



UNIVERSITÀ
CATTOLICA
del Sacro Cuore

Dottorato di ricerca in
Studi umanistici. Tradizione e contemporaneità
Ciclo XXXII
S.S.D. M-FIL/06

Heterodoxy and rational theology: Jean Le Clerc and Origen

Coordinatore: Prof.ssa Cinzia Bearzot

Tutor: Prof.ssa Elena Rapetti

Tesi di dottorato di: Andrea Bianchi

Matricola: 4612246

Anno Accademico 2018 / 2019

Acknowledgements

It is true that a typical day in the life of a Ph.D. student who is busy researching and writing up a thesis in 17th century intellectual history is not far from the stereotypical image of a dark room and patient staring at crammed pages, either on screen or in actual physical copies. As back in the days of the *République des Lettres*, however, during these years I have often felt part of a community of research and scholarship that has supported me in multiple ways so that the present analysis may be brought to completion. The first and most important scientific companion on this journey has been my supervisor, Prof. Elena Rapetti. I would like to thank her for her continuous advice, for our many discussions on the subject and the challenges she has posed to my analysis from time to time. Her encouragement to always strive for deeper and more complex layers of analysis has given much direction to my work. Errors remain my own.

I acknowledge and am grateful for the funding I have received from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No. 676258. This funding has allowed me to conduct my research in the best possible conditions. I would also like to thank the whole ITN HHFDWC team of which I was part. This has been a very supportive Europe-USA wide community of scholars and Ph.D. students. Interactions both at meetings and seminars and beyond have helped me not only scientifically but also, and more importantly, at the human level. I would like to thank Dr. Birgitte Bøgh for her excellent administrative support and passion for excellence. Her enthusiasm for the common goals of the project has helped me feel part of it. I also thank Prof. Anders-Christian Jacobsen for his initiatives as coordinator, Prof. Friedemann Stengel for his advice and support during my internship in Halle and Prof. Alfons Fürst for his feedback on my work during my secondment in Münster. Thanks go also to Prof. Lenka Karfíková, Prof. Karla Pollmann, Prof. Peter Martens and Prof. Theo Kobusch for their feedback on my work and their insights into an academic life and career. Among the Ph.D. students, I would like to thank in particular Elisa Zocchi for helping me find an alternative to my old reference manager, Joshua Roe for his help with the project database and with information on important

conferences, books and material in general and Elisa Bellucci for her friendship and encouraging attitude, especially during my time in Halle.

Both in my home institution in Milan and during the many conferences and workshops I have had the privilege to attend, many formal and informal encounters and discussions have proved very fruitful for the elaboration of this work and have given me the chance to review the progress of my work from a different perspective. On this note, I would like to thank in particular Prof. Marco Rizzi, Prof. Daniel Cyranka, Prof. Maria Cristina Pitassi, Prof. Daniela Solfaroli Camillocci, Prof. Paul Rateau, Prof. Todd Ryan, Prof. Stefano Brogi, Prof. Mauro Meruzzi, Prof. David Leech and Dr Christian Hengstermann. I would also like to thank Prof. Pitassi for the chance she has given me to spend some research time at the Institut d'histoire de la Réformation at the University of Geneva and for the help and welcome of the staff at the institute, Mrs. Cristina Conti and Mrs. Marlene Jaouich. I acknowledge the great service provided by institutions such as Google, the Bibliothèque nationale de France with Gallica and the Bayerischen Staatsbibliothek with its Münchener DigitalisierungsZentrum as they made available a wealth of digital material that would have been unimaginable only some decades ago.

I am also grateful for the staff at my home university in Milan for helping me in multiple ways. On this note, I would like to thank in particular Paolo Senna for his assistance as librarian and our lunch discussions on politics, academia and the world and Alessandra Amato and Silvia Merlo for their excellent guidance and precise support with the administrative aspects of the project, including the many travels required.

A special thanks goes also to Dr. Marilyn Lewis for her kind support throughout the Ph.D. process. Not only has she provided very useful links and insights from her research and crucial advice in the early stages of the process, her suggestions to improve my academic English writing have been precious for every page of the present work. I sincerely hope I was able to follow her guidelines, at least in part. Her enthusiasm for learning and for theology have been inspiring for me.

Finally, the biggest thanks go to my life companion, my wife Emanuela, to which this work is dedicated. Her love and the very numerous joyful moments spent

together these years have fuelled my research. Her companionship in times of difficulty or distress has been incredibly important for the success of this work, and her careful listening has helped me look at things, scientific and not, from a different perspective. I thank her also for her ability and willingness to move from country to country for prolonged research periods during these years. Without her encouragement that I should embark on a Ph.D. while it was only a dream, the present work would have probably never started in the first place.

Table of contents

GENERAL INTRODUCTION	I
PART 1: SKETCHES OF LE CLERC'S INTELLECTUAL PROFILE	18
1. EPISTEMOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS AND <i>MODICA THEOLOGIA</i>	18
1.1 DESCARTES, LOCKE AND LE CLERC	18
1.2 SCRIPTURAL EVIDENCE	29
1.3 <i>MODICA THEOLOGIA</i>	36
2. AUTHORITY AND TRADITION: THE PAGAN AND THE CHRISTIAN PAST	44
2.1 AUTHORITY AND TRADITION	45
2.2 USES OF THE PAST	52
2.3 THE CHRISTIAN TRADITION: CHURCH FATHERS AND EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITERS	58
PART 2: LE CLERC'S RECEPTION OF ORIGEN	72
3. ORIGEN THE THINKER	72
3.1 A DISCIPLE OF PLATO	73
3.2 THE HELLENISATION OF CHRISTIANITY	79
3.3 SCRIPTURAL PLATONISM: SOME EXAMPLES	84
3.4 PLATO'S JEWISH SOURCES	87
3.5 DEBATES ON THE FATHERS' PLATONISM	90
3.6 SAVING ORIGEN	96
4. ORIGEN'S BIBLICAL AND NON-BIBLICAL SCHOLARSHIP	100
4.1 ORIGEN'S <i>HEXAPLA</i> AND THE "NEW ORIGEN"	101
4.2 BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS	107
4.3 SCRIPTURAL INSPIRATION	112
4.4 THE DARK SIDE OF THE SCHOLARLY ORIGEN: PHILOLOGY, ALLEGORY AND BIBLICAL LANGUAGES	118
4.5 RESOLVING THE AMBIVALENCE	126
5. ORIGEN AS HISTORICAL TESTIMONY	130
5.1 TESTIMONY, FACTS AND CREDIBILITY	130
5.2 CRITERIA OF CREDIBILITY	134
5.3 ORIGEN AS TESTIMONY	143
5.4 ISSUES IN ORIGEN'S TESTIMONY	147
5.5 ORIGEN AS TESTIMONY IN EARLY MODERN ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORIES	153

