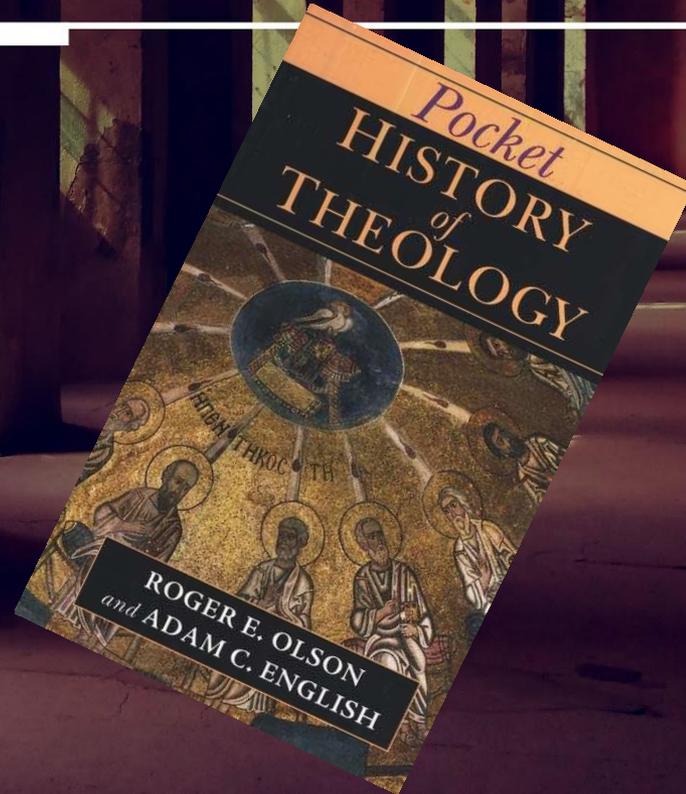


CHURCH HISTORY

3



Third-Century Tensions between philosophy and theology



CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA

Clement of Alexandria

d. 216

Theologian and Catechist

- ✦ Highly educated pagan convert
- ✦ Became colleague, then successor, of Pantaenus
- ✦ Fled Alexandria to avoid persecution, 202
- ✦ May have taught Origen, who assumed leadership of the catechetical school in 203
- ✦ Wrote *Pædagogus*, *Protrepticus*, *Stromata*, and "What Rich Person Will Be Saved?"
- ✦ Patron saint of teachers

Do not you judge who is worthy or who is unworthy. For it is possible you may be mistaken in your opinion. As in the uncertainty of ignorance it is better to do good to the undeserving for the sake of the deserving, than by guarding against those that are less good to fail to meet in with the good.

In [God's] ineffable essence he is Father; in his compassion to us he became Mother.

"What Rich Person Will Be Saved?" xxxiii, xxxvii

O Teacher Jesus, be favourable to your children. Grant that we who follow your command may attain the likeness of your image and in accord with our strength find in you both a good God and a judge who is not severe. *Amen.*

Attributed to Clement

Clement of Alexandria

- **True theology does not contradict or cancel out Greek philosophy but fulfills it.**
- (i.e. Can Christian theology work with science, psychology, sociology, neuroscience, etc, or not).
- **Christians should value and interact with the best education of the day.**
- **“All truth is God’s truth wherever it may be found.”**
- **“Plunder the Egyptians.”**

Clement of Alexandria

- **We should bring together the “rays of light” from all the various philosophical and religious systems and submit them to the authority of Scripture and apostolic tradition.**
- **The ideal Christian is “the true Gnostic” or “the perfect Gnostic”.**
- **By this Clement meant a person of wisdom/knowledge who lives a life of the mind and shuns the lower bodily desires and pleasures.**

Clement of Alexandria

- The “true Gnostic” was a kind-of “Christian” Plato or Socrates.
- Someone who stands for truth against the crowds that merely lives for parties and material gain.
- The “true Gnostic” seeks to be conversant with all kinds of wisdom and to rise above their bodily passions.

