

## Diskussion

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# Origen in Paradise: A Response to Peter Martens

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**Abstract:** This article is a response to Peter Martens, “Origen’s Doctrine of Pre-Existence and the Opening Chapters of Genesis,” *ZAC* 16 (2012): 516–549, in which he argues that Origen imagines the primitive state of human beings to be strictly incorporeal. Following the structure of Marten’s argument, it will be argued (a) that while Origen rejects anthropomorphic elements in the narrative of the creation of Eden, he does not deny its existence as a place in the world; (b) that Origen sometimes means by the fall of “rational beings” the fall of angels rather than human beings; (c) that the doctrine that “the end is like the beginning” ought to entail that humans had bodies in the beginning, as they will at the end; (d) that passages said by Martens to speak of a church that antedates the world are open to a different interpretation; and (e) that Origen does not say unequivocally that “coats of skin” at Genesis 3:21 represent bodies.

**Keywords:** allegory, incorporeality, pre-existence, Paradise, Adam and Eve, coats of skin

In a recent contribution to the *Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum*, Peter Martens<sup>1</sup> observes, with some justice, that even the ablest scholars have found it difficult to reconcile Origen’s exegesis of the first chapters of Genesis with the theory of the pre-existent soul that is commonly attributed to him.<sup>2</sup> The Mosaic account,

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<sup>1</sup> Peter W. Martens, “Origen’s Doctrine of Pre-Existence and the Opening Chapters of Genesis,” *ZAC* 16 (2012): 516–549.

<sup>2</sup> Notable contributions are those of Marguerite Harl, “La préexistence des âmes dans l’oeuvre d’Origène,” in *Origeniana Quarta. Papers of the 4th International Origen Congress: Innsbruck, 2.–6. September 1985* (ed. Lothar Lies; Innsbrucker Theologische Studien 19; Innsbruck, 1987), 238–258 and Caroline P. Hammond Bammel, “Adam in Origen,” in *The Making of Orthodoxy: Essays in Honour of Henry Chadwick* (ed. Rowan D. Williams; Cambridge, 1989), 62–93. As Martens notes, both maintain that passages which assume the corporeality of Adam preponderate in

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if Origen took it as literally as is often supposed, recounts first the creation of the visible cosmos with humanity as its crown, then the insufflation which made Adam a *living soul* and finally, after the making of woman from Adam's rib, the joint transgressions which caused both man and woman to be expelled from paradise. Thus it would appear that the embodiment of the soul precedes the fall; yet, on the standard account of Origen's belief in the pre-existence of the soul, its fall not only precedes, but is the occasion of, its incarceration in the body. The logic of consistency offers two solutions to this dilemma: either to deny that Origen held the doctrine of pre-existence commonly ascribed to him, or to maintain that he read the opening chapters of Genesis as an allegory rather than a historical account.<sup>3</sup> Rejecting or ignoring recent arguments in favour of the first alternative,<sup>4</sup> Martens takes the second, proposing that Origen's paradise should be understood as the incorporeal state of the soul before its loss of innocence, and that the text cannot be read literally when it seems to endow both Adam and Eve with bodies before the fall.

This paper will argue that he has seized the wrong horn of the dilemma. There is no doubt that Origen understood the first heaven which God created to be *omnis spiritalis substantia*, "all spiritual substance";<sup>5</sup> but to construe this at once as "mind,"<sup>6</sup> as Martens does, is to beg the questions that are raised in the present paper. To Martens it seems that the question is decided by a passage in *De principiis*, which certainly postulates the creation of rational entities at the dawn of the world;<sup>7</sup> there are, however, other well-known pronouncements of this tentative and speculative thinker which might be adduced as prooftexts for the

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the works of Origen, while admitting that the contrary is implied on certain occasions (Martens, "Origen's Doctrine" [see note 1], 519 [note 11] and 520 [note 12]).

<sup>3</sup> It is not denied, of course, that he entertained allegorical readings in addition to those which treated the text as a cosmogonic narrative: see Charlotte Köckert, *Christliche Kosmologie und Kaiserzeitliche Philosophie: Die Auslegung des Schöpfungberichtes bei Origenes, Basilios und Gregor von Nyssa vor dem Hintergrund kaiserzeitlicher Timaeus-Interpretationen*, (STAC 56; Tübingen, 2009), 248–253.

<sup>4</sup> See Mark J. Edwards, *Origen against Plato* (Ashgate Studies in Philosophy & Theology in Late Antiquity; Aldershot, 2002), 97–101; and idem, "Further Reflections on the Platonism of Origen," *Adamantius* 18 (2012): 317–324; also Panayiotis Tzamalikos, *Origen: Cosmology and Ontology of Time* (VCS 77; Leiden, 2006), 45; idem, *Origen: Philosophy of History and Eschatology* (VCS 85; Leiden, 2007), 44.

<sup>5</sup> Origen, *Homiliae in Genesim* 1,2 (SC 7, 28,12–13 Doutreleau) cited by Martens, "Origen's Doctrine" (see note 1), 526 (note 29).

<sup>6</sup> Martens, "Origen's Doctrine" (see note 1), 526.

<sup>7</sup> Origen, *De principiis* 2,9,1 (GCS 22, 164,10–13 Koetschau).

opposite view.<sup>8</sup> Even if we admit the creation of beings who were strictly incorporeal, we have still to determine whether these were the souls of men and women rather than the angelic intellects.<sup>9</sup> I shall argue here that paradise was the first abode of humans, and that in this state the soul already inhabited a body, though not a body of flesh and blood.

Being a reply to one study of restricted scope, the present paper will not canvass the possibility of the soul's existence before the creation of paradise.<sup>10</sup> A doctrine of its pre-existence, and even of its eternal pre-existence, is certainly compatible with the argument at *Homilies on Genesis* 1,11<sup>11</sup> that the inner man was created at Gen 1:26–27 before the fashioning of the outer man at Gen 2:1–7, and again with the assertion at *De principiis* 1,7,1<sup>12</sup> that we are properly identical with our minds. On the other hand, these passages are equally compatible, as in Gregory of Nyssa's *De opificio hominis*, with a logical rather than chronological primacy of the inner man, or with the instantaneous creation of the soul before it is sent down into the body. In other words, they are open to whatever interpretation is most consistent with the commentator's understanding of the paradisaical state in Origen. I shall therefore begin, as Martens does, with Origen's observations on the tree of Knowledge, then proceed to a reconstruction of his teachings on the antiquity of the church, the return to bliss, the nature of the primordial sin and the meaning of the coats of skin that were woven for Adam and Eve.

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**8** Charlotte Köckert, "Räumliche Vorstellungen im Weltbild des Origenes und ihr Verhältnis zum zeitgenössischen astronomischen Weltbild," in *Die Welt als Bild: interdisziplinäre Beiträge zur Visualität von Weltbildern* (ed. Christoph Marksches and Johannes Zachhuber; AKG 107; Berlin, 2008), (69–79) 73, cites Origen, *De principiis* 2,3,6 (122,3–4 K.): *a nostris rationibus alienum est, mundum incorporeum dicere, in sola mentis fantasia vel cogitationum lubrico consistentem*, i. e. "is it foreign to our ways of thought to speak of an incorporeal world consisting only in imagination or in the vagaries of thought." She goes on to conclude that in modifying the thought of Philo and Clement, Origen also distances himself "von dem platonischen Weltbild, das hinter dieser Deutung steht." Charlotte Köckert, "Räumliche Vorstellungen im Weltbild des Origenes" (see above), 74.

**9** Martens, "Origen's Doctrine" (see note 1), 527 (note 34), notes that his reading is contested by Köckert, *Christliche Kosmologie* (see note 3), 250 (note 133). Mine differs from both, but cannot be dismissed *a priori*, as it concurs with the reading of Gen 1:1–3 proposed by Augustine, *De civitate dei* 11,32 (CChr.SL 48, 351,1–352,36 Dombart/Kalb).

**10** Nor, for example, shall I take a position on the meaning of the στερέωμα (firmament) and the ἀντίκθων (Counter-world) in Origen, *Homilia in Psalmum* 36,2,4 (GCS.NF 19, 132,17.21.24 Perrone). I see nothing here that entails the existence of discarnate souls, or indeed of an incorporeal world for them to inhabit.

