Shorter writings

Rufinus of Aquileia (c. AD 345–411)

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Preface to Book 3 of On the First Principles

Rufinus had now come to Rome. The translation of B. III. and IV. had been made probably at Pinetum early in 398. He was already aware of the strong, feelings aroused by his Translation of B. I. and II., and he complains that parts of his work were obtained by Jerome's friends while still uncorrected, and used to his discredit (Apol. i, 18-21, ii, 44); but he continued the work, prefixing to it the following Preface as his justification.

Reader, remember me in your sacred moments of prayer, that I may be a worthy follower of the Spirit. It was you, Macarius, by whose instigation, I might say by whose compulsion, I translated the two first books of the Peri 'Arxwn. I did it during Lent; and at that time your near presence, my Christian brother, and your fuller leisure, forced me also into fuller diligence. But now that you are living at the opposite end of Rome from me, and my taskmaster pays his visits more seldom, I have taken longer in unfolding the sense of the two last books. You will remember that in my former preface I gave you warning that some people would be full of indignation when they found that I had no harm to say of Origen: and this, as I think you have found, has not been long in coming to pass. But if those demons who excite men's tongues to evil speaking, have been already set on fire by that first part of the work, though in it the author had not yet fully laid bare their devices, what will be the effect of this second part, in which he is going to disclose all the secret labyrinths through which they creep into the hearts of men and deceive the hearts of the weak and the frail? You will see disorder springing up on all sides, and party spirit will be raised, and an outcry will spread all through the town, and Origen will be summoned to the bar and condemned for his attempt to dispel the darkness of ignorance by the light of the Gospel's lamp. But all this will matter very little to those who are endeavouring to hold fast the sound form of the catholic faith while exercising their minds in the study of divine things.

I think it necessary, however, to remind you of the principle which I acted upon in reference to the former books, and which I have observed in the present case also, namely, not to set down in my translation things evidently contradictory to our belief and to the author's opinions as elsewhere expressed, but to pass them over as not genuine but inserted by others. On the other hand I have not, either in the former books or in these, omitted the novel

opinions which he has expressed about the formation of the reasonable creation, considering that it is not in such things that the faith mainly consists, but that what he is aiming at is merely knowledge and the exercise of the faculties, and that possibly there may be certain heresies which may have to be answered in this way. Only, in cases where he may have chosen to repeat in these later books what he had said before in the earlier, I have thought it expedient to cut out certain portions for the sake of brevity.

Those whose object in reading these books is to gain knowledge, not to disparage their author, would do well to seek the aid of men more skilled than themselves in interpreting them. For it is an absurd thing to get grammarians to explain to us the fictions of the poets' writings and the laughable stories of the comedians, and yet to think that books which speak of God and the celestial powers, and the whole universe, and which discuss all the errors of pagan philosophy and of heretical pravity are things which any one can understand without a teacher to explain them. In this way it comes to pass that men prefer to remain in ignorance and to pronounce rash judgments on things which are difficult and obscure rather than to gain an understanding of them by diligent study.

Preface to Origen's Homilies on Numbers

Addressed to Ursacius. Written in 410.

My dear brother, I might rightly address you in the words of the blessed master, "You do well, dearest Donatus, in reminding me of this; for I well remember my promise that I would collect all that Adamantius wrote in his old age on the Law of Moses, and translate it into Latin for the use of our people. But, as he says, the season was not seasonable for the fulfilment of my promise, but was full of storm and confusion. How can the pen move freely when a man is in fear of the missiles of the enemy, when he has before his eyes the devastation of cities and country, when he has to fly from dangers of the sea, and there is no safety even in exile? As you yourself saw, the Barbarian was within sight of us; he had set fire to the city of Rhegium, and our only protection against him was the very narrow sea which separates the soil of Italy from Sicily. In such a position, what leisure could there be for writing, and especially for translating, a work in which one's duty is not to develop one's own opinions but to express those of another?

However, when there was a quiet night, and our minds were relieved from the fear of an attack by the enemy, and we got at least some little leisure for thought, I setto work, as a solace from our troubles, and to relieve the burden of our pilgrimage, together into one and arrange all that Origen had written on the book of Numbers, whether in the way of homilies or in writings such as are called Excerpts, and to translate them into the Roman tongue. You urged me to do this, Ursacius, and aided me with all your might, indeed, so eager were you, that you thought the youth who acted as secretary too slow in the execution of his office. I wish, however, to point out to you, my brother, that the object of this method of studying scripture is not to deal with each clause separately, as you find done in commentaries, but to open up a path for the understanding, so that the reader may not be made negligent, but as it is written may "stir up his own spirit" and draw out the meaning, and, when he has heard the good word, may add to it by his own wisdom. In this way I have tried to give all the expositions which you desired; and now of all the writings that I have found upon the Law the short comments upon Deuteronomy alone are wanting; these, if God so will, and if he restores my eye-sight, I hope to add to the body of the work.

Indeed, my very loving son Pinianus, whose truly Christian company I have joined in their flight because of my delight in their chaste conversation, requires yet other tasks from me. But do you and he join your prayers that the Lord may be present with us, and may give peace in our time, and shew mercy to those who are in trouble, and make our work fruitful for the edification of the reader.parparpar

Preface to the Commentary on the Benedictions of the Twelve Patriarchs Book 2

Rufinus, as we see by his Preface to the former book, considered it unsatisfactory to expound the Blessing upon Judah apart from those on his brethren. Paulinus therefore, taking the occasion of their common friend Cerealis' journey to Rome, sends the following letter to induce Rufinus to expound the remaining Benedictions.

Paulinus to His Brother Rufinus, All Good Wishes.

