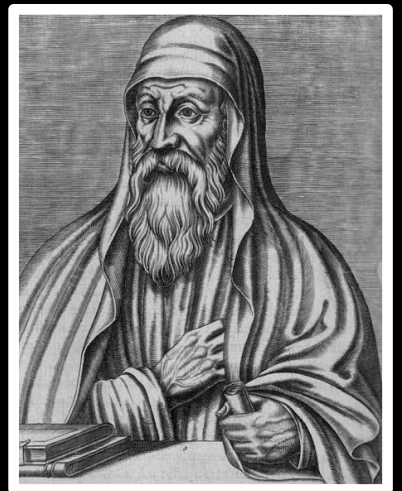




Jesus Christ

In the Writings of Origen

Fr. Tadros Y. Malaty



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Jesus Christ

In the Writings of Origen

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Christ the Lover of Mankind

One of my children asked me about Origen's theory of progression, which encouraged me to re-publish our book on "Jesus Christ in the writings of Origen," that answers this question in detail. Although you will find numerous quotes from his writings in this book, they are considered to be a very small sample of his teachings on the person of our Saviour, the lover of mankind.

In this discourse, we will take a look at Origen's view of Christ and his practical experience with the unity in Him. His views could be summarized in the following:

1. Christ is eternal and there was never a moment when He did not exist, for the Father cannot be without the Son from the beginning and there was not a moment when the Father was separate from the Son, who is the Wisdom and Power of God.
2. Christ's divinity is not limited to any place, for He fills heaven and earth.
3. His incarnation, to be one of us, was by His own will for it was said, "who loved me and gave Himself for me." (Gal. 2:20) His humility did not make his hypostasis less than the Father's. It was the pleasure of the Father and the Holy Spirit to reveal God's love to humanity through the Son's passion, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension to heaven just as the Son said of Himself, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." (Jn 3:16)
4. He humbled Himself because of His divine economy and His love for humanity, without any change occurring to His essence, for He is one with the Father and the Holy Spirit in the same divine essence.
5. Origen affirmed that Christ became a true human, that He may honour humanity in the eyes of the angels and that He may sanctify our bodies, our senses, our feelings, our minds, and our souls.
6. By His incarnation, He united us with Him that He may renew our nature, grow it, and grants it participation in the eternal inheritance.
7. On the cross, He declared His love to us, He crucified Satan and his powers, slayed death, and made humanity His own mystical body, with Him being the head of the holy Church.
8. Salvation does not end at the forgiveness of sins. It includes our reconciliation with the Holy Trinity, partaking in Christ who is our heavenly High-Priest, our physician, our teacher, our bread of Life, our true Light, the Wisdom of God, the divine Truth, the Way leading us to the bosom of the Father, and the King who

dwells in us and establishes His kingdom within us. He is the servant who opens our hearts to love and serve everyone. He is the hidden treasure, our true joy, the bridegroom of our souls, our consolation, who transforms us to be the people of the house of God.

The aim of this small book in your hands is not to hold a dry, destructive dialogue, but rather to help us recover God's image in us, and that our lives and our worship may be a true witness to God's love to all humanity.

I am also looking forward, by the grace of God, to publishing another book on Origen and the heresy of progression in the Holy Trinity that was publicized by Arius, the heretic.

What is Origen's goal of writing on the oneness of God and on each hypostasis of the Trinity?

1. He did so to have a constructive discussion with the heretics in order to witness to the truth that the believers may not stumble. He did so also in order to correct those heretics, and to urge them to have a practical fellowship with God.
2. To have a constructive (positive) response to the heretics.
3. To reveal the importance of doctrine in the life of the Church, the congregation, and the priests, by utilizing the gift of intellect granted to us by God and at the same time not by engaging in dry, intellectual dialogues at the expense of spiritual growth and edification.
4. To be continually in the presence of God.
5. To be able, while still in the flesh, to taste heaven and the joyful spiritual life.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with us all. Amen.

Important Notice:

Many of the Church Fathers in the first three centuries were philosophers, for the Church was able to win many philosophers to the faith. Those philosophers benefitted from their background and became great scholars and teachers in the Church, without being ordained as clergy. Using their strong background and well-spoken speeches, they were able to win many pagans and atheists to the faith. A great example of this was Athenagoras (the first dean of the school of Alexandria) whose writings were all philosophical to be able to address atheists at the time. For this reason, we should not be surprised when we see those

Fathers freely using philosophical terms until the time of the Council of Nicaea, in which the theological terms became standardized by the consensus of bishops in the east and the west.

JESUS CHRIST

1. Origen, in his writings and teachings, focuses on Christ. His heart is abundantly inflamed with the love of Christ, as he finds in Him, the fulfillment to all his needs. Origen urges us to accept Him as our heavenly King, our heavenly bread, our hidden treasure, our Way, our door, our Truth, the beginning and the end...etc.
2. Origen believes that humanity has fallen from its heavenly status, and lost its freedom, and is unable to be restored to its original state without Christ.
3. Christ, in His infinite love, stretches out His hands for mankind for their eternal glorification, but not by force.
4. In His love, He purchased us by His precious blood, as a cost to our freedom.
5. As the Savior of the world, He is the High-Priest who offers His life as a unique Sacrifice.
6. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the Heavenly Bridegroom, who works in us to unite with our souls as His own bride.
7. He is the true, heavenly, and unique Teacher and Physician who saves our souls from the darkness of ignorance and corruption, granting us Himself as the Truth, Medicine, and Righteousness.
8. The prophets of the Old Testament were joyfully waiting for the Messiah (Christ). Origen finds our Lord Jesus Christ everywhere in the Old Testament, and ***views the whole Bible as centered around Him only***¹.

¹ Job 5:46f, Rowan A. Greer: Origen, Paulist Press, 1979, page xi.

CHRIST THE LOVER OF MANKIND

Origen believes that our Lord Jesus Christ is the Savior of mankind.

Christ who loved humanity, even when they were sinners and enemies, and sacrificed Himself on their behalf, is asking to have a personal relationship with every soul. Therefore, Origen attributes Christ to himself as his own, savior calling Him “my Christ.”

