I. The Ethical Origen

Origen's theology emphasized ethical living as the outworking of Christian spirituality. For example as he wrote, both in the Commentaries on John and in the Contra Celsum, he emphasized the ethical implications of living in accordance with the divine will. He saw the Peter-Paul controversy as not just a historical event, but as a moral question that had implications for the treatment of Jewish and Gentile believers. Indeed, Origen's view was that the incident at Antioch was about Peter's learning to read the law spiritually (CC II, 1, Chadwick translation, p. 232) after some amount of moral repentance. For Origen, against Plato, virtue comes first and leads to knowledge.

Moving into the present, in the recent re-evaluation of Origen, we can see two examples of an appreciation for the Origenian Christology, perhaps less for the sake of Christology itself, but more for its anthropological lessons: it is the human moral agent Jesus who steers between the demands of the divine, while all the same living in the flesh, as we too must. One, John Milbank, attributes to Origen the idea that Jesus is Son of God in that he cleaves to God: there is a lesson for the rest of the human race too. In a similar manner, Michel Fédou claims that Origen showed theologians how to argue for universal logos and the particularity of the life of Jesus. The latter shows how God wills to...
give blessing to a diversity of life situations and means that God's plan is for all, yet he never intended in the Incarnation to take over any more than this particular man, from whose life lessons maybe drawn. Now even in drawing attention to him, an arch-hybrid of the past becomes the symbol for an alternative theological tradition of today, one recognizes a key part of Origen's thought which could be both a strength and a weakness: the interchangeability of Christology and Ethics.

Another recent study has pinpointed just how influential this 'ethical Origen' has been, not least in his interpretation of Paul and Romans in particular. Thomas Scheck's book on Justification strives to establish how much Origen and Augustine were as one on the doctrine of justification: "From Origen, Augustine apparently derived the metaphors that faith is the beginning, root and foundation of justification from which good works grow by means of divine grace... It appears to me that both Origen and Augustine conceive justification as an interior process of being made just through the transformative indwelling of Christ and the Trinity, a process that only begins at justification". Scheck claims that the two great early Christian writers posthumously "joined forces" at the Council of Trent in 1547, although this has never really been recognized, despite Verfallie's research making this all very clear.

II. ORIGEN IN THE BACKGROUND DURING THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES

The verdict of history, at least for the West was not so triumphantly positive: the received wisdom has been, and to some extent still is, that Origen was accepted as a mystic and exegete, but rejected as theologian. However to give that judgement a very long pedigree might be judged in turn as being guilty of anachronism. Origen was not always so suspect, at least not until the High Middle Ages. Paul the Deacon in eighth-century Lombardy anticipated the Carolingian appreciation of Origen. 6. P. Bettiol, Origenismo (in Oriente, secc. v-vi), in A. Monaci-Castagnoli (ed.), Origene: Dizionario. La cultura, il pensiero, le opere, Rome, città nuova, 2000, 329-337, p. 337: "Gia il longobardo Paolo Diacono (720-799) introduce massivamente Origene nella sua Omelia, vera e propria raccolta di fonti patristiche".

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Origins belief that the literal sense was unapt for God's words changing began to catch on, in Gregory the Great for example, in a way that would not distinguish much between spiritual and scriptural exegesis and theology. It was this on-going project of constructing an intellectual vision on the basis of the scriptures that inspired medieval exegesis and theology to a huge degree. As Regina Heyder points out, the importance of spiritual interpretation coming from Origen was transmitted via others, which made Origen, whom Abelard named "the great philosopher of Christians" (maximus Christianorum philosophus), safe for theological consumption, as he seemed to be "durch päpstliche autorität legitmiert". One can see this in Abelard's Letter 5 in which he plays with the imagery of Isaac and the springs of Genesis 26, and in what he writes about Jesus as he gives us water for ethical true living. Origen's 13th Homily on Genesis can be heard.

