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# ORIGEN AND THE HOLY SPIRIT

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement  
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

2018



# Origen and the Holy Spirit

by Justin J. Lee

## Abstract

This dissertation is an examination of the pneumatology of Origen of Alexandria. By providing insight into his understanding of the Holy Spirit, it also seeks to reframe the way in which Origen's Trinitarian theology is understood. In this study, I argue that Origen conceives of the Holy Spirit as a divine person, but inferior in nature. Origen's pneumatology must be considered in light of his understanding of the Son and Father, as well as the influence of Middle Platonism on his theological and cosmological framework. Origen's concept of Trinity is a hierarchy of divine persons in which the greater ministers to the existence of the lower. Though Origen recognizes the personhood of the Holy Spirit, he believes that the Spirit is less than the other divine persons, both in person and in work. The Spirit's origin and attributes, for which Origen has no real scriptural or traditional precedent, he struggles to articulate and often leaves unresolved.

I suggest that Origen's pneumatology can be best understood by examining where he is most clear and consistent: the work of the Holy Spirit. Origen consistently portrays the Spirit as participating in the divine work of salvation; his Trinitarianism is strongly economic, emphasizing shared work and will. The Spirit's specific role in the economy is to indwell and assist the saints, in line with his lesser status. There are two ways in which the Holy Spirit's activity can be framed: (1) in the Trinitarian and downward action of God, in which the Spirit is the direct distributor of the divine gifts and graces and (2) the Spirit's upward work of revelation and sanctification, by which he leads the saints to the Son and Father. The Spirit thus serves as the practical and personal initiator of believers into the greater processes of salvation and deification.

## Declaration

This thesis is the product of my own work and does not include work that has been presented in any form for a degree at this or any other university. All quotation from, and references to, the work of persons other than myself have been properly acknowledged throughout.

## Statement of Copyright

The copyright of this thesis rests with the author. No quotation from it should be published in any format, including electronic and the Internet, without the author's prior written consent. All information derived from this thesis must be acknowledged appropriately.

## Acknowledgements

I began my studies at Durham University almost four years ago knowing next-to-nothing about Patristics and academic theological research. Two dissertations and a number of presentations and publications later, I can confidently say that I know at least something about the church fathers and the world of theology. This growth, if one can call it that, indicates to me that some “thank yous” are in order.

First, I would like to thank the Department of Theology and Religion at Durham University, its faculty and staff, for the support it has provided to me during my studies. I’m honored to have been part of one of the best theology departments in the world, a place that is academically rigorous and stimulating, yet a genuinely warm and pastoral community. There is nowhere else quite like it. Second, I would like to express my gratitude to St. John’s College for being my home for the last four years. I would like to thank the staff and students for giving me opportunities I otherwise could not have had, for entrusting me with major responsibilities, and for being a supportive and welcoming family, as well as a stimulating social and academic environment. I would also like to thank the communities of King’s Church Durham and Durham Korean Church for being my families of faith these last few years and giving me opportunities to serve and exercise my gifts throughout the course of my studies.

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Soli Deo Gloria.

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## Abbreviations

ACT	Ancient Christian Texts
ACW	Ancient Christian Writers
ANF	Ante-Nicene Fathers
CH	Church History
CWS	The Classics of Western Spirituality
FOTC	Fathers of the Church Series (CUA Press)
GCS	Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten [drei] Jahrhunderte
HTR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
JECS	<i>Journal of Early Christian Studies</i>
JTS	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
LSJ	Liddell, Scott, Jones, eds., <i>A Greek-English Lexicon</i> , 9 <sup>th</sup> edition (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996)
LXX	Septuagint
NPNF	Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
PG	Patrologia Graeca
PL	Patrologia Latina
PGL	<i>A Patristic Greek Lexicon</i> , G.W. Lampe (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961)
PPS	Popular Patristic Series
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
SC	Sources Chrétiennes
StPatr	<i>Studia Patristica</i>
VC	<i>Vigiliae Christianae</i>



# INTRODUCTION

In the history of the church, few figures have attracted as much controversy or have been as misunderstood as Origen of Alexandria. Whether at the turn of the fourth century, highlighted in the literary skirmishes between Rufinus and Jerome, or in the sixth century with his actual condemnation, readers of Origen have differed significantly in their assessments of the Alexandrian master's writings.<sup>1</sup> Origen has been portrayed throughout history in caricatures rightly termed Origenisms, often based on misinterpretations or exaggerations of certain aspects of his creative theologizing.<sup>2</sup> But few, if any, can deny Origen's importance to the development of Christian theology. As one scholar has noted, Origen is one of two theologians whose theological vision has shaped the entirety of the Christian tradition, the other being the apostle Paul.<sup>3</sup> Origen stands as one of the first and greatest creative minds in the early church, an innovator with a knack for bringing together diverse systems of thought to construct his theological vision.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Elizabeth A. Clark, *The Origenist Controversy: The Cultural Construction of an Early Christian Debate* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992). For the sixth century see Richard Price, *The Acts of the Council of Constantinople of 553: With Related Texts on the Three Chapters Controversy* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2012), Daniël Hombergen, *The Second Origenist Controversy: A New Perspective on Cyril of Scythopolis' Monastic Biographies as Historical Sources for Sixth-Century Origenism* (Rome: Pontificio Ateneo S. Anselmo, 2001). See also Dirk Krausmüller, 'Origenism and Anti-Origenism in the Late Sixth and Seventh Centuries', in *Evagrius and his Legacy*, ed. J. Kalvesmaki and R. D. Young (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2015), 288-316; Brian Daley, 'The Origenism of Leontius of Byzantium', *JTS* 27 (1976), 333-369.

<sup>2</sup> For a brief summary, see E.M. Harding, 'Origenist Crises', in *The Westminster Handbook to Origen*, ed. John Anthony McGuckin (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2004), 162-67. See also various articles in *Origeniana Undecima: Origen and Origenism in the History of Western Thought*, ed. Anders-Christian Jacobsen (Leuven: Peeters, 2016).

<sup>3</sup> Joseph W. Trigg, *Origen: The Bible and Philosophy in the Third-Century Church* (London: SCM Press, 1985), 8-9.

<sup>4</sup> Henri Crouzel, *Origen* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1989), 163-69) has called Origen's theology a "research theology". Origen shows freedom to explore in areas in which the apostles are unclear or silent. It also means that he does not always seek to provide balanced, clear explanations for the theologizing he does. Rebecca Lyman, *Christology and Cosmology: Models of Divine Activity in*

Past Origen scholarship has gone through phases in its portrayals of Origen: early 20<sup>th</sup> century scholarship painted him as a Platonist appropriating Christian theology, while middle 20<sup>th</sup> century scholarship emphasized his identity as a man of the church.<sup>5</sup> More recent scholarship has sought to give a more balanced portrayal of Origen's thought, acknowledging the presence of both without necessary contradiction.<sup>6</sup> Recent scholarship has also sought to identify specific elements in Origen's thought that reflect varying influences. For example, instead of blanket statements affirming Origen's Platonism, scholars have sought to identify the presence of certain philosophical elements in Origen's theology, particularly Platonic<sup>7</sup> and Stoic.<sup>8</sup> To a lesser degree, scholars have also examined Origen's relationship with Judaism<sup>9</sup> and various forms of Gnosticism.<sup>10</sup> Most recently,

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*Origen, Eusebius, and Athanasius* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 5, notes: "Like other thinkers of Late Antiquity, Christians revised traditional cosmological forms to address contemporary problems regarding divine action and human life. Thus cosmology was not static; its very structure reflected theological creativity and deep religious concerns."

<sup>5</sup> For a summary, see Mark S.M. Scott, *Journey Back to God: Origen on the Problem of Evil* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 40-42. The philosophical side includes names like Harnack, Koch, de Faye, von Campenhausen, while the Christian side include names like Crouzel, Daniélou, Harl, Völker, Gruber, and de Lubac.

<sup>6</sup> Scott, *Journey*, 42-43, notes: "both operate simultaneously in him as he engages theological problems from a Christian perspective in the terms of his philosophical milieu." Simply put, Origen himself does not see them as contradictory.

<sup>7</sup> For example, studies like Alan Scott, *Origen and the Life of the Stars: A History of an Idea* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991) and Benjamin P. Blosser, *Become Like the Angels: Origen's Doctrine of the Soul* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2012), deal respectively with philosophical influence (primary Platonic) on Origen's understanding of stars and souls.

<sup>8</sup> There has been a particular interest in Stoic logic in Origen's thought, see esp. Ronald Heine, 'Stoic Logic as Handmaid to Exegesis and Theology in Origen's Commentary on the Gospel of John', *JTS* 44.1 (1993), 90-117; Louis Roberts, 'Origen and Stoic Logic', *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 101 (1970), 433-44; John M. Rist, 'The Importance of Stoic Logic in the Contra Celsum', in *Neoplatonism and Early Christian Thought: Essays in Honor of A.H. Armstrong*, ed. H.J. Blumenthal and R.A. Markus (London: Variorum, 1981), 64-78; Róbert Somos, 'Is the Handmaid Stoic or Middle Platonic?: Some Comments on Origen's Use of Logic', *StPatr* 56 (2013), 29-40.

<sup>9</sup> See esp. N.R.M. de Lange, *Origen and the Jews: Studies in Jewish-Christian Relations in Third-Century Palestine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976).

<sup>10</sup> E.g. Holger Strutwolf, *Gnosis als System: Zur Rezeption der valentinianischen Gnosis bei Origenes* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1993); Philip L. Tite, 'The Holy Spirit's Role in Origen's Trinitarian System: A Comparison with Valentinian Pneumatology', *Theoforum* 32 (2001),

Stephen Waers and Kellen Plaxco have written dissertations demonstrating the ways in which Monarchianism had an effect on Origen's theology.<sup>11</sup> This study recognizes that Origen lived in a complex time, influenced not only by these factors, but by a general worldview concerned with "fatalism, despair, superstition, and idolatry"<sup>12</sup>

Taking these factors into consideration, this study seeks to shed light on an understudied facet of Origen's theology: his pneumatology. This study seeks to fill this gap in knowledge by providing a comprehensive and contextually based analysis of Origen's understanding of the person, nature, and work of the Holy Spirit. In doing so, this study also seeks to provide additional insight and perspective on Origen's Trinitarian theology. While scholarship is in general agreement on Origen's influence on the fourth century Arian controversy, on pro-Nicenes and Arians alike, scholarship is still needed on Origen's pneumatology and Trinitarian theology to better understand this influence.<sup>13</sup>

In addition, this study seeks to correct the methodological shortcomings of past scholarship which has tended to evaluate Origen's Trinitarian theology and pneumatology anachronistically. The difficulty in understanding these aspects of Origen's theology is due largely to the difficult and complex reception history of Origen's writings. This has manifested in both overly negative and naively optimistic assessments of these aspects of

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131-164; Matteo Grosso, 'A New Link between Origen and the Gospel of Thomas: Commentary on Matthew 14,14', *VC* 65.3 (2011), 249-56 .

<sup>11</sup> Stephen E. Waers, 'Monarchianism and Origen's Early Trinitarian Theology' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Marquette University, 2016); Kellen Plaxco, 'Didymus the Blind, Origen, and the Trinity' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Marquette University, 2016).

<sup>12</sup> Lyman, *Christology*, 47.

<sup>13</sup> See especially Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); R.P.C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy 318-381 AD* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988); Rowan Williams, *Arius: Heresy and Tradition* (London: Darton, Logman & Todd, 1987), 117-57; Christopher A. Beeley, *The Unity of Christ: Continuity and Conflict in Patristic Tradition* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2012).

his theology. Certain scholars have evaluated Origen's Trinitarian theology against the standards of Nicaea and have found his theology wanting. Beginning with Harnack, many have been critical in their treatments of Trinity in Origen's thought, particularly for his weak Trinitarian formulations or overall lack of interest in Trinity.<sup>14</sup> Origen's pneumatology has also received similar criticisms from many of the same figures. One of the most common critiques of Origen's theology has been that it is essentially binitarian in character, containing no real place for the Holy Spirit.<sup>15</sup> The majority of the scholarship making such evaluations has not, however, made Origen's pneumatology a focus of their examinations.<sup>16</sup>

A second group of scholars has sought to portray Origen in a more favorable light, looking for pro-Nicene formulations, or traces of them, in his writings. Looking to redeem Origen from heresy, some of these scholars have even viewed Origen as an orthodox Trinitarian, often superimposing later categories and concepts onto Origen's third century theology.<sup>17</sup> This is also the case in treatments of Origen's pneumatology; certain assumptions are made about the Spirit's status and nature which are simply not representative of Origen's actual writings. Though the translations of Rufinus of Aquileia are particularly problematic

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<sup>14</sup> For a summary, see Kilian McDonnell, 'Does Origen Have a Trinitarian Doctrine of the Holy Spirit?', *Gregorianum* 75.1 (1994), 5–35. McDonnell includes in his list Harnack, Fortman, Trigg, Schutz, and Courth as those who do not think Origen is interested in Trinity.

<sup>15</sup> McDonnell, 'Spirit', 8–10. McDonnell notes that Harnack thinks Origen has no specific interest in the Holy Spirit, while Florensky believes that Origen includes the Spirit for the sake of structure. Koch, Shapland, Hauschild are cited as saying that Origen's theology has no real place for the Spirit. Hauschild even calls Origen's pneumatology "immature" and that sanctification could take place without the Spirit (*Gottes Geist*, 136, 141, 149). Even more recent works like Lyman (*Christology*) and Tzamalikos (*Cosmology*) treat Origen's doctrine of God and Christology without examining his pneumatology.

<sup>16</sup> Of the studies McDonnell cites, only Hauschild actively examines Origen's pneumatology.

<sup>17</sup> McDonnell, 'Spirit', 9–10, lists Kelly, von Balthasar, and Kannengieser. Other notable figures include Crouzel and Simonetti. More recently, Beeley and Ramelli have been the guiltiest of this. A recent study by Christoph Bruns, *Trinität und Kosmos: zur Gotteslehre des Origenes* (Münster: Aschendorff Verlag, 2013), though more fair in his examination of Origen's Trinitarian theology than Beeley or Ramelli, ultimately falls to a similar error.

in conveying Origen's actual opinions, many of these scholars have ridden the wave of recent pro-Rufinus sentiment, concluding that Rufinus' translations accurately represent Origen's Trinitarian theology, showing little concern for the discrepancies between the Greek and Latin works.

The result of these vastly different assumptions has been continuing debate over certain aspects of Origen's Trinitarian theology. Scholarship is still in disagreement over the issue of Christological subordinationism<sup>18</sup> in Origen's writings, even over his supposed use of *homoousios*.<sup>19</sup> Both debates are by nature problematic in that they are arguments over whether or not Origen is "orthodox" by later standards and categories. For example, the issue of whether or not Origen is "subordinationist", a complex issue in its own right, is faced with the fact that Origen is not actively subordinating the Son to the Father against a general theological consensus which says otherwise.<sup>20</sup> As Stephen Waers has noted, "scholars often read Origen with one eye toward Nicaea, looking for anticipation, development, and consonance in every phrase."<sup>21</sup>

This study seeks to provide a balanced, fair, and accurate treatment of Origen's pneumatology and Trinitarian theology by avoiding participation in such anachronistic issues. My concern is not whether or not Origen is an "orthodox" Trinitarian or if he possesses a "mature" theology of the Holy Spirit. The fact that the Holy Spirit and Trinity appear with some regularity throughout Origen's writings attest to the fact that he has a

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<sup>18</sup> McDonnell, 'Spirit', 10, notes that while many scholars absolve Origen of ontological subordination, some do not, e.g. Pretisge, Danielou, and Forman. We can also include in this list Nigel Rowe, *Origen's Doctrine of Subordination: A Study in Origen's Christology* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1987).

<sup>19</sup> The history of this debate and its implications will be discussed in Chapter 1.

<sup>20</sup> See Ayres, *Nicaea*, 21. I will use this term in the dissertation, but with the assumption that Origen is not actively subordinating the Son in this way.

<sup>21</sup> Waers, 'Monarchianism', 15.



pneumatology and Trinitarian theology. It must be acknowledged, however, that these topics are not as central for Origen simply because they were not issues of debate or markers of orthodoxy as they were in the fourth century. Acknowledging this, this study will address the particular contexts and concerns that shape Origen's understanding and employment of these doctrines, accounting for the various influences on these areas of his thought, both positive and negative. Rather than continually looking forward to Nicaea or seeking to find "orthodoxy" in Origen's writings, this study will seek to accurately portray the concepts and language Origen actually uses to speak about the Holy Spirit throughout his writings. This study also acknowledges that development or maturity must be taken into consideration when examining any writer's corpus.<sup>22</sup> However, given the consistency of Origen's Trinitarian theology and pneumatology throughout his writings, both in language and ideas, there is very little, if any, observable change.

## **The Issue of the Holy Spirit**

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in patristic pneumatology.<sup>23</sup> However, scholarship on Origen's pneumatology is still lacking; there are few works dedicated specifically to this topic.<sup>24</sup> In English, there has only been one monograph published on

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<sup>22</sup> This has been the approach in the recent study by Anders-Christian Jacobsen, *Christ – The Teacher of Salvation: A Study on Origen's Christology and Soteriology* (Münster: Aschendorff Verlag, 2015). This particular aspect is difficult to trace in Origen's thought, given the wide genres and contexts of Origen's writings, as well as the work of Rufinus.

<sup>23</sup> Examples of this include recent monographs by Anthony Briggman (*Irenaeus of Lyons and the Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) and Bogdan Bucur (*Angelomorphic Pneumatology: Clement of Alexandria and Other Early Christian Witnesses* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), as well as a slew of recent doctoral dissertations on the pneumatologies of figures like Novatian, Athanasius, Didymus, and others. To my knowledge, there are two other dissertations on Origen's pneumatology currently in progress.

<sup>24</sup> Studies include McDonnell's article; Tite, 'Holy Spirit'; George C. Berthold, 'Origen and the Holy Spirit', in *Origeniana Quinta* (Leuven: Peeters, 1992), 444-448; Pablo Argarate, 'The Holy Spirit in *Prin* I, 3', in *Origeniana Nona* (Leuven: Peeters, 2009), 25-47; Manlio Simonetti, 'Spirit Santo', in *Origene: dizionario: la cultura, il pensiero, le opere*, ed. Adele Monaci Castagno (Roma: Città Nuova, 2000), 450-456; Peter Martens, 'Holy Spirit', in *The Westminster Handbook to Origen* (Louisville,

Origen's pneumatology which focuses exclusively on Origen's pneumatology in the *Commentary on Romans*.<sup>25</sup> Though a thorough examination of the themes of this particular work, Moser's study does not tackle the issue of pneumatology in the entirety of Origen's thought. While there have been a handful of German studies that touch on Origen's pneumatology, the Holy Spirit is only a tertiary interest for these writers and is not examined at length.<sup>26</sup>

To understand Origen's pneumatology, we must take into consideration the limitations of the Christian tradition which he has inherited in order to understand the contribution which he made. Prior to Origen, few writers show as much concern about the person of the Holy Spirit.<sup>27</sup> Justin Martyr, for example, calls the Logos the Spirit and at times attributes prophecy to the Logos (1 *apol.* 33).<sup>28</sup> Though Clement of Alexandria's pneumatology shares some similar features with Origen's, the Spirit is not discussed

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KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), 125-28; Miguel M. Garijo, 'Vocabulario origeniano sobre el Espíritu Divino', *Scriptorium Victorienne* 11 (1964), 320-58. Other helpful studies include Giulio Maspero, 'Remarks on Origen's Analogies for the Holy Spirit', in *Origeniana Decima* (Leuven: Peeters, 2011), 563-578; Michael Haykin, *The Spirit of God: The Exegesis of 1 and 2 Corinthians in the Pneumatomachian Controversy of the Fourth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 1993); Alasdair Heron, 'The Holy Spirit in Origen and Didymus the Blind: A Shift in Perspective from the Third to the Fourth Century', in *Kerygma und Logos: Beiträge zu den geistesgeschichtlichen Beziehungen zwischen Antike und Christentum. Festschrift für Carl Andresen zum 70. Geburtstag* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1979), 298-310.

<sup>25</sup> Maureen Moser, *Teacher of Holiness: The Holy Spirit in Origen's Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2005).

<sup>26</sup> E.g. Wolf-Dieter Hauschild, *Gottes Geist und der Mensch* (München: C. Kaiser, 1972); Henning Ziebritzki, *Heiliger Geist und Weltseele: das Problem der dritten Hypostase bei Origenes, Plotin und ihren Vorläufern* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1994), and most recently Bruns.

<sup>27</sup> One major exception being Irenaeus of Lyons, known best in his Trinitarian theology for his imagery of the Son and the Spirit as the two hands of God. I will ignore western Latin writers like Tertullian, Novatian, and Cyprian, simply because of the lack of influence of these thinkers on Origen himself.

<sup>28</sup> Elsewhere, Scripture is often attributed to the divine spirit (*dial.* 9.1) or to the prophetic spirit (1 *apol.* 35-59; *dial.* 32.3, 43.3, etc.). For Justin, this is often because he is trying to understand Logos logic without compromising the unity of God (see L.W. Barnard, 'God, the Logos, the Spirit and the Trinity in the Theology of Athenagoras', *Studia Theologica* 24.1 (January 1970), 87-88).

frequently or consistently in his writings.<sup>29</sup> Though most writers prior to Origen assign the inspiration of prophecy<sup>30</sup> to the Holy Spirit and mention the need for the Spirit in baptism and Trinitarian formulae, there is little explanation or elaboration of why the Spirit is necessary for them.<sup>31</sup> Because of the overall lack of discussion of the Holy Spirit in the tradition he has inherited, Origen often finds himself speculating about issues for which he has no answers, even devising new pneumatological readings or paradigms.<sup>32</sup> As Henning Ziebritzki has commented, Origen sees a need to construct his own pneumatology in order to reconcile the Christian tradition he has received with what he sees in Scripture; there is a clear need for him to explore, originate, and innovate.<sup>33</sup> Origen is one of the first to comment at length on a number of pneumatological biblical texts and roles, for example the gifts of the Spirit in 1 Cor 12.<sup>34</sup> Origen's pneumatology is significant because he shows enough interest in the person of the Holy Spirit to attempt to articulate his identity in a way that had not been done prior to him, as far as we are aware.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Some examples: the Spirit's inspiration of Scripture (*str.* 1.29.181.1, 3.4.29.2, 6.15; *prot.* 9.68), revelation of the deep things of God (1 Cor 2.10: *str.* 2.2.7.3, 6.18), assistance in explaining Scripture (*prot.* 9.70), indwelling holy presence (*str.* 2.13.58.1, 5.13, 6.17; *paed.* 2.10.100), opposition to the flesh (*str.* 3.6.46.3, 3.11.77.3), consecrating work (*paed.* 1.6.25, 3.11.64; *str.* 4.26, 6.11). Confusion about the Spirit: *str.* 2.2.4.4, 2.2.5.1, 4.25, 5.1.

<sup>30</sup> Especially Justin, as the divine spirit/prophetic spirit. *Epistle of Barnabas* and Theophilus of Antioch primarily portray the Spirit in this way. Another feature is indwelling presence, seen esp. in Shepherd of Hermas.

<sup>31</sup> Justin: baptism in 1 *apol* 61, *dial.* 29.1; Trinitarian formula in 1 *apol.* 65, 67, 13. Clement: baptism in *paed.* 1.12.98, 3.9.48; Trinitarian formula in *q.d.s.* 42; *paed.* 1.6.42, *paed.* 3.12.101; *str.* 6.17.

<sup>32</sup> This means that he at times provides multiple possible explanations and frequently leaves points unsettled, often out of a desire not to say anything unfounded or impious, i.e. contrary to Scripture.

<sup>33</sup> Ziebritzki, *Heiliger Geist*, 144.

<sup>34</sup> Clement mentions them only in *str.* 1.12.56.1, while Justin mentions that Christ endowed with gifts of Spirit (Isaiah 11.1-3) in *dial.* 87.2, or briefly mentions the new charisms in *dial.* 88.1.

<sup>35</sup> I.e. his specific treatment of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit in *princ.* 1.3. The background to his understanding of the Holy Spirit, both Jewish and Christian, however, will not be the main focus of this study. They will be addressed where relevant.

This study, therefore, seeks to address the primary questions of who the Holy Spirit is and what the Holy Spirit does in Origen's theological system. As will be made clear in the third chapter, Origen's understanding of who or what the Holy Spirit is, i.e. his ontological status and identity, is not entirely clear, even to himself.<sup>36</sup> But contrary to scholars who have minimized the Holy Spirit's place in Origen's theology, Origen is consistent in his portrayal of the Spirit's work – his pneumatology is strongly economic. This study will seek to establish the role that the Holy Spirit plays in Origen's theology through a detailed examination of the Spirit's work in the entirety of Origen's literary corpus, looking for consistent patterns in the roles Origen attributes to the Spirit, as well as the language and concepts Origen uses to speak of this work. By determining what the Holy Spirit actually does in Origen's theology, we will be able to fairly the significance of the Spirit in his theological system. This study will argue that, for Origen, the Spirit plays unique and important role and function in the context of the divine work of salvation.

By establishing the place and role of the Holy Spirit in Origen's theological system, we will also be better equipped to understand, and thus examine and evaluate, the shape of his Trinitarian thought. As will be argued in this study, Origen's Trinitarianism is not so much based in the philosophical language of ontology and metaphysics; the fourth century buzzwords of "essence" and "nature" possess vastly different meanings in his time.<sup>37</sup> Instead, as we will see in Chapter 3, Origen's understanding of Trinitarian unity is economic. More than focusing on the idea of Trinity for its own sake, Origen's reflections on Trinity are most often in the context of a unified divine work of salvation, in which the

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<sup>36</sup> E.g. *Jo.* 32.187-189, 13.231; *princ.* Pref.4. He also does not comment on significant Trinitarian passages like Eph 4.4-6, 1 Cor 12.4-6.

<sup>37</sup> The background to these issues will be seen in Chapter 1.

Spirit plays a significant and unique role. Given the Trinitarian and pneumatological tradition which Origen inherited, or lack thereof, we cannot assume that a “developed” notion of Trinity existed prior to him or that they simply appear in Origen’s writings without any precedence. We will see instead that the Trinitarian framework that Origen builds comes out of significant theological reflection, borrowing heavily in structure and language from one place which Origen found clear and valuable: the Middle Platonic metaphysical frameworks of his time. At the same time, Origen’s Trinitarianism shows great concern to be faithful to the witness of Scripture, seeking to reconcile and assemble together the various scriptural passages from which Origen draws the major principles of his Trinitarianism.<sup>38</sup> His theology of the Spirit, therefore, is a result of the coming together of these systems in his thought. This study, therefore, will recognize this innate tension in Origen’s Trinitarian thought, seeking to account also for other concepts and concerns which helped to shape it.

## **Issues in Reading Origen**

The biggest challenge in identifying Origen’s actual thought is the issue of navigating the Latin translations of Origen’s writings made by Rufinus of Aquileia. In the preface to his translation of *On First Principles*, Rufinus makes the following note about his methodology:

wherever... we found in his writings anything contrary to that which he had himself piously laid down regarding the Trinity, we have either omitted it, as

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<sup>38</sup> Origen is surprisingly literal in his exegesis when it comes to the subject of God. While this study is not an examination of Origen’s exegesis, the important passages of Scripture in Origen’s construction of his pneumatology and Trinitarian theology, as well as their exegesis, are a central focus of this study.

being corrupt and interpolated, or we have rendered it according to that rule which we frequently find affirmed by him.<sup>39</sup>

Rufinus also admits that he has edited certain statements to make them clearer, in some cases even adding additional explanation taken from Origen's other writings. Though Rufinus did not drastically alter every last word and concept, his editing is most evident on subjects which were most controversial in his own day, e.g. Trinitarian theology and *apokatastasis*. The trustworthiness of Rufinus' translations has thus been a continuing issue of debate in Origen scholarship.<sup>40</sup> The height of suspicion of Rufinus can be found in Koetschau's early 20<sup>th</sup> century edition of *On First Principles*, which was translated into an English version by Butterworth.<sup>41</sup> More recent scholarship has tended to view Rufinus more favorably, casting greater suspicion on the sixth century condemnatory Greek fragments of Justinian, which Koetschau held in high regard.<sup>42</sup> But the existence of Rufinus' translated works means that scholars have not been in full agreement on what texts and language constitutes Origen's actual thought.

In order to accurately represent Origen's thought, this study will approach the language and terms in Rufinus' Latin translations, particularly *On First Principles*, with suspicion,

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<sup>39</sup> Rufinus, *princ.* Pref.3 (Behr, 1:7).

<sup>40</sup> For a summary, see Ronnie J. Rombs, 'A Note on the Status of Origen's *De Principiis* in English', *VC* 61.1 (2007), 21-29.

<sup>41</sup> Though Koetschau took very seriously the task of reproducing the authentic and Greek Origen, his methodology placed too much value on the condemnatory fragments of Justinian, for which he received much criticism. He also at times attempts to harmonize statements or reproduce the Greek in places where fragments do not exactly match up.

<sup>42</sup> See Rombs, 'Note', 23-24. Rombs notes that the contributions of Bardy and Guillaumont have demonstrated that certain Origen fragments in Justinian represent the views of Evagrius rather than Origen. Mid-20<sup>th</sup> century Origen scholarship, exemplified in writers like Crouzel and Simonetti, tended to be less critical of Rufinus' translations, but recognized the complexity of his thought. The most recent editions of *On First Principles*, by Samuel Fernandez, *Orígenes: Sobre Los Principios*, Fuentes Patrísticas 27 (Madrid: Ciudad Nueva, 2015), and John Behr, *Origen: On First Principles*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), display a more balanced approach that is more characteristic of current Origen scholarship.

especially statements made about the Trinity or the Holy Spirit which seem out of place for Origen's time. Although scholarship has generally agreed that Trinitarian theology is one area which Rufinus has most obviously edited Origen, this issue has not been taken as seriously or examined as thoroughly as it should be. While *On First Principles* will receive its due treatment, priority will be given to statements about Trinity and Spirit in Origen's Greek works, particularly the *Commentary on John* and *Contra Celsum*. By comparing the contrasting theologies of these two sets of works, we will be able to identify statements and language in the Latin texts that are foreign to the Greek writings and actually reflect fourth century concerns and terminology.

## **Structure**

The first half of this study will establish the context for Origen's pneumatology by examining his doctrines of the Father and the Son. As will be made evident, Origen's pneumatology cannot be treated independently; how he conceives of the person and work of the Holy Spirit is grounded in his conceptions of the Father and the Son. The second half of the study will look at various aspects of Origen's pneumatology, including the Spirit's person and status, the Spirit's function and place in his context of Trinity, and the particular roles that only the Spirit plays in the divine work of salvation and deification.

Chapter 1 will establish the foundation for Origen's Trinitarian thought by investigating his doctrine of the Father. This chapter will show that Origen's theological system and Trinitarian theology are grounded in a Middle Platonic understanding of God, which emphasizes God's incorporeality, ineffability, simplicity, and oneness.<sup>43</sup> It will also

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<sup>43</sup> Lyman, *Christology*, 13: "Middle Platonists, blending Stoic and Aristotelian ideas in their attempt to present the true meaning of Plato's *Timaeus*, provided a popular intellectual model of an eternal, hierarchical order. Stretched between the archetypal perfection of transcendent being

highlight Origen's conception of the Father's transcendent status, seen especially in his safeguarding of the Father's attributes through the Son's similar spiritual nature, but inferior status. This chapter will emphasize that Origen does not consider the idea of a "divine essence" or shared nature to be appropriate ways of viewing the Father-Son relationship, but that he was concerned with issues like the Son's real personhood and the noetic character of the Father-Son relationship. Chapter 2 will continue where the first left off by examining Origen's Christology. This section will not focus on the incarnation or the ministry of Jesus, but on Origen's conception of the second person of the Trinity, the eternal Word of God. Particular attention will be given to the various Christological titles Origen uses and what they say about Christ's person and function, e.g. titles of relationship (Son, Only-begotten, Firstborn), titles of similarity (Image, Reflection), and noetic titles (Word, Wisdom). This chapter will also examine how Origen resolves the issue of the interaction between the transcendent and immaterial Father with material creation through his doctrine of Christ's *epinoiai*, by which he "becomes" things (i.e. his titles) for creation, which includes the virtues of 1 Cor 1.30. These points will establish that Origen understands the Son to be a being inferior to the Father, whose purpose and function is to reveal him. They will also show that Origen does not often speak of shared divine attributes in the manner of fourth century writers, but holds to his own particular conception of them.