*The Apostle (St. Paul) declares what is written about Adam and Eve thus: “This is a great mystery but I speak concerning Christ and the church” (Eph. 5:32); He has loved her so that He gave Himself up for her, while she was yet disobedient, even as he says: “While we were **still, 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 to me³.*

THE DIVINITY OF CHRIST

Origen saw that the Person of the Word, was not reduced to a role or an office⁴. The Son is a *Hypostasis*, Living Wisdom. He is consubstantial to the Father, and therefore co-eternal and equal to 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 radiance⁵. For Origen, this eternity and continuity, cannot be expressed in any human language⁶.

² Comm. on the Songs of Songs, book 2:3 (ACW).

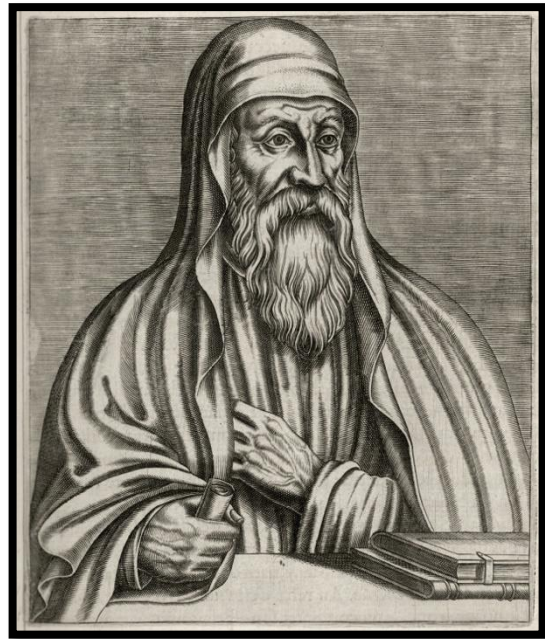
³ Contra Celsus 3:31

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.

“There was never a time when He (The Son) was absent. For when God was, 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 so, consider that this means that there was a time when Wisdom was not, the Word was not, and Life was not⁷.



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, today I have 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 eternal and unseen life. The day is today with Him in which the Son was begotten, and thus the beginning of His birth is not found, as neither is the day of it⁸.

Wherefore, we recognize that God was always the Father of his Only-begotten Son, who was born indeed of Him and draws His being through 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, with the bare intellect and reason...

St. 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...

⁷ De Principiis 4:28; Charles Bigg: The Christian Platonists of Alexandria, p. 207-208.

⁸ Comm. on John 1:32 (ANF).

This is an eternal and everlasting beginning, as brightness is begotten from light. For he does not become Son by an external way, through adoption, 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 was begotten. 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.

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 true.

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 and eternal Brightness. 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: and thus, there is no inequality; no Hypostasis is greater in status or less.

"Now, if any one were to say that, through those who are partakers of the Word of God, or of His Wisdom, or His Truth, or His Life, the Word and Wisdom itself appeared to be contained in a place, we should have to say to him in answer, that there is no doubt that Christ, in respect of being the Word or Wisdom, or all other things, was in Paul, and that he therefore said, Do you seek a proof of Christ speaking in me? and again, I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me. Seeing, then, He was in Paul, who will doubt that He was in a

⁹ De Principiis 1:2:2-5 (Cf. Butterworth).

¹⁰ De Principiis 1:2:11 (Cf. Butterworth).

¹¹ Comm. on John 1:34.

similar manner in Peter and in John, and in each one of the saints; and not only in those who are upon the earth, but in those also who are in heaven? For it is absurd to say that Christ was in Peter and in Paul, but not in Michael the archangel, nor 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 to 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 everyone. And He is present more fully and more clearly 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 such conclusion, when in Jesus' corporeal absence, he said to the crowds, "Among you stands, One whom you do not know, it is He who comes after me, is preferred before me, whose sandals straps, 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.

"Christ Jesus, He who came to earth, was begotten of the Father before all creation. 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 the last days, He emptied Himself and became Man, but He was still God; 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. Jesus Christ was truly born and truly suffered and not merely in appearance, and truly died like all humans. Moreover, He truly rose from the dead, and after the resurrection, He was then taken up into heaven¹².

*Hear also Paul say, "You are God's field, God's building," (1Cor. 3.9). What then is that "sanctuary" which has "not been made by the hands of men," but prepared by the hands of God? Hear the Wisdom saying, "Wisdom 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 hands 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.) This is the **"sanctuary" of the flesh which was taken up and "cut" from the mountain of human nature and the substance of flesh "without hands," that is, apart from the work of men¹³.***

Joseph C. McLelland, under the title "**God the Anonymous**" deals with Origen's view on the incarnation of the Logos. He writes,

"For Origen, the question [of the incarnation] must be 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

¹² De Principiis 1:1:4 (Cf. Butterworth).

¹³ In Exodus hom .6:12 (Cf. Ronad E Heine- Frs. of the Church, vol. 71.)

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 God¹⁴.”

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 “if we affirm that God Himself will come down to men. And he thinks, it follows from this that He leaves his throne¹⁶.” But Origen responds that Celsus 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 descend, or if the Word “comes to us,” ***this does not mean that He moves from one place to another or ever 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 humanity¹⁸.”

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, Christ was in the form of God but emptied Himself, that men might be able to receive Him.¹⁹

¹⁴ Contra Celsus 1:21; Joseph c. McLelland: God The Anonymous, Massachusetts, 1976, p. 106-107.

¹⁵ Joseph c. McLelland: God The Anonymous, Massachusetts, p. 113.

¹⁶ Contra Celsus 4:5.

¹⁷ Cf. Contra Celsus 6:60.

¹⁸ Joseph c. McLelland: God The Anonymous, p. 117.

¹⁹ Contra Celsus 4:15.

“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 flesh, and is spoken of in physical terms, so that those who accepted him in this form are gradually lifted up by the Word and can look even upon, so to speak, his absolute form²⁰.”

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 story²². 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 Christ’s humanity is in appearance only for Christ 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 Him²⁴”.

JESUS CHRIST BECAME A TRUE MAN

Origen does not deny the reality of Christ’s body, it had genuine need of sustenance²⁵. His life and His Passion were in no sense a sort of fantasy. Origen believes that Jesus’ body was so real, that we cannot accept, in the literal sense, the story of Him being carried up a mountain by the tempter²⁶.

²⁰ Joseph c. McLelland: God The Anonymous, p. 119.