5.6 FINAL REMARKS	157
PART 3: ORIGEN, FREEDOM AND THEOLOGY	159
6. DOCTRINAL DEBATES: ORIGINAL SIN	159
6.1 LE CLERC'S REJECTION OF ORIGINAL SIN AS <i>CORRUPTION</i>	160
6.2 ORIGINAL SIN AS IMITATION	163
6.3 DEBATES, ORTHODOXY AND STRATEGIC USE OF SOURCES	170
7. DOCTRINAL DEBATES: PREDESTINATION AND GRACE	181
7.1 EARLY APPEARANCES	182
7.2 THE AUTHORITY OF THE ORIGENIST TRADITION	192
7.3 ROMAN CATHOLIC AND PROTESTANT DEBATES ON PREDESTINATION	203
7.4 ORIGEN AS RATIONAL THEOLOGIAN	206
8. DOCTRINAL DEBATES: THEODICY	220
8.1 THE EARLY STAGE OF THE DEBATE	221
8.2 THE ARGUMENT OF FREEDOM	230
8.3 APOCATASTASIS, TOLERABLE AND ETERNAL PUNISHMENT	234
8.4 REASON, EVIDENCE AND FAITH	240
8.5 POLITICAL OR TACTICAL ORIGENISM?	244
GENERAL CONCLUSION	247
REFERENCES	251

Abbreviations

Phil: Origen. *Philocalia*.

CC: Origen. *Contra Celsum*.

Orat: Origen. *De Oratione*.

Prin: Origen. *De Principiis*.

Clo: Origen. *Commentarius in Johannem*.

BUH: Le Clerc, Jean. *Bibliothèque universelle et historique*.

BC: Le Clerc, Jean. *Bibliothèque choisie pour servir de suite à la Bibliothèque universelle*.

BAM: Le Clerc, Jean. *Bibliothèque ancienne et moderne pour servir de suite aux Bibliothèques Universelle et Choisie*.

Dict: Bayle, Pierre. *Dictionnaire Historique et Critique*.

General introduction

The aim of the present work is to provide a detailed study of the reception of the thought of Origen of Alexandria (c. 184–c. 253), especially his conception of freedom and its related theological doctrines, in Jean Le Clerc (1657–1736). In contrast to the case of a work on Plato, Descartes or Thomas Aquinas, for example, I think it is beneficial to start the present analysis with a justification of the choice of topic under scrutiny and the scholarly potential it offers.

Why Le Clerc?

Academic research has become increasingly inclusive in its choice of research subjects in the last few decades, and it now seems fully acceptable to the scientific community to have a detailed study dedicated to some intellectual figure of the past who had been branded as "minor". This is of course not only applicable to female intellectuals of past centuries, but to all those who, in one way or another, are increasingly recognised for their contribution to the intellectual development of their age, regardless of how big or small this is judged to be. Leaving aside Origen for now, who is far from a "minor" of the past, this is indeed the case with Jean Le Clerc, the leading character of the present study.

While it is true that Le Clerc was very popular throughout Europe in his time, only a handful of scholarly articles have been specifically dedicated to an exploration of his thought in recent centuries, some of which we will review in the present work, and only three monographs. The seminal monograph by Annie Barnes, *Jean Le Clerc (1657–1736) et la République des lettres*, published in 1936, is still the most authoritative work on Le Clerc's biography, while Samuel Golden's *Jean LeClerc*, published in 1972, has mainly an introductory character. Part of the Twayne's World Authors Series (TWAS), it was the intention of Golden that this work would provide only a survey of the subject. The excellent work by Maria-Cristina Pitassi, *Entre croire et savoir: le problème de la méthode critique chez Jean Le Clerc*, published in 1987, focused on Le Clerc's exegesis and covered many other aspects related to Le Clerc's epistemology. This is the most recent monograph dedicated to Le Clerc's thought and is very authoritative in its content.

While it is clear that Le Clerc's thought and production is an under-researched topic, or is at least less researched than is thought deserved,¹ the reason for such scholarly neglect is far less clear. It is certainly obvious that part of his status as a forgotten personality of the past is due to the fact that Le Clerc did not – at least apparently – propose a radical new way of understanding the world, or at least the world of philosophy, be it metaphysics, epistemology or natural philosophy. He has thus often suffered the much more visible presence of a Descartes, a Spinoza or a Locke, not to mention a Leibniz, a Malebranche or even a Newton, and many more. And yet, by recovering many facets of Le Clerc's thought, I hope in this work to make a case – if not to convince the reader – that a serious study of Le Clerc is a worthwhile effort.

A reader approaching the present monograph might already be aware of Le Clerc's importance for intellectual history. However, if not, or if the reader is only interested in the reception of Origen, I hope to show him a different perspective. That I make a case for studying Le Clerc's works might sound obvious coming from the author of the present monograph, but aside from the fact that I hope that the pages of this work will speak for themselves, I think there are a number of perspectives that support my statement from the start.

My claim is not that we should approach Le Clerc as we do traditionally with Locke or Descartes, for example, but that Le Clerc's possible contribution to scholarly research becomes more evident if we focus on early modern intellectual history. That is, to follow Sarah Hutton, we can consider intellectual history and the history of philosophy not solely for the ideas they provide, but as a conversation among contemporaries of Le Clerc that we can "tune in" to.² This is not to say that Le Clerc had nothing relevant to say that is worthy of note in a traditional history of philosophy or of theology of the period, as I will show. This is true particularly on the specific Cartesianism and empiricism that he practised. I believe, however, that it will be increasingly evident throughout the present work that it is in the domain of intellectual history that Le Clerc's star shines the brightest.

¹ Manuela DONI GARFAGNINI, 'L'uso della critica come disciplina. La Repubblica delle Lettere di fronte all'opera di Jean Le Clerc', in: *Jean Le Clerc e gli spazi della ragione. Percorsi di critica e di storia*. Edizioni di storia e letteratura, Rome 2004, 113.

² Sarah HUTTON, 'Intellectual History and the History of Philosophy', in: *History of European Ideas* 40, no. 7 (2014) 935–937.

Le Clerc's relevance for intellectual history can be easily substantiated: most prominently through his vast and influential journalistic activity³, which helped shape the early modern European mind,⁴ but also through his more than 800 letters to and from learned men from all corners of Europe.⁵ Le Clerc was, besides this, also a key figure in the intellectually fervent Netherlands of the 17th century for the role that he earned through his large production of treatises, manuals and Biblical and non-Biblical critical editions, most of which we will review in this work. Some of his works were republished multiple times well into the 18th century.

