

**The Letter Kills but the Spirit Gives Life:  
Romans 7 in the Early Works of Augustine and  
in Rufinus's Translation of Origen's Commentary**

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The late fourth century witnessed a kind of Pauline renaissance in which Augustine and Rufinus participated. Around 400, the commentaries on Paul of six notable men became available: Origen's (through Rufinus), Jerome's, Pelagius's, the Ambrosiaster's, Marius Victorinus's, and Augustine's.<sup>1</sup> Origen enjoyed some of his greatest success after his death: he directly influenced both Jerome's and Pelagius's work on Paul. Thus Origen's presence is felt in the writings of half of the men who found this new interest in Paul at the turn of the fifth century. Caroline Hammond Bammel convincingly argues that even Augustine had read Origen's *Commentary on Romans*, but not before 407 when Melania the Elder, a friend of Rufinus, visited Augustine at Hippo.<sup>2</sup>

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1. For an historical overview of the attention that the letters of Paul received in the fourth and fifth centuries, see Maria Grazia Mara, "Il significato storico-esegetico dei commentari al corpus paulino dal IV al V secolo," *Annali di Storia dell'Esegesi* 1 (1984): 59–74, especially 59–66.

2. See Caroline Hammond Bammel, "Augustine, Origen and the Exegesis of St. Paul," *Augustinianum* 32 (1992): 341–68; reprinted in *Tradition and Exegesis in Early Christian Writers* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1995), chap. 17; see also "Justification by Faith in Origen and Augustine," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 47 (1996): 223–35; and "Rufinus' Translation of Origen's Commentary on Romans and the Pelagian Controversy," in *Storia ed esegesi in Rufino di Concordia*, ed. A. Scottà, *Antichità Altoadriatiche*, 39 (Udine: Arti Grafiche Friulane, 1992), pp. 131–42, reprinted in

How Paul was received by his commentators helped to form the defining lines of the Pelagian controversy. It is with this in mind that we shall describe and compare Origen's and Augustine's respective interpretations of the notoriously difficult seventh chapter of Paul's letter to the Romans. Placing their interpretations in a larger theological framework helps to account for the notable lack of similarity but, more importantly, constitutes a step in evaluating more clearly Origen's role in the Pelagian controversy that followed so directly, both chronologically and logically, from the Pauline renaissance of the late fourth century.

### I. Origen's Interpretation of Romans 7

Origen's explanation of Romans 7 may be characterized by two interpretive moves. First, the incarnate Word causes the death of the law according to the letter. Secondly, Origen makes several distinctions in the meaning of "law" in order to explain the existential condition of the soul.

As with many of Origen's interpretations of Scripture, a certain freshness and freedom of thought characterize his rendering of the seventh chapter of Paul's letter to the Romans. In Romans 7:2, Origen reads not "a woman is bound by the law to her husband" but "a woman is bound to the law as to a husband," and the woman is thus bound as long as the law lives.<sup>3</sup> But, what does it mean to say that the law has died? According to Origen, it is of course the literal sense of the law that dies, and it died when "the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us."<sup>4</sup> Before the Incarnation, the literal law lived because it was a shadow of future things: "the earthly Jerusalem was a type and image of heavenly worship," and the altar, the priesthood and the literal meaning of the law remained significant.<sup>5</sup> However, the presence of the Word in the flesh overturned the old cult, and the first husband, the law according to the

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Bammel, *Tradition and Exegesis*, chap. 18. Bammel argues that Augustine borrowed from Origen in *De peccatorum meritis et remissione* (412) and in his sermon on Psalm xxxi, but reacted against Origen in *De spiritu et littera* (412). Bammel sees the turning point as the rise of Origenism and the crucial issue as the preexistence of the soul.

3. Origen, *Commentarii in Epistolam ad Romanos Libri X* 6, 7 (PG 14, 1071-72): "Vivente viro alligata est legi"; et ipsius exempli quod assumptum est plenius idem ordo declarat: legem enim loco viri posuit, et de ipsa dicit: "Si autem mortuus fuerit vir, soluta est a lege viri."

4. John 1:14.

5. Origen, *Comm. in Ep. ad Rom.* 6, 7 (PG 14, 1072): Etenim donec lex umbram gerebat futurorum bonorum, et in Ierusalem terrena coelestis culturae typus et imago gerebatur, et altare manebat, et sacerdotium, sermo legis, littera videlicet, vivere videbatur.

letter, died. Driving this point home, Origen asks “is not the word of the law called dead in certain respects because by it no sacrifices, no priesthood, no services of the Levitical order are carried out?”<sup>6</sup>

Origen’s arguments against any ultimate meaning in some of the literal laws are not limited to this last theological argument from the Incarnation of the Word; especially in his commentaries and homilies, Origen’s business is more textual analysis and explanation than cramming texts into the pigeonholes of a particular systematic way of thought. Thus, he is able to offer practical arguments against the literal sense of the law. He maintains that some of the laws are physically or practically impossible to keep. For example, “what kind of man fulfills what is written about the Sabbath: ‘you will not move yourself from your place on the day of the Sabbath’? For, how could anyone refrain entirely from moving?”<sup>7</sup> Or again, Origen will argue that “it is no longer possible to punish with the death penalty nor to stone the adulteress” by the law simply because the Romans have appropriated these privileges.<sup>8</sup>

Once the letter of the law is dead, or once the soul dies to it, the soul is free to belong to another, to Christ. And when we are crucified with Christ, die with him, and are buried with him in baptism, “we are freed through him from the law of sin and we are able to serve the law of God” according to the spirit.<sup>9</sup> So it is the soul’s marriage to Christ that enables it to understand the law according to the spirit. But is it not the same Origen who says that “the prophets and any others who were . . . wise among the people of God perceived that the law is spiritual?”<sup>10</sup> Did not Origen also say that the face of Moses was glorified in the knowledge of the law?<sup>11</sup>

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6. Ibid. (PG 14, 1073): An non iure dicitur in hac parte mortuus sermo legis, cui nulla sacrificia, nullum sacerdotium, nulla Levitici ordinis ministeria deferuntur?
  7. Ibid. 1, 12 (*Der Römerbriefkommentar des Origenes: kritische Ausgabe der Übersetzung Rufins*, ed. Caroline Hammond Bammel [Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1990], pp. 69–70): Quis enim impleret vel de sabbato quod scriptum est: “non te movebis de loco tuo in die sabbatorum;”—quomodo enim fieri poterat ut se aliquis penitus non moveret de loco suo?
  8. Ibid. 6, 7 (PG 14, 1073): Homicidam punire non potest, nec adulteram lapidare: haec enim sibi vindicat Romanorum potestas: et dubitas adhuc si mortua sit secundum litteram lex?
  9. Ibid. (PG 14, 1075–76): Ubi vero Christus pro nobis mortuus est, et nos cum ipso mortui sumus peccato, liberati sumus per ipsum a lege peccati in qua detinebamur, et possumus iam servire legi Dei; servire autem in novitate spiritus.
  10. Ibid. (PG 14, 1071): Quod non solum apostolos, sed et prophetas, et si qui erant tunc sapientes in populo Dei, sensisse arbitror, quia lex spiritalis est. . . .
  11. Cf. Origen, *Homilies on Genesis and Exodus* 12, 2–3; trans. Ronald E. Heine, FC 71 (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1982), pp. 368–71.

