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## Negotiating Heresy

### The Reception of Origen in Jerome's Eschatological Thought

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# Negotiating Heresy

The Reception of Origen in Jerome's Eschatological Thought

KATARINA PÅLSSON

CENTRE FOR THEOLOGY AND RELIGIOUS STUDIES | LUND UNIVERSITY



Jerome of Stridon (347-419/20) has largely been remembered for the controversies in which he was engaged. His work as a polemicist and a defender of what he considered to be orthodox teaching has been seen as defining. However, this champion of orthodoxy was himself often accused of heresy, and the main reason for his heresiological efforts was to defend himself against such accusations. During the first Origenist controversy, Jerome was forced to defend his orthodoxy by presenting Origen of Alexandria (185-253/54) as a heretic and "Origenism" as a heresy. Since Jerome had previously been heavily influenced by Origen, scholars have often described Jerome's change in attitude towards Origen as a complete turnaround, and his identity as an "anti-Origenist" from the time of the controversy has not been questioned.

The present study challenges this reconstruction by claiming that while Jerome especially attacked Origen's eschatological views, his own "orthodox" ideas about the resurrection, post-mortem purification, and eternal salvation show a great indebtedness to Origen's thought. By uncovering the rhetorical strategies involved in Jerome's polemics, by which he maximized the difference between himself and Origen, the study contributes to a nuanced assessment of Jerome's complex relation to Origen and his thought, a relation that was characterized by reception as well as rejection, by approval as well as polemics.

Katarina Pålsson works at the Centre for Theology and Religious Studies, Lund University. This is her doctoral dissertation.

## Negotiating Heresy



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## The Reception of Origen in Jerome's Eschatological Thought

Katarina Pålsson



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DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

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<b>Title and subtitle: Negotiating Heresy. The Reception of Origen in Jerome's Eschatological Thought.</b>			
<b>Abstract:</b> <p>The aim of this study is to examine the reception of Origen of Alexandria (185-253/54) in the eschatological thought of Jerome of Stridon (347-419/20). Jerome, who was a Christian ascetic writer and a biblical commentator, relied heavily on Origen's works during the first part of his career. Due to the Origenist controversy, which took place in the 390s and was initiated by Bishop Epiphanius of Salamis, Jerome came to change his attitude towards Origen, and became one of the authors who produced anti-Origenist heresiology during this period. The issues under debate concerned to a great extent eschatology, as Origen's ideas about the resurrection and about eternal salvation were attacked. In modern scholarship, Jerome's new attitude towards Origen has been described as a sudden volte-face, and Jerome's eschatological ideas, as expressed after the beginning of the controversy, are described as very different from Origen's. He is presented as teaching an idea of the resurrection which does not imply any change in the resurrection body, in relation to the earthly body, and he is described as claiming the idea of a hierarchy of the saved in opposition to Origen's idea about a final restoration of all rational beings.</p> <p>Paying much attention to the mechanics of heresiology and the rhetorical strategies used by Jerome in his constructions of Origen and "Origenism", I question the presentation of Jerome as a convinced anti-Origenist who held eschatological ideas that differed significantly from Origen's. Rather, I argue that Jerome exaggerated the difference between himself and Origen in these questions, while continuing to rely on the Alexandrian's eschatological thinking. Thus, I examine both the ways in which Jerome's eschatological thinking was indebted to Origen's theology and the ways in which he polemicized against Origen's ideas.</p> <p>I study Jerome's reception of Origen's eschatology not only in the Origenist controversy, but also in the preceding Jovinianist controversy, and in the later Pelagian controversy. Issues related to eschatology were of great importance in all these controversies. In my treatment of Jerome's involvement in the Jovinianist controversy, I argue that Origen was the main source of the ascetical theology that Jerome expressed in his work <i>Against Jovinian</i> (393) and also of the eschatological ideas that Jerome expressed in this work. Above all, I argue that in expressing the idea about a hierarchy of Christians based on asceticism, on earth as well as in heaven, he was indebted to Origen. I argue that Jerome continued to express this idea in the Origenist controversy, but that he now, paradoxically, used it in polemics against Origen himself. When it comes to the Pelagian controversy, I argue that Origen was important in Jerome's anti-Pelagian polemics, both as a source of his anti-Pelagian ideas and as a "heretic" with whom the Pelagians could be associated. An important purpose of the dissertation is to contribute to a nuanced description of Jerome's way of relating to Origen's theology, which takes account of the heresiological strategies that he used both in his presentation of Origen and in his orthodox self-presentation, and thereby show the great complexity of his reception of Origen.</p>			
<b>Key words: Jerome of Stridon, Origen of Alexandria, The Origenist Controversy, The Jovinianist Controversy, The Pelagian Controversy, Heresiology, Eschatology, Early Christian Asceticism, Resurrection, Salvation</b>			
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# Negotiating Heresy

The Reception of Origen in Jerome's Eschatological  
Thought

Katarina Pålsson



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Cover: Detail from Caravaggio, *Saint Jerome Writing*, 1605-1606.

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*To My Parents, Karin and Karl-Gustav Pålsson*

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# List of Abbreviations

CCSL	Corpus Christianorum Series Latina (Turnhout, Brepols)
Comm	Commentarius
CSEL	Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum (Vienna)
Ep	Epistula
GCS	Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten Jahrhunderte (Leipzig)
Hom	Homilia
PG	Patrologia Graeca (Paris)
PL	Patrologia Latina (Paris)
SC	Sources Chrétiennes (Paris, Les Editions du Cerf)





# Chapter 1. Introduction

## 1. Background: Jerome, Origen, and the Controversies

Jerome of Stridon (347-419/20) is to a large extent remembered for the controversies in which he was engaged. Although his role as a theologian has not been appreciated, his work as a polemicist and defender of what he considered to be orthodox teaching has been seen as defining, as has his work on the translation of the Bible and his exegesis. What is seldom remembered is that this champion of orthodoxy was almost constantly accused of heresy and in need of defending his own views against such accusations. An important part of the problem was his relation to Origen of Alexandria (185-253/54), an author by whom Jerome was immensely influenced, and yet accused of being a heretic. During the first Origenist controversy, Jerome's anti-Origenist heresiology contributed to the branding of Origen as an arch-heretic, and the construction of "Origenism" as a heresy.

The overall aim of this book is to contribute to a nuanced assessment of Jerome's complex relation to Origen and his thought, a relation that was characterized by reception as well as by rejection, by approval as well as by polemics. In what follows, I will give a general introduction to Jerome's career, to the controversies in which he was engaged, and to his relationship to Origen.<sup>1</sup>

### 1.1. Acquaintance with Origen and the Monastic Tradition

The point at which Jerome came to know the theology of Origen to an extent which influenced his own work is far from obvious. Origen's thought was highly influential in fourth century theological discussions, and above all in the area of asceticism. It has been shown that the Egyptian monasticism of the fourth century, and maybe already from the end of the third, was indebted to Origen's thought.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For a biographical account, see J.N.D. Kelly's *Jerome. His Life, Writings, and Controversies*, 1975.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Samuel Rubenson's "Origen in the Egyptian Monastic Tradition of the Fourth Century" in Bienert & Kühneweg, *Origeniana Septima*, 1999, 319-337. Rubenson has argued against the previously common scholarly view of Origenism as restricted to the last part of the fourth century and to a group centred on Evagrius of Pontus. In the view of Rubenson and others, Origen's influence in Egyptian monasticism goes further back in time, to the beginning of the

This radical form of oriental asceticism spread to the West, not least because Athanasius' *Life of Antony* became available for Western readers. Already at an early stage in Jerome's career, when he was still in the West, he became influenced by this ascetical tradition. During a period spent in Trier in the late 360s, he experienced some kind of conversion and came to think that the radical ascetical life was the superior way of life for a Christian.<sup>3</sup> Some years later this insight resulted in a journey eastwards and a withdrawal to the desert near Antioch, where Jerome began his struggle for perfection through self-mortification. Although his stay in the desert did not last for more than two or three years, the conviction that a radical ascetical life was superior remained for the rest of Jerome's life and was, as we will see, arguably the basic reason for his involvement in many controversies.

According to J.N.D. Kelly, it was probably during his stay in Constantinople in the 380s that Jerome was directly influenced by the work of Origen, above all by his biblical exegesis. In Kelly's account, Jerome, who lived in the East where theological discussions were so deeply inspired by the thought of Origen, must have known about the Alexandrian for many years, and his interest may have increased because of his connection with Gregory of Nazianz.<sup>4</sup> It was during this period that Jerome began translating works of Origen at the same time as he himself became interested in biblical exegesis.<sup>5</sup>

During the rest of his life Jerome would, in one way or another, be utterly dependent on Origen in his work. Up to the Origenist controversy in the 390s, his attitude towards Origen seems to have been thoroughly positive. While being in Rome (382-385), he translated two homilies on the Song of Songs, writing to Pope Damasus that while Origen had surpassed all writers in other works, in his exegesis on the Song of Songs he surpassed himself.<sup>6</sup> After having arrived in Bethlehem, he translated 39 homilies by Origen on the Gospel of Luke.<sup>7</sup> He

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fourth century or even to the end of the third century. Influence from Origen's thought, including protological, anthropological and eschatological ideas, can be seen in early sources, such as the letters of Antony. Antony's dependence on Origen is discussed more thoroughly in Rubenson's *The Letters of St. Antony. Monasticism and the Making of a Saint*, 1995.

<sup>3</sup> Jerome refers to this conversion in *Letter 3.5*. (CSEL 54, 17-18).

<sup>4</sup> Kelly 1975, 70-71, 76; see also Cavallera 1922, 1.2, 116; Gregory is mentioned as Jerome's "catechist", *kathegetos*, in *Ep 50.1* (CSEL 54, 389) and as his "teacher", *praeceptor*, in *Ep 52.8* (CSEL 54, 429). He is spoken of especially as an expert on the Holy Scriptures.

<sup>5</sup> Jerome's translations of Origen's homilies on Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Isaiah come from this period. (Kelly 1975, 76-77). In the prologue to his translation of Origen's homilies on Ezekiel, Jerome writes to Vincentius, to whom the work is dedicated, that even if he cannot translate all of Origen's works, he hope to translate at least very many of them (SC 352, 30-32).

<sup>6</sup> GCS 33, 26.

<sup>7</sup> The translation was probably made in 389 or 390 (Kelly 1975, 143).

accused persons who opposed Origen of being jealous,<sup>8</sup> and dedicated a long and praising description of him in his work *On Illustrious Men*.<sup>9</sup> Above all, Origen was Jerome's most important source when he produced exegetical works. He stated clearly in some of his own biblical commentaries that he depended on what Origen had done before him.<sup>10</sup> His knowledge of Origen's works was immense. In a letter written to the wealthy widow Paula, who was one of his most important patrons, Jerome enumerates the books of Origen.<sup>11</sup> While there is a possibility that Jerome relied on a catalogue of Origen's works which had been made by Pamphilus of Caesarea and inserted by Eusebius of Caesarea in the no longer extant *Life of Pamphilus*, it has been argued by E. Klostermann that Jerome's list reflects – at least to a very great extent – the works that Jerome himself used.<sup>12</sup>

Jerome was involved in controversies from early on in his career. Apart from the first one, which took place during his time in Antioch in the 370s and concerned the doctrine of the Trinity,<sup>13</sup> all of the debates were in one way or another related to asceticism. During his period in Rome in the 380s, Jerome ended up in a conflict with a certain Helvidius about the perpetual virginity of Mary, a debate that really was about more than this specific question: It concerned the status of virginity as compared to married life.<sup>14</sup> Jerome was not the first to introduce the oriental kind of asceticism in Rome – already at the time of his arrival in the city, there were groups of aristocratic women (those who would later become his patrons and followers) who were inspired by this more radical renunciation in their way of life.<sup>15</sup> Jerome, however, helped spreading this form of

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<sup>8</sup> In *Letter 33*, where Jerome praises the volume of Origen's work, he states that those who have opposed Origen in the past have done so not because he introduced any doctrinal novelties, but because of their jealousy. For the same reason, some “mad dogs” still attack him (*Ep 33.5*, CSEL 54, 259: *rabidi canes*).

<sup>9</sup> In this work, a catalogue of Christian authors written in 392 or 393 (for the dating, see Kelly 1975, 98, n. 29), Jerome dedicates a lengthy section to Origen (*De Viris Illustribus 54*).

<sup>10</sup> In his prologues to *Commentary on Galatians* and *Commentary on Ephesians*, he states that he has followed Origen (PL 26, 369-370, 543-544).

<sup>11</sup> *Letter 33*, CSEL54, 253-259.

<sup>12</sup> Klostermann, “Die Schriften des Origenes in Hieronymus' Brief an Paula”, 1897. See also the discussion in Courcelle 1969, 102-111.

<sup>13</sup> This controversy was the reason behind Jerome's first polemical treatise, *Dialogus contra Luciferianos* (PL 23, 155-182).

<sup>14</sup> Jerome wrote *De perpetua virginitate beatæ Mariæ adversus Helvidium liber unus* in 383 (Kelly 1975, 104, n. 1; Opelt 1973, 28) (PL 23, 183-206).

<sup>15</sup> As mentioned above, Athanasius' *Life of Anthony* was an important source of information about Eastern monasticism. Marcella, one of Jerome's aristocratic patrons, had apparently been in contact with Bishop Peter of Alexandria when he was living in exile in Rome in the 370s (Jerome, *Ep 127.5*, CSEL 56/1, 149). Jerome also claims that she met Athanasius; Kelly, however, denies the credibility of this (Kelly 1975, 92, n. 9).

asceticism in the city, to the annoyance of many. Although he had the support of the pope, Damasus, the majority of the clergy seems to have had a negative view on Jerome's ideas about the ascetical life. An important figure in this opposition was the writer who has come to be called "Ambrosiaster". In a work called *Questions on the Old and New Testaments*, Ambrosiaster, probably a member of the clergy in Rome,<sup>16</sup> wrote an extensive section about the interpretation of the first chapters of Genesis.<sup>17</sup> He argued for an interpretation of the narratives of the creation and the fall of humankind which supported a more positive view on marriage and reproduction than Jerome's ascetic outlook allowed. It is probable that he had Jerome's views in mind when he wrote this text.<sup>18</sup>

Something should be said about the controversial nature of the late fourth century radical asceticism. It has been argued by modern scholars that the tendency to turn away from the material world, combined with a tendency to speculate quite freely on theological subjects, did not always go together with the institutionalized church. According to this understanding, the spiritualizing ascetics posed a threat to ecclesiastical authority: In the view of such persons, sanctity and spiritual authority was based on ascetical achievement rather than on ordination. John F. Dechow, who has written about Epiphanius' part in the condemnation of Origen, suggests that a church in which political and legal establishment was at stake could not afford the mysticism and free speculation of the ascetics. In order to survive, the church had to defend its unity and allow no deviations.<sup>19</sup> Samuel Rubenson has argued that the Origenist controversy had to do with the inability to combine two expressions of the Christian tradition: The first was of a material, worldly kind and was represented by the institution of the Church with its hierarchy; the second was of a spiritual kind, and was expressed in the monastic tradition, which was dominated by mysticism. Origen himself, Rubenson notes, was able to combine these two aspects in his life and work, but by the end of the fourth century, it seems that it was no longer possible to combine them. Persons within the ecclesiastical hierarchy saw their authority threatened by those within the ascetical tradition. Thus, accusations of Origenist heresy became a way to attack these monks.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Hunter 2007, 160-161.

<sup>17</sup> *Quaestiones veteris et novi testamenti* 127, *De peccato Adae et Evae*, discussed in Hunter 1989, 283-299. See also Hunter 2007, 159-170.

<sup>18</sup> While, in Jerome's view, sexuality had not been a part of the human condition until after the Fall (a point to which we will return in chapter 3), Ambrosiaster thought of it as part of the human being in the original creation. In his article "The Paradise of Patriarchy", David Hunter discusses the difference between the two authors concerning this question (Hunter 1992).

<sup>19</sup> Dechow 1988, especially 462-466.

<sup>20</sup> Rubenson 1995. Likewise, Daniel Caner, in his book *Wandering, Begging Monks* (1998) has written about the social and economic conditions behind the promotion of certain kinds of monasticism over others from the middle of the fourth century to the middle of the fifth century.

This brings some clarity to the opposition that Jerome met in Rome. Coming to Rome, he complained about the laxness of the clergy, at the same time as he elevated his female ascetic disciples.<sup>21</sup> He was a radical ascetic who worried the clergy by seeming to disrupt the existing hierarchy and to want to displace it with a hierarchy based on ascetical achievement. As will become clear, this controversial attitude and the critique it evoked was to cause Jerome trouble long after he had left Rome, and it would also determine his activities in later controversies.

When his protector Pope Damasus passed away in December 384 and was replaced by Siricius, who was unfavourably disposed to radical asceticism,<sup>22</sup> it did not take long before Jerome was forced to leave Rome, apparently after he had been charged with inappropriate behaviour.<sup>23</sup> It becomes clear that it was his relationship to Paula that had been questioned.<sup>24</sup> After he had left the city in 385, Jerome settled in Bethlehem in 386, in the company of Paula and Eustochium.

## 1.2. The Jovinianist, the Origenist, and the Pelagian controversies

Seven years after his arrival in Bethlehem, Jerome became involved in the so called *Jovinianist controversy*. The controversy has its name from Jovinian, a monk lived in Rome<sup>25</sup> and who had come to question the value of a rigid ascetical life. The writings of Jovinian himself are not extant, but it is possible to reconstruct his views from the treatise that Jerome wrote against him, that is, *Against Jovinian*.<sup>26</sup> From Jerome's refutation of him we can reconstruct the message of Jovinian, as well as his methods of argumentation: Finding support in the Scriptures as well as in secular literature, he claimed that ascetical practices

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He brings attention to the phenomenon of wandering, begging monks, that is, to ascetics who moved from one place to another, seeking out patrons in the cities who would provide them with material goods in exchange for spiritual advice. Caner shows how these monks posed problems for official members of the institutional church by claiming spiritual authority as well as material privileges at the expense of ecclesiastical office holders. The subordination of monks to bishops was crucial in preserving hierarchical stability in the church.

<sup>21</sup> This attitude can be found in *Letter 22* (CSEL 54, 143-211) which he wrote to Paula's daughter, the virgin Eustochium, about the preservation of virginity. See especially *Ep 22.16, 28*.

<sup>22</sup> See Hunter 2007, 208-219.

<sup>23</sup> *Ep 45.6*, CSEL 54, 328: *infamiam falsi criminis inportarunt*.

<sup>24</sup> *Ep 45.2, 324: nihil mihi aliud obicitur nisi sexus meus, et hoc numquam obicitur, nisi cum Hierosolyma Paula proficiscitur*.

<sup>25</sup> Jovinian is called a monk (*monachus*) by Jerome in *AdvJov 1.40* (PL 23, 268). That he worked in Rome becomes clear from *AdvJov 2.38* (337-338). See the discussion in Duval 2003, 25-26, 43.

<sup>26</sup> *Adversus Jovinianum*, PL 23, 221-352. In this work, Jerome systematically quotes and refutes the arguments made by Jovinian.

such as celibacy and abstinence from food did not make a person a better Christian compared to if he/she married and received food with thanksgiving. What made a person a true Christian, and what made all Christians equal members of the church, was baptism. This equality would continue after death, since Jovinian claimed that in heaven, there is only one reward for those who are saved.<sup>27</sup>

One could ask whether Jovinian had Jerome in mind when he wrote his treatise. This seems quite possible, considering the latter's reputation. Either way, Jovinian obviously accused those who held more radical ascetical views of being heretics. This is indicated by Jerome's defensive statement in his work, where he claims that he does not follow the views of Marcion, Mani, or Tatian.<sup>28</sup> The charge of Manichaeism was particularly dangerous. At this time, Manichaeism was quite widespread, and when it came to practice, it was not easy to distinguish this group from those ascetics who, like Jerome, did not share the Manichaean world view. David G. Hunter has explained that the charge of Manichaeism, which Jovinian directed against his opponents, was a type of polemic that was increasingly common at this time. There was a tendency to label all radical ascetics "Manichaeans".<sup>29</sup>

Against Jovinian, Jerome argued that baptism did not put everyone at the same level: Within the one church, there were different degrees of holiness. This idea of a hierarchy of Christians, based on ascetic renunciation, would remain a central point in Jerome's literary production also in the Origenist and Pelagian controversies, as we will see. It was closely connected to a certain eschatological idea: Just as the church on earth was hierarchical, so the heavenly church would be hierarchical.<sup>30</sup>

The fact that Jovinian was later condemned, first by a synod in Rome and then by one in Milan,<sup>31</sup> could be thought to point to the victory of Jerome. This was, however, far from the truth. Jerome's polemical work had a terrible reception, and just as his views on asceticism had outraged people in the past, many were now upset about the way in which he degraded marriage to a point at which he seemed to view it as an evil. It was not only the non-ascetic Christians in Rome who reacted in this way, but also Jerome's ascetic friends, who thought that he exaggerated and expressed himself too harshly. Jerome wrote his *Letters* 48 and 49 to his friend Pammachius as a kind of apology, in which he expressed himself

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<sup>27</sup> *AdvJov* 1.3 (PL 23, 214).

<sup>28</sup> *AdvJov* 1.3, PL 23, 213. See Hunter 2007, 29-30.

<sup>29</sup> Hunter 2007, 130-146.

<sup>30</sup> This was claimed in the refutation of Jovinian's fourth thesis, according to which one and the same reward awaited all those who had kept their baptismal vow.

<sup>31</sup> For an account of these condemnations, see Duval 2003, 81-95. The condemnation at Rome is reported by Siricius (*Ep* 7, CSEL 82.3); the one in Milan by Ambrose (*Ep* 42, CSEL 82.3).

about marriage in a more moderate way, although without retreating from his idea of the superiority of virginity.

In 393, even before he wrote his *Against Jovinian*, Jerome became involved in a new controversy – the Origenist controversy.<sup>32</sup> Bishop Epiphanius of Salamis had initiated a campaign to purge the church of the heresy of Origen, and he suspected the bishop of Jerusalem, John, of being a follower of the Alexandrian. When Epiphanius visited Jerusalem in 393, he preached against Origenism, with the obvious aim of challenging John.<sup>33</sup> Epiphanius then added significantly to the already tense situation by ordaining, on his own account, Jerome's brother Paulinan at the monastery in Bethlehem; an action that resulted in John's excommunication of the members of Jerome's monastery. The controversy lasted until 397, when bishop Theophilus of Alexandria managed to bring about an agreement.<sup>34</sup>

Epiphanius had attacked Origen already in writings from the 370s,<sup>35</sup> and these initial accusations of heresy would, to a great extent, determine the debates about Origen in the 390s. The parts of Origen's theology which were under suspicion of heresy included his allegorical interpretation of the account of creation in Genesis; his idea about a pre-existence of souls; his idea of a spiritual resurrection which did not include the flesh; and the notion of *apokatastasis*, the final restoration of all rational beings (including the devil).

The question can be asked, however, to what extent this controversy was actually about the theology of Origen. To return to what was said above about the monastic tradition and the threat that radical ascetics seem to have posed to the ecclesiastical hierarchy during this period, it has been argued that the controversy was really a struggle for authority between bishops and monks, that is, between the ordained hierarchy of the church and individual ascetics, whose authority was based on asceticism. In Dechow's view, the establishment could not afford this kind of asceticism, and by presenting Origen as an arch-heretic, his followers could be combated.<sup>36</sup> Rubenson has likewise argued that the condemnation of Origen's teachings was a way to deal with his monastic followers, who did not fit into institutionalized Christianity.<sup>37</sup> Elizabeth Clark has also paid attention to the

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<sup>32</sup> For an account of the events, see Kelly 1975, 195-209.

<sup>33</sup> See the account in Jerome, *Contra Iohannem* 11, CCSL 79A, 19-21.

<sup>34</sup> Jerome's *Letter* 82 (CSEL 55, 107-119) is a response to Theophilus who had previously written to Jerome, urging him to make peace with John. Jerome expresses willingness to do so, even though he writes about John in a less than friendly manner. That a reconciliation was actually achieved is clear from *Letter* 81, to Rufinus (CSEL 55, 106-107) and the *Apology against Rufinus*, 1.1 (CCSL 79, 2) and 3.33 (CCSL 79, 103).

<sup>35</sup> *Ancoratus*, written in 374, and *Panarion*, written in 376.

<sup>36</sup> See n. 19.

<sup>37</sup> Rubenson, "Kampen om Origenes", 1995.



significance of asceticism in this controversy, by pointing out how questions about the body and materiality were important in the polemics against Origen. Against a monasticism that sought to transcend the present world and materiality, ecclesiastical authorities claimed the goodness of creation, of procreation and of marriage, and the fleshly reality of the resurrection body.<sup>38</sup>

In this controversy, Jerome did not involve himself to any great extent during the first three years, apart from taking the side of Epiphanius and translating a letter by Epiphanius to John of Jerusalem.<sup>39</sup> It was not until 396, when he seems to have realized that he himself was suspected of holding Origenist opinions,<sup>40</sup> that he became more engaged, both by defending himself against such accusations and by directing accusations towards Origen and his contemporary followers. He produced a polemical work against the bishop, *Against John of Jerusalem*,<sup>41</sup> but his polemics against the “Origenists” can also be seen in letters and biblical commentaries from the years around 400.<sup>42</sup> The theological questions to which he devoted most of his efforts were those of the resurrection body and of *apokatastasis*. As Elizabeth Clark has shown, for Jerome, the Origenist controversy was a continuation of the Jovinianist controversy. He continued to fight his ascetical battle, but under different conditions, that is, he now had to convince his opponents that, contrary to Origen, he was not a heretic.<sup>43</sup>

Accusations concerning Jerome’s former sympathies for Origen were to reappear in a second phase of the Origenist controversy. After the reconciliation in 397, Rufinus went to Rome and initiated a project for the purpose of vindicating Origen. By translating Origen's works (and correcting what might appear to be heretical in them, claiming that this depended on later falsifications); by translating Pamphilus’ of Caesarea *Apology for Origen*; by writing a *Falsification of the Works of Origen*; and by explaining in prefaces to his translations why accusations about Origen’s heresy built on misunderstandings, Rufinus hoped to

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<sup>38</sup> Clark 1992. See especially 4-6, 87-99, 130-37.

<sup>39</sup> *Letter 51* (CSEL, 395-412). The letter enumerates heretical tenets in Origen's theology, and admonishes John to reject Origenism.

<sup>40</sup> In *Letter 61*, written in 396 to Vigilantius (a priest in Gaul), it becomes clear that after his return to the West from Palestine, Vigilantius had spread rumours that Jerome was a sympathizer of Origen. (CSEL 54, 575-82).

<sup>41</sup> *Contra Ioannem Hierosolymitanum*, CCSL 79A.

<sup>42</sup> In *Letter 84*, he specifically discusses his way of using Origen and distances himself from the “Origenists”. However, his anti-Origenist critique appears even in letters that deal mainly with other matters, e.g. *Letter 75* (397) and *Letter 108*, the epitaph on Paula (404), both in which Jerome criticizes the “Origenist” idea about the resurrection. The polemics also appears in biblical commentaries from the period, such as *the Commentary on Jonah* and the *Commentary on Matthew*. We will return to these texts further on in this chapter.

<sup>43</sup> Clark 1992, 130-132, 150-151.

restore the damaged reputation of the Alexandrian master. What sparked the new stage in the controversy was a formulation in a preface to Rufinus' translation of Origen's controversial work *Peri Archon (De Principiis)*. Here, Rufinus claimed that in translating Origen in this way, he was simply continuing the work already begun by another, and it was obvious that it was Jerome that he had in mind.<sup>44</sup> This meant that Jerome could be seen as a defender of the very person from whom he had tried to distance himself during the first phase of the controversy, and he soon attacked Rufinus by writing an apology in three books against him.<sup>45</sup> Jerome also undertook the task of making a literary translation of Origen's *Peri Archon*, in order to expose the same heresy that Rufinus, he claimed, had tried to conceal.

It is difficult to say at which point the Origenist controversy came to an end. In a way, it ended in 400, when Origen's teachings were anathematized in Nitria and in Rome. However, the quarrel between Jerome and Rufinus continued well beyond this. The controversy can also be said to have lived on in the next controversy, in which Jerome was involved, namely the Pelagian controversy. As Elizabeth Clark has argued, Jerome saw this new controversy as a continuation of both the ascetic and the Origenist controversies.<sup>46</sup> Jerome attacked the Pelagian idea that a human being could be without sin. This, he argued, had its roots in the Pythagorean and Stoic teaching of *apatheia*, passionlessness. However, it was also an idea which he connected with Origenism, seeing the Pelagians as disciples of Origen. Importantly, even in this controversy, asceticism played an important part in Jerome's argumentation, and much of the critique that he had directed against Jovinian would return in his anti-Pelagian polemics. While presenting the Pelagians, like Jovinian, as making a strict division between the two groups of the righteous and the unrighteous, Jerome maintained the idea about a hierarchical order – both in this life and in the world to come – which allowed for ascetical strength as well as non-ascetical weakness. The most comprehensive expressions of this polemics can be found in his *Letter 133*, probably written in 414,<sup>47</sup> and the *Dialogue against the Pelagians*, written in 415.<sup>48</sup>

Some general points can be made about the three controversies in question. First, Jerome's views on asceticism were important in all of them. Connected to this were questions of eschatology. These became very important during the Origenist controversy, as the accusations directed against Origen concerned, to a great extent, his eschatological ideas. However, eschatology had been important in Jerome's dealing with heresy even earlier, because his views on asceticism,

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<sup>44</sup> Rufinus, *De principiis* 1, Pref. 1, CCSL 20, 245.

<sup>45</sup> *Contra Rufinum*, CCSL 79.

<sup>46</sup> Clark 1992, 221-227.

<sup>47</sup> For the dating, see Kelly 1975, 314.

<sup>48</sup> *Dialogus adversus Pelagianos*, CCSL 80.

criticized during the Jovinianist controversy, were directly connected to certain eschatological views: The idea of a hierarchy of Christians in heaven was connected to the idea of a hierarchy of Christians on earth.

The second important point to be made is that Jerome's position as orthodox was not taken for granted; rather, he himself was often accused of heresy (Manichaeism and Origenism), and his polemics should be seen as an effort to defend himself against such accusations and to portray himself as orthodox.

From this general introduction, we will now move on to an examination of the previous research on Jerome, before presenting the purposes of this present work in greater detail.

## 2. Previous Research

In the following overview of previous research, I will begin by discussing the general treatment of Jerome, and in the second part, I will concentrate on how Jerome's eschatological views have been approached and presented in modern scholarship. Finally, in the third part of this section, I will discuss the research on Jerome in relation to asceticism.

### 2.1. Research on Jerome in General

#### 2.1.1. *Life and Work*

Jerome's life was filled with conflict, and not surprisingly, the reconstruction of his life and work in modern times has divided scholars, who have tended to take different sides. In an earlier period, beginning during the Renaissance, scholars have often exaggerated either his virtues or his faults. Since the time of the 16th century Protestant Reformation, the ways to look upon Jerome have often been connected to confessional belonging.<sup>49</sup> During the first decades of the 20th century, two biographies of Jerome were written which to a certain extent mirrored this divide; one by a Protestant author, Georg Grützmacher,<sup>50</sup> and one by a Roman Catholic, Ferdinand Cavallera.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Protestants have criticized him for his ideas about the virginity of Mary, the cult of relics, the practice of bodily mortification, and, above all, for his support for the primacy of the papacy. At the same time, Catholic apologists have tried to downplay his mistakes, often at the expense of another party. See Murphy 1952, 10.

<sup>50</sup> Grützmacher, G., *Hieronymus: Eine Biographische Studie zur Alten Kirchengeschichte*, 1901-1908. Grützmacher's work shows certain hostility towards Jerome. The author focuses on negative features of Jerome's personality, such as hypocrisy. Interestingly – and this can be said also of Jerome's apologists – his literary style is seen as something negative: In Grützmacher, it is contrasted to the lack of argument (270, about the controversy with Helvidius); in Cavallera, who

Regardless of whether authors have tended to attack or to defend Jerome, a recurring theme in biographical writings is a focus on his personality. In an article by F. X. Murphy, Jerome is named “the irascible hermit”,<sup>52</sup> and even Cavallera, who tends to act as an apologist on his behalf, describes him as irritable and resentful.<sup>53</sup>

This interest in Jerome’s personality, and the tendency to approach him psychologically, can be seen in a more recent biography, namely in J. N. D. Kelly’s *Jerome: His Life, Writings, and Controversies* (1975). In describing Jerome’s stay in the desert of Chalcis, Kelly uses the letters of Jerome as informative of his inner positions and claims that these letters lay bare “his complex personality in a fascinating way”.<sup>54</sup> They show “[t]he warmth of his affections, his passionate desire to be loved, his prickly readiness to take offence, his rapid switches from bitter self-reproach to self-righteous indignation, his intense dislike of being alone”.<sup>55</sup>

This way of seeing Jerome’s letters as informative of a mental state has been questioned, and arguments have been made that his way of expressing himself should rather be seen as rhetorically motivated. In recent decades, more interest has been directed towards Jerome’s rhetorical strategies in presenting himself in certain ways: As a champion of orthodoxy, and more specifically, as a champion of orthodox asceticism and exegesis.

Stefan Rebenich, in *Hieronymus und sein Kreis: Prosopographische und sozialgeschichtliche Untersuchungen* (1992) and in his *Jerome* (2002), has argued that Jerome’s description of himself as a heroic desert hermit should not be taken at face value. This picture, which Jerome gives of himself for example in his *Letter 22*, should not, according to Rebenich, be taken as an historically accurate description of Jerome’s life in the desert, but should rather be read as means of his self-presentation as an ascetic authority. Rebenich criticizes earlier scholars (Grützmaker, Cavallera, Kelly) for unhistorically trying to harmonize Jerome’s desert stay with the isolation of Eastern hermits.<sup>56</sup> From his letters it becomes evident that Jerome did not part from the world outside completely. According to Rebenich, Jerome’s description of his ascetic life in *Letter 22*, written during his

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can be seen as an apologist for Jerome, his literary education is (partly) to blame for his faults, because of the interest in satire and caricatur to which it gave rise. See *Saint Jérôme. Sa Vie et son Oeuvre*, 1922, vii, and “The Personality of St. Jerome”, in Murphy, 1952, 18.

<sup>51</sup> See the previous footnote.

<sup>52</sup> Murphy, F. X., “St. Jerome: The irascible hermit”, in Murphy 1952.

<sup>53</sup> Cavallera, “The Personality of St. Jerome”, in Murphy 1952.

<sup>54</sup> Kelly 1975, 51.

<sup>55</sup> Kelly 1975, 51.

<sup>56</sup> Rebenich 2002, 13 ff.

ascetic campaign in Rome, had the purpose of gaining the confidence of would-be patrons by showing that he was a person with ascetic experience.<sup>57</sup>

Andrew Cain, in his *The Letters of Jerome*,<sup>58</sup> has examined Jerome's constructed authority in biblical exegesis and in asceticism. Differing from works in which Jerome's letters are studied from a historical-biographical starting point,<sup>59</sup> Cain offers a study of the strategies by which Jerome created his authority in letter writing. He examines the rhetorical self-presentation in Jerome's correspondence, namely, how he sought to attain authority and, thereby, a favourable reception of himself and his work.

While many scholars have seen the way in which Jerome presents himself as indicating "a character defect or /.../ rhetoric gone awry",<sup>60</sup> Cain argues that this is to oversimplify his motives, and argues instead that Jerome's triumphalist rhetoric should be explained by an awareness that his authority was not taken for granted, so that "apology and self-justification necessarily became almost as integral to his teachings and scholarship as the content itself".<sup>61</sup>

A similar focus on Jerome's self-portrayal is found in Mark Vessey's "Jerome's Origen: The Making of a Christian Literary Persona".<sup>62</sup> In Rome, Vessey shows, Jerome presented himself to his readers as a Latin Origen, in that he would provide them with excellent biblical commentaries. There are three main areas in which Jerome represented his activities as mirroring Origen's: 1) He presented himself as a tireless scholar, whose activities were made possible through the financial support from a generous but demanding patron, 2) he knew Hebrew, and therefore had access to the Old Testament in its original language, 3) Origen's achievements had remain unsurpassed, and Jerome, the next Origen, would one day be the standard, by which later biblical scholars in the West would be measured.

This recent approach, which focuses on Jerome's self-presentation, may bring new insights also to the question of Jerome's relationship to Origen. As shown by Vessey, Origen played an important part in Jerome's construction of his authority at an early stage in his career. In the present work, I will argue that even after Jerome's involvement in the Origenist controversy, Origen continued to be important for Jerome's self-portrayal, and especially for his construction of his

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<sup>57</sup> Rebenich 2002, 19-20.

<sup>58</sup> Cain 2009. Other recent works on Jerome as epistolographer are Fürst, *Augustins Briefwechsel mit Hieronymus*, 1999, and Conring, *Hieronymus als Briefschreiber*, 2001.

<sup>59</sup> Among these I count Grützmacher, Cavallera, Kelly and Rebenich, although, as we have seen, Rebenich differs in essential ways from the other biographers by paying more attention to the rhetoric involved in Jerome's descriptions.

<sup>60</sup> Cain 2009, 198.

<sup>61</sup> Cain 2009, 199.

<sup>62</sup> Vessey, Mark, "Jerome's Origen: The Making of a Christian Literary Persona", 1993.

orthodoxy. While Jerome's attacks against heresy in general and Origenism in particular have often been taken at face value – with descriptions of Jerome as a champion of orthodoxy, or as an “anti-Origenist” – it may be asked to what degree Jerome's heresiology reflected his actual convictions, and to what degree we are dealing with apologetical and polemical strategies.

### 2.1.2. *Controversies*

Jerome's involvement in controversies has been treated by J. Brochet, in his *Saint Jérôme et ses Ennemis*<sup>63</sup> from 1905, discussing above all Jerome's controversy with Rufinus. The work is clearly apologetic, being written in reaction to Grützmacher's less flattering account. Jerome is defended, and the fault of the controversies is blamed on his opponents: They are heretics who oppose the guardian of orthodoxy; they are worldly people who oppose the ascetic; they are mediocre people who are jealous of a talented person.

In a study from 1973,<sup>64</sup> Ilona Opelt examines Jerome's polemical work, arguing that it should be related to the traditional polemical tradition dominated by Cicero. She goes through the seven writings<sup>65</sup> in which Jerome attacks fellow Christians, and in a last chapter, she comments on Jerome's polemical method. Jerome is presented as an exegete, who preferred to analyse his opponents' arguments rather than to give original exposition of doctrine. His polemical writings are seen as answers or reactions, determined by the structure and theses in the works that he opposes.

Jerome's involvement in the Jovinianist controversy has been treated by Yves-Marie Duval (2003).<sup>66</sup> Duval shows that an important context for the controversy was the tension that radical asceticism had created in the church, with reactions from the Roman aristocracy, who thought their traditional values (especially those connected to marriage) to be threatened. Duval gives an analysis of Jerome's *Against Jovinian* and he discusses the sources that Jerome used, above all Tertullian and Origen. When it comes to Jerome's reception of Origen in this work, Duval especially discusses his use of Origen's exegesis of 1 Corinthians 7.<sup>67</sup> A main argument in Duval's book is that what began as a conflict over virginity and marriage in the Jovinianist controversy, turned into a conflict over the possibility (or impossibility) of human sinlessness in the Pelagian controversy.

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<sup>63</sup> Brochet J., *Saint Jérôme et ses ennemis*, 1905.

<sup>64</sup> Opelt, I., *Hieronymus' Streitschriften*, 1973.

<sup>65</sup> *Dialogus contra Luciferianos, De Perpetua Virginitate Beatae Mariae Adversus Helvidium, Adversus Jovinianum, Contra Iohannem Hierosolymitanum, Contra Rufinum, Contra Vigilantium, Dialogus Adversus Pelagianos.*

<sup>66</sup> Duval, *L'Affaire Jovinien. D'une Crise de la Société Romaine à une Crise de la Pensée Chrétienne à la Fin du IVe et au Début de Ve Siècle*, 2003.

<sup>67</sup> Duval 2003, 115-151.

A very influential study on the Origenist controversy is Elizabeth Clark's *The Origenist Controversy* (1992). Clark argues that different opponents of Origen perceived the controversy in different ways, that is, they argued against different versions of "Origenism". For Jerome, she argues, the new controversy meant a continuation of the Jovinianist controversy, and he also saw the Pelagian controversy in the light of the previous controversies. Generally, Clark has pointed to the importance of questions of bodiliness and materiality in the Origenist controversy.

A difference between Clark's work and mine is that, while she notes that Jerome deals to a great extent with the same issues as he did in the Jovinianist controversy, and thereby recognizes continuity in his thought, she does not make it clear that this was continuity with his previous thought *influenced by Origen*. Although Clark notices that Jerome had expressed Origenist views, such as the idea of *apokatastasis* and the pre-existence of rational beings, her discussion about this does not go further than the claim that Jerome, to save himself from accusations of heresy, made sure that he expressed other views on these subjects and tried to show that he had never actually held these views. I hope to demonstrate that Jerome's way to deal with Origen's thought after the beginning of the Origenist controversy was more complex. I want to further nuance Jerome's way of relating to Origen by putting more emphasis on the similarity of his theology to that of Origen, and it is from this starting point that I examine what takes place in the new polemical situation that came with the Origenist Controversy.

Jerome's heresiology in general has been treated in Benoît Jeanjean's *Saint Jérôme et l'Hérésie* (1999). In this thorough study, Jeanjean remarks that this genre is abundantly represented in Jerome's writings, in polemical writings as well as in letters and biblical commentaries.<sup>68</sup> He outlines Jerome's treatments of different heresies and the general strategies which he used for presenting and refuting heretics. Jeanjean describes the Origenist controversy as one that above all centred on doctrines, even if personal relationships played their part in its development. According to Jeanjean, this controversy implied a *volte-face* in Jerome's relation to Origen, whose theological ideas he knew very well before the controversy, but began to polemicize against only after 394.<sup>69</sup> Jeanjean pays a lot of attention to Jerome's polemics against Pelagianism,<sup>70</sup> including his association of it with Origenism.

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<sup>68</sup> Jeanjean 1999, 15.

<sup>69</sup> Jeanjean 1999, 138.

<sup>70</sup> Jeanjean 1999, 387-431.

### 2.1.3. Exegesis and Theology

In the general research on Jerome, that which concerns his biblical scholarship has been vast. Areas which have been treated are his linguistic and philological competence,<sup>71</sup> the motives for his translation of the Bible and his commentaries,<sup>72</sup> and his relation to Judaism.<sup>73</sup> The influence from Origen in his biblical scholarship has also been examined, in Ronald E. Heine's *The Commentaries of Origen and Jerome on St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians*.<sup>74</sup>

There is a clear tendency in scholarship on Jerome to distinguish Jerome as an exegete from Jerome as a theologian. According to Rebenich, Jerome's *exegetical* importance can be compared with Augustine's *theological* importance.<sup>75</sup> About Jerome's weakness as a theologian, he writes:

He preferred polemical simplification to subtle distinction, doctrinal conservatism to fresh ideas, rhetorical display to substantial argument, learned allusions to discursive ramifications, dogmatic reassurance to intellectual receptivity, and authoritative decision to independent judgement.<sup>76</sup>

Kelly's explanation of why Jerome has become a Doctor of the Church is also worth quoting:

Insofar as it suggests a creative theologian grappling with, and seeking to elucidate, the problems of Christian belief, it was wide of the mark. In contrast to Augustine, Jerome has neither the aptitude nor the inclination for adventurous thinking. Suspicious of novelties and abhorring heresies, he preferred the straight and narrow path marked out by authority, best of all by the see of Rome. Where he abundantly deserved the title was, first, as the articulate spokesman and pugnacious defender of popular Catholicism, and, secondly, as a translator and expositor of Scripture.<sup>77</sup>

Abhorrence of heresy can hardly be seen as something that distinguished Jerome from other Christian writers at this time. When it comes to heresy, what should be put forth is that he himself was accused of heresy on different occasions, and he

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<sup>71</sup> E.g. Kamesar, A., *Jerome, Greek Scholarship, and the Hebrew Bible* (1993); Brown, D., *Vir trilinguis: A Study in the Biblical Exegesis of Saint Jerome* (1992); Rebenich, S., "Jerome. The 'vir trilinguis', and the 'Hebraica veritas'" (1993).

<sup>72</sup> Williams, M. H., *The Monk and the Book: Jerome and the Making of Christian Scholarship* (2006).

<sup>73</sup> Gonzales-Salineró, R., *Biblia y Polémica Antijudía en Jerónimo* (Madrid, 2003).

<sup>74</sup> Heine, R., *The Commentaries of Origen and Jerome on St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians* (2002).

<sup>75</sup> Rebenich 2002, 56.

<sup>76</sup> Rebenich 2002, 71.

<sup>77</sup> Kelly 1975, 334.



needed to free himself from suspicions by distancing himself from heresies. It is in doing this, I will argue, that he actually is what Kelly denies that he is, namely, a creative theologian. I also claim that it is a mistake in more than one way to call Jerome a “defender of popular Catholicism”. When it came to the issues under debate, there was not one, popular Catholic view, but contesting views, and Jerome surely was not always on the side of the majority. Rather than defending a kind of existing Catholicism, he defended – or rather, rhetorically constructed – his own orthodoxy.

As can be expected, Jerome has been given little attention in histories of dogma.<sup>78</sup> One important explanation is that he is seen as an exegete and a polemicist rather than as a theologian. I think that this neglect should also be understood as part of a major tendency in histories of early Christian dogma to pay little attention to questions of eschatology, anthropology, protology, and asceticism, while Trinitarian and Christological theology is treated to a much greater extent. That is, the questions discussed and formulated as doctrines by the first four ecumenical councils are paid much more attention than questions which were certainly hotly debated and the subject of controversies, but not taken up by councils nor formulated in creeds in the way that the above-mentioned subjects were.<sup>79</sup> This is probably part of the explanation of Jerome’s absence from histories of theology: He was, above all, engaged in the kinds of questions of which the development is not much treated. However, in what follows I will present research that has been done on a specific part of Jerome’s theology, that is, his eschatological views.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> This can be said of Harnack, *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte*, (1897); Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine. Vol. 1*, 1971 (Pelikan mentions Jerome only on a few occasions, and never in connection to eschatology); and Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (1977), to which we will return.

<sup>79</sup> For example, Kelly treats questions of eschatology in his epilogue.

<sup>80</sup> By “eschatology”, I refer to “the study of the final end of things” (J. L. Walls, “Introduction” in *The Oxford Handbook of Eschatology*, 4). As Walls points out, eschatology is not only a temporal concept, but also a teleological one: “Things will reach their end when they achieve the purposes for which God created them” (4-5). This is connected to the concept of “realized eschatology”, which Walls contrasts to “future” eschatology. Realized eschatology involves the idea that the ends of things are, in some sense, already realized in the present life – a standpoint that is often, like its opposite, connected to social and political concerns (Walls, 13-14). While theologians who have opted for a realized eschatology have often questioned the social order in which they have found themselves, those who have emphasized future eschatology have rather wanted to preserve the social and political conditions. This has been pointed out by John Gager in an article about ancient Christian ideas about the resurrection (“Body-symbols”, 1982, to which we will return in chapter 4). However, it ought to be pointed out that even if such tendencies can be seen, there is no strict divide between Christian thinkers expressing ideas about realized eschatology, and those emphasizing future eschatology. As we will see in the cases of Origen and Jerome, they embraced both an idea of a resurrection in the present life and one in the world to come. Precisely the teleological aspect of eschatology will be important in the present work, as we will deal with Jerome’s (and Origen’s) ideas about the possibility of a human being to be

## 2.2. Research on Jerome's Eschatological Views<sup>81</sup>

### 2.2.1. John P. O'Connell's *The Eschatology of Saint Jerome*

Jerome's eschatological views have most extensively been treated in John P. O'Connell's *The Eschatology of Saint Jerome* from 1948. The work is important because O'Connell is the only scholar before me who has specifically treated Jerome's eschatological ideas in a larger work, and my own research must of course be seen in relation to what he has done.

O'Connell's work is a systematic-theological work. Already in the preface, an important difference from my work is seen in the point of departure, as O'Connell motivates his work from the need to fill in a gap in the history of dogma. Referring to J. Rivière,<sup>82</sup> he makes clear that the eschatology of the fourth century fathers still needs to be investigated, and that he intends to contribute to this with his thesis on Jerome.<sup>83</sup> This means that the focus is on a specific area of theology, and on the teaching itself, with little attention either to context or to the methods used. As will be made clear, my approach is a different one, as I pay much attention to the methods and rhetorical strategies that are involved as Jerome expresses his ideas. O'Connell's way of dealing with Jerome's eschatological thought can be characterized as static, while I suggest a more dynamic approach, which means that Jerome's writings are read in their polemical context.

O'Connell considers different eschatological themes – death, judgement, the bodily resurrection, millennialism, the particular judgement, heaven, the diversity of rewards among the saints, hell – and he explains Jerome's views on each of them. As O'Connell makes clear, Jerome did not write any theological treatises on particular subjects. His theological opinions must be collected from different kinds of sources, such as letters, biblical commentaries, and polemical works. O'Connell actually claims in his preface: “The father chosen for this study presents special difficulties. For he was not a theologian but an exegete and a polemist.”<sup>84</sup>

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transformed already in the present life. This explains the close connection between asceticism and eschatology in Jerome's thought: For the ascetic person, heaven is already a reality.

<sup>81</sup> I choose to talk about “Jerome's eschatological views” rather than the “eschatology of Jerome”, since this would indicate that it is possible to detect a system of theological views expressed by Jerome over time. Since, which will become all the more clear, Jerome expressed his thoughts in certain, often polemical and apologetic, situations, attacking opponents or defending himself against accusations, focus will be on some particular views, those under debate, while others will receive less attention. Changes may also occur as results of new controversies, for example when Jerome had to defend himself against accusations of Origenism.

<sup>82</sup> Rivière states in his article on “Jugement” in the *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique* that except from Ambrose, the eschatology of the Latin fathers in the fourth century is little known.

<sup>83</sup> O'Connell 1948, i.

<sup>84</sup> O'Connell 1948, i.

O'Connell certainly notes that Jerome's eschatological views cannot be treated without reference to those he wants to oppose, in O'Connell's words, "two important eschatological systems and three particular eschatological errors".<sup>85</sup> The first system is millennialism eschatology, the second, which is more relevant here, Origenist eschatology. The three eschatological errors consist in 1) "mercyism", to which we will return in a while, 2) Jovinian's thought that the heavenly reward will be one and the same for all the blessed, 3) the idea (connected to millennialism) that the heavenly reward will not begin until after the resurrection.<sup>86</sup>

O'Connell observes the paradoxical situation that Jerome fought against Origenism at the same time as being accused of it. O'Connell seems to hold the view that Jerome's standpoint against Origen was firm from 394 onwards.<sup>87</sup> This can be questioned in more than one way. Jerome did not, despite choosing Epiphanius' side in the controversy, turn definitely against Origen for a long time – not until 396, as we have seen, does he seem to have become aware that he himself was charged with Origenism, and it was at this point that he began to polemicize against Origen. However, not even at this time did he wholeheartedly turn against his former master, as he continued to accept parts of Origen's work.

O'Connell's most important contribution is the distinction that he makes between Origenism and "mercyism". The latter concept is O'Connell's own, and it refers to the *miseriordes* of whom Augustine speaks in his *De Civitate Dei*, namely groups or persons who denied eternal punishment for various groups of sinners (seven variants of the view are discussed). O'Connell makes clear the need to distinguish between two questions: "Did Jerome teach the universal restoration? Did Jerome teach the salvation of all Christians?"<sup>88</sup> The first question has to do with his relationship to Origenism, the second with his relationship to mercyism.

I think that O'Connell's treatment of the *miseriordes* and Jerome's relation to them has its weaknesses, which I will return to later in this work. However, there are contributions too: First, the fact that O'Connell pays attention to the *miseriordes*, at all. This is a group that has largely been neglected in church history, although there is reason to believe that their influence on Christian theology has been great.<sup>89</sup> Secondly, although I find O'Connell's definitions of "mercyism" as well as "Origenism" to be problematic, I think that his insistence

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<sup>85</sup> O'Connell 1948, iii.

<sup>86</sup> O'Connell 1948, ix-x.

<sup>87</sup> O'Connell 1948, viii.

<sup>88</sup> O'Connell 1948, 150.

<sup>89</sup> This I claim, above all, because of their great influence on the thought of Augustine of Hippo, who argued against them in important works from the later part of his career (*De fide et operibus*, *Enchiridion*, *De civitate Dei*).

that Jerome's possible approval of “mercysim” did not imply an approval of the teaching of *apokatastasis* is very important.

### 2.2.2. *Jerome's Place in Treatments of Early Christian Eschatological Thought*

Since O'Connell's time, no more work has been published which has dealt specifically with Jerome's eschatological views, nor with any other part of his theology. In the remaining part of this section, I will comment on Jerome's place in some treatments of early Christian eschatological thought.

In his book *Early Christian Doctrines*, J.N.D. Kelly distinguishes two groups in the fourth century, whose ideas of the resurrection are of particular interest, and both are connected to Origen: 1) The anti-Origenists, who claimed that Origen's views resulted in a denial of a real resurrection, 2) “those constructive thinkers who strove, some of them along cautiously Origenist lines but omitting what was most characteristic of Origen's teaching, to understand the mystery at a deeper level than the crude popular faith allowed”.<sup>90</sup> Jerome is placed in the first group, among Methodius of Olympus, Epiphanius of Salamis, and Eustathius of Antioch. According to Kelly, Jerome was, until 394, an adherent of Origenism, who claimed the disappearance of material bodies and their transformation into purely spiritual beings.<sup>91</sup> After 394, Jerome is said to have made “a complete *volte-face*”, as he began to stress the physical identity between the resurrection body and the earthly body – and that “with crudely literalistic elaboration”.<sup>92</sup> In the present work, I will question the description of a *volte-face* in Jerome's relationship to Origen. It is problematic, partly because it does not take into account the very gradual, and even reluctant, character of Jerome's involvement in anti-Origenist polemics. The reason for this involvement was that Jerome perceived that his orthodoxy was questioned. Based on this, we ought to ask to what extent his new approach to Origen was a matter of conviction (of Origen's heresy), and to what extent it was a rhetorical enterprise. I will argue that by polemics, Jerome exaggerated the difference between his own views and Origen's and made it appear much greater than it actually was.

In *The Hope of the Early Church: A Handbook of Patristic Eschatology* (1991),<sup>93</sup> Brian E. Daley sees Latin eschatology in the fourth century as heavily indebted to the East, and the “revived influence of Origen”.<sup>94</sup> It is in this context of Latin, Origen-influenced eschatology that Jerome is placed. Daley's first remark on Jerome seems to be absolutely correct: “The eschatology of Jerome /.../ like all

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<sup>90</sup> Kelly 1977, 475.

<sup>91</sup> Kelly refers to *CommEph* 5.29 and *AdvJov* 1.36.

<sup>92</sup> Kelly 1977, 476.

<sup>93</sup> Daley, B. E., *The hope of the Early Church: A Handbook of Patristic Eschatology*, 1991.

<sup>94</sup> Daley 1991, 93.

of his theology, is inextricably tied in with his knowledge of the Bible, with his intense personal relationships, and with the turbulent external circumstances of his long life of study and asceticism”.<sup>95</sup>

When it comes to the question of the punishment of sinners after death, Daley states: “... it is not clear that Jerome shows more decidedly Origenist, universalist traits in his works written before 394, than he does in later works”.<sup>96</sup> Naturally, in the later period, he more frequently stressed the eternity of the punishment of some individuals, but such views were expressed already in the early period.<sup>97</sup> At the same time, while, in his early works, he expressed the Origenist thought of universal restoration (here Daley differs from O’Connell, who denies this),<sup>98</sup> Jerome continued to affirm, even in his later writings, “that at least all those who believe in Christ will ultimately be received, by God’s mercy, into heaven”.<sup>99</sup> The words “at least” are of importance here, since they tell us something about the change that Jerome’s thought underwent, according to Daley: Jerome did not turn from being a convinced Origenist in all doctrinal matters to completely rejecting everything that Origen had written. On the contrary, in this particular case, he kept something of the Origenist restoration thought. The “at least” in Daley’s formulation indicates that although not all rational creatures would be saved, still, all Christians would be saved. Daley thus seems to agree with O’Connell that “misericordism” meant something other than “Origenism”, and that it was an essential part of Jerome’s (later) eschatology, but in contrast to O’Connell, Daley connects Origenism and “misericordism”<sup>100</sup> in the thought of Jerome and sees in this “misericordism” a lingering Origenist influence in his later work. This is an important observation, and one which will occupy us later in this work.

In her book *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200-1336* (1995), Caroline Walker Bynum pays attention to the view of the “body” expressed in texts that deal with bodily resurrection. She focuses primarily on images and metaphors to discern such views. In the case of Jerome, she notes that the most important metaphors for resurrection are those of re-assembly, such as the image of the ship which is restored after a shipwreck.<sup>101</sup> What these metaphors say about Jerome’s view on the resurrection body is, according to Walker Bynum,

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<sup>95</sup> Daley 1991, 101.

<sup>96</sup> Daley 1991, 103.

<sup>97</sup> For the later period, Daley refers to e.g. *Commentary on Matthew* 1.10.28; *Commentary on Isaiah* 2.5.14f.; and *Commentary on Jonah* 3.6. For the earlier period he refers to *Commentary on Ecclesiastes* 7.6.

<sup>98</sup> For example in *Commentary on Ephesians* 1.2.7 and *Commentary on Ecclesiastes* 1.6.

<sup>99</sup> Daley 1991, 103.

<sup>100</sup> Daley 1991, 104.

<sup>101</sup> For instance, in *Against John*, from which Walker Bynum gives a long quotation.

that to Jerome, it is bodily integrity (meaning that the body will rise with all its body parts intact) that is important, rather than material continuity (meaning that the body will rise consisting of the same material particles as it consisted of in the earthly life). Immutability and immortality will be put on, but this will not mean any real change, because they will be put on as garments on the same body.<sup>102</sup> What Jerome wants to distance himself from is, according to Walker Bynum, the thought of transformation.

In her book *The Christian Doctrine of Apokatastasis* (2013), Illaria L. E. Ramelli describes Jerome, among other contemporary Latin writers (such as Ambrose and Ambrosiaster), as envisioning “the eventual *apokatastasis* at least of all Christians, after periods of purification that can last even very long”.<sup>103</sup> She places these writers in a middle position between Origen's universalism and Augustine's rejection of the *apokatastasis*. In her treatment of Jerome, she separates his work into two phases, and describes his different attitude to Origen in the late 390s with reference to “a sudden volte-face”,<sup>104</sup> a statement that is supported by his own words in *Against Rufinus*.<sup>105</sup> She gives examples of Jerome's earlier Origenist views, such as his therapeutic view on suffering and the connected idea that even the devil will be saved, thus, maintaining the idea of *apokatastasis*.<sup>106</sup> He is also said to have shared Origen's protology in this work, claiming that this world was created as the result of a fall, and that the conduct of the rational creatures in a previous world is the explanation of their different conditions in this world.

Concerning Jerome's later phase, Ramelli makes the claim that “in Jerome's accusations [against Origen] one would fail to find the charge of having supported the eventual restoration of all sinners”,<sup>107</sup> thereafter she includes, in an enumeration of Jerome's accusations, the eventual restoration of the devil. Surveying the different accusations against Origen in Jerome's later years, Ramelli notes time after time that, although Jerome criticizes the idea of the restoration of the devil, he does not deny the restoration of all Christians. In his *Dialogue against the Pelagians* 1.29, she claims that “Jerome extended *apokatastasis* to all Christians, excluding from it only the devil and the impious”.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Walker Bynum 1995, 89-90.

<sup>103</sup> Ramelli 2013, 623-24.

<sup>104</sup> Ramelli 2013, 627.

<sup>105</sup> *AdvRuf* 3.9, CCSL 79, 82: *Eodem feruore quo Originem ante laudauimus, nunc damnatum toto orbe damnemus.*

<sup>106</sup> For instance, *CommEph* 4.16.

<sup>107</sup> Ramelli 2013, 637.

<sup>108</sup> Ramelli 2013, 640.

Indeed, that Jerome's own intimate conviction regarding the eventual restoration – a doctrine which he had embraced for many decades – remained unchanged is proved not only by his suggestion to Paulinus to rely on Origen's [Peri archon 3], which I have already pointed out, but also by his *Ep.* 55, in which he comments on 1 Cor 15:25-28, which was Origen's – and then Gregory of Nyssa's – favourite Scriptural passage in support of the doctrine of apokatastasis.<sup>109</sup>

What Ramelli appears to do, in contrast to O'Connell, is to merge Origenism with the views of the *misericordes*. As I indicated above, and as I will argue further on in this work, I find it helpful to separate the idea of *apokatastasis* from the idea that all Christians eventually will be saved. Precisely this distinction is important if we want to explain Jerome's reception of, and polemics against, Origen's idea of salvation.

To summarize the role ascribed to Jerome in previous research on his eschatological views, we can conclude that, although the focus is different in the authors mentioned above, there are some common features. There is a general understanding that Jerome's eschatology cannot be separated from his reception of Origen's thought and his ways of positioning himself in relation to Origen. This is described as a dependence, both positive and negative: It was undoubtedly positive in Jerome's earlier works, but later it became negative, although not entirely negative, as he could still show Origenist influences. What I intend to accomplish in the present work is to examine, in this connection, how Jerome's eschatological views were shaped by his opposition towards Origen, by his polemics against Origen and "Origenism"; how his work as a heresiologist made "Origen" and "Origenism" heretical, and, at the same time, helped him to construct his own orthodoxy.

Next, we will turn to research that has treated Jerome specifically in relation to asceticism. Much more scholarship has been directed towards this field, than towards eschatology. However, I claim that these two cannot be separated in any examination of Jerome's thought. His views on how the Christian life should be lived on earth are directly connected to his views on eternal life. As we saw previously, and as will become increasingly clear as we progress, the idea of hierarchy is fundamental to Jerome's thought: The present life, as well as the life to come, is a hierarchical one, and the order is determined by a person's degree of holiness – a holiness achieved by ascetical renunciation.

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<sup>109</sup> Ramelli 2013, 640.

### 2.3. Asceticism

An effect of the “cultural turn” in late ancient studies is an emphasis on the body, and this has resulted in a greater appreciation of the centrality of asceticism. Elizabeth Clark has treated the problem of asceticism and interpretation of Scripture in her *Reading Renunciation: Asceticism and Scripture in Early Christianity* (1999).<sup>110</sup> She treats the fundamental problem of how ascetics, who wished to have a foundation in the Scriptures for their way of life, handled the fact that these Scriptures seemed to support their agenda only in some cases, while in other cases they seemed to support a way of life that included marriage and reproduction. Clark argues that, by way of different exegetical strategies, proponents of sexual renunciation created ascetic meaning.

An important reading strategy for Jerome was that which Clark calls “The ‘Difference in Times’”. This approach makes a distinction between the Old Testament and the New, in a way that can explain why certain Old Testament texts do not seem to support renunciation. This, however, made Jerome vulnerable of accusations of heresy, and he had to distance himself from the interpretations of Encratites and Manichaeans.<sup>111</sup>

It is obvious that Jerome's biblical exegesis is important for understanding the formation of his theology, and the way in which he presented his own views as orthodox. He interpreted biblical texts against an opponent or a “heretic” from whom he wished to distance himself. That is, his interpretation was determined, not only by his ascetical ideal and the hierarchy that he wished to establish between celibate and married persons, but also by his need to distance himself from heresy and to construct his own orthodoxy.

In her book *The Origenist Controversy*, referred to earlier, Clark argues that the question of the body was the underlying religious issue in the controversy. While Epiphanius of Salamis and Theophilus of Alexandria based their arguments on the consequences of Origen's views for marriage and reproduction, Jerome, on the other hand, used other kinds of argument. Because of his involvement in the ascetic controversy in the early 390s, he would not, in contrast to the other writers, express views that elevated marriage and reproduction. However, he used the same arguments that he had used in the earlier controversy, but now towards Origen, namely, the arguments in favour for a hierarchy in the afterlife, based on the level of asceticism in this life. According to Clark, the ascetic debate was not displaced by the Origenist controversy but subsumed within it.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Clark 1999. The rhetorical strategies used in interpreting the creation stories are treated in “Heresy, Asceticism, Adam and Eve: Interpretations of Genesis 1-3 in the Later Latin Fathers”, in Clark 1986, 353-85.

<sup>111</sup> Clark 1999, 162-163.

<sup>112</sup> On Jerome's role in the controversy, see Clark 1992, 121-151.



In *Marriage, Celibacy, and Heresy in Ancient Christianity: The Jovinianist Controversy* (2007), David G. Hunter clarifies the relativism and insecurity one has to deal with when it comes to orthodoxy and heresy in the early church. Hunter argues that Jovinian, who was eventually condemned for heresy, was actually himself motivated by anti-heretical concerns in his critique of excessive asceticism. Hunter places him in an anti-heretical tradition that goes back to the second century, in which “orthodox” authors refuted Encratism. However, in the third century, a kind of “moderate Encratism” made its way into mainstream Christianity through the acceptance of some of its ideas by important theologians, among them Origen. These, in turn, influenced ascetic teachers in the fourth century, such as Jerome and Ambrose.<sup>113</sup> As this was at a time when not only asceticism, but also Manichaeism gained many followers, and at a time when authorities sought to stop the spread of Manichaeism, accusations of heresy came to be directed against those excessive forms of asceticism which were considered close to Manichaeism.

We have seen that there is a clear tendency in scholarship on Jerome during the last decades to focus on his rhetoric, either as a way of promoting himself and establishing his authority as a would-be-client for a powerful patron, or as a way of defending his theology as orthodox. These are, of course, connected, since Jerome's authority rests on his profession of both orthodox biblical exegesis and asceticism.

When it comes to descriptions of Jerome's involvement in controversies, these have often focused more on distance than on similarity, that is, more on how Jerome distances himself from others than on what he has in common with them. What Jerome does, by way of polemics, is to make those who are actually similar to himself appear to be utterly different. In the case of Origen, I will argue that what is often referred to as his *volte-face* was in itself a rhetorical move, and what Jerome did in criticizing Origen's thought was to meet Origen on his own battleground and, rather than to attack it from without, he revised it from within.

### 3. Purpose and Hypotheses

#### 3.1. Purpose

The purpose of my dissertation is to study the reception of Origen in the theology of Jerome, with a focus on eschatological questions such as the resurrection of the dead, eternal salvation and post-mortem purification and punishment. The reason

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<sup>113</sup> Hunter 2007, 115.

for this eschatological focus is the fact that, as we have seen in the description of the historical background, eschatological issues were central, not only in the Origenist controversy, but also in the Jovinianist and Pelagian controversies. They made up an essential part of Jerome's refutation of Origen and "Origenism", and eschatology was a field in which he had to defend his orthodoxy when faced with accusations of "Origenism".

I will examine both a positive and a negative reception of Origen in Jerome; that is, both in what ways his eschatological thinking was indebted to Origen's theology and in what ways he expressed eschatological ideas in opposition to Origen, in anti-Origenist polemics. As I will expand on later, I do not see this polemics simply in terms of refutation, but as a performative enterprise in which, on the one hand, an Origenist "heresy" was constructed and, on the other hand, Jerome's own thought, still deeply indebted to Origen, was further developed.

I intend to examine the purposes of Jerome's anti-Origenist polemics, the methods that he used, and the effects that this polemics had for his theology. I am particularly interested in the extent to which he refuted Origen's eschatological ideas after his engagement in anti-Origenist polemics, and to what extent he continued to make use of such ideas.

### **3.2. Hypotheses**

I will work with the hypothesis that, rather than being as opposed to Origen as Jerome, by way of rhetoric, tries to convince his readers that he is, his views were actually very close to Origen's, and this was the reason why he had to defend himself in the first place. However, by distancing himself rhetorically from Origen, in his effort to construct "Origenism" as a heresy from which he can separate his own orthodoxy, he does not refute Origen completely, but modifies "Origenist" views by expressing orthodox "versions" of them. Thus, the polemics results in a preservation of some parts of Origen's theology, which are, paradoxically, expressed in anti-Origenist polemics.

Another hypothesis from which I work is that, finding himself in a position somewhere between the institutional church and the ascetical movement, that is, between bishops and radical monks, Jerome was forced by his ascetical views both to defend and to attack Origen. As we shall see, his ascetical thought, which was heavily indebted to Origen, made him defend ideas expressed by the Alexandrian. At the same time, his precarious position in the church made it important for him to distance himself from the more controversial parts of Origen's thought.

## 4. Question Formulations

The questions which I intend to answer in this work are:

*To what extent, and in which ways, was Jerome indebted to Origen's eschatological thought after his involvement in the Origenist controversy?*

*To what extent, and in which ways, did Jerome express different eschatological ideas after his involvement in the Origenist controversy, as compared to before?*

*How did Jerome rhetorically construct Origen's eschatology as heretical?*

*Which were the functions of Origen and "Origenism" in Jerome's rhetorical construction of his own orthodox eschatology?*

## 5. Scope and delimitations

This study will not be limited to the Origenist controversy, because I find it important to see this debate in relation to both the previous Jovinianist controversy, and the following Pelagian controversy. An important reason for including the Jovinianist controversy in this study is that Jerome's construction of orthodoxy will be seen as a process, which was refined through the three controversies mentioned because of his need to respond to new accusations. The Jovinianist controversy is important since a central part of Jerome's theological work in all of the controversies was made up by his ideas on asceticism, and as we will see, it was in polemics against Jovinian that his theological justification of asceticism was developed. I claim that this controversy is important as a form of background to both Jerome's later anti-Origenist polemics and to the development of his eschatological thought. First, I will argue that Jerome was, at this stage, very dependent on Origen in his ascetical outlook and in his eschatological thinking. Secondly, many of Jerome's arguments used in the first debate would reappear in the two other controversies, and I want to examine what effects his involvement in the Origenist controversy, with accusations of Origenism directed against him, had for the views that he expressed. I want to examine what Origen's place was in the first controversy compared to the second, and whether the new, anti-Origenist polemics actually helped Jerome to develop the construction of his own orthodoxy. Also in the third controversy, the Pelagian controversy, I intend to study what function Origen and "Origenism" had, that is, in which ways these were used by Jerome in his polemical enterprise.

I will delimit the study to questions of eschatology and their connection to asceticism. Eschatological questions were important in all three controversies. While this is most obvious in the case of the Origenist controversy, since it was Origen's eschatological ideas particularly that were debated, eschatological questions were of great importance also in the Jovinianist and the Pelagian controversies.

## 6. Methodological Considerations

### 6.1. Reading the Material: Heresiological Analysis

The point of departure of this work is problem-based, that is, the material is selected after and according to the formulation of the problem and the theories which will be applied to it. The material will be read according to a theoretical framework, which will be more thoroughly presented in the second chapter. As will become clear, I read Jerome's texts from a particular understanding of the concepts of "orthodoxy" and "heresy" and I pay attention to the heresiological strategies that he uses in his polemics. The information of these texts will not be taken at face value, but they will be read with an awareness of the rhetorical strategies applied in them. For example, Jerome's descriptions of Origen or the "Origenists" will not be used for information about Origen and real-life Origenists. This, however, does not mean that the texts cannot be used as sources of historical information. What I look for is how these descriptions – or, better, constructions – serve Jerome's purposes; that is, how they function as rhetorical tools by which he constructs others' heresy and, simultaneously, his own orthodoxy. It is important to make clear that this does not imply that I focus on form (rhetoric) over content (theology); rather, I argue that the content should not be read apart from the form (rhetoric). The content is certainly dependent on the form: Jerome does not only polemicize, refute, stereotype, and so on, but precisely in doing this, he makes Origen into a heretic and "Origenism" into a heresy. If we see content (theology) as separated from form (heresiology), it implies that we neglect the performative aspect of polemics, and tend to think of the "orthodoxy" and "heresy" described in a text as having a set content, which must be defended or refuted – an idea that I will argue against more thoroughly in my second chapter.

While acknowledging the close connection between form and content, I still argue that it is of great methodological importance to keep them apart. This concerns *both* heresiological descriptions of the opponent – the heretic – *and* the author's self-portrayal as orthodox. As heresiologists typically sought to maximize the difference between themselves and the heretics and heresies that they constructed, an insufficient distinction between form and content may lead us to

accept this difference making as reflective of actual differences, while the similarities may be much greater than the heresiological rhetoric allows.

In what follows, I will argue that rather than seeing polemics as a non-contributory part of theological work, heresiology is the principal way in which theology was made in the early church.

## 6.2. Theology and Polemics

### 6.2.1. *Heresiology: The Refutation of Heresy as Theological Method*

In the introduction to the collection of essays called *Religious Polemics in Context*, T. L. Hettema and A. van der Kooij describe polemics as “a form of discourse in which controversy and confrontation is intended”.<sup>114</sup> The authors highlight the importance of the relationship between polemics and its context. The polemical context determines the content of the polemics; at the same time, the polemical text is intended to affect the context. Another important point relates to the identity of the polemicist, and the fact that polemics often has an internal function.<sup>115</sup> In most cases, it is not only (if at all) directed towards an opponent, but intended to present the author in a certain way, or to strengthen the identity of a group.

As polemics is a rhetorical enterprise, it cannot be taken at face value, for example, as an attempt to change the opponent's opinion. The purpose can be totally different. Even when the opponent is supposed to respond in some way, it is always related to the identity of the author or his/her group. For my purposes, this can be directly connected to the interaction between orthodoxy and heresy, to the construction of one's own orthodoxy by way of constructing the other's heresy.

In this connection, a third important point about polemics should be mentioned: Polemics is performative, in that it has certain effects. Rather than defending an already existing orthodoxy (which would make up the content), by applying rhetorical techniques, I argue that early Christian heresiologists rhetorically created this orthodoxy: The ideas that they expressed were typically expressed against an opponent. Thus, their polemical purposes and the rhetorical strategies by which they worked came to determine the content of what they presented as “orthodox” or “heretical”. Biblical exegesis is a concrete example: “Orthodox” interpretations of texts were very often expounded against alternative, “heretical” interpretations.

This brings us to another issue which is of importance for the selection of my material, namely that of heresiology and different early Christian genres.

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<sup>114</sup> Hettema & van der Kooij 2004, xiii.

<sup>115</sup> Hettema & van der Kooij 2004, xiv-xv.

### 6.3. The Question of Genres

The reason why I will work with material from different genres (polemical works, letters, biblical commentaries) is the methodological standpoint that genres, as a rule, mix, and that a single work can include several genres. Theological treatises, polemical works, apologetical works, and exegetical works all usually contain elements which are typically associated with other genres.

This has to do with the fact that theology is always made in a certain context. Theological works of different kinds are written in specific situations that motivate the writing of them. This has, I argue, consequences for what is meant by “constructive” or “creative” theology. It means that this is not restricted to certain genres but can be pursued in many different ways.

It is reasonable to assume that what binds the different genres together is precisely the quest for orthodoxy in opposition to heresy, thus, the promotion of an orthodox version as opposed to a heretical one. In his book *The Construction of Orthodoxy and Heresy*, John B. Henderson calls attention to the important fact that the early Christian theological enterprise was, to a great extent, a heresiological enterprise. This concerns theological works, conciliar statements, and creeds. Henderson speaks of such writings as “hidden heresiographies”.<sup>116</sup> To separate theological and polemical works makes no sense, since there is almost always a close connection between the two. As Henderson points out: Writings in the strictly heresiological genre are not “our only or even major sources for conceptions of orthodoxy and heresy in the early Christian centuries”.<sup>117</sup> Theological treatises, such as those of Athanasius against the Arians, belong to the sources, as do ecclesiastical histories. The enterprise of constructing and establishing notions of orthodoxy and heresy can, according to Henderson, be found in “practically every genre of early Christian literature”,<sup>118</sup> such as scriptural commentaries, letters, and sermons.

When it comes to Jerome, biblical exegesis is part of practically all his letters. Certain letters consist almost entirely of exposition of texts.<sup>119</sup> His biblical exegesis cannot be separated from his theology; rather, he interprets the texts according to a certain theological understanding. There is no good reason to separate polemical works from theological ones. All in all, Jerome’s theology and heresiology are seen in many kinds of texts. We will now turn to a presentation of the material that will be used in the present study.

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<sup>116</sup> Henderson 1998, 10. Henderson uses the word “heresiography” rather than “heresiology”. The former is commonly used by Islamicists, the latter by scholars in Patristics. The meanings of the words are equivalent.

<sup>117</sup> Henderson 1998, 26.

<sup>118</sup> Henderson 1998, 26.

<sup>119</sup> Jerome himself speaks, in *Ep* 29, about letter writing as a way to communicate about matters of the faith.

## 7. The Material

From the period before the Origenist controversy, I will focus mainly on one text by Jerome, written during the controversy with Jovinian, namely, *Against Jovinian* from 393.<sup>120</sup> The text was written, Jerome tells us, at the request of “holy brothers in Rome”,<sup>121</sup> who had sent Jovinian’s writings to him.<sup>122</sup> As we have seen above, the message of these writings centred on the unity of the church and the transformative effect of baptism: Jovinian argued that all Christians who had kept their baptismal vow were equal, regardless of whether they choose a celibate or a married life. Besides refuting this idea about equality through baptism, *Against Jovinian* stands out as the work in which Jerome’s ascetic theology is most comprehensively developed. He presents it as an orthodox middle between “heretical” asceticism and Jovinian’s critique of asceticism. Although Jerome had already in previous works expressed the idea that ascetic Christians were more holy than others, it is in *Against Jovinian* that he develops his notion of a hierarchy of Christians to a greater extent. The work is important for a study of Jerome’s eschatological ideas, since his ascetical hierarchy is transferred to heaven in refutation of Jovinian’s fourth thesis (that there will be one and the same reward for all the baptized).

From the period prior to the Origenist (and, in these cases, even the Jovinianist) controversy, two other works are of great importance for my entire study, namely Jerome’s commentaries on Galatians<sup>123</sup> and Ephesians.<sup>124</sup> These were written after Jerome’s arrival in Bethlehem, at some point between 386 and 388.<sup>125</sup> It is beyond doubt that Jerome used Origen’s exegetical works when writing these commentaries, because he declares this in the prefaces.<sup>126</sup> Fragments from Origen’s commentary on Galatians are extant in Pamphilus’ *Apology for Origen*, which makes it possible to confirm that certain sections of Jerome’s commentary come from Origen. More importantly, Origen’s commentary on Romans is extant in Rufinus’ Latin translation, and it is above all when compared to Origen’s

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<sup>120</sup> *Adversus Jovinianum*, PL 23, 221-352. For the dating, see Kelly 1975, 182; Cavallera 1922, vol. 1.2, 43-44; Grützmacher 1901, vol. 1, 101; Duval 2003, 14-15.

<sup>121</sup> *AdvJov* 1.1, PL 23, 211.

<sup>122</sup> These writings are not extant, and it is unclear how many they were. See Duval 2003, 43-44. Jerome refers to them as *commentarioli* in *AdvJov* 1.1 (PL 23, 211).

<sup>123</sup> *Commentaria in Epistolam ad Galatas*. Ed. J. P. Migne, PL 26, 307-438.

<sup>124</sup> *Commentaria in Epistolam ad Ephesios*. Ed. J. P. Migne, PL 26, 439-554.

<sup>125</sup> Nautin (1979, 5-12) dates these commentaries, as well as those on Philemon and Titus, to 386; Kelly (1975, 145) to 387-388.

<sup>126</sup> See n. 10 above and, concerning the *Commentary on Galatians*, Jerome, *Ep* 112.4.

Pauline exegesis in this book that Jerome's dependence on it becomes clear.<sup>127</sup> Some fragments remain also from Origen's commentary on Ephesians, which make possible a comparison with Jerome's, and, as Ronald Heine has demonstrated, the indebtedness to Origen's exegesis is profound.<sup>128</sup>

Jerome's Pauline commentaries are important because they give an insight into Jerome's reliance on Origen's Pauline exegesis, and I will argue that many ideas expressed in these commentaries, above all in the area of theological anthropology, would be used by Jerome for polemical purposes in later controversies.

Material from the period of the Origenist controversy includes letters, polemical works, and excerpts from biblical commentaries. All the letters are written some years after the beginning of the controversy. Although Jerome chose the anti-Origenist side in the controversy at an early stage, he did not begin to criticize the theology of Origen and contemporary Origenists theology until later. The first letter, in which we learn that Jerome has been accused of following Origen and must therefore defend himself, is *Letter 61*,<sup>129</sup> to Vigilantius, written in 396. This letter shares with other letters from the same time some themes and strategies of defence. Jerome makes a distinction between Origen as an exegete and Origen as a theologian, claiming that it was legitimate to follow Origen in his exegetical work, although not in his theological work. This is exactly what Jerome claims to have done himself.<sup>130</sup> An important point for Jerome is that this has always been the case, and not something he had to do because of the controversy.<sup>131</sup>

A very important text from the Origenist controversy is the treatise *Against John of Jerusalem*,<sup>132</sup> written in 397.<sup>133</sup> The reason for the work was a letter that John had written to bishop Theophilus of Alexandria, in which he had explained the development of the Origenist controversy from his point of view, and he had also included a confession of his Christian faith. It was this confession that Jerome reacted against in his treatise, addressed to the senator Pammachius, in which he claimed that, while expressing a correct belief concerning questions that were not

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<sup>127</sup> Scheck 2010, 8-9. For Jerome's dependence on Origen's *Commentary on Romans*, see also Bammel 1981 and 1996; Schatkin 1970.

<sup>128</sup> Heine 2002. See pp. 35-42 for a discussion of the catena fragments from Origen's commentary.

<sup>129</sup> *Epistulae*. Ed. I. Hilberg, CSEL 54-56, 1910, 1912, 575-582.

<sup>130</sup> At the same time, in *Letter 85*, to Paulinus of Nola, Jerome refers to Origen's teaching on the free will, and he makes it clear that he does not condemn everything that Origen has written, as his friends falsely assert. He repudiates only Origen's objectionable dogmas.

<sup>131</sup> Similar strategies of self-defense are seen in *Letter 82*, to Theophilus of Alexandria; *Letter 84*, to Pammachius and Oceanus; and *Letter 85*, to Paulinus of Nola.

<sup>132</sup> *Contra Iohannem*. Ed. J.-L. Feiertag, CCSL 79A, 1999.

<sup>133</sup> This dating is suggested by Kelly, 1975, 207, agreeing with Nautin 1972, 210-15.



under dispute, John failed to clear himself from suspicions of Origenism. In this text, Jerome deals with several Origenist errors,<sup>134</sup> but the one to which he ascribes most importance is that concerning the resurrection. He seeks to prove that John is a follower of Origen's heretical view on the resurrection and he presents his own ideas (in his view, the teachings of the "church") on this question.

*Letter 84*,<sup>135</sup> to Pammachius and Oceanus, is devoted in its entirety to Jerome's views on Origen. The writing is a response to a letter received from these friends in Rome, who had exhorted Jerome to explain his views on Origen and to remove any suspicions about Origenism.<sup>136</sup> The background to this was Rufinus' translation of Origen's *Peri Archon*, and his insinuation in a preface that in translating Origen, he was actually following Jerome's example. In this letter, Jerome describes his way of using Origen's works, and he also brings up the errors of Origen, thus distancing himself from what was not orthodox in his theology. However, Jerome also attacks contemporary Origenists. Thus, this text is important for examining his view, not only on Origen, but on Origenism, and how he perceives the relationship between the two. Doctrinally, the text shows the importance of eschatology and its connection to asceticism in the debate. The Origenists are described as holding a heretical idea about the resurrection of the dead.

Jerome's *Letter 84*, which was a public writing, led Rufinus to compose an apology against Jerome, in which he pointed out, among other things, that Jerome had used Origen without apparent disapproval in his *Commentary on Ephesians*. Jerome had not even received Rufinus' work, but had only heard the basic arguments of it, when he composed the first two books of his *Apology against Rufinus*. They would be followed by a third book, as a response to a subsequent letter from Rufinus.<sup>137</sup> In these books, Jerome defends his earlier use of Origen's works, especially in the *Commentary on Ephesians*, but he also attacks "Origenist" ideas, and questions the orthodoxy of Rufinus.

