The Son of God before Nicaea:
Heraclides and his Brother Bishops at a Gathering taught by Origen

O Filho de Deus antes de Nicéia:
Heráclides e seus irmãos bispos em um encontro realizado por Orígenes

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Abstract

This article examines the historical and theological significance of *Dialogue with Heraclides*, attributed to Origen, as a unique witness to conciliar processes prior to the Council of Nicaea (325). Through a near-stenographic transcript of a third-century episcopal meeting, the text reveals how fundamental doctrinal debates – especially concerning the relationship between God the Father and the Son – were conducted in local synodal contexts. Origen emerges not only as a Christian exegete and philosopher but also as a teacher and examiner of bishops, decisively contributing to the formulation of theological categories that would later shape the Nicene Creed. The work also sheds light on methodological and pedagogical aspects of early conciliar practice, such as the involvement of laypeople, the importance of written records, and the council's role as a space for instruction and ecclesial reconciliation. By recovering this episode, the article offers an essential interpretive key to understanding the genesis of Trinitarian theology and the formation of the conciliar tradition that would profoundly shape the history of Christianity.

Keywords: Origen. Council of Nicaea. Trinity. Dialogue with Heraclides. History of Church Councils.

Resumo

O presente artigo analisa a relevância histórica e teológica do *Diálogo com Heraclides*, atribuído a Orígenes, como testemunho singular do processo conciliar anterior ao Concílio de Niceia (325). A partir da transcrição quase estenográfica de um encontro episcopal no século III, o texto revela como debates doutrinais fundamentais – especialmente sobre a relação entre Deus Pai e o Filho – foram conduzidos em contextos sinodais locais. Orígenes emerge não apenas como exegeta e filósofo cristão, mas como mestre e examinador dos próprios bispos, contribuindo decisivamente para a formulação de categorias teológicas que mais tarde influenciaram o credo niceno. A obra também ilumina aspectos metodológicos e pedagógicos da prática conciliar antiga, como a presença de leigos, a importância dos registros escritos e o papel do concílio como espaço de instrução e pacificação eclesial. Ao recuperar esse episódio, o artigo oferece uma chave interpretativa essencial para compreender a gênese da teologia trinitária e a formação da tradição conciliar que marcará profundamente a história do cristianismo.

Palavras-chave: Orígenes. Concílio de Niceia. Trindade. Diálogo com Heraclides. História dos concílios.

Introduction

Unlike the heated debates and violent reactions that followed it, the Synod of Nicaea is a famously – even notoriously – difficult event to describe, above and beyond its taking place in a church and culture so markedly different from our own. Repeatedly, historians have had to navigate the turbulent stream of decisions from the synods of Nicaea (or more accurately, its preceding councils in Alexandria under Bishop Alexander in 317 or 318 and Antioch in early 325) to Constantinople without being able to discover at all how either ecumenical council came to its decisions. The reason for this is that no synodal records – in English, "minutes" – remain to provide evidence of procedural matters, discussions among the disputants, crucial speeches, or votes by the participants. Canons were preserved, attesting to the presence of scribes, but none of the details of either ecumenical council's debate – speeches, names of proponents and opponents, and the settling of questions – survive. Later interpreters may invoke, and elaborate upon, *Nicene* theology, but the truth is that we do not know what was the specific theology of the First Ecumenical Council itself, as it happened. We know only what later reports tell us[1].

Because these crucial records are lacking – either because they were not recorded, or were suppressed or destroyed – historians of the development of the teachings that emerged after Nicaea have had to depend on later accounts. These accounts were composed by Athanasius, thrice- exiled archbishop of Alexandria and ardent defender of Nicaea; Eusebius of Caesarea, seemingly reluctant signer of the Nicene decree; and later church historians writing in the fifth century, and therefore a century after the events of that first ecumenical council, and nearly half a century after the second.

Therefore, the deliberations of the council of Nicaea are lost, if (as some historians doubt) they were ever recorded. Over the course of the fourth century the Synod of Nicaea (apart from its canons) and the creed named after it became more a rallying cry than a set of council-records – undermined by some, upheld by others. And it is also well known that regardless of what actually happened (to invoke von Ranke) at Nicaea, which is unrecoverable, two parties – each invoking and relying upon the literary legacy of the one great Christian philosopher Origen – struggled during the fourth century until imperial intervention and the good fortune of Gregory Nazianzen's presence in the capital (along with his vitally important assistant Evagrius of Pontus)[2] and the later leadership of Nectarius the archbishop of the city (381-397), led to the confirmation of the Nicene declaration at the ecumenical council of Constantinople, and the development of a Trinitarian theology and a Christology suitable for a Christian philosophy adaptable to both the sophisticated and the *haplousteroi*, the simpler Christians.