Origen's understanding of the salvific role of Christ does not prevent some before Christ from being given the saving knowledge that the Word brought when he took flesh. In fact it is the same Word that enlightens those before Christ (e.g., the prophets to whom the Word of the Lord came) and that was made flesh for the multitudes. In Origen's words, "those who have been perfected in former generations have known no less than the things which were revealed to the apostles by Christ, since the one who also taught the apostles revealed the unspeakable mysteries of religion to them."<sup>12</sup> According to Origen, God "meets people where they are" in order to bring them back to him; he does not reveal to them what they cannot handle at the time. For example, Origen explains that in Jesus' transfiguration, Peter, James, and John looked upon him as he would appear in the glory of the resurrection, but Jesus commanded them to tell no one of the vision "for those who heard, and in particular, the multitudes, would have been injured when they saw Him crucified, who had been so glorified."<sup>13</sup> Thus, there are those who are able to receive, at least in part, the Word of God apart from the mediation of the flesh of Jesus, while the vast majority require such mediation. But no one can know God without the mediation of the Word. As Theresia Heither says, "the divine and human Word in the Scriptures and the divine and human Person of Jesus Christ are fundamentally one. They are God's one way to man and man's only way to God."<sup>14</sup>

Another distinguishing feature of Origen's exegesis of Romans 7 is his distinction of several meanings of "law."<sup>15</sup> He comments that Paul uses different

12. Origen, *Commentary on John* 6, 2 (GCS, Origenes Werke, 4, 111): καὶ ἵνα μὴ καθ' ἓν λέγων ἐπὶ πολὺ μῆκυνω τὸν λόγον βουλόμενος κατασκευάζειν οὐκ ἔλαττον τῶν τοῖς ἀποστόλοις ὑπὸ Χριστοῦ ἀποκαλυφθέντων ἐγνωκέναι τοὺς τετελειωμένους ἐν ταῖς προτέραις γενεαῖς, ἀποκαλύπτοντος αὐτοῖς τοῦ καὶ τοὺς ἀποστόλους διδάξαντος τὰ ἀπόρρητα τῆς θεοσεβείας μυστήρια, ἔτι ὀλίγα προσθεῖς κρίνειν τοῖς ἐντυγχάνουσι καταλείψω καὶ ὁ βούλονται περὶ τούτων σκοπεῖν. Trans. Ronald E. Heine, *Commentary on the Gospel According to John Books 1-10*, FC 80 (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1989), p. 174.

13. Origen, *Commentary on Matthew* 12, 43 (GCS, Origenes Werke, 10, 170): ἐπεὶ καὶ κατὰ ταῦτα βούλεται ὁ Ἰησοῦς μὴ λεχθῆναι τὰ τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ πρὸ τῆς μετὰ τὸ πάθος δόξης αὐτοῦ· ἐβλάβησαν ἂν οἱ ἀκούοντες, καὶ μάλιστα ὄχλοι, τὸν οὕτω δεδοξασμένον ὄρωντες σταυρούμενον. Trans. John Patrick, ANF 10 (orig. publ. 1896; repr. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994), p. 473.

14. Theresia Heither, "Einführung in den Römerbriefkommentar des Origenes," in *Origenes Commentarii in Epistulam ad Romanos, Liber Primus, Liber Secundus. Römerbriefkommentar, erstes und zweites Buch*, ed. and trans. eadem, Fontes Christiani (Freiburg: Herder, 1990), p. 17: "Gottmenschliches Wort der Schrift und gottmenschliche Person Jesu Christi sind im Grunde eins, sind der eine Weg Gottes zum Menschen, für den Menschen der einzige Weg zu Gott."

meanings of "law" and does not indicate these changes in meaning in order to preserve the mystery of the Scripture, not opening them to the unpolished and weak in faith.<sup>16</sup> What sense of law, then, is Paul using when he says "if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin"? Origen believes that this is the law written on the hearts of men by the living Spirit of God, i.e., the natural law and not the law of Moses.<sup>17</sup> This law comes with age and the development of conscience, and without conscience sin lies dead. Origen uses the example of a boy striking and cursing his parents. Certainly the law prohibits such actions and the boy appears to be sinning, but he is not guilty because he has not been taught by the law, that is by conscience, what he should and should not do.<sup>18</sup>

Origen does not limit the meanings of "law" to the Mosaic and the natural. There is also the law of the members, which is in power while we live in the flesh, and causes sin to abound. Origen describes the law of the members as the custom (*consuetudo*) of sin in one place,<sup>19</sup> and the movements and desires of the flesh in another.<sup>20</sup> This law of the members, the law of the flesh and of death, correlates with the literal sense of the law. Living according to the flesh,

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15. In the *Philocalia*, Origen distinguishes six different senses of "law" in Scripture: the literal law of Moses (τὸ γράμμα Μωϋσέως); the historical writings of Moses (ἡ παρὰ Μωϋσεὶ ἀναγεγραμμένη ἱστορία); the Psalms; the prophecy of Isaiah; the mystic and divine sense of the law (ἡ μυστικώτερα καὶ θειοτέρα τοῦ νόμου ἐκδοχή); and "the Word sown in the soul" (9, 1-2). However, only three of these senses (in addition to one that he adds in the commentary) are relevant for his interpretation of Romans 7.
16. Origen, *Comm. in Ep. ad Rom.* 6, 8 (PG 14, 1079): Paulus qui sub uno legis nomine sensum de una ad alteram tacitis indicibus transfert, illo ut arbitror proposito, quo et Scripturae propheticae constant, ne ea quae inspirati divinitus proloquuntur, impolitis hominibus et minus adhuc vel fidei vel studii deferentibus in propatulo ponerentur, et pedibus, ut ita dixerim, conculcanda traderentur.
17. Ibid. (PG 14, 1080): Quod si hi omnes, alique innumeri ante Moysi legem cognoverunt peccatum suum, non erit sine dubio Moysi lex de qua dicit Apostolus, quia "peccatum non cognovi nisi per legem"; et de qua dicit: "Concupiscentiam nesciebam nisi lex diceret: Non concupisces"; sed est illa lex de qua frequenter diximus, quae in hominum cordibus "scripta est, non atramento, sed Spiritu Dei vivi," et docet unumquemque quid agendum sit, quid cavendum.
18. Ibid. (PG 14, 1082): etiam exemplum pueri percutientis patrem aut matrem, vel maledicentis adduximus. In quo secundum legem quidem prohibentem percuti vel maledici patrem aut matrem, peccatum fieri videtur: sed istud peccatum mortuum esse dicitur, quia lex nondum adest in puero, quae eum doceat hoc quod facit, fieri non licere.
19. Ibid. 6, 9 (PG 14, 1087): Quod si iudicium de bono habet voluntas, consuetudo autem carnalium vitiorum, quae lex carnis vel lex membrorum appellata est.
20. Ibid. (PG 14, 1088-89): Sed rursus motus corporis et desideria carnis legem membrorum dicit, quae captivam ducit animam, et peccati legibus subdit.

we cannot serve in the newness of the Spirit but only in the oldness of the letter where the law of the members governs bearing fruit unto death and not unto God.<sup>21</sup> It is the law of the members that prevents a good will from being realized in action. In fact, Origen calls this good will the *initia conversionis*,<sup>22</sup> the beginning of the road to wisdom; but wisdom is had only when the good will is not contradicted in action.<sup>23</sup>