Chapter 3 will round out the discussion of Trinity by examining the person and status of the Holy Spirit. This chapter will demonstrate that Origen consistently uses personal language for the Holy Spirit, paralleling the Son. But it will also show that Origen is

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and the chaotic flux of the material realm, this world, even as an inferior image, possessed an anthropocentric unity with an implicit optimism for individual union with the divine."



generally unsure about the details of the Spirit's ontological existence and status. But the Spirit holds the third place after the Father and Son; he is divine, he is clearly superior to creation, ministering to it alongside the Son. This chapter will also show that Origen holds to the concept of a tiered Trinitarian hierarchy, with the status of each person corresponding to his particular role and function (i.e. ontology determines economy). We will see that for Origen, the concept of Trinity is primarily economic and not ontological, revealing his understanding of how God accomplishes salvation for humanity. The Spirit's occupies a unique place in this hierarchy, cooperating in the divine work, working to perfect worthy believers and initiating the work of salvation.

Chapter 4 will expand on the role of the Holy Spirit in the context of Trinity by examining several significant Trinitarian statements that appear throughout Origen's writings. In these Trinitarian statements, Origen depicts the downward action of God in the Trinitarian economy of salvation, providing the divine gifts and graces to assist the saints. The Spirit's particular role in this system is as the direct distributor of the graces and gifts of God, ministering in the saints in a way that the Father and Son cannot. The Spirit at times is also called gift and grace, demonstrating his innate sentness and his indwelling work in the souls of worthy believers, empowering them through his presence. This chapter will conclude with an examination of the conditions for the Spirit's indwelling, with brief treatments of Origen's doctrines of free will and baptism.

The fifth and final chapter will examine two particular roles of the Holy Spirit that exemplify the Spirit's role in Origen's Trinitarian system: revelation and sanctification. These two roles are two major aspects of the Spirit's assistance to believers and ways in which he leads them to the knowledge of the Father. They are also indicative of the Spirit's upward work, his initiation of believers into the greater process of salvation and

deification. The Spirit reveals as God's Spirit who searches the deep things of God (1 Cor 2.10), primarily through the inspiration of Scripture and the guiding of believers in its interpretation. This work, also described as illumination and teaching, helps to reveal the Son, who in turn reveals the Father. Sanctification for Origen is not simply an abstract giving of holiness, but is a process by which believers are confirmed through their obedience and holy living. As sanctifier, the Spirit works in tandem with the saints' work in self-purification, validating an existing holiness and marking the saint as ready to receive the Son and the Father. This saving work, for Origen, is a Trinitarian work, in which all three Trinitarian persons work together for the perfection and salvation of the saints for the ultimate goal of *theosis* and the knowledge of God.

My hope is that this study represents Origen's pneumatology and Trinitarian theology accurately as the texts reveal them, in all their intricacies and contradictions. I also hope to portray the complexity of Origen as a thinker, as an educated and enlightened Christian seeking to construct a theological system that is philosophically complex and yet grounded in Scripture, able to be explained in simple words yet containing higher and unspeakable divine truths. Origen's faith is rational yet mystical, complex and yet simple, the fulfillment of both the philosophers and Moses, the ultimate truth revealed to the world through the coming forth of the Son. Origen's task is also innately speculative, drawing from all relevant and useful sources to better elucidate the divine mysteries. By keeping these things in mind, I hope that all readers of Origen can better understand and appreciate Origen's thought for what it is, rather than what we want it to be.

## ORIGEN'S DOCTRINE OF GOD

In the preface to *On First Principles*, Origen explains the task he faces in writing his magisterial work. Noting that many well-meaning Christians “hold conflicting opinions not only on small and trivial questions but also on some that are great and important”, Origen seeks to set the record straight on difficult doctrines like the nature of God or his Son, “to lay down a definite line and clear rule regarding each one of these matters, and thereafter to investigate other matters.”<sup>1</sup> Instruction in the apostolic faith begins with the idea that “‘there is one God, who created and arranged all things’, and who, when nothing existed, made all things.”<sup>2</sup> The doctrine of God, therefore, is the first step for those seeking to live the Christian life, the foundation for any theological exercise.

In order to better understand Origen’s pneumatology, I will begin with an examination of his theology proper, his doctrine of God the Father. For Origen, the Father’s sole transcendence sets the foundation for how he thinks of the divine persons and their relationships, essentially a hierarchical structure of ministration and dependence. By establishing Origen’s understandings of the persons of the Father and the Son in the first two chapters, we will be able to more clearly discern how he conceives of the person of the Holy Spirit. I will begin this chapter with an examination of Origen’s extended treatments of the doctrine of God in *princ.* 1.1 and *Jo.* 13. An analysis of these passages will show that in his understanding of God the Father, Origen prioritizes the witness of Scripture, but in

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<sup>1</sup> *princ.* Pref.2 (Behr, 1:13). The issues he is referring to here include beliefs about God, Christ, and Holy Spirit, as well as other “created beings” and “dominions and holy powers”.

<sup>2</sup> *princ.* Pref.4 (Behr, 1:13). This summary statement of Origen’s doctrine of God contains a quotation of Hermas, *Mand.* 1.1 and is different in focus (i.e. creation) than Origen’s treatment.

many ways is more dependent on philosophical terms and concepts. Origen's concern in these discussions is to safeguard against erroneous materialist understandings of God, particularly those found in Stoic philosophy and in the heretical teachings of Gnostics and Monarchians. These varied influences, both positive and negative, are seen in his repeated emphasis on divine characteristics like incorporeality and transcendence, and in unmistakably philosophical features like divine simplicity and God as mind. I will also examine how Origen speaks of the very essence or being of God, specifically his use of the term *ousia*. Origen does not use this word in the sense of "substance", but instead employs it to highlight the Father's transcendence and ineffability. This is seen also in Origen's use of *ousia* for the Son, which is used to argue for the Son's concrete personhood, along with terms like *hypostasis* and *hypokeimenon*. Origen is unwilling to speak of Father as Son as sharing the same *ousia* as doing so compromises the Father's immateriality and unique existence. He instead explains the Father-Son relationship through noetic generation, grounded in the concept of shared will and work. Though Origen's theology proper is very Middle Platonic in character, he does not see himself as doing philosophy. Instead, Origen uses the tools he has received to construct the foundation for a greater theological and biblical narrative in which fallen and fleshly humanity can make its way back to its intended transcendent, rational, and spiritual reality whose source is in the Father.

## God the Father

Origen's doctrine of God is not overly extensive and can be reduced to a main few points.<sup>3</sup>

The first and most important of these is that God is incorporeal and immaterial.<sup>4</sup> This is

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<sup>3</sup> For Origen's doctrine of God, see Peter Widdicombe, *The Fatherhood of God from Origen to Athanasius* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994); Peter Nemeshegyi, *La paternité de Dieu chez Origène* (Tournai: Desclée, 1960); Crouzel.

<sup>4</sup> E.g. *Cels.* 8.49: "God is not a material substance" (SC 150:282; Chadwick, 488). For background, see Gedaliahu Stroumsa, "The Incorporeality of God: Context and Implications of

the main theme of Origen's discussion of God in *princ.* 1.1.<sup>5</sup> Origen begins his survey of this doctrine by addressing passages of Scripture that describe God's nature as fire (Deut 6.24), spirit (Jn 4.24), and light (1 Jn 1.5, Ps 35.10 LXX).<sup>6</sup> For Origen, these passages are not to be read literally, but reveal God's immaterial character in his work.<sup>7</sup> For example, light refers to God's spiritual power of illumination (1.1.1) while fire refers to his consumption of sin and evil thoughts (1.1.2).<sup>8</sup> The most significant of these verses is John 4.24.<sup>9</sup> "God is spirit" does not mean that God is composed of a spiritual body or substance, but that God is wholly immaterial and noetic.<sup>10</sup> Origen frames God's incorporeality against those who hold incorrect material conceptions of God, whether Stoic, Gnostic or misguided Christian.<sup>11</sup> Christians must set aside their inclinations to place importance on material things and

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Origen's Position', *Religion* 13.4 (1983), 345–58. Also see Gunnar af Hällström, *Fides Simpliciorum According to Origen of Alexandria* (Helsinki: Societas Scientiarum Fennica, 1984); Dragoş Andrei Giulea, 'Simpliciores, Eruditi, and the Noetic Form of God: Pre-Nicene Christology Revisited', *HTR* 108.02 (2015), 263–88.

<sup>5</sup> For a treatment on the authenticity and accuracy of the title of this first chapter (*De Deo*) and the following two, see Widdicombe, *Fatherhood*, 10–13.

<sup>6</sup> *princ.* 1.1.2 (Behr, 1:24–26).

<sup>7</sup> Lyman, *Christology*, 48, notes that this is an "assimilation of biblical predications of God... to the philosophical definitions, of the incorporeal. Rather than definitions of divine substance, these were descriptions of God's relationship to creatures as power to cleanse, enlighten, and inspire."

<sup>8</sup> Origen rejects the Stoic idea that fire is a substance, drawing instead from scriptural passages that highlight fire's association with cleansing and judgment (e.g. Is 6.6–7, Mal 3.2). See Christopher Stead, *Philosophy in Christian Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 141–42; John M. Rist, 'Beyond Stoic and Platonist: A Sample of Origen's Treatment of Philosophy (Contra Celsum: 4:62–70)', in Horst-Dieter Blume, *Platonismus und Christentum: Festschrift für Heinrich Dörrie* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1983), 238. John Dillon, 'Looking on the Light: Some Remarks on the Imagery of Light in the First Chapter of the *Peri Archon*', in *Origen of Alexandria: His World and Legacy*, ed. Charles Kannengiesser and William L. Peterson (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), 220, notes that Origen shows awareness of contemporary Platonic teaching of light as incorporeal, but chooses to use it metaphorically.

<sup>9</sup> Other treatments of this verse include *princ.* 1.1.1, *Jo.* 1.35, *hom.in.Lc* 26.1, *hom.in.Lev* 4.1, *Cels.* 2.71.

<sup>10</sup> Other places where Origen shows a resistance to Stoic materialism, i.e. that God has a spiritual body: *Cels.* 1.21, 3.75, 4.14, 6.71. See Robert M. Berchman, *From Philo to Origen: Middle Platonism in Transition* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1984), 124.

<sup>11</sup> The fact that Origen battled this issue on multiple fronts is obvious across his works, e.g. *Cels.* 7.27 (Christians), *Jo.* 13.149–50 (Valentinians). Stroumsa, 'Incorporeality', 348, argues that Origen's allegorical reading of Scripture is developed with this concern in mind. Tite, 'Holy Spirit', 144, notes this among several places where Origen is countering Valentinianism.

physical places (cf. Jn 4.20), but instead worship “by ‘spirit’ intellectual things, which we also call ‘spiritual’”, that is, their rational and intellectual capacity.<sup>12</sup>

This treatment is paralleled in *Jo.* 13.123-150.<sup>13</sup> As with *princ.*, Origen’s intention is to deny that God has “a bodily nature” or is material in any way (*Jo.* 13.123).<sup>14</sup> He uses the same scriptural references and metaphors as above: spirit (Jn 4.24), fire (Dt 4.24, Heb 12.29), and light (1 Jn 1.5). In this treatment, Origen shows even greater care to avoid materialist implications about God. He denies the idea that God’s essence is actually spirit or fire or light (13.124) on the grounds that all three are essentially physical or material: fire needs fuel or it will burn out, and even spirit in the body is subject to change (13.129). This type of language should instead be read similarly to other scriptural analogies, such as when God is described as having body parts (13.130-31). In his individual treatment of these images, Origen mostly repeats the same points, especially with light (13.136-37) and fire (13.138). However, his treatment of spirit (Jn 4.24) differs in that he emphasizes that God as spirit gives life (cf. 2 Cor 3.6), in the spiritual over the physical sense (13.140). Origen’s doctrine of God can be summed up in the following statement: his “divine nature is undefiled, and pure, and invisible” (13.147).<sup>15</sup> Origen’s repeated emphasis of God’s immateriality and warnings against misreading biblical imagery demonstrate the ever-present danger that even Christians face in misunderstanding the nature of God.<sup>16</sup> This

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<sup>12</sup> *princ.* 1.1.2-4; Behr, 1:27-29.

<sup>13</sup> SC 222:94-112; Heine, 89:93-150.

<sup>14</sup> SC 222:94-96; Heine, 89:93.

<sup>15</sup> SC 222:110-112; Heine, 89:99. Though these words come from a quotation of Heracleon, Origen casts doubt on whether these words are actually Heracleon’s, given that Heracleon suggests elsewhere that spiritual humans are of the same spiritual substance (*homoousios*) as the Father (*Jo.* 13.148-49).

<sup>16</sup> Origen is also bothered by Heracleon’s statements (throughout *Jo.*) that suggest change or corruption in God (e.g. *Jo.* 13.127-128). For materialism in the early church, see David L Paulsen, ‘Early Christian Belief in a Corporeal Deity: Origen and Augustine as Reluctant Witnesses’, *HTR* 83.2 (1990), 105-16.

understanding of God is also reflected elsewhere in Origen's writings, e.g. his descriptions of God's nature (φυσικός) as "entirely incorruptible, simple, uncompounded, and indivisible" (*Cels.* 4.14) or God himself as "an invisible and bodiless nature that is pure essence" (*Jo.* 20.158).<sup>17</sup>

Origen's discussion of God in the second half of *princ.* 1.1 makes little reference to Scripture, appealing instead to philosophical terms and constructs.<sup>18</sup> Origen begins in 1.1.5 with the statement that God is incomprehensible (*inconprehensibilem*) and immeasurable (*inaestimabilem*).<sup>19</sup> God's transcendence or ineffability is a second major point of emphasis in Origen's doctrine of God, related closely with his incorporeality. God's incomprehensibility means that his existence is far greater than any knowledge that humans can possess of him. Origen next highlights the limitations of spiritual knowledge in the corporeal body by using the image of a man whose eyes are not strong enough to see the brightness of the sun, reflecting the idea that human knowledge of God consists only of smaller rays of the greater light. This imagery is an allusion to the Greek metaphor of "like is known by like," the idea that vision involves the eye becoming like the sun or

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<sup>17</sup> *Cels.* 4.14 (SC 136:218; Chadwick, 193); *Jo.* 20.158 (SC 290:232; Heine, 89:239). See also *Cels.* 7.46: "the higher things, whether one wishes to call them 'being' (οὐσίαν), or things 'invisible' (ἀόρατα) because they are intelligible, or 'things which are not seen' because their nature lies outside the realm of self-perception" (SC 150:124; Chadwick, 434).

<sup>18</sup> For a discussion on the structure and purpose of this work, see introduction to Behr, *On First Principles* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), xxviii. Widdicombe, *Fatherhood*, 9-10, citing the work of writers like Harl, Dorival, and Berchman, calls *princ.* "an example of a Middle Platonist genre of philosophical treatises on physics, concerned with describing and defining God and the world." Others, especially Kannengiesser, 'Divine Trinity and the Structure of *Peri Archon*', in *Origen of Alexandria: His World and Legacy* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), 231-249, have argued for its innately Trinitarian structure and concerns. While it is clear in this work that the Trinitarian persons are essentially Origen's first principles, and that Origen makes a concerted effort to establish a sort of Trinitarian structure, we should be careful not to read too much into Origen's Trinitarianism – he is not as concerned about Trinity for the sake of Trinity as many (like Kannengiesser) argue.

<sup>19</sup> Behr, 1:28.

other luminary in order to see.<sup>20</sup> While God's transcendence means that full knowledge of his nature is not possible, he can be known by those who are like him.

Following this, Origen makes a significant statement about God that reflects his utilization of Middle Platonic language and ideas in *princ.* 1.1.6:

God, therefore, is not to be thought to be either a body or existing in a body, but to be a simple intellectual being (*intellectualis natura simplex*), accepting in himself no addition whatever; so that he cannot be believed to have in himself more or less, but is, in all things, *μονάς* (unity), or, if I may say, *ένάς* (oneness), and the intellect and source from which all intellectual being and intellect takes its beginning.<sup>21</sup>

There are several major points that stand out in this statement. First, Origen describes God as a “simple intellectual being”.<sup>22</sup> This description of God as *nous* or intellect is a particularly Middle-Platonic rendering of the doctrine of God, drawn from the Peripatetic doctrine of God as divine intellect (*nous*).<sup>23</sup> A second major point is the description of God as unity (*μονάς*) and oneness (*ένάς*). Origen's description of God as *μονάς* and *ένάς* is reflective of Neo-Pythagorean logic, another feature of Middle-Platonism.<sup>24</sup> This means

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<sup>20</sup> Drawn from Plato, *Tim.* 45. It is also present in Stoic philosophers like Posidonius (*M.* 7.93) and in contemporaries of Origen like Irenaeus (*haer.* 4.36.6) and Plotinus (*Enn.* 1.6.9). See Stead, *Philosophy*, 141. This concept is also in central to Origen's spiritual epistemology (i.e. becoming like God to see God) and is also seen in later writers, e.g. Athanasius, *inc.* 57.3.

<sup>21</sup> Behr, 1:30-31

<sup>22</sup> Widdicombe, *Fatherhood*, 24, argues that for Origen, God as mind is also central to his eternity and to his foreknowledge (cf. *Cels.* 7.46). For more on Origen and time, see Richard Sorabji, *Time, Creation, and the Continuum: Theories in Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1983); Panayiotis Tzamalikos, *Origen: Cosmology And Ontology of Time* (Leiden: Brill, 2006).

<sup>23</sup> This formula is first found in the second century Middle Platonic philosopher Alcinous (*Did.* 10.2) and also features prominently in the writings of Numenius of Apamea (*fr.* 16). Though Berchman (*Platonism*, 84, 109-112) attributes this to Albinus, John Whitaker has established that the author of the *Didaskalikos* is in fact Alcinous (see ‘*Parisinus gr.* 1962 and the writings of Albinus’, *Phoenix* 28 (1974), 320-54). Also see Stead, ‘The Concept of Mind and the Concept of God in the Christian Fathers’, in *The Philosophical Frontiers of Christian Theology: Essays Presented to D.M. Mackinnon*, ed. B. Hebblethwaite and S.R. Sutherland (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 39-54.

<sup>24</sup> Behr, *On First Principles*, 31 n.23, comments that *μονάς* has a Pythagorean background and *ένάς* a Platonic one, *μονάς* emphasizing unity giving rise to multiplicity and *ένάς* singularity in itself.



that God is one and simple, a perfectly simple unity, a Monad. As Robert Berchman has noted, these particular points represent “the mature synthesis of two currents in Middle Platonic thought”, namely Aristotelian and Neo-Pythagorean, into a “*nous-henas*” theology.<sup>25</sup> Third, God is the mind and fount from which all other intellectual existence and minds come. All other rational beings, therefore, find their ultimate source in God.<sup>26</sup>

Origen continues his discussion of the doctrine of God by expanding on the concept of the immateriality of mind in *princ.* 1.1.6, emphasizing the mind’s lack of dependence on the corporeal senses, showing instead how God as mind reflects the simplicity of the divine nature.<sup>27</sup> As mind, God cannot be composite; for him to be composite suggests the existence of something prior to the first principle (1.1.6).<sup>28</sup> The mind lacks a physical appearance or body (1.1.7), meaning that God’s act of contemplation and perception are without any physical constraints; he perceives in a manner differently from humans.<sup>29</sup> Origen’s point that God is immaterial and invisible means that humans cannot know him through their physical senses, but only through the spiritual capacity of the soul.<sup>30</sup> The knowledge of the invisible God can only be received through his Son (e.g. Col 1.15, Jn 1.18),

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Stead, *Divine Substance*, 182-89, notes that Aristotle taught that the *monad* is indivisible; Pythagoreans associated the mind with the number one and simplicity. Scholarship (e.g. Koch, *Pronoia*, 226-228; de Faye, *Origen*, 208) has recognized Numenius as the major Neo-Pythagorean source for Origen’s philosophy, learned through Ammonius Saccas (Berchman, *Platonism*, 111). cf. Philo (e.g. *Leg.* 2.1; *Deus* 11), Numenius (*fr.* 11), Alcinous (*Epit.* 10.8), Clement of Alexandria (*str.* 5.11.71.2). For more on Pythagoras and Neo-Pythagoreanism, see Dominic J. O’Meara, *Pythagoras Revived: Mathematics and Philosophy in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), esp. 13-14, 62-63, 79-84.

<sup>25</sup> Berchman, *Platonism*, 117. He also notes that Origen is the first Christian to do this.

<sup>26</sup> cf. Alcinous, *Did.* 10.2; Numenius, *fr.* 16.

<sup>27</sup> Behr, 1:30-39.

<sup>28</sup> See also *Jo.* 1.119: “God is altogether one and simple” (SC 120:122; Heine, 80:58). cf. Longinus, *fr.* 19; Atticus, *fr.* 12.

<sup>29</sup> Atticus (*fr.* 28, 13) describes the divine intellect as turning into itself to see the forms.

<sup>30</sup> Crouzel, *Origen*, 88-89, describes the soul in Origen as having two parts, the higher part and governing principles being the *nous* or *mens*, the lower element added after the fall. See Blosser, *Angels*, esp. 79-141.

who has made him known (*princ.* 1.1.8).<sup>31</sup> This marks a stark difference between Origen and philosophers of his time for whom the first God was completely unknowable. Origen's reflections on God, therefore, are not simply speculation or philosophy for the sake of philosophy. As Peter Widdicombe has noted, "the close connection between incorporeality and soteriology in *De Principiis* is a paradigm for the way in which [Origen] presents the whole of his doctrine of God and salvation."<sup>32</sup>

### Scripture or Philosophy?

Origen's treatment of the doctrine of God, however, raises issues about the authority of Scripture and its relationship with philosophy.<sup>33</sup> There is an inherent tension in his theology: while affirming the Christian nature of his task, he does not separate himself from the philosophical tradition which he has inherited. The two halves of *princ.* 1.1, which arrive at the same conclusions about God, appeal to fundamentally different sources to do so. Though Origen affirms the scriptural basis for his theology (e.g. *princ.* Pref.2), *princ.* 1.1.5-1.1.8 demonstrates his complicated relationship with philosophy. With the doctrine of God in particular, Origen leans heavily on philosophical terms and concepts which are not scriptural.<sup>34</sup> One example of this is *princ.* Pref.8, where Origen comments that the word

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<sup>31</sup> Origen distinguishes seeing from knowing, e.g. the Son knows but does not see the invisible Father, e.g. *mart.* 47.

<sup>32</sup> Widdicombe, *Fatherhood*, 20-21. Or as Lyman, *Christology*, 47, comments, "Origen's discussion of divine nature and will was not merely a speculative exercise, but a religious necessity to guard against the besetting spiritual distractions of the third century: fatalism, despair, superstition, and idolatry. He attempted to blend philosophical expressions of transcendence and goodness with religious affirmations of God's direct intervention in the structure of the world."

<sup>33</sup> Origen's relationship with philosophy has been an important issue in Origen scholarship for decades. See, e.g. Crouzel, *Origène et la philosophie* (Paris: Aubier, 1962); Hal Koch, *Pronoia und Paideusis* (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1932). For more recent treatments, see Emanuela Prinzivalli, 'Origen', in *The Cambridge History of Philosophy in Late Antiquity*, ed. Lloyd P. Gerson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 283-97; Rist, 'Beyond Stoic', 228-38; Ilaria Ramelli, 'Origen, Patristic Philosophy, and Christian Platonism Re-Thinking the Christianisation of Hellenism', *VC* 63 (2009), 217-63.

<sup>34</sup> Reinforcing Origen's belief that the words of Scripture do not show eloquence or rhetorical skill (*princ.* 4.1.7).

“incorporeal” (ἄσώματον) is not used in Scripture.<sup>35</sup> In *princ.* Pref.9, Origen notes that he will inquire whether this term is “found in the holy Scriptures under another name”.<sup>36</sup> He reveals this term in *Jo.* 13.132: invisible (ἄόρατον). But though “incorporeal” carries a more established philosophical and technical sense, which Origen applies regularly to God, he affirms that the simpler words of Scripture state all that is necessary to know God. For Origen, the eloquence of worldly learning does not equate to actual knowledge of God; Scripture’s knowledge encompasses and surpasses the philosophical tradition.<sup>37</sup> But at times philosophy is helpful in further explaining these truths. In certain places, Origen could reference Scripture to explain ideas about God but does not. For example, Origen never cites passages like Deuteronomy 6.4 in his discussions of the oneness or simplicity of God. Neither does he associate the “I am” in Exodus 3:14 with the concept of “being” (i.e. *ousia*) in Greek philosophy.<sup>38</sup>

Origen freely admits that non-Christians possess some knowledge about God and his Word because all people possess rational capacities.<sup>39</sup> But even unlearned Christians possess knowledge about God that the most learned philosophers do not.<sup>40</sup> True knowledge of God which leads to union with him and to salvation cannot be obtained

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<sup>35</sup> Behr, 1:18. A similar point is made in *princ.* 4.3.15. The only place where he notes it is used is in the non-canonical *Teaching of Peter* (*princ.* Pref.8). cf. Apuleius, *On Plato and his Doctrine* 1.5; Alcinous, *Did.* 10.7.

<sup>36</sup> Behr, 1:20.

<sup>37</sup> With the doctrine of God, Origen’s tendency is to discuss the being or existence of God in the language of philosophy, while he uses Scripture to describe God’s work or simpler things about God’s nature.

<sup>38</sup> For Origen’s treatment of God as “I am”, see Widdicombe, *Fatherhood*, 28-34. Widdicombe notes that Origen does not ever use Exodus 3:14 and Plato’s *Rep.* 509B together. Also Pierre Nautin, “Je suis celui qui est” (Exode 3, 14) dans la théologie d’Origène’, in *Dieu et l’Être: Exégèse de l’Exode 3, 14 et de Coran 20, 11-24* (Paris, 1978), 109-119.

<sup>39</sup> See esp. *princ.* 1.3.5, *Cels.* 6.4, *Jo.* 2.30.

<sup>40</sup> Origen notes four levels of knowledge in *Jo.* 2.27-31. Philosophers (i.e. Platonists) are the third rank who know only about the Logos but not his incarnation or crucifixion, unlearned Christians the second.

simply through belief in the existence of God and his Word, but is attained through the revelation of Scripture, through his Son and his Spirit (e.g. *Jo.* 19.21). Another example of the superiority of Christian knowledge, which will be discussed in a later chapter, is that knowledge of the existence of the Holy Spirit is only available to those familiar with the Scriptures (*princ.* 1.3.1).

Origen's attitude towards philosophy is best seen in his famous *Letter to Gregory* (*ep.* 2), in which he calls philosophy the helper of theology and introduces the idea of the "spoiling of the Egyptians". Origen felt free to utilize philosophy where he found it useful and helpful for theology, but to discard it where it was not.<sup>41</sup> As Mark Scott has noted, "if we accept his self-identification as a Christian writing for the church, recognizes that he internalizes more Platonic ideas than he cares to admit, and perceive how his unwavering Christian commitments and Platonic presuppositions engender dual internal tensions, we will begin to see him aright."<sup>42</sup> We must recognize Origen as a thinker drawing from multiple sources, willing to experiment with the interplay between theology and philosophy. Where Scripture is clear, Origen does not deny its authority; where Scripture is silent, Origen is willing to speculate or borrow. Origen thus views his task in articulating his doctrine of God as explaining what is stated in Scripture, which he at times clarifies and fleshes out with the help of philosophy.

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<sup>41</sup> See George Boys-Stones, *Post-Hellenic Philosophy: A Study of Its Development from the Stoics to Origen* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 195-200.

<sup>42</sup> Scott, *Journey*, 43. See also Lyman, *Christology*, 17-18, who notes that "the traditional opposition between biblical voluntarism and philosophical rationality contrasts not only different cultural world-views, but also the distinct approaches to reality found in religious and philosophical reflection... Scriptural writings did not provide an ontology, but rather portrayed a general pattern of divine transcendence and power, in description rather than analytical language."

## Divine Simplicity and the Attributes of God

As we have seen in *princ.* 1.1.6, Origen describes God as “oneness” and “unity”, reflecting the simplicity of the divine Mind. We have also seen that Origen prefers to describe God in generally apophatic terms: invisible, incorporeal, incomprehensible, and unknowable. Given how the Bible speaks of God’s attributes, both moral and personal, how does Origen account for descriptions of God’s traits or qualities?<sup>43</sup> Though Origen does not frequently discuss the “divine attributes” and speaks of God apophatically, he accepts and integrates scriptural discussions of these attributes into his theological system.<sup>44</sup> This aspect of his theology proper further testifies to his Middle Platonic assumptions about God’s nature and the logic he uses to account for and interpret descriptions and attributes of God found in significant scriptural passages.

One attribute which is not foreign to Origen’s Middle Platonic background is God’s goodness, a characteristic found both in Scripture (e.g. Mk 10.18, Wis 7.26) and in the Platonic tradition.<sup>45</sup> Drawing from both of these traditions, Origen holds to the idea that the Father is the only pure goodness and the source of goodness for all else. But scripturally, Origen derives this point from Mark 10.18.<sup>46</sup> An example of Origen’s statements on the Father’s goodness can be found in a fragment from Justinian:

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<sup>43</sup> Stead, *Divine Substance*, 163-66, gives two accounts: (1) the divine unity digests the plurality, that is, the changes in man give rise to different conceptions (*epinoiai*) of God, a view influenced by Stoicism which made its way into Christian orthodoxy. (2) By differentiation between absolute and lower unities, e.g. in the Neo-Platonists. Stead also notes that earlier Christians were not concerned with distinguishing between God’s substance and “energies”, though Origen is to a degree.

<sup>44</sup> It is in this regard that Origen diverges from the Platonic tradition; there is little, if any, description in Origen’s contemporary philosophers of what can be called “attributes of God” besides God as the Good, and other features that have already been discussed. See Harry Austryn Wolfson, ‘Albinus and Plotinus on Divine Attributes’, *HTR* 45.2 (1952), 115-30.

<sup>45</sup> I.e. in Plato’s “form of the good” in *Rep.* 508e2-3. The first god as form of the good is also a feature consistent in Middle Platonist thinkers.

<sup>46</sup> For more examples, see *Jo.* 1.253-254, 6.295. Origen may be rejecting the Stoic view of the virtues, in which the virtues of God and man are equal (e.g. *Cels.* 6.48, 4.29). He is also likely

[the Savior] is an image of God's goodness, but not goodness itself (αὐτοαγαθόν). And perhaps also the Son, while being good, is yet not good pure and simply (ἀπλῶς ἀγαθός)... so he is the image of the goodness, and yet not, as the Father is, good without qualification (ἀπαράλλάκτως ἀγαθός).<sup>47</sup>

Origen's point here is not that the Son is not good, but that he cannot be called goodness absolutely like the Father.<sup>48</sup> Instead, he is given the title "image of his goodness" (Wis 7.26), an indication that even his goodness comes from the Father.<sup>49</sup> The attribute "truth" is also treated similarly, i.e. that the Son is not truth when compared to the Father.<sup>50</sup> However, there has been some debate over the reliability of fragments like Justinian's, particularly because Rufinus' translation renders Origen so differently.<sup>51</sup> But as we will see in the next chapter, particularly in the Greek texts, Origen consistently displays a Christology in which the Son's attributes are derived from the Father's.<sup>52</sup> The idea that the Son possesses

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responding to Marcionite views of God, for which God cannot be good or just without qualification (see Widdicombe, *Fatherhood*, 26).

<sup>47</sup> Justinian, *Ep. ad Mennam* (Koetschau, *fr.* 6; Behr, 2:597.4) Also see Jerome, *Ep. ad Avitum* 2. For its reliability, see esp. H. Crouzel, 'Personnes de la Trinité sont-elles de puissance inégale selon Origène, Peri Archon 1, 3, 5-8', *Gregorianum* 57.1 (1976), 109-25. Though conflicting statements appear in the Rufinus-translated *On First Principles*, the general sense of the Justinian fragment (and supporting testimony by Jerome) more closely agree with language for God used by other Middle Platonists in Origen's time and Origen's writings elsewhere.

<sup>48</sup> John Dillon, 'Logos and Trinity', in *The Philosophy in Christianity*, ed. G Vesey (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 6-7, thinks that Origen's distinction between pure goodness and qualified goodness is borrowed from Numenius (e.g. *fr.* 16, 20). Numenius' understanding of the relationship between the first cause and the creator god (демиουργε) is similar to Origen's: "The creator stands in relation to the Good, which he imitates, just as becoming stands in relation to substance: he is its image and imitation" (Boys-Stones, *Platonist Philosophy 80 BC to AD 250: An Introduction and Collection of Sources in Translation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 181). Also note similar uses in Alcinoüs (*Did.* 10.3), Justin Martyr (*dial.* 4), and Attitcus (*fr.* 12).