Haimo of Auxerre might well have played an important role in linking Origen to Abelard. In his study of Abelard's commentary, Rolf Pfeffelmüller makes note of Haimo's role in Abelard's commentary on the question of Paul's two names (at p. 109, n. 598); on Rom 4,9-11 on the difference between the visible signum and the invisible signaculum (at p. 109, n. 598); on Rom 4,9-4,11 when the idea of a sacrifice for all altering pairing love to coming up in people's hearts (at p. 102, n. 273); on Gen 26,12-13 when the idea is of a sacrifice for ethical true living. But perhaps most important is his choice of an interpretation of the Isaiah quotation at Rom 9,28 (quia verbum abbreviatum faciet Dominus super terram), while avoiding Augustine: "verbum abbreviatum" means the love commandment, the creedal symbol, or the four gospels – the last an interpretation beloved of Origen himself. "Das dieser Text auf abaelard gewirkt hat, dürfte deutlich sein."
However, the aim of research in this paper is to examine the debt of Abelard, not Haimo, to Origen. If we can focus more closely on their respective Romans commentaries, Scheck is bold to claim: “on the other hand [in contrast to Aquinas], Origen’s CRm is woven into the fabric of Peter Abelard’s commentary on Romans”. However, Scheck’s reference here, which we might expect to substantiate this claim merely refers the reader to Peppermüller’s edition of Abelard’s CRm. No more is done to make the case. Yet, perhaps surprisingly, and perhaps tellingly, in his earlier work, Origen and the History of Justification, Scheck tends the reader to William of St Thierry’s Romans commentary to substantiate his view that Abelard’s CRm is “a mere mirror” of William’s. Of course, the road to Origen passes through William too, and it is arguably an interesting one.

Of course on William of St. Thierry Scheck is on strong ground when he writes: “Many of these elements have roots in Origen’s thought, such as the idea of returning to God, the necessity of human cooperation, the progressive transformation of the soul through the gradual process of deification, the inverted form image to likeness of God, and the mediator’s participation in the atonement of the Trinity. It seems clear that Williams has perfected Origen’s ideas by an Augustinian stress on the constant need for divine grace” 12. However, that is the point: William quoted twice as much material from Augustine as he did from Origen. Moreover, only one-quarter of the commentary by William relies on any patristic sources. If Scheck’s view was correct, one would expect a higher proportion of Origen’s material in the Roman exegesis, and if anything, he was noted for alternative readings, and for the definitions of key terms 13. Bernard of Clairvaux was most interested in a continuous spiritual tradition from the Bible through to his own day than in a privileged group of “fathers” as authorities, and there is no sense of them as belonging to a superior past. Bernard felt himself to be in communion with them, and in no sense their inferior 15. William

11. T. Scheck, Origen’s Interpretation of Romans, in S.A. Cartwright (ed.), A Companion to Paul in the Middle Ages, Leiden, Brill, 2013, 15-49, pp. 21-22. “This irenic usage of Origen’s Pauline exegesis during the Middle Ages suggests that the clouds of suspicion that hung elsewhere over Origen’s orthodoxy did not render suspect his CRm. As an exegete of Paul, he was normally cited as a Catholic authority of good faith.”


13. Ibid., p. 127.


liked to spin the threads of the fathers into his own kind of cloth, and in his writing, if one will forgive the extension of the metaphor, it is hard to see the joins. For both "Christians", there was an affection of likeness for patristic writers. Quite to the contrary Abelard was known for clearly delineating and distinguishing what was an ancient voice and what was his own. The *Sic et Non* is famous or infamous for its reservation about the fathers having unequivocal authority: if Bernard did not have them on a pedestal, then Abelard put them in their place. Writing about Abelard’s employment of patristic sources in general, Cartwright comments: "compared to William, he is less dependent on them, quoting them less frequently, though occasionally at great length, as does passage of Origen’s *Romans* commentary on the topic of circumcision at Romans 2:16 and again at 4:10."

The text of Abelard’s *Romans* commentary is clearly a carefully worked commentary which allows questions or excurses to interrupt the flow of the *lectio continua*.

