POPE SHENOUDA III
COPTIC THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE
SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA

LECTURES IN PATROLOGY

THE SCHOOL OF ALEXANDRIA

Book two

ORIGEN

Preparatory edition
1995

FR. TADROS Y. MALATY

St. Mark's Coptic Orthodox Church
427 West Side Ave.
Jersey City, NJ 07304

English text is revised by
ROSE MARY HALIM

Reverend Father Tadros Y. Malaty has kindly permitted that his books be published in the COeRL. He has requested that we convey that any suggestions or amendments regarding their translation are welcome, and should be forwarded to:
sydneywebmaster@coptic.org.au

Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, King of Kings and Lord of lords

THE BEHOLDER OF GOD
MARK THE EVANGELIST
SAINT AND MARTYR

H.H. Pope Shenouda III, 117th Pope of Alexandria and the See of St. Mark

His Grace Bishop Daniel
Bishop of Sydney and Affeliated Regions

THE DEANS
OF THE
SCHOOL OF ALEXANDRIA

3

ORIGEN

1

HIS LIFE

St. Didymus the Blind, the head of the School of Alexandria in the latter half of the fourth century, described Origen as "*the greatest teacher in the Church after the Apostles*[1]."

J. Quasten states, "The School of Alexandria reached its greatest importance under St. Clement's successor, Origen, the outstanding teacher and scholar of the early church,...a man of encyclopedic learning, and *one of the most original thinkers the world has ever seen*[2]."

G.L. Prestige says, "*He (Origen) was one of the greatest teachers ever known in Christendom*... He was the founder of biblical science, and, though not absolutely the first great biblical commentator, he first developed the principles of exposition to be followed and applied the technique of methodical explanation on the widest possible scale. He inaugurated the systematic treatment of theology, by writing a book about God, the world, and religion in their several relations. He finally completed and established the principle that Christianity is an intelligent religion, by bringing the strength and vigor of Greek philosophical insight to clarify the Hebrew religious institution and Christian spiritual history[3]."

Jean Daniélou says, "Origen and St. Augustine were the two greatest geniuses of the early church. Origen's writings can be said to mark a decisive period in all fields of Christian thought. His research into the history of the different versions of the Scriptures and his commentaries on the literal and spiritual senses of the Old and New Testaments make him the founder of the scientific study of the Bible. He worked out the first of the great theological syntheses and was the

1 G.L. Prestige: Fathers and Heretics, S.P.C.K., 1968, p. 52.
2 Quasten: Patrology, vol. 2, p.37.
3 G.L. Prestige: Fathers and Heretics, S.P.C.K., 1968, p .43.

first to try and give a methodical explanation of the mysteries of Christianity. He was the first, too, to describe the route followed by the soul on her way back to God. He is *thus the founder of the theology of spiritual life*, and it may be questioned whether he is not to some extent the ancestor of the great monastic movement of the fourth century[4]."

Hans Urs Von Balthasar says, "In the Eastern Church his mysticism of ascent to God remained immensely powerful through medieval and modern times, more powerful than the mysticism of "dazzling darkness" of the Pseudo-Areopagite (whose dominant influence was in the West). In the Western Church both Jerome and Ambrose unhesitatingly copied his work and thus bequeathed it to posterity... *His work is aglow with the fire of a Christian creativity* that in the greatest of his successors burned merely with a borrowed flame[5]."

Robert Payne says, "This eunuch was the first great doctor, the founder of scientific Biblical scholarship. He would use reason and make reason itself the servant of Christ. He would batter down the walls of Heaven by the main force of logic alone... And though he was never officially granted the title of Doctor of the Church, he was the greatest doctor of them all[6]."

B.F. Westcott says that though countless doctors, priests, and confessors proceed from his school, he was himself accused of heresy and convicted; though he was the friend and teacher of saints, his salvation was questioned and denied[7].

G.W. Barkley says, "There can be no doubt *that one of the most influential of the early church fathers* was Origen of Alexandria[8]."

---

4 Jean Daniélou: Origen, N.Y., 1955, p. VII..
5 Rowan A. Greer: Origen, Paulist Press, 1979, page xi.
6 Robert Payne: Fathers Of The Eastern Church, Dorset Press, New York, 1985, P. 43-44.
7 Brooke Fross Westcott: An Introduction to the Study of the Gospels, NY 1896, p. 429.
8 Gary Wayne Barkley: Origen; Homilies on Leviticus, Washington, 1990, p. 4.

The interpretation of Origen was a problem to earlier ages. Scholarius, the first patriarch of Constantinople under the Turks, made his own synthesis. The western writers say, "*Where Origen was good, no one is better, where he was bad, no one is worse*[9]."

The Coptic Church was compelled to excommunicate him because of some false ideas that he believed in, like the salvation of the devil, and the universal salvation of all the human race, besides his acceptance of priesthood from others than his bishop and after making himself eunuch. Other churches excommunicated him, his followers, and their writings after his death in the Council of Constantinople in 553 A.D.

Eric Osborn states that the middle third of this century saw some very good books on Origen. He mentions the work of Daniélou saying,

The work of Daniélou [10] was comprehensive by conviction and foreshadowed an end to disagreement. Origen was not either a philosopher or an exegete or a systematic, or a sacramentalist, or a mystic; he was all of them at once. The mistake which his interpreters had made was to isolate one element of his *"vision totale du monde*[11]". He was a man of the church, although the church formed no part of his theology. For him, Christianity was not first a doctrine but a divine force, active in history through its martyrs, saints and community[12]. While Celsus regarded the vision of God as accessible but difficult, Origen thought it was inaccessible and easy[13]. His hermeneutic, like everything else was complex, and the different strands had to be distinguished[14].

9 Eric Osborn: The Twentieth Century Quarrel and Its Recovery, p.3, 2 (Colloquium Origenianum Quintum, Boston College, August 14-18, 1989).
10 J. Daniélou: Origéne, Paris 1948.
11 Ibid 8.
12 Ibid 134.
13 Ibid 114
14 Ibid 198; (COQ,, p. 2.)

PRINCIPAL SOURCES OF INFORMATION ABOUT ORIGEN[15]

1. The farewell speech made by St. Gregory Thaumaturgus, the apostle of Cappadocia and Pontus, indicates and reveals their relationship with Origen and his influence on them. This speech has come down to us entire in its original language, Greek. While the whole document tells us of the relation of Origen with his students and the moving affection felt for him by St. Gregory, the second part of it describes precisely the curriculum followed by the master.

2. The "Church History" (*Eccl. Hist.*), book 6, of Eusebius, who succeeded him at the school at Caesarea. He says, "The little I have to say about him I will put together from letters and from information supplied by those of his friends who are still alive[16]." His main source of information was Origen's voluminous correspondence, which he gathered into volumes and kept in the library at Caesarea.

3. Pamphilus, a predecessor of Eusebius of Caesarea started to collect material relating to Origen and at the same time to put his library in order. He lived in Caesarea shortly after the death of Origen, but it is not known whether he had known Origen personally or not. Of the *Apology for Origen* that Pamphilus had composed in prison with the help of Eusebius we only have Book I in a Latin translation of Rufinus of Aquileia: the preface of this book, addressed by Pamphilus to the Christians who were condemned to labor in the mines of Palestine, contains precious hints on what Origen meant and how he should be understood[17].

Besides these sources we are informed about the contents of the rest of the work in chapter 118 of the *Bibliotheca* of Photius. Other scattered items are reproduced by various authors, St. Jerome, the historian Socrates, Photius and others: many seem to

15 Jean Daniélou: Origen, Sheed and Woard, N.Y., 1955, Part 1, Chapter 1.
16 Hist. Eccles. 6:2:1.
17 Henri Crouzel: Origen, Harper & Row, 1989, p. 1.

come from the missing volumes of Pamphilus' *Apology for Origen* or from lost works of Eusebius, such as his *Life of Pamphilus*[18].

ORIGEN'S BOYHOOD

Origen, a true son of Egypt, was born probably in Alexandria, in or about 185 A.D His name means "Son of Horus, the god of Light[19]," an Egyptian god, son of Isis and Osiris, symbolizing the rising sun. In the first centuries, those born of Christian parents sometimes bore names derived from pagan deities[20].

It is not unlikely that Origen was baptized while he was an infant, for he himself is one of the main supporters of infant baptism in that period[21].

Eusebius says that everything about Origen, even the things he did in the cradle, deserves to be remembered[22]. He saw the six-year-old Origen as though he were in his maturity, applying himself to the pursuit of the spiritual sense of the Scriptures. He received his Bible training from his father, and St. Clement of Alexandria, a free spirit if ever there was one, taught him theology[23]. His father Leonides was very careful to bring him up in the knowledge of the sacred Scriptures, and the child displayed a precocious curiosity in this respect[24]. He received from his father, a devout Christian who became a martyr, a double education, Hellenic and Biblical[25]. His father was the owner of a library of rare manuscripts, devoted to scholarship. Origen read widely in his father's library, and asked endless questions. So many questions that he had to be restrained and publicly rebuked. He was never satisfied with easy answers[26].

---

18 Henri Crouzel, p. 1.
19 Charles Bigg: The Christian Platonists of Alexandria, Oxford 1913, p. 152.
20 Henri Crouzel: Origen, Harper & Row, 1989, p.4 n. 11..
21 Henri Crouzel: Origen, Harper & Row, 1989, p.5.
22 Eusebius: H. E. 6:2:2.
23 Church History 50 (1981) : The Charismatic Intellectual: Origen's Understanding of Religious Leadership, p. 107.
24 J. Lebreton: The History of the Primitive Church, 1948, p.773.
25 Henri Crouzel: Origen, Harper & Row, 1989, p.5.
26 Robert Payne: Fathers Of The Eastern Church, Dorset Press, New York, 1985, P. 44.

"Everyday he would set him to learn a passage (from the Bible) by heart ... The child was not content with the straightforward, obvious meaning of the Scriptures, he wanted something more, and even at that time would go in pursuit of the underlying sense. He always embarrassed his father by the questions he asked[27]."

Eusebius, the historian, tells us that Leonides[28], seeing his son's fondness of the Word of God during his boyhood, was accustomed to go up to Origen's bed while he was asleep, uncover his chest and reverently kiss it as a dwelling-place of the Holy Spirit. He thought of himself as blessed in being the father of such a boy[29]. According to the Coptic Church, the kiss sometimes is a ritual gesture denoting veneration. That is why the priest kisses the altar and the Gospel book.

LEONIDES' MARTYRDOM

Besides being fed on the Holy Scriptures, Origen was exposed to the influence of martyrdom. In the tenth year of Septimius Severus (202 A.D) a persecution against Christians started, which was to last for several years in Egypt under a succession of prefects. It had a special severity upon the Egyptian Church[30]. The fires of persecution rose to a great height and thousands of Christians received crowns of martyrdom. It was during this persecution that St. Perpetua and St. Felicity were martyred in Africa. Leonides was arrested and thrown into prison. Origen, who had not then completed his seventeenth year ardently desired to attain the martyr's crown with his father. He was only prevented from achieving this desire by his mother who, at a critical moment, hid all his clothes, and so laid upon him the necessity of remaining at home[31], to look after his six brothers. He strongly urged his father to re-

27 Eusebius : H.E. 6:2:7 -11.
28 "Leonides" means "son of Lion."
29 Eusebius: H.E 6:2:11.
30 W. Fairweather: Origen & Greek Patristic Theology, Edinburgh, 1901, p37.
31 Benjamin Drewery: Origen & The Doctrine of Grace, London, 1906, Introd.

main firm by writing to him, "Do not dream of changing your mind for our sake... "

As a child, he had wished to be a martyr like his father; thirty years later by his eloquent *Exhortation to Martyrdom* he gave encouragement to his friends imprisoned and tortured by Maximin. Finally under Decius he had the proud privilege of suffering for Christ, and shortly after this glorious confession he died[32].

TEACHER OF LITERATURE

Leonides was beheaded and his goods were confiscated. Origen, then seventeen years old, remained with his mother and his six younger brothers. His refuge was with a noble lady of Alexandria, who helped him for a time. But he could not be comfortable there, since a heretic teacher, called "Paul of Antioch," had so captured this simple lady by his eloquence that she had harbored him as her philosopher and adopted son, and gave him permission to propagate his heresy by means of lectures delivered in her house.

Origen, as a churchman and an orthodox believer felt uncomfortable, left the house and maintained himself and his family by teaching secular literature and grammar.

The youthful Origen was unusual. He was a brilliant scholar. His education had progressed sufficiently by the time of his father’s death so that he could support the family by teaching. Through his teachings to pagans, Origen’s faith found expression as often as he had occasion to refer to the theological position of pagan writers. As a result, some pagans applied to him for instruction in Christianity. Among others were two brothers, Plutarch and Heraclas, of whom the former was martyred and the latter was yet to hold the bishopric of Alexandria[33].

32 The History of the Primitive Church, p. 928.
33 Fairweather, p.39.

ORIGEN AND THE SCHOOL OF ALEXANDRIA

Origen was about fourteen when he first attended the school presided over by Clement, and he remained Clement's pupil to the end, showing the influence of the master though he was to use Clement's weapons with incomparably greater skill. He was a good student[34].

J. Lebreton says[35],

> On the day following the death of Clement of Alexandria, Alexander of Jerusalem wrote thus to Origen: "We knew those blessed fathers who preceded us and with whom we ourselves shall soon be: Pantaenus, the truly blessed master, and also the venerable Clement who became my own master and assisted me and possibly others. Through these I came to know you, altogether excelling, my master and my brother[36]."

The School of Alexandria which had been dispersed by the persecutions and the departure of St. Clement left it without a teacher. St. Demetrius, Pope of Alexandria, recognized his ability, appointed Origen as the head of the school, when he was eighteen years old, due to his Christian zeal to preach and catechize. The post was an honorable one, but it was not without its dangers, for the persecution begun by the edicts of Severus (202) was still raging, threatening especially the converts and their masters.

Origen, immediately gave up all other activities and sold his beloved manuscripts that he possessed[37] (perhaps the library of Leonides spared by the exchequer), and devoted himself exclusively to his new duties as a catchiest. Probably by that time his brothers had grown up and taken over the support of the family, setting him free for the service of the Church. Origen was to re-

---

34 Robert Payne: Fathers Of The Eastern Church, Dorset Press, New York, 1985, P. 44.
35 The History of the Primitive Church, p. 929.
36 Eusebius: H.E. 6:14:8-9.
37 Eusebius: H.E. 6:3:1-8.

ceive from the purchaser an income of four obols a day which would have to suffice for his sustenance. Six obols were the equivalent of one denarius, which represented a very low daily wage. This gesture of reselling his library marks a complete renunciation of secular studies. But he was not slow to realize that secular knowledge was of great value in explaining the Scriptures and for his missionary work, and he would soon return to what he had intended to abandon[38].

According to Charles Bigg, "He sold the manuscripts of the Greek classics, which he had written out with loving care, for a trifling pension, in order that he might be able to teach without a fee[39]."

His catechetical instruction attracted many, and Origen grew in his vocation as a Christian teacher[40].

About the year 215, St. Alexander of Jerusalem regarded Origen, his master and friend, the successor to the venerable deans of the Alexandrian School, Pantaenus and Clement, though - in his eyes - even greater than these. On the day following the death of St. Clement, Alexander wrote to Origen: "We knew those blessed fathers who proceeded us and with whom we ourselves shall soon be: Pantaenus the truly blessed master, and also the venerable Clement, who became my own master and assisted me and possibly others. Through these I came to know you, although excelling, my brother[41]."

Here, I would like to refer to Origen's role in the development of the School of Alexandria:

1 - Origen devoted himself with the utmost ardor not only in studying and teaching the Holy Scripture, but also giving his life as an example of evangelical life. His disciple St. Gregory the

38 Henri Crouzel: Origen, Harper & Row, 1989, p.8.
39 Charles Bigg: The Christian Platonists of Alexandria, Oxford 1913, p. 154.
40 Rowan A. Greer: Origen, Paulist Press, 1979, page 4.
41 Ibid 6:14:8-9.

Wonder-maker says that "he stimulated us by the deeds he did more than by the doctrines he taught."

Eusebius gives a vivid account of the asceticism practiced by Origen. He lived with extreme simplicity, owning only one coat, walking barefoot, sleeping on the floor, eating only what was necessary to support life; and after a long day's work, sitting up half the night studying the Scriptures. Eusebius tells us that, "he taught as he lived, and lived as he taught; and it was especially for this reason that with the co-operation of the divine power, he brought so many to share his zeal." He adds, "he persevered in the most philosophical manner of life, at one time disciplining himself by fasting, at another measuring out the time for sleep, which he was careful to take, never on a couch, but on the floor, and indicated how the Gospel ought to be kept which exhorts us not to provide two coats nor to use shoes, nor indeed, to be worn out with thoughts about the future[42]."

He tried to lead his disciples and his hearers along the same way of asceticism and mortification which he imposed upon himself from his youth. To asceticism we must join prayers, with the aim of freeing the soul and enabling it to be united with God. That is what a Christian seeks by observing virginity[43], by drawing away from the world while living in the world[44], sacrificing as much as possible good fortune[45], and despising human glory[46].

As St. Gregory the Wonder-worker says, he "strove to be like his own description of the man leading the good life; he provided a model, I mean, for those in search of wisdom[47].

Origen was immensely successful. Several of his pupils were themselves martyred, another, many years later, became bishop of Alexandria. He taught as much by his example as by his

42 Ibid 6:3:9, 10.
43 In Num. hom 11:3.
44 In Lev. hom 11:1.
45 Ibid 15:2.
46 In Joan. 28:23.
47 Or. Paneg. 11. PG 10:1081C.

eloquence. He undertook to visit and console the confessors in prison, attended them to the scaffold and gave them their last kiss of peace. The mob tried to stone him. His lodgings were picketed by soldiers, though whether to arrest him or to extend the protection of a government more lenient than the populace towards so distinguished a figure, is not clear[48].

2 - At the beginning, Origen's aim was concentrated on preparing the catechumens to receive baptism, not only by teaching them the Christian faith but also by giving them instructions concerning the practical aspects of Christian life.

"*If you want to receive Baptism*," he says[49], "*you must first learn about God's Word, cut away the roots of your vices, correct your barbarous wild lives and practice meekness and humility. Then you will be fit to receive the grace of the Holy Spirit.*"

He was affectionate and, says Gregory, bewitching. He kindled in the hearts of his pupils a burning love, "directed at once towards the divine Word, the most lovable object of all, who attracts all irresistibly to Himself by His unspeakable beauty, and also towards himself, the friend and advocate" of Christ[50].

3 - Origen's task was not to prepare those people flocking in increasing numbers to sit at his feet, to be baptized, but rather to be martyred. His School was a preparation for martyrdom. Those who were close to him knew that they were running the risk of martyrdom. One pagan, Plutarch, converted by Origen was martyred; he was encouraged to the end by his master. Others still in the catechumenate or else neophytes followed him. Eusebius mentions Severus, Heraclides, Hero, another Serenus, and two women, Herais and Potamizena, whose martyrdom was especially glorious[51]. Michael Green says, "But it (School of Alexandria) was an evangelistic agency as well as a didactic one. 'Some of the Gen-

48 G.L. Prestige: Fathers and Heretics, S.P.C.K., 1968, p. 45.
49 In Leirt. hom 11:3.
50 G.L. Prestige: Fathers and Heretics, S.P.C.K., 1968, p. 49-50.
51 Eusebius: H.E. 6:4,5.

tiles came to him to hear the word of God,' and became strong, courageous Christians who sealed their testimony with their blood, men like Plutarch, Severus, Heron and Heraclides, as well as women like Herais: all were martyred. The preaching and teaching went together, and there was much practical work as well, the visiting of prisoners, the encouragement of those condemned to death for their faith, as well as working for a living and the exercise of great abstinence in food, drink, sleep, money and clothing[52]."

Eusebius describes the part Origen played at the time of persecution. "He had a great name with the faithful," he says[53], "due to the way he always welcomed the holy martyrs and was so attentive to them, whether he knew them or not. He would go to them in prison and stay by them when they were tried and even when they were being led to death... often, when he went up to the martyrs unconcernedly and saluted them with a kiss regardless of the consequences, the pagan crowd standing by became very angry and would have rushed upon him and very nearly made an end of him."

These heroic times left an indelible trace upon Origen's memory, and he recalled them towards the end of the long period of peace which preceded the Decian persecution:

That was a time when people were really faithful, when martyrdom was the penalty even for entrance into the church, when, from the cemeteries whither we had accompanied the bodies of the martyrs, we entered immediately our meeting places, when the whole Church stood unshakable, when catechumens were catechized in the midst of the martyrdom and deaths of Christians who confessed their faith right to the end, and when these catechumens, overcoming these trials, adhered fearlessly to the living God. Then it was that we remember seeing astonishing and marvelous wonders. Doubtless the faithful were then few in number, but they were

52 Michael Green: Evangelism in the Early Church,1991, p. 204.
53 Eus. H.E. 6:3:3-7.

truly faithful, following the straight and narrow path which leads to life[54].

4 - As his crowd of disciples flocked to him from morning to night, Origen realized that he had to divide them into two classes, so he chose his disciple Heraclas, an excellent speaker, to give the beginners the preparatory subject of Christian doctrines, while he devoted himself to instructing the advanced students in philosophy, theology and especially the Holy Scriptures.

5 - Origen gained a great number of pupils from the pagan School of philosophy. As Lebreton says that at the period 218-230 A.D Origen was particularly brilliant and fruitful. He was at the height of his powers; he enjoyed the confidence of Pope Demetrius, and every day saw still more students attending his lectures. These disciples came from everywhere, from the Hellenic philosophies and from the Gnostic sects; they sought from Origen the interpretation of the Scriptures and a knowledge of God. To satisfy all their desires the master felt the need of a deeper study of the Bible and of divinity. Accordingly he took up the study of Hellenic philosophy, as he explains in a fragment of a letter quoted by Eusebius: "*When I devoted myself to speaking, the fame of our worth spread abroad, and there came to me heretics and those formed in Greek studies and especially philosophers; it seemed good to me that I should examine thoroughly the doctrines of the heretics, and what philosophers profess to say concerning truth*[55]."

He felt that he was in need of deeper philosophical training, and this could be found in the lectures of Ammonius Saccas[56], a well-known Alexandrian philosopher (174-242 A.D), taught Platonism, and from him Plotonus (205-270 A.D), learned Neoplatonism. J. Quasten says,

---

54 In Jerem. Hom. 4:3.

55 Eusebius H.E. 6:14:11.

56 Saccas means "the sack," and the name was given to him because the longshoremen carried grain onto the ships in huge sacks (Robert Payne: Fathers Of The Eastern Church, Dorset Press, New York, 1985, P. 59.).

The period of his life as an educator can be divided into two parts: the first, as head of the school at Alexandria, extending from 203 to 23I A.D, was one of increasing success. The second part of his life was spent in Caesarea of Palestine from 231 A.D until his death. During the first period, he gained pupils even from heretical circles and from the pagan schools of philosophy....This busy schedule did not prevent him from attending the lectures of Ammonius Saccas, the famous founder of Neoplatonism. His influence can be seen in Origen's cosmology and psychology and in his method[57].

Origen was essentially a man of the student type[58]. But unlike St. Clement, he was not a philosopher who had been converted to Christianity, nor was his sympathy with philosophy. Perhaps because he was afraid of the beauty of philosophical forms or expressions as a dangerous snare that might entrap or distant him. Perhaps it was only that he had no time for such trifles[59]. Origen was a true missionary who realized that he must study philosophy just to be able to expound Christianity to the leading minds of his day and to answer their difficulties and stress the factors in Christianity likely to appeal to them most[60].

In a letter written in defense of his position as a student of Greek philosophy he says[61]: "*when I had devoted myself entirely to the Scriptures, I was sometimes approached by heretics and people who had studied the Greek sciences and philosophy in particular, I deemed it advisable to investigate both the doctoral views of the heretics and what the philosophers claimed to know of the truth. In this I was imitating Pantaenus who, before my time, had acquired no small store of such knowledge and had benefited many people by it.*"

57 Patrology, vol. 2, p. 38.
58 Charles Bigg: The Christian Platonists of Alexandria, Oxford 1913, p. 158.
59 H. Chadwick: the Early Church, 1969, p100.
60 Daniélou J: Origen, 1953, p73.
61 Eus. 6:9:12, 13.

It is worthy to note that not all the days of his long life were spent in scholarship, he was a man who was always violently liked or disliked. The story is told that the mob of Alexandria once seized him, clothed him in the dress of a priest of Serapis, gave him the tonsure and placed him on the steps of the great temple, ordering him to perform the office of a priest of Serapis by distributing palm branches to the worshipers. Origen did as he was ordered, and as he placed the palms in the hands of the people and blessed them, he cried out: "Come and receive the palms, not of idols, but of Jesus Christ![62]"

ORIGEN LEARNED THE HEBREW LANGUAGE

After the sack of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. and its destruction during the following years, Jewish criticism against Christianity was increasingly on the defensive, while Christian doctrine felt able to go its own way, without engaging the rabbis in a continuing dialogue. Origen seems to have been one of the few church fathers to participate in such a dialogue. Origen may also have been the first church father to study Hebrew. “As everyone knows,” St. Jerome says, "he was so devoted to the Scriptures that he even learned Hebrew, in opposition to the spirit of his time and of his people[63]." According to Eusebius, "he learned it thoroughly[64]." I think he learned it at first out of his deep love of the Scriptures, to discover the accurate meaning of its Hebrew text, and secondly for defending Christianity against the Jews. His knowledge of the language was never perfect, but it enabled him to get at the original text[65].

J.W. Trigg says, “One reason Origen probably wished to learn Hebrew was to become more proficient at finding the roots of Hebrew names. Origen shared the belief, common in his time, that the root meaning of a word remained somehow associated with it

62 Robert Payne: Fathers Of The Eastern Church, Dorset Press, New York, 1985, P. 58.
63 Viris Illustribus 54.
64 H. E. 6:16:1; Jaroslav Pelikan : The Christian Tradition, Chicago, 1971, p. 20-21.
65 Jean Daniélou: Origen, N.Y., p. 133

even when the word itself had come to mean something else entirely and that knowledge of this original meaning could be a very useful clue to the meaning of the text[66]."

ORIGEN'S SELF-MUTILATION

The presence of women at his lectures, while he was still a young man, and the consequent possibility of scandal suggested to him a literal acting on the words of the Gospel "there are eunuchs who made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake" Matt. 19:12. Origen felt obliged to take literally a word which the tradition of the Church did not understand in that way, so in a way lining up, in his youth, with those literalists whom he contested so harshly for all the rest of his life. It is indeed intriguing to find the one who is held to be the prince of allegory taking literally a verse which earlier tradition had usually understood allegorically[67].

Perhaps he regarded emasculation as simply one more of the mortifications he imposed on the body. He said later that *"those who obey the teachings of the Savior are martyrs in every act whereby they crucify the flesh; with its passions and desires*." If mortification was required, the emasculation was only an extreme form of mortification, to be compared with fasting... [68] In his enthusiasm for the perfect life, he unwisely took this action to prevent all suspicion, and at the same time he thought that he was carrying out a counsel of the Lord.

He tried to hide what he had done, but the secret was soon known and brought to the attention of Pope[69] Demetrius, who forgave him willingly, but later used it against him when he was ordained a presbyter[70].

---

66 J.W. Trigg: Origen, SCM, p.155.
67 Henri Crouzel: Origen, Harper & Row, 1989, p.9.
68 Robert Payne: Fathers Of The Eastern Church, Dorset Press, New York, 1985, P. 45.
69 The title of Papa, or Pope, was regularly given to the Bishops of Alexandria. (Eusebius, Eccl. Hist. 7:7:4; Robert Payne: Fathers Of The Eastern Church, Dorset Press, New York, 1985, P. 59.)
70 Robert Payne: Fathers Of The Eastern Church, Dorset Press, New York, 1985, P. 45.

This act of self-mutilation, condemned by the civil law[71], was already disapproved of by the Church, and was later formally condemned[72]. Origen himself wrote later when explaining this text in Matthew: "*If there are other passages, not only in the Old but also in the New Testament, to which we ought to apply the words: "The letter kills, but the spirit gives life," we must allow that they apply especially to this particular text*[73]." Origen says that "*true purity does not consist in doing violence to the body, but in mortifying the senses for the Kingdom of God*."

ORIGEN'S JOURNEYS

Origen's reputation spread not only in Alexandria but throughout the whole Church.

1 - About the year 212 A.D Origen went to Rome, during the pontificate of Zephyrinus, and in his presence St. Hippolytus gave a discourse in honor of the Savior[74].

2 - Shortly before the year 215, we find him in Arabia, where he has gone in order to instruct the Roman Governor at the latter's own request. "A soldier brought letters to Demetrius, Bishop of Alexandria, and to the prefect of Egypt in which the governor of Arabia requested them to send Origen to him as soon as possible, as he wished to discuss doctrines with him[75]."

He was also called to Arabia several times for discussions with its bishop. Eusebius mentions two of those debates, in the year 244 A.D an Arabian synod was convened to discuss the Christological views of Beryllus, Bishop of Bostra. The synod, which was largely attended, condemned Beryllus, because of his absolute monarchianism (one person as Godhead), and had vainly

71 Justin: Apol. 1:29.
72 First canon of the Council of Nicea, cf. note in Hefele-Leclercq, Histoire des Conciles, VI, Vol. I, pp. 529-532.
73 In Matt. Vol. 15:1 (Lebreton: The History of the Primitive Church, p. 931).
74 St. Jerome: De Viris Illustribus 61.
75 Eusebius: H.E. 6:19:15.

tried to bring him round to the Orthodox position[76]. Origen hurried to Arabia and succeeded in convincing Beryllus, who seemed even to have written a letter of thanks to Origen[77].

This link with Arabia is a continuation of Pantaenus'[78].

3 - Around the year 216 A.D, the emperor Caracalla had arrived in Alexandria and had been the butt of gibes on the part of the student population which greeted him as 'Geticus,' an ironical title of honor because he had assassinated his brother Geta. The Emperor looted the city of Alexandria, closed the schools, persecuted the teachers and massacred them. Origen decided to leave Alexandria in secret and withdrew for the first time to Caesarea of Palestine. There, he was welcomed by his old friend Alexander[79], Bishop of Aelia, that is of Jerusalem, and subsequently by Theoctistus, Bishop of Caesarea (in Palestine). Not wishing to miss the chance afforded them by the presence of so distinguished a biblical scholar, they invited him to expound the Scriptures in the Christian assemblies before them, although he was still a layman. Back in Alexandria, Pope Demetrius was very angry for, according to the Alexandrian Church custom, laymen should not deliver discourse in the presence of the bishops. The Pope made a protest to the Palestinian bishops, saying that "it has never been heard of and it never happens now that laymen preach homilies in the presence of bishops." Bishops Theoctistus and Alexander retorted in a letter which is possibly later and contemporary with the great crisis of 231-233 A.D - saying that this statement was manifestly incorrect. They quoted cases showing that "where there are men capable of doing good to the brethren, they are invited by the holy bishops to address the people." The Pope ordered the immediate return of Origen to Alexandria, and the latter loyally obeyed the summons,

76 Fairweather, p. 60.

77 Jerome: Catal c. 60.

78 J. Daniélou: The Christian Centuries, vol. 1, p. 184.

79 Eusebius reports passages of several letters that he wrote, including one to Origen in which he mentions his past relations with Pantaenus and Clement (HE 6:9-11; 6:14:8-9). This Alexander founded at Jerusalem a library which Eusebius used, as well as the one in Caesarea which originated in the library and the archives of Origen (HE 6:20:1) (H.Crouzel: Origen, 1989, p.15-16).

and everything seemed to settle down as it had been before. This incident was a prelude to the conflict which was to break out some fifteen years later.

Henri Crouzel states that another question can be asked about this first sojourn of Origen's at Caesarea of Palestine. In his *Historia Lausiaca,* Palladius reports the following concerning a virgin called Juliana[80]:

> It is also said that there was at Caesarea of Cappadocia a virgin named Juliana, of great wisdom and faith. She took in the writer Origen when he fled from the rising of the Greeks and hid him for three years, providing him with rest at her own expense and caring for him herself. All that I found, mentioned in Origen's own handwriting in a very old book written in verses. These were his very words: 'I found this book at the house of the virgin Juliana at Caesarea when I was hiding there. She said she had got it from Symmachus himself, the Jewish commentator.'

Writers usually understand by this 'rising of the Greeks' the persecution of Maximin the Thracian in 235 and accordingly suppose that at that time Origen had to leave Caesarea of Palestine where he had settled and hide at Caesarea of Cappadocia. Eusebius, who had also read the same note on the manuscript which was to be found in his day in the library at Caesarea in Palestine, reports that the commentaries of the Ebionite Symmachus - Ebionism was a Judaeo-Christian heresy - were to be found there and that Origen "indicates that he had received these works with other interpretations of the Scriptures by Symmachus from a certain Juliana, who, he says, had inherited these books from Symmachus himself[81]." This passage follows the chapter in which Eusebius explains how Origen composed the *Hexapla*[82]*:* Symmachus was the author of one of the four Greek versions which were col-

80 147 PG 34:1250D.
81 Eusebius 6:17.
82 Eusebius 6:16.

lated in it. These chapters relate to the Alexandrian period of Origen's life[83].

Crouzel also says, “We also wonder whether it is not right to see in the 'rising of the Greeks', not Maximin's persecution, but the troubles in Alexandria when Caracalla visited the city and to suppose that Palladius confused the two Caesareas, mentioning the Cappadocian one when it should have been the Palestinian. The fact is that the note in Origen's handwriting which he read and which is the source of his information does not say which Caesarea is meant and as the manuscript which contained it was found among the books that Origin left to the library of Caesarea in Palestine, it would seem more likely that the latter is meant. However, it is possible that Palladius knew from some other source that Juliana lived in Caesarea of Cappadocia[84].”

4 - At the beginning of the reign of Alexander Severus[85] (222-235 A.D), the Emperor’s mother, Julia Mammaea, the last of those Syrian princesses to whom the Severan dynasty owed much of its brilliance, summoned Origen to come to Antioch in order that she might consult him on many questions. She thought it very important to be favored with the sight of this man and to sample his understanding of divine matters which everyone was admiring.

According to Eusebius, Origen abode for some time at the royal place and after hearing powerful testimony to the glory of the Lord and the worth of divine instruction "hastened back to his School[86]."

Origen mentions in his *Letter to friends in Alexandria* a stay in Antioch, where he had to refute the calumny of a heretic whom he had already confronted in Ephesus.

---

83 Henri Crouzel: Origen, Harper & Row, 1989, p. 16.

84 Henri Crouzel: Origen, Harper & Row, 1989, p. 17.

85 The emperor offered the Christians not only peace but favour. He set up in the private sanctuary, the 'lararium' of his palace, the statues of Abraham and Jesus. The empress-mother dreamed of reconciling the Christians with Roman civilisation.

86 Eusebius: H.E. 6:21:3,4.

5 - Origen's next journey was into Greece, and involved two years absence from Alexandria. He went in response of Achia, apparently to act the part of peace-maker, and was bearer of written credentials from his Bishop[87]. Origen chose the longest way round: from Alexandria to Athens going through Caesarea of Palestine which was not the most direct way, probably to visit his Palestinian friends, Bishops Theoctistus and Alexander. There he was ordained a priest, by the Bishop of this country[88]. To the two bishops it seemed unfitting that a spiritual counselor of high authorities like Origen should be no more than a layman. Moreover, they desired to avoid all risk of further rebukes from Pope Demetrius by licensing Origen to preach in their presence. Possibly they wanted to give him greater prestige for the mission he was undertaking to Greece.

Origen at this time was not thinking of settling in Caesarea; once his mission to Greece had been accomplished, he would go back to Alexandria and again direct his school.

Pope Demetrius counted this ordination much worse offense than the former one, considering it as invalid, for two reasons:

a - Origen had received priesthood from another bishop without permission from his own bishop.

b - Origen's self-mutilation was against his ordination. Until today no such person (who practices self-mutilation) can be ordained.

ORIGEN'S CONDEMNATION

Pope Demetrius called a council of bishops and priests who refused to abide by the decision, that Origin must leave Alexandria[89], but this did not content bishop Demetrius. He called another

87 Fairweather, p. 50.
88 Eusebius: H.E. 6:23,4.
89 H.M. Gwatick: Early Church History, London, 1909, vol. 2, p. 192.

council of bishops only (in the year 232), and deprived him of the priesthood as the ordination was invalid and he became unfit for catechizing. Beside the above-mentioned accusations, they considered that there were some errors in his teachings such as:

1 - He believed souls were created before the bodies, and they are bound to bodies as a punishment of previous sins they had committed[90]. The world is for them only a place of purification.

2 - The soul of Christ had a previous existence before the Incarnation and it was united with divinity.

3 - All creation, even Satan aqnd demons, will return back to its origin in God, (eternal punishment has an end)[91].

We will deal with these errors attributed to him in chapter four: “Origen and Origenism.”

Origen was deprived of his priesthood, and St. Jerome says that all the bishops endorsed the attack on Origen except the Bishops of Palestine, Arabia, Achaia and Phoenicia. St. Jerome at the peak of his enthusiasm for Origen did not hesitate to write that, if Rome called a senate against Origen, it was not “on account of innovations in dogma, or to accuse him of heresy, as many of these mad dogs claim nowadays, but because they could not stand the splendid effect of his eloquence and scholarship for when he spoke all were speechless[92].”

Origen sent a letter, probably from Athens, to friends at Alexandria who presumably had warned him of what Pope Demetrius thought of him. The fragment that Jerome preserves which comes from an earlier part of Origen's letter contains disillusioned and bitter remarks about the limited confidence it is possible to have in the Church leaders: it is wrong to revile them or hate them; one should rather pity them and pray for them. One should not re-

90 De Principiis 1:8:1.
91 Ibid. 1:6:2; 3:6:6.
92 Epistle 33 to Paula,5.

vile anyone, not even the devil, but leave it to the Lord to correct them[93].

With a heavy heart Origen abandoned Alexandria forever and made his way, accompanied by the faithful Ambrosius and perhaps with a small following of copyists and stenographers to Caesarea. He obeyed abhorring schism, and with noble Christian unselfishness counted his expulsion from the place that was dearest to him than any on earth, as not too great a sacrifice in order to maintain the unity of the Church. For although he had powerful friends in Alexandria and overseas and might have become the leader of a great party to fight the bishop - but never did thus! He calmly left Alexandria, feeling that nobody could deprive him of his beloved church, as he says, "It sometimes happens that a man who has been turned out is really still inside, and one who seems to be inside may really be outside[94]."

"*The work of correction,*" Origen says in one of his letters about Ambrosius, "*leaves us no time for supper, or after supper for exercise and repose. Even at these times we are compelled to debate questions of interpretation and to amend manuscripts. Even the night cannot be given up altogether to the needful refreshment of sleep, for our discussions extend far into the evening. I say nothing about our morning labor. For all earnest students devote this time to study of the Scriptures and reading*[95]".

J. Lebreton says,

> Shortly after the condemnation of Origen, Demetrius died. His successor was the priest Heraclas, whom Origen had appointed as assistant, and who after his condemnation had taken his place at the head of the Catechetical School. It seems that Origen tried at this time to return to Alexandria and to take up his teaching once more, but Heraclas upheld the sentence of Demetrius. In 247 Heraclas

93 Henri Crouzel: Origen, Harper & Row, 1989, p.20.
94 In Lev. Hom 14:3.
95 Ep. to a friend about Ambrosius; Charles Bigg: The Christian Platonists of Alexandria, Oxford 1913, p. 156-157.

died in his turn, and was succeeded by St. Dionysius. He, however, took no steps to recall to Alexandria the man who had nevertheless been his own master. But in the time of the Decian persecution, Origen was to receive, after his painful confession of the Faith, a friendly letter from the Bishop of Alexandria.

These facts enable us to understand better the significance and the motives of the sentence of Demetrius: if his two successors, sometime pupils of Origen, did nothing to recall their master to Alexandria, it must have been because his dismissal was motivated not merely by the personal jealousy of Demetrius, but also by the Church's own interests[96].

A NEW SCHOOL

The departure of Origen from Alexandria to settle in Caesarea of Palestine divides his life into two main periods. Henri Crouzel states that, according to most manuscripts of Eusebius Origen's departure from Alexandria to settle in Caesarea of Palestine took place in the tenth year of the reign of Alexander Severus, say 231: one manuscript only gives the twelfth year, say 233. Eusebius subsequently points out that shortly after the departure of Origen, Demetrius, the bishop of Alexandria, died, after holding his office for fully forty-three years. Earlier he had noted the accession of Demetrius in the tenth year of Commodus, that is in 190. So Alexander would have died in 233 and that date makes it more likely that Origen settled in Caesarea in 233 than in 231[97].

Pastoral concerns appear and grow stronger during the second half of his life, for his priesthood and his preaching brought him into contact not only with the intellectuals with whom he still consorted but also with the generality of the Christian population[98].

---

96 The History of the Primitive Church, p. 944-5.
97 Henri Crouzel: Origen, Harper & Row, 1989, p.2.
98 Henri Crouzel: Origen, Harper & Row, 1989, p.24.

In the preamble to volume six of the *Commentary on John*, the first book that he composed at Caesarea as soon as he could start work again, Origen, who as a rule never speaks of himself, allows the bitterness caused by the recent events at Alexandria to show.

J. Lebreton says[99],

> The condemnations pronounced by men who had been most closely connected with Origen - Demetrius, who thirty years before had appointed him head of the Catechetical School, and Heraclas, who had been his disciple and his collaborator - together with the exile which removed him from the Church in which his father had died a martyr's death and in which he himself had taught for thirty years, and the pronouncements against him emanating from the whole world, were to Origen himself a terrible blow. Yet he says little about them in his works, and when he does so it is with moderation. The most explicit passage is found in the *Preface* of the Sixth Tome of St. John:
>
> *In spite of the storm stirred up against us at Alexandria, we had completed the fifth tome, for Jesus commanded the winds and the waves. We had already begun the sixth when we were torn from the land of Egypt, saved by the hand of God the deliverer, who had formerly withdrawn his people from thence. Since that time the enemy has redoubled his violence, publishing his new letters, truly hostile to the Gospel, and letting loose upon us all the evil winds of Egypt. Hence reason counseled us to remain ready for combat, and to keep untouched the highest part of ourselves, until tranquillity, restored to our mind, should enable us to add to our former labors the rest of our studies on Scripture. If we had returned to this task at an unseasonable time, we might have feared that painful*

99 Cf. The History of the Primitive Church, p. 945-6.

> *reflections would bring the tempest right into our soul. Moreover, the absence of our usual secretaries prevented us from dictating the commentary. But now that the multitude of heated writings published against us has been extinguished by God, and our soul, accustomed to the misfortunes which come to pass in consequence of the heavenly word, has learnt to support more peaceably the snares prepared for us--now that we have, so to speak, found once more a calm sky, we do not wish to delay any longer in dictating the rest, and we pray God our Master to make himself heard in the sanctuary of our soul, so that the commentary we have begun on the Gospel of John may be completed. May God hear our prayer that we may be able to write the whole of this discourse, and that no further accident may interrupt and break the continuity of Scripture*[100].
>
> This moving passage well brings out Origen's great grief, and also his efforts to overcome it and continue his work in peace.

J. Lebreton also says, "We can compare with this passage a fragment of a letter from Origen to his friends, quoted by St. Jerome, *Adv. Rufinum 2:18* : "Is it necessary to recall the discourses of the prophets threatening and reprimanding the shepherds and the elders, the priests and the princes of the people? You can find them without our help in the Holy Scriptures and convince yourselves that our own time is perhaps one of those to which these words apply: Believe not a friend, and trust not in a prince (*Micheas*, vii, 5), and also this other oracle which is being fulfilled in our own days "The leaders of my people have not known me they are foolish and senseless children; they are ready to do evil but know not how to do good" (*Jeremias*, iv, 22). such men deserve pity rather than hate, and we must pray for them rather than curse them, for we have been created, not to curse but to bless."

---

100 Comm. on John. 6:1:8-11.

Origen left Alexandria and made his new home in Caesarea, in Palestine, where he was gladly welcomed by the bishops. "They attached themselves to him as to a unique master, and they entrusted him with the explanation of the holy Scriptures and with the whole of Church teaching[101]," Bishop Theoctistus induced Origen to found a new school of theology there, over which he presided for almost twenty years. In this School he taught St. Gregory the Wonder-Worker for five years.

Ambrose and the book-producing organization had accompanied him to Caesarea, and a share in the dedication of two works was bestowed on that loyal benefactor.

At the bishop's request Origen also discussed the Scripture, at least twice a week, on Wednesday and Fridays[102]. The new task increased Origen's humility, for he believed that the preacher had to be first and foremost a man of prayer. Many times when he was faced with an especially difficult passage, he would often stop and ask his listeners to pray with him for a better understanding of the text[103].

His power as a teacher in Caesarea can fortunately be measured by an account which was recorded by a grateful pupil. His school at Caesarea exercised a magnetic attraction not only over the neighboring country but on hearers from abroad, who came to hearken to his wisdom from all parts, as the Queen of Sheba came to Solomon.

Among the earliest of them was a young law student, by name Gregory, afterwards surnamed the *"Thaumaturgus"* (Wonder-worker), owing to the apostolic signs and wonders which he wrought in his singularly successful labors as a missionary among his own people. His name by birth was Theodore, and was subsequently changed to Gregory. He was born in Pontus, of a distinguished but pagan family. At the age of fourteen, after the death of

101 Eusebius: H.E. 6:27.
102 In Num. Hom., 15:1; In Jesu. Nav., Hom. 20; In 1 Sam. Hom. 2.
103 In Gen. Hom. 2:3.

his father, he came to know Christianity and accepted it. Gregory wanted to become a lawyer, and set out for Beirut with his brother Athenodorus, in order to study law there. The two brothers took their sister with them as far as Caesarea, so that she could join her husband, who had been appointed assessor to the Governor of Syrian Palestine. Passing by Beirut on his journey, he arrived at Caesarea, only to fall under Origen's spell and find himself a captive, not of Roman law, but of Christian Gospel. He stayed for five years under the tuition of the master, at the end of which, he received the bishopric on the eve of returning home. Before leaving Caesarea, Gregory addressed to his master a *speech* of farewell and thanks (*Panegyric*). The admiration of the young disciple for his master shows how great was the latter's influence, and how much he was loved.

At the end of the first part of the *Panegyric,* St. Gregory describes in moving terms the fascination that the master's language had for him when he spoke of the Word and the mutual affection that grew up between them and him:

> And thus, like some spark lighting upon our inmost soul, love was kindled and burst into flame within us, - a love at once to the Holy Word, the most lovely object of all, who attracts all irresistibly towards Himself by His unutterable beauty, and to this man, His friend and advocate. And being most mightily smitten by this love, I was persuaded to give up all those objects or pursuits which seem to us befitting, and among others even my boasted jurisprudence, - yea, my very fatherland and relatives, both those - who were present with me then, and those from whom I had parted. And in my estimation there arose but one object dear and worth desire, - to wit philosophy, and that master of philosophy, that divine man[104].

104 Panegyric 6:84-4.

St. Gregory expresses the grief of farewell and weeps to leave the almost monastic life he had led with Origen and his fellow students[105].

> ... where both by day and by night the holy laws are declared, and hymns and songs and spiritual words are heard; where also there is perpetual sunlight; where by day in waking vision we have access to the mysteries of God, and by night in dreams we are still occupied with what the soul has seen and handled in the day; and where, in short, the inspiration of divine things prevails over all continually[106].

Origen states that many like St. Gregory exaggerate in praising him. He says, "*We ourselves also suffer from such exaggerations. Many who love us more than we deserve give to our discourses and to our doctrine praises of which we cannot approve. Others slander our books and attribute to us opinions which to our knowledge we have never held. Those who love us too much and those who hate us both stray from the rule of truth*[107]."

Henri Crouzel says,

> Following A Knauber[108] we think that the school of Caesarea was more a kind of missionary school, aimed at young pagans who were showing an interest in Christianity but were not yet ready, necessarily, to ask for baptism: Origen was thus introducing these to Christian doctrine through a course in philosophy, mainly inspired by Middle Platonism, of which he offered them a Christian version. If his students later asked to become Christians, they had then to receive catecheticial teaching in the strict sense.
>
> But the *didascaleion* of Caesarea is above all a school of the inner life: all its teaching leads to spirituality. It is striking to note that what Gregory admires most in Origen is not the polymath or the speculative sage, but the

105 Henri Crouzel: Origen, Harper & Row, 1989, p.26.
106 Panegyric 16.
107 In Luc. hom. 25.
108' Das Anliegen der Schule des Origenes zu Casarea,' Munchener Theologische Zeitschrift 19, 1968.

man of God and the guide of souls. Origen seems to Gregory to have gone far on the road of spiritual progress that leads to assimilation to God, so much so that he no longer has for guide an ordinary angel but already perhaps the Angel of the Great Council himself,' that is to say the Logos. He has received from God exceptional spiritual gifts: he can speak of God, he is the 'advocate' or 'herald' of the Word' and of the virtues,' the 'guide' of philosophy in its moral and religious applications. He possesses to a unique degree the gift of the exegete, analogous to that of the inspired author; he knows how to listen to God: 'This man has received from God the greatest gift and from heaven the better part; he is the interpreter of the words of God to men, he understands the things of God as if God were speaking to him and he explains them to men that they may understand them'. Among the gifts he has received from God, he has the greatest of all, 'the master of piety, the saving Word'. With him the Word comes in bare-foot, not shod with an enigmatic phraseology. He teaches the virtues in wise and compelling terms, but above all by his example: he puts his own lessons into practice, striving to fit himself to the ideal they describe: he presents to his students a model of all the virtues, so that they come to life.

God has given him the power to convince and that is how he overcame the resistance of the two brothers. His words pierced them like 'arrows[109].

Origen paid several journeys during this period[110]:

1. Bishop Firmilian of Caesarea in Cappadocia, invited him into his country 'for the good of the Churches' and then went himself to spend some time 'with him in Judaea ... to improve himself in divine matter'."

109 Henri Crouzel: Origen, Harper & Row, 1989, p. 28.
110 Henri Crouzel: Origen, Harper & Row, 1989, p.30ff.

2. A journey to Nicomedia, Diocletian's future capital, near the Asian shore of the Sea of Marmara, is attested by the conclusion of the long letter he wrote to Julius Africanus in reply to the latter's objections to the authenticity and canonicity of the story of Susanna in the Greek version of Daniel.

3. As we have seen before, Origen went to see Beryllus, bishop of Bostra in the Hauran, capital of the Roman province of Arabia, a country to which Origen had already been at the summons of its governor during the Alexandrian period of his life. Eusebius attributes to Beryllus a doctrine derived from both modalism and adoptionism: the former, to safeguard the divine unity, made of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit three modes of being of a single divine Person, while the latter thought of the Son as a man whom God adopted. Beryllus maintained that 'our Lord and Savior had not pre-existed in a mode of his own before his dwelling among men and that He did not possess a divinity of his own, but only that of the Father which dwelt in Him'. Many bishops had discussions with Beryllus at a synod held in his own Church and they summoned Origen to it; he succeeded in bringing Beryllus round to a more orthodox opinion.

4. Another mission, likewise to Arabia, and related to the reign of Philip the Arabian, who came from that country, was directed against the views of certain Christians known by the name of Thnetopsychites, that is people maintaining that the soul is mortal.

5. The third mission was not unconnected, as regards the opinions debated, with the two previous ones. The evidence for it is found in the Dialogue of Origen with Heraclides and the bishops his colleagues on the Father, the Son and the soul, the transcript in part of the proceedings of a synod like the former, but of which we know neither the time nor the place. But the doctrines discussed are sufficiently akin to those in debate at the other synods to suggest that this also was in Roman Arabia and at the same period. We will return to this dialogue in the following chapter.

ORIGEN'S TEACHING AS SEEN BY A DISCIPLE[111]

St. Gregory describes his feelings towards his teacher, Origen, as having the warmth of the true Sun which begins to rise upon him. He was pierced with Origen's words, as by a divine arrow. His prayers were as God's arrows, having the power to convert his hearers. St. Gregory states that in his zeal, Origen, "*did not aim merely at getting us round by any kind of reasoning; but his desire was, with a benignant, affectionate and most generous mind, to save us*."

The pains he took to build them up in the faith are admirably portrayed in Gregory's *Panegyric,* which gives us the first detailed curriculum of Christian higher education. But what is not so apparent from this account is the earnest prayer and confident use of the Scriptures in evangelism which Origen employed. Something of his priorities in this matter may be gleaned from his letter to Gregory. "Do you then, my son, diligently apply yourself to the reading of the sacred Scriptures. Apply yourself, I say, for we who read the things of God need much application, lest we should say or think anything too rashly about them. And applying yourself thus to the study of the things of God, . . . knock at its locked door, and it will be opened to you . . . And applying yourself thus to the divine study, seek aright, and with unwavering trust in God, the meaning of the Holy Scriptures, which so many have missed. Be not satisfied with knocking and seeking; the prayer is of all things indispensable to the knowledge of the things of God. For to this the Savior exhorted, and said not only 'Knock and it shall be opened to you; and seek and you shall find' but also, 'Ask, and it shall be given unto you'.

It was through the wise, dedicated, individual evangelism of Christians like Origen that some of the most notable converts

111 The History of the Primitive Church, p. 948ff.

were brought into the Christian Church. Hand-picked fruit was the best[112].

In St. Gregory's eulogy, pulsating with grateful admiration, the young man tells how he was first won by Origen and then trained by him. The master was not merely a professor but above all an educator; he transformed the person who gave himself up to him:

When he saw that his efforts were not fruitless, he began to dig the soil, to turn it over, to water it, to rake it over, and to use all his art and all his care in order to work upon us; everything that there was in the nature of thorns, thistles, or evil weeds, and all that our minds produced like a virgin forest, he cut back or extracted by his reprimands and orders; he corrected us after the manner of Socrates, and subdued us by his words if he found us like wild horses, impatient of the bit rushing off the road, and running hither and thither, until by persuasion or compulsion, curbing us by his speech as by a bit put into our mouths he succeeded in training us. At first this could not be done without pain and suffering for us; neither custom nor exercise had taught us to follow reason; but nevertheless he went on forming us by his discourses and gradually purified us (7:96).

Side by side with this moral training, an encyclopedic teaching was given.

Thus this whole course, encyclopedic and philosophical, was but a preparation for the study of Holy Scripture which for Origen was the most important subject of all, constituting Theology.

He himself used to interpret the Prophets and clarified all the obscure and puzzling passages such as occur frequently in the holy Scriptures... He clarified and threw light upon all the enigmas he encountered, because he knew how to listen to God and to understand him. One might say that these enigmas presented no diffi-

112 Cf. Michael Green: Evangelism in the Early Church, 1991, p. 228-9.

culty to him, and contained nothing that he did not understand. Of all the men of to-day, of whom I have heard or whom I have known, there has not been one who was able as he was to contemplate the purity of the divine oracles, to receive their light into his own soul, and to teach them to others. This is because the universal Head, he who spoke through the Prophets beloved by God, and who inspires all prophecy and all mystical and divine discourse, honored him as a friend, and set him up as a master. Through others, he spoke in enigmas, but through Origen he gave the understanding of them, and whatever he, the Master supremely worthy of belief, had by his royal authority ordained or revealed, this he gave to this man to expound, and to explain the oracles, so that if anyone were hard of heart and incredulous or still desirous to learn, he was able to learn from this man and was in a sense compelled to understand and to believe and to follow God. If he did all this, it was in my opinion by the communication of the divine Spirit; for those who prophesy and those who understand the prophets need the same power, and no one can understand a prophet unless the same Spirit who has prophesied give him the understanding of his discourse. That is the meaning of the words we read in the holy books: "He who shuts can alone open, and none other" - the divine word opens by manifesting those enigmas which are closed. This wonderful gift was received by this man from God, he was given by heaven the marvelous destiny of being to men the interpreter of the words of God, understanding what God says in the way in which God says it, and expounding it to men in a way that men can understand. Thus, there was nothing inexplicable, hidden, or inaccessible to us; we were able to follow every saying, barbarian or Greek, mysterious or public, divine or human; we were able in all freedom to run through all, to examine all, and to collect together and enjoy all the good things of the soul. Whether it came from some ancient source of the truth or from some other name or work, we drew from it abundantly and with full freedom wonderful and magnificent thoughts. To express the whole matter in brief, all this was for us a veritable Paradise, an image of the great Paradise of God, in which we did not have to

work upon the soul below, nor to feed our bodies by fattening them; we had only to develop the riches of the soul, like beautiful plants which we had planted ourselves or which had been planted in us by the Cause of all things, in joy and abundance (15:I74-183),

This eulogy does honor to the disciple as much as to his master. But at the same time we cannot help noticing a certain exaggeration, whether in the praise of Hellenic philosophy, or in the repeated praise of Origen himself as the unique master and sole interpreter of the Scriptures. Origen doubtless was himself aware of this exaggeration. We have a letter which he addressed to Gregory shortly after the return of the young man to his own country; we find in it some points which appear to be discreet corrections of the *Discourse* especially on the dangers which may be found in the good things of Egypt, and the necessity of prayer to understand the Scriptures. At the end of the letter, Origen gives this exhortation:

As for you, my son, apply yourself above all to the reading of the holy Scriptures. "Apply yourself," I say, for we need great attention when we read the holy books so that we may neither say nor think anything incautious concerning them. Be attentive to the reading of the divine Scriptures, with faith and the intention of pleasing God knock if the doors are shut, and the porter will open to you, as Jesus said: The porter will open the door to him." Being thus attentive to the divine reading, seek with an upright heart and a very firm faith in God, the spirit of the holy Scriptures, so often hidden. But do not content yourself with knocking at the door and seeking: the most necessary thing for the understanding of divine matters is prayer. The Savior, when exhorting us, did not content himself with saying to us: "Knock and it shall be opened unto you, seek and you shall fin; he also said: "Ask and it shall be given unto you." Because of my fatherly affection towards you I do not fear to speak to you thus. Whether we have done well or not, God and his Christ know, and he who has a part in the spirit of God and the spirit of Christ. May you yourself have part therein, an ever increasing part, so that you may not merely say: "We are becoming

participators in Christ" but also "We are becoming participators in God."

ORIGEN AS A PREACHER[113]

Origen was dean of the Scientific School of Alexandria, at the same time he was a preacher not in a formal way, but through his zeal of the salvation of men. As a preacher, Origen was very humble , because he knew there was much that he did not know and yet he was not afraid.

His spiritual lectures were attended by men and women, Christians, and non-Christians, poor and rich people. As we have seen, even the pagan Queen, Julia Mammaea desired to hear him and to be instructed by him. Michael Green presents Origen as an example of a lovely preacher saying:

> A lovely example of the attitude to preaching adopted by one of the great intellectuals at the end of the second century, Origen, is found in his Commentary on Psalm 36. One might expect that the head of the Catechetical School in Alexandria, the man who outgunned the philosophers on their own ground, was somewhat dull in his preaching and academic in his approach to it; in fact, the very reverse was the case.
>
> In this commentary on Psalm 36 Origen is talking of Christian preachers under the metaphor of arrows of God. "All in whom Christ speaks, that is to say every upright man and preacher who speaks the word of God to bring men to salvation—and not merely the apostles and prophets—can be called an arrow of God. But, what is rather sad," he continues, "I see very few arrows of God. There are few who so speak that they inflame the heart of the hearer, drag him away from his sin, and convert him to repentance. Few so speak that the heart of their hearers is

113 See David G. Hunter: Preaching in the Patristic Age, 1989, p. 42-3; Michael Green: Evangelism in the Early Church, 1991.

deeply convicted and his eyes weep for contrition. There are few who unveil the light of the future hope, the wonder of heaven and the glory of God's kingdom to such effect that by their earnest preaching they succeed in persuading men to despise the visible and seek the invisible, to spurn the temporal and seek the eternal. There are all too few preachers of this caliber." He fears that professional jealousy and rivalry often render, what few good preachers there are, useless in reaching those they try to win. And continuing in a very humble and sensitive vein Origen shares with the reader his dread that he should himself ever turn into the devil's arrow by causing anyone to stumble through what he did or said. "Sometimes we think we are confuting someone, and we speak ill-advisedly, and become aggressive and argumentative as we endeavor to win our case no matter what expressions we use. Then the devil takes our mouth and uses it like a bow from which he can shoot his arrows[114].[115]

Green also says,

> But it seems to have been Clement and Origen who were most sensitive about the need of those without Christ, and adept at pleading with them. We have already sampled the caliber of Origen's preaching, his inner concern to be an arrow in the Lord's hand, and his comments on Romans 9:1 where he asks the reader, "Do you have sorrow and grief for the lost ? Do you care enough to be separated from Christ for them ?" His predecessor in the Catechetical School at Alexandria, Clement, had equal warmth, as his *Protrepricus* makes clear. This is no mere Apology. It is a missionary tract, full of love and concern for those whom he is seeking to win. It may not be amiss to close this chapter with some excerpts from this treatise, as a reminder that the warmth of Christian love for the unevangelized and

114 Comm. on Ps. 36:3:3.
115 Michael Green: Evangelism in the Early Church, 1991, p. 203.

genuine concern for their well being did not end with the apostolic age.

"Do you not fear, and hasten to learn of him—that is, hasten to salvation—dreading wrath, loving grace, eagerly striving after the hope set before us, that you may shun the judgment threatened ? Come, come, O my young people! For if you become not again as little children, and be born again, as says the Scripture, you shall not receive the truly existent Father, nor shall you enter the kingdom of heaven. For in what way is a stranger permitted to enter ? Well, I take it, when he is enrolled and made a citizen, and receives one to stand to him in the relation of Father: then he will be occupied with the Father's concerns, then he shall be deemed worthy to be made his heir, then he will share the kingdom of the Father with his own dear Son[116]."

Origen's homilies give us a good picture of himself as a preacher, and of a third century preacher. He has no specific word for "Preacher;" he calls him simply *didaskalos*, or "teacher;" that is, the preacher was one sort of educator. When Origen preached, he stood before the congregation and had the book of the Scripture open before him; it was a corrected version of the Septuagint.

Origen did not preach regularly until he had been ordained a presbyter.

When Origen was preaching in Caesarea, the bishop was not present. But when he spoke of *1 Samuel* as a guest preacher in Jerusalem, the bishop attended. In his homily on 1 Samuel 1-2, Origen paid the bishop a compliment: "*Do not expect to find in us what you have in Pope Alexander, for we acknowledge that he surpasses us all in gracious gentleness. And I am not the only one to commend this graciousness; all of you, who have enjoyed it , know and appreciate it*[117].

116 Protrepticus 9; Cf. Michael Green: Evangelism in the Early Church, 1991, p. 253.
117 Homily on Samuel 1-2,1. (translated by Joseph T. Lienhard, S.J.

Origen readily admitted that learning alone did not make a good preacher. Again and again he asks his congregation to pray for him, and especially for his enlightenment, that he might understand the scriptures and explain them correctly. In one homily he says to his hearers: "*If the Lord should see fit to illuminate us by your prayers, we will attempt to make known a few things which pertain to the edification of the church*[118]" In another passage, he urges the congregation to pray for insight during each reading of the Scriptures:

We should pray the Father of the word during each individual reading "when Moses is read," that he might fulfill even in us that which is written in the Psalms: "Open my eyes and I will consider the wondrous things of your Law (Ps.. 118:18)." For unless he himself opens our eyes, how shall we be able to see these great mysteries which are fashioned in the patriarchs, which are pictured now in terms of wells, now in marriages, now in births, now even in barrenness?[119]

Elsewhere he says: "*Lord Jesus, come again; explain these words to me and to those who have come to seek spiritual food*[120]."

He was appalled by the task confronting him, for what he had to do was not just to state the truth but to state it in such a way that his hearers could grasp it. *"I often think of the maxim: "It is dangerous to talk about God, even if what you say about him is true." The man who wrote that must, I am sure, have been a shrewd and dependable character. There is danger, you see, not only in saying what is untrue about God but even in telling the truth about him if you do it at the wrong time*[121]."

Origen as a preacher, gains men through love, or say a close friendship. For example St. Gregory Thaumaturgus describes in a very moving way the affection between himself and his mas-

118 Homily on Exodus 9.2 (Heine, 337)
119 Homily on Genesis 12.1(Heine, 176)
120 Homily on Jeremiah 19:14.
121 In Ezech. hom. 1:11; Jean Daniélou: Origen, N.Y., 1955, p. 24-5.

ter, comparing it with that of Saul's son, Jonathan, for David[122]. "And so he goaded us on by his friendship, by the irresistible, sharp, penetrating goad of his affability and good purposes, all the good will that was apparent in his own words, when he was present with us and talked to us[123]." The friendship which unites the pupil to his master, his "true father," is the central idea of the moving peroration in which St. Gregory laments, with the support of many biblical references, all that he is about to leave: he compares himself to Adam driven out of Paradise, to the prodigal son reduced to eating the fodder of the swine, to the Hebrew captives refusing to sing in a strange land, to the robbed Jew of the parable of the Good Samaritan. And after asking his master to pray that an angel may watch over him during his journey back to his distant land, he ends his address as follows: "Ask him urgently to let us return and to bring us back to you. That alone, that more than anything else, will be our consolation[124]." The rhetoric in which this peroration is couched should in no way cast doubt on the youthful friendship and admiration that inspired it[125].

Origen, like other Alexandrian Fathers, such as Athenagoras, Pantaenus and Clement mixed even their apologetic writings with teaching and evangelism. They were missionaries, preachers, evangelists, and in many instances, martyrs.

Origen as a sincere preacher asks every believer to have the responsibility to be a representative of His Master, saying, "*There was no need for many bodies to be in several places and to have many spirits like Jesus, so that the whole world of men might be enlightened by the Word of God. For the one Word was enough, who rose up as a 'sun of righteousness' to send forth from Judaea his rays which reach the souls of those who are willing to accept him." He continues by pointing out that many have, in imitation of Christ, carried out the message from Judaea into the rest of the*

122 Henri Crouzel: Origen, Harper & Row, 1989, p. 53.
123 Panergyric, 6.
124 Ibid 16-19.
125 Henri Crouzel: Origen, Harper & Row, 1989, p.

world. "If anyone should want to see many bodies filled with a divine spirit, ministering to the salvation of men everywhere after the pattern of the one Christ, let him realize that those who in many places teach the doctrine of Jesus rightly and live an upright life, are themselves also called christs by the divine Scriptures in the words, 'Touch not My christs, and do My prophets no harm[126]."

Green says," There is another passage in Origen which sheds light on how seriously he took the responsibility of being the visible representative of his Master. In his *Commentary* on Romans 9:1 he considers Paul's professed willingness to be cut off from Christ if that would benefit his Jewish brethren and bring them to faith. Origen asks the reader if *he* has sorrow and grief for the lost, like that. Does he care so much that he would be willing to be separated from Christ for their sake ? Of course that could not happen. Nothing will be able to separate the Christian from the love of Christ, as Paul has made clear at the end of the previous chapter. Nor would it be possible to save others if one were about to perish oneself. But even though it could not happen, Origen persists in his challenging inquiry, would the reader be willing for such a fate in order to rescue others ? "*Have you learned the lesson of dying to live from your Lord and Master ? Have you learned from him who though by nature immortal and inseparable from the Father nevertheless died and descended into Hades ? In the same way Paul imitated his Master, and was willing to be accursed from Christ for his brethren's sake, although nothing could separate him from the love of Christ ! Is it so wonderful that the Apostle should be willing to be accursed for his brethren's sake, when he knew that the one who was in the form of God emptied himself of that form, and took on himself the form of the Servant and was made a curse for us ? Is it so wonderful if, when the Lord was made a curse for slaves, the slave should be willing to be a curse for his brethren* ?[127]"

126 Contra Celsus 6:79.
127 In Rom. hom. 9:1; Cf. Michael Green: Evangelism in the Early Church, 1991, p. 253.

Finally, Origen believes that Christ is speaking through him.

> *Till now Joshua writes the Torah by our words, in the hearts those who receive the word in straight faith will all their spirits, with sound ear, sound heart, and unevil thought*[128].

ORIGEN'S ATTITUDE TOWARD HIS ADMIRER

> *All the people were admired of him (St. John the Baptist) and loved him. Surely John was a strange man, worthy of the strong admiration of all men, for his life was totally different than theirs... But this surpassed the limits of reasonable love, for they asked if he was Christ.*
>
> *St. Paul was afraid of this unsuitable and spiritual love, as he speaks of him self: " But I forbear, lest anyone should think of me above what he sees me to be or bears from me. And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations" (2 Cor. 12:6,7.)*
>
> *I myself suffer from this exaggeration in our church, for the majority love me more that I deserve, and praise my speech and teaching ... while others criticize our homilies and attribute to me some ideas which are not mine... These who exaggerate in loving us and those who hate us both do not preserve the law of truth. Some lie in their exaggerated love as others in their hatred.*
>
> *Therefore we have to put limits to our love and do not leave it in freedom to carry us here and there. . . . It is written in the book of Ecclesiastes, "Do not be overly righteous, nor be overly wise, why should you destroy yourself" (Eccles. 7:16)*[129].

Origen, who was interested in the salvation of souls, did not care of his own glory. Truly he was very kind and gentle to at-

128 In Jos. hom 9:3.
129 In Luc. hom. 25:2.

tract men to their Savior, but sometimes he was very firm for their advantage, regardless their opinion on him. R. Cadiou says,

> The great Alexandrian, whose pupils were always quick to praise his gentle and penetrating methods of teaching, allowed himself certain elements of rudeness as a preacher. When he compared his own ideals of Christian perfection with the routine practice of the faithful or with the cupidity and laziness of certain members of the clergy, he was as unable to control his impatience as any other such intellectual Christian might be under the same circumstances. A certain sharpness began to appear in his style of preaching, and he himself acknowledged it in one of his homilies given at Jerusalem. "*Do not expect*," he says, "*to hear from me the gracious words that you hear from your Bishop Alexander. I agree with you that he is outstanding in the charm which marks his gentleness, and I know you have been accustomed to enjoy those delightful exhortations that pour forth from his fatherly heart, vivified as it is with the spirit of charity. But in my garden the herbs are of a sharper taste, and you will find them salutary remedies when you come here to pray*[130]."

MAXIMIN'S PERSECUTION

During the persecution initiated by Maximin, Origen took refuge in Cappadocian Caesarea. His old friends Ambrosius (Ambrose) and Protoktetuis, a priest of Caesarea, were seized and thrown into prison. He wrote and dedicated to them his treatise, "*Exhortation to Martyrdom*," in which he regarded martyrdom as one of the proofs of the truth of Christianity, and a continuation of the work of redemption.

Ambrose and Protoktetius were set at liberty and Origen returned to Caesarea in Palestine.

---

[130] In Sam. hom. 1 PG 12:995; R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder, 1944, p. 86-7.

Traveling to Athens through Bithynia, he spent several days at Nicomedia. there he received a letter from Julius Africanus, who asked him about the story of Susanna as an authentic portion of the Book of Daniel. Origen replied in a lengthy letter form Necomedia.

Under the reign of Decius (249 - 251), persecution rose again and Origen was arrested. His body was tortured, he was tormented with a heavy iron collar and kept in the innermost den in the prison. For several days his feet were tied together to a rock; and he was threatened with being burned at the stake.

Eusebius describes his suffering in the following terms:

> The number and greatness of Origen's sufferings during the persecution, the nature of his death..., the nature and the number of bonds which the man endured for the word of Christ, punishments as he lay in iron and in the recesses of his dungeon; and how, when for many days his feet were stretched four spaces in that instrument of torture, the stocks, he bore with a stout heart threats of fire and everything else that was inflicted by his enemies[131].

Origen bore all these sufferings bravely. He did not die of this persecution, but he died shortly afterwards and perhaps due to it.

Photius, giving an account of Pamphilus' Apology for Origen[132], says there were two traditions about Origen's death. The first said 'he ended his life in an illustrious martyrdom at Caesarea itself at the time when Decius was breathing nothing but cruelty against the Christians': that would imply his death during the persecution. The second tradition is the one attested by Eusebius: "He lived until the time of Gallus and Volusian," which Eusebius reports at the beginning of Book 7; 'he died and was buried at Tyre in his sixty-ninth year'. And Photius adds: 'This version is the true

131 Eusebius: H.E 6:39:5.
132 Bibl. 118:92b.

one, at least if the letters which we have, written after Decius' persecution, are not forgeries. [133']

Justinian made a charge that Origen "in the very time of his martyrdom denied Christ and paid his worship to the many gods of the Greeks[134]."

Before Origen died, St. Dionysius of Alexandria, who had succeeded Heraclas as Pope of Alexandria, sent him a letter *On Martyrdom*, to lead a renewal of Origen's old relation with the Alexandrian Church. This letter was probably an *Exhortation to Martyrdom* addressed to his former master when the latter was in prison. This assurance of sympathy, coming from the Church of his birth, from which he had been banished eighteen years, must have been moving to receive.

THE DATE OF HIS DEATH

Henri Crouzel states that, according to Eusebius' narrative the date of his death was in the time of Gallus, the successor of Decius, Origen, "having completed seventy years, less one," that is being sixty-nine: the date of his death would then be 254-255[135]. The difficulty about this is that Gallus and his son Volusian were overthrown in May 253 and that they did not reign two years[136]. So we must suppose, either that Origen died under their successor Valerian, or that he did not live for quite sixty-nine years. Given the precision of this last figure. Crouzel gives more weight to the dates 254-255 than he does the mention of Gallus' reign[137].

C. Bigg says, "He was buried in Tyre, where for centuries his tomb, in the wall behind the high altar, formed the chief ornament of the magnificent cathedral of the Holy Sepulcher. Tyre was wasted by the Saracens, but even to this day, it is said, the poor fishermen, whose hovels occupy the site of that city of palaces,

133 Henri Crouzel: Origen, Harper & Row, 1989, p.34.
134 Justin. Or; J. Pelikan: The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100-600), p. 343.
135 Eusebius: HE 7:1.
136 Eusebius: HE 7:10:1.
137 Henri Crouzel: Origen, Harper & Row, 1989, p.2.

point to a shattered vault beneath which lie the bones of "Origenus[138]."

138 Charles Bigg: The Christian Platonists of Alexandria, Oxford 1913, p. 160.

2

ORIGEN'S WRITINGS

AMBROSE AND ORIGEN'S WRITINGS

In 217 A.D, or soon after that, Origen made a great friend, Ambrose, a man of means and position whom he had won from Valentinian heresy. According to Eusebius, Origen began his commentaries on the Holy Scriptures being urged thereto by Ambrose, his publisher, who put his fortune at the service of his master. He dictated to more than seven amanuenses, who relieved each other at appointed times. And he employed no fewer copyists, besides girls who were skilled in elegant writing.

The object aimed at by the two friends is thus set forth by Origen, writing to Ambrose:

Today, under the pretext of gnosis, the heretics set themselves up against the holy Church of Christ, and multiply the volumes of their commentaries in which they pretend to interpret the evangelical and apostolic writings. If we ourselves keep silence, if we do not oppose them with true and sound doctrines, they will attract famished souls who, in the absence of healthy nourishment, will seize upon these forbidden foods which are indeed impure and abominable... In your own case, it was because you could not find masters capable of teaching you a higher doctrine, and because your love for Jesus could not abide an unreasoned and common faith, hence you formerly gave yourself up to those doctrines which subsequently you condemned and rejected, as was right[1].

1 *In Joann., 5:8. This passage has been preserved for us in the Philocalia. (Lebreton, p. 934).*

This passage reveals to us the fundamental motive of Origen's thought: in the city of Alexandria where Greeks, Jews, Gnostics and Christians are greedy for religious knowledge, and all claim to possess its secret, one cannot be satisfied with an "unreasoned and common faith;" the pride of a Christian will not suffer this, nor his "love for Jesus." But from whom is this high religious knowledge to be sought, if not from the master of the Alexandrian School? St. Clement had realized the indispensable necessity of such instruction; he had managed to give an outline of it. But it deserved to be expounded fully, and to this work Origen devoted his life[2].

HIS VOLUMINOUS WRITINGS

Origen was the most prolific Christian writer of antiquity. St. Epiphanius[3] declared that Origen had written 6000 works-scrolls of undoubted value and of varied lengths. The complete list of his writings that Eusebius added to the biography of his friend and teacher Pamphilus was lost. According to St. Jerome who used it, Origen's treatises are two thousand. St. Jerome's question, "which of us can read all that he has written?" is a sufficient testimony to the magnitude of Origen's literary works. Charles Bigg says, “The marvel is not that Origen composed so much, but that he composed so well[4].”

The Origenistic Controversies caused most of the literary output of the great Alexandrian to disappear. The greater part of his writings has perished as a result of the violent quarrels which broke out concerning his orthodoxy. Not only the reading of his works was proscribed but even preserving any of them was considered an illegal deed.

---

2 Lebreton: The History of the Primitive Church, p. 934-5.

3 Adv. Hear. 64;63.

4 Charles Bigg: The Christian Platonists of Alexandria, Oxford 1913, p. 157.

We possess only a small remnant of his work, mostly preserved, not in the original Greek, but in Latin translations. There is a number of Latin translations. Some are made by Saint Hilary, Saint Jerome, and several others.. The greater part comes from the pen of Rufinus of Aquileia. St. Basil and St. Gregory of Nzianzus compiled an anthology (*Philokalia Origenis*).

THE LATIN TRANSLATION

The Latin translations of Origen's works, especially those by Rufinus, are not accurate. For he wanted to present his author to the Latin-speaking public and therefore did not hesitate to abridge some passages that seemed to him to be too long or to add explanations when he thought it advisable. Refinus thought that Origen's books had been altered by heretics, and that he had the right to expurgate them...[5]

Heine has summarized Rufinus' alteration of Origen's text along five lines[6].

1. Heine suggests that Rufinus suppressed contradictory elements in Origen.

2. Rufinus attempted to restore the original thought of Origen from other texts of Origen's works.

3. He attempted to clarify Origen's thought where he found it obscure.

4. He admitted that he had abridged the text of Origen.

5. Rufinus translated the sense into Latin and did not give a word for word translation.

However, the conclusion reached by Ronald Heine and Annie Jaubert appears justified. The homilies of Origen are paraphrased in great length, yet they convey accurately all his thought.

---

5 Daniélou: Origen, 1953, p X-XII.

6 Heine, Frs. of the Church, 71, p. 34-5; Gary Wayne Barkley: Origen; Homilies on Leviticus, Washington, 1990, p. 21.

Even though Origen's exact expression is lost, the genuineness of the thought remains[7].

THE FEATURES OF HIS WRITINGS

1. Lebreton says, "The widespread influence of Origen will not surprise anyone who studies his teaching. In him, *theology aims no longer merely at refuting opponents, but also at instructing Christians*; it sets out to penetrate revealed truths more closely, and to co-ordinate them in a doctrinal synthesis in which the mind can find a place for all that it believes and all that it knows[8]."

2. Origen, in his writings, as other Alexandrian Fathers, was interested in *witnessing to the Gospel as an experienced life*. Adalbert Hamman remarked that the Fathers of the Church preach and write to instruct their congregations, not to provide universities with topics for doctoral dissertations[9].

3. David G. Hunter says,

> Origen's homilies were preached **spontaneously, not prepared in writing**. Their subject matter, always the scriptures, was dictated by the serial reading of the books of the Bible. They were utterly lacking in rhetorical polish, and showed the simplicity that led the church to choose to call discourses on the scriptures *homiliai*. After the reading, and with little or no introduction , Origen would begin to explain the scripture, verse by verse. He dealt first with the literal sense, then with any spiritual (meanings) he discovered. He always tried to find a way for his hearers to apply the passage to their lives. He ended his homilies, sometimes quite abruptly, with a doxology[10]**.**

---

7 Heine, 71, p. 32; G.W. Barkley: Origen; Hom. on Leviticus, p. 23.

8 The History of the Primitive Church, p. 928.

9 Adalbert Hamman: Dogmatik und Verkundigung in der Vaterzet, Theologie ind Glaube 61 (1971), p. 109.

10 On the structure of Origen's homilies , see Nautin, "Origéne predicateur: 123-31.

The most spectacular example of Origen's spontaneity is found in the homily on the witch of Endor. On the day Origen preached this homily in Jerusalem, before bishop Alexander, chapters 25 to 28 of 1 Samuel were read. Origen began by saying that the reading contained four periscopes or narratives, and that it would take several hours to explain the whole passage. He then turned to the bishop and asked him which passage he would like to hear explained. The bishop answered: the one about the witch. And Origen explained it[11].

Another incident is equally interesting. While Origen was preaching on the story of Hannah in 1 Samuel 2, a member of the congregation suffered an attack of epilepsy or the like and began to shout out. Others rushed to aid the person. Origen who was commenting on Hannah's words "My heart rejoiced in the Lord" (1 Sam. 2:1) worked the incident into his homily, explaining it as the work of an unclean spirit that could not bear the congregation's rejoicing in the Lord and tried to change their joy into sorrow[12].

4. Origen used the techniques he learned from Alexandrian literary study to refute heretical interpretations, to demonstrate to the simple the need for seeking a deeper meaning, and to provide the clues needed to reach the spiritual sense[13].

5. N.R.M. De Lange in the introduction of his book "*Origen and the Jews*" states that Origen "taking a great interest in the customs and traditions of the Jews and knowing personally certain Jewish teachers of his time, he is excellently placed *to give a sympathetic outsider's view of the Jews of his day and of their relations with their non-Jewish neighbors*[14]."

For example, Origen tells us of a Jewish Midrash in a curious passage of Ezechiel, which unites Noah, Daniel, and Job as

---

11 Homily on 1 Samuel 28,1.

12 Homily on 1 Samuel 1-2,10.

13 J.W. Trigg: Origen, SCM, p.154.

14 Origen and the Jews, Cambridge University Press, 1975, p.1.

types of just men who have been spared (16:11): I heard a Jew explain this passage by saying that they had been mentioned as having known the three stages: happy, unhappy, happy...see Noah before the Flood when the world was still intact. See him in the destruction of the world saved in the ark. See him coming out after the Flood becoming as it were the creator of a new world. Such is the just man: he sees the world before the Flood, that is before the end: he sees it in the Flood, that is in the destruction of sinful man at the day of Judgment: and he will see it again at the resurrection of all sinners[15].

6. Except in *Contra Celsum* he almost never quotes from profane authors. He is not a man who professes in private: he is rather a lecturer, and above all he is a catchiest and a preacher. He is quite willing to include idolaters, heretics and "philosophers" in a single sweeping condemnation. He knows that "the knowledge which converts men to lead a holy life comes only from...Christ" and that Christ is found only "in the Church" which is filled with his splendor - the Church, pillar and firm support of the truth, where the Son of Man dwells in fullness. From the moment when he becomes a priest, he is aware that he "exercises the teaching office of the Church, of which he bears the authentic character"' he wishes to be "the faithful steward of the divine mysteries." He compares the writings of the apostles to the trumpets of Israel's army which reduced to rubble the walls of Jericho, the whole machinery of paganism, and the systems of its thinkers.

7. Henri Crouzel says,

> The literary work of Origen has three essential characteristics, often inseparable and found, in varying degrees, in almost every writing of his: exegesis, spirituality, and speculative theology. An important part is often played in his work by philosophy, philology and various subjects. So we study Origen's *exegesis, spirituality and theology*,

---

15 In Ezek. hom. 4:8. PG 13:703; Jean Daniélou : From Shadows to Reality, Studies in the Biblical Typology of the Fathers, Newman Press, 1960, p. 76.

and in his theology the place taken by philosophy. But these three characteristics are not separable from each other; he knows 'no distinction of the genres'. They constantly interpenetrate, so that one of these aspects cannot be ' understood if abstracted from the other two'. Usually it is Scripture that forms the basis of his doctrine and it is from Scripture that he derives both his spiritual and his theological teaching, a spiritual teaching which always has theological foundations and a theological teaching from which a spiritual flavor is never lacking [16].

8. From the various works of Lomiento it emerges that, contrary to many current evaluations, Origen is a writer of worth, without useless ornamentation, but with a great power of expression[17].

9. In the dedication of Book 20 of the *Commentary on John* he prays to receive 'from the fullness of the Son of God, in whom it has pleased all the fullness to dwell[18].'

10. Origen constantly paid attention in his commentaries and often also in his homilies to the different readings that he found in the manuscripts.

11. Origen aims in almost all his writings and homilies to refute, directly or indirectly, the major heresies of his time, and the Gnostic sects, especially the trio Basilides - Valentinus - Marcion.

12. And though he gave an impression of vast authority in his writings, he was prepared to be humble. "*If anyone else can find something better, confirming what he says by clear proofs from Holy Scripture, let his opinion be preferred to ours*[19]." Sometimes Origen makes no firm statement, but he gives several inter-

---

16 Henri Crouzel: Origen, Harper & Row, 1989, p. 54-5.

17 Henri Crouzel: Origen, Harper & Row, 1989, p.

18 Comm. on John 20:1:1; Henri Crouzel: Origen, Harper & Row, 1989, p.

19 De Principiis 2:6:7; Robert Payne: Fathers Of The Eastern Church, Dorset Press, New York, 1985, P. 53.

pretations of the same passage, and they clearly remain hypothetical: they are statements by way of exercise, *gymnastikos*. St. Athanasius also expresses approval of this way of proceeding, when he is writing about Origen[20]. Most of the time Origen expresses himself thus when neither Scripture nor reason allows him to affirm more strongly, that is *dogmatikos*. The same can be said of the exegeses that do not originate from the New Testament: they also put forward interpretations by way of research[21].

The researcher who merely suggests his solutions to the reader and leaves the latter free to adopt others if he finds them preferable cannot be other than modest. The Alexandrian's modesty is noted by a considerable number of critics. The same goes for the Scriptural interpretations of which we have just spoken; they are suggested as something to reflect on and to contemplate and Origen declares himself ready to abandon them if anyone finds anything better[22].

Pamphilus of Caesarea, a writer who shows the most intelligent appreciation of Origen's manner, also emphasizes this aspect in the preface to his Apology for Origen[23]:

> We frequently find, however, that he speaks with a great fear of God and in all humility when he excuses himself from expounding what comes to his mind in the course of very advanced discussions and a full examination of the Scriptures: and when he is expounding he is often wont to add and to avow that he is not uttering a final pronouncement nor expressing an established doctrine, but that he is researching to the limit of his ability, that he is discussing the meaning of the Scriptures and that he does not claim to have understood that meaning wholly or perfectly: he says that on many points he has a preliminary idea but that he is

20 DE decretis Nicaenae Synodi 27:1-2.

21 Cf. Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p. 164.

22 Cf. Henri Crouzel, p. 164.

23 PG 17:543 Cff; Cf. Henri Crouzel, p. 164-165.

not sure that he has reached in every respect perfection or a complete solution. Sometimes we see him recognizing that he is hesitating about a number of points on which he raises questions that come to his mind; he does not give a solution to them, but in all humility and sincerity he does not blush to admit that all is not clear to him. We often hear him inserting into his addresses words which today even the most ignorant of his detractors would be too proud to utter namely that if anyone speaks or expresses himself on these subjects better than he, then it is preferable to listen to that teacher rather than to him. In addition to this we sometimes find him giving more than one answer to the same question: and quite reverently, as someone who knows he is speaking of the Holy Scriptures, after setting out the numerous ideas that come to his mind, he asks those who are listening to test each of his statements and to retain what a prudent reader would find most correct. He does so most assuredly because he wishes that all the questions that he has raised and discussed be held worthy of consideration before being approved or considered finally settled. The fact being that, according to our faith, there are in Scripture many things that are mysterious and wrapped in secrecy. If we pay careful attention to the sincerity and catholic spirit with which he describes all his writings in the preface to the Commentary on Genesis, we shall easily get from this text an insight into all his thought[24].

Here is the passage from the *Commentary on Genesis* which Parmphilus goes on to quote[25]:

If we were in every way too lazy and negligent to set about research, even though our Lord and Savior invites us to undertake it, we should certainly recoil (from such work), considering how far we fall short of the spiritual

---

24 Henri Crouzel: Origen.

25 PG 17:544 Bcff.; Cf. Henri Crouzel, p. 165.

understanding with which the intellect needs to be endowed if it is to devote itself to research into such great matters.... If in the course of discussion a profound thought occurs to one, it must be stated but not categorically affirmed: to do the latter would be the act of a rash man who had forgotten himself and lost the sense of human weakness: or, alternatively, the act of perfect men who knew in complete confidence that they had been taught by the Lord Himself, that is to say that they get what they assert from the Word of Truth and from the very Wisdom by which everything was made; or again it would be the act of men who have received from heaven divine answers, having gone into the tempest and the darkness where God is to be found, where the great Moses found it so difficult to go, and having been there, been enabled to understand and to express such great matters. But we, by the simple fact that we believe, however poorly, in Christ Jesus, and that we boast of being his disciples, nevertheless do not dare to say that we have perceived face to face the meaning that He has passed on to us of what is contained in the divine books; for I am certain that the world itself could not hold that in a manner proportionate to the force and majesty of its meanings. That is why we do not dare to affirm what we say in the way that the Apostles did and we give thanks that, while so many are unaware of their own ignorance and affirm, in all conscience as it seems to them, to be a final truth every passing thought that occurs to them, without rule of order, sometimes even in a stupid or a mythological way, we, in relation to these great realities and to everything that is beyond us, are not ignorant of our ignorance.

Origen's procedure can be compared to that of a professor of philosophy who tries to present to his students different doc-

trines with all their implications and in all their force even if he personally holds yet another view or has not decided on any[26].

ORIGEN'S MAIN SOURCES

N.R.M. Lange in his book, "Origen and the Jews," speaks of Origen's sources concerning the Jews and Judaism in his writings. His work gives us an account of his sources as a whole[27].

1. In the first place there is the **Greek Bible (**the Septuagint), with which Origen became familiar in his childhood, and which permeated the whole of his thought. According to Tertullian the text was available, with the Hebrew original, with the rest of Ptolemy's library in the Serapeum, and besides it was read publicly by the Jews. In addition to the version of the Septuagint there were others more faithful to the Hebrew text, notably that of Aquila. He also collected other versions, including those attributed to Symmachus and Theodotion, the readings of which he included in the *Hexapla*.

2. He referred to some of the **extra-canonical books**, such as Enoch, the Assumption of Moses, the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, the Prayer of Joseph, Ezra and several other Jewish apocrypha, including perhaps the Book of Jubilees. According to Harnack, since Origen knew these he ought also to have known all the Jewish apocryphal works listed by Nicephorus in his *Stichometria*. In addition he often quotes from unnamed Jewish apocrypha which do not seem to have survived.

3. **Philo** is quoted by Origen in a few places by name, and several more passages have been pointed out in which Origen seems to echo remarks of Philo, sometimes attributed to 'one of our predecessors.' It would appear from this that Origen regarded Philo as part of the heritage of the Church. We do not know how or when the writings of Philo passed into the Christian tradition, but it

---

26 Henri Crouzel, p. 166.

27 See Origen and the Jews: Nicholas De Lange, Cambridge University Press, chapter 2.

cannot have been long before Origen's birth, perhaps after the crushing of the Jewish revolt of 115 A.D, when many of his readers may have entered the Church.

Jean Daniélou says,

> In the commentary on St. Matthew 15:3, he praises him explicitly. "Philo, who has won the respect of the learned by his many volumes on the Law of Moses, writes in his book about the traps set for the best by the good... "Here he is singing Philo's praises and making a precise reference to one of his works. Further on in the same commentary (17:17) he writes of a "man who lived before our time and wrote books called 'Allegories on the Sacred Laws[28]."

Jean Daniélou[29] explains the effect of Philo on the thought of Origen, saying,

> We have seen how Philo interprets the image of God, to the likeness of which man is made, as the Logos, meeting place of ideas, and therefore containing in itself the archetypal ideal of man. Origen adopts this theory, but corrects it along Christian principles. The Logos, to the likeness of which man is made, is not the invisible creation prior to the visible world, that he is for Philo. He is the uncreated Logos, which became incarnate in Jesus Christ. For Origen the Logos has not the same nature as he has for Philo, though the latter has exerted his influence. And this Logos is identical with Jesus.

> *I find in the creation of man a remarkable fact, which I do not find elsewhere: God has made him to his image and likeness. Certainly, when we say that man is made in the image and likeness, we are not thinking of the bodily frame. No corporeal being can contain the image of*

---

28 Jean Daniélou: Origen, p. 178.

29 Jean Daniélou: From Shadows to Reality, p. 61-3.

God, but what has been made in God's image is the interior man, invisible, incorporeal, incorruptible, immortal. In these qualities is the image of God more clearly understood. But we must see what is this image and seek to what particular likeness it is to which man is said to be formed. For it is not said that God made man in his own image, but to the likeness of the image of God. What, then, is this other image to the likeness of which man has been made, if not our Savior, who is the first born of all creation, of whom it is written that he is the brightness of eternal light and the figure of God's substance; for he himself said: "He who has seen me, has seen the Father." All those who come to him and strive to become partakers of that invisible image, are daily renewed by their progress in the interior man to the image of him who made them[30].

But after this, Origen goes on to develop the allegory of creation in the manner of Philo. "*Let us see by means of allegory how man in the image of God has been made male and female. Our interior man is composed of soul and spirit. The spirit is called man, the soul (anima) is called woman. If there is harmony between them, they unite frequently and beget sons which are good dispositions and salutary thoughts, by which they fill the earth, that is they lead their bodily senses to higher levels*[31]." This is pure Philonian allegory. The same principle is applied to the submission of animals to man. "*You shall have dominion over the fishes of the sea and the birds of the air. We have already explained the literal meaning of this passage. Speaking allegorically (secundum allegoriam), it would appear to me that birds and fishes signify those realities of which we spoke earlier; I mean the dispositions of the soul*

30 In Gen. Hom. 1:13.

31 In Gen. hom. 1:15.

and the thoughts of the beast[32]." This example is quite sufficient to show how much our author borrows from Philo. Equally, with the Jewish philosopher Origen gives us a psychological and moral approach to the narrative of Genesis. This double approach is Christian and valid, for it represents the initial stages of Christian philosophy: it is not, however, a development of the sense of the text, but rather an extraneous addition. This moral allegorizing is confined by Origen within limits and runs on definite lines.

Henry Chadwick says,

But Origen's evident debt to Philo must not be used to put Origen into a Philonic strait-jacket with the effect of obliterating the important differences between them. The ethical, psychological and scientific exegesis of Philo is now being combined with the typological exegesis of Justin and Irenaeus, seeking in the Old Testament for specific foreshadowing of Christian doctrine in a way that is a natural and easy extension of the argument from prophecy common in the canonical gospels and going back to the earliest Christian generation[33].

4. Origen has friends among **Jewish teachers and** the rabbis, and consults them about Jewish interpretations, customs and traditions, of which he has a good knowledge. He makes use of ***Jewish traditions*** in expounding the Scriptures.

G. Bardy, in an article in the *Revue Biblique* for 1925 entitled "*Les traditions juives dans l'oeuvre d'Origéne,*" collected some seventy passages of Origen which he thought represented borrowings of Jewish traditions.

Jean Daniélou says,

A few examples of the more remarkable of these Jewish traditions will show the sort of thing involved. The

---

32 In Gen. hom. 1:16, 20, 5-8.

33 Henry Chadwick: History and Thought of the Early Church, London, 1982, p. 183.

Gnostic Apelles had rejected Noe's Ark as unhistorical, on the ground that it was "quite impossible for so small a space to contain so many animals and the food they would need for a whole year. The space mentioned could not accommodate even four elephants." In reply to this objection, Origen says: " I will tell him something I learned from my masters and from other sensible men who knew a great deal about Hebrew traditions. They used to say that it was clear from Scripture that Moses had been educated in Egypt and hence, they said, he calculated the number of cubits in the Ark by geometry, an art at which the Egyptians excelled. Well, geometricians have a method of reckoning which they call proportional, and by this method of reckoning which they call proportional, ... one cubit, in square measure and in cubic, can stand for six cubits and even for three hundred[34]." And in the contra Celsum he explains that the Ark was about forty kilometers long and one kilometer wide. This is a proof of the literal accuracy of the text in the rabbinical tradition, a thing not often found in Origen[35].

We know hardly anything of Judaism in Alexandria at this time, and any information Origen could offer would be most welcome. He knew the city well, having been born and brought up there, and having lived there for the greater part of his life. In the works produced before he left Alexandria there are some interesting remarks about Jews and Judaism. What is to be made of these? We know that in the great revolt of 115-17 A.D. many of the Jews of Egypt were killed. In Alexandria, where the revolt was crushed in its early stages, some of the Jews survived, but Jewish community life appears to have come to an end and the power of the Jews in Alexandria was destroyed.

We must turn now to the question of the Jews whom Origen consulted and whose statements he quotes. It is clear from

---

34 In Gen. 2:2.

35 Jean Daniélou: Origen, p. 175.

what he himself says that there were several of these, but his lack of precision makes it difficult to identify them and has generated a great deal of confusion.

In the preface to his *Commentary on the Psalms* he says that he sought explanations on the title of a psalm from the patriarch Ioullos and from someone who was said to be a scholar among the Jews. This Ioullos is thought by some to be a rabbi Hillel, who was not a patriarch but the son and brother of patriarchs. It is also believed, on the evidence of Talmudic texts that he was in contact with a famous rabbi of Caesarea, Hoschaia Rabba[36].

St. Jerome[37] says that Origen mentions by name the patriarch Huillus, who was his contemporary. St. Jerome mentions a teaching of this patriarch based on certain psalms, and also says that Origen ended Book 30 of his commentary on Isaiah with his interpretation of Isaiah 29:1ff[38].

At least one of Origen's Jewish informants was a convert to Christianity[39], and it may be that he made use of several converted Jews. It is clear that Origen prided himself on his contacts with certain *Jews*.

There are many passages in which Origen attributes a teaching to "the Hebrews[40]."

5 A certain historical source was ***Josephus***, whom Origen several times quotes by name.

6. An interesting Greek Jewish document is the ***Midrashic history***, perhaps translated into Greek from a Hebrew original in the third century, known as the *Book of Biblical Antiquities*.

---

36 Henri Crouzel: Origen, Harper & Row, 1989, p.13.

37 Adv. Rufinum 1:13 PL 23:408.

38 Nicholas De Lange: Origen and the Jews: Studies in Jewish-Christian Relations in Third-Century Palestine, Cambridge, 1975, p. 23.

39 Sel. in Ezech. 9:4; In Num. hom. 13:5; In Jer. hom 20(19):2.

40 Sel in Gen. 2:8; 41:45; In Ezech. hom 10:3; Sel. in Ps. 77:45; In Ps. prol. (PG 12:1056)); Sel in Lam. 1:1; In John 6:14.

7. There remain the Christian writers, both ‘orthodox’ and ‘heretical’:

Melito of Sardes[41] was certainly read by Origen, and had made the pilgrimage to ‘the places where the message was proclaimed and the deeds were done,’ where he recorded the canon of Scripture then current[42].

St. Pantaenus, who settled in Alexandria and taught there perhaps until Origen's early youth.

St. Clement is a more concrete influence.

Another scholar of the time who has received but scant attention is Julius Africanus, celebrated for his correspondence with Origen over the authenticity of the story of Susanna.

8. He was no less indefatigable in pursuit of ***secular learning***. Porphyry, the Neoplatonist, who met him personally when Origen was an old man complained that Origen "always consorted with Plato" and studying the books of later Greek philosophers. Academic pagans considered that Christians who exercised the rights of rational thought were encroaching unfairly on the professional preserves of infidelity... Origen himself claimed the widest liberty to drink all the springs of Hellenic rationalism. He asks how he could deal with the religious difficulty of heretic and heathen inquirers if he did not make himself familiar with their literature; it was the course followed by Christian leaders in Alexandria both before and after himself..[43].

He attended the lectures of Ammonius Saccas who can thus claim as his pupils in philosophy the two outstanding Greek thinkers of the Christian era-Origen himself and after him, Plotinus.

---

41 Sel. in Gen. 1:26 PG 12:39A.

42 Nicholas De Lange: Origen and the Jews, p.18.

43 G.L. Prestige: Fathers and Heretics, S.P.C.K., 1968, p. 45-6.

ORIGEN AND THE AGGADAH[44]

"*Aggadah*" is a word that has many meanings. In the present context it will be taken in its widest possible sense to include the whole body of non-legal traditions and elaborations of the biblical narrative which formed, or may reasonably be supposed to have formed, the stock in trade of early Amoraim.

"The Hebrews have a tradition in which the Lord God planted the "paradise" or garden called Eden, and they say it is in the middle of the world, like the pupil of an eye; that is why, they say, the river Pheison is interpreted "mouth of a pupil," since it is the first river that flows out of Eden. Their tradition is as follows: Eden, which is interpreted "sweet," existed before the garden came into being, for it was in it that the garden was planted."

Origen states that Adam spoke Hebrew, which would accord with the rabbinical belief that the world was created in Hebrew, but he mentions the fact in connection with the doctrine of the "angels of the nations" an idea which is not particularly associated with rabbinical Judaism.

Origen mentions a "tradition of the Hebrews" that Adam was buried at Golgotha. The immediate source of this tradition is evidently not rabbinical. Harnack says that it is more probably Judeo-Christian.

In a *homily on Exodus* Origen mentions a tradition (introduced in the Latin by the words "*audiui a maioribus traditum*") that separate paths were cut through the Red Sea for each of the twelve tribes. The same tradition is mentioned by Eusebius, who ascribes it to the Hebrews, and it is not unlikely that Eusebius' source is Origen. At any rate the *aggadah* is well attested in the Jewish sources. There are hints of it in the *Mekilta*, and it is specifically mentioned in the Midrash and in the Targum.

---

44 N.R.M. De Lange: Origen and the Jews, chapter 10.

An outstanding instance of Origen's adoption of *aggadic* interpretations is his comment on the image of the ox devouring the grass in the field in Numbers 22:4: "Just as a calf (tears up) the greenery with its mouth, so too the holy people, making war with its lips, has its weapons in its mouth, because of its prayers." Not only does this interpretation echo various rabbinical remarks, but it would also seem that Origen himself attributed it to a Jewish source.

A more questionable example is the statement that the angel who barred Balaam's way[45] was the same angel of whom God says to Moses "My angel will go before you to guard you on your way." According to L. Ginzberg, this angel was thought to be Michael, and he quotes two rabbinical remarks to this effect.

The "Hebrew Tradition" quoted by Origen, to the effect that Phinehas was granted immortality[46] has already been noticed.

45 Numbers 22:22.

46 Numbers 25:11f.

1. TEXTUAL STUDIES (*THE HEXAPLA*)

It is the first attempt at establishing a critical text of the Old Testament. Nothing like it had ever been attempted on the Bible before, and no subsequent study of the text could fail to profit alike by its example and by its actual performance[47]. "A golden book" it has been called with truth, for it touches not a single false note[48]. It was an immense task to which Origen dedicated his whole life[49]; it was begun in Alexandria, and it was finished probably in Tyre.

Charles Bigg says, "The *Hexapla*, the first great achievement of Christian erudition, is impressive in many ways, not least as a proof of the intelligence and sincerity of the community to which it was addressed. But with all his devotion and learning Origen was not a consummate master in the higher functions of criticism. His equipment was insufficient. His knowledge of Hebrew was respectable, and for his age remarkable, but not profound. He had a fair acquaintance with the grammar and dictionary, but had not penetrated into the genius of the language. Again he was hampered by prejudice[50].

Origen's *Hexapla* (the six-fold) is a milestone in biblical scholarship that makes him the father of textual criticism of the Bible in the Christian tradition. The work itself did not survive; in fact, no one may ever have made a full copy of it because of its sheer bulk and specialized function. It remained at Caesarea in Palestine until the Arab conquest, where a number of scholars, including the church historian Eusebius, and Jerome, the translator of the Bible into Latin, consulted it. It seems as if Eusebius had the

---

47 G.L. Prestige: Fathers and Heretics, S.P.C.K., 1968, p. 54.

48 Charles Bigg: The Christian Platonists of Alexandria, p. 159.

49 Quasten, vol 2, p. 44.

50 Charles Bigg: The Christian Platonists of Alexandria, p. 162-163.

column with the revised Septuagint copied, without the critical notations, as a text for use by the church[51].

Of the stately Hexapla time has spared us nothing but a gleaning of scattered fragments. The original MS perished probably when the library of Caesarea was destroyed by the Arabs in the middle of the seventh century, and its immense size-it consisted of not less than fifty great rolls of parchment-must have prevented its ever being copied as a whole, though the revised LXX was circulated separately, and indeed still exists in a Syriac translation[52].

It may, at first, appear surprising that Origen, whose real devotion was to the allegorical sense of the Bible hidden under the veil of the letter, paid such painstaking attention to the minutiae of textual criticism and, in fact, to other matters pertaining to the letter such as biblical geography, but this was entirely consistent with his presuppositions[53].

Origen constructed the *Hexapla* of the Old Testament to furnish Christians with a valid text of the Scriptures in their discussions with the Jews[54].

To his mind, this textual work was only the first of the exegete's tasks; his chief business was to explain the meaning of God's word as it was contained in the Holy Scriptures. St. Gregory of Nyssa shows us how Origen fulfilled this function. "He used to explain the obscurities in Scripture," he says "and he could shed light on them because he was such a wonderfully understanding hearer of God's word-or he would expound parts that were clear in themselves or at any rate were so to him. Of all men now living, I have never known or heard of one who had pondered as he had on the pure and luminous words and had become so expert at fathoming their meaning and teaching them to others. The Spirit who inspires the

---

51 Joseph Wilson Trigg: Origen, SCM Press Ltd, 1983, p. 85.

52 Charles Bigg: The Christian Platonists of Alexandria, p. 164.

53 Joseph Wilson Trigg: Origen, SCM Press Ltd, 1983, p. 86.

54 New Catholic Encyclopedia, article: Origen and Origenism.

prophets and all divine and mystic discourse honored him as a friend and had appointed him His interpreter.... The same grace is needed for understanding the prophecies as for making them[55]."

ITS CONTENTS

Eusebius says, "He (Origen) discovered versions made by other translators of the Holy Scriptures beside the Septuagint. In addition to the versions in current use, he also found those by Aquila, Symmachus and Theodotion. He took them from the hiding-places where they had long been lying and brought them to light[56]."

This work was called at first the *Tetrapela* or "Fourfold bible," for it contained the four Greek translations used in Alexandria:

1. The **Septuagint**, the Greek translation of the Old Testament which the church employed. Once the church adopted it as her Old Testament, the Jews who were faithful to the Septuagint until about the beginning of the second century, abandoned it and proclaimed the sole authority of the Hebrew Bible.

When the Septuagint contained words not in the Hebrew, Origen marked them with an obelus. These were standard critical marks developed by the Alexandrian textual critics of the second century B.C. and still in use today[57].

2. In Alexandria and in much of the Greco-Roman world including some parts of Palestine, few of the Jews actually understood Hebrew. They were in need of a new translation into Greek, a word-for-word translation. **Aquila,** a Jewish proselyte **living at the beginning of the second century,** did that. His translation was very literal, preserving Hebrew word order and idiomatic turns of phrase. He was influenced by the Palestinian rabbis.

---

55 On Paneg., 15 PG 10:1093C; Jean Daniélou: Origen, NY, 1955, p. 19.

56 Eusebius: H.E. 6:16:1.

57 Joseph Wilson Trigg: Origen, SCM Press Ltd, 1983, p.84.

3. A second Jewish proselyte, living at the same period, **Symmachus**, produced a translation in more acceptable Greek. His work was more in the nature of a revision of the Septuagint. Apparently synagogues in Alexandria used a three-columned Bible in which, to the right of each transliterated Hebrew word was, first, its translation by Aquila, and, second, its translation by Symmachus.

4. Another Greek translation, that of **Theodotion**.

Jean Daniélou says, "Having done all this and assembled his materials, he composed the Hexapla, i.e., he took the six texts - the Hebrew, the Greek transliteration of the Hebrew, the Septuagint, Smmachus, Aquila and Theodotion - and copied them out or had them copied in six parallel columns. In the case of the Psalms, so Eusebius says, he even produced an Octapla (nine-fold)[58]."

Origen uses diacritical marks to indicate divergences in readings.

Later, and after he had settled in Palestine, Origen discovered two more translations of the Hebrew Bible into Greek in addition to these. He supplemented the *Tetrapla* with the two of them.

1. An anonymous version he acquired at Nicopolis during a visit to Greece.

2. Another anonymous version, this only partial, had been discovered in the neighborhood of Jericho in a jar that contained a number of Hebrew and Greek manuscripts.

V V V

58 Jean Daniélou: Origen, NY, p.136-7.

2. BIBLICO-EXEGETICAL WRITINGS

Origen was the first of the great scientific exegetes[59] and all his successors, even those who reacted against him, as St. Jerome did, owed him nearly everything[60]. In this field his labors are prodigious and range over nearly the entire field of Scriptures. Hardly a book of the Bible, except Apocrypha, failed to be covered in the course of his expositions, either in the simpler form of sermons or in the profounder treatment of commentary, or in both... It was due to Origen, more than to any other single master, that biblical interpretation, and one of the principle divisions of Christian thought, that of biblical theology, were established for all time in the center of the activity of the Church[61]. It is said that he used to spend almost all the night kneeling, praying and reading the Bible. His exegetical writings are numerous and were of three main types.

Origen who devoted all his life to the Bible hesitated in publishing his work. As R. Cadiou says, "The master was quite aware of the dangers and the errors lying in wait for the exegete; consequently he had long been deaf to the pleadings of Ambrose. Perhaps his hesitation increased when he reminded himself that the Christian suspicion of literary men was not yet entirely dead.[62]" In the preface of his first commentary, he writes,

This vast enterprise is truly beyond me and my strength. I am forced by your lively curiosity, together with the confusion with which your goodness and your tolerance fill me to descend into the arena. For a long time I held back, knowing the danger, which would still be very great if, instead of discussing the Holy Scriptures, I wrote commentaries to be left to posterity. But you bewitched me in

---

59 J. Quasten, vol. 2, p. 45.

60 Jean Daniélou: Origen, NY, p. 132.

61 G.L. Prestige: Fathers and Heretics, S.P.C.K., 1968, p. 54.

62 R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder 1944, Chapter IV.

a thousand friendly ways. Now you have led me to this point as if by an initiation into the knowledge of divine things. You will be for me a witness before God. At the same time that He examines my whole life, He examines the dictations I now give and the feelings with which I give them. Sometimes I find the true meaning and sometimes my interpretation is rather forced, or perhaps I give the appearance of putting forward a definite opinion. But truly I have analyzed the words, not forgetting that when we speak of God we are judged by God, a maxim that is well stated; nor have I forgotten the adage that even to speak the truth on the subject of God is not without danger. Nothing can be beautiful if we separate it from God, especially the meaning of the Holy Scriptures which have been inspired in order to lead us to Him who is the Father of all things, through our Savior and High Priest, the only-begotten Son. Therefore I beg of you to pray for me that there may be granted me from the very beginning the grace to search well. Those who search have already the promise of finding; and undoubtedly those who fail to approach Him as they should are not considered by God as belonging to that class of men who duly search for the principle of all things[63].

KINDS OF EXEGETICAL WORKS

Origen's exegetical works are of three kinds: The ***Scholia*** or exegetical notes; his ***Homilies*** preached in Caesarea, Jerusalem, Athens, and elsewhere; and Scientific ***Commentaries***.

In the form of Scholia, Homilies, or Commentaries he expounded nearly every book in the Bible, and many books were treated in all three ways[64].

---

63 In Psalm., Praef. PG 12:1077; R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder 1944, Chapter IV.

64 Charles Bigg: The Christian Platonists of Alexandria, Oxford 1913, p. 164.

I. Scholia

Scholia or brief notes on difficult points of sacred Scripture, especially grammatical difficulties.

The most complete list of his work was made by St. Jerome in his letter to Paula[65], which was omitted in many manuscripts and was unknown to earlier editors of Jerome's letters. It was rediscovered *c.* 1845[66].

J. Quasten states that according to Jerome, Origen wrote Scholia on Exodus, Leviticus, Isaiah, Psalms I-I5, Ecclesiastes and the Gospel of St. John. Rufinus included some on Numbers in his translation of Origen's homilies on that book[67]. None have come down to us in their entirety. The work which C. Diobouniotis and A. Harnack edited as Origen's Scholia to the Apocalypse of St. John cannot be regarded as such, since it combines longer or shorter notes to difficult passages of the Apocalypse from Clement of Alexandria, Irenaeus, and Origen. Some fragments of the Scholia have been discovered in the *Catenae* and in the *Philocalia*, the anthology of Origen, which St. Basil and St. Gregory Nazianzen prepared.

V V V

65 Epist. 33.

66 New Catholic Encyclopedia, article: Origen and Origenism.

67 Rufinus, Interpr. hom.; Origen in Num. Prol.

II. Homilies

The *Homilies* are what we should call Lectures rather than Sermons. His object in *preaching*, Origen tells us, is not the explanation of the letter so much as the edification of the Church; hence he dwells here almost entirely upon the moral and spiritual sense[68].

A sentence from Eusebius[69] has given rise to divergent interpretations: “It is said that Origen, when he had passed the age of sixty and had acquired by his long preparation a very great facility, allowed the stenographers to take down the talks (*dialexeis*) given by him in public, something he had never allowed before.”

What were these *dialexeis*? The common view is that they were homilies, for the Greek word *homilia* from which we get homily means an 'informal talk'[70].

Others have wished to restrict these dialexeis to conversations, like the Conversation with Heraclides found at Toura, of which we shall have something to say below: this would exclude the homilies[71].

The historian uses the verb *dialegesthai*, which is from the same root as *dialexeis* and says it means 'explaining the holy Scriptures in public'. In the letter of the two bishops rejecting the protests of Demetrius the words *homilein* and *prosomilein* from the same root as *homilia* are applied to the same activity: so it is indeed homilies that are meant[72].

---

68 In Lev. hom. 1:1; In Num. hom. 14:1; Charles Bigg: The Christian Platonists of Alexandria, Oxford 1913, p. 167.

69 HE 6:36:1.

70 Henri Crouzel: Origen, Harper & Row, 1989, p.29.

71 Henri Crouzel: Origen, Harper & Row, 1989, p.29.

72 Henri Crouzel: Origen, p.29.

We can infer from that that the greater number of the homilies that have come down to us were delivered after 245 A.D But not all: the Homilies on Luke for example seem to be of an earlier date and to have been preached at the beginning of his stay in Caesarea. But they are of a different structure from the rest and much shorter; perhaps they were written out by Origen before or after delivery[73].

Most of the homilies must have been preached at Caesarea in Palestine. However, we can be sure that the homily on the birth of Samuel was preached in Jerusalem before bishop Alexander, for Origen says: 'Do not expect to find in us what you have in Pope Alexander; we recognize that he exceeds us all in the grace of gentleness' and a little further on: 'We have said this by way of introduction because I know that you are used to listening to the very sweet sermons of your very tender father. Papa, in Greek Papas, was at the time the normal way of addressing bishops[74].

Homilies, or popular expositions on some selected chapters or verses from the Holy Scriptures, which he delivered in liturgical meetings, aimed at popular edification. His work in interpretation covered every book of the Old and New Testaments.

Origen's homilies often began with a prayer that the Spirit would lead all present into the truth. It was not considered a unilateral pronouncement from the preacher, but a mutual endeavor with the people. He requested the prayers of the people, that "in answer to your prayers the Lord grant me understanding that we are worthy to receive the Lord's meaning[75]."

In Origen's time, Christian communities had three types of liturgical assemblies.

---

73 Henri Crouzel: Origen, 1989, p.30.

74 Henri Crouzel: Origen, p.30.

75 In Ezek. Hom., 4:3; Carl A. Volz: Life and Practice in the Early Church, Minneapolis, 1990, p. 113.

The first, and oldest, was the *synaxis* or assembly on Sunday, at which the Eucharist was celebrated. This assembly undoubtedly took place in the morning.

Then, on *Wednesdays and Fridays*, there was an assembly in the afternoon, perhaps about three o'clock, which ended the fast customary on those two days. This assembly also included the celebration of the Eucharist.

And finally, *on every day* but Sunday there was an assembly early in the morning, which was not Eucharistic[76]. The church historian Socrates says he ***preached every Wednesday and Friday***, but Pamphilus, his biographer, claims "he preached ***nearly every day*** in the church." Origen appears to be an exception in that he preached before he was ordained as presbyter or at least there was no careful distinction between preaching and teaching[77].

Joseph T. Lienhard says[78],

> Most of Origen's homilies on the Old Testament were delivered at Caesarea. In a passage that is often discussed, Eusebius wrote:
>
> "At this period of rapid expansion of the Faith [that is, under the emperor Philip, 244-249 A.D], when our message was being boldly proclaimed on every side, it was natural that Origen , now over sixty and with his abilities fully developed by years of practice, should as we are told, have allowed his lectures to be taken down by shorthand writers, though he had never before agreed to this:[79]"

Henri Crouzel accepts Eusebius' testimony and dates most of Origen's homilies after 245 A.D, except for the homilies on the

---

76 David G. Hunter: Preaching in the Patristic Age, 1989, p. 40.

77 Carl A. Volz: Life and Practice in the Early Church, Minneapolis, 1990, p.113.

78 David G. Hunter: Preaching in the Patristic Age, 1989, p. 40ff.

79 Eusebius: H.E. 6.36 (Willianson, 271).

Gospel of Luke, which he dates at the beginning of Origen's residence in Caesarea[80].

Pierre Nautin, in his impressive book on Origen, rejects Eusebius' remark that Origen was sixty before he allowed his homilies to be recorded, considering it a hagiographic gloss meant to glorify Origen's virtue.[81] Nautin has a different chronology: he believes that the homilies on the Old Testament were preached in a cycle of three years, probably from 239 to 242 A.D, and that the homilies on Luke were preached at the same time[82].

HOMILIES ON 1 SAMUEL

Origen preached on ***1 Samuel*** in Jerusalem, not in Caesarea. There is no suggestion anywhere that Origen ever preached on the historical books after 1 Samuel[83].

HOMILIES ON LUKE

Because Origen's ***Homilies on Luke*** are so much shorter than his homilies on the Old Testament, Nautin concludes that on Sunday a short homily was given after each of the three readings, perhaps by different preachers[84].

HOMILIES ON EXODUS

In his thirteenth homily ***on Exodus*** Origen discusses the reverence with which the word of God should be heard, and he compares this with the reverence with which the body of Christ should be received. He notes how careful the faithful are lest even a fragment of the Eucharistic bread should fall to the ground, and he says that they would consider themselves criminal-and rightly

---

80 Crouzel: Origéne, p. 53.

81 Nautin, Origéne, p. 93.

82 Ibid., p. 407-08.

83 David G. Hunter: Preaching in the Patristic Age, 1989, p. 42.

84 David G. Hunter: Preaching in the Patristic Age, 1989, p. 41.

so-if that should happen on account of their own negligence. But, he asks, why is the care exercised toward the Eucharist so disproportionate to the care exercised toward the Word? Why do the faithful consider it less sinful to hear the word in slipshod fashion than to let a particle of the Eucharist fall to the ground for the same reason[85]? Here Origen is expressing the attitude of the early Church, which is echoed later by Jerome[86] and Caesarius[87] in almost the same words: Scripture proclaimed and preached was held in as great honor as the sacrament of Christ's body, and both were equally necessary to the life of the Christian. It was right that the bishop should take this ministry with the utmost seriousness[88].

HOMILIES ON LEVITICUS[89]

There is common agreement that ***the Homilies on Leviticus*** were delivered in a three year cycle sometime between 238 and 244 A.D. Thus, they were delivered at the end of Origen's life.

Rufinus translated this work at the same date as the *Homilies on Genesis and Exodus*, between 403 and 405 A.D, for a certain Heraclius. He admits to having changed the text of this work more than the other homilies on the Pentateuch.

This work provides us with the following:

1. Insights into the life of the church in the third century. He refers to the practice of the Great Lent, which is dedicated to fasting[90]; the ordination of the priest, in whose selection all people participate[91]. He also mentions the process of Christian discipline, based on Matthew 18:15-17[92].

---

85 Cf. In Exod., 13:3

86 Cf. Tract. in Ps. 147.

87 Cf. Sermon 78:2.

88 Boniface Ramsey: Beginning to Read the Fathers, Paulist Press, 1985, p. 112.

89 Cf. Gary Wayne Barkley: Origen; Homilies on Leviticus, p. 20 ff.

90 In Lev. hom. 10:2.

91 In Lev. Hom. 6:3.

92 In Lev. Hom. 3:2.

2. The process of conversion and purification comes in three stages: the conversion from sin or the offering by which sins are absolved, then the turn of the soul to God, and finally the fruitfulness through the works of piety. These three stages cannot be realized without the mystery of the Holy Trinity[93].

3. He points to seven ordinances for the remission of sins granted in the Gospels. With the exceptions of the first, which is baptism, forgiveness depends on the works of the believer[94].

4. In *Hom. 12:5; 5:8; 7:5; and 12:4* Origen points out that the Jews have rejected part of the Septuagint.

5. In his interpretation of the sacrifices and offerings, Origen explains that each of them is a type and shadow of Christ[95], the Victim and the High-Priest. Christ's sacrifice is superior because it takes place in heaven[96].

6. In his homilies on Leviticus, Origen transformed the ritual instructions of Exodus 12 into a visionary account of Christian spiritual life[97].

7. This work expresses Origen's responses to his critics.

HOMILIES ON JOSHUA

This work dates from about 240 A.D.

In the first homily, Origen is at pains to show that the names Joshua and Jesus are etymologically the same. Origen is the first to develop the Joshua story as a type of baptism and subsequent Christian life: The Israelite journey to the Promised Land

---

93 In Lev. hom. 8:11:10.

94 In Lev. hom. 2:4.

95 In Lev. hom. 3:8; 4:8.

96 In Lev. hom 1:3.

97 J.W. Trigg: Origen, SCM, p. 189.

under Joshua is renewed in the Christian journey to salvation under Jesus Christ[98].

In this work, Origen makes ***a comparison between Moses, the symbol of the Law, and his successor Joshua, the symbol of Jesus***.

I. He says that although Moses realized the exodus from Egypt (Exod. 32:11), yet he confesses that he was unable to lead the people to victory over the Amelekites, Moses asked him to choose men and go out for the battle. Joshua alone has the power to lead the army[99].

II. The exodus of the people under the guidance of Moses was out of order, while when Joshua led the people to pass the Jordan River the priests and the people were in order. The priests carried the tabernacle on their shoulders where the tablets of the Law and the manna were preserved[100].

III. Origen asks: Why Joshua, the symbol of Jesus, is called the servant of Moses (Exod 24: 13)? He answers that Joshua served him not as if he was his follower or lesser than him, but as one who had the power to help him and protect him[101]. Jesus Christ the Son of God became a Servant of Moses for when the fullness of the time had come "God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law" (Gal. 4:4) [102].

IV. Joshua could not be a leader unless Moses dies (Jos. 1:2); thus the soul cannot receive Jesus Christ as her Groom unless her first husband (Moses' Law) dies, or she would be considered as an adulterous (Rom. 7:1-4).

---

98 Thomas Finn: Early Christian Baptism and the Catechuminate..., (Message of the Fathers of the Church, 1992, p. 197-198.

99 In Jos. hom 1:1.

100 In Jos. hom. 1:4.

101 In Jos. hom. 1:2.

102 In Jos. hom 2:2.

There was a necessity that Moses dies, so that the believers would not be accused of adultery[103].

If we do not understand how Moses dies we can't understand how Christ reigns[104].

V V V

103 In Jos. hom 1:3.

104 In Jos. hom 2:1.

III. Commentaries

Commentaries, or exhaustive or learned notes. If the homilies served the purpose of popular edification, the commentaries were written in order to give a scientific exegesis[105]. In spite of the allegoric, mystical and inner meanings, they have dogmatic elements with which they are cumbered, and in many respects still serve as models for commentators. They are a strange mixture of philological, textual, historical, etymological notes and theological and philosophical observation[106].

C. Bigg says, "The plan which he laid down for himself in the Commentaries was to give first the literal, then the moral, then the spiritual sense of each verse in regular succession. The text is but the threshing-floor on which he pours out all the harvest of his knowledge, his meditations, his hopes. Any word may open up a train of thought extending throughout all Scripture and all time . Hence there is much repetition and confusion. Even here the object is not so much instruction as the deepening of the Christian life[107]."

His Commentaries witness that he knew Hebrew but imperfectly, and this is a fatal defect in dealing with the LXX. But in the New Testament he displays an accurate and intelligent appreciation of Greek grammar, such scientific knowledge as the times could supply is at his call, and he had traveled in Palestine with a keen eye for the geography of the Gospels[108].

These are only a few of the items given in a long list of the works of Origen found in a letter from St. Jerome to Paula and Eustochium. This list totaled at least 444 for the Old Testament

105 J. Quasten, vol. 2,p. 49.

106 Quasten, vol. 2, p. 48.

107 Charles Bigg: The Christian Platonists of Alexandria, p. 170-171.

108 Charles Bigg: The Christian Platonists of Alexandria, p. 170-1

and 130 for the New. But, of these, only 21 have survived in the Greek original and only 186 in Latin translation.

His commentaries are: 25 books on the Minor Prophets, 25 on Matthew, 32 on John, 15 on Romans, 15 on Galatians, etc. It must be added that no small amount of Origen's exegetical work survived piecemeal in the Catenas - a collection of valuable observations. These began to appear very early, and by 500 A.D, in the hands of Procopius of Gaza, were in full swing.

The earliest commentaries we possess were written in Alexandria: those on the *Psalms, Genesis,* and the most important *Commentary on St. John*[109].

COMMENTARY ON THE PSALMS[110]

As we have already noted, Ambrose prevailed upon Origen to publish his first commentaries in which the master had written his interpretation of the Book of Psalms. Origen started with this commentary. R. Cadiou gives the following reasons:

1. No part of the Old Testament was more familiar to Christians, both learned and simple. It was habitually used, as their principal hymnal, in the public prayers of the faithful.

2. Certain psalms were already a part of the liturgy of the Eucharist and were not without influence on their interpretation.

3. The Psalter was also a source of personal piety.

What they sought in the psalms was the key to the contemplative life, for it is clearly mentioned there under various symbols. “Who shall ascend unto the mountain of the Lord: or who shall stand in His holy place? The innocent in hands, and clean of heart.” St. Clement had regarded this verse as a description of the goal of him who seeks perfection. “The prophet describes briefly, I believe, the true Gnostic,” he wrote. Written for seekers after wisdom, the Psalter would become also the guidebook and the

109 Lebreton, p. 935.

110 R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder 1944, Chapter IV.

favorite reading of the spiritual exegete, for in that book the prophet draws the image of Christ, speaks about Christ, and makes Christ speak to angels and to men.

Date and Composition[111]

According to Eusebius, he began to publish this work about the year 222 A.D. Cadiou states that he cannot accept this date, for it would mean that the numerous works which poured forth from his pen before he left Alexandria must be crowded into a brief span of seven years.

The *De Principiis* must have been composed at an appreciable interval after the publication of the commentary, because its viewpoint is quite different from that of the earlier book.

The first part of the Commentary was published in Alexandria. It discusses twenty-five psalms only, and there is no evidence that its various parts were all published at the same time.

Origen probably intended to comment on the entire Psalter, but he began the work with such a minute examination that he was able to complete it only to Psalm 25.

This commentary has almost entirely disappeared, but we do have a fragment that reveals Origen's view on biblical interpretation. In it Origen adopted as his own a Jewish tradition he learned from the Hebrew. According to it, the Bible in its obscurity resembles a series of locked rooms. Outside each room is a key, but it is not necessarily the key that fits the lock to that room. All the keys are available, even though they are not in the first place one would seek them. Thus the obscure texts of the Bible can only be properly understood by comparing them with other texts, the process Origen understood Paul to be referring to when he wrote of "comparing spiritual things with spiritual" (I Cor. 2:13) [112].

---

111 R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder 1944, Chapter IV.

112 Joseph Wilson Trigg: Origen, SCM Press Ltd, 1983, p. 88.

Cadiou states that the introduction enables us to see the general impression made upon Origen by the works of Hippolytus, by what he had gleaned from his conferences with the Jewish rabbis, and by his comparative study of the various Greek versions of the Bible. It contains a discussion on the authenticity of the Book of Psalms, on their various titles or epigraphs, and on their arrangement. It is preceded by a mystical exhortation, according to the fashion in Alexandria at that time, for this first work was written for the learned, as indeed were all the works that followed it.

In this Commentary Origen states that a believer must pass through the gates of sorrow to reach the knowledge of God[113]. This was Origen for whom the Psalter chanted tales of struggle and sang poems of victory unto salvation.

Origen's Commentary on the psalms suggests, long in advance, the history of the human soul that later fills the pages of the *De Principiis*.

Origen distinguished fear from servility and called it reverence, for he held that a Christian at prayer is not necessarily motivated by the notion of punishment[114].. He was especially interested in expressing the virtue of hope and put it in its due place in the Christian plan of life.

Hope was, in his view, a hunger and thirst after justice, a longing for the kingdom of heaven, an intense desire to obtain God's mercy in the hour of death, and a perpetual eagerness for the realization of all the mysterious promises which God, who does not deceive us, made to His saints[115].

He pointed out that the joy of the heart is very different from the joys of the flesh. That joy is nourished by the bread and stimulated by the wine to be found in the practice of contemplation. It

113 In Psalm. 4:2 PG 12:1137; ibid. 24:17 PG 12:1273.

114 In Psalm., 2:11 PG. 12:116; R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder 1944, Chapter IV.

115 R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder 1944, Chapter IV.

is a spiritual joy, the light that shines forth from a soul in which virtue glows, a joy inspired by the hope of the things of eternity. The hearts of those who are immersed in the things of earth are too heavy to know this joy, which is the only joy that is real and lasting; they know nothing of the holy zeal of the Christian soul rejecting all human interests, and they are ignorant that the Good and the Real are one and the same thing[116].

R. Cadiou says, "Its theology of the Logos, for example, indicates that in this book Origen was following in the footsteps of Hippolytus, but in this theological domain the sweep and accuracy of the pupil's thought carry him far beyond the stand taken by the master[117]."

In his comment on the words, "I have slept and have taken my rest," Origen thinks this may be a reference to the torpor which seizes the soul and makes it clothe itself with a body; and after death the soul descends into limbo from which, according to the traditional teaching, Christ has released the souls of earlier times who were imprisoned there[118].

COMMENTARY ON GENESIS

A recently discovered ***Commentary on Genesis*** by Didymus the Blind (c. 313-398 A.D), a writer who relied heavily on Origen, does at least provide us with some notion of Origen's interpretation, but even there the pages on the all-important first chapter of Genesis are heavily damaged. We have only one significant fragment left of Origen's *Commentary on Genesis*, the section that deals with one verse, Genesis 1:14, which states that the stars shall "be for signs." Origen picked up on the intention of the biblical author to repudiate the Babylonian ascription of the government of the universe to the stars although he was less radical in his

116 R. Cadiou: Origen, Chapter IV.

117 R. Cadiou: Origen, Chapter IV.

118 R. Cadiou: Origen, Chapter IV.

attack on astrology than the Bible would have allowed him to be. Belief in astrology, and the attendant belief that the stars rigidly determined all events, was, as we have seen, extremely widespread in Origen's time. Early Christian authors emphatically denied the doctrine of astral fatalism because it fundamentally contradicted the Christian message of redemption, but before Origen only Gnostics had attempted to provide a rational argument against astrology, and they were only concerned with the freedom of the spiritual part of a person from the control of the stars. Because, as a Christian and as a Platonist, he believed in free will, Origen felt compelled to undertake such an argument. Here is a case where Origen's background in Platonism was clearly helpful in defending the church's teaching. We may conjecture that the use of the word "signs" in Genesis was fortuitous; it is the term which Plotinus, also an opponent of astrology, used to indicate the genuine, non-deterministic function of the stars in the overall scheme of the universe, and we may presume that he inherited it from Ammonius. In Genesis 1:14, therefore, the Bible for once spoke to Origen in the technical language of Middle Platonism. Origen willingly affirmed that God knows all events in advance and even revealed some of them to the prophets, but even God's foreknowledge does not produce events, which spring from the free choice of responsible, rational creatures. If even God does not cause events to happen, much less do the stars, who are God's servants, cause them[119].

COMMENTARY ON THE GOSPEL OF ST. JOHN

Of the *Commentary on John*, which may be considered Origen's masterpiece, we possess in Greek only nine books: I, II, VI, X, XIII, XIX, XX, XXVIII, XXXII; of these Book XIX has lost its beginning and its end. In it Origen frequently discusses the interpretations given by a Valentinian Gnostic, Heracleon, author of the first commentary on John; some fragments of the latter's work Origen preserves. The first book contains a general introduc-

119 Joseph Wilson Trigg: Origen, SCM Press Ltd, 1983, p. 89-90.

tion, then goes on to expound only John 1:la: 'In the beginning was the Word', the second runs from John 1:Ib to 1:7. The other volumes get on a bit faster[120].

We have in Greek eight books of his ***Commentary on the Gospel of St. John***. They comprise at least thirty-two volumes, which he dedicated to his friend Ambrose. Nine of these volumes are nearly intact. This work is of great importance for a study of Origen the mystic, and his concept of the inner life[121].

J.W. Trigg says,

> Although he had made it to the thirteenth chapter, more than halfway through the Gospel, Origen was clearly running out of steam at the beginning of his thirty-second book, composed perhaps fifteen years after he had undertaken the project. There, in the preface, he told Ambrosius he expected he could not complete the commentary and would have to resume his study of John's Gospel in paradise...
>
> The defense of orthodoxy was a major purpose of Origen's *Commentary on John*; as it was of his *Commentary on Genesis*. Both books of the Bible had contributed significantly to Gnostic systems, particularly Valentinians... Origen carefully refuted (the Valentinain) Heracleon' interpretation (of the Gospel of John) whenever he had the opportunity...
>
> Although the refutation of heresy was a valuable fruit of his Commentary, its basic purpose was the exposition of the mystic sense of the Gospel...
>
> John not only leaned on Jesus' breast at the Last Supper, but Jesus made him, in effect, a second Christ, when He gave Him Mary as his mother...

---

120 Henri Crouzel: Origen, Harper & Row, 1989, p. 42.

121 J. Quasten, vol. 2, p. 49.

Origen prayed at the very outset of his commentary that God would assist him through Christ in the Holy Spirit to attain to the Gospel's mystical meaning[122]...

The Commentary on John, like Origen's Hexapla, therefore, is the work of a student and teacher of grammar[123].

COMMENTARY ON THE SONG OF SONGS

Origen was the first to regard the Song of Songs as celebrating the union of the soul with the Logos. Or rather, he saw it as both these things together: the Word's marriage was at once a union with the whole Church and a union with the soul. The Commentary on the Song of Songs is the most important of Origen's works, as far as getting to know his ideas on the spiritual life he was concerned with. In it, Origen works out a theory about the three stages of the spiritual life[124].

He calls them by the names of morals, physics and contemplation. He then goes on to say that "to distinguish between these three sciences, Solomon treated of them in three separate books, each in keeping with the degree of knowledge it was concerned with. First, in the book of Proverbs, he taught morals and set out the rules for living a good life. Then he put the whole of physics into Ecclesiastes. The aim of physics is to bring out the causes of things and show what things really are, and thus to make it clear that men should forsake all this emptiness and hasten on to what is lasting and eternal. It teaches that everything we see is frail and fleeting. When anyone in pursuit of Wisdom comes to realize that, he will have nothing but scorn and disdain for those things. He will, so to say, renounce that whole world and turn to those invisible, eternal things the Song of Songs teaches us about contemplation in figurative terms, with images taken from love-making.

---

122 Comm. on John 1:15.

123 Joseph Wilson Trigg: Origen, SCM Press Ltd, 1983, p. 148f..

124 Jean Daniélou: Origen, p. 304.

Thus, when the soul has been purified morally and has attained some proficiency in searching into the things of nature, she is fit to pass on to the things that form the object of contemplation and mysticism; her love is pure and spiritual and will raise her to the contemplation of the God-head[125]."

Origen also links the three ways with the three patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Abraham represents obedience to the commandments, Isaac is natural philosophy, and Jacob, because of his name Israel stands for contemplation[126].

There are two kinds of love. "There is a kind of love that is physical; the poets also call it desire. There is a spiritual kind of love as well, engendered in spirit by the inner man when he loves. To put it more plainly, anyone who still has the image of the earthly in the outer man goes where earthly desire and eros lead him. But one who has the image of the heavenly in the inner man will go where that desire and love of the things of heaven take him. The soul is actuated by this love when she sees how beautiful God's Word is and loves his splendor: he shoots an arrow at her and wounds her with his love[127]." "Children cannot know what the passion of love is. If you are a child where the inner life is concerned, you cannot understand these things[128]."

That gives us all the factors comprised in the doctrine of the spiritual senses. The spiritual senses are put into operation in the soul by the Word. They are the unfolding of the inner life. They correspond to various spiritual experiences, all concerned with the Word present on the soul. They are thus bound up with the perfection of the spiritual life. "Those who reach the summit of perfection and the height of bliss will find their delight in God's Word[129]."

---

125 Comm. Cant, 78, Daniélou, p. 304-5.

126 Jean Daniélou: Origen, p. 305.

127 Comm. Can. 67. (Jean Daniélou: Origen, p. 306).

128 Ibid. 62 (Jean Daniélou: Origen, p. 306).

129 Jean Daniélou: Origen, p. 308.

Those who taste the things of God find that the things of the body lose their appeal[130].

1. Origen interpreted the ***Song of Songs*** on three levels:

On the literal level, which has no value in and of itself, the poem is a play about relations between the bride and bridegroom. In dealing with each unit of meaning, therefore, Origen explained its place in this drama.

Following that he interpreted it on one or both of two allegorical levels, the ecclesiastical and the psychological, we have seen elsewhere in his exegesis. On the ecclesiastical level, the bride is the church. On the psychological level she is the soul. In either case the Bridegroom is the Logos. Thus, in verse 2:15, the little foxes that ruin the vines can be heresies on the ecclesiastical level or sins on the psychological level. Similarly, the approach of the Bridegroom after a period of absence in 2:8 can refer either to Christ's consolation of the church in times of Persecution or to His giving the Christian teacher a sudden inspiration when he is at a loss to explain a passage from the Bible.

In other cases Origen interpreted a passage on one allegorical level only. Thus 1:17, "the beams of our houses are cedars, our rafters of cypresses," refers to the good order of the church. Presbyters are the beams and bishops are the rafters. The rafters are cypress because it is strong and aromatic, symbolizing the need for bishops to be sound in good works and fragrant with the grace of teaching.

2. Origen also interpreted the Song of Songs in such a way as to discuss the Gentile origin of the church and its relation to Israel as well as its cleansing from sin and error[131].

---

130 See De Principiis 1:1:7,9; Contra Cels. 1:48; 7:34; In Lev. Hom. 31:7; In Ez. hom. 11:1; Comm. Cant. 2 (Jean Daniélou: Origen, p. 308).

131 Joseph Wilson Trigg: Origen, SCM Press, 1985, p.204-5.

3. Origen goes on to say that the Church, as the body and the bride of Christ, has existed as righteous from the beginning of time, and that in fact Christ became a man in order that he might minister to it[132]. The idea of the Church's pre-existence is apparently not one that was used to defend it against pagan accusations of being an upstart or untraditional[133].

With the body of Christ, probably the richest and favorite image of the Fathers for the Church is that of the virgin-bride; it is, after all, an image that had been sanctioned by Paul in Ephesians 5:32. It expresses the intimate union that exists between Christ and his Church, which was nowhere more splendidly expounded than in Origen's almost ecstatic commentary on the Song of Songs, the first great work of Christian mysticism. The image of the virgin-bride also provides the opportunity for the development of the vocation of virginity, which seeks to live out the mystical possibilities inherent in the image[134].

Origen says,

You must not think that it is called the bride or the Church only from the time of the coming of the Savior in the flesh, but from the beginning of the human race and from the very foundation of the world. Indeed, if I may seek the origin of this deep mystery with Paul as my guide, even before the foundation of the world. For this is what he himself says: ...As he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world.

4. Origen states the love spoken in the Song of Songs "*alone posses immortality*," and therefore it alone could make believers immortal[135].

---

132 Comm. in Cant. Cant 2:8.

133 Boniface Ramsey: Beginning to Read the Fathers, Paulist Press, 1985, p. 98.

134 Boniface Ramsey: Beginning to Read the Fathers, p. 107.

135 Jaroslav Pelikan: The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100-600),p. 154.

COMMENTARY ON LAMENTATIONS

His ***Commentary on Lamentations*** with its poignant laments over the plight of Jerusalem during the Babylonian exile, a city humiliated and subjected to its enemies, struck Origen as an allegory for the soul's plight in this world. When the biblical author lamented that Jerusalem was no longer full of people, he spoke symbolically of the soul's loss of the fullness of theoretical wisdom. When he lamented that Jerusalem was no longer great among the nations, he spoke of the soul's loss of pre-eminence in good works. When he cried, "The ways of Zion mourn," he referred to the conventional divisions of philosophy: the sciences of contemplation, physics, ethics, and logic. They mourn because they cannot conduct the soul to truth since the passions, inimical to philosophy, dominate it. Origen painted a bleak picture of the soul's situation, but he held out the hope that her sufferings are a purgative interlude in God's overarching drama of redemption. Although Lamentations has only five chapters, Origen completed his commentary on only four of them[136].

COMMENTARY ON ST. MATTHEW

Of the ***Commentary on St. Matthew***, which he composed in twenty-five books at Caesarea after the year 244 A.D, there are only eight preserved in Greek, namely, I0-I7, which deal with Matthew I3:36 to 22:33.

Of the *Commentary on Matthew* we have eight books in Greek, from X to XVII, which cover from Matt. 13:36 to 22:33. But a Latin translation, the work of an unknown translator, has come down to us, divided in the manuscripts and the I6th-century editions into 35 or 36 so-called homilies. It begins at volume XII chapter 9 of the Greek, at Matthew I6:I3, and continues almost to

136 Trigg: Origen, SCM Press Ltd, 1983, p. 89.

the end of the gospel, Matt. 27:66. Only Matthew 28 remains without exposition[137].

COMMENTARY ON THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS

The ***Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*** translated by Rufinus comprises ten books, while the original Greek showed fifteen, both versions, however, extending to the whole of the letter: Rufinus, as he says in his preface, apologizes for the difficulty of many passages and for the defective state of his manuscript: accordingly he shortened it by a third. We know the subject-matter of some of the passages that he omitted: for example the historian Socrates[138] notes a passage on Mary *Theotokos* (Mother of God) which was in Origen's volume I. The discovery at Toura of fragments of Books V and VI in the Greek, interpreting Rom. 3:5 to 5:7, makes possible, when to it are added other fragments previously published, a fairly positive judgment of the work of Rufinus[139].

The *Commentary on Romans* contains a lot of expositions of the functions and the Holy Spirit and his gifts.

COMMENTARY ON EPHESIANS

Origen’s one explicit discussion of the Pauline concept of charisma is his *commentary on Ephesians* 4:11-12, where he cautiously criticizes the official ecclesiastical leadership:

Christ is above all and through all and in all, but grace is given to each of the saints according to the measure of the gift of Christ, so that some are apostles but some are prophets, and others evangelists, and after them pastors and, above all, teachers. If a gift of grace [charisma] is given to a teacher according to the measure of the gift of

137 Henri Crouzel: Origen, Harper & Row, 1989, p. 42.

138 HE 7:32

139 Henri Crouzel: Origen, Harper & Row, 1989, p. 43.

Christ, it is clear that the pastor, exercising his duties with skill, must have the gift of grace to be a pastor. And how, indeed, could anyone be an evangelist, unless the feet-so to speak-of his soul are beautiful? For them to become so, God must supply them with beauty. The prophet as well, testing unbelievers and judging them (for such is the prophet of the new covenant), must be considered as one appointed in the church by God. It is possible for these to exist continually in the church; perhaps apostles also, to whom it is given to work the signs of an apostle, may be found even now[140].

Notice the insistence that charismata must be empirically verified. The charisma, thus verified, makes someone a teacher, a pastor, an evangelist and so on; ordination alone cannot supply the needed qualifications. Notice also that Origen treats the teacher as the culmination of the list. This illustrates that charisma is, for Origen, predominantly intellectual[141].

V V V

140 Church History 50 (1981) : The Charismatic Intellectual: Origen's Understanding of Religious Leadership, p. 110-111; In J.A.F. Gregg: "Origen's Commentary on Ephessians," Journal of Theological Studies 3 (1902),p. 413-4.

141 Church History 50 (1981) : The Charismatic Intellectual: Origen's Understanding of Religious Leadership, p. 111.

3 - APOLOGETICAL WORKS

CONTRA CELSUM (*Against Celsus*)

The most important apologetical work is his "**Contra Celsum**" (***Against Celsus***), a treatise composed of eight books written in answer to a detailed and far reaching attack by Celsus (180 A.D), called the "True Discourse *(Alethes Logos).*"

It is worthy to note that Origen frequently employed technical terms from Greek philosophy, but in all but one of his works, cited almost no book but the Bible. The exception is the *Contra Celsum*, where he displayed his formidable literary and philosophical erudition in order to establish his credentials for defending Christianity against a pagan opponent.

Celsus

Celsus, was a highly cultivated man, possessing in particular an excellent knowledge of Plato. He was regarded by Origen as an Epicurean. Some critics think he was rather a Platonist; it would seem to be more correct to regard him as an eclectic with an acute mind, well acquainted with the literature and philosophy of his time, but not adhering to any particular school. In addition, he was a statesman, a zealous official of the Roman Empire and jealous of the observance of traditions and laws. If we compare him with his predecessors, he is greatly superior to them. The opponents whom Minucius Felix and Tertullian had to face still believed that Christians practiced infanticide and incest. Celsus is not so credulous: when attacking his adversaries he despises these vague rumors, and seeks for more precise accusations with greater support.

He was familiar not only with Greek thought and literature of the period but also has some acquaintance with the Old Testament, knew the four Gospels and had an idea of the main thread of the Pauline theology. He claims to have read also the writings of Christians; he has even studied the Gnostic sects, and very unfairly

makes use of the information thus received to impute to the Church as a whole the follies and vices of these sectaries. He makes a great parade of his information, and he affirms in a boastful manner that he knows all about Christianity[142]. Origen rightly rebukes his bragging:

> *If he had read the prophets, whose books are admitted to be enigmatical and obscure; if he had gone through the evangelical parables, the law, the history of the Jews and the writings of the Apostles and, having read them without prejudice, had tried to penetrate their meaning, he would not say with such assurance: "I know all." We ourselves, who have studied all these things closely, would not dare to say "I know all," for we love the truth[143].*

Needless to say that Origen's apology against Celsus is of great value. It is marked by keen spiritual insight, vast erudition, masterly ability and mature thought[144].

The "True Discourse *(Alethes Logos)*"

Celsus' work has been lost but it could be almost entirely rewritten from the quotations of Origen, which amount to three quarters of its text. The aim of Celsus was to convert the Christians by shaming them out of their religion[145].

This work is a violent attack on Christianity and a defense of the state religion, depending on the faults Judaism and Platonic philosophy had to find with Christian teaching. It had been written seventy years previously. Origen had not read it, and it had made little impression on the Christians of Egypt and Palestine. It would probably have remained in oblivion if Ambrose had not read it by chance, and realized that it was a dangerous work which might dis-

---

142 Contra Celsum 1:12; Lebreton, p. 973.

143 Ibid.

144 Fairweather, p110, 111.

145 Quasten, vol .3, p. 52.

turb many souls by its attacks. He sent the work to Origen, asking his friend earnestly to refute it. At first he states that the life and authority of Christ are well known, and Celsus' work cannot shake the faith of any Christian[146]. But on the demand of Ambrose he wrote this reply, using many quotations from philosophical writers, showing that he was more educated than Celsus. He wrote it to those who are weak in faith (Rom 14:1).

When false witnesses testified against our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, He remained silent; and when unfounded charges were brought against Him, he returned no answer, believing that His whole life and conduct among the Jews were a better refutation than any answer to the false testimony, or than any formal defense against the accusations. And I know not, my pious Ambrose, why you wished me to write a reply to the false charges brought by Celsus against the Christians and to his accusations directed against the faith of the Churches in his treatise; as if the facts themselves did not furnish a manifest refutation and the doctrine a better answer than any writing, seeing it both disposes of false statements and does not leave to the accusations any credibility or validity[147].

For I do not know in what rank to place him who has need of arguments written in books in answer to charges of Celsus against the Christians, in order to prevent him from being shaken in his faith and to confirm him in it. But nevertheless, since in the multitude of those who are considered believers some such persons might be found as would have their faith shaken and overthrown by the writings of Celsus, but who might be preserved by a reply to them of such nature as to refute his statements and to exhibit the truth, we have deemed it right to yield to your injunction and to furnish an answer to the treatise which

---

146 Pref. 3

147 Preface 1 ANF.

you sent us, but which I do not think that any one, although only a short way advanced in philosophy, will allow to be a "True Discourse," as Celsus has entitled it[148].

Celsus' argument falls into ***three categories***[149].

First, there are the old pagan arguments against the Jews, later to be revived by a triumphant Church, for the moment adapted by Celsus for ammunition against the Christians.

Second, Jewish arguments against Christianity, for the most part genuine Jewish arguments found also in the Jewish writings and reflected in Christian apologetic writings, but including some elements not found anywhere else.

Lastly, pagan charges leveled at the Church but inapplicable to Judaism.

Origen's Response

Origen explains the following points:

1. The Jews, according to Celsus, were originally a band of rebel Egyptian slaves, who revolted against the Egyptian community and the religious customs of the Egyptians[150]. Celsus opens his attack by saying that whereas many of the older non-Greek nations have had some insight to the truth[151], the Jews have no original or true ideas[152].

The taunts that the Jews were a useless and uncultured people Origen likewise refutes. Indeed, he says, ***the ancient Israelites "manifested a shadow of the heavenly life upon earth***[153].

---

148 ANF.

149 N.R.M. De Lange: Origen and the Jews, p. 64f.

150 N.R.M. De Lange: Origen and the Jews, p. 64 f.

151 Contra Celsus 1:14.

152 Contra Celsus 1:4; 5:41.

153 Contra Celsus 4:31.

Moses' philosophy was derivative (and, Celsus seems to imply, false), and his followers were misled into believing it[154].

Origen replies, with Josephus, that, on the contrary**, *the Jews are among the most ancient and most cultivated of peoples.***
That this is not a new topic Origen is aware. He refers to 'numerous treatises in circulation among the Egyptians, the Phoenicians and the Greeks which testify to the antiquity of the Jews', and in particular the *contra Aponiem* of Josephus and the *pros Hellenas* of Tatian[155].

Origen repeatedly returns to the question of Moses' early date, and he rebukes Celsus for not knowing Moses antedates Homer and Hesiod[156]. Origen several times supports the view that ***Greek philosophy was, partly if not wholly, derived from Hebraic sources***[157].

By using stock Jewish answers to the pagan charges he manages to endow the Church with antiquity and respectability. But he must go still further, ***and show precisely how the Church is the heir to promises made to Abraham and his descendants, and how the New Israel superseded the Old***[158].

Christians and Jews alike, he says, in obedience to God's commandments avoid pagan temples, altars and images.

Both Jews and Christians also avoid referring to pagan gods by name, being aware of the power (which to Origen seems almost too real) inherent in names[159].

2. Origen explains that the Jews were considered to have lost the favor of God when they crucified Christ[160].

---

154 Ibid. 1:21, 23, 26 etc.

155 1:16.

156 4:11f.,21,36; 4:43, 47; 7:30f.

157 N.R.M. De Lange: Origen and the Jews, p. 67.

158 N.R.M. De Lange, p. 67-8.

159 1:25; 4:48.

160 Contra Celsus 4:32.

3. As a Platonic philosopher he asserts the striking superiority of the worship and philosophy of the Greeks. The proofs which Origen adduces in favor of Christianity are threefold. They are, in ascending order of validity: miracles, the Old Testament prophecies and the history of the Church. The appeal of miracles is naturally very strong to the primitive mind[161].

Origen, while insisting that miracles are possible, and that the biblical miracles (or most of them) really happened, and that the power to perform miracles still survives in the Church, refuses to make them the cornerstones of his defense of the faith[162].

If a Jew doubted the authenticity of the New Testament miracles, how can he explain the fact that the prophecies contained in the Old Testament not only foretold that there will be signs and wonders when the Messiah comes, but describes in details the important events in Jesus' life and in the early history of the Church[163]?

The miracles of the New Testament were superior to those of Moses in that the appeal of their purpose was more universal. Moses welded the Israelites into one people, but Jesus' people is the whole of mankind; Moses gave the Israelites the literal Torah, while Jesus' message is the spiritual Gospel; finally, that Jesus is superior to Moses is recognized by the prophets, who call Him the Messiah and the Savior of mankind[164].

4. Celsus refuses to allow an allegorical interpretation of the Bible, although he approves of the allegorisation of the Greek myths, and although other Greek thinkers, notably Numenius of Apamea, have interpreted the Bible allegorically[165].

---

161 N.R.M. De Lange, p. 70.

162 N.R.M. De Lange, p. 71.

163 N.R.M. De Lange, p. 71-2.

164 N.R.M. De Lange, p. 72.

165 Contra Celsum 1:15; 4:51; N.R.M. De Lange, p. 67.

5. Celsus as a true Greek was proud of the Hellenic philosophy "and with an appearance of fairness, does not reproach Christianity because of its origin among barbarians, but gives the latter credit for their ability in discovering such doctrines. To this, however, he adds the statement that the Greeks are more skillful than any others in judging, establishing and reducing to practice the discoveries of barbarous nations[166]." Origen declares the superiority of the Gospel over the Hellenic philosophy:

The Gospel has a demonstration of its own, more divine than any established by Grecian dialectics. And this diviner method is called by the apostle the "manifestation of the Spirit and of power": of "the Spirit," on account of the prophecies which are sufficient to produce faith in any one who reads them, especially in those things which relate to Christ; and of "power," because of the signs and wonders which have been performed as can be proved both on many other grounds and on this, that traces of them are still preserved among those who regulate their lives by the precepts of the Gospel[167].

6. Christians are simple people, but it does not mean that they are ignorant. Simplicity has its knowledge and living fruits. Christianity presents milk to the children and food for the mature.

Lebreton states that of all the objections by Celsus, none affected Origen more than the criticism of the faith of the simple. Origen answered by asserting firmly that this simple faith constitutes a kind of knowledge assured by the word of God and shown to be fruitful by the Christian life.

Let the question be put to the multitude of believers purified by the faith from the mire of the vices in which they were previously floundering, which of the two systems is to be preferred: the correction of morals by believing without

---

166 Contra Celsus 1:2 ANF.

167 1, 2 ANF.

question in the reward which awaits virtue and the punishment which threatens the guilty, or else the rejection of simple faith, and the postponement of the reform of morals until the conclusion of the rational discussion. It is obvious that with very few exceptions, these people would all fail to reach even that degree of rectitude of conduct assured by simple faith, but would persevere instead in a very evil life. This is by no means to be despised as a proof of the divine origin of our doctrine concerning the Savior, seeing that it is really indispensable to the well-being of mankind[168].

But Origen does not confine himself to this first reply: he goes on to show that Christianity itself offers to the select few a special knowledge, more elevated and rarer than the faith of the simple: *"Even according to our own doctrine, it is much better to adhere to doctrines with reason and wisdom than by simple faith; if the Word wished in certain cases for simple faith, it was in order not to leave mankind wholly without assistance*[169]." The faith of the simple is indeed excellent knowledge in its own way, but it is elementary. It is the milk for babes; God in his mercy gives it to those who are too weak to ascend higher to "*know God in the wisdom of God*."

In these answers we recognize Origen's own intellectual needs: the faith of the simple is not enough for him. What the mass of people believe in this way "seems clear, but it is not clear to those few chosen souls who endeavor to philosophize on our doctrine.' Even so, though, Origen does not wish to stop at this elementary knowledge, he recognizes not only its utility, but also its truth, and that is the essential point[170].

7. Celsus mocks at the idea of a Messiah and sees in Jesus an impostor and magician. He represents Jesus as being born of an

---

168 Contra Celsum 1:9.

169 Contra Celsum 1:13

170 The History of the Primitive Church, p. 976.

adulterous union between Mary and a soldier named Panther[171]. Expelled with his mother, Jesus had to go to Egypt to gain a livelihood; there he learnt the magical arts which he later on utilized in order to deceive people. His aspect was common, his wisdom wholly borrowed from Plato, and his courage greatly inferior to that of Heracles or Epictetus[172]. Celsus ignores the prophecies concerning Christ[173].

8. It is significant that he introduces into his argument in the *contra Celsum* the miracle of the virgin birth, which Celsus had ignored, and that he dwells at length on the miracle of the resurrection[174].

Celsus applies severe criticism to the Gospel, especially to all that concerns the resurrection of Christ. He says that the **Resurrection of Christ** was a fable, originating in the imagination of a woman and a few fanatics. The apostles and their successors invented this superstition. Origen replied that[175] Jesus was publicly crucified, and died in the sight of all; hence if he afterwards reappeared alive, His resurrection is undeniable. Now this real life of the risen Savior is attested by the apostles who witnessed it, and they maintained their testimony until death. "If they invented this story of the resurrection, how comes it that they preached it afterwards with such force that not only did they lead others to despise death, but first despised it themselves?[176]" Celsus would reduce the appearances of the risen Jesus to mere hallucinations or to dreams. How can one explain in this way the appearance to St. Thomas, or the one to the disciples on the road to Emmaus? It is objected: why did not the risen Christ manifest Himself to everybody? The an-

---

171 Contra Celsus 1:32.

172 The History of the Primitive Church, p. 974.

173 1:50 ANF.

174 N.R.M. De Lange, p. 75.

175 Lebreton, p. 979 ff.

176 Contra Celsum 2:61; 1:31.

swer is that all were not worthy to see him, nor able to bear the sight of Him[177].

Moreover, the resurrection is proved also by prophecies and

miracles, and above all by the fruits of salvation it has brought to mankind. For Celsus, the risen Christ is only a phantom.

"*But how can a phantom which is a transient deception afterwards have such results, convert so many souls, and persuade them to do all in order to please the God who will judge them? How can a phantom expel demons, and work great miracles, not fixing itself in one particular place, like the gods in human form, but operating in the whole world, gathering together and drawing to himself by his divinity all those who are disposed to lead an upright life*?[178]"

We recognize here one of the characteristic features in Origen's apologetics: in order to make men understand divine things, he does not isolate them, but presents them in the concrete whole which supports them and clarifies them. He does not separate Christ's resurrection either from his life which preceded it, or from the transformation of the apostles which followed it, or from the conversion of the pagans which is its fruit[179].

9. Celsus criticizes the way in which Jesus chose his disciples. But has he not really thus proved Jesus' power, which transformed them from sinners into saints? Among the Greeks, at most one can mention Phaedo and Polemon as having been rescued by philosophy from disorder. But the action of Jesus on the other hand was not confined to his twelve apostles; it has reached innumerable disciples, who are all able to repeat: We ourselves were sometime unwise, incredulous, erring, slaves to diverse desires and pleasures,

---

177 Contra Celsum 2:61, 62, 67.

178 Contra Celsum 7:35.

179 Lebreton, p. 980.

living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But when the goodness and kindness of God our Savior appeared, he made us what we are by the laver of regeneration, and renovation of the Holy Spirit whom he has poured forth upon us abundantly[180]." Mentioning the weakness of the disciples and apostles assures the genuinity of the gospels. The promise of Christ that his gospel would spread all over the world had been fulfilled. It is the work of the divine grace which attracts souls to follow our Lord Jesus Christ with them.

> *The word of God (1 Cor. 2:4) declares that the preaching, although in itself true and most worthy of belief, is not sufficient to reach the human heart, unless a certain power be imparted to the speaker from God and a grace appear upon his words; and it is only by the divine agency that this takes place in those who speak effectually. The prophet says in the sixty-seventh Psalm that "the Lord will give word with great power to them who preach." If then it should be granted that the same doctrines are found among the Greeks as in our own Scriptures, yet they do not possess the same power of attracting and disposing the souls of men to follow them*[181].