Despite the lack of minutes for the first ecumenical council, and a contemporary report of its proceedings, it is nearly certain, based on its conciliar precedents including of the Roman imperial government in metropolitan, provincial and senatorial gatherings, that Nicaea did involve questioning, cross-examination and debate before its presider arranged for a vote on the proposed decision of the council with respect to its doctrinal statement and its canons. The Synod of Nicaea likely would have conformed to established practice – both Roman governmental and ecclesiastical – and therefore it is useful to examine closely how one earlier council likely foreshadowed Nicaea[3].

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[1] FERNANDEZ, S., The Council of Nicaea and Its Reception (Ongoing Research), p. 297-303, and his forthcoming study in *Theological Studies* on the role of Eusebius – far greater than that of Arius – in promoting the "subordinationist" position with respect to the Son of God, *deuteros Theos* in the strict sense (see *Demonstratio Evangelica* and opening chapters of the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, and the term *homoousios* which Eusebius avoided whenever possible).

[2] MCGUCKIN, J., Saint Gregory of Nazianzus, p. 276-278; the Testament of Gregory of Nazianzus and Evagrius' *Letter on Faith*, composed in 380 or 381; GÉHIN, P., Evagre le Pontique, p. 14.

[3] CAMPLANI, A., Setting a Bishopric / Arranging an Archive, p. 231-272; GRAUMANN, T., Documents, Acts and Archival Habits in Early Christian Church Councils, p. 272-295.

1. The Conciliar Setting of the *Dialogue*

Historians know the records of that council in the comparatively short text somewhat misleadingly called *The Dialogue with Heraclides*. This text, preserved in a papyrus copy along with another text entitled *Peri Pascha* (On Easter/Passover) along with treatises of the later author Didymus the Blind, is a record of an interrogation of Bishop Heracleides, conducted by the most accomplished early Christian philosopher, presbyter and scriptural interpreter, Origen of Alexandria. As is well-known, the papyri were discovered by accident during World War II[4]; the *Dialogue* has been relatively neglected in scholarly treatments of Origen's thought, possibly because it does not record his own customarily brilliant exegesis or philosophy, but rather records his dealings with other, less well-educated and less talented Christian leaders. This text has not received much attention among those who study the works of Origen, nor among those who study the later council of Nicaea, presumably because it is fragmentary and relatively short and contains no sustained biblical exegesis or theological reflection.

Furthermore, because it lacks an introduction and conclusion, the text does not contain any indication of where the council took place or the precise year in which it was convened. It is thought to have been held between 244 and 249 in Arabia, possibly the area now identified as the nation of Jordan; because it was far from a major city, Origen (who had already traveled extensively in his teaching and ecclesiastical career) would most likely have been sent there as a teacher who could settle questions that were disturbing the church and had been communicated to Caesarea, the nearest and most important episcopal see in the mid-third century[5].

Yet for the the purposes of understanding the importance of councils as teaching occasions, and as occasions of doctrinal development recorded in permanent records, the *Dialogue with Heraclides* is crucially important. No other early Christian text contains a stenographic record of discussion so that a later reader can see how the discipline of teaching and the hierarchy of instruction took place in a common setting. It is true that Gregory Thaumaturgus' *Thanksgiving Speech to Origen* describes how the master taught in the setting of a classroom in Caesarea, and it is also true that Origen's numerous homilies, including the newly-discovered *Homilies on the Psalms*, show how he taught in the setting of the basilica at Caesarea.[6] But the *Dialogue*, which evidently was not revised or polished after the event it recorded, shows Origen to be a travelling *peritus*, teaching his fellow-teachers how they should think – as he had done at a higher and more detailed level in biblical commentaries, *On First Principles* and (in many passages) the *Contra Celsum*.

There are several circumstances of the text's creation, and features of its form, that deserve note: First, the text was written during the last quarter of Origen's life, after long experience with controversy and with the interpretation of scripture. Just as he was wary of his own bishop in Caesarea (cite) though less contentious than his relationship with that bishop's Alexandrian predecessor, he was evidently cautious about the training and knowledge of the bishops there assembled, and their grasp of the meaning of certain crucial Christian teachings.