Granted that Le Clerc had an influential place in European intellectual history, the present work will be especially, although not solely, concerned with his contribution to the development of a notion of Christian orthodoxy in his time. This applies to Protestant Christianity but can also be of interest from a Roman Catholic point of view. Not only was Le Clerc a literate, but also a pastor, and although he was ordained as a Calvinist pastor in his birthplace, Geneva, he later joined the Remonstrant (Arminian) Church in Amsterdam, whose main doctrines had been condemned in the synod of Dort in 1618–1619. Le Clerc thus became an "outsider" figure in the Calvinist Low Countries. Accused of Socinianism throughout his life, as we will visit again in the next chapters, he was also kept at a distance in his own church and in the Arminian-friendly wing of the Church of England, which was so dear to him. He had thus to defend and justify himself and his reputation on many occasions.

The present study is thus a contribution to the intellectual history of Europe, but more specifically to the history of the development of the concept of orthodoxy in early modern Protestant debates. The study of the reception of Origen, himself

³ He directed three learned journals, the *Bibliothèques*, and authored most of their articles. The *Bibliothèques* appeared as *Bibliothèque universelle et historique* (BUH), in 26 volumes, from 1686–1693; as *Bibliothèque choisie pour servir de suite à la Bibliothèque universelle* (BC), also known simply as *Bibliothèque Choisie*, in 28 volumes, from 1703–1713. The last title of the journals was *Bibliothèque ancienne et moderne pour servir de suite aux Bibliothèques Universelle et Choisie* (BAM), also known simply as *Bibliothèque ancienne et moderne*. It appeared in 29 volumes from 1714–1727. The final volumes of these *Bibliothèques*, containing general indexes, appeared respectively in 1718 (BUH and BC) and 1730 (BAM).

⁴ Hans BOTS, 'L'esprit de la République des Lettres et la tolérance dans les trois premiers périodiques savants hollandais', in: *Dix-Septième Siècle*, no. 116 (1977) 43–57.

⁵ Mario Sina and Maria Grazia Sina Zaccone have travelled throughout Europe for many years in order to collect, edit, and publish all known letters sent by or to Le Clerc. These have been published in four volumes from 1987–1997 by L. S. Olschki in Florence as *Jean Le Clerc: Epistolario*.

also considered an "outsider", condemned in two Christian councils at Alexandria and Constantinople, is an excellent focus point through which a study of intellectual history and the practices of orthodoxy construction can be approached.

The close-up on Le Clerc's relationship with Origen shows us a frame in the development of the European critical spirit or the crisis of the European mind, as Paul Hazard called it many years ago. Within this frame, we can experience from a closer point of view the intricacies of early modern argumentative practices in inter-confessional and intellectual debates regarding, among other things, the formation of orthodoxy and relate them to the more general intellectual developments of the time.

Why Origen?

The choice of Origen is not casual, nor has it been critically influenced by reasons extrinsic to Le Clerc's production. My choice was dictated by Le Clerc himself. In 1706, in the midst of one of his many learned debates, Le Clerc had exclaimed *Dieu est bon!* in the introduction of the 9th volume of his *Bibliothèque Choisie* when referring specifically to his articles against the famous Pierre Bayle (1647–1706).⁶ This was an important chapter in the dispute between the two learned men, which had featured something like a puppet show of a Manichean and an Origenist battling for the winning argument. At stake was nothing less than the problem of evil and its (rationally conceivable) compatibility with human freedom and God's justice and goodness. While Bayle, generally speaking, considered the Manichean solution as the only rational one but really pleaded for a fideistic attitude, Le Clerc believed that he could come to the rescue of God with the help of Origen's arguments.⁷

In what followed, it was easy for Bayle to accuse Le Clerc of Origenism, a word that at that time included different layers of meaning, the most superficial of

⁶ Jean LE CLERC, *BC 9* (1706), Avertissement, [7].

⁷ See, for example: Pierre BAYLE, *Dictionnaire historique et critique*, vol. 2/2, P-Z, R. Leers, Rotterdam 1697, Rem. H 'Pauliciens', 761–762; Théodore PARRHASE [Jean Le Clerc], '*Parrhasiana*', ou *pensées diverses sur des matières de critique, d'histoire, de morale et de politique, avec la défense de divers ouvrages de M. L. C.*, A. Schelte, Amsterdam 1699, 301–303. This debate will be reviewed closely in the final part of the present work and many more related references will be provided.

them simply being "heretic".⁸ It was similarly straightforward for Le Clerc to reject such an accusation and point to his only fictitious use of Origen's argument.⁹ The dispute faded away eventually, with Bayle's death in 1706 and Le Clerc's response to Bayle's posthumous work, but the two perspectives remained strongly consolidated. We will review this debate in much more detail in the final chapter of the present work, but for now it is sufficient to say that there appeared to be good reasons for Bayle's claim; Le Clerc's rational defence of theodicy was strongly based on a form of Origenism.

Le Clerc had even argued at one point that: "Il est hors de doute qu'il vaudroit mieux être Origeniste, que Deïste, ou Athée, ou Manichéen."¹⁰ Bayle's objections and Le Clerc's actual practices have thus given the first input to the present research. This debate, but also the fact that Le Clerc had at times supported his theological views on original sin, grace and predestination, and eschatology with a reference to Origen, render the Alexandrian the perfect focus point to uncover early modern argumentative practices, especially regarding orthodoxy formation, and provide fruitful insights for a study of early modern intellectual developments. This study will not be solely concerned with the Bayle–Le Clerc exchange and the role of Origen in it, but this debate shows the importance of setting sail on this quest.

The focus of the present study and first indications on the state of the art

Once the rationale of the present analysis and its scholarly potential have been defined, it is possible to further clarify the research questions. Within the main research goal of an understanding of Origen's reception in Le Clerc, with a view on his practices of orthodoxy construction, the most important aspect I will engage with in the present work will be the role of Origen's arguments and doctrines in Le Clerc's theology, especially those related to freedom. The aim will be, in other words, to discover if Bayle's accusation can be substantiated and generalised to the

⁸ Pierre BAYLE, *Reponse aux questions d'un provincial*, vol. 4, R. Leers, Rotterdam 1707, 22–23; *Entretiens de Maxime et de Thémiste, ou reponse à ce que Mr. Le Clerc a écrit dans son X. tome de la Bibliotheque Choisie contre Mr. Bayle*, R. Leers, Rotterdam 1707, 20.

⁹ LE CLERC, *BC* 9 (1706), art.3, 107.

¹⁰ LE CLERC, *Parrhasiana*, 314.

whole of Le Clerc's thought. Was Le Clerc really an "Origenist", or was Le Clerc's defence and disavowal of Origenism rather genuine and more coherent with his overall thought? What, then, were the reasons behind his use of Origen's arguments? This challenging subject is especially worthy of effort, as in Bayle's accusation there is a large portion of a common history of ideas that is still unexplored. The present study will be the first monograph dedicated to this question, but not the first attempt to put this issue under sharper light. Excellent but only preliminary reflections have been made in the past and have reached different conclusions.

