

**Re-Thinking Origen  
Conference Schedule  
25 April 2018, Cambridge**

**10:00am – Early Bird Coffee & Tea (Selwyn Room & Foyer)**

**10:30-12:25 – Morning session (Runcie Room)  
Re-Thinking Origen in Late Antiquity**

10:30-11:15 – Guilio Maspero: *Re-Thinking Origen's Trinitarianism: Probing behind the Accusations of the Origenist Crisis*  
Morwena Ludlow to respond

11:15-12:00 – Rowan Williams: *Reading and Misreading Origen in the 4<sup>th</sup> Century*  
Isidoros Katsos to respond

12:00-12:45 – Sam Rubenson: *Once Again: Origen, the Origenist Crisis and the Monks*  
Sarah Coakley to respond

**12:45-2:15 – Lunch (Selwyn Room & Foyer)**

**2:15-4:30 – Afternoon Session (Runcie Room)  
Re-Thinking Origen in Modernity**

2:15-3:00 – Douglas Hedley: *Re-Thinking Origen in the 17<sup>th</sup> century West: Anne Conway and the Cambridge Platonists*  
Christian Hengstermann to respond

3:00-3:45 – Andrew Louth: *Origen in the 18<sup>th</sup> century Philokalia*  
Laura Soureli and Elizabeth Theokritoff to respond

3:45-4:30 – Joseph O'Leary: *Origen in the Catholic Ressourcement Theologians*  
Philip McCosker to respond

**4:30 – Closing reception (Selwyn Room & Foyer)**

# Re-Thinking Origen Conference Abstracts

## RE-THINKING ORIGEN IN LATE ANTIQUITY

**Guilio Maspero: 'Re-Thinking Origen's Trinitarianism: Probing behind the Accusations of the Origenist Crisis'.**

**Morwena Ludlow to respond**

Both History of the Church and *Dogmengeschichte* witness to an ambiguity in the reception of Origen's theology. But the last decades offered quite an amount of new results, ranging from the discovery of the original Greek text of the homilies on the Psalms to the development of a relational and anti-reductionist epistemology for the history of dogma. These make possible to draw a new picture of the great Alexandrine's theology more faithful to his intention, which can be grasped only through a prayer-based approach, as in Sarah Coakley's and in Lorenzo Perrone's works. Origen's main concern was the identification of the purely spiritual dimension with the Trinity, highlighting the difference of Christian theology with respect to both Stoicism and Gnosticism. This brought him to the formulation of two main models for the Trinity: the triangular one and the linear one. Their interplay shows the impossibility to divide Christology from Pneumatology, driving from the first attempts to systematize the doctrine of the triune God towards a relational picture. From this perspective, the 4<sup>th</sup> century criticisms by Athanasius and the Cappadocians of the political theology based on the Arian reading of the monarchy allegedly according to Origen's Trinitarian theology could be presented as a faithful (relational) development of the Alexandrine's heritage.

**Rowan Williams: 'Reading and Misreading Origen in the 4<sup>th</sup> Century'.**

**Isidoros Katsos to respond**

One of the most significant strands in fourth century theology is the misreading of Origen by both critics and supporters. Reconstructing Pamphilus's defence of Origen from the heavily edited and adapted version of Rufinus, it seems clear that the main concern at this point was to defend the Alexandrian master against the charge of eroding the distinction between Father and Son; traces of this reading can be found in some of the early documents of the Arian controversy. By the end of the fourth century, the issue was defending Origen against accusations of subordinationism - as well as the other questions around anthropology which made his reputation so bitterly contested in monastic circles. We are still largely in thrall to these fourth century misreading: understanding Origen in his own terms requires more attention to the detail of his exegesis rather than the enshrining of any assumptions about his metaphysical aims. His concern, as far as it can be reconstructed, is not to elaborate a new account of the ontology of creator and creature; the shape of this is something he broadly takes for granted. The challenge for him is to develop a rationally consistent reading of the Bible so as to answer both

Valentinian and non-Christian polemic against the intelligibility of both Hebrew and Christian scripture. In this sense, he is primarily concerned about the common, public life of the Church as a worshipping and teaching body, rather than the construction of a system as such.

**Sam Rubenson: 'Once Again: Origen, the Origenist Crisis and the Monks'.**

**Sarah Coakley to respond**

Intensive and detailed studies of Origen's works, the reasons for his condemnation, and the so called Origenist crisis, have yet to come up with an answer to two basic questions: Why was it so important to have him, long dead, condemned, and how could his critics, succeed in this, when not only their adversaries, but even they, admired and used his works? That the relation between bishop Theophilus and the monks was crucial for the developments was recognized already in the earliest sources and has been confirmed in numerous recent studies. There is, however, still little agreement on Theophilus motives and actions as well as on the character and views of the monastic group or groups targeted by him

In my contribution I will argue that the idea that Theophilus encountered two distinct groups, 'Origenists' and 'anthropomorphites' is a misleading construct serving the needs of a specific historiography. I will do this by taking a closer look at fourth century Egyptian monastic intellectual tradition in a search for traces of a common spirituality and understanding of how the human being relates to the divine. Following a suggestion by Sarah Coakley I will suggest that this tradition had a theological foundation for the nature of the Church and of leadership that was perceived as dangerous to the organized unity for which Theophilus and others were responsible.

