

Yesterday I started explaining how the influential early Christian theologian Origen believed that at the end of time, all souls — including the most wicked to have ever lived, even the demons and the devil — will be saved. To make better sense of why this happens at the end, it's important to understand what Origen thought happened at the beginning — where souls came from in the first place

In the first book of his theological work On First Principles, Origen explains how all sentient beings originally came into existence. He argues that in eternity past, before the world was created, God created an enormous number of souls, whose purpose was to contemplate and adore him forever. True adoration, of course, requires freedom of the will: beings need to choose to adore God if their worship is a true honor. That means all souls must also have had the capacity to choose not to worship God, that is, to do evil. None of these created souls was inherently evil, however, and none - not even the soul that was to become the devil — “was incapable of good” (On First Principles 1.8.1-3).

As it happened, virtually all the souls failed in their task. There was only one, in fact, who ...

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