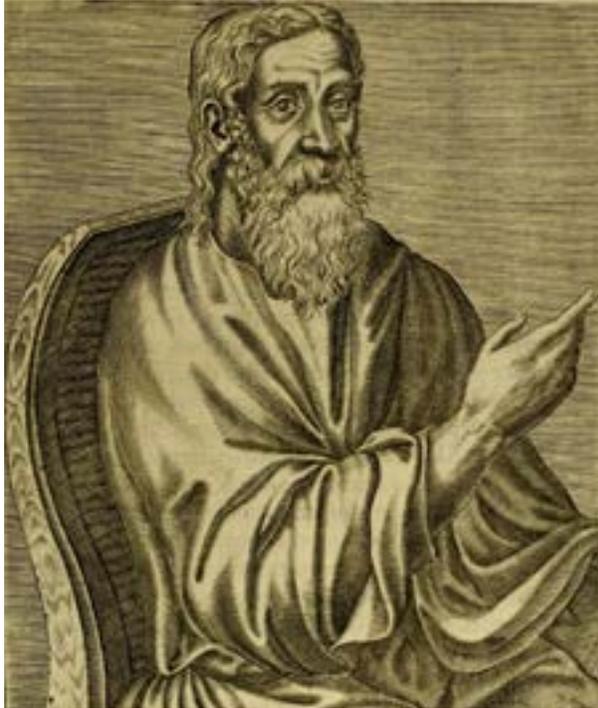




ORIGEN
of Alexandria (200-253),
Theology of

Origen's Theological View: Semi-Arian

STEVEN RITCHIE



It is no secret that Origen loved to read the Greek Philosophers and required his students in his schools at Alexandria, and later at Caesaria, to regularly read the Greek Philosophers. It is therefore no surprise that some of the students of Origen's school in Caesaria were later called the Cappadocian fathers who were influential in developing the Trinitarian idea of a coequal and timeless coeternal Son.

In the introduction to Origen of Alexandria, Looklex Encyclopedia informs us that Origen was influenced by Platonic philosophy and Gnosticism.

“As one of the earliest theologians, his non-Christian tools are most transparent in his work; both **Platonic philosophy and Gnostic concepts** came to play a central role in his understanding of Christian texts.”

Under Theology, Looklex Encyclopedia states:

“Origen is considered the founder of the allegorical method of scriptural interpretation. **He aimed at reconciling Greek philosophy with Christianity, himself mainly of the Platonist school.**”

Under Criticism And Influence, Looklex says:

“He had a background with Platonic philosophy with the belief in an eternal soul in contrast to the temporary, imperfect material world. Other controversial ideas were the preexistence of the soul, a universal salvation and **a trinity as a hierarchy where Jesus inferior to God (corresponding with Arianism)**, defining the resurrection of the body as mainly spiritual and having removed the original concept of hell.”

Origen's wrote in his Commentary on the Gospel of John, Book 1, Chapter 23,

“... I WONDER AT THE STUPIDITY OF THE GENERAL RUN OF CHRISTIANS (the Christian majority) IN THIS MATTER. I do not mince matters; it is nothing but stupidity ... THEY PROCEED DIFFERENTLY AND ASK, WHAT IS THE SON OF GOD WHEN CALLED THE WORD? THE PASSAGE THEY EMPLOY IS THAT IN THE PSALMS, ‘MY HEART HAS PRODUCED A GOOD WORD;’ AND THEY IMAGINE THE SON TO BE THE UTTERANCE OF THE FATHER DEPOSITED, as it were, in syllables ... THEY

DO NOT ALLOW HIM ... ANY INDEPENDENT HYPOSTASIS (substance of Being), nor are they clear about His ESSENCE. I do not mean that they confuse its qualities, but the fact of His having an ESSENCE (homousious) OF HIS OWN (Origen's view). For NO ONE CAN UNDERSTAND (among "the general run of Christians") HOW THAT WHICH IS SAID TO BE THE WORD CAN BE A SON. AND SUCH AN ANIMATED WORD, NOT BEING A SEPARATE ENTITY FROM THE FATHER (Origen's view) ... God the Word IS A SEPARATE BEING AND HAS AN ESSENCE (homoisious) OF HIS OWN." *Origen's Commentary on the Gospel of John, Book 1, Chapter 23*