1. Although our son Cerealis declared to me that it was uncertain whether, in returning as he now does to St. Peter, he would be ahle to visit you, yet it appears to me that it would be blamable in me and vexatious to you were I not to write to you by him in whom you have a part as well as I. It seems to me preferable to lose some letter paper by his not visiting you rather than to lose credit with you as I think I should do by his visiting you without it: and therefore I have entrusted trusted this letter, I will not say to chance, but to faith: for I believe that the Lord will direct to you the way both of our son and of my letter; since to those who long for good all will turn to good; and indeed he longs for you as you ought to be longed for by one who understands the good he may gain from your society. I believe that this longing of his in a good matter will not be lost, according to his faith and piety:

and therefore I have confidence that he will reach you and abide with you, and that I shall see the saving help of the Lord doubled towards you, since in him you will have the accession of a good son and pupil and assistant, and he will find in you a father and teacher of all good things given to him from the Lord, who will add to the efficacy and power of his prayers the strength of spiritual grace. As to myself, though I have the assurance that when you return to the East you will be unwilling to depart without visiting me, yet my sins make me fear that the daughter of Babylon, may turn you away from me. I pray therefore with earnest longings to the Lord that he would give me not according to my deserts but according to my desire and may direct your course to me in the way of peace; for such as do not walk in that way are reprobate and condemned and incapable of truly longing for your presence.

2. But now for the business part of my letter. I charge you, with the importunity, with which I am in the habit of knocking at your door even in the middle of the night, being driven by fear of a refusal to the modest attitude of a supplicant, to show ne kindness once more, and to expound the Benedictions on the twelve Patriarchs. You have already made a beginning with the prophecy relating to Judah, and have given, according to the precept, a threefold interpretation of it. I now beg you to expound the prophecy as it relates to each of the sons of Judah: so that I may myself become possessed of the truth by your means, and may also gain through your help the favor and the praise which will accrue to me; for I shall thus be able to make answer to those who have thought well to consult me on the difficulties of this passage of Scripture not with foolish words drawn from my own understanding but with divine truth flowing from your inspiration.

Rufinus, though at this time busy with his larger works the translations of Pamphilus' defence of Origen, and Origen's peri 'Arxn, and, though about to set out for Rome, lost no time in composing the work which Paulinus demanded, and sent it him with the following letter.

Rufinus to His Brother Paulinus, the Man of God, with All Good Wishes.

I. Though our common son Cerealis did not visit me, he felt what pain he would cause me if he delayed my reception of your letter, and forwarded it to me. In reading it I felt, as usual, a continual increase in my yearning towards you: but I found towards its close a request from which I have frequently begged you to excuse me-I mean the request which you make that I should write something in answer to your questions as to the interpretation of passages of Scripture. I thought that I should lead you to desist from these questions by the writings I have once and again sent you, which have given evidence of my ignorance and of the roughness of my speech.

2. But since you still are not weary of commanding me, I have at once, to the best of my powers, added to what I had written at your desire on the Benediction of Judah the comments on the remaining eleven patriarchs. I acted like the man in the parable of the two sons. I thought that I should thus best fulfil the father's will: and though when he ordered me to go into the vineyard I had said I will not go, yet after a while I went. If, as I grant, there is some rashness in the fact that with so little capacity we attempt such a great task, I would say, with submission to you, that this must be most justly imputed to you, since, through your excessive love for me you do not see that my measure of knowledge, as of other virtues, is but slight. I wrote this work in the days of Lent, while I was staying in the monastery of Pinetum, and I wrote it for you. But I found it impossible to conceal this poor work from the brethren who were there: and they, considering that a thing which had been honoured by your approval must be of great importance, extorted from me the permission to copy it for themselves. Thus, while you demand from me food for yourself you give refreshment to others also. Farewell, and be in peace, my most loving brother, most true worshipper of God, and an Israelite in whom there is no guile. I entreat you who are so full of the grace of God to hold me still in remembrance.

Preface to the Commentary on the Benedictions of the Twelve Patriarchs

Rufinus had arrived with Melania, in Italy, in the spring of 397, after a stay in the East of some 25 years. They had visited Paulinus at Nola, and had been entertained by him with the highest honours. Melania probably remained in Campania, where she had property, engaged in family affairs; but Rufinus set out for Rome. He stopped, however, for some months at the monastery of Pinetum near Terracina, with his friend Urseius the Abbot. His work on Jacob's Benedictions on his sons in Gen. xlix was occasioned by the following letter from Paulinus, who alludes to it in writing to Sulpicius Severus (Ep. xxviii). "I have written a short note to the Presbyter Rufinus, the companion of the saintly Melania in her spiritual journey, a truly holy and truly learned man, and one united with me on this account in the closest affection." The work itself, being an Exposition ot Scripture, is not given, but only the Preface.

Paulinus to His Brother Rufinus, All Best Wishes.

1. Even a short letter from one so likeminded as yourself is a great refreshment, like the dew which revives a thirsty field when the rivers are low. But while I confess that I have been refreshed by this letter which, though short, is still from you, and is sent by the servant of our common children, yet I have been troubled at hearing that all at once through the disquiet of your anxiety and the uncertainty caused hy delay, you have determined that you must go to Rome. May the Lord grant you to receive joy in the Lord from what we are doing: so that, as now we share in your anxiety, so we may rejoice in your joy, and that we may still have some beginnings of hope that we may enjoy your presence, when you begin to see clearly your way and the will of the Lord concerning you.

2. You are kind enough, with that affection which makes you love me as yourself, to desire that I should take up more seriously the study of Greek literature. I acknowledge the kindness which dictates this wish; but I am unable to give it effect, unless, through God's blessing on my earnest desires, I should have the happiness of your company for a longer time. How can I gain any proficiency in a foreign tongue in the absence of him who might

teach me what I do not know? I think that, in the matter of the translation of St. Clement, besides the other defects of my abilities, you noticed this especially as showing the weakness caused by my want of practice, that where I had been unable to understand the words or to express them accurately, I have translated them according to my idea of their drift, or, to speak more truly, set down what I thought ought to be there. All the more therefore do I need that, through God's mercy, I may have your company in fuller measure; for that will be like wealth to the poor or like gathering the crumbs which fall from the rich man's table with the eager appetite of the bondman's heart.