The importance of the question of the resurrection body becomes evident again in *Letter 108*, which is written to Eustochium after her mother's death in 404. In this letter we have an example of Jerome's strategy, exposed by Cain<sup>138</sup> and

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<sup>134</sup> For instance, the idea about a pre-existence of souls, the possible salvation of the devil, the allegorization of the biblical account of creation.

<sup>135</sup> CSEL 55, 121-34.

<sup>136</sup> *Ep 83*, CSEL 55, 119-120. Kelly (1975, 237) dates this letter to late 398, and Jerome's reply to the winter 398-99, thus agreeing with Cavallera, (1922, vol. 1.2, 37-38).

<sup>137</sup> *Contra Rufinum*. Ed. P. Lardet, CCSL 79, 1982. Cavallera dates the work to 401-402 (1922, vol. 1.2, 41); Grützmacher to 402-403 (1901, vol. 1, 101); Kelly to 401-402 (1975, 251, 255).

<sup>138</sup> Cain 2009. The present subject is dealt with in his *Jerome's Epitaph on Paula: A Commentary on The Epitaphium Sanctae Paulae*, 2013, 23, 402-17.

Vessey,<sup>139</sup> to use the authority of others to gain approval for his views. In this case, he describes himself as debating with a person who expresses Origenist ideas. The person in question had first spoken to Paula, who had turned to Jerome, who in his turn refuted the Origenist. Thereafter, Paula is said to have loathed the man and those who shared his views, considering them to be enemies of the Lord. Thus, Jerome claims the role of the teacher to which the authority (Paula) listens and by whom she is convinced. The question under debate is first and foremost that of the resurrection body.

Jerome often took the opportunity to attack enemies in his biblical commentaries. An important text in which his anti-Origenist critique shines through comes from the *Commentary on Jonah*,<sup>140</sup> another from the *Commentary on Matthew*.<sup>141</sup> It becomes crucial for Jerome in these texts to distance himself from interpretations which doctrinally support Origenist views, both by proving these to be wrong and by giving his own interpretations. In both these excerpts (*Commentary on Jonah* 3.6/9 and *Commentary on Matthew* 3.18.24), Jerome deals with the problem of merit after death, and deems it unjust and therefore not possible that all the saved would have the same reward, regardless of their way of life. As Elizabeth Clark has shown, the former critique against Jovinian is redirected to suit the new controversy: It is no longer the idea of equality between the baptized, but that of universal salvation, which must be refuted.<sup>142</sup>

Another important text, when it comes to Jerome's refutation of the idea of *apokatastasis*, is from the *Commentary on Isaiah*, from 408-410.<sup>143</sup> Thus, Jerome continued to attack Origenist ideas in his commentaries, after the end of the controversy. *Commentary on Isaiah* 18.66.24 is an important passage when it comes to Jerome's possible belonging to the *miseriordes*. The Origenist idea of *apokatastasis* is refuted and replaced by the view that all Christians will ultimately be saved.

From the time of the Pelagian controversy, an important text is *Letter* 133,<sup>144</sup> written in 414 or the first half of 415.<sup>145</sup> It is written to Ctesiphon, who seems to

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<sup>139</sup> Vessey 1993.

<sup>140</sup> *Commentarii in Prophetas Minores: Osee, Ioelem, Amos, Abdiam, Ionam, Michaeam*. Ed. M. Adriaen, CCSL 76, 1969. According to Kelly, the commentary on Jonah was written in 396 (Kelly 1975, 220). In this he agrees with Cavallera (vol. 1.2, 44) and Grützmacher (1901, vol. 1, 101).

<sup>141</sup> *Commentarius in Matheum*. Ed. D. Hurst & M. Adriaen, CCSL 77, 1969. Kelly (1975, 220) dates this commentary to 398, agreeing with Cavallera (vol. 1.2, 46) and Grützmacher (vol. 1, 101).

<sup>142</sup> Clark 1992, 127-129.

<sup>143</sup> *In Esaiam*. Ed. M. Adriaen, CCSL 73; 73A, 1963. (For the dating, see Cavallera 1922, vol. 1.2, 52; Kelly 1975, 299).

<sup>144</sup> CSEL 56/1, 241-260.

<sup>145</sup> Kelly 1975, 314.

have been a supporter of Pelagius, and who had written to Jerome hoping for a friendly debate between the two monks. In his letter, Jerome criticizes the Pelagians above all for their idea about the possibility that a human being may achieve sinlessness, and he associates this thought with the philosophical idea of *apatheia*. Besides, the idea is seen as mediated through earlier Christian heresies, above all, through Origenism. This connection between Pelagianism and Origenism returns in a lengthier work that Jerome wrote against the Pelagians, namely his *Dialogue against the Pelagians*<sup>146</sup> from 415.<sup>147</sup> This book contains a very important passage for assessing the question about Jerome's approval of ideas characteristic of the *miseriordes*: In *Dialogue* 1.29, he criticizes the Pelagians for holding a too harsh idea about post-mortem punishment, since they condemn even Christian sinners to hell. At the same time, he distances himself from the Origenist idea about *apokatastasis*, presenting Origenism and Pelagianism as two opposite heretical extremes, and his own idea about eternal salvation as an orthodox alternative to these. Thus, even in Jerome's refutation of Pelagianism, Origenism continued to play an important part.

## 8. Disposition

After this introductory chapter, I will proceed to a chapter wholly devoted to theoretical questions. Much attention will be paid to the concepts of “orthodoxy” and “heresy” and to the way in which they have been approached by modern scholarship. These will be important in my theoretical framework, which will be formulated in this chapter. Chapter 2 is therefore devoted to theory.

In chapter 3, I will begin the study by concentrating on the Jovinianist controversy in which Jerome was involved the years before he came to be involved in the Origenist controversy. As I will examine Jerome's polemics in relation to the context(s) in which he worked, I will begin by describing this context, that is, this conflict: Which issues were discussed? Why were they discussed? What was at stake? Which charges of heresy were directed at opponents, and which polemical strategies were used? I will then analyse Jerome's *Against Jovinian* in relation to this controversy. In this case, not Origenism, but Manichaeism is the heretical view from which Jerome must distance himself by constructing his own orthodoxy against the other's heresy. That is, at the same time as he must distance himself from it, it becomes an important rhetorical tool for him to use. He must of course also prove Jovinian wrong, that is, he must show

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<sup>146</sup> *Dialogus adversus Pelagianos*. Ed. C. Moreschini, CCSL 80, 1990.

<sup>147</sup> Kelly suggests this date, referring to the testimony from Orosius, *Liber apologeticus* 4, and Jerome's *Letter* 134.1 (Kelly 1975, 319).

that his own ascetical view is the correct, orthodox view. This is connected to his eschatological views. These are essential to Jerome's methodology, because he wants to show that Jovinian's views result in an unorthodox eschatology. I will also argue that Jerome was heavily indebted to Origen for the justification of asceticism that he develops in *Against Jovinian*.

My treatment of the Origenist controversy will be divided into two chapters. One will deal with the question of the resurrection body, and the other with the question of eternal salvation and *apokatastasis*. These questions stand out as the most important eschatological questions in Jerome's anti-Origenist polemics. In the fourth chapter, I will proceed in the same way as in the previous one, that is, I will begin with the context, the debate, the heresiological discourse, and I will ask the same questions as I did concerning the Jovinianist controversy. For this reason, I include quite a lengthy discussion about Epiphanius of Salamis, the initiator of the controversy, before I focus on Jerome's involvement.

In the sixth chapter, on the Pelagian controversy, I will proceed in the same way, starting with the new polemical context and examining Jerome's heresiological texts in relation to the larger heresiological discourse. Again, Jerome needs to distinguish himself from the heretics who are too close to him. In this controversy, much comes together when Jerome connects the new heresy with the earlier ones. Jovinian, Origen, and Pelagius are presented as belonging together. This is a known heresiological strategy, and, of course, the other side of the coin is that Jerome constructs his own orthodoxy in contrast to these heresies. Again, questions of eschatology are important, and it is in this chapter that we will deal with Jerome's possible relationship to Augustine's category of *miseriordes*. I will then summarize my results and discuss new perspectives in a final chapter.



# Chapter 2. Theory

## 1. “Orthodoxy” and “Heresy” in 20th and 21st Century Scholarship

### 1.1. Introduction

The concept of “heresy” comes from the Greek word *hairesis*, which means a “choice” or an “election”, but in the ancient world, it could also refer to groups who had a certain doctrinal identity, such as a philosophical school or a religious sect. The meanings are connected, since “choice” could refer specifically to the choice of a philosophical school. Used in this sense, the word implied no value judgment.<sup>148</sup> While the word “heresy” did not have a negative sense in pre-Christian usage, the pagan antecedent of the Christian notion of heresy is rather *heterodoxia*. *Heterodoxeo* meant, in its initial sense, to mistake one thing for another. The adjective *heterodoxos* could mean “of another opinion” but could also have a sense of value: “of other than the true opinion”.<sup>149</sup>

A shift in the way in which the word was used occurred during the second century, when Christian writers began to employ it with the technical sense of erroneous doctrine. Early Christian authors used it increasingly to refer to a system of false beliefs. Although at an early stage, the word could be used to refer to deviance in practical matters, from the second century onwards it was increasingly used exclusively to denote doctrinal errors.<sup>150</sup>

The change in the use of the concept was thus directly tied to Christian identity formation, in the sense that it became a tool in excluding “so-called Christians” (with incorrect beliefs) from “real” Christians. The concept served as a boundary between unaccepted forms of Christianity, and the one, “true” form, that of orthodoxy. Alain Le Boulluec has argued that Christians transformed the largely positive understanding of *hairesis* into a negative concept by applying the Greek difference between reality and naming to right and false belief. The heretics,

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<sup>148</sup> For a discussion of the concept, see Simon 1979, 101-116.

<sup>149</sup> Simon 1979, 111-113.

<sup>150</sup> Simon 1979, 109-110.

though they called themselves Christians, were, according to this understanding, not Christians in reality. From this, according to Le Boulluec, the notion of heresy was born.<sup>151</sup>

The opposite of heresy, already mentioned, is orthodoxy, that is, “right doctrine”. As in the case of heresy, early Christian authors adopted a pre-Christian concept and changed its initial signification. In classical Greek, the word *doxa* did not have the meaning of “doctrine” as in Christian usage, that is, a statement corresponding to eternal truth. Instead, it had the meaning of opinion, judgment (especially a philosophic opinion, and, in a negative sense, a mere opinion as opposed to knowledge). *Orthodoxia* was given its strong sense of right doctrine only in Christian usage.<sup>152</sup> However, the word does not seem to have been used in this normative sense until the fourth century, when it came to denote what belonged to the faith of “the church”, as opposed to heresy.<sup>153</sup>

This, of course, does not mean that right belief, as opposed to erroneous belief, became of importance only in the fourth century; we have already seen that the concept of “heresy” attained a valued significance much earlier.<sup>154</sup> Already at an early stage, long before the concept of “orthodoxy” was used in the sense it came to have later, Christian writers clearly expressed the view of heresy as something which appeared *after* the right version of Christianity.<sup>155</sup> Behind the idea that innovation is a bad thing lies the idea of true Christianity as a divine tradition, going back to Christ and the apostles. Le Boulluec notes how these ideas, having

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<sup>151</sup> Le Boulluec 1985, 37. According to Le Boulluec, the invention of heresy took place in the work of Justin Martyr: “Dans les écrits antérieurs aux oeuvres de Justin, il n'existe pas encore de représentation cohérente et unifiée de l'erreur et des dissensions, et la terminologie est elle-même diversifiée” (Le Boulluec 1985, 21). With Justin, the use of the term *haireisis* changed from denoting a group of people with common ideas to a group of people standing outside the established tradition, expressing false doctrines. Justin’s work against heresy is not extant, but can to a certain extent be recovered from other works. With Justin begins, according to Le Boulluec, some typical heresiological strategies, such as naming opponents, constructing succession lists, and describing heresy as being of a demonic nature.

<sup>152</sup> Le Boulluec 2000, 303-304.

<sup>153</sup> With Eusebius of Caesarea, the term was identified with the true faith or doctrine, and seen as the opposite of heresy or heterodoxy. Both the noun (*orthodoxeo*) and the adjective (*orthodoxos*) were used by those who defended the faith of Nicaea against Arianism. Le Boulluec 2000, 303-304.

<sup>154</sup> There were other words than “orthodoxy” that denoted right as opposed to wrong in earlier centuries, for example *orthotomia*, used by Clement of Alexandria (*Stromata* 7.16.104.1). This word can be said to have designated what modern scholars sometimes refer to as “orthopraxy” as much as it denoted right belief. The rightness does not only concern doctrine, but also practice. (Le Boulluec 2000, 304-305.)

<sup>155</sup> Clement, for example, saw the opposite of orthotomia (see previous footnote) as the practice of innovation, *kainotomeo* (to begin something new; to make innovations, literally: cut fresh into (in mining), open a new vein). *Stromata* 7.16.103.3; 17.107.2. The same type of rhetoric can be seen in the anti-heretical writings of Irenaeus and Tertullian.

found their way into Eusebius' ecclesiastical history, came to be determinative for confessional views in the history of Christianity, and, importantly, also affected works of a more scientific character.<sup>156</sup>

However, it would be wrong to see "heresy" as an exclusively Christian phenomenon. Christianity certainly is the religion that has produced the largest number of "heresies", but this does not mean that "heresy" does not exist in other traditions. In *The Construction of Orthodoxy and Heresy: Neo-Confucian, Islamic, Jewish, and Early Christian Patterns* (1998), Historian John B. Henderson has examined common patterns of treating difference in belief in these religions. Heresy has often been a category confined to Christianity, but Henderson argues that "the signs by which orthodoxy and heresy are represented in these traditions share a basic grammar that operates cross-culturally".<sup>157</sup>

Still, as we have seen, Christianity has been the religion most associated with the phenomenon of "heresy". The reason, broadly expressed, is that Christianity is a religion in which faith in a doctrinal content is central. The importance of right belief in early Christianity meant that the need to exclude wrong belief was likewise important. In Henderson's words: "Christianity, the most credal of all the great religions, was also arguably the most heresiographical".<sup>158</sup> To a great extent, Christian theology was developed for the purpose of refuting heresy. According to Henderson, theological works, creeds and conciliar statements can be seen as "hidden heresiographies".<sup>159</sup>

This chapter will not be about heresiology in early Christianity but will focus on the way in which this phenomenon has been handled in modern research. The problem concerns how to approach texts which deal with belief, and which have the purpose of claiming certain beliefs as right and others as wrong. Is it possible to use the very concepts of "orthodoxy" and "heresy" in historical research today, and, if so, how should they be defined? How is it possible to approach ancient discourses of right and wrong belief in a scholarly manner? These are the questions to bear in mind as I present the most important developments in 20th and 21st century scholarship on orthodoxy and heresy in early Christianity. After presenting Walter Bauer and the beginning of deconstruction of the concepts, I will continue to show how critical theory has helped scholars to approach the problem at hand, and on this basis, I will present the theoretical framework which I will use in the present study.

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<sup>156</sup> Le Boulluec 2000, 306.

<sup>157</sup> Henderson 1998, 37.

<sup>158</sup> Henderson 1998, 10. "Heresiology" and "heresiography" are synonymous.

<sup>159</sup> Henderson 1998, 10.



## 1.2. The Beginning of Deconstruction: Walter Bauer

To understand the importance of Bauer's work, it is important to be aware of the way in which scholars wrote about “orthodoxy” and “heresy” before him (and how they have, to a certain extent, continued to do so after him). In writing about ancient heresies, scholars have traditionally tended to take the information in heresiological accounts at face value. Thus, heresiological constructions have found their way into modern research, as the works of the heresiologists have been read as sources of information about historical situations, without sufficient attention being paid to their rhetorical character.<sup>160</sup> For example, the very common heresiological strategy of presenting “orthodox” beliefs as going back to an original and undivided form of Christianity, and “heresies” as innovations, typically based on non-Christian philosophy, which diverged from this pure origin, have had consequences for modern historical reconstructions, which have often described heresies – that is, diversity in Christian belief – as a later development.

It was such a reconstruction of early Christianity that Bauer turned against in his groundbreaking study *Rechtgläubigkeit und Ketzerei im ältesten Christentum*.<sup>161</sup> Although elements of Bauer's thesis can be found in earlier historical research,<sup>162</sup> his work achieved something of a paradigm shift in the study of “orthodoxy” and “heresy”. Contrary to the view established by ancient heresiologists, Bauer argued that rather than beginning with one, orthodox form from which “heretics” separated, early Christianity consisted from the beginning of different directions, many of which would later become known as heretical. According to Bauer, what would later be known as heresy existed in many geographical areas before what would later be known as orthodoxy.<sup>163</sup> Heresy could therefore be said to precede orthodoxy.<sup>164</sup> Also, in many places, the “heretics” outnumbered the “orthodox”. However, what would become orthodoxy suppressed heresy, especially through the powerful influence of the Roman church. Once this party had reached domination over the others, the orthodox winners rewrote history in order to make it seem that their version of Christianity had always been the accepted norm. According to Bauer, the accounts given by heresiologists should not be trusted when it comes to reconstruction of heretical groups.

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<sup>160</sup> The problem has been treated by Karen L. King, who argues that ancient discourses of orthodoxy and heresy have continued to operate in modern scholarship (King 2003).

<sup>161</sup> Bauer 1971.

<sup>162</sup> For example, the History of Religion School had emphasized the diversity of early Christian belief. One of the representatives of this school, Adolf von Harnack – who was also Bauer's teacher – was suspicious of the catholic tradition and appreciated pre-catholic expressions of Christianity, among them the “heresy” of Marcion. For an overview, see Desjardins 1991, 67-68.

<sup>163</sup> The geographical areas on which he concentrates are Edessa, Egypt, Antioch, and Asia Minor.

<sup>164</sup> See, for example, Bauer 1971, 43.

Bauer's thesis has met a lot of critique over the years. As research on the second and third centuries has progressed, some of his conclusions do not seem to be supported by historical evidence. He has also been criticized for arguing from silence in his reconstruction of early Christianity.<sup>165</sup>

However, the impact of Bauer's work has been enormous. An important influence of his work came to be seen in the scholarly attention paid to the social and political aspects of heresiology, that is, in the turning away from the history of ideas-mode of reconstruction to a focus on sociological aspects. The most important contribution, however, and the one to be discussed here, is Bauer's way of using the concepts of "orthodoxy" and "heresy". While much of the critique against him has concerned historical realities, his greatest contribution, and what most merits discussion, is the issue of terminology.

Before I say more about this, a clarification should be made. Bauer himself does not pay much attention to definition. His concern is historical reconstruction, that is, to prove that contrary to the traditional view, those groups that have been considered as deviations from a pure original faith did actually precede this "original" faith in many places. Even so, I argue that his way of using the concepts marks the beginning of their deconstruction, which was to be taken further by later scholarship, and that this was his major contribution.

As he explains himself, Bauer does not introduce any special use of language, in which "orthodoxy" designates the standpoint of the majority while "heresy" is characterized by the fact that it has only minority support. Instead, "orthodoxy" and "heresy" will refer to "what one customarily and usually understands them to mean", with the difference that they will be freed from value judgment.<sup>166</sup>

Thus, in Bauer's use, the orthodox do not have to be in a majority position in order to be orthodox, although the term is still clearly connected to the opinion of the majority, because it denotes the form of Christianity which would *eventually* be embraced by the majority in the whole Christian world. The orthodox were, simply, the ultimate winners. "The form of Christian belief and life which was successful was that supported by the strongest organization /.../ in spite of the fact that, in my judgment, for a long time after the close of the postapostolic age the sum total of consciously orthodox and anti-heretical Christians was numerically inferior to that of the 'heretics'".<sup>167</sup>

With Bauer, the focus has clearly shifted from doctrinal content to social groups: Orthodoxy does not denote right belief, but the form of Christianity expressed by the group which would eventually dominate. Likewise, heresy

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<sup>165</sup> Important critics have been H. E. W. Turner, *The Pattern of Christian Truth: A Study in the Relations Between Orthodoxy and Heresy in the Early Church*, 1954; and T. A. Robinson, *The Bauer Thesis Examined: The Geography of Heresy in the Early Christian Church*, 1988.

<sup>166</sup> Bauer 1971, xxii.

<sup>167</sup> Bauer 1971, 231.

referred to the losing parties, who expressed alternative views. As Bauer states in his introduction, having said that he would use the concepts as they are commonly used: “There is only this proviso, that we will not hear the two of them discussed by the church – that is, by the one party – but by history”.<sup>168</sup>

What begins with Bauer is, above all, a deconstruction of the concepts: They are still used, but they do not longer mean what they have previously been taken to mean, that is, right / wrong belief. They are stripped of value judgment and are used to describe and explain a historical development.

In the work of Bart D. Ehrman, who can be seen as one of Bauer's followers, definition of the concepts becomes clearer than was the case with Bauer himself. According to Ehrman, the labels can still be useful, if applied to social and political realities, and not to contents of dogma:

... the labels can retain their usefulness as descriptions of social and political realities, quite apart from their theological connotations. That is to say, they can serve as adequate descriptions of the group that eventually attained a level of dominance within the Christian tradition, and the multiplicity of groups that it overcame.<sup>169</sup>

This way of understanding orthodoxy and heresy means, of course, that the concepts have become relative, which makes it possible to use them in a scholarly way. Even so, I think there are disadvantages in this way of defining the concepts.

The first disadvantage is that a kind of essence is still ascribed to the concepts, so that Bauer could state that heresy *preceded* orthodoxy.<sup>170</sup> It was a form of Christianity, expressed by the group that was, or would be, in the dominant position. Even if we have gone beyond the kind of essentialism typical of the “traditional” view, according to which orthodoxy and heresy were defined by specific theological contents (following the heresiological descriptions), we here have another type of essentialism, which claims that particular historical conditions must be met for a group or a person to be called “orthodox” or “heretical”. Bauer certainly showed the contingent character of orthodoxy and heresy and thereby made these concepts relative, but only to a certain extent. The same can be said of Ehrman, who actually identifies “orthodoxy” and “heresy” with social groups.

This critique is directly connected to another, which concerns the monolithic character of this way of viewing orthodoxy and heresy, according to which many heresies were, in the fourth century, followed by *one* orthodoxy. Even if we define orthodoxy as a social group, it is also connected to certain theological views,

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<sup>168</sup> Bauer 1971, xxiii.

<sup>169</sup> Ehrman 1993, 12.

<sup>170</sup> As pointed out by Boyarin 2004, 3.

namely, the views expressed by this group, that is, by the majority. This means that even if doctrinal views do not in themselves define what is orthodox and heretical, the doctrinal component can never be left out, according to this definition. This renders the identification of orthodoxy and heresy with certain groups in a certain period of time untenable. Nor can the statement that “heresy” in this sense was followed by “orthodoxy” be upheld, because it supposes a degree of orthodox consensus which was not present in the fourth century.

Ehrman asks whether it makes sense to speak of orthodoxy before the fourth century.<sup>171</sup> One could ask: Is it possible to speak about orthodoxy, defined as a social group with certain theological views, in the fourth century? It is not, I argue, and the reason is that there was still too little doctrinal agreement during this period. In his study, Ehrman focuses on issues that would be “solved”, at least at a basic level, that is, issues that would find “orthodox” answers during the fourth century. However, while this may be the case for the doctrines that concern Ehrman (who writes about Christology), it is not the case in certain other areas, such as eschatology. When it came to eschatological questions, very little was settled during the fourth century. As far as questions of the resurrection of the body, post-mortem punishment and purification, and salvation are concerned, there was no majority opinion, but general uncertainty. To speak of one form of Christianity that emerged victorious as “orthodoxy” does not take account of the complexity of the situation.

Jerome is a perfect example of the fact that the boundary between orthodoxy and heresy was far from clear at that time. He was involved with those questions which were still under debate, and, if things had turned out differently, he could have ended up on the heretical side of the border. Nothing was settled, and it could have turned out either way.

Although there are problems with Bauer’s thesis, and with Ehrman’s development thereof, it marks a significant development in the study of orthodoxy and heresy. It would be wrong to suggest that the way of using the concepts has changed overall; in certain important works on early Christianity from the second half of the 20th century, the rhetoric of the heresiologists still shines through. Orthodox developments of theology are distinguished from developments that resulted in heresy. That orthodoxy was developed in relation to heresy is generally accepted, but the development is often seen in terms of orthodoxy being *defended* rather than *made*, indicating that something already exists which can be defended.<sup>172</sup> There has been a tendency to determine the “appropriateness” of

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<sup>171</sup> Ehrman 1993, 12. Ehrman uses the concept of “proto-orthodox” for the forerunners of the orthodox party (1993, 13).

<sup>172</sup> This tendency can be seen in Turner 1954; Pelikan 1971; Chadwick 1993.

various developments.<sup>173</sup> Orthodoxy, in this view, certainly becomes better defined in the struggle against heresy, but there is still something already that needs to be defined.

Bauer's thesis has been more appreciated in other fields than in the history of theology, not least in an interdisciplinary context, where the study of early Christianity has used insights from sociology, anthropology and cultural studies. This will be seen further below as we now turn to the later development of the study of orthodoxy and heresy.

### **1.3. The Impact of Critical Theory on the Scholarship on Orthodoxy and Heresy**

#### *1.3.1. Heresiology as Rhetorical Representation*

Further developments have occurred since Bauer wrote his *Rechtgläubigkeit*. Much of the recent research in the area of orthodoxy and heresy in early Christianity has been inspired by works from disciplines other than religious studies. Since what has been called “the cultural turn”,<sup>174</sup> a shift has occurred in the study of ancient Christianity, away from the socio-anthropological approach towards literary analysis and the study of discourse, something which is certainly true of the study on orthodoxy and heresy.<sup>175</sup> Influence from post-structuralist thinkers has meant that the perception of meaning as something arbitrary and constructed has spread from the area of language to the broader area of discourse in culture. “The discourse of orthodoxy and heresy” or “the heresiological discourse” are common ways of expressing the work of ancient heresiologists. In this approach, the focus is not on heresies as real, social movements, but rather on heresies as constructions by “orthodox” authors. The overall tendency has been to focus on heresiology itself rather than on “heretical” groups or persons, and not to make any clear distinction between the winning orthodox party and the losing heretical ones.

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<sup>173</sup> Le Boulluec has referred to this as the thesis of the development of Christian doctrine, and has stressed the importance of John H. Newman's *Essay on the Development of the Christian Doctrine* for this (Le Boulluec 2000, 312-314).

<sup>174</sup> See Martin & Cox Miller 2005, 1-18. The cultural turn, which can be seen as a development of the earlier linguistic turn, involves a certain way of perceiving culture, namely that culture is primarily concerned with the production of meaning. Meaning is seen as constructed, rather than existing in itself as something that can be “found”. Meanings are seen as constructed by the members of a culture, by the ways in which they represent things.

<sup>175</sup> The development of the study of ancient heresy from social history to a history of discourse is noted, for example, in Averil Cameron's “The Violence of Orthodoxy”, in Iricinschi & Zellentin 2008, 105-6.

The most important work on orthodoxy and heresy since Bauer's is probably Alain Le Boulluec's *La notion d'hérésie dans la littérature grecque* (1985). Le Boulluec builds on the ideas of Michel Foucault and sees orthodoxy and heresy as discursive constructions. Their contents are not fixed, but they are mobile concepts that do not exist independently of each other. According to Le Boulluec, heresy should not be seen as an historical object, but rather as a discursive structure. He shifts the focus from heresies to heresiology, which is an important development from Bauer, who tended to neglect the heresiologists as unreliable historical sources.

In his effort to date the invention of heresy, Le Boulluec does not refer to the first time that Christians used the term in a pejorative sense, but to the creation of a system of representations, that is, to the birth of the *notion* of heresy. Already before the term “orthodoxy” began to be used in the normative sense in the fourth century, there were ways to deal with and to think about teaching considered to be erroneous. Le Boulluec writes that in his work he intends to make possible “de discerner à quel moment, dans quel milieu et de quelle manière s’est exprimé dans le christianisme le besoin de maîtriser les dissensions par l’invention d’un schème régulateur et réducteur commun”.<sup>176</sup>

Le Boulluec’s confinement of his analysis to “heresiological representations”, rather than “heresies”, makes clear the constructed character of heresy: “Si l’on s’en tient à l’étude des ‘représentations hérésiologiques’, on situe d’emblée l’hérésie du côté des constructions contingentes et l’on est mieux en état de saisir les circonstances historiques de l’apparition du concept et son être tout relatif”.<sup>177</sup> Not conceiving orthodoxy and heresy as essences, he shifted the focus to a history of the representation of orthodoxy and heresy or, one could say, to the history of the idea of heresy itself. Orthodoxy and heresy are not seen as things but as notions, and the one cannot precede the other since they must always be defined in relation to each other.

Le Boulluec’s work can be seen as the foundation for revisionist work on orthodoxy and heresy in the last decades. To a great extent, the study of heresiology has been transformed from the reconstruction of heresies to the history of the notion of heresy in Christianity. Since Le Boulluec’s time, scholars have applied his insights to later periods and have extended his approach to such categories as the body and gender. Heresy has come to be seen as an ideological and social construction.<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> Le Boulluec 1985, 15-16.

<sup>177</sup> Le Boulluec 1985, 19.

<sup>178</sup> Examples of works that stand in this tradition of thought are Boyarin, *Border Lines* (2004) and Burrus, *The Making of a Heretic* (1995). We will return to these works further on in the present chapter.

Below, I will go deeper into two interrelated theoretical concepts which have become important in discussions on identity, that is, the concepts of *difference* and *the Other*. In later decades, these have proved fruitful in scholarship on orthodoxy and heresy, and these are concepts which I will use in the present study.

### 1.3.2. *Identity, Difference, and the Other*

In recent decades, questions of identity and difference have had a prominent role in various academic fields, such as history, anthropology, and sociology; a development that is part of the above-mentioned “cultural turn”. This has certainly been the case in scholarship on late antiquity.<sup>179</sup> With this new focus, there has been a tendency to see identity as produced within culture. The contingent and flexible character of identity has been highlighted, as opposed to seeing it as a fixed reality, made up of a set of essential characteristics.

An aspect of this way of viewing identity is that identity demands difference, because it is always constructed in opposition to something else, or to an Other.<sup>180</sup> This is commonly expressed by the concept of *stereotyping*, which is seen as a representational practice that has the function of naturalizing difference. The difference between self and other is represented as existing beyond history, in a fixed way. People who belong to a group are reduced to a few essentials, which are described as fixed in nature.<sup>181</sup>

The concept of *boundaries* has been used to illustrate the marking of difference. As Judith M. Lieu explains, boundaries enclose those within and exclude those outside. They protect against invasion – or so it seems: “It is part of the seduction of identity that the encircling boundary appears both given and immutable, when it is neither”.<sup>182</sup> The boundaries that mark identity are always subject to change.<sup>183</sup>

*Fluidity, construction and difference*, central concepts in recent theoretical discussion on identity, have become very important in the study of religious identities, including that of orthodoxy and heresy. Religious identities have come to be seen as discursive and as results of cultural negotiating with the “Other”, either other religions, or other groups within one’s own religion, considered to be

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<sup>179</sup> See Miles 1999, 1-12.

<sup>180</sup> The importance ascribed to difference does not only belong to the discussion of identity. It goes back to the linguistic turn, and ultimately to Saussure’s theory of language, according to which what signifies is neither the signifier (the word) nor any essence, but the difference between a certain sign and other signs in the system of language (see Dosse 1997). According to this theory, the marking of difference is fundamental to the production of meaning, which is relational and which depends on the difference between opposites. Saussure’s theories came to be incorporated into various fields.

<sup>181</sup> See Pickering 2001, especially 47-78.

<sup>182</sup> Lieu 2004, 98.

<sup>183</sup> In social sciences, this has been treated by, for example, Richard Jenkins, in *Social Identity*, 1996.

heretical. The concept of the heretic, seen in this way, functions as an ideological tool, whose main role is to create orthodox identities, and thereby to separate, for example, “real” Christians from others.<sup>184</sup> Ancient heresiological discourses, it is argued, reread similarities as differences, and turned what was similar into something that was utterly different.

In this context, the theories of the Historian of Religion, Jonathan Z. Smith have been influential. In his articles “Differential Equations”<sup>185</sup> and “What a Difference a Difference Makes”,<sup>186</sup> where he discusses the construction of otherness, Smith pays attention to difference as a relative and relational concept:

For ‘difference’ is an active term – ultimately a verbal form, *differre*, ‘to carry apart’ – suggesting the separating out of what, from another vantage point, might be seen as the ‘same’. /.../ Viewed in this light, difference is the more interesting phenomenon [as compared to “other”], which has not received the attention it merits. Among other gains, the making of difference allows for an understanding of the construction of internal distinctions as well as external ones.<sup>187</sup>

Smith calls attention to the fact that it is not the remote other that is perceived as problematic, but *the proximate other*. Difference or otherness becomes most problematic when it is “TOO-MUCH-LIKE-US” or when it claims to “BE-US”. The need to construct otherness and difference has to do with the need to protect the self from what is too close.<sup>188</sup>

Smith argues that otherness is ambiguous, because it is a term of interrelation, of interaction. It has to do with relative rather than absolute distance. It is not a descriptive category, but a rhetorical one.

Something is ‘other’ only with respect to something ‘else’. /.../ Despite its apparent taxonomic exclusivity, ‘otherness’ is a transactional matter, an affair of the ‘in between’.<sup>189</sup>

Recent studies in early Christianity have tended to consider identity as a relational and situational category and, accordingly, have focused on the rhetoric of

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<sup>184</sup> Iricinschi, Eduard & Zellentin, Holger M., “Making Selves and Marking Others: Identity and Late Antique Heresiologies”, in Iricinschi & Zellentin 2008, 19.

<sup>185</sup> Smith, “Differential Equations: On Constructing the ‘Other’”, Thirteenth Annual University Lecture in Religion, Arizona State University, Department of Religious Studies, March 5, 1992. Later published in *Relating Religion. Essays in the Study of Religion*, 2004, 230-250.

<sup>186</sup> Smith 2004, 251-302.

<sup>187</sup> Smith 2004, 241-42.

<sup>188</sup> Smith 2004, 245-46.

<sup>189</sup> Smith 2004, 275.



difference and the process of differentiation. Karen L. King has connected this way of understanding identity and difference to the rhetoric of “orthodoxy” and “heresy”, claiming that these concepts are used to construct both selves and others, and to place outside those who claim to be inside.<sup>190</sup>

King asserts that “orthodoxy” and “heresy” “are terms of evaluation that aim to articulate the meaning of self while simultaneously silencing and excluding others within the group”.<sup>191</sup> The discourse of orthodoxy and heresy constructs both the self and the other, and these constructions should not be mistaken for social realities:

Although processes of defining self and other are fluid, dynamic, and ambiguous in practice, the basic pattern for the discourse of orthodoxy and heresy has remained fairly stable from antiquity into the modern period, exerting its power beyond religion to pervade other spheres of identity construction such as nationalism, ethnicity, and race.<sup>192</sup>

King notes that polemicists needed to create sharp boundaries precisely because those which existed were not so neat. “[T]he polemicists’ discourse produced heresy as the deficient and defective other in contrast to true Christianity”.<sup>193</sup>

King makes the point that, by way of rhetoric, the heresiologists managed to disguise the internal struggles so as to make it seem like heresy was not an internal problem, but the problem of pollution from outside – from, for example, pagan philosophy. What is sought is therefore a sharpening of boundaries, as purification by exclusion of that which does not belong on the inside.<sup>194</sup> Heresy functions as a tool by which religious proximity is changed into difference. The primary goal of Christian self-definition was sameness, whether it was in opposition to non-Christians or to heretics. This implied a need to minimize differences within the group and to maximize differences between it and other groups. According to King, the strategies towards non-Christians and heretics were more or less the same, because, in order to exclude heretics, these needed to look more like outsiders than insiders. Differences had to be exaggerated, and similarities overlooked.

Studies on Jewish-Christian relations have been an important area for research on the formation of religious identity as an on-going negotiation with the other. This often goes hand in hand with a questioning the “parting of the ways”, and

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<sup>190</sup> King 2003, 25.

<sup>191</sup> King 2003, 24.

<sup>192</sup> King 2003, 24.

<sup>193</sup> King 2003, 30.

<sup>194</sup> King 2003, 33.

scholars have taken advantage of postcolonial theories of difference and hybridity. This can be seen in the work of Andrew S. Jacobs, who has drawn on Foucauldian discourse analysis as mediated through postcolonial theory<sup>195</sup> in his studies on early Christian representations of Jews.<sup>196</sup> Another important example is Daniel Boyarin's work *Border Lines*,<sup>197</sup> in which he argues that there were no uniquely Jewish or Christian characteristics in late antiquity. The distinction between Judaism and Christianity was imposed by border-makers, that is, by heresiologists, who sought to construct a Christian identity. By defining certain beliefs and practices as Christian and others as Jewish or heretical, they placed people on different sides of an artificial border. Boyarin argues that at least a significant part of the function of heresiology was to define Christian identity.

In Judith M. Lieu's work on early Christian identity, the concept of the "other" and the mutual interaction between the self and the other is important. When it comes to the self and the other, givenness and unchangeability are rhetorically constructed truths in the discourse of identity, but in practice, the self and the other are not so in any absolute sense. While stability is very important in the *rhetoric* of identity, in practice identities are dynamic and subject to change: "... difference is never absolute, even if it is represented as such; rather, the invention of 'the other' involves the selection of some – the boundary-markers – while ignoring similarities".<sup>198</sup>

In recent discussions on orthodoxy and heresy, theories of labelling,<sup>199</sup> originally found in sociological and postcolonial studies, have also been important. As the performative function of heresiological writings has come to be appreciated,<sup>200</sup> more attention has been paid to their function of bringing heretics into being by the act of naming. Lieu, in her work *Christian Identity*, focuses on the literary functions of labels as self-designation. When it comes to heresies, labels are used to mark those who are not real Christians, such as Marcionites and Valentinians. The ending of these words, -ians, attached to the name of their

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<sup>195</sup> Postcolonial discourse analysis was developed by Edward Said in his ground-breaking work *Orientalism* from 1979, in which he built on the Foucauldian concept of power-knowledge, that is, on the idea that power enables the production of knowledge, which in turn enables the development of power. Said studied Orientalism as a discourse in which knowledge of the Orient as the other of Western society was produced in order to dominate the Orient.

<sup>196</sup> Jacobs, *Remains of the Jews*, 2004; *Christ Circumcised*, 2012.

<sup>197</sup> Boyarin, Daniel, *Border Lines. The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity*, 2004. Other examples are Sanders & Meyer (eds.), *Jewish and Christian Self-definition*, 3 vol., 1980-1982; Neusner, Frerichs (ed.), *To See Ourselves as Others See Us*, 1985.

<sup>198</sup> Lieu 2004, 270.

<sup>199</sup> Labelling strategies are given much attention in Virginia Burrus' *The Making of a Heretic: Gender, Authority, and the Priscillianist Controversy*, 1995. Burrus shows that by using different labels to denote Priscillian, his opponents constructed their own orthodoxies by way of "naming the Other", that is, the heretic.

<sup>200</sup> See chapter 1, "Methodological considerations" and section 1.4 in the present chapter.

“founder”, parodies the word “Christians”. The rhetoric of labelling serves the purpose of creating boundaries against outsiders.<sup>201</sup>

### *1.3.3. The Reciprocity and Ambiguity of the Marking of Difference*

From what we have seen so far, in identity formation, portrayals of the other serve purposes of self-affirmation and boundary building. However, as has been argued by the Historian of Religion, William S. Green, the construction of otherness is more complex than that, because it also has a reciprocal effect on the self. Green highlights two essential components in the theories of the other: 1) A semantic component, the act of naming, and 2) the component of social proximity (peoples designated as “them” are often neighbours). It is when groups are too much alike that the marking of difference becomes important. “The most critical feature of otherness thus presupposes familiarity and reciprocity, and perhaps resemblance, between and among groups”.<sup>202</sup> In the act of naming an other, the name must correspond to the society’s sense of its own distinctiveness. The name must relate to something in the people who employ it. “The construction of a theory of the other thus involves a double metonymy and a double distortion”.<sup>203</sup> In creating its others, a society confuses some part of itself with itself and some part of the neighbour with the neighbour, and constructs each in terms of the other.

Although designed to mark and certify divergence and discontinuity, such correspondences can forge enduring reciprocal patterns of the inside and the outside. They can reshape the naming society's picture of itself, expose its point of vulnerability, and spark in it awareness of, or reflection about, the possibility or the reality of otherness within.<sup>204</sup>

This means that the self could have been what the other is described to be. It is, according to Green, an oversimplification to see theories of the other as serving only to draw boundaries and create distance. Such theories are also the means by which societies explore their own ambiguities. The function of naming is thus, according to Green, to be seen not only in terms of dominance of the others, but also as implying that the dominant part negotiates its own identity.

The question of reciprocity in naming the other has also been taken up by Karen King, who states: “The attempt to dominate one's opponents by calling them heretics has a reciprocal effect on the namer as well”.<sup>205</sup> In the discussion of

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<sup>201</sup> Lieu 2015, 23.

<sup>202</sup> Green, William, “Otherness within: Towards a Theory of Difference in Rabbinic Judaism”, in Neusner & Frerichs 1985, 50.

<sup>203</sup> Green 1985, 50.

<sup>204</sup> Green, 1985, 50.

<sup>205</sup> King 2003, 25.

orthodoxy and heresy, King has argued that constructing a heretical other simultaneously exposes the changeable character of orthodoxy.<sup>206</sup> In her discussion, King refers to Henry Chadwick,<sup>207</sup> who has argued that, for example, the formulation of a rule of faith was a weapon made in the defence of orthodoxy. According to King, reciprocity is on the one hand affirmed in such an argument, but on the other, it is seen in terms of an orthodoxy which, in a sense, is already there, although it is being more firmly shaped and defined when it has to confront heresies. Here we return to the discussion above about the meaning of “orthodoxy” in the writing of the history of dogma. King, on her part, argues that the reciprocity should be understood in a different way: The construction of the heretical other reciprocally exposes “the partial, mutable, and irregular character of orthodoxy”.<sup>208</sup> Again, proximity is the problem: To exclude those others means to exclude something of what it means to be Christian, “to divide the corporate self in the interests of power and purity”.<sup>209</sup>

In connection to this, we should also bring in the concept of hybridity. When it comes to theories of otherness and difference, postcolonial studies have had a significant impact on scholarship on identity formation in antiquity. Boyarin, in his *Border Lines*, applies Homi Bhabha’s concept of hybridity. Here we return to the ambiguity involved in the creation of self and other, and to the way in which the naming of the other exposes the instability of the self. Bhabha has argued that cultures are never static but emerge in an in-between space of negotiation and translation. It becomes important for the dominant party to describe its own culture as pure, and to describe hybridity as unnatural. However, the very practice of domination makes the language of the colonizer hybrid, and threatens the assumed purity, thus dissolving the clear division between the self and the other. The instability of colonial discourse makes it possible for the subaltern’s voice to be heard, which in turn colonizes the discourse of the colonizer: “... in the very practice of domination the language of the master becomes hybrid – neither the one thing nor the other”.<sup>210</sup>

In the before-mentioned book of Daniel Boyarin, “heretics” are seen as hybrids, as they are presented by the heresiologists as existing in the in-between space between “pure” Christianity and “pure” Judaism. According to Boyarin, hybridity is “double-edged”, in that it both represents a difference within and is ascribed to others in order to externalize the difference within. This disowned hybridity supports the idea of the purity of the self. According to Boyarin, borders are

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<sup>206</sup> King 2003, 25.

<sup>207</sup> Chadwick 1993, 41-45.

<sup>208</sup> King 2003, 25.

<sup>209</sup> King 2003, 25.

<sup>210</sup> Bhabha, Homi K., *The Location of Culture*, 1994, 33.

constructed to mask hybridity. The location of hybridity in others – the hybrids or heretics – serves this purpose.<sup>211</sup>

Here, we return to the problem of the proximate other. Daniel Boyarin and Virginia Burrus argue that heretics are products of attempts to create clear insider / outsider categories. Heresy is placed outside orthodox Christianity through syncretistic representation.<sup>212</sup> However, as the hybridized other is constructed, this calls the purity of orthodox identity into question by exposing its contingency. In Bhabha's words: "The paranoid threat from the hybrid is finally uncontainable because it breaks down the symmetry and duality of self/other, inside/outside".<sup>213</sup> Thus, "the orthodox subject is ever returned to itself split and doubled by heresy, and thus also by the religious other, as the duality of self/other, inside/outside is broken down".<sup>214</sup> Using another of Bhabha's terms, the authors claim that in seeing the heretic as a "mimic", "not quite" Christian, the orthodox themselves become "not quite" heretical. When heresy is seen as a mutation of Christianity, and the heretic as a mimic, it becomes virtually indistinguishable from the orthodox, and thus, "the Christian subject is likewise denied any mirror of simple 'recognition'".<sup>215</sup> By exposing the hybridity of the heretic, the contingency and partiality of the orthodox is exposed as well.

Andrew Jacobs has made the important point that rather than seeking to eliminate difference, Christian heresiologists and authors of anti-Jewish literature needed difference as a part of their orthodox self-construction. He writes: "I argue that the logic of ancient Christian orthodoxy, despite its own rhetoric, was not a logic of the exclusion of the theological 'other', but a logic of the partial absorption and internalization of that 'other'".<sup>216</sup> According to Jacobs, the orthodox cannot exist without the heretic; orthodoxy becomes such precisely by triumphing over heresy.<sup>217</sup> The making of hybrids does not reveal a pure self, existing before hybridization; rather, it reveals the instability – and impurity – of that self, which always implies the other and is always itself hybridized.<sup>218</sup>

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<sup>211</sup> Boyarin 2004, 15.

<sup>212</sup> Boyarin, Burrus, "Hybridity as Subversion of Orthodoxy? Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity", 2005, 431-441.

<sup>213</sup> Bhabha 1994, 116.

<sup>214</sup> Boyarin, Burrus 2005, 432.

<sup>215</sup> Boyarin, Burrus 2005, 434-435.

<sup>216</sup> Jacobs 2012, 72-73; 115.

<sup>217</sup> Jacobs 2012, 74-75.

<sup>218</sup> Jacobs 2012, 102-103; 114-118. "The edgy truth of late ancient Christian orthodoxy – which so carefully modeled singularity, uniqueness, and totality for the faithful – is that it exists always 'in between,' internalizing the difference that it has disavowed" (117-118).

## 1.4. Approaching the Heresiologist: A Methodological Question

Averil Cameron has argued that the emphasis that early Christians placed on language was crucial for Christianity to develop a powerful, indeed totalizing discourse (using a term of Foucault), a discourse that made possible the success of this minority religion: "... if ever there was a case of the construction of reality through text, such a case is provided by early Christianity".<sup>219</sup> There is a shift in focus from institutional and economic factors, which have often been seen as most important in the writing of history in the area, to manners of expression, rhetorical strategies and ideology, often seen as secondary by historians. When publishing her book, Cameron stated that while these approaches had become common in New Testament studies, they still had had little impact on later Christian literature. This has changed significantly since then.

When it comes to orthodoxy and heresy, a methodological shift has taken place since Bauer's time, a shift to which Le Boulluec's work was crucial. Although the deconstruction of the concepts had its beginning in the work of Bauer, he did not, as we have seen, consider the heresiologists to be valuable in historical reconstruction. With the influence from critical theory came an interest in rhetoric, discourse, and identity construction, which meant that the heresiological works were no longer seen as more or less irrelevant, but worthy of a study in their own right. Of course, the accounts of heresiologists are not seen as more reliable by scholars today, but these highly rhetorical texts have become of great interest in the study of construction of religious identity. There has been a shift in focus from heresies to heresiologists, that is, to the way in which heresy is constructed rhetorically. Henderson, for example, makes clear that his concern is not about recovering the "heretical thing-in-itself" from heresiological distortions. The heresiologist is not seen as an obstacle to be overcome (as was often the case in the era after Bauer), standing between the historian and the actual reality, but rather an object of study in himself.<sup>220</sup> Henderson motivates the importance of this type of approach: "... the obstacles themselves, the heresiographical distortions, reveal significant patterns".<sup>221</sup>

In her analysis of the formation of Christian identity during the first three centuries, Judith Lieu has argued that "the Jews" and "heretics" in early Christian literature should be read as rhetorical constructions, rather than as depicting social reality. She claims that "[t]he creation of otherness is a literary enterprise".<sup>222</sup> Propaganda and textuality receive a critical role in Lieu's works. Texts, she

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<sup>219</sup> Cameron, Averil, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire*, 1991, 21.

<sup>220</sup> Henderson 1998, 1-2; 24; 119.

<sup>221</sup> Henderson 1998, 119.

<sup>222</sup> Lieu 2004, 297.

argues, play a central part in the shaping of Christianity, and Christian identity was a product of literary creativity. Lieu calls attention to the importance of looking at the texts themselves, and at what they construct, rather than at realities outside the texts. She claims that there is a possibility that we can only discern the construction of the author, since the social reality may have been very different.<sup>223</sup>

Karen King<sup>224</sup> has argued that our reading of heresiologists should not be based on modern concepts of objectivity or on the intentions of the author. Rather, the heresiologist should be understood in the light of the rhetorical effects which informed his literary strategies. What is looked for is not the intention of the author, nor a reflection of a historical situation, but rather the way in which heretics are rhetorically constructed. Impartial objectivity was not a concern of these authors, and the problem of historical reliability is not really a problem at all, since the interesting question is what difference it makes to “represent truth through a discourse of orthodoxy and heresy rather than one of impartial objectivity”.<sup>225</sup>

The benefits of a literary approach have been expressed very well by Rebecca Lyman:

Unravelling the particular literary strategies of an individual allows us to avoid falling into a sociological reductionism of “orthodoxy” to the generalized or anachronistic institutional power of the “church” or accepting a typology of “Christianity” which assumes religious uniformity and ignores the complex intellectual construction of authority and theological consensus. The language of theological conflict itself in the fourth century therefore is key to exposing the concerns of Christian authors which emerge from the continuing doctrinal conflicts and the uneven Christianization of Roman society.<sup>226</sup>

This shift in approach is of importance also for the attitude towards heresiology as a genre. In her article “How to read heresiology” (2003), Averil Cameron notes that “heresiology is an embarrassment to modern scholars”,<sup>227</sup> and argues that it has been dismissed by scholars because of the premise that heresiological works are sources of information, rather than performative and functional texts.<sup>228</sup> Cameron

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<sup>223</sup> Lieu 2004, 24.

<sup>224</sup> In her paper “Social and Theological Effects of Heresiological Discourse”, in Iricinschi & Zellentin 2008.

<sup>225</sup> King 2008, 29.

<sup>226</sup> Lyman, “Ascetics and Bishops: Epiphanius on Orthodoxy”, in Elm, Rebillard & Romano 2000, 151.

<sup>227</sup> Cameron 2003, 472.

<sup>228</sup> Cameron 2003, 474.

argues that “heresiologies have a poetics of their own that has yet to be studied”,<sup>229</sup> that is, more attention should be paid to the effects of heresiological writings and how these are achieved. Cameron suggests that more should be done when it comes to the rhetorical techniques of heresiological discourse, of which she gives some examples in her article, for example the labelling of heretics and the differentiating of them from a norm (whereby the nature of this norm is defined).

In the case of heresiology, Cameron argues against the common view thereof as encyclopaedic and mechanical, academic and static, by stating that heresiological works are actually flexible, able to be adapted to changed conditions, and that they inform other types of writings.<sup>230</sup> Heresiological works appear in many different shapes, and cannot be dismissed as scholastic exercises.

It seems to be commonly held that in the second and third centuries, heresiological works took the form of motivated, engaged refutations. Later, however, dialogue was replaced by monologue, and refutation was no longer the principal aim. The falseness of certain doctrines was taken for granted; it did no longer demand elaborate demonstration. The works were characterized by their encyclopaedic form, brief descriptions and use of labels.<sup>231</sup> According to Helen Sillet, this judgment may be fair if it concerns the extent of new information about heretics. However, heresiologists should not be read as neutral historical sources: “Heresiologies provide us with representations produced by hostile rivals in a polemical setting /.../ Rather than dismissing the later catalogues as mere borrowing or mindless compilation, we must tailor our questions to suit the new form of the heresiological genre”.<sup>232</sup>

I argue that this way of approaching heresiology is very beneficial. As soon as we begin to see heresiology as a performative genre rather than as a descriptive one, it becomes clear that although it changes form in later periods because of new contexts, it is still certainly alive and worth examining, because although the forms are different, the texts are still performative. The fact that later works are repetitive does not change this fact, because the information about religious opponents is not what is interesting.

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<sup>229</sup> Cameron 2003, 472.

<sup>230</sup> Cameron 2003, 480.

<sup>231</sup> See McClure, J. 1979, 186-197. The argument that the genre was all but dead in the late fourth century has been made by G. Vallée, *A Study in Anti-Gnostic Polemics: Irenaeus, Hippolytus, and Epiphanius*, 1981, 5-6.

<sup>232</sup> Sillet, “Orthodoxy and heresy in Theodoret of Cyrus' Compendium of Heresies”, in Elm, Rebillard & Romano 2000, 263, n. 4.



## 2. Jerome and the Construction of Orthodoxy and Heresy: A Theoretical Framework

The recent research on orthodoxy and heresy has, in my view, two benefits above all: First, the fact that orthodoxy and heresy are seen as constructions, worked out in relation to each other, and secondly, the affirmation of the importance of heresiology. There is reason to think that just as heresiology has been neglected as an unproductive genre as opposed to creative theology, Jerome has been seen as a polemicist as opposed to a creative theologian.<sup>233</sup> Thus, a different way of approaching heresiology could have consequences for how we consider Jerome as a theologian. When the performative nature of polemics is appreciated, heresiology can also be appreciated as an important factor in the development of dogma.

Of course, the question can be raised whether Jerome should be seen as a heresiologist in the first place – after all, he did not produce strictly heresiological works, like Epiphanius' *Panarion*. Although heresiology can be defined as a literary genre, it can also, in the broader sense, and in the sense in which it has been used by most authors discussed above, refer to “the ‘science’ of heresies”<sup>234</sup> or to “the science of the errors of others”,<sup>235</sup> that is, the whole heresiological discourse in which certain forms of Christianity are rhetorically constructed as others. It is in this broader sense that I use the concept, and that makes it possible to read Jerome's anti-Origenist polemics as heresiology. This is connected to my previous discussion of genres,<sup>236</sup> in which I argued that a too rigid division of genres, and of authors, both contradicts the way in which theology was actually made in early Christianity and also makes it probable that one will neglect theological contributions because they take place in the “wrong” genre. Theology is always made in a context, and the context which often motivated the writing of works in different genres was precisely the concern to refute beliefs considered to be heretical. This is true of polemical works, theological treatises, exegetical works, creeds, and more. This is of course connected to the view of polemics as productive: It is one of many ways in which theology is made, and in which dogma is developed – not only in a purely negative sense (stating what is not correct), but also in a positive sense (claiming what is correct, as opposed to wrong belief).

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<sup>233</sup> See chapter 1, “Previous research”.

<sup>234</sup> Boyarin 2004, 2.

<sup>235</sup> Henderson 1998, 1.

<sup>236</sup> See “The Question of Genres” in chapter 1.

When it comes to Jerome, he was apparently concerned, in different types of works, to refute heresy and to express orthodox views in opposition to it. In doing this, he also clearly stood in a heresiological tradition, using rhetorical strategies common in the refutation of heresy. These considerations motivate reading him as a heresiologist.

The common view of Jerome as a polemicist rather than as a theologian is connected to the view of him as a defender of orthodoxy. There is a logic in this connection: Orthodoxy, as we have seen, has often been perceived – from early Christian texts to modern historical reconstructions – as in some way opposed to innovation. Therefore, it is not strange that Jerome, being seen as the church father who defended the doctrines of the church but did not add anything new, has also become known as a defender of orthodoxy. However, there is reason to question such a characterization. The reason why orthodoxy and heresy received a central place in Jerome’s work is, first of all, his need to defend himself against accusations of heresy. Throughout his career, he was vulnerable to such accusations, since his orthodoxy was far from generally accepted. He is an example of the fluidity of orthodoxy and heresy in late antiquity, and of the constant movement of the boundaries. In his writings against opponents, he seldom attacked heretics in defence of an established doctrine of the church; rather, he was defending his own orthodoxy in a matter which was still under debate and which had not been established as a doctrine of the church – something that to a large extent was true of the area of eschatology. Thus, Jerome is an example of the immense significance that rhetoric and propaganda played in portraying oneself as orthodox, precisely in contrast to those described as heretics.

In this work, the concepts of “orthodoxy” and “heresy” will be important in approaching the problem at hand. It may be pointed out that the importance that I ascribe to heresiological discourse in early Christianity does not in itself motivate or explain the use of the concepts in my analysis. The concepts are certainly problematic. Therefore, something should be said about the way in which I use them.

We have seen that Bauer used the terms in an essentialistic way, and so did Ehrman, who also used the concept of “protoorthodoxy”, in an effort to avoid anachronism. I have argued more extensively above against this way of using the concepts. I also claim that one should avoid the way of using “orthodoxy” as denoting a doctrinal content that already exists and that is just waiting to be articulated in the struggle against heresy, in such a way that it can be said to be defended. Some scholars distance themselves from talking about a “defence” of orthodoxy, while arguing instead that controversies, such as the Arian one, resulted in the “determination” of orthodoxy, so that orthodoxy can be seen as

achieved by a process of trial and error.<sup>237</sup> To a certain extent, this admits the contingent character of orthodoxy (and heresy), but even this view is essentialistic in the sense that one actually sees a theological content – the results of a conflict – as orthodoxy. Even if no orthodoxy existed at the beginning of the process, it certainly did at the end. I want to distance myself from this view as well.

However, I do not think that the concepts themselves should be abandoned, or that our focus should be shifted away from them. What is important is to recognize what the problem with the before-mentioned views actually is, namely, *essentialism*, the thought that “orthodoxy” exists, and that it corresponds to certain characteristics. The same can of course be said of heresy, but in the negative sense: Since certain characteristics are missing, it is not orthodoxy, and thus, it is heresy. However, when orthodoxy and heresy are freed from this focus on the essence, and when we have redefined them as purely rhetorical tools, I believe that they are truly useful.

I will thus use the concepts of “orthodoxy” and “heresy” to denote rhetorical representations. Used in this sense, I argue that they can be of great value in the reconstruction of the development of early Christian theology. To abandon them would make it difficult to understand this development, because the making of theology cannot be separated from the process of constructing orthodoxy in relation to heresy. Understanding orthodoxy and heresy as rhetorical representations allows us acknowledge the complexity of the historical and theological situation that we are dealing with, and this means that we do not have to look for a certain point in Christian history when orthodoxy prevailed (as suggested by Bauer and Ehrman). Thus, we do not have to ask, with Rowan Williams, whether it is possible to speak of “orthodoxy” before Nicaea,<sup>238</sup> since, according to the understanding here presented, “orthodoxy” exists wherever heresiology exists.

According to this understanding of “orthodoxy” and “heresy”, the relation between the concepts is of great importance. Following Henderson,<sup>239</sup> I see orthodoxy and heresy as alternately constructed. The rhetoric includes an account of both self and other, orthodox and heretic. The contents are not fixed, but orthodoxy and heresy are always “made” in interaction with each other. They can never really be separated, because as relative concepts, orthodoxy and heresy become what they are precisely in relation to their opposite. Heresiology always has to include both of them, although different texts certainly may emphasize the one over the other.

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<sup>237</sup> For example, Hanson, Richard, “The achievement of orthodoxy in the fourth century AD”, in Williams 1989, 142-156.

<sup>238</sup> Williams, “Does it make sense to speak of pre-Nicene orthodoxy?”, in Williams 1989, 1-23.

<sup>239</sup> Henderson 1998, 39.

Thus, I do not use the concepts of orthodoxy and heresy as referring to doctrinal views, social groups, or anything at all outside of the heresiological text. I refer to them as rhetorical representations, made by early Christian writers in order to promote a certain version of Christianity, or of a Christian doctrine, as the true version. This was a literary project, and I oppose the use of these concepts as referring to anything outside of texts. It should be pointed out that the way of using the concepts suggested here does not at all cut off heresiology from its social contexts. The point I want to make concerns terminology: I argue that the concepts are not helpful in describing social realities in early Christianity. However, the concepts have a theoretical importance when it comes to analysing the ways in which early Christian authors dealt with these social realities, namely, how the construction of right and wrong belief served in Christian identity formation. This was both a reaction to social realities, and had effects on social realities.

In this connection, I should clarify my way of using the terms “Origenism” and “Origenists”. These are as problematic as the terms “heresy” and “heresies” for scholarly use, because they are heresiological constructions whose original significance has a clearly pejorative connotation. My use of them is analogous to that of “heresy” and “heretics”; that is, they denote rhetorical representations rather than a certain dogmatic position or a social group with a common theology. Again, this does not mean that I overlook the socio-historical context: “Origenism” and “Origenists” as heresiological inventions had the purpose of dealing with social realities in the late fourth and early fifth centuries of Christianity. However, I contend that when it comes to this instance of labelling, using the terms to denote social realities may have the consequence of making us blind to those realities: The Origenist controversy, to which we will return later below, did not primarily deal with an “Origenist” heresy. Rather, anti-Origenist heresiology may be seen as a superstructure over issues of Christian identity and authority. It was the means by which to negotiate these issues, rather than the main problem. This remark further problematizes the use of “Origenism” and “Origenists” as referring to social realities. Besides, if we name some participants of the debate “Origenists” and others “anti-Origenists”, it means that we accept the categorizations made by the heresiologists for polemical purposes. This in turn implies the methodological risk of reading our sources according to our understanding of an author as “Origenist” or “anti-Origenist”.

Although orthodoxy and heresy are the most important theoretical concepts in my reading of Jerome's texts, there are others that are connected to them and that should be brought up here as well. The concepts of *self* and *other* will be used in this work in the discussion of how orthodoxy and heresy are constructed. Following the insights of Jonathan Smith and other authors discussed in the first part of this chapter, I want to pay attention to *the proximate other* as the primary object in heresiology. Connected to this is the question of *difference*, because it is by distancing himself from the heretical other that the heresiologist constructs his

orthodox self. This is, of course, only needed when the other is TOO-MUCH-LIKE-ONESELF, as Smith expresses it. Also labelling theory will have a place in this work, since I will look into the performative aspects of naming an opponent, either by the designation “heretic” or by a specific name (such as “Origenist”). However, naming and its effects are not only of importance when it comes to descriptions of heretical others, but also of orthodox selves. Therefore, I will also examine Jerome's ways of naming himself, or the group(s) with whom he identifies, in his self-presentation.

I will pay particular attention to the reciprocal character of the marking of difference. I think that this aspect is overlooked in many accounts of orthodoxy and heresy in early Christianity, not only in works marked by some form of essentialism, but also in others. The focus tends to be on the process of differentiation itself, and while it is claimed that this is often motivated by the fact that sameness actually exists and has to be covered, it is seldom recognized that the marking of difference can simultaneously *increase similarity*, namely in the sense that heresiologists embrace parts of the ideas that they refute. Here, the concept of hybridity is useful, because it rests on an understanding of the fluidity of identity (here, orthodox / heretical identity) and, connected to this, it means that the dominant (orthodox) part will always, in interaction with the inferior (heretical) part, adapt something of this inferior view into its own dogma.

What I want to focus on is above all the way in which the construction of the other implies a construction of the self. I argue that in the discussion on orthodoxy and heresy, this approach could contribute to a greater extent than it has done so far. Considering that the distancing from a proximate other can affect one's self-presentation, not only in a negative way (in distancing oneself) but also in a positive way, through internalizing the other into the self, we may ask to what extent and in what way “orthodox” authors actually incorporated parts of the “heresies” into their self-presentations in the process of refuting “heretical” views. This would mean that heresiology is not only theologically productive in the sense that “orthodox” views have developed in reaction against “heretical” views, but also because it involves a certain degree of assumption of what belongs to the other. Heresiology, I propose, can be understood as a kind of dialogue (and one might remember how many heresiological works that had this particular form!), as a giving and taking, in which the heresiologist and the (constructed) heretic share a common ground. Certainly, such a dialogue is not one on equal terms, but rather consists of the orthodox correction of the views of the heretic and of giving the right answers. Nevertheless, the very questions posed by the heretic have to be taken into account, as well as the false answers provided. Considered in this way, the heresiological process is one in which the orthodox corrector of errors cannot avoid a certain amount of influence from the heretic, who becomes part of the heresiologist's self-presentation.

The fact that Jerome over and over again had to distance himself from heretical views too close to his own, which was the case especially with Origen, makes his polemical writings very suitable for applying these theories to. It is important to remember that Jerome did not begin by refuting Origen as a heretic, but began by identifying himself with the Alexandrian, as he presented himself as the new Origen. When later on he had to attack Origen, he already stood on Origenist ground. To return to my hypothesis in the previous chapter, I propose that rather than totally refuting Origen by marking difference between Origen and himself, Jerome continued to make use of Origen's thought, even in his polemics against him, and, paradoxically – considering that he had the intention of making Origen a heretic – he actually made parts of Origen's most controversial ideas orthodox.



# Chapter 3. The Jovinianist Controversy

## 1. Introduction

When Jerome composed his treatise against Jovinian in the spring of 393, on the request of “holy brothers in Rome”<sup>240</sup> who had sent him the writings of his opponent, it was not the first time that he engaged in a controversy over asceticism. Already during his time in Rome in the 380s, Jerome had provoked people with his ascetical views, most clearly expressed in a lengthy letter to Eustochium,<sup>241</sup> and in his treatise against Helvidius, which concerned the perpetual virginity of Mary.<sup>242</sup> His extreme views – in the eyes of many – had put him at odds with the clergy of Rome, who did not live up to his rigid standards and who he tended to perceive as hypocrites.<sup>243</sup> Jerome suspected that not only clerics, but also certain women who claimed to live an ascetic life, only appeared to be ascetics in order to gain fame.<sup>244</sup> During that period Jerome also expressed very clearly the view that those Christians who followed the norms of society, above

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<sup>240</sup> *AdvJov* 1.1, PL 23, 211. While it has been suggested by J.N.D Kelly (1975, 182) that the senator Pammachius was responsible for sending Jovinian’s books to Jerome, asking him to refute them, David Hunter has argued that the expression *sancti ex urbe Roma fratres* rather points to “a group of monks or ascetics”, and makes the point that there is no evidence of a correspondence between Jerome and Pammachius until 394 (Hunter 2007, 25-26).

<sup>241</sup> In *Ep* 22, Jerome's primary focus is the preservation of virginity, although he also presents an ascetical theory, that is, a theological justification for ascetical practice and above all for virginity. (CSEL 54, 143-211).

<sup>242</sup> Helvidius had argued that although Mary was a virgin when she gave birth to Christ, she thereafter lived her life as a married woman and had other children with her husband. Jerome attacks his views in *De Perpetua Virginitate Beatam Mariam* (PL 23, 183-206). For an outline of the work, see Opelt 1973, 28-36; for a discussion in relation to the Jovinianist controversy, see Duval 2003, 32-33; Hunter 2007, 188-190.

<sup>243</sup> *Ep* 22.16; 28.

<sup>244</sup> *Ep* 22.3, where he tells Eustochium not to display her condition as an ascetic, so that it will result in pride.



all, those who married and had children, were not on the same level as Christians who lived as ascetics.<sup>245</sup>

As we saw in the introductory chapter, critique against Jerome's views can be seen already in the work of Ambrosiaster from the 380s, and it is clear that Pope Siricius, under whose episcopacy Jerome was forced to leave Rome, was highly sceptical towards the kind of asceticism represented by Jerome. Later in this chapter, we will return to the arguments of Ambrosiaster and Siricius, but for now, it will be sufficient to say that many questions discussed in the Jovinianist controversy had been debated already in the 380s. Jerome had not only attacked what he saw as mediocre Christianity, but most importantly, his ideas were perceived as a threat to the ordained clergy.

What is known about Jovinian is found in sources hostile towards him, that is, from Jerome, Ambrose and Siricius. What becomes clear from these sources is that he initiated a campaign in Rome against the kind of radical, Oriental-style asceticism represented by Jerome. Jovinian himself had been a monk of this kind, until he changed his mind and came to think that mortifications had nothing to do with Christianity. He thus changed his way of life, and he also argued for his new standpoint in pamphlets.<sup>246</sup> These were sent to Jerome by friends in Rome, with the request that he should compose a writing to refute them. Jovinian's campaign met with great success, as Jerome's work makes clear.<sup>247</sup>

At the beginning of his treatise, Jerome lists four propositions argued by Jovinian:

1) Virgins, widows and married women who have been baptized and who do not differ from each other in other works (*si non discrepent caeteris operibus*), are of equal merit.

2) They who with full assurance of faith have been born again in baptism cannot be overthrown (*subverti*) by the devil.

3) There is no difference between abstinence from food and its reception in thanksgiving.

4) For those who have kept their baptismal vow, there is one and the same reward in heaven.<sup>248</sup>

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<sup>245</sup> Jerome's attitude towards what he considered to be mediocre Christianity – or, rather, not authentic Christianity – has been studied by John Curran in his article "Jerome and the Sham Christians of Rome" (1997).

<sup>246</sup> *AdvJov* 1.1, PL 23, 211: *commentarioli*.

<sup>247</sup> *AdvJov* 2.36 (PL 26, 333-335), where he for example relates that there were virgins who had abandoned their vows and married because of Jovinian's teaching.

<sup>248</sup> *AdvJov* 1.3 (PL 23, 214). Information about Jovinian can also be found in Ambrose, *Epistula* 42, 4-7, and Augustine, *De Nuptiis et Concupiscentia* 2.15. For scholarly discussions of Jovinian's teachings, see Duval 2003, 43-80, and Hunter 2007, 30-43.

Jovinian was condemned in Rome and in Milan, probably in 393.<sup>249</sup> These condemnations did not have anything to do with Jerome's critique against Jovinian, which rather caused more opposition towards his radical ascetical views.<sup>250</sup> Neither does it seem as if Jerome knew of the condemnations before he published his *Against Jovinian*.<sup>251</sup>

It should be mentioned already at this point that besides arguing for his views from Scripture and from pagan sources, Jovinian had another weapon with which to fight against radical ascetics, and that was heresiology. As David G. Hunter has convincingly argued,<sup>252</sup> Jovinian can be placed within a larger heresiological tradition, going back to the authors of the Pastoral Letters. Typical of this tradition is the rejection as heretical of such views that imply a distortion of normal social life by viewing virgity, abstinence from food and seclusion as Christian ideals. Hunter speaks of an “‘orthodoxy’ and ‘heresy’ of asceticism”.<sup>253</sup>

## 1.1. The Heresiological Discourse

Critique from less ascetically minded persons against radical ascetics could be expressed in various ways and concern various problems. Such critique could concern the social level, pointing to the fact that radical asceticism overthrew social norms and traditional ways of establishing hierarchies.<sup>254</sup> Charges of heresy, on the other hand, can be seen as tools for heresiologists to combat what they saw as socially disruptive: By demonstrating that certain practices were based on

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<sup>249</sup> For discussion about this dating, see Duval 2003, 11-21; Hunter 2007, 16-17.

<sup>250</sup> This becomes clear in Jerome's *Letters* 48 and 49, to the Senator and Ascetic Pammachius, which can be seen as apologies for *Against Jovinian*. However, it is quite reasonable that Jerome, not knowing that Jovinian had already been condemned, wrote his treatise not only in order to refute Jovinian's views which seemed to undermine the rationale of asceticism, but also in order to demonstrate Jovinian's heresy, so that he would be condemned. See Jeanjean, *Saint Jérôme et l'Hérésie*, 1999, 33.

When it comes to the direct reasons for Jovinian's condemnation, they are not altogether clear. The condemnation in Rome is reported by Pope Siricius, who describes Jovinian as a teacher of luxury, an adversary of chastity, and someone who hates fasting (*Ep* 7.5). Ambrose also wrote a letter where he reported the condemnation of Jovinian in Milan; here Jovinian is described as not seeing chastity as superior and not imagining a different reward for the chaste than for persons engaged in sexual activity. He is also described as hostile to fasting. (Ambrose, *Ep extra collectionem* 15).

<sup>251</sup> Duval 2003, 41-42, 97.

<sup>252</sup> Hunter 2007, 87-129.

<sup>253</sup> Hunter 2007, 97.

<sup>254</sup> Clark 1999, 39.

heretical ideas, the practices themselves could be condemned. It became crucial to show, from the common sources of authority, that the opponents' practices were not supported by these. The need arose to demonstrate that one's own interpretation was the right one.<sup>255</sup>

With the growth of radical asceticism in the fourth century, the charges against it increased as well. This cannot only be explained by the fact that this form of asceticism became all the more visible in society, but also by the fact that Manichaean Christianity spread. This type of Christianity shared many features with non-Manichaean Christian asceticism. The wish to exterminate Manichaeism was expressed in imperial law<sup>256</sup> as well as in heresiological handbooks.<sup>257</sup> Because of the similarities, opponents to radical asceticism tended to blend the two types, and "Manichaeism" became the label most commonly applied to views deemed to be ascetically exaggerated. This was, of course, a common heresiological strategy: To connect different heresies to each other, regardless of the existence of any real connection.<sup>258</sup> Fourth century heresiologists came to use Manichaeism as a label under which other radical ascetics could be placed.<sup>259</sup> Hunter argues that Jovinian should be placed within this anti-heretical direction.<sup>260</sup>

Since radical ascetics were close to "heretical" ascetics in their views on sexuality and food, they had to distance themselves clearly from these. Elizabeth Clark speaks of three principal points in the self-defence of these ascetics, by

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<sup>255</sup> Clark 1999, 52-53.

<sup>256</sup> The first instance of legislation against the Manichaeans after the Christianization of the empire is an edict by the emperors Valentinian I and Valens at Trier in 372 (Diocletian had already legislated against the religion).

<sup>257</sup> For example in the heresiological handbook *Panarion* of Epiphanius of Salamis (376).

<sup>258</sup> Hunter 2007, 143. Caroline Humfress has argued that just as Manichaeans in an earlier stage had been persecuted by reference to laws concerning magicians and astrologers, so other ascetical groups came to be persecuted under laws against Manichaeism, being regarded as crypto-Manichaeans. The categories were thus extended so that new problematic groups could be dealt with ("Roman Law, Forensic Argument and the Formation of Christian Orthodoxy (III-VI Centuries)", in Elm, Rebillard, Romano 2000, 124-147.

<sup>259</sup> Hunter 2007, 146; Duval 2003, 26-27; Lieu 1985, 87. Typical of heresiological writing was that the contents of Manichaean belief and practice were simplified and the main tenets reduced to dualism, asceticism, and astrology. Also typical of heresiological writing was that groups and persons without any apparent connection came to be connected by the demonstration of affinity between them: Not only was Manichaeism made a heresy by giving it a name, a label, and connecting this with certain views described as contrary to right doctrine, but other groups and persons were also made heretical by the demonstration of Manichaean traits in their beliefs and practices. As radical asceticism was one of the things that marked Manichaeism, radical ascetics ran the risk of being labelled "Manichaeans".

In *Ep* 22.13 (CSEL 54, 160-161), Jerome describes how those who are rigid in their fasting are seen as Manichaeans by those virgins who are not so rigid in their abstinence.

<sup>260</sup> Hunter 2007, 130-131.

which they sought to show the difference between themselves and the heretics: 1) They did not forbid marriage, 2) they did not abstain from marriage because of prohibition, but of free will, 3) their motives for abstinence were holy and did not come from hatred of the creation.<sup>261</sup> Groups from which these ascetics distanced themselves (claiming their own orthodoxy in contrast to the others' heresy) were Gnostics, Montanists, Marcionites, Manichaeans, and Encratites. As Clark shows, similarity necessitated differentiation: It became important for radical ascetics to distance themselves from heretics.

It was during the Jovinianist controversy that Jerome most clearly and systematically expressed his views on asceticism in direct opposition to an accuser. Here, Jerome was defending himself against accusations of heresy to a degree that cannot be seen in any earlier work. Although a preoccupation with orthodoxy and heresy had begun earlier, and although Jerome's ascetical views had been under attack before, this work is the first in which he clearly defends his own view as orthodox in opposition to heretical views to which he is dangerously close. Jerome's self-presentation as an orthodox ascetical teacher becomes much stronger from this time on. This will continue to be the case during the Origenist controversy.

In what follows, I will analyse Jerome's discussions about asceticism in *Against Jovinian*. In accordance with the purpose of the thesis, focus will be on asceticism as related to eschatological views. I will also discuss a possible reception of Origen's thought. *Against Jovinian* was written before Jerome became engaged in anti-Origenist polemics, and Origen or "Origenism" are not mentioned in the present work; thus, what I will assess is a positive reception, an influence from Origen's theology and exegesis. In the latter part of this chapter, I will address the question of why Jerome's ideas were seen as so problematic by his contemporaries, and I will discuss the alternative understandings of asceticism expressed by Siricius and Ambrosiaster. Thus, the theological questions will be illuminated from a sociological perspective, and Jerome's ideas will be read as part of a larger discourse of Christian identity and authority in the later fourth century Latin church.

## 2. The Ascetical Theology of *Against Jovinian*

### 2.1. The Orthodox Middle

It is obvious already at the beginning of the treatise, that Jerome is anxious to position himself between two opposite errors: That of his opponent, and that of which his opponent accuses him. Having stated that Jovinian degrades virginity by

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<sup>261</sup> Clark 1996, 39-40.

extolling marriage, he makes it clear that in his opposition to this, he is no follower of Marcion, Mani, or Tatian. He does not, so he says, degrade marriage or see all sexual intercourse as impure.<sup>262</sup>

Already at this early stage, Jerome touches on a subject that was of immense importance in this controversy: That of the relation between the members of the church. As several scholars have pointed out, Jovinian's opposition towards radical asceticism was based on a certain idea about the church and its members.<sup>263</sup> We may note that in three of the four theses of Jovinian listed above, baptism is mentioned. When it comes to Jerome's refutation, it is clearly the case, as will be seen, that although arguments for virginity are made from pagan sources as well as from the Scriptures (thus, demonstrating the superiority of virginity over marriage at different times and in different cultures), it is the places of virginity and marriage *within the church* that matters.

This means that we are dealing with a sociological as well as a theological question. I will say more about this in the third part of this chapter, but it is important to make clear what is at stake already from the beginning. According to Jerome's heresiological presentation, the heretical ascetics<sup>264</sup> at the one end of the spectrum wished to exclude all who were not perfect from the church. No sexual intercourse was allowed for any Christian. At the other end, Jovinian says that all members of the church are equal, regardless of whether they are sexually active or not. Jerome's treatise can be seen as an attempt to define a middle position, as the orthodox view. What he says about the relation between virginity and marriage, the meaning of baptism, and, not least, about the eschatological vision should be understood as an answer to the question of the place of different groups within the one church.

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<sup>262</sup> *AdvJov* 1.3, PL 23, 213.

<sup>263</sup> Kelly writes: "... what gave a theological basis and inner cohesion to these [Jovinian's] propositions was Jovinian's stress on the element of faith in baptism, and his conviction that the transformation effected by it not only rescued a man from the power of sin, but created a unified, holy people in which considerations about merit were irrelevant" (1975, 181). Duval has brought attention to the ecclesiological character of Jovinian's standpoint and the emphasis that he put on the unity of all Christians in the church (2003, 77-79). Likewise, Hunter has highlighted this "ecclesial emphasis" in Jovinian's thought, and his view on the church of the baptized as a community of individuals, receiving the same attributes through baptism (2007, 36, 41-43). Karl Shuve, who has studied the use of the Song of Songs in early Latin Christianity, likewise claims that "the root of the problem for Jovinian was ecclesiological" and that "baptism lies at the heart of Jovinian's theology" (Shuve 2016, 202). Shuve connects this concern to a reaction, on the part of Jovinian, to the fact that virgins were distinguished from the rest of the Christians and alone identified with the titles (bride, sister, mother; cf. *AdvJov* 2.30, 326-327) that, in Jovinian's view, belonged to the church as a whole and thus to all the baptized alike.

<sup>264</sup> Among these can be mentioned Gnostics, Encratites, Marcionites, and (as we have seen), in Jerome's time, above all Manichaeans.

Having made it clear that he follows neither the “Epicurus of Christianity”<sup>265</sup> nor the heretics who saw the created world as evil, Jerome states that in a big house (*in domo magna*), one will find not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, and in connection to this he refers to 1 Corinthians 3:12,<sup>266</sup> claiming that on the foundation that is Christ, some build with better materials, others with worse.<sup>267</sup>

Jerome thus states that, contrary to Jovinian, he sees virginity as superior to marriage, and contrary to the heretical ascetics, he is aware 1) that marriage is approved of in Scripture and 2) that the church includes members of very different qualities. The second point is especially interesting, because it is obviously a way in which he distances himself from the heretics, who hold the opposite view that the church is only made up of the perfect. Unlike them, he does not claim that one has to be celibate in order to be a member of the church, a Christian. The church has room even for those who marry. However, at the same time he positions himself against Jovinian, whose view is that virgins and married persons are equal members of the church, something that Jerome clearly denies by reference to the words in 2 Timothy, that in a great house, there are vessels of many different materials,<sup>268</sup> as well as 1 Corinthians 3:12 (see above), which he reads as reference to different kinds of members of the church. In the present case, Jerome manages to express this view, which is in opposition to Jovinian’s view, against heretical ascetics – precisely against those heretics to whom Jovinian and others accused him of belonging. The argument by which he demonstrates that he is not a heretic is also the argument by which he refutes Jovinian.

It can thus be seen that Jerome presents his own view as the orthodox alternative between two extremes: The Epicurus of Christianity, who does not see

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<sup>265</sup> This he calls Jovinian in *AdvJov* 1.1. The philosophical school of the Epicureans was the least popular among early Christians. While Platonism was held in high esteem by many Christian thinkers, and parts of Stoicism were also seen as appealing, Epicurism seemed to have no good to offer. This had to do with the school’s materialism (atomism), its denial of life after death, and the idea that what we should strive for is a happy life in the present, lust (*hedoné*) being the highest good. It is probably in this way we shall understand Jerome’s naming of his opponent. It should also be noted that the practice to connect opponents to pagan philosophers was a common heresiological strategy: The point being that the “heretic” had a pagan thinker as his master, rather than Christ. In the present work, this becomes especially clear in 2.36: ... *vitia sequimur, non virtutes: Epicurum, non Christum: Jovinianum, non Apostolum Paulum*. Another strategy of associating Jovinian with “paganism” centres on the name of the opponent: *Cave Joviniani nomen, quod de idolo derivatum est. Squallet Capitolium, templa Jovis et caeremoniae conciderunt*. (*AdvJov* 2.38, PL 23, 338). Cf. Jeanjean 1999, 34-35. For the more general strategy in Jerome’s heresiology of associating “heretics” with “paganism” and with non-Christian thinkers, see Jeanjean 1999, 370-374.

<sup>266</sup> “Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw...”

<sup>267</sup> *AdvJov* 1.3, PL 23, 213.

<sup>268</sup> 2 Tim 2:20.

virginity as better than marriage, and heretical ascetics, who despise the created world and do not accept marriage at all.<sup>269</sup>

## 2.2. The Themes

### 2.2.1. *The Creation of Humankind*

As has already been said, in the debates over asceticism, biblical exegesis was crucial. As becomes clear from *Against Jovinian*, Jovinian had made extensive use of both the Old and the New Testament in his argumentation, and Jerome had to give alternative interpretations which supported his own view about the superiority of asceticism.<sup>270</sup> Perhaps the most important text for an ascetic writer to be able to explain was the creation story in Genesis. Those early Christian authors who saw the Old Testament as divine Scripture, shared the idea that humankind was created in the image of God and that the first humans fell. They also shared the view that the original creation, the creation in the image of God, was what corresponded to the will of God. This meant that the interpretation of the original state in Paradise was central for what was considered to be the goal of humankind and what should be expected of the Christian person in this world. That is, protology could not be separated from anthropology.<sup>271</sup>

According to Jerome's protology, Adam and Eve were virgins in Paradise, and their married life began after the Fall.<sup>272</sup> They sinned, were cast out, and immediately married. Sexuality is therefore a consequence of the Fall. This is a view expressed by Jerome on several occasions and an important part of his justification of virginity. It had been expressed already in *Epistula 22*, where he also wrote that after the Fall, Adam and Eve were clothed with mantles of skin. It was after the coats of skin that Eve began her married life.<sup>273</sup>

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<sup>269</sup> As is noted by Jeanjean, "a première vue /.../ *l'Adversus Iovinianum* dénonce et réfute le fossoyeur de l'ascétisme, mais n'insiste pas sur les erreurs proprement dogmatiques" (1999, 34). Jerome devotes the whole first book to the demonstration of the superiority of virgins to married persons, and the question of baptism (correctly described by Jeanjean as "[le] fondement théologique de toute la doctrine", and by Kelly (1975, 181) as being at the center of Jovinian's thought) is the one most briefly elaborated by Jerome.