<sup>49</sup> See *Cels.* 3.72, 8.14; *princ.* 1.2.5, 1.2.9. *Esp. com.in.Rom* 8.5.8: "The one true good is God, whose image of goodness is the Son and his Spirit, who is called good [cf. Ps 143.10] ... Therefore, he has designated as 'good things' that one good, since it consists in God, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit" (SC 543:476-478; Scheck, 104:147).

<sup>50</sup> See *Jo.* 2.151: "the Father of wisdom is greater than and surpasses wisdom" (SC 120:306; Heine, 80:134).

<sup>51</sup> Rufinus seems to have altered the text of *princ.* 1.2.13 to say that "the Son is not of some other 'goodness'" in order to emphasize their similarity (see Butterworth, *On First Principles*, 27 n.3).

<sup>52</sup> Lyman, *Christology*, 50-51: "Even within the Trinity divine substance is defined by qualities and activity in relation to the Father, the source of all being... On the one hand, Origen describes the Son and the Spirit as unquestionably divine, incorporeal and essential good. On the other hand,

goodness in the same way as the Father stands in conflict with Origen's generally Middle Platonic doctrine of God and the general character of his Christology; it represents instead concerns that appear in the divine equality debates of the fourth century.<sup>53</sup>

Other attributes that Origen more frequently references similarly display his reticence to speak of God's actual nature. Origen often makes references to God's light or glory (Wis 7.26, Heb 1.3),<sup>54</sup> or to his power (Wis 7.25).<sup>55</sup> Attributes like light, as we have seen, testify to God's work rather than his nature. Attributes like glory and power emphasize his transcendence rather than making any definite points about God's actual being. These attributes also do not suggest any variability or multiplicity in God's character or nature, and thus can be explained more easily.<sup>56</sup> Other characteristics like justice, truth, and wisdom are mentioned less frequently, used more often for the Son.<sup>57</sup> Though God's attributes are described throughout Scripture, we have seen that Origen tends to emphasize descriptions that do not make positive assertions, e.g. invisible,<sup>58</sup> incorporeal,<sup>59</sup>

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because the kind of nature is determined by the order of procession from the Father, both the Son and the Spirit are derivative and can thus be called created, and the Spirit who comes through the Son is sometimes described as the lowest element."

<sup>53</sup> cf. Numenius, *fr.* 16. Numenius speaks of four entities, the first is "the good itself", the second is the imitator, "the good creator" (Boys-Stones, *Platonist Philosophy*, 181). Numenius (*fr.* 20) also notes that the Good is called "the form of the good" (cf. Plato, *Rep.* 508e) and that "the Good is the form of the creator, who appears good to us by participation in the first and unique [Good]" (Boys-Stones, *Platonist Philosophy*, 182). Origen's doctrine of the Son follows this logic.

<sup>54</sup> Light: *princ.* 1.2.4, 4.4.1; *Cels.* 8.14. Glory: *princ.* 1.2.5, 1.2.7, 4.4.1; *Jo.* 13.153, 32.353; *Cels.* 8.12, 8.14; *com.in.Rom* 2.5.5, 4.8.8; *hom.in.Jer* 9.4.5.

<sup>55</sup> *princ.* 1.2.5, 1.2.9; *Jo.* 13.153; *Cels.* 8.14; *com.in.Rom* 1.5.2 (also 1 Cor 1.24). But in some places, Christ himself is also called power. Stead, *Divine Substance*, 213, suggests that attributes like God's glory and light and power (e.g. *Jo.* 13.152-53, *princ.* 1.2.9) mediate between the Father and Son.

<sup>56</sup> E.g. in *Cels.* 5.7, Origen rejects Jewish and philosophical views that suggest both that the world is God and that there is division in the divine, noting Stoics (1<sup>st</sup>), Platonists (2<sup>nd</sup>), others (3<sup>rd</sup>, likely Numenius). While it is clear that divine unity is important in philosophy prior to Origen (and also in Judaism), Origen considers himself the only one of these who truly adheres to this doctrine logically (SC 147:28-30; Chadwick, 268).

<sup>57</sup> Justice: *Jo.* 1.252, 2.53.

<sup>58</sup> *Jo.* 20.158, *Cels.* 6.64. See also *princ.* 1.1.8, 2.9.1.

<sup>59</sup> *Jo.* 13.131, 13.140; *princ.* 1.1.2. As light: *Cels.* 6.64.

and incomprehensible.<sup>60</sup> As he notes in *Cels.* 6.65, “none of the descriptions by words or expressions can show the attributes of God... there are, however, many qualities which cannot be named.”<sup>61</sup> Though Origen does not deny that God possesses attributes and titles, he does not believe that any descriptions do justice to God’s incomprehensibility.<sup>62</sup> Origen continues,

...it is possible by names to show something about His attributes in order to guide the hearer and to make him understand God’s character in so far as some of His attributes are attainable by human nature...<sup>63</sup>

While the fullness of God’s nature and character cannot be known, Scripture speaks of God’s attributes to allow people to know something about God, as far as their capacity allows. Origen thus admits positive attributes and moral qualities in God, but his overriding concern is to protect God’s immateriality, ineffability, and simplicity. Therefore, he makes extra effort to avoid the idea that God consists of parts or that he can be divided. He also avoids the notion of motion or “becoming” in God, ideas that suggest change.<sup>64</sup> This tendency is especially visible in Origen’s hesitance in *Jo.* 19.26 in explaining whether one can know God without knowing the Father, given that these different titles assume

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<sup>60</sup> *Jo.* 2.172, *princ.* 1.1.5. This reflects the Middle Platonist tendency towards negative theology, speaking of what God is not rather than by speaking of what he is (e.g. Alcinous, *Did.* 10.4). See Henny Fiskå Hägg, *Clement of Alexandria and the Beginnings of Christian Apophaticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); Salvatore Lilla, ‘La teologia negativa dal pensiero greco classico a quello patristico e bizantino’, *Helikon* 22 (1982), 229-77; John Whittaker, ‘Plutarch, Platonism and Christianity’, in *Studies in Platonism and Patristic Thought* (London: Variorum, 1984), 50-63; Deirdre Carabine, *The Unknown God: Negative Theology in the Platonic Tradition: Plato to Eriugena* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2015).

<sup>61</sup> SC 147:342; Chadwick, 380. cf. *mart.* 47: God “transcends the intelligible order” (GCS 2:43; Greer, 76).

<sup>62</sup> This stems from the Middle Platonist attitude towards human limitations in the knowledge of God. Raoul Mortley, *From Word to Silence: The Rise and Fall of Logos* (Bonn: Hanstein, 1986), 2:68, argues that Origen in *Cels.* 7.42-43 does not deny that God is “unspeakable” (cf. Plato, *Tim.* 28), but also does not deny the idea of Christian revelation in the incarnation, attributing the unspeakability to Paul’s experience of revelation in 2 Cor 12.4.

<sup>63</sup> *Cels.* 6.65 (SC 147:342; Chadwick, 380).

<sup>64</sup> cf. Numenius, *fr.* 11, 16.



that one can know God differently or by his different facets.<sup>65</sup> For Origen, the transcendence and simplicity of the Father must be guarded, but this is not the case with the Son. As we will see in the next chapter, Origen deals with this issue through the multiplicity of the Son's *epinoiai*, particularly how the Son "becomes" various things for the sake of creation.<sup>66</sup>

We have seen so far that Origen's doctrine of God, though in his own mind biblically grounded, draws heavily from Middle Platonic concepts. While Origen is able to build a scriptural foundation for this teaching, his concern is to preserve God's immateriality and transcendence, which is evident also in his discussions of the nature or being of God.

## God's Essence and Nature

Though Origen generally avoids speaking about God's very nature or being, there are several places in which he makes reference to it. In these instances, Origen does not consult Scripture, but instead alludes to the writings of Plato. Origen's intention in using the language of *ousia* is not to say that God's very being can be understood or measured or even explained, but in the Middle Platonic manner of his time, to emphasize the fact that God is unique in his existence and utterly transcendent. Citing Plato's *Rep.* 509B, Origen says,<sup>67</sup>

Since we affirm that the God of the universe is mind, or that He *transcends mind and being* (Plato, *Rep.* 509B), and is simple and invisible and

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<sup>65</sup> He simply asserts that, "For if there is one aspect of him in accordance with which he is Father, and another in accordance with which he is God, perhaps it is possible for someone to know God, but not to know the Father beyond knowing him as God, and not to know the Father" (SC 290:60; Heine, 89:173). His use of "aspect" (ἐπίνοιά) is notable as it is rarely applied to the Father, the only other instance in *dial.* 3. Though he uses it here to speak of the titles of the Father, he generally avoids speaking of any division or multiplicity in the Father.

<sup>66</sup> Boys-Stones, *Platonist Philosophy*, 166, notes that Origen's use of *epinoiai* to explain the relationship between God and the world is his own, but draws conceptually from Longinus.

<sup>67</sup> Origen cites or alludes to this text 6 times in his writings: *Cels.* 6.64, 7.38; *Jo.* 13.123, 13.152, 19.37; *Mart.* 47.

incorporeal, we would maintain that God is not comprehended by any being other than him made in the image of that mind.<sup>68</sup>

Origen repeats many of the points we have seen so far. However, he differs here in the idea that God transcends both mind and being, a statement which almost rings of Plotinus.<sup>69</sup> In another place where he cites this same quote (*Cels.* 6.64), Origen states that God “does not even participate in being”,<sup>70</sup> defining “being” as “to be unmoved and incorporeal” (ἐστῶσα καὶ ἀσώματος).<sup>71</sup> He then considers

... whether God “transcends being (οὐσίας) in rank and power” (Plato, *Rep.* 509B) and grants a share in being (οὐσίας) to those whose participation is according to His Logos, and to the Logos himself, or whether He is Himself being, in spite of the fact that He is said to be invisible by nature in the words that say of the Saviour: “Who is the image of the invisible God” (Col 1.15).<sup>72</sup>

Origen’s intention here is to explain the transcendent God’s interaction with creation through means of his Word. He suggests that God the Father is the source of all *ousia*, which is ministered to creation through his invisible Son. Origen’s reference to Plato is not an acknowledgment of Plato’s complete authority concerning matters of the divine. In most cases, Origen is not quoting *Rep.* 509B authoritatively, but as a point to take into

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<sup>68</sup> *Cels.* 7.38 (SC 150:100; Chadwick, 425): Νοῦν τοίνυν ἢ ἐπέκεινα νοῦ καὶ οὐσίας λέγοντες εἶναι ἀπλοῦν καὶ ἀόρατον καὶ ἀσώματον τὸν τῶν ὅλων θεόν, οὐκ ἂν ἄλλω τινὶ ἢ τῷ κατὰ τὴν ἐκείνου τοῦ νοῦ εἰκόνα γενομένῳ φήσομεν καταλαμβάνεσθαι τὸν θεόν. Widdicombe, *Fatherhood*, 37, notes that this is the only instance where “mind and being” appear together as designations of God

<sup>69</sup> Thus Williams’ note that Origen is “trembling on the brink of Plotinian solution” (Williams, *Arius*, 206-07).

<sup>70</sup> οὐσίας μετέχει ὁ θεός (SC 147:338; Chadwick, 379). Participation is always the lower in the higher. See David Balas, ‘The Idea of Participation in the Structure of Origen’s Thought: Christian Transposition of a Theme of the Platonic Tradition’, in *Origeniana: Premier Colloque International des Etudes Origeniennes* (Bari: Instituto di Letteratura Cristiana Antica, 1975), 261.

<sup>71</sup> This is in opposition to the Stoic notion of God – see Widdicombe, *Fatherhood*, 36. cf. *or.* 27.9.

<sup>72</sup> *Cels.* 6.64 (SC 147:340; Chadwick, 379-80): πότερον ἐπέκεινα οὐσίας ἐστὶ πρεσβεῖα καὶ δυνάμει ὁ θεός μεταδίδους οὐσίας οἷς μεταδίδωσι κατὰ τὸν ἑαυτοῦ λόγον καὶ αὐτῷ λόγῳ, ἢ καὶ αὐτός ἐστιν οὐσία.

consideration (e.g. *Cels.* 6.64, *Jo.* 13.123).<sup>73</sup> Origen's use of this quote, however, is not particularly inventive; it follows the general trend in his time to use Plato to speak of God as "beyond" or "outside" the created world.<sup>74</sup>

Origen's use of *Rep.* 509B, however, seems on the surface to be inconsistent in its articulation of God's metaphysical status, describing God as both "mind" (*princ.* 1.1.6) and "beyond mind".<sup>75</sup> This also is the case with *ousia*: though he cites Plato to say God "transcends being", he says in *Jo.* 20.158, "These are the doctrines of people who have not dreamed of an invisible and bodiless nature that is pure essence."<sup>76</sup> If this is the case, which did Origen believe: that God is mind and being or that he is beyond both?<sup>77</sup> Origen's seesawing suggests that he does not see a contradiction.<sup>78</sup> Rather, his description of God as transcendent in being or mind refers to the idea that God transcends any human understanding of either of these concepts. Simply put, Origen is not concerned whether God technically transcends *ousia* or is *ousia* itself; he simply wants to drive home the point

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<sup>73</sup> While Origen is influenced by Plato and acknowledges Plato's great learning, he is not entirely positive in his assessment of him (e.g. *Cels.* 6.5).

<sup>74</sup> See Boys-Stones, *Platonist Philosophy*, 162. Boys-Stones notes that while Platonists before Plotinus used this language frequently, Plotinus was innovative in his "radical interpretation" of it. cf. Atticus, *fr.* 12.

<sup>75</sup> See also *Cels.* 7.42. Parallels in Alcinous, *Did.* 10.2; Numenius, *fr.* 17.

<sup>76</sup> SC 290:232-234; Heine, 89:239: ἀπερ ἐστὶν δόγματα ἀνθρώπων μηδ' ὄναρ φύσιν ἀόρατον καὶ ἀσώματον πεφαντασμένων, οὕσαν κυρίως οὐσίαν. Refers to both Father and Son, also in *Cels.* 6.64. cf. Alcinous, *Did.* 10.3; Justin Martyr, *dial.* 4; Numenius, *fr.* 17.

<sup>77</sup> Widdicombe, *Fatherhood*, 34, 41-43, notes that commentators on this include Mortley (*Silence*, 2:73), Nautin (*Origène*, 85), and Williams (*Arius*, 140, 204-05). Mortley and Nautin are harsher in their criticism, Mortley calling Origen's indecision an embarrassment for him. Williams attributes this to Origen's "uneasy relationship between the constraint of Scriptural metaphor and assumptions of Platonic cosmology", though correctly identifying Origen's concern with the Father's transcendence.

<sup>78</sup> See Widdicombe, *Fatherhood*, 38-39. This supposed contradiction is also illuminated by Alcinous' statement that the first god/intellect "has everything in mind simultaneously and forever is greater than potential intellect" (*Did.* 10.2) or Numenius' reference to Plato: "The intellect which you humans conjecture to be the first is not. There is another intellect prior to it, more ancient and divine" (*fr.* 17). Both statements emphasize that God as first intellect is greater than the human concept of intellect, which is also Origen's point.

that God exists in a manner different from and above creation; humans cannot comprehend his being.<sup>79</sup> Therefore, his description of the Son as “being of beings” indicates that the Son’s *ousia* is not the same as the Father’s; this is repeated in *Cels.* 6.64 and in *Jo.* 13.152. Though the Son functions as the source of *ousia* for all of rational creation, his *ousia* is not utterly transcendent and unknowable in the way the Father’s is. Therefore, the Father alone is transcendent, the sole first principle, the only independent and entirely self-sustaining being, the true source of all *ousia*, even for the Son.<sup>80</sup>

Origen’s use of Plato’s “transcends *ousia*” also marks his safeguarding of God’s incorporeality.<sup>81</sup> For example, Origen’s discussion of God’s nature in *Jo.* 13 appears to target the Stoic view of God.<sup>82</sup> In *Jo.* 13.123, Origen mentions that others have “produced lengthy discussions of God and his essence (οὐσία),” some of which include that he “has a bodily nature (σωματικῆς φύσεως) which is composed of fine particles... like ether” or that “he is incorporeal (ἄσωμάτου) and is of a different essence (οὐσία) which transcends bodies in dignity and power.”<sup>83</sup> When speaking of God’s *ousia*, Origen is cautious to avoid usage that suggests corporeality. As we have seen in both *Cels.* 7.38 and 6.64, Origen qualifies discussions of God’s *ousia* with statements that deny any sense of materiality; only beings made in God’s noetic image can contemplate him (7.38), the Son is his invisible image (6.64). Because of this, Origen rejects statements like God “has *ousia*”, which rings of

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<sup>79</sup> As Stead, *Divine Substance*, 140, has noted, Origen’s use of Plato here suggests that “the Good transcends all human comprehension and so transcends the category of substance itself.”

<sup>80</sup> Again, Origen has biblical statements that could argue this point (e.g. 1 Cor 8.6), but he does not make any reference to such points in his more philosophically oriented discussion.

<sup>81</sup> E.g. *Jo.* 13.152. Widdicombe, *Fatherhood*, 40, notes that in this instance, Origen avoids answering the question he poses, but instead manipulates the issue to refute the Gnostic materialist abuse of “God is spirit” (Jn 4.24).

<sup>82</sup> E.g. in *or.* 27.8, where he contrasts the Stoic understanding of *ousia* with Platonic, cf. *Cels.* 1.21. See Stead, *Philosophy*, 166.

<sup>83</sup> *Jo.* 13.123 (SC 222:94-96; Heine, 89:93): ἄλλους ὑπερέκεινα οὐσίας πρεσβεῖα καὶ δυνάμει.

material substance. It is also probably for this reason that Origen does not establish the unity of the Son and Father on the concept of *ousia* as it suggests a material reproduction, choosing instead a model that is purely spiritual and noetic.<sup>84</sup> Therefore, in the manner of his time, Origen's use of *ousia* language tends not to be in the sense of "substance", a feature more common in later writers, but more in the sense of "being" or "essence" or even "existence".<sup>85</sup> In addition, Origen's use of *ousia* places God as the fount from which the being of all other things flow. God alone does not "participate in *ousia*"; if he did, there would be another existence ontologically prior to him.<sup>86</sup> Instead, Origen notes that the "being (οὐσίαν) of God is distinct from everything generated (πάντων τῶν γεννητῶν)"<sup>87</sup> or that "the glory that befits the divine essence is invisible to, and unapproachable by, any created nature."<sup>88</sup> This serves as further evidence that Origen does not use *ousia* in the sense of substance for the Father; the transcendence of God's *ousia* does not suggest a higher substance. Instead, God's ungenerated and unapproachable existence is uniquely

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<sup>84</sup> Esp. *Jo.* 20.157-158. As we will see, the idea of a shared *ousia* is present in Gnostic teaching.

<sup>85</sup> Stead, *Divine Substance*, 161-62, notes that even later patristic authors (e.g. Eusebius, Athanasius) were also hesitant to apply *ousia* to God, though this was not the case for Tertullian. Origen is more willing to say that the Son and Spirit have *ousia*, e.g. *Cels.* 6.64. In *or.* 5.1, Origen calls atheists people who "deny the being (οὐσίαν) of God" (GCS 3:308; Greer, 90). Tzamalikos, *Cosmology*, 87-88, notes that Origen's use of this language is not truly Platonic, Aristotelian, or Stoic – his intention is to articulate that God brought *ousia* into being and only uses it in a loose sense with God as he is beyond any notion of it. Also see Christoph Marksches, 'Was bedeutet οὐσία? Zwei Antworten bei Origenes und Ambrosius und deren Bedeutung für ihre Bibelerklärung und Theologie', in *Origenes und sein Erbe: gesammelte Studien* (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 2007), 173-93.

<sup>86</sup> See Athanasius, *De decr. Nic. syn.* 27.2 (Koetschau *fr.* 33; Behr, 2:616.24b), which Koetschau places next to *princ.* 4.4.1: "And when did the image of the ineffable and unnameable and unutterable being (*hypostaseos*) of the Father, his impress (Col 1.15), the Word who knows the Father, not exist?"

<sup>87</sup> *or.* 23.5 (GCS 3:353; Greer, 128).

<sup>88</sup> *fr.in.Lc* 140 (GCS 35:283-284; Lienhard, 94:181): ὅτι δὲ ἡ τῇ οὐσίᾳ τῇ θεῷ πρέπουσα δόξα πάση γεννητῇ φύσει ἀθέατος ἐστὶ καὶ ἀπρόσιτος. A reference to Christ's transfiguration.

his own; it is for this reason that Origen avoids defining God's *ousia* and unhesitatingly uses the phrase "transcends *ousia*".<sup>89</sup>

In summary, Origen's doctrine of God possesses many features common to Middle Platonic understandings of God. His priorities are to maintain God's immateriality and transcendence, as well as his simplicity and unity. He finds basis for these attributes in philosophical concepts, but reads them into the words of Scripture. Rather than being concerned with issues like essential unity of the divine persons, Origen seeks to preserve the uniqueness of the Father, placing him above and beyond all other existence.

### Essence and Persons Language and the Son

Origen's emphasis on the transcendence and superiority of the Father is further emphasized in his use of this same language for the Son. Origen uses *ousia* language differently for the Son, highlighting the Father's priority and the Son's ontological dependence on him.<sup>90</sup> The inevitable result is that Origen emphasizes the lower status of the Son compared to the Father. But Origen's primary concern in his use of this language for the Son is not to lower the Son's status, but to argue for his real and personal existence.

In *Jo.* 13.152, Origen says of the Son:

But although the Savior transcends in his essence, rank, power, divinity  
(ὑπερέχων οὐσίᾳ καὶ πρεσβείᾳ καὶ δυνάμει καὶ θειότητι) (for the Word is

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<sup>89</sup> *Jo.* 19.37: "First one apprehends the truth, so that in this way he may come to behold the essence, or the power and nature of God beyond the essence (τῇ ὑπερέκεινα τῆς οὐσίας δυνάμει καὶ φύσει τοῦ θεοῦ)" (SC 290:68; Heine, 89:176). cf. *Jo.* 1.115.

<sup>90</sup> For use of *ousia* language in the early fourth century, see Dragoș Andrei Giulea, 'Divine Being's Modulations: Ousia in the pro-Nicene Context of the Fourth Century', *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 59.3 (2015), 307–37. Scott, *Journey*, 27, notes that the "distinction between 'the first and the second God'" was a "major preoccupation" in Origen's time and sought to "distance the supreme God from involvement with the mundane world, particularly materiality and flux: 'The distinction is between a completely transcendent, self-intelligizing figure, and an active demiurgic one'" (quoting Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, 46).

living), and wisdom, being that are so great and of such antiquity, nevertheless, he is not comparable with the Father in any way.<sup>91</sup>

Origen's concern in this passage is to highlight the preeminence of the Son over all creation. He thus emphasizes the Son's greatness and preexistence, including the fact that he "transcends" in *ousia*. But in *ousia* and these other attributes, Origen is emphatic that only the Father is truly transcendent; his being is incomparable with the Son's.<sup>92</sup> This is confirmed also in *Cels.* 6.64, where Origen states that the Son is the "being of beings (οὐσίαν μὲν οὐσιῶν) and idea of ideas (ιδέαν ιδεῶν) and beginning (ἀρχὴν)... and his Father and God transcends all these".<sup>93</sup> Origen's description of the Son here is particularly Middle Platonic: the Son functions as the prototype of ideas and even the source of the *ousia* for all of creation.<sup>94</sup> But unlike the Father, the Son's *ousia* can be described and known; Origen is willing to speak about the Son's *ousia* in relation to creation.<sup>95</sup> Because the Son's *ousia* is less transcendent, he can serve as the mediator between the transcendent *ousia* and creation. Therefore, the source of all being is the Father who "grants a share in being (οὐσίας) to those whose participation is according to His Logos."<sup>96</sup> This means that the

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<sup>91</sup> *Jo.* 13.152 (SC 222:114; Heine, 89:100): Ἀλλ' ὅμως τῶν τοσούτων καὶ τηλικούτων ὑπερέχων οὐσίᾳ καὶ πρεσβείᾳ καὶ δυνάμει καὶ θειότητι - ἔμψυχος γὰρ ἔστι λόγος - καὶ σοφίᾳ, οὐ συγκρίνεται κατ' οὐδὲν τῷ πατρί.

<sup>92</sup> Widdicombe, *Fatherhood*, 39 n.105, notes that this is an anti-Marcionist, anti-Gnostic theme that runs throughout Origen's earlier works. Origen seems to change his opinion on the status of the Son compared to the Father; in *com.in.Mt* 15.10 (GCS 40:375-376), he notes that there is a "greater degree of correspondence" between the Father and Son's goodness than the Son's with humanity. James A. Lyons, *The Cosmic Christ in Origen and Teilhard de Chardin: A Comparative Study* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 105-06, argues that the difference between *com.in.Mt* 15.10 and *Jo.* 13.151 is not reflective of change in Origen's opinion, but that passages like *Jo.* 2.8-9 and *Cels.* 6.64 testify to the tension in Origen's theology of whether the Son is closer to Father or creation, meaning Origen views that Son as "existing on two levels", both divine and cosmic.

<sup>93</sup> SC 147:340; Chadwick, 380. See Berchman, *Platonism*, 84.

<sup>94</sup> In this he opposes Gnostic and Marcionite teachings which try to separate the creator of the Old Testament and the Father of Jesus. See Crouzel, *Origen*, 182.

<sup>95</sup> Stead, *Divine Substance*, 152, notes that the definition of *ousia* in *Cels.* 6.64 has moved away from "definition" to "ideal form".

<sup>96</sup> *Cels.* 6.64 (SC 147:340; Chadwick, 379).

Son is the intermediary *ousia* between the Father and creation; participation in the Father must be through him.<sup>97</sup> Therefore, the Son's *ousia* is similar to that of created beings in the sense that both participate or receive their *ousia* from another source.<sup>98</sup> But while the Son's *ousia* is greater than creation's, it is still less than the Father's.

Does Origen admit a similarity or participation in *ousia*? As we have seen, Origen affirms that the Son and Father are both invisible and incorporeal (e.g. *Jo.* 20.158) and that the Son possesses the “nature of a bodiless and invisible essence” (*naturam substantiae incorporeae atque invisibilis*) and thus resembles the Father, as the rational principle for creation (*princ.* 4.4.4).<sup>99</sup> Most of the Latin discussions of the *substantia* of the Son, however, are centered on the language of Hebrews 1.3, a topic which will be discussed in the next chapter. But this is a question that is difficult to answer, given the types of statements we have seen. While resemblance of *ousia* is likely and the Son's participation in the *ousia* of the Father for his existence can be assumed, it is not language that appears outside of the Rufinus-translated works.<sup>100</sup> But in *princ.* 4.4.3, Origen states that with the Son “it is [not] supposed that there took place any separation at all from the substance (*substantia*) of the Father,

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<sup>97</sup> See also *or.* 27.9, where the Son gives the “daily bread” or “bread for being”, which “is what corresponds most closely with rational nature and is akin to Being itself (τῇ οὐσίᾳ αὐτῇ συγγενής)” – the Word “shares its own immortality (ἀθανασία) with the one who eats it”(GCS 3:368-369; Greer, 142).

<sup>98</sup> Lyman, *Christology*, 47, notes that Origen “attempted to blend philosophical expressions of transcendence and goodness with religious affirmations of God's direct intervention in the structure of the world. The result was a dynamic ontology which has been described as ‘relational’, or ‘participatory’, since all existence is defined as good by its relationship to God's being and will.” Lyman, 48, also notes that Origen uses a “common Platonic idea of participation not as an abstract relation to a constitutive Form, but rather to express a state or condition of individual relationship to an active, intentional divine being” (citing Stead, *Divine Substance*, 141). For more on the philosophical background of participation, see Plaxco, ‘Didymus’, 25-28, 48.

<sup>99</sup> Behr, 2:566-67. Also *princ.* 1.6.4 (Behr, 1:117): “to live and exist without bodies... is thought to be a property of God alone”. In *princ.* 4.4.1, Rufinus inserts a gloss about God's substance is not changed to the Son or that the Son is not procreated out of the Father – showing he also inherits this concern in representing Origen. cf. *Jo.* 20.159.

<sup>100</sup> E.g. in the idea that all other gods participate in the Father for divinity (*Jo.* 2.17) or the aforementioned *Cels.* 6.64, where God alone is not participated in – everything participates in him.



which is everywhere.”<sup>101</sup> While there is clearly no separation between the two persons, the issue of *ousia* is more difficult to resolve.

More often, Origen’s concern in his discussions of the Son’s *ousia* is to establish the Son’s personal and concrete existence.<sup>102</sup> This concern reveals the context in which Origen’s theology is being shaped, in opposition to the denial of the Son’s personal existence, a problem which does not apply to the Father. Combatting Monarchian views, Origen condemns those who “do not give [the Son] substance (ὑπόστασιν) nor elucidate his essence” (οὐσίαν).<sup>103</sup> In these instances, Origen’s opponents conflate the Son’s existence with the Father’s, a point which Origen is quick to dismiss.<sup>104</sup> Origen responds that the Son is “invested with substance” (οὐσιωμένον) and not separate from God (Jo. 1.152).<sup>105</sup> In these examples, Origen shows little concern about the nature of the Son’s *ousia*, i.e. what his substance is, but cares only to demonstrate that the Son has *ousia*. We see, therefore, that Origen’s uses *ousia* language for the divine persons makes different points: for the Father it stresses his transcendence, for the Son his personal existence. Therefore, while we can ask questions about the origin and relation of the Son’s *ousia* to the Father’s, Origen is not

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<sup>101</sup> Behr, 2:566-67. In Jo. 1.292, Origen notes again that the Savior “excels” the many other powers of God and that the reason within human beings “has no individuality apart from us – possessing substance (ὑπόστασιν) ‘in the beginning,’ that is in wisdom” (SC 120:206; Heine, 80:94).

<sup>102</sup> See R.P.C. Hanson, ‘Did Origen apply the word homoousios to the Son?’, in *Epektasis: Melanges patristiques offerts au Cardinal Danielou*, ed. J. Fontaine and C. Kannengieser (Paris: Beauchesne, 1972), 293, who notes that Origen’s use of *ousia* with reference to the Son speaks of “the Son’s distinct reality within the Godhead”.

<sup>103</sup> Jo. 1.151-52 (SC 120:136-138; Heine, 80:64-65). Also see Jo. 2.149, where Origen suggests Jn 1.4 could be read as “the Father is not distinct from the Son in essence (οὐσίᾳ)” (SC 120:304; Heine, 80:134). While Valentinianism is clearly an issue throughout Jo., recent scholarship has highlighted the significance of the Monarchian issue for Origen. See Waers, ‘Monarchianism’, 215-299.

<sup>104</sup> Though there are some similarities in this with Heracleon’s use of *homoousios*, the issues are different, as will be seen shortly.

<sup>105</sup> SC 120:136; Heine, 80:64.

concerned with these issues; he simply uses this term for the Son to emphasize his personal distinction.

### *Hypokeimenon*

But distinction is not a denial of the Son's divinity. Instead, Origen shows concern to argue for the Son's real existence in a context where opponents are denying the Son's divinity. By establishing the Son's personal existence, Origen is able to speak of the Son as a divine person alongside the Father, emphasizing their special relationship, but preserving the Father's uniqueness. Origen does this not only through the language of *ousia*, but also through terms like *hypokeimenon* and *hypostasis*, all of which differ in meaning, but are used to argue the same point.<sup>106</sup>

Origen's desire to defend the Son's personal existence is evident in the few cases where he speaks of the *hypokeimenon* of the Son.<sup>107</sup> This concern can be seen in a statement Origen makes in *Jo.* 10.246:

They think that these statements prove that the Son does not differ from the Father in number, but that both being one, not only in essence (οὐσίᾳ), but also in substance (ὑποκειμένῳ), they are said to be Father and Son in relation to certain differing aspects (ἐπινοίας), not in relation to their reality (ὑπόστασιν).<sup>108</sup>

Origen's here again seems to be facing a Monarchian theology which views the Son and the Father as different aspects of one subject. Origen's use of three different terms reflects his belief that the Son exists as a real personal being who is distinguishable from the Father;

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<sup>106</sup> See Williams, *Arius*, 132. Williams notes that *hypostasis* and *ousia* are basically synonyms, meaning "real individual substance... as opposed to existence as a mental construct only".

<sup>107</sup> TLG defines *hypokeimai* as 'to underlie, as the foundation in which something else inheres, to be implied or presupposed by something else' e.g. '(1) to the matter which underlies the form, (2) to the substance (matter + form) which underlies the accidents.' cf. *Cels.* 2.76, 4.60; *princ.* 3.1.10; *Jo.* 2.146, 6.85.