10. Celsus attacked the Old Testament and at the same time used the Jewish arguments against Christianity. He criticizes the Old Testament, complaining that it often declares God subject to change and to be angry[182]. Origen replies that "*when we speak of God's wrath, we do not hold that it is an emotional reaction on his part, but something which he uses in order to correct by stern methods those who have committed many terrible sins*[183]." He even believes that God created some physical and external evils to purify and educate those who are unwilling to be educated by sound

---

180 Contra Celsum 1:64; 3:75; 4:2; 2:79.

181 6:2 ANF.

182 Contra Celsum 4:13:71.

183 Contra Celsum 4:72.

teaching. Origen uses the analogy of the doctor inflicting pain in order to heal and the schoolmaster chastising in order to improve[184]. Origen is in the same philosophical tradition as Philo, St. Clement and the Neoplatonists, and therefore, it is not surprising that he accepts the view that the Supreme Being is not subject to passion, and cannot change[185].

11. Celsus attacks the Jews who believe that they were the chosen people of God and that **the rest of mankind will be burnt up**:

> *It is foolish also of them to suppose that, when God applies the fire (like a cook!), all the rest of mankind will be thoroughly burnt up, and that they alone will survive, not merely those who are alive at the time, but also those long dead who will rise up from the earth possessing the same bodies as before. This is simply the hope of worms. For what sort of human soul would have any further desire for a body that has rotted? The fact that this doctrine is not shared by some of you (Jews) and by some Christians shows its utter repulsiveness, and that it is both revolting and impossible. For what sort of body, after being entirely corrupted, could return to its original nature and that same first condition which it had before that was dissolved?[186]*

The justification of belief in the resurrection of the body on grounds of divine omnipotence is denied by Origen when he comes to deal with this particular point (5.23)... It is precisely the appeal to divine omnipotence which is made in defense of the resurrection of the body by St. Clement of Rome[187], St. Justin Mar-

---

184 Contra Celsum 4:56.

185 Frances M. Young: The Use of Sacrificial Ideas In Greek Christian Writers From The New Testament to John Chrysostom, Philadelphia, 1979, p. 167.

186 Contra Celsus 5:14.

187 27.2

tyr[188], Athenagoras[189], St. Irenaeus[190], Tertullian[191], and by the Apocalypse of Peter (Ethiopic text) [192].

It is evident that Celsus and Origen start from the same presuppositions in their approach to the problem; they are agreed that it is quite mistaken to appeal to divine omnipotence in order to justify belief in what seems fantastic[193].

Origen begins from the basic fact that the nature of (*soma*) is impermanent; it is in a continual state of change and transformation, caused by the food which is eaten, absorbed by the body, and turned into tissue. This is the point developed by Aglaophon, whom Methodius makes the mouthpiece of Origen's opinions in his dialogue... When we say the body will rise again, what body do we mean? That of a youth, or of an old man, or of a child? The body is always being changed by the food eaten. And the flesh of a newborn child, or a youth, and of an old man, are different; we change from the flesh we have at first to another flesh, that of a child or a youth, and from this into that of an old man, changing our clothes, as it were, when they are worn out. For though hard and indigestible food is passed out of the stomach, the easily digestible food is formed into flesh, because it is absorbed by the contiguous veins which carry the blood. (Methodius I.9). Paul refers to this continual transformation of the body when he says in II Cor. 4.I6: "Though our outward man perish, our inward man is renewed day by day"[194].

The apostles' despise of death and their success assures the resurrection of Christ.

---

188 Apol. 1:I9.

189 de Resurr. Mort. 9.

190 Adv. Haer. 5:3:2-3.

191 De Carnis Resurr. 57.

192 Harvard Theological Review 41 (1948): Henry Chadwick: Origen, Celsus, and The Resurrection of the Body, p. 84.

193 Harvard Theological Review 41, p. 85.

194 Methodius I.I2; Harvard Theological Review 41, p. 86-7.

12. While the study of philosophy is confined to an educated élite, the Christians have brought an acceptance of moral truth to classes of society where philosophy has never penetrated[195]. Christianity has the power to renew human nature. Sinners are changed to saints. They have the power of the Holy Spirit operating in them:

> *And there are still preserved among Christians traces of that Holy Spirit which appeared in the form of a dove. They expel evil spirits and perform many cures and foresee certain events, according to the will of the Logos. And although Celsus or the Jew whom he has introduced may treat with mockery what I am going to say, I shall say it nevertheless-that many have been converted to Christianity as if against their will, some sort of spirit having suddenly transformed their minds from a hatred of the doctrine to a readiness to die in its defense*[196].

13. Celsus does not reject everything Christianity teaches. He approves, for instance, of its ethics and the doctrine of the Logos. He is willing to let Christianity live on condition that the Christians abandon their political and religious isolation and subordinate themselves to the common religion of Rome. His chief anxiety springs from the fact that they create a schism in the State weakening the Empire by division[197]. Thus he closes with an exhortation to the Christians "to help the king and to labor with him in the maintenance of justice, to fight for him, and if he requires it, to fight under him or lead any army along with him, to take office in the government of the country, if that is required for the maintenance of the laws and the support of religion[198]."

---

195 Contra Celsum 1:9f; 3:44ff.; 6:1ff.; Henry Chadwick: History and Thought of the Early Church, London, 1982, p. 184.

1961:46 ANF.

197 Quasten, vol. 3, p. 52.

198 8:73-75 ANF.

The opposition of Christians towards the State can be justified without difficulty. We are urged to remain faithful to the traditional and national cults. But are the philosophers forbidden to free themselves from the superstitions in which they were brought up? Why then try to prevent us condemning the gods of paganism, in order to turn all our homage towards the Creator of the universe? For the rest, is it not recognized that human laws deserve less respect than the natural law, which is the very law of God? And is it not above all in religion that the law of God should be respected by us?[199]

Christians are criticized for not serving the State. But they pray for it, as the apostle told them they ought to do. If military service is not required from the priests of idols, why require it of Christians? They keep away from magistracies, but even within the Church they decline as far as possible the charges which it seeks to place upon them[200].

Let the Empire be converted to Christianity, and God will watch over it. Meanwhile, Christians devote themselves to doing good to all, to those who are within by making them better, and to those who are without by drawing them to doctrine and to works of piety. In other words they do their best to penetrate as many men as possible with the Word of God, the divine law, in order to unite them to the supreme God through his Son and his Word[201].

Origen refuses to seek the favor of civil rulers. Christians obey the rulers, but in the Lord. They never accept heathen worship.

Celsus remarks: "What harm is there in gaining the favor of the rulers of the earth, whether of a nature differ-

---

199 Contra Celsum 5:35-37; Lebreton, p. 983.

200 Contra Celsum 8:73.

201 Contra Celsum 8:79 ff.

ent from ours, or human princes and kings? For these have gained their dignity through the instrumentality of gods[202].

There is One whose favor we should seek and to whom we ought to pray that He would be gracious to us-the Most High God, whose favor is gained by piety and the practice of every virtue. And if he would have us to seek the favor of others after the Most High God, let him consider that, as the motion of the shadow follows that of the body which casts it, so in like manner it follows, that when we have the favor of God, we have also the good will of all angels and spirits who are friends of God[203].

Moreover, we are to despise ingratiating ourselves with kings or any other men, not only if their favor is to be won by murders, licentiousness or deeds of cruelty, but even if it involves impiety toward God or any servile expressions of flattery and obsequiousness, which things are unworthy of brave and high-principled men who aim at joining with their other virtues that highest of virtues, patience and fortitude. But whilst we do nothing which is contrary to the law and word of God, we are not so mad as to stir up against us the wrath of kings and princes, which will bring upon us sufferings and tortures or even death. For we read: "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be, are ordained of God, Whosoever therefore resists the power, resists the ordinance of God" (Rom. 13:1,2)[204].

Origen's other apologetic or polemic works are no more than the taking-down of the disputations with various persons: Bassus, Beryllus of Bastra, a Valentinian named Candidus, and some Jews. These are mentioned by Africanius, Eusebius, Jerome,

---

202 8:63 ANF.

203 8:64 ANF.

204 8:65 ANF.

or Rufinus but are no longer extant except for the "*Dialogue with Heraclides*."

14. According to Celsus and others assailants, in the first two centuries, **Christians were considered as atheists.** For the new religion had no cult; it had broken from its Jewish origins and refused to compromise with the syncretistic religious culture of the Roman Empire. Christians alone faced the practical consequences of the monotheistic ideas of both Greek philosophy and Judaism, and asserted that **the Supreme God could only be worshipped by spiritual sacrifices**[205]. Origen states that God should be worshipped not with blood and carnal sacrifices but in spirit[206]; and ridicules the idea that a God who is known spiritually should be worshipped in a material way[207]. **The spiritual cult** is the offering of prayers[208]; the spiritual altar is the mind of faithful Christians; spiritual images of God are the virtues implanted in men by the Logos[209]. The Body of Christ is a spiritual temple[210], and the Christian people continually celebrate spiritual feasts and fasts by constant prayer and abstention from wickedness[211]. Above all Christ himself is the perfect sacrifice, and he is the High-Priest through whom Christian prayers are offered[212]. The Christians did have a cult, but it is entirely immaterial. It is along these lines that Origen tries to justify the Christian position in the Contra Celsum, and the central importance of the sacrifice of Christ is apparent.

---

205 See Contra Celsus, 6:35. Reason should have persuaded the philosophers to stop busying themselves with created things and images, and to ascend above them and present the soul to the Creator. Cf. 6;4; 7:44, 46; and 6:70: God should not be worshipped with flesh and carnal sacrifices but in spirit.

206 Contra Celsus 6:70; Frances M. Young: The Use of Sacrificial Ideas in Greek Christian Writers from the New Testament to John Chrysostom, Philadelphia, 1979, p. 115.

207 Ibid., 7:44.

208 Contra Celsus 3:81; 7:44, 46.

209 Ibid., 8:17.

210 Ibid., 8;l9.

211 Ibid., 8:22ff.

212 Ibid., 1:69; 3:34; 5:4; 8:13, 26.

His is the perfect sacrifice and the example of which Christian spiritual sacrifices are modeled, He is the High-Priest through whom they are offered[213].

15. Origen and Celsus differ fundamentally in their view of history. For Celsus the destruction of Jerusalem was an event wholly explicable in human terms[214]; God does not enter into the matter. For Origen, history is the setting for the drama of God's relationship with men, and any historical event maybe interpreted as evidence of God's love or displeasure. On this principle Jews and Christians agreed. For Jews and Christians alike, the destruction of Jerusalem and of the Temple, the dissolution of the Jewish state and the Roman occupation of Palestine signified the passing of an era. True, there were few voices raised in protest at this interpretation of history[215], but for the most part the Jews, as well as Christians, came to accept that Jerusalem had been destroyed because of the sins of the Jews[216].

16. The belief in Christ and the Christian doctrine presupposes grace:

> *The word of God (I Cor. 2~4) declares that the preaching, although in itself true and most worthy of belief, is not sufficient to reach the human heart, unless a certain power be imparted to the speaker from God and a grace appears upon his words; and it is only by the divine agency that this takes place in those who speak effectually. The prophet says in the sixty-seventh Psalm that 'the Lord will give word with great power to them who preach.' If then it should be granted that the same doctrines are found among the Greeks as in our own Scriptures, yet they do not pos-*

---

213 Frances M. Young: The Use of Sacrificial Ideas in Greek Christian Writers frim the New Testament to John Chrysostom, p. 97-8.

214 Contra Celsus 4:37.

215 De Principiis 4:1,3

216 N.R.M. De Lange, p. 79.

sess the same power of attracting and disposing the souls of men to follow them[217].

V V V

217 Contra Celsus 6:2 ANF.

4 - DOGMATIC WRITINGS

Origen believes that "*the one who carefully looks at the heresies of Judaism and Christianity becomes a very wise man*[218]."

DE PRINCIPIIS, ***Peri Archon,*** or **On First Principles**:

A dogmatic treatise in four books. He called it "*the elementary and foundation principles of things*[219]." This work is a mark of Origen's systematic mind[220]. It is the first attempt ever made towards the formation of Christian Theology[221]. J. Quasten says, “Origen's most important production is his *First Principles*, the first Christian system of theology and the first manual of dogma. As such it stands in majestic isolation in the history of the early Church. He wrote it in Alexandria between the years 220 and 230 A.D[222].”

G.W. Butterworth says, “De Fayé, in his recent work on Origen, has suggested that the *First Principles* was designed to take the place of the *Didaskalos*, or *Teacher*, which Clement had planned to follow on his *Protreptikos* and *Paidagogos*, but which he was never able to write[223].”

From his initial assertion that he did not intend to deviate from the teaching of the Church, Origen was at pains to show that the Gnostic doctrine of God and Gnostic dualism were inadequate as a view of the world and guide to conduct[224].

---

218 Against Celsus 3:13.

219 De Principiis, Praef. 9.

220 C. Kannengiesser: Origen, Systemacation in De Principiis , p.1, COQ.

221 Drewery, p.6.

222 J. Quasten, vol. 3,p. 57.

223 Henri De Lubac: Origen, On First Principles, NY., 1966 (Koetschau text together with an introduction and notes by G.W. Butterworth, p. XXX.

224 W.H.C. Frend: The Early Church, 1981, p. 87.

In this work Origen tried to help believers to fulfill his commandment, "*Enlighten yourselves with the light of knowledge*[225]." Later, Eusebius, Epiphanius, Pamphilius, Rufinus, Jerome, and Justinian are suitably present and ready to elicit their judgments on whether or not Origen gave the correct answer concerning "*De Principiis.*[226]"

In this work, Origen defended the Orthodox dogma against the Gnostics and the Marcionte. Even the general title of the work "*Peri Archon*," is then explained as referring primarily to the anti-Marcionite principals. Origen would have borrowed for that purpose the title of philosophical tractates named in the same way[227]. What Origen tried to find out was the common faith of the Church. Kattenbusch[228] say, "It is difficult to avoid the impression that Origen was seeking to establish, by means of an independent and free study, what was regarded as certain by Christians subject to the Church. As a starting point he had before his eyes the two Testaments, and he asked only what was to be found therein according to the immediate judgment of all Christians in the Church. In this study he naturally directed his attention to the results of the doctrinal controversies, and in particular the refutation of Marcion and of Gnosticism."

This work was written for the well-educated people and not for the common public. It is the first philosophical attempt to explain salvation. It is worthy to note that unlike the Gnostic Heracleon, Origen did not view the wisdom of the Greeks as contradiction and demoniac possession[229]. Lebreton says that Origen's presentation of the matter is of great interest, both because of the principles which guide him and the conclusions which he reaches. If

---

225 De Principiis, Praef. 9.

226 Robert M. Berchman: Origen on the Categories. A study in Later Platonic First Principles, p. 1. (COQ)

227 C. Kannengiesser: Origen, Systemacation in De Principiis , p.3, COQ.

228 Das Apostolische Symbol, Vol. II, p. 137.

229 Berchman, p. 4.

we compare this catalogue with the *Placita* of the contemporary philosophers, we are able to appreciate the value of the religious certitudes which the Christian Faith has brought into the world[230].

The aim of this work is the discovery of the truth about elementary and foundation principles concerning the Father, Christ, and the Holy Spirit; intelligible, sensible creatures, and concerning the nature of beings.

Everyone therefore who is desirous of constructing out of the foregoing a connected body of doctrine must study points like these as elementary and foundation principles... Thus by clear and cogent arguments he discovers the truth about each particular point and produce, as we have said, a single body of doctrine with the aid of such illustrations and declarations as he shall find in the holy scriptures and of such conclusions as he shall ascertain to follow logically from them when rightly understood[231].

Thus the preface and the whole work begins:

All who believe and are assured that grace and truth were obtained through Jesus Christ, and who know Christ to be the truth, agreeable to his own declaration, 'I am the truth' (John 14:6), derive the knowledge (gnosis) which incites men to a good and happy life from no other source than from the very words and teachings of Christ. And by words of Christ we do not mean those only which he spoke when he became man and tabernacled in the flesh, for before that time, Christ, the Word of God, was in Moses and the prophets. For without the Word of God, how could they have been able to prophesy of Christ? And were it not our purpose to confine the present treatise within the limits of all attainable brevity, it would not be difficult to show, in proof of this statement, out of the Holy Scriptures, how Moses or the prophets both spoke and performed all they

---

230 Lebreton, p. 933-4.

231 De Principiis, Praef. 9.

did through being filled with the Spirit of Christ. . . Moreover, after his ascension into heaven he spoke in His apostles, as is shown by Paul in these words: 'Or do you seek a proof of Christ who speaks in me' (2 Cor. I3,3).

Since many, however, of those who profess to believe in Christ differ from each other, not only in small and trifling matters, but also on subjects of the highest importance,. . . it seems on that account necessary first of all to fix a definite limit and to lay down an unmistakable rule regarding each one of these, and then to pass to the investigation of other points... as the teaching of the Church, transmitted in orderly succession from the apostles, and remaining in the Churches to the present day, is still preserved, that alone is to be accepted as truth which differs in no respect from ecclesiastical and apostolic tradition[232]*."*

J. Quasten says, "Here Origen clearly indicates that Scripture and tradition are the sources of Christian doctrine and he points to the rule of faith which contains the basic teaching of the apostles. However, they did not give any reasons for these truths nor did they present any account of their interrelations."

Though subject to every limitation of his age, he yet had the scientific spirit and used a scientific method. He follows where reason leads him[233].

The Latin Translation

The Greek original has perished, as has also the literal Latin translation made by St. Jerome. The surviving version is a free Latin translation published in Rome in 398-99 A.D by Rufinus. He had a certain friend, named Macarius, who had heard of the *De Principiis* and was anxious to read it, hoping to find in it

---

232 De Principiis: Pref. 1-2. ANF.

233 Henri De Lubac: Origen, On First Principles, NY., 1966 (Koetschau text together with an introduction and notes by G.W. Butterworth, p. LIV.

some arguments to help him in a controversy in which he was then engaged with the mathematicians, or pagan astrologers. At first, Rufinus hesitated, knowing well the odium which would gather round any man who seemed to be friendly towards Origen. Finally, however, he consented, and produced the version which is now before us.

Unfortunately, however, we must use Rufinus' text with caution. In addition to the loss of subtlety inevitable in a translation, we know, because Rufinus said so, that he altered passages which he considered of doubtful orthodoxy in order to make the work accessible to Christians in the West.

Rufinus did not believe that the Greek text which had come down to him was in every detail authentic. He could not imagine a time when Christian thought had been more fluid as it was in his own day. He maintained, without any doubt in all honesty, that the text had been tampered with by heretics. To prove this he translated and published with his version of *De* Principiis, the first book of the Defense of Origen, a work composed by Pamphilus the martyr in collaboration with Eusebius of Caesarea, the Church historian. The object of this work was to refute the attacks made on Origen by Methodius and others[234].

Rufinus witnesses that he made many changes in the text to purify it from obscure statements.. The principal fragments that survive in Greek are the discussion of free will in the third book of Origen's treatise and the discussion of biblical interpretation that takes up all of Origen's fourth and last book[235].

To justify himself, Rufinus wrote a small pamphlet on '*The Corruption of the Words of Origen'* and attached it to the transla-

---

234 Henri De Lubac: Origen, On First Principles, NY., 1966 (Koetschau text together with an introduction and notes by G.W. Butterworth, p. XXXIV, XXXV.

235 Joseph Wilson Trigg: Origen, SCM Press Ltd, 1983, p. 91.

tion of *De Principiis*. Here he gives more fully his reasons for altering the text. They are as follows[236]:

a. It was impossible to suppose that so intelligent and learned a man as Origen should have contradicted himself. A difference between works written in youth and old age might be natural, due either to forgetfulness or to change of opinion in the interval. But Origen exhibits contradictions in the same passage, almost in successive sentences.

b. Other writers of unquestioned orthodoxy had had their words corrupted by heretics; as for instance Clement of Rome, Clement of Alexandria and Dionysius of Alexandria.

c. Origen himself had complained, in a letter still extant, that his works had been corrupted by heretics.

The letter of Origen, which Rufinus here professes to translate, is of great interest. It deals only with one specific point, the possibility of the devil's salvation. Origen denies that he ever asserted this; only a madman could have done so. A discussion had taken place between himself and a heretic, of which notes had been made and afterwards published. Origen declares that he had never given the matter a second thought until it was brought to his notice that an incorrect version was being circulated.

The translation of *De Principiis* soon came into the hands of Jerome's friends in Italy, of whom Pammachius, Oceanus and Marcella were the chief. They were horrified by some of the doctrines still remaining in it and by the implied suggestion that Jerome would raise no objection to them. They sent him, therefore, a copy of the work with a request for information. Jerome replied by making a faithful Latin translation of the whole of the First Principles and sending it to Pammachius with a covering letter. He admits that he had once praised Origin for his good word; he

236 Henri De Lubac: Origen, On First Principles, NY., 1966 (Koetschau text together with an introduction and notes by G.W. Butterworth, p. XXXVIII ff.

would still do so if others would not praise his errors. Origen's doctrines on the nature of the Son and the Holy Spirit, on the pre-existence of souls, on the resurrection, and on the ultimate restitution of all things, when it will be 'the same for Gabriel as for the devil, for Paul as for Caiaphas, for virgins as for prostitutes', were poisonous heresies. No Latin writer had ever yet ventured to translate his works on the *Resurrection* and on *First Principles*, or the *Stromata* and the *Commentaries*, but only the *Homilies*, or popular addresses, which were harmless. The assertion that Origen's works had been corrupted by heretics Jerome denies; both Eusebius and Didymus had taken for granted that Origen held the incriminated views. Moreover, Jerome cannot believe that Pamphilus wrote the first book of the Defense; it must be by Eusebius. If, however, Pamphilus did write it, his martyrdom would wash away the fault[237].

Its contents

G.W. Butterworth says,

> Origen was dealing with questions which had been raised and discussed in the School before his time, and which were then admitted to be legitimate subjects for inquiry...
>
> All he tried to do was to work out its implications for the educated world of his time. Problems which do not arise in simple minds were continually being raised by his pupils and by the heretics in their rival theological schools.
>
> What is the explanation of apparently undeserved suffering?
>
> Has man free will, or is this an illusion?
>
> What happened before this world was created, and what will happen after it has come to an end?
>
> What is the origin and nature of the human soul?
>
> Are the stars alive?

---

237 Henri De Lubac: Origen, p. XLIII-XLIII.

Are there worlds in the sky where spirits live?

Origen believed that it was right to investigate such problems. Not all of them could be solved. But some might be, and the Christian thinker must do his best[238].

C. Bigg states that Origen explains here a *Regula Fidei* more than a creed, saying,

Here then we have the pith and substance of that doctrine which, in Alexandria at any rate, was taught to all Christians in the time of Origen. It differs from the Nicene creed in that it does not use the terms 'Very God' or '*Homoousion*' of the Son, in that it asserts the moral attributes of God, the creation of the world out of nothing, the spiritual nature of the Resurrection Body, the connection of punishments and rewards with conduct, the eternity of punishment, the existence of Angels, the freedom of the Will, the double sense of Scripture. It is rather a ***Regula Fidei*** than a ***Creed*** in the strict sense of the word. But the language is already so framed as definitely to exclude the Gnostics, the Noetians, possibly the Chiliasts, and certainly all those who doubted the Personality of the Holy Spirit.

Within these limits all is open ground. Even the definition of the terms, especially of the word 'eternal', is subject to reverent but free discussion. And Origen has availed himself of this liberty to the fullest extent. One of his earliest works is the De Principiis, 'On First Principles,' that is to say on the data of the Creed, in which he maps out the field of investigation, and expresses with fearless candor all his doubts, beliefs, suggestions, divinations about each article in turn. He was already of mature age when he composed this treatise, and his voluminous later writings

238 Henri De Lubac: Origen, p. XXXI, LIII.

are little more that an expansion of the ideas there set down[239].

This work treats the following topics:

1. **God and the world of spirits.**

The first book deals with the supernatural world, with the oneness and spirituality of God, with the hierarchy of the three divine persons and their characteristic relations towards created life, the Father acting upon all beings, the Word upon reasonable beings or souls, the Holy Spirit upon beings who are both reasonable and sanctified. There follow discussions of the origin, essence and fall of all angels[240].

Against Marcion and the Gnostics, the identity of the God of the two Testaments has been finally established. The Son (Jesus Christ) was born before all creatures; He is eternal. He was the Minister of the Father in the creation; he became truly man. The Holy Spirit inspired all the sacred writers.

The human soul: what is beyond doubt are its personal responsibility and its liberty, and the rewards or punishments which await it. Astrology is condemned. The metaphysical question of the origin of the soul is not dealt with.

There are angels and good powers, which serve God for the salvation of mankind; but no one has defined clearly when they were created, or what is their condition. As to the devil and his angels, and enemy powers, the teaching of the Church tells us of their existence, but does not explain clearly their nature and their manner of being. Most people, however, are of the opinion that the devil was once an angel, and that he involved in his defection a great number of angels, now called his own angels.

---

239 Bigg: The Christian Platonists of Alexandria, Oxford 1913, p. 192.

240 Quasten, vol. 3,p. 60.

2. **The world and man**

The world was created, had a beginning, and will come to an end. What existed before, and what will there be afterwards? The ecclesiastical preaching does not answer these questions clearly.

The fall of man; redemption of man through Jesus Christ; and his end. Origen emphasizes freedom and responsibility carried with it. He attacked the determinists whether they were philosophers or Christian Gnostics. And his message of freedom was designed to proclaim hope in a world where hope was almost buried beneath chaos. In this way his theology represents one of the foundations of the traditional Christian doctrine[241].

3. **Human freedom and final triumph of the good**.

The union of body and soul gives the latter the opportunity for struggle and victory. In this contest men are helped by angels and hindered by demons, but they retain their free will. Thus the third book, examining the extension of free will and responsibility, gives an outline of moral theology[242].

The second book treats the material world, the creation of man as a result of the defection of the angels, man as a fallen spirit enclosed in a material body, the transgression of Adam and redemption by the incarnate Logos, the doctrine of the resurrection, the last judgment and after life[243].

Apart from all these doubtful points, what we find underlying the book throughout is the great problem which worried the Gnostics, and which Origen tried with all his might to solve: that of the origin of evil. The Gnostics all tended towards a dualistic

---

241 See Rowan A. Greer: Origen, Introduction.

242 Quasten, vol. 3,p. 60.

243 Quasten, vol. 3,p. 60.

solution: Basilides and Valentine had already allowed themselves to be led in its direction; Marcion opened the way to it by his distinction between the two deities; Mani 24 will definitely accept it. Origen fully realizes this danger, and the whole aim of his thought is to dispel it. Already in the Preface, the freedom of every rational soul is presented as one of the fundamental theses, certified by the teaching of the Church; he returns to it on several occasions in the course of the work, and devotes to it a good part of Books II (9:2) and III (1). This emphasis was justified, and on more than one point Origen gave a useful corrective to the Gnostic and the astrological theses[244].

4. **The Scripture as the source of faith and the three modes of Scriptural interpretation**.

The whole Church agrees in saying that the Law is spiritual, but the spiritual sense of the Law is known only by those to whom the Holy Spirit has deigned to grant wisdom and knowledge.

The way, then, as it appears to us, in which we ought to deal with the Scriptures and extract from them their meaning is the following, which has been ascertained from the Scriptures themselves. By Solomon in the Proverbs we find some such rule as this repeating the divine doctrines of Scripture; "And do you portray them in a threefold manner, in counsel and knowledge, to answer words of the truth to them who propose them to you" (Prov. 22,20,21). The individual ought then to portray the ideas of Holy Scripture in a threefold manner upon his own soul in order that the simple man may be edified by the flesh as it were of the Scripture, for so we name the obvious sense, while he who has ascended a certain way (may be edified) by the souls as it were. The perfect man again (may receive edification) from the spiritual law, which has a shadow of

244 Lebreton, p. 937.

good things to come. For as a man consists of body, soul and spirit, so in the same way does Scripture, which has been arranged to be given by God for the salvation of men[245].

In the ***introduction***, Origin shows that ***the source of all religious truth is our Lord Jesus*** Christ, who Himself is the Truth[246].

The enemies of Origen used it as material to accuse him of heresy, in his own days and after his death. St. Jerome states that Origen wrote to Fabianus, bishop of Rome assuring that some articles mentioned in his work are against his own view, and that his friend Ambrose published it in a hurry[247]. It is said that many tears were shed by Origen's friends and enemies alike over his *De Principiis*[248].

On First Principles proceeds in **the first chapter of the first book** to discuss the doctrine of God, a discussion in which Origen quickly began to interpret the Christian faith in Platonic categories. Like the Platonists, Origen was concerned to defend the incorporeal nature of God against the Stoic doctrine that God is a particularly rarefied body called "spirit." In the process, he strove to demonstrate that biblical language calling God "spirit" or "a consuming fire" was not intended in the Stoic, materialistic sense. Sharing in the Holy Spirit of God, he argued, is not like sharing in a material substance that can be divided up into parts; it is like sharing, as physicians do in a science like medicine, by participating in the whole. Drawing on traditional Platonic vocabulary to describe God's transcendence, Origen described God as incomprehensible, immeasurable, and incomposite as well as incorporeal. He also employed the Neo-pythagorean term *henad*, which ex-

---

245 4,1,11 ANF.

246 Preface 1-2 ANF.

247 Jerome, Ep. 41.

248 Berchman, p. 2.

presses the utter unity and simplicity of God in contrast to the multiplicity of the world.

In the section of **the second book** that dealt with the identity of the God of the Old Testament and the God of the New Testament, Origen stressed, in equally Platonic fashion, the beneficence of God. This meant that he could not allow any suggestion that God actually experienced wrath. He therefore interpreted allegorically passages in the Bible that taken literally, presented an unworthy or incoherent image of God, providing fuel for Gnostic criticism. He argued against Marcion that it is quite consistent for God to be both just and good[249].

The **final chapter** of *On First Principles* recapitulates Origen's conclusions and ties up a few loose ends. The treatise provides the best defense proving that Origen knew how to write of the church's tradition. Against the Gnostics, it demonstrates that the church's doctrine has an inner coherence fully as strong as that of their own systems and that it does not promote the worship of a God who is a petty tyrant. Against pagan despisers, it demonstrates the depth and profundity of Christian doctrine and its harmony with their own highest ideals. But Origen does more than that. *On First Principles* is **a spiritual vision** as well as a theological treatise. In the process of explaining the origin and destiny of rational creatures, Origen establishes how and why we can expect to have communion with God. How? By separating ourselves intellectually and morally from purely sensual concerns and attachments. Why? Because, as rational creatures, we share something of God's nature and are the objects of God's concern. As Origen put it[250]:

We see, therefore, that men have a kind of blood-relationship with God; and since God knows all things and not a single intellectual truth can escape his notice - for God the Father, with his only-begotten Son and the Holy Spirit, stands alone in his knowledge not only of the things

---

249 Trigg: Origen, SCM Press Ltd, 1983, p. 95.

250 Trigg: Origen, SCM Press, 1985, p. 128-9.

he has created but also of himself--it is possible that a rational mind also, by advancing from a knowledge of small to a knowledge of greater things and from things visible to things invisible, may attain to an increasingly perfect understanding. For it (a rational mind) has been placed in a body and of necessity advances from things of sense, which are bodily, to things beyond sense perception, which are incorporeal and intellectual[251].

Finally, I mention here that it is too hard to give an accurate account of the theological system of Origen based on "*De Principiis*," for the following reasons:

I. As we have mentioned, the surviving version is the Latin translation Of Rufinus, who made many changes in the text.

II. Some scholars state that Origen was not a systematic thinker. It is impossible to link his treatises together so that they yield a systemic whole[252].

III. Concerning a definition of key terms employed by Origen, it is difficult to isolate specific passages in his works and to interpret them separately, for any given term used in a particular context presupposes a similar meaning of the term when employed in another.

ON NATURES

This work combated the Valentinian doctrine that the sort of nature a person has determines whether or not that person is saved[253].

---

251 De Principiis 4:4:10.

252 Bercman, p. 10; C. Kannengiesser: From Philo to Origen: Middle Platonism in Transition, Chico, 1984, Resch. Sci. Re 1, 5.1 (1987), 605-7.

253 Trigg: Origen, SCM Press Ltd, 1983, p. 88-9.

DISCUSSION WITH HERACLIDES[254]

Among a number of papyri found at Toura near Cairo in 1941 is a codex of about the end of the sixth century containing the text of a discussion between Origen and Bishop Heraclides. Robert J. Daly says, "How the codices found their way into the cave can only be conjectured. However, both Origen and Didymus were among those condemned as heretical at the Council of Constantinople in 553 A.D, and the condition in which the codices were found (the covers had been removed as if for use elsewhere) suggests that it was not for the purpose of safekeeping and preservation that they were put or thrown into the cave. It is, thus, a logical conjecture that the monks themselves had thrown them there as a way of purging their library of works that had come to be considered heretical or dangerous. The age of the codices, written in a seventh-century Coptic unical script, is consistent with this conjecture[255]."

1. This codex represents a complete record of an actual discussion, which had taken place in a church in Arabia in the presence of the bishops and the people about the year 245 A.D. Origen seems to be in full possession of his authority as a teacher.

This is the only surviving dialogue of Origen. There are indications that suggest that it may have been copied from a collection of Origen's dialogues in the library at Caesarea[256].

2. Origen takes up an anticipated objection: **the relation of the divinity of Christ to the resurrection** (5.10 to 6.7).

3. In a fine example of his method of sewing together various biblical texts to make his point, he emphatically affirms the

---

254 Robert J. Daly: Origen, Treatises on the Passover and Dialogue with Heraclides and his fellow bishops on the Father, the Son, and the Soul, (ACW), 1992.; Quasten, vol. 2, p. 62-4.

255 Cf. Origen: Treatise on the Passover and Dialogue of Origen with Heraclides and His Fellow Bishops on the Father, the Son, and the Soul (Translated by Robert J. Daly - ACW),p. 1.

256 Origen: Treatise on the Passover and Dialogue of Origen with Heraclides and His Fellow Bishops on the Father, the Son, and the Soul, p. 21 (ACW)

physical reality of Christ's body (i.e., it is not just a spiritual body), and hence the bodily reality of Christ's resurrection and ours[257].

Origen emphasizes that Jesus has the same composite elements - **body, soul, spirit** - as we do; otherwise we should not be wholly saved.

> *For the whole human being would not have been saved if he had not assumed the whole human being. They eliminate the salvation of the human body by saying that the body of the Savior is spiritual; they eliminate the salvation of the human spirit, of which the Apostle says: No one knows the thoughts of a human being except the spirit of the human being which is in him (cf. 1 Cor. 2.11). Desiring to save the spirit of the human being, about which the Apostle spoke, the Savior assumed also the human spirit. These three elements were separated at the time of the passion; they were reunited at the time of the resurrection. How? The body in the tomb, the soul in Hades, the spirit committed to the Father. The soul in Hades: You do not give up my soul to Hades (cf. Ps. 16[15].10; Acts 2.27)[258].*

Its Division

1. Part One: The Dialogue with Heraclides and Maximus **1:5 - 10:17.**

The first part of it has a discussion about the Father and the Son. Origen refers to Scripture in order to show **in what sense two can be one**:

I. Adam and Eve were two but one flesh (Gen. 2:24).

II. He (the just man) who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him (Cor. 6:17).

---

257 Origen: Treatise on the Passover and Dialogue of Origen with Heraclides and His Fellow Bishops on the Father, the Son, and the Soul, p. 23 (ACW)

258 Dial. with Heraclides 7 (ACW).

III. Finally he introduces Christ himself as a witness because He said: “I and My Father are one.” In the first example, the unity consisted of “flesh;” in the second of “Spirit;” but in the third of “God.” Thus Origen states: “*Our Lord and Savior is in His relation to the Father and God of the universe not one flesh, nor one spirit, but what is much higher than flesh and spirit, one God*.”

Origen declares that such an interpretation of Christ's words enables the theologian to defend the duality of God against monarchism and the unity against the impious doctrine of the Jews, who deny the divinity of Christ.

And while being distinct from the Father, the Son is Himself also God[259]."

We must treat this matter carefully, and point out in what respect they are two, and in what respect these two are one God[260].

Adam and his wife are distinct beings; Adam is distinct from his wife, and his wife is distinct from her husband. But it is said right in the creation account that the two are one: For the two shall become one flesh (Gen. 2.24; Matt. 19.5). It is thus possible at times for two to be one flesh. But note well that in the case of Adam and Eve it is not said that they will be two in one spirit, nor that they will be two in one soul, but that they will be two in one flesh. In addition, the just person, while distinct from Christ, is said by the Apostle to be one in relation to Christ: For whoever is united to the Lord is one spirit with him (1 Cor. 6.17). But is not one of these of a lower or diminished and inferior nature, while Christ is of a more divine and glorious and blessed nature? Are they therefore no longer two?[261]

---

259 Dial. with Heraclides 2:20 (ACW).

260 Dial. with Heraclides 2:30 (ACW).

261 Dial. with Heraclides 3 (ACW).

In some of our prayers we maintain the duality and in others we introduce the unity, and thus we do not fall into the opinion of those who, cut off from the Church, have fallen prey to the illusory notion of unity, abrogating the Son as distinct from the Father and also, in effect, abrogating the Father; nor do we fall into the other impious doctrine which denies the divinity of Christ[262].

2. Part Two: The Question of Danis: Is the Soul Blood? **10:20 - 24:24.**

Among the questions raised by others in the second part of the discussion is that of Dionysius (Danis), whether the soul and the blood of man are identical.

The problem at hand arises from the literal meaning of the Septuagint of Lev. 17.11, supported by Deut. 12.33: *the soul of all flesh is its blood.* This apparently suggested to some that the soul was material and thus subject to corruption with the body in the grave. Origen points out that the Scripture often uses bodily things to describe spiritual realities[263].

The original question about soul/blood is thus subleted in the overall synthesis in which each part of the exterior human being has its corresponding part, and homonym, in the interior human being.

Origen distinguishes in his answer between the physical blood and the blood of the interior man. The latter is identical with the soul. In the death of the just, this blood-soul separates from the body and enters the company of Christ even before the resurrection.

"There are, therefore, two human beings in each of us. What is the meaning of the saying that the soul of all flesh is its blood (cf. Lev. 17.11)? This is a great problem. For just as the outer human being has the same name as the

---

262 Dial. with Heraclides 4 (ACW).

263 Origen: Treatise on the Passover and Dialogue of Origen with Heraclides and His Fellow Bishops on the Father, the Son, and the Soul, p. 24 (ACW)

inner, so too with its members; thus one can say that every member of the external human being is also called the same thing in the inner human being.

"The outer human being has eyes, and the inner human being is said to have eyes: Lighten my eyes lest I sleep the sleep of death (Ps. 13[12].3). This is not talking about these bodily eyes, nor about bodily sleep, nor about ordinary death. The ordinance of the Lord is far-seeing, enlightening the eyes (cf. Ps. 19[18]8-9). It is not just in observing the commandments of the Lord that we become clear-sighted in bodily things, but in observing the divine commandments according to the mind that we become more clear-sighted. The eyes of the inner human being see more perceptively than we do. Open my eyes and I will understand the wondrous things of your law (Ps. 119[118].18). Is this to say that his eyes are veiled? No, but our eyes are our mind. It was for Jesus to pull back the veil that we might be able to contemplate what has been written and understand what has been spoken in secret. The external human being has ears, and the internal human being is also said to have ears. He who has ears to hear, let him hear (Matt. 11.15 and passim) All had the ears of the external senses, but not all have been successful in having internal ears which are purified. Having ears of the senses does not depend on us, but having internal ears does[264]*.*

"The exterior human being smells with his nostrils, perceiving good odor and bad odor, while the inner human being has other nostrils with which to perceive the good odor of righteousness and the bad odor of sins. The Apostle teaches about the good odor when he says: For we are the good odor of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, to some a fragrance from death to death, to others a fragrance from

264 Dial. with Heraclides 16-17 (ACW).

life to life (cf. 2 Cor. 2.15-16). And Solomon in the Canticle of Canticles also says, through the mouth of the young maidens of the daughters of Jerusalem: We run after you to the fragrance of your perfumes (Cant. 1.4[265]).

"The outer human being has the faculty of taste, and the inner human being has the spiritual faculty of which it is said: Taste and see that the Lord is good (Ps. 34[33].8; cf. 1 Peter 2.3). The outer human being has the sensible faculty of touch, and the inner human being also has touch, that touch with which the woman with a hemorrhage touched the hem of Jesus' garment (cf. Mark 5.25-34 parr). She touched it, as He testified who said: Who touched me? (Mark 5.30). Yet just before, Peter said to Him: The multitudes are pressing upon you and you ask, 'Who touched me?' (Luke 9.45 par). Peter thinks that those touching are touching in a bodily, not spiritual manner. Thus, those pressing in on Jesus were not touching Him, for they were not touching Him in faith[266].

"We thus have other hands, about which is said: May the lifting up of my hands be an evening sacrifice (Ps 141[140].2). For if I lift up these (bodily) hands, but leave the hands of my soul idle and do not lift them up with the holy and good deeds, the lifting up of my hands does not become an evening sacrifice. I also have different feet about which Solomon is speaking when he commands me: Let not your foot stumble (Prov. 3.23)[267].

"In Ecclesiastes there is an unusual text. It will seem meaningless to those who do not understand it; but it is of the wise that Ecclesiastes says: The wise man has his eyes in his head (Eccl. 2.14). In what head? For all human beings, even the senseless and the foolish, have bodily eyes in their head. But the wise have the eyes we have been speaking of,

---

265 Dial. with Heraclides 18 (ACW).

266 Dial. with Heraclides 19 (ACW).

267 Dial. with Heraclides 20 (ACW).

eyes which are illuminated by the ordinance of the Lord (cf. Ps 19[18].9), and they have them in their head, i.e., in Christ, because the head of man is Christ, the Apostle says (cf. 1 Cor. 11.3). The thinking faculty is in Christ[268].

"Even the hairs of Your head are all numbered (Matt. 10.30). What hairs: Those by which they were spiritually Nazirites.

"Since you have all these elements of the physical body in the inner human being, you should no longer have problems about the blood, which, with the same name as physical blood, exists, just like the other members of the body, in the inner human being. That is the blood which is poured forth from a soul; for He will require a reckoning for the blood of your souls (Gen. 9.5). He does not say, "your blood" but, the blood of your souls. And, His blood I will require at the watchman's hands (Ezek. 33.6). What blood does God require at the watchman's hands if not that which is poured forth from the sinner? Just as, when the heart of the foolish man is lost, and it is said: Hearken to me, you who have lost your heart (Isa. 46.12 LXX), so too does the blood and the vital power flow away from his soul[269].

The soul is both immortal and not immortal. First, let us carefully define the word 'death' and all the meanings that come from the term 'death'[270].

What are these three deaths? Someone may live to God and have died to sin, according to the Apostle (cf. Rom. 6.10). This death is a blessed one: one dies to sin. This is the death which my Lord died: For the death He died He died to sin (Rom. 6.10). I also know another death by which one dies to God. About this death it is said: The soul that sins shall

---

268 Dial. with Heraclides 20 (ACW).

269 Dial. with Heraclides 22-23 (ACW).

270 Dial. with Heraclides 25 (ACW).

die (Ezek. 18.4). And I know a third death according to which we ordinarily consider that those who have left their body are dead. For Adam lived nine hundred and thirty years, and he died (cf. Gen. 5.5).

"Since, therefore, there are three deaths, let us see whether the human soul is immortal with regard to these three deaths, or, if not with regard to all three deaths, whether it might still be immortal with regard to some of them. All of us human beings die with ordinary death which we think of as a dissolution. No human soul ever dies this death; for if it did die, it would not be punished after death. Men will seek death, it is written, and will not find it (cf. Rev. 9.6). For the souls being punished will seek death. They will desire not to exist rather than exist to be punished. This is why men will seek death and will not find it. Taken in this sense, every human soul is immortal. Now for the other meanings: according to one, the soul is mortal and blessed if it dies to sin. This is the death that Balaam was talking about in his prophesy, praying in the divine spirit: Let my soul die among the souls of the just! (Num. 23.10). It was about this death that Balaam made his astonishing prophecy and, in the word of God, prayed the most beautiful of prayers for himself; for he prayed to die to sin in order to live to God. This is why he said: Let my soul die among the souls of the just, and let my seed be like their seed! (Num. 23.10). There is another death, in regard to which we are not immortal; but it is possible for us, through vigilance, not to die this death. And perhaps what is mortal in the soul is not mortal forever. For to the extent that it allows itself to commit such a sin that it becomes a soul that sins which itself will die (cf. Ezek. 18.4), the soul is mortal for a real death. But if it becomes confirmed in blessedness so that it is inaccessible to death, in possessing eternal life it is no longer mortal but has become, according to this meaning too, immortal. How is it that the Apostle says of God: Who alone has immortality (1

Tim. 6.16)? I investigate and find that Jesus Christ died for all except God (cf. 2 Cor. 5.15 and Heb. 2.9). There you have the sense in which God alone has immortality[271].

3. Part Three: The Problem of the Immortality of the Soul, Provoked by a Remark from Demetrius **24:24 - 28:23.**

At the end of the discussion he deals with the **immortality of the soul**. As Bishop Philip arrives, Bishop Demetrius tells him that Origen has been teaching that the soul is immortal. Origen does not want to let this go without comment, so we have another few pages which comprise Part Three (24.24 to 28.23)

a. Death to sin, when we live to God *(Rom. 6:2).*

b. Death to God, when a soul sins *(Ezech 18:4).*

c. The ordinary death when we leave our bodies, or are dissolved.

To the third one, the soul is not subject, though those in sin desire it, they cannot find it (Rev. 9:6). The soul may be subject to the first or the second kind of death, and may thus be called mortal. In other words, Origen replies that the soul is on the one hand immortal, on the other mortal, depending entirely on the three different kinds of death:

All human beings die, but no human soul ever dies this third death. The *Dialogue* ends with another impassioned prayer expressing Origen's yearning *to be away from the body and at home with the Lord* (cf. 2 Cor. 5.8).

THE DIALOGUE WITH CANDIDUS

The Dialogue with Candidus, like the Dialogue with the Valentinan Heraclides which Origen published much later, was apparently the actual transcript of a debate in which Origen participated, in this case with a Gnostic teacher. Candidus, the Gnostic, cited Satan as a case of a rational being who had no free choice

271 Dial. with Heraclides 25-26 (ACW).

since Satan was everlastingly condemned to be God's enemy. Origen responded that not even Satan lacked free choice- of the will, and that even Satan could, by choosing to do good, return to God's favor. Orthodox critics of Origen took this statement that Satan could be saved as an indication that Origen was heretical since the Bible consigned Satan eternally to the "Lake of Fire" at the end of time.

ON THE RESURRECTION (*Peri Anastasius - De resurrectione*)

As a prelude to his work, "*On First Principiis*." Jerome's list of Origen's works mentions also the dialogues, "*On the Resurrection*," which are now lost.

In his work *De Principiis* Origen remarks: "*We ought first to consider the nature of the resurrection, that we may know what that body is which shall come either to punishment or to rest or to happiness; which question in other treatises which we have composed regarding the resurrection we have discussed at greater length, and have shown what our opinions are regarding it*[272]." Eusebius mentions two volumes *On the Resurrection*[273] . The essay of which Origen speaks in *De Principiis* must have been written in Alexandria before 230 A.D, if not earlier.

Only fragments of all these works survive in Pamphilus[274], Methodius of Philippi[275] and Jerome[276]. From Methodius we learn that Origen rejected the idea of a material identity of the risen hu-

---

272 De Principiis 2:10:1.

273 Eusebius: H.E. 6:24:2.

274 Apol. pro Orig. 7

275 De resurrectione.

276 Contra Joh. Hier. 25-26.

man, body and its parts. *On the Resurrection* combated what Origen considered a crude understanding of the resurrection of the dead as the reconstitution of the fleshly body[277].

MISCELLANIES or *Stromata* (Carpets)

Like his teacher St. Clement, Origen left behind him his "*Stromata*," in ten books, which have been lost, except for a few small fragments. He composed it "in the same city (of Alexandria) before his removal, as is shown by the annotations in his own hand in front of the tomes[278]."

The title indicates a variety of subjects discussed not in any particular order. In this study Origen compares Christian doctrine with the teaching of ancient philosophers like Plato, Aristotle, Numenius and Cornutus[279].

V V V

277 Joseph Wilson Trigg: Origen, SCM Press Ltd, 1983, p. 88.

278 Eusebius: H.E. 6:24:3.

279 St. Jerome: Epistle 70:4.

5 - PRACTICAL WRITINGS

ON PRAYER (*De Ortione*)

We will speak of this work in chapter 14. The text is extant in a codex of the fourteenth century at Cambridge[280], while a fifteenth century manuscript at Paris contains a fragment.

EXHORTATION TO MARTYRDOM (*Exhortatio ad Martyrium*)

See chapter 15.

In the *Exhortation to Martyrdom* Origen stresses the liberation of the human spirit and the degrees of glory which correspond to the intensity of suffering and love[281].

ON THE PASCH[282] (*Peri Pascha*)

The same codex, found at Toura in 1941, that contains the "*Discussion with Heraclides*," also preserve fragments of a long-lost treatise of Origen "*On the Pascha"* of which very little was hitherto known. The codex consists of fifty pages arranged in three quires of eight sheets (16 pages) each and a final quire of two sheets with writing only on the first two of these pages.

It is not a homily but a treatise. It is similar in structure and content to other treatises or homilies written by Milato of Sardis, Apollinaris of Hierapolis, Clement of Alexandria, Hippolytus, and numerous others[283]. It was probably written about 245 A. D.

---

280 Codex Cantabrig. Colleg. S. Trinitatis B.8. 10 saec. XIV.

281 See chaps, 15,42,47; Theological Studies 37 (1976): J. Patout Burns, S.J.: The Economy Of Salvation: Two Patristic Traditions, P. 599.

282 Robert J. Daly: Origen, Treatises on the Passover and Dialogue with Heraclides and his fellow bishops on the Father, the Son, and the Soul, (ACW), 1992.

283 Robert J. Daly: Origen, Treatises on the Passover and Dialogue with Heraclides and his fellow bishops on the Father, the Son, and the Soul, (ACW), 1992, p. 5.

In this treatise Origin wishes to correct a certain Hippolytus, whose treatise "On the Holy Pascha" had recently revived the Asiatic tradition of Melito and Apollinarius which connected Pascha with *paschein* and *pathos* (the passion). Origen knew this tradition; in *Homilies on Leviticus* 10:1 he cites Melito *On the Pascha* 37[284].

Most, if not all, of the brethren think that the Pascha is named Pascha from the passion of the Savior. However, the feast in question is not called precisely Pascha by the Hebrews, but phas[h]. The name of the feast is constituted by the three letters phi, alpha, and sigma, plus the rougher Hebrew aspirate. Translated, it means "passage." Since it is on this feast that the people went forth from Egypt, it is logical to call it phas[h], that is "passage[285]*."*

In *p* 12.25 to 16.4, Origen offers three arguments to support his affirmation that the Passover is not a type of the passion[286].

1. The Passover lamb is sacrificed by holy people, but Christ by criminals and sinners (12.25 to 13.3), as he had already pointed out in his *Commentary on John.* He says, "*The lamb is sacrificed by the saints or Nazirites, while the Savior is sacrificed by criminals and sinners*[287]."

2. The scriptural directives about roasting and eating the flesh of the Passover lamb are not fulfilled in the passion, but they are fulfilled in the life of the Christian (13.3 to 14.13).

3.) The Savior Himself (in John 3.14, alluding to Num. 21.8-9) sees not the Passover but the lifting up of the serpent in the wilderness by Moses as the prefiguring of His passion (14.25 to

---

284 See Raniero Cantalamessa: Easter in the Early Church, The Liturgical Press, Minnesota, 1993, p.150.

285 On the Pascha, 1.

286 Cf. Origen: Treatise on the Passover and Dialogue of Origen with Heraclides and His Fellow Bishops on the Father, the Son, and the Soul (Translated by Robert J. Daly - ACW), p.. 94.

287 Peri Pascha 12 (Translated by Robert J. Daly - ACW).

15.11). He Says, "*The Passover is not a type of the passion but a type of Christ Himself*[288]." "*It is obviously in accord with the type of the serpent and not in accord with the type of the Passover that one will understand the passion*[289]."

Origen also says, "*To show that the Passover is something spiritual and not this sensible Passover, He Himself says: Unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood, you have no life in you (cf. John 6.53). Are we then to eat His flesh and drink His blood in a physical manner? But if this is said spiritually, then the Passover is spiritual, not physical*[290].

Its Division

1. Part one (Exegesis of Exodus 12:1 - 11).

Introduction: The Name of the Passover	1:1 - 2:18.
The Passover of the Departure from Egypt	2:19 - 39:6.

2. Part Two

Introduction:	
The Spiritual meaning of the Pasch	39:9 - 41:2.
The Passover Lamb, Figure of Christ	41:13 - 43:6.
The Conduct of those in Passage	43:6 - 47:27.
Eat in hate...	47:27 - 49:34.
Conclusion	49:34 - 50:8.

LETTERS

St. Jerome cites four different collections of Origen's correspondence. One of them counted nine volumes. These letters perhaps are the same that Eusebius gathered into a collection, perhaps in the days when he catalogued the Origen library of Caesarea for

288 Peri Pascha 14 (Translated by Robert J. Daly - ACW).

289 Peri Pascha 14-15 (Translated by Robert J. Daly - ACW).

290 Peri Pascha 13 (Translated by Robert J. Daly - ACW).

his teacher and patron Pamphilus[291], and which contained more than one hundred epistles. Only two letters have survived complete:

I. The *Philokalia* contains in chapter 13 a communication from Origen addressed to his former pupil, St. Gregory the Wonder - Maker. In it Origen urges his pupils to make full use, in advancing the Christian cause, of all that Greek thought had achieved. Christianity can use the Greek philosophy as the Jews used the gold and silver they took from the Egyptians. He also asks him to persist in studying the Bible, and in prayers to understand the divine mysteries.

II. A letter addressed to Julius Africanus, in defense of Susanna as a part of the Book of Daniel, written in 240 A.D. from the house of his friend Ambrose in Nicomedea.

THE PHILOCALIA

The *Philocalia*, a word which etymologically means the love of beautiful things, is a collection of texts by Origen collected by two of the Cappadocian Fathers, St. Basil and St. Gregory of Nazianzen: it has come down to us in Greek, the authority of its editors having saved it in the days when the author's ill-repute might have caused its destruction. The first 15 chapters are about Holy Scripture, chapters 16 to 20, taken from the Contra Celsum, are on the controversy with the philosophers about Scripture, chapters 2I to 27 deal with free will. Among these last is a passage from the Clementine Recognitions and another from the Treatise of Methodius about free will: the reasons for the inclusion of these among texts otherwise exclusively by Origen are a matter of debate. A discreet apologetic motive on behalf of the Alexandrian is not absent from the minds of the two Cappadocians. These are re-

291 Eusebius: H.E 6:36:3.

liable texts from the critical point of view, although some cuts may sometimes have been made in them[292].

THE EXEGETICAL CATENAE

A great many fragments come from the exegetical *Catenae*, works in which the scriptural exegeses of various early Fathers are collected as a book of the Bible is commented on verse by verse. The first such 'catenist' seems to have been Procopius of Gaza in the 6th century. On the whole Origen is well represented in these. But the fragments of Catenae are subject to two main difficulties from the critical point of view. First the attribution to a particular author given in the Catenea is not always safe, for some fragments are attributed to different authors in different Catenae. Next it seems in many cases that the fragments are summaries made by the catenist of longer passages: this becomes evident when they can be compared with the passage from which they are drawn, existing in Greek or in Latin translations; the ideas are authentic but not always their expression.

QUOTATIONS IN LATER WRITINGS

Finally, fairly numerous passages are preserved as quotations in later works, whether supportive or hostile. But it is not always certain that they are giving us the authentic and complete text of what they are quoting. Thus on his writing entitled *Aglaophon* or *On the Resurrection* Methodius of Olympus quoted a long passage from Origen's *Commentary on Psalm 1*. Methodius's book is only preserved in its entirety in an Old Slavonic version, but Epiphanius reproduces about half of it in Greek in his *Panarion* 64. Before copying Origen's text as Methodius gives it (10:2-7), Epiphanius reproduces the first paragraph directly from Origen. When the two texts are compared, it will be seen that Methodius has suppressed all the expressions that he thought superfluous, so

292 Henri Crouzel: Origen, Harper & Row, 1989, p. 44-5.

as to abridge the passage, but without changing its sense; and it is probable that he did the same with everything that he reproduced. Some quotations may well be centos of a kind, taking from a text phrases here and there and making of them a consecutive passage; or perhaps a summary giving the idea such as it was or such as the compiler took it to be[293].

V V V

293 Henri Crouzel: Origen, Harper & Row, 1989, p. 45.

3

ORIGEN AND THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

Origen lived in the Bible[1]. He states that the whole Scriptures "*breathe the Spirit of fullness, and there is nothing, whether in the Law or in the Prophets, in the Evangelists or in the Apostles, which does not descend from the fullness of the Divine Majesty. Even at the present time the words of fullness speak in the Holy Scriptures to those who have eyes to see the mysteries of heaven, and ears to hear the voice of God*[2]."

Learning is useful, Origen tells his pupil Gregory, but the holy Scriptures are their own best key.

> *Be diligent in reading the divine Scriptures, yes, be diligent...*
>
> *Knock, and the doorkeeper will open unto you...*
>
> *And be not content to knock and to inquire, for the most necessary aid to spiritual truth is prayer.*
>
> *Hence our Savior said not only "Knock, and it shall be opened," and "Seek, and you shall find," but "Ask, and it shall be given you*[3].

> *Each of us who serves the word of God digs wells and seeks living waters, from which* ***he may renew his hearers***[4].

---

1 Dr. Lietzmann: The Founding of the Church Universal, p. 417.
2 In Jer. hom. 21:2.
3 From the Epistola ad Gregorium; Charles Bigg: The Christian Platonists of Alexandria, Oxford 1913, p. 172.
4 In Gen. hom. 13:3.

According to Origen, knowledge of the holy Scriptures is the royal road to the knowledge of God[5]. Although he sometimes speaks as a philosopher to philosophers, using their own language, especially in his work "*De Principiis*," he asserts the importance of the holy Scriptures.

> *Now in our investigation of these important matters we do not rest satisfied with common opinions and the evidence of things seen, but we use in addition, for the manifest proof of our statements, testimonies drawn from the Scriptures, which we believe to be divine, both from what is called the Old Testament and also from the New, endeavoring to confirm our faith by reason*[6].

We can say, that he believes that through the divine Scriptures our human knowledge is sanctified and becomes true wisdom. Therefore, he states that knowledge must become wisdom[7], and human knowledge grasps the principles only because divine perception has conjoined it[8]. It is therefore divine perception as articulated through Scriptures that determines the character of philosophical thinking[9].

THE BOOK OF THE CHURCH

The Holy Scripture is **the book of the Church** which we receive through the ***Church tradition***. He says, "*By tradition, I knew the four gospels, and that they are the true ones*[10]."

He believes that the true understanding of the Scripture is only found in the Church. The Church draws her catechetical material from the prophets, the gospels and the apostles' writings. Her faith was buttressed by holy Scripture supported by common

5 Joseph Wilson Trigg: Origen, SCM Press Ltd, 1983, p. 86.
6 De Principiis 4:1:1.
7 Contra Celsus 7:33:183:24; cf. 3:33:229:30f.
8 Comm. on John 1:26:39:29ff; 20:43:386; De Principiis 1:1:7:24:1ff; 1:1:8:26:2ff; 4:4:7:357:29f.
9 De Principiis , Praef 1; 9; 4:1:1:292:9ff; Contra Celsus 1:9-17:297.
10 Fr. Tadros Y. Malaty: Tradition and Orthodoxy, Alexandria 1979, p. 17.

sense[11]. He appeals[12] again and again to ***the Scripture as the decisive criterion of dogma***.

> *The true disciple of Jesus is he who enters the house, that is to say, the Church.*
>
> *He enters it by thinking as the Church does, and living as she does; this is how he understands the Word.*
>
> *The key of the Scriptures must be received from the tradition of the Church, as from the Lord Himself*[13].

Origen in his exegesis of the holy Scripture refers to the tradition and to the writings of the Fathers (presbyters) of the Church. For example, concerning the parable of the good Samaritan, he writes: "***One of the presbyters*** *said that the man who was going down to Jericho is Adam, Jerusalem is the Paradise, Jericho the world, the thieves the evil powers, the Samaritan is Christ.*" J. Daniélou says that Origen means here with "*the one of the presbyters"* St. Irenaeus[14].

Henri De Lubac explains Origen's view on the spiritual meaning of the Scriptures, saying,

> It (the spiritual meaning) is to receive the Word from Jesus' hands and to have Him read it to you. It is to act as "***a son of the Church***." If there is one fundamental obligation for the Christian, it is that of keeping "*to the rule of the heavenly church of Jesus Christ, through the succession from the apostles."* In concrete terms then, what is this rule? Saint Irenaeus had already given the answer: it is the interpretation of Scripture by the Spirit[15].

---

11 De Principiis 3:6:6; Kelly p. 42.
12 De Principiis 1:Praef.:10; 1:5:4; 2:5:3.
13 Yves Conger: Tradition and the life of the Church, London 1964, p.83.
14 Origen: Lucas Hom. 34; J. Daniélou: The Theology of Jewish Christianity, p. 49.
15 Henri De Lubac: Origen, On First Principles, NY., 1966 (Koetschau text together with an introduction and notes by G.W. Butterworth, p. XV.

ORIGEN AS AN INTERPRETER OF THE SCRIPTURE

St. Gregory the Wonder-Maker praises Origen as an interpreter of the Scripture by saying[16]:

> "The Spirit who inspires the prophets... honored him as a friend, and had appointed him His interpreter..."
>
> "He had the power to listen to God and understand what He said and then to explain it to men that they too might understand."

Eusebius tells us that Origen spent the greater part of his nights in studying the Holy Scriptures[17]. It was the center of his life[18], the well-spring of his personal religious life and the instrument for striving after perfection.

He made a close study of the text, and in order to fit himself for this task he learnt Hebrew[19], and made a collection of current versions of the Old Testament and composed his "*Hexapla*."

Origen's consistent principle of interpretation was: ***explaining the Bible by the Bible,*** that is obscure or difficult passages should be explained by other passages, from anywhere else in the Bible[20]. The whole Bible must be allowed to speak for itself, what ever a single text may seem to say; and it must be permitted to speak not merely in its own behalf, but in the name of God. ***Allegorical interpretation is based on the Holy Scripture***. In his "*Homilies on Jeremiah*," he states that his interpretation is invalid unless it depends on two or three witnesses (Deut. 19:15). The witnesses in his interpretation of the Book of Jeremiah are three: the New Testament, the Old Testament, and Jeremiah the Prophet himself[21].

---

16 St. Gregory Thaum. PG 10: 1093c, 1096a
17 Eusebius: H.E. 6:39.
18 Daniélou: Origen, p. 131.
19 Jerome: De Vir. Illustr. 54.
20 David G. Hunter: Preaching in the Patristic Age, Paulist Press, 1989, p. 47.
21 In Jerm. hom 1:7.

INTERPRETATION OF THE SCRIPTURE AS A DIVINE GIFT

According to St. Clement of Alexandria the spiritual understanding of the Scripture is a grace given to the perfect believers by Christ, through the continual advances of living faith, depending on the living Church tradition. He states that "the unwritten tradition of the written Word, given by the Savior Himself to the apostles, is handed down even to us, being inscribed on new hearts according to the renewing of the Book by the power of God[22]." Origen believes that for ***only those who have the Spirit of Jesus can understand their spiritual meaning***[23], i.e., to enter this chamber of eternal marriage between Christ and the soul. It is a divine gift.

Although all true believers accept the spiritual level of meaning, yet not everyone is able to understand it, but those who have this gift[24].

> *That there are certain mystical revelations made known through the divine Scripture is believed by all, even by the simplest of those adherents of the word; but what these revelations are, fair-minded and humble men confess that they do not know*[25].

Origen makes man totally dependent on God for a proper understanding of the holy Scriptures in their deepest meaning, for it is a divine grace. Without divine revelation and aid, no one would be able to comprehend the mysteries of the Scriptures. We obtain this grace through praying, as we must weep and beg the Lord to open our inner eyes like the blind man sitting by the road side at Jericho (Matt. 20:30). Origen says that we must pray for we

---

22 Stromata 6:15; B.F. Westcott: An Introduction to the Study of the Gospel, NY, 1896, p.428.
23 In Ezk. Hom 11:2.
24 De Principiis 4:1:7.
25 De Principiis 4:2:2; Gary Wayne Barkley: Origen; Homilies on Leviticus, Washington, 1990, p. 18.

are often beside the wells of running water - God's Scripture - and we yet fail to recognize them by ourselves.

> *Nothing good can come apart from God, and this is above all; true understanding of the inspired Scriptures*[26].

> *The Scriptures were written by the Spirit of God, and have meanings, not as they appear at the first sight, but also others, which escape the notice of most. For those (words) which are written are the forms of certain mysteries, and the images of divine matters. Accordingly, there is one opinion throughout the whole Church, that the whole case is indeed spiritual; however the spiritual meaning which the law conveys is not known to all, but to those only on whom the grace of the Holy spirit is bestowed in the word of wisdom and knowledge*[27].

> *Let us exhort God to grant that, as the word grows in us, we may receive a rich broad-mindedness in Christ Jesus and so be able to hear the sacred and holy words*[28].

> *And so, if at times we do not understand what is said, we shall not lessen our obedience or subside to easier material explanation, but wait for the grace of God to suggest to us an answer to our question, whether by direct enlightenment or through the agency of another*[29].

> *Many have sought to interpret the divine Scriptures... but not all with success. For rare is he who has the grace for this from God*[30].

Origen sees that, in the miracle of the *Feeding of the Five Thousand,* the fire that bakes the bread of exegesis is the love of God, the inspiration that comes from the Spirit and acts both on the

---

26 Sel. Ps. 1:2.
27 De Principiis, Pref. 8.
28 In Jer. hom. 6:3.
29 In Isa. hom. 2:2.
30 Sel. Ps. 119:85..

inspired writer and on his interpreter. The bread which the preachers cut into pieces and distribute to the crowd is the spiritual meaning. The oven is not only the reasoning ability of the intellectual but the higher part of the soul, the intellect, the heart or the ruling faculty, which is the seat of man's participation in the image of God, since only like can know like. The proper setting for this exegesis is contemplation and prayer: thence it comes down like Moses from his mountain, now that Jesus has done away with the veil, to reappear in the synthesis of the theologian, in the teaching of the preacher and the professor, in the struggles of the apologist, and above all in the Christian life of all who live by it [31].

The Holy Scripture is like a house in which all the rooms are locked, and the keys are not in the keyholes but scattered over the corridors and stairs; and none of the keys lying near the doors open those doors. The only way to interpret the Scriptures is therefore a close, methodical study of every text, every key. Such was the story a Jewish rabbi told him, and Origen answered: "*The key of David is in the hands of the Divine Word, which became flesh, and now the Scriptures which had been closed until His Coming are opened by that key*." But though Origen said this, his practice was the continual study of texts until the day he died... [32]

ALLEGORISM

I have already mentioned him as the founder of the mode of the ***allegorical interpretation*** of the Holy Scripture as a system[33].

According to Origen the understanding of Scripture is "the art of arts," and "the science[34]. The words of the Scripture are its body, or the visible element, that hides its spirit, or its invisible element. The spirit is the treasure hidden in a field: hidden behind

31 Henri Crouzel: Origen, Harper & Row, 1989, p. 65.
32 Robert Payne: Fathers Of The Eastern Church, Dorset Press, New York, 1985, P. 53.
33 School of Alexandria, Book 1, N.J 1994, p. 28ff.
34 Comm. John 23:46.

every word[35], every letter and even behind every iota used in the written word of God[36]. Thus ***'every thing in the Scripture is mystery***[37]."

Origen differs from St. Clement in regarding allegorism rather as a personal gift than as an inherited tradition. St. Clement's few allegorisms are almost without exception borrowed. We may say that he regarded not only the sanction but the substance of this mode of interpretation as given by tradition. Origen feels that he has a personal illumination[38].

J.N.D. Kelly clarifies allegorism according to Origen, saying,

> An admirer of Philo, he regards Scripture as a vast ocean, or (using a different image) a forest of mysteries; it was impossible to fathom, or even perceive them all, but one could be sure that every line, even every word the sacred authors wrote, was replete with meaning. In practice Origen seems to have employed a slightly different triple classification, comprising
>
> a) the plain historical sense,
>
> b) the typological sense, and
>
> c) the spiritual sense, in which the text may be applied to the devout soul.
>
> Thus when the Psalmist cries (3:4), "You, O Lord, art my support, my glory, and the lifter up of my head," he explains that it is in the first place David who speaks; but, secondly, it is Christ, Who knows, in His passion, that God will vindicate Him; and, thirdly, it is every just soul who, by union with Christ, finds His glory in God. Indeed, he makes the point that, thanks to the allegorical method, it is possible to interpret it (the Scripture) in a manner worthy of the Holy Spirit, since it would not be proper to take literally

35 Hom. Levit. 4:8.
36 Hom. Jerm. 39.
37 Hom. Gen. 10:1.
38 In Lev. Hom. 8; Bigg: The Christian Platonists of Alexandria, p. 184.

a narrative or a command (and understand it in a manner) unworthy of God[39].

The room that Origen finds in his homilies for the literal sense varies considerably. Some homilies are almost entirely built around it, in others it occupies a minimal space. Origen believes that many texts have no literal sense at all. Some, like the Decalogue, have a moral signification, of such a kind that it is needless to seek farther. The distinction between the two higher senses is not always very clearly drawn, as there are regions where the one shades off into the other by very fine gradations[40]. He held that innumerable passages in both Testaments have no sense at all except as allegories[41].

Origen discovers in the ***three books attributed to Solomon***: Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and the Song of Songs, the three branches of Greek learning: moral, natural, and inspective, which in any event the Greeks had borrowed from Solomon[42].

Origen adopted allegorism not only in interpreting the Old Testament to explain the first advent of the Messiah for our salvation, but also in the New Testament to clarify the second or last advent of the Glorified Christ in His eternal kingdom for our glorification.

Jean Daniélou says, "Up to the present we have studied his figurative exegesis of the Old Testament only. But a new idea comes out here: ***the New Testament in turn is seen as a figure of the Kingdom that is to come***. It is an idea that we have already met with in Origen's theology of Baptism. We have seen that he regarded Baptism as being at once the fulfillment of Old Testament figures and a figure both of the Baptism that will take place at the end of the world and also of the Resurrection. Now we have the

39 J.N.D. Kelly: Early Christian Doctrines, 1978, p. 73:
40 Bigg: The Christian Platonists of Alexandria, p. 174.
41 Bigg: The Christian Platonists of Alexandria, p. 175.
42 Cf. Comm. in Cant. Cant., prol. 3;Boniface Ramsey: Beginning to Read the Fathers, Paulist Press, 1985, p. 24.

same outlook again but with reference to the New Testament as a whole. Another dimension must thus be added to Origen's view of history. History is not just the relationship of the Old Testament to the New; it is also the relationship of the New Testament to the eternal Gospel, to use the words of the Apocalypse (14:6), as Origen does in a famous passage in the *De Principiis*[43]*."*

THE THEOLOGICAL JUSTIFICATION OF SPIRITUAL EXEGESIS

Origen comments on Joshua's promise to his soldiers "Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that I have given to you, as I said unto Moses" (Jos. 1:3), saying:

> *These places are the low lands of the literal meaning of the Scriptures. We must pass over this meaning to inherit the spiritual meaning, thus we ask for the things which are above where Christ is sitting on the right hand of the Father (2 Cor. 3:1)*[44].

Origen comments on the words "Your eyes are doves" (Song 1:15), saying,

> *Her eyes are compared to doves, surely because she understands the divine Scriptures now, not after the letter, but after the spirit, and perceives in them spiritual mysteries; for the dove is the emblem of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 3:16). To understand the Law and the Prophets in a spiritual sense is, therefore, to have the eyes of a dove... In the Psalms a soul of this sort longs to be given the wings of a dove (Ps. 67:14), that she may be able to fly in the understanding of spiritual mysteries, and to rest in the courts of wisdom*[45].

43 Jean Daniélou: Origen, p. 170-1
44 In Jos. 2:3.
45 Comm. on Cant. 3:1.

In the *Contra Celsum*, Origen writes that "*the Word so desires that there be wise persons among believers that, for the sake of exercising the hearers' intelligence, he hides certain things under enigmas and wraps others up in obscure sayings; some things are in parables and others in problems*[46]."

He also says, "*You see how it is: mystery on mystery everywhere. You see what a weight of mystery presses on us. There are so many mysteries that we cannot hope to explain them*[47]."

Origen gives the following justification of spiritual exegesis:

1. I have already mentioned that Origen discussed two problems which the early Church faced, concerning the Old Testament[48]:

a - The Scriptures contain much that is obscure. ***Jews reject the argument from prophecy because Christ did not fulfill strictly and literally every expectation attached to the Messiah***. For Origen, if two-and-a-half tribes remained in Transjordania when the holy Land was shared out, that means that the Old Testament, of which the land beyond the Jordan is the symbol, has arrived at a certain but incomplete knowledge of the Trinity[49]. The Word speaks in the Old Testament and that is revelation only because it speaks of Him, prophesies about Him, in its entirety and not simply in the few passages considered to be direct prophecies. It is a kind of indirect prophecy, in which the exegete, following in the footsteps of the New Testament itself, will find types of the Christ, the Church, the sacraments, etc. The principal types of Christ are Isaac, son of Abraham, who symbolizes the old covenant; Joshua, whose name in Greek is Jesus, the successor of Moses who represents the Law; and several others like Solomon, who receives the

46 Contra Celsum 3:45; Boniface Ramsey: Beginning to Read the Fathers, Paulist Press, 1985, p. 29.
47 In Gen. hom. 10:5, Jean Daniélou: Origen, p. 173.
48 School of Alexandria, Book 1, p. 33.
49 Henri Crouzel: Origen, Harper & Row, 1989, p. 66.

queen of Sheba, the Church gathered from the Gentiles; or again the High Priest, Joshua or Jesus, son of Josedec[50]. In other words, Origen finds the New Testament in the Old.

b - The heretics disown the Old Testament because they find in it evidence which, taken literally again, detracts from the moral perfection of God. And simple-minded Christians, through the same habit of literality, are induced to attribute to the true God such characteristics as they would not credit to the most savage and unrighteous of mortal men[51]. What is impossible is that the text should only have a literal meaning. Much in the Old Testament when interpreted literally and not spiritually is unworthy of God, and this is in itself a sufficient refutation of Judaism. It is blasphemy to ascribe to God human weaknesses like wrath or changes of mind[52].The ***Gnostics rejected the Old Testament, for they were scandalized by some passages which refer to God*** as being angry, or that He regretted or changed His mind... They were scandalized because they interpreted them literally and not spiritually...[53]

St. Clement and Origen were later to interpret the divine *anthropomorphisms* as symbols of the deeds and powers of God[54].

Henri Crouzel says,

> Mention must also be made of a problem which was important for the early Church, that of the *anthropomorphic* treatment of God in the Bible. Whatever we do we cannot speak of God without representing Him as a man, even when we use the most discarnate concepts of metaphysics and theodicy. The Bible often represents God with human parts, hands, feet, eyes, ears, mouth, etc. and it also tells of Him having human feelings, anger or repentance.

---

50 Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p. 71.
51 G.L. Prestige: Fathers and Heretics, S.P.C.K., 1968, p. 57.
52 Henry Chadwick: History and Thought of the Early Church, London, 1982, p. 183
53 Ibid.
54 Henri Crouzel: Origen, Harper & Row, 1989, p. 65.

> Among the early Christians were some, the *anthropomorphites*, who took the *anthropomorphisms* literally, while others, millenarians or chiliasts, conceived the promised beatitude in carnal terms [55].

B.F. Westcott says,

> The *anthropomorphic* language of Scripture he compares with our own mode of addressing children, suitably to their understanding, to secure their benefit, and not to exhibit our own capacity (Deut. 1:31); though still for the spiritual it has also a spiritual meaning contained in the simple words, if we know how to hearken to them[56].

Origen sees that these two sets of people misinterpreted the Scripture as they held the literal sense exclusively. For this reason he set his theory that there are three various meanings in Scriptures: the literal, the moral and spiritual meanings.

2. Origen states that the holy Scripture has its body, soul and spirit, the literal or historical meaning is its body, the moral is its soul, and the allegorical or spiritual meaning is its spirit.

At the same time the church has three groups: the simple, the more educated and the perfect ones. Every group finds what is suitable for it in the holy Scripture. The simple may be edified by the body, the more advanced by the soul, and the perfect by the spirit. Corresponding to these three parts are three methods of interpretation - the historical, the moral, and the spiritual.

Properly “the body” was for those who were before us, “the soul” for us, and “the spirit” for those “who shall receive the inheritance of eternal life, by which indeed they may reach the heavenly kingdom.”

---

55 Henri Crouzel: Origen, Harper & Row, 1989, p. 65.

56 Contra Celsus 4:71, Studies in Early Christians, vol. III, B.F. Westcott: On the Primitive Doctrine of Inspiration, p. 33.

a- The simple people or the uneducated should be edified by the letter itself, which we call the obvious meaning, the straightforward historical sense, or the corporeal.

For Origen the rule is, simply put, that a passage may be understood literally when it is reasonable and not unworthy of God[57]. Any passage may be understood spiritually[58].

b- People at the higher level should find edification for their souls by the moral meaning.

c- The perfect should be edified by the mystical or spiritual sense with relation to Christ, or the spiritual Law, as it contains the shadow of the blessings to come. Origen's real interest is the spiritual interpretation of the Scripture.

Many scholars clarify that Origen's theory does not mean that he believes in three classes in the Church, but three stages; and every member is called to ascend from the first stage to the higher one.

> Karen Jo Torjesen says,
>
> > This three-fold distinction in the doctrines of Scripture corresponds to three different groups or classes with whom the exegete or teacher is dealing: the beginners, the intermediate, and the advanced.
> >
> > I am using the language of "three classes" of people somewhat *inappropriately*, for Origen is not thinking in terms of fixed classes. He is thinking rather of a continuum, an upward trajectory along which he can identify three stages of development. This is clear from the language he uses to describe these groups or stages. The *haplousteros*, the simple, identifies the beginning stage. *Ho epi poson anabebekos* denotes progress from the starting point. *Teleios* designates those in whom the process of development has reached its highest stage[59].

57 Cf. De Principiis 4:2-3.
58 Boniface Ramsey: Beginning to Read the Fathers, Paulist Press, 1985, p.38.
59 De Principiis 4:2:4.

What distinguishes these three stages of development is the spiritual ability to understand and receive the teachings. The simple are souls who are edified, built up, formed, by simple teachings drawn from the literal and sensible parts of Scripture. The intermediate stage is variously described as either those who have advanced beyond this point[60] or those who are not ready for the more exalted teachings (*tous hypseloteron akouein me dynamenous*[61]). The last stage represents those who are able to receive and be formed by the "secret wisdom of God[62]." (V.2.4). The three-foldness, then, represents stages in the progression of the soul. And the three-foldness of the teachings in Scripture likewise refers to an ordering of doctrines that corresponds to the progressive steps of the soul's movement toward perfection[63].

3. The revelation is in the first place a Christ. He is, the Logos, the Word of God. He is God Himself speaking to men, God revealing Himself[64].

So also when the Word of God was brought to humans through the Prophets and the Lawgiver, it was brought without proper clothing. For just as there it was covered with the veil of flesh, so here with the veil of the letter, so that indeed the letter is seen as flesh but the spiritual sense hiding within is perceived as divinity[65].

Thus, the Lord Himself, the Holy Spirit Himself must be entreated by us to remove every cloud and all darkness which obscures the vision of our hearts hardened with the stains of sins in order that we may be able to behold the spiritual and wonderful knowledge of his Law, ac-

60 De Principiis 4:2:4.
61 De Principiis 4:2:6.
62 De Principiis 5:2:4.
63 Studies in Early Christians, vol. III, p. 290-291.
64 Henri Crouzel: Origen, Harper & Row, 1989, p. 69
65 In Lev. hom. 1:1 (G.W. Barkley - Frs. of the Church).

cording to him who said, "Take the veil from my eyes and I shall observe the wonders of your Law[66]."

Who could open the seals of the Book which was seen by John [of Patmos], the sealed Book which was written within and without, a Book which no one could read, and only the Lion of the tribe of Judah, who sprang from David? For Jesus opens the Book and no one can close it; He closes it, and no one can open it. And all of the Scriptures are indicated by this Book, which is "written without," because of its obvious meaning, and "written within," because of its concealed spiritual meaning[67].

4. The Scriptures ***must be interpreted spiritually*** because they are the work of the Spirit, who unites them in one book[68], and inspires both writer and reader[69]. The Holy Spirit is the author of the holy Scripture, the human author is of little account. Now it would be unbecoming for the Spirit to dictate a useless word: every detail must have meaning and meaning worthy of the Holy Spirit, making known an infinite number of mysteries. Every term in a pleonasm must make its own point. The holy Scripture is not to be treated as one would a human book, but as the work of the Spirit. To find the meaning of the word or the symbolism of an object Origen searches the whole Scripture for the other cases in which the word is used or the object mentioned[70].

5. All language that we use, that even Christ could use, would be behind the veils, is necessarily mythical, figurative[71].

THE GOSPEL

We may call the Gospel "*the first-fruits of the Scriptures*," or "*the elements of the Faith of the Church[72]*."

---

66 In Lev. hom. 1:4 (cf. G.W. Barkley - Frs. of the Church).
67 Comm. in Ioann. 5:5-6; Robert Payne: Fathers Of The Eastern Church, Dorset Press, New York, 1985, P. 45.
68 Lubac, p. 297-302; In Num. hom. 16:9; De Principiis 1:3.
69 Lubac, p. 315; Comm. John 32:18.
70 Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p. 71.
71 Bigg: The Christian Platonists of Alexandria, Oxford 1913, p. 189.

THE UNITY OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

B.F. Westcott says,

> "*There are many sacred writings, yet there is but one Book; there are four Evangelists, yet their histories form but one Gospel*[73]" they all conspire to one end, and move by one way[74].

THE HARMONY OF THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS

Origen believes that ***the dogmas are common to the Old and New Testaments***; forming a kind of symphony[75], and that there is no iota of difference between them[76]. Thus he paved the way for the classic doctrine which St. Augustine was to formulate in the epigram: "In the Old Testament the New is concealed, in the New the Old is revealed[77]." Balthasar says that Origen frequently emphasizes that he who arbitrarily singles out words of Scripture or dissects them (like Marcion) does violence to the body of Christ and prolongs his passion[78].

St. Clement, the teacher of Origen, states that "the prophets were perfect in prophecy...but the apostles were fulfilled in all things[79]." "There is no discord between the Law and the Gospel, but harmony, for they both proceed from the same Author[80]." Origen states that the Scripture cannot be broken, for it points to the same Christ. He says, "*The beginning of the Gospel is nothing but the whole Old Testament*[81]." "Christ, the Word of God, was in

---

72 Comm. on John, t. 1:6, Studies in Early Christians, vol. III, B.F. Westcott: On the Primitive Doctrine of Inspiration, p. 32.
73 Comm. on John 2.
74 Studies in Early Christians, vol. III, B.F. Westcott: On the Primitive Doctrine of Inspiration, p. 31.
75 In Joh. 5:8.
76 In Matt. Commm 14:4.
77 Quaest. in hept. 2. q. 73.; Kelly, p. 69.
78 Rowan A. Greer: Origen, Paulist Press, 1979, page XIII.
79 Stromata 4:21.
80 Stromata 2:23.
81 Michael Green: Evangelism in the Early Church, Michigan 1991, p. 80.

Moses and the Prophets, and by His Spirit they spoke and did all things[82].” The Law is a shadow of the Gospel, and the latter in turn is a shadow of the kingdom to come.

Both Origen and Augustine, the two most influential interpreters of the Scriptures in the early Church, agree on a still more fundamental exegetical principle - namely that Christ is the deepest meaning of the Old and New Testaments. "*Among the texts of the Law*," Origen writes, "*one can find a great number that are related to Christ in typological or enigmatic fashion*[83]."

In one of his *Commentaries on the Canticle of Canticles*, Origen explains this relation between the Law and the Gospel by saying:

> *When Christ came, He first stayed a while on the other side of the wall. The wall was the Old Testament, and He stayed behind it until He revealed Himself to the people. But the time came at last and He began to show Himself at the windows. The windows were the Law and Prophets, the predictions that had been made about Him, and He began to be visible through them. He began to show Himself to the Church, who was sitting indoors, i.e., she was engrossed in the letter of the Law. He asked Her to come out and join Him. For unless she went out, unless she left the letter to the Spirit, she would never be able to join Christ, would never become one with her Bridegroom. That was why He had called to her and asked her to leave the things she could see for the things she could not see. That was why He wanted her to leave the Law for the Gospel*[84].

Just as the Law was but a preparation for the Gospel, so also the latter is itself the symbol of the eternal Gospel. The Old

82 De Principiis 1:1; 4:15.
83 In Ioann. 13:26; Boniface Ramsey: Beginning to Read the Fathers, Paulist Press, 1985, p.38.
84 Comm. Cant. 3.

Testament is a figure of the New and through it and like it a figure of the eternal Gospel of the beatitude[85]..

> *Just as the Law contained the shadow of the good things to come, which were to be manifested by the Law preached in truth, so the Gospel, which the common people think they understand, teaches the shadow of the mysteries of Christ. But the eternal Gospel, of which John speaks, and which may properly be called the Spiritual Gospel, presents clearly to those who understand, all that concerns the Son of God, and the mysteries revealed in his discourses, and the realities of which his actions were the symbols.... Peter and Paul, who at first were manifestly Jews and circumcised, subsequently received from Jesus the grace to be such in secret; they were Jews ostensibly for the salvation of the majority, and they confessed this not only by their words but also they manifested it by their actions. The same must be said of their Christianity. And just as Paul could not succor the Jews according to the flesh without circumcising Timothy when reason required this, and also shaved his head and made offerings when there was good reason for doing so, thus becoming a Jew in order to save the Jews, so also he who devotes himself to the salvation of the many cannot hope to give efficacious succor by the hidden or secret Christianity to those who are still bound up with the elements of obvious or ordinary Christianity, or make them better, or enable them to reach that which is more perfect and higher. Hence Christianity must be both spiritual and corporeal; and when we should set forth the corporeal Gospel and say that we know nothing amongst the carnal save Jesus Christ and him crucified, we must do so. But when we find people perfected by the Spirit and bearing the fruits thereof, and in love with heavenly wisdom, we ought to communicate to them the*

85 Henri Crouzel: Origen, Harper & Row, 1989, p. 105.

discourse which rises from the Incarnation to that which is with God[86].

That which has been written concerning the events in the history of Jesus must not be thought to have no other truth than that of the letter and the historic fact, for those who study the Scriptures with more understanding show that each of these facts is itself a symbol[87].

The example which Origen gives of St. Paul's assertion that the Law is not about muzzling the oxen as they thresh corn applies equally to the right of Christian ministers to receive support from those to whom they preach-it would appear that the “moral" interpretation means the extraction from some particular instance of moral principle. The simple are quite capable of understanding such meanings when they have them pointed out. Accordingly, "most of the interpretations in circulations, which are adapted to the multitude and edify those who cannot understand the higher meanings, possess something of this character". In practice little is heard of this "moral" sense of Scripture in Origen's works for the obvious answer that he is usually engaged in the attempt to lead his hearers into deeper levels of thought[88].

The house where the Church lived was the part of Scripture comprised in the Law and the Prophets. The King’s chamber was there, a room filled with the riches of wisdom and knowledge. There was a cellar, too, where the wine was stored that rejoices men’s hearts, the wine, that is, of mystical and moral instruction[89]*.”*

We who belong to the Church accept Moses, and with good reason. We read his works because we think that he was a prophet and that God revealed himself to him. We believe that he described the mysteries to come, but with

86 In Joann 13:18:109-11.
87 Contra Celsum 2:69.
88 G.L. Prestige: Fathers and Heretics, S.P.C.K., 1968, p. 57-8.
89 Comm. on Song. 3.

symbols and in figures and allegories, whereas before we ourselves began to teach men about the mysteries, they had already taken place, at the time appointed for them . It does not matter whether you are a Jew or one of us; you cannot maintain that Moses was a prophet at all unless you take him in this sense. How can you prove that he was a prophet if you say that his works are quite ordinary, that they imply no knowledge of the future and have no mystery hidden in them? The Law, then, and everything in the Law, being inspired, as the Apostle says, until the time of amendment, is like those people whose job it is to make statues and cast them in metal. Before they tackle the statue itself, the one they are going to cast in bronze, silver or gold, they first make a clay model to show what they are aiming at. The model is a necessity, but only until the real statue appears, and when the statue is ready the sculptor has no further use for the model. Well, it is rather like that with the Law and the Prophets. The things written in the Law and the Prophets were meant as types or figures of things to come. But now the Artist himself has come, the Author of it all, and he has cast the Law aside, because it contained only the shadow of the good things to come (Hebr. x. I), whereas he brought the things themselves[90].

Lamps are useful as long as people are in the dark; they cease to be a help when the sun rises. The glory on the face of Moses is of use to us, and so it seems to me, and helps us to see how glorious Christ is. We needed to see their glory before we could see His. But their glory paled before the greater glory of Christ. In the same way, there has to be partial knowledge first, and later, when perfect knowledge is acquired, it will be discarded. In spiritual affairs, everyone who has reached the age of childhood and set out on the road to perfection needs a tutor and guardi-

90 In Lev. 10:1

ans and trustees until the appointed time comes (cf. Gal. 4.). Although at this stage he has no more liberty than one of his servants, he will eventually obtain possession of the whole estate. He will cease to be under the care of the tutor, the guardians and the trustees and will be able to enjoy his father's property that is like the pearl of great price (Matt. 13:, 46), like the perfection of knowledge. When a man obtains perfect knowledge - knowledge of Christ - he sweeps away his partial knowledge, because by frequenting these lesser forms of gnosis, which are, so to say, surpassed by the gnosis of Christ, he has become capable of receiving Christ's teaching, a thing so much more excellent than his former knowledge. But the majority of people do not see the beauty of the many pearls in the Law and the gnosis (partial though it is) of the prophetical books. They imagine that although they have not thoroughly plumbed and fathomed the depths of these works, they will yet be able to find the one pearl of great cost and contemplate the supremely excellent gnosis, which is the knowledge of Christ. Yet this form of gnosis is so superior to the others that in comparison with it they seem like stercora, though they are not stercora by nature. .... Thus all things have their appointed time. There is a time for gathering fine pearls and, when those pearls are gathered, a time for seeking the one pearl of great cost, a time when it will be wise to sally forth and sell everything to buy that pearl.

And anyone who wants to become learned in the words of truth must first be taught the rudiments and gradually master them; he must hold them, too, in high esteem. He will not, of course, remain all the time at this elementary level; he will be like a man who thought highly of the rudiments at first and , now that he has advanced beyond them to perfection, is still grateful to them for their introductory work and their former services. In the same way, when the things that are written in the Law and the

prophets are fully understood, they become the rudiments on which perfect understanding of the Gospels and all spiritual knowledge of Christ's words and deeds are based[91].

Those who observed the Law which foreshadowed the true Law possessed a shadow of divine things, a likeness of the things of God. In the same way, those who shared out the land that Judah inherited were imitating and foreshadowing the distribution that will ultimately be made in heaven. Thus the reality was in heaven, the shadow and image of the reality on earth. As long as the shadow was on earth, there was an earthly Jerusalem, a temple, an altar, a visible liturgy, priests and high priests, towns and villages too in Judah, and everything else that you find described in the book. But at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, when truth descended from heaven and was born on earth, and justice looked down from heaven (Ps. 84:12), shadows and images saw their last. Jerusalem was destroyed and so was the temple; the altar disappeared . Henceforth neither Mount Garizim nor Jerusalem was the place where God was to be worshipped : his true worshippers were to worship him in spirit and in truth (John IV. 23). Thus, in the presence of the truth, the type and the shadow came to an end, and when a temple was built in the Virgin's womb by the Holy Ghost and the power of the Most High (Luke I. 35), the stone- built temple was destroyed. If, then, Jews go to Jerusalem and find the earthly city in ruins, they ought not to weep as they do because they are mere children where understanding is concerned. They ought not to lament. Instead of the earthly city, they should seek the heavenly one. They have only to look up and they will find the Heavenly Jerusalem, which is the mother of us all (Gal. 4:26) . Thus by God's goodness their earthly inheritance

91 Comm. on Matth. 10:9,10.

has been taken from them to make them seek their inheritance in heaven[92].”

You see that everywhere the mysteries are in agreement. You see the patterns of the New and Old Testament to be harmonious. There one comes to the wells and the waters where brides may be found; and the Church is united to Christ in the bath of water[93].

Robert Payne says,

He (Origen) regarded the whole of the Old Testament as a continual prophecy of Christ, a foreshadowing of the New Testament. It was as though the Old Testament was a strangely fashioned glass, and by peering through it the New Testament acquired increased depth and meaning. All history vanishes; time stands still; there is only Christ, that short space of thirty years which seems to leap out of history altogether. Adam is Christ prefigured; the words of the Psalms are spoken by Christ through the mouth of David; and Solomon utters prophecies. Moses and the Prophets become aspects of Christ, for did not Christ say that Moses spoke of Him, and did not the Prophets prophecy His coming and His going? The Cross of Christ is dipped in the waters of Marah; the long journey from Egypt of the tribes of the Israelites prefigures the long journeys of Christ, or of the human soul in its search for Christ. Allegory, hypothesis, prophecy, symbolism - all have their place in Origen's interpretation. He sees the relationship between the Old and the New Testaments in so many dimensions that the mind is bewildered; and always high above the complex and strenuous drama which Origen unfolds, there is the higher drama: for all the events of earth are mirrored in Heaven, and Origen strains to interpret heavenly events in human words. So he says that Christ's blood was

92 In Josh. hom. 17:1.
93 In Gen. hom. 10:5 (Cf. Heine).

not only shed on earth at Jerusalem "for sin" (*pro peccato*), but also for a gift on the high altar which is in *Heaven (pro munere in superno altari quod est in coelis*)[94]. His vision of the heavenly economy is breath-taking. And then the Word touched them, and as they lifted their eyes they saw Jesus standing alone, and there was no one else. And Moses (the Law) and Elijah (Prophecy) were become one with Jesus (Gospel). And everything had changed: they were not three, but one single Being standing alone[95].

Henri Crouzel says,

The Gospel itself expresses mysteries under its literal meaning. The temporal Gospel is still a shadow, but this shadow is that of Christ, his humanity, 'under which we live among the nations' (Lam. 4:20), guided and protected by his human soul, image and shadow of the Word. The virtues, titles *(epinoiai)* of the Son we receive through this shadow which is his soul. The temporal Gospel brings us a personal knowledge of Christ, but it remains indirect: his divinity is perceived so far that we can see it through the humanity that holds it but also hides it from those who are incapable of seeing it[96]..

Adoration is either in the figures (Old Testament) or in spirit and in truth, but the latter is also in two ways: 'through a glass, darkly', relying on the earnest of the Spirit, at the present time (Temporal Gospel) or 'face to face', according to the Spirit at a future time (eternal Gospel).42 In the Old Testament the friends of the Bridegroom only bring to the Bride imitations of gold: it is only those who have been conformed to the Resurrection of Christ who will receive pure gold (Comm. on Cant. 2.); but this 'being conformed' can take place in two ways, 'through a glass,

94 Comm. in Philip II, I0.).
95 Comm. in Matt. 12:43; Robert Payne: Fathers Of The Eastern Church, Dorset Press, New York, 1985, P. 53-5.
96 Henri Crouzel: Origen, Harper & Row, 1989, p. 109-110.

darkly' by the first 'resurrection' obtained by baptism and a life in conformity with it, 'face to face' by the second and final resurrection[97]. Unlike the 'shadow of the law', the 'shadow of Christ', his humanity, brings Life, puts us on the Way, guides us to the Truth, already confers the realities which are Christ and protects from the evil sun, the devil (Comm. on Cant. 3).: so we have a possession of the mysteries, here below, where we are still exposed to the attacks of the Evil one. At the Passion of Christ the first curtain of the Temple, that of the Holy Place, was torn down, and the mysteries were revealed, but not perfectly: for the second curtain, that of the Holy of Holies, will only be taken away at the end of the world[98]..

Why is it that Isaac "sowed barley" (Gen. 26:21-22) and not wheat, and is blessed because he sows "barley," and is magnified "until he becomes great"? It appears, therefore, that he was not yet great, but after "he sowed barley" and gathered "a hundredfold," then "he became very great."

Barley is the food especially of beasts or of peasants. For it is a harsher species and would seem to prick one who touches it as if with some kind of points. Isaac is the word of God. This word sows barley in the Law, but wheat in the Gospels. He provides the one food for the perfect and spiritual, the other for the inexperienced and natural, because it is written: "Men and beasts you will preserve, O Lord" (Ps. 35:7)[99].

This Isaac, therefore, our Savior, when he has come into that valley of Gerara (Gen. 26), first of all wishes to dig those wells which the servants of his father had dug; he

97 Fragm. Rom. 24.
98 Henri Crouzel: Origen, Harper & Row, 1989, p. 111.
99 In Gen. hom. 12:5 (Cf. Heine).

wishes to renew the wells of the Law, of course, and the prophets, which Philistines had filled with earth.

Who are those who fill the wells with earth? Those, doubtless, who put an earthly and fleshly interpretation of the Law and close up the spiritual and mystical interpretation on the Law... so that neither do they themselves drink nor do they permit others to drink[100].

So, therefore, the wells which Abraham dug, that is the Scriptures of the Old Testament, have been filled with earth by the Philistines, or evil teachers, Scribes and Pharisees, or even hostile powers; and their veins have been stopped up lest they provide a drink for those who are of Abraham. For that people cannot drink from the Scriptures, but suffer a "thirst for the word of God," (Cf. Amos 8:11) until Isaac should come and open them that his servants may drink. Thanks, therefore, to Christ, the son of Abraham-of whom it is written: "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham" (Matt. 1:1) -who has come and opened the wells for us. For he opened them for those men who said: "Was not our heart burning in us when he opened to us the Scriptures?" (Luke 24.32) He opened, therefore, these wells and "called them," the text says, "as his father Abraham had called them. (Gen. 26.18) For he did not change the names of the wells[101].

JESUS CHRIST AND THE SCRIPTURES

We may believe that "*the divinity of the prophetic revelations, and the spiritual meaning of the law, shone forth by the dwelling of Jesus on earth*," and that there were no clear proofs of the inspiration of the writings of the old Covenant before that time; yet the Christian - who has recognized in his own Faith the fulfill-

100 In Gen. hom. 12:5 (Cf. Heine).
101 In Gen. hom. (Cf. Heine).

ment of Prophecy, and received the substance which the Law shadowed - will prize equally all “the words of God[102].”

The teachings of Jesus, his religion, and the divine writings of the Old and New Testaments have had such widespread effect, in comparison with the teachings of the philosophers, because they are teachings of God himself who has come in the flesh to bring the saving doctrines to men[103].

Origen shows that this wonderful effectiveness of the teachings of Christ was prophesied in both the Old and New Testament Scriptures. This conversion of great numbers of people to Christianity is prophetically described in Scripture through its references to the election of the heathen[104].

SWEETNESS OF THE SPIRITUAL MEANING OF THE LAW

> *I think that the Law, if it be undertaken according to the letter, is sufficiently bitter and is itself Mara. For what is so bitter as for a child to receive the wound of circumcision on the eighth day and tender infancy suffer the hardiness of the iron? A cup of this kind of Law is extremely bitter, so bitter in fact that the people of God-not that people who were baptized "in Moses in the sea and in the cloud,"(1 Cor 10.2.) but that people who were baptized "in spirit" and "in water"(Cf. Matt. 3.11; John 3.5.)-cannot drink from that water. But indeed they cannot taste the bitterness of circumcision nor are they able to endure the bitterness of victims or the observance of the Sabbath. But if "God shows a tree" which is thrown into this bitterness so that the "water" of the Law becomes "sweet," they can*

102 De Principiis 4:6; In Number. hom. 27:1; Studies in Early Christians, vol. III, B.F. Westcott: On the Primitive Doctrine of Inspiration, p. 32.

103 De Principiis 4:1:2, Studies in Early Christians, vol. III, Karen Jo Torjesen: “Body,” “Soul,” and “Spirit” in Origen’s Theory of Exegesis, p. 287-288.

104 Studies in Early Christians, vol. III, Karen Jo Torjesen: “Body,” “Soul,” and “Spirit” in Origen’s Theory of Exegesis, p. 288.

drink from it. Solomon teaches us what that "tree" is which "the Lord showed," when he says that wisdom "is a tree of life for all who embrace it."(Prov. 3.18.) If, therefore, the tree of the wisdom of Christ has been thrown into the Law and has shown us how circumcision ought to be understood, how the Sabbath and the law of leprosy are to be observed, what sort of distinction should be held between clean and unclean, then the water of Mara is made sweet and the bitterness of the letter of the Law is changed into the sweetness of spiritual understanding and then the people of God can drink[105].

PREPARATION FOR HEARING THE WORD OF GOD

One needed infinite patience, infinite agility, in order to understand the book clearly; and having completely understood it, a man would be like God, for all the secrets would be unfolded to him[106].

Origen assures that the word of God appears to different people in different ways determined by their spiritual capacity and preparation to receive it.

> *Do not marvel that the word of God is said to be "flesh" and "bread" and "milk" and vegetable, and is named in different ways for the capacity of those believing or the ability of those appropriating it*[107].

Origen warns us from the speedy readings of the Scriptures, which prevents us from the provisions that we must prepare for ourselves so that we may follow the true Joshua (Jos. 1:10-11)[108]. He asks us to do our best so that God may grant us the grace of the understanding of the Scriptures.

---

105 In Exodus hom . 7:1 (Cf. Ronad E Heine- Frs. of the Church, vol. 71.)
106 Robert Payne: Fathers Of The Eastern Church, Dorset Press, New York, 1985, P. 56.
107 In Exod. 7:8 (Cf. Heine)
108 In Jos. 1:4.

Many asked to interpret the divine Scriptures but not all succeeded in this. For it is rare to find the person who has this grace given to him from God[109].

We ask God to grant us, that as the word increases in us, so we may receive the abundance of the broadmindedness in Jesus Christ. Thus we become able to hear the sacred words[110].

If you devote your life to study and contemplation of the law of God, by the spirit of wisdom, you will receive a heart (Caleb = heart) who meditates in the law of God, has the power to destroy the great and fortified cities, i.e., destroy the words of the inventors of lies, and thus you become worthy of the blessing of Joshua and receive Habron (Jos. 14:6-15) [111].

"Descend, testify to the people and purify them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their garments and let them be prepared for the third day" (Exod. 19:10-11).

If there is anyone who has assembled to hear the word of God, let him hear what God has ordered. After he has been sanctified he ought to come to hear the word; he ought to wash his garments. For if you bring dirty garments to this place you too will hear: "Friend, how did you enter here, not having wedding garments?" (Matt. 22:12)

No one, therefore, can hear the word of God unless he has first been sanctified, that is, unless he is "holy in body and spirit," (Cf. 1 Cor 7:34), unless he has washed his garments. For a little later he shall go in to the wedding dinner, he shall eat from the flesh of the lamb, he shall drink the cup of salvation. Let no one go in to this dinner with dirty garments.

---

109 Sel. Ps. 119:85.
110 In Jer. hom. 6:3.
111 In Jos. hom. 18:3.

> *Wisdom also has commanded this elsewhere saying: "Let your garments be clean at all times" (Eccl. 9:8). For your garments were washed once when you came to the grace of baptism; you were purified in body; you were cleansed from all filth of flesh and spirit. "What," then, "God has cleansed, you shall not make unclean" (Acts 10:15, 11:9)*[112].
>
> *If, therefore, we also pray to the Lord that he see fit to remove the veil from our heart, we can receive spiritual understanding if only we turn to the Lord and seek after freedom of knowledge. But how can we attain freedom, we who serve the world, who serve money, who serve the desires of the flesh? I correct myself; I judge myself; I make known my faults*[113].

According to Origen, we are in need of Rebecca, whose name means "***patience***," for she grants us to drink from the well of the holy Scriptures.

> *Rebecca, which means "patience," when she saw the servant and contemplated the prophetic word "puts the pitcher down" from her shoulder (Gen. 24:18). For she puts down the exalted arrogance of Greek eloquence and, stooping down to the lowly and simple prophetic word, says, "Drink, and I will also give your camels a drink" (Gen. 24:14)...*
>
> *A soul who does all things patiently, who is eager and is undergirded with so much learning, who has been accustomed to draw streams of knowledge from the depth, can herself be united in marriage with Christ.*
>
> *Unless, therefore, you come daily to the wells, unless you daily draw water, not only you will not be able to*

112 In Exodus hom. 11:7 (Cf. Ronad E Heine- Frs. of the Church, vol. 71.)
113 In Exodus hom. 12:4 (Cf. Ronad E Heine- Frs. of the Church, vol. 71.)

to give a drink to others, but you yourself also will suffer a thirst for the word of God (Amos 8:11)[114].

But let us also beware, for frequently we also lie around the well "of living water," that is around the divine Scriptures and err in them. We hold the books and we read them, but we do not touch upon the spiritual sense. And, therefore, there is ***need for tears and incessant prayer*** *that the Lord may open our eyes, because even the eyes of those blind men who were sitting in Jericho would not have been opened unless they had cried out to the lord. (Cf. Matt. 20:30) And what am I saying? That our eyes, which are already opened, might be opened? For Jesus came to open the eyes of the blind (Cf. Isa. 42:7) Our eyes, therefore are opened and the veil of the letter of the Law is removed. But I fear that we ourselves may close them again in a deeper sleep while we are not watchful in the spiritual meaning nor are we disturbed so that we dispel sleep from our eyes and contemplate things which are spiritual, that we might not err with the carnal people set around the water itself*[115].

Karen Jo Torjesen says[116],

We must read them, he tells us, "*with attention, yea, with great attention, for it is needed in reading the divine writings, that we may not speak or form notions about them rashly*[117]."

We must read them with reverence: "*for if we use great care in handling the Sacred Elements, and rightly so, is it a lesser offense (piaculum) to disregard the Word of God than His Body*? [118]"

114 In Gen. hom. 10:2.
115 In Gen. hom. 7:6 (Cf. Heine).
116 Studies in Early Christians, vol. III, "Body," "Soul," and "Spirit" in Origen's Theory of Exegesis.
117 Ep. ad Greg. 3.
118 In Ezek. hom 13:3

We must read them with pure hearts: for "*no one can listen to the Word of God.... unless he be holy in body and spirit;..... no one can enter into this feast with soiled garments*[119]." Yet "*the language of the Bible is not enough to reach the soul of man, unless power be given from God to the reader, and shed its influence over the lesson; for, if there are oracles of God in the Law and the Prophets, in the Gospels and Apostles, he who is a student of God's oracles must place himself under the teaching of God*[120]"; such a one must "seek their meaning by inquiry, discussion, examination, and, which is greatest, by prayer; "he must not be content to 'knock' and to 'seek,' for prayer is the most necessary qualification for the understanding of divine things, ... and the Savior urged us to this when he said, not only 'knock. and it shall be opened,' seek, and you shall find,' but also, 'ask, and it shall be given you.;" If, then, we read the bible with patience, prayer, and faith; if we ever strive after a more perfect knowledge, and yet remain content in some things to know only in part, even as Prophets and Apostles, Saints and Angels, attaining not to an understanding of all things,-our patience will be rewarded, our prayer answered, and our faith increased. So "let us not weary in reading the Scriptures which we do not understand, but let it be unto us according to our faith, by which believe that Scripture, being inspired by God, is profitable[121]."

119 Ibid. 11:7.
120 Cf. Contra Celsus 6:2; In Jer. hom. 10:1.
121 Cf. In Gen. 11:3.; De Principiis 4:26; In Jos hom. 20.

THE WORD OF GOD AND UNFAITHFULNESS

Origen believes that as those who ate the heavenly manna in faith attained its sweetness, while those who did not eat it but hid it "worm comes from it in abundance" (Cf. Exod. 16:20), so those who receive the word of God unfaithfully and do not eat it, its sweetness will be changed into worm for them. Christ, the Word of God, came for the fall of some and the rise of others (Luke 2:34)[122].

THE WORD OF GOD IS WITHIN US

> *For the Scripture says, "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart; for if you confess the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead, you shall be saved" (Rom 10:8-9.) If, therefore, "you believe in your heart," your heart and your understanding is gold, therefore, you have offered the faith of your heart as gold for the tabernacle. But if you also "confess" in word, you have offered the word of confession as silver. For that reason Moses, who is the spiritual Law, says, "Take from yourselves." You take these things from yourself. They are within you. Even if you should be destitute you can have these things. But what he adds also bears on this point: "Each one as he has understood in his heart," For you cannot offer God anything from your understanding or from your word unless first you have understood in your heart what has been written. Unless you have been attentive and have listened diligently your gold or silver cannot be excellent, for it is demanded that it be "purged." Hear the Scripture saying, "The words of the Lord are pure words, as silver purged by the fire, refined seven times" (Ps. 11:7). If, therefore, you have understood in your heart what has been written, your gold, that is your*

122 In Exod. hom 7:8.

understanding, will be excellent, and your silver, which is your word, will be excellent[123].

HEARING AND FULFILLING THE WORD OF GOD

Because the text spoke of "first-fruits" (Exod. 35:5), I ask, "What are the first-fruits of gold or silver?

And now do first-fruits appear to be gathered from scarlet and purple and linen?

Or how does anyone offer `as he has understood in his heart'"?

This now strikes each of us.

Let us see at the same time both how we who are now present here have understood in heart and how the word of God is handled. There are some who understand in heart what is read; there are others who do not at all understand what is said, but their mind and heart are on business dealings or on acts of the world or on counting their profit. And especially, how do you think women understand in heart, who chatter so much, who disturb with their stories so much that they do not allow any silence? Now what shall I say about their mind, what shall I say about their heart, if they are thinking about their infants or wool or the needs of their household? I truly fear that they follow those women of whom the Apostle says, "Who learn to go about from house to house not only tattlers but also busybodies, saying things which they ought not" (1 Tim. 5:13). How, then do such women understand in heart? No one understands in heart unless his heart is untrammeled, unless he be open-minded and totally intent. Unless one be watchful in heart he cannot understand in heart and offer gifts to God. But even if we have been neglectful thus far let us immediately, starting now, be more attentive and give attention carefully, that we can understand in mind[124].

123 In Exodus hom. 13:2 (Cf. Ronad E Heine- Frs. of the Church, vol. 71.)
124 In Exodus hom. 13:3 (Cf. Ronad E Heine)

Next the text says, "And all the men to whom it seemed good in their understanding received from their wives and brought jewels and earrings and rings and hairpins and bracelets" (Exod. 35:22). You see here also how those offer gifts to God who see in their heart, who conceive understanding in their heart, who have their mind intent and given to the word of God.

Those, therefore, bring gifts and they bring them also from their wives, the text says, "earrings and jewels and bracelets." We have already often said that woman, according to the allegorical sense is interpreted as flesh and man as the rational understanding. Those, therefore, are good wives who obey their husbands; the flesh is good which no longer resists the spirit, but submits and agrees.

Therefore, "if two or three of you agree, whatever you shall ask shall be done to you" the Lord said. (Cf. Matt. 18:19). They offer, therefore, "earrings from their wives." You see how the hearing is offered to the Lord.

But bracelets also are offered to the Lord which refer to skillful and good works which are performed through the flesh. The rational understanding offers these things to the Lord.

But hairpins are also offered. He offers hairpins who knows well how to discern what is to be done, what to be avoided, what is pleasing to God or what displeasing, what is just, what is unjust. Those are the hairpins which are offered to the Lord. Here, therefore, the women offer earrings to the Lord because they are wise women. For the text says wise women came and made whatever things were necessary for the garments of the high priest. But those women who offered their earrings to make a calf were foolish, who "turned away their hearing from the truth and turned to fables and impiety" (2 Tim. 4:4), and, therefore, offered their earrings to make the head of a calf.

But also in the book of Judges we find another idol no less made from the earrings of women. Those women,

therefore, are blessed, that flesh is blessed, which offers to the Lord its earrings and its hairpins and its rings and all the works of its hands which it performs in the keeping with commandments of the Lord[125].

But the text also says, "the princes offered" (Cf. Exod. 35:27) their gifts. What are those gifts which the princes offer?

*"They offered jewels," it says, "emeralds, stones of fulfillment, and stones for the cape" (Cf. Exod. 35:27). They are called stones of fulfillment which are placed on the logion, that is, which are arranged on the breast of the high-priest, inscribed with the names of the tribes of Israel. This which is said to be the logion, that is, the oracular breastplate, (rationale) which is arranged on the breast of the high-priest represents the rational understanding which is in us. The "**stones of fulfillment**" are said to be placed on this, which nevertheless cohere and are joined together with the stones of the cape and, bound together, are supported from these**. The adorned cape is an indication of good deeds. Action, therefore, is associated with reason and reason with actions, that there might be harmony in both, "for he who shall do and teach, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven"** (Matt. 5:19). Let our speech, therefore, rest upon actions and let actions adorn our speech, for this is related as the adornment of the high priest. But the princes are required to execute these things; that is the adornment of those who have advanced so far that they deserve to preside over the people.*

*The princes also offer **oil** which will be beneficial for twofold uses: for lamps and for anointing. For the lamp of those who preside over the people ought not to be hidden*

125 In Exodus hom. 13:5 (Cf. Ronad E Hein.)

*or "placed under a bushel, but on a candlestick that it may **shine to all** who are in the house" (Cf. Matt. 5:15).*

*But the princes also offer "**a mixture of incense**" which is mixed by Moses "for a savor of sweetness to the Lord," (Exod. 35:28, 29:41) that they themselves also might say**, "We are the good odor of Christ**" (2 Cor. 2:15).*

*And after the people made their offering the text says, "Moses called every wise man" (Exod. 36:2) in construction and building that they might put together and construct the individual things which were described. "But," the text says, "he also called **the wise women**," (Cf. Exod. 35:25) that they might make the things which were proper in the tabernacle of the Lord*[126].

Rebecca's ears, therefore, could not receive their beauty, unless Abraham's servant come and himself adorn them; nor could her hands receive jewelry except that which Isaac sent. For she wishes to receive golden words in her ears and to have golden deeds in her hands. But she had come to the wells to draw water. How will you receive, who do not wish to come to the waters, who do not wish to receive the golden words in your ears and to have golden deeds in your hands. But she could not previously receive or deserve these things unless she had come to the wells to draw water. How will you, who do not wish to come to the waters, who do not wish to receive the golden words of the prophets in your ears, be able to be adorned with instruction, adorned with deeds, adorned with character? [127]

126 In Exodus hom. 13:7 (Cf. Ronad E Heine.)
127 In Gen. hom. 10:4 (Cf. Heine).

THE FIRE OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURE

Origen states that the fire of the holy Scripture has a twofold effect, as it burns and enlightens. When our Lord Jesus Christ spoke to His disciples from the Scriptures their hearts were burned and their minds were enlightened (Luke 24:32).

> *If you are a teacher you are erecting a tabernacle when you edify the Church of God. God, therefore, says to you also what he said to Jeremiah: "Behold I have made my words in your mouth as fire" (Jer. 5:14). If, therefore, when you teach and edify the Church of God, you rebuke only and reprove and censure and upbraid the sins of the people, but you offer no consolation from the divine Scriptures, you explain nothing obscure, you teach nothing of more profound knowledge, you do not open any more sacred understanding, you have offered scarlet, indeed, but not twofold. For your fire burns only and does not enlighten. And again, if, when you teach, you open the mysteries of the Law, you discuss hidden secrets, but you do not reprove the sinner nor correct the negligent nor hold severity of discipline, you have offered scarlet, to be sure, but not twofold. For your fire enlightens only; it does not burn. He, therefore, who "offers rightly" and "divides rightly" (Cf. Gen. 4:7 LXX), offers scarlet doubled, so that he mixes the small flame of severity with the light of knowledge*[128].

THE WORD OF GOD AND UNION WITH GOD

> *But it is certain that this* ***union of the soul with the Word*** *cannot come about otherwise than through instruction in the divine books, which are figuratively called wells.*

128 In Exodus hom. 13:4 (Cf. Ronad E Heine)

If anyone should come to these and draw from these waters, that is by meditating on these words should perceive the deeper sense and meaning, he will find a marriage worthy of God; for his soul is united with God[129].

THE WORD OF GOD AND JOYFUL LIFE

Let us also pray, therefore, to undertake to hear the word of God with such a mind, with such a faith that he may see fit to make us "a great feast." For "Wisdom has slain her victims, mixed her wine in the mixing bowl, and sent her servants" (Prov. 9:1-3) who all bring as many as they find to her feast.

It is so great a feast, that having entered wisdom's feast let us not again bring with us garments of foolishness, neither wrapped with the clothing of infidelity nor darkened with the stains of sin, but in simplicity and purity of heart let us embrace the word and serve the divine Wisdom which is Christ Jesus our Lord, "to whom be glory and sovereignty forever and ever. Amen." (Cf. 1 Peter 4:11; Rev. 1:6.) [130]

ALLEGORISM AFTER ORIGEN

J.N.D. Kelly says that the Alexandrian theologians who followed Origen, from Dionysius to Cyril, were all to a greater or lesser extent affected with their predilection for allegory; and the same can be said of the Palestinian (Epiphanius was a notable exception) and Cappadocian fathers. Through their influence the tradition of allegory passed to the West, and is visible in the expository writings, for example, of Hilary and Ambrose. The greatest of Latin exegetes is Jerome, though in his later days he became suspicious of allegorism[131].

129 In Gen. hom. 10:5 (Cf. Heine).
130 In Gen. hom. 14:4 (Cf. Heine).
131 Ep. 120:12; cf. in Am. 4:4; in Ezech. 16:31.

Indeed, Origen stressed the three senses of Scripture, deeming[132] that recourse to the spiritual meaning was made necessary by the anthropomorphisms, inconsistencies and incongruities which abound in the Bible. St. Augustine too employed allegory with the greatest freedom, delighting particularly in the mystical significance of names and numbers[133].

✞ ✞ ✞

132 In Matt. 21:5; in Gal. 5:13.
133 Kelly, p. 74-5.

4

ORIGEN AND ORIGENISM

Origen's influence on other Christian writers and theologians is profound and far reaching. In the third and fourth centuries he had disciples everywhere; only the greatest are mentioned by the scholars[1].

1. ***Theognostus*** (d. c. 282 A.D) and ***Pierius*** (d. c. 309 A.D) the heads of the School of Alexandria, self-consciously continued Origen's theological and exegetical tradition. Pierius, whose contemporaries knew him as "*Origen Junior*," educated Pamphilius (c. 2 40-309 A.D) who re-established the Origenist school in Caesarea[2].

2. Origen's work in the fields of exegesis and mystical theology was continued by ***St. Didymus the Blind***. According to Socrates[3], St. Didymus wrote a defense and exposition of Origen's *De Principiis*, of which nothing is extant. He dared to defend Origen and his work as entirely orthodox. He endeavored to show that Origen had been misunderstood by simple people who could not grasp his ideas. St. Jerome[4] reports that Didymus gave an orthodox interpretation of Origen's Trinitarian doctrine but accepted without hesitation his other errors regarding the sin of the angels, the pre-existence of souls, the *apokatastasis*[5]. No wonder then that in the sixth and following centuries he was condemned as a believer in the pre-existence of the soul and in the *apokatastasis*. In 553 A.D the Chalcedonians anathematized him together with Origen and

---

[1] *Jean Daniélou: Origen, p. VII.*

[2] *Joseph Wilson Trigg: Origen, SCM 1971, p. 247.*

[3] *Socrates: His. Eccl. 4:25.*

[4] *Adv. Rufin. 1:6; 2:116.*

[5] *Quasten: Patrology, vol.3, p. 89.*

Evagrius Ponticus for these doctrines in the Council of Constantinople.

St. Didymus taught St. Gregory of Nazianzen (329-389 A.D), Rufinus of Aquileia (c. 345-410 A.D), and St. Jerome (c. 342-420 A.D), three figures who spread Origen's influence and preserved his works[6].

3. ***Pamphilus of Caesarea***[7]: Of a noble family of Berytus (Beirut). He is one of Origen's most enthusiastic followers who received his early training in his native town. He held a public office, and then studied theology in the School of Alexandria[8] under the direction of Pierius, the successor of Origen. He admired Origen exceedingly.

He returned to Beirut; then later in Caesarea where Origen had taught in his later years. He desired to re-animate the school founded by Origen, and was there ordained priest by bishop Agapius. His teaching like Origen's, involved a spiritual and scriptural approach. He restored and developed the library attached to the school and organized a workshop of copyists. Arrested in November 307 A.D, he spent two years in prison and was beheaded in February 310 A.D, under Maximinus Daia.

He was the teacher of the first great Church historian, Eusebius of Caesarea, who used to call himself "the son of Pamphilus." While imprisoned in Caesarea, Pamphilus wrote with the collaboration of his pupil Eusebius, an *Apology for Origen* in six books, as a response to charges raised by St. Peter of Alexandria and St. Methodus. Book six was written after his death by Eusebius alone. The first book survived, it was translated into Latin by Rufinus. It defended Origen as orthodox and presented Origen as a model Christian.

---

[6] *Cf. Joseph Wilson Trigg: Origen, SCM 1983, p. 248.*

[7] *J. Quasten: Patrology, vol. 2,p. 144ff; Encyclopedia of the Early Church: Oxford University Press,1992, p. 638.*

[8] *Photius: Bibl. code 118-9.*

Pamphilus refutes accusations concerning Origen's thought on the Trinity, the incarnation, the historicity of Scripture, the resurrection, punishment, the soul and metempsychosis. In the process of defending Origen, Pamphilus affirmed his denial of eternal punishment, therefore the *Apology* itself was controversial[9]. Pamphilus and Eusebius refuted the accusations made against their hero and defended his views with many passages quoted from his own works.

4. ***Eusebius of Caesarea in Palestine***: Born in Palestine, perhaps at Caesarea, in c. 265 A.D. He was educated in that city. During Diocletian's persecution, he escaped death by fleeing to Tyre and thence to the Egyptian desert of Thebaid. He was arrested and imprisoned, and by the edict of tolerance of 311 A.D he was able to return to Palestine. Raised to the see of Caesarea in c. 313 A.D, he was involved from the start in the Arian controversy. He sided with Arius, but did not share the more extreme ideas of his doctrine.

He is the Father of Ecclesiastical History, succeeded Pamphilus in the school of Caesarea, inherited his ideas and defended him. It was out of veneration and gratitude to his teacher and friend that he called himself *Eusebius Pamphili*.

5. The ***Great Cappadocians*** inherited his teachings. Rowan A. Greer writes, "His influence upon the Cappadocian Fathers of the fourth century means that he is an important source for the theology that had become the classical articulation of Christian spirituality. Basil the Great, Gregory of Nazianzus, and Gregory of Nyssa preserved Origen's thought for the Church and adapted it to a theological explanation of monasticism understood as the perfect life meant to be lived by all[10]."

[9] *Joseph Wilson Trigg: Origen, SCM 1971, p. 247.*

[10] *Rowan A. Greer: Origen, Paulist Press, 1979, page xvi.*

The mystical exegesis of Origen has beyond any doubt had a powerful influence on Gregory of Nyssa, especially in his Fifteen Homilies on the Canticle of Canticles.

6. Through the Cappadocians, Origen's influence extends to ***Evagrius Ponticus***, one of the greatest of writers on spiritual life. He is responsible for the spread of his teaching among the monks of Egypt. Evagrius took a great interest in the speculative and contemplative aspects of Origen's thought and adapted them to the needs of the monastic movement which had emerged strongly in the course of the fourth century. Through him Origen's thoughts were handed on to St. John Cassian, and so to all Western Christian monasticism. Indirectly as well as directly he had remained an important influence upon Western spirituality. Evagrius, who began his ecclesiastical career as a protégé of Gregory of Nazianzus, eventually settled in Nitria, an important monastic colony in the Libyan desert south of Alexandria. From there Evagrius' Origenistic ascetic theology spread rapidly throughout the Christian world. His works were rapidly translated into Syrian, the language of Christians in what is now Syria and Iraq, and spread from there to Armenia. Evagrius influenced Western monasticism through his disciple, John Cassian (c. 360-435 A.D), one of the founders of Latin monasticism. Cassian's writings profoundly influenced Benedict of Nursia (c. 480-c. 550 A.D), whose rule ordered the regular reading of Cassian's works[11].

St. Gregory of Nazianzus, who referred to Origen as "the whetstone of us all," was more interested in Origen's contributions to theology and was careful to avoid the more controversial aspects of his thoughts.

St. Basil and St. Gregory of Nazianzus collaborated in 358-59 A.D on the *Philocalia*, and anthology of Origen's work that preserve fragments of a number of works, including *On First Principles*, now lost in Greek.

---

[11] *Cf. Joseph Wilson Trigg: Origen, SCM 1983, p. 248.*

7. ***Fr. Maximus the Confessor***[12]: He was born in c. 579-80 A.D in Palestine of a Samaritan father and a Persian slave-girl, and baptized by a priest of Hesfin on Golan. Originally named Moschion, at ten years he was entrusted to Abbot Pantaleon of the monastery of St. Charito, who named him Maximus and led him to study Origen. During the Arab invasion (614 A.D), he escaped from Jerusalem and took refuge in Cyzicus near Constantinople, subsequently forming close connections with the imperial court, especially through his disciple Anastasius. In 626 A.D following the invasion of the Persians and Avars he took refuge in Africa. Just before 647 A.D he went to Rome, where he took an active part in the Lateran council (649 A.D). Returning to Constantinople in 653 A.D he was arrested, tried in 654 A.D and was condemned to temporary exile in Bizya in Thrace. In 662 A.D he underwent a second long trial: he was condemned first according to the Iranian punishment by mutilation of the tongue and right hand, then by his final exile at Lazika, in distant Colchis on the Black Sea, where he died, worn out by his sufferings on August 13th of that year.

Maximus is a great doctor of mystical life, he was completely under Origen's influence for a time.

8. In the West, Origen's work was made known by ***Rufinus of Aquila***, the friend of St. Jerome. The two formed part of an ascetic group who in the year 370 A.D sought to recreate in Rufinus' home town of Concordia the monastic and intellectual life of the East. After a long stay in Egypt (373 A.D-380 A.D), where Rufinus frequented St. Didymus, he went and lived with Melania in the monastery on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem.

After unhappy disputes with St. Jerome over the translation of Origen's works, Rufinus returned to the West in 397 A.D, pursued at Rome and then at Aquileia by the animosity of his old friend. Fleeing the Goths, he went to Sicily where he died.

---

[12] *Encyclopedia of the Early Church: Oxford University Press, 1992, p. 547.*

He translated many homilies along with Origen's *Commentary on the Romans*, a part of his *Commentary on the Song of Songs.*

In chapter two, I have already mentioned the circumstances of his translation of Origen's treatise *On First Principles*.

9. ***St. Jerome***, who was at first a great admirer of Origen, later attacked him, though in matters related to his exegesis, remained his disciple to the end.

J. Gribomont[13] says that the first characteristic of St. Jerome (c. 347-419 A.D) is his having transmitted to the west, as the prince of translators, the riches of the Greek and Hebrew libraries. The second is his having possessed and communicated a literary culture very different from that of the other Latin Fathers. The third is a spiritual, exegetical and monastic sensibility, a splendid Origenian inheritance. Finally note the human qualities of a passionate soul, excessive in his passions and hatreds, but certainly out of the ordinary.

His name at birth was Eusebius Hieronymus. He was born before 331 A.D in Strido, at the frontiers of the Latin world. After brilliant literary studies in Rome, where he was baptized, Jerome sought his fortune at Triér, at the imperial court. There he was conquered by the eastern ideal of monasticism, whose echo had been brought there by St. Athanasius during his exile in Gaul. About 370 A.D he joined a group at Aquleiea who shared his ideal, but who were dispersed. St. Jerome accompanied St. Evagrius of Antioch to Syria. He made himself familiar with Greek, studied Hebrew and made the acquaintance of skilled exegetes. He went with Paulinus and St. Epiphanius of Salamis to Constantinople where he made friends with St. Gregory of Nazianzen. He went to Rome, where he gained the favor of Damasus, by his agile pen, his knowledge of the East, his biblical knowledge and his

[13] *Encyclopedia of the Early Church, 1992.*

readiness to support the policies of the Holy See. Damasus made him his secretary. Meanwhile his monastic and Origenian spirituality gave him access to the pious meetings of a group of aristocratic ladies, whose generosity permitted him to work without material worries. He found himself obliged to deepen his familiarity with the Latin, Greek and Hebrew Bible, and to make it his specialty.

After Damasus' departure (384 A. D), St. Jerome made a long journey in company with Paula to Cyprus, Antioch, the Holy land, then to Alexandria where he met St. Didymus the Blind and visited monasteries in Egypt, then finally went to Bethlehem. He benefited immensely from Origen's and Eusebius' library, accessible at Caesarea, and embraced an Origenist theology. This bound him to Melenia and Rufinus, established on the Mount of Olives, but opposed him to St. Epiphanius.

Towards 395 A.D St. Jerome found himself in a difficult situation: practically excommunicated by the bishop of Jerusalem, threatened with expulsion by the paetorian prefect and without many powerful friends. He succeeded in reversing the situation, when he attacked Origenism. He gained Theophilus of Alexandria as his friend, and became involved in the problem of the *Three Brothers*, taking the side of St. Theophilus against St. John Chrysostom.

St. Jerome sent a letter to the most blessed Theophilus, Pope of Alexandria, in which he congratulates the Pope on the success of his crusade against Origenism. He writes,

Jerome to the most blessed Pope Theophilus...

I write a few lines to congratulate you on your success. The whole world glories in your victories. An exultant crowd of all nations gazes on the standard of the cross raised by you in Alexandria and upon the shinning trophies which mark your triumph over heresy. Blessings on your

courage! Blessings on your zeal! You have shown that your long silence has been due to policy and not to inclination...[14]

It is worthy to note that Origen's concentration on free will as opposed to the Gnostics allowed St. Jerome to describe Origen as the ancestor of Pelagius.

St. Jerome had begun translating Origen's Homilies even before he left Rome. He used Origen's *Commentary on Ephesians* freely in writing his own Commentary on that epistle, borrowing them without questioning much of Origen's speculation on the angelic beings which he afterwards repudiated. His prefaces too speak of Origen in the highest possible terms[15].

St. Jerome translated almost eighty of Origen's homilies. Ultimately, however, Rufinus and St. Jerome, who had been friends since their youth, became enemies when they took different sides in what historians refer to, somewhat misleadingly, as the First Origenist controversy.

Vigilantius, on his return to the West after his visit to Jerusalem, had openly accused St. Jerome of a leaning to the heresy of Origin. St. Jerome wrote to him in the most severe tone repudiating the charge of Origenism and fastening upon his opponent those of ignorance and blasphemy[16]. He justified his use of the writings of Origen, as he writes,

> But, since ***Christ has shown us in Himself a pattern of perfect humility, bestowing a kiss upon His betrayer*** and receiving the robber's repentance upon the cross, I tell you now when absent as I have told you already when present, that I read and have read Origen only as I read Apollinaris, or other writers whose books in some things the Church does not receive. I by no means say that

---

[14] *St. Jerome: Epistle 92 to Theophilus.*

[15] *Henri De Lubac: Origen, On First Principles, NY., 1966 (Koetschau text together with an introduction and notes by G.W. Butterworth, p. XXXIII..*

[16] *Letter 61 (N& PN Frs.).*

everything contained in such books is to be condemned, but I admit that there are things in them deserving censure. Still, as it is my task to study by reading many authors to cull different flowers from as large a number as possible, not so much making it an object to prove all things as to choose what is good, I take up many writers that from the many I may learn many things; according to that which is written "reading all things, holding fast those that are good" 1 Thess. 5:21.

St. Jerome adds,

Origen is a heretic, true; but what does that take from me who do not deny that on very many points he is heretical? He has erred concerning the resurrection of the body, he has erred concerning the condition of souls, he has erred by supposing it possible that the devil may repent, and- an error more important then these- he has declared in his commentary upon Isaiah that the Seraphim mentioned by the prophet are the divine Son and the Holy Ghost. If I did not allow that he has erred or if I did not daily anathematize his errors, I should be partaker of his fault.

For while we receive what is good in his writings we must on no account bind ourselves to accept also what is evil. Still in many passages he has interpreted the Scriptures well, has explained obscure places in the prophets, and has brought to light very great mysteries, both in the Old and in the New testament.

St. Jerome sent a calm letter to Pammachius and Oceanus, in which he defines and justifies his own attitude towards Origen, but unduly minimizes his early enthusiasm for him. He admires him in the same way that Cyprian admired Tertullian but does not in any way adopt his errors. He writes[17],

[17] *Letter 34 (N&PN Frs.).*

It is charged against me that I have sometimes praised Origen. If I am not mistaken I have only done so in two places, in the short preface (addressed to Damasus) to his homilies on the Song of Songs and in the prologue to my book of Hebrew Names. In these passages do the dogmas of the church come into question? Is anything said of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost? Or of the resurrection of the flesh? Or of the condition and material of the soul? I have merely praised the simplicity of his rendering and commentary and neither the faith nor the dogmas of the Church come in at all. Ethics only are dealt with and the mist of allegory is dispelled by a clear explanation. I have praised the commentator but not the theologian, the man of intellect but not the believer, the philosopher but not the apostle. But if men wish to know my real judgment upon Origen; let them read my commentaries upon Ecclesiastics, let them go through my three books upon the epistle to the Ephesians: they will then see that I have always opposed his doctrines. How foolish it would be to eulogize a system so far as to endorse its blasphemy! The blessed Cyprian takes Tertullian for his master, as his writings prove; yet, delighted as he is with the ability of this learned and zealous writer, he does not join him in following Montanus and Maximilia...

The bishops at the council proclaimed their adherence to a dogma which was at the time denied; they said nothing about a difficulty which no one had raised. And yet they covertly struck at Origen as the source of the Arian heresy: for , in condemning those who deny the Son to be of the substance of the Father, they have condemned Origen as much as Arius.

10. Although ***St. Augustine***'s theological perspective differed in significant ways from Origen's, his immensely influential handling of biblical symbolism was in the Origenist tradition[18].

11. ***St. Hilary of Poitiérs***: He was born at the start of the fourth century, and he was elected as bishop of Poitiérs around 350 A.D. At Beziérs in 356 A.D, he tried to oppose the activities of the pro-Arians in Gaul; he was deposed and exiled to Phrygia, where he knew the works of Origen which deeply influenced his spirituality and his exegesis.

12. ***Bishop Damasus of Rome***: Rufinus, in the preface of his translation of "*De Principiis*" writes, "Bishop Damasus translated two of the *Homilies on the Song of Songs* from Greek into Latin, he composed so fine and noble a preface to that work, as to inspire everyone with a deep longing to read Origen and study him seriously. For he said that the text, 'The King has brought me into His chamber', might well be applied to the soul of Origen; and added that while in the rest of his works Origen had surpassed all other writers, in the Song of Songs he had even surpassed himself[19]."

13. Origen's method of biblical interpretation spread to the Latin-speaking West. A vital figure in this process was ***St. Ambrose*** (c. 339-97 A.D), Bishop of Milan. St. Ambrose, a brilliant orator of noble birth, dominated the western church during the later part of the fourth century and even forced emperors to yield to the power of his personality. Ambrose admired the Cappadocians and gained from them an appreciation of Origen's allegorical interpretation of the Bible, which he practiced extensively in his preaching at Milan. Ambrose, in turn, introduced the allegorical interpretation of the Bible to Augustine of Hippo (354-430 A.D), the theologian from North Africa who was to influence western theology profoundly for more than a thousand years.

---

[18] *Cf. Joseph Wilson Trigg: Origen, SCM 1983, p. 251.*

[19] *Henri De Lubac: Origen, On First Principles, NY., 1966, p. LXII*

Augustine was an ambitious young rhetorician of Christian origins who had subsequently embraced and become disillusioned with the Gnostic theology of the Manicheans when he heard Ambrose preaching at Milan[20].

If Origenism remained a powerful current of thought in the Church, opposition to Origenism also continued. About 375 A.D St. Epiphanius of Salamis, the heresiologist, attacked Origenism as heretic. He succeeded in persuading St. Jerome, who had been an admirer of Origen, to join him in the attack.

Even in his days many churchmen attacked Origen's writings as heretical. They explained the mixture of orthodoxy and heresy in his writings by the hypothesis that his real intentions were heretical, but that he had introduced orthodox ideas to confuse the simple believers. At the same time many churchmen also insisted on declaring that he desired nothing more than to be a loyal member of the church[21].

His supporters made a huge split among the Egyptian monks, and pushed Pope Theophilus of Alexandria to commit his serious fault: the condemnation of St. John Chrysostom, the Patriarch of Constantinople.

Finally, the Coptic Church excommunicated Origen during his life to prevent her members from accepting his errors, while the Chalcedonian Churches took this decision after his death, in the Second Council of Constantinople in 553 A.D.

THE ANTI-ORIGENISTS

The true controversy began in 398 A.D when Rufinus, who had returned to his native country Italy, published a translation of the first two books *On First Principles*. This translation, which Rufinus soon completed was venturesome in itself since Latin-

---

[20] *Cf. Joseph Wilson Trigg: Origen, SCM 1983, p. 250-251.*

[21] *H. Chadwick: The Early Church, Peginm books, 1974, p. 112, 113.*

speaking readers had not been exposed to the more speculative aspects of Origen's thoughts. What ignited the controversy, was Rufinus' indiscreet preface in which he claimed to be following Jerome's example in translating Origen and in amending theologically offensive passages in the process. Jerome bitterly resented the suggestion that he was still an admirer of Origen and that his translations were less than accurate. He responded with an attack on Rufinus in a letter to his friends in Rome. With his own purportedly due to his literal translation of *On First Principles*, which we can tell is biased by comparing both versions with existing Greek fragments, we can see it is as biased in its accentuation of Origen's alleged deviations from orthodoxy as Rufinus' was in its concealment of them. Unfortunately, only fragments of the work remain. A literary controversy over Origen continued in the West for many years. Though it left Origen somewhat a suspect, it did very little damage to the reputation in the West. The translations of his works continued to be read, and his indirect influence continued to be felt on Jerome, whose great Vulgate translation of the Bible depended much on Origen's inspiration[22].

1. St. Peter of Alexandria: His criticism of Origen seems very mild as we will see later on.

2. St. Methodius of Olympus (in Lycia): He was martyred in 311 A.D under Maximinus Daza. He conducted a determined and successful fight against Origenism[23]. In his chief work "*On the Resurrection*," he constructs models of Origenist arguments that he proceeds to demolish. This work could not eclipse Origen's reputation, yet it damages his theological stature enough to be at least a partial reason for the lengthy *Defense of Origen*[24], written about 307-310 A.D in five books by the martyr Pamphilus (assisted by Eusebius of Caesarea) and supplemented shortly thereafter with a

---

[22] *Cf. Joseph Wilson Trigg: Origen, SCM 1983, p. 252-253.*

[23] *Patrick J. Hamell: Handbook of Patrology, 1968, p. 69.*

[24] *Apologia pro Origéne.*

sixth book by Eusebius alone[25]. Methodius became the leader of opponents to Origenism. His central issue was Origen's peculiar view of the resurrection and his denial that the body will be raised.

G.W. Butterworth says that the first serious attack was made by Methodius, bishop of Patara in Lycia, in the early years of the fourth century. He wrote vigorously against Origen and his followers in regard to doctrines characteristic of *the First Principles*, viz. the eternity of creation, the pre-existence of souls and the spiritual nature of the resurrection of the body... Others, however, including such great names as Athanasius and the Cappadocian fathers, Basil and the two Gregories, while admitting that his works were not wholly free from error, yet regarded him an orthodox in the main and defended him[26].

3. St. Eustathius of Antioch: A leader of the victorious conservative group at the Council of Nicea in 325 and head of the strict Nicene party of Antioch. According to Theodoret[27], he was the first to speak at the Council and had the honor to salute the Emperor Conostantine with an address of welcome when he entered the assembly of the bishops. It was the same emperor who in 330 A.D drove him into exile in Trajanopolis in Thrace after an Arian synod at Antioch had deposed him in 326 A.D. St. Athanasius praises him as a "confessor," "sound in the faith," and "zealous for the truth," who "hated the Arian heresy[28]."

In his work "*De engastrimytho contra Origenem*" (On the Ventriloquist against Origen[29]) written in opposition to Origen's interpretation of Samuel's nature as conjured up for Saul by the witch of Endor (1 Sam. 28), St. Eustathius refers to St. Methodius'

---

[25] *Phot. Cod. 118; Jon F. Dechow: Dogma and Mysticism in Early Christianity, Mercer University Press, 1988, p. 112-113.*

[26] *Henri De Lubac: Origen, On First Principles, NY., p. XXXII..*

[27] *His. Eccl 1:7.*

[28] *Hist. Arian. 4:1.*

[29] *PG 18:613-673.*

On the Resurrection as a further resource on the soul-body problem underlying the interpretation of Samuel's nature. Sneeringly he called Origen "the clever Origen[30]," "the dogmatizer Origen[31]," " the big-talking Origen[32]," "the very learned Origen[33]," "the wordy Origen[34]," and "O most mindless of men[35]." He wrote,

As much as (Origen) proposed in an unorthodox manner (*Kakadoxos*) about the resurrection, it is impossible to elaborate now. For the worthy Methodius of blessed memory wrote enough on this subject, and he really showed quite clearly that (Origen) inconsiderately gave the heretics an opening by defining the resurrection in reference to form (*eidous*), but not in reference to body. Even that he upset everything with allegorical interpretation and sowed the seeds of heresy (*kakodoxis*) everywhere, it is easy to see that he filled the world with incalculable nonsense by endlessly repeating himself. So then by customarily allegorizing all things together in such a way, he was able not only to interpret the words of the ventriloquist (*eggasstrimythou* [the witch]) allegorically, but also to avoid explaining the clear [meaning] from the [natural verbal] sequence itself[36].

According to Dechow, in this passage, are the characteristics which are mentioned in Epiphanius' polemic against Origen[37]:

I. The focus on the resurrection.

II. The reliance on Methodius by conservative Nicene loyalists for the definitive statement of the case against Origen.

III. The acceptance of the charge made by Methodius that Origen actually denies bodily resurrection.

---

[30] *Engastr. contra Origenem 3.*

[31] *Ibid., 4, 9.*

[32] *Ibid., 20.*

[33] *Ibid., 23.*

[34] *Ibid., 24.*

[35] *Ibid., 24.*

[36] *De Engastrimytho contra Origenem, 22.*

[37] *Dogma and Mysticism in Early Christianity, Mercer University Press, 1988, p. 117.*

IV. Origen's responsibility for the heresy of teaching about the resurrection of the corporeal form (*eidos*).

V. Origen's responsibility for all heresies, which would appear as a result of allegorical exegesis.

St. Eustathius' opposition to Origenist and Arian views runs like a double thread through his writings. His interpretation of the soul-body problem in Origenist anthropology seems directly related to his anti-Arian understanding of the relation between soul and body in Christ. He was the first who noticed that the character of the Arian Christology[38], with its denial of a human soul in the incarnate Christ, appears linked to his uneasiness over the diminished reality that he perceived in Origenist conceptions of corporeality[39].

4. St. Epiphanius of Salamis

St. Epiphanius (c. 315-403), bishop of Salamis (now Famagusta), the chief city of Cyprus, published a scathing denunciation of Origen in his *Panarion* or *Medicine-Chest for All Heresies*. He depicted Origen as the main source of the recently defeated Arian heresy and spread slanders about Origen's character, including a story that he had sacrificed to Sarapis in Alexandria after being threatened with rape by an Ethiopian and another story that he took a memory drug[40].

G.W. Butterworth says,

> Towards the end of the fourth century Epiphanius, bishop of Salamis in Cyprus, renewed the attack. In two works, the *Anchoratus* (The Firmly-Anchored Man) and the *Adv. Haereses*, he includes Origen among the heretics, on the grounds previously set forth by Methodius and on others dealing with the nature of the Son and his relation to

---

[38] *Griillmeier: Christ in Christian Tradition, New York, 1965, p.246.*

[39] *Dogma and Mysticism in Early Christianity, p. 119-120.*

[40] *Cf. Joseph Wilson Trigg: Origen, SCM 1983, p. 250.*

the Father. Origen was charged with teaching that the Son, though generated from the essence of the Father, was nevertheless a creature, bearing the title Son by courtesy and not by right; that the Holy Spirit was also a creature; and that one day the Kingdom of Christ would come to an end and all beings, including the devil himself, would be reconciled and restored to God[41].

St. Epiphanius, in his work *"Adv. Haereses,"* "*Panarion*" (The Medicine-chest), refuted 80 heresies, considering Origen as their epitome. Jon F. Dechow says,

When Epiphanius considers Origen, he is unable to see him in any (light) other than as the epitome of heresy - the culmination of heretics before him and the inspiration and predecessor of those who follow. Origen's alleged heresy, to Epiphanius, is "dangerous and more wicked than all ancient ones, ... expresses a mentality like him," and provides the basic pattern for the subsequent aberrations of "Arius, the Amonians..., and others[42]."

A coolness had arisen between ***St. Epiphanius, Bishop of Salamis and St. John, Bishop of Jerusalem*** in connection with the Origenistic controversy. In 395 A.D St. Epiphanius visited St. John, and in vain attempted to obtain a condemnation of Origen from him. In St. John's parish, in the church of the holy tomb, St. Epiphanius attacked St. John, as a follower of Origen. St. Jerome followed Epiphanius and worked together against John. St. Epiphanius had also uncanonically conferred priests' orders on Jerome's brother Paulinan, in order that the monastery at Bethlehem might henceforth be entirely independent of John. Naturally, John resented this conduct and showed his resentment.

---

[41] *Henri De Lubac: Origen, On First Principles, NY., p. XXXII..*

[42] *Adv. Haer. 64:4:1-2; Jon F. Dechow: Dogma and Mysticism in Early Christianity, Mercer University Press, 1988, p. 95.*

St. John obtained a sentence of exile against St. Jerome from the secular authorities, which, however, was not carried out. For a time John and Jerome were reconciled through the good offices of Pope Theophilus of Alexandria, at that time an adherent of Origen[43].

The present letter is a half-apology made by St. Epiphanius for what he had done, and like all such, it only seems to have made matters worse.

> For I see that all your indignation has been roused against me simply because I have told you that you ought not to eulogize one who is the ***spiritual father of Arius, and the root and parent of all heresies.*** And when I appealed to you not to go astray, and warned you of the consequences, you traversed my words, and reduced me to tears and sadness; and not me only, but many other Catholics who were present.
>
> Can any one, moreover, brook Origen's assertion that ***men's souls were once angels in heaven***, and that having sinned in the upper world, they have been cast down into this, and have been confined in bodies as in barrows or tombs, to pay the penalty for their former sins; and that the bodies of believers are not temples of Christ, but prisons of the condemned?
>
> Again, he tampers with the true meaning of the narrative by ***a false use of allegory***, multiplying words without limit; and undermines the faith of the simple by the most varied arguments.
>
> Now he maintains that souls, in Greek the "cool things"... are so called because in coming down from the heavenly places to the lower world they have lost their former heat; and now, that our bodies are called by the Greeks chains... or else (on the analogy of our own Latin word)

[43] *F.L. Cross: The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, Oxford 1990, p. 1010.*

word) “things fallen,” because our souls have fallen from heaven; and that the other word for body which the abundance of the Greek idiom supplies is by many taken to mean a funeral monument, because the soul is shut up within it in the same way as the corpses of the dead are shut up in tombs and barrows.

If this doctrine is true what becomes of our faith?

Where is the preaching of the resurrection?

Where is the teaching of the apostles, which lasts on to this day in the churches of Christ?

Where is the blessing to Adam, and to his seed, and to Noah and his sons? “Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth.” According to Origen, these words must be a curse and not a blessing; for he turns angels into human souls, compelling them to leave the place of highest rank and to come down lower, as though God were unable through the action of His blessing to grant souls to the human race, had the angels not sinned, and as though for every birth on earth there must be a fall in heaven.

We are to give up, then, the teaching of the apostles and prophets, of the law, and of our Lord and Savior Himself, in spite of His language which is loud as thunder in the gospel.

Origen, on the other hand, commands and urges-not to say binds-his disciples not to pray to ascend into heaven, lest sinning once more worse than they had sinned on earth they should be hurled down into the world again. Such foolish and insane notions he generally confirms by distorting the sense of the Scriptures and making them mean what they do not mean at all. He quotes this passage from the Psalms: “Before you did humble me by reason of my wickedness, I went wrong;” and this, “Return unto your rest, O my soul;” this also, “Bring my soul out of prison;” and this, “I will make confession unto the Lord in the land of the living,” although there can be no doubt that the meaning of

the divine Scripture is different from the interpretation by which he unfairly wrests it to the support of his own heresy.

This way of acting is common to the Manichaens, the Gnostics, the Ebionites, the Marcionites, and the votaries of the other eighty heretics, all of whom draw their proofs from the pure well of the Scriptures, not, however, interpreting it in the sense in which it is written, but trying to make the simple language of the Church's writers accord with their own wishes[44].

5. St. Jerome

I have already mentioned St. Jerome as the admirer of Origen, and how he changed his mind and became an enemy of Origen and Origenism.

6. Theophilus of Alexandria.

At first Theophilus, Pope of Alexandria was considered on the side of the Origenist monks and against the simple and uneducated one, who *believes in anthropomorphism*, which attributes carnal members to God. But he became a severe enemy against the Origenists, when the problem of Isidore and the *Tall Brethren* appears as we will see afterwards.

Pope Theophilus sent to the bishops of Palestine and of Cyprus the synodical letter of a council held in Alexandria in 400 A.D to condemn Origenism. Written originally in Greek it was translated into Latin by St. Jerome. This letter had been sent in identical terms to the Bishops of Palestine and to those of Cyprus. We (W.H. Fremantle, G. Lewis and W.G. Martley)[45] reproduce the headings of both copies. That to the Bishops of Palestine commences thus:

---

[44] *N& PN Frs, Series 2, vol. 6, p. 83-86.*

[45] *N& PN Frs, Series 2, vol. 6, p. 185-186.*

To the well-beloved lords, brothers, and fellow-bishops, Eulogius, John, Zebianus, Auxentius, Dionysius, Gennadius, Zeno, Theodosius, Dicterius, Porphyry, Saturninus, Alan, Paul, Ammonius, Helianus, Eusebius, the other Paul, and to all the Catholic bishops gathered together at the dedication festival of Aelid,

Theophilus (sends) greeting in the Lord.

The Cyprians were addresses thus:

To the well-beloved lords, brothers, and fellow-bishops, Epiphanies, Marcianus, Agapetus, Boethius, Helpidius, Entasius, Norbanus, Macedonius, Aristo, Zeno, Asiaticus, Heraclides, the other Zeno, Cyriacus, and Aphroditus,

Theophilus (sends) greeting in the Lord.

The scope of the letter is as follows:

We have personally visited the monasteries of Nitria and find that the Origenistic heresy has made great ravages among them.

It is accompanied by a strange fanaticism: men even maim themselves or cut out their tongues to show how they despise the body.

I find that some men of this kind have gone from Egypt into Syria and other countries where they speak against us and the truth.

The books of Origen have been read before a council of bishops and unanimously condemned.

The following are his chief errors, mainly found in the "*Peri Archon*" (*De Principiis*)":

1. The Son compared with us is truth, but compared with the Father he is falsehood.

2. Christ's kingdom will one day come to an end.

3. We ought to pray to the Father alone, not to the Son.

4. Our bodies after the resurrection will be corruptible and mortal.

5. There is nothing perfect even in heaven; the angels themselves are faulty, and some of them feed on the Jewish sacrifices.

6. The stars are conscious of their own movements, and the demons know the future by their courses.

7. Magic, if real, is not evil.

8. Christ suffered once for men; he will suffer again for the demons.

The Origenists have tried to coerce me; they have even stirred up the heathen by denouncing the destruction of the Serapeum; and have sought to withdraw from the ecclesiastical jurisdiction two persons accused of grave crimes. One of these is the woman who was wrongly placed on the list of widows by Isidore, the other Isidore himself. He is the standard-bearer of the heretical faction, and his wealth supplies them with unbounded resources for their violent enterprises. They have tried to murder me; they seized the monastery church at Nitria, and for a time prevented the bishops from entering and the offices from being performed. Now, like Zebul (Beelzebub) they go to and fro on the earth. I have done them no harm; I have even protected them. But I would not let an old friendship (with Isidore) impair our faith and discipline. I implore you to oppose them whenever they come, and to prevent them from unsettling the brethren committed to you.

The synodical letter of the council of Jerusalem was sent to Pope Theophilus in reply to the preceding. The translation as before is by St. Jerome.

The following is an epitome: We have done all that you wished, and Palestine is almost wholly free from the taint of heresy. We wish that not only the Origenists, but Jews, Samaritans and heathen also, could be put down.

Origenism does not exist among us. The doctrines you describe are never heard here. We anathematize those who hold such doctrines, and also those of Apollinaris, and shall not receive anyone whom you excommunicate .

7. Emperor Justinian

Justinian (527 A.D-14 November 565 A.D) in his letter to Mannas charged Origen with affirming that in the resurrection the bodies of men will rise spiritually. Justinian also saw Nestorianism in Origen's doctrine of the soul of Christ when he wrote the following introduction to one of Origen's fragments: "He says that the Lord is a mere man[46]." This judgment takes no account of the fact that the chapter of the Treatise *On First Principles* in question is developing a doctrine of the "*communicatio idiomatum*," that is of the communication to Jesus the Son of Man of the qualities of the Logos and to the Logos of the qualities of Jesus, a doctrine incompatible with Nestorianism[47].

V V V

[46] *Fragment corresponding to Peri Arch. 2:6:4.*

[47] *Cf. Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p. 172.*

THE ORIGENISTS AND THE TRAGEDY OF ST. CHRYSOSTOM[48]

THE ORIGENISTS AND MONASTICISM

After Origen's death his writings attracted those who would admire them, especially in Nitria among the Egyptian monks, where Fr. Ammonius and his three brothers Dioscorus, Eusebius, and Euthymius, who were called the "*Tall Monks*," or the *"Tall Brothers"* on account of their stature[49] lived. In about 370 A.D, they established an Origenist group and were occupied in studying the Holy Scripture. They were distinguished both for the sanctity of their lives, and the extent of their erudition, and for these reasons their reputation was known in Alexandria. On the contrary the monks of Scetis who were very simple, were involved in practical worship, and looked to the Origenists as enemies of the true monastic life in the desert, because they changed it from its simplicity in practicing virtues, asceticism and continuous prayers, and in struggling against the devil, sin and the love of the world into an intellectual and contemplative life.

In other words, as Hausherr says, the Origenist quarrel was not only the source of two theologies, but also of "*two spiritualities.*" The first type of spirituality is the intellectual mysticism of such Egyptian monks as SS. Didymus, Isidore, Ammonius the Tall, and Evagrius. The second is that of the simple monks[50].

---

[48] *H. Chadwick: The Early Church, ch. 13; Fr. Tadros Y. Malaty: St. John Chrysostom, Alexandria 1980, p. 67-84.*

[49] *Socrates: H.E. 6:7.*

[50] *Dogma and Mysticism in Early Christianity, Mercer University Press, 1988, p. 105.*

POPE THEOPHILUS AND THE ORIGENISTS

Sadly almost all the scholars depended on the writings of the enemies of St. Theophilus Pope of Alexandria, who hated him because of his serious fault, i.e., his role in the exile of St. John Chrysostom.

Pope Theophilus loved the desert, and used to be in contact with the Desert Fathers, visiting them and asking them for spiritual advice. Until 400 A.D, the Origenist monks, Fr. Ammonius and his three brothers were in close contact with the Pope who loved them and honored them exceedingly because of their piety, asceticism and zeal in struggling against Arianism. He ordained Dioscours bishop of Hermopolis against his will, having forcibly drawn him from his retreat, while another successfully turned down the bishopric. Two of the brothers were ordained priests to assist him, and though they performed their duties successfully, nevertheless they were dissatisfied because they were unable to follow philosophical pursuits and ascetic exercises. The Pope asked them to settle in Alexandria, but they greatly preferred returning to the desert to practice monastic life to living in the city. Sozomen says, "They were at one period beloved by Theophilus above all the other monks of Egypt; he sought their society, and frequently dwelt with them[51]."

They loved the Pope as he denied *anthropomorphism*, which believes that God is a corporeal existence, and has the form of man[52]. The "*Anthropomorphites*," or "*Anthropomorphists*" who were more simple and uneducated refused Origen's allegory in interpreting the holy Scriptures, specially the Old Testament. They held fast to the literal interpretation and believed that God has carnal members as it is mentioned in the Bible (Ps. 99:5; 101:6,7; 119:73). Sozomen, the historian says, "A question was raised at this period which agitated Egypt and which had been propounded a

[51] *Sozomen: H.E. 8:11(N& PN Frs).*

[52] *Socrates 6:7.*

short time previously, namely, whether it is right to believe that God is *anthropomorphic*. Because they laid hold on the sacred words with simplicity and without any questioning, most of the monks of that part of the world were of this opinion; and supposed that God possessed eyes, a face, and hands, and other members of the body. But those who searched into the hidden meaning of the terms of Scripture held the opposite; and they maintained that those who denied the incorporeality of God were guilty of blasphemy. This latter opinion was espoused by Theophilus, and preached by him in the church; and in the epistle which, according to custom, he wrote respecting the celebration of the Passover when he took occasion to state that God ought to be regarded as incorporeal, and as alien to a human form[53]." In the Paschal encyclical of 399 A.D, Pope Theophilus mentioned that the Divine Being is wholly incorporeal, and it is unworthy to think of Godhead with bodily aspects.

St. John Cassian speaks of the bad effect this letter had on the simple monks, who refused reading it in their meetings[54]. A very simple ascetic monk called Serapion incited the monks who joined him in struggling against the Pope. I don't want to discuss the details of the events concerning the struggle between the Origenists and the anti-Origenists among the monks, but what I want to clarify is that the monastic movement and almost all churchmen were involved in this problem, instead of being occupied with the edification of the church and the evangelizing of the world.

Those anti-Origenists answered the Paschal letter of the Pope by descending in force from Scetis to Alexandria. Thousands of monks surrounded the Pope's residence in anger, excited a tumult against him, accusing him of impiety, and threatening to put him to death. Theophilus, however, becoming aware of this danger, presented himself to the insurgents forthwith, and said to them

---

[53] *Ibid.*

[54] *St. John Cassian: Coference 10:1-6.*

in a conciliatory tone, “When I look upon you, it is as if I behold the face of God.” This wise reply sufficiently mollified the men, moderating their fury. They believed that he accepted their belief in "*anthropomorphism*" for he uttered "God's face.” They replied, “Wherefore, then if you really hold orthodox doctrines, do you not anathematize the books of Origen; since those who read them are led into such opinions? If you will not do this, expect to be treated by us as an impious person, and the enemy of God.” “Such has long been my intention,” he replied, “and I shall do as you advise; for I blame not less than you do, all those who follow the doctrines of Origen.” By these means he deluded the brethren, and broke up the sedition, and the monks returned to Scetis.

The *Tall Brothers* blamed St. Theophilus and described him as a cowardly and faint hearted man. They began to attack him openly, especially when he refused their demand to receive St. Isidore in communion.