Clement of Alexandria

- **The true Christian Gnostic can “become God” in this life by putting off “desire” and become “impassable” (free from emotions like anger).**
- **By this Clement made clear that we cannot actually become perfect in the same way that God is, but that we put on the image of God.**

Clement of Alexandria

- **The goal of salvation is “Divinization”.**
- **Sharing in the divine nature (2 Pet. 1) by having the image of God fulfilled in us and attaining immortality.**
- **Any achievement in this is the work of God that comes about by our yielding to God. (i.e. shunning the lower life of the body and seeking the higher life of the mind/soul through contemplation and study).**
- **The teacher who guides us through this process is Jesus.**



ORIGEN

Origen

d. 254

Presbyter, Theologian, and Teacher

- ✠ May have been eunuch in obedience to Matt 19:12
- ✠ Called to head School of Alexandria after Clement
- ✠ When ousted in Alexandria, moved to Palestine
- ✠ Outstanding philosophical theologian; wrote *On First Principles* and *Against Celsus*
- ✠ First critical biblical scholar; compiled *Hexapla*, numerous commentaries
- ✠ Wrote Commentary on Song of Songs, *Life of Moses*, *Catechetical Orations*, *Contra Eunomius*

We say that this Logos dwelt in the soul of Jesus and was united with it in a closer union than that of any other soul, because it alone has been able perfectly to receive the highest participation in him who is the very Logos and the very Wisdom and the Very Righteousness himself.

Against Celsus, 5.39

For how can anyone be said to believe the Scripture when he does not see in it the mind of the Holy Spirit, which God would have us to believe, rather than the literal meaning?

Commentary on John, 10.27

Origen (185-254 AD)

- When his father was in prison waiting for execution for being a Christian, 16 year old Origen wanted to turn himself in to the authorities so he could die for his faith in Christ alongside his father.**
- His mother, however, hid his clothes so that he was unable to leave the house and, thus, saved his life.**

Origen (185-254 AD)

- **Castrated himself in dedication to Christ.**
 - *(Cut off anything that causes you to sin – Matt. 5:29-30).*
 - The church condemned him for this.
- **During Emperor Decian's persecution he suffered "bodily tortures and torments under the iron collar and in the dungeon; and how for many days with his feet stretched four spaces in the stocks." (Eusebius – Early church historian 300s).**
- **Though he did not die while being tortured, he died three years later due to injuries sustained at the age of 69.**

Origen (185-254 AD)

- Like Clement, Origen loved speculation and far surpassed Clement in blending Christian thought and Greek philosophy.**
- He became one of the most renowned scholars of his day, and of history.**
- Produced over 800 treatises/books during his life often dictating several books at the same times to his many scribes.**
- Even pagan philosophers came to his Christian school to learn under him.**

Origen (185-254 AD)

- Believed that the ultimate goal of salvation and Christian living is “divinization” – to becoming “like God” or “Christ-like.”
- This is still the position of Eastern Orthodoxy to this day.

Scripture has three levels of meaning

1. Corporeal: bodily/literal.

- i.e. Don't eat certain foods.**

2. Soulsh: rational and ethical. Meanings hidden beneath the literal/historical meaning.

- i.e. prohibitions against eating certain foods refers to moral practices of not associating with evil people.**

3. Spiritual: having to do with salvation.

- Refers in cryptic fashion to Christ and the Christian's relationship with God.**

- i.e. prohibitions against eating certain foods is to draw us to feed on Christ's body alone (in the Lord's Supper).**

Scripture has three levels of meaning

- **Sometimes God purposely makes the literal meaning ridiculous (and not meant to be followed) so that we know that we have to search for the spiritual meaning.**
 - **(Maybe he should have taken his own advice with the castration thing).**

Allegorical Interpretation of Scripture

- **One of his goals in his allegorical/spiritual interpretations was to relieve the unbearable pressure put upon Christians by skeptics like Celsus who ridiculed many of the OT stories as being absurd, immoral, and improper to God.**
- **Origen said that these stories were not meant to be taken literally.**
 - **i.e. the OT genocides should be read spiritually as about eradicating all sin from our life.**

Allegorical Interpretation of Scripture

- **Origen's downplaying of the literal was motivated out of:**
 - his desire to uphold the holiness of God's nature.
 - do what the NT seems to do with the OT at times.
 - follow the "spiritual" way Jesus appears to teach in the gospel of John.

Doctrine of God

“Origen’s doctrine of God is one of the most highly developed and complex in the history of Christian theology. It was both profound and confusing.”

