

## RUFINUS AS AN INTERPRETER OF ORIGEN: ASCETIC AFFLICTION IN THE *COMMENTARII IN EPISTULAM AD ROMANOS*

### Abstract

For over ninety years, the reliability of Rufinus as a translator has been the subject of much debate, but little consensus has emerged. This paper aims to evaluate Rufinus' reliability through a semantic and theological analysis of the theme of 'affliction' in his translation of Origen's *Commentary on Romans*. The article begins by outlining the *status quaestionis*. Next, it compares the meanings of affliction in Origen's Greek texts to those in Rufinus' Latin translation. The article then compares the soteriology in the Greek fragments of the *Commentary* to the soteriology in Rufinus' translation. These analyses suggest that the *Commentarii's* emphasis on asceticism in its concepts of affliction and salvation are due to Rufinus interpreting Origen's *Commentary* through his own early fifth-century monastic perspective. When understood in this way, Rufinus' translations can serve as a witness not only to Origen but also to Rufinus and to the reception of Origen by Western monastics at the beginning of the fifth century.

### Introduction

At the end of the fourth century, a debate erupted between Jerome and Rufinus over the reliability of Rufinus' Latin translations of Origen's works. With the death of Rufinus and with increasing suspicions concerning Origen's orthodoxy, the debate ended—unresolved. At the beginning of the twentieth century, however, the debate re-emerged, largely because of Paul Koetschau's critical edition of *De Principiis*, which questioned the fidelity of Rufinus' translations. Subsequent scholarship has primarily evaluated Rufinus' translations by analysing his principles of translation and comparing his translations to extant Greek witnesses to the originals.

This article aims to supplement these two methods by evaluating Rufinus' reliability from another perspective. The approach adopted here evaluates Rufinus' reliability at the theological and semantic levels. The article's analyses focus on the theme of 'affliction' in Rufinus' translation of Origen's *Commentary on Romans* and in extant Greek texts of Origen.<sup>1</sup> Based on this research, the paper

<sup>1</sup> On the Greek *Commentary*, see Henry Chadwick, 'Rufinus and the Tura Papyrus of Origen's *Commentary on Romans*,' *JTS* 10 (1959): 10–42; Jean Scherer, *Le*



proposes that Rufinus' Latin translation contains evidence of a reinterpretation of Origen's concept of affliction. The article argues that when affliction (*tribulatione*) in Rufinus' translation (*Commentarii in Epistulam ad Romanos*) is compared to affliction (θλῖψις) in the extant Greek texts of Origen, the emerging concepts of affliction are remarkably different, and that these differences are due to Rufinus reinterpreting Origen's third-century emphasis on physical martyrdom into Rufinus' own early fifth-century monastic context. The result is a reinterpretation of affliction itself. Affliction no longer refers primarily to externally imposed suffering. Instead, affliction is redefined to consist of the self-imposed suffering that accompanies ascetic striving for salvation. This shift also introduced a change of emphasis in the vision of salvation itself, which further suggests that the theology of the *Commentarii* should be read as a witness to Rufinus' interpretation of Origen rather than as an exact record of Origen's original comments on Romans.<sup>2</sup> When understood in this way, the *Commentarii* provides us with another window into the relationship between Origen and Western monasticism at the beginning of the fifth century.<sup>3</sup>

The article will begin by outlining the *status quaestionis*, which will demonstrate the need for new approaches to evaluating Rufinus' reliability as a translator. It will then turn to the theme of affliction (θλῖψις and its inflected forms) in the Greek texts of Origen. This analysis will show that θλῖψις primarily refers to externally imposed afflictions rather than to self-imposed ascetic afflictions. Next, the paper will contrast this meaning with the primarily ascetic meaning of affliction (*tribulatio*) found in the Latin *Commentarii*. The article will then qualify its evaluation of Rufinus by considering the theme of asceticism in the Greek works of Origen. This section will indicate that Rufinus did not introduce a completely foreign theme into the

*Commentaire d'Origène sur Rom. III. 5-V.7, d'après les extraits du Papyrus n 88748 du Musée du Caire et les fragments de la Philocalie et du Vaticanus graecus 762. Essai de reconstitution du texte et de la pensée des tomes V et VI du 'Commentaire sur l'Épître aux Romains' (Cairo: 1957): 85-121; Theresia Heither, trans., *Commentarii in epistulam ad Romanos: Liber primus, liber secundus* (Freiburg: 1990): 12-16; Thomas P. Scheck, trans., *Origen: Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, Books 1-5* (Washington, D.C.: 2001): 12-19.*

<sup>2</sup> Rufinus' translation, however, also undoubtedly contains much that is entirely from Origen.

<sup>3</sup> Rufinus likely translated Origen's *Commentary on Romans* around 406 while residing in Aquileia or Rome. For Rufinus' biography, see Francis Xavier Murphy, *Rufinus of Aquileia (345-411): His Life and Works* (Washington, D.C.: 1945); and C. P. Hammond, 'The Last Ten Years of Rufinus' Life and the Date of His Move South from Aquileia' *JTS* 28 (1977): 372-429.



commentary. Instead, he gave new prominence to a previously minor theme. The final two sections will explore the *Commentarii's* soteriology. These sections will reveal that Rufinus' ascetic emphasis also affected the translation's vision of salvation.

The results of this study will offer a number of broader conclusions about the *Commentarii* and about Rufinus as a translator. First, these results will caution us against uncritically attributing the *Commentarii's* contents to Origen alone. Second, they will provide additional support to the theory that Rufinus sometimes attempted to translate texts not only into his audience's language but also into his audience's historical context and theological framework. Third, and more positively, this study will suggest that the *Commentarii* and other translations of Origen by Rufinus can serve as witnesses not only to Origen but also to Rufinus and to the reception of Origen in early fifth-century Western monasticism.

### I. *Status Quaestionis*

Beginning with Paul Koetschau,<sup>4</sup> scholars have primarily used two methods to evaluate the reliability of Rufinus' translations: (1) the analysis of Rufinus' principles of translation;<sup>5</sup> (2) the comparison of Rufinus' translations to extant Greek texts of the same works. These methods have led to a spectrum of opinions on Rufinus' reliability. Koetschau concluded that Rufinus' translations are generally unreliable witnesses to Origen. Henri Crouzel and Manlio Simonetti,<sup>6</sup> following the evaluation by Gustave Bardy,<sup>7</sup> used these two methods to reach a different conclusion. They argued that Rufinus must be evaluated according to his stated intentions of clarifying obscurities, minimising repetitions, and removing unorthodox interpolations from Origen's writings. Although these aims often led Rufinus to paraphrase the work, when Rufinus' translation is compared to excerpts in the *Philocalia*, Rufinus' translation appears to contain a greater number of 'dangerous' opinions. From this assessment, Crouzel and Simonetti concluded that Rufinus' edition must be the more faithful translation.

<sup>4</sup> Paul Koetschau, *De Principiis*, vol. 5 of *Origenes Werke* (Leipzig: 1913).

<sup>5</sup> For Rufinus' principles of translation, see Ruf. *praef.* 2 to *princ.*; Ruf. *praef.* 2 to *comm. in. Rom.*; Ruf. *praef.* to GrNys. *Vita Greg. Thaumaturg.*

<sup>6</sup> Henri Crouzel and Manlio Simonetti, *Traité des principes. Tome 1, Livres 1 et 2* (Paris: Ed. du Cerf, 1978): 23-26.

<sup>7</sup> Bardy, *Recherches sur l'Histoire de Texte et des Versions latines du De Principiis d'Origène* (Paris, 1923).