POPE THEOPHILUS AND ISIDORE

St. Isidore was a rich man who had distributed all his wealth among the poor and needy, and was admitted to Nitria as an ascetic. He was gifted with a joyful face and sweet tongue, all who met him loved him. St. Athanasuis ordained him a priest, was very close to him, and accompanied him in his trip to Rome. He was interested in the ministry of the poor, sick and foreigners, and he was in charge of the hospital in Alexandria. He was the first ascetic St. Palladius met, who exceedingly loved him and praised him much in his writings.

Pope Theophilus also loved him and he had endeavored to ordain him in Constantinople after Nectarius instead of St. John Chrysostom. But this friendship had changed into a kind of enmity, because of his submission to the Tall Brothers and the Origenists.

There are many stories concerning his coming to the desert. According to Sozomen[55], it is said that a rich woman gave him money to spend on the needy and not to tell the Pope so that he would not use it in building the churches. The Pope took knowledge of this matter and entered into a dispute with St. Isidore, who escaped to Nitria, where the Origenists received him in reverence. Fr. Ammonius and some monks went to Theophilus and in vain they interceded for Isidore. Again some of the Origenists discussed the matter with the Pope, but the discussion ended by the imprisonment of one of them. Ammonius and all the monks with him then went to the prison, into which they were readily admitted by the jailer, who imagined that they had come to bring provisions to the prisoner; but having once obtained admission, they refused to leave the prison. When Theophilus heard of their voluntary confinement, he sent to desire them to come to him. They replied, that he ought first to take them out of prison himself, for it was not just, after having been subjected to public indignity, that they should be privately released from confinement. At length, however, they yielded and went to him. Theophilus apologized for what had occurred, and dismissed them as if he had no further intention of molesting them; but within himself, he raged and was vexed, and determined to do them ill. He was in doubt, however, as to how he could ill-treat them, as they had no possessions, and despised everything but philosophy, until it occurred to him, to disturb the peace of their retirement. From his former intercourse with them he had gathered that they condemned those who believe that God has a human form, and that they adhered to the opinions of Origen so he brought them into collision with the multitude of monks who maintained the other view.

This event caused a kind of enmity between the Pope and the Origenists, and in the second paschal letter (400 A.D) the Pope attacked Origenism as a heresy. The Origenists created many troubles in Nitria against the Pope, and when he sent some bishops to

[55] *Sozomen H. E. 8:12.*

discuss the matter they withdrew into the Church and refused to meet them. The Pope excommunicated Amoun and his brothers in a local council, and when he visited the desert some monks wanted to kill the *Tall Brothers*, but they escaped into a tomb while their cells were burnt. At last they left Egypt together with St. John Cassian, St. Isidore and about eighty monks[56] (Evagrius had died in January 399 A.D. just before the storm broke).

THE TALL BROTHERS IN PALESTINE

They went to Palestine on their way to Constantinople to complain at court and to put their case to the Patriarch John Chrysostom.

Pope Theophilus sent a synodical letter to 17 bishops in Palestine and 15 in Cyprus, to explain the Origenist' doctrines[57]. St. Jerome who had once translated some of Origen's works and praised him as "the greatest teacher of the church since the apostles" now became violently anti-Origenist. He encountered the Palestinian bishop to help Pope Theophilus in his struggle against the Origenists. St. Epiphanius of Salamis played the same role in Cyprus[58].

Sozomen writes[59],

> Dioscorus and Ammonius were accompanied hither by about eighty other monks. In the meantime, Theophilus sent messengers to Constantinople, to bring complaints against them and to oppose any petitions that they might lay before the emperor. On being informed of this fact, Ammonius and the monks embarked for Constantinople, and took Isidore with them; and they requested that their case might be tried in the presence of the

[56] *Soz.: H.E. 8:13.*

[57] *Jerome: Ep 92.*

[58] *Jerome: Ep 90, 92.*

[59] *Sozomen: H. E. 8:13.*

emperor and of the bishop; for they thought that, by reason of his boldness, John, who was careful to do right, would be able to help them in their rights. John, although he received them with kindness, and treated them with honor, and did not forbid them to pray in the church, refused to admit them to participation in the mysteries, for it was not lawful to do this before the investigation. He wrote to Theophilus, desiring him to receive them back into communion, as their sentiments concerning the Divine nature were orthodox; requesting him, if he regarded their orthodoxy as doubtful, to send some one to act as their accuser. Theophilus returned no reply to this epistle.

A COUNCIL IN CYPRUS

It occurred to Pope Theophilus that it would be advantageous to enlist St. Epiphanius, bishop of Salamis, in Cyprus, on his side. In 400 A.D, ***Pope Theophilus writes to St. Epiphanius*** to acquaint him that he now held the same opinions as himself, and to move attacks against the books of Origen, as the source of such nefarious dogmas, and to invoke a council in Cyprus for the condemnation of Origenism and asks him to transmit to Constantinople by a trustworthy messenger a copy of its decrees together with the synodical letter of Theophilus himself.

Theophilus to his well-beloved lord, brother, and fellow-bishop Epiphanius.

The Lord has said to his prophet, “See, I have this day set you over the nations and over the kingdoms to root out and to pull down and to destroy and... to build and to plant” (Jer. 1:10). In every age he bestows the same grace upon his church, that His body (Eph. 1:23) may be preserved intact and that the poison of heretical opinions may nowhere prevail over it. And now also do we see the words fulfilled. For the church of Christ “not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing” (Eph. 5:27) has with the sword of the

gospel cut down the Origenist serpents crawling out of their caves, and has delivered from their deadly contagion the fruitful host of the monks of Nitria.

I have compressed a short account of my proceedings (it was all that time would allow) into the general letter which I have addressed indiscriminately to all. As your excellency has often fought in contests of the kind before me, it is your present duty to strengthen the hands of those who are in the field and to gather together to this end the bishops of your entire island.

A synodical letter should be sent to myself and the bishop of Constantinople and to any others whom you think fit; that by universal consent Origen himself may be expressly condemned and also the infamous heresy of which he was the author.

I have learned that certain calumniators of the true faith, named Ammonius, Eusebius, and Euthymius, filled with a fresh access of enthusiasm in behalf of the heresy, have taken ship for Constantinople, to ensnare with their deceits as many new converts as they can and to confer anew with the old companions of their impiety. Let it be your care, therefore, to set forth the course for handling the matter to all the bishops throughout Isauria and Pamphylia and the rest of the neighboring provinces: moreover, if you think fit, you can add my letter, so that all of us gathered together in one spirit with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ may deliver these men unto Satan for the destruction of the impiety which possesses them (1 Cor. 5:4,5). And to ensure the speedy arrival of my dispatches at Constantinople, send a diligent messenger, one of the clergy (as I send fathers from the monasteries of Nitria with others also of the monks, learned men and continent) that when they arrive they may be able themselves to relate what has been done.

Above all I beg of you to offer up earnest prayers to the Lord that we may be able in this contest also to gain the victory; for no small joy has filled the hearts of the people both in Alexandria and throughout all Egypt, because a few men have been expelled from the Church that the body of it might be kept pure. Salute the brothers who are with you. The people with us salute you in the Lord[60].

Sozomen writes[61],

Theophilus wrote to the bishops of every city, condemning the books of Origen. It also occurred to him that it would be advantageous to enlist Epiphanius, Bishop of Salamis, in Cyprus, on his side, a man who was revered for his life, and was the most distinguished of his contemporaries; and he therefore formed a friendship with him, although he had formerly blamed him for asserting that God possessed a human form. As if repentant of having ever entertained any other sentiment, Theophilus wrote to Epiphanius to acquaint him that he now held the same opinions as himself, and to move attacks against the books of Origen, as the source of such nefarious dogmas. Epiphanius had long regarded the writings of Origen with peculiar aversion, and was therefore easily led to attach credit to the epistle of Theophilus. He soon after assembled the bishops of Cyprus together, and prohibited the examination of the books of Origen.

St. Epiphanius wrote a letter to St. Jerome, in which he describes the success of his council, covered at the suggestion of Pope Theophilus, with a copy of its synodical letter, and urges him to go on with his work of translating into Latin documents bearing on the Origenistic controversy:

---

[60] *See N& PN Frs, series 2, vol. 6, p. 184.*

[61] *Sozomen H.E.8:14.*

The presbyter Jerome, Epiphanius sends a greeting, in the Lord.

The general epistle written to all Catholics belongs particularly to you; for you, having a zeal for the faith against all heresies, particularly oppose the disciples of Origen and of Apollinaris; whose poisoned roots and deeply planted impiety almighty God has dragged forth into our midst, that having been unearthed at Alexandria they might wither throughout the world.

For know, my beloved son, that Amalak has been destroyed root and branch and that the trophy of the cross has been set up on the hill of Rephidim[62]. For as when the hands of Moses were held up on high Israel prevailed, so the Lord has strengthened His servant Theophilus to plant His standard against Origen on the altar of the church of Alexandria; that in him might be fulfilled the words : "Write this for a memorial, for I will utterly put out Origen's heresy from under heaven together with that of Amelek himself."

And that I may not appear to be repeating the same things over and over and thus to be making the same my letter tedious, I send you the actual missive written to me that you may know what Theophilus has said to me, and what a great blessing the Lord has granted to my last days in approving the principles which I have always proclaimed by the testimony of so great a prelate.

I fancy that by this time you also have published something and that, as I suggested in my former letter to you on this subject, you have elaborated a treatise for readers of your own language. For I hear that certain of those who have been shipwrecked have come also to the West, and that, not content with their own destruction, they desire to involve others in death with them; as if they

[62] *The monk Ammonius is said to have done this and similar things. (N&PN Frs).*

thought that the multitude of sinners lessens the guilt of sin and the flames of Gehenna do not grow in size in proportion as more logs are heaped upon them.

With you and by you we send our best greetings to the reverend brothers who are with you in the monastery serving God.

THE TALL BROTHERS IN CONSTANTINOPLE

The Origenists went to Constantinople where St. John Chrysostom received them joyfully, perhaps for his love of the Egyptian monks or to reconcile them with their Pope. In his *Homilies on Matthew*, Chrysostom says that the sky with its stars is not in the brightness of the desert of Egypt with its monks; and elsewhere he says that the Egyptians feed the bodies of the Constontinoplians with their wheat, and their hearts with their faith.

St. Chrysostom opened his heart and his residency to them; and the deaconess, widows and virgins served them, the matter on which Pope Theophilus blamed them[63]. The Origenists asked St. Chrysostom to reconcile them with their Pope, so that they might return to Egypt[64].

Palladius who hated Pope Theophilus describes those monks' approach of St. John Chrysostom, saying,

The monks then were forced by necessity to move about from place to place, and they finally reached the capital, where Bishop John had been installed by God's hand for the spiritual guidance of our rulers.

They fell down at his knees, imploring him to help souls plundered and abandoned by those more accustomed to this action than to doing good. John arose and beheld fifty sincere men with habits worn gray with their holy labors. Stung to the quick by his feelings of brotherly love as

[63] *Ibid. 25, 26.*

[64] *Palladius. PG 47:24, 25.*

was Joseph, he burst into tears and asked them: *"What sort of boar of the wood... or singular wild beast has been doing mischief to this fruitful vine?"*

Then they said: "Please be seated, father, and bind up the horrible wounds we have suffered because of Pope Theophilus' madness, if indeed you can heal our swollen wounds. For if you cannot speak up for us either out of respect or fear of Theophilus, so is the case with other bishops. Then the only thing left for us to do is to approach the emperor and acquaint him with the man's evil actions, thereby bringing ill fame to the Church. If you have any interest in the well-being of the Church, then, consider our petition and please persuade Theophilus to allow us to go to our home in Egypt. We have done no wrong against the law of the Savior or against him[65]."

CHRYSOSTOM INTERCEDES FOR THE MONKS

Palladius says,

John thought he could easily change Theophilus' bad feeling towards the monk and willingly took up the matter. He called them together and instructed them for the love of God they should not reveal the reason for their presence "until I send word to my brother Theophilus." He gave them quarters in the Church of the Resurrection for sleeping, but did not provide for other necessities of life. Some pious women brought their daily sustenance, and they themselves helped to some extent by the labor of their own hands.

There happened at that time to be some of Theophilus' clergy in Constantinople, who had come to buy offices from newly appointed officials in the Egyptian province. Some of them were courting favor with him by helping to

[65] *Palladius: On St. John Chrysostom (ACW), p. 46-47.*

destroy those who were harassing him. So John called them in to ask if they knew the ascetics who were present. They willingly gave a good report of them, saying: "We know them and they have suffered great violence. But if it please you, master, do not allow them communion in the spiritual feast as it will annoy the Pope (Theophilus), but be considerate of them in every other respect. That would be more fitting for you as bishop."

St. Chrysostom sent to Pope Theophilus, interceding for the monks, telling him their complaint and defending them and Origen, and asking forgiveness for the monks. He writes that he is in a critical position and does not know what he could do.

Palladius also writes,

So John did not receive them into communion, but did write a letter to Theophilus beseeching him: "Please do me the favor as your son and your brother and take these men in your arms."

Theophilus did not grant them that favor, but he did send along certain men well practiced in verbal disputation-we spoke about them above-and he had prepared them to present requirements which he had laid down as was his custom. These contained false statements including every sort of accusation regarding their spiritual life, since he found nothing wrong in their lives outwardly. Thus he prepared the way for them to be pointed out at the palace as frauds.

Pope Theophilus was very angry, specially when he knew that they participated in the public worship, although St. Chrysostom asked them not to receive the holy communion till he would receive an answer from the Pope.

CHRYSOSTOM FINDS THEOPHILUS IMPLACABLE

Palladius says,

The ascetics then saw they not only could not correct his view but acutely incited him to greater anger, and they sent him a delegation of worthy men declaring that they had anathematized all false doctrine. Then they gave a petition to John which explained the various forms of tyranny from which they suffered along with certain subjects I should be ashamed to speak of before young people. I fear that in doing so I should shake their faith in the veracity of my statements. I am sure that even more advanced souls might not even believe me.

Then John himself and through other bishops called on them to drop their accusations against Theophilus because of the mortification of such a trial. He wrote to Theophilus: “The men are driven to such a degree of distress that they are filing a formal indictment against you. Answer them as seems best to you, for they refuse to leave the capital for me.”

Theophilus was greatly incensed at this. He suspended the brother of the monks from his own church, namely Bishop Dioscorus, who had grown old in the service. Then he wrote to Bishop Dioscorus, who had grown old in the service :“I believe that you are not aware of the order of the Canons of Nicea where they declare: “ A bishop may not judge a case beyond his boundaries’; if so (and you know it full well), drop these charges against me. For if it were necessary for me to be judged, it should be by Egyptian judges, and not here with you at the distance of a seventy-five day’s journey.”

THE MONKS APPEAL TO EMPRESS EUDOXIA

Sozomen writes[66],

Some time subsequently, Ammonius and his companions presented themselves before the wife of the emperor, as she was riding out, and complained of the machinations of Theophilus against them. She knew what had been plotted against them; and she stood up in honor of them; and, leaning forward from her royal chariot, she nodded, and said to them, "Pray for the emperor, for me, for our children, and for the empire. For my part, I shall shortly cause a council to be convened, to which Theophilus shall be summoned." Due to a false report that prevailed in Alexandria, that John had received Dioscorus and his companions into communion, and had afforded them every aid and encouragement in his power, Theophilus began to adopt a strategy in order to eject John from his episcopate.

Palladius writes,

John received the letter and read it, but kept it to himself, and the matter of peace was discussed with the ascetics of both parties. Both sides were exasperated at hearing him, the one because they had been subjected to tyranny, the other because they could have no power to enforce peace without Theophilus. It had been at his orders that they brought forth the petitions of false accusation. John had given his answer and had then put the whole matter out of his mind.

Then the monks of the aggrieved party withdrew and brought up a long petition charging the other party of monks as being guilty of libel-and all the rest about Theophilus-lest I say any more of what everyone knows full well already. They came and made an appeal to their majesties in the Shrine of Saint John. They approached the

[66] *Sozomen: H. E. 8:13.*

Empress and begged that the case of the defendant monks be thoroughly investigated by the prefects. They begged that Theophilus be judged before John, whether he was willing or not. The petition was made and this was the decree: "Theophilus is to be summoned by the magistrate and must appear, willing or unwilling, to stand trial before John; furthermore, Theophilus' monks should prove the charges made against the holy men or pay the penalty for falsely accusing them."

THEOPHILUS SUMMONED TO CONSTANTINOPLE

So it was that Elaphius, one of the captains, was sent to Alexandria to bring Theophilus. The prefects were carrying out the rest of the empress' reply. The preliminary trial was held and resulted in a doubtful decision... The wretched monks, fearful of the decision, awaited the arrival of Theophilus who had suggested the petitions and actually dictated them. The military put them into prison as Theophilus was long delayed in coming. He eased the matter along by bribes, and some of the monks were sentenced to be transported to Proconnesus for malicious accusation at the final inquiry.

THE SON OF THE EMPRESS AND ST. EPIPHANIUS.

About this time, the son of the empress was attacked by a dangerous illness, and the mother, apprehensive of consequences, sent to implore St. Epiphanius to pray for him. St. Epiphanius returned the answer, that the sick one would live, provided that she would avoid all intercourse with the heretic Dioscorus and his companions the Origenists.

To this message the empress replied as follows:

"If it be the will of God to take my son, His will be done. The Lord who gave me my child, can take him back again.

You have not power to raise the dead, otherwise your archdeacon would not have died."

She alluded to Chrispion, the archdeacon, who had died a short time previously. He was the brother of two monks called Fuscon and Salamanus, and who had been companions of St. Epiphanius, and had been appointed his archdeacons.

CONFERENCE BETWEEN THE TALL BROTHERS AND EPIPHANIUS

Ammonius and his companions went to St. Epiphanius, at the permission of the empress. Epiphanius inquired who they were, and Ammonius replied, "We are, O father, the Tall Brothers; we come respectfully to know whether you have read any of our works or those of our disciples?" On St. Epiphanius replying that he had not seen them, he continued, "How is it, then, that you consider us to be heretics, when you have no proof as to what sentiments we may hold?" St. Epiphanius said that he had formed his judgment by the reports he had heard on the subject; and Ammonius replied, "We have pursued a very different line of conduct from yours. We have conversed with your disciples, and read your works frequently, and among others, that entitled 'The Anchored.' When we have met with persons who have ridiculed your opinions, and asserted that your writings are replete with heresy, we have contended for you, and defended you as our father. Ought you then to condemn the absent upon mere report, and of whom you know nothing with assured certitude, or return such an exchange to those who have spoken well of you?" St. Epiphanius was measurably convinced, and dismissed them. Soon after he embarked for Cyprus, either because he recognized the futility of his journey to Constantinople, or because, as there is reason to believe, God had revealed to him his approaching death; for he died while on his voyage back to Cyprus. It is reported that he said to the bishops who had accompanied him to the place of embarkation, " I leave you the city, the palace, and the stage, for I shall shortly depart."

ST. EPIPHANIUS IN CONSTANTINOPLE

At the beginning of 403 A.D St. Epiphanius who was about eighty-five years old went to Constantinople, considering this trip an honor to him, for struggling against the most serious heresy, i.e., Origenism.

On his arrival he found things in Constantinople had changed, for the empress hated extremely St. Chrysostom, and desired to get rid of him. St. Epiphanius attacked St. John Chrysostom for receiving those heretics. The Empress Eudoxia who hated St. Chrysostom used Pope Theophilus as a tool for revenge. The council of Oak was held in 403 A.D, under the presidency of Theophilus to condemn St. Chrysostom, who was exiled to Comana (Tokat) where he died on 14 September 407 A.D.

On the demand of the empress, the council was held under the presidency of Theophilus. The problem of the Tall Brothers was not mentioned, and St. Chrysostom was not accused of Origenism, for there was no doubt about his orthodoxy. Besides, the Origenists became almost without leader, for Bishop Dioscorus died shortly before the council was held, and Ammonius who accompanied the Origenist monks died on his arrival at the "Oak." Pope Theophilus mourned exceedingly and praised him, saying that he knows no other monk like him. Herax felt that this problem spoiled his purity and monastic life, therefore he entered the inner desert, devoting his life to worship. In the same year (403 A.D) Isidore also departed from this world. St. John Chrysostom was unable to defend or even to intercede for them, as he was absorbed in his problem with the empress.

It is worthy to mention that on the arrival of the Origenists to the desert, Pope Theophilus sent to them and stretched his arms to them. They apologized to him under the pressure of certain bishops, and the Pope received them without asking them to declare their faith, which meant that the problem in its essence was not doctrinal.

THE ORIGENIST CRISES OF THE SIXTH CENTURY

ORIGEN AND ORIGENISM

John Meyendorff says,

The question has long been asked whether the Origenism of the sixth century was really the doctrine of the great Alexandrian doctor.

Most historians who devote themselves to the study of Origen adopt a sympathetic and often admiring attitude toward him. Consciously or unconsciously preoccupied by the problem of a Christian witness in a non-Christian world, they are led to admire Origen as a Christian thinker who managed to make himself understood by the pagan Greeks and who created a Christian theology that studiously expressed itself in philosophical categories acceptable to non-Christians. Origen's merits in this respect are undeniable and most genuine. On the historical level, this personal rehabilitation of Origen has raised the problem of distinguishing between his own ideas and those of his disciples. Was Origen himself, or only a few "Origenists," the cause of the troubles of the fourth and the sixth centuries? The problem consists of knowing whether these Origenists were faithful to their master or had, in fact, corrupted his teaching.

Some historians tend to present the disputed questions of the fourth century, which were finally condemned in the sixth, as having nothing to do with Origen himself[67].

[67] *John Meyendorff: Christ in Eastern Christian Thought, St. Vladimir Seminary 1975, p. 48.*

Henri Crouzel[68] gives a brief account of the history of Origenism. He states that we can distinguish in Origenism six successive moments:

1. The whole of the speculations which, through the incomprehension of his successors, constituted the basis of later Origenism.

2. Origenism as understood by his third and fourth centuries detractors: Methodius, Peter of Alexandria, and Eustathius of Antioch. These were answered by Pamphilus's *Apology of Origen*. Besides the pre-existence of the soul and *apocatastasis*, they contested, through a series of misunderstandings, the doctrine of the resurrected body and of eternal creation.

3. Origenism of the Egyptian and Palestinian monks (in the second half of the fourth century): it was expounded mainly by Evagrus of Pontus in the *Kephalaia Gnostica*.

Evagrius "scholasticized" Origen's thought, suppressing its internal tensions and leaving out a great part of his doctrine so as to construct a system with what remained; this was the surest way to make it heretical, since heresy is the suppression and fragmentation of the antitheses that characterize Christian doctrine.

4. The most important moment was Origen as the fourth and fifth centuries anti-Origenists: Epiphanius, Jerome and Theophilus of Alexandria, opposed him, while Origen was defended by John of Jerusalem and Rufinus of Aquileia.

They accused Origen in view of the heresies of their own time, especially Arianism, without asking what were those that he had to face and which determined his particular problems... They never made systematic studies of Origen's work and they based their accusations on isolated texts, taking no account of the expla-

[68] *Cf. Encyclopedia of the Early Church, Oxford 1992, vol. 2, p. 623.*

nations often found in other passages in the same book, sometimes only a few lines away.

The battle began with Epiphanius, metropolitan of Salamis or Constantia in Cyprus: he classified Origen's "heresy" together with those that filled his *Ancoratus* and his *Panarion*, and insisted on obtaining a condemnation of Origen from bishop John of Jerusalem. In 393 A.D a certain Atarbius, by what right we do not know, made a round of the convents of Palestine gathering signatures for Origen's condemnation. He was received by Rufinus in his convent on the Mount of Olives, against all expectation he was welcomed by Jerome, until then an ardent defender of Origen, in his monastery at Bethlehem. The battle grew more bitter, with Rufinus and John against Jerome and Epiphanius. A reconciliation was reached between Rufinus and Jerome, but the dispute was revived when Rufinus, back in Rome, translated book I of Pamphilus's *Apologia*, followed by the *Peri Archon* (*De Principiis*), a manuscript which, purloined by Eusebius of Cremona, a monk and friend of Jerome, scandalized Jerome's Roman friends. They obliged Jerome to make a new translation of the *Peri Archon* which, with the intention of being literal, highlighted Origen's heresies and Rufinus's inexactitudes, and did everything to embitter thoughts. Meanwhile the patriarch of Alexandria, Theophilus, was chosen to arbitrate between the two contending parties. At first favorable to Origen, in the interests of the Politics of the Patriarchate, he changed sides, expelled the auxiliary bishop Isidore and the "Tall Brothers", and obtained the deposition of John Chrysostom who had given them asylum in Constantinople. He condemned Origen at a regional synod in 400 A.D: these events had immediate repercussions in the West, thanks to Jerome, and are echoed in two letters of Anastasius of Rome. This first dispute terminated in 402 A.D with Rufinus's silence.

5. The Origenistic controversy flared up in the first half of the sixth century, being described in detail in the "Life of St. Saba" by Cyril of Scythopolis. Origenism had been propagated especially

in the New Laura, near Jerusalem. Origenism or rather the Evagrianism was also propagated among the Palestinian monks who lived in monasteries under the obedience of St. Sabas. The main expression of their doctrine is the *Book of St. Hierotheus*, the work of the Syrian monk Stephen bar Sudayle, who aggravated Evagrius's Origenist "scholasticism" into a radical pantheism. Between Justinian's first and second interventions, these Origenists were divided into two groups.

J. Meyendorff states that recent studies have shed new light on *Evagrius Ponticus*, who was the great interpreter in the fourth century of Origenist ideas to Egyptian and Palestinian monks. He and not Origen is the one responsible of the Origen system. He says,

> The recent publication of Evagrius Ponticus' *Gnostic Chapters*, in which the doctrine condemned in 553 (A.D) is found, makes it possible to measure all the significance of the decisions of the fifth council. The assembly's target was not a phantom Origenism but the genuine doctrines of one of the spiritual masters of Eastern monasticism, Evagrius[69].

The Origenist monks at Jerusalem split into two parties:

a. The extremists were called ***Isochristi***, since they held that both at the beginning and at the end all the "minds" are equal to Christ: his superiority over them is only provisional; he had no part in the original sin.

b. The moderates, whose tardy alliance with the anti-Origenists led to the condemnation of the *Isochristi*, were called ***Protoctists***, since they attributed to Christ a superiority over the other minds. They seem to have regarded the soul of Christ not as equal to the other souls but as the most excellent of creatures. They, after renouncing the doctrine of the pre-existence of souls, made common cause with the orthodox against the *Isochrists*.

[69] *John Meyendorff: Christ in Eastern Christian Thought, St. Vladimir Seminary 1975, p. 55.*

Their opponents inflicted the surname *tetraditi* on them, accusing them of transforming the Trinity into a tetrad by introducing Christ's humanity into it.

6. They presumed Origenism against which the emperor Justinian's condemnatory documents were directed.

ORIGENISM AND EMPEROR JUSTINIAN[70]

Two important letters of Emperor Justinian describe the doctrinal problem posed by Origenism in the sixth century. The first is one addressed in 543 A.D to the five patriarchs, but better known as the *Letter to Menas*, Patriarch of Constantinople, in which Origen is numbered among the most pernicious heretics.

Upon the Emperor's command a Council was convoked at Constantinople in 543 A.D, and an edict drawn up in accordance with Justinian's views giving a long list of Origenistic errors and their refutation.

The second imperial letter was addressed to the council of 553 A.D.

The Origenisic controversy was ended by the (Second) Council of Constantinople in 553 A.D, which approved fifteen anathematizes. Anathematizes 2, 3, 4, and 5, condemn very precisely these Origenist ideas on the Origens of the world and on the nature of the hierarchy that diversifies beings (*Anathemas 2 and 4*).

The *first anathema* of the fifth council is devoted to the doctrine of the pre-existence of souls.

The doctrine of *apocatastasis* is again condemned in the terms that Origen liked to use in the *De Principiis* (*Anathema 15*).

According to Origen, Satan himself would have his place as a spiritual creature of God in the restored intellectual universe,

[70] *John Meyendorff: Christ in Eastern Christian Thought, p. 52ff.*

evidently after ceasing to be God's enemy. This point is condemned by name in the twelfth anathematism. Only the material bodies are fated to disappear, according to Origen. Hence the *eleventh* anathema.

Undoubtedly, the *Letter to Menas* of the Emperor Justinian and the anathematisms of the fifth council do not always present a faithful picture of Origen. Their criticisms are based always and solely on the *De Principiis.* As is well-known, Origen was generally far more reticent in his other works, especially his commentaries, about the more dubious points of his doctrine, for example, the problem of the resurrection of the body. Some of the condemned doctrines, especially relating to the spherical form of the risen body of Christ (*Anathema 10*), have no parallel in the known texts of Origen. It must, however, be pointed out that the name of Didymus is attached to those of Origen and Evagrius in the contemporary sources that speak of the condemnations of 553 A.D. It is therefore a priority possible that the tenth anathematism is concerned with one of his lost writings.

THE ANATHEMAS AGAINST ORIGEN[71]

1. If anyone asserts the fabulous pre-existence of souls, and shall assert the monstrous restoration which follows from it: let him be anathema.

2. If anyone shall say that the creation of all reasonable things includes only intelligences without bodies and altogether immaterial, having neither number nor name, so that there is unity between them all by identity of substance, force and energy, and by their union with and knowledge of God the Word; but that no longer desiring the sight of God, they gave themselves over to worse things, each one following his own inclinations, and that they have taken bodies more or less subtle, and have received names, for among the heavenly Powers there is a difference of

[71] *N& PN Frs., series 2,vol. 14,p. 318-319.*

names as there is also difference of bodies; and thence some became and are called Cherubim, others Seraphim, and Principalities, and Powers, and Dominations, and Thrones, and Angels, and as many other heavenly orders as there may be: let him be anathema.

3. If anyone shall say that the sun, the moon and the stars are also reasonable beings, and that they have only become what they are because they turned towards evil: let him be anathema.

4. If anyone shall say that the reasonable creatures in whom the divine love had grown cold have been hidden in gross bodies such as ours, and have been called men, while those who have attained the lowest degree of wickedness have shared cold and obscure bodies and are become and called demons and evil spirits: let him be anathema.

5. If anyone shall say that a psychic condition has come from an angelic or archangelic state, and moreover that a demoniac and a human condition has come from a psychic condition, and that from a human state they may become again angels and demons, and that each order of heavenly virtues is either all from those below or from those above, or from those above and below: let him be anathema.

6. If anyone shall say that there is a twofold race of demons, of which the one includes the souls of men and the other the superior spirits who fell to this, and that of all the number of reasonable beings there is but one which has remained unshaken in the love and contemplation of God, and that that spirit has become Christ and the king of all reasonable beings, and that he has created all the bodies which exist in heaven, on earth, and between heaven and earth; and that the world which has in itself elements more ancient than itself, and which exists by themselves, viz.: dryness, damp, heat and cold, and the image (icon) to which it was formed, was so formed, and that the most holy and consubstantial Trinity did not create the world, but that it was created by the

working intelligence which is more ancient than the world, and which communicates to it its being: let him be anathema.

7. If anyone shall say that Christ, of whom it is said that he appeared in the form of God, and that he was united before all time with God, the Word, and humbled Himself in these last days even to humanity, had (according to their expression) pity upon the divers falls which had appeared in the spirits united in the same unity (of which he himself is part), and that to restore them he passed through divers classes, had different bodies and different names, became all to all, an Angel among Angels, a Power among Powers, has clothed Himself in the different classes of reasonable beings with a form corresponding to that class, and finally has taken flesh and blood like ours and has become man for men; [if anyone says all this] and does not profess that God the Word humbled himself and became man: let him be anathema.

8. If anyone shall not acknowledge that God the Word, of the same substance with the Father and the Holy Ghost, and who was made flesh and became man, one of the Trinity, is Christ in every sense of the word, but [shall affirm] that he is so only in an inaccurate manner, and because of the abasement , as they call it, of the intelligence ; if anyone shall affirm that this intelligence united to God the Word, is the Christ in the true sense of the word, while the Logos is only called Christ because of this union with the intelligence, and *e converso* that the intelligence is only called God because of the Logos: let him be anathema.

9. If anyone shall say that it was not the Divine Logos made man by taking an animated body with a (*psychi logicy*) and (*noera*), that he descended into hell and ascended into heaven, but shall pretend that it is the (*Nous*) which has done this, that (*Nous*) of which they say (in an impious fashion) he is Christ properly so called, and that he has become so by the knowledge of the Monad: let him be anathema.

10. If anyone shall say that after the resurrection the body of the Lord was ethereal, having the form of a sphere, and that such shall be the bodies of all after the resurrection; and that after the Lord himself shall have rejected his true body and after the others who rise shall have rejected theirs, the nature of their bodies shall be annihilated: let him be anathema.

11. If anyone shall say that the future judgment signifies the destruction of the body and that the end of the story will be an immaterial , and that thereafter there will no longer be any matter, but only spirit (*nous*): let him be anathema.

12. If anyone shall say that the heavenly Powers and all men and the Devil and evil spirits are united with the Word of God in all respects, as the (*Nous*) which is by them called Christ and which is in the form of God, and which humbled itself as they say; and [if anyone shall say] that the Kingdom of Christ shall have an end: let him be anathema.

13. If anyone shall say that Christ is in no wise different from other reasonable beings, neither substantially nor by wisdom nor by his power and might over all things but that all will be placed at the right hand of God, as well as he that is called by them Christ, as also they were in the feigned pre-existence of all things: let him be anathema.

14. If anyone shall say that all reasonable beings will one day be united in one, when the hypostases as well as the numbers and the bodies shall have disappeared, and that the knowledge of the world to come will carry with it the ruin of the worlds, and the rejection of bodies as also the abolition of [all] names, and that there shall be finally an identity of the (*gnosis*) and of the hypostasis; moreover, that in this pretended apocatastasis, spirits only will continue to exist, as it was in the feigned pre-existence: let him be anathema.

15. If anyone shall say that the life of the spirits (*noon*) shall be like to the life which was in the beginning while as yet the

spirits had not come down or fallen, so that the end and the beginning shall be alike, and that the end shall be the true measure of the beginning: let him be anathema.

FALSE DOCTRINES ATTRIBUTED TO ORIGEN

Now, I give a brief account of Origen's doctrinal faults; he himself declared that some of them were introduced into his writings to disfigure his personality.

Henri Crouzel says that Origen was read in the 4th and 5th centuries by theologians preoccupied with heresies[72]. They challenged the Origenism of their time rather than Origen himself, dead for a century and a half.

I have already mentioned the accusations of Origen's doctrinal faults. The main faults are:

1. The pre-existence of souls.
2. The apokatastasis.
3. The mode of the resurrection.
4. Subordination.

Tixeront states that these Origenist doctrines had not much importance especially in the East, but their effects were felt in the Latin Church[73].

In the East, St. Demitrius, Pope of Alexandria, condemned Origen and his teachings in a local council. St. Theophilus, Pope of Alexandria, who, after favoring Origen's disciples, became their opponent, succeeded in having his doctrines condemned in a council of Alexandria in the year 399/400 A.D. St. Epiphanius of Selamis also held a council of Cyprus, in the year 399 A.D or 401 A.D, and entered into correspondence with St. Jerome for the purpose of persuading him to translate into Latin his own paschal and synodal letters on the subject.

---

[72] *Cf. Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p. 175.*

[73] *Tixorent: History of Dogmas, 1914, vol. 2, p. 333.*

In the West, St. Jerome at first intensely admired Origen. and St. Ambrose had largely drawn from Origen's writings. It was chiefly Rufinus, however, who by his translation of the "*De Principiis* (*Pari-Arkhon*)" in the year 397 A.D, contributed to spread abroad in the West the Origenist doctrines[74]. These doctrines soon found many supporters among priests, monks, and especially among the laity[75]; and - in one way or another - they had their effects on St. Augustine[76] and on Orosius[77] which were held in the name of God's mercy and of the redeeming efficacy of the true faith in Jesus Christ[78]. In the year 400 A.D, Anastasius of Rome condemned Origen's teaching while the Emperor forbade the reading of his books[79]. In 542/3 A.D Emperor Justinian published a long refutation of Origenism as a serious heresy.

V V V

[74] *Ibid, p. 331.*

[75] *Jerome: Ep. 62:2; 85:3; 127:9; Anastasius: Ep. 1:3 (PL 80:16).*

[76] *Augustine: De Civ. Dei 21:17-22; De fide et operibus 1:21; Enchiridion 67,112, In Psalm 80:20 etc...*

[77] *De aebitrii libertate (PL 31:1185).*

[78] *Enchir. 112; De Civit Dei 21:26:1; 24:3.*

[79] *Anast: Ep 1,2.*

1. THE PRE-EXISTENCE OF SOULS[80]

I. ITS SOURCE

From the time of Plato, this idea "Pre-existence of the soul of men" had led many thinkers astray. It seemed to them to provide the solution of this difficult problem: *How can the original inequality of souls be explained without calling in question the equitable Providence of God?* Plato had already answered the difficulty by[81] the myth of Er the Armenian, and drew this conclusion: God is not responsible; the soul chose her lot before her birth.

St. Clement had rightly set this solution aside. He says, "We did not exist before God made us. For if one were to accept our pre-existence, we should have to know where we were and how and why we have come into this world[82]."

Origen returned to it.

II. THE MAIN BASICS OF THE "PRE-EXISTENCE OF SOULS"

Origen set aside Plato's idea of a transference of souls from one human body to another[83], and rejected the Pythagorean metempsychosis, which teaches that human souls pass into the bodies of animals[84].

Origen's theory is based on the following principals:

1. In his defense[85] of ***man's freedom and God's justice*** against the Gnostics he adopted the theory of the pre-existence of

---

[80] *Cf. Fr. Tadros Y. Malaty:Man And Redemption, 1991, p. 8; Lebreton, 1947, p. 938-9.*

[81] *Fragment of a letter to his friends, quoted by Rufinus, De adulteratione liborum Origenis.*

[82] *Eclogae propheticae 17:1.*

[83] *Contra Celsum 4:17.*

[84] *Ibid 5:49; 8:30.*

[85] *De Principiis 2:9:2-6.*

human souls. He states that God - out of His goodness - created rational essences, all of them were equal and alike, and they were granted free will. They had to be advanced by imitating God or to fall away by neglecting Him, to depart from good being tantamount to settling down to evil. He states that ***all souls are eternal, created by God, and equal to one another***[86].

2. Souls pre-existed, when they fell in sin they were clothed with material bodies and ***came to the world of sense for purification*** by imposing punishment upon them. The sins committed by the souls in the preceding world explains the different measure of graces which God bestows on every one and the diversity of men here on earth.

3. When contemplating God's supreme view of His beloved creature, i.e., man, and God's close and deep relationship with him, has incited Origen to believe that man's soul is much greater than to be attributed to this visible world. Erroneously, he believed that the soul existed before the body to which it was assigned as a penalty for its sin. The Alexandrians rejected this Origenist theory, for it deforms the believers' view of the body and also of the world. In fact this body is not a jail where the soul is imprisoned but is a good divine gift, that helps the soul and partakes with it in all human needs, and will partake with it in the heavenly glory[87].

Before the ages, they were all pure intelligences, whether demons or souls or angels. One of them, the Devil, since he possessed free will, chose to resist God and God rejected him. Other powers fell away with him becoming demons. Other souls that had not sinned so grievously as to become demons, therefore God made the present world, binding the souls to the bodies as a punishment[88].

---

[86] *De Principiis 2.96.*

[87] *Fr. Tadros Y. Malaty: Man and Redemption, Alexandria 1991, p. 4.*

[88] *Ibid 2:6:3 (See St. Jerome: Ep. ad Avitum 124:6).*

4. Fall is due to the free will which is one of the essential characteristics of rational creatures. Origen emphasizes ***the personal sins of individuals*** who have followed Adam's example rather than their solidarity with his guilt. He believes that each one of us was banished from Paradise for his personal transgression[89].

5. According to Origen, men are pure intelligences fallen from their former splendor and united with bodies which are not evil. He opposed[90] those who condemn the body as the principal of evil, and teaches that ***evil resides in the will alone***[91].

6. Origen thinks that the sensible world, created by God for the purification of fallen souls, will come to an end when all will have been restored to their original purity.

Under the influence of divine Providence, the world will end in the triumph of the Good. The end will consist in the submission of all to God, as St. Paul says: "God will be all in all" (Cf. 1 Cor. 15:23-28). I will return to this point in my speech on the ***apokatastasis***.

Origen's system which shaped his cosmology has two main axes: Providence and liberty**.** It was the will of Providence that all (rational creatures) should possess the good to the same degree, any difference of status among them would have to be accounted for by the use they had made of their freedom. A similar principle governs his eschatology. Sin is the withdrawal of the will from the good. Therefore the only question is to know how free creatures are to return to the good[92]. Origen's doctrine of the pre-existence of souls is connected with his idea of a universal restoration. At the end death will be conquered and all souls, even demons, will be saved. ***All rational creatures will be equal at the end***[93].

---

[89] *Kelly: Early Christian Doctrines, 1978, p. 180f.*

[90] *Contra Celsus 5:21.*

[91] *Kelly, p. 180f.*

[92] *Jean Daniélou: Origen, p. 276.*

[93] *De Principiis 1:6.*

This similarity between end and beginning must not be taken too strictly to mean a perfect identity and equality: beginning and end are similar because of the submission of all to God, but that does not exclude the possibility of progress between the beginning and the end[94].

Origen raises several times the question of successive worlds. After this present world others will follow, the results of new failures, due like the first to the weakness of free creatures. Following out the logic of the system, some even came to allow the salvation of the devil: Origen was blamed for this, but he protested that "*even an idiot could not hold such a thesis*."

II. THE PRE-EXISTENCE OF SOULS AND THE HEAVENLY CHURCH

As he believed in the pre-existence of souls, he regards the heavenly Church as the assembly of all the saints, having existed since before creation[95].

III. THE CONTINUOS PROGRESS IN EVIL OR GOODNESS

Origen believes that through freedom which is granted to the rational creatures, souls of men are continuously risen up or fallen down, or in unceasing progress in evil or goodness.

These are the souls of men, some of whom, in consequence of their progress, we see taken up into the order of angels, those, namely, who have been made 'sons of God' or 'sons of the resurrection'' or those who forsaking the darkness have loved the light and have been made 'sons of the light'; or those who, after winning every fight and being changed into 'men of peace', become 'sons of peace' and 'sons of God'; or those who, by mortifying their mem-

[94] *Henri Crouzel: Origen, p. 205.*

[95] *Song of Songs 2.*

bers which are upon the earth and rising superior not only to their bodily nature but even to the wavering and fragile movements of the soul itself, have 'joined themselves to the Lord', being made wholly spiritual, so as to be always 'one spirit', with him, judging each individual thing in company with him, until they reach the point when they become perfect 'spiritual men' and 'judge all things', because their mind is illuminated in all holiness through the word and wisdom of God, while they themselves are utterly incapable of being judged by any man[96].

When the soul moves away from the good and inclines towards evil it becomes more and more involved in this. Then, unless it turns back, it is rendered brutish by its folly and bestial by its wickedness. And it is carried towards the conditions of unreason and, so to speak, of the watery life. Then, as befits the degree of its fall into evil, it is clothed with the body of this or that irrational animal[97].

IV. THE SOUL OF CHRIST

It is noted that Origen (and Evagrius his disciple) who believed in the pre-existence of the soul of man declared that in Christ the Logos dwelt in the soul that pre-exists the body[98]. But the Alexandrians elsewhere outlined the features of the "Incarnate Logos" so powerfully that an idea of the "incarnation of souls" was excluded[99].

G.W. Butterworth says,

The pre-existence and the future re-incarnation of the human soul was a doctrine that met with much opposi-

---

[96] *De Principiis 1:8 (Henri De Lubac).*

[97] *De Principiis 1:8:4 (Cf. Butterworth).*

[98] *Comm. in Joan 20:19.*

[99] *Aloys Grillmeier: Christ in Christian Tradition, vol. 1, London 1975, p. 381; Fr, T.Y. Malaty: The Terms Physis & Hypostasis in the Early Church, Alexandria 1987, p. 7.*

tion in the Church on account of its obvious connection with Greek and oriental speculation. But it led even Origen himself into a difficulty when he came to discuss the Incarnation. Jesus, as man, possessed a soul. Had this soul a preexistence, like all others? Origen answered that it had. In the beginning, when other souls were declining from God, the soul of Jesus retained its innocence and continued by its own free choice in such close association with the Word of God that finally habit became changed into nature and an indissoluble union was created. It was this soul, already united with the Word of God, which took flesh of the Virgin Mary and appeared among men. And since there were multitudes of spiritual beings who had never come to earth, Origen supposed that Christ would visit them, too, in their celestial abodes, would assume their nature and would even suffer for them[100].

Before the ages minds were all pure, both demons and souls and angels, offering service to God and keeping his commandments. But the devil, who was one of them, since he possessed free will, desired to resist God, and God drove him away. With him revolted all the other powers. Some sinned deeply and became demons, others less and became angels; others still less and became archangels; and thus each in turn received the reward for his individual sin. But there remained some souls who had not sinned so greatly as to become demons, nor on the other hand so very lightly as to become angels. God therefore made the present world and bound the soul to the body as a punishment. For God is no 'respecter of persons,' that among all these beings who are one nature (for all the immortal beings are rational) he should make some demons, some souls and some angels; rather is it clear that God made one a demon, one a soul and one an angel as a means of punishing each

[100] *Henri De Lubac: Origen, On First Principles, NY., p. LVI, LVII.*

in proportion to its sin. For if this were not so, and souls had no pre-existence, why do we find some new-born babes to be blind, when they have committed no sin, while others are born with no defect at all? But it is clear that certain sins existed before the souls, and as a result of these sins each soul receives a recompense in proportion to its deserts. They are sent forth from God as a punishment, that they must undergo on earth a first judgment. That is why the body is called a frame, because the soul is enclosed within it[101].

V V V

[101] *De Principiis 1:8 (Henri De Lubac).*

2. APOKATASTISIS[102]

I. THE WORD "APOKATASTISIS"

The word "**A*pokatastisis***," which means restoration, re-establishment, with the Latin equivalent *restitutio*, usually denotes the doctrine of the restoration of all things at the end of time, a doctrine *attributed to Origen and to St. Gregory of Nyssa*. It means the ***final restoration of the devil and all rational beings*** to God's happiness and friendship. The noun *apokatastasis* and the verb *apokathistemi* are used by Origen, not very often and in various senses, some of which can be taken to symbolize the final *apokatastasis*, others the return of the Israelites to their own country from exile.

Origen was the first Christian ***Universalist***[103]. In his youthful work "*De Principiis*[104]" he taught a final restoration. In commenting on the Pauline phrase "*body of Christ,"* Origen says that this body "*is all mankind - rather perhaps the totality of every created thing*[105]." But he seems at least to have modified it, and exempted Satan from final repentance and salvation.

The principle that everything which had a beginning must also have an end is one of those referred to by Origen in the *Commentary on St. John*[106]. But sin is the aversion of the will from God. It would seem, therefore, that in the end God's patient love will succeed in making all his creatures weary of their unfaithfulness. The most stubborn will eventually give in and consent to love him, and at last even his enemy death will be overcome. But in Origen's opinion there will be no victory unless there is free submission.

---

[102] *Cf. Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p. 258 ff.*

[103] *Schaff :Hist. of the Church vol. 2, p. 611.*

[104] *De Principiis 1:6:1,2.*

[105] *Eric G. Joy: the Church, S.P.C.K, 1977, p. 64.*

[106] *Comm. on John 1:16.*

The only thing that can give God glory is that all created spirits should freely acknowledge His excellence and love Him for it[107]. The end of the creature is the glory of God and his own perfection; and as God has the whole of time at His disposal, He pursues that end throughout all the aeons in the Pentecost of years. The time will come when God is all in all (1 Cor. 15:. 28); all creatures with free will have returned to Him and his rule will be universal. The whole creation will be restored to its original integrity[108].

This point in particular was condemned by the Fifth Ecumenical Council (of the Chalcedonians) in its first canon under the name of *apokatastasis*. "If anyone teaches the mythical doctrine of the pre-existence of the soul and the apocatastasis that follows from it, let him be anathema[109]."

Jean Daniélou states that ***St. Gregory of Nyssa*** did in fact formally condemn the idea of the *apokatastasis* as it was distorted by Origen. He defines it with great precision. "I have heard people maintain that the life of the soul did not begin when the soul was joined to the body; there were souls alive, they say, and grouped in nations in a world of their own before that... Yielding to a sort of inclination towards evil, they lose their wings and come to have bodies. They afterwards return by the same stages and are restored to the heavenly regions... There is thus a kind of cycle, perpetually passing through the same stages; the soul never settles in any one state for ever. People who teach that are simply jumbling things up together and producing a mixture of the tenable and the untenable." That shows what it was that Gregory rejected - the return of the soul to the purely spiritual state it was in originally, the idea of successive lives and the theory of permanent instability. He did not in any way reject the doctrine of the re-establishment to be reconciled with freedom. That is precisely the mystery which man's

---

[107] *De Principiis 1:2:11.*

[108] *De Principiis 3:6:3; Jean Daniélou: Origen, p. 287.*

[109] *Jean Daniélou: Origen, p. 288.*

gaze cannot fathom. Origen saw clearly enough, then, that there were two things involved: God's love and man's freedom. But his attempts to reconcile them led him to put forward two theses, one of which - the *metaphysical* necessity of the ultimate elimination of evil-safeguards God's love but destroys man's freedom, while the other - the perpetual instability of the free-safeguards man's freedom but destroys God's love. Gregory of Nyssa was humbler in the face of the mystery of the *apocatastasis*; he was content with admiring it as the supreme work of a love that would do no violence to free will. To him it stood for the certitude that in Christ salvation had been acquired for man's "nature" without any possibility of loss, but that the individual still had the power of dissociating himself from it by his own free choice[110].

II. ORIGEN'S DENIAL OF THIS DOCTRINE

Origen - in his letter from Athens to his friends at Alexandria - is protesting against those who attribute to him something he never said, that the devil, the father of malice and perdition, and of those who are excluded from the kingdom of God would be saved. Not even a madman could say that. Origen complains that his teaching is distorted by his enemies like that of St. Paul in 2 Thess. 2:1-3.

> *I see that similar things are happening to us. For a certain heresiarch with whom I disputed in the presence of many people, in a debate that was written down, took the manuscript from the secretaries, added what he wished to add, took out what he wished to take out, and altered it as seemed to him good: now he is passing it round under our name, insulting us for what he had himself written. Indignant about that, the brethren in Palestine sent a man to me in Athens to get authentic copies from me. But at that time I had neither re-read nor corrected that text, but had lost sight of it, so that it was difficult for me to find it. However,*

[110] *Jean Daniélou: Origen, p. 289.*

I sent it them and, God is my witness, when I met the man who had distorted my book, I asked him why he had done it and, as if to satisfy me, he said: 'Because I wanted to improve the discussion and to correct it. He corrected it as Marcion and his successor Apelles corrected the Gospel and the Apostle. For, just as these people upset the truth of the Scriptures, so that man, taking away what had really been said, inserted false affirmations to get us accused. But, although they are heretical and impious men who have dared to act in this way, they will nevertheless have God as their judge, those who lend credence to these accusations against us[111].

J.N.D. Kelly says,

Even the devil, it appears, will participate in the final restoration. When Origen was taken to task on this point, he indignantly protested, according to his later champion Rufinus[112], that he had held no such theory. But the logic of his system required it, since otherwise God's dominion would fall short of being absolute and His love would fail of its object; and the doctrine is insinuated, if not explicitly taught, in his writings[113] as well as taken for granted by his adversaries[114]. [115].

H. Crouzel states that in the second chapter of the *Apology against Rufinus* Jerome says he read a dialogue between Origen and a disciple of Valentinus called Candidus. The first point of the discussion concerned the unity of nature between the Father and the Son and the second was the salvation of the devil. Jerome summarizes it as follows: "Candidus asserts that the devil has a very evil nature which can never be saved. To that Origen rightly

---

[111] *Henri Crouzel: Origen, Harper & Row, 1989, p. 20.*

[112] *De adult. lib. Orig. PG 17:624 f.*

[113] *E.g. De Princ. 1:6:3.*

[114] *E.g. Jerome, c. Joh. Hieros.16.*

[115] *Kelly, p. 474.*

replies that it is not because of his substance that the devil is destined to perish, but that he has fallen because of his own will and that he could be saved. Because of that Candidus slanders Origen by representing him as saying that the devil has a nature that must be saved, when in fact Origen refutes Candidus's false objection. Origen, the supreme theologian of free will, and the constant opponent of the Valentinian determinism, replies that it is not one's nature that decides one's salvation or damnation, but the free choice of the will in accepting or refusing grace. The devil could have been saved if he had not been obstinate in his opposition to God. But Candidus, understanding Origen in terms of his own frame of reference, concludes from this that, for his opponent, the devil is saved by his nature.[116]."

III. BIBLICAL BASIS

Jaroslav Pelikan says[117],

Certainly the boldest version of the idea that salvation was a triumph over the devil was Origen's speculation about "the restoration of all things." From his theory of the pre-existence and the pre-historical fall of the soul he drew a corollary about its ultimate destiny; for "*the end is always like the beginning*[118]." The decisive text for his picture of this "end" was 1 Corinthians 15:24-28, which prophesied the eventual subjection of all enemies, including death, to Christ, and the delivery of the kingdom by Christ to the Father. Then God would be "all in all[119]." The pedagogical process by which this subjection was to be carried out would achieve "salvation," and Origen was prepared to believe "*that the goodness of God, through his Christ, may recall all his creatures to one end, even his enemies being*

[116] *Henri Crouzel: Origen, Harper & Row, 1989, p.21.*

[117] *Jaroslav Pelikan : The Christian Tradition, Chicago, 1971, p. 151.*

[118] *De Principiis 1:6:2.*

[119] *On Prayer 25:2.*

conquered and subdued[120]" - not only "the last enemy," death but also the devil, who held the world in his dominion[121]. God would not truly be "*all in all*" until "*the end has been restored to the beginning, and the termination of things compared with their commencement. And when death shall no longer exist anywhere, nor the sting of death, nor any evil at all, then truly God will be all in all*[122]."

IV. SCHOLARS' DEFENSE

H. Crouzel says that as for the *apocatastasis*, scholars have stuck to certain statements in the Treatise *On First Principles*, interpreted rigidly, without taking account of other declarations in the same book and in other works; instead of explaining the Treatise *On First Principles* by reference to his work as a whole, they have interpreted the work as a whole according to the 'system' they have drawn from the Treatise; and they have defined that 'system' by leaving aside all the nuances and refusing to take seriously the numerous discussions between alternatives thus assuming arbitrarily that Origen was committed to one of them[123].

H. Crouzel states that the main passage on which Origen's *apocatastasis* is based is 1 Cor. I5, 23-28, which is about the resurrection of the dead: 'But each (will be raised) in his own order: Christ the first-fruits, then at His coming those who belong to Christ. Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet (Ps. 109 [110]:1). The last enemy to be destroyed is death. For God has put all things in subjection under his feet (Ps. 8:7). But when it says all things are put in subjection under Him, it is

---

[120] *De Principiis 1:6:1.*

[121] *Against Celsus 7:17.*

[122] *De Principiis 1:6:3.*

[123] *Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francicsco 1989, p. 235.*

plain that He is excepted to put all things under Him. When all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subjected to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be everything to everyone[124].

Crouzel says that several questions arise about the use Origen made of these Pauline verses, questions which must be answered, not from isolated texts but from his work as a whole.

1. Does Origen represent this restoration as incorporeal?

2. As pantheistic?

3. Is it for him absolutely universal, implying the return to grace of the demons and the damned, and does he attach to this universality, if there is universality, the status of dogmatic affirmation, or is it simply a great hope?

4. Whence comes Origen's insistence on this Pauline text and on the 'restoration of all things'?[125]

1. As for an incorporeal *apocatastasis,* we would explain that Origen declares that the risen body will be spiritual, and it will be sheltered from death[126]. At the end of this chapter we will mention the destiny of the body, if it will be changed or totally dissoluted. The question would seem superfluous after all we have said about the resurrection of the body[127].

In the *Dialogue with Heraclides*[128], Origen says,

It is absolutely impossible that the spiritual should become a corpse or that the spiritual should become unconscious: if in fact it is possible for the spiritual to become a corpse, it is to be feared that after the resurrection, when our body will be raised according to the word of the Apostle: it is sown a physical body and raised a spiritual

[124] *Henri Crouzel: Origen, p. 258*

[125] *Henri Crouzel: Origen, p. 258.*

[126] *Henri Crouzel: Origen, p. 260.*

[127] *Henri Crouzel: Origen, p. 258.*

[128] *Dialogue with Heraclides 5-6.*

body, we should all die. In fact Christ raised from the dead dies no more, but those who are in Christ raised from the dead will die no more.

2. Is Origen's *apocatastasis* pantheistic? Does it imply that the final union of the spiritual creatures with God and with each other will be effected by the dissolution of their 'hypostaseis', that is of their substances and personalities? [129]

Origen often expresses the unity of the believer with God by I Cor. 6:I7 'But he who is united with the Lord becomes one spirit with Him', a replica of Gen. 2:24, quoted in the same verse: 'The two shall become one flesh'. Between the believer and the Lord, as between the husband and the wife, there is both union and duality. There is no trace of pantheism there[130].

On the subject of the union with God the Father and with Christ which will characterize the life of the blessed, let us quote among others two texts. The first is from the *Commentary on John*[131]:

Then all those who have come to God by the Word who is near Him will have a unique activity, to comprehend God, so as to become formed in the knowledge of the Father, all being together exactly a son, as now the Son alone knows the Father.

The second phase is in Contra Celsus 6:17[132]:

The Stoics may destroy everything in a conflagration if they wish. But we do not recognize that an incorporeal being is subject to a conflagration, or that the soul of man is dissolved into fire, or that this happens to the being of angels, or thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or power.

---

[129] *Henri Crouzel, p. 260.*

[130] *Henri Crouzel, p. 260.*

[131] *Henri Crouzel, p. 261.*

[132] *Contra Celsus 6:71; Henri Crouzel, p. 261.*

In the first, the *diakosmesis*, that is the organization of the world, the latter emerges gradually from the divine fire, a God represented as material; in the second the *ekpyrosis*, the conflagration, the world is again absorbed little by little in the divine fire.

3. Did Origen profess a universal *apocatastasis*, including the return to grace of the demons and the damned? Origen complains that he is said to hold the opinion that the devil will be saved.

The study of certain passages about 'eternal fire' would show Origen more inclined to accept eternal punishment for the demons than for men[133].

If the free will of man, accepting or refusing God's advances, plays such a role in Origen's thought, how could he become certain that all human and demonic beings, in their freedom would allow themselves to be touched and would adhere to God in the apocatastasis?[134]

He seems to preserve the hope that the Word of God will attain such force of persuasion that without violation of free will, it will in the end overcome all resistance[135].

V V V

[133] *Henri Crouzel, p. 264.*

[134] *Henri Crouzel, p. 264-265.*

[135] *Henri Crouzel, p. 265.*

3 - THE MODE OF THE RESURRECTION

Perhaps no doctrine was so peculiarly nauseating to Origen as the Jewish-Christian doctrine of the resurrection of the body[136].

Justinian charged Origen with the denial that the bodies will be raised. According to the letter of Justinian to the patriarch Menas, Origen affirmed that "*in the resurrection the bodies of men rise spherical*." This heresy was condemned in the Second Council of Constantinople. Henry Chadwick explains Origen's doctrine according to the Emperor Justinian and the Council of Constantinople in the following points:

I. Origen's first attack against the risen bodies is the nature of the body (*soma*).

II. Origen's second line of attack is the contention that at death the body returns into its constituent elements, and although the composing elements do not in any sense cease to exist, yet they cannot be put together again in their original form[137].

III. Origen scores a palpable hit when he asks what will happen to the bodies of people eaten by wild beasts, since, just as the food we eat is absorbed by the veins and becomes part of the constitution of our body, so also men's bodies devoured by animals become part of them[138].

Just as the food which we eat is assimilated into our body and changes its characteristics, so also our bodies are transformed in carnivorous birds and beasts and become parts of their bodies; and again, when their bodies

---

[136] *Harvard Theological Review 41 (1948): Henry Chadwick: Origen, Celsus, and The Resurrection of the Body, p.88..*

[137] *Ibid, p. 88.*

[138] *Ibid, p.89.*

are eaten by men or by other animals, they are changed back again and become the bodies of men or of other animals[139].

IV. Origen's fourth objection is that if the flesh is to rise again in the same form, then what use is going to be found for its organs? Are we serious to suppose; he asks, that the wicked are going to be provided with teeth to gnash with?[140] If the simple view of the resurrection is accepted, then risen bodies will have the same needs as earthly bodies; we shall need to eat and drink in the heavenly places[141]; some use will have to be found for our hands and feet[142].

SCHOLARS DEFENSE

I. Some scholars see that this charge is not yet confirmed, for Origen in his writings concerning the spiritual body which will be risen was defending the Church doctrine in the resurrection of the body against two different ideas:

a. The crude literalism which pictured the body as being reconstituted, with all its physical functions on the last day.

b. The perverse spiritualism of the Gnostics and Manicheans, who proposed to exclude the body from salvation.

The explanation he advanced[143] started with the premises that "the material substream" of all bodies, including men, is in a state of constant flux, its qualities changing from day to day, whereas they all possess a "distinctive form" which remains unchanged. The development of a man from childhood to age is an illustration, for his body is identically the same throughout despite

---

[139] *Origen ap. Methodius 1:20:4.; Harvard Theological Review 41 (1948): Henry Chadwick: Origen, Celsus, and The Resurrection of the Body, p. 89.*

[140] *ap. Method. I.24.*

[141] *Ibid. I.7*

[142] *3.7.6-7 ; Harvard Theological Review 41 (1948): Henry Chadwick: Origen, Celsus, and The Resurrection of the Body.*

[143] *Sel. in Ps. 1:5.*

its complete physical transformation; and the historical Jesus provides another, since His body could at one time be described as without form or comeliness (Is 53:2), while at another it was clothed with the splendor of the Transfiguration[144].

II. It is difficult to know how far the opinions attributed to Origen by Justinian really go back to Origen himself rather than merely to the monks of the New Laura in the sixth century. The monks were the immediate cause of Justinian's action and no doubt the Origenists held views which were a definite advance on the modest speculations of their master. At least, one of the anathemas of the council at Constantinople is now known to be a quotation from Evagrius Ponticus and not from Origen at all, so that it is clear that Justinian was not too careful to verify his references[145]. It is therefore vital to distinguish between Origen and those who claimed to be his followers[146].

III. The nearest approach that Origen makes to this doctrine is in the well-known passage, *De Oratione 3I:3*, and it has been thought that it was the superficial reading of this passage which led to this doctrine being attributed to Origen[147].

IV. There is an even greater difficulty than in *De Principiis* in which Origen had committed himself. It becomes very difficult to see why this was not mentioned in the Origenistic controversy at the end of the fourth century. In fact, the greatest difficulty in the way of supposing Origen to have asserted the sphericity of the resurrection body is that neither Jerome nor Methodius say so. Both would have had every reason to mention this point, since it was

---

[144] *Kelly, p. 471.*

[145] *Harvard Theological Review 41 (1948): Henry Chadwick: Origen, Celsus, and The Resurrection of the Body.*

[146] *Harvard Theological Review 41 (1948): Henry Chadwick: Origen, Celsus, and The Resurrection of the Body.*

[147] *Harvard Theological Review 41 (1948): Henry Chadwick: Origen, Celsus, and The Resurrection of the Body.*

their immediate object to draw attention to the offensive aspects of his doctrine.

In his letter to Eustochium consoling her upon the death of her mother, Paula[148], Jerome relates how Paula once met with a follower of Origen who raised doubts in her mind about the resurrection of the flesh, asking whether there would be sexual differentiation in the next world, and maintaining that risen bodies would be tenuia et spiritualia. Jerome says that he went to the man and cross-questioned him; finding his answers unsatisfactory, he replied for him and drew his inferences from the other's premises; the risen Christ had shown his hands and feet- "*ossa audis et carnem, pedes et manus; et globos mihi Stoicorum atque aeria quaedam deliramenta confingis*[149]," Again, it is difficult to know how far this is to be taken seriously; it reads as if Jerome is assuming that because the Origenists deny physical resurrection they must therefore follow the Stoics in supposing that disembodied souls are spherical. What Origen really did say is preserved by Methodius and Jerome[150].

> *So the body has well been called a river, since strictly speaking its primary substance does not perhaps remain the same even for two days; yet Paul or Peter are always the same, not merely with respect to the soul..., because the form which characterizes the body remains the same, so that the marks which are characteristic of the physical quality of Peter and Paul remain constant; it is because of the preserving of this quality that scars caused in our youth persist in our bodies, and so with certain other peculiarities, moles and similar marks*[151].

---

[148] *Ep. I08.*

[149] *Ep. I08:24, p. 343, ed. Hilberg.*

[150] *Harvard Theological Review 41 (1948): Henry Chadwick: Origen, Celsus, and The Resurrection of the Body.*

[151] *Harvard Theological Review 41 (1948): Henry Chadwick: Origen, Celsus, and The Resurrection of the Body.*

It is this same physical form (that which characterizes Peter and Paul) which the soul will again possess in the resurrection, though the form will then be much improved; but it will not be exactly as it was on earth. For just as a man has roughly the same appearance from infancy to old age, even if his features seem to undergo much change, so also there will be the same sort of relation between the earthly form and that to come. It will be the same although it will also be vastly improved. The reason for this is that wherever the soul is it has to have a body suitable for the place where it finds itself; if we were going to live in the sea we should need fins and scales like fish; if we are to live in heaven, then we shall need spiritual bodies. The earthly form is not lost, just as the form of Jesus did not become quite different on the mount of the Transfiguration[152][153].

R. Cadiou states,

> Origen held that this dogma is to be interpreted in the light of the knowledge we have, aided by the word of God... We know that our bodies are not substantially the same from one day to another. A continual process of renewal is ever at work in the flesh and the tissues. But over against this, there is, even in physical life, a principle of continuity or an individuality. That continuity or that individuality is made evident to us by a totality of external characteristics, by one form proper to Peter and by another form proper to Paul. Despite the ceaseless process of renewal, there is a definite persistence; particularities, personal marks, even scars are involved in that persistence...
>
> The spiritual world is a new environment. The body becomes refined there, being made spiritual and being rendered capable of understanding things which it has hither to been unable to grasp. Origen did not consider it

[152] *Origen ap. Method. I.22.3-5.*

[153] *Harvard Theological Review 41 (1948): Henry Chadwick: Origen, Celsus, and The Resurrection of the Body.*

necessary to accept literally the Scriptural metaphors, such as the parable of Lazarus or the story of the just man. He held that the *materia prima* of the body does not rise from the dead, at least not in its entirety[154]. In spite of that fact, however, the risen individual is recognizable, just as Jesus, Moses, and Elias were recognizable after death[155].

Origen's use of those three great names as part of his argument was quite enough to startle his public, and he found it expedient to give a further explanation of his theory. This explanation appeared in one of his subsequent commentaries. "*I affirm, with an absolute faith, that Christ was the first to ascend into heaven in His flesh.*" He further stated that, in the ascension, the body of Christ was already purged of all human weaknesses at the heavenly altar. It is to be noted that he made no such assumptions in regard to Enoch or Elias[156].

As against his opponents Origen also denied that any argument for the physical resurrection of the flesh could be based on the narratives in the Gospels about the resurrection of Jesus. For the body of Jesus was *sui generis*, as is immediately apparent from consideration of his virgin birth. Admittedly he ate and drank after the resurrection and showed the disciples his hands, his feet, and his side; yet he can pass through locked doors, and while breaking bread can vanish out of their sight. And even before the resurrection certain things said about Jesus in the Gospels do not in any way correspond with our normal physical experience, as for example in the Transfiguration. It is clear to any careful reader of the Gospels that Jesus appeared differently to different people, and had

---

[154] *In Psalm., 1:5 PG 12:1092.*

[155] *R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder, 1944, p. 93-4.*

[156] *In Psalm.,15:9 PG 12:1215; R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder, 1944, p. 94.*

many aspects, so that his appearance varied according to the spiritual capacity of the beholder[157].

TREATISE ON THE RESURRECTION

R. Cadiou says,

> From the first moment of its appearance this new theory of the resurrection of the body evoked such a storm of criticism that Origen saw the need for a careful and scientific exposition of his views. He was further led to this decision by the fact that Christian beliefs about the life after death were beginning to seize the attention of thinkers outside the church. Possible explanations of this change in the non-Christian philosophical world are to be found in the growth of Aristotelianism, the emergence of a philosophical outlook that was not wholly Greek, and the reverence that Christians were beginning to pay, openly and without any effort at concealment, to the relics of the holy martyrs. Besides, Tertullian had already written on this subject of the resurrection after death. Hippolytus would soon do the same, at the request of Empress Mammaea, who was not a Christian. In view of all these considerations, Origen determined to write a theological treatise on the problem. Known to literary history as the Treatise on the Resurrection, it consisted of two parts[158].
>
> In the first part (*of the Treatise on the Resurrection*) Origen made his confession of faith: we shall rise from the dead with our own bodies. In the case of a holy martyr who suffers the torments of prison life, of the scourgings, of the conflicts in the arena, or of a death on the cross, will such a witness for the faith be recompensed

---

[157] *Harvard Theological Review 41 (1948): Henry Chadwick: Origen, Celsus, and The Resurrection of the Body.*

[158] *R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder, 1944, p. 94.*

in his soul only? Consider also the martyrdoms borne by the Christian soul in a life of daily mortification. All such sufferings concern the body more than they do the soul, because it is by the passions of the body that we are subjected to temptation. In the body, then, merit is acquired. In this first part of his work Origen did not hesitate to employ several of the traditional arguments which had already been used by Tertullian and by the majority of the Christian apologists.

After making his profession of faith in the Christian tradition of the resurrection of the body, he proceeded, in the second part, to his justification of it. He knew that his task was to expound a Christen belief to men who were not Christians[159].

Criticism Of The Treatise[160]

The Treatise on the Resurrection taught that, with the unique exception of God, no spirit is utterly incorporeal. The soul always possesses the virtualities of a physical life proportioned to its needs. Besides, the physical organism always tends to adapt itself to the function or set of functions which it has cultivated. The gross and earthly condition of the soul, as we know it here below, is the result of a diminution of spiritual activity. If the primary union between God and the individual intelligence is re-established, the entire body sees God, understands Him, and knows Him. Every step taken by the soul in the direction of such a re-establishment makes it more capable of contemplating the goodness of God.

[159] *R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder, 1944, p. 95.*

[160] *R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder, 1944, p. 99.*

THE DESTINY OF THE BODY

Kelly says,

His task was the twofold one of expounding the truth against

(a) the crude literalism which pictured the body as being reconstituted, with all its physical functions, at the last day, and

(b) the perverse spiritualism of the Gnostics and Manicheans, who proposed to exclude the body from salvation.

The explanation he advanced[161] started with the premises that the "material substratum" of all bodies, including men, is in a state of constant flux, its qualities changing from day to day, whereas they all possess a "distinctive form" which remains unchanging. The development of a man from childhood to age is an illustration, for his body is identically the same throughout despite its complete physical transformation; and the historical Jesus provides another, since His body could at one time be described as without form or comeliness (Isa. 53,2), while at another it was clothed with the splendor of the Transfiguration.

From this point of view the resurrection becomes comprehensible. The bodies with which the saints will rise will be strictly identical with the bodies they bore on earth, since they will have the same "form", or *eidos*. On the other hand, the qualities of their material substrata will be different, for instead of being fleshy qualities appropriate to terrestrial existence, they will be spiritual ones suitable for the kingdom of heaven. The soul "needs a better garment for the purer, ethereal and celestial regions[162];" and the famous Pauline text, 1 Cor. 14,42-4, shows that this

---

[161] *Sel. in ps. 1:5.*

[162] *Contra Celsus 7:32.*

transformation is possible without the identity being impaired. As he explains the matter[163], when the body was at the service of the soul, it was "psychic;" but when the soul is united with God and becomes one spirit with Him, the selfsame body becomes spiritual, bodily nature being capable of donning the qualities appropriate to its condition[164].

FINAL DISSOLUTION OR CHANGE OF BODIES

His endeavor to uphold a spiritual doctrine of the resurrection of the body was misinterpreted by Methodius, St. Jerome and others as an attack upon the Church's faith. According to St. Jerome Origen believes that the bodies will be resolved into the divine nature. St. Jerome writes, "And after a very long discussion, in which he asserts that all bodily nature must be changed into spiritual bodies of extreme fineness and that the whole of matter must be transformed into a single body of the utmost purity, clearer than all brightness and of such a quality as the human mind cannot conceive. At the close he states: And God shall be all in all, so that the whole of bodily nature may be resolved into that substance which is superior to all others, namely, into the divine nature, than which nothing can be better[165]."

In his *"De Principiis"* Origen write,

It must needs be that the nature of bodies is not primary, but that it was created at intervals on account of certain falls that happened to rational beings, who came to need bodies; and again, that when their restoration is perfectly accomplished these bodies are dissolved into nothing, so that this is forever happening...

---

[163] *De Principiis 3:6:6; Contra Celsus 3:41f.*

[164] *Kelly, p. 471.*

[165] *Ep. ad Avitum, 10.*

Everyone who shares in anything is undoubtedly of one substance and one nature with him who shares in the same thing. For example, all eyes share in the light, and therefore all eyes, which share in the light, are of one nature. But though every eye shares in the light, yet since one eye sees clearly and another dimly, every eye does not share equally in the light. Again; all hearing receives the voice and sound, and therefore all hearing is of one nature; but each person is quick or slow to hear in proportion to the pure and healthy condition of his hearing faculty. Now let us pass from these examples drawn from the senses to the consideration of intellectual things.

Every mind which shares in intellectual light must undoubtedly be of one nature with every other mind which shares similarly in this light. If then the heavenly powers receive a share of intellectual light, that is, of the divine nature, in virtue of the fact that they share in wisdom and sanctification, and if the soul of man receives a share of the same light and wisdom, then these beings will be of one nature and one substance with each other. But the heavenly powers are incorruptible and immortal; undoubtedly therefore the substance of the soul of man will also be incorruptible and immortal. And not only so, but since the nature of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, to whom alone belongs the intellectual light in which the universal creation has a share, is incorruptible and eternal, it follows logically and of necessity that every existence which has a share in that eternal nature must itself also remain forever incorruptible and eternal, in order that the eternity of the divine goodness may be revealed in this additional fact, that they who obtain its blessings are eternal too. Nevertheless, just as in our illustrations we acknowledged some diversity in the reception of the light, when we described the individual power of sight as being either dim or keen, so also we must acknowledge a diversity of participation in the Father, Son

and Holy Spirit, varying in proportion to the earnestness of the soul and the capacity of the mind[166].

Origen confirms the change of the body and not its dissolution, saying,

Our flesh indeed is considered by the uneducated and by unbelievers to perish so completely after death that nothing whatever of its substance is left. We, however, who believe in its resurrection, know that death only causes a change in it and that its substance certainly persists and is restored to life again at a definite time by the will of its Creator and once more undergoes a transformation; so that what was at first flesh, 'of the earth earthy', and was then dissolved through death and again made 'dust and ashes',-for 'dust you are', it is written, 'and unto dust shall you return'-is raised again from the earth and afterwards, as the merits of the 'indwelling soul' shall demand, advances to the glory of a 'spiritual body' (1 Cor. 15:44)[167].

In his speech of **death,** Origen says,

It is on this account, moreover, that the last enemy, who is called death, is said to be destroyed; in order, namely, that there may be no longer any sadness when there is no death nor diversity when there is no enemy. For the destruction of the last enemy must be understood in this way, not that its substance which was made by God shall perish, but that the hostile purpose and will which proceeded not from God but from itself will come to an end. It will be destroyed, therefore, not in the sense of ceasing to exist, but of being no longer an enemy and no longer death[168].

---

[166] *De Principiis4:4:8,9 (Cf. Butterworth).*

[167] *De Principiis 3:6:5 (Cf. Butterworth).*

[168] *De Principiis 3:6:5 (Cf. Butterworth).*

Cadiou states, "At this point Origen warned his readers of the prevailing habit of using the word "flesh" in discussions on the resurrection of the body. He held that in such discussions the word should be understood in a broader sense. It must not be forgotten that the state of glory is like that of the angels. In that higher life the body does not sin, for it is no longer subject to the infirmities or the corruption that mark our life on earth. It becomes, in the resurrection, a flesh with which we can please God. The Apostle, desiring to tell us that after our departure from this life of misery we shall be called to glory, says that "all flesh shall see the salvation of God." Pursuing this line of thought, Origen remarked that we speak of the flesh as dust because of the lowly element from which the flesh comes[169]."

THE RISEN AND GLORIOUS BODY

From this comparison we may gain an idea how great is the beauty, how great the splendor and how great the brightness of a spiritual body, and how true is the saying that 'eye has not seen nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man to conceive what things God has prepared for them that love Him' (1 Cor. 2:9). But we must not doubt that the nature of this present body of ours may, through the will of God who made it what it is, be developed by its creator into the quality of that exceedingly refined and pure and splendid body, according as the condition of things shall require and the merits of the rational being shall demand[170].

Of this body the same apostle has also said that 'we have a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens' (Rom. 8:21), that is, in the dwelling-places of the blest. From this statement we may then form a conjecture of what

[169] *R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder, 1944, p. 97.*

[170] *De Principiis 3:6:4 (Cf. Butterworth).*

great purity, what extreme fineness, what great glory is the quality of that body, by comparing it with those bodies which, although heavenly and most splendid, are yet made with hands and visible. For of that body it is said that it is a house not made with hands but 'eternal in the heavens' (2 Cor. 5:1)[171].

The whole argument, then, comes to this, that God has created two universal natures, a visible, that is, a bodily one, and an invisible one, which is incorporeal. These two natures each undergo their own different changes. The invisible, which is also the rational nature, is changed through the action of the mind and will by reason of the fact that it has been endowed with freedom of choice; and as a result of this it is found existing sometimes in the good and sometimes in its opposite. The bodily nature, however, admits of a change in substance, so that God the Artificer of all things, in whatever work of design or construction or restoration he may wish to engage, has at hand the service of this material for all purposes, and can transform and transfer it into whatever forms and species he desires, as the merits of things demand. It is to this, clearly, that the prophet points when he says, 'God who makes and transforms all things'(Amos 5:8 LXX)[172].

THE RISEN BODY AND THE WOUNDS OF CHRIST

R. Cadiou states that according to Origen in heaven our Lord no longer bears the wounds of His passion, but He wished to leave to His followers the memory of His bruised and humiliated flesh. At that time their souls were not advanced enough in the path of His love to see Him as He really was in the splendor of His glory[173].

---

[171] *De Principiis 3:6 (Henri De Lubac).*

[172] *De Principiis 3:6:7 (Cf. Butterworth).*

[173] *R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder, 1944, p. 97.*

4. SUBORDINATIONISM

He is accused of teaching subordinationism, i.e., the Son is subordinate to the Father and is inferior to Him, and the Holy Spirit is subordinate to the Son. J. Quasten says, "That he teaches subordinationism has been affirmed and denied. St. Jerome does not hesitate to accuse him of doing so, while Gregory Thaumaturgos and St. Athanasius clear him of all suspicion. Modern authors like Regnon and Prat also acquit him[174]." Charles Bigg states that the objections raised in ancient times against Origen's Subordinationism rest in many cases on the most serious misapprehension, may for the present be dismissed[175]. The Son, as we have seen, possesses all the attributes of God, His Goodness, His Wisdom, His power. He possesses them in full and perfect measure, not accidentally but substantially and unchangeably, not precariously but by virtue, if we may so speak, of a law of the Divine Nature. He is begotten, not created. The Son is in the Father, the Father in the Son, and no schism is conceivable between them. Yet the Word is the Splendor of the Divine Glory, the Image of the Father's Person; in a word, He is the Son. The Father is the "Fountain" from whom His Divinity is "drawn[176]."

John Meyendorff states that it was precisely Origen's cosmology and anthropology, that were the targets of Origenism and not his theology. Foremost were his cosmological, anthropological, and eschatological ideas, which constituted precisely the cornerstone of Origenism as a system[177].

---

[174] *J. Quasten: Patrology, Vol 2, P '7.*

[175] *Charles Bigg: The Christian Platonists of Alexandria, Oxford 1913, p. 226.*

[176] *Bigg: The Christian Platonists of Alexandria, p. 223.*

[177] *John Meyendorff: Christ in Eastern Christian Thought, St. Vladimir Seminary 1975, p. 49.*

In 543 A.D, Emperor Justinian began his indictment by attacking the Trinitarian subordinationism of Origen. It is interesting to note that the Emperor was not followed on this point by the council of Constantinople, which did not pronounce any anathema against Origen's Trinitarian doctrine. This doctrine, in fact, does not seem to have interested the Palestinian Origenist monads, who had provided the motive for conciliar action.

OBJECTIONS

1. The Son Cannot See The Father

In the accusation put forward by St. Epiphanius and St. Jerome they blame Origen for saying that the Son cannot see the Father; and the passage in *Treatise On First Principles* on which they rely is in fact directed against the *Anthropomorphites* who attribute both to the Father and to the Son in His divinity bodies and corporeal senses. St. Epiphanius and St. Jerome understand it as if Origen meant that the Son does not know the Father and see in it a proof of the inferiority of the Son to the Father[178]... Origen states that the Father and the Son know each other by the very act, both eternal and continual, by which the Father begets the Son[179]..

2. Prayers Are Offered To The Father Alone

Charles Bigg says, "But there is one true consequence of his view so momentous that it must not be passed over. I refer to his teaching on the subject of prayer offered to the Son . He has declared himself upon this point many times, especially in the *Celsus*. "Away with the advice of Celsus that we should pray to demons. For we must pray only to the Supreme God; yes, and we must pray to the only Begotten and First born of every creature, and beseech Him as our High Priest to offer to His God and our God, to His Father and the Father of all that live , our prayers as

[178] *Henri Crouzel: Origen, Harper & Row, 1989, p. 103.*

[179] *Henri Crouzel: Origen, Harper & Row, 1989, p. 103.*

they come first to Him." The meaning of these words is explained at large in the Treatise upon prayer[180].

Origen refers to the words of St. Paul, "I exhort therefore that first of all supplications, prayers, intercessions and giving of thanks be made for all men" (1 Tim. 2:1), drawing a distinction between these four forms[181].

He concludes that the three lower forms of petition may be addressed to men for help or pardon, or to saints or angels, or to the Holy Spirit or Christ, the last and highest only to the Father in the Son's name.

He does not, it will be observed, forbid the Christian to pray to Christ as God[182]. He refers to the prayers of the Penitent Thief, of Stephen, of the father of the lunatic child, all addressed to the Son and the Son alone, and he himself prays to the Son in the same way[183].

We may address the Savior, in immediate supplication, for those boons which it is His special province to bestow. But in the supreme moment of adoration, when the soul strains upwards to lay itself as a sacrifice before the highest object of thought, we must not stop short of Him who is above all. Such prayer is necessarily attended by a "doxology," a clear recognition of the Nature of Him before whom we stand, and in the doxology the Father's Name is first. Origen appeals to the express command of Jesus, "*Whatsoever you shall ask the Father He will give it in My name*," to the usage of Scripture, and lastly to the usage of the Church. It is probable that at this very time a change was creeping into the language of worship. "*Are we not divided,"* he asks, "*if we pray some to the Father, some to the Son, falling into the error of ignorant*

---

180 Bigg: The Christian Platonists of Alexandri, p. 226.

181 On Prayer 14:2 ff.

182 Bigg: The Christian Platonists of Alexandria, p. 227.

183 Bigg: The Christian Platonists of Alexandria, p. 228.

men because we have never inquired into the real nature of what we are doing?[184]"

It has been thought that his protest refers specially to the Eucharist, the Anaphora of *Missa Fidelium*, in which for long after this time there was no direct address to the Son. But in truth it has a wider scope. He is warning his readers, not against excessive devotion to " the Lord and Savior Jesus," for in this Origen himself yields to none nor against the fullest belief in Christ's Divinity, for here also Origen's doctrine, in the judgment of those most worthy of our deference, stands above suspicion; but against the language, if I may risk the phrase, of partial adoration, which verges on the one hand towards Noetianism, on the other towards some form of Gnosticism, on the other towards some form of Gnosticism, that is of moral opposition[185].

John J. O'Meara[186] states that there is one section in this treatise "On Prayer," which demands special attention. Throughout the entire tract Origen stresses the position of Christ as our High-priest and Intercessor to such a degree that several passages may be quite readily understood in a subordinationist sense[187]. Particularly striking are chapters 14-16. Origen says that we should pray in the name of Jesus, but we should adore the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit. God the Father alone is entitled to accept adoration. If Christ terms Christians His brothers, He makes it clear that He wishes them to adore the Father, not Him, the Brother: "*Let us pray therefore to God through Him and let us speak all in the same way without any division in the form of prayer*."

---

[184] *Bigg: The Christian Platonists of Alexandria, p. 229.*

[185] *Bigg: The Christian Platonists of Alexandria, p. 230.*

[186] *Origen: Prayer, Exhortation to Martyrdom, Translated by John J. O'Meara (ACW), p. 9-10.*

[187] *Subordinationism means a tendency to consider Christ inferior to the Father and the Holy Spirit inferior to the Father and the Son.*

This theory did not find adoption by any of the Fathers, and Origen remained the only one applying it. Even Origen contradicts himself, for he inserts in his homilies praises and prayers to Christ, and elsewhere in his works, he defends the adoration of Christ against the objection of polytheism. There is the possibility, however, that Origen thinks of solemn or liturgical prayer only, especially since the treatise is addressed to a deacon. Perhaps Origen wishes to justify the liturgical custom of praying through Christ to the Father.

3. According to Origen, the Father is " The God," "the only true God": **the Son is "God" without addition, because His Deity is derived**[188].

4. Origen And Arianism

Origen is accused of believing in "*subordination*," i.e. that the Son is inferior to the Father, and the Holy Spirit is inferior to the Son and the Father. And thus he prepared the way to the Arians who tried to defend their heresy through his works.

J. Lebreton says[189], "The vital truth that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit transcend all other beings was always affirmed by Origen, and we find it already in the treatise *De Principiis 2:2:2*. But we must also allow that there is in this treatise a hierarchical conception of the divine Persons which endangers their equality and their consubstantiality[190]."

---

[188] *Charles Bigg: The Christian Platonists of Alexandria, Oxford 1913, p. 222-223.*

[189] *The History of the Primitive Church, p940-1.*

[190] *In the treatise De principiis, this hierarchy is manifested especially in the actions of the divine Persons, which are of unequal extent: "God the Father, containing all things, attains to all beings, communicating to each one the being it possesses as its own. By an action inferior to that of the Father, the Son attains only to rational beings, for he is the second after the Father. By still lesser action, the Holy Spirit acts only on the saints. From this it follows that the power of the Father is greater than that of the Son and the Holy Spirit and that of the Son is superior to that of the Holy Spirit; and that of the Holy Spirit is greater than that of all other holy beings" (1:3:3).*

J.W. Trigg says, “Arius (c. 250 - c. 336), relaying among other things, on the subordinationist strain in Origen’s Christology, denied that Christ was God in the same sense that God the Father was. Arius preferred to view Christ as “the first born of all creation, a created divine being who, unlike God the Father, had a beginning in time[191].”

Against Arius, who appealed to Origen’s subordinationism, his affirmation, that is, of Christ the Son’s inferiority to God the Father, Athanasius appealed to Origen’s doctrine of eternal generation and to his understanding of redemption. If, as Origen taught, Christ was born from God the Father rather than created by God, then Christ would have the same substance as God the Father, especially since Christ shared with God the Father the property of not being subject to the category of time. Moreover, Athanasius argued, a created being like the Christ of Arius, not being divine himself, could not assist us to the ultimate goal of redemption in Origen’s theology, the attainment of likeness to God. Although Origen was not directly responsible for the doctrine of the Trinity eventually reaffirmed in the “of one substance” formula of Nicea at Constantinople in 381 A.D, his theology established the questions at issue and suggested the general framework of the eventual solution[192].

With the breakdown of Roman imperial power in the West over the course of the fifth century, Latin - and Greek - speaking Christianity drifted increasingly apart, and Origen’s reputation fared differently in the two areas. In the West he was read and respected but was somewhat suspect. His reputation was not helped by the regard in which his Commentary on Romans was held by Pelagius, the British theologian who had the poor judgment to at-

[191] *Cf. Joseph Wilson Trigg: Origen, SCM 1983, p. 249-250.*

[192] *Cf. Joseph Wilson Trigg: Origen, SCM 1983, p. 250.*

tack Augustine's understanding of divine grace. Nevertheless, Origen remained influential in the monastic tradition[193].

In the East, Origenism remained popular, and controversial, among monks in Palestine and Syria. Eventually controversy among monks over Origen brought him to the attention of the Emperor Justinian 1 (483-565 A.D), who was, among other things, an amateur theologian. Justinian secured the condemnation of Origen , along with his disciples. Didymus and Evagrius, at the Second Council of Constantinople in 553 A.D, three hundred years after Origen's death. In the Byzantine world Origen remained under a cloud until the fourteenth century, and this resulted in the disappearance of most of his works that were not translated from Greek. The steady encroachment of the Turks, however, led to a renewed interest in Origen's *Contra Celsum* as the principal defense of Christianity written in Greek[194].

Origen and Nestorism

Some Fathers and scholars believe that Origen is responsible of Nestorism. John Meyendorff says[195],

> In his synodal letter of 400 A.D, Theophilus of Alexandria had already pointed out that for the Origenists, "the Word of the living God has not assumed the human body," and that Christ, "who was in the form of God, equal to God, was not the Word of God, but the soul which, coming down from the celestial region and divesting itself of the form of eternal majesty, assumed the human body." The distinction between Christ and the Word presupposed by this curious Christology of the Origenists could not fail to recall, for sixth-century minds, the Nestorian distinction between the Word and the assumed man.

---

[193] *Cf. Joseph Wilson Trigg: Origen, SCM 1983, p. 254.*

[194] *Cf. Joseph Wilson Trigg: Origen, SCM 1983, p. 254-255.*

[195] *John Meyendorff: Christ in Eastern Christian Thought, St. Vladimir Seminary 1975, p. 47.*

5

HIS THEOLOGY

J. Lebreton says, “In the whole of Christian Antiquity, at least in the Eastern Church, there is no writer who is so attractive, whose glory is so disputed, or whose study is so difficult, as Origen... To-day we possess only some portions of his immense work, and the greater part of it has come down to us only by means of translations, the accuracy of which is by no means certain. In spite of all these difficulties, however, it is not impossible to determine in outline the life, character and thought of this famous doctor[1].”

The theology of Origen, his cosmology, anthropology, ecclesiology, eschatology etc. have been affected by the following factors:

1. The ***heresies of his time***: Origen’s main aim almost in all his writings and homilies is to refute, directly or indirectly, the major heresies of his time. In his youth, Origen complied *De Principiis* “*for those who, sharing our faith, are accustomed to look for reasons for their belief and for those who stir up conflicts against us in the name of the heresies*[2].”

2. Origen had to deal with heretics as well as with ***the simple believers*** who were averse to any kind of speculation. His encounter was with these two theological movements.

3. His view on ***knowledge and philosophy***: As we have seen the Alexandrians were concerned with philosophy for many reasons. To answer the burning philosophical questions of their time, to correct the philosophical views which were opposed to the Christian faith, to attract well-educated persons to Christianity and to defend Christianity from the accusation of ignorance and fool-

1 The History of the Primitive Church, p. 927.
2 De Principiis 4:4:5.

ishness brought by some philosophers. Many scholars believe that Origen founded Christian theology.

4. As a man of the Bible, Origen's theological system is affected by it. He based his entire doctrine on his commentaries on the Sacred Scriptures. His theology was, above everything else, a system of exegesis. By his technique of spiritual interpretation, he succeeded in making the Bible accessible to every Christian who had any feeling for holy things[3].

5. His ***heart was inflamed*** for the conversion of the whole world, the edification of the true spiritual Church and the progress of every soul in divine and practical knowledge of the Holy Trinity, unity with her Heavenly Groom, and continuos glorification. Therefore we cannot depend on his work "*De Principiis*" alone, which he had written while he was young, as if it contains his theological system. Undoubtedly his preaching and dialogues with simple people, bishops, philosophers and queens had their effect on his theological system. One of these affects his soteriological attitude almost in all his writings and homilies.

Under the title "*Origen's Christian Gnosis*" Basil Studer says[4],

> This new, inquiring and systematic theology is rightly called Christian gnosis. It is gnosis not only because it follows up the problems of the Gnostics of the second century but also and primarily because it takes up again the true concerns of those first Christian theologians: above all the search for the knowledge that would provide a foundation for the salvation of mankind and the world[5].

To understand Origen's thoughts it is necessary to know what these heresies were, the simple people who were disinclined to hold onto the true faith, and his view on philosophy.

---

3 R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder, 1944, p. 30.

4 Basil Studer: Trinity and Incarnation, Minnesota 1993, p. 79.

5 Cf. J. Daniélou: Gospel message, p. 445-500, with Clement of Alexandria: Stromata 6 and 7, and Origen: Per. Arch. 2:11:6; In Num. hom 17:4.

THE HERESIES AND HERETICS

Origen had Christianity in his very blood and never subscribed to any tolerance of heresy. Even as an orphan seventeen years old, when he was enjoying the financial help of a great lady of wealth and distinction who treated him as an adopted son, he refused to compromise in any degree, according to Eusebius: "She was treating with great honor a famous heretic then in Alexandria, a certain Paul of Antioch. Origen could never be induced to join with him in prayer... and, as he somewhere expresses it, he abominated heretical teachings[6]."

1. The main heresies which Origen faced was "***Gnosticism***," which I have discussed in Book 1, Chapter 4: "***The School Of Alexandria And The Gnostics."*** Like St. Irenaeus and Tertullian, and also St. Clement of Alexandria, Origen was opposed to the Gnostic movement[7].

Origen faced the Gnostic sects, especially the trio: Basilides, Valentinus, Marcion, in the following points:

I. Their systems were based on the inseparable division and antagonism between the Demiurge or "Creator God" and the supreme unknowable Divine Being. Origen insists on the identity of the Creator God and the Father of Jesus Christ.

The Gnostics contrast the two Testaments and the allegorical exegesis which Origen uses. Origen, as other Alexandrian Fathers ***emphatically stressed the fundamental unity of both phases of revelation (Old and New Testament).*** He inculcates the unity of authorship of both revelations[8].

According to Origen, there were some who taught that Paul was seated at the right hand of Christ in heaven, and Marcion at

6 R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder, 1944, p. 104.
7 Cf. Basil Studer: Trinity and Incarnation, Minnesota 1993, p. 77-78.
8 De Principiis praef. :4.

the left[9]. ***Marcion*** makes of the Creator God of the Old Testament a just but not a good God and even one positively cruel and malicious[10]. The essential concern of Origen's statement which opens the list of propositions of the rule of faith in the preface of the *Treatise on First Principles* is to oppose the Marcionite and Gnostic doctrines which separated the Creator God of the Old Testament from the Father of Jesus Christ, making the former a just God, the latter a good God. There is only one God, who created everything out of nothing, who was the God of all the holy men of the old covenant, who promised by his prophets the coming of his Son and subsequently sent Him. There is only one God for the law, the prophets and the apostles, for the Old Testament and the New[11].

Origen states that God is one; He is God both of the Old and New Testament.

> *The kind of doctrines which are believed in plain terms through the apostolic teaching are the following:-*
>
> *First, that God is one, who created and set in order all things, and who, when nothing existed, caused the universe to be. He is God from the first creation and foundation of the world, the God of all righteous men, of Adam, Abel, Seth, Enos, Enoch, Noah, Shem, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, of the twelve patriarchs, of Moses and the prophets. This God, in these last days, according to the previous announcements made through his prophets, sent the Lord Jesus Christ, first for the purpose of calling Israel, and secondly, after the unbelief of the people of Israel, of calling the Gentiles also. This just and good God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, himself gave the law, the prophets and the gospels, and he is God both of the apostles and also of the Old and New Testaments[12].*

9 Jaroslav Pelikan: The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100-600), p. 80.
10 Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p. 154.
11 Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p. 182
12 De Principiis 1:1:4 (G.W. Butterworth).

II. He particularly objects to Valentinus' doctrine of the three natures of souls and to the predestinarianism which underlies it[13]. It was by reason of this doctrine that Origen drew up his chapter on free will in equality of rational beings, an equality only to be broken by the free choice of their will: the cosmology described in that book is explained by the dialectic between divine action and human freedom which can accept or reject the divine[14].

I will speak of Origen's *Philosophy of Creation* and *Freedom* in two separate chapters.

2. Origen faces *two opposite tendencies* in the Trinitarian theology:

I. The ***Modalists***, or the ***Monarchians***, who tried to safeguard the divine "monarchy," the unity of the Deity "monotheism). They considered the Son a mere name and mode of manifestation of the Father. For them the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are three modes of being a single divine Person.

They are called ***Noetians*** and later ***Sabellians***, as they were attributed to Noetus of Smyrna[15] and the Libyan Sabellius[16].

In the West they were called ***Patripassians***, because it followed from their doctrine that the Father suffered the Passion.

---

13 Henri Crouzel: Origen, p. 154.

14 Henri Crouzel: Origen, p. 155.

15 The first to spread the Patripassian doctrine, at the end of the second century, for which he was condemned by the presbyters of Samyrna. Hippolytus (Noet. 1) attests that Noetus claimed that he was Moses and his brother was Aaron (Cf. Encyclopedia of the Early Church, Oxford 1992, vol. 2, p. 599.).

16 His Libyan origin is uncertain. In about 220 A.D he was condemned in Rome by Callistus, as an exponent of Patripassian monarchianism. After the condemnation, either he or his disciples tried to spread monarchian doctrine in Libya and Egypt, and developed it in opposition to the Logos-theology of Origen and his school. They extended the original Patripassian doctrine to take in the Holy Spirit: one sole God is manifested as Father in the Old Testament, Son in the incarnation, Holy Spirit poured upon the apostles at Pentecost. In this way they avoided, at least formally, Noetus's statement, which had met such opposition, that the Father himself had been incarnate and had suffered. They also maintained against Origen's doctrine of three distinct hypostaseis in the Trinity, that Father, Son and Holy Spirit constitute a single prosopon and a single hypostases. (Cf. Encyclopedia of the Early Church, Oxford 1992, vol. 2, p. 748-749.)

II. The ***Adoptianists*** also wanted to safeguard the "monarchy" by seeing in Christ just a man whom God adopted as a Son of God for his merits.

In fact it could happen that Modalism and Adoptianism were mixed up.

In chapter seven I will show how Origen is quite familiar with the terms "triad[17]" (*Trias*) and "*Hypostaseis*[18]*."* J.N.D. Kelly says,

> The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are, Origen states, "three Persons" *(Hypostaseis)*[19]. This affirmation that each of the Three is a distinct *hypostaseis* from all eternity, not just as manifested in the "economy," is one of the chief characteristics of his doctrine, and stems directly from the idea of eternal generation[20].

THE HERETICS AND THE ROAD OF FAITH

Origen believes that heretics receive the deposit of faith at first, then they depart from it. He says, "*Heretics, all begin by believing, and afterwards depart from the road of faith and the truth of the church's teaching*[21]."

In their pride, the heretics search the holy Scriptures, not to discover the truth, but to confirm their own doctrines. Henri de Lubac says,

> One must receive the faith of God in the spirit which the church teaches us, and must not do like the heretics who search the Scriptures only in order to find some confirmation of their own doctrines.

---

17 In John 10:39:270; 6:33:166; In Jes. hom. 1:4:1.
18 In John 2:10:75; Contra Celsus 8:12.
19 In John. 20:22:182 f.; 32:16:192 f.
20 J.N.D. Kelly: p. 129.
21 Comm on the Song of the Songs, 3:4. PG 33:179.

Their pride raises them “higher than the cedars of Lebanon” and their sophistries are full of deceit. But it is no use for them to pretend that they have a tradition which comes down from the apostles; they are professors of error.

While the faithful Christian in no way strays from the great tradition, they appeal to secret Scriptures or to secret traditions in order to confirm their lies. Thus they want to make us worship a Christ whom they have invented “in solitude,” while the only authentic Christ reveals Himself “within the house.”

They disfigure those vessels of gold and silver which are the sacred texts, in order to fashion them into objects according to their own fancy.

They are thieves and adulterers who seize the divine words only to deform them by their perverse interpretations.

They are counterfeiters for they have coined their doctrine outside the Church. False teachers, false prophets, spinning out of their own minds what they propound, they are the liars of whom Ezekiel speaks. By a perverse trickery they often cover their idols, that is, their empty dogmas, with sweetness and chastity so that their propositions may be smuggled more easily into the ears of their listeners and lead them astray more surely.

They all call Jesus their master and embrace him; but their kiss is the kiss of Judas[22].

And this also we must know that as the gates of cities have each their own names, in the same way the gates of Hades might be named after the species of sins; so that one gate of Hades is called "fornication," through which fornicators go, and another "denial," through which the deniers of God go down into Hades. And likewise already each of the heterodox and of those who have begotten any

22 Henri De Lubac: Origen, On First Principles, NY., 1966 (Koetschau text together with an introduction and notes by G.W. Butterworth, p. XIV.

"knowledge which is falsely so called (I Tim. 6:20)," has built a gate of Hades - Marcion one gate, and Basilides another, and Valentinus another[23].

The deceiver enemy, the devil, presents stone instead of bread (Luke 11:11). This is what the devil wants, that the stone may be changed into bread, so that men may be fed not by bread but by stone which has the shape of the bread.

If you see the heretics eat their false teachings as bread know that their discussions, and teaching are a stone which the devil presents to us to eat as if it is bread. . .

May we be watchful and so not eat the stone of the devil believing that we are growing up by the Lord's bread[24].

The devil speaks and depends upon the Scripture... May he not deceive me even if he uses the Scripture[25].

✞ ✞ ✞

23 Commentary on Matthew, Book 12:12 (Cf. ANF).
24 In Luc. hom. 29:3,4
25 In Luc. hom. 31:1-7.

THE ANTHROPOMORPHITES, MILLENARIANS, AND LITERALISTS

Origen opposes those whom he calls the "*simpler*" and whom we might call by three names[26]:

I. ***Anthropomorphites***: They take literally the anthropomorphism that the Bible attributes to God and to the soul and consequently picture God as corporeal: against these Origen clearly affirms the absolute incorporeality of the three Persons and of the soul.

Against the *Anthropomorphites* **Origen explains that God is Spirit, and He alone is without body.**

> *But the substance of the Trinity, which is the beginning and cause of all things, 'of which are all things and through which are all things and in which are all things', must not be believed either to be a body or to exist in a body, but to be wholly incorporeal*[27].
>
> *But if it is impossible by any means to maintain this proposition, namely, that any being, with the exception of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, can live apart from a body, then logical reasoning compels us to believe that, while the original creation was of rational beings, it is only in idea and thought that a material substance is separable from them, and that though this substance seems to have been produced for them or after them, yet never have they lived or do they live without it; for we shall be right in believing that life without a body is found in the Trinity alone. Now as we have said above, material substance possesses*

26 Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p. 155-156.
27 De Principiis 4:4 (Henri De Lubac).

such a nature that it can undergo every kind of transformation[28].

II. ***Millenarians*** or ***Chiliasts***, because they take literally the thousand years of Apocalypse 20:1-10. They believe that there will be a first resurrection of the just, who will reign for that time in the heavenly Jerusalem which will come down to earth. They will enjoy with Christ happiness before the final resurrection.

M. Simonetti[29] says, “The decisive reaction against millenarism came from the Alexandrians, who propound a much more spiritual conception of Christian eschatology. Origen rejected the literal interpretation of Rev. 20-21, gives an allegorical interpretation of it and so takes away the Scriptural foundation of millenarism.”

Origen denied the millenarism[30], considering the exegesis of the literalists on some promises concerning the kingdom of Christ was "*unworthy of the divine promises*." He castigates[31] the follies of literalist believers who read the Scriptures like the Jews whose belief in the future Messianic kingdom is understood as political and material rule. They cherish dreams of dwelling in an earthly Jerusalem after the resurrection, where they will eat, drink and enjoy sexual intercourse to their hearts” content[32].

Origen opposes the doctrine of the resurrection current among the millenarians or Chilliest. As regards to ***the state of the body*** after this resurrection, they imagine that it will be identical with the earthly body so that people will eat and drink, marry and procreate, and that the heavenly Jerusalem will be like a city here below. The spiritual body will differ in nothing from the psychic body and everything in the Beyond will be like life in this lower world. For, being anthropomorphisms, the millenarians take liter-

28 De Principiis 2:2 (Cf. Butterworth).
29 Cf. Encyclopedia of the Early Church, Oxford 1992, vol. 1, p. 560.
30 De Principiis 2:11:2-3.
31 De Principiis 2:11:2.
32 105. Kelly, p. 473.

ally the biblical anthropomorphisms. They suppress all difference between the terrestrial body and the glorious body, keeping only the identity[33].

III. The ***Literalists***, because they preserve the literal meaning of the Scriptures, even to the absurd lengths of which anthropomorphism and millenarianism are examples: Origen's doctrine of Scriptural allegory is also directed against these.

✞ ✞ ✞

33 Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p. 250.

ORIGEN'S SOTERIOLOGY[34]

Origen, as a spiritual leader, concentrates on the salvation of his own soul and others' souls almost in all his writings. His heart was inflamed with the desire of the restoration of the souls, and their glorification through the redeeming work of the Savior of the whole world.

1. Origen' systems of theology, spirituality, cosmology, ecclesiology, angelogy, demonolgy, eschatology etc. are aimed at the return of rational creatures to their eternal rest, as we will see afterwards in the following chapters. This cannot be realized by their own efforts, especially men who are in need of the divine grace to enjoy the redeeming work of the Savior.

2. Origen as a disciple of St. Clement of Alexandria faced the Hellenic culture not by attacking philosophy and knowledge, but by assuring that salvation in its reality is the true gnosis and practical philosophy. Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world descended to us as the Illuminator and Educator. He is the Light of the world who redeems us from the darkness of ignorance and grants us victory on the demons who prevent us from the light of truth. Christ is the Heavenly Teacher who renews our nature by His Holy Spirit and raises us with Him to His heaven, as His Bridal chamber, where the Groom reveals His divine mysteries to His bride.

3. Origen collects together in one place[35] all the titles he can find in scripture which express the nature and work of Christ, the Savior of the world. He explains that these titles are mentioned in the Holy Scriptures as promises to us, so that we may find our satisfaction, life, righteousness, salvation and glorification:

---

34 Cf. Frances M. Young: The Use of Sacrificial Ideas in Greek Christian Writers from the New Testament to John Chrysostom, Philadelphia 1979, p. 173 ff

35 Comm. on John 1:22 ff.

the Light of the World (John 8:12),
the Way, the Truth, and the Life (John 14:6),
the Resurrection (John 11:25),
the Door (John 10:9),
the Good Shepherd (John 10:11),
the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last (Rev. 22:13),
the Messiah who is called Christ (Luke 24:14),
the Logos who is God (John 1:1),
the Son of God,
the Savior,
the Power of God (Rom. 1:16),
the Righteousness , the Holiness, and Redemption (1 Cor. 1:30),
the King, Teacher and Master,
the True Vine and Bread,
Living and Dead,
Sword, Servant, Lamb of God, Paraclete, Propitiation, Wisdom, Sanctification, Demiurge, Agent of the good God, High-Priest, Rod, Flower, and Stone.

These ideas Origen draws on at random as he discusses Christ's saving work, in *Homilies* and *Commentaries* which wander unsystematically from point to point.

2. Frances M. Young says that the only work which is at all systematic is the *De Principiis*; even the *Contra Celsum* takes the form of a commentary on Celsus' anti-Christian arguments, and shows little logical sequence of thought. Yet it seems to the present writer that under this confusing array of ideas, there is a basic pattern to Origen's soteriology, a pattern of conflict between good and evil in which Christ achieves the victory.

3. Young also says that most expositors of Origen's thought have regarded his idea of Christ as Revealer, Educator and Enlightenment, that is, as the Logos of God, as his characteristic view of Christ's saving function. That this should be Origen's

main account of Christ's work in the *De Principiis* is not surprising[36], since this was a work dominated by philosophical issues and ideas. It is also prominent in the *Commentary on John*[37]. As the brightness of God's glory, Christ enlightens the whole creation, and, as the Word, he interprets and presents to the rational creation the secrets of wisdom and the mysteries of knowledge. The Only-Begotten is the Truth, because he embraces in himself, according to the Father's will, the whole reason of all things, which he communicates to each creature in proportion to its worthiness[38].

I will speak of the redeeming work of Christ and the meaning of salvation in chapter nine.

✞ ✞ ✞

36 De Principiis 1:2:6-8; 3:5:8.
37 Comm. on John 1:23-24, 27, 42.
38 Frances M. Young: The Use of Sacrificial Ideas in Greek Christian Writers from the New Testament to John Chrysostom, Philadelphia 1979, p. 173-174.

6

THE GREEK PHILOSOPHY, KNOWLEDGE, AND FAITH

1. KNOWLEDGE

I have already spoken of "*The School of Alexandria and the Gnostics*[1]*.*"

KNOWLEDGE (*GNOSIS*)

St. Clement attempting to create a true, and authentic and practical Christian "*gnosis*," constantly uses the word *Gnostic* to mean "spiritual believer." He does not separate knowledge (*gnosis*) from spirituality, while Origen never denotes by this term the Christian "spirituality," but he uses the Pauline terms *teleios,* perfect, or *pneumatikos,* spiritual[2]. The word *gnostikos* is very rare and is only found once applied to the spiritual, in a fragmented document, with a clearly ironical intention directed at those who hold to the supposed *gnosis*[3].

THIRST FOR KNOWLEDGE

In the School of Alexandria, Origen had learned how to thirst after wisdom till he rested in God Himself. "The desire for wisdom," as St. Clement says, "grows when it is inspired and fed by habits of study, and it grows in proportion to the growth of the student's faith[4]." "He who, therefore, has God resting in him will not desire to seek elsewhere. At once leaving all hindrances, and

---

1 School Of Alexandria, N.J. 1994, p. 76 ff.
2 Cf. Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p. 99.
3 Cf. Henri Crouzel: Origen, Harper & Row, 1989, p. 116.
4 Cf. R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder, 1944, p. 11.

despising all matter which distracts him, he cleaves to heaven by knowledge, and passing through the spiritual essences, and all rule and authority, he touches the highest thrones, hasting to that alone for the sake of which he alone knows... For works follow knowledge, as the shadow follows the body[5].”

KNOWLEDGE AND CHURCH LIFE

The deans and students of the School of Alexandria looked to the Christian life or to Church life as a source of unceasing learning of the divine knowledge. The true members of the Church are the friends of wisdom, and the students of faith are students of true knowledge. R. Cadiou says,

> Thus it happened that, from the day a student enrolled at the Academy, he was taught to regard the life of a Christian as a progressive introduction to knowledge of the divine. He learned to see ***the Church as a long course in the study of religion***, a course which admitted of several degrees. And he absorbed the general principle of the Academy, which made a distinction between the two kinds of Christian, the simple and the perfect.
>
> In the eyes of Origen, as in those of Clement, the Church has its privileged souls; they are the friends of wisdom, and they either cultivate the spirit in lives of personal holiness or dedicate themselves to philosophical research. Beyond this group is the main body of the faithful, content to eat humbler fare[6].

KNOWLEDGE AS THE ASSURANCE OF SALVATION

As I said before, the Alexandrians were interested in the "*gnosis*," not merely for the delight of their minds, but rather for the satisfaction of the soul. The "*knowledge*" for them is an experi-

---

5 Stromata 7:13.

6 R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder, 1944, p. 9.

ence of the unity with the Father in the Only-begotten Son by the Holy Spirit. Through the true knowledge of the Holy Trinity we attain the new risen life in Christ, by the work of the Holy Spirit, instead of spiritual death which we had suffered[7].

St. Clement insists that the goal of Christian education is "practical, not theoretical. Its aim is to improve the soul, not to teach, and to train it up to a virtuous, not an intellectual life[8]."

R. Cadiou in his book, “Origen” says,

> Not without reason did the students who followed the elementary classes at Alexandria long for the special knowledge of God which Clement had promised them. In the common conviction among all the various sects of the day, this special knowledge of God was an assurance of salvation; it was supposed to be mysteriously imparted to special individuals who were born with the gift of unlocking the secrets of the divine. Such special individuals were considered to differ essentially from the common run of men[9].

For Origen, knowledge is not just an intellectual meditation on God and His glory, but it is a daily experience in our worship and life. Therefore it is the same thing as union with God and love. To ask him the question whether blessedness is knowledge or love would be for him nonsense, for knowledge is love. For him there is no distinction between intellectual and spiritual knowledge[10].

Origen relies on the Hebrew meaning of the verb to **know**, used to express the **human act of love**: “Adam knew his wife Eve.” Such is the ultimate definition of knowing compounded with love in union. This last quotation excludes all pantheism: just as

---

7 School of Alexandria, N.J. 1994, Book 1, p. 194.
8 See Carl A. Volz: Life and Practice in the Early Church, Minneapolis, 1990, p. 103, 222; Paidagogos, 1:1..
9 R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder, 1944, p. 8.
10 Cf. Henri Crouzel: Origen, p. 99.

the man and the woman are “two in one flesh” so God and the believer become two in ‘one and the same spirit’[11].

According to Origen, knowledge inflames our love, grants us perfection of the soul, its purification, and thus it attains likeness to the Son of God. The goal of our spiritual life is to attain knowledge, through which we share fellowship with Christ, meet Him as if face to face and to be in His likeness. Knowledge develops both the filiation and the glorification[12].

H. Crouzel says that knowledge is a vision or a direct contact, dispensing with the mediation of the sign, the image, the word, which are rendered necessary here below by our corporeal condition[13]. It is participation in its object, better still it is union, ‘mingling’ with its object, and love. In the state of blessedness, we repeat, the saved will have been taken, as it were, into the Son, yet without pantheism, for they will see God with the very eyes of the Son[14]...

The apostolic life of the preacher and teacher only has value if its aim is contemplation; and contemplation blossoms into apostolic action. To see Jesus transfigured on the mountain, and thus to contemplate the divinity of the Word seen through his humanity - the Transfiguration is the symbol of the highest knowledge of God in his Son which is possible here below - one must, with the three apostles, make the ascent of the mountain, symbolizing the spiritual ascent. Those who remain in the plain see Jesus “with no form nor comeliness” (Isa. 53:2), even if they believe in his divinity: for these spiritual invalids He is simply the Doctor who cares for them. Or to use another image from the Gospels Jesus speaks to the people in parables out of doors; He explains them

11 Henri Crouzel: Origen, Harper & Row, 1989, p. 117-118.
12 Henri Crouzel, p. 117.
13 Henri Crouzel, p. 116.
14 Henri Crouzel, p. 116.

to the disciples indoors: so one must go into the house in order to begin to understand[15]..

> *We conclude from these words (Luke 1:2) that knowledge sometimes is an aim in itself, but deeds crown it... To be satisfied with knowledge without applying it, it becomes a useful science. As science is correlated to the practical deeds so knowledge to the ministry of the Word[16].*

KNOWLEDGE AND FREEDOM[17]

Origen considers the grace of knowledge a free gift of the divine love. It must be received freely by man and ascesis is the witness to this will on man's part. Origen criticized the conception held by the Montanists of trance as unconsciousness and that shows that God does not take possession of a soul without its consent.

Knowledge is ***the meeting of two freedoms, that of God and that of man***. That of God on the one hand, for a divine Being is only seen if He is willing to make Himself visible[18]. The *Contra Celsus[19]* clearly asserts, dealing with passages from Plato that Celsus brings up, the whole distance that separates Christian grace from the approximations known to Plato and the Platonists. Of course, for the latter, the divine realities can only be seen in the light of God[20], but this light will necessarily come to anyone who places himself in certain conditions of ascesis. Now, Origen recalls, the grace of knowledge is a free gift of the divine love. It must be received freely by man and ascesis is the witness to this will on man's part. Origen criticized the conception held by the Montanists of trance as unconsciousness and that shows that God does not take possession of a soul without its consent.

---

15 Henri Crouzel, p. 101.
16 In Luke. hom 1:5.
17 Cf. Henri Crouzel, p.100.
18 In Luke. hom. 3:1.
19 Contra Celsus 7:42.
20 Contra Celsus 7:45.

HUMAN KNOWLEDGE AND DIVINE PROVIDENCE

There is strength to the summary of Hal Koch, that Origen's theology involves a meeting of divine providence and human learning: *pronoia* and *paideusis*. The education of humanity takes place through the providential teaching of the Incarnate Word; Logos is *Paidagogos* [21]. Origen at the end has to grapple with the logic of this dynamic role for Logos: how can such lively *paideia* spring from the changeless One? [22]

HUMAN KNOWLEDGE AND CHURCH TRADITION

Origen as a churchman trusts in the Church Tradition as a source of the Christian dogmas

and doctrines, but in broadmindedness and openness of heart, for he believes that the human mind is a divine gift, and in itself is an image of deity. Like knows like; mind comprehends Mind. Joseph C. McLelland says,

> He is careful to distinguish between two areas of thought. The first is that in which he is reasoning within the common confession of faith, where "*that alone is to be accepted as truth which differs in no respect from ecclesiastical and apostolic tradition*[23]" The second is that in which doctrine is still "*open,*" where he is relatively free to speculate, to suggest *gymnastikos* theories about the origin of the soul, angelogy, and especially cosmogony and eschatology. These latter two doctrines become at Origen's hands an eternal creation and the famous *apokatastasis* or restorationism which has characterized his name in popular opinion ever since[24]...

---

21 H. Koch: Pronoia und Paideusis: studien Uber Origénes und sein Verhdltnis zum Platonismus, Leipzig 1932,3, p. 62ff.
22 Joseph c. McLelland: God The Anonymous, Massachusetts, 1976, p. 105.
23 Joseph c. McLelland: God The Anonymous, p. 94.
24 De Principiis 2.

Origen, of course, has only begun; he proceeds to expound the way in which there is positive human knowledge of God. He shows that although God is incomprehensible there is no absolute darkness but a "*veritable esoterisme*" of Light[25].

The argument of Celsus which Origen seeks to refute in 7:32f turns on whether the Christian doctrine of the resurrection is worthy of the invisible God or not. Origen agrees with Celsus' idealist presupposition, and states: "*The knowledge of God is not derived from the eye of the body, but from the mind which sees that which is in the image of the Creator and by divine providence has received the power to know God*[26]."

There is an intellectual sight which is different in kind from sensible sight: "*in proportion to the degree in which the superior eye is awake and the sight of the senses is closed, the supreme God and His Son, who is the Logos and Wisdom and the other titles, are comprehended and seen by each man*[27]."

THE WISDOM OF GOD AND THE WISDOM OF THE WORLD

Henri De Lubac says,

Nor does Origen confuse wisdom with wisdom. We cite once again his clear declaration against Celsus' haughty reflections: "Human wisdom is what we call 'the wisdom of the world,' which is 'foolishness with God.' But the divine wisdom, which is different from the human if it really is divine, comes by the grace of God who gives it to

25 Joseph c. McLelland: God The Anonymous, p. 100; H. Urs Von Balthasar: Parole et Mystere chez Origéne, Paris 1957, p. 33; M. Harl: Origéne et la Fonction Revelatrice du Verbe Incarne, Paris 1958,p. 86ff.; R.P. Festugiere: La Revelation d'Hermes Trismegiste, Paris, vol. 4,p. 92ff.
26 Contra Celsus 7:33.
27 Contra Celsus 7:39; Joseph McLelland: God The Anonymous, p. 100; Harl, p. 188f.

those who prove themselves to be suitable persons to receive it... Celsus describes as very uneducated and as slaves and as quite ignorant those who... Have not been educated in the learning of the Greeks. But the people whom we call very uneducated are those who are not ashamed to address lifeless objects... However, there is some excuse here for the error.[28]"

It is not astonishing that certain writers, who have clear ideas on the arts and sciences and who sometimes display an ability to discuss questions of morals or to solve problems in literature, should remain in ignorance of God. Their intellect is like the vision of a man who can see every object except the sun and who never lifts his eyes toward the sun's rays[29].

OUR CONTINUOS PROGRESS IN KNOWLEDGE

Although Origen sees God more as Light than as Darkness, he sometimes alludes to the Darkness in which God hides Himself. But this relates to our ignorance which belongs to our carnal condition. The goal is knowledge 'face to face,' coinciding with the perfect 'likeness[30].' In the resurrection we shall have a knowledge like that of the angels, though Origen does not say clearly how perfect that knowledge is[31].

V V V

28 Henri De Lubac: Origen, On First Principles, NY., 1966 (Koetschau text together with an introduction and notes by G.W. Butterworth, p. XVIII.
29 In Ps., 4:7 PG 12:1164; Cf. In Gen. hom. 3 PG 12:89; R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder, 1944, p. 56.
30 Henri Crouze, p. 100.
31 Henri Crouzel, p. 103.

2. KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

HUMAN LANGUAGE

According to St. Clement, "God of the universe who is above all speech, all conception, all thought, **can never be committed to writing**, being inexpressible even by His own power[32]." "God is invisible and **beyond expression by words**..., what is divine is unutterable by human power (2 Cor. 12:4; Rom. 11:33)... The discourse concerning God is most difficult to deal with[33]."

Joseph C. McLelland writes,

> If God is unknowable He cannot be spoken of, and therefore man cannot give him a name. Such was the theology of the Platonists: for Albinus, God is transcendent so decisively that he is unspeakable and therefore unnamable (*arretos, akatonomastos*). Celsus had also stated that "he cannot be named" and Origen takes this up as worthy of a detailed reply. Celsus is right, Origen states, if he means that our descriptions by word or expression cannot show the divine attributes. But this applies to attribution on any level - "*who can express in words the sweetness of a date and that of a dried fig*?" There is difficulty in finding names to distinguish between qualities even in this regard[34]. But if by "name " one means that he can "*show something about His attributes in order to guide the hearer and to make him understand God's character insofar as some of His attributes are attainable by human nature*," then this is a valid mode of speaking[35].

---

32 Stromata 5:10:65.
33 Ibid. 5: 12.
34 Contra Celsus 6:65; cf. 7:43. "we affirm that it is not only God who is nameless, but that there are also others among the beings inferior to him".
35 Cf. Joseph McLelland: God The Anonymous, p. 102-103.

Origen states that through His infinite love God uses even our human language and expressions to make a communication with us.

"For I am the Lord your God, a jealous God"(Exod. 20:5). Behold the kindness of God! He Himself assumes the weakness of human dispositions that He might teach us and make us perfect. For who, when he hears the phrase, "a jealous God," is not immediately astonished and thinks of the defect of human weakness?!

But God does and suffers all things for our sake. It is so we can be taught that He speaks with dispositions which are known and customary to us. Let us see, therefore, what this statement means: "I am a jealous God[36]*."*

Furthermore, Origen's doctrine of God unreservedly accepts the traditional Platonic definitions that God is immutable, impassible, beyond time and space, without shape or color, not needing the world, though creating it by His goodness[37]. Although he speaks of God's divine impassability and that He has no human emotion[38], he insists upon declaring God's true Fatherhood through love, expressed to us through human language as if He has every feeling and emotion.

Moreover, does not the Father and God of the Universe somehow experience emotion, since He is long-suffering and of great mercy?!

Or do you know that when He distributes human gifts He experiences human emotion?!

For 'the Lord your God endured your ways, as when man endures his son' (Deut. 1:31)[39].

---

36 In Exodus hom 8:5 (Cf. Ronad E Heine- Frs. of the Church, vol. 71.)
37 Contra Celsum 6:62.
38 Origen: De Principiis 2:4:4, In Num, hom 16:3.
39 In Ezech. hom. 6:6.

GOD IS INCOMPREHENSIBLE[40]

1. For Origen, God who is incomprehensible, reveals Himself, His nature, and His characteristics to man, not as an object of showing or curiosity, but for man's advantage. God wants His closest and dearest creature to know Him so that he may imitate Him and share with Him His life. In other words, ***establishing the Spiritual Church as the Bride of Christ is the true aim of theology or of our faith and knowledge of God.***

> *God is not an object of curiosity, but a free and sovereign Being who gives Himself to be known by a created being, who is equally respected for its own subjective integrity and expected to be willingly and freely related to God. This faith has gathered together men from east, west, north, and the south into the knowledge of God*[41].

2. God is immaterial, transcendent, and incomprehensible, but ***He reveals Himself to men especially when they have pure minds***.

> *There is a kinship between the human mind and God; for the mind is itself an image of God, and therefore can have some conception of the divine nature, especially the more it is purified and removed from matter*[42].

3. Through God's help and grace man can acknowledge Him. Joseph C. McLelland writes,

> Man knows God, Origen answers Celsus, "*by looking at the image of the invisible God,"* that is "*by a certain divine grace, which does not come about in the soul without God's action, but with a sort of inspiration*". Plato had thought God difficult to know, but not impossible, whereas "*it is probable that the knowledge of God is beyond the capacity of human nature (that is why there are such great*

---

40 Cf. Fr. Tadros Y. Malaty: God, N.J. 1994; William G. Rusch: The Trinitarian Controversy, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1980, p. 13ff.
41 Comm. on the Proverbs PG 17:229. (See Emilianos Timiadis: The Nicene Creed, 1983, P.22.)
42 De Principiis 1:1:5 - 7.

errors about God among men), but that by God's kindness and love to man and by a miraculous divine grace the knowledge of God extends to those who by God's foreknowledge have been previously determined, because they would live lives worthy of Him after He was made known to them[43]".

4. God who is absolutely impassible has no human motions, at the same time ***He is not a solid Being***, for He is "Love," unique Love. Love is expressed by our human nature that we might acknowledge it and accept it, therefore we read in the Holy Scriptures that God grieves at our falling into sin; He hates sin and rejoices in our repentance. Origen gives many examples from the Scriptures, then concludes,

Now all these passages where God is said to lament, or rejoice, or hate, or be glad, are to be understood as spoken by Scripture in metaphorical and human fashion. For the divine nature is remote from all affection of passion and change, remaining ever unmoved and untroubled in its own summit of bliss[44].

Rowan A. Greer says:

Origen means to be insisting upon the Biblical witness that God is the Creator and Sovereign Lord of the created order. And he is able to expound the idea not only by using Scripture, but also by employing philosophical ideas. One line of argumentation lies behind the discussion in *De Principiis 4:1-2*. God is not contained by the created order, but He informs it with His own presence and power. The theme is originally Jewish and may be found both in Philo and in the rabbinical writings...

Origen's argument is that to regard God as the first principle of the universe requires that He be defined as a unity and incorporeal. As he points out, the very notion of

43 Contra Celsus 7:43, 44; Joseph McLelland: God The Anonymous, Massachusetts, 1976, p. 104.
44 In Numb. hom. 33:2.

matter or corporeality carries with it the implication of diversity ... Thus, if God is to be transcendent and the first principle of the universe, He must be one. And if He is one, then He is beyond the diversity characteristic of corporeality... the Biblical and philosophical themes are united in a vision of God who is not limited by space or time and so is the Lord of creation...

In His relation to God, the Word is God in precisely the same way that no real difference can be made between a thought and its thinker[45].

5. Origen began by acknowledging that God is incomprehensible. God ***is known only indirectly*** at best, by inference from ***the universe and the created order.*** God being perfect brought into existence a world of spiritual beings, souls, co-eternal with himself. Origen believes that God must always have a universe related to him, but the universe is not regarded as a second uncreated principle alongside God[46].

KNOWLEDGE OF GOD AND GRACE

"No man has known the Father save the Son, and he to whom the Son may reveal Him" (Matt. 11:27; Luke 10:22). He shows that God is known by a certain divine grace which does not come into the soul without God's working but with a sort of inspiration [or "God-possession"]. Indeed it is likely that the knowledge of God is beyond the reach of human nature - hence the great blunders men make about God - but that by God's kindness and love toward man and by a miraculous and divine grace the knowledge of God reaches those who have been determined in advance by God's foreknowledge, because they

45 Cf. Comm. in John. I.32, 42; II.2,5; Rowan A. Greer: Origen, Paulist Press, 1979, page 7, 8.
46 De Principiis 1:2:10; 2:9:1.

would live worthily of Him when He was made known to them[47].

Out of love to man God manifested the truth and that which may be known of Himself (Rom. 1:18) not only to those who are devoted to Him but also to some who know nothing of pure worship and piety toward Him[48].

REVELATION OF GOD

Our Savior, therefore, is the image of the invisible God, in as much as compared with the Father Himself He is the truth; and as compared with us, to whom He reveals the Father, He is the image by which we come to the knowledge of the Father, whom no one knows save the Son, and He to whom the Son is pleased to reveal Him[49].

All who believe and are assured that 'grace and truth came through Jesus Christ' (John 1:17), and who know Christ to be the truth, agreeably to His own declaration, 'I am the truth' (John 14:6), derive the knowledge which incites men to a good and happy life from no other source than from the very words and teaching of Christ. And by the words of Christ we do not mean those only which He spoke when He became man and tabernacled in the flesh; for before that time, Christ, the Word of God was in Moses and the prophets[50].

VISION OF GOD AND HIS ANGELS

Jean Daniélou writes, “Celsus had agreed with Plato that the vision of God is within man’s reach but at the price of great

47 Contra Celsus 7:44.
48 Contra Celsus 7:46.
49 Origin: De Principiis, Book 1, Ch. 2, Section 6.
50 Origen: De Principiis, Preface l; “The Ante-Nicene Fathers", Vol. 4, 1979, by Roberts and Donaldson. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Michigan. USA.

effort, and that it is the privilege of the few. Origen rejects both propositions[51]."

We shall see the Father face to face, but only because we shall be "One spirit with the Lord." In this sense only Origen believed that the work of Redemption and Mediation will have an end. We shall see the Father no longer in the Son, but as the Son sees Him, in the day when God shall be all in all[52].

Origen asserts the following realties:

1. None can see God or His angels except through pure heart.

2. This vision as a divine gift, is offered to us according to His will and desire. For God and His angels are present with us, but we don't see them. The Divine grace grants the just to see God by their inner sight.

3. Even when man sees God, he cannot see Him as He is.

God was seen by Abraham or by other holy ones through divine grace. The eye of the soul of Abraham was not the only cause, but God offered Himself to be seen by the righteous man, who was worthy of seeing Him.

Probably there is an angel near us now while we are speaking, but cannot see him because of our unworthiness.

The (bodily) eye or the inner one may endeavor to attain this vision, but unless the angel himself reveals himself to us those who have the desire cannot see him.

This reality does not concern the vision of God only in this present age but also when we shall leave this world. For God and His angels do not appear to all men after their departure immediately... but this vision is granted to the pure heart which is prepared to see God.

---

51 Jean Daniélou: Origen, NY 1955,p. 107.
52 Charles Bigg: The Christian Platonists of Alexandria, Oxford 1913, p. 211.

A man whose heart is burdened with sin is not in the same place with he whose heart is pure, the latter sees God, while the other does not see Him.

I think this happened when Christ was here in the flesh on earth. For not all who beheld Him saw God. Pilate and Herod the ruler beheld Him and at the same time did not see Him (as God).

Three men, therefore, came to Abraham at midday; two come to Lot and in the evening (Gen. 19:1[53]). For Lot could not receive the magnitude of midday light, but Abraham was capable of receiving the full brightness of the light[54].

First, however, observe that the Lord also was present with Abraham with two angels, but two angels alone proceeded to Lot. And what do they say? "The Lord has sent us to consume the city and destroy it" (Gen 19.13.) He, therefore, received those who would give destruction. He did not receive Him who would save. But Abraham received both Him who saves and those who destroy[55].

"The Lord blessed Isaac," the text says, "and he dwelt at the well of vision." (Gen. 25:11) This is the whole blessing with which the Lord blessed Isaac: that he might dwell "at the well of vision." That is a great blessing for those who understand it. Would that the Lord might give this blessing to me too, that I might deserve to dwell "at the well of vision[56]."

But if anyone rarely comes to church, rarely draws from the fountains of the Scriptures, and dismisses what he hears at once when he departs and is occupied with other affairs, this man does not dwell "at the well of vision." Do you want me to show you who it is who never withdraws

---

53 Cf. Philo QG. 4.30
54 In Gen. hom. 4:1 (Cf. Heine).
55 In Gen. hom. 4:1 (Cf. Heine).
56 In Gen. hom. 11:3 (Cf. Heine).

from the well of vision? It is the apostle Paul who said: "But we all with open face behold the glory of the Lord" (Cf. 2 Cor. 3:18)[57].

The vision that sees God is not physical but mental and spiritual; and ... this is why the Savior was careful to use the right word and say "no man knows the Father save the Son", not... "sees." Again, to those whom He grants to see God, He gives the "spirit of knowledge" and the "spirit of wisdom", that through the Spirit himself they may see God (Isa. 11:2)[58].

The organ which knows God is not the eye of the body but the mind, for it sees that which is in the image of the Creator, and it has received by the providence of God the faculty of knowing Him[59].

For now, even if we are deemed worthy of seeing God with our mind and heart, we do not see Him as He is but as He becomes to us in order to bring His providence to bear on us.... [60].

Even if we are deemed worthy of seeing God,... we do not see Him as He is, but as He (accommodates Himself to us) [61].

GOD IS LOVE

Although the Early Alexandrian theologians spoke of God's divine impassability and that He has no human emotion[62], they insisted upon declaring His true Fatherhood through love, expressed to us through human language as if He has every feeling and emotion. **Origen** states, 'Moreover, does not the Father and God of the

57 In Gen. hom. (Cf. Heine).
58 Comm. on Song of Songs 3.
59 Contra Celsus 7:33.
60 Comm. on Matt. 17:19 on 22:1..
61 Comm. Matt 17. 17ff.
62 Origen: De Principiis 2:4:4, In Num, hom 16:3.

Universe somehow experience emotion, since He is long-suffering and of great mercy?! Or do you know that when He distributes human gifts He experiences human emotion?! For 'the Lord your God endured your ways, as when man endures his son' (Deut. 1:31)..[63]

Through love we can acknowledge God

We must realize how many things ought to be said about (this) love, and also what great things need to be said about God, since He Himself is "Love." For "as no one knows the Father except the Son, and he to whom it shall please the Son to reveal Him... Moreover, in like manner, because He is called Love, it is the Holy Spirit, who proceeds from the Father, who alone knows what is in God; just as the spirit of man knows what is in man (1 Cor. 2:11). Here then the Paraclete, the Spirit of Truth, who proceeds from the Father (John 15:26), ranges, searching for souls worthy and able to receive the greatness of this love, that is of God, which He desires to reveal to them[64].

V V V

63 In Ezech. hom. 6:6.
64 Comm. on Song of Songs, Prologue.

3. PHILOSOPHY

I have already spoken about "*The School of Alexandria and Philosophical Attitudes*[65]." I discussed Origen's view on Greek philosophy, why did the School of Alexandria use philosophy, and to what extent.

Philosophy and rhetorical training were the two principal ways to complete an education in Origen's time, and studying philosophy was less likely to offend Christians than the study of literature which he had already completed.

Origen knew and respected ***the works of Numenius*** of Apamea, a Platonist who lived during the second century A.D, but only fragments of Numenius' work survived.

"Who is Plato," Numenius asked, "but a Moses speaking Attic Greek?" In the course of *On the Good,* Numenius used both the Old and New Testaments, interpreted allegorically, to substantiate his thesis. Similarly, Philo and St. Clement reached out to Platonism to understand the deeper meaning of the Bible.

We can summarize Origen's view of philosophy in the following points:

1. Like St. Clement, Origen believed that all past philosophy can be, and must be, placed ***in the service of Christ***. He once told St. Gregory Thaumaturgus there could be no genuine piety in a man who despised philosophy: "*a gift which man alone of all the creatures of the earth has been deemed honorable and worthy enough to possess*."

Sometimes he praises philosophy and science. In his letter to St. Gregory Thaumaturgus he states that philosophy looks like gold which the Hebrews took from Egypt, instead of using it in

---

65 School of Alexandria, Book 1, p.97 ff.

establishing the Tabernacle they made the golden bull. He knows Philosophy well, but uses it as a theologian convinced of his right to dig his wells in the land of the Philistines in spite of their recriminations [66].

Origen studied philosophy not out of love, but to preach to those who had a philosophical education. In fact he gained many students from the Museum. In this he initiates St. Pantenaus.

2. Through adopting certain Platonic attitudes, Origen aimed ***to refute the first principles of Christian Gnosticism and Stoicism***. Correspondences between Platonism and the needs of Christian theology in its battle with the Gnostics help explain the extraordinary power of Platonism over Origen's thought, a power greater than he himself was aware. He became convinced that false doctrine was bad philosophy, that true doctrine was true philosophy, and that good philosophy is Platonism. Origen knew how important Platonism was to his understanding of God and God's relation to the world, even if he ostensibly consider philosophy, as Clement did, a preparatory discipline, useful for making the Christians aware of what was already there, beneath the veil of allegory, in the Bible. He does not always seem to have been aware, even as aware as Clement was in his own case, of the extent to which Platonism molded his understanding of the Christian life.

3. Philosophy was the handmaiden, but he would never allow it to become the master[67]. Jaroslav Pelikan[68] says, "One of the most decisive differences between a theologian and a philosopher is that the former understands himself as, in Origen's classic phase, '*a man of the church*[69],' a spokesman for the Christian community."

---

66 In Gen. hom. 13:3; Henri Crouzel: Origen, Harper & Row, 1989, p.
67 Robert Payne: Fathers Of The Eastern Church, Dorset Press, New York, 1985, P. 48.
68 Jaroslav Pelikan: The Christian Tradition, vol. 1, Chicago, 1971, p. 3.
69 Hom. on Lev. 1:1; Hom. on Jos. 9:8; Hom. on Isa. 7:3.

Origen was not like his teacher St. Clement, a philosopher who was converted to Christianity, therefore he was not so kind towards the Greek philosophy. He is sensitive to the beauty of the Greek language, he praises it in others, but care about style is inconsistent with the serious nature of his apostolic task[70]. He concentrated on assuring its falseness and insufficiency, because he was **afraid from the beauty of the philosophical expressions** that may deceive believers.

In his speech of the wall of Jericho, he calls philosophy the high walls which support the world. We are in need of the Lord Jesus (Joshua) who sends the priests and apostles to use the silver trumpets (Num. 10:2, Ps. 98:6) presenting the heavenly teachings to destroy these walls of Jericho.

The wedge of gold which Achau stole (Jos. 1:21) is the spoiled philosophies which appear brilliant, deceiving the believers by the sweet golden tongue.

If you take it and put it in your tent, i.e., you permitted their teaching to enter in your heart, you defile the whole Church. This is what the wicked Valentinus and Basilides did. They stole the wedge of gold which was in Jericho and tried to transfer the evil philosophical principals to the church, which defile all the Church of God[71].

He warns us from philosophy, for the pagans abused it by mixing there own errors with the truth, and thus it cannot teach the will of God[72]. He also declares that philosophy has no power to renew our nature.

4. Origen believes that ***Platonism contains truths present in the biblical account about reality***. His purpose was to recover Plato for Platonism, and then Platonism for Christianity[73].

---

70 Henri Crouzel: Origen, Harper & Row, 1989, p. 57
71 In Jos. hom 7:7.
72 In Psalms 36:3,6.
73 Ibid., 28.

Plato is certainly for Origen the high point of Greek thought, of human thought apart from revelation, and he constantly draws inspiration from him, at least in the form in which Middle Platonism presented him. In the controversy with Celsus over knowledge of God many texts of Plato are called to witness by Celsus and sometimes admired and sometimes contradicted by Origen on the basis of the Christian revelation. In spite of his great admiration for Plato, Origen retains his independence of him and is able to criticize him from the standpoint of his Christian faith[74].

He sets an immediate distance between himself and Plato by sharp accusations that Plato was a pagan who, despite the high insights of dialogues such as the *Republic* and the *Phaedo*, failed to break with polytheism[75]. It is significant that the complaint is directed not against Plato's metaphysics but against his behavior. Origen simply assumes as axiomatic the Platonic conception of the intelligible world with the sensible world as a reflection of it. For Origen the idea is fundamental to his view of revelation[76].

5. Origen ***does not treat all the schools alike*** and passes a different judgment on each; at the bottom of the order of merit is *Epicureanism*, "philosophy's shame" with its morality of pleasure which is the opposite of the Cross of Christ, its negation of Providence which makes it a veritable atheism, its atomic physics, its refusal to recognize man's spiritual privileges. With the Platonists and Stoics he is against Aristotle's doctrine of three kinds of good[77].

He does not believe in a certain philosophy, but chooses what is good in every theory.

Rowan A Greer says,

---

74 Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p. 157.
75 Contra Celsum 3:47; 6:3,4; 7:42,44.
76 Henry Chadwick: History and Thought of the Early Church, London, 1982, p. 188.
77 Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p. 156-157.

We are left in a circle. On the one hand, Origen begins with scripture, and his careful reading of it yields the theological conclusions that comprise his views as a whole. From this point of view he is certainly a Christian and, indeed, a Biblical theologian.

On the other hand, Origen approaches scripture with preconceptions that are in great part determined by his philosophical training and bent of mind. At this level it is possible to charge him with simply importing Greek philosophy into his interpretation of scripture. The resulting puzzle is not easily solved...

In the first instance Origen's importance lies in bridging the gap between Christianity and the Graeco-Roman world. He was able to expound the Gospel in terms meaningful to his pagan contemporaries and perhaps more important, to Christians who retain that culture even upon conversion...

This is Origen's point of view and his conviction is that Christianity had the power to transform the old culture and make it fruitful[78].

6. He deals with many philosophical problems, such as man's free will, the divine Providence, the relationship between God and man etc.

7. According to Origen, the main aim in studying philosophy is to build up a Christian philosophy, that is to say theology. After destroying Hesebon, the ‘city of thoughts,’ the Christian does not leave it in ruins but rebuilds it in his way, using the materials that suit him in what remains of the demolished town[79]. Thus, it is the responsibility of the Church to establish the true philosophy instead of the false ones. Origen states that Celsus misunder-

78 Rowan A. Greer: Origen, Introduction.
79 In Num. hom. 13:2.

stands Pauline texts, therefore he accuses the Christians of banishing all wisdom[80].

The "divine philosophy" is a theology in the broadest sense of the term, with exegetical and spiritual content as well as speculative. On the other hand Origen seems to have no idea of a permanent rational philosophy in Christianity alongside theology. For that he would have needed to distinguish more fully between Reason and Revelation and between Natural and Supernatural. Reason is for him participation in the supernatural Reason of God, his Son, who is also the Revelation. If there are two passages[81] in which a correct distinction is found between natural and supernatural, this distinction is offered in a way that does not seem familiar to him. Origen holds above all to a supernatural in which the natural is implicitly contained. Why have recourse to an imperfect source when perfect learning is given? When God speaks must not every human voice keep silence? The flesh pots of Egypt would be of little value, seeing that we have the manna of Scripture. Indeed it seems that for him philosophy of a purely rational order ceased to exist with the appearance of Christianity, not of course as reflection but as an independent discipline. Philosophy belongs to the past, a productive past, which the present uses for the building up of Christian theology, but does not sustain. The inheritance is accepted, with reservations[82].

AMMONIUS SACCAS AND MIDDLE PLATONISM[83]

Origen studied under the Platonic philosopher Ammonius Saccas (c. 175-242 A.D). Ammonius was originally a Christian, who at some point renounced his faith to embrace Greek philosophy. He had no objection to teaching Christians; in addition to Origen, he taught Heraclas, a future bishop of Alexandria.

---

80 Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p. 161.
81 Contra Celsus 5:23; Comm. on John 1:37.
82 Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p. 161-2.
83 R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder, 1944, p. 149; J.W. Trigg: Origen, p. 66-67.

Origen's decision to study with Ammonius Saccas would not be difficult to explain even if Clement had not been around to urge on him the value of philosophy as a preparation for the deeper Christian mysteries.

Ammonius taught at Alexandria for at least 50 years, from the time of Commodus (192 A.D) to his own death in c. 242 A.D, the year of Gordian III's Persian expedition, which Plotinus joined. He was said to have earned his living as a porter and to have been at one time employed in that capacity at the docks of Alexandria. Born of Christian parents, he turned to the study of philosophy at some unknown date during the reign of Emperor Commodus. However, he retained a reminder of his former occupation, for he was generally known by the name Saccas ("Sack").

R. Cadiou says,

> A contemporary witness asserts that the young Origen followed the lectures of Ammonius Saccas over a period of years. The record is found in the *Treatise against the Christians* which Porphyry wrote in the year 274. "This man, having been a hearer of Ammonius, who had made the greatest proficiency in philosophy among those of our day, with regard to knowledge, derived great benefit from his master."
>
> Eusebius does not deny the influence of Ammonius although it lessens the stature of his hero. On the contrary he confirms Porphyry's statement by quoting a letter written by Origen in the days of his exile. In that letter the great Alexandrian scholar acknowledged his depth to Greek learning. He says that he became a pupil of one whom he calls a master of philosophical sciences. He was then older than the ordinary student, for he informs us that he followed the example of Heraclas, his colleague, "who I have found persevered five years with a teacher of philosophy before I began to attend to these studies." This enables us to fix the year 210 as the earliest date when Origen could have joined the classes of Ammonius. At that date Origen

was more than twenty-five years old. It is true that Ammonius is not mentioned in this letter, but it is obvious from the context that the school of Ammonius is the locale of the studies which Origen refers to[84].

The treatise "*On the agreement between Moses and Jesus*" mentioned by Eusebius[85] can be explained as having been composed by Ammonius whom Eusebius confused with.

Ammonius wrote nothing, and it is notoriously difficult to reconstruct his doctrines, but he taught Origen and Plotinus, the two most influential thinkers of the third century, as well as other men eminent in their time. The historical record is confusing, but it seems that Origen could not have met Plotinus since Origen had left Alexandria permanently before Plotinus became Ammonius' student.

In his lectures he aimed to reconcile the thought of Plato and Aristotle, thus aligning himself with the electic tendency characteristic of Antochus of Ascalon and middle Platonism and later renewed by Platonius and Prophyry.

It is impossible to say just what Origen learned from Ammonius. It may be that, like other great teachers, Ammonius influenced his students more by instilling in them a sympathetic yet critical approach to a great tradition than by passing on his own particular doctrines.

Origen's debt to Ammonius and to the Platonism he mediated appears at every level of Origen's thought, from the language and style he employed to express himself to the deepest convictions he had about the way we can come to share in the being of God. Prophery is correct in implying that Origen was not a member of the brotherhood formed by the disciples of Ammonius, he was just a hearer, with the purpose of using and learning philoso-

84 R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder Book Co., 1944, p. 186.
85 H. E. 6:19:10.

phy for the service of the preaching and finding solutions to the philosophical problems of his time.

What could have persuaded Origen to follow such a Platonism?

As Origen disagrees with the Stoics and some Gnostics that the divine *ousia* was material, that knowledge of God and reality rested on a materialist epistemology, and that everything was determined by fate, he desired to use Platonism to refute arguments. He found himself obliged to follow Ammonius, Maximus, St. Pantaenus, and St. Clement. Each viewed both Platonists and Aristotelians as allies in their attempt to correct falsehoods of Gnosticism and Stoicism.

Thus far, Origen and Plato were in profound agreement in their rejection of the Gnostics, but there was far more to their compatibility than simply their agreement on the goodness of the world and its Creator. The Christianity of Origen's time, even as it rejected the Gnostics' hatred of the world, taught its followers to despise the fundamental cravings for comfort, sex, and the continuation of life itself that tie us to the world. Plato's dictum that we should take flight from this world to become like the divine so far as we can find its echo in Paul's "Set your mind on things that are above, not on things that are on earth" (Col. 3:2). If Plato complained that the body was a prison house in which the soul was tightly bound like an oyster in its shell, Paul asked who would deliver him from this body of death (Rom. 7:24).

What did the Neoplatonists believe?

1. They had many beliefs, but their strongest belief lay in the power of the speculative mind to solve all questions except one through the quiet logic of reasoning. All things could be understood save God alone. ***God is incommensurable and above reason***, and could be apprehended only under three forms - as the infinite, limitless and without thought or form or being; as the one and the good, the source of all that loves; and as the sum of all the powers of the universe.

Out of this superabundance issues the world of ideas, radiating from God like the beams of the sun. From the world of ideas come the souls tainted with the love of sensation and mortal desires and all this world of appearances. *The task of the good man is to ensure that he belongs to the world of ideas rather than to the world of matter, in which at last the heaviest souls dwell*[86].

Ammonius may have made a particular point of the incompatibility between Plato and the Gnostics. Certainly no more fully agreed with Origen in this regard than did Plotinus. Plotinus unambiguously affirmed the goodness of the created order while being aware of its limitations.

2. Another area where Origen found Platonism and Christianity singularly compatible was in their simultaneous insistence on the ***activity of divine providence*** and ***human freedom***.

Origen could read them in Plato himself. Indeed, Paul's "in everything God works for good with those who love him, who are called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28) almost reads like an echo of Plato's "all things that come from the gods work together for the best for him that is dear to the gods."

R. Cadiou says,

> The Platonism of the day was still holding fast to the old concepts; and Origen, even before Plotinus, denounces the timidity of his Platonist adversaries. "*In their excessive fear, certain of the Greeks are of the opinion that future events are determined by necessity and that, if God foresees the future, there is no free will. In fear of excluding from the divine attributes what they call the divine magnificence, they have dared to put forward this impious teaching*[87]." By their vaunted reverence for the dignity of God they sought to justify their assumption that His knowledge determines the future. They were acquainted, of

86 Robert Payne: Fathers Of The Eastern Church, Dorset Press, New York, 1985, P. 47.
87 In Gen. hom. 3 PG 12:61.

course, with the Bible, where the word "magnificence" is one of the titles of Providence and is employed in the text of the Septuagint as a reminder of the marvelous benefits that God showered upon the people of Israel[88].

3. Origen ***distinguished between simple believers who accept the Christian faith on authority and the tiny elite of spiritual Christians*** who seek to know the deep things of God. For Plato, as for Origen, the intellectual elite is a spiritual elite because the intellect is the faculty of the soul which alone can attain to the vision of true being.

ORIGEN AND PLOTINUS

Many scholars deal with the relationship between Origen the Christian and Plotinus the pagan in their main thoughts as two famous disciples of Ammonius Saccas, and have an important and lasting influence upon the thought of succeeding theologians and philosophers. Some scholars believe that they even did not meet face to face, but they had met through certain thoughts.

Plotinus was born in the thirteenth year of the reign of Septimius Severus, i.e. 204 A.D-205 A.D. Aged twenty-eight, i.e. in 323-233 A.D, he attended various teachers of philosophy at Alexandria, but was deeply disappointed by them all until he met Ammonius Saccas, who was a revelation for him and with whom he remained for eleven years. Early in 243 A.D - Ammonius had probably died shortly before - wishing to know the Persian religion, he joined the emperor Gordian III's expedition against Persia. In the first months of 244 A.D, following the failure of the compaign and the death of the emperor, he went to Antioch; that same year he arrived in Rome, where he finally settled and began his teaching career. For ten years, following Ammonius' example, he

88 R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder, 1944, p. 144.

confined himself to oral teaching; only in the first year of Gallienus (253 A.D) did he begin to write some treatises[89].

R. Cadiou says,

> Each of these two men founded a great philosophical system, and the two systems would soon be in opposition to each other. Each man became a professor; Origen of a Christian mysticism, the saner parts of which would later be absorbed into the mentality of the Church, and Plotinus of the last philosophy of Hellenism. Yet we cannot fail to perceive a definite relationship between them, a kinship that sometimes manifests itself in very lively resemblances in their methods, in the problems which they discussed, and in the prefaces and style of their various writings...
>
> The comparison of these two writers shows that they sat at the feet of the same master. For several years before he left Alexandria, about 200 A.D., Origen attended the lectures of Ammonius. Plotinus spent a much longer time with Ammonius, eleven years, during the period when Origen was already settled in Caesarea. The consensus of critical opinion is that "if they seem to agree occasionally or to solve certain problems in a similar way, the explanation is to be found in the fact that they had learned those solutions from the same master[90]."

R. Cadiou, as many other scholars, believes that there is a common philosophical tradition in the thoughts of Origen and Plotinus, although they differ as Origen depends on the church tradition and has biblical concepts. For this reason Porphyry reproaches Origen for having betrayed Plotinus, his classmate of earlier days[91].

---

89 Encyclopedia of the Early Church, Oxford University Press 1992, article Plotinus.
90 Origen, p. 166.
91 R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder Book Co., 1944, p. 183.

As an example Plotinus and Origen ***criticize astrological prediction***, but every one in his own way. Origen asks: "How can the arrangement of the stars today have caused events that happened years ago?" In the same strain Plotinus asks, "How is it possible to say that the stars are the cause of the nobility of man's relatives, since those relatives already possessed their nobility before the stars fell into the position on which the astrologer makes his prediction?"

Another example is Origen and Plotinus's view on the soul of man. Here I refer to the doctoral dissertation of Antonia Tripolitis: ***The Doctrine of the Soul in the Thought of Plotinus and Origen***[92]. In an essay based upon this doctoral dissertation, he writes:

> Fundamental to the thought of both Plotinus and Origen, is their insistence on the divine origin and divine nature of the individual human soul? Their major concern, indeed the goal of their thought, was the ultimate "return" of the soul, by means of knowledge, to unity with its divine source. Both were convinced that the human soul belongs to the world of intelligible reality, and both undertook to describe, each in his own way, the means by which this union with Reality could be attained...[93]

Both Plotinus and Origen believed that the rational soul participates in the divine eternal world and that its origin lies outside of time in the realm of the "intelligible" or divine[94]. However, there is a difference in how each perceives the status of the soul as it participates in the divine, that is, the nature of the soul's participation in its transcendent source. ***According to Plotinus, the human rational soul, which is a person's true nature, is a direct emanation of the divine essence***. It is a part of the divine world, a

---

92 University of Pennsylvania, 1971.

93 (Donald F. Winslow: Disciplina Nostra, Philadelphia 1979) Antonia Trippolitis: Return To The Divine: Salvation In The Thought Of Plotinus And Origen, p. 171.

94 Enn. 4:4:15ff; De Principiis 1:4:3-5.

being which exists on the lowest level of divinity and therefore in continuous and direct relationship with the divine intellect[95]. ***Origen, as a Christian who was influenced by the biblical view of creation, could not accept so exalted a view of human nature, that the rational should be a part of the divine and in direct association with it.*** This biblical pessimism notwithstanding, he did find, through a rational interpretation of the Genesis narratives, the basis for a qualified assertion of the soul's participation in the divine...[96]

Adhering to the Platonic doctrine of "assimilation to God," both Plotinus and Origen maintain that the world of sense is alien to the soul and a hindrance to the soul's realization of its own true nature. Each believes that a person's goal should be to become liberated from the things of sense and to realize one's divine nature as *logos* or *logikos*, thus regaining one's original status. The rational soul possesses within itself both the desire and power for communion with the divine. The attainment of perfection and the regaining of original purity is thus within the grasp of human capability[97].

Both Origen and Plotinus claim that the ability and power, movement and desire, to return to God have from the beginning been implanted by God within the soul[98]. Both Origen and Plotinus state that it is the responsibility of the individual soul to recognize the power within it and,

---

95 Enn. 4:7:15; cf. 4:3:5; 4:4:14-15; 1:1:10; 2:9:2.
96 (Donald F. Winslow: Disciplina Nostra, Philadelphia 1979) Antonia Trippolitis: Return To The Divine: Salvation In The Thought Of Plotinus And Origen, p. 172.
97 Enn. 1:6:8; 4:9:4,8; Comm. on John 2:3: De Principiis 3:6:1; 4:4:9-10; (Donald F. Winslow: Disciplina Nostra, Philadelphia 1979) Antonia Trippolitis: Return To The Divine: Salvation In The Thought Of Plotinus And Origen, p. 173-4.
98 Exhortation to Martyrdom 47; De Principiis 2:11:4ff; cf. Comm. on Cant. 1; and Enn. 4:7:31.

by means of this power, to strive conscientiously to attain the world of intelligible realities[99].

But it is only ***Origen, who holds to the soul's unstable and changeable nature, in whose writings we find the insistence on the soul's inability***, of itself, to realize and utilize the divine power implanted within it to attain ultimate communion with God. It is important for the soul to realize and acknowledge its own limitations, that is, its instability and dependence, ***if it is to turn to God for that grace without which salvation is impossible***[100]. When it does this, the soul begins to receive God's guidance, those personal and individual acts of grace which guide it through the various phases of the ascent towards God, all in accordance with the given soul's maturity and capacity for spiritual progress[101]. It is through the soul's conscientious effort, its imitation of the divine Logos, and with the help and guidance of the Logos, that the soul is capable of being perfected and led to union with God. It is the Logos which provides the soul first with the moral power with which it can do battle against sin, and then with an increase of intellectual insight as it advances towards God, during which advance it begins to perceive and understand those mystical divine truths which heretofore had been hidden from it[102].

From a common Platonic tradition, then, there emerged two views of salvation, one of them pagan and one of them Christian. What they have in common stems from this shared tradition. Where their views differ stems from their respective understanding of human nature. Plot-

---

99 Comm. on Cant. 2; (Donald F. Winslow: Disciplina Nostra, Philadelphia 1979) Antonia Trippolitis: Return To The Divine: Salvation In The Thought Of Plotinus And Origen, p. 175-6.
100 Contra Celsus 7:42ff; cf. 4:50 and Comm. on Cant. 2.
101 Contra Celsus 7:33, 43-4; De Principiis 4:4:9-10.
102 In Num. hom. 27:1-13; In Gen. hom. 1:7, 13; Comm. on Cant. 2, 3; (Donald F. Winslow: Disciplina Nostra, Philadelphia 1979) Antonia Trippolitis: Return To The Divine: Salvation In The Thought Of Plotinus And Origen, p. 176.

inus, as did the pagan Platonists, adopted certain elements of the tradition, reinterpreted them, and developed out of them an exalted anthropology. For Plotinus, the human is essentially divine; the true self, or rational soul, is a member of the intelligible universe, a stable, impassable, immortal, divine entity which is untreated and exists from before all time, eternally sustained in the intelligible universe and in constant communion with the divine. The goal of human existence is to understand this essential divinity and, through virtue and philosophy, to restore it to its proper, original relationship to the One and to the divine world.

Origen, also a Platonist, differed from Plotinus precisely in his adaptation of a more biblically based view of creation and of the imperfection of human nature. Thus he used those Platonic concepts which could the more readily explain his Christian anthropology. ***Origen is less optimistic than Plotinus about the inherent goodness of human nature, but more optimistic about the possibility of eternal salvation for all created beings.*** Heeding the biblical accounts of creation, Origen assigns to the human soul the status of creatureliness albeit created from all eternity in the image of God. As such, the soul has a certain "kinship" with God, is immortal, and capable of participating in the divine life. But it is not essentially divine. As created, the entire soul is basically unstable and in need of God's grace and assistance. The aim of one's life should be to purify oneself from the things of the sense and to return to fellowship with God. For the Christian, this is done through faith in Christ (Logos) and diligent imitation of Him who guides all souls in their return to God[103].

103 Antonia Trippolitis: Return To The Divine: Salvation In The Thought Of Plotinus And Origen, p. 177-8.

MYSTICAL KNOWLEDGE

The only kind of knowledge that really interests Origen is the kind that he calls 'mystical': *mystikos* being the adjective that corresponds to *mysterion*, mystery. The meaning of the expressions 'mystical knowledge *(gnosis)'* or 'mystical contemplation *(theoria)*' is essentially that of knowledge or contemplation of the mystery[104].

H. de Lubac says,

> By the very stuff and movement of his thought, which cannot be separated from the most intimate aspects of his life, it seems to us that Origen was one of the greatest mystics in the Christian tradition[105].

This conception of knowledge is of a mystical kind in the strongest present day sense of the word: it is indisputable that a mystical desire powerfully inspires and directs this work, gives form to this thought, and explains this life[106].

Why has God spoken to men in symbols and why has He only given them the truth in this obscure form?