(Roger Olson)

Doctrine of God

- **Origen built much of his doctrine of God by trying to answer the questions of many pagan intellectuals who considered his Christian views primitive and contradictory.**
 - **How could the one God who created the universe be born as a infant?**
 - **Who was running the universe when God was a infant?**
 - **If God became human he would have to change (become better or worse) and that would mean that God wasn't perfect. (Celsus)**

Doctrine of God

- This led Origen to be one of the first theologians to develop a sustained theology of the relationship between God the Father and God the Son.
- His attempts to do so both cleared things up and muddied the waters that eventually erupted in the greatest theological controversy in Christian history.
 - (Arius vs Athanasius and the Nicene Creed).

Doctrine of God

- **God is Spirit and Mind, “simple”** (i.e. without body, parts or passions), **incorporeal, immutable** (unchangable), **and incomprehensible.**
- **God is one and perfect and Jesus is God.**

“What belongs to the nature of God is common to the Father and the Son.” (Origen).

Doctrine of God

- **Origen rejected any real change in the divinity, even in the Logos, in the process of becoming incarnate/human.**

“For, continuing unchangeable in His essence, He condescends to human affairs by the economy of His providence.” (Origen).

Doctrine of God

- This became the common position of Eastern Christian orthodoxy, but also lead to varying interpretations, splits and heresy.
 - i.e. If the Logos remained “unchangeable in his essence” *even in the incarnation* can one really say that the Logos became human?

Some Controversial Beliefs

- **Universal salvation** (even – possibly - for the devil).
- **Our souls pre-existed our bodies** (which is why we can have such different personalities at birth).
- **For ideas like these and others the church eventually condemned Origen as a heretic.**

Some Controversial Beliefs

- Origen, however, always saw himself as a promoter of a strict adherence to scripture and the apostolic tradition.**
- He argued that speculation beyond them is permitted as long as it remains consistent with them.**
- Whether or not he stayed consistent with them is where he and the church differed in some of his positions.**

Some Controversial Beliefs

- There is no doubt that Origen was a passionate and sincere lover of Jesus Christ and the church.**
- He stands alongside Irenaeus and the later Augustine as a model of a great Christian intellectual.**
- He sacrificed his life in the service of the faith.**
- But much of his speculation left the church with a lot to sort out.**



TERTULLIAN

Tertullian

d. 225?

Theologian

- ✠ Wrote in Carthage
- ✠ First theologian to write in Latin
- ✠ May have been trained as a lawyer
- ✠ Combative literary style
- ✠ Sympathetic to Montanist cause
- ✠ Eventually separated from catholic church ~ 210
- ✠ Gave theological sense to terms such as *trinitas*, *regula fidei*, *personæ*, *substantia*

“The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church”

“What has Athens to do with Jerusalem, the Academy with the Church?”

“If he only seemed to be human, we only seem to be saved.”

“[Praxeas] throws out prophecy and brings in heresy; he put the Paraclete to flight and crucified the Father.”

Tertullian

- **Was horrified by Clement , Justin Martyr and Origen's approach to theology.**
- **Theology and Greek philosophy should never mix and are antithetical to each other.**
- **We should avoid rationalizing Christian beliefs with Greek philosophy.**
- **Rejected the study of any non-biblical and non-apostolic sources.**

Tertullian

- **“What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?”**
- **“To know nothing in opposition to the rule of faith is to know all things.”**
- **Regarding belief in the incarnation and the death and resurrection of the son of God.**
- **“I believe because it is absurd.”**
- **“It is certain because it is impossible.”**
- **(He did use a lot of hyperbole to make his points).**

Tertullian

- **Made important contributions to the doctrines of the Trinity and the person of Christ.**
- **The first one to fully confront the heretical view of modalism, the idea that God is one person who wears three different masks.**
- **If this is true then the totality of God would have died on the cross in the mask of the Son.**
- **But the Father did not die on the cross, but only the Son did.**

Tertullian

- **Developed the concept of an “organic monotheism.”**
- **God’s “oneness” does not rule out or exclude a multiplicity, just as biological organisms can be “one” and yet made up of interconnected and mutual parts.**
- **God is one substance and three persons.**
- **“Distinction without division.”**

Tertullian

- In his latter ministry days he became so disgusted with the moral decay in the church that he defected to join the Montanist “New Prophecy” church in Carthage.
- Montanist was a teacher who believed that God spoke through him and gave ongoing revelation as authoritative as scripture.
- Many believe him to be the incarnation of the Holy Spirit.