Origen was denying the Nicene Creed before it was written by saying that Jesus "has an essence of his own" rather than being the same essence "homousias" as the Father. Thus Origen who described his Christian opponents as "the general run of Christians" believed that the Word (Logos) is "... the utterance of the Father deposited" who is the same "substance" as the Father. Hence, Origen's Modalist opponents were saying that the Word that was made flesh is the Father's word (logos) rather than a distinct God the Word Person. Also notice that Origen contrasts his teaching from the Modalists by saying, "and that the word" (logos) is "a separate entity from the Father" and "is a separate Being and has an ESSENCE OF HIS OWN."

About one hundred years later, the Nicene Creed stated that the Son is the same essence (homousious) as the Father. Therefore the Modalists were the early Christians that were believing in and upholding the Nicene Creed well before it was written while the Semi-Arian so called Trinitarians were denying that Creed by saying that Jesus is a lesser God Person with an essence (homoisious) of his own.

Origen and the Semi-Arians like him were teaching that the "animated word" is "a separate entity from the Father." Thus the historical evidence proves that the Modalists were the original Christians affirming that the substance of being of the Son was the same substance of being (hypostasis) of the Father while the Semi-Arians denied Christ's true deity. It is no wonder why the latter Roman Catholic Church condemned the writings of Origen.

If I were to say that the Modalists were "the general run of Christians" in the twenty first century, my Trinitarian opponents would rightly laugh and ridicule me for lying. Yet even though Origen himself as an ardent opponent of Modalism, admitted that the Modalists were "the general run of Christians" in the third century, hard hearted Trinitarians always deny it! Origen wrote that the Modalists were among the multitudes of believers calling Jesus the Most High God while the Semi-Arian tendencies of Origen denied Christ's full deity.

"Grant that there may be some individuals among the multitudes of believers who are not in entire agreement with us, and who incautiously assert that the Savior is the Most High God; however, we do not hold with them, but rather believe Him when He says, 'The Father who sent Me is greater than I.'" Contra Celsus 8:14

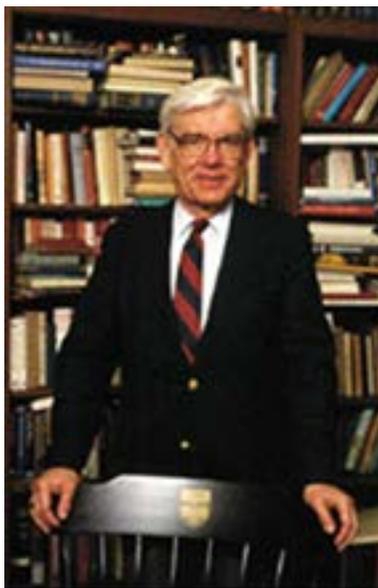
Origen and the other “Semi-Arians” like him did not believe like the modalists because the Modalists were saying that Jesus “is the Most High God.”



According to Johannes Quasten, Origen’s later doctrine of a timeless eternal Son was “a remarkable advance in the development of theology and had a far reaching influence on ecclesiastical teaching (Patrology Vol. 2, Page 78).”

Although Origen was the first to clearly teach that the Son always existed as a Son throughout eternity past, he taught “that the Son is not mightier than the Father, but inferior to Him (Contra Celsus 8:15 - Patrology Vol. 2, Page 79).”

Although the doctrine of Eternal Sonship was first taught by Origen in the third century (Patrology Vol. 2, Quaten, Pg. 79.), Origen vacillated in his teaching about an eternal son and a created son.