Two of the most helpful studies have used the second approach to identify Rufinus' translational tendencies.<sup>8</sup> M. Monica Wagner's work highlights Rufinus' principles of translation, but more importantly, it also shows how these principles shaped Rufinus' translation of Gregory Nazianzen's *Apolegetica*. Wagner's study reveals that Rufinus sometimes paraphrased arguments, modified scripture references, and added corrections, mistakes, expansions, transitions, doublets, and changes of emphasis to the text. Sixty years later, Anna M. Silvas has demonstrated additional ways in which Rufinus modified his translations. Silvas argues that, for the sake of his Latin readers, Rufinus sometimes sharpened the scripture references, abridged and paraphrased the arguments, and explained, clarified, idiomised, enhanced, and embellished the language of the texts. Silvas' translational observations largely confirm those of Wagner, and both studies conclude that Rufinus' perceived freedom to adapt the texts for his audience often resulted in the creation of new Latinised 'versions' of the Greek originals.

Despite the considerable scholarship on Rufinus' reliability,<sup>9</sup> consensus has generally been reached on only two points. First, Rufinus' principles of translation reflect the standards of his times. Any evaluation of his translations must take these standards into account. Second, the fragmented and sometimes unreliable nature of the Greek texts makes it unwise to make absolute conclusions about Rufinus as a translator. Despite almost a century of scholarship since the publications of Koetschau and Bardy, both positive and negative assessments of Rufinus' translations remain tenable.<sup>10</sup> This suggests that new approaches are necessary if we are to reach firmer conclusions about the reliability of these translations. The present article therefore aims to supplement the established methods by offering a new approach, which uses the theme of affliction in the *Commentarii in Epistulam ad Romanos* to evaluate Rufinus' translation at the semantic and theological levels.

<sup>8</sup> M. Monica Wagner, *Rufinus the Translator: A Study of his Theory and his Practice as Illustrated in his Version of the Apologetica of St Gregory Nazianzen* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1945); Anna M. Silvas, *The Asketikon of St Basil the Great* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005): 102-29.

<sup>9</sup> See especially Bardy, *Recherches*; Crouzel and Simonetti, *Traité des principes*, 23-26; Wagner, *Rufinus the Translator*; Scherer, *Le Commentaire d'Origène sur Rom. III. 5-V.7*, 85-121; Heither, *Commentarii*, 12-16; Silvas, *The Asketikon*, 102-29; and Scheck, *Commentary on Romans, Books 1-5*, 12-19. See also the summaries in Alan Scott, *Origen and the Life of the Stars: A History of an Idea* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991): 168-172; and Rombs, 'The Status of Origen's *De Principiis* in English,' *Vigiliae Christianae* 61 (2007): 21-24.

<sup>10</sup> Compare, for example, the evaluations of Rufinus by Silvas and Rombs.



## II. Affliction (Θλῖψις) in the Greek Texts of Origen

In the extant Greek texts of Origen, θλῖψις and its inflected forms primarily refer to afflictions that come upon individuals against their will.<sup>11</sup> These afflictions usually come from an external cause, such as an agent or circumstance.

In the *Exhortation to Martyrdom*, all twenty-four occurrences of θλῖψις refer to afflictions from externally imposed persecutions. Θλῖψις indicates general persecution (49), public mockery and the loss of property (44), and the possibility of martyrdom during the persecutions imposed by Maximin (1; 2; 41; 42). In *Contra Celsum* θλῖψις occurs nine times, and it refers to the justice of God (8.32), to the afflictions caused by Celsus' treatise (*praef* 3-4), to living as Christians in the hostile world (6.19; 6.20; 6.59; 8.14), and to enduring poverty, destitution, and nomadism for the sake of obedience to God (7.18). In the *Commentary on the Gospel of John* Origen only once discloses the specific cause of affliction (external persecutions, 10.35.229), but θλῖψις never appears to be self-imposed (1.26.176; 10.32.208; 28.24.217). In the *Homilies on Jeremiah* θλῖψις refers to humanity's bondage to the devil before Christ won freedom (14.11.13-14) and to pedagogical discipline from God (19.15.46). In the *Commentary on Matthew* the meaning of θλῖψις is less clear, but it appears to refer to the threat of evil (13.26.110) and to the persecution that sent John to Patmos (16.6.139). In the *Commentary on Ephesians* θλῖψις refers to the danger, opposition, and occasional destitution that Paul endured in Ephesus and Asia (14.16, 27, 35, 46; cf. 1 Cor. 15:32; 2 Cor. 1:8-10). In the *Fragments on Lamentations* θλῖψις is more ambiguous, but it again signifies externally imposed afflictions (*fr.* 59; 74). In the *Selections on Ezekiel* θλῖψις refers to the affliction that comes from the Father's pedagogical discipline and conviction (PG 13:784). In the *Philocalia* θλῖψις indicates the hardships Paul faced during his ministry (25.4), trials like those experienced by Job, which come from the devil and test faith (26.5), and the punishment of the unrighteous during the last judgement (21.5). The latter is also the meaning of θλῖψις in *On First Principles* (3.1.6).

<sup>11</sup> This assessment is based on a study of the 89 occurrences of θλῖψις (and its forms) in twelve of the authentic works of Origen preserved in Greek that contain forms of θλῖψις: *Cels.*, *comm. in Eph.*, *comm. in Mt. 10-17*, *fr. in Rom.*, *hom. 1-20 in Jer.*, *Jo.*, *mart.*, *or.*, *princ.*, *philoc.* The two remaining works (*schol. in Apoc.* and *exp. in Pr.*) contain 9 occurrences, many of which are ambiguous. Statistics are based on *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*. Numbering and editions also follow TLG.



In *On Prayer* θλιψις refers to Jonah's affliction in the whale (14.4), but it also refers to temptations that test faith (29.3; 30.1). When interpreting 'Deliver us from the evil one,' Origen introduces Psalm 33:20 (LXX): 'Many are the afflictions of the righteous, and He will deliver them from them all' (30.1). Origen insists that afflictions, like temptations, are a part of this life. Christians should therefore pray that they will not be conquered by these experiences. Here θλιψις seems to refer to all afflictions that a Christian may experience for the sake of righteousness, including martyrdom, loss, want, alienation, and perhaps spiritual warfare and self-imposed ascetic striving against sin. Yet, Origen also notes that in the Hebrew scriptures affliction (θλιψις, LXX) primarily expresses a circumstance that occurs independently of one's choice (30.1).

In the Greek fragments of the *Commentary on Romans*, θλιψις indicates afflictions that distress 'the many' who have not learned from Christ the value of affliction (Scherer, *fr. in Rom.* 228). Although Origen does not disclose the source of these afflictions, the context suggests that they result from external circumstances that are not self-imposed, such as persecution or loss. Those who have been taught by Christ, however, know that enduring these afflictions brings the virtue of patience (230). θλιψις also once refers to the affliction that comes from Christians governing themselves properly (232). Origen says the affliction of the saints consists of more than enduring hardships; it also requires that people curb their passions and govern themselves according to the Spirit. In this instance, θλιψις is an ascetic affliction—it is essentially self-imposed by the individual because the individual has chosen to strive against sin, and this striving brings affliction. As noted, however, this meaning only occurs once. In these fragments, θλιψις primarily refers to externally imposed afflictions.

To summarise, θλιψις occurs eighty-nine times in the twelve works examined above. In nine instances it may refer to the afflictions that come from self-imposed asceticism—from governing oneself not according to evil passions but according to the Spirit. In eighty instances, however, it indicates afflictions that are not self-imposed and that usually result from an external source, such as circumstance or the actions of a particular agent. As something externally imposed, the affliction itself can consist of physical or emotional anguish. This is a significantly different emphasis than that which we find in Rufinus' translation.