Peppermüller makes it sound as though in this matter Abelard performed a breakthrough, one which would set the key for Lombard and Robert of Melun, even though Lombard does not seem to have known Abelard’s commentary (and the latter’s influence can more be seen in the flow of the Anonymous commentary of the 1170s.) Although the Glosa Ordinaria at Laon preserved Origen and others in small chunks, it is unlikely Abelard knew it. He got his Origen in larger sections as we will see below, and it is this which best explains his "imitation" of Origen in the use of excurses. In sharp contrast to Aquinas’ *Romans Commentary’s* solitary mention of Origen, Abelard avoided the trope of *cognitio sui*, since he was not really interested in self-understanding as monks were. "La réflexion éthique d’Abélard, en revanche, envisageait l’homme raisonnable comme sujet responsable de la moralité" (ibid, p. 402).

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Abelard’s commentary has twenty-eight citations from Origen. Pepper- 
müller has also observed that in general Abelard was not so much of an 
innovator as had been claimed: methodologically he was a glossator like 
the rest, one whose first task was to make sense of the text. He like the 
rest looked backwards to the tradition for help. However, what was 
distinctively characteristic in his work was the number of excurses, 
Origen-style, that he employed. Another distinguishing feature could be 
that while he shared many things with the school of Lan, he contended 
that the Mosaic Law with its ‘collective’ mentality had represented a 
step back from the natural law with its golden Rule; personal respon-
sibility stood in the foreground of his ethical system. Along with the 
Abrahamian, the Abelardian, grace is offered to each human being, and 
each must decide what to do with it.

III. Theme One: Christology and the Soul

Also, dialectics changed the method of “Scripture interpreting Scrip-
ture” into something different, an exegesis with one eye on the issues 
and the concepts. One might see this as the reason behind the need for 
excurses: again, just like Origen. Boethius was also helpful to Abelard, 
so that this remarkable Christian philosopher had been able to imagine 
a pre-lapsarian Adam possessed with the possibility of sinning. His 
influence rather than that of Aristotle directly perhaps helps to explain 
the philosophical and more positive anthropology in Abelard. Yet one 
might once more contrastively compare another theologian indebted to 
Boethius, Aquinas, who mostly used Origen in his gospels commentary 
(Catena Aurea), yet who was frequently critical about Origen’s doctrine, 
calling him ‘grandfather of Arianism’, and accusing him of reducing 
predestination to mere prescience. In fact in his own Romans commen-
tary Aquinas only mentioned Origen once, on Rom 1:6 regarding the 
reading decisions, not predestination: for it would be licit to think 
with Origen that the eternal Son could not act or fore-knowledge: this could imply 
a time when he was not.

52. R. P. epperMüller, Exegetische Traditionen und Theologische Neuansätze in 
Abaelards Kommentar zum Römerbrief, in e.M. Buytaert (ed.), Peter Abelard: Pro-
ceedings of the International Conference, Louvain, 1974, Leuven, University Press, 1974, 
116-126, p. 117.
53. Ibid., pp. 119-121.
Tracing the Roman Commentary of Origen in Abelard’s Propitiatorum per fidem

Origen was happy to comment: “This, to say that he was ‘proposed’ does not fit the one who always was, that is the Word of God, but concerns the soul which although inseparable from the Word of God was all the same created but the Word of God and is posterior to the unbegotten divinity.” In other words, not so heretical as Thomas would imply. Abelard, with a Christology well on the way to a Christus assumptus position, albeit not quite fitting that label, was, like Origen quite ready and able to see praedestinatus as “according to Christ’s human nature.” Yet if we read on in Origen, who is prepared to speak of the son of God as nevertheless somehow destinatus, we find: “But it is necessary if that which is born from the seed of David according to the flesh is what really is destined (destinatus) in power according to the Spirit of sanctification to be the Son of God, and is in the substance of God in such a way as should be accepted regarding the soul of Christ, which is in very truth with the flesh and the Spirit of sanctification as substance of the


24. Abelard, Expositio I, 114, moves swiftly to the question of the believer’s faith receiving the sacrifice, where for him, the soteriological “action” is to be located:

Praedestinatus, inquam, filius dei in virtute, hoc est: ut esset virtus et fortitudo omnium per fidem et cohaerentium. Cf. M. L’Andgraf, Dogmengeschichte der Frühscholastik, 2/1, Regensburg, Pustet, 1954, pp. 172-198. It makes sense to think of a Christology of grace where the direction of flow is from God to humanity: in that sense “praedestinatus” is meaningful.
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In other words there is no “destining” of such a free agent. The soul of Christ was not from the seed of David, but the soul is understood to be located somewhere between that seed and the Son of God which are both destined, each in their own way. It is the work accomplished by Christ’s soul to inspire the believing soul that provided the hinge for Abelard’s soteriology, as much as it also did for Cistercian spirituality. It would not be too far-fetched to suggest that there is at least a “family resemblance” with Origen here.