These years were a significant period in the life of Origen and in the church in his region. As we know from the nearly-contemporary works *Contra Celsum* and *Exhortation to Martyrdom*, and the last, newly-discovered homilies, Origen was well-aware of the threat of a coming persecution. He had been preparing for persecution for his entire adult life, as numerous scholars have discussed; but the real and present danger of the 240s changed the context of his exposition, not only because of the standard concern

[4] In August, 1941, by a British Army unit attempting to clear a cave in Tura, an area south of Cairo, where they discovered several sixth-century works of Origen and Didymus the Blind, preserved on papyrus. These works probably were hidden in the sixth century, after the condemnations of "Origenism," i.e. the teachings of Origen, Evagrius and Didymus in (ironically) imperial ecclesiastical councils of 543 and 553.

[5] DALY, R. J., Treatise on the Passover; and, Dialogue of Origen with Heraclides and his fellow bishops on the Father, the Son and the soul.

[6] TRIGG, J. W.; YOUNG, R. D. (Eds.)., Teacher of the Logos.

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about Christians failing to stand firm against judicial scrutiny, torture and death, but because (as he explains in the *Exhortation*) those [events] took place in the invisible world as well, where angels and demons were present and watching in the context of aeonic and cosmic time and the moment (*kairos*) of testing. This context changes how the work is apprehended, as can be seen in the discussion below.

The form of the text is neither exegetical nor philosophical; rather, it is unpolished, and a sequence of notes on a discussion. There was no time or room for long, interpretive discussions of scriptural texts; the text itself shows that Origen was present to interrogate those who attended, and to clarify certain teachings.

For present purposes, it is not necessary to review the entirety of the *Dialogue with Heraclides*; only the first part is concerned with what will become the major issue at Nicaea – the relationship between God the Father and the Son of God. And the first part, as we shall see below, makes clear that the bishops were students to the teacher, not – as would become at least the expected standard practice in later centuries – the teacher to the bishop and eventually the emperor and his court, including ecclesiastical officials. Notably, throughout the entire text, Origen was engaging in dialogue with four separate bishops. He was teaching them almost as he would the *haplousteroi*, the simpler Christians for whom he had a great deal of solicitude – as his many sermons and the Contra Celsum attest. But now, in Arabia, he was operating at a council, where teaching was also public because laymen were in attendance. Councils were beginning to become a procedure – adapted from Greco-Roman government procedure – for forming Christian doctrine and elaborating Christian discipline and law.

Thus when he went to Arabia, Origen had behind him a lengthy career of scriptural interpretation, which along with philosophy gave rise to his understanding of the relationship between the Father and the Son. What we see in the Dialogue is a foreshadowing of the controversy over Nicaea, and supplemented with passages from the roughly contemporary *Contra Celsum*, it is possible to understand why the Son must be understood as divine: because just as only the divine can create, and only the divine can restore creation to health.

It is generally accepted that Origen's thinking about the relationship of the Son of God to God the Father, formed by a fusion of biblical texts read in a certain way, and the philosophy of the Platonic tradition, lay behind the Nicene formula. The teaching Origen finds appropriate in the Dialogue is no different from his teaching in sermons, treatises and commentaries in that it has a consistent understanding of the divine being, and of scripture. Its real title: *Dialektos* – not "Dialogue" as it is usually named, and as I will refer to it in this paper – but *Debate Against Herakleides* (just as the Contra Celsum is *Pros ton Kelson – Against Celsus*). It therefore is in form adversarial, as Origen judged that he needed to be. The person of Heraclides disappears as the debate continues, but other bishops are present and named.

For a historian, the *Dialogue with Heraclides* is a text that fascinates in part because it begins *in medias res*, with no explanation of where the synod met, or how it began. The current English translation is less than satisfactory, because it downplays the contentious nature of the occasion and is not careful with translation of technical terms. Therefore I have retranslated the first section of the text, in order to show how Origen's cross-examination proceeded in all its terminological precision. I have reflected the alternative translations of the Greek text to bring out its ecclesiastical-judicial, and theological context.