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. Jesus Christ

*Now this body (of the demon) is by nature a fine substance and thin like air, and on this account most people (heretics) think and speak of it as incorporeal; but the Savior had a body which was capable of being handled and dealt with.*²⁷

Origen faces the deep mystery of the “composite nature” of Christ²⁸. He affirms that the Logos has intentionally taken a body no different from human flesh, “*so he has also taken with the body its pains and grieves*”²⁹. Yet, he knows that His passion and death are the heart of His divine love and salvation - he can speak of the “benefit” of Christ’s death³⁰, and can argue from the reality of his agonies to the reality of his resurrection³¹.

Origen, who enriched the Greek Christology with the scientific terms, *Physis*, *Hypostasis*, *Ousia*, *Homousios*, *Theanthropos*, is the first to use the designation “God-man” (*Theanthropos*)³², to affirm Christ’s humanity against the Gnostics. He also affirmed the unity of Christ’s nature. He stated that “Christ” though designated by a name which implies His divinity, human attributes can still 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 became one with the Word of God*³⁴.

THE FORM OF HIS BODY

Origen believes that our Lord Jesus Christ had a true body, which resembled all men, and was seen by all who surrounded Him. At the same time, His appearance changed in accordance to the capacity of those who saw Him and because of this, His appearances could be edifying and fitting to the needs of each viewer. One time it might be said “He had no form nor beauty,” and at another He might appear to the chosen three disciples, transfigured in glory. To those who are still at the foot of the mountain and not yet prepared

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.

to ascend, the Word “has no form nor beauty.” His appearance to such people is dishonored and deficient, in comparison with those, who by following Him, have received power to go with Him up the mountain, where He transfigured to them.

“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 He also used to appear to every individual in a form corresponding to his rank³⁵.

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 God³⁶.

“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 body, of the catechumens and believers, men, women, and children, be fixed on Jesus. for beholding Him, makes His light reflect on your faces, which become brighter³⁷.

CHRIST HAS A HUMAN SOUL

Charles Bigg states:

Origen is the first to speak in detail of Christ’s human soul. Like other souls, it is eternal and eternally united with the Word. From the beginning, it received Him wholly, and united with Him inseparably. It was like all other human souls, free as they are; but the perfection of love, the uniqueness of worthiness, bound it so closely to the divinity, that the union of the two may be compared to a mass of iron glowing forever with a white heat. Whoever touches 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, attributed to His Divinity and vice versa. This is the *Communication Idiomatum*. The body of Jesus was pure from all birth stain, from all defilement of every kind. It was real flesh³⁸.

³⁵ Comm. Ser. Matt. 100 on 26:48ff.

³⁶ Frag. Hom. Luke 15 (On Transfiguration).

³⁷ In Luc. hom. 32:6.

³⁸ Bigg: The Christian Platonists of Alexandria p. 233.

In his work "*De Principiis*," Origen affirmed that Christ had a human soul:

Therefore, when the Son of God wished to appear to men and live among them for their salvation, He took not only a human body, as some suppose, but also a soul, similar to our souls in its nature, but similar to Him in purpose and power, and thus it could be fulfilled without changing the wishes and dispensations of the Word and Wisdom.

Origen believes in the pre-existence of the soul of Christ, like all other rational creatures. Henri Crouzel says, "So, Christ, the human, 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 GOALS 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 unwilling⁴⁰.

1. To unite us with Himself

Consider, then, how the Son will be able to be elevated in His flesh to the possession of all good things that already belong to Him because 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 partaker in the Father's purposes. How, then, can He receive from the Father the order, to demand the nations to be given to Him for an inheritance, and that His possessions should extend to the ends of the earth (psalm 2)? 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, that the Son might become flesh and go forth, without changing His divine nature, to preach deliverance to the captives and to give sight to the blind.

³⁹ Henri Crouzel: Origen, San Francisco 1989, p. 192.

⁴⁰ Benjamin Drewery: Origen and the Doctrine of Grace, London 1960, p. 113.

*Therefore, we say that the Son receives His kingdom and is recognized as the heir of the Father. 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 transform it from earth to 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 raise it 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 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, and it still has the power to renew our interior man. Origen says that Jesus Christ as a Priest and Sacrifice 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.

Appearing in bodily form and giving Himself out as flesh, He summons to Himself those who are flesh, in order that He may first, transform them into the likeness of the Word who

⁴¹ In Psalm., 2:8 PG 12:1108; R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder 1944, Chapter IV. ⁴² Fr. Malaty: Luke, p. 294 (in Arabic).

⁴² Fr. Malaty: Luke, p. 294 (in Arabic).

⁴³ Contra Celsus 6:78.

⁴⁴ Homilies on Leviticus 9:2 (Cf. Frs. of the Church).

has become flesh, and then to His likeness before He became flesh⁴⁵. Out of His generous love, imparted deification to others ... who are transformed through Him into gods, as images of the prototype... the word is the archetype of the many images⁴⁶.

In his *Commentary on the gospel of St. John*, Origen states that the word “Jordan” means “their descent down⁴⁷.” 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 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 transformed 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 after vanquishing the kingdom of death⁴⁸.

Let us look at the words of the Gospel now before us. The "Jordan" symbolizes descending downwards. The name "Jared" is etymologically close to it, it also yields the meaning "descent" for Jared was born to Mahalalel, as it is written in the Book of Enoch (if anyone

⁴⁵ Contra Celsus 6:68.

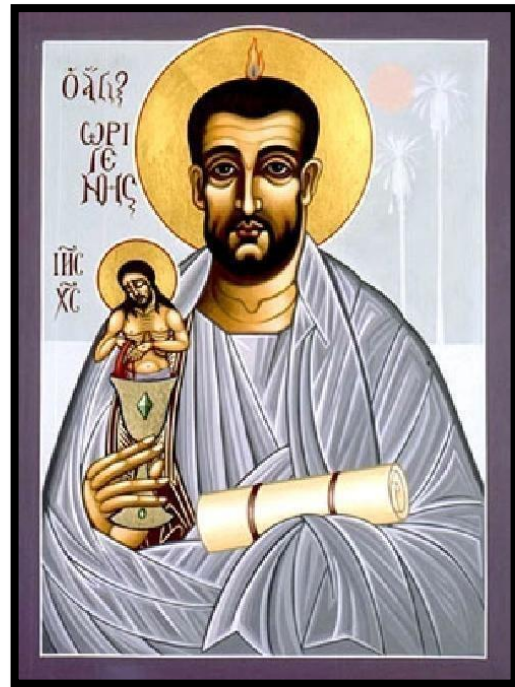
⁴⁶ Comm. on John 2:2.