Indeed, it should be pointed out here that Origen weaves together the moral life and the right interpretation of the Scriptures. One must read the Scriptures in the Spirit in order to understand rightly its moral demands, and, in turn, right living sets one on the way to wisdom. "The recognition of the Logos hidden in the Scriptures," says Eberhard Schockenhoff, "proves to be, for Origen, the first condition for understanding the Scriptures. And to this recognition there corresponds a fundamental ethical assumption that Origen, following the word of the Apostle Paul, describes as 'conversion from the letter to the spirit' (ἀπὸ τοῦ γράμματος ἐπὶ τὸ πνεῦμα μετάνοια) or also as 'turning to Christ' (ἐπιστρέφειν ἐπὶ τὸν χριστόν)."<sup>24</sup>

Thus, Origen's interpretation of Romans 7 rests upon two pillars: the death of the law according to the letter at the hands of the Word made flesh making it possible to give fruit unto God in the newness of Spirit; and the distinctions

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21. Ibid. 6, 7 (PG 14, 1075): Ita ut serviamus in novitate spiritus, et non in vetustate litterae dictum videtur, hoc modo consequente intelligi poterit. In carne quidem positi, et secundum carnem viventes, propter peccatorum vitia, quae lex illa, quae erat in membris nostris, alebat ut fructificarent morti, non poteramus servire novitati spiritus dum illa lex membrorum vivebat in nobis, imo dum nos secundum illam vivebamus.
  22. Ibid. 6, 9 (PG 14, 1087): Et in his singulis iste qui iam initia conversionis accipit, competenter dicit, quia "velle adjacet mihi, perficere autem bonum non invenio. Non enim quod volo bonum, hoc ago; sed quod odi malum, illud facio."
  23. Ibid. (PG 14, 1088): Iste ergo ab initio quidem statim voluntatem habuit ut esset sapiens, sed non statim adfuit ei opus sapientiae. Sed et in eo ipso cum eruditur ut sapiens fiat, quanta stulte et contra sapientiam gessit! Qui tamen intelligere quidem potuit quam stulte gesserit: habebat enim iam studium sapientiae; non tamen ita iam sapiens erat, ut cavere posset ne quid insipienter admitteret.
  24. Eberhard Schockenhoff, *Zum Fest der Freiheit: Theologie des christlichen Handelns bei Origenes*, Tübinger theologische Studien (Mainz: Matthias-Grünwald-Verlag, 1990), p. 37: "Der Anerkennung des in den Schriften verborgenen Logos, die sich als erste theologische Verstehensbedingung des origeneischen Schriftverständnisses erwies, entspricht eine fundamentale ethische Voraussetzung, die Origenes im Anschluß an ein Wort des Apostels Paulus (vgl. 2 Kor 3, 6–17) als 'Bekehrung vom Buchstaben zum Geist' (ἀπὸ τοῦ γράμματος ἐπὶ τὸ πνεῦμα μετάνοια) oder auch als 'Umkehren zu Christus' (ἐπιστρέφειν ἐπὶ τὸν χριστόν) bezeichnet."

in the meaning of the law that enable him to make sense of existence without the law and of the war within the soul created by the law of the members. These two pillars merge into one when the law of the flesh is correlated with the law according to the letter and the natural and spiritual Mosaic laws with the newness of the Spirit. "The letter kills but the spirit gives life."<sup>25</sup>

## II. Augustine's Interpretation of Romans 7

Whenever considering the teaching of St. Augustine on any particular issue or scriptural text, the inquirer must ask "when?"; "when did Augustine think this about that?" Augustine wrestled with Romans 7 in three different works before the outbreak of the Pelagian controversy.<sup>26</sup> The section of *De diversis quaestionibus octoginta tribus* that treats Romans 7 was written ca. 394/95 "when St. Augustine was involved in a systematic study of the Pauline letters."<sup>27</sup> In this same period, he composed the *Expositio quarundam propositionum ex Epistula ad Romanos*, the *Expositio Epistulae ad Galatas*, and the *Epistulae ad Romanos inchoata expositio*, but only the first considers certain verses from Romans 7. Finally, in 396 Augustine expounded this same chapter of Romans in response to a request from Simplician, that "Milanese priest . . . who was . . . an old and experienced man" even ten years earlier.<sup>28</sup> In these works we will find Augustine's early interpretation of Romans and the doctrine of grace engendered by his reflection on Romans. This teaching on grace undergoes significant development up to 397, but from this point on, does not substantially differ from the teaching of his later writings.<sup>29</sup> While

25. 2 Cor. 3:6.

26. For an exposition of Augustine's interpretation of Rom. 7:7-25 drawn largely from his sermons, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, and later works, see Marie-François Berrouard, "L'exégèse augustinienne de Rom., 7, 7-25 entre 396 et 418," in *Recherches Augustiniennes*, 16 (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1981), pp. 100-27.

27. David L. Mosher, "Introduction," in Augustine, *Eighty-Three Different Questions*, trans. idem, FC 70 (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1982), p. 19.

28. Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), p. 93.

29. Concerning the development in Augustine's teaching on Romans 7, J. Patout Burns locates the difference in the role of the will. In the writings of 394-96, Burns notices Augustine's concern for the "inviolability of the human will" while in the later writings even to will is given by the grace of God. See J. Patout Burns, "The Interpretation of Romans in the Pelagian Controversy," *Augustinian Studies* 10 (1979): 43-54. Ultimately, however, I think Burns exaggerates the difference between the earlier and later writings on Romans 7 (and on Romans 9 as well).

Augustine is consistent after 397 in regard to his doctrine of grace, he still takes the freedom to interpret the same text in various ways according to the situation in which the text is read. Thomas Martin's detailed study of Romans 7:24–25a in the works of Augustine has made this abundantly clear.<sup>30</sup>

Augustine's explanation of Romans 7 centers around the role of the law. First of all, "the law was given not to introduce sin nor to extirpate it, but simply to make it known; by the demonstration of sin to give the human soul a sense of its guilt in place of a secure sense of its innocence."<sup>31</sup> The law, or rather a person's inability to keep it, produces anxiety over guilt, thus preparing the soul for conversion. The result of making sin known was to make it abound. Concupiscence increases and strengthens when sin involves the breaking

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By 397 the major contours of Augustine's doctrine of grace are in place. In 394/95 Augustine stated that "it is we who believe and will, but he who gives to those believing and willing the ability to do good works through the Holy Spirit, through which the love of God is poured forth in our hearts" (*Expositio quarumdam propositionum ex Epistula ad Romanos* 61, 7; trans. Paula Fredriksen Landes, *Augustine on Romans: Propositions from the Epistle to the Romans, Unfinished Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* [Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1982], pp. 33–35). Also, in 396 Augustine makes a similar statement in the course of explaining Rom. 7:7–25: "actual willing is certainly within our power" (*De diversis quaestionibus ad Simplicianum*, 1, 1, 11; trans. John H. S. Burleigh, in *Augustine: Earlier Writings* [Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1953], p. 381). However, in the second book of this same work, Augustine, in the course of a long struggle with the text of Rom. 9:10–29, declares the opposite. "No one believes who is not called. God calls in his mercy, and not as rewarding the merits of faith" (*ibid.* 1, 2, 7; trans. Burleigh, p. 391). Thus, faith is to be numbered among the gifts of grace. A few paragraphs later, Augustine's turn-about is completed when he says: "there are two different things that God gives us, the power to will and the thing that we actually will. The power to will he has willed should be both his and ours, his because he calls us, ours because we follow when called. But what we actually will he alone gives, i.e., the power to do right and to live happily for ever" (*ibid.* 1, 2, 10; trans. Burleigh, p. 393).

