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*“The Significance of Origen as an Exegete with his Threefold Sense
of Understanding Scripture”*

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INTRODUCTION.

There are so many topics and themes to write about and to share one's views that one is confronted with the problem of choosing what to write. But one must finally make a decision and I can only hope that what motivated me to write, will also inspire the readers to pick up this work and read. This essay speaks about a man, who was an inspired Christian. That very statement seems quite obscure, given our present day secularized society, where christianity, be it in public or private lives of many, seems not to play a significant role anymore.¹ In looking for Role Models to inspire and imitate so as to have a successful life, it is quite unlikely that modern day man will take his search by looking at Saints, and most definitely not Saints of past centuries! More likely such a search for role models would be found in Human beings of our present generation and most likely by people who share the same World views. How can a man of the third century, more so a Christian, tell us about the things that preoccupy our present day era? Would he be able provide answers to Globalization, Genetechnic and Environmental questions?² There is no doubt, our problems and our history is different from those of his century, but it would be wrong to think that the People of the first five centuries lived on a problem-free Island. They also had their difficulties to which they applied their reasoning, so as to achieve the best of results. The problems of War and Peace, Marriage and Family may have been formed differently, but nonetheless, they were as difficult to solve as they are today. Just as we have intelligent and educated men in our era, who through their reflections help to shape the way we move forward, so also in these centuries, we have thinkers whose thoughts made their world then a better place. It is in such a problem-saddled world, that we see a man, Origen, trying to announce what must change or should change in a man's life as a Christian. The questions Origen was preoccupied with and to which he sought to give answers to included; What is man and his

¹ cf. REEMTS, C: *Origenes: Eine Einführung in Leben und Denken*, Würzburg 2004, p.7.

² Ibid., p.8.

place in the World? Who is God and what has this strange man Jesus Christ to do with God and Man? How should i act? Am i free or is my Life destined? What happens after Death? Do we have just one World or many? More often than not he does not come to a concluding answer, but nonetheless, points the direction to where the answer might be.³ In reading Origen's Works one cannot but notice how his thoughts are sometimes so surprisingly modern, but then at other times sometimes so very frightening strange and distant from our way of reasoning. Both, the familiar and the strangely obscure, can help to motivate us to want to study him in detail. In calculating one comes to the realization that there is a distance of more than 1800 Years between us and despite this expanse of century gap, one recognizes that some of those very same questions that were been asked in Origen's time are still the very same that occupy our thinking, and Origen's strange way of thinking can help us in examining our own Concepts and our way of thinking.⁴ Origen stands at the beginning of the intellectual/spiritual Story of Christianity. He is the first to completely and utterly think out the Christian message/good news. "He is the Christians church's first and greatest biblical scholar."⁵ This is not to say he was merely a scholar or a Librarian, not at all, the Christian church is proud to have him as her great mystic. As a mystic, as one reads in his Work on the Song of Songs, he beautifully presents the divine Word's thirst for the soul of man and mankind's search for its lost Lord.⁶ One could rightly posit that in the disciplined scholar, one finds also an excellent poet Thomas Merton brings highlights this in his poem "Origen." "...his sin was to speak first among mutes," he said, describing Origen's effect on later ages as akin to that of a "mad lighthouse," emitting incessant pulses of illumination, setting a compass point for the whole of the West."⁷ One cannot but notice that several patristic theologians in the second half of the twentieth century are inspired by Origen and his Work, theologians like R.P.C Hanson, whose efforts in the rediscovering

³ Ibid., p.8-9.

⁴ Ibid., p.9.

⁵ cf. Mc GUCKIN, J. A: *The Westminster Handbook to Origen*, Westminster 2004, p.9.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

the significance of scriptural exegesis for modern man, invites him (man) to read and understand Origen.⁸ The series of academic work by the Origeniana shows that many are still inspired and continue to be inspired by this man, despite his been dead for more than seventeen hundred years.⁹ For this reason one cannot but want to critically analyze this man who continues to evoke such influence; Is Origen an Exegete? His student Gregory Thaumaturgus (Gregory of Neocaesarea) thinks of him as such! Or as Jerome thinks and portrays; Origen's explanation of Scripture is arbitrary, so much so that his exegesis and explanation end up changing the meaning of the Biblical sayings. Many believe and hold such against Origen that through his use of allegory, which are most times ridiculous, Origen with such allegorical interpretations devalues History. With so much emphasis by Origen on the Spiritual sense, the facts of the actual events are destroyed. This work has as its focus to bring about a better understanding of the man Origen and also a better appreciation of his work, especially his exegetical analysis. In other words the write up seeks to explore Origen's understanding of Scripture in the Five chapters of this essay. The First chapter describes his early Life and his maturing into a theologian and a man of the Church. It also gives a brief overview of Origen's scholarly Works. The Second Chapter highlights Origen's controversial Legacy, the case against him and the many objections by his critics. An attempt will also be made to differentiate between Allegory and Typology. In the Third Chapter Origen's Handling of the text of the Bible will be handled, with references to "Inspiration" and the three Senses of Scripture(Historical (Literal), Moral and Spiritual(Mystical)) and his affirmation of History. This chapter will be followed by a description of Origen's understanding of "The Logos" and the relation of the Logos to Scripture and the soul. Particular attention will be paid to the relationship between the Logos and the Hearer. In the final Chapter a conclusion will be given to show that in Origen one finds not only a fascinating view of the mind and spirit of an important Father of the Church, but an essential key to a more profound understanding of the way in which Christ speaks to us through Scripture. Since the focus of my work is to show that Origen has a lot to offer in terms of biblical interpretation I shall employ a historical and exegetical method in my analy-

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

sis and discussion of this essay. I therefore invite you to reflect deeply on the words of our Holy Father, Pope Benedict, in his Wednesday audience of April, 25th, 2007.

“I invite you to welcome the teachings of this great teacher of the faith into your hearts. He reminds us that in the prayerful reading of Scripture and in a coherent way of life, the Church is renewed and rejuvenated. The Word of God, which never ages or has its meaning exhausted, is a privileged way of doing this. It is the Word of God, through the work of the Holy Spirit, which leads us always to the whole truth.”¹⁰

1. ORIGEN: A MAN OF THE CHUCH

In trying to know more about this man, it is good to start by trying to establish the historical happenings that took place around the time he is believed to have been born. Origen's birth coincides with a period which Edward Gibbon once called "the period in the history of the world, during which the condition of the human race was most happy and prosperous."¹¹ So one asks what can be known historically about this period? The aim is to be able to establish in as close as possible the year of Origen's birth. "Commodus, the unworthy son of Marcus Aurelius, succeeded his father as emperor in A.D. 180, five years before Origen's life began in Alexandria. What can be written of the history of the Roman Empire during Origen's lifetime is little more than a list of imperial murders, civil wars, and their disastrous consequences in social and economic life. Plague and famine, together with barbarian invasions, complete the picture."¹² In other words it was a World in chaos, with a lot of succession struggles. At the time of his death which is believed to be around 254, the Empire was no better shape, a pointer to this is the capture of Valerian a Roman emperor by the Persians.¹³

¹⁰ cf. BENEDICT XVI: International congress for the 40th anniversary of the dogmatic constitution "*Dei Verbum*" in *Insegnamenti*, vol. I, 2005, p.552-553.

¹¹ cf. GIBBON, E: *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, London 1950, vol. 1, p.95.

¹² cf. LYNCH, K. A: *The Classics of Western Spirituality*, New York 1979, p.1.

¹³ Ibid.

One would expect that with such reign of chaos and disorder, this would be all that would fill Origen's life and work, but on the contrary, in reading Origen's work, one could scarcely guess that he was living in a world where

Things fall apart; the center cannot hold;
 Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
 the blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
 The ceremony of innocence is drowned.
 The best lack of all conviction, while the worst
 Are full of passionate intensity

W.B. Yeats¹⁴

This dichotomy between the upheavals in the Society in Origen's day and the serenity in his Writings should not be misconstrued that Origen could not care less about the malaise of his community. He did indeed care, but chose to confront and address these ills not directly but indirectly. How? By evolving words, in his Works and in his Life that depict and best describe the Christian vision.¹⁵ In other words, this enterprise of Origen was meant to form the people, especially the Christians of his day in such a positive manner, that they in turn would have an impact on the fruits of his teachings to address the ills of the Society of Origen's day. They were to be the transforming catalyst to bring about a changed and a transformed Roman empire.¹⁶ For Origen, the theologians task was to render the Gospel in such a way that it was readable and understandable to the pagan, especially the learned ones. But in doing this, Origen was also convinced one should never fall into the danger of losing one's one religious conviction. It can be rightly said, that it was this rendering of the Gospel in an intelligible form to pagans and at the same time rendering it in such a way that Christians became even more convinced of their Faith, that made Christianity so attractive to the people of the third century and its continued growth and triumph in the fourth century.¹⁷ Regardless of how problematic we might find Origen, one cannot but see that his Life and his Works have a lot to offer, not just in how he shaped the birth of a new Roman world but more importantly how he

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 2.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

did this through the agents, the Christians of his time, who were so influenced through his readings and it is with this knowledge of the transforming nature of his Works that I now invite us to take a closer look at this great theologian.

1.1 EARLY LIFE

To have a good survey and background knowledge of Origen's life the Book IV of Eusebius of Caesarea's *Ecclesiastical History* offers us a good description. Who is this Eusebius? Eusebius, was one time bishop of Caesarea, he succeeded Pamphilius, and Pamphilius in turn was one of the most dedicated disciples of Origen. Since Eusebius was a protégé of Pamphilius, it stands to reason that he also revered Origen, hence one needs to be on guard when reading Origen from Eusebius, but why read him at all if there is danger of this bias? Because Eusebius was in charge of the archives and of the Library, this would mean he had an undisputed means to the books and letters of Origen.¹⁸ Such primary materials are so valuable because with certainty without Eusebius furnishing us with the information from them, they would otherwise have been lost. Eusebius produced *Life of Origen* from primary source IE Origen's own writings and from now fragmented treatise of Pamphilius. *Apology for Origen* was written by Pamphilius to defend in a theological manner his hero Origen. This he wrote while in prison for his faith. Eusebius assisted him in this research and so we can understand how Eusebius became familiar with the "Origen archives". In reading the *Apology for Origen*, one discovers that the first book speaks more of theological issues rather than concern itself with biographical analysis. In it one also finds one of the pupils of Origen, Gregory (Thaumaturgus) addressing a farewell speech to his teacher, which again is more theological than bibliographical. Hence, we only get a clearer picture of Origen's life from Eusebius.¹⁹ Noteworthy to be read is Pierre Nautin who is very critical in going through Eusebius work and who makes a very good foundational reconstruction of

¹⁸ cf. EUSEBIUS: *The History of the Church*, tr. G.A. Williamson, New York 1965, p.5 In reading *Historia ecclesiastica* 6.36. (Henceforth *H.E.*), Eusebius affirms that he had amassed more than 100 of Origen's letters.

¹⁹ cf. LYNCH, K.A: *The Classics of Western Spirituality. Opt.Cit*, p. 2.

Origen's life.²⁰ No doubt other scholars challenge details of Nautin's work,²¹ and he himself concedes that many issues in his work are debatable, but one cannot but appreciate Nautin's outline. Nautin through the use of source criticism, sets up a criteria, which enables one to isolate data and information from reliable sources such as Origen's correspondence. He does not rely on hearsay stories about the relationship between Origen and his father, for example, Eusebius claims that the name of Origen's father was Leonides, this Nautin says cannot be proved, so most likely, its doubtful.²² "One of such story is that Leonides was so amazed and impressed by his son's precocious inquiries about the deeper meaning of scripture that he would often uncover his breast as he slept, kiss it with reverence as the shrine of a divine spirit, and thank God for deeming him worthy to be father of such a boy."²³ The conclusion one can infer from all this is that, despite its non-reliability, the account of Eusebius about the life of Origen makes a deep impact, and is inspirational to its readers. Taking a closer look at Nautin's outline, which I follow here, one sees this clearly, that despite been a controversial figure, Origen is still recognized in his own time as a great man, who had loads of detractors but who also had tons of faithful friends. According to Eusebius, Origen was hardly seventeen years of age when Septimus Severus' began persecuting Christians "in the tenth year of (his) reign"²⁴ this historical information, helps us in approximating Origen's birth date as 185/6 A.D.²⁵ His birth place was Alexandria, in Egypt, which was at that time a great center of learning, especially for the Hellenistic traditions. A city known for its rich and deep Philosophical traditions, its in depth study of literary criticism, and its deep focus on speculative theology. Among its renowned Christian Professors and most likely an Alexandrian clergy was Clement. The father of Origen, Leonides, a known Christian in the city, was most likely an active professor in literary criticism. One can deduce from the name 'Origen' a common Egyptian name, which is derived from the Greek for

²⁰ cf. NAUTIN, P: *Origene: sa vie et son oeuvre*, Paris 1977, p.23.

²¹ cf. CROUZEL, H: *Origen: The Life and Thought of the first Great theologians*, tr. by A.S Worall, San Francisco 1989. and NATABLY L: *Constantine and Eusebius*, Cambridge, 1981, p.56.

²² cf. TRIGG, J. W: *Origen*, London 1998, p.3.

²³ H.E. 6.2.10-11; tr. Trigg, p.3.

²⁴ H.E. 6.2.2.1-5; tr., G.A. Williamson, p. 179.

²⁵ cf. CROUZEL, H: *Origen: The Life and Thought of the First Great Theologians*, tr. A.S. Worall San Francisco 1989, p.2.

"Child of Horus"²⁶ that, "he was the child of a mixed marriage between one of the *hon-estiores* and a woman from the class of *humiliores*."²⁷ This would explain why Origen, who did not enjoy the full right as a citizen, because he was of a mixed marriage, was not persecuted.²⁸ He attended most of these persecutions, urging those to be executed to persevere. Servus ordered the killing of all citizens who had professed and accepted the Christian Faith, Origen was a Christian but not a citizen.²⁹

Being a prominent and known figure, Leonides, Origen's father, was a good scape goat to warn other Christians what would happen to them if they refused to renounce their faith. He suffered imprisonment and was later beheaded.³⁰ His death had profound effect on his family, both emotionally and in term of finances, because as part of the punishment, those condemned and executed also had their property confiscated. Origen, being the eldest of the seven sons,³¹ was now faced with the responsibility of providing for the family. He would have loved to suffer martyrdom with his father, but his mother intervened.³² Even if he had succeeded to get away, he would still not have been executed, because the law did not permit the killing of a non-citizen. At a later persecution by Decius, Origen, who was by then now an old man, would be severely tortured, and even though he had a passion for wanting to die as a martyr, he would survive this ordeal and die not as a martyr but as a confessor.

²⁶ Folklore had it that Osiris had given birth to the child Horus, a son to the goddess Isis. The worship of this goddess was the most powerful pagan movement at that time in Egypt.

²⁷ cf. ROUSSELLE, A: *The Persecution of the Christians at Alexandria in the 3rd century*, in *Revue historique de Droit français et étranger* 2 (1974) 222-51, esp. p.231-33. Jerome believed the mother of Origen to have been a Jewess or a christian. This claim he supports by saying that Origen was taught at a very young age to memorise the psalms.

²⁸ cf. *H.E.* 6.3.4-5; 6.4-6.5.

²⁹ cf. *The Historia Augusta* (Servus, 17.1) says that this persecution was aimed at those who proselytized for Christianity. CROUZEL, H: *Origen* 1989, p.5 takes it as an indication that Leonides might have been an important figure in the catechetical school of the church into which Origen seems to have been later inducted.

³⁰ The fact that he was beheaded and not killed like the other martyrs is an indication of his political and social rank.

³¹ cf. *H.E.* 6.2.12.

³² Eusebius narrates about this incidence by telling us that Origen's mother hid all his clothes and so he could not go out naked to offer himself for arrest.

At the age of eighteen³³ Origen was asked to be the director of the catechetical school in the church in Alexandria. Many have misunderstood this appointment to mean he took over the office of Clement of Alexandria and became the head of the official school of theology. Far from it, this appointment saddled him with the responsibility of taking care of the catechumens and more importantly prepare them in religious instructions. To better understand this, one could say while Clement was an independent professional Professor of Philosophy, Origen was being initiated by the bishop as one of the employee of the church to help in a charitable and in a solidarity way in taking care of families who had lost their loved ones to persecution. This would mean he had two jobs, one of lecturing his private pupils and the other of instructing his catechumens. But he was certainly not an independent professor at this stage of his life. From Eusebius we learn that despite the difficulty of the time Origen was faithful and courageous in his catechetical duties. In regards to his private lessons he saw himself more as a Rhetor-Philosopher and not as a Grammaticus. To him the simple life-style of the Sophist was pragmatic and this he adopted. Eusebius describes this³⁴; this simple life-style of a Sophists had a lot in common with the ascetical nature of Christianity and later readers of Origen would see in this life style something to be emulated; a student who denies himself the proper hours of sleep so as to read the Scriptures, one who chose poverty, chose to be celibate and who was a disciple of fasting and prayer. Such a life style was indeed cherished by the Christians of the fourth century, especially the Monks, little wonder they saw Origen as one of their founding fathers. Most likely his father's grammarian's library was sold³⁵ for a small amount of money and the proceeds from it put towards the payment for his tuition for his studies in Philosophy, an indication that he had already found wealthy patrons who were willing and ready to assist him in his career.³⁶ Ambrose was a benefactor. He was an adherent of a type of Gnostic Christian-

³³ cf. *H.E.* 6.3.3.

³⁴ cf. *H.E.* 6.2.12.

³⁵ cf. Although I earlier stated that all Leonide's property was confiscated, it seems the state did not seize his books after his death; Eusebius, *H.E.* 6.2.13.

³⁶ Again we learn from Eusebius that he got four obols which was less than what a poor labourer would receive. This was not because Origen did not have good bargaining skills, but it points to the fact that he wanted and preferred to live in a voluntary poverty and under the care and supervision of his patron and/or patrona.

ity called Valentinus. He became a strong supporter of Origen's work, both in Alexandria and in Caesarea. Owing to his financial help and support, the publications of new works such as the *Treatise on Prayer* and the *Commentary on John* was made possible. He also hired stenographers who had the task of making multiple copies as Origen lectured. The young Origen had another anonymous supporter, a wealthy woman. She allowed Origen to live with her while still a scholar. It seems she cherished having scholars in her household, because Origen was not the only scholar with her, a certain Paul from Antioch who was renown as a Gnostic theologian also enjoyed the woman's patronage.³⁷ This Paul from Antioch it must be said did quite well as many came to the Lectures which he gave in the house of this benefactors of his. Report has it that he was a very successful Lecturer in Alexandria. Owing to his popularity, great numbers gathered at the house of this wealthy Patrona, to listen to Paul's lecture. Among them not only of heretics, but also people who belong to the orthodox party, all eager to hear Paul speak and listen to his teachings. Origen discussing this situations stated that he despised the doctrine that Paul taught, which we can rightly deduce most have been some type of Gnosticism. Origen also stated that he never joined them in their prayers, for him to do so would mean praying together with a heretic, but instead that he preserved the "rule of the church."³⁸ One thing is clear however, regardless of what Paul's teaching might have been, the fact that Origen knew in a very detailed way about the doctrines of the Gnostics especially that of Valentinus and Marcion, can only be because he had heard them from this Paul of Antioch. This is evidenced in his works as he sought to outline the challenges, difficulties and dangers these teachings and the Gnostic doctrine posed to the faith of the church. He was particularly concerned about the subjects about the God's benignity as it relates to whether it encroaches on the free will of Man. The danger of Gnosticism for Origen and for other Patristics was not, as we recon in our contemporary epoch, its esoteric nature, but rather the danger lies in its denying that

³⁷ This Paul of Antioch, little is known about him, except that as a teacher, he was not dependent or an employee of any particular institute. This was quite a common thing in Alexandria in the third century. This wandering independent Lecturers were a discomfort to the Bishops of Alexandria, who felt their authority was been undermined.

³⁸ cf. Eusebius, *H.E.* 6.2.13-14.

God is the Father of Jesus and he is also the God of Israel, their denial that this same God is the creator of the world and the one who gave the Law. All these issues and elements are positions held by all the Gnostics, Valentinus, Marcion, Basilides, and their followers, it was their point of unity, even if they disagreed about other issues. For instance, Marcion, makes the claim that one cannot reconcile the wicked actions of the God we read in the Old Testament with the God Jesus reveals to us in the New Testament. The former is cruel to the point of been a savage while the latter is kind and loving. One may infer that maybe Origen's initial move in deciding to make use of allegory in interpreting the bible may have been for the simple reason to disprove such claims like the one's Marcion makes here. Marcion, together with some other Gnostic followers, Ptolemaeus and Heracleon, already envisaging this move on the part of Origen that he would have recourse to using allegory in explaining such passages in the analysis of the bible passages³⁹ responded by writing their own commentaries. One sees in Origen's Work; *Commentary on John* clearly that he was responding to the commentaries written by the Gnostics. This Work when read carefully is an evidence that it was written to give a graphic and descriptive answer to Heracleon, who had written his own commentary on the gospel of John.

Owing to the support and the financial help he got from his benefactors, Origen finished his studies. With the completion, it was now possible to be employed as a professional *grammateus*, one who lectures about the Greek literature and thus gainfully employed, the financial responsibility of taking care of his family became lighter. I would like to remark here that these literal studies had a way of shaping this great theologians thoughts and play and important and a significant factor in the legacy he will leave the church.⁴⁰ It was as a *grammateus*, that Origen developed his own four-level process of method of analyzing and interpreting a literary text. This method had first been developed some four hundred years earlier, by the Hellenist, who were then

³⁹ cf. GRANT, R. M: *Heresy and Criticism: the search for Authenticity in Early Christian Literature*, Louisville 1993, p.57.

⁴⁰ cf. NEUSCHÄFER, B: *Origenes als Philologe*, (=Schweizerische Beiträge zur Altertumswissenschaft 18) vol 2, Basel 1987, p.67.

grammarians trying to study and understand Homer and other literary classics. These four levels are, respectively, textual criticism, reading, interpretation, and judgement.⁴¹

The first level; Textual criticism, has become very popular in our contemporary age. One should note that during Origen's era, all Works had to be handwritten, meaning no two different manuscripts were ever the same. Thus, the method of Textual criticism was necessary, so as to ensure both the Professor and the students had the same text in their hand. It was also a common practice by earlier scholars in Alexandria for them to examine other variants of the same text, all in an effort to be as close as possible to the original text. One cannot but admire and marvel at Origen's mastery of this technique when one reads his Work. It is one of the arguments that one can always fall back on, whenever one hears that Origen was not critical in his analysis of biblical exegesis. The contrary is the case.

The first phase of Textual criticism is followed by, Reading, which is the second level of the four-method approach to any given text. What is done at the phase or stage is the reading aloud of the text? In our generation one would not appreciate this reading aloud, as the people back then in Origen's time did. Why? Now, we have all manners of punctuation to help in understanding a text right away. Things like capital letters, spaces between words quotation marks etc were not in use during this period, so it is in the reading out loud, that one can differentiate between who is speaking, the persona (*pro-sopon*) and the one who is been addressed, the one who is been spoken to. One detects this clearly in Origen's work, in his response to Celsus.⁴²

The third level is called interpretation (*exegesis*). As the name suggests, one seeks to furnish the text with as much information as one can gather. The collection of this information is usually by analysis the words used by the author in the text. This was not such an easy task, since these classics employed the use of words that were no longer

⁴¹ cf. All this information about the levels and in describing the levels, I made use of Henri-Irenee MARROU: *A History of Education in Antiquity*, tr. by George Lamb, New York 1956, pp. 229-34.

⁴² cf. RONDEAU, M.-J: *Les Commentaires patristiques du Psautier (IIIe-Vesiecles)*, vols 1 and 2; (=Orientalia Christiana Analecta 219 and 220) Rome, Pont. Institutum Studiorum Orientalia, 1982 and 1985, esp. vol.2, pp. 21-135.

the day-to-day language of the then present Alexandria. Such words could reveal so much as a geographical location, the chronological time and even information about the science of that epoch. Interestingly there is a branch of interpretation, known as *technikon*.⁴³ which basically looks at the rhetorics employed by the author in the text. For instance his use of grammar, his use of figures of speech, etc. *Technikon* also involves trying to understand the author's use of arrangement (*taxis*) and objective, target(*oikonomia*), especially in regards to a particular end or purpose(*skopos*) he might have in mind. This concept 'Oikonomia' plays a great and a significant role in many of Origen's exegesis, as we shall later come to discover.

The Fourth and final level is where the grammateus is called to make a judgment (*krisis*). In other words, he is to make an evaluation of the author's work or text and from his assessment bring out useful and helpful lessons from the text / work for his students. No doubt, Origen knew that, as a general principle, which works for the interpretation of any given text, especially difficult ones, is achieved by looking for an explanation from another passage written by that same author. This principle is beautifully and simply summarized as, "Clarify Homer from Homer."⁴⁴

This great scholar did not limit his studies to just Philosophy, but in this period under review dabbled into other branches of epistemology (*enkuklios paideia*) including; mathematics, astronomy in today's language, astrology and even music. That the natural sciences play an important and significant role in the thoughts of Origen is witnessed and testified to by one of his own student. In the *Address* which this student composed he says Origen through lectures on these sciences helped him move from what he at first saw as nothing but pure irrationality to state of rationality as he contemplated in awe "the face of the beauty and majesty of the holy plan (*oikonomia*) of the universe."⁴⁵

Surprisingly enough, because Origen never explicitly mentions Clement of Alexandria in any of his Writings, one may ask the question whether Origen was at all influ-

⁴³ cf. Here about the topics on *technikon* and *metricon*, I looked up and read NEUSCHÄFER, B: *Origenes als Philologe*, pp. 202-46.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 276-85.

⁴⁵ *Address* 8.111.

enced by Clement? It can be supported that indeed Origen was influenced by Clement. One must give credit to whom credit is due and in this sense Clement was an original theologian, one would be wrong to see him just as a *manqué of Origen*. Many of the themes and topics that were in a sketchy form in Clement would later be developed by Origen in systematic manner. Worthy of mention here, is that it was Clement who must be regarded as the pioneering father, who employed the use of Greek Philosophy and interpretations in allegory to argue convincingly against the Gnostics.⁴⁶ On many occasions one can read from his arguments how he placed biblical insights side by side with philosophical ideas and ideas from Greek literature, as Harl beautifully puts it; “combining biblical and classical terminology or moving seamlessly from a citation of a pagan author to a similar idea in the bible and vice versa.”⁴⁷ He even drew an analogy to support this his use of the Greek philosophy by saying that just as Paul understood the Torah as helping the Jews until the coming of Christ Gal. 3, 24, so also philosophy is to be seen in this light as serving as a teaching medium (pedagogue) for the Greeks.⁴⁸ Despite his welcoming attitude towards Greek philosophy, he drew the line, just like all other early Christian writers, when it came to the pagan religion. To them in a non-equivocal manner he showed zero tolerance. One sees in what kind of Intellectual climate Origen grew up in. It was a climate characterized by theologians like Clement, whose thoughts evidenced by his writings shows one can and should always at any given time and moment be able to differentiate a Christian scholar from a Gnostic. The difference lies in the formers unflinching obedience to the church's rule of faith. Needless to say such decorum to the churches traditions was at a flourishing stage in Alexandria at the time under review. The idea that God's punishments are to be understood as helping to purify rather than it been retributive, as the Gnostics would want many to believe and even argued to this end, was countered by both Clement and Origen with the

⁴⁶ cf. LILLA, R. C: *Clement of Alexandria: A Study in Christian Platonism and Gnosticism*, Oxford 1971, p.32.

⁴⁷ Clement d'Alexandrie, *Le Pédagogue*, trad. HARL, M., Paris 1960 (= SC 70), p. 102, “almost constant employment of a vocabulary borrowed simultaneously from the Bible and from Greek culture”

⁴⁸ cf. Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* 1.5.28.3.

use of allegorical interpretation of the Bible. Another point of similarity of both authors is the distinction they both make between simple Christians and spiritual Christians. The former, according to them, act and are conditioned by fear, while the latter have overcome fear and act and are conditioned by love. It is to the advanced Christians that more responsibilities are entrusted, for example they are to guard some secrets and some doctrines that are of an advanced nature from the simple Christians. This they have to do because premature revelation of such advanced doctrines could endanger the simple minded Christians.⁴⁹ In looking at the treatise, called *Peri archon* (also referred as *On First Principles*) written by Origen, anyone who is familiar with Clement's works would see in this work of Origen the theological plan of Clement in its realization and actualization. In the words of Brian Daley; "a systematic anti-Gnostic consideration of Scriptural doctrine, all as a prelude for a "truly Gnostic" account the cosmos and God, based on the book of Genesis and consistent with the "Rule of Truth".⁵⁰ The foregoing has tried to affirm the fact that indeed with no doubt Origen was influenced by Clement of Alexandria, especially in his formative years. But one should also note that the student did not remain forever under the shadow of his teacher. Origen, had his own style in bringing out his thoughts and his ideas as one is bound to notice in reading his works. One distinguishing point in this, is that with no doubt, evidenced by reading *Contra Celsum*, Origen in comparison to Clement had a deeper knowledge of both Greek philosophy and Greek literature. This point is played out in the prominent place Origen gives to language and terminology in the Bible.