Then, on Rom 6:9 which speaks of “death having no rule over him,” there seem to be at least implicit, sometimes influence of Origen here on Abelard as the Christological theme is explored:

According to the divinity part as he came with the Father, we too be in it of
the same [will]. For it was so that he said “divine property” — the soul of the man is in me. I use the term “divine property,” of course, in a periphrastic sense. But it is a good thing for the soul to be in the same will. It is a good thing that the soul of Christ will not as it were sink into a common suffering since after all he came to do the will of the Father in the great and living present sense.

It seems that he was ruled by death at Gethsemane, but that was only because the soul of the man (not the divinity which was united to the Father) consented to stoop before death and put up with being forced to be sick for the sake of gaining health. And it was revealed in the Gospels that great grief and death the one who thoroughly announced his will to live for his God, subject to Christ and believing in the Father.

For his part Origen says that Paul daringly implies that since death will no longer rule over then it did rule for a time. Origen stresses that Christ was like a long conquering dispute in free properties, clashing

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24. Origen, Ottawa 358:184, on Rom 1:3: “Sed requiritur si id quod de semine David nascitur secundum carnem est quod vero in virtute destinatur secundum spiritum sanctificationis filius Dei et in substantia Dei est, quomodo accipiendum est de anima Iesu, quae hic nequaquam cum carne et spiritu sanctificationis vel divinae virtutis substantia nominatur…”

25. CRm (sc 532, 180, on Rom 1,3): SED...
his power, and he suffered the rule of death by choice, not by necessity.27 As we have seen, Abelard makes this verse to be about the Passion by placing it in the Garden of Gethsemane, and its particular reference to the end of Christ. Cartwright comments on the Abelardian emphasis on Christ’s voluntary being perfect so that he retained a free choice to sin, but could not sin while (freely) united to God.28

IV. Theme Two: The Spectacle of the Cross

Bernard of Clairvaux complained that Abelard played around with the inner/outer distinction when it came to eyes, and overall tended towards spiritual interiorisation. Even though the Song of Songs’ nosce te ipsum sounds similar, Bernard (and Courcelle in more recent times) were convinced that Abelard abused that slogan by fixing one’s eyes on one’s self. Abelard’s commentary on Romans was “a controversial work, one that led to Abelard’s second condemnation at the Council of Sens in 1140.”29 Or, one might say, played a part in that condemnation. A large chunk of Origen on Rom 2:16 serves to remind and to make sure that circumcision was for the race of Abraham only and from which practice Christians were exempt. The logic is that if one looks at Leviticus’ rules for a proselyte which Origen mentions (from Lev 17) one must see an orientation which is not exactly to what one would expect from Christianity.30 It could be that Abelard is happy to let Origen speak for him here, and he intended the reader to know that he (Abelard) could not have put it better himself, and that on such recondite things to do with Jewish practice, Origen knew more than a Twelfth-Century Frenchman ever would and should be heard. Origen was interested in the Jews more than most patristic commentators were. Origen’s view, as set out in the Roman commentary was that all, Jew and Gentile are equally under sin. The Gentiles fail to acknowledge the moral law – yes there are different kinds of worce in Roman, as Origen makes clear, and as R. R. Robinson

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30 CRm II,26-27; cccM 11, p. 94: Si praeputium, ide est ipsa praeputia gentilitas quam vos, scilicet Iudaei, quasi ad ignominiam praeputium vocatis, custodiat iustitias Legis potius quam figuras, hoc est impleat morali varietatis praecepta quae unumquemque iustificant.
has highlighted.31 Furthermore, it is not clear that "Trinitarianism" is such a big issue in Origen's Commentary on Romans as Thomas Scheck thinks it is, or that even it was of high importance for Abelard in writing his.