30. See Thomas F. Martin, "Miser Ego Sum: Augustine, Paul, and the Rhetorical Moment" (Ph.D. diss., Northwestern University, 1994). Martin shows that between 386 and 401, Augustine "explicitly gives [Rom. 7:24–25a ('Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!')] a *sub lege* reading" (436). So these are the words spoken by one without grace, unable to perform the commands of the law. But, between 402 and 417 Augustine applies the same text to the struggles of the Christian under grace but not yet having the peace of the resurrection. Finally, between 418 and 430, Augustine uses this text to juxtapose "human life before and after the Fall" (438). The point here is the ability of the text, because it is the Word of God, to speak to the situation of those to whom it is preached.
31. *Ad Simpl.* 1, 1, 2 (CCSL 44, 9): Quare intellegendum est legem ad hoc datam esse, non ut peccatum insereretur neque ut extirparetur, sed tantum ut demonstraretur, quo animam humanam quasi de innocentia securam ipsa peccati demonstratione ream faceret. Trans. Burleigh, 377. Cf. *De div. quaest. oct. trib.* 66, 1.

of a law. In other words, transgression of a law sweetens sin. Although "sin . . . existed before the law, [it] did not reach its full sinfulness because there was so far no violation of a law."<sup>32</sup>

Under the law, but without grace, man finds himself in a state of ultimate frustration: he cannot do what he wills, and he does not want to do what he does.<sup>33</sup> In this state of frustration, he is subject to the law of the members, the law of sin and death. In *To Simplician*, he calls this law in the members "the burden of mortality,"<sup>34</sup> but his explanation in *Eighty Three Different Questions* is clearer. "Law of sin" means that the law is imposed on sinners, not that the law itself is sin; and "law of death," that sin's wage is death.<sup>35</sup> Freedom from the law of sin, from the state of frustration brought on by knowledge of the law, and freedom to do what the law commands only comes with grace. That the "law is spiritual"<sup>36</sup> means that only the spiritual man, the graced man, can fulfill it.<sup>37</sup> "The letter kills but the spirit gives life."<sup>38</sup>

Augustine's reading of the analogy of the woman, husband, and law encapsulates his interpretation of Romans 7:7-25. Although he mentions the analogy in the *Propositions from the Epistle to the Romans*, the clearer presentation is found in *Eighty Three Different Questions*. He explains that "in the analogy the husband dies with the result that the wife marries whom she wants, and she is released from the law of the husband; but in the question at issue the soul itself dies to sin that it should marry Christ, and when it dies to sin, it also dies to the law of sin."<sup>39</sup> Thus, by faith in Christ, the soul is enabled to die to sin,

32. *Ibid.* 1, 1, 3 (CCSL 44, 9): *Erat enim et ante legem, sed non omnis erat, quando crimen praevaricationis adhuc deerat.* Trans. Burleigh, p. 377. Cf. *De div. quaest. oct. trib.* 66, 1.

33. Cf. Rom. 7:15-20. It is in his interpretation of this passage that Augustine will differ from what he says in the second book of *Ad Simpl.* (on Rom. 9) and in the works addressing Pelagianism. Here "to will" is within the power of the soul and not itself a gift of grace.

34. *Ad Simpl.* 1, 1, 13 (CCSL 44, 17): *Legem appellat in membris suis onus ipsum mortalitatis.* Trans. Burleigh, p. 382.

35. *De div. quaest. oct. trib.* 66, 1 (CCSL 44A, 152): *Lex peccati autem dicitur, non quia lex ipsa peccatum est, sed quia peccatoribus imponitur; ideo etiam lex mortis, quia stipendium peccati lex.* Trans. David L. Mosher, *Eighty-Three Different Questions*, FC 70 (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1982), p. 139.

36. Rom. 7:14.

37. *Ad Simpl.* 1, 1, 7 (CCSL 44, 12): *In quo satis ostendit non posse impleri legem nisi ab spiritalibus, qui non fiunt nisi per gratiam. Spiritali enim legi quanto fit quisque similior, id est quanto magis et ipse in spiritalem surgit adfectum, tanto magis eam implet.* Trans. Burleigh, p. 379.

38. 2 Cor. 3:6.

ceasing to be a sinner under the law and having been transformed into a spiritual man able to fulfill the commands of the Lord.

### III. Contrast: Historical and Not

Origen's exegesis of Romans 7 is more historical insofar as he shows more concern than Augustine does for what Paul was thinking, how Paul uses certain words in certain contexts, and what he says at other times to other people. Origen, however, is less historical in his interpretation of the Old Testament. According to him, understood correctly the Law and the Prophets shine with the glory of the Gospels. Commenting on the fact that Moses and Elijah appear at the transfiguration of the Lord, Origen says "Moses, the law, and Elijah, the prophet, became one only with the Gospel of Jesus; and not, as they were formerly three, did they so abide, but the three became one."<sup>40</sup>

Origen saves the Old Testament from the Marcionites, making it consistent with Christianity by spiritualizing it; the Word of God, no matter when spoken, has its true meaning in the age of Christ, i.e., read under the guidance of the Word. As Heither puts it, "according to Origen, the history of salvation is wholly identical with the history of revelation. The Logos is the meeting place of God and man."<sup>41</sup> Origen, of course, does not go as far as Barnabas for whom "the Old Testament was an exclusively Christian book."<sup>42</sup> For Origen, the altar of the Temple, the priests who sacrificed on it, and the whole Jerusalem cult are truly types of Christian worship. Nevertheless, the unity of truth of the two testaments is revealed by knowledge that imparts a singleness of vision.

Augustine's exegesis is the opposite. It is less historical in its concern for detail about what Paul said, and when and to whom he said it. However, it is

39. *De div. quaest. oct. trib.* 66, 2 (CCSL 44A, 153): in illa similitudine vir moritur, ut nubat mulier cui volet et a lege viri solvatur, hic autem ipsa anima moritur peccato, ut nubat Christo. Cum autem moritur peccato, moritur etiam legi peccati. Trans. Mosher, p. 140.

40. Origen, *Commentary on Matthew* 12, 43 (GCS, Origenes Werke, 10, 168): Ἐν γὰρ μόνον γέγονε Μωϋσῆς ὁ νόμος καὶ Ἠλίας ἢ προφητεία Ἰησοῦ τῷ Εὐαγγελίῳ, καὶ οὐχ ὡς περ ἦσαν πρότερον τρεῖς, οὕτω μεμενῆκασιν, ἀλλὰ γεγόνασιν οἱ τρεῖς εἰς τὸ ἓν. Trans. John Patrick, ANF 10:473.

41. Heither, "Einführung in den Römerbriefkommentar des Origenes," p. 17: "Heilsgeschichte ist nach seinem Verständnis ganz und gar identisch mit Offenbarungsgeschichte. Der Logos ist die Stätte der Begegnung von Gott und Mensch."