⁴⁷ Comm. on John, book 6:25.

⁴⁸ De Principiis 2:6:1 (Cf. Butterworth).

accepts this book as sacred), “that the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves.” (Gen. 6:2).

By this descent, some thought that there is an enigmatical reference to the descent of souls into bodies, taking the phrase “daughters of men” as an allegorical expression of this earthly tabernacle. Should this be so, what river will “their descent” 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 Jesus (Joshua)? His current, flowing in the descending stream, makes glad the city of God, as we find in psalm (55:4), 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.



We have to understand that the Jordan is the Word of God, who became flesh and dwelt among us. Jesus is the chief cornerstone who gives us His humanity which He assumed, as an inheritance. This human nature has been assumed by the Son of God, has been washed, and has received into itself the pure and guileless dove of the Spirit, bound to it and no longer able to fly away from it⁴⁹.

“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 blessing⁵⁰. The sojourning of the Savior with us, made all good things available to us⁵¹. If we have risen with Christ, who is the righteousness, and we walk in newness of life, and live according to

⁴⁹ Comm. on John, book 6:25

⁵⁰ In Luke Hom. 17 on 2:34.

⁵¹ In Luke hom. 4.

*righteousness, so 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”, 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 His love for 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 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 restore 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 prisoners and holds us in his sway: away from the reach of his hands,

⁵² Comm. on Rom. 4:7 on 4:23-25.

⁵³ In Josh. hom. 12:3.

⁵⁴ Comm. on John 2:26 (21).

⁵⁵ Contra Celsus 1:54f.

*so we may receive the forgiveness of sins, and become healed from the wounds of sin, to do the works of piety and the other virtues*⁵⁶.

4. To grant man victory over 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 sight is fixed on eternal life 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, Lawgiver and Model⁵⁹. 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 rational⁶⁰. He also is the pattern of the perfect life⁶¹, the exemplar of true virtue, into whose likeness Christians are transformed⁶², thereby being enabled to participate in the divine nature⁶³.

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, And also as a teacher of divine mysteries to the already pure and sinless*⁶⁴. *With the light of the Word, we banish the darkness of heresies... 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.

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

⁶⁵ Contra Celsus 6:67.

6. To guide the “lost sheep of the house of Israel” and then, because of the unbelief of the Jews, *He would take away “the kingdom of God” from them 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, who 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, but also in the angels and powers.⁶⁹ Thus, the Logos gradually unifies all with Himself, without violating the freedom of rational beings⁷⁰.

Origen believes that through God’s goodness to men He became a man, and to angels He appears as an angel, so that all feel that He belongs to them.

The Savior accordingly became, 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

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.

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 Him⁷¹.

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 us, He gladdens us, we who live with Him, granting us to drink of what by His power changed to wine. For in reality, before Jesus, the Scripture was water, but since He came it has become wine to us.

In the second visit, at the time of the judgment which the Father has entrusted Him with, He completely heals the nobleman's son from fever.

Thus, at the first coming, those who received Him were gladdened; at the second those who were not willing before to drink of His wine were 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 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 preparation 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 restored men to the form of God.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 His divine power in the whole human race⁷⁴.

⁷¹ Comm. on John 1:34 (ANF).

⁷² Comm. on John 13:62.

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 inflamed with the love of God, as a response to the divine love says to Celsus that the only thing that God wants is the salvation of His creation⁷⁵, not for any lack, but because of His infinite love towards His creation.

2. Natural religion and natural morality are not enough. Salvation is only found in Christ, as the good works that are done without the purification that God gives us are of no avail⁷⁶. The human soul is so weak and distracted that it cannot be redeemed apart from the power and grace of God in Christ.

- ❖ Some see that the severity of Origen's judgment on "the good pagan" is supported by his denial that this life is the only chance a man has⁷⁷.

*"And, because the Enemy had spread these nets everywhere and had trapped almost everyone in them, it was needed that a savior should come stronger than these nets that He may destroy them, and thus clear the way for those who followed Him."*⁷⁸

3. Basil Studer⁷⁹ states that the external functions of the Logos for Origen are twofold: creation and the salvation narrative.

- Through Him, the world has been created, the soul established, and the world was put into order⁸⁰.
- He establishes salvation, which conserves the world. Even His incarnation served salvation in that sense of conservation⁸¹. **"In the Salvation narrative, the Logos is behind all human events"**⁸². In the Old Testament, He revealed Himself through

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.

⁸¹ Cf. De Principiis 2:6:3.

⁸² Cf. De Principiis 2:6:31.

Prophetic visions by chosen men and through His own appearances.⁸³ And in the fullness of time, He was made man, to rid men of demons, to re-establish the Law and to provide an example of a virtuous man⁸⁴.

4. The fulfillment of salvation will be realized when He Himself will subject Himself, as the Head of the Church, to the Father and God will be all in all⁸⁵. This will be so in the second coming (“Parousia”) of the Logos in creation and history⁸⁶.

CONCEPT OF SALVATION

To understand the various explanations that Origen gave for the redemption, we must never lose sight of his first two books of the Commentary on John. For Origen, the passions of Christ are strongly linked to the mission of the Word. The suffering Christ, after all, 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 soul⁸⁷.

We can summarize the concept of salvation, according to Origen, in the following points which cannot be separated from each other:

1. Salvation and Illumination

For Origen, salvation cannot be separated from illumination. Our Savior is our inspiration, our educator, and our illuminator.

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 its opposition to darkness, and knowledge in opposition to ignorance. Concerning the redeeming work of our Lord Jesus Christ, J.N.D. Kelly⁸⁸ says that the Logos is our Teacher, Lawgiver and Model⁸⁹.

By associating with Him, we lose our nature of deadliness and irrationality, and we attain the “godly life and understanding⁹⁰”.

He is “the model of the perfect life,” the Exemplar of true virtue into whose likeness, Christians are transformed⁹¹, thereby being enabled to participate in the divine nature⁹². As he puts it⁹³, “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 again⁹⁴ “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 διδάσκαλος) 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 “Didaskalion” in which every single thing contributed to the education of the free human beings at school there⁹⁵. From the verses of the Gospel of John that “grace and truth came through Jesus Christ” (John 1:17) and that Christ was “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 was also active in Moses and the prophets.