Luisa Simonutti did not handle the question of Le Clerc's Origenism specifically, but she discussed Le Clerc's early epistolary conversations with his fellow Arminian friend and teacher Philipp Van Limborch (1633–1712) on the possible place for dissimulation in religious matters. Whereas Limborch was against it, Simonutti has shown that such a possibility was contemplated by Le Clerc in particular circumstances.¹¹ From this reflection we can infer that a sort of hidden Origenism in Le Clerc was a plausible possibility, at least in Le Clerc's early years. A conclusion in this direction was reached by Daniel P. Walker, who explicitly considered Le Clerc as a sort of disguised Origenist on eschatological matters.¹² Walker's reflection was mainly based on a particular work by Le Clerc, the *Parrhasiana*, written in his mature years.

Mario Sina has argued for a more "sincere" Le Clerc. He pointed out that Le Clerc was willing to express his genuine thought even in circumstances where it was clear that it would have been received with hostility.¹³ In an article dedicated to the discussion of Le Clerc's Origenism, Sina concluded that certain aspects of Le Clerc's thought prevented him from being a true Origenist, but rather that Origen's thought became part of Le Clerc's arguments if it was in agreement with certain

¹¹ Luisa SIMONUTTI, *Arminianesimo e tolleranza nel seicento olandese. Il carteggio Ph. van Limborch, J. Le Clerc*, L. S. Olschki, Florence 1984, 30–42.

¹² Daniel Pickering WALKER, *The Decline of Hell. Seventeenth-Century Discussions of Eternal Torment*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London 1964, 188–195.

¹³ Mario SINA/Maria Grazia SINA ZACCONE, *Jean Le Clerc. Epistolario. Vol. I. 1679–1689*, L. S. Olschki, Firenze 1987, introduzione, XVI–XVIII.

truth canons he believed to be the best.¹⁴ Sina based his reflection on Le Clerc's philosophical/epistemological beliefs and his Cartesian/critical spirit, as expressed in both a selection of his main works and his epistolary. He came thus to somehow different conclusions from Walker and Simonutti. If we follow Sina, we must take Le Clerc's disavowal of Origenism seriously and must find other ways to understand Le Clerc's references to Origen in the debate with Bayle. These other ways, again, if we follow Sina, must be in agreement with Le Clerc's epistemological outlook.

Stefano Brogi arrived at a similar conclusion and argued that Le Clerc's methodological framework prevented him from being a full Origenist, especially Le Clerc's idea that only what is clearly revealed in Scripture must be believed. Yet, Brogi focused his reflection on the debate between Bayle and Le Clerc and also argued that a certain sympathy for Origen in Le Clerc, especially on the doctrine of universal salvation, was undeniable and in line with his Arminian theology. He has thus contended that Le Clerc's caution on Origenism with Bayle was more dictated by his need to defend himself from accusations of heterodoxy than from personal conviction.¹⁵ The result of this analysis thus points in two different directions: Le Clerc cautiously appropriated parts of Origenism but at the same time his epistemological framework prevented him from a full adhesion to Origenism. What is certain is that for Brogi, at least in the debate with Bayle, Origen was instrumental for Le Clerc in avoiding the final defeat of rational theology.¹⁶

A rather critical attitude of Le Clerc towards Origen has been detected by Gaetano Lettieri, who, again, based his reflection mainly on the *Parrhasiana*. He considered Le Clerc's use of Origen against Bayle as a polemical device and argued that Le Clerc's Origenian eschatology was dictated by a rational preference in comparison to a strictly Reformed eschatology as put forward by Bayle, but not in absolute terms.¹⁷ This is only partly close to the reflection of Brogi. Only a few years ago, Michael W. Hickson completed an English edition of the last work of

¹⁴ Mario SINA, 'Origenismo e anti-agostinismo in Jean Le Clerc diffusore della cultura inglese', in: *Studi su John Locke e su altri pensatori cristiani agli albori del secolo dei lumi*, Università, Vita e Pensiero, Milano 2015, 421–440.

¹⁵ Stefano BROGI, *Teologia senza verità. Bayle contro i 'Rationaux'*, FrancoAngeli, Milan 1998, 192–193, 199.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 201–203.

¹⁷ Gaetano LETTIERI, 'Origenismo (in occidente, secc. VII-XVIII)', in: Adele MONACI CASTAGNO (ed.), *Origene. Dizionario. La cultura, il pensiero, le opere*, Città nuova, Rome 2000, 318.

Bayle dedicated to his debate with Le Clerc, the *Entretiens de Maxime et de Thémiste*, and in the long introduction to this work he sketched the contours of the debate. In his analysis, based on Le Clerc's works involved in the debate, he showed how Le Clerc exploited Origenism as a device, thus reaching conclusions that were partly similar to those of Lettieri and Brogi.¹⁸

Finally, another recent study, this time by Scott Mandelbrote, also highlighted Le Clerc's polemical use of Origen against Bayle. Mandelbrote also added the interesting remark that Le Clerc considered Origen favourably as a (Biblical) editor.¹⁹ In sum, the available research on this particular question is useful for the present work as an indication of different aspects of and possible answers to the main question. Yet, research has argued in various ways on this topic, and Origen's role for Le Clerc has not been examined in depth. This past research acts, therefore, as an excellent springboard for this present study, which seeks to enrich it with new insights.

Method and limits

This study adds unexplored layers to the problem through a different methodological perspective. It not only reviews previously analysed material but, most importantly, makes use of a much larger basis of references to Le Clerc's production compared to previous scholarly literature. It includes not only a comprehensive analysis of Le Clerc's works, but also of his epistolary correspondence and, even more interestingly, of his journalistic production. To embark on a research project on the reception of Origen in Le Clerc is promising because of the frequent appearances of Origen in Le Clerc's work, and not all reception quests can boast such a departure point. It could be tempting to stop at that, but besides these references I will also organically take into account his many other works and the intellectual-religious background of the time. Le Clerc's production is vast, and it was not possible to review every single work with the

¹⁸ Michael W. HICKSON, 'Introduction', in: Michael W. HICKSON (ed.), *Dialogues of Maximus and Themistius*, Brill, Leiden/Boston 2016, 43–50.

¹⁹ Scott MANDELBROTE, 'Origen against Jerome in Early Modern Europe', in: Silke-Petra BERGJAN/Karla POLLMANN (eds.), *Patristic Tradition and Intellectual Paradigms in the 17th Century*, Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen 2010, 132.

same depth, even if I touched upon, albeit briefly at times, every published work of his of which I am aware. However, I am confident about the results of the present analysis, but I am sure it could be further enriched by new insights in the future or even corrected in some of its parts. This is even more true if we take into account continuous developments in early modern intellectual history and the rise of digital humanities and the progressively increasing availability of large amounts of data.