<sup>270</sup> As Jeanjean notes, the procedure of showing the heretic's lack of comprehension of Scripture and of refuting the views derived from certain interpretations, was common in the early polemical works of Jerome (1999, 382). See also Opelt, about Jerome's use of exegesis in his polemical writings (Opelt 1973, 188-193).

<sup>271</sup> For a study of exegetical strategies applied by ascetics to Old Testament texts, see Clark 1999, 104-113, 145-152.

<sup>272</sup> *AdvJov* 1.16, PL 23, 235.

<sup>273</sup> *Ep* 22.18-19, CSEL 54, 166-170.

Thus, according to Jerome, sexuality was not part of the original plan for humankind, but came about because of a misuse of the free will. Understanding this anthropological outlook is crucial for understanding Jerome's argument for virginity: This was how human beings were originally meant to live. It is probable that Origen was the most important source for Jerome in developing his ideas about the association of sexuality with the Fall of humankind. The Alexandrian had clearly expressed the view that it was after the Fall, that is, after the beginning of the fleshly existence of humankind, that sexual life became a reality.<sup>274</sup> Not developing more on this theme at the moment, we will have reason to come back to it in the continuing analysis, as basically all other themes in *Against Jovinian* are connected to this fundamental standpoint.

### 2.2.2. *The Law and the Gospel*

We have seen so far that a very clear line is drawn between before and after the Fall: Sexuality is seen as a post-lapsarian phenomenon. As Jerome makes clear already in the beginning of his thesis, he (in opposition to the heretics) is aware of the command to multiply and fill the earth.<sup>275</sup> However, when he later refutes Jovinian's use of this and other Old Testament passages that seem to approve of marriage and childbearing, he makes clear that this command was not given from the beginning, but only after the Fall. This is important, because it means that, according to Jerome, it had no place in God's original intention with humankind. To multiply and replenish the earth is not something that is good in itself, but it was necessary because of the Fall. The wood had to be planted, so that there could be an after-growth to cut down. Without marriage and childbearing, humankind would have ceased to exist.<sup>276</sup>

It should be noted that the clear distinction between the pre-lapsarian and the post-lapsarian condition is not the only one made by Jerome in his explanations of how Old Testament realities related to the present lives of Christians. He notes how an increasing number of practices became allowed because of human weakness. Just as divorce was not permitted from the beginning, the eating of flesh was not known until the deluge. After the deluge, the law was given, circumcision was commanded, divorce and the eating of flesh were permitted.<sup>277</sup>

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<sup>274</sup> Origen, in *Homilies on Leviticus* 6.2, speaks about the skins as coats of mortality and weakness which came to characterize the human condition, because of the corruption of the flesh (*ex carnis corruptione*, SC 286, 276-278), and in *the Commentary on Romans* 5.9.12, he expresses the view that it was after the sin that Adam and Eve began their sexual life: *Corpus ergo peccati est corpus nostrum quia nec Adam scribitur cognovisse Euam uxorem suam et genuisse Cain nisi post peccatum* (CS 539, 496).

<sup>275</sup> *AdvJov* 1.3, PL 23, 213.

<sup>276</sup> *AdvJov* 1.16, PL 23, 235-236.

<sup>277</sup> *AdvJov* 1.18, PL 23, 236-237.



The most important division of time since that between Paradise and the Fall is that which occurred with the Incarnation. Christ is Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, and with His coming into the world, Omega passed into Alpha and the end was turned into the beginning, as all things in heaven and on earth were summed up and renewed in Him. Now, we are no longer to divorce, to be circumcised, or to eat flesh.<sup>278</sup> What may have been appropriate during Old Testament times is no longer so.<sup>279</sup>

Jerome thus refutes Jovinian's argumentation from the Old Testament by claiming that, while all the ordinances that are found in these books were valid for a time, this time has now passed. Since the Incarnation, a new era has begun, and this means the possibility of a return to the original condition, before the Fall, and thus, before the commandment to increase and multiply. Many of the ordinances in the Old Testament (including the one to increase and multiply) were given as consequences of the Fall, or rather, of human weakness and mortality after the Fall.

An important point in the whole of Jerome's argumentation is that "it is one thing to live under the law, another to live under the Gospel".<sup>280</sup> Jerome wants to make clear that he does not disparage the predecessors under the law (as the Manichaeans were said to do), and that he is aware that they served their generation according to their circumstances, fulfilling the command to increase and multiply.<sup>281</sup> Now, however, the circumstances are different, and Christians are given a new instruction: The time is shortened, and those who have wives may live as if they had none.<sup>282</sup> Just as Abraham pleased God in marriage, so virgins now please Him in perpetual virginity. The first was according to the Law, the second according to the Gospel.<sup>283</sup>

This way of seeing the time of the Law as radically different from the time of the Gospel should, I think, be understood as a strategy for Jerome to free himself

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<sup>278</sup> *AdvJov* 1.18, PL 23, 236-237.

<sup>279</sup> Clark, in her discussion of strategies used by ascetically inclined church fathers in order to interpret Scripture in ways that supported their ascetical agenda, points out the strategy called "the difference in times" as especially important in Jerome's work (Clark 1999, 145-152, 165). The meaning of this strategy is to enlarge the difference between the two Testaments. This has, for example, the advantage of making it possible to claim that while marriage was something good during Old Testament times, it is now only permitted.

According to Clark, Jerome uses this strategy in order to claim the difference between Christians in his own time. By distancing the Christian present from the Hebrew past, he also distances ascetics from non-ascetics in the present (Clark 1999, 169).

<sup>280</sup> *AdvJov* 1.24, 243: ... *aliud sit in Lege versari, aliud in Evangelio*.

<sup>281</sup> Gen 1:28.

<sup>282</sup> *AdvJov* 1.24, PL 23, 243. Cf. Ep 22.21, CSEL 54, 172.

<sup>283</sup> *AdvJov* 2.4, PL 23, 288.

from accusations of Manichaeism. In this way, he can argue that what is no longer legitimate has been legitimate in the past.<sup>284</sup> At the same time, it is of course a strategy to use against opponents, such as Jovinian, who tried to argue from the Old Testament that married persons were on a par with virgins.

Important for this idea about the new era of the Gospel is Jerome's interpretation of the Song of Songs. In *Against Jovinian*, he made use of this biblical book to show, in Karl Shuve's words, that "virginity becomes the hallmark of the New Covenant".<sup>285</sup> Jovinian had turned to this book for evidence of the goodness of marriage, and, as with other Old and New Testament texts, Jerome had to give alternative interpretations, that supported his ideal of virginity. The Song of Songs "contains the mysteries of virginity",<sup>286</sup> he made clear in *Against Jovinian*. As shown by Shuve, Jerome interprets the words to the bride: "Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away, for the winter is passed, and the rain is over and gone", to signify the Old Testament passing away and the coming of the Gospel. The era of the Gospel is the era of virginity.<sup>287</sup>

Another Old Testament text that was used by Jerome to show that the time of virginity began with the Gospel comes from Ecclesiastes. While Jovinian had taken Solomon as an example of a holy man who had married, Jerome makes Solomon a speaker for his own purposes. Referring to Ecclesiastes 3:2, he comments on the words "a time to be born, a time to die"<sup>288</sup> by claiming that while we had children under the Law, we now ought to die under the Gospel.<sup>289</sup> Thus, these words serve to show that some things were valid under the Law but other things are valid under the Gospel.

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<sup>284</sup> The same is true of married persons in the New Testament: The Gospel did not exist before the crucifixion of Christ, so these persons had married while still living under the Law.

<sup>285</sup> Shuve 2016, 207.

<sup>286</sup> *AdvJov* 1.30, PL 23, 251.

<sup>287</sup> *AdvJov* 1.30, discussed in Shuve 2016, 205-206. Shuve points out that this ecclesiological use of the Song found in *Against Jovinian* was new in Jerome's reception of this book. Virginity is clearly connected to the emergence of the church in the history of salvation. However, as in his earlier use of this book, Jerome interprets the bride as the celibate woman, rather than the church (Shuve 2016, 207). This interpretation was one that he owed to Origen, whose commentary on the Song of Songs he had translated in the 380s, and whose spiritual interpretation he had integrated into his *Letter 22* (see Shuve 2016, 182-191). Shuve notes that, following Origen, Jerome interpreted the bride as the human soul (*Ep* 22.1, CSEL 54, 145) who is united to Christ (cf. Origen, *HomCant* 1.1). Likewise, the idea of the soul, who is darkened by sin, being purified by the marriage, is recognized from Origen (*HomCant* 1.6). However, Shuve argues that Jerome's focus in *Letter 22* differs from Origen's interpretation of the Song, as he has a more precise interpretation of the bride as the consecrated virgin, rather than simply the human soul (2016, 186-187). For Jerome's use of Origen's exegesis of the Song in *Against Jovinian*, see Duval 2003, 186-189.

<sup>288</sup> Eccl 3:2.

<sup>289</sup> *AdvJov* 1.29, PL 23, 250-51: *Peperimus in Lege cum Moyse, moriamur in Evangelio cum Christo*.

Virgins are considered to live in a paradisiac state to such a degree that Jerome imagines the possibility of an actualization of the Fall in their lives. As Adam and Eve were led astray, so the virgin might also be. Like them, there is a risk that the virgin gives in to temptation, makes the wrong choices, and thus, allows the tempter to bring about his/her fall.<sup>290</sup> While the Fall can be actualized in the life of the virgin, there is also a possibility that the virgin, being tempted, may avoid the Fall and its consequences. What is actualized, then, seems to be the original condition itself. Since the new era has begun, we are – or, at least, can be – back at the beginning of the human race. What Adam and Eve did not succeed in achieving, the Christian person may accomplish. The same opportunity is given to us – the choice is ours, as it was theirs. Christ, the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, put right what Adam did wrong. He too was tempted by the devil, but, in difference to Adam, He did not give in to temptation. The role of Christ seems to be twofold: He is the one who sets the mistake of Adam and Eve right, thus making possible a return to what was before the Fall, but He is also an example for us: Christians should follow Him by not giving in to temptation.

While Jerome obviously saw sexuality as a result of the Fall, there is no indication that sexuality brought about the Fall. Food was the original problem; sex was a consequence. Jerome writes:

As long as he [Adam] fasted, he was in Paradise. He ate, and was ejected. Having been ejected, he immediately took a wife. He who was a virgin while fasting in Paradise became bound in marriage when he was satisfied with food on the earth.<sup>291</sup>

When it comes to the relationship between abstinence from food and abstinence from sex, Jerome does not see the first as good in itself, but only as a help to attain what is good in itself: Fasting is needed for the preservation of chastity.<sup>292</sup> This instrumental understanding of abstinence from food may be explained by Jerome's need to defend himself from accusations of Manichaeism.<sup>293</sup>

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<sup>290</sup> In *Ep* 22.18, this possibility of actualization of the Fall becomes evident. What happened to Eve can happen to the virgin who is tempted (CSEL 45, 167).

<sup>291</sup> *AdvJov* 2.15, PL 23, 305: *Quamdiu jejunavit, in paradiso fuit: comedit, et ejectus est: ejectus statim duxit uxorem. Qui jejunus in paradiso virgo fuerat, satur in terra matrimonio copulatur.* Jerome saw the intake of too much food and wine as resulting in sexual desire. Here we see that sex was a result of eating too much (or not fasting). The food came first, then sexual desire. This again points to the actualization of the state in Paradise: Food can bring about a fall. In *Ep* 22, Jerome had pointed out that while Adam gave in to temptation by choosing food, Christ did not give in to temptation. Just as food brought us out of Paradise, the abstinence of food can bring us back (*Ep* 22.10, CSEL 45, 157-158).

<sup>292</sup> *Ep* 22.11, CSEL 45, 158-159.

<sup>293</sup> In *Against Jovinian*, Jerome makes clear the difficulty, or rather impossibility, of surrounding oneself with luxuries and pleasure without giving attention to them. If even those who distance themselves from such things experience temptation, how much more will not they be tempted,

After discussing Jerome's ideas about the possibility of a return to the original state through virginity, we should assess the question of the place of marriage during the time of the Gospel. Does it have any legitimate place at all? It has, and because of his need to distance himself from those who condemn marriage, it becomes important for Jerome to make clear what that place is. One way of describing this is to claim that marriage is legitimate as the root of virginity. Jerome argues that the Lord would not have condemned marriage, because that would mean to do away with "the seed-plot of humankind",<sup>294</sup> of which virginity is a growth. Of course, during Old Testament times, this can be connected to the need to fill the earth, but in New Testament times, marriage is justified precisely in the sense of producing virgins. Marriage can thus be seen as something good in relation to virginity, not of course by comparison, but as that from which virginity springs. If the Lord cut off the root, how could He expect fruit?

"A time to plant and a time to uproot":<sup>295</sup> We planted in marriage, Jerome explains, now let us harvest by chastity that which was planted. From the worse comes the better, and this corresponds to the two Testaments, to the time under the Law and the time under the Gospel. Jerome says that we are warned not to prefer the Law to the Gospel, nor to see virginity as equal to marriage. The end of a thing is better than its beginning.<sup>296</sup>

### 2.2.3. *The Absolutely and the Relatively Good. Virginity as an Option for the Strong*

Another way in which Jerome expresses his view on marriage is in terms of absolute and relative goodness.<sup>297</sup> Some things – virginity in this case – are absolutely good, that is, good in themselves (*per se bonum*). Other things – marriage – are relatively good, that is, their goodness depends on what they are compared to. This way of reasoning is obvious in Jerome's likening of virginity and marriage to gold and silver. Silver will not cease to be silver, only because gold is more precious than silver.<sup>298</sup> This statement points to a view on marriage as a lesser good.

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who do not distance themselves from it? The same idea is expressed in *Ep* 22.8, and in both cases, reference is made to 1 Tim 5:6: "but the widow who lives for pleasure is dead even while she lives". The idea seems to be that although food is not evil in itself, living in luxury will result in a fall. Cf. also *Ep* 22.11 (see previous footnote).

<sup>294</sup> *AdvJov* 1.12, PL 23, 227: *Si virginitatem Dominus imperasset, videbatur nuptias condemnare, et hominum auferre seminarium, unde et ipsa virginitas nascitur.*

<sup>295</sup> *Ecc* 3:2.

<sup>296</sup> *AdvJov* 1.29, PL 23, 251, reference to *Ecc* 7.10.

<sup>297</sup> *AdvJov* 1.9, PL 23, 222-223.

<sup>298</sup> *AdvJov* 1.3, PL 23, 213.

Commenting on the parable of the sower,<sup>299</sup> Jerome claims that the thirty-fold, the sixty-fold, and the hundred-fold spring from one earth and from one sowing, but remarks that the numbers are very different.<sup>300</sup> The thirty-fold, says Jerome, applies to married people, the sixty-fold to widows, and the hundred-fold to virgins. If we return to the question of the church and its members, it becomes clear again that, rather than seeing only radical ascetics as real Christians, Jerome imagines a hierarchy of Christians within the one church. This should be seen as a heresiological positioning, because Jerome had to distance himself not only from his opponent, but also from those “heretical” ascetics to whom his opponent accused him of belonging. In contrast to them, he presents himself as not seeing marriage as something bad, but as a lesser good than virginity.<sup>301</sup>

Jerome refers to Jovinian’s words to virgins: “Do not be proud: You are a member of the same church as those who are married”.<sup>302</sup> This may have been said in direct opposition to Jerome, who in his *Letter 22* had exhorted Eustochium: “Learn in this matter a holy pride: Know that you are better than they”.<sup>303</sup> It becomes clear how important membership in the church was in Jovinian’s argumentation: Virgins are not superior to married persons, because they are all members of the church. Above all, the rite of baptism seems to have assumed a central place in his argumentation. If we recall his four propositions, as presented by Jerome, baptism was mentioned in three of them. The new birth in baptism seems to have been understood by Jovinian to imply equal membership in the one church.<sup>304</sup>

Jovinian had apparently based some arguments on 1 Corinthians 7, and this text is abundantly used by Jerome to refute Jovinian and, at the same time, to present his own views as being in accordance with the Scriptures. One of the arguments which Jerome produces from this text concerns the question of relativity. “If it is a good thing not to touch a woman, then it is a bad thing to do so, because what else is the opposite of good, if not evil?”<sup>305</sup> This may not seem so relative, but it becomes clear in what follows that we have to do with a question of degrees. Because, if this evil is allowed, it is to prevent a worse evil. A thing that is allowed

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<sup>299</sup> Mt 13:1-9.

<sup>300</sup> *AdvJov* 1.3, PL 23, 213.

<sup>301</sup> In *Ep* 22.15, the seed from which the hundred-fold and the sixty-fold spring is identified as chastity.

<sup>302</sup> *AdvJov* 1.5, PL 23, 217: *Ne superbias: ejusdem Ecclesiae membrum es, cujus et nuptae sunt.*

<sup>303</sup> *Ep* 22.16, CSEL 54, 163: *Disce in hac parte superbiam sanctam: Scito te illis esse meliorem.*

<sup>304</sup> See Hunter 2007, 30-50, and Kelly 1975, 181.

<sup>305</sup> *AdvJov* 1.7, PL 23, 218: *Si bonum est mulierem non tangere, malum est ergo tangere: nihil enim bono contrarium est, nisi malum.*

to prevent another, worse thing, has only a slight degree of goodness. Marriage would not have been allowed if it were not for fornication.

When it comes to the question of relative goodness, Jerome's view that sex was not part of God's plan for humankind shines through. That is naturally good, which is not so only in comparison to something bad.<sup>306</sup> This can be connected to Jerome's protological and anthropological views: What was not part of the original creation cannot be naturally good, but only relatively good, when compared to worse alternatives. Naturally good are the characteristics with which the human being was originally created. This is connected to the view of Paradise as a perfect state, a state in which the human being was like God.

Concerning the exhortation to married persons to stay away from each other in order to give themselves unto prayer, Jerome wonders what good thing could be an obstacle to prayer, and he argues that, since we should pray always, sexual intercourse should always be avoided.<sup>307</sup>

Jerome points out that when Paul says that after prayer, husband and wife may come together again, he does not express a wish, but only makes a concession because of human weakness. He pays attention to Paul's words that he says this by way of permission, not by way of command.<sup>308</sup> We should thus see marriage as a concession to weakness, rather than a thing commanded.<sup>309</sup> It is permitted because of a worse alternative. The reason why first marriages are allowed is the same as why second and third marriages are allowed: To avoid fornication. All instances of marriage exist by permission, although they are not on the same level. Jerome even brings fornication into this argument, as if he compares the concession that makes marriage possible to that of making a return to the church possible for a sinner. This idea of a hierarchy within the church is an idea that seeks to combine mercy and justice. All Christians are included, even sinners, but all are given the place they deserve. The repentant fornicator is forgiven, but cannot be put on a par with people who have a sexual life within marriage. Neither are married people, living in a sexual relationship, equal to married people who are continent. Virginity is the only way of life that is not only permitted, but is absolutely good in itself.<sup>310</sup>

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<sup>306</sup> *AdvJov* 7, PL 23, 219: *Bonum est illud naturaliter, quod comparationem non habet mali, quod praelatione alteritus non obumbratur.*

<sup>307</sup> *AdvJov* 1.7, PL 23, 220. Also in *Ep* 22.22, Jerome expresses the idea that either we pray always and are virgins, or we cease to pray to fulfill the duties of marriage (CSEL 54, 174).

<sup>308</sup> 1 Cor 7:6.

<sup>309</sup> *AdvJov* 1.8, PL 23, 221: *Et mussitamus adhuc nuptias non vocare indulgentiam, sed praeceptum, quasi non eodem modo et secunda et tertia matrimonia concedantur, quasi not et fornicatoribus per poenitentiam fores aperiantur Ecclesiae, quodque his est majus, et incestis?.*

<sup>310</sup> Cf. Jerome, *Commentary on Galatians* 2.4.13-14, PL 26, 380-381. The Galatians, Jerome explains, could not receive the spiritual understanding because they were carnal-minded. Therefore, because of fleshly weakness, Paul made concessions, allowing them to marry. The

“What the Apostle wishes is one thing; what he allows is another”,<sup>311</sup> Jerome claims. When we do what the Apostle wishes, it is a merit; when we do what he pardons, we are not doing anything good that deserves a reward, but are simply using the indulgence (*abutor* can mean “to use” but also “to use badly”).<sup>312</sup> What the Apostle actually wishes, Jerome says, is clear: “I wish that all were as I myself am”.<sup>313</sup> What Paul wishes, what he is not only indulgent towards (*ignoscentem*) is, according to Jerome, a celibate life. Jerome elaborates this exhortation to imitate Paul: He wishes others to imitate him, just as he himself imitates Christ, a Virgin born of a Virgin.<sup>314</sup>

Jovinian had obviously argued from Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 7:25: “... concerning virgins I have no command of the Lord”. Here we return to the question of command and wish. It is right to say, according to Jerome, that virginity is not commanded, because what is commanded has to be done, and if it is not done, one ought to be punished. If virginity was a command, marriage would be condemned. Since marriage is permitted, virginity cannot be commanded. That marriage should not be permitted, says Jerome, makes no sense: This would mean to do away with the seed-plot of humankind, of which virginity is a growth. There must be a root if there is to be fruit.<sup>315</sup>

Jerome makes clear that while virginity is not commanded, it is still superior to marriage: It is what God wants from us. We return to a rhetoric of strength and weakness: God knows that humans are weak, and He does not command such a difficult thing from them. However, He gives it as a possibility for the stronger ones. There is a difference between *praeceptum* and *consilium*: The first has to be followed, the second is recommended and one is free to follow it or not. We should not marvel, Jerome says, that from us, who live amid the temptations of the flesh, the angelic life is not demanded.<sup>316</sup> Here Jerome refers to Jesus' words about

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commandments to not seek a wife or to live as if they had none are directed at spiritual people. “Some commandments (*praecepta*) are directed at spiritual people, others at carnal-minded people; in one case, an order (*imperium*) is given, in another, an allowance (*indulgentiam*) is made”.

<sup>311</sup> *AdvJov* 1.8, PL 23, 221: *Aliud est, velle quid Apostolum, aliud est ignoscere.*

<sup>312</sup> *AdvJov* 1.8, PL 23, 221.

<sup>313</sup> 1 Cor 7:7.

<sup>314</sup> *AdvJov* 1.8, PL 23, 221.

<sup>315</sup> *AdvJov* 1.12, PL 23, 227. In Ep 22.20, the argument is that to command virginity would have meant abrogating marriage and condemning a divine ordinance. The way of thinking is similar in the two texts: Marriage is permitted, thus, virginity cannot be commanded. In *Against Jovinian*, this is corroborated by the justification of marriage from virginity.

<sup>316</sup> *AdvJov* 1.12, PL 23, 227: *Angelorum vitam non exigimur, sed docemur.* Cf. Ep 22.20, where Jerome also speaks of the angelic life as to difficult a thing to demand, because it is contrary to nature (CSEL 54, 171).

eunuchs who have made themselves such for the sake of the kingdom of heaven.<sup>317</sup> He who is able to receive it, let him receive it, the Lord said, and thus, Jerome concludes, virginity stands as an option for those who are willing and able. The fact that virginity is not commanded is here turned to its advantage: Because virgins *willingly* give what is not commanded of them, Christ loves them more than others.<sup>318</sup> It follows, says Jerome, that those who have not made themselves eunuchs will not receive the same place as those who have.<sup>319</sup> To reconnect to the idea of a hierarchy within the church, it becomes clear that such a hierarchy can be understood in terms of strength and weakness. The weak ones are those who take advantage of the concessions made for their sake. They do not do what is good, but what is allowed. The same way of thinking is seen in Jerome's treatment of Jovinian's third proposition, that which concerned the value of fasting. Fasting is not required of every Christian, Jerome claims; rather, it is for the strong ones, those who want to be perfect.<sup>320</sup>

R.A. Markus' concept of the *secular*, as a neutral sphere between the sacred and the profane, is helpful in understanding Jerome's discussions about virginity and marriage.<sup>321</sup> While Markus argues that it was common for ascetically inclined writers in Jerome's time rhetorically to blend the secular into the profane, thus producing a dichotomy of perfect (ascetic) Christians, separated from the world, and less perfect, ordinary or worldly Christians,<sup>322</sup> I claim that this is not the case with Jerome. For all his loathing of mediocre Christianity, he certainly had a place for it in his hierarchy of Christians – after all, there would not be any hierarchy without it. If we apply the concept of the secular to his ideas, it does certainly not retain the neutral connotation that it has in Markus' usage: Jerome ascribes religious value to it. However, it is clearly separated both from the profane – forbidden, and from the sacred – perfect Christianity. In itself, it is neither good nor bad; at the same time, it is always both good and bad, depending on to what it is compared.

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<sup>317</sup> Duval has noted the similarity to Origen's exegesis in his *Commentary on Matthew 15.5* (Duval 2003, 133-34).

<sup>318</sup> *AdvJov* 1.12, PL 23, 228. This view is also important in *Ep* 22.20: One reason why virginity is not commanded is that what is freely given is worth more than what is extorted by force.

<sup>319</sup> *AdvJov* 1.12, PL 23, 228.

<sup>320</sup> *AdvJov* 2.6.

<sup>321</sup> See Markus 1990 and 2006.

<sup>322</sup> Markus 2006, 74: "The ascetic model set up a simple polarity between Christian perfection and, over against it, worldliness, the secular, the profane, all amalgamated in a single category: the world, the flesh, and the devil, as later Christian language would say".



#### 2.2.4. *Virginity and Human Nature*

Is virginity natural to the human being, or is it against nature? At first sight, Jerome seems to be inconsistent in this matter. One of the reasons that Jerome gives for virginity not being a command is the actual difficulty for a human being to accomplish it<sup>323</sup> – it is contrary to human nature. We have seen that Jerome saw sexuality as a consequence of the Fall, and he tends to understand post-lapsarian human nature above all as a sexualized nature. Human life is characterized by temptation and passion, and, in the case of a Christian, the continuing fight between spirit and flesh.<sup>324</sup> This view on the human condition had been expressed by Jerome in writings before the Jovinianist controversy, and it was an idea that he would return to in later works.<sup>325</sup> As Peter Brown has remarked: “In his [Jerome’s] exegesis of the Apostle, he contributed more heavily than did any other contemporary Latin writer to the definite sexualization of Paul’s notion of the flesh”.<sup>326</sup> It is in connection with this idea that we have to understand his statement that virginity is against nature. After all, being a virgin means living the angelic life, and to be like angels would be too hard to command humans who still live in the flesh.<sup>327</sup>

This understanding of post-lapsarian human nature as characterized by the weakness of the flesh is a theme that is recognized from Origen, and I argue that Jerome was heavily indebted to Origen’s anthropological thought in his own ascetical theology. This profound influence took place long before Jerome wrote his *Against Jovinian*, as an aspect of his reception of Origen’s Pauline exegesis. We saw in the introductory chapter that Jerome was heavily influenced by Origen in writing his commentaries on Galatians and Ephesians (between 386 and 388). In the *Commentary on Galatians*, many parallels can be seen to Origen’s anthropological thinking, based on Paul’s distinction between spirit and flesh. In his *Commentary on Romans*, Origen had spoken of the post-lapsarian existence of humankind as a defiled state, because of the fleshly existence. The flesh was seen

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<sup>323</sup> *AdvJov* 1.34, PL 23, 256.

<sup>324</sup> In *AdvJov* 1.38 (PL 23, 264), Jerome speaks of the “weakness of the flesh” (*infirmitas carnis*) referring to Gal 5:16-17. The same biblical passage is referred to in *AdvJov* 2.3, in a lengthy discussion about the impossibility to escape temptation while living in the flesh.

<sup>325</sup> In *Letter* 22, Eustochium is advised not to be proud, but to fear: She always runs the risk of losing what she owns. Not until the flesh has been dissolved will she be safe (22.3). As long as we are held down by the body, as long as the flesh fights the spirit and the spirit the flesh (cf. Gal 5:17), we have no certain victory (22.4). Although the Apostle brought his body into subjection, he still saw another law in his members, warring against the law of his mind (22.5, cf. Rom 7:23).

<sup>326</sup> Brown 1988, 376.

<sup>327</sup> *AdvJov* 1.12, PL 23, 227: *Non igitur admirari, si inter titillationes carnis, et incentiva vitiorum, Angelorum vitam non exigimur, sed docemur.* Cf. Ep 22.20: *... durissimum erat contra naturam cogere angelorumque uitam ab hominibus extorquere...* (CSEL 54, 171).

as contrary to the spirit, and the soul as being in the middle, giving its assent to either the spirit or the flesh. In Origen's view, a person could become spiritual or fleshly, by turning either to the spirit or to the flesh.<sup>328</sup> Turning to the spirit meant transcending this earthly existence, and having one's citizenship in heaven.

In the present chapter, as well as those that follow, we will have reason to return to this reception on several occasions. For our present purposes, it will suffice to say that an idea that Jerome certainly shared with Origen, was that about the human being's possibility to transcend human nature, and live a heavenly life already on earth.<sup>329</sup> This idea becomes important in Jerome's argument against Jovinian, not least when he discusses virginity in relation to human nature.

In *Against Jovinian*, Jerome notes that "some are made eunuchs by nature, others by human force".<sup>330</sup> The eunuchs who please the Lord are those who are in this condition not from necessity, but from free choice, the ones who have "refused to be what they were born as" (*quod nati sunt*). Again, it becomes clear that Jerome sees virginity as contrary to human nature.

Origen had expressed himself in a similar way when he wrote in his *Commentary on Romans* about the beginning of eschatological realities in the lives of certain persons. He interprets the significance of the circumcision given on the eighth day, by claiming that this points to the future age. The spiritual circumcision belongs to those who anticipate this age, when they will be like the angels of God by not marrying.

... it belongs to those who have castrated themselves for the sake of the kingdom of God, and to those whose citizenship while living on earth is found in heaven; it belongs to those who look not to the things which are seen but to what is unseen, and who know that what is seen is temporal, but what is unseen is eternal.<sup>331</sup>

According to Jerome, the virginity that pleases the Lord is the one freely chosen, which is contrary to nature, contrary to the condition of a person's birth, and too hard for most people. This can be connected to what has been said above about wish and command and a hierarchy of the strong and the weak: Virginity is what is wished, not commanded, and those who are capable of it are the strong, on the top of the hierarchy of Christians.<sup>332</sup> Jerome associates this to what he sees as a

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<sup>328</sup> For instance, Origen, *CommRom* 1.21.5 (SC 532, 252). Cf. Jerome, *CommGal* 3.5.17 (PL 26, 411-413); 5.25 (422).

<sup>329</sup> See, for instance, Jerome, *CommEph* 2.19-22, PL 26, 475-76; Origen, *CommEph* 2.19-22, Gregg 1902, 407-408.

<sup>330</sup> *AdvJov* 1.12, PL 23, 228: *Alios eunuchos natura facit, alios vis hominum*.

<sup>331</sup> *CommRom* 2.9.26, SC 532, 398, transl. Scheck 2001, 155.

<sup>332</sup> *AdvJov* 1.12. Cf. *Ep* 22.19, CSEL 54, 168: *Alium eunuchum necessitas faciat, me voluntas*. Also in this place, there is a connection made to the fact that not all can understand God's saying, but only those to whom it is given.

general tendency in Paul, namely, that he showed mildness to those who were still too weak, so that the new believers drawn from the Gentiles were not given rules that would be too hard for them to follow. This, of course, did not mean that Paul did not see some things as better than others, but he permitted the less good things for the sake of weak persons.<sup>333</sup> In this understanding of the best Christians being those who do more than is commanded, parallels can be seen in Origen's thought. As Yves-Marie Duval has shown, Jerome is dependent on Origen's understanding, expressed in his *Homilies on 1 Corinthians*, of Paul as making a difference between doing well and not sinning. Commenting on 1 Corinthians 7:28, Jerome, after the manner of Origen, claims that the person who marries certainly does not sin; however, Paul does not say that such a person does well either.<sup>334</sup> The idea that virgins belong to a class of Christians who do more than is commanded is also expressed in Origen's *Commentary on Romans*, which we know was an important source for Jerome's Pauline exegesis.<sup>335</sup>

In *Against Jovinian* 1.36, Jerome discusses the existence of natural functions and what these mean when it comes to what kind of life we ought to live. He starts from the argument (obviously coming from Jovinian) that if we were meant to stay virgins, why do we have sexual organs? Why do we have functions that are not to

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<sup>333</sup> *AdvJov* 1.34, PL 23, 256.

<sup>334</sup> *AdvJov* 1.13, PL 23, 229: *Aliud est non peccare, aliud benefacere*. Cf. Origen, *In 1 Cor* 7.26 and 7.28 (*Fragment* 39, Jenkins, 509-510), where Origen points out that when Paul speaks of chastity, he call it good, but when he speaks of marriage, he speaks of it in terms of not sinning. See the discussion of Jerome's dependence on this text in Duval 2003, 135-139, 142. For the dependence on Origen's homilies on 1 Corinthians, see also *Ep* 49.3, where he asks Pammachius to read other writers', among them Origen's, exegesis of 1 Corinthians 7, in order to see that Jerome's views on virginity and marriage were not more extreme than the view of other authorities (CSEL 54, 348-349).

<sup>335</sup> Cf. Origen, *CommRom* 10.14.6-7, where he, commenting on Romans 15:27, makes a distinction between sharing (*communio*) or participation (*participatio*) – pertaining to spiritual things, and ministering (*ministerium*) – pertaining to fleshly things. Ministering has to do with what is owed, while more perfect, heavenly things are not owed. We are in debt because of the sin of Adam and Eve. "For that reason, then, commands are given, so that we may pay off the debts" (*Idcirco ergo et praecepta donantur ut debita persoluamus*, *CommRom* 10.14.6, SC 555, 356, transl. Scheck 2002). Reference is made to Luke 17:10 (those who have only done their duty are unworthy servants), as well as 1 Cor 7:25 (cf. above). Origen claims that the things that we do beyond what is owed, and thus, not because they are commanded, are spiritual and more perfect. To these, virginity belongs. Cf. also *CommRom* 3.2.18-20 (SC 539, 76-78), where Origen argues that because of Adam's sin, we are worthless, and if we do what is commanded, we are still worthless (again, reference is made to Luke 17:10 and to 1 Cor 7:25). If one adds to what has been commanded, however, one is no longer a worthless servant. Virginity goes beyond what is commanded. If a person fulfills the commands and also preserves virginity, he or she is a good and faithful servant. It is probable that Jerome builds on Origen's views, and the more general view on merits and individual struggle to which this idea about commandment must be connected. Obedience to the commandments should of course be expected from everyone. The word *commandment* implies trespass and sin if not followed, and this should be avoided by everyone.

be used? “What does the Apostle mean by exhorting to continence”, Jerome asks, “if continence is contrary to nature?”<sup>336</sup> Why did Paul and Jesus have bodily members which they did not use?

Against this, Jerome wants to make the point that having certain natural functions does not mean that they must be used. He holds that the best thing to do is to act against nature. The angelic life is set against the natural life. Marriage belongs to earth, virginity to heaven. A connection is made to the resurrection, when we will be like the angels: What others begin to be in heaven, virgins begin to be already on earth. The angelic life is a sexless life, and that is what ascetics accomplish here and now.

This idea – that what the Christian should do is to go against nature and in this life, while still living in the flesh, begin to live the kind of life that awaits in heaven – must be placed within a broader framework of protological, anthropological and eschatological views. According to Jerome, sexuality is, as we have seen, not part of the original creation of humankind, and it will not be part of the world to come. It is a consequence of the Fall. It belongs to the post-lapsarian human nature, not to human nature as created by God. The life of the virgin is in the present time both a return to the original state and an anticipation of the future state, i.e. those states that correspond to the will of God. The married life does not correspond to the will of God but is something that He accepts because of human nature’s post-lapsarian condition.

However, in some places, Jerome could express the view that virginity is the natural condition, whereas marriage is not. In *Letter 22*, he claims that virginity is natural, while marriage is the consequence of transgression.<sup>337</sup> This is shown, he says, by the fact that what is born in marriage is virgin flesh, giving back what the root has lost. This is connected to the state in Paradise, to which human beings can return in the new era (the time of the Gospel). Now Paradise is your home too, Jerome writes to Eustochium, and continues: “Keep the condition of your birth”.<sup>338</sup> Here, the situation is reversed, compared to what we have seen previously: Virginity, not marriage, is the natural condition.

This does, however, not mean that Jerome contradicts himself. What we have to do with here is two senses of “nature” and “natural”. The one has to do with human nature after the Fall. In this case, the sexual life is natural, the life of virginity is against nature. However, “natural” can also mean the way in which humankind was created, that is, in the image of God. In this case, virginity is the

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<sup>336</sup> *AdvJov* 1.36, PL 23, 260: *Quid sibi autem vult apostolus, ut ad continentiam cohortetur, si contra naturam est?*

<sup>337</sup> *Ep* 22.19, CSEL 54, 169: *... uirginitatem esse naturae, nuptias post delictum.*

<sup>338</sup> *Ep* 22.19, CSEL 52, 169: *serua, quod nata es.*

natural condition. Marriage was not part of the original creation, but was a consequence of the Fall.

### 2.2.5. *Virginity and the World to Come*

In *Against Jovinian*, Jerome associates virginity to death as well as to immortality. The virgin is said to die to the present world already before his or her physical death, and at the same time to anticipate the heavenly life while still living on earth. In a sense, the virgin, when physically dying, has already left the world and gained immortality. We have better offer voluntarily already here and now what will be taken from us anyway; and by offering it freely, we will receive a greater reward.<sup>339</sup>

When discussing the apostles, to whom Jovinian had referred as examples of holy persons who had married, Jerome, although he accepted that most of the apostles might have been married (since they had lived under the Law before the crucifixion, when the time of the Gospel began) places most emphasis on the apostle John, who he claims was a virgin. John, the youngest of the apostles, had been a virgin when he became a Christian, and had remained a virgin. This was the reason why he was more beloved by Jesus. He, a virgin, recognized Jesus, a virgin, after the resurrection.<sup>340</sup> When it is said in the Gospel of John that because of Jesus' words to Peter, a saying went abroad that the most beloved disciple would not die,<sup>341</sup> Jerome uses this to show the connection between virginity and immortality. Here we have proof, he says, that virginity does not die, but abides with Christ, and its sleep is not death but a passing to another state.<sup>342</sup>

I argue that this idea about the immortality of the virgin is connected to an idea about the possibility of ascetics to transcend their physical conditions while still living in the flesh. The virgin transcends the earthly life and begins the eternal life – the angelic life – already on earth. Thus, physical death loses its significance. The boundary between Heaven and earth is dissolved. This may be compared to what was said previously about the ascetic life as a return to Paradise, which was, likewise, a state of immortality. With the coming of Christ, the Alpha and the Omega, it was possible for human beings to regain their humanity in the image of God, a humanity in the likeness to the angels, and thus both to return to Paradise and to anticipate Heaven.

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<sup>339</sup> *AdvJov* 1.13, PL 23, 230: *Si autem mors finis est nuptiarum: cur necessitatem non in voluntatem vertimus? Et quod invitis extorquendum est, cur non spe praemiorum offerimus Deo?*

<sup>340</sup> *AdvJov* 1.26, PL 23, 246: *solus virgo virginem agnoscit.*

<sup>341</sup> *Jn* 21:23.

<sup>342</sup> *AdvJov* 1.26, PL 23, 247: *Ex quo ostenditur, virginitatem non mori, nec sordes nuptiarum abluere cruore martyrii, sed manere cum Christo, et dormitionem ejus, transitum esse, non mortem.*

This is closely connected to Jerome's views on salvation history; the divisions, discussed above, that he makes between before the Fall, after the Fall, after the deluge, after the Incarnation. This view has eschatological consequences, because when the great before/after belongs to the Incarnation, neither the physical death nor the heavenly life are seen as the beginning of something entirely new. Rather, the time between death and resurrection, and even after the resurrection, is seen as a continuation of what has begun in this life. The virgin has begun the immortal life already on earth and he or she will continue to live that life in the next world. In a way, death does not even occur.

### 2.2.6. Sexual Differentiation

The question of sexual differentiation would become of immense importance during the Origenist controversy, and Jerome would be forced to defend his views. In the earlier part of his career, which we are now dealing with, an influence from Origen on his views on sexual differentiation and the resurrection body is obvious.<sup>343</sup>

Origen had discussed the character of the resurrection body in his *Commentary on Matthew*. Here he expresses the view that the bodies of the resurrected will be like angelic bodies, ethereal and shining.<sup>344</sup> These bodies will, according to Origen, be without age or sex, and this he seems to explain by the fact that the corresponding functions have no place in heaven: That is, we will not grow, and we will not engage in sexual intercourse. For Origen, the idea of a sexless life after death is connected to the beginning of a sexless life on earth, which is achievable by practising continence. Since we shall one day be like the angels, we should, according to Origen, begin this life already here on earth.

While it is certain that Jerome knew and used Origen's *Commentary on Matthew*, and may have been influenced by the ideas about sexual difference that are expressed in it,<sup>345</sup> a direct dependence on Origen's ideas about sexual difference can be found in the *Commentary on Ephesians*. Thanks to Heine's translation and juxtaposition of their respective commentaries,<sup>346</sup> as well as the

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<sup>343</sup> A thorough discussion about Jerome's use of Origen's ideas about sexual difference will be given in chapter 4, as it is an important aspect of Jerome's theories about the resurrection body.

<sup>344</sup> Origen, *CommMt* 17.29-30, commenting on Matthew 22:30: "For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven".

<sup>345</sup> In *Letter* 33.4, Jerome mentions that Origen has written 25 books on the Gospel of Matthew (CSEL 54, 256). For Jerome's dependence on Origen's exegesis in his own *Commentary on Matthew*, written in 398, see the introduction to Scheck's translation (2008, 19-23).

<sup>346</sup> Heine 2002.

information that we have from Jerome himself in this regard,<sup>347</sup> we may be certain of such an influence.

In this commentary, Jerome speaks about the relation between husbands and wives and compares this to the relation between soul and body. "... we must care for our wives as for our own bodies",<sup>348</sup> Jerome writes. A little later on he adds: "... a woman also possesses this difference in respect to a man which the body has in respect to the soul in the literal sense inasmuch as a woman is devoted to birth and children".<sup>349</sup> The connection between woman and body (rather than soul) thus seems to be connected to the fact of childbirth. However, Jerome continues, a woman can choose not to become pregnant and give birth to children; she can be devoted to Christ more than to the world. If she chooses this, "she will cease to be a woman and be said to be a man, because we all desire to attain to the perfect man". This seems to be the literal sense according to Jerome, while the tropological sense is that we shall love our body which, although it is lower in rank than the soul, is a means for us to use in our development.<sup>350</sup>

What follows is part of Jerome's *Commentary on Ephesians*, but in his *Apology against Rufinus*, he claims that it is quoted from Origen's commentary. He says that the soul nourishes and cherishes that flesh which will see the salvation of God.

... souls also cherish their bodies so that this corruptible may put on incorruption and, suspended on the lightness of wings, may be lifted more easily into the air. Therefore, let us husbands cherish our wives and let our souls cherish our bodies so that wives may be brought into the rank of men and bodies into the rank of souls. And may there be no diversity of the sexes at all, but as there is no man and woman among the angels, so also let us, who will be like angels, even now begin to be that which has been promised us in the heavens.<sup>351</sup>

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<sup>347</sup> In his *Apology against Rufinus*, Jerome tries to sort out which parts of the commentary are from Origen, and which represent his own ideas (for his ideas about sexual difference, see *ApolRuf* 1.29).

<sup>348</sup> *CommEph* 3.5.28, PL 26, 533, transl. Heine 2002, 237.

<sup>349</sup> *CommEph* 3.5.28, PL 26, 533, transl. Heine 2002, 237.

<sup>350</sup> While the tropological sense builds on Origen's idea that man corresponds to soul and body, which is inferior, to woman (and thus makes permanent the hierarchy), the literal sense opens for the possibility of dissolving the hierarchy. A woman can choose to cease being a woman, by not engaging in sex and childbearing.

<sup>351</sup> *CommEph* 3.5.29, PL 26, 534, (transl. Heine 2002, 238): *Animae quoque fovent corpora sua, ut corruptivum hoc induat incorruptionem, et alarum levitate suspensum, in aera facilius elevetur. Foveamus igitur et viri uxores, et animae nostra corpora, ut et uxores in viros, et corpora redigantur in animas. Et nequaquam sit sexuum ulla diversitas: sed quomodo apud angelos non est vir et mulier: ita et nos, qui similes angelis futuri sumus, jam nunc incipiamus esse quod nobis in coelestibus repromissum est.*

Here is reflected Origen's idea of the resurrected life as a life like that of the angels, meaning, among other things, without sex. This future state motivates us to begin to live like the angels already in this life. It is a two-way process, because precisely in doing that – by cherishing our body by asceticism – corruption can put on incorruption. The goal is the angelic life, and to reach it, we should begin living it already here on earth.

The *Commentary on Ephesians* was written a few years before *Against Jovinian*, and as I will argue in what follows, Jerome continued in this work to express ideas about the possible transcendence of sexual difference. It has already become clear that he claimed, against Jovinian, that Adam and Eve were virgins in Paradise and that the sexual life was a consequence of their being cast out. Referring to the words in Colossians 3:9-11, and adding “male and female” to the list of opposites that no longer exist if one has been renewed in knowledge in the image of the Creator, Jerome states that the bond of marriage is not found in this image.<sup>352</sup> I argue that this statement, which appears directly after the quotation of the biblical passage, shows that Jerome intends to say that humankind, created in the image of God, did not originally consist in two different sexes, but was one.<sup>353</sup>

It is, according to Jerome, to this condition that we are able to return in the era of the Gospel. Through the work of Christ, and through His consecration of virginity, we can return to the original state in Paradise. When the difference of sex (*diversitas sexus*) is done away with, and we have put off the old human (*homo*) and put on the new, we are born again into Christ.<sup>354</sup> The point seems to be that by living a virginal life, we can make sexual difference disappear, and in this way we can put off the old human, who was a consequence of the Fall, and put on the new, who is renewed according to the image of God. This image contains no sexual difference. In this way, we are born again, and in contrast to our natural birth, which is a birth into a life of sexual differentiation, this birth brings us back to the original condition in Paradise. This way of understanding the creation of human beings in the image of God as pertaining to a humanity without sexual difference probably has Origen as its source.<sup>355</sup>

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<sup>352</sup> *AdvJov* 1.16, PL 23, 235: *Imago Creatoris non habet copulam nuptiarum.*

<sup>353</sup> Origen also denied that man and woman were part of the original creation, and saw this differentiation as a consequence of the Fall. Origen's view differs from Jerome's in that Origen imagined the original creation as that of pre-existent rational beings. Jerome expresses nothing of this thought in the present work. Still, he seems to agree with the view that being created in the image of God meant being created without differentiation of sex.

<sup>354</sup> *AdvJov* 1.16, PL 23, 235.

<sup>355</sup> Concerning this passage in *Against Jovinian*, Duval has pointed out a possible dependence on Origen's ideas about the creation of humans in the image of God, as expressed in his *Homilies on Genesis* 1.13 (Duval 2003, 154).



A clear similarity to Origen is found in Jerome's remark that *two* is not a good number. It is not said in Genesis about the creation on the second day that it was good, as is the case of all the other days.<sup>356</sup> Also, all the animals that Noah took into the ark in pairs were unclean animals.<sup>357</sup> Thus, it shows that he views the original creation of humanity as singular.

In *Against Jovinian* 1.29, Jerome returns to the question of sexual differentiation, here with reference to Ecclesiastes 7:28-29: "One man among a thousand I found, but a woman among all these I have not found. See, this alone I found, that God made human beings straightforward". These words give Jerome an occasion to discuss the condition of the first human beings. Concerning the human being (*homo*) that God made, Jerome notes that the word can refer to males as well as females. A woman, says the author, he has not found. Connecting to Genesis, Jerome concludes that Adam, that is *homo*, is called both male and female.

Those who remained virgins in Paradise were joined together after leaving Paradise. This fact is important in Jerome's argumentation: If marriage was as good as virginity, why did the first humans not have sexual intercourse in Paradise? They were driven out, and began to do on earth what they had not done in Paradise.

In *Letter* 22, when arguing that the punishment of womankind does not pertain to virgins, Jerome says about the punishment "you shall die"<sup>358</sup> that (in the virgin's words) "this is the end of marriage, but my way of life is without sex (*sine sexu*)".<sup>359</sup> Instead of dying, the virgin is without sex; thus, dying is set in opposition to independence of sex. This can only be explained by reference to the state in Paradise, which was a state without death and without sexuality. Mortality came with the coats of skin. Those who choose a sexual life will surely die, they are still under the punishment. However, there is now a possibility to go back to what was before the Fall, and to choose not to fall. Then the punishment will be avoided and immortality granted.<sup>360</sup>

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<sup>356</sup> Cf. Gen 1:8.

<sup>357</sup> *AdvJov* 1.16. A dependence on Origen has been argued by Duval (2003, 155-157) who refers to Origen's *Letter to Africanus* 4 and to *HomGen* 2.6. See also Courcelle 1969, 105, n. 105. To this might be added a passage from Origen's *Commentary on Romans*, where he associated the number *two* to uncleanness: *CommRom* 3.8.4 (SC 539, 128-130). In his *Letter* 48, Jerome mentions Origen among the authors who have commented on the question about the odd number before him (48.19, CSEL 54, 384).

<sup>358</sup> Gen 2:17.

<sup>359</sup> *Ep* 22.18, CSEL 54, 167.

<sup>360</sup> About becoming a man, cf. Origen, *HomEx* 2.1-2 (SC 321, 68-78) where he explains the reason why Pharaoh wanted to kill males, not females. Origen claims that the flesh and the passions of the flesh are designated by the female, and the man is the rational sense and the intellectual spirit. Pharaoh (the devil) wants to destroy the rational sense and wants the passions of the flesh to live. An exhortation is made to keep alive the male inside, to attend and assist the inner man. Cf. *AdvJov* 1.12, about the eunuch, who by the strength of his faith gained the name of a *man* (PL 23, 228).

We have already seen that Jerome understood the ascetic life as an anticipation of the angelic life in heaven. Being like angels – without sex – means not to use the functions of sex. Of the state in the resurrection, he writes:

If likeness to the angels is promised to us (and among the angels there is no sexual difference), we will either be without sex, as the angels are, or at least, which is clearly proved, we will rise in our own sex, not using the function of sex.<sup>361</sup>

Did Jerome think that we will be asexual, as the angels are? Although this was an idea that Jerome would refute vehemently during the Origenist controversy, at this point, he seems to be uncertain. However, he is very clear on the point that matters to him: *If we rise in our own sex, we shall not perform the functions of sex.* Already on earth, transcendence of sex is possible for the ascetic person, precisely by refusing the natural functions.

### 2.2.7. *Virgins as a Special Race*

It becomes clear from *Against Jovinian* that for Jerome, virgins make up a kind of race of their own. They belong together and they stand in a special relation to each other and to the Lord. Jesus was a virgin, born of a virgin. John, who was young and had not married when he became a Christian, remained a virgin, and he was more beloved by Jesus than the other disciples. He was the one who took care of Mary after Jesus' death, and according to Jerome, his virginity was crucial in this: "the virgin mother was committed by the virgin Lord to the virgin disciple".<sup>362</sup> With reference to the Gospel of John, Jerome explains that this apostle stands above the other evangelists: While they begin their gospels by focusing on Jesus' earthly life, John begins with the Word in the beginning. "Virginity expounded what marriage could not know".<sup>363</sup> Thus, Jerome's references to virgins in earliest Christianity do not only have the purpose of showing that virginity had been held in high regard from the beginning of the Christian era (meaning that his form of asceticism was no innovation), but also to show that virgins are a kind of their own, a kind that stands in a special relation to God, and have possibilities that others do not have. This is important in his placing virgins on the top of the hierarchy within the church, and it is of course notable that this special relation to God and the special abilities it brings is possible to reach (in theory, at least) for anyone, regardless of social class or gender. It certainly is no prerogative of the clergy.

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<sup>361</sup> *AdvJov* 1.36, PL 23, 261: *Si angelorum nobis similitudo promittitur (inter angelos autem non est sexus diversitas), aut sine sexu erimus, quod angeli sunt; aut certe quod liquido comprobatur, resurgentes in proprio sexu, sexus non fungemur officio.*

<sup>362</sup> *AdvJov* 1.26, PL 23, 248: *... a Domino virgine, mater virgo, virgini discipulo commendatur.*

<sup>363</sup> *AdvJov* 1.26, PL 23, 248: *Exposuit virginitas, quod nuptiae scire non poterant.*

In his *Letter 22*, Jerome had written that when the Son of God came to the earth, He established for himself a new household (*familia*) there, so that just as He was served by angels in heaven, He would be served by angels on earth. Being a servant of the Lord implies not serving anyone in the world.<sup>364</sup>

This can be compared with Jerome's words about those who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom, and who are said to have renounced their condition of birth.<sup>365</sup> This expression points to the idea that the virgin race stands in a special relation to God, similar to that of the priests. It is obvious that this is a race / household / order instituted by the Lord, which becomes clear for example in *Against Jovinian* 1.36: The Lord caused John the Baptist and John the Apostle to make themselves eunuchs through love of Him, after causing them to be born men.<sup>366</sup> The virgin race lives contrary to post-lapsarian human nature, but according to human nature as it was originally created. This is necessary for them to be able to conduct the proper worship: They are not to think about the things of the world, but about the things of the Lord.<sup>367</sup>

Jesus was born by a virgin, and He continues to be born by virgins. In *Letter 22*, Jerome had claimed that Mary, who did not want to speak to any man, spoke fearlessly with an angel. Now you, too, says Jerome to Eustochium, can be the Lord's mother. He refers to Jesus' words about who are His mother and His brothers.<sup>368</sup> As Christ becomes older, He regards the virgin no longer as His mother, but as His bride. Thus is shown the special, very intimate, relation between Christ and the virgin.<sup>369</sup> This mystical side of Jerome's thought shows a great indebtedness to Origen. Origen spoke of Christians as part of a fellowship with the saints. Already on earth, while still in the body, a person could belong to the same fellowship as those in heaven. In connection to this, he refers to Matthew 22:30 and thus clearly shows that he understands these words about the resurrection as pertaining to the earthly life. Reference is also made to the promise of the kingdom of heaven.<sup>370</sup>

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<sup>364</sup> *Ep* 22.21, CSEL 54, 173-74.

<sup>365</sup> *AdvJov* 1.12, PL 23, 228.

<sup>366</sup> This, in turn, can be connected to what has been said about nature: That the Lord wants us to live *against* nature, that the fact of physical functions does not implicate that we should follow them.

<sup>367</sup> In his *Commentary on Ephesians* 1.2.19 (PL 26, 475-476) Jerome comments on the words about being citizens of the saints and members of the household of God (Eph 2:19). Human beings and heavenly powers can all equally become a dwelling place of God in the spirit. As shown by Heine, Jerome was heavily dependent on Origen's exegesis (Heine 2002, 138-139).

<sup>368</sup> Mt 12:49.

<sup>369</sup> *Ep* 22.38, CSEL 54, 202-205.

<sup>370</sup> *HomLev* 4.4, SC 286, 170-172. Origen's *Homilies on Leviticus* appear to have had a great influence on Jerome, when it comes to mystical interpretations of the Old Testament cult as referring to the reality of the Christian person. His knowledge of them is shown by the mention of

### 2.2.8. *Virgins and Priests*

In her book *Reading Renunciation*, Elizabeth Clark has showed how early Christian writers made exegetical use of elements in the Old Testament cult, such as the Temple and the sacrifices, by transferring the sanctity of these to Christian ascetics. It was common, for example, to call the virgin a temple who gives him/herself as a sacrifice.<sup>371</sup> By using different exegetical strategies, texts concerning ritual purity could be referred to in order to make claims about sanctity and spiritual authority in the church. I will return to this issue in the third part of this chapter, where I will discuss some alternative ways of constructing such authority, as compared to Jerome's. For now, we will focus on Jerome's standpoint as it is expressed in *Against Jovinian*.

Clark argues that while the meaning of "temple" and "sacrifice" was narrowed down by the ascetic writers, so as to refer only to celibates, the language of purity on pollution was rather broadened: Such regulations were relevant for all Christians.<sup>372</sup> This often had to do with lay people being required to abstain from sexual relations for certain periods. While this is certainly correct, I still think it is important to point out that purity had a very different function for the ascetic person than for the lay person, a function that is directly connected to the ascetic's role as temple and sacrifice.

In *Against Jovinian*, Jerome speaks of virgins who make themselves pure temples of God by offering themselves as a whole burnt-offering, being holy both in body and in spirit.<sup>373</sup> In order to be a sacrifice, it is not enough to be a virgin in the flesh: While the flesh must not be defiled by lust, the mind must not be defiled by impure thought.<sup>374</sup> The reason why marriage prevents sanctity is not only the sexual intercourse that it involves, but also the fact that the married person's mind is occupied by worldly thoughts. She who is married, Jerome points out, thinks of the things of the world, how she may please her husband, "But we are not of this world".<sup>375</sup> In the same work, Jerome uses the words in 1 Peter 2:5, about the holy

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them in his list of Origen's works in *Letter* 33 (CSEL 54, 257), and the fact that he had read them is shown by the reference to them in *Letter* 36.1, to Pope Damasus (CSEL 54, 269). See Courcelle 1969, 106.

<sup>371</sup> Clark 1999, 204-232.

<sup>372</sup> Clark 1999, 215-216.

<sup>373</sup> *AdvJov* 1.12, PL 23, 228: *Grandis fidei est, grandisque virtutis, Dei templum esse purissimum, totum se holocaustum offerre Domino; et juxta eumdem Apostolum, esse sanctum et corpore et spiritu.*

<sup>374</sup> *AdvJov* 1.13, PL 23, 231: *Sed illa virginitas hostia Christi est, cujus nec mentem cogitatio, nec carnem libido maculavit.*

<sup>375</sup> *AdvJov* 1.13, PL 23, 231: *Nos autem non sumus de hoc mundo.* Jerome's occupation with the purity of the virgin's mind is clearly seen in *Ep* 22.23 (CSEL 54, 177), where he writes: *Iesus ingressus templum omnia, quae templi non erant, proiecit. Deus enim zelotes est et non vult domum patris fieri speluncam latronum. Alioquin, ubi aera numerantur, ubi sunt caeuae*

priesthood that offers spiritual sacrifices, to refer especially to celibates, as well as 1 Peter 2:9 (“you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood...”).<sup>376</sup>

The virgin is, in Jerome's view, not only a temple and a sacrifice, but also the one who offers the sacrifice. This is crucial, because it means that the virgin does not only have a passive role – that is, his/her purity is not only necessary for approaching something holy, or for receiving something holy, which is, for instance, the case with regard to lay people who participate in the Eucharist. Besides having the passive role of being a receiver, the virgin certainly has an active role as well, in offering him/herself as a sacrifice.

When Jerome speaks about those who have made themselves eunuchs, they are said to have renounced their condition of birth in order to worship God (*ob mei cultum noluerunt esse quod nati sunt*).<sup>377</sup> The mention of a *cultus* for which virgins renounce a sexual life, marriage, and children, in order to dedicate themselves wholeheartedly to the worship of God, indicates that Jerome ascribes a priestly status to these ascetics. They are an elevated group, standing in a relationship to God which married people cannot obtain.

With references to the people who had to avoid sexual intercourse for three days when they were near mount Sinai and the show-bread which might not be eaten by those who had recently had sexual intercourse, Jerome states that in view of the purity of the body of Christ, all sexual intercourse is impure.<sup>378</sup> He also refers to the regulation that a man who has married a wife and planted a vineyard must not go to battle, and gives the explanation that he who is a servant of his wife cannot be a soldier of the Lord.<sup>379</sup> Further, he points out that the laver in the tabernacle was made from the mirrors of women who fasted, signifying the bodies of pure virgins. Within the temple, things were made of the purest gold, for silver must not be brought into the holy of holies.<sup>380</sup>

As we will see later in this chapter, Ambrosiaster and Siricius likewise made use of Old Testament texts about ritual and purity; however, they did so in order to show that celibacy was first and foremost a characteristic of the ordained clergy, which separated them, as a holy elite, from other Christians. To a great extent,

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*columbarum et simplicitas enecatur, ubi in pectore virginali seacularium negotiorum cura aestuat, statim velum templi scinditur; sponsus consurgit iratus et dicit: relinquetur vobis domus vestra deserta.*

<sup>376</sup> *AdvJov* 1.39, PL 23, 266.

<sup>377</sup> *AdvJov* 1.12. See also 1.40 (PL 23, 269), where he claims that a lost people cannot be saved unless it offers sacrifices of chastity (*hostiae castitatis*) to God.

<sup>378</sup> *AdvJov* 1.20, PL 23, 238.

<sup>379</sup> *AdvJov* 1.20, with reference to Deut 20:6-7.

<sup>380</sup> Similar thoughts are expressed in *Ep* 22.23 (CSEL 45, 175-176). Just as the vessels of the temple were not to be displayed to anyone, so virgins should not be exposed to public gaze. In this text, the virgin's body is referred to as a temple.

Jerome does the same thing; that is, he uses the texts as reference to Christian priesthood, and sees celibacy as that which makes priests a separate, holy group within the church. However, he does not include only, or even primarily, ordained clergy, but rather all ascetics and, above all, virgins. These do not have to be priests to have this special place. Jerome's vision of a hierarchy in the church is dynamic in the sense that it depends on a person's degree of purity.

In his defence of marriage, Jovinian had pointed out that men with one wife and with children were appointed by the Apostle to become bishops.<sup>381</sup> Jerome argues that, in order to avoid that the first Gentile believers abandoned the church because the regulations were so hard, the Apostle Paul made the burden light for them, just as he, though he preferred virginity to marriage, had no commandments concerning virginity. When it comes to bishops, Jerome turns Jovinian's argument to his own advantage: The bishop is surely not a man who begets children during his episcopate. If the priests were allowed to perform the work of marriage, it would have pointed to an equality between marriage and virginity, but as it is, they are not equal: "... if it is unlawful for priests to touch their wives, they are holy in the sense that they imitate virgin chastity".<sup>382</sup> The fact that priests have to be chaste points to the superiority of virginity to marriage, and also, of all virgins to all married people. The chastity of once-married priests makes them holy because they imitate virgin chastity. This is the primary form of chastity. Jerome says that the number of virgins is not great enough for all priests to be virgins. He draws a parallel to an army: Does it follow that, because all the strongest soldiers are chosen, the weaker ones should not be taken as well? For the army to reach the right number of soldiers, even weaker persons have to be chosen.<sup>383</sup> Sometimes married persons are chosen instead of virgins, and Jerome gives some possible reasons for this, for example, that those who elect them are themselves mostly married, and that bishops look for the wrong characteristics in candidates.<sup>384</sup>

Jerome argues that bishop, priest and deacon are not honourable distinctions, but names of offices. The blessedness of bishops, priests, and deacons does not lie in the fact that they are such, but in their possession of the virtues that their offices imply. A deacon can be holier than a bishop. Jerome argues that although there are distinctions of rank in an army, once the battle begins, these do not mean anything, but only the victory – similarly, in the battle that the church is fighting, it is not

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<sup>381</sup> Cf. 1 Tim 3:2.

<sup>382</sup> *AdvJov* 1.34, PL 23, 257: *aut si sacerdotibus non licet uxores tangere, in eo sancti sunt, quia imitantur pudicitiam virginalem.*

<sup>383</sup> *AdvJov* 1.34.

<sup>384</sup> *AdvJov* 1.34. Cf. *Ep* 52.7, to Nepotian (394), where Jerome discusses the relationship between bishops and priests: Bishops should know themselves to be priests, not lords.

names, but deeds that are needed. It is not the person who is most noble, but the one who is bravest warrior, who has the greatest honour.<sup>385</sup>

There is reason to believe that Jerome was dependent on Origen for his ideas about priesthood and sanctity. Many of the exegetical strategies applied to Old Testament texts about purity and ritual can be recognized in Origen's works. Origen, too, had pointed out the importance of inner purity: Physical abstinence is not enough. In a homily on Leviticus, Origen claims (commenting on Leviticus 1:3 f.) that to offer blood on the altar through the priest or the sons of the priest means to be made pure in body and spirit. In this case, the sacrifice is that of our flesh, which is mortified. This flesh (the calf) shall be male, not knowing a female, avoiding concupiscence and weakness. The priest and his sons designate the mind. There are those who offer their flesh, but not through the ministry of the priest, that is, while they are pure in the body, they are not so in their mind. These are likened to the five foolish virgins.<sup>386</sup> If the priestly ministry and the other virtues are lacking, the continence of the flesh does not reach the altar of the Lord.<sup>387</sup>

In a homily on Joshua, Origen writes:

For indeed whoever lives by a priestly religion and by holiness are themselves truly the priests and Levites of the Lord. It is not just those who seem to sit in the priestly assembly, but even more those who behave in a priestly manner. Their portion is the Lord, and they do not possess any portion on the earth.<sup>388</sup>

The Levites in the Old Testament are interpreted as the small group with pure minds, who surpass all the rest.<sup>389</sup> "According to a spiritual understanding, the priest is called the mind consecrated to God and the Levite is called that one who incessantly assists God and serves his will".<sup>390</sup> Those who devote themselves to the service of God can be said to be Levites and priests.<sup>391</sup>

In Origen's view, the perfect believer is a priest. The ordained person is, or at least should be, elected because of having this characteristic. Ideally, they are

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<sup>385</sup> *AdvJov* 1.35, PL 23, 259.

<sup>386</sup> Mt 25:1-13.

<sup>387</sup> *HomLev* 1.5, SC 286, 84-88.

<sup>388</sup> *HomJos* 9.5, SC 71, 254: *Etenim quicumque sacerdotali religione et sanctitate vivunt, non solum hi qui videntur in consessu sacerdotali, sed hi magis, qui sacerdotaliter agunt, quorum pars est Dominus nec ulla iis portio habetur in terris, ipsi sunt vere sacerdotes et Levitae Domini...* Transl. Bruce 2000, 101.

<sup>389</sup> *HomJos* 17.2-3, SC 71, 374-382.

<sup>390</sup> *HomLev* 15.3, SC 287, 256: *Secundum spiritalem intelligentiam sacerdos mens Deo consecrata dicitur et levita appellatur is, qui indesinenter adsistit Deo et voluntati eius ministrat.* Transl. Barkley 1990, 259.

<sup>391</sup> *CommJo* 1.2.10, SC 120, 62.

perfect, and at the top of the hierarchy of holiness. In reality, though, priests are sometimes elected for other reasons than their holiness – a point that we have seen Jerome make as well. According to Origen, a person who has been ordained but is not perfect, is not really a priest at all. On the other hand, a lay person can be holier than clerics, and can rightly be called a priest.<sup>392</sup> The order of the church is an order of souls.<sup>393</sup>

According to Origen, the perfect – sacred – Christians were those who distanced themselves from the world, as much in body as in mind: The person who did not keep his/her mind pure did not profit from the purity of the body. For Christ to dwell in the Christian, the mind had to be pure; the problem of evil thoughts was extensively treated by Origen. The Christians who, in this way, kept their minds pure, like temples, were the real priests. The hierarchy of Christians was a spiritual one, not based on ordination, but on inner development. In a similar way, sacraments were, in Origen's view, of no use if the person who received them had the wrong disposition.<sup>394</sup>

Jerome certainly shared with Origen a dynamic view on the hierarchy of Christians: It depended more on their inner condition, and on their way of life, than on outer characteristics, such as ordination. Even priesthood itself was understood by both authors as a quality that could be achieved and lost. The exegetical strategies applied by Jerome show similarities to those from Origen's works. This is also the case when we come to our next theme, that of baptism: As Origen had done before him, Jerome argued against the idea of a ritual act as necessarily transforming a person; such a transformation, whether by ordination or baptism, was seen as dependent on choices made by the individual.

### 2.2.9. *The Meaning of Baptism*

We have noted the importance of baptism in Jovinian's thought, and in what follows, we will take a closer look at Jerome's refutation on this point and his own ideas about the meaning of baptism. Against Jovinian's first thesis (virgins, widows and married women who have been baptized and who do not differ from each other in other works are of equal merit), Jerome remarks that if we understand the regenerating character of baptism (*baptisma novum hominem facit*) as meaning that there will be no difference between a virgin and a widow, then the same must be said of harlots: Once baptized, they will be equal to virgins.<sup>395</sup>

In the second book of *Against Jovinian*, Jerome attacks the second thesis of his adversary (those who, with full assurance of faith, have been born again in baptism

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<sup>392</sup> See *HomLev* 6.5, SC 286, 288-290; 9.9, 116. See the discussion in Ledegang 2001, 350-351.

<sup>393</sup> Like Jerome, Origen compares it to an army: *HomJos* 12.1, SC 71, 294-296.

<sup>394</sup> See *CommRom* 5.8, SC 539, 464-466; *CommJn* 1.7.40-43, SC 120, 82-84.

<sup>395</sup> *AdvJov* 1.33, PL 23, 255.



cannot be overthrown by the devil). Here, however, he presents it as saying that those who are baptised cannot be *tempted* (*tentari*) by the devil (rather than *overthrown*, *subverti*), thus making the proposition quite easy to refute.<sup>396</sup> Jerome claims that Jovinian used the following biblical passage from 1 John: “Those who have been born of God do not sin, because God's seed abides in them; they cannot sin, because they have been born of God.”<sup>397</sup> From this, Jovinian is said to have argued that God abides in all the baptized alike, that is, there is no difference between them because of their different progress in the post-baptismal life.

Jerome seeks to present Jovinian as having a deterministic view, in the sense of claiming that the baptized cannot fall, for the reason that temptation itself, that is, the cause of falling, cannot affect them. Against this, Jerome claims that baptism certainly cleanses a person from former sins, but it does not prevent future sins.<sup>398</sup> One method in Jerome's refutation of this proposition is to point to human existence in the flesh as implying a constant risk of temptation and, thereby, of falling: The flesh is what keeps even the baptised person in an uncertain position. He asks: “Does anyone think that we are safe, and that we should be sleeping once we have been baptised?”<sup>399</sup> Referring to 1 Corinthians 3:10-15, he points out that a Christian can build with gold, silver, and precious stones, as well as with wood, hay, and straw.<sup>400</sup> The post-baptismal life is seen by Jerome as a struggle: Nothing is settled by baptism.<sup>401</sup>

Besides arguing from the fleshly existence and the risk of falling that it continues to imply, Jerome argues from an idea about God's justice: If the will were not free – if we could not fall after baptism – the individual would not deserve either reward or punishment. “God created us with free will, and we are not forced by necessity to embrace either virtues or vices. Where there is necessity, there is no crown”.<sup>402</sup>

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<sup>396</sup> *AdvJov* 2.1, PL 23, 281.

<sup>397</sup> 1 John 3:9.

<sup>398</sup> *AdvJov* 2.4, PL 23, 290: *et nos nobis blandimur de baptisate: quod sicut priora peccata dimittit, sic in futurum servare non potest, nisi baptizati omni custodia servaverint cor suum* (Proverbs 4:23).

<sup>399</sup> *AdvJov* 2.3, PL 23, 286: *Et existimat aliquis securos, et dormientes nos esse debere post baptismum?*

<sup>400</sup> *AdvJov* 2.3, PL 23, 287.

<sup>401</sup> Cf. Origen, *HomJer* 1.3; *HomLk* 24. The one who does not keep his/her baptism is the one who builds with bad materials, and in the next life he or she must go through a second baptism by fire. This person will be saved, but through fire. He/she is saved in the second, and final, resurrection. This means that baptism in itself does not guarantee a changed way of life. A person can choose not to keep his/her baptism. Such a person has no part in the first resurrection.

<sup>402</sup> *AdvJov* 2.3, PL 23, 286: *Liberi arbitrii nos condidit Deus, nec ad virtutes, nec ad vitia necessitate trahimur. Alioquin ubi necessitas, nec corona est.* Speaking of death in martyrdom, he writes

These were ideas that Jerome had expressed in earlier writings as well, for example in his *Commentary on Galatians*, which we have already mentioned in this chapter. What is most important for our present purposes is the heresiological context in which Origen expressed his ideas about the soul and its free will. His *Commentary on Romans* was written, as he makes clear in the preface, with the intention of refuting heretics who claimed that human beings were good or evil because of their good or evil natures. Among the heretics he mentions Valentinus and Marcion as representatives of this view.<sup>403</sup> The latter was associated by Origen with writers who displayed a “Gnostic” tendency. It is in this polemical context that his interpretation of the concepts *spirit* and *flesh* must be understood: Origen sought to show, against his “Gnostic” adversaries, that a soul was not spiritual or earthly by nature, but could become so by freely turning to the spirit or to the flesh.<sup>404</sup> The same idea is expressed in several other works by Origen, such as *De Principiis*.<sup>405</sup>

In his *Commentary on Galatians*, it is obvious that Jerome was well aware of Origen’s defence of free will against those who claimed the existence of good or evil natures, and I argue that this became important in his later refutation of Jovinian. In the commentary, Jerome speaks of heretics who claim that there are different kinds of natures; namely, spiritual, animal, and earthly natures.<sup>406</sup> Against such heretics, he expresses the idea that to be a spiritual person does not imply the impossibility of sinning,<sup>407</sup> and he claims that individuals who are “earthly” may become “spiritual” if they turn to better things. In these passages, Jerome was most certainly dependent on Origen’s anti-Gnostic polemics, since striking similarities can be found in Origen’s works, not least in his *Commentary on Romans*.

In a way similar to Origen’s determinist adversaries, Jovinian is presented as imagining two kinds of human beings, the spiritual ones and the fleshly ones (*spirituales, carnales*). Jerome’s way of presenting Jovinian as a determinist and of arguing against him from an idea of the soul as a free agent between the spirit and the flesh, shows great similarities to Origen’s anti-Gnostic polemics. The use of

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(*AdvJov* 2.31, 328): “it is the will, from which this death is effected, which is crowned” (... *voluntas, ex qua ipsa mors nascitur, coronatur*).

<sup>403</sup> See for example *CommRom* 4.12.1, SC 539, 334.

<sup>404</sup> *De principiis* 2.9.5, against Marcion, Valentinus and Basilides, and their idea that souls have different natures (SC 252, 260-364).

<sup>405</sup> *Princ* 3.1.8, SC 268, 46-52; 3.4.2, 200-206, where Origen writes against those who claim that souls have different natures and are saved or lost as a consequence of their natures. Also in *CommRom* 2.4.9, Origen refutes heretics who claim that natures of human souls are either good or evil (SC 532, 300-302). What will be rewarded or punished is works, not natures.

<sup>406</sup> *CommGal* 1.1.15, PL 26, 325-326. Cf. Origen in *CommRom* 1.5, SC 532, 166-170. See also *CommGal* 1.2.15, PL 26, 342-343 (cf. Origen, *CommRom* 8.10.1-4, SC 543, 550-552).

<sup>407</sup> *CommGal* 3.6.1, PL 26, 425-426.

Paul and Judas as examples of the human capacity to both rise and fall had been common in Origen's argumentation for the freedom of the will, and so it is in Jerome's arguments as well. This is sometimes connected to a certain understanding of the words in Matthew 7:18, about good trees that cannot bear bad fruit, and bad trees not cannot bear good fruit. In *Against Jovinian*, Jovinian is said to have made use of this biblical text in order to argue that there are only two classes of people: The sheep and the goats, the righteous ones and the unrighteous ones; the righteous being the baptised Christians.<sup>408</sup> How can it be, Jerome asks, that Judas, who was a good tree, came to produce bad fruit, and Paul, who was a bad tree, came to produce good fruit? A good tree does not bear evil fruit, nor does a bad tree produce good fruit, he claims, as long as they continue in their goodness or badness, that is, it depends on their free choice.<sup>409</sup>

Already in his *Commentary on Galatians*, Jerome had written, under the influence of Origen's anti-determinist exegesis, "against heretics" who claimed different natures with reference to the same biblical passage.<sup>410</sup> In this commentary, he also comments on the words in Romans 11:24 about the good and the wild olive tree, and asks how it can be that Paul at one point persecuted the church, if he was of a spiritual nature. This is very similar to Origen's discussion in *De Principiis*, where he uses the example of Paul's persecution of Christians in an argument against those who claim different natures.<sup>411</sup> Jovinian seems to have presented Jerome with an opportunity to use a heresiological exegesis that he had learnt from Origen in a real-life conflict about the implications of baptism for a Christian person.

Jerome claimed that the fact that our bodies are said to be a temple of the Holy Spirit does not mean that God dwells in all alike (as Jovinian had argued). The Scriptures speak in many places of one as if it were many, and many as if they were one. Besides, in a temple there are many divisions: Kitchens, pantries, outer and inner courts, the vestibules, the Holy of Holies. Certainly, the body which is a temple of the Holy Spirit refers to the faithful, who are the body of Christ. This does not mean that all parts of the body are equal and that God dwells in all the members alike. There is a difference between the head and the feet. In the temple of our body, there are different degrees of merit. Responding to the proposition of Jovinian, that the whole Christian people is one in God and partakers of divine nature, Jerome states that we are not one in the Father and the Son according to

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<sup>408</sup> *AdvJov* 2.18, PL 23, 312-313.

<sup>409</sup> *AdvJov* 2.25, PL 23, 322: *Tamdiu ergo nec arbor bona malos fructus facit: nec mala bonos, quamdiu vel in bonitate sua, vel in malitia perseverat.* See also 2.28, about the mansions.

<sup>410</sup> *CommGal* 3.6.1.

<sup>411</sup> *De Principiis* 1.8.2-3, SC 252, 222-228. The parallel has been drawn also by Duval 2003, 231, n. 159. Duval also refers to Origen, *CommMt* 10.11.

nature, but according to grace. The glory is increased, but the nature does not change.<sup>412</sup>

Jerome remarks that sins can be of very different severity.<sup>413</sup> Some are easily pardoned, others not. Jovinian is presented to have argued that different sins are punished with the same penalty. In this case, Jerome says, one must either deny that one is a sinner in order to escape Gehenna, or, as a sinner, one will be sent to hell even for a light offence (*etiam de levi crimine*). No human being is without sin. Paradoxically, Jovinian – according to Jerome – raises some to a higher rank than they deserve, but at the same time he thrusts people into hell because of small offences.<sup>414</sup>

Concerning the question of penitence, Jerome states, by reference to the parable about the prodigal son, that it is one thing to be penitent, another to always be with the father. The penitents are not on the same level as the saints. Jovinian seems to have interpreted the parable to mean that there was absolutely no difference made between the two brothers.

“Let us all sin, and after the penance we will be equal to the apostles”,<sup>415</sup> Jerome writes against Jovinian, and it is probable that what he distances himself from here is the view that although we sin, we will all be on the same level because of our penance. In Jovinian’s view, as presented by Jerome, Christians are saved *as a people, in the church*. The importance of individual good or bad actions is in this way downplayed. The Christian person is saved as a member, not as an individual. Jerome did not imagine any salvation outside the church either, but focused more on individual effort. Even if we are baptised in the church and do penance in the church, and even if this is all important for our being set on the right hand on the Day of Judgment, it is up to ourselves to reach a higher level within this one church. Some are pardoned, others do what they are commanded to do, and these are not on the same level. In his commentary on Galatians, Jerome had claimed that one is not clothed with Christ only by receiving the bodily baptism of water, which is visible to the fleshly eyes.<sup>416</sup>

Origen understood baptism as the beginning of a process, a struggle that would lead to the final resurrection, and an anticipation thereof. In his *Commentary on Romans*, where he discusses the fact that the Apostle Paul may speak about the resurrection as something that has occurred as well as something that will take place in the future, Origen explains what is meant by a twofold resurrection: In the first one, we rise with Christ from earthly things and seek heavenly things; in the

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<sup>412</sup> *AdvJov* 2.29, PL 23, 326.

<sup>413</sup> *AdvJov* 2.30, PL 23, 327: *Sunt peccata levia, sunt gravia*.

<sup>414</sup> *AdvJov* 2.31, PL 23, 328.

<sup>415</sup> *AdvJov* 2.34, PL 23, 333: *Peccemus omnes, et post poenitentiam idem erimus quod Apostoli sunt*.

<sup>416</sup> Jerome, *CommGal* 2.3.27-28, PL 26, 368-369.

second one, there will be a general resurrection in the flesh. The first resurrection is a resurrection of the mind, the second is one of the flesh. The first occurs already in this life, the second in the future. The first is individual: It depends on a person's own efforts to renounce earthly things and to seek heavenly things instead. The second, which is general and includes all, does not depend on free will. The first is connected to the Lord's first coming, the second to His second coming.<sup>417</sup>

In Origen's view, human beings have a responsibility for their salvation. Against those who thought that faith alone was enough for salvation, Origen argued that works are needed as well. Belief in Christ's resurrection is not enough: His resurrection must also be realized in the life of the baptized. If we have not given up committing sins and begun to embrace the virtues, Christ is still in the tomb for us.<sup>418</sup> Through baptism, past sins are forgiven, but baptism does not guarantee that a person will not sin again, and her or she will therefore face the consequences on the Last Day.<sup>419</sup> It is highly probable that Origen's refutation of determinism and his insistence on human effort in the post-baptismal life, which had influenced Jerome already in his writing of the Pauline commentaries, continued to be of use for him in his polemics against Jovinian.

### 3. The Place of *Against Jovinian* in a Late Fourth Century Discourse on Christian Identity and Authority

As Elizabeth Clark has pointed out, although Jerome had taken up the question of hierarchy among Christians in earlier texts, it was in his controversy with Jovinian that this became a central matter to him.<sup>420</sup> Because of the situation of controversy, and the accusations directed against him, he had to elaborate his ascetical theory to a degree that he had not previously done. Jerome had already assessed the question of Christian identity by showing how virgins made up a special *familia* within the one church, and by exhorting those who lived in chastity to remain enclosed, and not mix with Christians outside this *familia*. That is, one does not have to live in celibacy to be a Christian, but Christians who live in celibacy are on another level compared to those who do not. In *Against Jovinian*, this is elaborated in ways not seen in Jerome's earlier works.

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<sup>417</sup> *CommRom* 5.9.14, SC 539, 498-500.

<sup>418</sup> *CommRom* 4.8.4, SC 539, 286-288; 8.2.6, SC 543, 458-460: By returning to sin, we rebuild the barrier of evil between God and ourselves which Christ has destroyed, reconciling us with God. That is, we can destroy that work by sinning.

<sup>419</sup> *CommRom* 7.8.2 (SC 543, 332), see also *CommRom* 5.2.9-11 (SC 539, 416-418).

<sup>420</sup> Clark 1992, 130.

The elaboration is of course directly dependent on the propositions of Jovinian. It was those that Jerome had to answer. This did not only imply developing his ideas about the superiority of virginity, but also about subjects connected therewith: The meaning of baptism, the attitude towards food, and the eschatological consequences. In what follows, I will discuss an important context for the writing of *Against Jovinian*, namely a late fourth century discourse of Christian identity and authority. I will also address the question about Jerome's dependence on Origen.

### 3.1. The Question of Christian Identity and the Church

As R. A. Markus has pointed out, a central problem in the identity formation of Christians in the fourth and fifth centuries had to do with the Christianisation of society. This was most apparent in the West, where Christians had not been culturally assimilated to the same extent as in the East. When people who did not seem very interested in the Christian religion converted for other reasons, the question what a Christian really was had to be asked. How should Christianity relate to the secular world? Could it adopt the Roman culture, or did this mean to accept the remaining influence of pagan traditions? Where should the boundary be drawn between the Christian religion and the secular life?<sup>421</sup> Markus notes how in the West, some authors (Jerome included) found it important to mark a difference in relation to pagan culture. In the last decades in the fourth century, there was a polarization between paganism (a Christian construction, as Markus points out)<sup>422</sup> and Christianity, as a result of the reign of Julian and of conflicts between pagan aristocrats and the Christian court. This polarization was soon to disappear, but the question of identity remained.<sup>423</sup>

One way to mark what true Christianity was about was to turn to asceticism. In this way, a person could distinguish him/herself from the multitude of “Christians” whose conversion to Christianity did not seem to change their lives to any great extent. The conversion to true Christianity and the conversion to asceticism seemed to go hand in hand. Markus shows how, in the writings of Paulinus of Nola, the two are sometimes confused, although a distinction between Christianity and asceticism is accepted.<sup>424</sup>

However, while for some, renunciation was the mark of authentic Christianity, it was not so for others; rather, it could be perceived as dividing the church. A hierarchy was established by these ascetics, who separated themselves from

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<sup>421</sup> Markus 1990, 14, 30-34.