Origen was also mightily interested in learning Jewish language, not just as a youth growing up, but this interest continued right into his matured years. Clement could not have given him a better legacy as when he introduced Origen and invited him to have an interest in reading the works of Philo. Origen, no doubt did not stop at Philo but through reading Philo got in contact with subsequent Christian traditions. Who was Philo? He was a theologian of Jewish origin but who lived in Alexandria, in the first

⁴⁹ cf. STROUMSA, G. G: *Hidden Wisdom: Esoteric Traditions and the Roots of Christian Mysticism*, Leiden 1996. p.42.

⁵⁰ cf. DALEY, R. J: *Origen's "De Principiis": Negative Theology in Clement of Alexandria and its possible implications*, in: *Studia Patristica* 31, (1997) pp. 540-45.

century. He wrote in an astonishingly undiluted Greek. Many of these treatises interpreted the sacred Torah in the light of Plato and vice versa. Many who are intellectually and morally unworthy of understanding the Scriptures, are enabled through this great scholars work to have an access to such mystically concealed knowledge. This opening Philo makes possible by his applying the use of allegory in interpreting the Scriptures.⁵¹ One wonders why during the time of Origen under the time under review, just a century after this, Philo's influence seemed to have waned! Nonetheless, his work did not utterly vanish, for not only did Origen come in contact with Philo's works in Alexandria but he was also able to find a Jewish teacher. Without whose help the work of Philo would have been very difficult to understand since Origen's knowledge of the Hebrew language was not that deep. This Jewish Professor helped him and even introduced him and brought him in contact with exegetical traditions of the Jewish people.

Aside from reading Philo and having some basic idea about Jewish exegesis, an account by a philosopher called Porphyry, a pagan, states that Origen also had contact with the Platonist called Ammonius Saccas as a young man growing up.⁵² This meeting can be deduced as been the reason why Origen's knowledge of philosophy was so excellent. This Ammonius Saccas was believed to have lectured Origen thoroughly in Philosophy. Accounts of this same Porphyry leads us to believe that, later on, Plotinus also became a student of this Ammonius Saccas. It is this Plotinus, who later came to be known as the father of Neoplatonism. "Plotinus himself held in the highest esteem a fellow-student of Ammonius named Origen, the author of three (now lost) philosophical treatises."⁵³ A pointer to the fact that these two may indeed have been students of the same teacher is the position held by the two of them regarding Stars. Among the first astrologers Origen and Plotinus agreed that the stars were not to be seen as causes but indeed as signs. That they both expounded such a doctrine is an indication that they

⁵¹ cf. RIEDWEG, C: *Mysterienterminologie bei Platon, Philon und Klemens von Alexandrien*, Berlin 1987, p.43.

⁵² H.E. 6.19.6.

⁵³ PORPHYRY: *Life of Plotinus* vol. 3, 14 and 20.

most likely studied under the same Professor. Just as Origen was able to come in contact with his Jewish teacher through reading Philo, it can be presumed that also through his teacher Ammonius, he became interested and read other Philosophers like Plato, Aristotle, stoic philosophers, etc. This great scholar Origen indeed had a love for knowledge, he followed it wherever it went. One should however not misconceive his love for knowledge, especially his love for philosophy with a bias and prejudice which many have of an entirely different epoch and era. What is this bias or prejudice of such an epoch? Many were of the thinking in that age of Reasoning if you are on the side of Philosophy, IE a rationalist, then you are opposed and against anything that had to do with religion. Not at all, but in the time of Origen, it was in the manner and schooling of philosophers to be critical. But this critical way of thinking had nothing to do with their questioning the reality of God. In other words they did not say God or religion was not logical or not critical and hence should be discarded. Such was not the thinking of the philosophers at the time of Origen. Contrary to such thoughts, the goal of a Platonist in those times was following the footsteps of their master and teacher as one finds in the *Theaetetus* “to transform themselves with the help of wisdom so as to become like the divine as much as possible.”⁵⁴ This indeed was the goal of Origen as he followed and sought out the knowledge of Philosophy of the Platonists. Another misconception we must be wary of as we read that Origen had a great interest in Philosophy is to think that Origen saw himself as owing Philosophy for his formation in this knowledge his loyalty and allegiance in such a way that the doctrines of Philosophy have a higher rank than the doctrines of his Christian faith! No such thing or thought existed for Origen. This point is explored by Henri Crouzel who outlined the similarities in the doctrines of both Plotinus and that of Origen, and who came to the conclusion that, despite the striking similarities, the latter did not just accept the former, based on his being an authority in the field, but that he (Origen) actually accepted each doctrine after careful critical analysis and in fact in cases where such philosophical doctrines ran contrary to the Christian faith, Origen refused to accept such philosophical doctrines, no matter how attractive their logic might seem.⁵⁵ But one might ask, what then was the primary goal

⁵⁴ PLATO: *Theaetetus* 176b.

⁵⁵ CROUZEL H: *Origène et Plotin: Comparaisons doctrinales*, Paris 1991, p.22.

of Origen in pursuing philosophy? It must have been the rigorous critical method of this discipline that attracted him and this training he employed when coming in contact with reality. This art of relying on one's judgment in assessing whatever is to be examined, Origen also sought to inculcate in his students. He sought to awaken and make active in his pupils "the part of the soul that exercises judgment."⁵⁶ As this art was not just meant to be confined in the four walls of a classroom, but even more to be applied in every situation of one's life and in one's living. This is affirmed by Pierre Hadot who points out that for Origen, which was also true for all who claim to love wisdom, philosophy was a way of life.⁵⁷ And this way of life, was in not contrary, nor in opposition to the Christian way of life. If anything it was most compatible with it. With such a conviction, Origen encouraged all with whom he came in contact with for them to love knowledge and seek wisdom, by introducing them to study of philosophy. His teaching was always that philosophy must and should be understood as an exercise that helps one mature morally and intellectually because it helps purify the way and manner in which one thinks. This step of purification Origen says acts as a stepping stone to the next level which is that of being able to understand Scripture.⁵⁸ He was never tired of using himself as an example, telling all who cared to listen that he fell in love with the Hebrew language and how his studies of it, has helped him in understanding quite clearly as nothing else could that the books of Scripture, especially the books Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs, commonly written in praise of Solomon, when critically studied, was nothing short of "a progressive philosophical curriculum."⁵⁹ Furthermore, he illustrated this love of wisdom and this need for a continued search for it by using Jesus as an example. He points out that Jesus, who for him is the ultimate Teacher, had one goal in mind, and that was the enterprise to make his disciples, in other words to transform them to become like him. I do not call you servants anymore, but friends.

⁵⁶ *Address* 7.106.

⁵⁷ cf. HADOT, P: *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, tr. by M. CHASE, Oxford 1995, esp. pp.264-76.

⁵⁸ cf. *Address* 13-14.

⁵⁹ *Commentary on Song of Songs*, Prologue 3.

1.2 ADULT LIFE AT ALEXANDRIA

I have already highlighted how Origen was inducted by the Bishop of Alexandria to take care of the Catechumens, giving them religious instructions. But as he matured, not just in age but in academic parlance, it is only natural that he also wanted to pass this on to his pupils. Unfortunately, the bishop Demetrius, and not just him, but as was the practice in Origen's epoch, bishops liked all in their province to know that they (the bishops) were the ones in charge of the teachings of the Church and not the Christian Teachers. With the result that a display and flexing of such authority on the part of the Bishops reduced considerably, no matter how charismatic and brilliant the teacher might be, the domain of operating freely as he chose. This would prove a problem for Origen with regards to his bishop Demetrius. It should be said that the great scholar and teacher, Origen, while not having any problem in obeying the church's rule of faith and to his credit also, he was always ready to be corrected and be criticized as long as this was constructive, he however did not see it as his duty to listen to anyone as regards to how or what he should teach, even if the person giving such a command were a bishop.⁶⁰ No doubt, this proved to be no small issue between him and the bishop Demetrius. This issue of the bishop not having the authority to tell him what to teach became so tense, compounded with the growing popularity of Origen, so much so that living in Alexandria was no longer an option. Things got so bad between Origen and Demetrius, that the former took a trip to Rome in around AD 215.⁶¹ But things were practically the same in Rome as in Alexandria for someone who had an occupation as lay teacher. It was not conducive at all functioning as a Christian teacher, however the silver lining was that in Rome, he was able to get a more intensive and deeper learning and outlook about theology on the Trinity. It was also during this period that Origen, with the help of his patron, already mentioned in the foregoing, the wealthy man called Ambrosius, was able to have his lectures and Seminars documented, which was later edited and published as books. Ambrosius helped in regards to footing the bills for paying for stenographers, who were saddled with the task of being present at every Lecture and Symposium Origen had and

⁶⁰ cf. TRIGG, J: "*The Charismatic Intellectual: Origen's Understanding of Religious Leadership*", in: *Church History* 50 (1981) 5-19, reprinted in *Studies in Early Christianity*, vol 9, ed. E. FERGUSON, New York 1992, pp. 107-21.

⁶¹ *H.E.* 6.14.10.

faithfully copying his Thoughts at such Events. One could say Ambrosius was so financially helpful, because Origen had through convincing arguments, shown him what really the Gnostic's doctrine stood for. Ambrosius in turn wanted the Truth, that he had come in contact with to reach as many people as possible and he believed by supporting Origen in publishing his many lectures. In this manner he hoped to achieve this goal.⁶² And indeed, soon enough with the publication of such material, Origen's fame and popularity soon grew and he became a notable figure in the community of Christians in Rome. This soon brought him in contact with the noble families in Rome, notable among which was the desire of the governor of the Roman province of Arabia to meet him.⁶³ There is also the record of a Julia Mamaea, whose son was Emperor Alexander Severus, inviting Origen to come and visit her in Antioch.⁶⁴ (It would be recalled that this same family of the Severan had earlier persecuted Christians and were responsible for executing Origen's dad. But most likely the present date under review IE AD 231, the persecution had long ended.) One can only guess that this rise in popularity and reputation of Origen, did not please the Bishop of Alexandria, Demetrius and must have led to a further deterioration in relations. Owing to this ever deepening tension between him and Demetrius, Origen most likely used this opportunity of being invited by different nobles in Greece and Caesarea to also look for new accommodations in a new place, where he would not have to be under the authority of Demetrius. The Bishop of Caesarea, Theoctistus, who saw how brilliant Origen was and who above all appreciated his homilies, extended to him the hospitality of giving him a home and invited him to stay in Caesarea. He even went further than providing a home, seeing how immensely valuable Origen would be for his church in Caesarea, he went on to ordain him to the priesthood. As would be expected, this action of Theoctistus, did not please Demetrius, because Origen had been inducted by him, and was therefore technically speaking still under his jurisdiction and not under the authority of the bishop of Caesarea. Demetrius

⁶² Ibid. 6.23,1-2.

⁶³ Ibid. 6.19.15.

⁶⁴ Ibid. 6.21.3.

therefore sought to invalidate Origen's ordination by putting forward the argument that Origen had mutilated himself and was by this very fact not a worthy candidate for Ordination. Furthermore, to further discredit Origen, Demetrius referred to a debate Origen had had with a Gnostic, *Dialogue with Candidus*, and in this debate Origen had claimed that the Devil will be saved! This position of Origen is a blasphemy and so a heretical position and Demetrius went on to say that this shows that Origen was not only unfit to be a clergy, but also unfit to be a Christian teacher.⁶⁵ With so much controversy surrounding Origen, one can understand why the Church in Alexandria wanted nothing more to do with him. This estranged relationship did not change for the better even after Demetrius' death in AD 233, despite the fact that the new bishop, Heraclas had been a former student of Origen. So it came to be that Origen decided to permanently stay in Caesarea and continued both his priestly and his educational duties. The year, AD 234 he took this decision is noteworthy because Origen himself believed it to be a significant date in his life. Origen referred to these events as his deliverance from Egypt.⁶⁶

1.3 AT CAESAREA; A MAN OF THE CHURCH

We now meet a matured Origen who no longer lives in the Alexandrian church where he had his formative years as a youth, but who now lives in the Caesarean church. Having received his ordination from the hands of the then bishop of Caesarea, Theoctistus, Origen was quite content to carry out his clerical duties and his academic work in Caesarea. One could say this would be his only true home for the remaining part of his life. It is here in Caesarea that Origen produced many of his works, that we now read today. Ambrosius continued to be a friend to him and with his financial support and help, many of Origen's books were published. His clerical duties included giving sermons at Eucharistic celebrations and also teaching the lay faithful about the rule of faith and about the doctrines of the church. Because of his brilliant mind, he was also invited on many occasions to by bishops to examine if a bishop's viewpoint or perspective was heretical. In comparison to his former home, Caesarea was smaller in size, but nonetheless having a seaport and an administrative office for representatives of the roman empire there was a

⁶⁵ Ibid. 6.8.5. cf NAUTIN, P: *Origene: sa vie et son oeuvre*, p. 103.

⁶⁶ cf. *Commentary on John 6.2*. cf Nautin, P: *Origene: sa vie et son oeuvre*, pp. 366-8.

lot of comings and goings. This meant that it was an excellent location for someone who wanted to study the bible and also for those who wanted to impart knowledge about Scripture.⁶⁷ The reference to Palestine as "holy land," as we call it in our contemporary age and era, was first used as such far back then during the time of Origen. One could say he was among the first writers to coin-out that term.⁶⁸ Origen saw being in Palestine as an opportunity to deepen his knowledge about the many geographical locations found in the bible and he also aimed to fulfill and satisfy passion for gathering manuscripts. Another advantage Origen saw in living in Caesarea was that it boasted of having an ever growing Jewish community that spoke not only their Jewish mother tongue, but that also spoke Greek. Thus enabling him to come in contact with them and exchange ideas and have clarifications on technical matters. The product of such reflection helps us in our own day to understand what were the thoughts of the Jews living in Palestine at that given time.⁶⁹ This exchange of thoughts and ideas was not just one-sided, IE Origen sourcing for information and materials from the Jewish community, but it was a two-way exchange of thought and information. This is evidenced by the fact that scholars of Jewish origin like Rabbi Hosha'ia is believed to have made use of Origen's copies of the works of Philo.⁷⁰ The document, *Address to Origen*, which is believed to have been published around AD 238 and AD 245, is believed to have been a work put together by a student and its composition is believed to have taken place in this town of Caesarea. This work is important in the sense that it reveals the structure of the mind of the great and brilliant Professor Origen and also reveals the methods this Professor employs in order to fulfill his task of imparting knowledge to his pupils.⁷¹ Who composed this work? It is believed that most likely it was composed by one of

⁶⁷ cf. McGUICKIN J. A: "Caesarea Maritima as Origen Knew It", an article in: *Origeniana Quinta*, (1992) 3-25.

⁶⁸ cf. WILKEN, R.L: *The Land Called Holy: Palestine in Christianity History and Thought*, New Haven 1992, p.56.

⁶⁹ cf. HALPERIN, D. J: *The Faces of Chariot: Early Jewish Responses to Ezekiel's Vision*, Tübingen 1988, pp. 337-8.

⁷⁰ cf. RUNIA, D. T: *Philo in Early Christian Literature: A Survey*, Assen-Minneapolis 1993, pp. 24-5.

⁷¹ cf. GREGORIUS: *Remerciement à Origène. La Lettre d'Origène à Grégoire*, trad. H. CROUZEL, Paris 1969 (=SC 148),p.67.

Origen's student who is known as Gregor Thaumaturgus. This same Gregor is believed to be the one to whom Origen wrote; *Letter to Gregory*.⁷²

Documentations show that as a cleric in the church at Caesarea, Origen gave homilies and sermons on a frequent and regular basis. On the basis of this information, we have a window that affords us the opportunity in seeing how Preaching was done and carried out in the period before the Nicea council. It is also from such glimpse that Nautin has been able to put forward the argument that the church in Caesarea in the space and period of three years of liturgical Eucharistic celebration reads the whole bible.⁷³ The methodology which Origen applied during his homily was to go verse after verse in explanation of the bible passage that had been read at that particular Eucharistic gathering. In this verse to verse explanation he brought out the moral lessons the passage was trying to teach. Taking a Statistics of how many of Origen's homilies and sermons survived, we have a total number of Two-hundred and five in Latin translations. This was made possible through the translations made by Rufinus or Jerome. A further twenty homilies given by Origen on Jeremiah and one homily on the book of 1 Samuel also have come down to us in its Greek translation.⁷⁴ No doubt, there is a difference between those listening in a philosophy class and those listening at a Eucharistic gathering. Origen was quite aware of this, but nonetheless, even when giving a sermon he aimed to make his hearers to be attracted to want to read the scriptures. In other words, just as he himself had been totally immersed in the love of scripture and the ever growing need to fully understand this word of God, because of its capabilities of been able to transform whoever reads and understand the words it contains, so also Origen sought to infuse his hearers with this same longing, to want to read and understand the divine word so as to come in contact with its transforming power. To achieve this goal of his, he was always looking for better ways to transmit this need for his hearers to personally want to study the scripture. He believed that if his hearers would be reverent enough

⁷² NAUTIN P: *Origene: sa vie et son oeuvre* pp.83-6 and pp.182-97, Nautin begs to differ that Gregor Thaumaturgus is the author of *Address to Origen*, he nonetheless accepts that the Address was written by one of Origen's student.

⁷³ cf. NAUTIN P: *Origene: sa vie et son oeuvre*, pp. 389-409.

⁷⁴ cf. There is a rewritten versions of Origen's Homilies by Jerome anout seventy of them in Jerome's work titled, *Tractate or Homilies on the Psalms*. PERI, V: *Omellie orgeniane sui Salmi*, Vatican City 1980, p.45.

and if they sought through prayers to approach the bible, then it would become possible for them to come in contact with this transforming power of the scripture.⁷⁵ With this focus and aim in mind, one understand then why Origen's sermon in its methodology and character was "homiletic". The root meaning of the word "homiletic" is conversational.⁷⁶ To bring out an active participation and response in his hearers he often asked questions of a hypothetical sort during the homily. Another thing he did in his preaching was to frequently make use of the second-person singular, such use makes the hearer feel as if the homily is meant and being addressed to him personally. Origen also did not just preach in abstract, he made his homilies to come to bear on issues confronting and affecting his lay faithful. For instance he spoke frequently against greed and lust, for the very reason that he knew Caesarea being a growing seaport station, these two vices would definitely be rampant among many of its citizens, his lay people not excluded. He sought to maintain at all times a high reverence for the church's doctrines and inculcate in his hearers a respect for the word that is preached.

This high respect for the proclaimed word is evidenced by the accusations he makes against his congregation. He told them that they were inconsistent in the sense that, on the one hand they were very meticulous (as they should be) about not wanting to lose one tiny crumb of the Eucharistic bread, but at the same time they failed in regards to their struggling to apply the word of God to their way of living, and in this sense they lost without even thinking twice about it God's word, which is as important as the crumbs of the Eucharistic bread.⁷⁷ One already senses from this accusation of Origen against his lay people that things were not always smooth and rosy between preacher and hearer. It goes to show that sometimes his homily did not sit well with his lay people. Origen sometimes admonished the members of his congregation for been inattentive while he was giving his sermon and at another instance he openly com-

⁷⁵ cf. SHEERIN, D: "*The Role of Prayer in Origen's Homilies*," in: Origen of Alexandria: His World and His Legacy, ed. C. KANNENGIESSER and W .L. PETERSON 1988, pp. 200-14.

⁷⁶ cf. About the style Origen employed in delivering his Homilies read P. NAUTIN, "*Origene predicateur*," Turin 1987, p.32.

⁷⁷ cf. ORIGEN: *Homilies on Exodus*. 13.3.

plained that they were not ready to hear the things he wanted to say to them.⁷⁸ Despite his passion in wanting to get his congregation to actively transform themselves after listening to his homilies, many of which brought out moral and spiritual lessons of the read passage, one can say without any iota of doubt that Origen did not have that gift of controlling his congregation, in comparison to as someone like John Chrysostom or Augustine. However, Origen, did not necessarily also want to control the members of his congregation in such a way, his aim was to want to bring his hearers to a deep love of scripture, having himself experienced its transforming power.

1.4 HIS ACADEMIC WORKS

Many who have come to love this brilliant scholar, no doubt have many of his Works in their study, perhaps even his works in both languages into which it has been translated, IE its Latin and Greek forms. It is quite probably that some scholars would perhaps even have a set of Origen's works which has been translated into English. No doubt this set of compilation in its English version is very small when compared to the sets in Greek and Latin. But the surprising thing is that even those who may possess a set of Origen's work in both Greek and Latin, have just a tiny portion, when one compares it to the many works which this great theologian published. Over the many centuries, decay by book ruining insects have made humanity lose a great majority of useful information and traditions from Christian of the ancient era. How does one explain the lose of so much useful information? The painful but truthful fact is that every student of Christian history knows that the behavior of every generation is, the attitude to regard the works carried out in the ages preceding his time and era as being not so important and useful, as to merit its conscious and careful preservation. For instance, the landmarking and historical Council of Nicene(325), so significant that it was to the extent of even been sponsored by the state, brought so much excitement, because the church was finally been recognized by all and sundry, and no one in his right mind would think about the period before this epoch-making event as being valuable or as having anything more useful and important to offer. To the Christians of this epoch, anything before this council would and should be regarded as old and outdated and as such not wor-

⁷⁸ cf. ORIGEN: *Homilies on Genesis* 10.1 and *Homilies on Jeremiah* 20.6.

thy to be preserved. Not even the writings of these earlier periods. That is how many of the earliest writings of the church came to be lost. Only now do we realize how much of a legacy and how many invaluable works has been lost, never more to be reacquired and thus a loss for posterity.⁷⁹ Little wonder then that some significant works of a brilliant mind such as Origen have also been lost. But in Origen's case another factor can be traced which led to the quick loss of his works. One can say that Origen's mind was of a very speculative kind. The church of his day was not given into speculation and only after many generation would such speculation be admitted into the Christian church. In other words Origen was entering territories, fields and areas that would take many years to come before receiving the churches approval and blessing. Origen himself, in dabbling into these fields and in engaging in speculation about so many issues did not think he was doing anything contrary to the teachings of Scripture or anything against the wisdom of the church. He always believed he was following the teachings of Christ, as laid down by Christ himself and given to his successor, the apostles. Origen posed questions on many central Christian points, for example questions that centered on Christology, Trinitarian issues and anthropological ones. These questions became for many the foundation on which and from which they formed their own ideas.⁸⁰ Owing to his speculative theology, Origen became a problem for the church of the fourth and fifth centuries. Why? The Christian church at this period under review, was a church that was in process of defining what Christian orthodoxy meant. In other word it was no longer flexible and could not have one of its theologian, no matter how great a mind he might have, to continue to set bad precedence for others, by engaging and been involved in a speculative theology. There were laws of the church that had been drawn up in Synods that needed to be followed. But Origen was already a "legend" before the appearance of these laws that sought to bring more rigidity. Origen's legacy as the greatest mind to come from the early Christian church no doubt made his teachings a sacrosanct for later generations of Christian thinkers. It is not easy erasing a memory of such an influential

⁷⁹ cf. Mc.GUCKIN J.A: *The Westminster Handbook to Origen*, p. 25.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

mind as Origen, whom the monks really loved, believing him to be the first Christian mystic and the first to practice ascetical living. This is what the church of the third and fourth centuries had to contend with. The church wanted and needed so very urgently to regulate and eradicate this reverential awe that people had of Origen.⁸¹ This goal of the church would prove not so easy to achieve. After so many controversies about Origen, that covered a span of the three centuries, IE the fourth, the fifth and part of the sixth century, a decree which ordered Origen's books to be burned was issued by Emperor Justinian in 543. It is this decree that is solely responsible for the accelerated rate in which the works of Origen came to be lost and this explains why only a tiny fragment of his works have survived till date.⁸² In fact one cannot but wonder how even the tiny fragments that we have today even came to survive despite this decree. No doubt it bears evidence to the admiration and significance the church has for this great theologian. The fact that he continues to live on in his work is a sign that those of his era, cannot thank him enough, knowing that they owe a lot of their theologizing to him, whose work provided a basis for their spring board and we in this generation as in many generations to come know also that Origen is so interwoven into the theology of Christianity that we remain ever in debt to him and his great legacy. I do not think he will ever be forgotten nor dismissed as irrelevant. In a more narrowed sense, I want to focus on Origen and his legacy to biblical exegesis. One would not be wrong if one were to describe Origen as the founding father or architect of all commentaries on biblical passages. Since the work of an architect is fore and foremost to set a good foundation, in this regard Origen laid a solid ground-framework to help and aid every Christian who sets out to reflect on scripture. Today we have the Origenian who are naturally lovers and admirers of this great genius of the church. One would not be wrong in saying that Eusebius was one the first Origenean. Eusebius, documented and drew up a list of all of Origen's works. This list is now lost but we know he drew up this list because it was included in the biography Eusebius made of Pamphilus.⁸³ Another confirmation that this list existed is because Jerome knew that Eusebius had made one and so while on a visit

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid., p. 26.

⁸³ cf. *H.E.* 6.32.3.

to Caesarea, he went to the library and made use of it. From Eusebius list, Jerome must have drawn up his own list, because a copy of this list was sent to Paula, who was Jerome's secretary. Was there then a difference between Eusebius' list and that of Jerome. Most likely, and the difference was that Jerome's list mentions some other specific works of Origen, which are not in Eusebius list. One hopes that with this list that have survived, from Jerome and Eusebius, even though only in tiny fragments, a complete and comprehensive edition of all the works of this brilliant scholar of the church may soon be published. But it must be said that this task is still a work that is in the works.⁸⁴

1.4.1 PHILOSOPHICAL TEXTS

SCHOLIA: What is Scholia (its singular form is scholium or scholion)? It is a term used to designate explanations of a critical or grammatical nature. Jerome informs us that Origen had such commentary explanations journal or notes on some books of the bible. For example; there are scholia by Origen on Leviticus, Ecclesiastes. Numbers, Exodus. Of course, not many of these scholia come down to us in our contemporary age in its full and in its complete state. We however have many of them passed on to us in their fragmented state the "Catenae". This word "Catenae" means "chain". It refers to the a collection made after the sixth century of the notes of fathers of the church, notes which these fathers made regarding their reflection on scripture. Such notes were used by preachers, because they were, been comments of church fathers, sure to be free of heresy and so undoubtedly orthodox. Aside from Origen's scholia been preserved in its fragmented form in the catena, one could also find some fragments of these commentary explanations in Origen's *Philocalia*. This *Philocalia* of Origen was most likely composed by Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nazianzus, most likely around the fourth century. In this *Philocalia*, one could also find commentary explanations of Origen in his interpretation of certain books of the bible.⁸⁵ The third and finally source where one may find this scholia is by Pamphilus. This work by Pamphilus is called *Apology for Origen*. It contains five books, although a sixth book was later added by

⁸⁴ cf. Mc. GUCKINJ. A: *The Westminster Handbook to Origen*, p. 26.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

Eusebius. Sadly enough of all six books, only one book, the first has been handed down to us. This has been translated by Rufinus into Latin.