Past personalities did not exist and write in a vacuum, and I will not present Le Clerc as a personality detached from his cultural and religious surroundings. The present research will thus try to also consider the intellectual background which helped shape Le Clerc's thought and to relate it mainly to Descartes, Locke or Le Clerc's fellow Arminians as well as learned debates of the time. I will not attempt, however, to extend the findings of the present research to Dutch Arminians of the time as a whole or other religious groups or philosophical currents. Much will still remain to be done, for example, on the reception of Origen in Dutch Arminianism, even after the present work. This latter would have been a wholly separate challenge to which one or more future studies could be dedicated.

A significant number of scholars, especially from the 60s of the last century onwards, have reflected on the possibilities and the limits of reception research, and it is clear that the identification of the reception of an author in another later author is a highly complex endeavour.²⁰ To mention just the most evident problem, it can easily become a biased quest in which research on the reception of Origen finds Origen everywhere, as with Augustine, Jerome, Scholastics, Cartesianism and much more.²¹ Reception research owes much to developments in philosophy and literary studies, as with Hans Georg Gadamer, Hans Robert Jauss and Wolfgang Iser, who have criticised an overly positivistic approach to the past. Through their reflection, the focus in classical and literary studies has shifted from an excessive

²⁰ For an introduction to the questions on and the various approaches to reception theory, see: Robert C. HOLUB, *Reception Theory. A Critical Introduction*, Methuen & Co., London 1984; Mark KNIGHT, 'Wirkungsgeschichte, Reception History, Reception Theory', in: *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*, 33, no. 2 (2010) 137–146; Rien T. SEGERS, 'Dynamics and Progress in Literary Studies? Some Notes on a Neglected Topic in Literary Scholarship with Special Reference to Reception Research', in: *LUMIS-Schriften* 35, 1993.

²¹ Karla POLLMANN, 'The Proteanism of Authority', in: Karla POLLMANN/Willemien OTTEN (eds.), *The Oxford Guide to the Historical Reception of Augustine*, vol. 1, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2013, 8.

attention to understanding the author and the text, to including the reader of the text and what the reader does with the text.²²

The approach of reception research has been criticised from a post-modern and post-structural point of view for its seemingly arbitrary choice to focus on the reader rather than other factors, but Karla Pollmann has claimed that this criticism has not invalidated the approach. According to her, this critique has rather fostered the refinement of reception research, prompting an awareness of the personal beliefs which are at work in those committed to it.²³ Her definition of reception research is that it is:

An approach to texts that concerns itself first and foremost with *historical* actualisation(s) of a text by one or more reader(s), be it by way of precise quotation, more or less precise paraphrase, or the mere apostrophe of the author as authority, and be it for rather mundane doxographic purposes, for political or other very specific concrete aims, or in wider interpretative contexts. [...] Reception studies [...] seek to understand textual interpretations as they have been produced historically in different times by various readers and analyse the process of producing interpretations rather than to provide them.²⁴

It is this approach and its evident empirical component ("who reads what, how, and why")²⁵ that I will use as my own throughout the present work. Pollmann has spelt out possible ways in which reception can happen at this more practical level and various strategies at work in the reception of a text.²⁶

The broad spectrum of material I will cover in the present analysis and the reflections on the wider cultural-religious background in which it was placed seek to mitigate the risk of either reading too much reception into a text or simply deterministically interpreting this reception according to my own beliefs. The importance of context in the case of reception studies is fundamental. As Lorna

²² Charles MARTINDALE, 'Introduction. Thinking Through Reception', in: Charles MARTINDALE/Richard F. THOMAS (eds.), *Classics and the Uses of Reception*, Blackwell, Oxford 2006, 3; Charles MARTINDALE, 'Reception', in: Craig W. KALLENDORF (ed.), *A Companion to the Classical Tradition*, Wiley-Blackwell, Chichester 2010, 298. For an interesting reflection on the "old" and the "new" way of reading past texts and a suggestion for a balance approach of the two, see: Martyn P. THOMPSON, 'Reception Theory and the Interpretation of Historical Meaning', in: *History and Theory* 32, no. 3 (1993) 248–272.

²³ Karla POLLMANN, 'How to Do Things with Augustine. Patristics and Reception Theory', in: *Church Studies* 5 (2008) 34–35.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 32–33.

²⁵ Karla POLLMANN, 'The Proteanism of Authority', 8.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 12–13.

Hardwick has pointed out, reception studies "are concerned not only with individual texts and their relationship with one another but also with the broader cultural processes which shape and make up those relationships".²⁷

Another methodological distinction is important at this point. I will often refer to Origen as a "Church Father" throughout the present work, even if it would have been more correct to label Origen an "early Christian thinker". Not that Origen's importance as a giant of the early Church can be doubted. Recent years, as well as the 20th century, have witnessed a rise in the interest in Origen. However, the fact that he was condemned by two councils remains a controversial factor. Hence, I have deemed it more appropriate to call Origen a "Church Father" on most occasions, because this is what Le Clerc did. Le Clerc's reflections on the Church Fathers included Origen and it would have therefore been too confusing not to follow Le Clerc's lead.²⁸ After all, in French-speaking countries the concept of who was a Church Father was very fluid and was tailored to the various needs of the various confessional groups.²⁹

A last point is my use of gender in the text. I use the traditional masculine "he" and "his" whenever I refer to the reader. I am well aware that this is only a limited choice and that my readership will be only partly represented through this linguistic device. I made this choice for reasons of convenience and to avoid overcomplicated language. I am grateful for the reader's understanding.

Current research on heresiology, patristics and the reception of Origen

The question of Le Clerc's Origenism, as I have argued before, is part of the larger research question on early modern practices of orthodoxy formation, at least from the angle I think is more advantageous to see it. The intellectual consequences of early modern heterodoxy, it has been claimed in a recent publication dedicated to the topic by Sarah Mortimer and John Robertson, have been so far largely

²⁷ Lorna HARDWICK, *Reception Studies*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2003, 5.

²⁸ An example can be drawn from the preface of Le Clerc's *Ars Critica*: 'Origenes, & plerique alii Græci Patres, Platonicis dogmatibus maximè addicti fuerunt.' Le Clerc, *Ars Critica in qua ad studia linguarum latinæ, græcæ, et hebraicæ via munitur: veterumque emendandorum, spuriorum scriptorum a genuinis dignoscendorum & judicandi de eorum libris ratio traditur*, vol.1, G. Gallet, Amsterdam 1697, præfatio, sec.2, 6.