<sup>108</sup> SC 157:530; Heine, 80:309. It is evident from this is that his *epinoiai* are not the foundation for his personhood. Origen's treatment of this term will be discussed in the next chapter.

they are different and distinguishable fundamentally, both in *ousia* and *hypokeimenon*.<sup>109</sup> The result of this is Origen's conclusion that the "Son is other (ἕτερον) than the Father", an affirmation of personal distinctions, not a denial of their relatedness.

In other similar instances, Origen comments that the Son "subsists in his essence (οὐσιωδῶς) insofar as the substance is concerned (κατὰ τὸ ὑποκείμενον)" (Jo. 6.188) or even that the Son is a "being and subject distinct from the Father" (or. 15.1).<sup>110</sup> Origen's use of *hypokeimenon* alongside *ousia* makes it difficult to discern the precise sense that Origen intends with each word. The semantic range of *hypokeimenon* is slightly different than *ousia*, ranging from the literal root meaning of "that which underlies" or its simple definition "subject".<sup>111</sup> This first meaning gives it a nuance closer to "substance" than *ousia*, though it is unlikely that Origen uses it to refer to this idea.

But given how he uses *ousia* elsewhere as being or existence or reality, his use of *hypokeimenon* alongside it mean it likely has a slightly different nuance. Origen's uses of *hypokeimenon* suggest that it emphasizes the personal distinction of the Son, e.g. in the sense of "subject". It is even possible that, avoiding any material or corporeal sense, Origen uses *hypokeimenon* to emphasize the Son's "sonness", as a foundation for his personhood. But Origen's intention in using this term is to argue for the Son's concrete personhood; he covers all his bases by using a variety of different terms to prove without a doubt that the Son exists separately from the Father, possessing an *ousia* and *hypokeimenon* of his own.

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<sup>109</sup> See Stead, *Philosophy*, 181-82.

<sup>110</sup> Jo. 6.188 (SC 157:268; Heine, 80:221); or. 15.1 (GCS 3:334; Greer, 112): κατ' οὐσίαν καὶ ὑποκείμενον ἔστιν ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ πατρὸς. This comes in a discussion of who prayer should be addressed to.

<sup>111</sup> Stead, *Divine Substance*, 72-73, also defines it as "the thing itself which undergoes or possesses them [accidental qualities/states]." Stead notes that in Aristotle it often refers to the concrete whole or to its matter, contrasted to *ousia*, which is used with reference to the concrete whole or its form. Also note the Stoic sense as "individual" (Stead, *Philosophy*, 127-28).

One last instance in which *hypokeimenon* appears is in Origen's discussion of the one and many in the person of Christ. In *hom.in.Jer* 8.2.1, Origen notes that in Christ there is "one substance (ὑποκείμενον)" though Christ is many in aspects.<sup>112</sup> Although the issue that Origen is addressing here is different, the point that he is making is the same. Though Christ possesses many attributes and aspects, he is a single subject.

### *Hypostasis*

Origen's concern to defend the individual existence or personhood of the Son is seen most clearly in his use of the term *hypostasis*.<sup>113</sup> With this term specifically, Origen shows a willingness to speak of the Father and the Son together, as a unity of divine persons. One particularly relevant use of this term can be found in *Cels.* 8.12:

Therefore we worship the Father of the truth and the Son who is the truth; they are two distinct existences (δύο τῇ ὑποστάσει πράγματα), but one in mental unity (ὁμονοία), in agreement (συμφωνία), and in identity of will (ταυτότητι τοῦ βουλήματος).<sup>114</sup>

Origen uses the phrase δύο τῇ ὑποστάσει πράγματα to emphasize the distinction between the personal existences of the Son and the Father.<sup>115</sup> It is notable that Origen speaks of Father and Son as two *hypostases*; he does not do so the same way with either *ousia* or *hypokeimenon*.<sup>116</sup> Again, it is difficult to distinguish the nuances this term from the other

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<sup>112</sup> SC 238:358, Smith, 97:77. The formula is repeated in *hom.in.Jer* 27.4.1, but in Latin. Also see *com.in.Rom* 5.6.7: Christ is one in essence (*substantia*) yet many in virtues/operations (*uirtutibus/operationibus*) (SC 539:450; Scheck, 103:348).

<sup>113</sup> For background, see Jürgen Hammerstaedt, 'Hypostasis', *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* vol. 16 (Stuttgart, 1993), 986-1035; Volker Drecoll, 'Der Begriff Hypostasis bei Origenes: Bemerkungen zum Johannes-kommentar II, 10', in *Origeniana Octava* (Leuven: Peeters, 2003), 479-487. See also Ilaria Ramelli, 'Origen, Greek Philosophy, and the Birth of the Trinitarian Meaning of Hypostasis', *HTR* 105.03 (2012), 302-50.

<sup>114</sup> SC 150:200; Chadwick, 460-61.

<sup>115</sup> Ramelli, 'Hypostasis', 303, translates *hypostasis* as "individual substance," which captures the nuance of the term, but is problematic in that it does not agree with Origen's tendency to avoid "substance". Stead, *Divine Substance*, 134, translates it as "independent reality".

<sup>116</sup> Also *com.in.Mt* 17.14: ὁποῖοι εἰσιν οἱ συγγέοντες πατρός καὶ υἱοὶ ἑννοίαν καὶ ὑποστάσει ἑνὰ διδόντες εἶναι τὸν πατέρα καὶ τὸν υἱόν, τῇ ἐπινοίᾳ μόνῃ καὶ τοῖς ὀνόμασι <μόνοις> διαιροῦντες τὸ ἓν

two, given their use together. But *hypostasis* is Origen's favorite term to speak of the Son's existence, appearing more frequently than the other two in this context. In places where *hypostasis* appears alongside *ousia*, Origen's emphasis appears to be on the real personal existence of the Son, compared to his being or general existence.<sup>117</sup> For example, in *Cels.* 1.23, Origen challenges Celsus to demonstrate the "existence and reality" (ὑπόστασιν καὶ οὐσίαν) of the Greek gods,<sup>118</sup> or in *Jo.* 1.151, dealing with Monarchian opponents, he comments that "they do not give [the Son] substance (ὑπόστασιν) nor do they elucidate his essence (οὐσίαν)."<sup>119</sup> In both cases, Origen stresses the idea that for a being to truly exist, it must possess a distinct personal existence and an actual being or reality. The Greek gods do not possess either of these, while the Son clearly has both.<sup>120</sup>

However, we must be careful in the conclusions that we make based on Origen's use of *hypostasis*.<sup>121</sup> Origen appears to have been the first to use *hypostasis* in a Trinitarian sense

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ὑποκείμενον (GCS 40:624). See Antonio Orbe, 'Origenes y Los Monarquianos', *Gregorianum* 72.1 (1991), 39–72.

<sup>117</sup> E.g. *Jo.* 32.192–93, 1.244, 1.292, 2.215.

<sup>118</sup> SC 132:132; Chadwick, 22. Also *Cels.* 8.67. Given how Origen uses *hypostasis* and *ousia* elsewhere, Chadwick's translation does a decent job in preserving Origen's overall meaning.

<sup>119</sup> SC 120:136; Heine, 80:64. Stead, *Philosophy* 140, comments that here it must be more than "bare existence" and must be translated "substance". Also see *princ.* 1.2.2: "Let no one, however, suppose that when we call him *the Wisdom of God*, we mean something unsubstantial (*aliquid insubstantium*)" (Behr, 1:40–41).

<sup>120</sup> In *or.* 27.8, Origen gives definitions of both *ousia* and *hypostasis*, likely taken from a textbook (see Stead, *Divine Substance*, 138). In a discussion of the "daily bread" in the Lord's prayer, Origen offers both Platonic and Stoic definitions of these terms: "Those who say that substance (ὑπόστασιν) chiefly pertains to incorporeal things customarily refer "being" (οὐσία) in its strict sense to incorporeal things, since they exist steadfastly and neither admit any addition nor suffer any loss" (GCS 3:367–368; Greer, 140–41). His own usage is more Platonic.

<sup>121</sup> This is the problem in Ramelli's treatment of this (see 'Hypostasis', 302–350). Ramelli interprets Origen's notion of the difference between the Son and the Father to refer to the Son's human nature. She also assumes Origen's belief in a shared Trinitarian *ousia* and Origen's actual use of *homousios*. Evidence Ramelli cites for this includes *Schol.Mt.* PG 17:309.47 and *Jo.* 2.149 (304). The first reference is dubious in authorship, the second she clearly misreads. She also places too much importance on Athanasius' *decr.* 27.1–2 (see n.86 above).

and may have even influenced his contemporary philosophical use of this term.<sup>122</sup> There is no doubt that Origen's use of this term had an impact on later usage of this term, particularly on the Cappadocians. But Origen's use of this term is different than those who come after him; he does not assume a shared Trinitarian *ousia*. His description of the Son as *heteros* from the Father is not a purely personal distinction, but a reflection of his belief in the transcendence of the Father over the Son.<sup>123</sup> Second, even up until Athanasius, theologians were using *ousia* and *hypostasis* nearly synonymously, a feature also present in Origen's thought.<sup>124</sup> The difficulty in differentiating these terms shows that their usage was not standardized in Origen's time.<sup>125</sup> Though Origen is comfortable affirming that there are "three *hypostases*," the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (*Jo.* 2.75), the implications of this statement are very different in his time and context than they would be in the fourth century.<sup>126</sup> Rather, combatting the dangers of Gnostic and Monarchian thought, Origen argued for the concrete and personal existence or *hypostasis* of the Son to distinguish him from the Father, for which he also used the terms *ousia* and *hypokeimenon*.

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<sup>122</sup> Stead, *Philosophy*, 181, notes that Neoplatonists introduced "hypostasis" as *terminus technicus*. See esp. Porphyry, *vit. Plot.* 25.

<sup>123</sup> E.g. *dial.* 2.18, 22 (Heraclides).

<sup>124</sup> Stead, *Philosophy*, 178, notes that there is a difference in theory between the two terms, but that it is difficult to discern what that is. Hanson, 'Did Origen Teach that the Son is *ek tes ousias* of the Father?', in *Origeniana Quarta* (Innsbruck: Tryolia-Verlag, 1987), 201, argues that *ousia*, *hypostasis*, and *hypokeimenon* are virtual synonyms in Origen's writings, *ousia* never being used to refer to essence or substance.

<sup>125</sup> For example, when referring to humans, Origen notes, "our true substance (ἡ προηγουμένη ὑπόστασις)... is in our being according to the image of the Creator" (*Jo.* 20.182: SC 290:248; Heine, 89:244-245), or "they have taken into the very essence (ὑπόστασιν) of their soul the works caused by evil" (*Cels.* 6.26: SC 147:242; Chadwick, 341).

<sup>126</sup> SC 120:254; Heine, 80:114. It should be noted that Origen is concerned in this passage to distinguish the Spirit from the Father and the Son (e.g. he is not "unbegotten"), the conclusion being that he is inferior to both.

Origen's concern to distinguish the personal existence of the Son is also evidence in his use of other terms to argue this same point. One instance of this is found in *Jo.* 2.16:

They either deny that the individual nature (ιδιότητα) of the Son is other (ἐτέρων) than that of the Father by confessing him to be God whom they refer to as "Son" in name at least, or they deny the divinity (θεότητα) of the Son and make his individual nature (ιδιότητα) and essence as an individual (τὴν οὐσίαν κατὰ περιγραφὴν) to be different (ἐτέρων) from the Father.<sup>127</sup>

Here we see a similar point being argued, but in slightly different language. Origen's use of *ιδιότης* is significant in that there is a firm recognition of that which makes the Son the Son and the Father the Father; each has his own specific characteristics that make him who he is. It is also clear here that Origen is again opposing two incorrect views that Christians make in their attempt to secure the piety of God.<sup>128</sup> In the first, God the Father is confused with the Son; any distinctions between the two are erased. In the second, the opposite problem occurs: out of a desire to protect the uniqueness of God, the Son's divinity is denied. Because of this, the Son is made to be a being different from and even independent of the Father. Origen, therefore, wants to protect the individuality of the Son (*ιδιότητα*), while at the same time protecting his divinity (*θεότητα*).<sup>129</sup> This passage demonstrates that Origen holds firmly to a distinction of personal characteristics (*ιδιότητα*), but denies difference in other regards, i.e. divinity.<sup>130</sup> He does not make any statements about the quality or source of that divinity (i.e. the Father), but assumes it is

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<sup>127</sup> *Jo.* 2.16 (SC 120:216; Heine, 80:98). See Eusebius, *h.e.* 6.33.1, where Eusebius notes that Beryllus is the first to argue that the Son does not preexist κατ' ἰδίαν οὐσίας περιγραφὴν, to which Origen responds (Loeb 265:86-87).

<sup>128</sup> Waers, 'Monarchianism', 283-286, argues convincingly for the Monarchian context of this passage, the first what some would call a Sabellian view, the second what Waers calls "psilanthropism" or adoptionism.

<sup>129</sup> But Origen also uses language of two gods, e.g. "but one God, the Father and the Son" (*Cels.* 8.12: SC 150:200; Chadwick, 460; *dial.* 2.26: SC 67:58; Daly, 54:59). He may have found precedence for this language in biblical passages like John 17.21-22 and 14.10-11.

<sup>130</sup> Lyman, *Christology*, 72, calls this a "contingent divinity" or "divinity by proximity" – it is derivative but unquestionable. See Ch. 3, p.137.

shared.<sup>131</sup> Origen's use of the phrase "essence as an individual" (τὴν οὐσίαν κατὰ περιγραφὴν) is also significant, in that it again demonstrates Origen's belief in the Son's distinct personhood, even if used here in a negative context. The fact that he does not use *hypostasis* is also notable, given his use of it elsewhere. On the one hand, Origen's use of οὐσία here shows that he does not mind using it to speak of personal distinctions, consistent with what we have seen so far. The addition of κατὰ περιγραφὴν further emphasizes the Son's "individual being" or "individual existence" in a way similar to how he uses *hypostasis*.<sup>132</sup> It is yet another term that Origen throws into the mix to testify to the Son's personal existence, this time emphasizing the Son's distinctive character.<sup>133</sup> But it seems that Origen's use of this phrase, particularly the addition of κατὰ περιγραφὴν, further qualifies and enhances his use of οὐσία to define or distinguish personhood.<sup>134</sup> In any case, this passage further highlights Origen's belief in the distinct personhoods of the Father and the Son. It also reminds us of the limitations in Origen's language, seen in his use of a variety of terms including *ousia* and *hypostasis*. This statement also assumes the priority of God over the Son. Origen and his opponents thus represent different responses to the issue of the distinction of the Son from the Father. Though Origen deals with this

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<sup>131</sup> Origen also notes that everything is made God by participation in the Father's divinity and the Firstborn "drew divinity into himself" (*Jo.* 2.17: SC 120:218; Heine, 80:99). He also says the Father holds the place of divinity, the Son of reason (*Jo.* 2.20). While Origen finds it incorrect to deny the Son's divinity, it is clear that like goodness, it is derived (see *Jo.* 13.152). Even the angels partake in God's divinity (*Cels.* 7.65). This agrees generally with the earlier discussion of God the Father as *autotheos* or *autoagathos*. cf. *Jo.* 13.234.

<sup>132</sup> Also note similar usage in *Jo.* 1.291-92. See Matthew Crawford, "The Triumph of Pro-Nicene Theology over Anti-Monarchian Exegesis: Cyril of Alexandria and Theodore of Heraclea on John 14:10-11", in *J ECS* 21.4 (2013), 549-55. Also see Balas, 'Participation', 269-70.

<sup>133</sup> Lampe (PGL) defines it as "distinctive property, specific character; of God, attribute". LSJ offers the following definitions: 'peculiar nature, property, specific character' or 'particular existence, individuality'.

<sup>134</sup> Waers, 'Monarchianism', 286 n.125, compares his usage to Clement of Alexandria, who in his *Excerpta ex Theodoto* 19, uses it to distinguish the Son, but does not go as far as to use *ousia*. cf. Alcinous (*Did.* 8.2, 29.3); Plutarch (*De Iside et Osiride* 382A, 8).



issue by arguing for the Son's personhood, he is also willing to say that the Son is different from the Father rather than allow the opposite.

We see, therefore, that Origen's discussions of the Son's personhood show little interest in ideas like shared *ousia* or unity on the basis of it. Instead, assuming similarity by relations, Origen's concerns are indicative of issues present in his time: he employs a variety of terms to individuate the Son's existence from the Father's. He assumes they are similar, but emphasizes their distinction. Though Origen undoubtedly influenced later writers in the language he employed, his major concerns were to argue for the Son's real personhood against those who denied it and to affirm the Son's place and work next to the Father. While Origen assumes, to a degree, a shared divinity between Father and Son, particularly in the face of opposing Monarchian arguments, he assumes a difference between the two in *ousia* and status. Therefore, while he is, to a degree, concerned with the issue of Father-Son unity in these passages, it is not his major concern; he chooses to speak of this unity in a different way.

### The Son's Unity with the Father

Although Origen emphasizes personal and even essential differences between the Father and the Son, he does not deny their unity. Instead, he chooses to speak of their relationship in a manner consistent with his understanding of God: as immaterial and noetic. As we will see, he chooses to speak in the language of a shared will, emphasizing the Son's conformation to and participation in the will of the Father, both in his person and work. Therefore, it is a foregone conclusion that Origen does not ground the unity of divine persons in the concepts of shared essence or being.

But one major issue in Origen scholarship has been whether or not Origen actually used the word *homoousios* to describe the divine Father-Son relationship.<sup>135</sup> The basis for this argument comes from the pens of Pamphilus of Caesarea in the third century and Rufinus in the fourth, who use this as an argument for Origen's orthodoxy.<sup>136</sup> A main point of conflict has been Origen's lost *Commentary on Hebrews*, which Pamphilus' text cites as evidence. Hanson argues that Rufinus was intentionally deceptive in his editing of Pamphilus, a point which he bolsters with the support of Jerome.<sup>137</sup> More recently, Mark Edwards has argued that Origen did actually use *homoousios* and in a Trinitarian sense.<sup>138</sup> Edwards, however, clarifies this by noting that he does so "analogically and not dogmatically" and that for Origen, the Father and Son "possess a common nature in the same degree, though not of course of the same kind, as a bodily subject and its emanation."<sup>139</sup> Though Origen's Trinitarian or Christological use of the *homoousios* is still debated, what is not debatable is the nature of that usage, if it is real.

*Homoousios* does appear elsewhere in Origen's writings, in the *Commentary on John*.<sup>140</sup> But in these particular instances, Origen is responding to Heracleon's nuanced use of this term to describe (1) those who are spiritual and thus *homoousios* with God and (2) those

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<sup>135</sup> See Hanson, 'homoousios', 293-303. Hanson argues that he does not. For a summary of the scholarship, see Scheck, introduction to Pamphilus, *Apology for Origen*, 23. Others who deny Origen's use of this term include Danielou and Simonetti, and more recently Amacker, Junod, Williams, and Rowekamp. Others like Kelly and Crouzel have argued for the affirmative.

<sup>136</sup> See Pamphilus, *Apology for Origen* 94 (Scheck, 120:83); Rufinus', *On the Falsification of Origen* 1 (Scheck, 120:124). Both also refer to Origen's belief that the Holy Spirit was not created as evidence for his orthodoxy. In reading Pamphilus, however, we must remember that *homoousios* was not an established term in his time, and that this text is preserved only in Rufinus' translation.

<sup>137</sup> I.e. Jerome's testimony (in *Apologia adversus Libros Rufini*) that the *Apology for Origen* was not by Pamphilus.

<sup>138</sup> Mark Edwards, 'Did Origen apply the word homoousios to the Son?', *JTS* 49.2 (1998), 658-70.

<sup>139</sup> Edwards, 'homoousios', 668. This is a reference to a fragment from the now lost *Commentary on Hebrews*.

<sup>140</sup> *Jo.* 13.148-50, 20.168-70, 20.205-206.

who are evil as *homoousios* with the devil.<sup>141</sup> In each of these instances, Origen's response is expectedly negative, particularly in the first example.<sup>142</sup> On these grounds, we should be wary of statements like that of Jerome, which assert Origen's belief that God and rational creation share the same substance.<sup>143</sup> Given what we have seen so far, particularly in how Origen guards God's *ousia* or uses it for the personal existence of the Son, it is extremely unlikely that he would have agreed with the idea that the Son and Father are *homoousios*, especially as an explanation for the Son's origins or status. More likely than not, Heracleon's usage contributed to Origen's avoidance of the term, especially considering the various implications that it would have held.<sup>144</sup> It is also extremely unlikely, for similar reasons, that Origen would have been comfortable with the idea that the Son is "from the *ousia*" of the Father.<sup>145</sup> R.P.C. Hanson has argued that there are clear instances in which Origen rejects this idea, seen particularly in his statements that the Son is different (*heteros*) from the Father.<sup>146</sup> As we will see in the next chapter, Origen's tendency is to speak of the Son as coming from the Father's light, glory, or even his power, not from the being of the Father himself.<sup>147</sup> To say that the Son is generated out of the Father's *ousia* is to suggest a material generation, a point which Origen is adamant to avoid. Specifically, in

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<sup>141</sup> See Stead, *Divine Substance*, 209-214. See also Williams' definition of *homoousios* for Origen: "to designate co-ordinate members of a single class, beings sharing the same properties" (*Arius*, 134-35).

<sup>142</sup> His issue being that human beings who are capable of sin cannot be said to be the same in essence as God.

<sup>143</sup> Jerome, *Ep. ad Avitum* 14 (Butterworth, 326 n.1).

<sup>144</sup> This term also appears on the *Dialogue of Adamantius*. While most scholars agree that it was not written by Origen, Ilaria Ramelli has argued that it is, and even uses the appearance of *homoousios* in it as grounds for Origen's belief in the *homoousios* of the Son with the Father (see Ramelli, "The *Dialogue of Adamantius*: A Document of Origen's Thought?", *StPatr* 52 (2012), 71-98, 268-73).

<sup>145</sup> See Hanson, 'ek tes ousias', 201-202. Hanson dismisses two supposed instances of this (*fr.in.Jn* 9 and *com.in.Rom* 4.10) which some have argued show Origen's adherence to this formula.

<sup>146</sup> See n.129 above. cf. *or.* 15.1.

<sup>147</sup> Origen prefers to speak in the language of "image", drawing especially from Hebrews 1.3: χαρακτήρ τῆς ὑποστάσεως (see esp. *Jo.* 13.153). Also see *princ.* 1.2.5-1.2.8; *com.in.Rom* 2.5.5, 4.8.8.

Jo. 20.157, Origen denies the views of those who say that “God is diminished and lacking... in the essence (οὐσίᾳ) that he formerly had, when he has begotten the Son.”<sup>148</sup> He continues on in 20.158 to explain that these people also believe “that the Father and the Son are corporeal (σῶμα), and that the Father has been divided (διηρησθαι).”<sup>149</sup> As God’s incorporeality and unity are two of the major points that characterize Origen’s doctrine of God, it seems obvious that he would not affirm this “*ek tes ousias*” formula. We can conclude, therefore, that *homoousios* or *ousia*-based unity is not a concept that Origen held to, at least not in the way that Rufinus claims.

### Shared Will

What then forms the unity between the Son and the Father? In *Cels.* 8.12, Origen says the following about the Father-Son relationship:

Therefore we worship the Father of the truth and the Son who is the truth; they are two distinct existences (δύο τῇ ὑποστάσει πράγματα), but one in mental unity (ὁμονοία), in agreement (συμφωνία), and in identity of will (ταυτότητι τοῦ βουλήματος).<sup>150</sup>

This statement contains no suggestions of a shared essence or substance, but imagines the unity of the Son and the Father on purely noetic terms. This statement is in full agreement with Origen’s discussion in *princ.* 1.2.6 of the Son as “an act of will (*voluntas*) proceeding from the intellect (*ex mente procedens*)”.<sup>151</sup> As a purely rational being and idea of ideas, the

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<sup>148</sup> SC 290:232; Heine, 89:239.

<sup>149</sup> SC 290:232-234; Heine, 89:239.

<sup>150</sup> SC 150:200; Chadwick, 460-461.

<sup>151</sup> Behr, 1:48-49. Origen continues: “And therefore I consider that the will of the Father ought to be sufficient for the subsistence (*subsistendum*) of what he wills; for in willing he uses no other means than that which is produced by the counsel of his will”. He also repeats this in *princ.* 1.2.9, noting, “although it proceeds from the power itself as will proceeding from intellect, nevertheless, even the will of God itself becomes a power of God” (Behr, 1:54-55). Also, the Son announces the will of the Father (Jo. 1.283). cf. Jerome, *Apol. adv. Rufin.* 2.19 (Behr, 2:614.22), who notes Origen’s belief that the Son “was produced or born, for fear of dividing God the Father into parts; but he asserts that he is a sublime and pre-eminent creature who came into existence by the will of the Father like all other creatures.”

Son comes forth and participates in the will of the Father, who is the first and greatest mind. Origen emphasizes the sole action of the Father in this process, noting that, “in willing he uses no other means than that which is produced by the deliberations of his will” (*princ.* 1.2.6). It is by the Father’s will alone that the Son is generated.<sup>152</sup>

Origen also places emphasis on the action of the Son in confirming this unity. This is seen particularly clearly in *Jo.* 13.228:

It is proper for the Son of God when he becomes a doer of the Fathers will [...] when he wills in himself what was also the Father’s will, so that the will of God is in the will of the Son, and the will of the Son has become indistinguishable from the will of the Father, and there are no longer two wills but one.<sup>153</sup>

In this statement, Origen is not saying that the Son was ever separate from the Father or that his will ever needed to be united with the Father’s. Rather, he is describing his understanding of the unity between the Father and the Son; their wills are so united that they are indistinguishable from each other. Origen also does not envision the Son’s generation as taking place at a particular point in time; the Father’s eternality assumes the eternality of this generation. But the Son’s unity with the Father is realized in the Son’s continual confirmation of the Father’s will. Origen also notes that “the complete will of

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<sup>152</sup> Lyman, *Christology*, 52, notes that “Will is often the linchpin in [Origen’s] descriptions of God’s activity in creation and redemption... [it] is both the immediate expression of God’s nature and the interior desire of God.” Commenting on *princ.* 1.2.6, Lyman continues, 53, “Origen asserts the absolute power of the divine will in the creation of anything, the Son or the cosmos, and the close relation between will and mind, which is in line with contemporary Stoicism, which assimilated the intellectual to the volitional process. Will is not only the actualization of rational reflection, but part of the reflection itself (*consilio voluntas*). It is in this sense that he refers to divine will as the linchpin in the creation or generation of wisdom.” Origen’s reference to will also “safeguard[s] against emanation or corporeal images of generation” (70).

<sup>153</sup> SC 222:154; Heine, 89:115. cf. *dial.* 2.27: “We profess two Gods... [but] the power (δύναμις) is one” (SC 67:58; Daly, 54:59). While the idea of “power” is similar in a sense to “will”, this statement seems to conflict with *Jo.* 13.152 (above), in which the Son’s *dunamis* is inferior to the Father’s. Origen’s (and Heraclides’) meaning in *dial.* may be an affirmation of a single force in work, but this is difficult to discern given the context. Note also Williams’ comment (*Arius*, 139) that “Wisdom is the *energeia* of a divine *virtus* of *dunamis*, the actualization of a divine capacity.”

the Father is done by the Son when the willing of God that occurs in the Son does that which the will of God wishes" (*Jo.* 13.230).<sup>154</sup> In this continuing process, their wills become indistinguishable. Continuing on, Origen notes that "it is only the Son who has comprehended the complete will of God and does it, for which reason he is also his image" (*Jo.* 13.231).<sup>155</sup> Just after this, in *Jo.* 13.234, Origen even suggests that

Perhaps this is why he is the image of the invisible God. For indeed the will that is in him is an image of the first will, and the divinity that is in him is an image of the true divinity.<sup>156</sup>

Origen's discussion of the Son's will in this passage suggests his belief that the basis for the Son's unity with the Father is the Son's perfect understanding and accomplishment of the will of the Father. The Son resembles the Father inasmuch as he does the will of God. Though creation cannot perfectly obey the will of the Father, needing to grow in its holiness and knowledge, the Son understands and obeys perfectly. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Son is called the "Son of his will," reflecting again how Origen understands the begetting of the Son (*princ.* 4.4.1).<sup>157</sup> Origen's use of "Son" in this passage suggests that he is speaking of the eternal Word and not of the incarnate Christ; he is definitely speaking of the unincarnate Son in *Jo.* 13.234 with the title "image of the first will". Origen's portrayal of the Son's perfect participation in the Father's will, therefore, represents the pinnacle of the spiritual and rational; it is how he conceives of the unity between the First Mind and the Second Word. This model for divine unity also reflects

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<sup>154</sup> SC 222:154-156; Heine, 89:116.

<sup>155</sup> SC 222:156; Heine, 89:116.

<sup>156</sup> SC 222:156-158; Heine, 89:116. He continues that "the will concerns the disposition (τῆς διαθέσεως), when it adds after the reference to doing the will, 'to perfect the work of God'" (SC 222:158; Heine, 89:117).

<sup>157</sup> Behr, 1:563. Also see Justinian, *Ep. ad Mennam* (Koetschau fr. 32; Behr, 2:616.24): "this Son was begotten of the Father's will..."

how Origen understands human participation in the divine as a fundamentally noetic process. The Son, therefore, becomes a subject who can be imitated, a model of perfect knowledge and unity for rational and spiritual Christians. As created beings grow in their holiness and knowledge, they are better able to understand and do the will of the Father, growing in resemblance to the Son. Though this model is not without its issues, particularly in the implication that conformity of will suggests the Son's becoming or changing, it reveals Origen's concerns to explain divine unity on purely noetic terms and to provide a means by which humans can come to participate in the divine.

The concept of unity in shared will also form the basis for Origen's understanding of Trinitarian unity. As we will see in a later chapter, the Spirit is also called "that fellow worker with the will of God" (*or.* 1.1) who knows and participates in the will of the Father.<sup>158</sup> The perfect knowledge of the Father's will, for Origen, seems to distinguish Son and Spirit from creation.<sup>159</sup> While Origen does not reflect at length on the will of the Holy Spirit, examples like these indicate that he holds to the same logic when speaking of the Spirit's unity with the Son and the Father.<sup>160</sup> We will revisit this in further detail in a later chapter.

## Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that Origen's doctrine of God, drawing heavily from Middle Platonic philosophical concepts, places heavy emphasis on divine immateriality and transcendence. Origen's theology of the Father is also developed in opposition to the materialistic teachings of Stoics, various Gnostics, and Monarchians. But Origen

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<sup>158</sup> GCS 3:298; Greer, 81. See also *Jo.* 13.231, *hom.in.Num* 18.22.

<sup>159</sup> He does note, however, that "the remaining holy beings... will do nothing contrary to the will of God" (*Jo.* 13.231: SC 222:156; Heine, 89:116), though this does not mean that they fully comprehend it.

<sup>160</sup> But does this mean that the Spirit is united with the will of the Father through the Son? Origen does not comment on this.

understands his task as being biblical, supported by the overall witness of Scripture. Origen's doctrine of God is incredibly consistent: God is incorporeal and immaterial, incomprehensible and ineffable, monad, simple, mind, the first principle and source of all things. The philosophical language of *ousia* and *hypostasis*, which later writers will utilize to argue for Trinitarian unity, is used by Origen to emphasize the sole transcendence of the Father and to argue for the personhood of the Son. Origen's conception of the Father's relationship with the Son is not based in the concepts of nature and essence, but uses the imagery of noetic generation, the Son as will coming from the First Mind. In all of these points, Origen consistently maintains the priority and transcendence of the Father; in his being and essence, the Father is greater than all else that exists.

The major problem that arises in Origen's theology proper, however, is in accounting for how this transcendent and immaterial God can be responsible for a material creation. Unlike his philosophical contemporaries, Origen is willing to speak of God as creator. However, the Father's simplicity, or Origen's emphasis on his oneness or unity, do not allow for multiplicity or variability within his being. Because of this, Origen's Christology becomes an essential factor in his theology – it serves to resolve the cosmological issues that appear in the differences between God and creation. The Son, therefore, serves as mediator between God and creation, participating perfectly in the will and work of the Father. Though not on the same level as created beings, he is still far above the created world, the idea of ideas, being of beings, the initiator of God's creative work and the source of rationality for creation. By virtue of his mediatory status, he cannot be equal to the Father, but must sit between invisible God and visible creation, an invisible and rational image of the invisible Father. Therefore, even Origen's Christology, his understanding of the person of the Son and his ministration to the material world, begins with the



theological assumptions he possesses about the Father. The identity of the Son, both in his personal being and his work, is the subject of the next chapter.