<sup>422</sup> Markus 1990, 28.

<sup>423</sup> Markus 1990, 30-31.

<sup>424</sup> Markus 1990, 35-38.

others. In *Letter 22*, Jerome advises Eustochium not to keep company with married women (and this advice to ascetical women to be enclosed was repeated in many of his writings).<sup>425</sup> This attitude resulted in hostility among non-ascetics. We have seen previously in this chapter how charges of Manichaeism were used to combat the ascetical movement. As David Hunter has pointed out, the resistance to asceticism did not only come from pagans, but also from Christians – above all, the Christian aristocracy, but from the clergy as well.<sup>426</sup> In Markus’ words: “It was in Jerome’s time that this opposition swelled into protest against the growing gap between the religion of the ordinary Christian and that of the ascetic elite”.<sup>427</sup>

Many Roman aristocrats saw a danger in the degradation of marriage that was implied in radical asceticism. Kate Cooper writes: “... They saw the social dangers of too enthusiastic a reception for the ascetic ideal, correctly perceiving in asceticism a competing system of social ranking that, if it did not eradicate the aristocracy’s traditional claim to position, would permanently alter its terms”.<sup>428</sup> Cooper distinguishes between “separatists” on the one hand and “traditionalists” on the other,<sup>429</sup> claiming that at the centre of “traditionalist” critique of radical asceticism was a defence of marriage.<sup>430</sup> Yves-Marie Duval, in his work on the Jovinianist controversy, likewise points to the issue about marriage as central in the anti-ascetic sentiment among the Roman aristocracy: By exhorting women not to marry, this asceticism was perceived as attacking,

... l’un des sentiments les mieux ancrés dans l’esprit de l’aristocratie romaine, celui de la continuité de la race; celui aussi des alliances matrimoniales qui permettaient à certaines familles d’étendre indéfiniment leur emprise en même temps que leurs relations.<sup>431</sup>

Jerome’s report about Jovinian’s success among the wealthy and powerful is probably accurate.<sup>432</sup> Jovinian offered an answer to the problem of Christian identity – who was truly a Christian – which put the celibates and the married on an equal level, by pointing to baptism, and truthfulness to the baptismal vow, as that which defined a Christian. In *Against Jovinian*, Jerome’s answer to the same question was to maintain that while the church was one, there was a hierarchy of

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<sup>425</sup> *Ep* 22.16, CSEL 54, 163-164.

<sup>426</sup> Hunter 2007, 54-55.

<sup>427</sup> Markus 1990, 38-39.

<sup>428</sup> Cooper 1996, 82.

<sup>429</sup> Cooper 1996, 88-91.

<sup>430</sup> Cooper 1996, 92-115.

<sup>431</sup> Duval 2003, 28. See also Curran 2000, 269-280.

<sup>432</sup> *AdvJov* 1.37, PL 23, 336: *Tibi cedunt de via nobiles, tibi osculantur divites caput.*

members within the one church – a hierarchy that was based on the members’ degrees of asceticism. Positioning himself between those who see the church as consisting of the perfect and those who claim that all, even repentant sinners, are equal members of the church, Jerome claims that all who have been baptised belong to the church, but that they are not all on the same level.

### 3.2. Ecclesiastical Hierarchy, Priesthood, and Sanctity

David Hunter has claimed that in *Against Jovinian*, Jerome, besides arguing for the superiority of virginity to marriage, was promoting his understanding of ecclesiastical authority.<sup>433</sup> While celibacy, according to Pope Siricius’ understanding (to which we will return), had the function of enhancing the clerical office by distancing priests from other Christians, Jerome “seems to have had very little interest in, or even respect for, the clerical office itself”.<sup>434</sup> Hunter points out that, while showing the fault of Jovinian and, simultaneously, by presenting his own orthodoxy, were obviously important reasons for Jerome’s writing of *Against Jovinian*, another reason was to challenge the clerical leadership in Rome and in Milan. In the previous analysis, we saw that according to Jerome, the clerical office itself was not enough. What mattered the most was the degree of a person’s asceticism, which meant that a lay person could possess greater sanctity than a bishop.

There were opposing views, and one of those who expressed them was a person who seems to have been an important antagonist of Jerome’s during his period in Rome: Ambrosiaster. His views on the priesthood are closely connected to his critique of the proponents of radical asceticism. He does not seem to approve of the ordination of monks, since the kind of celibacy he approves of is that of priests who have been ordained after marriage. The celibacy he speaks of is, therefore, a post-marital celibacy.<sup>435</sup> We note immediately the difference from Jerome, who claimed that priests who had married were holy to the extent that they imitated virginity by their chastity.

To the question why priests must be celibate, if there is nothing wrong with marriage, Ambrosiaster answers that there are degrees of goodness, so that what is clean in respect to man is not clean in respect to God. Something that is clean to a poor person might be unclean to an emperor. As priests stand in a special relationship to God, being God’s vicars and high priests, what is permitted for other people is not always permitted for them. This is the case with sexual intercourse. What can be seen here is that a link is established between celibacy

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<sup>433</sup> Hunter 2007, 231.

<sup>434</sup> Hunter 2007, 236.

<sup>435</sup> A term used by Brown 1988, 377-78.



and the clerical ministry. As Hunter points out, this undermines the value of lay asceticism, and may well be directed against proponents of radical asceticism, such as Jerome.<sup>436</sup> Although Jerome was himself ordained, he was critical towards the clergy of Rome, whom he blamed for laxness, and he promoted lay asceticism, not least among women.<sup>437</sup> For him, a lay person could possess greater sanctity than an ordained priest – it all depended on the degree of asceticism. Holiness was not connected to an office, but to a way of life. Here we return to the idea of a hierarchy of souls, based on an inner condition, and to the importance of the inner person, or rather the inner man: The achievement is not connected to outer conditions, but to spiritual struggle. These manly characteristics can be achieved by all souls.

Ambrosiaster argued for the need for priests to be celibate by reference to the Levites in the Old Testament. These were not allowed to engage in intercourse before they served at the divine ceremonies, but as they did not do this all day, they could be with their wives for certain periods. Now, however, the Christian priest has to be prepared to perform their ministerial duties every day, and thus, they cannot engage in sexual intercourse at all.<sup>438</sup>

Pope Siricius probably approved of the proceedings against Jerome in 385.<sup>439</sup> “From the perspective of the Roman clergy, Jerome seems to have been perceived very much as Priscillian was by many Spanish bishops, that is, as a divisive figure whose ascetical teachings and activities threatened to undermine ecclesiastical order and clerical dignity”.<sup>440</sup> Jerome seems to have been seen as something of an itinerant troublemaker, who by promoting extreme ascetical ideas threatened the stability of the church in Rome. In this respect, Jerome reminds us of the wandering, begging monks, who appeared in cities, who established relations with patrons who provided them with material goods in exchange for spiritual advice, and who, in doing this, threatened the authority of the ecclesiastical hierarchy.<sup>441</sup>

Siricius wanted to regulate ascetical piety and to enhance clerical dignity. He legislated that in order to become a priest, a person – whether lay man or monk – had to pass through certain ranks, and thus could not be ordained immediately. It also becomes clear that for Siricius, the ordinary candidate was a person who had

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<sup>436</sup> Hunter 1989, 294.

<sup>437</sup> See *Ep* 22.16, 28.

<sup>438</sup> Hunter 2007, 162; reference to Ambrosiaster, *Quaestiones* 127.36 (CSEL 50, 415).

<sup>439</sup> Hunter 2007, 209; Kelly 1975, 112.

<sup>440</sup> Hunter 2007, 210.

<sup>441</sup> See n. 20 in the introductory chapter. Jerome criticized not only the clergy for laxness, but also Christian hypocrites who followed Christ while continuing to live a comfortable and social life, expressing their devotion in good works and the company of holy men, without fully dedicating themselves to the ascetic life. See also Curran 2009.

been married (only once).<sup>442</sup> Siricius did not see asceticism as crucial to becoming a priest, but he held that priests should practice sexual continence. Like Ambrosiaster, and possibly influenced by his ideas, he referred to the Levites in the Old Testament.<sup>443</sup> Ritual purity became the main reason for sexual renunciation. The priest must be ready every day to offer sacrifice and to baptize, and therefore, he must abstain totally from sexual intercourse.

According to Hunter, Siricius' wish to secure an order of clerical promotion and his insistence on clerical celibacy based on ritual purity both served the purpose of enhancing clerical authority. In the case of clerical celibacy, this 1) elevated the clergy above married people, 2) elevated the clergy over lay ascetics because the reason for this celibacy was ritual purity.<sup>444</sup> In that sense, the very reason for lay celibacy could be questioned.

The argumentation seen in Ambrosiaster and Siricius makes it clear, just as Hunter points out, that Jerome does more in *Against Jovinian* than simply refute Jovinian: He also promotes lay asceticism against ecclesiastical authorities with a suspicious or even hostile attitude towards this growing phenomenon within the church.

### 3.3. Dependence on Origen

While it has been suggested that *Against Jovinian* is a heresiological work, that its focus is on practice more than theology,<sup>445</sup> that it should be read as part of a discourse of ecclesiastical authority<sup>446</sup> and that it was a way for Jerome to claim a hierarchy of ascetics and non-ascetics,<sup>447</sup> it has not been seen as a theological treatise – as has hardly anything written by Jerome. Based on the theological themes discussed above, I argue that it is a theological treatise. This does of course not mean that it is *not* a heresiological treatise and a highly rhetorical work. As I have explained in the previous chapters, I see no contradiction in this. Neither does it mean that I do not understand it as addressing ecclesiastical issues; in the previous section, I asserted that it is important to understand the treatise from this perspective.

Jerome has a heresiological purpose, and also an apologetic one. In order to make his point, he has to show that his understanding of asceticism is orthodox, by

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<sup>442</sup> Hunter 2007, 211-13.

<sup>443</sup> Hunter 2007, 215-16. Reference to Siricius, Ep 1.7 (PL 13, 1138-39).

<sup>444</sup> Hunter 2007, 218.

<sup>445</sup> Jeanjean 1999, 37.

<sup>446</sup> Hunter 2007.

<sup>447</sup> Clark 1999.

giving a theological justification of his views. This theological framework would have a continuity in Jerome's thinking, continuing well after the beginning of the Origenist controversy, as we will see in the following chapters. What I will argue below, based on the previous analysis, is that in presenting this framework, Jerome was dependent on Origen's theology.

An important aspect of this has to do with Jerome's dynamic view of the human person, of the church, and of authority. This is connected to his view of baptism, which means that it is the beginning of a process, of a resurrection, which will not be completed until after death. This process implies personal struggle, and the individual's free will is crucial. It is possible both to rise and to fall. Being saved from hell is one thing, being greatly rewarded is another. The choices made by a person here on earth will have consequences after death.

When it comes to authority, this dynamic view means that the hierarchy in the church is moveable. As one's place in the hierarchy depends on one's degree of asceticism, and as one can rise as well as fall, the order of the hierarchy can vary. Importantly, ordained persons are not above other ascetics, rather, their holiness depends on their asceticism, and virgins are of higher rank than those who are not virgins.

This means that sanctity, and thereby celibacy, is not only for the clergy, but for everyone. But, of course, we must ask: Why is celibacy, and above all virginity, so important? This is explained by certain theological views about humanity's beginning and destiny; the history of salvation; and the end. Although Jerome does not express Origen's idea about a pre-existence of rational beings (what is also known as a doctrine of a double creation, meaning that the creation narratives in Genesis pertain to two distinct creations, one spiritual, the other carnal), he expresses something similar: Even in Jerome's view, we are dealing with an original humankind in accordance with the will of God, and a post-lapsarian humankind, who lives under extremely different conditions. Jerome clearly stands in a line of thought according to which the difference between before and after the Fall is radicalized. Connected to this drastic differentiation between before and after the Fall is the idea that the end will be like the beginning. We will return to the original state, from which we have fallen. In the resurrection, we will be like the angels, which implies that sexual difference will come to an end. It is from this anthropological, protological and eschatological outlook that we must understand the importance of celibacy. The idea of transcendence, which is important in Origen's thought, can be seen also in Jerome: Already in this life, the human being can begin the heavenly life, which likewise means a return to the original state.

I conclude from this that Jerome made extensive use of Origen's thought in his polemics against Jovinian, which I see as part of a larger discourse on Christian identity and authority in the late fourth century Western church. When it comes to the question of baptism, Jerome transferred Origen's anti-Gnostic polemics to a new heresiological context. In his focus on individual purity and sanctity, his ideas

of a hierarchy of Christians based precisely on these qualities, and his view of the best Christians as an angelic race, the Alexandrian thinker was his most important source.

## 4. After Jovinian. On the Threshold of the Origenist Controversy

Jerome's *Letter 50* tells us that after Jovinian's condemnation, a new monk had appeared in Rome who threatened Jerome's authority. The letter was written in 394, that is, at the time when the dispute between the Bishops Epiphanius and John was well under way. It is addressed to Domnio, a friend in Rome who, like Pammachius, had taken offence at some of Jerome's expressions in *Against Jovinian*.<sup>448</sup> However, this letter is not an apology, but an answer to a letter from Domnio, in which he has told Jerome about a certain monk in Rome.

The monk in question had slandered Jerome's writing against Jovinian, and is said to have preached publicly against Jerome. He was obviously among those who thought that Jerome expressed himself too harshly about marriage in his *Against Jovinian*.<sup>449</sup>

Although the monk has criticized Jerome's work against Jovinian, he has obviously criticized Jovinian as well, and even debated with him in public. Jerome, however, seems to think that the views of this monk are actually close to those of Jovinian.<sup>450</sup> Jerome finds a problem in this ambivalence – on the one hand, the man is an ascetic, on the other, he seems to deny the superiority of asceticism. Jerome asks Domnio to “warn him not to speak contrary to his profession, and not to destroy with his words the chastity that he professes with his garb”.<sup>451</sup> Jerome is especially concerned about the monk's teaching of widows and virgins in private. Does he preach chastity to them, or does he rather encourage them to give up their ascetic struggle?<sup>452</sup>

When it comes to the debate about the church, baptism, and the value of asceticism, it is not at all clear what views this monk really represents. It is obvious that he stands between Jovinian and Jerome, attacking both of them. In this, the monk was not at all unique: This seems to have been a very common

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<sup>448</sup> *Ep* 50.3 (CSEL 54, 390-391).

<sup>449</sup> *Ep* 50.3, 5, CSEL 54, 390-391, 394-395.

<sup>450</sup> *Ep* 50.4 (CSEL 54, 392).

<sup>451</sup> *Ep* 50.3, CSEL 54, 390: ... *moneas eum, ne loquator contra propositum suum, ne castitatem habitu pollicens verbis destruat...*

<sup>452</sup> *Ep* 50.3, CSEL 54, 390-391.

approach, from what we can read in two of Jerome's previous letters.<sup>453</sup> It is known that though Pope Siricius condemned Jovinian, he did not approve of Jerome's views. Augustine went to great lengths to find a middle way between the two extremes.<sup>454</sup>

The critique of Jerome's *Against Jovinian* thus seems to have come from different quarters. There were, at the one end, the followers of Jovinian, and, at the other end, Jerome's ascetically-minded friends, such as Pammachius. Then we have this monk of *Letter 50* and his followers, who seem to stand somewhere in-between. At least this is the impression given by Jerome. What remains clear is that the opposition was widespread, and that it came even from ascetic persons.

It is important to remember that the question was not about the value of asceticism per se, but whether ascetics were better than other Christians. That is, we are dealing with a negotiation of Christian identity and a struggle about spiritual authority within the church. Who made up the holy elite of the church? What made them holy? The fact that some of the opponents to the more radical form of asceticism, that seemed to devalue marriage and reproduction, were themselves ascetics is evidence enough that this debate goes far beyond renunciation as such.<sup>455</sup> This is crucial for understanding the connection between the "Jovinianist" and the "Origenist" controversies. The reason why Origen's theology, and above all his ideas about the angelic life and the possibility of transcendence, became the object of great conflict is, I argue, the fact that those ideas supported the visions of late fourth century lay asceticism. To this subject we now turn.

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<sup>453</sup> *Letters 48 and 49*, written to Pammachius as a kind of apology. Jerome does not withdraw from the ideas that he had expressed in *Adversus Jovinianum*, but tries to demonstrate that he did not say anything unorthodox about marriage and procreation.

<sup>454</sup> As discussed by Hunter (2007, 269-284).

<sup>455</sup> As we will see in the next chapter, this was the case with Epiphanius.

# Chapter 4. The Origenist Controversy: The Question of the Resurrection Body

## 1. Preliminary Considerations

The question about Jerome's relation to Origen, or Origenism, before and after the beginning of the so called "Origenist controversy" is not easily answered. While the opinion has been expressed that he never held Origenist views,<sup>456</sup> the more common view expressed by scholars is that he held Origenist views at an earlier stage, but then turned around to refute these same views.<sup>457</sup> Also common in descriptions of Jerome's relation to Origen's thought before and after the controversy, is the idea that he was only influenced by Origen's exegesis, while he had little knowledge of, or at least did not hold, Origenist teachings on issues such as the pre-existence of minds or the final restoration of the same.<sup>458</sup> At the same time, it is often acknowledged that Jerome, in his turning away from Origen, was motivated by personal concerns more than by intellectual conviction.

We will have reason to return to different interpretations of Jerome's involvement in the Origenist controversy, as we proceed. My intention in the present chapter is to deal with one question in which Jerome began to polemicize against Origen: That of the resurrection body. I want to examine what consequences Jerome's involvement with Origen had for his eschatological thought, and more precisely, his relation to Origen's thought. What changed, and what remained the same? What can be said about the relation between Jerome's eschatological thought and his anti-Origenist polemics?

In the second chapter, I discussed dangers of categorization and naming, arguing that ancient heresiological categories tend to find their way into modern scholarship with the result that ancient works are interpreted from certain presuppositions. For example, an author's polemicizing against a heretic or a

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<sup>456</sup> O'Connell 1948 (about eschatological questions).

<sup>457</sup> Kelly 1975; Clark 1992; Jeanjean 1999; Ramelli 2013.

<sup>458</sup> Kelly 1975, 198.

heresy might result in categorizing such a writer as “orthodox” and, as a consequence, a reading of the writer’s work according to such a categorization. This will, in turn, prevent us from seeing other things. In the present chapter, I intend to challenge the categorization of Jerome as an “anti-Origenist” by discussing the relation between his eschatological thought, here on the resurrection body, and his anti-Origenist polemics.

Elizabeth Clark’s work *The Origenist Controversy* has the great advantage of demonstrating that the Jovinianist, the Origenist and the Pelagian controversies are closely related. She sees the debate about asceticism as continuing to be of importance in the Origenist controversy, especially for Jerome. An important point that she makes is that the Origenist controversy was about different things for different persons involved, and “Origenism” itself meant different things to different participants. Thus, for Jerome, the new controversy meant a continuation of the Jovinianist controversy, and he also interpreted the new controversy about Pelagius’ thought in the light of the previous controversies.<sup>459</sup>

While Clark notices that Jerome, in the Origenist controversy, dealt to a great extent with the same concerns as in the Jovinianist controversy, and thereby recognizes a continuity in his thought, she does not claim that this was a continuity with his previous dependence on Origen. In the previous chapter I argued that in the ascetical theology that Jerome expressed in the Jovinianist controversy, he was heavily influenced by Origen’s thought. Thus, while I will agree with Clark that the debate over asceticism continued to be important for Jerome in the Origenist controversy, I will also argue that this continuity was a continuity with ideas that he had learnt from Origen.

## 2. Old and New Controversies

### 2.1. The Beginning of the Origenist Controversy

Even before Jerome had written his *Against Jovinian*, what would develop into the Origenist controversy had already begun in Palestine.<sup>460</sup> The controversy was initiated by Epiphanius, bishop of Salamis, who, almost ten years after the writing of his *Panarion*, a heresiological work in which Origen was presented as an arch-heretic, had become determined to wipe out this heresy from the church once and

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<sup>459</sup> Clark 1992, 121-151, 221-227.

<sup>460</sup> The historical development of the controversy is described in, for instance, in Kelly 1975, 195-209. The most important sources are a letter by Epiphanius translated into Latin by Jerome (*Ep* 51) and descriptions given by Jerome in *Against John*. For an outline of the development of Jerome’s anti-Origenist heresiology during the controversy, see Jeanjean 1999, 132, 138-149.

for all. He suspected the bishop of Jerusalem, John, of holding Origenist views, and the monasteries in Jerusalem and Bethlehem were also under suspicion. It was probably on Epiphanius' initiative that a group of monks, led by a certain Atarbius, came both to Jerome's monastery in Bethlehem and that of his friend, Rufinus, on the Mount of Olives, to demand a formal rejection of Origen's teachings. Rufinus refused to do so; Jerome, on the other hand, complied.<sup>461</sup>

Later that year, Epiphanius himself visited Jerusalem, and took the opportunity to preach against the heresy of Origen. John, realizing that he was the real target of the charges, held a sermon in which he explained his views on the Christian faith. Epiphanius had to affirm that the views expressed were orthodox, and after this, he soon left the city.

The definitive clash between the bishops occurred when Epiphanius ordained a priest, namely Jerome's brother, Paulinian, to serve in Bethlehem. John was offended, and a drastic consequence was his excommunication of Jerome and the other monks in the monastery in Bethlehem. This situation also caused a break between Jerome and his former friend, Rufinus, who supported the bishop of Jerusalem.

The fact that Jerome became involved in the Origenist controversy at this stage, by choosing Epiphanius' side, did not mean that he began to engage in anti-Origenist polemics. From 393 to 396, one cannot find any evidence of a turn against Origen's thought. His polemical activity during these years continued to concern issues about the value of asceticism and marriage; that is, it was still the Jovinianist controversy that occupied Jerome. As we saw in the previous chapter, the condemnations of Jovinian did not end the debate, and Jerome's *Against Jovinian* caused a lot of critique that forced him to defend his orthodoxy on these issues. It was still Manichaeism, not Origenism, from which he had to distance himself.<sup>462</sup>

However, in a few years, Jerome would begin to develop an anti-Origenist polemic, and one of the most important issues would be that of the resurrection body. In his polemical writing *Against John*, Jerome's basic charge concerns his opponent's way of speaking of the "body" rather than the "flesh" when dealing with the question of the future resurrection. It also becomes obvious that a specific problem that he sees in this speaking of "body" rather than "flesh" is that it endangers physical sexual difference. "Substitute flesh for body", Jerome

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<sup>461</sup> This episode is related by Jerome in his *Apology against Rufinus* 3.33 (CCSL 79, 103-104). Kelly argues that although it is not said that Epiphanius initiated the campaign, it becomes clear from the text that Atarbius acted at the initiative of someone else, and Kelly claims that this person was most probably Epiphanius. Kelly does not specify which part of the text that underlies his argument, but he is probably referring to the words: ... *quis Atarbii contra te et ceterorum rabiem concitavit?* ("... who evoked the anger of Atarbius and others against you?") (CCSL 79, 103).

<sup>462</sup> See chapter 3.4.



suggests, “and you have not denied the existence of male and female”.<sup>463</sup> Where did this new concern come from?

For an answer, we must turn to Epiphanius of Salamis, the originator of the controversy. In what follows, I will discuss Epiphanius’ anti-Origenist polemics and the purposes behind it. Such a discussion is of importance for the study of Jerome’s polemics, in at least two ways: First, Epiphanius, as we will see, was an important source for Jerome, who would to a great extent repeat the same accusations of heresy. Secondly, it helps us to understand the heresiological context: What was at stake? Which were the underlying issues? Why did it become important to attack Origen, more than a century after his death? This second point is also crucial for understanding the difference between Epiphanius’ and Jerome’s critique of Origen – as will become clear, Jerome himself was liable to accusations that Epiphanius directed against “Origenism”, and his refutation of Origen would largely consist in self-defence.

## 2.2. Epiphanius: Asceticism, Hierarchy and the Image of God

### 2.2.1. *The Charges in Letter 51 to John of Jerusalem*

After his ordination of Paulinian and the reactions this caused from John, Epiphanius wrote a letter to the bishop of Jerusalem in 394. The letter was translated into Latin by Jerome (*Letter 51*). In the letter, Epiphanius explains and defends his actions, but the main part of it deals with the heresy of Origen, a heresy from which he begs John to withdraw.<sup>464</sup>

Epiphanius goes through a number of questions on which he claims that Origen has expressed heretical views. The first one concerns the Trinity: Origen is said to have taught that the Son cannot see the Father. Epiphanius, by use of a common heresiological method, connects Arianism to Origen's theology, claiming that this was the root of their ideas.<sup>465</sup>

It is clear, however, that Trinitarian questions are not at the centre of Epiphanius’ anti-Origenist polemics. He quickly passes over to those questions that are of greatest concern to him, and which deal with anthropology, eschatology and biblical interpretation. He accuses Origen of claiming that the souls of humans were once angels, who had fallen and become confined in bodies. Thus, the bodies of Christians are not, in Origen's view, temples of Christ, but prisons, given as punishment for sinners. From this, Epiphanius passes over to a related issue: That

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<sup>463</sup> *Contra Iohannem* 31, CCSL 79 A, 57: *Tolle corpus et pone carnem, et virum et feminam non negasti.*

<sup>464</sup> *Ep* 51.3, CSEL 54, 399-400.

<sup>465</sup> In *Ep* 51.3, Epiphanius calls Origen the “spiritual father of Arius” and even the “parent of all heresies” (CSEL 54, 400).

of biblical interpretation, and more precisely, to the allegorical interpretation of Genesis. Allegory is the primary tool for Origen in his composition of heretical doctrines, Epiphanius argues. If he had followed the plain sense of the Scriptures, he could never have claimed his ideas about the fall of angels into human bodies, but by applying a spiritual interpretation, he can replace the truth with his own opinions.<sup>466</sup>

Origen is also said to claim that souls have come down from heavenly places by losing their heat and becoming cold, and they have then been confined in bodies;<sup>467</sup> thus, he returns to a previous point, and it is clear from this letter that protological questions are of great importance for Epiphanius. Describing how, according to Origen, souls are shut up in bodies like dead bodies in tombs, he asks:

If this is true, what becomes of our faith? Where is the preaching of the resurrection? Where is the teaching of the apostles, which lasts on to this day in the churches of Christ? Where is the blessing to Adam, and to his seed, and to Noah and his sons? "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth". According to Origen, these words are a curse and not a blessing; for he turns angels into human souls, making them leave the place of highest rank and to come down lower...<sup>468</sup>

Thus, Origen's protological views are presented as endangering the whole Christian faith. However, we may note in the quotation that two things are especially put at risk because of the idea that angels have been turned into human souls and confined in bodies: The resurrection, and the blessing to multiply and replenish the earth.

Epiphanius returns to the question of the resurrection body later in the letter. In *Ep* 51.5, his attack on Origen's denial of the resurrection of the flesh comes directly after a charge concerning protology, namely the idea that Adam and Eve did not have fleshly bodies before the fall, and that the coats of skins represent their bodies. Again, it is clear that the problems that Epiphanius sees in Origen's view on the resurrection cannot be understood apart from other concerns he has about Origen's theology, and protological questions seem to be of great importance. If we interpret the words of Genesis in a true and not in an allegorical way, it becomes clear, Epiphanius holds, that human bodies existed before the

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<sup>466</sup> *Ep* 51.4. Epiphanius says that it is common among heretics to use the Scriptures to their own purposes: Manichees, Gnostics, Ebionites, Marcionites and others. They do not, according to him, interpret according to the actual meaning of the text, but in a way that reflects their own opinions (CSEL 54, 402-403).

<sup>467</sup> *Ep* 51.4.

<sup>468</sup> *Ep* 51.4, CSEL 54, 402: ... *si hoc veum est, ubi est fides nostra? Ubi praeconium resurrectionis? Ubi apostolica doctrina, quae in ecclesiis Christi hucusque perdurat? Ubi illa benedictio ad Adam et ad semen eius et ad Noe et ad filios eius: Crescite et multiplicamini et replete terram? Iam enim non erit benedictio, sed maledictio iuxta Origenem, qui angelos vertit in animas et de sublimi fastigio dignitatis facit ad inferiora descendere...*

Fall. This is connected to the question of sexual difference: Rather than spiritual beings falling from heaven and being imprisoned in bodies, the first human beings were a man and a woman.<sup>469</sup>

We will pass over the charge about the possible repentance of the devil,<sup>470</sup> which will be dealt with in the next chapter. One charge that is important to our present concerns does however remain: The charge that Origen taught that Adam lost the image of God. Refraining from expressing the way in which the human being is created in the image of God, Epiphanius is certain that the image is not lost.<sup>471</sup>

We see the close connection between the charges. The fundamental problem seems to be Origen's ideas about the creation of humankind: If we accept the idea that humans, being angels in heaven, were without flesh in the beginning, then belief in the resurrection is at risk.

This concern is already seen in an earlier work of Epiphanius, *Panarion*, written in 376. In this work, Epiphanius goes through eighty heresies, explaining and refuting their errors. A large section is dedicated to Origen, and it is clear that, already at this time, the related issues of the creation of humankind and the resurrection of the dead were of great importance to Epiphanius in his refutation of the Alexandrian theologian. As in the letter of 394, he begins his discussion with Trinitarian issues, but moves on quickly to what he considers to be more serious errors by Origen.<sup>472</sup> He speaks about the pre-existence of souls; that these were originally angels who fell and who were confined in bodies; and that Origen reads the Scriptures to mean what suits him rather than what they actually mean.<sup>473</sup> Jon F. Dechow has argued that while the disputes about Origen in the beginning of the fourth century concerned Trinitarian issues to a great extent,<sup>474</sup> such concerns faded away during the latter half of the century.<sup>475</sup> Instead, questions about protology and eschatology were the most important ones in Epiphanius' anti-Origenist heresiology.

According to Elizabeth Clark, three charges in the letter to John of Jerusalem were new or at least developed from what Epiphanius wrote against Origen in *Panarion*: The charges concerning reproduction, the loss of the image, and the

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<sup>469</sup> *Ep* 51.5, CSEL 54, 403.

<sup>470</sup> *Ep* 51.5, CSEL 54, 403.

<sup>471</sup> *Ep* 51.6-7, CSEL 54, 405-410.

<sup>472</sup> *Pan* 64.4.3-5, GCS 31, 410-11.

<sup>473</sup> *Pan* 64.4.7, 412.

<sup>474</sup> In Pamphilus' *Apology for Origen*, written 307-310, most of the charges against Origen that the author refutes concern the teaching on God and Christ.

<sup>475</sup> Dechow 1988, 248-251, 265-270.

possible restoration of the devil.<sup>476</sup> When it comes to the restoration of the devil, it is true that this charge is not found in the *Panarion*. The other two can however be found there, and I will argue that they were very important to Epiphanius already in the 370s. In what follows, I will discuss what Epiphanius had to say about these two subjects (reproduction and the image of God) in the *Panarion*, and about the way in which they were related to his ideas about the resurrection body. Through this, I hope to reach an understanding of what Epiphanius saw as most problematic about Origen's theology and why he found it so important to refute Origenist ideas. This will provide a background for my later examination of Jerome's heresiological writings concerning this question, both because he depended on Epiphanius' polemics, and because he continued to differ from Epiphanius' views in significant ways.

### 2.2.2. *Panarion: Marriage, Reproduction and Resurrection*

A lengthy section of Epiphanius' refutation of Origen in *Panarion*<sup>477</sup> is made up of excerpts from a work of Methodius of Olympus, *On the resurrection*.<sup>478</sup> In *Panarion* 64.31.1-4, in a quotation from Methodius, the Origenist interpretation of the skin tunics as the earthly bodies of Adam and Eve is refuted. It is reported how Adam, seeing the woman, exclaimed: "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. /.../ Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh".<sup>479</sup> Methodius/Epiphanius also turns to the confirmation by Jesus in the Gospel: "... the one who made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this reason..."<sup>480</sup> Also the blessing to be fruitful and multiply<sup>481</sup> is brought up. Although there is no precise mention of the goodness of sexuality in this case, it can easily be concluded that, according to Methodius/Epiphanius, sexual difference and sexual activity were realities before

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<sup>476</sup> Clark 1992, 95-96. Concerning the charge about reproduction, Clark argues that in his earlier polemics against Origen, Epiphanius had not spoken of reproduction, and the importance of this question in *Letter 51* should, according to her, be interpreted as a consequence of the Jovinianist controversy, for which his source would have been Jerome (Clark 1992, 96-99).

<sup>477</sup> Although an Origenist sect is mentioned, almost the whole section is confined to Origen himself. However, some mention is made about the "sect" in Epiphanius' own day. The sect is said to have begun in Egypt, but now it appears among very prominent persons who have adopted the monastic life (*Panarion* 64.4.1). According to Dechow, it was above all "orthodox" persons influenced by Origenist thought that Epiphanius had in mind (Dechow 1988, 142-146).

<sup>478</sup> Methodius wrote this work probably at the beginning of the fourth century, and it is probable that Pamphilus of Caesarea, in his *Apology for Origen*, had it in mind when he refuted those who accused Origen of heresy because of his views on the resurrection body.

<sup>479</sup> Gen 2:23-24.

<sup>480</sup> Mt 19:4-5.

<sup>481</sup> Gen 1:28.

the Fall. Interestingly, reference to the resurrection is made: Methodius/Epiphanius does not accept allegorical interpretations of flesh and bones as spiritual realities, as the heretics' "excuse for saying that the resurrection is not a resurrection of the flesh".<sup>482</sup> Again, protological issues are related to eschatological ones: To secure a real resurrection, we have to confirm a creation of the human being with a fleshly body.

While the above-mentioned arguments come from a quotation from Methodius, it is clear from other places in the *Panarion* that the question of marriage and reproduction was important to Epiphanius already at this time. For example, he faults the Encratites for seeing marriage as unlawful, and as in the refutation of Origen in *Panarion* 64, references are made to Genesis 1:28,<sup>483</sup> Matthew 19:5.<sup>484</sup> Epiphanius also refers to Mark 10:9<sup>485</sup> and Hebrews 13:4.<sup>486</sup> It is clear that it was important for Epiphanius to demonstrate that both the Old and the New Testament approve of marriage.<sup>487</sup>

Another similarity to the excerpt from Methodius is Epiphanius' way of relating the issue of creation to that of resurrection. The Encratites are said to be inconsistent, because they believe in the resurrection of the dead, and still, they see marriage as something evil. If there is a resurrection, says Epiphanius, how can marriage be of the devil? Again, belief in a real resurrection demands belief in the original creation of the human being with flesh.

That Epiphanius found it important already in *Panarion* to give scriptural proof of the goodness of marriage and reproduction can be seen in several other places.<sup>488</sup> In Epiphanius' view, sexuality was part of the original creation and not a consequence of the Fall. We may note the close connection between this concern

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<sup>482</sup> *Panarion* 64.31.3, 450, transl. Williams 1994, 159.

<sup>483</sup> "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth".

<sup>484</sup> "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh". This is a confirmation of the words in Genesis 2:24.

<sup>485</sup> "Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate".

<sup>486</sup> "Let marriage be held in honour by all, and let the marriage bed be kept undefiled".

<sup>487</sup> The importance of demonstrating this can be understood from the exegetical strategy, common in Jerome's work, which has been called the "difference of the times" (Clark 1999) and means that a radical distinction is made between the two Testaments, in a way that what was valid in earlier times need no longer be valid for the Christian person. See the discussion in chapter 3.

<sup>488</sup> In *Panarion* 23.5.6-7, against Saturnilus, Epiphanius argues from Mark 10:9 and Hebrews 13:4 that marriage is of God. In 43.1.5-2.1 (GCS 31, 187-188), against the Lucianists, Epiphanius claims that the Old Testament and the New Testament express the same idea on marriage. In 45.3.2-4 (201), against the Severians, he claims that desires are placed in human beings by God, and that there is nothing wrong with sexual desire. It is given to fulfil the command to be fruitful and multiply, and is seen as part of the fruitfulness of creation at large. In 61.1.8 (381), writing against the Apostolics, whom he describes as an offshoot of the Encratites, he argues that sexuality was part of human nature as originally created.

and his views on the resurrection, and also his insistence on the agreement between the two Testaments: In the refutation of some sects, these issues are mentioned together.<sup>489</sup> Thus, I do not agree with Clark's conclusion that the question of reproduction was a new concern for Epiphanius in the Origenist controversy, and a consequence of his awareness of Jovinianist controversy.<sup>490</sup> It is apparent that Epiphanius' views on this issue were similar to those of Jovinian.<sup>491</sup> However, rather than Epiphanius being influenced by the questions discussed in this debate over asceticism, it might be that his ideas were a source for Jovinian to draw from. As David Hunter has pointed out, the *Panarion* circulated in the West during the 380s, and arguably had an effect on ideas about asceticism.<sup>492</sup> If Epiphanius' work contributed to the anti-ascetical tendencies in the West at this time, of which Jovinian was the most prominent spokesman (or at least the best known), the conclusion that Epiphanius influenced Jovinian does not seem far-fetched.

Even greater similarities, and another possible example of Epiphanius' influence in the West, are found in Ambrosiaster.<sup>493</sup> In his work *Quaestiones veteris et novi testamenti* he gave a defence of marriage and reproduction, possibly in reaction to Jerome's ascetical theology, such as expressed in *Letter 22* and *Against Helvidius*.<sup>494</sup> Ambrosiaster argued, like Epiphanius, that sexual desire was part of the original creation.<sup>495</sup> Like Epiphanius, a tendency can be seen in the work of Ambrosiaster to emphasize the unity between the Old and the New Testament. Both Testaments, he argued, approved of sexuality within marriage, and some of the references he made were the same as those we can find in Epiphanius.<sup>496</sup> In a way similar to Epiphanius, Ambrosiaster saw human sexuality as part of the fruitfulness of creation at large and, importantly, not as connected to

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<sup>489</sup> In some places, for example concerning the Encratites, Phrygians and Quintillianists, it is said that they use the Old Testament and the New, and that they believe in the resurrection of the dead, and, *despite this*, they think of marriage as evil, which in Epiphanius' mind is inconsistent.

<sup>490</sup> Clark argues from an absence of references to Genesis in Epiphanius' treatment of Origen in *Panarion*. We have seen that such were made in the excerpt from Methodius; besides, as has also been shown, Epiphanius argued from such texts in other places in *Panarion*.

<sup>491</sup> See chapter 3. For example, Jovinian argued from Gen 1:28.

<sup>492</sup> Hunter 2007, 147, 153.

<sup>493</sup> Although Hunter does not discuss any possible influence from Epiphanius on Ambrosiaster (besides noting that Ambrosiaster wrote his *Quaestiones* at the same time as Epiphanius' heresiological work circulated in the West), he clearly connects the two writers: "Like Epiphanius and Filastrius, Ambrosiaster criticized an ascetic piety that rested on what he regarded as dubious theological grounds" (Hunter 2007, 169).

<sup>494</sup> This has been argued by Hunter (1989).

<sup>495</sup> *Quaest* 127.

<sup>496</sup> Gen 1:28, Mt 19:4-6. Like Epiphanius, Ambrosiaster preferred a literal interpretation of Genesis, against the spiritualizing interpretations of ascetics.

sin but intended from the beginning. Ambrosiaster even connects the views of his opponents to the heresies of Marcion and Mani, as does Epiphanius.<sup>497</sup>

The discourse of ascetical orthodoxy and heresy certainly did not begin with Jovinian, but was well under way during the 380s. It is important to note that not all those who polemicized against ascetics were of the same view, as we have seen already in the previous chapter. Epiphanius did not share Jovinian's view that married people were equal to virgins: He, like Jerome, thought that virginity was superior.<sup>498</sup> It was the theological foundations behind certain versions of asceticism that Epiphanius opposed. It was, in his view, an error common to radical (like the Encratites) and more moderate (like Origenists) ascetic thinkers that they based their asceticism on a heretical idea of the creation of humankind, which denied the place of sexuality – and, thus, sexual difference – in the original creation.<sup>499</sup>

### 2.2.3. Panarion: *The Image of God and Human Nature*

Another critique against Origen in *Letter 51* concerns the question about the image of God. Origen is reproached for claiming that the image is lost. While refraining from expressing a view concerning in what particular respect the human is created in the image of God,<sup>500</sup> Epiphanius is certain that the image remains in all human beings.<sup>501</sup> Even in this case, comparisons can be made to Ambrosiaster. Like Epiphanius, he saw the image of God as remaining in (male) human beings.<sup>502</sup>

Just as I have argued with respect to the issue of reproduction, I suggest that this issue of the image was not a new – or a greater – concern for Epiphanius in the 390s than it had been in the 370s.<sup>503</sup> It appears in the section about Origenist heresy in the *Panarion*,<sup>504</sup> and more importantly, it cannot be separated from his discussion of the (fleshly) creation of humankind, and this was Epiphanius' primary concern in the refutation of Origen. A lengthy quotation from Methodius

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<sup>497</sup> *Panarion* 64.71.14 (GCS 31, 520).

<sup>498</sup> See for example *Panarion* 61 (GCS 31, 380-389).

<sup>499</sup> Hunter 2007, 158.

<sup>500</sup> Although in *Panarion* 44.4.11, Epiphanius says that both body and soul are included in the image, and together they make up the human being.

<sup>501</sup> *Ep* 51.7.

<sup>502</sup> Hunter has shown that Ambrosiaster did not see women as being in the image of God. They had been subordinated already in the creation of human kind, because they had their existence from the male. Thus, the subordination of women in society was not to be transcended but was actually in accordance with the original intention of God. Hunter 1992, 447-469.

<sup>503</sup> This, as we have seen above, is what Clark suggests.

<sup>504</sup> *Panarion* 64.4.9, GCS 31, 412.

in *Panarion* 64 concerns the question of creation,<sup>505</sup> and as we have seen, the question is presented as the most serious one in *Letter* 51. In *Panarion*, Epiphanius makes it clear how he sees Origen's errors on these points (the image and creation) as related to each other: "He [Origen] says that Adam lost the image of God. This is why the skin tunics are signaled in scripture, for 'He made them tunics of skin and clothed them' refers to the body".<sup>506</sup> Origen's interpretation of the image of God as reference to the inner person, not to the body, is connected to the giving of bodies only after the Fall.<sup>507</sup> Thus, in Methodius'/Epiphanius' presentation of Origen's thought, the image was lost with the giving of the body.

In *Letter* 51, we have seen Epiphanius refuting Origen because of his teaching that angels fell into souls and were confined in bodies. Although he has been criticized for this description, and for the charge that Origen claimed that the image has been lost,<sup>508</sup> these presentations are important because they say a lot about what he finds problematic about Origenism. In the quotation from Methodius in the *Panarion*, the question about what it means to be like the angels is discussed. Origen's defender in the dialogue, Aglaophon, has argued that if we are to be equal to angels, we will have no flesh. Against this, the static difference between natures of different kinds of creatures is emphasized: Angels are one species, humans another. Humans cannot be turned into angels, neither can angels be transformed into humans. Human nature will be restored to what it was before the Fall, but even at that time, it was a human nature, not an angelic one.<sup>509</sup>

We see again how ideas about the creation of humankind are crucial to argumentations concerning the resurrection body. Further on, the quotation from Methodius reads:

... God created the man at the first and willed that he be a man. But if he willed it, and he wills what is good – and if man is good – and if man is said to be composed of soul and body – then man will not be bodiless at the [resurrection] but embodied,

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<sup>505</sup> As Dechow (1988, 361) points out, Epiphanius neglects certain parts of Methodius' work which are important in the question of the resurrection body and concentrates on the part that treats the pre-existence of souls and the interpretation of the skin tunics as bodies (Methodius' dialogue with Aglaophon): "His monastic, non-philosophical background and interests seem evident here".

<sup>506</sup> *Panarion* 64.4.9, GCS 31, 412, transl. Williams 1994, 135.

<sup>507</sup> However, although Origen argued that the image of God referred to the inner person, he thought that the rational beings had some kind of body even before the Fall; the change that took place after the Fall was that the body became earthly, that is, heavy, corruptible, and mortal.

<sup>508</sup> Both Dechow and Clark fault Epiphanius because of his description of Origen as thinking that human beings have lost the image of God, and also for presenting him as thinking that angels fell and became humans (Clark 1992, 92, Dechow 1988, 305-307). Dechow argues that according to Origen, the loss was not complete, and it had more to do with a dynamic rising and falling, and importantly, it is always possible to regain the image. (See *De Principiis* 3.6.1, *HomGen* 13.4).

<sup>509</sup> *Panarion* 64.41.2-6, GCS 31, 463-464.



or man will be other than man. /.../ The body does not perish, then, for man is a composite of body and soul.<sup>510</sup>

Here we encounter one of the major issues in the Origenist controversy, that concerning angelic and human natures. A danger was seen in Origen's alleged idea that humans had once been not only *like* angels, but, actually, angels (that is, without flesh and sexual difference), and that they would be angels again in the resurrection.

"... Christ did not say, 'They shall be angels', but, 'They shall be like angels'".<sup>511</sup> Being like the angels in the resurrection does not mean being without flesh, Methodius/Epiphanius assure us, but means that we will not marry and that we will be immortal.<sup>512</sup>

#### 2.2.4. Possible Motives of Epiphanius

While it is, in a sense, true that the most important concern for Epiphanius was that of materiality,<sup>513</sup> it is possible to go further and ask why materiality was so important. Dechow has argued that the background to Epiphanius' polemics against Origen should be seen in the conflict between "monastic elitism" and "intransigence" in Egypt.<sup>514</sup> I would like to develop this idea of the underlying problem as one of spiritual authority and ascetical elitism, and connect it to the ecclesiological concerns that were discussed in the previous chapter, and which I argued were at the foundation of the Jovinianist controversy.

A problem that Epiphanius returns to over and over again in *Panarion*, when he presents groups whose heresy is in some way connected to radical asceticism, is

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<sup>510</sup> *Panarion* 64.42.4-5, GCS 31, 465-66, transl. Williams 1994, p. 168.

<sup>511</sup> *Panarion* 64.43.4, GCS 31, 466.

<sup>512</sup> *Panarion* 64.43.3, also 64.63.17, where Epiphanius explains that there will be no more lusts and struggles to maintain continence.

<sup>513</sup> Clark 1992, 87; cf. Hunter 2007, 155.

<sup>514</sup> Dechow 1988, 96, argues that, according to Epiphanius, the danger lay in spiritualization and denial of the ultimate value of the present bodily condition. Dechow suggests writings such as the Macarian Homilies and the works of Evagrius as containing such ideas that Epiphanius opposed. A similar view has been expressed by Samuel Rubenson, who has argued that it is in the conflict between materiality and spirituality, connected to bishops and Origenist monks respectively, that we ought to seek the reason for the controversy. Arguing from the anti-Origenist criticism of Theophilus of Alexandria, Rubenson demonstrates how questions about bodiliness, reproduction and the visible sacraments were important in this criticism, as opposed to the spiritualizing tendencies of writers in the Origenist monastic tradition. Behind such polemics lay the eschatology of the desert fathers who were influenced by Origen, and what was perceived as an indifference to the material church. Rubenson suggests that in the fourth century, the free theological thinking that had characterized the work of Origen came to be less accepted, and the visible church with its visible sacraments came to represent the only accepted expressions of Christian faith. (Rubenson, "Kampen om Origenes", 1995, 71-73).

that of ascetical elitism. This does not only have to do with their thinking of themselves as better because of their ascetic life, but also concerns the question about how sinners – above all, those who have lapsed during persecutions – should be treated. The groups named Purists and Apostolics are said not to allow readmission to those who have lapsed. Interestingly, in his critique of the elitism (and perhaps, more precisely, lay elitism) of the Purists, Epiphanius describes them as demanding of everyone what should only be demanded of priests.<sup>515</sup> “The priesthood ranks first and has the strictest requirements in everything, but moderation and forbearance are shown to the laity, so that all may be taught and all shown mercy”.<sup>516</sup> Epiphanius has a clearly lenient view towards Christian sinners. Over and over, he returns to the theme of possibility of repentance. It is possible until death,<sup>517</sup> and in a metaphor of the church as a ship, he assures that the ship accepts almost all kinds of people, even “someone who just wants to cross the ocean without drowning”. The ship can save all.<sup>518</sup>

These views are presented in opposition to those ascetics who, although they make up the better parts of the ship, should not look down on others. Thus, Epiphanius both argues in favor of ascetical superiority (in contrast to Jovinian), and simultaneously, his main target seems to be that of ascetical elitism. The force of his words about the priesthood becomes clear: The priests are those who must be holy, who must be celibate. Very much like Ambrosiaster and Siricius,<sup>519</sup> celibacy and priesthood come together in separating a holy group of Christians from the rest, from whom very little is asked as a requirement for salvation.<sup>520</sup> The priest always had to be ready to fulfil the services. Epiphanius compares to how lay persons abstain from sexual intercourse for shorter times in order to pray: The priest must always do this.<sup>521</sup>

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<sup>515</sup> “... they have assumed that what is enjoined upon the priesthood because of the priesthood’s preeminence applies equally to everyone”. “Since Christ’s incarnation, in fact, because of the priesthood’s higher rank, God’s holy Gospel does not accept men for the priesthood after a first marriage, if they have remarried because their first wife died”. (59.4.1, GCS 31, 367, transl. Williams 1994, 105). 59.6.8: “The priesthood ranks first and has the strictest requirements in everything, but moderation and forbearance are shown to the laity, so that all may be taught and all shown mercy” (GCS 31, 371, transl. Williams 1994, 108). 59.11.3: “They have assumed that the prohibitions of second marriages and the rest, which are reserved for the priesthood, < are enjoined > upon all the laity...” ( GCS 31, 376, transl. Williams 1994, 111-112).

<sup>516</sup> *Panarion* 59.6.8, GCS 31, 371.

<sup>517</sup> *Panarion* 59.9.9, GCS 31, 374-375.

<sup>518</sup> *Panarion* 61.4.3 ff, GCS 31, 384.

<sup>519</sup> See previous chapter.

<sup>520</sup> However, we should note that for Epiphanius, virginity was a higher state than marriage, while Ambrosiaster and Siricius seem to have preferred post-marital celibacy among the clergy.

<sup>521</sup> *Panarion* 59, GCS 31, 363-379, about the “Purists”.

We should note the striking difference compared to the views of Jerome, who, like Origen, saw the Christian hierarchy as an invisible one, based on the life of the inner person, not outer ordination. Jerome, too, imagined an especially holy group of Christians, separated from the rest, but these were the ascetics of body and mind, regardless of ecclesiastical status. They were a special race, joining the angels in the service of God. When it came to ascetical elitism, he clearly supported it, as in his reminder to Eustochium that she was better than married women.<sup>522</sup>

Elizabeth Clark has written: “We may indeed question if only the views of the historical Origen here [dealing with the charge of the deprecation of reproduction] occupy Epiphanius’s thoughts: given the controversies over asceticism that beset the 380s and 390s, it is likely that more than Origen’s teaching pure and simple is at stake”.<sup>523</sup> We may indeed question that, and in my view, Origen’s theology “pure and simple” was never a major concern for Epiphanius. From what has been discussed above, it seems more likely that Epiphanius was primarily concerned about the church of his time and the authority of some of its members. What made immateriality connected to uncertainty was the room that it left for transcendence. Origen’s ideas were dangerous because they rendered everything uncertain, and they did so by denying that the bodily sense of the Scriptures is the most important sense, that the teaching preserved in the (visible) church by a (visible) ecclesiastical hierarchy is the only acceptable teaching, that bodily human beings are the human beings as they were created and as they will rise. That is, uncertainty has to do with immateriality, in the sense that, in the view of Origen and others like him, everything material refers to something immaterial, which holds a higher degree of truth.

We have already seen that a common concern for Epiphanius and Ambrosiaster was to emphasize the unity between the Old and the New Testaments, and they seem to have sought to minimize the difference between before and after the Fall, by affirming that human beings were originally created with fleshly bodies, sexual difference and sexual desire. These two general concerns are clearly connected: The point is that the state of the human being in the original creation was not utterly different from the state after the Fall, which means that what had been valid in Old Testament times was still valid for Christians. The wish to refute theological views of ascetics can be seen in the claim that the command to multiply was given in the original creation and is still valid, by claiming that

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<sup>522</sup> *Ep* 22.16.

<sup>523</sup> Dechow as well as Clark have argued that Epiphanius’ most important concern is that of materiality. Clark explains: “Already in the *Ancoratus*, the major line of assault against Origen pertains to issues of ‘materiality’ as they manifest themselves in discussions of the body and of allegorical exegesis”. Clark 1992, 96.

female subordination was part of the original creation and reinforced after the Fall,<sup>524</sup> and by claiming that humans still have the image of God.

It is important to note that, for all his similarities to Ambrosiaster and Jovinian and his possible influence on debates over asceticism in the West, the problem that Epiphanius saw was not asceticism itself. He was an ascetic himself, and it is clear from several places in the *Panarion* that he saw virginity as a higher condition than married life.<sup>525</sup> The problem he saw, I argue, was a threat to the present, material order of the world and, above all, to the church. Central in Origen's thought, as well as writers in the ascetical tradition, such as Jerome, was the idea of a constant possibility for the soul to fall as well as rise. The ascetic life itself was perceived as a rising from a Fall, the Fall that had placed the human being in his/her present bodily condition. As we have seen, the aim was to return to the state before this Fall, to Paradise, and to anticipate the resurrected life in Heaven, a life without sexual difference. It was views like this, I suggest, that Epiphanius, as well as Ambrosiaster, sought to refute by emphasizing the unity of the two Testaments and by seeking to minimizing the difference between before and after the Fall.

We can thus see a great paradox in the fact that the translator of Epiphanius' letter was a follower of Origen, sharing with him those very ideas which appeared most dangerous to Epiphanius: The dynamic view on hierarchy, the radical difference between before and after the Fall, the angelic life as what has been lost and what can be regained through ascetic struggle.

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<sup>524</sup> This was in clear contrast to Jerome, who thought that female subordination, and sexual difference itself, was a consequence of the Fall. This is connected to "the difference in times": It was possible for Christian women to return to the state before the Fall by living as ascetics, something that had not been possible for women in Old Testament times. Ambrosiaster saw the punishment of women itself as a kind of return to an original order that had been lost because of the Fall. The woman was inferior from the beginning because she derived from the man. Epiphanius does not seem to have been very engaged in this question, and in *Epistula* 51, he seems to include woman in the image of God, saying about Adam that "he alone was made in the image of God (he and his wife, that is, for while he was formed of clay she was made of one of his ribs)...". However, even Epiphanius could argue against female authority from the account in Genesis; in *Panarion* 49, he argues against the Quintillianists, who are presented as denying sexual difference among themselves by reference to Gal 3:28. Against this, Epiphanius reminds his readers that the woman came from the man, and also that Eve was deceived before Adam, and that part of her punishment was subordination. Thus, as with Ambrosiaster, a literal interpretation of Genesis made it possible to refute the claims of some ascetical thinkers that women could become equal to men through asceticism.

<sup>525</sup> For example in *Panarion* 61, against the Apostolics (GCS 31, 380-389) and 63 (398-402), against the Origenists (another group than the followers of Origen).

### 2.2.5. Epiphanius and the Question of the Resurrection Body

We might seem to have drifted far away from the question of the resurrection, but that is, in a way, the point. Epiphanius, I suggest from the discussion above, was not primarily concerned about eschatological questions, but ecclesiological ones.

We have already seen that it is not possible to understand Epiphanius' views on the resurrection body apart from his views on protology. In what follows, some more things will be said about his heresiological presentation of Origen's theology of the resurrection. Origen is said sometimes to support it nominally, sometimes to deny it, and sometimes to claim a partial resurrection.<sup>526</sup> Epiphanius depends, as we have seen, heavily on Methodius' critique of Origen and, as has been pointed out by some scholars,<sup>527</sup> he takes over a certain misunderstanding by Methodius: The concept of *eidos*, which is of great importance in Origen's theology of the resurrection body, is interpreted as meaning "outer appearance" rather than "corporeal form", that is, a form that remains in the human body and guarantees its identity through material flux. We will have more to say about this when we come to Jerome's ideas of the resurrection body, but for now, the important point concerning Epiphanius' heresiological representation of Origen's thought on this issue must be his claim that Origen did not teach a real resurrection, meaning a resurrection of this body that has lived on earth.

David Hunter has claimed that in Epiphanius' refutation of Origen's ideas on the resurrection body, "it was not the implications of Origen's teaching for marriage, but rather its implications for asceticism that troubled Epiphanius".<sup>528</sup> He has in mind those arguments of Epiphanius that focus on justice: As the soul and the body have suffered together in this world, we must also expect them to be rewarded together in the resurrection.<sup>529</sup>

There is, however, reason to question whether this was really an important concern of Epiphanius. It was a classical way of arguing in favour of the resurrection of the body, and of course, it suited Epiphanius' purposes: Since he presented Origen as denying a real resurrection, he could also accuse him of thinking that the body would not have any reward for its struggles. However, in Epiphanius' arguments concerning creation as well as resurrection, the important

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<sup>526</sup> *Panarion* 64.4.10 (GCS 31, 412-413).

<sup>527</sup> Crouzel, "Les critiques adressés par Méthode", in Crouzel 1990, 679-716; Dechow 1988.

<sup>528</sup> Hunter 2007, 157.

<sup>529</sup> Such as *Panarion* 64.63.9 (GCS 31, 502): The body and the soul work together; 64.70.17: "The body is linked with the soul and the soul with the body /.../ and there is a full judgment of both..."; 64.71.7-8 (519): If only the soul will have the inheritance of the kingdom of heaven, then we could cease mortifying our bodies; however, if the body works together with the soul, God will not be unjust and deprive it of its reward.

point is anthropological: To claim that the human being as originally created, as well as resurrected in the future, has a fleshly body. The more fundamental motive for arguing this is, as I have suggested, to minimize the difference between the present world, the original state and the resurrection. I will argue further when we come to Jerome's dealing with this question that asceticism is in itself problematic as an explanation of ideas about the resurrection of the flesh. The argument from the body's ascetical struggle (which can be called an argument from justice) had been used by Origen too, in his argumentation of the resurrection of the body.<sup>530</sup>

### 3. Jerome's Heresiological Presentation of Origen's Views on the Resurrection

#### 3.1. The Beginnings of Jerome's anti-Origenist Polemics

##### 3.1.1. *First Signs of an Anti-Origenist Heresiology: Letters 61 and 62*

After having translated Epiphanius' letter, it took about four years before Jerome made a greater attack on Origen's ideas of the resurrection body. The first place in which he criticizes Origen for not having a correct teaching of the resurrection of the body, is in his *Letter* 61, to Vigilantius, written in 396. This Vigilantius, a priest from Gaul, had visited Jerome in Bethlehem.<sup>531</sup> On his return to the West, he had obviously accused Jerome of holding Origenist views.<sup>532</sup>

"Origen is a heretic, but what does that have to do with me, who do not deny that on many points he is heretical?"<sup>533</sup> Jerome then numbers such points: The resurrection of the body, the condition of souls, the possible repentance of the devil, and – this Jerome thinks is more serious – the idea that the Seraphim in Isaiah 6:2 are the Son and the Holy Spirit. When it comes to the question of the resurrection, Jerome does not explain the error of Origen, but he shortly returns to the question in 61.3, where he tells us that he had "preached on the resurrection and on the reality of the risen body" when Vigilantius had been in Bethlehem, and

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<sup>530</sup> Pamphilus of Caesarea, *Apology for Origen* 128 (SC 464, 208-210).

<sup>531</sup> See *Ep* 58.11, CSEL 54, 541.

<sup>532</sup> It seems like Vigilantius had stayed with Rufinus and Melania in Jerusalem before he visited Jerome, and it was probably from them that he learned about Jerome's admiration of Origen. See Kelly 1975, 202.

<sup>533</sup> *Ep* 61.2, CSEL 54, 577: *Origenes hereticus: Quid ad me, qui illum in plerisque hereticum non nego?*

Vigilantius seemed to approve of what he said.<sup>534</sup> We may note that Jerome does not speak specifically of the resurrection of the flesh.<sup>535</sup>

Something should be said about Jerome's rhetorical strategies in the letter, as compared to the strategies he would use later. At this stage, Jerome makes no effort to explain either what is problematic about the views that he mentions, or what his own ideas on these subjects are, as compared to Origen's. When it comes to the question of the resurrection body, he makes no effort to show in which way Origen's view implicates a denial of a real resurrection body, and although Jerome had obviously preached on the subject, he gives us no clue about his own understanding of the reality of the resurrection body. The strategy, instead, consists in assuring the reader that Jerome knows how to distinguish between what is orthodox and what is heretical in Origen. We would be wrong, he argues, to condemn the whole of Origen's thought because some of his ideas were heretical. Rather, we should separate the good from the bad. Importantly, this distinction seems to be, to a great extent, a distinction between Origen's exegetical and theological work. Jerome would continue to claim, in later writings, that even if he had used Origen's exegetical works, he had never embraced his theology. This distinction is, of course, a purely artificial one, as Origen's theology cannot be separated from his exegesis, and neither can Jerome's. Jerome would certainly have trouble answering Epiphanius' charge that Origen's errors were connected to his allegorical method of interpretation. We must be aware of the rhetorical use that Jerome makes of genres. The underlying assumption seems to be that exegesis simply means bringing out what the author says, while theology involves a more innovative process.<sup>536</sup>

This attitude towards Origen's works was repeated in *Letter* 62, to Tranquillinus, a friend in Rome, who had asked Jerome if everything that Origen had written ought to be avoided. We should select what is good and avoid what is bad, is Jerome's answer.<sup>537</sup> Again, it is Origen's exegetical works that Jerome speaks of as useful – his erroneous views should not lead us to reject his biblical commentaries (although, of course, these "erroneous" views were expressed, to a large extent, precisely in biblical commentaries). However, Jerome remarks that if

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<sup>534</sup> Jerome's preaching on this subject shows that he perceived himself to be vulnerable to accusations connected to it.

<sup>535</sup> It does not become clear in which ways Vigilantius thought Jerome to be an Origenist.

<sup>536</sup> In *Ep* 49, concerning the continuing debates after the Jovinianist controversy, Jerome makes clear that what he wrote about marriage in *Adversus Jovinianum*, he wrote as an interpreter (*interpretor*) and commentator (*commentator*), not as a theologian (*dogmatistes*) (48.14, CSEL 54, 371). Cf. *Ep* 48.17, 381: *commentatoris officium est non, quid ipse uelit, sed, quid sentiat ille, quem interpretatur, exponere.*

<sup>537</sup> *Ep* 62.2, with reference made to 1 Thess 5:21. CSEL 54, 583-584.

one must choose sides, that is, for or against Origen, one should prefer “rustic piety to blasphemous learning”.<sup>538</sup>

### 3.1.2. Against John of Jerusalem

Not long after, Jerome would have to choose sides, and as he had said, he chose to be a pious rustic. This was the character he would assume in his polemical work *Against John*, while at the same time presenting his opponent, the bishop of Jerusalem, as a learned blasphemer. His strategies change significantly. Charges against Origen are brought up, and Jerome explains why Origen’s views are heretical, while at the same time he gives his own views on the subjects discussed, presented as the views of the church. The work is a great example of the mutual construction of orthodoxy and heresy that had taken place in the work of Epiphanius and which would be common in future heresiological works. Views are presented as heretical and given an orthodox alternative.

The immediate reason for the writing of this work was that John, because of the problematic situation in which he found himself, accused of Origenism by Epiphanius, had written a letter to bishop Theophilus of Alexandria, in which he had given his views on the situation and also, in a kind of apology, had answered the accusations of heresy and explained his views on the matters under debate. This letter is not extant, but it can to a great extent be recovered from Jerome's work against John.<sup>539</sup>

It should be noted that although Origen's ideas are criticized in *Contra Iohannem*, Jerome’s real target is not Origen himself, but John. The purpose is twofold: 1) To present John as a heretic who tries to conceal his heresies by cunningly making them appear orthodox, thus deceiving the simple believers, and, 2) to present his own views as orthodox, free from any stain of Origenist heresy, and also in accordance with the common view.

Jerome brings up several charges against Origen, but he makes it clear that the most important one is that concerning the resurrection body.<sup>540</sup> This is the first work in which Jerome speaks specifically about the resurrection of the *flesh*, and his main argument on this matter is that John fails to prove that he accepts a real resurrection, as he only speaks of the resurrection of the body, and not of the flesh. He gives quotations from John’s letter, and concludes that when ignorant people hear what John has to say about the resurrection – his words about the dead, about graves, about “the resurrection ‘in a true and not an imaginary sense’”, about a resurrection of the same bodies that we have now, and a crowning or a punishment

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<sup>538</sup> *Ep* 62.2, CSEL 54, 584: ... *libentius piam rusticitatem quam doctam blasphemiam eligam*.

<sup>539</sup> Kelly 1975, 205-206.

<sup>540</sup> *Clo*h 23, CCSL 79A, 37 : ... *famosissimam de resurrectione carnis et corporis quaestionem*.



of that same body which during its earthly life had deserved such rewards or punishments – they will believe that John actually confesses a real resurrection.<sup>541</sup>

This is part of an important heresiological strategy used in Jerome's anti-Origenist polemics (and, as demonstrated by Jeanjean, in his heresiology in general).<sup>542</sup> Jerome presents his opponents – in this case, John – as trying to disguise their heretical ideas, by speaking in a way that simple believers will think that they actually express the true faith, in this case, belief in a real resurrection. John, in Jerome's presentation, sees himself as part of an intellectual elite, sharing a more perfect kind of knowledge with others like him, and deceiving simple believers to think that he believes as they do.<sup>543</sup> Part of this rhetoric is that Jerome presents himself as one of the unlearned: "... you wanted us unlearned<sup>544</sup> to believe that in speaking of the body, you spoke of the flesh as well, while the perfect would understand that in speaking of the body, you denied the flesh".<sup>545</sup> At the same time, however, it is clear that Jerome does not see himself as one of the unlearned. What he appears to be, in this rhetoric, is rather a protector of the unlearned, who, by his learning, is able to reveal the deceits of the Origenists.<sup>546</sup> As he makes clear to John: "You see that we understand your subtleties and your secrets, which are spoken in the bedchambers and among the perfect, and which the people standing outside are not allowed to hear proclaimed in public".<sup>547</sup>

This shows similarities to Epiphanius' anti-Origenist polemics (and that of Methodius' before him). Epiphanius could say of Origen that he "attacks those who declare the certainty of the resurrection", "inculcating a sophistical opinion", trying to "overthrow the confession of our true hope in the resurrection".<sup>548</sup>

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<sup>541</sup> *Cloh* 24, CCSL 79A, 40.

<sup>542</sup> Jeanjean 1999, 308-313, 355-357, 377-381.

<sup>543</sup> As Jeanjean has shown, it was an important strategy in Jerome's heresiology to present his opponents, the heretics, as deceitful, trying to fool the simple people: Jeanjean 1999, 312, 323-326.

<sup>544</sup> *nos rudes*.

<sup>545</sup> *Cloh* 27, CCSL 79A, 49.

<sup>546</sup> The *vir ecclesiastus* is defined by Jeanjean as: "... celui qui est devenu expert dans la science des Écritures et dans la connaissance de Dieu. Son érudition lui permet de reconnaître la vraie doctrine et la juste interprétation, mais elle lui donne aussi un devoir d'assistance à l'égard des autres chrétiens et en particulier des 'simples' que leur ignorance expose davantage à la séduction des hérétiques" (1999, 330). Jerome defines himself as such in, for example, *Ep* 133.3 (CSEL 56/1, 244). See a lengthier discussion in Jeanjean 1999, 330-346.

<sup>547</sup> *Cloh* 27. For a discussion about charges of ambiguity as part of Jerome's heresiology in general, see Jeanjean 1999, 377-382.

<sup>548</sup> *Panarion* 64.11.2-3 (GCS 31, 420, transl. Williams 1994, 140-141). Also, in the quotation from Methodius, several instances of this rhetoric can be seen. Origen is connected to the sophists and accused of deceiving his audience by saying things that seem wise. The dichotomy truth / appearance is important: Origen says things to please, but the truth is hidden from those who

Another important rhetorical strategy used in *Against John* is to present John, and other Origenists, as relying on “pagan” philosophy in their arguments about the resurrection.<sup>549</sup> Rather than confessing with the words of the creed, that the flesh will rise, they use rational argumentation to prove a non-material resurrection. John is advised to put down the weapons (*arma*)<sup>550</sup> of the pagans:

The arguments /.../ which you use against the church are not your own. They flow from a pagan source. The pagans oppose us with the same. You say that you are a Christian – then put down the weapons of the pagans. It is they who should learn from you to confess the resurrection of the flesh – not you who should learn from them to deny it.<sup>551</sup>

However, the direct source of John’s heresy is Origen. In order to show that John’s ideas, as expressed in the apology, are really those of Origen, Jerome gives an account of Origen’s view on the resurrection, claiming that if we do not know the kind of the venom, we will not know what antidote to use.<sup>552</sup> It is only when keeping Origen’s view in mind that we realize why John over and over speaks of the resurrection of the body, but not a single time of the resurrection of the flesh.

In the following, we will go through certain themes from Jerome’s discussion of the resurrection body in *Contra Iohannem*. Jerome’s heresiological presentations will be analysed and discussed in comparison to what he had written about these subjects before the beginning of the controversy, but also to other of his anti-Origenist writings. Besides examining in what ways Jerome presents Origen as a heretic and himself as orthodox, we will ask to which degree he changed his views on these matters because of his new position in the controversy.

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listen (64.19.4-5, GCS 31, 430-431). There is talk about “blasphemous disputations” (19.7, 431) and “heretical sophists” (20.4, 432). The ignorant audience admires what is said as if it were the truth, as if they were looking at a picture and mistook the picture for what it resembled (20.4-5, 432), cf. Epiphanius’ words in 67.1, about Origen deceiving the ignorant. Also, Epiphanius accused Origen of corrupting the minds of simple persons (63.6). Claiming that Origen nominally confesses the resurrection, Epiphanius makes a distinction between illusionary appearance and what is real (63.10). Also, in his final conclusions, Epiphanius writes about how Origen and his followers suffer from a certain venom, that is, secular, or Greek, education (72.5, 9, 523).

<sup>549</sup> Jeanjean 1999, 45 (specifically about the Origenist controversy); 279-281; 317-321; 370-374 (about the general heresiological strategy in Jerome’s work to associate heresy with worldly wisdom and pagan thought).

<sup>550</sup> For the rhetoric of war and battle in Jerome’s heresiology, see Jeanjean 1999, 302-304, 318; Opelt 1973, 163-164.

<sup>551</sup> *Clloh* 32, CCSL 79A, 57-58.

<sup>552</sup> *Clloh* 25, CCSL 79A, 40-41.

## 3.2. Themes

### 3.2.1. *The Identity of the Present Body and the Resurrection Body*<sup>553</sup>

Origen, Jerome claims, saw a twofold error in the church: “That of us, and that of the heretics” (*nostrorum et haeticorum*).<sup>554</sup> We thus note that Jerome identifies himself with one of two groups against whom Origen expressed his ideas about the resurrection: “We, who are simple and φιλοσάρκους, that is, lovers of the flesh, say that the same bones and blood, and flesh, the same outer appearance and bodily members, yes, the whole bodily composition, will rise on the last day.”<sup>555</sup> The other group, the heretics, are those who, Origen claims, deny the resurrection of both flesh and body, so that only the soul will be saved. The identification that Jerome makes with the simple and unlearned<sup>556</sup> should be understood as a rhetorical strategy – as we will see in what follows, Jerome had very little in common with the anthropomorphists and the chiliasts whom Origen opposed. This is yet an example of the previously discussed rhetoric of simplicity.

The basic charge concerning Origen’s teachings on the resurrection body is that these did not account for a resurrection of the same body that had lived on earth. Referring to Origen's explanations in his works *On the Resurrection*, *Stromateis* and *On the First Psalm*, Jerome presents Origen as holding that after death, the elements that have made up the human body returns to their substances; for example, the flesh goes into the earth. These elements do not disappear, but neither can they go back to their former composition; that is, the resurrection body will not be composed of the same materials as the earthly body. “When this is said”, Jerome concludes, “the firmness of the flesh, the fluidity of the blood, the density of sinews, the interlacing veins and the hardness of bones is denied”.<sup>557</sup>

Still, Origen is presented as claiming that the same persons who have lived on earth will rise. How is this identity explained? Jerome presents Origen’s view as follows: Taking his departure from 1 Corinthians 15, Origen had compared the resurrected body to the plant that springs from a seed. In every seed, there is a principle that contains all the future growth. When the seed dies and is dissolved in

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<sup>553</sup> I have treated this question in the article “Angelic Humans, Glorious Flesh”, Pålsson 2019.

<sup>554</sup> *Cloh 25, CCSL 79A, 41: Dicit ergo Origenes in pluribus locis et maxime in libris de resurrectione quattuor, et in expositione primi Psalmi et in Stromatibus, duplicem errorem uersari in ecclesia: nostrorum et haeticorum.*

<sup>555</sup> *Cloh 25, CCSL 79A, 41: Nos simplices et φιλοσάρκους, id est amatores carnum, dicere quod eadem ossa et sanguis, et caro, idem uultus et membra, totiusque compago corporis resurgat in nouissimo die.*

<sup>556</sup> See the discussion in Jeanjean 1999, about the *vir ecclesiasticus*, the man of the church, as one who is satisfied with the simple truth, in contrast to heretics who turn to intellectual discussion (348-349).

<sup>557</sup> *Cloh 25, CCSL 79A, 43.*

the earth, it draws to itself surrounding materials, and from these, a body rises. The bodies that will rise will not have the same flesh or be in the same form that they had before. Origen suggests, in Jerome's representation, that a resurrection of the flesh and the same members would mean that we would again need barbers because of growing hair, that we would again have to cut our nails, and that our genital organs would again be used for sexual purposes. Quoting Philippians 3:21, Origen says: "... the Lord will transform our body of humility and fashion it according to his body of glory".<sup>558</sup>

This is the reason, says Jerome, why John in his letter speaks about the body no less than nine times, and not a single time about the flesh: He actually holds the Origenist view of the resurrection, which denies the resurrection of the flesh. He claims to know what John would answer when challenged with this: That he thought that the flesh meant the same thing as the body. Jerome explains the difference: While all flesh is body, all body is not flesh. "Flesh is properly what is held together by blood, veins, bones and sinews".<sup>559</sup>

Thus, fundamental to Jerome's heresiological presentation is the claim that body is not equal to flesh. Professing belief in the resurrection of the body is not enough: If it is not the flesh that rises, the person will not be the same. Although the emphasis on the difference between body and flesh is not the same in Epiphanius, it seems highly probable that it was his insistence on a resurrection of this body, which had lived on earth, which influenced Jerome's discussion.<sup>560</sup> "Flesh", then, becomes essential to the identity of the person. Referring to the Book of Job, Jerome says that Job's suffering would be in vain if he would rise in another body than that carnal one in which he had suffered. Jerome here uses the

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<sup>558</sup> *Cloh 26*, CCSL 79A, 46. The question of whether the interpretation presented corresponds to what Origen actually thought should not concern us here, since what is important is Jerome's heresiological rhetoric and the alternative interpretations that he presents, but I disagree with Caroline Walker Bynum that he does not describe Origen's true position (and I agree with Clark, who claims that Jerome does not "misrepresent Origen's position"). (Walker Bynum 1995, 88, Clark 1992, 136). Since Origen's writings on the resurrection are to a great extent lost, it is difficult to know to which degree presentations are consistent with his own words, but what can be said in the present case is that a similar view is presented in Pamphilus' *Apology for Origen* 130 (SC 464, 210-214).

<sup>559</sup> *Cloh 27*, CCSL 79A, 48: *Caro est proprie quae sanguine, uenis, ossibus nerisque constringitur.*

<sup>560</sup> One may note that, although Epiphanius certainly spoke of the flesh in his refutation of Origen's views on the resurrection, he does not seem to have made the clear distinction that Jerome makes in the present work. Methodius, who is the principal spokesman of *Panarion* 64, asserted that Paul as well as the prophets understood "body" to mean "this flesh" (*Panarion* 64.54.1 ff). The argument is against those who understand body as not meaning flesh, and thus are able to accept a resurrection of the body, but not of the flesh. Against these, Methodius argues that with "body", "this body" is meant, that is, the fleshly body. However, we can probably still explain Jerome's emphasis on the resurrection of the flesh from his knowledge of Epiphanius' polemics. Epiphanius (Methodius) argued that this very body would rise, that is, the body of flesh, and this clearly became a concern for Jerome as well.

metaphor of restoring a ship after a shipwreck – how can the ship be said to be restored, if each part of which it was built is rejected? As noted above, the argument from suffering (most importantly, asceticism) had been used by Epiphanius as well: What was the point of mortifying the body if it would not be rewarded?

The true teaching on the resurrection, says Jerome, is one that ascribes glory (*gloria*) to the flesh without taking away its reality (*veritas*). Here, he gives his orthodox alternative to Origen's (and John's) heresy. Important here is Jerome's understanding of transformation as clothing. When the corruptible puts on incorruption and the mortal puts on immortality, it does not mean that the body of flesh is done away with (*abolere*), "but that which previously was without glory, it makes glorious, so that when the more worthless robe of mortality and weakness has been laid aside, we may be clothed in the gold of immortality".<sup>561</sup> By adding the prefix *super* (in *superinduere*) Jerome clarifies even further that the glory is put *upon* the body. This is presented in contrast to the presentation of the Origenist explanation of identity, that is, identity through transformation.

At the end of his discussion of the resurrection body, Jerome refers to an argument that he claims to have had with a Marcionite. He gives this view on the resurrection, or more precisely on what is meant by the statement that corruption cannot inherit incorruption:

As long as they remain mere flesh and blood, they will not inherit the kingdom of God. But when the corruptible has put on incorruption, and the mortal has put on immortality, and the clay of the flesh will be made into a vessel, then that flesh that was formerly kept down by a heavy weight upon the earth, when once it has received the wings of the spirit – wings that imply its change, not its destruction – will fly with fresh glory to heaven...<sup>562</sup>

John O'Connell as well as Caroline Walker Bynum has taken Jerome's denial of change in the resurrection body seriously, arguing that change was what he feared above all,<sup>563</sup> and that according to Jerome, "[t]here is no change in the body itself".<sup>564</sup> We may note that for all Jerome's insistence that we will rise with the same body, in the quotation above he speaks about change (*immutatio*) rather than

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<sup>561</sup> *CIoh* 29, CCSL 79A, 52: ... *sed quod ante inglorium fuit, efficere gloriosum, ut mortalitatis et infirmitatis uiliore ueste deposita, immortalitatis auro /.../ induamur.*

<sup>562</sup> *CIoh* 36, CCSL 79A, 71: *Tamdiu ergo regnum dei non possidebunt, quamdiu tantum caro sanguisque permanserint. Cum autem corruptivum hos induerit incorruptionem et mortale hoc induerit immortalitatem, et lutum carnis in testam fuerit excoctum, quae prius gravi pondere premebatur in terra, acceptis Spiritus pennis et immutationis, non abolitionis, nova gloria volabit ad caelum.*

<sup>563</sup> Walker Bynum 1995, 90-91, 110.

<sup>564</sup> O'Connell 1948, 49.

destruction (*abolitio*). It seems quite obvious that his emphasis on permanence has more to do with presenting his view as ultimately different from Origen's, than with any absolute refusal of change. How can the body be said to be more glorious without any change taking place? What changes, and what remains?

According to O'Connell, the distinction between substance and glory was one that Jerome had already expressed even before the beginning of the Origenist controversy, and that he would continue to express thereafter. O'Connell notes that all that Jerome would express against Origen in the controversy is summarized already in his *Commentary on Galatians*:

... when we have been transformed from the body of humility into the body of glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, we will have that body that neither the Jew can cut nor the Gentile preserve in the state of uncircumcision. It will not be different in regard to the substance but in regard to the glory.<sup>565</sup>

O'Connell is certainly correct in claiming that the distinction substance / glory would become very important in Jerome's later thought on the question of the resurrection body, although he could use different terms to express the sameness of the resurrection body and the earthly body: He sometimes speaks of the reality as the remaining part (as in *Contra Iohannem*); sometimes substance, as in the commentary on Galatians and as we have also seen to be the case in *Adversus Jovinianum*;<sup>566</sup> sometimes nature (*natura*);<sup>567</sup> sometimes both substance and nature.<sup>568</sup>

However, part of O'Connell's argument is that, because Jerome already before the controversy expressed an argument that he used in anti-Origenist polemics, he cannot have held an Origenist view on the resurrection at that time either. I will argue to the contrary, that this very important distinction (substance / glory) in Jerome's thought on the resurrection, that he would also use in his anti-Origenist polemics, was actually one that he had learnt from Origen.

In *De Principiis*, Origen expressed the idea that only God is incorporeal (in the "philosophical" sense of the word).<sup>569</sup> Every creature has some kind of body. The

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<sup>565</sup> *CommGal* 6,15, PL 26, 436: ... *cum de corpore humilitatis transformati fuerimus in corpus gloriae Domini Jesu Christi, illud habebimus corpus quod nec Judaeus possit incidere, nec cum praepotio custodire Gentilis. Non quod juxta substantiam aliud sit; sed quod juxta gloriam sit diversum.*

<sup>566</sup> *AdvJov* 1.36. Other examples are *CommMt* 17.2 (CCSL 77, 147) *CommIs* 58.14 (CCSL 73A, 678).

<sup>567</sup> *CommIs* 40.6 (CCSL 73, 457); *Ep* 108.23 (CSEL 55, 341).

<sup>568</sup> *Ep* 75.2, CSEL 55, 31.

<sup>569</sup> For the meaning of "incorporeality" in Origen's view, see preface 8 to *De Principiis* (SC 252, 84-88).

corporeal nature may be transformed by God into different forms;<sup>570</sup> for example, angels have ethereal bodies, as they live in heavenly places, while in this life, human beings have a heavier body. In the resurrection, however, they will have the same kind of bodies, of a more subtle kind, as the angels have. Thus, the material substance is formed into solid bodies when used on inferior beings, but when it is used by perfect and blessed beings (*perfectoribus ... beatoribus*), it shimmers in the splendour of celestial bodies (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:40).<sup>571</sup> The change taking place is described by Origen in the following way: The form (*habitus*) will pass away, but not the material substance (*substantiae materialis*): “but a certain change of the quality takes place, and a transformation of the form”.<sup>572</sup> In his *Commentary on John*,<sup>573</sup> Origen expresses this idea about bodily change by saying that every material body has a nature (φύσις) that is in itself without qualification, and receives the qualities (ποιότητες) that the Creator gives it.<sup>574</sup> He writes that a mortal essence (οὐσίαν θνητὴν) cannot transform into (μεταβάλλουσιν εἰς) an immortal one.<sup>575</sup> However, while the material (ὕλικόν) subsists, and cannot be destroyed, the qualities may change.<sup>576</sup> In Origen’s view, the material or corporeal nature (*naturam*) cannot possibly disappear, because only the Trinity is without body.<sup>577</sup> Importantly, Origen does not only speak of the body as remaining, but also the flesh. Certainly, a change will take place, but the substance will remain.<sup>578</sup>

Origen thus expressed an idea about the resurrection, according to which the sameness is explained by reference to what in Greek is called οὐσία, φύσις, ὕλη, and in Latin translations *natura* and (*materialis*) *substantia*. The difference is

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<sup>570</sup> *De principiis* 3.6.7 (SC 268, 251).

<sup>571</sup> *De principiis* 2.2.2 (SC 252, 246-248).

<sup>572</sup> *De principiis* 1.6.4, SC 252, 204: *Sed inmutatio quaedam fit qualitatis atque habitus transformatio.*

<sup>573</sup> It may be noted that this commentary was written in opposition to the “Gnostic” Heracleon, and Origen’s theology of the resurrection certainly has to be understood within its heresiological context. Against “Gnostic” thinkers, Origen argued that bodies will be resurrected. The distinction between natures (which remain the same) and qualities (which change) was important in this polemic.

