

about in an enigmatic way in the Gospel when he said, "Who is able to enter the house of a strong man and plunder his possessions unless he first binds the strong man?"⁵⁶⁹ So then, first he bound him at the cross and thus he entered his house, the underworld, and from there "ascending on high he led captivity captive,"⁵⁷⁰ namely those who have been raised together with him and have entered the holy city, the heavenly Jerusalem.⁵⁷¹ Therefore it is right that the Apostle says in the present passage, "Death will no longer exercise dominion over him." For he will no longer give himself over to the tyrant's sphere of lordship nor will he empty himself again by taking the form of a slave and by becoming obedient unto death.⁵⁷² Never again will he endure the domination of the tyrant and of death in the form of a slave, even though he was put in this position voluntarily and not by compulsion.

(13) This is why I am amazed that certain people want to claim, in contradiction to this absolutely clear pronouncement of Paul, that in the future age it should be necessary for Christ to suffer the same things or similar things all over again, so that those whom his medicine was not able to heal in the life of the present dispensation might be freed. For they say:⁵⁷³ Can there be any age in the future when neither good nor evil are committed, but instead things are brought to a standstill and pro-

569. Mt 12.29

570. Eph 4.8; Ps 68.18.

571. Cf. Mt 27.52-53; Heb 12.22. See also *Comm in Mt* 12.43.

572. Cf. Phil 2.7-8.

573. Cf. *Princ* 3.3.5. Unless Origen has repudiated his earlier speculation (which is by no means impossible; cf. Molland, *Alexandrian Theology*, pp. 161-64), it appears that Rufinus may have put Origen's own opinions into the mouths of others here. For according to Jerome, *Ep* 124.13, the Alexandrian himself expressed these speculations in *Princ* (in a passage omitted in Rufinus's translation). Jerome quotes Origen, "Now if we extend our inquiry to the passion of our Lord and Savior, it may indeed be overbold to suppose that He will suffer in heaven; yet if there is spiritual wickedness in heavenly places and if we confess without a blush that the Lord has once been crucified to destroy those things which He has destroyed by his passion; why need we fear to imagine a like occurrence in the upper world in the fullness of time, so that the nations of all realms shall be saved by a passion of Christ?" (NPNF2 6:243). Origen's earlier suggestion (which in the current passage is repudiated) seems to be an adaptation of the Stoic doctrine of endlessly repeating world-cycles; cf. H. Koch, *Pronoia und Paideusis: Studien über Origenes und sein Verhältnis zum Platonismus* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1932), p. 92.

found silence remains? This, they claim, appears absurd. We shall therefore grant that something will happen. And where something is happening it is inevitable, they say, that some things would be done rightly, some things less rightly, and that in this very act some would make progress and become better, whereas others would become worse.⁵⁷⁴ For freedom of will shall always remain in rational natures. It was possible even for him who was Lucifer, owing to the splendor of his glory,⁵⁷⁵ and who rose in the morning because of the light of knowledge, to be changed from his own glory and become darkness because of the evil which he received.⁵⁷⁶ And to him who was without stain from the day of his birth and dwelled with cherubim and lived in the midst of the fiery stones and was clothed with the entire adornment of the virtues⁵⁷⁷ in the paradise of God, there was no tree of virtues which could compare.⁵⁷⁸ But later, iniquities were found in him and he was cast from heaven to earth.⁵⁷⁹ In the same way [M1053] it can come to pass that in whatever state a soul exists and in whatever degree of perfection of the virtues, it can still experience a fall, owing to the fact that virtue is changeable.⁵⁸⁰ So just as the [soul] is moved from the vices to virtue, so also from the virtues to the vices.⁵⁸¹ If this is the case, the inference will seem to be that where there is sickness a physician will be needed, for according to the voice of the Savior himself, "There is need of a physician for those who are sick."⁵⁸²

(14) By proposing these and similar things, they surmise that these same arrangements will have to be repeated by Christ even in the future ages.⁵⁸³ But we shall respond briefly to these things as well as we can. We certainly do not deny that free will always will remain in rational natures, but we affirm that the power of the cross of Christ⁵⁸⁴ and of his death which

574. Cf. *Princ* 2.3.3.

576. Cf. *Princ* 1.5.5.

578. Ezek 31.8.

579. Cf. Ezek 28.15, 17. Cf. *Princ* 1.5.4.

580. Cf. *Comm in Jn* 32.19.

582. Mt 9.12.

583. There is a similar refutation of these views in *Princ* 2.3.4 but there again it appears that Rufinus may have put Origen's own tentative views into the mouths of others.