However, it seems patent that when it comes to the Cross there is quite an affinity here between Origen and Abelard. Lawrence Bond has highlighted on Rom 3:26 that having rejected the ransom theory and the satisfaction theory (God recompensing God) Abelard says the cross works not by word but by example. The example is a singular grace in which God bound himself by love and is thus the crucifixion is more than just a cognitive "sign": "God's joining with us... is the starting point."32 When it comes to Abelard, it might be simpler to say that Abelard thinks of this as the teaching of Jesus, and that this is transmitted to the believer by the Holy Spirit. It allows the natural drive towards God, which had become tangled and out of service, to work freely again. Abelard does not get only senses that Paul regarded the cross of Christ as a cultic event: in trying to avoid the transactional for reasons of the debt being increased rather than taken care of by Christ's death, he has overlooked anything spiritual, as that which is to be regarded as no more valid than circumcision. Abelard does not get any sense that Paul regarded the cross of Christ as a cultic event: in trying to avoid the transactional for reasons of the debt being increased rather than taken care of by Christ's death, he has overlooked anything spiritual, as that which is to be regarded as no more valid than circumcision. Abelard does not get any sense that Paul regarded the cross of Christ as a cultic event: in trying to avoid the transactional for reasons of the debt being increased rather than taken care of by Christ's death, he has overlooked anything spiritual, as that which is to be regarded as no more valid than circumcision. Abelard does not get any sense that Paul regarded the cross of Christ as a cultic event: in trying to avoid the transactional for reasons of the debt being increased rather than taken care of by Christ's death, he has overlooked anything spiritual, as that which is to be regarded as no more valid than circumcision. Abelard does not get any sense that Paul regarded the cross of Christ as a cultic event: in trying to avoid the transactional for reasons of the debt being increased rather than taken care of by Christ's death, he has overlooked anything spiritual, as that which is to be regarded as no more valid than circumcision. Abelard does not get any sense that Paul regarded the cross of Christ as a cultic event: in trying to avoid the transactional for reasons of the debt being increased rather than taken care of by Christ's death, he has overlooked anything spiritual, as that which is to be regarded as no more valid than circumcision. Abelard does not get any sense that Paul regarded the cross of Christ as a cultic event: in trying to avoid the transactional for reasons of the debt being increased rather than taken care of by Christ's death, he has overlooked anything spiritual, as that which is to be regarded as no more valid than circumcision. Abelard does not get any sense that Paul regarded the cross of Christ as a cultic event: in trying to avoid the transactional for reasons of the debt being increased rather than taken care of by Christ's death, he has overlooked anything spiritual, as that which is to be regarded as no more valid than circumcision. Abelard does not get any sense that Paul regarded the cross of Christ as a cultic event: in trying to avoid the transactional for reasons of the debt being increased rather than taken care of by Christ's death, he has overlooked anything spiritual, as that which is to be regarded as no more valid than circumcision. Abelard does not get any sense that Paul regarded the cross of Christ as a cultic event: in trying to avoid the transactional for reasons of the debt being increased rather than taken care of by Christ's death, he has overlooked anything spiritual, as that which is to be regarded as no more valid than circumcision. Abelard does not get any sense that Paul regarded the cross of Christ as a cultic event: in trying to avoid the transactional for reasons of the debt being increased rather than taken care of by Christ's death, he has overlooked anything spiritual, as that which is to be regarded as no more valid than circumcision. Abelard does not get any sense that Paul regarded the cross of Christ as a cultic event: in trying to avoid the transactional for reasons of the debt being increased rather than taken care of by Christ's death, he has overlooked anything spiritual, as that which is to be regarded as no more valid than circumcision.
through preaching and sacrament. One might wish to compare Origen at this point, as a theologian for whom salvation was very much about revelation and the receiving of this by faith. The structure of the oracle in Exod 25:10–16 is described by “pure gold” as “the holy and pure soul of Jesus who is the mediator between God the Trinity and humanity since he has something less than the nature of the Trinity. It is for this reason that Scherer gives “le dieu-Verbe” as another possible candidate for being the “golden mediator.” The point that comes out of Exod 25:22 is of a place to service and to receive propheticness—in its place for revelation, even as the Midrash Rabbah emphasized.