<sup>574</sup> Cf. Origen, *CommIoh* 13.21 (SC 222, 98) and Origen, *Contra Celsum* 4.56-57 (SC 136, 326-32), where Origen says that the matter that underlie all bodies is itself without qualities and without form: ἄποιος, ἀσχημάτιστος (Origen, *CCels* 4.56).

<sup>575</sup> *CommIoh* 13.61 (SC 222, 268).

<sup>576</sup> *CommIoh* 13.61 (SC 222, 268).

<sup>577</sup> *De principiis* 1.6.4.

<sup>578</sup> *Princ* 3.6.5: ... *inmutationem eius tantummodo per mortem factam ... substantiam vero certum est permanere.* About Origen and the resurrection of the flesh, see also Pamphilus, *ApolOrig* 142-149, SC 464, 228-236.

explained by the Greek terms ποιότητες and σχῆμα, and by the Latin terms *forma*, *habitus*, and *qualitas*. A transformation (μετασχηματίζω, μεταβάλλω, *immuto*, *permuto*) certainly will take place, which will not imply the destruction of the substance, but a change of its qualities.

In writing his commentary on Galatians, Jerome, as we have already seen in previous chapters, depended heavily on Origen's exegesis. As Origen clearly expressed the idea that in the resurrection, the substance/nature would be the same but there would be a change in glory, it is not difficult to imagine that in writing the words quoted above from Jerome's commentary, Jerome may have been quoting Origen or he may at least have depended on him. It may be noted that immediately after this passage, Jerome quotes the words in 1 Corinthians 15:53 (about the mortal putting on immortality and the corruptible putting on incorruption), and from this we may conclude that Jerome interprets the putting on as a transformation from a body of humility into a body of glory. This does not imply that the substance is taken away, but merely that the glory increases, and this seems to be exactly what Origen taught on the subject.

Besides, the quotation from the *Commentary on Galatians* contains a feature that I do not think that Jerome would have repeated in the Origenist controversy. Having a body that cannot be circumcised or uncircumcised seems to imply that we will not have sexual organs. This is a view that Origen seems to have held, and Jerome seems to accept it here.<sup>579</sup> This, however, was a view that he had to repudiate during the Origenist controversy.

We remember that change understood as clothing was important in Jerome's anti-Origenist polemics concerning the question of the resurrection body. In this way, he could emphasize the sameness of the body, while still admitting change. The understanding of transformation as clothing was a prominent theme in Origen as well. In a passage from *Against Celsus*, the tent (σκηνή), spoken of in 2 Corinthians 5:4,<sup>580</sup> is interpreted as referring to the body. This tent is not the same as the habitation (οἰκία) in which it is located. The habitation will be destroyed, but the tent itself will remain. This change is expressed in terms of clothing in the following way: The righteous "do not wish to put off the tent, but to put something else on over it, and through this, mortality might be swallowed up by life."<sup>581</sup>

In his *Commentary on John*, Origen writes:

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<sup>579</sup> Cf. the discussion about sexual differentiation in chapter 3.

<sup>580</sup> "For while we are still in this tent, we groan under our burden, because we wish not to be unclothed but to be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life."

<sup>581</sup> μὴ θέλοντες τὸ σκηνὸς ἀπεκδύσασθαι ἀλλὰ τῷ σκηνεὶ ἐπεκδύσασθαι, ἵν' ἐκ τοῦ ἐπεκδύσασθαι καταποθῇ τὸ θνητὸν ὑπὸ τῆς ζωῆς. *CCels* 5.19, *SC* 147, 62.



It is not the same thing that the corruptible nature [φύσιν] is clothed [ἐνδύεσθαι] in incorruption, and that the corruptible nature is transformed into [μεταβάλλειν εἰς] incorruption.<sup>582</sup>

Jerome's critique against Origen centres on precisely the distinction between being changed into something else and being changed into the likeness of something else; the first is an essential change, the other is limited to the qualities of the being. Giving an argument that Origen had used himself,<sup>583</sup> Jerome claims that when the Apostle says "this mortal" etc., he certainly points to the body that was present.<sup>584</sup> Jerome also made use of 2 Corinthians 4:6 to make the same point as Origen did, that is, "we do not want to take away the flesh, but put the glory on over it, and we want to put on our house which is of heaven, so that the mortal may be swallowed up by life."<sup>585</sup>

While I agree with O'Connell that there was a high degree of consistency in Jerome's understanding of the resurrection, I do not see this as evidence that Jerome had an "anti-Origenist" idea of the resurrection already before his engagement in anti-Origenist polemics. Rather, my conclusion is that Jerome, in this polemics, continued to embrace an idea of transformation that he had learnt from Origen, and, paradoxically, used it against Origen in the process of rhetorical difference-making. His insistence on not teaching a destruction, but a change, expressed in opposition to Origen (and John), is not contrary to Origen at all.

Thus, a clear continuity can be seen in Jerome's views on the resurrection body before and after the beginning of the controversy. What is new in *Contra Iohannem* is his emphasis on the flesh in claiming identity between the resurrected body and the earthly body.<sup>586</sup> Even in this case, it can be pointed out that Origen does not seem to have denied the resurrection of the flesh if by "flesh" we mean

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<sup>582</sup> Οὐ ταῦτόν δέ ἐστιν <τὸ> τὴν φθαρτὴν φύσιν ἐνδύεσθαι ἀφθαρσίαν, καὶ τὸ τὴν φθαρτὴν φύσιν μεταβάλλειν εἰς ἀφθαρσίαν. (CommIn 13.61, SC 222, 268).

<sup>583</sup> *De Principiis* 2.3.2 (SC 252, 250-256).

<sup>584</sup> *CIoh* 29, CCSL 79A, 52.

<sup>585</sup> *CIoh* 29, CCSL 79A, 52: ... *uolentes non spoliari carne, sed superuestiri gloria, et domicilium nostrum, quod de caelo est, superindui desiderantes, ut deuoretur mortale a uita.*

<sup>586</sup> This does not mean that he had denied the resurrection of the flesh before this, but it had not been important to claim. In his *Letter* 53.8, written when the Origenist controversy was well under way, Jerome brings up the question in the resurrection when he speaks of the Book of Job. He quotes the same passage as he will do in his work against John a few years later. His own words are also similar: He says that Job expresses this belief clearer than anyone has done after him. Interestingly, while "flesh" is the word used in the quotation, Jerome makes no point that Job is speaking precisely of the resurrection of the flesh but says: "... it prophesies the resurrection of human bodies...". While the resurrection of the flesh is the most important issue in the work against John, Jerome only speaks of bodies here. He does not seem to have seen the importance of claiming the resurrection of the flesh, rather than just the body – a distinction that would become so important to him a few years later.

the material substance. Jerome's emphasis on flesh over body, and his reluctance to use the concept of spiritual body, has to be understood as reflecting his polemical concerns, as ways of maximizing the difference between himself and Origen, just as his identification with the anthropomorphists against whom Origen argued.

### 3.2.2. *Sexual Difference*

In *Against John*, Jerome notes a particular consequence of Origen's denial of the resurrection of the flesh and the organs: If this were true, then we would not again be males and females, but the differences between the sexes would disappear. The question of sexual difference is part of the question of identity, but deserves a treatment of its own, as this was the kind of identity that Jerome thought of as most important to claim.

Origen's objection against those who claim the resurrection of the flesh is, in Jerome's presentation, that if all the organs will remain, we will also continue to use these organs. If the same flesh would remain, we would again be men and women, and would again marry. Contrary to this, Origen claims that we will have a spiritual body, which cannot be touched or seen.<sup>587</sup>

The question of sexual difference is, of course, directly connected to Jerome's insistence on a resurrection of the same flesh. In his argumentation from the Book of Job, which we have already mentioned, Jerome says that "where there is a structure of flesh, there is also the distinction of sex".<sup>588</sup> Where there is distinction of sex, identity is secured: John will be John and Mary will be Mary.<sup>589</sup> Jerome then returns to his argument concerning the functions of organs; an argument that he had used already in *Adversus Jovinianum*: He presents Origen's view as one according to which having organs and using them are necessarily connected, just as he had formerly presented Jovinian's view.<sup>590</sup> Not only the presentation, but also the refutation of it is similar to the polemics against Jovinian: The point of departure in Jerome's argument is the ascetic who lives on earth. These persons, who have sexual organs but do not use them, anticipate the life that is promised to all in the resurrection. Against Origen, he asserts that we do not have to fear the marriage in the world to come of those who, while living on earth, did not use their genital organs for sexual purposes. That is, contrary to what he has presented as the opinion of Jovinian as well as Origen, the function of organs is not a necessary consequence of their existence. Jerome notes that the words that they will not marry must apply to those who actually can marry – it is not said about the

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<sup>587</sup> *CIoh* 26, CCSL 79A, 43-48.

<sup>588</sup> *CIoh* 30, CCSL 79A, 55.

<sup>589</sup> *CIoh* 31, CCSL 79A, 56.

<sup>590</sup> *AdvJov* 1.36, see the discussion in chapter 3.

angels. Who has ever crowned a stone for remaining a virgin? The following words are worth quoting, as Jerome here explains his view on what it means to be like the angels:

Likeness to the angels is promised us, that is, the blessedness which they have without flesh and without sex, will be given to us in our flesh and with our sex. My simplicity so believes and so understands sex, as to confess: Human beings will rise without the functions of sex, and in this way, they will be like the angels. The resurrection of the members will not be seen to be superfluous, only because they will be without their functions, because when we are still in this life, we strive not to fulfil the functions of the members. Likeness to the angels does not mean that humans will be transformed into angels, but refers to an increase in immortality and glory.<sup>591</sup>

Here we return to the question of transformation: What is denied is a transformation from humans into angels, and what is suggested in its place is a change of qualities; the glory will be increased.

We recognize the concern about angels from our previous discussion of Epiphanius. An important part in his anti-Origenist heresiology, building on the work of Methodius, was the refutation of a view of the human being as originally being something other than human, namely, an angel, and correspondingly, that in the resurrection we would no longer be human beings.<sup>592</sup>

We have seen that the resurrection of the flesh became a new concern for Jerome as a result of his involvement in the Origenist controversy. We may then ask, when it comes to the closely related issue of sexual difference, to what extent his opinions diverged from or were similar to what he had expressed before the beginning of the controversy. In the previous chapter, we saw that the idea of a possibility to transcend sexual difference through asceticism was an important part in Jerome's ascetical theology.

One of the accusations brought against Jerome by Rufinus, in a later state of the controversy, was that he had formerly agreed with Origen's views on the possibility of transcending sexual difference.<sup>593</sup> The place where he was said to

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<sup>591</sup> *Cl*oh 31, CCSL 79A, 57: *Angelorum nobis similitudo promittitur, id est beatitudo illa, in qua sine carne et sexu sunt angeli, nobis in carne et in sexu nostro donabitur. Mea rusticitas sic credit et sic intellegit sexum confiteri: Sine sexus operibus homines resurgere et sic eos angelis adaequari. Nec statim superflua videbitur membrorum resurrectio, quae caritura sint officio suo, cum adhuc in hac vita positi, nitamur opera non implere membrorum. Similitudo autem ad angelos non hominum in angelos demutatio, sed profectus immortalitatis et gloriae est.* A very similar explanation is given in *Ep* 108.23 (CSEL 55, 341).

<sup>592</sup> We have seen that one of Epiphanius charges against Origen was that he taught that angels had fallen and become human beings. Jerome never claimed this, although he refuted Origen's teaching on the pre-existence of souls.

<sup>593</sup> Rufinus, after moving to the West in 397, had begun a project of restoring the reputation of Origen. An important part in this was to translate some of Origen's works. In the preface to one of

have done so was in his *Commentary on Ephesians*. Here, Jerome had expressed the idea that through chastity, the sexual difference between husband and wife can disappear.<sup>594</sup> If a woman chooses to be more devoted to Christ than to the world, “she will cease to be a woman and be said to be a man”.<sup>595</sup> Concerning the eschatological realities becoming true already in this life through asceticism, Jerome writes: “... may there be no diversity of the sexes at all, but as there is no man and woman among the angels, so also let us, who will be like angels, even now begin to be that which has been promised us in the heavens”.<sup>596</sup> The relationship between husband and wife is compared to that between the soul and the flesh. “... the soul loves, nourishes, and cherishes that Flesh which will see the salvation of God, educating it with disciplines /.../ souls also cherish their bodies so that this corruptible may put on incorruption and, suspended on the lightness of wings, may be lifted more easily into the air”.<sup>597</sup>

In his *Apology against Rufinus*, Jerome comments of this particular accusation. He explains the wording in the commentary that he first gave a “simple” explanation that was his own, and that the connection made to the resurrection, and the statement that bodies could be brought into the rank of souls and women into the rank of men, was from Origen’s work. However, Jerome does not stop his explanation there, and what he says in the following is very informative. What is it that Rufinus finds disturbing in the quotation from Origen? Jerome thinks that the problem, in Rufinus’ view, lies in the following words: “so that this corruption may put on incorruption and, suspended on the lightness of wings, may be lifted more easily into the air”. When saying this, Jerome explains, he does not alter the nature of bodies, but increases their glory. Receiving immortality does not mean ceasing to be what one was. When it comes to the question of women being brought into the rank of men and the ending of sexual difference, being like the angels, he directs the following words at Rufinus:

These words should rightly disturb you, if I had not said after the earlier words: “Let us even now begin to be that which is promised us in the heavens”. When I say

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these translations, that of *Peri Archon*, Rufinus indicated that in doing this, he was simply continuing what Jerome had already begun, thus pointing out Jerome as an Origenist. This was the start of a new phase in the Origenist controversy, with Jerome writing an apology against Rufinus and Rufinus writing one against Jerome. Important in Rufinus’ critique against Jerome was that in previous works, he had expressed Origenist ideas, above all in his *Commentary on Ephesians* and his *Commentary on Ecclesiastes*.

<sup>594</sup> *CommEph* 3.5.29.

<sup>595</sup> ... *mulier esse cessabit, et dicetur vir...*

<sup>596</sup> *CommEph* 3.5.29, PL 26, 534: ... *nequaquam sit sexuum ulla diversitas: sed quomodo apud angelos non est vir et mulier: ita et nos, qui similes angelis futuri sumus, jam nunc incipiamus esse quod nobis in coelestibus repromissum est.* (Transl. Heine 2002, 238).

<sup>597</sup> *CommEph* 3.5.29. PL 26, p. 534, transl. Heine 2002, 238.

“let us begin here on earth”, I do not annul the nature of the sexes, but lust, and I remove the intercourse of men and women, as the apostle says: “The time is short; it remains that those who have wives be as though they have none”. And when the Lord was asked in the Gospel who of the seven brothers should have her as wife in the resurrection, he said: “You err, knowing neither the Scriptures nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they will neither marry nor be married, but they will be as the angels of God in heaven”. In fact, where there is chastity between man and woman there begins to be neither male nor female but, still situated in the body, they are being changed into angels among whom there is neither man nor woman. This is also stated in another passage by the same apostle: “Whoever has been baptized into Christ has put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus”.<sup>598</sup>

The importance of this passage for understanding Jerome’s approach to this question in the Origenist controversy cannot be overstated. It shows that in the question of sexual difference, he continues to embrace the idea that it is possible for a human being to transcend such difference, while distancing himself from what he presents as an Origenist view on the resurrection body. It is quite remarkable that in the process of defending himself against a charge from Rufinus, and certainly claiming that the passage in the *Commentary on Ephesians* was a quotation from Origen, he still defends what is said in this passage. As opposed to most cases, where his argument consists of showing that the idea in question is Origen’s and not his own, he here defends what is thought to be disturbing. Jerome is evidently aware that his ideas about sexual differentiation are a cause for concern, and it becomes important to him to show that his ideas about this question are orthodox. They do not, as is the case with Origen, imply a denial of a real resurrection.

Jerome presents his ideas as orthodox by claiming that is possible to transcend sexual difference already in the earthly body. Note that, in the quotation, it is by adding “let us already now be...” that he claims to escape the accusation of Origenism. We may recall the argument that he had made, both in *Against Jovinian* and in *Against John*, from the existence and function of organs: Ascetics

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<sup>598</sup> Apol Ruf 29, CCSL 79, 28-29: *Recte moverent, nisi post priora dixissem: 'Iam nunc incipiamus esse quod nobis in caelestibus repromissum est'. Quando dico: Hic esse incipiamus in terris, non naturam tollo sexuum, sed libidinem et coitum viri et uxoris aufero, dicente Apostolo: Tempus breve est. Reliquum est ut et qui habent uxores sic sint quasi non habeant; et Dominus, interrogatus in Evangelio cuius de septem fratribus in resurrectione uxor esse deberet, ait: 'Erratis, nescientes Scripturas neque virtutem Dei. In resurrectione enim neque nubent neque nebentur, sed erunt sicut angeli Dei in caelo'. Et revera ubi inter virum et feminam castitas est, nec vir incipit esse, nec femina, sed, adhuc in corpore positi, mutantur in angelos, in quibus non est vir et mulier; quod et in alio loco ab eodem Apostolo dicitur: 'Quicumque in Christo baptizati estis, Christum induistis. Non est Iudaeus neque Graecus, non est servus neque liber, non est masculus neque femina. Omnes enim vos unum estis in Christo Iesu'.*

already have organs that they do not use, and it is precisely in this way that they are like the angels – what is true for them now will be true for all in the resurrection. Saying that we can already be like the angels now – which, he continues to think, means precisely not to be male and female – this means that we are like angels in our earthly body, which, in turn, means that we will be like the angels in the resurrection in our earthly body. Jerome thus both maintains the Origenist idea of transcending sexual difference through asceticism, and distances himself from an Origenist view on the resurrection, in a single argument from the body of the ascetic person on earth.

Perhaps the clearest statement of Jerome's view on the resurrection body as well as his view on sexual difference after his engagement with anti-Origenist polemics, is seen in *Letter 75*, to the widow Theodora. Theodora had recently lost her husband, with whom she had lived in continence, and Jerome speaks of their relationship in the following way:

... he began to treat you even on earth as a sister, or indeed, as a brother, for a continent tie does not have the difference of sex which belongs to marriage. And since even in the flesh, if we are born again in Christ, we are no longer Greek and Barbarian, bond and free, male and female, but are all one in him – how much more true will this be when this corruptible has put on incorruption and when this mortal has put on immortality. “In the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage but are like the angels in heaven”. When it is said: “they neither marry nor are given in marriage but are as the angels in heaven”, the nature and substance of bodies are not taken away, but the greatness of the glory is shown. For the words are not “they will be angels” but “like the angels”. While likeness to the angels is promised, identity with them is denied. /.../ therefore they will not cease to be human. They will certainly be glorious and graced with angelic splendour, but they will still be human, so that the Apostle will still be the Apostle, and Mary will still be Mary. Then confusion will overtake that heresy which gives great but vague promises, only that it may take away hopes which are at once modest and certain.<sup>599</sup>

The “heresy” spoken of is of course Origenism. We may conclude that in this passage, many important elements come together and we can see how Jerome marked his difference from Origen despite, or rather because, his own ideas were

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<sup>599</sup> *Ep 75.2, CSEL 55, 31-32: ... in terra quoque sororem te habere coeperat, immo fratrem, quia casta coniunctio sexum non habet nuptialem. Et si adhuc in carne positi et renati in Christo non sumus Graecus et barbarus, servus et liber, masculus et femina, sed omnes in eo unum sumus, quanto magis, cum corruptivum hoc induerit incorruptionem et mortale induerit immortalitatem, 'non nubent neque nubentur, sed erunt sicut angeli in caelis'. Quando dicitur: 'non nubent neque nubentur, sed erunt sicut angelis in caelis', non natura et substantia corporum tollitur, sed gloriae magnitudo monstratur. Neque enim scriptum est: 'erunt angeli', sed: 'sicut angeli', ubi similitudo promittitur, veritas denegatur. /.../ Ergo homines esse non desinunt, incliti quidem et angelico splendore decorati, sed tamen homines, ut et apostulus apostulus sit et Maria Maria et confundatur heresis, quae ideo incerta et magna promittit, ut, quae certa est moderata sunt, auferat.*

so close to those of Origen. From *Against John*, we recognize the insistence that Paul will Paul and Mary will be Mary, and that likeness to the angels does not mean to become angels. From Jerome's earlier thought, we have his insistence on the possibility to transcend sexual difference, including the possibility that women may be able to escape the punishment by practicing celibacy. From his earlier thought, but also repeated in *Against John*, we recognize the idea that the substance or nature remains the same in the resurrection, while the degree of glory changes.

But does not Jerome contradict himself? He says that Paul will be Paul and Mary will be Mary, but at the same time he argues that sexual difference may be transcended. There is no contradiction, because in the first case, Jerome speaks about the outer person, in the second case, he speaks about the inner person (as will be discussed in the next section). Theodora was not a "brother" in the body, but in her mind. What we see is how Jerome consciously presents a view that he and others knew to be Origenist, and then gives it an anti-Origenist interpretation. Sexual difference can be transcended, but, contrary to what Origen claimed, we will rise with our genital organs intact.

Although the text quoted above is the clearest example of Jerome's way of using as well as refuting Origen's ideas after his engagement in the controversy, there are more. A couple of years before, when Theodora's husband was still alive, Jerome had written a letter to him, expressing this view on their relationship: "You have with you one who was once a partner in the flesh but is now a partner in the spirit, once your wife but now your sister, once a woman but now a man, once an inferior but now an equal".<sup>600</sup> We see how flesh and sexual difference are connected: When she was a partner in the flesh, Theodora was a woman and inferior, but now that she is a partner in the spirit, she is a man and an equal. The letter was written in 397, in the same year as the work in which Jerome so vehemently argued that human beings would rise as men and women. This, obviously, did not prevent him from seeing transcendence of sexual difference as a possibility.<sup>601</sup>

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<sup>600</sup> Ep 71.3, CSEL 55, 4: *Habes tecum prius in carne, nunc in spiritu sociam, de coniuge germanam, de femina virum, de subiecta parem.*

<sup>601</sup> The idea of the celibate who already in this life becomes what she/he will be in the future, is expressed also in a letter to another ascetic, Marcella's companion Principia, in 397 (Ep 65). In this letter, Jerome admits that he has been criticized for his way of writing to women, and he explains his practice by pointing out, by references to the Scriptures, that some women can do what some men fail to do. Later on, he tells Principia: "Womanly things failed in her [Abraham's wife Sara], you never had them; sex is devoured by a virgin, she bears Christ in her body and already possesses what she will be" (*Illi defecerant muliebria, tu numquam habuisti: Sexus devoratur a virgine, Christum portat in corpore, iam possidet, quod futura est*, Ep 65.1, CSEL 54, 617). It is interesting that he speaks of Sara in terms of ceasing to be a woman (*illi defecerant muliebria*), as he had spoken in similar ways of ascetics ceasing to be flesh. In both cases, the ceasing surely pertains to the inner person, since the outer continues to be of flesh and of a gender.

Finally, I will mention Jerome's *Letter* 84, in which he discusses the Origenists, and among other things their way of dealing with the question of the resurrection body. The critique against John returns: The Origenists speak of body rather than flesh, because they believe in the resurrection of a spiritual body, and in this way, they try to deceive simple believers. If this strategy is uncovered, they use another one: They speak of the flesh, but do not accept that all the body parts will be resurrected. If one asks them if we will have hair in the resurrection, they will laugh and say that in that case, we will need barbers. Again, the issue of sexual difference is brought up: These Origenists deny that we will rise with male and female characteristics.<sup>602</sup>

Then Jerome uses a hitherto new strategy in dealing with this question – he presents the Origenists argument as connected to heretical women:

... their women use to finger their breasts, slap their bellies, pinch their loins and smooth chins, and say: "What use is it for us if this fragile body will rise? We will be like angels and also have the nature of angels".<sup>603</sup>

This text has been used by Caroline Walker Bynum as example of what she sees as a concern of Jerome to "maintain gender inequality and social hierarchy in heaven".<sup>604</sup> Likewise, Peter Brown quotes it as an example of Jerome's insistence, against Origen, on the remaining difference between the sexes.<sup>605</sup> I think it is important to see the passage in a larger context and to interpret it from what Jerome says in other writings. As we have seen, Jerome claimed in writings from the same period that women could become equal to men, thus transcending sexual difference. It should have become clear by now that Jerome's insistence on a resurrection that included the genital organs did not prevent him from claiming the possibility of transcending sexual difference. In this particular case, we also have to be sensitive to a common heresiological strategy, namely that of connecting the views of opponents to women. We must not confuse the use of a common rhetorical tool at the time with Jerome's ideas of sexual differentiation.

### 3.2.3. *The Meaning of "Flesh" and the Spiritual Resurrection*

In his *Against John*, Jerome is quite clear about what is meant by the word "flesh" (*caro*): "Flesh is properly what is held together by blood, veins, bones and

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<sup>602</sup> *Ep* 84.5 (CSEL 55, 126-127).

<sup>603</sup> *Ep* 84.6, CSEL 55, 127: *Solent enim mulierculae eorum mammas tenere, ventri adplaudere, lumbos et femina et puras adirectare maxillas et dicere: 'Quid nobis prode est, si fragile corpus resurget? Futurae angelorum silimes angelorum habebimus et naturam'.*

<sup>604</sup> Walker Bynum 1995, 91.

<sup>605</sup> Brown 1988, 382.



sinews”<sup>606</sup> (or, at least, he uses the word in this particular sense). Rising in the flesh also implies, as we have seen, to rise as men and women. Thus, the insistence of the preservation of the flesh is simultaneously an insistence on the preservation of sexual difference. In the following, we will examine what Jerome had to say about the “flesh” in some earlier writings, as well as in other texts from the Origenist controversy, in order to assess the question of his reliance on Origen on this subject, and to what degree he distanced himself from Origen's views.

In his *Commentary on Ephesians* 2.6, Jerome says that someone who understands the resurrection and the kingdom of Christ in a spiritual way will say that the saints already sit and rule with Christ:

For just as the saint is by no means in the flesh when he lives in the flesh and has his citizenship in heaven, when he walks on the earth and, ceasing to be flesh, is transformed totally into spirit – so it is when we sit in the heavenly places with Christ. The kingdom of God, indeed, is within us.<sup>607</sup>

What Jerome says is that while a human being lives in this fleshly body, he/she may deny the fleshly condition and begin to live as if in heaven, having his/her citizenship in heaven. Jerome even speaks of a transformation into spirit while living on earth. His dependence on Origen in this instance is certain, since a fragment from Origen's commentary, in which he deals with this passage, has been preserved. In this text, Origen explains that if we understand that the kingdom of Christ is spiritual, something that is within us, we will hold that someone who is already holy (ἀγιον) is not in the flesh, nor on the earth, even if simple people may say that he/she is.<sup>608</sup> Such a person already has his/her citizenship in heaven and is sitting with Christ in the heavenly places. No one of those in the heavenly places is in the flesh, but already in the spirit.<sup>609</sup>

Now, it could of course be suggested that Jerome was simply quoting Origen's commentary in his work, without actually agreeing with his ideas – after all, his biblical commentaries were, to a large extent, compilations of earlier exegetical works, and above all those of Origen, which meant that Jerome could give different interpretations, and he seldom clarified with whom he agreed. However, when it comes to the idea about transcending the fleshly existence expressed in the *Commentary on Ephesians*, it is quite clear that this was held by Jerome himself, since he expressed it repeatedly in other kinds of writings. For instance, in a letter

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<sup>606</sup> *CIoh* 27, CCSL 79A, 48.

<sup>607</sup> PL 26, 468-69: *quomodo enim nequaquam in carne sanctus est, cum vivat in carne, et habet conversationem in coelestibus, cum gradiatur in terra, et caro esse destituit, totus veritatur in spiritum: Ita eum in coelestibus sedere cum Christo: regnum quippe Dei intra nos est...*

<sup>608</sup> Origen, *CommEph* 2.6 (Gregg, 405).

<sup>609</sup> Origen, *CommEph* 2.6 (Gregg, 405).

to the bishop Heliodorus, written in 396 after the death of Heliodorus' nephew, Nepotian, Jerome speaks of the entrance into Paradise as something that can become real already in this life, and that we should not express wonder at what is promised us in the resurrection: "... for all of us who live the flesh but not according to the flesh, have our citizenship in heaven, and while we are still here on earth we are told that 'the kingdom of heaven is within us'".<sup>610</sup> Jerome seems to say that what will be true for all (who will be saved) in the resurrection, is true for some Christians already on earth. For those, the kingdom of heaven is already a reality. The resurrection in this life – which is individual and voluntary – should be understood in terms of anticipation of the future resurrection – which will be general and necessary.

The resurrection of the ascetic person in the present life meant to cease to be flesh, in the sense that although the ascetic was still living in the flesh, he/she did not live according to the flesh (*secundum carnem*). Thus, Jerome expressed an idea of a resurrection without flesh. This, importantly, did not mean that the human being would not live in the flesh, that is, would not have a fleshly body. The flesh that the ascetic ceases to be does not correspond to blood, bones and sinews. Thus, we are dealing with "flesh" in another sense, and we get some clues from what Jerome says in another text. In *Letter 54*, to the widow Furia (from 394), Jerome writes: "It is a great merit ... to overcome the condition of your birth and, while living in the flesh, not live in a fleshly way".<sup>611</sup> It is clear that Jerome refers specifically to sexual desire, because in the preceding sentences, he speaks about libido, lust, as being internal, while "all other sins are external";<sup>612</sup> that it is implanted in humans for the sake of procreation, and may easily, if it oversteps its boundaries, become a sin.<sup>613</sup> What the ascetic ought to overcome is sexual desire; it is in this sense that he/she may "cease to be flesh". The same concern is seen in a letter written after the Origenist controversy, to Laeta in 407, where Jerome writes of her daughter, Paula: "... let her be ignorant of the world, let her live the angelic life; while she is in the flesh, let her be without the flesh..."<sup>614</sup>

What we see is a clear distinction between the outer and the inner person, in terms of the inner person's ability to transcend his/her outer condition. The inner person can, while living on earth in a fleshly body and being attacked by

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<sup>610</sup> *Ep 60.3, CSEL 54, 552: Nec mirum hoc nobis in resurrectione promitti, cum omnes, qui in carne non secundum carne vivimus, municipatum habeamus in caelo et hic adhuc positus dicatur in terra: regnum Dei intra vos est. Cf. Ep 107.13.*

<sup>611</sup> *Ep 54.9, CSEL 54, 475: grandis ergo uirtutis est et sollicitae diligentiae superare, quod natus sis in carne, non carnaliter uiuere...*

<sup>612</sup> *Ep 54.9, CSEL 54, 475: omnia alia peccata extrinsecus sunt.*

<sup>613</sup> *Ep 54.9, CSEL 54, 475: ... si fines suos egressa fuerit, redundat in uitium et quadam lege naturae in coitum gestit erumpere.*

<sup>614</sup> *Ep 107.13, CSEL 55, 303.*

temptations and passions, transcend this life by not giving in to the urges of the flesh; by living contrary to postlapsarian human nature. We may recall our discussion in the previous chapter, concerning Jerome's ideas in *Against Jovinian* about virgins who refuse to live according to the condition of their birth.

We have already mentioned Jerome's *Commentary on Galatians* as a work in which an influence of Origen's Pauline exegesis can be seen. In this work, Jerome speaks of the dying of the saint in the present life, that is, a dying to the world, a crucifying of the flesh. Eschatological realities are ascribed to the life of such a person: "... the consummation of the 'world' comes to him, and he is made worthy of the 'new heaven and the new earth', and the new covenant".<sup>615</sup> Jerome also writes of such a person that he/she "does not contemplate the things that are seen, but those that are unseen".<sup>616</sup>

In this way of interpreting the outer and the inner person, Jerome was certainly influenced by Origen's Pauline exegesis. Origen spoke of different kinds of death, and one of them, death unto sin, was characterized by the destruction of the flesh. This death, however, takes place in the earthly life of the baptised, and thus, the destruction of the flesh pertains to the inner person.<sup>617</sup> This is connected to fight against the flesh: The death unto sin begins with confession, continues with the mortification of the earthly members, and ends in resurrection. As we saw in the previous chapter, Origen distinguished between two resurrections. The first is a process that begins with baptism; the second is the resurrection at the end of time. Importantly, the first resurrection does not necessarily mean advance, because a fall is always possible for the baptised person. The first resurrection is a partial one, while the second is perfect.<sup>618</sup> The one who is a saint already on earth, although he appears to be in the flesh, is no longer in the flesh, and no longer on earth. He/she is in the spirit, and in heaven.<sup>619</sup> By following the spirit rather than the flesh, the inner person could, in Origen's view, change from being fleshly to being spiritual. In his book *On prayer*, Origen speaks about the spiritual soul (*ψυχή πνευματική*) as one which is lifted up and follows the spirit—and not only follows it, but even becomes it (*ἐν αὐτῷ γινομένη*).<sup>620</sup> In the same work, he

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<sup>615</sup> *CommGal* 3.6.14, PL 26, 435, transl. Scheck 2010, 270.

<sup>616</sup> Cf. 2 Cor 4:18.

<sup>617</sup> Origen expressed the idea that what can be said about the outer person can often be ascribed to the inner person as well. The organs of the body have their counterparts in the soul (discussed, for example, in his *Dialogue with Heraclides*). This is also true of the flesh: Origen can speak of the flesh of the inner person, meaning the lower desires. It is this inner flesh that the soul must fight, since it stands between the flesh and the spirit.

<sup>618</sup> *CommJoh* 10.35.

<sup>619</sup> Crouzel, "La 'première...'", in Crouzel 1990, 11.

<sup>620</sup> Origen, *De oratione* 9.2 (GCS 3, 319).

expresses the same idea by speaking of earth being transformed into heaven. The one who sins is earth and becomes that with which he/she is associated.<sup>621</sup> The one who does the will of God is heaven.

We return to a conclusion drawn in the previous chapter, namely, that one of the most important aspects of Jerome's dependence on Origen's thought was his dynamic understanding of the human being. What we have seen here, focusing on their ideas about the resurrection, is that Jerome, like Origen, imagined two resurrections. The first took place in the present life, and it was voluntary and individual. It was the transformation of the inner person from flesh to spirit, which took place while the person was still situated in an earthly body. The second would take place in the future, and it would be necessary and general. The important point to make is that even after his involvement with anti-Origenist polemics, Jerome continued to hold the same idea about the possibility of transcending the fleshly existence on earth, which also meant transcending sexual difference, at the same time as he criticized Origen's idea about a "spiritual" resurrection without flesh and sexual difference.

The distinction between the inner and the outer person thus becomes important in Jerome's anti-Origenist polemics: While Origen is presented as claiming a transformation of human beings into angels, Jerome presents himself as claiming only an inner transformation, which takes place with the same body intact. The transformation of the soul, and its possibility to achieve fleshlessness/sexlessness, is presented as an orthodox counterpart to the idea of a transformation of the body into fleshlessness/sexlessness. Thus, the ascetic person who lives on earth assumes the central place in Jerome's anti-Origenist polemics concerning the question of the resurrection.

## 4. Conclusions

Jerome's polemics against Origen during the Origenist controversy was closely bound up with self-defence: He needed to convince his readers that he was not, and never had been, an Origenist. He thus made use of the common heresiological strategy of maximizing the difference between himself and the "heretic", making exaggerations for the purpose of concealing actual similarities. When it comes to the question about the resurrection, this maximizing of the difference is seen not only in statements about the resurrection of blood, bones and sinews, or in the emphasis on the flesh over the body, but also in Jerome's identification with a group within the church – the anthropomorphists – whom Origen had opposed, and against whom he had expressed his view on the resurrection. In his

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<sup>621</sup> Origen, *De oratione* 26.6 (GCS 3, 363): εἰς τὴν συγγενῆ, ἐὰν μὴ μετανοῆ, ἐσόμενός πη.

presentation of Origen's ideas about the resurrection, Jerome focused on the way in which Origen explained the difference between the earthly body and the resurrected body; while he, when presenting his own ideas, focused on sameness. However, at a closer look, Jerome did not deny difference in the resurrection body, in relation to the earthly body, and neither did Origen's theology lack an explanation of the sameness. Rather, Jerome's idea about sameness and difference in the resurrection, his ideas about transformation, and his view on what constituted the angelic life had very much in common with Origen's thought, which was certainly his main source. Thus, I do not agree with Jeanjean when he describes Jerome's attitude towards Origen during the controversy in terms of a "revirement total de Jérôme vis-à-vis d'Origène",<sup>622</sup> and claims that in order to account for such a profound change in attitude, we have to realize that Jerome understood the controversy as part of the church's struggle against heresy in general. I argue that Jerome's critique of Origen is best explained from apologetic motives, and that the differences in doctrine which he presents are rhetorical exaggerations, rather than reflective of a conviction about Origen's heresy.<sup>623</sup>

In Jerome's view, the change that takes place is a transformation of the body into the likeness of the soul. The substance, or the reality, remains the same, while the qualities change. We have seen that such ideas were expressed by Origen as well, but even so, they are used in Jerome's anti-Origenist polemics, as Jerome presents his own view on sameness and difference as an orthodox opposite to a heresiologically constructed Origenist idea of a dissolution of the human person, a ceasing to be human and a change into something else. The idea of transformation as clothing, as a putting on, as a possession of other qualities – that is, the transformation into the likeness of something – which was so important in Origen's theology of the resurrection, was used by Jerome against Origen and his followers.

When it came to the question of sexual difference, Jerome continued to hold the Origenist view that sexual difference could cease in the inner person, who could cease to be flesh, while he firmly held that it would continue in the outer person. Origen was presented as claiming a bodily transformation of humans into angels, without flesh and sexual organs, while Jerome presented himself as claiming a transformation of the inner person with the outer person intact. This idea of a transformation of the inner person in this life through asceticism, an idea that Jerome had learnt from Origen and had used to a great extent in his ascetical theology, was now used to distance his own, orthodox view on the resurrection

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<sup>622</sup> Jeanjean 1999, 38. However, he also remarks the contradictions involved in Jerome's relation to Origen (53).

<sup>623</sup> According to Jeanjean, this controversy was first and foremost about dogma (Jeanjean 1999, 37, 42), but he also notices that Jerome's position was hardened because of the accusations from Vigilantius and Rufinus (53).

from Origen's view. The ascetic person, who lived an angelic life on earth, was elevated to heaven, and became the orthodox counterpart of humans transformed into angels.

In her work *The Origenist Controversy*, Elizabeth Clark makes the important point that different opponents to Origen had different agendas. She claims that ascetic theology was especially important for Jerome, and that he continued to use his arguments against Jovinian in the Origenist controversy. In this chapter, we have seen examples of the ways in which Jerome returned to arguments against Jovinian in his anti-Origenist polemics. However, my starting point in this examination has been different from that of Clark, in that I suppose, from my conclusions in the previous chapter, that Jerome was very dependent on Origen in his polemics against Jovinian. What Clark calls "debates over asceticism"<sup>624</sup> was not a reason for Jerome to attack Origen's theology. To the contrary, Origen's theology became his main tool in his theological justification of asceticism. It was not concerns about asceticism, but the fact that he found himself accused of Origenism, that made Jerome engage in anti-Origenist polemics, as becomes apparent in his *Letter 61*.

In his important work *The Body and Society*, Peter Brown deals briefly with the effects of the Origenist controversy for Jerome's views on sexual difference and the relationship between men and women. "On issues that touched on the nature of the human person, and most particularly on the extent to which the differences between the sexes could be regarded as transcendable, Origen was shown to have belonged to a very distant age".<sup>625</sup> When having to choose, Jerome, in Brown's account, chose the side of those who claimed the lasting difference between the sexes as well as the lasting risk of sexual temptation between them. Brown describes the problem that this generation saw in Origen's theology as centring on the limitlessness of the human person, which implied that the present bodies, and, as Brown develops this, "the landmarks of their own society"<sup>626</sup> would be transformed. In the case of Jerome, the heresiologist clarified the consequences of Origen's ideas about the fluidity of the person. These dangers became clear to Jerome after the beginning of the controversy, and while Brown acknowledges that Jerome remained influenced by Origen as an exegete, he holds that Jerome definitely turned against Origen's ideas about the human person.<sup>627</sup>

The fact that Jerome continued to be indebted to Origen after the beginning of the controversy is well known. However, scholars tend to take Jerome's words in *Letter 49* for granted: That he was not a theologian, but an exegete, as well as his

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<sup>624</sup> Clark 1992, 6.

<sup>625</sup> Brown 1988, 379.

<sup>626</sup> Brown 1988, 380.

<sup>627</sup> Brown 1988, 380.

words in *Letter* 61: That he had appreciated Origen as an exegete, but not as a theologian. This distinction is artificial, as theology and exegesis cannot be separated. However, it was an important rhetorical strategy in Jerome's anti-Origenist polemics.

There is a tendency among scholars who write on the Origenist controversy to generalize in their descriptions of the participants. For example, Caroline Walker Bynum has written: "Jerome, Theophilus of Alexandria, and the other anti-Origenists wanted to defend a kind of gender and class essentialism – that is, to elevate to the courts of heaven the differences between male and female, married and chaste, leader and follower, that were found naturally on earth and, in certain ways, enhanced within the monastic movement".<sup>628</sup> This view may be connected to a more general tendency of associating resurrection ideas that emphasize the *body* to ideologies that support society and its institutions, and resurrection ideas that emphasize an inner (immaterial) transformation to movements of divergence and protest. This theory was developed by John Gager, who, following Mary Douglas' ideas about body symbols, argued that with the merging of church and society during the fourth century, the majority church opted for an idea about the resurrection which stressed its physical character, and that in doing so, they were expressing the idea that "'the individual is by nature subordinate to society,' whether that society be the Christian Church or the Christian Empire".<sup>629</sup> Gager comments specifically on the "anti-Origenists", among whom, he writes, "neither the 'moderate Pauline' nor the 'radical Corinthian' view proved acceptable".<sup>630</sup>

While the theoretical framework presented by Gager is certainly useful, and makes it possible for us to reveal the social background behind many early Christian debates that in one way or another concerned the body, it is important to remember that historical reality may be much more complex than such a theory allows for. Gager himself remarks that although, in some cases, there are clear connections between ascetic leanings, a docetic Christology and a belief in a present-life, spiritual resurrection (that is, views implying a lesser importance of bodiliness), they do not always exist together in early Christian thinkers.<sup>631</sup>

From what we have seen in this chapter, I argue that while Gager's theory makes great sense in explaining Epiphanius' ideas about the resurrection, Jerome is a clear exception. Being a radical ascetic and often critical of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, and certainly arguing for alternative kinds of hierarchy within the church, we still find him arguing not only for a bodily, but also for a *fleshly* resurrection. In this, we see the problem of treating all writers who wrote against

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<sup>628</sup> Walker Bynum 1995, 90.

<sup>629</sup> Gager 1982, 351, quotation from Douglas 1970, 195.

<sup>630</sup> Gager 1982, 351.

<sup>631</sup> Gager 1982, 358-59, 360-361.

“Origenism” as making up one party of “anti-Origenists”. This becomes even clearer when we consider the great modifications that come with Jerome’s insistence on a fleshly resurrection. At a closer look, his ideas about sameness and difference in the resurrection are very close to those of Origen. What emerges is a very complex picture of how Jerome dealt with a debated issue and Origen’s ideas about it.

In my theoretical considerations in the second chapter, I discussed the performative function of naming, which has been noted in scholarship on heresiology during the last decades. To give an opponent a name is to make a heretic. One can take these considerations one step further and ask what impact heresiological naming in antiquity may have had on modern scholarship. This has, of course, been immensely discussed among scholars, but much more attention has been paid to recovering the created heretic than the created heresiologist. However, since heresiological work is a two-way process of constructing a heretical other and an orthodox self, the making of a heretic implies the making of the orthodox.

In modern scholarship on the first Origenist controversy, it is common to categorize participants as “Origenists” and “anti-Origenists”. Such categorizations are based on ancient heresiology. True, “anti-Origenist” is a modern term, but the way it is used depends on heresiological constructions. My point is that just as the ancient heresiologist made the heretic, and simultaneously himself, by heresiological presentations, so modern scholars also make Origenists and anti-Origenists, rather than describe them. Ancient heresiology has found its way into modern reconstructions, and Origenists and anti-Origenists continue to be created.

When a writer has been named an anti-Origenist and has thus become an anti-Origenist, his ideas will be interpreted through this knowledge. This categorization and naming of participants in controversies will determine our interpretation of their works. It may even lead us to think that participants with a common designation also have a common agenda. At the same time, it makes us blind to certain aspects of their works, that is, to those aspects which do not support the categorization and which we, consequently, do not look for in the first place.

What can we say about this from the present chapter? That the common way to describe the Origenist controversy as a controversy with two camps, an Origenist (or, at least, supporters of Origen) and an anti-Origenist, and to place Jerome in the second category is an example of how ancient heresiology has found its way into modern scholarship, with scholars making categorizations and reading authors according to these – categorizations, which were originally made by heresiologists.

One of Jerome’s most important rhetorical strategies in the present controversy was to maximize the difference between himself and Origen, the “proximate other”. We should be careful not to take this marking of distance as evidence of a radical change in Jerome’s thought. I argue that the above-mentioned



categorization of Origenist – anti-Origenist may prevent us from seeing a continuity in Jerome’s thought and may make us focus instead on what changed because of the controversy. I hope to have demonstrated such a continuity in the present chapter.

# Chapter 5. The Origenist Controversy: The Question of Eternal Salvation

## 1. Introduction

It is common in presentations of Jerome and his relation to Origen's thought to claim that a radical difference between the two authors existed, based on their ideas on hierarchy in the afterlife. Origen's eschatology is often presented as centered on the idea of *apokatastasis*, which tends to be associated with an idea of equality between rational beings in the consummation, while Jerome is presented as claiming that a hierarchy will continue to exist among those who are saved.<sup>632</sup>

In the present chapter, in which Jerome's reception of Origen's views on post-mortem punishment and salvation are in focus, I will argue against such a distinction between the two theologians. Just as we have seen that Jerome's views on the resurrection body depended on Origen, even after he began to polemicize against him, so I will argue that Jerome's views on punishment and salvation show a great influence from Origen's thought, even after his engagement in anti-Origenist polemics.

Jerome's positive reception of Origen's ideas about the afterlife after his involvement in the Origenist controversy has been neglected to a great extent, and in previous chapters I have suggested a reason for this neglect by reference to the categorization of the participants in the Origenist controversy into "Origenists" and "anti-Origenists", a categorization which is based on ancient heresiology. As I have argued in my second chapter, we have to be aware of the rhetorical strategy of marking difference to "proximate others", and of the risk of essentializing rhetorical constructions, in such a way that Jerome's anti-Origenist rhetoric results in descriptions of him as being an "anti-Origenist". I have drawn attention to the tendency to place Jerome in an anti-Origenist camp because of his rhetoric, and thereby to read his works through the lens of his being an anti-Origenist. In this

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<sup>632</sup> See, for example, Clark 1992, 6, who makes a distinction between Origen and Jerome precisely from ideas of hierarchy and egalitarianism. See also Bynum 1995, 86-94; Brown 1988, 379-386.

way, I have argued, Jerome's heresiological presentation of Origenism determines the way in which his theology is understood.

This kind of categorization, I showed in the previous chapter, has made Jerome a proponent of the resurrection of the same flesh in contrast to Origen's ideas of a spiritual resurrection body; a distinction that is highly artificial, since it is based on a rhetorical maximizing of difference on Jerome's part. In this chapter I will argue, in a similar way, that such categorization has made Jerome a proponent of a hierarchy in the afterlife in contrast to Origen's ideas about a final equality of all rational creatures. This means that it has not only had consequences for the way in which Jerome is understood, but also for the way in which Origen is understood – the idea of *apokatastasis* is presented as the main Origenist idea of the afterlife. My general aim in this chapter, and its contribution to the work as a whole, is to problematize such categorization and to highlight a positive reception of Origen in Jerome's ideas on eternal salvation.

As in the previous chapters, the theological issues will be discussed in connection with social issues, more precisely, with issues about spiritual authority and hierarchy in the church. I have previously argued that, although given different names and commonly associated with quite different theological questions, the Jovinianist and the Origenist controversies should be seen as dealing with the same concerns, about Christian identity and spiritual authority, and that the heresiology produced should be seen as a superstructure of those deeper concerns. This partly explains why we will have reason to return to the work *Adversus Jovinianum* in this chapter: I argue that the issues discussed during the Origenist controversy should not be examined apart from the issues more commonly connected to the Jovinianist controversy, but that it is important that they are treated together. This is also profitable for the study of the reception of Origen in Jerome, since it prevents us from focusing solely on either the positive or the negative aspects, and lets us examine the latter in the light of the former.

In the first part of the chapter, I will examine Jerome's ideas of salvation in quite a broad sense, but with a focus on certain issues: The difference within the two general classes of the saved and the condemned; the heavenly life of the perfect Christian as a continuation of life on earth; and post-mortem purification. Above all, I will argue from *Against Jovinian*, because Jerome treated these issues to a great extent in that work, but I will also refer to other works from before as well as after the beginning of the Origenist controversy. Having previously argued that Jerome's ideas about a spiritual hierarchy of Christians, based on their degree of holiness, was heavily indebted to Origen's thought, I now discuss the way in which Jerome also depended on Origen in transferring this hierarchy to heaven. The argumentation in *Against Jovinian* will provide an important point of comparison to Jerome's ideas about a post-mortem hierarchy as expressed in the context of the Origenist controversy.

In the second part, we will approach the question of *apokatastasis*, which became so important in anti-Origenist polemics. I will treat Jerome's defence against Rufinus' charges that Jerome had previously held this teaching himself, and I will discuss whether Jerome held this idea at any point. My primary focus in this part is, however, on Jerome's heresiological presentations of Origen's ideas on eternal salvation, as well as on his orthodox self-presentation, and on the rhetorical function that *apokatastasis* had in this polemics.

## 2. Jerome's Ideas on a Hierarchy in the Afterlife

### 2.1. Claiming Two Diversified Classes – Exegetical Strategies

As the main subject of the third chapter was Jerome's ideas about the hierarchy of Christians on earth, I have postponed my discussion of Jerome's critique of Jovinian's fourth thesis ("there are two classes (*ordines*), the sheep and the goats, the righteous and the unrighteous")<sup>633</sup> to the present chapter, where our focus is on the eschatological hierarchy. I argue that these interrelate closely, and we will have reason to return on several occasions to our discussion of the present-life hierarchy of Christians.

We have seen in the third chapter that Jovinian's ecclesiological thought centred on the idea of the unity of the church and on the role of baptism in accomplishing that unity. What could be ascribed to the church could also be ascribed to each of the baptized. As the church was, for instance, a virgin or a temple, so too was every baptized Christian. When it came to eschatology, Jovinian made only one distinction, namely that between the saved and the condemned (or between the spiritual and the carnal).<sup>634</sup> He used biblical passages about the sheep and the goats,<sup>635</sup> about the wheat and the tares<sup>636</sup> and about the trees and the fruit,<sup>637</sup> to illustrate this point. That is, the difference that Jovinian sought to maintain was that between Christians and non-Christians, while he sought to lessen the distinctions within the Christian group – both in this world and in the world to come.<sup>638</sup>

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<sup>633</sup> *AdvJov* 2.18, PL 23, 312-13.

<sup>634</sup> *AdvJov* 2.20, *spirituales, carnales*, PL 23, 314.

<sup>635</sup> Mt 25:31-46.

<sup>636</sup> Mt 13:24-30.

<sup>637</sup> Mt 7:15-20.

<sup>638</sup> As we have discussed in the third chapter, the social issues behind this concerned the kind of ascetical elitism represented by Jerome.

When Jerome refuted these ideas in *Against Jovinian*, an important strategy was to interpret the same biblical passages in different ways, namely, so as to allow for differentiation within the two groups of the saved and the condemned. We may note that while Jovinian spoke of all the saved as *spirituales* and all the condemned as *carnales*, Jerome found both kinds within the one church, among the saved. This difference had of course been an important theme already in the earlier parts of *Against Jovinian*, where he had argued that celibate Christians were superior to married Christians. In the last part, where he refutes Jovinian's fourth proposition,<sup>639</sup> his focus is an eschatological one, although we constantly see how these statements in the area of eschatology are clearly connected to Jerome's ideas about the church on earth.

Jerome points out that there is difference between one sheep and another: A small sheep is not on a par with a ram.<sup>640</sup> The words about the tares and wheat, about the good and the bad fish and about the different animals in Noah's ark are applied here in an argument that there is a great diversity within the church, among those who will be saved, both in this world and in the world to come.<sup>641</sup> Jerome interprets the words about the tares and the bad fish not as being about those who will be condemned, but as signifying the worse among those who will be saved. The man who lived with his father's wife<sup>642</sup> will certainly be among the sheep, because he repented, but he will not shine with the same glory as Paul does. The idea of hierarchy is most clearly seen in the reference to Noah's ark, with different animals in different abodes, but also in Jerome's interpretation of the church as the body of Christ: The body has many members, but they are not equally important. Also, in Jerome's writing, the image of the church as a temple<sup>643</sup> or a house does not have the function of demonstrating unity, but diversity – or, more precisely, diversity within unity: "... in a large house there are different vessels".<sup>644</sup> In these ways of using biblical passages that Jovinian had understood as speaking of the saved and the condemned, and in claiming instead a hierarchy among the saved, striking parallels to Origen's thought can be seen.<sup>645</sup>

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<sup>639</sup> *AdvJov* 2.18-36.

<sup>640</sup> *AdvJov* 2.22, PL 23, 316-18.

<sup>641</sup> *AdvJov* 2.22, PL 23, 316-18.

<sup>642</sup> 1 Cor 5:1.

<sup>643</sup> The image of the temple and the use of it in *Against Jovinian* has been studied more thoroughly in chapter 3. We will return to its eschatological significance below.

<sup>644</sup> *AdvJov* 2.26, PL 23, 323: ... *in domo magna diversa vasa sint* (also referred to in *AdvJov* 1.3). 2 Tm 2:20 is also used by Origen in expressing his idea of a hierarchy of Christians; see *HomJos* 9.9 (SC 71, 262-264; and *HomNb* 25.5.2 (SC 461, 212).

<sup>645</sup> Origen as well interpreted the words about tares and the wheat to be about the church (*HomJos* 21.1-2). He also interpreted the threshing-floor (Mt 3:12) not as the world, but as the Christian people, among whom there is wheat and chaff. Likewise, the fishing net containing both good

Duval has remarked that Origen's typological interpretations of the Old Testament cult provide an important background for understanding Jerome's ideas about the Christian hierarchy, not least in the world to come.<sup>646</sup> As Duval has pointed out, Jerome's reference in *Against Jovinian* to the division of the Holy Land in explaining the future diversity probably depends on Origen's exegesis.<sup>647</sup>

For Jerome, like Origen, free will is essential for a person's salvation – and not only for salvation, but for the order of salvation. Jerome's reception of Origen means that the Alexandrian's anti-Gnostic heresiology is transferred to a new context: While Origen's opponents were – to a major part – those who claimed different natures, Jerome's opponent is one who claims that baptism puts all at the same level. As we saw in the third chapter, Jerome directed charges of determinism against Jovinian, which were very similar to Origen's critique against "Gnostic" determinism. Like Origen, Jerome argued against a simple distinction between good and bad, and above all, against ideas implying that distinction was not dependent on human effort, which meant that individuals were saved or condemned by some kind of necessity. This becomes clear in his interpretation of the good and the bad trees (which Origen had also used against "Gnostic" opponents): "That is, neither does a good tree produce bad fruit, nor a bad tree good fruit, as long as it continues in its goodness, or badness".<sup>648</sup> Paul and Judas are brought up as examples of the way in which human beings can change from bad to good, and vice versa, because of their free choice.

In Origen's anti-Gnostic polemics, the question of free will was closely connected to the question of God's justice. This theme returns in Jerome's theological justification of a post-mortem hierarchy. "God is not unjust": He will reward "the vessel of election", who works harder than others, according to his merits.<sup>649</sup> This appeal to justice is a typical Origenist concern, which governed

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and bad fish (Mt 13:47-48) is interpreted as the church: *HomEz* 1.11 (SC 352, p. 78-82); *HomLev* 7.5 (SC 286, p. 334-36); *CommMt* 10.12, 13. In his interpretation of Noah's ark, Origen claims that the different floors and departments in the ark illustrate the different levels in the church (*HomGen* 2.3, SC 7, 88-94; cf. 1 Cor 15:23).

<sup>646</sup> Duval 2003, 233-234.

<sup>647</sup> Duval 2003, 240, n. 236, referring to Origen, *HomNb* 28.1-3 (SC 461, 352-364), when commenting on *AdvJov* 2.34.

<sup>648</sup> *AdvJov* 2.25, PL 23, 336: *Tandiu ergo nec arbor bona malos fructus facit, nec mala bonos, quandiu vel in bonitate sua, vel in malitia perseverat*. Cf. Origen in *CommRom* 8.10.3, SC 543, 552: *... arborem bonam vel malam non nasci, sed fieri*. Here, we find ourselves in polemics against "Gnostic" writers (Origen specifically speaks of *hi qui de schola Valentini et Basilidis veniunt*), who claimed that there were good and bad natures. Important in Origen's argumentation is, as we have seen several times previously, the idea that all souls share a common nature, but that their qualities can differ as a result of free choice.

<sup>649</sup> *AdvJov* 2.23, PL 23, 319: *non est injustus Deus, ut obliviscatur operis ejus, et dispar meritum aequali mercede compenset*.

Origen's ideas of the afterlife – again, not only with regard to the difference between the saved and the condemned, but also with regard to the difference *among* the saved. To imagine that everyone would have the same heavenly life would, in Origen's view, imply that God was unjust.<sup>650</sup>

Next, we will look more closely at Jerome's treatment of two especially important biblical passages from which he (by making alternative interpretations to those of Jovinian) sought to demonstrate the afterlife diversity, and we will examine a possible dependence on Origen.

### 2.1.1. 1 Cor 15:23 and 39-42: Diversity in the Resurrection

In *Against Jovinian*,<sup>651</sup> Jerome brings attention to the words in 1 Corinthians that each one will rise “in turn”,<sup>652</sup> which, he claims, means that the conditions among the resurrected will differ as a consequence of their different merits. He then quotes 1 Corinthians 15:39-42,<sup>653</sup> which Jovinian had interpreted as signifying the difference between the spiritual and the carnal (the two groups of the saved and the condemned).<sup>654</sup> Jerome claims that the words about “one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars”, as well as the difference in glory among the stars, must be understood to be said about the sheep, thus implying that there will be a difference between those on the right hand. Then he puts the following words in Paul's mouth: “the just will shine with the brightness of the sun, and those who are in the second rank will glow with the glory of the moon...”,<sup>655</sup> and he quotes Paul: “‘Because we must all’, he says, ‘be manifested

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<sup>650</sup> In a fragment from his work *On the resurrection*, preserved in Pamphilus' apology, Origen uses an argument from justice in his defence of the resurrection of the body, claiming that it must be rewarded together with the soul, because it has joined the soul in the earthly struggle, in martyrdom as well as in asceticism. Although he does not explicitly speak of a hierarchy in the resurrection here, it becomes clear that this is what he intends, since he concentrates on the best Christians: The martyrs and the ascetics. It is the reward of these Christians that he is concerned about, those who will be crowned, and it would be unjust if only the soul and not the body had its reward (*ApolOrig* 128, SC 464, 208-20).

<sup>651</sup> *AdvJov* 2.23.

<sup>652</sup> Cf. 1 Cor 15:23.

<sup>653</sup> “Not all flesh is alike, but there is one flesh for human beings, another for animals, another for birds, and another for fish. There are both heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is one thing, and that of the earthly is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; indeed, star differs from star in glory. So it is with the resurrection of the dead.”

<sup>654</sup> *AdvJov* 2.20; 2.23.

<sup>655</sup> *AdvJov* 2.23, PL 23, 334: ... *justi claritate solis luceant, et qui in sequenti gradu sunt, lunae splendore rutilent...*

before the judgment-seat of Christ, so that each one will receive what he has done in the body, either good or bad”<sup>656</sup>.

These passages in 1 Corinthians had been used by Origen as well, to make the same point: Salvation will be diversified. In a homily on Joshua, he claims that in the resurrection, all will not have the same glory. Quoting the words from 1 Corinthians 15:39-42, he concludes: “Therefore, many differences are depicted of those who come to salvation”.<sup>657</sup> A clear connection between the degree of ascetic renunciation on earth and the degree of glory in the resurrection is seen in Origen’s *Commentary on Romans*. Mortifying the earthly members, keeping the body dead, a person’s works can ascend to heaven and be compared to the splendour of the stars, and when the day of resurrection comes, such a person will stand out in splendour, as one star differs from another.<sup>658</sup> Reference to this biblical passage is made in other works as well, with the same purpose.<sup>659</sup>

### 2.1.2. John 14:2: The Many Mansions

Another parallel to Origen’s thought can be seen in Jerome’s interpretation of the “many mansions”, spoken of in the Gospel of John,<sup>660</sup> as referring to eschatological realities (as opposed to the different churches in the world, as

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<sup>656</sup> *AdvJov* 1.23, PL 23, 334: *Omnes enim, ait, manifestari nos oportet ante tribunal Christi, ut recipiat unusquisque quae gessit per corpus, sive bonum, sive malum.* Cf. 2 Cor 5:10.

<sup>657</sup> *HomJos* 10.1, SC 71, 270: *Multae ergo eorum, qui ad salutem veniunt, differentiae designantur.* Reference to the same biblical passage is made in *HomJos* 25.4, where Origen argues that there will be a certain order in the resurrection. Here, reference is also made to 1 Cor 15:23-24, about each one rising in his own order. Cf. *HomGen* 2.3, about Noah’s ark, where reference is made to this place.

<sup>658</sup> *CommRom* 4.6.11, SC 539, 266-268.

<sup>659</sup> One example is *De Principiis* 2.10.2 (SC 252, 376-378). Here, Origen makes clear that in the resurrection, there will be difference both between saints and sinners and within the two groups. The words about the glory of the sun, the moon and the stars refer to difference between the saints; the words about different kinds of flesh refer to differences among the sinners, who have not purged themselves in the earthly life. In 2.10.3, where Origen continues to discuss the different qualities of resurrection bodies, he says that: “... those who shall deserve to obtain an inheritance in the kingdom of heaven” will have a spiritual body that is suited for a heavenly life, “... while to each one of those who may be of inferior merit, or of a more abject condition, or even the lowest in the scale [*ultimi*], and altogether thrust aside, there is yet given, in proportion to the dignity of his life and soul, a glory and dignity of body – nevertheless in such a way, that even the body which rises again of those who are to be destined to everlasting fire and to severe punishments, is by the very change of the resurrection so incorruptible, that it cannot be corrupted or dissolved even by severe punishments” (transl. Frederick Crombie, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 4). Here also, a difference between the saved themselves is spoken of, and the difference is based on merit.

Other instances of Origen using these passages are *CommRom* 2.5.6 (SC 532, 310-312); 7.8.8 (SC 543, 320).

<sup>660</sup> John 14:2.



Jovinian had interpreted them).<sup>661</sup> The importance of human free will and personal struggle for having the best places becomes clear, when Jerome interprets the passage as meaning that it is not Christ, but the believers who prepare the places, or rather, the places is prepared for works (opera) not for persons – in this way, everyone gets a place according to his/her merits.<sup>662</sup>

Reference to the mansions is made by Jerome in other works written before his engagement in anti-Origenist polemics, and it is sometimes combined with one of the passages discussed above; 1 Corinthians 15:39-42. For example, in his *Commentary on Ephesians*, Jerome writes that the kingdom of heaven can be understood as one house of God with various dwellings, “for there is one glory of the sun, another of the moon and another of the stars”.<sup>663</sup> It is highly probable that Jerome was dependent on Origen when he wrote this, because, as we have seen, Origen was his main source in composing this commentary. This is all the more probable, since in other works Origen used John 14:2, and even in combination with 1 Corinthians 15:39-42, to argue that salvation will be diversified.<sup>664</sup>

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<sup>661</sup> *AdvJov* 2.28, PL 23, 324.

<sup>662</sup> *AdvJov* 2.28, PL 23, 324-25.

<sup>663</sup> *CommEph* 2.4.3-4, PL 26, 494-495.

<sup>664</sup> For example, in *HomLev* 14.3, Origen argues that not all who will be saved will inherit the kingdom of God. He refers to Christ’s promises to those He called blessed: They were not all promised the same thing: “There is not one kind or a single type of the future promise”. The kingdom of heaven is the highest of the blessings, “although the Lord says, ‘In my Father’s house there are many rooms.’” (*Promissionis futurae non unus est modus neque simplex species*. SC 287, 234, transl. Barkley 1990, 249). One may compare this with another text from the *Homilies on Leviticus* (15.2), where Origen comments on the words “a house in a walled city” (Lev 25:29). Only a few, namely those who walk on the earth but have a conversation in heaven (cf. Phil 3:20) and those of whom the Apostle says: “You are ... God’s building” (1 Cor 3:9), can have such a house, that is in heaven (SC 287, 252-256). In *Homilies on Numbers* 1.3.2, Origen combines Jn 14:2 and 1 Cor 15:23 when he speaks of diversity in the resurrection. Origen here speaks of some who will be “transferred to paradise or to some other place out of the many mansions that are with the Father”. This “distinction in translation and glory” will “certainly be based on the merits and works of each one”. Referring to 1 Cor 15:23, Origen writes: “Each one will be in that rank (ordine) which he merits of his works have earned for him” (SC 415, 42). This may be compared to what Jerome says in *Adversus Jovinianum*: The different places are prepared, not for persons, but for their works (*AdvJov* 2.28). See also *HomJos* 10.1, referred to above, where the two biblical passages are combined by Origen.

A passage in which Origen does not use the biblical passages that we have discussed here, but in which his ideas about the saved having different places in heaven are clearly expressed, is *HomNb* 3.3.3. Origen interprets Numbers 3:5-39, about the Levites and the firstborn who belong to God. As in many other places, he takes the Levites to signify the perfect Christians, who are set apart from the rest to serve God (this has been discussed in the third chapter and we will return to it in our next section). Origen interprets the words about the people of God being divided into four encampments as a reference to four churches in heaven, or to “four orders (*ordines*) of saints in heaven” namely those spoken of in Hebrews: Mount Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem, the multitude of praising angels, “and those who are above all these come to the ‘church of the firstborn ones, which is written in heaven’” (cf. Heb 12:18, 22-22). The churches

As O’Connell has pointed out, Jerome does not use Paul’s words about one star differing from another only with regard to the resurrection, but also more widely to describe the differentiation of rewards among the saved,<sup>665</sup> something that becomes clear precisely through the connection with John 14:2. A main difference, which is determinative for an individual’s position in heaven, seems to be that between those who have fallen after baptism and have had to repent, and those who have not. As we have seen, he writes in *Against Jovinian* that the man who lived with his father’s wife and repented will not shine with the same glory as the Apostle.<sup>666</sup>

This was an idea that Jerome continued to express after his involvement in anti-Origenist polemics. In the *Commentary on Amos* from 406, he writes:

There are many mansions with my Father, and one star differs from another in brightness. So will also the resurrection of the dead be for the saints, who will shine like the sun and the moon, like the evening star and the morning star. However, those who have repented after their sin will, because of the diversity of merits, be compared to other stars.<sup>667</sup>

Here, we see how the biblical passages are used to claim an eschatological difference between the saints and those who have had to repent after sinning.

### 2.1.3. *Difference Between Sinners and Between Sins. The Question of Repentance*

Related to the subject of a post-mortem hierarchy is the question of repentance, or, more precisely, the question about what will happen to Christian sinners in the world to come. Jerome presents Jovinian as claiming that just as there is only one salvation, so there will only be one punishment, regardless of the seriousness of the sins.<sup>668</sup> In this case, we would all go to Gehenna, Jerome says, because we have all committed lighter sins occasionally. Jerome focuses especially on lying,<sup>669</sup> claiming that as all human beings are liars, Jovinian – according to Jerome’s presentation of his ideas – either does not belong to humankind, or he will go to

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signify different levels. Not everyone comes to each of these places. The important thing is not to remain on earth (3.3.4) (SC 415, 86, 88).

<sup>665</sup> O’Connell 1948, 130-31.

<sup>666</sup> *AdvJov* 2.22.

<sup>667</sup> *CommAm* 2.5.1.2. CCSL 76, 273-74: *Multae mansiones sunt apud Patrem meum, et stella a stella differt in claritate, ita et resurrectio mortuorum, sanctis splendentibus sicut sol et luna, uesper et lucifer. Qui autem post peccatum egerint paenitentiam, pro diuersitate meritorum stellis aliis aequabuntur.*

<sup>668</sup> *AdvJov* 2.33, PL 23, 330: *noster Zeno.*

<sup>669</sup> “... everyone is a liar” (cf. Ps 116:11; Rom 3:4) (*AdvJov* 2.31).

hell. “There are serious sins, and there are light sins”, Jerome states.<sup>670</sup> As Origen had done before him, Jerome refers to 1 John 5:16<sup>671</sup> in arguing that there are lighter and more serious sins, and that the chance of being forgiven depends on the seriousness of the sin.<sup>672</sup> Free will is claimed by Jerome as the great differentiator of human beings: Their reward or punishment in the world to come depends on this. Speaking of death in martyrdom, he writes: “it is the will, from which this death is effected, which is crowned”.<sup>673</sup>

However, we must be aware that Jerome makes a caricature of Jovinian when he presents him as claiming that one will go to hell for lesser sins. The strictness with which Jovinian's view is depicted is modified when we understand that, although he might have argued that all sins were equal, his view on penitence was quite a lenient one, in the sense that he thought that the penitent – who would be saved – would be at the same level as those who were saved without having to do penance. Jovinian had obviously argued from the parable of the prodigal son,<sup>674</sup> which he took to mean that no difference was made between the penitent and the son who had stayed with the father. Against this, Jerome claims that while the penitent person will certainly be saved, there will still be distinction among the saved ones:

... it is one thing to be a penitent, and with tears beg for forgiveness, and another to always be with the father. And so the shepherd<sup>675</sup> and the father say, through Ezekiel, to the sheep that was carried back and to the son who was once lost: “And I will establish my covenant with you, and you shall know that I am the Lord, and you shall remember, and be confounded, so that you will never again open your mouth because of your shame, when I have forgiven you all that you have done.”<sup>676</sup>

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<sup>670</sup> *AdvJov* 2.30, PL 23, 341: *Sunt peccata levia, sunt gravia.*

<sup>671</sup> In this text, a distinction is made between “a sin that does not lead to death” and “a sin that leads to death”.

<sup>672</sup> *AdvJov* 2.30. For Origen's use of this biblical passage, see *HomEx* 10.3: Some sins are to death, Origen explains, others not (reference is made to 1 Jn 5:16). What is a sin unto death and what is not, Origen is not certain of: *Quae autem sint species peccatorum ad mortem, quae vero non ad mortem sed ad damnium, not puto facile a quoquam hominum posse discerni. Scriptum namque est: Delicta quis intelligit?* (SC 321, 318).

<sup>673</sup> *AdvJov* 2.31, PL 23, 328: ... *voluntas, ex qua ipsa mors nascitur, coronatur.*

<sup>674</sup> Lk 15:11-32.

<sup>675</sup> That is, the one who left ninety-nine of his sheep to bring back one that was lost (Lk 15:4-7).

<sup>676</sup> *AdvJov* 2.31, PL 23, 343: ... *aliud est poenitentem esse, et lacrymis veniam deprecari, alium semper esse cum patre. Unde per Ezechielem ad reportatam ovem, et perditum quondam filium, loquitur pastor et pater: Et suscitabo pactum meum tecum: et scies quia ego Dominus, et recordaberis, et confunderis; ut non sit tibi ultra aperire os prae confusione tua, cum placatus fuero tibi in omnibus quae fecisti.* Cf. Ez 16:62-63.

Origen's *Homilies on Joshua* is a work in which his ideas about hierarchy among Christians, in this world and the next, are clearly seen, and his interpretation of the fate of the Gibeonites<sup>677</sup> can be recognized in Jerome's polemics against Jovinian. When other hostile peoples were slaughtered, the Gibeonites were kept safe in order to do certain kinds of work. Where do these belong? asks Jerome. Not among the goats, because they were allowed to live. Thus, they must belong to the sheep. However, the Scriptures make it clear that they were not of the same merit as the Israelites. "You then see that they stand on the right hand, but are of a far inferior grade",<sup>678</sup> Jerome claims.

We may pass to a text written much later, after the beginning of the Origenist controversy, namely the *Commentary on Amos* (from which we discussed another passage above). Here, we recognize Jerome's explanation in *Adversus Jovinianum* of the parable of the prodigal son: Those who repent, although they will be saved, will not be at the same level as those who do not need to repent.

Because the glory of the one who always followed the Lord is not the same as that of him who departed from the flock, and later was carried back on the shoulders of the good shepherd. And so, through another prophet, the Lord says: "I prefer the repentance of a sinner rather than his death". Repentance becomes better, not in comparison to the most pure holiness and the Church of Christ – which does not have either wrinkle or spot – but in comparison to death and hell.<sup>679</sup>

One may note the idea of the perfect church, of which the repentant sinner is obviously not a part.

## 2.2. Individual Holiness as Determinative for Eschatological Unity with Christ

What, then, determines a person's place in heaven? We have so far spoken of merits, of what a person accomplishes – or fails to accomplish – during his/her life on earth. We have noticed a basic difference between those who must repent after post-baptismal sin, and those who do not. In this section we will try to deepen our understanding of what it is that the best Christians accomplish, according to Jerome – what makes them better than others, and what thereby guarantees them

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<sup>677</sup> Cf. Jos 9:3-27.

<sup>678</sup> *AdvJov* 2.33, PL 23, 331: *Vides ergo quod stent quidem a dextris; sed multo inferiori gradu.* Cf. Origen, *Hom.Jos* 10, SC 71, 270-280.

<sup>679</sup> *CommAm* 2.5.1.2, CCSL 76, 273: *Non est enim eadem gloria eius qui semper secutus est Dominum, et eius qui aberrauerit a grege, et postea boni pastoris humeris reportatus est. Vnde et per alium prophetam Dominus ait: 'Malo paenitentiam peccatoris, quam mortem'. Paenitentia non sanctitati purissimae et Ecclesia Christi, – quae non habet rugam neque maculam –, sed morti et inferis comparata fit melior.*

the best abodes in heaven. We will therefore begin on earth, that is, where Jerome himself always began – with the ascetic Christian and his/her union with the Lord. Building on insights from our third chapter, where these aspects were discussed, we will move on to see in which way they formed Jerome’s eschatological thought.

### 2.2.1. *The Abiding of Christ in the Christian*

One of Jovinian’s arguments for the equality of baptized Christians had, according to Jerome, been made from the words in the Gospel of John concerning Christ’s abiding in the believer.<sup>680</sup> From this, Jovinian had argued that Christ abides in all the baptized alike.<sup>681</sup> A biblical passage that he is also said to have used is the following, from 1 John: “Those who have been born of God do not sin, because God’s seed abides in them; they cannot sin, because they have been born of God.”<sup>682</sup> From this, Jovinian is said to have argued that God abides in all the baptized alike, that is, no difference is made because of their different progress in the post-baptismal life.

As with other instances of Jovinian using biblical passages to defend his views, Jerome had to explain the meaning of Christ’s abiding in a way that supported his own ideas, and demonstrate that the abiding is not the same in all baptized Christians. We have already discussed this question in the third chapter, where we also noted the connection between what is said about abiding and Jovinian’s and Jerome’s different ideas about the church, or the individual Christian, as a temple. This image, important to Jovinian in claiming equality between Christians,<sup>683</sup> is used by Jerome to argue the exact opposite, i.e. their inequality. When he applies the image to the church, Jerome points out that in a temple, there are many divisions.<sup>684</sup> “God does not inhabit everyone equally”, Jerome writes, “nor does He impart Himself to everyone in the same degree”.<sup>685</sup>

According to Jerome, Jovinian had connected the words in John 17:20-21,<sup>686</sup> about the divine abiding, to 2 Peter 1:4, about being partakers of divine nature.<sup>687</sup>

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<sup>680</sup> Cf. Jn 6:56; 17:20-21.

<sup>681</sup> *AdvJov* 2.27, PL 23, 323.

<sup>682</sup> 1 Jn 3:9.

<sup>683</sup> Jovinian seems to have made a point about the words in 1 Corinthians about Christians being a temple of God (cf. 1 Cor 3:16; 6:19), claiming that “temple” written in the singular and not the plural shows that God dwells in all Christians to the same degree (*AdvJov* 2.19, PL 23, 315).

<sup>684</sup> *AdvJov* 2.29, PL 23, 325.

<sup>685</sup> *AdvJov* 2.29, PL 23, 325: *Non aequae Deus omnes inhabitat: nec ad eandem mensuram omnibus infunditur.*

<sup>686</sup> “I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us...”

In Jerome's alternative way of understanding this passage, his dependence on Origen is clearly seen. We may recall from our fourth chapter a basic distinction in the theology of both writers: That between nature/essence on the one hand, and grace/gloria (which we may also term qualities) on the other. Jerome writes:

... we are not one in the Father and the Son according to nature, but according to grace. Because the human soul and God are not of the same substance (as the Manichaeans use to claim). But, He says: "You have loved them as you have loved me". You see, then, that we are admitted into communion with His substance, not of nature, but of grace, and the Father loves us because He loved His Son, and the members are loved, that is, those in the body. /.../ The Word did not cease to be what He had been; nor did the human cease to be what he was by birth. The gloria was increased, the nature was not changed.<sup>688</sup>

This was a very important distinction in the thought of Origen as well. We have seen, concerning his theories about the resurrection, that he used the distinction between essence (οὐσία, φύσις) and qualities (ποιότητες) to explain, on the one hand, what will remain the same, and, on the other, what can be changed. Even when it came to the transformation of the inner being, Origen held, as we have seen, that a person could become spiritual or fleshly, depending on whether he/she followed the spirit or the flesh. This was developed in polemics against "Gnostic" thinkers who had deterministic views and thought that human beings had different natures, so that individuals could be said to be "spiritual" or "fleshly" by nature. In *De Principiis*, Origen claimed that what was essential to God could exist accidentally in human beings through their imitation of God, as qualities that could be achieved as well as lost by free will.<sup>689</sup>

Connected to this is the understanding of transformation as clothing, which we discussed in chapter 4. Some qualities will be put off and others will be put on, but the substance remains the same. This is not only true of the body, but of the inner person as well. The clothing with Christ, which means that the human being will accidentally possess the virtues which Christ is, involves not only an external

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<sup>687</sup> *AdvJov* 2.29, PL 23, 326.

<sup>688</sup> *AdvJov* 2.29, PL 23, 326: ... *non nos secundum naturam, sed secundum gratiam unum esse in Patre et Filio. Neque enim ejusdem substantiae est (quod Manichaei solent dicere) anima humana et Deus. Sed, 'dilexisti' inquit, 'eos, sicut et me dilexisti'. Vides ergo quod in consortium substantiae ejus assumimur, non naturae esse, sed gratiae: et ideo nos diligit, quia Filium dilexit Pater: et membra diliguntur, scilicet in corpore. /.../ Nec Verbum desiit esse quod fuerat: nec homo perdidit esse, quod natus est. Gloria aucta est, non mutata natura.*

<sup>689</sup> In *De principiis* 1.8.3, Origen made a clear distinction between the divinity of God and of human beings who imitated him: The nature of God is Righteousness, Wisdom and Reason, and cannot be anything contrary to these virtues. Human beings can, by imitating Christ and by participating in His divinity, have these virtues not "by nature (*natura*), but as an accidental quality (*accidens*)", and therefore, it may be lost (SC 252, 226-228).

imitation of the Lord, but an intimate relationship: Christ inhabits the heart of the believer. However, for this to take place, the mind must be pure enough. Whether the soul is inhabited by Christ or by the devil is determined by its degree of purity. In a homily on Leviticus, Origen speaks about souls by using female designations, as harlots or virgins. The harlot is the one who prostitutes herself to demons. One should not sow the word of God in a harlot soul, so that the seed is contaminated, but the souls chosen shall be “virgins in the simplicity of faith which is in Christ”.<sup>690</sup> In this way, Christ may be formed in them through faith.<sup>691</sup>

If compared to Jovinian’s idea that the seed of God is given to the believer in baptism and remains in him/her, Origen’s interpretation of the seed of God, of God inhabiting the person, focuses on the individual and on his/her development, rather than seeing the abiding as connected to a ritual act in the church. The same can be said about Origen’s interpretation of the temple, which he tended to apply, first and foremost, to the individual soul rather than to the church. Origen often spoke of the Christian soul as a temple, and he claimed that a person has to become holy and pure in body and mind if Christ is to inhabit him/her as His temple.

Considering this, it is not surprising that Origen’s understanding of the abiding of God became useful in Jerome’s polemics against Jovinian, as he sought to counter Jovinian’s “ecclesial emphasis”<sup>692</sup> by focusing on individual development after baptism. The dependence on Origen’s idea about an intimate relation between Christ and the believer is seen already in his *Commentary on Galatians*, where he used the process of pregnancy as a picture of how the seed of the word of Christ finds its way into the soul of its hearer, how it grows and how its fate remains uncertain as long as the one who has conceived it is in the process of giving birth to it.<sup>693</sup> Also, the struggle does not end with the birth, but continues because the child has to be nurtured in order to reach maturity.<sup>694</sup>

In his critique of Jovinian, Jerome, like Origen, tended to apply the image of the temple to the individual Christian instead of to the church – more precisely, to the perfect Christian: To the virgin. He understood the abiding of Christ in the Christian as dependant on the person’s purity and holiness. While Jovinian had argued that this abiding was the same in all, that all were to the same degree a temple of God, and that this was effected by the sacrament of baptism, Jerome argued, by using a basic distinction in Origen’s spiritual theology, that the abiding

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<sup>690</sup> *HomLev* 12.7 (SC 287, 190-94), cf. 2 Cor 11:3.

<sup>691</sup> Cf. Gal 4:19. See also Origen, *HomEx* 10.3, SC 321, 312-320.

<sup>692</sup> Hunter 2007, 43.

<sup>693</sup> *CommGal* 2.4.19, PL 26, 384-386.

<sup>694</sup> Reference to Mt 12:50. See also Jerome, *CommGal* 2.4.15-16 (PL 26, 381-383), where he seems to be dependent on Origen’s idea of the word of God taking root in the soul, also about Christ growing in a person’s heart.

differed from one Christian to another, and it depended on purity achieved by distancing oneself from the secular.<sup>695</sup> We also return to the importance ascribed to free will: The imitation of Christ rather than the devil, the letting Christ rather than the devil inside one's heart, and the preparing of oneself as to make Christ all the more present, are mystical themes in the thought of both Origen and Jerome which are based on the idea of the free choice of the individual.

We return to the spiritual understanding of priesthood discussed in chapter 3. According to Jerome, only ascetics, who were consecrated to God and separated from the world – belonging to the sphere of the sacred, distinguished from the pollution of the secular – could be temples of God in the real sense of the word. Jerome, as well as Origen, was convinced that entanglement with the secular prohibited communion with the Lord.<sup>696</sup> Even ordinary believers had to purify themselves, for example, in order to receive the Eucharist.<sup>697</sup> The extraordinary believers, however, were those who constantly kept away from secular affairs, being themselves temples of God in which they themselves served as priests.

We may seem to have drifted far away from our present subject, that focuses on eschatological ideas. There are reasons for this, however. As should have become clear by now, Jerome's eschatological theology cannot be separated from his ascetical theology: The centre is always the ascetic person who lives on earth. The same is true of Origen. The understanding of transformation brought up here and dealt with in more detail in the previous chapters, and the role of the free will, is crucial to understand the ideas about hierarchy in both authors. This is a hierarchy based, not on any outer condition, but on the spiritual achievement of the inner person.

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<sup>695</sup> The abiding could be lost: Christ could withdraw from a person's heart, as a consequence of the person's imitating the devil and thus letting him inside the heart (*AdvJov* 2.2, PL 23, 283-284).