THE HEXAPLA: While still in Alexandria, Origen had already begun a sketchy columned bible edition. However it attained a more defined outlook and shape as he further worked on it in Caesarea. Each column contained the translation of Scripture in a Greek form which was different in terms of transliteration from those in the other columns. Of course one finds that Origen, before the columned, to aid a better reading, first set out the books of the Old Testament in its original Hebrew alphabets and then right next Hebrew text was the transliterated form in the Greek language. A first column was in the Greek language, but this form was a Version from Jewish thinker called Aquila. This first column was followed by a second column, which version also from a Jewish scholar named Symmachus. The third column contained what we know as the Septuagint text and the fourth and last column had Theodotion's version of the Greek transliteration. These four columned version of the transliterated form of the Hebrew bible into Greek, were the commonly know ones. One could say the Standardized one in use and the one available to every biblical scholar of Origen's time. It was to these four that Origen added three columns. These added columns are known to contemporary biblical scholars as Quinta, Sexta and Septima. As I have earlier highlighted, Origen was a lover of book-finding adventure. The idea of these three added columns was the fruit of one of such book finding missions.⁸⁶ In the foregoing, we have already seen how critical Origen is when approaching any text, this great and brilliant mind ever so critical saw it as necessary, and so went on to introduce what we call critical annotations into the text of the bible. He was the first Christian thinker to do this at Alexandria. From his studies in the Library at Alexandria, he came up with a group of signs, each having a specific function that would better help the one reading and studying Scripture. One of the signs called the obelus was placed in the column that had the Septuagint version of the transliterated Hebrew text of the bible. Now one would ask, what then was the function of this obelus? This is the obelus sign (÷) and wherever one sees this sign in the Septuagint column it was an indication that such a passage, though in the Septuagint version, was

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 27.

not to be found in the Hebrew text. Another sign which Origen introduced was the asterisk (*). Its function was to indicate that an element was missing which in normal sense was appropriate to be present in such a transliterated Greek version.⁸⁷ One sees from its technical use that the Hexapla was for the student and scholar of the bible at that time indeed a great research aid, and as such one of the prized collection of the Library in Caesarea. With such a tool, many came to see the Library in Caesarea as a growing school of biblical exegesis, whose serious minded and thorough critical analysis of Scripture, made it a force to be reckoned with. Many from far and near no doubt wanted to be part of such a School, a place where the authenticity of biblical books was subjected to the best text criticism ever to be established.⁸⁸ As is the case with many of the works of antiquity, the Hexapla has been handed down to us only in its fragmented forms. One of such fragmented form is one that survived from a copy made by a bishop of Tella called Paul far back in the seventh century. We have it from the records of Epiphanius that Origen completed this work, shortly before he died.⁸⁹

1.4.2 SERMONS

From the accounts of the historian called Socrates, we have come to know that it was customary for Origen to preach every Wednesday and Friday at the Eucharistic gatherings in the church at Caesarea.⁹⁰ From time to time, whenever he was on visit to Arabia, especially during the convocation of any given Synod, he was also invited as guest preacher to and also whenever he journeyed to Jerusalem. From his biographer, Pamphilus, we learn, Origen preached daily. If all this is true, and we do not have reason to believe otherwise, then it follows that if one were to make a collection of all his homilies and sermons and all spiritual texts, that would indeed be a lot and an enormous vol-

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 28.

⁹⁰ cf. *H.E.* 5.22.

ume. Being a brilliant and admired Figure, it is most likely that his homilies were written down by scribes as he gave them at liturgical celebrations and eucharistic gatherings. This must not have bothered him, although we learn that on many occasions he did express discomfort in allowing “unverified” material to be passed around. Origen also was of the opinion that a preacher’s sermon should only be recorded when and only if the homilist is seasoned and matured in the art of preaching. In other words only when a preacher has been preaching for many years. He himself, in keeping to this norm that he gave, only allowed stenographers to record the addresses he gave in public after he was sixty years of age. In those times when one attains the age of sixty-one is seen as an elder.⁹¹ It is quite doubtful if in reading the homilies that have survived to our age and epoch one would reconnect through them to the one who gave them. Most certainly these homilies have been altered and watered down through time and most likely been thoroughly blue-penciled. These homilies and sermons remain however a great source in helping us understand how preaching during liturgical gatherings looked like in the third century. Despite the fact that about 279 homilies have been preserved, it would not be exaggerating to say he gave more than over 600 homilies. From these 279, only 27 do we have in its Greek originality. Among them is worthy of mention the twenty homilies on Jeremiah, Jerome has its Latin parallel. Handed down to us is also *Homily on the Witch of Endor* (1Sam. 28:3-25). A great number of Origen’s homily was translated by Rufinus into Latin. Sadly enough one cannot but regret that a great many of his homilies on the individual Psalms have been lost.

1.4.3 COMMENTARIES

Having looked at the homilies of Origen in the foregoing, one may wonder why his commentaries are not grouped under the same heading of being Homilies? Being a thorough critical scholar, this is not to say or mean that his Homilies were not critical, but one notices that in his works labelled as Origen’s commentaries, his approach to the books of the Bible here is done and carried out in a more systematic way. One could say in the writing of these commentaries he tends to be more academic or he has a more scientific outlook. Two views always ran at the back of Origen’s mind in analyzing the

⁹¹ cf. McGUCKIN, J. A. *The Westminster Handbook to Origen*, p. 28.

books of the bible so as to write his commentaries on them. One was the adoption and the use of the Textual criticism he had learned in Alexandria. The second was to always see these books as being the holy writ of a people with Jewish Origin. In this second consideration Origen always sought to analyze these books as a whole, IE the books in the Old Testament having a link and relationship with the Gospels and the other books of the New Testament.⁹² As with so many others of Origen's works, not a single commentary is handed down to us in its complete form. These commentaries further drive home the point and the fact that Origen indeed had a brilliant mind. One could almost say he had a photographic mind of the texts of the bible, such that his mind could be likened as been a Concordant. Of course such feat he was only able to achieve because he read long and very wide. One might almost be tempted to say he knew the whole books of Scripture by heart. The use of allegory as a method comes out very distinctively and strikingly in this body of Origen's work. Later authors and exegetes find Origen's hermeneutic of scripture so attractive, so critical and so elaborately explained that they believe him to be the greatest exegete that ever lived. To mention just a few of the commentaries that have survived; Commentaries on the Johannine Gospel, the Gospel of Matthew and the Epistles to the Romans.

1.4.4 FORMAL DEFENSES

AGAINST CELSUS (CONTRA CELSUM): Of all the works of Origen, this is the only work where he, employing and using his expertise in the field of Rhetoric, debates with someone who was not a member of the Christian community. This is not to say that Origen was not apologetical in his other works, but one cannot but note the uniqueness of it in this work, *Contra Celsum*.⁹³ This work is outstanding in comparison to other apologetical works in and before Origen's time because no one had been able to answer this Sophist, Celsus quite adequately enough before this rebuttal by Origen. In other words Origen was able to face, in an intellectual debate, this huge 'enemy' of Christianity. Celsus, to show his utter disgust and distaste for all Christians and what they stand

⁹² Ibid., p. 29.

⁹³ Ibid., p. 32.

for had written his work titled *The True Word*, in AD 178. In this work he went all out in criticizing the church and sadly enough this attack against the church was in the first instance met with no counter response. Such a silence was unacceptable to Ambrose, Origen's benefactor. In his determination not to let this intellectual critic go unanswered, Ambrose turned to Origen. He told him the church of which he was proud to be a member of was been mocked and ridiculed and this should not be left without giving an appropriate and an adequate rebuttal. It was in the tradition of the church to ignore such attacks, knowing with time it would lose its bite, and this was also the position Origen took before he was approached by his benefactor. After all, Christ also remained silent and gave no response when attacked and questioned during his court hearings. But Origen's position changed after hearing what Celsus had postulated about those who chose to be Christians. Celsus had said it was tantamount to stupidity for anyone to want to be a Christian and that no real thinker and scholar and no real Hellenist would decide to join such a religion. This claim of Celsus so disturbed Origen, that he decided a response must be written to refute and reject such an attack. Origen's response was however not just based on wanting to answer the issues Celsus made, but with this treatise he sought to give the interpretation to many themes as seen from a Christian's point of view. Furthermore he used this medium to address questions that philosophy raised and how these were answered by Christian thinkers.

Thus one sees why this treatise of Origen is so profound. It is the first body of work, that really highlights and aims to present to the world the thoughts of Christians about how they have and how they hope to continue to change a culture of the hellenist with Christian values. So, what would later come to its highest actualization in the fourth century, with the Church and the Byzantine Empire making a pact, has in this body of work its humble and early beginnings. This marriage between church and state is referred to by Florosky as the "Christianization of Hellenism."⁹⁴ One might think that this, been a rebuttal and refutation of Celsus claims, that Origen would be one-sided, in the sense that his only aim and task in this work was to present the Christian religion in a positive light, but this was not the case. Being an honest critical thinker, Origen knew

⁹⁴ Ibid.,p. 33.

Celsus had made some valid points about the problems to which the Christian scholar and thinkers must give a thought out answer to. For someone who has not read Celsus work, *The True Word*, just by reading Origen's *Contra Celsum*, one can make a construction of the former. As indicated in the foregoing, a rebuttal was not the only thing Origen had in mind in writing this work, but as he himself indicates in the preface of this treatise (paragraph 6), that he hoped through this body of work to help those he referred to as weak in faith, would find some encouragement and conviction in reading the treatise, *Contra Celsum*.⁹⁵ We learn from Eusebius that Origen was more than sixty years by the time he began this treatise⁹⁶, that would mean around AD 246. One could say he had the desire, not only to make the school in Caesarea one with a very high reputation, but the clerical zeal in him also made him want to make the Christian school a missionary ground for the many scholars and thinkers who were attending the school but who were pagans. Thus such a treatise would no doubt be very useful to such pagans. To them and many like them, this body of work was not just intellectually stimulating but at the same time gave nourishment and an in depth education. And no doubt, the middle of the third century had many of such people.⁹⁷ For Eusebius, *Contra Celsum*, was not just a book for the intellectuals and not just one with a missionary character, but in fact for him it was a compendium that had answers for every form of accusation or charge that may be leveled at the Christian religion. (Eusebius, *Against Hierocles I.*)

Noteworthy of mention is a repeated position of Origen as regards Celsus all through this work. Origen maintains over and over again that although Celsus was a clever man, he should not be regarded as a wise one. In other words for Origen one could be clever but at the same time be unwise. This idea he further developed theologically. Origen likened the Gospel's inner spirit as been outwardly shabby, maybe even old but that inwardly it has the power and it is far from been old, contrary to its old

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ cf. *H.E.* 6.36.1.

⁹⁷ cf. McGUICKIN., *The Westminster Handbook to Origen Op.Cit.*, p. 33.

looking exterior, inwardly it is fresh. This inner freshness and this innate power of the gospel is what makes it attractive to all men, most especially to those who are sincere and honest, regardless to what generation they belong. This spirit of the Gospel is according to Origen, what is continually giving the Christian religion its youthful renewal and vigor, no matter how old and shabby it may externally appear to be. Through this inner reviving spirit it is possible for all, and not just the clever, the learned and the wealthy, to gain understanding about God's presence, his mercy etc. In summary therefore, *Contra Celsum*, is not just refuting an attack made against the Christian religion, but even more importantly it is a reflection of the views of the church. One that Origen hoped would show to the world how Christians understand themselves and what answers they gave, enlighten by their religion, to the same perennial questions raised by humanity as a whole.⁹⁸

DIALOGUE WITH HERACLEIDES: Having looked at a debate Origen had with an 'outsider' a Sophists who did not belong to the Christian religion, it is not less important and less interesting, but even very fascinating to also consider a debate he had with an 'insider' namely with a theologian, a bishop in the Arabian diocese, whose name was Heracleides. This text most likely was written down by one of Origen's secretary. In reading the text, one finds that Origen had been invited by a group of bishops, who at a Synod where faced with the problem of ascertaining the orthodoxy of the claims of this Heracleides a member of their Episcopate. In other words Origen was called in to act as a theological peritus. The bishops believed Origen was most fitting for this function, since he was a renown and internationally respected religious thinker. As such a worthy representative of the common voice of the Christian church. The debate was about the doctrine of 'One god' or 'Two gods'. Heracleides who had theologically been grounded in the believe that God is and can only be one person, he was so to say of a 'quasi mon-archianist' mentality and was not at all impressed with those theologians who belonged to the Logos mentality. The latter was a school of thought that was growing and influencing a lot of theologians in Rome and Caesarea at that time. A key element central to the dialogue was to establish how many gods were there? Of course Heracleides main-

⁹⁸ Ibid..p. 34.

tained that there is only One God. To this Origen asked whether or not one can exclude of the Son as a divine being in the One God? If not, then Origen says he is justified in his use of the term "two gods." This Heracleides objected to. The aim of the debate was not to make it a trial of the Bishop Heracleides, but rather it was seen as a discussion aimed to make sure that all bishops were in agreement about a common doctrine.⁹⁹

1.4.5 DOGMATIC ESSAYS

FIRST PRINCIPLES (PERI ARCHON, DE PRINCIPIIS): While still in Alexandria, during the time his reputation as a brilliant scholar was growing and spreading, Origen wrote this body of Work called *Peri Archon*. This work can be regarded as the first manual that treated the Christian theology in a scientific manner. This guidebook was issued in four volumes. It was published around 235, and one can rightly say its publication marked the beginning of the bitter disagreements between Origen and Demitrius, the bishop of Alexandria. Its end result was Origen leaving Alexandria and settling in Caesarea. Again, only fragmented parts of the original work have survived. These fragmented parts are found in Emperor Justinian edicts and in the *Philocalia*. Despite us having only fragments of the original Greek version, owing to Rufino's translation, we have the complete version of the *Peri Archon* in Latin. In the opening and introductory section of the book, Origen highlights what constitutes the essence of Theology and what its assignments are, especially in regards to culture and tradition. In this section he also outlines the relation between Theology and Scripture, and goes on to speak about the student of theology having an intellect capabilities to grasp spiritual realities. Further developing this point, Origen puts forward the argument that the enlightenment of any and of every Christian has its starting point from Christ lessons and teachings. He affirms that Christ himself had enlightened the apostles and the apostles in this illuminated understanding passed on this teaching which we can read about in a compendium of revealed truths. Origen makes this point about the sacred reveal truths because a great number of Christians already had different and diverging opinions about what the true

⁹⁹ Ibid.

teaching of the apostles as received from Christ were. To this end, Origen saw the necessity to draw up in an order and in a listed form the sacred kerygma. His aim in doing so, according to him, was in an effort to help all Christians know and remain by the true teachings and not be lead astray by believing the false teachings were the true teachings of the apostolic tradition. We find the words so formulated in the *Peri Archon*; “And that alone is to be accepted as truth which in no way whatsoever differs from ecclesiastical and apostolic tradition” Preface. 1-2. The main body of the work follows this essay of clarification given in the preface. Origen divided the actual work into four volumes or sub-treatises. Each volume was a book on its own. The first two books treated issues relating to theology and cosmology, while the third and fourth books handled themes about anthropology and teleology.¹⁰⁰ This body of work also called *First Principle* demonstrates Origen’s brilliance and mastery as a Christian scholar, one that gained him wide spread recognition and popularity. In this body of work, Origen had been able to merge in a very significant way the educational curricula of what was been taught in philosophy then, together with all that Christians hold as their system of truth. Indeed a feat that could only be accomplished by a brilliant mind such as Origen.

MISCELLANIES (Stromata): As a teacher of an advanced level, Origen gave seminar classes. To aid in delivering his lectures at such seminars, Origen like many other advanced teachers of his time had a file which contained materials he intended to use for such seminar classes. This file for his seminar lectures is what is referred to as his book of Stromata. Literally translated this word Stromata means; “carpets”, “tapestries”, or simply “bits and pieces” (hence Miscellanies).¹⁰¹ The bits and pieces to be found in this book would most likely be advanced-level questions, which Origen intended for his higher level students, for them to work out and solve in their group. Sadly this body of work has been completely lost. We only know about it because of the small fragments of it that have survived in forms of quotes. Most likely it was a work not written in Caesarea, but in Alexandria. Eusebius most have had an original copy of this in hand for he stated, “This he composed in ten books in the same city (Alexandria) be-

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. p. 36.

¹⁰¹ Ibid. p. 37.

fore his removal, as is demonstrated by the annotations in his own handwriting in the front cover of the volumes.”¹⁰²

ON PRAYER (Peri euches, De oratione): This body of work is a treatise that is very short in comparison to the other treatise that Origen wrote. It discusses Prayer in its very essence. It is a valuable body of work in the sense that it helps answer a lot of questions Christians of Origen’s time were having as regards what prayer is and how one ought to pray. This treatise was written in response to a petition made by Origen’s benefactor Ambrose and the sister of his benefactor Tatiana. Most likely it was written shortly after he settled in Caesarea, about 234. It is divided into two sections. The one section treats themes and issues regarding the nature of prayer, free will, and it sought to answer questions about whether there was any point in praying since things were already predetermined by God.¹⁰³ In answering these questions about Prayer, Origen adopted both a philosophical and a practical analysis. The other section is a continuation of commentaries on the ‘Our Father’. Origen makes a verse by verse explanation. Prior to the time of writing this treatise there had not been many commentaries written on the Lord’s Prayer.

THE EXHORTATION TO MARTYRDOM (Protreptikos, Peri martyriou, Exhortatio ad martyrium): Origen came to learn that the Emperor Maximinus Thrax had given the order for Christians to be persecuted in the year 235. At this time he was no longer in Alexandria but in Caesarea, but he wanted to be in solidarity with those been persecuted, especially with a cleric and a deacon who had been captured. So to this end he wrote this work *Exhortation to Martyrdom*. Its goal was to urge those imprisoned to remain strong in faith and fill them with courage of the providence of God.¹⁰⁴ Furthermore this body of work was also addressed to the Christian communities, for there was a growing sense that it was not really of much importance sacrificing to the gods of the Romans, as long as one “still held the faith in one’s heart” (*Exhortation to Martyrdom*

¹⁰² H.E. 6.24.3.

¹⁰³ cf. McGUICKIN. J. A: *The Westminster Handbook to Origen*, p. 38.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 39.

45-46). Such a lapse attitude was unsettling and troubling to Origen, whose belief in Martyrdom since his youthful years had remained unshaken. In writing this work he hoped to instill once again in the hearts of such Christians the high value and ideal of Martyrdom.¹⁰⁵ In the concluding section of this work, Origen reminded all that God himself sees the spilling of the blood of his saints and he will most definitely not allow such killings to go unanswered. As for those whose blood were shed, they should see this persecution as purification and the offering of their lives as been redemptive for others. (chap 50).

ABOUT THE PASCHA (Peri pascha): The same place where *Dialogue with Heracleides* had been found, IE at Toura, this treatise *Peri Pascha*, was also discovered in 1941. Of course like many other of Origen's body of work only fragments of the work was recovered. These surviving fragments, leave no doubt as to what the issue under discussion was, IE about the Pascha (Easter). Nautin has done extensive work in trying to reconstruct from the nearly decomposed work and he published an edition of it in 1979. Another scholar Daly has a useful publication in which he attempted to translate and give some commentaries on this recovered fragmented work. This was published in 1992.

ESSAY ON THE RESURRECTION: Two books preceded the writing of *Peri Archon*. These books help us to grasp in some way how Origen understood the Resurrection.¹⁰⁶ We come to know of these books and of Origen's position about the resurrection because of their survival in a fragmented form as Methodius of Olympus wrote a refutation to Origen's position. Hence owing to this apology work, we know Origen had had these two books written. It is from this rebuttal of Methodius that we also learn that his version is a diluted form of the original Greek version. This we know in comparing Methodius work to that of Epiphanius' version.¹⁰⁷

1.4.6 THE LETTERS WRITTEN BY ORIGEN

¹⁰⁵ cf. *H.E.* 6.2.2-6.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.* *H.E.* 6.24.2.

¹⁰⁷ cf. McGUCKIN, J. A: *The Westminster Handbook to Origen*, p. 40.

Owing to his been a reputed theologian and a sought after cleric, one can rightly conclude that Origen must have had a lot of correspondence. Knowing such correspondence was a mine of information, Eusebius seems to have edited these Letters of Origen in the fourth century.¹⁰⁸ This editorial work yielded more than nine volumes. In these volumes Eusebius recovered more than over a hundred letters. From such a vast number of correspondence, only two have come down to us in its complete version. The greater number of the letters survived only in very small fragments.

LETTER TO THEODORE: This letter *Address to Theodore* is one of the two Letters that we have in its original form. Who was this Theodore? Most likely he was a follower, a student of his in Caesarea, who later was a great apostle of missions to the church in Cappadocia. This Theodore is the same one who is called Gregory Thaumaturgus. One finds this letter, like many of Origen's work preserved in the 13th Chapter of the *Philocalia*. Most likely it was written around 238 at a place called Nicomedia. What matter is addressed in this Correspondence. There was the question of how the Christian church in Cappadocia could deal with the Hellenist and their culture without compromising their Christian faith. Origen's recommendation on this issue was that the Christian church should adopt the same attitude that the Hebrews in the bible adopted in their relationship with the Egyptians and their culture. Especially what the Hebrews did on leaving Egypt, how they used the Gold and Silver, spoils from their sojourn, to embellish the shrine of God. In this same manner, the Christian church in Cappadocia should use the philosophy of the Hellenists and put it to use in serving God. The Letter concludes by urging Theodore never to cease in his daily reading of the bible and also to continue to take his studies seriously.¹⁰⁹

LETTER TO JULIUS AFRICANUS: Another Letter of Origen that survived was also written from this place called Nicomedia. We know this because in its introductory section, Origen writes that he is presently with his benefactor, Ambrose. He also men-

¹⁰⁸ cf. *H.E.* 6.36.3.

¹⁰⁹ cf. McGUCKIN, J. A: *The Westminster Handbook to Origen*, p. 40.

tions that Ambrose was at that present time acting as his secretary. Most likely it was written around 240. The letter is called Origen's *Reply to Julius Africanus*. Who was this Julius? He was a Christian and he a librarian, who had worked in Rome in the great Pantheon Library. While carrying out his duty as a librarian, he had read one of the earlier works of Origen, the commentary of Origen made about the passage treating Susanna and the elders. After reading this work, he drafted a letter to Origen, stating that Origen was wrong in thinking that the passage should be taken as divine scripture. Julius' argument was based on two things, this passage was first and foremost not in the original Hebrew text and second any good biblical scholar could see that its constitution in terms of style and language was different in comparison with the other books of Daniel. Origen found this letter from Julius interesting, as he recognized the brilliant mind of the biblical scholar and this prompted him to give Julius a reply. This reply was so important for it to be preserved not only because of what Origen had to say but because, what he said served as criteria in determining the books of the bible that can be called canonical.¹¹⁰ In his reply Origen not only defended the fact that the story of Susanna and the elders was canonical he also cited other texts that fall in the realm of canonical books, passages such as; Azarias' Prayers, the narration about Bel and the Dragon, the three youths in the fiery furnace. Origen stated that such stories in the book of Daniel can only be found in the Septuagint. One notices that Origen never comes to really answer the questions about literary that Africanus raised, what he does do is to present the position of the church as regards canonicity of Christian scriptures.¹¹¹ It is as if he was pointing a warning finger at Africanus, telling him; "Do not remove the ancient boundary marks which have been set up by your fathers" (Proverbs 22:28).

Aside from these two Letters that have survived in their complete forms, the vast majority of the remaining letters have been lost. Among the lost Letters, there is a mention by Eusebius of some important Letters such as a correspondence with Emperor Philip. Important because this Emperor was most likely the first Christian roman emperor. Also a correspondence with the spouse of this first Christian emperor, the Em-

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid., p. 41.

press Severa. Notable among such important letters was also the ones written to Pope Fabian (236-50). Eusebius was able to reconstruct the life of Origen, using these letters as a source.

2. A DEBATABLE INHERITANCE

With so much accomplishments, owing to his brilliant mind and his love for searching for wisdom, it is quite easy to see why Origen became for many a model to whom one can look up to a true Christian and an inspirational scholar. This admiration was not just limited to those in the Christian church but even outside of the faith. In his quest to better understand Scripture there was no field that he did not dabble in, if knowledge from such a field would bring about a better scriptural analysis. His search lead him to study the Jews and their traditions, he was involved in studies of philosophy and the sciences. His aim and goal was to, through such studies, come closer to God and possibly help other also to achieve this closeness to God. As the title of this project suggests, Origen has a great significance or should have a great meaning for us, owing to his many contributions to theology. Sadly enough, many remain ungrateful for his many contributions.¹¹² However in some circles his outstanding work and legacy is praised to the highest heavens. Most especially his important contribution to biblical exegesis. Henri de Lubac in affirming the indebtedness theologians of all ages owe Origen goes on to quote Richard Simon, who is an expert in modern textual criticism of the bible, saying; “Most of the Fathers who lived after Origen scarcely did anything but copy his commentaries and other treatises on Scripture and even those who were most opposed to his sentiments could not keep from reading them and profiting from them.”¹¹³ Origen’s use and application of allegory in interpreting scripture has opened the way made for all who share the Christian faith to possess the whole texts and passages of the bible and thus to see scripture as the book of the Church. Manilo Simonetti postulates that before Origen’s analysis and interpretation using allegory, the Old Testament was for

¹¹² cf. TRIGG, J: *Origen*, London [u.a.] 1998 (= The early Church Fathers). , p. 62.

¹¹³ DE LUBAC, H: *Exégèse Médiévale: Les Quatre sens de l'Écriture*, vol. 3, Paris 1959-64, p.212.

many Christians, not an inspired Christian scripture, but simply a handbook which provides information for a lot of questions.¹¹⁴ Origen's scriptural analysis was so attractive and many loved reading it not only because one understood it better the way he made clarifications with allegors, but because these explanations were very convincing. The reader of his exegesis drew on the spiritual lessons he made, because Origen did not just present these explanations from abstract ideas but these lessons for the spiritual growth of the reader, was drawn from the author's conviction that the one and same Plan of God's salvation that we find in the world, this same plan was to be found in scripture. It is not different from the plan God has in wanting to save every individual being. Being the same plan of God in all three, it is therefore possible to make analogies about the world and it would be a fit and be applicable in the same manner to scripture or if and when applied to an individual soul. This explanation means that in unravelling ourselves, we can also unravel scripture and the same is true about unravelling the world.¹¹⁵

This great theologian was not only problematic during his era, but even in our generation he continues to be a source of division among intellectuals. Ulrich Berner in 1981 observed that the same opposing camps that Jerome and Rufino held with regards to Origen's ideas and doctrines in the fourth century still continue to remain the same divided camps in academic parlance till date.¹¹⁶ There are intellectuals who share the same views about what Berner refers to as 'systematic' explanation of scripture. Earlier intellectuals in Origen's time had also held this same view, the position that Origen with his use of allegory reduced Christianity to platonism. For them, Origen with his allegorical interpretations, treated the teachings of the church as been only an occurrence in the greater scheme of things. For instance, they understood Origen to take the fall of man to be understood as simply the break by rational beings in thinking about God and this break will be rectified when they are once again united with him. Such interpretation according to them is totally philosophical and not a Christian interpretation. Those opposed to the 'systemic' interpretation group, were of the view that Origen rather than

¹¹⁴ cf. SIMONETTI, M: *Lettera e/o allegoria: Un contributo alla storia dell'esegesi patristica*, Rome 1985, pp. 215-25.

¹¹⁵ cf. TRIGG, J: *Origen*, p. 62-3.

¹¹⁶ BERNER, U: *Origenes*, Darmstadt 1981, p. 45.

be attacked and accused of wrongful interpretation of scripture, should be seen as a true son of the Christian faith, not as a betrayer. For them Origen's only problem was that maybe in his zeal he went into speculating about teachings and doctrines that he should not have. However, according to members of this camp, Origen should be pardoned for such a mistake because after all his intentions for involving in such speculations was an intended good. He was only looking for how Christians could be mystically united with God. This deeper communication with God by Christians led him into all the allegorical interpretations and speculations he carried out in trying to understand and use scripture as a medium for this mystical union. For them, Origen's goal was clear and noble.¹¹⁷ This polarized position about Origen, as mentioned earlier, did not begin in our generation, nor did it even begin with Jerome and Rufino as many think, but we read that Methodius, a contemporary of his had an opposing view from that of Origen as regards resurrection and was also against Origen's use of allegory in biblical interpretation.¹¹⁸ This standpoint of Methodius we glimpse from another scholar in the third century, whose name is Eustathius. His writings show that he was in agreement with Methodius against Origen's views and thoughts. This Eustathius always referred to Origen as the "dogmatist." To be branded a 'dogmatist' meant Eustathius saw Origen as one who arbitrarily made up teachings based solely on his own way of thinking.¹¹⁹ As is to be expected, those who admired Origen and were in awe of his works, defended him against such attacks, chief amongst who were Pamphilus and Eusebius. For them Origen was not a dogmatist.

¹¹⁷ TRIGG, J: *Origen*, p. 64.

¹¹⁸ cf. For more about this view of Methodius, VITORES, A: *Identidad entre el cuerpo muerto y resusitado en Orígenes según el "De Resurrectione"* de Metodio de Olimpo, Jerusalem 1981 and Methodius of Olympus: *Divine Sovereignty, Human Freedom, and Life in Christ*, Washington 1997 and PATTERSON, L. G: *Methodius, Origen and the Arian Dispute* in: SP 17/2 (1982) pp. 913-23.

¹¹⁹ cf. To get a clearer picture about this matter on Eustathius, see J. W. TRIGG: *Eustathius of Antioch's Attack on Origen: What is at Issue in an Ancient Controversy?* in: *Journal of Religion* 75 (1995) pp. 219-38.