## ORIGEN'S DOCTRINE OF THE ETERNAL SON

Origen's Christology is a subject which has rightly received a vast amount of attention in scholarship.<sup>1</sup> The purpose of this chapter is not to suggest any new readings or undiscovered features of Origen's Christology, but to elucidate certain aspects of it which are relevant to the aims of this study. In order to gain an accurate understanding of Origen's pneumatology, particularly within the context of his Trinitarian thought, we must establish how he understands both Father and Son and what he is willing and unwilling to say about them. By determining Origen's understanding of the Son's personhood and function, we will establish a necessary template by which we can understand his conception of the Spirit, as well as a basis for evaluating the suspicious Rufinus-translated statements of *On First Principles*.

Continuing where the first chapter left off, Origen's Christology is his solution to the problem of God's transcendence and the reality of the material world. For Origen, the Son's ontological identity is reflected in his economic identity; in his execution of the Father's work, he demonstrates his similarity to and difference from the Father, as well as his exalted nature over creation.<sup>2</sup> As in his treatment of God the Father, Origen establishes his Christology by emphasizing the authority of Scripture, yet deploys it in a generally Middle

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<sup>1</sup> For the most recent treatment, see Anders-Christian Jacobsen, *Christ, the Teacher of Salvation: A Study on Origen's Christology and Soteriology* (Münster: Aschendorff Verlag, 2015). Significant works include Koch, *Pronoia*, 1932; Crouzel, *l'image*, 1956; Origen, 1989; Harl, *Origène*, 1958; Lyons, *Cosmic*, 1982; Lyman, *Christology*, 1993; Rowe, *Subordination*, 1987. For a summary, see Jacobsen, *Christ*. 23-33.

<sup>2</sup> Lyman, *Christology*, 51, notes, "against modalists, Origen defines the function as essential to the person, not as a temporary economic phase." Also see Crouzel, 'Personnes', 109-25.

Platonic matrix.<sup>3</sup> Though metaphysically abstract by virtue of its borrowing from Platonic thought, Origen's Christology, like his doctrine of God, is also practical and salvific, instructing believers in the necessity of the rational for the reception of salvation. By establishing that the Son's ontological status is a reflection of his overall role in revealing the Father, we will be able to illuminate the Spirit's nature and role alongside the Son in his more ground-level and practical work in leading believers to the Son.

This chapter, therefore, will seek to explain Origen's understanding of the Son's ontology, seen in his relationship with the Father, through the various titles he holds and the roles associated with them. First, we will examine the Christological titles of relation, drawn from passages like Colossians 1.15 and John 3.16. Analysis will show that for Origen, these titles affirm the Son's non-material generation or derivation from the Father, as well as his unique and elevated status over all creation. Second, an examination of titles of similarity, like Image and Reflection, drawn from verses like Colossians 1.15, Hebrews 1.3, and Wisdom 7.25-26, will demonstrate Origen's belief that the Son by nature originates from and is thus similar to the Father, but is not the same as him. Origen also uses these verses to show that by means of this similarity, the Son works uniquely to reveal the invisible Father. Third, we will examine Origen's theology of the aspects (*epinoiai*) of Christ, the things which he is or becomes for creation. While the Son in his original form is Wisdom and Word, reflecting his noetic identity and intimacy to the Father, as well as Origen's use of Platonic thought, the Son also takes on other aspects or titles in his interaction with creation, for the sake of the work of salvation. In the last part of this chapter, we will see that the divine virtues are also included in the aspects (*epinoiai*) which Christ becomes,

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<sup>3</sup> Lyman, *Christology*, 42, calls this "Platonic wineskins for Christian theology", noting also that Origen was "an eager, fearless borrower".

drawn from Origen's reading of 1 Corinthians 1.30. For Origen, the Son's mediatory status and ability for multiplicity allow him to manifest the virtues contained within the forms and ideas of Wisdom, which allows the saints to participate in Christ as they actively perform these virtues. These varied aspects of Origen's Christology testify to the varied influences on his thought, as well as the complex and unique system he builds through them to serve his overall theological goal.

### **Titles of Relation: Dependence and Distinctiveness**

This section will examine Origen's treatment of the relational titles of Christ: Son, Firstborn, and Only-Begotten. Origen teaches that God is spiritual and invisible, devoid of any materiality or physicality.<sup>4</sup> The same can be said of his Son.<sup>5</sup> But in Scripture, these titles of Christ, Son, Firstborn, and Only-Begotten, seem to suggest physical birth or origin, something Origen wants to avoid. In his treatments of these titles, Origen makes the following points: (1) the Son's existence is dependent on the Father, though not in a physical or material sense, (2) the titles testify of the exalted place of the Son over all of creation, (3) they indicate the Son's special knowledge of and revelation of the Father. Origen also assumes that these titles indicate the Son's ontological inferiority to the Father; but it is only because of the Son's inferiority that he is knowable and can thus reveal the invisible Father.

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<sup>4</sup> *princ.* 1.1.8, *Jo.* 13.146. See Dragos A. Giulea, 'Origen's Christology in Pre-Nicene Setting', *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 92/3 (2016), 407-37.

<sup>5</sup> See esp. Origen's inclusion of the Son and Spirit in his interpretation of Jn 4.24 in *hom.in.Lev* 4.1. See also *Cels.* 7.27, *hom.in.Lc* 26.1, *Jo.* 13.124.

## Son and Only-Begotten

The title “Son” for Origen is significant because it is a title of relationship, indicating nearness and similarity to the Father.<sup>6</sup> As Origen notes in *princ.* 1.2.4, “[the Son] does not become Son in an external manner, through adoption in the Spirit (Rom 8.15), but is Son by nature.”<sup>7</sup> Only the eternal Son, the Word of God, can claim inherent sonship. While the saints can be called sons of God, the title Son is indicative of a special type of sonship, one that only God’s true Son can possess. Closely related to this is the title “Only-Begotten”, which often appears with Son, i.e. Only-Begotten Son. For Origen, Only-Begotten also signifies that the Only-Begotten alone is by nature Son from the beginning (*Jo.* 2.76), as the Father is the only unbegotten (*Jo.* 2.75).<sup>8</sup>

But the relational and metaphysical implications carried in the titles “Son” and “Only-Begotten” cause difficulty for Origen. Specifically, “generation” or “begetting” suggest a physical birth, something Origen wants to avoid. One place where Origen reflects on this is in *Jo.* 20.157-159.<sup>9</sup> He notes the differences between the phrases “proceeded (Ἐξῆλθον) from God” and “begotten (γεγέννημαι) by God”, stating that the second (begotten) is unfitting for the Son as it suggests a physical birth.<sup>10</sup> He notes that the implication of this term is that God becomes “diminished” or “lacking” in his essence (τῇ οὐσίᾳ), or that “the

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<sup>6</sup> While I am using the title “Son” as a default term for the second person of the Trinity, this does not mean that it is the primary or only way in which Origen understands or speaks of him, though it is one of the most frequently used.

<sup>7</sup> Behr, 1:47.

<sup>8</sup> From this, Origen concludes that the Word must then be older than the Holy Spirit (*Jo.* 2.73). Also in *princ.* 1.2.5, Origen notes that the he is called Only-Begotten by virtue of his being “Son by nature” (Behr, 1:47).

<sup>9</sup> SC 290:232-234; Heine, 89:239.

<sup>10</sup> In understanding Origen’s treatment of the Father’s begetting of the Son, we must remember that Origen does not possess the technical distinction between the terms begotten (γεννάω) and created (γενάω), a feature of fourth century pro-Nicene Trinitarian theology. In certain instances, it is clear that Rufinus has made this distinction in Origen’s writings (i.e. changed “created” to “begotten”), particularly in places like *princ.* Pref.4 and 4.4.1.

Son has come into life by exchanging one place for another in a material (σωματικῶς) sense, and not by exchanging one condition for another” (Jo. 20.159).<sup>11</sup> Those who suggest material generation in God, he notes, “have not dreamed of an invisible and bodiless nature that is pure essence (οὐσαν κυρίως οὐσίαν),” a trait which is shared by the Son and Father (Jo. 20.158). Therefore, such conclusions about both Father and Son must be rejected.<sup>12</sup>

But because these titles are present in Scripture, they must attest in some way to the nature of the Son’s origins. As we have seen in the last chapter, Origen’s solution is to describe the “begetting” of the Son as something wholly impassionate and incorporeal, unlike physical procreation (*princ.* 1.2.6).<sup>13</sup> As Mind, the incorporeal Father immaterially begets a spiritual and equally immaterial Son.<sup>14</sup> By conceiving of the Son’s generation in this way, Origen bypasses the danger of splitting the divine essence or likening begetting to human procreation.<sup>15</sup> Noetic generation also frees God from temporal limitations as his act of thinking as Mind is not restricted by time. Discussing the “noble origin of the Son,” Origen says that “today” (in Ps 2.7) refers to the fact that:

There is no evening of God possible and, I think, no morning, but the time, if I may put it this way, which is coextensive with his unoriginated and

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<sup>11</sup> SC 290:234; Heine, 89:239. Origen has in mind the Gnostic concept of emanation, in which God is split into parts. But he does occasionally use the language of emanation: Jo. 13.153, *Cels.* 8.14, *princ.* 1.2.5. This is one reason for Origen’s avoidance of *ousia* language (e.g. Jo. 20.157) and his tendency to speak instead of the Son coming from some aspect of the Father, e.g. light or glory. For Gnostic background, see Lyons, *Cosmic*, 97-104.

<sup>12</sup> SC 290:232-234; Heine, 89:239. See *princ.* 1.2.4. While Origen does not dwell much on the actual act of begetting, one place he dwells on it is Jo 1.283: “But perhaps a belch (Ps 45) is the emergence of hidden wind into the open, as though one belching exhales this way, so the Father belches forth visions of the truth in a disconnected manner and produces their form in the Word, and for this reason the Word is called the image of the invisible God” (SC 120:202; Heine, 80:92).

<sup>13</sup> See also *princ.* 1.2.9, 4.4.1. Note also the resistance to Gnosticism in the beginning of this section, particularly in his denial of emanations and God being split into parts. cf. Athanasius, *Orat. II. con. Arian. c.* 57 (Butterworth, 314 n.6).

<sup>14</sup> Thus upholding the Middle Platonic concept of God as mind and his Word as the thought or forms going forth from it. cf. Numenius, *fr.* 15, 16; Alcinous, *Did.* 10; Atticus, *fr.* 28.1-7.

<sup>15</sup> As we have seen, Father-Son unity is not based for Origen in common essence or nature, but in a shared will. See esp. *Cels.* 8.12, Jo. 13.228-234.

eternal life (ὁ συμπαρακτείνων τῇ ἀγενήτῳ καὶ ἀϊδίῳ αὐτοῦ ζωῇ), is today for him, the day in which the son has been begotten. Consequently neither the beginning nor the day of his generation is to be found.<sup>16</sup>

This statement suggests a continual or eternal generation, an ever-begotten nature of the Son.<sup>17</sup> Origen's use of "beginning", both here and in other places (e.g. *Jo.* 1.102), is similar to "created" in that it does not mean that the Son began at some point in time or that the Father changed, but simply refers to origin, causation, and priority.<sup>18</sup>

While the titles Logos or Word are closely related to knowledge and mind,<sup>19</sup> Son and Only-Begotten are titles of relationship that also have epistemological implications.<sup>20</sup> For example, in *Jo.* 2.126, "there are some ideas that are incomprehensible to all begotten nature except himself, which he knows for himself."<sup>21</sup> In *princ.* 1.1.8, Origen stresses the fact that because God is incorporeal and invisible, he cannot be seen (cf. *Jn* 1.18), even going so far as to say that "the nature of God... is not even visible to [the only-begotten]".<sup>22</sup> The reason for this is because the Son cannot physically "see" the Father as sight is a physical

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<sup>16</sup> *Jo.* 1.204 (SC 120:160; Heine, 80:74).

<sup>17</sup> See also *com.in.Rom* 9.4.5. Also *princ.* 1.2.4: "For this is an eternal and everlasting begetting, just as brightness is begotten from light (*Wis* 7.26, *Heb* 1.3)" (Behr, 1:47).

<sup>18</sup> For more on how Origen uses the language of "creation", see next section and Ch. 3. cf. *Jo.* 20.154: "and indeed if one considers him who, before he has emptied himself, is in the essential form of God (τῇ προηγουμένη ὑπάρχοντα θεοῦ μορφῇ), he will see the Son who has not yet proceeded from God himself, and the Lord who has not yet proceeded from his place" (SC 290:230-232; Heine, 89:238). This refers to the Son's being resembling the Father's, particularly with reference to invisibility and incorporeality (cf. *Jo* 32.193, 1.200). Procession here is a reference to the incarnation and to *Jn* 8.42. Also note *princ.* 2.2.1, which shows the fingerprints of Rufinus: "some are accustomed to inquire whether, just as the Father begets an uncreated Son, and brings forth (*profert*) the Holy Spirit, not as if not previously being, but because the Father is the origin and the source of the Son or the Holy Spirit, and no before or after can be understood in respect of them" (Behr, 1:152-53).

<sup>19</sup> *Cels.* 4.85. He notes also that the reason that men have is common to men and to divine beings, also to God.

<sup>20</sup> Based on the idea that the Son resembles the Father, e.g. in his invisibility (*princ.* 1.2.6).

<sup>21</sup> SC 120:290; Heine, 80:128.

<sup>22</sup> Behr, 1:37.

phenomenon.<sup>23</sup> Instead, the Son “knows” the Father (*princ.* 1.1.8), a point drawn from Matthew 11.27.<sup>24</sup> Therefore, Origen notes that,

...the Word can also be called “the Son” because he announces the secrets of his Father, who is “mind” analogous to the Son who is called “Word.” For as the word in us is the messenger of what the mind perceives, so the Word of God, since he has known the Father, reveals the Father whom he has known, because no creature can come into contact with him without a guide.<sup>25</sup>

These two terms, Word and Son, both describe the same reality: the Son proceeds from the mind of the Father and thus reveals what he knows. Therefore, the Son’s sole possession of knowledge of the Father (Mt 11.27) testifies to their mysterious relationship, a glimpse into the inner workings of God.<sup>26</sup> Only-Begotten is also a title of preeminence,<sup>27</sup> forming the basis for the Son’s work in creation.<sup>28</sup> Origen also notes in *Jo.* 19.38 that the title “Only-Begotten” is the “whole of our steps”, which means that it is the highest of the titles or names of the Son.<sup>29</sup> As believers work their way upwards from the incarnate Christ, they reach the mystery of the Only-Begotten Son who alone is Son by nature.

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<sup>23</sup> Origen emphasizes elsewhere that seeing is not physical sight but takes place in the mind – knowing or perceiving (*princ.* 2.6.3; Behr 2:207). He also notes in *Cels.* 6.69, commenting on Mt 5.8, that even the Logos and wisdom of God (Ps 103.24) are “hard to perceive” (SC 147:352; Chadwick, 384).

<sup>24</sup> See *Cels.* 6.17, *Jo.* 13.146.

<sup>25</sup> *Jo.* 1.277 (SC 120:198; Heine, 80:90-91). *Cels.* 7.38: “God is not comprehended by any being other than him made in the image of that mind” (SC 150:100; Chadwick, 425), i.e. his Logos. See also *Jo.* 32.359, *Cels.* 7.43.

<sup>26</sup> Origen notes in *Jo.* 20.47, that “there will be a time when one sees the Father in a manner similar to the Son” (SC 290:180; Heine, 89:215), suggesting that true believers will no longer need the image to see the things of the Father. But until this time, all knowledge of the Father is mediated through his Only-Begotten Son (see *Cels.* 6.17, *Jo.* 19.35).

<sup>27</sup> E.g. *princ.* 1.4.4, 1.2.10, 2.8.5, 3.5.6. Also *Cels.* 8.17, 7.16. 7.16. Only-Begotten testifies of his “preeminent nature” (*Jo.* 1.200: SC 120:158; Heine, 80:73).

<sup>28</sup> I.e. things are made through him as Only-Begotten (*princ.* 3.5.8, 2.6.3).

<sup>29</sup> SC 290:68; Heine, 89:176. Explanation for this can be found in *Cels.* 7.43: “Anyone, therefore, who has understood how we must think of the only begotten God, the Son of God, the firstborn of all creation, and how the Logos became flesh, will see that anyone will come to know the Father and Maker of this universe by looking at the image of the invisible God” (SC 150:116; Chadwick, 431).



## Firstborn of Creation

A similar and related title frequent in Origen's writings is "Firstborn of Creation", a title drawn from Colossians 1.15. For Origen, this title does not mean that Christ is counted among the things that God has made, but it is another title that highlights the Son's preeminence, distinguishing him as being above all created things.<sup>30</sup> The particular honor of "firstborn", as Origen notes, is that "he was the first to be with God and has drawn divinity into himself" and is thus "more honored than the other gods beside him" (*Jo.* 2.17).<sup>31</sup> Origen also links the title Firstborn of Creation with kingship,<sup>32</sup> special knowledge of God,<sup>33</sup> and even the divine virtues.<sup>34</sup> Firstborn of Creation is similar to the title Only-Begotten in that it is a divine title that emphasizes the unique status of the Son in his pre-incarnate form. The fact that this title does not refer to the incarnate Christ is apparent in places where Origen states that the Firstborn became man or assumed a body,<sup>35</sup> or is invisible and the image of the invisible God.<sup>36</sup> Drawing from Colossians 1.16-18, Origen also

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<sup>30</sup> *Cels.* 7.16: "If there was something divine in his human nature, it was the only-begotten Son of God and the firstborn of creation... Indeed, the person and essence (οὐσία) of the divine being in Jesus is quite a different matter from that of his human aspect" (SC 150:50; Chadwick, 407). Note also reference to divine titles in *Cels.* 7.43, as well as the title "firstborn of the dead" (Col 1.18), which refers to the life he gives through resurrection: *Jo.* 1.117, 1.120. For preeminence, see esp. *princ.* 1.7.1, 2.6.1, 2.6.2, 2.9.4.

<sup>31</sup> SC 120: 216-218; Heine, 80:98-99. See also *Cels.* 6.69. Again, Origen's statements seem to suggest a beginning in time, but this is not what he is saying.

<sup>32</sup> See *Jo.* 1.192, 1.195.

<sup>33</sup> *Cels.* 6.17: "Neither can anyone worthily know the uncreated and firstborn of all created nature (Col 1.15) in the way that the Father who begat him knows him; nor can anyone know the Father in the same way as the living Logos who is God's wisdom and truth" (SC 147:222; Chadwick, 331).

<sup>34</sup> *Cels.* 8.17: "Images and votive offerings appropriate for God, which have not been made by vulgar workmen, but which are made clear and formed in us by the divine Logos, are the virtues which are copies of the firstborn of all creation" (SC 150:210; Chadwick, 464). Also, in *princ.* 2.6.1, the Son stands as mediator as the "firstborn of all creation".

<sup>35</sup> See *Jo.* 1.175, 2.187; *Cels.* 5.37. Also *Cels.* 6.47: the "relation of the soul of Jesus to the firstborn of all creation, the divine Logos, is not that of two separate beings" (SC 147:298; Chadwick, 365). cf. *Jo.* 19.128.

<sup>36</sup> *Jo.* 1.104, *Cels.* 7.27, 7.43; *princ.* 2.6.1. Firstborn also is a title that shows he is worthy of worship: *Cels.* 7.70. 8.26. As image and firstborn he does not die: *Jo.* 28.159, 32.322.

associates “Firstborn” with the Son’s involvement in creation; all things, invisible and visible, were created by God through the Firstborn.<sup>37</sup>

Particularly notable about this title, however, is Origen’s treatment of the word “creation.” Origen is not afraid to call the Son “created,” seen in places like *Cels.* 5.37: “For the divine scriptures know that he is oldest of all created beings (δημιουργημάτων), and that it was to him that God said of the creation (τῆς δημιουργίας) of man: ‘Let us make man in our image and likeness.’”<sup>38</sup> He prefaces this, however, by saying that while the Firstborn of creation came recently (i.e. in the incarnation), “he is not in fact new (νέον) on the account.”<sup>39</sup> As we have seen, Origen operates under the assumption that everything that is not the Father finds its beginning in God, who alone is without beginning or origin. While Origen does not consider the Son to be part of the physical world or that he was created at some point in time, by virtue of not being the Father, the Son also must in some way be “created”.<sup>40</sup> As Rowan Williams has noted, “it is almost impossible to sort out exactly what [Origen] meant by [*ktisma*]” and that “*ktisis* is strictly only the unimpeded expression of God’s rational will”.<sup>41</sup> Given that the Son is the will proceeding from the Mind (*princ.* 1.2.6), the creative act of the Father, it is not all that unusual that Origen called the Son “created”. Firstborn of Creation, therefore, is a title that indicates that the Son is the foremost of all things that have come from the Father. It also emphasizes the Son’s intermediary role by virtue of his simultaneous divinity and perceptibility.

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<sup>37</sup> See *princ.* 4.3.15, 2.9.4; *Jo.* 2.70.

<sup>38</sup> SC 147:114; Chadwick, 294. See also Jerome, *Apol. adv. Rufin.* 2.19 (Butterworth, 313 n.2), *Ep. ad Avitum* 2 (Butterworth, 3 n.4) and Athanasius, *Orat. II. con. Arian* (Koetschau fr. 33; Behr, 2:616.24b). cf. *princ.* 4.4.8. See C.W. Lowry, “Did Origen Style the Son a *ktisma*”, *JTS* 39 (1938), 39-42.

<sup>39</sup> SC 147:114; Chadwick, 294. By “new” we can assume he means created at some point in time.

<sup>40</sup> The same is inferred of the Spirit (*Jo.* 2.75).

<sup>41</sup> Williams, *Arius*, 141-42.

Origen's difficulty in explaining the origins of the Son are present not only in his use of "created" language, but in the language of time, e.g. "beginning". In *Jo.* 1.104, for example, he notes that,

Since the firstborn of all creation is the image of the invisible God, the Father is his beginning (ἀρχή). And likewise also Christ is the beginning of those made according to the image of God.<sup>42</sup>

As we have mentioned, this beginning is not a literal beginning, but refers to source or origin, that as the Son and Firstborn of all Creation, he is ontologically dependent on God.<sup>43</sup>

As Origen notes in *Jo.* 1.102:

the God of all things is clearly a beginning too... the Father is the beginning of the son, and the creator is the beginning of the things created and, in general, God is beginning of the things which exist.<sup>44</sup>

Christ, therefore, is also "beginning" as creator (*Jo.* 1.104) and the beginning of things that exist (*Jo.* 1.116), though not of everything.<sup>45</sup> This tendency is also present in Origen's use of "older" (πρεσβύτερος), which reflects not creation in time, but the same idea of ontological priority.<sup>46</sup> Though creation clearly has a beginning at some point in time, Origen's use of

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<sup>42</sup> SC 120:114; Heine, 80:55.

<sup>43</sup> Williams, *Arius*, 140, notes that "the Father alone is the *arche* of the Logos, as the Logos is the *arche* of all else, mean[ing] that the being of the Father provides the intelligible form of the Logos". He also notes, 138, that "The only 'beginning' the Word has is God, 'from whom he is, of whom he is born' – a characteristic play on the many senses of *arche*: the Word does not have an *arche*, a point of origin, in time, only an *arche*, an origin and 'rationale' of existence in the being of God." Note also Rufinus' apparent rejection of this language in *princ.* 1.2.3: "Let the one, then, who assigns a beginning to the Word of God or to the Wisdom of God consider with care lest his impiety is cast upon the unbegotten Father himself..." (Behr, 1:43).

<sup>44</sup> SC 120:112; Heine, 80:54.

<sup>45</sup> cf. *princ.* 1.2.2: "God is always the Father of his only-begotten Son, who was indeed born of him, and derives from him what he is, but without, however, any beginning (*initio*)... Wisdom is thus believed to be begotten (*generatam*) beyond the limits of any beginning that we can speak of or understand... within this very subsistence of Wisdom was every capacity and form of the creation that would come to be... containing within herself the beginning (*initia*) and the reasons and the species of the entire creation" (Behr, 1:43). This seems to be an example of Rufinus clarifying Origen's language.

<sup>46</sup> E.g. *Jo.* 1.118, 2.36, 2.73.

the language of “beginning” and “older” for the Son is to signify ontological priority in the context of origin.

Therefore, the titles “Son”, “Only-Begotten”, and “Firstborn of all Creation” are biblical names for the second Trinitarian person that emphasize origin and status, simultaneously suggesting the Son’s similarity to and inferiority to the Father. They testify to the Son’s special knowledge of the Father, as seen in the following statement: God “gave a share of Himself and His greatness (μετέδωκε γὰρ ἑαυτοῦ καὶ τῆς μεγαλειότητος) to the only-begotten and firstborn of all creation,” in order that the Son might show the image of his Father’s greatness (*Cels.* 6.69).<sup>47</sup> They also confirm the Son’s exalted place over creation due to the uniqueness of his sonship and the priority of his existence. By means of this status, he ministers to creation, giving both sonship and reason.<sup>48</sup> Though Origen dislikes the materialist implications of these titles, he is able to explain biblical terms like “created”, “beginning”, and “begotten” as markers of ontological priority rather than createdness.

### **Titles of Similarity: Image and Reflection**

In addition to the relational titles, Origen finds significance in other biblical titles for the Son that explain his relationship to the Father. Origen’s Christological discourse in *princ.* 1.2 highlights the titles for Christ found in the following verses: Colossians 1.15, Hebrews 1.3, and Wisdom 7.25-26.<sup>49</sup> In these titles of similarity, Origen does not face the same issues

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<sup>47</sup> SC 147:350; Chadwick, 383. What Origen means by God’s “share of himself” is not entirely clear, but seems to be a reference to his image.

<sup>48</sup> See *Jo.* 2.19, 2.12. Origen differentiates between “God over all” and “God” and Logos as source of reason in all. But the Word ministers deity to all others (*Jo.* 2.19; SC 220:220; Heine, 80:99).

<sup>49</sup> Alastair Logan, ‘Origen and Alexandrian Wisdom Christology’, in *Origeniana Tertia* (Roma: Edizioni dell’Ateneo, 1985), 123, has argued that Origen was the first Christian to apply Wis 7.25-26 systematically to Christ. Logan, 128, also notes earlier associations of Christ with Wisdom in the second century work *Teaching of Silvanus*. Origen also seems to have placed higher stock in Col 1.15 than any other major Christian writer before him.

he has with the relational titles – they are less prone to materialist misunderstandings.<sup>50</sup> His repeated use of these verses and their titles demonstrate that the Son (1) is unique and absolutely necessary in order for creation to know the invisible Father, (2) that he reflects or reveals the invisible God by nature of his derivation from and similarity to the Father, (3) as image or reflection, he cannot be equal to that which he reflects.

## Colossians 1.15

Origen's understanding of the Son as "Image of God" is drawn primarily from his reading of Colossians 1.15.<sup>51</sup> His repeated citations of this verse show its importance to his understanding of the person of the Son.<sup>52</sup> There are two main points that Origen most often makes when he references "image of the invisible God" (εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ἀοράτου) in Colossians 1.15. The first we have already seen: God is incorporeal and invisible, "no man has seen God at any time" (Jn 1.18) and cannot.<sup>53</sup> As Origen notes in *princ.* 1.1.8, "image of the invisible God" means that "there is no being to which God is visible; not as if he were a being visible by nature and yet eludes... but because by nature it is impossible for him to be seen."<sup>54</sup> The second point is that as the "image of the invisible God", the Son reveals the unseen God. In *Jo.* 32.359 we see that

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<sup>50</sup> For Christ as image, see Crouzel, *L'image*, esp. 71-128. Crouzel's work is significant, particularly in his explanation of the background to the idea of "image" (31-70). Much of Crouzel's analysis on divine Son as "image" is paralleled in this study. However, Crouzel, 110, concludes that "image" for Origen assumes Father-Son consubstantiality, based heavily on two fragments (*xx in Apoc* 3.7, *xxii in Apoc* 3.14-16) whose authenticity is suspect. Crouzel, 120-21, also argues (1) that Origen's theology, particularly his understanding of Son as image, changes from philosophical to more mystical, resulting in him emphasizing the equality of persons, and that (2) Origen's thought on this subject is not systematic but impulsive.

<sup>51</sup> This is especially clear in *Cels.*, where he uses this verse to explain the Son's identity in light of opposition from pagan/philosophical opponents.

<sup>52</sup> It is the most frequently quoted biblical verse in Origen's writings. See: *princ.* 1.1.8, 1.2.1, 1.2.5, 2.6.1, 2.6.3, 4.3.15, 4.4.1, 4.4.10; *Jo.* 1.104, 1.283, 19.127, 20.367, 28.159, 32.193, 32.359; *Cels.* 4.85, 5.37, 6.17, 6.47, 6.63, 6.64, 6.69, 7.27, 7.43, 7.65, 7.70, 8.17, 8.26; *com.in.Rom* 7.5.7, 7.7.7, 8.11.8, etc.

<sup>53</sup> See esp. *Cels* 7.27, 6.64, 7.43. Origen's emphasis in Jn 1.18 is on "on his own".

<sup>54</sup> Behr, 1:37. See also *Cels.* 6.64, 7.27.

...the Father who begot him is contemplated in the Word, since the Word is God and the image of the invisible God (Jn 1.1, Col 1.15), and he who beholds the image of the invisible God is able to behold the Father directly, too, for he is the prototype of the image.<sup>55</sup>

Because it is “difficult to see the Maker and Father of the universe,” Origen notes, “He who has seen me has seen the Father who sent me” (Jn 14.9).<sup>56</sup> The Father, therefore, can only be seen through his Image, his Word, who comes forth from him.<sup>57</sup> Origen grounds this on humanity’s rational capacity: the Son also “granted invisibly to all rational creatures whatsoever a participation in himself” (*princ.* 2.6.3).<sup>58</sup> Therefore, by seeing the image, one can see the Father.

The title “Image”, however, suggests further points about the Son’s actual nature. In *princ.* 1.2.6, Origen suggests two interpretations of the term “image” in Colossians 1.15: (1) “that which is painted or sculpted on some material, such as wood or stone” or (2) a child who is in the image (*imago*) or likeness (*similitudinem*) of his parents. The first example he allows for humans who are also made in the image of God (Gen 1.26) – they possess a general likeness, but it is not inherent.<sup>59</sup> For Origen, humanity’s creation in the image of God (Gen 1.27) is reflected in “the rational soul which has the capacity for virtue”, which

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<sup>55</sup> SC 385:342; Heine, 89:409. See *Cels.* 4.85: “But when he looks at the rational beings, he will see reason which is common to men and to divine and heavenly beings, and probably also to the supreme God Himself. This explains why he is said to have been made in the image of God; for the image of the supreme God is His reason (Logos)” (SC 136:396; Chadwick, 251).

<sup>56</sup> *Cels.* 7.43 (SC 150:114-116; Chadwick, 431). He notes here that Jesus here is not speaking of his physical body.

<sup>57</sup> See *Jo.* 1.283, *Cels.* 6.69: “God is not corporeal but invisible, perceived by those who can perceive with the heart (mind) – a pure heart (Mt 5.8)...” (SC 147:352; Chadwick, 383). He also notes that the Son is “hard to perceive”.

<sup>58</sup> Behr, 2:207. cf. *Cels.* 7.38.

<sup>59</sup> cf. *Jo.* 1.104. Origen makes a distinction between “image of God” and “image of the Son” in *com.in.Rom* 7.7.7. He seems to suggest here and elsewhere that there is a similar ontological difference and dependence between the Son and creation as there is between the Father and the Son. Humans are better described as images of the Son, rather than as images of the Father (SC 543:308; Scheck, 104:86-87).

they possess through the Son.<sup>60</sup> The second example Origen deems as more fitting for the Son. Knowing that this analogy has material implications, i.e. that of substantial likeness, Origen chooses to emphasize similarity based in their shared work (citing Jn 5.19), consistent with his treatment of the Son's generation from the Father's will.<sup>61</sup> While Origen is successful in avoiding the issue of physical similarity or generation, it is clear that the father-son analogy on the basis of will falls short. But it indicates that Origen's understanding of "image" rejects similarity on the basis of shared substance or even ontological dependence, emphasizing instead cooperation in work.

For Origen, "Image" cannot be the same in nature as its original; it can only reveal in part. As Origen notes in *Cels.* 6.69, the Father

...gave a share of Himself and His greatness to the only-begotten and firstborn of all creation (Col 1.15), that being himself an image of the invisible God he might preserve the image of the Father also in respect of his greatness. For it was impossible that, so to speak, a rightly proportioned and beautiful image of the invisible God should not also show the image of His greatness.<sup>62</sup>

We can conclude from this that the Son, possessing "a share" of the Father's greatness reveals part of the greatness of his Father. Again, Origen emphasizes that the Son's revelation of the Father is true – he reveals otherwise unknown spiritual realities about the Father. But this image is partial; it is great and beautiful, but it is incomplete. By virtue of

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<sup>60</sup> *Cels.* 7.66 (SC 150:168; Chadwick, 450). cf. Justinian, *Ep. ad Mennam* (Koetschau fr. 4; Behr, 2:597.2): "We, therefore, having been made according to the image, have the Son, the original, as the truth of the noble qualities that are within us. And what we are to the Son, such is the Son to the Father, who is the truth." Also *Cels.* 8.18.