<sup>696</sup> Perhaps the best explanation of Origen's view on holiness is given in a homily on Leviticus (11.1). *Sanctus*, says Origen, signifies that which is outside the earth. "For whoever consecrates himself to God will deservedly appear to be outside the earth and outside the world; for this one can also say, 'Walking about the earth, 'we have a way of life in heaven'" (cf. Phil 3:20, a favorite passage for Origen as well as Jerome for explaining the superiority of some Christians over others). That person deserves to be called holy, says Origen, who distinguishes him/herself from the secular, devoting him/herself to God, being set apart from those who live in a carnal manner and engage in worldly affairs (*qui separatus est et segregatus a reliquis hominibus carnaliter viventibus*), and not seeking things that are on earth but things that are in heaven (Cf. Col 3:1-2, also a common passage to refer to in both Origen and Jerome). Only the one who is not mixed (*permixtus*) with worldly persons can devote him/herself fully to God, and such a person is holy. Origen speaks specifically of worldly people who engage in activities that the pagans take part in, and we return to the distinction sacred / secular in his understanding of the hierarchy of Christians. The perfect Christians are the ones set apart from the secular, the space common to Christians and non-Christians; they are "different and set apart for priestly uses" (SC 287, 142-148; transl. G.W. Barkley, 1990).

<sup>697</sup> *AdvJov* 1.7 (PL 23, 220), drawing a further consequence of Paul's words about abstaining from sexual intercourse in order to pray (1 Cor 7:5).



### 2.2.2. *The Perfect Christian as a Temple and a Priest in Heaven*

Like Origen, Jerome denied that Christ's words that the apostles would be with Him, and that they would be one in Him and the Father,<sup>698</sup> applied to all Christians: Only the perfect would actually be with the Lord. According to Jerome, this can be said of persons who "have believed, have been perfected, and can say 'the Lord is my portion'" (which is said about the Levites in Deuteronomy).<sup>699</sup> The diversity between the better and the worse Christians, between those who belong to the sphere of the sacred and those who belong to the sphere of the secular, is brought into the world to come. In the passage discussed here, Jerome goes directly to a place in Ezekiel, where "the order of the future church and the heavenly Jerusalem is described".<sup>700</sup> In the description in Ezekiel, the priests who have sinned and have been degraded to lower degrees are still, Jerome points out, in the temple (here interpreted as the church); they are among the sheep, but they belong to the worst of the sheep.<sup>701</sup> Here, different ranks among Old Testament priests are understood to refer to different ranks among Christians. The degree of those priests was determinative for which part of the Temple they could access: A Christian's degree of holiness likewise determines how close to the Lord he or she can come.

The theme of the eschatological abiding of Christ would be treated more extensively in a later text of Jerome, in one of his *Homilies on the Psalms*. This work has been dated to 401-402, and one reason for dating the work after 400 is the frequent attacks on Origenist heresy in these texts.<sup>702</sup> We will return to one such example in a later part of this chapter. However, this work also shows a deep

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<sup>698</sup> Commenting on Jn 14:3 and 17:21.

<sup>699</sup> *AdvJov* 2.28, PL 23, 339: *qui crediderunt, qui perfecti sunt, qui possunt dicere, 'pars mea Dominus'* (cf. Ps 73:26; about the Levites, Deut 10:9). Again, similarities to Origen are seen, who interpreted the words about the Levites having the Lord as their portion as meaning that only these perfect Christians would be with the Lord. Origen had interpreted the words about the Lord being the inheritance of the Levites in the following way: "In what other way can this be understood, except that there is in the church of the Lord certain persons, who by the strength of their soul and because of their merits (*virtute animi et meritorum gratia*) surpass all the others, and to whom the Lord Himself is said to be the inheritance?" (*HomJos* 17.2-3, SC 71, 374). Here again, those who will be saved are divided into two groups: The majority do good works because they believe in God and fear Him, while a small group is described as wise and keeping their minds pure – the Levites and priests. The perfect Christian is the one who renounces the world. Such a person will have a share of the heavenly abode in the future, and will be with Jesus. The words in John 17:24, 21-22 are applied only to these perfect Christians, that is, Jesus' wish that the apostles will be where He is, and that they will be one in Him and the Father.

<sup>700</sup> *AdvJov* 2.28, PL 23, 339: ... *ubi futurae Ecclesiae et coelestis Jerusalem ordo describitur*. Cf. Ez 44:10.

<sup>701</sup> See also 2.34. The division of the land is interpreted as a reference to differences in heaven.

<sup>702</sup> Discussed in Kelly 1975, 136-137, and Clark 1992, 139-140.

influence of Origen's theology, and Jerome uses Origen's ideas as his own, without speaking of their source.<sup>703</sup>

Those will be happy, Jerome writes in his fifth homily on the Psalms, in whom Christ will abide, i.e. those who will be His tabernacle.<sup>704</sup> We then find the connection between abiding and imitation, which was so important in Origen's, and later in Jerome's, ideas of the inner transformation of the perfect Christian. If someone says that he/she believes in Christ, let him/her walk as Christ walked, Jerome writes. This may be compared with his words in *Adversus Jovinianum*: "Does he abide in Christ or does he not abide? If he abides, let him then walk as Christ walked".<sup>705</sup> The abiding is not something essential or necessary to the baptized Christian, because it always depends on a free choice, which is above all a choice of imitation.

In another passage from the *Homilies*, the saints are understood to be the houses of the heavenly Jerusalem as well as its inhabitants. In this section, the unity between Christ and the saints is also expressed.

In this city, Christ reigns. In this city, the inhabitants are themselves both inhabitants and gates; they are themselves both houses and inhabitants. Do you wish to know in which way they are houses? Christ inhabits them, Christ walks about in them. "I will inhabit them", He says, "and walk about in them". Consider the greatness of a holy soul: It can contain Christ, whom heaven cannot contain. See what He says: "I will inhabit". It is possible for Him to dwell in a narrow space. "I will inhabit, and I will walk about in them". Wherever He walks about, certainly it is a big house, in which He walks. "You are the temple of God", He says, "and the Holy Spirit dwells in you". Let us prepare our temple, so that Christ may come and dwell in us; and so that our soul may be Sion, that it may be a watchtower, that it may be placed on the heights, and be upwards, not downwards. We read in the prophet Zechariah: "And the angel", he says, "who spoke in me, said to me". If the angel spoke in the prophet, how much more does He who lives in us have us as dwelling places as well as persons to converse with?<sup>706</sup>

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<sup>703</sup> For Jerome's dependence on Origen's exegesis of the Psalms, see Courcelle 1969, 106-107. As Courcelle remarks, Jerome mentions Origen's exegesis in *Letter 133.3, Against John 25*, and *Against Rufinus 1.13*.

<sup>704</sup> *TractPs 5*, CCSL 78, 17-18: *Felices erunt, qui Xpistum hospitem habere merebuntur. Et habitabis in eis. Felices qui tabernaculum Xpisti erunt. 'Et gloriabuntur in te omnes qui diligunt nomen tuum' /.../ Qui diligunt: non dixit, qui timent, sed, qui diligunt.*

<sup>705</sup> *AdvJov 2.2*, PL 23, 296: *Manet in Christo, au non manet? Si manet, ita ergo ambulet ut Christus.* Cf. *TractPs 5*, CCSL 78, 18. Cf. 1 Jn 2:6.

<sup>706</sup> *TractPs 133*, CCSL 78, 290-291: *In hac ciuitate Xpistus regnat, in hac ciuitate habitatores ipsi sunt et habitatores et portae, ipsi et domus sunt et habitatores. Vultis scire quoniam domus sunt? Xpistus habitat in eis, Xpistus deambulat in eis. 'Inhabitabo, inquit, in eis, et deambulabo'. Vide animam sanctam, quam grandis sit: Xpistus capit, quem caelum non capit. Vide quid dicat. Inhabitabo, inquit. Sed fieri potest, ut aliquis anguste habitet. Inhabitabo, et deambulabo in eis.*

Being temples themselves, having the Lord within, these holy souls (the perfect Christians) are also parts of the temple, or of the holy city. They themselves have all the attributes of the church, and simultaneously, they make up the perfect church, the one without spot and wrinkle.<sup>707</sup>

The passage is a good example of how close heaven is to earth in Jerome's thought. His description of heaven could just as well be a description of the life of the ascetic on earth. O'Connell lets this passage illustrate what he calls "the Christocentric view"<sup>708</sup> that Jerome has of heaven: The relation between Christ and the saints is important. I would like to add that this closeness to, this unity with Christ is a consequence of the closeness to Christ achieved already on earth. This unity will not be the same for all in the heavenly church, just as it is not the same for all in the church on earth. While it is certainly correct to claim that Jerome's idea of a hierarchy was based on degrees of renunciation, we could also say that it is based on closeness to Christ, which is the aim of renunciation. One may note the similarity to Origen's thought in the verbs that are used to describe the presence of Christ in the believer: Christ does not only dwell in, but also walks about in, these Christians – and this indicates different degrees of abiding.<sup>709</sup>

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*Vbicumque deambulat, utique lata domus est, ubi deambulatur. 'Vos estis, inquit, templum Dei, et Spiritus sanctus habitat in vobis'. Praeparemus templum nostrum, ut Xpistus ueniat, et habitet in nobis: ut et anima nostra Sion sit, ut sit specula, ut sit in summitatibus constituta, ut sit sursum, non deorsum. Legimus in Zacharia propheta: 'Et angelus, inquit, qui loquebatur in me, dixit ad me'. Si angelus loquebatur in propheta, quanto magis qui habitat in nobis, ipse nos habet et domos et confabulatores?*

<sup>707</sup> This can be contrasted with Jovinian's view: He seems to have ascribed the attributes of the church to the individual Christian – however, he ascribed them to all the baptized. The true, perfect, church, according to Jerome as well as Origen, is an invisible reality, made up of perfect souls in union with their Lord; a union that will be more complete in the world to come.

<sup>708</sup> O'Connell 1948, 115.

<sup>709</sup> In *HomGen* 1.13, "Heaven is my throne" (Is 66:1) is understood by Origen to mean that God resides in those who have their citizenship in heaven. "But in these who are still involved in earthly details, the most remote part of his providence is found, which is figuratively indicated in the mention of feet. In this passage, Origen also speaks of different kinds of abiding: "And not only does God rest [*requiescit*] upon them, but he also dwells [*inhabitat*] in them". Further: "God not only dwells in this man but also walks [*inambulat*] in him". This is said of those "who are perfect, who have been made heavenly [*caelestes facti*] or who have become of heaven [*caeli effecti*]" (SC 7, 58, transl. R. E. Heine, 1982, 64).

O'Connell has also noted the close relationship in Jerome's thought between life on earth and life in heaven, and he argues that this is clearly seen in Jerome's view on the heavenly life as a reward: "the notion of a reward after a victorious contest" is, according to O'Connell, the theme that connects most of what Jerome writes about heaven (O'Connell 1948, 108). However, although O'Connell remarks in one place that: "Heaven will be no surprise" (111), in the sense that its joys are such that we can look forward to them (they are imaginable), he directs less attention towards Jerome's ideas on how the heavenly life can – if only in an imperfect way – begin already on earth, for the ascetic person. It must be remembered that Jerome, to a large extent, taught a "realized" eschatology, and his ideas about the world to come must be understood from his ideas about the Christian life on earth.

The text abounds with Origen's mystical thought – a fact that is remarkable, considering the late dating of Jerome's homilies and the frequency of anti-Origenist polemics in them.<sup>710</sup> It is an example of how Jerome continued to hold ideas from Origen long after he began to polemicize against him, and it overturns any simple presentation of the “Origenist” Jerome who became an “anti-Origenist” because of the controversy. This indicates instead the great complexity in his new ways of relating to the Alexandrian writer.

Origen's ideas about the eschatological priesthood are expressed, for instance, in his *Homilies on Numbers*. The words about a royal priesthood in 1 Peter 2:9 are given an eschatological interpretation: Following up the grace that humans have received through a deserving life, they will, when they have left this life, be deemed worthy of the holy service, and they will be accepted among the priests of God and officiate at the ark of the covenant, that is, they will at the hidden mysteries behold the glory of the Lord with unveiled faces and enter into the holy land, receiving their inheritance.<sup>711</sup> The word “presbyter” is itself interpreted eschatologically when Origen claims that it is not those of old age who are called presbyters, but those of maturity of thought who lead a certain way of life. They are the ones who stretch out for what is ahead and forget what lies behind,<sup>712</sup> and who are “fit for the kingdom of God”.<sup>713</sup> They have been brought to perfection. Such a person, who “keeps him/herself unstained from this world” while living in it, is carried from evil days on earth to eternity.<sup>714</sup> We see how Origen's idea of a hierarchy of Christians, which was based on inner conditions, is transferred to heaven. The degree of sacredness achieved on earth will correspond to a greater closeness to God in the world to come.

Not only the image of the *temple* was used by Jerome, as well as Origen, to explain the relationship between Christ and the Christian, but also that of the *spouse*. We have previously seen that Jerome, using Origen's commentary on the Song of Songs, understood the bride as signifying the human soul, and more precisely, the virgin. In *Letter 22*, Jerome writes to Eustochium concerning her future reward – the one that she will receive if she preserves her virginity – and, among other things, he puts these words from the Song of Songs in Christ's mouth, as He meets His bride: “Arise and come, my love, my beautiful one, my

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<sup>710</sup> Clark speaks of the work in the following way: “Far from his favorable treatment of Origen in the *Commentarioli* on Psalms, written about a decade earlier, Jerome is now concerned to show his hand at anti-Origenist interpretation” (1992, 139).

<sup>711</sup> *HomNum* 4.3.4 (SC 415, 112). Here one may make a connection to what he says in another place about the inheritance of the Levites, *HomJos* 17.2-3.

<sup>712</sup> Cf. Phil 3:13.

<sup>713</sup> Cf. Lk 9:62.

<sup>714</sup> *HomJos* 16.1, SC 71, 358-360, transl. Bruce 2002, 152.

dove, for behold: The winter is over, the rain has passed”.<sup>715</sup> The union which has begun already during the earthly life would be completed. Both images – temple and spouse – are used to indicate closeness; a closeness which only the ascetic person can achieve because of his/her distancing from the secular world, and which finds its completion when the ascetic has reached the heavenly Jerusalem.

### 2.2.3. *Death as a Time of Victory*

This idea that a closeness achieved in the earthly life will be completed in the world to come is mirrored in Jerome’s ideas about the death of the ascetic person. As we saw in the third chapter, in Jerome’s view, the virgin does not really die, but he/she simply passes from one state to another.<sup>716</sup> This idea about the virgin’s immortality is, I argue, connected to the idea that the virgin will regain the state in paradise and thus escape the punishments given to human beings because of the Fall, including death. We have seen that Jerome, following Origen’s idea about a spiritual resurrection on earth, considered such persons to be already resurrected, in a spiritual way – while they were still living in the flesh, they did not live according to it, that is, they did not give in to its desires. These persons both regained the state in paradise and anticipated the angelic life in heaven by transcending their earthly existence. I argue that it is within this protological, eschatological and anthropological framework that we should understand the claim that these persons do not die – they already live the heavenly life.

The physical death of the virgin is, in Jerome’s view, the limit of a (voluntary) struggle. While being in the earthly body, there is always a risk of falling, but the death of the ascetic is a triumph.<sup>717</sup> With physical death, that risk is removed; the victory is won. According to Jerome – and the same idea was expressed by Origen

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<sup>715</sup> *Ep* 22.41, CSEL 54, 209: ... *surge, veni, proxima mea, speciosa mea, columba mea, quia ecce hiemps transiit, pluvia abiit tibi*. Cf. *Cant* 2:10-11.

<sup>716</sup> *AdvJov* 1.22, PL 23, 252: *Quamobrem et Moyses moriens pangitur a populo Israel: Jesus autem quasi victurus non plangitur. Nuptiae enim finiuntur in morte, virginitas post mortem incipit coronari*. About the saint’s immediate presence with Christ after death, see *Ep* 39.3 (Blesilla’s being at rest with Christ is assured by reference to her changed way of life: If she had died when her mind was occupied with worldly pleasures, there would be reason to cry for her, however, she died after she had taken the vow of widowhood and renounced the world); also *Ep* 60.6-7, concerning the death of Nepotian. In *Ep* 39.3, Paula is rebuked for her sorrow for Blesilla’s death, and we see here the idea of ascetics as the *familia Christi*: Paula should not grieve that her daughter has become Christ’s daughter. The ascetics have their real home in heaven, and they are strangers on earth, so their physical death means to come home.

<sup>717</sup> *Ep* 22.4, CSEL 54, 148: *Quamdiu hoc fragili corpusculo continemur, quamdiu habemus thesaurum istum in vasis fictilibus et concupiscit spiritus adversus carnem et caro adversus spiritum, nulla est certa victoria*. According to Origen, even for the best Christians, who, although they are visibly in the flesh, still do not live in the flesh, nothing is certain. There is always a risk of falling. The life on earth is a struggle, all “perfection” achieved here is relative in relation to the absolute perfection in the world to come, and it can always be lost. See, for instance, *CommRom* 3.2.13, PL 14, 932-33.

– the death of the perfect Christian results in an immediate closeness to the Lord. We may thus comprehend, that it is the persons who already during the earthly life have had Christ within them, being His temple / spouse, who will join Him immediately after death. The closeness to Christ achieved on earth and the beginning of the angelic life blur the boundary between physical life and death for the ascetic person.<sup>718</sup>

#### 2.2.4. Summary

What I hope to have demonstrated so far is this: In Jerome's view, a person's degree of holiness determines not only the degree to which Christ is present in that person in this life, but also the degree to which communion with Christ is achieved in the life to come. Someone who is tainted by the secular – the sphere common to non-Christians and Christians – will not have the same place in the world to come as someone who is consecrated to God in purity. In this way, Jerome's ideas about a hierarchy in the afterlife are profoundly influenced by Origen's mystical theology.

### 2.3. Post-Mortem Purification Through Fire

So far, we have seen that, according to Jerome, the future reward depends on the degree of holiness that a person has achieved on earth. The perfect Christians will pass directly to the Lord, whose closeness they have deserved already in their bodily life, through their extraordinary purity. What about the others? Jerome's view of heaven as hierarchical implies that it will have room for individuals who are far from perfect. People who repent after having sinned will come to heaven; they will just not have the best places. However, how can a person who is still tainted by the secular – what belongs to this world – enter heaven at all? Should not this uncleanness, this earthliness, prohibit them from entering? This brings us to the question of post-mortem purification.

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<sup>718</sup> In the thought of Origen as well as of Jerome, and connected to their ideas about holiness, there is a notion of a contradiction between living for the Lord and living for the world, between serving the Lord and serving an earthly spouse, between giving birth to the Lord (or to virtues) and giving birth to earthly children. The one excludes the other. This also means that being dead in a bodily sense, such as the “death” of the womb of a woman who becomes infertile, which can be effected by a natural process but, in the ascetic, through the will, is a necessary condition for attaining the real life, which is Christ. See Origen, *CommRom* 4.6.7-9, PL 14, 982-84.

### 2.3.1. Exegesis of 1 Cor 3:10-15<sup>719</sup>

Origen tended to understand the hierarchy of Christians as related to their use, or neglect to use, the grace that they had received – that is, having been baptized, one could progress or regress to different degrees.<sup>720</sup> This can be connected to his distinction between those who rise in the first resurrection – those who have kept their baptismal vow, and those who rise in the second resurrection – those who have fallen after baptism. Origen could speak of an eschatological baptism by fire for those who belonged to the second resurrection. In the baptism of fire, the fire will prove them and will burn away the wood, hay and straw.<sup>721</sup>

According to Origen's interpretation of 1 Corinthians 3:10-15, sinners who have their baptism and their belief in Christ as a foundation, but who have built upon this foundation with the wrong materials, will be saved after having been purified by fire.<sup>722</sup> This purification is needed in order for them to come close to God, which is the condition of the beatitude. God Himself is fire, and by coming near to Him, one is cleansed.<sup>723</sup>

Also in *Against Jovinian*, Jerome applies the words in 1 Corinthians 3:10-15 to those Christians who have neglected the grace given to them, and he notes an eschatological significance: There are different degrees of salvation.<sup>724</sup>

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<sup>719</sup> “According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building on it. Each builder must choose with care how to build on it. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid; that foundation is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw – the work of each builder will become visible, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the sort of work each has done. If what has been built on the foundation survives, the builder will receive a reward. If the work is burned, the builder will suffer loss; the builder will be saved, but only as through fire.”

<sup>720</sup> See *CommRom* 1.4, about the difference between being “called” (*vocatus*) and “chosen” (*electus*). All those who believe in Christ are called, but some are only called and not chosen, that is, those who have neglected the grace given to them (SC 532, 162-164). Cf. *HomEz* 1.13, where Origen says that God removes evil from us either with Spirit or by fire (reference is made to Rom 8:13: “... if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live”) (SC 532, 86-88). This is dependent on human effort. If the evil has not been removed by the Spirit, we need purification by fire.

<sup>721</sup> Origen, *HomJer* 2.3 (SC 232, 244-248). Origen speaks of two resurrections in *CommRom* 5.9.14 (SC 539, 498-500), where he says that the first resurrection is the one in which we rise with Christ in our mind, directing it towards heavenly and future things and away from the earthly, while the second resurrection is the future, general one. See also *HomEz* 2.5 (SC 352, 114-116). For a comprehensive discussion of Origen's idea about a first and second resurrection, see Crouzel, “La 'première' et la 'seconde' résurrection des hommes d'après Origène” (Crouzel 1990).

<sup>722</sup> For example, in *HomJos* 4.3, Origen speaks of “the foundation of faith in you” (SC 71, 154-156). In *HomJer* 13.5-6, the foundation is said to be Jesus Christ.

<sup>723</sup> Origen speaks of post-mortal purification in numerous places, as has been treated by Crouzel, “L'exégèse origénienne de I Cor 3, 11-15”, in Crouzel 1990, 273-83. See for instance *HomEz* 1.3, where the fire is said to examine the works of sin.

<sup>724</sup> *AdvJov* 2.22, PL 23, 317-318.

In his *Commentary on Zephaniah*, written 392-393, Jerome interprets the day of the Lord not only as the last day but also as the day of the death of the human being. In 1.4.6, one interpretation of Judah and Jerusalem is a reference to the soul of each individual, and the destruction of the idolatry in these places is understood to signify the destruction of the evils of the soul. In a similar way to Origen, Jerome seems to understand judgment in terms of purification, and like Origen, he sees that which has to be cast away from the soul as its relationships to the world; its love for what is not God. We see again that those who need cleansing are those defiled through involvement with the secular. That it is only Christian sinners who will undergo profitable judgment becomes clear earlier in the text, where Judah and Jerusalem are interpreted as the church, which will be cleansed. In 1.7, an explicit connection is made to 1 Corinthians 3, as the Lord's face is said to "burn up the hay, straw and wood of sins".<sup>725</sup>

In another place in the same work, we again recognize from Origen the condition of the worse Christians as being earthly, or even human. Concerning the words: "and their blood will be poured out like earth, and their bodies like dung",<sup>726</sup> Jerome refers to the words in Genesis that God's spirit will not remain in humans, because they are flesh,<sup>727</sup> and the words in 1 Corinthians 15:50, that flesh and blood will not inherit the kingdom of God. Jerome explains that it is out of love – and jealousy – that God does this to "these who gave themselves completely to the earth, and were not strangers and foreigners".<sup>728</sup> Jerome could

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<sup>725</sup> *CommSoph* 1.7, CCSL 76 A, 663. Other relevant places in the same commentary: 1.13.14, where Jerome speaks of what will happen "when the time of judgment (*tempus iudicii*) comes, or of the death and departure of each one from the world" (671). And later, about the day of the Lord being near: "Or near, as we said above, when we depart from the world, and the death of each one brings about the consummation of the world" (672). As in other places, this is seen above all in terms of remedy: The evil will be destroyed, for the better of the individual. That we are only dealing with Christian sinners becomes clear, when Jerome says of those whose houses will be demolished (cf. Zeph 1:13): "there are many in the church who build Zion in blood and Jerusalem in iniquity [cf. Mic 3:10], for whom it is beneficial that such houses are destroyed" (671). See also 2.3.4: "And I warn you of this, He says, so that on the day of the Lord's wrath you may be protected, either at the consummation of the world, or at the departure of each one from the world" (679). And this passage ends with the words, concerning the difference between the sins of souls: "... on the Day of Judgment, the fire will prove the quality on each one's work" (680).

<sup>726</sup> Cf. Zeph 1:17.

<sup>727</sup> Gen 6:3.

<sup>728</sup> *CommSoph* 1.17.18 (CCSL 76 A, 676). See Origen, *HomLk* 39.5-6, where Origen interprets the words of Christ about giving to Caesar what is Caesar's, as follows: "Put off the person of the earthly man, cast off the earthly image, so that you can put on yourselves the person of the heavenly man and give 'to God what is God's'". In another homily on Luke (26), Origen clearly connects the need of purification with those who "cling to the earth and its fruits". God, Origen writes, is spirit and fire – that is, to the righteous ones, He is spirit, and to the sinners, He is fire. Origen connects this to the words about the Lord coming "to bring fire on the earth" (Lk 12:49). Origen brings attention to that it is the earth that is mentioned. "For, if 'you are converted to the Lord,' who is spirit, Christ will be spirit for you, and has not 'come to cast fire upon the earth.'



also, like Origen, speak of God as fire, thus combining the words in 1 Corinthians 3 with the words in Deuteronomy: “God is a devouring fire”.<sup>729</sup>

This way of interpreting heaven and earth, the earthly being that which needs cleansing, is very important for our understanding Origen’s, as well as Jerome’s, views on the post-mortem (as well as the present-life) hierarchy, and here, we return to our distinction sacred-secular as determinative for that hierarchy. If transferred to the world to come, it becomes clear that only the sacred is not in need of purification, while the secular certainly is. Not only sins have to be cleansed, but everything that belongs to the post-lapsarian human nature; that is, not only fornication, but also sexual life within marriage and reproduction within marriage are seen as pollution. A person who has engaged in such things is in need of purification.<sup>730</sup>

In his *Commentary on Amos* from 406, Jerome interprets the ten tribes of Israel as signifying the heretics, and the two tribes of Judah as signifying “the church and the sinners of the church”. Those sinners have the right faith, but because of their sins, they need purification by fire.

Therefore the Lord now shows Himself to be calling for fire as judgment, so that the fire may test the quality of each one's work, and that may be fulfilled which is written: “Walk in the light of your fire and in the flame that you have kindled.”<sup>731</sup>

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But, if you are not converted to him but cling to the earth and its fruits, 'he comes to cast fire' upon the earth” (transl. J. T. Lienhard, 1996). See also *CommRom* 4.11.6: Referring to Deuteronomy 32:22 (“A fire is kindled by my fury, it will burn to the depths of the infernal regions; it will devour the earth and its increase, it will set on fire the foundations of the mountains”), Origen again pays attention to that it is that which belongs to the earth that is burnt away; the words about the foundations of the mountains are interpreted as meaning that it is “not the exalted souls or the heavenly minds” that undergo fire, “but those who have been submerged in the ground or the earth, or even in the depths of the earth”. Also, *HomGen* 1.11: The impulses of the outer, that is, the carnal and earthly person, is connected to “Let the earth bring forth...” (that is, he lets this passage refer to the bad things that come from our flesh).

For Jerome's interpretation of heaven and earth in this way, see *TractPs* 133, where he speaks of the saints as being heaven and sinners as being earth. Although the saints are on the earth, their citizenship is in heaven. Also in a manner very similar to Origen, he claims that those who are heaven may become earth, and vice versa. Judas and Paul are brought up as examples.

<sup>729</sup> Deut 4:24. In his *Commentary on Joel* 2.1/11: ... *erit ignis uorans, sive consumens, ut omne in nobis fenum, ligna, stipulamque consumat* (CCSL 76, 180). And in his commentary on Nahum (written 392-93), he writes, concerning the words “God is jealous, and the Lord is avenging”, that those who God does not save through clemency, He saves through jealousy, being zealous for their salvation. “... his vengeance is inimical, and, as a fire, it consumes the wood, hay and stubble, so that the pure gold and silver may remain” (*CommNh* 1.2, transl. Scheck 2016). Cf. Origen, *HomLev* 5.3, where he combines 1 Cor 3:12 and Deut 4:24; and *HomEz* 1.3.2-3.

<sup>730</sup> See *HomEz* 1.3.2, where Origen writes: “God is ‘fire’, but ‘from the kidneys to’ the feet. By this he shows that those who are involved in reproduction have need of fire. For ‘kidney’ signifies coitus” (SC 352, 48, transl. Scheck 2010, 29). Cf. *HomJer* 11.5; *CommMt* 15.23; *HomLev* 3.5.

<sup>731</sup> Is 50:11.

/.../ But fire is called upon for judgment, and first it devours the abyss, that is, all kinds of sins, wood, hay and straw, and afterwards it consumes at once the part [*partem*], that is, it comes to His holy ones, who are considered to be in His possession and in His portion [*parte*].<sup>732</sup>

The fire clearly has the function of punishment for those who come near the sacred without having made themselves sacred enough, but simultaneously it purifies them – that is, what they have not done themselves, the fire does for them. However, this does not mean that those purified become equal with those who have no need for purification. For those who are holy, the fire rather increases their status. This idea was expressed by Origen as well.<sup>733</sup>

## 2.4. Summary

In the first part of this chapter, I have argued that Jerome was very indebted to Origen in his ideas about diversity in the afterlife. We have seen exegetical strategies taken over by Jerome in his polemics against Jovinian, and an understanding of 1 Corinthians 3:10-15 which appears to be very close to that of Origen. Beneath these eschatological ideas lies a certain notion, common to the two authors, of the hierarchy of Christians on earth, based on their degree of holiness.

## 3. Jerome and the Teaching of *Apokatastasis*

So far, we have occupied ourselves with, above all, Jerome's ideas of hierarchy in the world to come. In this, a positive reception of Origen has been seen. Most of the texts discussed have been from the time before Jerome's involvement in the Origenist controversy. The purpose with this is, as I made it clear at the beginning

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<sup>732</sup> *CommAm* 7.4/6, CCSL 76, 316, 317: ... *idcirco nunc Dominus ad ignem iudicium uocare se monstrat, ut uniuscuiusque opus quale sit ignis probet, et impleatur illud quod scriptum est: 'Ambulate in lumine ignis vestri, et in flamma quam succendistis' /.../ Vocatus autem ignis as iudicium, deuorat primum abyssum, id est omnia genera peccatorum, ligna, fenum, stipulam, et postea comedit simul partem, hoc est ad sanctos illius peruenit, qui in peculium Domini et in eius parte reputantur...* Reference is made to 1 Corinthians 3:15.

<sup>733</sup> Origen expresses this idea in *HomJr* 2.3; 16.6; *HomEz* 1.3.3; *HomJos* 4.3; *HomLev* 14.3; *CCels* 4.13. Origen's hierarchy of Christians is based on the degree of holiness of the inner persons, and this hierarchy is preserved by the eschatological fire, punishing the worst Christians and making the best even better. In *HomJer* 13.5-6, Origen discusses what will happen to someone who dies, having built with both good and bad materials, and he brings up the absurd alternative that such a person (because of the good works) would simply enter the sanctuary with his/her wood, hay and stubble, and would thus soil the kingdom of God.

of the chapter, to provide an idea about Jerome's proximity to Origen with regard to questions about a post-mortem hierarchy, purification, and punishment. This will serve as a well-needed background as we move on to examine Jerome's way of relating to Origen's idea of *apokatastasis*.<sup>734</sup>

### 3.1. The concept of *apokatastasis*

The idea of *apokatastasis* has been treated extensively by Illaria Ramelli in *The Christian Doctrine of Apokatastasis* (2013). She gives the following definition of the term:

... a Christian and late-antique philosophical doctrine /.../ [that] came to indicate the theory of universal restoration, that is, of the return of all beings, or at least all rational beings or all humans, to the Good, i.e. God, in the end.<sup>735</sup>

I would like to argue against such a definition and offer an alternative. First, I claim that one should avoid speaking of it as a doctrine, as this indicates something settled and accepted as orthodox. In the places where Origen spoke of *apokatastasis*, he certainly did not express it as a doctrine. Second, I find a contradiction in the claim that universal restoration does not have to imply the return of all beings, but can signify the return of at least all rational beings or all humans. Universalism can only mean that everyone returns. A modified universalism is not universalism; there is not room for any at least. Besides, such a way of using the term *apokatastasis* renders it quite meaningless, and makes it possible to speak of very many authors as holding the doctrine of the *apokatastasis*, even if they only accepted that all humans will be saved. It seems to take the meaning out of the word by making it applicable to the most divergent ideas, without any obvious connection.

Ramelli actually goes even further in her inclusive interpretation of the word: It can even mean the return of all Christians.<sup>736</sup> This is for example the case in her treatment of Ambrosiaster:

... Ambrosiaster seems to have been a supporter of the *apokatastasis* doctrine, at least for all Christians, since he makes an exception for unbelievers.<sup>737</sup>

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<sup>734</sup> I will not treat Origen's ideas about *apokatastasis*. This is beyond the purposes of this work. If in some places Origen expressed the idea that all rational beings will ultimately be saved, that does not lessen the importance of all the places where he claims the opposite, and where he claims a diversified salvation. The purpose of this work is not to reconstruct Origen's theology, but Jerome's diverse ways of using it.

<sup>735</sup> Ramelli 2013, 1.

<sup>736</sup> Ramelli 2013, 623-624.

I agree with O’Connell, who makes a clear distinction between the teaching of apokatastasis and ideas about eternal salvation which leaves room for, for example, the salvation of all Christians. This is, in O’Connell’s terminology, a difference between “Origenists” and “mercyists”.<sup>738</sup> I will return to this distinction in the sixth chapter of this work. O’Connell describes the difference like this: While Origen’s idea of the non-eternity of hell (*apokatastasis*) rested on a philosophical idea that implies that all suffering will ultimately end, the idea of the “mercyists” was “based on an unwillingness to see souls suffer eternally in hell”, and these ideas were defended by reference to the mercy of God and to the Scriptures.<sup>739</sup> Another important difference is that the “mercyists” only claim the final restoration of human sinners. Although I am sceptical towards the designation “mercyists”,<sup>740</sup> I find O’Connell’s distinction between the teaching of *apokatastasis* and other inclusive ideas of salvation, such as extending it to all human being or to all Christians, to be very appropriate and helpful. In the following, I will only use the term *apokatastasis* to refer to the idea that it is possible for all rational creatures, including the devil, ultimately to be saved. This also implies an idea of final unity in which differences brought about because of a Fall will come to an end.

## 3.2. Defence against Rufinus’ Arguments from the *Commentary on Ephesians*

### 3.2.1. *A New Stage in the Origenist Controversy*

... it cannot be that in the same commentary on Ephesians, which, from what I have heard, he uses to accuse me, I have spoken both rightly and wrongly, and that both sweet and bitter has proceeded from the same source.<sup>741</sup>

By the beginning of the fifth century, the Origenist controversy had to a great extent turned into a controversy centred around two persons, Jerome and Rufinus. Returning to Italy in 397, when a temporary peace had been achieved between the two parties in Palestine, Rufinus began what can be described as a project of vindicating Origen. This consisted mainly of translating Origen’s works into Latin;

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<sup>737</sup> Ramelli 2013, 623.

<sup>738</sup> From Augustine’s term *misericordes* (e.g. *De Civitate Dei* 21.17-27). See my discussion in the introductory chapter, “Previous Research”.

<sup>739</sup> O’Connell 1948, ix.

<sup>740</sup> This will be treated in chapter 6.

<sup>741</sup> *ApolRuf* 1.15, CCSL 79, 14: *Neque enim fieri potest ut in eisdem ad Ephesios libris, quos, ut audio, criminatur, et bene et male dixerim, et de eodem fonte dulce amarumque processerit....*

a translation that was not literal but had the specific aim of freeing the texts from what Rufinus claimed were falsifications made by heretics.<sup>742</sup>

The great problems arrived with the translation of *On First Principles*. The translation of such a controversial work was, under those circumstances, itself bound to have bad results. What made the situation even worse was Rufinus' statement in his preface that he was simply continuing on a project actually begun by another writer, hinting that it was Jerome: The project of translating Origen, not literally, but so as to transfer the true meaning and eliminate what was against orthodox teaching. Rufinus did not lie when he made that claim,<sup>743</sup> but the timing was certainly bad. In 398, Jerome received a worried letter (*Epistula* 83) from friends in Rome, together with Rufinus' unfinished draft of *On First Principles*.<sup>744</sup> The authors of the letter, Pammachius and Oceanus, asked him to translate the work literally, since they suspected that Rufinus tried to conceal errors in it, and also to counter Rufinus' claim that he was continuing a project begun by Jerome. And so Jerome did. The translation of *On First Principles* is only extant in the fragments repeated by Jerome in *Letter* 124; the letter, intended to be spread in public,<sup>745</sup> is extant.

It was these circumstances that led Rufinus to compose his *Apology against Jerome*. An important point that he made here was that Jerome's *Commentary on Ephesians* and his *Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, which Jerome had claimed showed that he had never accepted Origen's teachings (only his exegesis), actually contained many passages in which Jerome seemed to approve of Origen's more controversial views. One of these was the apokatastasis, and above all its implication for the eventual restoration of the devil and the demons.

### 3.2.2. Rufinus' Charges and Jerome's Answers

One text brought up by Rufinus, as evidence of Jerome's acceptance of Origen's views, was the following one, from the *Commentary on Ephesians*:

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<sup>742</sup> Rufinus made a translation of Pamphilus' apology for Origen. The "Falsification of the works of Origen" was written as an appendix to the translation. Here, Rufinus argued that the existence of unorthodox teachings in Origen's works had to be explained with reference to falsifications made by heretics.

<sup>743</sup> Rufinus *ApolHier* 1.21, CCSL 20, 55-56. In *Ep* 61.2, Jerome, in defending his way of using Origen, had claimed that he cut away or ignored what was bad and kept what was good when translating him.

<sup>744</sup> According to Rufinus (*ApolHier* 2.48, CCSL 20, 120-121) it was stolen from him by a friend of Jerome, Eusebius of Cremona. Eusebius had obviously shared it with other supporters of Jerome in the city, who were already disturbed by Rufinus' translation of Pamphilus' apology with its preface and appendix.

<sup>745</sup> It is spoken of in *ApolRuf* 1.12 as *epistula publica*. He also wrote a private letter to Rufinus that Jerome's friends made sure did not reach him.

It is asked how there is ‘one hope of the calling’ when there are diverse dwellings with the Father (John 14:2). We reply to this that the ‘one hope of the calling’ is the kingdom of heaven understood as if it were one house of God the Father in which house are various dwellings, for there is one glory of the sun, another of the moon and another of the stars (1 Cor. 15:41). Or, it may indicate rather subtly that at the end and consummation of things all things are to be restored to their original condition, when we all are made ‘one body’ and are transformed into a perfect man and the Saviour’s prayer for us is fulfilled, ‘Father, grant that as I and you are one, so also they may be one in us’ (John 17:22).<sup>746</sup>

The first possible interpretation that Jerome presents has already been dealt with in this chapter: We noted the combination of John 14:2 and 1 Corinthians 15 in Jerome’s argumentation about diversity in heaven. The second possible interpretation (*Aut certe illud subtilius indicatur...*) is the one that Rufinus used in his polemics against Jerome,<sup>747</sup> to show that Jerome had embraced the teaching of *apokatastasis*.

It seems highly probable that the whole quotation above comes from Origen’s commentary. Origen, like Jerome – as we have seen previously in this chapter – used these two biblical passages in order to demonstrate differentiation in the world to come, but he could also express the idea that all would return to their original state in the end. Origen probably argued that these words could be interpreted in either way, and in his commentary, Jerome simply followed Origen.

Does this quotation support the claim that Jerome did at one point embrace the teaching of *apokatastasis*? He might have done, since he presents the idea without clearly distancing himself from it, but I think it is important to remember that Jerome’s commentaries were put together from other writers’ commentaries, and thus, we should be careful about ascribing ideas expressed in these works to Jerome himself. It is only when an idea expressed in a commentary is also expressed in other kinds of works, which certainly represent Jerome’s own views, that we may conclude that he actually embraced that idea himself. Thus, in the present case, we may conclude that the former part of the quotation was an interpretation that Jerome stood behind, since he expressed it in many other places. However, this does not mean that he did not embrace an Origenist view, since this was a view most certainly held by Origen himself.

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<sup>746</sup> *CommEph* 2.4.3-4. PL 26, 495: *Quaeritur quomodo una spes vocationis sit: cum apud Patrem diversae sint mansiones. Ad quod, unam spem vocationis, regnum coelorum, quasi unam domum Dei Patris esse dicimus /.../, et in una domo varias mansiones. ‘Alia enim gloria solis, alia lunae, alia stellarum’. Aut certe illud subtilius indicatur, quod in fine et consummatione rerum in pristinum statum restituenda sint omnia, quando omnes unum corpus efficiemur, et in virum perfectum reformabimur: et oratio pro nobis Salvatoris implebitur: ‘Pater, da, ut quomodo ego et tu unum sumus, sic et isti in nobis unum sint’.* (Transl. R.E. Heine, 2002).

<sup>747</sup> Rufinus, *ApolHier* 1.41, CCL 20, 75-76.

Rufinus also put forward the following text in order to demonstrate that Jerome had embraced the idea of *apokatastasis*:

So, therefore, it will be in the restoration of all things when Christ Jesus, the true physician, shall come to heal ‘the body’ of the whole Church which is now scattered and torn apart. Each one, according to the ‘measure’ of his ‘faith and recognition of the Son of God’ (whom he is said to recognize because he had known him earlier and afterwards had ceased to know him) will receive his place and will begin to be that which he was, yet not so that, as another heresy has it, all are placed in one age, that is all are transformed into angels, but each individual member is perfected in accordance with its ‘measure’ and duty so that, for example, the rebellious angel begins to be that which it was created and human beings, who were cast out of paradise, are again restored to the cultivation of paradise. But all these things will happen in such a way that they are mutually joined among themselves in love. And while member rejoices with member and is delighted in the advancement of another, the body of Christ, the Church of the first-born, will dwell in the heavenly Jerusalem which the apostle calls the mother of the saints in another passage (cf. Gal. 4:26).

These statements are rather obscure for us because, as we said above, they are said *μεταφορικῶς* (metaphorically) in Greek and when a metaphor is translated literally from one language into another the ideas and buds are choked by thorns, as it were.<sup>748</sup>

Jerome explains, in his apology against Rufinus, that he has quoted from Origen’s commentary, and that some additions from him should clarify that he did not himself hold this view. Above all, Jerome refers to the words *juxta aliam haeresim*, claiming that these show that he was comparing one heresy to another, agreeing with neither of them.<sup>749</sup> One heresy claims that all rational creatures will be transformed into angels. The other heresy claims that every creature will be what it was when it was created. Jerome also points out that his words at the end

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<sup>748</sup> *CommEph* 4.16. PL 26, 503-504: *Ita igitur et in restitutione omnium, quando corpus totius Ecclesiae nunc dispersum atque laceratum, verus medicus Christus Jesus sanaturus advenerit, unusquisque secundum mensuram fidei, et agnitionis Filii Dei (quem ideo agnoscere dicitur, quia prius noverat, et postea nosse desivit) suum recipiet locum, et incipiet id esse quod fuerat. ‘Ita tamen ut non juxta aliam haeresim’, omnes in una aetate sint positi, id est: omnes in angelos reformatur: sed unumquodque membrum juxta mensuram et officium suum perfectum sit: verbi gratia, ut angelus refuga id esse incipiat quod creatus est: et homo, qui de paradiso fuerat ejectus, ad culturam iterum paradisi restituatur. Ista autem universa sic fiet, ut invicem inter se charitate jugantur: et dum congaudet membrum membro, et in alterius provectione laetatur, Christi corpus, Ecclesia primitivorum habitet in coelesti Jerusalem, quam in alio loco Apostulus matrem sanctorum vocat. Idcirco (ut supra diximus) haec apud nos obscuriora sunt, quia μεταφορικῶς dicuntur in Graeco. Et omnis metaphora, si de alia in aliam linguam transferatur ad verbum, quibusdam quasi sentibus, orationis sensus et germina suffocantur.* (Transl. Heine, 2002, 181).

<sup>749</sup> *ApolRuf* 1.26-27.

of the passage should make it clear that these were not his own words, but a translation.<sup>750</sup>

Elizabeth Clark notices that this is one of few places in this commentary where Jerome clearly distances himself from Origen. Jerome, Clark writes, does not seem to have been “as resolute an Origenist as Rufinus implied”.<sup>751</sup> I object that in claiming eschatological diversity, Jerome was hardly less Origenist. Likewise, O’Connell has claimed: “... in the two passages /.../ our Author is commenting on Scripture and gives more than one interpretation to the scriptural texts in question, adding non-Origenistic explanations to the Origenistic explanations”.<sup>752</sup> Again, it makes no sense to distinguish Origenist and non-Origenist interpretations in this case, since the idea of a hierarchy in the afterlife was so important in Origen’s thought as well, as has been demonstrated in the first part of this chapter.

Another passage from Jerome’s commentary on Ephesians which Rufinus discussed was 1.12. It is a passage that Rufinus brought up as an example of how Jerome followed Origen in his idea of the pre-existence of rational beings. The first part of the text expresses such a view, and it is most probably from Origen; the second part presents an alternative. Rufinus thinks that the second part corresponds to Jerome’s opinion. In his apology, Jerome does not answer this accusation. We will not consider the question of pre-existence but will confine ourselves to the idea of *apokatastasis*, and Rufinus brings up the second part of the text to show that Jerome held this teaching.<sup>753</sup> Here, Jerome begins by giving another interpretation to those “who have previously hoped in Christ” than the one that refers to pre-existent intelligences. “Another”, who does not accept the teaching of pre-existence,<sup>754</sup> understands the words in the following way: When Christ returns, and all will be subjected to Him, then those who have previously hoped in Him “will be in the praise of his glory”.<sup>755</sup> The difference here concerns being subjected to Christ willingly or by necessity.<sup>756</sup>

Those, however, who have been found believing by necessity at that time when not even the devil and his angels can deny the one who is ruling, hope but are not in the

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<sup>750</sup> “These statements are rather obscure for us...”. Heine accepts this explanation, claiming that the words clearly show that what was said above was a translation (Heine 2002, 181, n. 28).

<sup>751</sup> Clark 1987, 159.

<sup>752</sup> O’Connell 1948, 150-151, 154-155.

<sup>753</sup> Rufinus, *ApolHier* 1.31-32 (CCSL 20, 65-67).

<sup>754</sup> *CommEph* 1.1.12, PL 26, 455: *Alius vero hoc dogma non sustinens, quod ante fuerimus et speravimus in Christo, quam in isto corpore degeremus, illo intelligentiam transferet...*

<sup>755</sup> *futuros esse in laudem gloriae ejus*. References are made to Phil 2:10-11 and 1 Cor 15:28.

<sup>756</sup> *alios voluntate, alios necessitate subjiciendos*.



praise of his glory. /.../ if only he who hopes and he who hopes previously know that different rewards will be received based on the difference of their hope.<sup>757</sup>

This is another text in which Clark argues that Jerome distances himself from Origen; here, by nuancing the idea of complete unity in the afterlife: “Jerome hints that the ‘oneness’ of the future restoration or the heavenly afterlife will leave room for gradation on the basis of moral rank”.<sup>758</sup> In the present passage, Jerome seems to say that although all will be saved, their reward will not be the same. I will repeat my objection that the idea of gradation in the afterlife should not be understood as in any way contrary to Origen’s thought. It is one thing to say that Jerome distances himself from the idea of apokatastasis as such, but Clark speaks about “Origenist interpretation”, and this, we have seen, was often an interpretation that sought to maintain the difference between better and worse Christians, in this world and in the world to come.

Another place that Rufinus highlights is *Commentary on Ephesians 2.7*, where it is discussed what it means that believers will sit and rule with Christ. First, the following is said:

But let us, who once were held by the law of the underworld and were thus destined for works of the flesh and punishments because of vices and sins, now rule in Christ and sit with him. Moreover let us not sit in some lowly place but let us sit ‘above every principality, authority, power, and dominion and every name which is named not only in this age but also in that which is to come’ (Eph. 1:21). For if Christ has been raised from the dead and sits at the right hand of God in the heavenly places above every principality, authority, and power, etc., and we sit and rule with Christ, we must sit above these powers which he sits above.<sup>759</sup>

Then, another interpretation is given, according to which the powers which human beings will be placed over are the evil powers, who will improve by having those

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<sup>757</sup> *CommEph 1.1.12*, PL 26, 455-56: ... eos vero qui reperti fuerint necessitate credentes, eo tempore quo nec diabolus, et angeli ejus poterunt negare regnantem, esse sperantes: sed non in laudem gloriae ejus. /.../ sciat, et sperans, et ante sperans, quod pro diversitate spei diversa sint praemia recepturi. Transl. Heine, 2002, 100.

<sup>758</sup> Clark 1987, 160.

<sup>759</sup> *CommEph 1.2.7*, PL 26, 469: Quod nos qui quondam lege tenebamur inferni, et propter vitia atque peccata; ut operibus carnis, ita eramus et suppliciiis destinati: nunc in Christo regnemus sedeamusque cum eo. Sedeamus autem non in humili quocumque loco, sed super omnem principatum, et potestatem, et virtutem, et dominationem, et omne nomen, quod nominatur non solum in hoc saeculo, sed etiam in futuro. Si enim Christus suscitatus a mortuis sedet ad dextram Dei in coelestibus supra omnem principatum, et potestatem, et virtutem, et caetera: et nos sedemus regnamusque cum Christo: necesse est ut super his quae sedet ille, sedeamus. Transl. Heine 2002, 127.

who are better than them sitting over them and ruling them.<sup>760</sup> Jerome answered Rufinus' accusation by pointing out that this second part is certainly from Origen, but that the previous one (quoted above) represents his own interpretation.<sup>761</sup> Rufinus seems to have treated them together,<sup>762</sup> and according to Heine, it is most probable that they both came from Origen.<sup>763</sup> I agree with this: The first interpretation focuses on the present life of the perfect Christian, and the idea that this Christian already sits with Christ was expressed by Origen as well, as is seen in the passage immediately before (2.6). Here, Jerome's commentary is very close to Origen's, in claiming that when we understand the kingdom in a spiritual way, we understand that the saints already now have their citizenship in heaven, because while living in the flesh, they have ceased to be flesh. It becomes clear both in the present commentary and in other works that this interpretation was one that Jerome embraced. As the first passage in 2.7 builds on what has been said in the previous passage, it seems probable that Jerome continued to use Origen's commentary, and presented an interpretation with which he agreed.

### 3.2.3. Conclusion

Did Jerome hold the teaching of the *apokatastasis* prior to the Origenist controversy? Clark has expressed the idea that Jerome changed from having more or less accepted Origen's idea of *apokatastasis* to refuting it, and she gives two reasons for this change: 1) The new situation that the Origenist controversy brought with it, and 2) the debate over asceticism, where Jerome claimed a hierarchical view, which did not leave room for the idea of *apokatastasis*. This idea of a hierarchy in the afterlife was, according to Clark, "heightened" in the work against Jovinian, written in between the *Commentary on Ephesians* and the *Apology against Rufinus*.<sup>764</sup>

Clark writes concerning Jerome's apology:

The fact that Jerome includes the Origenist theme of the devil's restoration when presenting his own defence against the charge of Origenism might strike us as peculiar, even incriminating. Yet in his comment are contained two of his strongly-held views: that all sin is ultimately forgivable for the repentant, and that there will be a ranking in heaven. The first opinion, it appears, pushed Jerome to toy with the

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<sup>760</sup> *CommEph* 1.2.7, PL 26, 469: ... *ut dicat eas esse angelos refugas, et principem mundi istius, ut Luciferum qui mane oriebatur, super quibus sancti cum Christo in fine sessuri sunt, illis quoque tribuentes beneficium... Cum autem tales habuerint sessores, juxta sedentium voluntatem incipient gubernari.*

<sup>761</sup> *ApolRuf* 1.24, CCSL 79, 24.

<sup>762</sup> Rufinus, *ApolHier* 1.37-39, CCSL 20, 71-74.

<sup>763</sup> Heine 2002, 128, n. 39.

<sup>764</sup> Clark 1987, 155.

idea of the apokatastasis; the second, born largely of his ascetic commitment, served as a restraining factor against the straightforward adoption of that theory.<sup>765</sup>

I agree that these two aspects were very important in Jerome's eschatological thought. However, I do not think that they should be seen as in any way contradictory, but rather as dependent on one another. I also argue that in both aspects, Origen was Jerome's main influence. As I have clarified already, a basic difference between Clark's approach and mine is that I see Jerome's polemics against Jovinian, and his theological justification of asceticism in its entirety, as heavily dependent on Origen's thought. The idea of a hierarchy of Christians was an important part of this framework. I do not see this idea as a consequence of either the Jovinianist or the Origenist controversies. This idea, which stems from Origen, was integral to Jerome's thought already at an earlier stage, although it would certainly be used in new arguments and further developed during these controversies. The general tendency to reduce Jerome's thought to polemics is clearly seen in Clark's argument. She makes no acknowledgement of the mystical theology, deeply influenced by Origen's thought, which Jerome expressed in several works before as well as after the beginning of the Origenist controversy.

Thus, I cannot agree with another statement by Clark:

... in the Origenist controversy we see Jerome's ascetic ideals modifying his interest in the apokatastasis. From the *Ephesians Commentary*, we could not have predicted whether ascetic gradation or a universal restoration to one goodness would dominate his thought. That a restoration of all beings to a primordial unity is finally rejected by Jerome has not a little to do with his struggle against Jovinian.<sup>766</sup>

It is true that from the *Commentary on Ephesians* itself, we could not tell which view would be most important in Jerome's thought. However, if we take into consideration other works written during the 380s – that is, well before both the Jovinianist and the Origenist controversy – I think that while it is beyond doubt that the idea of a hierarchy of Christians was very important in Jerome's thought, it is not possible to claim the same when it comes to the idea of *apokatastasis*. It is important in this discussion to take into account, not only Jerome's biblical commentaries, but also his other works. The only places where he expresses the idea of *apokatastasis* are in the biblical commentaries, where he depends on Origen. While the idea of a post-mortem hierarchy was expressed, as we have seen in the previous part of this chapter, in works where we can be certain that Jerome's words were his own (such as the polemical work against Jovinian), he never

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<sup>765</sup> Clark 1987, 163.

<sup>766</sup> Clark 1987, 167.

speaks of *apokatastasis* in these works. This may indicate that the idea of *apokatastasis* did not have any important place in his theology.

Of course, Jerome did not speak much about a hierarchy in the afterlife during this early part of his career. However, the importance that hierarchy had in his thought makes it highly probable that he imagined a hierarchy after death as well – after all, Origen did. That he seldom spoke of it must be explained by the fact that he did not have to – eschatology was not an interest of his until he was forced to engage in it for polemical and apologetical reasons.<sup>767</sup>

I do not think that there is enough evidence to say that Jerome embraced the idea of *apokatastasis* at any point at all. I agree with O’Connell in accepting Jerome’s explanation that in his commentaries, he offered different interpretations, often without expressing his own opinion in any clear way. Jerome’s method in writing commentaries was, precisely, to collect insights from earlier writers, and above all from Origen. He does not usually clarify whether he agrees or disagrees. It is certainly problematic to claim, from the fact that Jerome did not deny certain interpretations, that he actually agreed with them. Of course, one could argue, as Ramelli does, that Jerome would not have included so much of Origen’s work in his commentaries if he did not agree.<sup>768</sup> However, he often gives more than one interpretation, so how do we know with which one he did agree? If he thought Origen’s interpretations to be outright heretical, I agree that he would not have included them to this extent, and there is no doubt that Jerome saw Origen as the best exegete. However, it is one thing to say that he did not clearly distance himself from Origen’s ideas, and another to say that he embraced them, which must mean that they were integral to his own theology. It may be added that in several texts written before the Origenist controversy, Jerome expressed the idea of the eternity of hell in several places.<sup>769</sup>

Did Jerome absolutely deny the teaching of *apokatastasis* before the controversy? In some places, he seems to have done so. In others, such as the ones quoted above, Jerome did not deny it. Either way, it was not an important part of his reception of Origen. However, even if he held that view at an earlier stage, his later denial thereof did not make his theology less “Origenist” than before. This could only have been the case if, after engaging in the controversy, he had begun to deny the idea of a heavenly hierarchy, or of post-mortem purification – and this,

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<sup>767</sup> One example of his speaking of the hierarchy in the afterlife during this period is found in *Ep* 39.8, where he expresses the idea of a hierarchy of virgins, widows who had children and widows who had not had children (corresponding to Eustochium, Paula, and Blesilla).

<sup>768</sup> Ramelli 2013, 633.

<sup>769</sup> See *CommEccl* 11.3; 9.7; 7.16; 2.16; 9.3-6; *Ep* 34.3. Brian E. Daley has pointed out that Jerome could express the idea of an eternal hell before as well as after the beginning of the controversy, and he could also express very lenient ideas, as well as an inclusive view on salvation with an emphasis on God’s mercy, during both phases of his career (Daley 1991, 103-104).

he certainly did not do. In what follows, I will argue that, paradoxically, Jerome made use of precisely these ideas in his polemics against Origen's idea of *apokatastasis*.

### 3.3. Jerome's Anti-Origenist Polemics Concerning the Teaching of *Apokatastasis*

#### 3.3.1. Jerome's Heresiological Presentation of Origen's View on Eternal Salvation

In *Against John* 7, Jerome lists eight errors of Origen, which directly correspond to charges brought up by Epiphanius in *Letter* 51.<sup>770</sup> One of the errors ascribed to Origen is presented as the claim that the devil and the demons will ultimately repent and rule with the saints. However, Jerome does not treat the question about the restoration in this work, in which his main focus is, as we have seen in the fourth chapter, the question of the resurrection body.

Epiphanius, who, as we have seen, was an important source of Jerome's heresiological presentation of Origen's ideas on the resurrection body, is also a source when it comes to Jerome's treatment of the question of *apokatastasis*. Although the issue of *apokatastasis* was certainly less important to Epiphanius than that of the resurrection body, and not brought up in the anti-Origenist polemics in his earlier works *Ancoratus* and *Panarion*, he pays some attention to it in his letter to John of Jerusalem (*Epistula* 51).<sup>771</sup> Having presented Origen's view that the devil would ultimately be restored to his former position and return to the kingdom of heaven, Epiphanius points out the absurdity of such a thought by drawing out the implications: "John the Baptist, Peter, the apostle and evangelist John, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and the rest of the prophets, are made co-heirs of the devil in the kingdom of heaven".<sup>772</sup> We will recognize this presentation and this critique,

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<sup>770</sup> The connection is noted by Clark 1992, 133.

<sup>771</sup> Clark claims that this new concern "carries a resonance from the debate between Jerome and Jovinian" (1992, 99). She notes that Epiphanius' argument is similar to those of Jerome, who in his work against Jovinian had argued that there will be difference among those who are saved, because of difference in merit. I think that the comparison is misleading, because Epiphanius' ideas on hierarchy (treated in the previous chapter) are very different from Jerome's. Epiphanius would hardly accept the idea of a spiritual hierarchy on earth mirrored in heaven, an idea so important in *Against Jovinian* and many other works (as we have seen, Epiphanius was hostile towards the ascetical elitism that lay behind such ideas). There is no reason to understand his critique against *apokatastasis* in terms of ideas about a hierarchy of Christians. I thus do not agree with Clark when she claims: "Epiphanius's objection to the Origenist thesis concerning the restoration of the devil rehearses precisely the same rhetorical pattern [from *Adversus Jovinianum*]: differentiation on the basis of personal merit must be preserved at all costs" (1992, 100).

<sup>772</sup> *Ep* 51.5.

which is based on ideas about meritism and justice, in the following treatment of Jerome.

In *Letter 84*, Jerome does not say much about the question of the restoration, but what he does say is something that will reappear in other places. First: “Let us not expect the repentance of the devil. This is an empty hope, dragging us into the depths of hell. It is here [on earth] that life is to be either sought or lost”.<sup>773</sup> In the next passage, Jerome clarifies even further what he sees as the problem about the hope of the restoration of the devil: “after many ages and one restoration of all things, it will be the same for Gabriel as the devil, Paul as Caiaphas, virgins as prostitutes...”.<sup>774</sup> In both quotations, we return to Jerome’s idea that merit is gained on earth, and only on earth. Here is the place to struggle. After death, no further opportunity will be given. This is directly connected to the question of hierarchy: The hierarchy achieved on earth is the hierarchy that will remain in eternity. Virgins will always be superior to prostitutes. If Origen’s idea were correct, we would have to accept that there will be no such lasting difference depending on the earthly struggle.

Ramelli has noted that in this letter, “in Jerome’s accusations [of Origen] one would fail to find the charge of having supported the eventual restoration of all sinners”.<sup>775</sup> This is certainly true – Jerome would continue to hold an inclusive idea of eternal salvation, in the sense of claiming that even sinners would be saved, as long as they were orthodox Christians (we will return to this question in chapter 6). However, Ramelli’s point is that Jerome did not deny the teaching of *apokatastasis*, and here we return to the disagreement over definitions which I have treated above.

We may note the rhetorical strategy which would dominate Jerome’s polemics against Origen’s views on *apokatastasis* – and which simultaneously had an apologetic purpose because of the accusations directed against him: He presented the idea of a heavenly hierarchy as his own, orthodox idea, in contrast to Origen’s heretical view of a final equality<sup>776</sup> between all creatures. While Origen himself taught a hierarchy in the afterlife, even among the saved, Jerome focused on the idea, expressed cautiously in some places, that all beings would be restored to their original condition.

An important text, when it comes to Jerome’s anti-Origenist polemics concerning the question of eternal salvation, comes from his commentary on

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<sup>773</sup> *Ep 84.6*, CSEL 55, 128: *non expectemus diaboli paenitentiam. uana est illa praesumptio et in profundum gehennae trahens; hic aut quaeritur vita aut amittitur.*

<sup>774</sup> *Ep 84.7*, CSEL 55, 129: *... post multa saecula atque unam omnium restitutionem id ipsum fore Gabriel, quod diabolum, Paulum, quod Caiphan, virgines, quod prostibulas...*

<sup>775</sup> Ramelli 2013, 637.

<sup>776</sup> Cf. *ApolRuf 1.6*, CCSL 79, 6: *aequalem statum.*

Jonah, written in 396. Commenting on the words about the repentance of the king of Nineveh (Jonah 3:6-9), Jerome writes that he is aware of the fact that many interpret the repentance of the king as reference to the repentance of the devil at the end, as the last to be converted.<sup>777</sup> They also think that he will “be restored to his former place”.<sup>778</sup> This, however, the Scriptures do not say, and, besides, such an interpretation “completely undermines the fear of God”. If people know that even the devil will be saved after repenting, they will continue in their sinful ways. Jerome refers to the words in the Gospel that the sinners will be thrown into the eternal fire that is prepared for the devil and his angels,<sup>779</sup> and to the words in Isaiah about the worm that will not die and the fire that will not be quenched.<sup>780</sup> Then, he returns to the kind of argumentation that we have already met in *Letter 84*: If, after many ages, all rational creatures would become equal, “what difference will there be between a virgin and a prostitute”? What will separate Gabriel from the devil, or the apostles from the demons?<sup>781</sup>

Another informative text appears in the *Commentary on Matthew* (398), where Jerome comments on the passage about the one who owed ten thousand talents.<sup>782</sup> “Some” (*quidam*) understand that person to be the devil. “But how can it be that the Lord forgives him ten thousand talents and does not forgive us, his fellow servants, one hundred denarii? This is no ecclesiastical interpretation, nor should it be received by wise men”.<sup>783</sup>

Yet another example comes from Jerome’s *Homilies on the Psalms*, a work referred to earlier in this chapter. In our previous treatment of a text from the *Homilies*, we noted striking similarities with Origen’s eschatological thought. We saw an example of Jerome’s dependence on Origen’s mystical thought in general, and on his ideas about a hierarchy in heaven in particular. However, these homilies also show a lot of examples of anti-Origenist polemics, including critique of the teaching of apokatastasis. The words “their violence comes down on their own heads” (about the wicked, Psalm 7:16) is interpreted as referring to those who

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<sup>777</sup> See also his *Commentary on Daniel* (407) where he counters the interpretation of the king of Nineveh as the devil (CCSL 75A, 808-809, 818-819). See also his discussion of hierarchy, with a distinction between learned saints and ordinary saints, in *CommDan* 4, CCSL 75A, 938, commenting on Dan 12:3.

<sup>778</sup> *CommJon* 3.6/9, CCSL 76, 407.

<sup>779</sup> Cf. Mt 25:41.

<sup>780</sup> Is 66:24.

<sup>781</sup> CCSL 76, p. 408.

<sup>782</sup> Mt 18:24.

<sup>783</sup> *CommMt* 3.18.24, CCSL 77, 164: *Sed quomodo ei dimittat Dominus decem milia talenta et ille nobis conseruis suis centum denarios non dimiserit, nec ecclesiasticae interpretationis est nec a prudentibus uiris recipiendae.*

claim that the devil will repent; the orthodox alternative presented by Jerome is that the devil will be punished in eternity.<sup>784</sup>

We have already seen how Jerome defended himself against Rufinus' accusations concerning his former views on *apokatastasis* in his *Apology against Rufinus*. In the first book, enumerating the errors of Origen, he mentions the Alexandrian's ideas "about the restitution of all things to a state of equality".<sup>785</sup> In the second book of this work, Jerome attacks Rufinus' views on the same issue. Because of the situation with Jerome's public apology (*Epistula* 84) and the hostility from Jerome's friends in Rome, Rufinus had written an apology addressed to Pope Anastasius, in which he had sought to demonstrate the orthodoxy of his faith. Jerome attacked this apology, including Rufinus' explanation of how he conceives the future fate of the devil. Even if the critique is directed against Rufinus, Jerome did, of course, also have the aim in this passage of distancing himself from Origen, by demonstrating the ways in which Rufinus' explanation was unsatisfactory, and by presenting an alternative, orthodox view.

One point of critique against Rufinus' explanation concerns the nature of the devil's punishment. Rufinus had spoken of eternal fire – this does not say much, Jerome objects, for one who knows what Origen meant by "eternal fire": "... namely, the conscience of the sinners and the remorse of their heart burning within".<sup>786</sup> This was, he claims, how Origen interpreted the words in Isaiah about the worm that will never die and the fire that will never be quenched.<sup>787</sup> He also refers to the biblical words: "I came to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled"<sup>788</sup> and "God is a devouring fire",<sup>789</sup> as passages understood by Origen to mean that all sin would eventually be burnt away. Considering these ways of understanding "fire" in Origen – as the burning conscience or as an external, divine fire that burns away all sins – the claim that the eternal fire awaits the devil is not very convincing when it comes to distancing oneself from Origenist error, Jerome remarks.

We have seen in other places that Jerome himself claimed that sinners could be purified by fire – what we see him do here is to mark his distance from Origen by denying that the devil will profit from such a fire.

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<sup>784</sup> *TractPs* 7, CCSL 78, 27.

<sup>785</sup> *ApolRuf* 1.6, CCSL 79, 6: ... *de restitutione omnium in aequalem statum*.

<sup>786</sup> *ApolRuf* 2.7, CCSL 79, 39: ... *conscientiam uidelicet peccatorum et paenitentiam interna cordis urentem*. The same presentation of Origen's view is given in *Ep* 124.7. In *Ep* 124.3, the focus is not so much on final equality as on the problem of transformation, which is seen to imply that the devil may become an archangel.

<sup>787</sup> *Is* 66:24.

<sup>788</sup> *Lk* 12:49.

<sup>789</sup> *Deut* 4:24.



Later in the *Apology*, Jerome enumerates various ideas of Origen that he considers to be heretical, and one of them is that:

... in the restoration of all things, when the fullness of indulgence has been reached, cherubim and seraphim, thrones, principalities, dominions, virtues, powers, archangels, angels, the devil, the demons, the souls of all humans, Christians as well as Jews and Gentiles, will be of one condition and rank.<sup>790</sup>

Here, although Jerome does not explain what fault he perceives in this description, we may conclude from what we have seen in other places that the problem is a lack of meritism and, thereby, of a hierarchy.

If we return to Epiphanius, mentioned in the beginning of this section as a forerunner of Jerome's heresiological treatment of the *apokatastasis* teaching, we may note how much more important this aspect was in Jerome's polemics, compared to Epiphanius'. This, I argue, must be explained to a great extent by Jerome's need to distance himself from a view that Rufinus had claimed that he had once expressed without criticizing it. Jerome's treatment is simultaneously polemical and apologetical. However, this can be said of Jerome's anti-Origenist polemics as a whole, because of his great indebtedness to Origen's thought. In a way not necessary to Epiphanius, Jerome had to express his own ideas as orthodox in opposition to the Origenist heresy. While already Epiphanius had seen the problem of *apokatastasis* in terms of meritism and justice, and had pointed out the problems with an idea that individuals of extremely different merit would come to one and the same end, Jerome put much more emphasis on this point,<sup>791</sup> and besides, he went beyond Epiphanius in his critique: While the Cypriot bishop had simply pointed out the problem of certain holy persons would come to the same end as the devil, Jerome, while in some places speaking in a similar manner about Gabriel and the devil, took the implications of *apokatastasis* one step further: It would mean that a virgin and a prostitute would come to the same end, as well. His idea about a hierarchy of Christians, important already before the Jovinianist controversy but above all developed above all in *Against Jovinian*, was now also used in polemics against the *apokatastasis* teaching.<sup>792</sup> In the following, I will

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<sup>790</sup> *ApolRuf* 2.12. CCSL 79, 46: ... *in restitutione omnium, quando indulgentia uenerit principalis, cherubim et seraphim, thronos, principatus, dominationes, uirtutes, potestates, archangelos, angelos, diabolum, daemones, animas omnium hominum, tam christianorum quam iudaeorum et gentilium, unius condicionis et mensurae fore...*

<sup>791</sup> Epiphanius, we remember, treated this in only one text, *Ep* 51, and very briefly.

<sup>792</sup> As I have already discussed, I am sceptical of Clark's association between Epiphanius' critique in *Ep* 51 and the Jovinianist controversy, because of Epiphanius' and Jerome's very different ideas of hierarchy. I do not see Epiphanius' words about apostles, prophets and the devil meeting the same end as connected to ideas about a hierarchy among Christians. This connection was certainly made by Jerome, as has been, and as will be, argued, but there is no need to understand Epiphanius' polemics in this way.

discuss further how precisely this emphasis of a hierarchy based on merit became a chief rhetorical strategy in Jerome's simultaneous construction of Origenist heresy and of his own orthodoxy.

### 3.3.2. *The Role of Apokatastasis in Jerome's Heresiological Constructions*

We have previously discussed the question of whether Jerome held the teaching of *apokatastasis* before the beginning of the controversy. Our present focus is on what happened during the controversy. Did he clearly deny the teaching? When speaking of Jerome's second phase, Ramelli makes the point that although Jerome denied the restoration of the devil, he did not deny the teaching of *apokatastasis* as such.<sup>793</sup> I do not agree, and the first reason is one already discussed, namely, the definition of the term. In neither of the texts referred to by Ramelli does Jerome accept the idea of a restoration of all rational creatures. It is true that in most places, he only denies the restoration of the devil, but according to my definition, this implies a denial of *apokatastasis*.

The second reason, and the one that I will develop in the following, is that a claim that Jerome continued to embrace the idea of *apokatastasis* neglects the important role that this teaching played in his anti-Origenist polemics, in the simultaneous construction of Origenism as a heresy and of Jerome himself as an orthodox teacher. Thus, the question whether Jerome came to deny the teaching of *apokatastasis* turns out to be of less importance. In the following, *apokatastasis* will not be treated as a teaching which could be held or refuted,<sup>794</sup> but as a crucial tool in Jerome's anti-Origenist heresiology, and as a way to mark his difference from Origen. Although I deny that *apokatastasis* was at any point important in Jerome's eschatological thought, I definitely claim that it was important in his anti-Origenist polemics.<sup>795</sup>

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<sup>793</sup> "Jerome's own intimate conviction regarding the eventual restoration /.../ remained unchanged" (Ramelli 2013, 640). Ramelli (637-41) brings up several texts to illustrate this point: *Ep* 84; *Ep* 124.3; *Contra Iohannem* 7; *Apologia contra Rufinum* 1.6; 2.12; *Commentary on Daniel*; *Commentary on Isaiah* (6-7); *Commentary on Matthew* 3.18.24; *Homilies on the Psalms*; and *Dialogus adversus Pelagianos* 1.29 (this text will be treated in chapter 6). Treating these texts, Ramelli's point (in support of her claim that Jerome's view on restoration did not change) is that his critique of the *apokatastasis* teaching "is limited to [the restoration of] the devil" (638) (and, in *Dial* 1.29, of the impious), while he does not refute "that of humans" (641); it is also said that he "extended apokatastasis to all Christians" (640).

<sup>794</sup> Quite opposite to Ramelli, O'Connell writes: "No one who reads the passages we have quoted from Jerome's works written after 393 can doubt that he completely rejected the apocatastasis" (1948, 154).

<sup>795</sup> It should be noted that in saying this, I do not deny that the teaching of *apokatastasis* has been held by various thinkers in the history of Christianity. However, I find it important, especially in the case of Jerome, to examine its rhetorical functions, quite apart from its content in either Origen's or Jerome's thought. For the moment, our focus will thus be on how Jerome used the idea rhetorically, and not on whether or not he held it at any point – I argued in a previous section that it never made up any important part of his theology.

How is Origen presented as a heretic with regard to his ideas on eternal salvation? To summarize from our discussion above: The heretical view most commonly presented by Jerome is that the devil will ultimately be saved, which also means that no punishment will last forever, since it only has the function of purification. The presentation of a view of the end as one of equal beings, without differentiation based on the earthly life, is also common. Jerome's orthodox self-presentation centres on the idea that all will be paid according to their previous way of life. This will mean eternal punishment for some, while for others, it will mean that although they will be saved, they will not be on the same level as the best Christians. One may note that salvation is often denied by Jerome specifically to the devil and the demons. When it comes to human beings, Jerome speaks rather in terms of a hierarchy.

The importance of the question of the *apokatastasis* during the Origenist controversy, and especially the accusations brought against him by Rufinus, forced Jerome to express himself with a much greater clarity about the afterlife than he had needed in his earlier career. He had to distance himself from his former master, and he did this by vehemently denying any possibility of salvation for the devil and the demons. However, this polemic had a positive side as well, since Jerome offered an orthodox alternative to the Origenist heresy that he constructed. He did not deny the idea of post-mortem purification, nor the idea that punishment could have a remedial function and lead to salvation. This was an idea that he had learnt from Origen, that he had expressed before the beginning of the controversy, and that he continued to embrace. The development that can be seen and the change caused by the new polemical context, was his clearer distinctions. He defined which groups would come to an everlasting fire for the single purpose of punishment, and which groups would come to a purifying fire, that would lead to salvation. In this way, he continued to express ideas that had been expressed by Origen, at the same time as constructing Origenism as a heresy.

The paradoxical character of this heresy-making becomes even clearer when we consider his extensive use of the idea of meritism and hierarchy in his anti-Origenist polemics. This lies, of course, behind the categorizations discussed above: Which fire one will come to depends on one's merits. Even more interesting, though, are his ideas about a hierarchy among the saved. It is not only that Gabriel and the devil will not be equal – neither will a virgin and a penitent prostitute. Jerome's very inclusive view of salvation, including all Christians, even sinners, is combined with his idea, expressed already in his work *Adversus Jovinianum*, about a heavenly hierarchy that mirrors the hierarchy of Christians on earth. This idea was, we have seen, utterly important in his anti-Origenist polemics concerning the teaching of *apokatastasis*, and the paradoxical thing is that these ideas about meritism and hierarchy had Origen as their source. The discussion in this second part of the chapter must be seen in the light of what has been argued in the first part, which concentrated on eschatological hierarchy.

This leads me to the same conclusion that I came to in the previous chapter, concerning the question of the resurrection body: Jerome continued to embrace, to a great extent, the same “Origenist” ideas as he had held before the controversy, and in his anti-Origenist polemics, he used these very ideas against Origen. Of course, an important feature of this anti-Origenist polemics is the fact that Jerome highlights one of Origen's ideas about the end: The restoration of all rational creatures. Origen expressed other ideas as well; he expressed uncertainty about the *apokatastasis* teaching; and in some places, he seems to have denied it. Above all, the idea of hierarchy in the afterlife was very important in his thought. Even in texts where Origen did seem to embrace the idea of *apokatastasis*, he envisioned it as taking place only after ages of moving up and down in hierarchies. These observations, however, had no room in texts that had the purpose of rhetorically maximizing the difference between Origen and Jerome. In these, the *apokatastasis* became the one Origenist vision of the end, and the idea of a hierarchy was presented in opposition to this vision, which, of course, made the impression that Origen and Jerome were very far from each other on this issue – and that was exactly what Jerome's worried friends in Rome, as well as persons hostile to him, had to be convinced of.

It is worth noting, when it comes to Jerome's heresiological strategies, that he directs the same critique against Origen that he had directed against Jovinian. In both cases, the problem is unjust equality. The refutation of the possible salvation of the devil becomes part of the argument from meritism and justice. Considering how different these two thinkers were, the level of rhetoric in Jerome's critique becomes obvious. Highlighting the idea of *apokatastasis* rather than Origen's ideas about a hierarchy, Jerome manages to present the Alexandrian as neglecting merit and justice in a way similar to Jovinian.

My objection to claims, such as Ramelli's, that Jerome continued to embrace the idea of *apokatastasis* rests above all on their neglect of the performative function of polemics, and a focus on “doctrines” that are “held”, rather than on rhetorical constructions. Such essentialism prevents us, I argue, from seeing the actual importance that *apokatastasis* had in Jerome's work. *Apokatastasis* was for Jerome, above all, a rhetorical tool for marking his distance towards Origen, and for concealing an actual proximity in a way similar to the role that the spiritual body played in anti-Origenist polemics concerning the resurrection body, which we discussed in the previous chapter. It was one of the most important ways in which he constructed Origenism as a heresy, as well as himself as an orthodox anti-Origenist.

## 4. Conclusions

... [Jerome] was still fighting a Western controversy over asceticism and thus a major motif in his attack on Origenism lay in his insistence that moral hierarchy must be preserved and gradations of status in the afterlife upheld. Ascetic renunciation, not theological speculation, stands at the center of his religious concern.<sup>796</sup>

Clark has certainly made a valuable contribution by pointing out the close connection that the Jovinianist and the Origenist controversies had in Jerome's career. I basically agree with her conclusion, quoted above, but I think that it can be nuanced in two ways. First, as I have pointed out before, a basic difference between Clark and me is that I argue that Origen was his main source in Jerome's critique against Jovinian. In this chapter I have sought to demonstrate how ideas about a post-mortem hierarchy, which he had learnt from Origen, were used against Origen in the new controversy. Second, and connected to what has already been said, I do not agree that Jerome's concern is ascetic renunciation per se, apart from theological speculation. While Clark focuses solely on Jerome's ideas on the ascetic life – on ethics – I have argued that connected to this is a mystical theology with profound ideas about the union between Christ and the Christian person, a union that goes beyond ethics. It is above all in this way that his dependence on Origen becomes obvious.

Heresiology is a performative enterprise that makes both heretics and orthodox. It almost always aims at making the difference between them as great as possible. In Jerome's case, this is true all the more, because of his close association with Origen's work. Just as in the previous chapter, I have argued that Jerome's rhetorical portrayal of himself as an opponent to Origen has found its way into modern scholarship, in which the difference that he makes between himself and Origen has taken for granted. The common view is that the idea of *apokatastasis* is a characteristic idea of Origen, while Jerome, one of the fiercest anti-Origenist, denied it by appeal to a hierarchy in the afterlife. Both O'Connell, Ramelli and Clark seem convinced that this was Origen's idea of the afterlife, and that Jerome's view differed from it. Clark not only essentializes the rhetorically constructed difference between the two authors, but also seems to give it a moral interpretation, when she writes in her introduction to *The Origenist Controversy*: "Ought Origen's egalitarianism (all rational creatures were created in and shall return to a condition of equal blessedness) bow to Jerome's theory of a hierarchy of merit based on ascetic renunciation?"<sup>797</sup> I hope to have demonstrated the

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<sup>796</sup> Clark 1992, 150-51.

<sup>797</sup> Clark 1992, 6.

narrowness of such a representation and to have brought out the much greater complexity in Jerome's way of relating to Origen's thought.

As was made clear already in the previous chapter, I agree with Clark in understanding ideas about a hierarchy in heaven as mirroring concerns about the hierarchy on earth. My disagreement with Clark concerns her way of claiming that hierarchical ideas were typical of the anti-Origenist side, as opposed to what Origen had taught. I rather argue that Jerome's ideas about hierarchy were close to Origen's, while these differed from, for example, Epiphanius' ideas about hierarchy. As I have argued in the fourth chapter, Epiphanius seems to have been much closer to Jerome's antagonists Siricius and Ambrosiaster in understanding the hierarchy of Christians as one of clergy and laity.<sup>798</sup>

From my examinations in the third chapter and in the present one, I conclude that the hierarchy that Jerome, like Origen, sought to maintain, was a hierarchy based on the holiness of the Christian person. Such holiness was understood by both authors to be dependent on purity in body and mind – and thus, it was necessarily connected to the renunciation of the world (the secular) which they saw as polluting. Through this purity, this sacredness, a person could be a temple of God in the most true sense of the word. This was independent of any outer conditions, such as clerical ordination, social status and sexual difference. After all, what these perfect Christians did was to return to the condition in Paradise, to a state without any social and sexual differences. Distinctions like these were consequences of the Fall, but as the ascetic person transcended the post-lapsarian existence, he/she stood above all that. All were meant to be priests, and the perfect Christians of both sexes were, precisely, priests. This was Origen's, as well as Jerome's, idea of the hierarchy of Christians in the present age and in the world to come.

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<sup>798</sup> See discussion in chapter 4, where I argued that Epiphanius' ideas on hierarchy and resurrection fits well into the group described as "the triumphant, institutional church of the fourth century" (Bynum 1995). Epiphanius' notion of hierarchy is, I claimed, a visible, material one, where great importance is ascribed to the clergy – all of this in contrast to Jerome's notion of hierarchy. I argued earlier in the present chapter that I see it as a mistake to understand Epiphanius' one instance of critique of *apokatastasis* in terms of concerns about hierarchy (Clark). This was certainly the case with Jerome, but there is no reason to make the same connection when it comes to Epiphanius.



# Chapter 6. The Pelagian Controversy

## 1. Introduction

In a prologue in his *Commentary on Ezekiel*,<sup>799</sup> Jerome complains about a new heresy that is taking the place of that of Rufinus and the Origenists. Although he does not mention Pelagius by name, it is probable that this British monk is the one he has in mind when he writes that although the old sea-serpent has died, new ones have arisen to rage against him.<sup>800</sup> As we will see, Jerome made a connection between “Origenism” and the teachings of Pelagius and his followers, seeing the latter as springing from the former. This was an idea to which he would in writings during these final years of his life, a period that coincided with the first phase of the Pelagian controversy.

Pelagius was a theologian who has mostly been remembered for his ideas about human free will and its relation to divine grace; ideas that, in modern scholarship, tend to be presented in contrast to those of Augustine, who has come down in history as Pelagius’ main opponent. In an important work from 1968,<sup>801</sup> Robert Evans claimed the importance of an “anti-Manichaean tendency” in Pelagius’ thought.<sup>802</sup> He put a lot of emphasis on the idea that sin was a result of choices made by human beings and did not accept the idea of sin being transmitted by human reproduction. This would, he claimed, imply that sin is necessary to the human existence; an idea that he connected to Manichaeism.<sup>803</sup>

Precisely the understanding of free will was central in Jerome’s polemics against Pelagius. In the before-mentioned work, Evans pays attention to Jerome’s role in the Pelagian controversy. Jerome, Evans pointed out, preceded Augustine in refuting Pelagius.<sup>804</sup> His involvement in the Pelagian controversy was,

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<sup>799</sup> The commentary was written at intervals between 411 and 414 (Kelly 1975, 304-306).

<sup>800</sup> *CommHiez* 6 prol., CCSL 75, 225. About Pelagianism as a “new” heresy, following the Origenist one, see also *CommHier* 2.6; 2.35-36; 3.11, book 4 prol; 22.24-27.

<sup>801</sup> Evans, Robert, *Pelagius. Inquiries and reappraisals*, 1968.

<sup>802</sup> Evans 1968, 53, see also 85, 92, 118-119.

<sup>803</sup> Evans 1968, 97.

