



Origen and the History of Justification: The Legacy of Origen's Commentary on Romans

Thomas P. Scheck

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Standard accounts of the history of interpretation of Paul's Letter to the Romans often begin with St. Augustine. As Thomas P. Scheck demonstrates, however, the *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* by Origen of Alexandria (185-254 CE) was a major work of Pauline exegesis which, by means of the Latin translation preserved in the West, had a significant influence on the Christian exegetical tradition.

Scheck begins by exploring Origen's views on justification and on the intimate connection of faith and post-baptismal good works as essential to justification. He traces the enormous influence Origen's Commentary on Romans had on later theologians in the Latin West, including the ways in which theologians often appropriated Origen's exegesis in their own work. Scheck analyzes in particular the reception of Origen by Pelagius, Augustine, William of St. Thierry, Erasmus, Cornelius Jansen, the Anglican Bishop Richard Montagu, and the Catholic lay apologist John Heigham, as well as Martin Luther, Philip Melancthon, and other Protestant Reformers who harshly attacked Origen's interpretation as fatally flawed. But as Scheck shows, theologians through the post-Reformation controversies of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries studied and engaged Origen extensively, even if not always in agreement.

An important work in patristics, biblical interpretation, and historical theology, *Origen and the History of Justification* establishes the formative role played by Origen's Pauline exegesis, while also contributing to our understanding of the theological issues surrounding justification in the western Christian tradition.

“Thomas Scheck's *Origen and the History of Justification* is first of all invaluable for increasing readers' exposure to a primary text of an exegete and theologian who will always be very relevant for the church—Origen. Second, this work is invaluable for presenting all sides of the debate today on the meaning of justification. All who weigh in on the doctrine of justification must consult this work in order to understand the seismic quakes that still affect Christians' balance on this issue. And third, since this book focuses on Origen's Romans commentary, it must be read by all Romans students who want to be able to discern the magnetic fields that still powerfully pull readers of Paul's letter in different directions.” —**Mark Reasoner, Bethel University**

“The interpretation of Paul's Letter to the Romans has been a central and continuing preoccupation in the western Christian tradition. Origen's contribution to its interpretation was seminal, subtle, and suggestive. But the expansiveness of Origen's *Commentary on Romans*, combined with later controversies about Origen's views, appears to have inhibited scholars from tracing the reception of Origen's commentary in the West. Thomas P. Scheck's book ably and admirably remedies this oversight.” —**Theodore de Bruyn, University of Ottawa**

“Thomas Scheck demonstrates the range of Origen's influence and establishes his as the real alternative to the Augustinian understanding of the divine operation in Christians. His study raises again the questions posed by Robert O'Connell of Augustine's appropriation of and dissent from Origen. In each chapter, Scheck both reports and advances the existing scholarship on Origen's influence.” —**Patout Burns, Vanderbilt Divinity School**

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