First, because man is a body, riveted to a corporeal world which is a world of images. There is a close connection between literalness and corporeality: the same reason lay behind the divine anthropomorphisms in the Bible and the Incarnation of the Son[107]..

To man imprisoned in his body, incapable of understanding anything that is not made known to him through his physical organs, God could only reveal Himself through perceptible figures which would bring man little by little to the discovery of God's true nature[108]..

---

104 Cf. Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p. 99.
105 Henri Crouzel: Origen, Harper & Row, 1989, p. 119.
106 Henri Crouzel, p. 118.
107 Henri Crouzel, p. 106.
108 Henri Crouzel, p. 106.

It must be repeated that, according to the measure of spiritual progress made, the veil of ‘image’ which still covers the mystery in the temporal Gospel becomes more and more transparent, revealing the truth that it holds. When one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away, gradually no doubt, and the divinity of Christ shows more and more through his humanity, the flesh no longer forming a screen for those who have 'spiritual eyes' capable of perceiving the divinity[109]..

There is no difficulty in showing the way that leads from one to the other; from the Old Testament to the historical Christ, the spiritual exegesis of the Old Testament: from the historical Christ to Christ present in the soul the spiritual interpretation of the New Testament[110]..

From Christ present in the soul to the Wisdom Christ of whom there is speech among the perfect, to the transfigured Christ, the spiritual ascent symbolized by that of the three apostles climbing the Mountain; from the Wisdom Christ of whom there is speech among the perfect to the Wisdom Christ who is tantamount to the Intelligible World, the beatific vision[111].

V V V

109 Henri Crouzel, p. 112.
110 Henri Crouzel, p. 112-113.
111 Henri Crouzel, p. 113.

4. FAITH

HOW GREAT IS FAITH!

The source and origin of every blessing is to believe in the supreme God[112].

Origen comments on the words of St. Matthew concerning the faith of the centurion, "When Jesus heard it, ***He marveled***, and said to those who followed, 'assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!"

Notice how great is (faith), this which makes Jesus, the Only-Begotten Son of God admire! (Matt. 8:10) The gold, richness, kingdom, and authorities are in his eyes as the shadow and a faded flower. But nothing of these things He admires, nor does He look to it as a great or precious thing, except faith. He admires faith and honors it, looking to it as something acceptable to Him[113].

Lack of faith prevents us from the work of God in our lives. Origen comments on the words, "*He did not there many mighty works because of their unbelief*" (Matt. 13:58), saying,

We are taught by these things that powers were found in those who believed, since "to every one who has, to him more will be given" (Matt. 13:12), but among unbelievers not only did the powers not work, but as Mark wrote, "They could not work" (Mark 7:5). For attend to the words, "He could not there, do any mighty works," for it is not said, "He would not," but "He could not;" as if there came to the power when working co-operation from the faith of him on whom the power was working, but this co-operation was hindered in its exercise by unbelief. See, then, to those who said, "Why could we not cast it out?" He said, "Because of your little faith" (Matt. 17:19,20).

---

112 De Principiis 3:2:5.
113 Catenea Aurea, Fr. Malaty: Luke, p. 197 (Arabic).

And to Peter when he began to sink, it was said, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" (Matt. 14:31)

But, moreover, she who had the issue of blood, who did not ask for the cure, but only reasoned that if she were to touch the hem of His garment she would be healed, was healed on the spot. And the Savior, acknowledging the method of healing, says, "Who touched Me? For I perceived that power went forth from Me" (Luke 8:45, 46)[114].

Without faith man is deprived from the fruits of the Holy Spirit.

Everyone without faith is a deep and hollow "valley": belief in Christ fills him with the fruits of the Spirit - that is, with the virtues[115].

THE PURPOSE OF FAITH

Origen believes that faith in the Holy Trinity and the incarnation of the Logos for attaining unity with God is the way of the true knowledge. The aim of this knowledge is attaining perfection of the soul, through its restoration to its original nature. The soul or *pseki* means in Origen's mind *coldness*, for it lost its original warmth through its estrangement from God. It can become spirit (*pnevma*). In Christ the soul acknowledges the Father, and beholds Him, and thus she becomes a spirit again

FAITH AND KNOWLEDGE

The perfection of faith is knowledge, which in its turn depends on faith as its foundation and its starting-point. Faith retains an indirect character, but knowledge, the fulfillment of faith, is in a certain manner a direct contact with Christ and the mysteries contained in Him[116]..

---

114 Comm. on Matt. 10:18.
115 In Luke. hom 22 on 3:5ff..
116 Henri Crouzel: Origen, p. 113.

Knowledge as Origen understands it starts from faith of which it is in a sense the perfecting[117].

We have faith... in God, who enriches us in all utterance and knowledge (1 Cor. 1:5), that He will enrich us as we strive to observe the spiritual laws, and that, progressing in our construction on the strength of His bounties, we shall attain the crown of the edifice[118].

FAITH AND VICTORY OVER HOSTILE POWERS

Origen comments on the divine words, "If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you shall say unto this mountain: Move from here to there, and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you" (Matt. 17:20).

The mountains here spoken of, in my opinion, are the hostile powers that have their being in a flood of great wickedness, such as are settled down, so to speak, in some souls of men. Whenever, then, anyone has all faith so that he no longer disbelieves in anything contained in the Holy Scriptures, and has faith such as was that of Abraham, who believed in God to such a degree that his faith was counted for righteousness, he has all faith as a grain of mustard seed; then will such a one say to this mountain - I mean, the dumb and deaf spirit in him who is called lunatic,- "Remove hence," clearly, from the man who is suffering, perhaps to the abyss, and it shall remove...

Let us also attend to this, "This kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting" (Matt. 17:21)... As we devote ourselves to prayer and fasting, we may be successful as we pray for the sufferer, and by our own fasting may thrust out the unclean spirit from him[119].

---

117 Henri Crouzel: Origen, p. 113.
118 Comm. on John 6:2 (Drewery).
119 Comm. on Matt. 13:7.

FAITH AND PRAYER

For Origen, faith is the mother of the fruits of prayer, without her no child can be born.

Just as it is impossible to beget children without a woman and the act which results in the begetting of children, so it is impossible to obtain such and such requests if one does not likewise pray ... with a certain faith, and a record of life lived in such and such a way[120].

FAITH IN THE CROSS!

The passion of Christ, indeed, ***brings life to those who believe but death to those who do not believe.*** *For although salvation and justification are for the Gentiles through His cross, to the Jews it is nonetheless destruction and condemnation. For so it is written in the Gospels, "behold, this one was born for the ruin and resurrection of many" (Luke 2:34).*

FAITH AND GOD'S GIFTS

When we have offered to Him gifts from our own store, we then go on to receive gifts from Him. For when we have offered Him our faith and love, then He freely bestows on us the various gifts of the Holy Spirit[121].

God's desire is first to receive something from us, and then to give us of His own, that His gifts and bounties may be seen to be bestowed on the deserving[122].

FAITH AS A DIVINE GRACE

The Divine grace grants us faith itself and increases it.

(Paul) *says that among other things the gift of faith is also granted by the Holy Spirit (cf. . 1 Cor. 12:9, Phil.*

---

120 On Prayer 8:1
121 In Num. hom. 12:3 (Drewery).
122 In Num. hom. 24:2 (Drewery).

1:29). [Origen then quotes Luke 17:5] "increase our faith" to show that] *the apostles, understanding that the faith which springs up within a man cannot be perfect unless the faith coming from God is added to it, say to the Savior "Increase our faith,"* [and so Romans 4:16]*: even that very faith by which we are seen to believe in God is confirmed in us by a gift of grace*[123].

FAITH AS THE MEASURE OF ATTAINING GRACE

(Paul teaches that) *there are three ways of receiving grace,.. his point is that we have some part to play in the matter, but that the greatest fact consists in the bounty of God. First... there is the "**measure of faith**" by which a man receives grace; then it is given "for a man's profit;" lastly, the Spirit apportions it "as He wills" (cf. Rom 12:6 with 1 Cor. 12:7,11).*

Now it appears to be our responsibility that sufficient faith should be found in us to merit higher grace; but God's judgment determines for what profitable and useful ends it should be given, and of course the decision to give it at all rests entirely on Him... I think I have sufficiently laid down above the difference between the faith that is required from us and faith given us by God through grace... the faith which hopes, believes and trusts with no shadow of doubting is our own; but the mode of operation of faith itself, our knowledge of it, and the perfected understanding of the things we believe, is given by God[124].

God is above feeling and change. He is uncreated. But the acts of His providence are as various as are those whom His providence rules, for He is maker of all. Some of these acts, for example, provoke to anger, others to envy. In the same way do His spiritual servants receive dispensa-

123 Comm. on Rom. 4:5
124 Comm. on Rom. 9:3.

tions of His grace, glory and splendor, given from the one omnipotent God who is Himself above change and feeling[125].

The grace or gifts of God are given to those who by ***faith and virtue*** *have become prepared to receive them*[126].

FAITH AND WORKS

Faith is belief as confidence: it is not a purely intellectual activity. It is not a theoretical idea in our thoughts, nor is it just some words we have to utter, but is expressed in its works[127], a practical response to the divine love and redeeming deeds. The living faith is a faith that works through love.

It is clear that he who dies while he is in sin does not believe truly in Christ, even if he says that he believes in Him.

For he who believes in the justice of Christ does not inequity, and who believes in His wisdom does not behave nor speak in foolishness[128].

Moses, therefore, lifts up his hands and, when he lifted them up, Amalec was overcome. To lift up the hands is to lift up our works and deeds to God and not to have deeds which are cast down and lying on the ground, but which are pleasing to God and raised to heaven. He, therefore, who "lays up treasure in heaven" lifts up his hands, "for where his treasure is" (Cf. Matt. 6:20-21). There also is his eye, there also his hand. He also lifts his hands who says, "The lifting up of my hands is as the evening sacrifice" (Ps. 140:2). If, therefore, our deeds are lifted up and are not on the earth, Amalec is overcome[129].

---

125 Sel. Ezek. 16:8.
126 Comm. on John Frag. 44 on 3:27.
127 Henri Crouzel: Origen, Harper & Row, 1989, p. 113.
128 In Joan t. 19. See Fr. Malaty: School of Alexandria, Alexandria 1980, p. 186 (in Arabic).
129 In Exodus hom. 11:2 (Cf. Ronad E Heine- Frs. of the Church, vol. 71.)

But we must keep in mind that we are judged at the divine tribunal not on our faith alone as if we did not have to answer for our conduct (cf. James 2.24), nor on our conduct alone as if our faith were not subject to examination[130].

We hope, however, that you pay attention to what is heard not only to hear the words of God in the Church but also to practice them in your homes and "to meditate on the Law of the Lord day and night.' (Cf. Ps 1.2) [131].

Therefore, from this "olive" let us extract the oil of our works, from which a lamp can be lit for the Lord " that we may not walk in darkness" (Cf. 1 John 2:11). That is all we have to say as regards " the lamp of the lampstand" and its "oil" Lev. 24:1f.)[132].

The birds of heaven which are winged spiritually, are able to lodge in the branches of faith so great[133].

[Helchana had two wives, Anna (the 'nobler' wife) and Fennana; but he had children at first by the latter only]: This Helchana-which means "the possession of God"-is first made a father by his second wife....and it is only after she has had several children that the womb of Anna is opened in response to her prayers and she becomes the mother of that son whom he "offered to God"..."Fennana" means "conversion, and "Anna" means "grace". Hence each of us who wishes to become "the possession of God" should marry those two wives...: the first joined to us through faith (cf. Eph. 2:8)...; union to Fennana (i.e. "conversion") should come second, because it is only after the grace of belief that one experiences betterment of conduct and conversion of life. But the order of procreation is different from that of marriage. The first wife...to bear us

---

130 Dial. with Heraclides 8 (ACW).
131 Homilies on Leviticus 9:5 (Cf. Frs. of the Church).
132 Homilies on Leviticus 13:3 (Cf. Frs. of the Church)
133 Comm. on Matt. 13:5.

children is Fennana, because the first fruits that we bring forth are those of conversion....For our first work of right-eousness is to be converted from sins, since unless we are first converted...from evil, we cannot become fathers by Anna and bear children by grace. Note...the difference: Fennana has sons who do not wait on God-nor can the "sons of conversion" be such as can wait on and cling to God. They are not indeed useless, or completely alien from divine things, for they receive "portions" (I Sam 1:4) from the divine sacrifices....Each of us, then, is first converted from sin and by his conversion brings forth works of right-eousness; later "Anna" is stirred up in us... "pours forth her prayer to God" and herself bears sons... (and the sons of grace) are such as wait upon God. Now "grace and truth came through Jesus Christ". He then is a son of grace who gives his time to God and God's word. Cf. Hom. Gen. 9:2: If therefore a son of grace is of such greatness and quality, let us also hasten to Mary "Anna"; but let us be patient, that our first sons may be of conversion-that we should first give satisfaction by our good works, and only thereafter breed a son of grace and the "gift of the Spirit" (Acts 2:38)...(namely) "Samuel"... which means "God is there"... For where the "spirit of grace" is, there is said to be God Himself[134].

FAITH AND THE HOLY TRINITY

Origen comments on Numbers 17 concerning the budding of Aaron's rod, saying,

Everyone who believes in Christ first dies then is reborn; and here is another lesson, in the subsequent bud-ding of the dry rod.

The first shoot is the first confession a man makes in Christ.

---

134 Hom. on 1 Sam 5 on 1:1.

Then come the leaves, when the reborn man has received the gift of grace from the sanctification of the Spirit of God.

Thereafter he bears flowers when he has begun to make headway - to be graced with refinement of character, to pour forth the bloom of mercy and kindness.

Finally he brings forth the fruits of righteousness, by which he not only lives himself but offers life to others too. For when he reaches perfection and puts forth the word of faith, this is bearing fruits by which others may be nourished.

This is the way the various types of believers are produced from the rod of Aaron, who is Christ[135].

135 In Num. hom. 9:9.

7

GOD AND THE TRINITARIAN FAITH

GOD[1]

THE NEGATIVE ATTRIBUTES

In chapter four of this book I have mentioned under the title "the Knowledge of God," the following points:

1. Human language cannot express the nature of God, but through His infinite love He reveals Himself to us using our human expressions, as if we are His own little children.

2. God is absolutely impossible, has no human motions, and He is not solid Being. He is a loving Creator, who is eternally taking care of His creatures.

3. According to the words of our Savior "*God is a Spirit*," and from the words of St. John "God is Light," "*it must not be supposed then that God is a body, or in a body, but a simple intellectual nature, admitting of no addition at all. There is in Him no greater or less, no higher or lower, for He is the Monad, the Unit, Mind, the Fountain of all mind*[2]."

4. Being incorporeal God is *independent of the laws of Space and Time*, omniscient, omnipresent.

> *How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out.*

---

1 William G. Rusch: The Trinitarian Controversy, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1980, p. 13.
2 De Principiis 1:1; Charles Bigg: The Christian Platonists of Alexandria, Oxford 1913, p. 194.

He has in a sense no titles, and His fittest name is He That Is[3].

5. God is unchangeable. There was a question usually raised: **If God is changeless, why do we offer prayers and sacrifices to Him, as if He will change His decisions towards us?**

Origen felt bound to answer this question. He tackled this problem in his treatise *On Prayer*[4]; and answered it by an appeal to the free will enjoyed by mankind in spite of God's providence and foreknowledge. He justified prayer by appeal to its role in God's dispensation for the universe and the soul. By his prayer, a man reveals his faith and ultimate desire. Origen's discussion is in the philosophical tradition, though he uses Scripture to support his case and the argument is twisted to the Christian tradition in which the question was raised[5].

6. Without divine grace we cannot acknowledge God.

7. God is known through the universe, but the Word of God reveals Him in the Old and New Testament.

POSITIVE ATTRIBUTES

Our knowledge of the Divine spreads out on all sides into the inconceivable, but it is rooted in the positive. Before we can know what He is not, ***we must know what He is.***

Origen states that ***God's incomprehensibility is in us, not in Him***. His dwelling is the thick darkness, because of our disability to acknowledge Him as He is. He Himself is Light; and the more closely we approach Him, the more completely will the darkness melt away into light. In the future when we become one spirit with the Logos, we shall see God face to face; then we will acknowledge Him as the infinite Light who illuminates our under-

3 Bigg: The Christian Platonists of Alexandria, p. 195.
4 On prayer, 5:1-10:2.
5 Frances M. Young: The Use of Sacrificial Ideas in Greek Christian Writers from the New Testament to John Chrysostom, Philadelphia, 1979, p. 114-5.

standings. ***Even now we are not left without some understanding of Him*** which, imperfect as it may be, is yet true as far as it goes. We see Him dimly revealed in Creation[6].

GOD'S HOLINESS

> *"There is none holy like the Lord" (1 Sam. 2:2): However great a man's growth in holiness and his attainments in purity and sincerity, yet none can be as holy as the Lord, because He is the bestower of holiness, while man receives it; He is the fountain of holiness... while man... drinks it; He is the light of holiness while man looks on it[7].*

✞ ✞ ✞

6 Bigg: The Christian Platonists of Alexandria, p. 196.
7 In 1 Sam. hom 11 on 2:2 (Drewery)

THE TRINITARIAN FAITH

Origen is quite familiar with the terms "triad[8]" (*Trias*) and "*Hypostaseis*[9]," and what they denote are always present[10].

One of the chief characteristics of Origen's doctrine is: The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are Three Persons (*Hypostaseis*)[11]. He affirms that each of the Three is a distinct *Hypostasis*, from all eternity, not just as manifested in the "economy[12]," i.e., does not only refer to Their part in salvation history. He is holding to genuine trinitarianism, although he uses philosophy but he is always controlled by his Christian faith. ***He asserts that the Son and the Holy Spirit are not only powers of the Father, but they are Hypostaseis like the Father***[13].

In acknowledging the Holy Trinity as recognized more perfectly through the incarnation of the Logos and the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, he proves his sense of the unique Godhead, that in the New Testament is revealed as Trinity[14].

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE FATHER, THE SON AND THE HOLY SPIRIT

1. Basil Studer states, "The systematic structure of Origen's theology of the Logos is obviously directed by his interest in the philosophical question of the relation of the One to the Many. But it cannot be overlooked that it is basically a matter for him of a traditional, though newly thought-out vision of the history of salvation. For he has placed the historically understood incarnation at

8 In John 10:39:270; 6:33:166; In Jes. hom. 1:4:1.
9 In John 2:10:75; Contra Celsus 8:12.
10 Basil Studer: Trinity and Incarnation, Minnesota 1993, p. 84..
11 In John 10:39:270; 6:3:166; In Jos. hom. 1:4:1.
12 Kelly, p. 129.
13 Basil Studer: Trinity and Incarnation, Minnesota 1993, p. 84..
14 De Principiis 1:3:7; Basil Studer: Trinity and Incarnation, Minnesota 1993, p. 84.

the very heart of his doctrine of the revealing mediatorship of the Logos[15]."

Origen realizes the importance of the oneness of the Son with the Father and Their distinction also. He wishes to avoid both the absolute **monarchianism,** the risk of denying **Christ's divinity**, and **modalism**[16]. In spite of his rejection of all modalistic oversimplifications, Origen like the other anti-absolute monarchians is concerned with a full preservation of biblical monotheism[17].

Origen insists that both terms of the antinomy, the One and the Many, must be equally kept in view...

"*for I cannot separate the Son from the Father, the Father from the Son...*"

"*We call Him Father who is not Son, Him Son who is not Father*[18]."

For to ascribe division to an incorporeal substance is the act not only of extreme impiety but of the dullest folly[19]. Hence the generation of the Son is to be regarded as a continuous process: "*The Father did not beget His Son and let Him go from Himself, but always begets Him*[20]."

The endeavors to render monotheism beyond all doubt at first concern the relation of Father and Son, Origen speaks of a ***unity of will and action,*** and in this context employs the comparison with marriage[21] and also with the union of Logos and soul. Similarly he regards the Logos as the image of the Father or as the revelation of divine glory.

Here I repeat what I mentioned concerning the "*Discussion with Heraclides.*" Origen refers to Scripture in order to show **in what sense two can be one**:

---

15 Basil Studer: Trinity and Incarnation, Minnesota 1993, p. 83.
16 See the previous chapter, "Heresies."
17 Basil Studer: Trinity and Incarnation, Minnesota 1993, p. 84..
18 Bigg: The Christian Platonists of Alexandria, p. 218.
19 De Principiis 1:2:6.
20 In Jer. hom 9:4; Charles Bigg: The Christian Platonists of Alexandria, Oxford 1913, p. 219.
21 Principiis 1.2.6; Discussion with Heraclides 3.

I. Adam and Eve were two but one flesh (Gen. 2:24).

II. He (the just man) who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him (Cor. 6:17).

III. Finally he introduces Christ himself as a witness because He said: "I and My Father are one."

In the first example, the unity consisted of "flesh;" in the second of "spirit;" but in the third of "God." Thus Origen states: "*Our Lord and Savior is in His relation to the Father and God of the universe not one flesh, nor one spirit, but what is much higher than flesh and spirit, one God*."

Origen presents the union as one of love and action, and also has described it as a substantial union, using the word *homoousios*[22] (consubstantial, or one and equal in the same essence or *ousia*). Pamphilus ascribes to him this famous term "*Homoousion*" of the Nicene Fathers[23].

2. Origen wishes to indicate the distinction between the Father and the Word. He insists that the Son is other in subsistence than the Father; they are two in respect to Persons[24]. The Father and Son differ from each other in *Hypostaseis*[25].

Originally *Hypostaseis* and *ousia* were synonyms, the former Stoic and the latter Platonic, meaning real existence or essence. Although *Hypostaseis* has this original sense in Origen, it is often used in the sense of individual subsistence. The Son's deity is derived from the fountainhead, the Father. The Logos is the archetype because he is always with the Father[26]. Thus Origen understands that the Logos is God by derivation.

3. As the Father's offspring, the Son participates in His Godhead; He is Son of God by nature, and His nature is one with

22 Fragments on the Epistle to the Hebrews in PG 14:1308.
23 Charles Bigg: The Christian Platonists of Alexandria, Oxford 1913, p. 221.
24 On Prayer 15:1.
25 The Commentary on the Gospel of St. John 2.2.10.
26 Comm. on John 2.2.10.

the Father's[27]. This generation **cannot be compared with any corporeal process.** It is like the emergence of will from mind[28]. It is an act of the Father's will, a continuous exercise of will, not a single act for economy.

Origen states that the Son is brought forth from the Father, not by a process of division, but in the same way as **the will is brought forth from reason**.

Origen asserts that the Logos or the Wisdom was begotten apart from any physical passion, just as the will proceeds from the mind. If He is called the **Son of Love** (Col. 1:13), then why not, in the same manner, also the Son of Will?[29]

> *The Only-begotten Son of God is His Wisdom existing substantially... How could anyone believe that God the Father could have existed at any time without begetting Wisdom?... We must believe that Wisdom is without beginning...*
>
> *He is called the Logos because He is as it were the interpreter of the secrets of the mind of God.*
>
> *We are forbidden the impiety of supposing that the way in which God the Father beget and sustains His Only-begotten Son is equivalent to the begetting of man by man or animal by animal; there must be a great difference. It is fitting that this should not be so, since nothing can be found in existence, or conceived or imagined, to be compared with God. Thus human thought cannot comprehend how the unbegotten God becomes the Father of the Only-begotten Son.*
>
> *For it is an eternal and ceaseless generation**, as radiance is generated from light**.*
>
> *For He does not become the Son externally, by the adoption of the Spirit, but He is by nature the Son.*

---

27 In John. 2:2:16; 2:10:76; 19:2:6.
28 De Principiis 1:2:6.
29 De Principiis 4:4:1.

> *He alone is Son by nature, and therefore He is called "Only-begotten."*
>
> *Caution is needed lest anyone should fall into those absurd fables invented by those who picture for themselves some kind of "promotions," so as to assign parts to the divine nature and to divide the essential being of God the Father. Rather as* ***an act of will proceeds from the mind without cutting a part of the mind or being separated or divided from it****; in some such way the Father is to be thought of as "begetting" the Son*[30].
>
> *St. John tells us that "God is Light," (1 John 1:5), and Paul calls the Son "the radiance" of eternal light (Heb. 1:3). Therefore, as light can never be without radiance, how can it be said that there was a time when the Son was not? For that is as much as to say that there was a time when Truth was not, when Wisdom was not, when Life was not.*
>
> *But we have to apologize for using such phrases as "there was never a time when He was not," for these words have a temporal significance. Yet when they are used of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, they are to be understood as denoting something supra-temporal*[31].

4. The relationship between God, the Father, and his Son, the Word (Logos), is eternal. The Word's generation is eternal[32]. **It cannot be said that** "***there was once when He was not.***"

5. Origen confirms the personality (*Hypostasis*) of the Holy Spirit.

> *"The Spirit blows where it wills" (John 3:8). This signifies that the Spirit is a substantial being (ousia). It is not, as some imagine, an activity (energia) of God without individual existence. And the Apostle, after enumerating*

30 De Principiis 1:2:1 - 6.
31 Ibid. 4:4:28.
32 De Principiis 1:2:4.

> *the gifts of the Spirit, proceeds thus, "And all these things come from the activity of the one same Spirit, distributing to each individually as He wills" (1 Cor. 12:11). If He "wills" and "is active" and "distributes," He is therefore an active substance (ousia) not a mere activity*[33].

He used the words of the book of Acts to prove the same idea: "It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us" (Acts 15:21), "The Holy Spirit *said*" (13:2), and "*This is what the Holy Spirit says*" (21:10).

6. J.N.D. Kelly says,

> The Three, on his analysis, **are eternally and really distinct**... No doubt he tries to meet the most stringent demands of monotheism by insisting that the fullness of unoriginate Godhead is concentrated in the Father, Who alone is "the fountain-head of deity[34]." "But the Son and the Spirit are also in their degrees divine, possessing, though derivatively, all the characteristics of deity; distinct from the world of creatures, they cooperate with the Father and mediate the divine life flowing from Him. This vision of "the adorable, everlasting Triad[35]," of which he detected an anticipation in the thrice-repeated "holy" of Isaiah's seraphim, was to inspire generations of later Greek theologians[36].

7. For Origen **the whole Trinity is involved in the work of creation in the same way that it is involved in the work of salvation**. Through the Trinity the work of creation is co-ordinate with the work of salvation, and creation itself serves the purposes of salvation. It can do so because it has two distinct levels of reality enabling the soul to make a choice between Spirit and matter, and the related values of good and evil. The making of this choice requires the nature of man to be such that it can relate to these two

33 In Joan Frag. 37.
34 Frag. in Heb. 2:3:20.
35 Ibid. 6:33:166; 10:39:270.
36 J.N.D. Kelly: p. 131.

orders, and it is clearly necessary for men to have a two-fold nature corresponding to the two-fold structure of the cosmos[37].

THE HOLY TRINITY AND SIMPLICITY OF GOD

Usually we are asked, "How can God bring forth a Son?" We answer this question with another question, "Can God not bring forth a Son?"

We cannot accept God as a solid Being unable to bring forth! Every energetic essence has to bring forth something. Fire brings forth light and produces heat, the radioactive elements bring forth nuclear energy and the human mind brings forth wise thoughts. God can never be a solid Being, but He eternally brings forth the Son, for He is the "Light" who bring forth "Light." Truly, a light that brings forth no light is darkness[38].

It is said that Jesus Christ "Who being the brightness of His glory and the expression image of His person ..." (Heb. 1:3) "...is the image of the invisible God" (Col. 1:15), like the Word is the image of the invisible mind.

> *What else are we to suppose the eternal light is, but God the Father? His splendor (Heb. 1:3) was not present with Him? Light without splendor is unthinkable. But if this is true, there was never a time when the Son was not the Son...*[39]

UNITY IN DIVINE WILL

Concerning **the unity of the Holy Trinity in the divine will**, G. L. Prestige says,

> Origen[40] observes that the will of God is present in the will of the Son, and the will of the Son is undeviating from the will of the Father, so that there are no longer two

37 G. Bostock (COQ, p. 7,8.)
38 H. H. Bishop Pishoy: Article on 'Trinity.'
39 In Heb. Frag 24.
40 On St. John 13:36, 228.

wills but one will, which single will provides the reason for our Lord's assertion that, "I and the Father are one." He repeats[41] that the Father and the Son are two "things" (*pragmata*) in objectivity, but one in consent and harmony and identity of purpose. Athanasius[42] follows Origen in maintaining the position that there is one will which proceeds from the Father and is in the Son, so that from this fact the Son may be seen in the Father and the Father in the Son[43]." He also says: "As God is one in will, so is He one in operation or energy." This doctrine goes back to Athanasius, where it forms part of his proof of the deity of the Holy Spirit. Thus he argues at some length[44] that, since the Father is light and the Son is radiance from the light, the Holy Spirit, being the agent by the reception of whom mankind receives its enlightenment, must be discernible in the Son. When, therefore, we are enlightened by the Spirit, it is Christ who in Him enlightens us, since St. John has said that it is Christ who is the true Light that enlightens every man. Similarly, the Father is the source, and the Son is called the River that flows from the Source, yet the Scripture says that we drink of the Spirit, because in drinking the Spirit we drink Christ. Again, Christ is the true Son, but it is through the Spirit that we are made sons and have received the Spirit of adopted sonship. So he concludes[45] that there is a holy and perfect triad expressed in Father and Son and Holy Spirit, which contains nothing foreign or derived from an external source; its nature is self-consistent and indivisible, and its energy is one, therefore, the Father acts invariably through the *Logos* in the Holy Spirit. Thus the unity of the Holy Triad is preserved, and so one God is preached in the Church, who is over all and through all and

41 Contra Celsus 8:12.
42 Against the Arians 3:66.
43 God in the Patristic Thought, p. 256.
44 Ep. ad Serapion 1:19.
45 Ibid. 1:28.

in all, and over all, as Father, arch and source; through all, through the *Logos*; and in all, in the Holy Spirit[46]."

UNITY IN WORK

Here we are most clearly shown that there is no separation of the Trinity, but that this which is called the "*gift of the Spirit*" is ministered through the Son and worked by God the Father. And yet "*all these work that one and the self-same spirit, dividing to each man as He will*"[47].

> *In the Trinity nothing can be said to be greater or lesser, nor can there be any separate action; the gift of the Spirit is revealed through the Son and works through the Father. Father, Son and Holy Spirit are three in person and operation but They are one in essence and life.. Thus, by the unceasing work of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit in us and which is carried out through successive stages, we are able to behold the holy and blessed life of the saints*[48].
>
> *God the Father bestows on all the gift of existence; and a participation in Christ, in virtue of His being the Logos or Reason, makes them rational. From this it follows that they are worthy of praise or blame, because they are capable alike of virtue and of wickedness. Accordingly there is also available the grace of the Holy Spirit, that those beings who are not holy in essence may be made holy by participating in this grace. When therefore they obtain first of all their existence from God the Father, and secondly their rational nature from the Logos, and thirdly their holiness from the Holy Spirit, they become capable of receiving Christ afresh in his character of the righteousness of God, those, that is, who have been previously sanc-*

46 God in the Patristic Thought, p. 257-8.
47 De Principiis 1:3:7 (Cf. Butterworth).
48 De Principiis 1:3:7,8.

tified through the Holy Spirit; and such as have been deemed worthy of advancing to this degree through the sanctification of the Holy Spirit obtain in addition the gift of wisdom by the power of the working of God's Spirit. This is what I think Paul means when he says that "to some is given the word of wisdom, to others the word of knowledge, by the same spirit"[49].

THE ROLE OF THE HOLY TRINITY

The role of the Father is to ***give being***, that of the Son to make the being ***logikos,*** this representing as we have seen a mainly supernatural rationality, and that of the Spirit to confer ***sanctity***[50].

The Father's action extends to ***the whole universe***,
the Son's is restricted to ***rational creation***,
the Spirit's to ***those who are holy***[51].

Gerald Bostock says, "For Origen the whole Trinity is involved in the work of creation in the same way that it is involved in the work of salvation. Origen believes that just as the Father is the source of all matter and energy, so he gives existence to every being; just as the Son gives form to the physical world, so he gives the power of reason to the soul. and the Spirit who acts as the substance of heaven similarly gives life to those who are saved[52]."

The three Persons (*Hypostaseis*) have each a role in the imparting of this knowledge. All wisdom comes from God: this Logos is sometimes invested even with technical skill. Through the two other Persons it is always the Father, source of the Trinity, who teaches: He does it through human masters. It is He who gives deep understanding to those who receive that particular grace. But to a certain degree the human master is no longer necessary and

49 De Principiis 1:3:8 (Cf. Butterworth).
50 Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p. 191
51 De Principiis 1:5-8.
52 Gerald Bostock: Origen's Philosophy of Creation, p. 7 [Colloquium Origenianum Quintum; Origen and Philosophy, Boston College August 14-18,1989.]

the man who has reached the spiritual level is taught directly by God. To understand the Gospels we need the *nous* that is the mind of Christ (1 Cor. 2:6) and to have in ourselves the spring of living water which the word of Jesus pours into the soul. The Son is not only the physician who cures the blindness or deafness of the soul so that it can see and hear, he is the Revealer in person who communicates to men the knowledge He has of the Father. The Spirit unveils the spiritual meaning of the Scriptures which He inspired and He acts within the soul. The role of each of the divine Persons in this teaching is not always clearly distinguished. It can be said, however, that the Father is the origin, the Son the minister, the Spirit the medium in which the teaching is produced[53]..

53 Henri Crouzel: Origen, Harper & Row, 1989, p. 103-4.

GOD'S GOODNESS and LOVE

One of the main positive attributes of God which the holy Scripture underlinesis God's goodness, revealed through His infinite love to rational creatures, especially to man. Origen asserts that man is the dearest friend of God, the subject of his love.

1. God is the Shepherd of all souls. He desires the salvation and glorification, not all of the souls of men but that of rational creatures. This is assured by his doctrine of **Apokapastasis.**

> *And as God is a Lover of men and is ready to welcome, at every moment and under any form, the impulse of human souls to better things, even of those souls who make no haste to find the Loges, but like sheep have a weakness and gentleness apart from all accuracy and reason, so He is their Shepherd*[54].

2. God takes care of man through His **divine Providence**. He enslaves nature and all circumstances on man's behalf. In his comment on the passing of the Red Sea, Origen explains how God enslaves nature on man's behalf, saying:

> *Notice the goodness of God the Creator. If you obey His will, if you follow His Law, He compels the elements themselves to serve you even against their own nature*[55].

3. God does not want man to be isolated from heaven; He grants him His own-self as a **grace.**

4. God's love is revealed through His **redeeming work:** the incarnation, the crucifixion and the resurrection of Christ.

---

54 Comm. on John 1:29; Cadiou: Origen, Herder, 1944, p. 7.
55 In Exodus hom. 5:4 (Cf. Ronad E Heine- Frs. of the Church, vol. 71.)

Before speaking of his doctrine of *Apokapastasis*, divine Providence, grace of God and the redeeming work of Christ in special chapters, I will deal with Origen's reply to the following questions:

1. Why it is said that God is jealous (Exod. 20:5; 34:14)?

2. How God does not know the sinners (Matt. 7:23; 25:12).

3. What is the meaning of God' anger?

GOD IS LOVE

According to Origen, God in His love needs nothing but the salvation of His creatures[56].

Origen elaborates on the meaning of "loving," and the fact that "love" refers to God alone in its strict or proper meaning. "And because God is Charity, and the Son likewise, who is of God, is Charity, He requires in us something like Himself; so that through this charity which is in Christ Jesus, we may be allied to God who is Charity, as it were in a sort of blood relationship through this name of charity... it makes no difference whether we speak of having a passion for God, or of loving Him; and I do not think one could be blamed if one called God Passionate Love (*Amorem*), just as John calls him Charity (*Caritatem*). Indeed, I remember that one of the saints, by name Ignatius, said of Christ: 'My Love (Amor) is crucified,' and I do not consider him worthy of censure on this account[57]."

GOD IS JEALOUS

> *Herein, therefore, "God is jealous": if He asks and desires that your soul cling to Him, if He saves you from sin, if He reproves, if He chastises, if He is displeased, if He is angry and adopts as it were, a certain jealousy*

56 Frances M. Young: The Use of Sacrificial Ideas in Greek Christian Writers from the New Testament to John Chrysostom, Philadelphia 1979, p. 113.

57 Cf. In Cant. Prol. 35; Joseph c. McLelland: God The Anonymous, Massachsetts, 1976, p. 124.

towards you, recognize that there is hope of salvation for you t[58].

For "God is jealous" and does not wish that soul which He betrothed to Himself in faith to remain in the defilement of sin, but wishes it immediately to be purified, wishes it swiftly to cast out all its impurities, if it has by chance been snatched away to some. But if the soul continues in sins and says: "We will not hear the voice of the Lord, but we will do what we wish and will burn incense `to the queen of heaven'" (Cf. Jer 7:18), a practice reprobated by the prophet, then it is held over for that judgment of Wisdom: "Since indeed I called and you did not listen, but jeered at my words, therefore, I also will laugh at your ruin" (Prov. 1:24-26), or that judgment which has been placed on those in the Gospel when the Lord says, "Depart from me into the eternal fire which God has prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matt. 25:41) [59].

LOVER OF THE REPENTANT

(Repentant sinners) *who take refuge in... the kindness of God, Who is alone able to benefit them*[60].

DOES GOD KNOW THE SINNER?

In his *Commentary on the Psalms*, Origen expresses the relation between God and man in terms of knowledge, we say that God knows the righteous and does not know the unrighteous. He does not know the unrighteous because it is not fitting that God should know evil, and therefore sinners are as nothing in the eyes of God. The good, on the contrary, belong to God. He is their way; more accurately, His Son is their way with the result that the Father, who alone shares the knowledge of the Son, knows them in Him[61].

---

58 In Exodus hom 8:5 (Cf. Ronad E Heine- Frs. of the Church, vol. 71.)
59 In Exodus hom. 8:6 (Cf. Ronad E Heine- Frs. of the Church, vol. 71.)
60 Sel. Ps. 2:9.
61 In Psalm 1:6; PG 12:1100 (R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder 1944, Chapter IV.)

GOD USES EVIL FOR THE ADVANTAGE OF THE JUST

God did not create evil, nor when others have contrived it does He stop it (although He could do) but uses it for necessary ends. For by means of those in whom is evil, He makes those who are working towards the achievement of goodness famous and praiseworthy. For if evil disappeared there would be nothing to stand over against goodness, and goodness, having no opposite, would not shine out with its greater brightness and proved superiority. For goodness is not goodness unless it is proved and tested[62].

GOD OF THE IMPOSSIBILITIES

The things that cannot be comprehended by the reason of mortals because they are spiritual and beyond human range and far above our perishable nature, become by the will of God possible of comprehension by the abundant and immeasurable grace of God poured out on men through Jesus Christ, the minister of boundless grace toward us, and through the co-operation of the Spirit[63].

GOD'S DWELLING IN THE HEARTS OF MEN

God dwells not in a place or in a land but in the heart...; the pure heart is His abode [quotes 2 Cor 6 16] [64].

✞ ✞ ✞

62 *In Num. hom. 14:2.*
63 *On Prayer 1:1.*
64 *In Gen. hom. 13:3.*

GOD'S ANGER[65]

CONCEPT OF GOD'S ANGER

God being unchanging, eternal, must needs be passionless. Scripture attributes to Him wrath, hatred, repentance, but only in condescension to our infirmities. He is righteous and good, and desires not the death of a sinner. Punishment is not His work, but the necessary consequence of sin. There will come a time in the restitution of all things when it will no longer be possible to speak of the wrath of God. But though Origen cannot think of the Deity as agitated by passions in the narrower sense of the word, by mental disturbance or unreason of any kind, it is clear from the language already cited that he was far from regarding Him as devoid of attributes. "*The Father Himself and God of all*," he says, "*is long-suffering, merciful and pitiful. Has He not then in a sense passions? The Father Himself is not impassable. He has the passion of Love*[66]."

DIVINE CHASTISEMENT

Punishment by God does not arise from anger. His punishment of men is not for vengeance, but always disciplinary and remedial. Punishment is thus regarded by Origen as something educational: all suffering teaches a lesson[67].

Origen shows that punishment actually proceeds from God's goodness.

> *If it was not of use toward the conversion of sinners to put them to torment, a merciful and kindly God would never have visited crime with punishment. But like a most indulgent father He "chastens" (Prov. 3: 11) His son to*

---

65 Frances M. Young: The Use of Sacrificial Ideas In Greek Christian Writers From The New Testament to John Chrysostom, Philadelphia, 1979, p. 168.

66 In Ezech. hom. 6:6; Charles Bigg: The Christian Platonists of Alexandria, Oxford 1913, p. 196-197.

67 Jean Daniélou: Origen, p. 277.

teach him, and like a most far-seeing (providentissimus) master He reproves an unruly pupil with a look of severity, lest the latter, secure of being loved, should perish.

Some of you may be so outraged by the very word "anger" that you condemn it even in God. Our reply will be that the "anger" of God is not so much "anger" as a necessary dispensation.

The speaker (of Ps. 6:1) knows that the "wrath" of God is a means to human health, and is applied to the task of healing the sick, of curing those who have scorned to hear His word...

Everything that comes from God is good, and we deserve our "chastening"...

Everything that comes from God and seems harsh is actually of avail for teaching and healing. God is doctor, father, master - and not severe, but lenient...

When you find people, according to the accounts of Scripture, punished, you should "compare Scripture with Scripture" (cf. 1 Cor. 2:13)... and you will see that what appears the harshest is actually the sweetest[68].

None of that is understood by the people who slander the God of the Law and cast their accusations at Him regardless of the fact that He was slow even to reprove men.

You will ask how any of it can be expressive of God's goodness. Well, the words "I will make to live" and "I will heal" (Deut. 32:39), come to my mind.

God sometimes causes suffering - but the doctor too, you know, often does. And when God makes men suffer, it is as a means of restoring them to health. Thus, when He strikes men, what impels Him to do it is his goodness.

What I am going to say may seem paradoxical, but I am going to say it, all the same. What Scripture calls

68 In Ezek. hom. 1:2 (Drewery).

God's rage works with salvation in view when it administers correction, because it is a good God's rage; and what it calls his anger is educative because, again, it comes from a God's goodness if people could take it in without harming themselves. Not unreasonably, God hides all that from those who fear Him, because He does not want them to presume on that abundant kindness of His that bears with men and waits for them (Rom. ii. 4); for if they did, they would be laying up still greater store of anger for themselves[69].

In one of the *homilies on Jeremiah*, Origen shows that bodily pain is good in itself.

It is possible for parts of a body to wither and become lifeless. If they do, they will probably be able to bear pains which the parts with more life in them could not stand[70].

The idea is then transferred to the soul.

Suppose a soul were like a body with limbs so numb that it could not feel anything when it was struck, even if the blow were as hard as it could possibly be. Such a soul would become paralyzed without realizing it, whereas another would be aware of what was happening. Obviously, a man who does not feel the impact of a thing that ought to cause him pain is more seriously ill than one who is aware that something unpleasant is being inflicted on him and hopes he will suffer from it; for ability to suffer is a sign of life[71].

Therefore, because God is merciful and "wishes all men to be saved" (Cf. 1 Tim. 2:4), he says, "I will visit their crimes with an iron rod and their sins with whips. I will not, however, remove my mercy from them" (Ps. 88:32-33;

69 Comm. on Matt. 15:11; Jean Daniélou: Origen, p. 278.
70 In Jer. hom. 6:2.
71 In Jer. hom. 6:2; Jean Daniélou: Origen, p. 279.

2:9). The Lord, therefore, visits and seeks the souls which that most wicked father begot by the persuasion of sin, and says to each of them: "Hear, daughter, and look and incline your ear, and forget your people and the house of your father" (Ps. 44:11). He, therefore, visits you after sin and disturbs you and he visits you with a whip and a rod for the sin which your father the devil submitted to you, that He may avenge that sin "in" your "bosom," that is, while you continue in the body. And thus the avenging of "the sins of the fathers in the bosoms of the sons in the third and fourth generation" is completed (Cf. Jer. 32:18; Exod. 20:5)[72].

This, therefore, is what this passage of Scripture summed up in a few words has taught us that we may know that it is much more serious "to receive sin" and to have it with us and to carry it to Hell than to do punishment in the present age for the thing committed[73].

If it was not of use towards the conversion of sinners to put them to torment, a merciful and kind God would never have visited crime with punishment. But like a most indulgent father He "chastens" (Prov. 3:11) His son to teach him, and like a most far-seeing master he reproves an unruly pupil with a look of severity, lest the latter, secure of being loved, should perish. Some of you may be so outraged by the very word "anger" as a necessary dispensation. The speaker (of Ps, 6:1) knows that the "wrath" of God is a means to human healthfulness, and is applied to the task of healing the sick, of curing those who have scorned to hear His word... Everything that comes from God and seems harsh is actually of avail for teaching and healing. God is doctor, father, master- and not severe, but lenient... When you find people, according to the accounts of Scripture, punished, you should" compare with Scrip-

72 In Exodus hom. 8:6 (Cf. Ronad E Heine- Frs of the Church, vol. 71.)
73 Homilies On Leviticus 14:4 (Cf. Frs. of the Church)

ture" (cf. 1 Cor. 2:13)... and you will see that what appears the harshest is actually the sweetest[74].

God is swift to deeds of kindness but slow to punish those who deserve it. Although He could silently administer punishment to those He has condemned and give them no warning, He does no such thing, but even if He condemns He speaks - when speech is opportune to turn from condemnation the man about to be condemned[75].

GOD'S REPENTANCE

In his *Homilies on Jeremiah*[76] also, Origen faces the problem of God's repentance in the Old Testament. Origen understands repentance to mean "change one's mind," and he argues that since a supposedly wise man inevitably loses face by "repenting," God can hardly "repent" of a plan He has made, especially as He has foreknowledge of the future. He goes on to explain that while God is not like man, He chooses to appear like man in order to educate his children. Just as we talk baby-language to babies - for a baby cannot be expected to understand adult conversation - so we must think God acts with regard to the human race. When you hear of the anger and wrath of God, you must not think that God suffers the emotions of wrath and anger.

It is a matter of verbal usage for the sake of a child. We put on threatening looks, not because we are angry but for the child's good; if we always show our love and never correct the child, it is the worse for him. It is in this way that God is said to be angry, so as to change and better us.

In the *Commentary on Romans*, he says that because God was just He could not justify the unjust; but because He recognized that man's sin was of entirely his fault, being committed under the tyranny of the devil, He himself sent a Mediator who was able to deal with sin

74 In Ezek. hom 1:2 (See Drewery)
75 In Jer. hom. 1:1.
76 In Jer. hom. 18:6.

and its cause, convert mankind, and so make the just God "propitious" to men in a way that he could not be to sinners[77]. That this work of reconciliation, which Origen is able to describe in rather qualified propitiation language, was accomplished through the blood of Christ[78].

> *When divine providence is woven into human affairs, He assumes the human mind, manner, and diction. When we talk to a two-year-old child we use baby-talk for his sake... Such is the situation you must imagine when God exercises His providence on the human race, especially on the "infants" thereof...*
>
> *Again, since we repent, God when talking to us says "I repent;" and when He threatens us He does not presume to have knowledge of the future, but threatens us as if He were talking to children... (E.g.) "Speak to the children of Israel-perhaps they will hear and repent" (Jer. 33:21). This "perhaps" does not indicate any uncertainty on God's part... but is designed to leave open your freedom of choice, and to prevent your saying: "If He foreknew my destruction I must perish: if He foresaw my salvation I must certainly be saved."... You will find thousands of other such statements about God accommodating Himself to man. If you hear of God's wrath and anger, you must not suppose that wrath and anger are passions in God. They are accommodations in the use of language, in order to correct and improve the child. We too put on a fearful frown for children, not because such is our disposition but as a means of managing them[79].*
>
> *He must be reminded that just as when we are talking to very small children we do not aim to speak in the finest language possible to us, but use language fitted to the weakness of our charges, and suit our actions also to*

77 In Comm. Rom. 2:1,8.
78 Ibid. 4:8,12; 8:4; 10:9; In Lev. 10:9.
79 In Jer. hom. 18:6 on 18:8 (Drewery).

what seems useful for the correction and guidance of children as such, even so does the Word of God seem to have disposed the Scriptures, determining what style of narrative is suitable by the capacity of his hearers and their real needs[80].

The "repentance" of God is actually the change of His providence from one dispensation to another. (Why use the term?...) *Because the prophets had to use the more down-to-earth form of expression in speaking of God to the slowest-witted, to give it a chance of being understood... We must not impute to God the mercurial character of the human mind ; for we intend to impute to the essence of divine providence the changes of dispensation it rightly makes when dealing with us*[81].

DIVINE PROVIDENCE AND TEMPTATIONS

Origen looks upon afflictions, like suffering and martyrdom, not as an evil event but as a gift which is granted to some believers by God's Providence. Under the guidance of providence, life is a continual trial by which the wicked man is corrected and the righteous man is granted opportunities of showing his merit[82]. For example Paul's thorn in the flesh is a gift of the divine providence to forestall his pride[83].

If we are told that certain unpleasant experiences - so-called" evils are inflicted by parents, teachers, and pedagogues (tutors), or by surgeons who use cutlery or the knife for purposes of healing, we say that parents... inflict "evil", but that would not be an accusation against them; in just the same way God is said to inflict such "evils" for purposes of correcting and healing[84].

---

80 Contra Celsus 4:71.
81 Frag on 1 Sam. 15:9-11 (Drewery).
82 R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder Book Co., 1944, p. 263.
83 In Jer. hom. 12:8.
84 Contra Celsus 6:56.

And the fact that the temptations that come to us are meant to show us who we are or to make known the secret things in our hearts is established[85].

At least we must suppose that the present temptation has come about as a testing and trying of our love for God. "For the Lord is tempting you," as it is written in Deuteronomy," to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul"(Deut. 13:3:df.; Matt. 22:37; Deut. 6:5) But when you are tempted, "You shall walk after the Lord your God, and fear Him, and keep His commandments:, especially" you shall hear His voice and cleave to Him, when He takes you from the regions here and associates you with Himself for what the Apostle calls "the increase of God" in Him (Col. 2:19) [86].

Faith is tested by temptations, and when it conquers one temptation and its faith has been thus proved, it comes to another one; and it passes, as it were, from one stage to another, so, when it proceeds through the different temptations of life and faith one by one, it is said to have stages in which increase in virtues are sought one by one. In this way there is fulfilled what is written, "They will go from virtue to virtue" (Ps. 84:7) until the soul arrives at its goal, namely the highest summit of virtues, and crosses the rivers of God and receives the heritage promised it[87].

The soul, unless it is somehow salted with constant temptations, immediately becomes feeble and soft. For this reason the saying is established that every sacrifice shall be salted with salt (Lev. 2:13)[88].

85 On Prayer 17.
86 Exhortation to Martyrdom 6.
87 In Num. hom. 27:5.
88 In Lev. hom. 27:12.

> *The "lilies" (of Song 7:2) are the flowers of the grace of God, which He collected from the midst of the worlds of thorns*[89].

> *Temptation, as I think, gives a kind of strength and defense to the soul. For temptations are so mingled with virtues that no virtue appears to be seemly or complete without them*[90].

No one comes to the contest of martyrdom without Providence[91].

God uses martyrdom of His believers as a witness to attract others to the Christian faith.

> *Let us learn from this passage what great advantage accrues through the Christian persecutions, how great a grace is bestowed, how God becomes the champion of the Christians, how abundantly the Holy Spirit is poured on them. For the grace of God is then most mightily at hand when the savagery of men is stirred up; and then do we have peace with God when are in suffering from men because of the justice of war...Although Moses and Aaron stand high through the achievements of their lives, although in natural attainments they are pre-eminent, nevertheless the glory of God could never have shone on them unless they had come to be persecuted, in tribulation and danger, nay almost at the point of being killed. And you (my hearers), you too, must not suppose that the glory of God can shine upon you if you are idle or asleep*[92].

> (Providence) *granted increase and boldness of speech to the multitude in spite of the fact that there were countless obstacles to the spread of the teaching of Jesus in the world. But since it was God who wished the Gentiles*

89 Excerpta Procopiana in Cant. Cant. 7:2.
90 Ibid.
91 Exhortation to Martyrdom 34.
92 In Num. hom. 9:2 (See Drewery).

also to be helped by the teaching of Jesus Christ, every human plot against the Christians has been thwarted, and the more kings and local rulers and peoples everywhere have humiliated them, the more they have grown in numbers and strength[93].

For God has dealings with souls not with a view to the fifty years, so to speak, of our life here, but to the boundlessness of eternity. For He has made our intellectual nature deathless, akin to Himself, and the rational soul is not, as it were, shut out from healing by being confined to this life[94]*.'*

✞ ✞ ✞

93 Contra Celsus 7:26 (See Drewery).
94 De Principiis 3:1:13

THE DIVINE PROVIDENCE[95]

In our speech on “the divine providence” according to St. Clement of Alexandria we noticed that the Alexandrian Fathers looked upon philosophy as a divine gift that partially revealed the truth but not with a full view. For some philosophers denied the divine providence, while others believed in it but in a very narrow way. The Alexandrians believed in God's providence in its biblical sense; namely it embraced all creation in general - the universe, the nations, and in particular man, and not absent even from animals. It surpassed time and space, for it involved man even before his creation, i.e., before the time when he was in the Divine Mind, and it still takes care of him on earth throughout all ages and will continue acting beyond the grave, into eternal life, or in the world to come. Divine Providence cares for believers and unbelievers, rational and irrational creatures. This is revealed through God’s self-giving, generosity, tender mercies, kindness and chastening; through the pleasant events, and through the evil, sorrowful ones[96].

Origen believes that it is only atheism which is destructive and immoral that blinds the inner sight from beholding the providence, which is evident and almost visible[97].

> *We confess, as a certain and unshakable dogma, that God cares for mortal things, and that nothing is done apart from His providence in heaven or on earth[98].*

Origen speaks of the superlative transcendence of the life of God[99] to deny that God is extended in physical universe in any material or quasimaterial sense, at the same time he repeatedly clarifies God's immanence to confirm God’s infinite goodness and love for man.

---

95 Cf. Fr. Tadros Y. Malaty: The Divine Providence, Alexandria 1990.
96 The School of Alexandria, N.J 1994. Book 1, p. 214 ff.
97 Comm. on John 2:3.
98 In Gen. hom. 3:2.
99 G.L. Prestige: God in Patristic Thought, SPCK 1975,p. 26.

For how do we live and move and have our being (Acts 17:28), if His power does not surround and hold together the universe?!

And what is heaven but the throne of God, and the earth His footstool, as the Savior Himself declares, except by His power, which fills the whole universe, both heaven and earth, as the Lord says (Jer. 23:24)[100]*?!*

GOD'S PROVIDENCE AND OUR CREATION

We are indebted to the Gracious God for the existence of the universe for man's sake, caring for it continuously on man's behalf, our coming into existence from nothing, and for the special love of God for mankind even before their creation.

Nothing that exists over its existence to itself: You alone have been granted your existence from no other. We all-i.e. the whole creation - did not exist before we were created: our existence is due to the will of the Creator[101]*.*

The fact that we exist cannot possibly be a reward of our works but is due to the grace of our Creator[102]*.*

(On "rational beings") *whatever goodness existed in their being was there not by nature, but by the beneficence of their Creator... the Creator granted to the minds He had created, the faculty of free and voluntary movement, in order that the good that was in them might become their own, since it was reserved by their own free will*[103]*.*

No one, Jew or Gentile, is devoid of this law, which is in men by nature. It will be found that God gave man all the feelings and all the impulses by which he could strive and progress towards virtue; and besides that He implanted in him the power of reason, by which he might rec-

100 De Principiis 2:1:3.
101 In 1 Sam. hom. 2. [See B. Drewery: Origen and the doctrine of grace, 1960.]
102 Comm. on Rom. 4:5 (Cf. Drewery).
103 De Principiis 2:9:2 (Cf. Drewery).

ognize what he ought to do and what to shun. God is found to have bestowed all this on all men alike[104].

DIVINE PROVIDENCE EMBRACES EVERYTHING

God who loves man takes care of him in all aspects of life; His providence embraces everything even the number of hairs in his head (Matt 10:30; Luke 12:7); therefore we have to acknowledge that all events - even the trivial things - happen not by chance, but by divine providence.

The things that happen to men... do not do so by chance or accident, but for a purpose so carefully calculated, so lofty, that not even the number of the "hairs" of our head" (Matt 10:30) is outside it-and that not only of the saints but (one may say) of all men; this providence extends even to "two sparrows" which are sold for a penny (Matt 10:29) whether "sparrows" is meant spiritually or literally[105].

To such a degree has Divine providence embraced everything that not even the hairs of our head have excepted being numbered by Him[106].

DIVINE PROVIDENCE EMBRACES EVEN THE ANIMALS

Providence primarily cares for rational beings, but encompasses irrational animals which also profit from what is designed for man[107].

For since God clearly rules over the motion of heaven and what is in it and over what is accomplished on earth and sea by His divine skill - the birth, origins, foods, and growth of all different animals and plants - it is foolish

104 Comm. on Rom. 3:6.
105 De Principiis 2:11:5.
106 Contra Celsus 8:70.
107 Contra Celsus 4:74.

to close our eyes and not look to God (cf. Isa. 6:10; Matt 13:15; Acts 28:27) [108].

GOD'S PROVIDENCE AND HOLY SCRIPTURE

The divine Providence disposed the writing of the holy Scripture for nourishing man with divine wisdom and salvation.

> *This is our understanding of everything that was written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit: that through the writings holy Providence was granting super-human wisdom to mankind, sowing (as it were) oracles of salvation in every writing possible, to show the way to wisdom!...* [109]

GOD'S PROVIDENCE AND MAN'S SANCTIFICATION

In His book, R. Cadiou says under the title "*God the Friend of Man*,"

> Nothing is outside the plans of Providence, not even our sins or our efforts at resistance. We can say with the Apostle that all the work of salvation is God's. God has endowed rational beings with the gift of free will. He imparts His enlightenment to them. He implants in their souls the germs of good and of perfection. Yet all the while He leaves them free to reject His gifts, even while He regulates the circumstances in which the soul lives and breaks down the obstacles the soul encounters. Do we not render honor to the architect who builds a house after many others have offered to build it? Is the leader who has saved a beleaguered city not given a triumph by the grateful citizens? Similarly, without further considering our very small part in the work, we attribute our salvation to the Divine Mercy,

108 Exhortation to Martyrdom 4.
109 Comm. on Ps. 1:4 (Philocalia).

through whose goodness and forbearance the work is brought to completion[110].

GOD'S PROVIDENCE AND MAN'S SANCTIFICATION

"There is none holy like the Lord" : However great is man's growth in holiness and his attainment in purity and sincerity, yet none can be as holy as the Lord, because He is the bestower of holiness, while man receives it; He is the fountain of holiness... while man receives it; He is the fountain of holiness... while man...drinks from it; He is the light of holiness while man looks at it[111].

Thus the work of the Father, which confers on all existence, is found more glorious and splendid, when each one, through participation in Christ as "Wisdom", "Knowledge", "Sanctification", advances and comes to higher degrees of progress. Likewise when each, through participation in the Holy spirit, has been sanctified and made purer and of higher integrity, and thus is more worthy to receive the grace of wisdom and knowledge, in order that all stains of pollution and ignorance may be removed and that he may receive such advancement in integrity and purity. Hence the life which he received from God may be worthy of God, whose purpose is to make it pure and perfect: that the creature should be as worthy as the Creator. For in this way also shall man, whose Creator wished him to be so, receive from God the power to exist forever and to abide for eternity[112].

(God) cares for the soul [i.e. the seat of the faculties] of every man, that he may be rational, that he may attain knowledge, that his intelligence may find exercise in

110 R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder Book Co., 1944, p. 262.
111 In 1 Sam. hom. 2 (See Drewery).
112 De Principiis 1:3:8 (See Drewery).

(the life of) the body, that his senses (Heb. 5:14) may be good fettle[113].

DIVINE PROVIDENCE AND THE REVELATION OF TRUTH

Divine Providence uses every means to reveal the mysteries of God, at first through creation, and through the natural laws God grants to man. He also speaks to us through our daily life, so that we can be in touch with Him. He sent Moses' Law, His prophets and finally the "Truth" Himself descended to our world after becoming a Man to reveal Himself to us and to raise our souls, minds and motions to the bosom of the Father, by the work of His Holy Spirit.

> *The organ of the body which knows God is not the eye (of the body) but the mind, for it sees that which is in the image of the Creator, and it has received by the providence of God the faculty of knowing Him*[114].

> *"The invisible things of God", i.e., the things conceived by the mind, "are understood by the things that are made", and "are clearly seen from the creation of the world" by the process of thought. And [the disciples of Jesus], in their ascent from the created things of the world, do not halt in the invisible things of God; but after sufficient mental exercise among them to produce understanding, they ascent to the eternal power of God and (quite simply) to His divinity. They know that, out of love to man, God revealed His truth and that which may be known of Himself-and this not only to those devoted to Him, but also to those who knew nothing of pure worship and piety towards Him, but who by God's providence have ascended to the knowledge, and impiously hold down the truth in un-*

113 In Jer. hom. 3..
114 Contra Celsus 7:33.

> *righteousness; and just because of this knowledge... they can no longer plead and excuse before God*[115].

DIVINE PROVIDENCE AND DEMONS

In the early centuries of Christianity as the pagan world was terribly in the hold of demons and evil spirits on men, a question was raised: how do we explain the existence of demons who are ruling the lives of men in a world governed by God's Providence? Origen and other Alexandrian Fathers who experienced the grace of God replied with the following points:

a. Men became sons of Satan (John 8:44) and willingly entered in close relationship with him instead of attaining the adoption to God and receiving unity with Him . It is our own responsibility and not God's to choose between God or Satan.

b. St. Clement of Alexandria and Origen explain that the demonic order attempts to make man fall, lead him into slavery and to ally him with themselves. The divine providence does not leave us helpless before the demons, for it supports us with the angels for our protection if we accept their actions for our sakes (Heb. 1:14), and to lead believers to the heavenly wedding room if they wish.

c. The Alexandrian fathers explain that in the battle against demons we are not alone, for the battle rises between God Himself and Satan.

> *For even if the demons were not kindly disposed to them, they could still suffer no harm from them, being under the guardianship of the Supreme God who is kindly-disposed to them because of their piety, and who makes His divine angels stand over those worthy to be guarded that they suffer not from the demons*[116].

---

115 Ibid. 7:46.
116 Contra Celsus 8:27.

We are not under the control of demons but of the God of the universe, through Jesus Christ who brings us to Him. According to the laws of God, no demon has inherited control of the things on the earth; but one may suggest that through their own defiance of the law they divided among themselves those places where there is no knowledge of God and the life according to His will, or where there are many enemies of His divinity. Another suggestion would be that because the demons were fitted to govern and punish the wicked, they were appointed by the Logos that administers the universe, to rule those who have subjected themselves to sin and not to God[117].

If I belong to the Church, no matter how small I may be, my angel is free to look upon the face of the Father. If I am outside the Church, he does not dare...

Indeed, each of us has an adversary who seeks to draw us into the ranks of his own leader[118]*. (*Origen states that good angels are more powerful, able to defend us against the adversary[119]*).*

When a man has received the faith, Christ who has redeemed him by His blood from his evil masters entrusts him, since hereafter he is to believe in God, to a holy angel who, because of his great purity, always sees the face of the Father[120]*.*

"For He has appointed His angels over you; to keep you in all your ways," Ps. 90:11.... For it is the just who needs the aid of the angels of God, so as not to be overthrown by the devils, and so that his heart will not be pierced by the arrow which flies in the darkness[121]*.*

---

117 Ibid. 8:33.
118 In Luc. hom. 35.
119 Comm. on Matt. 13:28.
120 Ibid.
121 In Num. hom. 5:3..

The Shepherd (of Hermas) makes the same statement, saying that two angels (one good and the other evil) accompany every single man; and whenever good thoughts come into our mind, it says they are put there by the good angel; but if they are otherwise, it says that is the impulse of the evil angel[122].

For everyone is influenced by two angels, one of justice and the other of iniquity. If there are good thoughts in our heart, there is no doubt that the angel of the Lord is speaking to us. But if evil things come into our hearts, the angel of the evil one is speaking to us[123].

There had to be angels who are in charge of holy works, who teach the understanding of the eternal light, the knowledge of the secrets of God and the science of the divine[124].

(The angels also are evangelists) *Now if there are men who are honored with the ministry of evangelists, and if Jesus Himself brings forth tidings of good things, and preaches the Gospel to the poor, surely those messengers who were made spirit by God (Ps. 104:4), those who are flames of fire, ministers of the Father of all, cannot have been excluded from being evangelists also (Luke 2:10:11)* [125].

The apostles have the angels to assist them in the accomplishment of their ministry of preaching, in the completion of the Gospel work[126].

122 Comm. on Luke 35..
123 Ibid.
124 In Num. hom. 14:2.
125 Comm. on John 13.
126 In Num. hom. 11:4.

DIVINE PROVIDENCE AND GOD'S FATHERHOOD

God reveals His providence in its greatest depth through His Fatherhood to men. God is not in need of men's worship or offerings but of their hearts to lift them up to His glories, to enjoy His eternal love, and practice their sonship to Him.

> *It is right to examine what is said in the Old Testament quite carefully to see whether any prayer may be found in it calling God "Father". Up till now, though I have looked carefully as I can, I have not found one. I do not mean that God was not called Father or that those who are supposed to have believed in God were not called sons of God; but nowhere have I found, in a prayer, the boldness proclaimed by the Savior in calling God "Father"...*
>
> *But even if God is called "Father" and those who are begotten by the Logos of Faith in Him are called sons (Deut. 32:6,18,20; Isa. 1:2; Mal. 1:6), the certainty and immutability of sonship cannot be seen in the Old Testament. Indeed, the passages I have listed indicate that those called sons are guilty, since according to the Apostle, "So long as heir is a child, he is no better than a servant, though he is lord of all, but he is under guardians and trustees until the date set by the Father" (Gal. 4:1-2). And "the fullness of time", (Gal. 4:4), is present in the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, when those who wish receive the adoption of sons, as Paul teaches in these words, "For you did not receive the spirit of bondage to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of sonship in which we cry, "Abba, Father" (Rom. 8:15). And in John, "But to all who received him, He gave power to become children of God, to those who believe in His name" (John 1:12). And because of the "Spirit of sonship ", we have learned in the general letter of John, concerning those born of God, that" no one born of God commits sin, for He remains in*

him, and he cannot sin because he is born of God" (1 John 3:9)[127].

DIVINE PROVIDENCE FOR MANKIND, CHURCH AND EVERY PERSON

For the number of souls is, as far as we can see, infinite; and the same is true of their characters, and they have innumerable motions, projects, purposes, and impulses. There is One alone who can manage all these for the best manager, since He knows the fitting times, the appropriate assistance to be given, the ways of training and direction. And He is the God and the Father of the whole universe[128].

His providence cares for us every day- in public and in private, secretly and openly, even when we know it not[129].

All things have been created primarily for the benefit of the rational being...God does not care, as Celsus thinks, only for the universe as a whole, but, besides the whole, for every rational being in particular. Yet His providence for the whole never fails. For even if some part of it degenerates because of the sin of the rational being, God sees to (Economies) its purification and to the subsequent turning back of the universe to Himself[130].

DIVINE PROVIDENCE AND THE GOODNESS OF CREATION

We say that by the providence and wisdom of God all things are so ordered in this world that nothing is wholly useless to God, whether it be evil or good... God did not create evil, nor,

127 On Prayer 22:1,2.
128 De Principiis 3:1:14 (In Philocalia 21:13).
129 Sel Ps. 14:44.
130 Contra Celsus 4:99.

when others have contrived it, does He prevent it although He could. But he uses evil for necessary ends. For by means of those in whom is evil, He makes those who are working towards the achievement of goodness famous and praiseworthy. For if evil disappeared there would be nothing to stand over against goodness, and goodness, having no opposite, would not shine out with its greater brightness and proved superiority. Virtue is not virtue if it be untested and unexamined...(Origen compares Joseph and his brethren, the sin of the latter being necessary for the whole story of Exodus to Deuteronomy; Balak; Judas Iscariot - even the devil for if he were suppressed) this would entail the simultaneous disappearance of our struggle against his wiles, and he who had struggled "lawfully" (2 Tim. 2:5) could no longer expect the crown of victory[131].

✞ ✞ ✞

131 In Num. hom 14:2.

DIVINE GRACE[132]

THE CONCEPT OF GRACE

Benjamin Drewery tried to give a definition of God's grace, through the numerous works of Origen. He says that we may suggest that if Origen had been required to offer a formal definition of grace, he would have responded somewhat as follows:

> *Grace is **the power of God** freely, but not unconditionally, placed at man's disposal,*
>
> *whereby He appropriates through **the Holy Spirit** the offer of salvation to a new and ultimate life, revealed and enacted in the Scriptures,*
>
> *by the **Incarnate Jesus Christ**, and made available by Him to the world[133].*

For Origen, divine Grace means God's free self-giving, His blessings, His generosity, and His kindness.

GRACE AND REWARD

In his comment on the Pauline words, "Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as a debt..." (Rom 4:4ff), Origen says

> *None of God's gifts to humanity is made in payment of a debt, but all of grace... (Paul's) distinction is rightly made:*
>
> *"wages" is used with reference to sin,*
>
> *"grace-gift" with reference to God. For God's gifts are of grace, not like wages which are owed... Reward is something owed, but a work of sheer kindness[134].*

---

132 Fr. Tadros Y. Malaty: The Divine Grace, Alexandria, 1992; Benjamin Drewery: Origen and the Doctrine of Grace, London 1960..

133 Benjamin Drewery: Origen and the Doctrine of Grace, London 1960, p. 48.

134 Comm. on Rom. (GK) 22; 34; 4:5(Drewery, p. 18,19).

GRACE AND WORKS

God is not in need of our good works, which are in fact a sign of our response to His love, and to our acceptance of His divine grace in our life. It is a good chance for us that God bestows His grace upon us continuously and in abundance.

The grace of prophecy is not idle; no grace-gift is idle in a holy man.

> *God asks for things from us, not that He has need of anything, but in order that He might graciously give us in return things of His own... God graciously gives us in return good things - with an addition. For to Him who made his one mina into ten (Luke 19:11ff) He gave in return the ten minas, adding to them another that belonged to the man who did not work*[135].

Philo states that these works are practical sacrifices of thanksgiving which must be offered to God and these what we offer in fact are God's gifts to us. Origen considers that attributing good words to man is guilty of sacrilege.

> *Everything* (says God) *that mankind has he receives from Me. Lest therefore anyone should believe that in offering gifts he is conferring some benefit on God, and should stand guilty of sacrilege through the very act that he intended as worship... What can a man offer to God? Just this.. (these) gifts to Me that I have already given.*
>
> *That the law of faith suffices for justification in the complete absence of any works on our part, is shown by the robber who was crucified along with Jesus and by the sinful woman in Luke (7:37). For her sins were remitted, not because of any work of hers, but from faith... But that after recognition of this, unrighteous behavior can bring to noth-*

135 In Luke hom. 39.

ing the grace of the One who has justified, (Paul) himself will make clear at a later point. My own view is that even such works as appear good, if done before the coming of faith, cannot justify the agent, because they are not "built on the fair foundation of faith"(1 Cor. 3:11).

He does not say that the faith of the righteous is counted to them for righteousness. If it were, what grace would appear to be counted to the righteous? Righteousness for righteousness?' 'The works which Paul repudiates...are not the works of righteousness which are laid down in the law, but those in which the observers of the law according to the flesh make their glory, i.e. circumcision, the sacrificial rites, the observation of the Sabbath and new moons...if a man is justified by such as these he is not justified freely [Latin, 'gratis']; for such works are least of all expected from one justified by grace-his care is to watch that the grace he has received does not become of none effect in him (cf. 1 Cor. 15:10). Now there is no danger of this, and no ingratitude to the grace of God, in harnessing to that grace works worthy of it; but a man who receives that grace and then sins becomes guilty of ingratitude to the One who made the grace available for him. But if you have not made the grace of none effect, you will have it multiplied to you, and receive a multitude to graces, as it were for a reward of good works (and quotes 2 Pet 1:2, 1 Pet 4:10).

Since good works are fruits of the work of the divine grace, therefore we must receive these gifts with humility.

(O Lord, my heart is not lifted up): These are the words of a righteous man, endowed with great and wonderful grace-gifts, who does not preen himself on them... but remains humble[136].

136 Sel. Ps. 131:1.

GRACE AND THE WORKS OF THE HOLY TRINITY

We cannot separate the works of every *Hypostasis* (Person) of the Holy Trinity from the other *Hypostaseis* in our lives, which in fact are God's free gifts or abundant grace. Just for our study we make a distinction between the grace of every *Hypostasis*.

1. The grace of the Father:

I. He created us through the Logos.

II. Free will to all rational creatures is a divine gift.

III. His Fatherhood to us revealed through His Only-Begotten Son.

IV. His continuous divine Providence to all His creatures.

V. He satisfies the needs of our souls with His gifts.

VI. His infinite love is revealed through the redeeming work of His Son.

2. The grace of the Son:

I. A personal relationship with the Only-Begotten Son.

II. His titles reveal His grace.

III. His incarnation as a divine grace.

IV. His crucifixion as a redeeming grace.

V. His resurrection as a divine grace that passes over the grave.

VI. In Him we become children of God.

VII. The spirit of prophecy in the Old and New Testament is a grace of Christ.

VIII. Baptism as a divine grace.

IX. Our Educator and Guide in the Laws of God.

X. Our leader in the spiritual battle; to Him we owe our victory over hostile spiritual powers.

XI. In Him even judgment is seen to come within the range of a merciful God.

3. The grace of the Holy Spirit:

I. The Revealer of the truth; and the Giver of wisdom and knowledge.

II. He grants us adoption to the Father.

III. The Instructor of Prayers.

IV. The source of sanctification and perfection.

I will return to these divine works on our speech of every *Hypostasis*.

DIVINE GRACE IN THE LIFE OF BELIEVERS

GRACE AS GOD'S SELF-GIVING

Grace, according to Origen is ***enjoying God Himself***, the Holy Trinity, dwelling and acting in men. Therefore, he did not occupy himself with the concepts of "grace" but rather with having the experience of the unity with God, the Grantor of grace and gifts. Who became a gift for man to own Him in his depth; thus man is raised to His heavens.

This spiritual and biblical understanding led Origen sometimes to use ***the name of Christ in lieu of His gifts or grace***[137]. At other times he used to call Christ "The Kingdom in Person[138]," for he who attains the Kingdom of God, enjoys it not as a thing, but as the Divine Logos who fulfills all man's needs.

In other words, the eschatological attitude did not let the Alexandrians think or enter into a dispute about the conception of grace, but rather they were involved in experiencing "grace" as ***the enjoyment of the Person of Christ Who fills the inner life and acts within us by His Holy Spirit, to lead us to the Father's bosom***. Christ Himself, the Grace-Giver, grants Himself as a "grace," in order that we may attain Him in us.

> (As He became Man), *we are now able to receive Him; to receive Him so great and of such nature as He was, if we prepare a place in proportion to Him in our soul.*
>
> *Christ, who is all virtue, has come, and speaks, and on account of this, the kingdom of God is within His disciples and not here or there.*

---

137 Benjamin Drewery: Origen and the Doctrine of Grace, London 1960, p.109.

138 See Josh. hom. 17:3 where the partaking in the "wisdom" and "Knowledge" of God, His "Truth" and His "Logos" is summarized as partaking in the divine grace.

GRACE AS GOD'S SELF-REVELATION

But as one cannot be in the Father or with the Father except by ascending from below upwards, and coming first to the divinity of the Son, through which one may be led by the hand and brought to the blessedness of the Father Himself, so the Savior is the inscription "the door[139]*."*

Since the Father is inseparable from the Son, He is with him who receives the Son[140].

For there is in the divinity of the Logos some help towards the cure of those who are sick, thus respecting what the Logos says, "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick" Matt. 9:12; others, again, who are pure in soul and body exhibit "the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but now is manifested by the Scriptures of the prophets" Rom 16:25, and "by the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ" 2 Tim. 1:10, whose "appearing" is manifested to each one of those who are perfect, and enlightens the reason in the true knowledge of things[141].

God the Logos was sent, indeed, not only as a physician to sinners, but also as a Teacher of divine mysteries to those who are already pure and who sin no more[142].

We, the eyes of whose souls have been opened by the Logos, and who see the difference between light and darkness, prefer by all means to take our stand "in the light" and will have nothing to do with darkness at all[143].

Accordingly, if Celsus was to ask us how we think we know God, and how we shall be saved by Him, we

139 Origen: In Ioann. 1:29.
140 Comm. Matt. 13:19.
141 Contra Celsus 3:61 (A.N. Frs. vol. 4).
142 Ibid. 4:68.
143 Ibid. 8:59.

would answer that the Logos of God who entered into those who seek Him or who accept Him when He appears, is able to make known and to reveal the Father, Who was not seen (by anyone) before the appearance of the Logos. And Who else is able to save and conduct the soul of man to the God of all things save God the Logos, Who, "being in the beginning with God," became as flesh, that He might be received by those who could not behold Him, inasmuch as He was, the Logos, and was with God, and was God? And discoursing in human form and announcing Himself as flesh, He calls to Himself those who are flesh, that He may in the first place cause them to be transformed according to the Logos that was made flesh, and afterwards may lead them upwards to behold Him as He was before He became flesh; so that they receiving the benefit, and ascending from their great introduction to Him which was according to the flesh, say, "Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer" 2 Cor. 5:16[144].

...(We believe in) self-revealing God, Who has manifested Himself by Him who by His great power has spread the true principals of holiness among all men throughout the whole world[145].

The things that cannot be comprehended by the reason of mortals, because they are vast, beyond human range and far above our perishable nature, become by the will of God possible of comprehension by the abundant and immeasurable grace of God poured out on men through Jesus Christ, the Minister of boundless grace toward us, and through the co-operation of the Spirit[146].

Who sees God as Christ sees Him, for He alone "sees"... "the Father" (John 6:46), and even if it is said that the "pure in heart shall see God" Matt 5:8 it will be beyond

144 Ibid. 4:68.
145 Ibid. 8:59.
146 On Prayer 1:1.

question by Christ and spiritual; and... that is why the Savior was careful to use the right word and say "no man knows the Father save the Son", not... "See." Again, to those whom He grants to see God, He gives the "Spirit of knowledge" and the "spirit of wisdom", that through the Spirit Himself they may see God (Isa. 11:2). That is why He said "He who has seen me has seen the Father" John 14:9. We shall not be so stupid as to assume that those who speak about the physical body of Jesus saw the Father also; otherwise the scribes, Pharisees, Pilate... and all the crowd that cried "Crucify... Him" will have done so... Many looked on Him, but none is said "to have seen " Him unless he who has recognized that He is the Logos and the Son of God, and that in Him the Father also is at the same time recognized and seen[147].

GRACE AND OUR PERFECTION

Divine grace grants us perfection in every virtue.

For we must apply not only to wisdom but to every virtue the words of Solomon "For though a man be never so perfect among the children of men, yet if Your wisdom be not with him, he shall be nothing regarded" (Wisdom 9:6). Thus a man perfect in chastity or righteousness or virtue or piety who has not, however, received that chastity [etc.] that comes from the grace of God, will be "nothing regarded."

Hence if we wish to be granted this more perfect virtue, and that it should abound in us, let us first use every means to acquire diligently that which is perfect on human standards; and having done so, let us show our awareness that this is "nothing regarded" without the grace of God, let us "humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God" (I Pet. 5:6), and pray... that the perfection of all the good in

147 Comm. Song of Songs, 3.

us may be given from God, and that He may make us perfect and acceptable to God, as it were His sons[148].

GRACE OF RENEWAL (DEIFICATION)

Rowan A. Greer[149] says that Origin's description of the highest aspect of the Christian life borrows themes from Plato. The goal of the Christian life is to be made divine, as he says,

> *There is one (kind of food) that stands out above all the others mentioned, "the daily bread for our being" about which we must pray that we be made worthy of it, and that nourished by God the Logos, who was in the beginning with God, we may be made divine*[150].

Here Origen depends upon the earlier Christian tradition and in particular upon Clement of Alexandria's use of the phrase from Plato's *theaetetus* that defines human destiny as "likeness to God as far as possible." Plato also understands this destiny as a flight of the soul to God. In the *phaedrus* the soul gains wings for its return to heaven, and Origen alludes to the idea when he speaks of the soul returning like an eagle to God. On his speech of the blessedness of the martyrs, he says, "*Having cut so great (worldly) bonds, they have made for themselves wings like those of an eagle, and can fly up to the house of Him who is their Lord*[151]."

In his "*De Principiis*" Origen explained the meaning of deification by saying "*The aim for which we hope is that so far as it can happen we may be made participants in the divine nature by imitating him, as it is written, "He who says he believes in Christ ought to walk in the same way in which he walked" (cf. 1 John 2:6)."*

---

148 Comm. Ser. Matt. 69 on 25:29.
149 Rowan A. Greer: Origen, p. 25.
150 On Prayer, 17:13.
151 Exhortation to Martyrdom, 15.

Jauncey says[152] that grace according to Origen, is not merely enlightenment (grace of baptism), though it is that, but it is also a real participation in the fullness of Christ, a most real union of the divine power, with human choice. Origen says "*It is thus that by the unceasing work of Father, Son and Holy Spirit towards us, carried through successive stages of progress, we are able (if it may be so) to behold the holy and blessed life of the saints*[153]."

Origen sees "*the Spirit as the Source of our regeneration, so that without the Spirit no one can participate in the Father and the Son. Thus, the charity that pours into our hearts by the Holy Spirit makes us partakers in the divine nature*[154]*." He also says: [The presence of Christ in our souls and the mystery of our union with Him is stressed much more by Origen than by the heirs to his thought*[155]."

Now, I present some quotations from Origin's writings concerning the role of God's grace in the continuous renewal of our nature[156]:

> *For no noble deed has ever been performed amongst us, where the Divine Logos did not visit the souls of those who were capable, although for a little time, of admitting such operations of the Divine Logos.*
>
> *If a branch cannot bear fruit except if it abides in the vine, it is evident that the disciples also of the Logos, who are the rational branches of the Logos' true vine, cannot produce the fruits of virtue unless they abide in the true vine, the Christ of God...*
>
> *"For the Son of Man has come already, but not in His Glory" (quotes Isa. 53:25). He had to come in this way, that He might "bear our sins" and suffer "on our behalf;"*

---

152 E. Jauncey, p. 142.
153 De. Principiis 1:3:8.
154 De Princ. 1:3:5.
155 In Rom. Hom. 5:8; 8:2 (see In Cant 1;4; In Jern. hom 9:1; In Luc. hom. 22:1 etc.).
156 Contra Celsus 6:78; 5:12; Comm Matt. 12:9 on 16:27 (B. Drewery); Contra Celsus 6 (PG 11:1417-1240); Comm. on John 2:2; 1:37.

for it was not fitting that the Christ in glory should "bear our sins" and suffer "for us." But, He is coming again in glory after this preliminary preparing of His disciples through that appearing of His which had "no form nor comeliness." He became like them that they might become like Him, "conformed to the image" (Rom. 8:29) of His glory: since at His first coming He became conformed to "the body of our humiliation" (Phil. 3:21), when He "emptied Himself and took the form of a servant," He restores men to the form of God and makes them like unto it.

Thus, knowing that Christ has come, we see that through Him many christs have been made in the world, who like Him, loved righteousness and hated iniquity, and therefore God... anointed them with oil of gladness (Ps. 45:7). But, He, having loved righteousness and hated iniquity more than His companions, did receive the first fruits of this anointing, and as it were, the whole anointing of the oil of gladness. But His companions, each according to his capacity, shared in His anointing. Therefore, since Christ is the Head of the Church, so that Christ and the Church make one body, the oil has gone down from the head to the beard (the symbol of the perfect man) of Aaron, and this oil, going down, reached to the collar of His robe.

The Son in His kindness generously imparted deification to others... who are transformed through Him into gods, as images of the Prototype... the Logos is the Archetype of the many images.

If by participation (in the Logos) we are raised from the dead, and enlightened, and also, it may be, shepherded by Him and ruled over, since He does away with the irrationality and the deadness in us, in as much as He is the Logos and the Resurrection[157].

Nevertheless, it presents an offering to God even if it is said only "to offer fine wheat flour mixed with oil." For

157 Comm. in Ioannem 2:2.

every soul needs the oil of divine mercy and no one can escape the present life unless he has at hand the oil of heavenly mercy[158].

GRACE OF ADOPTION TO THE FATHER

None of the Old Testament writers addressed God as "Father"], perhaps because they did not know the Father; they prayed to Him as God and Lord, awaiting the One Who pours out the Spirit of adoption, not less on them than on those who believe in God through Him after His appearing. Unless indeed Christ did appear to the eye of their minds, and they did gain, being perfected, the spirit of adoption, but did not venture to speak or write of God as Father openly and to all, lest they might anticipate the grace that through Jesus was poured out on all the world, as He called all men to adoption.

The devil was formerly our father, before God became our Father, perhaps indeed the devil still is;...if "everyone that commits sin is born of the devil" we are born of the devil, so to speak, as often as we sin. Such perpetual birth from the devil is as wretched as perpetual birth from God is blessed; and not that I do not say that the righteous man has been born once and for all of God, but that he is so born on every occasion that God gives him birth for some good action. (This perpetual rebirth is true even of Christ) for Christ is the "effulgence" of "glory," and such effulgence is not generated once only but as often as the light creates it... Our Savior is the "Wisdom of God", and the wisdom is the "effulgence of eternal light" (Wis. 7:26). If then the Savior is always being born... from the Father, so too are you, if you have the spirit of adoption (Rom. 8:15), and God is always begetting you in every deed and thought you have; and this begetting makes you a perpetually re-born son of God in Christ Jesus.

---

158 In Lev. hom. 2:2 (cf. G.W. Barkley - Frs. of the Church).

> *I think that non can address God as "Father" unless he has been filled with the "spirit of adoption" (Rom. 8:15), and that such a son may address his Father as "Father" to honor Him with regard to the commandment (Mt. 5:44), "Love your enemies... that you may be sons of your Father...". Again everyone who "does righteousness" (1 John. 2:29) is born of God, so born, with the "seed of God in him" (John 3:9). Because he "can sin no more," he may say "Father... Again, one is born of God not from corruptible seed but through the living and abiding Logos of God, as it is written: "As many as received Him, them He gave the right to become children of God... who were born not of blood... but of God" (John. 1:12f). The point of this saying is not to raise us to the level of God's nature, but that He (the Logos) gives us to share in His grace, and graciously grants us His own dignity; for He tells us to call God "Father"*[159].

GRACE AND THE HEAVENLY LIFE

Divine grace makes our hearts very close to heaven, granting us the desire to attain the heavenly kingdom not only in the world to come but here on earth, by the dwelling of Christ in our souls. Origen says: "*as long as Jesus Christ, the Divine Logos that was in the beginning with God, does not dwell in a soul, the kingdom of heaven is not in that soul. However when one is ready to receive that Logos, the kingdom of heaven is nigh at his right hand*[160]*."*

GRACE AND SHARING IN THE CRUCIFIXION OF CHRIST

Divine grace enables us to share in Christ's crucifixion and death.

---

159 Comm. John 19:5; Hom. Jer. 9:4; Hom. Luke Frag 42 on 11:2 [See B. Drewery: Origen and the Doctrine of Grace].

160 Comm. Matt. 10:14 on 13:52 [B. Drewery].

Then [Thomas], as a true disciple, resolving to follow wherever He should go, sought that the other disciples too should by the grace of Christ lay down their lives with Him[161].

THE HOLY BIBLE AS A DIVINE GRACE

The Holy Spirit as the Revealer of the Truth, grants us the holy Scripture as a divine grace, works in our souls as a field of God. By heavenly grace not only do we discover the truth through the holy Scriptures, but also attain its effect in our lives. It grants us to be in the presence of God Himself on reading the Holy Scripture, to hear Him, and to understand His word.

Every man is his own farmer. His soul is like a field to be plowed, and the oxen he drives there are the holy thoughts which Scripture has given him. Under the plowshare of the Logos his soul receives the seed of God's grace and becomes, as it were, a new field. On the fertile soil he casts the seed of God's teaching, the seed of the law and of the prophets and of the Gospel, and all such teaching he holds in his memory for his hours of meditation and prayer[162].

Jude wrote an epistle which was short, but filled with the powerful words of heavenly grace[163].

The divine scripture says that the spoken word, even if it is most true and convincing in itself, is not sufficient to reach a human soul unless some power is also given by God to the speaker and grace flowers on what is said, and it is only by God's gift that this power is possessed by those who preach with effect[164].

---

161 Comm. on John Frag. 79 on 11:16.
162 In Luc., Frag. XXX; R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder, 1944, p. 39.
163 Comm. on Matt. 10:17.
164 Contra Celsus 6:2.

God admonishes those who hear Him throughout the whole of scripture and through those who teach by God's grace[165].

Nothing good can come apart from God, and this is above all true of the understanding of the inspired Scriptures[166].

Let us exhort God to grant that, as the Word grows in us, we may receive a rich large-mindedness in Christ Jesus and so be able to hear the sacred and holy words[167].

And so, if at times we do not understand what is said, we shall not lessen our obedience or betake ourselves to easier material, but wait for the grace of God to suggest to us an answer to our question, whether by direct enlightenment or through the agency of another[168].

DIVINE GRACE AND PRAISING GOD

Divine grace changes the inner man into the joyful kingdom of God; thus the true believer can sing the praises of God's glory.

None can exalt the Lord if the Lord has not uplifted him...

To uplift one's own soul in all virtue and in the life of wisdom is to exalt the one who dwells in that soul?[169]

165 Contra Celsus 6:57.
166 Sel. Ps. 1:2.
167 In Jer. hom. 6:3.
168 In Isa. hom. 2:1.
169 Cf. Ps. 29:2.

GRACE AND SATISFACTION

Our souls cannot be satisfied except by the works of divine grace; through it we receive God Himself dwelling in our inner man, and His gifts.

> *Grace comes to us from God and we are filled with His gift*[170].

GRACE AND ATTRIBUTING GOD TO BELIEVERS

God is attributed to us as our own, if we receive Him within us by His grace.

> *He is the God of the living... who perceive the grace He gave them when He announced Himself as their God and said "This is my eternal memorial" (Ex 3:15), And so Abraham, Isaac and Jacob live perceiving God and His grace*[171].

FREE GRACE

Grace is the gift of God offered to men who are unable to attain it by their own merits. St. Paul says, "being justified freely by His grace" Rom. 3:24.

> *None of God's gifts to humanity is made in payment of a debt, but all are of grace.*
>
> *God's grace is not given to those who lack zeal in the cause of good, nor can human nature achieve virtue without help from above*[172].

THE GROWTH OR THE LOSS OF GRACE

Origen assured that it is the free grace of God that acts in the life of the believer, it is ever acting in his life granting him the good will and the power to practice the "new life" in Christ. Be-

---

170 In Ezek. hom. 6:6.
171 Comm. on Matt. 17:36 on 22:23ff.
172 86. Comm. Ined, des Ps. 118:326; See our Book: Man and Redemption, Ottawa 1987, p 23ff.

lievers cannot by themselves do good without God's grace, and at the same time God who grants man free will as the most noble gift does not work in him unwillingly. He grants him to accept free grace or reject it. This grace is not something solid or static but always dynamic, ever-acting, therefore the believer who accepts it must enjoy continuous growth in grace, otherwise he loses it. Therefore, St. Paul says, "Do not quench the Spirit" 1 Thess. 5:19.

> *In His wisdom He makes His graces great to those who show with all their power... that they love Him with all their souls*[173].
>
> *This expression (rekindling the lamp, torch or other lights) seems to indicate something like this also in Jacob. As long as he was far from Joseph and received no information about his life, his spirit had failed in him, and the light which was in him had been darkened, as the kindling has already failed. However when those who reported to him about Joseph's life came, that is those who said that "the life was the light of men," John 1:4 he rekindled his spirit in himself, and the brightness of the true light was renewed in him.*
>
> *However because occasionally the divine fire can be extinguished even in the saints and the faithful, we hear the Apostle Paul warning those who were worthy to receive gifts of the Spirit and grace, by saying: "Do not quench the Spirit" (1 Thess. 5:19). The Scripture says of Jacob, therefore: "And Jacob is still living," (Gen. 45:28), as if he has experienced something like that which Paul warned against, and has renewed himself through those words which had been spoken to him that Joseph is still alive.*
>
> *However this also should be noticed, that he who "rekindled his spirit," meaning of course, that spirit which seemed almost extinguished, is said to be Jacob. But he who says: "it is a great thing for me if my son Joseph is liv-*

173Exhort. to Martyrdom 2

ing;" Gen. 45:28 as if he understands and sees that the life which is in the spiritual Joseph is great, he is no longer called Jacob, but Israel, he who sees in his mind the true life which is Christ, the true God.

But he is excited not only about the fact that he has heard that "Joseph his son is living", but especially about that which has been announced to him that it is Joseph who holds "dominion over all Egypt", for the fact that his son has reduced Egypt to his rule is truly great to him. For to tread on lust, to flee luxury, and to suppress and curb all the pleasures of the body, this is what it means to have "dominion over all Egypt". And this is what is considered great and held in admiration by Israel.

But if there is someone who should subject at least some vices of the body, but yield to others and be subject to them, it is not said correctly of him that he holds "dominion over the whole land of Egypt," but, for example, he will appear to hold dominion over one, perhaps, or two or three cities. But Joseph whom no bodily lust ruled, was a prince and lord "of all Egypt". Therefore no longer Jacob, but Israel, whose spirit has been rekindled, says: "It is a great thing for me if Joseph my son is living. I will go and see him before I die" (Gen. 45:28)[174].

THE MEASURE OF HIS GRACE

Origen affirms that God helps man by His freely-given grace. He desires to grant it without limitation, but He gives it according to the following factors.

1. His grace surpasses our needs, but we receive what we need only.

2. God’s will (Rom 12:6, 1 Cor. 12:7,11).

3. Our faith, expressed by works and virtues.

174In Exod. hom 15:2,3.

God does not have to "measure out" His Spirit and His grace - "to His greatness there are no limits" (Ps 145:3). The point of the "measure" is to spare the recipients, who can only cope with ***what is fitting for them to take***[175].

For the grace-gift of God surpasses our need, even as does being in the glory of sun, moon and stars, or in the holy resurrection of the dead[176].

Grace is given "according to the measure of the gift of Christ," if not "from works" (Rom. 11:6), at ***least on condition of some qualification on our part****. For grace is given "from faith" (Rom. 4:16), its purpose being to co-operate towards the adornment of faith with works*[177].

✞ ✞ ✞

175 Comm. on Eph. 17 on 4:6.
176 Comm. on John 9 (6).
177 Comm. on Eph. 17 on 4:6.

8

GOD THE FATHER

The specific attributes of the First *Hypostasis* will be best ascertained by considering His relation to the Second and the Third *Hypostaseis*.

ETERNAL FATHER AND ETERNAL SON

Origen states that the generation of the Son is ***eternal*** and also ***continuous;*** the Father is begetting the Son at each instant, just as light is always emitting its radiance[1]. By eternity and continuity Origen expresses eternity conceived as a unique instant which cannot be expressed by human language[2].

The Son is begotten by the Father as the reflection is by the light, as the will proceeds from the intellect, or as the word is emitted by the intellect. Origen applies to this generation the titles given to Wisdom in the *Book of Wisdom (7:25-26)*, a breath of the power of God, a very pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty[3].

The logic of Origen's anti-Sabellian exegesis led to the insistence that the Logos was distinct from the Father, but eternal, so that none could "*dare to lay down a beginning for the Son, before which He did not exist*[4]." Since everything is eternal in God, this generating act is eternal also: *aeterna ac sempiterna generation*[5]*;* the Son has no beginning.

---

1 In Jer. hom. 9:4.
2 Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p. 187.
3 Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p. 186.
4 De Principiis 4:4:1; Jaroslav Pelikan: The Christian Tradition, Chicago, 1971, p.191.
5 In Jer. 9:4; De Principiis. I:2:4.

Contrary to what Arianism was to say, the eternity of this generation is clearly affirmed, for it is inconceivable that the Father ever existed without His wisdom, His Reason, His Word, all expressions which denote the Son. Nor did the Father begin to be Father, as if He had not been so before, since all change in God is inconceivable. Twice in his treatise *De Principiis* and once in the *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* we find the famous sentence that was to be used against the Arians: *"ouk en boti ouk en"* There was not when He (the Son) was not[6]. There is no time that He was not[7]. The relation of the Son to the Father is, therefore, that of the unity of substance.

What else are we to suppose the eternal Light is, but God the Father? His splendor (Heb. 1:3) was not present with Him? Light without splendor is unthinkable. But if this is true, there is never a time when the Son was not the Son...[8]

FATHERHOOD OF GOD

Peter Widdicombe says,

For Origen, the affirmation that God is Father lies at the heart of Christian faith. It is fundamental to his conception of the divine nature, to his perception of the relation between God and the Son and its difference from the relation between God and the created order, and to his understanding of the process of redemption. The description of God as Father is a commonplace of his theological vocabulary. His writings are replete with biblical quotations in which God is referred to as Father, many of which are from the Gospel of John; he also quotes *Timaeus 28 C* where Plato refers to the "Creator and Father of all," but relatively rarely[9].

---

6 Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p. 187.
7 De Principiis. 1:2:9 f.; 4:4:I; In Rom. I:5.
8 In Heb. frag 24.
9 Peter Widdicombe: Fatherhood of God from Origen to Athanasius, Oxford 1994, p.7.

Therefore, even though God is called "Father," and those who are begotten by the word of faith in Him are called "sons," yet one cannot find among the ancients the concept of positive and unalterable sonship[10].

I think that none can address God as "Father" unless he has been filled with the "spirit of adoption" (Rom. 8:15), and that such a son may address his Father as "Father" to do him honor, with due regard to the commandment (Matt. 5:44f, "Love your enemies... that you may be sons of your Father..."). Again, everyone that "does righteousness" (1 John 2:29) is born of God. So born with the "seed of God in him" (ibid. 3:9), because he "can sin no more," he may say "Father... Again, one is born of God not from corruptible seed but through the living and abiding Word of God, as it is written: "As many as received Him, to them gave He the right to become children of God... which were born not of blood... but of God" (John 1:12f). The point of this saying is not to raise us to the level of God's nature, but that He (the Word) gives us to share in His grace, and graciously grants us His own dignity; for He tells us to call God "Father" [11].

HO THEOS

In a passage from the *Commentary on John* which has given rise to scandal, Origen remarks that in John 1:1 "the God - *Ho Theos"* stands for the Father, while the Son is called "*Theos* - God" without the article. "The God" is in a way the proper name of the Father, source and origin of the Deity[12].

When Origen comes to the activity proper to each *Hypostasis*, he attributes to the Father **the gift of being**: He is "the One who is" (Exod. 3:13) and the source of being. He does not hold His

10 On Prayer 22:2.
11 In Luke hom. Frag. 42 on 11:2.
12 Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p. 181.

existence from anything else, and everything else holds its existence from Him. Sometimes He is called *nous*, intelligence, and *ousia*, being and sometimes with the Platonists, beyond *nous* and beyond *ousia*[13].

Without any compromise of the equality of *Hypostaseis* in the Trinity, Origen could teach that the Father is the *principle of all being and all good*[14].

THE GOOD AND JUST FATHER

The second passage in the *Treatise on First Principles*[15] is directed against the Gnostics, especially the Marcionites. Origen reacts against the separation that they make between the Creator God of the Old Testament and the Father of Jesus Christ. He shows that Jesus in the Gospels always calls the Creator God His Father and that St. Paul does the same[16].

Origen asserts that there cannot be justice without goodness nor goodness without justice. Even when God punishes, He does it out of goodness. And God is called good in the Old Testament and just in the New[17].

THE FATHER IS NOT CREATOR OF EVIL

The Father is the origin and Creator of everything, even of matter, but not of sin and evil. Sin and evil are not positive realities, but negative; sin is that "nothing" which, according to John 1:3 was made without the Word[18].

---

13 Comm. on John 13:21:123; 19:6:37; Contra Celsus 7:38: Origen there takes up a formula of Celsus; Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p. 183
14 R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder Book Co., 1944, p. 178-179.
15 De Principiis 2:4-5.
16 Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p. 184.
17 Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p. 184.
18 Comm. on John 2:13-15 (7-9), 92-111; Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p. 183

CHRIST REVEALS HIS FATHER IN THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS

God the Father can be recognized ***through His creatures*** as the sun through its rays:

Our eyes frequently cannot look upon the nature of the light itself, that is, upon the substance of the sun: but when we behold his splendor or his rays pouring in, perhaps, through windows or small openings to admit the light, we can reflect how great is the supply and source of the light of the body. So, in like manner, the works of Divine Providence and the plan of this whole world are a sort of rays, as it were, of the nature of God, in comparison with His real substance and being. As therefore, our understanding is unable of itself to behold God Himself as He is, it knows the Father of the world from the beauty of His works and the comeliness of His creatures[19].

1. The Logos reveals Him even in the Old Testament: He inspired men before His incarnation[20], granting believers divine knowledge.

Before that time, Christ, the Word of God was in Moses and the prophets[21].

2. We know the Father through the incarnation of the Logos: The incomprehensible Father becomes comprehensible through the Logos, who in the fullness of time became Man. He grants His believers to be united with the Father in Him and thus they acknowledge Him. By this knowledge the soul becomes perfect, i.e., returns to her original goodness.

Joseph C. McLelland writes,

The incarnation of the Word renders Him "*able to reach anybody*." Here is where Origen's Platonism differs

---

19 De Principiis. I:I:6 ANF.
20 Against Celsus, 8:54.
21 Origen: De Principiis, Preface l; "The Ante-Nicene Fathers", Vol. 4, 1979, by Roberts and Donaldson. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Michigan. USA.

from the classical tradition in which Celsus and Clement stand: "Plato may say that it is difficult to find the maker and father of this universe, indicating that it is not impossible for human nature to find God in a degree worthy of Him, or if not worthy of Him, yet at least in a degree higher than that of the multitude... we affirm that human nature is not sufficient in any way to seek for God and to find Him in His pure nature, unless it is helped by the God who is object of the search[22]".

The aim of faith is to attain the knowledge of the Father, through ***the unity with the Son who alone knows Him***[23].

The Word of God, coming to those who seek Him, or to those who receive Him when He is manifested, is able to make known the Father and to reveal Him who was not seen before His coming[24].

3. We who have the practical knowledge of the Father can be reconciled with Him through our Savior, who became the High Priest and the Victim.

Christ, the true High Priest who by His own blood made God propitious to you and reconciled you to the Father[25].

We have peace with God" (Rom. 5:1), but it is through our Lord Jesus Christ who reconciled us to God through the sacrifice of His blood... Christ came that He might destroy the enemies and make peace, and reconcile us to God when we were separated because of the barrier of wickedness which we set up by sinning[26].

We can approach (God) through Jesus Christ, and especially if we know Christ in His capacity of Righteous-

---

22 Joseph c. McLelland: God The Anonymous, Massachsetts, 1976, p. 103; cf.
23 In John 1:16.
24 Contra Celsus 6:68.
25 In Leviticum hom. 9:10.
26 Comm. on Rom. 4:8.

ness, Truth, Wisdom, Resurrection, True Light. For without these we cannot approach God-nor indeed without Peace which is Christ[27].

4. Christ's titles call us to attain the knowledge of the Father.

He is called the **Logos**, granting us the reason (*logika*) by which we acknowledge of the Father. He is the **Light of the world**, who illuminates our inner sight to behold the Father.

If we look at the things by the names of which the Son of God is called, we shall understand how many good things Jesus is, whom those preach whose feet are beautiful (Isa. 52:7).

One good thing is life; but Jesus is the Life. Another good thing is the Light of the world, when it is true Light, and the light of men; and all these things the Son of God is said to be[28].

He is the **Truth**, those who abide in Him, attain divine knowledge.

Our Savior, therefore, is the image of the invisible God, inasmuch as compared with the Father Himself He is the truth: and as compared with us, to whom He reveals the Father, He is the image by which we come to the knowledge of the Father, whom no one knows says the Son, and He to whom the Son is pleased to reveal Him[29].

All who believe and are assured that "grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" (John. 1:17), and who know Christ to be the truth, agreeably to His own declaration, "I am the Truth" John. 14:6, derive the knowledge which incites men to a good and happy life from no other source than from the very words and teaching of Christ. And by the words of Christ we do not mean those only

---

27 Sel. Ps. 119:169.
28 Comm. on John, book 6:28
29 Origin: De Principiis, Book 1, Ch. 2, Section 6.

which He spoke when He became Man and tabernacled in the flesh[30].

And another good thing which one may conceive to be in addition to Life or Light is the Truth[31].

He is the **Way** and the **Door:**

Since one cannot be in the Father or with the Father without first ascending to the divinity of the Son, by which one can be led up to the blessedness of the Father, the Savior is described in Scripture as the "Door[32]*."*

And a fourth in addition to these is the Way which leads to the Truth.

And all these things our Savior teaches that He is, when He says: "I am the Way and the Truth and the life" (John 14:6).

Ah, is not that good, to shake off earth and mortality, and to rise again, obtaining this boon from the Lord, since He is the Resurrection, as He says: "I am the Resurrection" (John 11:25).

But the door also is a good, through which one enters into the highest blessedness.

Now Christ says: "I am the Door" (John 10:9).

And what need is there to speak of ***Wisdom****, which "the Lord created the first principle of His ways, for His works" (Prov. 8:22), in whom the Father of her rejoiced, delighting in her manifold intellectual beauty, seen by the eyes of the mind alone, and provoking him to love who discerns her divine and heavenly charm?*

A good indeed is the wisdom of God, proclaimed along with the other good foresaid by those whose feet are beautiful.

---

30 Origen: De Principiis, Preface l; "The Ante-Nicene Fathers", Vol. 4, 1979, by Roberts and Donaldson. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Michigan. USA.
31Comm. on John, book 6:28
32 Comm. on John 1:27.

*And the **Power of God** is the eighth good we enumerate, which is Christ.*

Nor must we omit to mention the Word, who is God after the Father of all. For this also is a good, less than no other.

Happy, then, are those who accept these goods and receive them from those who announce the good tidings of them, those whose feet are beautiful[33].

Basil Studer states that for Origen, the Son is the Wisdom and the Logos (Word). In relation to the Father He is Wisdom, whose knowledge He is[34]. In relation to the world He is the Logos, the communication of what He beholds in the Father[35].

5. *Through our Lord Jesus Christ we attain fatherhood of God, **the Father is attributed to us as our own God and Father.***

You shall be my people and I will be your God." He is not the God of all men but only of those to whom He graciously gives Himself, as He did to the patriarch to whom He said "I am your God" (Gen. 17:1)... [Origen quotes Matt. 22:32: "not the God of the dead but of the living."] *Who is the "dead"? The sinner- the man who does not possess the One who said "I am the life" (John 11:25), the one whose works are dead (Heb. 6:1). If then He is "not the God of the dead...", and we know who is the living - the one who guides his life by Christ and remains with Him - and if we desire God to be our God, let us bid farewell to the works of death...* [36]

This Jesus Christ...has graciously bestowed on those who are truly His disciples that the same One should be not only their God but their father [and quotes John 20:17: "I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and my

---

33 Comm. on John, 1:11.
34 De Principiis 1:2:2.
35 De Principiis 1:2:3; Basil Studer: Trinity and Incarnation, p. 80.
36 In Jer. hom. 9:3 on 11:4.

God and your God"]. It is my opinion that He bestowed the same gift on Abraham also...[37]

Further, the words "from His fullness we have all received" and "grace for grace"...show that the prophets too were able to accept the gift from the fullness of Christ, and received the second grace in place of the first. For they, too, led by the hand of the Holy Spirit, after their initiation by allegory, attained to the vision of the truth. That is why not all the prophets but only "many" (Matt. 13:17) longed to see what the apostles saw. For if there was a difference between the prophets, it lay in this, that the higher class who had been perfected did not long to see what the apostles saw, for they had already seen it; but those who had not, like them achieved this ascent to the heights of God's Word had come to yearn for the things made known to the apostles through Christ... [38]

In general, before the incarnation of the Only-Begotten Son, many of the men of the Old Testament could not acknowledge God as their own Father.

Perhaps because they did not know the Father; they prayed to Him as God and Lord, awaiting the One who pours out the Spirit of adoption not less on them that on those who believe in God through Him after His appearing. Unless indeed Christ did appear to the eye of their minds, and they did gain, being perfected, the spirit of adoption, but did not venture to speak or write of God as Father openly and to all, lest they might anticipate the grace that through Jesus was poured out on all the world, as He called all men to adoption[39].

THE ROLE OF THE FATHER IN OUR SALVATION

---

37 Comm. on Matt. 17:36.
38 Comm. on John 6"3 (2).
39 Comm. on John 19:5.

Origen, in his exposition of the idea of the ransom, repeatedly referred to the idea of Christ's being handed over by His Father to the hostile powers. Since the devil had the power of death, the way man was rescued from the devil and death was for the Son to be delivered by the Father into the devil's hands, and by Him in turn into the hands of the enemies of Christ.

To whom did he give his soul as a ransom for many? Certainly not to God! Then why not the devil? For he had possession of us until there should be given to him the ransom for us, the soul of Jesus[40].

"*This slain Lamb has been made, according to certain hidden reasons, a purification for the whole world; for which, according to* ***the Father's love to man,*** *he submitted to death purchasing us back by His own blood from Him who had got us in his power, sold under sin*[41]."

The Father gave up His own Son not only for the saints... for the great ones, but for the least also, and for every single member of the Church... God then, who gave us worth through pouring out the precious blood of His Son for us... [42].

THE FATHER GIVES US TO HIS BELOVED SON

For He (the Father) gives them to His Son their teacher and doctor, to free them from ignorance and disease - i.e. from sin - and so keep them under His protection and kingly rule.

The "tombs" in question... are the bodies of the souls which were sinful, i.e. dead to God. But when through the grace of God such should have been aroused to faith, their bodies... are made the bodies of the holy...

---

40 In Matt. hom. 13:8-9; Jaroslav Pelikan: The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100), p. 148.
41 Comm. on John 6:35.
42 Comm. on Rom. 7:9 0n 8:32.

HIS DWELLING IN THE SOULS

He visits the souls of those who have been able to receive His operations[43].

V V V

43 Contra Celsus 6:78.

9

JESUS CHRIST

Origen, in his writings and preaching, concentrates on Christ. His heart is abundantly flamed with the love of Christ, as he finds in Him all his needs.

1. Origen believes that the souls of men had fallen from their heavenly rank, and instead of their freedom they are unable to be restored to their origin without Christ.

2. Christ in His infinite love stretches His hands for the whole of mankind for their eternal glorification.

3. In His love He paid His precious blood to the devil who enslaves us, as a cost of our freedom.

4. As the Savior of the world he is the High Priest who offers His life as the unique Victim and Sacrifice.

5. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the Heavenly Groom who works for His spiritual marriage with our souls as His own bride.

6. He is the true heavenly and unique Teacher and Physician who heals our souls from the darkness of ignorance and corruption, granting Himself as the Truth, the Medicine, and the Righteousness.

7. He satisfies all our needs, asking us to receive Him as the heavenly Kingdom, heavenly Bread, the spiritual Jordan, the hidden Treasure, the divine Way, the Door, the Truth, the Rock, the Resurrection, the Beginning and the End etc.

8. Men of God of the Old Testament were joyfully waiting for the Messiah (Christ). Origen finds our Lord Jesus Christ everywhere, and ***the entire Old Testament speaks of Him only***[1].

CHRIST AS A LOVER OF MANKIND

Origen believes that our Lord Jesus Christ is the Savior of all rational creatures, especially mankind. He believes in the restoration of all these creatures, even the devil and his evil angels.

Christ who loved men, even while they were sinners and enemies, and sacrificed Himself on their behalf, enter in a personal relationship with the soul of man. Therefore Origen attributes Christ to himself as his own, calling Him "my Jesus."

> *The Apostle* (St. Paul) *declares what is written about Adam and Eve thus: This is a great mystery in Christ and in the Church (Eph. 5:32); He so loved her that He gave Himself for her, while she was yet undutiful, even as he says: When as yet we were ungodly according to the time, Christ died for us (Gal. 2:20); and again: When* ***as yet we were sinners****, Christ died for us (Rom. 5:6)*[2].
>
> *But if* ***my Jesus*** *is said to be taken up "in glory," I see God's graciousness*[3].

✞ ✞ ✞

1 Job 5:46f, Rowan A. Greer: Origen, Paulist Press, 1979, page xi.
2 Comm. on the Songs of Songs, book 2:3 (ACW).
3 Contra Celsus 3:31

THE DIVINITY OF CHRIST

Origen saw that the Person of the Word was not reduced to a role or an office[4]. The Son is a *Hypostasis*, Living Wisdom. He is verily and substantially God, and therefore of necessity co-eternal and co-equal with the Father.

ETERNAL SON OF GOD

In the previous chapter we noticed that Origen states that the generation of the Son is ***eternal*** and also ***continuous;*** the Father is begetting the Son at each instant, just as light is always emitting its radiance[5]. By eternity and continuity Origen expresses eternity conceived as a unique instant which cannot be expressed by human language[6].

> *There never can have been a time when He was not. For when was that God, whom John calls the Light, destitute of the radiance of His proper glory, so that a man may dare to ascribe a beginning of existence to the Son... Let a man, who ventures to say there was a time when the Son was not, consider that this is all one with saying there was a time when Wisdom was not, the Word was not, the Life was not*[7].

> *None of these testimonies, however, sets forth distinctly the Savior's exalted birth; but when the words are addressed to Him, "You are My Son, this day have I begotten You" (Ps. 2:7; Mark 1:11; Heb. 1:5), this is spoken to Him by God, with whom all time is to-day, for there is no evening with God, as I consider, and there is no morning, nothing but time that stretches out, along with His unbe-*

4 R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder Book Co., 1944, p. 290.
5 In Jer. hom. 9:4.
6 Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p. 187.
7 De Principiis 4:28; Charles Bigg: The Christian Platonists of Alexandria, p. 207-208.

ginning and unseen life. The day is to-day with Him in which the Son was begotten, and thus the beginning of His birth is not found, as neither is the day of it[8].

Wherefore we recognize that God was always the Father of his Only-begotten Son, who was born indeed of Him and draws His being from Him, but is yet without any beginning, not only of that kind which can be distinguished by periods of time, but even of that other kind which the mind alone is wont to contemplate in itself and to perceive, if I may so say, with the bare intellect and reason...

John, however, uses yet more exalted and wonderful language in the beginning of his gospel, when by an appropriate declaration he defines the Word to be God; "And the Word was God, and He was in the beginning with God" John 1:1, 2). Let him who assigns a beginning to the Word of God or the Wisdom of God beware lest he utters impiety against the unbegotten Father Himself, in denying that He was always a Father and that He begets the Word and possessed wisdom in all previous times or ages or whatever else they may be called...

This is an eternal and everlasting beginning, as brightness is begotten from light. For he does not become Son in an external way through the adoption of the Spirit, but is Son by nature.

Now, as we said above, the wisdom of God has her subsistence nowhere else but in Him who is the beginning of all things, from Whom also she took her birth. And because He Himself, who alone is a Son by nature, is this Wisdom, He is on this account also called the "Only-Begotten"[9].

8 Comm. on John 1:32 (ANF).
9 De Principiis 1:2:2-5 (Cf. Butterworth).

ETERNAL WISDOM OF GOD

But since the Wisdom of God, which is His Only-begotten Son, is in all respects unalterable and unchangeable, and since every good quality in Him is essential and can never be changed or altered, His glory is on that account described as pure and sincere...

Now God's Wisdom is the Brightness of that Light, not only in so far as it is light, but in so far as it is everlasting Light. His Wisdom is therefore an everlasting Brightness, enduring eternally. If this point is fully understood, it is a clear proof that the Son's existence springs from the Father Himself, yet not in time, nor from any other beginning except, as we have said, from God Himself[10].

Now Christ is Wisdom-as-a-whole, and the capacity for wisdom achieved by each of the wise is actually a partaking in Christ... [11].

HIS DIVINITY IS NOT LIMITED BY A PLACE

In his "*De Principiis*" Origen assures Christ's divinity and that His divinity is not limited by a place:

But perhaps someone will say that through those who are participants (cf. Heb. 3:14) in God's Word or His Wisdom or truth or life the Word and Wisdom appears Himself to be in a place. The answer must be given that there is no doubt that Christ insofar as He is Logos and Wisdom and all the rest was in Paul, because of which he said, "Or do you desire proof that Christ is speaking in me?" (2 Cor. 13:3). And again, "But it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me" (Gal. 2:20). Then, therefore, since He was in Paul, who will doubt that He was likewise in Peter, in John, and in each one of the saints,

10 De Principiis 1:2:11 (Cf. Butterworth).
11 Comm. on John 1:34.

and not only in those on earth but also in those in the heavens? For it is absurd to say that Christ was in Peter and Paul, but not in Michael the Archangel and in Gabriel. From this it is clearly discovered that the divinity of the Son of God was not confined to any place, since He is not so much in one as not to be in another. Rather, since He is not confined in any place because of the majesty of His incorporeal nature, He is further understood not to be absent from any place...

He is not present in a similar way in every one. And He is present more fully and more clearly and, if I may put it this way, more openly in the archangels than in holy men. This is evident from the fact that when the saints arrive at the highest perfection, they are said to be made "like angels" or "equal" to angels according to the view of the Gospel (cf. Mt. 22:30; Luke. 20:36). It follows that Christ is made present in different ones to the degree that the reckoning of what they deserve permits...

And David points out the mystery of the entire Trinity in the creation of everything when he says, "By the Word of the Lord the heavens were made, and all their power by the Spirit of His mouth" (Ps. 33:6).

And John the Baptist points to some such conclusion when in Jesus' corporeal absence he said to the crowds, "Among you stands One whom you do not know, even He who comes after me, the thong of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie" (John. 1:26-27). John could not have said He stood in the midst of those among whom He was not corporeally present, about Him who was absent, so far as His corporeal presence was concerned. Thus, it is clear that the Son of God is both wholly present in the body and wholly present everywhere.

✞ ✞ ✞

THE INCARNATION

THE INCARNATION AND CHRIST'S DIVINITY

Origen insists on the fact that "*having become man, he remained what he was, God*." Jesus' kenosis did not put an end to his divine character.

> *Then again: Christ Jesus, He who came to earth, was begotten of the Father before every created thing. And after He had ministered to the Father in the foundation of all things, for "all things were made through Him"* (John 1:3), *in these last times He emptied Himself and was made Man, was made flesh, although He was God; and being made man, He still remained what He was, namely, God. He took to Himself a body like our body, differing in this alone, that it was born of a virgin and of the Holy Spirit. And this Jesus Christ was born and suffered in truth and not merely in appearance, and truly died our common death. Moreover He truly rose from the dead, and after the resurrection... He was then taken up into heaven*[12].
>
> *Hear also Paul say, "You are God's field, God's building,"(1 Cor. 3.9.) What then is that "sanctuary" which has "not been made by the hand of man," but prepared by the hands of God? Hear Wisdom saying, "She has built a house for herself."(Prov. 9.1.) I think, however, that this is understood more correctly of the Lord's incarnation. For "it was not made by the hand of men," that is the temple of flesh is not built in the virgin by human work, but, as Daniel had prophesied, "A stone cut without hands separated and became a great mountain."(Dan. 2.34-35.) That is the* ***"sanctuary" of the flesh which was taken up and "cut" from the mountain of human nature and the***

12 De Principiis 1:1:4 (Cf. Butterworth).

substance of flesh "without hands," that is, apart from the work of men[13].

Joseph C. McLelland, under the title "***God: Changeless Yet Lively***" deals with Origen's view on the incarnation of the Logos. He writes,

> For Origen, the question is approached in terms of the Platonic doctrine of model and image, and of the place of the Incarnate Word in this kind of universe.
>
> He faces a profound difficulty in all this, because he is opposing those (Stoics, Epicurus, even Aristotle) who have filled the world "with a doctrine that abolishes providence, or limits it, or introduces a corruptible first principle which is corporeal, "while the doctrine of the Jews and Christians which preserves the unchangeable and unalterable nature of God has been regarded as irreverent, since it is not in agreement with those who hold impious opinions about God[14]..."
>
> The incarnate Word participates in the relative and temporary nature of the world into which He comes. The truth of the Gospel consists in apprehending a gracious divine-human reality, to be sure, but there follows recognition of the merely symbolic nature of the human element and ascension to the divine reality above it[15]...
>
> The question of the divine descent in incarnation is therefore decisive for the entire theology of Origen. Celsus had brought the objection "that we affirm that God Himself will come down to men. And he thinks it follows from this that He leaves his throne[16]." But Celsus, replies Origen, does not know the power of God, for He both fills all things and maintains all things in their being. If God is said to de-

---

13 In Exodus hom .6:12 (Cf. Ronad E Heine- Frs. of the Church, vol. 71.)
14 Contra Celsus 1:21; Joseph c. McLelland: God The Anonymous, Massachsetts, 1976, p. 106-107.
15 Joseph c. McLelland: God The Anonymous, Massachsetts, p. 113.
16 Contra Celsus 4:5.

scend, or if the Word "comes to us," ***this does not mean that He moves from one place to another or leaves His throne***. ***There is no "changing" or "leaving" involved***[17]. "Even supposing that we do say that He leaves one place and fills another, we would not mean this in a spatial sense." In what sense would we mean it? In an existential sense, for the "change" is to be understood as taking place in us: "anyone who has received the coming of the Word of God into his own soul changes from bad to good, from licentiousness to self-control, and from superstition to piety." One scholar has concluded that for Origen, "The earthly life of Christ was a grand symbolic drama, a divine mystery-play for the enlightenment of humanity[18]."

Origen refers to his former reply, and adds, "***While remaining unchanged in essence, He comes down in His providence and care over human affairs.***" He distinguishes this doctrine from that of Epicurus and the Stoics, for they have missed "the true conception of God's nature, as being entirely incorruptible, simple, uncompounded, and indivisible." So also[19] Christ was in the he form of God but emptied Himself, that men might be able to receive Him. "But he underwent no change from good to bad." When the Word assumed a human body and a human soul, He remained "Word in essence," suffering "nothing of the experience of the body or the soul." His descent is to the low level of those who cannot behold the divine radiance; He "becomes as it were flesh, and is spoken of in physical terms, until he who has accepted him in this form is gradually lifted up by the Word and can look even upon, so to speak, his absolute form[20]."

17 Cf. Contra Celsus 6:60.
18 Joseph c. McLelland: God The Anonymous, p. 117.
19 Contra Celsus 4:15.
20 Joseph c. McLelland: God The Anonymous, p. 119.

There are different forms corresponding to the different kinds of receivers - "*whether he is a beginner, or has made a little progress, or is considerably advanced, or has nearly attained to virtue already, or has in fact attained it*[21]." A favorite illustration in this respect is the Transfiguration story[22]. The people down below could not receive the truer form in which he showed himself to the chosen few on the mountain. The former saw only the mortal nature (Origen quotes Isaiah 53, "he had no form or beauty"), while the disciples attained to the immortal Logos. Yet Origen does not wish to suggest that the human form is an appearance only-"he does not mislead or tell lies.[23] Although he will not say that the incarnate form partakes of an absolute character, he is not saying the opposite, in the Gnostic manner of reducing the incarnation to an appearance of relative value--a sort of theophany. He wishes to maintain its truth as preparatory rather than normative. Again it is pedagogy which is operative: the divine Logos assumes humanity in relation to our present fallen state, for we "could only thus at first receive Him[24]".

JESUS CHRIST BECAME TRUE MAN

Origen does not deny the reality of Christ's body, it had genuine need of sustenance[25]. His life, His Passion were in no sense fantastic. Origen believes that so real was Jesus' body that we cannot accept in the literal sense the story of His being carried up into a mountain by the tempter[26].

Now this body (of the demon) is by nature a fine substance and thin like air, and on this account most peo-

21 Contra Celsus 4:16.
22 E.G. 2:64.
23 Contra Celsus 4:18.
24 Comm. on John 1:20; Joseph c. McLelland: God The Anonymous.
25 In Gal., Frag., Tollinton: Selections from the Commentaries and Homilies of Origen, SPCK 1929, p 41ff; Joseph c. McLelland: God The Anonymous, p. 121.
26 Bigg: The Christian Platonists of Alexandria, p. 234.

> *ple think and speak of it as incorporeal; but the Savior had a body which was solid and capable of being handled*[27]..

Origen is facing the deep mystery of the "composite nature" of Christ[28]. He grants that the Logos intentionally assumed a body no different from human flesh, "*so he assumed with the body also its pains and grieves*[29]." Yet he knows that His passion and death are at the heart of divine love and salvation - he can speak of the "benefit" of Christ's death[30] , and can argue from the reality of his agonies to the reality of his resurrection[31].

Origen, who gave the Greek Christology the scientific terms, *physis, hypostasis, ousia, homousios, theonthropos,* is the first to use the designation God-man *(theonthropos)*[32]), to affirm Jesus' humanity against the Gnostics. He also affirmed the unity of Christ's nature. He stated that "Christ" though designated by a name which connotes His divinity, human attributes can be predicated of Him and *vice versa.* He says:

> *The Son of God, through whom all things were created was named Jesus Christ and the Son of man. For the Son of God also is said to have died-in reference, namely, to that nature which could admit of death; and He is called the Son of man, who is announced as about to come in the glory of God the Father, with the holy angels. And for this reason, throughout the whole of Scripture, not only is the divine nature spoken of in human words, but the human nature is adored by appellations of divine dignity*[33].

> *After the Incarnation the soul and body of Jesus become one with the Word of God*[34].

---

27 De Principiis 1:2:2-5 (Cf. Butterworth).
28 Contra Celsus 1:66..
29 Contra Celsus 2:23.
30 Contra Celsus 1:54f., 61.
31 Contra Celsus 2:16.
32 In Ez. hom. 3:3.
33 De Princ. 2,6,3 ANF.
34 Contra Celsus 2:9.

THE SHAPE OF HIS BODY

Origen believes that our Lord Jesus Christ had a true body which had its shape like all men, and was seen by all who surrounded Him, at the same time His body changed in accordance with the capacity of those who saw it, and because of this its appearances could be beneficial and fitting to the needs of each viewer. At one time it might be said "He had no form nor beauty," and at another He might appear to the chosen three transfigured in glory... To those who are still at the foot of the mountain and not yet prepared to ascend, the Word "has no form nor beauty". His form to such people is dishonored and deficient in comparison with those who by following Him have received power to go with Him even as He climbs the high mountain, He has a more divine form.

> *Not only did He possess two forms, one in which He was seen by all, another into which He was transformed before His disciples on the mountain - but that He used to appear to every individual in a form corresponding to his worth*[35].
>
> *The Word appears in different forms in accordance with each man's capacity. For some He has no form nor beauty; for others He is blooming with beauty. By those who are [still] "ascending" through lofty works and thus making for the "high mountain" of wisdom, He is conceived in His simpler form and known in carnal terms. But by the perfect He is conceived in His divinity, and their knowledge enables them to see Him in the form of God*[36].
>
> *"And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him" (Luke 4:20)... How much I desire that in our congregation... the eyes of the soul, and not of the*

35 Comm. Ser. Matt. 100 on 26:48ff.
36 Frag. Hom. Luke 15 (On Transfiguration).

body, of the catechumens and believers, men, women and children, be fixed on Jesus. for beholding Him makes His light reflect and your faces become more bright[37].

CHRIST HAS A HUMAN SOUL

Charles Bigg states:

> He is the first to speak at large of the Human Soul of Jesus. Like other souls, it is eternal and eternally united with the Word. From the first it received Him wholly, and clove to Him inseparably. It was like in all things to all other human souls, free as they; but the perfection of love, the singleness of worthiness, bound it so closely to the Godhead, that the union of the two may be compared to a mass of iron glowing for ever with a white heat. He who should touch the iron would feel not the iron but the fire. Hence in scripture we commonly find the titles proper to the Humanity of our Lord transferred to His Divinity and the Humanity of our Lord transferred to His Divinity and conversely. It is the *communicatio Idiomatum*. The Flesh of Jesus was pure from all birth stain, from all defilement of every kind. It was real flesh[38].

In his work "*De Principiis,*" Origen assured that Christ has a human soul.

> *Therefore, when the Son of God wished to appear to men and live among men for the salvation of the human race, He took not only a human body, as some suppose, but also a soul, and one like our souls in its nature, but like Himself in purpose and power, and such as could fulfill without turning all the wishes and dispensations of the Word and Wisdom.*

---

37 In Luc. hom. 32:6.

38 Bigg: The Christian Platonists of Alexandria p. 233.

Origen believes in the pre-existence of the soul of Christ, like all other rational creatures. Henri Crouzel says,

> So the Christ-man exists in the pre-existence, long before the incarnation, and has quite a history before that event. He is the Bridegroom of the pre-existent Church formed of the totality of rational creatures[39].

THE PURPOSES OF THE INCARNATION

Benjamin Drewery gives a summary of Origen's view on the purposes of the incarnation, saying;

> Christ became like men that they might become like Him: He made available all good things-teaching the way to God, warning of judgment, exemplifying the good life, converting, reforming, purging from evil, gladdening His followers, sowing the seed of God's word, opening the kingdom of God to all the world, to unworthy as well as worthy, even if not to the unwilling[40].

1. To join us with Himself

> *Consider, then, how the Son will be able to be elevated in His flesh to the possession of those goods that already belong to Him by reason of His divinity; for those who are in the world, since they belong to the Father, can be considered to belong, in a certain way, to the Son, the sharer in the Father's purposes. How, then, can He receive from the Father the order to demand that the nations be given to Him for an inheritance and that His possessions should extend to the ends of the earth? The reason is that man, to avoid serving God, has risen in futile revolt against God; and the Father, who is the Creator of all beings, in His wish to redeem mankind has sent into this world the Logos, His Only-begotten Son, to the end that the Son might be made flesh and*

39 Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p. 192.
40 Benjamin Drewery: Origen and the Doctrine of Grace, London 1960, p. 113.

go forth, without changing His divine nature, to preach deliverance to the captives and to give sight to the blind. Therefore we say that the Son receives His kingdom and is recognized as being established as the heir. But, although we can say this because of the human nature which He has assumed, we must be on our guard so as not to misunderstand the inner structure of the mystery of the Trinity[41].

When Jesus is among the multitudes He is outside His house,(Matt. 13:1) for the multitudes are outside the house. This work issues through His love towards men, for He leaves the house and goes far to those who are unable to come to Him[42].

2. To renew our nature

Nothing good has happened among men without the working of the divine Word[43].

The Lord became man to resurrect our fallen human nature, and to change it from earth unto heaven.

It says, "a consecrated linen tunic will be put on" (Lev. 16.4). Flax thread comes from the earth; therefore, it is "a sanctified linen tunic" that Christ, the true high priest, puts on when he takes up the nature of an earthly body; for it is said about the body that "it is earth and it will go into the earth.." (Cf. Gen. 3:19.) Therefore, ***my Lord and Savior, wanting to resurrect that which had gone "into the earth," took an earthly body that he might carry it raised up from the earth to heaven***[44].

In the Epistle to the Hebrews, St. Paul clearly explains the difference between the animal sacrifice and Christ's Sacrifice, for

41 In Psalm., 2:8 PG 12:1108; R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder 1944, Chapter IV.
42 Fr. Malaty: Luke, p. 294 (in Arabic).
43 Contra Celsus 6:78.
44 Homilies on Leviticus 9:2 (Cf. Frs. of the Church).

the first one was repeated because of its weakness and failure to renew the depth of human nature, but the last One was offered once only for it still has the power to renew our interior man. Origen says that Jesus Christ as a Priest and Victim at the same time did not offer animal's blood that consumes but His own Blood that gives life, resurrection and immortality. He always changes believers from mortality into immortality, redeeming their nature to participate in His life and to bear His likeness.

> *Discoursing in bodily form and giving Himself out as flesh, He summons to Himself those who are flesh, in order that He may first of all transform them into the likeness of the Word who has been made flesh, and after that He was before He became flesh*[45].

> *The Son of His kindness generously imparted deification to others ... who are transformed through Him into gods, as images of the prototype .. the word is the archetype of the many images*[46].

In his *Commentary on John*, Origen states that the word "*Jordan"* means "*their going down*[47]." Christ, our Savior, is the Jordan, in Him we descend to be purified. In other words, the Logos descended by His incarnation and became man, so that we may descend and gain Him as our purification.

> *When, therefore, we consider these great and marvelous truths about the nature of the Son of God, we are lost in the deepest amazement that such a being, towering high above all, should have "emptied himself" of his majestic condition and become man and dwelt among men, a fact which is evidenced by the "grace poured upon his lips" and by the witness which the heavenly Father bore him, and confirmed by the signs and wonders and mighty deeds which He did. And before that personal appearance*

45 Contra Celsus 6:68.
46 Comm. on John 2:2.
47 Comm. on John, book 6:25.

which He manifested in the body, He sent the prophets as heralds and messengers of His coming; while after His ascension into the heavens He caused the holy apostles, unlearned and ignorant men from the ranks of tax-gatherers or fishermen but filled with His divine power, to travel through-out the world, in order to gather together out of every nation and all races a people composed of devout believers in Him...

When, therefore, we see in Him some things so human that they appear in no way to differ from the common frailty of mortals, and some things so divine that they are appropriate to nothing else but the primal and ineffable nature of deity, the human understanding with its narrow limits is baffled, and struck with amazement at so mighty a wonder and knows not which way to turn, what to hold to, or whither to betake itself. If it thinks of God, it sees a man; if it thinks of a man, it beholds One returning from the dead with spoils after vanquishing the kingdom of death[48].

Let us look at the words of the Gospel now before us. "Jordan" means "their going down." The name "Jared" is etymologically akin to it, if I may say so; it also yields the meaning "going down;" for Jared was born to Maleleel, as it is written in the Book of Enoch - if any one cares to accept that book as sacred-in the days when the sons of God came down to the daughters of men. Under this descent some have supposed that there is an enigmatical reference to the descent of souls into bodies, taking the phrase "daughters of men" as a tropical expression of this earthly tabernacle. Should this be so, what river will "their going down" be, to which one must come to be purified, a river going down, not with its own descent, but "theirs," that, namely, of men, what but our Savior who separates those who received their lots from Moses from those who obtained their own portions through

48 De Principiis 2:6:1 (Cf. Butterworth).

Jesus (Joshua)? His current, flowing in the descending stream, makes glad, as we find in the Psalms, (55:4) the city of God, not the visible Jerusalem - for it has no river beside it - but the blameless Church of God, built on the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Christ Jesus our Lord being the chief corner-stone. Under the Jordan, accordingly, we have to understand the Word of God who became flesh and tabernacle among us. Jesus who gives us as our inheritance the humanity which He assumed, for that is the head corner-stone, which being taken up into the deity of the Son of God, is washed by being so assumed, and then receives into itself the pure and guileless dove of the Spirit, bound to it and no longer able to fly away from it[49].

("for the falling and the rising of many" Luke 2:34.): *"The first blessing is that he who stands in sin should fall and die in sin: the second that he should rise and live in righteousness. Faith in Christ graciously bestows both these blessings*[50].

The sojourning of the Savior with us, which made available to us all good things[51].

If we have risen with Christ, who is righteousness, and we walk in newness of life, and live according to righteousness, Christ has risen for us, that we might be justified... Christ, then, justifies only those who have undertaken a new life, on the model of His Resurrection, and cast off the old clothing of... unrighteousness as that which leads to death[52].

3. To grant man victory over sin, the evil world, and the devil

Jesus the Son of God, my Lord, may grant and order me to tread beneath my feet the "spirit of fornication",

49 Comm. on John, book 6:25
50 In Luke Hom. 17 on 2:34.
51 In Luke hom. 4.
52 Comm. on Rom. 4:7 on 4:23-25.

to tread on the neck of the spirit of wrath and anger, the demon of avarice (etc.)...[53]

Just as the Father "alone has immortality" (1 Tim. 6:16) our Lord having, for love of us, taken on Himself the burden of death on our behalf - by the same showing to the Father alone belong the words "in Him there is no darkness" - Christ having, for man's benefit, taken on Himself our darkness, that by His power He might bring our death to naught and disperse the darkness in our souls[54].

Before the advent of our Lord and Savior all the demons reigned in men's minds and bodies, in undisturbed possession of their spirits. But when the grace and mercy of our Savior God appeared on earth to teach us how each man's spirit should regain the liberty and image of God in which it was created...

Who is this if not Jesus Christ, by whose stripes we who believe in Him were healed, when he "put off the principalities and powers" among us, and made a show of them "openly" upon the Cross? (Col. 2:15)[55].

We have fallen under the power of our enemies - namely, the "ruler of this age" and his subordinate evil powers; hence we required redemption, through the One who buys us back from our state of alienation from Him. Hence our Savior gave His own blood as a "ransom" for us... "Forgiveness of sins" follows redemption, and is indeed impossible before a man has been redeemed. First we must be redeemed from the power of the one who has taken us prisoner and holds us in his sway: freed from him-beyond the reach of his hands, so to speak-we may thus be able profitably to receive the forgiveness of sins, and

53 In Josh. hom. 12:3.
54 Comm. on John 2:26 (21).
55 Contra Celsus 1:54f.

healed from the wounds of sin to do the works of piety and the other virtues[56].

4. To grant man victory on death

For everyone who is with Jesus is beyond the power of death[57].

He once rose from the dead and so utterly convinced His disciples of the truth of His resurrection that they showed all men through their sufferings that their gaze is fixed on life eternal and the resurrection which has been exemplified to them in word and deed, and so can mock at all the hardships of this life[58].

5. To grant us the true effective Knowledge "Gnosis"

Origen says that the Logos is our Teacher, Law-giver and Model[59]. He teaches us not only through words, but also by granting us to associate with Him, thus we lose our deadliness and irrationality, and become divinely possessed and rational[60]. He also is the pattern of the perfect life[61], the exemplar of true virtue into whose likeness Christians are transformed[62], thereby being enabled to participate in the divine nature[63].

Within the divinity of the Word is power not only to help and cure those who are sick,... but to show to the pure in body and mind "the revelation of the mystery"...

The divine Word was sent as a doctor to sinners, but as a teacher of divine mysteries to the already pure and sinless[64].

---

56 Comm. on Eph. 4 on 1.
57 Comm. on Matt. 16:8 on 20:25-28.
58 Contra Celsus 2:77.
59 Kelly ,p. 180f; De Principiis 4:1:2; Contra Celsus 2:52:3:7.
60 Comm. on John 1:37.
61 Contra Celsus 1:68.
62 Ibid. 8:17.
63 De Principiis 4:4:4.
64 Contra Celsus 3:61,62.

> *With the light of the Word we banish the darkness of impious doctrines... Because the Word has opened the eyes of our soul, we see the difference between light and darkness, and choose in every way to stand in the light*[65].

6. To convert the "lost sheep of the house of Israel" and then, because of their unbelief***, to take away "the kingdom of God" from the former, Jewish, husbandmen and give it to "other husbandmen***[66]."

7. He registers as the Head of our race

> *Just as through having Adam as the first example , the head, of our natural mode of birth, we are all said to have in this respect one body, even so do we register Christ as our head through the divine regeneration, which has become a pattern for us, of His death and resurrection*[67].

CONTINUITY OF THE GOODNESS OF JESUS

> *The goodness of Jesus toward men was not confined to the days of His incarnation; even to this day the power of Jesus is working for the conversion and moral growth of those who believe in God through Him*[68].

INCARNATION AND ANGELS

Origen believes that the mediatorship of the Logos lasts not only in the Church as a whole and in every member of her, but also in the angels and powers[69] . Thus the Logos gradually unifies all with Himself, without violating the freedom of rational beings[70].

---

65 Contra Celsus 6:67.
66 Contra Celsus 4:3.
67 Comm. on John Frag. 14o0 on Colos. 1:18.
68 Contra Celsus 1:43.
69 De Principiis 4:4:5; 4:3:13 [left out by Rufinus; In Lev. hom. 1; Contra Celsus 7:17).
70 Cf. De Principiis 3:5:6-8.

Origen believes that through God's goodness to men He became a man, and to angels appears as an angel so that all feel that He belongs to them.

> *The Savior accordingly became, in a diviner way than Paul, all things to all, that He might either gain all or perfect them;* ***it is clear that to men He became a man, and to the angels an angel.*** *As for His becoming man no believer has any doubt, but as to His becoming an angel, we shall find reason for believing it was so, if we observe carefully the appearances and the words of the angels, in some of which the powers of the angels seem to belong to Him*[71].

THE TWO ADVENTS OF CHRIST

Origen suggests that the two visits of our Lord Jesus Christ to Cana of Galilee symbolize His two advents.

> *In the first, after washing, He gladdens us who make our lives with Him, giving us to drink of what by His power is wine... For in reality before Jesus the Scripture was water, but since He came it has become wine to us.*
>
> *In the second* (advent*), He relieves from fever at the time of the judgment with which He has been entrusted by God, freeing from fever and completely healing the noble-man's son...*
>
> *Thus at the first coming those who receive Him are gladdened; at the second those who were not willing before to drink of His wine are freed from all disease and the fiery darts of the enemy (Eph. 6:16)*[72].
>
> *"For the Son of Man has come already, but not in His glory"* (Origen quotes Isa. 53 2-5). *He had to come in this way, that He might "bear our sins" and suffer "on our*

71 Comm. on John 1:34 (ANF).
72 Comm. on John 13:62.

behalf;" for it was not fitting that the Christ in glory should "bear our sins" and suffer "for us."

But He is coming again in glory after this preliminary preparing of His disciples through that appearing of His which had no "form nor comeliness". He became like them that they might become like Him, "conformed to the image" (Rom. 8:29) of His glory: since at His first coming He became conformed to "the body of our humiliation" (Phil. 3:21) when He "emptied Himself and took the form of a servant", He restores men to the form of God and makes them like unto it[73].

It was not the aim of His first advent to judge mankind before He had taught them and shown them the things they should do; nor did He come to punish the bad and save the good, but to sow in His own wonderful way the seed of His word by a certain divine power among the whole human race[74].

73 Comm. on Matt. 12:29 on 16:27.
74 Contra Celsus 2:38.

JESUS CHRIST AND OUR SALVATION

THE NEED OF SALVATION

1. Origen who was aflame with the love of God as a response to the divine love says to Celsus that the only thing that God ***needs*** is the salvation of His creatures[75], not for any lack, but because of His infinite love towards His creatures.

2. Natural religion and natural morality are not enough. There is salvation only in Christ, and good works done before justification are of no avail[76]. The soul of man is so weakened and distracted that it cannot be redeemed apart from the power and grace of God in Christ. The severity of Origen's judgment on "the good pagan" is, of course, much qualified by his denial that this life is the only chance a man has[77].

> *And, because the Enemy had spread these nets everywhere and had trapped almost everyone in them, it was needful that somebody should come who should be stronger than they and stand out above them and should destroy them, and thus clear the way for those who followed Him[78].*

3. Basil Studer[79] states that the external function of the Logos for Origen is two fold: it refers to creation and to the history of salvation. Through Him the world has been created. As the world' soul He established its order[80]. Thus He establishes salvation, which consists in the conservation of the world. Even His incarna-

75 Contra Celsus 8:62; cf. St. Clement of Alexandria: Stromata 7:14.
76 Comm on Rom. 8:2.
77 Henry Chadwick: History and Thought of the Early Church, London, 1982, p. 187.
78 Comm. on the Songs of Songs, book 3:13 (ACW).
79 Trinity and Incarnation, p. 80.
80 De Principiis 2:1:3; 1:2:9; i:3:5f.

tion served salvation in this sense of conservation[81]. ***In the history of salvation the Logos is behind all human events***[82]. In the Old Testament He exercises the works of Prophetic insight meditated through chosen men and through His own appearances[83]. In the fullness of time He was made man, to rid men of demons, to re-establish the Law and to provide the example of a virtuous man[84].

4. The fulfillment of salvation will be realized when He Himself, as the Head of the Church will subordinate Himself to the Father and God will be all in all[85]. This will be realized in the last advent (*parousia*) of the Logos in creation and history[86].

CONCEPT OF SALVATION

To understand the various explanations that Origen gave of the mystery of redemption, we must never lose sight of the first two books of the Commentary on John. With Origen, the Passion is always bound up with the mission of the Word. The suffering Christ is the horseman of the Apocalypse, riding on a white horse. The horse is white as a symbol of the truth proclaiming His glory, and the Rider's garments are sprinkled with the blood with which He triumphed. Christ's sacrifice is a preparation for the spiritual progress of the Christian soul[87].

We can summarize the concept of salvation according to Origen in the following points which cannot be separated from each other:

1. For Origen salvation is not separated from illumination. **Our Savior is the Divine Revealer, Educator and Enlightenment.**

81 Cf. De Principiis 2:6:3.
82 Cf. De Principiis 2:6:31.
83 Cf. De Principiis 1:Praef.:1.
84 Cf. De Principiis 3:5:6; 3:3:2.
85 Cf. De Principiis 1:6:1f; 3:5:6.
86 Cf. De Principiis 1:2:10.
87 R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder Book Co., 1944, p. 300-301.

Salvation is expressed as light in opposition of darkness, and knowledge in opposition of ignorance. Concerning the redeeming work of our Lord Jesus Christ**,** J.N.D. Kelly[88] says that the Logos is our Teacher, Law-giver and Model[89] etc.

By associating with Him we lose our deadliness and irrationality, becoming "*divinely possessed and rational*[90]."

He is "*the Pattern of the perfect life*," the Exemplar of true virtue into whose likeness Christians are transformed[91], thereby being enabled to participate in the divine nature[92]. As he puts it[93], "*Discoursing in bodily form and giving Himself out as flesh, He summons to Himself those who are flesh, in order that He may first of all transform them into the likeness of the Word who has been made flesh, and after that may exalt them so as to behold Him as He was before He became flesh*;" and again[94] "*with Jesus' humanity and divinity began to be woven together, so that by fellowship with divinity human nature might become divine, not only in Jesus Himself, but also in all those who believe and embrace the life which Jesus taught, the life which leads everyone who lives according to His commandments to friendship with God and fellowship with Him*."

It might be said that being a *didaskalos* (teacher) himself, Origen regarded his God as a *Didaskalos* too, as a Master in charge of the education of children, and looked on God's universe as a vast *didaskaleion* in which every single thing contributed to the education of the free human beings at school there[95].

From the statements of the Gospel of John that "grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" (John 1:17) and that Christ was

88 See J.N.D. Kelly, page !84-5.
89 De princ. 4:1:2; 4:3:12; Contra Cels. 2:52;3:7.
90 In Joh. 1:37:268.
91 Contra Cels. 8:17.
92 De Princ. 4:4:4.
93 Contra Cels. 6:68.
94 Contra Cels. 3:28.
95 Jean Daniélou: Origen, p. 276.

"the truth" (John 14:6) in person, it followed that the only reliable source of the Christian life lay in the very words and teachings of Christ. But, continued Origen, the words of Christ did not include only the words which He spoke while He was in flesh, for ***Christ had also been the Word of God active in Moses and the prophets***.

> *The Spirit that worked in the prophets was Christ... it is Christ who has given us the Spirit of prophecy*[96].

According to Origen, Jesus allowed darkness to descend upon His soul in order that it might be dispelled from ours. How could the darkness have overtaken Him? The Word is quicker than the evil powers, and they are always outstripped by Him. If He waits for them, as He did in the drama of His Passion, they are entrapped. When they approach Him, they are certain to be destroyed. Redemption is, therefore, only the first aspect of illumination. It is a struggle in which Truth confronts the powers of darkness before vanquishing them utterly[97].

2. **Salvation is a reconciliation with God.**

> *"We have peace with God" (Rom. 5:1), but it is through our Lord Jesus Christ who reconciled us to God through the sacrifice of His blood... Christ came that He might destroy the enemies and make peace, and reconcile us to God when we were separated because of the barrier of wickedness which we set up by sinning*[98].

3. Origen, explaining the work of the Savior and His death, he declares, "*not only has been set forth as an example of dying for religion, but has affected a beginning and an advancing of* ***the overthrow of the evil one, the Devil, who dominated the whole earth***[99]*."* From the moment of His birth His life was a conflict with

---

96 Sel Lam. 4:20.
97 R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder Book Co., 1944, p. 300.
98 Comm. on Rom. 4:8.
99 Contra Celsus 7:17.

the powers of darkness[100]. His passion and resurrection signified their final defeat. Origen appeals[101] to Col. 2:15 as proving that the Savior's death has a twofold aspect, being both an example and also the trophy of His victory over the devil, who in effect was nailed to the cross with his principalities and powers...

Salvation is seen basically in the context of the **war between good and evil**, between God and the devil. Origen can maintain that Christ as the Logos conquers the opposing powers by reason, "by making war on his enemies by reason and righteousness, so that what is irrational and wicked is destroyed[102]." Right doctrine is a means of conquering sin[103]. The Light shines not only on the darkness of men's souls, but has penetrated to where the rulers of this darkness carry on their struggle with the race of men; and shining in darkness the Light is pursued by darkness, but is not overtaken[104].

Young says that the conquest of the devil is in fact the most prominent theme of Origen's soteriology. The *De Principiis* spends a chapter on "How the devil and the opposing powers are, according to the scriptures, at war with the human race[105]." The activity of the demons plays a large role in Origen's arguments with Celsus[106]. The *Homilies on Joshua* are full of warfare against the devil, for Joshua's wars are allegorized as the wars of Christ and his followers against the devil and his angels[107]. In the *Commentary on Romans*[108]**.** Origen explains the Incarnation and Work of Christ by means of a parable which expresses this soteriological position: there was a just and noble king, who was waging a war

100 Contra Celsus 1:60:6:45; hom. in Lucia. 30:31.
101 Hom. in Jos 8:3; in Matt 12:40.
102 Comm. on John 2:4.
103 Comm. on Rom. 6:3.
104 Comm. on John 2:21; Frances M. Young: The Use of Sacrificial Ideas in Greek Christian Writers from the New Testament to John Chrysostom, Philadelphia 1979, p. 174.
105 De Principiis 3:2; also 1:5:1; 3:3:6; 3:5:6.
106 Contra Celsus 8:55-57, etc.; also 1:31; 6:43; 7:17; 8:44,54.
107 Hom. on Jos. 12:1; 7:3-6,7; 9:4,5.
108 Comm. on Rom. 5:10; also 5:1,3,6,7,10; 4:8..

against an unjust tyrant, but trying to avoid a violent and bloody conflict, because some of his own men were fighting on the tyrant's side, and he wanted to free them, not destroy them. He adopted the uniform of the tyrant's men, until he managed to persuade them to desert and return to their proper kingdom, and succeeded in binding the "strong man" in fetters, destroying his principalities and powers and carrying off those dead captive. This idea is basic to Origen's whole understanding of salvation, and is the theory to which he turns to explain all soteriological problems[109].

4. Frances Young says that connected with the idea of Christ as Educator, is another important theme of Origen's soteriology, the description of Him as the ***Example of obedience*** which Christians should follow, as the Way. This theme finds expression particularly in the call to martyrdom, which is the culmination of observance of "the entire pattern of living set out in the Gospel[110]." This is closely linked with the idea of illumination which we have already considered, since by following Christ of heaven, especially through martyrdom, men will understand as never before, all secrets and understand all mysteries, and will discover the nature of the intelligible and the beauty of Truth[111]. But again this description of Christ's saving work is part of the picture of the struggle against the devil and his angels, for, above all, "*martyrs in Christ despoil with Him the principalities and powers and triumph with him, by partaking in his sufferings and the great deeds accomplished in his sufferings - among which is his triumphing over principalities and powers which you will soon see conquered and overcome with shame*[112]."

109 Frances M. Young: The Use of Sacrificial Ideas in Greek Christian Writers from the New Testament to John Chrysostom, Philadelphia 1979, p. 173 ff.
110 Exhort. on Martyrdom 12. See also Comm. on Rom. 4:10; 7:3,13; Contra Celsus 7:17; 8:44..
111 Exhortation of Martyrdom 13..
112 Exhortation of Martyrdom 42.

Obedience, self-denial and humiliation, death to sin, the spiritualized martyrdom[113], is likewise an imitation of Christ, part of the educative work of the Savior, and an incident on the drama of conquering evil and leading to virtue and participation in the divine nature. It is essentially Christ's work to restore what had been corrupted, and deal with the enemy that had caused the corruption[114].

5. Salvation is a process of healing which is realized by the true **Physician who Himself is the Medicine**. Christ brings healing to the morally sick[115], and resurrection and life to the morally dead[116]. He came into our deadness to deliver mankind from the bondage of corruption[117]. This, too, is part of Christ's conquest of the tyranny of death, sin and the devil, for the devil has the power of death and is the enemy of him who is the life[118].

> *Only, if one wishes to be healed, let him follow Jesus[119].*
>
> *Come now to Jesus, the heavenly Physician.*
> *Enter into this medical clinic, His Church.*
> *See, lying there, a multitude of feeble ones. The woman comes who was made "unclean" from birth (Mark 5:25; Lev. 12:2f.). "A leper" comes who was segregated "outside the camp" for the uncleanness of his leprosy (Mark 1:40; Lev. 13:46). They seek a cure from the Physician: how they may be healthy, how they may be cleansed.*
> *Because this Jesus, who is a doctor, is Himself the Word of God, He prepares medications for His sick ones,*

113 Comm. on Rom 9:39; 5:8-9; also Contra Celsus 2:69; De Principiis 4:4:4..
114 De Principiis 3:5:6; Frances M. Young, p. 175.
115 Comm. on Matt. 11:18; Contra Celsus 8:72; 3:60..
116 Comm. on Rom. 5:1-9.
117 Comm. on John 1:25,28, 35; 2:6; 10:4.
118 See Comm. on Rom. 5:1-9; Comm. on Matt. 13:9; Hom. on Jos. 8:6; Frances M. Young: The Use of Sacrificial Ideas in Greek Christian Writers from the New Testament to John Chrysostom, Philadelphia 1979, p. 175.
119 Commentary on Matthew, Book 13:2 (Cf. ANF).

not from potions of herbs but from the sacraments of words.

If anyone sees these verbal medicines scattered inelegantly through books as through fields, not knowing the strength of individual words, he will overlook them as cheap things, as not having any elegance of word. But the person who in some part learns that the medicine of souls is with Christ certainly will understand from these books which are read in the Church how each person ought to take salutary herbs from the fields and mountains, namely the strength of the words, so that anyone weary in soul may be healed not so much by the strength of the outward branches and coverings as by the strength of the inner juice[120].

There are many other matters, too, which are hidden from us, and are known only to Him who is the Physician of our souls. For if in regard to bodily health we occasionally find it necessary to take some very unpleasant and bitter medicine as a cure for the ills we have brought on through eating and drinking, and sometimes, if the character of the ill demands it, we need the severe treatment of the knife and a painful operation, yes, and should the disease have extended beyond the reach even of these remedies, in the last resort the ill is burnt out by fire, how much more should we realize that God our physician, in his desire to wash away the ills of our souls, which they have brought on themselves through a variety of sins and crimes, makes use of penal remedies of a similar sort, even to the infliction of a punishment of fire on those who have lost their soul's health[121].

Origen believes that those who become perfect are in need of Jesus Christ, not as a Physician but as a Teacher.

---

120 Homilies on Leviticus 8:1 (See Frs. of the Church)
121 De Principiis 2:10:6 (Cf. Butterworth).

> *We do not find any healing recorded of the disciples; since if any one is already a disciple of Jesus he is whole, and being well he needs Jesus not as a Physician but in respect of His other powers*[122].

6. **Salvation is realized through Atonement**. Frances Young states that all the previous various ways of expressing Christ's work have led to the Classic theory of Atonement. The work of salvation is, first the conquest of the powers of corruption, and then the exaltation of man by a process of healing and education.

The work of Atonement in Origen's thought is, first the wresting of the evil powers, the death and sin which tyrannize over human nature, and then the reconciliation of human nature with God.

> *For no man could die with Jesus the death for us all, that we may live, because all had been in sin and all had need of another to die for them, not they for others*[123].

This description of Christ's work appears as Origen's allegorization of the **Day of Atonement ritual** (Lev. 16).

The two goats which were presented before the Lord at the door of the tabernacle of meeting (Lev. 16:7), and the high-priest casts lots for them, are Barabbas and Jesus; Pilate sent off Barabbas alive with the sins of the people on his head, whereas Christ was offered as a sin offering to cover the sins of those who were to be forgiven[124].

The desert to which the scapegoat was sent, was a place empty of virtues, empty of God, empty of justice, empty of Christ, empty of every good thing.

---

122 Comm. on Matt., book 11:3.
123 Comm. Ser. Matt. 88 on 26:33-35.
124 In Lev. Hom. 10:2.

The man who led off the scapegoat had to be pure, and he must be understood to represent the Lord himself, our Savior. Origen draws the parallel between their actions, first pointing out that as the man washed his garments in the evening, so Christ purified the tunic of our flesh and blood, the human nature he had assumed on our behalf. He then interprets his leading away the scapegoat in terms of Colossians 2.15: "he nailed to his Cross the principalities and hostile powers and triumphed over them." This means Origen asserts, that "he fulfilled the lot of the 'apopompaeus' (the LXX word for Azazel) in them, and as the man in readiness led them into the wilderness; thus he led away the spiritual hosts of wickedness and the rulers of the darkness of this world, triumphing over them within himself (in semetipso)." He alone had the power to lead them off to the desert, the empty places of hell. He then returned with His work accomplished, and ascended to heaven, where He was purified more completely at the heavenly altar, that He might present the pledge of our flesh which He took with Him in perpetual purity. This then is the "dies propitiation is," when God is propitious to men. When sin has been removed, when the hostile powers have been led out of the way and human nature purified, then reconciliation with God is possible.

7. For Origen, the sacrificial death of Christ gave mankind the means of escape from the domination of the evil powers and of **participation in the divine nature**[125].

> *For the divinity of Christ is from above by which this fire is enflamed. Suitably, therefore, the heavenly fire consumed all these things which were done in the body by the Savior and restored all things to the nature of his divinity...*
>
> *For indeed, the whole burnt offering of his flesh which was offered through the wood of the cross united the earthly with the heavenly, the human with the divine*[126].

125 De Principiis 4:4:4; Frances M. Young, p. 184.

> *For the ancients, sheep, he-goats, cattle, and birds were killed and fine wheat flour was moistened. For you, the Son of God was killed. How could it please you to sin again? And yet, lest these things not so much build up your souls for virtue as cast them down to despair, you heard how many sacrifices there were in the Law for sins. Now hear how many are the remissions of sins in the gospel*[127].
>
> *Such great things, then, He is, the Paraclete, the atonement, the propitiation, the sympathizer with our weaknesses, who was tempted in all human things, as we are, without sin; and in consequence He is a great High-Priest, having offered Himself as the sacrifice which is offered once for all, and not for men only but* ***for every rational creature***[128].

8. Salvation means the glorification of believers through the resurrection of Christ. At **the resurrection** Christ's humanity was glorified, and we as the Church had the right to be glorified through union with Him. Christ's resurrection is the paradigm for the exaltation of believers.

> *With a view to giving us the blessings of the first-born, he himself becomes "firstborn from the dead," that he himself might have the primacy in everything, and may take up us, who believe in his resurrection, for his first fruits . . . if, indeed, we keep firm hold on the grace of these blessings to the end, aided by the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ himself*[129].

---

126 In Lev. hom. 1:5 (cf. G.W. Barkley - Frs. of the Church).
127 In Lev. hom. 2:4 (cf. G.W. Barkley - Frs. of the Church).
128 Comm. on John, book 1:40.
129 Homily on Numbers [3:4]: Drewery 132.

THE DEATH OF CHRIST AS A PROPITIATORY SACRIFICE

Origen applies Isaiah 53:4 f. to Christ's passion, stating that "*He too has borne our sins and has been bruised because of our iniquities, and the punishment which was owing to us, in order that we might be chastised and might obtain peace, has fallen on Him*[130]". In some passages, Origen states that Christ's death is conceived as paying His precious blood to the devil to purchase us and grant us freedom from his dominion.