**11** At Origen, *Homiliae in Genesim* 1,11 (50,1–54,36 D.).

**12** Origen, *De principiis* 1,7,1 (86,5–8 K.).

# 1 Pre-existence in Genesis 3 (Martens, 522–528)

Martens makes a strange choice of his first text to prove that Origen did not regard paradise as a place on earth. It is taken, like most specimens of Origen's heterodoxy, from a modern edition of his *De principiis*, but, in contrast to many of these citations, it is extant in the Latin of Rufinus, who is commonly held to have purged the text of its most anomalous teachings. It is also, as Martens notes, preserved in Greek—that is to say in the *Philokalia*, a florilegium of excerpts from his writings, which is traditionally thought to have been assembled by two champions of orthodoxy, Basil the Great and Gregory Nazianzen.<sup>13</sup> Even if the attribution is false, it suggests that ancient readers found little to offend them in this admonition against crude literalism:<sup>14</sup>

Τίς γοῦν νοῦν ἔχων οἰήσεται “πρώτην καὶ δευτέραν καὶ τρίτην ἡμέραν ἑσπέραν τε καὶ πρωΐαν” χωρὶς ἡλίου γεγονέναι καὶ σελήνης καὶ ἀστέρων; τὴν δὲ οἶονεὶ πρώτην καὶ χωρὶς οὐρανοῦ; Τίς δ’ οὕτως ἡλίθιος ὡς οἰθῆναι τρόπον ἀνθρώπου γεωργοῦ “τὸν θεὸν πεφυτευκέναι παράδεισον ἐν Ἑδὲμ κατὰ ἀνατολάς,” καὶ “ξύλον ζωῆς” ἐν αὐτῷ πεποιηκέναι ὁρατὸν καὶ αἰσθητόν, ὥστε διὰ τῶν σωματικῶν ὀδόντων γευσάμενον τοῦ καρποῦ τὸ ζῆν ἀναλαμβάνειν;

Who that has any intelligence at all will suppose that a first, a second and a third day, a morning and an evening, took place without a sun, a moon or stars? And the first day (so to speak) without even a heaven? Who was ever so witless as to suppose that God, in the manner of a human cultivator, planted a garden in Eden in the east (Gen 2:8) and created in it a visible and perceptible tree of life (Gen 2:9), so that one could obtain life by tasting the fruit with corporeal teeth?

Martens takes this to mean that there is no place in the physical world for Eden; the purpose of analogous texts in Origen, however, is not to substitute a spiritual for a literal topography but to explain an anthropomorphic verb in a manner befitting the character of God. Thus, while there can be no question of a literal descent of God to inspect the tower of Babel, there can also be no question but that the building of this tower was a historical event.<sup>15</sup> By the same principle, Origen argues here that when God is said to have made the world, we are not

<sup>13</sup> See Neil B. McLynn, “What was the ‘*Philokalia* of Origen?’” in Neil B. McLynn, *Christian Politics and Religious Culture in Late Antiquity* (Variorum Collected Studies Series 928; Farnham, 2009), 32–43.

<sup>14</sup> Origen, *De principiis* 4,3,1 (323,5–11 K.). Martens also quotes the continuation, in which Origen derides the notion that God could walk and Adam hide from him behind a tree.

<sup>15</sup> For Celsus’ ridicule of the story at Gen 11:4–5 see Origen, *Contra Celsum* 4,1 (GCS 2, 272,10–14 Koetschau).

to suppose that he employed his hands like an a human architect; on the other hand, we are not to doubt that the world was created, or that the time between its beginning and the present can be measured in human years. Chrysostom too enjoins us not to take the verb “planted” in its literal sense<sup>16</sup> but he has never been suspected of denying that Eden was a place on earth.

This is not the only mention of Paradise in Origen’s *De principiis*, for the soul that quits the present world with a burden of unexpiated sin is required to pass through the earthly paradise:<sup>17</sup>

*Puto enim quod sancti quique discendentes ex hac vita permanebunt in loco aliquo in terra posito, quem “paradisum” dicit scriptura divina, velut in quodam eruditonis loco et, ut ita dixerim, auditorio vel schola animarum . . . Si qui sane “mundus corde” et purior mente et exercitator sensu fuerit, velocius proficiens cito et ad aeris locum ascendet et ad caelorum regna perveniet per locorum singulorum, ut ita dixerim, mansiones, quas Graeci quidem σφαίρας, id est globos, appellaverunt, scriptura vero divina “caelos” nominat.*

For my belief is that all those who depart this life in a holy state will abide in a certain place, located on earth, which divine scripture calls paradise, as if in a certain place of instruction or, if I may so express myself, a lecture-hall or school of souls . . . If one is truly clean of heart, purer in mind and more active in apprehension, one will make more rapid progress, ascending to the place of the air and the places of the heavens through the stations, if I may so express myself, of the individual places (cf. John 14:2), which the Greeks for their part styled σφαίραι, that is orbs, although divine scripture terms them heavens.

Rufinus’ desire to keep faith with his text is indicated by the use of the Greek noun σφαίρας. Some allowance must be made here for κατάχρησις, that is for the transference of terms from the realm of experience to a future mode of being. At the same time, the assertion that this school for souls is on earth can hardly admit of an allegorical construction. Of course it cannot be strictly true of the soul, which Origen believes to be incorporeal, that it dwells in a place on earth or that it ascends through the planetary orbits; this difficulty, however, will be resolved in the course of this paper when we consider Origen’s teaching that the εἶδος, or tenuous form, of the body adheres to the soul after death.<sup>18</sup> Motion in space is clearly implied when the soul is said to look down on the earth from which its pilgrimage began. It would seem, therefore, that the paradise through which it has passed must also occupy space, though possibly not a space com-

<sup>16</sup> John Chrysostom, *De Genesi* 13 (PG 53:108).

<sup>17</sup> Origen, *De principiis* 2,11,6 (190,1–4,9–13 K.).

<sup>18</sup> See below, final section of this paper.

mensurable with the one that we now inhabit.<sup>19</sup> Unless we would force a contradiction on Origen, his irony in the passage adduced by Martens must be reserved for those who imagine that God shaped the abode of Adam and Eve with hands like ours, not for those who imagine this abode to have been a physical locality. And nothing in his words suggests that Adam and Eve were placed in this locality as a consequence or punishment of their fall from a higher state.

## 2 Male and Female (Martens, 528–532)

Before we proceed in detail to consider whether human souls were involved in the fall that preceded the creation of our universe, we must first inquire what Origen understands by a λογικός, or rational agent. Panayiotis Tzamalikos, reviewing only those works of Origen which survive in Greek, has argued that the λογικοί enjoyed a potential, rather than an actual existence in the intellect of God before the temporal creation;<sup>20</sup> before this creation we have evidence only of λογικά, or rational entities, comparable but not identical to the ideal forms of Platonism. The Latin works, however, have a right to be believed when they are not obviously tendentious, and it would be too sceptical to reject their testimony that the spiritual heaven which was first created in wisdom was already peopled by rational intellects:<sup>21</sup>

*Quae omnia, ut diximus, non fortuito neque indiscrete, sed aptissimo et iustissimo dei iudicio ordinata sunt et pro meritis disposita ipso iudicante et probante; ut illi quidem angelo Ephe-siorum committi ecclesia debeat, illi vero alii Smyrnesium, et ille quidem angelus ut sit Petri, alius vero ut sit Pauli; tum deinde per singulos “minimorum,” qui sunt in ecclesia, qui vel qui adscribi singulis debeant angeli, qui etiam cotidie “videant faciem dei,” sed et quis debeat esse angelus, qui circumdet “in circuitu timentium deum.”*

<sup>19</sup> Martens, “Origen’s Doctrine” (see note 1), 537 (note 65) observes that, at Origen, *Contra Celsum* 7,28 (GCS 3, 179,32–180,3 K.), Origen “clearly removes the Edenic paradise from this earth”—or more precisely, from the earth that has been cursed. This lapidary text cannot simply overrule what is said with greater clarity in *De principiis*: the two can be reconciled if we suppose that there is some place which, being exempt from the curse, is not perceived to be on earth until the soul escapes from its gross integument. Martens also adduces in Origen, *Contra Celsum* 4,39 (311,4–13 K.) and 6,49 (120,11–121,17 K.) as passages which “confirm that he rejected a literal rendering of paradise”; the first, however, says only that the narrative is arcane and the second that it was not composed without serious intent.