❖ The Spirit that worked in the prophets was Christ for it is Christ who has given us the Spirit of prophecy⁹⁶.

⁸⁸ See J.N.D. Kelly, page 184-5.

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.

⁹⁶ Sel Lam. 4:20.

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 events of His Passion, they are entrapped. When they approach Him, they are certainly 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 utterly⁹⁷.

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 sinning⁹⁸.

3. Christ and the Triumph Over the Devil

Origen, explaining the works of the Savior and His death, 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 earth⁹⁹.” From the moment of His birth, He was always in conflict with the powers of darkness¹⁰⁰. His passion and resurrection signified their final defeat. Origen appeals¹⁰¹ to (Col. 2:15) in order to prove that the Savior’s death has a twofold aspect, being both an example and also the crown of His victory over the devil, who in effect was nailed to the cross with his principalities and powers.

Salvation is seen as a basis 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

⁹⁷ R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder Book Co., 1944, p. 300.

⁹⁸ Comm. on Rom. 4:8.

⁹⁹ Contra Celsus 7:17.

¹⁰⁰ Contra Celsus 1:60:6:45; hom. in Lucia. 30:31.

¹⁰¹ Hom. in Jos 8:3; in Matt 12:40.

irrational and wicked is destroyed¹⁰².” 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 overtaken¹⁰⁴. Young says that the conquest of the devil plays a prominent role in Origen’s soteriology.

The *De Principiis* dedicates a chapter on “How the devil and the opposing powers are, according to the scriptures, at war with the human race¹⁰⁵.” The activity of the demons plays a large role in Origen’s arguments with Celsus¹⁰⁶. 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 angels¹⁰⁷. In his Commentary on Romans,¹⁰⁸ Origen explains the incarnation of Christ by means of a parable which expresses this soteriological position, “*There was a just and noble king, who was waging a war against an unjust tyrant, but, at the same time, trying to avoid a violent and bloody conflict, because some of his own soldiers 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 his soldiers to return to their proper kingdom. He also succeeded in binding the “strong tyrant” in fetters, destroying his principalities and powers and carried off those dead captives.*” This idea is basic to Origen’s whole understanding of salvation and is the theory to which he turns to explain all soteriological problems¹⁰⁹.

4. Salvation and the Obedience to the Divine Teacher

Frances Young states that Origen’s soteriology includes an important theme that is linked to the idea of Christ being a Teacher, which is Christ’s model of obedience that Christians are called to follow. This theme is expressed particularly in “*The exhortation to martyrdom*”, which is the culmination of observance of “the entire pattern of living set out in the Gospel¹¹⁰.” This is closely linked with the idea of illumination which we have already

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

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.

considered, since by imitating the Heavenly King, 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 Truth¹¹¹. But again this description of Christ's salvific 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 through His sufferings – which includes His triumph over the principalities and powers which you will soon see conquered and overcome with shame*"¹¹²

Obedience, self-denial, humility, death to sin, and spiritual martyrdom¹¹³, are likewise an imitation of Christ, and a main feature of the educative work of the Savior, as well as an incident on the struggle to conquer evil that leads 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 corruption¹¹⁴.

5. Salvation and the Freedom from Corruption

Salvation is a process of healing, which is realized by the true Physician, who Himself is the Medicine. Christ brings healing to the sinful,¹¹⁵ resurrecting the morally dead¹¹⁶. He came into our death to deliver mankind from the bondage of corruption¹¹⁷. This, too, is part of Christ's victory over the tyranny of death, sin and the devil, for the devil has the power of death and is the enemy of Him who is Life¹¹⁸.

- ❖ "*Only those who want to be healed follow Christ.*"¹¹⁹
- ❖ "*Come now to Jesus, the heavenly Physician. Enter into this medical clinic, His Church.*"

¹¹¹ Exhortation of Martyrdom 13.

¹¹² Exhortation of Martyrdom 42.

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).

“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: asking that they may be made healthy, that they may be cleansed. Christ the Physician is Himself the Word of God, He prepares medications for His sick ones not from herbs but from the Sacredness of His words. If anyone sees these verbal medicines scattered inelegantly throughout books as through fields, not knowing the strength of them, he will overlook them as cheap things, as not having any elegance of word. But the person who learns that the medicine of souls is with Christ will certainly understand from these books which are read in the Church how each person ought to collect beneficial herbs from the fields and mountains, meaning the strength of His words, so that anyone weary in soul may be healed not so much by the strength of the outward branches and coverings, but by the strength of the inner sap¹²⁰. “

- ❖ *“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, with regards to bodily health, we occasionally find it necessary to take some very unpleasant and bitter medicine as a cure for our sicknesses, and sometimes, if the illness demands it, we undergo painful operations, yes, and should the disease has extended beyond the reach even of these remedies, as a last resort the diseased area sever all together. How much more should we realize that God our Physician, in his desire to wash away the sicknesses of our souls, which we have brought on ourselves through a variety of sins, 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 became perfect need Jesus Christ, not as a Physician but as a Teacher.

- ❖ We do not find any healings of the disciples; since if anyone is already a disciple of Jesus, he is whole, and being healthy, they need Jesus not as a Physician but as a source of other powers¹²².

¹²⁰ Homilies on Leviticus 8:1 (See Frs. of the Church)

¹²¹ De Principiis 2:10:6 (Cf. Butterworth).

¹²² Comm. on Matt., book 11:3.

6. Salvation and Enjoying Christ's Atonement

Frances Young states that all the previous various ways of expressing Christ's work have led to the traditional 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 tyrannized the human nature, and then the reconciliation of human nature with God.

- ❖ For no man could die with Jesus who died for us all, that we may live. Everyone sinned and all needed a savior to die for them, and not the opposite¹²³.

This description of Christ's work appears as Origen's allegorizing of the Day of Atonement ritual within the Jewish tradition (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 forgiven¹²⁴. 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. The man who led off the scapegoat had to be pure representing 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 scape goat (the LXX word for Azazel) in them, and as "the man in readiness" led the goat 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." He alone had the power to lead them off to the desert, the empty places of hell. He then returned from His work accomplished, and ascended to heaven, where He completed the purification more completely at the heavenly altar, that He might present the pledge of our flesh which He took with Him in

¹²³ Comm. Ser. Matt. 88 on 26:33-35.