2.1 THE QUARRELS WITH ORIGEN

For the likes of Methodius and Eustathius and the many more in the intellectual circles who criticized Origen, especially for his use of allegory in interpreting scriptures, nothing useful, according to them can be derived from reading the sermons and or commentaries of Origen. To them these works of Origen was not an interpretation of the bible but in fact the very opposite, namely the misinterpretation of Christian scripture. According to them, Origen use of allegory was a means “to infuse Hellenism broadly into the biblical tradition”.¹²⁰ To such detractors, what then is to be understood by the term Allegory? Their answer; allegory referred to the “reputed scholarly, scientific, philosophical means for discerning a philosophy and a theology in the ancient writings venerated as oracles.”¹²¹ It became a tool in Origen’s hands, an implement he so religiously made use of because it helped him in no small means to bring whatever interpretation he wanted into the interpretation of scripture.¹²² According to them, one finds here the utter disregard for the symbols Christians had acquired from both the Jewish and Pagan traditions¹²³ and the representatives of such views go on to accuse Origen of using such symbols in what can only be described, according to them as the “aberration of his age”¹²⁴ The proponent of such views, argue that Origen did this so as to eradicate the division he had about the differences he saw between Christian way of life and the Hellenistic culture. Thus, the scripture having been subjected to such analysis and interpretation only found its spiritual meaning and lessons by deriving it from philosophy. In other words, the teachings of Moses or that of Jesus could only be understood when one understands Plato.¹²⁵ “Origen, in fact, lives his religious life in both of the two rival worlds. He is by fullest conviction a Christian, but an equally convinced Platonist...He finds in the allegorical method of interpretation the possibility of a reconciliation of the

¹²⁰ CROISET Maurice and Alfred: *Histoire critique de la littérature grecque*, vol 5, Paris 1931, p. 851.

¹²¹ DE FAYE, E: *Esquisse de la pensée d’Origène* Paris 1925, p. 39.

¹²² cf. Ibid., p. 40.

¹²³ cf. RIVAUD, A: *Histoire de la philosophie*, vol. 1 Beauvals, France 1948, p. 493, for more readings about the symbols as understood by the Fathers of the Church; Also the understanding of these symbols as employed by Origen found on p.118, is in my view quite questionable.

¹²⁴ DENIS, J: *De la philosophie d’Origene*, Paris 1884 p. 33.

¹²⁵ cf. NYGREN, A: *Agape and Eros*, trans. W. Phillip, pt. 2, vol.1, Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, Chicago 1939, pp. 136-37 and 153-54:

conflicting motifs. By its aid he could reinterpret the Platonic arguments and myths in a biblical direction. But still more important, thanks to the allegorical interpretation of Scripture, he could also regard Platonism as the hidden, spiritual meaning of Christianity.”¹²⁶ If one follows this line of thought unto which Origen leads one, then it would mean the best example that best explains the capabilities of the mind is given by philosophy.¹²⁷ What Origen is saying simply put, (of course according to his detractors) is that our analysis of reality has nothing to learn from sacred scripture.¹²⁸ For Origen, the text is Christian, but the mental activity is Greek.¹²⁹ Origen’s opponents are of the view that, the true exegetes, those who were loyal Christians, busied themselves by caring for the people pastorally and presented the books of the bible to the lay as taught and handed down by the church, but the self appointed exegete from Alexandria busied himself not as a pastor of souls, but rather his interest was in the conversion of scholars and intellectuals.¹³⁰ They went on to say that, to win them, referring to these scholars and intellectuals over to himself, Origen did not hesitate to introduce their methodology and even their poetry into how one should read, interpret and understand scriptures. In this way he changed the legends of antiquity found in scripture into the myths that is to be found in philosophy.¹³¹ Thus, they claim, Origen’s exegesis took on, “in the presence of the Old Testament, the attitude of the Stoic philosopher vis-à-vis Homer and popular mythology”.¹³² The end result of such biblical interpretation could not be anything other than a misrepresentation of the words of scripture. The consequence being a spirit-filled

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ cf. DE FAYE, E: *Origene*, vol. 1, Paris 1923, p. 95.

¹²⁸ cf. Ibid. vol. 3 1928, pp. 159-60.

¹²⁹ cf. SEEBERG, R: *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte*, vol. 1 Erlangen and Leipzig 1920, p. 506.

¹³⁰ cf. FLICHE/MARTIN: Labriolle, “*Saint Ambroise*”, p.600. cf. *Histoire générale de l’Eglise*, vol. 4 Paris 1937, p. 32.

¹³¹ cf. DE FAYE, E: *Origene* 1,20. This view posited by Faye is the same one shared by L. MÉNARD in his work titled *Banquet d’Alexandrie*, Paris 1911, pp. 64-83.

¹³² BAUMSTARCK, A: *Liturgie comparée*, Chevetogne 1934, p.17. Whilst appraising R. Cadiou’s work *La Jeunesse d’Origene*, the priest, Father de Ghellinck came to the conclusion that such a description of the allegorical use by Origen “makes very little room for rationalizing pagans”: *Nouvelle revue theologique* 63 (1936) 938.

Christianity turned into the ideals that is to be found in Platonic philosophy.¹³³ His attackers also maintain that Origen was even more extreme than Philo, because Philo's method of exegetical interpretation led to the actual and real understanding of the text, unlike Origen's use of them, which not only changed and misrepresented the text, but even went so far as to declare them to be everywhere absurd.¹³⁴ The case against Origen further went on to state that in a bid to pacify those who questioned the defense Christianity made and those who suspected theology, Origen told such intellectuals that the historical events found in scripture and the narratives in the bible were not true.¹³⁵ A modern day textual critic, Richard Simon, accuses Origen of pretending not to know what the phrase profound theology meant and also of emphasizing the spiritual sense so strongly that he negated and denied the literal sense.¹³⁶ This same view of Richard Simon is also shared by the renown Cardinal du Perron. According to Perron; "Origen's furnace...distills and over refines all Religion into allegories, by the fallacy of his allegories, he corrupts the truth of history, never ceasing to melt and dissolve the whole solidity of Scripture into dreams and reveries, to convert its whole substance into vanities and illusions, and by this abolition of the literal sense, to reduce the principal articles of the Creed to smoke. Spiritual sickness, spiritual frenzy, impious spiritualities".¹³⁷

For now, I will give two thoughts, as a counter to these attacks. Later on in, third and the concluding chapters of this essay I will again address these criticisms. First, in agreement with Dom Ceillier, I believe that Origen had the utmost regard for the literal sense or historical events. If anything, one of Origen's preoccupation was the attention he always gave while interpreting scriptures of not to been at the two extremes of biblical exegesis, IE the one that explained everything literally or the other that seeks to ex-

¹³³ cf. GREGORIUS: Discours funébres [...], trad. F. BOULENGER, Paris 1906, 1906, pp. 40-49.

¹³⁴ cf. DE FAYE, E: *Origène* 1, 110 and 115. Faye after reading the homilies of Origen on Genesis and Exodus felt its quite absurd for origen to make such Remarks.

¹³⁵ cf. MALDEN, R.H: *St. Ambrose as an Interpreter of Holy Scripture*, in: The Journal of Theological Studies, 62 (1915) 511-12.

¹³⁶ cf. SIMON, R: *Histoire critique des principaux commentateurs du Nouveau Testament*, Rotterdam 1693, pp. 46 and 47.

¹³⁷ Cardinal du PERRON, J, D: *Traité de l'Eucharistie*, Lyon Public Library 1622, vol. 2, p.219; vol. 1, p. 140, etc.

plain everything spiritually.¹³⁸ The second defense in Origen's justification, is beautifully explained by Father Lagrange. He maintains that if one were to read Origen and understand him, then one would not but agree that Origen never doubts that the events in the bible are historical events that happened.¹³⁹ Those who think otherwise most likely have maybe read only fragments of his work and so do not have the whole picture of Origen and his exegetical interpretation. Father Langrange goes on to argue that those who accuse Origen of ignoring history or of denying the literal sense, in order to support their arguments, always use the commentaries Origen made in the passages regarding the creation of the world, the fall of man or the temptation. Du Perron is one of such people guilty of this. But in all sincerity we all know that these narratives cannot and should not be treated as if they happened as they are reported, so literally! The fact that these passages at the beginning of scripture are different, only supports what Origen did, in his treating of them exegetically in a different way so as to arrive at an explanation for them. In fact one should praise Origen for finding an explanation for such difficult texts. His allegorical interpretation of these texts does not bring out his betrayal of scripture, but on the contrary shows how this genius helps us better understand what before was for us so very confusing. No one can believe the texts the way they are in these narratives; for instance, what right thinking man would agree that there was morning and evening or day and night, when the Sun and Moon had not yet been created? Origen realized that the narrative should not be taken literally, but figuratively.¹⁴⁰ Furthermore, for the many critics who accuse Origen of bringing philosophy into the understanding of scripture, the interpretations Origen makes with his use of allegory to these narratives, including the fall of man, is in no way the ones the pagan intellectuals use in their myths and fables. There is no denying that Origen used philosophical sources, after all he lived at a particular era and among a certain people and culture. But

¹³⁸ cf. CELLIER, Rémy Dom: *Apologie de la morale des Pères de l'Eglise*, Paris 1718, pp. 109-12.

¹³⁹ cf. Father M-J LANGRANGE O.P, *Éclaircissements sur la méthode historique*, in: *École pratique d'études bibliques*, 14 (1905) 26. And *Revue Biblique Academic Journal* by French Dominicans who were based in Jerusalem, *École pratique d'études bibliques*, 9 (1900) 294.

¹⁴⁰ cf. De LUBAC, H: *History and Spirit The Understanding of Scripture according to Origen*, San Francisco 2007, p. 20.

it would be a mistake not to be able to differentiate between a truth of culture and a truth of doctrine. To drive home this point I think De Lubac summarize it beautifully when he states; “But let us not confuse a fact of culture with a fact of doctrine! Let us be able to perceive, beneath surface resemblances, the antagonism of fundamental assertions, and beneath the apparent borrowings, the radical transformations!”¹⁴¹ From the foregoing, with these two points, one sees that contrary to what some scholars say, Origen indeed affirms biblical history. He could not be accused of totally disregarding the literal sense, because in approaching and analyzing any text, Origen always sees it as dependent on history because every text has to do with finding answers to relationships which is always of a personal kind. This holds true for Origen in the narratives found in Genesis as well as the visions found the book of Revelation. In other words in the whole of scriptures. What Origen does when he allegorical interprets a text is that; “he spiritualizes that history, or, if you prefer, he interiorizes it; he in no way destroys it. In his thinking, it remains, although in perhaps debatable forms, what it was in the Bible and what it still is for the church: the first act of the drama of our salvation”.¹⁴²

2.2 ALLEGORY OR TYPOLOGY

It is necessary and even important to state this question; Does the biblical interpretation as we know it and as we have it today, have any similarity with the way and manner Origen and the Christian church at that time interpreted the bible? ¹⁴³ When the scholars of antiquity used the term *allegoria*; they understood it to mean the methodology that was employed in order to understand a text in scripture. In other words, the full understanding of the text and its theological content could only be revealed or known when this method was applied. This view of needing a text to be uncovered, so as to get to the mystery it holds for a Christian community in history, through the use of allegory, made it possible for Origen and other biblical scholars of that era to see the Old Testament as text ever alive and vibrant in and for the Christian community.¹⁴⁴ This is how allegorical

¹⁴¹ Ibid. p. 21.

¹⁴² Ibid., p. 22.

¹⁴³ cf. HANSON, R. P. C: *Allegory and Event: A Study of the Sources and Significance of Origen's Interpretation of Scripture*, Louisville-London 1959, p. 7.

¹⁴⁴ cf. MCGUCKIN: *The Westminster Handbook to Origen*, p. 49.

interpretation of scripture was understood then. For us in our contemporary epoch it presents a problem. This is because the historical critical method as practiced today has as its condition the very thing that interpreters of the scripture in those days ignored. What is this condition for a true and valid interpretation of a biblical text? The historical-critical method functions on the assumption that a careful reconstruction of the actual events is necessary for a correct reading of the text under focus. Thus in comparison to what a critical historian of scripture does today, to what was done in the their century, an interpretation as scriptural interpretation was nothing more than “a reading in”¹⁴⁵ In other words it was not objective but very subjective form of biblical interpretation. To this end many biblical scholars see the exegesis of the ancient patristics as non-redeemable. There are however some exegetes, who are of the opinion that figural reading in whatever form it may exist is a necessary part of theology. Such commentators make a distinction between allegory and typology. The difference been that allegorical interpretations does away with the literal sense completely, while the typological interpretation takes the historical events into consideration and through a developing of it, seeks to explain the text.¹⁴⁶ For instance, the mistake in trying to explain the Song of Songs as having purely a spiritual interpretation, IE the soul in its relationship to God is wrong, because it ignores the literal sense, it is an actual historical event and must be interpreted as such. On the other hand the story of the crossing of the sea is rightly read when it is typologically interpreted. The historical account is considered but other ‘Type’ is also considered. Ie This exodus can also refer to the crossing Christ or a Christian makes from death over to new life. This explanation of making a distinction between allegory and typology does seem to show that the way and manner exegesis was carried out in ancient times is recognizable and legitimate for modern day biblical interpreters. There remains however the problem that it does not tell us much about the inner workings of exegetical interpretation of the patristic scholars.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ cf. Ibid.

This problem can be formulated in a more specific and narrowed down sense. We can ask, how then is one to comprehend the importance of Origen's scriptural analysis, which he does with the aid of allegory? Contrary to what some believe, the use of allegory by Origen was not for the purpose of reading of the Old Testament using the eyes of the New Testament, nor was the use of allegory aimed at taking the old covenant and fitting it in close alignment with the historical events in the New Testament. What we should understand about Origen's use of allegory was that he used it with the goal of showing that the whole of scripture was the gradual unfolding of Christ kingdom. The whole of scripture for Origen, has an eschatological character. The Christian is called through a reading and a reflection on the text of the bible to recognize and experience the heavenly coming down to the earthly and transforming it. The use of allegory was not an attempt to deny or annihilate history, as many have accused Origen of trying to do, but indeed it is an attempt through this use of allegorical interpretation of scripture to reveal the plan God has for the World, a plan one can uncover if one interprets the bible correctly.¹⁴⁷

3. ORIGEN AS AN EXEGETE AND AN ALLEGORIST

It should be noted that even though Origen is synonymously linked with exegesis, he was not the only one who was involved in the interpretation of the bible. In other words, before him, there had been others who were biblical scholars before Origen started publishing his exegetical works. These included Gnostics, who loved to speculate, and found biblical speculation glorious; Predestinarians¹⁴⁸ and Literalists used the scriptural texts in confirming many of their ideas; Marcionites¹⁴⁹ used exegesis as an excuse to attack the Old Testament; Jewish scholars using exegesis to defend the Hebrew scrip-

¹⁴⁷ cf. Ibid. p.50.

¹⁴⁸ cf. When one reads C. BIGG one finds an elaborate analysis and description about what explanations Gnostics gave for different biblical passages. See *The Christian Platonists of Alexandria*, Oxford 1913, p. 56; also the in the work of R. CADIOU: *La Jeunesse d'Origene*, Paris 1936; J. DANIELOU also gives more information about this topic in his publication: *Origene*, Paris 1948, p.147f; The same theme is treated by W. VÖLKER: *Die Verwertung der Weisheits-Literatur bei den Christlichen Alexandrinern*, in: ZKG 64 (1952/53) 1-33, hier: p. 5.

¹⁴⁹ cf. In the essay of G. SALMON: "Marcion" in the *Dictionary of Christian Biography*, there is a detailed exposition on the exegesis as practiced by the Marcionites; Also for further reading; F. J. FOAKES-JACKSON: *Christian Difficulties in the Second and Twentieth Centuries*, chs. I-III; and E. C. BLACKMAN: *Marcion and his Influence* provide excellent source materials.

tures against the wrongful use by Christians; while pagan scholars used exegesis in whatever way and manner they pleased just as long as it helped them attack their arch enemy, IE the Christian's interpretation.¹⁵⁰ One would therefore be totally wrong to claim that Origen was the first one to write a commentary on the bible. A Commentary work on the book of Daniel had been published by Hippolytus, even before Origen wrote a single sentence. Years before Origen wrote his exegetical works on the Gospel of John, Heracleon had already written his commentary on the same Evangelist. It is most likely, that there were other commentaries and exegetical works written by other biblical scholars we do not know of, because of their not surviving and been lost.

From all the foregoing, it becomes clear that prior to Origen's publications of his exegetical works, one can distinguish two distinct approaches to analyzing scriptural texts. The first was the use of what is referred to as 'proof-texts'. This simply means writing an exegetical work on passages that one finds in the Old Testament that have already been actualized or completed as a prophecy in Jesus Christ.¹⁵¹ The second type of exegesis was simply that of writing a commentary on a passage or book of scripture. The work of a biblical scholar was not so easy in the sense that there were so many methods of how he could approach a text in order to interpret it. Coupled with this, he as a Christian intellectual must be able to defend the scripture from the many attacks the bible had.¹⁵² Not all biblical scholars can be said to have had what it takes to be a competent interpreter of scripture. Justin could be described as confident enough but rather narrow in his analysis of the texts of passages he interpreted. Theophilus for his part almost always depended upon sources from philosophy that were not original or the primary source. Hippolytus was at best like someone not cut out to be an exegete. The church must be said to have in Origen someone who could really deliver the powerful biblical interpretation. He had all that is demanded to accomplish this task, and he put

¹⁵⁰ cf. HANSON, R. P. C: *Allegory and Event*, p. 160.

¹⁵¹ cf. *Book of Testimonies* by J. R. HARRIS. Princeton 1916.

¹⁵² cf. HANSON, R. P. C: *Allegory and Event*, p. 161.

all his being in faithfully doing justice and in presenting the church and the world of his time the hidden mysteries contained in scripture.¹⁵³

3.1 ORIGEN'S UTILIZATION OF THE BIBLE TEXTS

The text of the Old Testament used by Origen for his the many references in the bible is the LXX¹⁵⁴ version. Hanson says Origen follows this translation so loyally that he even accepts the mistakes in it as scriptural.¹⁵⁵ According to Origen, this we find in his *Commentary on Hosea*, it is not right to want to correct any passage of the Septuagint, regardless that its literal meaning makes no sense. For Origen all the books of the Septuagint, except for the ones already given by the Greek version, are to be taken and seen as been canonical. There is however a deference he gives to the Hebrew text, especially when in debate with Jewish scholars. Field, who is an expert in Origen's Hexapla, noticed that Origen, always referred to the Hebrew scriptures in this work and not to the LXX. This shows that Origen in theory accepted the first rank of the Hebrew version over and above the LXX. Nonetheless he had this sentimentality for the LXX.¹⁵⁶ This action of his in the Hexapla tells us about the special regards he had for the LXX but also tells us that the supreme analysis of any biblical passage or text should always be given to Hebrew text. It was Origen believed and conviction that the Hebrew language was the original tongue of humanity which remained with the Jewish people after the Tower Babel event.¹⁵⁷ Origen always reminded those who read his works that all the Prophets did their writings in the Hebrew language.¹⁵⁸ This emphasis on the Hebrew language been important for a student studying the scripture has made many intellectuals ask the question how good was Origen in this language? There is no doubt that he knew more than just the alphabets, a prove of this is the compilation of the Hexapla. Without some form of knowledge of Hebrew he could not have published this work.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵³ cf. Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ cf. Septuagint Version of the Old Testament.

¹⁵⁵ To be fair to Origen, he was not the only one who did this, but every Christian exegete of his epoch was guilty of this, the Literalists not excluded.

¹⁵⁶ cf. FIELD, F: *Origenis Hexapla quae Supersunt*, Prolegomena, Paris 1857. pp. 61-63.

¹⁵⁷ cf. ORIGEN: *Homilies on Numbers*. XI.4.

¹⁵⁸ cf. ORIGEN: *Homilies on Ezekiel*. VI.4.

¹⁵⁹ cf. HANSON, R. P. C: *Allegory and Event*, p. 167 and p. 171.

But it is noteworthy that he never claims to be vast in his knowledge of the language, he is always willing to make a referral to any inquiring student about the Hebrew text or related issues to a Hebrew expert and professional. It would be wrong to say that Origen had no idea whatsoever about the Hebrew language. He knew sufficiently enough, more than the biblical scholars before his time or during the third century. But it would also be wrong to state that he was an expert in the language.¹⁶⁰ He could intelligible read and so derive the needed information from a text, but to critically analyze in the Hebrew language was a level too high for him.

There is every indication that in his analysis of scripture, Origen did not consult only the Hebrew scripture or the Septuagint version as sources. Other authorities he had recourse too were the Aquila, the Symmachus and the Theodotion versions. One can only marvel at the brilliance of Origen in balancing criticism of a text on the one hand and still making use of other versions of that same text on the other hand.¹⁶¹ In other words he would handle the same text in different versions and even when the other version's interpretation was not purely(entirely) correct, he would treat the less correct version as also valuable and recognize the possibility of it been the original. Such attention to details from other versions of scripture should convince in no small measure the intellectuals who argue that Origen did not regard other versions of the bible text, aside from the LXX as inspired. Scholars who level this accusation against Origen include Tollinton,¹⁶² Harnack¹⁶³ and Koetschau.¹⁶⁴ There is a need for them to reevaluate their research and reassess their conclusion of whether indeed Origen is guilty of using solely

¹⁶⁰ cf. BARDY, G: *Les Traditions Juives dans l'Oeuvre d'Origene*, in: *Revue Biblique*, 34 (1925) 217-252.

¹⁶¹ cf. HANSON, R. P. C: *Allegory and Event*, p. 175.

¹⁶² cf. TOLLINTON, R. B: *Selections from the Commentaries and Homilies of Origen*, London 1914. Introduction, pp. 36- 41.

¹⁶³ cf. HARNACK, A: *Der Kirchengeschichtliche Ertrag er exegistischen Arbeit des Origens*, New Jersey 1918 II, pp.6f, In this essay, Harnack accuses Origen of maintaining that one must always depend solely on the LXX texts when interpreting the Old Testament. Even when other versions about the same texts appear to offer a better account.

¹⁶⁴ cf. KOETSCHAU, P: In his claim he directs us to read the Preface to his edition of the *Contra Celsum*, p. 33, "yet the Greek text of the Septuagint remains for him the inspired and predominant one".

the LXX, as the only inspired scriptural text in his exegesis. I am inclined to agree with Kahle, whose judgment of the issue seems to be a more balanced outlook:

“He was convinced that to the original a greater authority must be attributed than to a translation derived from it... His aim is to repair the disagreement of the Greek Bible according to the authoritative Hebrew text. As his knowledge of Hebrew was not sufficient for doing this directly from the Hebrew text, he used all sorts of Greek translations of the Bible to which he had access, as a help in this task. He could, however, not speak frankly about these problems. He had to be cautious. The ‘Septuagint’ was regarded as the canonical text, inspired by God. So we find in his works only occasionally a remark on these problems¹⁶⁵ This submission of Paul Khale is wanting only of one little detail and that is the fact that Origen was convinced that the LXX was inspired. However its inspiration was to be understood and considered as special in some way. Those who translated this version of the bible, were so ‘inspired’, one could say were so directed to include some details or in other cases to remove or omit some other details pertaining to issues about Christ. But despite this special inspiration, the Christian was not to think that this makes the LXX take a ranking position over the Hebrew text or the other versions for that matter.¹⁶⁶

Having stated that Origen, like many biblical scholars of his age, had a preference for the Septuagint text, believing it to be ‘special’ in its own unique way, one must commend the way this great intellectual in the way he seeks to solve the many difficulties that is contained in this text. His goal, despite it been problematic, was to analyze with the help of the textual criticism the historical events of the passages of this version. This was problematic because as stated earlier Origen’s well known sentiments for the text and second because the different authors of this text had dissimilar accounts. To effectively do this he used the *instrumenta studiorum* that was in his possession, IE the many other transliterations mentioned earlier in chapter two of this work, also the Hebrew scriptures. He also extensively used Onomastica, name-lists and the midrash as sources which he got from the Rabbi. In this regard, observing the extent Origen goes in

¹⁶⁵ cf. GLICKMAN, M: *The Cairo Geniza*, Woodstock-Vermont 2001. pp. 159 f. For a similar judgement see FIELD, F: *Originis Hexapla*, p. 4.

¹⁶⁶ cf. HANSON, R. P. C: *II Corinthians (Torch Bible Commentaries)*, London 1954, p. 178.

his research, so as to have the best interpretation possible for scripture, one must give him kudos and also state that this ranks him as the best biblical scholar before his time and after his era, maybe with the exception of Jerome.¹⁶⁷ The attractiveness of Origen's exegesis is that his explanations always contain that element that makes the reader believe it is true because it was always a reasonable explanation. This quality one most say was lacking in Jerome. It is this quality of being so convincing in his interpretation of scripture that won his benefactor, Ambrose over to Christianity and which made Gregor Theodorus, his student be filled with praises and eulogies of him.¹⁶⁸ Furthermore, it is this same talent of his that enabled him to achieve a feat impossible to a later century, IE the conversions of a large number of heretics to the Christian orthodoxy. This he did without recourse to violence but simply with his persuasive arguments.¹⁶⁹

Origen in approaching and analyzing a text of scripture, with the aim of verifying it to be authentic, introduced methods unlike the ones used by exegetes before him, for instance not the one used by Clement of Alexandria.¹⁷⁰ A study of the interpretation by Clement when put side by side with that of Origen reveals that the former's interpretation were always unclear, bordering on been vague. Origen's explanation because of the methods he used was more academic and one sees it as been more systematic. I have already mentioned that Origen had a photographic memory, such that there is no indication that he ever had a recourse to use a concordance, nonetheless his students were instructed to always have copies of scripture while studying a passage for the sake of comparison.

One can not easily ascertain the difference between when Origen is analyzing a text in a Homily or in a Commentary, but one can make a distinction when he is deliver-

¹⁶⁷ cf. Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ This Gregor Theodorus would in his later life come to be known as Gregory Thaumaturgus.

¹⁶⁹ cf. HANSON, R. P. C: *II Corinthians (Torch Bible Commentaries)*, p.182.

¹⁷⁰ cf. To know more about this issue the following publications are helpful source materials BIGG, C: *The Christian Platonists of Alexandria*, Oxford, 1886 p.169; KOETSCHAU, P: Preface to his edition of the *Contra Celsum*, p. 31-34; F. PRAT: *Origene, le Theologien et l'Exegete*, Paris 1907, p. 179; G.L. PRESTIGE: *Fathers and Heretics*, London 1940, p.114 ff.

ing a Homily. Here, one distinctly notices signs that Origen knows the audience before him is the lay faithful and the purpose of opening the scriptures to them is quite different from the purpose for which he analyzed in his commentaries.¹⁷¹

3.2 INSPIRATION AND UNDERSTANDING

*To say that Scripture is “inspired” by God is to say that it is the work of his spirit.*¹⁷²

Although Origen knew and appreciated that a text of the bible may be wrongly recorded, he nonetheless believed in scripture been inspired, and it may seem more baffling, he believed it to be word for word inspired.¹⁷³ Zöllig has remarked that Origen’s use of the word *θεόπνευστος* which stands for ‘inspired’ should not be understood as meaning an active breathing of God’s spirit, but rather a passive one. “Holy Spirit has a divine nature, and this not simply because it contains divine ideas, nor because it contains its lines...but because it has god as its author.”¹⁷⁴ Origen is convinced and affirms that the sacred scripture is not men’s compilation, rather the written word which have come to us because God the father willed it, God the Spirit inspired it and it all came to be through Jesus Christ.¹⁷⁵ This believe that every single word of the Bible is a careful planned by God father was a common doctrine in Origen’s time and age. We find evidence of this believe in Hyppolitus, one who had always written without any dependence on Origen. Hypolitus said; “The Holy Scriptures declare to us nothing unnecessary (*ἀργόν*), but only what is for our own instruction, for the enhancement of the prophets and the exposition of what was said by them.”¹⁷⁶ The same way Philo postulates in regards to this verbatim inspiration, so also does Origen, who even goes so far as to maintain that this is not just true of only the Old Testament, but oral inspiration must also be

¹⁷¹ HANSON, R. P. C: *II Corinthians (Torch Bible Commentaries)*, p. 187.

¹⁷² cf. Origen: *Peri Archon*, ed. KOETSCHAU, P. p. 72.

¹⁷³ cf. ZÖLLIG, A is very committed to this topic, he even wrote a treatise on it, *Die Inspirationslehre des Origenes*, Freiburg 2010 He really treated Inspiration thoroughly in this publication as far back as 1902, but sadly it has never been translated from its original German and also not so accessible to come by. The following books however also make good source materials on the subject; T. B. TOLLINTON: *Selections from the Commentaries and Homilies of Origen*, Introduction, pp. 20-22; H. DE LUBAC: *Histoire et Esprit*, pp. 295-301; R.L.P MILBURN: *Early Christian Interpretations of History*, London 1954 p. 46 f, p. 49, p. 53.

¹⁷⁴ ZÖLLIG, A: *Die Inspirationslehre des Origenes*, p. 13-15.