> *Because He is a sacrificial victim, He becomes, by the pouring out of His blood, a propitiation in that He gives remission of past sins. Such propitiation, however, comes to each believer by the path of faith... It is certain that propitiation was fulfilled by the pouring out of the sacred blood [Heb 9 22]* [131].
>
> *But now Christ died for us, and how, since he was the Lamb of God, he bore the sin of the world and carried our weaknesses and suffered for us, we have often explained in other places, where we brought as examples accounts that are found in secular histories; for even in them, some persons are said to have driven away pestilences, storms and other such eventualities by throwing themselves into the grip of death, and to have freed their homeland or nation from the destruction of an impending catastrophe. How true these stories are, or what rational explanation they may have, God alone knows. Yet of those of whom these stories are told, not even in fiction is it said that anyone freed the whole world, except Jesus alone, "who though he was in the form of God, did not think it robbery to be equal with God but emptied himself, and took the form of a servant and offered a victim*

130 In Joh. 28:19:165.
131 Comm. on Rom. 3:8 on 3:25.

for the whole world, delivering his own blood to the prince of this world, according to the wisdom of God[132].

Christ indeed "did no sin," but He was "made sin on our behalf," when He who was "in the form of God" deigns to be "in the form of a servant:, when He who is immortal dies, and He who is impassible suffers, and He who is invisible is seen; and since death and every other weakness of the flesh is imposed on us all because of our sinful state, He Himself also, who "was made in the likeness of man and found in fashion as a man", "offered as a sacrifice to God" a "calf without blemish" - that is, His immaculate flesh -unquestionably in return for the sin which he took over from us in "bearing our sins" [133].

At the same time, Origen believes that the meaning of words implying propitiation certainly did not mean buying off the anger of God. One of the problems he and his contemporaries faced was the challenge of Marcion's view that in Christ was revealed a God of love, while the God of the Old Testament was a God of justice and wrath, distinct from the Father of Jesus Christ. Perhaps for this is reason Origen had to explain the wrath of God in so many homilies[134].

Origen speaks[135] of Jesus delivering up His soul, or life, as a ransom for many. To whom did he give it? It could not have been to the Father; rather it was to the devil who had dominion over us until the soul of Jesus was given to him as a ransom for us. He delivered His soul in exchange for the souls of men which the Devil had claimed as due because of their sinfulness. The devil accepted the exchange, but could not hold Jesus, who proved stronger than death, in his clutches and was thus cheated of his victim. The devil was deceived; he thought he could master it (the soul) and did not

132 Comm. on Rom. 4:11; see Frances M. Young, p. 182-3.
133 In Lev. hom. 3:1.
134 Frances M. Young, p. 185 ff.
135 In Matt. 16:8; 12:28; In Joh. 6:53:274: Hom. In Exod. 6:9; etc.

realize that he could not bear the torture of holding it[136]. So the life offered in sacrifice and the blood shed as an expiation become in the hands of Origen the ransom price given by God to the devil. For it was the Holy Father of Jesus who "spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all," as his lamb, that the lamb of God, who died for every man, might bear away the sin of the world[137].

> *The sin of all, however, is not taken away by the Lamb without suffering or affliction for the sinners before its removal. For thorns have been not only scattered but deeply rooted "in the hands" of every man who has become "drunk" with evil and lost the power to become sober[138].*

THE SACRIFICE OF CHRIST AND ANIMAL SACRIFICES

In the Epistle to the Hebrews, St. Paul clearly explains the difference between animal sacrifices and Christ's Sacrifice, for the first one was repeated because of its weakness and failure to renew the depth of human nature, but the last One was offered once only for it still has the power to renew our inner man. Origen stated that animal sacrifices were consumed by eating or even burning them; however, our Lord's Sacrifice is not only alive, but is Life-giving to those who partake of It. Jesus Christ as a Priest and Victim at the same time did not offer animals' blood that consumes but His own Blood that gives life, resurrection and immortality. He always changes believers from mortality into immortality, redeeming their nature to participate in His life and to bear His likeness.

CHRIST'S SACRIFICE FOR SIN[139]

Because of the interdependence of sacrificial interpretations of Christ's death and ways of understanding Old Testament

136 Comm. on Matt. 16:8; Young, p. 183.
137 Contra Cells 8:43; Frances M. Young, p. 183-4.
138 Comm. on John 6:55.
139 Frances M. Young, p. 179 ff.

sacrifices, Origen frequently uses Old testament sacrificial language to describe the death of Christ without attempting to explain further how the sacrifice for sin worked. Consequently in many passages, his view appears to be the expiatory idea found in the Old and New Testaments. Under the Old Covenant, they tried to remove sins by the blood of bullocks and goats, but they could not do it. It was because they were so ineffectual that the Son of God came in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin; He condemned sin in the flesh, because He was made a sacrificial Victim for sin and was offered for the purging of sin. The whole scripture testifies to this, he claims; he does not question the principle. As we have already seen, the removal of sin was Origen's idea of the means of propitiation; so, as in the New Testament, vocabulary of propitiation is used with an expiatory sense.

Occasionally Origen tries to explain how Christ's sacrifice could remove sin. According to *Leviticus***,** the priests eat the sin-offering: so, says Origen, Christ, who is priest as well as victim, eats the sins of the people. God is a consuming fire. The God of fire consumes human sins; He assumes them, devours them and purges them. Christ thus took upon Himself our sins, and like a fire, He ate and assumed them Himself.

A second explanation depends closely on Old Testament ideas. Christ was a sacrificial offering without blemish; this purity is in a way contagious, so that anyone who touches the flesh of this sacrifice is sanctified.

Both these attempts to explain are based on an acceptance of scriptural language and ideas; they emphasize the fact that the sacrifice dealt with sin by removing it, but do not satisfactorily explain how.

Whenever Origen really requires an explanation, he passes over to the classic theory For example, "*This slain lamb has been made, according to certain hidden reasons, a purification for the whole world; for which, according to the Father's love to man, He*

submitted to death purchasing us back by His own blood from him who had got us in his power, sold under sin."

THE NATURE OF THE SACRIFICE OFFERED BY CHRIST

Christ's sacrifice is superior to the sacrifices of the Old Testament, because It takes place in heaven[140]. In *Homilies on Leviticus*[141] Origen regards Christ's sacrifice on earth, that is, his death on the cross, as a type of his heavenly sacrifice. But he makes a quite different distinction, for the priest offered one bull on the altar as a holocaust (burnt-offering) and another as sin-offering which was burned outside the camp, and there is a difference between a burnt-offering and sin-offering.

So, interpreting this allegorically, Christ offered a burnt-offering on the heavenly altar, but on earth, that is, outside the camp of heaven, where sin had reigned since Adam, He offered it for sin. Perhaps Origen considers Christ's heavenly sacrifice a gift sacrifice, a sacrifice of praise, worship and thanksgiving.

Origen frequently refers to Christian sacrifices as an imitation of Christ, of martyrdom being a holocaust, of perfect obedience and imitation of Christ leading to the holy place, and making the Christian a partaker in the divine sacrifice. Thus the sacrifice of Christ was the offering of perfect worship and obedience to God, the example for Christians to imitate[142].

See, therefore, if perhaps Jesus, whom Paul says through his own blood "to have made peace not only for the things which are in earth but also for the things in heave," is the same calf which was offered "in heaven," certainly not "for sin" but for an offering; and "on earth," where sin "reigned from Adam to Moses," he was offered "for sin." And this is the one which suf-

140 In Lev. hom. 1:3.
141 In Lev. hom 1:3:3
142 Frances M. Young, p. 215.

fered "outside the camp," outside that camp, I think, which Jacob had seen, the celestial camp of the angels of God about whom it was written in Genesis, "And when he looked up, Jacob saw the camp of God in its splendor, and the angels of God went up to him. And when he saw them, Jacob said, 'This is the camp of God.' " Therefore, outside that heavenly camp is everything in which we live; this earthly place in which Christ suffered in the flesh[143].

CHRIST AS THE HIGH-PRIEST

The expression of St. Cyril of Alexandria "Christ is the altar, the offering and the priest[144]" comes from Origen[145].

> *The fact that Isaac "carried wood for the burnt offering" prefigured the bearing by Christ of His own cross. Now carrying the wood for the burnt-offering is the duty of the priest. Christ is therefore both Victim and Priest*[146].

Not only do the sacrifices of the Old Testament point to Christ, Christ is a fulfillment of the "shadows and images" of the high priest.

As a true High Priest, He has offered the Father a true sacrifice in which He is Himself the Victim, thereby propitiating the Father[147].

> *For as none is good (Matt. 8:2, 3) but one, God the Father, so among rivers none is good but the Jordan, nor able to cleanse form his leprosy him who with faith washes his soul in Jesus. And this, I suppose, is the reason why the Israelites are recorded to have wept when they sat by the rivers of Babylon and remembered Zion; those who are carried captive, on account of their wickedness, when they taste other waters after sacred Jordan, are led to remember*

---

143 In Lev. 1:3:3 (Barkley).
144 PG 68"596-604.
145 Jean Daniélou: The Bible and the Liturgy, Michigan 1979, p. 130 n.
146 In Gen. hom. 8:1.
147 In Rom. 3:8.

> *with longing their own river of salvation. Therefore it is said of the rivers of Babylon, "There we sat down," clearly because they were unable to stand, and wept." And Jeremiah rebukes those who wish to drink the waters of Egypt, and desert the water which comes down form heaven, and is named from its so coming down-namely, the Jordan*[148].

Origen interprets Christ's death as an act of vicarious substitution or propitiatory sacrifice. He argues[149] that, as the Leader of the Church, Jesus is the head of a body of which we are members; He has taken our sins upon Himself, has borne them and has suffered freely for us. As a true priest, He has offered the Father a true sacrifice in which He is Himself the Victim, thereby propitiating the Father[150]. The Son offers the Christians' own gifts of pity, justice, piety, peace[151]. He offers the lives of transformed believers[152].

> *Christ, the true High Priest who by His own blood made God propitious to you and reconciled you to the Father*[153].

THE MYSTERY OF THE CROSS

Henri De Lubac says,

> But the proclamation of Jesus crucified remains no less essential. For "the economy of the Passion" is central. It is "the Economy" par excellence. Origen knows that without the wood of the cross the leprosy of sin cannot be healed. He knows that it is the whole Church, without any distinction of categories, that was saved by the blood of Christ. He knows that the death of Christ is the Tree of life for all of us, that all fruitfulness comes from this death as

148 Comm. on John, book 6:28
149 Hom. in Lev. 1:3.
150 In Rom. 3:8.
151 In Lev. hom 9:6.
152 Comm. on Rom. 4:8.
153 In Leviticum hom. 9:10.

from the grain of wheat which must fall into the earth and seem to perish. He declares that all the glory and all the riches of the Church lie in Christ's Passion. For him, to be converted is "to come to the cross of Christ"" and the wisdom of the perfect consists not in some other knowledge, but in the contemplation of "the profound mysteries which Paul uncovers there for us" and then in rejecting... the wisdom of the world. It is to be crucified to this world's wisdom. For there is total opposition between the narrow way of salvation shown to us in the cross of Christ, and the wide and easy way which the philosophy of the wise men of the world seeks to engage us. The "vision of the Logos" can be attained only at the price of death to the world and at the cost of great tribulation; and no matter how sublime this vision may be, it will never make us lose sight of the crucified Jesus, at once priest and victim. There is no wisdom that excuses us from taking up his cross and following him. Even supposing that, like Paul, one has been caught up to the third heaven, there is only one way not to fall back; and it is precisely this, to "take up the cross and follow Jesus in whom we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens[154]."""

Every soul, therefore, which comes to childhood, and is on the way to full growth, until the fullness of time is at hand, needs a tutor and stewards and guardians, in order that, after all these things he who formerly differed nothing from a bond-servant, though he is lord of all, (Cf. Gal. 4:1,2) may receive, when free from a tutor and stewards and guardians, the patrimony corresponding to the very costly pearl, and to that which is perfect, which on its coming does away with that which is in part, when one is able to receive "the excellency of the knowledge of Christ , having been

154 Henri De Lubac: Origen, On First Principles, NY., 1966 (Koetschau text together with an introduction and notes by G.W. Butterworth, p. XX.

previously exercised so to speak, in those forms of knowledge which are surpassed by the Knowledge of Christ," (Phil. 3:8) having been previously exercised, so to speak, in those forms of knowledge which are surpassed by the knowledge of Christ[155].

The passion of (Jesus) on the Cross was ***the judgment of the whole of this world****... Since the divine event on the Cross entailed the judgment on all existing things, He could say when the moment of the Passion drew near-"Now is the judgment of this world*[156]*".*

R. Cadiou states that Origen tells his pupils that a study of the crucified Jesus is the means of reaching the highest degrees of the spiritual life. He warns them that this mystery of the Savior's Passion would give them a knowledge of Christ that would be far from imperfect, and that it is so difficult a mystery that even the Apostles had to be instructed in its meaning before they could understand it and before they could see that it meant our salvation[157].

Cadiou also says that we need feel no shame of the Savior's Passion, for it has its source in His voluntary abasement and in His extreme desire to serve. "We do not hesitate to say that the goodness of Christ appears in a greater and more divine light, and more according to the image of the Father, because 'He humbled Himself.'" His acceptance of servitude was but a small part of His sacrifice. In His sufferings, in His silence, in His agony, the Word-made-flesh experienced all the sorrows that afflict the human heart. In Him their domain was limited, because He was without sin. But in another sense His afflictions were total, since He who was always the Savior and even in His transcendence and in His divinity willed that it should be so. He was silent before Pilate, "He desired to suffer for all mankind. If He had spoken, He would

155 Comm. on Matt., book 2:9.
156 Comm. on John frag 89 on 12:31.
157 R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder Book Co., 1944, p. 301.

not have been crucified because of weakness. There was no weakness in what the Son of God said[158]."

The Cross is a sign of the divine love.

*He would not have done unless He had possessed... **boundless love for us**, and this is true both of our Lord Jesus Christ Himself in dying for the ungodly, and of God the Father in giving His only-begotten Son for the redemption of the ungodly[159].*

The Cross gives a perfect example to believers of Christian dying for the sake of God.

Christ slew the enmity in His own flesh, when by undergoing death He gave an example to mankind of fighting against sin even unto death, and thus at length by resolving the enmity in His own flesh reconciled by His blood mankind to God[160].

It is in no way unreasonable that the One who was to be the living model for mankind showed how they should die for the sake of religion[161].

The Cross is a sign of victory.

For when pagans lead their enemies in triumphal processions they put up trophies of victory over them in the form of a cross; and in this way the Cross of Christ is a trophy of victory over Satan. Hence Paul can say, "May I never boast save in the Cross" (Gal. 6:14), for he knew what that Cross has power to achieve-my liberation from evil, won by His dying to save me from death[162].

158 In Joan. 19:2 PG 14:544; R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder Book Co., 1944, p.
159 Comm. on Rom. 6:10 on 5:6f.
160 Comm. on Rom. 6:12.
161 Contra Celsus 2:16.
162 Comm. on Cor. 6.

> *What do the demons fear? At what do they tremble? Beyond question - the Cross of Christ, in which they are "triumphed over..." (Col. 2:15). Fear and trembling, therefore, will fall upon them when they see the sign of the Cross fixed in faith upon us...* [163].

Origen comments on Joshua 8:29 LXX, where it reads "he hanged the king of Gai on a double tree," saying,

> *The cross of our Lord Jesus Christ was "double"... that is, it stands on two footings...; on the visible plane the Son of God was crucified in the flesh, but invisibly there was nailed on that cross the "devil" and his "principalities and powers"* [Col. 2: 14f. quoted in full]... *Hence the cross of the Lord has two meanings: the first is given by the apostle Peter - Christ crucified "left us an example" (1 Pet 2:21); and this second shows the cross as a trophy of victory over the devil "on which he was crucified and vanquished*[164]*."*

The Cross gathers believers from all the world in unity of love.

> *when, lifted up upon the cross He was about to embrace with His arms the whole world*[165].

163 In Exod. hom. 6:8.
164 In Josh. hom. 8:3 on 8:29.
165 In Exod. hom. 11:4 on Isa. 65:2.

JESUS CHRIST AND OUR SATISFACTION

CHRIST AS THE SUFFICIENCY OF THE SOUL

Man is in need of the Logos to satisfy all his needs. He presents Himself to man as if He is everything to him.

> *And perhaps, as the Apostle says, for those who have their senses exercised to the discerning of good and evil (Heb. 5:14),* ***Christ becomes each of these things in turn****, to suit the several senses of the soul.*
>
> *He is called the true* ***Light****, therefore, so that the soul's eyes may have something to lighten them.*
>
> *He is the* ***Logos****, so that her ears may have something to hear.*
>
> *Again, He is the* ***Bread of life****, so that the soul's palate may have something to taste.*
>
> *And in the same way, He is called the* ***Spikenard*** *or* ***Ointment****, that the soul's sense of smell may apprehend the fragrance of the Word.*
>
> *For the same reason He is said also to be able to be felt and handled, and is called the* ***Logos*** *made flesh, so that the hand of the interior soul may touch concerning* ***the Word of life*** *(John 1:1-4; 1 John 1:1).*
>
> *But all these things are the One, Same Logos of God, who adapts Himself to the sundry tempers of prayer according to these several guises, and so* ***leaves none of the soul's faculties empty of His grace***[166].

Christ offers Himself to those who feel in need of Him. This feeling grants them the merit of His presence and dwelling in their hearts.

---

166 Comm. on the Songs of Songs, book 2:9 (ACW).

> *Indeed I might say He becomes everything that every creature capable of being liberated needs of Him. Because of this He becomes the Light of men when they, darkened by evil, seek that light which shines in darkness and is not comprehended by it; He would never have become the Light of men if men had not come to be in darkness*[167].

Christ who is one and the same presents Himself to every believer according to his spiritual condition,

> *There are, as it were, different forms of the Logos, as He appears to each of those led to know him, corresponding to their condition - the beginners, those slightly or considerably advanced, and those approaching or already in possession of virtue*[168].

> *Christ becomes present in each individual to the degree that his merits have allowed*[169].

THE TITLES OF CHRIST

> *Although Christ is one in essence, He has many titles to indicate His powers and his workings; for He is apprehended in His being as Grace, Righteousness..., Peace..., Life..., Truth..., the Logos*[170].

> *To seek Jesus is to seek the Logos, Wisdom, Righteousness, Truth, the Power of the Father; for Christ is all these*[171].

---

167 Comm. on John 1:20.
168 Contra Celsus 2:16.
169 De Principiis 4:4:2.
170 Comm. on Rom. 5:6.
171 Comm. on John 32:31.

SUFFICIENCY TO BEGINNERS AND TO THE SPIRITUALITY MATURE

Origen makes a distinction between the titles of Christ, those which are offered to the beginners in their spirituality, and others for those who are mature. The former are in need of Christ as a Physician to heal their wounded nature, as the Shepherd to take care of their needs, or as the Savior who forgives their sins. The latter are in need of Him as the Wisdom, Logos and Righteousness.

> *Happy indeed are they who needing the Son of God have yet become such as no longer to need Him as a Doctor who heals the sick or as a Shepherd or as Redeemer, but as Wisdom, Logos, Righteousness, or one of the other titles that He takes for those whose spiritual maturity fits them for His noblest gifts*[172].

CHRIST IS ALL GOOD THINGS

> *Now what the Gospels say is to be regarded in the light of promises of good things; and we must say that the good things the apostles announce in this Gospel are simply Jesus.*
>
> *One good thing which they are said to announce is the resurrection; but the resurrection is in a manner Jesus, for Jesus says: "I am the resurrection"...*
>
> *Isaiah too says: "How beautiful are the feet of them that proclaim good tidings" (Isa. 52:7); he sees how beautiful and how opportune was the announcement of the Apostles who walked in Him who said, "I am the way," and praises the feet of those who walk in the intellectual way of Christ Jesus, and through that door go in to God.*
>
> *They announce good tidings, those whose feet are beautiful, namely, Jesus*[173].

172 Comm. on John 1:20.
173 Comm. on John, 1:10.

CHRIST IS THE BEGINNING AND END

"The Beginning and the End" is a phrase we usually apply to a thing that is a completed unity; the beginning of a house is its foundation and the end the parapet.

We cannot but think of this figure, since Christ is the stone which is the head of the corner, to the great unity of the body of the saved.

For Christ the only-begotten Son is all and in all, He is as the beginning in the man He assumed, He is present as the end in the last of the saints, and He is also in those between, or else He is present as the beginning in Adam, as the end in His life on earth, according to the saying: "The last Adam was made a quickening spirit." This saying harmonizes well with the interpretation we have given of the first and the last[174].

CHRIST AS THE LOGOS

Joseph C. McLelland writes,

It is when Origen handles the titles of Christ that he formulates his own answer. His introduction to the *Commentary on John* is a treatise on the *epinoiai*. The manifold functions of the Logos are expressed through his tittles: word, wisdom, redeemer, shepherd, etc. It would seem that "Word" is the highest, the eternal title, and yet: "*if we go through all his titles carefully we find that he is the arche only in respect of his being wisdom. Not even as the Word is he the arche, for the Word was in the arche. And so one might venture to say that wisdom is anterior to all the thoughts that are expressed in the titles of this first-born of every creature*" (1:22). This does not mean, however, that the title of Word is not crucial, since it is Logos which on

174 Comm. on John 1:34 (ANF).

investigation forces theology to reckon with positing a second, "*separate entity*," a Son of God, and so to examine all other titles (1:23)[175].

He is the Word, "because He is as it were the interpreter of the secrets of the divine intelligence," the channel of Revelation[176].

Origen uses the term "Logos" as a source of our reasoning:

As, then, from His activity in enlightening the world whose light He is, Christ is named the ***Light of the world****, and as from His making those who sincerely attach themselves to Him put away their deadness and rise again and put on newness of like, He is called the* ***Resurrection****, so from an activity of another kind He is called* ***Shepherd*** *and* ***Teacher****,* ***King*** *and* ***Chosen Shaft****, and* ***Servant****, and in addition to these* ***Paraclete*** *and* ***Atonement*** *and* ***Propitiation****. And after the same fashion He is also called the* ***Logos****, because* ***He takes away from us all that is irrational, and make us truly reasonable,*** *so that we do all things, even to eating and drinking, to the glory of God, and discharge by the Logos to the glory of God both the commoner functions of life and those which belong to a more advanced stage[177].*

If we consider the Logos in the beginning, who was with God, God the Word, we shall perhaps be able to declare that only he who partakes of this Being, considered in this character, is to be pronounced reasonable ("logical"), and thus we should demonstrate that the saint alone is reasonable[178].

CHRIST IS THE LIGHT

For He Himself is "the Light of the world" who also illuminates the Church by His light. For just as the

175 Joseph c. McLelland: God The Anonymous, Massachsetts, 1976, p. 110.
176 Charles Bigg: The Christian Platonists of Alexandria, Oxford 1913, p. 209.
177 Comm. on John, book 1:42.
178 Comm. on John, book 2:!0.

moon is said to receive light from the sun so that the night likewise can be illuminated by it, so also the Church, when the light of Christ has been received, illuminates all those who live in the night of ignorance.

But if someone progresses in this so that he is already made a "child of the day," so that "he walks honestly in the day," (Cf. Rom. 13:13) as "a child of the day and a child of light," (Cf. 1 Thess. 5:5) this person is illuminated by Christ Himself just as the day is illuminated by the sun[179].

CHRIST IS THE TRUTH

The Only-begotten is the Truth because He embraces in Himself according to the Father's will the whole reason of all things with perfect clearness; and being the Truth, He communicates to each creature in proportion to its worthiness[180].

CHRIST AS THE WISDOM OF GOD

Basil Studer states that for Origen, the Son is the Wisdom and the Logos (Word). In relation to the Father He is Wisdom, whose knowledge He is[181]. In relation to the world He is the Logos, the communication of what He beholds in the Father[182].

Joseph C. McLelland states that even the title "wisdom" is for us. He writes,

In acknowledging Wisdom as the only attribute properly eternal, a distinct problem is posed by the text of I Cor. 1:30: "Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom, our righteousness and sanctification and redemption." For once having settled the question of an "eternal" or absolute title,

179 In Gen. hom. 1:5.
180 In Joan 1:27 PG 14:73; R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder Book Co., 1944, p. 176.
181 De Principiis 1:2:2.
182 De Principiis 1:2:3; Basil Studer: Trinity and Incarnation, p. 80.

Origen wishes to show that all other titles were taken by Wisdom "for us," in accommodation to human needs rather than in expression of divine verities. He explains Paul's words by referring them to other passages which call the Son wisdom (and "power") in an absolute sense[183]. Thus we have "both forms of the statement, the relative and the absolute" whereas with the other titles such as sanctification and redemption we have only the relative. Origen's purpose is to distinguish the higher titles, including Wisdom, Word, Life and Truth from those which are later, "which he took for our sake." Divine providence has met human need and human potential by supplying the variety of titles to lead us along the way of attribution toward the absolute and ultimate Arche. And a crucial passage observes, "happy indeed are those who in their need for the Son of God have yet become such persons as not to need him in his character as a physician healing the sick, nor in that of a shepherd, nor in that of redeemer, but only in his characters as wisdom, as the word and righteousness, or if there be any other title suitable for those who are so perfect as to receive him in his fairest characters[184]".

The two classes (simpler and higher believers) have "analogies in what concerns the Logos. Some are adorned with the Word himself; some with what is next to him but appears to be the very original Logos himself, those, namely, who know nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified, and who behold the Word as flesh". The Logos "*is not on earth as He is in heaven; on earth he is made flesh and speaks through shadow, type and image*." Origen concludes: "*the multitude, therefore, of those who are reputed to believe are disciples of the shadow of the Word, not of the true Word of God which is in the opened heaven*[185]".

183 Comm. on John 1:39.
184 Comm. on John 1:22; Joseph c. McLelland: God The Anonymous, p. 110-111.
185 Joseph c. McLelland: God The Anonymous, Massachsetts, 1976, p. 111-112.

The Word is milk for those Christians who are like children, vegetables for those who are weak, and solid meat "adapted to athletes" for those engaged in active combat. The solid form of the "living bread" is "spiritual and reasonable food" shared with angels, and confers deification[186].

CHRIST AS THE WAY

"*For without boasting, it is self-evident that nothing better could be conceived than to entrust oneself to the Supreme God and to be dedicated to a doctrine which teaches us to leave everything created and leads us to the supreme God through the inanimate and living Logos*[187]."

CHRIST AS THE KING

Both the Son of God and the Antichrist desire to reign. The Antichrist desires to reign in order to destroy, while Christ to redeem.

Christ reigns upon those who are faithful among us, by His Word, Wisdom, Justice and Truth. But if we prefer our lusts upon God then sin reigns upon us, as the apostle says, "Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body "Rom. 6:12.

There are two kings who want to reign: Either sin and the devil who reign over evildoers; or Justice and Christ over righteous men. No doubt, our Lord and Savior desires to reign but by justice, truth and every virtue. . . He does not want to be crowned as a King without suffering (the Cross.) [188].

CHRIST IS OUR KINGDOM

---

186 Joseph c. McLelland: God The Anonymous, Massachsetts, 1976, p. 112.
187 Contra Celsus 3:81.
188 In Luc. hom. 30:1-3..

Our aim is to attain the kingdom of God within us, which is Christ Himself. It was Origen who said Jesus was the *autobasileia*, the kingdom in Person[189]. In his *Commentary On Matthew 12:14*, Origen clarifies that the Kingdom of the heavens is the totality of 'virtues,' and Christ is each and every virtue.

> *He is here speaking of Himself as the Kingdom of God, for He is King and God[190].*
>
> *For this reason as long as Jesus Christ, the divine Word that was in the beginning with God, does not dwell in a soul, the kingdom of heaven is not in that soul. But when one is ready to receive that Word, the Kingdom of heaven is nigh at his hand[191].*

CHRIST AS THE HEAVENLY BREAD

> *But the Scripture says, "And in the morning you will be filled with bread" (Exod. 16:12). The Word of God is also bread for us. For He himself is "the Living Bread which descends from heaven and gives life to this world" (John 6:51,33). But the fact that it says that this bread is given "in the morning" while we say that His coming in the flesh took place in the evening, I think is to be understood as follows.*
>
> *The Lord came in the evening of the declining world and near the end of its appointed course, but at His coming, since He himself is "the Sun of Righteousness."(Cf. Mal 4.2 LXX: 3.20) He restored a new day for those who believe. Because, therefore, a new light of knowledge arose in the world, in a certain manner He made his own day in the morning and, as it were, "the Sun of Righteousness" brought forth its own morning, and in this morning those who receive his precepts are filled with bread...*

---

189 Comm on Matt. 14:7; Michael Green: Evangelism in the Early Church, p. 51.
190 In Luke hom. 32 on 10:9.
191 Comm. on Matt. 10:14 on 13:52.

Besides this interpretation, we can also take it to mean that for each one our morning and beginning of day is that time when we first are illuminated and approach the light of faith. At this time, therefore, when we are still in the first principles we cannot eat the flesh of the word, that is, we are not yet capable of perfect and complete doctrine. But after long exercises, after much advance, when now we are near evening and are being impelled to the goal of perfection, then at last we can become capable of solid food and the perfect word.

Let us, therefore, now hasten to receive the heavenly manna. That manna imparts the kind of taste to each mouth that each one wishes[192]. For hear also the Lord saying to those who approach Him: "Be it is done unto you according to your faith" (Matt. 8:13). And, therefore, if you receive the word of God which is preached in the Church with complete faith and devotion, that word will become whatever you desire.

For instance, if you are afflicted, it consoles you saying, "God does not despise a contrite and humble heart" (Ps. 50:19).

If you rejoice in your future hope, it heaps up joys for you saying, "Rejoice in the Lord and exult, O righteous" (Ps. 31:11).

If you are angry, it calms you saying, "Cease from wrath and leave indignation behind" (Ps. 36:8).

If you are in pain, it heals you saying, "The Lord heals all your weaknesses"(Cf. Ps. 102:3).

If you are consumed by poverty, it consoles you saying, "The Lord lifts up from the earth the helpless and snatches the poor from the dung" (Ps. 112:7).

---

192 (Cf. Origen Comm. Matt.., Ser. 100 where he relates the differing tastes of the manna to Wis 16.20-21. It was a common Rabbinical tradition that the manna had the particular taste that each person eating it wished (Mekilta de-Rabbi Ishmael, Vayassa' ch. V; Midrach Rabbah, Exod. 25.3; Yoma 75a.)

So, therefore, the manna of the word of God imparts into your mouth whatever taste you wish[193].

But many things might be said about the Logos Himself who became flesh, and true meat of which he that eats shall assuredly live for ever, no worthless person being able to eat it; for if it were possible for one who continues worthless to eat of Him who became flesh, who was the Logos and the living bread, it would not have been written, that "every one who eats of this bread shall live for ever" (John 6:51)[194].

What can nourish the soul except the Word, and what is "more precious to his mind more than the wisdom of God?.... [195]

CHRIST AS THE SERVANT

Again, let any one consider how Jesus was to His disciples, not as he who sits at meat, but as he who serves, and how, though the Son of God, He took on Him the form of a servant for the sake of the freedom of those who were enslaved in sin, and He will be at no loss to account for the Father's saying to him: "You are My Servant" (Isa. 49:3,6.). And a little further on: "It is a great thing that you should be called My Servant." For we do not hesitate to say that the goodness of Christ appears in a greater and more divine light, and more according to the image of the Father, because "He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:6,8). Than if he had judged it a thing to be grasped to be equal with God, and had shrunk from becoming with God, and had

193 In Exodus hom . 7:8 (Cf. Ronad E Heine- Frs. of the Church, vol. 71.)
194 Commentary on Matthew, Book 11: 14 (Cf. ANF).
195 On Prayer 27:2.

shrunk from becoming a servant for the salvation of the world[196].

CHRIST IS THE JORDAN

Naaman is angry; he does not see that our Jordan is the cleanser of those who are impure form leprosy, from that impurity, and their restorer to health; it is the Jordan that does this, and not the prophet; the office of the prophet is to direct to the healing agency... [197]

But as the dragon is in the river of Egypt, so is God in the river which makes glad the city of God; for the Father is in the Son. Hence those who come to wash themselves in Him put away the reproach of Egypt, and become more fit to be restored[198].

CHRIST AS OUR HIDDEN TREASURE

The heavenly things, therefore, even the kingdom of heaven, or Christ Himself the King of the ages, are the kingdom of heaven which is likened to a treasure hidden in the field[199].

What treasures? Compare the words "in Him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. 2:3). These treasures are in Christ. From that source come forth these winds, these spirits, so that one man becomes wise, another faithful, another has knowledge, and others receive whatever grace-gift of God it may be (I Cor. 12:8) [200].

---

196 Comm. on John, book 1:37.
197 Comm. on John, book 6:28
198 Comm. on John, book 6:29.
199 Comm. on John, book 1:40.
200 In Jer. hom. 8:5 on 10:3.

CHRIST AS THE SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

Origen comments on the event of the standing of the sun over Gibeon in the days of Joshua till the people took revenge upon their enemies (Jos. 10:12-14) that it was a symbol of the work of our Savior who changes our life into a continuous day till we attain final victory over our enemy.

> *we desire to explain - if it is possible - how the Lord Jesus spreads the light and extends the day for the salvation of the souls and the destruction of the powers of evil. . . .*
>
> *The Sun ever shines and not realizes sunset, i.e. , the Sun of Righteousness who shines the light of truth in the believers' hearts, when the number of believers is completed then the evil time will come, the last generation in which the love of many will be cold because of the increase of selfishness and the lack of righteousness. Only little numbers of believers will remain, and the day will be shortened (Matt. 24:22).*
>
> *Yes, God Himself knows the extension of the days at the time of salvation and the shortening of time at tribulation and waste!*
>
> *For us, let us walk faithfully through the light of the day and accomplish the works of light, as long as we attain with the day and the time of light is extended*[201].
>
> *Let us struggle against our enemies "against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Eph. 6:12).*
>
> *The Sun of Righteousness does not stop from His companionship to us , for He never leaves us. He is not in a hurry for the sunset, as He Himself says, "I am with you always "(Matt. 28:20). He is with us not only for a troubled*

201 In Jos. hom. 10:3.

day, but all the days, even to the end of the ages, till we conquer our enemies[202].

CHRIST, THE SOURCE OF TRUE JOY

For the Logos of God does not show forth His own beauty so much in healing the sick, as in His tendering the temperate draught to make glad those who are in good health and are able to join in the banquet[203].

CHRIST IS OUR PROTECTION

We live under the shadow of the grace of Christ[204].

He who imitates Christ is a rock[205].

CHRIST, THE SOURCE OF VICTORY

None boasted of His victory or ascribed it to His own courage, but because they knew that it is Jesus who gives the victory, "not a man moves his tongue" (Josh 10:21). The apostle well understood this when he said "Not I but the grace of God that is in me" (1 Cor. 15:10)...

May my Lord Jesus grant me (after winning the battle of life).. to lay the victory not to my own credit but to that of His cross[206].

Jesus... who destroys the vices within us and overturns the most vile kingdoms of sin.. [207].

CHRIST IS THE REST OF THE SOUL

Scripture does not say that "the land had rest from wars" under Moses, but under Joshua (= Jesus) (Joshua

202 In Jos. hom. 10:5.
203 Comm. on John, book 10:10.
204 Sel Lament. 4:20.
205 Fr. Malaty: Luke, p. 358.
206 In Jos. hom 12:2.
207 In Josh. 15:4.

11:23). It is likewise certain that the "territory" of our own lives, the field of our struggles and tribulations, will only have rest from war by the power of the Lord Jesus. For within us are all those tribes of vices which... besiege the soul... [208].

CHRIST, THE GROOM OF THE SOUL

Christ is called the Bridegroom of the soul, whom the soul espouses when she comes to the faith[209].

CHRIST AND REVEALING THE MYSTERIES OF THE SCRIPTURES

'It is He who "opens the Scriptures" (Luke 24:32) and so kindles the hearts of the disciples[210].

PROPHETS AND THE FULLNESS OF CHRIST

According to Origen, many prophets received the grace of Christ as they desire to see Him through their initiation by allegory.

JESUS AND THE SPIRIT OF PROPHECY

Christ, who has given us the Spirit of prophecy[211].

CARRYING JESUS CHRIST

Simon the elder reveals the need of mankind to enter the Temple of God under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and to carry Jesus Christ on their hands so that they might be freed from the prison of this world.

---

208 In Josh. Hom. 1:7.
209 In Gen. Hom. 10:4.
210 In Exod. hom. 12:4.
211 Sel. Lam. 4:20.

Simon didn't enter the temple by chance, but he was led by the Spirit of God...

You also, if you want to receive Christ, embrace him among your hands and to be ready for freedom from prison, endeavor to be led by the Spirit who enter you into the temple of God. There is Jesus inside the church, in the temple which is established by the living stones[212].

The One Word... sent out the rays which reach the souls of those willing to receive Him[213].

THE GROWTH OF CHRIST

By the might by which He emptied Himself, He also grows!...

He appeared weak as He took a weak body, and He was able to grow also and be strengthened...

The Son of God emptied Himself, and with the same night He was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was with Him!.. [214]

SEEKING FOR CHRIST

St. Mary and St. Joseph were seeking for Jesus Christ among the relations and friends but they did not find Him.

We do not find Jesus while we are among the relations and friends according to the flesh. We do not find Him in the family according to the flesh... I shall not find my Jesus among the multitudes... Seek Him in the temple of God.

Seek Him in the Church.

---

212 In Luc. hom. 15:3.
213 Contra Celsus 6:79.
214 In Luc. hom. 19:2.

Seek Him among the teachers who do not leave the temple. There you will find Him...

May we seek him with great effort anxiously then we shall find Him, as the Scripture says, "your father and I have sought you anxiously " (Luke 2:48). Don't seek Him in slackness, slothfulness and hesitation, as some do for they do not find Him[215].

If you have lost the Son of God a day seek Him at first in the temple...

But hurry to the temple; there you will find Jesus the Word and the Wisdom[216].

BE A RELATIVE TO CHRIST!

The Gospel gives the title "parents" to the Virgin for she conceived Him and to Joseph for he served Him[217].

HOW DO WE DO GREATER WORKS THAN JESUS CHRIST (JOHN 14:12)?

For I think it is in truth a "greater" work when a man while still in the flesh, frail and easily falling, overcomes in battle the giants and the legions of the demons, his only weapons being the Gospel of Christ and his own faith in it. He ranks as greater than the one He gains Himself[218].

215 In Luc. hom. 18:4.
216 In Luc. hom. 19:4.
217 In Luc. hom. 19:3.
218 In Num. hom. 7:6.

10

THE HOLY SPIRIT

A chapter of the *Treatise on First Principles* is devoted to the Holy Spirit[1]. Its first concern is to affirm against Marcion and Valentinus. He specifically mentions that there is only one Holy Spirit who inspired both the Testaments, just as there is only one Father and one Son. While in the Old Testament the Spirit was only given to the prophets, now, after the coming of the Savior, He is poured out abundantly over the whole Church and teaches how to read the Scriptures in their spiritual sense. This Holy Spirit distributes the charisms, that is graces attached to an act or to a function[2].

Origen confirms **the Personality of the Holy Spirit.** The apostle, after enumerating the gifts of the Spirit, proceeds thus, "And all these things come from the activity of the one same Spirit, distributing to each individually as ***He wills***." (I Cor. 12:11) if He "wills" and "is active" and "distributes," He is not a force or energy of God, but an active personal substance[3]. Origen uses the words of the book of Acts to prove the same idea: "It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us" (Acts 15:21). "The Holy Spirit ***said***" 13:2; "This is what the Holy Spirit ***says***" 21:10. He acknowledges that the Spirit operates in creation, and describes Him as chief in rank of all things originated by the Father through Christ[4].

In (John 3:8) the Spirit is an Essence. He is not, as some suppose, a Divine Energy, having (as they pretend) no distinctive personal existence[5].

---

1 De Principiis 2:7.
2 Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p. 201.
3 Fragment 37 on the Gospel of St. John.
4 Comm. on John 2.10.75.
5 See H.B. Swete: The Holy Spirit in the Ancient Church, p. 133.

He (the Holy Spirit) is an entity, and an entity is not (merely) an energy, though it has a capacity for energy[6].

THE DIVINITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Origen asserts the divinity of the Holy Spirit, "*The Spirit Himself is in the Law and in the Gospel; He is ever with the Father and the Son; like the Father and the Son He always is and was and will be*[7]."

The divinity of Christ is evident not only from the wonders which He produced[8] and from the prophecies which He fulfilled[9], but also from the power of the Holy Spirit operating in Christians:

> *And there are still preserved among Christians traces of that Holy Spirit which appeared in the form of a dove. They expel evil spirits and perform many cures and foresee certain events, according to the will of the Logos. And although Celsus or the Jews whom he has introduced may treat with mockery what I am going to say, I shall say it nevertheless - that many have been converted to Christianity as if against their will, some sort of spirit having suddenly transformed their minds from a hatred of the doctrine to a readiness to die in its defense*[10].

The Holy Spirit is the same rank as the Son, exercising the ministry of eternal life, without any dependence other than that which unites Him to the Father as to His origin. He has no need of being instructed by the Logos. He knows the Father and is one of the Trinity, and it is impossible to suppose that there is in Him either acquisition of new knowledge or progressive advancement in the knowledge He eternally has[11].

---

6 See H.B. Swete: The Holy Spirit in the Ancient Church, p. 373.
7 Comm. in Ep. ad. Romans 6:7.
8 Contra Celsus 2:48.
9 Contra Celsus 1:50.
10 Contra Celsus 1:46 ANF.
11 R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder Book Co., 1944, p. 231-2

We must not suppose, however, that the Spirit knows God as we do, through the revelation of the Son. For if the Holy Spirit knows the Father by this means, He passes from ignorance to knowledge; and it is certainly as impious as it is foolish to confess that He is the Holy Spirit and then to ascribe ignorance to Him. For even if we grant that something else existed before the Holy Spirit, yet it was not by a process of development that He came to be the Holy Spirit; as if one should dare to say that at the time when He was not yet the Holy Spirit He did not know the Father, but that after He had gained this knowledge He became the Holy Spirit. That could not be, for the Holy Spirit would never have been included in the unity of the Trinity, that is, along with God the unchangeable Father and with his Son, unless He had always been the Holy Spirit[12].

He is mentioned after the Father and the Son because He completes the work and because, in the life of religion, perfection comes only at the end[13]. Origen also says, "*The Savior was made less than the Spirit through the divine plan of the Incarnation*[14]."

THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

1. The grace of the Father applies to all creation; the grace of the Son to all rational beings; but the grace of the Holy Spirit is restricted to believers.

I think it is the Holy Spirit, in whom is contained every kind of gift. For on some is bestowed by the Spirit, the word of wisdom, on others the word of knowledge, on others faith; and so to each individual of those who are capable of receiving Him, is the Spirit Himself who made that

12 De Principiis 1:3:2 (Cf. Butterworth).
13 R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder Book Co., 1944, p. 293.
14 Comm. on John 2:11.

quality, or understood to be that which is needed by the individual who has deserved to participate[15].

Thus, therefore, the working of the power of God the Father and God the Son is spread indiscriminately over all created beings, but a share in the Holy Spirit is possessed, we find, by the saints alone. Accordingly it is said, "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord except in the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:3). Even the apostles themselves are scarcely worthy at the last count of hearing the words, "You shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you" (Acts 1:8). It follows logically from this, I think, that "he who has sinned against the Son of Man is worthy of forgiveness" because he who is a sharer in the Word or Reason seems, if he ceases to live according to reason, to have fallen into ignorance of folly and so to deserve forgiveness; whereas he who has once been counted worthy to share in the Holy Spirit and then turns back again is by this very act and deed said to have blasphemed against the Holy Spirit...

What we have been describing is the peculiar grace and work of the Holy Spirit[16].

This grace must thus be deserved; the recipients must be (for example) [17]:

I. Those who thirst after God.

The Holy Spirit, from whom those who thirst after and long for God obtain "spiritual graces" (Rom. 1:11) and heavenly gifts.

II. Those who merit it through faith in Christ or through thirsting after and longing for God.

---

15 De. Principiis. 2:7:3.
16 De Principiis 1:3:7 (Cf. Butterworth).
17 Cf. B. Drewery, p. 172-3.

The grace of the Holy Spirit... is given to the faithful[18].

III. Those cleansed by the Law, who have known and fulfilled the commandments of God.

You, who wish to receive holy baptism and to earn the grace of the Spirit, must first submit to the cleansing of the Law; must hear the word of God, cut out your innate vices and lay aside... your barbarous habits, that in gentleness and humility you may be able to receive in addition the grace of the Holy Spirit[19].

IV. Those who are faithful, gentle, humble, pure in heart, whose lives are praiseworthy for their good deeds, their virtues, their love.

"Not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel" (Rom. 9:6), nor are all who have been washed with water straightway washed with the Holy Spirit, just as not all who are enrolled as catechumens are outside the sphere of the Spirit. Cornelius was a catechumen, and before he came to the waters he deserved to be granted the Holy Spirit. Simon had received baptism, but because he was insincere in seeking this grace he was denied the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 8) [20].

('The Spirit rested on them and they all prophesied'):'*We read that the Spirit rests not on all men whatsoever but on the holy and blessed; For the Spirit of God rests on the "pure in heart" (Matt. 5:8) and on those who purify their souls from sin, just as He does not dwell in a body given over to sins, even if He has dwelt in it in the past; for the Holy Spirit cannot tolerate the partnership and company of an evil spirit. For there is no doubt that*

18 *De Principiis 2:11:5*
19 *In Lev. hom. 6:2.*
20 *In Num. hom 3:1*

when we sin an evil spirit comes and makes play in our heart, whosoever we be... Hence our sin "grieves the Holy Spirit" (Eph. 4:30), but our righteous and holy deeds prepare Him a "resting-place" in us. Hence (in Numbers 11)... to say that the Spirit rested on the seventy elders is to declare the praise, worthiness and goodness of their lives[21].

In each generation the wisdom of God enters souls which she finds holy and makes them friends of God and prophets. Indeed one could find in the sacred books men in each generation who were holy, and receptive of the divine Spirit[22].

The Holy Spirit comes only to the virtuous and stays far from bad men... Apart from and alien to the bad, it fills those who have faith and love[23].

2. We are in need of the Holy Spirit to **grant us unity with the Father through the Son**. Truly, our Lord Jesus Christ is the only Way that leads us to this unity, for He offered His sacred blood as a price for it, but it is realized by His Spirit. Through Him we become **partakers of the Father and the Son**.

It is impossible to become partakers of the Father, or of the Son, without partaking of the Holy Spirit[24].

It is God's work to dwell invisible, by His Spirit and by the Spirit of Christ, in those in whom He judges them worthy to dwell[25].

It is also through the Father's grace, or His Self-giving that we are granted His own Spirit to dwell in us.

God is always giving a share of His own Spirit to those who are able to partake of Him[26].

---

21 In Num. hom. 6:3 on 11:25.
22 Celsus 4:7.
23 Comm. on John Frag. 37.
24 De Principiis 1:3:5.
25 Contra Celsus 5:1.

At the same time it is the Spirit's grace that grants us, by His dwelling within us, the adoption to the Father so that we might find a place in the Father's bosom and become able to participate in His nature and in His eternal glories.

3. We need the Holy Spirit to live within us, to **reveal to us "God" who is Love** (1 John 4:8); not through mere words and theoretical thoughts, but by the presence of "Love" Himself within us.

> *We must realize how many things ought to be said about (this) love, and also what great things need to be said about God, since He Himself is. "Love." For "as no one knows the Father except the Son, and he to whom the Son wills to reveal Him" (Matt. 11:27), so also no one knows Love except the Son. In the same way, no one knows the Son, Who is Love Himself, except the Father. Moreover, in like manner, because He is called Love, it is the Holy Spirit, who proceeds from the Father, who alone knows what is in God; just as the spirit of man knows what is in man (l Cor. 2: 11). Here then the Paraclete, the Spirit of Truth, who proceeds from the Father (John 15:26), ranges, searching for souls worthy and able to receive the greatness of this love, that is of God, which He desires to reveal to them*[27].

4. The Holy Spirit has His role **in our prayers**, if we recognize our insufficiencies. He guides our souls even beyond the heavens.

> *The Spirit that cries in the hearts of the blessed, "Abba, Father"... makes intercession for us to God with groanings beyond utterance (Rom. 8:26), taking on Himself our groanings because of His great love and pity for men*[28].

---

26 Contra Celsus 6:70.
27 Comm. on Song. of Songs, Prologue.
28 On Prayer 2:3.

In whatever part of the world he (the Christian) *prays, but he rises above the universe, "shutting the eyes of sense, and raising upwards the eyes of the soul." However he stops not at the vault of heaven; but passing in through beyond the heavens, under the guidance of the Spirit of God*[29].

5. The Holy Spirit grants us the word of God, and divine knowledge.

(The Scriptures) *were composed, and have come down to us, from the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, by the will of the supreme Father, through Jesus Christ*[30].

"The Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God" 1 Cor. 2:10... The soul of man cannot search "everything," and a greater Spirit was necessary within us... That we, by the mingling of this Spirit with us might search along with Him "everything, even...[31]*"*

6. The Holy Spirit reveals the mystery of the Holy Trinity.

The Gospel shows (the Holy Spirit) *to be of such power and majesty that it says the apostles could not yet receive those things which the Savior wished to teach them until the Holy spirit should have come, who could pour Himself into their souls and enlighten them concerning the nature and faith of the Trinity*[32].

7. The Holy Spirit helps us in witnessing to the Gospel and teaching others the truth.

If a man teaches the same things in the same way that Jesus taught, he speaks not "from his own heart" but by the Holy Spirit[33].

---

29 Contra Celsus 7:44.
30 De Principiis 4:2:2.
31 Comm. 1 Cor. 10.
32 De Principiis 2:7:3.
33 In Ezek 2:2.

8. **Allegorism or the spiritual understanding of the Scripture is a grace of the Holy Spirit**, granted to perfect believers to enter the chamber of eternal marriage between Christ and their soul to enjoy the divine wisdom and its mysteries. He is the Giver of knowledge and wisdom. Origen received this thought from his teacher St. Clement[34], who stated that the understanding of the Holy Scriptures belongs not to all, but to the Gnostics who are guided by the Holy Spirit, the Giver of knowledge.

(Send me Your light): That is, the light sent out from (the Father) into the mind of those who are called to redemption, the understanding through the Spirit, which leads those who are thus enlightened to God[35].

(Quotes Psalm 18:11 “God made darkness His hiding-place"): *"By this it is made clear that the ideas about God which are open to human understanding on its own merits are without clarity or certainty, since God hides Himself as if in darkness from those who cannot see Him- partly because of the impurity of the mind that is bound to a human "body of humiliation" (Phil 3:21), partly because of its limited power to comprehend God... That the prophet may show the profundity of the doctrines about God, which is beyond the same Spirit which “locked" (Isa. 22:22) and "sealed" (Isa 29:11) the writings of Isaiah. If the Spirit has not "opened" the words of the prophets, the imprisoned truths cannot be opened*[36].

The sacred Scriptures were not composed by any human words, but were written by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and were also delivered and entrusted to us by the will of God the Father through His Only Begotten Son Jesus Christ...[37]

---

34 Stromata 5:16.
35 Contra Celsus 4:95; Sel. Ps. 43:3.
36 Contra Celsus 6:17 (Benjamin Drewery).
37 De Principiis 4:2:2 (R.A. Greer, p. 180).

No soul can attain the perfection of knowledge in any other way than by becoming inspired by the truth of divine wisdom[38].

We pray that the light which comes from the knowledge of the glory of God may shine in our hearts (2 Cor. 4:6) through the Spirit of God, who is dwelling within us and makes us able to imagine and understand the things of God. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God" Rom. 8: 14[39].

If anyone meditates on the Law of the Lord day and night (Ps. 1:2), if anyone is like the mouth of the righteous that mediates on wisdom (Ps. 37:30), he will be able to investigate and discover these things more clearly, providing that he is seeking through the right way, knocking the door of God's wisdom and asking that it be opened for him so he may be worthy to receive and understand the words of knowledge and wisdom through the Holy Spirit; and to be worthy to partake of that Wisdom Who says, "I stretched out my words and you did not hear" Prov. 1:24; Col. 4:3[40].

It is the Holy Spirit who tells the deeds of which we read...

For whence could Moses tell of what has been done since the beginning of the world or what was in store at its end, unless through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit?

Whence could he prophesy of Christ, unless the Holy Spirit told him?...

The meaning of the narrative [in Numbers] *and the real truth hidden under this veil, can only be known in full clarity, as I hold, by the Holy Spirit, who inspired the words, and by our Lord Jesus Christ, who said of Moses "he wrote of Me" (John 5:46), and by the Almighty God,*

---

38 De Principiis 4:2:7.
39 Contra Celsus 4:95.
40 Comm. on Song of Songs: Prolog (ACW).

whose venerable counsel is revealed to mankind not by open disclosure but under the veil of letters[41].

All the knowledge of the Father has been revealed by the Son and is gained by the Holy Spirit... We must know that as the Son, who alone knows the Father, reveals Himself to whom He wills (Matt. 11 :27) so also the Holy Spirit, who alone "searches the deep things of God," 1 Cor. 2: 10, reveals God to whom He wills[42].

"Let us have (suffer) pains to avoid being found unworthy of so great and sublime an understanding [viz. the mystical interpretation of Leviticus 24:1], *but rather that our soul should first become a "holy place" in which we may receive the holy mysteries by the grace of the Holy Spirit from whom everything that is holy has received its sanctity*[43].

("I opened my mouth and panted [drew breath] because I longed for your commandments"): "He who through his actions has opened his heart, draws in the Holy Spirit who reveals to him the mysteries of God. The "mouth" of my soul is my understanding. Closing this to evil thoughts, I opened it to good ones, and drew in the Spirit of understanding, grace and wisdom. The cost of the grace of the Spirit is the recital and execution of the commandments of God: no sooner is our mouth opened that the Spirit is drawn from heaven[44].

9. The dignity of the Holy Ghost appears in a number of passages of the New Testament where He is associated with the Father and the Son in the sanctification of souls. An outstanding example is the baptismal formula[45].

---

41 In Num. hom. 26:3.
42 De Principiis 1:3:4.
43 In Lev. hom. 8:6.
44 Sel. Ps. 119:131.
45 R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder Book Co., 1944, p. 231.

Before the incarnation of the Logos, the Holy Spirit was working in man's life for its sanctification. There were saints even more before Christ, who lived in the hope of His redeeming action. But now, the Holy Spirit - who is the Spirit of Christ - descended upon Him, on His baptism, on our behalf, so that He might dwell in us, and grant us adoption to the Father through baptism. Therefore, our Lord asks us to call God, "Our Father who art in heaven." St. Paul says: "For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the spirit of adoption by whom we cry out: "Abba, Father. "The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God; and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified," Rom. 8:15-17. St. John says, "But to all who received Him, He gave power to become children of God," John 1:12.

The record in the Acts of the Apostles tells about the manifestation of the Spirit that lives in the baptized, when the water prepares the way for those who approach with sincerity. Baptism is called the "bath of rebirth," Tit. 3:5, which takes place with the renewal of the spirit[46]."

Because through the sacrament of Baptism the defilement of birth are laid aside, therefore even little ones are baptized; for "except one be reborn of water and Spirit he will not be able to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven[47]."

The Savior interprets how it is possible to be born from above, saying that since entrance into God's Kingdom is set before us, but it is impossible for anyone to attain this without having been born of water and Spirit, it follows that to be born from above is by being born of water and Spirit. But he is born of(the)Spirit, who is made ;according to it, becoming from it holy and spiritual. Then, since he

46 Comm. on John 6:33.
47 In Luc. hom 14 (Harold Smith: Ante-Nicene Exegesis of the Gospels, SPCK 1962, p. 35).

who enters into the Kingdom of God is born not of the Spirit alone, but also of water, it follows that we should search out from the Scriptures something also about water. And consider whether it does not differ from the Spirit merely in conception and not in substance (See John vii. 38-39). For if it is said of the Spirit that living water flows like rivers from the believer, the water will differ from the Spirit only in conception. As then anyone who is born of the Savior would be wise from Wisdom, so also of the - Spirit he is born holy and spiritual, and of the water he is born cleansed, and each man watered for fruit-bearing is born of water and Spirit.

Another will say that "water" means here the teaching which cleans the soul, which itself contributes to being born from above. Of this cleansing by divine education the Psalmist said to God, "You shall wash me and I shall be whiter than snow" (Cf. Jer. 4:14). Then since not only the soul is called to salvation, but also the very body, which it uses as an instrument for its own operations; naturally this too must be sanctified through what is called in the divine teaching "washing of regeneration," which is also named divine Baptism, no longer mere water, for it is sanctified by some mystic invocation; cf. Matt. 27:l9f.... How can it be any more mere water which has partaken as far as possible of the power of the Holy Trinity and is associated with moral and intellectual virtue? Consider too its greatness by considering why it is received. For if it is in order to enter the Kingdom of heaven, and this is of surpassing excellence; how is the cause of entrance into it not a great thing? The Kingdom of God means the constitution of those who live according to His Laws. But this has its abode in a proper place, I mean in heaven. Since it is here called "Kingdom of God," but in Matthew "Kingdom of Heaven," we must say that Matthew has named it from its subjects, or the places in which they are; while John and Luke have named it from its King, even God; as when we, speaking of

the Kingdom of the Romans, designate it through its subjects, signifying it also from the place on the earth or the world[48].

The Church has received a tradition from the apostles to give baptism even to little ones. For since the secrets of divine mysteries had been entrusted to them, they knew that there are in a11 people genuine defilements of sin, which ought to be washed away through water and Spirit[49].

As we received this divine grace we must call our God, "Our Father," not only by our lips but through our whole saintly life, that declares our true adoption to God.

Because of the "Spirit of sonship" we have learned, in the general letter of John concerning those born of God, that "no one born of God commits sin, for His seed remains in him, and he cannot sin because he is born of God," 1 John 3:9..., they may not say "Our Father" only half way. Such people add to their works their hearts, which are the fountain and origin of good works which lead to righteousness, while the mouth joins in harmony and confesses to achieve salvation (Cf. Rom. 10:10)[50].

THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

There is one and the same Holy Spirit in the Law and the Gospels[51].

The Jewish prophets, illuminated by the divine Spirit as far as was serviceable to their prophesying, were the first to enjoy the visitation of the superior Spirit to them. Because of what I may term the touch of what we call the "Holy" Spirit upon their soul they gained clearer men-

---

48 John Frag. 36 (H. Smith).
49 Romans 5:9 (H. Smith).
50 On Prayer 22:2,3.
51 In Lev. hom. 13:4.

tal perception and brighter radiance of the soul and even of the body, which no longer warred against the life-according-to-virtue, because it was mortified in respect of the "mind of the flesh" (Rom. 8:6ff). For we are persuaded that the "deeds of the body" and the enmities arising from the "mind of the flesh" which is opposed to God, are done to death by the divine Spirit[52].

Of the Jewish prophets some were wise before they received the gift of prophecy and divine inspiration, others became wise through the mental illumination that the actual gift of prophecy bestowed. These were chosen by Providence to be entrusted with the Divine Spirit... on the ground of the unexampled and finely-toned freedom of their lives-such a quality as would face danger and death without fear[53].

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND GOD'S DWELLING IN OUR HEARTS

God is always giving a share of His own Spirit to those who are able to partake of Him[54].

The Holy Spirit had been able to find a place within (Anna) because of her holiness and purity[55].

The Holy Spirit comes only to the virtuous and stays far from bad men[56].

THE RENEWAL OF OUR NATURE THROUGH BAPTISM

As we have seen, the Fathers of the Church do not separate between adoption to God and the renewal of our nature, for they are two aspects of the same grace.

---

52 Contra Celsus 7:4.
53 Contra Celsus 7:7.
54 Contra Celsus 6:70.
55 In Luke hom. 17.
56 Comm. on John Frag. 37.

In the fountain of baptism our inner man is created and our nature is renewed by the Holy Spirit, so that we might live as sons of God who attain a new life in Christ.

(Baptism) is named "the washing of generation," being accompanied by the renewing of the Spirit, who still broods over the water[57].

The Holy Spirit creates for Himself a new people and renews the face of the earth; when through the grace of the Spirit, men" put off the old man with his doings," Col. 3:9, and begin to "walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:4)[58].

THE SPIRIT OF SANCTIFICATION

The grace of the Holy Spirit is added so that those creatures which are not holy by virtue of their own being may be made Holy by participation in the Spirit. Thus they derive existence from God the Father, rationality from the Word and sanctity from the Holy Spirit. Again when they have once been sanctified through the Holy Spirit they are made capable of receiving Christ, in respect that He is the "Righteousness of God" (1 Cor. 1:30) and those who have deserved to advance to this stage through the sanctification of the Holy Spirit will go on to attain the gift of wisdom through the power of the Spirit of God and His operation in them[59].

His special work is that of ***sanctification***. The Father gives being to all that exists; the Son imparts reason, Logos, to all capable of it; the Holy Ghost works life in those that believe. Hence though all men may be said to participate in the First and Second Persons, not all men share in the Third. It is He that creates in man the capacity to receive Christ, first as Justice, then as Wisdom, and

57 In Joan. 6:33.
58 De Principiis 1:3:7.
59 De Principiis 1:3:8.

so on in ever deepening affinity, till at last the gift of being becomes worthy of the Giver[60].

But just as a person receives the adoption of sons by participation in the Son of God and is made wise by participation in God's Wisdom, so also he is made holy and spiritual by participation in the Holy Spirit. For it is one and the same thing to receive participation in the Holy Spirit as to receive it in the Father and the Son, since, of course, the nature of the Trinity is one and incorporeal. And what we have said about the participation of the soul must be understood to apply to angels and heavenly powers, just as it does to souls, since every rational creature requires participation in the Trinity.

St. Clement of Alexandria declares the unceasing divine work in our life, saying, [*the Instructor created man from dust, renews him by water and nurses him by the Spirit*]. What does St. Clement mean by the words. "*The Instructor nurses man by the Spirit*"? The Divine Instructor, Jesus Christ, sent His spirit in the Church not only to grant us adoption to God, but to nurse us continuously by the divine life, or by "holiness in Jesus Christ" that we might become holy as our God is Holy [Lev. 11:44, 45, 1 Pet. 1:16].

In the Old Testament, especially in Leviticus, God repeatedly called man to practice "holiness," giving him His commandments, accepting animal sacrifice and the laws of purification, but man was weak and unable to practice this. He felt that" holiness" is a burden that he could never bear, for it meant less pleasure for him.

Now as the Lord grants us His Holy Spirit dwelling within us, holiness becomes the delightful law that the children of God enjoy. This kind of life brings some changes - in our opinion -

60 Charles Bigg: The Christian Platonists of Alexandria, Oxford 1913, p. 215.

from simple pleasure to real delight which we enjoy through the communion of the Holy One.

Holiness is a natural life to the spiritual man, in whom the Holy Spirit dwells and acts, sanctifying his soul, mind, heart, senses and all the members of his body. St. Anthony, the Great, presents in his letters a beautiful speech concerning the sanctification of a believer's life especially his soul - by the Holy Spirit who guides man towards a saintly life .

(Rational beings) *first obtain their existence from God the Father, then their rationality from the Word, and thirdly their sanctification from the holy Spirit. They are made capable of receiving Christ in His capacity of Righteousness, because they have now been sanctified through the Holy Spirit; and those who have deserved to achieve this degree of progress through the sanctification of the Holy Spirit obtain just as surely the gift of wisdom through the power of the working of the Spirit of God, and His operation in them ...*

That this may come to pass, and that those who were made by God may be present unceasingly and inseparably with Him. It is the work of wisdom to instruct and educate them and lead them to perfection, by the strengthening and the unceasing sanctification of the Holy Spirit, through such sanctification alone they can attain to God[61].

(The Holy Spirit) *is manifestly a sanctifying power, which we all can have a share of so as to be sanctified by His grace*[62].

As by participation in the Son of God, man is adopted into the rank of the sons of God... so also by par-

61 De Principiis 1:3:8.
62 De Principiis 1:1:3.

ticipation in the Holy Spirit, man is made holy and spiritual[63].

He is called the "Spirit of holiness" for He offers holiness to all[64].

The "good tree" is the Holy Spirit, the "bad tree" is the devil and his servants. He who has the Holy Spirit shows His fruits, which the apostle enumerates (Gal 5:22). He who has the opposite power bears the fruits of "dishonorable passions" (Rom. 1:26), "thorns and thistles" (Heb. 6:8) [65].

(The Holy Spirit) *is a sanctifying power, a share of which all are said to have who have deserved to be sanctified through His grace*[66].

The Holy Spirit is so holy as to be above "sanctification"; for His holiness comes not from some outside source, thus making Him holy-He was always holy... But every creature will be "sanctified unto holiness", either through the Holy Spirit who deems it fitting to make him so, or through his own merits[67].

He is called the Spirit of holiness because he offers holiness to all[68].

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND VICTORY

The Spirit wrestles with the flesh, and that man's spirit which the Spirit strengthens wins victory[69].

---

63 De Principiis 4:4:5.
64 Comm. Rom. 1:5.
65 Ibid. Frag. 9 on 6:43.
66 De Principiis 1:1:3.
67 In Num. hom. 11:8 on 18:9.
68 Comm. on Rom. 1:5..
69 In Luke hom. 11.

THE HOLY SPIRIT IS OUR ADVOCATE

The Alexandrians considered "prayers" - both liturgical and private - not as some formalities or duties to be fulfilled,, but as a great task that needs the grace of the Holy Spirit which acts in the life of the Church and within every soul. By praying, the Church (or the soul) is lifted up in the presence of the Holy Trinity, practices her dialogue with God openly and expresses her love towards Him and towards all creatures. 'The Lord promised His disciples that He would sent them the "Advocate," His own Spirit (John 16:7f), who alone has the power to raise up our minds and illuminate our souls to enjoy close communication with the Father through His Only-Begotten Son. This is what St. Paul means by the intercession of the Spirit for the saints according to the will of God (Rom. 8:26,27).

Prayer is the action of the Holy Trinity in our life, for the Father sheds light upon it, the Son teaches it and the Holy Spirit works within us to enable us to understand and speak rightly of such a great subject, as Origen states.

The Holy Spirit grants our barren minds fruitfulness, and makes them spiritual, so that we can pray and sing with the Spirit (I Cor. 14:15).

David says: "To you I have lifted up my eyes, You who dwell in heaven, "Ps. 123:1; "To You, O God, have I lifted up my soul" Ps. 25:1... How? The soul is lifted up and follows the Spirit... It even comes to be in Him[70].

Indeed, St. Paul says, "the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts, knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God," Rom 8:26,27. The Spirit cries, "Abba, Father," in the hearts of the blessed people and He knows by careful attention our sighs in this taberna-

70 On Prayer 8:2.

cle, sighs suitable of weighing those who have fallen or have transgressed. He intercedes on our behalf, taking on Himself our groanings because of His great love and pity for men.

By His wisdom he sees that our souls have been humbled to dust (Ps. 44:45)... and so He "makes intercession with God" not by using any "groanings" but those "which cannot be uttered.

And this Spirit, not content with making intercession to God, intensifies His intercession and "More than making intercession" in the case, I believe, of those who are "more than conquerors," Rom. 8:37...[71]

I will pray with the Spirit, and I will also pray with understanding. I will sing with the Spirit and I will also sing with understanding." 1 Cor. 14:15...For neither can our mind pray unless the Spirit prays first for it.. so that we can not even sing and say hymns to the Father in Christ with proper rhythm, melody, measure, and harmony unless the Spirit Who searches everything, even the depth of God (1 Cor. 2:10), first praises and sings hymns to Him...

I believe that it was a result of seeing the human weakness that is incapable of praying as one ought to pray, and realizing this, that one of the Lord's disciples when he herd the wise and mighty words spoken by Him in His prayer to the Father, said to the Lord when he had finished praying: "Lord, teach us to pray" Luke 11:1...[72]

Prayer is such a great task that it requires the Father to shed light upon it, His "first born word" to teach it, and the spirit to work within us to enable us to understand and speak rightly of so great a subject[73].

---

71 Ibid. 2:3
72 Ibid. 2:4.
73 Ibid. 2:6.

But meanwhile Moses cries out to the Lord. How does he cry out? No sound of his cry is heard and yet God says to him. "Why do you cry out to me? Exod 14:15. I should like to know how the saints cry out to God without a sound. The apostle teaches, "God has given the Spirit of his Son in our hearts crying: "Abba, Father! Gal. 4:6. And he adds, "The Spirit himself intercedes for us with indescribable groans." And again, "He who searches the heart knows what the Spirit desires because he pleads for the saints according to God." So, therefore, when the Holy Spirit intercedes with God, the cry of the saints is heard through silence[74].

He prays for those who pray and appeals along with those who appeal. But, He does not pray for servants who do not pray continuously through Him, nor will He be the Advocate with God for His own if they are not obedient to His instructions that they "always ought to pray and not lose heart" Luke 18:1[75].

GRACE AND PRAISING GOD

It is easy for any person to praise God by his lips, but we are in need of the Gift of the Spirit that grants us inner joy (Gal. 5: 22), to praise Him by our whole inner man, our minds, hearts and senses. By this divine gift we enjoy the pledge of heavenly life, which is a delightful life of singing and praising God.

If the mind is not filled with the grace of God, it cannot sing the praises of His glory[76].

Since we have been brought by a heavenly power (1 Cor. 2:4), indeed by a more than heavenly one, to faith and belief we should worship God, the Creator of all, as ours[77].

---

74 In Exod. hom. 5:4.
75 On Prayer 10:2.
76 Sel Ps. 71:9.
77 De Principiis 4:1:7.

THE HOLY SPIRIT, SOURCE OF JOY

For if anyone has deserved to participate in the Holy Spirit by the knowledge of His ineffable mysteries, he undoubtedly obtains comfort and joy of heart. For since he comes by the teaching of the Spirit to the knowledge of the reasons of all things which happen - how and why they do occur - his soul can in no aspect be troubled, or admit any feeling of sorrow[78].

THE HOLY SPIRIT OUR COMFORTER THROUGH TRIBULATIONS

For it is not to all, but to Paul and those like him, that this present tribulation is said to be momentary and light, because they have the perfect charity of God in Christ Jesus poured out in their hearts by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 5:5)[79].

LOVE AS THE FIRST "FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT"

Jesus "was hungry," i.e. constantly seeking to share in the fruits of the holy Spirit in the life of the righteous; His food, if one may put it so, the "figs" that He eats in His hunger, is the love growing in the life of him who bears it - that love which is the first "fruit of the Spirit" - and joy, peace, long-suffering, etc.(Gal. 5:22)[80].

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND SACRAMENT OF PENANCE

In this sacrament of penance and confession the believer attains second baptism, for he receives a kind of spiritual renewal to his inner man.

---

78 De. Principiis. 2:7:4.
79 Song of Songs: Prologue.
80 Comm. on Matt. 16:27 on 21:17-22.

"That the thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed,"(Luke 2:35).

There were evil thoughts in men, and they were revealed for this reason, that being brought to the surface they might be destroyed, slain, put to death, and He Who died for us might kill them. For while these thoughts were hidden and not brought into the open they could not be utterly done to death. Hence, if we have sinned we also ought to say," I have made my sin known to You, and I have not hidden my wickedness. I have said I will declare my unrighteousness to the Lord against myself" (Ps. 32:5). For if we do this and reveal our sins not only to God but also to those who can heal our wounds and sins, our wickedness will be wiped out by Him who says," I will wipe out your wickedness like a cloud," Isa. 44:2.

Certainly, the Christian should be under strict discipline (more than those men of Old Testament times), because Christ died for him... Now listen to all the ways of remission of sins in the Gospels:

First, we are baptized for the remission of sins.

Second, there is the remission in the suffering of martyrdom.

Third, the remission given in return for works of mercy (Luke 11:44)..

Fourth, the forgiveness through our forgiveness of others, (Matt. 5:14)...

Fifth, the forgiveness bestowed when a man "has converted a sinner from the error of his ways," James 5:20.

Sixth. sins are remitted through abundance of love (Luke 7:4).

In addition, there is also a seventh way of forgiveness, hard and painful, namely the remission of sins through penitence when "the sinner washes his bed with tears, and tears are his bread by day and night,' Ps. 6:6; 42:3; and when he does not hold back in shame from de-

claring his sin to the priest of the Lord and asking for medicine (James 5: 14).. [81]

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND MARRIAGE

Since God has joined together (a man and woman in marriage), for this reason there is a grace-gift for those joined together by God. Paul knew this, and declares that equally with the purity of the unmarried state is a marriage according to the word of God a grace-gift (Origen quotes 1 Cor 7: 7). Those who are joined together by God obey in thought and deed the command "husbands, love your wives...." (Eph 5:25)[82].

TO BE FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT

Thus therefore, to those converted from sin, purification is indeed given through all that which we said above, but the gift of the grace of the Spirit is designated through the image of "oil" that this one who is covered from sin, not only can attain cleansing but also be filled with the Holy Spirit by whom he can receive the best "robe and ring" and, having been reconciled with the Father, can be restored to the place of a son, through our Lord Jesus Christ himself, "to whom is glory and power forever and ever, Amen[83].

STRONG IN SPIRIT

(‘grew and became strong in spirit’): *‘To grow and to become strong are different things.*

---

81 In Lev. hom 2:4
82 Comm. on Matt. 14:6 on 19:3-12.
83 In Lev. hom. 8:15 (Gary Wayne Barkley- Frs. of the Church).

Human nature is weak, and if it is to become strong, it needs the help of a strengthener. Whose help? The Spirit's.

This means that he who would be truly strong must "become strong in Spirit."

The majority become strong in and according to the flesh, but the athletes of God (2 Tim. 2:3ff) become strong in spirit, and because of this become valiant against the "carnal mind that is set on the flesh" (Rom. 8:7). For the Spirit wrestles with the flesh, and man's spirit which that Spirit strengthens wins victory[84]*.*

QUENCH NOT THE SPIRIT

Because the divine fire can be from time to time extinguished even in the saints and the faithful, hear the apostle Paul prescribing for those who have deserved to receive the gifts and graces of the Spirit "Quench not the Spirit" (1 Thess. 5:19) [85]*.*

TAKE THE MINA FROM HIM

"Take the mina from him" (Luke 19:11ff.), that is, the grace of the Holy Spirit since while he is in possession of it he cannot be punished[86]*.*

JESUS CHRIST AND THE HOLY SPIRIT

Because Jesus is the only one who never sinned, in Him alone the Holy Spirit "remained[87]*.*

---

84 In Luke hom. 11 on 1:80.
85 In Gen. hom. 15:3.
86 In Luke hom. 39.
87 In Num. hom. 6:3.

11

THE PHILOSOPHY OF CREATION

PHILOSOPHY OF CREATION[1]

Truly Origen's treatment of cosmology is philosophical rather than theological, and he is reacting to the Neoplatonism in the atmosphere around him, but his purpose is not to present a philosophical idea, but to serve the exegesis of the Scripture through the contemporary ideas of cosmology.

Gerald Bostock believes that the framework of Origen's philosophy of creation is clarified in his exegesis of Genesis 1:6, concerning the image of the firmament, which lies between the upper and the lower waters of creation.

First of all heaven is said to be made, the totality that is of ***spiritual substance****, where God rests on a throne as it were ... (cf. Isa. 66:1).*

But this heaven, namely the firmament, is ***corporeal****.*

And so that first heaven, which we call spiritual, represents our mind ... our inner spiritual being which looks on God.

But this corporeal heaven, which is called ***the firmament, represents our external being which sees physical reality****. Just as the firmament is called "heaven," so a man who is in the body, and who can distinguish between*

[1] *See Gerald Bostock: Origen's Philosophy of Creation, [Colloquium Origenianum Quintum; Origen and Philosophy, Boston College August 14-18,1989.]*

the waters which are above and those which are below the firmament, will be called a heaven or ***heavenly man*** *... (cf. Phil. 3:20) ... sharing in the water which is above the firmament, the spiritual water* ***welling up to eternal life*** *(John. 4:14), because he is separated from the water of* ***the abyss*** *(Gen. 1:2), where darkness dwells and the* ***prince of this world*** *(John. 12:31)*[2].

This passage, according to Bostock, sets out three basic principles:

First, that there is a spiritual heaven or realm which transcends and precedes the establishment of the firmament or this present world.

Secondly, that the firmament is set between entirely different "waters" of a higher and lower nature.

Thirdly, that the nature of man is co-ordinated with the structure of the universe.

Bostock says that in affirming **the first principle** Origen sets himself within the Platonic tradition as it is expounded by Philo, who says that the intelligible world came into existence before the creation of the physical world[3]. Unlike Philo however Origen is in no danger of seeing this intelligible world as a purely mental construct, because he sees it as ***the heaven of Biblical tradition, the dwelling-place of God and of His holy angels. This heaven is God's first and essential act of creation, as opposed to the second creation of the visible world***[4]. The present visible world is not to be thought of as the first of God's works.

Origen has no difficulty in reconciling this idea with Genesis, because the word "beginning" in Gen. 1:1 (*arche*) does not have any temporal significance. "Scripture, recognizing the distinction between first and beginning, does not say 'He first

[2] *In Gen. hom. 1:2 PG 12:1334A*
[3] *Cf. Philo, De Opif. 4:10.*
[4] *De Principiis 3:6:1.*

made'... The world had its beginning (i.e. source) in the Creator, but was not the first of His works, because He made many things earlier.

The spiritual world, in which the angels dwell, constitutes the heaven of Biblical teaching. But it is also the realm of incorporeal reality, as this is described in the Platonic tradition. "To be in the heavenly realms (Eph. 1:3) means to be in mental and intangible reality. For a man stores up treasure in heaven (Matt. 6:20) and no longer has his heart on earth, in material and corporeal concerns that is, when he attends to the intelligible universe[5]. ***G. Bostock states that there is a clear, philosophical contrast between the static realm of Platonic ideas and the heaven of Origen's theology. Origen has a dynamic concept, as he refers to the Holy Spirit who blows where He wills, who moves over the face of the waters.***

Origen refers to God as the universal source of being, and the one who ***continually wills existence***[6].

Secondly, that the firmament is set between entirely different "waters" of a higher and lower nature. Their characteristics are different in that the higher waters represent the pure substance of the Spirit, while the lower waters represent the substance of mere matter. ***Origen clearly believes that matter, however inferior to Spirit in terms of unity and structure, is substance in the sense that it is everlasting. Its eternity must not be taken to mean that matter existed prior to God and His creation, as Plato appears to suggest***[7]. Origen rejects this view of matter[8]. It is not the eternity of an autonomous realm, but that of an element within the eternal creation of God. It has no absolute beginning. In other words, creation, as Origen understands it, is the temporal expression of an

[5] *Com. Ep. 1:3.*
[6] *Comm John 1:17, De Principiis 1:3:5.*
[7] *Plato: Tmaeus 30A*
[8] *De Principiis 1:1:3.*

eternal order.

Creation, as Origen understands it, is the temporal expression of an eternal order. And it is from this standpoint that we have to approach the description in Genesis of the creation of the world. It is an act which essentially takes place outside time.

> *The God who made the whole world did not need time to make the mighty creation of heaven and earth... For even if these things seem to have been made in six days, intelligence is required to understand in what sense the words "In six days" are meant...*[9]

Origen believes it is ridiculous to understand creation as taking place in "six days,' interpreted as a literal sequence. ***He points out that "days" did not exist before the sun and moon and stars were formed, and it is quite clear to him that the "days" described in Genesis 1 do not refer to a literal succession***. In this he is following the thinking of Philo, and of the Middle Platonists who said that Plato's description of an apparently temporal creation was made for the sake of "clarity of instruction." In the same way, Origen says that "*everything was made at once ... but for the sake of clarity a list of days and their events was given*[10]. The same line of thought is found in St. Didymus[11]. The story of creation, in other words, refers to one simultaneous act, but was presented in sequential form to enable us to imagine the process.

Origen is happy to affirm that "*bodily nature was created out of nothing after a space of time and brought into being from non-existence*[12]." Similarly it will end in non-existence: "*bodily matter exists but for a space of time, and just as it did not exist before it was made, so it will again be resolved into non-existence*[13]." This philosophical proposition is confidently related by Origen to

---

[9] *Comm. Mot 14:9.*
[10] *Sel Gen 2:2 PG 12:97B-C.*
[11] *In Genesim 35.*
[12] *De Principiis 2:2:1.*
[13] *Ibid. 2:3:2.*

those Biblical texts which affirm that heaven and earth will pass away. This world has both a beginning and an end. Its nature is such that it forms a cosmic counterpart to the life of the individual, who enters into time by his birth and departs from it by his death.

Thirdly, that the nature of man is co-ordinated with the structure of the universe. Creation itself serves the purposes of salvation.

1. Creation can serve the purposes of salvation because it has two distinct levels of reality enabling the soul to make a choice between spirit and matter, and the related values of good and evil. The making of this choice requires the nature of man to be such that it can relate to these two orders, and it is clearly necessary for men to have a two-fold nature corresponding to the two-fold structure of the cosmos[14].

2. Man can acknowledge the invisible heaven through the visible things of this world.

God made all things in wisdom so He created all species of visible things on earth in which to place some knowledge of things invisible, whereby the human mind can mount to spiritual understanding and find the causes of things in heaven[15]*."*

CREATION AND THE CREATOR

As we have seen in our speech of the Father, the Creator Himself is the Good God. Origen's cosmology shows His goodness, for He created the world in a ***marvelous harmony, through the divine Wisdom***. He also asserts the divine providence and free will of rational beings. R. Cadiou says,

Let us assume that this primary Demiurge is the Creator Himself. He has created matter by giving to it the

[14] *Gerald Bostock: Origen's Philosophy of Creation, p. 8; [Colloquium Origenianum Quintum; Origen and Philosophy, Boston College August 14-18,1989.]*
[15] *Comm. on Songs 3.*

quantity necessary to enable it to receive divine ideas. This much simpler hypothesis explains also the plasticity of things in the hands of the Artisan of the universe.

Why, then, should we have need of imagining a different worker in the process of creation?

Is it not more logical to think of matter as being predisposed to order because this predisposition has been given to it by the almighty Power which originally created it?[16]

We must not forget that the world, in its creation, received the totality of the ideas **formed by the divine Wisdom**[17].

It is one power that grasps and holds together all the diversity of the world and leads the different movements toward one work, lest it is so immense an undertaking that the world should be dissolved by the dissensions of souls. And for this reason we think that God, the Father of all things, in order to ensure the salvation of all His creatures through the ineffable plan of His word and wisdom, so arranged each of these that every spirit, whether soul or rational existence, however called, should not be compelled by force, against the liberty of his own will, to any other course than that to which the motives of his own mind led him (lest by so doing the power of exercising free will should seem to be taken away, which certainly would produce a change in the nature of the being itself). And He so arranged that the varying purposes of these would be suitably and usefully adapted to the harmony of one world, by some of them requiring help, and others being able to give it, and others again being the cause of struggle and contest to those who are making progress. Among these their dili-

[16] *R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder, 1944, p. 143.*
[17] *De Principiis 2:1:4; R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder, 1944, p. 143.*

gence would be deemed more worthy of approval, and the place of rank obtained after victory be held with greater certainty, which should be established by the difficulties of the contest[18].

The cosmology of the *De Principiis* illustrates in many ways the theory of a universe peopled with beings created by God; the world is a proving-ground where providence raises up the stronger for **the help of the weaker in the struggle for perfection**, and thus the communion of saints is adjusted to the harmony of nature[19].

Are we to offer our congratulations to the Creator for having found the special set of circumstances, lack of which would have prevented Him from being the Demiurge, the Father, the Benefactor, the God of justice and mercy**? He has no need of destiny or chance or even of an anterior nature to set Him to work**[20].

THE ORIGIN OF MATTER

Origen concentrated his efforts on two problems: the problem of the origin of matter and the problem of the foreknowledge of God. His entire criticism was directed to the exposure of an ambiguity by which the philosophers of his day were misled.

His adjustment was based on a classical doctrine of philosophy. Matter was always considered and unbegotten substance as old as the divine ideas themselves. It is the receptacle of qualities. It is quite undetermined and quite without form, if considered simply in itself. Actually, of course, it cannot be separated from the modes of being which give it existence. In itself, it always lacks determination, yet it always receives some determination[21].

[18] *R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder, 1944, p. 157-158.*
[19] *R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder, 1944, p. 159.*
[20] *R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder, 1944, p. 143.*
[21] *R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder, 1944, p. 142.*

IS EVIL CREATED?

For Origen the cause of evil is within the soul. The soul might not have come into being at all, and even in this created state it does not necessarily possess all its being or all its good. Seeing that it can weaken without involving the Creator in the responsibility for such weakness, he recognized sin as the sole cause of evil. Thus, matter will no longer be the force of rebellion but the most imperfect of the things created by God, an occasion of trouble and annoyance for the souls that dwell above it on the levels where the spirits move and live. With regard to primeval matter and the elements with which the Creator performed His work, Origen will find them in the divine thought itself, in the wisdom established "in the beginning of His ways[22]."

PRESENTATION OF CREATION IN THE MIND OF GOD

Creation, as Origen understands it, is the temporal expression of an eternal order.

Yet in this matter human intelligence is feeble and limited, when it tries to understand how during the whole of God's existence His creatures have existed also, and how those things, which we must undoubtedly believe to have been created and made by God have subsisted, if we may say so, without a beginning...

This is that Wisdom in whom God delighted when the world was finished, in order that we might understand from this that ***God ever rejoices****. In this Wisdom, therefore, whoever existed with the Father, the creation was always present in form and outline, and there was never a time when the pre-figuration of those things which hereafter were to be did not exist in Wisdom...*

God did not begin at a certain time to be Creator,

[22] *R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder, 1944, p. 147.*

when he had not been such before[23].

INNUMERABLE WORLDS

St. Jerome writes,

In the second book he (Origen) asserts that there are innumerable worlds, not, in the manner of Epicurus, many similar worlds existent at one time, but that after the end of one world comes the beginning of another. ***A world existed before this world of ours, and another in turn will exist after it, and another after that, and others in constant succession.*** But he is in doubt whether there will ever be a world similar in every respect to another world, so that the two would appear to differ in no particular, or whether it is certain that ***there will never be one world quite like another and totally indistinguishable from it***[24].

In St. Theophilus of Alexandria's Paschal letter[25], translated by St. Jerome we also find the following: "Nor does any man die over and over again, as Origen dared to write, in his desire to establish that most impious doctrine of the Stoics is by the authority of the divine Scriptures."

It seems that Origen himself refuses this idea, as he says,

Moreover, as for those who maintain that worlds similar to each other and in all respects alike sometimes come into existence, I do not know what proofs they can bring in support of this theory. For if it is said that there is to be a world similar in all respects to the present world, then it will happen that Adam and Eve will again do what they did before, there will be another flood, the same Moses will once more lead a people numbering six hundred thousand out of Egypt, Judas also will twice betray his

[23] *De Principiis 1:4 (Henri De Lubac).*
[24] *Ep. ad Avitum 5.*
[25] *Epistle 96.*

Lord, Saul will a second time keep the clothes of those who are stoning Stephen, and we shall say that every deed which has been done in this life must be done again. I do not think that this can be established by any reasoning, if souls are actuated by freedom of choice and maintain their progress or the reverse in accordance with the power of their own will. For souls are not driven on some revolving course which brings them into the same cycle again after many ages, with the result that they do or desire this or that, but they direct the course of their deeds towards whatever end the freedom of their individual minds may aim at[26].

THE WHOLE UNIVERSE IS GOD'S TEMPLE

But a Christian, even of the common people, is assured that every place forms part of the universe, and the whole universe is God's temple[27].

THE WORLD AS A PLACE OF PURIFICATION

Rowan A. Greer says,

Discernment is the key to Origen's idea. The Christian must learn to look beyond corporeal and visible things to the Creator. If sometimes Origen expresses his idea as a rejection of the world, we must keep in mind that it is the world as a fallen order and as a place of torment for the soul that is rejected[28].

CREATION SERVES THE RIGHTEOUS MEN

Origen believes that evil men hate all creatures, while righteous men who are full of love, are served by the creatures. For

[26] *De Principiis 2:3:4 (Cf. Butterworth).*
[27] *Contra Celsus 7:44.*
[28] *Rowan A. Greer: Origen, p. 24.*

them, what seems violent changes and becomes kind to them. The righteous man passes the Red Sea as if it was a land, while the evil man is drowned in it. For the righteous, the water becomes walls on his right and left hands for his protection (Exod. 14:22-29). In the terrible wilderness he receives food descending from heaven (Ps 78:20)... God promises us that if we walk through the fire we shall not be burned (Is. 43:2). God changes even the rock into a spring of water... at last Origen says, "*The righteous must not be afraid of anything, for all the creation is subject to him (Gen. 1:26; Ps. 8:7)*[29]*"*

V V V

[29] *In Jos. hom. 4:1.*

THE STARS[30]

ST. CLEMENT AND THE STARS

Alan Scott speaks of Clement of Alexandria as the teacher of Origen and his view on stars explaining the following points:

1. St. Clement of Alexandria is an uncompromising opponent of the Hellenistic religion of the heavens, particularly in his *Protriptikos,* which is addressed to pagans. He is aware of the pagan and Gnostic depiction of the stars as either gods or evil demons, and rejects both. He attacks Alcmaeon of Croton for believing that the stars are gods and alive, and Xenocrates for suggesting that the planets and the cosmos are eight gods[31]. The heavenly bodies are not gods but are at best administrators[32] and instruments established by God to measure time[33] . Like Philo, he is also a strong opponent of astrology.

2. With Philo and St. Justin Martyr, St. Clement proposes that God allowed the pagans to worship the heavenly bodies so that they may be spared from atheism and might have at least some knowledge of the divine[34].

3. In the *Ecllogae Propheticae,* Clement says that the stars are "spiritual bodies, in communion with and governed by their angels[35]." He follows this with a long interpretation of Psalm 18:5 (19:4), "He set his tent in the sun." Clement denies the Gnostic interpretation of Hermogenes that Christ's body is taken from the sun, and passes on his own teacher Pantaenus' view that Old Testament prophecy has a future as well as a past reference, so that

[30] *Alan Scott: Origen and the Stars, Oxford Early Christian Studies, 1994.*
[31] *Protrepticus 5:66; 2:26; 6:67; 10:102.*
[32] *Stromata 6:16:148.*
[33] *Alan Scott, p. 104.*
[34] *Alan Scott, p. 106; Stromata 6:14:110; Justin Martyr: Dialogue 55:1.*
[35] *Eclogae Propheticae 55:1; also in Epistola Iudae frag. 3:207).*

this passage in fact looks forward to the Resurrection[36].

ORIGEN AND THE STARS[37]

Alan Scott in his dissertation explains the following points:

1. According to Origen's student, Gregory Thaumaturgus, Origen devotes considerable attention to secular learning, including astronomy. It was a propaedeutic, not to philosophy but to the study of the scripture. His knowledge of astrology depends on the advances of contemporary astronomy, but he only uses them in a highly restricted role. He regards himself not as a scientist or a free thinker in cosmological matters, but describes himself as a churchman, who was interested in the faith and tradition of the Church.

2. Origen is the first Christian theologian to discuss the physical composition of the stars. With Philo he rejects Anaxagoras' contention that the stars are fiery metal[38],but he thinks they are still made of some type of body which is ethereal in nature[39].

3. Since Origen saw pagan learning as a preparation for understanding the gospel, much of his cosmology comes out only incidentally in doctrinal discussion and scriptural exegesis.

a. Following the view of contemporary astronomy[40] that the sun is the leader of the other planets, Origen interprets this in a Christian sense, saying that the superiority of the sun illustrates the place that the *Logos* has in the spiritual world.

b. Like most Hellenistic philosophers he realizes that the moon reflects the light of the sun, but he then compares this again and again to the Church's relationship to Christ, the only light

[36] *Alan Scott, p. 108.*
[37] *Ibid., part III.*
[38] *Contra Celsus 5:11.*
[39] *De Principiis 1:7:5.*
[40] *Astronomy and astrology in antiquity were used interchangeably.*

which the Church has is that given it by the Sun of Righteousness, who is Christ[41]

c. Origen passes on the standard scientific view that the earth lies at the absolute center of the universe, stating that it rests on nothing but the power of God[42].

d. Many of the stars are greater than the earth, so we cannot interpret literally the words of Philipians 2:10 , that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth, and under the earth[43].

4. Origen believes that the heavenly bodies are living beings; and they have a much happier life than that of humanity[44]. But there is some room for doubt in his mind as we will see. He notes that tradition does not make clear whether the stars have life or not[45].

> *The sun also, and the moon and the rest of the heavenly bodies* ***are living beings****; and moreover, just as we men for certain sins have been enveloped in these bodies of ours, which are gross and heavy, so the lights of heaven have been given bodies of one sort or another to enable them to provide more or less light, while the demons, for greater offenses, have been clothed with real bodies*[46].

Quoting Romans 8:22 “all creation groans and grieves,” Origen believes that the universe has a soul, and it will be judged likewise humanity[47]. He also thinks that heavenly bodies commit sin as it is written that the stars are not clean in His sight (Job 25:5), therefore they possess life and soul.

---

[41] *Comm. on John 1:25; 6:55; In Gen. hom. 1:5; In Num. hom. 23:5; In Ezech. hom. 9:3.*
[42] *In Jer. hom. 8.*
[43] *Philocalia 23:17.*
[44] *On Prayer 7.*
[45] *De Principiis 1:7:4 (Cf. Butterworth).*
[46] *De Principiis Praef. 10.*
[47] *Contra Celsus 8:31.*

In time the sun itself may say: "I desire to be dissolved, to return and be with Christ, which is far better." The sun, moon and stars are obedient to God, for did not the Lord say- "I have given a commandment to all the stars" (Isa. 45:I2)? Thus they bestow upon the world the amount of splendor God has entrusted to them, and like all other living creatures they will partake in the end of a new heaven and a new earth, "*when perhaps every bodily substance will be like the other, of a celestial purity and clearness*[48]."

5. Angels are assigned to the heavenly bodies, one to the sun, another to the moon, and a third to the stars[49].

6. The movement of the stars witnesses their goodness. Against the Gnostics, Origen asserts that the world, created by God, is good. When the Scripture called the world "evil," it denoted earthly and human affairs.

7. Origen denies worshipping the stars. He believes that the universe is filled with rational, spiritual beings who have powers and responsibilities which are much greater than anything in the human race.

8. Origen is acutely aware that his cosmological speculations are innovative, and he frequently expresses his views hesitantly. He confesses that he is unable to give answers to some questions concerning the world to come; and also concerning the stars.

When... the saints have reached the heavenly places, then they will clearly see the nature of the stars one by one, and will understand whether they are living beings or whatever else may be the case[50].

9. Origen asserts that the stars and planets cannot be eter-

[48] *De Principiis 1:7:4; Robert Payne: Fathers Of The Eastern Church, Dorset Press, New York, 1985, P. 50.*
[49] *In Jer. hom. 10:6.*
[50] *De Principiis 2:11:7.*

nal, since they are created and visible[51].

10. Origen's combination of physical and theological speculations was not developed in Patristic literature because there was a strong tendency to separate theology from physics and astronomy.

V V V

[51] *De Principiis 1:7:2:46-51; 3:6:4:114f; Comm. on Rom. 8:11.*.

RATIONAL CREATURES

J.W. Trigg gives an account of Origen's view on rational creatures in the following words:

Origen followed his discussion of God (in *De Principiis*) with a discussion of rational creatures.

These beings have the gift of reason as their principal attribute, and since they are rational, Origen, who accepted the arguments of Plato's *Phaedo* on the immortality of the soul, considered them to be naturally immortal as well.

The spiritual world of rational creatures was, Origen believed, **God's original creation**, and the creation of the material world came later.

He claimed biblical warrant for his doctrine of two creations in the puzzling first verse of Genesis, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." He accepted the interpretation of Philo that this verse, which would seem to be superfluous in light of the detailed description of the creation in the rest of the first chapter, actually applies to the creation of the spiritual world, the rest of the chapter being the description of the material world.

God, Origen held, must have created **a limited number of rational creatures**, as an infinite number of them would be incomprehensible even to God, and to allow that the All-knowing could fail to comprehend anything would be to postulate what is not possible, a self-contradiction in the nature of God. Origen may have learned of the problem of the incomprehensibility of the infinite from Numenius, who wrote that if matter is infinite, it is unbounded; if unbounded, irrational; if irrational, unknowable; if unknowable, without order.

Since they are not God, these rational creatures **are not good essentially**, as only God is, but they do **possess**

free will to choose the good and the concomitant moral responsibility to do so.

There are **four major types** of rational creatures: angels, the powers of wickedness, the animating spirits of the heavenly bodies, and human souls.

The **human soul of Christ**, as we have seen, is a rational creature that is a uniquely special case.

The thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers of Paul suggested to Origen that within these four large groups there are a multitude of ranks, each with its proper dignity and authority. Angels and devils, much less animated heavenly bodies, are scarcely prominent in theological thought today, but Christians, Gnostics, Platonists, and Jews all affirmed their existence and importance in Origen's time[52].

Every mind that participates in the intelligible light ought undoubtedly to be of one nature with every other mind that in a similar fashion participates in the intelligible light.

If, therefore, the heavenly powers by the fact that they participate in wisdom and sanctification receive participation in the intelligible light, that is, the divine nature, and if the human soul receives participation in the same light and wisdom, they and it will be of one nature and of one substance with one another.

Moreover, the heavenly powers are incorruptible and immortal; so, doubtless, the substance of the human soul will be incorruptible, and immortal.

Not only this, but since the nature of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, from whose intelligible light alone the entire creation draws participation, is itself incorruptible and eternal, it certainly both follows and is necessary that

[52] *Joseph Wilson Trigg: Origen, SCM Press Ltd, 1983, p.103-4.*

every substance that draws participation from that eternal nature also endures itself forever both incorruptible and eternal, so that the eternity of the divine goodness may be understood by the fact that those who receive His benefits are also eternal.

But just as in our examples the diversity of perceiving the light is retained, since the vision of the person seeing is described as duller or sharper, so also in the case of participation in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit diversity is retained in proportion to the attention of the understanding and the capacity of the mind[53]*.*

A similar course of reasoning must be applied to the angels. ***We must not suppose that it is the result of chance that a particular duty is assigned to a particular angel****; the work of curing and healing, for instance, to Raphael; the supervising of mortals to Michael.*

We must believe that they have obtained these duties for no other reason except their own individual merits and that they entered upon them as a reward for the zeal and virtue they displayed before the construction of this world; after which event this or that kind of duty was assigned to each member of the order of archangels, while others were counted worthy of being enrolled in the order of angels and to act under this or that archangel, or under this or that leader or chief of his order.

All this, as we have said, was arranged not by chance or at random, but by the most appropriate and righteous judgment of God, being settled in accordance with merit, God himself deciding and approving.

Thus to one angel would be entrusted the Church of Ephesus, to another the Church of Smyrna; this angel would be Peter's, that Paul's; and so on through the entire

[53] *Rowan A. Greer: Origen, Introduction.*

number of those 'least ones' who are in the Church it would be decided which of the angels, who daily "see the face of God," must be attached to each, and also which angel it must be who was to encamp "around them that fear God[54]."

ANGELS, DEMONS, AND SOULS OF MEN

He considers **the universe** a community of distinct spirits, a city of obedient souls; as a necessary consequence, it is a vast living thing, with a unity that is moral rather than physical. The individual souls, which are not parts of a total soul but natures or essences irreducible one to another, work together for the general harmony, each according to its own personal value[55].

No such hierarchy of classes is found in Origen's concept of the spiritual universe. For him, the universe consists of a multitude of dwellings, as it were, peopled by souls that are ever in process of either rise or fall. Above men are the spirits of the stars and of the angels, and below them are the demons, plunged in the deepest degradation. At the beginning those spiritual powers were all intelligences, and they can still return to their pristine condition. Their original unity and equality render possible the restoration of the world. To save someone, it is necessary not only to help him, but to raise him to himself[56].

Origen believes that angels, demons and souls of men were all rational creatures and have free will. They were good, but their goodness is accidental and not essential, God alone is good by His own nature. They also possessed the same and equal qualities, and by their own will they increased or decreased in their degrees. All had sinned, the sins of the angels were not grievous like those of the demons, while the sins of the souls of men are in the middle.

---

[54] *De Principiis 1:8 (Henri De Lubac).*
[55] *R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder Book Co., 1944, p. 241.*
[56] *R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder Book Co., 1944, p. 159.*

Besides those three rational creatures, Origen adds the stars as living beings as we already noticed.

J.N.D. Kelly[57] states that Origen is a firm exponent of the theory of the pre-existence of all individual souls. In the beginning, he explains[58], God out of His goodness created a fixed number of rational essences, all of them equal and alike (there was no reason for any diversity), and all of them endowed with free will - thus he strives to defend the divine justice and the principle of liberty against the Gnostics. Since these souls were free, it rested with their own volition to advance by imitating God, or to fall away by neglecting Him, to depart from good being tantamount to settling down to evil. With the unique exception of Christ's pre-existent soul[59], all these rational beings opted in varying degrees for the latter; the result was their fall, which gave rise to the manifold and unequal gradations of spiritual existence.

Before the ages they were all pure intelligences (νοες)*, whether demons or souls or angels. one of them, the Devil, since he possessed free will, chose to resist God, and God rejected him. All the other powers fell away with him, becoming demons, angels and archangels according as their misdeeds were more, or less, or still less, heinous. Each obtained a lot proportionate to his sin. There remained the souls; these had not sinned so grievously as to become demons or so venially as to become angels. God therefore made the present world, binding the soul to the body as a punishment... Plainly He chastises each to suit his sin, making one a demon, another a soul, another an archangel*[60]*...*

[57] *Kelly, p. 180-1.*
[58] *De Principiis 2:9:6.*
[59] *De Principiis 2:6:3; cf. Jerome: Epistle 124:6.*
[60] *De Principiis 1:8:1.*

THE PRE-EXISTENT CHURCH

All the rational creatures, those which would later become angels, men, demons, were created together and absolutely equal. They were absorbed in the contemplation of God and formed the Church of the pre-existence, united like the Bride to the Bridegroom with the pre-existent intelligence that was joined to the Word and had been created with them[61].

V V V

[61] *Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p. 206.*

MAN

G. Bostock states that Origen makes use of the two accounts of creation in Genesis to demonstrate that man has a two-fold nature - both an inner self, made in the image of God, and an external form fashioned from the dust of the ground[62]. This inner self, which is "*invisible and Incorporeal, Immaculate and immortal*,[63]" corresponds to the eternal creation, while his external form corresponds to the physical world[64]. Like the eternal world which precedes the formation of the physical order, man's inner self is older and superior to his external form[65]. It was created directly by God, when God "breathed the breath of life" (Gen. 2:7) into man, so that he shared in God's own incorruptible Spirit[66].

GREATNESS OF MAN

St. Gregory of Nyssa, the disciple of Origen, considers man as the dearest creature to God. He inherits this concept from his teacher, who looks to Christ in His relation to believers as the Great of great ones, the Lord of lords, the King of kings.

> *"Among his brothers" Jesus is "great," among these who previously had been called "Great;" and thus, he is "Pastor of pastors" (Cf. 1 Pet. 5:4), and "High priest of high priests" (Cf. Heb. 4:14), and "Lord of lords" and "King of kings" (Cf. 1 Tim. 6:15). And so, He is the great of the great; and this is why it is added, "Great among his brothers.*[67]

When contemplating God's supreme view of His beloved

[62] *Comm. Rom. 2:13.*
[63] *In Gen. hom. 1:13.*
[64] *Ibid. 1:2.*
[65] *In Jer. hom. 2:1.*
[66] *Against Celsus 4:37.*
[67] *Homilies On Leviticus 12:2 (Cf. Frs. of the Church)*

creature, i.e., man, and God's close and deep relationship with him, Origen was incited to believe that man's soul is much greater than to be attributed to this visible world. Erroneously, he believed that the soul existed before the body to which it was assigned as a penalty for its sin. The Alexandrians rejected this Origenist theory, for it deforms the believers view of the body and also of the world. They believe that the body is not a jail where the soul is imprisoned but is a good divine gift, that helps the soul and partakes with it in all human needs, and will partake with it in the heavenly glory.

Even after the fall of souls, God cannot abandon them, for He has created the soul to know the reasons of things and to contemplate in Him[68].

MAN'S SOUL AS A DWELLING-PLACE OF GOD

Those who defile their souls, and change them from being a house of the Heavenly Father, the holy Jerusalem and house of prayer into a cave of thieves... They deprive their souls from what is precious, and rob the best of what they have so that they become as nothing[69].

MAN AS AN IMAGE OF GOD

The theme of the creation of man in the image of God flows from three passages in Genesis: I:26-27 which links the image of God with man's domination over the animals; 5:I-3 where the image expresses a certain filiation; 9:6 where the image makes man a sacred being whose blood may not be spilt[70].

Origen understands the first two chapters of Genesis, not as two accounts of the creation, but as two distinct creations. Of these the first relates to the soul, which alone is created after the image,

[68] *R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder, 1944, p. 90.*
[69] *Comm. on Ioan. 10:18.*
[70] *Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p. 92.*

the soul which is the incorporeal and invisible image of the incorporeal and invisible Word, and the second relates to the body, which is simply the vessel containing the image. Origen in his *Commentary on Genesis* saw the second chapter as an account of the creation of the ethereal body of the pre-existent: since only the Trinity is without a body, these two creations, though logically distinct, must have been chronologically simultaneous[71].

The 'after-the-image' is, Origen expressly says, 'our principal substance,' the very basis of our nature: man is defined, at the deepest level of his being, by his relation to God and by the movement that leads to his becoming more like his model, thanks to the divine action which is manifest at the beginning and at each of the stages of this development, and thanks also to the freedom that God has given man when creating him. This freedom, in which free will, the power of choice, holds an important place, is not, however, limited to free will, but exhibits, through our author's spiritual doctrine, all the shades of meaning of Paul's eleutheria. The truth is that adherence to God liberates, rejection of God enslaves. The 'after-the-image' is, in addition, a 'source of knowledge': of course, all knowledge of God is revelation, but the first of these revelations is the one God gave us when he created us in his image: in this 'after-the-image,' which is what the most profound element of our being, we find God. Here, Origen reproduces a principle of Greek philosophy which is a common-sense affirmation: only the like knows the like[72].

The likeness will be achieved with perfect knowledge, in the resurrection and the beatitude. We do not press the point here, for it will be studied more completely in connection with Origen's eschatology. Let us simply say that the likeness will end in unity with Christ, a unity which is not understood in a pantheistic manner, for it respects the 'hypostaseis' of the angels and of men as

[71] *Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p. 94.*
[72] *Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p. 95-6.*

Origen makes clear in contradiction to the Stoic 'conflagration.. But all, having become sons, somehow within the Only Son, will see the Father in the same way that the Son sees Him. All having become one Sun in the Sun of Righteousness, the Word, will shine with the same glory. It would not do to conclude, as has sometimes too hastily been done, that there will not then be any further mediation by the Word. That will always exist, but its mode will have changed: it is in becoming within the Son that the saints will see the Father as Himself and will shine with His glory[73].

Man has two icons, one he had received from God at the time of creation as it is written in Genesis " In the image of God He created" Gen. 1:27, and the other is the image of the earthly man (1 Cor. 15:49) which he received on his disobedience and sinning, when he was moved away from Paradise, when the prince of this world seduced him (John 12:31)...

As the coin has the image of the ruler of this world, thus he who completes the deeds of the kings of darkness (Eph. 6:12) has his image.

Jesus orders us to render this image and move it away so that we may have the original image in which He created, so that we should be in the likeness of God. Thus we render what is of Caesar to Caesar, and what is to God to God (Luke 20:23-26)[74].

But it is our inner man, invisible, incorporeal, incorruptible, and immortal which is made "according to the image of God." For it is in such qualities as these that the image of God is more correctly understood. but if anyone supposes that this man who is made "according to the image and likeness of God" is made of flesh, he will appear to represent God Himself as made of flesh and in human form.

[73] *Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p. 98.*
[74] *In Luc. hom. 39:4.*

It is most clearly impious to think this about God[75].

For if man, made according to the image of God, contrary to nature by beholding the image of the devil has been made like him by sin, much more by beholding the image of God, according to whose likeness he has been made by God, he will receive that form, which was given to him by nature, through the Word and His power. And let no one, seeing his image to be more with the devil than with God, despair that he can again regain the form of the image of God, because the Savior came not "to call the just, but sinners to repentance."(Cf. Luke 5.32.)[76]

CHRIST, THE UNIQUE IMAGE OF THE FATHER

Only Christ is in the strict sense the image of God, the perfect image: He is this by His divinity alone, "invisible image of the invisible God," for God, invisible and incorporeal, can only have one image, invisible and incorporeal[77].

If the humanity of Christ is not included by Origen in the image of God, it is like that of all men 'after the image' or 'image of the image.' However, it plays a special part in the transmission of the image, it is like a second, intermediate image, the Word being the first, between God and us, for it is the most immediate model offered to us to imitate, and, according to Origen's interpretation of Lamentations 4, 20 which we shall explain below, the Shadow of the Lord Christ under which 'we live among the nations'. Contrariwise, we know of no passage in Origen which brings in the Holy Spirit in connection with the image[78].

[75] *In Gen. hom. 1:13(Cf. Heine).*
[76] *In Gen. hom. (Cf. Heine).*
[77] *Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p. 93.*
[78] *Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p. 93-4.*

THE IMAGE OF GOD IS CONTINUOUSLY MAGNIFIED OR DECREASED IN US

Origen comments on the words of St. Mary, "my soul ***magnifies*** the Lord" (Luke 1:46), saying that the Lord is unchangeable, but **His image in us may be magnified or decreased**.

As the image (of the Lord) is magnified and becomes more bright by my deeds, thoughts, and words and thus the Lord is glorified...

So when we sin His image becomes belittled and faded[79].

According to Rown A. Greer Origen's writings reveal that his primary interest lies in the drama of **the soul's struggle to return to God after her fall**. Origen's views of martyrdom, prayer and Scripture merge into one vision of the Christian life as a movement towards a perfect knowledge of God and **perfect fellowship with Him through Christ**[80].

Origen insists that in all men some elements of the divine image remain. The Logos lights every man coming into the world; all beings that are rational partake of the true Light[81]. The Gospel brings to actuality what in unbelievers is present potentially[82]. The preacher needs not hesitate to claim for a Christian possession all that seems sound and good in Hellenic culture[83].

ADAM'S SIN OR INDIVIDUAL SIN?!

There are passages in Origen's writings especially in his *Commentary on Romans*, where he appears to accept the doctrine that the whole race was present in Adam's loins and "sinned in him." It is difficult, however, to take them at their face value, for

---

[79] *In Luc. hom. 8:2.*
[80] *Rown A. Greer: Origen, Paulist Press, 1979, p. 17.*
[81] *Comm. on John. 20:28; In Jer. hom. 14:10.*
[82] *Comm. on Rom. 8:2.*
[83] *Henry Chadwick: History and Thought of the Early Church, London, 1982, p. 184.*

we know that in his translation, he adjusted his teaching in the interests of orthodoxy.

Man in his essential nature is essentially incorporeal, and would have stayed immortal if he had not fallen into sin[84]. As it is he has fallen from the heights of heaven, and his original divine nature is now robed in flesh.

Origen states that the Fall has caused man to put on the garments of mortality and of frailty. These are the "**coats of skin**" (Gen. 3:21) made by God for Adam and Eve when they were being expelled from Paradise[85]. Following Philo and the Gnostics, who had interpreted the coats of skin as bodies[86], Origen sees the Fall not simply as a moral but as a metaphysical event. The Fall means that man enters a world which is separate from God[87], and takes on a dual nature of spirit and of flesh because he is now clothed in a physical body.

Man's dual nature includes a dual means of perception because the Fall has the effect of creating man's physical sight, which corresponds to the physical world in which he now lives. "*They ate and the eyes of both of them were opened*" (Gen. 3:6-7). Their eyes which were opened were those of the senses ... But it was the eyes of the soul with which they saw when they rejoiced in God and His Paradise." As a result of his first creation in the image of God man still has a capacity for spiritual sight, but the Fall means that he normally uses his physical sight and his spiritual sight remains unused[88].

As a result of this dual means of perception man can make an effective choice between the two levels of creation to which his nature corresponds. Morally speaking he is poised like the firma-

---

[84] *In Jer. Comm*
[85] *Against Celsus 4:40.*
[86] *Philo :Quaest in Gen. 1:53. For the Gnostics see Clement: Stromata 3:95:2 and Irenaeus : Adv. Haer 1:5:5.*
[87] *Comm. Rom. 3:3 PG 14:9338C.*
[88] *Against Celsus 6:67; Comm. Mat. 16:11.*

ment between matter and Spirit - pure matter representing the limit of his soul's movement away from God while the Spirit representing the goal of his striving for God. Mentally speaking however his nature must correspond to the whole of the cosmos. Origen believes that man's nature is analogous to that of the whole cosmos, because he is in himself a "***minor mundus***'- or microcosm. Origen spells this out in graphic detail: "*You must recognize that you have within yourself flocks of cattle ... and even of birds. You yourself are indeed another small world, with the sun, moon and stars within you*[89]."

Origen had no difficulty in finding Scriptural support that the pre-existent soul committed sins before receiving her body, especially the story of Jacob and Esau, the one loved, the other hated by God at birth[90].

GOODNESS OF MAN IS ACCIDENTAL

If then there are any other things called good in the Scriptures, such as an angel, or a man, or a slave, or a treasure, or a good heart, or a good tree, all these are so called by an inexact use of the word, since the goodness contained in them is accidental and not essential[91].

MAN AS A TRICHOTOMY[92]

Origen believes that man consists of three elements:

1. The *pneuma* or *spiritus.* The **spirit** is the divine element present in man and thus it has real continuity with the Hebrew *ruach*. Being a gift of God, it is not strictly speaking a part of the human personality, for it takes no responsibility for a man's sins;

---

[89] *In Lev. hom. 5:2.*
[90] *Mal. 1:2-3 taken up again in Rom. 9:11: thus Peri Arch. 3:1:22; Cf. Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p. 209.*
[91] *De Principiis 1:2:13 (Cf. Butterworth).*
[92] *Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p. 88-92; Henry Chadwick: History and Thought of the Early Church, London, 1982, p. 190-1.*

nevertheless these reduce it to a state of torpor, preventing it from acting on the soul. It is the pedagogue of the soul, or rather of the intellect, training the latter in the practice of the virtues, for it is in the spirit that the moral consciousness is found; and training it also in the knowledge of God and in prayer.

2. The **soul** (*psyche anima*), contains a higher and a lower element. In *De Principiis*[93] 2:10:7 Origen discusses the better element of the soul "*which was made after the image and likeness of God*," and "*the other part . . . , the friend and lover of corporeal matter*[94]."

The soul is the seat of the free will, of the power of choice and so of the personality. If it submits to the guidance of the spirit, it is assimilated to the spirit, becomes wholly spiritual, even in its lower element. But if it rejects the spirit and turns towards the flesh, the lower element takes over from the higher its governing role and renders the soul entirely carnal[95].

This higher element, intellect, heart or governing faculty, constituted the whole of the soul in the pre-existence, according to the theory favored by Origen.

The lower element of the soul was added to it after the primitive fall: it corresponds to the soul's standing temptation to turn aside from the spirit and yield to the attraction of the body. It is the source of the instincts and the passions, and it is sometimes treated as equivalent to the two lower elements in Plato's trichotomy, the thymos and the epithymia, without Origen distinguishing between the noble and the evil tendencies in these.

It seems that Origen feels a kind of confusion concerning the soul of man, for he concludes his speech of the soul, saying,

These points about the rational soul we have

[93] *De Principiis 2:10 7.*
[94] *Cf. De Principiis 3:4:1.*
[95] *Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p. 88.*

brought forward to the best of our ability rather as matters for discussion by our readers than as definite and settled doctrines[96].

Henry Chadwick states that in the doctrine of the soul Origen was faced by a choice between three possible doctrines:

(a) The *Creationist* view that God creates each soul for each individual as conceived and born.

(*b)* The *Traducianist* view: There is also a creation but indirect and mediate: they suppose that the soul derives with the body from the paternal seed.

(c) The *Platonic Pre-existence theory*, according to which immortal and pre-existent souls temporarily reside in the body. Those who believed in theory lodes to the *Traducianists* as their opponents. They presented a grave objection. If the soul is truly that breath which the Lord in the beginning breathed into Adam, then how can it come with the body from the seed of the father? Does not this then mean that it will die with the body, a conclusion that our faith cannot accept?[97]

Creationism seemed to involve God in endless fuss; Traducianism seemed to endanger the transcendence of the soul in relation to the body by making it something corporeal. Pre-existence had the merit of making a theodicy possible which answered the Gnostics' complaint against the justice and goodness of the Creator. On several occasions Origen disclaims the myth of transmigration as false, yet his own system presupposes a picture of the soul's course which is strikingly similar. Probably the right solution of this problem is to be found in Origen's insistence on freedom rather than destiny as the key to the universe. In other words, he objected to the fatalistic principles underlying the doctrine of transmigration; he did not object to the idea if its foundations rested on the goodness and justice of God assigning souls to bodies in strict ac-

[96] *De Principiis 2:8:2 (Cf. Butterworth).*
[97] *Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p. 208.*

cordance with their merits on the basis of free choices.

Origen teaches that souls are not unbegotten and eternal[98], but created by God, who from overflowing goodness created rational, incorporeal beings.

*And there is the further question whether **the soul** puts on a body only once and, having laid it down, seeks for it no more; or whether, when it once has laid aside what it took, it takes it yet again; and, if it does so a second time, whether it keeps what it has taken always, or some day puts it off once more. But if, as the Scriptures lead us to think, the consummation of the world is near and this present state of corruption will be changed into one of incorruption, there seems no doubt that the soul cannot come to the body a second or third time under the conditions of this present life. For, if this other view were accepted, then the world would know no end of such successive reassumptions*[99].

In the creation of a soul God does not produce an unfinished or imperfect work. The created soul, however, has within itself the power to turn away from God, the power to abandon truth for falsehood, and reality for illusion[100].

3. The **body** (*soma, corpus*). It is because the souls of men have been implicated in the primitive fall in a less grave way than the demons and because there is for them some hope of cure that they have been put into this perceptible and terrestrial world as a place of correction, having bodies[101].

Origen applies the word body both to the terrestrial body and to the more subtle bodies which he distinguishes in his speculations on the history of rational beings: 'ethereal' bodies or 'daz-

[98] *Cf. De Principiis 1:3:3.*
[99] *Comm. on the Songs of Songs, book 2:5 (ACW).*
[100] *R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder, 1944, p. 90.*
[101] *Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p. 214.*

zling' bodies, belonging to the pre-existent intelligences; the angels; those raised from the dead to eternal blessedness; the 'dark' bodies of the demons and of those raised from the dead to damnation[102].

We have seen that we must not confuse the meaning of the word body with the almost always pejorative meaning of the word flesh, which expresses an undue attachment to the body and thus refers rather to the lower part of the soul. But the earthly body, like everything perceptible, is good in itself: created by God, it is among those realities of which the Bible says that when He looked at them in their profound being: 'God saw that they were good."

After death, even before the resurrection, the soul retains a certain bodily dress which Origen infers from the parable of the evil rich man and Lazarus and from the appearance of Samuel to Saul, if we rely on a text quoted by Methodius of Olympus in his *Aglaophon* or On the Resurrection: he assimilates it expressly to the 'vehicle of the soul' and it is of course a logical consequence of the affirmation that the Trinity alone is absolutely incorporeal.

MIND AND SOUL

God is fire and warmth. Moving further away from God the intelligences got cold and became souls. So we are tailing about a decline in fervor and charity. The reduction from intelligence into soul is a matter of degree, for not all fell to the same level[103].

We must see, therefore, whether perchance, as we said was made clear by its very name, the psyche or soul was so called from its having cooled from the fervor of the righteous and from its participation in the divine fire, and yet has not lost the power of restoring itself to that condition of fervor in which it was at the beginning. Some such fact the prophet appears to point to when he says, 'Turn

[102] *Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p. 90.*
[103] *Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p. 210.*

unto your rest, O my soul'. All these considerations seem to show that when the mind departed from its original condition and dignity it became or was termed a soul, and if ever it is restored and corrected it returns to the condition of being a mind[104].

Mind when it fell was made soul, and soul in its turn when furnished with virtues will become mind...

Now if this is so, it seems to me that the departure and downward course of the mind must not be thought of as equal in all cases, but as a greater or lesser degree of change into soul, and that some minds retain a portion of their original vigor, while others retain none or only very little. This is the reason why some are found right from their earliest years to be of ardent keenness, while others are duller, and some are born extremely dense and altogether untouchable[105].

But perhaps it will be asked: If it is the mind, which with the spirit prays and sighs, and the mind also which receives perfection and salvation, how is it that Peter says, 'Receiving the end of our faith, the salvation of our souls'? If the soul neither prays nor sings with the spirit, how shall it hope for salvation? Or, if it should attain to blessedness, will it no longer be called a soul? Let us see whether, perhaps, this point may be answered in the following manner, that just as the Savior came to save that which was lost, but when the lost is saved, it is no longer lost; so, if he came to save the soul, as he came to save that which was lost, the soul when saved remains a soul no longer[106].

THE SOUL OF JESUS CHRIST

[104] *De Principiis 2:8:3 (Cf. Butterworth).*
[105] *De Principiis 2:8:4 (Cf. Butterworth).*
[106] *De Principiis 2:8:3 (Cf. Butterworth).*

The pre-existent "intellect" of Jesus is from the moment of its creation united to the Word, in a way which makes it absolutely incapable of sin, through the intensity of its charity, that charity which in a way transforms it into the Word, as iron plunged into fire becomes fire[107].

But all question about the soul of Christ is removed when we consider the nature of the incarnation. For just as he truly had flesh, so also he truly had a soul[108] .

The reader must also take this point into consideration, that of the passages in the Gospels which concern the soul of the Savior, it is noticeable that some refer to it under the name of soul and others under the name of spirit. When Scripture wishes to indicate any suffering or trouble that affected Him, it does so under the name soul, as when it says: 'Now is My soul troubled' (John 12:27), and 'My soul is sorrowful even unto death' (Matt. 26:38) and 'No one takes my soul from Me, but I lay it down of Myself' (Luke 23:46). On the other hand He commends 'into His Father's hands' not His soul but His spirit; and when He says the 'flesh is weak' He does not say the 'soul' is 'willing' but the spirit'; from which it appears as if the soul were a kind of medium between the weak flesh and the willing spirit[109].

But if the above argument, that there exist in Christ a rational soul, should seem to anyone to constitute a difficulty, on the ground that in the course of our discussion we have often shown that souls are by their nature capable of good and evil, we shall resolve the difficulty in the following manner. It cannot be doubted that the nature of His soul was the same as that of all souls; otherwise it could

[107] *De Principiis 2:6; Henri Crouzel: Origen, Harper & Row, 1989.*
[108] *De Principiis 2:8:2 (Cf. Butterworth).*
[109] *De Principiis 2:8:4 (Cf. Butterworth).*

not be called a soul, if it were not truly one. But since the ability to choose good or evil is within the immediate reach of all, this soul which belongs to Christ so chose to love righteousness as to cling to it unchangeable and inseparably in accordance with the immensity of its love; the result being that by firmness of purpose, immensity of affection and an inextinguishable warmth of love all susceptibility to change or alteration was destroyed, and what formerly depended upon the will was by the influence of long custom changed into nature. Thus we must believe that there did exist in Christ a human and rational soul, and yet not suppose that it had any susceptibility to or possibility of sin...

Suppose then a lump of iron be placed for some time in a fire. It receives the fire in all its pores and all its veins, and becomes completely changed into fire, provided the fire is never removed from it and itself is not separated from the fire...

And while, indeed, some warmth of the Word of God where the divine fire itself essentially rested, and that it is from this that some warmth has come to all others[110].

THE BODY

In his work *First Principles* Origen remarks[111] "*We ought first to consider the nature of the resurrection, that we may know what that body is which shall come either to punishment or to rest or to happiness; which shall question in other treatise which we have composed regarding the resurrection we have discussed at great length, and have shown what our opinions are regarding it.*" Eusebius mentions two volumes *On the Resurrection*[112]. The list of St. Jerome names *De resurrection libros II* but adds *et alios resurrection dialogos II.* It seems that later were both combined into

[110] *De Principiis 2:6 (Cf. Butterworth).*
111 De Principiis 2:10:1.
112 Hist Eccl. 6,24,2.

one. Pamphilus[113], Methodius of Philippi[114] and Jerome[115]. From Methodius we learn that Origen rejected the idea of a material identity of the risen, with the human, body and its parts. St. Jerome's remarks[116] that in this study Origen compared Christian doctrine with the teaching of ancient philosophers like Plato, Aristotle, Numenius and Cornutus.

Alongside that, many passages affirm the essential goodness of the human body. Origen argues, "*The body of the rational being that is devoted to the God of the Universe is a temple of the God whom they (Christians) worship*[117]." The human body could be "*made holy*" for God[118]; and each Christian man or woman could build their body into a "*holy tabernacle of the Lord*[119]." "*You have progressed to become a temple of God, and you who were mere flesh and blood have reached so far that you are a limb of Christ's body*[120]."

On the other hand, the flesh, for Origen, is impure because it is ambiguous and dangerous. He emphasizes the imperfection of every human act performed by a human being whose concupiscence never entirely leaves. Origen proclaims repeatedly that through time until the end of the world, the trace of past deeds is engraved on human heart, even the traces of thoughts which passed and were rejected by human will[121].

INNER PURITY

For there are also others who offer their flesh as a

---

113 Apol. pro Orig. 7.
114 De resurr.
115 Contra Joh. Hier. 25-26.
116 Epist. 70,4.
117 Contra Celsum, 4:26, in: H. Chadwick, Origen: Contra Celsum, Cambridge University Press, 1980, p. 202.
118 On Jud., 6:5.
119 On Exod., 13:5.
120 On Jes., 5:5.
121 On Numbers, 25:6, in H. Crouzel, Origen, translated by A.S. Worrall, San Francisco, Harper & Row, 1989, p. 139.

whole burnt offering but not through the ministry of the priest. They offer neither knowingly nor according to the Law which is in the mouth of the priest. They are indeed pure in body but are found to be impure in spirit.

It is possible for such to be pure in body. Yet, they do not offer their whole burnt offerings through the hands and ministry of the priest. For they do not have in them the counsel and the prudence with which to perform the priestly function in the presence of God . They are like those "five foolish virgins" who certainly were kept virgins and had purity of body. But they did not know how to store up the "oil" of charity and peace and the remaining virtues "in their vases"; and therefore they were excluded from the marriage chamber of the bridegroom (Cf. Matt. 25:1f.). Hence, the continence of the flesh alone is not able to reach to the altar of the Lord if it is lacking the remaining virtues and the priestly ministry.

And therefore, we who read or hear these things should attend to both parts-to be pure in heart, reformed in habits. We should strive to make progress in deeds, be vigilant in knowledge, faith, and actions, and be perfect in deeds and understanding in order that we may be worthy to be conformed to the likeness of Christ's offering, through our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, through whom to God the Almighty Father with the Holy Spirit be "glory and power forever and ever. Amen" (Cf. 1 Pet. 4:11; Rev. 1:6)[122].

THE RELATION BETWEEN THE BODY AND THE SOUL

Origen would revive the functions of the soul. The directive part of the soul became, in his hands, the power of contemplating the Good[123].

This “couch,” which she refers to as shared by her-

[122] *In Lev. hom. 1:5 (cf. G.W. Barkley - Frs. of the Church).*
[123] *R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder Book Co., 1944, p. 163.*

self and her Bridegroom, seems to me to mean the human body in which while the human soul is still a tenant it is deemed worthy of consorting with the Word of God... It is fitting that such a soul should have this common "couch" of the body with the Word, for the power from on High bestows grace on the body also-the gifts of chastity, continence, and other good works[124].

Rational being, of which the human soul forms a part, can beget no good things of itself-even if it can receive them. It is like a woman: it needs another to beget the virtues of action and thought that it proves able to bring to birth. Hence I call it the bride-of no mean bridegroom, but of Him alone who can sow the seed of good, none other than Jesus... [125].

This matter of the body, then, which now is corruptible, shall put on incorruption when a perfect soul, instructed in the doctrines of incorruption, has begun to use it.

And I would not have you be surprised that we should use the metaphor of bodily clothing to describe a perfect soul, which on account of the word of God and his wisdom is here called 'incorruption'. For indeed Jesus Christ Himself, who is the Lord and Creator of the soul, is said to be the 'clothing' of the saints, as the apostle says, 'Put you on the Lord Jesus Christ' (Rom. 13:14). As therefore Christ is the clothing of the soul, so by an intelligible kind of reasoning the soul is said to be the clothing of the body; for it is an ornament of the body, covering and concealing its mortal nature. When therefore the apostle says, 'This corruptible must put on incorruption', it is as if he said, 'This body, with its corruptible nature, must receive

[124] *Comm. on Song of Songs 3.*
[125] *Comm. on John Frag. 45 on 3:29.*

the clothing of incorruption, that is, a soul that possesses in itself incorruption, by virtue of the fact that it has put on Christ, who is the wisdom and the word of God[126].

MAN'S EFFECT ON THE CONGREGATION

When one person commits a sin, anger will include all the people (Jos. 7:1)[127].

V V V

[126] *De Principiis 2:3 (Henri De Lubac).*
[127] *In Jos. hom 7:6.*

ANGELS[128]

Jean Daniélou presents Origen's view on angels and their role in heaven and on earth, in his book, "*The Angels and their Mission According to the Fathers of the Church*."

For the highly developed teaching of Origen on angels and demons see *De Principiis*. 1;8; 3:2.

In the preface of *De Principiis* Origen found that the express teaching of the church had laid it down as the official tradition that the angels were the servants of God (and, as such, his creatures), but had left the time of their creation and the nature of their existence as matters for investigation and speculation[129].

THEIR GOOD WILL TOWARDS GOD

But if they are "mighty in strength" Ps. 103:20 to do the will of God, and if they seek the destruction of the impious, this is a sign that it is on account of their good will towards God that they stand before Him (Luke 1:19) and serve Him and are at His right hand[130].

ANGELS' FREE WILL

Not only Origen assures the **free will** of angels, demons, and souls of men, and their capacity to do good and evil, but also he believes that **angels admitted evil but in a little degree**. God alone is Holy by nature.

Our contention is, however, that among all rational creatures there is none which is not capable of both good

---

[128] *Cf. Jean Daniélou: The Angels and their Mission According to the Fathers of the Church, translated by David Heimann, 1933.*
[129] *Jaroslav Pelikan: The Christian Tradition, 1. The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100-600), Chicago, 1971, p. 134-5.*
[130] *De Principiis 1:8 (Henri De Lubac).*

and evil. But it does not necessarily follow that, because we say there is no nature which cannot admit evil, we therefore affirm that every nature has admitted evil, that is, has become evil. Just as we may say that every human nature possesses the capacity to become a sailor, and yet this will not result in every man becoming a sailor; or again that it is possible for every man to learn the art of grammar or medicine, and yet this does not prove that every man is either a doctor or a schoolmaster; so when we say that there is no nature which cannot admit evil, we do not necessarily indicate that every nature has actually done so; nor on the other hand will the statement that there is no nature which may not admit good prove that every nature has admitted what is good.

Our opinion is that not even the devil himself was incapable of good, but the fact that he could admit good did not lead him to desire it or to take pains to acquire virtue. For, as we learn from the passages we quoted out of the prophets, he was at one time good, when he dwelt 'in the paradise of God," "in the midst of the cherubim." Just as, therefore, he had in himself the power of admitting either good or evil, and falling away from good he turned with his whole mind to evil, so also there are other created beings who, while possessing the power to choose either, by the exercise of free will flee from evil and cleave to the good...

The nature of the Holy Spirit, which is Holy, does not admit pollution, for it is holy by nature or essence...

Thus there exists that other order of rational creatures, who have so utterly abandoned themselves to wickedness that they lack the desire, rather than the power, to return, so long as the frenzy of their evil deeds is a passion and a delight[131].

[131] *De Principiis 1:8 (Henri De Lubac).*

CHURCH OF ANGELS

"*If the angel of the Lord encamps beside those who fear the Lord and brings them deliverance (Ps. 33:. 8)... it would seem that when a number of people duly meet together for the glory of Christ, they will each have their own angel encamped beside them, since they all fear the Lord. Each angel will be with the man he has been commissioned to guard and direct. Thus, when the saints are assembled, there will be two Churches, one of men and one of angels*[132]."

There are two Churches, a Church of men and a Church of angels. Whenever we say anything in conformity with the real drift and meaning of the Scriptures, the angels rejoice at it and pray with us. And because the angels are present in the Church at any rate, in any Church that deserves to be called Christ's - St. Paul orders that when women go there to pray, they should have their heads veiled, for the angels' sake [I Cor. 11:I0]. These are evidently the angels that stand by the saints and rejoice over the Church. We cannot see them, because our eyes are darkened by the filth of sin, but the Disciples saw them-Jesus said to them: 'Believe me when I tell you this; you will see heaven opening, and the angels of God going up and coming down upon the Son of Man' (John 1:51)[133].

According to Origen, guardian angels are Christ's diligent coworkers in the saving of all mankind. Each one of us is attended by a good and bad angel.

ANGELS AND PEOPLE OF GOD IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

a. **The angels as the friends of the Bridegroom instruct**

[132] *On Prayer 31:4.*
[133] *In Luc. hom. 23.*

the Church, that is to say, the people of God, during the time of their espousals, the Old Testament. But the Church longs for the kiss of the Bridegroom, His coming in person. "*When I was preparing myself for my marriage with the Son of the King and the First-Born of every creature, the holy angels followed me and ministered to me, bringing me the Law as a wedding present. Indeed it has been said that the Law was promulgated through the angels by means of a mediator (Gal. 3:19). But, since the world was already nearing its end and still His presence was not granted me and I only saw His servants rising and descending about me, I poured out my prayer to you, the Father of my Bridegroom, begging you to have pity on my love and send Him to me so that he need no longer speak with me through His servants the angels but might come Himself*[134]*.*"

In his comment on the words: "We will make the chains of gold, inlaid with silver" (Song of Songs 1:10), he states that this time he sets it in relation with the figurative character of the Old Law, which is signified by the silver, as opposed to the spiritual reality of the Gospel, which is the gold.

We propose to show how the holy angels who, before the coming of Christ, watched over the bride while she was still young are the friends and companions of the Bridegroom mentioned here... In fact, it seems to me that the Law which was promulgated through the agency of a mediator did indeed contain a foreshadowing of the good things which were to come, but not their actual likeness; and that the events set down in the Law and enacted in figure though not in reality are merely imitations of gold, not real gold.

Among these imitations are the Ark of the Covenant, the mercy seat, the Cherubim, ... the Temple itself and everything which is written in the Law. It is these imitations

[134] *Comm. on Song of Songs 1.*

which were given to the Church, the bride, by the angels, who are the friends of the Bridegroom and who served her in the Law and the other mysteries. That, I believe, is what St. Paul meant when he spoke of the "worship of the angels which some enter into blindly, puffed up by their mere human minds" (Col. 2:18). Thus, the entire cult and the religion of the Jews were imitations of the gold. Wherever anyone turns toward the Lord and the veil is lifted from before him, he sees the real gold[135]*."*

"*If we explain the passage as referring to the soul, it must appear that, as long as the soul is still young and not fully formed, it is under guardians and teachers. These are the angels who are called the guardians of children and who always see the face of the Father in heaven. Accordingly, they are imitations of gold given to the soul which is not yet sustained with the solid nourishment of the Word."* Thus there is a parallelism between the history of humanity and the history of the individual. In the one as well as the other, the role of the angels is concerned with the beginnings, the preparations. This conception contains an entire general theology of the missions of the angels in outline form.

b. Origen speaks of angels set in charge of the four elements, who were perhaps well known to St. Paul (Gal. 4:9), and of angels presiding over the different domains of the universe, over the stars, the metros, the plants and animals[136].

c. The promulgation of the Law is the principal gift made by God to His people through the ministry of the angels.

For the Law is said to have been ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator(Gal. 3:19)[137].

The angels served the people of Israel in the Law

[135] *Comm. on Song of Songs 2.*
[136] *In Jer. hom. 10:6.*
[137] *Comm. on the Songs of Songs: Prologue 4 (ACW).*

and in the other mysteries[138].

d. According to the Book of Wisdom, during the entire Exodus the people not only were served by angels, but also they were nourished by the bread of the angels, "You did feed Your people with the food of angels and gave them bread from heaven prepared without labor, having in it all that is delicious and the sweetness of every taste" (Wis. 16: 20). Origen asks our souls to practice the Exodus, and to have their spiritual trip in the desert of this life that we may receive the same angelic food.

Do not waver at the solitude of the desert; it is during your sojourn in the tents that you will receive the manna from heaven and eat the bread of angels[139].

d. Origen tells us that the "*Ark of the Covenant, the mercy seat, the Cherubim, and even the temple itself*[140]" were given to Israel through the angels.

THE ANGELS AND THE MINISTRY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

Origen sees one of these angels in the Macedonian who appeared to St. Paul to beg aid of him[141].

The role of the angels of the Churches has its remote beginning in their mission toward souls who are still pagan.

Come, Angel, receive him who has been converted from his former error, from the doctrine of the demons... Receive him as a careful physician; warm and heal him... Receive him and give him the baptism of the second birth[142].

The Apostles have the angels to assist them in the accomplishment of their ministry of preaching, in the com-

[138] *Ibid. 2.*
[139] *In Num. hom. 17:3.*
[140] *Comm. on Song of Songs 2.*
[141] *In Luc. hom. 12.*
[142] *Hom. in Ez., 1,7.*

pletion of their gospel work[143].

ANGELS AND THE NATIONS

Origen like his teacher St. Clement of Alexandria believes that "the presiding powers of the angels have been distributed according to the nations and the cities[144]." He writes: "*Some certain spiritual powers have come into* ***a presiding office over particular nations*** *in this world*[145]."

Origen, following the Jewish tradition, attributes to them a part in the origin of the various languages[146]. But their mission is primarily spiritual.

> *We read in Scripture that there are princes over each nation-and the context makes it quite clear that they are angels and not men. It is these princes and the other powers of this world who each have a separate science and a special doctrine to teach*[147].

> *Accordingly we find in the holy Scriptures that there are rulers over individual nations, as for instance, we read in Daniel of a certain 'prince of the kingdom of the Persians' and another 'prince of the kingdom of the Greeks' who, as is clearly shown by the sense of the passage itself, are not men but powers. Moreover in the prophet Ezekiel the 'prince of Tyre' is most plainly pictured as a certain spiritual power*[148].

The angels to whom the nations were entrusted are powerless to stop the flood of evil. "*Before the birth of Christ these angels could be of little use to those entrusted to them and their attempts were not followed by success... Whenever the angels of the*

---

[143] *Hom. in Num., 11, 4.*
[144] *Stromata 6:17.*
[145] *De Principiis 3:3:3.*
[146] *Contra Celsus 5:30.*
[147] *De Principiis 3:3:2.*
[148] *De Principiis 3:3 (Henri De Lubac).*

Egyptians helped the Egyptians, there was hardly a single proselyte who believed in God[149]."

THE ANGELS OF THE NATIVITY

Origen says, "*The coming of Christ into the world was a great joy for those to whom the care of men and nations had been entrusted*[150]"

Origen has already shown the angels eager to descend with the Word. "*When the angels saw the Prince of the heavenly host tarrying among the places of earth, they entered by the way that He had opened, following their Lord and obeying the will of Him who apportioned to their guardianship those who believe in Him. The angels are in the service of Your salvation. If He descended into a body, they have been granted to the Son of God to follow Him. They say among themselves, 'If He has put on mortal flesh, how can we remain doing nothing? Come, angels, let us all descend from heaven,' That is why there was a multitude of the heavenly host praising and glorifying God when Christ was born. Everything is filled with angels*[151]."

Origen interprets the shepherds of Bethlehem allegorically as the angels of the nations, making a play on the word shepherd, which applies to the one as well as to the other. "*The shepherds can be considered as the angels to whom men are entrusted. They all had need of assistance so that the nations in their charge would be well governed. It is to them that the angel came to announce the birth of the true Shepherd*[152]."

THE ANGELS OF THE ASCENSION

The entry of the Incarnate Word into heaven appears much

[149] *In Luc. hom. 12.*
[150] *In Luc. hom. 12.*
[151] *In Ex. hom. 1:7.*
[152] *In Luc. hom. 12.*

like an unforeseen revelation made to the heavenly powers.

With Origen appears the text of Isaiah 63, and the allusion to the blood of the Passion. "*When he came forward the Victor, His body raised up from the dead, certain of the Powers said, 'Who is this that comes from Bosra, with His garments dyed red?' But those who were escorting Him said to those in charge of the gates of heaven, 'Open, you gates of eternity*[153]*.'*"

ANGELS AND THE LAST ADVENT

As the Son of man comes in the glory of His own Father, so the angels, who are the words in the prophets, are present with Him preserving the measure of their own glory. But when the Word comes in such form with His own angels, He will give to each a part of His own glory and of the brightness of His own angels, according to the action of each[154]*.*

THE ANGELS ARE EVANGELISTS

The angels are not merely entrusted with one small service for the gospel... But the angel "flying" on duty "in mid-air" (Rev. 14:6) has a gospel wherewith to evangelize all nations, for the good Father has in no wise deserted those who have fallen from Him[155]*.*

Now if there are those among men who are honored with the ministry of evangelists, and if Jesus Himself brings tidings of good things, and preaches the Gospel to the poor, surely those messengers who were made spirits by God (Ps. 104:4), those who are a flame of fire, ministers of the Father of all, cannot have been excluded from being evangelists also. Hence an angel standing over the shepherds made a bright light to shine round about them, and

[153] *Comm. in Jo., 6,56.v*
[154] *Comm. on Matt. 12:30 (ANF).*
[155] *Comm. on John 1:14.*

said: "Fear not; behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all the people; for there is born to you, this day, a Savior, who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David" (Luke 2:10, 11). And at a time when there was no knowledge among men of the mystery of the Gospel, those who were greater than men and inhabitants of heaven, the army of God, praised God, saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will among men." And having said this, the angels went away from the shepherds into heaven, leaving us to gather how the joy preached to us through the birth of Jesus Christ is glory in the highest of God; they humbled themselves even to the ground, and then returned to their place of rest, to glorify God in the highest through Jesus Christ. But the angels also wonder at the peace which is to be brought about on account of Jesus on the earth, that seat of war, on which Lucifer, star of the morning, fell from heaven, to be warred against and destroyed by Jesus[156].

THE ANGELS AND SACRAMENTS

Origen believes that the angels have their role in the preparation of men for baptism as well as they have their role in baptism itself.

Come, angel, receive him who has been converted from his former error, from the doctrine of the demons...

Receive him as a careful physician, warm and heal him...

Receive him and give him the baptism of the second birth[157].

At the time that the Sacrament of the Faith was administered to you, there were present heavenly Powers, the min-

[156] *Comm. on John 1:13 (ANF).*
[157] *In Eze. hom. 1:7.*

istrations of the angels, the Church of the first-born[158].

The angels are present at Baptism.

Yes, the powers of heaven were present when the sacrament of faith was given you; the hierarchies of angels, the Church of the firstborn, were there [cf. Heb. 22:. 23]. If we realize that 'Israel' means 'seeing God mentally', we shall see that the name is even more appropriate when used of the angels who minister to us; for, as the Lord said when speaking of the children-and you were a child yourself when you were baptized, your angels always see the heavenly Father's face [Matt. 18:10]... Such were those sons of Israel who were present, gazing on God's face, when the sacraments of faith were given you...[159]

As the angels preside over baptism so they are equally **present at every Christian assembly**.

On the question of the angels the following is a necessary conclusion: If the angel of the Lord shall encamp round about them that fear Him, and shall deliver them; and if what Jacob says is true not only in his own case but also in the case of all those who are dedicated to the omniscient God, when he speaks of the angel that delivers me from all evils: then it is probable that, when many are assembled legitimately for the glory of Christ, the angel of each encamps round each of them that fear God, and that he stands at the side of the man whose protection and guidance has been entrusted to him. Thus, when the saints are assembled together, there is a twofold Church present, that of men and that of angels[160].

I have no doubt that there are angels in the midst of our assembly too, not only the Church in general, but each

[158] *Hom. in Jos., 9,4*
[159] *In Jos. hom. 9:4.*
[160] *Origen, De or., 31,5 (ACW 19).*

church individually-those of whom it is said that 'their angels always see the face of my Father who is in heaven.' Thus we have here a twofold Church, one of men, the other of angels. If what we say is in conformity with both reason and the meaning of Scripture, the angels rejoice and pray together with us. And since there are angels present in Church-that is, in the Church which deserves them, being of Christ-women when they pray are ordered to have a covering upon their heads because of those angels. They assist the saints and rejoice in the Church. We indeed do not see them because our eyes are grown dim with the stains of sin; but the Apostles see them, as they were promised: 'Amen, amen, I say to you, you shall see the heavens opened and the angels of God going up and coming down upon the Son of Man.' And if I had this grace which the Apostles had, I would see the multitude of angels that Eliseus saw, when Giezi, standing right beside him, saw nothing[161].

With reference to the words, "when through the laver I became a child in Christ," it may be said, that there is no holy angel present with those who are still in wickedness, but that during the period of unbelief they are under the angels of Satan; but, after the regeneration, He who has redeemed us with His own blood consigns us to a holy angel, who also, because of his purity, beholds the face of God[162].

ANGELS

If the angels of God came to Jesus and ministered to Him (Matt. 4:11), and if it is not right for us to believe that this ministry of the angels to Jesus was for a short time

[161] *Hom. in Luc., 23.*
[162] *Comm. on Matt. 13:28 (ANF).*

only during His bodily sojourn among men, when He was still in the midst of those who believed, not as He that sits at table but as he that serves (Luke 22:27), how many angels, do you think, minister to Jesus who wishes to gather together the sons of Israel one by one and assemble those of the dispersion and saves them that are in fear and call upon Him?(Isa. 27:12; John 10:16; 11:52; Acts 2:21; Rom. 10:12f.) And do they not contribute more than the apostles to the growth and increase of the Church, so that John says in the Apocalypse that certain angels stand over the churches? (Rev. 1:20; 2:1, 8, 12,18; 3:1,7, 14.) Nor is it in vain that the angels of God ascend and descend upon the Son of man, and are seen by eyes illumined by the light of knowledge (John 1:51; Osee 10:12 LXX)[163].

The angel, indeed, of each one, even of the little ones in the Church, always seeing the face of the Father who is in heaven (Matt. 18:10) and beholding the divinity of our Creator, prays with us and cooperates with us, as far as is possible, in what we seek[164].

If then God knows the free will of every man, therefore, since he foresees it, He arranges by His Providence what is fair according to the deserts of each, and provides what he may pray for, the deposition of such and such thus showing his faith and the object of his desire...

To this other man who will be of such and such a character, I will send a particular guardian angel to work with him at his salvation from such and such a time, and to remain with him up to a certain time. And to another I will send another angel, one, for example, of higher rank, because this man will be better than the former. And in the case of another, who, having devoted himself to lofty teachings, becomes weak and returns to material things, I will

[163] *On Prayer 11:3 (ACW).*
[164] *On Prayer 11:5.*

deprive him of his more powerful helper; and when he departs, a certain evil power-as he deserves-will seize the opportunity of profiting by his weakness, and will seduce him, now that he has shown his readiness to sin, to commit such and such sins[165]*."*

THE GUARDIAN ANGELS

The doctrine of guardian angels was not new with him; it is found in the *Shepherd* of Barnabas, and St. Clement of Alexandria, and was based principally on the Scriptures (Gen. 48:16; Tob. 3:25); Matt. 18:10. This doctrine appears in the earliest Christian texts. It is found in Pseudo Barnabas[166], in Hermas[167], in St. Clement of Alexandria[168], who goes back himself to the *Apocalypse of St. Peter*. Origen develops the doctrine to a great extent.

All of the faithful in Christ, no matter how small, are helped by an angel, and Christ says that these angels always see the face of the Father who is in heaven[169].

Here Origen refers to Matthew 18:10; elsewhere he refers to Acts 12:15[170].

We must say that every human soul is under the direction of an angel who is like a father[171].

The Fathers of the fourth century profess the same doctrine. For St. Basil "an angel is put in charge of every believer, provided we do not drive him out by sin. He guards the soul like an army[172]."

When a man has received the Faith, Christ who has

---

[165] *On Prayer 6:4 (ACW).*
[166] *Pseudo-Barn., 18,1.*
[167] *Vis., 5, 1-4.*
[168] *Ecl., 41, 48.*
[169] *De Princ., 2, 10, 7.*
[170] *Hom. in Num., 11,4; see also 20, 3.*
[171] *Comm. in Matt., 13,5.*
[172] *Hom. in Ps. 33:6. See also Gregory of Nyssa, Hom. Cant., 7; Hilary, Tract. Ps. 124; Tract. Ps. 137: "All the faithful are aided by the services of these divine ministers according to what has been written: "The angel of the Lord surrounds those who fear Him' (Psalm 33:8)": Eusebius, Praep. Ev., 13; Gregory the Wonder-worker, Pan. Orig., PG 10, 1061 BC.*

redeemed him by His blood from his evil masters entrusts him, since hereafter he is to believe in God, to a holy angel who, because of his great purity, always sees the face of the Father[173].

But, lest this should happen, lest the evil spirits should again find foothold in her, God's providence looked forward in such wise as to provide the little ones and those who, being as yet but babes and sucklings in Christ, cannot defend themselves against the wiles of the devil and the attacks of evil spirits, with angel champions and guardians. These are ordained by Him to act as tutors and governors of those who, as we said, are under age and so unable to fight for themselves (1 Cor. 3:1; Eph. 6:11; Gal. 4:2)[174].

Each and everyone of the faithful, and he the least in the Church, is said to be assisted by an angel, of whom the Savior says that he sees the face of God the Father[175].

Angels are the highest rational creatures. Origen believed that angels direct nations and churches as well as act as the guardians of individual people. Angels of higher rank have charge of more important functions. In his homilies at Caesarea, Origen claimed, for example, that angels of higher rank are assigned to persons of higher intellectual stature and consequently greater responsibility, than are assigned to the common run of folk. Persons who failed to behave worthily of their high calling could be divorced by their heavenly guardians and assigned to an angel of lower rank[176].

Angels, demons and men were created equal; differences even among heavenly creatures are a result of their conduct, that

[173] *Comm. in Matt., 13, 28.*
[174] *Comm. on the Songs of Songs, book 2:3 (ACW).*
[175] *De Principiis 2:20:7.*
[176] *Joseph Wilson Trigg: Origen, SCM Press Ltd, 1983, p.105.*

depended on their own will.

God gave angels the care of all of creation; rational and irrational.

Before conversion, man is subject to demons, but after conversion he is under the care of a private angel who incites him to do good and defends him against evil angels.

Angels participate with us in our worship. When the church assembles, the angels of believers also assemble with them as a hidden church.

So great was the demonic influence felt to be that Origen devotes a chapter of his work *On First Principles* to "*how the devil and the opposing powers are, according to the Scriptures, at war with the human race*." He expends much of his effort, however, on putting the demons' role into perspective. Some simple Christians think, Origen says, that the demons' powers are so overwhelming that they drive people into sin, and that if there were no demons there would be no sin. But this is not the case; sin arises from within, and the demons take advantage of our sinfulness and aggravate it, although they do in fact introduce some evil thoughts into our hearts as well. In any event, we are not alone in the fight against the evil powers, since there are good spirits too who come to our aid. Here Origen recalls a passage from the second-century *Shepherd* of Hermas[177], which speaks of two angels in the human person, one of righteousness and one of wickedness, each competing for his soul[178].

Or at least since the Lord in the gospel testifies that the hearts of sinners are besieged by "seven demons" (Luke 11:26), "the priest" appropriately “sprinkles seven times before the Lord" in purification that the expulsion "of the seven evil spirits" from the heart of the person purified

[177] *Mand 6:2:1-10.*
[178] *De Principiis 3:2:4; Boniface Ramsey: Beginning to Read the Fathers, Paulist Press, 1985, p. 65-6.*

maybe shown by " the oil shaken seven times from the fingers[179]."

Origen applies a verse from Psalm 90 to the Christians: "For He has given His angels charge over you; to keep you in all your ways." (Psalm 90:11). He comments: "*For it is the just who need the aid of the angels of God, so as not to be overthrown by the devils, and so that their hearts will no be pierced by the arrow which flies in the darkness*[180]."

Origen attributes to the angels a role in this healing process. Interpreting the parable of the Good Samaritan as pertaining to the conversion of the sinner, he writes: "*When he was about to leave in the morning, he took two pennies from the money he had with him, from his silver, and gave them to the innkeeper, certainly the angel of the church, whom he commands to look after [the sick man] carefully, and nurse him back to health."*[181] *Elsewhere, comparing the resurrection of Lazarus to that of the sinner, Origen remarks that the body of Lazarus, after leaving the tomb, is still bound with bandages: "One might ask to whom Jesus said 'Loose him.' It is not recorded as being said to the disciples, nor to the crowd, nor to those who are with Mary. Because of the words, 'Angels drew near and ministered to Him,' and because of the symbolic character of the passage, one might suppose that it is other than these who are addressed here*[182]."

Origen distinguishes the general presence of the angles with regard to the one who is praying and the special presence of the guardian angel. "*In the same way we must suppose that the angels who are the overseers and ministers of God are present to one who is praying in order to ask with him for what he petitions, the angel, indeed, of each one, even of the little ones in the Church,*

[179] *In Lev. hom. 8:14 (G.W. Barkley - Frs. of the Church).*
[180] *Hom. in Num., 5, 3.*
[181] *Hom. in Luc., 34.*
[182] *Comm. in Jo., 28, 8.*

always seeing the face of the Father who is in heaven and beholding the divinity of our Creator, prays with us and cooperates with us, and far as is possible, in what we seek."[183] *This participation of the guardian angel in prayer, his union with our supplication, comes up frequently in Origen. This Christian has nothing to fear from the devil, because "the Angel of the Lord shall encamp round about those that fear Him and he shall deliver them; and his angel who constantly sees the face of the Father in heaven, always offers up his prayers through the one High-Priest to the God of all. In fact, he himself joins in the prayers of the one entrusted to his care*[184]."

Thus the angel circulates between the soul and heaven. "*We readily admit... that they rise upwards carrying the prayers of men.. and come back down bringing to each one what he desires of the goods that God has appointed them to administer to the objects of their loving kindness*[185]."

"*All men are moved by two angels, an evil one who inclines them to evil and a good one who inclines them to good*[186]." And again: "*What I say of every single province I think ought to be believed as well of every single man. For everyone is influenced by two angels, one of justice and the other of iniquity. If there are good thoughts in our head, there is no doubt that the angel of the Lord is speaking to us. But if evil things come into our heart, the angel of the evil one is speaking to us*[187]."

THE ANGELS AND SPIRITUAL LIFE

The assistance of the angels which is given to the soul at

[183] *De or., 11,5 (ACW 19).*
[184] *Contra Cels., 8,36.*
[185] *Ibid., 5, 4. See also Hom. in Num., 11,5; Hom'. in Lev., 9,8. Hilary has this testimony to give: "There is positive grounds to the teaching (auctoritas absoluta) that the angels preside over the prayers of the faithful. They offer to God every day the prayers of those who have been saved" (Comm. in Matt., 18,5). See also Tract. Ps. 129.*
[186] *Hom. in Luc., 35.*
[187] *Ibid., 12.*

baptism is to continue throughout the whole course of its life. Not even sins can suppress it. They can only sadden the angel of the soul[188].

Origen had already written: "*There had to be angels who are in charge of holy works, who teach the understanding of the eternal light, the knowledge of the secrets of God, and the science of the divine*[189]."

Thus Origen writes: "*But set forth, be not afraid of the desert solitude. Soon even the angels will come to join you*[190]."

Origen was the first really to emphasize this characteristic of the action of the angels, the fact that it is concerned with the beginnings of the spiritual life: "*Look and see if it is not above all the children, led by fear, who have angels; and if in the case of the more advanced it is of the Lord of the angels who says to each of them: 'I am with you in tribulation.; To the extent that we are imperfect, we have need of an angel to free us from evils. But when we are mature and when we have passed the time for being under teachers and masters, we can be led by Christ Himself*[191]."

Here Origen stresses a general aspect of the doctrine of the angels, their relation with beginnings and preparations. It is they who prepared the path of Christ in the Old Testament; they are the friends of the Bridegroom whose joy is perfect when they hear the voice of the Bridegroom and who leave the Bride alone with Him; it is they who, as the Gospel teaches, have a particular relationship with children. So their role remains connected with the beginnings of the spiritual life. They draw the soul to good by noble inspirations and they give it a horror of sin. Thus they dispose it to receive the visitation of the Word. But they withdraw before Him. In

---

[188] *Origen, Hom. in Luc., 35.*
[189] *Hom. in Num., 14, 2.*
[190] *Hom. in Num., 17, 4; E. Bettencourt, Doctrina ascetica Origenis, pp. 30 f.*
[191] *Comm. in Matt., 12, 26. See also Comm. in Jo., 1, 25; Hom. in Num., 11, 3; 14, 3. See E. Bettencourt, op. cit., pp. 24-28.*

the course of its spiritual ascent, the soul passes first of all through the angelic spheres, but it goes beyond in order to arrive to the realm of God. The whole mission of the angels is to lead souls to the King of the angels and then to disappear before Him.

ANGELS REJOICE FOR OUR VICTORY

When you will be engaged in the conflict you can say with Paul: We are made a spectacle to the world and to angels and to men (1 Cor. 4:9). The whole world, therefore, all the angels on the right and on the left, all men, both those on the side of God (Deut. 32:9; Col. 1:12) and the others - all will hear us fighting the fight for Christianity. Either the angels in heaven will rejoice over us, and the rivers shall clap their hands, the mountains shall rejoice together, and all the trees of the plain shall clap their branches (Ps. 97:8; Isa. 55:12 LXX) - or - and God forbid that it should happen - the powers of the lower world will gloat over our crime and will be glad[192].

THE ANGELS AT THE MOMENT OF OUR DEATH

The angels as the servants of the Savior desire and help us in our salvation. they assist at the ascension of the souls of the true believers, specially the martyrs, crying out, "*Quis est iste*?[193]" Origen shows the angels assisting with open admiration at the struggles of the martyrs, just as they did at that of Christ:

A great multitude is assembled to watch you when you combat and are called to martyrdom. It is as if we said that thousands gather to watch a contest in which contestants of outstanding reputation are engaged. When you are engaged in the conflict you can say with St. Paul: "We are made a spectacle to the world and to the angels and to

[192] *Exhortation to Martyrdom, 18 (ACW).*
[193] *Origen, Hom. in Judic., 7,2.*

men." The whole world, therefore, all the angels on the right and on the left, all men, both those on the side of God and the others-all will hear us fighting the fight for Christianity. The angels in heaven will rejoice with us[194].

Who could follow the soul of a martyr as it passes beyond all the powers of the air [the demons] and makes its way towards the altar of heaven? Blessed is that soul which, by the crimson of its blood poured out in martyrdom, puts to rout the ranks of the demons of the air advancing toward it. Blessed is he of whom the angels shall sing the prophetic words as he enters into heaven, "Who is this that comes up from Bosra?[195]*"*

When this tabernacle has been dissolved, and we have begun to enter into the Holies and pass on to the promised land, those who are really holy and whose place is in the Holy of Holies will make their way supported by the angels, and until the tabernacle of God come to a halt, they will be carried on their shoulders and raised up by their hands. This the Prophet foresaw in spirit, when he said: 'For he has given his angels charge over you; to keep you in all your ways' (Psalm 90:11). But everything that is written in this Psalm applies to the just rather than the Lord... Paul, treating of the same mystery, strengthens the belief that some will be borne upon the clouds by the angels when he says, "Then we who live, who survive, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air" (1 Thess. 4:17)[196].