### III. Affliction (*Tribulatio*) in the Latin *Commentarii*

In the Latin *Commentarii*, the concept of affliction as an externally imposed experience occurs far less frequently. The *Commentarii* describes afflictions of this kind as 'neutral' (*medias*) afflictions, in that they present the soul with a choice of how it will respond to them (4.9.9).<sup>12</sup> If the soul rejects and despises God because of these afflictions, then it has responded in a way that is 'unrighteous,' and it deserves punishment or correction (4.9.8). In contrast to this, if the soul recognises that these neutral afflictions present it with an opportunity for promoting virtue, and if it chooses to endure these afflictions with faith, then these afflictions are no longer neutral but sanctifying.<sup>13</sup> Such afflictions become a means of righteousness and a complement to the second kind of affliction, which occurs much more frequently in the *Commentarii*: affliction that comes from ascetic striving for salvation.

As we observed above, in the extant Greek texts of Origen θλῖψις only occasionally refers to afflictions that result from intentionally governing oneself according to the standards of the Word and the Spirit. This secondary meaning of θλῖψις occurs much more often in the the Latin *Commentarii*. Indeed, compared to the Greek texts, Rufinus' translation appears to have inverted Origen's primary and secondary meanings of affliction. In the *Commentarii* affliction (*tribulatio*) usually indicates the self-imposed ascetic suffering that comes from the soul striving to govern its body and mind according to the moral pattern established by Christ. As we will see, the content of these afflictions is further described as the suffering that results from voluntarily embodying the death of Christ by mortifying sin for the sake of justification, perfection, and adoption.

The *Commentarii*'s distinction between these two kinds of afflictions, which will hereafter be referred to as 'neutral' afflictions and 'ascetic' afflictions, is most clearly presented in its comments on Romans 5:3-5:

<sup>12</sup> References cite the book, chapter, and section numbers of Rufinus's *Commentarii in Epistulam ad Romanos* in Scheck, *Commentary on Romans, Books 1-5*, and Origen: *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, Books 6-10* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2002), which correspond to the book and chapter numbers in PG 14. Hereafter *comm. in Rom.* refers to Rufinus's edition, and *fr. in Rom.* refers to the Greek fragments. All other abbreviations follow G.W.H. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961).

<sup>13</sup> Rufinus has preserved Origen's distinction between μάστιξ (a 'scourge' or punishment) and θλῖψις ('affliction'). Reflecting on Psalm 31:10 (LXX), Origen concludes, '...Thus according to this neither the righteous is to be scourged, nor the sinner afflicted,' Scherer, *fr. in Rom.* 230.17-20.



We ought to accept as the afflictions (*tribulationes*) of the righteous then, not only those which come externally from matters which we have called above indifferent (*indifferentes*) and neutral (*medias*), for example, from losses or illnesses or any bodily torment; but also from the fact that while at rest they afflict (*affligunt*) and exhaust themselves by resting their own desires, by harnessing their lust, by keeping unbounded liberty in check, and by dashing to the ground everything else which is opposed to the good of self-control.<sup>14</sup> (4.9.9)

These comments introduce a distinction between neutral and ascetic afflictions, and they begin to describe the nature of self-imposed, ascetic afflictions. Ascetic afflictions primarily result from striving for self-control. As souls resist sin, they become weary from struggling in prayer, combating the flesh, and denying the pleasures of sin. This exercise of self-control is difficult but necessary. Without it Christians may be disqualified from salvation (cf. *praef.* 3; 6; 1 Cor. 9:27). Although rooted in scripture, both this warning about disqualification and the larger discussion of affliction are based on the presupposition that the human soul is self-governing.

The rational soul's ability to govern itself is an essential element in the soteriologies of Origen and Rufinus.<sup>15</sup> This freedom of the human soul justifies God's right to judge souls.<sup>16</sup> The *Commentarii's* exposition of Romans 6:16-18 attributes this concept of freedom to the Apostle Paul. 'So then, this is what the Apostle teaches in this

<sup>14</sup> *Tribulationes ergo iustorum non solum eas debemus accipere, quae extrinsecus ueniunt ex istis rebus, quas indifferentes uel medias supra diximus, id est uel damnis, uel languoribus, uel ex quolibet corporis cruciatu: sed et in eo, quod etiam in requie positi semet ipsos affligunt et atterunt, resistendo uoluntatibus suis, refrenando libidinem, coercendo licentiam, et omnia, quae ad bonum continentiae perinent...* All translations of Rufinus' *Commentarii* are from Scheck, *Commentary on Romans, Books 1-5*, and *Commentary on Romans, Books 6-10*, which are based on the critical edition Origenes, *Der Römerbriefkommentar des Origenes: Kritische Ausgabe der Übersetzung Rufins*, Ed. C. P. Hammond Bammel. 3 vols. (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1990-98). The Latin quotations are from C. H. E., *Origenis opera omnia*, vol. 6, because Hammond Bammel's edition was unavailable for consultation. The translations of the Greek fragments are my own, done in consultation with the French translations in Scherer, *fr. in Rom.*

<sup>15</sup> On the rational soul's self-governance, see also *princ.* 3.1.6; 3.1.10; 3.1.19; 3.1.22; *fr. in Jo.* 43; *or.* 29.13. In two sections of *De Principiis* extant only in Latin, the rational soul operates in 'a world in which free will is continually tempted in order to gain virtue,' H. S. Benjamins, 'Origen's Concept of Free Will in Relationship to the Fight against Opposing Powers (*De Principiis* III.2-3),' *Studia Patristica* 26 (1993): 220.

<sup>16</sup> B. Darrell Jackson, 'Sources of Origen's Doctrine of Freedom,' *CH* 35 (1966): 13-14. Without freedom creatures cannot be held accountable for their actions. Freedom allows for divine righteousness and human responsibility.



passage: Each person has it within his own power and in the efficacy of his [free] will that he should become either a slave of sin or of righteousness' (6.3.3).<sup>17</sup> Just as there are two kinds of affliction, so there are also two paths in decision making (1.18.6; cf. *Didache* 1). The soul may travel the path leading to sin or the path leading to righteousness, but it will become enslaved to serving whichever path it chooses.

The *Commentarii* frequently describes these paths in the Pauline language of flesh and Spirit, which represent central theological categories in the *Commentarii*.<sup>18</sup> In the context of soteriology, these terms indicate the soul's journey either toward or away from union with God. The path of the Spirit represents the things of the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, and, to a lesser degree, the ministering spirits.<sup>19</sup> This path gradually leads to justification, perfection, and adoption as a child of God.<sup>20</sup> The path of the flesh is the antithesis of the Spirit. A soul that follows the flesh risks becoming corrupt, ignorant of God, devoid of its spirit, and consumed by the fires of hell (2.9.4; 7.5.10). As the rational agent in human beings, the soul is free to choose either path: 'the soul is a mean (*mediam*), as it were, between the flesh and the Spirit. And certainly, if it unites itself with the flesh to obey the desires of sin, it becomes one body with it; but if it unites itself with the Lord it becomes one spirit with him.' The soul is free to choose the things of the flesh or the Spirit, but it will be responsible for the consequences of its decision.<sup>21</sup> It is this self-governance that makes enduring ascetic afflictions possible. The soul can choose to follow the Spirit, but following the Spirit requires enduring the ascetic afflictions that result from striving against sin and the desires of the flesh.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>17</sup> *Hoc est ergo, quod in hoc loco Apostolus docet: quia unusquisque in manu sua habet et in arbitrii potestate, ut aut peccati servus sit, aut iustitiae.*

<sup>18</sup> On the subject of the flesh and the Spirit in the self-governance of the soul, see Maureen Beyer Moser, *Teacher of Holiness: The Holy Spirit in Origen's Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (Piscataway, N.J.: Gorgias Press, 2005): 55-68.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 44-51.

<sup>20</sup> On 'life in the Spirit,' see also *hom. in Gen.* 7.

<sup>21</sup> The doctrine of self-governance here does not appear to include any concept of the 'bondage of the will.' The soul, regardless of its spiritual height, retains its ability to turn to the things of God or the things of the flesh. Sin is not a power that renders the soul infinitely incapable of choosing the good, but is a habit that must be overcome. See G. Bostick, 'The Influence of Origen on Pelagius and Western Monasticism', in *Origeniana Septima*, ed. by W. A. Bienert and U. Kühneweg (Leuven, 1999): 388-89.