<sup>20</sup> Tzamalikos, *Origen: Cosmology and Ontology of Time* (see note 4), 45; Tzamalikos, *Origen: Philosophy of History and Eschatology* (see note 4), 44 (note 8).

<sup>21</sup> Origen, *De principiis* 1,8,1 (94,25–95,6 K.).

All these offices, as we have said, are not ordained by chance or without discrimination, but by the most just and apposite judgment of God; they are dispensed according to merit, as himself judges and approves that the church of the Ephesians ought to be entrusted to one particular angel, that of the Smyrnaeans to another, and that one particular angel ought to be that of Peter, another that of Paul; then (judging and approving), with regard severally to the least who are in the church, that these or those angels who every day “see the face of God” ought to be assigned to several persons (Matt 18:10), or what angel it ought to be who encamps around those “who fear God” (Ps 33:8).

Origen goes on to declare that every rational nature is capable of good and evil,<sup>22</sup> having cited the acts of Peter and Paul on earth as proofs that even men of a “spiritual nature” are prone to sin.<sup>23</sup> He does not, however, recount any fall from a state of initial felicity at this point: when he warns that righteousness is sometimes an accidental rather than an essential property, and urges us therefore to strive at all times to participate in the righteousness and wisdom that are conferred by the Holy Spirit, he is clearly speaking of the present life.<sup>24</sup> Returning to the angels, he argues that, on the principle that reward should match desert, we cannot suppose their offices to be allotted to them at random, and he applies the same reasoning to the “second order” of rational beings who have willingly surrendered themselves to darkness.<sup>25</sup> Only then does he proceed to the third order of rational beings, the “souls of humans,”<sup>26</sup> whom he does not here characterise (in the extant Latin) as intellects fallen from a higher state. This information is furnished by the Greek witnesses whom Paul Koetschau and other editors have inserted into the text,<sup>27</sup> but they do not profess to be quoting the very words of Origen, and a number of scholars have recently proposed that the *De principiis* should be read without their assistance.<sup>28</sup>

The task that Martens has set himself is to demonstrate not merely the pre-existence of rational creatures but that of the soul, by which he means at all times the human soul. No-one doubts that Origen, like every other Christian of antiquity, held that the angels were already in existence at the dawn of the world; can we be sure that this text refers to any beings other than the denizens of that intellectual

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<sup>22</sup> Origen, *De principiis* 1,8,3 (99,14–15 K.).

<sup>23</sup> Origen, *De principiis* 1,8,2 (98,22–99,5 K.).

<sup>24</sup> Origen, *De principiis* 1,8,3 (100,18–101,3 K.).

<sup>25</sup> Origen, *De principiis* 1,8,4 (101,25–27 K.).

<sup>26</sup> Origen, *De principiis* 1,8,4 (101,29–30 K.).

<sup>27</sup> Origen, *De principiis* 1,8,1 (95,14–97,4 K.) and 1,8,4 (102,12–104,13 K.).

<sup>28</sup> See e. g. Ronnie J. Rombs, “A Note on the Status of Origen’s *De Principiis* in English,” *VigChr* 61 (2007): 21–29; Michael J. Kruger, “Origen’s List of New Testament Books in Hom. Jos. 7.1: A Fresh Look,” in *Mark, Manuscripts and Monotheism: Essays in Honour of Larry Hurtado* (ed. Dieter T. Roth and Chris Keith; Library of New Testament studies 528; London, 2016), (99–117) 102–103.

heaven which Augustine would later identify with the light that shone three days before the creation of the sun?<sup>29</sup> The ancient witnesses tell us that, in contrast to Augustine, Origen held both souls and angels to be fallen intelligences whose present bodies are of a density commensurate with the violence of their rebellion against the Creator; as Augustine remarked, however, the theory attributed to him is barely coherent, and it is not set out in any of his extant works with the clarity that it acquires in the hands of his critics.<sup>30</sup> Some of these indictments are plainly libellous, as they impute to him a theory of transmigration which he explicitly disowns;<sup>31</sup> others seem to originate in passages which, while they might indeed be understood to say that embodiment in this world is the penalty for sin in a higher sphere, could also be read without perversity as accounts of the embodied soul's loss of the relative innocence that it enjoyed in childhood.<sup>32</sup> Martens may think such readings erroneous but his argument, as it now stands, has said nothing to preclude them or to show that the intellects to which the quoted text alludes are human souls.

Take, for example, the following passage on the origin of the rational creation:<sup>33</sup>

*In illo ergo initio putandum est tantum numerum rationabilium creaturarum vel intellectualium, vel quoquomodo appellandae sunt quas mentes superius diximus, fecisse deum, quantum sufficere posse prospexit.*

Thus in that beginning it must be supposed that God created exactly the number of rational or intellectual creatures (or however the beings that we previously called “minds” are to be styled) which he foresaw to be sufficient.

<sup>29</sup> Augustine, *De civitate dei* 11,7 (326,28–327,39 D./K.), *Confessiones* 12,9,9 (CChr.SL 27, 220,27–221,12 Verheijen).

<sup>30</sup> Augustine, *De civitate dei* 11,23 (341,1–343,64 D./K.), observing that if demons have fallen further than souls, but from the same state, they ought to have bodies grosser than those of humans.

<sup>31</sup> Origen, *Commentarii in evangelium Ioannis* 2,9,66 (ed. Vito Limone, *Commento al Vangelo di Giovanni* [Il Pensiero Occidentale, Milan, 2012], 288; Origen, *Commentarii in Romanos* 6,8,117–131 (ed. Caroline P. Hammond Bammel, *Der Römerbriefkommentar des Origenes: Kritische Ausgabe der Übersetzung Rufins. Buch 4–6* [Vetus Latina 33; Freiburg, 1997], 503).

<sup>32</sup> See e. g. Origen, *De principiis* 1,4,1 (63,10–64,16 K.), which certainly ends with an exhortation to the embodied soul.

<sup>33</sup> Origen, *De principiis* 2,9,1 (164,10–13 K.); Martens, “Origen’s Doctrine” (see note 1), 527 assumes these minds to be future souls of humans. Franz-Heinrich Kettler, “Die Ewigkeit der geistlichen Schöpfung nach Origenes,” in *Reformation und Humanismus: Robert Stupperich zum 65. Geburtstag* (ed. Martin Greschat and Johann F. G. Goeters; Witten, 1969), 272–297 suggests that they are the forms of particular beings which inhabit the mind of God at *De principiis* 1,4,5 (67,16–68,15 K.).



The denizens of this primordial state are minds, but again we may ask, are they human or angelic? The glorious habitations which await the elect in this super-celestial world are later contrasted with the wretched lots assigned to many humans from the hour of birth;<sup>34</sup> justice requires that this should be the consequence of some ante-natal choice. Nevertheless, the causes of Esau's subjection to Jacob are not related either to paradise or to a fall from heaven; the argument is rather that, as the allocation of human fortunes must be determined by some antecedent factor, so there must be a reason for the fall of celestial creatures:<sup>35</sup>

*Si ex praecedentis videlicet vitae meritis digne eum "dilectum esse" sentiamus a deo, ita ut et fratri praeponi mereretur: ita etiam de caelestibus creaturis, si advertamus quoniam ista diversitas non est creaturae principium, sed ... ex eo profecto quod unusquisque in eo quod mens creatus a deo est vel rationalis spiritus, pro motibus mentis et sensibus animorum vel plus vel minus sibi ipse meriti paraverit.*

If we understand that it was obviously from the merits of his foregoing life<sup>36</sup> that he (Jacob) was loved by God, so that he deserved to be preferred to his brother; so this is also true of heavenly creatures if we observe that that diversity originates not with the creation but ... with the fact that each, insofar as it is a mind created by God or a rational spirit, has secured a greater or lesser portion of merit for itself by the motions of its own mind and the affections of its own soul.