The angels who have had the responsibility of human souls

---

[194] *Exhort., 18 (ACW 19).*

[195] *Ohm. in Judaic., 7,2. Gregory of Nyssa presents "the angels waiting on the death of martyrs in order to lead their souls into their abodes" (Serm. 40 Mart.).*

[196] *In Num. hom. 5, 3. See also Eusebius, Comm. in Is., 66: "The angels will lead the elect to their blessed end, when they will be lifted up, carried as was Elias on an angelic chariot, amid the rays of heavenly light."*

are shown examining the merits and demerits of the souls who present themselves before the gates of heaven. They are somewhat like customs officials at the gates of cities[197].

Every angel, at the end of the world, will present himself for judgment, leading with him those whom he guided, helped, and taught[198].

ANGELS AND SPIRITUAL UNION WITH THE SOULS OF MEN

We must therefore take heed lest there be found in us any unseemly thing, and we should not find favor in the eyes of our husband Christ, or of the angel who has been set over us. For if we do not take heed, perhaps we also shall receive the bill of divorcement, and either be bereft of our guardian, or go to another man. But I consider that it is not of good omen to receive, as it were, the marriage of an angel with our own soul[199].

THE FOOD OF ANGELS

The saints can sometimes share spiritual and rational food not only with men, but also with the more divine powers. They do so either to help them, or to show what excellent nourishment they have been able to prepare for themselves. The angels rejoice and nourish themselves on such a demonstration, and become the more ready to cooperate in every way and for the future to join their efforts towards a more comprehensive and more profound understanding for him who, provided only with the nourishing doctrines that earlier were his, has brought joy to them and, to put it thus, nourished them. Nor must we wonder that man should give nour-

[197] *Origen, Hom. in Luc., 23.*
[198] *Hom. in Num., 11,4).*
[199] *Comm. on Matt. 14:21 (ANF).*

ishment to the angels. Christ Himself confesses that He stands at the door and knocks, that He may come in to him who opens the door to Him, and sup with him (Rev. 3:20). And then He gives of His own to him who first nourished, as well as he could, the Son of God[200].

Since the angels also ***are nourished on the wisdom of God*** *and receive strength to accomplish their own proper works from the contemplation of truth and wisdom, so in the Psalms we find it written that the angels also take food, the men of God, who are called Hebrews, sharing with the angels and, so to speak, becoming table-companions with them. As much is said in the passage, Man ate the bread of angels (Ps. 77:25). Our mind must not be so beggarly as to think that the angels forever partake of and nourish themselves on some kind of material bread which, as is told, came down from heaven upon those who went out of Egypt (Exod 16:15; Ps. 77:24), and that it was this same bread which the Hebrews shared with the angels, the spirits dedicated to the service of God (Heb. 1:14)*[201].

Just as the demons, sitting by the altars of the Gentiles, used to feed on the steam of the sacrifices, so also the angels, allured by the blood of the victims which Israel offered as symbols of spiritual things, and by the smoke of the incense, used to dwell near the altars and to be nourished on food of this sort[202].

[200] *On Prayer 27:11 (ACW)*
[201] *On Prayer 27:11 (ACW).*
[202] *De Principiis 1:8:1 (Cf. Butterworth).*

DEMONS

The demons, having once been rational (*logika*) beings, have become, through their rejection of God irrational (*aloga*) beings without reason; thus they are assimilated to the animals, becoming as it were spiritual beasts[203]. Origen states that the Church assures the existence of the demons, and left the questions what they are, and how they are for discussion.

Further, in regard to the devil and his angels and the opposing spiritual powers, the Church teaching lays it down that these beings exist, but what they are or how they exist it has not explained very clearly. Among most Christians, however, the following opinion is held, that this devil was formerly an angel, but became an apostate and persuaded as many angels as he could to fall away with him; and these are even now called his angels[204].

THE AUTHORITY OF THE DEMONS UPON THE WICKED

Origen asks if truly Satan and his angels have been destroyed by the redeeming work of Christ, why we believe that he still has authority against the servants of God? He answers that the violent activity of Satan has its effect on evildoers only, but he has no authority upon those who are in Christ[205].

One must suppose that if a man becomes unworthy of a holy angel, he may even give himself up to an angel of the devil because of the sins he commits and his disobedience wherewith he condemns God[206].

In this way, then, even Satan was once light, before

[203] *Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p. 95.*
[204] *De Principiis 1:1:6 (Cf. Butterworth).*
[205] *In Librum Jesu Neve, hom. 8:4.*
[206] *On Prayer 31:7 (ACW).*

he went astray and fell to this place, when "his glory was turned into dust" (Isa. 14:11) which is the peculiar mark of the wicked, as the prophet also says. And so he is called the "prince of this world" (John 12:31; 16:11) for he exercises his princely power over those who are obedient to his wickedness, since "this whole world" (and here I take "world" to mean this earthly place) "lies in the evil one" (1 John 5:19), that is, in this apostate. That he is an apostate, or fugitive, the Lord also says in Job, in the following words, "You wilt take with a hook the apostate dragon" (Job 40:20), that is, the fugitive dragon. And it is certain that the dragon means the devil himself[207].

R. Cadiou says,

The devil's power is derived from the weakness of the soul. Is that power ever exerted unless the soul is off guard and lacking in vigilance? Does not the devil take advantage of the lowering of our resistance owing to luxury and sloth? Seizing the occasion of the first transgression, he presses us hard in every way, seeking to extend our sins over a wider field. He knows how to profit from sin, for he was the first sinner on this earth. He exploits the threefold temptation of the body, of external things, and of our thoughts. He turns a man of uncontrollable anger into a murderer. He takes full control, we know, in the morbid states of obsession, of madness, and of melancholia. He offers such incitements to sin that even the purest soul must be vigilant against the merest defilement from his assaults. But his attacks are never greater than our powers of resistance. No being, except the Savior, has ever had to withstand the attacks of all the powers of hell. Therefore the great occasion of sin is the flesh itself, with its instincts that turn the soul away from its true end. Within our body there

[207] *De Principiis 1:5:5 (Cf. Butterworth).*

are germs of evil, opposed to the germs of good which God has implanted in the mind. The human will, which of itself is weak to accomplish any good, readily yields to those instincts. Then the memory, in its weakness to hold fast to good, makes sinful impressions even stronger[208].

BAPTISM AND OUR AUTHORITY ON THE DEMONS

Before baptism a renunciation of Satan is realized. In performing this solemn act, the catechumen faced the west, the region of the devil and his cohorts of evil angels. He then turned toward the east, the land of salvation, to be baptized.

And how many savage beasts infuriated against us, wicked spirits and evil men, have we encountered and often through our prayers muzzled so that they were unable to fix their teeth in those among us who had become the members of Christ! (Cf. 1 Cor. 6:15; Dan. 6:22)[209]

THE AUTHORITY OF BELIEVERS UPON THE DEMONS

Origen warns that evil spirits are lying in wait to lead men astray and subject them to their kingdom of darkness.

He asks the powers of betrayal to attack the souls of men not openly but suddenly through unstraight ways... We say with Paul, "we do not ignore his plans[210]*."*

The believer should cultivate the aid of the administering spirits of God to repulse those hostile demons[211].

Do the demons have any authority? Origen believes that these diabolical and bestial images cannot destroy the image of God. The latter endures beneath the former like the water in Abraham's well which the Philistines filled with mire. A picture painted

---

[208] *R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder Book Co., 1944, p. 274.*
[209] *On Prayer 13:3.*
[210] *In Jos. hom. 14:3.*
[211] *De Principiis 3:2:5; Jaroslav Pelikan: The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100), p. 136.*

by the Son of God, it is indelible. But, just as Isaac had to come to clear out the wells his father had dug, only Christ, our Isaac, can clear the wells of our soul of the filth that our sins have accumulated, so that the living water can flow again. The permanence of the 'after-the-image' in man despite his faults assures, through the grace of Christ, the possibility of conversion: it is the same with the permanence of the spirit, an element of the trichotomic anthropology[212].

Before we have the faith there was a kingdom of sin in everyone of us. But by the coming of Jesus, ***all kings who were reigning over us were killed...*** *He teaches us how to kill them all and do not leave even one of them to escape, for if we leave one alive, we cannot be considered as the followers of Joshua's sword (Jos. 11:10-11).*

If a sin of greed, pride or carnal lusts reigns over you, you are not a soldier of Israel and you disobeyed the commandment which God gave to Joshua[213].

All the earth is the palace of this king who received authority over the whole earth as if it is his own palace; it is the Satan!...

It is written in the Gospels that the strong one sleeps in his palace in security until He who is stronger comes and fetters him with chains and deprives him of his possessions. Then, the king of this palace is the prince of this world[214].

Origen comments on the words, "you should tread upon the lion and the cobra "Ps. 91:13".

As we read in the Scripture which straightens us, we acknowledge completely that we have an authority to tread upon you (O devil) with feet.

---

[212] *Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p. 96-97*
[213] *In Jos. hom. 15:4.*
[214] *In Jos. hom. 14:2.*

This authority is not given in the Old Testament (Ps. 91:13), but in the New Testament. Does not the Savior say: "Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and Scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you" (Luke 10:19).

Let us trust in this authority and receive our armor, and trample with our conduct on the lion and copra[215].

Jesus came strong in the battle to destroy all our enemies and redeem us from their snares and free us from our enemies and all who hate us[216].

PERPETUAL FATHERHOOD OF THE DEVIL AND THAT OF GOD

The devil was formerly our father, before God became our Father. Perhaps indeed the devil still is;... if "everyone that commits sin is born of the devil," so to speak, as often as we sin.

Such perpetual birth from the devil is as wretched as perpetual birth from God is blessed.

Note that I do not say that the righteous man has been born once and for all of God, but that he is so born on every occasion that God gives him birth for some good action. (This perpetual rebirth is true even of Christ) *for Christ is the "effulgence" of "glory", and such effulgence is not generated once only but as often as the light creates it... Our Savior is the "Wisdom of God", and wisdom is the "effulgence of eternal light" (Wisdom 7:26). If then the Savior is always being born... from the Father, so too are you, if you have the spirit of adoption (Rom. 8:15), and* ***God is always begetting you in every deed and thought you have****; and this begetting makes you a perpetually re-*

[215] *In Luc. hom. 31:1-7.*
[216] *In Luc. hom. 10:3.*

born son of God in Christ Jesus[217].

Our inner man, therefore, is said either to have God as Father, if he lives according to God and does those things which are of God, or the devil, if he lives in sin and performs his wishes.

The Savior shows this clearly in the Gospels when he says, "You are of your father the devil and you wish to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning and he did not stand in the truth" (John 8:44).

As, therefore, the seed of God is said to remain in us when we, preserving the word of God in us, do not sin, as John says, "He who is of God does not sin because God's seed remains in Him,"(1 John 3.9.) so also when we are persuaded to sin by the devil we receive his seed[218].

TRUSTING IN THE DEMONS

Origen states that horses in the Scriptures refer to the Devil.

"A horse is a vain hope for safety, neither shall it deliver any by its great strength" Ps. 33:17. This also is said concerning those who trust in the Devil: "They have bowed down and fallen; but we have risen and stand upright" Ps. 20:8. Comparison here, in fact, is not between the chariot (horses) and the Lord, as if to these we appeal. But here he explains that we supplicate the true God, while they to the chariots and horses, i.e., to the evil spirits[219].

DEVIL'S CURRENCY

Well, murder is the devil's currency... You have committed murder: you have, then, received the devil's

---

[217] *In Jer. hom. 9:4.*
[218] *In Exodus hom. 8:6 (Cf. Ronad E Heine- Frs. of the Church, vol. 71.)*
[219] *In Jos. hom. 15:3.*

money. Adultery is the devil's currency... You have committed adultery: you have received coinage from the devil. Robbery, false witness, rapacity, violence-all these are the devil's riches and his... treasure; for such is the money that comes from his mint. It is, then, with this kind of money that he buys his victims, and makes his slaves all those who have taken the smallest coin from such a treasury[220].

DEMONS AS EVIL GUARDIANS

The demons can be guardians, guardians in reverse, trying to make those they have taken charge of sin, whether individuals or nations. At their head is their chief, Satan, the Devil, the Evil One, in whom Origen sees the "Principle" of the fall following (Job 40,14 [19 LXX]): "He is made to be the first of the works (*plasma*) of God, to be the laughing stock of his angels[221].

THE CROSS AND THE DEVIL

1. The Demons as the princes of this world laid a snare to Jesus Christ, and crucified Him, not knowing who was concealed within Him.

When these, therefore, and other similar princes of this world, each having his own individual wisdom and formulating his own doctrines and peculiar opinions, saw our Lord and Savior promising and proclaiming that he had come into the world for the purpose of destroying all the doctrines, whatever they might be, of the "knowledge falsely so called" (1 Tim. 6:20), they immediately laid snares for Him, not knowing who was concealed within Him. For "the kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord and against His

[220] *In Exod. hom. 6:9.*
[221] *Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p. 212.*

Christ" (Ps. 2:2)... They crucified the Lord of glory [222]*.'*

2. Through the cross the demons lost their dominion.

He began on the cross by chaining the demon, and, having entered into his house, that is to say, into Hell, and having ascended from there into the heights, He led away captives, that is to say, those who rose again and entered with Him into the heavenly Jerusalem[223].

But if we follow Jesus and believe His words and are filled with His faith, the demons will be as nothing in our sight[224].

THE SALVATION OF THE DEVIL

In chapter four under the title "*Apokatastis*," I have dealt with this topic, the salvation of the Devil according to Origen. Robert Payne says,

> Just as he believed that the sun would return to God, so he believed that even the Devil would return to his proper inheritance, and "walk once again in the Paradise of God between the cherubim[225]." And why, he asks, should it not be? Was he not once the Prince of Tyre among the saints, without stain, adorned with the crown of comeliness and beauty, and is it to be supposed that such a one is any degree inferior to the saints? Sin did not brand a man eternally; the pains of Hell are disciplinary and temporary, not everlasting, and Hell fire is no more than the purifying flame which removes the baser elements from the soul's metal. Not the body as flesh, but the body as spirit will rise again on that eternal morning, of which all the ages of the world are no more than the previous night. And that this

[222] *De Principiis 3:3 (Henri De Lubac).*
[223] *Comm. on Rom. 5:10; PG 14:,1052 A.*
[224] *In Num. hom. 7:5.*
[225] *De Principiis 1:8:3.*

Heaven exists, and that the end will be as the beginning we have no doubt, "*for God would never have implanted in our minds the love of truth, if it were never to have an opportunity of satisfaction*[226]."

THE DEVIL AS THE BLINDER

Origen maintains that the 'blinder' is the evil one, the 'Healer' is our Lord Jesus Christ.

But as for "they could not believe," we must say that the case is similar to that of congenital physical blindness, later cured by the Savior: to say "I cannot see because I am blind" would not be to deny that the blind man would ever be able to see. Indeed later he could, when Jesus opened the eyes of the blind and graciously bestowed the gift of sight... In the same way those who once could not believe because their eyes had been blinded by the evil one were still able to come to believe by coming to Jesus... and seeking the gift of (spiritual) sight[227].

We are not under the control of demons but of the God of the universe, through Jesus Christ who brings us to Him. According to the laws of God no demon has inherited control of things on the earth; but one may suggest that through their own defense of the law they divided among themselves those places where there is no knowledge of God and the life according to His will, or where there are many enemies of His divinity. Another suggestion would be that because the demons were fitted to govern and punish the wicked, they were appointed by the Word that administers the universe, to rule those who have subjected themselves to sin and not to God[228].

---

[226] *De Principiis 2:10:5; Robert Payne: Fathers Of The Eastern Church, Dorset Press, New York, 1985, P. 45.*
[227] *Comm. on John Frag 9:2 on 12:39.*
[228] *Contra Celsus 8:33.*

12

FREE WILL

The first chapter of book three of *De Principiis* which takes up over half of that book, brings us to the heart of Origen's theology, the doctrine of free will. Except for one paragraph, the full Greek text survives. The chapter falls into three unequal parts. The first part is a discussion, in philosophical terms, of the question. The brief second part cites biblical texts that uphold the doctrine of free will. The third and longest part discusses in detail passages from the Bible that seem, on what Origen insisted to be a superficial reading, to deny free will[1].

FREE WILL OF RATIONAL CREATURES

According to Origen men as well as all other rational creatures are free[2]. Truly man is everywhere in chains, but it is his own responsibility, for the cause of his enslavement is traceable to that very freedom, which he misused.

G.W. Butterworth says,

> All the Gnostic systems, and most other speculations of this period, ran in a fatalistic direction. If Origen appears to us to spend unnecessary trouble in his effort to establish the fact of human freedom, we must remember that it is largely this which gives the Christian tone and color to all his thought[3].

---

[1] *Joseph Wilson Trigg: Origen, SCM Press Ltd, 1983, p.115-6.*
[2] *De Principiis preface 5.*
[3] *Henri De Lubac: Origen, On First Principles, NY., 1966 (Koetschau text together with an introduction and notes by G.W. Butterworth, p. LVII.*

The weakness of Origen's system, considered as a whole, lies in its assumption that the entire cosmic process is a mistake, due to the misuse of free will[4].

Against the Gnostics, specially Marcion, Valentinus, and Basilides Origen argues that rational creatures were originally equal, for in the changeless God, who is just, there could be no cause of diversity[5]. The primary referent of this equality is the goodness of each creature as obedient to or imitative of God[6]. Unlike God creatures possess their goodness accidentally (*kata sumbebekos*) and not essentially (*ousiodos*). But they can make it their own by freely choosing to continue in the good[7]. This choice is free, however, the opposite choice is possible. Whatever choice is made, the creature is responsible for it[8].

Thus, Origen was able to give an account of the levels of creatures' goodness (or evil) and God's judgment upon them. Each creature is the cause of his own fall[9]. And in proportion as one falls, one is placed in the cosmos by God. The scale runs from the highest angels down to demons. Even in the various fallen stages creatures remain free to return to their original goodness or to become worse[10].

...every rational nature can, in the process of passing from one order to another, travel through each order to all the rest, and from all to each, while undergoing the various movements of progress or the reverse in accordance with its own actions and endeavors and with the use of its power of free will[11].

---

[4] *Henri De Lubac: Origen, On First Principles, NY., 1966 (Koetschau text together with an introduction and notes by G.W. Butterworth, p. LVIII.*
[5] *Ibid. 2:9:5-6.*
[6] *Ibid.*
[7] *De Principiis 2:4:2.*
[8] *Church History 35 (1966): 13-23 (B. Darrell Jackson: Sources of Origen's Doctrine of Freedom).*
[9] *De Principiis 1:4:1*
[10] *Church History 35 (1966): 13-23 (B. Darrell Jackson: Sources of Origen's Doctrine of Freedom), p. 14.*
[11] *De Principiis 1:4:3.*

As we have seen before in chapters 7 and 9, after the Fall, man was unable to return to his original goodness by his own effort. He is in need of the grace of God and the redeeming work of Christ, even this is realized through his free will.

Every soul has the power and choice to do everything that is good. But because this good feature in human nature had been betrayed when the chance of sin was offered... the "fragrance it gives forth"(Song 2:13), when it is redeemed by grace and restored by the teaching of the Word of God, is that very fragrance which the Creator had bestowed at the beginning and sin had taken away....The grace which [the soul] had first received from the Creator, was lost, and now was recovered...[12]

FREEDOM AS A CHURCH DOCTRINE

Origen believes that a doctrine of freedom is one of the doctrines **set forth by the apostles as essential**. He was not an innovator on this. Earlier Christian writers had considered freedom an important Christian doctrine[13]. Yet beyond its traditional status, Origen has a rationale for including this doctrine. He starts *De Principiis* 3:1, the chapter on freedom, in this way[14]:

Since the teaching of the Church includes the doctrine of the righteous judgment of God, a doctrine which, if believed to be true, summons its hearers to live a good life and by every means avoid sin, for it assumes that they acknowledge that deeds worthy of praise or blame lie within our own power (eph'hemin) - let us now discuss separately a few points on the subject of free will,...[15]

The freedom of creatures is inferred from the doctrine of judgment. ***God's judgment to be righteous, must be exercised on***

---

[12] *Comm. on Song Songs 4.*
[13] *For example St. Justin: Apology 1:43-44; St. Theophilus: Ad Autolycum 2:27; and St. Irenaeus: Adv. Haer. 4:37.*
[14] *Church History 35 (1966): 13-23 (B. Darrell Jackson: Sources of Origen's Doctrine of Freedom).*
[15] *De Principiis 3:1:1 (Butterworth)*

responsible creatures. Responsibility in turn requires freedom. Now the doctrine of judgment is ecclesiastic and scriptural.

FREEDOM AS A SCRIPTURAL DOCTRINE

In his speech on Free will, Origen quotes several passages from the Old and New Testaments (Micah 6:8; Deut. 30:15, 19; Isa. 1:19f; Matt. 5:39, 22, 28; Rom. 2:4-10) to show that God commands obedience and rewards it, and punishes disobedience[16]. But this God "*...tells us that it lies in our power to observe the injunctions...*[17]" He concludes, "*Indeed, there are in the Scriptures ten thousands of passages which with utmost clearness prove the existence of free will*[18]."

Thus the freedom of the rational creature is an inference from certain Scriptures which do not mention freedom at all. One wonders why Origen did not use some such text as Galatians 5:1 or 2 Corinthians 3:17 as Scripture passages basis for a doctrine of freedom. But he did not; rather he inferred it as a consequence of other scriptural. Still, in that respect, it has a Scriptural basis. But note what has been inferred from these Scriptures: only the existence of freedom. When Origen delineates the nature of freedom, he draws upon non-Biblical sources[19].

Freedom is related to Scripture in two ways.

First, Scripture is allegorized to be consistent with it. Origen sees in the prophecies about Egypt, Tyre, Babylon, Israel, etc. references to heavenly places which are the dwelling places of souls in the various stages of fall and return[20]. And in the Scriptures about the king of Tyre (Ezekiel 28:11-19) and Lucifer (Isaiah

---

[16] *Ibid. 3:1:6.*
[17] *Ibid.*
[18] *Ibid.*
[19] *Church History 35 (1966): 13-23 (B. Darrell Jackson: Sources of Origen's Doctrine of Freedom), p. 13-14.*
[20] *De Principiis 4:3:9-13.*

14:12-22; Luke 10:18) he sees proof that individuals can choose to fall from a higher state to a lower one[21].

Second, Scripture presents certain difficulties which the transcendental doctrine of freedom can explain. For example, why did God love Jacob and hate Esau before they were born? The answer is, of course, "older causes[22]."

There is another aspect to Origen's doctrine of freedom. He gives a detailed picture of its internal structure. It has been established that freedom is the principle of movement from one state to another, but it is a certain kind of movement. In two texts, *De Principiis* 3:12-3 and *De Oratione* 6:1, Origen locates freedom by subdividing the class of things moved (*ton kinoumenon*)[23]:

1. some are moved solely from without (*exothen*), e.g., logs, wood, stones, and anything moved qua body.

2. Some are moved from within themselves (*en heautois*), e.g., animals, plants, fire, springs; of these there are two kinds.

a. Some are moved out of themselves (*ex heauton*), viz., without living soul (*apsycha*).

b. Some are moved from within themselves (*aph'heauton*), viz., living things (*empsycha*); of these there are two kinds.

I. Irrational animals.

II. Rational animals (*logikon zoon*)[24].

In sections 7-24 (Book 3:1), many scriptural passages which appear to deny freedom are shown to be capable of an interpretation at least consistent with and sometimes favorable to Origen's doctrine of freedom. For example, there is the difficult text in Exodus 4:21 where God is represented as "hardening Pharaoh's heart." Origen interprets this to mean that Pharaoh freely rejects

---

[21] *De Principiis 1:5:4-5.*

[22] *De Principiis 3:1:2; 2:9:7; Church History 35 (1966): 13-23 (B. Darrell Jackson: Sources of Origen's Doctrine of Freedom).*

[23] *Church History 35 (1966): 13-23 (B. Darrell Jackson: Sources of Origen's Doctrine of Freedom), p. 15.*

[24] *Church History 35 (1966): 13-23 (B. Darrell Jackson: Sources of Origen's Doctrine of Freedom), p. 15.*

the work of Moses (a series of external impressions) and therefore God's action in Moses results in Pharaoh's hardening of the heart. Other men freely accept this same action of God and are thereby brought closer to God[25]. It should be clear that there is much in Origen's doctrine of freedom that he does not even pretend to derive from Scripture. I turn now to examining possible philosophical sources for Origen's non-Biblical theories[26].

Movable Things

1. from without **2. from within themselves**

a. without soul **b. with soul**

I. Irrational animals **II. Rational animals**

MAN'S FREE WILL AND DIVINE GRACE

How can we say that we have free will, if God by His grace already had chosen us as His own, and He knew us before we were created that we would believe in Him?

The divine plan of our salvation was eternal, the Father chose us, for He was pleased with us even before we were made, through His beloved Son. He accepted us for we were hidden in His Son, our Mediator, clothing His righteousness. We were chosen, for He knew us before we were created that we would believe in Him.

[25] *De Principiis 3:1:7-14.*
[26] *Church History 35 (1966): 13-23 (B. Darrell Jackson: Sources of Origen's Doctrine of Freedom), p. 16.*

St. Paul clarifies this, saying:

"For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son.

Moreover, whom He predestined, these He also called;

whom He called, these He also justified;

and whom He justified, these He also glorified" (Rom. 8:29,30).

Origen comments on this Pauline passage, saying:

Such passages as these are seized on by those who do not understand that man who is foreordained by the foreknowledge of God is really responsible for the happening of what is foreknown; and they imagine that God introduces men into the world who are already equipped by nature for salvation... Let us observe the order of the words... It is not fore-ordination that is the start of calling and justification. If this were so, a more convincing case could be put by those who bring in the absurd argument about "salvation by nature." It is in fact, foreknowledge precedes fore-ordination... God observed beforehand the sequence of future events, and noticed the inclination of some men towards piety, on their responsibility, and their stirring towards piety which followed on this inclination; He sees how they devote themselves to living a virtuous life, and He foreknew them, knowing the present, and foreknowing the future... His foreknowledge is not the cause of what happens as a result of the responsible actions of each individual. Thus, the freedom bestowed by the Creator enables man to choose what to realize, of various possibilities which arise[27].

As a result of (God's) foreknowledge the free actions of every man fit in with that disposition of the whole which is necessary for the existence of the universe[28].

[27] *Comm. on Rom. 1 (Philocalia 25:1).*
[28] *On Prayer (De Oratione), 6:3.*

God... is not ignorant of the future, but permits man to do what he wishes through his faculty of free will[29].

Origen replies to those who say that our salvation is in no way our responsibility, but is a matter of our constitution, for which the Creator is responsible, saying:

"Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it. Unless the Lord guards the city, the watchman stays awake in vain" (Ps. 126 [127]:1). This is not meant to deter us from building, or to counsel us not to be vigilant in guarding the city which is in our soul... We should do right in calling a building a work of God, rather than of the builder, and the preservation of a city from hostile attack we should rightly call an achievement of God rather than of the guard. But in so speaking we assume man's share in the achievement, while in thankfulness we ascribe it to God who brings it to success.

Similarly man's will is not sufficient to obtain the end (of salvation) (Rom. 9:16), nor is the running of the metaphorical athletes competent to attain "the prize of the upward summons of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:14). This is only accomplished with God's assistance. Thus it is quite true, "It is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy" (Rom. 9:16). Our perfection does not come about by our remaining inactive, yet it is not accomplished by our own activity; God plays the great part in effecting it[30].

[29] *Sel Exod. 15:25.*
[30] *De Principiis 3:1:18.*

FREE WILL AND GOD'S PROVIDENCE[31]

Origen asserts that Divine Providence allows man's free will full scope in his cooperation with God. He says that if a believer takes away the element of free will from virtue he destroys its essence[32]. This conviction is one of the pillars of Origen's ethics and theology.

Origen harmonized the freedom of the will with the plan of Divine Providence. In doing so, he constituted himself the defender of free will. As he expounds his theory, providence envelops free will, impels it in the direction of good conduct, disciplines it, and heals it. If we contemplate this help as it comes to us from God, we cannot understand it. But the Christian teacher or the spiritual director is not without evidence to convince him of its value[33].

The universe is cared for by God in accordance with the condition of the free will of each man, and that as far as possible it is always being led on to be better, and... that the nature of our free will is to admit various possibilities[34].

Someone may ask: How can we interpret God's Providence through the free will of men, for if God takes care of everyone, even of the number of each head's hair (Matt. 10: 30) how will we accept the free will of others who would harm me or even kill me through their free will?

Our God who in His goodness grants us free will, through His infinite wisdom uses this human freedom for the edification of His children, for He changes even evil deeds to the salvation of others. St. Clement of Alexandria gives a biblical example. Jacob's sons sold Joseph as a slave, but God used this evil action for Joseph's glory. Joseph said to his brothers: "But now, do not there-

[31] *Fr. Tadros Y. Malaty: Man and Redemption, Alexandria 1991, p. 8.*
[32] *Cf. Contra Celsus 4:3.*
[33] *R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder Book Co., 1944, p. 258.*
[34] *Contra Celsus 5:21.*

fore be grieved or angry with yourselves because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life ... so now it was not you who sent me here, but God, and He has made me a father of Pharaoh, and lord of all" (Gen 45: 5-9); "Do not be afraid, for am I in the place of God? But as for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive" (Exod. 50: 19, 20).

Judas, the traitor, misused the freedom which was granted to him, and God used even his evil action for realizing the salvation of mankind by the crucifixion of our Lord.

The universe is cared for by God in accordance with the condition of the free will of each man, and that as far as possible it is always being led on to be better, and ... that the nature of our free will is to admit various possibilities[35].

God does not create evil; still, He does not prevent it when it is displayed by others, although He could do so. But He uses evil, and those who exhibit it, for necessary purposes. For by means of those in whom there is evil, He bestows honor and approbation on those who strive for the glory of virtue.

Virtue, if unopposed, would not shine out nor become more glorious by probation. Virtue is not virtue if it be untested and unexamined*...*

If you remove the wickedness of Judas and annul his treachery you take away likewise the cross of Christ and His passion; and if there were no cross, then principalities and powers would have not been stripped nor triumphed over by the wood of the cross (Col. 2: 15). Had there been no death of Christ, there would certainly have been no resurrection and there would have been no "Firstborn from the dead" (Col. 1: 8); and then there would have been for us no hope of resurrection.

[35] *Contra Celsus 5:21.*

Similarly concerning the devil himself, if we suppose for the sake of argument, that he had been forcibly prevented from sinning, or that the will to do evil had been taken away from him after his sin; then the same time there would have been taken from us the struggle against the wiles of the devil, and there would be no crown of victory in store for him who rightly struggled[36].

PHILOSOPHICAL BASICS OF FREEDOM[37]

Origen's originality consists partly in his combination of Platonic and Stoic theory and partly in modifying these theories by Scriptural doctrines. He combines the Platonic transcendental viewpoint with the Stoic analysis of the internal structure of freedom. The former is related to Scripture as a structure found allegorically present in Scripture. It is impossible to say which came first in Origen's mind. He may have seen this transcendental structure in Scripture and then found Plato confirmatory. But since he finds it in Scripture by allegory, it seems more likely that the theory is prior. With the Stoic aspect of his doctrine of freedom there is no such ambiguity. He does not relate it to Scripture at all, either as confirming Scripture or being confirmed or derived from it. This part of his doctrine of freedom is purely philosophical.

He ends up with the free rational soul as the middle term between antecedents which are not in its power (in accordance with Stoicism) and consequences which follow strictly from its choices (in accordance with Platonism). In this combination, Platonism is modified by drastically reducing the number of antecedents. (In the myth of Er all possible lives were presented to the souls.) Stoicism is modified by positing God as the providential manipulator of antecedents. This is Scriptural in basis. The Scriptural modification of Platonism is at least two-fold. First, the Logos of God enters the hierarchy of creatures for the purpose of

[36] *In Num. hom. 14:2.*
[37] *Church History 35 (1966): 13-23 (B. Darrell Jackson: Sources of Origen's Doctrine of Freedom), p. 21-22.*

training them to make the right choices in order to improve their status. Second, Origen sees more clearly than Plato an end to the series of epochs when the rational souls will have been completely remodeled by the Logos and God will be all in all.

FREE WILL AND CONVERSION

There is a place in Origen's thought for human responsibility. The attempt is to deal with the question of why some people adamantly reject Christianity. The main emphasis is on free will[38].

FREE WILL AND GOOD AND EVIL POWERS

We are not governed by necessity, nor compelled against our will to do good or evil. For if we are free, some powers may perhaps be able to urge us to sin, and others to help us to save ourselves. But we are not at all compelled to do good or evil, contrary to what is maintained by those who say that the courses and motions of the stars are the causes of human actions[39].

FREEDOM AND WELCOMING CHRIST

A man must question his own heart as soon as he hears the message of the Church. Christ is found by those who are determined to find Him. He does not impose Himself upon us. "He knows by whom He is likely to be repulsed and by whom He is to be welcomed." At the moment foreseen by providence, He makes Himself known to the heart that longs for Him.

A*s long as a man preserves the germs of truth within himself, the Word is never far away from him. Such a man can always nourish the seeds of hope*[40].

[38] *Gary Wayne Barkley: Origen; Homilies on Leviticus, Washington, 1990, p. 9.*
[39] *De Principiis, Praef.*
[40] *In Joan. 19:12 PG 14:548; R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder Book Co., 1944, p. 297.*

13

THE CHURCH

A CHURCHMAN

Origen is a churchman, in the fullest sense of the term, his proudest boast is to be an ecclesiastical man[1]. It may even be said that the Scripture and the Church were the most important and essential things about him. He created the critical study of the Old Testament text, and worked out the theology of the relationship between the Old Testament and the New. In doing so, he was handing the Church tradition.

Jean Daniélou states that Origen is a churchman, saying, "We have seen from his life that he had been catechist, lector, priest, doctor and martyr by turns: the whole of his life was spent in the discharge of ecclesiastical functions[2]."

Jaroslav Pelikan says,

> For one of the most decisive differences between a theologian and a philosopher is that the former understands himself as, in Origen's classic phrase, "***a man of the church***," a spokesman for the Christian community. Even in his theological speculations and in his polemic against what may have been public teaching in the church of his time, a theologian such as Origen knew himself to be accountable to the deposit of Christian revelation and to the ongoing authority of the church. His personal opinions must be said into the contents of the development of what the church has believed, taught, and confessed on the basis of the Word of God[3].

Henri de Lubac says,

His intellectual formation, we must not forget, was entirely Christian; we might even say entirely ecclesiastic. Many features of his homilies remind us of it, if need be. "*We of the Church*," he says; "*I a man of the Church, living in the faith of Christ and set in the midst of the Church...*" Justin, Tatian, Clement and others like them were converts; because of a turn of mind due to their early formation they remained philosophers. But when Origen affectionately proclaims himself "*a man of the Church*," he underlines something like an inborn quality that is the mark of his whole genius. When he speaks of the "world," the word is often used in the sense it has in the gospels-the world that passes away, especially the evil world from which Jesus Christ comes to set us free...

He constantly appeals to "*the rule of the Church*," "*the faith of the Church*," "*the word of the Church*," "*the preaching of the Church*," "*the tradition of the Church*," "*the doctrine of the Church*," "*the thought and teaching of the Church*." In the bones of the paschal Lamb he sees a symbol of the "*holy dogmas of the Church*" of which not one shall be broken. He does not want "*that there be any disagreement on doctrine among Churches*." He is Adamantius, "the man of iron;" "doctrinal firmness" is one of the virtues closest to his heart. He exalts constancy in the faith and stability of dogma[4].

Henri de Lubac also says,

His piety was redoubled by a very strong concern with orthodoxy. For example, in one of his homilies on Saint Luke he says: "*As for myself, my wish is to be truly a man of the Church, to be called by the name of Christ and not that of any heresiarch, to have this name which is blessed all over the earth; I desire to be and to be called, a Christian, in my words as in my thoughts*[5]."

I, myself a man of the Church, living under the faith of Christ and placed in the midst of the Church, am com-

pelled by the authority of the divine precept to sacrifice calves and lambs and to offer fine wheat flour with incense and oil[6].

If I belong to the Church, no matter how small I may be, my angel is free to look upon the Face of the Father. If I am outside the Church, he does not dare[7].

That Origen was devoted to the Church is not debated. What kind of churchman he was is debated. For example, Origen as a teacher preferred to labor in research and open questions rather than in the basics of faith. For Origen, to become part of the church is to think like the Church and to study her theology. But even during this period of his life we find in his writings echoes of the baptismal and Eucharistic liturgies[8].

V V V

CONCEPTS OF CHURCH

1. CHURCH, HOUSE OF THE SON OF GOD

Origen is the first to declare the Church to be the City of God here on earth[9], existing for the time being side by side with the secular state[10].

It is plain, however, that Christ is describing the Church, which is a spiritual house and the House of God, even as Paul teaches, saying: But if I tarry long, it is that you may know how you ought to behave thyself in the House of God, which is the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. So, if the Church is the House of God, then-because all things that the Father has are the Son's, it follows that ***the Church is the House of the Son of God***[11].

St. Paul in his epistle to the Ephesians, pictures the Church as Christ's building, now growing unto a holy temple in the Lord (Eph. 2: 21f). Origen speaks of the Church as God's spiritual temple, saying,

The Spirit of Christ dwells in those who bear, so to say, a resemblance in form and feature to Himself. And the Word of God, wishing to set this clearly before us, represents God as promising to the righteous: "I will dwell in them, and walk among them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My People" (2 Cor. 6: 16 Cf. Lev. 26: 12; Jer. 3:33; 32:38; Zech. 8:8). And the Savior says: "If any man hears My words, and does them, I and My Father will come to him, and make our abode with him" (John 14: 23)...

And in other parts of the Holy Scripture where it speaks of the mystery of the resurrection to those whose ears are divinely opened, it says that the temple which has been destroyed shall be built up again of living and most precious stones, thereby giving us to understand that each

of those who are led by the word of God to strive together in the duties of piety, will be a precious stone, in the one great temple of God. Accordingly, Peter says, "You also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 2: 5) and Paul also says, "Being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ our Lord being the chief comer-stone" (Eph. 2: 20). And there is a similar hidden allusion in this passage in Isaiah, which is addressed to Jerusalem: "Behold, I will lay your stones with carbuncles, and lay your foundations with sapphires. And I will make your battlements of jasper, and your gates of crystal, and all your borders of pleasant stones. And all your children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of your children. In righteousness shall you be established" (Isa. 54:11-14).

There are, then among the righteous some who are carbuncles, others sapphires, others jaspers, and others crystals, and thus there is among the righteous every kind of choice and precious stone[12].

Origen could only admire the attitude of the people of God towards building the tabernacle. Everyone was so eager to offer generously whatever possible, each according to his ability and resources. He experienced the urge to participate in establishing God's spiritual tabernacle within himself, and said:

O Lord Jesus Christ, will you make me worthy to partake in building Your house.

Come, let us build the tabernacle of Jacob's God, Jesus Christ our Lord and adorn it...

God's dwelling place is the sanctity that we are requested to attain... Consequently, everybody, can find a tabernacle for God in his heart. Its ten curtains (Exod. 26: 1) refer to the fulfillment of the ten commandments.

Examining the tabernacle closely, the purple, the blue, the fine twined linen etc. symbolizes the variety of good deeds:

Gold refers to faith ~ Rev. 23: 18):

Silver to preaching (Ps. 12: 6);

Brass to patience

Timber that does not rot to the acquaintance that the believer gains in the uninhabited wilderness and the everlasting; chastity;

Linen to virginity;

Purple to loving martyrdom;

Scarlet to the brightness of love

Blue to the hope in the heavenly kingdom;

From all these materials, the tabernacle is built...

The soul should have an altar right in the center of the heart. On it sacrifices of prayer and burnt offerings of mercy are offered. Thus, bullocks of pride are slaughtered with the knife of meekness and rams of anger, goats of luxuries and passions are killed.

Let the soul know how to establish a permanently illuminating lampstand, right in the holy of her heart[13].

Origen calls the Church the "City of God", for she is "the dwelling of God among His people" (See Rev. 21:3). God builds His Church, as His own City; builds it not with stones but with His own elect believers.

2. THE CHURCH, THE ASSEMBLY OF BELIEVERS

Origen describes the Church as ***the assembly of believers***, or the congregation of Christian people[14], ministered by the clergymen[15].

His emphasis, of course, is upon the personal pilgrimage to God. But he does not forget the communal character of the Christian life. For example, his treatment of prayer tends to underline

its personal aspects, he remembers that prayer in the community is more powerful and must be the Christian's joy as well as his duty. He says, "*The angelic powers join the assemblies of the faithful, whither comes the power of our Lord and Savior Himself, where the spirits of the saints gather, both those - so I believe - of the departed who have gone before and, evidently, of those who are still among the living; though to explain this is not an easy matter*[16]."

3. THE CHURCH, HOUSE OF FAITH

Faith is the core of the church. The Only Begotten Son Himself admired the faith of men (Matt 8:10), while He was not admired with gold, wealth, kingdoms etc. Nothing is so precious to Him like faith[17]. Faith for Him is not just a thought or some word we utter, but a practical acceptance of God's work in our lives[18].

4. THE CHURCH, THE BRIDE OF CHRIST

The Alexandrian Fathers, especially Origen in his *Commentary on the Canticle of Canticles*, adopted this evangelic concept of the Church as the heavenly Bride of Christ, in which they found a genuine basis of relationship between God and man.

Do not believe that the Bride, that is, the Church, has existed only since the Savior's incarnation. She exists since before the creation of the world (Eph. 1:4). So the church's foundations have been laid from the beginning[19].

5. THE CHURCH, THE BODY OF CHRIST

The Church is ***the Body of Christ***, animated by Him as an ordinary body is animated by the soul, and the believer who belongs to her is his member[20].

We say [21]*that the Holy Scriptures declared the body of Christ, animated by the Son of God, to be the*

whole Church of God, and the members of his body, considered as a whole, to consist of those who are believers; since, as a soul vivifies and moves the body, which of itself has not the natural power of motion like a living being, so the Word, arousing and moving the whole body, the Church, to befitting action, awakens, moreover, each individual member belonging to the Church, so that they do nothing apart from the Word.

6. THE HOUSE OF SALVATION

There can be **no salvation without this Church**. Thus he states: *Extra hanc domum, id est ecclesiam, nemo salvatur*[22]. The church is the ark of salvation, receives light from Jesus Christ, has the ability to interpret the Holy Scripture.

Origen states that there is no salvation outside the Church, the house of redemption. According to him, Rahab (Josh. 2) mystically represents the Church, and the scarlet thread the blood of Christ; and only those in her house are saved.

If anyone wishes to be saved... let him come to this house where the blood of Christ is for a sign of redemption. For that blood was for condemnation amongst those who said, "His blood be on us and on our children" (Matt. 27 25). Jesus was "for the fall and resurrection of many" (Luke 2: 34); and therefore in respect of those who "speak against His sign" His blood is effective for punishment, but effective for salvation in the case of believers.

Let no one therefore persuade himself or deceive himself: outside this house, that is, outside the Church, no one is saved... The sign of salvation (the scarlet thread) was given through the window because Christ by His incarnation gave us the sight of the light of godhead as it were through a window; that all may attain salvation by that sign who shall be found in the house of her who once was a harlot, being made clean by water and the Holy

Spirit, and by the blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, to whom is glory and power for ever and ever[23].

For Jesus was "set for the falling and rising of many" (Luke 2:34), and hence for those who deny His "sign" His blood works punishment, for those who believe, salvation... Outside this house (i.e. the Church) none is saved: to leave it makes a man responsible for his own death[24].

The church has a power to remit sins.

Ernest Latko says,

A careful study of passages found in Origen's earlier and later works will reveal unmistakably that he maintained that the Church possessed the power of the keys, or the power to remit sin. He refers to that power time and again. Not all authors, however, are agreed that this was his position. Basing their conclusions on one or another difficult passage, which can certainly be clarified when compared with the whole of his doctrine, they come by the conclusion that Origen denied that power to the Church. Thus Harnack writes that it was Pope Callistus, who first insisted that the Church possessed the power to remit sins, and that this edict was a manifestation of a change taking place in the very concept of the church. The early church, he says, regarded itself as a congregation of saints and ascribed the power of remitting sins to God alone[25].

Moreover, just as the sun and the moon enlighten our bodies so also our minds are enlightened by Christ and the Church[26].

7. THE COMMUNITY OF LOVE

Origen speaks of the communion of love that unites earth with heaven:

Now the one great virtue according to the Word of God is to love one's neighbor. We must believe that the saints who have died possess this love in a far higher degree towards the ones engaged in the combat of life than those who are still subject to human weakness and involved in the combat along with their weaker brethren. The words, "If one member suffers anything, all the members suffer with it, or if one member glories, all the members rejoice with it" (1 Cor. 12:26), are confined to those on earth who love their brethren...

If the angels of God came to Jesus and ministered to Him (Matt. 4:11), and if we believe that this ministry of the angels to Jesus was not limited to just the short time during His earthly sojourn... then how many multitudes of angels do you think minister to Jesus to gather together the sons of Israel one by one, and assemble those of the dispersion, and deliver them that are in fear and call upon Him[27].

8. GATES OF ZION

Origen beholds the Church as the gate of righteousness, through which Jesus Christ, the Righteous One, enters. The Church's gates are in the opposite direction of that of death.

Now the gates of Zion may be conceived as opposed to the gates of death, so that there is one gate of death, dissoluteness, but a gate of Zion, self-control. And so a gate of death, unrighteousness, the gate of Zion is righteousness, which the prophet shows forth saying, "This is the gate of the Lord, the righteous shall enter into it (Ps. 118:20)."

And again there is cowardice, a gate of death, but manly courage, a gate of Zion;

and want of prudence, a gate of death, but its opposite, prudence, a gate of Zion.

But to all the gates of the "knowledge which is falsely so called (I Tim. 6:20)" one gate is opposed, the gate of knowledge which is free from falsehood.

But consider if, because of the saying, "our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, (Eph. 6:12) etc., you can say that each power and world's ruler of this darkness, and each one of the "spiritual hosts of the wickedness in the heavenly places" (Eph. 6:12) is a gate of Hades and a gate of death[28].

9. NEW ISRAEL

The historical Israelites cease to be Israelites, while the believers from the Gentiles become the New Israel. This involves a redefinition of Israel[29].

10. CHURCH, THE ARK OF NOAH AND THE MYSTERY OF FORGIVENESS[30]

Origen interprets the Ark of Noah and its dimensions in a symbolic manner. He looked to the ark as the Church of Christ:

To the width, we attribute the number 50, which is the number sacred to forgiveness and remission. According to the Law, indeed, there was a time for forgiveness of debts every fifty years...

Now Christ, the spiritual Noah, in His ark, that is to say, the Church, in which He saves the human race from destruction, has attributed this number of forgiveness to the width. For if He had not granted the forgiveness of sins to believers, the Church would not have spread across the world[31].

We have here the application to Christ of the forgiveness symbolized by the number fifty, but no allusion is made to the liturgical Pentecost. This is found elsewhere: "*The number 50 contains forgiveness according to the mystery of the Jubilee which*

takes place every fifty years, or of the feast which takes place at Pentecost[32]*."*

This symbolism of Pentecost as signifying forgiveness has a particular importance for Origen, for in the seven liturgical weeks he sees the figure of the age-long weeks of weeks through which is achieved the complete forgiveness of all sins and the restoration of all humanity in its perfection through successive existences: "*We must examine whether the texts relative to the days, to the months, to the time and to the years, are not relative to the ages (aeones). For if the Law is the shadow of future blessings, it follows that the Sabbaths are the shadow of other Sabbaths. And what should I say of the feast of the seven weeks of days*[33]*."*

It is interesting also to notice that Origen, in *the Homilies on the Numbers*, sought to find in the Gospel the symbolism of Pentecost as the symbol of forgiveness: "*The number fifty contains the mystery of forgiveness and pardon, as we have abundantly shown in many passages of Scripture. The fiftieth day after Easter is considered as a feast by the Law. And in the Gospel also, in teaching the parable of forgiveness and pardon, the Lord speaks of a debtor who had a debt of fifty denarii*[34]*."*

11. THE CHURCH AS OUR MOTHER

According to the Spirit, your Father is God; your mother is "the heavenly Jerusalem"(Cf. Gal. 4:26; Heb. 12:22). Learn this from prophetic and apostolic witnesses. This Moses himself writes in a song, "Did not your Father himself acquire you here and possess you? " (Deut. 32:6)[35]*.*

But the Apostle says about "the heavenly Jerusalem": "she is free who is the mother of us all" (Gal. 4:26). Therefore, first, your Father is God who begot your spirit and who says, "I have begotten sons and exalted them" (Isa. 1:2). But the Apostle Paul also says, "Let us submit to the Father of spirits and we shall live (Heb. 12:9)[36]*.*

12. THE CHURCH AS AN INTERPRETER OF THE SCRIPTURES

On this account we must explain to those who believe that the sacred books are not the works of men, but that they were composed and have come down to us as a result of the inspiration of the Holy Spirit by the will of the Father of the universe through Jesus Christ, what are the methods of interpretation that appear right to us, who keep to the rule of the heavenly Church of Jesus Christ through the succession from the apostles[37].

Origen believes that our Lord Jesus Christ Himself is present among His people in the Church to enlighten their inner eyes.

And now if you so wish in this church and in this congregation your eyes can behold the Lord. For when you direct your loftiest thoughts to contemplate Wisdom and Truth, which the Only Son of the Father, your eyes see Jesus. Blessed is the community of which it is written that the eyes of all, catechumens and faithful, men, women, and children, saw Jesus not with eyes of the flesh, but with those of the Spirit[38].

13. THE CHURCH, AN ADORNMENT AND LIGHT OF THE WORLD

Now, the adornment of the world is the Church, Christ being her adornment, who is the first Light of the world[39].

For the end will come if the salt loses its savor, and ceases to salt and preserve the earth, since it is clear that if iniquity is multiplied and love waxes cold upon the earth, (Matt. 24. 12.) as the Savior Himself uttered an expression of doubt as to those who would witness His coming, saying, (Luke 18:8.) "When the Son of man comes, shall He find faith upon the earth?" then the end of the age will come[40].

The Church, imitating her heavenly Groom, is **the light of the world**. Origen invites his opponent to compare the pagan cities with the Christian churches established therein[41].

The churches formed by Christ, if compared to the assemblies of the cities in which they live appear as lighted torches in the world. For who will not confess that the least good members of the Church are often better than many of those seen in the civil assemblies?

Thus the Church of God which is at Athens is gentle and constant, doing its best to please the supreme God; while the assembly of Athens is tumultuous, and cannot in any way be compared with the Church.

After comparing in the same way the churches of Cornish and Alexandria with these cities, he adds:

If we compare the senate of the Church of God to the senate of each city, it will be found that some of the senators of the Church would be worthy senators of a divine city, if there were such a city of God in the world while the civil senators in no way deserve by their morals the eminent place they occupy among their fellow citizens.

Compare, in the same way, the head of each church to the heads of cities, and you will find that in the churches of God, even those who are in the lowest rank among the senators and heads, and who by comparison seem to be negligent, are yet superior to all the civil magistrates if we put their respective virtues side by side.

V V V

THE FEATURES OF THE CHURCH

R.P. Lawson says, "The exquisite picture that the great Alexandrian portrays of his beloved Church is so vivid and so rich in color... Small wonder that for too many to-day she stands only for an organization, rather than for what she was familiarly in Origen's thought of her-Our Lord and Savior's mystical Bride![42]

1. ONE CHURCH

According to Origen, there is only **one church on earth**, and it is finally inseparable from the sacramental, hierarchical institution. This church is, in a striking phrase of Origen, *"the cosmos of the cosmos, because Christ has become its cosmos, he who is the primal light of the cosmos*[43]*."*

Enlightened by the Logos, the Church becomes the world of worlds. As he believes in the universal restoration, the Church for him comprises not only the whole of humanity, but the whole rational creatures[44].

Origen sees the unity of the Church based on her one faith, discipline, and rule.

> *I bear the title of priest and, as you see, I preach the word of God. But if I do anything contrary to the discipline of the Church or the rule laid down in the Gospels-if I give offense to you and to the Church - then I hope the whole Church will unite with one consent and cast me off*[45].

In *hom. 9 on Joshua*, Origen speaks of the temple of God in which Jesus Christ is able to offer a Sacrifice to the Father. It is built with unbroken stones which not any iron tools was used on them (Deut. 27.5). These are the pure living stones, the saintly apostles who constitute one temple through the unity of their hearts (Acts 1:24) and souls. They pray together in harmony as with one voice (Acts 1:14). They have one mind. In other words **true unity**

is based on saintly life, love (unity of hearts), communal worship (one voice), and oneness of faith (one mind).

Origen looks at the sanctity of every member as a base for the church unity for what a member commits has its bad effects on others. He says: *"a single sinner tarnishes the people*[46]*,"* and *"one who commits a fornication or another crime, casts a stain on the whole people*[47]*."*

> *The victim is eaten in its entirety in a single house, and no flesh is taken outside. This means that only one house has salvation in Christ, namely, the Church throughout the world, hitherto estranged from God but now enjoying unique intimacy with God because it has received the apostles of the Lord Jesus, just as of old the house of Rahab, the harlot, received the spies of Joshua, and was the only one saved in the destruction of Jericho.*
>
> *So, however numerous the Hebrew houses were, they were equivalent to a single house, and likewise the churches throughout town and country, however numerous they are, constitute but a single Church. For Christ is one in all of them everywhere, Christ who is perfect and indivisible. Therefore in each house the victim was perfect and was not divided among different houses. For Paul himself says that "we are all one in Christ because there is one Lord and one faith" (Eph. 4:5)*[48]*.*

The unity of the Church is based on its continuity in her faith which starts by the Old Testament and continues in the New Testament. Origen summed up the apostolic continuity in the *confession "that there is one God, who created and arranged all things, the God of the apostles and of the Old and New Testaments*[49]*."*

Another form of continuity in the apostolic tradition **was the continuity of the apostles with one another as the faithful messengers of Christ**. Origen spoke in an utterly matter-of-fact way about "*the teaching of the apostles*[50]*,*" who, like the prophets

of the Old Testaments, had been inspired by the Holy Spirit. This definition of apostolic continuity was directed against the isolation of one apostle from the apostolic community[51].

2. THE CHURCH ADMITS BELIEVERS OF DIFFERENT DEGREES

Origen regards all Christians members of the true Church, though ranked in an ascending scale of faith and knowledge.

Quoting John 14:2 and 1 Cor. 15:39-41, Origen states that there are degrees among those who receive the salvation. He believes that **the Gibeonites** (Jos. 9) refers to the least among them. They believe in God and His redeeming deeds but they do not translate this faith in their practical life.

> *In the Church, there are some Christians who are real believers. They believe in God and do not discuss His commandments. They fulfill their religious duties and desire to serve, but they are not pure in their conducts and private lives. They do not take off the old man with his deeds (Col. 3:9). They are like the Gibeonites who put on their old garments and patched sandals...*

He found a symbol of this distinction of believers in **the arrangements for carrying the Tabernacle** on the march. Aaron and his sons were to wrap the sanctuary and all the vessels of the sanctuary in the appointed covering of badgers' skins or cloths of blue and scarlet; after that, the sons of Kohath shall come to bear them, but they shall not touch any holy thing lest they die.... they shall not go in to see when the holy things are covered lest they die. So in our ecclesiastical observances there are some things that all must do, but that all cannot understand. Why, for instance, we should kneel in prayer, or why we should turn our faces to the East, could not, I think, be made clear to everybody. Who again could easily expound the manner of celebration of the Eucharist, or of its reception, or the words and actions, the questions and replies, of Baptism? And yet all these things we carry veiled and covered

upon our shoulders, when we so fulfill them as they have been handed down to us by the Great High Priest and his Sons. Only the son of Aaron, the man of spiritual intelligence, might gaze upon the holy things naked and unveiled. To the son of Kohath belonged unquestioning obedience; he carried the burden, but was forbidden to demand the reason. Nor might the son of Aaron declare it. To uncover the mystery, to explain that which the bearer was not able to comprehend, was spiritual homicide[52].

Origen says that the Church **admits the highly spiritual believers and also the weak ones**, calling the former **men** and the latter **animals**.

> *But the Church also has animals, hear how it says it in the Psalms: "Lord, you will make men and beasts safe" (Ps. 35:7). These, therefore, who are dedicated to the study of the word of God and of reasonable doctrine, are called men. But those who are living without such studies and do not want exercises of knowledge, but are nevertheless faithful, they are called animals, though, to be sure, clean ones. for just as some are men of God, so some are sheep of God*[53].

Jean Daniélou states that Origen touches on a new subject of symbolism, the comparison of **the animals in the ark** and "those who are saved in the Church." The animals are divided among various degrees of perfection:

As all have neither the same merit, nor is their progress in the faith equal, so the ark did not offer equal accommodation for all... and this shows that in the Church also, though all share the same faith and are washed by the same baptism, all do not equally advance and each one remains in his own class[54].

Origen also explains that there are wicked persons in the church.

> *Wherefore let us not be surprised if, before the severing of the wicked from among the righteous by the*

angels who are sent forth for this purpose, we see our gatherings also filled with wicked persons. And would that those who will be cast into the furnace of fire may not be greater in number than the righteous[55]*!*

3. THE CHURCH LOVES ALL MANKIND

Origen who was aflame with the love of all mankind **desires the salvation of all men**. When Celsus charges the Christians with believing that God has abandoned the rest of mankind and is concerned for the Church alone, Origen replies that this is not a Christian belief[56].

But since it was God who wished the Gentiles also to be helped by the teaching of Jesus Christ, every human plot against the Christians has been thwarted, and the more kings and local rulers and peoples everywhere have humiliated them, the more they have grown in numbers and strength[57]*.'*

THE CHURCH POSSESSES THE RISEN LIFE OF CHRIST

Through unity with **the Risen Christ**, the Church then is called **to rise in greater brightness** and splendor, as though consummation had come.

"Arise; come, my neighbor, my fair one, my dove; for lo, the winter is past; the rain is gone and has departed to itself; the flowers have appeared on the earth...." (cf. Song 2 12). We can say that it is a sort of prophecy given to the Church, to call her to the promised blessings of the future. She is told to "arise," as though the consummation of the age were already reached and the time of resurrection come. And, because this word of command forthwith seals the work of resurrection, she is invited into the kingdom, as being now, by virtue of the resurrection, brighter and more splendid[58].

Origen explains that **Christ is her life:**

And the fact that the Church is the aggregate of many souls and has received the pattern of ***her life from Christ***[59].

5. THE CHURCH GRIEVES FOR SINNERS

The Church together with her Head, Jesus Christ is **in grief till the return of sinners to their God,** and subject to the Father. Origen comments on the words, "Truly I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of this vine until I drink it anew with you in the kingdom of My Father" (Matt. 26:29), saying that wine in the holy Scriptures is a symbol of spiritual joy. God promised His people to bless their vines, that is to grant them abundance of spiritual joy. Therefore He prevents the priests to drink wine on their entrance into the temple, for He wants them to be in grief while the sacrifices are offered on behalf of sinners. When all sinners are reconciled with God then their joy will be perfect. Origen believes that our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and His saints are waiting for the repentance of sinners, therefore, their joy is not yet perfect.

For we must not think that Paul is mourning for sinners and weeping for those who transgress, but Jesus my Lord abstains from weeping when he approaches the Father, when he stands at the altar and offers a propitiatory sacrifice for us. This is not to drink the wine of joy "when he ascends to the altar" because he is still bearing the bitterness of our sins. He, therefore, does not want to be the only one to drink wine "in the kingdom" of God. He waits for us, just as he said, "Until I shall drink it with you." Thus we are those who, neglecting our life, delay his joy[60].

For now his work is still imperfect as long as I remain imperfect. And as long as I am not subjected to the Father, neither is he said to be "subjected" (1 Cor. 15:28) to the Father. Not that he himself is in need of subjection before the Father but for me, in whom he has not yet completed his work, he is said not to be subjected, for, as we

read, "we are the body of Christ and members in part" (1 Cor. 12:27).

But as long as within me "the flesh strives against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh" (Gal. 5:17) and I have not yet been able to subject the flesh to the spirit, certainly I am "subjected" to God, not in whole but "in part." But if I could draw my flesh and all my other members into harmony with the spirit, then I will seem to be perfectly "subjected."

But he does not drink now because he stands at the altar and mourns for my sins. On the other hand, he will drink later, when "all things will have been subjected to him" and after the salvation of all and the death of sin is destroyed (1 Cor. 15:28, 26; Rom. 6:6). Then it will no longer be necessary to offer "sacrifices for sin" (Lev. 6: 30). For then there will be joy and delight. Then "the humble bones will rejoice" (Ps. 50:10) and what was written will be fulfilled: "Pain, sorrow and sighing flee away" (Isa. 35:10).

For the saints, when they leave this place, do not immediately obtain the whole reward of their merits. They also wait for us though we delay, even though we remain, For they do not have perfect delight as long as they grieve for our errors and mourn for our sins. Perhaps you do not believe me when I say this. For who am I that I am so bold to confirm the meaning of such a doctrine? But I produce their witness about whom you cannot doubt. For the Apostle Paul is "the teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth" (1 Tim. 2:7). Therefore, in writing to the Hebrews, after he had enumerated all the holy fathers who were justified by faith, he adds after all that, "But those who had every witness through the faith did not yet obtain the new promise since God was looking forward toward something better for us that they might not obtain perfection without us" (Heb. 11:39-40). You see, therefore, that Abraham is still waiting to obtain the perfect things. Isaac waits, and Jacob

and all the Prophets wait for us, that they may lay hold of the perfect blessedness with us.

Therefore, you will have delight when you depart this life if you are holy. But when the delight will be full when you lack none of the members of the body. For you will wait for others just as you also are waited for.

Because if the delight does not seem to be complete for you who are a member, if another member is missing, how much more does our Lord and Savior, who is "the head" (Eph. 4:15-16) and the originator of the whole body, consider his delight to be incomplete as long as he sees one of the members to be missing from his body. And for this reason, perhaps, he poured out this prayer to the Father: "Holy Father, glorify me with that glory that I had with you before the world was" (John 17:5). Thus, he does not want to receive his complete glory without us, that is, He Himself wants to live in this body of his church and in these members of his people as in their soul that he can have all impulses and all works according to his own will, so that that saying of the prophet may be truly fulfilled in us, "I will live in them and walk [among them]" (Lev. 26:12).

Now, however, as long as we are not all "perfected," and "are still in [our] sins" (Phil. 3:15; Rom. 5:8), he is in us "in part." For this reason, "we know in part and we prophesy in part" (1 Cor. 13:9) until each one is worthy to come to that measure which the Apostle says, "I live, but it is no longer I, for Christ lives in me" (Gal. 2:20), Therefore, "in part," as the Apostle says, now "we are his members" (1 Cor. 12:27) and "in part we are his bones."[61]

You see, therefore, that it is impossible for him to drink the new cup of the new life who still "is clothed by the old person with his deeds." "For no one," it says, "puts new wine into old wine skins." Therefore, if you want to drink from this "new wine," renew yourself and say, "If

our outer person is destroyed, the inner person is renewed from day to day" (Col. 3:9; Matt. 9:17; 2 Cor. 4:16). Certainly this statement is sufficient concerning these things[62].

6. THE CHURCH LIVES IN UNCEASING VICTORY

In chapter 11 we noticed how Origen praises true believers for they conquer the devil and all sins. The true churchmen have trampled upon all the powers by divine grace. Even the gates of Hades cannot overcome them.

Instead of that, when He has torn (the nets) and trampled them, He so emboldens His Church that she too dares to trample now upon the snares, and to pass over the nets, and with all joy to say: Our soul has been delivered as a sparrow out of the snare of the fowlers; the snare is broken, and we are delivered (Ps. 123:7).

Who rent the snare, save He who alone could not be held by it (Acts 2:24)? For, although He suffered death, He did so willingly, and not as we do, by necessity of sin; for He alone was free among the dead (Ps 87:6).

And, because he was free among the dead, when He had conquered him who had the empire of death (Heb. 2:14), He brought forth the captives that were being held by death. And He did not raise only Himself from the dead; He also raised, together with Himself, those who were held by death, and made them to sit with Him in the heavenly places. For ascending on high, He lead captivity captive (Eph. 26; 4:8), not only bringing forth the souls, but also raising their bodies, as the Gospel testifies: Many bodies of the saints... were raised,... and appeared to many, and came into the holy city of the living God, Jerusalem (Matt. 27:52; Heb. 12:22)[63].

The church, as a building of Christ who built His own house wisely upon the rock (Matt. 7:24), is incapable of admitting the gates of Hades which prevail against every

man who is outside the rock and the church, but have no power against it[64]*..*

8. THE CHURCH NEVER CEASES FROM PREACHING ALL OVER THE WORLD

The church which Origen sees and loves is ever the ensemble of Christ's disciples **scattered over the face of the earth**. That great society can never be confused with the rest of the human race, although it never ceases to attract those who have need of belief and although the anxious crowds of those who are hearkening to its call surround it as with a radiance[65].

From the beginning of the church the gospel message was proclaimed by the faithful wherever they lived or traveled. In his treatise against Celsus, Origen writes that *"Christians do all in their power to spread the faith all over the world. Some of them make it the business of their life to wander not only from city to city but from township to township and village to village, in order to gain fresh converts for the Lord*[66]."

9. THE CHURCH IS ANCIENT AND NEW

The Church of the New Testament has inherited all that was the Old Testament's Church to enjoy, not literary but spiritually. St. Paul who describes the Old Testament Church, "to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the services of God, and the promises" (Rom. 9:4), confirms that these privileges have been transferred to the New Testament Church, because of her belief in Christ, saying: " Therefore, having these promises..." (Cor. 7:1)[67].

But do not think that these words are spoken only to that " Israel " which is " according to the flesh" (cf. 1 Cor. 10:18). These words are addressed much more to you who were made Israel spiritually by living for God, who were circumcised, not in flesh, but in heart[68].

The Church is new in her life in Christ, for she accepts the work of His Holy Spirit who unceasingly renews our thoughts and our life. She also is very ancient, for she was in the mind of God who planned for our salvation, even before the foundation of this world.

I would not have you suppose that "the bride of Christ (Rev. 21:2), or the Church is spoken of only after the coming of the Savior in the flesh, but rather from the beginning of the human race, from the beginning of the human race, from the very foundation of the world; I may follow Paul in tracing the origin of this mystery even further, before the foundation of the world. For Paul says," He chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy..." (Eph. 1:4,5).

The Apostle also says that the church is built on the foundation not only of the apostles but also of prophets (Eph. 2:20). Now Adam is numbered among the prophets, and he prophesied the "great mystery in respect of Christ and the Church" when he said; "For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother and shall cleave to his wife and the two shall be in one flesh" Gen. 2:24. For the apostle is clearly speaking of these words when he says: "This mystery is great; but I am speaking in respect of Christ and the Church" (Eph. 5:32). Further the apostle also says: "For He so loved the church that He gave Himself for Her, sanctifying her with the washing of water" (Eph. 5:25,26)... And in this He shows that it is not the case that she did not exist before. For how could He love her if she did not exist? without doubt she existed in all the saints who had been from the beginning of time. Thus loving the church, He came to her. And as His "Children share in flesh and blood, so He also was made partaker of these" (Heb. 2:14) and gave Himself for them. For these saints were the Church, which He loved so as to increase it in

number, to improve it with virtues, and by the "Charity of perfection" (Col. 4:6), transfer it from earth to heaven[69].

ORIGEN'S GRIEF ON ACCOUNT OF THE CHURCH (OF CAESAREA)

It is impossible that the church be fully-purified, as long as she is on earth.

It is impossible to be pure so that there is no one sinner or non-believer in her, and all are saints, without any sin...[70]

Many who come to the feast, but little are these who sit on the table[71].

1. On many occasions Origen expresses his grief on account of the Church (of Caesarea), reproving his hearers through love.

Although all the faithful and the catechumens were expected to attend the morning assembly each day, **many were apparently lax in their attendance**, and others were inattentive or even left after the reading of the scripture. In a petulant mood, Origen once complained about those who did not come to the Synaxis[72].

It may perhaps seem very severe, but can I cover with plaster a wall which is collapsing[73]*?*

How can I put pearls in deaf ears and those who turn away?[74]

Does it not cause [the Church] sadness and sorrow when you do not gather to hear the word of God? And scarcely on feast days do you proceed to the Church, and you do this not so much from a desire for the word as from a fondness for the festival and to obtain, in a certain manner, common relaxation[75].

Tell me, you who come to church only on festal days, are the other days not festal days?...Christians eat the flesh of the lamb every day, that is, they consume daily the flesh of the word[76].

2. Origen complains that **some do not stay for the homily**:

Some of you leave immediately as soon as you have heard the texts which are selected readings... Some do not even patiently wait while the texts are being read in church. Others do not even know if they are read, but are occupied with mundane stories in the furthest corners of the Lord's house[77].

Origen's annoyance grew as his congregation became even more impatient with his explanations of details from the book of Exodus:

But what would it profit should [other things] be discussed by our vast toil indeed, but be despised by hearers who are preoccupied and can scarcely stand in the presence of the word of God a fraction of an hour, and come to nothing?...there are some who understand in heart what is read; there are others who do not at all understand what is said, but their mind and heart are on business dealings or on acts of the world or on counting their profit. And especially, how do you think women understand in heart, who chatter so much, who disturb with their stories so much that they do not allow any silence? Now what shall I say about their mind, what shall I say about their heart, if they are thinking about their infants or wool or the needs of their household?[78]

3. Origen was annoyed because **some members of the congregation objected to his method of interpreting the scriptures**, in particular to his discovery of a spiritual sense there; biblical literalism is not only a modern temptation. In one homily Origen said:

If I shall wish to dig deeply and open the hidden veins" of living water, " immediately the Philistines will be present and will strive with me. They will stir up disputes and malicious charges against me and will begin to refill my wells with their earth and mud[79].

Origen is even clearer on the topic of his opponents as he sets out on one of his most challenging and difficult tasks, preaching on the book of Leviticus:

For if, according to some people, who are even among our own, I should follow the plain sense [of Scripture] and understand the voice of the lawgiver without any verbal trick or clouded allegory thus they usually ridicule us then I, a man of the church who lives under faith in Christ and stand in the midst of the church, am compelled by the authority of God's law to sacrifice calves and lambs and to offer flour, along with incense and oil. For they who force us to spend our time on the narrative and to keep the letter of the law do this. But it is time for us to use the words of the blessed Susanna against the unprincipled presbyters, words that they themselves indeed repudiate when they lop the story of Susanna off from the catalogue of inspired books. But we accept this story [as scripture] and conveniently bring its words against them and say: "Straits are round about me." For if I agree with you and follow the letter of the law, "death is my lot:" if I do not agree, "I shall not escape your hands. But it is better for me to fall into your hands without any act than to sin in the sight of the Lord" (Dan 13:22-23)[80].

J.W. Trigg says,

Origen's sermons help us to avoid the all-too-common tendency to idealize the life of the church during the pre-Constantinian period; if we are to believe him, the church in Caesarea was in sorry shape. He complained in the course of his preaching that relatively few Christians

bothered to attend any but the Sunday services. Some only came then in order to relax and enjoy the company of their friends and were chatting in the back of the room during the sermon[81]. People did not convert to Christianity in Origen's time for worldly reasons, as they would once Constantine made Christianity the preferred religion of the empire, but many belonged to Christian families and continued in the church out of habit and training rather than out of zeal. There had been no persecutions for a generation, so that the winnowing of adversity had not occurred. Origen found himself looking back wistfully to the heroic days of persecution in his youth:

Then there were believers, when there were noble martyrdoms. As soon as we returned from conveying the martyrs to the cemetery, we gathered together in assembly. The whole church was there, not the least bit anguished, and the catechumens were instructed in the midst of the confessors, and in the midst of the dead who had confessed the truth unto death, nor were they anxious or perturbed, because they believed in the living God. Then we saw great and marvelous signs. Then there were few believers, but they really did believe, and they traveled the strait and narrow way that leads to life. But now we have become numerous...and there are few indeed among the many who profess Christian piety who will actually attain divine election and blessedness[82].

"The church sighs and grieves when you do not come to the assembly to hear the Word of God. You go to church hardly ever on feast days, and even then not so much out of a desire to hear the word as to take part in a public function[83]*." He continues by saying that the greater part of their time, "nearly all of it in fact," is spent on mundane things.*

In a sermon on Psalm 36 he addressed this issue:

Watch this only, brethren, that no one of you be found not only not speaking or mediating wisdom, but even hating and opposing those who pursue the study of wisdom. The ignorant, among other faults, have this worst fault of all, that of regarding those who have devoted themselves to the word and teaching as vain useless; they prefer their own ignorance to the study and toil of the learned, and by changing titles they call the exercises of the teacher verbiage, but they call their own unteachableness or ignorance, simplicity[84].

The sermon actually represents Jesus in the midst of the congregation. When the hearers contemplate the message in the service, "*your eyes can behold the Lord. For when you direct your loftiest thoughts to contemplate Wisdom and Truth, which are in the Only Son of the Father, your eyes see Jesus*[85]."

V V V

CHURCH TRADITION

The Church's traditional rule of faith supplies the foundation for speculation and the main line of his theology. He held fast to church tradition, and tried to use philosophy to interpret it. He said, "*We maintain that that only is to be believed as the truth which in no way conflicts with the tradition of the Church and the apostles*[86]."

Balthasar says that his Christian *gnosis* is inseparable from the practice of ecclesiastical sanctity. The entire weight of his preaching points to that unity[87].

Tradition or "the Canon of Faith" is the body of beliefs currently accepted by Christians. He states that Church tradition is handed down from the apostles and is preserved publicly in the churches that stood in succession with the apostles.

T*he teaching of the Church, handed down in unbroken succession from the apostles, is still preserved and continues to exist in the churches up to the present day, we maintain that that only is to be believed as the truth which in no way conflicts with the tradition of the church and the apostles*[88].

Together with the proper interpretation of the Old Testament and the proper canon of the New, this tradition of the Church was a decisive criterion of apostolic continuity for the determination of doctrine in the Church catholic[89].

Origen explains the deposit of Church tradition, which St. Paul refers to in his epistle to Timothy, saying, "O Timothy, Guard the good deposit" (1 Tim. 6:20), as receiving Christ Himself and the Holy Spirit within him.

Likewise, I add the fact that we received Christ, the Lord, as "a deposit" and we have the Holy Spirit as "a deposit." We must watch, therefore, lest we use this holy de-

posit sacrilegiously and, when sins move us into their assent, we swear that we have not received "the deposit." Certainly, if we have that in us, we cannot consent to sin[90].

Origen comments on the words, "those who from the beginning were ***eye-witnesses*** and ministers of the word delivered them to us" (Luke 1:2), saying that there are two important points concerning the church tradition[91]:

a. By saying "eyewitness" he does not mean the bodily eyes, for many saw Jesus Christ according to His flesh, ignoring His Person and His redeeming work, just as Pilate, Jude and the people who cried "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" (John 19:15). The unbeliever cannot see the word of God, this sight to which Christ refers by saying: "He who has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:9).

b. Beholding the Word of God must be correlated to work: "ministers of the Word". For knowledge and practical life are inseparable, or as Origen says that deeds are the crown of knowledge.

TRADITION AND SANCTIFIED REASON

Tradition, embodying the teaching of the Apostles, has handed down certain facts, certain usages, which are to be received without dispute; but it does not attempt to explain the why or the whence. It is the office of the sanctified reason to define, to articulate, to co-ordinate, even to expand, and generally to adapt to human needs the faith once delivered to the church[92].

V V V

CHURCH DISCIPLINE

Origen speaks of a custom, which indicates a longer period of time. "*In the Church of Christ there is this custom, that those who are in notorious sins are dismissed from the common prayer*[93]." Origen states that the custom of dismissing from the common prayer such as are manifest in great iniquities, lest the little leaven which would not pray from a pure heart corrupt the whole community[94]. J.W. Trigg says,

> Origen spiritualized ecclesiastical discipline similarly. He readily accepted the right of church leaders to exclude notorious sinners from the Eucharist, and he thought that they were betraying their pastoral responsibility if they failed to exercise that power. His concern was not that the presence of sinners would, in some mysterious way, impair the church's standing before God but that they would set a bad example. The toleration of known sinners, he thought, demoralizes a congregation, since the simple think, when they see a Christian sin and remain in the church, that they ought to be able to sin with impunity themselves. A good pastor therefore removes the mangy sheep from the flock, since otherwise its mange will inevitably spread to others[95]. Even so, the church's leaders should use their authority discreetly. It is best to see if exhortation and admonishment will cure sinners before excluding them from fellowship[96]...
>
> At the same time, an unjustified excommunication does not really sever the person excommunicated from the spiritual fellowship of the church. Since Origen believed that the Christian was deprived of nothing by not partaking of the Eucharist, such exclusion did no harm.
>
> The church could readmit to its fellowship the excommunicated Christian who exhibited genuine repen-

tance and a firm resolve not to sin again. Demonstrating such moral reformation was a serious process[97].

We then for whom these things are said to be written ought to know, that if we shall sin against the Lord, and if we worship the pleasures of our mind, and the desires of the flesh as good, we also are delivered, and through apostolic authority we are delivered to Zabulon. Listen then to him who says this about the person who had destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved (1 Cor. 5:5). You see therefore that not only through his Apostles does God deliver up sinners into the hands of his enemies, but even through those who preside over the Church, and possess the power not only of loosing, but also of binding; sinners are delivered unto destruction of the flesh, whenever they are separated from the body of Christ for their sins... whenever they are dismissed from the Church by the priests[98].

DISCIPLINE AND RANKS OF BELIEVERS

Discipline must be more strict and firm according to the responsibility and the role of the believer in the church.

All sinners in the Church... deserve punishment, but their punishment will depend on the rank they occupy...

A catechumen deserves more mercy than one of the faithful...

A deacon has a better right to pardon than a priest.

What follows from that you do not need me to tell you... I fear God's judgment and I keep before my imagination a picture of what will happen at it... I bear in mind the saying: If a weight is too heavy for you, do not lift it. What good is it to me to be enthroned at the master's desk in the place of honor... if I cannot do the work my position demands? The torments I shall be punished with will be all the more painful because everyone treats me with respect, as though I were good, whereas in fact I am a sinner[99].

It is to be noted well that the Lawgiver does not add to the sin of the high priest that he shall have sinned through ignorance or involuntarily. For he who was elevated to teach others could not fall through ignorance[100].

ORDER OF DISCIPLINE

For he does not wish you, if perhaps you see the sin of your brother, to rush out immediately into a public place and cry out indiscriminately and divulge another's sins because that certainly would not be the act of one correcting but rather of one defaming. He says, "Only between you and him, accuse him" (Cf. Matt. 18:15). ***For when he who sins sees the secret is kept to himself, he himself will also keep the shame of correction.*** *But if he sees himself defamed, he will immediately be turned to the shamelessness of denial. Not only will you not have corrected the sin, but you will have even doubled it. Therefore, learn the proper order from the Gospels*[101].

NOT TO BE IN A HURRY IN EXCOMMUNICATION

Origen cautions one on using power in excommunicating the sinner. He says: "*But this should be done rarely*[102]."

Origen states that the Church would cut off, or excommunicate, from the congregation of saints, those who after several exhortations to a better life failed to come to repentance for their sins. Thus in one of his *Homilies on Joshua* he brings this out when he remarks[103]:

We do not maintain that one should be cut off for a light fault; but if for an iniquity one is exhorted and upbraided once, and again, and even a third time, and does

not show any signs of improvement, let us use the physician's method...

If the malignancy of the tumor does not respond to the medications, there remains for us the sole remedy of excommunication[104].

Origen stresses the fact that only those whose sins are manifest are cut off from the Church. Wherever the iniquity is not evident, one cannot dismiss a person from the community, lest in eradicating the cockle we eradicate the wheat also[105]. It is humiliating to be cut off from the congregation of the saints; it is an infamy[106].

Therefore St. Paul, who knows that these things are good for the faithful, says of him who sinned: 'whom I have given,' he says, 'to Satan unto the destruction of the flesh', to be punished by death. This shows which are the fruits of this death, when he says: 'that the spirit might be saved in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ!' When he says: 'I have given unto the destruction of the flesh', that is in affliction of the body, which is wont to be undertaken by the penitents, he calls this the death of the flesh, which death of the flesh brings life to the soul[107]*.'*

REACTION OF SOME OF THE EXCOMMUNICATED ONES

Origen explains that bishops have to expect insults from those whom they excommunicated; and that we should not listen to such tales full of malicious exaggeration spread by those who because they have been excommunicated do great harm to the bishop with their sinful tongues[108].

Hence I hold that he who fell into the gravest sin in Corinth, for that reason obtained mercy, because while he was upbraided that he was dismissed from the Church, he did not hate the accuser, but rather he accepted the animadversion with patience and put up with it with fortitude. I am of the opinion that he came by an even greater love for Paul, and for those who were obedient to the decrees of Paul

in their rebuke of him. Therefore Paul revoked his sentence, and brought the excommunicated one back into the Church[109].

Prophets and teachers endure from those who do not wish to be healed of their sin the same things that physicians endure from patients unwilling to accept harsh medical treatment... Such undisciplined patients flee their physicians or injure and insult them, treating them as if they were their enemies[110].

This rebuke should not be difficult to bear. If we find it hard to put up with it now, what would we do if God would rebuke and accuse us in His anger? Therefore if we cannot bear the anger of the bishop who upbraids us, but accept it with indignation, how can we stand the anger of God?[111]

HEAVENLY EXCOMMUNICATION

Origen says that "*if anyone among us should sin, he is dismissed; even though he is not excommunicated by the bishop, because he hides* [112]."

NEED OF REPENTANCE

Cleansing from sin is not established through bodily punishments, but through repentance... [113]

V V V

PRIESTHOOD AND LAITY

PRIESTS, SUCCESSORS OF APOSTLES

Origen combined the apostolic and the priestly definitions of the Christian ministry when he said that "*the apostles and their successors, priests according to the great High Priest... know from their instruction by the Spirit for what sins, and when, and how, they must offer sacrifice*[114]."

PRIESTS AS INTERPRETERS OF THE SCRIPTURES

Joseph W. Trigg clarifies how Origen believes that the main work of the priests of the Old Testament was ritual service while that of the New Testament is education. “The Old Testament priesthood was appealing to Origen, in the first place, because priests were a tribe apart, entirely consecrated to God’s service. On his return to Alexandria after his first sojourn in Caesarea, Origen wrote about this at the beginning of his *Commentary on John*. Priests, he explains, are persons consecrated to the study of the word of God, and high priests are those who excel at such study. There can be no question that these grades correspond to ecclesiastical offices. Priests, and the high priest in particular, also have privileged access to God. Thus Origen follows Clement of Alexandria in interpreting the priest as a spiritual man But if the priest has a privileged access to divine secrets, this is only so that, as a teacher, he might mediate God’s word to others. Origen transforms the Jewish ritual legislation into an exposition of the priest’s vocation as a teacher. For example, removing the skin of the sacrificial victim symbolizes removing the veil of the letter from God’s word, and taking fine incense in the hand symbolizes making fine distinctions in the interpretation of difficult passages. He also interprets sacrifice as the progressive liberation of the soul from the body that makes possible the apprehension of higher truths. Thus the Levitical priesthood comes to symbolize a moral and intellectual elite of inspired teachers of scripture. This transformation

culminates in Origen's interpretation of the high priest's vestments, each item of which symbolizes a spiritual qualification[115]."

If the apostle is an inspired exegete, he is also, like the priest, a teacher by vocation, responsible for mediating God's word to persons at all levels of spiritual progress. Jesus made this clear when he ordered the disciples to allow little children to come to him, thus signifying that more advanced Christians should condescend to the simple[116]. The "works of an apostle" are, in fact, works of teaching. When Jesus commissioned his disciples and gave them power to give sight to the blind and to raise the dead, he had in mind restoring to sight persons "blinded" by false doctrines and raising to life persons "dead" in their sins[117]. Being an apostle is not an official position but function verified in the doing. In arguing to this effect Origen cites Corinthians 9:2: "*If to others I am not an apostle, at least I am to you, for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord*[118]."

Bishops have a special place in the divine economy, since they share responsibility for their congregations with angelic bishops, with whom they cooperate[119]. As a result of these unique responsibilities, bishops have more powers granted to them than are granted to ordinary Christians, though, conversely, more is required of them[120]... Moses' selection of Joshua as his successor is thus the pattern for the selection of a bishop[121]:

> *Here is no popular acclamation, no thought given to consanguinity or kinship;....the government of the people is handed over to him whom God has chosen, to a man who...has in him the Spirit of God and keeps the precepts of God in his sight. Moses knew from personal experience that he was preeminent in the law and in knowledge, so that the children of Israel should obey him. Since all these things are replete with mysteries, we cannot omit what is more precious, although these things commanded literally seem necessary and useful*[122].

Today (Christ) is speaking in our congregation, not only in ours but in other congregations all over the world.

Christ teaches, and He asks instruments which He uses to spread His teaching. Pray that He may find me ready to this and I give homage to Him[123].

J.W. Trigg says,

As with priests, the prime qualification of the apostles was their insight into the mysteries of the Bible. The "fields... white already to harvest" which Jesus called upon the Apostles to reap were the books of the Old Testament[124]. When he called upon them to cross the Sea of Galilee, this symbolized his call to pass from the literal to the spiritual sense of Scripture[125]. A prime characteristic of the Apostle's function as an interpreter and teacher of the Bible was the duty to exercise discretion. Paul, the greatest of the Apostles, provided Origen with an example of apostolic discretion. When among spiritual Christians, Paul boldly imparted "a secret and hidden wisdom of God" (1 Cor. 2:7), but among the simple he judged it expedient "to know nothing... except Jesus Christ and Him crucified" (I Cor. 2:2)[126]. Origen was careful in the case of Apostles, as with priests, to remove any suggestions that those who fulfilled the apostolic function in the church could be identified as the holders of particular positions. Apostles are those who perform the works of an Apostle, works such as restoring to sight those blinded by false doctrine and raising to life those dead in their sins[127]. apostleship is verified in its fruits, or as Paul said: "If to others I am not an apostle, at least I am to you; for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord" (I Cor. 9:2)[128].

PRIESTHOOD AND ABILITY OF TEACHING

He must also be able to communicate what he knows. *"For it is not sufficient for the high priest to have wisdom and to per-*

ceive all reason unless he can communicate what he knows to the people[129]*."*

Origen says that the priest wears the robe of doctrine to teach the advanced and the robe of the word to teach those who are beginning in the faith[130]. Origen comments on the clothes of the priest in and outside the holy of holies saying,

> *You see, therefore, how this most learned priest when he is within, among the perfect ones as in "the holy of holies," uses* ***one robe of doctrine****, but when "he goes out" to those who are not capable he* ***changes the robe of the word and teaches lesser things and he gives to some "milk" to drink as "children" (1 Cor 3:2, 1), to others "vegetables" as "the weak" (Rom. 14:2), but to others, he gives "solid food," of course****, for those who, "insofar as they are able, have their senses trained to distinguish good or evil" (Heb. 5:14). Thus, Paul knew how to change robes and to use one with the people, another in the ministry of the sanctuary*[131]*.*

THE PRIESTS AND TEACHERS AS PILLARS OF THE CHURCH

> *In the tabernacle of the Old Testament, therefore, the pillars are joined by interposed bars; in the Church the teachers are associated by the right hand of fellowship which is given to them.*
>
> *But let those pillars be overlaid with silver and their bases overlaid with silver. Let two bases, however, be allotted to each pillar; one, which is said to be the "capital" and is placed over it; another, which is truly called the "base" and is placed under the pillar as a foundation.*
>
> *Let the pillars, therefore, be overlaid with silver because those who preach the word of God shall receive*

through the Spirit "the words of the Lord," which are "pure words, silver proved by fire" (Ps. 11:7).

But they have the prophets as the base of their preaching, for they erected the Church "upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets" (Cf. Eph. 2:20), and using their testimonies they confirm the faith in Christ.

The capital of the pillars, however, I believe, is He of whom the Apostle says, "The head of man is Christ" (1 Cor. 11:3).

I have already said above that the bars of the pillars are the right hand of the apostolic fellowship given to one another. Let the curtains, which after they have been sewn to rings and suspended in circles and tied with cords, are stretched out in the manner of curtains twenty-eight cubits in length and four in breadth, hold the remaining multitude of believers who cling to and hang on the cords of faith. For "a threefold cord is not broken" (Eccl. 4:12). This is the faith in the Trinity, from which the whole Church hangs and by which it is sustained. I think that the law introduced in the Gospels is designated by the twenty-eight cubits in length and the four in breadth which are the measure of one court[132]*. For the number seven usually signifies the Law because of the many mysteries of the seventh number. When this number is united with four, four times seven consequently make the number twenty-eight.*

These ten courts, however, were constructed that they might contain the whole number of perfection and designate the Decalogue of the Law. But now the appearance of scarlet and blue and linen and purple set forth many diverse works. They disclose the curtains, the exterior and interior veil, and the whole priestly and high priestly attire joined with gold and gems[133]*.*

A HIERARCHICAL POWER[134]

Origen says that "*according to the image of Him, who gave the priesthood to the Church, the ministers also and the priests of the Church receive the "sins of the people," and in imitation of the Master they grant remission of sin*[135]*."*

Just as the Apostles knew how to use this power, even so they who like the Apostles are priests, according to the High Priest Christ, know the meaning of their power[136].

Elsewhere he is just as emphatic. He says, in one of his *Homilies on Leviticus*, that in accordance with the will of Christ, who instituted the priesthood in the Church, the priests of the Church receive the sins of the people, and in imitation of the Divine Master they grant remission of sins[137]..

In his sermon on one of the Psalms, Origen shows the marvelous power of the bishops in which he says that Christ was the great Physician who could cure even malady and infirmity. Now His apostles Peter and Paul, even as the prophets, are physicians; and so are all those who after the apostles have been placed over the Church, to whom the art of healing wounds has been given. It is precisely those ministers whom God has placed as physicians of souls in the Church, because our God does not want the death of sinners, but their penance and conversion[138].

You see therefore that God not only through His Apostles delivers up sinners into the hands of the enemies, but even through those who are over the church, and possess the power not only of loosing, but also of binding[139].

INNER PRIESTHOOD

The hierarchy of the Church is conceived not as an external priesthood but in accordance with its interior degrees of perfection. This idea of a hierarchy according to it has already appeared in the *Eclogae Proplieticae* of Clement. We have passed from the official exegesis of the Church to a private and unofficial one[140].

What good does it do me that I occupy the first chair in the congregation, and receive the honor of an elder, without possessing the works worthy of my dignity? [141]"

AUTHORITY AND PURITY

Origen affirms on several occasions that the validity of ecclesiastical powers depends upon the priest's state of soul. "*If he is tightly bound with the cords of his own sins, to no purpose does he bind and loose*." The right of forgiving sins committed against God is reserved to him who "*is inspired by Jesus, as the apostles were, and whom we can know by his fruits as having received the Holy Spirit*[142]."

Origen stresses the importance of spiritual qualities in the bishop. He believes that a sinful bishop looses his power to remit sins, saying:

After this let us see in what sense it was said to Peter, and to every believer who is Peter, "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. 16:19)... When one judges uprighteously, and does not bind upon earth according to His will, the gates of hell prevail against him: but in the case of him against whom the gates of hell do not prevail, this man judges righteously; inasmuch as he has the keys of the kingdom of heaven, opening to those who have been loosed on earth that they may also be loosed in heaven, and free; and closing to those who by his just judgment have been bound on earth that they also be bound in heaven, and condemned. When those who claim the function of the episcopate, use this text even as Peter, and having asserted that they have received the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven from Christ, teach that things bound by them, that is to say, condemned, are also bound in heaven, and that those which have obtained remission by them are also loosed in heaven, we must say that they speak well if they have the way of life... and if they are such that upon them the Church is built by

Christ, and to them with good reason this could be referred; and the gates of hell ought not to prevail against him when he wishes to bind and loose. But if he is tightly bound with the cords of his sins, to no purpose does he bind and loose[143].

He complains that one cannot dismiss such persons whose sins are doubtful or concealed[144].

Nor do we say this of those who obviously and notoriously are sinful, that they should not be expelled from the Church... Because we cannot therefore dismiss those who despise us: let us dismiss those at least whom we can, whose sins are known. Wherever the sin is not evident, we cannot throw anyone out of the Church 'lest perhaps gathering up the cockle, you root up the wheat also together with it'[145].

MISUSING AUTHORITY

Some bishops, "*particularly in the largest cities*," make themselves as inaccessible as tyrants in order to overawe their congregations[146].

BISHOPS AND VAINGLORY

And you will say the like in the case of him who seeks the office of a bishop for the sake of glory with men, or of flattery from men, or for the sake of the gain received from those who, coming over to the word, give in the name of piety; for a bishop of this kind at any rate does not "desire a good work," (I Tim. 3:1) nor can he be without reproach, nor temperate, nor sober minded, as he is intoxicated with glory and intemperately satiated with it. And the same also you will say about the presbyters and deacons[147].

Origen comments on the behavior of Joshua who received his lot of inheritance after all the tribes and after Caleb, saying,

Why did he desire to the last of all? To assure that he became the first of all (Matt. 19:30). He did not receive his inheritance by his own decision but from the people as the Scripture says, "the children of I Israel gave an inheritance among them to Joshua the son of Nun" (Jos. 19:49). But now all these things happened to them as examples (1 Cor. 10:11)... It is said, "Increase in behaving humbly then you will increase in greatness and receive a favor from the Lord" (Sirach 3:17), and also, "If they chose you a president don't be proud, but be among them as one of them" (Sirach. 32:10)[148].

Accordingly, if we do alms before men...we receive the reward from men (cf. Matt. 6:1-4); in general, everything done with an eye on being glorified by men has no reward from Him who....rewards those who act in secret. So, too, those influenced by thoughts of vain glory or love of gain act with sullied motives. The teaching which is thought to be the teaching of the church, if it becomes servile through words of flattery, either when it is used as a pretext for avarice, or when one seeks human glory because of one's teaching, it is no longer the teaching of those "who have been set up in the church: first, apostles, second, prophets, third, teachers (1 Cor. 12:28). And you will say the same with regard to one who seeks the office of bishop for the sake of human esteem, or for the sake of gain received form converts to the word who give in the name of piety; a bishop of that sort assuredly does not "aspire to a noble task" (1 Tim. 3:1), nor can he be "irreproachable, temperate, self-controlled," as he is intoxicated with glory and intemperately puffed up with it. The same is also applicable to presbyters and deacons[149].

Origen, in his homilies and commentaries presents himself as an example for the humbleness of clergymen and teachers.

1. He used to attribute his understanding of the holy Scriptures to the grace of God and to himself.

2. Many times he asked those who attended his speech to hear those who were more wise than him and attained more grace of understanding from God.

Probably a man wiser than I and judged by God worthy of a more penetrating and richer grace-gift of wisdom in exposition from the Spirit of God, and of the gift of knowledge in the word by the Spirit (I Cor. 8:12)...(could give a better exposition here than mine, but I have done my best.') [150].

May God grant to whom He chooses a richer word of wisdom and a word made more penetrating by the light of knowledge, that my own exposition compared with one based on such grace-gifts may resemble a candle in the light of the sun[151].

(Origen's modest conclusion to his exposition): *This is the best I can do...Let the man who is able to receive greater grace for the understanding of this passage speak more and better words*[152].

(None can fully interpret) *unless Jesus, who privately explained everything to His own disciples (Mark 4:34), has made His dwelling in his mind and opens all the dark, hidden unseen, treasure-chambers in the parable... Now I have not yet received a mind sufficient and capable of being mingled with the mind of Christ and thus able to attain to such things*[153].

Origen asks all clergy to be humble, imitating Moses the greatest among the prophets who did not dare to chose a successor to himself, asking God Himself to choose who is fit to this position.

Let us admire the greatness of Moses. As he was about to depart from this life, he prayed God to choose a leader for his people. What are you doing Moses? Don't you have sons of your own, Gershom and Eliezer? If you

lack confidence in them, what about your brother, a great man? Why don't you ask God to make them the leaders of the people?

Would that the princes of the Church, instead of designating in their wills those linked to them by ties of blood or family relationships and instead of trying to set up dynasties in the Church, might learn to rely on God's judgment and far from choosing as human feelings urge, would leave the designations of their successors entirely in God's hands. Could not Moses have chosen a leader for the people and chosen him by a wise judgment, a right and just decision...? Who could have chosen a leader more wisely than Moses? But he did not do so. He made no such choice. He did not dare.

Why not? In order to avoid giving those who came after him an example of presumption. Listen: "May the Lord, the God of the spirits of all mankind, set over the community a man who shall act as their leader in all things, to guide them in all their actions..." (Num 27.16-17) If a great man like Moses did not take upon himself the choice of a leader for the people, the election of his successor, who then will dare, among this people which gives its vote under the influence of emotion, or perhaps of money; who will dare then, even in the ranks of the priests, judge himself capable of pronouncing on this, unless by means of a revelation obtained through prayers and supplication addressed to the Lord?[154]

PRIESTHOOD AND TRADING IN THE TEMPLE OF GOD

May every man who sells in the temple, especially if he was a seller of doves... i.e., he sells what the holy Spirit (the Dove) reveals to him asked for money and not freely. As he sells the work of the Spirit he will be moved away from the altar of the Lord[155].

TRUE LEADERSHIP

How is it that the church is in such a sorry state? Has God failed to provide the church with worthy leaders? By no means. But the church sometimes fails to give such persons their proper place of honor and responsibility[156].

For it frequently happens that he who deals in an humble and abject interpretation and knows earthly things has the preeminent rank of a priest or sits in the chair of a teacher, while he who is spiritual and so free from earthly things that he "judges all things and is judged by no one" either holds a lower rank of ministry or is relegated to the common multitude[157].

But this anomaly is only external, for on a deeper level the members of the spiritual elite whom Origen describes as priests and apostles are the true leaders of the church:

Whoever has in himself those things that Paul enumerates about a bishop, even if he is not a bishop before men, is a bishop before God, since he did not come to his position by the ordination of men[158].

PRIESTHOOD AND INNER INCORRUPTIBILITY

The priest must put on the **garment of incorruptibility**, instead of that of Adam, the skin tunic. Aaron, the high-priest, was dressed with garments by Moses (Lev. 8:7).

Indeed, it is said that God made those. "For God made skin tunics and clothed Adam and his wife." Therefore, those were tunics of skins taken from animals. For with such as these, it was necessary for the sinner to be dressed. It says, "with skin tunics," which are a symbol of the mortality which he received because of his skin and of his frailty which came from the corruption of the flesh. But if you have been already washed from these and purified through the Law of God, then Moses will dress you with a

garment of incorruptibility so that "your shame may never appear" and "that this mortality may be absorbed by life[159].

For, before everything, the priest who assists at the divine altars ought to be girded with purity, otherwise he will not be able to cleanse the old and establish the new unless he has put on the linens. About the linen clothes, it has been frequently spoken already, and especially when we were speaking about the priestly garments, that this kind has the form of purity, from the fact that the origin of flax is brought forth from the earth so that it conceived without any mixture[160].

The portions of the priest in the *Peace offerings* are the breast and the right limb (Lev. 7:30,33), for he has to be sanctified in his heart and in his deeds.

"The fatty parts which are above the breast" are placed on the altar, but "the breast itself is for Aaron and his sons" (Lev. 7: 30)...

I think that if anyone says he is a priest of God, unless he has a breast (or the heart as the source of thoughts) chosen from all the members, he is not a priest...

Such is the limb (Lev. 7: 33) of the priest that the sons of Israel bring it to him for their salvation by which they are saved...

In this offering "the breast" and "the right limb" are made part of the priest that it may be a sign that his breast and heart, which thought evil things before, converted by the labor of the priest, received good thoughts and thus was cleansed that likewise "he may be able to see God." In like manner also, in the limb is the sign that his evil and sinister words, which are certainly wicked and not good, he converts into right that they may be according to God. This is the right limb, which is said to be the priest's part[161].

From this I think it is one thing for the priests to perform their office, another thing to be instructed and prepared in all things. For anyone can perform the religious ministry, but few there are who are adorned with morals, instructed in doctrine, educated in wisdom, very well adapted to communicate the truth of things and who expound the wisdom of the faith, not omitting the ornament of understandings and the splendor of assertions which is represented by the ornament "of gold plate" placed on his head. One then is the name of a priest, but there is not one dignity either by the worth of his life or by the virtues of his soul. For this reason, in the things which the divine law describes, even as in a mirror any priest ought to inspect himself and to gather from that place the degrees of his merit, if he sees himself placed in all these high priestly ornaments, which we explained above[162].

PRIESTHOOD AND DWELLING IN THE HOUSE OF GOD

The priest does not leave the House of God, i.e., he loves the heavenly life.

For that reason, if anyone wants to be a high priest not just in name but in worthiness, let him imitate Moses; let him imitate Aaron. What is said about them? "They ***did not leave the Tent of the Lord****" (Lev. 10:7). Moses was constantly in "the Tent of the Lord." What was his work? That he should either learn something from God or teach the people*[163].

It is the duty of the priests to **assist the people to attain the forgiveness of sins** by the work of the Holy Spirit through the Church. They cannot realize this unless they be found in the Church, the holy place and the spiritual Tent of Witness (Lev. 6:19), i.e., unless they practice the church life as a holy life.

For it is logical that the ministers and priests of the Church receive "the sins of the people" according to

*the example of the one who gave the priesthood to the Church ought to be so perfected and learned in the priestly duties that they consume "the sins of the people in a holy place, in the court of the Tent of Witness," **not sinning themselves**[164].*

PRIESTHOOD AND LIFE OF PRAYER

The priest is **a man of prayer**, who assists his people by his prayers to defeat the unseen enemy.

Thus let the priest of the church also pray unceasingly that the people who are under him may defeat the invisible Amalachite hosts who are the demons that assail those who want to live piously in Christ[165].

THE PRIEST'S FATHERHOOD

Origen in his speech on the authority of priests assures that they are physicians who take care of the sick people, working hard for their healing. They are not rulers but fathers.

For in the Church, the priests and teachers can beget sons, just as that one who said, "My little children, for whom I am again in travail until Christ is formed in you" (Gal. 4:19). And again in another place he says, "Although you have myriad teachers in Christ, but not many fathers. For I beget you in Christ Jesus for the gospel" (1 Cor. 4:15)[166].

Origin's reminder is always salutary: "*he who is called to the episcopacy is called, not to domination, but to the service of the whole church[167].*"

God permits priests to feel weakness, so that they might be kind with those who are weak. On discovering their own sins they become decent with the sinners to attract them to repentance.

"The Law appoints human priests who have weaknesses," (Lev. 7:28) in order that just as they can offer for

their own weakness, so also they can offer for that of the people...

But what is most to be admired in this kind of priest? Not that he may not sin-because that is impossible, but that he knows and understands his own sin. For he who thinks he has not sinned never corrects himself. In like manner, he is more easily able to pardon those who sin, whose conscience is disturbed by his own weakness[168].

PRIESTS AS PHYSICIANS

In one of his homilies on the Psalms Origen calls the bishops physicians who know how to heal wounds[169].

SPIRIT OF LEADERSHIP

It is the work of the leaders to create a spirit of leadership in others, so that ministry might not be concentrated in them alone.

But note that God said to Moses in this place, "Go before the people and take with you men advanced in years, that is the elders of the people" (Exod. 17:5). Moses alone does not lead the people to the waters of the rock, but also the elders of the people with him. For the Law alone does not announce Christ, but also the prophets and patriarchs and all "those advanced in years[170]*."*

PRIESTHOOD AND GRACE OF GOD

Divine grace prepares the prophets, apostles, evangelists, shepherds, and teachers to this divine call and works through them. If one neglects it, he falls from his calling.

The shepherhood (of the ministers of the Church) is failure unless Christ shepherds with them[171].

If to be a "teacher" is a grace gift "according to the measure of the gift of Christ", it is clear that a "shepherd" also, who tends his flock wisely, needs a grace-gift to

do so. And how can one be an "evangelist," the "feet" of whose soul (if I may put it so) are not "beauteous"? For this, God must grant the "beauty[172]*."*

The proper tasks of a priest are twofold: to learn of God by reading and frequently meditating on Holy Scripture, and to teach the people. But let him teach what he has learned from God - not "from his own heart" (Ezek. 13 2) or from human understanding, but the things the Spirit teaches... And so we, meditating on [the Old Testament narratives], *recalling them to mind day and night, and continuing instantly in prayer, should pray God that He may deign to reveal to us true knowledge of what we read, and to show us how we may keep the spiritual law, both in our understanding and in our actions. So may we deserve to obtain spiritual grace, enlightened by the law of the Holy Spirit*[173]*.*

GENERAL PRIESTHOOD

In his homilies, Origen refers to the general priesthood of all members of the Church. As an example he says,

Do you want to know the difference between the priests of God and the priests of Pharaoh? Pharaoh gave lands to his priests; the Lord says to his own "I am your lot." Pay attention, readers, all you priests of the Lord.... Let us hear what Christ our Lord enjoins his priests "Every one of you that does not renounce all that he possesses, cannot be my disciple." I tremble when I say these words, for above all it is myself that I accuse, myself that I condemn. Christ refuses to regard as his disciple whosoever possesses something and does not renounce all that he possesses. What are we doing? How can we read this and expound it to the people, we who not only do not renounce that which we have, but also desire to acquire what we never possessed before we came to Christ? Because our consciences accuse us, are we able to dissimulate that

which is written? I do not want to make myself doubly guilty...[174]

Origen was training men who would later be the ruling class in the life of the Church. He himself had not yet been ordained to the priesthood but he had long aspired to that grace. In the meantime he regarded his pedagogical functions as something sacred, seeing in them an image of the priesthood of Aaron. Let us remember that St. John represents the Christian people in his vision of the twelve tribes whom he counted around the Lamb. On one side he places the virgins, as first fruits of the faithful of Christ. They are the intellectual elite, the little group of true disciples who, by the study of Holy Scripture, by contemplation as well as by vigilance and perseverance, guard that purity of body and of mind by which the perfect are known. They can be called Levites or priests of Israel because they exercise an inner priesthood[175].

Do you not know that the priesthood has been given to you, that is to say, to the whole church of God and to the people believers? Hear Peter say to the faithful: "a chosen race, a royal priesthood a holy nation, an acquired people" (1 Pet. 2:9). You, then, have the priesthood since you are a priestly race, and so you ought to offer to God a sacrifice of praise, (cf. Heb. 13:15), a sacrifice of prayers, a sacrifice of mercy, a sacrifice of purity, a sacrifice of sanctity[176].

Most of us devote most of our time to the things of this life and dedicate to God only a few special acts, thus resembling those members of the tribes who had but few transactions with the priests, and discharged their religious duties with no great expense of time. But those who devote themselves to the divine word and have no other employment but the service of God may not unnaturally, allowing for the difference of occupation in the two cases, be called our Levites or priests. And those who follow a more distinguished office than their kinsmen will perhaps be high priests according to the order of Aaron[177].

In the moral sense, this high priest can be seen as the understanding of piety and religion, which through the prayers and supplications which we pour out to God, performs in us, as it were, a kind of priesthood. If this one should transgress in something, immediately "he makes all the people sin" against the good acts which are within us. For we do not do any right deed when the understanding, the guide of good works, turns aside into wrong. For that reason, for correction of this, not just any kind of offering is required but the sacrifice "of the fatted calf" itself. In like manner, the guilt of the congregation; that is, the correction of all virtues which are within us, is repaired though nothing other than by putting Christ to death[178].

*Observe that there always ought to be "fire on the altar." And you, if you want to be a priest of God, as it is written, "**For every one of you will be priests of the Lord**" (Isa. 61:6). For it is said that you are "an elect race, a royal priesthood, an acquired people" (1 Pet. 2:9). If, therefore, you want to exercise the priesthood of your soul, let the fire never depart from your altar. This is what the Lord also taught in the Gospels that "your loins be girded and your lamps burning" (Luke 12:35). Thus, let the "fire" of faith and the "lamp" of knowledge always be lit for you*[179].

As we have already said often, you too can function as a high priest before God within the temple of your spirit of you would prepare your garments with zeal and vigilance; if the word of the Law has washed you and made you clean, and the anointing and grace of your baptism remained uncontaminated; if you were to be clothed with two garments, of the letter and of the spirit; if you were also girded twice so that you may be pure in flesh and spirit; if you would adorn yourselves "with a cape" of works and "a breastplate" of wisdom; if also he would crown your head "with a turban" and " golden plate"

(Lev. 8:7f.), the fullness of the knowledge of God; although, I would have you know, you may be hidden and unknown before men. "For you are the temple of the living God" if "the Spirit of God lives in you"(2 Cor. 6:16; 1 Cor. 3:16)[180].

Or are you ignorant that to you also, that is, to all of the Church of God and to the people of believers, the priesthood was given? Hear what Peter says about the faithful: You are " an elect race, royal, priestly, a holy nation, a chosen people" (1 Pet. 2:9). Therefore, you have a priesthood because you are "a priestly nation," and for this reason "you ought to offer an offering of praise to God,"(Cf. Heb. 13:15) an offering of prayer, an offering of mercy, an offering of holiness. But in order to offer these things worthily, you must have clean clothes separated from the common clothing of the rest of humanity and have the necessary divine fire, not one "alien" to God but that one which is given people by God, about which the Son of God says, "I came to send fire upon the earth and how I wish that it be ignited." (Luke 12:49) For if we do not use that but another, and this an opposing fire, from that one which transforms itself as "an angel of light" (Cf. 2 Cor. 11:14), without doubt we will suffer the same thing that "Nadab and Abiud " suffered[181].

Each (believer), according to the providence and choice of God, is called apostle, prophet etc. and the saying.. "Many are called, but few chosen" (Matt 22:14) is fulfilled in accordance with the divine ways of grace.. It is, however, possible for a man to be called as an apostle etc... but to fall from his calling, if he neglects the grace of that calling...[182]

The Word of God is working in the lives of all the members, clergy and laymen, so that all may have their active role.

Just as the soul moves the body which has not been endowed to be moved in a vital manner by itself, so the Word energizing the whole body keeps the Church in motion and each of its several parts[183].

CHURCH DEMOCRACY

Church democracy appears in the relation between clergymen and laity which I will speak of on another occasion. Here I refer to the following points:

a. Origen says: "*He who is called to the episcopacy is called, not to domination, but to the service of the whole church*[184]."

b. St. Clement and Origen spoke of the general (laity) priesthood[185].

Do you know that the priesthood has been given to you that is to say, to the whole church of God and to the believers? Hear Peter say to the faithful: " a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, an acquired people " 1 Pet. 2: 9. You, then, have the priesthood since you are a priestly race, so you ought to offer to God a sacrifice of praise (Heb. 13: 15), a sacrifice of prayers, a sacrifice of mercy, a sacrifice of purity, a sacrifice of sanctity[186].

R. Cadiou says,

We are told by these historians that, according to a number of evidences, the most ancient of which is found in the works of St. Jerome, the bishop of Alexandria, from the earliest times in that church, was one of the members of the local clergy; that he was chosen and delegated by the priests in some such way as the emperor was chosen by the army. This primitive custom, so we are told, ended only under the successors of Demetrius. Beginning with this post-Demetrius period, the "patriarch" was elected and consecrated by the neighboring bishops according to the habitual procedure; and they would have been under no ob-

ligation to choose him from the ranks of the clergy of Alexandria[187].

Origen gives some insight into the election of bishops in his day. Using Origen's *Homily on Numbers* 13.4 as evidence, E. Ferguson demonstrates that in the third century there were at least four ways of electing bishops:

1. A popular election.

2. An appointment by a reigning bishop.

3. A *testomonium* either nominating a person or ratifying one elected by the people.

4. A presbyterial election, Origin's personal preference[188].

c. Origen asserts that the presence of the people is required in the ordination of a priest, for they elect him[189].

For in the ordination of a priest the presence of the people is also required, that all may know for certain that the man elected to priesthood is a man of the whole people the most eminent, the most learned, the holiest, the most outstanding in every virtue[190].

He says it should be an open decision lest anyone have second thoughts, and he bases this on the fact that "Moses called together the whole assembly."

V V V

[1] *Thomas Halton: The Church (Message of the Fathers of the Church, vol. 4, p. 21.)*
[2] *Jean Daniélou: Origen, NY, 1955, p. 27.*
[3] *Jaroslav Pelikan: The Christian Tradition, 1. The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100-600), Chicago, 1971,p. 3..*
[4] *Henri De Lubac: Origen, On First Principles, NY., 1966 (Koetschau text together with an introduction and notes by G.W. Butterworth, p. X, XIII.*
[5] *Henri De Lubac: Origen, On First Principles, p. XIII.*
[6] *In Lev. hom. 1:2 (G.W. Barkley - Frs. of the Church).*
[7] *In Luc. hom 1:35.*
[8] *R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder Book Co., 1944, p. 313 .*
[9] *In Jer. hom. 9.2; In Jos. hom. 8.7.*
[10] *Quasten, p. 82.*
[11] *Comm. on the Songs of Songs, book 3:3 (ACW).*
[12] *Contra Celsus 8:28,29.*
[13] *In Exod. hom. 13:9.*
[14] *In Ezek. hom 1:11; in Exod. 9:3.*
[15] *Against Celsus 8:75; in Jer. hom. 11:3.*
[16] *On Prayer, 31:5; Rowan A. Greer: Origen, p. 27.*
[17] *In Matt 10:19.*
[18] *In John. 19.*
[19] *Comm. on Cant. 11:8 (ACW 26:149; tr. R.P. Lawson).*
[20] *Against Celsus 6:48; in Matt. 14:17.*
[21] *Contra Cels. 6,48 ANF.*
[22] *In Jos. hom. 3,5.*
[23] *In Lib. Issu Nave 3:5(Battenson, p. 3360-7).*
[24] *In Josh. hom 3:5.*
[25] *A. Harnack, Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte (4 ed. rev.; Tuebingen: J. Mohr, 1909), p. 439 sq.; Ernest Latko: Origen's Concept of penance, Laval 1949, p. 69.*
[26] *In Gen. hom. 1:7.*
[27] *On Prayer 11:2.*
[28] *Commentary on Matthew, Book 12:13 (Cf. ANF).*
[29] *N.R.M. De Lange: Origen and the Jews: Studies in Jewish-Christian Relations in Third-Century Palestine, 1976, Cambridge, p. 80.*
[30] *Jean Daniélou: The Bible and the Liturgy, p.325-7.*
[31] *In Gen. hom. 2:5.*
[32] *In Matt. hom. 11:3; PG 13:908 A.*
[33] *De Oratione 27:14; Koetschau, 373, 14.*
[34] *In Num. hom. 5:2; see also 25:2.*
[35] *Homilies On Leviticus 9:9 (Cf. Frs. of the Church)*
[36] *Homilies On Leviticus 11:3 (Cf. Frs. of the Church)*
[37] *De Principiis 4:2 (Henri De Lubac).*
[38] *In Luc. hom. 32:6 (Thomas K. Carroll; Messages of the Fathers of the Church).*
[39] *Comm. on John, book 6:38.*
[40] *Comm. on John, book 6:38.*
[41] *Contra Celsum 3:27.*
[42] *R.P. Lawson: Origen, The Song of Songs, Commentary and Homilies, p.7.*
[43] *In John hom. 6:59; Jaroslav Pelikan: The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100), p. 160.*
[44] *Hom. in 36 Ps. 2:1.*
[45] *In Jos. hom. 7:6; Jean Daniléou: Origen, NY, 1955, p.8.*

[46] *In Jos. hom. 7. PG 12:861, 244.*
[47] *PG 12:244.*
[48] *An anonymous Paschal homily in the tradition of Origen; Thomas Halton, p. 87.*
[49] *De Principiis, Pr. 4.*
[50] *De Principiis, Pr. 4.*
[51] *Jaroslav Pelikan: The Christian Tradition, 1. The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100-600), Chicago, 1971, p. 112.*
[52] *Charles Bigg: The Christian Platonists of Alexandria, Oxford 1913, p. 180-181*
[53] *In Lev. hom. 3:3 (cf. G.W. Barkley - Frs. of the Church).*
[54] *Jean Daniélou : From Shadows to Reality, Studies in the Biblical Typology of the Fathers, Newsman Press, 1960, p. 106.*
[55] *Comm. on Matt., book 2:13.*
[56] *Contra Celsus 4:28; N.R.M. De Lange: Origen and the Jews: Studies in Jewish-Christian Relations in Third-Century Palestine, 1976, Cambridge, p. 76..*
[57] *Contra Celsus 7:26.*
[58] *Commentary on the Song of Songs 3.14; ACW 26.239, 245.*
[59] *Comm. on the Songs of Songs, book 2:6 (ACW).*
[60] *Homilies on Leviticus 7:2. (See Frs. of the Church)*
[61] *Homilies on Leviticus 7:2. (See Frs. of the Church)*
[62] *Homilies on Leviticus 7:2. (See Frs. of the Church)*
[63] *Comm. on the Songs of Songs, book 3:13 (ACW).*
[64] *Commentary on Matthew, Book 12:11 (Cf. ANF).*
[65] *R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder Book Co., 1944, p. 313.*
[66] *Against Celsus, 3:9; Carl A. Volz: Life and Practice in the Early Church, Minneapolis, 1990, p. 97.*
[67] *Fr. T. Y. Malaty: The Church 1991, p. 7-8.*
[68] *In Exod. hom 7:12*
[69] *Comm. on Cant. Cant. 2[Bettenson: Early Christian Fathers, 1956, p. 338-9]*
[70] *In Jos. hom. 21:1.*
[71] *PG 13:1524.*
[72] *David G. Hunter: Preaching in the Patristic Age, 1989, p. 43ff.*
[73] *In Gen. hom. 10:1.*
[74] *In Gen. hom 10:1*
[75] *Homily on Genesis 10.1 (Heine, 157)*
[76] *Ibid. 10.3 (Heine, 162-63)*
[77] *Homily on Exodus 12.2 (Heine, 369)*
[78] *Ibid., 13.3 (Heine, 378)*
[79] *Homily on Genesis 12.4(Heine, 180-81)*
[80] *Homily on 1 Samuel 28,1.*
[81] *See Hom. on Genesis 10:1.*
[82] *Hom. on Jer. 4:3; Joseph Wilson Trigg: Origen, SCM Press, 1985, p. 177-178.*
[83] *On Gen. Hom., 10:1; On Jer. Hom., 18:7-10; Carl A. Volz: Life and Practice in the Early Church, Minneapolis, 1990, p. 115.*
[84] *On Ps. 36, 5:1; Carl A. Volz: Life and Practice in the Early Church, Minneapolis, 1990, p. 114.*
[85] *On Luke hom.; 36:6.*
[86] *De Principiis, I. praef. 2.*
[87] *Rowan A. Greer: Origen, Paulist Press, 1979, page XIII.*
[88] *De Principiis 1:1 (G.W. Butterworth).*
[89] *Jaroslav Pelikan : The Christian Tradition, Chicago, 1971, p. 115.*
[90] *Homilies on Leviticus 4:3. (See Frs. of the Church)*
[91] *In Luc. hom 1:4,5 [Fr. T. Malaty: Luke (in Arabic), P. 21-22.]*

[92] *Charles Bigg: The Christian Platonists of Alexandria, Oxford 1913, p. 191.*
[93] *In Mattthaem Commentariorum Series, 89 PG 13:1740; Ernest Latko: Origen's Concept of penance, Laval 1949, p. 89.*
[94] *Comm. on Matt. PG 13:1740; Ernest Latko: Origen's Concept of penance, Laval 1949, p. 71.*
[95] *Fragm. on 1 Corinthians, ed. by C. Jenkins, Journal of Theological Studies (1908): 364.*
[96] *Comm. on Matt. 16:8.*
[97] *Joseph Wilson Trigg: Origen, SCM Press, 1985, p.196-7.*
[98] *In Judices Homilia 3:5 PG 12:960-961.; Ernest Latko: Origen's Concept of penance, Laval 1949, p.93.*
[99] *In Ezech. hom. 5:4; Jean Daniélou: Origen, NY, 1955, p. 25.*
[100] *In Lev. hom. 2:1 (cf. G.W. Barkley - Frs. of the Church).*
[101] *In Lev. hom. 3:2 (cf. G.W. Barkley - Frs. of the Church).*
[102] *In Mattaeum Commentarii Liber 25, Liber 16:8 PG 13:1396; Ernest Latko: Origen's Concept of penance, Laval 1949, p. 98..*
[103] *Ernest Latko: Origen's Concept of penance, Laval 1949, p. 70.*
[104] *In Josh. hom 7:6 PG 12:862.*
[105] *In Jos. hom. 21:1 PG 12:740.*
[106] *In Ezek. hom. 10:1 PG 13.*
[107] *In Lev. hom. 14:4 PG 12:559; Ernest Latko: Origen's Concept of penance, Laval 1949, p. 70.*
[108] *In Jer. hom. 14:14; Ernest Latko: Origen's Concept of penance, Laval 1949, p. 94.*
[109] *In Psalmum 37 Homilia 1:1 PG 12:1370.*
[110] *In Jer. hom. 14:1.*
[111] *Ernest Latko: Origen's Concept of penance, Laval 1949, p. 95.*
[112] *In Lev. hom. 12:6 PG 12:542; Ernest Latko: Origen's Concept of penance, Laval 1949, p. 100.*
[113] *Homilies On Leviticus 11:1 (Cf. Frs. of the Church)*
[114] *On Prayer, 28:9; Jaroslav Pelikan : The Christian Tradition, Chicago, 1971, p. 59.*
[115] *Church History 50 (1981) : The Charismatic Intellectual: Origen's Understanding of Religious Leadership, p. 111-112.*
[116] *Comm. on Matt. 15:7.*
[117] *In Isaiah hom. 6:4.*
[118] *Comm. on John 32:17; Church History 50 (1981) : The Charismatic Intellectual: Origen's Understanding of Religious Leadership, p. 113-114.*
[119] *De Principiis 1:8:1; In Luke hom. 12:3.*
[120] *In Jerm. hom 11:3; Fragm. 50.*
[121] *Church History 50 (1981) : The Charismatic Intellectual: Origen's Understanding of Religious Leadership, p. 115.*
[122] *In Num. hom. 22:4; Church History 50 (1981) : The Charismatic Intellectual: Origen's Understanding of Religious Leadership, p. 116.*
[123] *In Luc. hom. 32:2.*
[124] *Comm. on John 13:47.*
[125] *Comm. on Matt. 11:5.*
[126] *See Comm. on John 13:18; Hom. on Lev. 4:6.*
[127] *Hom. on Isa. 6:4.*
[128] *Comm. on John 32:17; Joseph Wilson Trigg: Origen, SCM Press, 1985, p. 142.*
[129] *In Lev. hom. 6:4.*
[130] *In Lev. hom. 4:6.*
[131] *Homilies on Leviticus 4:6. (See Frs. of the Church)*

[132] *Atrii. The word occurs again in this and the next section, each time in a context which suggests that it has reference to the "curtains" of Exod. 26.1-2 which were ten in number and 26 x 4 in dimensions. The word in the LXX at Exod. 26, 1-2 is aulaia which the Vulgate renders cortina. Perhaps Rufinus connected aulaia in Origen's text with aule, which would be correctly rendered at atrium. Another possibility is that Origen himself connected the two words and used a form of aule. Fortier translates the word as "vestibule."*
[133] *In Exodus hom. 9:3 (Cf. Ronad E Heine- Frs. of the Church, vol. 71.)*
[134] *Ernest Latko: Origen's Concept of penance, Laval 1949, p. 72 f.*
[135] *In Lev. hom 5:3.*
[136] *On Prayer 28; PG 11:527-530.*
[137] *In Lev. hom. 5:3 PG 12:451.*
[138] *In Psalm. 37 hom 1:1 PG 12:1369; Ernest Latko: Origen's Concept of penance, Laval 1949, p.74.*
[139] *Ernest Latko: Origen's Concept of penance, Laval 1949, p. 70.*
[140] *Jean Daniélou: From Shadows to Reality, Studies in the Biblical Typology of the Fathers, p. 107.*
[141] *In Ezek. hom. 5:4 PG 13:707.*
[142] *R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder Book Co., 1944, p. 315 .*
[143] *Ernest Latko: Origen's Concept of penance, Laval 1949, p. 70.*
[144] *Ernest Latko: Origen's Concept of penance, Laval 1949, p. 102.*
[145] *In Josue Homilia 21:1 PG 12:928; Ernest Latko: Origen's Concept of penance, Laval 1949, p. 102.*
[146] *Comm. on Matt. 16:8; Church History 50 (1981) : The Charismatic Intellectual: Origen's Understanding of Religious Leadership, p. 116.*
[147] *Commentary on Matthew, Book 11:15 (Cf. ANF).*
[148] *In Jos. hom. 24:2.*
[149] *Commentary on Matthew 11:15; Thomas Halton, p. 21.*
[150] *Comm. on Matt. 15:37 (Drewery).*
[151] *Comm. on Matt. 16:13.*
[152] *Comm. on Matt. 16:17.*
[153] *Comm. on Matt. 14:11.*
[154] *In Num. hom. 22:4 (Robert B. Eno - Massage of the Frs. of the Church, p. 84.)*
[155] *In Luc. hom. 38:5.*
[156] *Cf. Church History 50 (1981) : The Charismatic Intellectual: Origen's Understanding of Religious Leadership, p. 116-117.*
[157] *In Numb. hom. 2:1 Church History 50 (1981) : The Charismatic Intellectual: Origen's Understanding of Religious Leadership, p. 118.*
[158] *Series Comm. on Matt. 12 Church History 50 (1981) : The Charismatic Intellectual: Origen's Understanding of Religious Leadership, p.*
[159] *Homilies on Leviticus 6:2. (See Frs. of the Church)*
[160] *Homilies on Leviticus 4:6. (See Frs. of the Church)*
[161] *Homilies on Leviticus 5:12. (See Frs. of the Church)*
[162] *Homilies on Leviticus 6:6. (See Frs. of the Church)*
[163] *Homilies on Leviticus 6:6. (See Frs. of the Church)*
[164] *Homilies on Leviticus 5:3. (See Frs. of the Church)*
[165] *Homilies on Leviticus 6:6. (See Frs. of the Church)*
[166] *Homilies on Leviticus 6:6. (See Frs. of the Church)*
[167] *In Isa. hom. 6; PG 13.239; Thomas Halton, p. 21.*
[168] *In Lev. hom. 2:3 (cf. G.W. Barkley - Frs. of the Church).*
[169] *Ernest Latko: Origen's Concept of penance, Laval 1949, p. 78.*
[170] *In Exodus hom. 11:2 (Cf. Ronad E Heine- Frs. of the Church, vol. 71.)*
[171] *In Luc. hom. 12:2.*

[172] *Comm. on Eph. 17 on 4:11ff.*
[173] *In Lev. hom. 6:6.*
[174] *In Gen. hom. 16:5.*
[175] *R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder Book Co., 1944, p. 310 .*
[176] *Homilies on Leviticus 9:1; Thomas Halton, p. 146.*
[177] *In Joan. 1:3 PG 14:25; R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder Book Co., 1944, p. 310 .*
[178] *In Lev. hom. 2:3 (cf. G.W. Barkley - Frs. of the Church).*
[179] *Homilies on Leviticus 4:6. (See Frs. of the Church)*
[180] *Homilies on Leviticus 6:5. (See Frs. of the Church)*
[181] *Homilies on Leviticus 9:1 (Cf. Frs. of the Church).*
[182] *Comm. on Rom. 1:2 on 1:2.*
[183] *Contra Celsius 6:48; Thomas Halton, p. 145..*
[184] *In Isa. hom 6 PG 13:239.*
[185] *St. Clement of Alexandria: Who is the Rich Man that shall be Saved?*
[186] *In Lev. hom. 9:1.*
[187] *R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder Book Co., 1944, p. 317-8 .*
[188] *F. Ferguson: "Origen and the Election of Bishops." Church History 43 (1974), 27-30, 32.*
[189] *Ep. 48 ad Amun.*
[190] *SC 286, 279; Thomas Halton, p. 21.*

14

CHRISTIAN WORSHIP AND LITURGIES

WORSHIP

ITS MEANING

Origen distinguishes ***adoration*** from ***worship***, because sometimes a person adores an idol or a man against his own will, while worshipping means subjection of the whole man - inside and appearance - in the action.

> *The text goes on to say, "You shall not adore them nor worship them" (Exod. 20:5). It is one thing to worship, another to adore[1]. One can sometimes adore even against his will, as some fawn to kings when they see them given to fondness of this kind. They pretend that they are adoring idols when in their heart they are certain that an idol is nothing. But to worship is to be subjected to these with total desire and zeal. Let the divine word, therefore, restrain both, that you may neither worship with desire nor adore in appearance[2].*

WORSHIP AND RITUALS

In *homily 5 on Numbers* Origen alludes to various Christian customs of worship.

---

1 The same distinction is made in Origen is... in Exodum (PG 17.16D). Cf. also Procopius' Catena in Baehrens (GCS 29.223f).

2 In Exodus hom 8:4 (Cf. Ronad E Heine - Frs. of the Church, vol. 71.)

> *There are things among the Church's observances, which everyone is obliged to do, and yet not everyone understands the reason for them; e.g.,... the fact that we **kneel** to pray, and that of all the quarters of the heavens, **the east** is the one we turn to when we pray... And can you readily explain the reason for the way we receive the Eucharist, for the rites it is celebrated with or for the words, gestures, commands, questions and answers made in Baptism?*[3]

1. THE ORIENTATION

> *I must also say a word or two about the part of the world we ought to look to when we pray... You will all immediately point to ... **the east** as the direction we should turn to, for reasons of symbolism, when we say our prayers, since the soul ought to keep its eyes steadily turned towards the rising of the true Light.*
>
> *Suppose a man has a house... facing another way and prefers to turn that way when he says his prayers, on the ground that where the doors and windows do not face east, **the sight of the sky is more conducive to recollection in the soul than the sight of a wall**. He should be told that... his house faces this quarter of the globe or that because men have decided that it should, whereas the superiority of the east to the other parts of the world comes from nature. What is of natural law must be considered superior to what is laid down by positive law*[4].

The interesting thing about the passage quoted is that it shows that the tradition concerned not only public prayer but private prayer as well, and thus gives us a glimpse of the private religious practice of the early Christians, a sphere we have very little information about. As for the symbolical significance of the custom,

---

3 In Num. hom. 5:1.
4 On Prayer 32.

Origen says that it was observed because Christ is the Sun of the new universe, the Church[5].

2. STRETCHING HANDS AND LIFTING UP THE EYES

> *There is no limit to the number of postures the body can take up, but the position to be preferred is unquestionably the one we adopt when we stretch out our hands and lift up our eyes, as it is the best bodily expression of the soul's attitude in prayer*.

He also says that we ought, so to speak, to stretch out our souls before we stretch out our hands and raise our minds to God before we raise our eyes to him. Before we stand up, we should free our minds from all preoccupation with the earthly and so stand them before the God of the universe. We should put aside any resentment we may feel at wrongs done to us if we want God to forgive us for the wrong we have done ourselves[6].

People might be forced by circumstances to pray in some other position.

> *I say that this should be observed when there are no obstacles. But circumstances may sometimes lead you to pray sitting down, e.g., if you have... bad feet; and if you have a temperature, you may even have to lie down... for if your business makes it impossible for you to go to some quiet place to discharge your debt of prayer,* ***you will not be able to insist on standing when you pray.*** *As for prayer in a kneeling position what you must realize is that it is necessary when we confess our sins to God and beg him to forgive them and restore us to health. It is a symbol of that prostration and submission that Paul speaks of when he says: "I fall on my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that Father from whom all fatherhood in heaven and on earth takes its title" (Eph. 3:14). This spiritual bending of*

5 Jean Daniélou: Origen, NY, 1955, p. 29.
6 On Prayer 31; Jean Daniélou: Origen, NY, 1955, p. 30.

the knee, so called because all creatures worship God and humble themselves before him, when they hear the name of Jesus, is, to my mind, what the apostle is thinking of when he says: "Everything in heaven and on earth and under the earth must bend the knee before the name of Jesus" (Phil. 2:10)[7].

3. SPECIAL PLACE FOR PRAYER

As far as place is concerned... any place will become suitable for prayer if you pray well in it... How-ever, if you want to say your prayers in greater quiet and without so much distraction, you may choose a special place in your own house, if you can have a consecrated place, so to speak, and pray there.... Special grace and benefit are to be had from the place of prayer, the place, I mean, where the faithful assemble; for it is reasonable to suppose that ***angelic powers are present when the faithful meet together****; the influence of our Lord and Savior must be there too and so must the spirits of the saints - the spirits, to my way of thinking, of* ***the dead who have gone before us and obviously, too, the spirits of those saints who are still alive****, though how, it is difficult to say*[8].

You may look at the Savior now, if you will, with your own eyes, in this assembly and in this church; for when you set the most spiritual part of ***your eyes they do look on Jesus****. Blessed was that community whose members Scripture tells us, all had their eyes fixed on Him (Matt. 13:I6). If only this assembly too could deserve the same testimonial and all of you, catechumens and baptized Christians, men, women and children, could look at Jesus, not with your bodily eyes but with the eyes of the soul! When you look at Him, through His grace and His gift of contemplation, your faces shine with a clearer light and you*

7 On Prayer 31; Jean Daniélou: Origen, NY, 1955, p. 30-1.
8 On Prayer 31, 4.

can say: 'The light of Your countenance, O Lord, is signed upon us (Ps. 4:7)[9]."

4. THE GREAT LENT

Origen touches on the practice of Lent, which is dedicated to fasting[10]; the ordination of the priest, in whose selection all the people participate[11]; and on the process of Christian discipline, based on Matthew 18.15-17[12].

However, we do not say this that we may loosen the restraints of Christian abstinence. For we have forty days dedicated to fasting; we have the fourth and the sixth day of the week on which we regularly fast. There is certainly freedom for the Christian to fast at all times, not by an excessive regard of an observance but by virtue of moderation[13].

5. CONCEPT OF FASTING

Do you still want me to show you what kind of fast it is appropriate for you to practice?

Fast from every sin, take no food of malice, take no feasts of passion, do not burn with any wine of luxury. Fast from evil deeds, abstain from evil words, hold yourself from the worst evil thoughts.

Do not touch the secret loaves of perverse doctrine.

Do not desire the deceptive foods of philosophy which seduce you from truth.

Such a fast pleases God.

But "to abstain from the foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by the faithful" (1 Tim.

---

9 In Luc. hom. 32.
10 In Lev. hom. 10:2
11 In Lev. hom. 6:3.
12 In Lev. hom. 3:2.
13 Homilies On Leviticus 9:9 (Cf. Frs. of the Church)

4:3) and to do this with those who crucified Christ, cannot be acceptable to God. Once the Pharisees were indignant with the Lord because his disciples were not fasting. He responded to them, "The sons of the Bridegroom cannot fast as long as the Bridegroom is with them" (Cf. Matt. 9:15). Therefore, let them fast when they lose the Bridegroom; but we, who have the bridegroom with us, cannot fast[14].

6. TRUE FEASTS

We must acknowledge that he who is interested in feasts and temporary cares cannot ascend to the upper-room, nor have a share with Jesus in keeping the Pasch[15].

7. THE LORD'S DAY

The perfect man is he who is involved in the words of the Lord, His deeds and His thoughts. Thus he lives in the Lord's days constantly, and all his days become the Lord's days[16].

8. OFFERING THE SACRIFICE OF PREACHING THE GOSPEL

To announce the Gospel is a sacerdotal office. Even as the Priest had to see while officiating that the victim was without blemish, and hence agreeable to God, so he who carries out this sacrifice of the Gospel and announces the words of God must watch that his preaching is without blemish, his instruction without fault, and his magisterial perfect. But that means that he is, as far as possible, first to offer up himself in sacrifice and to make his members dead to sin, so that, not only through his doctrine, but also by the example of his life, he shall ensure

14 Homilies On Leviticus 10:2 (Cf. Frs. of the Church)
15 In Matt. 26:18..
16 In Jos. hom 5:2.

that his oblation, in being accepted by God, wins the salvation of those who hear him[17].

9. THANKSGIVING

Preaching the Gospel is a kind of worship and a sacrifice.

This is the sacrifice that is called "salutary" (Lev. 7:28-34). No one offers that sacrifice to the Lord unless one who, healthy and conscious of his salvation, renders thanks to the Lord. Thus, no one who is sick in spirit and feeble in works can offer a "salutary sacrifice[18]*."*

9. WOMEN'S HEADS ARE COVERED THROUGH PRAYERS

I do not hesitate to say it: in our congregation angels too are present. If we say anything consonant with the Word, they rejoice and pray with us. And it is because angels are present in Church, in that Church at least which is Christ's, that women are called upon to have their heads covered and men are bound to bow in veneration[19].

✞ ✞ ✞

17 Comm. on Rom., Book 10:11. (Thomas K. Carroll; Messages of the Fathers of the Church).
18 Homilies on Leviticus 5:12. (See Frs. of the Church)
19 In Luc. hom. 23:8 (Thomas K. Carroll; Messages of the Fathers of the Church).

THE LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

Origen depicts a living picture of the Liturgy of Eucharist in his days.

THE EUCHARIST, THE BODY OF CHRIST[20]

Origen told Celsus that we consume bread which by virtue of prayer has become body, which sanctifies those who use it with a sound purpose. The Eucharist is "*a certain holy body which sanctifies those who partake of it with a pure intention*[21]." He refers to the reverence shown to the Eucharist[22]. He designates the Eucharist the Logos Himself[23]. In the *Contra Celsus* he writes thus: "*We give thanks to the Creator of all and, along with thanksgiving and prayer for the blessing we have received, we also eat the bread presented to us; and this bread becomes by prayer a sacred body, which sanctifies those who sincerely partake of it*[24]."

He is more explicit in the following passage: "*You who are wont to assist at the divine Mysteries, know how, when you receive the body of the Lord, you take reverent care, lest any particle of it should fall to the ground and a portion of the consecrated gift (consecrati muneris) escape you. You consider it a crime, and rightly so, if any particle thereof fell down through negligence*[25]."

Origen in the *Commentary on St. John* writes thus of the Last Supper: "*As he who unworthy eats the bread of the Lord or drinks His chalice, eats and drinks to his judgment, as the greater force, which is in the bread and the chalice, effects good things in*

20 See Michael O'Carroll: Corpus Christi, An Encyclopedia of the Eucharist, p. 147-9
21 Contra Celsus 8: 33.
22 In Exod. hom. 13:3.
23 In Matt. 11:14.
24 PG 11:1566 C.
25 In Exodum Hom. 13:3.

a good soul and evil things in a bad, the morsel given (to Judas) by Jesus was of the same kind; that which He gave to the other apostles saying "Take and eat" was salvation for them, but judgment for Judas, so that after the morsel Satan entered into him. The bread and chalice are understood by the more simple people in the ordinary meaning of Eucharist, but by those who have acquired a higher knowledge in the more divine meaning of the nourishing truth of the Word[26]."

EUCHARIST AND ALLEGORISM

Here we enter the realm of allegory, well-known to students of Origen. For both St. Clement and Origen, the bodily feeding of the Eucharist becomes a symbol of spiritual feeding of the Word, which is then equated with intellectual and moral nourishment found particularly in Scripture, right doctrine and mystical contemplation. When the sacrament is received in the right frame of mind, it feeds both body and soul, nourishing both parts of the composite being, Man; but Origen quite explicitly stated that, without spiritual awareness, participation in the communion-sacrifice has no effect, the food just passing through the material body like any other. The spiritual food which brings immortality to those who partake with faith, cannot be eaten by unworthy persons, since it depends on spiritual participation in the Divine Word[27].

> *That bread which God the Word (deus verbum) owns to be His body, is the Word which nourishes the soul, the Word which proceeds from God the Word, and that bread from heavenly bread which is placed upon the table, of which it is written: 'You have prepared a table before me, against them that afflict me' (Ps. 22:5). And that drink, which God the Word owns to be His blood, is the Word which saturates and inebriates the hearts of*

---

26 In Johannem 32:24.

27 Frances M. Young: The Use of Sacrificial Ideas in Greek Christian Writers from the New Testament to John Chrysostom, Philadelphia 1979, p. 252ff..

those that drink it, they drink in that cup of which it is said: How goodly is Your inebriating chalice (Ps. 22).... Not that visible bread, which he held in His hands, did the divine Logos call His body, but the word, in the mystery of which the bread was to be broken . Not that visible drink did he call his blood, but the word, in the mystery of which this drink was to be poured out. For the body of the divine Logos or His blood, what else can they be than the word which nourishes and the word which gladdens the heart?[28]

About this passage G. Bareille thinks that it shows that Origen had not sought to make a synthesis of his ideas in this whole theological domain, while P. Batiffol thinks that his doctrine is here incomplete. Passages as the following must be noted:

If you go up with him to celebrate the Pasch, He gives you the chalice of the New Testament, He gives you the bread of the blessing, He dispenses His body and His blood[29].

Formerly in figure baptism was in the cloud and the sea, but now regeneration is in water and the Holy Spirit. Then in figure the manna was food, but now disclosed the flesh of the Word of God is true food, as he Himself said, "For My flesh is food indeed and My blood is drink indeed[30]*."*

What it means to approach such great and such wondrous sacraments?![31]

Till now (Christ) enters under our food through the leaders of the church the saints, of whom God is pleased... When you receive the body and blood of the Lord, He him-

28 In Matthaeum comment. ser 85.
29 In Jeremiam Hom. 19:13.
30 In Numeros Hom. 7.
31 In Ps. 37 Hom. 2 PG 12:1386D.

self enters under your roof. In humility say, " O Master, I am not worthy... [32]

*We are said to **drink the Blood** of Christ, not only in the rite of the mysteries, but also when we receive His words in which life consists, just as He says, "The words which I have spoken are spirit and life" (John 6:63)*[33]

Origen clearly believed that what he received in the Eucharistic communion, was the Word of God which enlightens the ignorance of the world. The communion-sacrifice has thus been intellectualized as well as individualized, and the fellowship-meal uniting the church as communion with the Risen Christ, is completely submerged[34].

MERIT OF RECEIVING THE EUCHARIST

The fact that the Eucharist can be eaten to one's condemnation (a fact well illustrated by the Last Supper, of which the disciples all partook for their salvation, except Judas who partook for his condemnation), is interpreted by Origen to mean that the Word which brings salvation to the soul which is basically healthy, may be a stimulant to worse evil if given to a sick soul.

In his comment on Matt. 26:23 "He who dips his hand into the dish with Me, he will betray Me," Origen explains that those who receive the Communion while they plot against their brethren, imitates Judas the betrayer.

Such are all in the church who plot against their brothers in whose company they have been frequently at the same table of the body of Christ and at the same cup of His blood[35].

---

32 Catena Aurea, Fr. Malaty: Luke, p. 196.

33 In Num. hom. 7:2. (Daniel J. Sheerin: The Eucharist, p. 180. Message of the Fathers of the Church)

34 Frances M. Young: The Use of Sacrificial Ideas in Greek Christian Writers from the New Testament to John Chrysostom, Philadelphia 1979, p. 252ff..

35 Daniel J. Sheerin: The Eucharist, p. 176-7 (Message of the Fathers of the Church).

BAPTISM

Origen praises Baptism as a new birth, participation in the divine nature, acceptance of membership in the body of the church, return to Paradise and receiving a general priesthood.

Baptism is the indispensable first stage in the journey to God. It purifies, regenerates, initiates one into Christ, and endows with the Holy Spirit. But as the *Homilies on Exodus* and the *Homilies on Joshua* make clear, baptism and its preparations are the fledgling stage of a long and dangerous journey[36].

CHRIST'S BAPTISM

For Origen and the Alexandrian Fathers generally, however, the focus is squarely on Christ's own baptism: What happened at the Jordan happens also in the baptismal font[37].

> *The Events of the Jordan are the icon of the mystery which is accomplished in baptism[38].*

PREPARATION FOR BAPTISM

Origen lays great stress on the spiritual efficacy of baptism. He insists on penitence, sincere faith and humility as its prerequisites[39].

> *But you, too, who desire to receive holy baptism and to obtain the grace of the Spirit, first you ought to be cleansed by the Law. First, having heard the word of God, you ought to restrain your natural vices and to set right your barbarous and wild nature, having taken on gentle-*

---

36 Cf. Thomas Finn: Early Christian Baptism and the Catechumenate, Minnesota 1992, Message of the Fathers of the Church, p.193-194.

37 Cf. Thomas Finn: Early Christian Baptism and the Catechumenate, Minnesota 1992, Message of the Fathers of the Church, p. 11,12.

38 In Jos 5:1.

39 Levet. hom. 6:2; Lucan hom. 21; Exod. hom. 10:4,

ness and humility, you can receive also the grace of the Holy Spirit[40].

Not all are "washed unto salvation". Those of us who have received the grace of baptism in the name of Christ are "washed," but I cannot tell which are washed "unto salvation". Simon was "washed"... but because he was not washed unto salvation he was condemned by the one who said to him in the Holy Spirit "your money perish with you" (Acts 8:20). It is tremendously hard for him who is washed to be washed unto salvation. Hearken, you catechumens... and prepare yourselves while you are still catechumens and unbaptized...: he who is washed but not unto salvation receives the water but not the Holy spirit. He who is washed unto salvation receives both[41].

The benefit from baptism depends on the intention of the person baptized. If he repents he receives it: if he comes for baptism without repenting the benefit becomes a judgment.

BLESSINGS OF BAPTISM

1. Origen sees the baptismal font as a ***tomb***, where the candidate participates in the death, burial and resurrection of Christ (Rom. 6:1-11). He calls baptism the "***mystery of the third day***[42]." For "*those who have been taken up into Christ by baptism have been taken up into His death and have been buried with Him, and will rise with Him*[43]."

2. Baptism is the new or "***second circumcision***[44]."

3. Baptism is a **mystery of illumination**.

---

40 Homilies on Leviticus 6:2. (See Frs. of the Church)
41 In Ezek. hom. 6:5 on 16:4.
42 Thomas Finn: Early Christian Baptism and the Catechumenate, Minnesota 1992, Message of the Fathers of the Church, p. 9.
43 In Exod. hom . 5:2.
44 In Luc. hom. 14.

Blessed are those who become near (to Him)! They became near the fire which illuminates them and does not burn them[45].

4. Baptism is a mystery of the **unity of earth and heaven**.

Origen believes that passing the Red Sea under the leadership of Moses was a symbol of baptism in the Old Testament, while passing the Jordan River under the guidance of Joshua was a symbol of baptism in the New Testament. The Red Sea was divided and the people passed among the waters, while in the Jordan River water was only on one side. It refers to the unity of the two (earth and heaven) and the destruction of the dividing wall[46].

5. Baptism is the mystery of **purification from all sins**.

It is not said that Joshua seized one (king) and left another through the war, but he seized all and killed them. For the Lord Jesus purified us from all kinds of sins which were in man before his faith... Do you not believe with me that all sins with all their kings have been removed from us in the waters of baptism? This is what the apostle Paul desired to say for after numerating all kinds of sins he adds, "And such were some of you, but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor. 7:11)[47].

(Baptism) is named "the washing of generation," being accompanied by the renewing of the Spirit, who still broods over the water[48].

When you come to Jesus and receive the grace of Baptism for the remission of sins... you yourself shall rest from war (Jos 11:23), on condition that you carry in the

45 In Jos 4:3.
46 In Jos. 1:4.
47 In Jos. hom. 12:5.
48 In Joan. t. 6:33.

body the mortification of the Lord Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may appear in our body (2 Cor. 4:10). Thus the war ends in you, and you become a peace-maker, and are called a child of God (Matt. 5:9)[49].

6. Baptism sets **aflame the soul with the fire of the Holy Spirit**.

Christ, then, does not baptize with water, but His disciples. He reserves for Himself to baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire[50].

For His baptism is not that of the body only; He fills the penitent with the Holy Spirit, and His divine fire does away with everything material and consumes everything that is earthly, not only from him who admits it to his life, but even from him who hears of it from those who have[51].

For my part, I cannot speak thus, for I know that, when I go hence, my wood will have to be burned in me[52].

But if there is a sinner like me, he will come to this fire like Peter and Paul, but he will not be able to cross it like Peter and Paul[53].

7. Origen **frees us from the power of the Devil**.

8. Baptism makes us members of the Church as **Christ's body**[54].

The Holy Spirit creates for Himself a new people and renews the face of the earth; when through the grace of the Spirit, men "put off the old man with his doings," Col 3:9, and begin to walk in the newness of life" (Rom. 6:4)[55].

---

49 In Jos. hom. 15:7.
50 Comm. on John, book 6:13.
51 Comm. on John, book 6:17.
52 In Jer. hom. 20:3
53 Hom. on Ps. 36 (3:1); Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p. 246.
54 Exod. hom. 5:5; Rom. hom. 8:5.
55 De Principiis 1:3:7.

> *Let us consider that perhaps we have been preserved so that baptized with our own blood and washed from every sin we may pass our existence with our fellow contestants near the altar in heaven (Rev. 6:9)*[56].

BAPTISM AND THE ADOPTION TO THE FATHER

Through Baptism we receive the adoption to the Father by the grace of the Holy Spirit. On our part we must call our God, "our Father," not only by our lips but through our whole saintly life, which fits our adoption to the Father.

> *Because of the "Spirit of sonship" we have learned, in the general letter of John concerning those born of God, that "no one born of God commits sin, for His seed remains in him, and he cannot sin because he is born of God," 1 John 3:9..., they may not say "Our Father" only half way. Such people add to their works their hearts, which are the fountain and origin of good works which lead to righteousness, while the mouth joins in harmony and confesses to achieve salvation (Cf. Rom. 10:10)*[57].

THREE KINDS OF BAPTISM

> *Now, it may very well be that some one not versed in the various aspects of the Savior may stumble at the interpretation given above of the Jordan; because John says, "I baptize with **water**, but He that comes after me is stronger than I; He shall baptize you with the **Holy Spirit**." To this we reply that, as the Word of God in His character as something to be drunk is to one set of men water, and to another wine, making glad the heart of man, and to others blood, since it is said, "Except you drink My blood, you have no life in you," (John 6:53) and as in His character as food He is variously conceived as living bread or as flesh, so also*

---

56 An Exhortation to Martyrdom, 39 (Greer).
57 On Prayer 22:2, 3.

He, the same person, is baptism of water, and baptism of Holy Spirit and of fire, and to some, also, of blood. It is of His last baptism, as some hold, that He speaks in the words "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished?" (Luke 12:50). And it agrees with this that the disciple John speaks in the Epistle (I John 10:8) of the ***Spiri****t and the* ***water****, and the* ***blood****, as being one*[58].

BAPTISM OF BLOOD

Let us remember the sins we have committed, and that it is impossible to receive forgiveness of sins apart from baptism,

that it is impossible according to the laws of the Gospel to be baptized again with water and the Spirit for the forgiveness of sins,

and that the baptism of martyrdom has been given to us. This is what it is called, as is evident from the fact that, "Are you able to drink the cup that I drink?" is followed by "or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?" (Mark 10:38). And in another place it is said, "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how I am constrained until it is accomplished!" (Luke 12:50)[59].

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BAPTISM OF MOSES AND THAT OF JOSHUA

And Joshua, who succeeded Moses, was a type of Jesus Christ, who succeeds the dispensation through the Law, and replaces it by the preaching of the Gospel. And even if those Paul speaks of were baptized in the cloud and in the sea, there is something harsh and salty in their baptism. They are still in fear of their enemies, and crying to the Lord and to Moses, saying, (Exod. 14:11) "Because there

58 Comm. on John, book 6:26.
59 An Exhortation to Martyrdom, 30 (Greer).

were no graves in Egypt, have you brought us forth to slay us in the wilderness? Why have you dealt thus with us, to bring us forth out of Egypt?" But the baptism of Joshua, which takes place in quite sweet and drinkable water, is in many ways superior to that earlier one, religion having by this time grown clearer and assuming a becoming order...

And, in the former case, they kept the Passover in Egypt, and then began their journey, but with Joshua, after crossing Jordan on the tenth day of the first month they pitched their camp in Galgala; for a sheep had to be procured before initiations could be issued to the banquet after Joshua's baptism[60].

BAPTISM OF INFANTS

The early church insisted on the baptism of children, so that grace touches their own salvation. Every human being is born in sin and for this reason it is an apostolic tradition to baptize the newly born. Origen is a witness to infant baptism.

The Church has received ***a tradition from the Apostles*** *to give baptism even to little ones. For since the secrets of divine mysteries had been entrusted to them, they know that there are in all people genuine defilements of sin, which ought to be washed away through water and Spirit*[61].

If you like to hear what other saints have felt in regard to physical birth, listen to David when he says, I was conceived, so it runs, in iniquity and in sin my mother has borne me (Ps. 50,7), proving that every soul which is born in the flesh is tainted with the stain of iniquity and sin. This is the reason for that saying which we have already quoted above, "No man is clean from sin, not even if his life be one day long" (Job 14,4). To these, as a further

60 Comm. on John, book 6:26.
61 In Romans, book 5:9.

point, may be added an inquiry into the reason from which, while the church's baptism is given for the remission of sin, it is the custom of the Church that baptism be administered even to infants. Certainly, if there were nothing in infants that required remission and called for lenient treatment, the grace of baptism would seem unnecessary[62].

For those who have been entrusted with the secrets of the divine mysteries, knew very well that all are tainted with the stain of original sin, which must be washed off by water and the Spirit[63].

Jaroslav Pelikan says,

In the writings of Origen the custom of infant baptism was taken to be of apostolic origin. He maintained that there was "a tradition of the church from the apostles" to administer baptism also to infants. But even though it was apostolic, the custom remained problematical for him. If infants were completely devoid of anything that called for forgiveness and pardon, baptismal grace would seem superfluous. Why, then, was it the custom of the church to administer baptism to them? Attempting to draw together these various considerations, he proposed as a tentative answer: "Infants are baptized 'for the remission of sins.' Of which sins? Or at what time have they sinned? Or how can there exist in infants that reason for washing, unless in accordance with the idea that no one is clean of filth, not even if his life on earth has only been for one day? And because the filth of birth is removed by the sacrament of baptism, for that reason infants, too, are baptized; for 'unless one is born again of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of heaven.'[64]"

---

62 In Lev. hom. 8,3 SPCK.
63 In Rom. hom. 5,9.
64 Jaroslav Pelikan: The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100), p. 290-1.

BAPTISM AND CONSTANT SPIRITUAL STRUGGLE

Origen states that the Risen Christ is an Energizing Light. Christ's "energy" as risen is present to the believer not only at his baptism, but also at his consistent walking and struggling in "newness of life."

Now he is called the light of men and the true light and the light of the world because he brightens and irradiates . . . all reasonable beings. And similarly it is from and because of the energy with which he causes the old deadness to be put aside, and causes life par excellence to be put on, so that those who have truly received him rise again from the dead, that he is called the resurrection. And this he does not only at the moment at which a man says, "We are buried with Christ through baptism and have risen again with him" [cf. Rom 6:4], but rather when a man, having laid off all about him that belongs to death, walks in the newness of life which belongs to him the Son, while here. We always "carry about in our body the dying of the Lord Jesus," and thus we reap the vast advantage, "that the life of the Lord Jesus might be made manifest in our bodies" (2 Cor. 4:10)[65].

SINNING AFTER BAPTISM

> *Who recites: "Our Father who are in heaven," and has not the Spirit of Adoption lies*[66].
>
> *If you commit new sins you return to your ancient reproach, nevertheless you will be in more evil condition as if you have "trampled the Son of God underfoot, counting the blood of the covenant by which (you) were sanctified a common thing"(Heb. 120:29)....*
>
> *Yes, who presents himself to adultery after receiving the Gospel, his reproach becomes greater than he who does thus while he is under the law. For it is said, " shall I*

65 Commentary on John [25]: based on ANF 9.312
66 PG 13:1599.

then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot?! (1 Cor 3:17)[67].

It seems to me that there is a difference between those who are baptized ... There are some who receive the holy baptism and return to push themselves to the cares of the world and the passions, drinking again from the salted cup of the lusts[68].

✞ ✞ ✞

67 In Jos. hom 5:5.
68 In Jos. hom. 4:1.

15

SPIRITUAL LIFE

MASTER OF SPIRITUAL LIFE

R. Cadiou who writes four chapters on the ***Spirituality*** of Origen says, "Origen was, above everything else, a man devoted to the things of the spirit[1]."

Henri de Lubac says,

> Like John the Evangelist, he "reclined at the breast of Jesus." The one for whom he as a boy would have wished to meet martyrdom had forever enraptured the depths of his soul[2].

Jean Daniélou[3] says,

> Gregory of Nyssa[4] and Evagrius Ponticus, the two great theorists who wrote on mystical theology in the fourth century, were both disciples of his (writings), and if Gregory went further than Origen in stressing the part played in the mystical union by love without light, he still was closely dependent on him. The line of thought started by Origen was carried on in the spirituality of the east by the Pseudo-Dionysius, who was a disciple of Gregory of Nyssa. Maximus the Confessor depends on him either directly or through Evagrius and the Pseudo-Dionysius, as Fr. Von Balthasar has shown[5]. In addition, his spiritual

---

1 R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder 1944, Chapter IV.

2 Henri De Lubac: Origen, On First Principles, NY., 1966 (Koetschau text together with an introduction and notes by G.W. Butterworth, p. XIII.

3 Jean Daniélou: Origen, NY, p. 293.

4 Jean Daniélou: Platonisme et theologie mystique. Essai sur la doctrine spirituelle de saint Gregoire de Nysse, Paris, 1943.

5 H.Urs von Balthaster, Kesmische Liturgie, Freiburg in Breisagau, 1941.

teaching was transmitted to the West through Evagrius Ponticus, who handed it on to Cassian[6].

Walter Volker[7], whose interest is in spirituality, regards Origen as a master of spiritual life and a great mystic.

Fr. Aloysius Lieske accuses Volker of failing to see that Origen's mystical theology is rooted in dogma and the Church[8]. In fact, Origen uses some of the concepts found in the Platonist mystical writings in circulation at the time, just as St. Clement of Alexandria had done before him, but his theology of spiritual life struck a chord in the hearts of so many Christians, because it is first and foremost a product of the Bible. In Origen's opinion there was no book equal to the holy Bible.

6 Cf. D. Marsili, Giovanni Cassiano e Evgario Pontico, Rome, 1936.
7 Das Volkommenheitsideal des Origene, Tubingen, 1931.
8 Cf. Jean Daniélou: Origen, NY, p. 336-7.

SPIRITUAL LIFE
OR
A JOURNEY OF THE SOUL

Origen considers spiritual life as a serious journey of the soul. Through this journey the soul returns by divine grace to her original nature, and becomes an icon of God. Thus, she can be raised up through canonical struggling till her return to the bosom of God.

It is a dangerous trip, or it is a continuos battle, but it has its sweetness through unceasing victory over the evil world, sin and demons. Believers examine the work of the Holy Trinity while they are struggling.

Through His grace God leads the soul on and on, from a knowledge of one's self to the struggle against sin, to practices of asceticism, to the mystical ascent, until at last she is admitted to the mystical (*spiritual*) union with the Logos[9]:

> *The soul is moved by heavenly love and longing when, having clearly beheld the beauty and the fairness of the Word of God,*
>
> *it falls deeply in love with His loveliness and receives from the Word Himself a certain dart and wound of love...*
>
> *If, then, a man can so extend his thinking as to ponder and consider the beauty and the grace of all the things that have been created in the Word, the very charm of them will so smite him, the grandeur of their brightness will so pierce him as with a chosen dart, as the prophet says (Isa. 49:2), that he will suffer from the dart Himself a*

9 R.P. Lawson: Origen, The Song of Songs, Commentary and Homilies, p.15-6.

saving wound, and will be kindled with the blessed fire of His love.