<sup>61</sup> He supports this by citing Gen 5.3 and Seth's creation in Adam's image. There is a statement, however, that seems to indicate Rufinus' work: "This image preserves the unity of nature (*naturae*) and substance (*substantiae*) common of a father and of a son" (Behr, 1:48-49). Jerome, in *Ep. ad Avitum* 14 (Butterworth, 326 n.1), notes that Origen "is unwilling to admit that the Son and the Holy Spirit are of the Father's substance, lest he should seem to be diving the divine essence into parts".

<sup>62</sup> SC 147:350; Chadwick, 383.

the fact that it reveals the eternal and invisible Father, this image is also eternal and invisible.<sup>63</sup> But it is not comparable to the Father.

### Hebrews 1.3

A second important verse in Origen's treatment of "image" in *princ.* 1.2 is Hebrews 1.3.<sup>64</sup> Origen's interpretation of Hebrews 1.3 follows closely to that of Colossians 1.15.<sup>65</sup> Origen's discussion of this verse mostly concerns the functional implications of "reflection" and "imprint"; both terms show how the Son reveals the Father.<sup>66</sup> Though εἰκὼν, ἀπαύγασμα, and χαρακτήρ are different words, Origen uses them to say the same things about the Son.

Addressing the term ἀπαύγασμα in *princ.* 1.2.7, Origen notes that as God is light, the Son is "the splendor (*splendor*) of this light."<sup>67</sup> As brightness, the Son "proceed[s] from God without separation, as brightness from light, and lightening the whole creation." In contrast with how Origen understands the generation of the Son, his emanation as the splendor of the divine light is ultimately functional. The key point of this verse for Origen is that the Word leads to and reveals the Father: "it is by splendor that we understand and perceive what light itself is."<sup>68</sup> Origen even notes that the Son, "becoming for us the splendor", allows those who were unable to "look upon the glory of the pure light while it

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<sup>63</sup> cf. Athanasius, *De decr. Nic. syn.* 27.2 (Koetschau, *fr.* 33; Behr, 2:617.24b): "If he is an 'image of the invisible God', he is an invisible image; and I would dare to add that as he is a likeness of the Father there is no time when he did not exist... And when did the image of the unspeakable, unnameable, unutterable substance of the Father, his impress, the Word who knows the Father, not exist?" See also *princ.* 1.2.9, 4.4.1.

<sup>64</sup> E.g. *Cels.* 8.14, *princ.* 4.4.1, *Jo.* 13.153, *hom.in.Jer.* 9.4.5.

<sup>65</sup> "He is the reflection of God's glory (ἀπαύγασμα τῆς δόξης) and the exact imprint of God's very being" (χαρακτήρ τῆς ὑποστάσεως αὐτοῦ).

<sup>66</sup> See *Cels.* 8.12-14: "we worship the Father by admiring (θαυμάζοντες) His Son who is Logos, Wisdom, Truth, Righteousness, and all that we have learnt the Son of God to be" (*Cels.* 8.13; SC 150:202; Chadwick, 461). See also *com.in.Rom* 9.4.5.

<sup>67</sup> Behr, 1:50-51. The Greek ἀπαύγασμα is *splendor* in Latin.

<sup>68</sup> Behr, 1:50. Origen follows by explaining how it trains the eye to see brightness of the original light – see Ch. 1, n.20.



remained in the magnitude of his divinity” to now “obtain the way of beholding the divine light through looking upon the splendor” (*princ.* 1.2.8).<sup>69</sup>

Assumed, however, in Origen’s discussion of the Son as the “brightness of light” or “reflection of his glory” is that the Son is not equal to the Father. While the Son is frequently described as light and even true light, in this he does not compare to the Father.<sup>70</sup> This is confirmed in statements like in *Jo.* 2.149:

God is said to be light... one thinks it is confirmed from that source too that the Father is not distinct from the son in essence (τῇ οὐσίᾳ). But another who has observed more accurately and speaks more soundly will say that the light which shines in the darkness and is not overcome by it (*Jn* 1.5), and the light in which there is no darkness at all (1 *Jn* 1.5) are not the same (οὐ τὰ αὐτὸν).<sup>71</sup>

While not a discussion of Hebrews 1.3, this passage reflects how Origen elsewhere uses the example of brightness and light to explain the status and role of the Son. The Son, coming out of the Father like brightness from light, is similar to the Father, but should not be confused with the light of the Father. For Origen, to say that the two are of one essence is to confuse the light for the brightness. But as the brightness or reflection of God’s eternal light and glory, Origen is insistent that the Son’s generation or emanation must also be eternal, as a light cannot exist without its brightness (*princ.* 4.4.1).<sup>72</sup>

Origen provides further insight on the Son’s as reflection of glory in *Jo.* 32.353:

In my opinion, the Son is the reflection of the total glory of God himself [*Heb* 1.3]... anticipating, however, a partial reflection on the rest of the rational

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<sup>69</sup> Behr, 1:53. cf. *hom.in.Jer* 9.4.5.

<sup>70</sup> The Son is frequently described as light, particularly in his illumination of the world and minds (e.g. *Jo.* 1.120, 1.161-167, 1.179-181, 1.267, 2.10, 2.149-157), but the Father transcends truth and light (*Jo.* 2.151).

<sup>71</sup> SC 120:304-306; Heine, 80:134.

<sup>72</sup> Athanasius, *De Decr. Nic. syn.* 27.2 (Koetschau, *fr.* 33; Behr, 2:616.24b) notes that as a “likeness” of the Father (*Col* 1.15), there was “no time when he did not exist” and that God as light could not have “no effulgence of his own glory” (*Heb* 1.3).

creation from this reflection of the total glory. For I do not think that anyone except his Son can contain the whole reflection of the full glory of God.<sup>73</sup>

Origen's emphasizes the Son's unique ability to reflect God's total glory. His intention is not to diminish the Son's status but to highlight it, comparing the Son to the rest of rational creation who cannot fully reflect this glory. Given what we see elsewhere, it is most likely that creation reflects God's glory inasmuch as they are a reflection of the Son or Image. It should be noted, however, that the Son does not reflect the fullness of God himself, but is the "whole reflection" (τὸ πᾶν ἀπαύγασμα) of the full glory of God. In the examples of image and reflection, Origen does not assume that the Son can contain or reveal fully the nature of the Father.<sup>74</sup>

The second significant title of the Son in Hebrews 1.3, "the exact imprint of God's very being" (χαρακτήρ τῆς ὑποστάσεως αὐτοῦ), is treated in *princ.* 1.2.8. Again Origen's comments focus on the revelatory function of the Son: "Consider, then, whether the Son of God... in regard to this very point of making God to be understood and known, be called the figure of his substance or subsistence".<sup>75</sup> Origen ties this revelatory function to the titles Word and Wisdom, namely that in revealing truths about God, Wisdom can thus be called the "figure of his substance". It is also notable that Origen links together the language of Colossians 1.15 and Hebrews 1.3 to emphasize the same point about the Son's revelatory nature as image, given that the terms are different.<sup>76</sup>

This phrase, however, has different metaphysical implications. To explain it, Origen uses the illustration of a statue (i.e. the Son) which is the physical representation of an even

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<sup>73</sup> SC 385:338; Heine, 89:408.

<sup>74</sup> *com.in.Rom* 2.5.5: "the source of glory is the Father himself, from whom the splendor of that glory, the Son, is generated" (SC 532:310; Scheck, 103:115). See also *com.in.Rom* 4.8.8, *Jo.* 32.28.

<sup>75</sup> Behr, 1:53: *figuram substantiae uel subsistentiae*. Butterworth translates the term as "Image".

<sup>76</sup> I.e. εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ἀοράτου in Col 1.15 vs. χαρακτήρ in Heb 1.3.

more immense statue whose shape or form cannot be seen (God).<sup>77</sup> This seems problematic on the surface, especially given Origen's anti-materialist treatment of image (Col 1.15) in *princ.* 1.2.6.<sup>78</sup> But Origen differentiates his readings of Hebrews 1.3 from Colossians 1.15 in that *χαρακτήρ τῆς ὑποστάσεως αὐτοῦ* refers to the incarnation, particularly the Son's "emptying himself of equality with the Father and showing us the way by which we may know him" (*princ.* 1.2.8).<sup>79</sup> This difference may simply be due to the presence of "invisible God" in Colossians 1.15: the "image of the invisible God" must refer to the preincarnate and invisible Son, while the language of "express image of God's substance" is more open ended. However, Origen's intent in this illustration is simply to highlight God's incomprehensibility and the Son's revelatory function in the incarnation. One other notable point here is that Origen does not seem to find any issue with the use of *ὑποστάσεως*, particularly in its potential materialist misunderstandings, unlike with *ousia*.<sup>80</sup> This indicates that Origen does not read the phrase *χαρακτήρ τῆς ὑποστάσεως αὐτοῦ* as referring to God's very being or existence, something that is invisible and immaterial and ultimately unknowable. Instead, given how he treats it, Origen seems to understand it as a reference to God's personal existence.

## Wisdom 7.25-26

Wisdom 7.25-26 is equally important to Origen's Christology and, as it is longer, contains more content that reflects the same general points:

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<sup>77</sup> *princ.* 1.2.8. Jerome also testifies of this in *Ep. ad Avitum* 2 (Behr, 2:597.4).

<sup>78</sup> Origen acknowledges that this is not a perfect illustration, but allows in this instance for a material illustration show that the Son of God "through the likeness of his works and power demonstrated that the immense and invisible greatness of God the Father was in him" (Behr, 1:53), after which he cites Jn 14.9, 10.30, 10.38.

<sup>79</sup> Behr, 1:53. In other places, Origen only mentions this verse alongside others, e.g. *Cels.* 8.12, 8.14 suggest incarnation, but it is not clear elsewhere.

<sup>80</sup> Chadwick's rendering of *ὑποστάσεως* as "person" in *Cels.* 8.13-14 follows more closely to Origen.

For she is a breath (ἄτμις) of the power of God, and a pure emanation (ἀπόρροια... εἰλικρινής) of the glory of the Almighty; therefore nothing defiled gains entrance into her. For she is a reflection of eternal light (ἀπαύγασμα γάρ ἐστὶν φωτὸς αἰδίου), a spotless mirror of the working of God (ἔσοπτρον ἀκηλίδωτον τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ ἐνεργείας), and an image of his goodness (εἰκὼν τῆς ἀγαθότητος αὐτοῦ).<sup>81</sup>

Origen's lengthy treatment of these verses also appears in *princ.* 1.2.9-10, in the section immediately following his exegesis of Hebrews 1.3. His treatment of these verses follows closely to that of Colossians 1.15 and Hebrews 1.3.<sup>82</sup> Origen's begins his exegesis of Wisdom 7.25-26 in *princ.* 1.2.9 by giving five definitions of God drawn from this text, all of which are also characteristics of God's Wisdom: power, glory, eternal light, working, and goodness.

In the first definition, Origen envisions the eternal generation of God's wisdom in terms of breath from power:

The breath [...] the vigor of all this great and so immense power itself comes to have its own subsistence (*subsistentia*), for although it proceeds from the power itself as will from the intellect, nevertheless even the will of God itself becomes the power of God.<sup>83</sup>

The underlying meaning is that the breath of the power is not the power of God itself (which is only God's), but is a sort of secondary power. This second power "subsists in its own properties" (*in sua proprietate subsistens*), a "kind of breath... of the first and unbegotten power of God."<sup>84</sup> Origen also notes that, given that God has always had his power and will, the breath of his power has also always existed, "having no beginning but

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<sup>81</sup> NRSV.

<sup>82</sup> Origen also sometimes includes 1 Cor 1.24 with these verses.

<sup>83</sup> *princ.* 1.2.9 (Behr, 1:55). Origen here again links will (*uoluntas*) with the person of the Son, but here will becomes power (*uirtus*).

<sup>84</sup> *princ.* 1.2.9 (Behr, 1:55).

God himself.”<sup>85</sup> This second power does not come from God’s “essence” or “nature,” but comes forth as the will of God from God’s power, consistent with the language Origen uses elsewhere to describe the generation of the Word.<sup>86</sup> But his emphasis is to portray the Son as a distinct individual from the Father, inseparable from God and deriving his existence from him, but clearly distinct from the source.

Continuing on, in *princ.* 1.2.10, Origen tackles the second phrase, “emanation of the purest glory of the Almighty” (Wis 7.25b).<sup>87</sup> The title “Almighty,” Origen notes, assumes the existence of something over which God exercises his power.<sup>88</sup> Origen comments that Wisdom, the pure emanation (Greek ἀπόρροια, Latin *manatio*) of the glory of the Almighty, is that by which “God holds power over all things.” This means that Wisdom, the emanation of the glory, is the ruling authority of God over all creation. Wisdom, therefore, also “has a share... in the glory of omnipotence,” evidence of Origen’s understanding that God’s Wisdom, by imaging the Father’s glory, is able to participate in what belongs to God alone.<sup>89</sup> His explanation of this verse is summed up in the following:

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<sup>85</sup> Behr, 1:57. Note temporal vs. ontological beginning.

<sup>86</sup> Michel Barnes, *The Power of God: Dunamis in Gregory of Nyssa’s Trinitarian Theology* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2001), 122, notes that while 1 Cor 1.24 “does not use *power* and *wisdom* in the context of a production account; yet the effect of its exegesis *via* the Wisdom and Hebrew texts is a support for a production account.” As in Jo. 13.153, Origen avoids speaking of the production of the Son from the Father himself, but from his glory (Heb 1.3) or power (Wis 7.25).

<sup>87</sup> Behr, 1:57.

<sup>88</sup> This leads logically into the potential issue of the eternity of creation – cf. Justinian, *Ep. ad Mennam* (Koetschau, *fr.* 5; Butterworth, 24), which parallels *princ.* 1.2.10: “Now how is it anything but absurd that God should at first not possess something that is appropriate to him and then should come to possess it?” In this passage, Origen is defending the eternity of God’s attributes, e.g. “almighty”, with reference to the person of Christ and creation – God must always have been almighty over something.

<sup>89</sup> Behr, 1:59. This is due both to his authority and the obedience of the subjects. This is followed with a discussion of how the Son must have everything the Father’s has, based on Jn 17.10.

So, in this way is God's Wisdom herself the pure and clear *emanation of the glory of God*, in respect of his being *Almighty*, glorified as the *emanation of omnipotence or of glory*.<sup>90</sup>

While the Son is not the omnipotence or glory itself, he is the means by which that omnipotence is exercised, seen in verses like Philippians 2.10, which show Jesus wielding dominion over creation.<sup>91</sup> God's dominion is "by Word and Reason, not by force and necessity", reflecting the "purest and brightest" glory of wisdom, that is, of the Son.<sup>92</sup> This indicates that God's glory, though invisible, is seen most clearly in the coming forth and authoritative work of his Wisdom, who is the "effluence" of his glory. The way in which the Son works reflects the intellectual nature of both persons – it is by these means that the Son exercises authority and thus makes the Father, the source of that power, known.<sup>93</sup>

Origen continues his exegesis of Wisdom 7.25-26 in *princ.* 1.2.11. For Origen, the three further titles in v.26 contribute to the same theological points he makes throughout this section. "Splendor of eternal light," similar to Hebrews 1.3, refers to the Son or Wisdom as the brightness of the light that is God, functionally working to reveal the light of the Father, but also proves that "the subsistence of the Son derives from the Father himself" in an eternal sense (*princ.* 1.2.11).<sup>94</sup> With the second title, "the flawless mirror of the working (*inoperationis/ ἐνεργείας*) of God", Origen keys in on the term "working" (*princ.* 1.2.12).<sup>95</sup> The "working" of God refers to the strength (*uigor*) by which the Father works, "either

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<sup>90</sup> Behr, 1:61.

<sup>91</sup> This is similar to what we have seen in the titles Firstborn and Only-Begotten.

<sup>92</sup> Behr, 1:61.

<sup>93</sup> Note the last sentence of this section: "But since the Wisdom of God, who is his only-begotten Son, is in all respects unalterable and unchangeable, and every good quality is in him essentially (*substantiale*), such that it can never be changed or altered, therefore his glory is declared to be pure and genuine" (*princ.* 1.2.10; Behr, 1:61). While some of these points are assumed in Origen's discussion, the "essential" language and the need to call his glory "pure" rings of Rufinus.

<sup>94</sup> Behr, 1:63. Origen notes he has already covered this general point, but comments on the everlasting (*sempiternum*) and eternal (*aeternum*) implications of this phrase.

<sup>95</sup> Behr: 1:62-63. As with "emanation", Rufinus includes both terms.

when he creates or when he acts in providence, or judges, or when he arranges and orders individual things, each in its own time”.<sup>96</sup> It is a reference to the sustained work of the Father from creation to future judgment, as well as the power by which he does this. The description of Wisdom as “mirror” refers to the Son’s reflection of the Father’s power and work. In all that the Son does, he does not deviate from the Father, mimicking him like a reflection in the mirror (Jn 5.19). Origen also emphasizes that the Father and the Son do not do separate works, but they are “one and the same movement”.<sup>97</sup> This work, Origen notes, is not similar or simply imitation, as in a pupil and a master, but show no dissimilarity (*dissimilitudo*); they are not similar but the same things.<sup>98</sup>

Finally, the phrase “image of his goodness” (εἰκὼν τῆς ἀγαθότητος αὐτοῦ), similar to Colossians 1.15, reflects again the original goodness of the Father which is reflected in the Son (*princ.* 1.2.13). Origen’s treatment of this verse parallels what he does with “image” in Colossians 1.15. Notably, however, Koetschau’s edition has placed a Greek fragment from Justinian’s condemnation of Origen alongside it.<sup>99</sup> In this fragment, Origen is said to have said that only the Father can be “goodness itself” (αὐτοαγαθόν) or “good pure and simply” (ἀπλῶς ἀγαθός). The Son, as “image of the goodness” cannot be called “good” without qualification in the same way as the Father.<sup>100</sup> From what we have seen so far, these

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<sup>96</sup> *princ.* 1.2.12; Behr: 1:62-63.

<sup>97</sup> *princ.* 1.2.12; Behr: 1:62-63.

<sup>98</sup> Origen’s concern here is with those who compare Father and Son’s work to teacher/pupil. He notes that the Son’s making of things in a “bodily manner” (*material corporali*) were first made by the Father in a “spiritual substance” (*substantiis spiritalibus*), suggesting a technical description of a unified work in creation.

<sup>99</sup> Justinian, *Ep. ad Mennam* (Koetschau fr. 6; Behr, 2:597.4). Behr, 1:65, notes that Fernandez inserts this fragment here also (See Samuel Fernandez, *Orígenes: Sobre Los Principios*, Fuentes Patristicas 27 (Madrid: Ciudad Nueva, 2015)).

<sup>100</sup> Jerome, *Ep. ad Avitum* 2 (Behr, 2:597.4) agrees: Origen only calls the Father “good” and “of perfect goodness” (*perfectae bonitatis*). He also notes that according to Origen, “The Son is not good, but is a kind of breath and image of goodness (*auram quandum et imaginem bonitatis*), so that he is not called good absolutely (*absolute bonus*)”.

descriptions are in general agreement with what Origen has to say about the Son as imaging the Father and receiving what he has from the Father, drawn from his readings of Luke 18.19 and Mark 10.18.<sup>101</sup> It would be a stretch, however, to say that Origen would refrain from calling the Son “good” at all, reflecting the bias of those who condemned Origen. In fact, Origen elsewhere shows concern with the views of Marcionites or Gnostics to speak of the Son as not being just or good.<sup>102</sup> These anti-Marcionite statements, however, do not agree with the descriptions of the Son in *princ.* 1.2.13 as not possessing a second goodness (*secunda bonitas*) or another goodness (*altera bonitas*), or that there is no “dissimilarity (*dissimilitudo*) or difference of goodness (*distantia bonitatis*) in the Son”.<sup>103</sup> The emphasis in *princ.* 1.2.13 on the source of goodness in the Father and the overall shared quality of goodness can probably best be understood as Rufinus’ attempts to correct misunderstandings of Origen, views which have likely been exaggerated in the condemnatory fragments. But Origen’s actual views on the Son’s goodness, which we see in part in the fragments and elsewhere in his writings, is that the Son, while truly good, possesses goodness through the Father and thus is not absolute goodness. This understanding is encapsulated in the phrase “image of his goodness”.<sup>104</sup>

Colossians 1.15, Hebrews 1.3, and Wisdom 7.25-26 form a collection of texts that are central to Origen’s Christology. In each of these verses, we see Origen’s emphasis on the Son’s

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<sup>101</sup> See esp. *Jo.* 2.96, 6.105, 6.295, 13.153. See esp. *Jo.* 13.234: “But even though he is an image of the Father’s goodness, he says, ‘Why do you call me good?’” (Mk 10.18; Lk 18.19) And indeed it is this will that is the distinctive food of the Son himself, on account of which he is what he is” (SC 222:156-159; Heine, 89:116-117).

<sup>102</sup> See *Jo.* 1.252, 1.253.

<sup>103</sup> Behr, 1:64-65. Even in *com.in.Rom* 8.5.8, Origen notes that “The one true good is God, whose image of goodness is the Son and his Spirit, who is called good (Ps 143.10)... Therefore, he has designated as ‘good things’ that one good, since it consists in God, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit” (SC 543:476-478; Scheck, 104:147).

<sup>104</sup> Therefore, statements about the essential goodness of the Trinity (e.g. *princ.* 1.5.3) should be viewed with suspicion.



origins in and similarity to the Father, portrayed through the analogies of light, reflection, and image.<sup>105</sup> Origen finds similarity in the language of these texts, particularly in the depiction of the Son as emanation or reflection whose source is the Father, the necessity for an eternal generation, the economic and revelatory activity reflected in his emanation, and the general sense of his inferiority to the Father as necessitated by his derivation from him.<sup>106</sup> Origen seems to gravitate toward these verses because they best explain his understanding of the Son's nature and function. One notable point is the fact that Origen's interpretations of these titles remain relatively undisturbed in the translations of Rufinus. In both the Greek and the Latin, it is clear that Origen consistently understands the Son to be similar to, derived from, yet not the same as the Father. While in certain places Rufinus attempts to clarify Origen's theology, it is evident that Rufinus is not completely misguided in emphasizing that Origen taught the similarity of Father and Son; though Origen did not teach that they were equal, Origen's later detractors are clearly incorrect in arguing that he taught that they were dissimilar.

## **The *Epinoiai* of Christ**

In this section we will examine another important feature in Origen's Christology: his doctrine of Christ's *epinoiai*.<sup>107</sup> Like the titles of image, this doctrine reveals Origen's

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<sup>105</sup> See esp. *Jo.* 13.153, where Origen lists many of these titles together in the context of the Son's revelation of the Father in spite of his inferiority (SC 222:114; Heine, 89:100).

<sup>106</sup> See esp. *Jo.* 2.49. Also see *hom.in.Jer* 9.4.5, in which Origen cites Heb 1.3, Wis 7.26 to show that the "reflection of glory" has not been begotten just once and no longer begotten" and that the Son reflects the Father (SC 232:392; Smith, 97:93).

<sup>107</sup> LSJ defines ἐπίνοια primarily as "*thinking on or of a thing, thought, notion*". Lampe (PGL), 538, defines it as "thought, conception", particularly for Origen as "in distinguishing various aspects of Christ's redemptive activity". For treatments, see Matthew Kuhner, 'The "Aspects of Christ" (*Epinoiai* Christou) in Origen's Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans', *HTR* 110.02 (2017), 195–216; Ronald Heine, 'Epinoiai', in *The Westminster Handbook to Origen* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2004) 93–95; John A. McGuckin, 'The Changing Forms of Jesus', in *Origeniana Quarta* (Innsbruck: Tryolia-Verlag, 1987), 215–222; Marguerite Harl, *Origène*, esp. 173–75, 234–237; Gerhard

understanding of the person of the Son and his working in the world.<sup>108</sup> But unlike the titles of image, many of Christ's *epinoiai* reflect his relationship with creation; the Son is or becomes various "aspects" or "concepts" (*epinoiai*) for creation, both before and in the incarnation.<sup>109</sup> These aspects reflect creation's various needs (e.g. *Jo.* 1.119) and the Son's ability to meet them through his inherent capability for multiplicity.<sup>110</sup> The vast number of these aspects or titles reflect the multifaceted nature of Christ's work, through which he reveals the Father.<sup>111</sup> But Origen is insistent that the Son remains one in person; the various aspects which he has do not affect his essence.<sup>112</sup> This doctrine also marks a distinction between the natures of the Son and the Father.<sup>113</sup> The Son can "become" or even change in a way that the Father cannot.<sup>114</sup> Being one in person and multiple in aspect and operation,

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Gruber, *ZΩH: Wesen, Stufen und Mitteilung des wahren Lebens bei Origenes* (München: Max Hueber, 1962), 241-266.

<sup>108</sup> Origen resembles Numenius who also conceives of the second God as "one" and exercises the complexity of powers (*fr.* 11, cf. *fr.* 21). But unlike Numenius, Origen rejects the claim that the Logos' action on the material world unifies matter and "dissipates" or "divides" him (Stead, *Divine Substance*, 186). Berchman, *Platonism*, 111, notes that Origen resembles Numenius in the doubleness of second principle as both mind (*nous*) and demiurge.

<sup>109</sup> The lengthiest treatment of this is in book 1 of *Jo.* (1.125-136). In *Jo.* 1.52-53, Origen also speaks of the "names" (τα ονόματα) and "titles" (προσηγορίας) of the Son, all of which he uses synonymously.

<sup>110</sup> Stead, *Philosophy*, 129. This doctrine does not mean that the Son is "multiple" in his nature – it is economic (see Tzamalikos, *Cosmology*, 35).

<sup>111</sup> Heine, 'Epinoiai', 95, notes, "Christ would be analogous to the prism through which the light of God is refracted and the person standing in the light would be the individual Christian. While the prism is more than the different hues of light, nevertheless one cannot see it without seeing the hues."

<sup>112</sup> See *Jo.* 1.200, 1.204, 32.324-26; *princ.* 1.2.2, etc. Crouzel, *Origen*, 189, notes that Valentinians had hypostatized the different biblical titles of Christ into various entities – Origen is reacting against this.

<sup>113</sup> In *Jo.* 10.246, Origen insists that the Son differs from the Father in number. This is said not to say that the Son is multiple, but that he is distinct from the Father in person – Father and Son are not merely aspects (SC 157:530; Heine, 80:309). The Son also is not entirely ineffable (*princ.* 1.2.6). Origen follows in the trend of philosophical distinctions between simple and complex unity; thus God the Father is one and simple (see Heine, 'Epinoiai', 93).

<sup>114</sup> Later authors would not be comfortable with this. But note that the Word does not become God but is clearly God (*Jo.* 2.12), though differing from "the God" who is over all (*Jo.* 2.15).

the Son can thus serve as the link between Father and creation. Therefore, through the many *epinoiai* of the Son, believers are led to the Father.<sup>115</sup>

This teaching is important to this study for two primary reasons. First, it reveals Origen's concern to preserve scriptural language. While this doctrine seems Platonic in character, Origen uses it to explain the various titles of Christ that appear throughout Scripture, which are then applied practically to believers of varying spiritual levels.<sup>116</sup> Second, it attests to Origen's penchant to view the cosmos, and even the Christian life, as a cosmological or spiritual hierarchy.<sup>117</sup> For Origen, Christ's titles and aspects do not exist arbitrarily; they function as steps on the ladder of spiritual progress upwards to the knowledge of God, thus some are superior to others (*Jo.* 19.34-39).<sup>118</sup> But each of the many aspects is significant in its own right, aiding believers in their particular needs.<sup>119</sup> Therefore, while the Father is at the top of the hierarchy or ladder, the Son, as mediator, occupies a wide range of steps which lead up to the Father.<sup>120</sup> Third, Origen's doctrine of the *epinoiai* demonstrates his unique and nuanced understanding of the nature of Christ, as well as the divine attributes and virtues. Though Origen clearly believes that goodness and divinity come from the Father, his conception of the "divine attributes" is vastly different than

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<sup>115</sup> E.g. *Cels.* 7.44.

<sup>116</sup> See Lyman, *Christology*, 72-73.

<sup>117</sup> Kuhner, 'Aspects', 199, calls this a "characteristically Platonic 'step' cosmology". For background, see Theo Kobusch, 'Die Epinoia—Das menschliche Bewusstsein in der antiken Philosophie', in *Gregory of Nyssa: Contra Eunomium II: An English Version with Supporting Studies*, ed. Lenka Karfikova (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 3-20.

<sup>118</sup> Also *Cels.* 7.46: the disciples "look at the things that are becoming, so that they use them as steps to the contemplation of the nature of intelligible things" (SC 150:124; Chadwick, 434). As Origen notes in *Cels.* 4.16, there are "different forms (*μορφαί*) of the Word", which can be perceived as one progresses spiritually. Those who have "nearly attained virtue" or have "in fact attained it" can see God as Christ was revealed on the mountain in his transfiguration, while those below cannot see things so "wonderful and more divine" (SC 136:220; Chadwick, 194).

<sup>119</sup> *Cels.* 2.64, 4.99. Origen is also not always consistent in his application of these titles or in their order (see Harl, *Origène*, 358).

<sup>120</sup> But even to begin this ascent, one must begin with the first step, which we will see, is the Holy Spirit.

those who come after him. Origen's understanding of the virtues is based in Christ's ministry and *epinoiai*, which believers receive by participation in and imitation of Christ. This in turn affects how he understands the person of the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit's relationship with the virtues.<sup>121</sup>

The first half of the next section will address Origen's understanding of two of the ontologically prior or highest Christological titles, Wisdom and Word, noetic designations which refer to the Son's preincarnate existence.<sup>122</sup> These titles reflect the Platonic way in which Origen views the person of the Son and his revelation of the Father. Though these titles testify to similar points about the Son, they differ in that Wisdom is static while Word is dynamic. In the second half of this section, we will look at Origen's treatment of Christ as the "virtues", which are also his *epinoiai*. These virtues, most of which are drawn from Origen's reading of 1 Corinthians 1.30, are found and manifested in the person and work of Christ. But Origen's understanding of Christ himself as the virtues is a unique part of his Christology, testament to the practical aspect of his theology, seen in humanity's ability to participate in the divine and achieve salvation through performing the virtues of Christ.

## Wisdom

Of the many aspects of Christ, the two highest are Wisdom and Word, both of which describe the Son's spiritual and eternal existence. For Origen, Wisdom is not simply an attribute, but is a personal entity distinct from the Father (*princ.* 1.2.2).<sup>123</sup> But this does not

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<sup>121</sup> Which, we will see, conflicts with how Rufinus portrays him on the divine attributes and functions like sanctification.

<sup>122</sup> See *Jo.* 1.118, 2.36. "Older" meaning ontologically prior.

<sup>123</sup> See *Jo.* 1.243 (SC 120:180; Heine, 80:83): "[God's] wisdom does not exist merely in the mental images of the God and Father of the universe in a way analogous to the images in human thoughts". Waers, 'Monarchianism', 236-38, argues that Origen deemphasizes "Logos" in the beginning of his *Commentary on John* and prioritizes "Wisdom" due to concerns about Monarchian theology which understood Logos as neither separate nor distinct from the Father. For background on the concept

mean that the person of Wisdom exists independently of God; Origen notes that “the Wisdom of God has her subsistence nowhere else but in him who is the beginning of all things, from whom also she is born” (*princ.* 1.2.5).<sup>124</sup> Origen maintains his ontological hierarchy in how he speaks of this title: as Wisdom’s beginning “the Father of wisdom is greater than and surpasses wisdom”.<sup>125</sup>

Origen’s treatment of the person Wisdom is undoubtedly understood through the lens of the Middle Platonic Logos and the divine forms.<sup>126</sup> As Origen says in *Jo.* 1.115,

And we must say that after God had created living wisdom... from the models in her he entrusted to her [to present] to the things which exist and to matter [both] their conformation and forms, but I stop short of saying their essences (τὰς οὐσίας).<sup>127</sup>

This explanation of “living wisdom” further confirms Origen’s understanding of God as Mind and the second principle, the Son, as the “act of will proceeding from the mind” (*princ.* 1.2.6).<sup>128</sup> It also confirms the Son’s purely noetic existence and his ontological dependence on the Father. When one understands Wisdom as

... an incorporeal existence compromised of the various ideas which embrace the principles of the universe, an existence which is living and animate, as it

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of wisdom, see R.L. Wilken, ed., *Aspects of Wisdom in Judaism and Early Christianity*, (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1976).