¹⁷⁵ cf. *Peri Archon IV. 9*, cited by ZÖLLIG, A: *Op.Cit.*, p.62; cf. p. 78.

¹⁷⁶ cf. Origen: *Commentary on Daniel I.7.2*.

applied in studying the New Testament. In other words, as we find in the thesis of Zöllig, for Origen, inspiration is revelation.¹⁷⁷ What then is Revelation in the thoughts of Origen? Revelation, according to Origen should be understood to mean proposals, either of a written kind or of a spoken form, which are directly God inspired. It is this inspiration theory that makes Origen in his exegesis, even though such explanation do not fit the historical event, earn the criticism of other biblical scholars. Origen believed every verse and every word to be an oracle and so was always trying to uncover the mystery he believed the written words of scriptures to have.¹⁷⁸ In an effort to prove that scripture indeed contains divine oracles, Origen is guilty of a fallacy of circular definition. He maintains that the Scripture should be taken as inspired because these oracles that are of a divine nature, but in the same breath he is saying based on the fact that Scripture is inspired they have to contain these divine oracles. This unclarity of the subject matter is the reason why this theory is so unbelievable.¹⁷⁹ Another issue raised by Hanson against Origen is that Jesus seems to be, when one reads the exegesis of Origen, everywhere in the Old Testament, so much so that he is more present in the Old Testament than in the New Testament. Hanson believes such an analysis of scripture leads the reader into the danger of thinking that there is no real difference between the Old and the New Testaments.¹⁸⁰

But we must understand that the Old and the New Testaments are united by the Spirit. This spirit gives all passages be it in the new or in the old the spiritual lessons they contain. This supposition has a necessarily following deduction. The reader of Scripture has not in his hands a human book and so cannot with his human capabilities begin to unravel and comprehend its content. It can only be comprehensible to him, if the same Spirit who inspired its writing also opens the mind of the one who reads it.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁷ cf. ZÖLLIG: *Die Inspirationslehre des Origenes*, p. 77.

¹⁷⁸ cf. BROWN. R. E: *The Sensus Plenior in Sacred Scripture*, Baltimore 2008.

¹⁷⁹cf. HANSON, R. P. C: *II Corinthians (Torch Bible Commentaries)*, p. 189.

¹⁸⁰ cf. Ibid., pp. 202-203.

¹⁸¹ cf. ECKHART Meister: *The Book of Divine Comfort*, trans. BLAKNEY . R: New York 1941, p. 88) Most likely the commentor here to whom Eckhart refers to here is Origen.

The understanding of the bible has been “opened” for all times by Jesus. With his coming to earth, Jesus brought a new understanding of the Law; hence, in trying to grasp this new meaning, a necessary condition would be our inviting Jesus to take residence in us, this would enable us to be reformed in him, he who is the New Man. This new man or new creation can be achieved through the Spirit, that Jesus has sent to us.¹⁸² There was no way man could penetrate and understand the bible, until with the death and resurrection of Jesus, his spirit was sent, the one who renews us. This spirit was “poured out on all flesh”. Without receiving this outpouring, without this renewal in the spirit, we would never be able to understand the passages of the bible. This spirit has the task down through the ages to continue working in bringing each created being into the full knowledge of truth. This he does by revealing what really lies beyond shadows and figures.¹⁸³ The very soul in the Church is a beneficiary of this Light of the Spirit. She also seeks to interpret the scriptures, and this she does in a manner of been faithful to the treasure that are to be found in scripture that have been entrusted to her. The Church knows she has a responsibility to nourish her lay with the word of God, a tradition that has been handed down to her from the apostles.¹⁸⁴ In other word it is a reading of scripture by a community of talented and gifted biblical scholars, which has the aim of giving her lay faithful the right explanation of scripture. The role that was given to Origen in this reading as a community, was indeed enormous and colossal. He was only human, and so it is to be expected that some biblical interpretations of his were not hundred percent objective. The church also having this at the back of her mind, did not canonize all of Origen’s exegetical works!¹⁸⁵ It must be said however that Origen always understood clearly that he was just an instrument in the service of the church, helping her

¹⁸² cf. DE LUBAC, H: *History and Spirit The Understanding of Scripture according to Origen*, pSan Francisco 2007, p. 362-363.

¹⁸³ cf. Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ cf. ORIGEN: *Peri Archon*, ed. KOETSCHAU, P. p. 308. This we also find by Irenaeus with a sticht sense when he refers to the church and her hierarchical nature: *Adversus Haereses*, vol. 4, 20, 1-2 (1032-33).

¹⁸⁵ cf. DE LUBAC, H: *History and Spirit The Understanding of Scripture according to Origen*, p. 364.

through his moral teaching and homilies, and that in all these activities he saw himself as active agent of the Holy spirit.¹⁸⁶

It was always necessary to be humble when one is confronted with a difficult text. Origen believes without this humility, there lies the high risk of explaining such difficult passages in a subjective manner, IE from one's own viewpoint. The right attitude must always be a giving up of ones intellect, soul and will to the Word of God. When one fails to do this then one ends up misrepresenting God's word and anyone who is guilty of distorting the word of God, can only be referred to and rightly so as a 'false prophets'.¹⁸⁷ Origen also does not see his exegesis as representing exactly the interpretation of the bible, such that they have to be accepted as dogma, rather in his own words these interpretations are only "intelligentiae spiritualis exercitia (exercises in spiritual interpretation)."¹⁸⁸

3.3 ORIGEN AND HIS THREE-SENSE INTERPRETATION OF SCRIPTURE

Origen's division of his interpretation of Scripture into three senses is as popular as Caesar's division of Gaul into three parts.¹⁸⁹ We read in his *Peri Archon* that just as the human being can be divided into three units (parts), namely body soul and spirit, it is also possible to make a threefold division of Scriptures; which brings about a threefold meaning; a literal (carnal), a moral (psychic) and an intellectual or spiritual meaning. Origen maintains that the intellectual or spiritual sense is reserved for the advanced Christian. He justifies this idea by quoting Proverbs 22:20f. Interestingly enough the Hebrew text has the beginning of the passage as; for have I not written unto thee excellent things? But this is wrongly transliterated in the LXX as; have I not written thee in a

¹⁸⁶ cf. BOUYER L.: *La spiritualité du Nouveau Testament et des Pères. Histoire de la spiritualité chrétienne I*, Paris 1960, p. 32.

¹⁸⁷ cf. DE LUBAC, H: *History and Spirit The Understanding of Scripture according to Origen*, p. 369.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid. p. 374.

¹⁸⁹ cf. Other publications that share light on this subject include; De FAYE, E: *Origene, Op. Cit.*, I, pp.75-82; PRESTIGE, G. L: *Fathers and Heretics*, London 1940, p.24; TURNER, H. E. W: *The Pattern of Christian Truth*, London, 1954, pp. 258-73.

triple way?¹⁹⁰ Origen, however readily agrees, using this same quotation that not all passages in scripture always have to possess this three sense interpretation. There are passages that have just the moral and the spiritual senses. He uses the example found in John 2,6, where six stone water jars, could either hold two or three firkins a piece. And an example of a passage where a three-sense interpretation is applicable, in the three stories of the ark.¹⁹¹ We read in the introductory parts of *Homilies on Psalms* 37-39 that Origen states he would in treating this Psalm text try in differentiating, on the one hand when the prophecies that were been made here for the future were of a spiritual kind and when they were to be understood as been of an ethical kind.¹⁹²

3.3.1 THE HISTORICAL SENSE

When Origen speaks about the Historical (literal) sense then more often than not he is referring to the tendencies of the Jews and invariably to the unintelligent Literalists or the simple minded people generally. He maintains that understanding this sense has its usefulness, even though it is with a content and a quality that is humbling and subordinate.¹⁹³ His predecessor, Clement of Alexandria had also used the term ‘Jewishly’ to refer to ‘literally’, and one has the feeling that in his work *Against the Judaizers* was meant to convey that the literary or historical events contained in the Old Testament should not be taken seriously. Origen postulates that when one attempts to explain the heavenly kingdom in a literal way, then one is doing nothing more than interpreting scripture in some Jewish sense.¹⁹⁴ He however concedes that one who orientate their life by following the letter of the good news, IE the literal recorded words, will attain salvation because even the ordinary historical narration of the good news is more than adequate to save the ordinary people.¹⁹⁵ To the question of whether this literal historical sense should be allegorized? Origen responds in the affirmative, but says the

¹⁹⁰ cf. ORIGEN: *Peri Archon* IV, 2,45. This same passage of scripture Origen uses as argument in his in *Homilies on Leviticus* X.2.

¹⁹¹ cf. ORIGEN: *Homilies on Genesis* II.3.

¹⁹² cf. ORIGEN: *Homilies on Psalms* 37, I.1.

¹⁹³ cf. To have a better grasp of this theme the Historical sense as understood by Origen the following bibliographies are helpful; TURNER: *The Pattern of Christian Truth*, pp. 283-291, and ZÖLLIG: *Die Inspirationslehre des Origenes*, p. 102.

¹⁹⁴ cf. HANSON, R. P. C: *Origen's Interpretation of Scripture Exemplified from his Philoclia*, p. 237.

¹⁹⁵ cf. Ibid. p. 238.

purpose of an allegorical interpretation of such a literal form was only meant for the good of those simple folk, because an understanding beyond this sense was not possible to them.¹⁹⁶ On some rare instances, Origen even advocates that a text should not be allegorized at all, but that its meaning should be taken literally as it is written. For example the incidence where the rich young man is asked by the Lord to make a sales of all his possessions and follow him, in Matthew 19, 21. Origen postulates this command should not be, on the basis that it is a difficult command to follow, be given an allegorical interpretation. He says there are examples in the Bible, in Acts of the Apostles, where this injunction was followed literally and the fulfillment of this command has also been obeyed in Greek history. The same applies in interpreting this passage; “And every one that has left houses, or brothers, or sisters, or father, or mother, or children, or lands, for my name’s sake, shall receive a hundredfold” in Matthew 19:29. Origen in analyzing this passage say the words; houses and lands, ought not to be allegorized, however the other words father and mother may be allegorized.¹⁹⁷ Reading Origen’s last exegetical work published before his death, his *Commentary on Matthew*, one notices more and more him showing that the literal sense is important and recommends one should not be too quick in wanting to explain it away with allegorical analysis.¹⁹⁸

In handling some passages however, Origen would declare it is imperative to do both, IE keep the literal sense and go on to also analyze and interpret it allegorically. He believed one of the usefulness and importance of the literal sense was in its simplicity it was attractive in getting people to want to read the bible and in the study of scripture lead them from this literal sense to the allegorical sense.¹⁹⁹ The passage, John 4, 28, about the Samaritan woman, ‘So the woman left her water-pot and ran to the town’, Origen says is a good example of this. When interpreted in its literal sense is describes

¹⁹⁶ cf. ORIGEN: *Peri Archon* IV.2.8.

¹⁹⁷ cf. *Commentary on Matthew* XV.25; ‘father’ and ‘mother’ in this text of scripture are to be understood according to Origen as referring to ‘innocent and blameless bishops’ and also referring to ‘irreproachable and presbyters’.

¹⁹⁸ cf. HANSON, R. P. C: *Origen’s Interpretation of Scripture Exemplified from his Philoclia*, p. 238.

¹⁹⁹ cf. ORIGEN: *Contra Celsum* VII.60

the willingness, eagerness and readiness of the woman to bring Christ to others or others to Christ; and in its allegorical sense it explains her readiness to leave her false life and her water pots of hypocrisy in exchange for the living water of Christ.²⁰⁰ Origen even makes the point on one occasion that it might even be in the best interest for some to believe in the literal sense because many who have found out that there can be allegorical interpretation to the bible passages have abandoned the right way, claiming there is no hell, since hell fire should not be taken literally. Origen thinks maybe if such people had only known of a literal explanation, maybe their souls would not have failed on the path to destruction.²⁰¹

Despite his respect for the literal sense, one can find in several instances of his works where Origen categorically states that a literal understanding of such a text cannot be possible. According to him, sometimes not even a moral sense, but only a spiritual interpretation is possible. Such cases always interest and catch the attention of many biblical scholars, especially his detractors. Such texts are mostly found in regards to given of laws and commandments. According to Origen the law about first fruits as contained in Numbers 13 can be taken in a literal sense, but to observe all injunctions in its literal sense is wrong. One can have different categories or groupings of laws; there can be judgements, there can be commandments or there can be precepts. Commandments like the ones given in the Ten commandments are to be taken literally, but the law for instance about the celebrating the unleavened bread, Passover, are to be allegorized, not taken literally. A mixture is also possible, IE the law is to be taken both in its literal sense and in its allegorical sense. For instance the precepts about Matrimony, these laws about marriage are binding literally as given by the Lord, and also to be understood as a mystery as explained in an allegorical explanation given by St. Paul. Looking at Abraham, Sarah was his wife and Hagar was his concubine in every literal sense of the relationship, but this relationship also has an allegorical sense to it.²⁰² Some other examples of a law meant wholly for allegorical interpretation include ordinances like those found in Exodus 16, 29; Let no one go out of his place on the seventh day and Leviticus 13

²⁰⁰ cf. ORIGEN: *Commentary on John XXVIII. 23f.*

²⁰¹ cf. ORIGEN: *Homilies on Jeremaih XX.4.*

²⁰² cf. ORIGEN: *Homilies on Numbers XI.1.*

and 14; where instructions are given about the identification of Leprosy on the skin.²⁰³ For more of such texts, which should never be taken in its literal sense, Origen draws up a list of them in the *Peri Archon*.

It was Origen's handling of the literal sense in this manner that made his attackers argue that he in fact disregarded the historical or literal sense. He was accused of degrading it to a subordinate level and in many instances regarding it as unimportant. Faye has this to say about Origen and his attitude to the literal sense; "When he mentions the literal meaning, he deals with it in a few phrases, he gives the impression of noticing it only to clear his conscience. But what is more serious, he overwhelms it with criticism. More often he declares it to be absurd, it is inconsistent with other passages of Scripture; it is unworthy of God. This sense is provisional, it is good enough for Jews, a Christian cannot be satisfied with it."²⁰⁴ In this essay, I have already tried to address this issue that such accusations are somewhat an exaggerated presentation of how Origen really viewed the literal sense. Perhaps it would help to highlight here, those who are of a contrary view to the position of Faye. Bigg had this to say about Origen in regards to the literal sense, "...real and natural sense of the Bible...is the foundation of everything."²⁰⁵ Cadiou agrees with Bigg and stated, "The allegory is never without some relation to the literal sense."²⁰⁶ Pratt is also in unison with Bigg and Cadiou, for him Origen does not in any instance deny that any biblical passage is not literally true, in fact for him (Origen), the allegorical could only be based if there was a literal sense.²⁰⁷ De Lubac in comparison to these statements that have been made, goes all out in saying that Origen knows and maintains this truth that even when a passage in its literal sense seems incomprehensible, maybe even inconsistent and totally absurd even, then the task of trying to analyze it does not mean the negation of it been literally true,

²⁰³ cf. ORIGEN: *Homilies on Romans I.10; Homilies on Genesis II.6*.

²⁰⁴ DE FAYE, E: *Origen and His Work*, p. 110.

²⁰⁵ BIGG, C: *The Christian Platonists of Alexandria*, Oxford 1886, p. 170.

²⁰⁶ CADIOU, R: *La Jeunesse d'Origene*, p. 46.

²⁰⁷ cf. PRATT, F: *Origene, le Theologien et l'Exegete*, Paris 1907 Introduction., p. 26.

but rather an affirmation that it should not be interpreted *only* literally, but that such a text needs also a spiritual interpretation.²⁰⁸

3.3.2 THE MORAL AND SPIRITUAL (MYSTICAL) SENSES

Origen in describing the ‘moral’ sense of scripture can be said to have a very close similarity with Philo, his predecessor, who also had been involved in allegorical interpretation of scripture. For both these scholars the moral sense has in most cases involves lessons to be learned in realms of ethics and in the domain of psychology, whenever one is involved in an analyses of a bible text.²⁰⁹ For Daniélou the moral sense should be referred to as ecclesial and liturgical²¹⁰ for the reason that it concerns mainly how one should behave in a spirit of piety as a member of the Christian faith. He further argues this point by saying, one sees more examples of the moral sense in the Homilies of Origen than one reads in his Commentaries. De Lubac correctly defines moral sense as “the application of the text made to the soul, without a Christian assumption being obviously introduced.”²¹¹ The biblical passage Origen puts forward to show that biblical exegesis should be both morally and spiritually analyzed is that of the two disciples asked to get the donkey for Jesus’ triumphal entry in Jerusalem, “for one applies the writings for the healing of the soul and allegorizes them for the benefit, and the other sets out the good things and true which are to come through the medium of those things which lie in shadow.”²¹²

In other words, while the moral is concerned in a direct way with constructing or building the physical person, the spiritual is more concerned through mystical and theological explanations with enlightening the soul. Even though time and again Origen refers to the three senses of explaining bible passages in his Homilies and in some instances mentioning the moral sense in his commentaries, to a large extent the this moral sense does not really have such an important meaning in his exegesis. No doubt there

²⁰⁸ cf. DE LUBAC, H: *Histoire et Esprit*, chapter 4, section 3.

²⁰⁹ cf. ZÖLLIG, A: *Die Inspirationslehre des Origenes*, p. 110; PRESTIGE, G. L: *Fathers and Heretics*, p. 119.

²¹⁰ cf. DANIELOU, J: *Les sources bibliques de la mystique d'Origén*, in: *Revue d'Ascétique et de Mystique*, Paris 1964, p. 166.

²¹¹ DE LUBAC, H: *Histoire et Esprit*, p. 141.

²¹² cf. ORIGEN: *Commentary on John X.28*.

were instances and many of them for that matter where a passage's interpretation has many moral lessons, but Origen found out that when analyzing any text with the view of giving interpretation that is practical, in most cases the moral sense becomes absorbed in the spiritual sense.²¹³ One would therefore not be wrong in stating that the spiritual sense is allegory in its most perfect manner of interpreting the bible.²¹⁴ Origen in describing this spiritual sense says it is the revelation of heavenly things to come, which had been prior to the uncovering of the mysteries, types and shadows pointing to a fulfillment in the future. In trying to determine which parts of the scripture are to be interpreted literally and which ones allegorically, one must be prepared to engage in an extensive study. One must also have a lot of experience. Origen recommends that words that have similarity in meaning, which are to be found in different passages of the whole bible, can help in making sense of a particular text, whose literal sense the biblical scholar is having problems interpreting.²¹⁵ Also he maintains that since all scriptural passages contain the spiritual sense but not all have the literal sense, instances where a solely spiritual text is found the allegorical analysis of such a text should be carried out by including the circumstances surrounding the historical narratives of that text in the allegorical interpretation.²¹⁶ Another rule about the spiritual sense was deduced by Origen when he carried out an extensive analysis of the Pascha using this method of allegorical interpretation. It is incorrect and weak, bordering on being tasteless for one to analyze and interpret the Passover lamb in a literal sense. Origen said; "He who takes the raw meat of the Scripture for cooking must be careful not to take what is written in that insipid and watery and tame sense. Our interpretation must begin at the lamb's head, the highest and leading doctrines concerning the heavenly things and finish at its feet, the most material or terrestrial things or evil spirits or unclean demons. The inward parts must not be omitted. And as we must approach the whole of Scripture as one body,

²¹³ cf. HANSON, R. P. C: *Allegory and Event*, p. 243.

²¹⁴ cf. When one reads the work of ZÖLLIG, A: *Die Inspirationslehre des Origenes*, p. 108., one becomes informed in depth about how Origen analyzes the spiritual sense.

²¹⁵ cf. HANSON, R. P. C: *Allegory and Event*, p. 244.

²¹⁶ cf. ORIGEN: *Peri Archon IV.3.5*.

we must not break or cut up the most sinewy and strongest joints of the harmony of its whole system, as do those who as far as their own profit is concerned break the unity of the Spirit in all the scriptures.”²¹⁷ This very difficult allegory concludes with what one might refer to as the general law of allegory. Origen says that one must never think that historical realities in its literal forms in the bible correspond to the allegorical explanation one makes of such texts, in the same way material functions do not correspond to material things, rather a correct interpretation must see material functions as corresponding to allegorically spiritual things and literal historical narratives correspond to things of the intellect.²¹⁸

One of the most discussed allegory of Origen among biblical scholars is the manner in which he allegorically interpreted the Israelites journey through the wilderness. Origen compares this journey made by the Israelites with its different Stations to the journey the soul of a Christian makes in its quest for perfection. It must be stated that Origen was not the first biblical scholar to analyze this text of scripture using allegory. Heracleitus had prior to him, made an allegorical explanation of Odysseus’ journey using it to interpret the many evil that can befall a human being on his life’s journey.²¹⁹ Also, Philo had made some publications about this theme of the wanderings in the desert. In his allegorical interpretation Philo had said, Mara stood for bitterness and Elim referred to gateways, IE entrance into virtue.²²⁰ Worthy of note is also the fact that some Jewish intellectuals had, based on the different names of the different Stations, deduced allegorical instructions and teachings.²²¹ One also notices that in his allegorical interpretation of this Desert journey, Origen made use of a work which contained the meanings of the names of the places at different Stations. This body of work was most definitely not compiled by him, but most likely by intellectuals who were Jews and not Christians.²²² Völker, in his work strongly believes that Origen’s allegorical interpreta-

²¹⁷ HANSON, R. P. C: *Allegory and Event*, p. 248.

²¹⁸ cf. ORIGEN: *Commentary on John X.18*.

²¹⁹ cf. HANSON, R. P. C: *Allegory and Event*, p. 254.

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ cf. ‘Interpretation of Hebrew Names in Origen’, in: *Vigiliae Christianae* 10 (1989) 121f.

²²² cf. Ibid., pp. 115-23.

tion of the desert journey proves beyond any reasonable doubt the chance of there been a union between God and the soul. This union is of a mystical sort.²²³ Hanson is however of a contrary view to Völker standpoint. For him Origen does not prove this mystical union enough. In fact Hanson argues that all that Origen did was to be involved in a lot of speculation of a philosophical and a theological sort commonly found among Platonists of that epoch in Alexandria and use this speculation to arrive at what he Origen calls a mystical union.²²⁴ Now, Hanson is not claiming that there does not exist this possibility of a mystical union of the soul, but he is of the opinion that Völker in his analysis of Origen's allegory work concerning this Stations of the Desert journey, should have been more careful and not jump to such conclusions readily.²²⁵ Perhaps, what is so remarkable in all this, is that Origen was able to arrive at the possibility of such a union by a 'mere' application and analysis of "Philonic allegorizing of the names of the Stations of the Wilderness."²²⁶

Why the use of allegory at all in the interpretation of scripture? Why this search for a deeper meaning than what is written in the bible? Origen argues that the only way of getting at the significance of a passage in scripture, so come to the lessons it aims to pass across lies in allegorical interpretation, because taking only its literal meaning does not lead one to the real message the text contains. Furthermore, only with the use of the allegorical sense can scripture be defended and safeguarded by heretical attacks. Origen maintains this practice of allegorizing is supported and promoted by Scripture itself.²²⁷ In Origen's epoch, practically all schools of thought, be they self acclaimed heretics or

²²³ cf. VÖLKER: *Das Vollkommenheitsideal des Origenes*, pp. 62-78, 139, 195.

²²⁴ cf. VÖLKER: *Das Vollkommenheitsideal des Origenes*, pp. 91-98; compare this to *Origen's Doctrine of Tradition*, by R.P.C HANSON, London 2004. pp. 81 f.

²²⁵ cf. It is highly recommended to read the following pages in, VÖLKER, *Das Vollkommenheitsideal des Origenes*, pp. 134-44. to get a clearer picture about what Hanson is saying.

²²⁶ LUNDBERG, P: *La Typologie Baptismale*, Leipzig-Uppsala 1942, pp. 117f. in this work shows his admiration for what Origen was able to achieve with this allegorical explanation of the Desert journey.

²²⁷ cf. This same submission by Origen can be read in *Contra celsum* IV.44, There Origen to support his claim refers his readers to Galatians 4, 26.

belonging to orthodoxy, with the exclusion of the Jewish school and the Literalists, made use of allegory in their interpretation of scripture.

“But now there are countless multitudes of believers who, though not all can expound the principles of spiritual interpretation systematically and thoroughly, are almost all persuaded that circumcision should not be understood literally nor the Sabbath rest nor the pouring out of blood of cattle, and do not believe that answers were given to Moses by god about these things.”²²⁸ Origen states emphatically that an allegorical explanation of the bible was sanctioned and ratified by the Church.²²⁹ It is quite surprising that Origen does not stand alone in this substantiation, quite a considerable number of modern day biblical intellectuals vindicate Origen in the way he allegorized scripture. Zöllig says a look at St. Paul’s writings, shows the justification in some instances for the use of allegorical interpretation, although he warns only with the approval and support of the church’s authority. He further argues that the practice of using allegory was approved by the regulations of the Christian belief. This he says is evidenced by the fact that it was the weapon of Apologists against the Jews, Origen was able through its use to draw pagans and a further evidence of its practical advantage is how pagan ideas is explained in scripture through allegory.²³⁰ Zöllig also affirmed without any iota of doubt the idea that the spiritual sense was dormant in the bible; “It is Origen’s achievement to have demonstrated incontrovertibly that the Old Testament is a grand type of the New, and that in the holy Scriptures besides the literal sense the mystical sense must come into its own.”²³¹ Klostermann does not wholeheartedly speak for the application of allegorical interpretation by Origen. He is of the view that Origen was compelled use allegorical interpretation. Origen made remarkable progress upon earlier works of allegorical biblical explanation. He also is of the view that sometimes this allegorical method was sometimes the only way of arriving at a real understanding of scripture.²³² De Lubac for his part is not so censorious of Origen, in fact he is more fervent in his support

²²⁸ cf. ORIGEN: *Peri Archon II.7.2*.

²²⁹ cf. To prove this supposition was made by both Clement of Alexandria and Origen, read HANSON, R.P.C: *Origen’s Doctrine of Tradition*, pp. 6 f., 71f., 82, 103-105.

²³⁰ cf. ZÖLLIG, A: *Die Inspirationslehre des Origenes*, pp. 123f.

²³¹ Ibid. p. 127.

²³² cf. KLOSTERMANN, E: *Formen der exegetischen Arbeiten des Origenes*, in: TLZ (1947) 206.

for Origen's allegorical interpretation. He agrees with Origen that the spiritual sense is to present in all scriptural passages and he praises Origen's handling of the difference made by St. Paul as regards the spirit and the letter.²³³

I wish to highlight here the refutation and critique Hanson brings against Origen and conclude this section of the essay by bring my own counter view against Hanson. Hanson confesses that many arguments made to defend Origen's use of allegory seems to him (Hanson) not be persuasive and convincing enough. Hanson maintains that it may be the case that the intention of Origen in the use of allegorical interpretation was seen by modern scholars as been praiseworthy, to be admired and maybe even to be accepted. But there is a difference between defending someones intention and defending someones use of a method in this case Origen's use of allegorical interpretation. Hanson goes on to claim that a look at the so called threefold system, IE a division of explanation into the literal, moral and spiritual senses by Origen has only led to a self-frustrating exercise at best. Hanson claims it to be a self defeating activity because Origen starts off objectively with making three differentiations of interpretation only to end up with all been absorbed or all dissociating into one, the spiritual sense. More annoying is the fact that this spiritual sense is nothing more than Origen's doctrine. He alone postulates in the spiritual sense what a text should mean or not mean. According to Hanson, every scriptural text has a literal narrative whose interpretation in this historical context gives enough material worthy for giving a Christian's way of life edification. But to say that all passages must produce a spiritual interpretation and that its literal explanation is not proper for a Christian way of life is just sheer absurdity.²³⁴

Now to some response to Hanson's claims. The question regarding Origen's intentions in introducing an allegorical interpretation of scripture remains a very much open question. We noted in the earlier part of this essay that Origen was at times affected by Philonic postulations and presuppositions in his analysis of a bible text. One thing that

²³³ cf. De LUBAC, H: *Histoire et Esprit*, p. 307.

²³⁴ cf. HANSON, R. P. C: *Allegory and Event*, p. 257.

can be said though is that it would be utterly wrong basing Origen's nature and Temperament as an allegorist solely with reference to only his threefold stipulation. Analysis based on this stipulation, as observed and as Hanson rightly affirms, allows any person to rationalize and make any interpretation he wants to make of the bible.