V. Comparison of Method and Style

If Stephen Cartwright is correct, then Abelard was perhaps looking for trouble: “If Abelard regards the words of the text as mutable, then so also does he regard the order of these words.” Origen himself of course liked to point to other versions in order to widen the semantic range and link by catchword with other parts of the canon. Indeed, the Alexandrian’s presence and influence is significant, not least in the delight in playing around with text and meaning. However, it is somewhat misrepresentative and certainly too positive for M. Fédou to claim that Abelard received Origen’s expositions readily and without critical qualification.

To evidence that critical stance towards the Alexandrian, on Rom 4:11 there comes another long quotation from Origen, to the effect that Christians (“we” have another type of blood—”not that of the circumcision.” Origen commented that it was impossible for Joshua to have circumcised the Israelites a second time. However, while discussing the reason and order of circumcision, Abelard was astonished that Origen refused the obvious literal interpretation at Josh 5:2–9: “They were still uncircumcised because they had not been circumcised on the way.” Origen read Scripture in an oracular way; but Abelard, according to the rules of literature for Origen, had to be a conformist to one from circumstances otherwise.

34. SC 539, 128, on Rom 3:25: “The common point of view and cause of circumcisions are different in the case of Christ: and in the same way the circumcision marks a certain passage of salvation, from a certain nature of nature of which flesh before nature. ... And in this there is something that marks a certain passage of salvation, from a certain nature of nature of which flesh before nature.
38. SC 539, 134, on Rom 3:26.
his people; with the first circumcision his taking the former people away from idolatry. Egyptian priests were also circumcised; thus it was quite a noble thing: and we should not despise it because it seems hard. And not all unnecessary things—such virginity—are bad. Abelard’s disdain for Origen here did not make him refuse to set out in full the spiritual interpretation of this passage by the Alexandrian. Before adding that Ambrose agreed—see Liber de Fide 3.3—and Po-Honor (Eloigné) concurred too. Yet Abelard then proceeds to offer his literal explanation, which can be found, not in Augustine as such, but in Ambrosian’s Quaestiones veteris et novi testamenti: the text really meant that the second time it was a circumcision for all the people, not for select individuals. Abelard then explains that Abraham underwent a double circumcision, both spiritually for the sake of division, and physically for the sake of example, once for the natural and the natural realities matter. This spiritual interpretation serves to drive home a “faith alone” line for those who are in future to believe, both gentiles and Jews by the faith. The promise is, however, to gentiles especially: they are the stars, meaning the contemplatives and in a secondary way, theology teachers; finally “sand of the sea” stands for the ordinary married people.

There is, for all the criticism of Origen for missing the literal sense, an appreciation of his spiritualizing, albeit done in a rather sober way. Rufinus takes the text quite literally, despite his dependence on Greek Origen and his pressure by Religius in the commentary on Romans 4:25. Abraham’s body being dead: cf. Origen (Homo hominum sermones interdicti: the literal question was Abraham’s body, actually speaking, past its ability or affection).

Religious answers the point by asking the literal sense to be the sense, whereas the Greek first, in parallel, the text as it is. It is indeed not impossible at that point for Abraham to reproduce naturally as least before his soul died. It could be claimed that Abelard unwittingly was closer to Origen’s views than he could later know.

The major point to be made here: Abelard’s theological originality arguably came to the fore when he adopted Origen’s style, rather than simply quoted his exegesis. And yet to adopt method from someone is to