²⁹ Jean-Louis QUANTIN, *Le Catholicisme classique et les Pères de l'Eglise. Un retour aux sources (1669–1713)*, Institut d'Études augustiniennes, Paris 1999, 48–61.

neglected.³⁰ Their work has provided useful insights in that direction, with two essays dedicated to Arminians, in particular Grotius, in their relation with Calvinists and Socinians.³¹ Despite the many other excellent essays in the same volume dedicated to various other authors of the time, much needs still to be done, especially in the case of Le Clerc.

Irena Backus, a scholar specialised in the reception of patristics, and Philippe Büttgen, have also signalled a general gap in the study of heterodoxy in the early modern time compared to the abundance of studies on the reception of the Fathers.³² They have further highlighted that there exists a close relationship between the study of the reception of the Fathers and the study of early modern heresy. They have pointed out that although there existed different criteria for defining heresy among Christian confessions, at the same time, both Roman Catholics and Protestants used the same strategy to prove their orthodoxy. They defined their orthodoxy with a reference to the old, true, Church, in an attempt to negate the same orthodoxy of the other party. This was the *moyen par excellence* of the time, they claimed, to marginalise the confessional opponent.³³

Considered from this perspective, a short reference to current research on the reception of the Church Fathers in the Reformation and early modern time becomes important to better assess the findings of the present study and its contribution to scholarly research on early modern intellectual history. I believe that current research has shown a number of ways in which Christian confessions related

³⁰ Sarah MORTIMER/John ROBERTSON, 'Nature, Revelation, History. Intellectual Consequences of Religious Heterodoxy c. 1600–1750', in: Sarah MORTIMER/John ROBERTSON (eds.), *The Intellectual Consequences of Religious Heterodoxy, 1600–1750*, Brill, Leiden/Boston 2012, 1.

³¹ Hans W. BLOM, 'Styles of Heterodoxy and Intellectual Achievement. Grotius and Arminianism', in: Sarah MORTIMER/John ROBERTSON (eds.), *The Intellectual Consequences of Religious Heterodoxy, 1600–1750*, Brill, Leiden/Boston 2012, 47–73; Sarah MORTIMER, 'Human and Divine Justice in the Works of Grotius and the Socinians', in: Sarah MORTIMER/John ROBERTSON (eds.) *The Intellectual Consequences of Religious Heterodoxy, 1600–1750*, Brill, Leiden/Boston 2012, 75–94.

³² Irena BACKUS/Philippe BÜTTGEN, 'Introduction. L'argument hérésiologique à l'époque des réformes', in: Irena BACKUS/Philippe BÜTTGEN/Bernard POUDERON (eds.) *L'argument hérésiologique, l'Eglise ancienne et les réformes, XVIe-XVIIe siècles. Actes du colloque de Tours, 10–11 Septembre 2010*, Beauchesne, Paris 2012, 13.

³³ *Ibid.*, 14–17. Jean-Louis Quantin has argued that, although such a polemical use of the Fathers was common early on in 17th century Roman Catholicism, this changed during the century with a greater stress on Church authority. Jean-Louis QUANTIN, 'The Fathers in Seventeenth Century Roman Catholic Theology', in: Irena BACKUS (ed.), *The Reception of the Church Fathers in the West. From the Carolingians to the Maurists*, vol. 2, Brill, Leiden/New York/Cologne 1997, 984.

to the early Church, the more common and traditional being the polemical one, where Fathers were used as authorities in religious debates.³⁴

A good example from the early 16th century has been given by Andrea Villani, who discussed the polemical (and almost paradoxical) use of Origen against Luther by two Roman Catholics, Ambrosius Catharinus (c.1484–1553) and Albert Pighius (1490–1542).³⁵ He also showed that this use did not mean a full commitment to the authority under question – and this could not have been true with Origen in any case – but a selective use of Origen targeted to what was most useful in the polemic.³⁶ Villani has also argued that such use of the early Church was by no means exclusive to Roman Catholics, but that a similar approach was present also in Protestantism.³⁷ Backus and Johannes Van Oort have shown that this was the case with Calvin, for example.³⁸ Calvin followed the traditional medieval method of authorities "at least stylistically", but he was no acritical follower of Church tradition.³⁹ Other reformers like Luther and Melanchthon also recurred to the Fathers on some occasions,⁴⁰ and later on the early Arminians like Armin and

³⁴ For an introductory article on the medieval use of Church tradition as "authority" see: Jacques-Guy BOUGEROL, 'The Church Fathers and *Auctoritates* in Scholastic Theology to Bonaventure', in: Irena BACKUS (ed.), *The Reception of the Church Fathers in the West*, vol. 1, 289–335.

³⁵ Andrea VILLANI, 'Origène entre Ambrosius Catharinus, Martin Luther et Albertus Pighius. La reprise d'un Père au service de la polémique *Ad Extra* et *Ad Intra*', in: Irena BACKUS (ed.), *L'argument hérésiologique*, 223–255.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 228–238.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 223–224. This has been confirmed also by Backus. Irena BACKUS, 'The Early Church in the Renaissance and Reformation', in: Ian HAZLETT (ed.), *Early Christianity. Origins and Evolution to AD 600. In Honour of W. H. C. Frend*, Abingdon Press, Nashville 1991, 291–303. Similarly, Ralph Keen has argued that whereas Roman Catholics focused on Patristic agreement, Protestants preferred individual Fathers. Ralph KEEN, 'The Fathers in Counter-Reformation Theology in the Pre-Tridentine Period', in: Irena BACKUS (ed.), *The Reception of the Church Fathers in the West*, vol. 2, 738.

³⁸ Irena BACKUS, 'Calvin and the Greek Fathers', in: Robert J. BAST/Andrew C. GOW (eds.), *Continuity and Change. The Harvest of Late Medieval and Reformation History. Essays Presented to Heiko A. Oberman on His 70th Birthday*, Brill, Leiden/Boston/Cologne 2000, 275–276; Johannes Van OORT, 'John Calvin and the Church Fathers', in: Irena BACKUS (ed.), *The Reception of the Church Fathers in the West*, vol. 2, 697–699.

³⁹ BACKUS, 'Calvin and the Greek Fathers', 275–276. Calvin's appropriation of Augustine's theology was later detected by Jansen and his interpretation was criticised, even if Jansen's primary confrontation was with the Jesuits and their interpretation of Augustine. On this, see Ralph KEEN, 'The Critique of Calvin in Jansenius's *Augustinus*', in: Maria Cristina PITASSI/Daniela SOLFAROLI CAMILLOCCI (eds.), *Crossing Traditions. Essays on the Reformation and Intellectual History. In Honour of Irena Backus*, Brill, Leiden/Boston 2018, 405–415.