The same year Hanson's *Allegory and Event* was published, Henri de Lubac's two of what would eventually be a four volume of *Exégèse Médiévale*²³⁵ was published. Its translated edition in English also now exists. De Lubac in this work handles the fourfold spiritual exegesis of scripture. In it he calls back into memory the Christian traditions in spirituality through the Latin Middle Ages into the Renaissance, presenting Origen's original work as rendered in Latin, not the *Peri Archon* which was controversial in nature but his homilies and his commentary on the Song of Songs, as its primary inspiration. A look at this work when compared with with Hanson's judgement of Origen reveals a very great contrast of both these men's views about the same man. De Lubac's argument is that the fourfold spiritual exegesis raised the spirituality that is characteristic of the church. This helps in promoting a progressive and also a real and current interaction with the inspired scriptural text. De Lubac does not suggest we should now continue doing exegesis as it was carried out by Origen, but he does believe that a separation of exegesis from spirituality, that has always characterizes modern Christianity is not a gain rather a serious disadvantage.

The Earliest Lives of Jesus, was written by Robert M. Grant in 1961. In this work he made the discovery that Origen's connection and association to history was more problematic than either Hanson or de Lubac had postulated. Grant speaks about Theon and Dio Chrysostom, who were great intellectuals and rhetoricians in the Greco-Roman era, how these two had developed and introduced a demanding method for testing the probability of happenings in history. This historical critical course was studied by students of Literature in of antiquity. It was known and referred to as 'grammar'. It was this complex literary text (grammar) that Origen applied in his analysis of the historical problems raised by the diverging Gospel accounts of the life of Jesus, especially the dif-

²³⁵ cf. So far the first two volumes have appeared in English as *Medieval Exegesis: The Four Senses of Scripture*, vol 1, translated by M. SEBANC, Michigan 1998, and vol. 2 translated by E.M. Macierowski, Scotland 2000.

ferences between John and the Synoptics. For one to use such complex method, Grant makes his final submission by saying, “Perhaps it should be said that Origen is not interested in history as such but in the use of historical methods.”²³⁶ Such analysis given by Grant can only make us affirm that Origen’s use of allegorical interpretation of scripture was not with the aim of disregarding ‘history’ in itself, as Hanson believes, rather in the face of important factual events in passages of biblical narratives, Origen used ‘history’ with his application ‘historical criticism’ (grammar) to do a good work of explaining scripture.²³⁷

To further buttress this let us now examine how Origen with the use of the instrument of allegory did not destroy History, but rather affirmed it.

3.4 AFFIRMATION OF HISTORY

For Origen, he was utterly convinced that the Logos had to have a body. The same way in which we find in scripture relations between the literal narratives and their spiritual meanings, so also we find this relation in the Logos between his human body flesh and his divine spirit.²³⁸ It follows necessarily the entirety of Scripture is, in a manner of speaking is integrated, just as in the same way the Person it heralds and preaches, is incorporated. It is “non in phantasia, sed in veritate, IE not in fantasy, but in truth.”²³⁹ In looking at Christ, one sees a man in flesh with ones human eyes, but with the eyes of faith one perceived the divinity in him. This is also true of scripture, one needs to arrive at its veiled spiritual secrets by going through the narratives of the written word.²⁴⁰ For this truth to be arrived at, there is a requirement on the part of the reader that he first believes in the happening of the events as they are recorded in scripture. “They took place ἐπὶ τῷ ῥητῷ IE in the way stated.”²⁴¹ The only mistake the Jews made, was to

²³⁶ GRANT, R. M: *The Earliest Lives of Jesus*, New York 1961, p. 114.

²³⁷ cf. HANSON, R. P. C: *Allegory and Event*, Introduction p. 17.

²³⁸ cf. ORIGEN: *Homilies on Leviticus*, 1.1 280-81.

²³⁹ ORIGEN: *Series on Saint Matthew*, ed. E. KLOSTERMANN, p. 92.

²⁴⁰ cf. Ibid. p. 27

²⁴¹ cf. ORIGEN: *Homilies on Jeremiah* 7,1 p. 52.

limit themselves to these things that happened. It is because of people like them and those who behave in such manner that both the letter and the spirit of scripture had to be safeguarded. Such a defense aims to avoid cursing the letter and also prevent a blasphemy of the spirit.²⁴² All that transpired and all that came to pass, did come to pass in mystery, but it happening in mystery always presupposes the real event. A believe in the account of the event is a must. “*Manete prius historiae veritate*. The reality of the history remains first of all.”²⁴³

There are those who deny the literal sense when its narrative in bible seems unacceptable. Origen never does this, in fact, he always accepts, without any trace of doubt, the recorded narration as it is contained in scripture. Regardless of how very unlikely a miracle that Jesus worked might seem, Origen sees no reason why one would want to avoid its obvious interpretation. He remains unmoved even when critics like Celsus might mock him for entertaining such notions. Such contempt from his detractors neither frightens nor daunts him. “God grant, he cries out, that I be called insane by the infidels, I who have believed such things!”²⁴⁴ One notices, in reading Origen’s homilies, for instance his analysis of Noah’s ark, how much attention he gives to details, wanting to be faithful to the literal account. Apelles and many other biblical scholars raised their objections to such meticulous detailing.²⁴⁵ Not giving in to the mockery and sneer of the heretics and pagan scholars, Origen asks, “Must we not admire this construction, which seemed so like a great city?”²⁴⁶ The episodes achieved success because the actors remain very visible and perceivable; thus the command and order that they contain must still be studied, every last letter of it.²⁴⁷ One should always strive to want to know this perceivable, this literal, every historical detail of it.²⁴⁸ One has begun well, who strives

²⁴² cf. ORIGEN: *Homilies on Leviticus 14,1* p. 478.

²⁴³ De LUBAC, H: *History and Spirit*, p. 106.

²⁴⁴ cf. Origen: *Homilies on Luke 7* p.51 The reason he made such an exclamation was because some were hesitating and even doubting claims in scripture regarding the virginal conception of Jesus and also the consecration of John the Baptist.

²⁴⁵ cf. ORIGEN: *Homilies on Genesis 2,1* ed. KOETSCHAU, P: p. 22.

²⁴⁶ De LUBAC, H: *History and Spirit The Understanding of Scripture according to Origen*, p. 107.

²⁴⁷ cf. ORIGEN: *Peri Archon 4,3 3*, ed. P. KOETSCHAU.

²⁴⁸ cf. TILLEMONT, Le Nain: *Mémoires*, 2nd ed., 3,555:Who believes Origen had an utmost respect for the literal text.

at the very beginning to study it, Origen was referring here to the historical narratives. This is because almost always in all instances this literal sense becomes the foundation in understanding the spiritual lessons of the text.²⁴⁹ Origen says it is a good thing if one remains for a while at this ‘literal-sense’ level. He also recommends it, if it would help the biblical scholar, to get a background information about the geography and landscape, this would go a long way in helping to analyze the facts of the narrative.²⁵⁰ Thus one begins to understand Origen, not as a biblical intellectual who is preoccupied with analyzing a text for the sole purpose of deducing the meaning of the text, but rather as an exegete who is concerned with the ongoing spiritual changes and metamorphosis that one experiences in coming in contact with the text.²⁵¹ I wish to conclude this chapter with the words of Hans Urs von Balthasar:

“The theory of the senses of Scripture is not a curiosity of the history of theology but an instrument for seeking out the most profound articulations of salvation history...When exegesis is understood in this way, it includes all of theology, from its historical foundation to its most spiritual summits. In the center stands Christ, who is both exegete and exegesis; he interprets himself and does so primarily in deeds, which are incarnate words. Thus the letter is always being transformed into spirit, promise into fulfillment...”²⁵²

4. THE LOGOS

We have, in the foregoing chapter examined how Origen handled the text of scripture. This chapter looks at the relationship of the Holy spirit to the Logos. A unique association because even before any analysis we already refer to him as Word (Logos) of God. We know that there is only one Holy spirits and not two spirits, well in the same way there can only be one Word of Scripture and not two. In other words when one speaks

²⁴⁹ cf. ORIGEN: *Homilies on Exodus*. 10.2.

²⁵⁰ cf. De LUBAC, H: *History and Spirit The Understanding of Scripture according to Origen*, p. 109.

²⁵¹ cf. DAWSON, J. D: *Christian Figural Reading and the Fashioning of Identity*, Berkeley 2002, p. 56.

²⁵² BALTHASAR, H. V: *The Theology of Henri de Le Lubac*, San Francisco 1991.

about the spirit contained in the Bible one means the holy spirit, in the same way and manner when one talks about the Word of God that is contained in the bible, one is referring to no other Nature than the Logos. This Logos, as we read in the first book of the Bible, is the One that was with God at the Creation in the beginning and he is the same one called the living Wisdom and Son of God.²⁵³ The bible is the Word of God (Logos), and it proclaims the Word (Logos). This spiritual sense that is spoken about so extensively, one may ask what actually is it made of? It is found in every chapter and verse in scripture so much so one can describe it as a living organism. What does it hope to reveal to us? The answer is made up of just a word: Christ. This Christ, this Logos who is of God and who is God came to dwell and live with us. A study of all the books of scripture shows to us that Christ is the subject matter, theme and topic, he is the key in reading scripture and if we read the scripture properly, we then come in contact and encounter his presence and godhead everywhere in scripture. When he tells us to search the scriptures, he does not mean that we should read a book in the Old Testament or a letter in the New Testament, but indeed to read all of the books of the bible. Why? Because in all books he is the subject and theme been discussed, all the books of scripture can be likened to being parts and they make up the whole, this whole been the Logos, Christ.²⁵⁴ This Logos, it must be understood is not a diversity of words, πολυλογία, and also not λόγοι (words), but λόγος (word). In this same way we come to understand that all the words of Scripture are not a diversity, owing to the fact that they have their wholeness in the Logos, “The Word par excellence, αὐτόλογος (Word in itself)”.²⁵⁵ The Logos reveals himself through the words of Scripture, in the same way he reveals himself through the human Jesus. The Logos explains and clarifies all pages of Scripture where one encounters him when one reads it properly as it should be read and it is in the same way in which his actions in the historical and mortal life are explanatory.²⁵⁶

When analyzed in this manner, the Bible can be described as a first foundation of the Logos. The Logos who by his very essence is not visible, can be seen and touched in

²⁵³ cf. ORIGEN: *Homilies on Ezekiel*, 1,9: p. 332. See also *Contra Celsum* 3,81. pp. 271-272.

²⁵⁴ cf. ORIGEN: *Contra Celsum* 5,22, p. 23.

²⁵⁵ cf. ORIGEN: *Commentary on John* 5,4. p. 102.

²⁵⁶ cf. *Ibid.* 13, 42 p. 268.

scripture, just as people were able to touch Jesus in his flesh, the flesh in the case of scripture is a word that makes this encounter possible, IE we read about him the Logos.²⁵⁷ “In the way and manner Christ appeared veiled in a human body, enabling the carnal to see the man in him, so also we should understand that the spiritual would recognize the God, for this reason is Scripture presented embodied (*incorporée*). All spiritual and prophetic meaning is enclosed right there in history, only that the inferior cannot perceive the mystery that it holds.”²⁵⁸ When Origen speaks about the Logos, he usually goes deeper. He for instance uses the word ‘Logos’ with a conscious ambiguity. The scripture is filled with the mysteries of the Logos, which is Jesus Christ. This Jesus is the subject of its narration. But these mysteries of the Logos are also in a general way referring to statements from God.²⁵⁹ The Word of God which nourishes our soul is no doubt the sacred scripture, but this nourishment is one at the same time Jesus himself, who is the ‘living bread which has come down from Heaven’.

In looking at the teaching of the Logos which is found in Scripture one comes to the discovery that all can be traced back to when one makes an encounter with the Logos. Those who were inspired to write the holy books wrote out their own experience when they encountered the Logos and they made a record of these encounters solely for our advantage.²⁶⁰ This is to say that in reading the biblical authors narratives the reader is to uncover the intentions of why God inspired the writers to write. What is the goal of their record? A careful study of it will reveal to us that it has an intentionality meant for the reader in the future, IE towards us, meaning it was intended for us. Its goal was to instruct us about the truth of the Logos. This truth was of a spiritual kind and it was

²⁵⁷ ORIGEN: *Volumes on Saint Matthew*, ed. KLOSTERMANN, E. p.78

²⁵⁸ ORIGEN: *Series on Saint Matthew*, ed. KLOSTERMANN, E. p. 45.

²⁵⁹ cf. ORIGEN: *Homilies on Leviticus*. One finds similrs ideas in, *Contra Celsum* 4,3: “Always and in each generation, God has made his Logos descend into the souls of his friends and his prophets for the education of those who would prove docile to it.” p. 275.

²⁶⁰ cf. TORJESEN, K: *Hermeneutical Procedure and Theological Method In Origen's Exegesis*, Berlin-New York 1986, p.111. I also agree with the Comments made in the Footnote. Origen is of the opinion that the biblical authors are the ones who in their inspired writings laid in those writings both the literal and spiritual senses. Their goal was for us through our reading of their work to make an encounter with the Logos, just as they too had made such an encounter, and through this encounter to be transformed just as they too were transformed.

meant to be of a universally kind, and the method that was to be employed in doing this, was through the use of historical and material symbols, all in an effort to achieving this goal.²⁶¹

4.1 SCRIPTURE AND THE SOUL

When one speaks about the universal pedagogy of the Logos, one is referring to the profound action of Christ who is the Logos in bringing souls and restoring these souls to the nature they had before the fall of man, and this original state of the soul was where it had perfect knowledge about God. This action reached its high and summit with the Logos taking on flesh and becoming man. Since this is the highest form of encountering the Logos, all other forms of encounter can only be seen as been continuations of this one divine medium of instruction.²⁶² In Origen's analysis of Matthew 14:13-14, he interprets this to mean that Christ takes on flesh so as to make contact with those who were in the flesh and who had the desire to experience this encounter.²⁶³ In this very short text, Origen sees two important lessons to be learnt about the Logos (God) becoming man. With Christ's coming in the flesh, entering into time, an important historical event took place, whose ramifications is more than the Bethlehem birth, its a has universal implication. Second element of the text is the fact that owing to our inability to encounter him, he comes to make the encounter and contact possible. In other words he bridges the distance, which is an ontological one, between God and man.²⁶⁴

Origen beautifully describes this encounter between God and Man when he said; "God is absolute unity and simple, but the Saviour on account of the multiplicity of things and of sin was predestined to be a propitiation and he, the first fruits of the whole

²⁶¹ cf. TORJESEN, K: *Hermeneutical Procedure and Theological Method In Origen's Exegesis*, p. 112.

²⁶² cf. Ibid., p. 114. in her footnote says this about KOCH, H: *Pronoia und Paideusis* in: AKG 22 (1932) 62-78. in this work writes that the World according to Origen is a means by which the Logos teaches man how far he has fallen from God. In this world man sees that knowledge is limited and only a faded reflection of perfect knowledge. But with instructions from the Logos, the soul of man can free himself from this imprisoned material world. This freedom through divine teaching is what makes and constitutes salvation for Origen.

²⁶³ cf. ORIGEN: *Commentary on Matthew*, ed. KLOSTERMANN, E. p.

²⁶⁴ TORJESEN, K: *Hermeneutical Procedure and Theological Method In Origen's Exegesis*, p. 115.

creation, became himself many things and became perhaps everything that each creature capable of redemption would need from him.”²⁶⁵

This ‘God taking on human flesh’ is the ultimate and highest way one can think of the Logos coming to us. With this action and activity, the Logos, whose very essence it is to be complete and undivided takes on diversity. God is made into many components or elements (*ἐπίνοιαί*), in order for him to be known. For every title of Christ describes and reveals to us a component or part of his divine nature.²⁶⁶ This revelation of the many divine attributes of God is what Origen called the *ἐπίνοιαί*. It is in the incarnation they become visible for the first time and consequently, because of this revelation, man imitating attributes of God can strive to be like him.²⁶⁷ Without the Logos taking on flesh, these divine attributes would not have been known and could not have been emulated. In other words in this action of the Logos a universal instruction is been taught that which is only made possible because God took human flesh and became comprehensible to all human flesh. To this end, with the incarnation the Logos, the universal divine instruction, both in Jesus’ historical era and in our present contemporary time, has been made possible. How so? With the Logos taking on flesh, the conditions suitable and required for human beings to intelligibly understand him for all time had been created.²⁶⁸

In the understanding of Origen as regards the creation of this condition, it has involved a long descent. In other words in speaking about the incarnation event, one is not just thinking about how Jesus came to be born in Bethlehem. One is thinking and taking into account and including everything that involves this long descent of the Logos. He was first at creation with the Father and now after bridging this ontological distance, he is now with us in human flesh. Origen, in analyzing the descent, says the coming of the Logos, of our Saviour into our World has taken not less than forty-two generations to

²⁶⁵ ORIGEN: *Der Johanneskommentars I,20*, ed. E. PREUSCHEN in: GCS 10 (1903) 258-399.

²⁶⁶ cf. Ibid. I,20-39, pp. 24-51.

²⁶⁷ cf. Ibid. XIX, 23 pp. 324-325.

²⁶⁸ cf. TORJESEN, K: *Hermeneutical Procedure and Theological Method In Origen's Exegesis*, p. 115.

reach its final realization. Matthew 1, 17) "...The forty-two generations are the stations through which Christ descended into the Egypt of this world...Let us mount by the stations of this descent, and take for our first station his last his birth from a virgin."²⁶⁹

Thus for Origen one should see the incarnation as a path. The Logos in covering this ontologically pathway, moving from being with the Father to being in the flesh. This distance can be ascended to and descended from. One understands why Origen sees the incarnation as not simply being a unique emptying of the Logos of himself, but it has the universal divine instruction corresponding to this kenosis. Origen believes that only in this goal to be divine instruction for all men does the unique kenosis attain its fullest and highest meaning.²⁷⁰

"God has sent the Word, his own son to rescue us out of ignorance and error and to lead us to light of his divine law...whoever ascends, ascends with him, the one who has descended all the way to us that we might be able to reach the place from whence he descended."²⁷¹

The goal of descending and becoming man was so as to educate and through this education and divine instruction to transform the whole of humanity. This divine instruction has the power to free the soul from blunder, and thus freed the soul can then journey upwards to God, taking the same path by which the Logos himself came down to man. This very idea forms the understanding that Origen has of the divine instruction that is meant for all by the Logos. In this divine teaching, the historical event of the God becoming man corresponds with the whole activity of the Logos. Hence when he appeared in the flesh and he did this in time, the Logos became visible for all flesh and for all time. In other words he does not have to reappear over and over again. The mission of the Logos remains the same, whether within the time of the historical Jesus or outside of time. "The incarnation becomes in this way, the all-including event which extends

²⁶⁹ cf. ORIGEN: *Homilien zu Numeri, Josua und Judges*, ed. BAEHRENS in: GCS 30 (1925) 21-27.

²⁷⁰ cf. TORJESEN, K: *Hermeneutical Procedure and Theological Method In Origen's Exegesis*, p. 116.

²⁷¹ cf. ORIGEN: *Homilien zu Numeri, Josua und Judges*, p. 25

into the distant past, to the time of the prophets and this same central event extends to the Future into the time of Origen's hearers."²⁷²

In analyzing the divine instruction of the Logos, which is of course is universal in its dimension, Origen says that even though its central expression is to be seen in the incarnation, one should know that this universal pedagogy comes way ahead before this activity of the Logos taking human flesh, for the simple reason that the Logos remains forever himself and therefore he remains the eternal teacher. This can be explained in the sense that Christ should be understood as being the one who instructed and taught Moses and the prophets. This follows necessarily, because without the Word of God, without this instruction from the eternal teacher, Christ, they would have been unable to prophesy Christ.²⁷³ This would mean that saints of the Old Testament knew Christ, (the Logos) in the same and equal manner as those who physically saw and were taught by the historical Jesus (the incarnate Logos). Origen in justifying this claim referred to Jesus' statement about the resurrection of the dead, God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.²⁷⁴ The very fact that God was proud to identify himself as the God of these men and the fact that Christ speaks of them as living, should make us not doubt for a single moment that the living, IE the saints of the Old testament, had knowledge of the teachings of Life, because they had been taught by Life himself before he became flesh. For this sole reason they are referred to as living, because they share and participate in the Life and are united with the one who says, I am the Life.²⁷⁵ "And as inheritors of such great promises they have received not only the appearances of angels, but also the appearing of God in Jesus Christ...they both knew God and understood the words of God in a way appropriate to the divine majesty, therefore it is recorded that they saw God and knew him...And it is clear that Moses saw in the law the truth of the law and understood the ascending sense (*ἀναγωγήν*) of the allegories of the histories which were

²⁷² TORJESEN, K: *Hermeneutical Procedure and Theological Method In Origen's Exegesis*, p. 116.

²⁷³ cf. ORIGEN: *De Principiis I, Praef.*, ed. KOETSCHAU, P, p. 7.14-8.2.

²⁷⁴ cf. Mark 12, 26.

²⁷⁵ cf. TORJESEN, K: *Hermeneutical Procedure and Theological Method In Origen's Exegesis*, p. 117.

written by him.”²⁷⁶ The knowledge they had of the Logos correspondent to their participation in him. When we read the law and the prophets, what we are reading is an account of the experience the saints of the Old Testament had with the historical divine instruction of the Logos.²⁷⁷ This same universal divine instruction of the Logos can extend to the future, to us just as its extension to the past included the fathers of antiquity. This extending forward to us is the third form of the divine instruction of the Logos, his mission is to come into each individual soul. The first two-forms of coming were, his universal coming in the flesh and his coming in the form of a voice of the prophets to the saints. How does he achieve this coming into our souls, which is his third form of coming? He does this by coming to us individually when we read the bible. The Logos in the bible is clothed in a language that is both visible and intelligible to each individual soul.²⁷⁸ Every rational Being needs food which must, not only be suited for him but also be in the right proportion for him. The Word of God contained in scripture is indeed the true nourishment for the human rational soul. We know that the physical body has a range of varied nutrients, the same is true of the rational soul. In this regard, as milk is given as nourishment to babies, so also with regards to the word of God, it is not received under the same form. One can say there is in the Word of God a diet of milk, which would refer to things that are not too difficult to understand, simple teachings, those concerning morals. Such are given to those who beginners in the study of scriptures. In other words those receiving the elementary instructions for the rational soul.²⁷⁹

According to Origen the divine instruction remains basically the same in each the three-forms highlighted, be it the before the incarnated Logos, or be it the perfect word incarnate Logos or lastly be it the present day spiritual application. The Logos who is teaching is always Christ, this is his activity, to give divine instruction. When he becomes incarnate no matter in what form, as a voice, as flesh or as a language his goal is to teach and to instruct.²⁸⁰ Thus one can rightly say that the divine pedagogy is first and

²⁷⁶ cf. ORIGEN: *Der Johanneskommentars*. VI,4, p.110.12-13, 16-20, 22-24, p. 111.6-8.

²⁷⁷ cf. TORJESEN, K: *Hermeneutical Procedure and Theological Method In Origen's Exegesis*, p. 117.

²⁷⁸ cf. Ibid. p.118

²⁷⁹ cf. ORIGEN: *Homilien zu Numeri, Josua und Judices*, p. 255.25 - 256.8.

²⁸⁰ cf. TORJESEN, K: *Hermeneutical Procedure and Theological Method In Origen's Exegesis*, p. 118.

foremost about teaching, about doctrine, about instruction. This divine teaching as seen from the foregoing is through scripture. The one who instructs through this scripture is the Logos himself, and it is in this scriptural text that we are able to encounter him in the third form of divine instruction.

There are so many instructions and teachings in the bible, but the truth remains that no matter how many and diverse these instructions may seem or be, they are the same truths that the Logos revealed about himself while teaching as the historical Jesus. When the Logos through the historical instruction he gave to the saints in the Old Testament was teaching and instructing, these instructions or doctrine became a written document which for us today in our present contemporary time a source. How? For this account which they recorded was what they understood from their encounter and what they had learned from the Logos. Writing under the influence of the holy spirit they made a record of the instructions of the Logos and when we read this recorded account we are also reading the same doctrine or truth taught to them by the Logos. This recorded account of their encountered experience with the Logos and his divine pedagogy is true both for the New Testament authors as well as for the prophets.²⁸¹ When we read these accounts, we are also been instructed by the Logos through these words. And these instructions can be applied to our rational souls as nourishment.

Sacred Scripture is therefore a very important means and medium which the Logos employs in passing on his divine teachings to the people living in the contemporary era. As noted from the foregoing, the Logos encounters people of every age and generation through scripture. In the this form where the Logos makes his encounter not with prophets as in the first form, nor in the flesh as with the second form, but in language, his sole aim is that the individual soul experiences him. It would be advantageous before delving into how the Logos achieves this sole aim, to how it is even possible for Logos to communicate himself through scripture, a written word. Torjesen beautifully explains this when she said; “This dual dimension of Scripture, activity and content, re-

²⁸¹ cf. ORIGEN: *Der Johanneskommentars*. X,4, pp. 173-175.

flects a similar duality in the Logos himself as the one who not only mediates knowledge but is also the object of knowledge. In Origen's understanding the Logos is always both personal subject and objective order of things."²⁸² This double activity of the Logos can seem a to be in opposition to one another, but they are not. Simply put the subject that is been revealed or announced is been revealed and announced by the subject itself, one could say a self subject. In other words, the one that announces himself, in this case the Logos, is making statements about himself because he is the subject matter.²⁸³ The same is what we find in scripture. Here the Logos is the teacher who teaches the Truths that is found in the bible. When he does this, the Truths he teaches is nothing more than a revelation an unveiling of himself to the one who is reading the scriptures.²⁸⁴ "In opening the treasure of knowledge to be found in the bible, one finds if we are indeed able to open them, that it is always Christ who is hidden in them (within)".²⁸⁵

Thus we come to the understanding that the holy bible's one and only content is the Logos who took flesh, but who appears here to the reader in language. But where as in the flesh he is totally visible to the eyes, in sacred scripture we find a part of him revealed every time and the uncovering is gradual till all these, piece by piece disclosure presents the whole of Logos. In other words to gain contact or make an encounter with the Logos in this contemporary pedagogy it is done not through the flesh, but rather through the teachings and instructions that is to be found in reading the holy books. It is in this manner that he reveals himself to the soul. Since every human being requires food which is suitable to him, the appropriate food for the rational soul of man is nothing other than God's word that is to be found in scripture.²⁸⁶ The rational soul of a human being is what makes it possible for it to make contact and encounter God. This also enables him to share in the being and divinity of God.²⁸⁷ When the Logos shares with

²⁸² TORJESSEN, K: *Hermeneutical Procedure and Theological Method In Origen's Exegesis*, p. 119.

²⁸³ cf. ORIGEN: *Der Johanneskommentars. XIII, 28*. PREUSCHEN, E, pp. 251-253.

²⁸⁴ cf. GÖGLER, R: *Zur Theologie des biblischen Wortes bei Origen*, Düsseldorf 1963. p. 263.

²⁸⁵ cf. ORIGEN: *Commentry in Matthew. X, 6* KLOSTERMANN, E, p. 6.

²⁸⁶ cf. ORIGEN: *Homilien zu Numeri, Josua und Judices, XXVII, 1* BAEHRENS, W. A, pp. 255.25-256.1.

²⁸⁷ cf. ORIGEN: *De Principiis II Capital. 11, 7* ed. KOETSCHAU, P, pp. 191-192.

the rational soul, he does it through the instructions to be found in the bible. In this communication of himself, the Logos is always conscious of the level of the individual's soul, knowing its limits and capabilities. It gives only so much that the rational soul can understand, enabling the soul to grow from this communication of himself. Thus this on going formation and growth is possible because of the different and many instructions for the soul which is found in the bible. Thus the holy scriptures becomes a very impressive tool for the Logos to reveal himself to the rational soul. This tool, the bible contains truths of a universal sort, thus the Logos is able to disclose himself, since he is the truth in the bible to all.²⁸⁸

From the above explanation, we can deduce then, that instructions is the way by which the Logos shares himself with the individual soul. Origen however sees a problem here which is of a hermeneutical kind. If these instructions found in bible, are of a universal range hidden in the spiritual sense, how then are they measured in a pedagogical sense to fit the particular situation.²⁸⁹ His study led him to the conclusion that it must be the Logos who does this. The Logos takes the universal instruction and so applies it to the one who is studying these instruction and who is trying to explain them. It is therefore possible in this regard because the one who is reading these instructions in the bible becomes in analyzing these text the spiritual sense which is a gradual and a continuous unveiling of the Logos. Thus this gradual revelation corresponds to the gradual growth in the individual's soul. This activity in the soul of the one who is listening to the Logos and through this means enabling the growth of his soul, Origen says the Logos has two goals as its objective. To heal the soul from evil and to have knowl-

²⁸⁸ cf. TORJESEN, K: *Hermeneutical Procedure and Theological Method In Origen's Exegesis*, p. 120.