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40. "On the question of the resurrection of Abraham and of other physically inanimate persons, one may wonder if the phenomenon does not resemble the Apparition of the Virgin (see also John 20:12). Origen’s 18th century commentator Pierre-Henry Brochard, in his edition of 1792, defends these very particular words of the Resurrection, which in Origen’s context are a metaphor for the resurrection of the soul: 'the resumption to life of the corpse of Abraham.' With regard to the soul, this is a straight affirmation: 'resurrected in a spiritual manner' (see also Commentary on Rom 11:3.3-5, 7, p. 211)."
show a deeper kind of influence, arguably. There are twenty to thirty passages where he offers "spiritual interpretation" - only three come from other writers, an 5.11 from Origen, as we have seen, 15.26 from Jerome, 16.3 from Boethius. The rest are his own, apparently. Of the patristic era writers, "Abelard uses Origen more than any other... he cites half again as much material from Origen's Romans commentary as he does from all the works of Augustine, though over half of this material is found in two passages, on the single topic of circumcision" 41. Cartwright then concludes: "The doctrine here is to discuss matters of life, the translation of the text is the last of the process of 'interpretation', but the text is all in Origen, with regard to his doctrinal teaching is this quite limited..." 42. But the point is: he is following Origen's method, not slavishly his content. Moreover, "(t)he passage Abelard quotes or alludes to most often is Deut. 7.6/14.2/26.18, which refers to the Jews as the 'peculiar people' to God... It should be noted that this is not so much a phenomenon of biblical verses, but of a phrase or a concept appearing in three places. Likewise, within Romans, 5.12, 8.28, 13.10 are his favorites, allowing him to return to what he key matters of the book are, wherever he might be in his commentary.

VI. Ethics Once More

Cartwright tells us that Abelard used Augustine more for moral questions, and was less faithful to him on doctrinal matters, such that when one gets to the bold predestinarian language of Rom 9.21-24 he claims: "grace is only an inspiration to do good" - one is then not surprised to see that Abelard is happy to overlook questions of predestination, retribution, justification, and salvation of men. Yet that does not mean that in not contradicting Augustine, Abelard was therefore following him. So far we have mentioned ethics, Christology, the cross, and the practice of dialectic and excurses, where he seems closer to Origen. In fact he does explicitly departs from Augustine on the issue of original sin, on

41. Cartwright, Introduction to Peter Abelard (n. 29), p. 25 gives the main, most obvious examples of Abelard's "borrowing" from Origen's Romans commentary: on 2.11: circumcision for Jews only; on 4.11: the symbolism of cutting away; on chapter 16, the context of Romans and Paul's "pastoral" material.
42. Ibid.
43. Ibid., p. 19.
44. Ibid., p. 42: "... additional grace is not necessary to do good". The image employed by Abelard is that of a doctor not being responsible for those who refuse to take his medicine.
Rom 5.19, where he looks a bit like Origen: sin must be actual sin. Again, this interpretation is as novel as it is destined. Origen unhesitatingly turns on an 'Erbstrafentheorie', although an Helvetic origin.21 Betham managed to lodge the issue. Although grace can be repeated, in fact an abundance of grace is expected (τὸ ἀπολύτως ἀπόλυτος, Rom 5.21), so he comments on Rom 5.17, nonetheless there is no need for a preparing grace. Indeed on Rom 5.22, Abelard in turn denies the need of a 'new grace', of an "Augustinian" sort to enable people to receive the grace of Christ, a situation that he likens to a patient deciding to follow an instruction to take a certain medicine: "This is, as Pindurio insists, not Pimplagism", although one might call it a "semi-Pimplagism".22 And if that is so, then he is in good company. Trent and Origen. Location rather than works are what God looks on, although in Rom 14.23, "for everything which is not of faith is sin". Abelard notes that a "good intention" does not excuse one if the action be wrong.23 So there is appreciation of Origen's content as well as his method, again in the area of applying or actualising external grace.24

21. See note 1 at SC 539, 128.
23. See note 1 at SC 539, 348.
24. See note 1 at SC 539, 428, 439.
Once again, the appreciation of the natural law and reason is a place where our two great thinkers correspond. As Cartwright puts it, “He [Abelard] also equates reason with our spirit, which receives and recognizes the testimony from the Holy Spirit that we are the sons of God, and with the natural law that enables the Gentiles, who lack the written law of Moses, to obey God’s will.” But unlike William, Abelard does not move beyond rationality to a supra-rational, “spiritual” level. The idea of love as a rational force also echoes Ongenes. As mentioned at the beginning, Ongenes and others are giving an account of biblical religion that is rational and serious. Abelard and Ongenes agree on the ethical and serious approach to the Christian faith. Abelard and Ongenes are like brothers in arms.

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51. Cartwright, Introduction to Peter Abelard, p. 80.