⁴⁰ QUANTIN, *Le Catholicisme classique*, 65–66. A further example of this kind from the early Reformers comes from the Protestant use of the exegesis of the Fathers on the discussions concerning the canonicity of the book of Revelation, especially with Beza. Irena BACKUS, 'The Church Fathers and the Canonicity of the Apocalypse in the Sixteenth Century. Erasmus, Frans Titelmans, and Theodore Beza', in: *Sixteenth Century Journal* XXIX, no. 3 (1998) 661, 662–665.

Grotius referred to Augustine in a polemical way to discharge themselves from accusations of Pelagianism. Aza Goudriaan has shown how these early Arminians employed what he called "strategies". They stressed their closeness to Augustine in certain times, but their closeness to the pre-Augustinian church in others.⁴¹

This relationship with the early Church in Protestant Christianity was still actual in the time of high orthodoxy, that is in the long 17th century. Augustine was still instrumental for the Reformed to prove their orthodoxy, for example.⁴² This was so despite critical voices within their ranks, for example of André Rivet (1572–1651), who pleaded for a critical assessment of the Fathers. Backus has pointed out that Rivet did not propose an entirely new approach, but that his reflection was still very different from that of his predecessors.⁴³ Still, at times Rivet also used the Fathers polemically in the traditional sense and according to his practical needs.⁴⁴

Again, a similar example on Calvin and Zwingli can be found in Irena BACKUS, 'L'Exode 20, 3–4 et l'interdiction Des Images. L'emploi de La Tradition Patristique Par Zwingli et Par Calvin', in: *Unsere Kunstdenkmäler. Mitteilungsblatt für die Mitglieder der Gesellschaft für Schweizerische Kunstgeschichte. Nos monuments d'art et d'histoire. Bulletin destiné aux membres de la société d'histoire de l'art en Suisse. I nostri monumenti storici. Bollettino per i membri della società di storia dell'arte in Svizzera* 35 (1984) 319–322.

⁴¹Aza GOUDRIAAN, 'Seventeenth-Century Arminians and the Accusation of Pelagianism. Some Tactical Approaches', in: Irena BACKUS (ed.), *L'argument Hérésiologique*, 363–379. In another essay, Goudriaan showed how Armin preferred the "awake" Augustine to the "sleeping" Augustine (the late thought). He was surely better served by the early Augustine. Aza GOUDRIAAN, 'Augustin Asleep or Augustine Awake?', in: Marius Th. VAN LEEUWEN/Keith D. STANGLIN/Marijke TOLSMA (eds.), *Arminius, Arminianism, and Europe. Jacobus Arminius (1559/60–1609)*, Brill, Leiden/Boston 2009, 51–72. Diana Stanciu has claimed that there was a proper reception and influence of Augustine in Armin and she has highlighted some points of agreement among the two authors. As with all reception research, I think further research will be able to evaluate this claim further, taking into account a larger source base than this study. Diana STANCIU, 'Augustine's Legacy in the Dutch Remonstrants and the Cambridge Platonists', in: BERGIAN (ed.), in: *Patristic Tradition*, 168–169.

⁴²Maarten WISSE, 'The Teacher of the Ancient Church. Augustine', in: Willem J. VAN ASSELT (ed.), *Introduction to Reformed Scholasticism*, Reformation Heritage Books, Grand Rapids, Mich. 2011, 45–55.

⁴³Irena BACKUS, 'The Fathers and Calvinist Orthodoxy. Patristic Scholarship', in: Irena BACKUS (ed.), *The Reception of the Church Fathers in the West*, vol. 2, 839–841, 857–861. An example of a positive but critical reception of the Fathers many years before Rivet could be found for example in Erasmus. He was very passionate about the Fathers and studied them a lot, but he was still critical towards them to a certain degree. Jan Den BOEFT, 'Erasmus and the Church Fathers', in: Irena BACKUS (ed.), *The Reception of the Church Fathers in the West*, vol. 2, 537–538.

⁴⁴BACKUS, 'The Fathers and Calvinist Orthodoxy', 865. Ambiguity towards the Fathers, as Quantin has pointed out, was also part of the Anglican experience. This reflected the different streams within it, something that had changed from the early part of the century. Initially, Laudian and English Arminian circles had considered the *consensus patrum* as a source of doctrinal truth together with Scripture, but this had been later confronted with a more critical approach to the Fathers. Such a critical approach was, however, again overturned after the Restoration. The result was that the Fathers became at times instrumental in the traditional way, but that this was mainly restricted to the High Church. For other parties of the English Church, such an approach was

This ambiguity in the use of the Fathers, traditional-polemical but also critical, was still present in the later part of the century with Francois Turretini (1623–1687), but Eginhard Meijering has also shown that later orthodox Reformed used the Fathers in a much more speculative way compared to the early Reformers.⁴⁵ Mandelbrote has also argued for a more speculative use of the Fathers in the 17th century. The Fathers, he added, became like "quarries for contemporary argument and debate".⁴⁶

The place of Origen within this patristic discussion was, of course, much more complex than that of Jerome and of Basil, for example. In recent years, a significant amount of research has been dedicated to the study of the reception of Origen and "Origen's freedom" in the Renaissance and early modern time.⁴⁷ One of the most interesting reflections is that, starting with the Renaissance, there has been a "rediscovery" of Origen's conception of freedom. This is not to say that Origen's exegesis or spirituality was not present in medieval times, but Alfons Fürst has claimed that Origen's conception of freedom and its metaphysical implications was at times an important inspiration for the Renaissance and the early modern focus on

considered with scepticism because it seemed too close to Roman Catholicism. Jean-Louis QUANTIN, 'The Fathers in Seventeenth Century Anglican Theology', in: Irena BACKUS (ed.), *The Reception of the Church Fathers in the West*, vol. 2, 990–993, 1005–1006.

⁴⁵ Eginhard P. MEIJERING, 'The Fathers in Calvinist Orthodoxy. Systematic Theology', in: Irena BACKUS (ed.), *The Reception of the Church Fathers in the West*, vol. 2, 869, 884–885. A further example from the late 17th century is Bayle. Irene Dingel has shown that his relationship with Christian antiquity was also at the service of polemics, it was part of a tactic. However, she has also highlighted an additional interesting use of the Christian antiquity in him. For Bayle, Christian antiquity became a way to criticise the present Church, be it Roman Catholic or Protestant. Irene DINGEL, 'Die Behandlung der Kirchenväter bei Pierre Bayle', in: BERGIAN (ed.), *Patristic Tradition*, 32–33.

⁴⁶ MANDELBROTE, 'Origen against Jerome in Early Modern Europe', 135.