<sup>22</sup> Origen's views on materiality in his anthropology and soteriology are frequently ambiguous. On the one hand, he seems to conceive of the soul alone as being



This concept of affliction is remarkably different from the primary meaning of θλίψις in the surviving Greek witnesses to Origen's works. As we observed, in the Greek works θλίψις usually refers to afflictions that are caused by external agents or circumstances. In the *Commentarii*, however, *tribulatio* usually refers to afflictions that come from ascetic striving against sin. The concept of affliction as something self-imposed occurs throughout the *Commentarii*. This initially suggests that Rufinus reinterpreted θλίψις according to the monastic tradition that he had inherited, in which the language of martyrdom and affliction was used to describe the internal spiritual struggles that accompany ascetic striving.

#### IV. Asceticism in the Greek Texts of Origen

It is important to qualify this initial evaluation by noting that, despite the sharp contrast between the concepts of affliction in the Greek witnesses to Origen's works and the Latin *Commentarii*, Origen was himself an ascetic theologian of sorts. In the Greek texts, Origen makes a modest number of ascetic remarks—remarks that call human beings to renounce sinful pleasures for the sake of training the body to be governed according to the Word. Origen warns that the

according to the image of God, and so the soul alone is that which will be redeemed and preserved in the resurrection (see Anders Lund Jacobsen, 'Genesis 1-3 as Source for the Anthropology of Origen,' *Vigiliae Christianae* 62 (2008): 213-232). On the other hand, his discussions of the resurrection at times suggest that even the saints will retain their bodies (see, for example, *comm. in Rom.* 5.9.12; *Cels.* 5.18-19; M. J. Edwards, 'Origen's Two Resurrections,' *JTS* NS 46 (1995): 502-518). Despite this disagreement, the Latin preserves *Commentarii* Paul's flesh-Spirit dualism, but it now understands this dualism through an ascetic lens, in which the soul must train the body to live according to the pattern of the Spirit and of salvation. In such a context it is not surprising that Paul's dualism has been sharpened. 'Flesh' no longer refers to that which is merely human (see John M. G. Barclay, *Obedying the Truth: Paul's Ethics in Galatians* (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 2005): 202-209). Instead, flesh refers to that which is proper to the 'kingdom' of sin (*comm. in Rom.* 6.1.4). The deeds of the flesh are therefore sinful and must be put to death (*comm. in Rom.* 6.14.5). This mortification of the flesh involves the body because the body is the arena in which the conflict between the flesh and the spirit takes place. The salvation of the soul is worked out in the body, and it is achieved by the soul ruling the body according to the Spirit. However, this emphasis on the soul does not mean that the material realm is evil. The emphasis on living according to the pattern of the resurrection suggests that when souls govern their bodies according to the Spirit, part of the material realm is by extension redeemed and patterned after the heavenly realm (cf. *comm. in Rom.* 4.7.8; 5.8.13; cf. *or.* 25.3; 26.1, 6). Although the body must obey the Spirit, it is the sinful flesh that is evil—not the body.



body is temporary (*princ.* 4.4.8; cf. 1.8.1; 2.8.3) and that the pleasures of the body can lead souls astray and prevent them from knowing God (*Cels.* 7.33; 8.22-23; *or.* 19.3; *Jo.* 6.11). He says that souls must therefore discipline and control their bodies so they will not be overcome by any temptation (πειρασμός) from the flesh or external circumstances (*Cels.* 8.22-23; *or.* 29.19). Souls must mortify sin, the flesh, and the deeds of the body so they can be made perfect, can 'live to God,' and can be united to him (*Comm. in Mt.* 14.3; *dial.* 168-174; *or.* 25.2).<sup>23</sup> Yet, throughout these exhortations, Origen teaches that these ascetic activities require divine grace. He insists that if humans possess even a little faith and resist sin to the best of their abilities, then the Word will rescue them and God will supply them with the strength they lack (*comm. in Mt.* 11.6; *or.* 29.19). Origen also teaches that the purity of heart necessary for knowing God can only be established by God himself (*Cels.* 7.33). Finally, Origen maintains that the mortification of sin requires unceasing prayer (*or.* 25.1-2; cf. *dial.* 168-174), requires the Spirit of God, who destroys sin (*Cels.* 8.22; *comm. in Mt.* 14.3), and requires the presence of Christ, who is righteousness (*ibid.*, 12.24) and is able to transform those who submit to him (*Dial.* 140-152).<sup>24</sup>

This outline of Origen's ascetic remarks contributes to our evaluation of Rufinus in three ways. First, it indicates, on the one hand, that the ascetic ideals of self-denial, of self-discipline, and of self-governance according to a spiritual standard are not foreign to Origen's writings, but, on the other hand, that these ascetic ideals are also a relatively uncommon subject in Origen's works. From this, we can deduce that Origen's *Commentary on Romans* likely also contained ascetic statements and that these statements were probably infrequent. Second, this summary cautions us against too sharply separating asceticism from martyrdom. As we have observed, Origen described asceticism as part of the mature Christian life, in which Christ and the Spirit empower souls to live according to righteousness. However, Origen also described asceticism as training and preparation for enduring all temptations—including martyrdom.<sup>25</sup> Third, this summary shows that

<sup>23</sup> See also *princ.* 1.7.5, which describes the sun's desire for physical dissolution and spiritual union with Christ, and *princ.* 1.8.4, which indicates that souls can ascend to heaven because of virtue and can descend into bodies because of sin.

<sup>24</sup> The references above represent every clear example of ascetic protrepsis and parenesis that I have identified in *Cels.*, *comm. in Mt.* 10-17, *Jo.*, *princ.*, *or.*, *dial.*

<sup>25</sup> See *or.* 29.19. Origen's references to the 'noble athlete' (γενναῖος ἀθλητής) and 'the athletes of piety' (τῶν τῆς εὐσεβείας ἀθλητῶν) (*mart.* 1; 23) also imply bodily discipline and training.



Origen presented asceticism as an activity that is necessary for salvation and that is effected by divine grace. As we will see, this concept of the relationship between asceticism, grace, and salvation differs from that expressed in Rufinus' *Commentarii*. Together, these points qualify our evaluation of Rufinus by suggesting that Rufinus likely emphasised and elaborated on a theme that was already present, albeit infrequently, in the original text. In this way, Rufinus' asceticising of affliction does not represent a radical change of content, but rather a change of emphasis. Yet, as the third point alludes, the broader consequences of Rufinus' asceticising affected not only the concept of affliction but also the vision of salvation.

### V. Justification

In the Greek fragments of the *Commentary on Romans*, Origen presents faith as the sole basis for justification. Condemnation is an earned punishment; justification is an unmerited gift of grace.<sup>26</sup> Origen also insists, however, that justifying faith cannot coexist with sin: 'And do not think that the faith that God reckons as righteousness is able to be in anyone while unrighteousness or any other vice exist in this [soul], and coexist with this faith... Clearly the one who believes that Jesus is the Christ does not sin, and the one who sins does not believe,' (Scherer, *fr. in Rom.* 180.14-20). There are degrees of faith, but the gift of justification is only given to those whose faith mirrors Abraham's, which was 'mature' or 'complete' (τηλικούτος) (182.9-4.7). This faith transforms souls by turning them from the acts of sin to acts of love—and, where love is perfect, faith is complete (186.10-19; 214.1-4). Thus, as Rufinus's translation will also affirm, justification involves participating in the pattern of the resurrection life (222.3-13).