3. At the moment when I was writing these words my eye fell upon a passage of Scripture, occurring in a portion which I had set down for reading, namely that in which Judah is blessed by Jacob; and I determined after a time to knock at the door of your mind, for which the Lord had given me this most timely occasion. I beg you, if you love me, or rather because you love me so greatly, to write and say how you understand this blessing of the Patriarchs; and, if there are some things in it which are worth knowing but hard to understand, impart to me also the knowledge of them; especially of that passage which says: "Binding his colt to the vine and his ass's colt to the haircloth." Tell me what is the colt and the ass's colt, and why his colt is to be bound to the vine, but the ass's colt to the hair cloth.

The Answer of Rufinus Forms the Preface to His Exposition of the Benedictions.
1. The more I excuse myself to you, and the more I assert that I am unable to respond to your inquiries, the more instant you become in your requests, and the harder become your demands: you treat me as you would an ox whose laziness you have discovered, and prick his flanks and back as he stops and turns back with goads of ever increasing sharpness. I must point out to you, therefore, that, even if I am able to bow my neck low so as just to drag the heavy yoke which you lay upon me, yet I have no chance of bursting at a rapid pace into the open and wide-spreading plains through a form of speech which flows at large and pours itself forth over far-extending space. Bear with me therefore if my resolution has been but tardily fulfilled, and if I come up only at a feeble pace to the point to which you call me.

2. You ask me how the passage in Genesis is to be understood in which Israel the father of the patriarchs is represented as predicting what he saw would happen to each of his sons, and says of Judah, amongst other things: "Binding his colt to the vine, and his ass's colt to the tendril of the vine." You write it "and his ass's colt to the haircloth" (cilicium); but in the Greek it stands: kai th eliki ton pwlon thj onou autou. The Greeks call by the name elika (twist) not the sprigs of the vine (as our copies have it) but those sickle-like shoots by which it supports itself on branches of trees or poles or the supports of the kind which I think the farmers call goatikins; so that the vine is made safe by these clinging shoots from all danger of falling, and the tendril can either become loaded with grapes or grow out in unfettered length. I think therefore that this very word (helici), like some others, must have been set down a long time ago in the Latin versions, and that it was afterwards supposed by unintelligent copyists that by helici, hair-cloth (cilicium) must be meant.

3. It is easy in this way to emend the mistakes of the translation; but it is not so easy to find out the meaning of the expression itself unless we take into consideration the whole passage. But the treatment of this passage would be placed in a fuller and clearer light if we could go back to the beginning of the whole of these Benedictions. But this implies no small amount of leisure and of time; or, to speak in a more Christian sense, it demands a mind illuminated by the Holy Spirit. My talent is but slight, and there are many demands on my time; and my friends are urging me to comply with their requests about Origen. But, so far as these circumstances admit, and so great a matter can be treated with brevity, I will state at once what appears to me the true meaning of this passage, for the love with which you bid me trust you in everything, and without prejudice to the judgment of others, who may have something better to say about it.

Preface to the Translation of the Sayings of Xystus

Composed at Aquileia About the Year 307 a.d.
(For the questions relating to Xystus see the Prolegomena, p. 412.) Rufinus TO Apronianus, His Own Friend

I know that, just as the sheep come gladly when their own shepherd calls them, so in matters of religion men attend most gladly to the admonitions of a teacher who speaks their own language: and therefore, my very dear Apronianus, when that pious lady who is my daughter but now your sister in Christ, had laid her commands on me to compose for her a treatise of such a nature that its understanding should not require any great, effort, I translated into Latin in a very open and plain style the work of Xystus, who is said to be the same man who at Rome is called Sixtus, and who gained the glory of being both bishop and martyr. I think that, when she reads this, she will find it expressed with such brevity that a vast meaning is unfolded in each several line, with such power that a sentence only a line long would suffice for a whole life's training, and yet with such simplicity that one who looked over the shoulder of a girl as she read it might question whether I were not quite weak in intellect. And the whole work is so concise that it would be possible for her never to let go of it. The entire book would hardly be bigger than the finger ring of one of our ancestors.

And indeed it seems but right that one who has learnt through the word of God to count as dross the ornaments of the world should now receive at my hands by way of ornament a necklace of the word and of wisdom. For the present let this little book serve for a ring and be kept constantly in the hands: but it will not be long before it will penetrate into the treasure house and be wholly laid up in the heart, and bring forth from its innermost chamber the germs of instruction and of a participation in all good works. I have added further a few choice sayings addressed by a pious father to his son, but all so succinct that the whole of this. little work may rightly be called in Greek the Enchiridion or in Latin the Annulus.

Preface to the Translations of Origen's Books On the First Principles

Addressed to Macarius, at Pinetum, a.d. 397.
The Translation of the two first Books of the Peri 'Arxwn was issued soon after, or contemporaneously with the Apology of Pamphilus. The Preface to them was intended to remove prejudices by showing that Jerome (who though not named is clearly described) had been Rufinus' precursor in translating Origen. The compliments paid to Jerome were no doubt sincere: but the use made of his previous action can hardly be justified. Rufinus knew well that Jerome's view of Origen had to some extent altered, that a disagreeable controversy had sprung up at Jerusalem about him, in which he and Jerome had taken opposite sides: and that the animosity aroused by this had with the greatest difficulty been allayed, and a reconciliation effected at the moment when he had quitted Palestine. This Preface with the Translation of the Peri\ 'Arxw=n was the most immediate cause of the violent controversy and the final estrangement between Rufinus and Jerome.