⁴⁷ For a short overview of the reception of Origen from the medieval to the early modern time, including a preliminary bibliography, see: LETTIERI, 'Origenismo'. See also: Alfons FÜRST, 'Origen's Legacy to Modern Thinking about Freedom and Autonomy', in: *Origeniana Undecima. Origen and Origenism in the History of Western Thought*, Peeters, Leuven/Paris/Bristol, CT 2016, 3–27. Within the book series "Adamantiana", dedicated to the study of the reception of Origen, a number of publications have dealt specifically with the reception of Origen in the Renaissance and early modern time: Alfons FÜRST/Christian HENGSTERMANN (eds.), *Autonomie und Menschenwürde. Origenes in der Philosophie der Neuzeit*, Adamantiana 2, Aschendorff Verlag, Münster 2012; FÜRST/HENGSTERMANN (eds.), *Die Cambridge Origenists. George Rusts Letter of Resolution Concerning Origen and the Chief of His Opinions. Zeugnisse des Cambridger Origenismus*, Adamantiana 4, Aschendorff, Münster 2013; FÜRST/HENGSTERMANN (eds.), *Origenes Humanista. Pico della Mirandolas Traktat De Salute Origenis Disputatio*, Adamantiana 5, Aschendorff Verlag, Münster 2015; Alfons FÜRST (ed.), *Origenes in Frankreich. Die Origeniana Pierre-Daniel Huets*, Adamantiana 10, Aschendorff Verlag, Münster 2017; FÜRST/HENGSTERMANN (eds.), *Origenes Cantabrigiensis. Ralph Cudworth Predigt vor dem Unterhaus und andere Schriften*, Adamantiana 11, Aschendorff Verlag, Münster 2018.

the individual.⁴⁸ He has shown how this happened, for example, in the case of Marsilio Ficino (1433–1499) and Pico della Mirandola (1463–1494).⁴⁹ Furthermore, Origen has been recognised as influential in Erasmus⁵⁰ and, going back to the article by Villani, in the case of the Roman Catholic Pighius it seemed appropriate to refer back to Origen and claim that, on free will, the Alexandrian had supported the golden middle between Pelagianism and Protestant predestination.⁵¹

Despite the renewed interest in Origen, which was also fostered by the edition of his Latin and Greek works in the 16th and 17th centuries,⁵² Origen was still a highly controversial personality of the early Church, and the French debate on the salvation of Origen is an excellent example of that.⁵³ Protestant scepticism towards Origen was also widespread.⁵⁴ Yet, following Mandelbrote, it can be said that, generally speaking, the perception towards Origen changed during the 17th century. Due to various circumstances, he became much more acceptable as a figure, despite the well-known unorthodox doctrines attributed to him. Le Clerc, Mandelbrote has argued, had been a driver in that change of perception.⁵⁵ In some other circumstances, as Sarah Hutton has shown, interest in the thought of Origen became real enthusiasm, as with the "Origenist" revival in English theology, advanced by Cambridge Platonism.⁵⁶

There was, in sum, a varied and changing attitude towards Origen during the 16th and 17th centuries. This was at times well within the canons of the general polemical attitude towards the Fathers. Yet, Origen's thought, and in particular "Origen's freedom", seemed to be given special consideration in particular

⁴⁸ Alfons FÜRST, *Origenes. Grieche und Christ in römischer Zeit*, Anton Hiersemann Verlag, Stuttgart 2017, 171.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 173–179. On Pico della Mirandola see also the already mentioned: FÜRST/HENGSTERMANN, *Origenes Humanista*.

⁵⁰ FÜRST, *Origenes*, 179–181. André GODIN, *Érasme Lecteur d'Origène*, Droz, Geneva 1982.

⁵¹ VILLANI, 'Origène Entre...', 246–247.

⁵² FÜRST, *Origenes*, 181–183.

⁵³ See: Henri DE LUBAC, 'La controverse sur le salut d'Origène à l'époque moderne', in: *Bulletin de littérature ecclésiastique* 83 (1982) 5–29, 83–110. For a more recent review of the debate, see Elena RAPETTI, 'The 17th century French debates on Origen's biography', in: *Origeniana Undecima. Origen and Origenism in the history of Western thought*, Peeters, Leuven/Paris/Bristol, CT 2016, 47–65.

⁵⁴ MANDELBROTE, 'Origen against Jerome in Early Modern Europe', 122.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 122, 125, 135.

⁵⁶ Sarah HUTTON, 'Henry More and Anne Conway on Preexistence and Universal Salvation', in: Marialuisa BALDI (ed.), *'Mind Senior to the World'. Stoicismo e Origenismo nella filosofia Platonica del Seicento inglese*, Franco Angeli, Milano 1996, 113.

circumstances. This happened despite Origen's "heretic" reputation. One of the results of the present analysis will be greater clarity regarding how some of the considerations I have made on the general reception of the Fathers and of Origen will apply, or not, to Le Clerc and the Arminian case. The background provided in this section provides a much needed wider perspective on the relationship between Le Clerc and Origen.

Chapter synopsis and final remarks

This work is divided into three main parts. In part one I pose the foundations for the rest of the analysis. This part provides sketches of Le Clerc's intellectual profile, especially those traits that are more relevant for an understanding of his relationship with Origen. In the first chapter I analyse the epistemological foundations upon which Le Clerc's considerations are based: his relationship with the thought of Descartes and Locke and his conception of Scripture. I then look at the epistemological but also theological consequences of such an approach. In the second chapter I uncover Le Clerc's relationship with the concept of intellectual authority and with both the Christian and pagan traditions. This includes an analysis of Le Clerc's relationship with the Church Fathers more generally.

The second part focuses on Le Clerc's multi-faceted reception of Origen and seeks to understand from a higher point of view how Le Clerc considered Origen. Its three chapters are dedicated to a study of multiple sides that Le Clerc saw in Origen. In the first chapter of this part I investigate the reception of the "philosophical" Origen, including Origen's Platonism. In the second chapter I consider how Le Clerc evaluated Origen's Biblical scholarship. In the third chapter I look at the role of Origen as historical testimony and compare Le Clerc's practices in this area to those of other historians of the time.

The third and final part deals with Le Clerc's relationship with Origen's conception of freedom in theological debates. In chapter one it is the turn of the doctrine of original sin, in chapter two I investigate the doctrine of predestination and grace, and in chapter three I conclude with the debates surrounding theodicy. In this final chapter the role of Origen within the debate with Bayle, which I sketched in this introduction, will be further clarified.

The analysis I propose in the remainder of this work will, in sum, fill various knowledge gaps in early modern intellectual history. Because it combines intellectual history with the history of philosophy and history of theology, the present analysis will appeal to a number of scholars. This will be beneficial not only to those interested in Le Clerc as such or in the reception of Origen, but also to those interested in early modern dynamics of orthodoxy construction and in rational theology. My hope is that these new insights will result in an improved understanding of our contemporary world and its intellectual dynamics.