As we will see, however, when the Greek fragments are compared to Rufinus' translation, these fragments more clearly identify grace as the efficient cause of justification. Overcoming sin remains a necessary part of the Christian life, but justifying faith is attributed to grace (204.19-206.8). In the Greek fragments, Christians are justified by a faith that is mature and characterised by love. This justifying faith, however, is entirely a gift from God, and it is given because of

<sup>26</sup> See Scherer, *fr. in Rom.* 148.3-6; 154.8-10; 166.1-6; 168.3-6; 168.11-14; 186.4-9.



God's grace and love alone. This vision of justification allows Origen to insist that justification is by faith rather than merit. But this vision also enables Origen to avoid the problem of what we might call 'cheap grace'—of Christians being 'justified' but never overcoming sin. For Origen, justification brings and involves personal transformation. Although Christians must mortify the desires of the flesh, the mortification of sin is not the basis of their justification. Human effort could never establish a faith sufficient for justification; therefore, justifying faith must be supplied by God.

The Latin *Commentarii* offers a noticeably different account of the relationship between faith, works, and justification. In the *Commentarii* justification brings the forgiveness of past sins and the capacity to avoid future sins. Christians require this divinely-empowered capacity because God will judge all people according to their actions.<sup>27</sup> Christians must therefore mortify sin so they can receive and preserve their justification.<sup>28</sup> The *Commentarii* warns that God will not reckon righteousness to those who are unrighteous (4.7.6).<sup>29</sup> Rather, the *Commentarii's* section on Romans 4:23-25 teaches that Christians must demonstrate their faith by living in accordance with justification, which is righteousness:

For if we have been raised together with Christ, who is righteousness, if we walk in the newness of life, if we live in accordance with righteousness, then to us Christ has been raised for our justification. But if we have not yet laid aside the old man with his deeds, but we live in unrighteousness, I dare say that to us Christ has not yet been resurrected for justification nor has he been handed over on account of our sins. For if I believe this, how can I love that for which he endured death? If I believe these things, that he rose for my justification, how can unrighteousness be pleasing to me? Therefore Christ justifies

<sup>27</sup> D.H. Williams, 'Justification by Faith: a Patristic Doctrine,' *JEH* 57 (2006) 655.

<sup>28</sup> In the *Commentarii*, the thief on the cross was saved because in his death he rebuked the blasphemies of the other thief and 'had been planted together into the likeness of his [Christ's] death by his confession,' *comm. in Rom.* 5.9.7. In *princ.* 3.1.21, justification and condemnation are not eternally predestined according to God's will; instead, God justifies those whom he foreknows will freely choose to mortify sin for the sake of salvation.

<sup>29</sup> Joseph S. O'Leary, 'Grace', in *The Westminster Handbook to Origen*, ed. by John A. McGuckin (Louisville, KY, 2004): 116-117, observes that Origen has no notion of souls being 'simultaneously just and sinful' (*simul iustus ac peccator*); instead, justification accompanies faith that is expressed by moral perfection. To return to the thief, he was saved by his faith and the good works of his confession (*comm. in Rom.* 3.9.3).



only those who have received the new life in the pattern (*exemplo*) of his resurrection and who reject the old garments of unrighteousness and iniquity as if there were the cause of death.<sup>30</sup> (4.7.8)

These comments primarily describe justification as a state of being. Justification consists of a declaration of forgiveness, but it also includes a new way of living that is made possible by the death and resurrection of Christ. Justification is an ontological pattern possessed by participation. If people do not participate in the pattern of justification then they do not receive justification (5.9.2).<sup>31</sup> This pattern reflects Romans 6:11: believers must die to sin so they may live for God. Against those who may think that faith does not require holiness, the *Commentarii* asserts:

If you believe that Christ has died to sin and lives to God, you also ought to be dead to sin and live to God. This is precisely what he declares with apostolic authority when he says, 'But if you have been resurrected with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on the things that are above, not on things that are on earth' (Col. 3:1-2). For those who do these things are showing themselves to be believers in him who raised our Lord Jesus from the dead; and to such persons faith will be reckoned as righteousness.<sup>32</sup> (4.7.5)

Here belief in Christ must be demonstrated by the mortification of sin.

<sup>30</sup> *Etenim si consurreximus cum Christo, qui est iustitia, et in nouitate uitae ambulamus, et secundum iustitiam uiuimus, surrexit nobis Christus ad iustificationem nostram. Si uero nondum deposuimus ueterem hominem cum actibus suis, sed in iniustitia uiuimus, audeo dicere, quod nondum nobis surrexit Christus ad iustificationem, nec traditus est propter peccata nostra. Si enim hoc credo, quomodo illud amo, pro quo ille pertulit mortem? Si hoc credo, quod ille ad iustificationem meam surrexit, quomodo mihi iniustitia placet? Iustificat ergo eos Christus tantummodo, qui nouam uitam exemplo resurrectionis ipsius susceperunt, et uetusta iniustitiae atque iniquitatis indumenta uelut causam mortis abiiciunt.*

<sup>31</sup> Cf. *Jo.* 1.59. In *Jo.* 19.152 Origen insists that faith devoid of works is unbelief. Cf. *James* 2:20.

<sup>32</sup> *Et si creditis, quia Christus mortuus est peccato, et uiuit Deo, etiam uos mortui estote peccato, et uiuite Deo. Et hoc est, quod auctoritate Apostolica protestatur, et dicit: „si consurrexistis cum Christo, quae sursum sunt quaerite, ubi Christus est in dextra Dei sedens: quae sursum sunt sapite, non quae super terram:“ quia qui haec agit, hic se ostendit credere in eum, qui suscitauit Iesum Dominum nostrum a mortuis: et huic uere fides reputatur ad iustitiam.* See also *hom. in Gen.* 3, where this mortification indicates reception of the New Covenant.



In the *Commentarii* the act of mortifying sin is presented as an ongoing, self-imposed ascetic affliction. We must 'receive within ourselves the cross of Christ, through which the body of sin is destroyed in such a way that our members which were enslaved to sin should no longer serve it but God' (5.9.2). This is demonstrated by souls overcoming anger and jealousy, restraining the lusts of the flesh, and in short, becoming dead to sin by altogether overcoming sin (6.1.6). The *Commentarii* teaches that the act of mortifying sin is described by First Corinthians 15:31 ('I die daily') and Second Corinthians 4:10 ('We always carry around the death of Jesus Christ in our body'). The act of dying to sin consists of ceaselessly resisting the sinful desires of the flesh.

By mortifying sin, believers are declared righteous and they receive justification.<sup>33</sup> The *Commentarii's* section on Romans 5.3-5 explains the value of such affliction:

For whereas others are saddened during affliction (*tribulatione*), we boast in afflictions, having been strengthened by the power of his grace. For we have learned a new discipline by his instruction, namely that we should obtain the good of patience through afflictions, and when we possess this good of patience, we shall be judged as having approved character; and when we have been approved through the patience of many afflictions, we may hope for a future reward from God.<sup>34</sup> (4.9.1)

As people endure the affliction of dying with Christ, they begin to participate in the virtue of patience, and in time they will be approved. This idea is expanded on in the comments on Romans 8. Here it is argued that those who deny the flesh and serve the Spirit are completely in Christ, and thus they possess nothing worthy of condemnation (6.12.2). They are living sacrifices pleasing to God (9.1.3). Such people, having died with Christ, live with him according to the pattern of justification, and their faith, demonstrated by enduring these afflictions, is reckoned as righteousness (4.7.5).<sup>35</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Although mortifying sin is a prerequisite to justification, this mortification also requires grace. See *comm. in Rom.* 4.9.1; 6.9.6.

<sup>34</sup> *Caeteris etenim in tribulatione tristantibus, nos gratiae ipsius uirtute roborati, in tribulationibus gloriamur. Didicimus namque nouam ex eruditione ipsius disciplinam, ut per tribulationes bonum patientiae capiamus: habentes uero patientiae bonum probabiles iudicemur: et per patientiam multarum tribulationum probati, spem futurae a Deo remunerationis habeamus...*

<sup>35</sup> The *Commentary* describes baptism similarly: authentic baptism is demonstrated by mortifying sin with Christ. See *comm. in Rom.* 5.8.3.