## **RE-THINKING ORIGEN IN MODERNITY**

**Douglas Hedley: 'Re-Thinking Origen in the 17th century West: Anne Conway and the Cambridge Platonists'.**

**Christian Hengstermann to Respond**

The Cambridge Platonists constitute one of the most important phases in the reception of Origen in the West. This is in part because they associate the Christian and the pagan Origen as a pupil of Ammonius Saccas and schoolmate of Plotinus. Origen is thus integral for the 'Platonism' of the Cambridge Platonists. This Origenistic moment in English history was facilitated by the abolition of the Church of England during the Protectorate and the removal of the imprimatur of the Bishops. After the Restoration, these men of 'Latitude' were regarded with extreme suspicion by Restoration High Churchmen, and often condemned as frankly heretical. The Origenistic Cambridge Platonists or Latitudinarians furnished the foundation of the Broad Church party in 19<sup>th</sup> century Anglicanism, and their Origenism provided a position distinguishable from the Evangelical and the High Church parties. F.D.

Maurice and Westcott were characteristic figures of this later Origenistic movement (Maurice's removal from King's London and Westcott's magnificent 'Origen' essay are good examples). In my paper I will discuss the Origenism of Cudworth, More, Rust and Conway. This 'Origenism' takes different forms. Cudworth, More, Rust and Conway exhibit different levels of commitment to characteristically 'Origenistic' tenets.

### **Andrew Louth, 'Origen in the 18<sup>th</sup> century Philokalia'.**

#### **Laura Soureli and Elizabeth Theokritoff to respond**

If, as Marguerite Harl once asserted, the term *Philokalia* has only been used twice as a title—for the fourth-century work compiled by Basil the Great and Gregory the Theologian and for the eighteenth-century work compiled by Nikodimos the Hagiorite and Makarios of Corinth—there is something of an irony in the realization that Nikodimos and Makarios would have been horrified at the idea that there was any trace of Origen in their anthology. Nevertheless, there is more than a trace of Origen's influence in what amounts to the subtitle of the work: 'in which through ethical philosophy by way of activity and contemplation the intellect is purified, enlightened, and perfected'. The influence of Origen runs deep in the Byzantine ascetical and mystical tradition, not least in Evagrius, whose important treatise on prayer was included in the *Philokalia* (though attributed to another), and several other Fathers, for example, Diadochos of Photiki, Maximos the Confessor, and also Elias Ekdikos, whose works are represented in the *Philokalia*. Perhaps more striking still is the way in which the ascetical terminology of the *Philokalia* bears the mark of Origen and Evagrius. Some reflection will be offered on why this is so and what it tells us about the development of Byzantine ascetical and mystical theology, of which the *Philokalia* is such an important witness.

### **Joseph O'Leary: 'Origen in the Catholic Ressourcement Theologians'.**

#### **Philip McCosker to respond**

The post-war embrace of Origen by French Jesuits, beginning with Daniélou's *Origène* (1948), and continued by de Lubac, Crouzel, Fédou, and beyond France by Dupuis, Nemeshegyi, Balthasar, reflects fatigue with Scholasticism and Augustinianism. Origen promised broad, luminous horizons.

Origen is cited in three documents of Vatican II, with the highest frequency in *Ad Gentes*, the decree on Missions. His name can thus be linked with one of the most impressive paradigm shifts of the Council, the new opening, both theoretical and practical, to the other religions.

De Lubac's engagement with Buddhism came to fruition in three erudite volumes: *Aspects du bouddhisme* (1951), *La rencontre du bouddhisme et de l'Occident* (1952), and *Amida* (1955). The most enthusiastic pages are found in the first volume, where he correlates Origen's comment on the Transfiguration with the *sambhogakaya* or bliss-body, the second of the three Buddha bodies alongside the

Dharma-body and the *nirmanakaya* or appearance-body. The conclusions of the two subsequent volumes, in contrast, seem distressingly negative to readers today.

Vatican II associates the elements of truth and goodness in the other religions with the universal illumination of the divine Logos and with the work of the Spirit. Had de Lubac aligned the illuminating work of the Logos in Origen with the Dharma-body, the ultimate reality of buddhahood, he would have come closer to the vision of Vatican II. If he failed to do so, that would reflect his relative inattention to the Logos-theology of Origen's *Commentary on John*.

I shall check this hunch and attempt to follow the subsequent interplay between Origenism and interreligious openness before and after the Council.