I am aware that a great many of our brethren were incited by their longing for Scriptural knowledge to demand from various men who were versed in Greek literature that they would give the works of Origen to men who used the Latin tongue, and thus make him a Roman. Among these was that brother and associate of mine to whom this request was made by bishop Damasus, and who when he translated the two homilies on the Song of Songs from Greek into Latin prefixed to the work a preface so full of beauty and so magnificent that he awoke in every one the desire of reading Origen and eagerly investigating his works. He said that to the soul of that great man the words might well be applied: "The King has brought me into his chamber": and he declared that Origen in his other books had surpassed all other men, but in this had surpassed himself. What he promises in this Preface is, indeed, that he will give to Roman ears not only these books but many others of Origen. But I find that he is so enamoured of his own style that he pursues a still more ambitious object, namely, that he should be the creator of the book, not merely its translator. I am then

following out a task begun by him and commended by his example; but it is out of my power to set forth the words of this great man with a force and an eloquence like his:

and I have therefore to fear that it may happen through my fault that the man whom he justly commends as a teacher of the church both in knowledge and in wisdom second only to the Apostles may be thought to have a far lower rank through my poverty of language. When I reflected on this I was inclined to keep silence, and not to assent to the brethren who were constantly adjuring me to make the translation. But your influence is such, my most faithful brother Macarius, that even the consciousness of my unfitness is not sufficient to make me resist. I have therefore yielded to your importunity though it was against my resolution, so that I might no longer be exposed to the demands of a severe taskmaster; but I have done so on this condition and on this understanding, that in making the translation I should follow as far as possible the method of my predecessors, and especially of him of whom I have already made mention. He, after translating into Latin above seventy of the books of Origen which he called Homiletics, and also a certain number of the "Tomes," proceeded to purge and pare away in his translation all the causes of stumbling which are to be found in the Greek works; and this he did in such a way that the Latin reader will find nothing in them which jars with our faith.

In his steps, therefore, I follow, not, indeed, with the power of eloquence which is his, but, as far as may be, in his rules and method, that is, taking care not to promulgate those things which are found in the books of Origen to be discrepant and contradictory to one another. The cause of these variations I have set forth very fully for your information in the Apology which Pamphilus wrote for the books of Origen, to which I have appended a very short treatise showing by proofs which seem to me quite clear that his books have been in very many cases falsified by heretical and ill-disposed persons. This is especially the case with the books which you now require me to translate, namely, the Peri 'Arxwn, which may be rendered either Concerning First Principles or Concerning Principalities. These books are in truth, apart from these questions, exceedingly obscure and difficult; for in them he discusses matters over which the philosophers have spent their whole lives without any result. But our Christian thinker has done all that lay in his power to turn to purposes of sound religion the belief in a creator and the order of the created world which they had made subservient to their false religion.

Wherever therefore I have found in his books anything contrary to the truth concerning the Trinity which he has in other places spoken of in a strictly orthodox sense, I have either omitted it as a foreign and not genuine expression or set it down in terms agreeing with the rule of faith which we find him constantly assenting to. There are things, no doubt, which he has developed in somewhat obscure language, wishing to pass rapidly over them, and as addressing those who have experience and knowledge of such matters; in these cases I have made the passage plain by adding words which I had read in other books of his where the matter was more fully treated. I have done this in the interest of clearness: but I have put in nothing of my own; I have only given him back his own words, though taken from other

passages. I have explained this in the Preface, so that those who calumniate us should not think that they had found in this fresh material for their charges. But let them take heed what they are about in their perversity and contentiousness. As for me, I have not undertaken this laborious task (in which I trust that God will be my helper in answer to your prayers) for the sake of shutting the mouths of calumnious men, but with the view of supplying material for the increase of real knowledge to those who desired it.

This only I require of every man who undertakes to copy out these books or to read them, in the sight of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and adjure him by our faith in the coming kingdom, by the assurance of the resurrection of the dead, by the eternal fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels (even as he trusts that he shall not possess as his eternal inheritance that place where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth, and where their fire will not be quenched and their worm will not die) that he should neither add nor take away, that he shouldneither insert nor change, anything in that which is written but that he should compare his copy with that from which it is copied and correct it critically letter for letter, and that he should not keep by him a copy which has not received correction or criticism, lest, if his copy is not thus distinct, the difficulty of the meaning may beget a still greater obscurity in the mind of the readers.

Preface to the Two Books of Ecclesiastical History

Addressed to Chromatius, Bishop of Aquileia, a.d. 401
(For the occasion of writing, and the date, see Prolegomena, p. 412.)

It is the custom, they say, of skilful physicians, when they perceive that some epidemic disease is near at hand in one of our cities, to provide some kind of medicine, whether solid or liquid, which men may use as a preventative to defend themselves from the destruction which is hanging over them. You have imitated this method of the doctors, my venerable Father, Chromatius, at the moment when the gates of Italy were broken through by Alaric the commander of the Goths, and thus a disease and plague poured in upon us, which made havoc of the fields and cattle and men throughout the land. You then sought a remedy against the cruelty and destruction, so that the minds of then which were languishing might be drawn away from the contagion of the prevailing malady, and might preserve their balance through an interest in better pursuits. This you have done by enjoining on me the task of translating into Latin the ecclesiastical history which was written in the Greek language by that most learned man, Eusebius of Caesarea. You thought that the mind of those who heard it read to them might be so held fast by it that, in its eager desire for the knowledge of past events, it might to some extent become oblivious of their actual sufferings. I tried to excuse myself from the task, as being, through my weakness unequal to it, and as having in the lapse of years lost the use of the Latin tongue.