¹²⁴ In Lev. Hom. 10:2.

perpetual purity. This then is the “atoning death”, where God is reconciled 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. Salvation and the Greatness of Christ our God

For Origen, the sacrificial death of Christ gave mankind the means of escape from the dominion of the evil powers and a chance to partake 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
- ❖ For the ancients, sheep, goats, cattle, and birds were killed and fine wheat flour was sprinkled over the sacrifice. 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 listen to the abundance of forgiveness in the gospel.¹²⁷
- ❖ How great these things are! For He is the Paraclete, the atonement, the sympathizer with our weaknesses, who was tempted as we are, but without sin; and in consequence, He is the 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 and the Glory of the Believer

At the resurrection, Christ’s humanity was glorified, and we as the Church attained the privilege of being glorified through our unity with Him.

¹²⁵ De Principiis 4:4:4; Frances M. Young, p. 184.

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.

- ❖ Christ's resurrection is the model for the exaltation of the believers. Christ became "the first-fruit of those who have fallen asleep," that we may enjoy the blessings of being born in Christ. We shall resurrect with Him too, if we were to hold onto the grace of these blessings to the end, aided by the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ himself¹²⁹.

The Death of Christ as an Atoning Sacrifice

Origen applies Isaiah (53:4) 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 Him¹³⁰". In some of his writings, Origen states that Christ's death is conceived as paying His precious blood to the devil to purchase us and to grant us freedom from his dominion.

- ❖ *"Because He is the sacrifice, 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, since He was the Lamb of God, He bore the sins of the world and carried our weaknesses and suffered for us. We have shown in other places examples of secular accounts of history; 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 man, did not think it robbery to be equal with God but emptied himself, and took the form of a servant", offering Himself as a sacrifice for the whole world, delivering his own blood to the prince of this world, according to the wisdom of God¹³²."*

¹²⁹ Homily on Numbers [3:4]: Drewery 132.

¹³⁰ In Joh. 28:19:165.

¹³¹ Comm. on Rom. 3:8 on 3:25.

¹³² Comm. on Rom. 4:11; see Frances M. Young, p. 182-3.

- ❖ *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 the terms used to imply atonement 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 heresy 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 homilies¹³⁴.

Origen speaks¹³⁵ 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 in his clutches, who proved to be stronger than death, and was thus deceived by his victim. The devil was deceived; he thought he could grasp His soul and did not realize that he could not bear the torture of holding Him¹³⁶. So, the life offered in sacrifice and the blood shed as an expiation became, in the mind of Origen, the ransom price given by God to the devil. For it was the 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 take away the sin of the world¹³⁷.

The sin of all, however, has not been taken away by the Lamb without suffering or affliction on behalf of sinners before its removal. For thorns have not only been scattered but deeply

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.

¹³⁶ Comm. on Matt. 16:8; Young, p. 183.

¹³⁷ Contra Cells 8:43; Frances M. Young, p. 183-4.

rooted “in the hands” of every man who has become “drunk” with evil and lost the power to become sober¹³⁸.

Christ’s Sacrifice 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 burning; but our Lord’s Sacrifice is not only a living sacrifice but is Life-giving to those who partake of it. Jesus Christ, as a Priest and Sacrifice, did not offer animals’ exhaustible blood but His very own life-giving Blood, resurrection, and immortality. He always transforms believers from mortality into immortality, redeeming their nature to participate in His life and to bear His likeness.

Christ’s Sacrifice for our Sin¹³⁹

Because of the interdependence between the sacrificial interpretations of Christ’s death and the methods of understanding Old Testament sacrifices, Origen frequently uses the Old testament sacrificial language to describe the death of Christ without attempting to further explain how the sin offering was performed. 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 atone sins by the blood of bullocks and goats, but they could not do it. It was because they were so ineffective that the Son of God came in the likeness of sinful flesh to atone for our sins; He condemned sin in the flesh. He became a sin offering and was offered for the purging of sin. The whole scripture testifies to this, Origen claims. As we have already seen, the atonement 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 forgave sin. According to the book of Leviticus, the priests eat the sin offering - as Origen says - Christ, who is the priest

¹³⁸ Comm. on John 6:55.

¹³⁹ Frances M. Young, p. 179 ff.

as well as the sacrifice, consumes the sins of the people. God is a consuming fire. God 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.

In another explanation based on the Old Testament, Origen views Christ as a sacrificial offering without blemish; this purity is in a way contagious, so that anyone who touches the flesh of this sacrifice is sanctified. These explanations are both 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 resorts to the traditional 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 Christ’s Sacrifice

Christ’s sacrifice is superior to the sacrifices of the Old Testament because it takes place in heaven¹⁴⁰. In his 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. However, he makes a quite different distinction, for the priest offered one bull on the altar as a burnt-offering and another as sin offering, which was burnt outside the camp, and there is a difference between the burnt-offering and the sin-offering.

As a result, 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 freewill sacrifice, a sacrifice of praise, worship and thanksgiving.

Origen frequently refers to Christian sacrifices as an imitation of Christ, of martyrdom being a burnt offering, 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

¹⁴⁰ In Lev. hom. 1:3.

¹⁴¹ In Lev. hom 1:3:3

the offering of perfect worship and obedience to God, the example for Christians to imitate¹⁴².

- ❖ *See, therefore, if perhaps Jesus, whom Paul says that through his own blood “to have made peace not only for the things which are in earth but also for the things in heaven”, is not the same calf which was offered “in heaven,” as the earthly one was “for sin” but the heavenly sacrifice was for an offering; “on earth,” where sin “reigned from Adam to Moses,” he was offered “for sin.” This is the one which suffered “outside the camp,” outside that camp 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 in, this earthly place in which Christ suffered in the flesh¹⁴³.*

Christ as the High-Priest

The expression of St. Cyril of Alexandria “Christ is the altar, the offering and the priest¹⁴⁴” comes from Origen¹⁴⁵.

- ❖ *The fact that Isaac “carried wood for the burnt offering” prefigured the bearing of Christ His own cross. Now, carrying the wood for the burnt offering is the duty of the priest. Christ is therefore both the Sacrifice and the Priest¹⁴⁶.*

Not only do the sacrifices of the Old Testament point to Christ, Christ is the 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 Sacrifice, thereby propitiating the Father¹⁴⁷.

- ❖ *For as none is good (Matt. 8:2, 3) but one, God the Father, so, among rivers none is good but the Jordan, nor is able to cleanse from leprosy him who with faith*

¹⁴² Frances M. Young, p. 215

¹⁴³ In Lev. 1:3:3 (Barkley).