²⁸⁹ cf. Ibid., p.120. This commentary is from her Footnote 41. Origen is aware that some individuals are just beginners and others are far more advanced in their spiritual encounter while reading the bible, the problem he states here is trying to understand giving this diversity of the individuals soul how no soul should be given too much than it can handle, just the appropriate measure of teaching that the soul can understand and grasp. He treats this problem also in works that are not of an exegetical kind eg. in his work called, *Dialogue 12,15-13,18*. J. SCHERER, SC., pp. 82-83.

edge of the mysteries. These two goals when achieved makes the union of the soul with the Logos possible.²⁹⁰

The thought that these instructions or teachings are what is needed for the soul to grow and progress are ideas Origen shares with Platonism. The Platonic idea of the soul been able to attain perfection only when it comes to know fully what is good and this should happen through a direct and immediate form.²⁹¹ For this to even be possible, there needs to be a certain form of relationship between the one who is thinking and the object of his thought.²⁹² The act of obtaining the desired similarity between the one who is thinking and the object that is been thought about, is an act of bearing semblance to God, *ὁμοίωσις τῷ Θεῷ*.²⁹³ This act is possible to the soul, IE to bear semblance to God, who is the ultimate intelligible and the ultimate good. The soul achieves this semblance by moving or orientating his rational faculties towards God.²⁹⁴ There is no surprise that with this Platonic viewpoint, Origen claims that the soul can bear resemblance to God when he applies himself to the instructions found in scripture.

Nonetheless, despite been a Platonic idea, Origen changed it a little by the function he gives to the Logos. The one who is teaching and giving this instruction, this knowledge to the individual soul is the Logos for the simple reason that he (the Logos) is the image of God.²⁹⁵ This teaching by the Logos is so beautiful in the sense that, the Logos is not only the object that the soul, but this instruction is carried out in such a way and manner that the it can be received by every soul based on his capabilities to understand. When the soul receives more of this teaching and is able to grow in his knowledge of the Logos, then he is closer in his likeness or in his semblance to God. At the hight of this growth, when the soul attains this perfect likeness, or perfect knowledge, he is then able to see God face-to-face.²⁹⁶ Hence for Origen the *ὁμοίωσις τῷ Θεῷ*

²⁹⁰ cf. Ibid., p. 121.

²⁹¹ cf. PLATO: *Republic* 490 B, *Symposium* 211 E.

²⁹² cf. PLATO: *Phaedo* 79 D.

²⁹³ cf. PLATO: *Theaetetus* 176 B-C.

²⁹⁴ cf. PLATO: *Phaedo* 66A.

²⁹⁵ cf. ORIGEN: *De Principiis I Cap.* 2,7-8. KOETSCHAU, P, pp. 37-39.

²⁹⁶ cf. Ibid. III Cap. 6.1 KOETSCHAU, P, pp. 279 - 282; *Commentary on John I,16*, PREUSCHEN, E, pp. 20-21.

of the individual soul is attained when one listens to the instructions of the Logos and one assimilates this knowledge of him to be able to grow in ones soul.²⁹⁷

“The Logos was effectively sent by God as a physician to the sinner, but as a teacher to the divine mysteries to those who are already clean and sin no longer.”²⁹⁸ The cure for the soul from sin is by the Logos and when achieved this process is called Healing.²⁹⁹ That would mean under our current discussion about how the Logos is teaching and communicating himself to the individual soul, there must also be a way he heals sinners today. In some way it is the same way the Jesus who became flesh, the word-incarnate healed, but in some way it is also different.³⁰⁰ Healing and cure by the Logos in our present time is through the Church’s teachings and her explanation of the bible.

The healing of the soul it must be understood is not automatic, but rather achieved through a regular church attendance, where one is always participating actively in listening to the scriptures and where one understands the explanation that is given by the churches ministers and where one tries applying these lessons also to ones life. Then and only then will this healing be possible. Origen believes that in the same way and manner the physical body is nourished and becomes strong and healthy so also the words of scripture which are divine, keep the soul alive and healthy, because the spiritual sense is nourishment for the soul. Such nourishment is therefore possible through daily listening to the word of God, the explanation given to it by the church and through continuous prayer.³⁰¹ The explanation of the holy bible in the church enables one to share in the teaching of the Logos, who wants to instruct all sinners. The healing and cure is possible in the individual soul for the very reason that it is the Logos himself, who is been interpreted in scripture, is present in the divine teaching the sinner listens

²⁹⁷ cf. TORJESEN, K: *Hermeneutical Procedure and Theological Method In Origen's Exegesis*, p. 121.

²⁹⁸ cf. ORIGEN: *Celsus III*, 62. KOETSCHAU, P: *Op.Cit.* p. 256-10.

²⁹⁹ cf. ORIGEN: *Comm. in Mt. X*, 23-24 KLOSTERMANN, E, pp. 31-34.

³⁰⁰ cf. ORIGEN: *Hom. in Cant., II*, 4 BAEHRENS, W. A, pp .345-346.

³⁰¹ cf. ORIGEN: *Hom. in Lev. IX*, 7 BAEHREANS, W. A, pp. 432.1-6.

to. In this way as the soul accepts and meditates on these instructions and seeks to follow in their footsteps, the Logos is gradually restoring that part of man, the spirit, and helping it along the road to perfection. The first goal, IE of cleansing from sin is for novices, those just starting on the road to be God's children. One can refer to these novices as catechumens, people who are starting their studies of understanding the Logos.

The fact that we have mentioned that there are those who are catechumens or novices, suggests that there are those who are not novices. These others "...who although they need the Son of God, no longer need him as physician...but as Wisdom and Word of Justice...who are able because of their perfection to receive from him the highest truths."³⁰² To those who belong to his group when the Logos instructs them it is not with the aim of cleansing them from sin anymore, but rather the aim and goal is to ever more progressively stamp upon their souls the very essence of the one they seek to resemble, IE the Logos. In such a way that they seek ever more readily and are continuously striving to conform to the logos as they have come to understand him.³⁰³ Thus, if this is achieved then a mystical union would become possible. From the foregoing, we can deduce that the moral and mystical instruction of the Logos becomes the way in which the soul can hope of been restored to its original state, which was perfect union with the good, the intelligible, through a sanctity of his soul and through a redemption of that sanctified soul. Thus the one is a preparation of the other, the moral instruction is a stepping stone for the mystical instruction, which is a preparation and step towards ultimate perfect union with God.

"...for there is one activity for those who have attained God by means of the Word who stand before him and that is to contemplate God, so that through the act of knowing and seeing God he may be completely transformed and become a son, just as now only the Son knows the Father."³⁰⁴

³⁰² cf. ORIGEN: *Der Johanneskommentars. I,20*. PREUSCHEN, E, p. 25.16-20.

³⁰³ cf. ORIGEN: *Comm. in Mt. X,15*. KLOSTERMANN, E, pp. 18-20.

³⁰⁴ cf. ORIGEN: *Der Johanneskommentars. I,16*. PREUSCHEN, E, p. 20.15-18.

So from the foregoing we have seen that the Logos instructs the individual soul and that this divine teaching comes from the interpretation of scripture in a Christian community. Origen has highlighted to us that this instruction by the logos is carried out in such a way that it is able to be received by the individual soul in proportion to what he is capable of understanding. Each stage of understanding, catechumenate level or advanced level, brings about a growth in the soul. It is in the interest of the individual soul to dispose itself to receive more, to grow, because only in this way can he move towards the ultimate goal of become like and so united to God. The revelation of the Logos and by the Logos is gradual. Just as there is a gradual growth from the moral level to the mystical level, in the same way there is a gradual way in both the moral and the mystical instruction of how the Logos reveals himself.³⁰⁵ It can be likened to climbing a stairway. When one is just on the lower level, one knows only very few doctrines or has few instructions about the Logos, but the higher one climbs be it in the moral or the mystical levels, the more teachings one has, the more advanced is ones knowledge of the logos.³⁰⁶ This idea of the soul climbing these stairway of the different instructions so as to arrive at the different stages of the moral and the mystical, is given with the view that at the top of the stairway the soul can then be united with God. Thus this continuous climbing, that is a continuous study of the instructions is the way in which the soul is restored to its original status of being the same likeness with God.

“Now let us strive to make progress and to ascend one by one the steps of faith and virtue. For if we stay awhile at each stage until we arrive at perfection, we will have made a stop at every virtue along the ascent until our progress and our education reaches the summit of perfection and the promises are inherited.”³⁰⁷

³⁰⁵ cf. ORIGEN: *De Principiis II, Cap. 11,6.7*. KOETSCHAU, P, pp. 189-192.

³⁰⁶ cf. TORJESSEN, K: *Hermeneutical Procedure and Theological Method In Origen's Exegesis*, p.123 on W. VÖLKER: *Das Vollkommenheitsideal des Origenes*, pp. 25-61., gives a very comprehensive explanation of how this growth and development of the human soul takes place. He states that there are two stages involved. First the soul struggles to overcome the yearnings of the flesh, ie the carnal desires and Second frees its senses from been dependent on things of the World.

³⁰⁷ cf. ORIGEN: *Hom. in Num. XXVII,3* BAEHRENS, W. A, p. 260.22-27.

Thus it should be noted that what here has been described as a series of continuous upward climbing of the soul till it achieves perfection or unification with its Creator is no different from the route that the Logos took in descending from being with God till his coming in the flesh at his incarnation.³⁰⁸

4.2 THE LOGOS SPEAKS, HOW IS HE HEARD?

All this while we have been hinting that the Logos, through the words of scripture, communicates himself to the individual soul, and we have presupposed that the individual soul can also receive what is been communicated by the Logos. But how really does this happen? When Origen defines inspiration he specifically describes the need for there to be a relation between the text and the one who hears or reads it. This relationship is made possible because of the matter or theme or topic that is been discussed. In the scripture this theme or topic is the Logos, who is teaching. The operative word for Origen's understanding of inspiration is 'usefulness' of the bible, which is safeguarded by the Holy spirit, since he is the one who inspires.³⁰⁹ God's goal for allowing the existence of the bible, which of course is secured by the holy spirit, was that it should be of help and advantage to the soul of man. The bible is a continuation of God's teaching and instruction to the individual.³¹⁰

The Holy Spirit is tasked with been primarily responsible for enlightening the saints, the prophets and the disciples. This the Holy Spirit does according to God's provision and also through the one who is as eternal as God, the Logos. The end-goal of this task of inspiration, was the uncovering of the mysteries to the individual soul, through him being instructed.³¹¹ The mysteries the soul was to unravel, through these instructions, included knowledge about why the Logos took on human flesh, knowledge about the beginning of evil and knowledge about the source of diversity. In other words

³⁰⁸ cf. TORJESEN, K: *Hermeneutical Procedure and Theological Method In Origen's Exegesis*, p.123. This commentary is also from her Footnote 60. If the Logos covered this distance from being with God to being in human flesh in what we might refer to as an ontological route or distance, then it necessarily follows that the human soul that desires to be with God, united with him, must also undertake this so called ontological route, moving from his flesh and carnal limitation so as to ascend and arrive at perfect union with God.

³⁰⁹ cf. Ibid., p. 124.

³¹⁰ cf. Ibid.

³¹¹ cf. ORIGEN: *De Principiis IV Cap. 2,7*. KOETSCHAU, P, p. 318,8-12.

the aim of the soul been inspired was to form it and fill it with knowledge of the Logos. The intention of God is fulfilled when the individual soul becomes enlightened and grows spiritually. This the soul or reader of the scripture does in the measure appropriate to him. Thus as mostly wrongfully understood, the end goal of inspiration by the Holy Spirit is not really in revealing and proving the truth about God, but rather in the communication of this Truth in a way of instruction giving to the individual soul.³¹²

For Origen every single text inspired by the Holy Spirit is useful.³¹³ Thus in this regard, when analyzing a passage, the very first consideration by any good student of scripture is to seek out the usefulness of the passage. This usefulness, it should be noted is different from what modern biblical scholars busy themselves with, IE the application of the text to a similar scenario. The usefulness, when one has really done a thorough analysis of the text according to Origen, is the spiritual lesson to be learned from it and this spiritual sense fully helps us in understanding the hidden meaning contained in the text. Getting at this hidden spiritual meaning is equal to getting to the what the text meant at the time it was inspired and thus makes up its usefulness. When the student of the scripture can arrive at this usefulness, then he has achieved getting to the application of the text for his soul and thus succeeded at receiving what the Logos meant to teach him.³¹⁴ An easier way of determining this usefulness, so as to arrive at what the Logos intends to teach is by trying to determine the topic of a passage. If one is able to discover the topic, then one has arrived at the usefulness of the text. Thus put differently in uncovering what the Logos intends to teach in a particular text, the usefulness of the text has been uncovered. Thus every time we read Origen's exegetical work and look at the topic of a passage or the name he gives to a work, we know this has been derived from what he believes the Logos is trying to teach. This topic then, can be taken by the listener or the hearer of scripture to be the spiritual application for his souls.³¹⁵ This

³¹² cf. ORIGEN: *Fragmente und Indices. I; II* KLOSTERMANN, E, pp. 196-197.

³¹³ cf. ORIGEN: *Der Johanneskommentars. I,5* PREUSCHEN, E, pp. 9-10; *Comm. on Mt.* KLOSTERMANN, E: pp. 196-197.

³¹⁴ cf. TORJESEN, K: *Hermeneutical Procedure and Theological Method In Origen's Exegesis*, p. 126.

³¹⁵ cf. Ibid.

need for the usefulness or the topic of a text or work to be established prior to making an exegetical analyses of any passage is very important to Origen. This he not just recommends should be done by every biblical student of scripture, but he follows his own instruction by doing this, as we find in many of his homilies and commentaries.³¹⁶ For instance, prior to starting a thorough analysis of Psalm 36, we find this extensive explanation given by him:

“God spoke in many and various ways to our Fathers by the prophets, and it was at these times the unutterable mystery taught us also through the things which were uttered. At some times he teaches us about the Savior through and about his coming. At other times he corrects our habits and improves us. Therefore we will try to point out the diversities of this kind throughout the different passages of divine Scripture and try to determine where there are prophecies and (we) are told about the future or where something mystical is revealed or where the passage treats of moral questions.”³¹⁷

A look at Psalms 36, 37 and 38 shows to us that the Logos through the prophets, whom he had inspired was communicating with the Israelites of old. These same words are addressed to us in a manner of speaking, who are the new Israel, and they are addressed to us for the purpose of bringing about a progress of a moral kind to our individual souls. Origen states that the Logos was teaching so as to change our old behavior. Thus before going to a verse to verse exegesis, this prelude to the text which defines its theme has already given a clue that the instruction contained in the Psalm about to be analyzed is of a moral kind. Thus, as earlier shown above it is crucial to always identify the usefulness of the text to the reader which is to be found in the theme or topic. It makes reading the exegesis of the subsequent verses of the text so much easier to understand and to grasp.³¹⁸

The topic for the Song of Songs is also given by Origen in first homily's prologue. The explanation given here is that this book of scripture is a song about marriage, which aims to portray the perfect love which a Bridegroom, who in this case is Christ has for

³¹⁶ cf. ORIGEN: *Hom. in Jeremiahomilien, Klagelieder, Erklärung der Samuel und Königsbücher*, ed. KLOSTERMANN, E: in (=GCS 38)

³¹⁷ *Ps. 36 I, I* MIGNE, PG 12, Col. 1319 B 2-11.

³¹⁸ cf. TORJESEN, K: *Hermeneutical Procedure and Theological Method In Origen's Exegesis*, p. 127.

his Bride, who in this case is the soul of man or the church community in its perfected state. Taking this as the topic of Song of Songs, Origen says:

“When you have been through all the songs, then set your course for greater heights, so that as a fair soul with her Spouse you may sing this Song of Songs too. Listen to the Song of Songs and make haste to understand it and to join with the Bride in saying what she says, so that you may hear also what she heard.”³¹⁹

In the text quoted above, Origen shows his belief in the importance of discovering and highlighting the topic of the text. Every time this is done, the reader of the bible is brought in a very quick manner to what the Logos wants to communicate to him. In this book of the Song of Songs, it is the disclosure of himself (IE the Logos) to his church which is his Bride. And what he discloses about himself are the mysteries about himself. These mysteries are what the reader must take note to hear and see, because here lies the instruction the Logos wants to communicate.³²⁰

In looking at the Gospel recordings about Christ's coming, Origen says that it is not the recordings concerning his advent that constitutes the work been called or referred to as a Gospel, but rather and more importantly the intended instruction it was meant to communicate.

As a matter of speaking, generally everything can be seen and called ‘gospel’ as long as it represents the coming of Christ, all that which is a preparation of the soul for Christ's presence. Also all that which brings about Christ's presence or his coming in the individual soul that wishes to receive God's word, should be called is gospel.³²¹

There is a difference between the Gospel and the history of the Old Testament in their respective relation to the Logos. The former has a special direct relation while the latter only an indirect one. Thus if one were to ask about the usefulness of the Gospel to

³¹⁹ cf. ORIGEN: *Homilies in Cant. I,1* BAEHRENS, W. A, p. 28.16-18. p. 29.10-12. trans. LAWSON, R. P: *Song of Songs*, p. 267.

³²⁰ cf. TORJESEN, K: *Hermeneutical Procedure and Theological Method In Origen's Exegesis*, p. 128.

³²¹ cf. ORIGEN: *Der Johanneskommentars.. I,4* PREUSCHEN, E, p. 9.18-22.

the hearer, then one might be surprised to know that, since the Gospel brings the Logos, Christ, directly in contact that is a direct encounter between the Logos and the soul, in this sense we understand why the Gospel is not for novices or starters.³²² The knowledge or instruction given in the Gospel requires that one has already graduated from the level or stage of the moral instruction and thus one is at the level of receiving the mystical instructions. In other words, one already has some knowledge about the Logos. One could say, the instructions given in the Gospel, are instructions that can only be useful to the hearer if and only if he has been prepared for this knowledge by having been prepared and progressed in his knowledge from reading other texts of scripture, which would have prepared him for the knowledge or instruction which the gospel gives. To understand the Gospel means one is already free from sin. Thus if one has successfully passed that stage of instruction, the Gospel becomes useful to the hearer because it helps him to progress towards been united with the Logos.³²³

In the foregoing we have come to learn how the searching out of the theme is very helpful to the hearer since this informs him about what the Logos want to teach him. We want to now take a closer look at how it is that there exists an encounter between the text and the hearer. Origen in his exegetical analysis shows this to us. In other words, exegesis discloses the possibility of this contact and encounter between the bible passage and the one who hears it.

We recall that in an attempt to bring the text to the reader/listener Origen always employed this method of establishing a theme which brings out the usefulness and which helps the reader/listener to know right away what is the instruction under focus. Well our focus now is of a reverse type. Origen is not seeking here to bring the text closer to the hearer, but he is looking to bring the reader into the text. And this he hopes to achieve with his exegetical analysis. More specifically put, Origen throughout his

³²² cf. TORJESEN, K: *Hermeneutical Procedure and Theological Method In Origen's Exegesis*, p.129 on NAUTIN: *Origene* pp. 392-401. this commentary is again from her Footnote 76. Nautin tells us that at least thrice a week during the Eucharistic celebration, the Gospel passage was proclaimed and analysed in an exegetical manner and to this gathering no catechumens were allowed.

³²³ cf. Ibid., pp. 129-130.

analysis hopes to find the hearer exactly there where the Logos is giving his divine instruction.³²⁴

In taking this closer look we will be able to distinguish that the reader of scripture finds himself in relation to the text, from two standpoints/viewpoints. The first being that with each stage of the analysis, the reader can identify himself is in the text and second having been placed in the text, the reader finds himself always in a forward or advancing motion. To better illustrate this, let us make a case study of the analysis Origen made of Psalm 37. He describes the behavior of the Psalmist in saying this prayer. Only after he has finished this does he bring in the reader, and in such a way that the reader now assumes the behavior that the Psalmist had when he also was saying this prayer. This the reader does, by reliving exactly what the Psalmist did. When the Psalmist was in this prayer mode, he was before the Logos. This position of been in prayer has meaning in a universal sense, in the sense that this meaning is true for all souls. Everyone understands what been in a prayer mode means. This can be understood in the sense that there exists a relation of an analogous kind between the Psalmist and the hearer, why? For the simple reason that both are in contact with the Logos who is teaching them.³²⁵

We have considered an instance from the Old Testament. It must be said when compared to the Gospel, the exegetical analysis by Origen is quite very different. Unlike the reader been introduced to take the place of the one he reads about, in the Gospel the hearer is drawn into the interpretation and analysis only at the end, the very last verse. So, while the reader is related to all the verses in the Old Testament, in the New Testament he is not related in Origen's exegesis to all the verses.

Why this sharp contrast? Quite simple, in the Old Testament the one who is making an encounter with the Logos in the Old Testament is doing so indirectly, therefore it was possible for the reader to share this experience by imitating the character in the text.

³²⁴ cf. Ibid.

³²⁵ cf. Ibid. p. 131.

In doing this the reader is been prepared for his ability to be able to understand the Gospel.³²⁶ This form of sharing and participation is however not possible in the New testament because the encounter with the Logos here is direct. The instruction is been given here directly to the reader by the Logos. In other words the Logos is operating through a history that is his very own.³²⁷

An analysis of Origen's exegesis reveals that when he relates the reader to the text, he gradually moves him from the literal sense and by the end of the exegetical analysis the reader is at the spiritual sense. But there is another movement that we hardly would notice if our attention is not drawn to it. This movement we find when we relate the individual in every verse-exegesis that Origen makes.³²⁸ One can refer to the first movement IE the one from historical to mystical as been a vertical one. The other movement IE the one the listener makes in the verse by verse biblical interpretation can be called a horizontal movement. This latter movement takes place at the mystical sense and should be see as the soul's growth towards perfection, IE his ascending movement which culminates in the soul's union with God. This is made possible because the reader shares in the mystical instructions.³²⁹

This movement and its corresponding progressive growth of the soul described above is to be found in many of Origen's exegetical works. However the type of advancement of the soul which takes place, either moral or mystical depends on the text of the biblical that is been interpreted, for it is in this analysis that the reader relates with and also draws the lesson or one could say the nourishment for his soul thereof. A good example of the moral kind of advancement is the analysis made by Origen on Psalm 37. The reader grows in the sense that he is moved to give up his attachment to his carnal desires and instructed through this exegetical interpretation to grow in the likeness of God.³³⁰

³²⁶ cf. ORIGEN: *Comm. in Mt. X, 10*. KLOSTERMANN, E: in: (=GCS 40), p. 11.

³²⁷ cf. TORJESEN, K: *Hermeneutical Procedure and Theological Method In Origen's Exegesis*, p. 133.

³²⁸ cf. Ibid.

³²⁹ cf. Ibid.

³³⁰ cf. Ibid. p. 134.

A good example of the mystical type of advancement of the reader of scriptures is the exegetical interpretation Origen makes in his Homilies on the Song of Songs. Here the movement is a transition from the knowledge of moral to the knowledge about the mystical.³³¹

It should be noted that in Origen's spiritual interpretation of scripture, when the one reading or hearing the exegetical explanation, actively shares and participates it means he is being taught by Christ himself, the divine Logos. This is important to note because when the reader places himself before the spiritual sense of the text, what he is doing is placing himself before the instructions and the divine pedagogy of the Logos. He is in this sense a disciple who is being educated by the Logos, and who can advance in the growth of his soul if he takes these instructions of the Logos to heart.³³² For Origen this goes to prove the Logos is not to be seen as an abstract theory, but indeed a personal Logos, just as the Christ, who took flesh and had a human personality. Thus through the scripture the listener is able to come in contact and have a personal experience with Christ.³³³

To better understand how the divine Logos comes into the soul and what he hopes to achieve, Origen uses the illustration of Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem. Jesus should be interpreted as the Word of God who is entering Jerusalem which in this case, is the soul. Now this word, Jesus that is entering the Soul, (Jerusalem) is being carried by an ass. Origen wants us to understand that this ass had to be loosened by two disciples, and Origen interprets this act of loosening from its bound as first of all a freeing from the letter of the Old Testament and the fact that 'two' disciples do this 'unloosening', meaning application of the written text *ἀναγωγῆν* for the soul's healing and the other disciple represents how through allegory one uncovers the mystical instructions of the

³³¹ cf. Ibid.

³³² cf. Ibid. p. 135.

³³³ cf. Ibid., p.135 on GÖGLER. R: *Zur Theologie des biblischen Wortes bei Origenes*, p. 263. The commentary here is from the Footnote 84. When one reads this section of Gögler's work one sees how beautifully he tries to describe the fact that no distinction should be made between the Christ Logos that took human flesh and the Logos whom we find 'incarnate' in scriptures.

Logos. We find in Jesus carried by the ass, the one who can do these things that scripture does, IE to purify and heal the soul.³³⁴

Thus Origen sees the Logos, who is both the incarnate-Christ and Christ in Scripture, relating to the soul in the same way, IE educating the soul. The Logos, the personal Christ comes into the soul by means of the ‘word of truth’ which is found in both the Old and the New Testament. This coming is actualized in that the soul is instructed by the teachings of the Old Testament. The teachings are of two kinds; moral and mystical, the former cures the latter instructs. It must be made clear however that these teachings are not to be found in the letter (literary sense) of the text, *τα γεγραμμένα*, but have to be unbounded. In other words unloosened from the written text, just like the disciples loosened the ass.³³⁵ Thus Origen’s use of the term ‘to loosen’, attempts to demonstrate the task of interpretation, which every scriptural passage needs. If this is true, then it follows that only through exegesis and explanation of scriptural passages by competent teachers the church can the soul receive the coming of Christ. Only in this spiritual sense can the soul personally encounter Christ.³³⁶

A clear indication that Christ is indeed present in a spiritual interpretation of scripture to the individual soul, is taking a look at the workings or fruits produced by the instructions the spiritual sense gives. The effect of such instructions is that it has the capability of healing the soul, *Θεραπεία τῆς ψυχῆς*. The Logos alone can purify the soul and set it free of every other thought.³³⁷ If the word that the Logos uses in instructing and in teaching were to be powerless then they could not make the soul make advancement in growth. “If the word of the Logos was not effective, or if he was not present teaching, then the steps of the progression would be an empty scaffolding into which the soul could gaze, but not climb. Nor would the soul be addressed in the spiritual sense or confronted by the Logos, if his speaking were not effective speaking.”³³⁸

³³⁴ cf. ORIGEN: *Der Johanneskommentars*. PREUSCHEN, E, p. 201.22-31.

³³⁵ cf. TORJESEN, K: *Hermeneutical Procedure and Theological Method In Origen’s Exegesis*, pp. 135-136.

³³⁶ cf. Ibid.

³³⁷ cf. Ibid.

³³⁸ Ibid. p. 137.

This powerful teaching of the Logos brings about two things, it purifies and cures the soul from sin and makes the soul open for instructions in the mysteries. The goal Origen says of this twofold activity of the Logos to bring about the unity of the soul with God.³³⁹

4.3 WHAT DOES THIS THREE-SENSE INTERPRETATION OF SCRIPTURE MEAN TO THE READER

When Origen makes an exegetical interpretation of any text in the bible, he always has a four-step process that guides his analysis. The four steps can be easily identified by the question each step seeks to answer.³⁴⁰ The first step aims to find information about the grammatical sense of the passage. The second step concerns itself with matters regarding the historical reality to which the first step refers to. Preoccupation of step three is trying to grasp what the Logos intends to teach through this concrete reality. In other words it aims to find out the intention of the Holy Spirit in inspiring the author to record such a historical reality. The last step of Origen's exegesis is directed towards finding out how this instruction is useful to the one who is in the here and now reading the bible. In other words how should he apply this text it to his life.³⁴¹

For Origen, without the grammatical sense there can be no going to the other three steps, in other words there can be no exegetical explanation of the passage. Thus the grammatical sense forms the cornerstone of the interpretation. In this sense one can see step two as been an extension of step one. Why? Because step two explains in a more detailed way what step one refers to. "Step two contains the filled out, coherent and intelligible description of the concrete situation. These two steps taken together constitute what Origen understands as the literal sense of the text which he counterposes to the spiritual meaning."³⁴²

³³⁹ cf. Ibid. p. 138.

³⁴⁰ cf. Ibid.

³⁴¹ cf. Ibid.

³⁴² TIGCHELER, J: *Didyme*, Netherlands 1977. in this work can be said to be the very first exegete to note there been a difference within this very literal sense.