## VI. Perfection and Adoption

In the Greek fragments of Origen's commentary, grace inspires justifying faith, and this faith brings personal transformation. Souls who have received the gift of justifying faith practice acts of love, rather than sin,<sup>36</sup> and their faith is described as 'perfect' or 'complete' (τηλικούτος) (Scherer, *fr. in Rom.* 182.9-4.7). Although Origen's comments on key passages in Romans related to Christian maturity, adoption, and transformation by the Holy Spirit are lost, Origen's association of justification with perfection suggests that he may have believed that other aspects of salvation, including adoption and the gift of the Holy Spirit, accompanied the gift of justifying faith. If justifying faith included knowing God as Father through the Holy Spirit (cf. Rom. 5:5), this filial relationship would provide the foundation for transformation.

Rufinus' translation separates justification from perfection, adoption, and reception through the Holy Spirit of the knowledge of God's love. Importantly, it also presents ascetic afflictions as the means by which Christians merit receiving these aspects of salvation. According to the *Commentarii*, ascetic striving and affliction leads to justification, but thereafter, this striving can also lead to adoption and to reception of the full grace of the Holy Spirit. This grace of the Holy Spirit completes the process of adoption by enabling the Christian to know and love God as Father.

The *Commentarii*'s preface introduces the subject of Christian perfection, which it will attribute to ascetic striving and affliction. The preface uses perfection to explain the difficult content of Paul's letter to the Romans. It proposes that Romans is difficult to understand because 'the Apostle seems to have been more perfect in this letter than in the others' (*praef.* 3).<sup>37</sup> Perfection is 'twofold' (*duplicem*) (*ibid.*). First, it involves 'satisfying the virtues' (*ibid.*). Then it is completed 'when someone advances so far that he is not able to fall away or to look backwards' (*ibid.*).<sup>38</sup> Despite these distinctions, the *Commentarii* usually combines the two aspects so that perfection becomes a single concept. When conceived in this way, perfection refers to an

<sup>36</sup> (Scherer, *fr. in Rom.* 186.10-19; 214.1-4).

<sup>37</sup> *Quod uidetur Apostolus in hac epistola perfectior fuisse, quam in caeteris.*

<sup>38</sup> *In quo ostendit duplicem esse perfectionem: unam, quae est in expletione uirtutum, secundum quam dicit, quod non sit perfectus; et alteram, cum ita quis proficit, ut decidere non possit, neque retrorsum adspicere, secundum quam dicebat: „quicumque ergo perfecti sumus, hoc sentiamus.“* In the *Commentary*, Stephen exemplifies this state of perfect faith.



advanced state of Christian faith, in which the soul orders the body according to the Spirit and single-mindedly seeks God.<sup>39</sup> According to the *Commentarii*, we find evidence of Paul's spiritual state scattered throughout the apostle's letters. When compiled, this evidence reveals Paul's progressive maturation. In First Corinthians, Paul appears to waver, admitting, 'I punish my body and reduce it to slavery, so that after proclaiming to others I myself should not be rejected' (ibid., 3; 6; 1 Cor. 9:27). In Philippians he hopes he might attain 'the resurrection from the dead' but admits he has not already attained it or 'already become perfect' (*praef.* 3; Phil 3:11-12). In contrast, in Romans he writes in a way that is 'much more lofty and eminent' (*praef.* 6).<sup>40</sup>

According to the *Commentarii*, Romans 8 particularly reveals Paul's confidence before God. In Romans 8, Paul writes as one who has obtained salvation and has experienced the love of God. From these comparisons, the *Commentarii* concludes that Paul made significant spiritual progress during the years in which he wrote his letters. This maturity is the reason for the difficulty of his later letters, especially Romans. The *Commentarii* here seems to assume that spiritual maturity brings a deeper knowledge of God, who is ultimately ineffable. Therefore, as Paul matured, it became increasingly difficult for him to articulate his knowledge of the mysteries of God because this knowledge is beyond the limits of human language and comprehension. Note that in this argument perfection is the result of spiritual progress through ascetic striving and affliction. This argument presupposes that progress in virtue and relational knowledge of God is not only possible in the Christian life but is proper to it.

The *Commentarii* attempts to support this argument for Paul's progress by explaining the relationship between perfection and ascetic striving. Anticipating possible objectors, it asks: 'How then will it be demonstrated that he wrote Second Corinthians as an even more perfect man than he was when writing First Corinthians?' (*praef.* 4). The *Commentarii's* response is telling:

Aponolus dicit: tribulationem posuit, sed non angustiam. Ita vero non solum nullam angustiam tribulatione illa perdidit, sed latitudinem perdidit. Denique tribulatione illa non solum angustiam posuit, sed etiam latitudinem perdidit. Denique tribulatione illa non solum angustiam posuit, sed etiam latitudinem perdidit. Denique tribulatione illa non solum angustiam posuit, sed etiam latitudinem perdidit.

<sup>39</sup> The *Commentarii* later distinguishes between earthly and heavenly perfection. Those who share Paul's level of spiritual maturity are considered perfect compared to other human beings, but these people still lack 'the summit of heavenly perfection,' *comm. in Rom.* 10.10.3.

<sup>40</sup> *Sed in illis quidem iste eius fuerit profectus; quanto autem sublimior et eminentior sit ad Romanos scribens ex ipsius epistulae sermonibus colligamus, in qua dicit....* On the preface, see Caroline Bammel, 'Origen's Pauline Prefaces and the Chronology of his Pauline Commentaries', in *Origeniana Sexta*, ed. by Gilles Dorival and Alain Le Boulluec (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1995): 495-514.



Without doubt this is shown by what is related in this letter when he says, 'We suffer affliction (*tribulationem*), but are not crushed (*angustiamur*); we are perplexed, but not driven to despair; we suffer persecution but are not forsaken; we are struck down, but not destroyed, always carrying around the death of Jesus in our body, so that the life of Jesus Christ may also be made visible in our body.' In him who was always carrying around the death of Jesus in his own body, certainly never did the flesh lust against the spirit, but rather the flesh had been subjected to him since it had been put to death in the likeness of Christ's death.<sup>41</sup> (*praef.* 4)

The *Commentarii* does not appeal to any other texts to demonstrate Paul's progress; rather, it finds Paul's description of suffering sufficient. From this we are left to ask what makes Paul's description in Second Corinthians 4:8-10 indicative of progress? The answer appears to come by way of contrast. In First Corinthians Paul beats his body in order to 'reduce it to slavery' and hopes he will not be rejected from salvation. The *Commentarii* interprets Paul's words as an indication of wavering (*praef.* 3); here the apostle yearns to overcome the desires of the flesh but has not yet completed the task. In Second Corinthians 4:8-10 Paul emphasises his perseverance in trials, which is interpreted as victory over the desires of the flesh. The Paul of Second Corinthians consistently resists sin, which indicates that the apostle has perfected the task he mentioned in First Corinthians. Paul has made progress because he endures the afflictions that come from resisting the flesh; in this way he has put the flesh to death and is 'always carrying around the death of Jesus in his own body' (*praef.* 4).<sup>42</sup> If this reading of the *Commentarii* is correct—that it interprets Paul's trials in Second Corinthians as the trials of resisting the flesh, and it sees Paul's perseverance in the afflictions from these trials as evidence of Paul's progress—then it follows that in the *Commentarii* the ascetic affliction of mortifying sin is a means to attaining perfection.