42. Joseph T. Lienhard, *The Bible, the Church, and Authority: The Canon of the Christian Bible in History and Theology* (Collegeville, Minn.: The Liturgical Press, 1995), p. 17.

more historical in the sense that Augustine interprets Romans 7 according to his theological categories of the fourfold division of time: before the law, under the law, under grace, and in the peace of the resurrection. "Prior to the Law we live in ignorance of sin and as followers of carnal desires. Under the Law we now live forbidden to sin, and yet, overcome by sin's habits, we sin because faith does not yet assist us."<sup>43</sup> Under grace, we are delivered from sin, but not by our own merits.<sup>44</sup> "But, nonetheless, we still suffer from its attempted seductions; although we are not betrayed to it [sin]."<sup>45</sup> It is as the man in this stage, that Paul says, "with my mind I am a slave to the law of God, but with my flesh I am a slave to the law of sin."<sup>46</sup> Finally, in the fourth stage the body puts on incorruptibility and immortality and "there is absolutely nothing in man which resists the spirit, but all things, joined and connected harmoniously to one another, maintain unity by a steadfast peace."<sup>47</sup>

Augustine's fourfold division of time makes his exegesis of Romans 7 eminently historical, and the law of the Old Testament finds a place in this order. Gerald Bonner explains that, for Augustine, "the ceremonial requirements of the Law were, in their day, of value in that they applied profitable coercion to sinners who could not be persuaded by reason."<sup>48</sup> He continues, "they are not, however, any longer binding for those who have been set free from sin by the Grace of Christ."<sup>49</sup> Although Augustine, like Origen, found a place for the figurative interpretation of the laws that Christians were no longer required to

43. *De div. quaest. oct. trib.* 66, 3 (CCSL 44A, 154): Ante legem actio est, cum peccatum ignoramus et sequimur carnales concupiscentias. Sub lege est actio, cum iam prohibemur a peccato, et tamen eius consuetudine victi peccamus, quoniam nos nondum adiuuat fides. Trans. Mosher, pp. 141–42.

44. *Ibid.* (CCSL 44A, 154): Tertia actio est, quando iam plenissime credimus liberatori nostro, nec meritis nostris aliquid tribuimus, sed eius misericordiam diligendo iam non vincimur delectatione consuetudinis malae, cum ad peccatum nos ducere nititur. Trans. Mosher, p. 142.

45. *Ibid.* (CCSL 44A, 154): sed tamen adhuc eam interpellantem patimur, quamvis ei non tradamur. Trans. Mosher, p. 142.

46. *Ibid.* 66, 6 (CCSL 44A, 162): Et ille homo nunc describitur esse sub gratia, qui nondum habet perfectam pacem, quae corporis resurrectione et immutatione futura est. Trans. Mosher, p. 148.

47. *Ibid.* 66, 3 (CCSL 44A, 154–55): Quarta est actio, cum omnino nihil est in homine quod resistat spiritui, sed omnia sibimet concorditer iuncta et conexas unum aliquid firma pace custodiunt, quod fiet mortali corpore vivificato, cum corruptibile hoc induerit incorruptionem, et mortale hoc induerit immortalitatem. Trans. Mosher, p. 142.

48. Gerald Bonner, *St. Augustine of Hippo: Life and Controversies* (London: SCM Press, 1963; rev. ed. Norwich: The Canterbury Press, 1986), p. 218.

49. *Ibid.*

observe, unlike Origen, his teaching about the Old Testament was also governed by the theological category of progressive revelation.

Augustine saved the Old Testament from the Manichees not by spiritualizing it but by giving it a place in the economy of salvation. Divine providence did not desert us but “provided a path by means of the separation of the patriarchs, the bond of the law, the predictions of the prophets, the mystery of the incarnation, the witness of the apostles, the blood of the martyrs, and the inclusion of the Gentiles.”<sup>50</sup> In their debate, Faustus explained to Augustine that he rejected the Old Testament because the practices that it enjoins are no longer binding on Christians. “Christians,” he says, “have not adopted these observances, and no one keeps them; so that if we will not take the inheritance, we should surrender the documents.”<sup>51</sup> In response, Augustine urges Faustus to look at the Old and New Testaments from the point of view of prophecy and fulfillment. “We receive the Old Testament,” he says, “not in order to obtain the fulfillment of these promises, but to see in them predictions of the New Testament.”<sup>52</sup> Augustine also challenges Faustus’s view that the prophets and the patriarchs “were taken up with earthly things.” According to Augustine, the prophets and patriarchs “understood, by the revelation of the Spirit of God, *what was suitable for that time*, and how God appointed all these sayings and actions as types and predictions of the future.”<sup>53</sup>

Faustus again raises his objection later in the debate. Augustine remarks that he has already explained this but adds a further point. The Manichaeans fail to distinguish between the “moral” and “symbolic” precepts of the Old Testament. As a result, the Manichaeans, “not seeing that whatever observance God appointed for the former dispensation was a shadow of future things,

50. Caroline Hammond Bammel, “Pauline Exegesis, Manichaeism and Philosophy in the Early Augustine,” in *Christian Faith and Greek Philosophy in Late Antiquity: Essays in Tribute to George Christopher Stead*, ed. L. R. Wickham and C. P. Bammel, p. 22 (New York: E. J. Brill, 1993); reprinted in Bammel, *Tradition and Exegesis*, chap. 16.

51. *C. Faustum Manich.* 4, 1 (CSEL 25, 268): Quae [obseruanda] quia christianorum placere nemini—neque enim quisquam nostrorum ea custodit—dignum est, ut cum refusa hereditate reddamus et tabulas. Trans. Richard Stothert, *Reply to Faustus the Manichaean*, NPNF 1, 4 (orig. publ. 1887; repr. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994), p. 161.

52. *Ibid.* 4, 2 (CSEL 25, 269): Non ergo uetus testamentum ad consequendas illas promissiones, sed ad intellegendas in eis noui testamenti praenuntiationes accipimus. Trans. R. Stothert, 1, 4:161.

53. *Ibid.* (CSEL 25, 269): Intellegebant enim reuelante sibi spiritu dei, *quid tempori illi congrueret* et quibus modis deus per illas omnes res gestas et dictas futura figuranda et praenuntianda decerneret. Trans. R. Stothert, 1, 4:162, my emphasis.

because these observances are now discontinued, condemn [the Old Testament], though no doubt *what is unsuitable now was perfectly suitable then* as prefiguring the things now revealed.”<sup>54</sup> Thus, for Augustine the Old Testament has its proper place in the economy of salvation, and in this economy lies the unity of the two Testaments.

#### IV. Contrast: The “Law”

Origen’s exegesis of Romans 7 makes use of several distinctions in the meaning of “law.”<sup>55</sup> In various contexts, it can denote: the Mosaic law, which for Origen designates everything from the Ten Commandments to the laws concerning leprosy and the washing of walls on the Sabbath; the natural law,<sup>56</sup> that is, the law of conscience written on the hearts of men; and the law of the members, which governs those who live according to the flesh. Although the natural law is good, for Origen “the law of nature by no means witnesses to the righteousness of God manifested by Jesus Christ”:<sup>57</sup> it cannot shine with the same glory as the Gospel. In addition, of course, there is the pivotal distinction between the law according to the letter and according to the spirit. To the righteousness manifested in the Word made flesh “the Law of Moses, not the letter, but the spirit, does witness, as also the Prophets in accordance with the spirit of the law, and as does the spiritual word in them.”<sup>58</sup> Origen relies heavily upon these distinctions in order to make sense of Romans 7.