Thus these two calamities are analogous, but not identical; if there was ever a race of disembodied minds, it appears to have been angelic rather than human. Yet even this we must doubt, in the light of Origen's comment on Psalm 81,6: "I have said you are gods and sons of the Highest, but you will die like humans and fall like one of the archons." In his *Commentary on John* he maintains that this locution, "one of the archons," singles out Satan from the "many archons" as an object of special reproach:<sup>37</sup>

Πλειόνων γὰρ ἀρχόντων γενομένων, εἷς πέπτωκεν, ὃ παραπλησίως μμούμενοι τὴν ἐκείνου πτώσιν πίπτουσιν οἱ ἀμαρτάνοντες. Ὡς γὰρ ἐκεῖνος ἐν θεότητι τυγχάνων πέπτωκεν, οὕτω καὶ πρὸς οὗς ὁ λόγος φησὶ, "ἐγὼ εἶπα θεοὶ ἐστέ, καὶ υἱοὶ υψίστου πάντες," ἀποπεσόντες τῆς μακαριότητος, οὐ προηγουμένως ὄντες ἄνθρωποι, "ὥς ἄνθρωποι ἀποθνήσκουσιν" καὶ "ὥς εἷς τῶν ἀρχόντων πίπτουσιν."

<sup>34</sup> Origen, *De principiis* 2,9,3 (166,12–167,16 K.). It seems that they are occupied at the present time by certain "invisible powers" (*invisibiles virtutes*, 167,10), to whom the administration of things above the earth has been confided.

<sup>35</sup> Origen, *De principiis* 2,9,7 (171,7–14 K.).

<sup>36</sup> On possible meanings of this expression, which cannot (as we have seen) imply a doctrine of transmigration, see Mark J. Edwards, "Origen's Platonism: Questions and Caveats," *ZAC* 12 (2008): 20–38.

<sup>37</sup> Origen, *Commentarii in evangelium Ioannis* 32,18,233–234 (1231 L.).

For, whereas many archons had come into being, there was one who fell, in close imitation of whom sinners fall his fall. For just as he fell, being in a state of divinity, so those to whom the word says “I have said you are gods and children of the most high,” having fallen from blessedness, “die like humans,” not previously being humans, and “fall like one of the archons” (Ps 82:6).

The state from which Satan fell to his present ignominy was therefore that of an archon, by which Paul and Origen understand a being appointed to govern the visible cosmos;<sup>38</sup> there is no intimation that he became an angel by some previous transgression. While sinners are said to “fall his fall” by aping him, they did not fall from the same altitude, for his “divinity” is contrasted with their “blessedness.” Since he is their prototype, their blessedness must have been inferior to his divinity, but even this latter state, as we have seen, is not the absolute sublimity of the one God. In fact an angel, according to Origen, has a tenuous body;<sup>39</sup> thus, when he says that Satan’s human satellites were “not previously human,” he must mean that they were not mortal beings trammelled by flesh and blood. He cannot mean that they possessed no bodies of any kind.

In any case, the subject of this paper is the incorporeality of paradise, which may not be the same thing as the incorporeality of heaven. The assumption of many scholars has been that Origen followed the obvious sense of Gen 2 in regarding Adam and Eve as embodied creatures at the time when they were first placed in the garden. Martens, however, maintains that they are not historical but symbolic figures, the one representing Christ and the other his church. In support of this contention he adduces a number of passages in Origen’s works which seem to him to imply that Christ was united with the church, and hence with all the souls that constitute it, before the creation of the material cosmos. A passage from Origen’s *Commentary on Matthew*, of which the Greek survives, is advanced as “one of the more transparent references to the pre-existent church”:<sup>40</sup>

‘Ο κτίσας γε ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς κατ’ εἰκόνα (ὡς ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων) ἄρρεν αὐτὸν ἐποίησε καὶ θῆλυ τὴν ἐκκλησίαν, ἐν τῷ κατ’ εἰκόνα ἀμφοτέροις χαρισάμενος.

He who created him from the beginning according to the image (Gen 1:26–27), as being in the form of God (Phil 2:6), made him male and the church female, vouchsafing to both the same existence according to the image.

<sup>38</sup> See Origen, *Commentarii in epistolam ad Ephesos* (ed. Francesco Pieri, *Esegesi Paolina – i testi frammentari* [Opera omnia di Origene; Rome, 2009], 264–266).

<sup>39</sup> See Origen, *De principiis* 2,2,2 (112,15–113,4 K.) with Tzamalikos, *Origen: Cosmology and Ontology of Time* (see note 4), 114.

<sup>40</sup> Origen, *Commentarii in evangelium Matthaei* 14,17 (GCS 40, 325,27–32 Klostermann/Benz); Martens, “Origen’s Doctrine” (see note 1), 531.

Martens assumes without argument that “the beginning” here precedes the creation of the visible cosmos, and he is clearly right to do so, as the bearer of the divine image is Christ in his eternal role as second person of the Trinity. Further exegesis, however, would be required to prove that the church was also in existence from the beginning, for nothing is said to that effect. Origen’s statement that the church is female is consistent with the usual Christian teaching that the church’s participation in the image is the consequence of her union with Christ. When indeed, except when he took flesh, could it be said of the Second Person that the Father made him male? Origen in fact says in plain terms, as he recounts the descent of the Word for the purpose of making the church his bride, that this descent is the historical incarnation:<sup>41</sup>

Καὶ ἐκολλήθη τῇ ἐνταῦθα καταπεσούσῃ γυναικὶ αὐτοῦ, καὶ γεγόνασιν ἐνθάδε οἱ δύο εἰς σάρκα μίαν. διὰ γὰρ αὐτὴν γέγονε καὶ αὐτὸς σὰρξ, ὅτε “ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο καὶ ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν.”

And he was coupled with his wife who had fallen here,<sup>42</sup> and here the two have become one flesh (Gen 2:24); for it was on her account that he himself became flesh also, because the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us (John 1:14).

Nothing here suggests that the existence of the soul or the church itself antedates that of the visible cosmos. But Martens presents another text from the *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, which according to his interpretation plainly asserts that the church and the world are coeval:<sup>43</sup>

*Non enim mihi ex adventu Salvatoris in carnem sponsam dici aut ecclesiam putes, sed ab initio humani generis et ab ipsa constitutione mundi, immo, ut Pauli duce mysterii huius originem repetam, ante etiam constitutionem mundi.*

For you must not suppose me to say she is called the spouse or church only since the Saviour’s advent in the flesh, but from the beginning of the human race and from the very foundation of the world, or rather, if I may repeat the origin of this mystery under Paul’s guidance, even before the foundation of the world (Eph 1:4).

<sup>41</sup> Origen, *Commentarii in evangelium Matthaei* 14,17 (326,8–13 K./B.).

<sup>42</sup> Martens, “Origen’s Doctrine” (see note 1), 531, takes “fallen down here” to mean “fallen down hither,” which is possible but by no means mandatory.

<sup>43</sup> Origen, *Commentarium in Canticum Canticorum* 2,8,4 (ed. Claudio Moreschini and Vito Limone, *Origene e Gregorio di Nisa: Sul Cantico dei Cantici* [Il Pensiero Occidentale; Milan, 2016], 392); Martens, “Origen’s Doctrine” (see note 1), 532.

The Latin *constitutio* stands for καταβολή (Eph 1:4), which for Origen signifies not creation but a descent from the pristine state. Thus at *De principiis* 3,5,4,<sup>44</sup> the souls who descend by καταβολή from an “unseen and eternal” domain are contrasted both with those who undergo subjection voluntarily (i. e. the sun and other heavenly bodies) and with the sons of God, who are no doubt the fallen angels.<sup>45</sup> Once this is understood, the passage does not imply that the church existed, even for God, before the creation of Adam. Even if we surmised, without good warrant in this passage, that the church was espoused to Christ before the creation of the physical heaven and earth, it would be necessary to prove that she existed as a body of actual souls, and not as one of those “genera, species and even individuals” which eternally populate the mind of God.<sup>46</sup>

Origen insists, according to Martens, that “this prophecy from Genesis” (i. e. that man and woman shall be one flesh, Gen 2:24) “does not prove that ‘she [...] did not exist before.’”<sup>47</sup> But the passage from the *Commentary on the Song* to which he refers is a gloss not on Gen 2:24 but on Eph 5:25–26, the “familiar lens,” as Martens remarks,<sup>48</sup> through which the prophecy has been read.<sup>49</sup>

*Sed et idem apostolus cum dicit, sic enim ecclesiam Christus amavit ut semet ipsum traderet pro ea, sanctificans eam lavacro aquae, non utique ostendit eam prius non fuisse. Quomodo enim dilexisset eam quae non erat? Sed eam sine dubio dilexit quae erat. Erat autem in omnibus sanctis qui ab initio saeculi fuerunt.*

But the same apostle, when he says For Christ so loved the church that he gave himself for her, sanctifying her with the laver of water, does not mean that she did not exist before. For how could he have loved one who did not exist? On the contrary, she whom he loved was undoubtedly one who existed. In fact she existed in all the saints who have lived since the beginning of the world-era.