<sup>41</sup> *Ex his sine dubio, quae in ea scripta referuntur, cum dicit: „tribulationem patimur, sed non angustiamur: aporiamur, sed non exaporiamur: persecutionem patimur, sed non derelinquimur: deilemur, sed non perimus: semper mortem Iesu in corpore nostro circumferentes, ut et uita Iesu in corpore nostro manifestetur.“ Qui ergo semper mortem Iesu in corpore suo circumferebat, nunquam utique in eo concupiscebat caro aduersus spiritum, sed erat ei subiecta, utpote mortificata ad similitudinem mortis Christi.*

<sup>42</sup> In *Jo.* 20.232-3 Origen presents the mortification of sin as an indication of perfection, but he does not suggest that mortification is the means by which individuals become perfect.



The *Commentarii's* remarks on Romans 2:8-9 and 5:3-5 confirm this interpretation and explain how ascetic affliction contributes to perfection. Its comments on Romans 2:8-9 attempt to explain the difference between the afflictions of the righteous and the unrighteous. These comments assert that there are two kinds of affliction. The first leads to 'anguish' (*angustia*): 'As for that affliction which is followed by anguish, this is not to be considered to be the same kind of affliction, concerning which the Apostle says, "Affliction produces perseverance (*patientiam*)"' (2.6.6; Rom. 5:3).<sup>43</sup> The second kind of affliction 'is not followed by anguish, as the Apostle himself says, "We suffer affliction but we are not in anguish." On the contrary, not only does that affliction of the saints contain no anguish, but it has breadth. For this is what the righteous man declares, "You enlarged me in affliction"' (2.6.6; Ps. 4:1).<sup>44</sup> If the first kind of affliction leads to anguish, the second leads to breadth, so that God may 'dwell in them' and 'walk about' (2.6.6).<sup>45</sup> The metaphor of contraction and expansion emphasises the spiritual end of each kind of affliction. 'Anguished' or 'constricted' souls govern themselves according to the desires of the flesh and therefore habitually sin. By failing to practice the virtues, they fail to participate in God, and because of this, in a sense they fail to exist (4.5.2). Alternatively, souls with 'breadth' and 'spacious rooms' govern themselves according to the things of the spirit.

By persevering through these ascetic afflictions, souls attain perseverance and proceed towards perfection, which consists of satisfying the virtues and developing an indelible faith (*praef.*3).<sup>46</sup> When souls reach this perfection, they receive the full grace of the Spirit, being adopted as children of God in such a way that the love of God is perceptibly shed abroad in their hearts.<sup>47</sup> Importantly, the *Commen-*

<sup>43</sup> *Tribulatio uero, quam subsequitur angustia, non est similis putanda illi tribulationi, de qua dicit Apostolus, quia „tribulatio patientiam operatur.“*

<sup>44</sup> *Illam enim talis tribulatio angustiam non habet subsequentem, sicut et ipse Apostolus dicit: „tribulationem patimur, sed non angustiamur.“ Immo uero non solum nullam angustiam tribulatio illa sanctorum, sed latitudinem habet. Denique sic dicit iustus: „in tribulatione dilatasti me.“*

<sup>45</sup> Scheck, *Commentary on Romans, Books 1-5*, 121 n.143, highlights this imagery, noting that *angustia* and *στενοχωρία* bear the double-meaning of 'anguish' and also 'constriction.'

<sup>46</sup> Origen and Rufinus likely understand the virtues as attributes of God. Those who participate in virtues participate in their source, which is Christ. See Maurice F. Wiles, *The Divine Apostle* (Cambridge, 1967): 114-15. See also Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification*, 150; Scheck, *Commentary on Romans, Books 1-5*, 54.

<sup>47</sup> *Hom. in Ex.* 5 emphasises the importance of striving for Christian perfection. Even if perfection is never reached, the act of striving may be sufficient for salvation.



*tarii's* remarks about Romans 8 emphasise that the initial stages in adoption are based on merit and received when souls are approved by God.<sup>48</sup> We are tutored by 'the spirits of slavery... until we come to the age when we merit receiving the Spirit of adoption of sons and become now a son' (7.2).<sup>49</sup> We are kept under the watch of these spirits until we 'should reach the legal age of the maturation of the soul, which anyone who has gone beyond the spirit of slavery, which he had received leading to fear, and by which he was being kept as a pedagogue, becomes worthy to receive the Spirit of adoption' (7.5.3).<sup>50</sup> The *Commentarii's* remarks on Romans 5:3-5 teach that this approval comes from perseverance: 'We have learned a new discipline by his instruction, namely that we should obtain the good of patience through afflictions, and when we possess this good of patience, we shall be judged as having approved character; and when we have been approved through the patience of many afflictions, we may hope for a future reward from God' (4.9.1).<sup>51</sup> Here ascetic striving and afflictions are the means by which souls merit adoptive sonship.

Related to this, ascetic striving is necessary for receiving adoption and for experiencing the love of God. When souls have persevered in ascetic affliction and striving to such a degree that they merit

<sup>48</sup> Similarly, in *princ.* 1.3.7 (Latin) and *Jo.* 13.143 (Greek), participation in the Holy Spirit is reserved for those desire to mortify sin and walk in newness of life. Before the gift of the Spirit, Christians are assisted by grace and the ministering spirits. On the concept of stages in adoption, see Peter Widdicombe, *The Fatherhood of God: From Origen to Athanasius*, rev. ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004): 93-94.

<sup>49</sup> *Usque quo ad id aetatis ueniat, quo spiritum adoptionis filiorum mereatur accipere, et sit iam filius ac dominus omnium.* The pneumatology in Rufinus' translation is not well supported by the Greek fragments because Origen's comments on pneumatological texts such as Romans 5:5; 8; and 15 are lost. In his preface to *De Principiis*, Rufinus admits to omitting or revising all unorthodox Trinitarian language because he believed these were heretical interpolations (Ruf. *praef.* 2 to *princ.*; cf. Moser, *Teacher of Holiness*: 12, 19). Charles Kannengiesser, 'Écriture et théologie trinitaire d'Origène', in *Origeniana Sexta*, ed. by Gilles Dorival and Alain Le Boulluc (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1995): 351-64 has defended the Trinitarianism in Rufinus' translation of *princ.* and *Jo.*, arguing that Origen distinguished the person of the Son from the Father in order to combat Monarchianism, and the Spirit from other spirits to combat Valentinianism. There remains a need, however, for further critical comparisons of the pneumatology in Origen's Greek texts and Rufinus' Latin translations.

<sup>50</sup> *Usque quo ad legitimam aetatem animae perfectionis aduenerit, ubi quis iam supergressus spiritum seruitutis, quem acceperat in timore, a quo uelut paedagogo seruaretur, dignus efficiatur accipere adoptionis spiritum...* For more on the spirit of slavery, see Moser, *Teacher of Holiness*, 71-72.

<sup>51</sup> For the Latin, see n. 34. On θλιψις leading to the virtue of ὑπομονή, see also Scherer, *fr. in Rom.* 228.8-13; 230.14-17.



God's approval, they receive adoption. They also receive the virtue of hope, which is described as trust in a future reward from God (4.9.7). With this hope comes a new way of living for God.<sup>52</sup> Souls no longer serve God out of fear, but now, being confident that they have merited a reward from God, they begin to serve out of love.<sup>53</sup> To those who possess approved faith and sure hope, the Spirit gives the knowledge of God's love, which confirms one's adoption as a child of God. Influenced by First Corinthians 13, the *Commentarii* asserts: 'together with hope, [approved character] possesses the fullness of love' (4.9.7),<sup>54</sup> and that 'the love of God which is greater than everything follows faith and hope, and not only fills our mind but also abounds and is shed abroad into our hearts' (4.9.1).<sup>55</sup> This 'love of God' is God's love for human beings, given to the perfect (4.9.11-12). Having persevered in ascetic afflictions, merited approval, and received hope, the 'perfect' receive 'the highest and greatest gift of the Holy Spirit,' which is the knowledge of God's love for us, 'by which we are able to love God himself' (4.9.12).<sup>56</sup> Receiving from the fullness of the Spirit, souls experience the love of God poured into their hearts, which confirms their adoption and empowers them to love God (7.2.1; 4.9.11).<sup>57</sup> According to the *Commentarii*, 'those who are perfect... now receive the Spirit of adoption once and for all, "by which" Spirit "we cry: Abba, Father!" For no one but a son cries out to a father' (7.2.1).<sup>58</sup> From Romans 5:3-5, the *Commentarii* concludes:

From the fullness of the Spirit, the fullness of love is infused into the hearts of the saints in order to receive participation in the divine nature, as the Apostle Peter has taught, so that through this gift of the

<sup>52</sup> Cf. Scherer, *fr. in Rom.* 212.13-14, in which hope is an expression of spiritual progress.