¹⁴⁴ PG 68²596-604.

¹⁴⁵ Jean Daniélou: The Bible and the Liturgy, Michigan 1979, p. 130 n.

¹⁴⁶ In Gen. hom. 8:1.

¹⁴⁷ In Rom. 3:8.

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 with longing their own river of salvation. Therefore, it is said of the rivers of Babylon, "There we sat down and wept.," clearly because they were unable to stand. Jeremiah rebukes those who wish to drink the waters of Egypt, and desert the water which comes down from heaven, the Jordan¹⁴⁸.

Origen interprets Christ's death as an act of vicarious substitution or propitiatory sacrifice. He argues¹⁴⁹ that, as the Leader of the Church, Jesus is the head of the body of which we are members of; He has taken our sins upon Himself, has borne them and has suffered freely for us. As the High Priest, He has offered the Father a true sacrifice in which He is Himself the Sacrifice, thereby propitiating the Father¹⁵⁰. The Son offers the Christians' own gifts of kindness, justice, piety and peace¹⁵¹. He offers the lives of believers transformed¹⁵².

- ❖ Christ, the true High Priest who by His own blood made God propitious to you and reconciled you to the Father¹⁵³.

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 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 one, 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

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.

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 seek 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 sacrifice. 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 maturity, until the fullness of time is at hand, needs a tutor and stewards and guardians, in order that, after all these things, (a believer who is still a child under the law), 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 inheritance corresponding to the very costly pearl, and to that which is perfect, "the excellency of the knowledge of Christ" (Phil. 3:8)¹⁵⁵
- ❖ The passion of Jesus on the Cross, was the judgment of the whole of this world. Since the divine event of 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 salvation¹⁵⁷.

Cadiou also says that we need not feel shameful 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

¹⁵⁴ Henri De Lubac: Origen, *On First Principles*, NY., 1966 (Koetschau text together with an introduction and notes by G.W. Butterworth, p. XX.

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.

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 incarnated Word, 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 not have been crucified in weakness¹⁵⁸.”

The Cross is a sign of the divine love and Victory Over the Devil

- ❖ He would not have done this 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 ungodly¹⁵⁹.

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 God¹⁶⁰.
- ❖ 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 religion¹⁶¹.

The Cross is a sign of victory

- ❖ When pagans were leading 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, except in the 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 death¹⁶².

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 us¹⁶³.

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 “two-fold”. Meaning that, it stands on two footings; on the visible plane, the Son of God was crucified in the flesh, and the invisible plane, there the “devil” and his “principalities and powers” were nailed onto that cross [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 the second shows the cross as a trophy of victory over the devil, on which he was crucified and vanquished¹⁶⁴.

The Cross gathers believers from all the world in unity of love.

- ❖ When, lifted upon the cross He embraced with His arms the whole world¹⁶⁵.

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 SUFFICIENCY

CHRIST THE SUFFICIENCY OF THE SOUL

Humans need the Logos, not only as a savior who restores man to his initial status, but also 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 incarnated Logos, 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. Christ offers Himself to those who feel in need of Him.¹⁶⁶”

This feeling grants them the merit of His presence and dwelling in their hearts.

“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 are not in darkness¹⁶⁷. ”

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

¹⁶⁶ Comm. on the Songs of Songs, book 2:9 (ACW).

¹⁶⁷ Comm. on John 1:20.

advanced, and those approaching or already in possession of virtue¹⁶⁸. Christ becomes present in each individual to the degree that his merits have allowed¹⁶⁹.”

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 Logos¹⁷⁰.

To seek Jesus is to seek the Logos, Wisdom, Righteousness, Truth, the Power of the Father; for Christ is all these¹⁷¹.

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 needs 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 needs 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 gifts¹⁷².

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, are simply Jesus. One good thing which they are said to announce, is the resurrection; but the resurrection is in a manner:

¹⁶⁸ Contra Celsus 2:16.

¹⁶⁹ De Principiis 4:4:2.

¹⁷⁰ Comm. on Rom. 5:6.

¹⁷¹ Comm. on John 32:31.

¹⁷² Comm. on John 1:20.

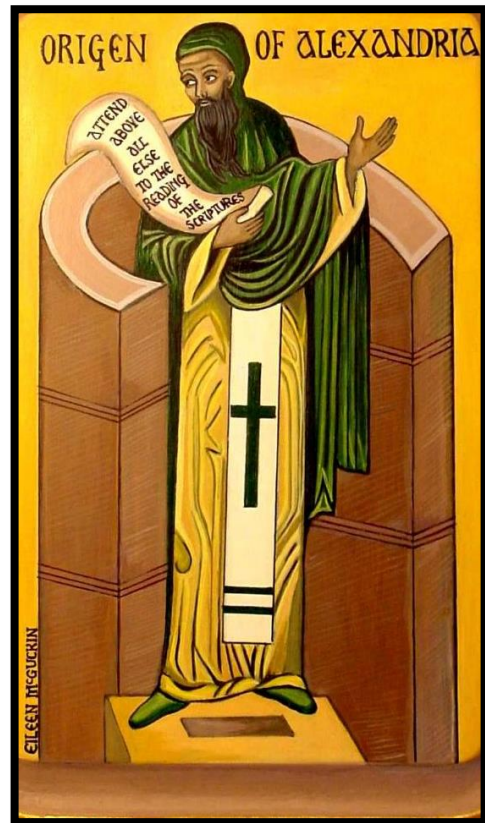
Jesus, for Jesus says: “I am the resurrection...” Isaiah too says: “How beautiful are the feet of them that proclaim good tidings” (Isa. 52:7); he sees how beautiful and how opportune was the announcement of the Apostles, who walked in Him who said, “I am the way,” and praises the feet of those who walk in the intellectual way of Christ Jesus, and through that door go to God. They announce good tidings, those whose feet are beautiful, namely, Jesus¹⁷³.

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 is 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 became a life-giving spirit.” This saying harmonizes well with the interpretation we have given of the first and the last¹⁷⁴.



¹⁷³ Comm. on John, 1:10. Jesus Christ

¹⁷⁴ Comm. on John 1:34 (ANF).