2. The Acta of the Council

The text begins as follows: "When a logos was put in motion by the bishops present, about the pistis ('faith', or even 'trustworthiness') of Heraclides the supervisor (*episkopos*), in order that he would make an admission (or, confirm) as to how (*to pōs*) he believed, and each one present spoke and made inquiries to (or, "interrogated") him, Heraclides said".

Even this damaged opening paragraph tells us that the bishops were acting as a unified body, or at least that the result of their consultation was a unified action, and that each had a turn in making an inquiry as to his beliefs – or more likely, as to his teaching.

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It is fair to ask what would have been the events leading up to this meeting? Was Heraclides' teaching reported by a member of his congregation to another bishop, or directly questioned? Such a situation was a possibility, given the use of councils among early Christian assemblies, whether local or regional, to resolve problems of belief and behavior. Sometimes letters were employed to address a dispute, as in the case of the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch, for instance; but often in-person meetings were required not only because this is how things were done at the local level in the Greco-Roman world but also because the council as in the Council of Jerusalem was the ideal way to express the Christian ideal (mostly honored in the breach) of unity. It is plausible that in-person meetings became the norm because the meetings leading up to Nicaea operated that way, not only because Origen himself was involved in them. They were opportunities not only for decision making, but for teaching.

Questioned by Origen, Heraclides gave what was an obviously unsatisfactory answer when he said, simply quoting scripture:

> And I believe what the divine writings (or, scriptures) say: 'In a beginning was the logos, and the logos was next to God, and the logos was God. He was in a beginning next to the God. All came about (egeneto) through him, and apart from him not even one came about.(John 1.1' Thus we are united [or, "concur"] in the same faith, and according to this also we believe that the Christ took flesh, that he was born, that he went up into the heavens in the flesh in which he rose again, that he is seated at the right of the Father, coming again he will come also "to judge the living and the dead," God and a human.

Anyone present at that council who had been reading Origen's previous work on the incarnation of the Logos would have known what was coming next: a full-on interrogation. Once again, it would be very interesting to know about interrogations at the councils preceding Nicaea and at Nicaea itself, but since these are lost to us, this debate gives a good example of how such a conversation took place during the days of its meeting.

Following Heraclius' profession of faith, Origen then engaged in a cross-examination of Heraclides – and here we can see an approach that's visible at much greater length in the CC, but in that case the subject under cross-examination was long dead, and he was an enemy of Christianity, not a bishop.

The next part of the *Dialogue* records a question-and-answer session, as follows:

> "Origen said: Since definitively the preliminary hearing (or, questioning) is in order to speak something on the topic of the preliminary hearing, I will speak. The entire *ekklēsia* [understood either as assembly or church] is present, listening. No difference ought to exist in *gnōsis* between church and church, since you are not a false assembly. I summon you, Papa Heraclides. The all-ruler is God, the ingenerate, who over all made the whole. Is this acceptable?"
> Heraclides said: "It is acceptable; for thus I too believe."
> Origen said: Christ Jesus, "existing in the form of a God," being another than the God "in whose form" he existed, was a God before he came into the body, or not?"
> Heraclides said: "A God he was before."
> Origen said: "A God he was before he came into the body, or not?"
> Heraclides said, "Yes."
> Origen said, "Another God than this the God of whom "in form" he existed?"
> Heraclides said, "Clearly from someone other, and being in a form of that one, he existed."
> Origen said, "Is it not true there was a God, a son of God, the only begotten of God, 'the firstborn of all creation' [Col 1.15] and that we are not hesitant (*deisidaimonoumen*) in some places to say two gods, but in others to say one God"?
> Heraclides said, "This, what you say, is clear. But we say a God to be the all-ruler, God beginningless, endless, containing the all and not contained, and the logos of this one is son of the living God, a God and a human, through whom all the all came about, God according to a spirit, a human according to "who was born from the Mary."

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> Origen said: To what I asked, indeed you seem not to have replied. Clarify, then; for perhaps (or, "to be fair?") I did not follow. The Father is a God?"
> Heraclides said, "Absolutely."
> Origen said, "The son is another than the father?"
> Heraclides said, "How is it possible for the son to be, if he were a father?"
> Origen said, "The son, being another than the father is he also a God"?
> Heraclides said, "He too is a God."
> Origen said, "And the two gods become one?"
> Heraclides said, "Yes.
> Origen said, "We confess two gods."
> Heraclides said, "Yes. The power is one."