<sup>804</sup> Evans 1968, 3-4.



according to Evans, confined to its initial part, when it centred above all around the person of Pelagius and his writings.

There are different scholarly opinions concerning whether Jerome and Pelagius had been in dispute already. Some scholars have identified the unnamed monk in *Letter 50* – who, we remember from our third chapter, had attacked Jerome because of the ideas that he had expressed in *Against Jovinian*, but who had also opposed Jovinian's views – with Pelagius, while others have refuted this identification.<sup>805</sup> What is certain is that Jerome and Pelagius both were in Rome in the 380s, where they served the same purpose of being spiritual teachers to members from the upper classes.<sup>806</sup> While Jerome, as we know, had to leave the city already in the mid-380s, Pelagius stayed there until 409/10, when he, like many others, left the threatened capital. He came to Carthage in 411 but left after a few months to end up in Palestine.

At this early stage one may ask for what reason Jerome would turn against him – that is, if Pelagius is not the monk spoken of in *Letter 50*. First, Jerome was certainly not interested in having another spiritual authority besides himself around, particularly since Pelagius seems to have had great success with his preaching in Palestine, and since he seems to have had good relationship to bishop John.<sup>807</sup> This brings us to a more important reason, namely the connections that Pelagius had to people whom Jerome considered to be sympathizers of Origenism.<sup>808</sup> Jerome was aware that Pelagius had used Rufinus' translations of the Sentences of Sextus, a fact that he made use of in arguing that the Pelagian idea of sinlessness was a pagan idea mediated, above all, through Origenism.<sup>809</sup> Most importantly, Pelagius had relied heavily on Rufinus' translation of Origen's *Commentary on Romans* when writing his own commentary on this biblical book.<sup>810</sup>

However, even if Pelagius had relationships to persons with "Origenist" sympathies, and even if he relied on Origen in some parts of his theology, the

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<sup>805</sup> The identification was made by Plinval (1943), accepted by Evans (1968), but has been refuted by Duval (1980). While the proponents of the thesis have pointed out similarities in Jerome's presentation of the monk in *Ep 50* and his later presentations of Pelagius, Duval explains this by reference to heresiological strategies: This was how Jerome described heretics (a "portrait-robot de l'hérétique", 530 ff.).

<sup>806</sup> Brown, "The Patrons of Pelagius: The Roman Aristocracy Between East and West" (Brown 1972, 208-226).

<sup>807</sup> John is said, by Augustine, to have been very fond of Pelagius. Augustine, *Ep 179.1*.

<sup>808</sup> Pelagius' association to Paulinus of Nola, a friend of Melania the Elder and of Rufinus, is attested (see Brown 1972, 211-212). However, it is not certain that Pelagius and Rufinus ever met (Hunter 2007, 260, n. 71; Evans 1968, 18-20).

<sup>809</sup> *Ep 133.3*, CSEL 56/1, 246-247.

<sup>810</sup> We will return to the different receptions of Origen's Pauline exegesis later in this chapter.

association that Jerome makes between “Origenism” and “Pelagianism” must first and foremost be understood as a rhetorical strategy. Despite his association with people who appear to have been sympathetic towards Origen, Pelagius himself seems to have seen Origen as a heretic – at least, he made heresiological use of Origen. “Origenism” was an accusation that Jerome and Pelagius hurled against each other.

The most immediate reason for Jerome’s attitude towards Pelagius was the fact that this competitor to spiritual authority revived old charges against him, and thereby threatened his already precarious standing as an orthodox teacher. In a preface of his *Commentary on Jeremiah*,<sup>811</sup> we find Jerome complaining that he had been charged with Origenism by the new heretics. Pelagius was repeating the accusation formulated by Rufinus, that Jerome had depended on Origen in his *Commentary on Ephesians*.<sup>812</sup> However, this was not the only charge that Pelagius directed against Jerome. It also appears that when spreading his teaching, especially among women,<sup>813</sup> Pelagius attacked Jerome’s views on marriage as expressed in *Adversus Jovinianum*.<sup>814</sup> Although Jerome made it clear that he had answered these charges long ago, these accusations did of course call for apologetical and polemical reactions, and “Origenism” was to play an important role in his heresiological construction of Pelagianism, as well as his self-defence.<sup>815</sup>

Although Jerome’s refutation of “Pelagianism” can be seen in several works from the latter years of his life, two are written specifically with this purpose: *Letter 133 to Ctesiphon*,<sup>816</sup> and the *Dialogue against the Pelagians*.<sup>817</sup> In the

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<sup>811</sup> According to Kelly, Jerome began to write this commentary either at the end of 414 or at the beginning of 415 (Kelly 1975, 316). It was never completed.

<sup>812</sup> *CommHier* book 1 prol. Here, Rufinus is said to be the precursor of Pelagius.

<sup>813</sup> *Ep* 133.4 (CSEL 56/1, 247-48); *CommHier* 3.60.3 (CCSL 74, 154); *Dialogus adversus Pelagianos* 1.26 (CCSL 80, 33-34). The association of Pelagius with female disciples in particular may of course be explained by reference to a common heresiological strategy; however, it is a historical fact that spiritual teachers at the time, such as Jerome himself, found their audience mainly among aristocratic women who had chosen the celibate life. The fact that debates over asceticism were typically debates about the status of virgins, widows and married women (as we have seen concerning *Against Jovinian*) points to this (cf. Hunter 2007, 32). At the same time, it is quite clear that Jerome made heresiological use of the fact that Pelagius had success in spreading his teaching among women; he refers to 2 Tim 3:6-7 (“silly women, overwhelmed by their sins”) and points out that even in former days, a characteristic of heretics had been their association with women (*Ep* 133.4).

<sup>814</sup> *CommHier* 1 prol; 4, prol; 3.60.3.

<sup>815</sup> I would not call Jerome's attitude a “presupposition ... that Pelagianism rested on Origen's ideas” (Ramelli 2013, 640). Rather, we are dealing with a rhetorical strategy, which make the “unfoundedness” of the association less relevant.

<sup>816</sup> The letter was probably written in 414 (Kelly 1975, 314). Ctesiphon appears to have been a lay person who supported Pelagius, and he had written to Jerome in order to inaugurate a friendly

summer of 415, the Spanish priest Orosius arrived in Bethlehem, bringing two letters from Augustine together with some anti-Pelagian writings by the same bishop.<sup>818</sup> Orosius' anti-Pelagian propagation in Jerusalem led John of Jerusalem to summon a conference, at which both Pelagius and Orosius were present. This did not result in any decision, but Pelagius was summoned to a synod in Diospolis later the same year, where he had to explain his teachings, and they were declared to be orthodox.<sup>819</sup> However, while his theology was considered to be quite unproblematic in Palestine, his ideas about the possibility that human beings could lead a righteous life and his refutation of the idea of sin as physically transmitted, had already led to reactions against him in North Africa, and he was to be condemned in Carthage and Milevis in 416 and by pope Zosimus in Rome in 418.<sup>820</sup> This did not put an end to the Pelagian controversy, since the latter part centred around the debate between Augustine and Julian of Eclanum in the 420s.

It ought to be pointed out that in the present chapter, my focus will be on Jerome's heresiological construction of Pelagianism, and especially on his use of Origen and "Origenism" in this construction, rather than on any actual differences between Jerome and Pelagius. This means that there will be few references to Pelagius' theology. To the extent that Pelagius' own ideas are discussed, the above-mentioned book of Robert Evans is my main source.

In the following, I will treat the themes in Jerome's anti-Pelagian polemics which are most important for understanding his reception of Origen, as well as his rhetorical construction of "Origenism", during these final years of his life. I will begin with Jerome's refutation of what he presented as the Pelagian idea of sinlessness, and I will continue with the question of human free will in relation to divine grace. The third theological theme is that of the church and its hierarchy. As we will see, the question of baptism would again be of great importance in the Pelagian controversy. I will argue that Jerome's refutation of (what he presents as) the Pelagian idea about the church on earth is mirrored in his ideas about post-mortem purification, judgment, and salvation. Throughout this examination, Jerome's reception of Origen in his anti-Pelagian polemics is of particular interest,

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debate between the two. See *Ep* 133.13, where Jerome gives warnings about housing heretics and supporting them financially. That Ctesiphon had written to Jerome in a friendly manner is indicated in *Ep* 133.1.

<sup>817</sup> The *Dialogue* was written in 415 (Kelly 1975, 319). The participants of the dialogue are the orthodox Atticus, who represents Jerome's views, and the heretical Critobulus, who represents the Pelagian perspective.

<sup>818</sup> Kelly 1975, 318, cf. *Dial* 3.19.

<sup>819</sup> An account of the proceedings is given by Augustine in *De gestis Pelagii*. For Orosius' involvement, see his *Liber apologeticus* 3-4. For a discussion of the events, see Kelly 1975, 317-19.

<sup>820</sup> Lamberigts 1992.

both in terms of a positive reception of his ideas, and with regard to Origen's heresiological function in the construction of Pelagianism.

## 2. The Question of *Apatheia* and Sinlessness

### 2.1. Introducing the Problem

At the centre of Jerome's critique against the Pelagians lies their idea about sin and the possibility for a human being to be sinless. Jerome explains this Pelagian idea by claiming that they hold the teaching of *apatheia*, that is, freedom from passions. They are presented as claiming that once this condition has been achieved, it will not be possible to sin anymore, because for sin to take place, there must be passions.

The Pelagians are described as making a distinction between being without sin (*sine peccato esse*) and being sinless (*ἀναμάρτητον*): The first, Jerome says, they claim to confess, but not the latter, and the explanation he gives is that *ἀναμάρτητον* would not be accepted by Eastern Christians. However, according to Jerome, this distinction is an example of the deceitful strategies by which the Pelagians try to appear orthodox: To be "without sin" (*absque peccato*) and to be "sinless" is, he claims, one and the same thing, expressed by two words in Latin and one in Greek.<sup>821</sup>

In this, we find an important heresiological strategy applied by Jerome against the Pelagians: They are presented as trying to deceive the simple and unlearned by speaking in ambiguous ways.<sup>822</sup> (As we will see in what follows, the same accusation was directed against them because of their use of the word *grace*). They try to formulate themselves in ways that make them appear as orthodox; in this case, by using one expression instead of another when both mean the same thing. We recognize from *Contra Iohannem* the heresiological strategy of presenting the opponent as teaching one thing in public, to the unlearned, and another thing to his disciples, the intellectual elite, those who consider themselves to be more advanced in knowledge.<sup>823</sup>

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<sup>821</sup> *Ep* 133.3, CSEL 56/1, 244-245.

<sup>822</sup> *Ep* 133.3, CSEL 56/1, 244: ... *simplices... indoctosque decipiunt...* As noted in chapter 4, this was a general strategy in Jerome's heresiology. Jeanjean discusses the strategy specifically in connection to Pelagiansim: Jeanjean 1999, 412-415.

<sup>823</sup> One may also recognize a similarity in that John was depicted as pretending that he did not know the difference between flesh and body, while he actually did, and tried to confuse the unlearned by the way he used the terms (or, more precisely, only one of the terms, *body*).

Because you know what it is that you teach your disciples on the inside, saying one thing with your mouth and concealing another in privacy. To us, who are outside and unlearned, you speak through parables, but to your own you disclose the secrets.<sup>824</sup>

Against the Pelagians as well as the Origenists before them, the rhetoric of ambiguity is used for the purpose of presenting the opponent as giving an esoteric teaching to a small group of his own disciples while claiming something else in public, in the presence of the unlearned, in order to deceive them and to make them consider him to be orthodox.

According to Jerome, the pride of the Pelagians does not only rest on their view of themselves as a Christian elite, but their idea of sinlessness is itself associated with pride.<sup>825</sup> In his *Commentary on Jeremiah*, Jerome compared them to the Arians: While the Arians had denied the equality of the Son with the Father, the Pelagians thought themselves to be equal to God.<sup>826</sup> In the letter to Ctesiphon, Jerome accuses them of saying with the devil: “I will be like the Most High”.<sup>827</sup> As we will see, this way of presenting the Pelagians run like a red thread through Jerome’s polemics against them. They are presented as thinking too highly of the human being and of his/her possibilities in relation to God. The error of the Pelgians is, according to Jerome, the error of the devil: They believe that they can become equal to God. They are not satisfied with likeness to Him.<sup>828</sup> This distinction between equality and likeness is, as will become clear, central in Jerome’s anti-Pelagian polemics.

Against the Pelagians, Jerome argues that while being situated in the earthly body, it is impossible to root out passions completely; there is always a risk of temptation, and therefore always a risk of falling. He does not equate *apatheia* and sinlessness,<sup>829</sup> but sees *apatheia* as a state that necessarily implies sinlessness. Sins are committed because of passions. It is one of Jerome’s main points in his anti-Pelagian polemics that a state without passions can never be achieved during this

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<sup>824</sup> *Ep* 133.3, CSEL 56/1, 245: *nosti enim, quid intrinsecus discipulos tuos doceas aliud ore commemorans et aliud celans conscientia, nobisque alienis et indoctis loqueris per parabolas, tuis autem mysteria confiteris.*

<sup>825</sup> About pride as a characteristic of the Pelagians, see Jeanjean 1999, 409-411; about pride as typical in Jerome’s descriptions of heretics in general, see 347-352.

<sup>826</sup> *CommHier* 2.1 (CCSL 74, 59).

<sup>827</sup> *Ep* 133.1, CSEL 56/1, 242: *... ero similis altissimo.* Cf. 133.12 (259), where Pelagius is said to be lifted up in his pride to the stars, only to end up the same way as Lucifer, falling like lightning from heaven (Lk 10:18). This is contrasted to how Jonah in humility was thrown into the sea and then rose in glory, being a type of Christ.

<sup>828</sup> *Ep* 133.1, CSEL 56/1, 242: *quae enim potest alia maior esse temeritas quam dei sibi non dicam similitudinem sed aequalitatem uindicare...* Cf. *Dialogus adversus Pelagianos* 1.21, CCSL 80, 27: *aliud esse similitudinem, aliud aequalitatem.*

<sup>829</sup> This is claimed by Evans (1968, 21).

earthly life and, because it is not possible to reach such a passionless state, neither is it possible to reach a sinless state.

## 2.2. Pelagian Reliance on “Paganism” and “Origenism” in Their Ideas about Sinlessness

The Pelagian teachings are not new, Jerome asserts in *Letter* 133.<sup>830</sup> They have learnt their arrogance from other heretics, who in turn have learnt it from pagan philosophers. The philosophical idea, thought to lie behind the Pelagian heresy as well as others, is that of *apatheia*, freedom from passions. Pointing out Pythagoras and Zeno, the supposed founder of Stoicism, as the foundation of this error, he describes them as claiming that it is possible to root out *πάθη* from the human mind. Πάθη, he says, may be described in Latin as *perturbationes*, that is, passions, such as distress and pleasure. These philosophers claim that the passions can be rooted out from the human mind, and all vice can be destroyed.<sup>831</sup>

However, as pointed out by Benoît Jeanjean, Jerome does not claim that Pelagius has learnt his ideas directly from the pagans, but mediated through Christian heretics.<sup>832</sup> He is presented as part of a genealogy of heretics, who have in common the idea that it is possible for (at least some) human beings to be altogether free from passions, and thereby to be perfect. In this genealogy, Origenism occupies a particularly important place.<sup>833</sup> Among the heretics from whom the Pelagians have supposedly learnt their ideas, Evagrius of Pontus is the writer whose views are most clearly connected to the problem of rooting out *πάθη*, and Jerome explains the concept of *apatheia*, which he also calls *inpassibilitas* or *inperturbatio*, in the following way: “when the soul is never moved by any thought or weakness and – to express it simply – is either a stone or a God”.<sup>834</sup>

It seems that Jerome had only become aware of Evagrius quite recently, since he was not part of Jerome’s anti-Origenist heresiology during the Origenist controversy.<sup>835</sup> However, in this new controversy, he would play an important heresiological part. As I have already indicated in the introduction, Jerome

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<sup>830</sup> *Ep* 133.3, 244: *Nihil novi adserunt*.

<sup>831</sup> *Ep* 133.1, *Dial* Prol.1; 2.6, *CommHier* 4.

<sup>832</sup> Jeanjean 1999, 388-402. Cf. *Ep* 133.1, CSEL 56/1, 242: ... *omnium hereticorum uenena conplecti, quae de philosophorum et maxime Pythagorae et Zenonis, principis Stoicorum, fonte manarunt*. See also *CommHier* 4.

<sup>833</sup> Other heretical precursors are Mani, Priscillian, Basilides, as well as Jovinian – to whom we will return. For the association of Pelagianism with Origenism, see Jeanjean 1999, 395-397.

<sup>834</sup> *Ep* 133.3, CSEL 56/1, 246: ... *quando numquam animus ulla cogitatione et uitio commouetur et – ut simpliciter dicam – uel saxum uel deus est*.

<sup>835</sup> As pointed out by Clark (1992, 223).

expressed the idea that the new controversy, the new “heresy”, was a continuation of the Origenist controversy (and the Origenist heresy). This idea must be understood rhetorically: It was in Jerome's interest to connect “Pelagianism” to “Origenism”. The reason was twofold: First, the heresiological strategy of associating the ideas of opponents with earlier, “known” heresies, and thereby discredit them, was well-tried among earlier Christian heresiologists. Secondly, Jerome had more immediate, personal reasons: He was still in need to dissociate himself from Origen, a need which had become even stronger because of Pelagius' accusations against him. Jerome's view of Pelagianism as a continuation of Origenism must be explained as a rhetorical strategy applied for apologetic as well as polemical reasons.

This is where Evagrius assumes his important function. Origen himself is certainly mentioned among the heretical teachers of Pelagius, but in *Letter* 133 the description of Origen is confined to his interpretation of Psalm 16:7 (“in the night also my heart instructs me”),<sup>836</sup> which, it is claimed, he understood to mean that a person who has reached the height of virtue does not suffer from the human condition at night (*ea pati, quae hominum sunt*), and is not disturbed by evil thoughts.<sup>837</sup> It is also claimed in the *Dialogue* that Origen mixed the Stoic teaching of *apatheia* with the teaching of the church, namely in his *Stromata*.<sup>838</sup> Origen is also said to be the teacher of both Rufinus and Pelagius.<sup>839</sup> It is Evagrius, however, who assumes the leading role in Jerome's association of Pelagianism with Origenism. In *Epistula* 133, Evagrius is called an Origenist and is connected to Rufinus, Origen's known defender.<sup>840</sup> Jerome associates Evagrius with Pelagianism through the idea of *apatheia*, a state of freedom from passions, that is, a state without temptation and, therefore, a necessarily sinless state.

Evagrius is not the only Origenist who serves this purpose; so does Rufinus, although indirectly. Since he was not a theologian himself, the heresiological critique of Rufinus had to be confined to the authors whose works he had translated or for whom he had shown approval in other ways. Jerome brings up *The Sentences of Sextus*, a work that according to him was written by the Pythagorean philosopher Xystus (*hominis absque Christo atque ethnici*), but which Rufinus, he claims, thought was written by the bishop and martyr Sextus.<sup>841</sup>

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<sup>836</sup> In Jerome's quotation, the words is “kidneys” (*renes*) not “heart” (*Ep* 133.3, 247).

<sup>837</sup> *Ep* 133.3.

<sup>838</sup> *Dial* prol 1.

<sup>839</sup> *CommHier* 22.24-27.

<sup>840</sup> He is mentioned among other Origenists about whom Rufinus had written in a book about monks (who were, in Jerome's judgment, not monks at all, *Historia Eremitica*). 133.3, CSEL 56/1, 246.

<sup>841</sup> Not knowing that the author was a philosopher, thinking he was instead a martyr, many Christians are said to “drink from the golden cup of Babylon” (*bibant de aureo calice Babylonis*, *Ep* 133.3, CSEL 56/1, 247). See also *CommHier* 22.24-27.

The Pelagians are said to depend on this work.<sup>842</sup> Jerome focuses on what Xystus has to say about perfection: He speaks about perfection according to the teaching of the Pythagoreans, “who make the human being equal to God and say that the human being is of His substance”.<sup>843</sup> Among the heretics who are seen as precursors of Pelagius, the “Origenists” are most clearly connected to the idea of a passionless state.

Jerome’s principal method in arguing against the Pelagian idea about sinlessness is to provide evidence from the Scriptures – something that he gladly points out, rhetorically placing the Scriptures in a diametrically opposed position to pagan thought.<sup>844</sup> Of particular importance is Paul’s Letter to the Romans. A reason for this may have been the fact that Pelagius had published an exposition on the epistles of Paul (after all, he did not only rely on pagans and heretics), in which a main concern had been to eliminate all suspicions of determinism from the teaching of the apostle, and to enhance instead the importance of free will and good works. In the following, we will take a closer look at the common heritage from Origen on which both Jerome and Pelagius drew.

### 2.3. Common Dependence on Origen’s *Commentary on Romans*

Origen’s *Commentary on Romans*, extant in Rufinus’ Latin translation and some Greek fragments,<sup>845</sup> has been shown to be an important source for Pelagius’ theology.<sup>846</sup> The main reason why Pelagius found Origen’s commentary attractive was the Alexandrian’s basic intention to show, against deterministic writers such as Valentinus, Basilides and Marcion, that Paul did not deny the freedom of the human will.<sup>847</sup> As Pelagius’ main concern was precisely to refute determinism (in the Manichaeic form), Origen’s commentary came to be useful.<sup>848</sup> However, it is also a commentary in which plenty of similarities can be seen to Jerome’s anti-Pelagian polemics, as will become apparent in what follows.

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<sup>842</sup> *Ep* 133.3, 247. This appears to be accurate, see discussion in Evans (1968) about Pelagius use of the work (ch. 4).

<sup>843</sup> *Ep* 133.3, 246, l. 24, 247: ... *qui hominem exaequant deo et de eius dicunt esse substantia...*

<sup>844</sup> *Ep* 133.2, 243. A few sentences (*paucis sententiolis*) from the Scriptures will confute the arguments of the heretics and, through them, the philosophers.

<sup>845</sup> Scheck 2008, 4. For a discussion of the finds in relation to Rufinus’ translation, see Chadwick 1959.

<sup>846</sup> Bohlin 1957, 77-103; Scheck 2008, 63-85.

<sup>847</sup> Origen makes this purpose clear already in the preface.

<sup>848</sup> For example, Pelagius argued that when it was said that humans are justified by faith without works of the law, “works of the law” referred to the Old Testament ceremonial law, not to works of righteousness after baptism, which he considered to be necessary for salvation (*Pelagius’s Expositions of Thirteen Epistles of St Paul*, Souter 1926, 34).



When it comes to Jerome, the fact that he had already made extensive use of Origen's commentary on Romans prior to the Pelagian controversy makes it probable that Origen's exegesis would continue to determine his understanding of the letter, even in the context of the Pelagian controversy. We have seen previously that Jerome's *Commentary on Galatians* shows great indebtedness to Origen, and in his polemics against Jovinian – whom, we remember, he presented as a determinist – he applied several arguments that can be recognized from the commentary in question.<sup>849</sup> I have previously argued that if we must point out one feature in Jerome's reception of Origen as especially important for understanding his theology, it would be his reception of Origen's Pauline exegesis.<sup>850</sup>

The use of Origen by both Pelagius and Jerome can be explained by the fact that Origen's work was open for different interpretations when it came to his ideas about sin. As well as placing an immense focus on human free will, speaking of the Gospel as a new law, and even seeming to claim the possibility of some form of sinlessness (features that would be taken up by Pelagius), the commentary also speaks of sin as a common reality for all human beings, and of human life in the flesh as necessarily defiled (ideas that would suite Jerome's purposes in his anti-Pelagian polemics, as we will see below). That is, both Jerome and Pelagius could find ideas in this commentary that would help them to formulate and develop their positions in the controversy. As Caroline Hammond Bammel has written: "... the commentary he [Rufinus] translated was a rich treasury of arguments, which could readily provide material both for the Pelagian and for the anti-Pelagian side of the controversy".<sup>851</sup>

It has been debated among scholars how to understand those places in Origen's commentary which point to original sin, considering that in other texts, Origen expressed the idea of a pre-cosmic fall of rational beings. One solution has been to argue that Rufinus made changes that diverged from Origen's original statements.<sup>852</sup> Hammon Bammel, however, has defended the possibility that Origen himself expressed both these ideas, without any necessary contradiction.<sup>853</sup> I find Bammel's argument very convincing, and important in the sense that it challenges the view that the pre-cosmic fall was Origen's only, or true, teaching of the Fall. Clark's argument, that Augustine's idea of original

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<sup>849</sup> As we have seen (chapter 3), there are several parallels between Jerome's critique of Jovinian and his Pauline exegesis in *CommGal*, where he is clearly dependent on Origen in his attacks on "Gnostic" determinism.

<sup>850</sup> It has been noted that Jerome's implicit acceptance of Origen's Pauline exegesis was an important reason for the later reception of Origen's *Commentary on Romans* in the Middle Ages (Scheck 2008, 8).

<sup>851</sup> Hammond Bammel 1981, 76.

<sup>852</sup> See discussion in Scheck 2008, 75-77.

<sup>853</sup> Bammel 1989, 83.

sin functioned as a sort of replacement for Origen's idea of a pre-cosmic fall, in the sense that it provided a solution to the problem of evil, becomes questionable.<sup>854</sup> Instead, Origen's thought seems to have lent itself to different interpretations, or rather, different parts thereof could be used to emphasize different ideas. The Origen that has come down to us is, to a great extent, the "Origen" of the heresiologists, who emphasized certain parts of his teaching for heresiological purposes, thereamong his idea of the pre-existence of souls. As Scheck writes: "... Origen seems to have been equally a source for Pelagius's stress on original sin as personal sin and deliberate imitation of Adam, as well as a source for the collective theory of original sin, which was expressed much later by Ambrosiaster and Augustine".<sup>855</sup>

Jerome is certainly aware that Origen's ideas about the (im)possibility of sinlessness could be used in different directions. He writes of Origen in the beginning of *Dialogus*:

It is characteristic of Origen to hold both that it is impossible for human nature to not sin between birth and death, and, on the other hand, that it is possible, when someone has turned to the better, to achieve such strength that he/she does not sin anymore.<sup>856</sup>

Without attempting to give a complete explanation of Origen's view on sin, I will in the following give an insight into the ideas expressed by him which are of particular importance for understanding Jerome's reception of him in the context of the Pelagian controversy. I will not limit myself only to the commentary on Romans, although this is the most important source in this regard.

## 2.4. Origen on Sin and Defilement

Origen clearly believed that the post-lapsarian state was a defiled state, and that the human being found him/herself in a state of pollution from the very birth. "... our flesh is indeed a flesh of sin", he writes with reference to Romans 8:3.<sup>857</sup> The

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<sup>854</sup> Clark 1992, 244. Bammel has demonstrated Augustine's dependence, in *De peccatorum*, on the *Commentary on Romans* for his idea about the transmission of sin by propagation (1992, 135).

<sup>855</sup> Scheck 2008, 79.

<sup>856</sup> *Dial* 1.1, CCSL 80, 4: *Illud autem Origenis proprium est, et impossibile esse humanam a principio usque ad mortem non peccare naturam et rursus, esse possibile, cum se aliquis ad meliora conuerterit, ad tantam fortitudinem peruenire ut ultra non peccet.*

<sup>857</sup> Cf. Jerome, *Ep* 133.8.

“body of death”<sup>858</sup> and the “body of our humiliation”<sup>859</sup> is the earthly, or fleshly, body and its defilement is specifically associated with sexuality. Origen claims that Christ, unlike us, did not have a flesh of sin, but only the likeness to it.<sup>860</sup> The absence of sin from Him is explained by His different conception, being born by a virgin and through the Holy Spirit, and not as a result of sexual lust.<sup>861</sup> In contrast to His body, ours is the body of sin, the body of death and the body of humiliation. It is according to this idea about a common defilement of the human existence that Origen understands Psalm 51:5 (“Indeed, I was born guilty, a sinner when my mother conceived me”); an interpretation that is confirmed in many texts.<sup>862</sup> Likewise, our body being “a body of sin” is connected by Origen to the fact that it was after the sin that Adam knew his wife and became the father of Cain: “Therefore our body is a body of sin, because it is not written that Adam knew his wife Eve, and became the father of Cain, until after the sin”.<sup>863</sup>

There us in all of us, according to Origen, an innate defilement of sin (*genuinae sordes peccati*); a defilement that must be cleansed through baptism.<sup>864</sup> He notes that in Leviticus, an offering is prescribed for a child who is born, which he interprets as meaning that the child, who has of course not sinned, is tainted by sin anyway.<sup>865</sup> A passage often quoted by him in this regard is Job 14:4-5 (LXX): “No one is pure from uncleanness, even if his life lasts only one day”,<sup>866</sup> as well as the words in Psalm 51:5 already mentioned above.<sup>867</sup>

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<sup>858</sup> Rom 7:24. *CommRom* 5.9.10 (SC 539, 494-496).

<sup>859</sup> Phil 3:21. *CommRom* 5.9.10.

<sup>860</sup> *CommRom* 5.9.10. Cf. Rom 8:3.

<sup>861</sup> *CommRom* 5.9.10, SC 539, 496: ... *nostra quidem caro peccati sit caro, Christi autem caro similis sit carnis peccati*. See also *CommRom* 3.5.5-6, where the purity of Christ, as distinct from other human beings, is explained by the fact that He was conceived by an undefiled virgin.

<sup>862</sup> See for instance *CommRom* 6.12.4, where Origen writes that all human beings who have been conceived through a sexual act have a flesh of sin, *carne peccati*, and can say the words of Psalm 51 together with David. Christ, on the other hand, had a human body without the contamination of sin: ... *quidem corporis nostri habuit, pollutionem tamen peccati quae ex concupiscentiae motu conceptis traditur omnino non habuit* (SC 543, 206).

<sup>863</sup> *CommRom* 5.9.12, SC 539, 496: *Corpus ergo peccati est corpus nostrum quia nec Adam scribitur cognovisse Euam uxorem suam et genuisse Cain nisi post peccatum*.

<sup>864</sup> *CommRom* 5.9.13. Origen writes that: *essent in omnibus genuinae sordes peccati quae per aquam et spiritum ablui deberent... propter quas etiam corpus ipsum corpus peccati nominatur...* (SC 539, 498).

<sup>865</sup> *CommRom* 5.9.12. See also *HomLev* 8.3, where Origen points out that the saints do not celebrate their birthdays. Here too, he refers to Ps 51.5, and writes that this shows that “every soul which is born in flesh is polluted by the filth ‘of iniquity and sin’”. As in the Commentary on Romans, an association is made to the practice of infant baptism.

<sup>866</sup> *CommRom* 5.9.12, SC 539, 498: *Pro quo peccato offertur unus hic pullus? Numquid nuper editus parvulus peccare potuit? Et tamen habet peccatum pro quo hostia iubetur offerri a quo mundus*

Origen was thus of the opinion that the impurity of the earthly existence affected every human being, regardless of how short their lives may be. He could distinguish between the defilement of human nature on the one hand, and sin on the other. Life in an earthly body is, Origen claimed, always polluted. Even Christ put on pollution – however, He did not put on sin. Origen thus made a distinction between stain and sin. Discussing the need for sacrifices for infants, and again referring to Job 14:4-5, he points out that the wording in this biblical passage is: “No one is pure from uncleanness” (rather than “no one is pure from sin”). Every soul clothed with a human body has its own stain. Jesus, however, was stained through His own will, since He took on a human body for the sake of our salvation.<sup>868</sup>

However, as we have seen above, the defilement often seems to have been understood by Origen in terms of sin.<sup>869</sup> This does not necessarily imply a contradiction; rather, we ought to distinguish between the idea of sin in terms of defilement, as a universal impurity of the human existence – and thereby as an ontological category – and sin as a juridical category, understood as action contrary to the law of God. What has become clear so far is that Origen thought that all human beings were born defiled because of their fleshly existence (this defilement being the ontological sense of sin), although they had not committed any sin themselves (the juridical sense). He also thought that there was no human being, not even those who were holy, who had not sinned. This is explained by the very fact of their defiled existence.<sup>870</sup>

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*negatur quis esse nec si unius diei sit uita eius* (Job 14:4-5 LXX). Also, in *HomLev* 8.3 (cf. previous note), the words are referred to in an argument about the defilement of human birth, as are they in *HomLk* 14.5.

<sup>867</sup> As in *CommRom* 5.9.12. Also, in *Contra Celsum*, Job 14:4-5 and Psalm 51:5 are combined when Origen explains that the (correct) Christian view on the earthly life is that it is a miserable state, and in this context argues from the sacrifice for infants (*CCels* 7.50, SC 150, 130-132). Rom 7:24 (body of this death) and Phil 3:21 are also referred to here.

<sup>868</sup> *HomLk* 14.3-5. *HomLk* 14.5: The Lord was clothed with stained garments (*Zec* 3:3) and put on an earthly body.

<sup>869</sup> As discussed above: His understanding of the flesh of sin; his comment in *CommRom* 5.9.12 that infants are tainted by sin; his comment in *HomLev* 8.3, where he claims that “every soul which is born in flesh is polluted by the filth of iniquity and sin”.

<sup>870</sup> In *CommRom* 5.5.4, Origen claims that even holy persons commit sin. He quotes the words from Job 14 and clarifies the connection between the defiled human nature and the committing of sins. In *CommRom* 5.1.17, he claims (commenting on Rom 5:12) that the death of sin (that is, what Origen understands as the true death, that consists in the sin of the soul, and of which the natural death is a shadow) passed to everyone in this, that all sinned: ... *in omnes homines mortem pertranisse peccati in eo quo omnes peccauerunt...* From this he argues that even righteous persons are not without fault; all have sinned: *Et ideo etiam si Abel illum iustum dixeris non potest excusari* (SC 539, 370-374).

The association of defilement with sin relates of course to Origen's idea about the Fall. He expresses, in many places, the idea that all humans were with Adam when he sinned.<sup>871</sup> We will not go deeper into this question here, but it ought to be pointed out that Origen expressed such an idea, whether or not one considers it to contradict to the idea of pre-existence.<sup>872</sup> What is of great importance when we consider Jerome's reception of these ideas is the way in which Origen connected Adam to the earthly, as opposed to the heavenly existence. We return to the idea of the earthly, fleshly existence as implying defilement. The words in the Book of Psalms that “we sink down to the dust”<sup>873</sup> are used by in his *Commentary on Romans*,<sup>874</sup> as well as in *Contra Celsum*, where he makes clear the distinction between the life of the soul on earth and its life in Paradise as well as in the world to come. The words “You have brought us down in a place of affliction”<sup>875</sup> refer, according to Origen, to “this earthly region” to which Adam came when he was driven out of Paradise because of his sin.

Adam also takes on an ethical significance in Origen's exegesis on Romans. He is understood by Origen as the image of the earthly, and the person who lives according to this image is “still in this world” and “earthly” (*terrenus*) – in contrast to the one who bears the heavenly image, who is “neither earthly nor in this world”, and whose “citizenship is said to be in heaven” (cf. Phil 3:20).<sup>876</sup> The earthly person “walks in the image of the earthly, and thinks according to the flesh, and perceives that which is of the flesh”, Origen states (cf. Rom 8:5).<sup>877</sup> We here return to a theme that we dealt with more thoroughly in chapters 4 and 5; that of Origen's idea about the connection between imitation and transformation.

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<sup>871</sup> Origen could say that all humanity was expelled from Paradise because they were in Adam's loins (*CommRom* 5.1.12: Here, it is said that death passed to all humans through Adam, and that death entered through sin, which entered through Adam (*per Adam... introisse peccatum et per peccatum mors*, SC 539, 366).

In 5.4.3, Origen speaks of the condemnation because of Adam's transgression, which spread to all humans. Everyone was formed in a place of humiliation. Two possible reasons are given: All were in Adam's loins and were expelled from Paradise with him, or each one was driven out of Paradise (supposedly the theory of pre-existence). ... *delicti eius condemnatio quae in omnes homines sine dubio peruenit. Omnes enim in loco hoc humiliationis et in conuale fletus effecti sunt...* (SC 539, 432). Cf. *CommRom* 5.9.10. See also *CCels* 7.28, about human beings dying, and being expelled from Paradise, in Adam (SC 150, 76-78).

<sup>872</sup> Cf. discussion in previous section.

<sup>873</sup> Ps 44:25.

<sup>874</sup> *CommRom* 5.9.11.

<sup>875</sup> Ps 43:20 (LXX). *CCels* 7.50, SC 150, 132.

<sup>876</sup> *CommRom* 5.1.13: Adam was “of the earth, earthly” and Christ was “heavenly” (cf. 1 Cor 15:47, 49).

<sup>877</sup> *CommRom* 5.1.13, SC 539, 368: ... *in imagine terreni ambulat et secundum carnem cogitat et quae carnis sunt sapit...*

Adam is the image of the earthly; by imitating him, we become earthly. Christ is the image of the heavenly; by imitating Him, we become heavenly. In this sense, the concept “world” could, according to Origen, signify earthly persons, that is, those who follow the flesh rather than the spirit.<sup>878</sup>

Origen was of the opinion that passions, even though not acted upon, impeded a person's purity; for instance, a person who experienced lust could not be called chaste. Who can boast of chastity, Origen asks, when reading the words in the Gospel of Matthew: “everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart”.<sup>879</sup> This is, according to Origen, the reason why the prophet says: “Who can say, ‘I have made my heart clean’”.<sup>880</sup>

Does Origen's idea about defilement of human nature, and of the impossibility of reaching perfection while in the flesh, exclude the possibility that human beings may, through development, reach a state in which they follow the spirit without being dragged down by the flesh? As Hammond Bammel has pointed out, although Origen speaks of the fleshly existence as excluding purity, he also had a strong idea about the Christian life as one of progress, and according to this understanding, the person described in Romans 7:14-25 was clearly at a different level than Paul was when he wrote the commentary, and Paul is here speaking in the persona of a recent convert.<sup>881</sup>

In his preface, Origen also speaks of Paul as having reached perfection in the sense of having advanced to such a degree that he cannot not fall away or look backwards.<sup>882</sup> In Paul, who always bore the death of Jesus in his body, the flesh did not lust against the spirit, because the flesh had been put to death in the likeness of the death of Christ, and it was thereby subjected.<sup>883</sup> Likewise, in the sixth book of his commentary, Origen makes a distinction between those in whom the flesh still fights against the spirit, and those who are no longer partly in the flesh and partly in the spirit, but completely in Christ. These serve Christ rather than the law of sin – the idea is that they have passed from one kind of service to

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<sup>878</sup> *CommRom* 5.1.19: “world” designates earthly persons. See also *CommJoh* 19.20, SC 290, 124-128. In *CommRom* 9.1.6, Origen speaks of those who have adapted to the form of the present world (*secundum formam saeculi praesentis aptantur*). Those, however, who do not look to what is seen but to what is unseen (cf. 2 Cor 4:18) are transformed (*transformantur*) into the form of the future world (SC 555, 72). About not being of this world, see also *CommMt* 13.21.

<sup>879</sup> Mt 5:28.

<sup>880</sup> *CommRom* 3.6.7, Proverbs 20.9. The text from Proverbs is used by Jerome in *Against Jovinian* as well as in *Ep* 133. In the same text, Origen refers to the passage “all your righteousness is like the rag of a menstruous woman” (Is 64:6), which is also referred to by Jerome in *Dial* 2.25 in an argument that all human beings are unclean.

<sup>881</sup> Bammel 1981, 74-75. *CommRom* 6.9.3.

<sup>882</sup> *CommRom* pref. 3.

<sup>883</sup> *CommRom* pref. 4.

another.<sup>884</sup> This is how the death of the “old man”, who was subject to sin, is understood: When this takes place, the human being – the “new man” – will no longer be enslaved by sin.<sup>885</sup>

Thus, Origen’s ideas about sin could be used for different purposes: While Pelagius made use of his ideas about progression in the Christian life and the possibility of reaching a state in which the flesh would no longer fight the spirit, Jerome’s anti-Pelagian polemics resonates the aspect of Origen’s thought which emphasizes the impurity of the fleshly existence and this ontological sense of sin. To this reception we now turn.

## 2.5. Jerome about the Relativity of Human Perfection

### 2.5.1. *The Fleshly Existence Preventing Sinlessness*

In a letter to the virgin Demetrias (*Letter* 130), written during the Pelagian controversy,<sup>886</sup> Jerome speaks about how the apostle Paul subjected his body and still, heated by the violence of sensual passion, made himself the spokesman of the human race, saying: “Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?”<sup>887</sup> Jerome writes that as long as we are in the tabernacle of this body (*tabernaculo corporis*) and are enveloped by fragile flesh (*fragili carne circumdamur*), we cannot root out the passions (*affectus et perturbationes*), we can only restrain them.<sup>888</sup> It ought to be pointed out that these ideas were in no sense

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<sup>884</sup> *CommRom* 6.11 (SC543, 196-200). Pelagius understood the carnal person as made up of two persons. See Scheck 2008, 83.

<sup>885</sup> *CommRom* 5.9.7-9, SC 539, 492-494.

<sup>886</sup> Jerome does not explicitly mention the Pelagians in this letter. This may be explained by the fact that Demetrias’ family, the Anicii, had good contacts with Pelagius, who, like Jerome, wrote a letter with advises to the virgin. However, he brings up the remaining danger of Origenism in his letter to Demetrias. Kelly (1975, 313) has interpreted this as a way for Jerome to attack Pelagianism, and that this is the “heresy” that he actually aims at refuting. This is questionable, because the connection that Jerome made between Origenism and Pelagianism when it came to Christian doctrine, centred around the question of perfection and sinlessness. In *Letter* 130, however, the issue he focuses on is that of the origin of souls. I do not know of Jerome anywhere associating the Pelagians with Origen when it comes to this teaching. Also, the fact that he refers to a writing in which he had refuted the heresy at hand, which is presumably *Letter* 124, to Avitus (the letter to Ctesiphon still not having been written) makes the idea that he here has the Pelagians in mind utterly questionable. If this were the case, he presumably would have focused on the faults in Origen of which he accused Pelagius as well.

<sup>887</sup> *Ep* 130.9 (CSEL 56/1, 188-189), *Rom* 7:24. References are also made to *Rom* 7:18: “... I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot do it”, and *Rom* 8:8-9: “... those who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit”.

<sup>888</sup> *Ep* 130.13 (CSEL 56/1, 193). Cf. the letter to Salvina (*Ep* 79), in which Jerome writes about the impossibility of being free from the “predispositions to passion” which the Greeks call

new in Jerome's writings; rather, they – and many of the biblical passages referred to – had been part of his ascetical theology from a very early stage of his career.<sup>889</sup> We also recognize these ideas from his polemics against Jovinian, his former antagonist whom Jerome now sought to associate with the new “heresy” of Pelagianism. As we have already noted, Jovinian was included among the heretical precursors of the Pelagians. Jerome specifically connects the Pelagian teaching to Jovinian's second thesis (that those who had been baptized could not be overthrown, or tempted, by the devil).<sup>890</sup> As we have seen, Jerome also pointed out, against Jovinian, the uncertainty of the life of the Christian, who is always involved in the struggle between the spirit and the flesh. Several of the biblical passages that Jerome uses in his polemics against the Pelagians had been used in his refutation of Jovinian as well.<sup>891</sup>

This being said, the view that the fleshly existence definitely excludes the possibility that a secure state would be reached, gained a central place in Jerome's anthropological and eschatological thought during the Pelagian controversy: It even became the most important component of his anti-Pelagian polemics. Against what he had presented as the Pelagian idea about apatheia, Jerome sought to demonstrate that the fleshly existence necessarily excludes passionlessness, and, as a consequence, it excludes the kind of perfection envisaged by the Pelagians. The flesh, in Jerome's use of the concept in his anti-Pelagian polemics, is necessarily bound up with passions (*perturbationes*). The passions, in their turn, tend to take on the single meaning of sexual instinct.

Importantly, Jerome does not only deny that passions can be avoided, but he also claims that because the passions cannot be avoided, sin cannot be avoided either. Against Pelagius' ideas about the possibilities of the human will, Jerome points out its limitations: Although we want to do good, we do not always do so,

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προπάθειαι. Everyone has to decide whether to accept or reject such thoughts. The soul is torn between the works of the spirit and the works of the flesh (Gal 5:19-23). To experience passions is human; to resist them is Christian (*Ep* 79.9, CSEL 55, p. 98-99). Cf. *Dial* 2.5: Every human being has felt anger, and it is a sin, *iustitia autem iram celeri paenitudine mitigare* (CCSL 80, 60). As in *Ep* 79, reference is made to Eph 4:26 (“Be angry but do not sin”).

<sup>889</sup> See discussion in chapter 3.

<sup>890</sup> In *Letter* 133, Jovinian is mentioned among the heretical precursors of the Pelagians. What Jerome has written on that subject thus applies, he claims, to the Pelagians as well. *Ep* 133.3, 247, l. 19-21.

<sup>891</sup> Proverbs 20:9 (also in *Dial* 1.40, 2.4); Job 14:4-5 (LXX); Psalm 51.5; Romans 11.32. In *Dial* 1.13, the Pelagian argues from 1 John 5:18-19, which also Jovinian is said to have done in support of his second thesis. The words in the Lord's prayer, “Lead us not into temptation”, are used in anti-Pelagian polemics, and in this an association is made to Jovinian: *tu cum Ioviniano loqueris, eos qui plena fide baptismum consecuti sunt, temptari ultra et peccare non posse* (*Dial* 3.15, CCSL 80, 119). See also *Dial* 2.5, CCSL 80, 60: *Quamdiu enim uiuimus, in certamine sumus, et quamdiu in certamine, nulla est certa uictoria, quae etiam apostolo fortissime proelianti in futuro seculo reseruat.*



because of our fleshly existence. He quotes Romans 7:23 (“I see in my members another law...”),<sup>892</sup> and 7:19 (“For I do not do the good I want...”), and, commenting on the latter passage, he claims that wishing to be without sin is not enough to resist it. Reference is also made to Galatians 5:17 (a text that he had used even before the Pelagian controversy),<sup>893</sup> and Jerome claims that: “... God is one thing, the human being another; the weakness of the flesh is one thing, the strength of the spirit another”.<sup>894</sup> Concerning the strength of the spirit in contrast to the weakness of the flesh, reference is made to Matthew 26:41 (“Stay awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak”).<sup>895</sup> Origen had made use of the same biblical passage, claiming that the Spirit helps our weakness which “comes from the weakness of the flesh”.<sup>896</sup>

This is not, Jerome points out, to say with the Manichaeans that there is a nature that is essentially evil. However, from the testimony of the Apostle, he concludes that a kind of “necessity” or “compulsion”<sup>897</sup> is present. Either a person does not have human members, or, if it is not possible for a human not to have members, voluptas and luxuria will war in these members.<sup>898</sup> Although Jerome never developed a theology of original sin, it is clear that he saw sin as inseparable from the postlapsarian condition of human beings. In his argumentation for the universality of sin, he refers, both in *Letter* 133 and the *Dialogue*, to the words in Psalm 51: “Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me”. As we may remember, this was a passage referred to by Origen as well, as he sought to demonstrate the defilement of the human condition.<sup>899</sup> This is one of many examples of how Jerome shares exegetical strategies with Origen.<sup>900</sup>

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<sup>892</sup> *Ep* 133.2, CSEL 56/1, 243. Cf. Origen, *CommRom* 4.4.5; 4.8.5; 5.6.4.

<sup>893</sup> See for instance *Commentary on Galatians* 3.5.17, *Adversus Jovinianum* 2.3.

<sup>894</sup> *Ep* 133.9, CSEL 56/1, 254: *aliud esse deum, aliud hominem, aliam carnis fragilitatem, aliam spiritus fortitudinem.*

<sup>895</sup> *Ep* 133.9. (Cf. *AdvJov* 2.3).

<sup>896</sup> *CommRom* 7.4.4, SC 543, 294.

<sup>897</sup> ... *quae necessitas illius inpediat uoluntatem, quae tanta uis odio digna imperet facere, ut non, quod uult, sed, quod odit et non uult, facere compellatur* (*Ep* 133.9, CSEL 56/1, 254-255).

<sup>898</sup> *Dial* 2.19, CCSL 80, 78, see also *Dial* 3.11, 112.

<sup>899</sup> *CommRom* 5.9.10; 5.9.12.

<sup>900</sup> Also Proverbs 20:9 (“Who can say, ‘I have made my heart clean’”) was used by Jerome in arguing against the Pelagians in *Ep* 133, and he had used it in *Against Jovinian* as well. Cf. Origen in *CommRom* 3.6.7. Likewise, “all our righteous deeds are like a filthy cloth” (Is 64:6), which we have seen to be used by Origen in arguing that the human condition is a defiled state, is referred to by Jerome in *Dial* 2.25, in an argument that all human beings are unclean (CCSL 80, 90).

Jerome had certainly expressed his view of the close association between flesh and sin before the Pelagian controversy. However, it receives an important polemical function in his anti-Pelagian critique: By associating flesh and sin so closely, Jerome could claim that Pelagius, who believed in the possibility of human sinlessness, thought that passions could be avoided and that a kind of perfection, which only belongs to God, could be reached. However, it is important to remember the two categories of sin discussed above, that is, sin in the ontological sense and sin in the juridical sense. While there is nothing to indicate that Pelagius taught that a state without passions could be reached in the earthly life – even though he held the view that, at least in theory, a state without committing sins was possible – what we see in Jerome is a tendency to blend these two aspects in his polemics in order to make the opponent’s position appear not only absurd, but even blasphemous, by ascribing divine attributes to human beings.

### 2.5.2. *Divine Perfection and Human Perfection*

At the beginning of *Letter 133*, we find Jerome reacting to what he presents as the Pelagian idea about passionlessness in the following way:

This is to take away what is human from the human, and to express a wish that the human being, while situated in the body, can be without it, rather than to teach what the Apostle says: “Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?”<sup>901</sup>

In this argument against the Pelagian idea of *apatheia*, we recognize Jerome’s insistence on the continuing fight between the spirit and the flesh, as long as a human being lives in an earthly body. In what follows, we will look more closely at his way of applying the distinction between divine and human perfection in his anti-Pelagian polemics, as well as his reliance on Origen in this regard.

An important part of Jerome’s argumentation was the idea that the perfection reached by holy persons on earth was a relative, or imperfect, perfection, as compared to the absolute perfection of God. In the *Dialogue*, the Pelagian interlocutor names a few persons who he considers to have been without sin. Giving the example of Job from the Old Testament, and of Zacharia and Elizabeth from the New Testament, he comments, from the manner in which these persons are described: “I think that they are free from sin and that they do not lack

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<sup>901</sup> *Ep 133.1*, CSEL 56/1, 242: *hoc est enim hominem ex homine tollere et in corpore constitutum esse sine corpore et optare potius quam docere dicente apostolo: miser ego homo, quis me liberabit de corpore mortis huius? Rom 7:24. Cf. Origen’s use of this passage in CommRom 5.9.10-11; 5.10.6.*

anything that pertains to righteousness”.<sup>902</sup> The anti-Pelagian reply consists in pointing out that, in the cases of Job and Zacharia, other things are said that show that they were not altogether without fault. This may be compared to an argument given by Origen in his commentary on Romans, where he, commenting on the words “death passed through to all men in that all have sinned”,<sup>903</sup> gave several examples from the Scriptures in order to show that all have sinned, even righteous persons.<sup>904</sup>

“This is the true wisdom in man”, Jerome claims, “to know that he is imperfect; and, so to say, the perfection of all the righteous, living in the flesh, is imperfect”.<sup>905</sup> There are thus two kinds of perfection (*perfectiones*).<sup>906</sup> The kind of perfection that pertains to human beings is clearly characterized by contingency. Job, Zacharia, and Elizabeth are righteous in a way that can change into unrighteousness; they are not righteous according to the perfection that can never change, of which it is said: “I am God, and I change not”.<sup>907</sup>

In arguing for the universality of sin among human beings, and specifically the relativity of human perfection, a method used by Jerome was to contrast fallen humankind, not only with God, but also with Christ in the flesh. One aspect of this was to stress that although He was without sin, not even Christ was unaffected by His existence in the flesh. Jerome points out that even Christ was tempted by the devil.<sup>908</sup> This was an argument that he had used against Jovinian as well, refuting the position that after baptism, Christians cannot be tempted by the devil. The Pelagians are presented as holding the same view as Jovinian concerning baptism, namely, that a person who has been baptized with complete faith cannot be tempted, or that such a person can avoid sin if he/she wants to.<sup>909</sup> Since even Christ was affected by His fleshly existence, Jerome asks how we, “who are altogether fleshly and every day fight the works of the spirit”, can do anything we wish to do?<sup>910</sup>

We can certainly use our free will to avoid sinning, he says, but because of our human weakness, we can only do it in a limited, temporary, imperfect way, rather

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<sup>902</sup> *Dial* 1.12, CCSL 80, 14: *puto quod peccato careant et nulla re indigeant quae ad iustitiam pertinet*. He refers to Job 1:1 and 6:25 (LXX), and to Lk 1:5-6.

<sup>903</sup> Rom 5:12.

<sup>904</sup> *CommRom* 5.1.20, SC 539, 376.

<sup>905</sup> *Dial* 1.15, CCSL 80, 19.

<sup>906</sup> *Dial* 1.16, CCSL 80, 20.

<sup>907</sup> Mal 3:6.

<sup>908</sup> *Ep* 130.10, CSEL 56/1, 190.

<sup>909</sup> *Dial* 2.15, CCSL 80, 73. He speaks of *successor Iouiniani*.

<sup>910</sup> *Dial* 2.14, CCSL 80, 72: *qui toti carnei sumus et quotidie spiritus operibus repugnamus*.

than perfectly and consistently.<sup>911</sup> To be sinless forever belongs to God alone, and to Christ who, “being the Word made flesh, was not subjected to the damages and sins of the flesh”.<sup>912</sup> In *Letter* 133, Jerome writes, concerning the impossibility of keeping God’s commandments, that it was written of Christ *quasi proprium* – as a characteristic – that he “did not commit any sin, nor was guile found in His mouth” (1 Peter 2:22). And he continues: “If I too have this [that is, sinlessness] together with Christ, what characteristic will He have?”<sup>913</sup>

Jerome had referred to 1 Peter 2:22 also in *Against Jovinian*,<sup>914</sup> to make the same point: Christ is the only person who has been sinless while living in the flesh. Neither baptism nor individual struggle can make a human being share this characteristic of Christ.

Origen had also made a clear distinction between the humanity of Christ and all other humanity. As we have already seen, Origen, referring to Romans 8:3, held that the likeness of Christ’s flesh to our flesh of sin meant that His flesh was not a flesh of sin, and this was explained by the fact that He was not conceived through a sexual act. Thus, we see again how the universality of sin is associated with sexuality. Although He possessed a human body, Christ did not possess the “contamination of sin, which is passed down to those who are conceived by the operation of lust”.<sup>915</sup> Like Jerome, Origen applied the words in 1 Peter 2:22 to Christ, in order to explain how He differs from other human beings.<sup>916</sup>

### 2.5.3. *Nature and Qualities – Relative Perfection Understood as Imitation*

So wherein does human perfection consist during the earthly life, according to Jerome? His ideas are actually very similar to Pelagius’: Human perfection is understood in terms of imitation of Christ.<sup>917</sup> The greater the imitation, the higher the perfection. Still, Jerome blames the Pelagians for being heretical, in the sense of understanding the perfect human being as a person who is equal to God. In what follows, I will show that an important distinction that Jerome uses in this

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<sup>911</sup> *Dial* 3.12, CCSL 80, 113: ... *sed hoc pro modo et tempore et condicione fragilitatis humanae...*

<sup>912</sup> *Dial* 3.12, CCSL 80, 113: ... *qui Verbum caro factus carnis detrimenta et peccata non pertulit.*

<sup>913</sup> *Ep* 133.8, CCSL 80, 252-253: *de illo scriptum est quasi proprium: qui peccatum non fecit nec dolus inuentus est in ore eius. si hoc et mihi commune cum Christo est, quid ille habebit proprium? Cf. Dial* 1.23.

<sup>914</sup> *AdvJov* 2.2.

<sup>915</sup> *CommRom* 6.12.4, SC 543, 206: ... *pollutionem tamen peccati quae ex concupiscentiae motu conceptis traditur omnino...* Almost the same thing is said in *CommRom* 5.9.10. See also 3.5.6: *Quamuis enim carnem naturae nostrae susceperit ex incontaminata tamen uirgine assumtam et casta Sancti Spiritus operatione formatam.*

<sup>916</sup> *CommRom* 3.5.4; 5.9.3; 5.7.9.

<sup>917</sup> For the importance of imitation in Pelagius’ thought, see Evans 1948, 52; 63; 107; 111.

argumentation is that between nature and qualities. We have already seen, in the fourth and fifth chapters, that this distinction was important in Jerome's ideas about transformation.

Precisely this distinction was very important in Origen's thought as well. Origen explains that when we imitate Christ by not sinning, this is, precisely, an imitation, a being like Christ, as opposed to being what Christ is – completely sinless. Origen points out that we are not said to be planted together “into His death” (*morti eius*), but “into the likeness of His death” (*similitudini mortis eius*).<sup>918</sup> We recognize the distinction between transformation into and transformation into likeness of, which was basic in Origen's, as well as in Jerome's, idea of change. Christ committed no sin,<sup>919</sup> but all other humans do.<sup>920</sup> We cannot die the same death that Jesus died to sin, in such a way that we would not have sin in us at all. However, we can possess the likeness of His death, and we can keep ourselves from sinning by imitating Him and by following in His footsteps. However, we cannot be without sin altogether – this “belongs to Christ alone”.<sup>921</sup>

Origen distinguished between the virtues being present in God by nature (*per naturam*) and in the human being by imitation (*per imitationem*). The human who possesses the virtues is perfect, but only accidentally and not in an essential way. Imitation is always a matter of choice: One could choose between God and the devil.<sup>922</sup> Righteousness is, according to Origen, found first of all in God, but also in those who imitate Him, and unrighteousness is found first of all in the devil, but also of those who imitate him.<sup>923</sup>

One way in which Origen expressed the distinction essential / accidental was by speaking of Christ's soul as a jar containing oil, and other souls as taking part of the scent. The Christian person can lose the scent by moving too far away from the jar, while Christ Himself cannot lose the scent.<sup>924</sup> Christians can be christi,<sup>925</sup> but Christ alone is Christ by nature. Also, Christians can be called gods through their participation (*metousia*) in the divinity of God, but they are not gods by nature (*ousia*). In a homily on Exodus, Origen writes that beings can be called gods

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<sup>918</sup> Cf. Rom 6:5.

<sup>919</sup> Reference to 1 Pt 2:22.

<sup>920</sup> Reference to Jb 14:4-5 (LXX).

<sup>921</sup> *CommRom* 5.9.3, SC 539, 486: *Hoc est ergo quod recipere potest humana natura ut in similitudine mortis eius fiat dum ipsum imitando non peccat. Nam omnino ex integro nescire peccatum solius Christi est. Cf. CommCant* 3.

<sup>922</sup> Origen, *HomLev* 4.3, SC 286, 166-168.

<sup>923</sup> Origen, *CommRom* 3.1.7, SC 539, 46.

<sup>924</sup> *DePrinc* 2.6.6 (SC 252, 320-322); 4.4.9 (SC 268, 422-426). About Christ's indwelling in the believer, see also *DePrinc* 1.1.3 (SC 252, 94).

<sup>925</sup> *CommMt* 12.11; *CCels* 4.79.12-13 (SC 147, 378).

because of grace and participation in God: ... *deos illos dicit qui per gratiam et participationem Dei dii appellantur*. They are called gods by grace, “but no one is like God either in power or nature” (*nullus tamen Deo similis inuenitur uel in potentia uel in natura*). When it is said that we will be like the Lord (1 John 3:2), this resemblance does not concern nature, but grace (*similitudo tamen haec non ad naturam, sed ad gratiam reuocatur*).<sup>926</sup>

In his *Commentary on Romans*, Origen understands the justice of God to be Christ, and he can speak of justice in this sense as an indwelling presence. In one text, he compares the human soul to a house. It can, if it follows the spirit, invite the virtues – that is, Christ – to dwell within it, or it can follow the will of the flesh and allow the devil and the vices to enter.<sup>927</sup> Christ is the *iustitia* through which human beings may become *iusti*.

This kind of argumentation is applied by Jerome against the Pelagians, as he sought to show that their idea about perfection implied that human beings could be equal to God.<sup>928</sup> Against the Pelagians, he pointed out that likeness is one thing, equality another.<sup>929</sup> Like Origen, he argued that God alone is immortal by nature (*per naturam*) and not by grace (*per gratiam*). While God is called the light, immortal, and wise, other beings can have these as attributes. Jerome explains that human perfection does not come from nature, but from grace, and thus, by comparison to God, those who appear to be perfect are imperfect.<sup>930</sup> Human perfection is, like all qualities possessed by humans, contingent and dependent on the degree of likeness to God, while God's perfection is unchangeable. Much of this argumentation, we may note, was already seen in *Against Jovinian*.<sup>931</sup>

Jerome made it an important point in his anti-Pelagian polemics to show that the Pelagians did not respect the genuine difference between the divine and the created natures. As I argued in the fourth chapter that Jerome's idea about change in the resurrection body was indebted to Origen's way of explaining human transformation, I find it plausible that also when expressing, against the Pelagians, his idea of human perfection in contrast to divine perfection, Jerome depended on Origen's thought.

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<sup>926</sup> *HomEx* 6.5 (SC 321, 182-184). See also (about divinization) *HomEx* 8.2 (246-248); *CCels* 3.37 (SC 136, 88); *CommMt* 16.16 (GCS 10, 528).

<sup>927</sup> *CommRom* 1.21.9.

<sup>928</sup> *Ep* 133.10, CSEL 56/1, 256: *tu ipse, qui perfectam et deo aequalem in hominibus iustitiam iactitas...*

<sup>929</sup> *Dial* 1.21, CCSL 80, 27: ... *aliud esse similitudinem, aliud aequalitatem*.

<sup>930</sup> *Dial* 2.7, CCSL 80, 63.

<sup>931</sup> *AdvJov* 2.29, PL 23, 326: Jerome says that we are not one in the Father and the Son according to nature, but according to grace: ... *non nos secundum naturam, sed secundum gratiam unum esse in Patre et Filio*.

#### 2.5.4. Perfection on Earth and in the World to Come

Another way in which Jerome's anti-Pelagian argumentation shows similarities with Origen's ideas about sin and imperfection concerns the difference between perfection in the earthly life and in the world to come. In several texts throughout his career, Jerome expressed the idea that, in this life there is struggle, while security and victory are preserved for the world to come, a point to which he returns in his *Dialogue against the Pelagians*.<sup>932</sup> He makes a distinction between our life in the flesh, in which perfection will always be relative – imperfect, when compared to the future perfection – and the future life, when this mortal will be clothed in immortality, and real perfection will be reached in the sense that God will be all in all.<sup>933</sup> Referring to 1 Corinthians 13, Jerome argues that in this life, we have the virtues *in umbra... et imagine*, knowing in part and prophesying in part.<sup>934</sup>

Referring to Philippians 3:12-13, Jerome explains that Paul does not see himself as perfect already, having only obtained in part (*ex parte accepisse*) and understood in part (*ex parte comprehendisse*). Forgetting what is past and longing for the future, Paul clearly shows, according to Jerome, that he is not content with the present.<sup>935</sup> The perfection of the righteous, who live in the flesh, is imperfect.<sup>936</sup> The perfection that can be attained is a perfection according to the degree of human frailty (*secundum humanae fragilitatis*), and a perfection that implies knowledge of not yet having been made perfect.<sup>937</sup>

In his preface to the *Commentary on Romans*, Origen makes it clear, based on the words in Philippians 3:12-15, that there are two kinds of perfection: "... one which consists in the satisfying of the virtues, according to which he [Paul] says that he is not perfect,<sup>938</sup> the other is when someone advances so far that he is not able to fall away or to look backwards, according to which he was saying, 'Let those of us then who are perfect be of this mind'".<sup>939</sup> Although Origen appears to

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<sup>932</sup> *Dial* 2.24, CCSL 80, 88.

<sup>933</sup> *Dial* 1.19, CCSL 80, 25. See also *Dial* 1.20, CCSL 80, 25.

<sup>934</sup> 1 Cor 13:9-10, 12. *Dial* 3.12, CCSL 80, 113-114. None of the saints can have all the virtues while in the "frail body", because now we prophesy in part, and we know in part... Cf. *Dial* 1.15; 19.

<sup>935</sup> *Ep* 133.6, CSEL 56/1, 250-251. This passage is also used in polemics against Jovinian (*AdvJov* 2.33). In that case, Jerome argued against Jovinian's idea that no development would take place after baptism, claiming that we ought to continue struggling to become better (which, of course, is part of his idea of a hierarchy of Christians – those who only keep their baptismal vow are seen as inferior to those who do more).

<sup>936</sup> *Dial* 1.15, CCSL 80, 19: *cunctorum in carne iustorum imperfecta perfectio est*.

<sup>937</sup> *Dial* 1.15, CCSL 80, 20.

<sup>938</sup> Phil 3:12-13: "Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal..."

<sup>939</sup> *CommRom* pref. Orig. 3. Cf. Phil 3:13-15.

have been more optimistic about human possibilities during the earthly life, he certainly made a clear distinction between the relative perfection that can be achieved on earth and the absolute perfection awaiting in the world to come.

In the same commentary, Origen writes that as long as a person lives in the body, he/she cannot be justified,<sup>940</sup> but only when he/she leaves the body and the struggle of the present life.<sup>941</sup> He refers to Sirach 11:28 (“Call no one happy before his death...”), to which Jerome also refers in the *Dialogue*.<sup>942</sup> Likewise, Origen’s statement in the same passage that the least one in the kingdom of God is greater than the greatest person who lives in the earthly body, is an argument used by Jerome in *Against Jovinian*<sup>943</sup> as well as in *Dialogue against the Pelagians*.<sup>944</sup>

As even the Apostle knows in part and understands in part,<sup>945</sup> how can anyone have “understanding”,<sup>946</sup> Origen asks. Only when putting aside the earthly body can we understand “face to face”; now, our understanding is as in a mirror and a riddle.<sup>947</sup> Origen argues that in the present life we may attain the form and shadow of the virtues, but not the virtues themselves – this will happen when perfection comes.<sup>948</sup> A biblical passage used by Jerome against the Pelagians is Wisd 9:15 (“A perishable body weighs down the soul, and this earthly tent burdens the thoughtful mind”),<sup>949</sup> and this was used by Origen as well.<sup>950</sup>

This strong eschatological emphasis when discussing perfection is certainly characteristic of Origen’s thought, with his overall idea of the realities on earth being shadows of heavenly realities, combined with a conviction that the present realities do not only anticipate, but also participate in what is to come. While on earth, they are no longer on earth. Therefore, it is not surprising that Jerome’s argument from earthly imperfection in contrast to heavenly perfection, resonates with ideas expressed by Origen. Jerome makes a clear distinction between the perfect church in the future and the church on earth. In the future, all will be subjected to God, and He will be all in all.<sup>951</sup> Also in the body of the church,

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<sup>940</sup> Commenting on Rom 3:10: “There is no one who is righteous...”.

<sup>941</sup> *CommRom* 3.2.16.

<sup>942</sup> *Dial* 2.5, CCSL 80, 60.

<sup>943</sup> *AdvJov* 2.27.

<sup>944</sup> *Dial* 1.17, SSCL 80, 23.

<sup>945</sup> Cf. 1 Cor 3:9.

<sup>946</sup> Rom 3:11: “there is no one who has understanding”.

<sup>947</sup> Cf. 1 Cor 3:12.

<sup>948</sup> *CommRom* 6.3.8; cf. 1 Cor. 13:10 and Jerome, *Dial* 3.12, CCSL 80, 113-114.

<sup>949</sup> *Dial* 2.3, CCSL 80, 55-56.

<sup>950</sup> *CommRom* 6.3.8; 7.2.7; Cf. HomNm 21.1; 23.11, DePrinc 2.6.7.

<sup>951</sup> 1 Cor 15:28.



everyone is not subject to the head, Christ, because some members are still resisting. No one, while living in the fragile, mortal and corruptible flesh (... *fragili carne circumdamur, immo mortali et corruptibili*), can become subjected to God in all virtues.<sup>952</sup> It is not until this mortal has been clothed in immortality, and the corruptible in incorruption, that God will be all in all, and everyone will possess all the virtues perfectly.<sup>953</sup>

## 2.6. Conclusion

Both Jerome and Pelagius were dependent on Origen's Pauline exegesis. In this section, I have argued that Origen's understanding of sin as an ontological category became important to Jerome in his anti-Pelagian polemics. By rhetorically blurring this understanding of sin and the understanding of sin as voluntary acts, he sought to present the Pelagian position as not only absurd and contrary to experience, but also as blasphemous. The Pelagians were accused of pride and presented as thinking that human beings could reach the same perfection as God possesses.

Except the general idea of the human, fleshly existence as defiled, Jerome seems to have appropriated some more specific ways in which Origen explained the relativity of human perfection. One is the distinction made between divine and human perfection, and, even more specifically, the distinction between the humanity of Christ and all other humanity. Connected to this point is another distinction, that between nature and qualities: Human perfection depends on the human's imitation of God. Finally, a distinction is made between perfection on earth and perfection in the world to come.

We will now pass to our second theological theme, that concerning the freedom of the human will in relation to divine grace.

## 3. Free Will and Grace

### 3.1. The Limitations of the Human Will and the Need of Grace

According to Jerome, the Pelagians use the word grace (*gratia*) as reference to the commandments of the Law and the free will that makes it possible for human beings to obey them, rather than to the help from God in individual actions (*non*

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<sup>952</sup> *Dial* 1.19, CCSL 80, 25: ... *beatos esse nos credimus, si in singulis uirtutibus partibusque uirtutum Deo subiecti simus.*

<sup>953</sup> *Dial* 1.20. Cf. *Dial* 2.30: We are necessarily subject to sin until *corruptiuum hoc atque mortale incorruptione et immortalitate mutetur.*

*per singula opera eius nitamur et regamur auxilio*).<sup>954</sup> They are presented as believing that this is enough for a human being to be righteous and to attain salvation. Thus, the Pelagians are not said to expressly deny the need for grace, but their way of understanding it is, in Jerome's opinion, inadequate: Rather than seeing grace as something that human beings are in constant need of, they use it to refer to the the creation of the human being (*conditionem hominis*).<sup>955</sup>

According to Jerome's presentation, the Pelagians claim that if a person needs the help of another to do what is good, then the free will is destroyed, and thereby, human responsibility. It is not the human being who deserves reward or punishment, but this must be attributed to God's help. Rather, the grace that we need is, according to Jerome's Pelagians, the free will with which we are created, and which makes it possible for us to choose the good.<sup>956</sup>

Although there is a certain amount of truth in Jerome's claim that the creation of humankind had an important place in Pelagius' theology of grace, his presentation of the Pelagian teaching is clearly one-sided, having the purpose of showing that the Pelagians despised the help of God by thinking that the human being had all the necessary capacities for salvation within him/herself.<sup>957</sup>

Against this, Jerome asserts that our human condition is not enough in itself to do good. We always need God's help, also for individual deeds (*in singulis rebus, per singula opera*).<sup>958</sup> His grace is not given once and for all, but is bestowed on us continuously, when we seek it.<sup>959</sup> This idea of a constant need of grace, as opposed

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<sup>954</sup> *Ep* 133.5, CSEL 56/1, 248. See also *Ep* 133.10, about the constant need of God's help. In the *Dialogue*, the orthodox voice, Atticus, wants his opponent, Critobulus, to explain, when he claims that human beings can be without sin "with God's grace" (*cum Dei gratia*, 1.1), whether he by this refers to what God has given us in creation (more specifically, free will), or to the help that He continuously gives us in every single act (*in singulis rebus*), *Dial* 1.2, 7. Critobulus thinks that some actions can be performed without the help of God (*Dial* 1.3).

<sup>955</sup> *Ep* 133.6, CSEL 56/1, 249, 251. Cf. Critobulus in *Dial* 1.2: *quod tales conditi sumus. Dial* 1.28, 35: ... *dum gratiam eius non ad singula refert opera, sed ad conditionis ac legis et liberi arbitrii potestatem.*

<sup>956</sup> *Dial* 1.4, CCSL 80, 8-9 *Ep* 133.5, CSEL 56/1, 249.

<sup>957</sup> Pelagius understood grace as 1) the rational will, given at creation, 2) the Law of Moses, 3) forgiveness of sins in baptism (redemption through the death of Christ), 4) the teaching of Christ, and 5) the example of Christ (see Evans 1968, 111; cf. Bohlin 1957, 15-22). According to Pelagius, once human beings had the teaching and the example of Christ to follow, their will was enough to do so. Nothing in their nature prevented them from it, because all they needed was to be enlightened once more and thus reconnected to their inner nature, which was as good as it was in Adam before his sin. However, as seen above, Pelagius' concept of grace included much more than what was given to the human being at the creation.

<sup>958</sup> *Dial* 1.2, CCSL 80, 7.

<sup>959</sup> *Ep* 133.6. References to 1 Cor 4:7, Rom 9:16, Phil 2:13. Also *Dial* 2.6, CCSL 80, 63: ... *non nostrae solum esse potestatis facere quod uelimus, sed et Dei clementiae, si nostram adiuet uoluntatem.* Rom 9:16 is also used in *Dial* 2.7.

to the Pelagian idea (as presented by Jerome) of grace given once and for all (*semel*), must be understood according to what has been said previously about Jerome's view of human (im)perfection: According to Jerome, the human being can never, while living in the flesh, reach a state of certain victory, that is, a state in which no more help from God is needed. Always being dragged down by the flesh, we are in constant need of God's help in order not to fall.

In the discussion about grace and free will, Jerome returns to the accusation that the Pelagians are trying to erase the difference between God and human beings, boasting that through the freedom of the will, human beings are as powerful as God, and do not need help from anyone else.<sup>960</sup> The charge of blasphemy is forcefully expressed in the following passage, the words being those of a heresiologically constructed Pelagian, speaking to God:

“Go away from me, because I am pure.<sup>961</sup> I have no need of you”. You gave me free will once and for all, so that I can do what I want. Why do you interfere again, so that I cannot do anything unless you complete your gift in me?<sup>962</sup>

Jerome's main strategy in presenting the Pelagian idea of free will as heretical (and we remember his need to defend his own view on this matter), is thus clearly part of his larger anti-Pelagian scheme: The Pelagian idea of free will implies, according to Jerome, a view of the human being as something other than human, that is, as equal to God.<sup>963</sup>

The Pelagians claim, according to Jerome, that the will is enough in order to be without sin; if we are still sinners, it depends on the will being imperfect.<sup>964</sup> They cannot, says Jerome, point out anyone who has been without sin, but they claim that it is possible.<sup>965</sup> Against this, he argues that it is impossible to be sinless, precisely from the fact that no person is known to have been so.<sup>966</sup> In *Letter* 133.8-9, Jerome frequently returns to this theme. What Christian is there, he asks, who

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<sup>960</sup> *Ep* 133.5, CSEL 56/1, 249: ... *per liberum arbitrium non homines propriae uoluntatis sed dei potentiae factos esse se iactant, qui nullius ope indiget.*

<sup>961</sup> *Is* 65:5.

<sup>962</sup> *Ep* 133.6, CSEL 56/1, 251: ‘*recede a me, quia mundus sum; non habeo te necessarium*’. *dedisti enim mihi semel arbitrii libertatem, ut faciam, quod uoluerio; quid rursum te ingeris, ut nihil possim facere, nisi tu in me tua dona compleueris?*

<sup>963</sup> Cf. *AdvJov* 2.2.

<sup>964</sup> *Dial* 1.7-8, 10-11.

<sup>965</sup> *Dial* 1.8, where the Pelagian is presented as making use of the distinction possibility and actuality (τῆ δυνάμει, τῆ ἐνεργείᾳ), CCSL 80, 11.

<sup>966</sup> *Dial* 1.9, reference to *Eccl* 1.9-10; also in 133.2. Also *Dial* 1.11: *aut enim quod potest fieri, aliquando factum est, aut si nunquam factum est, fieri non posse concede*, (CCSL 80, 14).

does not wish to do what is good?<sup>967</sup> Many references to Paul's letter to the Romans are made to make the point that wishing to do good is not enough in order actually to do it.<sup>968</sup>

The idea of free will, Jerome asserts, is not in any way contrary to the idea that we need the help of God in every single action.<sup>969</sup> However, it is clearly important for Jerome to emphasize the limitations of the free will in salvation, since he claims that, to a certain extent, free will ceases to be where there is mercy and grace. Free will, he explains, exists only insofar as we wish for and strive for something. However, it is only possible for us to accomplish it with the help of God.<sup>970</sup> We will see further on, when we come to the theme of future judgment and salvation, that Jerome describes the Pelagian view on human freedom as limiting God's mercy. The statement that the free will does to an extent cease to be is quite radical, not least considering how important the idea about free will had been in Jerome's thought. This emphasis must be understood as his way of countering an idea that, according to his presentation of it, ascribed too much importance to free will at the expense of God's mercy. Contrary to this, Jerome's orthodox self-presentation plays down the importance of free will, that is, of the human role in salvation, in order to elevate the importance of divine mercy.

We have already seen that while Pelagius was indebted to Origen's ideas about the human free will, Origen had also expressed ideas that became useful in anti-Pelagian polemics. The distinction between nature and qualities, which we discussed in the previous part, is essential also for Jerome's understanding of grace in opposition to the Pelagians: He presents their idea of grace as implying that they do not see God's help as needed, thus, they erase the boundary between divine and human by ascribing to human beings a power that can only belong to God.

There is good reason to believe that Origen's *Commentary on Romans* provided Jerome with an understanding of grace which had a strong emphasis on the action of God in the transformation of the human being. An important theme in the commentary is the idea of the indwelling of Christ in the believer as justifying grace. Origen combined the idea about imitation by free choice with the idea that Christ inhabits the believer and forms him/her from within. Perfect likeness to Christ is only possible through the indwelling of Christ. The example and the choice to follow it is not enough, but a real presence of the Lord is necessary.

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<sup>967</sup> See also *Dial* 1.20, CCSL 80, 26.

<sup>968</sup> Rom 3:20; 7:22-25; 7:14-20.

<sup>969</sup> *Dial* 1.5, CCSL 80, 9.

<sup>970</sup> *Dial* 3.10, CCSL 80, 111: *Vbi autem misericordia et gratia est, liberum ex parte cessat arbitrium, quod in eo tantum est, ut uelimus atque cupiamus et placitis tribuamus assensum; iam in Domini potestate est, ut quod cupimus, laboramus ac nitimur, illius ope et auxilio implere ualeamus.*

Divinization, becoming gods, is possible for human beings through this grace of participation.<sup>971</sup>

Connected to this, and an important aspect of the distinction nature / qualities, is the idea that Christ is the virtues (while human beings can have the virtues by imitating Him); an idea expressed by Jerome as well.<sup>972</sup> According to Origen, Christ is the *iustitia* through which human beings may become *iusti*.<sup>973</sup> An image that Origen uses is that of Christ as the vine and the Christians as branches (cf. John 15:5). Here, we see the idea of the Christian's constant need of Christ in order to progress. If we bear good fruit, we do so because we belong to Christ, but whether we belong to Him or not is our choice.<sup>974</sup> The same biblical passage is quoted by Jerome in the *Dialogue*, and he makes the comment: "Just as the vine shoots and branches immediately decay when they are cut off from the parent stem, so all the strength of men fades and perishes, if it loses the help of God".<sup>975</sup>

In his work *Against Celsus*, Origen wrote that those who cultivate virtues can be understood as raising statues of which Christ is the prototype.<sup>976</sup> However, at the same time as Christ is said to be a prototype and to have in Him the models of the virtues "ἐν ᾧ ἐστὶ... παραδείγματα", He is also understood to play an important role in forming the virtues in the human being.<sup>977</sup> That is, we are not simply dealing with an idea of the human being imitating Christ, raising statues in His likeness (images of virtue, "ἀγάλμασι τῆς ἀρετῆς"), but Origen thinks that Christ is very much involved in this formation into His likeness. Origen could speak of Christ as being the leader in the heart of the believer.<sup>978</sup>

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<sup>971</sup> *HomEx* 6.5; 8.2; *CommEph* 23.11-14 (JTS 3, 558), *CommJn* 20.37 (SC 290, 324).

<sup>972</sup> *CommRom* 2.5.7-8; 5.10.19. Cf. 1 Cor 1:30; Eph 2:14. Cf. Jerome, Ep 130.19.

<sup>973</sup> *CommRom* 3.3.6, SC 539, 98-100: *Et sicut ipse est iustitia ex qua iusti omnes fiunt*.

<sup>974</sup> *CommRom* 1.15.6. Another image, of which Origen makes use of, is that of the soul as a house. It can, if it follows the spirit, invite the virtues – that is, Christ – to dwell therein, or it can follow the will of the flesh and allow the devil and the vices to enter (*CommRom* 1.21.9. Ref. to Jn 14:23).

<sup>975</sup> *Dial* 3.9.

<sup>976</sup> About Christ as an example, see Origen, *CommCant* 3.4.

<sup>977</sup> *CCels* 8.17, SC 150, 210: These statues are not the works of common craftsmen, ἀλλ' ὑπὸ λόγου θεοῦ τρανούμενα καὶ μορφούμενα ἐν ἡμῖν. About the imitators being shaped after Christ: *CommRom* 4.6 (SC 539, 254-268); *CommEph* 19.50-53 (JTS 3, 1902, 419).

<sup>978</sup> *CommEph* 15.19-22 (JTS 3, 1902, 411). Cf. Origen, *CommCant* 2.6, where the ideas about imitation and formation by Christ are combined. Again, Origen speaks of Christ as an example – a pattern – but he does not only speak of the soul's relation to Christ in terms of an external following, but explains it by using the image of rider and horse: The soul is, in this relation, not going its own way, but is led according to the Rider's will. Cf. *CommRom* 8.2.8, where Christ is identified with the virtues and the believer is said to be subjected to the lordship of these virtues, no longer being under the lordship of vices.

Jerome shares with Origen the idea of grace as God's continuing involvement in the life of the Christian. It is through God, through Christ who is the virtues, that human beings can have them. Referring to 1 Corinthians 12:11, he points out that: *non dixerit secundum quod unumquodque membrum cupit, sed secundum quod ipse uult Spiritus.*<sup>979</sup> For possessing the virtues, our own will is not enough. He also remarks that Mary called herself blessed, not through her own merit and virtue, but through God's mercy (*clementia*) which was dwelling in her.<sup>980</sup>

Of what importance can grace be, asks Jerome, when a human being by his/her own efforts can become sinless? On the other hand, if we need grace, why then claim that our free will is enough?<sup>981</sup> Thus, he seeks to point out that the Pelagian teaching is not only blasphemous and heretical, but illogical as well, and to this lack of logic he gives an explanation: While the Pelagians teach one thing among themselves, they say something else in public, in order to appear orthodox. The phrase "not without the grace of God" (*non absque dei gratia*) is, according to Jerome, added by them in order to cover their actual ideas and to sound orthodox to their hearers.<sup>982</sup> Jerome also speaks of them as *fraudulenter praetendis dei gratiam*,<sup>983</sup> that is, as deceitfully using the concept of grace as a cover for their actual ideas.

We have already noted that this heresiological strategy, which aims to present the heretic as ambiguous, teaching one doctrine among his disciples in secret and another among the uneducated crowd in public, is frequent in Jerome's anti-Pelagian polemics, just as it had been in his critique of Origenism. The Pelagians are presented as trying to deceive simple people who are easily misled (*decipiendas rudes animas*)<sup>984</sup> by speaking of grace as necessary, while they do not actually think that it is.<sup>985</sup>

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<sup>979</sup> *Dial* 1.17, CCSL 80, 22.

<sup>980</sup> *Dial* 1.17, CCSL 80, 23.

<sup>981</sup> *Ep* 133.8, CSEL 56/1, 253.

<sup>982</sup> *Ep* 133.8, CSEL 56/1, 253: *Illud uero, quod ad decipiendos quosque postea huic sententiae coaptarunt: 'non absque dei gratia', cum prima legentes fronte decipiat, introspectum et diligentissime uentilatum decipere non potest. Ep* 133.5, 248, l. 21-24. Also, in the same letter: *adseris posse hominem esse sine peccato, si uelit, et post grauissimum somnum ad decipiendas rudes animas frustra conaris adiungere: 'non absque dei gratia'.* Cf. also *Dial* 1.28, CCSL 80, 35.