But I reflected that your commands were not to be divaricated from your position in the Apostolic order. For, at the time when the multitude in the desert were hungering, and the Lord said to his Apostles, "Give ye them to eat," Philip who was one of them instead of bringing out the loaves which were hid in the wallet of the Apostles, said that there was a little lad there who had five loaves and two fishes. He knew that the exhibition of the divine virtue would be none the less brilliant if the ministry of some of the little ones were used in its fulfilment. He modestly excused his action by adding, "What are these among so many? So that the divine power might be more conspicuous through the difficult and desperate circumstances in which it acted. I felt that, since you were a scion of the Apostolic order, you had possibly acted in remembrance of Philip's example, and that, when you saw that

the time was come for the multitudes to be fed, you had engaged the services of a little lad who might be able to contribute, twice told, the five loaves which he had received, but who further, to fulfil the Gospel type, might add two small fishes which he had captured by his own efforts. I have therefore made the attempt to execute what you had ordered, having the assurance that the deficiency of my inexperience would be excused on account of the authority of him who gave the command.

I must point out the course I have taken in reference to the tenth book of this work. As it stands in the Greek, it has little to do with the process of events. All but a small part of it is taken up with discussions tending to the praise of particular Bishops, and adds nothing to our knowledge of facts. I have therefore left out all this superfluous matter; and, whatever in it belonged to genuine history I have added to the ninth book, with which I have made his history close. The tenth and eleventh books I have myself compiled, partly from the traditions of the former generation, partly from facts within my own memory; and these I have added to the previous books, like the two fishes to the loaves. If you bestow your approval and benediction upon them, I shall have a sure confidence that they will suffice for the multitude. The work as now completed contains the events from the Ascension of the Saviour to the present time; my own two books those from the days of Constantine when the persecution came to an end on to the death of the Emperor Theodosius.

The following note occurs at the end of the ninth book of Rufinus‘ Latin Version of Eusebius. Thus far Eusebius has given us the record of the history. As to the subsequent events, as they have followed on up to the present time, as I have found them recorded in the writings of the last generation, or so far as they are covered by my own knowledge, I will add them, obeying, as best I may, in this point also the commands of our father in God.

Rufinus' Preface to the Translation of Origen's Commentary on Psalms 36, 37, and 38

Addressed to Apronianus, Either at Rome or at Aquileia, Between a.d. 398 and a.d. 407

The whole exposition of the thirty-sixth, thirty-seventh and thirty-eighth Psalms is ethical in its character, being designed to enforce more correct methods of life; and teaches at one time the way of conversion and repentance, at another that of purification and of progress. I have therefore thought it well to translate it into Latin for you, my dearest son Apronianus, having first arranged it in nine of the short sermons which are called in Greek Homilies, and incorporated it into one whole; and thus this discourse which in all its parts aims at the correction and the advancement of the moral life, is collected into a single volume. My translation will at all events be of use so far as to put the reader without effort in possession of the meaning of the author, which is here fully laid open, and to bring home to him the simplicity of life which he enjoins with clearness of thought and in simple words; and thus the voice of prophecy may reach not men alone but also god-fearing women, and lend subtlety to the minds of the simple. Yet I fear that pious lady, who is my daughter but your sister in Christ, may think that she owes me no thanks for my work if it brings her nothing but puzzling thoughts and thorny questions: for the human body could hardly hold together if divine providence had formed it of bones and muscles alone without blending with them the ease and grace of the softer tissues.

Rufinus' Preface to the Translation of Origen's Commentary on Romans

Addressed to Heraclius at Aquileia About a.d. 407

My intention was to press the shore of the quiet land in the little bark in which I was sailing, and to draw oat a few little fishes from the pools of Greece: but you have compelled me, brother Heraclius, to give my sails to the wind and go forth into the deep sea; you persuade me to leave the work which lay before me in the translation of the homilies written by the Man of Adamant in his old age, and to open to you the fifteen volumes in which he discussed the Epistle of Paul to the Romans. In these books. while he aims at representing the Apostle's thoughts, he is carried away into a sea of such depth that one who follows him into it may well be afraid of being drowned in the greatness of his thoughts as in the vastness of the waves. Then also you do not consider this, that my breath is but scanty for filling a grand trumpet of eloquence like his. And beyond all these difficulties is this, that the books themselves have been interpolated. In almost all the libraries (I grant that no one can tell how it happened) some of the volumes are absent from the body of the work; and to supply these, and to restore the continuity of the work in the Latin version is beyond my talent, but would be, as you must know when you make your demand, a special gift of God.

You add, however, so that nothing may be wanting to the labour I am undertaking, that I had better abbreviate this whole body of fifteen volumes, which in the Greek reaches to the length of forty thousand lines or more, and bring it within moderate compass. Your injunctions are hard indeed, and might be thought to be imposed by one who did not care to consider what the burden of such a work must be. I will, however, attempt it, hoping that through your prayers, and the favour of the Lord, what seems impossible to man may become possible. But we will now, if you please, listen to the Preface which Origen himself prefixes to the work on which he was entering.

The Letter of Anastasius to John Bishop Concerning the Character of Rufinus

The letter of Anastasius to John of Jerusalem was written in the year 401; it is spoken of in Jerome's Apol.iii., c. 21, which was written in the first half of 402, as "the letter of last year." Jerome intimates in the same passage that it was only one of several letters of the same character which Anastasius wrote to the East. Rufinus had not seen it, and refused to believe its genuineness. But there seems to be no reason for doubting this. Anastasius had, at the earnest request of Theophilus of Alexandria, formally condemned Origenism. And Rufinus' translations of Origen's Peri 'Arxwn and of Pamphilus' Vindication of Origen, and his own book on the Falsification of Origen's works were taken at Rome as a defence of Origenism generally. Rufinus, however, appealed continually, and especially in his Apology to Anastasius, to the church of Jerusalem, where he had been ordained. "My faith," he says, "is that which is preached at Jerusalem." Anastasius, therefore, in condemning Origen would be understood as condemning Rufinus, and might also seem to condemn his Bishop John of Jerusalem. This will account for the fulsome praises with which the letter opens. John, moreover, had written "to consult" Anastasius about Rufinus, which probably implies some action in Rufinus' interest; but the fact that Jerome knew the contents of the letter and Rufinus did not seems to show that Bishop John had become more friendly with Jerome and less so with Rufinus.