At this point, the text gives no further record of Origen's interrogation of Heraclides. Whether it ended there, or the stenographers merely stopped recording, is impossible to say. What does follow in the text as we have it, however, is further instruction on the part of Origen – to three bishops, Maximus, Dionysius and Demetrius. There is no record of the cities in which their churches were located, or of their relationship to Heraclides, although there is certainly a connection between Origen's correction of Heraclides and his instructions to the other three bishops.

For present purposes, only one more section of the *Debate with Heraclides* is useful, because it contains Origen's teaching about the importance of instructing how Christ is God, incarnate for the purpose of the restoration of rational beings to their former status – i.e., their salvation.

After the interrogation of Heraclides concluded, Origen moves immediately into an expository section:

> But since our brothers have taken offense (*proskoptousin*) that there are two gods, a healing word (*logos*) is necessary, and it is necessary to demonstrate according to what they are two and according to what the two are one God.

Here can be seen another purpose for a council: to re-establish peace between disputants in the broader community. This event gave Origen the opportunity to address the puzzle of the incarnation, in the light of its purpose: the restoration of all rational minds, over the course of aeons, to union with God. For this purpose the Son as Christ must set in motion a teaching that makes possible the *anabasis* of these minds, now in various bodies (angel, demon or human) according to the degree of their alienation from the Father. Since that aspect of Origen's thought has been covered extensively elsewhere, there is no need to describe it here. It will be helpful, however, to review Origen's method as a teacher of a synod.

Origen reframes the question in this way: how can two be one?

This situation occurs "many times" – pollà – in the scriptures – for instance, in the case of Adam and Eve, where though they are one and another ,"the two become one flesh" (though not in soul and spirit). Likewise the Apostolos (Paul) says that the just person though "yet another" is "one spirit" with Christ (1Cor 16.17). Christ, though, is not flesh and spirit "with respect to the Father and God of all," but "something above both flesh and spirit, one God." That "something above," Origen says, is neither *monarchia* where the Son is "distinct from the father and [as think those who say this] "abrogating the father," nor is the *theoitēs* of Christ denied. Relying upon Is 43.10 and Deut 32.39, where God speaks with one voice, says Origen:

> In these *phonai*, it is necessary not to reckon that the unity refers to the God of the All with purity apart from a christ; not even of Christ apart from a God; but thus we say, to be as Jesus says, "My Father and I are one" (Jn 10.30).

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In the next section of the text, Origen gives an extremely vivid idea of how important it was to render a clear and – one may say – inspired approach to the matters that were causing a disturbance (just as he does in his homilies) – literally "stirring up" many in the local church (*dia to polla kekinēsthai en tautē tē ekklesia*). Origen notes what seems to be the standard procedure following this formation of factions:

> Often they are written to be signed, and in order that the bishop should sign, and those under suspicion also should sign in the presence of the entirety of the people, so that there would no longer come about some rebellion or [judicial] inquest (or, examination). Having submitted the matter for examination to God, second also of the bishops, third of the presbyters and of the people, again I will say what moved me on this topic. Always the sacrifice comes about to God pantokrator through Jesus Christ, as of sacrifice with the Father the divinity of his. *Not twice, but to a god through a god does the sacrifice come about* (emphasis mine).

The sentences following this extract appear to have been confused or corrupted in the manuscript, so for the purposes of this brief study I omit discussion of them; the important aspects to note here, however, are that the records of synodal discussion are kept and signed – minutes to which all present including lay people (presumably, but not necessarily, adult male Christians); and that Origen begins his discussion about the Son of God from the practice of the liturgy (*prosphora*)[7] whether the Eucharistic liturgy, or more broadly the Christian way of worshipping God understood as personal and communal prayer.

The next section of the manuscript continues to attempt to settle the problem of "two Gods," a difficulty that presaged the discussions of Nicaea, both from the Arian and Eusebian side, and from the Athanasian – and, later, the Cappadocian side. Origen has evidently disturbed some in the assembly either during the synod itself, or before the synod (thus pointing to the likelihood that his texts were circulating in the region south of Palestine where he taught, in Caesarea).

Origen states: "Some have alleged about the *theotēs* that although I confessed the resurrection of the dead before the church of a dead body, although I admitted with regard to the *theotēs ousiodōs* of Jesus Christ." His teaching on the corpse of Christ and its resurrection, Origen indicates, are necessary for the general teaching of the resurrection of all. At the end of the discussion, Origen remarks, "if this is pleasing [to you], they will also be enacted as law and affixed. He then asks, "What else about the faith? Maximus, say what it seems to you."