584. Cf. 6.1.4.

575. Cf. Is 14.12.

577. Ezek 28.13-15.

581. Cf. *Cels* 4.69; 8.72.

he undertook at the end of the ages⁵⁸⁵ is so great that it suffices for the healing and restoration not only of the present and the future but also for the past ages. It suffices not only for our human order, but also for the heavenly powers and orders.⁵⁸⁶ For according to the Apostle Paul's own pronouncement: Christ has made peace "through the blood of his cross" not only with "the things on earth" but also with "the things in heaven."⁵⁸⁷

(15) Now precisely what it is that would restrain the freedom of will in the future ages to keep it from falling again into sin, the Apostle teaches us with a brief statement, saying, "Love never falls away."⁵⁸⁸ For this is why love is said to be greater than faith and hope,⁵⁸⁹ because it will be the only thing through which it will no longer be possible to sin. For if the soul shall have ascended to this state of perfection, so that it loves God with all its heart and with all its mind and with all its strength, and loves its neighbor as itself,⁵⁹⁰ what room will there be for sin? After all, it is on this account as well that in the law [love] is said to be the first commandment, and in the Gospels love is commanded above everything else.⁵⁹¹ And when the supreme authority for feeding the sheep was given to Peter and the Church was founded upon him as upon the rock,⁵⁹² the confession of no other virtue is demanded of him except of love.⁵⁹³ And John, when he says many things concerning love, even says this: "He who abides in love abides in God."⁵⁹⁴ Rightly then love, which alone is greater than all, will keep every creature from falling away⁵⁹⁵ at that time when God will be all in all.⁵⁹⁶ For the Apostle Paul had ascended to this degree of perfection,⁵⁹⁷ and standing in it he was confidently saying, "For who will separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus? Will affliction, or distress, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" and again, "But I am certain [M1054] that neither life,

585. Cf. Heb 9.26.

587. Col 1.20.

589. Cf. 1 Cor 13.13.

591. Mt 22.38.

593. Cf. Jn 21.15-17.

595. Cf. *Princ* 2.6.5-6, where Origen discusses how Christ's soul became immutable and incapable of sinning through its being on fire with love for God and righteousness.

596. Cf. 1 Cor 15.28.

586. Cf. *Princ* 2.3.5.

588. 1 Cor 13.8.

590. Cf. Mt 22.37-39.

592. Mt 16.18.

594. 1 Jn 4.16.

597. Cf. Preface of Origen (3).

nor death, nor things present, nor things to come, nor angels, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”⁵⁹⁸ From all of this it is plainly shown that if none of these things enumerated by the Apostle can separate us from the love of God, when someone shall have ascended to the peak of perfection, how much more impossible shall it be for the freedom of will to separate us from his love!⁵⁹⁹ For even though this is also a virtue and abides in nature, nevertheless the power of love is so great that it draws all things to itself⁶⁰⁰ and joins all persons to itself and conquers the virtues, especially since God has first given to us the grounds of love, “He who did not spare his only Son but handed him over for us all and with him has freely given all things to us.”⁶⁰¹

(16) He who was Lucifer and who arose into heaven,⁶⁰² he who was without stain from the day of his birth and who was among the cherubim,⁶⁰³ was able to fall with respect to the kindness of the Son of God before he could be bound by chains of love. But after the love of God shall have begun to be shed abroad in the hearts of everyone through the Holy Spirit,⁶⁰⁴ what the Apostle has declared will become settled, “Love never falls away.”⁶⁰⁵ We have said these things to the best of our ability in response to questions generated by the passage, so that it might become more plainly clarified in what manner Christ has died to sin once and for all and how he dies no longer, and why it is the life he lives, he lives to God.

(17) To live to God should be understood by this being fulfilled, that he who was in the form of God emptied himself

598. Rom 8.35, 38, 39.

600. Cf. Jn 12.32.

602. Cf. Is 14.12.

604. Cf. Rom 5.5.

599. Cf. 7.12.3.

601. Rom 8.32.

603. Cf. Ezek 28.14–17.

605. 1 Cor 13.8. It is difficult to read this passage without recalling Koch's characterization of Origen as an “eternal optimist”; *Pronoia und Paedeusis*, p. 32. Some scholars take the present passage as Origen's final opinion on the subject of restoration and have concluded that the Alexandrian believed that there would be a final end of history, evil would never rise again and God's love will ultimately prevail in restoring all creatures; for example, Bigg, *Christian Platonists*, pp. 233; 300 n. 2; Molland, *Alexandrian Theology*, p. 164; Teichtweier, *Sündenlehre*, p. 81; Vogt, *Kirchenverständnis*, pp. 343–46.