Thus the first sentence signifies only that there was a church before the incarnation; the second, however, asserts that she has existed “in all the saints who have lived since the beginning of the world-era.” Martens here appears to have over-

<sup>44</sup> Origen, *De principiis* 3,5,4 (273,17–275,27 K.).

<sup>45</sup> Full elucidation is not required here, but it will suffice to say the “things unseen and eternal” at 2 Cor 4:18 are not incorporeal; on the contrary, Paul is speaking of the resurrected life in the body of glory. This passage therefore cannot be cited as evidence that Origen held the original paradise to be incorporeal, even if paradise is the abode to which he refers.

<sup>46</sup> Origen, *De principiis* 1,4,5 (67,16–68,15 K.): *sine dubio omnia vel genera vel species fuerunt semper, et fortassis etiam per singula.*

<sup>47</sup> Martens, “Origen’s Doctrine” (see note 1), 532.

<sup>48</sup> Though in fact he cites only Eph 5:31–32.

<sup>49</sup> Origen, *Commentarium in Canticum Canticorum* 2,8,6 (392–394 M./L.).

looked an ambiguity which will be evident at once if we imagine that the author were Augustine rather than Origen. No-one will deny that for Augustine too the invisible church is made up of “all the saints who have lived since the beginning of the world-era.” Yet no-one will take this to mean that each of these saints has been in existence throughout the whole that period; what is meant is evidently “all the saints, at whatever time each of them came into being between the creation and the present day.” If this is what the Latin would convey in any other context, why not in a translation from Origen also? Why could it not mean, in other words, what the contemporaries of Jesus meant to say when they exclaimed that “no-one had opened the eyes of a man born blind from the beginning of the world” (John 8:32)?

### 3 The Meaning of Restoration (Martens, 532–533)

The texts which Martens now adduces to show that Origen’s Eden is a parabolic rather than a physical locality will persuade only those for whom the foregoing argument has already sufficed to prove this. The first is Origen’s prophecy at *De principiis* 3,6,3 that when the rational mind is cleansed of sin and filled with the understanding of the God who is now its all in all, it will be restored to the prelapsarian state:<sup>50</sup>

*Si ergo finis ad principium reparatus et rerum exitus conlatus initiis resituet illum statum, quem tunc habuit natura rationalis, cum de ligno sciendi “bonum et malum” edere non egebat ... tunc vere deus “omnia in omnibus” erit.*

If therefore the end refashioned according to the beginning, and the outcome of things corresponding to the inception, will restore that state which rational nature possessed at that time when it did not need to eat from the tree of knowing good and evil ... then truly God will be all in all.

As Martens correctly observes, there “is no suggestion here” of a “lush, corporeal paradise”;<sup>51</sup> the primitive condition of Adam and Eve in Origen’s work *Against Celsus* is one in which the inner eye had not yet been darkened by the awakening of the physical organs. But is this state of innocence, in which (as Martens says) they were engaged in the perpetual contemplation of God, irreconcilable with the possession of a body? Origen’s reply to Celsus survives in Greek, and its language

<sup>50</sup> Origen, *De principiis* 3,6,3 (284,3–10 K.).

<sup>51</sup> Martens, “Origen’s Doctrine” (see note 1), 533.

suggests that the protoplasts already inhabited some place in the cosmos that we know.<sup>52</sup>

Λεκτέον δ' ὅτι Μωϋσῆς ἀναγράφων τὴν κοσμοποιΐαν, εἰσάγει τὸν ἄνθρωπον πρὸ μὲν τῆς παραβάσεως πῇ μὲν βλέποντα πῇ δὲ μὴ βλέποντα, βλέποντα μὲν ἐν τῷ λέγεσθαι περὶ τῆς γυναικὸς ὅτι “εἶδεν ἡ γυνὴ ὅτι καλὸν τὸ ξύλον” . . . μὴ βλέποντα δὲ . . . ἐν τῷ “ἔφαγον, καὶ διηνοίχθησαν οἱ ὀφθαλμοὶ τῶν δύο.”

It must be said that Moses, when he described the making of the cosmos, represents humanity before the fall as seeing in one way, not seeing in another: seeing inasmuch as it is said of the woman that “the woman saw that the tree was good” . . . and not seeing . . . in the words “They ate and the eyes of the pair were opened” (Gen 3:7).

If the woman first acts alone and then the man and woman suffer as a pair, some differentiation of sexes has taken place before the fall, and this would surely necessitate the possession of external organs. It is possible that Origen is shielding his true opinion from his pagan interlocutor, and from the common believer on whose behalf he undertook this apology; he was certainly expressing his own opinion, however, when he asserted in *De principiis* that nothing can subsist without a body except the three persons of the Trinity and maintained that the term “incorporeal” can be predicated only in a loose sense of created spirits.<sup>53</sup> If the angels, according to Origen, can still possess bodies of some kind, we need not deny a body to Adam and Eve in the state of innocence—though it would lack the grosser properties which sully the flesh as we know it—and we therefore need not suppose that the return foretold by Origen will entail the complete denudation of the soul.

## 4 Adam and Eve as Sinners (Martens, 534–536)

Martens now takes up a passage from the work *Against Celsus*, in which Origen declares, on the authority of Paul, that the name of Adam comprehends the whole human race, that each of us is involved in his fall, and that we bring upon ourselves by our own transgressions the curse that God might seem to have pronounced on him alone at Gen 3:17–19. When Martens styles this an “allegorical interpretation of Adam’s sin”<sup>54</sup> he ought to mean, if he is following ancient usage, that the text

<sup>52</sup> Origen, *Contra Celsum* 7,39 (189,23–26, 28, 31–32 K.).

<sup>53</sup> Origen, *De principiis* 1,6,4 (85,17–20 K.); *De principiis* 1,prooem. 8 (14,14–15,19 K.), quoting the *Preaching of Peter*.

<sup>54</sup> Martens, “Origen’s Doctrine” (see note 1), 534.

has been so construed as “to say one thing but intend another”; yet students of the Hebrew Bible today would agree with Origen that Adam is a designation, not only of one man but of all humanity.<sup>55</sup> In other words, the generic interpretation is as faithful to the plain sense of the Hebrew as the one which treats Adam as a single being. Even if the generic sense is agreed to be allegorical, it hardly follows that the historical reading is excluded. This fallacy is exposed by Martens himself when he quotes an excerpt from Origen’s *Commentary on Romans* in a footnote.<sup>56</sup> Pondering the apostle’s doctrine that all humanity suffers death on account of the first man’s trespass, Origen suggests two senses in which this may be true:<sup>57</sup>

... sive quod in lumbis Adae fuerunt omnes qui ex eo nascuntur et cum ipso pariter eiecti sunt, sive alio quolibet inenarrabili modo et soli Deo cognito unusquisque de paradiso trusus videtur et excepsisse condemnationem.

... either because all who are born of Adam were in his loins, and were expelled with him just as he was, or because in some other inexplicable mode, known only to God, each individual is seen to have been cast out of paradise and suffered condemnation.

“The latter view expressed in this passage,” writes Martens, “mirrors the view in *Contra Celsum*.”<sup>58</sup> No doubt; but why should not this be equally true of the former view? Martens alleges, as though he were speaking for Origen, that if the name Adam is given to the entire race, “it could not possibly refer to a single individual.”<sup>59</sup> Origen, however, does not say this, and his usual practice in the interpretation of biblical narrative (as Martens perceives elsewhere) is to affirm the literal truth as a prolegomenon to the exposition of the more recondite sense. Even if he elected not to defend the historical reading against the ridicule of Celsus, the *Commentary on Romans* shows that, when he addressed the church, he was not afraid to maintain our universal descent from Adam as a historical fact.

It is well enough known that Origen assigns three senses to scripture, corresponding to the body, the soul and the spirit in that human nature which Christ the Word assumed in his incarnation.<sup>60</sup> It has also been observed, by Morwenna

55 Roger N. Whybray, “4. Genesis,” in *Oxford Bible Commentary* (ed. John Muddiman and John Barton; Oxford, 2001), (38–66) 43.