Amid these many distinctions in the meaning of “law,” one should not lose sight of the role of moral action in the theology of Origen. As Eberhard Schockenhoff says, “If one wants to sum up in one sentence the fundamental

54. Ibid. 6, 2 (CSEL 25, 285): Ex hac quippe inperitia Manichaei et omnes, quibus displicent litterae ueteris testamenti, quicquid deus mandauit priori populo ad celebrandam umbram futurorum non intellegentes et ea modo non obseruari animaduertentes ex more praesentis temporis illa reprehendunt, quae utique illi tempori congruebant, quo ista, quae nunc manifestata sunt, uentura significarentur. Trans. R. Stothert, 1, 4:167–68, my emphasis.

55. See Caroline Hammond Bammel, “Law and Temple in Origen,” in *Templum Amicitiae: Essays on the Second Temple Presented to Ernst Bammel*, ed. W. Horbury (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press–JSOT Press, 1991), pp. 464–76; reprinted in Bammel, *Tradition and Exegesis*, chap. 11; and Riemer Roukema, *The Diversity of Laws in Origen’s Commentary on Romans* (Amsterdam: Free University Press, 1988).

56. For the development of *physis* and *nomos* in Greek thought, see Helmut Koester, “NOMOS ΦΥΣΕΩΣ: The Concept of Natural Law in Greek Thought,” in *Religions in Antiquity: Essays in Memory of Erwin Ramsdell Goodenough*, ed. Jacob Neusner (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1968), pp. 521–41.

conviction which guides Origen's theological explanation of ethics, he could say the following: he who goes the way of the ethical life and enters on the road of the good meets Christ. Whether he knows it or not, he already stands in a real relationship to the Son of God; who is present to every individual man and is coextensive with the entire world and the whole of history."<sup>59</sup>

Augustine, on the other hand, does not even consider the sense in which he uses "law" in his exegesis. From *To Simplician* it is clear that he at least has in mind the Ten Commandments. But, Augustine's use of "law" may be better explained by reconsidering his fourfold division of time (before the law, under the law, under grace, and in the peace of the resurrection). As William Babcock has pointed out, this fourfold division is both historical and personal: the schema refers to both "the stages of human history as perceived in relation to the law of Sinai and the coming of Christ and . . . the various dispositions of the human person in relation to the morally evil and the morally good."<sup>60</sup> Augustine is able to say, "there are four different phases even in [the life of] one man." Thus, each of the divisions denotes both a period of time in salvation history and a stage in the development of the person on his way to eternal life.

Babcock does not consider, however, the relationship between these schemata and the meaning of "law." When "law" is considered in terms of personal development, it seems that Augustine would include not only the Mosaic law, but also any moral norm derived from natural reason. For it would make no difference whence the norm came, from reason or from revelation; it would still condemn the graceless man and give life to the man quickened by the grace of God. However, in terms of the schema as salvation history, "law"

57. Origen, *Philocalia* 9, 3 (In *Comm. in Ep. ad Rom.* 6, 8 [PG 14, 1078]): τῇ τοίνυν δικαιοσύνη τοῦ θεοῦ φανερούμενη ὑπὸ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ μαρτυρεῖ μὲν οὐδαμῶς νόμος. Trans. George Lewis, *The Philocalia of Origen: A Compilation of Selected Passages from Origen's Works Made by St. Gregory of Nazianzus and St. Basil of Caesarea* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1911), p. 50.

58. *Ibid.* (PG 14, 1078): ὁ δε Μωϋσέως νόμος, οὐ τὸ γράμμα, ἀλλὰ τὸ πνεῦμα, καὶ οἱ ἀνάλογον τῷ πνεύματι τοῦ νόμου προφῆται ἁμαρτυροῦσιν. Trans. Lewis, p. 50.

59. Schockenhoff, *Zum Fest der Freiheit*, p. 197: "Wollte man die Grundüberzeugung, die Origenes in seiner theologischen Explikation des Ethischen leitet, in einem Satz zusammenfassen, so könnte dieser lauten: Wer den Weg des ethischen Lebens geht und auf der Bahn des Guten ansteigt, der begegnet Christus. Ob er darum weiß oder nicht, er steht bereits in einer realen Beziehung zu dem Sohn Gottes, der jedem einzelnen Menschen gegenwärtig und der Totalität von Welt und Geschichte koextensiv ist."

60. William S. Babcock, "Augustine's Interpretation of Romans (A.D. 394-396)," *Augustinian Studies* 10 (1979): 59.

seems to refer to the decalogue and not the natural law. For if "law" in the economic schema denoted the natural law and the Mosaic law, we would no longer have four stages but only three. Because man, collectively, can never be without the natural law, Augustine's first stage in salvation history, "before the law," would be meaningless unless "law" here meant the Mosaic law.<sup>61</sup> Furthermore, in *To Simplician*, Augustine explains that when Paul says he lived without the law, he is speaking in the person of the "old man."<sup>62</sup> This is clearly a reference to the historical rather than the personal schema.

Thus "whereas Origen distinguishes various different kinds of law, including the law of Moses, which in its literal sense is superseded by the Gospel, the written laws of other peoples, the natural law written in men's hearts, and the law of sin described by Paul as dwelling in his members, Augustine simply refers to the law without further qualification both where the Mosaic Law is clearly intended and where he is apparently speaking of law in general."<sup>63</sup> Even when considering the law of sin and death, which Origen understands as governing the man in the flesh, Augustine argues that the law is not sin but over sinners whose transgressions bring death. Nevertheless, in their respective interpretations of Romans 7, both Origen's and Augustine's understanding of law plays a key role, and for both "the commandment is holy and just and good."<sup>64</sup>

### V. Contrast: The Fall

In commenting upon Romans 7, both Origen and Augustine have to explain the situation in which the soul is alienated from itself. Paul's words describe this dismal situation and culminate in an exclamation and plea for help: "Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?"<sup>65</sup> Like every other serious commentator on this passage (Rom. 7:14-25), Origen and Augustine must explain in whose person Paul is speaking.

According to Origen Paul begins speaking in the person of one sold to sin under the law of the flesh in Rom. 7:14. Here Paul employs his usual method of evangelization: "for though I am free with respect to all, I have made myself

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61. Of course an individual can be "without the natural law" in the sense that Origen outlined: conscience comes with age.

62. Cf. *Ad Simpl.* 1, 1, 6.

63. Bammel, "Augustine, Origen and the Exegesis of St. Paul," p. 353.

64. Rom. 7:12.

65. Rom. 7:24.

a slave to all, so that I might win more of them.”<sup>66</sup> Thus, when he speaks in the person of one under the flesh, Paul has become weak to the weak.<sup>67</sup> Paul continues to speak as one under the flesh up to and including verse 24: “Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?” The next half verse, however, is spoken with apostolic authority: “Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!”<sup>68</sup> But Paul speaks again as a man under the flesh in 25b: “So then, with my mind I am a slave to the law of God, but with my flesh I am a slave to the law of sin.”<sup>69</sup> The acrobatics that Origen performs to make sense of this passage indicate the difficulty of arriving at a satisfactory interpretation.