With this quotation, it can be seen that Origen remains in the role of examiner at this small council in Arabia. The teacher and homilist of Caesarea, who in his home city was regularly entrusted with giving homilies and directing a school of philosophy and exegesis, here shows that like a teacher, he can examine those who are still learning. It is not surprising that his students are, in this case, bishops. These bishops seem not to know Christian teaching at the level that Origen does, and therefore they require instruction. At the same time, they have the authority to meet in a synod and to prepare – in all likelihood – to take this orthodox and deeper teaching received from Origen to their congregations in their home cities.

One more question remains, and that has to do with Origen's own understanding of the relationship between the Father and the Son. This is an understanding that surely guided his examination of Heraclides, but is still under discussion; modern scholars in the previous century and this one have disagreed about how Origen thought of the relationship between the two divine beings. As Rowan Williams has shown in a recent article, both Origen's contemporary opponents (dualist teachers such as Marcion and Valentinus) and his later supporters (such as Rufinus) misunderstood and distorted his teaching.

In "On Not Misreading Origen," Williams reasons that Origen has by the end of his career developed a "polemical agenda" that must deal not only with enemies of the true teaching such as Valentinus, but also with those teachers within the orthodox body of churches who misunderstand the correct teaching of the being and role of the Son of God both within the godhead, and as Christ, in communicating corrective

[7] BUCHINGER, H., Eucharistische Praxis und eucharistische Frömmigkeit bei Origenes, p. 5-78.

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teaching to his genuine followers. Quoting Origen's Commentary on John 2.14 and 2.21, Williams writes to repudiate "any suggestion that the work of the Logos is limited":

> We cannot properly think, for example, that creation begins with a divine delegation of power and responsibility to a demiurge who produces the lower levels of created being with the Logos subsequently working on this inferior, material world in order to bring to light and form the spiritual seeds in it … the characteristically gnostic postulation of a primordial fragmentation of divine life is, in Orien's eyes, a surrender to the very materialism that gnostic rhetoric deplores.[8]

Identifying those among the orthodox whose mistakes endanger a correct, and saving, teaching about the Logos, Williams writes that in the *Commentary on John*, the *Contra Celsum* and the newly-discovered Psalms homilies, Origen states that orthodox Christian teachers are in need of correction as well: "Origen is perhaps more often deliberately setting out to correct previous apologists than we have usually recognised: one of the things he is afraid of is inept or imperfectly instructed allies."[9] Such a recognition by Williams supports very well the attitude that Origen takes in the *Dialogue*. Origen's allies are here the bishops of Arabia, but they do not have extensive knowledge of scripture and philosophy; they need further instruction so that they will not damage the truth the church was established to preach. Williams remarks, further, that "The eternally hypostatic character of the Logos is what Origen most wants to affirm, and what he is afraid of is a would-be 'orthodox' riposte to Valentinian or Stoicising cosmogonies that ends up with a two-stage narrative about the generation of the Logos in which the eternal status of the Logos as *Son* is compromised."[10]

This short essay is not the place to explore in detail the theology of divine sonship, or the terms *hypostasis* and *homoousios* as Origen uses them. Scholars of Origen still disagree on his understanding of the relation between the Father and the Son, coming as it did before the issue became a matter of controversy, and his theology's relationship not only to Athanasius' or Eusebius, but also to that of the settled teaching of the Council of Constantinople, elaborated by Gregory of Nazianzus, Gregory of Nyssa, and the first Gregory's student, Evagrius. At the same time, it must be noted that Origen's understanding of the divinization of rational, created minds tilts toward that of those neo-Nicenes and requires the full divinity of the Son and Logos, incarnate in the Savior.

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Conclusion

This essay has attempted to explore two aspects of the history of early Christian councils: first to show how, at a small and regional council, Origen tried to use the occasion to instruct and converse with bishops – and second, to illustrate that the knowledge of the history of the early church's theology has been lost along with the minutes of the otherwise-celebrated Council of Nicaea. Thanks to the accidental discovery of the Tura papyri we have at least a model of conciliar discussion. We may reasonably imagine that similar, and similarly spirited exchanges, occurred at the first ecumenical council in Nicaea.

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[10] WILLIAMS, R., On Not Misreading Origen, p. 311-312.

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