56 Martens, “Origen’s Doctrine” (see note 1), 534 (note 57).

57 Origen, *Commentarii in Romanos* 5,4,28–32 (407 H. B.).

58 Martens, “Origen’s Doctrine” (see note 1), 534.

59 Martens, “Origen’s Doctrine” (see note 1), 534.

60 Origen, *De principiis* 4,2,4 (312,1–314,21 K.).

Ludlow,<sup>61</sup> that the bodily sense (at least when it is historical rather than ethical) is true of the past, while the psychic sense obtains in the present (perhaps we should say, at all times including the present) and the spiritual sense is discernible only in the light of things to come. If it would be an error to set the psychic against the bodily sense as though they were incompatible, it would be an equally dangerous confusion to impose the past tense upon the psychic reading. Thus when we interpret the following passage from Origen's *Commentary on the Song*, we must be careful to distinguish the sense which pertains to the church from that which pertains to Eve:<sup>62</sup>

*Recordare quomodo prima mulier seducta est et in praevaricatione facta, quae non aliter salva fieri dicitur nisi per filiorum generationem, illorum dumtaxat qui permanent in fide et caritate cum sanctitate. Hoc ergo quod de Adam et Eva scribitur sic asseverat Apostolus: Mysterium magnum est in Christo et in ecclesia, qui eam ita dilexit ut semetipsum traderet pro ea, cum esset adhuc haec ipsa impia, sicut ipse dixit: cum enim adhuc secundum tempus impii essemus, Christus pro nobis mortuus est.*

Remember how the first woman was seduced and brought into a state of sin (1 Tim 2:14); she cannot be saved except by the bearing of sons, that is of such as persevere in faith and charity with holiness (1 Tim 2:15). Now what is written here of Adam and Eve the Apostle asserts in the following words to be a great mystery regarding Christ and the church, for he loved her so greatly that he gave himself for her (Eph 5:32), when she herself was still impious, or as he himself has said: for when in the course of time we were still impious, Christ died on our behalf (Rom 5:6).

Nothing is said here of the existence of the soul before the creation of the body. Eve is at once the mother and the universal paradigm of all sinners who will be redeemed by marriage to Christ; these prospective saints were in the world before his advent, and should not be conceived as disembodied souls. This passage is a gloss on the text, *My vineyard I have not kept* (Cant 1:6), in which the speaker is identified by Origen as the soul who turns to Christ, and the vineyard as the way of thought (*eruditio*) that she followed before her conversion.<sup>63</sup> Martens chooses to speak of this as her “pre-existent past,”<sup>64</sup> but it is pre-existent only in relation to her espousal to the Saviour. As for Eve, we may call her too pre-existent if we

<sup>61</sup> Morwenna A. Ludlow, “Anatomy – Investigating the Body of Texts in Origen and Gregory of Nyssa,” in *Reading the Church Fathers* (ed. Morwenna A. Ludlow and Scot Douglass; London, 2011), (132–153) 140.

<sup>62</sup> Origen, *Commentarium in Canticum Canticorum* 2,3,13–14 (332 M./L.).

<sup>63</sup> Origen, *Commentarium in Canticum Canticorum* 2,3,11 (330 M./L.); *illam possumus eruditionem dicere, qua unusquisque exercebatur ante fidem*. Cf 2,3,18 (334 M./L.).

<sup>64</sup> Martens, “Origen’s Doctrine” (see note 1), 535.



will, and we may say that she stands for the church, but it would be a fallacy to conclude, with Martens, that she therefore “stands more particularly for the pre-existent church.”<sup>65</sup>

## 5 Coats of Skin (Martens, 536–541)

Origen’s most notorious departure from the literal sense of scripture was his comment on the coats of skin which God sews for the parents of the human race at Gen 3:21. To Celsus he would say only that this passage contains a mystery which cannot be divulged to outsiders;<sup>66</sup> according to Epiphanius, he taunted his co-religionists who insisted upon the literal sense by asking them if they thought that God Almighty was a tanner.<sup>67</sup> As we have already noted, it is one thing to hold that the language used of God is metaphorical, and another to reject the historicity of the whole narrative; it is clear enough, however, from the strictures of Epiphanius that Origen took the coats of skin to represent some change in the relation between the soul and its physical envelope. Martens builds his case on a fragment from a catena on Genesis, in which Origen (if he is the author) asks how the coats of skin which are fashioned for Adam and Eve at Gen 3:21 can be equated with the body when Adam has already said of Eve before the fall, “this is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh” (Gen 2:23). This would be an argument against the thesis of Marten’s paper rather than in its favour, were it not that Origen goes on to reject two alternative readings of the text. It will be useful to reproduce his own words at length:<sup>68</sup>

Τί δεῖ νοεῖν τοὺς “δερματίνους χιτῶνας”; Σφόδρα μὲν οὖν ἡλίθιον καὶ γραῶδες καὶ ἀνάξιον θεοῦ τὸ οἶσθαι ζώων τινῶν περιελόντα δέρματα τὸν θεόν, ἀναιρεθέντων ἢ ἄλλως πως ἀποθανόντων, πεποιηκέναι σχῆμά τι χιτῶνων καταρράψαντα δέρματα δίκην σκυτοτόμου. Πάλιν τε φυγόντα τὸ οὕτως ἄτοπον, λέγειν τοὺς “δερματίνους χιτῶνας” οὐκ ἄλλους εἶναι τοῦ σώματος, πιθανὸν μὲν καὶ εἰς συνκατάθεσιν ἐπισπάσασθαι δυνάμενον, οὐ μὴν σαφές ὡς ἀληθές· εἰ γὰρ οἱ δερματίνοι χιτῶνες σάρκες καὶ ὅστέα εἰσίν, πῶς πρὸ τούτων φησὶν ὁ Ἀδάμ τοῦτο νῦν ὅστούν ἐκ τῶν ὁστῶν μου καὶ σὰρξ ἐκ τῆς σαρκός μου;

<sup>65</sup> Martens, “Origen’s Doctrine” (see note 1), 535.

<sup>66</sup> Origen, *Contra Celsum* 4,40 (313,25–314,2 K.), quoted by Martens, “Origen’s Doctrine” (see note 1), 540 (note 75).

<sup>67</sup> Epiphanius, *Panarion* 64,63,5 (GCS 25, 74,5–75,18 Holl). See further Elizabeth A. Clark, *The Origenist Controversy: the cultural construction of an early Christian debate* (Princeton, 1992), 91–93.

<sup>68</sup> Origen, *Commentarii in Genesim* 22 (ed. Karin Metzler, *Die Kommentierung des Buches Genesis* [Origenes Werke mit deutscher Übersetzung 1,1; Berlin, 2010], 190,24–192,2), citing *Collectio Coisliana*, frg. 121 (CChr.SG 15, 124–126 Petit).

What is to be understood by *coats of skin*? On the one hand it is extremely simple-minded, superstitious and unworthy of God to suppose that God took the skins of certain animals, whether purposely killed or dead from some other cause, and made some form of tunic, having sewn the skins together like a tanner. And again if one shuns this absurdity by saying that the coats of skin are nothing but the body, this is plausible and capable of inducing assent, but it is not clear that it is true. For if the coats of skin are flesh and bones, how does Adam say before this episode, *this is now bone from my bones and flesh from my flesh* (Gen 2:23)?

So far, Origen's reasoning does not support the theory that Adam and Eve were created as incorporeal beings; he clearly rejects the view that the coats of skin are flesh and bone. We quickly learn, however, that he does not propose to supplant this interpretation by a more literal one, or by a different allegory in which the skins represent death:<sup>69</sup>

Ταύτας οὖν τὰς ἀπορίας περιϊστάμενοί τινες, “δερματίνους χιτῶνας” τὴν νέκρωσιν ἦν ἀμφιέννυται ὁ Ἀδάμ καὶ ἡ Εὐά, διὰ τὴν ἁμαρτίαν θανατωθέντες, ἀπεφώνησαν τυγχάνειν, οὐ πάνυ τι οὐδὲ αὐτοὶ εὐχερῶς δυνάμενοι παραστήσαι πῶς ὁ θεός, καὶ οὐχὶ ἡ ἁμαρτία, νέκρωσιν ἐμποιεῖ τῷ παραβεβηκότι· πρὸς τοῦτοις ἀνάγκη ἔχουσι λέγειν σάρκα καὶ ὅστέα τῷ ἰδιῷ λογῷ οὐκ εἶναι φθαρτά, εἰ γε ὕστερον τὴν νέκρωσιν οἱ πατέρες ἡμῶν διὰ τὴν ἁμαρτίαν εἰλήφασιν. Ἀλλὰ καὶ εἰ ὁ παράδεισος θεῖόν τι χωρίον ἐστίν, λεγέτωσαν πῶς ἐκεῖ ἔκαστον τῶν μελῶν, μὴ μάτην δεδημιουργημένον, τὴν οἰκίαν ἐνέργειαν ἐνεργεῖ.