This trip of the souls is the **ladder of Paradise**, which the patriarch Jacob saw, being traversed by those spirits that fall away or by those other spirits that are restored, in the course of several lives, to the dignity they had at the beginning. The poem of heaven unrolls according to the same law. Heaven is peopled by souls that have fallen away but are more meek and mild than the others to wisdom, and they take part in the splendid liturgy of the celestial city. Moreover, a more perfect universe, is to come, in which matter, having become pure and ethereal, will form the new world[10].

DISCOVERING ONESELF[11]

The first stage of spiritual life is that in which a believer returns to himself, acknowledges himself, and discovers **world in miniature** within himself.

Origen understands that **the real world is the world inside man**, or his spiritual being, which in a sense partakes of the nature of God. His concept originated in the meeting of two great doctrines:

1. The biblical one that man was created as an icon of God. To be more precise, man was made not just in God's icon but in the icon of the Logos[12]. It is said in the Book of the Song of Songs, "If you know not yourself, O fairest among women, go forth and follow after the steps of the flocks" (Song 1:7).

2. The Platonist one that man's perfection depends on his likeness to God.

10 R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder Book Co., 1944, p. 223.
11 Jean Daniélou: Origen, NY, p. 294-5.
12 In Gen. hom 1:15.

Man is also involved in the life of the senses, which is foreign to his essence. he loses God's icon in so far as he molds himself to the pattern of animal life. Spiritual life will therefore consist of the process by which he returns to his true nature, his efforts first to realize what he is and then to try and recover his real nature by destroying the power of his corrupt animal life. To the extent to which he succeeds, he will recover the image of God that once was in him and in it will see God.

In other words, a believer in acknowledging his inner-self feels **two realities**:

1. **His need to returning to his original nature by divine grace**.

> *Who, although they have been given by God the grace of thinking on and understanding many things, neglect other spheres of knowledge and give no heed to self-knowledge*[13].
>
> *He who does not realize his own weakness and the divine grace, even if he receives a benefit before he has come to know himself and condemn himself, will come as his own achievement what has actually been freely supplied him from the heavenly grace. This produces pride and arrogance, and will be a cause of his downfall*[14].

2. **The real world is within him**.

> *Understand that you are another and that there is within you the sun, the moon, and the stars...*
>
> ***Do you doubt that the sun and the moon are within you to whom it is said that you are the light of the world?***[15]

13 Comm. on Song Songs 2.
14 De Principiis 3:1:12.
15 Homilies on Leviticus 5:2. (See Frs. of the Church)

SOUL'S JOURNEY AND RETURN TO GOD[16]

Origen explains spiritual life and progress, using different metaphors:

I. A Journey.

2. Growth to maturity .

3. Struggling in a spiritual battle.

I. A JOURNEY

Origen sees that all Church worship and liturgies are a divine journey. Baptism, for example is presented as the exodus and entrance to the true promised land, as the restoration of Paradise, and as entrance into the heavenly Jerusalem[17].

According to Rown A. Greer, Origen's writings reveal that his primary interest lies in the drama of **the soul's struggle to return to God** or to attain **unity with God**. Origen's views of martyrdom, prayer and Scripture merge into one vision of the Christian life as a movement towards a perfect knowledge of God and **perfect fellowship with Him through Christ**.

Jean Daniélou in his book, "Origen," says that the spiritual journey begins with the advances made by the Word, our Savior. The soul's response is her conversion: she sets out after Him as the Hebrews in Egypt did after the pillar of cloud, which was a figure of the Word or of the Holy Ghost. Origen then goes on to describe the successive stages in the journey, the various places where the soul stops and rests[18].

Origen finds this journey in the symbol of the crossing of the desert by the children of Israel[19].

---

16 See Rown A. Greer: Origen, Paulist Press, 1979, p. 17f.; Jules Lebreton: The History of the Primitive Church, p. 958f.; Fr. Tadros Y. Malaty: Commentaries of the Early Fathers; Exodus, Alexandria 1980 (in Arabic).

17 Rowan A. Greer: Origen, p. 26.

18 Jean Daniélou: Origen, p. 298.

19 In Num. hom., 27.

The stages of this journey through the desert are figures of the mystical stages of our spiritual pilgrimage[20].

STAGES OF THE SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

I give here a summary of some stages of this journey which Origen presents in his *Homilies on Exodus.*

I. Entering the desert, leaving Raamses and every earthly thing.

We have to leave **Pharaoh**, the symbol of the **devil**, and his land. He does not want us to leave him, for he wants us to have the image of the man of dust and not bear the image of the Heavenly One (1 Cor. 15:49)[21].

Those alone will have the courage to do this who desire no other lot here below but God. Moreover, it is possible only if we are upheld by Christ "*who is our strength*," and if we are guided by Moses (a symbol of faith) and Aaron (a symbol of works of worship). Moses himself did not know whither he was going, *but "the Lord Himself became his guide*," for the pillar of fire and the cloud were the Son and the Holy Spirit.

The **devil begins to tremble** when souls start their journey under the guidance of Christ, the Word and High-Priest, saying with Pharaoh, “lest they multiply, and it happen, in the event of war, that they also join our enemies and fight against us, and so go up off the land” (Exod. 1:10).

Souls must leave **Raamses** (Exod. 1:11), which means “city of corruption or agitation[22].” The enemy wants the souls to be in Raamses, in hard bondage and in confusion,, making bricks by mud, instead of contemplating on heavenly things..

20 The History of the Primitive Church, p. 958ff.
21 In Exod. hom. 5 .
22 In Exod. hom. 5 .

"If you wish to be perfect, sell all your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me" (Matt. 19:21).

This is to depart from Raamses, and to follow Christ[23].

II. Celebrating the Pasch

The Hebrews celebrated the ***Pasch*** in Egypt, and the next day set out on their journey.

Origen states that the lamb of the Pasch must be roasted in fire (Exod. 12:9), for the believer is in need of the fiery spirit, holding the fiery words of God, as it is said to Jeremiah "Behold, I will make My words in your mouth fire" (Jer. 5:14). Thus on hearing Christ speaking in us, we say, "Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the scriptures to us? [24]."

We go out of a world which is upset and agitated (*Raamses*), and we arrive at ***Sochoth***, which means "the tents," for the soul is now a stranger here below. She lives in tents till she arrives to the everlasting house.

III. Camping in the third station: Etham (Exod. 13:20)

On the third station, which is a symbol of the resurrection of Christ on the third day, the soul encamps in **Etham**, which means "sign." It is the "***Mystery of the Third Day,***" by which the Lord guides the believer and reveals to him the beginning of the way of salvation[25].

A believer cannot enter the wilderness of temptations and troubles, unless he has the experience of the risen life in Christ. There the Lord goes before the believer by day in a pillar of cloud

23 In Exod. hom. 5 .
24 Comm. on John 13.
25 In Exod. hom. 5:2 .

to lead the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give him light, so as to go by day and night (Exod. 13:21).

Origen refers to the mystery of the third day on many occasions, for he believes that a believer cannot realize the trip of his soul unless he is supported by the resurrection of Christ, which had been realized on the third day.

I have mentioned this mystery in the previous book[26].

* Through the risen life of Christ, our thoughts, words and deeds (3) are sanctified, also the three elements of a believer would be sanctified.

* Abraham after the arrival of the appointed place on the third day (Gen. 22:4) offered joyfully his son Isaac as a burnt offering, as he beheld the sign of the resurrection of Christ[27].

* Moses asked Pharaoh to permit the people to go for three days in the desert to offer sacrifices to God (Exod. 3:18).

* Before entering the Promised Land God asked Joshua to tell the people that they have to be sanctified for three days before passing the Jordan River.

IV. Continuos ascent in the narrow and hard way of virtues

The Lord asked the people to go to ***Pi Hahitoth*** (Exod. 14:1), which means the "winding ascent."

> *Perhaps you used to think that the way which God shows would be level and easy and certainly would involve no difficulty or labor. It is an ascent and a winding ascent. For it is not a downhill way on which one strives towards virtue, but it is ascended and it is ascended with great difficulty. Hear also the Lord saying in the Gospel how "straight and narrow is the way which leads to life" (Matt. 7:14)*[28].

26School of Alexandria, Book 1, NJ 1994, p 42-3 .
27 In Gen. hom. 8:1,4.
28 In Exod. hom. 5:3 (Heine) .

V. Facing bitter trials and troubles

The following stage in the spiritual life is reached when the soul embarks on its passage through the period of a kind of purgation. This stage, with its trials and its occasional flashes of light, is figuratively represented by the crossing of the Red Sea, and approaching the "***Bitter Waters***": it is a hard trial to cross the sea with its storms, and to hear the noise and booming of the furious waves, but if we follow Moses, the Law of God, we shall cross the sea with dry feet. As for the "Bitter Waters," we must not be afraid of these:

> *If you enter upon the path of virtue, do not refuse to approach the bitter waters.*

Origen explains how the children of God can walk on dry ground in the midst of the sea[29], attaining victory over the waters of sins and lusts, while the wicked people sink like lead in the mighty waters (Exod. 15:10).

> *It can happen that marching in the midst of sinners the liquid of sin may not pour over you;*
>
> *it can happen that no wave of lust sprinkle you as you pass through this world, that no surge of desire strike you*[30].

Origen also comments on the first hymn which the people sang after their victory (Exod. 15), saying "***It is the custom of the saints to offer a hymn of thanks to God when an adversary is conquered***[31]."

How can we face the bitterness of the commandments of the Law and that of temptations and troubles?

---

29 In Exod. hom. 6:14 .
30 In Exod. hom. 6:14 .
31 In Exod. hom. 6:1 .

Origen answers, that there is **a need of the wisdom of Christ which is declared through the wood of the Cross**, as it happened in Marah (Exod. 15:23-25)

> *If God shows a tree which is thrown into this bitterness so that the "water" of the Law becomes "sweet," they can drink from it...*
>
> *The tree of the wisdom of Christ has been thrown into the Law..., then the water of Mara is made sweet and the bitterness of the letter of the Law is changed into the sweetness of spiritual understanding and then the people of God can drink...*
>
> *Whence it is established that if anyone without "the tree of life," that is without the mystery of the cross, without faith in Christ, without spiritual understanding should wish to drink from the letter of the Law, he will die from too much bitterness.*

VI. Arriving to the Desert of Sin (= Vision and Temptation)

They journeyed from Elim and came to the ***desert of Sin*** (Exod. 16:1), which name signifies "*bush*" and "*temptation*;" the bush is the vision of God, but visions are not unaccompanied by temptation. The soul comes to the desert of Sin. The word means both "vision" and "temptation". And there are in fact, Origen says, "*visions which are also temptations, for sometimes the wicked angel "transforms himself into an angel of light" (2 Cor. 11:14)*".

> *For sometimes the angel of darkness transforms himself into an angel of light; watchful attention is therefore necessary in order to discern the different visions. Thus Joshua, seeing a Vision and knowing that it might be a temptation, said to the one who appeared to him "Are you a friend or a foe?" In the same way the soul which makes progress when she begins to discern between visions, shows that she is truly spiritual if she always knows how to discern them. That is why amongst the*

spiritual gifts is included that of the discernment of spirits[32].

Where a storm blows, it can not shake the building which is established on a rock, but it reveals the weakness of the building's stones which is built on the sand[33].

The Christian pilgrim must choose the narrow and straitened road that leads to his destiny. His travel is in winter where there is hardship and persecution.

All the blessed will first be obliged to travel the narrow and hard way in winter's storm (Matt. 7:14) to show what knowledge he had acquired for guiding his life, so that afterwards they will realize the words of the Song of Songs to the bride when she has safely passed through the winter. For she says, "My beloved answers and says to me, "Arise and come away, my love, my fair one, my dove; for lo, the winter is passed, the rain is over and gone" Songs 2:10-11... And after the winter is past and the rain is over and gone, the flowers will appear that are planted in the house of the Lord and flourish in the courts of our God (Ps. 92:13)[34].

Moreover, when the soul sets out from Egypt of this life to go to the promised land, she necessarily goes by certain roads.. and observes certain stages that were made ready with the Father from the beginning... Who will be found worthy and so understanding of the divine mysteries that he can describe the stages of that journey and ascent of the soul and explain either the toils or the rest of each different place? For how will he explain that after the first and second stages Pharaoh is still in pursuit?...[35]

32 In Number. hom. 11.
33 In Luc. hom. 26:4.
34 An Exhortation to Martyrdom, 31.
35 In Number. Hom 27:4.

VII. Passing from Sin (Temptation) to Dophkah (Num. 33: 12; Dophkah means Health)

The next stages are taken as relating to the soul's recovery of health and the destruction of concupiscence. Now that the soul is cured and her strength restored, she begins to enter the specifically mystical region. That brings us to the knowledge (*gnosis*), the object of which is the knowledge of the things of God. Yet the fact that the soul has reached these heights does not mean that she escapes temptation.

Temptations are given her to guard her and keep her safe

> *Dophka signifies health. There are many illnesses of the soul. Avarice is a malady, and a detestable one; then there are pride, anger, boasting, fear, inconstancy, pusillanimity and all the others. When, O Lord Jesus, will You cure me from all my maladies? When shall I be able to say "O my soul, bless the Lord, who cures all your diseases?" When shall I also be able to establish myself in Raphaca, in health?*[36]

VIII. Arriving to Rephidim (meaning "sound judgment")

> *The man has attained soundness of judgment who rightly departs from temptation and whom temptation renders approved. For in the day of judgment he will be sound, and soundness will be with him who has not been wounded by temptation, as it is written in the Apocalypse, "But to him who has overcome I will give of the tree of life which is in the paradise of my God." (Rev. 2:7).*

For the first time the people enter in a war against another nation "Amalek." Victory had been realized by the shadow of the cross, for Moses lifted his hands up while he was on the top of the

36 Ibid.

hill. Our Lord Jesus lifted His hands up, overcoming all nations through His love.

> *Jesus had been exalted on the Cross and was about to embrace the whole earth with His arms*[37].

IX. Respecting the wisdom of others, even if they are pagans.

Origen admires Moses who was full of God and spoke with God face to face but he did not despise the counsel of Jethro (Exod. 18).

> *Moses who was meek above all men (Num. 12:3), accepted the counsel of a lower man both that he might give a model of humility to the leaders of people and represent an image of the future mystery. For he knew that at some future time the Gentiles would offer good counsel with Moses, that they would bring a good and spiritual understanding to the Law of God*[38].

X. Receiving the Law of God on Sinai

Through this divine trip we receive the Law of God on Sinai, "*when the soul has become able to receive the divine secrets and the heavenly visions."* Next comes the grave of lusts, then the open spaces of perfection and beatitude.

> *Notice well, O pilgrim, the law of your progress: when you have buried and mortified the concupiscence of the flesh, you will arrive at the wide open spaces of beatitude. Thence you pass on to Rathma and Pharan Rathma signifies "consummated vision;" Pharan "visible mouth." The soul has to grow that it be no longer importuned by the flesh, and that it may have consummated visions and grasp the perfect knowledge of things, that is, the causes of the Incarnation of the Word of God, that it*

37In Exod. hom. 11:4.
38 Ibid. 11:6.

may understand more fully and more deeply the reasons of his dispensations[39].

XI. Last station of perfection (Promised Land)

Finally, after further stages, the soul arrives to its destiny.

> *When the soul has passed through all these virtues and reached the summit of perfection, it leaves this world and goes away, as was written of Henoch "He was found no more, for God took him." Such a man seems still to live in this world and in the flesh; and yet he is no longer to be found. Where is he no longer found? In any worldly action, in any carnal thing, in any matter of vanity. For God has taken him away from all these, and has established him in the region of virtues. The final stage is in the west, in the land of Moab, opposite the Jordan For all this journey has no other end than to lead us to the river of God, to bring us to the flowing stream of wisdom, to bathe us in the waters of divine knowledge, so that, being purified by all these trials, we may be able to enter into the promised land*[40].

Origen explains that through love the soul ascends on the mountain of Beauty[41], and realizes her journey. The longing of the soul for God is like the longing of Israel for the promised land. It is a yearning for Paradise and when purified allows the soul to pass the flaming swords of the cherubim and gain access to the tree of life[42]. Or it is the pilgrim's desire for his true city, the heavenly Jerusalem[43].

Origen explains that this journey is realized by the divine grace and in the company of Christ who strengthen the soul in her

---

39 In Num. hom. 27:12.
40 In Num. hom. 27:12.
41 On Prayer, 17:2].
42 An Exhortation to Martyrdom, 36.
43 De Principiis 4:3:6.

travel, at the same time it needs the courage and endurance of the soul's believer.

2. THE GROWTH TO MATURITY

Believers are called to participate in the divine journey, so that their souls might leave Raamses and enter the Promised Land, or they attain a kind of maturity. Their souls grow from spiritual childhood to spiritual manhood.

> (It is possible to be a child in the outer man but a man in the inner). *Such was Jeremiah, who already possessed grace from God when he was still physically in the age of childhood*[44].

Origen explains the need of the believer's soul for spiritual food to grow up to maturity. He arranges these foods in a hierarchical order[45]:

a. "Milk" by which the babes in Christ are nourished (Heb. 5:12-14).
b. "Vegetables" (Romans 14:2ff) for the weak.
c. "Solid food" (Heb. 5:12-14) for the mature or perfect.

All these different foods are to be equated with the Word of God (John 6:32-33), who accommodates his nourishing revelation to the condition of the one receiving It. This is how we receive our "daily" bread, which strengthens us to grow to maturity, and to become in the likeness of Christ.

The true bread is that which nourishes the true man, the man created after the image of God, and through which he who is nourished by it is made to the image of Him that created Him. What is more nourishing for the soul than the Word? And what is more precious for the mind of him that understands it than the

44 In Jer. hom. 1:13 on 1:6.
45 Comm. on Songs: prologue.

Wisdom of God? And what is in better accord with rational nature than Truth?[46]

Our responsibility for seeking the right food is never forgotten, but Origen's emphasis is upon God's gift and his providential guidance of our growth towards perfection.

It must be emphasized that Origen does not mean to distinguish different natures of Christians, as the Gnostics did. On the contrary, all are destined for perfection and maturity. But Origen realizes that this growth to perfection can not be accomplished for most Christians within the confines of this present life. Growth continues after this life and before the *apokatastasis* during which the simple are enabled to grow until they can receive solid food.

This concept of spiritual progress and of its stages has been set forth above according to Homily 27 of *the Book of Numbers*, because it is here that we best see it as a whole and in its details. But it is mentioned also very often in Origen's works. Some historians make this a matter for criticism. For St. Paul, they say, what appears in the moral life of a Christian is mainly the rupture with the past, accomplished once for all by the new birth; for Origen, on the contrary, it is a progressive development, a gradual ascent by which we successively climb the degrees of the perfect life[47].

Lebreton explains the difference between St. Paul's doctrine and Origen's in the following points:

a. It is noteworthy that St. Paul himself also indicates the various stages of the Christian life, for instance in I Cor. 3:1-2, Gal. 4:19.

b. Moreover, the readers of the epistles of St. Paul were just emerging from paganism; they still retained a painful memory of

46 On Prayer, 27:2, ACW, vol 19.
47 The History of the Primitive Church, p. 960.

the darkness in which they had so long lived, and the joy of the wonderful light which had suddenly shone upon them. Origen's hearers, on the other hand, had for the most part been Christians for a long time. They were already children of light, and they were bound to live as such, having no more darkness, but being wholly transparent and shining forth with the light of Christ.

c. There is another contrast, which is deeper and more instructive. If we compare the doctrine of Origen with the speculative teaching of the Gnostics, we are the better able to realize their character by the contrast between them. One of the fundamental dogmas of Gnosticism is the essential distinction between the different races of men, the hylicals, the psychicals, and the pneumaticals: by natural necessity a man belongs to one of these classes, and it would be in vain to endeavor to change it. In Origen, the degrees of religious knowledge are certainly far removed from each other, but there is no abyss separating them; the whole effort of the preacher is aimed at leading Christians on to the highest union with God, for all God's children can and should aspire to this.

3. STRUGGLING IN A SPIRITUAL BATTLE

The pilgrim soul on its journey encounters war and must be ready for it. His comment of the arrival of the Jews to Sochoth (Num. 33) is:

> *The first progress of the soul is to be taken away from earthly agitation and to learn that she must dwell in tents (for Sochoth is interpreted "tents) like a wanderer, so that she can be, as it were, ready for battle and meet those who lie in wait for her unhindered and free*[48].

Life is a battle in which are engaged the soldiers of God, and the soldiers of Satan[49]. No neutrality is possible[50]: "*Every man*

48 In Number. Hom 27:9.
49 In Ps. 36; hom. 2:8.

endowed with reason is either a child of God or a child of the devil; for either he commits sin or he does not commit it; there is no middle course. If he sins, he is of the devil; if he does not sin, he is of God[51].”

Through the believer's spiritual struggle against bodily lusts he expects temptations and he must acknowledge their advantages. Growth is a painful process, and that temptation and struggle never leave us until we have attained the maturity of perfection. He sees that "*Sin*" (Num. 33:36) means temptation, and that there is no other way of embarking on our journey to the Promised land except passing through it. For Origen a temptation is as a testing of gold in fire. It is also a providential process by which we are fashioned into what we should be. God is a divine goldsmith who brings us as vessels to the fire, strikes us with His hammers into an object of beauty suitable for his grandeur[52].

Origen says that there are two kinds of spiritual struggles[53]:

I. A ***struggle of the saints***, such as St. Paul and the Ephesians, as it is said, “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Eph. 6:12).

II. A ***struggle of those who are weaker*** and have their own faults; they wrestle against flesh and blood, for they are surrounded with vices and corporeal lusts. Their struggle is through their body’s senses. The five kings who fought with the Gibeonites (Jos 9:1) are symbols of the war through the senses.

It is much better that the sinner should be in torment than that his mind should be at ease. “*I wish to God I could feel a fire scorching my heart and burning my bones [cf. Jer. 20:. 9] the*

50 Lebreton, p. 955
51 In Joann. 20:13:107
52 Ibid. 27:12.
53 In Jos. hom. 11:4.

minute I committed any sin or said anything I deserved to be blamed for[54]."

Origen and Gregory concentrate on the gradual development of the human soul, which is freed from bondage to earthly delights and rises to union with God[55].

Rown A. Greer says,

> The journey, the growth to maturity, and the warfare or contest are all dependent on the freedom of the Christian. But as has been suggested, they are also placed within the context of God's providence, which continually trains our freedom. Christ accompanies the Christian on his journey, feeds him with true bread, and assists him in his struggle. Moreover, providence assists the Christian through the saints, both departed and present and through the angels. The Christian life is thereby given a wider setting...
>
> If our warfare is against Satan and his hosts, we have spiritual powers for good on our side so that the conflict is not unequal[56].

POSITIVE ATTITUDE OF STRUGGLES

Our struggle has two aspects: negative and positive. For we have not only to leave evil (negative) but also to do what is good (positive).

Origen explains how Joshua conquered the pagan cities not by the aim of destroying them, but of sanctifying them.

1. For example one of these cities was "**Libnah**" (Num. 33:21) which means "white." Origen says that these are two kinds of "white," the white of leprosy and the white light. The city was

---

54 In Jer. hom. 19:8 ; Jean Daniélou: Origen, p. 279.
55 Theological Studies 37 (1976): J. Patout Burns, S.J.: The Economy Of Salvation: Two Patristic Traditions, P. 599.
56 Rown A. Greer: Origen, Paulist Press, 1979, p. 22.

white because it was suffering from the leprosy of the pagan kings. Joshua destroyed this whiteness to grant it the whiteness of light under his reign[57].

2. The same thing happened to "**Lachish**" (Jos. 10:32) which means "way." It was the way of the evildoers which has to be destroyed (Ps. 1:6) and through Joshua because it was the right way (Ps. 107:7). Lachish was the way of the evildoers, after it was conquered and robbed it was established anew as a right way, under the reign of Israel[58].

3. Also "**Habron**" which means "marriage. "

> *The soul married at first the Devil as an evil husband. After the death of this congest husband and her freedom of his rule she married the Man of Righteousness, the legal husband of whom the apostle Paul says, " For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ" (2 Cor. 11:2)[59].*

4. Origen says that the first war of the Word is uprooting the evil which the Father did not plant, and burning it. The second work is to plant what is good in the souls of the believers every day.

> *(Christ) uproots the auger and plants calmness, uproots pride and plants humbleness, uproots the defilement's and plants chastity, uproots ignorance and plants knowledge...[60]*

GRACE AND SPIRITUAL STRUGGLING

It is the journey of the soul under the guidance of divine grace which grants her zeal for struggling against evil and practising the good life, granting her virtues..

---

57 In Jos. hom. 13:2.
58 In Jos. hom. 13:2.
59 In Jos. hom. 13:2-3..
60 In Jos. hom. 13:3-4.

> *God's grace is not given to those who lack zeal in the cause of good, nor can human nature achieve virtue without help from above*[61].

For he who has achieved virtue from his toil and sweat receives an addition from God: for example, when a man has achieved faith by the exercise of his own free will, who will be granted a grace-gift of faith [I Cor. 12:9], and (in sum) a man who has improved some one of his natural resources by care and attention will be granted what is still lacking from God[62].

STRUGGLING WITHOUT DESPAIR[63]

Origen compares the rise of the fallen Christian to the splendid display of power of a combatant in the public games who had the misfortune to fall first but who arose and with renewed energy won over his adversary. Our combat, he continues, is much the same. If one of us has had the misfortune to fall into sin, one must not give up all hope, because

> *it is possible for one to regain one's composure, and to shudder at the evil, which one has committed; and furthermore, it is possible not only to restrain oneself, but also to satisfy God, in tears and lamentations... If you should see that someone has fallen into some sin, and that after his fall he is in despair about his conversion, repeating, as he does: how can I be saved, I who have fallen? There is no longer any hope for me; my sins hinder me. How can I even dare to approach the Lord? How can I return to the Church?... Let him not remain on the ground after his fall. Let him not lie prostrate; but rather let him arise and amend his fault. Let him wipe out the sin by the satisfaction of his penance*[64].

---

61 Comm. Ps.
62 In Luke hom. 39.
63 Earnest Latko: Origen's Concept of penance, Laval 1949, p. 85.
64 In Psalm. 36 hom. 4:2 PG 12 1353.

But if anyone returns to his conscience, I do not know if we are able to excuse some member of the body which was not in need of fire. And since the prophet was indeed clean from all things, therefore, he deserved that "one of the seraphim be sent to him " (Cf. Isa 6.6), who would purify only his lips. But I am afraid that we merit fire not only for individual members but for the whole body. For when our eyes lust either through illicit passions or through devilish spectacles what else do they gather for themselves except fire? When our ears are not turned from hearing vain and derogatory things of neighbors, when our hands are by no means restrained from murder and from robberies and from plundering, when our "feet are swift to shed blood," (Cf. Ps 13.3.) and when we hand over our body not to the Lord but to fornication, what else do we hand over "into Gehenna" (Cf. Matt 5.29.) except our whole body? [65]

✞ ✞ ✞

65 Homilies on Leviticus 9:7 (Cf. Frs. of the Church).

SPIRITUAL LIFE AS A FESTIVAL AND JOYFUL LIFE

Origen speaks of spiritual life as a hard and dangerous trip of the soul and as a continuos battle, but its atmosphere is heavenly, for even through struggle a believer practices the fellowship with Christ, acknowledging the dwelling of the Holy Spirit within himself, attaining the knowledge of the mysteries of the Father. His life becomes a festival and Sabbatical day.

1. PRACTISING HEAVENLY LIFE

The prophet says, "You brought over a vine from Egypt; you drove out nations and planted it. You made a passable way before it; you planted its roots and it filled the earth. Its shade covered the mountains and its branches the cedars of God."(Cf. Ps. 79.9-11.)

Do you perceive now how God plants and where he plants? He does not plant in the valleys, but on the mountains in high and lofty places. He does not wish to place again in lowly places those whom he led out of Egypt, whom he led from the world to faith, but he wishes their mode of life to be uplifted. He wishes us to dwell in the mountains, but also in these very mountains no less does he not wish us to crawl all over the ground, nor does he wish further that his vine have its fruit cast down to the ground, but he wishes its shoots to be led upwards, to be placed aloft. He wishes that there be vine branches not in just any lowly trees, but in the loftiest and highest cedars of God. I think the "cedars of God" are the prophets and apostles. If we are joined to them as the vine which "God brought over from Egypt" and our shoots are spread along their branches and, resting on them, we become like vine

branches bound to one another by bonds of love, we shall doubtless produce very much fruit. For "every tree which does not produce fruit is cut down and cast into the fire"(Luke 3:10)[66].

It is not because of the place where he dwells, but because of his dispositions, that he who is still on earth has his citizenship in heaven and lays up treasures in heaven (Phil. 3:20; Matt. 6:20f.), Having his heart in heaven and bearing the image of the Heavenly One (1 Cor. 15:49), he is no longer of the earth nor of the lower world (John 3;31; 8:23;18:36), but of heaven and the heavenly world that is better than this[67].

It says, "He went up to the higher place to pray and he saw the heavens open" (Acts 10:9, 11). Does it not yet appear to you that Peter had gone up "to the higher," not only in the body but also in mind and spirit? It says, "he saw the heaven open and a certain vessel descending to the earth like a sheet in which were all quadrupeds, reptiles, and fowls of the sky. And he heard a voice saying to him, 'Arise, Peter, kill and eat' (Acts 10:11-13)[68].

What happens after this? "Go," the text says, "into the high land, to one of the mountains which I shall show you, and there you shall offer him for an holocaust" (Gen. 22.2)... He is sent, therefore, "into the high land" and the high land is not sufficient for a patriarch about to accomplish so great a work for the Lord, but he is also ordered to ascend a mountain, of course that, exalted by faith, he might abandon earthly things and ascend to things above [69].

---

66 In Exodus hom .6:10 (Cf. Ronad E Heine- Frs. of the Church, vol. 71.)
67 On Prayer 26:5(ACW).
68 Homilies on Leviticus 7:4. (See Frs. of the Church)
69 In Gen. hom. 8:3 (Cf. Heine).

Believers attain this heavenly life through the work of the cross.

> *For Christ, "through His blood has made peace with things on earth and things in heaven" (Col. 1:20) so that the earthly might have fellowship with the heavenly*[70].

> *Just as the sun and the moon are said to be the great lights in the firmament of heaven, so also are Christ and the Church in us. But since God also placed stars in the firmament, let us see what are also stars in us, that is, in the heaven of our heart*[71].

Origen comments on the words " ...divides the water which is above heaven from the water which is below heaven" Gen. 1:7, saying,

> *Therefore, by participation in that celestial water which is said to be above the heavens, each of the faithful becomes heavenly, that is, when he applies his mind to lofty and exalted things, thinking nothing about the earth but totally about heavenly things, "seeking the things which are above, where Christ is at the right hand of the Father" (Col. 3:1). For then he also will be considered worthy of that praise from God which is written here when the text says: "And God saw that it was good" (Gen. 1:8)*[72].

2. SPIRITUAL LIFE AS A FESTIVAL LIFE

St. Clement, as we have seen, considers the Christian life as an unceasing feast, asking us: "holding festival... in our whole life[73]." To him the true *Gnostic* attains **the new life in Christ as a Festival.** Origen has the same idea, for to him the Christian celebrates the Passover both at Eastertime as a memorial of

70 Homilies on Leviticus 4:4. (See Frs. of the Church)
71 In Gen. hom. 1:7.
72 In Gen. hom. 1:2.
73 Stromata 7:7.

Christ's death, and **at all times by feasting** with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth and the bitter herbs of sorrow and repentance[74]. His life is a Paschal or unceasing feast, full of spiritual joy through repentance.

> *Tell me, you who come to church only on festive days, are the other days not festive days? Are they not the Lord's days?* [75]

For Origen, *"Every day is the Lord's Day... therefore Christians eat the flesh of the Lamb daily; they consume each day the flesh of the Word, for Christ our Passover has been scarified (1 Cor. 5:7)*[76]*."*

3. SPIRITUAL LIFE AS A JOYFUL LIFE

Origen comments on the words of the Psalmist: "Blessed are the people who know the joyful sound" (Ps. 89: 15), saying:

> *He does not say: "Blessed are the people who practise righteousness," or "who have the knowledge of heaven, earth and stars," but "who know the joyful sound!" Sometimes the fear of God grants man a joy...*
>
> *Here blessedness is presented in abundance, why? For all the people participate in it, and all know the companionship in joyful sound!*[77]
>
> *Isaac, scripture says, "grew" and became strong, that is, Abraham's joy grew as he looked not at those things "which are seen, but at the things which are not seen." (Cf. 2 Cor. 4:18) For Abraham did not rejoice about present things nor about the riches of the world and the activities of age. But do you wish to hear why Abraham rejoiced? Hear the Lord saying to the Jews: "Abraham*

74 Contra Celsus 8:22-3; Comm. on John. 10:13.
75 In Gen. hom. (Cf. Heine).
76 In Gen. hom. 10.
77 In Jos. hom 7:2.

> *your father desired to see my day, and he saw it and was glad" (John 8:56) in this way, therefore, "Isaac grew"; (Cf. Gen. 21:8) that vision of Abraham, in which he saw the day of Christ, and the hope which is in Christ were increasing his joys. And would that you too might be made Isaac and be a joy to your mother the church*[78]

4. SPIRITUAL LIFE AS A SABBATICAL LIFE

In his *Contra Celsus*, Origen states that a Christian's soul has its true rest (Sabbath), in the contemplation of divine things, and thus she examines the Sabbath of eternity. In other words, as God has His rest on the seventh day, not in terms of inactivity, but in terms of contemplating in His works which He had done, so the believer's life becomes Sabbatical, not by abstention from good works, but by contemplation on God, His works, and His heavenly glory[79].

> *Everyone... who lives in Christ lives ever on the Sabbath: and rests in peace from evil works, but does the works of righteousness without ceasing. But many who have the name of Christ but not His grace, live in sabbatical holiday from good works and do bad ones*[80].

✞ ✞ ✞

78 In Gen. hom. (Cf. Heine).
79 Sorce Chriétiene 147:330.
80 Comm. Ser. Matt. 45 on 24:20ff.

CHRISTIAN VIRTUES

JESUS CHRIST IS OUR VIRTUE

Virtue according to Origen is to be one with Christ, for He is the Virtue that fills Him[81]. He is the Justice, Wisdom, Truth. He who practices virtue shares in the divine nature[82].

> *To seek Jesus is the same as to seek the Word, Wisdom, Justice, Truth, and the almighty power of God, as Christ is all these*[83].

> *I think, therefore, that Sara, which means prince or one who governs empires, represents* ***arete****, which is the virtue of the soul. This* ***virtue****, then, is joined to and clings to a wise and faithful man, even as that wise man who said of wisdom: "I have desired to take her for my spouse." (Wis 8.2.) For this reason, therefore, God says to Abraham: "In all that Sara has said to you, hearken to her voice." (Gen. 21.12.) This saying, at any rate, is not appropriate to physical marriage, since that well known statement was revealed from heaven which says to the woman of the man: "In him shall be your refuge (This rendering is based on the LXX apostrophe. Rufinus' text has conversion.) and he shall have dominion over you." (Gen. 3.16.) If, therefore, the husband is said to be lord of his wife, how is it said again to the man: "In all that Sara has said to you, hearken to her voice"? (Gen. 21.12.) If anyone, therefore, has married virtue, let him hearken to her voice in all which she shall counsel him*[84].

> *And indeed the Scripture designates the progress of the saints figuratively by marriages. Whence also you can,*

---

81 Fragmenta in Ioanem. 9.
82 Cf. H. Crouzel: Theologie de l'image de Dieu chez Origen, Pains, 1956, p. 239f..
83 Comm. on John 32:19; R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder, 1944, p. 131-2.
84 In Gen. hom. 6:1 (Cf. Heine).

if you wish, be a husband of marriages of this kind. For example, if you freely practice hospitality, you will appear to have taken her as your wife. If you shall add to this care of the poor, you will appear to have obtained a second wife. But if you should also join patience to yourself and gentleness and the other virtues, you will appear to have taken as many wives as the virtues you enjoy[85].

Just as the Savior is Righteousness, Truth and Sanctification in person, even so is He "endurance"(Jer. 17:3 LXX) in Person. It is impossible to be righteous or holy without Christ: and impossible to "endure" unless one possesses Him. For He is the 'endurance" of Israel[86].

You are Righteousness, we have followed You as Righteousness: and in the same way as Sanctification, Wisdom, Peace, Truth, the Way leading to God, the true Life[87].

GOD, THE SOURCE OF VIRTUES

God is the source of our virtues, which grow in us gradually. No virtue, no perseverance, is immune to the possibility of change unless it is of Christ, whose human soul chose the good without any resort to that *libertas indifferentiae* which would have confronted Him with a choice between good and evil. This is true for men, for angels, for every creature. Creatures are divine in that degree only in which God is present within them, and, "*in the absence of divine Wisdom, they are counted as nothing*." Their goodness does not belong to them, and only through trials and afflictions do they obtain perseverance. We cannot speak of self-control or of indifference to suffering without remembering that they

85 In Gen. hom. (Cf. Heine).
86 In Jer. hom. 17:4.
87 Comm. on Matt. 17:22 on 19:27.

come "*from the grace of God, to which are added the efforts of man*[88]."

> *In God all these virtues exist for ever; and they can never come to Him or depart from Him, whereas men acquire them gradually and one by one*[89].
>
> *In this way, then, through the ceaseless work on our behalf of the Father, the Son and the holy Spirit, renewed at every stage of our progress, we may perchance just succeed at last in beholding the holy and blessed life; and when after many struggles we have been able to attain to it we ought so to continue that no satiety of that blessing may ever possess us; but the more we partake of its blessedness, the more may the loving desire for it deepen and increase within us, as ever our hearts grow in fervor and eagerness to receive and hold fast the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit*[90].
>
> *But, if Christ is Righteousness, he who has received righteousness confesses not himself but Christ; so also he who has found wisdom, by the very possession of Wisdom, confesses Christ. And such a one indeed as, "with the heart believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth makes confession unto salvation (Rom. 10:10)," and bears testimony to the works of Christ, as making confession by all these things of Christ before men, will be confessed by Him before His Father in heaven (Matt. 10:32). So also he who has not denied himself but denied the Christ will experience the saying, "I also will deny him (Matt. 10:33)* [91]*."*

---

88 In Psalm., 17:21 PG 12:1232; cf. ibid. 1:1 PG 12:1086; R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder 1944, Chapter IV.
89 De Principiis 4:4:10.
90 De Principiis 1:3:8 (Cf. Butterworth).
91 Commentary on Matthew, Book 11:6 Cf. ANF).

For perhaps also each of those who have been crucified with Christ puts off from himself the principalities and the powers, and makes a show of them and triumphs over them in the cross; or rather, Christ does these things in them[92].

Therefore, the soul conceives from this seed of the word and the Word forms a fetus in it until it brings forth a spirit of the fear of God. For so the souls of the saints say through the prophet, "By your fear, Lord, we conceived in the womb and brought forth in labor and gave birth; we have made and brought forth in labor and gave birth; we have made the spirit of your salvation upon the earth" (Isa. 26:18). This is the birth of the holy souls, this is conception; these are holy unions which are convenient and apt for the great high priest, Christ Jesus our Lord, "to whom is glory and power forever and ever. Amen! (Cf. 1 Pet. 4:11; Rev. 1:6)[93]*."*

But do you want me to show you from the Scriptures that trees or wood are given the name of individual virtues, which we mentioned above? I turn to the most wise Solomon as a witness when he said about wisdom, "The tree of life is for all who embrace it" (Prov. 3:18). Therefore, if "wisdom is the tree of life, " without a doubt, there is another tree of prudence, another of knowledge, and another of justice. For logically it is not said that only wisdom, of all the virtues, was worthy to be called "the tree of life" but that the other virtues by no means received names of a similar sort. Therefore, "the trees of the field will give their fruit" (Lev. 26:4)[94].

(Paul in Romans 12) *ties up with the gift of grace moral precepts, to show that to Christians these too are*

92 Commentary on Matthew, Book 11:6 Cf. ANF).
93 Homilies On Leviticus 12:7 (Cf. Frs. of the Church)
94 Homilies On Leviticus 16:4. (Cf. Frs. of the Church)

given by the grace of God. For there are many Gentiles whose moral standards are orderly and whose institutions are honorable, who never ascribe the merit of these to God or confess that they received grace from Him; they lay them to the credit of their own industry, or preen themselves on their masters and legislators. But the apostle makes clear to us that everything that is good comes from God and is given through the Holy Spirit (and Origen quotes James 1:17, I Cor 1:31)[95].

The truth may be that each virtue is a kingdom of heaven, and that all together are the kingdom of the heavens. This would mean that the man who lives by the virtues is already in the kingdom of the heavens, and (for example) that the saying "repent, for the kingdom of the heavens is at hand" (Matt. 3:2) has no temporal reference, but a reference to actions and purpose. For Christ, who is each and every virtue, has come to dwell with us and speaks-and therefore the "Kingdom of God" is "within His disciples" and not "here or there" (Luke 17:21)[96].

If "a branch cannot bear fruit unless it abides in the vine," it is clear that the disciples of the Word, the spiritual branches of the true vine (the Word), cannot bear the fruits of virtue unless they abide in the true vine, the Christ of God...

Virtue, by definition, is a spiritual battle, it is the activity by which the soul, by divine grace, governs the body and its motions; vice, an activity in which the motions or passions of the body wrongfully gain control of the governing mind and the servant becomes master.

Precepts are given to pay debts. But what we do over and above what we owe we do not do by precept. For

95 Comm. on Rom. 9:24.
96 Comm. on Matt. 12:14 on 16:13ff.

instance, virginity is not a payment of debt, nor is it demanded by a precept, but it is offered over and above what is owed[97].

The verse says, "To those that love God all things collaborate unto good." The Christian must conform himself to the image of Christ; the Christian becomes Christ's spirit when he has so attached himself to the Word and Wisdom of God in all things that in no way is the image and likeness discolored. And thus if one wishes to attain to the summit of perfection and beatitude one seeks after the likeness of Christ's image, the image of the Son of God[98].

Lack of God is never natural to any human soul. For the soul to be re-established, it is enough that the light comes to it. Always the light can come without harm or loss to itself, for it comes only in the measure of the needy soul's capacity to receive it. When it has once been received, it must be kept alive by holy practices and by attendance at salutary instructions, for all around it there is the darkness of evil thoughts affecting even the actions. This explains why the light is wisdom first and justice afterward[99].

"There is work for those who dig the wells of living water, wherever they labor; that is, for those who teach the word of God to every soul and draw from it its salutary fruit... Let us dig those wells that were within us and throw out the earth that chokes them. We shall make the waters come forth again, even unto overflowing, because the ***Word of God is within us***[100]*."*

97 Comm. on Matt. 15:16; Thomas Halton, p. 160.
98 Comm. on Rom. 7:7; Thomas Halton, p. 154.
99 R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder Book Co., 1944, p. 295.
100 In Gen. Hom. 13:3f.; R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder Book Co., 1944, p.

THE SANCTIFICATION OF THE SENSES

In the spiritual battle, man's senses are sanctified, not by destroying them as evil things, but destroying what is evil so that they might be directed towards worshipping God, edification of the soul, and serving others.

Commenting on the five Amorite Kings who were executed by Joshua (Jos. 10:16-27), Origen says

> *This, in my opinion, means that the five carnal senses, after being conquered by Jesus and deposing them from their denial of faith, and after the death of sin in them as they become free from the servitude of sin, these senses become in the service of the spirit in doing righteousness.*
>
> *Thus Jerusalem who was ruled by a king who was not noble became ruled by David the strong king and the wise Solomon*[101].
>
> *Do you wish that I show you from the Scriptures* ***how the devil opens the mouth of men of this kind who speak against Christ?*** *Note what has been written about Judas, how it is reported that "Satan entered him," (John 13.27.) and that "the devil put it in his heart to betray Him." (Cf. John 13.2.) He, therefore, having received the money, opened his mouth that "he might confer with the leaders and the Pharisees, how he might betray him." (Cf. Luke 22.4.) Whence it seems to me to be no small gift to perceive the mouth which the devil opens. Such a mouth and words are not discerned without the gift of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, in the distributions of spiritual gifts, it is also added that "discernment of spirits" is given to certain people (Cf. 1 Cor 12.10.) It is a spiritual gift, therefore, by which the spirit is discerned, as the Apostle says elsewhere, "Test the spirits, if they are from God" (Cf. 1 John 4.1.)*

101 In Jos. hom. 11:5.

But as God opens the mouth of the saints, so, I think, ***God also may open the ears of the saints to hear the divine words.*** *For thus Isaiah the prophet says: "The Lord will open my ear that I may know when the word must be spoken"(Cf. Is 50.4-5.) So also the Lord opens eyes, as "the Lord opened Agar's eyes and she saw a well of living water" (Gen. 21:19). But also Eliseus the prophet says: "`Open, O Lord, the eyes of the servant that he may see that there are more with us than with the enemy.' And the Lord opened the eyes of the servant and behold, the whole mountain was full of horses and chariots and heavenly helpers."(Cf. 4 Kings 6.16-17.) For "the angel of the Lord encircles those who fear him and will deliver them" (Ps. 33:8)*[102].

You see (Lev. 14:17) how by the last and highest purification the ear is to be purified that the hearing may be kept pure and clean; Or at least since the Lord in the gospel testifies that the hearts of sinners are besieged by "seven demons, "the priest" appropriately "sprinkles seven times before the Lord" in purification that the expulsion "of the seven evil spirits" from the heart of a person purified may be shown by "the oil shaken seven times from the fingers[103]*."*

THE INNER SENSES

Origen who believes in the world of the inner man as the true world, concentrates on the inner senses. As the body has its sense by which it can acknowledge what is visible and earthly, the soul also has its senses through which she can see God and His heaven, hear Him, and keep in touch with Him.

And to these let us add five others which are the senses of the inner man, through which either is made

102 In Exodus hom. 3:2 (Cf. Ronad E Heine- Frs. of the Church, vol. 71.)
103 In Lev. hom. 8:13 (Gary Wayne Barkley- Frs. of the Church).

"pure in heart we see God" or "have ears to hear" the things which Jesus teaches. Or, we take that "odor" about which the Apostle says, "for we are the pleasing odor of Christ" (2 Cor. 2:15). Or we even take that taste about which the prophet says, "Taste and see that the Lord is sweet" (Ps. 33:9), or that touch which John mentions, "We have seen with our eyes and have touched with our hand concerning the Word of Life" (1 John 1:1). "But to all of these we add one more so that we may refer all these things to the one God. And indeed, these things were spoken concerning the restoration of those things which had been removed from the sanctuary by any fault[104].

HUNGER FOR THE WORD OF GOD

The believer whose soul desires her restoration as an icon of God, and her return to God, is hungry for the word of God.

For the Word of God is adjusted to the needs of human souls and is to be measured by the desire of him who enjoys it. It is like the bread which does not change, but the taste of which depends on the hunger of him who eats it.

Here was Origen's notion of the work of transformation, the labor of love, where the Christian soul measures its own spiritual progress[105].

"I beseech you, therefore, be ***transformed*** *(cf. Eph. 4:20-24, Rom. 12:1-2).*

Resolve to learn that you can be transformed and put aside the form of swine, which describes the impure soul, and the form of dog, which describes the person who barks and howls and speaks abusively.

104 In Lev. hom. 3:7 (cf. G.W. Barkley - Frs. of the Church).
105 R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder, 1944, p. 132.

It is possible to be transformed (even) from serpents. For he wicked person is addressed: "You serpent and brood of vipers!" (cf. Matt. 23:33).

If, then, we are willing to hear that it is in our power to be transformed from serpents, from swine, from dogs, let us learn from the apostle the transformation that depends on us. This is how he puts it "We all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into His likeness" (2 Cor. 3:18).

If you were a barker and the ***Word molded you*** *and changed you, you were transformed from a dog to a human being.*

If you were impure, and the ***Word touched your soul****, and if you offered yourself to be* ***shaped by the Word****, you were changed from a swine into a human being.*

If you were a wild beast, on ***hearing the Word*** *which tames and domesticates, which changed you by the will of the Word into a human being, you will no longer be addressed: "You serpent and brood of vipers!" (cf. Matt. 23:33)*[106].

"*When we neglect study, the truths that we already know lose their appeal*," as the psalmist warns us[107].

In his commentary on the Psalms, he wrote to Ambrose in these terms:

"*Under the pretense of seeking the knowledge of God, the heretics rise against the church, bringing forward their works composed of numerous books in which they claim to explain the Gospels and the apostolic writings. If I remain silent and fail to put forward the true and real doctrines of Christ, they will then proceed to conquer the greedy souls who, in default of healthy food, grasp at the filthy and abominable foods that are forbidden... With*

106 Dialogue with Heraclides 13, 14 (translated by Robert J. Daly)..
107 R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder, 1944, p. 133.

regard to you, this was indeed your own history. Unable to find masters capable of giving you the higher knowledge and captured by an unenlightened and ignorant form of belief, you sought the love of Christ in opinions you had formerly abandoned. But you subsequently renounced those opinions, by abjuring them as soon as you made use of the intelligence which has been given to you. I speak thus in order to defend those who know how to teach and to write. But if I must speak for myself, I will confess that I am not perhaps such a man as God renders capable of being His minister of the New Testament. I may be so according to the letter, but not according to the spirit. So I have been guilty of presumption in devoting myself to the work of scriptural exegesis[108]*."*

MEDITATING IN THE NEW AND OLD TESTAMENT

We must endeavor, therefore, in every way to gather in our heart, "by giving heed to reading, to exhortation, to teaching," (1 Tim. 4:13) and by "meditating in the Law of the Lord day and night," (Ps. 1:2), not only the new oracles of the Gospels and of the apostles and their Revelation, but also the old things in the Law "which has the shadow of the good things to come" (Heb. 10:1), and in the prophets who prophesied in accordance with them[109].

SPIRITUAL LOVE

May the way of the Lord be prepared in our hearts, for the heart of man is so great and wide, as if it was the world.

Look to its greatness not into a bodily quantity, but in the power of the mind which gives it the ability to embrace very great knowledge of the truth.

108 R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder, 1944, p. 133-134.
109 Comm. on Matt., book 2:15.

> *Then, let the hard way be prepared in your hearts through a suitable life, and in good and perfect works, so this way will preserve your lives in righteousness, and the words of the Lord enter into you without obstacle*[110].

LOVE OF ENEMIES

As our Lord Jesus Christ, who is Love, is our Virtue, and our soul asks Him to be transformed unto His icon, therefore we practice love to all creatures, except the devil, for he alone is the true enemy of God and His children.

We don't hate our persecutors as our enemies, but through love we pray for them, knowing that the only enemy is the devil who urges men to be cruel.

> *If, then, you ever see your persecutor raging very much, know that he is being urged on by a demon as his rider and, therefore, is fierce and cruel*[111].

> *"And you will pursue your enemies" (Lev. 26:7). What "enemies" except "the devil" himself "and his angels" (Cf. Lev. 26:3) and evil spirits and "unclean demons" (Cf. Luke 4:33). We will pursue them not only to drive them from ourselves but also from others whom they attack, if we keep the divine precepts. It says, "You will pursue your enemies and they will fall dead in your sight" (Lev. 26:7). If "God grinds Satan swiftly under our feet" (Cf. Rom. 16:20),"the enemies will fall dead in our sight" (Cf. Lev. 26:7)*[112].

HUMBLENESS

Henri de Lubac says,

---

110 In Luc. hom. 21.
111 In Exodus hom .6:2 (Cf. Ronad E Heine- Frs. of the Church, vol. 71.)
112 Homilies On Leviticus 16:6 (Cf. Frs. of the Church)

He (Origen) wants us to humble ourselves deeply so that we may deserve to hear the sweetness of His voice. He declares that all the good things which man can expect and which God can give are summed up in Jesus. He praises those who contemplate Christ and who remain bound to him "by a bond of tender affection," and those who prefer to put their trust in His words rather than in their own conscience. Even as Origen smiles at Jesus' childhood, so he suffers with Him the suffering and humiliation of his Passion which he at times evokes with startling realism. He admires the majesty of his silence. He also meditates on the first pages of the gospel; and from Jesus' submission to Joseph he learns that, no matter how great one may be, there is no better thing than to live in humble submission. He announces that there is no true Christian life in separation from the man who was the Christ and from Mary his mother. He often speaks of "my Jesus," "my Lord," "my Savior." This personal touch had become so much a habit with him that he at times slipped into introducing it even into his quotations from Scripture. It is a Pauline trait; but Origen's insistent usage makes something new of it, a sort of conquest of Christian piety[113].

If you are not "humble and peaceful," the grace of the Holy Spirit cannot live within you, if you do not receive the divine words with fear. For the Holy Spirit departs from the proud and stubborn and false soul[114].

HELPING WEAKER PERSONS

Note this, too, that Mary being the greater comes to Elisabeth, who is the less, and the Son of God comes to the Baptist; which should encourage us to render help without

113 Henri De Lubac: Origen, On First Principles, NY., 1966 (Koetschau text together with an introduction and notes by G.W. Butterworth, p. XII.
114 Homilies on Leviticus 6:2. (See Frs. of the Church)

delay to those who are in a lower position, and to cultivate for ourselves a moderate station[115].

SOBRIETY

Sobriety is the mother of all virtues just as, on the other hand, drunkenness is the mother of all vices[116].

HOSPITALITY

He escapes the flames, he escapes the conflagration for this reason alone: because he opened his house to strangers. Angels entered the hospitable house; fire entered the houses closed to strangers[117].

ALMSGIVING

If, then, any one in our time who has the bag of the Church speaks likes Judas on behalf of the poor, but takes away what is put therein, let there be assigned to him the portion along with Judas who did these things[118].

OVERCOMING TEMPTATIONS

The Savior then compels the disciples to enter into the boat of temptations and to go before Him to the other side, and through victory over them to go beyond critical difficulties; but when they had come into the midst of the sea, and of the waves in the temptations, and of the contrary winds which prevented them from going away to the other side, they were not able, struggling as they were without Jesus, to overcome the waves and the contrary wind and reach the other side. Wherefore the Logos, taking compassion upon them who had done all that was in their

---

115 Comm. on John, book 6:30..
116 Homilies on Leviticus 7:1. (See Frs. of the Church)
117 In Gen. hom. 5:1 (Cf. Heine).
118 Commentary on Matthew, Book 11:9 (Cf. ANF).

power to reach the other side, came to them walking upon the sea, which for Him had no waves or wind that was able to oppose if He so willed; for it is not written, "He came to them walking upon the waves,: but, "upon the waters;" (Matt. 14:25)[119].

Then when we see many difficulties besetting us, and with moderate struggle we have swum through them to some extent, let us consider that our boat is in the midst of the sea, distressed at that time by the waves which wish to shipwreck us concerning faith or some one of the virtues; but when we see the spirit of the evil one striving against us, let us conceive that then the wind is contrary to us. When then in such suffering we have spent three watches of the night - that is, of the darkness which is in the temptations - striving nobly with all our might and watching ourselves so as not to make shipwreck concerning the faith or some one of the virtues, - the first watch against the father of darkness and wickedness, the second watch against his son "who opposes and exalts himself against all that is called God or any thing that is worshipped" (2 Thess. 2:4), and the third watch against the spirit (The conception of Origen seems to be that opposed to the Divine Trinity there is an evil trinity. Cf. book 12:20) that is opposed to the Holy Spirit, then we believe that when the fourth watch impends, when "the night is far spent, and the day is at hand," (Rom. 13:12) the Son of God will come to us, that He may prepare the sea for us, walking upon it[120].

SIN

CONCEPT OF SINNING

What is the meaning of sinning in the mind of Origen?

119 Commentary on Matthew, Book 11:5 (Cf. ANF).
120 Commentary on Matthew, Book 11:6 (Cf. ANF).

1. As our virtues is **Christ Himself**, so lacking of the fellowship with Christ and unity with the Father is sinning.

2. Virtue is restoring the nature of the soul to be **the icon of the Logos**, and sinning is a lack of this icon.

3. Virtue is **attributing the soul to God as one of His children**, and sinning is attributing to the devil. A soul who refuses her Father, and Heavenly Groom, becomes widowed and desolate like Jerusalem. Such a soul readily becomes the prey of its enemies. Indeed, its distress only adds to the strength of its foes. As progress in virtue on the part of the soul weakens the devil and dissipates his power as the wind carries away the dust in the road, so sin on the contrary encourages him and makes him daring. He then hurls himself at the noblest part of the soul and despoils it. Thus confusion takes the place of order in the life of the soul. My sins, says the sinner, weigh heavily on my shoulders and my strength is gone. Sin takes possession of the soul and rules it completely. The soul is thus held in bondage without ever being able to realize commensurably its own desires or to satisfy them in any degree. Origen began to view evil as boundless, and passion as a kind of infinity[121].

4. Virtue is attaining **the enlightenment** of our inner man by the work of the Word of God, the Truth, who reveals the divine knowledge to His bride, and sinning is ignorance which is realized by the devil who endeavors to destroy every divine knowledge, so that we may be admitted to his kingdom of darkness.

Sin **obscures the vision of God**, but not entirely for all: Certain reminiscences remain - knowledge, of whose primal source the soul is not aware[122].

Sins are **harlotry and attack the virginity of Christ's bride**, the soul, and even more, the Church[123].

---

121 R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder, 1944, p. 90.
122 John J. O,Meara: Origen, ACW vol. 19, p. 216..
123 John J. O'Meara: Origen, ACW vol. 19, p. 232..

BITTERNESS OF SINS

As sinning is a lack of fellowship with Christ, the sweetness of the soul, the Nourisher, and Source of her freedom, therefore sin is very bitter. It is a servitude to the severe devil, who strips her from all inner beauty and glory.

> *Truly all kinds of sins are bitter. There is nothing more bitter than them, even if these sins have a kind of sweetness at first, as Solomon says...*
>
> *On the contrary righteousness seems to be at first bitter, but at the end it is more sweet then honey, when it produces the fruit of virtue*[124].

> *How speedy is the banishment of the pleasures!*
>
> *How its annihilation is very soon!*
>
> *This which the sinners think that is remaining for good!* [125]

FIRE OF SINS

Origen distinguishes between the divine fire inflamed within us through the word of God which enlightens our inner man, and that inflamed through sin which destroys our inner beauty and goodness. On the first fire he says,

> *"The declaration of the Lord has set him on fire" (Cf. Ps. 118:140). And again in the gospel it was written, after the Lord spoke to Cleopas, "Was not our heart burning within us when he opened the Scriptures to us?" (Luke 24:18, 32)...* On the other fire he says, *"This fire is not from the altar of the Lord, but it is that which is called" an alien fire" and you heard a little earlier that those who brought " a foreign fire before the Lord were destroyed" (Cf. Lev. 16:1). You also burn when wrath fills you and*

124 In Jos. hom. 14:2..
125 In Jos. hom. 14:3..

when rage inflames you; meantime you burn also with the love of the flesh and you are cast away into the fires of most disgraceful passions. But all this is "an alien fire" and contrary to God, which, without a doubt, whoever burns will endure the lot of Nadab and Abiud (Cf. Lev. 10:1,2)[126]*."*

It says, "And he will take a censor filled with coals." (Lev. 16.12.) Not all are cleansed by this fire which is taken "from the altar." (Cf. Lev 16.12.) Aaron is cleansed by that fire, so is Isaiah, and any who are like them. But others who are not of this kind, among whom I also reckon myself, shall be cleansed by another fire. I fear it is the one about which it was written, "A river of fire was flowing before him." (Dab 7.10.) This "fire" is not "from the altar." The fire that is "from the altar" is the fire of the Lord. But that which is outside the altar is not of the Lord but is properly of each one who sins, about whom it said, "Their worm will not die, and their fire will not be extinguished." (Isa 66.24.) Therefore, this "fire" is of those who have ignited it just as it also was written in another place, "Walk in your fire and in the flame which you kindled for yourselves." (Isa 50.11) [127]

We can also add the fact that the nature of sin is like the material which is consumed by fire, which the Apostle Paul says is built upon by sinners who "upon the foundation" of Christ "build wood , hay and straw" (Cf. 1 Cor. 3:12) In this it is shown openly that there are certain sins so light that they are compared "to straw," on which the fire, when brought, cannot last long; but that there are others like "hay" which the fire also consumes easily, but which lasts a little longer than "the straw[128]*."*

126 Homilies On Leviticus 9:9 (Cf. Frs. of the Church)
127 Homilies on Leviticus 9:8 (Cf. Frs. of the Church).
128 Homilies On Leviticus 14:3 (Cf. Frs. of the Church)

FRUITS OF SINS

Sin makes man small and petty; virtue keeps him distinguished and great. For just as bodily sickness makes the human body feeble and poor, but good health renders it joyful and strong, so understand that the sickness of sin also certainly makes the soul lowly and small, but good health of the inner person and works of truth make it great and distinguished and to the degree that it grows in virtues, it yields a larger greatness. That is how I understand what was written about Jesus, "He grew in wisdom and in age and in grace before God and men (Luke 2:52)[129].

Each sin by its nature and extent pays its due penalties... [130]

EVIL SOUL AND THE TEN PLAGUES

The ten plagues inflicted upon Pharaoh and his people are symbols of the effects of sin on the soul.

But now if we are also to discuss the moral nature, we will say that any soul in this world, while it lives in errors and ignorance of the truth is in Egypt.

1. If the Law of God begins to approach this soul ***it turns the waters into blood*** *for it, that is, it changes the fluid and slippery life of youth to the blood of the Old or New Testament.*

2. Then it draws out of the soul the vain and empty talkativeness and complaining against the providence of God which is like ***the noise of frogs****.*

3. It also purifies its evil thoughts and scatters ***the stinging mosquitoes*** *which have the power of craftiness to sting.*

---

129 Homilies On Leviticus 12:2 (Cf. Frs. of the Church)
130 Homilies On Leviticus 14:3 (Cf. Frs. of the Church)

4. It also removes the bites of the passions which are like ***the stings of the fly*** *and destroys the foolishness and brutish understanding in the soul, by which "Man when he was in honor, did not understand, but has been compared to stupid beasts, and make like to them" (Ps. 48:21).*

5. And in respect to ***the sores on the cattle****, the Law censured the soul's swelling arrogance and extinguished the mark of madness in it.*

6. After this, moreover, it employs the sounds of "the sons of ***thunder****" (Cf. Mark 3:17), that is the teachings of the Gospels and apostles.*

7. But it also attends to ***the chastening of hail****, that is it might restrain the luxury of pleasure. At the same time it also employs* ***the fire of penance****, that the souls also might say: "Was not our heart burning within us?" (Luke 24:32)*

8. Nor does the Law of God take away the example of ***the locusts*** *from the soul by which all its restless and disturbed motions are devoured and eaten up, whereby it too learns what the Apostle teaches: "That all its activities be according to order."(Cf. 1 Cor 14.40.)*

9. But when the soul has been sufficiently restrained for morals and constrained to make its life more faultless, when it has perceived the author of the blows and has now begun to confess that "it is the finger of God"(Cf. Exod. 8.19.) and it has acquired some understanding, then especially ***the soul sees the darkness of its own conduct****, then it perceives the gloom of its own errors.*

10. And when the soul has reached this point, then it will deserve that ***the firstborn of the Egyptians in it be destroyed***[131].

ESCAPE FROM EVIL

Origen asks us to escape from sin as Joseph did with his mistress.

> *But if we have the disposition of continence, even if have we an Egyptian mistress love us deeply, we become birds and, leaving the Egyptian garments in her hands, will fly away from the indecent snare*[132].

In his *Commentary on Psalms*, Origen held that the soul must endeavor, not to isolate itself from sin, but to destroy sin utterly. We must study the tactics of spiritual science in the school of Christ if we would annihilate sin and crush within our hearts the carnal temper and the passions which cling to the soul, no matter how wholesome their activities may seem to be[133]. The choice is between sacrificing oneself and becoming as nothing: there is no other alternative[134].

> *For He does not wish us to sin further after recognition of Himself, after the illumination of the divine word, after the grace of baptism, after the confession of faith and after the marriage has been confirmed with such great sacraments.*
>
> *He does not permit the soul whose Bridegroom or Husband He Himself is called to play with demons, to fornicate with unclean spirits, to wallow in vices and impurities. But even if this* sometimes *unfortunately should happen, He wishes, at least, that the soul be converted and return and repent*[135].

---

131 In Exodus hom. 4:8 (Cf. Ronad E Heine- Frs. of the Church, vol. 71.)
132 In Gen. hom. 1:8. (Cf. Ronald E. Heine).
133 In Psalm. 2;9.
134 R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder 1944, Chapter IV.
135 In Exodus hom 8:5 (Cf. Ronad E Heine- Frs. of the Church, vol. 71.)

Goats' hair is also offered (Exod. 35). This kind of animal is ordered in the Law to be offered for sin. Hair is a dead, bloodless, soulless form. He who offers this animal shows that the disposition to ***sin is already dead in himself****, nor does sin further live or rule in his members.*

The skins of rams are also offered. Some before us suggested that the ram represents madness. And because a skin is an indication of a dead animal, he who offers the skins of rams to the Lord shows ***that madness is dead in himself***[136]*.*

With regard to the fact that he is ordered "to shave off all his hair" (Cf. Lev. 14:9), I think that each work of death placed in the soul which originated in sins is ordered to be cast away - for now they are called the hairs. For its preferable for the sinner to set right everything that is born in him either in counsel or in word or in deed if he truly wants to be cleansed, to remove it and cast it off and not allow anything to remain. But the saint ought to preserve every hair, and if it is possible, " a razor" ought not "pass over his head" that he be not able to cut off anything from his wise thoughts either in words or deeds. Whence, of course, it is that " a razor" is said "not to have passed over the head" of Samuel (1 Sam. 1:11); but also from all the Nazarites (Cf. Num. 6:5), who are the just because of the just it has been written, "whatever he does will prosper, and his leaves will not fall" (Cf. Ps. 1:3). Whence also, "the hairs of the head" of the Lord's disciples also are said "to be numbered" (Cf. Matt. 10:30), that is, all their acts, al their words, all their thoughts are kept before the Lord because they are just, because they are holy. But every work, every word, every thought of sinners ought to be cut off. And this is what is meant: "That every hair of his body is shaved off and then he will be clean" (Cf. Lev. 14:9)[137]*.*

---

136 In Exodus hom. 13:5 (Cf. Ronad E Heine- Frs. of the Church, vol. 71.)
137 In Lev. hom. 8:4 (Gary Wayne Barkley- Frs. of the Church).

And as the seed of God, which abides in him who is born of God, makes it impossible for him who is formed according to the Only-Begotten Word (Gal. 4:19) to sin, so in every man that commits sin the seed of the devil is present, and as long as it remains in his soul, it makes it impossible for the soul so afflicted to reform. But since for this purpose the son of God appeared, that He might destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8)), it is possible through the indwelling of the Word of God in our soul to destroy the works of the devil, to root out the evil seed placed in us, and to become children of God[138].

"They sank in the depth like a stone," (Exod. 15.5.) Why "did they sink in the depth like a stone?" Because they were not the kind of "stones from which sons of Abraham could be raised up," (Cf. Matt. 3.9.) but the kind which love the depth and desire the liquid element, that is, who seize the bitter and fluid desire of present things. Whence it is said of these: "They sank like lead in very deep water." (Exod. 15.10.) They are serious sinners. For iniquity also is shown "to sit upon a talent of lead," as Zachariah the prophet says: "I saw a woman sitting upon a talent of lead, and I said, `Who is this'? And he answered, `Iniquity,'" (Cf. Zech 5.7.) Hence it is, therefore, that the unjust "sank in the depth, like lead in very deep water." (Cf. Exod. 15.5,10.)

The saints, however, do not sink, but walk upon the waters, because they are light and are not weighed down with the weight of sin. Indeed our Lord and Savior "walked upon the waters,"(Cf. Matt. 14.25.) for it is he who truly did not know sin.(Cf. 2 Cor 5.21.) His disciple Peter also "walked," although he was somewhat anxious,(Cf. Matt. 14.29-30.) for he was not so great and of the same quality

138 On Prayer 22:4.

as the one who has no lead at all mixed in himself. He had some, though very little[139].

But hear what the prophet says, "You have been sold for your sins and for your iniquities I sent your mother away."(Is 50.1.) You see, therefore, that we are all creatures of God. But each one is sold for his own sins and, for his iniquities, parts from his own Creator. We, therefore, belong to God in so far as we have been created by him. But we have become slaves of the devil in so far as we have been sold for our sins. Christ came, however, and "bought us back"(Cf. Gal 3.13.) when we were serving that lord to whom we sold ourselves by sinning. And so he appears to have recovered as his own those whom he created; to have acquired as people belonging to another indeed those who had sought another lord for themselves by sinning[140].

Sin deprives the soul from the presence of Christ

"The soul that sins, it shall die" (Ezek. 18:4) Therefore, Christ does not come upon this dead soul because He is "Wisdom" (1 Cor. 1:24) and wisdom does not enter into a malevolent soul. For this one is dead because sin is in it, malice is in it. "For when sin was completed, it begot death" (Jas. 1:8). And for this reason, Jesus "does not enter a dead soul." But if the soul is living, that is, if it does not have a mortal sin in it, then Christ, who is "Life" (John 11:25), comes to the living soul; because just as "light cannot exist with darkness nor justice with iniquity" (2 Cor. 6:14), so life cannot exist with death. And therefore, if anyone is aware that he has a mortal sin within himself and does not reject it by repentance of a most full reparation, he shall not hope that Christ "will

139 In Exodus hom .6:4 (Cf. Ronad E Heine- Frs. of the Church, vol. 71.)
140 In Exodus hom .6:9 (Cf. Ronad E Heine- Frs. of the Church, vol. 71.)

enter" his "soul," because he is "the great priest" who "does not enter into any dead soul" (Lev. 21:10)[141]"

If a spirit of wrath or envy or pride or impurity should enter your soul and you receive it, if you should assent when it speaks in your heart, if you should take pleasure in these things which it suggests to you according to its mind, then you have prostituted yourself with it[142].

CUTTING SIN AT ITS BEGINNING

Suppose a feeling of anger arises in my heart. This feeling will not be changed into a deed if I am afraid of the future punishment. This is not enough, but according to the Scripture (Josh 11:1) I have to do my best that I will not leave any movement of anger in me.

If the soul is in trouble even if the thought had not become a deed, this trouble itself is not fit with the soldier of Christ . The soldiers of Joshua must believe in a way that does not leave anything to embitter their hearts. If anything is left, just as a custom or even an evil thought, this can grow up through time, increase, strengthen and at last guides us to return to our own vote (Prov. 26:11), and thus the last stale becomes worse than the first (Luke 11:26. this is what the prophetic psalm means, "Blessed" shall he be who takes and dashes your little ones against the rock "Ps. 137:9. Here he means by " the little ones" the evil thoughts. . . . . , if we feel that these thoughts are little and in the beginning we must seize them, cut them and dash them against the rock, i. e. against Christ (1 Cor. 10:4). We must kill them according to the Lord's commandment, and not leave a breath of them in us[143].

141 Homilies On Leviticus 12:3 (Cf. Frs. of the Church)
142 Homilies On Leviticus 12:7 (Cf. Frs. of the Church)
143 In Jos. hom. 15:3.

ADULTERY

The priest who has power to offer sacrifice for certain voluntary and involuntary transgressions does not offer a holocaust (cf. Lev. 7:37; Ps. 39:7 etc.) for sin in the case of ***adultery, deliberate murder, and other serious sins.*** *In the same way the apostles also and their successors, priests according to the great High Priest, having received the science of divine therapy, know from their instruction by the Holy Spirit for what sins, when, and how they must offer sacrifice*[144]*.*

PRIDE

Pride is the principal sin of Satan[145]*..*

DRUNKENNESS

Drunkenness of wine is destructive in all things, for it is the only thing which weakens the soul along with the body...

But in the illness of drunkenness the body and the soul are destroyed at the same time; the spirit is corrupted equally with the flesh[146]*.*

Drunkenness deceives him whom Sodom did not deceive. He whom the sulfurous flame did not burn is burned by the flames of women[147]*.*

LIE

If the truth is the gird of the soldiers of Christ (Eph. 6:14), then every time we lie... we take off the gird of the

---

144 On Prayer, 28 (ACW).
145 In Ezek. hom. 9:2. PG 13:734 CD.
146 Homilies on Leviticus 7:1. (See Frs. of the Church)
147 In Gen. hom. 5:3 (Cf. Heine).

soldiers of Christ. If we deal falsely, we become in lack of armor[148]!

ANGER

Origen states that anger is the cause of the fall of Satan. If we don't overcome anger we will not receive the peace of angels as our inheritance.

The same thing applies to other vices, such as pride, envy, selfishness and impurity. These vices have their own harmful angels who incite us to do evil. If we don't overcome them, purifying our hearts from them, the hearts which have been purified already by baptism can't receive the promised inheritance[149].

Anger inebriates the soul, but rage makes it more than drunk, if indeed anything can surpass drunkenness. Cupidity and avarice make a person not only drunk, but enraged.

ENVY

Envy and spite weaken it more than any drunkenness. One cannot enumerate how many things there are that afflict the unfortunate soul by the vice of drunkenness[150].

WICKED WORDS

The mouths of such as bring forth words of death and destruction are called sepulchers, as also are all that

148 In Jos. hom. 4:1.
149 In Jos. hom. 1:6.
150 Homilies on Leviticus 7:1. (See Frs. of the Church)

speak against the true faith or make any opposition to the discipline of chastity, justice, and sobriety[151].

We must struggle with all our strength to free ourselves from the preoccupations of the world and from mundane activities, and even, if it is possible, leave behind us the useless talk of our companions, and devote ourselves to God's word and "meditate on His law day and night" (Ps. 1:2), so that our conversion might be wholehearted and we might be able to look upon Moses' unveiled face[152].

151 Comm. on Cant. 3:5
152 In Lev. hom. 6:1.

PENANCE AND CONFESSION[153]

PENANCE AND THE HOLY TRINITY

> *The course of this purification, that is, conversion from sin, is divided into three parts. First is the offering by which sins are observed; second is that by which the soul is turned to God; the third is that of the fruitfulness and fruits which the one who is converted shows in works of piety. And because there are these three offerings, for that reason, it adds also that he must take "three tithe measures of fine wheat flour" (Cf. Lev. 14:10) that everywhere we may understand that purification cannot happen without the mystery of the Trinity[154].*

MODERATE WAY OF PENANCE

Origen believes in the practice of penance to a moderate extent, for "*excess and lack of measure in abstinence are dangerous to beginners[155].*"

UNCEASING REPENTANCE

Origen states that believers are in need of unceasing repentance all their life.

> *Therefore the day of atonement remains for us until the sun sets; (Cf. Lev 11.25) that is,* ***until the world comes to an end****. For let us stand "before the gates" (Cf. Jas. 5.9) waiting for our high priest who remains within "the Holy of Holies," that is, "before the Father" (Cf. 1 John 2.1-2); and who intercedes not for the sins of everyone, but "for the sins" of those "who wait for him" (Cf. Heb 9.28)[156].*

---

153 Quasten, p. 84.
154 In Lev. hom. 8:10 (Gary Wayne Barkley- Frs. of the Church).
155 Jean Daniélou: Origen, NY, p. 299.
156 Homilies on Leviticus 9:5 (Cf. Frs. of the Church).

First is the one by which we are baptized "for the remission of sins" (Cf. Mark 1:4).

A second remission is in the suffering of martyrdom.

Third, is that which is given through alms for the Savior says, "but nevertheless, give what you have and, behold, all things are clean for you" (Luke 11:41).

A fourth remission of sins is given for us through the fact that we also forgive the sins of our brothers. For thus the Lord and Savior himself says, "If you will forgive from the heart your brothers' sins, your Father will also forgive you your sins. But if you will not forgive your brothers from the heart, neither will your Father forgive you" (Matt. 6:14-15). And thus he taught us to say in prayer, "forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors" (Matt. 6:12).

A fifth forgiveness of sins is when "someone will convert a sinner from the error of his way." For thus the divine Scripture says, "Whoever will make a sinner turn from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins" (Jam 5:20).

There is also a sixth forgiveness through the abundance of love as the Lord himself says, "Truly I say to you, her many sins are forgiven because she loved much" (Luke 7:47). And the Apostle says, "Because love will cover a multitude of sins" (1 Pet 4:8).

And there is still a seventh remission of sins through penance, although admittedly it is difficult and toilsome, when the sinner washes "his couch in tears" (Cf. Ps. 6:7) and his "tears" become his "bread day and night" (Cf. Ps. 41:4) when he is not ashamed to make known his sin to the priest of the Lord and to seek a cure according to the one who says, "I said, 'I will proclaim to the Lord my injustice against myself,' and you forgave the impiety of my heart" (Ps. 31:5).

REPEATED PENANCE

Origen insists that penance **for some serious sins** cannot be repeated.

> *There is always an opportunity for recovery where, for example, some mortal guilt (culpa mortalis) has found us out, one which does not consist in a mortal crime (crimen mortale), as blasphemy of the faith, which is surrounded by the wall of ecclesiastical and apostolic dogma, but either in some vice of speech or habit... Such guilt can always be repaired, nor is penance ever denied for sins such as these. In more grievous sins, only one opportunity for penance is granted. But the common sins, however, which we frequently incur,-these always allow of penance and at all times are redeemed*[157].

CONFESSION

Origen reasons that the two sanctuaries found in the Tent of Witness are to be interpreted according to a mystical understanding. According to this understanding, the first sanctuary represents the Church. The second is the heavenly sanctuary where Christ continues to serve as High Priest[158].

> *See what holy Scripture teaches us, that it is not right to bury sin in our hearts.... But if a man become his own accuser, in accusing himself and confessing he vomits out his sin, and dissipates the whole cause of his sickness.*
>
> *But observe carefully to whom you confess your sins; put the physician to the test, in order to know whether he is weak with the weak, and a mourner with those that mourn. Should he consider your disease to be of such a nature that it must be made known to, and cured in the*

157 In Lev. hom. 15:2 PG 12:560-561; Earnest Latko: Origen's Concept of penance, Laval 1949, p. 103.
158 In Lev. hom. 9:9.

presence of the assembled congregation, follow the advice of the experienced physician[159].

The Israelite, if he should happen to fall into sin, that is, a layman, cannot remit his own sin; but he needs a levite, a priest, indeed he seeks out someone who holds an even more eminent position: it is the prerogative of the bishop, that he should receive remission of his sins[160].

If we do this, and reveal our sins not only to God, but also to those who can heal our wounds and sins, our sins will be wiped away by Him, who says: "I have blotted out your iniquities as a cloud, and your sins as a mist." [161]

CONFESSION OF SECRET SINS

Even when the sin is secret ought one to enter into penance, such as is customarily imposed on sinners. He says in the fourteenth homily on Leviticus: "*Wherefore now if anyone of us is conscious of a grievous sin, let him fly to penance and voluntarily take upon himself the destruction of the flesh*[162]*.*"

PUBLIC CONFESSION

In earlier years confession was made publicly, and Ambrose recommends that it be made before the people, but he also permitted a private confession. Origen also allowed the penitent to confess privately to the pastor, "*to declare his sin to a priest of the Lord and to ask for the cure,*" St. Augustine recommends that confession "*be made to the bishop*[163]."

This public procedure was participated in by the whole community. It was a solemn function, and all took part in it. In his

159 Hom. on Ps. 37, 2:6.
160 In Numb. hom 10:1 PG 12:635.
161 In Lucan Homilia 17 PG 13:1846.
162 In Lev. hom. 14:4.
163 Sermon on Lev. 2:4; Carl A. Volz: Life and Practice in the Early Church, Minneapolis, 1990, p.165.

Homily on Psalm 37, he says that he who has sinned must suffer much when he converts to penance and to the amending of his life; and he must remember that his friends and neighbors will leave him. But if he is sincere he will not mind the shame before his friends. The shaming of the penitent before the congregation was considered not only necessary but even advantageous, in that it worked conversion and complete repentance. Origen calls on sinners to come out into the open and confess their sins: "*if therefore there is some one so faithful that he is conscious of some sin, let him go out into the middle and let him become his own accuser*[164]."

Such a person disregards human respect and confesses his sin, even before the assembled congregation[165].

A study of Origin's words will show that all grievous sins had to be submitted to the **public penance**. In one of his homilies on the Psalms he seems to indicate just that, when he says[166]:

> *There is something marvelous in this mystery when it commands "to confess sin." And indeed, everything we do of any kind is to be proclaimed and brought out in public. If "we do anything in secret" (Cf. John 7:4), also if we commit anything secretly either in a single word or even an inward thought, this is necessary for everything to be revealed, for everything to be confessed. Indeed, it is to be confessed by that one who is the accuser and inciter of sin. For now this one urges us to sin and also accuses us when we do sin. If, therefore, in this life we anticipate him and are ourselves our own accusers, we escape the wickedness of the devil, our enemy and accuser. For elsewhere, the prophet also speaks thus: "first tell your injustices in order that you may be justified" (Isa. 43:26). Does he not evidently show the mystery which we are dealing with when*

164 In Judices Homilia 2:5 PG 12:961; Earnest Latko: Origen's Concept of penance, Laval 1949, p. 91-92.
165 In Psalmum 37 Homilia 2:1 PG 12:1381
166 Earnest Latko: Origen's Concept of penance, Laval 1949, p. 103.

it says, "you speak first" to show you that you ought to anticipate him who was prepared to accuse you?[167]

He who for his sins makes confession to God, and in Spirit he is sorry while he does penance, knowing what punishment awaits the sinner after death says these things, explaining how much a man must suffer when he turns to penance and improvement of life, how his friends and neighbors desert him and stand away from him because he turns to ***exomologesis*** *and sorrow for his sin... If therefore such a man, mindful of his sin, confesses the sins he committed and with human confusion he little regards those who abuse him while he confesses... and sneer at him; he however realizes that in this way he will receive pardon... so that he refuses to hide and conceal his stain, but he pronounces his sin; nor does he desire to be a whited sepulcher, which without appears beautiful to men, that is, that he might appear just to such as behold him, but within is full of every uncleanness and of dead men's bones. If therefore there is someone so faithful that if he is conscious of some sin, let him come forth before the congregation and let him be his own accuser*[168].

Elsewhere Origen speaks of public confession. He says:

Consider then a man who is faithful but sick, who could be overcome by some sin, and because of this lamenting for his iniquities, and seeking however a cure and to recover his health. If therefore such a man, conscious of his iniquity, confesses whatever he has committed... disregards those who abuse him... so that he refuses to hide and conceal his stains, but he confesses his sin, that he might not be a whited sepulcher, which without appears beautiful to men... within however he is full of

167 In Lev. hom. 3:4 (cf. G.W. Barkley - Frs. of the Church).
168 In Psalmum 37 Homilia 2:1 PG 12:1380-1381; Earnest Latko: Origen's Concept of penance, Laval 1949, p. 70.

every uncleanness and dead men's bones. If therefore there is someone so faithful that if he is conscious of a sin, let him come out before the community and let him be his own accuser[169].

Further in the same homily Origen seems to demand **public confession**. He says:

Consider therefore what Sacred Scripture teaches us, that we must not conceal our sins in our heart. For as they who are troubled with indigestion and have something within them which lies heavy upon their stomachs, are not relieved unless it be removed; in like manner sinners, who conceal their practices and retain their sin within their hearts, feel in themselves an inward disquietude and are almost suffocated with the malignity which they thus suppress. But if he will only become his own accuser, while he accuses himself and confesses, he at the same time discharges himself of his iniquity and digests the whole cause of his disease... If he shall judge your disease to be such as should be laid open and cured before the whole assembly of the Church, for the possible edification of others and for your own ready healing, this should be done deliberately and discreetly[170].

There is in the works of Origen another allusion to public confession. In one of his homilies on Jeremiah he says:

Consider therefore how candid the prophets are: they do not conceal their sins, as we do, but openly they proclaim their sins, not only to the men of their age, but to all generations. Indeed even I do not dare here to confess my sins before a few, because they who hear me would condemn me. But Jeremiah, when he had transgressed, is

169 In Psalmum 37 Homilia 2:1 PG 12:1281; Earnest Latko: Origen's Concept of penance, Laval 1949, p. 102.

170 In Psalmum 37 Homilia 2:6; Earnest Latko: Origen's Concept of penance, Laval 1949, p. 103.

not ashamed, but rather puts his sin down in his writings[171].

EXOMOLOGESIS

In one of his earlier works on the Psalms he says in his *Commentary on Psalm 135*, that "***exomologesis*** *signifies a thanksgiving and glorification. But it is also used for the confession of sins, as in this place* [172]."

The word *exomologesis* has a threefold meaning.

The first is a confession of sin to God alone.

The second is an avowal of one's sins before men, in order to receive divine pardon.

The third is the *exomologesis* of the public and solemn penance as imposed on sinners by the Church. This is the type Origen refers to so often when he says that "*chains are also the bonds of sins: which bonds are broken not only by divine baptism, but also by martyrdom suffered for Christ and through the tears of penance*[173]." He mentions the "*severest penance*," and describes how the soul is converted to peace, "either through baptism, or through tears and penance[174]."

BAPTISM AND FORGIVENESS OF SINS[175]

Origen stresses on different accessions that strictly speaking there is only one forgiveness of sins, that of baptism (Mark 1:4), because the Christian religion gives the power and grace to overcome sinful passion[176]. **However, there are a number of means to obtain remission even of sins committed**

171 In Jer. hom. 19:8 PG 13:517; Earnest Latko: Origen's Concept of penance, Laval 1949, p. 103.
172 In Psalmum 37 Homilia 2:1 PG 12:1380-1381; Earnest Latko: Origen's Concept of penance, Laval 1949, p. 70.
173 Selecta in Psalmos PG 12:1577.
174 Ibid. 1576; Earnest Latko: Origen's Concept of penance, Laval 1949, p. 90.
175 Quasten, p. 84.
176 Exhort. ad mart. 30.

after baptism. Origen lists seven of them: martyrdom, almsgiving (Luke 11:41), forgiving those who trespass against us (Matt. 6:14-15), conversion of a sinner (according to Jam. 5:20), fullness of love (according to Luke 7,47) and finally through penance and by a confession of sins before a priest. The latter decides whether the sins should be confessed in public or not.

> *That the thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed..." Luke 2:35.*
>
> *There were evil thoughts in men, and they were revealed for this reason, that being brought to the surface they might be destroyed, slain, put to death, and He Who died for us might kill them. For while these thoughts were hidden and not brought into the open they could not be utterly done to death. Hence, if we have sinned we also ought to say," I have made my sin known to You, and I have not hidden my wickedness. I have said I will declare my unrighteousness to the Lord against myself" (Ps. 32:5). For if we do this and reveal our sins \not only to God but also to those who can heal our wounds and sins, our wickedness will be wiped out by Him who says, "I will wipe out your wickedness like a cloud," Isa. 44:2..*
>
> *Certainly, the Christian should be under strict discipline (more than those men of the Old Testament times), because Christ died for him... Now listed to all the ways of remission of sins in the Gospels:*
>
> *First, we are baptized for the remission of sins.*
>
> *Second, there is the remission in the suffering of martyrdom.*
>
> *Third, the remission given in return for works of mercy (Luke 11:44).*
>
> *Fourth, the forgiveness through out forgiveness of others, (Matt. 5:14, 15)...*
>
> *Fifth, the forgiveness bestowed when a man "has converted a sinner from the error of his ways," James 5:20.*

Sixth, sins are remitted through abundance of love (Luke 7:4).

In addition, there is also ***a seventh way of forgiveness*** *which is hard and painful, namely the remission of sins through penitence when "the sinner washes his bed with tears, and tears are his bread by day and night," Ps. 6:6, 42:3; and when he does not hold back in shame from declaring his sin to the priest of the Lord and asking for medicine (James 5:14)...*[177].

✞ ✞ ✞

177 In Leviticum hom. 2:4.

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF BELIEVERS

1. PARTICIPATING IN THE DIVINE NATURE

Origen takes the petition of the Lord's Prayer for daily bread to mean that those who were nourished by God the Logos would thereby be made divine. In many other places, too, he defined salvation as the attainment of the gift of divinity. Identification with Christ would lift the believer through the human nature of Christ to union with his divine nature and thus with God and thus to deification[178].

> *It is evident, therefore, that the angels to whom the Most High entrusted the nations to be ruled are called either gods or lords; gods as if given by God and lords as those who have been allotted power from the Lord. Whence also the Lord said to the angels who did not preserve their preeminence: "I said, `You are gods and are all sons of the Most High. But you shall die like men and shall fall like one of the princes'" (Ps. 81:5-7), imitating, of course, the devil who became the leader of all to ruin. Whence it is evident that violation of duty, not nature, made those accursed. You, therefore, O people of Israel, who are "the portion of God," who were made "the lot of his inheritance" (Cf. Deut. 32:9), "shall not have," the text says, "other gods besides me" (Exod. 20:3), because God is truly "one God" and the Lord is truly "one Lord." But on the others who have been created by him he bestowed that name not by nature but by grace[179].*

178 De Oratione 27:13; Contra Celsus 3:28; Jaroslav Pelikan: The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100-600),p. 155.

179 In Exodus hom 8:2 (Cf. Ronad E Heine- Frs. of the Church, vol. 71.)

2. A BELIEVER ESTABLISHES AN INNER TABERNACLE FOR GOD

A believer contributes in the Lord's spiritual tabernacle, by divine grace.

> *Let what has been said about the tabernacle suffice for the present, being all we have been able to discover cursorily and direct to the ears of our hearers, that each of us also might be zealous to make a tabernacle for God within himself. For it was not said in vain that the fathers dwelt in tabernacles.*
>
> *I understand that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob dwelt in tabernacles as follows. For those men who adorned themselves a tabernacle for God.*
>
> *For the royal purple was notably resplendent among them, because of which the sons of Heth said to Abraham: "You are a king from God among us" (Gen. 23:6).*
>
> *The scarlet also shone, for Abraham held his right hand disposed to slay his only son for God.*
>
> *The blue shone when he always looked to heaven and followed the Lord of heaven. But he was also likewise adorned with the other things.*
>
> *I also thus understand the feast of the tabernacles which the Law commands, that the people might go out a certain day of the year and dwell in the tabernacles made of palm branches and the foliage of the willow and poplar and the branches of leafy trees. The palm is a sign of victory in that war which the flesh and spirit wage between themselves: but the poplar and the willow tree are branches of purity as much in virtue as in name. If you preserve these things entire, you can have the branches of the bushy and leafy tree which is the eternal and blessed life when "the Lord places" you "in that green place upon the water of refreshment" (Cf. Ps. 22:2, 1:3), through*

Christ Jesus our Lord, "to whom belongs glory and the sovereignty forever and ever. Amen" (Cf. 1 Pet. 4:11)[180].

3. FEELING THE PRESENCE OF GOD

A believer continuously has **the feeling of the presence of God**.

And Aaron came," the text says, "and all the elders of Israel to eat bread with Moses' father-in-law in the presence of God" (Exod. 18:12). but those who are "elders," those who are older, who are perfect and approved in merits, eat bread "in the presence of God"; they are the ones who observe what the Apostle says, "Whether you eat or drink or whatever else you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31). Everything, therefore, which the saints do, they do "in the presence of God." The sinner flees from the presence of God. For it has been written that Adam, after he sinned, fled "from the presence of God." When he was asked about it he answered, "I heard your voice and I hid myself because I was naked" (Cf. Gen. 3:10). But Cain also, after he had been condemned by God for parricide, "went out," the Scripture says, "from the face of God and dwelt in the land of Nain" (Gen. 4:16). He, therefore, who was unworthy of the presence of God "went out from the face of God." The saints, however, both eat and drink "in the presence of God" and do everything they do "in the presence of God." In discussing the present passage, I see, even further, that those who receive a fuller knowledge of God and are imbued more fully with the divine disciplines, even if they do evil, do it before God and in his presence just as a man who said: "To you only have I sinned and have done evil before you" (Ps. 50:6). What advantage, then, does he have who does evil before God? That he immediately repents and says, "I have sinned." He,

180 In Exodus hom. 9:4 (Cf. Ronad E Heine- Frs. of the Church, vol. 71.)

however, who departs from the presence of God does not know how to be converted and to purge his sin by repenting. This, then, is the difference between doing evil before God and to have departed from the presence of God when you sin[181].

But further the disciples who are always with Jesus are not sent away by Him; but the multitudes after they have eaten are sent away. Likewise, again, the disciples who conceive nothing great about the Canaanitish woman say, "Send her away, for she cries after us" (John 6:13); but the Savior does not at all appear to send her away; for saying unto her, "O woman, great is your faith, be it done to you even as you wilt," (Matt. 14:14) He healed her daughter from that hour: it is not however written that He sent her away. So far at the present time have we been able to investigate and see into the passage before us[182].

4. BELIEVERS ARE THE LORD'S LOT

Believers acknowledge that that they are the Lord's lot.

But do you still want to see another form of the two lots (Lev. 16:8)? Consider those two "robbers" who at the time of his crucifixion "were suspended one at his right hand and one at his left." (Cf. Luke 23.33.) See that the one who confessed the Lord was made "a lot of the Lord" and was taken without delay "to paradise." But the other one who "reviled" him (Cf. Luke 23.39-43.) was made " the lot of the scapegoat" that was sent "into the wilderness" of Hell[183].

The Levites did not receive an inheritance from Moses nor from Joshua, for the Lord, God of Israel, is their inheritance. . . .

---

181 In Exodus hom. 11:2 (Cf. Ronad E Heine- Frs. of the Church, vol. 71.)
182 Commentary on Matthew, Book 11:19 (Cf. ANF).
183 Homilies on Leviticus 8:10 (Cf. Frs. of the Church).

Many of the people of God have the simple faith in God's fear, they please God with their good deeds and genuine customs, Very little and rare are those who are gifted with wisdom and knowledge, and keep their hearts pure, and plant in their souls the most beautiful virtues, and their knowledge has the power to enlighten the way to others. . . . . These without doubt is said- that they are Levites and priests, their lot is the Lord, who is the wisdom which they chose above everything[184].

5. A BELIEVER HAS A KIND OF SPIRITUAL PARENTHOOD

A believer has a kind of **spiritual parenthood**, or in other way he always brings forth new members of the Church through his love and witnessing to Christ.

The soul which has just conceived the Word of God is said to be a woman with child. We read about such a conception also in another passage: "From your fear, Lord, we conceive in the womb and gave birth" (Cf. Isa. 26:17-18).

Those, therefore, who conceive and immediately give birth are not to be considered women, but men, and perfect men. For hear also the prophet saying, "Was the earth brought forth in one day, and the nation born at once?" (Cf. Isa. 66:8) That is the generation of perfect men which is born immediately on the day that it was conceived.

But lest it appear strange to you that we said men give birth, we have set forth already earlier how you ought to understand the names of the members, that you might abandon the corporeal significations and take the meaning of the inner man. But if you wish to have further satisfaction from the Scriptures on this, hear the Apostle saying, "My little children of whom I am in labor again

184 In Jos. hom. 17:2.

until Christ be formed in you" (Gal. 4:19). They, therefore, are perfect men and strong who immediately when they conceive give birth, that is, who bring forth into works the word of faith which has been conceived.

The soul, however, which has conceived and retains the word in the womb and does not give birth is called woman, as also the prophets says, "The pains of birth have come upon her and she does not have the strength to give birth" (Cf. Isa. 37:3). This soul, therefore, which is now called a woman because of its weakness, is stricken and made to stumble by two men quarreling between themselves and bringing forth stumbling blocks in the strife - which is customary in verbal dispute - so that it cast out and loses the word of faith which it had slightly conceived. This is a quarrel and contention "to the subversion of the hearers." If, therefore, the soul which has been made to stumble cast off the word yet unformed, he who made it stumble is said to suffer loss[185].

6. PARTICIPATION IN THE CRUCIFIXION OF CHRIST

A believer **participates in the crucifixion of his Christ**, by being despised by others. Origen states that in the Old Testament sacrifice was offered at the door of the tabernacle (Lev. 1:3) and not inside the door but outside the door.

"At the door of the tabernacle" (Lev. 1:3) is not inside the door but outside the door. For Jesus was outside the door, "for he came to his own and his own did not receive him" (John 1:11) Therefore, he did not enter into that tabernacle to which he had come but " at the door of it" he was offered for a whole burnt offering, since he suffered "outside the camp" (Lev. 4:12). For also those evil "husbandmen cast out the son form the father's vineyard and killed him when he came" (Matt. 27:1; John 18:13f.).

185 In Exodus hom. 10:3 (Cf. Ronad E Heine- Frs. of the Church, vol. 71.)

This, therefore, is what is offered "at the door of the tabernacle, acceptable before the Lord" (Lev. 1:3). And what is as "acceptable" as the sacrifice of Christ "who offered himself to God?" (Heb. 9:14).

Therefore, he who zealously imitates the prophetic life, and attains to the spirit which was in them, must be dishonored in the world, and in the eyes of sinners, to whom the life of the righteous man is a burden[186].

7. BELIEVERS ARE KINGS AND PRINCES

This prince can be seen as the power of reason which is within us. If this [reason] sins in us and we do something foolish, then we must be fearful of that statement of the Savior which says, "You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt has lost its taste, it is of value for nothing except to be thrown out and walked on by men" (Matt. 5:13). Therefore the prince also has his offering[187].

But if there are some who have come out of Egypt and, following the pillar of fire and cloud, are entering the wilderness, then He comes down from heaven to them and offers them a small, thin Food, like to the food of angels; so that man eats the bread of angels[188].

For, if the heavenly Jerusalem is the mother of souls, and the angels equally ***are called heavenly****, there will be no inconsistency in her calling these who like herself are heavenly, her mother's sons. It will, on the contrary, seem supremely apt and fitting that those for whom God is the one Father should have Jerusalem for their one mother*[189].

---

186 Comm. on Matt., book 2:18.
187 In Lev. hom. 2:4 (cf. G.W. Barkley - Frs. of the Church).
188 Comm. on the Songs of Songs, book 1:4 (ACW).
189 Comm. on the Songs of Songs, book 2:3 (ACW).

8. BELIEVERS BECOME EQUAL TO ANGELS

> *When we are somewhat more advanced, we shall be equal to the angels. (Matt. 22:30)*[190].

9. ORTHODOXY IN KNOWLEDGE AND LIFE

The true believer has pure and straight doctrines or knowledge and life.

> *But you who want to be pure, hold your life in conformity and harmony with knowledge, and your deeds with understanding, that you may be pure in each, that "you apply the cud" and "divide the hoof" (Lev. 11) but also that "you may produce" or "you may cast away" the hoofs*[191].

> *But our earth, that is, our heart, receives blessings if it receives "the rain" of the doctrine of the Law "which frequently comes upon it" and brings forth the fruit of works. But if it does not have spiritual work, but "thorns and thistles, " that is, cares of the world or the desires of pleasures and riches," it is false and near to the curse, whose end will be burning." For that reason, each one of the hearers when he assembles to hear, receives " the shower " of the word of God; and if he indeed brings forth the fruit of a good work, he will obtain "a blessing." But if he disdains the received word of God and frequently neglects to hear it and to subject himself to the care and passion of secular affairs, then one who would suffocate the word "with thorns" he will procure "a curse" for a blessing and find instead of the blessing "an end in burning*[192]*."*

---

190 Comm. on John, book 2:16.
191 Homilies on Leviticus 7:6. (See Frs. of the Church)
192 Homilies On Leviticus 16:2 (Cf. Frs. of the Church)

10. WITNESSING TO CHRIST

A believer witnesses to Jesus Christ not only by his words, but also by his life.

> *But nevertheless, this leprous one is ordered only to cover his "mouth" (Lev. 13:45).*
>
> *Why is it that he is instructed to have all parts of his body naked and is ordered only to cover his mouth?*
>
> *Is it not also evident that the word is closed to him who is in the leprosy of sin; that "the mouth" is closed to him that he may be excluded from the assurance of the word and the authority of the teaching?*
>
> *For "God said to the sinner, 'Why do you expound my justices and take my covenant in your mouth?' (Ps. 49:16) Therefore, let the sinner have a closed "mouth" because he who does not teach himself, cannot teach another; and for this reason he is commanded to cover his "mouth," who by doing evil lost the freedom of speaking*[193].

11. BELIEVERS ARE ROCKS

Believers, especially the apostles and disciples, are rocks.

> *For a rock (or a Peter) is every disciple of Christ of whom those drank who drank of the spiritual rock which followed them (1 Cor. 10:4), and upon every such rock is built every word of the church, and the polity in accordance with it; for in each of the perfect, who have the combination of words and deeds and thoughts which fill up the blessedness, is the church built by God*[194].
>
> *But if you suppose that upon that one Peter only the whole church is built by God, what would you say about John the son of thunder or each one of the apostles? Shall we otherwise dare to say, that against Peter in particular*

193 Homilies on Leviticus 8:10 (See Frs. of the Church)
194 Commentary on Matthew, Book 12:10 (Cf. ANF).

the gates of Hades shall not prevail, but that they shall prevail against the other Apostles and the perfect? Does not the saying previously made, "The gates of Hades shall not prevail against it," (Matt. 16:18) hold in regard to all and in the case of each of them? And also the saying, "Upon this rock I will build My church" (Matt. 16:18)? Are the keys of the kingdom of heaven given by the Lord to Peter only, and will no other of the blessed receive them? But if this promise, "I will give unto you the keys of the kingdom of the heaven" (Matt. 16:19), be common to the others, how shall not all the things previously spoken of, and the things which are subjoined as having been addressed to Peter, be common to them?[195]

12. BELIEVERS ATTAIN THE TRANSFIGURATION OF CHRIST.

For when he has passed through the six days, as we have said, he will keep a new Sabbath, rejoicing in the lofty mountain, because he sees Jesus transfigured before him; for the Word had different forms, as He appears to each as is expedient for the beholder, and is manifested to no one beyond the capacity of the beholder[196].

But when He is transfigured, His face also shines as the sun, that He may be manifested to the children of light, who have put off the works of the darkness, and put on the armor of light (Rom. 13:12), and are no longer the children of darkness or night, but have become the sons of day, and walk honestly as in the day (Rom. 13:13); and being manifested, he will shine unto them not simply as the sun, but as demonstrated to be the sun of righteousness[197].

195 Commentary on Matthew, Book 12:11 (Cf. ANF).
196 Commentary on Matthew, Book 12:36 (Cf. ANF).
197 Commentary on Matthew, Book 12:37 (Cf. ANF).

13. FULL OF STRENGTH

The true believer never has the weakness of the elders, but always full. of strength

a. The saint has power in every moment of his life, even when he becomes very old (Jos. 14:11)[198].

b. Believers live in the spiritual heights.

The king of Jericho hated the two spies and planed for their killing, but he could not fulfill his plan for they went to the mountain (Josh. 2:22).

> *The prince of this world (John 12:31) persuade the spies of Jesus, and he would get rid of them, but he could not put his hands on them, for they went to the mountain, and asked for the highest of the hills and tops of the mountains....*
>
> *The prince of this world can't go to these places, nor reach Jesus who is on the highest.....*
>
> *He likes those who fall down in the depth, for there he can reign over them, and there he establishes his dwelling place, and from there , he descends to the hell[199].*
>
> *The saint does not ask for what is low in the bottom of the valleys, but he asks for a high mountain, a mountain on which there are great and fortified cities. The book in truth says, "the Anakim were there, and that the cities were great and fortified" Jos. 14:12*[200].
>
> *They (Mary and Joseph) did not acknowledge the meaning of Jesus 'Words, "Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business (house). , i. e. , to be in the Temple. . . . .*

198 In Jos. hom. 18:2.
199 In Jos. hom. 1:5.
200 In Jos. hom. 18:3.

The highest are the houses of Jesus. As Joseph and Mary had not yet arrived to the perfect faith they could not soar in the highest, therefore it is said, "He went down with them" (Luke 2:51). Many times Jesus goes down with His disciples and does not remain always on the mountain[201].

Mary became worthy to be called the Theotokos, therefore she should ascend the mountains and remain in the lights (Luke 1:39)[202].

c. The believer is so very strong in Jesus Christ, that he would tread upon the serpent.

Origen comments on the words, "And they struck them down, so that they let none of them remain or escape" (Jos. 8:22) saying: "*We must not leave any demon alive, but we have to kill them all till the end*[203]." Here he speaks of sins as if they are demons.

Let us then pray that our souls become strong and good, and have the power to tread upon the necks of our enemies and bruise all the heads of the serpent so that it cannot bruise our heel[204].

May the Lord Jesus, the Son of God, grant me the grace of crushing the spirit of evil, the tendency of anger, violence, and the demons of greed and pride[205].

✞ ✞ ✞

201 In Luc. hom. 20:2.
202 In Luc. hom. 7:2.
203 In Jos. hom 8:7.
204 In Jos. hom. 12:2.
205 In Jos. hom. 12:3.

SPIRITUAL SACRIFICE AND CULT[206]

SACRIFICE IN THE WRITING OF ORIGEN[207]

Origen mentions sacrifice so frequently that Harnack calls him "the great theologian of sacrifice[208]." Continuing the openness of Clement, Origen has a basically positive attitude toward Old Testament sacrifice which he repeatedly uses as the basis for spiritual or allegorical interpretations.

Of the roughly 550 passages in Origen which speak of sacrifice or related subjects, about 340 occur in the Latin translations, some 20 in the unreliable Greek fragments of the Commentary on the Psalms, and about 190 in well-attested Greek texts. Fortunately, these Greek texts alone are sufficient to demonstrate the major aspects of Origen's thought on sacrifice. The most important sources are, from the Greek: *Commentary on Matthew*, *Exhortation to Martyrdom*, *Against Celsus*, and. above all, the *Commentary on John*; and from the Latin: the homilies, particularly Rufinus' translation of the *Homilies on Leviticus*.

SPIRITUAL SACRIFICES AND CULTS

Origen had **certain arguments for spiritualizing sacrifice**.

1. Origen states that God should be worshipped not with blood and carnal sacrifices but in Spirit. The Supreme God should

206 Frances M. Young: The Use of Sacrificial Ideas in Greek Christian Writers from the New Testament to John Chrysostom, Philadelphia, 1979.

207 Cf. Fobert J. Daly: The Origins of the Christian Doctrine of Sacrifice, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1978, p. 122f.

208 A. Harnack, Lehrhuch der Dogemengeschichte (3 vols.: 4th ed.; Tubingen Mohr [Siebeck], 1909-10; repr. Darmstadt Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1964), 1. 477. P. Nautin, Origene. Sa vie et son oeuvre (Paris Beauchesne, 1977) is the best key to Origen studies.

be worshipped by means of piety and every virtue[209], by spiritual sacrifices[210].

2. Origen argues from the fall of the Temple within a few years of the crucifixion[211].

3. He also argues from the word of Scripture, in this case the Epistle to the Hebrews, that literal sacrifices were meant to cease and be replaced by the realities which they symbolized. He says, "*If anyone reads the whole of the Epistle to the Hebrews... he will find how the whole of this part of the Apostle's writing in the Law are types and forms of things that are living and true*[212]."

1. CHRIST'S SELF-SACRIFICE

Jesus Christ, the High Priest and Victim at the same time, is the true Paschal Lamb who is led to the slaughter, who takes away the sins of the world, who by His own blood reconciles us to the Father. He emptied Himself, bearing our infirmities and chastisements out of His own love for us and in obedience to the Father. He is perfect and unique in sacrificing Himself willingly to the Father and realizing the will of the Father which is one with His will.

2. BELIEVER'S SELF-SACRIFICE

Origen's main concern seems to be to teach how the Church and her members share in the sacrifice of Christ[213]. For the true Jerusalem, he explains, is the Church, built of living stones (cf. 1 Pet 2:5), where there is a holy priesthood and where spiritual

209 Contra Celsus 6:70; 7:44; 8:64; Frances M. Young: The Use of Sacrificial Ideas in Greek Christian Writers from the New Testament to John Chrysostom, Philadelphia 1979, p. 115.
210 Contra Celsus 6:35.
211 In Lev. Hom. 10:1; 3:5; 4:10.
212 Ibid., 9:2; 10:1.
213 Cf. Fobert J. Daly: The Origins of the Christian Doctrine of Sacrifice, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1978, p. 122f.

sacrifices are offered to God by those who are spiritual and who have come to the knowledge of the law of the spirit[214].

Origen states that every true believer must offer **a self-sacrifice**. He is his own burnt sacrifice, if he renounces his possessions, takes up his cross and follows our Lord Jesus Christ, having charity, by loving his brethren, and fighting for justice and truth, even unto death; by dying to all desire of the flesh, as the world is crucified to him, and he to the world, and fulfilling martyrdom.

In the *Homilies on Leviticus*, Origen allegorizes the sacrifices "*Pro Peccato*" in terms of the sacrifice of Christ, and the sacrifices "*Pro munere*" as the offering of Christians[215]: The gift-sacrifices of worship and thanksgiving are still to be offered by Christians, even though sacrifices for sin have been perfected and annulled by the offering of Christ[216].

Origen stresses the need for unceasing sacrifice by repeatedly referring to or expanding on Ps 44:22: "For your sake we are slain all the day long, and accounted as sheep for the slaughter"[217]. Origen sees the whole of Christian life in terms of sacrifice[218].

MARTYRDOM AND PURITY AS THE BEST SACRIFICES

The best sacrifice for the Christian that pleases God is **martyrdom**. A martyr is considered as if he offers his body to be burned for the sake of Christ[219].

---

214 Cf. Commentary on John 6:9 (38) and 13:13.

215 In Lev. 2:4 is the only place where he speaks of the offerings of Christians as being Pro Peccato.

216 Frances M. Young: The Use of Sacrificial Ideas in Greek Christian Writers from the New Testament to John Chrysostom, Philadelphia, 1979, p. 130.

217 Commentary on John 6:52, Against Celsus 8;21, Homilies on Joshua 9, 1; Commentary on the Psalms, PG 12, 1428A-B; Commentary on Romans 8, PG 14, 1132; Exhortation to Martyrdom 21.

218 Cf. Homilies on Leiticus 2:4; Homilies on Joshua 2:1: Commentary on the Psalms 49:5.

219 In Lev. 9:9.

As with most early Christian writers, martyrdom is the most perfect way to unite oneself to Christ and His sacrifice. The following sequence of ideas (from the *Commentary on John 6:54*) is typical of Origen: The blood-shedding of the martyrs is the sacrifice which is related to that of the Lamb. In the Book of Revelation, John sees the martyrs standing next to the heavenly altar of sacrifice. Then - after searching for the spiritual meaning of the sacrifice of Jephthah's daughter, which he finds in the vicarious nature of Christian sacrifice - Origen concludes that **through the death of the pious martyrs many others receive blessings beyond description**.

After martyrdom comes **virginity** as a self-sacrifice, then refraining from pride, avarice, lying etc.[220]. Origen assures that only when a believer is **purged of sin**, he can offer sacrifice pleasing to God[221].

SPIRITUAL WORSHIP AS A SELF-SACRIFICE

By constant prayer that we become living stones from which Jesus builds the altar on which to offer spiritual victims.

The spiritual cult is the **sacrifice of prayers**[222];

The spiritual altar is the mind of faithful Christians;

Spiritual images of God are the virtues implanted in men by the Logos[223].

On this internal altar the believer must offer without ceasing. Truly celebrating a continuos feast, serving God faithfully, living ascetically and prayerfully, and continually offering to God bloodless sacrifices in prayer.

The Body of Christ is a spiritual temple[224],

220 Comm. Rom. 9:1.
221 In Lev. 5:4.
222 Contra Celsus 3:81; 7:44,46.
223 Contra Celsus 8:17.
224 Contra Celsus 8:19..

and the Christian people continually celebrate spiritual feasts and fasts by constant prayer and abstention from wickedness[225].

Above all Christ Himself is the Perfect Sacrifice, and He is the High Priest through whom Christian prayers are offered[226].

Origen realized that the "burnt offering" in the Old Testament meant the highest **sacrifice of praise**, not an offering of placation as in Greek religion; so his exposition of Christian burnt offering implies the same thing[227].

OUR BODY, THE TEMPLE OF GOD

Origen sees it, the altar on which Christian sacrifice takes place is the altar within us. Our body is a temple of God, and the best of these temples is the body of Jesus Christ. The temple which has been destroyed will be rebuilt of living and most precious stones, with each of us becoming a precious stone in the great temple of God. As living stones we must also be active. For if, says Origen, I raise my hands in prayer, but leave hanging the hands of my soul instead of raising them with good and holy works, then the raising of my hands is not an evening sacrifice. In a concrete application, Origen remarks that good and holy speech is an offering to God, but bad speech is an offering to idols; and whoever listens to bad speech eats what has been offered to idols[228].

True to the central Christian mystery of the incarnation Origen also emphasizes the importance of the body in the sacrifice of the Christian; for no one weak in soul and slow in words can offer the saving sacrifice. Thus, following the New Testament, Origen sees the gift worthy of God not in sacrifices or holocausts,

---

225 Contra Celsus 8:22ff.

226 Contra Celsus 1:69; 3:34; 5:4; 8:13,26;. Frances M. Young: The Use of Sacrificial Ideas in Greek Christian Writers from the New Testament to John Chrysostom, Philadelphia 1979, p. 97.

227 Frances M. Young: The Use of Sacrificial Ideas in Greek Christian Writers from the New Testament to John Chrysostom, Philadelphia, 1979, p. 131.

228 Against Celsus 8:19; Dialogue with Heraclides 20; Homilies on Numbers 20:3.

but in the very life itself of the Christian. As he comments on the widow's offering, he reminds us that it is not what or how much we offer that is important, as long as it consists of all that we are and have, and as long as we offer it with our whole strength[229].

SUFFERING AS A SPIRITUAL SACRIFICE

The Lamb takes away the sins only of those who suffer. If we want to offer to God our proud flesh as a sacrificial calf, we must first mortify our members and live ascetically lest, after preaching to others, we fall away ourselves. Contact with Christ's sacrifice is saving, but only if one draws near to Jesus, the Word made flesh, with full faith and obedience as did the woman with the hemorrhage who was healed by touching Christ's robe (Mark 5:25-34) [230].

OFFERING SPIRITUAL SACRIFICE IN THE SIGHT OF GOD

The true believer must not only offer his own-self as a sacrifice to God, but also he must do that in the sight of the Lord (Lev. 6:18),and not to go out of His sight as Cain did (Gen. 4:16,14.

> *If there is anyone who has faith to stand "in the sight of the Lord" and does not flee "from his face" and the knowledge of sin does not turn his gaze aside, this one offers a sacrifice "in the sight of the Lord" (Lev. 6:18). Therefore, he said this "offering" which is offered "for sins" is "very holy" (Lev. 6:18)*[231].

---

229 Commentary on Romans 9 (on Rom 12 1); Homilies on Leviticus 5:12; Commentary on the Psalms 115; Homilies on Numbers 24:2; Commentary on John 19:7 (2)-8.

230 Homilies on Jeremiah 18:10, Commentary on John 6:58 (7); Homilies on Leviticus 1:5; 4:8, Homilies on Numbers 24:2; Commentary on the Lamentations of Jeremiah Fragment 49; Against Celsus 8:17; Homilies on Leviticus 5, 3-4.

231 Homilies on Leviticus 5:3. (See Frs. of the Church)

MYSTICISM

Origen is one of the creators of the language of mysticism. He created some of his themes by starting from Scripture and also using philosophic data and Hellenistic imagery[232].

The knowledge which the mystic receives is in its essence inexpressible: it is a direct contact between the divine Spirit and the human spirit by-passing to a certain extent a mediating tractor, whether concept, sign or word. And yet the beneficiary tries to describe it in order to communicate it[233].

> *It gives the impression that divine grace and man work together like two men pulling a cart together. As the themes that we have been studying and the ones we are about to study show, it is God and his Christ who are working: man's role is to let God act in him or to stop Him doing so*[234].

MYSTICISM AND THEOLOGY

The soteriological attitude of Origen, as of all other Alexandrian Fathers, destroys the contrast between mysticism and theology. For the term "mysticism" denotes no more than a *spirituality* which expresses a doctrinal attitude[235]; this spirituality is the main line in Origen's theology, cosmology, ecclesiology, anthropology, angelogy, eschatology etc. His main purpose in all his works is the restoration of the soul's nature to be perfected so that she may become an icon of God, and to attain mystical union with God.

232 Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p. 121.
233 Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p. 121.
234 Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p. 126.
235 Vlademir Lossky: The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church, 1976, p. 7.

Origen, who is considered as the first Eastern theologian, is at the same time one of the great leaders in spirituality. This confirms that mystics are not set against theologians, as some scholars believe. On the contrary, mysticism and theology support and complete each other. One is impossible without the other. A theologian must express and reveal truth through his practical life.

Unlike gnosticism, in which knowledge for its own sake constitutes the aim of the Gnostic, Origen was eager to acknowledge his hunger for discovering his inner man, transforming his soul, attaining mystical union with God, and practicing the heavenly life in the inner kingdom. Thus theology has an eminently practical significance; it is the royal way for mysticism.

IS ORIGEN A MYSTIC?

Rowan A. Greer presents three points[236]:

First, Origen believes that in the highest aspect of the Christian life we shall know God, see Him face to face, and be joined with Him in a union of love.

Second, this destiny represents the completion of our nature; we were created after God's image in order to have perfected knowledge of and fellowship with him.

Third, our natural destiny is merely potential until God rouses our minds and empowers them to become what in principal they are.

Therefore, if one defines mysticism as a state in which we are somehow enabled to transcend ourselves, Origen is a mystic only in a qualified sense. From one point of view the highest aspect of the Christian life simply completes our nature. But from another point of view, since only God can give us this power, Origen may properly be regarded as a mystic.

---

236 Rowan A. Greer: Origen, p. 24.

THE MYSTICAL THEMES

I have already referred to these themes throughout the previous chapters, for in all his works Origen is absorbed in the restoration of the soul.

1. Mystical Marriage

Origen presents the "mystical marriage" between Christ and the soul as a present experience. He repeatedly refers to the ascent of the soul, by the work of the divine grace, to the heavenly nuptial chamber. There she practices mystical union with the Heavenly Groom, the Word of God, who reveals the divine mysteries, or the Truth, to His bride.

> *Christ is called the Bridegroom of the soul, whom the soul espouses when she comes to the faith*[237].

In his Commentary on the Song of Songs, Origen states that the bride who is wounded by the divine arrow is the faithful soul. *This arrow represents above all love, or Christ Himself who is Love.* On the contrary, wicked people are wounded by the flaming darts (the sins and the vices) of the Evil one which he produces, and they are accepted by those who receive them.

The archer is either the Father or the Son; the arrow is obviously the Son; but the latter also becomes the wound which the arrow inflicts on the soul according to a passage of the *Contra Celsus:* the impress of the wounds that are marked on each soul after the Word, that is the Christ in each individual, derived from Christ the Word.

As a churchman, Origen speaks of the Church also as the bride of Christ, through her, every faithful soul enjoys a personal experience of the mystical or spiritual union or marriage.

---

237 In Gen. Hom. 10:4.

2. Mystical Motherhood of the Soul

If the soul is to give birth to the Word, then Mary is its model: And every soul, virgin and uncorrupted, which conceives by the Holy Spirit, so as to give birth to the Will of the Father, is the Mother of Jesus[238].

This birth of Christ in the soul is essentially bound up with the reception of the Word and in a certain way Jesus is thus being continually born in souls. The Father originates this generation. It first becomes apparent in the virtues, for Christ is all virtue and every virtue, the virtues are identified with Him as it were in an existential way. But if the Christ is not born in me, I am shut out from salvation[239].

Such is *'the Christ in each individual, derived from Christ the Word'*[240]. When Jesus from the Cross said to St. Mary, indicating St. John: "Behold your son," He did not mean that He was in this way making St. John another son of his mother, for St. Mary never had more than one son, but that St. John was in this way becoming as if he was Jesus Himself, so much so that it is impossible to understand the Gospel of John unless one has the mind, the *nous*, of Christ[241].

The righteous man is begotten by God, begotten in his Son, in each of his good deeds[242]. And the result will be the condition of blessedness in which all men, having become in a way inferior to the Only Begotten Son, will see the Father as the Son sees Him[243].

But this Jesus who is born in us is killed by sin: He cannot be contained in souls which sin renders too narrow and He is barely alive like an anemic baby in lukewarm souls: in the others

238 Fragm. Matt. 28; Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p. 124.
239 Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p. 125.
240 Contra Celsus 6:9; Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p. 125.
241 Comm. on John 1:4 (6);Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p. 125.
242 In Jerem. hom. 9:4.
243 Comm. on John. 10:16; Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p. 125.

He grows[244]. It can even happen that some accord Him such a place within them that He walks in them, lies down in them, eats in them, with the whole Trinity[245]. It is in our hearts that we must prepare a way for the Lord, both by the purity of our moral life and by the development of contemplation[246]. In each of us Jesus can grow in wisdom and stature and in grace[247].

> *The soul which has just conceived the Word of God is said to be a woman with child. We read about such a conception also in another passage: "From your fear, Lord, we conceive in the womb and give birth" (Cf. Isa. 26:17-18)* [248].

3. The Inner world

Origen considers the inner world is the true world, therefore the first step for ascending to heaven is discovering one's self, as we have mentioned before.

4. The Inner Jerusalem

For Origen, Christ desires to enter our inner Jerusalem, to reign there. There His heavenly kingdom is established.

5. The Inner Altar and Temple

We noticed that Origen exhorts us to offer our inner man to Jesus Christ to establish His temple by the work of His Holy Spirit, and to reveal Himself as the High Priest who serves therein and offer Himself as the Victim.

> *It is just, indeed, that each one be found to have his own portion in the Lord's tabernacle. For what each one offers does not escape the Lord's notice.*

---

244 Comm. on John 20:6.
245 Comm. on Cant. 2.
246 In Luc. hom. 21:5, 7.
247 Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p. 125.
248 In Exodus hom. 10:3 (Cf. Ronad E Heine- Frs. of the Church, vol. 71.)

How glorious it is for you if it be said in the Lord's tabernacle: "That gold," for example, "with which the ark of covenant is covered, is his; the silver from which the bases and the columns are made is his; the bronze from which the rings and laver and some bases of the columns have been made is his; but also those stones of the cape and breastplate are his; the purple with which the high priest is adorned is his; the scarlet is his" and so on for the other things.

And again how shameful, how miserable it will be if the Lord, when He comes to inquire about the building of the tabernacle, should find no gift from you in it; if He should perceive nothing offered by you. Have you lived so irreligiously, so unfaithfully that you have desired to have no memorial of your own in God's tabernacle?

For just as "the prince of this world" (Cf. John 12:31), comes to each one of us and seeks to find some of his own deeds in us and if indeed he find anything he claims us for himself, so also, on the contrary, if the Lord, when He comes, should find something of yours in His tabernacle, He claims you for Himself and says you are his.

Lord Jesus, grant that I may deserve to have some memorial in Your tabernacle.

I would choose, if it be possible, that mine be something in that gold from which the mercy seat is made or from which the ark is covered or from which the candlestick and the lamps are made.

Or it I do not have gold, I pray that I be found to offer some silver at least which may be useful in the columns or in their bases. or may I certainly deserve to have some bronze in the tabernacle from which the loops and other things are made which the word of God describes.

Would that, moreover, it be possible for me to be one of the princes and to offer precious stones for the adornment of the cape and breastplate of the high-priest.

But because these things are beyond me, might I certainly deserve to have goats' hair in God's tabernacle, lest I be found barren and unfruitful in all things[249].

6. The Inner Transfiguration

For Origen, the transfiguration of Christ within us is the favorite subject of this theme: comment on this is found in the works of Origen's old age, *Commentary on Matthew, Contra Celsus* and homilies[250].

Man receives true life from his participation in Christ, who is Life, and who transmits to man the life that He eternally and unceasingly receives from *the Father*[251].

7. The Inner Senses

Before Origen, Theophilus of Antioch[252] spoke of the "**eyes of the soul**" and the "**ears of the heart**", but Origen was to use this theme on a great scale[253].

For Origen the humanity of Jesus was like a screen hiding His divinity from the eyes of men. What hides the divinity of Jesus from the eyes of men is first the will of Jesus not to reveal it so, since a divine Person is only seen when He reveals Himself: and second, man's unpreparedness in ascetic terms to perceive it, the lack of "spiritual eyes[254]."

The risen Jesus, manifesting Himself in His divinity through his glorified body, only showed Himself to his apostles and not to Pilate, to Herod, to the chief priests, who had had Him crucified, for they were incapable of perceiving his divinity[255].

---

249 In Exodus hom. 13:3 (Cf. Ronad E Heine- Frs. of the Church, vol. 71.)
250Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p. 130.
251 Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p. 127-8.
252 Ad Autolycos 12.
253 Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p. 132.
254 Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p.130-131.
255 Contra Celsus 2:63-64; Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p. 131.

In the Song of Songs, the Heavenly Groom praises His bride, for having **dove's eyes**, that is a spiritual perception of the meaning of the Scriptures, through the inner eyes[256].

> *But "blessed are those eyes" (Luke 10:23) which inwardly see the divine Spirit that is concealed in the veil of the letter; and blessed are they who bring clean ears of the inner person to hear these things. Otherwise, they will perceive openly "the letter which kills" in these words[257].*
>
> *Simon didn't enter the temple by chance, but he was led by the Spirit of God...*
>
> *You also, if you want to receive Christ, embrace him among your hands and be ready for freedom from prison, endeavor to be led by the Spirit who enters you into the temple of God. There is Jesus inside the church, in the temple which is established by the living stones[258].*

8. The Inner Ascent

For Origen every "going up" mentioned in the holy books, for example from Egypt to Palestine or from Galilee to Judaea, symbolizes a spiritual ascent, and every "going down" a decline. Thus Mary, after the annunciation, goes into the hill country (Luke 1:39) to meet Elizabeth and in her presence to give vent to an outburst of joy: in this she is fulfilling an apostolic mission, in that she is allowing the Jesus she carries in her womb to 'form' *(morphoun)* the John that is in Elizabeth's[259].

The inner ladder which the soul uses to ascend from day to day to heaven is love. J.W. Trigg says,

> Like Plato in the *Symposium*, Origen identified love as the power that leads the soul from earth to heaven by

256 Comm. on Song, 3:1.
257 In Lev. hom. 1:1 (G.W. Barkley - Frs. of the Church).
258In Luc. hom. 15:3.
259 Comm. on John 6:49 (30); Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p. 130.

enabling it to concentrate all its energies on the attainment of the beloved object. God the Creator, Origen argued, is love, and had made us kindred with God by implanting that love in us.

It is, nevertheless, our duty to direct the love God has given to us to its appropriate object... The prime object of our love should be God, who is ever the same. Our neighbors are also appropriate objects of our love since insofar as they are rational creatures they also were created in incorruption...

We must not love earthly and corruptible things but use them to further our legitimate love. Love thus motivates ethics and mystical contemplation[260].

9. The Inner Treasure

In Chapter nine we noticed that our Lord Jesus Christ offers Himself to the soul to possess Him as her Treasure. He enriches her and satisfies all her needs.

And perhaps, as the Apostle says, for those who have their senses exercised to the discerning of good and evil (Heb. 5:14), ***Christ becomes each of these things in turn****, to suit the several senses of the soul.*

He is called the true ***Light****, therefore, so that the soul's eyes may have something to lighten them.*

He is the ***Logos****, so that her ears may have something to hear.*

Again, He is the ***Bread of life****, so that the soul's palate may have something to taste.*

And in the same way, He is called the ***Spikenard*** *or* ***Ointment****, that the soul's sense of smell may apprehend the fragrance of the Word.*

For the same reason He is said also to be able to be felt and handled, and is called the ***Logos*** *made flesh, so*

260 Origen, p. 203.

that the hand of the interior soul may touch concerning ***the Word of life*** *(John 1:1-4; 1 John 1:1).*

But all these things are the One, Same Logos of God, who adapts Himself to the sundry tempers of prayer according to these several guises, and so ***leaves none of the soul's faculties empty of His grace***[261].

10. Inner Joy

The presence of the Groom in the heart of the bride changes all her life unto an unceasing feast, He offers Himself as her Feast and eternal joy.

Through the co-operation and presence of the Word of God encouraging and saving us, our mind is made joyful and courageous in the time of trial, and this experience is called "enlargement[262]*."*

The tones of joy over the revelation of glorious and eternal life, victory over sin, evil world, demons and death, and the unceasing ascent of the soul towards heaven ring through Origen's writings. The mood of exalted joy crystallized into his outlook upon divine grace cooperating with man's free-will.

11. The Inner Light

Light that shines in our inner man symbolizes the graces of knowledge[263].

Each of the divine *Hypostasis* has His part to play in the giving of this light.

"In Your light do we see light[264]": for Origen that means: "we shall see the Light that is the Father through the Light that is the Son." The Son is called: Light of the World, True Light, Light

261Comm. on the Songs of Songs, book 2:9 (ACW).
262 On Prayer 30:1.
263 Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p. 126.
264 Ps. 35 (36):10; De Principiis 1:1:1.

of men, Light of the Nations, Sun of Righteousness, Rising Sun. Also the Holy Spirit is called Light, for illumination is attributed to Him.

The Church has also been called, in the persons of the apostles, the Light of the World. She is the moon passing on to men by her teaching the brightness given her by the Sun. For the light of Christ becomes inward in the one who receives it: the latter himself becomes light as he conforms to Christ. In the Beatitude all the saints will become one single solar light in the Sun of Righteousness[265].

12. The Mystical food

Origen often recalls the threats God made through Amos (8:11) that He would send on earth a hunger and thirst to hear the Word of God. This is a matter of punishment: the hunger and thirst are not a desire for the Word, but famine and drought, God having deprived His people of all the ministers of His word[266].

Christ, the Incarnate Word of God, is the Heavenly food, offered as **milk** to the weak souls, and as **strong meat** to the mature ones.

He also, as the True Vine produces wine which rejoices the souls[267], while the bad wine of false doctrine takes one out of the intellect[268].

Drunkenness by **the Wine of the True Vine** is not irrational but divine[269]. It is joy, delight, consolation, the pleasure felt by the five spiritual senses, a participation here below in the Beatitude. Knowledge of the mysteries causes our hearts to burn within us, like the hearts of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. It brings rest and peace, but an active rest impelled by

265 Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p. 126-7.
266 Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p. 128.
267 Comm. on John 1:30 (33).
268 In Jer. hom. 2:8; Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p. 129.
269 Comm. on John 1:30 (33).

the fire that it lights in the soul. It is also sweetness. But the most characteristic quality attributed to it is 'enthusiasm', that is to say the feeling that God is present by which the inspiration of the sacred author becomes in a way perceptible to the reader[270].

The action of the Holy Spirit is also marked in the gift of the **living water**[271].

13. The Inner Battle

The Incarnation, the Passion, the Crucifixion, and the Resurrection of the Logos are not illusion, nor deception, as the Gnostics taught, but reality. He became true man so that he might enter in an actual battle with the Devil, and thus He gains victory over Him as over death, on our account. Thus in Him we gain daily victory in our battle, whose arena is our heart.

Through this inner battle, we are transformed every day to a kind of glorious nature, as we might be made divine by growing in bearing the image of the Logos.

14. Education of Wilderness

> *Moses also lived in the wilderness after his flight from Egypt, while he was 40 years old... But John went to the wilderness after his birth, of whom it is said that he was the greatest among those who was born from men. He was worthy to have an excellent education[272].*

ASCETICISM[273]

1. We are aware of the life of poverty and mortification which Origen had imposed upon himself from his youth; he tried to lead his disciples and his hearers along the same road. In this

270 Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p. 129-130.
271 Comm. on John 2:16-19; Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p. 128.
272 In Luc. hom. 10:7.
273 The History of the Primitive Church, p. 956f.

matter especially **the prophets and the apostles were his masters.**

The life **the prophets** chose is "*difficult to imitate, hard, free, invincible in face of death and danger*." Such were Moses, Jeremiah, Isaiah, "*who went beyond all asceticism, living for three years naked and without shoes*," and Daniel with the young men who were his companions, who would live only on water and vegetables. Compared with these examples, the strength of Antisthenes, Diogenes or Crates was but child's play[274].

The apostles themselves are also our models, especially St. Paul. He brought his body into subjection; he found strength in his weakness[275]. Christians often ask God to grant them the lot of the prophets and the apostles: let them understand what this prayer means.

> *Give us to suffer what the prophets suffered, grant us to be hated as the prophets were hated, give us to preach a doctrine, which shall make us hated; give us as many trials as the apostles. But to say: 'Give us the lot of the prophets' if we do not wish to suffer what the prophets suffered is an unjust pretense[276]*."

2. Origen acknowledges asceticism without implying hostility to the body, for he considers it as a fitting vehicle during our life on earth to ascend to God. This acceptance of the body and the sense of wholeness that it provided is what separated previously Christians and Platonists from the Gnostics[277].

✞ ✞ ✞

274 Contra Celsius 7:7.
275 Comm. on Matt. ser. 94.
276 In Jerem. hom. 16:14.
277 Trigg: Origen, p. 165.

16

PRAYER

ON PRAYER (*De Oratione*)[1]

This is a treatise addressed to his friend Ambrose and an unknown lady, Tatiana, perhaps the sister of Ambrose, written in 233 or 234 A.D. Origen wrote this work, which is the oldest scientific discussion of Christian prayer in existence. It is a gem among the writings of Origen. This treatise was written after a long period of peace, and contains many allusions to martyrdom, and his enthusiasm glows in it so brightly that we are tempted to believe it was written in the period when the persecution was raging[2].

1. John J. O'Meara says that, it is not merely a treatise on prayer; it is a prayer in itself. For the spirit of Origen which, as Erasmus says, is everywhere aflame, is burning here with such intensity as to make it impossible for the reader to remain untouched. A glance at the *Table of Contents* will tell the reader of the topics treated; but he must read the text itself to feel its power and the irresistible charm of Origen's use of Holy Writ[3]. J.W. Trigg says, "It is the first clear and thoroughgoing exposition, within the Christian tradition, of prayer as the contemplation of God rather than as a means of achieving material benefits[4]."

2. It reveals more clearly than any of his other writings the depth and warmth of Origen's religious life. The ideas of this treatise have had a far-reaching effect in the history of spirituality. Origen's writings were read by some early monks of Egypt.

---

1 Origen: Prayer, Exhortation To Martyrdom, Translated and Annotated by John J. O'Mearea (ACW); Quasten, vol. 3, p. 66ff.
2 R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder, 1944, p. 16.
3 Origen: Prayer, Exhortation To Martyrdom, Translated and Annotated by John J. O'Mearea (ACW), p. 8.
4 Joseph W. Trigg: Origen, SCM 1985, p. 157.

3. In it, Job is held up as "the athlete of virtue."

4. Origen gives a beautiful interpretation of the opening address “Our Father, who art in heaven.” He points out that the Old Testament does not know the name 'Father' as an alternative for God in the Christian sense of a steady and changeless adoption. Only those who have received this spirit of adoption and prove that they are children and images of God by their actions can recite the prayer rightly. Our entire life should say: 'Our Father who art in heaven,' because our conduct should be heavenly, not worldly.

5. The advice which he gives in the first part of his treatise, not to ask for things of this earth but for supernatural treasures explains his interpretation of the fourth petition: “*Since some are of the opinion that this must be understood as if we should ask for bread for our body, it will be worth to refute their wrong idea and find out the truth about the daily bread. One ought to tell such people how is it possible that He, who demands that one ought to pray for heavenly and great things, could forget His own teaching, according to their opinion, and order them to ask the Father for a worldly and small cause*[5].” The food is the Logos, who calls Himself 'the Bread of life.'

6. Origen took this word, *epiousios*, as cognate to *ousia*, the philosophical term for the substance of things, incorporeal in itself, that makes possible whatever attributes they have. The term also refers to the future. The bread we request in the Lord’s Prayer can thus be the bread of the Word of God, which is Wisdom and Truth[6].

> *Since this is the case, and the difference between nourishments is as we have said, the supersubstantial bread which is unique and above all those that are mentioned. We must pray to be made worthy of it, and to be nourished by the Word of God, which was in the beginning with God, so that we may be made divine...*

5 On Oratione 27:1.
6 J.W. Trigg: Origen, SCM, p.159.

> *Some state that the term epiousios is formed from the verb epienai: that is to say, that we are bidden to ask for the bread that properly belongs to the age that is to come*[7].

7. Origen explains **Forgiving our debtors**, mentioned in the Lord's Prayer, saying:

> *But towards ourselves also we have debts: we must use our body in such a way as not to waste its substance in our love of pleasure; and we owe it to our soul to look after it carefully, to provide that the mind retain its keenness, and that our speech may never be barbed, but always helpful, and never given to vain talk. And again, if we do not discharge our debts towards ourselves, our debt becomes all the heavier*[8].

8. Origen tried to define prayer and argued with ***those who denied freedom of will***, and who gave the following objections to prayer[9]:

a. *First, if God foresees everything that will happen, and these things must happen, prayer is useless.*

b. *Second, if everything happens according to the will of God, and His decisions are firm, and nothing that He wills can be changed, prayer is useless.*

c. *What is the use of praying to Him who knows what we need even before we pray?*

For them, either our prayer is superfluous because God has already determined to grant our request, or it is vain because God has determined not to grant it. Either God has predestined us to salvation, in which case it is unnecessary to pray for salvation or to receive the Holy Spirit, or God has predestined us for damnation, in which case such prayer is futile[10].

---

7 On Prayer !7:13 (ACW).
8 On Prayer 28:2 (ACW).
9 On Prayer 5:6,2.
10 Joseph W. Trigg: Origen, SCM 1985, p. 157.

> *If we are satisfied about our freedom of will, which manifests innumerable tendencies to virtue or vice, or again to one's duty or the opposite of one's duty, it follows that God necessarily knew what form it would take before it took that form along with all the other things that were to be from the creation and foundation of the world (Rom. 1:20; Matt. 25:34). And in all the things which God prearranges according as He has foreseen each of our free actions, He prearranged according to the requirements of each of our free actions both that which was to happen as a result of His Providence and that which was to happen in the sequence of events that were to be. Yet the foreknowledge of God is not a cause of everything that is to be and of the effects of our free actions resulting from our own impulses*[11].

Origen argues in such a way as to insure both human freedom and divine providence; for divine foreknowledge is not the cause of man's actions, which he performs in freedom and for which he is accountable.

Origen rejected the opinion of those who said that temptations to sin could not be resisted. Refuting various Greek doctrines about the cyclical nature of history, he asserted the Christian teaching "that the universe is cared for by God in accordance with the conditions of the free will of each man, and that as far as possible it is always being led on to be better, and ... that the nature of our free will is to admit various possibilities[12]."

> *If then God knows the free will of every man, therefore, since He foresees it, He arranges by His Providence what is fair according to the deserts of each, and provides what he may pray for, the disposition of such and such thus showing his faith and object of his desire*[13].

11 On Prayer 6:3 (ACW).
12 Jaroslav Pelikan, p. 282.
13 On Prayer 6:4 (ACW).

9. Origen's *On Prayer* provides us with a number of insights, unusual in his work, into the conventional religious practices of Christians in his day[14].

Its contents

The introduction opens with the statement that what is impossible for human nature becomes possible by the grace of God and the work of Christ and the Holy Spirit in our prayers and lives. Such is the case with prayer. We pray to the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit.

The treatise consists of two parts:

The first part (Chs. 3-I7) deals with prayer in general.

The second part (Chs. I8-30) deals with the Lord's Prayer in particular.

An appendix (Chs. 3I-33), which makes additions to the first section, deals with the attitude of the body and soul, gestures, the place and the direction of prayer, and finally the different kinds of prayer.

At the end, Origen begs Ambrose and Tatiana to be content with the present writing for the time being until he could offer something better, more beautiful and more precise. Apparently Origen was never able to fulfill this promise.

THE WORK OF THE HOLY TRINITY IN PRAYERS

> *Since then to expound prayer is such a difficult task that one needs the Father to shed light upon it and the Word Himself, the firstborn, to teach it, and the Spirit to work within us that we may understand and speak worthily of so great a theme, I beseech the Spirit, praying as a man (for I do not lay to my own credit the capacity for prayer),*

14 Joseph W. Trigg: Origen, SCM 1985, p. 157.

before I begin to speak of prayer, that it may be granted me to speak fully and spiritually (etc.) [15].

PRAYER AND RENEWAL

St. Clement and his disciple, Origen, as preachers and teachers at the same time, look up to the Savior as the "Teacher" who grants us Himself "the Truth." He is the Medicine for ignorance and grief. Therefore St. Clement calls our Savior the "New Hymn[16]," while Origen calls the new life in Christ "prayer." St. Clement considers Christ the source of joy, for in Him we attain knowledge and are healed from any serious sickness, ignorance, or any other source of inner grief. Origen believes that the Christian life is a prayer, or a close contact with Christ, the Source of sweetness arising from true Knowledge.

In other words, the two deans of the School of Alexandria have the same insights towards divine knowledge. St. Clement states that Christ changes everything in a believer's life into a constant feast, in which he has no other hymn to sing except that of Christ Himself. Origen expresses the same feeling when he describes his entire life as a prayer, and stresses that Christ alone is the source of an unceasing stream of knowledge.

According to Origen, prayer is not just a part of communal and personal worship that we have to exercise. A Christian's entire life is a prayer in which the exercise commonly called prayer is only a part.

Rather, if we understand the earlier discussion of praying "constantly" (1 Thess. 5:17), then let our whole life be a constant prayer in which we say "Our Father who art in heaven," and let us keep our commonwealth (Phil. 3:20) not in any way on earth, but in every way in heaven, the throne of God, because the kingdom of God is estab-

15 On Prayer 6.
16 Protrepticus 1.

lished in all those who bear the image of the Man from heaven (1 Cor. 15:49) and have thus become heavenly[17].

We are on the road to perfection, if straining forward to what lies ahead we forget what lies behind. The kingdom of God will be established for us when the Apostle's word is fulfilled, when Christ with all His enemies made subject to Him will deliver "the kingdom to God the Father.... "constantly"(1 Thess. 5:17) with a character being divinized by the Word, and let us say to our Father in heaven, "hallowed be Your name, Your kingdom come[18]*."*

Origen asks us to pray without ceasing to sanctify the whole cycle of the day, by practicing good deeds, considering them as prayer.

It is only in this way that we can understand the injunction "to pray without ceasing" as some thing that we can carry out all the time. We can say so if we regard the whole life of a saint as one great continuous prayer. What is usually termed "prayer" is but a part of this prayer, and it should be performed not less than three times each day[19].

Although Origen considered a virtuous life one unbroken prayer, he recommended specifically praying to God at least three times a day: in the morning, at noon, and in the evening[20].

HOW GREAT IS PRAYER?!

For what better gift can a rational being send up to God than the fragrant word of prayer, when it is offered from a conscience untainted with the foul smell of sin? [21]

17 On Prayer 22:5 (Rowan A. Greer).
18 On Prayer 25:2 (Rowan A. Greer).
19 On Prayer 12:2 (ACW).
20 Joseph W. Trigg: Origen, SCM 1985, p. 158.

THE BLESSINGS OF PRAYER

1. Origen, depending on the holy Scriptures, states that prayer is the act of lifting up unceasingly the soul to attain ***a vision of divine beauty and majesty***. We attain ***the open gates of heaven***, or we have their keys: "*Again, Elijah, when the heavens had been closed to the impious for three years and six months, they were later opened by the word of God, (1 King. 17, 18). This can always be brought about by anyone who receives rain upon his soul through prayer, whereas formerly because of sin he was deprived of it*[22]."

2. The utility and advantage of prayer is that it enables us to enter ***into a union with the Spirit of the Lord***, who fills heaven and earth. Repeated conversation with God has a sanctifying effect on the believer's entire existence. Prayer's real purpose is not to ask advantages from God or to influence Him but to ***share in His life***, and to ***communicate with heaven***. Origen admonishes those who long for a spiritual being in Christ but ask for small and worldly things in their intercourse with God rather than for great and heavenly values. The best example is given by Christ, our High-Priest. He offers up our worship together with that of the angels and the souls of the deceased, especially the guardian angels, who carry our invocations to God.

3. Through prayer we enjoy the ***Presence of God***. "*It is evident that the man who prays thus, even while he is still speaking and contemplating the power of Him who is listening to him, will hear the words:` Behold, I am here'* [23]."

4. Through prayer we ask God that we, together with our brothers, ***might be changed from earth into heaven***.

---

21 On Prayer 2:2 (Rowan A. Greer).
22 On Prayer 13:5
23 Ibid. 10:1.

> *If then we are "earth" because of sin, let us pray that also for us God's will may be disposed for correction, just as it overtook those before us who became or were "heaven." And if we are reckoned by God not "earth" but "heaven," let us ask that the will of God may be fulfilled on earth as in heaven, I mean for the baser people so that they may, so to speak, make earth heaven with the result that there will no longer be any earth, but all will become heaven. For if the will of God is done on earth as in heaven, understood as I have said above, then earth does not remain earth. Let me put it more clearly by using another example*[24].
>
> *"Your will be done on earth as in heaven"... And those who come after us "on earth" will pray to be made like us who have come to be "in heaven*[25]*."*

5. Through prayer ***we are surrounded by angels of God*** who do their best for our progress: "*At the time of prayer itself **the angels are reminded by him who is praying** of the things which he needs, and they do what they can for him acting according to the general injunction which they receive*[26]."

6. In this work, as in all his works, especially his *Homilies on Leviticus*, Origen explains the advantages of temptation.

> *The use of temptation is as follows. What our soul has received is unknown to all save God - is unknown even to ourselves; but it is manifested by means of temptations: so that it may be no longer unknown what kind of persons we are, but rather that we should also know ourselves and be aware, if we will, of our faults and give thanks for the good results manifested to us of temptations*[27].

---

24 On Prayer 26:6 (Rowan A. Greer).
25 On Prayer 26:1 (Rowan A. Greer).
26 On Prayer 11:4.
27 On Prayer 29:17 (trans. Oulton, p. 319).

He also gives an answer to the question: Why do we pray to God that we may not enter in a temptation, if it is useful to our spirituality? Origen says that when we pray that God may not lead us into temptation, this must really mean that we pray that God will enable us to overcome temptation when it comes and allow us to profit by the experience[28].

Prayer ***fortifies the soul against temptations and drives evil spirits away***. By prayer we close the mouths of lions, or of evil spirits[29]. For this reason we should engage in it at certain times during the day. Through prayer we discover our Lord who went into the nets of temptation by His own will for our sake to deliver us from them.

> *The whole life of man on earth is, then, as has been said, temptation. Accordingly, let us pray to be delivered from temptation, not that we should not be tempted - which is impossible, especially for those on earth - but that we may not yield when we are tempted. He who yields to temptation enters, I believe, into temptation because he is entangled in its nets. Our Savior, going into these nets on behalf of those who had been caught in them before, and looking through the nets, as is said in the Canticle of Canticles (2:9 LXX), speaks to those who have been previously caught by them and have entered into temptation, saying to them as to His bride: Arise, come, my neighbor, my beautiful one, my dove[30].*

7. By prayer we ***attain purity:***

> *Those who give themselves continually to prayer know by experience that through this frequent practice they avoid innumerable sins and are led to perform many good deeds[31].*

28 Joseph W. Trigg: Origen, SCM 1985, p. 163.
29 On Prayer 13:3.
30 On Prayer 29:9 (ACW).
31 Ibid. 8:2.

And to this the Savior said, teaching us that absolute chastity is a gift given by God, and not merely the fruit of training, but given by God with prayer, "All men cannot receive this gift, but they to whom it is given[32]."

Through the very act of prayer, the soul becomes more spiritual. It separates itself from bodily concerns, and turns entirely to spiritual things. Origen presented prayer thus, not as a duty we owe to God, but as an exercise conductive to the transformation of the entire personality[33].

8. Origen gives many examples of the power of prayer:

Hannah gave birth to Samuel, who was reckoned with Moses, because when she was barren she prayed to the Lord with faith (1 Sam. 1; Jer. 15:1; Ps. 99:6).

And Hezekiah, being still childless and having learned from Isaiah that he was about to die, prayed and was included in the genealogy of the Savior (Matt. 1:9-10;2 Kings 20:1ff; Isaiah 38:1ff).

Again, when, as a result of a single order arising from the intrigues of Haman, the people were about to be destroyed, the prayer and fasting of Mordecai and Esther were heard, and hence there arose, in addition to the feasts ordained by Moses, the festival of Mordecai for the people (Esther 3:6,7; 4:16,17; 9:26-28).

And Judith , too, having offered holy prayer, overcame Holofernes with the help of God, and so a single woman of the Hebrews brought shame to the house of Nebuchadnezzar (Judith 13:4-9).

Further, Ananias and Azarias and Misael became worthy to be heard and to be protected by the blowing of a wind bringing dew, which prevented the flame of the fire from being effective (Song of Three Children 27).

---

32 Commentary on Matthew, book 14:25 (Cf. ANF).
33 J.W. Trigg: Origen, SCM, p. 159.

And the lions in the den of the Babylonians were muzzled through the prayers of Daniel.

And Jonah, too, not having despaired of being heard from out of the belly of the whale that had swallowed him, escaped from the belly of the whale and thus fulfilled the remainder of his prophetical mission to the men of Niniveh[34].

9. Besides the material benefits which we may attain through prayer there are **spiritual ones**, which are more important.

And so it was more the soul of Hannah that was cured of barrenness and bore fruit than her body when she conceived Samuel.

Hezechiah begot divine children of the mind rather than such as are born of the body from the seed of the body.

Esther and Mordecai and the people were delivered even more from spiritual attacks than from Haman and the conspirators.

Judith cut off the power of the prince who wanted to destroy her soul rather than the head of Holofernes.

And who will not admit that on Ananias and his companions descended the spiritual benediction that is granted to all the saints and is spoken of by Isaac when he says to Jacob:` God give you the dew of heaven', rather than the physical dew which quenched that flame of Nebuchadnazar?

And they were invisible lions that were muzzled for the prophet Daniel so that they could do no hurt to his soul, rather than the lions that were seen and to whom we all referred the passage when we met it in the Scriptures.

And who has escaped from the belly of that beast subdued by Jesus our Savior and that swallows down eve-

34 On Prayer 13:2.

ryone that flies from God, as had Jonah, who as a holy man was receptive of the Holy Spirit?[35].

10. Through constant prayers God establishes His temple in us

I believe that anyone among you who is a "living stones," is able to be a temple. He cares with prayer, offering his supplications at night and day, and offers the sacrifice of his petitions. Thus God builds His temple[36]*."*

ANSWERS TO PRAYER

1. God who watches over our salvation may postpone or prevent certain material benefits, which are the shadow of spiritual ones, so that we may not be absorbed in earthly things.

As he, then, who seeks the rays of the sun neither rejoices nor grieves whether the shadow of bodies be present or absent, seeing that he has what is most necessary as long as he receives the light, whether there is no shadow or more or less of it, so if we be given spiritual gifts and receive illumination from God are in full possession of the things that are truly good, we shall not waste word over such an insignificant thing as a shadow[37].

We must pray for the essentially and truly great and heavenly things, and leave to God what is concerned with the shadows that accompany the essential gifts, He understands what is needful for us, because of our mortal body, before we ask Him (Matt. 6:8)[38].

(God in His dealings with us works slowly but surely. Just as the wise farmer will not value rocky ground and quick results that won't last) *even so the great Farmer*

35 On Prayer 16:3
36 In Jos. hom 9:1.
37 On Prayer 17:1.
38 On Prayer 17:2.

> *of all nature delays the blessing which might be expected sooner, for fear it prove superficial*[39].

2. If we want to find a heavenly response to our prayers we must know what we ought to pray for.

> *And he (St. Paul) confessed that he did not know how to pray "as we ought." For he says, "what we ought to pray for as we ought we do not know" (Rom. 8:26). It is necessary not only to pray, but also to pray "as we ought" and to pray for what we ought*[40].

> *And it is useful to know what it is to ask, and what it is to receive, and what is meant by "Every one that asks, receives," and by "I say unto you though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity, he will arise and give him as many as he needs*[41]*."*

3. The effects of prayer depend on our interior preparation. The better the soul is prepared the sooner its petitions will be answered by God and the more will it benefit from the dialogue with Him.

4. God hears the voice of the believer who prays with his whole soul:

> *God therefore will give the good gift, perfect purity in celibacy and chastity, to those who ask Him with the whole soul, and with faith, and in prayers without ceasing*[42].

5. Quoting the words of our Lord Jesus Christ in Matthew 18:19, Origen states that ***our harmony and agreement*** with each other is a secure way of having our prayers answered, for through unity and love Christ Himself dwells in us.

---

39 De Principiis 3:1:14.
40 On Prayer 2:1 (Rowan A. Greer).
41 Commentary on Matthew, book 14:25 (Cf. ANF).
42 Commentary on Matthew, book 14:25 (Cf. ANF).

Origen notices that the Greek word which is translated "agree" in this verse (Matt. 18:19) is *symphonsusin*. It means that Christ asks us to be united together in harmony so that we may be considered as a *symphony* which delights God Himself. Origen gives an interpretation of the verse on three levels:

a. ***Church symphony***, when the members of the church become one in mind and one in spirit, therefore Christ dwells among them. The two who are one in symphony are the divine and spiritual.

In his speech on the power of harmony in relation to prayer he comments on the words, "Again I say unto you that if two of you shall ***agree (***be in ***symphony)*** on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them" (Matt. 18:19).

> *The word **symphony** is strictly applied to the harmonies of sounds in music. And there are indeed among musical sounds some accordant and others discordant. But the Evangelic Scripture is familiar with the name as applied to musical matters in the passage, "He heard a symphony and dancing" (Luke 15:25). For it was fitting that when the son who had been lost and found came by penitence into concord with his father a symphony should be heard on the occasion of the joyous mirth of the house. But the wicked Laban was not acquainted with the word symphony in his saying to Jacob, "And if you had told me I would have sent you away with mirth and with music and with drums and a harp" (Gen. 31:27). But akin to the symphony of this nature is that which is written in the second Book of Kings when "the brethren of Aminadab went before the ark, and David and his son played before the Lord on instruments artistically fitted with might and with songs" (2 Sam. 6:4, 5); for the instruments thus fitted with might and with songs, had in themselves the musical symphony which is so powerful that when two only, bring along with the symphony which has relation to the music that is*

> ***divine and spiritual***, *a request to the Father in heaven about anything whatsoever, the Father grants the request to those who ask along with the symphony on earth,- which is most miraculous, - those things which those who have made the symphony spoken of may have asked. So also I understand the apostolic saying "Defraud you not one the other except it be by agreement for a season that you may give yourselves unto prayer" (1 Cor. 7:5). For since the word harmony is applied to those who marry according to God in the passage from Proverbs which is as follows: "Fathers will divide their house and substance to their sons, but from God the woman is married to the man," it is a logical consequence of the harmony being from God, that the name and the deed should enjoy the agreement with a view to prayer, as is indicated in the word, "unless it be by agreement" (Matt. 18:20)...*
>
> *But if you wish still further to see those who are making symphony on earth look to those who heard the exhortation, "that you may be perfected together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Cor. 1:10), and who strove after the goal, "the soul and the heart of all the believers were one" (Acts 4:32), who have become such, if it be possible for such a condition to be found in more than two or three, that there is no discord between them. just as there is no discord between the strings of the ten-stringed psaltery with each other*[43].

b. ***Family symphony***, when a husband and his wife are living in harmony in their spiritual life.

> *Let us also touch upon another interpretation which was uttered by some one of our predecessors, exhorting those who were married to sanctity and purity; for by the two, he says, whom the Word desires to agree on earth, we must understand the husband and wife, who by agreement*

43 Commentary on Matthew, book 14:1 (cf. ANF).

defraud each other of bodily intercourse that they may give themselves unto prayer (1 Cor. 7:5); when if they pray for anything whatever that they shall ask, they shall receive it, the request being granted to them by the Father in heaven on the ground of such agreement[44].

c. ***Personal symphony***, when the spirit and the body of the believer are working together in harmony under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Christ dwells in this believer as if He is the Third.

In the wicked, sin reigns over the soul, being settled as on its own throne in this mortal body, so that the soul obeys the lusts thereof; but in the case of those, who have stirred up the sin which formerly reigned over the body as from a throne and who are in conflict with it, "the flesh lusts against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh;" but in the case of those who have now become perfected, the spirit has gained the mastery and put to death the deeds of the body, and imparts to the body of its own life, so that already this is fulfilled, "He shall quicken also your mortal bodies because of His Spirit that dwells in you;" and there arises a concord of the two, body and spirit, on the earth, on the successful accomplishment of which there is sent up a harmonious prayer also of him who "with the heart believes unto righteousness, but with the mouth makes confession unto salvation," so that the heart is no longer far from God, and along with this the righteous man draws nigh to God with his own lips and mouth. But still more blessed is it if the three be gathered together in the name of Jesus that this may be fulfilled, "May God sanctify you wholly, and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved entire without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." But some one may inquire with regard to the concord of spirit and body spoken of, if it is possible for these to be at concord without the third being so,- I mean

44 Commentary on Matthew, book 14:1(cf. ANF).

> *the soul,- and whether it does not follow from the concord of these on the earth after the two have been gathered together in the name of Christ, that the three also are already gathered together in His name, in the midst of whom comes the Son of God as all are dedicated to Him,- I mean the three, and no one is opposed to Him, there being no antagonism not only on the part of the spirit, but not even of the soul, nor further of the body*[45].

Besides these three levels, Origen speaks of the ***harmony of the two covenants*** (the New and the Old Testaments), as if they were two and the Holy Spirit who united them is the Third. In many occasions Origen assures the unity of the Scriptures, if we understand them spiritually, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

> *And likewise it is a pleasant thing to endeavor to understand and exhibit the fact of the concord of the two covenants, of the one before the bodily advent of the Savior and of the new covenant; for among those things in which the two covenants are at concord so that there is no discord between them would be found prayers, to the effect that about anything whatever they shall ask it shall be done to them from the Father in heaven. And if also you desire the third that unites the two, do not hesitate to say that it is the Holy Spirit, since "the words of the wise," whether they be of those before the advent, or at the time of the advent, or after it, "are as goads, and as nails firmly fixed, which were given by agreement from one shepherd." And do not let this also pass unobserved, that He did not say, where two or three are gathered together in My name, there "shall I be" in the midst of them, but "there am I." not going to be, not delaying, but at the very moment of the concord being Himself found, and being in the midst of them*[46].

45 Commentary on Matthew, book 14:3(cf. ANF).
46 Commentary on Matthew, book 14:4(cf. ANF).

KINDS OF PRAYER

According to the words of St. Paul (1 Tim. 2:1), Origen sees that there are four kinds of prayers: supplications, prayers, intercessions and thanksgiving:

> *I believe that **supplication** is offered by one who needs something, beseeching that he receive that thing; **prayer** is offered in conjunction with praise of God by one who asks in a more solemn manner for greater things; **intercession** is the request to God for certain things made by one who has greater confidence ; and **thanksgiving** is the prayer with acknowledgment to God for the favors received from God: either the one who acknowledges and understands the greatness of the favor done him, or he who has received it attaches such greatness to it*[47].

PRAYER AND TEARS[48]

> *The constant prayer and the abundant tears attract God towards mercy!*
>
> *Weeping alone guides to the blessed laughing.*
>
> *Jesus Christ desired to reveal all blessedness in Himself. He says, "Blessed are those who weep", and He Himself to put a base on this blessedness well!*

PRAYER AND PIETY

> *"We must then seek the favor of the one God over all and pray that He may be gracious, seeking His favor by piety and every virtue*[49].

PRAYING THROUGH SILENCE

> *How does Moses cry out (Exod. 14:15)?*

---

47 On Prayer 14:2. (ACW)
48 In Jer. hom. 3:49; In Luc. hom. 18.
49 Contra Celsus 8:64.

No sound of his cry is heard and yet God says to him: "Why do you cry out to Me?

I should like to know how the saints cry out without a sound. The apostle teaches, "God has given the Spirit of His Son in our hearts crying: Abba, Father!" (Gal. 4:6) and he adds, "The Spirit Himself interceded for us with indescribable groans" and again "he who searches the heart knows what the Spirit desires because He pleads for the saints according to God" (Rom. 8:27). So therefore, when the Holy Spirit interceded with God the cry of the saints is heard through silence[50].