According to Augustine, in verses 14–20 Paul is “speaking in the person of a man under the law and not yet under grace, who is brought to do wrong by some dominant desire, and by some deceptive sweetness associated with prohibited sin.”<sup>70</sup> However, when Paul continues, “So I find it to be a law that when I want to do what is good, evil lies close at hand,” he is speaking as a man under grace who does not yet have the peace of the resurrection in which he will no longer be agitated by the need and desire for physical things.<sup>71</sup> No matter who is speaking these words, for both Origen and Augustine the state of frustration, of which verses 15–25 speak, is brought about by a “fall.”

Although Origen does not explicitly mention his doctrine of the fall in his commentary on Romans 7, it is presupposed.<sup>72</sup> His teaching on the fall correlates

66. 1 Cor. 9:19.

67. Cf. 1 Cor. 9:22 and Origen, *Comm. in Ep. ad Rom.* 6, 9 (PG 14, 1086): Quod vero dicit: “Ego autem carnalis sum, venundatus sub peccato,” hic iam tanquam doctor Ecclesiae personam in semetipsum suscipit infirmorum; propter quod et alibi dixit: “Factus sum infirmis infirmus, ut infirmos lucrarem.”

68. Origen, *Comm. in Ep. ad Rom.* 6, 9 (PG 14, 1089): Respondetur vero ei ad hoc quod dixerat: “Quis me liberabit de corpore mortis huius?” iam non ex illius persona, sed ex apostolica auctoritate: “Gratia Dei per Iesum Christum Dominum nostrum.”

69. *Ibid.* 6, 10 (PG 14, 1090): “Itaque ego ipse mente servio legi Dei, carne autem legi peccati.” Forte aliquis dicet quod Apostolus, qui nunc usque non quasi ipse, sed assumpta alterius persona locutus est, modo velut personae immutationem designans dicat, “Ego ipse,” ut ostendat haec quae dicenda sunt, ad seipsum idem Apostulus pertinere.

70. *Ad Simpl.* 1, 1, 9 (CCSL 44, 14): loquitur enim adhuc ex persona hominis sub lege constituti nondum sub gratia, qui profecto trahitur ad male operandum concupiscentia dominante atque fallente dulcedine peccati prohibiti. Trans. Burleigh, p. 380.

71. Cf. *De div. quaest. oct. trib.* 66, 6.

72. Origen’s doctrine of the fall will be drawn largely from *On First Principles*. There is, of course, a risk in drawing upon this earlier speculative work in order to explain a later commentary on Scripture. This is especially dangerous when dealing with the *Commentary on Romans* “where

with his teaching on the preexistence of individual souls. With the Gnostics, Origen agreed that differing natures of rational beings cannot be attributed to the same creator.<sup>73</sup> The Gnostics argued from this that there were different creators corresponding to the diversity of spirits wherein some have “the authority to rule while others are subject to rulers.”<sup>74</sup> Origen responds that “the cause of the diversity and variety among these beings is shown to be derived not from any unfairness on the part of the Disposer but from their own actions, which exhibit varying degrees of earnestness or laxity according to the goodness or badness of each.”<sup>75</sup> Thus, for Origen the preexistence of souls and their respective falls preserve the justice of God and explain the diversity of rational natures. Among the minds that God created, by free will “some sinned deeply and became daemons, others less and became angels; others still less and became archangels; and thus each in turn received the reward for his individual sin.”<sup>76</sup> But human beings were those “souls who had not sinned so greatly as to become daemons, nor . . . so very lightly as to become angels. God therefore made the present world and bound the soul to the body as a punishment.”<sup>77</sup>

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he [Origen] appears to accept the doctrine that the whole race was present in Adam's loins and 'sinned in him' (J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 5th ed. [San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1978], p. 181). Nevertheless, with Kelly, I still see his early doctrine of the fall behind his interpretation of Romans.

73. Cf. Origen, *De Principiis* 1, 8, 2 (GCS, Origenes Werke, 5, 98): *dum et uni eidemque conditori diversas naturas rationabilium creaturarum adscribi videtur absurdum, sicut vere absurdum est, et causam tamen in eis diversitatis ignorant*. Trans. G. W. Butterworth, *On First Principles* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1936; reprinted Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1973), p. 69: “For while it seems absurd, and indeed is absurd, that the differing natures of rational beings should be attributed to one and the same creator, nevertheless the objectors are ignorant of the cause of these differences.”
74. Origen, *De Principiis* 1, 8, 2 (GCS, Origenes Werke, 5, 98): *Aiunt enim consequens non videri ut unus atque idem conditor, nulla extante causa meritorum, aliis potestatem dominationis iniungat, alios subiciat dominantibus, aliis tribuat principatum, alios subiectos esse principibus faciat*. Trans. Butterworth, p. 69.
75. *Ibid.* (GCS, 22, Origenes Werke, 5, 98): *Quae utique omnia, ut ego aestimo, consequentia rationis huius, quam supra exposuimus, redarguit atque confutat, per quam causa diversitatis ac varietatis in singulis quibusque creaturis ostenditur ex ipsarum motibus vel ardentioribus vel pigrioribus, secundum virtutem vel secundum malitiam, non ex dispensantis inaequalitate descendere*. Trans. Butterworth, p. 69.
76. *Ibid.* 1, 8, 1, a fragment from Leontius of Byzantium, *De Sectis*, Act. 10, 5 (GCS, Origenes Werke, 5, 96; cf. PG 86A, 1265): *Καὶ οἱ μὲν πάνυ ἀμαρτήσαντες, δαίμονες ἐγένοντο· οἱ δὲ ἔτι ἔλαττον, ἄγγελοι· οἱ δὲ ἔτι ἔλαττον, ἀρχάγγελοι· καὶ οὕτως ἐφεξῆς ἕκαστος πρὸς τὴν οἰκείαν ἀμαρτίαν ἀπέλαβεν*. Trans. Butterworth, p. 67.
77. *Ibid.* (GCS, Origenes Werke, 5, 96; cf. PG 86A, 1265): *ὑπελείποντο δὲ αἱ ψυχαὶ, αἵτινες οὐδὲ τοσαῦτα ἦσαν ἀμαρτήσασαι, ἵνα δαίμονες γένωνται, οὐδὲ πάλιν οὕτω κουφοτέρως,*

Thus, for Origen, the fall is of preexistent minds who freely commit individual and personal sin and whose punishment (in the case of humans) caused the creation of the world and its union with a body. The soul's punishment, the body, affects the mind more than the will,<sup>78</sup> even though the force of habit can plague the will as Origen states in commenting on Rom. 7:14–25. This punishment is ordered to the rehabilitation of the soul so that it can once more become a mind on fire with the desire for God.<sup>79</sup>

Augustine's teaching on the fall differs much from Origen's.<sup>80</sup> While the notion of the preexistence of the soul often played on his mind, it is not essential to his doctrine of the fall (though it may have been instrumental in the development of this doctrine). Wrestling with Romans 9, Augustine concludes that God could not have hated Esau "unless the hatred was merited by injustice on Esau's part,"<sup>81</sup> and Esau was born meriting damnation because if he merited damnation by God's foreknowledge of evil deeds, then Jacob's election would also have been thus merited.<sup>82</sup> But grace cannot be merited. Crucial is the passage in which Augustine calls humanity a mass of sin (*massa peccati*):

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ἵνα ἄγγελοι γένωνται. ἐποίησεν οὖν ὁ θεὸς τὸν παρόντα κόσμον, καὶ τὴν ψυχὴν συνέδησε τῷ σώματι πρὸς κόλασιν. Trans. Butterworth, p. 67.