1. The kind words of approval that you have addressed, my dear Bishop, to your brother Bishop, is a fresh mark of your long tried affection. It is a high commendation which you confer upon me, a most lavish recognition of my services. I thank you for this proof of your love; and, following you at a distance in my littleness, I bring the tribute of my words to honour the splendour of your holiness and those virtues which the Lord has conferred upon you. You excel all others so far, the splendour of your praise shines forth so conspicuously, that no words which I can use can equal your deserts. Yet your glory excites in me such admiration that I cannot turn away from the attempt to describe it, even though I can never do so adequately. And, first, the praise which you have bestowed on me out of the serene

heaven of your great spirit forms part of your own glory: for it is the majesty of your episcopate, shining forth like the sun upon the opposite quarter of the world, which has reflected its own brightness upon us. And you give me your friendship unreservedly; you do not weigh me in the balance of criticism. If it is right for you to praise me, must not your praise be echoed back to you? I beg you therefore, for your own sake no less than mine, that you will not praise me any more to my face. I ask this for two reasons: if the praise is undeserved it must excite in your brother-bishop a sense of pain; if it is true, it must make him blush.

2. Let me come to the subject of your letter. Rufinus, about whom you have done me the honour to ask my advice, must bring his conscience to the bar of the divine majesty. It is for him to see how he can approve himself to God as maintaining his true allegiance to him. 3. As for Origen, whose writings he has translated into our language, I have neither formerly known, nor do I now seek to know either who he was or what expression he may have given to his thought. But as to the feeling left by this matter on my own mind I should be glad to speak with your holiness for a moment. The impression which I have received is this,-and it has been brought out clearly by the reading of parts of Origen's works by the people of our City, and by the sort of mist of blindness which it threw over them,-that his object was to disintegrate our faith, which is that of the Apostles, and has been confirmed by the traditions of the fathers, by leading us into tortuous paths.

4. I want to know what is the meaning of the translation of this work into the Roman tongue. If the translator intends by it to put the author in the wrong, and to denounce to the world his execrable deeds, well and good. In that case he will expose to well-merited hatred one who has long laboured under the adverse weight of public opinion. But if by translating all these evil things he means to give his assent to them, and in that sense gives them to the world to read, then the edifice which he has reared at the expense of so much labour serves for nothing else than to make the guilt the act of his own will, and to give the sanction of his unlooked for support to the overthrow of all that is of prime importance in the true faith as held by Catholic Christians from the time of the Apostles till now.

5. Far be such teaching from the catholic system of the Church of Rome. It can never by any possibility come to pass that we should accept as reasonable things which we condemn as matters of law and right. We have, therefore, the assurance that Christ our God, whose providence reaches over the whole world, bestows his approval on us when we say that it is wholly impossible for us to admit doctrines which defile the church, which subvert its well tried moral system, which offend the ears of all who are witnesses of our doings and lay the ground for strife and anger and dissensions. This was the motive which led me to write my letter to Venerius our brother in the Episcopate, the character of which, written as it was in my weakness but with great care and diligence, you will realize by what I now subjoin: "Whence, then, he who translated the work has gained and preserves this assurance of innocence I am not greatly troubled to know: it fills me with no vain alarm. I certainly shall omit nothing which may enable me to guard the faith of the Gospel amongst my own people, and to warn, as far as in me lies, those who form part of my body, in whatever part

of the world they live, not to allow any translation of profane authors to creep in and spring up amongst them, which will seek to unsettle the mind of devout men by spreading its own darkness among them. Moreover, I cannot passover in silence an event which has given me great pleasure, the decree issued by our Emperors, by which every one who serves God is warned against the reading of Origen, and all who are convicted of reading his impious works are condemned by the imperial judgment." In these words my formal sentence was pronounced.

6. You are troubled by the complaint which people make as to our treatment of Rufinus, so that you pursue certain persons with vague suspicions. But I will meet this feeling of yours with an instance taken from holy writ, namely, where it is said: "Man seeth not as God seeth; for God looketh upon the heart, but man upon the countenance." Therefore, my dearly beloved brother, put away all your prejudice. Weigh the conduct of Rufinus in your own unbiassed judgment; ask yourself whether he has not translated Origen's words into Latin and approved them, and whether a man who gives his encouragement to vicious acts committed by another differs at all from the guilty party. In any case I beg you to he assured of this, that he is so completely separate from all part or lot with us, that I neither know nor wish to know either what he is doing or where he is living. I have only to add that it is for him to consider where he may obtain absolution.

The Peroration of Rufinus Appended to His Translation of Origen's Commentary on Romans

Addressed to Heraclius at Aquileia, Probably About 407

A satisfactory conclusion has now, I trust, been reached of the Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, the writing of which has been a work of very great labour and time. I confess, my most loving brother Heraclius, that in the attempt to respond to your request I have almost forgotten the precept; "Do not lift a burden above your strength. Even in the other translations of Origen's works into Latin, which were made because you earnestly requested it, or rather exacted it as a journeyman's task, the labour was very great; for I made it my object to supplement what Origen spoke extempore in the lecture room of the church; for his aim there was the application of the subject for the sake of edification rather than the exposition of the text. This I have done in the case of the Homilies, and the short lectures on Genesis and Exodus, and especially in those on the book of Leviticus, where he spoke in a hortatory manner, whereas my translation takes the form of an exposition. This duty of supplying what was wanted I took up because I thought that the practice of agitating questions and then leaving them unsolved, which he frequently adopts in his homiletic mode of speaking, might prove distasteful to the Latin reader. The works upon Jesus Nave and the book of Judges and the thirty-sixth, thirty-seventh and thirty-eighth Psalms, I translated simply as I found them, with no great labour.

