



# Patristics and Christian Learning

with Dr. Jordan Woods

## Lecture 4: Origen & Gregory the Miracle-Worker: Watersheds in Christian Learning

### Outline:

#### Origen & Gregory the Miracle-Worker: Watersheds in Christian Learning

- Origen of Alexandria
  - Origen was a murky figure.
  - He lived from c. AD 185 – c. AD 253.
  - He is super brilliant, and he memorized much of the scriptures.
  - He is also learning from advanced human wisdom.
  - He is made the successor of Clement in Alexandria.
  - Read him judiciously.
  - Look to him as the Father of Christian learning.
  - Five firsts with Origen:
    - He is the first serious biblical commentator. He wrote commentary on every single book of the Bible.
    - He is the first textual critic of the biblical manuscripts.
    - He is the first systematic theologian (*On First Principles*).
    - He is the first great Christian apologist.
    - He is the first Christian mystic. He writes comments and homilies on Song of Songs. He allegorizes the Song of Songs to be about Christ and the Church.
  - Two big ideas from Origen:
    - God pursues us everywhere in his word (and creation).
      - God comes to us in the text.
      - The task of studying scripture (and nature) is to discern the Word of God within.
    - God wants to be pursued in everything in his word.
      - Everything that is very essential, the apostles delivered with clarity.
      - Even those things said clearly, they left unarticulated the grounds for them. They did this so that they may be sought out for those who are lovers of wisdom.
      - One feature of God's pedagogy is that God does not give us all of the answers without a bit of effort to pursue God.
- Gregory the Miracle Worker gives a portrait of Origen as a teacher.



- Teaching and pedagogy is about the spirit, rather than the facts.
- Follow God alone.
- What was most important about Origen wasn't the knowledge he accumulated but the spirit of inquiry, wonder, admiration, of fearless pursuit of truth, and that God delights in our search for him.
- Two things worth reflecting on as teachers and educators in classical schools:
  - What sort of spirit are you bringing to the classroom?
  - If teaching is an invitation in God's pedagogy, your students are exactly the students that you need, and you are the teacher that they need.