<sup>124</sup> Behr, 1:47. cf. *Jo.* 1.102, 1.104; *princ.* 4.4.1.

<sup>125</sup> *Jo.* 2.151 (SC 120:306; Heine, 80:134).

<sup>126</sup> See esp. *Cels.* 6.64. Crouzel, *Origen*, 189, notes that Wisdom contains both Platonic “ideas” and Stoic “reasons” – the two concepts “have been confused since the Middle Stoicism of Poseidonius.”

<sup>127</sup> SC 120:122; Heine, 80:57. Origen’s hesitance to apply “essences” to Wisdom’s forms here likely stems from his understanding of the Father as the source of all *ousia* – see Ch. 1, p.34. For Wisdom as “created”, see Justinian, *Ep. ad Mennam* (Koetschau fr. 32; Behr, 2:616.24); *Jo.* 19.36.

<sup>128</sup> Berchman, *Platonism*, 127, notes that Origen’s idea of the Logos as not identical with the mind of God is one way in which Origen differs from Clement and Philo. Boys-Stones, *Platonist Philosophy*, 137, notes that the “forms do not play a significant part in Christian thinking” and that “Christology is born in the logical space occupied by the forms”. See also Edwards, *Origen against Plato* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 65-74.

were, he will understand the wisdom of God which precedes all creation...  
(Jo. 1.244)<sup>129</sup>

In order for creation to exist, Wisdom, which contains the prefiguration of all things, must first exist. Origen continues: because of “this creation” (i.e. Wisdom) “the whole creation has been able to subsist, since it has a share in the divine wisdom according to which it has been created.”<sup>130</sup> Because Wisdom is the Father’s very Wisdom, it must be eternal:

In this Wisdom, therefore, who ever was with the Father, was creation always delineated and shaped, and there never was a moment when the prefiguration of those things, which were to be thereafter, was not in Wisdom.<sup>131</sup>

Wisdom, therefore, reflects the fact that in his essence the Son is eternal and ontologically dependent on the Father, the hypostatic manifestation of the thinking of the divine mind.

While Origen’s understanding of divine Wisdom is clearly influenced by Platonism, it is also evident that he draws certain points from Scripture. The most important biblical reference for this is Proverbs 8:22: “The Lord created me at the beginning of his work, the first of his acts of long ago” (NRSV).<sup>132</sup> In this verse Origen finds a precedent for speaking of Wisdom as “created”, as we have seen above.<sup>133</sup> It is also the grounds for Wisdom as the

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<sup>129</sup> SC 120:180; Heine, 80:83. In Jo. 1.114, Origen notes that “all things have come to be according to the thoughts of what will be, which were prefigured by God in wisdom (Ps 103.24)” (SC 120:120; Heine, 80:57). Origen also uses the illustration of a house or a ship to further explain the role of Wisdom: it is like the blueprints of such structures.

<sup>130</sup> Jo. 1.244 (SC 120:180; Heine, 80:83). God’s creation through wisdom: *Cels.* 6.69 (Ps 103.24), *princ.* 2.1.3, Jo. 1.245.

<sup>131</sup> *princ.* 1.4.4 (Behr, 1:87). See also *princ.* 1.2.2, 1.2.3. See Angelos Kritikos, ‘XX—Platonism and Principles in Origen’, *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies, Supplement* 94 (2007), 413-414, for a comparison of Origen’s views with the misreading of him by Methodius.

<sup>132</sup> “... but not as Word” (Jo. 1.222: SC 120:118; Heine, 80:56). See also Jo. 1.111.

<sup>133</sup> Similar to “Firstborn”. The Son’s titles of “firstborn” and “only-begotten” distinguish the Son’s metaphysical status from the Father, who alone is “uncreated”. See *Cels.* 6.66, 6.17; *princ.* Pref.4.

first of Christ's titles – as Origen notes, “as wisdom he is called the beginning” (*Jo.* 1.111).<sup>134</sup>

By this, Origen means that Wisdom is the first or highest of the various aspects of Christ, ontologically prior to all others (*Jo.* 1.222-23).<sup>135</sup>

The title Wisdom is tied closely with Word, as both testify to similar points about Christ.

In *Jo.* 1.111, Origen notes,

But it is as the beginning that Christ is creator, according to which he is wisdom. Therefore as wisdom he is called the beginning... [*Prov* 8.22, *Jn* 1.1] in wisdom. It is wisdom which is understood, on the one hand, taken in relation to the structure of the contemplation and thoughts of all things, but it is the Word which is received, taken in relation to the communication of the things which have been contemplated to spiritual beings.<sup>136</sup>

Wisdom is associated with the thoughts and ideas prefiguring creation, to the “structure of contemplation and thoughts.” This is different from the title “Word”, which is linked to the going forth of them in revelation. Both are linked to the Father's mind and to creation, but in different ways: Wisdom possesses the divine images or forms, whereas the Word goes forth with these and communicates them to rational creation. Wisdom is thus the static aspect, Word the dynamic. A Christian, therefore, contemplates first the Word who is received, and then progresses upward into the divine forms and images found in Wisdom. Therefore, Wisdom and Word are titles Origen distinguishes ontologically from Christ's other titles: while the Son “has some things not for himself, but for others,” the

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<sup>134</sup> SC 120:118; Heine, 80:56. Similarly, Christ is the beginning of things made in the image of God (see *Jo.* 1.104).

<sup>135</sup> Origen's logic is drawn from his reading of the relevant verses together– *Prov* 8.22 and *Jn* 1.1.

<sup>136</sup> SC 120:118-120; Heine, 80:56-57. Origen follows in *Jo.* 1.112 with what comes after Wisdom: Word is second, Life is third, etc. He notes in 1.111 how the priority of Wisdom in *Prov.* 8.22, which causes the Word to be in the beginning (*Jn* 1.1) in wisdom. Through the Word, Life then comes to be (*Jn* 14.6).

*epinoia* Wisdom is a title which he has “for himself and for others” (*Jo.* 2.125-26).<sup>137</sup> What he means by this is ontological priority: while the Son to some degree becomes the other things that he is for the sake of ministering to creation, he always was and will be Wisdom innately, simply “for himself”.<sup>138</sup> For this reason, Origen sorts the titles or aspects of Christ in order of appearance (*Jo.* 1.223), with Wisdom coming first because it alone is “beginning” and innate.

There are also functions that Origen ties to the title Wisdom. Wisdom allows for correct knowledge of God and thus proper worship. Origen notes that Wisdom allows people to “know and think piously about God” or even “think or believe that the God and Father ever existed” (*princ.* 1.2.2).<sup>139</sup> He explains this further in *princ.* 1.2.8:

[Word and Wisdom] in regard to this very point of making God to be understood and known, [are] called *the figure of his substance* or *subsistence*; that is, when Wisdom outlines in herself, first of all, the things which she wishes to reveal to others, by which God may be known and understood by them, then she may also be called the *express figure of the substance* of God.<sup>140</sup>

God’s Wisdom also allows people to be wise and act wisely (*Jo.* 19.155).<sup>141</sup> But Origen acknowledges that God is greater than his Wisdom, calling him “Wisdom’s Father” and the “Father of Wisdom... [who is] greater than and surpasses wisdom.”<sup>142</sup> God’s Wisdom,

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<sup>137</sup> SC 120:290; Heine, 80:127-128. *Jo.* 2.126: “we must inquire, since there is a system of ideas in him insofar as he is ‘wisdom,’ if there are some ideas that are incomprehensible to all begotten nature except himself, which he knows for himself” (SC 120:290; Heine, 80:128).

<sup>138</sup> “Word”, on the other hand, is for himself, but at least in part for others (*Jo.* 2.126, 128). See also *Jo.* 1.119: the Savior, “becomes many things, or perhaps even all of these things, as the whole creation which can be made free needs him” (SC 120:122; Heine, 80:58).

<sup>139</sup> Behr, 1:41

<sup>140</sup> Behr, 1:53. See also *princ.* 1.2.3: Wisdom is “forming beforehand and containing within herself the species and reasons of the whole creation” while Word “discloses to all other beings... the reason of the mysteries and secrets which are contained within the Wisdom of God... she is [...] the interpreter of the secrets of the intellect” (Behr, 1:43).

<sup>141</sup> SC 290:142; Heine, 89:203. Also *princ.* 1.2.4.

<sup>142</sup> See *Jo.* 19.36, 2.151 respectively. See also *Jo.* 1.186-187 for similar statements on truth.



therefore, is that by which the Father is known; one “ascends from knowing Wisdom to Wisdom’s Father... [it is] impossible for God of Wisdom to be apprehended apart from the leading of Wisdom” (*Jo.* 19.36).<sup>143</sup>

Wisdom is also associated with God’s power and rule. Commenting on Wisdom 7, Origen notes that “through Wisdom, who is Christ, God holds power over all things”, or that God is called Almighty (*princ.* 1.2.10).<sup>144</sup> God’s establishment of order in the universe thus comes through the working of his Wisdom and Word, yet another example of his noetic emphasis. Wisdom, therefore, is the “flawless mirror” who “moves along or acts with all the same motions and actions with which the one who looks in the mirror moves or acts, and deviates from them in absolutely nothing”, performing perfectly the will of God.<sup>145</sup> Though God is removed from creation by virtue of his inaccessible nature, all his thoughts and plans are revealed in his Wisdom and go forth in his Word (*princ.* 1.2.12).

## Word

The importance of the Christological title “Word” or Logos to Origen’s theological system and its inherent reliance on Platonism is well documented in Origen scholarship.<sup>146</sup> As we have seen with Wisdom, it is a title that attests to the Son’s noetic and ontological identity. We have also seen that Origen draws from particular biblical verses (*Prov* 8.22, *Jn* 1.1) to

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<sup>143</sup> SC 290:68; Heine, 89:176. See also *Jo.* 1.107 (SC 120:116; Heine, 80:56): Origen notes that for Christ, “in his nature, divinity is the beginning.” His humanity is the beginning for those who cannot yet receive this. cf. *Jo.* 1.51.

<sup>144</sup> Behr, 1:59. This is also applied to Word – God exercises power “through Wisdom, that is by Word and Reason, not by force and necessity” (Behr, 1:61).

<sup>145</sup> *princ.* 1.2.12 (Behr, 1:63).

<sup>146</sup> See esp. Harl, *Origène*; O’Leary, ‘Logos’, in *The Westminster Handbook to Origen*, 142-45; Letelier, ‘Le Logos chez Origène’, *Revue des Sciences Philosophiques et Théologiques* 75 (1991), 587-612; etc.

make ontological distinctions between Wisdom and Word, dividing the general function of the Logos in Platonic cosmology between the two titles.<sup>147</sup>

For Origen, Word also reflects the eternity of the person of the Son. Drawing from John 1.1, he notes that the Word, because of the term “was”

...is neither separated from beginning nor does he depart from the Father...  
[he] does not *come to be* in the beginning [...] for before all time and eternity  
“the Word was in the beginning,” and “the Word was with God.”<sup>148</sup>

For Origen, the Son is clearly “beginning” as Wisdom, but he is also “not even the beginning insofar as he is the Word, since ‘the Word’ was ‘in the beginning’” (Jo. 1.118).<sup>149</sup> Similarly, Wisdom is “older” (πρεσβύτερον) than all the other names of the firstborn of creation (Jo. 1.118), just as the Word is “older than the things which were created from the beginning” (Jo. 2.36).<sup>150</sup> As with Wisdom, Origen shows concern for those who think that the Word is a literal word from the Father (Jo. 1.152).<sup>151</sup> To combat this, Origen argues that the Word is not separate (κεχωρισμένον) from the Father, and is also “invested with substance” (οὐσιωμένον).<sup>152</sup> Though coming after Wisdom, Word is included amongst his “noblest titles” which those who are perfect can receive (Jo. 1.124).<sup>153</sup> As there is only one Wisdom and one Justice, so there is also only one Word of God (Jo. 2.37-38).<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> Kritikos, ‘Platonism’, 415, notes that Word presupposes Wisdom and is never separate from it, similar to how “Numenius’ Third God is not merely a Third, but a Second-and-Third.”

<sup>148</sup> Jo. 2.9 (SC 120:212; Heine, 80:97). He notes in Jo. 2.65 that “with God” does not tell us when... nor does “with God” tell us he “was God” or “in the beginning” (SC 120:246; Heine, 80:111). Also Jo. 2.36: “the Word was older than the things which were created from the beginning” (SC 120:230; Heine, 80:104).

<sup>149</sup> This seems to suggest that he only becomes “Word” in relation to creation, as we will soon see.

<sup>150</sup> Jo. 1.118 (SC 120:122; Heine, 80:58); Jo. 2.36 (SC 120:232; Heine, 80:104). Also, the Son is “older” than the Holy Spirit (Jo. 2.73).

<sup>151</sup> See n.123 above.

<sup>152</sup> Jo. 1.152 (SC 120:136-138; Heine, 80:64-65). See also Jo. 2.16 (for analysis, see Ch. 1, p.44).

<sup>153</sup> SC 120:124; Heine, 80:59.

<sup>154</sup> SC 120:232; Heine, 80:104. Also Jo. 2.42, 2.21.

But the distinction between Wisdom being “before” creation and the Word “in the beginning” is an intentional detail present in Scripture: it reveals that Wisdom is ontologically prior to Word.<sup>155</sup> Wisdom, Origen notes, is “the “beginning” and precedes the Word which announces her,” while the Word “is always in the beginning, in wisdom” (*Jo.* 1.289).<sup>156</sup> Therefore, Christ as Word “possess[es] substance in the beginning, in Wisdom” (*Jo.* 1.292).<sup>157</sup> Also, as has been noted, one major difference between Wisdom and Word is that Wisdom “is understood,” particularly in relation to contemplation and thoughts of all things, while the Word “is received,” referring to “the communication of the things which have been contemplated to spiritual beings (*Jo.* 1.111).<sup>158</sup> This is also seen in *Jo.* 1.283, in which the Father “belches forth visions of truth (see *Ps* 45.1) in a disconnected manner, [he] produces their form in the Word.”<sup>159</sup>

The title Word is thus connected to creation. In *Jo.* 1.113, Origen suggests that “in the beginning was the Word” may mean that “all things came to be in accordance with the wisdom and plans of the system of thoughts in the Word.”<sup>160</sup> The Word, therefore, is the initiation or execution of the divine plans. The phrase “through whom” (*Jn* 1.3) refers to the fact that God is the initiator and that the Word is in second position; creation was made through (*dia* = instrumentality) the Word, but by (*upo* = personal agent) the Father (*Jo.* 2.70).<sup>161</sup> The Son, therefore, is Wisdom prior to creation (and continues to be), but is Word at the beginning of creation. The aspect of Wisdom, therefore, is prior to Word, but

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<sup>155</sup> See esp. *Jo.* 1.109.

<sup>156</sup> *SC* 120:206; Heine, 80:94.

<sup>157</sup> *SC* 120:206; Heine, 80:94. See also *Jo.* 1.291 for testimony of personal existence of the Son as Word. In many of these instances, the title Word itself does not have particular significance for this argument.

<sup>158</sup> *SC* 120:120; Heine, 80:57.

<sup>159</sup> *SC* 120:202; Heine, 80:92.

<sup>160</sup> *SC* 120:120; Heine, 80:57.

<sup>161</sup> *SC* 120:250; Heine, 80:112. Which includes the Holy Spirit (*Jo.* 2.73).

Word carries out the plan of God as it creates and ministers to creation.<sup>162</sup> Though Origen does not think that the Word “became” God in the act of creation (*Jo.* 2.8), there is a distinct sense of movement or even change associated with this title.

The title Word is also significant because it signifies that he is the source of all rationality.

In *Jo.* 1.267, Origen notes that the Son is called Word

because he removes everything irrational (ἄλογον) from us and makes us truly rational (λογικούς) beings who do all things for the glory of God... so that we perform both the more common and more perfect works of life to the glory of God because of reason.<sup>163</sup>

In the same way that the title “light” refers to his enlightening work and “resurrection” to his putting off what is dead, the title Word (Logos) refers to his imparting of reason.<sup>164</sup> The Word is the source of reason, as the Father is of divinity (*Jo.* 2.20).<sup>165</sup> Origen also notes elsewhere that “the Logos has opened the eyes of our soul,” causing people to “see the difference between light and darkness” (*Cels.* 6.67).<sup>166</sup> More specifically, the Word reveals the Father. This is seen in a more particular sense in *Cels.* 6.66, in which the Logos shows man “how great was the ignorance and impiety and lack of knowledge about God” leading to idolatry and instead “has led the mind of the man who wants to be saved to the uncreated and supreme God.”<sup>167</sup> By contemplating that which only he grasps (*Jo.* 2.60), the Word “reveals the Father whom he has known” (*Jo.* 1.277).<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> This does not mean that Origen thinks of these two things as separate concepts or beings; rather, he views them as distinct titles which begin to apply to the Son in his eternally static and eternally kinetic states.

<sup>163</sup> SC 120:192-194; Heine, 80:88.

<sup>164</sup> See *Jo.* 1.164, 1.181 respectively. This also applies to truth and wisdom (*Jo.* 2.40).

<sup>165</sup> SC 120:220; Heine, 80:100. See also *Jo.* 2.15.

<sup>166</sup> SC 147:346; Chadwick, 382. cf. *Jo.* 2.10.

<sup>167</sup> SC 147:344; Chadwick, 381. See also *Cels.* 6.68.

<sup>168</sup> SC 120:198; Heine, 80:91.

Origen's lengthy treatment of the title Word in book two of the *Commentary on John* places particular emphasis on the function of the Word as initiator of deification. While God is the source of divinity, it is through the ministry of the Word that people can be deified (Jo. 2.17).<sup>169</sup> The Word is also called the "archetypal image" of many images; humans are formed in the Image of God who is continually "with God" in "unceasing contemplation of the depth of the Father" (Jo. 2.18).<sup>170</sup> For this reason "God the Word is the minister of deity to all other gods" (Jo. 2.19).<sup>171</sup> Following this, Origen again compares the God-Word relationship with Word-human: the rationality that humans possess images the Word, who is rationality itself, who in turn images God the Father, who is divinity (Jo. 2.20). Because the Word initiates people into divinity, he is opposed to the flesh; many cannot participate in him because of sin (Jo. 1.269-270).<sup>172</sup>

Because the Word is God's Wisdom sent forth, the Word is also associated with the incarnation. Origen notes in Jo. 2.61 that, "For perhaps even if in some way we attain the most sublime contemplation of the Word and of the truth, we shall not forget that we were introduced to him by his coming in our body."<sup>173</sup> In order for anyone to even know about the existence of the divine Word, he must first see the Word made flesh.<sup>174</sup> Origen also

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<sup>169</sup> For more on divinity, see Ch. 3, p.137. See also *Cels.* 6.68: "And who but the divine Logos can save and lead the soul of man to the supreme God?" (SC 147:348; Chadwick, 382). Can see image of heavenly: Jo. 2.47.

<sup>170</sup> SC 120:218; Heine, 80:99.

<sup>171</sup> SC 120:220; Heine, 80:99.

<sup>172</sup> In Jo. 2.22-33 (SC 120:220-228; Heine, 80:100-103), Origen notes a number of incorrect views with regard to the Word. Some are devoted to another foreign word (2.22), other words which are a second or third rank next to the Word (2.23). Speaking of those in the faith, there are others who participate in the Word "in the beginning" (2.28) and those lesser who only know Christ crucified (2.29, 1 Cor 2.2), those who devote themselves to the words which participate in the Word, e.g. philosophy (2.30), and the fourth in rank is those who believe in godless/incorrupt words (2.31). He summarizes the four groups: those who know the God of the universe, those who know God the Word, those who think sun/moon are gods, those who worship idols (2.32).

<sup>173</sup> SC 120:242-244; Heine, 80:110.

<sup>174</sup> By seeing the Logos who was in the beginning with God and takes on flesh, one can thus receive the Logos, "who was with God, who was God" (*Cels.* 6.68: SC 147:348; Chadwick, 382).

distinguishes between “the true Word of God” (τῷ ἀληθινῷ λόγῳ θεοῦ) and the “shadow of the Word” (τῇ σκιᾷ τοῦ λόγου), or the preincarnate Word and the Word made flesh (*Jo.* 2.50).<sup>175</sup> He also notes that the “Word on earth is not like the Word in heaven, inasmuch as he has become flesh and is expressed by means of a shadow and types and images,” suggesting a muting of the Word’s revelatory function by his coming in the flesh (*Jo.* 2.49).<sup>176</sup> Finally, Origen also links the Word with judgment, drawing from the image of the heavenly warrior in Revelation 19.11-12. Because the Word is “faithful and true,” it is his task to fight with justice and destroy the “irrational elements and injustice” in order to dwell in humans.<sup>177</sup>

As Origen notes in *princ.* 1.2.4, all of the titles of Christ, including Wisdom, Son, Life, and Word, “are named from his works and powers, and in none of them is there the slightest ground for anything bodily, which might seem to designate size or form or color.”<sup>178</sup> Christ’s titles indicate that he is inseparable from what he does.<sup>179</sup> Each title is not arbitrary, but indicates something about his character and his work in salvation.<sup>180</sup> Though there are

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<sup>175</sup> SC 120:238; Heine, 80:107. While Origen on occasion uses the language of “shadow” with Christ, particularly alongside “image” (e.g. *princ.* 1.1.4; *Jo.* 13.146), it is not a term he often uses. cf. “shadow of Christ” (*umbram Christi*) in *princ.* 2.6.7; *com.in.Rom* 6.3.8.

<sup>176</sup> SC 120:238; Heine, 80:107. This also agrees with Origen’s belief that revelation varies depending on levels of holiness; believer must transcend from the Word made flesh to the Word in heaven. The Logos “calls to himself those who are flesh that he may make them first to be formed like the Logos who became flesh” (*Cels.* 6.68; SC 147:348; Chadwick, 382).

<sup>177</sup> *Jo.* 2.51, 2.53, 2.57.

<sup>178</sup> Behr, 1:45. Life means that all life comes to be in the Word (*Jo.* 1.112, 1.117). Also, in *Jo.* 1.188, Christ is the “principle of life”, by which participants can truly live (SC 120:154; Heine, 80:71). cf. *Jo.* 2.156.

<sup>179</sup> For the more random titles, see *Jo.* 2.89.

<sup>180</sup> Other titles in which the Son is “beginning” include “Power” (*Jo.* 1.248, 1.291), which also “reveals things about his existence prior to creation” (*Jo.* 1.240; SC 120:178; Heine, 80:83). Citing verses like Philippians 4.13 and 1 Corinthians 1.24, Origen notes that the power is the means by which God’s work is done, that which is “furnished by Jesus” and “flows into the souls of believers” (*Jo.* 1.241; SC 120:178; Heine, 80:83). Like Wisdom, the Power of God is also described as being manifested as a person, coming forth from him to do the will of the Father. It also reflects his dominance over other powers: “the highest and best of these powers was Christ who is called not only the “wisdom of God,” but also the “power” (*Jo.* 1.291; SC 120:206; Heine, 80:94). The saints

far too many Christological titles to count, they are increasingly numerous for those saints who “continue in blessedness” (*Jo.* 1.123).<sup>181</sup> Beginning with the more elementary titles and works of Christ, those which can be seen, believers are called to work their way upwards through the various aspects of Christ into immaterial things.<sup>182</sup> Christ’s ministry, therefore, is to lead believers into immateriality and blessedness, into himself as the spiritual image of God, by which believers can know the Father himself.

We see, therefore, that Origen brings together biblical testimony and philosophical constructs in his understanding of the Christological titles of Wisdom and Word. Origen does not see conflict between the two worldviews in this regard, but uses biblical terminology and functions to fill out his own unique version of the Platonic doctrine of forms. Given, however, this understanding of the titles of Wisdom and Word, or simply the person of Christ, it becomes increasingly difficult to imagine Origen speaking in the language of divine equality or shared substance between persons. Drawing from philosophical concepts, Origen’s conception of the Son is entirely noetic and incorporeal; these concepts are foreign to the Middle Platonic milieu of Origen’s time and to the way Origen himself conceives of the person of the Son. In his explanation of the titles Wisdom and Word, Origen’s concern instead is to emphasize the Son’s revelation of the Father; as his thoughts and forms, he makes the Father known. It is this point which is significant to Origen; here he distinguishes himself from philosophy in that this act of revelation in the

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participate in Christ as the power of God, as he is the source of their power (e.g. *Jo.* 1.240. Wisdom: *Jo.* 1.246). Both Wisdom and Power are spoken of in qualified and unqualified expressions, meaning they come prior to his interaction with creation, which he derives from his reading of 1 Cor 1.24. For 1 Cor 1.24, see *princ.* 1.2.1; *Jo.* 19.156, 20.76, 20.344; *Cels* 7.23; *com.in.Rom* 1.5.2, 4.7.5, 5.1.3, 5.9.3, 8.13.8, 8.13.9; *hom.in.Jer* 1.6, 8.2, 9.4.5.

<sup>181</sup> SC 120:124; Heine, 80:59. Some examples include grace and truth (*Jo.* 6.36), justice (*Jo.* 6.40). More *epinoiai* in *Jo.* 10.21-38, 41-47.

<sup>182</sup> Only-Begotten as highest of the steps (*Jo.* 19.38), Wisdom and Word reveal his immaterial existence. See esp. *Cels.* 4.16, 7.46.

Word is possible and personal. But Origen still maintains the Middle Platonic need for a mediatory buffer – the Word is the means by which the immaterial and invisible Father makes himself known to creation. As we have seen in the various titles that have been discussed so far, Origen’s Christology, though varied in the language and Scripture it uses, testifies of the same general point: the immaterial and noetic Son, though subordinate to the Father, reveals him through his similarity and derivation from him.

### **Christ and the Virtues as *Epinoiai***

Origen also teaches that the divine virtues, as articulated in Scripture, are also included amongst Christ’s many *epinoiai*. He therefore holds to a particularly unique view about the divine attributes and virtues and how they come to be possessed by humans. As we will see in this section, Origen does not hold to a concept of divine virtues equally shared amongst the divine persons, nor does he believe that they are simply given to the saints in an abstract manner – the saints must perform them to receive and participate in Christ. By clarifying this teaching, we will also be able to better understand how the Holy Spirit works to assist the believer in attaining these virtues, particularly in his work of sanctification.

Origen states that the *epinoiai* of Christ are exceedingly numerous, that he could even name 10,000 or more titles if he so pleased.<sup>183</sup> For the sake of sanity, we will not attempt to treat or even mention all of these titles, but will only examine Origen’s understanding of the virtues of Christ. For Origen, the divine virtues are included in Christ’s many *epinoiai* – they are inseparable from him. As with many of Christ’s other *epinoiai*, he “becomes” them for for us – he is the source of them. Origen’s understanding of the divine virtues, then, is simultaneously abstract and concrete: the Son as Wisdom holds all the divine

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<sup>183</sup> Jo. 1.136, also 1.123.



thoughts and ideas and even virtues, but these virtues are achieved through human participation in them, through obedience and imitation of the person of Christ. This facet of his Christology is thus ethical in nature; the more virtuous or Christ-like one becomes, the more fully Christ comes to dwell in the individual through the virtues.<sup>184</sup>

Origen does not deny the idea that virtues and all other good things ultimately come from God. But as he notes in *Cels.* 6.62, “the attributes of God are superior to any which are known not only by human nature, but even by the nature of beings who have risen beyond it.”<sup>185</sup> Origen even suggests that all knowledge possessed about God is actually inferior to God; “we should also accept the view that God has no characteristics of which we know.”<sup>186</sup> Although Origen in places calls God the “Father of wisdom” and “Father of righteousness”, he seems to believe that the virtues are all ultimately found in the person of Christ.<sup>187</sup> Because God’s attributes cannot be known, they must then be revealed through his Son. As Origen notes in *Cels.* 8.17, all virtues which “are made clear and formed in us by the divine Logos” are “copies of the firstborn of all creation” (*Cels.* 8.17). He continues,

For in him are patterns (παράδειγματα) of righteousness, prudence, courage, wisdom, piety, and the other virtues. Accordingly, there are images in all who, according to the divine word, have made for themselves prudence, righteousness, courage, wisdom, piety, and the products of the other virtues. We are persuaded that it is fitting for them to give honour to the prototype of all images (πρωτότυπον πάντων ἀγαλμάτων), ‘the image of the invisible God’, the only-begotten God.<sup>188</sup>

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<sup>184</sup> E.g. *princ.* 1.3.8, 4.4.5; *Jo.* 1.240, 2.28.

<sup>185</sup> SC 147:334; Chadwick, 378. For 1 Cor 13.12 (“see in a mirror, dimly”), see *Cels.* 7.38, 7.50; *princ.* 2.3.2, 2.6.7, 2.11.6, etc. Origen, however, considers “if the Father is the ‘sanctification’ of our sanctification himself” as the Father is the head of Christ (*Jo.* 1.249, SC 120:182; Heine, 80:84). The point is to distinguish what Christ can be called without qualification (contra *princ.* 4.4.10). See Barnes, *Power*, p. 116 n. 59. For apophaticism in Origen’s theology, see Ch. 1 n.60.

<sup>186</sup> *Cels.* 6.62 (SC 147:334; Chadwick, 378).

<sup>187</sup> *com.in.Rom* 9.1.6 (SC 555:68; Scheck, 104:193).

<sup>188</sup> SC 150:210-212; Chadwick, 464. Prototype: see *Jo.* 2.18, 6.107, 32.359.

As the Wisdom of God, the Son possesses the plans and thoughts of the Father, including the patterns and prototypes of all virtues.<sup>189</sup> But not only does the Wisdom possess the patterns of all virtues, he himself is the very virtues. As Origen notes in *Cels.* 5.39, the virtues have “been made by God and as God’s Son”. The Son is “the virtue which includes all virtues, and the Logos which includes every logos whatsoever of the beings which have been made according to nature” (*Cels.* 5.39).<sup>190</sup> As with the other aspects of Christ, there also exist “an order in the levels of advancement and ... degrees within the virtues” (*com.in.Rom* 6.5.6).<sup>191</sup> Therefore, for humans, the virtues are “made clear and formed in us by the divine Logos” and “are copies are firstborn of all creation” (*Cels.* 8.17).<sup>192</sup> As humans see the virtues manifested in Christ, they can work their way upward to higher and greater things.

### I Corinthians 1.30 as Christ’s Virtues

The idea that the divine is the source of all virtues is an idea that has precedence in the philosophical thought of Origen’s time.<sup>193</sup> But for Origen, uniquely, the person of the Word is the virtue of the virtues, the source for human participation in the divine virtues.<sup>194</sup> Origen’s basis for which virtues Christ is and how he manifests these virtues is found in 1 Corinthians 1.30: “He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom

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<sup>189</sup> cf. the four cardinal virtues of Plato (*Cels.* 6.9).

<sup>190</sup> SC 147:118; Chadwick, 296. Origen continues that only the soul of Jesus “has been able perfectly to receive the highest participation in him who is the very Logos and very Wisdom, and very Righteousness himself.” cf. *Cels* 8.15.

<sup>191</sup> SC 543:122; Scheck, 104:14-15.

<sup>192</sup> SC 150:210; Chadwick, 464.

<sup>193</sup> It is common in Middle Platonism to speak of the “divine goods” as the virtues of the soul, which are attained through participation in and contemplation of the first good (e.g. Alcinous, *Did.* 27; Eudorus, *fr.* 30; Apuleius, *On Plato and His Doctrine* 2.1). Many also refer to Plato’s teaching that the end is likeness to God (e.g. *Tim.* 42a-d) (Eudorus, *fr.* 25; Alcinous, *Did.* 28.3-4).

<sup>194</sup> See Plotinus, *Enn.* 1.2 (Crouzel, *Origen*, 190). cf. *Cels.* 6.64, *Jo.* 32.178. Stoic idea of virtues in *Cels.* 8.17.

from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption” (NRSV).<sup>195</sup> As with other aspects, Christ “becomes” (ἐγενήθη) these things, meaning he does not simply possess them, but that he manifests them in time in his ministry of salvation, particularly in the incarnation.<sup>196</sup> Christ also becomes these things “for us”, indicating their beginning in Christ’s interaction with creation. As Origen comments, “all these titles are named from his works and powers” (*princ.* 1.2.4), meaning they find their source in the Son’s work as it relates to creation.<sup>197</sup> These titles and virtues are only known because of the Son’s work.