While then in the other cases which I have mentioned above, I employed much labour in supplying what Origen had omitted, in this work on the Epistle to the Romans the labour that fell on me for the causes described in the Preface was immense and full of complexity. But there will have been nothing but pleasure in these labours, provided only that my experience in other cases, of ill-disposed minds requiting my toils and vigils with contumely, be pot repeated and that I do not gain for my studies the reward of detraction and for my labour a conspiracy to ruin me. For in dealing with these men I have to undergo a new form of accusation. They say to me; When you write these things, in which are found many pieces the composition or which is due to yourself, you should place your own name in the

title, and let it run thus: 'The books of Rufinus' commentary on (for instance) the Epistle to the Romans;' for so, they say, in the case of profane writers, the name in the title is not that of the Greek author who is translated but of the Latin author who translates him. But all this complaisance, by which the works are ascribed to me, is caused not by love to me but by hatred to the author. I am much more observant of my conscience than of my reputation; it may be apparent that I have added some things to supply what was wanting;

and that I have abbreviated what was too lengthy; hut to steal the title from the man who laid the foundations on which the building has been reared is what I cannot think right. It must be, I grant, in the discretion of the reader, when he has examined the work, to ascribe the work to any one he thinks right; but my intention has been not to seek the applause of students but the good of those who wish to be edified.

I shall turn next to the work which was long ago imposed upon me but now is demanded with still greater vehemence by the Bishop Gaudentius, namely to turn into Latin the books called the Recognition of Clement the Bishop of Rome, the successor and compassion of the Apostles. In this work I well know that, to judge by the ordinary rule, I shall have labour upon labour. In this case I will do what my friends desire, I will put my own name in the title of the work, though I shall have that of the author also. It shall be called Rufinus's Clement. If the Lord enable me to fulfil this task, I shall afterwards return to that which you desire, and say something, God willing, on the books of Numbers or of Deuteronomy (for this alone is wanting to my whole work on the Heptateuch): or else I shall write what I can, the Lord being my guide, on the remaining epistles of the Apostle Paul.

The Preface to the Books of Recognitions of St. Clement

Addressed to Bishop Gaudentius
(For the occasion and date of this work see the Prolegomena, p. 412.)

You possess so much vigour of character, my dear Gaudentius, you who are so signal all ornament of our teachers, or as I would rather say, you have the grace of the Spirit in so large a measure, that even what you say in the way of daily conversation, or of addresses that you preach in church, ought to be consigned in writing and handed down for the instruction of posterity. But I am far less quick, my native talent being but slender, and old age is already making me sluggish and slow; and this work is nothing but the payment of a debt due to the command laid upon me by the virgin Sylvia whose memory I revere. She it was who demanded of me, as you have now done by the right of heirship, to translate Clement into our language. The debt is paid at last, though after many delays. It is a part of the booty, and in my opinion no small one, which I have carried off from the libraries of the Greeks, and which I am collecting for the use and advantage of our countrymen. I have no food of my own to bring them, and I must import their nourishment from abroad. However, foreign goods are apt to appear sweeter; and sometimes they are really more useful. Moreover, almost anything which brings healing to our bodies or is a defence against disease or an antidote to poison comes from abroad.

Judaea sends us the distillation of the balsam tree, Crete the leaf of the dictamnus, Arabia her aromatic flowers, and India the crop of the spikenard. These goods come to us, no doubt, in a less perfect condition than those which our own fields produce, but they preserve intact their pleasant scent and their healing power. Therefore, my friend who are as my own soul, I present to you Clement returning to Rome. I present him dressed in a Latin garb. Do not think it strange if the aspect which his eloquence presents is less bright than it might be. It makes no difference if only the meaning is felt to be the same.

These are foreign wares, then, which I am importing at a great expense of labour; and I have still to see whether our countrymen will regard with gratitude one who is bringing them the spoils(spolia) of his warfare, and who is unlocking with the key of our language a treasure house hitherto concealed, though he does it with the utmost good will. I only trust that God

may look favourably on your good wishes, so that my present may not be met in any quarter by evil eyes and envious looks: and that we may not witness that extremely monstrous phenomenon, expressions of illwill on the part of those on whom the gift is conferred, while those from whom it is taken part with it ungrudgingly. It is but right that you, who have read this work in the Greek should point out to other's the design of my translation-unless indeed, you feel that in some respects I have not observed the right method of rendering the original. You are, I believe well aware that there are two Greek editions of this work of Clement, his Recognitions; that there are two sets of books, which in some few cases differ from each other though the bulk of the narrative is the same. For instance, the last part of the work, that which gives an account of the transformation of Simon Magus, exists in one of these, while in the other it is entirely absent.

On the other hand there are some things, such as the dissertation on the unbegotten and the begotten God, and a few others, which, though they are found in both editions, are, to say the least of them, beyond my understanding; and these I have preferred to leave others to deal with rather than to present them in an inadequate manner. As to the rest, I have taken pains not to swerve, even in the slightest degree from either the sense or the diction; and this, though it makes the expression less ornate, renders it more faithful.

There is a letter in which this same Clement writing to James the Lord's brother, gives an account of the death of Peter, and says that he has left him as his successor, as ruler and teacher of the church; and further incorporates a whole scheme of ecclesiastical government. This I have not prefixed to the work, both because it is later in point of time, and because it has been previously translated and published by me. Nevertheless, there is a point which would perhaps seem inconsistent with facts were I to place the translation of it in this work, but which I do not consider to involve an impossibility. It is this. Linus and Cletus were Bishops of the city of Rome before Clement. How then, some men ask, can Clement in his, letter to James say that Peter passed over to him his position as a church-teacher. The explanation of this point, as I understand, is as follows. Linus and Cletus were, no doubt," Bishops in the city of Rome before Clement, but this was in Peter's life-time; that is, they took charge of the episcopal work, while he discharged the duties of the apostolate. He is known to have done the same thing at Caesarea; for there, though be was himself on the spot, yet he had at his side Zacchaeus whom he had ordained as Bishop. Thus we may see how both things may be true; namely how they stand as predecessors of Clement in the list of Bishops, and vet how Clement after the death of Peter became his successor in the teacher's chair. But it is time that we should pay attention to the beginning of Clement's own narrative, which he addresses to James the Lord's brother.