<sup>53</sup> See *comm. in Rom.* 4.9.11, which teaches that the love of God is only given to those who 'no longer have the spirit of slavery' and in whom 'perfect love casts our fear.'

<sup>54</sup> *Simul enim cum spe et caritatis abundantiam tenet.* ... Brackets in Scheck's translation.

<sup>55</sup> *Fidem namque et spem consequitur caritas Dei, quae omnium maior est, et non solum replet mentem nostram, sed et abundat ac diffunditur in cordibus nostris...*

<sup>56</sup> *quod uelut summum et maximum donum sancti Spiritus... per hoc ipsum diligere possimus Deum, quod diligimur a Deo.*

<sup>57</sup> Cf. *or.* 22.3-5; 28.8; *hom. in Gen.* 7. 'Perfect' Christians experience the love of God because of their greater participation in the Spirit.

<sup>58</sup> *Sed quasi perfecti semel iam accepimus spiritum adoptionis, in „quo spiritu clamamus: Abba, Pater!“ Neque enim patrem alius quis nisi filius uocat.* Cf. *fr. in Rom.* 1.1-4 in K. Staab, 'Neue Fragmente aus dem Kommentar des Origenes zum Römerbrief,' *Biblische Zeitschrift* 18 (1928) 72-82.



Holy Spirit, the word which the Lord said might be fulfilled, 'As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be one in us.' (Jn 17:21) This is, of course, to be sharers of the divine nature by the fullness of love furnished through the Holy Spirit.<sup>59</sup> (4.9.12; cf. 2 Peter 1:4)

For those believers who have persevered in ascetic afflictions, the Holy Spirit completes their adoption by pouring the love of God into their hearts, which gives them the knowledge of God as their Father.<sup>60</sup> The gift of God's love enables them to participate in his love, which is undoubtedly the highest virtue.<sup>61</sup> As souls begin to love God with the Holy Spirit's gift of love, they participate in the union of love shared between the Father and the Son, and in this way they participate in the divine nature, which is love.

The vision of salvation that emerges in the *Commentarii* certainly reflects aspects of Origen's soteriology,<sup>62</sup> but it also reflects its monastic translator. As we observed, the Greek fragments of Origen's commentary insist that justifying and perfect faith is truly a gift of grace alone. Although Rufinus' translation affirms that works of the Law contribute nothing to justification (3.9), the *Commentarii* also departs from Origen by emphasising the necessity of ascetic striving for justification, perfection, adoption.

## Conclusion

This article has attempted to use a semantic and theological analysis of the theme of affliction in the *Commentarii in Epistolam ad*

<sup>59</sup> *Quod si et spiritus caritatis, et filius caritatis, et Deus caritas inuenitur, certum est, quod ex uno Paternae Deitatis fonte et Filius intelligendus est, et Spiritus sanctus, ex cuius abundantia etiam sanctorum cordibus ad participationem capiendam diuinae naturae, sicut Petrus Apostolus edocuit, abundantia caritatis infunditur: ut per istud sancti Spiritus donum compleatur ille sermo, quem Dominus dicit: „sicut tu, Pater in me, et ego in te, ut et isti in nobis unum sint:“ diuinae scilicet naturae participes effecti, in abundantia caritatis per Spiritum sanctum ministratae.*

<sup>60</sup> See also the insightful analysis of Widdicombe, *The Fatherhood of God*, 99-103.

<sup>61</sup> On love as the primary means of union with God in Origen's theology, see Henri Crouzel, *Origène: et la 'connaissance mystique'* (Paris, 1961): 519-23. Crouzel argues that although Origen also presents knowledge as a source of union, Origen understands knowledge in the 'Hebrew' sense, which refers to the intuitive knowledge about another that is gained in a relationship of love.

<sup>62</sup> On Origen's soteriology, see Norman Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004): 140-154; Widdicombe, *The Fatherhood of God*, 93-118.



*Romanos* to evaluate Rufinus' reliability as a translator. From this analysis, a sharp difference in meaning between 'affliction' (θλιψις) in the Greek witnesses to Origen's works and 'affliction' (*tribulatione*) in Rufinus' Latin translation has emerged. In the Greek texts, affliction primarily refers to externally-imposed experiences of anguish. In Rufinus' translation, however, affliction usually refers to anguish that arises from self-imposed ascetic striving. The study has also revealed an important soteriological difference. The Greek fragments of Origen's *Commentary on Romans* emphasise the role of grace in justification. Justification is effected by mature, justifying faith, which is only possessed as an unmerited gift from God. In contrast, the Latin *Commentarii* tends to de-emphasise grace by presenting ascetic striving as the means by which one is justified, perfected, and adopted as a child of God.

Although the fragmented state of Origen's *Commentary on Romans* prohibits us from making an absolute judgement about Rufinus' reliability as a translator, three conclusions about Rufinus' translations present themselves. First, the significant difference between the concept of affliction in the Greek witnesses to Origen's works and in Rufinus' Latin translation indicates that we must approach Rufinus' translations with caution. As previous scholarship has demonstrated so well, Rufinus' principles of translation are not our own. Although Rufinus is at times remarkably faithful to the Greek texts, the differences of emphasis between the Latin *Commentarii* and the Greek witnesses to Origen suggests that, *pace* the argument of Crouzel and Simonetti, Rufinus sometimes introduced theological changes in order to adapt the texts to his own theological context.

Second, the ascetic character of these differences supports the proposal of Wagner and Silvas that Rufinus occasionally adapted his texts to make them applicable to his fifth-century Latin audience. Origen wrote during a period when persecution and martyrdom was a real possibility. By the time Rufinus translated his works, however, martyrdom was no longer a threat and the monastic movement of the fourth century had reinterpreted martyrdom, persecution, and affliction as spiritual experiences related to ascetic striving for salvation. It seems quite likely that the ascetic emphasis in the *Commentarii* therefore reflects Rufinus' desire to make Origen's commentary not only linguistically accessible to his audience but also spiritually relevant.

Third, Rufinus' changes suggest that his *Commentarii* can serve as a witness not only to Origen but also to Rufinus himself. The ascetic character of affliction and of salvation in the *Commentarii* likely owes more to Rufinus than Origen, and these concepts probably



reflect elements of Rufinus' own theology. From this we might deduce, for example, that Rufinus believed ascetic striving is necessary for justification. More broadly, Rufinus' changes can also tell us about the reception of Origen by early fifth-century Western monasticism. Rufinus' dedication to translating Origen's works into Latin shows that Rufinus' community valued Origen as a teacher. However, Rufinus' changes also reveal that even Rufinus himself—the great defender of Origen—believed Origen's works must be adapted in order to be of optimal benefit to Latin audiences. Accordingly, Rufinus' changes may also reveal elements of his audience's theological perspectives, for, as we observed, Rufinus appears to have translated the text not only into his readers' language but also into their historical context and theological framework.

To conclude, it seems reasonable to propose that the *Commentarii* should be read as a witness not only to Origen's interpretation of Romans but also to Rufinus' interpretation and appropriation of Origen. Rufinus' translation may have much to tell us about Western monasticism and its reception of Origen at the dawn of the fifth century.

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