CHRIST 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 titles: 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 beginning” only in respect of his being “The Wisdom”. Not even as the “Word” is He the beginning, for the “Word was in the beginning.” And so, one might venture to say that Wisdom is advanced to all the thoughts that are expressed, in the titles of this first-born over all creation (1:22). This does not mean, however, that the title of Word is not crucial, since it is the “Logos “which on investigation, forces theology to consider a “separate entity,” for the Son of God, and so to examine all other titles (1:23)¹⁷⁵.

He is the Word, “because He is the interpreter of the secrets of the divine intelligence,” or “the channel of Revelation¹⁷⁶”.

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 from His making those, who sincerely attach themselves to Him, put away their deadness and rise again and put on newness of life, He is called the Resurrection, so from activities of other kinds He is called Shepherd and Teacher, King and Chosen Pillar, and Servant, and in addition to These: Paraclete and Atonement . 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 discharged by the Logos to the glory of God, both the commoner functions of life and those which belong to a more advanced stage¹⁷⁷.

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

¹⁷⁵ Joseph c. McLelland: *God The Anonymous*, Massachusetts, 1976, p. 110. ¹⁷⁶ Charles Bigg: *The Christian Platonists of Alexandria*, Oxford 1913, p. 209.

¹⁷⁶ Charles Bigg: *The Christian Platonists of Alexandria*, Oxford 1913, p. 209.

¹⁷⁷ Comm. on John, book 1:42.

character, is to be pronounced reasonable ("logical"), and thus, we should say that the saint alone is reasonable¹⁷⁸."

CHRIST THE LIGHT

For He Himself is "the Light of the world" who also illuminates the Church by His light. For just as the moon is said to receive light from the sun, so that the night can be illuminated by it, so also the Church, when it receives the light of Christ, it 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 sun¹⁷⁹.

CHRIST 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 worthiness¹⁸⁰.

CHRIST 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 the Wisdom, but in relation to the world He is the Logos¹⁸¹ who communicates to the world the knowledge of 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, Origen wishes to show, that all other titles, were taken by the 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

¹⁷⁸ Comm. on John, book 2:10

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.

passages, which call the Son the Wisdom (and “the Power”) in an absolute sense¹⁸³. 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, “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 beginning. 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 the 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 characters¹⁸⁴”.

The two classes (the 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 heaven¹⁸⁵”.

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 deification¹⁸⁶.

CHRIST 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

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, Massachusetts, 1976, p. 111-112.

¹⁸⁶ Joseph c. McLelland: God The Anonymous, Massachusetts, 1976, p. 112. 187 Contra Celsus 3:81.

teaches us to leave everything created and leads us to the supreme God through the unchanging and living Logos¹⁸⁷."

CHRIST 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 reigns 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 OUR KINGDOM

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 Person¹⁸⁹. 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 God¹⁹⁰.

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 at his hand¹⁹¹.

¹⁸⁷ Contra Celsus 3:81.

¹⁸⁸ In Luc. hom. 30:1-3

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

CHRIST 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 Jesus' 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.

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 advancement, 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 wishes¹⁹². 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).

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.)

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).

So, therefore, the manna of the word of God, imparts into your mouth, whatever taste you wish¹⁹³. But many things might be said about the Logos Himself who became flesh, and true meat, of which he that Eats, shall assuredly live forever, no worthless person being able to eat it; for if it were possible for one who continues worthless, to eat of Him, who is the Logos and the living bread, it would not have been written, that "everyone who eats of this bread shall live forever" (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 THE SERVANT

Again, let anyone 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 too small a 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, and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:6,8), more than if he had judged it a thing to be grasped to be equal with God and had refused becoming a servant for the salvation of the world¹⁹⁶.

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.

¹⁹⁶ Comm. on John, book 1:37.

CHRIST THE JORDAN

*Naaman was angry (2 kings 5:11); he did not see that our Jordan is the cleanser of those who are impure from leprosy, 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 was 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 their shame and become more fit to be restored*¹⁹⁸.

CHRIST 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 field¹⁹⁹. 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-gifts of God that may be (I Cor. 12:8)²⁰⁰.

CHRIST 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.

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.

²⁰⁰ In Jer. hom. 8:5 on 10:3.

“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 extended²⁰¹.

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 day, but all the days, even to the end of the ages, till we conquer our enemies²⁰².

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 banquet²⁰³.

CHRIST IS OUR PROTECTION

²⁰¹ In Jos. hom. 10:3

²⁰² In Jos. hom. 10:5.

²⁰³ Comm. on John, book 10:10.

We live under the shadow of the grace of Christ²⁰⁴.

He who imitates Christ is a rock²⁰⁵.

CHRIST, THE SOURCE OF VICTORY

No one boasts of his victory or ascribes it to his own courage, but because they know, 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 cross²⁰⁶.

Jesus, who destroys the vices within us and overturns the most vile kingdoms of sin²⁰⁷.

CHRIST IS THE REST OF THE SOUL

Scripture does not say that “the land had rest from wars” under Moses, but under Joshua (= Jesus) (Origen 473 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 BRIDEGROOM OF THE SOUL

Christ is called the Bridegroom of the soul, whom the soul espouses when she comes to the faith²⁰⁹.

²⁰⁴ Sel Lament. 4:20.

²⁰⁵ Fr. Malaty: Luke, p. 358.

²⁰⁶ In Jos. hom 12:2.

²⁰⁷ In Josh. 15:4.

²⁰⁸ In Josh. Hom. 1:7.

²⁰⁹ In Gen. Hom. 10:4.

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 disciples²¹⁰.

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 prophecy²¹¹.

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. Simon did not 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 enter you into the temple of God. There is Jesus inside the church, in the temple which is established by the living stones²¹². The One Word... sent out the rays which reach the souls of those willing to receive Him²¹³.

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

²¹⁰ In Exod. hom. 12:4.

²¹¹ Sel. Lam. 4:20.

²¹² In Luc. hom. 15:3.

²¹³ Contra Celsus 6:79.

of God emptied Himself, and with the same power, 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 relatives and friends, but they did not find Him.

We do not find Jesus while we are among the relatives 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.

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). Do not seek Him in slackness, slothfulness, and hesitation, as some do, for they do not find Him²¹⁵.

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 Wisdom²¹⁶.



²¹⁴ In Luc. hom. 19:2.

The aim of this small book in your hands is not to hold a dry, destructive dialogue, but rather to help us recover God's image in us, and that our lives and our worship may be a true witness to God's love to all humanity.

“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 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 transformed 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...”