Translation of Pamphilus' Defence of Origen

Written at Pinetum a.d. 397.
While Rufinus was staying at Pinetum, a Christian named Macarius sought his advice and assistance. He was engaged in a controversy with the Mathematici, a class of men who had deserted the scientific studies from which they took their name, and had turned to astrology and a belief in Fatalism. Macarius, having heard of Origen's greatness in the region of Christian speculation, earnestly desired some knowledge of his writings: but was unable to attain it through ignorance of Greek. He declared to Rufinus that he had had a dream in which he saw a ship laden with Eastern merchandize arriving in Italy, and that it was declared to him that this ship would contain the means of attaining the knowledge he desired. The coming of Rufinus seemed to him the fulfilment of his dream, and he earnestly besought him to impart to him some of the treasures of his Greek learning, and especially to translate for him Origen's great speculative work, the Peri 'Arxwn, that is On First Principles. Rufinus hesitated, knowing that there was a strong prejudice against Origen, and that he was looked on, especially in the West, as a heretic, though his writings were little known there. He yielded, however, to the solicitations of Macarius: but to guard against the imputation of heresy, he undertook three preliminary works. First, he translated the Apology of the Martyr Pamphilus for Origen; secondly, he wrote a short treatise on the Adulteration by heretics of the works of Origen; and, thirdly, in translating the Peri 'Arxwn he prefixed to it an elaborate Preface in justification of his course in translating the work. All these documents became the subject of vehement controversy which found its expression in the letter of Jerome to his friends at Rome, and the Apologies of Rufinus and Jerome translated in this volume.

The Apology of Pamphilus for Origen forms the sixth book of a work undertaken by him in connexion with Eusebius of Caesarea, the Church Historian. Pamphilus was a great collector of books, and a learned man, but Eusebius was the chief writer. Pamphilus was put to death in the last persecution, that under Galerius; and Eusebius having at a later time fallen under suspicion of Arianism, it was attempted by those who disliked Origen, to dissociate Pamphilus from all connexion with the work. There seems however no reason to doubt, notwithstanding Jerome's violent protestations, that Pamphilus was associated with

Eusebius throughout the work, and that he actually wrote the sixth book. The translation of this Apology was made first, and sent out with a Preface which runs as follows:

You have been moved by your desire to know the truth, Macarius, who are "a man greatly beloved," to make a request of me, which will bring you the blessing attached to the knowledge of the truth; but it will win for me the greatest indignation on the part of those who consider themselves aggrieved whenever any one does not think evil of Origen. It is true that it is not my opinion about him that you have asked for, but that of the holy martyr Pamphilus; and you have requested to have the book which he is said to have written in his defence in Greek translated for you into Latin: nevertheless I do not doubt that there will be some who will think themselves aggrieved if I say anything in his defence even in the words of another man. I beg them to do nothing in the spirit of presumption and of prejudice; and, since we must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ, not to refuse to hear the truth spoken, lest haply they should do wrong through ignorance. Let them consider that to wound the consciences of their weaker brethren by false accusations is to sin against Christ; and therefore let them not lend their ears to the accusers, nor seek an account of another man's faith from a third party, especially when an opportunity is given them for gaining personal and direct knowledge, and the substance and quality of each man's faith is to be known by his own confession.

For so the Scripture says: "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation": and: "By his words shall each man be justified, and by his word shall he be condemned. The opinions of Origen in the various parts of Scripture are clearly set forth in the present work: as to the cause of our finding certain places in which he contradicts himself, an explanation will be offered in the short document subjoined. But as for myself, I hold that which has been handed down to us from the holy fathers, namely, that the Holy Trinity is coeternal, and of a single nature, virtue and substance; that the Son of God in these last times has been made man, has suffered for our transgressions and rose again from the dead in the very flesh in which he suffered, and thereby imparted the hope of the resurrection to the whole race of mankind. When we speak of the resurrection of the flesh, we do so, not with any subterfuges, as is slanderously reported by certain perons; we believe that it is this very flesh in which we are now living which will rise again, not one kind of flesh instead of another, nor another body than the body of this flesh. When we speak of the body rising we do so in the words of the apostle; for he himself made use of this word: and when we speak of the flesh, our confession is that of the Creed.

It is an absurd invention of maliciousness to think that the human body is different from the flesh. However, whether we speak of that which is to rise, according to the common faith, as the flesh, or, according to the Apostle, as the body, this we must believe, that according to the clear statement of the Apostle, that which shall rise shall rise in power and in glory; it will rise an incorruptible and a spiritual body: for "corruption cannot inherit incorruption. We must maintain this preëminence of the body, or flesh, which is to be: but, with this

proviso, we must hold that the resurrection of the flesh is perfect and entire; we must on the one hand maintain the identity of the flesh, while on the other we must not detract from the dignity and glory of the incorruptible and spiritual body. For so the Scripture speaks. This is what is preached by the reverend Bishop John at Jerusalem; this we with him both confess and hold. If any one either believes or teaches otherwise, or insinuates that we believe differently from the exposition of our faith, let him be anathema. Let this then be taken as a record of our belief by any who desire to know it. Whatever we read and whatever we do is in accordance with this account of our faith; we follow the words of the Apostle, "proving all things holding fast that which is good, avoiding every form of evil.

"And as many as walk by this rule, peace be upon them and upon the Israel of God."

Source. English translation: an older public-domain translation as collected in the Writings-Database (HistoricalChristianFaith), mostly from the Ante-Nicene, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers and similar nineteenth-century editions. SermonIndex has only divided it into chapters and short sections; the wording is the translator's own. Square brackets, Greek or Latin words and footnote-free text are as the source file prints them, and a transcription error may remain. No Greek or Latin text is shown beside it yet, and no modern English version has been made.