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**Perspectives on Origen and the history of his Reception**, hg. v. Alfons FÜRST. – Münster: Aschendorff Verlag 2021. 368 S. (Adamantina, 21), geb. € 56,00 ISBN: 978-3-402-13752-9

The book being reviewed today represents excellent news for the academic world in general and for the world of Origen Studies in particular for many reasons. Firstly, the authors have found a novel way of addressing the history of the reception of the immense and controversial work of Origen of Alexandria. Secondly, the volume is well-organized and the quality of each of its articles is excellent. Finally, after finishing this work, readers will be motivated to continue delving into topics essential for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

We will now proceed to further explain these three aspects in order to clearly show the great value that this work coordinated by *A. Fürst* has.

With respect to the first aspect, already in the title appear two terms which highlight the need to access a different “contemporary hermeneutical awareness”<sup>1</sup> in order to contextualize both the life and work of Origen, as well as his subsequent history. Here we are referring to the terms *Perspectives* and *Reception*. What underlies both terms is the idea that Origen was read and understood differently and, on many occasions, even from completely antagonistic *perspectives*. Just as one of the authors in the volume, *Anders-Christian Jacobsen*, has expressed “the theory of reception and the history of reception allow us to be aware of what we are doing and how” and in this sense “this theory and method is a way to study how and why early Christianity has been and still can be important.”<sup>2</sup> *Peter Martens* has also observed that: “There are numerous references to Origen the ‘heretic’ who erred on one matter or another. But we should not avert our eyes from these criticisms, as if this is where the reception of Origen stopped. On the contrary, these rejections of Origenian positions might constitute some of the most interesting instances of his reception in the west. Here is an oft-neglected facet of reception history.” (250)

As regards the second aspect we wish to highlight, referring to the organization and quality of the volume’s articles, we will begin by explaining its general structure. This work consists of an excellent introduction by Fürst (which we will give more detail on at the end of our review) and then four sections dedicated to the following topics: (1.) Role Models for Human Freedom and Dignity in Origen, (2.) Perspectives on Origen in Late Antiquity, (3.) Perspectives on Origen in Medieval and Early Modern Times and (4.) Conclusion.

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<sup>1</sup> H. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, (New York: Continuum, 1996), XXXIV.

<sup>2</sup> See “Reception theory and reception history in the study of early Christianity”- Lecture given by Prof. Anders-Christian Jacobsen on the AIEP YouTube Channel – March 2022.

The first section includes the work of the following specialists: *Anders Christian Jacobsen* (“Body and Freedom in Origen”); *Karla Pollmann* (“Role Models and Soft Power in Origen”); *Monnica Klöckener* (“The Samaritan Woman in Origen’s Commentary on John See from a Modern Perspective of Human Dignity”); and *Sara Contini* (“Judging the Judges: Exaltation and Humiliation in Origen’s *Homilies on Judges*”).

The second section includes the following contributions: *Fürst* (“Reading of Origen in Late Antiquity: Origen as Presented by Pamphilus, Athanasius and the Philocalia”); *Pui Him Jp* (“Origen against Origen? The Paradoxical Legacy of Origen in Athanasius’s Exegesis of Prov: 8:22 in *Contra Arianos II*”); *Mark J. Edwards* (“Origen, Didymus and Theodore on the Literal Sense”); *Stephen C. Carlson* (“Rufinus’s Origenization of Eusebius in his Translation of the *Historia ecclesiastica*”); *Benjamin A. Edsall* (“A Liturgical Update in Rufinus’s Translation of Origen’s Commentary on Romans?”); *Giovanni Hermanin de Reichenfeld* (“God is the Spirit or the Spirit is God? Origen’s and Augustine’s Interpretation of John 4: 24 and their Understanding of God’s Essence”); *Morten Kock Moller* (“Secundum proposition hominis: Augustine’s Refutation of a popular Interpretation of Rom. 8:28”); and *Illaria Scarponi* (“In Defence of Freedom of Choice: The Liber de induratione cordis Pharaonis as a Case of Reception of Origen’s Biblical Exegesis”).

The third section presents the following articles: *Peter Martens* (“Perplexa haereditas: Origen in the Western Middle Ages”); *Lenka Karfiková* (“Beatus Origenes, diligentissimus rerum inquisitor: “The Spiritual Body” and Other Origenian Themes in John Eriugena”); *Elena Rapetti* (“Between History and Hagiography: Origen in French Jansenism”); *Marylyn A. Lewis* (“Henry Hallywell (1641-1703): A Cambridge Origenist in Parochial Sussex”); and *Elisa Bellucci* (“Origen Between Kabbalism and Divine Wisdom: The Role of the Alexandrian in the Work of Johan Wilhelm and Johanna Eleonora Peterson”) and finally, the Conclusion, which is an interesting article by *Theo Kobusch* referring to The Losable and the Unlosable: Origen’s Anthropological Achievement and its Impact throughout Time.

As can be seen, there is great variety of topics. Nevertheless, all include a common connection that presents a true challenge for the reader. Each article asks important questions which deserve to be reflected upon today, either as new paths of research on the reception of Origen’s work during different historical moments or as proposals for thinking about our contemporary world.

And finally, to speak about the third aspect, I wish to dedicate space to the introduction of this work carried out by Fürst. In effect, this introduction poses fundamental questions which help the reader to continue delving into essential topics for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This clear objective is reflected in its title “Perspectives on Origen -Quondam and Tomorrow - Stimuli for the Future of Origen Studies in the New Millenium”. From this suggestive title, we see the possibility of opening new lines of research into topics which in some way or other have begun with Origen and which are undoubtedly still valid for our world today. Some of these lines of research are: Rhetoric of Persuasion, Power and Authority, Social Impact, Individuality and Diversity, Gender and Equality Issues, Determinism and Freedom and Cultural Transfer and Transformation. Very interesting is the reflection referring to Origen as “A Voice from the Margin”. A. Fürst asks if this marginalization that Origen suffered after his death turned out to be an advantage or a disadvantage and his response is categorical: it was an advantage, because, in his words: “His is a minor, but nevertheless powerful voice which engages with central ideas about core questions. These ideas could be all the more fruitful as they are coming from outside, from the underground of heretical rivulets flowing into the mainstream. And might his thoughts about the individual human being, his life and hope for the future, about universal values,

about the power of persuasive rhetoric, about the strong belief in free self-determination within all kinds of deterministic frameworks - might these thoughts not be needed today more than ever before?" (27)

And to conclude this review, as a reader who learned from and enjoyed this volume very much, I would like to say that the reflections it contains have allowed me to corroborate the idea that Origen continues to be valid due to the fact that he is an author who knew how to live and think freely and who left this great legacy for future generations.

Über die Autorin:

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