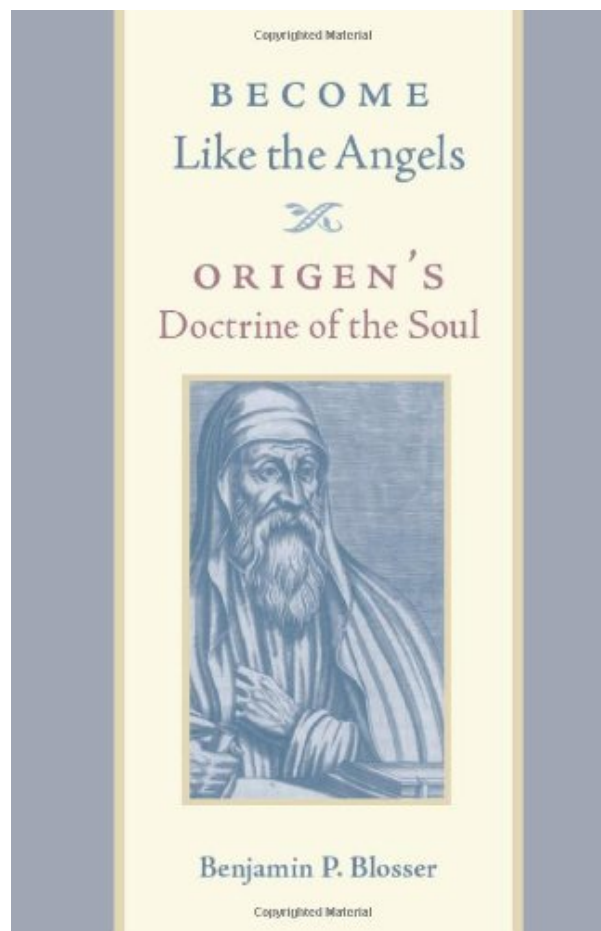


# **BECOME LIKE THE ANGELS: ORIGEN'S DOCTRINE OF THE SOUL BY BENJAMIN J. BLOSSER**



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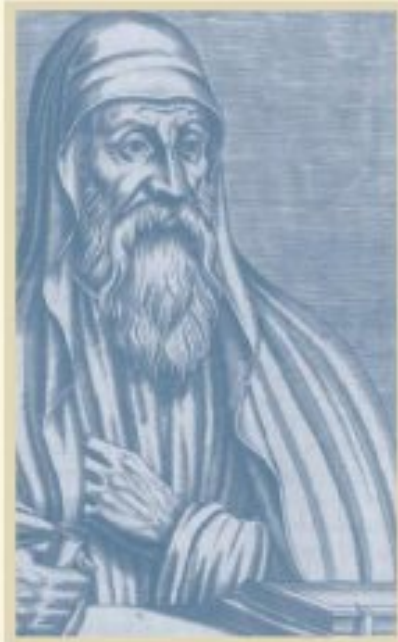


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## **Review**

“An ambitious and very well researched book on the way in which Origen deals with a fundamental issue in ancient philosophy?the position, state, and function of the soul in a living being. It is a topic at the core of all anthropological and cosmological thinking in Late Antiquity. In elegant, lucid prose, Blosser takes the reader gently through the minefield of previous scholarship and presents a very clear and skillful exposition of Origen as religious philosopher.”?John A. McGuckin, Professor of Byzantine Church History, Columbia University, and editor of *The Westminster Handbook to Origen of Alexandria*

## **About the Author**

BENJAMIN P. BLOSSER is associate professor of theology at Benedictine College where he teaches courses in church history, ecclesiology, and New Testament studies. He received his Ph.D. in historical theology from the Catholic University of America.

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Origen of Alexandria (c. 185-245), a catechist, presbyter, and confessor of the ancient Church was a foundational figure in the establishment of early Christian theology. Today he is commonly referred to as "the first Christian theologian" and is widely known as a master of biblical exegesis, rational inquiry, and spiritual formation. Yet his legacy remains somewhat ambiguous in part because of the posthumous condemnation of certain propositions from his works. *Become Like the Angels* explores Origen's legacy and, in particular, his teachings about the origin, nature, and destiny of the human person. By way of a historical critical approach, Benjamin P. Blosser discusses the influence of Middle Platonic philosophy on the human soul and then compares it with Origen's teaching.

This study finds that, while Origen was highly aware of Middle Platonic speculations on the soul and does borrow extensively from their vocabulary, he never accepts their underlying, philosophical assumptions and is in fact subtly critical of Middle Platonic theories of the soul. His anthropology remains from first to last a biblical, Christian, and even mystical one, the fruit of a remarkable effort to synthesize faith and reason in the ancient Church.

## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR:**

Benjamin P. Blosser is associate professor of theology at Benedictine College where he teaches courses in church history, ecclesiology, and New Testament studies. He received his Ph.D. in historical theology from the Catholic University of America.

## **PRAISE FOR THE BOOK:**

"An ambitious and very well-researched book on the way in which Origen deals with a fundamental issue in ancient philosophy—the position, state, and function of the soul in a living being. It is a topic at the core of all anthropological and cosmological thinking in Late Antiquity. In elegant, lucid prose, Blosser takes the reader gently through the minefield of previous scholarship and presents a very clear and skillful exposition of Origen as religious philosopher."—John A. McGuckin, Professor of Byzantine Church History, Columbia University, and editor of *The Westminster Handbook to Origen of Alexandria*

"Origen is a demanding synthesizer of classical learning and Christian faith. Blosser skillfully negotiates many of the consequent dilemmas, leading the reader to a greater appreciation of Origen as both a faithful theologian and creative philosopher in his own right. Moreover, *Become Like the Angels* is thoroughly researched, carefully reasoned, and elegantly written - a welcome contribution to the field." —Catholic Historical Review

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4 of 5 people found the following review helpful.

Definitive and Brilliant.

By Philip Blosser

If I do say so myself, Benjamin Blosser has written an outstanding work on a very specific area: Origen's doctrine of the soul, its origin, its operation, and state. One thing that the author does very well is to cut through the misunderstandings of Origen as a proto-universalist and suspected heretic to show why these assumptions can be dismissed as speculative intellectual experiments, which the Church father carefully distinguished from Church teaching. This enables Blosser to set aside common stumbling blocks that prevent the invaluable work of Origen from having ready access to a larger Christian audience.

Origen has been called the "first theologian of the Church," and is rightly respected by those who know him for his broad learning in the classical as well as biblical and theological traditions, not to mention his keen analytical ability and suggestive insights. His careful development of a Christian doctrine of the soul in light of both biblical and classical philosophical traditions (specifically Middle Platonism) offer invaluable resources for contemporary Christian philosophical and theological anthropological reflection. The work comes highly recommended, and I expect readers will find it reasonably accessible and even lively for a scholarly work of its kind.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful.

Excellent Study of Origen's Theological Anthropology

By MSMS

An erudite study of Origen's theological anthropology. Blosser helpfully situates Origen's doctrine of the soul in its Middle Platonic intellectual milieu while demonstrating its theological function in Origen's "grand vision of salvation history," which sees the world as a theater of salvation, a "drama of love repudiated and love redeemed" (216, cf. 266-267).

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