To obviate these difficulties, therefore, some have maintained that in fact the coats of skin are the mortality in which Adam and Eve were clothed when they were made dead on account of their sin; yet even they cannot at all satisfactorily explain how it is God, and not sin, that is the cause of mortality to the transgressor. In addition, they are bound to maintain that flesh and blood are not corruptible in their proper nature although our progenitors subsequently incurred mortality on account of sin. Moreover, if paradise is a divine locality, let them say how in that place each of the members, not having been fashioned in vain, performs its proper activity.

The commentators who are put to the question in the italicised passage are those who identify the coats of skin with our mortality. The objection to this thesis is that sin is the cause of mortality, whereas God is the one who is said to have made the coats of skin at Gen 3:21. Moreover, if the new integument signified nothing other than mortality, it would follow that flesh and blood had not hitherto been subject to death. Origen here assumes it to be impossible that Adam and Eve had incorruptible bodies of flesh and blood before the fall; he does not deny them bodies, and assumes that his interlocutors do not do so. His challenge to them is not to explain how Adam and Eve could have bodies of any kind, but to account for the

<sup>69</sup> Origen, *Commentarii in Genesim* 22 (192,2–10 M.).

operation of all their members if these bodies were identical with ours. The requisite gloss, as he argues in his *Homilies on Leviticus*, is one that equates the coats of skin with a change in the constitution of the body that makes it liable to death:<sup>70</sup>

*Talibus enim oportebat indui peccatorem, “pelliciis,” inquit, “tunicis,” quae essent mortalitatis, quam pro peccato acceperat, et fragilitatis eius, quae ex carnis corruptione veniebat.*

It was proper, he says, that the coats of skin in which the sinner was clothed should pertain at once to the mortality which he had incurred as a consequence of sin and to the infirmity which was coming on account of the corruption of the flesh.

The coats of skin are thus to be identified with the depravation of the body, but not with mere embodiment. When he demands an account of the operation of all the members before the fall, Origen addresses himself to those, who because they equate the skins with mortality alone, assume that the bodies of Adam and Eve were physically identical with ours. This would seem to be the problem, raised and answered with less indirection by Gregory of Nyssa,<sup>71</sup> about the role of the genital organs. Origen says elsewhere that the children of sexual intercourse are born in filth, and he knows that the saints who live for ever are “like the angels,” who “neither marry nor are given in marriage.”<sup>72</sup> Here he implies that the body initially fashioned for Adam was, at least in this respect, unlike the one that now makes amends for its mortality by sexual reproduction.

## 6 The loss of wings

In support of his contention that Origen read the fall in Eden allegorically, Martens cites a comparison drawn by Origen himself between this narrative and a myth from Plato’s *Phaedrus*:<sup>73</sup>

<sup>70</sup> Origen, *Homiliae in Leviticum* 6,2 (GCS 29, 362,16–19 Baehrens).

<sup>71</sup> Gregory of Nyssa, *De opificio hominis* 16,9–18 (ed. Lara Sels, *Gregory of Nyssa: De hominis opificio: The Fourteenth-Century Slavonic Translation* [Bausteine zur Slavischen Philologie und Kulturgeschichte. Reihe B, 21; Cologne, 2009], 196–202).

<sup>72</sup> Origen, *Homiliae in Leviticum* 8,3 (396,21–27 B.); Origen, *Commentarii in evangelium Matthaei* 17,30 (670,19–672,30 K./B.).

<sup>73</sup> This passage gives the keynote to Peter Martens, “Embodiment, Heresy and the Hellenization of Christianity: The Descent of the Soul in Plato and Origen,” *Harvard Theological Review* 108 (2015): 594–620. Martens, while attributing to Origen a theory resembling that of Plato, denies that this represents a Hellenization of Christianity, since it is Origen’s Christianity that provides the matrix for his speculations. For a similar argument (though it questions the ascription of the Platonic tenet to Origen), see Edwards, “Origen’s Platonism” (see note 36). In charging Edwards

Καὶ ὁ ἐκβαλλόμενος δὲ ἐκ τοῦ παραδείσου ἄνθρωπος μετὰ τῆς γυναικὸς, τοὺς “δερματίνους” ἡμφιεσμένους “χιτῶνας,” οὗς διὰ τὴν παράβασιν τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἐποίησε τοῖς ἀμαρτήσασιν ὁ θεὸς, ἀπόρρητόν τινα καὶ μυστικὸν ἔχει λόγον, ὑπὲρ τὴν κατὰ Πλάτωνα κά<θο>δον τῆς ψυχῆς, περορρούουσης καὶ δεῦρο φερομένης, “ἔως ἂν στερεοῦ τιнос λάβηται.”

And the man cast out of paradise with the woman (or, with his wife), clad in the coats of skin which God made for the sinners on account of their trespass, has an inexpressible and mystic import, beyond the descent of the soul in Plato when it sheds its wings and is borne hither “until it lights upon something solid” (citing Plato, *Phaedrus* 246c).<sup>74</sup>

Undoubtedly Plato’s fable is an allegory, for he cannot have imagined that an incorporeal soul has wings or even that it can occupy a place. We might be tempted therefore to suppose that the mystery of the Mosaic narrative can be unlocked by the analogous substitution of an incorporeal for a corporeal subject. Martens himself, however, forestalls this inference by adopting the better translation of the Greek, according to which it is only Plato, not his inspired precursor, who recounts the soul’s fall and its loss of wings.<sup>75</sup> The alternative rendering—followed, for example, in the Ante-Nicene Fathers series—credits the church itself with a “mystical doctrine (far transcending that of Plato) of the soul’s losing its wings.”<sup>76</sup> This is shown to be erroneous by Origen’s allusion in Book 6 to another being who was cast down from an aerial paradise:<sup>77</sup>

Οὕτω λέγω καὶ τὰ ἀπὸ τοῦ Ἰεζεκιήλ ὡς περὶ “Φυραῶ” ἢ “Ναβουχοδονόσορ” ἢ ἄρχοντος “Τύρου,” ἢ τὰ ἀπὸ τοῦ Ἡσαΐου, ἐν οἷς θηγεῖται ὁ βασιλεὺς Βαβυλῶνος· ἅψ’ ὧν οὐκ ὀλίγα τις ἂν μανθάνοι περὶ τῆς κακίας, ποῖαν ἔσχεν ἀρχὴν καὶ γένεσιν, καὶ ὅτι ἀπὸ τινω περορρούησάντων καὶ κατακολουθησάντων τῷ πρώτῳ περορρούήσαντι ὑπέστη ἡ κακία.

I refrain from mentioning also what Ezekiel says about Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar and the Prince of Tyre, or the lamentation over the King of Babylon in Isaiah, from which it is possible to learn not a little about the origin and birth of evil, and that evil came into being from those who shed their wings in the train of him who was first to shed his wings.

and Tzamalikos with a reinscription of the false antithesis between Christianity and Hellenism, Martens seems to forget that criticism of Plato, far from being foreign to Hellenism, is a cardinal feature of all Greek thought outside the Academy.

<sup>74</sup> Origen, *Contra Celsum* 4,40 (313,25–314,2 K.).

<sup>75</sup> Martens, “Origen’s Doctrine” (see note 1), 540; he quotes Chadwick’s rendering: “superior to the Platonic doctrine of the descent of the soul.” I do not know whether Martens, “Origens’s Doctrine” (see note 1), 520, includes this among the passages in which Origen does not distance himself from Plato.

<sup>76</sup> Frederick Crombie, “Origen Against Celsus,” in *Tertullian, Part fourth, Minucius Felix, Commodian, Origen, parts first and second* (ed. Alexander C. Coxe; [The Ante-Nicene Fathers 4; Grand-Rapids, 2005]), (395–669) 516 translates, “a secret and mystical doctrine (far transcending that of Plato) of the soul’s losing its wings.”

<sup>77</sup> Origen, *Contra Celsum* 6,43 (114,12–17 K.).