<sup>983</sup> *Ep* 133.6, CSEL 56/1, 251.

<sup>984</sup> *Ep* 133.8, CSEL 56/1, 253.

<sup>985</sup> Jeanjean 1999, 412-415.

### 3.2. The Mutual Charge of Manichaeism and the Question of Natures

As we remember from our treatment of the Jovinianist controversy, Manichaeism provided heresiologists with a helpful tool to discredit radical ascetics, namely by connecting ideas about the superiority of asceticism to a hatred of the created world. However, Manichaeism was also brought up as a charge against persons who were thought to express deterministic views.<sup>986</sup>

It becomes clear in *Letter* 133 that the issue of free will was one that the Pelagians had used in polemics against Jerome, accusing him of denying it, and associating him with Manichaean determinism because of his view that the fleshly existence precluded any possibility of sinlessness.<sup>987</sup> It is after arguing for this idea, speaking of the limitations of the human will and the need for grace, that Jerome writes:

You will protest against this and say that we follow the teaching of the Manichaeans and others, who make war against the church over [the question of] different natures, claiming that there is an evil nature, which in no way can be changed.<sup>988</sup>

The Pelagians would thus have argued that Jerome's idea that the fleshly existence excluded the possibility of not sinning at all, was similar to the Manichaean idea of an evil nature, implying that persons who participated therein could not be without sin. One of Jerome's strategies of defence is one that we recognize from the Jovinianist controversy: If the opponents want to bring an accusation of Manichaeism, they should direct it against the Apostle Paul – that is, it is their ideas that go against the Scriptures, not Jerome's.<sup>989</sup> The Apostle knows, says Jerome, that God is one thing and the human being another; the weakness of the flesh is one thing and the strength of the spirit another. Jerome clearly denies that a nature (*natura*) can in itself be evil. This, however, does not change his idea that the weak flesh precludes the possibility of sinlessness.

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<sup>986</sup> The problem of free will was important among Christians in the late fourth and early fifth centuries, and Manichaeism did not present the only challenge in this regard: Non-Christian astrological speculation also seems to have been an impetus to efforts to defend free will, philosophically and theologically. One may note that for all the suspicions of heresy surrounding Origen, his ideas on free will, developed against “Gnostic” opponents, were generally accepted.

<sup>987</sup> *Ep* 133.6 (accused of destroying free will); *Ep* 133.9 (associated with Manichaeism).

<sup>988</sup> *Ep* 133.9, CSEL 56/1, 254: *Reclamabis et dices Manicheorum dogma nos sequi et eorum, qui de diuersis naturis ecclesiae bella concinnant, adserentium malam esse naturam, quae inmutari nullo modo possit.* See also *Ep* 133.10, CSEL 56/1, 256: *Frustra blasphemias et ignorantium auribus ingeris nos liberum arbitrium condemnare.*

<sup>989</sup> *Ep* 133.9, CSEL 56/1, 254: *caro enim desiderat contra spiritum...* (Gal 5:17). For Jerome's strategy of presenting himself as a commentator on Paul, playing down his role as a theologian, see *Ep* 48.14.

Jerome does not only defend himself against the charge of Manichaeism, but he also directs the same charge against Pelagius. The first heretic listed in *Letter* 133 as a precursor of the new heresy is Mani, and that the connection between Pelagius and Mani lies precisely in determinism becomes clear when it is said that, according to the Manichaean teaching, the “elect” cannot sin even if they want to.<sup>990</sup> According to Jerome’s presentation, the Pelagians used the concept of sinlessness to refer to a state from which it was not possible to fall (since the state is achieved by passionlessness, and someone who is undisturbed by passions cannot sin). We remember his association to Evagrius, according to whom it is possible to reach a state in which the mind becomes either a stone or a God. This is also the reason why Jerome says, in the prologue to his *Dialogue*, that the Manichaeans condemn human nature, destroy free will and take away the help of God.<sup>991</sup> It is in this way that Jerome accuses the Pelagians of determinism: They are said to imagine a condition in which it is not possible to sin. For Jerome, free will includes the possibility to rise as well as to fall. If we do not need to seek God’s help, it means that we are perfect in a non-reversible way, and thus, by necessity.

However, according to Jerome, the most important heretical precursor of Pelagius in this regard is not Mani, but Jovinian. It is to Jovinian’s second thesis that the Pelagian teaching is explicitly associated, that is, the thesis that involved what Jerome understood to imply a kind of determinism: Being baptized, the human being could not fall (or even be tempted). We have already seen in the present chapter how Jerome’s arguments against the Pelagian idea of sinlessness are very similar to those that he directed against Jovinian’s idea of the post-baptismal condition of the Christian person. Importantly, he had associated Jovinian with Manichaeism because their idea that the substance (*substantia*) of the human soul (*anima humana*) is the same as the substance of God.

In the *Dialogue against the Pelagians*, the Pelagian spokesman uses an argument that Jovinian was also said to have used: “... he cannot sin because he is born of God”, referring to 1 John 5:18-19.<sup>992</sup> Jerome answers in a way very similar to how the Pelagians are said to have argued against him: If a person does not sin, because he/she cannot sin, free will is taken away (*liberum tolletur arbitrium*), and it is not the person who can be credited with not sinning, but the good nature.<sup>993</sup>

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<sup>990</sup> *Ep* 133.3, CSEL 56/1, 245: *Manicheus electos suos... dicit omni carere peccato nec, si uelint, posse peccare...*

<sup>991</sup> *Dial* Prol. 2, CCSL 80, 5.

<sup>992</sup> *Dial* 1.13.

<sup>993</sup> *Dial* 1.13, CCSL 80, 16. Although 1 Jn 5:18-19 is presented as part of a Pelagian argument, as it had been in the presentation of Jovinian, the answer that Jerome gives is different in the two controversies. Certainly, some of the biblical passages that he uses in his refutation are the same (1 Jn 1.8; 1 Jn 1:9; Rom 11:32), but his emphasis differ. Against the Pelagians, he writes that he who is born of God does not sin as long as the seed of God abides in him, and he cannot sin



Thus, Jerome turns the Pelagian argument based on a just reward against the Pelagians. He describes them as claiming that when the height of perfection has been reached, it is not possible to sin, not even in thought or out of ignorance.<sup>994</sup>

### 3.3. Conclusion

As with Jovinian, the Pelagians' ideas are presented as deterministic in claiming that a state can be reached from which decline is not possible. The reason why decline is not possible is that the human being has been transformed in such a way that he/she is no longer fully human. The Pelagians are charged with erasing the boundary between divine and human. The charge of determinism that Jerome directs at them is, I argue, a refutation of a certain idea of transformation: It is the understanding of human change from one nature (human) into another (divine) that excludes the risk of falling. God is perfect and does not change – what He is, He is in an essential way. It is above all in this understanding of transformation, and of the necessity of the indwelling of God in a person in order for him/her to change, that Jerome's ideas about free will and grace show a dependence on Origen.

## 4. The Church and its Hierarchy

We have noted previously in this work the great importance that the question of baptism came to assume in the late fourth and early fifth centuries. At the time of Christianization of Roman society, many people asked what obligations followed with baptism – how radical conversions could be expected from the newly born? We have seen the answer (as least as reconstructed by Jerome) that Jovinian gave to this question: The baptized were equal members of the church. Against this, we have seen Jerome emphasize that the church of the baptized was a hierarchical church, in which the levels of different individuals depended on their post-baptismal progress as Christians. Connected to the question of baptism and its implications was the eschatological question of salvation. Would all who were

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because he is born of God. However, the enemy sows weeds in the field of the Lord. While we are in the mortal body (*dum sumus in corpore isto mortali*), we are mixed with the wheat. The chaff will be separated from the wheat at the consummation of the world. Both against Jovinian and against the Pelagians, Jerome wants to show that we can sin after baptism. However, while free will was the primary focus against Jovinian (we follow either Christ or the devil), here the focus, based on the same biblical passage, is on the inevitable presence of evil in our lives.

<sup>994</sup> *Dial Prol.1, CCSL 80, 4: ... se asserant ne in cogitatione quidem et ignorantia, cum ad consummationis culmen ascenderit, posse peccare.*

baptized be saved, even if they had become Christians only nominally and had not changed their way of life? Was faith enough for salvation, or were works needed as well?

These questions would return in the Pelagian controversy. Robert Markus has written: “The most articulate voice to raise the question of what ‘conversion’ meant in the conditions of around 400 was that of Pelagius”.<sup>995</sup> As we will see in what follows, Jerome criticized Pelagius for demanding too much of the Christians on earth; expecting a perfection from them which could only be achieved in the heavenly church. Here, we return to the theme of relative perfection, although from a more sociological perspective, as Jerome presents his idea of the hierarchical church as an orthodox counterpart to the Pelagian church of the perfect.

As we remarked already when treating the Jovinianist controversy, Jerome's ideas about a hierarchy on earth were closely bound up with his eschatological ideas. This, we will see, was also the case in his anti-Pelagian polemics, as he argued that the Pelagian view about the church in heaven was elitist and exclusive. Against this view, he presented his own idea about a hierarchical church in heaven; an idea that implied a notion of purifying punishment for Christian sinners.

## 4.1. The Church on Earth

### 4.1.1. *Different Degrees of Righteousness after Baptism*

Although Pelagius, with his anti-Manichaean theology, seems to be quite distant from Jovinian, and clearly refuted him,<sup>996</sup> Jerome, as we have already seen, directed arguments against the Pelagians which he had previously directed against Jovinian. We remember from the third chapter that a main issue in Jerome's polemics against Jovinian concerned the idea of a hierarchy of Christians. In this regard, many of the arguments used against Jovinian can also be recognized in Jerome's anti-Pelagian polemics. In the following, we will look more closely at Jerome's refutation of what he presents as the Pelagian view on the post-baptismal life of the Christian person.

Jerome claims that the Pelagians share Jovinian's idea of baptism, and that his former refutation of Jovinian applies to them as well. The view presented by Jerome as Pelagian is that the baptized person, being without sin and righteous through baptism, has the possibility to preserve this righteousness forever and to avoid sin altogether (*omne vitare peccatum*).<sup>997</sup> This, one may remark, is not

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<sup>995</sup> Markus 1990, 40.

<sup>996</sup> In his *Libellus fidei* (PL 45, 1716-18).

<sup>997</sup> *Dial* 3.1, CCSL 80, 98.

identical to his charge against Jovinian, who was said to hold that after baptism, a Christian cannot be tempted by the devil. Jerome's Pelagians seem to hold that baptism means an obligation: Having been baptized, a Christian is not supposed to sin anymore. This has the implication that their idea of the church is one of perfect, in the sense of sinless, individuals. The Pelagian spokesman in the *Dialogue* argues that, since we have been freed from this body of death through the grace of Christ, we should not sin anymore.<sup>998</sup>

The fault that Jerome finds with them is therefore, at a closer look, not the same as that of which he accused Jovinian; the problem he sees is rather that the Pelagians understand baptism as putting the human being into a condition in which sinlessness is possible (rather than claiming that it makes sinning impossible). The similarity to Jovinian is that they exaggerate the effect of baptism on the baptized person. Refuting the Pelagians, Jerome claims that although baptism takes away past sins, it does not confer new virtues. It promises rewards to the person who has been set free, provided that he/she labours.<sup>999</sup> The blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin,<sup>1000</sup> not only by the profession of baptism, but also by the mercy of repentance (*clementia paenitudinis*). In the post-baptismal life, righteousness is preserved, not through baptism as such, but through labour and diligence, and, above all, through the mercy of God. We ask and we make the beginning, but it is God who gives and who completes what we have begun and what we cannot bring to perfection on our own. Baptism does not guarantee victory.<sup>1001</sup> One may notice that in this, Jerome makes sure that he combines the idea of free will (individual struggle) with the view that God's grace is necessary for human transformation, as its most important precondition.

It ought to be pointed out that Jerome's description of the Pelagian idea about baptism is a caricature. In probable dependence on Origen's commentary on Romans, Pelagius had expressed the idea that while the human being is forgiven former sins in baptism without any merit,<sup>1002</sup> faith is only the beginning of the process of justification, which is brought about not only by faith, but by works as well. One must live in such a way as to merit the heavenly rewards.<sup>1003</sup> Evans

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<sup>998</sup> *Dial* 2.2, CCSL 80, 54: *Liberati ergo de corpore mortis per gratiam Domini nostri Iesu Christi, nequaquam ultra peccare debemus*. The context of this remark is a debate over how to interpret Romans 7:22-25; the anti-Pelagian Atticus holds that this points to the continuing fight between the spirit and the flesh in all the baptized, while the Pelagian Critobulus holds that it shows the obligation for the newly born person not to sin anymore, and points out that Paul does not identifying himself here with the entire human race, but speaks in the name of others.

<sup>999</sup> *Dial* 1.23, CCSL 80, 30.

<sup>1000</sup> 1 Jn 1:7.

<sup>1001</sup> *Dial* 3.1, CCSL 80, 98-99.

<sup>1002</sup> Evans 1968, 113.

<sup>1003</sup> Evans 1968, 29.

writes: “He obviously writes with the assumption that some, perhaps many, who have believed will not enter the kingdom of heaven”.<sup>1004</sup>

Jerome’s and Pelagius’ ideas about baptism actually appear to be very similar. They both claim that baptism is not a guarantee for a righteous life. It is thus important to note that Jerome’s description of the Pelagian view on baptism, and his association of Pelagius with Jovinian should be understood as heresiological rhetoric. However, our focus ought to be on Jerome’s polemics and his orthodox self-presentation. Against the view that baptism puts everyone into an equal condition and enables them to be sinless, he argues that perfection among humans is relative, not only in relation to God, but also in relation to other humans.

Connected to Jerome’s idea about a twofold perfection (divine and human) is his claim that human beings can only be compared to each other when it comes to their degree of justice. The idea is that while no creature can become perfect according to the true and perfect justice,<sup>1005</sup> they can be perfect in comparison with other creatures. Someone who is not righteous in comparison with others, may be so according to his/her own state and measure (*secundum statum et mensuram suam*).<sup>1006</sup> Thus, human perfection is relative – and hierarchical.

The Pelagians are said to argue that God’s commandments are either possible or impossible to keep. If they were impossible to keep, so goes the argument, then blame would not attach to us, but to God who gave the commandments.<sup>1007</sup> According to Jerome, God has commanded what is possible, but no one can fulfil everything that is, in itself, possible. We cannot possess all the virtues at the same time. Also, if a person does not possess all the virtues, this should not be counted as a fault (*non sit in crimine*) for which he/she should be condemned. Rather, the person is justified because of the virtues which are possessed.<sup>1008</sup> The fact that no one is without sin does not mean that no righteous persons exist. To be righteous is based on having many virtues, not on being without sin. To be without sin (*absque uitio, quae Graece dicitur anamarteton*) belongs to God alone. “Has God commanded me to be what He is?” Jerome asks in the letter to Ctesiphon.<sup>1009</sup> What

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<sup>1004</sup> Evans 1968, 116. The importance of baptism in Pelagius’ thought has been demonstrated by Bohlin, who explains (Bohlin 1957, 34) that according to Pelagius, Christians are made holy by baptism. In the first human being, the posse was actualized, as *facere*. In baptism, it is again so, but it is God who accomplishes it, not the person who is baptized. We are made members of the body of Christ, and we are without sin, as Christ was without sin. After baptism, the damage to the will that is caused by the habit of sinning is healed, and the original freedom of the will is restored, so that it can again be rightly employed by the baptized person.

<sup>1005</sup> *Dial* 1.17, CCSL 80, 21: *nullam creaturam secundum ueram consummatamque iustitiam posse esse perfectam.*

<sup>1006</sup> *Dial* 1.17, CCSL 80, 21.

<sup>1007</sup> *Ep* 133.8; *Dial* 1.14, 22.

<sup>1008</sup> *Dial* 1.22, CCSL 80, 28.

<sup>1009</sup> *Ep* 133.8, CSEL 56/1, 252: *numquid praecepit mihi deus, ut essem, quod deus est...*

will be crowned in the future is our will, which has laboured – not our sinlessness.<sup>1010</sup> The idea that righteous works count even if sins are committed was expressed also by Origen in the *Commentary on Romans*.<sup>1011</sup> Likewise, Origen thought that persons could be called righteous even if they have sinned, and could be called sinners even if they have done righteous deeds. According to this understanding, it is one thing to sin, another to be a sinner.<sup>1012</sup>

Against the Pelagian idea about the implications of baptism, Jerome thus returns to his old teaching about the hierarchy of Christians. It is not only by comparison to God that human beings are imperfect, but also by comparison to other humans, who have reached further in possessing the virtues.<sup>1013</sup> The fact that we are urged by the Divine Word to attain perfection is understood as meaning that everyone should strive forward according to his/her strength. In his anti-Pelagian critique, Jerome discusses hierarchy in a way which is strikingly similar to the discussion that we find in *Against Jovinian*, especially when considering his exegetical strategies. Paul and Timothy were both righteous, he says, but not to the same degree. Paul, who worked harder than the other apostles, certainly had greater merit (... *plus habere meritorum eum, qui plus omnibus laborauit*).<sup>1014</sup> In the Father's house, there are many mansions, *quia et merita diuersa*.<sup>1015</sup> Also 1 Corinthians 15:41 is referred to: *Stella a stella differt in gloria*.<sup>1016</sup> We have seen previously in this work that these two biblical passages, John 14:2 and 1 Corinthians 15:41, were especially important in Jerome's argumentation that the future resurrection will be diversified. Here, he uses them against the Pelagians to point out that in this life, in the church on earth, there is difference: "... in the one body of the church, there are different members".<sup>1017</sup> We are to strive for "the greater gifts", so that we, because of our faith and diligence, may be of greater merit than others who are anointed, and be superior to those who, in comparison

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<sup>1010</sup> *Dial* 3.6, CCSL 80, 104: *Voluntatem nostram, quae obtulit omne quod potuit, et laborem, quo contendit ut faceret, et humilitatem, quae semper respexit ad auxilium Dei.*

<sup>1011</sup> *CommRom* 2.4.9-10.

<sup>1012</sup> *CommRom* 5.5.3.

<sup>1013</sup> *Dial* 1.18, CCSL 80, 24: *Ex quibus omnibus approbatur non solum ad comparationem diuinae maiestatis homines nequaquam esse perfectos, sed ne angelorum quidem et ceterorum hominum, qui uirtutum culmina conscenderunt...*

<sup>1014</sup> *Dial* 1.17, CCSL 80, 22. Cf. *AdvJov* 2.23, about Paul working harder than the other apostles (1 Cor 15:10), and that equal rewards will not be given for unequal efforts; 2.27, about Christ's abiding in different persons, where Paul is contrasted to Timothy and Titus.

<sup>1015</sup> *Dial* 1.17, CCSL 80, 22. Cf. *AdvJov* 2.28. (Jn 14:2).

<sup>1016</sup> Cf. *AdvJov* 2.23.

<sup>1017</sup> *Dial* 1.17, CCSL 80, 22: *... in uno Ecclesiae corpore membra diuersa sunt.*

with us, will be ranked second or third.<sup>1018</sup> In a great house there are different vessels, and although a bronze vessel is perfect according to its own measure (*secundum modulum suum*), it is imperfect in comparison with silver: "... when things are alternately compared to each other, they are all imperfect and perfect".<sup>1019</sup>

We have already seen Jerome fault the Pelagians for not distinguishing clearly enough between the Christian life in the flesh and the Christian life in the next world, when corruption has put on incorruption, pointing out that on earth, there is uncertainty and struggle, but in heaven, there is certainty and victory. This strong distinction between earthly imperfection and heavenly perfection can also be seen in his critique of the Pelagian idea of the church. He blames the Pelagians for not distinguishing sufficiently between the (imperfect) church on earth and the (perfect) church in heaven. The Pelagians are said to think that the church is perfect already in this mortal and corruptible flesh. However, Jerome claims, it is not until the end of the world that the Lord will present to Himself the church in a perfect state; holy, spotless and without blemish.<sup>1020</sup> The church will only reach perfection in heaven: "... the true perfection, which is free from all impurity, is reserved for heaven, when the Bridegroom says to His bride: 'You are altogether beautiful, my love, and there is no stain in you'".<sup>1021</sup> In this life, there is labour and struggle (*labor, contentio*); in the next, there is reward.<sup>1022</sup> Referring to 1 John 3:2,<sup>1023</sup> Jerome remarks that although we are the children of God, likeness to God and true contemplation of God will not be achieved in the present life.<sup>1024</sup> This is similar to Origen's ideas about the future church as compared to the earthly one.<sup>1025</sup>

For all his propagation for perfection in the form of asceticism, Jerome certainly did not envisage the church on earth as a spotless church of saints. Neither did he perceive the community of the baptized according to a dichotomy of perfect, real Christians, and non-perfect Christians in name only, as R.A. Markus has argued

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<sup>1018</sup> *Dial* 1.17, CCSL 80, 22-23: ... *ut fide et industria plus ceteris charismatibus habere mereamur melioresque simus his, qui comparatione nostri in secundo uel tertio gradu positi sunt.*

<sup>1019</sup> *Dial* 1.17, CCSL 80, 23: ... *dum sibi inuicem comparantur, imperfecta et perfecta omnia.*

<sup>1020</sup> Cf. Eph 5:27.

<sup>1021</sup> *Dial* 3.13, CCSL 80, 116: ... *uera et absque omni sorde perfectio in caelestibus reseruetur, quando sponsus loquitur ad sponsam: 'Tota pulchra es, proxima mea, et macula non est in te'...*

<sup>1022</sup> Reference to Phil 2:15.

<sup>1023</sup> "Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed."

<sup>1024</sup> *Dial* 3.13, CCSL 80, 115-116.

<sup>1025</sup> Cf. Origen, *CommRom* 7.2.4; 5.9.6.

that ascetic thinkers at the time commonly did,<sup>1026</sup> but left room for the secular, the mediocre, within the church – although he certainly despised it.

In Jerome’s presentation of Pelagianism, the teaching appears to be in opposition to diversity and hierarchy. Again, Jerome charges them of blasphemy. Following the Pelagian logic, we ought to ask: Why is there any diversity at all, if everyone, if he/she wants to, can be something higher than what he/she is? Why are we humans, rather than angels? (In this case, the Pelagian teaching is associated with that of *Ho Archaios*, which probable refers to Origen). Then, reproaching God for not making us all equal, we will reach a point when we ask: Why is God alone God?<sup>1027</sup>

In the following, we will turn our attention to a specific question when it came to hierarchy within the church, namely, to the relationship between virginity and marriage.

#### 4.1.2. *Virginity and Marriage*

According to Markus, Pelagius, like Jovinian, rejected the “double standard” of ascetical Christians and ordinary Christians.<sup>1028</sup> However, his way of doing this differed from Jovinian’s: Pelagius thought that all Christians, whether celibate or married, were called to perfection. According to Markus: “All alike are called to ... aspire to Christian perfection. Ascetic renunciation became secondary, or irrelevant”.<sup>1029</sup> In Pelagius’ view, righteousness, *iustitia*, was the fundamental Christian virtue, without which salvation was not possible.<sup>1030</sup>

However, Pelagius also held that different kinds of life (the virgin life, the continent life for widows and for married people, and the married life) merited different rewards in heaven.<sup>1031</sup> As Hunter has pointed out, while Jerome and Pelagius shared the idea that sexual abstinence was superior to, and worthy of a greater reward than, married life, their reasons for claiming this differed. Here we return to the question about the defilement of human nature, or sin as an ontological category, discussed above. Jerome understood sexuality as defiled and

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<sup>1026</sup> Markus 2006, 74.

<sup>1027</sup> *Dial* 1.20, CCSL 80, 26-27. Reference to 1 Cor 12:4-6.

<sup>1028</sup> Markus 1990, 41. About the double standard, that is, the idea of a distinction within the church between an elite of perfect Christians and ordinary Christians, see Baynes, “The thought-world of East Rome”, 1955.

<sup>1029</sup> Markus 1990, 42. Pelagianism, Markus argues, was a reaction to the kind of mediocre Christianity that seemed to blur the boundary between Christian and “pagan”. “Pelagius wanted his Christians to be as clearly defined and as distinct a group in society as the ascetics were in the Christian Church”. (Markus 1990, 43).

<sup>1030</sup> Hunter 2007, 260.

<sup>1031</sup> Evans 1968, 40-41.

saw conception and birth as impure in some sense, that is, a human being was impure from the birth. Pelagius did not see sexuality in terms of impurity – he did not make any association between Adam’s sin and sexuality. He even accused those who condemned marriage of condemning nature, a typical anti-ascetic argument. Pelagius did not see celibacy as an end in itself but rather as an instrument which helped a person to think less about worldly things.<sup>1032</sup> Although Pelagius’ critique against Jerome views on marriage could, according to Hunter, be seen as a reaction to Jerome's accusations,

... it is unlikely that he would have criticized the excesses of Jerome’s *Adversus Jovinianum* unless he had actually found the treatise offensive. Pelagius’ criticisms of Jerome in 414, therefore, provide additional support for the argument ... that Pelagius sought a *via media* between Jovinian and Jerome in his teachings on marriage and celibacy.<sup>1033</sup>

There is a risk of exaggerating the difference between Jerome and Pelagius in this regard. Hunter’s comment that, unlike Jerome, Pelagius did not see marriage as a sin, can hardly count as a real difference, because neither did Jerome – marriage, in his view, was certainly something impure in comparison to virginity, but pure in comparison to fornication. In itself, marriage was neutral without any absolute value. It was not a sin, and it was legitimate precisely because fornication could thereby be avoided. Pelagius actually expresses something very similar to this in his *Letter to Demetrias*, in which he speaks of marriage as an intermediate thing, *media*, neither forbidden nor commanded, but allowed, *conceduntur*.<sup>1034</sup>

All in all, Pelagius’ understanding of marriage in relation to virginity was very similar to Jerome’s, although he expressed himself with more moderation. If one looks beyond the expressions and at the actual content of what is said, there is not much difference. I suggest that the presentation of Jerome as one who condemned marriage, and thus his connection to Manichaeism, was itself a rhetorical strategy taken up by Pelagius in the context of the controversy, as he knew that Jerome had already been criticized for his views before this controversy. This would have served Pelagius the purpose both of smearing Jerome and of appearing to be more different from him than he really was.

In what follows, we will examine more closely Jerome’s ideas about the future church and his opposition to Pelagius' views on post-mortem punishment.

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<sup>1032</sup> Hunter 2007, 266.

<sup>1033</sup> Hunter 2007, 267.

<sup>1034</sup> *Dem* 9.2 (PL 30, 25).



## 4.2. The Church in Heaven

### 4.2.1. *The Question of Faith and Works. The Misericordes*

#### 4.2.1.1. “Mercyists” and “Origenists”?

The following examination is connected to our previous discussion of *apokatastasis* (chapter 5) in the sense that it concerns the extension of salvation. How many would be included? The answer of someone who embraced the teaching of *apokatastasis* would be: All rational creatures. Jerome's answer was, as we shall see, all Christians. John O'Connell, who denies that Jerome was an “Origenist” who claimed the *apokatastasis*, has raised the question whether he can be called a “mercyist”. Although I agree neither with O'Connell's use of “Origenism” nor with his use of “mercyism”,<sup>1035</sup> this part of O'Connell's work is very important, and he highlights a polemical construct that has been rather neglected in modern scholarship: The *misericordes*. O'Connell explains “mercyism”: “According to this error /.../ some or all of those whose sins are in themselves worthy of the eternal pains of hell will be freed therefrom after a time through the mercy of almighty God”.<sup>1036</sup> While, according to O'Connell, the idea of *apokatastasis* was based on philosophical ideas, “mercyism” is based on the unwillingness to see souls suffer eternally, and is defended by reference to the Scriptures and to the mercy of God. The *misericordes* are only concerned with the souls of human beings, not with the possibility of the salvation of demons.

The problem that I see in O'Connell's discussion of “mercyism” is precisely the term, “mercyism”, which he himself has coined, based on the concept *misericordes*, found, as we will see, in Augustine's works. First, this one concept does not account for the great variety among the *misericordes* that Augustine presents. Secondly, and more importantly, the concept is problematic since it essentializes this rhetorical construct even more than Augustine himself did. All we have is Augustine's polemics; we have no texts from persons who claimed that they themselves were “mercyists” (neither do we have texts from anyone who claimed to be an “Origenist”). These are heresiological constructions and should be referred to as such, in order to avoid the fallacy of treating as historically real what is presented for polemical purposes. However, this does not mean that Augustine's writings about the *misericordes* has no historical interest; to the contrary.

Apart from these considerations, O'Connell's treatment of the *misericordes* as representatives of eschatological ideas that are not identical with the teaching of *apokatastasis*, but worthy to be studied in their own right, is very profitable. I have

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<sup>1035</sup> See discussion in chapter 5.

<sup>1036</sup> O'Connell 1948, ix, see also 156.

explained already, in chapter 5, that my basic critique of Ramelli's discussion of apokatastasis is the fact that it can be applied to so many different views on salvation:

Ambrose and Ambrosiaster, like Jerome and probably also Optatus of Milevis their contemporary, and unlike Augustine, would seem to envision the eventual apokatastasis at least of all Christians, after periods of purification that can last even very long. Their eschatological position in respect to apokatastasis seems to be somehow intermediate between Origen's universalism and Augustine's later rejection of apokatastasis.<sup>1037</sup>

What she describes here could, I agree, be counted among the opinions of the *misericordes*, in accordance with Augustine's presentation. I argue, like O'Connell, that it is essential to make this distinction, and perhaps above all when dealing with Jerome's eschatological thought, just as it is essential both to acknowledge his dependence on Origen and the ways in which he differs from his Alexandrian master.

#### 4.2.1.2. Augustine's Presentation of the *Misericordes* in the Context of the Pelagian Controversy

The *misericordes* are presented by Augustine as having one common denominator: They deny that all of those who were punished after death will be punished forever. Besides that, their ideas are utterly different. In *De Civitate Dei*, Augustine presents Origen's idea of *apokatastasis* as the most extreme of these views. He presents six different types: Those who claim that the devil and his angels can be saved; that all human beings will be saved;<sup>1038</sup> that the heretics will be saved; that they who have belonged to the Catholic church but have left it will be saved; that those who keep the Catholic faith will be saved, regardless of their way of life; that they who have sinned will be saved if they also perform works of mercy.<sup>1039</sup>

Importantly, Augustine does not seem to regard most of the *misericordes* as heretics, but simply as Catholics who are misled by their sense of pity. The view

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<sup>1037</sup> Ramelli 2013, 623-624.

<sup>1038</sup> According to Richard Bauckham, this version shows similarities to the work *Apocalypse of Peter*: The salvation of unbelievers takes place through the intercession of the saints (Bauckham 1998, 147, n. 50). However, there are two varieties: Those who argue this from an "Origenist" idea of punishment as purificatory, and those who argue that there will be no punishment at all, thanks to the intercession of the saints and God's mercy. The first group, according to Bauckham, are Origenists, the others are not and, he argues, dependent on the *Apocalypse of Peter*. The first of these groups seems to have come to Augustine's attention through Orosius, see Lehaut 1912, 9-11.

<sup>1039</sup> Augustine, *De Civ Dei*, 21.17-27. CCSL 48.

that he clearly sees as heretical is the most extreme of them, that is, the “Origenist” idea about the repentance of the devil. However, as Richard Bauckham notes, while Augustine did not debate with anyone who actually held the “Origenist” position, he used this position to claim that if others (the second and third groups) were to be consistent, they would have to agree with Origen, who had been condemned by the church.<sup>1040</sup>

The group with whom Augustine occupies himself the most is the one who holds that those who keep the Christian faith will be saved, despite the fact that they have led sinful lives. The first book in which the *miseriordes* appear is entirely preoccupied with this one group: *De fide et operibus* from 413. Here, the question is about baptism – the *miseriordes*, in this case, are said to claim that no moral instruction is needed before baptism, because faith is enough for a Christian.<sup>1041</sup> They also interpret the words in 1 Corinthians 3:11-15 to mean that even if Christians sin, they will be saved, because their faith is the saving foundation.<sup>1042</sup>

Augustine was not the only theologian in the early fifth century who occupied himself with the *miseriordes*. Pelagius did as well. While Pelagius’ main reason for using Origen’s *Commentary on Romans* was to refute determinism, he certainly made use of it also for refuting those who thought that faith alone was enough for salvation. Commenting on Romans 3:28, he complains about those who think that faith suffices for the baptized person. The works that are no longer needed are the works of the Jewish ceremonial law – not works of righteousness, which it is still necessary to perform (reference is made to James 2:26).<sup>1043</sup> This is very similar to Origen’s understanding of the need for works in addition to faith.<sup>1044</sup> Origen, like Pelagius, had pointed to the passage in James to defend this view,<sup>1045</sup> as would Augustine as well.

While Pelagius seems to have been dependent on Origen for his ideas about faith and works (without, of course, openly agreeing with him), he also made heresiological use of the Alexandrian. In *De Gestis Pelagii*, Augustine describes how Pelagius, at the synod at Diospolis, defended the idea that Christian sinners would be punished eternally, by claiming that everyone who disagreed with him was an Origenist, which, according to Augustine’s account, resulted in the

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<sup>1040</sup> Bauckham 1998, 151.

<sup>1041</sup> *De Fide* 1.1.

<sup>1042</sup> *De Fide* ch. 15-16; *Enchiridion* 18.67; cf. *De Civ Dei* 21.13.

<sup>1043</sup> Souter 1926, 34.

<sup>1044</sup> *CommRom* 2.4.9; 8.2.6. See discussion about Pelagius’ reliance on Origen in Scheck 2008, 80-81.

<sup>1045</sup> See for instance *CommRom* 2.9.3.

acceptance of his statement.<sup>1046</sup> That is, he emphasized another part of Origen's thought, namely that about universal salvation, and thus managed to associate Christians who held lenient views on eschatological punishment with this well-known archheretic.

One may suggest that one reason for Augustine's emphasis on this one group of *miseriordes* was that this was the version most widely held within the church, and also by some prominent theologians.<sup>1047</sup> The fact that Pelagius had been accused because of the ideas that he held about post-mortem punishment points to the fact that such a rigid view was not the ordinary idea among Christians in the early fifth century. Pelagius managed to discredit it, however, by associating it with Origenism; and as we have seen, Augustine did the same. Another important reason for Augustine's focus on this group of *miseriordes* was probably the teaching of Pelagius himself. It is well known that the late Augustine differed quite significantly in thought from the early Augustine, and this had not a little to do with his refutation of Pelagianism. Pelagianism seems to have affected him in the sense that he withdrew from some ideas criticized by the Pelagians, such as those expressed by the *miseriordes* (his refutation of these coincide with the beginning of the Pelagian controversy).<sup>1048</sup> Augustine seems to have sought an orthodox middle way between Pelagius on the one hand and those who did not see works as necessary for salvation on the other.

As we remember from the third chapter, Jerome, too, had referred to James 2:26 to make the same point, namely in his refutation of Jovinian's view on baptism. The purpose in this case was to show that baptism received with faith does not make all Christians equal members of the church, and, as we have seen, Origen was an important source for this argumentation. However, in his anti-Pelagian polemics, Jerome had quite different points to prove. What he expresses is nothing short of one of the ideas of the *miseriordes*, that is, the view that as long as a person keeps the Christian faith, that person will be saved, regardless of his/her way of life.

#### 4.2.2. Jerome on the Salvation of Christian Sinners

O'Connell has argued that while Jerome did not embrace the theory of *apokatastasis*, he should be counted among the *miseriordes*. In my fifth chapter I have agreed with O'Connell's conclusion that there is not enough evidence to claim that Jerome accepted the teaching of *apokatastasis* at any point. In the

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<sup>1046</sup> Augustine, *De Gestis Pelagii* 1.9.

<sup>1047</sup> See Kelly 1977, 484, mentions Ambrosiaster, Jerome, and Ambrose among those who held this view.

<sup>1048</sup> 412 was also the year when Augustine initiated his anti-Pelagian polemics. About Augustine and Pelagius, see Evans 1968, 66-89.

following, we will look at an important text from the *Dialogue* which, I agree with O'Connell, certainly points in the direction that Jerome was a representative of one of the groups described by Augustine as *miseriordes*, that is, of the group who claimed that a believing Christian, although he/she was a sinner, would be saved because of the foundation of faith.

In the *Dialogue*, Jerome criticizes the following Pelagian statement: "On the Day of Judgment the unrighteous and the sinners will not be spared, but they will be consumed in eternal fires".<sup>1049</sup> The Pelagians, by claiming this, are said to prevent God from showing mercy. Thus, we see how the emphasis on the mercy of God does not only concern human possibilities and limitations in the present life, but also in the next. Jerome sees the Pelagian teaching, with its focus on the power of free will, as having the eschatological consequence of condemning even Christian sinners to hell.

In Jerome's presentation, the Pelagian optimism concerning human possibilities has the consequence of neglecting the mercy of God, both when it comes to our performance of good works in this life, and our salvation in the next. It is we who must achieve it through our own efforts, and if we fail, God will not save us. The Pelagians are described as taking away power from God and giving it to the human; God is not allowed to decide His judgment. Two biblical passages that the Pelagians are said to have made use of are Psalm 104:35: "Let sinners (*peccatores*) be consumed, and the unrighteous (*iniqui*), so that they are no more" and Isaiah 1:28: "The unrighteous and the sinners shall burn together and those who abandon God shall be consumed". However, Jerome says, God may threaten because of mercy. It is not said that the sinners and the unrighteous will be consumed in everlasting fires, but that they will disappear from the earth and cease to be unrighteous. It is one thing to put an end to sin and iniquity (*a peccato et iniquitate desistere*), another to perish forever. He points out that the passage from Isaiah simply says that the unrighteous and the sinners will burn together, not that they will do so in eternity. The words that those who abandon God shall perish are understood by Jerome as a specific reference to heretics, who will be consumed if they do not turn back to the right faith.<sup>1050</sup>

Jerome does not think that unrighteous persons and sinners should be grouped together with the impious (*impi*). Every impious person, he explains, is certainly unrighteous and a sinner, but not every person who is a sinner and unrighteous is impious. Those are impious who have no knowledge of God, or who have changed the knowledge that they once had. Sin and unrighteousness are rather understood

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<sup>1049</sup> *Dial* 1.29, CCSL 80, 36: *In die iudicii iniquis et peccatoribus non parcendum, sed aeternis eos ignibus exurendos*. This is a quotation from one of Pelagius' books, *Liber testimoniorum*, which is lost. Pelagius was forced to explain the sentence during the proceedings against him at Diospolis in 415.

<sup>1050</sup> *Dial* 1.29, CCSL 80, 36.

as wounds that can be healed. It is written: “Many are the scourges of the wicked”;<sup>1051</sup> eternal destruction is not spoken of. Chastisement results in improvement and can be given because of mercy: “... the Lord disciplines the one He loves, and He chastens everyone He accepts as His son”.<sup>1052</sup>

However, punishment does not have a healing function for everyone, which becomes clear from Jerome's interpretation of the words in Psalm 1:5: “Therefore, the impious shall not rise again in judgment, nor sinners in the council of the righteous”. The impious are already condemned to destruction, and therefore they are not part of the future judgment. The sinners are seen as a middle group: They will not perish forever, like the impious, but neither will they share the glory of the resurrection with the righteous: “It is one thing to lose the glory of the resurrection, another to perish forever”.<sup>1053</sup>

Jerome refers to John 5:28-29, where it is said that those who have done good will come to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment. This is also understood to be the meaning of Paul's words in Romans 2:12: “... whoever has sinned without the Law will perish without the Law, and whoever has sinned under the Law shall be judged by the Law”. The impious are without the Law and will perish forever. The sinner is in the Law, which Jerome understands as meaning that a sinner who believes in God will be judged but will not perish.<sup>1054</sup> Jerome followed Origen in making this distinction. Both Augustine and Pelagius denied that there was a distinction between these words.<sup>1055</sup>

Three groups emerge: The righteous, who appear not to need judgment; the impious, who do not need judgment either, because they are already condemned to eternal perdition; and the middle group, the sinners, who are the only ones who will be judged, and who, it appears, will not perish eternally.

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<sup>1051</sup> Ps 32:10.

<sup>1052</sup> Heb 12:6.

<sup>1053</sup> *Dial* 1.29, CCSL 80, 37: *Aliud est gloriam perdere resurgendi, aliud perire perpetuo.*

<sup>1054</sup> *Dial* 1.29, CCSL 80, 37: *Sine lege impius est, qui in aeternum peribit; in lege peccator, credens in Deum, qui per legem iudicabitur, et non peribit.*

<sup>1055</sup> See Scheck 2008, 99; Schelke 1956, 79-80. In *De Fide*, Augustine writes that his opponents might say that “judgment” refers to transitory punishment, and that it is for those who have led evil lives but who have believed. However, says Augustine, “judgment” means eternal judgment, and “life” means eternal life. There are only two classes (*De Fide* 23.42-43, commenting on the opponents' interpretation of Rom 2:12, an interpretation that Jerome certainly embraced). The opponents are those who claim that believers will be saved by fire (23.44). Although Augustine could express the idea of post-mortem purification, in his later thought, he tended to remove it from the Last Day to the time between death and resurrection. He spoke of those benefitting from punishments as a middle group, who had been bad enough to need help and good enough to deserve help. (*Ench* 29.109-110). For a treatment of the development of Augustine's ideas on post-mortem purgation and punishment, see Ntedika 1966.

This may be compared to what Jerome had written in his *Homilies on the Psalms*, where he refers to the words in the Gospel of John, that the one who believes in Christ will not be judged, while the one who does not believe is judged already.<sup>1056</sup> Who will be judged, then? This one must stand between the believer and the non-believer (*medium inter credentem et non credentem*).<sup>1057</sup> The one who truly believes does not sin, Jerome claims. Later, he says of the kind of person who will be judged: “The one who certainly believes, but who is overcome by sin; who has what is good, but also what is bad; who does good things at the times when he/she believes, but who does bad things at times when faith is lacking”.<sup>1058</sup>

Here too, we find three groups: Those who will not be judged because of their faith; those who will not be judged because they have already been judged, as a result of their lack of faith; and, finally, those who will be judged, who have done good works because they have sometimes had the true faith, but who have also sinned, because they have sometimes lacked the true faith. Where there is sin, true faith is lacking. Jerome seems to agree with Augustine’s definition of the faith that saves as faith that works through love. However, it may be noted that in the *Dialogue*, he says nothing about the need of good works for those who will be saved, and it may be that his need to position himself against the Pelagians has resulted in a view in which more emphasis is put on faith and mercy, and less on works.

This idea of a middle group can be recognized also in Origen, who often made a distinction between the better and the worse among the saved. The worse thus make up a middle group between the perfect and those who will be condemned to hell. For a more thorough discussion about this, I refer to chapter 5, where I sought to demonstrate that Jerome’s ideas about a post-mortem hierarchy shows great affinities to Origen’s eschatological thought.<sup>1059</sup>

Like Jovinian, the Pelagians are presented as claiming only two options in this life as well as in the next: To be a sinner, or to be without sin; to be unrighteous or to be righteous; to be a goat or to be a sheep. Like he had done against Jovinian, Jerome protests that if this were true, no one would be saved, because everyone has sinned.<sup>1060</sup> Even in his anti-Pelagian polemics, Jerome combines an idea about

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<sup>1056</sup> Cf. Jn 3:18.

<sup>1057</sup> *HomPs* 1, CCSL 78, 10.

<sup>1058</sup> *HomPs* 1, CCSL 78, 10: *Qui credit quidem, sed peccatis uincitur: qui habet bona, habet et mala: qui eo tempore quo credit benefacit, quo non credit male facit.*

<sup>1059</sup> We have already discussed his distinction between the *called* and the *chosen*, and also between those who rise in the first and in the second resurrection. For the different eschatological fates of the called and the chosen, see further *CommRom* 7.8. See also *HomJos* 9.7 and *HomJos* 17.2-3, where Origen speaks of two groups among those who will be saved: Those who hasten towards heaven because of their desire to be in the sight of God, to be with the Lord. Others seek salvation because they fear Gehenna.

<sup>1060</sup> Cf. *AdvJov* 2.21; 2.30.

the impossibility of being without sin in the present life with an idea of salvation as diversified, hierarchical and with room for those who have excelled in virtues as well as for the sinners. The one thing that unites them is their Christian faith. No one can be without sin, but there are differences between sins, he claims, and they will have different consequences in the world to come. Again, Jerome's idea of a hierarchy, although elitist, implies inclusion, and the church on earth as well as the church in heaven has room for those who are very far from perfection.

Jerome ends his refutation of the Pelagian view on the future judgment in the following way:

If Origen says of all the rational creatures that they will not be lost, and allows penitence for the devil, what does that have to do with us, who say that both the devil and his entourage and all impious and faithless will perish forever, and that Christians, if they are overtaken by sin, will be saved after the punishments?<sup>1061</sup>

This is a very significant passage, since Jerome positions himself against both Origen and the Pelagians. The mutual construction of heresy and orthodoxy becomes obvious: Jerome's view is presented as an orthodox middle between two heretical extremes: The one that claims the salvation of all rational creatures, the other that denies it to all sinners, even to Christians.<sup>1062</sup> Jerome seems to have held that as long as a person is a believing Catholic Christian, he/she will ultimately be saved. Those who will not be saved are those who do not have the correct faith: Non-Christians and heretics.

*Dialogue* 1.29 also gives insights into Jerome's ideas about post-mortem punishment and judgment. Certainly, the Christians who will be saved despite their sin will not escape punishment. Punishment, however, can have different functions. For the impious, it has only a retributive function. For the sinners who will ultimately be saved, it has a healing function. The Christian sinners will be saved after the punishments, and from what Jerome says earlier in the text, it is clear that this is a healing punishment in the sense that it improves the person. That they will be taken from the earth is understood the taking away of their unrighteousness and sin, although they themselves will not be destroyed. This is very close to Origen's idea of punishment as purification, and the comment at the end also indicates that Jerome partly accepts Origen's idea of universal salvation, and partly refutes it. Punishment certainly has a healing function, as Origen claimed – but not for all rational creatures, only for some of them.

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<sup>1061</sup> *Dial* 1.29, CCSL 80, 37: *Si autem Origenes omnes rationales creaturas dicit non esse perdendas et diabolo tribuit paenitentiam, quid ad nos, qui et diabolum et satellites eius omnesque impios et praeuarcatores dicimus perire perpetuo, et Christianos, si in peccato praeuerti fuerint, saluandos esse post poenas?*

<sup>1062</sup> Jeanjean writes concerning the passage that Jerome presents his own ideas as a “voie royale” between two heretical extremes (Jeanjean 1999, 425).



This tendency to make categorizations of individuals in the world to come is also seen in what Jerome has to say about judgment. As we have seen, he imagines three groups. Only the middle group will be judged, and this, we understand, is the group that consists of Christian sinners. They will be judged and punished, but ultimately saved.

*Dialogue* 1.29 is, as O’Connell has pointed out, one of the most important texts in demonstrating that Jerome represented one of the views of the *misericordes*, namely, that all Christian believers will be saved. As O’Connell remarks, Jerome does not say anything in this text which implies that he was speaking of lighter sins and not of more serious ones, nor of persons who had repented rather than of those who had not. The only distinction that is seen is between those who have a correct Christian faith, and those who do not.<sup>1063</sup>

Although this is perhaps the clearest example that Jerome held a view ascribed by Augustine to the *misericordes*, there are other texts, written before the *Dialogue*, which also point in that direction. Especially telling is the following quotation from his *Commentary on Isaiah*:

This we should leave to only the knowledge of God alone, who weighs not only mercy, but also torments, and who knows whom He should judge, in what way, and for how long. Let us only say what befits human weakness: “Lord, do not accuse me in Your fury, nor blame me in Your anger”.<sup>1064</sup> And while we believe that the devil and all deniers and impious, who say in their heart: “There is no God”, will receive eternal punishments, we also think that those who are sinners and impious and yet Christian, whose works will be tested and purified in fire, will receive a sentence from the Judge which will be moderate and mixed with mercy.<sup>1065</sup>

Here, the point is the same as in the *Dialogue*: Christians will be saved, even if they are sinners. They will be judged, but their sentence will be one mixed with mercy. We also find that Jerome clearly makes a connection with fire, in which the Christians will be tested and purified (which was an idea expressed by Origen), using 1 Corinthians 3:11-15. This is also seen in his *Commentary on Amos*.<sup>1066</sup>

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<sup>1063</sup> O’Connell 1948, 171.

<sup>1064</sup> Ps 6.1.

<sup>1065</sup> *In Es* 18.66.24, CCSL 73A, 799: *Quod nos Dei solius debemus scientiae derelinquere, cuius non solum misericordiae, sed et tormenta in pondere sunt; et novit quem, quomodo aut quamdiu debeat iudicare. Solumque dicamus, quod humanae convenit fragilitati: 'Domine, ne in furore tuo arguas me; neque in ira tua corripias me'. Et sicut diaboli et omnium negatorum atque impiorum, qui dixerunt in corde suo: Non est Deus, credimus aeterna tormenta. Sic peccatorum atque impiorum et tamen Christianorum, quorum opera in igne probanda sunt atque purganda, moderatam arbitramur et mixtam clementiae sententiam iudicis.*

<sup>1066</sup> *CommAm* 3.7.4-6, CCSL 76, 315-317. In the previous chapter we have treated his refutation of the idea of *apokatastasis* in his *Commentary on Jonah*. However, in this text, which has a clear anti-Origenist purpose, Jerome does not completely refute Origen’s inclusive view on salvation, but modifies it. The devil is clearly excluded from salvation, but when it comes to human sinners,

O’Connell has written: “Jerome... did not consider mercyism a form of Origenism. For if he had, he would have condemned it along with Origenism”.<sup>1067</sup> I certainly agree with O’Connell that Jerome’s ideas were representative of one version of the *miseriordes* against whom Augustine argued. However, I understand the connection between this position and his relation to Origen in quite different terms. Neither “Origenism” nor “mercyism” were separate doctrines that existed in the church in Jerome’s time. Origen’s ideas about post-mortem punishment and purification were to a certain extent accepted and modified by Jerome; a modification that is seen in the categorization of sinners in the world to come, and in the limitation of the inclusiveness of Origen’s view of *apokatastasis* to one group of sinners rather than affording it to all rational creatures. Jerome’s views are certainly developed in dialogue with Origen – it is developed in texts from the time of the Origenist controversy and afterwards, often in combination with an explicit refutation of the *apokatastasis* doctrine. The teaching of *apokatastasis* is denied, but the idea of punishment as purification is accepted. As I argued already in the previous chapter, *apokatastasis* was, in Jerome’s anti-Origenist polemics, understood primarily as the idea that the devil would ultimately be saved: This is the charge to which Jerome returns again and again. This was, of course, only the most far-reaching consequence of Origen’s idea, and one that he himself seems to have been reluctant to draw. The idea that punishment may have a positive function was, however, clearly accepted by Jerome. Like Origen, he saw justice and mercy as closely connected, and he excluded the possibility of salvation of sinners apart from through purifying punishment.<sup>1068</sup>

Jerome’s ideas about post-mortem punishment and purification provide a great example of his very complex way of relating to Origen from the time of the Origenist controversy: It is a relation of partly accepting, partly rejecting. As we have seen before, Origen’s own ideas are used against him; he plays a positive role in the construction of Origenist heresy, in the simultaneous construction of Origenism and Pelagianism as two heretical extremes, and in the construction of Jerome’s own orthodoxy as the middle between them.

Ramelli sees the expression in *Dialogue* 1.29 as an example that Jerome still expressed the idea of *apokatastasis*, although he refutes Pelagianism because of a supposed connection to Origenism.<sup>1069</sup> Ramelli’s argument, we remember, was

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Jerome points out that God deals with His creation, not only by justice, but also by mercy (*CommJon* 3.6-9, CCSL 76, 406-410).

<sup>1067</sup> O’Connell 1948, 165.

<sup>1068</sup> Not all of the types of *miseriordes* in Augustine’s descriptions embraced the idea of punishment as purification.

<sup>1069</sup> Ramelli 2013, 640.

that Jerome continued to hold the idea of *apokatastasis* (broadly understood). I would rather claim that, while he clearly denied the teaching of *apokatastasis* as an important part of his anti-Origenist polemics, he claimed the salvation of all Christians against Origenism as well as against the Pelagian idea that he constructed as its opposite. Thus, Jerome's view is presented as significantly different from both Origenism and Pelagianism. As I have argued in the fifth chapter, the importance that *apokatastasis* has in Jerome's theology is mainly polemical: He uses it against Origen, and in defence of his own orthodoxy. It is a crucial way for him to mark his difference towards Origen. The salvation of all Christians is the orthodox middle between the two heretical extremes that he constructs as Origenism and Pelagianism. Of course, I do not deny Jerome's dependence on Origen in this regard: What I have tried to show is precisely that we are dealing with both a dependence and a refutation.

## 5. Conclusions

Although Jerome's theology remained quite stable throughout the controversies in which he was engaged, his emphasis on the relativity and uncertainty of the Christian life on earth became stronger – in clear contrast to the security and rest that the saints will enjoy in the world to come. While Pelagius understood sin as a juridical category, and as consisting of actions, Jerome focused on sin as an ontological category, understood in terms of mortality and weakness, by which all human beings were affected. Human existence after the Fall was a defiled state, in which the flesh never ceased to rage against the spirit, and the human will was always torn between the two. Passions were a reality that could not be escaped, and therefore, a state of perfection from which no regression was possible, could not be achieved while in the earthly body. This was reserved for the time when the mortal would put on immortality. Even the best Christians were, because of their weakness, in constant need of God's mercy. To claim that perfection could be reached by free will was to make the human being equal to God.

Pelagius' emphasis was on the power of the free will and on the necessity of good works. Although Jerome had also defended these ideas, above all against Jovinian's thesis of the equality of the baptized, in his refutation of the Pelagians, he focused rather on the limitations of the free will. Being charged with Manichaeism because of his ideas of the flesh, Jerome hurled that accusation back at the Pelagians: It was actually they who destroyed free will, he claimed, because, like Jovinian, they argued that human beings could reach a condition from which they could not fall. Giving expression to an idea of transformation that had characterized Origen's thought, Jerome claimed that while we can become like

God by putting on certain qualities, we remain fleshly human beings and, therefore, changeable.

In his anti-Pelagian polemics, Jerome also followed Origen in claiming a distinction between stronger and weaker Christians within the one church, seeing the church on earth as imperfect and diversified, which left room for the weaker members even in salvation. The idea of *apokatastasis* was rejected, but partly accepted, as Jerome took over the idea of punishment as purification, although he limited it to a certain group of sinners. In Jerome's anti-Pelagian polemics, Origen played the double function of being the principal source of the theological views which he expressed against the Pelagians, and of being presented as a heretical opposite to Pelagianism, from which both the Pelagian view and Jerome's own view on diversity in the afterlife were defined.

The question whether Jerome was or was not a "mercyist" is, in my opinion, not very interesting in itself. Both Origenists and *miseriordes* are polemical categorizations, and, as I have argued throughout this work, there is a methodological danger in taking over and reading sources according to heresiological categorizations. Besides, I do not think that we ought to look for a consistent system in Jerome's eschatological thought. However, the texts in which he does express the idea about post-mortem punishment as purification are highly significant for my purposes, that is, in understanding his reception of Origen in terms of both a dependence and a refutation. In Jerome's anti-Pelagian polemics, Origen assumes the double function of providing Jerome with theological ideas and of being a heretic, with whom the Pelagians can be compared.



# Chapter 7. Conclusions and Perspectives

## 1. Jerome's Reception of Origen Through Three Controversies

The purpose of my dissertation has been to study the reception of Origen in the theology of Jerome, with a focus on eschatological questions. I have examined both a positive reception; that is, in what ways Jerome was indebted to Origen's theology, and a negative reception; that is, in what ways he expressed his ideas in opposition to Origen, in anti-Origenist polemics. A basic presupposition has been that heresiology is a performative enterprise in which orthodoxy and heresy are mutually constructed. Thus, I have not read Jerome's polemics against Origen as simple refutations of certain ideas, but have tried to explain how he relates constructively to those ideas, how they help him to construct his own orthodoxy, and to what extent he continues to embrace them, despite a rhetorical maximizing of the difference.

I have asked what effects Jerome's anti-Origenist polemics had on his eschatological thought. To what extent did Jerome continue to be indebted to Origen's eschatological ideas after his involvement in the Origenist controversy? To what extent did he express new ideas? By which heresiological methods did he distance himself from a thinker by whom he was deeply influenced? Which functions did Origen, and "Origenism" as a constructed heresy, have in Jerome's orthodox self-presentation?

My third chapter, about the Jovinianist controversy, served to provide a background for the study of Jerome's anti-Origenist polemics. In this chapter I sought to demonstrate that before his engagement in the Origenist controversy, Jerome was heavily dependent on Origen, not only in his exegetical work, but also in his ascetical theology. Reading *Adversus Jovinianum* as a theological justification of the superiority of ascetics in the church, I argued that the theological framework presented in the treatise was deeply indebted to Origen's thought. An aspect of this dependency is the dynamic view on the human person, on the church, and on spiritual authority, that Jerome expresses in this work. His dependence on Origen can also be seen in his view on baptism as the beginning of

a process, of a resurrection, which will not be completed until after death. In this process, the individual's free will is crucial, and Jerome's accusations that Jovinian is a determinist are strikingly similar to Origen's anti-Gnostic polemics, to which Jerome was indebted already in the earlier writing *Commentary on Galatians*.

Just as Jerome shared Origen's idea that baptism works the forgiveness of past sins, but does not guarantee a righteous life, which was thought to depend on the free choice of the individual, he also expressed an idea about priesthood, which was similar to Origen's understanding. He understood true priesthood to be achieved by an inner condition: Those who were pure in body and mind were the real priests. This has to do with Jerome's idea about a hierarchy of Christians, which was not a hierarchy based on the degrees of lay people, deacons, priests, and bishops, but on individual purity. As a person's place in the hierarchy depends on his/her degree of asceticism, and as it is possible to rise as well as to fall, the order of the hierarchy in the church can vary. Even the holiness of ordained persons depends on their asceticism and, in the case of married clergy, on their imitation of virgin purity.

This means that sanctity (and celibacy) is not only for the clergy, but for everyone. In this, Jerome differed significantly from two contemporary writers, Ambrosiaster and Siricius, who saw the primary function of celibacy as positioning the clergy in a state pure enough for them to perform their ministerial duties. Against such ideas, Origen's ideas about a spiritual priesthood and a spiritual hierarchy of Christians appear to have become useful for Jerome in his promotion of lay asceticism.

Jerome had to explain why celibacy was the best way of life for everyone, and in doing this, he presented an idea of the history of creation and salvation, according to which the state before the Fall differed utterly from the post-lapsarian human condition in that it was a virginal state without sexual difference. This radicalization of the Fall is certainly an important feature in Origen's theology, and although Jerome does not seem to have embraced the idea of a pre-existence of rational beings, he certainly shared Origen's cyclic view of the history of salvation, according to which the end will be like the beginning. In the resurrection, we will be like angels, and sexual difference will end. However, while living in the fleshly condition following the Fall, the human soul could regain Paradise and anticipate the heavenly life through transcendence. It is precisely this way of life, which means to live contrary to post-lapsarian human nature, that makes some Christians better than others.

I have argued that an awareness of Jerome's dependence on Origen, not only in the area of exegesis, but also when it comes to ascetical theology (the two are of course closely related – it is, after all, mainly from the Scriptures that Origen as well as Jerome argue), is important when studying Jerome's later anti-Origenist polemics. Only in this way we can come to terms with his continuous indebtedness

to Origen, reveal the rhetorical strategies by which Jerome seeks to disclose his actual closeness to Origen, and assess Jerome's reception of Origen in a way that is not determined by his anti-Origenist rhetoric.

Moving on to Jerome's involvement in the Origenist controversy, I devoted one chapter to the question of the resurrection body, and one to the question of eternal salvation. These were the two most important eschatological questions concerning which Origen's teachings were debated in the controversy. Jerome's polemics against Origen was bound up with his self-defence: Accused of being a sympathiser of Origen, he needed to convince his readers that he had never been an Origenist. Concerning the question of the resurrection body, Jerome presented Origen as holding that human beings will not rise with the same body that they had on earth, because he denied the resurrection of the flesh. While Jerome speaks of the flesh in strongly materialistic terms, as that which is held together by blood, bones, and sinews, it is clear that he, like Origen, had a theory that the resurrection body would be a transformed body. If one reads the text with an awareness of Jerome's use of the heresiological strategy of maximizing difference towards a proximate other, it becomes clear, I have argued, that his materialistic expressions, his emphasis on flesh over body and on sameness over difference, ought to be understood as rhetorical exaggerations, by which he distanced himself from Origen. This becomes particularly obvious when we compare what Jerome actually says about bodily change to Origen's ideas about the resurrection. They both held that the bodily nature or substance would remain the same (thus preserving the identity of the resurrected person), while its qualities would change (allowing for the heavenly life to be of a very different kind than the earthly). I have argued that in his polemics against Origen concerning this question, Jerome was actually dependent on Origen. The idea of transformation as clothing, that is, transformation into the likeness of something else, rather than into something else, was an idea expressed by Origen and used by Jerome in anti-Origenist polemics.

A particularly important question during this controversy was whether or not the resurrected person would be without sexual difference. In this case, I have argued that it is essential to distinguish between Jerome's ideas about a spiritual resurrection of the soul in the present life – a resurrection that is from the flesh and into spirit – and his ideas about the future, general resurrection of bodies. Again, Jerome sought to maximize the difference between himself and the “Origenists” by insisting that human beings would rise with all their organs intact. However, he continued to hold that for the inner person, in the present life, it was possible, through asceticism, to transcend sexual difference, to cease to be male and female. This idea, in which he depended on Origen, came to play a part in his anti-Origenist rhetoric: Jerome presented himself as orthodox precisely by making a clear distinction between the inner and the outer person. For the inner person, living on earth, it was possible to transcend sexual difference while living in a



sexed body. In the resurrection, humans would again transcend sexual difference, living in sexed bodies.

When it comes to the question about eternal salvation, my main argument has been that Jerome's idea about a hierarchy in heaven ought not to be seen as a way in which he differed from Origen, rather, he was indebted to Origen not only in claiming a hierarchy of Christian on earth, but also in heaven. They both imagined a hierarchy based on the holiness of the Christian person. The pure Christians, the perfect priests who served the Lord already on earth, and who were temples in which they offered themselves, would keep this position in the world to come, when the proximity to the Lord which they had achieved on earth would be completed. Jerome had expressed ideas about hierarchy against Jovinian, and hierarchy would also be a main topic in his anti-Origenist polemics. Of course, Jerome had no interest in revealing any affinity with Origen; to the contrary, he sought to maximize the difference between his own ideas, presented as orthodox, and Origen's, presented as heretical. In this, the concept of *apokatastasis* played a major rhetorical role: Jerome presented this as the one Origenist idea about the end, while he neglected Origen's theories about a post-mortem hierarchy. He presented his idea of a hierarchy as an orthodox counterpart to the idea of *apokatastasis*, which he characterized above all as implying the ultimate salvation of the devil.

In the Pelagian controversy, Jerome would also make use of his idea about a hierarchy of Christians. Here, he also showed an indebtedness to Origen in claiming, against what he presented as the Pelagian idea about sinlessness, that human life after the Fall was defiled, and sin unavoidable. We return to the radicalization of the consequences of the Fall. Also his ideas about the relativity of human perfection echo those of Origen, who had clearly distinguished the relative perfection of humans on earth both from the divine, absolute perfection, and from the heavenly perfection in the consummation.

However, while a positive reception of Origen can be seen in Jerome's anti-Pelagian polemics, he also made rhetorical use of Origen and "Origenism". The Pelagian idea about sinlessness is associated with Origenism, especially as expressed by Evagrius of Pontus. Origen became rhetorically useful in another way, as the idea of *apokatastasis* was presented as a heretical opposite extreme to the Pelagian (likewise, heretical) idea that even Christian sinners would be punished forever. Jerome presents his own view as an orthodox middle position, by claiming that although the devil, demons and impious persons will perish forever, Christian sinners will be saved after their punishment. Jerome thus accepts one aspect of the *apokatastasis* theory, namely the understanding of punishment as purification, but he limits this offer to one group of sinners, to those who have kept the correct Christian faith.

All in all, Jerome's eschatological thought did not change significantly because of his involvement in anti-Origenist polemics. His emphases certainly changed:

Claiming the resurrection of the flesh and with sexual organs had not been a concern for him prior to the Origenist controversy. Neither had he clearly distanced himself from the idea of *apokatastasis*. However, I argue that in his heresiological presentation of Origenist ideas, as well as of his own views, he was still deeply influenced by Origen's theology. Both concerning the resurrection and eternal salvation, he expressed views with which Origen may certainly have agreed. However, Jerome's need to distance himself from Origen meant that he sought to conceal the actual proximity and to exaggerate – even to make up – the differences. As in all kinds of stereotyping, Origen and “Origenism” were reduced to a few essential characteristics. While Origen had claimed that the resurrected body would be the same as the earthly body, Jerome emphasized what Origen had to say about difference. While Origen claimed a post-mortem hierarchy, Jerome focused on his theory about *apokatastasis*.

It was precisely in his anti-Origenist polemics that Jerome maintained many of Origen's ideas. This may be seen as paradoxical, but according to the understanding of heresiology that I have presented in this work, it is rather what we may expect: Heresiology is a mutual construction of orthodoxy and heresy, which implies a kind of dialogue between heresiologist and heretic: The heretic's view must be taken into account, and in one way or another, it will be part of the orthodox self-presentation.

It has been one of my main arguments throughout this study that Jerome did not pass from being a convinced Origenist to become a radical anti-Origenist; from an indiscriminate acceptance of Origen's theories to an outright denial of all that could be associated with Origen. The well-known *volte-face* never took place. What we have seen is instead a very complex way of relating to Origen, and a reception which was both positive and negative. In arguing this, I have criticized research on Jerome that tends to take his heresiological strategies as descriptions of his actual relation to Origen's thought, and therefore, like him, tends to maximize the difference between the two writers. To this issue we will now turn, and I will widen the scope from Jerome to early Christian heresiology at large.

## 2. Recovering the Heresiologist. Ancient Heresiology and Modern Scholarship

The consequences of naming, or of interpellation, have been noted in scholarship on orthodoxy and heresy. Speaking about the strategy of “labelling”, scholars have brought attention to the way in which rhetorical strategies of ancient heresiologists have a performative side in actually creating the heresy which is named and

described. It has become appreciated how naming does things, rather than describe them.<sup>1070</sup>

Taking my departure in such considerations, I would like to discuss a particular instance of naming: The naming of participants in controversies, and, more specifically, the naming of participants of the Origenist controversy. I will argue that speaking of “Origenists” and “anti-Origenists”, which is common in modern reconstructions of the controversy, the scholars using these designations do not describe something; they create something.

When a writer has been named an anti-Origenist, and has thus become an anti-Origenist, his/her ideas will be interpreted through this knowledge. This categorization and naming of participants in controversies will determine our interpretation of their works. It may even lead us to think that participants with a common designation also have a common agenda. At the same time, it makes us blind to certain aspects of their works, that is, to those aspects which do not support the categorization and which we, consequently, do not look for in the first place.

Things become even more problematic when we consider on what this naming of participants is based. I argue that ancient heresiological rhetoric plays an important part here. Jerome rhetorically maximized the difference between Origen and himself, and this rhetoric of difference still seems to effect reconstructions of the controversy. What Jerome constructed rhetorically is represented as a fact: That he became an anti-Origenist. We may recall the arguments from John O’Connell and Caroline Walker Bynum, that Jerome denied change in the resurrection. Likewise, J.N.D. Kelly’s remark that Jerome stressed the physical identity between the resurrection body and the earthly body “with crudely literalistic elaboration”,<sup>1071</sup> and Elizabeth Clark’s argument that Jerome’s idea of hierarchy made him differ from Origen, may be seen as instances of how modern scholars have read heresiological presentations as sources of information, without paying sufficient attention to the rhetorical strategies of difference-making which are involved. In the case of Jerome, this has had the consequence of categorizing him as an anti-Origenist – and this is, of course, how Jerome categorized himself by way of polemics. Once he has been named an anti-Origenist, this will prevent us even more from seeing the proximity between him and Origen, as we read his texts with the presupposition that we will find ideas diametrically opposed to what we think that we know about Origen's thought. It should be added that Jerome's

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<sup>1070</sup> Primarily associated with Louis Althusser, the theory of interpellation was developed by Judith Butler, who has examined injurious as well as noninjurious effects of naming (*Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative*, 1997). Virginia Burrus has applied the theory to ancient Christian texts in which authors polemicize against Jews and heretics, “Hailing Zenobia: Anti-Judaism, Trinitarianism, and John Henry Newman”, 2002. Labelling as a heresiological strategy is discussed in greater detail in chapter 2 of the present work.

<sup>1071</sup> Kelly 1977, 476.

heresiological constructions have not only had consequences for the way in which he is presented (as an anti-Origenist, who holds certain anti-Origenist views), but also for the way in which Origen is presented: There is good reason to believe that ideas commonly associated with Origen, such as the spiritual resurrection body and the apokatastasis, have much to do with how he has been presented by the heresiologists, who have emphasized certain (that is, the most controversial) aspects of his theology at the expense of others.

Alain Le Boulluec, in his before-mentioned work on heresy, where he argued that orthodoxy and heresy are not stable entities but contingent constructions, also paid attention to the problem that modern scholars run the risk of reproducing ancient heresiological rhetoric in their analyses.<sup>1072</sup> Theresa Shaw has written that Le Boulluec's work:

... is both representative of and influential in a larger body of research that seeks to recast the study of 'orthodoxy' and 'heresy' with sensitivity to the dangers of historically contingent categories and the problems of reading ancient texts /.../ Thus recent studies have challenged scholars to 'rethink' previous understandings of 'heretical' individuals and groups, understandings that in many ways relied on ancient genealogies and labels developed in the agonistic context of the theological dispute and its aftermath.<sup>1073</sup>

In her article, Shaw treats the problem of scholars who analyse ancient texts according to categories presented by ancient heresiologists, so that genealogies of heresy find their way into modern scholarship. Scholars tend to interpret certain beliefs and practices, presented as heretic in heresiological works, to belong to individuals or groups "outside" the orthodox church.<sup>1074</sup>

The attention that Shaw and others have paid to heresiology as a genre and to its effects is certainly very beneficial for the reading of late ancient Christian texts. I would nevertheless suggest that it is possible to go further. As we see in the quotation from Shaw above, it seems to be the presuppositions about heretical individuals and groups that must be rethought in the first place. While a greater appreciation of the importance of heresiology in late ancient studies can certainly be seen,<sup>1075</sup> there still seems to be an idea that the "heretics" are the ones who have been misunderstood and who need to be recovered, rather than the heresiologists themselves. While very much attention has been paid to the rhetorical portrayal of

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<sup>1072</sup> See Le Boulluec 1985, 13, 19, and Le Boulluec 2000, 303, 308.

<sup>1073</sup> Shaw, "Ascetic practice and the genealogy of heresy: Problems in modern scholarship and ancient textual representation", in Martin & Cox Miller 2005, 213.

<sup>1074</sup> The example that Shaw treats in her article is a work attributed to Athanasius of Alexandria, "Discourse on Salvation to a Virgin".

<sup>1075</sup> For example, Cameron 2005, "How to read heresiology", see also my discussion in chapter 2.

“heresy”, this is not the case with the other part of the process, that is, the rhetorical portrayal of “orthodoxy”. While it is acknowledged that orthodoxy, as well as heresy, is a contingent construction, much less attention has been paid to the self-presentation of the heresiologists, which is the necessary counterpart to the presentation of the heretic or the heresy. Just as there is a risk of placing authors in the category of “heresy” or “outside of the church” because of heresiological rhetoric, there is likewise a risk of placing authors in the category of “orthodox” or “inside the church” because of such rhetoric. Thus, the more radical views of such an author may be passed by if he succeeds to, rhetorically, place himself firmly enough within the “right” group. His works will be read through the lens of “orthodox writer”, whatever that may mean in different contexts. His vehement refutation of heresies will make us exclude the possibility of similarities between his own views and those that he refutes.

From these considerations, and, above all, from the results of this work, I argue that the common way of describing the Origenist controversy as a controversy with two camps, an Origenist (or, at least, supporters of Origen) and an anti-Origenist, and the placing of Jerome in the second category, is a splendid example of how ancient heresiology has found its way into modern scholarship, with scholars making categorizations and reading authors according to these; categorizations that were originally made by heresiologists. It is not that Jerome labelled himself an “anti-Origenist”. The term is a modern construction, but modern scholars' way of naming Jerome an “anti-Origenist” depends on Jerome's heresiological rhetoric.

Just as the concept of “Origenism”, which is itself a heresiological construction, tends to essentialize the theology of Origen and his followers, so “anti-Origenism” brings a common identity to those who are labeled in this way, which implies the risk of making us blind to important differences between them. Clark has pointed out that different writers opposed Origen in different ways; however, she still treats them as belonging to one and the same anti-Origenist party. I have argued in the present work that Jerome, in the areas of his theology which have been examined here, was much closer to Origen than to Epiphanius, who, on the other hand, expressed ideas that were very similar to those of Ambrosiaster and Siricius, two of Jerome's opponents in Rome. Epiphanius' very motive for inaugurating the Origenist controversy was, I have claimed, his opposition to the kind of radical lay asceticism that Jerome promoted. While materiality and bodiliness were important questions in the Origenist controversy, Epiphanius and Jerome dealt with these in utterly different ways. This clarifies the importance of being aware of polemical motives and strategies, and the risk of using the label of “anti-Origenism” to describe writers whose anti-Origenist polemics may have differed widely both in terms of motives, content, and rhetorical strategies.

Speaking of naming, I think that it is appropriate at this point to focus on the three controversies which I have treated in this work, and to discuss what their common denominators are.

### 3. Heresiological Strategies

In what follows, I will outline the major heresiological strategies applied by Jerome in the Jovinianist, Origenist and Pelagian controversies.

#### 3.1. Associations to “Paganism” and Christian Heresies

A common heresiological strategy used by Jerome is that to ascribe a pagan – especially a philosophical – origin to the ideas of the opponent. In the case of Jovinian, he is associated with Epicurus because of his approval of sexual life and food, and with Zeno, the Stoic, because of his idea that all sins are equal. Likewise, Origen and the “Origenists” are said to depend on pagan thinkers, above all on Plato. In *Epistula* 84, Origen is said to have tried to harmonize Christian doctrine with Plato in the sixth book of his *Miscellanies*, and this is connected to the ways of contemporary Origenists.<sup>1076</sup> In *Adversus Rufinum*, Jerome claims that Origen was dependent on Plato in writing the *Peri Archon*.<sup>1077</sup> Also contemporary Origenists are accused of relying on Plato – of course, through Origen’s mediation. Concerning the possibility that beings may become of higher and lower ranks, he calls the Origenist (John’s) doctrine a mixture of pagan fables and writes: “What you admire so much, we repudiated long ago when we found it in Plato”.<sup>1078</sup>

In connection to this, it is important to note that for all his speech about the pagan sources of contemporary heretics and mediation through Christian heresies, Jerome’s main focus when associating “Origenists” with “pagans” is not on the content of their ideas, but on their methodological approach. The dichotomy that he creates builds, above all, on two kinds of knowledge: The one that has God for its source, and that has been revealed in the Scriptures and expressed in the creed of the church, and the one that has human reason as its source.<sup>1079</sup> In *Against John*, Jerome pointed out to John of Jerusalem that it is the pagans who should learn to

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<sup>1076</sup> An elaboration and explanation of this is given in *AdvRuf* 1.18, CCSL 79, 17-18.

<sup>1077</sup> *AdvRuf* 3.40, CCSL 79, 110-111.

<sup>1078</sup> *Clch* 19, CCSL 79A, 31.

<sup>1079</sup> Cf. Jeanjean 1999, who points out that according to Jerome, pagans and heretics certainly seek the truth, but they do so in the wrong way, trusting their human intelligence (279-281).

confess the resurrection of the flesh, and not a Christian bishop who should learn from them how to deny it.<sup>1080</sup>

We have seen also in the case of the Pelagians, that their teachings are associated with pagan thinkers, namely with Stoicism. Like the Origenists, the Pelagians are presented as relying too much on the human faculty of reason rather than accepting the Christian faith as it is found in the Scriptures and in the creed. In *Letter* 133, Jerome writes that a few sentences from the Scriptures will refute the arguments of the heretics and, through them, the philosophers.

This is also important in Jerome's orthodox self-presentation. He has not, he writes:

... followed the philosophers in their discussions [argumenta] but have preferred to agree with the plain words of the apostles. For I have known that it is written: I will destroy the wisdom of the wise...<sup>1081</sup>

However, Pelagius is not considered to have learnt his ideas directly from the pagans, but mediated through Christian heretics.<sup>1082</sup> Thus, the strategy of claiming a pagan origin is combined with the strategy of associating different heresies with each other, regardless of any actual points of contact. Referring to Tertullian, Jerome claims that the philosophers are the patriarchs of the heretics.<sup>1083</sup>

### 3.2. The Rhetoric of Simplicity and the Concept of “Church”

An important strategy in Jerome's heresiology in general is his association of heretics with esoteric teachings. Closely connected to this is the accusation of ambiguity: Both Origenists and Pelagians are presented as teaching one thing among themselves and saying something else in public, in order to deceive simple people into thinking that they share the same views as the rest of the church, that is, orthodox views. In *Against John*, Jerome presents John as someone who seeks to disguise the ideas that he actually embraces, by speaking in such a way that simple believers will think that he expresses the true faith, in this case, belief in a real bodily resurrection. He speaks of the resurrection “in ambiguous and balanced

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<sup>1080</sup> *Cl Joh* 32, CCSL 79A, 57-58. Cf. Epiphanius in *Panarion* 64.65.5: Origen interprets the skin tunics as bodies because “the Greeks' heathen teaching” is sown in him (GCS 31, 505, transl. Williams 1994, 192).

<sup>1081</sup> *Ep* 133.12, CSEL 56/1, 258-259.

<sup>1082</sup> *Ep* 133.1, CSEL 56/1, 242: ... *omnium hereticorum uenena conplecti, quae de philosophorum et maxime Pythagorae et Zenonis, principis Stoicorum, fonte manarunt*. Cf. Jeanjean 1999, 388-402.

<sup>1083</sup> *Ep* 133.2, CSEL 56/1, 243; cf. Tertullian, *Adversus Hermogenem* 8.

language”.<sup>1084</sup> What he has said concerning the resurrection of the body “is well thought out to please the ignorant”.<sup>1085</sup> “You confirm the uncertainty of those who doubt and you raise a storm that at once overthrows the firm building of our faith”.<sup>1086</sup>

Likewise, when it comes to Pelagius, he is exhorted to speak what he believes, to preach publicly (*publice*) what he tells his disciples in secret (*secreto*). Those who are in his secret chambers hear one thing, our people hear another. Of course, the unlearned crowd would not manage to take in Pelagius’ secret teaching, just as infants cannot take solid food but are satisfied with milk.<sup>1087</sup>

If we pass to Jerome’s self-presentation, he presents himself as someone who speaks openly: “I will speak freely, and although you screw your mouths, pull your hair, stamp your feet, and take up stones like the Jews, I will openly confess the faith of the Church”.<sup>1088</sup>

The one *ecclesia* with its simple confession of faith, based on revelation, is set against the multiple teachings of the heretics, based on human reason. Jerome speaks of himself as someone who belongs to a category of *ecclesiastici viri*.<sup>1089</sup> He says that he has always, in his various writings, sought to teach what he had himself been taught publicly in the church.<sup>1090</sup>

While Jerome identifies with the simple ones, and distinguishes this category from an intellectual elite who consider themselves to be better, he also clearly sees himself as better than the simple ones, and not as unlearned at all, because it is precisely through his learning that he may reveal the secrets of the heretics. He appears as a kind of protector of the unlearned who, by his knowledge, can save them from being caught in the snares of the heretics. Thus, while the Pelagians deceive the simple and unlearned, they cannot deceive “men of the Church, who meditate on the Law of God day and night”.<sup>1091</sup>

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<sup>1084</sup> *Cl*oh 24, CCSL 79A, 39: ... *streptum resurrectionis ac pompam hac uerborum ambiguitate librauit.*

<sup>1085</sup> *Cl*oh 23, CCSL 79A, 37.

<sup>1086</sup> *Cl*oh 28, CCSL 79A, 50: *de dubiis incerta confirmandis, certam fidei domum subita tempestate subuertis.*

<sup>1087</sup> *Ep* 133.11, CSEL 56/1, 257: *loquere, quod credis; publice praedica, quod secreto discipulis loqueris. qui dicis te habere arbitrii libertatem, quare non libere, quod sentis, loqueris? aliud audiunt cubiculorum tuorum secreta, aliud nostrorum populi. etenim uulgus indoctum non potest arcanorum tuorum onera sustentare nec capere solidum cibum, quod infantiae lacte contentum est (Heb 5:12).*

<sup>1088</sup> *Cl*oh 31, CCSL 79A, 56.

<sup>1089</sup> *Ep* 133.3, CSEL 56/1, 244. See Jeanjean about Jerome as *vir ecclesiasticus*, 1999, 330-346.

<sup>1090</sup> *Ep* 133.12, CSEL 56/1, 258-259.

<sup>1091</sup> *Ep* 133.3, CSEL 56/1, 244: ... *ecclesiasticos uiros, qui in lege dei die ac nocte meditantur...*



## 4. Exegete, Polemicist *and* Theologian? A Reassessment of Jerome's Place in the History of Christian Theology and the Reception of Origen

From the discussion about heresiological strategies, it becomes clear how important it was for Jerome to distance himself from philosophical learning and present himself as, above all, an interpreter of the Scriptures. The words of the Scriptures were, in his polemics, presented as diametrically opposed to the philosophical arguments of the heretics. To this, we should add his insistence that he was an exegete rather than a theologian. We have seen it in his apologetical writing in which he explained certain statements in *Adversus Jovinianum* (*Epistula* 49): His role was simply to explain the words of the Apostle; he did not add any opinions of his own. This strategy is also used when he explains his way of using Origen: He has used only Origen's exegetical works, he claims, and he has not been influenced by Origen's theology.

This strict divide between exegesis and theology is artificial, and it is clearly made by Jerome for apologetic reasons. To be influenced by Origen's exegesis does of course imply influence from his theology, as his theological ideas determined the interpretations that he made. The very fact that Jerome, in *Against Jovinian*, presented alternative interpretations to biblical texts, refuting those made by Jovinian, shows that there were room for different interpretations of the same texts.

If we take this into account, it is quite remarkable how well Jerome has succeeded in persuading modern scholars that he was, precisely, an exegete, but not a theologian. As I discussed in the introductory chapter, this way of presenting Jerome is very common, and consequently, he is given little space in historical reconstructions of early Christian teaching.

I hope to have demonstrated in this work that Jerome was an exegete, a polemicist, and a theologian. The theology he produced was not expressed in theological treatises that dealt with a single theological question but was rather expressed in biblical commentaries, in letters, and in polemical treatises. I have sought especially to show that in being a polemicist, Jerome was also a theologian. Polemics, I have argued, is a way of making theology. It is never a simple refutation, never completely negative in the sense on non-productive – even if this is often what the heresiologists want us to believe – but it is a performative work of giving “orthodox” answers to questions that are shared by heresiologist and heretic alike. In Jerome's heresiology, Origen played an important role in several ways: He provided a source of theological ideas and exegetical strategies; he was used in the constructions of other “heretics”; and he was himself the “heretic” in dialogue with whom Jerome constructed his own “orthodoxy”.

The common division of Jerome's career into an Origenist and an anti-Origenist phase, and the very labelling of him as an "anti-Origenist" depends, I argue, on a neglect of, first, Jerome's actual theological contributions, in which the influence of Origen is profound, and secondly, of the effects of his anti-Origenist polemics. In this way, ancient heresiology has found its way into modern scholarship. Characteristic of heresiology, as of all kinds of stereotyping, is the tendency to simplify, and to present Jerome as an "Origenist" who became an "anti-Origenist" because of a new situation, is certainly to simplify what was in reality a complex way of relating to an earlier writer, and to neglect the theologian behind the "orthodox" self that he constructed. To use an important distinction in Jerome's, as well as in Origen's theology of the resurrection, we are not dealing with a destruction, but with a transformation.



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