Origen makes a distinction between the letter, IE the written document and the event or historical reality that the former describes. This must not be confused as been the same with the modern day use of these terms.³⁴³ The writers of the text of the bible in using specific words were not just describing a historical event but rather were involved in a historical-spiritual action. In other words both the human writer and the Holy spirit were involved in choosing those words and it was with the aim of teaching future generations about the mysteries of the Logos. This means the words themselves at the very moment of their been written were intended to point to the Logos. Therefore for this instruction which these words contain to be uncovered, there is a need for spiritual interpretation, for they were 'coded' so as to be meaningful to the reader and help him spiritually.³⁴⁴ This spiritual instruction is what steps three and four are concerned with. Giving this analysis one would expect Origen's explanation of scripture to move directly from the grammatical to the spiritual meaning. He however does not do this, but rather moves from the grammatical/word to the historical reality behind the passage. This he does because for him the history which the text describes and narrates is not just common or simple history as we understand it, rather this is a record of contact between the writer and the divine Logos. It is the Logos revealing himself and giving his instruction to the writer, who may be someone in the Old Testament like Moses or the prophets or someone in the New Testament like Paul or any of the apostles.³⁴⁵

It is for this reason, what these people were taught, IE the unveiling of the Logos and his instructions, remains a universal truth, which the Logos is. Thus the content of this teaching and of this instruction, whether giving in form of law or as a historical event is the same instruction that was given by the Christ who became flesh and it is the same teaching we have today.³⁴⁶ This education was meant for all peoples to whom it was given, but only the biblical authors/writers understood the spiritual truth it con-

³⁴³ cf. TORJESEN, K: *Hermeneutical Procedure and Theological Method In Origen's Exegesis*, p. 139.

³⁴⁴ cf. Ibid.

³⁴⁵ cf. ORIGEN: *Jeremiahomilien, Klagelieder, Erklärung der Samuel und Königsbücher*, ed. KLOSTERMANN, E, p. 63ff.

³⁴⁶ cf. ORIGEN: *De Principiis IV Cap. 2,8* KOETSCHAU, P, pp. 320-321.

tained and this truth was in a Symbolic content. They in turn recorded it also in a symbolic content for future generations.³⁴⁷

Now, from the above analysis it means history, according to Origen has two vital aspects; it is the truth proclaimed to all in its universal content by the incarnate Christ and it is truth by which the biblical author came to knowledge about the Christ-Logos. All this goes to show that since the literal sense holds these instructions needed for our education, an interpretation of these words in their literal sense is necessary and paramount.³⁴⁸ The very fact that when the writers were recording an encounter with the Logos and an encounter which was an education in itself, IE the Logos revealing the truth about himself, it becomes an archetype by which all can be taught by the Logos, as long as one is able to interpret what has been written down literally into its spiritual sense.³⁴⁹

Only after Origen has explained these intricacies does he proceed to explain the spiritual sense which step three concerns itself with. The spiritual meaning can be built not from the grammatical sense but rather on the concrete reality the passage refers to. “It is the historical reality behind the text which contains the figurative representation of the spiritual reality, not the naked text. It is the historical pedagogy of the Logos as the content of the historical-literal sense which forms the basis for the spiritual sense. This relationship constitutes the structure of Origen’s exegesis.”³⁵⁰

³⁴⁷ cf. ORIGEN: *De Principiis IV Cap. 2,7-8* KOETSCHAU, P, pp. 318-321.

³⁴⁸ cf. TORJESEN, K: *Hermeneutical Procedure and Theological Method In Origen's Exegesis*, p. 140.

³⁴⁹ cf. Ibid. This commentary is from Footnote 98. This is because the teaching action of the Logos never changes. What he taught the biblical scholars of old, was the same teaching he gave to his apostles and disciples when he was physically alive and it remains the same teaching he gives us today when we read the bible.

³⁵⁰ Ibid., p.141 Commentary on Footnote 99. GÖGLER, R: *Zur Theologie des biblischen Wortes bei Origenes.*, p. 352., in this passage he analyzes Origen as been influenced by the Hellenist tradition of his time and says Origen therefore opted for a strong emphasis on depending on the written word for his exegesis: “Wie der Logos Typ und Bild des Unsichtbaren Vaters ist, so ist der Wortlaut und der Buchstabe (die Schrift) Typ, Bild, Schatten des Mysteriums Logos”. I do not share this view, but I agree with Torjesen’s analysis that for Origen the literary grammatical sense only provides a window for us to see historical which in turn is a coded form of the spiritual reality.

It should be noted, for many opponents accuse Origen as having no regard for the historical sense, that Origen interprets the spiritual sense by making the historical or literary reality his foundation in a bid to arrive at what lies *behind* the text. This goes in line with theory of De Lubac who claimed that Origen in his interpretation always moves from the historical narratives to sublime spiritual truth. He divides the exegesis into two senses; the literal and the spiritual. The literal sense is history as regards salvation history and the spiritual sense is Christ hidden in the biblical text as a mystery. Just as the Old Testament shares a unique relation with the New Testament, so also this salvation history shares a unique relation with the hidden mystery Christ. In Lubac understanding, exegesis is the unity of both, in other words the movement from history towards the spirit, IE towards Christ.³⁵¹

One notices that while in the steps One and Two, things are still in the physical reality, the same is not true when one moves from step Two to Three. The things under discussion here are spiritual realities and of an eternal sort.³⁵² Thus, there is a quantum leap in order to cover this distance that exists between step two and step three. How does Origen explain this leap from the particular to the general, from the concrete to the spiritual and eternal?

There are two ways by which Origen achieves this leap or jump from the historical level to the spiritual. We have seen in our earlier discussion that for Origen things on the historical level already represent in a symbolic way and manner things that are on the spiritual level. Having this in mind, helps us easily understand the application of allegory in explaining this quantum jump.³⁵³ For ἀλληγορεῖν is the method used by biblical scholars in order to discover a truth of a universal kind which has been rendered and coded in symbols. In this regard it enables one to move effortlessly from one level of reality to another, say from a particular to an abstract one.

³⁵¹ cf. De LUBAC, H: *Histoire et Esprit*, p. 76.

³⁵² cf. TORJESSEN, K: *Hermeneutical Procedure and Theological Method In Origen's Exegesis*, p. 142.

³⁵³ cf. Ibid., p.142. Commentary on Footnote 101. Origen says both levels, physical/historical and the spiritual are linked by one and the same component, the Logos who is teaching. The biblical authors wrote their experience of this divine teacher which has come down to us in a historical recorded word. When their account is exegetical interpreted, we gain access to what the Logos was teaching the biblical authors then and what he is also teaching us now as we read and analyse the passage, for the divine instruction of the Logos remains the same.

As already stated, the spiritual sense concerns itself with providing answers to two questions; what the Logos wants to teach with the historical reality and how one, as the reader of biblical narration apply this to his life and situation.³⁵⁴ The term *πρὸς ἀναγωγήν* beautifully summarizes the spiritual sense in its totality. When literal translated this term means; that which leads the soul upward.³⁵⁵ We have studied the way in which Origen determines the theme or the topic of the text by locating its usefulness to the reader.³⁵⁶ For one to determine the spiritual sense of a text one must look for the Holy Spirits' intention, for only this corresponds to the readers' progressive growth and the soul's ultimate perfection and unity with God.

In asking the question about what the Logos aims to teach through the historical event Origen is asking about the instructions the Logos is giving in the particular text under study. These instructions when correctly analyzed furnish us with the spiritual sense which has the power to bring about growth and progress to the soul.³⁵⁷

The aim of the Holy Spirit in inspiring the writers is to give their souls and the future generation nourishment. This nourishment are the spiritual instructions which we find in the bible, arranged in a manner that helps the soul grow and ascend in its knowledge of God. This progressive growth of the soul is possible because of the content of these instruction, IE the Logos. The Logos communicates himself to the reader in such a way and only in that degree that is possible for the listener to understand him. Thus one must know that to have knowledge of the instruction is to have knowledge of the Logos.³⁵⁸

³⁵⁴ cf. ORIGEN: *Hom. in Jer.* KLOSTERMANN, E, p. 10.4.

³⁵⁵ cf. TORJESSEN, K: *Hermeneutical Procedure and Theological Method In Origen's Exegesis*, p.144. Commentary on Footnote 107. Origen must have chosen to use this term, *ἀναγωγή*, because most likely the other words he found in the hellenistic vocabulary were insufficient and inadequate in rendering the true theological meaning of this way of explaining the exegesis. cf. W. BIENERT: '*Allegoria*' und '*Anagoge*' bei Didymos dem Blinden von Alexandria in: PTS 13 (!972) 59-62.

³⁵⁶ cf. pp. 54 and 59 above.

³⁵⁷ cf. Ibid. p. 145.

³⁵⁸ cf. Ibid. p. 146.

Every exegetical interpretation then is required to explain these instructions of scripture in order to bring about this increased knowledge about the Logos, which leads in a corresponding way to the advancement of the soul in its perfection.³⁵⁹ In this sense the question which step four of Origen's exegetical analysis aim to tackle, IE the application of the teaching of the Logos to contemporary reader, is already defined in the instructions one will find in the instructions when one draws out its spiritual sense. All that is needed is the application of these spiritual sense of the instruction to the individual's situation.³⁶⁰

Thus the last point mentioned above asks us to take a look at how the spiritual sense transports into becoming the readers' world of the here and now. There is here a transition from instructions giving by the Logos, that means a transition from the Scriptural world to the world of the hearer. This is made possible because of inspiration. Those experiences of the inspired writers is universal because of the constant. He taught the saints and he teaches the contemporary hearer.³⁶¹ Thus we can say and rightly so that the inspiration of Scriptures only attains its aim when the historical and material form have been communicated to the reader.³⁶² In the same way, the Bible, as the tool and instrument of communicating the educational activity of the Logos, really only attains its goal when the listener/reader becomes truly informed and instructed in the truth.³⁶³

This all means that Origen understands the duty of exegesis as being part of a whole process of an ongoing formation of salvation (*salus*). Thus, salvation can be seen to mean divinizing a person, which in this case is a participation in God. Origen believes the one way open to man to participate in God is when one has true knowledge of his nature.³⁶⁴ For Origen and many intellectuals of his time, Knowledge has a character

³⁵⁹ cf. Ibid.

³⁶⁰ cf. Ibid.

³⁶¹ cf. Ibid.

³⁶² cf. ORIGEN: *De Principiis IV Cap. 2, 7-8* KOETSCHAU, P, pp. 318-321.

³⁶³ cf. TORJESEN, K: *Hermeneutical Procedure and Theological Method In Origen's Exegesis*, p.146. Commentary on Footnote 118. Words found in the bible are not like the words found in a newspaper. The words of the bible are effective and it achieves its goal because it is the word of the Logos.

³⁶⁴ cf. Ibid. p.147.

which is both mystical and contemplative. For the Hellenist and also for Origen similarity make knowledge possible. One could say; Like is known by like. This similarity in rational man was lost in the fall. Thus salvation becomes the restoration of this similarity. This recapturing of the image (*εἰχλὼν*) of God in man, enables him to have the capabilities of knowing God. This restoration or redemption process according to Origen is carried out by the Logos through his divine instructions, his educating the soul in which in a gradual progressive way, the soul is moved to recovery to its original likeness to God.³⁶⁵

Hence, we understand what the primary task of the Logos is, IE to reveal God in such a way that man can know him, and through this knowledge of God, become like him. This task of the Logos reached its climax in the incarnation.³⁶⁶

“In the same way in which the incarnated Logos, by taking on human flesh and having a history becomes visible, so also through the bible does he communicate himself, but here in the form of doctrines and instructions, thus becoming knowable.”³⁶⁷ It then is the duty of exegetical interpretation to enlighten the individual how he can share in the Logos through knowledge of him. For in the same way in which that knowledge of the soul about God is gradual and increasing, so also is the teaching of the Logos in the bible developmental.³⁶⁸ “Every new instruction or teaching of the Logos brings about a closer resemblance to God and simultaneously prepares the soul for the next level of participation and knowledge. In this way we see the bible as been both having doctrinal content and been a spiritual medium. Both of which enables and ensures the soul participating in the universal teaching of the Logos.”³⁶⁹

This is what gives the exegetical interpretation of Origen its importance in the church’s spirituality. The soul needs to continually move towards its perfection, an as-

³⁶⁵ cf. Ibid.

³⁶⁶ cf. Ibid.

³⁶⁷ Ibid.

³⁶⁸ cf. Ibid.

³⁶⁹ Ibid.

cension that is made possible the more he deepens his knowledge of the Logos, the incarnate Christ. Just like the sacraments of the Church, exegesis contributes to the forward movement of Christ's work of redemption. Exegetical interpretations continues the teachings of Christ.³⁷⁰

5. CONCLUSION

In the Introduction of this work, we have seen that a number of objections were raised against Origen. There can be no doubt that he was a brilliant and renown biblical scholar from the times of the first books of the New Testament were written till the time of Augustine. Crouzel rightly portrays him, borrowing the words found in Luke 2:34; Origen can be likened to 'a sign that will be contradicted'.³⁷¹ The most basic opposition against him, started while he was still alive, and the critic level against him then was his use of allegory. His opponents did not think it was possible by means of allegorical interpretation to uncover secret instructions or reveal hidden meanings in the bible. Many of them believed Origen, with his use of allegory, was trying to justify his bringing the Platonic Philosophy and the Hellenist Tradition into the Christian scripture and the Christian community. Thus for them and for many biblical scholars what Origen did was not to explain the bible through allegory but rather through allegorical interpretation to read into the bible whatever he (Origen) wanted to see there.

It is with this viewpoint of so many biblical scholars in mind that this project has tried to really present Origen in a light, that would enable one to better understand him and especially his thoughts. Of course I do not claim to have exhausted the problem of solving Origen's understanding and interpretation of the Scripture by means of his threefold-sense explanation. But like Henri de Lubac I believe Origen 'spiritualizes' history. In other words he tried to give an understanding of history from inside out, a kind of interiorizing it, but it would be totally wrong to accuse him of destroying history. What he is guilty of is spiritualizing the whole bible, and this he did for the good of the

³⁷⁰ cf. Ibid.

³⁷¹ CROUZEL, H: "*Signum qui contradicetur*" in *Origen*, trans. Henry Worrall, San Francisco 1989, p. 11.

soul, but also in a way and manner that he did not take anything away from history.³⁷² When Origen made an exegetical interpretation of a passage of scripture then his aim and objective was to capture the spirit that was to be found there in the historical narrative and guide it to the spiritual sense or lesson.³⁷³ For him, a denial of the concrete historical reality makes exegesis impossible; “Every symbolic construction, with its interiorizing, its spiritual digression, does not evacuate the narrative. It is not even indifferent to it, as Philo’s allegorism could be. It is built, in principle, on its basis.”³⁷⁴ It must be said that far from been an exercise in deforming the message of the Christian faith, Origen’s magnificent capabilities of spiritualizing the whole of the bible makes it less Alexandrian-oriented and more evangelical motivated.³⁷⁵

De Lubac also makes an important point which I believe is worth considering. He argues that Origen’s scriptural interpretation is not the only explanation that there has to be, but just one out of many other interpretations; “What it is important to remember is that one sense (intelligence) does not prevent another sense, because Wisdom, which is one in itself, prepares itself for a multiplicity of partial and various meanings.”³⁷⁶ Hence, that Origen gives an allegorical explanation of a passage does by no means mean another person cannot explain it based on concrete factual events if one so chooses to.

In advocating and supporting Origen’s method of interpreting and explaining the scriptures, one also must know he is but human and so bound to make mistakes. One of his flaws was to share the then popular believed presupposition of his time that every detail in a passage of scripture had a reason for being in the text. Another thing he was guilty of was his practice, whenever he was finding difficulty of interpreting a text, of gathering comparable and close ideas from everywhere in the bible. Such an action of-

³⁷² De LUBAC, H: *Histoire et Esprit*, pp. 20,112.

³⁷³ cf. Ibid., p. 278.

³⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 245.

³⁷⁵ cf. Ibid., p. 137.

³⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 140.

ten ignored the account in its original context.³⁷⁷ The third thing one can accuse Origen of doing is “the domestic life of the Patriarchs becomes an institute of spiritual philosophy.”³⁷⁸ This means Origen should have studied more the thought pattern and the way the Semitic people expressed themselves. And also that the religious life of the ancient Israel underwent stages of development. Many of the biblical commentators before the nineteenth century share this problem.

It is rather a bit too extreme of Hanson to say of Origen that he (Origen) practiced an Alexandrian allegory, which had basically the philosophy of Plato and the Stoic as its source. This accusation is strong-worded because in comparison to Typology, this Alexandrian allegory was basically not historical. Its one aim was to free a text from any relation to concrete historical recorded events.³⁷⁹ Hanson maintains that Origen is a great biblical scholar, one who is a pioneer in this academic field, but he believes that Origen almost always does not think as the original biblical writers thought but on many instances gives the exact opposite idea, that makes one conclude that he is putting his own idea into the thoughts of the biblical authors, IE a reading into their minds.³⁸⁰ This is for Hanson unacceptable and a great shortcoming on the part of Origen. He argued; “presumably the guiding principle in all exegesis of both Old and New Testaments will remain indefinitely the question of what any given text meant when it was first written or uttered to the first audience for which it was intended. Allegory,...instead of ensuring that he would in his exegesis maintain a close contact with biblical thought, rendered him deplorably independent of the Bible.”³⁸¹ Hanson therefore views the exegetical interpretation of Origen as negative.

Our examination of Origen’s sophisticated methods has shown this claim of Hanson to be far from the truth. It is true to affirm that Origen’s primary concern was not history for history’s sake, but he was more concerned with the use of historical methods. Origen in his use of allegory was not seeking to empty ‘history’, in the manner of mak-

³⁷⁷ cf. HANSON, R. P. C: *Allegory and Event*, p. 12.

³⁷⁸ De LUBAC, H: *Histoire et Esprit*, pp. 248-49.

³⁷⁹ cf. HANSON, R. P. C: *Allegory and Event*, p. 63.

³⁸⁰ cf. *Ibid.*, p. 363.

³⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 371.

ing it void of the concrete factual events found in the narratives of scripture, rather he used ‘history’ in manner of historical criticism to carry out his work of exegetical interpretation.³⁸²

While it was a necessary requirement in the year 1959, for Hanson to believe that the primary task of a biblical scholar was make sure that any interpretation given, was expressly in agreement with what its intention was when it was first written or spoken to the first hearers. This was a criteria and a very important one for that matter for the biblical scholars who employed basically historical criticism in their analysis of the bible. For one to be acceptable in academic circles at that time, one had to be scientific and the historical critical method was very systematic, fulfilling the conditions of science.

The chapters two three and most especially the fourth chapter of this work have shown that there is a new and a radical change in the way and manner scripture is analyzed and interpreted today. Frances M. Young noticed and rightly so that, with regards to *Allegory and Event*, that “the standard English account of Origen’s exegesis virtually organizes the material around the view that Origen never really understood the Bible because he was too loosely to history. Since that book was written, the shift in biblical studies has helped us recognize that concern about ‘history’ has a very modern ring.”³⁸³ No one in our contemporary age believes the only valid interpretation of scripture is to analyze what it meant for the first hearers to whom it was addressed. For it can be argued that who really is the text intended originally for? For those who first heard it, the ones who actually composed and wrote it down or for us who now read it!

In today’s contemporary approach to biblical analysis and interpretation, one notices that it is growing and flourishing. The study of the Bible both as a literature, and as a Work handed down to Western tradition is precisely positive because it makes the bible more what it should be, and that is relevant. If that is the case then from the time of Origen’s interpretation of scripture, and precisely because of him, according to Si-

³⁸² cf. Ibid., p. 17.

³⁸³ YOUNG M. F: *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture.*, Cambridge 1977, p. 3.

moneti, the Western tradition has read and studied the scripture as a unified and as a whole book. And many agree it makes more sense, at least from a from a perspective of analysis literature, for one to study it in that manner. All the attention to the different intentions and views of the biblical authors does not really help in the understanding of the holy books.³⁸⁴

Northrop opines, “The Bible has traditionally been read as a unity, and has influenced Western imagination as a unity.”³⁸⁵ He went on further to argue that using a similar collection of symbols, like the steps and stages found in the allegory of Origen, enabled justifying the study of scripture as a united single book. This same thought and idea is shared by historians who carry out research in Judaism and Christianity. For them the important thing was not the intention behind the writing of different books of the bible, but rather they were more concerned and wanted to know how these books had been received. Thus, for instance, owing to what is referred to as environmental ethics, Jeremy Cohen on the history of one verse, Gen. 1:28, has come up with new and surprising insight into the culture and traditions of both the Jews and Christians traditions in this text.³⁸⁶ Thus one can only agree with James Kugel who said an exegesis of tradition itself establishes traditions.³⁸⁷ Kugel also throws light on how the early interpretations need not be dressed to fit our expectations and standards, but how they can be understood on their own merits. There has been a growing interest in approaching works as they have been received by contemporary biblical scholars. Everyone knows how difficult it is in establishing the intended meaning for the first hearers. There is always that danger there of authors bringing their own complexities and purposes. Hence, this preference of analysis a work as they have been handed down.

This preference by biblical scholars for a more open analysis in studying the scriptures is further appreciated because historians have come to see how very difficult if not next to impossible it is to be free of ones subjectivity in analysis any text. Post-

³⁸⁴ cf. Ibid.

³⁸⁵ NORTHROP, F: *The Great Code: The Bible and Literature.*, New York 1982, p. 13.

³⁸⁶ cf. COHEN, J: *Be Fertile and Increase, Fill the Earth and Master It* The Ancient and Medieval Career of a Biblical Text., Ithaca, N.Y. 1992, p. 32.

³⁸⁷ cf. KUGEL, J: *The Bible As It Was.*, Cambridge 1997, p. 23 and *Traditions of the Bible: A Guide to the Bible As It Was at the Start of the Common Era.*, Cambridge 1990, p. 28.

modernists have also given some new ideas and perspectives about Origen's work. In the year 2002, John David Dawson defended the scriptural hermeneutic of Origen against a postmodern viewpoint as represented by these three critics, Daniel Boyarin, Erich Auerbach and Hans Frei. Dawson took a new approach by arguing that one can best understand Origen when one does not see him as someone whose primary concern is in providing the significance or sense of a passage, as do the modernist, but rather in seeing and understanding him as someone who seeks to bring the reader of the passage in contact with the spiritual changing effect and transformative power that is ongoing and which is possible when one encounters a text.³⁸⁸ (as we have noted in chapter four).

With the discovery that as historians we are never free of our subjectivity, the scriptural explanations made by the apologists and the fathers take on a new face and are seen in a new light. We come to the realization that Ancient biblical scholars and interpreters may indeed provide us with the possibility of having an extraordinary insight into ancient texts, not because they themselves are free from their presuppositions, a feat that is quite really impossible, but because these very presuppositions are different from ours.³⁸⁹ Anna argues this point when she stated that the ancient commentators of Plato can help us in this manner, not because they lack our modern day presuppositions, but because they have their own and we can compare it to our own and so establish a development in thoughts regarding Plato.³⁹⁰ Her argument is not that the ancient interpreters are right and modern interpreters incorrect, but that a serious study of the views of ancient commentators helps us uncover aspects of Plato that we would otherwise have overlooked or even missed and further helps us in critically reexamine our presuppositions and standpoints. This very idea is what Theresia Heither adopts in her approach and analysis of Origen's *Commentary on Romans*. All other commentators on the letter to the Romans have submitted that this book is concerned with justification by grace, Origen however thinks differently, and this is what Theresia values in Origen's

³⁸⁸ cf. DAWSON, J. D: *Christian Figural Reading and the Fashioning of Identity*., Berkeley 2002, p. 35.

³⁸⁹ cf. TRIGG, J: Introductory section of the book *Allegory and Event*., p. 24.

³⁹⁰ cf. ANNAS, J: *Platonic Ethics: Old and New*., Ithaca, N.Y. 1999, p.27.

analysis of the letter. It is such new insight like these that makes Origen the great and brilliant bible scholar that he is.³⁹¹

There can be no doubt that, Origen and his many works of explaining scripture has indeed more value and use than his critics, who maybe so filled with their own pre-suppositions, were able to see. This great man of the Church did not study the scripture as only a pure intellectual or a disinterested academician. His goal was not so much as to explain Scripture but more importantly through scripture to shed light on everything.

³⁹¹ cf. TRIGG, J: *Allegory and Event*, p. 25.

6. BIBLIOGRAPHY

6.1 ABBREVIATIONS

Note: Abbreviations in the notes that are not here, are according to SCHWERTNER, Siegfried: *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*. Abkürzungsverzeichnis, Berlin, 1976.

Origen is consistently quoted from edition of the ante-Nicaean *Corpus* of the Prussian Akademie (*Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte GCS* (Berlin, Akademie Verlag)), the so-called Berlin edition, and, for the works that do not appear, from the De la Rue edition reproduced in Migne, *Patrologia Graeca*, PG volumes 11 through 17.

Eus.EH	Eusebius: <i>Ecclesiastical History</i>
GCS	<i>Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte</i> , Leipzig and Berlin 1897 ff.
JTS	Journal of Theological Studies
LXX	Septuagint Version of the Old Testament
PA	Origen, Concerning First Principles (Peri Archon)
PG	Migne, <i>Patrologia Graeca</i> , Paris 1857 ff.
TU	Texte und Untersuchung zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur, Leipzig
ZKG	<i>Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte</i>

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Erklärung

Ich erkläre, dass ich die vorliegende Diplomarbeit selbständig und ohne fremde Hilfe verfasst, andere als die angegebenen Quellen und Hilfsmittel nicht benutzt und die den benutzten Quellen wörtlich und inhaltlich entnommen Stellen als solche erkenntlich gemacht habe.

Abstract

Origenes (185-ca. 254), einer der produktivsten und einflussreichsten der frühen Kirchenväter, ist der vornehmste von allen Theologen der Alten Kirche. Er wird für seine Schriftauslegung bewundert. Von allen Kirchenvätern wurde er am meisten missverstanden. Ist Origenes ein Exeget, wie ihn sein Schüler, Gregor Thaumaturgus nennt, oder ist seine biblische Erklärung willkürlich und verändert die Bedeutung der biblischen Worte, wie Hieronymus denkt? Die grundsätzliche Kritik an Origenes ist nicht nur, dass seine Allegorien phantasievoll seien, sondern auch, dass seine allegorischen Auslegungen die Geschichte entwerteten. Der Einwand ist, dass durch Origenes' Betonung des spirituellen Sinnes die tatsächliche Bedeutung und den Wert der Geschichte zerstört würde. Diese Arbeit legt dar und versucht zu zeigen, dass Origenes nicht der verrückte 'Allegoriker' war, als den man ihn so oft betrachtete!

Mit anderen Worten, die vorliegende Arbeit will Origenes' Verständnis der Heiligen Schrift in den fünf Kapiteln dieses Essays erkunden. Das erste Kapitel beschreibt seine Kindheit und seine Reifung als Theologe und als Mann der Kirche. Das zweite Kapitel zeigt Origenes' umstrittenes Erbe, das Verfahren gegen ihn und die Quellen der christlichen Allegorie. Im dritten Kapitel wird der Umgang des Origenes mit dem Text der Bibel behandelt werden, mit Verweisen auf "Inspiration" und die drei Sinne der Schrift (wörtlicher, moralischer und spiritueller Sinn), sowie seine Bekräftigung der Geschichte. Auf dieses Kapitel folgt eine Beschreibung von Origenes' Verständnis des Logos sowie der Beziehung zwischen dem Logos, der Schrift und der Seele. Im letzten Kapitel wird eine Schluss gegeben, um zu zeigen, dass man bei Origenes, einem wichtigen Kirchenvater, nicht nur einen faszinierenden Blick auf Seele und Geist findet, sondern man findet bei ihm einen wesentlichen Schlüssel zu einem tieferen Verständnis der Art und Weise, wie Christus zu uns durch die Schrift spricht.

Abstract.

Origen (185-ca. 254), one of the most influential of the early Church Fathers, is the most distinguished of all the theologians of the ancient church, admired for his amazing Scripture exegesis. Of all the Church fathers, none has been more misunderstood than Origen. Is Origen an Exegete, as his student Gregory Thaumaturgus (Gregory of Neocaesarea) calls him, or is his Scriptural explanation arbitrary, changing the meaning of the Biblical sayings as Jerome thinks? The basic criticism of Origen is not only that his allegory are fanciful, but also that his allegorical interpretations depreciates history. The objection is that with Origen's emphasis on the Spiritual sense destroys the factual meaning and value of history. This work sets out to try to show that Origen was not the mad 'allegorist' he is so often thought to be!

In other words the write up seeks to explore Origen's understanding of scripture in the five chapters of this essay. The first chapter describes his early Life and his maturing into a theologian and a man of the Church. The second chapter highlights Origen's controversial legacy, the case against him and the sources of christian allegory. In the third chapter Origen's Handling of the text of the Bible will be handled, with references to "inspiration" and the three senses of scripture (literal ,moral and spiritual) and his affirmation of history. This chapter will be followed by a description of Origen's understanding of "The Logos" and the relation of the Logos to scripture and the soul. In the final chapter a conclusion will be given to show that in Origen one finds not only a fascinating view of the mind and spirit of an important Father of the Church, but an essential key to a more profound understanding of the way in which Christ speaks to us through Scripture.

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Studium

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