Yale University
Historian Dr. Jaroslav Pelikan

Under the title, “Christ as Creature,” Pelikan wrote, “In Origen’s doctrine of the Logos, however, there were two sets of ideas ... In one sense, the logic of Origen’s anti-Sabellian exegesis led to the insistence that the Logos was distinct from the Father, but eternal, so that none could ‘dare lay down a beginning for the Son’ (Origen, Principiis. 4 4:1) ... But at the same time Origen interpreted the passages of derivation and distinction in such a way as to make the Logos A CREATURE and SUBORDINATE to God, ‘the firstborn of all creation, a thing CREATED, wisdom’ (Origen Princ. 4 4:1). And in support of this latter interpretation his chief proof was Proverbs 8:22-31.” *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition, Vol. 1, Pg. 191 – Jaroslav Pelikan*

Before the Trinity doctrine was fully developed, there was a tremendous reaction to the development of the Semi-Arian doctrine of men like Justin, Tertullian, Hippolytus, Clement of Alexandria, and of Origen. The historical evidence proves that the reaction among “the general run of Christians” against emerging Semi-Arian theology was led by Sabellius and other leaders among the Modalists who successfully persuaded the majority of the churches to believe in Modalistic Monarchianism in their opposition to the emerging Semi-Arian theology.



Portrait of John Henry Newman 1801-1890

The following information is from Trinitarian Church Historian John Henry Newman’s Book, *Arians of the Fourth Century*, Chapter 1, Section 5, under “Sabellianism.”

The context of chapter 1, Section 5A (Page 118) prove that the “speculations” of “Praxeus” “remained alive in that part of the world, though latent [Note 3 - Tertull. in Prax.], till they burst into a flame about the middle of the third century, at the eventful era when the rudiments of Arianism were laid by the sophistical school at Antioch.”

Here the author states that “speculations” about the teachings of Praxeus “remained alive in that part of the world” (Egypt and North Africa) before bursting out into a flame in the middle of the third century in reaction to the form of Semi-Arian theology that predated the theology of Arius. **Now if the theology of Praxeus**

“remained alive” within the hearts and minds of the Christian majority, then these Christians could not have been Trinitarian in their thinking.

The context of chapter 1, Section 5B (Page 119) proves that the Sabellian theology **“became so popular among the clergy already prepared for it ... that in a short time (to use the words of Athanasius) ‘The Son of God was SCARCELY PREACHED IN THE CHURCHES.’”**

Here is the quote in its full context:

“Sabellius, from whom the heresy has since taken its name. He was a bishop or presbyter in Pentapolis, a district of Cyrenaica, included within the territory afterwards called, and then virtually forming, the Alexandrian Patriarchate. Other bishops in his neighborhood adopting his sentiments, his doctrine became so popular among a clergy already prepared for it, or hitherto unpracticed in the necessity of a close adherence to the authorized formularies of faith, that in a short time (to use the words of Athanasius) “the Son of God was scarcely preached in the Churches.””

Trinitarian Catholic Historian Henry Newman clearly stated, “his doctrine (the context proves ‘Sabellius’) became so popular among a clergy already prepared for it, or hitherto unpracticed in the necessity of a close adherence to the authorized formularies of faith, that in a short time (to use the words of Athanasius) “the Son of God was scarcely preached in the Churches.” Now if the later early fourth century Athanasian idea of the Son of God “was scarcely preached in the Churches” then that would mean that the **Trinitarian idea was “scarce” and that the Modalist idea was “so popular among the clergy” at that time.** Therefore Henry Newman admitted that the Modalists were predominant within the mid third century and that the later Athanasian idea of the Son of God was “scarcely preached in the Churches.”

Wherefore, there are four undeniable historical facts from the writings of Origen.

1. Origen believed in an inferior Semi-Arian Son rather than a coequal Trinitarian Son.
2. Origen was highly influenced by Greek Platonic Philosophy in formulating his theology.
3. Origen was the first Christian writer on record to clearly teach a timeless eternal Son.
4. Origen clearly stated that “the general run of Christians” were the Modalistic Monarchians who taught that the word of God was “the utterance of the Father”.

CONCLUSION: These four historical facts are confirmed by the writing of scholarly Trinitarian historians themselves.



GLOBAL IMPACT MINISTRIES
A Defense of the Apostolic Christian Faith

Email: theglobalimpactministries@gmail.com

Website: www.apostolicchristianfaith.com