The Prince of Tyre is identified as the devil at *De principiis* 1,5,4,<sup>78</sup> not by an allegorical reading but on the contrary by the literal application of words and images that would now be understood as poetic conceits. The “doctrine far superior to Plato’s” thus concerns the mystery of the first transgression, which was not committed by a human agent. It may not be true to say that the devil’s wings are metaphorical, for Origen denies (as we have seen) that he and his kind are incorporeal, unless this term means only that their bodies are too subtle to be perceived by our carnal organs.<sup>79</sup> As the body of an angel is none the less finer than that of a demon, it is probable that demonic bodies are grosser now than they were in the state of bliss.

If this can be true of the denizens of the air, why not of the protoplasts in Eden? An older contemporary of Origen, commenting on Christ’s dictum that the saints in heaven are like the angels, neither marrying nor been given in marriage, concluded that the saints will possess an imperishable body that is immune to corruption and passion.<sup>80</sup> The view that I am attributing to Origen is the converse of this—that the body which is imperishable and immune to corruption and passion will be angelic, and hence in no need of genital organs. We can understand little of Origen’s anthropology unless we grant that he posited at least one intermediate state between incorporeality (the condition of God alone at *De principiis* 1,6,4)<sup>81</sup> and gross embodiment as we have known it since the fall. The spiritual body whose survival he affirms in the work *Against Celsus* is clearly more tenuous than the body which is severed from the soul by physical death;<sup>82</sup> Methodius in his treatise *On the Resurrection* characterizes the spiritual body as the εἶδος, or form, of this discarded vehicle.<sup>83</sup> The state of the body before the fall is easily

<sup>78</sup> Origen, *De principiis* 1,5,4 (73,7–75,27 K.).

<sup>79</sup> The demons, like the angels, are said to have been νόες καθαροί (pure intellects) in their original beatitude by Antipater of Bostra, as cited by John of Damascus, *Sacra Parallela* 2,770 (ed. Michel Le Quien, *Joannis Damasceni Sacra Parallela* 2 [Paris, 1712], 770). His assertion is generally printed at the beginning of *De principiis* by modern editors; Damian Caluori has pointed out to me, however, this plural of νοῦς is not attested elsewhere in Origen’s writings.

<sup>80</sup> Hippolytus, *Fragmentum de resurrectione et incorruptione* (GCS 1, 254,5–12 Achelis), from the *Hodegos* of Anastasius Sinaitica.

<sup>81</sup> Origen, *De principiis* 1,6,4 (85,17–19 K.).

<sup>82</sup> See especially Origen, *Contra Celsum* 5,18–19 (19,4–21,10 K.).

<sup>83</sup> Methodius Olympius, *De resurrectione* 1,25,4–6 (GCS 27, 251,12–252,18 Bonwetsch). For seminal discussions of this doctrine see Henri Crouzel, “La doctrine origénienne du corps ressuscité,” *Bulletin de Littérature Ecclésiastique* 81 (1980): 241–257; Hermann Schibli, “Origen, Didymus and the Vehicle of the Soul,” in *Origeniana Quinta. Papers of the 5th International Origen Congress: Boston College, 14.–18. August 1989* (ed. Robert J. Daly; Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium 105; Leuven, 1992), 381–394.

surmised from these descriptions of the relation of soul and body after death. If “the end is the same as the beginning,” as he asserts at *De principiis* 1,6,2,<sup>84</sup> it must follow that the body which God initially gave to Adam was of a subtler kind than the one which we now inherit from him, swollen as it is by the leaven of sin.

## 7 Conclusions

There is at least one passage in which Origen contemplates the possibility of everlasting life without embodiment, but he does not seem to be advancing his own opinion:<sup>85</sup>

*Verum istam perfectionem ac beatitudinem rationabilium naturarum ita demum quidam permanere in eo statu quo supra diximus putant, id est ut deum “omnia” habeant, et deus eis sit “omnia,” si nullatenus eas societas naturae corporalis amoveat. Alioquin aestimant gloriam summae beatitudinis impedi, si materialis substantiae interseratur admixtio. De qua re plenius nobis in superioribus quae occurrere potuerunt pertractata atque digesta sunt.*

Now there are some who think that this perfection and blessedness of rational natures can abide in that state of which I have spoken—the state, I mean, in which all things have God and God to them is all—only so long as they are not removed by any contact with bodily nature. Otherwise, in their opinion, the glory of consummate blessedness would be impaired, should any admixture of material substance be introduced. All that I have been able to think of saying on this question has been more fully treated and pondered earlier in this work.

This is the very chapter of his *De principiis* in which he appears to doubt that the end is in all respects the same as the beginning. At 3,6,1<sup>86</sup> he argues, from God’s failure to create us in both his image and his likeness at Gen 1:27, that the likeness is still to be bestowed upon the saints as the prize and consummation of virtue. If even the final state will not be wholly free of embodiment, we must surely conclude that Adam and Eve already had bodies in paradise, unless we suppose (as Origen could not) that the acquisition of a body will enhance our likeness to God.

As evidence for the incorporeality of Adam and Eve in Eden, Martens argues: (a) that Origen cannot permit the planting of trees to be literally ascribed to God; (b) that the church is said to have existed before the material creation; (c) that at the final restoration the saints will relinquish the bodies that they now inhabit; (d) that Adam in Origen is a symbol for humanity in the mass; and (e) that the

<sup>84</sup> Origen, *De principiis* 1,6,2 (79,22–80,1 K.): *Semper enim similis est finis initii.*

<sup>85</sup> Origen, *De principiis* 3,6,3 (284,10–285,7 K.).

<sup>86</sup> Origen, *De principiis* 3,6,1 (279,22–282,20 K.).

coats of skin were created only after the fall. To this I have replied: (a) that to deny a bodily act to God is not to deny that he acts in the physical cosmos; (b) that the cited passages do not affirm the eternal pre-existence of the church; (c) that the extinction of the gross body does not imply the loss of all corporeality; (d) that the symbolic and the literal sense are often true concurrently in Origen; and (e) that the fragments on Genesis deny sexual organs to Adam before he put on the coats of skin, but not corporeal members of any kind. I have added a final section showing that Origen, far from appropriating Plato's myth of the fall of souls, transferred it to the apostasy of Satan.

In fact it would seem that any talk of literal or allegorical reading is misplaced, whether one holds, with Martens, that Origen postulates the existence of the inner man without a body or, with the present paper, that even at the beginning the inner man possessed a body, though of a rarer mould than ours. In either case the inner man is as real and as human as the outer man, and hence the scriptural convention to which appeal must be made is homonymy rather than allegory—homonymy not in the English sense, which denotes the chance identity of sound between words that are unrelated in meaning, but in the sense defined by Origen's *Commentary on the Song of Songs*. As the proem to this work explains,<sup>87</sup> the two referents of a homonym in scripture are cognate yet ontologically distinct, one being the spiritual archetype and the other its physical analogue. Thus we must exercise spiritual senses to grasp the spiritual sense of the revelation which we first apprehend in a visible form,<sup>88</sup> and the fire which burns the body has its counterpart in God's purgatorial action on the soul.<sup>89</sup> The inner man, in contrast to the outer is incorporeal; outside the mind of God, however, individuation requires a substrate and the precondition of homonymity is a common matter. Origen's Adam has his own body and Eden its own topography, though not on any map that can be read with carnal eyes.

**Acknowledgement:** I am grateful for the comments of an anonymous reader.

<sup>87</sup> See Origen, *Commentarium in Canticum Canticorum* proem. (148–156 M./L.). According to Porphyry, the difference between homonymy and metaphor (which is often regarded as the seed of allegory) is that metaphors can be replaced by a more quotidian term and a homonym cannot: Porphyrius, *Commentarium in Aristotelis Categorias* (ed. Adolf Busse, *Porphyrii Isagoge et in Aristotelis Categorias commentarium* [Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca 4,1; Berlin, 1887], 67,4–32). Origen held that the inner man is as properly (indeed more properly) a man than his visible counterpart.

<sup>88</sup> See Karin-Jo Torjesen, *Hermeneutical Procedure and Theological Method in Origen's Exegesis* (PTS 28; Berlin, 1985), 70–107; Peter Martens, *Origen and Scripture: the contours of the exegetical life* (Oxford Early Christian Studies; Oxford, 2012), 205–226.

<sup>89</sup> Origen, *De principiis* 1,1,1 (17,1 K.) quoting Deut 4:24.