PREPARATION FOR PRAYER

1. As our entire life should be a prayer, we must prepare ourselves to prayer by the ***purity of our inner life in Christ*** so that it might be powerful and acceptable. We must turn away from all disturbing impressions and thoughts, whether they have their cause in the surrounding world or in ourselves. There cannot be any true worship unless a continuous war against sin is waged in order to cleanse the heart, and to free the spirit of disordered affections, with a struggle against all passions[51]. This preparation itself has its sweetness.

2. Commenting on Matthew 5:22, Origen makes it clear that only those who are entirely ***reconciled with their neighbors*** are able to converse with God[52].

Nor can one think of devoting time to prayer unless one is purified. For he who prays will not obtain remission of his sins unless he forgive from his heart his brother who has offended him and ask for his pardon (Matt. 6:12; Luke 11:4)[53].

---

50 In Exod. hom. 5:4 (Cf. Heine) .
51 Cf. Quasten: Patrology, vol. 3, p. 68.
52 Quasten, vol. 3,p. 68.
53 On Prayer 8:1 (ACW).

> *I wonder why anyone should doubt that when she (the soul) so prepares herself for prayer she is happy in the very preparation itself*[54].

3. Origen states that prayer is a gift of the Holy Spirit, who prays in us and leads us in prayer.

4. Origen as a man of the holy Bible acknowledges that there is ***no separation between prayer, reading the Scriptures, and exercising one's daily life***. In a fragment from a letter written by Ambrose to Origen from Athens and quoted by St. Jerome in *Letter 43* to Marcella the writer reports "that he never took a meal in Origen's presence without reading: that he never went to bed before one of the brethren had read aloud the sacred writings: that it went on like this day and night, so that reading followed prayer and prayer followed reading[55]."

5. Origen notes that ***the posture of the body*** images the qualities of the soul in prayer, and he says that standing with hands extended and eyes elevated is by far the best way to offer prayer[56]**.** He could approve of prayer while sitting or even lying down if a believer was sick[57].

> *For under certain circumstances it is allowed to pray properly sometimes sitting down because of some disease of the feet that cannot be disregarded or even lying down because of fever or some such sickness. And because of circumstances, for example, if we are at sea or if affairs do not permit us to withdraw to offer the prayer that is owed, it is right to pray acting as though we were not doing it*[58].

---

54 Ibid. 9:1.
55 Henri Crouzel: Origen, Harper & Row, 1989, p.27.
56 On prayer 31:2.
57 On Prayer 31:2.
58 On Prayer 31:2 (Rowan A. Greer).

6. For prayer, Origen recommends a ***special corner in one's own house*** that could serve as a sanctuary. At the same time he writes:

> *Now concerning the place, let it be known that every place is suitable for prayer if a person prays well. For "in every place you offer incense to me..... says the Lord", (Mal. 1:11); and "I desire then that in every place men should pray" (1 Tim. 2:8). But everyone may have, if I may put it this way, a holy place set aside and chosen in his own house, if possible, for accomplishing his prayers in quietness and without distraction. In addition to the general considerations he will use in assessing such a place, he should examine whether any transgression or anything contrary to right reason has been done in the particular place where he prays*[59].

7. Origen who concentrates on the personal contact between the believer's soul and her Heavenly Groom believes that the best place to pray is "*where the faithful meet together*[60]." He also assures that a believer can practice ***communal prayers*** even in his private room. There the spirits of the departed believers as well as the guardian angels of those who are present gather. It is an assembly whose prayers are all the more effective for their being so numerous[61].

8. Origen asks us to pray in spirit:

> *This is how he should come to prayer, stretching out his soul, as it were, instead of his hands, straining his mind toward God instead of his eyes, raising his governing reason from the ground and setting it before the Lord of all instead of standing. All malice toward any one of those who seem to have wronged him he should put away as far as any one would wish God to put away His malice toward*

59 On Prayer 31:4 (Rowan A. Greer).
60 On Prayer 31:5.
61 On Prayer 31:5-7.

him, if he had wronged and sinned against many of his neighbors or had done anything whatever he was conscious of as being against right reason[62].

9. Besides praying in spirit we have to pray also in mind, as St. Paul said. When we pray with understanding we shoot the Devil as with a fiery arrow:

In addition, I believe that the words of a saint's prayers are filled with power, especially as praying with the mind is like light rising from the understanding of the one who prays (cf. Ps. 96: 11; Is. 58:10; Rom. 3:13; Jas. 3:8)...

For it goes forth from the soul of the one praying like an arrow shot from the saint by knowledge and reason and faith; and it wounds the spirits hostile to God to destroy and over throw them when they wish to hurl round us the bonds of sin (cf. Ps. 8:3; Prov. 5:22) [63].

10. In speaking about attitudes during prayer, Origen states that all worship should be directed towards ***the East***, in order to indicate that the soul is looking towards the dawn of the true Light, the Sun of justice and of salvation, Christ[64].

Now concerning the direction in which one ought to look when he prays, a few things must be said. Since there are four directions, north, south, west, and east, who would not immediately acknowledge that it is perfectly clear we should make our prayers facing east, since this is a symbolic expression of the soul's looking for the rising of the true Light. But suppose someone wishes instead to offer intercessions in whatever direction the doors of the house face according to the opening of the house, saying that having a view into heaven is more inviting than looking at a wall; and suppose it should happen that the opening of

62 On Prayer 31:2 (Rowan A. Greer).
63 On Prayer 12:1 (Rowan A. Greer).
64 Ibid. 32.

the house is not toward the east. In this case let the person be told that the buildings of men arbitrarily face in certain directions or have openings in certain directions, but by nature the east is preferred over the other directions, and what is by nature must be ranked ahead of what is arbitrary[65].

THANKSGIVING

According to Origen, a believer should begin and end one's prayer glorifying God; in between one should in turn give thanks for God's blessings[66]. Origen comments on the song which Moses sang with the people and Mariam (Exodus 15), saying:

It is the custom of the saints to offer a hymn of thanks to God when an adversary is conquered, as men who know the victory came about not by their own power but by the grace of God[67].

Thanksgiving is realized not only through words and hymns, but also through an inner life and **behavior**, it must be brought about by our own hands.

I believe that one to be he who praises God in all his actions and fulfills through him what our Lord and Savior says: "That men may see your good works and praise your Father who is in heaven." Therefore, this one offered "a sacrifice of praise" for whose deeds, doctrine, words, habits, and discipline, God is praised and blessed...

His hands will bring an offering to the Lord." Does the Lawgiver evidently not say that it is not a person who brings an offering but "his hands" (Lev. 5:30). that is, his works? For truly, it is works that commend an offering to God. For if your hand was closed to giving and opened to

---

65 On Prayer 32:1 (Rowan A. Greer).
66 J .W. Trigg: Origen, SCM, p.158.
67 In Exodus hom. 6:1 (Cf. Ronad E Heine- Frs. of the Church, vol. 71.)

receiving, your leprosy is still within you and you cannot bring "an offering of salvation[68]."

ANGELS PRAY WITH US

And he (the angel) prays with us and does all he can to work with us for what we pray[69].

THE CONTEMPLATIVE LIFE AND THE ACTIVE LIFE[70]

For Origen the word "***contemplation***" means religious knowledge, the interpretation of difficult texts of Holy Scripture, and the theological conclusions that flow therefrom, all of which things are acquired only after much effort and are granted to the virtuous man exclusively. Although contemplation, like activity, is a matter of effort, yet the two are divine gifts. We are in need of the grace of God to contemplate as well as to behave as children of God who have the image of God and become in His likeness.

Origen believes in the oneness of the new life in Christ, which is expressed by action and contemplation without separation. He recognizes no boundary between contemplation and action.

Holy reflections have their own work, a ceaseless inquiry in which the sense of their visible world is sharpened and without which the soul's grasp of God's truth becomes weaker and weaker. "But his will is the law of the Lord, and on His law he shall meditate day and night."

An action is born of every genuine thought. "The soul that meditates on the law of the Lord is not a soul that undertakes to review in memory the words of the law apart from the works of righteousness which are in agreement with the law; but it is the soul that succeeds in doing the works of righteousness from continually meditating on them. By reason of this continual meditation on the works prescribed by the law, the soul acquires a certain facility in fulfilling

68 Homilies on Leviticus 5:7. (See Frs. of the Church)
69 On Prayer 11:5 (Rowan A. Greer).
70 Cf. R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder 1944, Chapter IV.

all the obligations that can bind the man who lives perfectly according to the law. This is the way the soul becomes capable of meditating on the law of the Lord day and night."

Origen is the first to identify this unity of contemplation and action with the story of Martha and Mary. The apostolic life of the preacher and teacher only has value if its aim is contemplation; and contemplation blossoms into apostolic action. To see our Lord Jesus transfigured on the mountain, and thus to contemplate the divinity of the Word seen through his humanity - the Transfiguration is the symbol of the highest knowledge of God in his Son which is possible here below- one must, with the three apostles, make the ascent of the mountain, symbolizing the spiritual ascent. Those who remain in the plain see Jesus "with no form nor comeliness" (Isa. 53:2), even if they believe in his divinity: for these spiritual invalids He is simply the Doctor who cares for them. Or to use another image from the Gospels Jesus speaks to the people in parables out of doors; He explains them to the disciples indoors: so one must go into the house in order to begin to understand[71].

Origen as a man of the Bible spent almost all his life contemplating on it, considering that the most valuable divine gift to the soul, as the bride of the Heavenly Groom, is to be lifted up by the Holy Spirit and to enter in His chamber and receive His divine knowledge. This is the pledge of eternal glory. But we must beware of supposing that he gives priority to the contemplative over the active life. For him, even the contemplation of prayer includes "deeds of virtue," and one can say "our Father" or "Jesus is Lord" only if actions as well as words make the affirmations[72]. Moses and Aaron symbolize the one "hand," which includes faith and knowledge of the law together with works[73]. From one point of view the active life prepares the soul for the contemplation of God. But from another point of view contemplation empowers the soul

71 Cf. Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p.101.
72 On Prayer 12:2.
73 In Num. hom 27:6.

to act. Like Plato's philosopher, the soul that has glimpsed God must return to the cave and work[74].

Cadiou says,

> Clement's ideal of the perfect Christian as one who is both active and contemplative was now being taught to the students at the Academy in a new way. The Christian Gnostic of the Stromata had been a man utterly devoted to prayer, unblemished in all his thoughts and actions, sharing in some measure the mind of God. In Origen's hands, that lofty ideal was transformed, being fashioned into something real and concrete; the Gnostic became the ascetic and the contemplative, the first model of what was later to be the Christian monk...
>
> *When we meditate on the law of God we must not forget the different applications to that holy law. In the same spirit we must not neglect prayer on special occasion, because prayer, like meditation, consists of fulfilling the law of the Lord in everything[75].*
>
> In Origen's view, the contemplative prays at the rising of the sun, and before retiring to rest at night he examines his conscience[76]."

PRAYER AND READING THE BIBLE

"*Diligently apply yourself to the reading of the Sacred Scriptures,"* Origen said to Gregory Thaumaturgus, "*with faithful pre-judgments such as are well pleasing to God. Prayer is of all things indispensable to the knowledge of the things of God*[77]."

74 Rowan A. Greer: Origen, p. 27.
75 In Psalm, 1:2 PG 12:1088; Cf. ibid. 5:5 PG 12:1169; ibid. 4 ;5; PG 12 ;1144.
76 R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder 1944, Chapter IV.
77 R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder, 1944, p. 57

PRAYER AND PREACHING

According to Origen, reading the Bible and interpreting it is a sacramental act in which God answers man's prayer[78]. The preacher and congregation have to seek after the voice of God through mutual prayers. They pray together for the Holy Spirit to give them understanding. Accordingly, Origen sometimes pauses in a homily to invite the community to join with him in prayer that the Holy Spirit might enlighten him:

> *On that question, if the Lord in answer to your prayers grants me understanding, and if at least we are worthy to receive the Lord's meaning, then I shall say to you a few words...*[79]

This act of praying while preaching expresses the very heart of Origen's thought and occurs again and again throughout his homilies:

> *No one can find it easy to discover all the allegories contained in this story of Abimelech and Sara. All the same we must pray that the veil covering our hearts (as they strive to turn to the Lord) may be removed by the Spirit. We must pray Him to lift from us the veil of the letter and show us the brightness of His Spirit*[80].

Through prayer our Lord Jesus Christ Himself becomes present among His people, reads and interprets the word of God.

> *We shall understand the meaning of the Law if it is Jesus who reads it to us and makes its spiritual significance clear. Do you not believe that in this way the meaning was grasped by those who said: did not our hearts burn within us while He talked with us along the way and while He opened to us the Scriptures?*[81]

---

78 Henri Crouzel: Origen, Harper & Row, 1989, p. 106.
79 In Ezek. hom 4:3 (Thomas K. Carroll; Messages of the Fathers of the Church).
80 In Gen. 6:1(Thomas K. Carroll; Messages of the Fathers of the Church).
81 In Jos. hom. 9:8 (Thomas K. Carroll; Messages of the Fathers of the Church).

No wonder then that at times during the homily Origen pauses to pray:

> *O Lord Jesus come again to explain these things to me and to those who are here in quest of spiritual nourishment*[82].

✞ ✞ ✞

82 *In Jer. hom. 19:14 (Thomas K. Carroll; Messages of the Fathers of the Church).*

17

THE JEWS in the Writings of Origen

THE JEWS

In chapter two we noticed that Origen was in good contact with some Jewish leaders. In the course of his biblical studies Origen found it advisable to become acquainted with the leaders of Jewish thought in Alexandria. He mentions those whom he consulted, and he also makes use of Jewish traditions in expounding the Scriptures. They helped him also in learning their literal commentaries on the Old Testament and Hebrew.

R. Cadiou says,

> He had no intention of engaging in controversy with them, nor did he propose to adopt their methods of exegesis. His approach to them shows that an author does not always borrow from his contemporaries what is in harmony with his own type of mind. In spite of his own interest in the allegorical method he did not go to the rabbis for any lessons in its use. He sought from them something he himself lacked: a literal or literary commentary of the Bible[1].

"G. Bardy, in an article in the *Revue Biblique* for 1925 entitled '*Les traditions juives dans l'oeuvre d'Origéne*," collected some seventy passages of Origen which he thought represented borrowings of Jewish traditions[2]."

This relationship shows the normal relations between Jews and Christians in his time[3]. On the other side, there is a fascinating

---

1 R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder, 1944, p. 43.
2 Origen and the Jews: Nicholas De Lange, Cambridge University Press, p. 2
3 Michael Green: Evangelism in the Early Church, p. 107-8.

passage in his *Commentary on the Psalms* which shows how utter and complete was the breakdown in communication between Jews and Christians by the third century. Commenting on the passage in Deuteronomy: *"They have stirred me to jealousy with what is no god; they have provoked me with their idols. So I will stir them to jealousy with those who are no people; I will provoke them with a foolish nation,"* Origen sees its fulfillment in the contemporary scene.

> *That is why even now the Jews are not roused against the Gentiles, against those who worship idols and blaspheme God. No, they do not hate them, nor does their indignation blaze against them. But it is against the Christians that they are consumed with an insatiable hatred, Christians who have abandoned idols and are converted to God![4]*

Origen records how in his day Jews told him that *"As they had no altar, no temple, no priest, and therefore no offerings of sacrifices, they felt that their sins remained with them, and that they had no means of obtaining pardon.*[5]*"*

> *1f he who is commonly called a Jew murdered the Lord Jesus and is still today responsible for that murder, it is because he has not understood the Law and the prophets in a hidden manner*[6]*.*

DIALOGUE WITH THE JEWS

Origen remarks, commenting on Isaiah 53,

> *I remember that once in a discussion with some whom the Jews regard as learned (i.e. Rabbis) I used these*

4 Hom. on Psalm 36:1.
5 In Num. Num. 10:2; Michael Green: Evangelism in the Early Church, p. 111.
6 In Jer. hom. 12:13; J.W. Trigg: Origen, SCM, p. 185.

prophecies. At this the Jew said that these prophecies referred to the whole people as though of a single individual, since they were scattered in the dispersion and smitten, that as a result of the scattering of the Jews among the other nations many might become proselytes. In this way he explained the text: "Your form shall be inglorious among men" and "those to whom he was not proclaimed shall see him" and "being a man in calamity". I then adduced many arguments in the disputation which proved that there is no good reason for referring these prophecies about one individual to the whole people. And I asked which person could be referred to in the text: "This man bears our sins and suffers pain for us" and "but he was wounded for our transgressions and he was made sick for our iniquities;" and I asked which person fitted the words "by his strips we were healed." Obviously, those who say this were once in their sins, and were healed by the passion of the Savior, whether they were of the Jewish people or of the Gentiles: the prophet foresaw this, and put these words into their mouths by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. But we seemed to put Him in the greatest difficulty with the words "because of the iniquities of my people he was led to death". If according to them the people are the subject of the prophecy, why is this man said to have been led to death because of the iniquities of the people of God, if He is not different from the people of God? Who is this if not Jesus Christ, by whose strips we who believe in Him were healed, when he put off the principalities and powers among us, and made a show of them openly on the cross?[7].

O Jews, when you come to Jerusalem and find it destroyed, it had been changed into dust and ashes, don't weep as a child (1 Cor. 4:20), don't be in grief but ask for a city in the heaven instead of that which you search here on earth.

---

7 Contra Celsus 1:55; Michael Green: Evangelism in the Early Church, p. 83.

Lift up your sight, you will find " the Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all" (Gal. 4:26).

Don't be in grief for the temple (here) is left, and don't be in despair as you don't find a priest . For in heaven there is an altar and the priests of the future goods passing before the Lord according to the order of Melchizedek (Heb. 5:10). It is God's love and mercies that He removed the earthly inheritance from you that you may ask for the heavenly one[8].

R. Cadiou says,

A Jewish rabbi who had been converted to Christianity asked himself why the king of Moab employed this figure of speech, 'as the ox is wont to eat the grass to the very roots.' The reason was, he said, that the ox in brewing uses its tongue like a scythe to cut what it finds. Thus the Israelites use their mouths and their lips as fighting weapons, destroying their enemies by borrowing the words of their challenge and using them for a means of offense[9].

THE JEWS AND THE GENTILES

Our Lord Jesus Christ came to this world not for rejecting the Jews, but through their unbelief He opened the gates of faith to the Gentiles.

He did not come with the aim of bringing about the unbelief of the Jews, but by His foreknowledge He foretold that this would happen and He used the unbelief of the Jews to call the Gentiles.

God's providence has been wonderful: it has used

8 In Jos. hom. 17:1.
9 R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder, 1944, p. 46.

the sin of the Jews to call the Gentiles into the kingdom of God by Jesus, strangers though they were to the covenants and alien to the promises (Eph. 2:12) [10].

It is clear that although the Jews saw Jesus they did not know who He was, and although they heard Him they did not understand from His sayings the divinity within Him, which was transferring God's care of the Jews to those Gentiles who believe in Him. Hence we may see how after the advent of Jesus the Jews have been entirely forsaken, and retain none of their traditionally sacred possessions, nor even a hint of the divine presence among them[11].

(Origen asks the meaning of the twin signs obtained by Gideon): *'I remember one of our predecessors saying in his commentaries that the fleece of wool was the people of Israel, while the rest of the ground was the rest of the nations, and the dew which fell on the fleece was the Word of God, because divine indulgence was shown to that people alone... But the second sign, the opposite of the first, is understood like this: observe the whole people of the Gentiles, gathered throughout all the world, possessing now within itself the divine dew-see it sprinkled with the dew of Moses, bedewed with the writings of the prophets; see it green with the watering of the Gospel and the apostolic (writings); while the fleece, the people of the Jews, is left to suffer in dryness, barren of the Word of God*[12].

The Jews ought to have been the closest to the truth for they had the "types" of the truth but they rejected it[13]. Those who truly understand the Law, offer spiritual sacrifice, not physical,

10 Contra Celsus 2:78.
11 Contra Celsus 2:8.
12 In Judg. hom. 8:4 on 6:36-38.
13 In Lev. hom. 12:1.

sacrifices[14]. The offering of incense in Leviticus 16:12 is what is offered by each church.

"No prophet is accepted in his own country" (Luke 4: 24).

Anothoth, the country of Jeremiah did not receive him well (Jer. 11:21), and Isaiah and the rest of the prophets were refused by their country, i.e. the circumcised people... while we who are not attributed to the country, and were foreigners from the promise received by Moses and Prophets who reveal Christ. We received Him from all our hearts more than the Jews who refused Christ and did not witness to Him[15].

The true Israelite, then, is everyone who knows Christ; if a man does not know Christ he is no Israelite, for "Israel" means "the mind that sees God". The "glory" of the Jews, then, is to believe in Christ whom their prophets predicted-the glory, that is, of encountering the One they had awaited[16].

For how was the Bridegroom, the Logos, not going to leave the adulterous generation and depart from it? But you might say that the Logos of God, leaving the synagogue of the Jews as adulterous, departed from it, and took a wife of fornication, namely, those from the Gentiles; since those who were "Zion, a faithful city" (Isa. 1:21), have become harlot Rahab, who received the spies of Joshua, and was saved with all her house (Josh. 6:25); after this no longer playing the harlot, but coming to the feet of Jesus, and wetting them with tears of repentance, and anointing them with the fragrance of the ointment of holy conversation, on

14 In Lev. hom. 9:8
15 In Luc. hom. 33:3.
16 In Luke hom. 15 on 2:30f.

account of whom, reproach Simon the leper, the former people, He spoke those things which are written (Josh. 6:25)[17].

When (God) rejected Israel.. grace was poured out on the Gentiles. The calling of the Gentiles took its start f.rom the fall of Israel. [Hence Origen himself, a Gentile, can converse about the promises of God-can have faith in the God of Israel,] *and by the grace of God can accept Jesus Christ, who was heralded aforetimes by the prophets*[18].

Before the advent of Christ God was known only in Judea; since then the whole earth is the Lord's. Before that advent "fullness" was not to be found anywhere on earth, and most of the earth was.. emptiness; since then many would say from among the Gentile believers "from his fullness have we all received..." (John 1 16), and thus themselves, they have become His "fullness" - for those who are "empty" of the ordering of the gospel, cannot be the "fullness" of Christ[19].

The passion of Christ brings life to believers... and death... to unbelievers. For although salvation and justification come to the Gentiles through His cross, to the Jews come death and condemnation[20].

After many prophets who administered correction to Israel, Christ came to correct the whole world[21].

From the ruins of Jerusalem there came a cry of hope. "I am abandoned to my sufferings," she said to the nations of the world, "in order that you should find your place. Because of you I have become an enemy of God although He had chosen me to be His beloved because of

---

17 Commentary on Matthew, Book 11:6 Cf. ANF).
18 In Jer. hom. 3.
19 Sel Ps. 24:1.
20 In Lev. hom. 3:1.
21 Contra Celsus 4:9.

my fathers. Hear my sigh and understand why I weep... Blessedness is primarily the avoidance of sin, but in the second place it is the confession to God of the sins we have committed. When the rest of the nations of the world will be saved, I in my turn, Lord, shall obtain salvation according to Your just judgments."

THE JEWS AND THE CHURCH

Concerning Origen and the Jews, the debate between the Church and synagogue can be reduced to the question of Scripture. Whose Bible is it? The Church's? The synagogue's? This question is answered by Origin's claim that the Scripture is the church's and it is the supreme authority for the Church[22].

We Christians say that although (the Jews) "enjoyed the favor of God" and were loved by Him more than any others, yet this dispensation and grace changed over to us when Jesus transferred the power at work among the Jews to the Gentile believers[23].

Commenting on this verse, "He shall not be reckoned among the nations" (Numbers 23:9) Origen adds that if Israel abandons his privileged position he is no longer Israel. "*Therefore no one from Jacob or Israel who sins can be called Jacob or Israel, and equally no Gentile who has once entered the Church of the Lord will ever again be reckoned among the nations*[24]."

Lest it should be doubted that God has warned the Jews of what would befall them, there was the prophecy of Moses himself (Deuteronomy 32:21), "I will move them to jealousy with those

22 Gary Wayne Barkley: Origen; Homilies on Leviticus, Washington, 1990, p. 14.
23 Contra Cels. 5:50.
24 In Num. hom 15:3; N.R.M. De Lange: Origen and the Jews: Studies in Jewish-Christian Relations in Third-Century Palestine, 1976, Cambridge, p. 80.

who are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation." The Church, composed of elements of various peoples but itself not a people, is clearly a strong candidate for the title of "those who are not a people;" as for the foolish nation, the key lies in I Corinthians 1:27, "God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise[25]."

JUDAISM IN ALEXANDRIA

Nicholas De Lange in his book "Origen and the Jews" says,

> We know hardly anything of Judaism in Alexandria at this time, and any information Origen could offer would be most welcomed. He knew the city well, having been born and brought up there, and having lived there for the greater part of his life. In the works produced before he left Alexandria there are some interesting remarks about Jews and Judaism. What is to be made of these? We know that in the great revolt of 115-17 so many of the Jews of Egypt were killed. In Alexandria, where the revolt was crushed in its early stages, some of the Jews survived, but Jewish community life appears to have come to an end and the power of the Jews in Alexandria was destroyed[26].

JEWISH PROPHETS

(The Jewish prophets) *were chosen by providence to be entrusted with the divine Spirit and with the words proceeding from Him, because of their quite exceptional qualities-courage, independence, fearlessness in face of death and danger[27].*

God... taught men by the prophets to hope for the advent of Christ, who would save them[28].

---

25 E.g. Contra Celsus 2:78; De Principiis 4:1:4; N.R.M. De Lange: Origen and the Jews: Studies in Jewish-Christian Relations in Third-Century Palestine, 1976, Cambridge, p. 81.
26 Origen and the Jews: Nicholas De Lange, Cambridge University Press, p.8.
27 Contra Celsus 7:7.
28 Contra Celsus 3:14.

JEWISH SCRIPTURE

When Jesus said to the Jews, "the Kingdom of God shall be taken from you and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof" (Matt. 21 43), what other dispensation was He giving than to bring forth to light by divine power the whole Jewish Scripture, which contains the mysteries of the Kingdom of God?[29]

JEWISH FEASTS

When Origen interprets the meaning of Jewish festivals, he does so on two levels. One level is the interpretation which is based on the literal meaning. The second level of understanding is based on illumination of the Spirit. Origen contends that Moses saw heavenly things and passed on to Israel types and images of what he had seen[30]. Furthermore, Origen suggests that if the teaching of Moses is not understood spiritually, then Moses cannot be called a prophet[31].

Thus, Origen, in his *Homilies on the Numbers (hom. 23)*, treats of the symbolism of the Jewish feast, and interprets the feast of first-fruits (*nova*) as expressing the renewal of the interior man[32].

JEWISH SACRIFICES

We mentioned that Origen accepts the tradition that Jewish sacrifices foreshadowed the sacrifice of Christ. Therefore, we must carefully draw a distinction between the sacrificial practices of the

---

29 Contra Celsus 4:42.
30 In Lev. hom. 13:1
31 In Lev. hom. 10:1.
32 Jean Daniélou: The Bible and the Liturgy, p.322; In Num. hom. 23:8; PG. 12:753 A.

Jews and of other nations[33].

33 Contra Celsus 5:44; Frances M. Young: The Use of Sacrificial Ideas in Greek Christian Writers from the New Testament to John Chrysostom, Philadelphia, 1979, p. 118.

MOSES' LAW

In a fragment of his *Commentary on Romans* preserved in the *Philocalia*, Origen shows great acuity in handling St. Paul's use of the word "law," ultimately distinguishing six different usages of the word. Origen suggests that the presence or absence of the article can be helpful in distinguishing St. Paul's two most important usage's of "law," the use of it to mean the law of Moses and the use of it to mean natural law. Here, and in several other cases, Origen still provides a helpful commentary on Paul's notoriously obscure use of language[34].

The Mosaic law needed to be brought up to date, and at the same time it was wrong that it should be limited to one alone of all the peoples of mankind[35].

Origen states that God closes their eyes as unworthy to see, and the eyes of their prophets and of their rulers who profess to see the hidden things of the mysteries in the divine Scriptures; and when their eyes are closed, then shall the prophetic words be sealed to them and hidden, as has been the case with those who do not believe in Jesus as the Christ. And when the prophetic sayings have become as the words of a sealed book, not only to those who do not know letters but to those who profess to know, then the Lord said, that the people of the Jews draw nigh to God with their mouth only, and He says that they honor Him with their lips, because their heart by reason of their unbelief in Jesus is far from the Lord[36].

If anyone reads the whole of the Epistle to the Hebrews... he will find how the whole of this part of the Apostle's writing shows that those things written in the law

34 J.W. Trigg: Origen, SCM, p.172-3.
35 Contra Celsus 4:22.
36 Commentary on Matthew, Book 11:11 (Cf. ANF).

are types and forms of things that are living and true[37].

Jewish Christians still lived according to the literal law[38]*, but for the Church this could only be a shadow of the spiritual law. Expounding the journey of the Israelites, Origen explains the tree thrown into the waters of Marah as an allegory of the Christian spiritualization of the law of Moses, and he adds, 'the Jews are still at Marah, still dwelling by bitter waters; for God has not yet shown them the tree by means of which the waters are sweetened*[39].

"The Lord... threw a tree in the water and the water became sweet:; but when the "tree" (cross) *of Jesus comes and the teaching of my Savior makes its dwelling with me, the Law of Moses is "sweetened"- its taste to one who thus reads and understands it is sweet indeed*[40].

CIRCUMCISION

When the Jew sins his circumcision shall be reckoned for uncircumcision, but when one of the Gentiles acts uprightly his uncircumcision shall be reckoned for circumcision (Rom. 2:25-26), so those things which are thought to be pure shall be reckoned for impure in the case of him who does not use them unfittingly, nor when one ought, nor as far as he ought, nor for what reason he ought[41].

Origen identifies the 'uncircumcised' with those who disobey the commands of God:

God does not wholly abandon either the circumcised or the uncircumcised, because He loves every

37 In Lev. hom. 9:2; 10:1.
38 Contra Celsus 2:1.
39 In Exodus hom. 7:3.
40 In Jer. hom. 10:2.
41 Commentary on Matthew, Book 11:12 (Cf. ANF).

soul. For He has sent Jesus to 'circumcise' everyone, worthy and unworthy: Jesus -not the son of Nun, whose circumcision of the people was not the true and perfect one-but our Lord and Savior. For it is He who has truly cut away the pollution in our flesh and purged the stains of our sins from our heart and soul[42].

We who have been transferred from the Law and Prophets to the Gospel are circumcised again (Jos. 5:7) by the Rock which was Christ (1 Cor. 10:4), then the word of the Lord to Joshua is realized in us, i.e., "this day I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you" Jos. 5:9[43].

Jesus came and gave us the second circumcision "by the washing of regeneration" (Tit. 3:5), purified our spirits and took away our reproach, grouting us instead the promise of the good conscious towards God.

Then the second circumcision takes away the reproach, and purifies us from our vices and sins... If by faith we passed over the stream of the Jordan by the virtue of the Gospel, and purified by the second circumcision, then we must not be afraid from the reproach of our previous sins. Do you hear: "I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you"?[44]

JEWISH WARS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Commenting on the wars in which Joshua was involved, Origen says:

The Jews who read these events, I am speaking of the Jews according to the appearance, who is circumcised

---

42 In Jos. hom. 6:1 on Josh 5.
43 In Jos. hom 5:5.
44 In Jos. hom 5:5.

in his body, and ignores the true Jew who is circumcised in his heart; this Jew does not find except description of wars, killing of enemies, and victory of the Israelites who plundered the possession of the foreigners and pagans, under the guidance of Joshua. While the Jew according to the heart, that is the Christian who follows Jesus, the Son of God, and not Joshua the Son of Nun, understands these events as representing the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. He says, "Today also my master Jesus Christ fights the powers of the evil and derives them out from the towns which they occupied before. He drives them out of our souls. He kills the kings who reigned over them, so that sin will not reign over us. As our souls become free from the reign of sin they become a temple of the Lord and of the God's Kingdom, hearing the words, "The kingdom of God is within you"...

Let us then understand well, that if Joshua had killed the kings of Jericho, AI, Libnah, Lachish, and Habron, this all happened so that these cities would be subject to the oracles of the Lord instead of their subjection to the law of sin, to evil kings[45].

Unless those carnal wars (of the Old Testament) were a symbol of spiritual wars, I do not think that the Jewish historical books would ever have been passed down by the apostles to be read by Christ's followers in their churches... Thus, the apostle, being aware that physical wars have become personal battles of the soul against spiritual adversaries, gives orders to the soldiers of Christ like a military commander when he says, "Put on the armor of God so as to be able to hold your ground against the wiles of the devil" (Eph. 6:11)[46].

45 In Jos. hom. 13:1.
46 In Jos. hom. 15:1.

JEWISH ALLEGORIES

Origen's free and independent methods of study had the unexpected result of putting him in touch with Jewish publications comparable with the words of the outstanding philologists of Alexandria[47].

The Jewish allegories had little influence on Origen. His work on Philo, however, shows some traces of them, but we should remember that his interest lay in Philo's system of thought rather than in his exegesis. With his Christian viewpoint he found Jewish allegories cold and lifeless. They lacked what the emerging Christian exegesis possessed, something that would have imparted to them the warmth of life. They needed a view of the Bible as a whole, a general system of interpretation, an ideal that would rouse the ancient texts from slumber, an inspiration that would given them a new sense of authority in the consciousness of a long-cherished hope at last realized[48].

He became a sincere admirer of the rabbinical custom of comparing different biblical passages with one another and, wherever possible, of establishing connections between them. This was merely one of a number of the exegetical methods in use among the Jews. Origen drilled himself in the application of it, and it later became the principal instrument of Christian exegesis[49].

JEWISH PASCH AND CHRISTIAN PASCHA

Origen's fullest treatment of the Pascha, next to his treatise *On the Pascha*, is found in His *Commentary on John* 10:13-19, *Homilies on Exodus* 5:2; 7:4; *Homilies on Numbers* 23:6; *Homilies on Jeremiah* 19:13, and *Against Celsus* 8:22.

---

47 R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder, 1944, p. 43.
48 R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder, 1944, p. 46.
49 R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder, 1944, p. 47.

In his *Commentary on John* he finds the spiritual meaning of the Old Testament descriptions of the Exodus and prescriptions of the Pascha. Eating the whole of the roasted lamb, for example, means understanding the Scriptures and all of creation under the influence of the Spirit, while the unleavened bread symbolizes the Christian's repentance and salutary trials. These exercises prepare one to receive the manna, which he explains elsewhere[50] as the Word of God incarnate and immolated as our paschal victim. The three foods given successively in the course of the Exodus - the lamb, the unleavened bread, and the manna - represent three phases of the spiritual life, but it is not said that they follow one another in that order[51]. He frequently says that the spiritual nourishment is to be taken in the form that suits one's degree of advancement in the spiritual life[52].

THE MEANING OF THE PASSOVER

Now this should be enough comment on the mere name to teach us the meaning that comes from the word phas (fas) and to warn us against rashly attempting to interpret things written in Hebrew without first knowing the Hebrew meaning. We come now to an examination of the text itself, knowing that the Passover (Pascha) means passage[53].

KIND OF PASCHAS

Origen refers to three kind of Paschas:

I. The historical Pascha of the Old Testament.

II. The Pascha as celebrated by the Church.

III. The heavenly Pascha: "*Raising our minds to the third Pascha, which will be celebrated among myriads of angels in the most perfect festivity (cf. Heb. 12:22) and with the happiest exodus, is not necessary at the same time, especially since we*

50 Homilies on Exodus 7:4.

51 Raniero Cantalamessa: Easter in the Early Church, The Liturgical Press, Minnesota, p. 151.

52 Raniero Cantalamessa: Easter in the Early Church, The Liturgical Press, Minnesota, p. 152.

53 Peri Pascha 2 (Translated by Robert J. Daly - ACW).

have spoken more fully and lengthily than the text required[54]."

For the Christian Pasch is a yearly and daily feast; it is celebrated both at Easter time as a memorial of Christ's death and resurrection, and at all times by feasting with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth and the bitter herbs of sorrow and repentance[55].

For Origen, the Pasch means Christ, our Passover Lamb, the Eucharist, and study of the Divine Word, but for Philo, it represents the journey of the soul from the body and its passions[56].

THE PASSOVER (EXEGESIS OF EXODUS 12)

1. First month of the year.

But when Christ came not to abolish the law or the prophets but to fulfill them (Matt. 5.17), he showed us what the true Passover is, the true "passage" out of Egypt. And for the one in the passage, the beginning of the months is when the month of passing over out of Egypt comes around, which is also the beginning of another birth for him - for a new way of life begins for the one who leaves behind the darkness and comes to the light (John 3:20-21) - to speak in a manner proper to the sacrament through water given those who have hoped in Christ, which is called the washing of regeneration (Titus 3:5). For what does rebirth signify if not the beginning of another birth?[57]

2. This month is for you the beginning of months.

It is clear that it is not for the whole people that the

---

54 Comm. on John 10:18:111.
55 Frances M. Young: The Use of Sacrificial Ideas in Greek Christian Writers from the New Testament to John Chrysostom, Philadelphia 1979, p. 155.
56 Frances M. Young: The Use of Sacrificial Ideas in Greek Christian Writers from the New Testament to John Chrysostom, Philadelphia 1979, p. 122.
57 Peri Pascha 4 (Translated by Robert J. Daly - ACW).

month was then the beginning of months, but only for Moses and Aaron to whom it was spoken...

For the fact that the perfect man has the beginning of another birth and becomes other than what he was, this is what the Apostle is teaching us when he says: The old man in us was crucified with Christ (Rom. 6:6), and again: If we have died with Him we shall also live with Him (2 Tim. 2:11; cf. Gal. 2:19), and then speaking boldly of himself: It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me (Gal. 2:20)[58].

3. Receiving Christ in our senses.

When one has taken the true Lamb, that is, Christ, one does not immediately sacrifice and eat Him but after an interval of five days from His taking. For when someone hears about Christ and believes in Him he has taken Christ, but he does not sacrifice or eat Him before five days have gone by (cf. Exod. 12:3,6). For since there are five senses in the human being, unless Christ comes to each of them, He cannot be sacrificed and after being roasted, be eaten. For it is when he made clay with His spittle and anointed our eyes (John 9:6-7) and made us see clearly (Mark 8:25), when He opened the ears (cf. Mark 7:33-35) of our heart so that having ears we can hear (cf. Matt. 11:15; 13:19), when we smell His good odor (cf. Eph. 5:2; 2 Cor. 1:15), recognizing that His name is a perfume poured out (Cant. 1:3; cf. Phil. 2:7), and if, having tasted, we see how good the Lord is (cf. 1 Peter 2:3; Ps. 34[33]:8), and if we touch Him with the touch of which John speaks: That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes and touched with our hands concerning the word of life (1 John 1:1), then it is that we will be able to sacrifice the Lamb and eat it and thus come out of Egypt[59].

---

58 Peri Pascha 6 (Translated by Robert J. Daly - ACW).
59 Peri Pascha 18,19 (Translated by Robert J. Daly - ACW).

4. On the fourteenth day of the month, between the two evenings.

For the lamb was sacrificed on the fourteenth day of the month, between the two evenings, when, beginning with the fifteenth day, the sphere of the moon reaches its fullest plenitude in the opinion of the experts. And for our part, unless the perfect, true Light (cf. John 1:9) rises over us and we see how it perfectly illumines our guiding intellect, we will not be able to sacrifice and eat the true Lamb[60].

In his Homilies on Genesis, Origen says, "*Since the paschal Law prescribes that the lamb should be eaten in the evening, the Savior suffered in the evening of the world, so that you might always eat the flesh of the Word, you who live always in the evening until the morning shall come*[61]."

5. A lamb without blemish, a male, and a year old.

A lamb without blemish, a male, a year old. For Christ is a perfect being, since there is nothing lacking or deficient in Him. Male indicated his firmness and courage. And it is said to be a year old because the year signifies a completed number since the sun returns to its own place after an interval of twelve months[62].

6. The whole assembly of the sons of Israel shall kill it towards evening.

It is towards evening (cf. Exod. 12:6b) that we are ordered to kill the lamb, since it is at the last hour (1 John 2:18) that the true Lamb, the Savior, has come into the world

---

60 Peri Pascha 20-21 (Translated by Robert J. Daly - ACW).
61 In Genesis 10:3.
62 Peri Pascha 22, 23 (Translated by Robert J. Daly - ACW).

(cf. John 1:9)[63].

7. The application of blood to the houses.

The application of blood to the houses which we sacrifice, and which we anoint with blood, our houses, which is to say, our bodies, which anointing is the faith we have in Him, by which faith we have confidence in the destruction of the power of the destroyer (cf. Exod. 12:23)[64].

8. Eat the flesh roasted with fire

To eat the lamb roasted with fire means to feed upon God's word once the preacher has interpreted it with the assistance of the fire par excellence, the Holy Spirit. To eat the lamb raw means attempting to feed on the word when it has been presented with the inadequate literal interpretation of the Jews. To eat the lamb boiled in water means attempting to feed on the word when it has been misinterpreted by heretics, who contaminate the word with their own non-biblical doctrines, much as boiled meat is mixed with water, a substance foreign to it[65].

Therefore the Holy Spirit is rightly called fire, which it is necessary for us to receive in order to have converse with the flesh of Christ, I mean the divine Scriptures, so that, when we have roasted them with this divine fire, we may eat them roasted with fire. For the words are changed by such fire, and we will see that they are sweet and nourishing[66].

9. Not raw or boiled with water.

We are commanded not to cook the flesh of the Savior, that is, the word Scripture, with such a water, and not to mix with the words of Scripture another material which could water it down in the cooking, but to partake of it by cooking it with fire alone, that is, with the divine Spirit,

63 Peri Pascha 25 (Translated by Robert J. Daly - ACW).
64 Peri Pascha 25 (Translated by Robert J. Daly - ACW).
65 J.W. Trigg: Origen, SCM, p. 190.
66 Peri Pascha 26-27 (Translated by Robert J. Daly - ACW).

and not eat it raw or cooked with water[67].

10. The head with the feet and the entrails.

...some partake of its head, others of its hands, others of its breast, others also of its entrails, still others of its thighs, and some even of its feet, where this is not much flesh, each partaking of it according to his own capacity. Thus it is that we partake of a part of the true Lamb according to our capacity to partake of the Word of God. There are some who partake of the head and, if you wish, of each part of the head, for example, of the ears so that, having ears, they can hear his words (cf. Matt. 11:15; 13:9, 43). Those who taste of the eyes will see clearly (cf. Ps 34 [33]:9; Heb. 6:4-5) lest you dash your foot against a stone (cf. Ps 91[90]:12; Jer. 13:16; Matt. 4:6; Luke 4:11). Those who taste the hands are the workers (cf. John 9:4) who no longer have drooping hands (Heb. 12:12) which are closed against giving (cf. Sir. 4:31), the ones who accept correction before the Lord become angry with them (cf. Ps. 2:11). Others, resting on its breast (cf. John 13:25), will even recognize from this food who the betrayers of Christ are (cf. John 13:21-26). The studious who eat of the entrails will see even to the depths of God - for the entrails have a certain harmony of twists and turns and they also make for the body everything needed for life; and such function of one initiated in the mysteries - or rather they see the hidden ratio of the Incarnation situated as it were in the middle, at least if we take the head to be the divinity...

Varied indeed is the food of those who eat the Passover, but they are all one (cf. Acts 2:44); even he who eats the head is one with whoever eats the feet, since the

---

67 Peri Pascha 28 (Translated by Robert J. Daly - ACW).

head cannot say to the feet: "I have no need of you." For the members eaten are many but the body of Christ is one (1 Cor. 12:20-21). Let us preserve, then, as well as possible the harmony of the members in order not to incur the reproach of dividing the members of Christ (1 Cor. 6:15)[68].

11. Leave nothing until morning

Just as the mysteries of the Passover which are celebrated in the Old Testament are superseded by the truth of the New Testament, so too will the mysteries of the New Testament, which we must now celebrate in the same way, not be necessary in the resurrection, a time which is signified by the morning in which nothing will be left, and what does remain of it will be burned with fire[69].

12. You shall break no bone of it.

The words becoming His bones, the flesh becoming the meaning from the text, following which meaning, as it were, we see in a mirror dimly (1 Cor. 13:12) the things which are to come, and the blood being faith in the Gospel of the new covenant (cf. 1 Cor. 11:25; Luke 22:20)[70].

13. Your loins girded.

We are ordered, when we eat the Passover, to be pure of bodily sexual union, for this is what the girding of the loins means. Thus Scripture teaches us to bind up the bodily source of seed and to repress inclinations to sexual relations when we partake of the flesh of Christ[71].

14. Sandals on your feet.

It is that the flesh itself also goes out with us as we

---

68 Peri Pascha 30-32 (Translated by Robert J. Daly - ACW).
69 Peri Pascha 32 (Translated by Robert J. Daly - ACW).
70 Peri Pascha 33 (Translated by Robert J. Daly - ACW).
71 Peri Pascha 35-36 (Translated by Robert J. Daly - ACW).

depart from Egypt. For we must put to death what is earthly in us: immortality, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, and so forth (cf. Col. 3:5; Gal. 5:19-20) and thus depart from Egypt[72].

15. Your staff in your hand

They should henceforth also have staffs in their hands (cf. Exod. 12:11) as ones who are to share henceforth in the task of training, because the staff is a symbol of training. For he who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him, as we have read in Proverbs (Prov. 13:24)[73].

V V V

72 Peri Pascha 37-38 (Translated by Robert J. Daly - ACW).
73 Peri Pascha 38-39 (Translated by Robert J. Daly - ACW).

18

MARTYRDOM

All through his life, Origen's thoughts ran on Martyrdom. He was a martyr by race; yearned in his youth to be martyred with his father Leonides. The exaltation of martyrdom was the core of Origen's training in the Christian life, and cornerstone of his teaching.

When he received the School of Alexandria, Origen courageously assisted many of his students who were martyred, and he assisted them in their last moments[1]. He considered himself that he was called to the task of ***preparing Christians for martyrdom***. He prepared not only the hearts of believers but also those of the catechumens to receive martyrdom joyfully. He breathed his own spirit into them. He visited them in prison, acted as their advocate, and gave them the brotherly kiss in open court.

Every person who came to him for instruction in the faith was liable to the penalties of the law. Liable also were his more advanced pupils who had submitted to baptism in spite of the imperial edict against it. But in the eyes of the law the born Christian who lived by his faith was not as much a criminal as the Christian who made converts of others, and it is probable that Origen owed his immunity to the tolerance of the local administration at Alexandria[2]. It is probable that the edict of Severus, which was directed against converts only, did not touch him, and that so long as he abstained from formal defiance he was personally safe[3]."

While he was old, he recorded his feelings concerning a persecution occurred at Alexandria from about forty years. In his *Homilies on Jeremiah* he describes the glorious persecuted Church

1 New Catholic Encyclopedia, article: Origen and Origenism.
2 R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder, 1944, p. 15.
3 Charles Bigg: The Christian Platonists of Alexandria, Oxford 1913, p. 153.

of Alexandria.

This happened when man (a Christian) was a true believer. In courage he used to go to the church to be martyred.

We usually returned from the cemetery, in companion with the bodies of the saints, to our meetings, where the church in steadfast assembles.

The catechumens heard sermons amongst martyrdom. They overcame suffering, and confessed the Living God without fear.

Truly we behold marvelous and heroic deeds!

The believers were little in number, but they are believers in truth, they had progress in the straight and narrow way which leads to life[4].

EXHORTATION TO MARTYRDOM (*Exhortatio ad Martyrium*)[5]

During the persecution of Maximinus[6], he wrote the *Exhortation to Martyrdom*, has the same message of his letter to his father while he was a child, with the amplifications that seemed necessary to the mature man. He wrote it in Caesarea of Palestine in 235 A.D, to Ambrose and Protocotius the priest of Caesarea, who were cast in prison. He declares martyrdom as his sweet desire that his soul demanded.

Origen stands with St. Ignatius of Antioch by reason of his desire for martyrdom, and with St. Clement of Alexandria because he taught that martyrdom was the perfection of love. He regarded it as one of the proofs of the truth of Christianity, not merely because it showed that Christians were capable of dying for their faith - other people die too, for their country or their ideas - but because in the

4 In Jer. hom. 4:3.

5 Origen: Prayer, Exhortation To Martyrdom, Translated and Annotated by John J. O'Meara (ACW); Quasten, vol. 3,p. 69ff.

6 Maximin was proclaimed emperor at Mainz in 235 A.D. He remained in Germany till winter of that year.

Christian martyrs contempt for death was a sign that they had already defeated the powers of evil that use death as their instrument of torture (I Cor. 15:55). Martyrdom brought the resurrection, in a way, into the present as a living reality; the martyrs' charismata, impassability in particular, were a sort of foretaste of the resurrection. Martyrdom was thus a continuation of the work of redemption.

Apart from the fact that this treatise is of great historical value as a first-class source for the persecution of Maximinus, it remains an important document of Origen's own conviction and courage, his faith and his religious loyalty. It reveals the hopes and fears of the Egyptian Christians in the first half of the third century[7].

This work shows that he had lost nothing of his enthusiasm. However, in chapters 45 and 46, he mentions, not without purpose, that this desire for martyrdom was not shared by all. There were some who regarded it as a matter of indifference if a Christian sacrificed to the demons or directed his invocation to God under another name than the correct one. There were others who thought it no crime to agree to the sacrifice which the pagan authorities demanded, since it would be enough "to believe in your heart." It was for such circles that Origen wrote his treatise.

ITS CONTENTS

This work may be divided into five parts:

a. Exhortation to martyrdom:

It is a short work of great vigor and immense assurance. He is like someone standing at the elbow of Ambrosius, saying: "The time has come. Put away all other thoughts. There is need for martyrdom." Origen regards martyrdom as the most holy profession of the Christian. By martyrdom the Christian shows with his whole soul the desire to be united with God. It is best to die righteously,

7 Origen: Prayer, Exhortation To Martyrdom, Translated and Annotated by John J. O'Meara (ACW),p. 11-12.

best to depart from life with the single purpose of entering the kingdom of Heaven: all other purposes are meaningless in comparison with this. He believes the martyrs received a special and greater fullness of beatitude than any holy men, they were the elect of God, sitting by God's side on the Throne of Judgment, and therefore themselves beyond judgment; and their blood has the power to obtain remission of sins for others. All through the book there breathes the quiet assurance in the supreme validity of the martyr[8].

Origen asks: What greater joy there can be than the act of martyrdom? A great multitude is assembled to watch the last hours of the martyr. And let each of us remember how many times we have been in danger of an ordinary death, and then let us ask ourselves whether we have not been preserved for something better, for the baptism in blood which washes away our sins and allows us to take our place at the heavenly altar together with all the companions of our warfare[9].

Have faith, have courage, above all prepare yourselves for the blessedness of martyrdom. "*We are the sons of a patient God, the brothers of a patient Christ, let us show ourselves patient in all that befalls us*[10]." And the best that can befall us is a martyr's death[11].

* Remaining steadfast in tribulation, because after a short time of suffering our reward will be eternal (Chs. 1-2).

* Martyrdom is a duty of every true Christian because all who love God wish to be united with Him (Chs. 3-4).

* Only those can enter eternal happiness who courageously confess the faith (ch. 5).

b. Warning against apostasy and idolatry:

* To deny the true God and to venerate false gods is the

8 Robert Payne: Fathers Of The Eastern Church, Dorset Press, New York, 1985, P. 63-4.
9 De Martyr., 39.
10 De Martyr., 43.
11 Robert Payne: Fathers Of The Eastern Church, Dorset Press, New York, 1985, P. 65.

greatest sin (ch. 6), because it is senseless to adore creatures instead of the Creator (ch. 7). God intends to save souls from idolatry (Chs. 8-9).

* Those who commit this crime enter into a union with the idols and will be punished severely after death (ch. 10).

c. Carrying one's cross with Christ in perseverance:

* The real exhortation to martyrdom (ch. 11).

* Only those will be saved who take the cross upon themselves with Christ (Chs. I2-I3).

* The reward will be greater in proportion to the earthly possessions left behind (ch. 14-I6).

* Since we renounced the pagan deities when we were catechumens, we are not permitted to break our promise (ch. I7).

* The conduct of the martyrs will be judged by the whole world (ch. I8).

* We must take every kind of martyrdom upon ourselves in order not to be numbered with the fallen angels (Chs. I9-2I).

d. Scriptural examples of perseverance and endurance:

* Eleazar (ch. 22) and the seven sons with their heroic mother of which the second Book of the Maccabees reports (ch. 23-27).

e. The necessity, the essence and the kinds of martyrdom:

***** The Christians are obliged to suffer such a death in order to repay God for all the benefits He bestowed upon them (Chs. 28-29).

* Serious sins committed after the reception of the baptism of water can only be forgiven by the baptism of blood (ch. 30).

* The souls of those who withstand all temptations of the evil one (ch. 32) and give their lives for God as a pure oblation, not only enter eternal bliss (ch. 3I) but can procure forgiveness for all whom they pray (ch. 30).

* As God extended His help to the three youths in the fiery furnace and to Daniel in the lions' den, so His support will not be

lacking to the martyrs (ch. 33).

* Not only God the Father, Christ, too, demands this sacrifice. If we deny Him, He will deny us in heaven (Chs. 34-35).

* He will lead the confessors of the faith to Paradise (ch. 36) because only those who hate the world shall be heirs of the kingdom of heaven (Chs. 37, 39).

* They will bestow blessing on their children, whom they have left behind here on earth (ch. 38).

* Whosoever denies the Son, denies God the Father also (ch. 40); but if we follow the example of Christ and offer our life-for the kingdom of God, His consolation will be with us (ch 3. 41-42). For this reason the Christians are urged to be ready for martyrdom (ch. 43-44).

* Chapters 45 and 46 deal with a side issue, the veneration of the demons and the question with what name to invoke God. The last part of the essay summarizes the exhortations and admonitions for courage perseverance, emphasizing the duty of every Christian to stand the test in times of persecution (Chs. 47-49).

MARTYRDOM ACCORDING TO ORIGEN AND ST. CLEMENT

St. Clement attacks those who rashly incite the rulers, statesmen and soldiers to persecute them. He clarifies that the true Christian does not fear death, but he must not be in a rush asking for his death. It is not a martyrdom but committing a kind of suicide, against God[12]. He looks like the Indian ascetics who throw themselves in fire[13]. For St. Clement, martyrdom is a daily experience, a good witness to Christ by words and work and by all man's life[14].

Origen, on the contrary to St. Clement, asks believers to seek for martyrdom as a precious chance for the soul to attain freedom and for the church to be glorified. Origen always desired mar-

12 Strom. 4:10:76,77.
13 Ibid., 4:14:17,18.
14 Stromata 4:14; 2:104.

tyrdom and constantly made clear, in his *Exhortation to Martyrdom* as well as in his homilies, the esteem in which he held this crowning testimony to our belonging to Christ. However, he is far from being a fanatic about it.

MARTYRDOM ACCORDING TO ORIGEN AND TERTULLIAN

Tertullian, when a Montanist, refuses in *his De Fuga* any kind of flight from persecution, but the Alexandrian in his *Commentary on John*[15] not only condemns any courting of martyrdom but also makes it a Christian duty to escape confrontation with the authorities, if this can be done without recantation: and he enjoins this in the name of the charity a Christian ought to show to the enemies of his faith, for it saves them from committing a crime[16].

Tertullian and Origen exhort believers to martyrdom, but everyone of them has his own view. Fr. Gregory Dix states that Tertullian concentrates on the resurrection of the body and delivering it from the eternal punishments, while Origen concentrates on the freedom of the soul and her progress through her learning by the Logos, so that she may be risen with Him.

While Tertullian looks to martyrdom as a way for the glorification of our risen body, Origen looks to it as a royal way through which Jesus Christ, the Logos, the Educator of the soul enters with her into the bosom of the Father, and there He reveals to her the divine mysteries. For Origen revealing the mysteries or attaining the true knowledge of God is the real eternal glory to the soul who becomes a friend of the Heavenly Father. Origen says,

Then you will know as friends of the Father and Teacher in heaven, since you have never before known face to face (cf. 1 Cor. 13:12). For friends learn not by enigmas, but by a form that is seen or by wisdom bare of words, symbols, and types; this will be possible when they attain to

15 28:23 (18)
16 Henri Crouzel: Origen, Harper & Row, 1989, p. 53.

the nature of intelligible things and to the beauty of truth. If, then, you believe that Paul was caught up to the third heaven and was caught up into Paradise and heard things that cannot be told, which man may not utter (2 Cor. 12:2,4), you will consequently realize that you will presently know more and greater things than the unspeakable words then revealed to Paul, after which he came down from the third heaven. But you will not come down if you take up the cross and follow Jesus, whom we have as a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens (cf. Heb. 4:14). And if you do not shrink from what following Him means, you will pass through the heavens, climbing above not only earth and earth's mysteries but also above the heavens and their mysteries[17]*."*

ORIGEN'S LONGING FOR MARTYRDOM

Martyrdom seemed to Origen to be a means of attaining the perfect purity which even personal holiness was unable to give; it was the final preparation for the right to stand on the heavenly altar. This was the view of martyrdom that he wished every member of the Christian to have. The church without martyrs, he used to say, is as desolate as a Jerusalem without victims for the sacrifice in the temple[18].

CONCEPTS OF MARTYRDOM

1. Origen believes that ***Christ Himself, the Lord of the martyrs, is the true Martyr who works in the lives of His believers***. He lived in more than one epoch of martyrdom, declaring that Christ allows the martyr to suffer, and He Himself suffers in His martyrs; He grants the martyr the victory and the crown and He accepts this crown in him[19]. He understands that the absolute loyalty of the Christian martyr holds a persuasive power to bring pa-

17 An Exhortation to Martyrdom, 13.
18 R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder, 1944, p. 16.
19 In Ioan, hom. 14;17.

gans to the vision of the truth[20].

2. Martyrdom is ***the work of every true Christian***, who desires to be united with God, and to struggle for His righteousness.

I beseech you to remember in all your present contest the great reward laid up in heaven for those who are persecuted and reviled for righteousness' sake, and to be glad and leap for joy on account of the Son of Man (cf. Matt. 5:10-12; Luke 6:23), just as the apostles once rejoiced when they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for His name (cf. Acts 5:41). And if you should ever perceive your soul drawing back, let the mind of Christ, which is in us (cf. Phil. 2:5), say to her, when her wishes to trouble that mind as much as she can, "Why are you sorrowful, my soul, and why do you disquiet me? Hope in God, for I shall yet give Him thanks" (Ps. 42:11). I pray that our souls may never be disquieted, and even more that in the presence of the tribunals and of the naked swords drawn against our necks they may be guarded by the peace of God, which passes all understanding (cf. Phil. 4:7), and may be quieted when they consider that those who are foreigners from the body are at home with the Lord of all (cf. 2 Cor. 5:8)[21].

I think that just as he who joins himself to a prostitute becomes one body with her (1 Cor. 6:16), so the one who confesses some god, especially in the time when faith is being tried and tested, is mingled and united with the god he confesses. And when he is denied by his own denial, which like a sword cuts him off from the One he denies, he suffers amputation by being separated from the One he denies[22].

Martyrs are lovers of God, who express their love by sacri-

20 Rowan A. Greer: Origen, Paulist Press, 1979, page 5.
21 An Exhortation to Martyrdom,, 4.
22 Ibid., 8.

ficing every earthly pleasure on behalf of their dwelling with God in His glory, they sacrifice even their temporal life. The opening lines of his *Exhortation to Martyrdom* give us an echo of the exaltation which lifted up his mind and his heart in those days of martyrdom.

3. Martyrdom is necessary for our salvation. It is ***a participation with Christ in His crucifixion***, and a practice of the evangelic life.

> *Among our agreements with God was the entire citizenship of the Gospel, which says, "If anyone would come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever would save his soul would lose it, and whoever loses his soul for My sake will save it" (Matt. 16:24-25). And we often come more alive when we hear, "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what ransom shall a man give in return for his soul? For the Son of Man is to come with His angels in the glory of His Father, and then He will repay everyone for what he has done" (Matt. 16:26-27)...*
>
> *Long ago, therefore, we ought to have denied ourselves and said, "It is no longer I who live" (Gal. 2:20). Now let it be seen whether we have taken up our own crosses and followed Jesus; this happens if Christ lives in us. If we wish to save our soul in order to get it back better than a soul, let us lose it by our martyrdom*[23].

4. True Christians suffer persecution for the sake of Christ as ***a sign of their sincere love***. They respond to His love by their practical love.

> *We can also learn from this what martyrdom is like and how much confidence toward God it produces. Since a saint is generous and wishes to respond to the benefits that have overtaken him from God, he searches out what he can do for the Lord in return for everything he has obtained*

23 Ibid., 12.

from Him. And he finds that nothing else can be given to God from a person of high purpose that will so balance his benefits as perfection in martyrdom[24].

5. Martyrdom is ***a precious death***, which is granted to those who are elected by our Savior.

Clearly "the cup of salvation" in Psalms is the death of the martyrs. That is why the verse "I will take the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord" is followed by "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints" (Ps. 116:13, 15). Therefore, death comes to us as "precious" if we are God's saints and worthy of dying not the common death, if I may call it that, but a special kind of death, Christian, religious, and holy[25].

6. Through martyrdom we become ***brothers of the apostles*** and are numbered with them.

The following exhortation to martyrdom, found in Matthew, was spoken to no others but "twelve." We, too, should hear it, since by hearing it we shall be brothers of the apostles who heard it and shall be numbered with the apostles. This is the passage: "Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear Him who can destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matt. 10:28)...

And notice that this commandment is given not to Jesus' servants but to His friends (cf. John 15:15), "Do not fear those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do" (Luke 12:4)[26].

7. Martyrdom is ***the way of eternal glory***.

Who would ponder these considerations and not utter the apostolic cry: "The sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us!" (Rom. 8:18). For how can the confession

---

24 Ibid., 28.
25 Ibid., 29.
26 Ibid., 34.

before the Father fail to be much greater than the confession before men? And how can the confession made in heaven by the One who had been confessed fail to exceed in the highest degree the confession made by the martyrs on earth of the Son of God[27]?

God once said to Abraham: "Go forth out of your country." Soon perhaps we shall hear it said to us: "Go forth out of every country." It would be well if we were to obey, and come to see in the heavens the place which is known as "the kingdom of the heavens[28]."

8. Martyrdom is ***a baptism of blood***, and a source of forgiveness of sins. He mentions the idea that one's own sins could be washed by Baptism in blood[29], and the virtue of the martyr's death was still considered to atone not merely for oneself but for many[30].

Let us each remember how many times he has been in danger of dying an ordinary death, and let us consider that perhaps we have been preserved so that baptized with our own blood and washed of every sin we may pass our existence with our fellow contestants near the altar in heaven (cf. Rev. 6:9)[31].

9. Origen in his work "*Exhortation to Martyrdom*" explains that by martyrdom, a believer can offer himself as ***a true priest in sacrifice to God***, for "*Just as Jesus redeemed us by His precious blood, so by the precious blood of the martyrs others may also be redeemed. Martyrdom is "a golden work," "the cup of salvation.*" The martyr offers himself to God as a sacrifice, as a priest, in union with the sacrifice of Christ: he offers, with himself, all that he has on earth, fortune, family, children[32].

10. Early Christians believed that Christ, by triumphing

27 Ibid., 35.
28 De Martyr., 51.
29 Exhort. Mart. 30.
30 Exhort. Mart. 30.
31 Ibid., 39.
32 Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989.

over death on the Cross, broke Satan's most effective weapon, the fear of death[33]. According to Origen, the martyr ***joins Christ in warfare against the devil*** and his hosts[34]. This idea of imitating Christ in fact dominates Christian literature on martyrdom, and it becomes determinative of the ideas expressed[35].

A martyr is a wrestler, an athlete, and his martyrdom is a fight, in an arena, at grips with the diabolical powers which want to make him sacrifice to idols in order to recover their strength in his defeat: he is encompassed with heavenly witnesses who await his triumph, for his victory defeats the principalities and powers of the demonic world. This fight is a test, showing whether the Christian has built his house on the rock or on the sand, whether the seed of the word has in him fallen upon good ground or on stony ground where it cannot take root[36].

The martyr especially is regarded as continuing what Christ achieved when he mastered death and the devil and gave the human race its freedom. He "*despoils the principalities and powers with Christ and triumphs with Him, because he shares in His sufferings and in the victories springing from them*[37]." That is what crushes the devil's power[38]. The evil spirits are well aware of the blessings martyrdom brings to Christians; they dread it so much that they strive to slow down persecution[39].

> *For it is likely that the nature of things allows, in a mysterious manner that most people cannot understand. The possibility that the voluntary death of one righteous man for the community will avert by expiation evil demons who cause plagues or famines or tempests at sea etc.* [40].

---

33 J. W. Trigg: Origen, p. 20.
34 Exhort. Mart. 42.
35 St. Gregory of Nyssa: PG 46:781; St. Gregory Nazianzen: De Oratione 4:67-71; 5:6,24ff.; Frances M. Young: The Use of Sacrificial Ideas in Greek Christian Writers from the New Testament to John Chrysostom, Philadelphia 1979, p. 110.
36 Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989.
37 Exhort. Mart. 41.
38 Comm. on John 6:54.
39 Contra Celsus 8:44; Jean Daniélou: Origen, p. 273..
40 Contra Celsus 1:31.

We must regard the blood of the holy martyrs as freeing us from harmful powers; their endurance, for example, and their confession even unto death, and their zeal for religion serve to blunt the edge of the plots the powers lay against a man in his sufferings... Such is the kind of service that the death of the most pious martyrs must be understood to do, many people receiving benefits from their death by an efficacy that we cannot explain[41].

It is worthy to note that Origen in his "*Exhortation to Martyrdom*" does not mention a single example of the philosophers who received sufferings and death in courage for the sake of their own beliefs, as St. Clement does. He gives examples from the Old and New Testaments. Origen desires to declare the relationship between martyrdom and the sacrifice of the Cross.

11. Martyrdom, for Origen, is the ultimate test of the Christian's willingness to prefer spiritual to corporeal realities.

I think that they love God with all their soul who with a great desire to be in union with God, ***withdraw and separate their souls not only from the earthly body but also from every material thing that can keep them from God.*** *Such men accept the putting away of the body of humiliation without distress or emotion when the time comes for them to put off the body of death by what is commonly regarded as death.*

12. According to Origen, the best rational sacrifice is martyrdom, then virginity, then refraining from pride, avarice, lying etc. [42]

13. Commenting on Psalm, he wrote that we must offer a sacrifice of denying our own wisdom. It is a kind of martyrdom.

There is within us a mentality which we must destroy, to the end that thus it may become a sacrifice to

41 Comm. on John 6:53 on 1:29.

42 Comm. on Rom. 9:1; Frances M. Young: The Use of Sacrificial Ideas in Greek Christian Writers from the New Testament to John Chrysostom, Philadelphia 1979, p.

God[43].

MARTYRDOM AND EVANGELISM

In the same way the martyrs bear witness for a testimony to the unbelieving, "and so do all the saints whose deeds shine before men. They spend their lives rejoicing in the Cross of Christ and bearing witness to the true Light[44].

Martyrs encourage believers and catechumens to witness to Christ without fear.

When the Christians came back from the cemeteries after bearing the bodies of the holy martyrs to their burial and assembled in the church for prayer, we used to see the evidence of their holiness. The whole Christian body was there, and no member of the flock showed fear. The catechumens learned a lesson in those assemblies when they heard the report of what the holy martyrs had said to their judges and of the steadfastness with which they confessed the faith up to the moment of their death. I know Christian men and women who saw strange things happen in such assemblies, and even real miracles[45].

REWARDS OF MARTYRDOM

1. The martyr carries his cross with Christ renouncing his own life that Christ may live in him. He follows Christ in His sufferings, and then in His glory, seated at the right hand of the Father, for communion in the passion leads to communion in the triumph[46]. His reward is glorification with Christ and eternal union with Him[47]. The reward of martyrdom is, as all Christians believed, unspeakable joy, but for Origen that joy was distinctly intellectual:

---

43 In Ps., 2; PG 12:1109 .
44 Comm. on John 2:28; PG 14:89..
45 In Jer. hom. 4; R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder, 1944, p. 17.
46 Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989.
47 Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989.

Just as each of our members has some ability for which it is naturally fitted, the eyes to see visible things, and the ears to hear sounds, so the mind is for intelligible things and God who transcends them. Why, then, do we hesitate and doubt to put off the corruptible body that hinders of and weighs down the soul?... For then we may enjoy with Christ Jesus the rest which accompanies blessedness and contemplate Him in His wholeness, the living Word. Fed by Him and comprehending the manifold wisdom in Him,... we may have our minds enlightened by the true and unfailing light of knowledge..[48].

We are, therefore, led to believe that the powers of evil do suffer defeat by the death of the holy martyrs; as if their patience, their confession, even unto death, and their zeal for piety blunted the edge of the onset of evil powers against the sufferer, and their might being thus dulled and exhausted, many others of those whom they had conquered raised their heads and were set free from the weight with which the evil powers formerly oppressed and injured them[49].

In some such way must we suppose the death of the most holy martyrs to operate, many receiving benefit from it by an influence we cannot describe[50].

2. Origen looks to persecution as the Christian's cheerful lot, saying, "*We are only persecuted when God allows the tempter and gives him authority to persecute us... If it is His will that we should again wrestle and strive for our religion... we will say, 'I can do all things through Christ Jesus our Lord who strengthens me'*.[51]"

3. Origen is repeating that martyrs were not judged by God,

48 In Jos. hom. 8:2; J.W. Trigg: Origen, SCM, p.164.
49 Comm. on John, book 6:36
50 Comm. on John, book 6:36.
51 Contra Celsus 8:70.

but rather sat in judgment with Him[52].

He calls martyrdom a chalice, as is evident again from the words: "Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from Me. Nevertheless not as I will but as You will." And again we learn that he who drinks the chalice that Jesus drank ***will sit, reign, and judge beside the King of Kings[53]***.

4. Since the martyrs are victims offered by the Church, we can obtain through their intercession the remission of our sins[54]. These sacrifices of the Church are joined to the unique sacrifice of Christ. They offered their life as a sacrifice of love, which has its effect even on others. "*In some such way must we suppose the death of the most holy martyrs to operate, many receiving benefit from it by an influence we cannot describe*."

Frances M. Young says,

> The idea that the martyr's sacrifice is expiatory never entirely disappears, though it is related closely to the far more efficacious death of Christ which atoned for the sins of the whole world. In fact, the Jewish martyr tradition probably provided the earliest means of interpreting the death of Christ. However, once Christ crucified was considered the one and only sacrifice for the sins of the whole world, the persistence of belief in the atoning efficacy of a Christian's martyrdom is hard to explain unless the idea had already entered Christian thinking independently. The problem of obtaining forgiveness for post-baptismal sins, admittedly, ensured the continuance of the idea that one's own sins could be washed by the Baptism in blood, but the virtue of the martyr's death was still considered to atone

52 Cf. Hippolytus, In dan. 2.37; Tertullian, De res. carn. 43; Cyprian, Ad Fort. I3; Eusebius, H. E. 6.42.5 (quoting Dionysius of Alexandria); etc., Cf. J.P. Kirsch, The Doctrine of the Communion of Saints in the Ancient Church (London I9I0) 82.

53 Exhortation to Martyrdom, 28 (ACW).

54 R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder, 1944, p. 16.

not merely for oneself but for many[55].

Let us also remember our sins, and that without baptism it is impossible to obtain remission of sins (cf. Acts 2:38), and that according to the precepts of the Gospel one cannot be baptized a second time in water and the Spirit for the remission of sins, but that we are given the baptism of martyrdom... And you must consider if, just as the Savior's baptism of martyrdom cleanses the world from guilt, ours too may work for the healing of many by such cleansing. For as those who served at the altar set up by the Law of Moses were thought to procure through the blood of goats and bulls remission of sins for the people, so the souls of those "who have been beheaded for their testimony to Jesus" (Rev. 20:4) do not serve in vain at the altar in heaven but procure for them that pray remission of sins. We learn too that just as Jesus Christ the High Priest offered Himself as a sacrifice, so the priests, whose High Priest He is, offer themselves as a sacrifice (Heb. 5,7,8,10), for which reason they are seen at their rightful place - the altar. But while some of the priests were without blemish and offered in their divine service sacrifices that were without blemish, others were sullied with such blemishes as Moses listed in "Leviticus" (21:17ff) and were kept away from the altar. Who then is the priest without blemish, if not he who upholds the confession to the last and who fulfills in every detail what we mean by martyrdom?[56].

THE ARENA OF THE BATTLE

Origen comments on the destruction of Jericho's walls (Jos. 6), saying:

May we go to the war and attack the most dangerous city in the world, i.e., the evil.

---

55 Frances M. Young: The Use of Sacrificial Ideas in Greek Christian Writers from the New Testament to John Chrysostom, Philadelphia 1979, p. 110.

56 Martyrdom 30.

May we destroy the proud walls of the sin...

The battle in which you are involved is within you. There is the building of evil which must by destroyed.

May your enemy be kicked out from the depth of your heart![57]

MORTIFICATION AND MARTYRDOM

Mortification and martyrdom are one and the same thing. If a Christian fails to accustom himself to consider all human life as a testing wherein all his reserves of courage must ultimately be called into play, he is likely to find himself exposed to the danger of apostasy in his hour of trial[58].

Origen realized that the "burnt offering" in the Old Testament meant the highest offering of praise, not an offering of placation as in Greek religion; so his exposition of the Christian holocaust implies the same thing. The Christian's holocaust is himself, and he keeps the sacrifice burning on the altar by renouncing his possessions, taking up his Cross and following Christ; by giving his body to be burned, and following the glory of the martyr, having charity; by loving his brethren, and fighting for justice and truth, even unto world is crucified to him, and he to the world[59].

MARTYRDOM AS A VERSION SACRIFICE

Frances M. Young says,

The martyr's sacrifice has to be seen then in the context of this same duelist picture, and it would not be surprising to find that, like the death of the greatest martyr, Christ, his sacrifice should be interpreted as a means of averting the evil demons. Clement's use of the analogy with the death of patriotic pagan citizens to avert plague etc., suggests that this was the kind of terms in which the

57 In Jos. hom 5:5.

58 R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder, 1944, p. 16.

59 In Lev. hom. 9:9; Frances M. Young: The Use of Sacrificial Ideas in Greek Christian Writers from the New Testament to John Chrysostom, Philadelphia 1979, p. 131.

sacrifice could be understood. Origen's **Exhortation to Martyrdom** confirms this, which is hardly surprising, since we found he was the chief exponent of the aversion sacrifice as a means of understanding the atoning death of Christ. Origen exhorts his readers to persevere in the war against the demons, insisting that idolatry is the only alternative to martyrdom. He describes as the rewards of martyrdom, the attaining of sinlessness and the bliss of heaven. But he also describes the atoning value of the martyr's sacrifice, and sets before him the joy of imitating and participating in the sufferings of Christ. The work of the martyr in Christ in despoiling with him the principalities and powers and triumphing with him, by partaking in his sufferings and the great deeds accomplished in his sufferings. For "it may be that as we have been purchased by the precious blood of Jesus..., so some will be ransomed by the precious blood of martyrs..." The martyr's sacrifice is exactly analogous to the sacrifice of Christ and therefore to be interpreted as the same kind of sacrifice - that is, in the case of Origen, as a sacrifice offered as a ransom to avert the power of the evil one, as part of the warfare against the devil in which Christ had already won the ultimate victory. Like Christ, the martyr glorified God simply by his willing self-sacrifice to the cause of dealing with the sin and evil of the world[60].

V V V

60 Frances M. Young: The Use of Sacrificial Ideas in Greek Christian Writers from the New Testament to John Chrysostom, Philadelphia 1979, p. 228-229.

19

MARRIAGE AND VIRGINITY[1]

SANCTITY OF MARRIAGE

Origen, like his teacher St. Clement of Alexandria, defends the lawfulness of marriage against the Encratites[2] who are mostly the Marcionites and the Montanists[3]. He refers to them in the words of St. Paul in 1 Tim. 4:3 as attaching themselves to demonic doctrines[4]. Several times allusions were made to them as they forbid marriage and preach abstinence[5]. We read in Origen's writings against the Marcionites that nothing created by God is impure in itself, and that nothing can be defiled except by the evil thoughts and intentions of humans. They forbid marriage which is realized **by the providence of God**[6]. He also opposed their distinction of the Creator God of the Old Testament and God the Father of Christ, refuting their allegation that marriage and procreation are cooperation with the former[7].

---

1 See Fr. Metthias F. Wahba: The Doctrine of Sanctification in relation to marriage according to St. Athanasius, Ottawa, 1993, ch. II.; Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989.

2 Tatian, a former pupil of the apologist Justin, stood at the head of a long line of Christians who were called "Encratites" (the "Chaste Ones," from the Greek word enkrateia, meaning "chastity" or "self-control"). The Encratites interpreted the stories about Adam and Eve in the opening chapters of Genesis as an account of the fall of humanity from a pristine, Spirit-filled existence into the sinful, mortal condition now epitomized by human sexuality. Only by rejecting marital intercourse and procreation, the Encratites taught, could people be restored to their original, spiritual condition intended by God the Creator. (David G. Hunter: Marriage in the Early Church, Minneapolis, 1992, p13.)

3 H. Crouzel, Virginite et Marriage selon Origene, Paris, Desclee de Brower, 1963, pp. 132-134.

4 Com. in Rom., 1X.2; Com. on Matt., X1V.6, X11.27, in H. Crouzel, op. cit., p. 133.

5 De. Principiis., 11.7; Hom on Lev., X.2; Com. in Matt. Xv.4; Frag. on Rom, 5; in H. Crouzel, op. cit., p. 133.

6 Frag. on 1 Cor., XXX1V, XXXV11, edited by Jenkins in Journal of Theological Studies, 1X (1908), pp 500-514, mentioned by Crouzel, op. cit., p. 133.

7 Frag. on 1 Cor., XXX1V, XXXV11, edited by Jenkins in Journal of Theological Studies, 1X (1908), pp 500-514, mentioned by Crouzel, op. cit., p. 133.

Origen defends Christian marriage, as a type of unity of the Church with Christ.

> *Since God has joined them together (a man and a woman in marriage), for this reason there is a gift for those joined together by God. Paul knowing this declares that equally with the purity of the holy celibacy is* ***marriage according to the Word of God a gift****, saying, "But I would that all men were like myself; howbeit, each man has his own gift from God, one after this manner, and another after that" (1 Cor. 7:7). Those who are joined together by God obey in thought and deed the command "Husbands, love your wives,* ***as Christ also the Church****" Eph 5:25*[8]*.*

CONCEPT OF MARRIAGE

1. St. Clement speaks of marriage as co-operation among the couple, and leads to a kind of harmony[9]; Origen, his disciple, sees in marriage **a mutual giving**[10].

2. He urges that the true Christian has intercourse with his wife only **to have offspring**, and he cautions married people against having relations once the wife has conceived. Using Seneca's argument from the conduct of animals, he says, "*Some women serve lust without any restraint." indeed I would not compare them to dumb beasts; for beasts, when they conceive, know not to indulge their mates further with their plenty. Intercourse must be suspended until the woman can conceive again*[11]."

3. Marriage is **a safety valve for those who are not gifted with continence.**

---

8 Comm. Matt. 14:16 on 19:3-12.
9 Fr. Malaty: School of Alexandria, NJ. 1994, book 1,p. 265.
10 Origen, Hom. on Num. 24:.2, in H. Crouzel, Virginite et Marriage selon Origene, p. 105.
11 In Gen. 3:6; 5:4.

> *God has allowed us to marry wives, because not everyone is capable of the superior condition, which is to be absolutely pure*[12].
>
> *Do not think that just as the belly is made for food and food for the belly, that in the same way the body is made for intercourse. It was made that it should be a temple to the Lord. Adam had a body in Paradise, but in Paradise he did not know Eve*[13].

To live in marriage as a perfect Christian, with the reserve and self-control which conjugal love demands, in self-giving to the partner and the children and not in the desire to enjoy the other, is difficult for one who, like every other man, has to overcome the trend of a nature marked by selfishness. Marriage is a way of perfection that is far from easy and the grace of the sacrament is very necessary for that[14].

SECOND MARRIAGE[15]

Origen does not forbid absolutely second marriages after widowhood, for the apostle permitted them (1 Cor. 7:39-40). He even harshly blames the rigorists who exclude the remarried from the assemblies as if they were open sinners. But he is far from encouraging second marriages for the following reasons:

1. His argument depends on St. Paul's refusal to ordain those who remarried as clergymen. According to St. Paul (1 Tim. 3:1-2, 12; Tit 1:5-6), clergyman should be "the husband of one wife;" he cannot remarry if he is widowed and remarried men must not be ordained.

---

12 Against Celsus 8:55; Carl A. Volz: Life and Practice in the Early Church, Minneapolis, 1990, p. 78.

13 Frag. on 1 Cor., 29, in P. Brown, The Body and Society, p. 175.

14 Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989..

15 Origen, Hom. on Luc., XV:11, in H. Chadwick, Alexandrian Christianity, p.38.

2. To take a second wife is not in conformity with the primitive law of Gen. 2:24, for one cannot be one flesh with a second woman.

3. Origen sees no better reason for those who get remarried than inability to live continentally and to control one's instincts.

It is astonishing that Origen, like many other Fathers, never mentions any other motives for remarriage such as economic factors or the requirements of children's education. Marriages are presented only as an extreme concession to weakness: it is better to marry than to live in sin when one cannot put up with continence.

What about the multiple unions of the patriarchs, which were even simultaneous? They symbolize "mystical economies."

> *Paul wishes no one of those of the church, who has attained to any eminence beyond the many, as is attained in the administration of the sacraments, to make trial of a second marriage*[16].

Origen permits remarriage and even harshly blames the rigorists who excluded the remarried from the assemblies as if they were open sinners.

MARRIAGE AND THE FALL

Origen insists that marriage came into existence as a result of the Fall. He believes that human beings come into existence as angelic spirits that fall from beatitude into human bodies. Sexuality, then, is an unfortunate instrument of providing bodies for the fallen spirits[17]. St. Peter of Alexandria (c. 300-311 A.D), protested against Origen's opinion that the union of pre-existent souls with bodies was a consequence of their sin. He adds that the idea was a Greek doctrine, foreign to Christianity[18].

---

16 Comm. Matt. 14:22.
17 De Principiis, 1.5, 11.8.
18 J. Tixeront, History of Dogma, St. Louis, MO, B. Herder Book, 1930, vol. 1, pp. 391-392.

SEXUAL RELATIONS

Origen is one of the Christian authors who developed the idea of an impurity inherent in sexual relationships[19]. The only difference between the impurity of carnal conditions and that of sexual relations is one of intensity. As an ascetic and mystic, Origen was very sensitive to the danger of enjoyment of sexual relations[20]. The defilement of marriage can be overcome to a certain extent if the love of the spouses imitates that of Christ for the Church, and avoids all selfish passion[21]. Carnal love is only an abuse of the love which God has put in our hearts in order that we should love him[22]. Conjugal love, though carnal, must tend more and more toward the spiritual by the harmony between the spouses which would be disturbed by passion, a selfish love seeking the satisfaction of enjoyment, not the good of the partner[23].

Origen considers the physical pleasure of sexual bonding in marriage as a bland displacement of true feeling, a deflection of the spirit's capacity for delight into the dulled sensation of the body[24].

Several of Origen's writings point to an impurity in sexual relations, even through legitimate marriage. The child is impure at birth; this original impurity is transmitted by generation as linked to the sexual intercourse of the parents with the passion which accompanies it. Origen's idea to the impurity of even lawful sexual relations is derived from his interpretation of 1 Cor. 7:5; abstention from conjugal relations for the sake of prayer is temporary, to be sure, and agreed between them, but is understood as an annihilation[25].

---

19 H. Crouzel: Origen, p. 138.
20 Ibid., 139.
21 H. Crouzel: Marriage and Virginity, p. 59.
22 Comm. on Songs, Prol.
23 Ibid., 3.
24 Hom. on Cant. Cant. 2.9; P. Brown: The Body and Society, NY 1988, p. 173..
25 Frag. on 1 Cor. 7:5; H. Crouzel, Origen, pp. 138.

The idea is drawn also from his own understanding of passages of the Old Testament. The woman who has given birth is impure because of the flow of blood, whereas she was not impure during nine months as she was far from the sexual relationships which took place previously[26]. Elsewhere, Origen directs that the conjugal bedroom is not a convenient place for prayer, because "those who indulge in the pleasures of love are to some extent defiled and impure[27]." One cannot think of the Holy Spirit during the conjugal relation. Origen says, "Lawful marriages are not sinful; but at the time when the sex act is performed, the Holy Spirit will not be present, even if it were a prophet doing the act of generation[28]."

Origen, however, endeavors to distinguish the impurity of conjugal relations from sin. It only exists "in some way", and it is only "a certain" impurity. This kind of impurity does not prevent married people from offering to God their bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God (Rom. 12:1).

Carnal love is only an abuse of the love which God has put in our hearts so that we should love Him[29]. To be sure, Origen scarcely distinguishes between the movement of the gift from the movement of the desire, the distinction that our contemporaries denote by the Greek words *agape* and *eros*[30].

SEXUAL RELATIONS AND DEVOTION TO WORSHIP

The impurity of even lawful sexual relations also emerges from Origen's interpretation of 1 Cor. 7:5: that which is in Paul a piece of advice or a permission aimed at the withdrawal of the married couple for prayer becomes for Origen an obligation, tem-

26 On Lev. 12:2-7.
27 De Orat., 31:4.
28 Hom. in Num., 4:3.
29 Comm. on Cant., Prol.
30 Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989.

porary, to be sure, and agreed between them, but extended to religious fasts and to the reception of the Eucharist.

MARRIAGE AND ORDER OF LOVE

Love must be ordered: this theme is developed in the *Commentary on the Song of Songs* at Cant. 2, 4 LXX "Order the love that is in me," and likewise in the *Homily on Luke 25* and is the beginning of a whole tradition.

1. Only **God and His Christ**, who are subjects and objects of the same love, must be loved "with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our strength" (Matt. 22:37): to love a creature like that is to confer on it what must only be given to God, it is idolatry. God alone is to be loved without limit.

2. The **neighbor** must be loved "as ourselves" (Matt. 22:39).

First among neighbors is the **wife** whom the **husband** must love as his own body, just as Christ loves the Church: this love "is of a particular nature and is separate from all other'[31]. Next come the other affections in the family. But none of these loves are to be preferred to the love of God, when the choice must be made, for example by the martyr: to put those one loves before God would not be truly to love them[32].

EQUALITY OF HUSBANDS AND WIVES

R. Crouzel says,

> In Hebrew legislation and in Roman law there was no equality of the spouses in the matter of adultery. A married man who allowed himself extramarital relations with an unmarried girl was not an adulterer; he in no way wronged his wife, who had no rights over him. On the contrary, the married woman who did the same was an adulteress and was punished severely by the law as was her ac-

31 Comm. on Cant. 3.
32 Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989.

complice, for she was her husband's property. While in Roman circles the wife could take the initiative to end the marriage, in Jewish circles she could not. When Paul writes: “For the wife does not rule over her own body, but the husband does; likewise, also, the husband does not rule over his own body, but the wife does” (1 Cor. 7:14), he is re-establishing equality, giving the wife a right over her husband’s body similar to the one he has over hers[33].

This equality in respect of the fundamental rights which is to be found fairly clearly in the works of Origen does not prevent the man from remaining the head of the family nor from being likewise within the family the one who leads prayer. Paul’s rule “That the women should keep silent in the churches” (1 Cor. 14:35)[34] is used by Origen against the Montanists, by reason of their prophetesses, Priscilla and Maximilla, to show that their Church was not the Bride of Christ[35].

*Let **the wives** learn from the examples of the patriarchs, let the wives learn, I say, to follow their husbands. For not without cause is it written that “Sara was standing behind Abraham,” but that it might be shown that if the husband leads the way to the Lord, the wife ought to follow. I mean that the wife ought to follow if she see her husband standing by God[36].*

MIXED MARRIAGES

R. Crouzel says,

Origen is strongly opposed to unions between believers and unbelievers. They are “unequally yoked” to use a Pauline term, *heterozygountes*[37], and Origen cannot see in

33 Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p. 144..
34 Fragm. 1 Cor. 74.
35 Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p. 145.
36 In Gen. hom. 4:4 (Cf. Heine).
37 2 Cor. 6:14; Fragm. 1 Cor. 35.

that a true marriage of which God is the author: the accord that comes from the Lord is lacking. Some Christians consider themselves authorized to marry pagans by what Paul says in I Cor. 7, 14: they will sanctify their partners. But for one thing the case envisaged by the apostle is not the same: it is that of a marriage between two unbelievers, one of whom is converted subsequently, and not that of an inter-faith marriage contracted between a Christian and a non-Christian. For another thing, when he said that the believer would sanctify his partner, Paul only mentioned the more favorable solution, for the other possibility also exists: that the Christian is soiled by the pagan partner and that there ensues a struggle starting from the 'abundance of the heart[38], that is to say from the strength of the convictions of each; it is not certain that the Christian will win and keep his faith. As Paul requires of the widows[39], marriage must be 'in the Lord', which Origen, in common with most but not all the Fathers, interprets to mean with a Christian partner[40].

DISSOLUTION OF MARRIAGE

Origen assures that marriage cannot be dissolved by every cause, but only by committing fornication (Matt. 19:3).

> *We must say that Christ's saying, "What God has joined together let no man put asunder" (Matt. 19:6), did not put away the former synagogue, His former wife, for any cause than that wife committed fornication, being made an adulteress by the evil one, and along with him plotted against her husband and slew Him, saying, "Away with such a fellow from the earth, crucify Him" (John 19:6,15; Luke 23:18)*[41].

38 Matt. 12:34; Fragm. 1 Cor. 36.
39 1 Cor. 7:39; Fragm. 1 Cor. 36.
40 Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p. 145-6.
41 Comm. Matt. 14:17.

VIRGINITY[42]

To express Origen's view on virginity, I quote almost R. Crouzel who deals with this topic in two of his works[43].

Origen did not write a treatise on virginity: his teaching about it is scattered through his works and contained especially in the fragments that survive of his exegesis of the first Epistle to the Corinthians.

HOW GREAT IS VIRGINITY!

Origen considers virginity as the most perfect gift after martyrdom. In the sacrifice of virginity, man is at once, by his intellect, the priest, and in his flesh the victim, like Christ on the Cross. Virginity is presented as a privileged link between heaven and earth; for God was able to unite Himself to humanity only through a "holy" body of a virgin woman without marital relations[44].

ST. MARY, THE PATRONESS OF THE VIRGINS

St. Mary among women is the first fruit of virginity as the Lord Jesus is among men[45].

Origen affirms ***St. Mary's perpetual virginity*** in his *Homilies on Leviticus*[46]. In another place he says:

> *A certain tradition has come to us to this effect... Mary, after giving birth to the Savior, went in to adore and stood in that place for virgins (in the Temple). Those who knew that she had borne a son tried to keep her away,*

42 Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p. 141ff.
43 Virginité et Marriage selon Origéne, Museum Lessianum, section theologique 58, Paris, Desclée de Brower, 1963; Origen, Translated by A,S. Warrall, 1989.
44 Comm. on Matt. 17:35.
45 Com. on John, 1.4, Hom. on Luke 7:4; in H. Crouzel, Origen, p. 141.
46 In Lev. hom. 8:2. PG 12:493f.

> *but Zachary said to them: She is worthy of the place of virgins, for she is still a virgin*[47].

In Homily VII on Luke, preserved in a translation by St. Jerome and in several Greek fragments which correspond closely to the translation and cover more than half of it, Origen is incensed against a heretic who, probably on account of Matt. 12:46-50, maintained that Mary had been renounced by Jesus for having had children by Joseph after his birth. Where Origen simply says: “Some one dared to say' (*etolmese tis eipein*), Jerome translates: 'Some one, I know not who, let himself go to such a point of madness that he said: (*In tantum quippe nescio quis prorupit insaniae, ut assveveret . . .*) [48].

Origen represents St. Mary as the patroness of the virgins, or the Virgin of the virgins: "*It would have been unbecoming to attribute to anyone other than Mary the title of '**The First of Virgins***[49]***.'"***

VIRGINITY AND SPIRITUAL MARRIAGE BETWEEN CHRIST AND THE SOUL

Origen as an Alexandrian explains virginity as a royal inner way, through it the believer’s soul examine the union with her Heavenly Groom, Jesus Christ

R. Crouzel says,

> Virginity makes the union of Christ and the soul more possible. It is thus a witness both to the first and the last things because it evokes the perfect marriage of Christ and Church which was present in the pre-existence and will be again at the Resurrection. The Church, Bride and Virgin, holds her virginity from the chastity of her members leading a life either of virginity or of chastity according to the

47 Comm. in Mat. 25.
48 Henri Crouzel: Origen, Harper & Row, 1989, p. 54.
49 Comm. in Mat. 10:17 PG 13:878A.

state in which they find themselves. So chastity appropriate to the state of marriage is an element in the virginity of the Church.

VIRGINITY OF FAITH AND HEART

Virginity of the body is not desired for its sake, but as a way that leads the soul to practise the inner virginity, that is to devote herself as a pure bride to her Heavenly Groom. This is what Origen assures in his speech on virginity.

R. Crouzel in his book on "Origen" says,

> Virginity of faith is more important than virginity of morals, which has no value if the doctrine is false[50].
>
> Virginity of body only has meaning where there is virginity of heart: violation of the first is important when there is also violation of the second. Finally, Christian virginity is a voluntary decision: it must not be confused with the factual virginity of a woman who has not found a husband or a man incapable of marriage, unless that factual virginity has been freely undertaken from a religious motive. Christian virginity is a deliberate decision to preserve celibacy for the service of God[51].

Just as marriage involves a mutual giving of the spouses to one another, so virginity takes its place in the theme of mystical marriage because there is a mutual self-giving between God and His creature[52].

VIRGINITY AS A DIVINE GIFT

Perhaps some men can live in celibacy, as they refuse marriage for a reason or other. But inner virginity is a divine gift, and nobody can practice it without God's help. R. Crouzel says,

---

50 Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p. 141.
51 Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p. 142.
52 Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p. 142.

> Virginity is then a gift of God to the soul which must receive it in faith and prayer. But virginity is also a gift that the soul makes to God, the most perfect after martyrdom, a gift made in response to the first gift which comes from God. In the sacrifice of virginity the man is at once by his intellect the priest who immolates, and in his flesh the victim which is immolated: thus he imitates Christ on the Cross, at once priest and victim. A fragment of Origen's exegeses of the first Epistle to the Corinthians clearly distinguishes two kinds of commandments, the kind imposed on all and necessary to salvation, and the kind, including virginity and poverty, which go beyond what is imposed and necessary for salvation. Such was the celibacy lived by Paul out of devotion to the Church. If chastity appropriate to one's state of life is a commandment imposed on all, virginity goes beyond what is imposed on all[53].

VIRGINITY AS A SACRIFICE

We mentioned before that for Origen all Christian life is interpreted as a holy sacrifice, for it is a new life in the Crucified and Risen Christ. Virginity as a high Christian life is a true spiritual sacrifice, acceptable to God.

R. Crouzel says,

> Virginity imposes a sacrifice, a mortification of the flesh which does not consist in refusing it what is needful, but not serving its evil desires. The measure and the manner of this mortification are not the same for all, for all do not have the same difficulties. Some are naturally chaste and have little difficulty in keeping themselves free of evil imaginations; with others this is not so, and they have to struggle constantly. The means vary, but in no way can one attain here below a chastity which would take away all danger of falling and make precautions unnecessary. The

53 Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p. 143.

actions of the saint, even the best of them, are not exempt from stain. Closely linked with chastity are the keeping of the heart and the senses, consisting in the avoidance of dangerous thoughts and sensations, flight from occasions where that could happen, fasting with abstinence from certain kinds of food and drink considered particularly rousing, prayer in the Storm of temptation with the effort to keep calm and confident. However, temptation is normal for man in this lower world: it takes many forms and spares no age or state of life, the healthy no more than the sick. It is for the Christian yet another opportunity to offer to God his chastity[54].

VIRGINITY AND MARRIAGE

Origen believes that Christian marriage and virginity are divine grace, granted to believers according to their gifts, and have the same spiritual aim.

R. Crouzel says,

With Jesus, all the virtues that are identified with Him grow in the soul. Unlike the married person, who is in a sense, the slave of his partner, for he has surrendered rights over his own body, the virigin is free, not with a freedom to give rein to selfishness, but with a freedom that finds its justification in a more complete service of God. We saw above that we must distinguish in Origen free-will, that is the power of choice, from freedom[55].

Thus it can be understood how the freedom of virginity undertaken for God's sake is identified with the service of God[56].

✞ ✞ ✞

54 Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p. 143.
55 Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p. 143-4.
56 Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p. 144.

20

ESCHATOLOGY

ESCHATOLOGICAL ATTITUDE

As the return of the soul to God is the main line in Origen's thought, therefore his writings almost have an eschatological attitude.

Origen looks to the spiritual meaning of the Scriptures as a participation in heaven itself. St. Gregory expresses the attitude of his teacher by saying, "To our mind, it was really... an image of Paradise[1]." It is the first resurrection which we enjoy here, till we attain the second or last one (Rev. 20).

With joy we celebrate the eighth day (Sunday), the day of the resurrection, as a pledge of the world to come

> *The number eight, which contains the virtue of the Resurrection, is the figure of the future world*[2].
>
> *When Christ "shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father," then those living beings, because they have before this been made part of Christ's kingdom, shall also be delivered up along with the whole of that kingdom to the rule of the Father; so that, when "God shall be in all," they also, since they are a part of all, may have God even in themselves, as he is in all things*[3].

Origen assures that we here attain by divine grace a kind of perfection, but we have to grow in this perfection all our lives in this world till we meet our Lord face to face on the Last Day.

---

[1] *Or. Paneg. 15.*
[2] *Sel. Psalm. PG 12:1624 B-C.*
[3] *De Principiis 1:7 (Henri De Lubac).*

> *"As long as we are in this world, the words "I shall be safe" cannot be completely fulfilled - only when we live with the angels of God, when "God's statutes" will be practiced face to face with Him, in true reality, not a shadow thereof*[4].

Jean Daniélou states that Origen in his teachings of eschatology has almost his own personal system, saying,

> When we come to the **Last Things**, we find ourselves in the same sort of country as we did when we studied the beginnings of things, eschatology corresponds to "archaeology." Scripture has little information to give about it. We shall thus be faced once more with Origen's personal system in its most characteristic forms[5].

I have mentioned his eschatological attitude in our speech on ***apokatastasis***, that is the return of all rational creatures to their original nature; also on the destiny of man's body. Here I will try to explain Origen's view on:

1. The resurrection of Christ as the source of our resurrection.
2. Death.
3. Transformation and final unity of the universe.
4. The kingdom of God.
5. Outer darkness and eternal fire.
6. Knowledge after death.
7. Man's rank in heaven.

In all these elements we have to know that two main axes that rule Origen's system: Divine Providence and man's free-will.

✞ ✞ ✞

[4] *Sel Ps. 119:117.*
[5] *Origen, P. 276.*

1. THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST[6]

CHRIST'S RESURRECTION AND THE RESURRECTION OF BELIEVERS

1. As Origen's theology is soteriological, he states that the holy Scripture emphasizes Christ's resurrection for the resurrection of believers, that is the practice of the risen life, which is the pledge of the future resurrection, or attaining the present first resurrection as a way to attain the second one.

> *"We have a "pledge of the Holy Spirit" (2 Cor. 1;22), whom we shall receive in His fullness "when that is perfect is come" (1 Cor. 13:10): and likewise we have a "pledge of the resurrection," the fact being that none of us has yet risen in the perfection of resurrection*[7].
>
> *If you believe that Christ has risen from the dead, you must believe also that you yourselves have likewise risen with him; and if you believe that he is seated at the right hand of the Father in heaven, you must also believe that you yourselves are situated no longer in the earthly but the heavenly scene; and if you believe yourselves dead with Christ, you must believe that you will also live with him; and if you believe that Christ is dead to sin and lives to God, you too must be dead to sin and alive to God... This is because the man who (sets his mind on things above) shows his belief in him who raised up Jesus... from the dead, and for this man faith is truly counted for righteousness... And if we have risen with Christ who is righteousness, and walk in newness of life, and live according to righteousness, Christ has risen for us, that we might be justified... who*

[6] *Cf. Thomas P. Collins: The Risen Christ in the Fathers of the Church, Paulist Press, Glen Rock, N.J., 1967, p. 42f.*
[7] *In Ezek. hom. 2:5.*

have undertaken a new life on the model of his resurrection...

Evoking the Genesis account of Jacob's blessing on Judah, Origen pictures the buried Lord as a sleeping lion. Aroused by the Father in the resurrection, the Lord Jesus is instrumental in making those who (in this life) "*have been made conformable to His resurrection*" fully authentic persons. It appears that for Origen conformity to Christ's resurrection makes people "*like gold*" in the present existence, and that their quality as "*true gold*" awaits a further "spiritualization" and fuller identification with the Lord.

> *So have the things delivered through our Lord Jesus Christ himself been set in true gold and in solid silver.... For when he has laid him down and slept "as a lion and as a loin's whelp" (cf. Gen 49: 9), and afterward the Father has aroused him, and he has risen from the dead, if then there be such as have been made conformable to his resurrection, they will continue no longer in the likeness of gold, that is, in the pursuit of bodily things, but will receive the true gold from him*[8].
>
> *But when the resurrection itself takes place of the true and more perfect body of Christ, then those who are now the members of Christ, for they will then be dry bones, will be brought together, bone to bone, and fitting to fitting (for none of those who are destitute of fitting approval) will come to the perfect man), to the measure (Ephes. 4:13) of the stature of the fullness of the body of Christ. And then the many members (1 Cor. 12:12 sq.) will be the one body, all of them, though many, becoming members of one body. But it belongs to God alone to make the distinction of foot and hand and eye and hearing and smelling, which in one sense fill up the head, but in another the feet and the rest of the members and the weaker and humbler ones, the more and the less honorable. God will temper the body together, and then, rather than*

[8] *Commentary on the Song of Songs [2.8]: ACW 26.153-55.*

> *now, He will give to that which lacks the more abundant honor, that there may be, by no means, any schism in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another, and, if any member be well off, all the members may share in its good things, or if any member be glorified, all the members may rejoice with it*[9].

Origen believes that there are two kinds of regeneration, one is called washing of generation, realized in this world through baptism, as a pledge of the other regeneration which will be realized in the world to come, and is called regeneration by the Holy Spirit and Fire.

> *This is the Regeneration of that new coming-into being when a new heaven and earth is created for those who have renewed themselves, and a new covenant and its "cup" is given. Of that Regeneration what Paul calls the "washing of Regeneration" (Titus 3:5) is the prelude, and that which is brought to this "washing of regeneration" in the "renewing of the Spirit" is a symbol of that newness. It might also be said that whereas at our natural birth "none is pure from defilement, even if he only lives one day" (Job 14:4, LXX)... in the "washing of regeneration" everyone who is "born again" "of water and the Spirit" (John 3:3,5) is pure from defilement, but (if I may venture to put it so) only "in a glass darkly" ý(1 Cor. 13:12). But at that* ***other Regeneration****, when the Son of man shall sit upon the throne of His glory, everyone who achieves that Regeneration in Christ is totally pure from defilement, sees Him face to face, having passed through the washing of regeneration to that other one, the latter can be understood by reflection on the words of John, who baptized "with water unto repentance," concerning the Savior: "He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire."*

[9] *Comm. on John, book 10:20.*

> *Further, in the washing of regeneration we were buried with Christ [quotes Rom 6 4]; but in the Regeneration of the washing through fire and the Spirit we become conformed to the "body of the glory" (Phil. 3:21) of the Christ who sits on the throne of His glory*[10].

2. **Resurrection as a transfiguration of the Crucified Christ.** The resurrection eliminates and transfigures the Christ of the passion. He appears as the mighty Lord, loaded with victory and trophies; He comes in splendor as the King of glory[11].

> *Then those who escort him say to those that are upon the heavenly gates, "Lift up your gates, you rulers, and be you lifted up, you everlasting doors, and the king of glory shall come in." But they ask again, seeing as it were, his right hand red with blood and his whole person covered with the marks of his valor, "Why are your garments red, and your clothes like the treading of the full wine vat when it is trodden?" (cf. Is 63:2). And to this he answers, "I have crushed them" (Is 63:3)*[12].

Origen seems to see the conviction of the resurrection of Christ as influencing Christians to look beyond their sufferings to "life everlasting and the resurrection."[13]

> *He rose from the dead and so utterly convinced his disciples of the truth of his resurrection so that they show to all men through their sufferings that their attention is focused on life everlasting and on the resurrection which has been exemplified to them in word and deed. And so they can mock at all the hardships of this life*[14].

---

[10] *Comm. on Matt. 15:22f. on 19:27 f.*
[11] *Thomas P. Collins: The Risen Christ in the Fathers of the Church, Paulist Press, Glen Rock, N.J., 1967, p. 48.*
[12] *Commentary on John, 37.*
[13] *Thomas P. Collins: The Risen Christ in the Fathers of the Church, Paulist Press, Glen Rock, N.J., 1967, p. 52.*
[14] *Against Celsus 2.77: Drewery 132*

3. Through the passion and the resurrection of our Lord **He became the New Adam, the Head of the sanctified mankind.**

> *Just as through having Adam as the first example, the head, of our natural mode of birth, we are all said to have in this respect one body, even so do we register Christ as our head through the divine regeneration of his death and resurrection which has become a pattern for us*[15].

4. The resurrection of Christ **glorifies God the Father.** Origen is commenting on Romans 4:23-25. The question he is asking is why Paul gives the Christian as the object of his faith **the God who raised Christ from the dead** rather than, for example, the God who created heaven and earth. Origin's answer is that the former designation **glorifies God the Father** more than the latter one[16].

> *For the latter meant the making of what did not exist, the former the redeeming of what had perished.... The latter . . . was achieved by a mere fiat, the former by suffering. Now the pattern and image of this . . . mystery had come beforehand in the faith of Abraham. For he had believed, when he was ordered to sacrifice his only son, that God was able to raise him even from the dead; he had also believed that the transaction then set afoot did not only apply to Isaac, but that it was sacramental, and that its full meaning was reserved for that descendant of his who is Christ. It was then ... with joy that he offered his only son, because he saw therein not the death of his issue, but the restoration of the world, the renewal of the whole creation, reestablished through the resurrection of the Lord: And this was why the Lord said of him, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day..." [John 8:56].*

---

[15] *Commentary on John, fragment 140: based on Drewery 132.*

[16] *Thomas P. Collins: The Risen Christ in the Fathers of the Church, Paulist Press, Glen Rock, N.J., 1967, p. 49.*

2. DEATH

KINDS OF DEATH

Origen follows tradition in teaching the twofold death of the Christian - that of the body, the result of Adam's sin[17] and that of the soul, the result of personal sin[18].

In fact, Origen distinguishes three kinds of death:

1. A "**death to sin**" which is good.
2. A "**death in sin**," which is bad.
3. An indifferent death, neither good nor bad in itself, which he also calls "**physical**" or "**common**" death.

1. DEATH IN SIN

Those who refuse to live in Christ, live in sin; in other words, as they refuse to attain the Life, they taste death. Death in sin is the opposite of the divine life which shares in the divine Spirit and in the Christ who is Life.

> *But apart from the word of the promise of Jesus, we have conjectured not without reason that **we would taste of death, so long as we were not yet held worthy to see "the kingdom of God come with power," and "the Son of man coming in His own glory and in His own kingdom**[19]."*

> *But since here it is written in the three Evangelists, "They shall not taste of death (Matt. 16:28)," but in other writers different things are written concerning death, it may not be out of place to bring forward and examine these passages along with the "**taste**." In the Psalms, then, it is said, "What man is he that shall live and not **see** death (Ps. 89:48)?" And again, in another place, "Let death **come***

[17] *In Ezek. hom. 1:9; In Jer. hom. 2:1.*
[18] *Joanne E. McWilliam: Death and Resurrection (Message of the Fathers of the Church), p. 122-3.*
[19] *Commentary on Matthew, Book 12:34 (Cf. ANF).*

> ***upon them*** *and let them go down into Hades alive (Ps. 55:18);" but in one of the prophets, "Death becoming mighty has* ***swallowed*** *them up (Isa. 25:8); and in the Apocalypse, "Death and Hades* ***follow some*** *(Rev. 6:10)."*
>
> *Now in these passages it appears to me that it is one thing to taste of death,*
>
> *but another thing to see death,*
>
> *and another thing for it to come upon some,*
>
> *and that a fourth thing,*
>
> *different from the aforesaid, is signified by the words, "Death becoming mighty has swallowed them up," and a fifth thing,*
>
> *different from these, by the words, "Death and Hades follow them*[20]*.*

The death of the soul

> *And for this reason, the prophet says, "the soul which sins will die" (Ezek. 18:4), although we do not think that its death is to the destruction of the substance, but from the fact that the soul is alien and remote from God who is true life, we must believe that it dies*[21]*.*

However, Origen believes that God in His redeeming providence never leaves souls to die in sin, truly they are free to choose their ways, but in the long run, even after death, God as the Divine Doctor heals these wounds, and grants these souls eternal life[22]. "His patience is to their advantage, because the soul is immortal and therefore, even if it is not cured at once, it is not debarred from salvation for ever; salvation is only put off to a more suitable time[23].

---

[20] *Commentary on Matthew, Book 12:35 (Cf. ANF).*
[21] *Homilies On Leviticus 9:10 (Cf. Frs. of the Church)*
[22] *See Jean Danéliou, chapter five*
[23] *De Princ-3:1:13; De Oratione 28, 13*

2. DEATH TO SIN

Death to sin consists essentially in conformity to the death of Christ which is accompanied by conformity to His resurrection (Rom. 6).

3. INDIFFERENT DEATH

As for indifferent death, the opposite of that is indifferent life, the life we share with the animals[24]. There is a link between death in sin and physical death, for he regards death of sinners as temporal divine punishment, for their purification.

. The relation between sin and physical death is affirmed in many tests: the latter is the result of the fall, the wages of sin. In some instances it is not clear whether physical death or death in sin is meant, but this very uncertainty reveals the link. The death to which our earthly body is condemned clouds all our earthly life. "Wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from this body of death?," cries Paul; and Origen comments, "*That is why the saints do not celebrate their birthdays. Only those who live the life of the body consider themselves happy to be living in this body of death. Even if we know that the future glory will be beyond compare with the present life and its woes, we see with fear the day of death approaching and we should like to escape it*[25].

In our treatment of "God's Anger," we noticed that divine punishment, even death, is regarded by Origen as something educational;. Jean Daniélou says, "Even **Death** will give in at the end; even Death will be converted[26].

Already in the Old Testament the death penalty imposed for a grave crime expunged the pain of sin, for "God does not punish twice the same offense": so it was already a redemptive pun-

[24] *Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p. 236.*
[25] *Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p. 236-237.*
[26] *Origen, P. 277*

ishment. It is above all the death of Christ which is the source of the death to sin of all those who are baptized into his death and consequently mortify their earthly members. In Christ Himself death does not touch the Word but the human nature that is joined to Him: and his death was like all human deaths except that He freely and voluntarily took it upon Himself for the sake of his friends: He went down into Hades, "free among the dead," stronger than death, dominating it instead of being dominated by it, in order to deliver those who had been conquered by it. By the death of Christ is destroyed the death that is Christ's enemy, death in sin[27].

We have seen that martyrdom is the most perfect imitation of Christ in his death, and hence in his resurrection. It shares in Christ's work of redemption. It obtains the remission of sins, not only for the martyr but for others, and it puts to flight the powers of the devil[28].

✞ ✞ ✞

[27] *Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p. 237.*
[28] *Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p. 237..*

3. TRANSFORMATION AND FINAL UNITY OF THE UNIVERSE

St. Paul says that there are some things that are "seen" and "temporal" while others are "not seen" and "eternal." He says, "the form of this world shall pass away" (1 Cor. 7:31). David also says: "The heavens shall perish, but you shall remain; and they all shall grow old as a garment, and as a cloak you shall change them, as a garment they shall be changed." For if the heavens shall be "changed," certainly that which is "changed" does not perish; and if "the form of this world passes away," it is not by any means an annihilation or destruction of the material substance that is indicated, but the occurrence of a certain change of quality and an alteration of the outward form.

Isaiah too, when he says that "there shall be a new heaven and a new earth" (Isa. 65:17), undoubtedly suggests a similar thought. For the renewal of "heaven and earth" and the transmutation of the "form of this world" and the alteration of the "heavens" will undoubtedly be accomplished in readiness for those who are journeying along the way which we have indicated above, making for that end, namely, blessedness, to which we are told that even God's enemies themselves are to be subjected, the end in which God is said to be "all" and "in all" (1 Cor. 15:24, 25, 28)l[29]."

> *For the end is always like the beginning; as therefore there is one end of all things, so we must understand that there is one beginning of all things, and as there is one end of many things, so from one beginning arise many differences and varieties, which in their turn are restored, through God's goodness, through their subjection to Christ*

[29] *De Principiis 1:4 (Henri De Lubac).*

and their unity with the Holy Spirit, to one end, which is like the beginning[30].

✞ ✞ ✞

[30] *De Principiis 4:4 (Henri De Lubac).*

4. THE KINGDOM OF GOD

ESCHATOLOGY AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Our eternal life in fact is an extension to the kingdom of God that we attain here. In his *Commentary on John* 21, Origen states that the resurrection is something both accomplished in believers in the past - something already realized - and something to be accomplished in the future. The realized resurrection of man is epitomized in the par-scriptural statement, "We rose with him" (1 Cor. 15:22-25). The future resurrection - the "not yet" (John 20:17) of contemporary theological usage - is epitomized in the scriptural statement, "In Christ shall all be made alive."[31]

Our life here is considered as a continuos festival day, because we attain the pledge of the eternal life, specially through contemplation. Jean Daniélou says,

> Eusebius conceives this, in the manner of Origen and of the monks of Egypt who were his contemporaries, as a continual meditation on Scripture. Their life is thus ***a perpetual feast-day***. And this contemplative life, at once that of the patriarchs and that of Christians, is the image, the *eikon* of the "blessed rest," that of heaven, where, freed from all servitude one can contemplate intelligible realities. The Sabbath itself was introduced by the law of Moses because of the people (*plethos*), as an educational means to lead them to the more perfect practice of the perpetual and spiritual Sabbath. This is the very thesis of Origen on the origin of feast-days[32].

Kelly says,

> In the third century Origen developed these and kindred ideas, interpreting the kingdom of God either as the

[31] *Thomas P. Collins: The Risen Christ in the Fathers of the Church, Paulist Press, Glen Rock, N.J., 1967, p. 46.*
[32] *Contra Celsius, VIII, 23; Koetschau, 240, 3-15; Jean Daniélou: The Bible and the Liturgy, p.247.*

apprehension of divine truth and spiritual reality[33], or (this in explanation of Luke 17:21) as the indwelling of the Logos or the seeds of truth implanted in the soul[34], or as "the spiritual doctrine of the ensouled Logos imparted through Jesus Christ[35]." "The intelligence (νους) which is purified," he wrote, "and rises above all material things to have a precise vision of God is deified in its vision[36];" and since true knowledge, in his view, presupposes the union of knower and object, the divine gnosis of the saints culminates in their union with God[37].

In his treatment of the judgment we meet with the same characteristic tension between the desire to retain traditional dogma and the desire to reinterpret it in a manner palatable to intelligent believers.

The judgment itself will be enacted at the end of the world, and a definitive separation will then be made between good and bad[38].

The Savior will not appear in any given place, but will make Himself known everywhere; and men will present themselves before His throne in the sense that they will render homage to His authority. They will see themselves as they are, and in the light of that knowledge the good and the bad will be finally differentiated. Needless to say, there is no room here for millenarianism, and Origen castigates[39] the follies of literalist believers who read the Scriptures like the Jews and cherish dreams of dwelling in an earthly Jerusalem after the resurrection, where they will

[33] *Sel in Ps. 144:13.*
[34] *In John. 19:12:78.*
[35] *In Matt. 10:14.*
[36] *In John. 32:27:338.*
[37] *In John. 19:4:23f.; Kelly, p. 470.*
[38] *In Matt. Comm. ser. 70.; Kelly, p. 472.*
[39] *De Principiis 2:11:2.*

eat, drink and enjoy sexual intercourse to their hearts" content[40].

"Each sinner," he states, "kindles his own fire... and our own vices form its fuel[41]." In other words, the real punishment of the wicked consists in their own interior anguish, their sense of separation from the God Who should be their supreme good[42].

He is satisfied, however, that in fact they must one day come to an end, when all things are restored to their primeval order. This is his doctrine of the *apokatastasis*, in which his eschatology, as indeed his whole theological system, culminates, and which postulates that the conclusion of the vast cosmic evolution will be identical with its beginning[43].

Even the Devil, it appears, will participate in the final restoration. When Origen was taken to task on this point, he indignantly protested, according to his later champion Rufinus[44], that he had held no such theory[45].

When they reach heaven, he explains, the redeemed will apprehend the nature of the stars and the reasons for their respective positions. God will disclose the causes of phenomena to them; and at a later stage they will reach things which cannot be seen and which are ineffable[46].

ETERNAL GLORY

Although souls of men received bodies after their fall, Origen believes that in eternity not only the soul but also the body will

---

[40] *105. Kelly, p. 473.*
[41] *De Principiis 2:10:4; cf. Jerome: in Eph. 5:6*
[42] *Kelly, p. 473.*
[43] *Kelly, p. 473-4.*
[44] *De adult. lib. Orig. PG 17:624 f.*
[45] *Kelly, p. 474.*
[46] *Kelly, p. 485.*

be glorified. He argues strongly against the Gnostics as they believe that bodies will be entirely dissolved.

GLORIOUS BODIES

In chapter four, it was mentioned that for Origen, the body will share the soul in its eternal glory. H. Crouzel says,

> If the body is normally called the clothing of the soul, Origen paradoxically calls the soul the clothing of the body, for at the resurrection the soul will clothe the body with the qualifies of immortality and incorruptibility which belong to the soul's nature[47].

Bodies will be transformed from dishonor to glory, and from corruptibility to incorruptibility.

> *The matter of the body... which now is corruptible, shall put on incorruption when a perfect soul, instructed in the doctrines of incorruption, has begun to use it*[48].

> *And of this honor some of those who stand by Jesus are deemed worthy if they be either a Peter against whom the gates of Hades do not prevail, or the sons of thunder (Mark 3:17), and are begotten of the mighty voice of God who thunders and cries aloud from heaven great things to those who have ears and are wise. Such at least do not taste death*[49].

DEGREES OF GLORY

It seems that contrary to his idea of "*apokatastsis,*" Origen in some texts refers to the degrees of eternal glory. Truly all risen bodies will be transformed into glorious and spiritual status, but every body is glorified according to a man's merits in his life on earth. Men will be divided into different orders or classes.

---

[47] *Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p. 239-240.*
[48] *De Principiis 2:3:2.*
[49] *Commentary on Matthew, Book 12:32 (Cf. ANF).*

> *It is better... to say that we shall all rise again even the wicked will come to that place where is weeping and gnashing of teeth and where the righteous shall each in his order receive reward according to the merit of his transformed body so as to become like the glory of the body of Christ*[50].
>
> *....A body of glory and dignity will correspond to the dignity of each one's life and soul*[51].
>
> *As, then, without any doubt it will happen in the day of judgment that the good will be separated from the evil and the righteous from the unrighteous and every individual soul will by the judgment of God be allotted to that place of which his merits have rendered him worthy, if God will*[52].

Some scholars see that these different orders or classes will appear in the beginnings of eternity, but as they will be perfectly purified they will be restored to their ancient ranks.

THE SHAPE OF THE GLORIOUS BODY

Origen believes that the body in eternity "*will have the same form, though there will be the greatest possible change for the better*[53]." To be changed for the better means to be transformed from material to spiritual, to inhabit the realm of the Spiritual God. This is what happened "*with the form of Jesus; for it did not become in the transfiguration wholly different from what it was*[54]."

---

[50] *In Isaiah, fragm. (*
[51] *De Prin, 2:10:3*
[52] *De Principiis 2:9:8 (Cf. Butterworth).*
[53] *Psalms frag. (Tillinton)*
[54] *Ibid*

NOTION OF *EIDOS*

Whereas Origen uses "*eidos*" to express precisely the identity of the spiritual body with the earthly, although with qualitative differences, Methodus believes that Origen was teaching that the risen body would be other than the earthly, that is, there would be no continuity of what would today be called personality[55].

PARADISE

Origen discusses the placing of the Good Thief in Paradise. He says that saints of the old covenant will be led by Christ to Paradise at his own glorious Ascension: thus He has re-opened for them the way which the sin of Adam had closed . Henceforth the righteous of the new covenant will not go to Hades, but, allowing for what we shall say below about eschatological purification, will directly go to Paradise, before the resurrection[56].

✞ ✞ ✞

[55] *Dewart, P. 142.*
[56] *Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p. 242.*

5. OUTER DARKNESS AND ETERNAL FIRE

Origen believes that in the resurrection men will be divided into two portions, those who are saved, the righteous, and those who are to be punished, the wicked ones. The latter are full of sadness, appropriate to the deeds and life of men who in this present existence have despised God's commandments, and putting aside all fear of judgment, practised uncleanness and covetousness[57]; but this punishment will not be everlasting. For when the body will be punished, the soul will be purified , and so restored to its ancient rank[58].

MEANING OF LASTING DARKNESS

The "outer darkness" is in my opinion not to be understood as a place with a murky atmosphere and no light at all, but rather as a description of those who through their immersion in the darkness of deep ignorance have become separated from every gleam of reason and intelligence. We must also see whether possibly this expression does not mean that just as the saints will receive back the very bodies in which they have lived in holiness and purity during their stay in this life, but bright and glorious as a result of the resurrection, so, too, the wicked, who in this life have loved the darkness of error and the night of ignorance, will after the resurrection be clothed with murky bodies, in order that this very gloom of ignorance, which in the present world had taken possession of the inner parts of their mind, may in the world to come be revealed through the garment of their outward body. (Perhaps, however, the "gloom and darkness" should be taken to mean this coarse and earthly body, through which at the end of this world each man that must pass into another world will receive the beginnings of a fresh

[57] *On Isa. frag. (Tillinton)*
[58] *De Principles 2:10:8*

birth)... The expression "prison" must be thought of in a similar way[59].

PUNISHMENT OF ETERNAL FIRE

1. Origen, who confirms man's free-will, believes that punishment of fire after death is inflamed by sinners' deeds.

We find in the prophet Isaiah that the fire by which each man is punished is described as belonging to himself. For it says, "Walk in the light of your fire and in the flame which you have kindled for yourselves" (Isa. 50:11). These words seem to indicate that every sinner kindles for himself the flame of his own fire, and is not plunged into a fire which has been previously kindled by some one else or which existed before him. Of this fire the food and material are our sins, which are called by the apostle Paul wood and hay and stubble (1 Cor. 3:12). And I think that just as in the body an abundance of eatables or food that disagrees with us either by its quality gives rise to fevers differing in kind and duration according to the degree in which the combination of noxious elements supplies material and fuel for them - the quality of which material, made up of the diverse noxious elements, being the cause which renders the attack sharper or more protracted - so when the soul has gathered within itself a multitude of evil deeds and an abundance of sins, at the requisite time the whole mass of evil boils up into punishment and is kindled into penalties; at which time also the mind or conscience, bringing to memory through divine power all things the signs and forms of which it had impressed upon itself at the moment of sinning, will see exposed before its eyes a king of history of its evil deeds, of every foul and disgraceful act and all unholy conduct. Then the conscience is harassed and pricked by its own stings, and becomes an accuser and witness against itself[60].

[59] *De Principiis 2:10 (Henri De Lubac).*
[60] *De Principiis 2:10:4 (Cf. Butterworth).*

Eternal fire is different from our material fire, for the latter goes out, the former does not. It is invisible and burns invisible realities. But there is analogy between the two: the sufferings of men who die by fire gives some idea of what that fire can make them suffer. The Treatise *on First Principles* attempts a psychological explanation of that fire: it is a fire which each sinner lights for himself and which is fed by his own sins. Origen often says that our deeds leave their marks on our souls and that at the Day of Judgment those marks will be revealed and all will be able to read them. The sinner seeing on himself the marks of all his wicked deeds will feel the pricks of conscience and this remorse will constitute the fire that punishes him. It is also possible to start from the passions with which a man burns here below. Sinners caught in the net of these passions at the moment when they are leaving the world, without having in any way amended their lives, feel them at their most acute[61].

2. Origen continually uses the expressions "eternal fire" (*pyr aionion*) and inextinguishable fire (*pyr asbeston*) and yet he ventures to suggest several times the idea that the punishment will be remedial, and therefore should have an end[62], as he believes in the *apokatastsis*.

H. Crouzel says,

> In the *Homilies on Jeremiah* there are to be found preserved in Greek passages which point in both directions. Homily 20 (19), 4 would suggest that the truth about the punishments would lie in their remedial character: however, it is not impossible that there is a certain irony in this passage, as this expression seems to show: "How many of those whom one thinks wise..." According to Homily I15, God not only destroys the work of the devil, He annihilates it, sending the straw into an inextinguishable fire and the tares to the fire. But since the torment of eternal fire could

[61] *Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p. 243.*
[62] *Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p. 243.*

not corrupt people, what God annihilates by the fire seems to be the devil's work in man and went back to the remedial character[63]...

According to the *Commentary on Romans*: *eternity signifies in Scripture sometimes the fact that we do not know the end, sometimes the fact that there is no end in the present world, but the time will be one in the next. Sometimes eternity means a certain length of time even that of a human life*[64]...

But the main Scriptural passage is I Cor. 3, 11-I5: pointing to the foundation which is Jesus Christ and we can build with imperishable materials, gold, silver, precious stones, or with perishable, wood, hay, straw. When the Day comes the work of each will be put to the test: if it lasts the builder will receive his reward; if it is consumed he will be harmed, but he will be saved as through the fire. This text is explained thirty-eight times in what is extant of Origin's work[65].

3. The fire which consumes is in most of the texts, God Himself, "a devouring fire," for God does not consume perceptible materials but spiritual realities, our sins. It is also Christ, according to an *agraphon*[66]: "*Those who approach Me approach the fire, those who depart from Me depart from the Kingdom*." This identification of God with the purifying fire is all the more remarkable in that it would be found in the intuitions of certain later mystics relying on the experience of their inner purifications[67].

[63] *Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p. 243-244.*
[64] *Comm. on Rom. 6:5; Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p. 244.*
[65] *Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p. 245.*
[66] *An agraphon is a saying attributed to Jesus but not found in the New Testament*
[67] *Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p. 245.*

HADES AND GEHENNA

We must not confuse Hades, the place of the dead described in the parable of the Rich Man - who suffers there - and Lazarus - who is happy there- with Gehenna, the place of torment[68].

In Origin's famous homily on Saul's visit to the witch of Endor and the conjuring of Samuel, Hades is the place where the saints of the Old Testament went after death, for, on account of the sin committed when humanity began, they could not go to Paradise, where grew the tree of life, guarded by the Cherubim with the flaming sword. It is from Hades that Samuel comes up to show himself to Saul[69].

✞ ✞ ✞

[68] *Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p. 2241-2.*
[69] *Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p. 242.*

6. MAN'S RANK IN HEAVEN

Origen comments on Joshua's promise to his soldiers; "every place that the sole of your feet will tread upon I have given you." (Jos 1:3), saying :

> *As (the devil) became a fallen angel, I can tread upon him under my feet. By the Lord Jesus I have the ability to crush Satan under my feet (Rom 16:20), and have the right to replace him in Heaven. Thus we understand the promise of our Lord Jesus that He grants us every place the sole of our feet tread upon it. Don't think that we can receive this inheritance while we are sleeping in negligence*[70].

✞ ✞ ✞

[70] *In Jos. 1:6*

7. KNOWLEDGE AFTER DEATH

So then, if the air between heaven and earth is not devoid of living and even rational beings, as the apostle said, "Wherein in times past you walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of this air, the spirit who now works in the children of disobedience" (Eph. 2:2), and again, "We shall be caught up in the clouds to meet Christ in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thess. 4:17), we must suppose that the saints will remain there for some time, until they learn the reason of the ordering of all that goes on in the air, in its two-fold form. By two-fold form I mean, for example; when we were on earth we saw animals or trees and we perceived the differences among them and also the very great diversity among men. But when we saw these things we did not understand the reasons for them; but this alone was suggested to us by the very diversity of what we saw, that we should search out and inquire for what reason all these were created diverse and arranged in such variety; and if we have cherished on earth a zeal and love for this kind of knowledge, there will be given to us after death an acquaintance with and understanding of that reason, if indeed the matter turns out as we should wish. When therefore we have comprehended that in its fullness, we shall comprehend in two-fold form the things we saw on earth[71].

✞ ✞ ✞

[71] *De Principiis 2:11:6 (Cf. Butterworth).*

21

OTHER THOUGHTS

THE MEANING OF THE 'GOSPEL"

We may venture to say that the Gospel is the first fruits of all the Scriptures[1]."

Origen gives an extensive survey of the "*Gospel*" as he understands, in the first part of Book One of his *Commentary on John*[2]. The Gospel is good news about Jesus, first and foremost. Not only a recital of what he said and did, though this, too, is "*gospel,*" but also it presents Jesus Christ so that we may attain Him. The supreme significance of "Gospel" is good news about Jesus Himself as a Person. "***We must say that the good things the Apostles announce in this Gospel are simply Jesus**."*

To be sure, the good news has specific and varied content. "*One good thing is life: but Jesus is the Life. Another good thing is the Light of the world, when it is true Light, and the light of men: and all these things the Son of God is said to be."* The same may be said of the Truth, or the Way that leads to Truth, the Door, or the Resurrection. "*All these things the Savior teaches that He is*[3]."

The Savior, when He sojourned with men and caused the Gospel to appear in bodily form, caused all things to appear as gospel (good tidings) [4]."

Origen, however, prefers to hold that "*all the New Testament ought to be called the Gospel*." Every page of it has the sweet odor of the presence of Jesus, and "*it also contains many praises of*

---

1 In Joan. 1:4; PG 14:25; R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder Book Co., 1944, p. 281.
2 Comm. on John. 1, Chs 5-15.
3 Michael Green: Evangelism in the Early Church, p. 51.
4 In Joan 1:8 PG 14:33; R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder Book Co., 1944, p. 280-281.

Him and many of His teachings, on whose account the Gospel is a gospel[5]*.*"

WITNESSING TO CHRIST

Christians used to witness to Christ even in the public places of the towns. Celsus complained of the spread of the faith by these means, "*We see that those who display their trickery in the market places and go about begging would never enter a gathering of intelligent men, nor would they dare to reveal their noble beliefs in their presence: but whenever they see adolescent boys and a crowd of slaves and a company of fools, they push themselves in and show off.*"

This was an accusation that hurt Origen very much. How could anyone call "reading of the Bible, and explanations of the reading" together with "exhortation to goodness" *trickery?*

And as for the claim that only the ignorant were attracted by Christianity presented in this guise, Origen indignantly and lengthily denies it. Christianity is the true philosophy, and market place evangelism is one perfectly proper way for an educated Christian to disseminate it[6].

Origen refers to men of this sort when he replies to Celsus: "*Christians do all in their power to spread the faith all over the world. Some of them accordingly make it the business of their life to wander not only from city to city but from town to town and village to village in order to win fresh converts for the Lord.*" From being motivated by selfish considerations, "they often refuse to accept the bare necessities of life; even if necessity drives them to accept a gift on occasion, they are content with getting their most pressing needs satisfied, although many people are willing to give them much more than that. And if at the present day, owing to the large number of people who are converted, some rich men of good position and delicate high-born women give hospitality to the mes-

5 In Joan 1:5 PG 14:28; R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder Book Co., 1944, p. 281.
6 Michael Green: Evangelism in the Early Church, p.171.

sengers of the faith, will anyone venture to assert that some of the latter preach the Christian faith merely for the sake of being honored? In the early days when great peril threatened the preachers of the faith in particular, such a suspicion could not easily have been entertained; and even at the present day the discredit with which Christians are assailed by unbelievers outweighs any honor that some of their fellow-believers show them[7].

Their aim was throughout pastoral and evangelistic; that is why they adapted their message to the capabilities of the hearers. "*We confess that we do want to educate all men with the Word of God, even if Celsus does not wish to believe it*[8]" was Origen's proud boast, and he carried it out. In addition to his Christian pupils in the school at Alexandria, he had pagan hearers to whom he gave instruction in the faith[9]. Indeed, Julia Mamaea, the queen-mother, heard him lecture[10]. It would be a mistake to think that the apologists and theologians were anything less than evangelists. The objective of their lives was to bring men of all sorts and intellectual abilities to the truth about God, man and the universe as it was revealed in Jesus Christ[11].

ADAM

Origen believes that Adam, as the father of mankind attained salvation through the Cross of Christ. He refers to a tradition that Adam was buried in the same place that Christ was crucified, and in that place *"found resurrection through the resurrection of the Savior... For it was unfitting that while the many sprung from him should receive remission of sins and the blessing of resurrection, he-the father of mankind-should not all the more attain to grace of this kind."*

Origen believes that Adam was a prophet.

---

7 Michael Green: Evangelism in the Early Church, p. 168-9.
8 Contra Celsus 3:54.
9 Eusebius: HE 6:3.
10 Ibid. 6:21.
11 Michael Green: Evangelism in the Early Church, p. 172.

> *And **among the prophets Adam** too is reckoned to have prophesied the great mystery in Christ and in the Church, when he said: For this cause a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they shall be two in one flesh. It is clearly with reference to these words of his that the Apostle says that this is a great mystery, but I speak **in** Christ and **in** the Church.*

JOHN THE BAPTIST

1. The word "John" in Hebrew means "God is merciful;" Origen says that it means "the grace of God."

> *"John" means "the grace of God". Hence when Zachariah wrote on the tablet that the name was John, immediately his mouth was opened by the grace of God...and his tongue, no longer bound by unbelief, was restored to him*[12].

2. St. John is the ***voice***, while our Lord Jesus Christ is the ***Speech***. How great is the difference between a voice and Speech?!

> *Now we know voice and speech to be different things. The voice can be produced without any meaning and with no speech in it, and similarly speech can be reported to the mind without voice, as when we make mental excursions, within ourselves. And thus the Savior is, in one view of Him, Speech, and John differs from Him; for as the Savior is Speech, John is voice.*
>
> *John himself invites me to take this view of him, for to those who asked who he was, he answered. "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare the way of the Lord! make His paths straight!"*
>
> *This explains, perhaps, how it was that Zachary lost his voice at the birth of the voice which points out the Word of*

12 Hom on Luke. 9 on 1:56.

God, and only recovered it when the voice, forerunner of the Word, was born.

A voice must be perceived with the ears if the mind is afterwards to receive the speech which the voice indicates. Hence, John is, in point of his birth, a little older than Christ, for our voice comes to us before our speech. But John also points to Christ; for speech is brought forward by the voice.

And Christ is baptized by John, though John declares himself to have need to be baptized by Christ; for with men speech is purified by voice, though the natural way is that speech should purify the voice which indicates it. In a word, when John points out Christ, it is man pointing out God, the Savior incorporeal, the voice pointing out the Word[13].

3. The baptism of St. John prepared the way to the baptism of our Lord Jesus Christ.

John has a right and duty to baptize even though he is not the promised Messiah because his humble baptism in water is a necessary preparation for the spiritual baptism of the Messiah who is to come[14].

John (the Baptist) "turned many of the sons of Israel to the Lord their God",... but our Lord Jesus Christ enlightened everyone to the knowledge of the truth, for that is His work[15].

4. St. John the Baptist knew our Lord, even while he was in his mother's womb, but his knowledge was not perfect till He was baptized.

He knew Him from his mother's womb, but not all about Him. He did not know perhaps that this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit and with fire, when he saw the Spirit descending[16].

---

13 Comm. on John, book 2:26.
14 J.W. Trigg: Origen, SCM, p.155.
15 In Luke hom. 4 on 1:16.
16 Comm. on John, book 1, 37.

5. Origen believes that the spirit and power of Elijah the Prophet - not the soul - were in St. John the Baptist.

> *I have thought it necessary to dwell some time on the examination of the doctrine of transmigration, because of the suspicion of some who suppose that the soul under consideration was the same in Elijah and in John, being called in the former case Elijah, and in the second case John...*
>
> *The soul of John being in no wise Elijah*[17].

> *For in truth, while many prophets are his equal, none is his superior in the (measure of) grace given unto him.' (John the Baptist speaks): 'I have attained to so great grace as to be deemed worthy of the prophecy which foretold of my life on earth in the words "I am the voice of one crying..." and "Behold I send my messenger..."' (When Mary conceived she stayed with Elizabeth) 'when the one child who was being formed [the unborn Jesus] graciously bestowed on the other [John] with some exactness His own likeness, and caused him to be conformed to His glory. That is why later John was supposed to be Christ, from the similarity of appearance, and Jesus was thought to be John raised from the dead, by those who were not capable of distinguishing the image from its own likeness.*

THE SAINTS

1. The saints, for Origen, are ***all spiritual persons, living and dead***. Such people have the power to intercede with God for us and to obtain for us the forgiveness of our sins.

When Origen speaks of prayer to the saints, he meant requesting the prayers of fellow Christians, and these which are offered to the departed saints. In fact, the departed saints may be better able to intercede for us than our fellow Christians since they

17 Commentary on Matthew, Book 13:2 (Cf. ANF).

have obtained fullness of knowledge and are no longer hindered by bodily passions.

Since the saints at rest are still members of the body of Christ, in which all members care for each other, we may safely presume that they take an interest in our needs[18].

> *And as knowledge is revealed to the saints now through a glass in a dark manner, but then face to face, so it would be unreasonable not to employ the analogy for all the other virtues also, which if prepared already in this life will be perfected in the next. Now the one great virtue according to the Word of God is love of one's neighbor. We must believe that the saints who have died have this love in a far greater degree towards them that are engaged n the combat of life, than those who are still subject to human weakness and are engaged in the combat along with their weaker brethren. The saying: if one member suffer any thing, all the members suffer with it, or if one member glory, all the members rejoice with it, does not apply only to those who here on earth love their brethren For one can quite properly say also of the love of those who have quit this present life: ... the solicitude for all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is scandalized, and I am not on fire?*[19]

Origen believes that the two and half tribes who passed the Jordan to fight with other tribes till the end, and returned to their inherited land in the eastern side of the Jordan refers to the departed members of the Church who struggle with us by praying till all of us will inherit[20].

Origen often speaks of their intercession with God, starting from two texts of the Old Testament: the dead Samuel prophesies for Saul at the house of the witch of Endor and of Jeremiah it is

---

18 J.W. Trigg: Origen, SCM, p.160-1.
19 On Prayer 11:2 (ACW).
20 In Jos. hom. 16:5.

written: 'He who is the friend of his brethren and prays much for the people and for the whole holy city, Jeremiah, the prophet of God'. Origen cites these two examples several times to show that the saints in heaven do not remain idle, but are full of charity for their brethren still in this world, whom they help with their prayers and intercessions.

Several texts emphasize the intervention of the martyrs, co-redeemers with Christ, on behalf of their brethren. The saints of the Old Testament also go before us in the front rank in our battles with the evil powers[21].

The joy of Christ and the saints will not be complete until the whole Body is reconstituted in the heavenly Jerusalem[22].

2. Origen states that saints have their own sins. Ernest Latko says,

> In commenting on the name *saints* as applied to the people of God, Origen, in one of his *Homilies on the Book of Numbers*, reminds us that because they are saints they are not necessarily exempt from sin. Their holiness is not absolute; it is relative and consists in a consecration of their lives to God, Who in His goodness preserves them from the gravest faults[23].
>
> *Those who are not saints die in their sins; but those who are saints do penance for their sins, put up with their wounds, understand their faults, and so they search out the priest, and ask for a cure; they look forward to a purification through the bishop. That is why therefore the word of the law cautiously and with significance states that the bishops and priests receive the sins not of anyone, but of the saints alone; for he is a 'saint' who attends to his sin through the bishop*[24].

21 Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p. 247.
22 Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p. 247.
23 Ernest Latko: Origen's Concept of penance, Laval 1949, p. 82.
24 In Num. hom. 10:1 PG 12:638.

A SAINTLY LIFE

Therefore, "be holy, says the Lord, even as I am holy" (Lev. 20:7). What does it mean "even as I am holy"? Just as, it says, I am set apart and separated at a distance from everything that is praised or worshipped either on earth or in heaven; just as I surpass every creature and I am set apart from everything which I have made; so also you be set apart from all those who are not holy nor dedicated to God...

Finally this same word which is called hagios in the Greek language signifies that it is something outside the earth[25].

But if you wish to recall some other of the saints, the word of Scripture replies to you, saying, "There is no man upon the earth who does good and sins not" (Eccl. 7:20). Therefore, only Jesus rightly "has perfect hands"; who alone "does not sin" (1 Pet. 2:22), that is, who has perfect and whole works of his hands[26].

A COMPARISON BETWEEN SINNERS AND SAINTS

With regards to the fact that he ordered "to shave off all his hair"(Cf. Lev. 14:9), I think that each work of death placed in the soul which originated in sin is ordered to be cast away-for now they are called the hairs. For it is preferable for the sinner to set right everything that is born in him either in council or in word or in deed if he truly wants to be cleansed, to remove it and cast it off and not allow anything to remain. But the saint ought to preserve every hair, and if possible, "a razor" ought not "pass over his head" that he be not able to cut off anything from his wise thoughts either in words or deeds. Whence, of course,

25 Homilies On Leviticus 11:1 (Cf. Frs. of the Church)
26 Homilies On Leviticus 12:3 (Cf. Frs. of the Church)

it is that "a razor" is said 'not to have passed over the head" of Samuel (1 Sam. 1:11); but also from all the Nazarenes, (Cf. Num. 6.5) who are the just because of the just it has been written, "whatever he does will prosper, and his leaves will not fall" (Cf. Ps. 1:3). Whence also, "the hairs of the head" of the Lord's disciples also are said "to be numbered" (Cf. Matt. 10:30), that is , all their acts, all their words, all their thoughts are kept before the Lord because they are just, because they are holy. But every work, every word, every thought of a sinner ought to be cut off. And this is what is meant: "That every hair of his body is shaved off and then he will be clean" (Cf. Lev 14:9)[27].

THE TRUE BEAUTY

He that has understood what is meant by the beauty of the bride whom the Bridegroom, the Word of God, loves, that is to say, of the soul blooming with beauty supercelestial and supramundane, will be ashamed to honor with the same term "beauty" the bodily beauty of women or child or man. The flesh is incapable of real beauty, since it is all ugliness. For all flesh is as grass; and the glory thereof (John 3:29), as seen in the reputed beauty of women and children, is compared by the prophet to a flower: All flesh is as grass, and all the glory thereof as the flower of the field . ... The grass is withered and the flower is fallen; but the word of the Lord endures forever (Isaiah 40:6-8)[28].

NATURAL LAW

Origen used the familiar Stoic distinction between “the ultimate law of nature” and “the written code of cities” to justify the Christian refusal to obey the idolatrous laws of the nations, including Rome; he was “apparently the first to justify the right to resist tyranny by appeal to natural law.” But the Christian acceptance of

27 Homilies on Leviticus 8:11 (Cf. Frs. of the Church).
28 On Prayer 17:2.

the pagan idea of natural law did not compel a Christian theologian such as Origen to be oblivious of the relativity in the laws of the nations[29].

Origen believes that all men partake of God:

> *I am of the opinion then, that the activity of the Father and the Son is to be seen both in saints and in sinners, in rational men and in dumb animals, yes, and even in lifeless things and in absolutely everything that exists; but the activity of the Holy Spirit does not extend at all either to lifeless things, or to things that have life but yet are dumb, nor is it to be found in those who, though rational, still lie in wickedness (1 John 5:19) and are not wholly converted to better things. Only in those who are already turning to better things and walking in the ways of Jesus Christ, that is, who are engaged in good deeds and who abide in God (1 Cor. 4:17; Eph. 2:10; 1 John 4:13), is the work of the Holy Spirit, I think, to be found.*
>
> *That the activity of the Father and the Son is to be found both in saints and in sinners is clear from the fact that all rational beings are partakers of the word of God, that is, of reason, and so have implanted within them some seeds, as it were, of wisdom and righteousness, which is Christ. And all things that exist derive their share of being from him who truly exists, who said through Moses, 'I am that I am' (Exodus 3:14); which participation in God the Father extends to all, both righteous and sinners, rational and irrational creatures and absolutely everything that exists. Certainly the apostle Paul shows that all have a share in Christ, when he says, 'Say not in your heart, who shall ascend into heaven? that is, to bring Christ down; or who shall descend into the abyss? that is, to bring Christ back again from the dead. But what says the scripture? The word is nigh you, even in your mouth and in your heart'*

29 Contra Celsus 5:37; Jaroslav Pelikan: The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100-600), p. 32.

(Rom. 10:6-8). By this he indicates that Christ is 'in the heart' of all men, in virtue of His being the Word or Reason, by sharing in Which men are rational...

Again, the gospel teaches that no men are without communion with God, when the Savior speaks as follows, 'The kingdom of God comes not with observation; neither shall they say, Lo here! or, there! but the kingdom of God is within you' (Luke 17:20, 21)[30].

If he [non-Christian] keep justice or preserve chastity, or maintain prudence, temperance, and modesty; although he be alien from eternal life, because he does not believe in Christ, and cannot enter the kingdom of heaven, because he has not been born again of water and of the Spirit, still it seems, according to the Apostle's words, that the glory and honor and peace of his good works cannot perish utterly[31].

Yet later in the same sermon he says:

I can scarcely persuade myself that there is any work which can claim remuneration from God as a debt, since even the very ability to do, or think, or speak, comes to us from the generous gift of God. How then can he be in debt to us, who has first put us in his debt[32]*?*

Without any derogation of the mission of the Savior, the Academy of Alexandria discovered in every individual a sense of divine things and the hidden image of God[33].

Part of our virtues we possess from our own resources, and we have gained it through our own choice; the other part is from God-that is, if we have such faith in the Savior and His Father as our free will allows: and for this

30 De Principiis 1:3:5,6 (Cf. Butterworth).
31 Hom. on Rom., 2:7; Carl A. Volz: Life and Practice in the Early Church, Minneapolis, 1990, p. 116.
32 Ibid. 4:1.
33 R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder Book Co., 1944, p. 298.

we may have recourse to Him as did Jesus' disciples with their "increase our faith-where "increase" implies that they were asking Him for God-given faith in addition to what they had gained of their own choice. Paul expressly says the "in proportion to our faith" (Rom 12:6) (i.e. the faith within us that is due to the exercise of our own free will) "the gifts of the Spirit are bestowed". "To another is given faith, by the same Spirit (1 Cor 12:9). If faith is given to a man in proportion to the faith he already has, it is clear that the God-given faith comes alongside that which we have achieved of our own resources. And so with the other virtues. Since then virtue is a grace, since it makes its possessor a "favored one", it follows that the part which comes from God comes alongside that already achieved by our own purpose; and this is the meaning of "grace for grace" being given us by God[34].

THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

He begins with the statement that, since the creature has received his being, he possesses the good in a manner that is limited, partial, and imperfect. In this participation Origen will seek the cause of sin and evil, which, according to the heretics, are caused by God. To refute this pessimism of theirs, let us begin by taking a less lofty view of man and by estimating at its real value the immutable virtue which adorns all the sages and wise men of this world. Their well-known perseverance is rendered possible, first by God's primary gift; then by wisdom, which undertakes the education of the soul; and finally by the Holy Ghost, who makes the soul perfect[35].

It is wrong to think that the darkness vainly tries, like an active substance, to overtake the light. On the contrary, it always disappears and ceases to exist. In order that falsehood and impos-

34 Comm. on John Frag. 11 on 1:16.
35 R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder Book Co., 1944, p. 236-237.

ture should be dispelled, is it not sufficient for the light of truth to appear? However strange it may seem, the darkness must be far away if it is to try to reach the light. The nearer it approaches the light, the more quickly it is dissolved. We can say, then, that error has strength and movement within us only when we are far removed from truth. Only then does it move forward to come to grips with our understanding; and each time it approaches the enlightened intelligence, it shows its own nothingness." In the wide sweep of this passage, written in the loftiest terms of Alexandrian thought, we see the reflection of all the vital elements of the Academy over which Origen presided: the rejection of Gnostic dualism, the high regard in which intellectualism was held, and the glowing optimism based upon the feeling that the religion revealed by Christ would be preached to all men[36].

On the one hand, he rejects the Gnostic theory, which makes evil an alien substance, not created by God; on the other, he excludes the Stoic idea that evil is only apparent. In his opinion, evil is certainly real, but it can be conducive to good and it will eventually cease to exist. Hence the existence of evil is consistent with the goodness of God. When God created the world, he knew that evil would one day come into it, because where there are creatures endowed with freedom it is inevitable. If he did not prevent it, the reasons were, first, that he has a sovereign respect for the freedom of the will and, second, that he knew it would help the execution of his plan. As always, Origen means this quite literally. There is no evil except in men's wills. The sinner's ill-will may have consequences both for the sinner himself and for other people. This corresponds to the two sides of evil: in so far as evil acts against its author, it is sin; in so far as its acts on others, it is suffering. But both may lead to good. Sin is allowed to exist so that if men want to see what it is like, they may wallow in it, and then, finding how bitter it tastes, grow weary of it and of their own accord go back to the good. Experience of evil thus appears as the

36 R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder Book Co., 1944, p. 295-6.

essential preliminary to the recovery of the good by creatures possessing freewill[37].

> *Now to withdraw from the good is nothing else than to be immersed in evil; for it is certain that to be evil means to be lacking in good. Hence it is that in whatever degree one declines from the good, one descends into an equal degree of wickedness. And so each mind, neglecting the good either more or less in proportion to its own movements, was drawn to the opposite of good, which undoubtedly is evil[38].*
>
> *As therefore God is 'fire' and the angels 'a flame of fire' and the saints are all 'fervent in spirit' so on the contrary those who have fallen away from the love of God must undoubtedly be said to have cooled in their affection for Him and to have become cold. For the Lord also says, 'Because iniquity has multiplied, the love of the many shall grow cold'. And further, all those things, whatever they may be, which in the holy Scripture are likened to the adverse power, you invariably find to be cold. For the devil is called a 'serpent' and a 'dragon,' and what can be found colder than these?[39].*

THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION[40]

The doctrine of election was important for Origen, especially in his dealings with the Jews. His concern was twofold.

First, he wanted to show that the election of Gentiles, as taught by the Church, was prophesied in the Hebrew Bible.

Second, he wanted to confirm this interpretation of the biblical passages in question by reference to the history of the Jews

---

37 Jean Daniélou: Origen, p. 277.
38 De Principiis 2:9:2 (Cf. Butterworth).
39 De Principiis 2:8:3 (Cf. Butterworth).
40 Gary Wayne Barkley: Origen; Homilies on Leviticus, Washington, 1990, p. 8.

and the Christian church since the advent of Christ. De Lange argues that the second was the more important for Origen.[i]

MARIOLOGY

1. In speaking of "Virginity," we notice how Origen considers St. Mary as the first virgin and the model of virgins.

2. Origen alludes to St. Mary as ***restoring the womankind the honor it had lost*** through Eve's sin; in this way a woman "finds salvation in child bearing" 1 Tim. 2:15. He says,

> *The joy trumpeted by Gabriel to Mary destroyed the sentence of sorrow leveled by God against Eve*[41].
>
> *Just as sin began with the woman and then reached the man, so too the good tidings had their beginning with the women: Mary and Elizabeth*[42].
>
> *"Blessed are you among women." For no woman has been or ever can be a partaker in such grace. There has been but one divine conception, one divine birth, one bearer of the God-man.' (Mary reflects) 'Since I have been deemed worthy of such great and wondrous grace from God... I above all women must glorify the One who is working such miracles in me.*

3. Origen interpreted the sword that would pierce St. Mary according to Simeon's prophecy (Luke 2:35) as doubts that would invade her on seeing her Son crucified. He stated that, like all human beings, she needed redemption from her sins[43].

4. Origen speaks about the ***soul's maternity***. St. Mary, as the mother of God, represents the Church, whose members spiritually bear God in their souls, Origen considered the spiritual life of Christians after baptism as the growth of Christ Himself within their motherly souls.

---

41 Lucan. Hom. 6.
42 Lucan. Hom. 8.
43 Hom. in Lucas 17.

Just as an infant is formed in the womb, so it seems to me that the Word of God is in the heart of a soul, which has received the grace of baptism and thereafter perceives within itself the word of faith ever more glorious and more plain[44].

It would be wrong to proclaim the incarnation of the Son of God from the holy Virgin without admitting also His incarnation in the Church... Everyone of us must, therefore, recognize His coming in the flesh by the pure Virgin, but at the same time we must recognize His coming in the spirit of each one of us[45].

Hear this, O shepherds of the churches,
O shepherds of God.
All through time the angel comes down and announces to you that today and every day
the Redeemer is born,
that is Christ the Lord[46]*!*

NEW NAMES

In his work *Peri Pascha*, Origen refers to receiving new names perhaps on baptism, as a sign of the new life in Jesus Christ. He gives many examples of men whose names were changed by a divine call.

Those who have been made perfect have new names because they are no longer the same but have become other than what they were[47].

44 Hom. on Exod. 10:4.
45 De Sargiusga 8:2.
46 Hom. on Luke 12.
47 Peri Pascha 7 (Translated by Robert J. Daly - ACW).

SIGNS AND MIRACLES

Origen points out that, unlike magic, Christian miracles are always wrought for the benefit of men, that they are done by men whose lives are exemplary, not wicked, and by faith in the power of God, not of evil[48]. No magical lore and sophisticated training was necessary: indeed "it is, generally speaking, uneducated people who do this kind of work" by means of prayer, reliance on the name of Jesus, and some brief allusion to His story[49].For it was not the power of men, or their knowledge of the right formulae which produced these cures, but "the power in the word of Christ[50]."

When Celsus asserted that God did not will anything that was contrary to nature, Origen countered with the teaching that whatever was done in accordance with the will and word of God could not be contrary to nature; this applied especially to so -called miracles. In his own exegesis of the miracle stories in the Bible, Origen seems to have held to their literal factuality, while in Against Celsus and especially in On First principles he argued at length that these stories were not to be taken as they stood, but as mystical statements of spiritual truths[51].

> *And as they believe the signs and not in Him but in His name, Jesus "did not trust Himself to them, because He knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man, because He knew what is in every man[52]."*
>
> *Next let us remark in what way, when asked in regard to one sign, that He might show it from heaven, to the Pharisees and Sadducees who put the question, He answers and says, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and there shall be no sign given to it, but the sign of*

48 Contra Celsus 2:51.
49 Contra Celsus 1:6; 7:4.
50 Contra Celsus 7:4; Michael Green: Evangelism in the Early Church, p. 190-191.
51 Contra Celsus 5:23; In Matt. hom. 11:2; 13:6; De Principiis 4:2:9:15-16 Jaroslav Pelikan: The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100-600),p. 137.
52 Comm. on John, book 10:28.

Jonah the prophet," when also, "He left them and departed" (Matt. 17:4)...

Seek you also every sign in the Old Scriptures as indicative of some passage in the New Scripture, and that which is named a sign in the New Covenant as indicative of something either in the age about to be, or even in the subsequent generations after that the sign has taken place[53].

THE CROSS

The crucifixion of Jesus has two sides.

The Son of God has been crucified in the body with a visible method, while Satan was invisibly crucified, the apostle proclaims, "having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the Cross" Col. 2:14.

Then, there is two meanings to the Cross of the Lord: the first is mentioned by Peter the Apostle, "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that you should follow His steps" 1 Pet 2:21. The other meaning presents the chaliee of Christ's victory over Satan[54].

For it is impossible for a leper to be cleansed from sin without "the wood" of the cross, unless he also has recourse to "the wood" on which the Savior, as the Apostle Paul says, "despoiled the principalities and powers triumphing over them on the wood"(Cf. Col. 2:15,14)[55].

53 Commentary on Matthew, Book 12:4 (Cf. ANF).
54 In Jos. hom. 8:3.
55 Homilies on Leviticus 8:10 (Cf. Frs. of the Church).

CASTING A LOT

The Apostle (Acts 1:23-26) explains that if we use it (the casing of a lot) *in absolute faith together with prayer, it reveals to men the hidden will of God very clearly*[56].

THE COMMANDMENT

Those who receive within themselves the greatness of the commandment and its priority, realize this through three conditions:

a. with all their hearts, they hold steadfastly in themselves the perfection of this love, its thoughts and its works.

b. with all their souls they be ready to sacrifice their own-selves on behalf of the service of God who created everything, when there is a need for this for the progress of His word. God is loved by the whole soul when there is no place of the soul outside the faith[57].

CHRISTIANS AND THE STATE

None better than Christians fight for the Emperor, but we fight "forming a special army," an army of piety, by offering our prayers to God[58].

MEN AND WOMEN

The Holy Scripture in fact does not differiate between men and women according to their sex. For before Christ there is no difference among the two sexes, but the difference is according to the heart which divides (the believers) into men and women.

---

56 In Jos. hom. 23:2.
57 PG 13:1599.
58 Contra Celsius 8:73; Thomas Halton, p. 145.

How many women are considered as strong men before God?! And how many men are considered as weak women?! [59]

THE HONOR OF WOMEN

Before the birth of John, Elizabeth prophesied; and before the birth of the Lord our Savior, Mary prophesied.

Thus it started with woman and reached to man, this salvation in the world started with women who overcame the weakness of their sex[60].

GRACE OF PROPHECY

Thanks be to God, that although the grace of prophecy was confined to Israel, now a still greater grace than all they had has been poured out on the Gentiles through our Savior Jesus[61].

ABRAHAM, ISAAC, AND JACOB

This.. threefold division of divine philosophy (moral, natural, contemplative) was, I think, privileged in [Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob].... For Abraham shows forth, by his obedience, moral philosophy..., Isaac, who digs wells and searches the mysteries of nature, represents natural philosophy..., Jacob is the contemplative, and was named "Israel" because of his meditating on divine things (cf. his visions).... Hence we are not surprised to find that these three blessed men built altars to God, i.e. consecrated to Him the progress of their philosophy, that they might

59 In Jos. hom 9:9.
60 In Luc. hom. 8:1.
61 Comm. on Matt. 10:22.

teach that these things should come under the heading not of human arts but of God's grace[62].

RACISM

The city of Alexandria lay on one of the frontiers of the Roman Empire. Its great port was the gateway to the main roads of Syria. When the Christian citizen of Alexandria looked out upon his immediate environment, he was faced with the problem of different races trying to live together. The nationalities that were subject to the empire of the Caesar remained unchanged by the culture and the laws of their conquerors. On the contrary, they evinced a tendency to maintain their own national individualism, at least to the point of reviving a number of their sacred traditions. How could the upholders of Christianity maintain that there was no longer either Greek or barbarian, Roman or Jew? [63]

He argued that every soul in the world is placed in the rank best fitted for its capacity, and that in a forgotten past each soul's freedom of will either incited it to progress by imitation of God or reduced it to failure through negligence. In this way he explained why a harmony exists between the inner life of the rational being and the outer circumstances that move him to action. Divine providence continues to regulate each soul according to its needs by preparing for it occasions or circumstances which correspond to the variety of its movements or of its feelings and purpose.

The equality of souls is demonstrated by the consummation common to all of them. In the course of the spiritual struggle in which they are now engaged they never lose the possibility of attaining it ultimately. The fact that brutal or perverted beings exist in this world must not cast doubt on this truth. A single act of free will is sufficient to manifest the immortal destiny of a savage and to show the kinship he enjoys with the holiest spirits. In the unenlightened minds of rude and unlettered men as well as in the

62 Comm. on Song of Songs, Prologue.
63 R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder Book Co., 1944, p. 251.

minds of those who possess a refined feeling for things invisible, there is revealed a mode of participation proper to all creatures whom God has endowed with intelligence[64].

✞ ✞ ✞

[i]de Lange, *Origen and the Jews*, 96-98.

64 R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder Book Co., 1944, p. 252.