78. A consideration of wherein Origen locates redemption reveals how the fall damaged the soul. Because the saving Logos is our teacher and exemplar, our fallen condition must primarily be one of ignorance. See *De Principiis* 4, 3, 12 and 4, 1, 2. Even the Holy Spirit's role in redemption is described in these terms: it enables the spiritual interpretation of Scripture and comforts by revealing a consciousness of spiritual knowledge. See *De Principiis* 2, 7, 1–2, 7, 4.
79. Cf. Origen, *De Principiis* 3, 5, 8 (GCS, Origenes Werke, 5, 278): Verum certis quibusque et modis et disciplinis et temporibus subiectio ista complebitur, id est non necessitate aliqua ad subiectionem cogente nec per vim subditus fiet omnis mundus deo, sed verbo ratione doctrina provocatione meliorum institutionibus optimis comminationibus quoque dignis et competentibus, quae iuste immineant his, qui salutis et utilitatis suae curam sanitatemque contemnunt. Trans. Butterworth, p. 243: "The whole world will . . . become subject to God . . . by word, by reason, . . . and also by such merited and appropriate threatenings as are justly held over the heads of those who contemptuously neglect to care for their own salvation."
80. In keeping with the scope of this paper, Augustine's teaching on the fall will be drawn primarily from *To Simplician*. His conception of the fall undergoes development even between the first (on Rom. 7) and second (on Rom. 9) parts of *To Simplician*. However, as it relates to the existential situation of the man under the law, there is no change. See, e.g., Eugene TeSelle, *Augustine the Theologian* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970), pp. 178–80.
81. *Ad Simpl.* 1, 2, 8 (CCSL 44, 33): Ut autem odisset Esau nisi iniustitiae merito, iniustum est. Trans. Burleigh, p. 392.
82. Cf. *ibid.* 1, 2, 10–1, 2, 11.

Now all men are a mass of sin, since, as the apostle says, "In Adam all die" (1 Cor. 15:22), and to Adam the entire human race traces the origin of its sin against God. Sinful humanity must pay a debt of punishment to the supreme divine justice. Whether that debt is exacted or remitted there is no unrighteousness.<sup>83</sup>

As a result of the fall, carnal concupiscence reigns in the soul and destroyed is the state in which "the spirit vivifies the earthly members, and man's whole nature is wonderfully attuned as the soul rules and the body obeys."<sup>84</sup> Concupiscence, the tendency to sin, conquers the man under the law though without grace and agitates but does not conquer the man under grace though not yet in the peace of the resurrection. In short, the struggles of Romans 7 result from the fall and its effects, which Augustine explains commenting upon Romans 9.

Origen and Augustine differ greatly in their respective explanations of original sin. Augustine's view of the fall is communal: all are guilty by the sin of one man. In Origen's system, however, each individual soul causes its own fall by its own sin. While for Origen the fall affects primarily the intellect, causing ignorance and separation from the vision of God, for Augustine the fall affects primarily the will, preventing man from doing what the law commands, though it causes ignorance too. They also have different views of the punishment that followed the fall. In the words of Caroline Bammel, "for Origen divine punishment is primarily corrective and purgative, for Augustine it is primarily retributive."<sup>85</sup> These respective views of original sin influence how Origen and Augustine construe the problems of knowing and performing what the law commands, and how these problems are solved. Origen's solution is spiritual understanding while Augustine's is the help of grace for the will.

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83. *Ibid.* 1, 2, 16 (CCSL 44, 41-42): *Sunt igitur omnes homines—quando quidem, ut apostolus ait, "in Adam omnes moriuntur," a quo in universum genus humanum origo ducitur offensionis dei—una quaedam massa peccati supplicium debens divinae summaeque iustitiae, quod sive exigatur sive donetur, nulla est iniquitas.* Trans. Burleigh, p. 398.

84. *Ibid.* 1, 2, 20 (CCSL 44, 51): *in omnibus est etiam spiritus vitalis terrena membra vivificans; omnisque natura hominis dominatu animae et famulatu corporis conditione mirabili temperata.* Trans. Burleigh, p. 404.

85. Bammel, "Origen's Commentary on Romans and the Pelagian Controversy," p. 139.

## VI. Conclusion

Origen's and Augustine's respective commentaries on Romans constitute small pieces of the very complicated puzzle that is the Pelagian controversy. How does this exercise of comparing and explaining Origen and Augustine on Romans 7 help us to understand better the role that Origen played in the unfolding of the Pelagian controversy? It helps us both to evaluate better Pelagius's appropriation of Origen and to recognize a fundamental agreement between Augustine and Origen. While we must acknowledge Origen's influence upon Pelagius, especially in his insistence on free will, it must be equally noted that Pelagius destroys the harmony of Origen's theology when he appropriates only some of its aspects. Although Pelagius clearly borrows from Origen in his interpretation of the law in Romans 7, he lacks Origen's distinction between the law according to the letter and according to the spirit and the corresponding emphasis upon the Spirit guiding the soul in its understanding of the Scriptures.<sup>86</sup>

More importantly, however, Pelagius adopts Origen's enthusiasm for free will without adopting the equally essential (to Origen) preexistent fall. Pelagius thereby transforms Origen's fallen soul, which desperately needs the Word to deliver it from ignorance and bondage to the literal law of the flesh, into the independent soul that can do what it wills and earn eternal life. For Origen, it is true, willing follows closely upon knowing and does not seem to require special intervention from God. However, to know must be given by the Word, and the knowledge that the Word gives cannot be had without it. Thus, to adopt Origen's position on free will without his belief in the preexistence of the soul is to change radically the condition into which men are born. In spite of certain resemblances to Pelagius and the fact of historical influence upon him, Origen's beliefs in original sin (however different from Augustine's) and saving knowledge place him at odds with Pelagianism.

Origen and Augustine are struggling with the same issues in their respective doctrines of original sin: the human condition; the justice of God; free will; and salvation. "The dilemma therefore is how to retain the doctrine of original sin, so characteristic of Origen (although not only of Origen), but to combine it with a tenable view of the origin of the soul and the maintenance of divine justice."<sup>87</sup> Indeed, it could be argued that it is this dilemma that Augustine's teaching resolves, however unpalatable his solution is to modern sensibilities.

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86. See *Pelagius's Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans*, trans. Theodore de Bruyn, Oxford Early Christian Studies (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), pp. 100-105.

The battle of the early fifth century should be construed not as the theology of Augustine versus that of Pelagius, Caelestius, and Origen; but as the Augustinian and Origenistic salvation by God versus the Pelagian salvation by human merit. Origen, like Augustine, finds humanity in a situation from which only God can save it. Nevertheless, both Augustine and Pelagius reacted against Origen: "the characteristic views of both Augustine and his Pelagian opponents were formed as a result of the rejection of ideas of Origen, in particular Origen's belief in the preexistence of the soul."<sup>88</sup>

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87. Bammel, "Augustine, Origen, and the Exegesis of St. Paul," p. 365, n. 98.

88. Bammel, "Origen's Commentary on Romans and the Pelagian Controversy," p. 138. Bammel even conjectures that Rufinus translated Origen consciously to offer an alternative to Augustine and Pelagius!