While 1 Corinthians 1.30 is most referenced in *com.in.Rom*, we see a significant treatment of this verse in the *hom.in.Jer* 8.2.1:

For all such virtues, insofar as they are of God, are Christ: he is the wisdom of God, he is the power of God, he is the righteousness of God, he is sanctification, he is redemption. In this way he is the prudence of God. But though there is one substance (ὁποκείμενον), for differences in the aspects (ταῖς ἐπινοίαις), the names (τὰ ὀνόματα) are many. You do not understand the same thing about Christ when you understand him as wisdom and when you understand him as righteousness. For when he is wisdom, you mean the knowledge of things divine and human, but when he is righteousness, he is that power which allots to every person according to worth. And when he is sanctification, he is what enables those faithful and dedicated to God to become holy...<sup>198</sup>

In this statement, we see many of the same points that Origen covers with the other aspects. For one, Origen is quick to explain that Christ’s identification as the virtues does not compromise his single personhood.<sup>199</sup> The virtues are also inseparable from Christ and

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<sup>195</sup> In addition to the virtues found in 1 Cor 1.30, Origen finds the titles or virtues “truth”, “life” (Jn 14.6), and “peace” (Eph 11.49) particularly significant.

<sup>196</sup> See also *com.in.Rom* 4.7.5, 2.5.6, 2.6.5, 3.7.14, etc.

<sup>197</sup> Behr, 1:45.

<sup>198</sup> SC 232:356-358; Smith, 97:76-77.

<sup>199</sup> See also *com.in.Rom* 5.6.7: “For just as Christ is indeed one in essence (*substantia*) but may be designated in many ways according to his virtues and operations, so perhaps the devil can himself be understood by various designations” (SC 539:450-452; Scheck, 103:348). Also *com.in.Rom* 7.9.6, 7.19.8; *Cels.* 2.64, *princ.* 1.2.1, 1.2.13, 4.4.1; *Jo.* 1.10, 1.19, 1.20.

the specific work he does.<sup>200</sup> Christ is also the “beginning” of the virtues in believers: “just as he himself is the righteousness through which all become righteous... he is truth through which all stand firm in the truth” (*com.in.Rom* 3.6.5).<sup>201</sup>

But Origen’s understanding of Christ as the virtues “for us” seeks to bypass abstraction for the sake of practicality. While in Middle Platonic philosophy ideas and forms and virtues exist in the Word *in abstracto*, Origen emphasizes that for Christians, one must see Christ and imitate his character in order to achieve the virtues. Because the virtues are identical with Christ, they can be known by seeing Christ and his working in the world.<sup>202</sup> While all people have capacity for virtue due to their souls, where the image of God can be found (*Cels.* 7.66), only Christians who know Christ can truly possess the fullness of the virtues.<sup>203</sup> Therefore, when Origen speaks of Christ as “righteousness” in 1 Cor 1.30, he is referring to the fact that Christ is “righteousness for us”, or how Christ manifests divine righteousness in his working in the world, something only Christians can know and participate in.<sup>204</sup>

For Origen, the important point in the attainment of these virtues is the believer’s action in living a holy and pure life in imitation of Christ. It is only in this way that the virtues come to the believers and Christ becomes present within them.<sup>205</sup> As Origen notes, those who imitate Christ “assume into [their] own virtuous soul the characteristics of God” (*Cels.*

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<sup>200</sup> For a related argument in the fourth century, see Mark DelCogliano, *Basil of Caesarea’s Anti-Eunomian Theory of Names: Christian Theology and Late-Antique Philosophy in the Fourth Century Trinitarian Controversy* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), esp. 171-76.

<sup>201</sup> SC 539:98; Scheck, 103:205. See also *com.in.Rom* 3.7.10, 3.7.14, 5.5.8.

<sup>202</sup> E.g. *com.in.Rom* 1.1.3, 3.7.10: Christ is the “righteousness of God” being disclosed apart from the natural law, or redemption (*com.in.Rom* 3.7.14), or the door – access to grace (*com.in.Rom* 4.8.5).

<sup>203</sup> *Cels.* 8.17. Therefore, as the Son reflects the unknowable attributes of the Father, humans also reflect the Son in his virtues.

<sup>204</sup> See *com.in.Rom* 7.19.8, 8.1.2-3, 8.2.4.

<sup>205</sup> Conversely, those who “oppose wisdom and righteousness and sanctification” are “distrusting Christ” and thus “complying with wickedness” (*com.in.Rom* 2.6.5).

6.63).<sup>206</sup> In *com.in.Rom* 8.2.5, Origen notes that there is a difference between “for there potentially to be existence in a subject” and “for it to be in actuality or effectual achievement”, with reference to the work of Christ.<sup>207</sup> Origen even applies here the Aristotelian terms *dunamis* and *energeia* to add technical clarity to these ideas.<sup>208</sup> Origen makes these distinctions to explain how Christ’s work is potentially available to all, but is present in actuality only for those who confess him as Lord. This same distinction applies for the virtues – those who choose to do them partake in Christ’s work and thus can possess them in actuality or in fullness.<sup>209</sup>

Origen paints the picture of the man “who is perfect and who possesses all the virtues” as “having assumed each virtue in its totality”, one who “possesses perfect wisdom and perfect self-control, and so also piety and the other virtues” (*Jo.* 32.178).<sup>210</sup> The pinnacle of this is the incarnate Christ himself, whose human soul, by his perfection, is “united by supreme participation with the majesty of the Son of God” to the point that he is joined more closely to the Logos than any others before him (cf. 1 Cor 6.17).<sup>211</sup> As Origen notes in *Cels.* 5.39,

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<sup>206</sup> SC 147:228; Chadwick, 379. Includes rational (*princ.* 1.3.6, 2.6.3), reception of life (*Jo.* 1.188), power (*Jo.* 1.240), justice (*Jo.* 2.52), glory (*com.in.Rom* 2.5.5), wisdom (*Jo.* 1.245), enlightenment (*Jo.* 1.268), even being (*Cels.* 6.64). Imitation of the virtues of Christ: see esp. *Jo.* 2.262, 6.41; *princ.* 4.4.4, 4.4.10; *Cels.* 5.5, 6.63, 8.18.

<sup>207</sup> SC 543:456; Scheck, 104:139.

<sup>208</sup> Scheck, *Commentary on Romans*, 138 n.37, cites *Nicomachean Ethics* 2.1, 1103a; *De Anima* 2.2, 414a as examples of this. cf. *princ.* 1.8.3.

<sup>209</sup> However, in *com.in.Rom* 6.3.8, Origen notes that living in the virtues is “living in the shadow of righteousness, wisdom, truth” (cf. Lam 4.20), which reflects his belief in a later eschatological fullness of the virtues (SC 543:108; Scheck, 104:9).

<sup>210</sup> SC 385:262-264; Heine, 89:376. Heine, 376 n.162 comments that Origen is “expressing the Stoic ideal of the wise man, i.e. that the perfect man possesses all the virtues.” The perfect example of this is, of course, the incarnate Christ. See René Brouwer, *The Stoic Sage: The Early Stoics on Wisdom, Sagehood and Socrates* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

<sup>211</sup> *Cels.* 6.47 (SC 147:298; Chadwick, 365). Unity of the man Jesus and the Logos is almost Antiochene: “If this is the case, the relation of the soul of Jesus to the firstborn of creation (Col 1.15), the divine Logos, is not that of two separate beings”. Also *Cels.* 7.17. Crouzel, *Origen*, 95, notes that “man is defined at deepest level of his being by his relation to God and by his movement that leads

We say that this Logos dwelt in the soul of Jesus and was united with it in a closer union than that of any other soul, because he alone has been able perfectly to receive the highest participation in him who is the very Logos and very Wisdom, and very Righteousness himself.<sup>212</sup>

Those who achieve perfection in all of the virtues are “conformed to the image of his own Son” (Rom 8.29), allowing them to “be seen in that form in which [Christ] is in the form of God” (cf. Phil 2.6).<sup>213</sup> Origen considers this to be a process – the saints “participate in Christ to the extent that [they have] the capacity for wisdom, insofar as Christ is wisdom” (*Jo.* 1.246).<sup>214</sup> Throughout his writings, Origen uses the construction “participation in him, as X,” defining participation in Christ as the doing of the particular virtue.<sup>215</sup> Therefore, to the degree they manifest these virtues, the saints are also said to participate more fully in Christ.<sup>216</sup> It should be noted that the saints’ participation in Christ as the virtues or aspects is not different in character than the Son’s knowing perfectly the will of the Father and doing it (e.g. *Jo.* 13.231). Therefore, as the saints participate in the Son by manifesting his character and attributes in their lives, they more fully partake in the will of the Father, just

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to his becoming more like his model, thanks to the divine action which is manifest at the beginning and at each of the stages of this development.”

<sup>212</sup> SC 147:118-120; Chadwick, 296. Origen considers these to be the Son’s unqualified attributes.

<sup>213</sup> *com.in.Rom* 7.7.4 (SC 543:304; Scheck, 104:85). Origen notes, however, that this is not his physical form or what Origen calls his “slave-form,” a reference to Philippians 2.7.

<sup>214</sup> SC 120:182; Heine, 80:83. cf. *princ.* 1.3.8: “The God and Father bestows upon all that they should be; and participation in Christ, in respect of the fact that he is the Word or Reason, renders them as rational beings” (Behr, 1:81).

<sup>215</sup> Reason: *princ.* 1.3.8, 4.4.5; *Jo.* 1.268, 2.28, 19.147. Wisdom: *Jo.* 1.245-46; *Cels.* 6.17. Life: *Jo.* 1.188, 2.227. Power: *Jo.* 1.240. Justice: *Jo.* 2.52. Truth: *Jo.* 20.245. Morality generally: *Jo.* 2.57.

<sup>216</sup> Also *princ.* 2.7.3: “And just as there are many ways of understanding Christ, who, although he is Wisdom, does not, however, exercise or assume the power of wisdom in all, but only in those who apply themselves to wisdom in him” (Behr, 2:219). “Our relationship with Christ is automatically our relationship to wisdom, righteousness, truth and all the other virtues. To be ‘in Christ’ is to be ‘in’ all the virtues; to have Christ in us is to have them in us... To put on Christ is to put on all the virtues” (see Scheck, introduction to Origen, *Commentary on Romans*, 36-37, citing Wiles, *Divine Apostle*, 114).

as the Son does – the key in both cases is action and obedience.<sup>217</sup> Union with the divine is thus moral rather than essential, Christ forming the model.

In this way, believers are able to “honor the Father and the Son... who shows the proper honor and devotion to wisdom, justice, and truth, and to all things which Christ is said to be” (*com.in.Rom* 2.5.6).<sup>218</sup> Participation in the virtues also leads to life, seen especially in Origen’s citations of Romans 6.11 (“alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord”) with references to virtues like wisdom, peace, righteousness and sanctification.<sup>219</sup> Only by joining in Christ can one truly live; eternal life can only be attained when Christ is truly and fully dwelling in the individual through the attributes.<sup>220</sup> Therefore, “wherever Christ reigns, there grace and righteousness superabound unto eternal life”.<sup>221</sup>

In this context, salvation is not simply something that God does to people, but is a process which saints act out in cooperation with God through the conscious act of participating in Christ as the virtues. This emphasis on human action shows that Origen’s teaching on Christology and the divine virtues is more than just abstract or noetic, but is thoroughly ethical and practical. While all can participate to the virtues to some degree, not all choose to.<sup>222</sup> Even Origen’s understanding of righteousness and justification, in his exegesis of Romans, is characterized by this emphasis: when one participates in Christ who is

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<sup>217</sup> Origen does not as often speak of the saints as participating in the Father, and when he does he simply notes its spiritual character (e.g. *Cels.* 6.17). He primarily speaks of participation in the sense of doing and obedience.

<sup>218</sup> Scheck, 103:116. See also *Cels.* 7.13, 8.10. The performing of these virtues also merits the presence of the Holy Spirit.

<sup>219</sup> *com.in.Rom* 5.10.18. See also *com.in.Rom* 6.13.9: “the one who possesses these qualities has the Spirit of Christ in himself and hopes that his own mortal body will be made alive because of the Spirit of Christ that dwells within him” (SC 543:226; Scheck, 104:57). cf. *com.in.Rom* 8.2.2.

<sup>220</sup> *com.in.Rom* 4.7.5 – those placed together with him are no longer in earthly regions but in heavenly.

<sup>221</sup> *com.in.Rom* 5.6.8 (SC 539:452; Scheck, 103:349). See also *com.in.Rom* 4.8.5.

<sup>222</sup> See *Jo.* 1.269.

righteousness and justification, he is justified.<sup>223</sup> This focus leads to a more individually oriented understanding of salvation, though Origen does at times speak of salvation in a corporate sense, particularly the practice of virtue in the life of the church as a whole.<sup>224</sup>

Origen's writings, therefore, are full of biblical imagery which refers to the participation in Christ as performing the virtues. Drawing from Romans 13.14 and Galatians 3.27, Origen also speaks of the Christian life in the imagery of clothing: "Christ justifies only those who have received the new life in the pattern of his resurrection and who reject the old garments of unrighteousness and iniquity as if they were the cause of death" (*com.in.Rom* 4.7.8).<sup>225</sup> Therefore, to put on the virtues is to restore the image in which one was created.<sup>226</sup> Elsewhere, Origen makes reference to Christian living as being a slave to Christ or as serving Christ. To be a "slave of Christ," Origen notes, is to be "a slave of the Word of God, of wisdom, righteousness, truth, and of absolutely all the virtues which are identical with Christ himself."<sup>227</sup> Similarly, to serve the law of God and to "be under the law of the Spirit" (cf. Rom 8.2) is to serve Christ, that is, to "serve wisdom... righteousness... truth, and to serve all the virtues at the same time" (*com.in.Rom* 6.11.2).<sup>228</sup> Those who "truly" confess are "subjected to the lordship of wisdom, righteousness, truth, everything that

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<sup>223</sup> Scheck, introduction to Origen, *Commentary on Romans*, 25, notes: "Origen understands justification as the reception of the righteousness of God, which he identifies with Jesus Christ (cf. 1 Cor 1.30). This righteousness makes human beings just, beings in whom the justice of God dwells... Christ is the righteousness through which all become righteous."

<sup>224</sup> E.g. *com.in.Rom* 9.2.15 (SC 555:92; Scheck, 104:203): "how that body is in Christ" (Rom 12.4) is also "in truth and wisdom and righteousness and sanctification" (1 Cor 1.30).

<sup>225</sup> SC 150:212; Chadwick, 464. See also *com.in.Rom* 2.12.23, 9.34.1; *Cels.* 8.17.

<sup>226</sup> *princ.* 4.4.10: "in him the marks of the divine image are manifestly discerned not through the form of his body, which goes to corruption, but through the prudence of his mind, justice, moderation, virtue, wisdom, discipline, in sum through the whole band of virtues, which exist in God essentially (*per substantiam*) and which may exist in the human being through diligence and imitation of God" (Behr, 2:583).

<sup>227</sup> *com.in.Rom* 1.1.3 (SC 532:158; Scheck, 103:62), citing 1 Cor 1.30, Jn 14.6.

<sup>228</sup> SC 543:200; Scheck, 104:46. See also *com.in.Rom* 6.5.6.



Christ is” (*com.in.Rom* 8.2.8).<sup>229</sup> For those who participate in the virtues and imitate Christ, the virtues, “all of which are Christ the Lord, are reigning with us” as much as “the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in him” (*Col* 2.3).<sup>230</sup>

We see, therefore, that humans must participate in Christ as the virtues in order to receive these virtues themselves. This is not done in an abstract way, but practically, through holy living in obedience and imitation of Christ. Origen is also clear to articulate that participation in these virtues is in Christ, not the Father. These things the Son possesses innately, even “becoming” them for us. Because the Father’s attributes are unknowable, they can be known through his Son and are made manifest in the incarnation. In a way similar to how the Son participates in the Father for his being and for specific attributes, e.g. divinity, human beings are dependent on the person of Christ. This understanding of the divine attributes serves as further testimony of the hierarchical ontological and cosmological order present in Origen’s theology. It also testifies to the practical orientation of Origen’s theology and the importance of the action of the believer.

## Conclusion

In this chapter, we have examined several key points of Origen’s Christology which testify to Origen’s belief that the Son is a being dependent on and derived from the Father, ontologically inferior yet similar to him. Origen’s goal in his discussions of the Son’s roles and titles, particularly the titles of relation and image, is to demonstrate how the Son reveals the Father by virtue of his particular nature. His existence is an existence that ontologically and functionally testifies of the Father – these two aspects of Christ are

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<sup>229</sup> SC 543:458; Scheck, 104:140. Citing 1 Cor 1:30, Jn 14:6. Origen is generally consistent in his list of virtues.

<sup>230</sup> *com.in.Rom* 8.3.2.

inseparable for him. On the other hand, Origen's discussion of Christ's *epinoiai*, those things that Christ becomes for the sake of salvation, reveal also his unique relationship with creation, possessing their forms and images as Wisdom, manifesting them in the incarnation. It is because of these simultaneous similarities that the Son can be called the "medium between all these created things and God, that is the *Mediator (mediatorem)*".<sup>231</sup> As mediator, Christ is also the minister of all that is the Father's, such as grace (*princ.* 1.3.7) or <sup>232</sup> deity (*Jo.* 1.19).<sup>233</sup> In the incarnation, Christ's body serves to minister (ὕπηρετῆσαι) his goodness (*Jo.* 2.187).<sup>234</sup> Origen also understands the Son to be the source of the virtues, even the virtues themselves, possessing them in forms and making them known in his ministry. Participation in the virtues, then, is participation in Christ, who is the necessary link between the unattainable Father and the diversity of creation.

In this Christological system, we see an amalgamation of Christian scriptural ideas and Platonic thought constructs, Origen's attempt to systematize biblical truths into a working and logical system. While this system is not without its flaws, it testifies to Origen's creative theological mind, his unique exegesis of Scripture within the framework of how

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<sup>231</sup> *princ.* 2.6.1 (Behr, 2:203), citing 1 Tim 2.5. Lyons, *Cosmic*, 90-91, 118-124, notes that mediation in Origen's time typically appeared in two types: (1) emanationist, exemplified in Monarchianism, and (2) subordinationist, seen in Arianism. Though much scholarship has tended to place Origen in one of the two categories (see 118-19), Lyons argues that Origen is not strictly one or the other, containing features of both (124). Lyons argues for this in the context of Origen's "twofold constitution of Christ", which describes a "co-operative" mediation that differs depending on who Christ is being related to.

<sup>232</sup> Also *princ.* 2.2.2, Pref.4.

<sup>233</sup> In *Cels.* 7.70, the Logos "administers (τοῦ διοικοῦντος) the whole world" (SC 150:176; Chadwick, 453). There are many instances in *Cels.* where Chadwick misleadingly translates διὰ as "through the mediation", e.g. 7.46 and 8.36 (prayer), 8.6 and 8.13 (worship), 7.44 (journey to blessedness), piety (8.20), service (8.8). cf. *Jo.* 2.76.

<sup>234</sup> SC 120:334; Heine, 80:145. Also *com.in.Rom* 3.8.4: his "soul is intermediate (*media*) between God and men (1 Tim 2.5)" (SC 539:128-130; Scheck, 103:219). See also *hom.in.Lev* 9.10. For 1 Tim 2.5, also see *Jo.* 2.209; *com.in.Rom* 8.5; *princ.* 1.2.7, 2.6.3; *Cant.* 1.3. Those who know Christ also are a part of his ministering work: e.g. ministering apostles (*Jo.* 1.165), and saints (*Jo.* 1.166), ministering spirits (*Jo.* 32.198, *Cels.* 8.31).

he views the world. The modern reader of Origen must be careful of the work of Rufinus, which alters large swaths of Origen's thought and changes its direction. The inherent hierarchy of Origen's system and the impetus placed on human effort become lost in Rufinus' impositions of later understandings of divine persons and divine attributes onto Origen's system. Therefore, in considering the whole of Origen's thought, we must understand its nuances and overall goal.

By better understanding Origen's Christology, we are now equipped to examine his pneumatology. As we have seen, Origen does not conceive of the Son and Father as equal beings; the Father is greater than and ministers through his Son. Origen carries these assumptions into how he understands the person of the Holy Spirit; the Spirit is less than the Son, the Son ministers to the Spirit's existence, and the Spirit serves to reveal the Son.<sup>235</sup> In addition, Origen does not conceive of divine virtues as being innate and shared equally amongst the Trinitarian persons; as we have seen, the Father's attributes are unknowable and indescribable. Human participation in the divine virtues happens through the ministry of the incarnate Son. This logic is applied also to the person of the Holy Spirit who not only depends on the Son for his existence, but requires the Son for his various attributes; the degree to which they possess them is different. We will now move to the primary focus of this study, the person of the Holy Spirit.

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<sup>235</sup> Though he also at times reveals the Father – we will see this in Chapters 4 and 5.

## THE IDENTITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

A number of scholars have asserted that Origen does not really have a pneumatology or that his theology could function without the the Holy Spirit.<sup>1</sup> In the next three chapters, I will challenge these claims by establishing the importance of pneumatology to Origen's overall theological system. We will see that for Origen, the Spirit plays significant roles in the divine work of salvation, which will be discussed in Chapters 4 and 5.

This chapter will examine Origen's conception of the person and nature of the Holy Spirit. In the first section, we will examine Origen's use of personal language to describe the Spirit's existence. Origen's employment of the language of *hypostasis*, the same terminology he uses for the Son, represents a significant development in pneumatology. Combatting Gnostic, Monarchian, and various philosophical schools of thought, Origen argues for the superiority of Christian knowledge on the basis of its knowledge of the Spirit's personal existence. Following this, we will look at Origen's struggles to articulate the ontological status of the Spirit. Analysis will show that Origen envisions the Spirit's nature or being as dependent on and inferior to the Son's, in a way similar to how he envisages the Son's relationship with the Father. While Origen recognizes that the Spirit has an existence greater than created beings, he shows a consistent hesitance or uncertainty in making concrete statements about the Spirit's actual nature, due to a general lack of scriptural and creedal testimony, as well as no philosophical parallels for the person of the Holy Spirit. In the last part of this section, we will look at the Spirit's

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<sup>1</sup> E.g. Harnack, Koch, and Hauschild (see McDonnell, 'Spirit', 8-10).

place in Origen's Trinitarian scheme. The Spirit sits ontologically below the Father and the Son, in a graded hierarchy in which the higher being ministers to the existence of the lower.<sup>2</sup> In a manner consistent with his time, Origen avoids the language of a shared Trinitarian essence or nature, instead speaking of a united divine will and work. Where he speaks of Trinitarian operation, the Spirit's identity and function become the most evident: the Holy Spirit dwells and works amongst the saints, supplying to them the various gifts and graces that come from the Father and are ministered by the Son. As we will see more fully in the following chapters, in God's working of salvation, the Spirit leads believers to the knowledge of the Son, preparing them for the fullness of the divine.

## The Person of the Spirit

One pneumatological point on which Origen is crystal clear is that the Holy Spirit possesses distinct subsistence. Origen begins his chapter on the Holy Spirit in *princ.* 1.3 by arguing this very point. Acknowledging that philosophers and others possess a general knowledge of the Father and of his Word, Origen asserts that,

...of the subsistence (*subsistentia*) of the Holy Spirit, no one could have even a suspicion, except those who were familiar with the law and the prophets, or those who profess a belief in Christ.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Scholars who have denied such a hierarchy include Crouzel, 'Personnes', 109-25, and Helmut Saake, 'La notion de la Trinité à visée pansotériologique chez Origène et son déplacement intra-ecclésial chez Athanase d'Alexandrie', in *Politique et Théologie chez Athanase d'Alexandrie*, *Théologie historique* 27, ed. Charles Kannengiesser (Paris: Beauchesne, 1974), 295-304.

<sup>3</sup> *princ.* 1.3.1 (Behr, 1:67). See also *hom.in.Gen* 14.3, *Cels.* 6.8. Origen does not, however, include Jews in those who do not possess a knowledge of the Holy Spirit. He states that they do not confess the Son of God is the Logos (*Cels.* 2.31: SC 132:362; Chadwick, 93) and can only read Scripture literally (e.g. *com.in.Rom* 2.4.12, 6.12.9, 9.1.1; *hom.in.Jer* 18.9.2). Though the Spirit of God appears frequently in the Old Testament in the inspiration of prophecy and empowering of certain figures (*Cels.* 7.4, 7.7), Origen also says that the Holy Spirit forsook them (*Cels.* 7.8) and generally berates the Jews for their ignorance (see de Lange, *Origen*, 83).

True knowledge of God can only be attained by those who are aware of the Holy Spirit's existence and recognize his revelation in the words of Scripture.<sup>4</sup> Origen follows these statements by citing various biblical passages that affirm the existence of the Holy Spirit and the Trinity (*princ.* 1.3.2).<sup>5</sup>

In order to better understand Origen's statement in *princ.* 1.3.1, we must consider two Middle Platonic figures who we have already mentioned: Numenius of Apamea and Plotinus.<sup>6</sup> Numenius, who we know had significant influence on Origen, held to a generally triadic divine structure: the first God is intellect; the second and third are the cosmic mind and world soul.<sup>7</sup> While Numenius' three possess some superficial parallels to Origen's, there are clear differences. Numenius' world soul is not an independent existent; it is a lower aspect of the second principle that splits into parts when it comes into contact with matter.<sup>8</sup> For Numenius, the world soul has two phases, non-rational and rational, and orders the universe when it becomes rational; it is essentially the "extension of this intelligizing power", that is the second god, into the universe.<sup>9</sup> The cosmological functions

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<sup>4</sup> For the Holy Spirit's role in revelation, see Ch. 5, 200.

<sup>5</sup> Passages include Ps 50.13, Dan 4.9, Jn 20.22, 1 Cor 12.3, Acts 8.18, Mt 12.32.

<sup>6</sup> Origen cites "Numenius the Pythagorean" several times (*Cels.* 1.15, 4.51, 5.38, 5.57), particularly regarding the invisibility of God, allegory, and the indestructibility of the soul. He is the second most mentioned philosopher after Plato. In *h.e.* 6.19.7-8, quoting Porphyry, Eusebius mentions a number of philosophers who Origen read, of whom Numenius is at the top of the list. For more on the influence of Numenius' triad on Origen, see Kritikos, 'Platonism', 403-17. For a comparison of Origen's theology to other Middle Platonic thinkers (e.g. Alcinous, Moderatus, Nichomachus), see Berchman, *Platonism*, 105-109.

<sup>7</sup> Berchman, *Platonism*, 111, notes that Numenius is the first to propose the triadic hierarchy of three intellects (see *fr.* 11, 16, 21).

<sup>8</sup> *fr.* 11.

<sup>9</sup> Berchman, *Platonism*, 110.

of Numenius' second and third principles have parallels in Origen's second; neither plays a soteriological function like the Holy Spirit.<sup>10</sup>

Though Plotinus, Origen's younger contemporary, had no discernable influence on Origen's writings, his triadic system also possesses parallels with Origen's and represents a major shift in Platonic thinking in his time.<sup>11</sup> For example, Plotinus' concept of the One is similar to Origen's, particularly in his emphasis on the Unity of the supreme principle, manifested in his avoidance of applying any description to the One.<sup>12</sup> But Plotinus takes this a step further than Origen: as the Goodness beyond intelligible reality, the One cannot be described as a Mind as the act of thinking would suggest duality; thus, the One is beyond Mind and gives rise to Thought, which is the second principle.<sup>13</sup> The result of this is that each member of Plotinus' triad occupies a higher level of metaphysical existence than Origen's: Plotinus' second is the source of the intelligible world, and the third, the Soul, the originating principle of movement and life, is similar to Origen's Word.<sup>14</sup> But in terms of function, Plotinus' second and third principles overlap with Origen's second and do not differ significantly from Numenius' conceptions. But again, Origen's third hypostasis, the person of the Holy Spirit, also has no equivalent in Plotinus' system.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> However, Numenius' second intellect, the *nous*, is sent down for people to participate in it. Kritikos, 'Platonism', 110-11, notes that this gap allows room for Origen for a third person, the Holy Spirit, who becomes the soteriological agent for redemption.

<sup>11</sup> For a comparison, see Henning Ziebritzki, *Heiliger Geist und Weltseele: das Problem der dritten Hypostase bei Origenes, Plotin und ihren Vorläufern* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1994). Also Dillon, 'Origen and Plotinus: The Platonic Influence on Early Christianity', in *The Relationship Between Neoplatonism and Christianity*, ed. T. Finan and V. Twomey (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1992), 7-26.

<sup>12</sup> *Enn.* 6.9.2, 6.9.6. Also Stead, 'Augustine's Philosophy of Being', in *The Philosophy in Christianity*, ed. G. Vesey (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 1989), 72-73.

<sup>13</sup> *Enn.* 6.9.5-6. Ziebritzki, *Heiliger Geist*, 140, notes that Origen's first God is closer to Alcinoüs and Numenius'. This is one recognizable shift in the doctrines of Neoplatonism from Middle Platonism.

<sup>14</sup> *Enn.* 4.3.9-10. Ziebritzki, *Heiliger Geist*, 141.

<sup>15</sup> Ziebritzki, *Heiliger Geist*, 143-144, calls this a "void."

For Origen, Christian recognition of the Holy Spirit's existence proves the superiority of their knowledge of the divine. While Origen acknowledges the achievement of pagan philosophers (e.g. *Cels.* 6.18), their inability to recognize the Holy Spirit is a key point of error in their thought. This ignorance is no more apparent than in Celsus' misunderstanding of God's Spirit and the incarnation, particularly his comments that "God thrust his own Spirit into a body and sent him down here" (*Cels.* 6.70) or that the "Son is a spirit derived from God" (*Cels.* 6.72).<sup>16</sup> It is also present in philosophers like Numenius and Plotinus and ultimately Plato, who come close in certain regards, but replace the Holy Spirit with a world soul, an abstract concept more than a personal being.<sup>17</sup> Even the Stoics, for whom *pneuma* was the basic physical component of the universe, are incorrect in their material understanding of *pneuma*, something Origen is eager to reject (e.g. *Cels.* 6.71).<sup>18</sup> Origen, therefore, seeks to distance his theology from pagan philosophy; only Christians know the Spirit and receive the truth from him.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> *Cels.* 6.70 (SC 147:353; Chadwick, 384); 6.72 (SC 147:360; Chadwick, 386).

<sup>17</sup> Edwards, *Origen*, 74-75, notes that "in no Platonic system is the third principle a compeer of the Christian Holy Spirit" and also comments that Origen is unique in his effecting salvation in the context of matter, as well as the spiritual via the Holy Spirit (cf. Ziebritzki, *Heiliger Geist*, 262-64). Crouzel, *Origen*, 192, notes that Christ's soul functions similarly to Plotinus' world-soul.

<sup>18</sup> The Stoic understanding of *pneuma* should also be considered as a backdrop for the formulation of Origen's pneumatology. Stoic *pneuma*, typically understood to be the active agent through which god produces and sustains all things, is fundamentally material, understood to be made of air and fire (see R. Salles, *God and Cosmos in Stoicism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 34, cf. Galen, *Intr. Med.* 14. 726. 7-11 = SVF 2.716 = LS 47N). *Pneuma*'s primary function is "the generation of the cohesion of matter and generally of the contact between all parts of the cosmos" (John M. Rist, *Stoic Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 86, citing Sambursky, *Physics of the Stoics* (London: Routledge, 1959), 1). In Stoic cosmology, all things are connected by *pneuma*, which possesses "tensional movement" (*tonike kinesis*) like a string; thus human action can be described as rational or irrational vibrations in human *pneuma* (Rist, *Stoic Philosophy*, 86-88). Origen's issue with this doctrine (e.g. *Cels.* 6.71), is that everything, including God, is material, including first principles like the Logos and even the human soul (see Moser, *Teacher*, 31).

<sup>19</sup> Platonic philosophy did not give *pneuma* as central a place as the Stoics, more commonly using *pneuma* as "wind" or "breath" rather than as something spiritual. By Origen's time, however, Stoic influence had begun to creep into Platonic thinking, seen particularly in Diogenes Laertius' description of the Platonic world-soul as consisting of *pneuma* (*Lives*, 7.139, in Levison, *Filled with*



Origen's belief in the exclusivity of Christian knowledge of the Holy Spirit is also evident in his treatment of Gnostics.<sup>20</sup> Like the philosophers, their incorrect understandings of the Holy Spirit mark them as heretics. In *princ.* 2.7.1, Origen says,

For even if we grant to Marcion or Valentinus that it is possible to draw distinctions regarding divinity, and to describe the nature of the good as one, and that of the just as another, what will he contrive or what will he invent so that he can introduce a distinction in the Holy Spirit? I consider, then, that they are able to find nothing which points to any distinction of whatever kind. (Behr, 2:217)

There are two possible explanations for what Origen is saying here. The first is that Marcionites and Valentinians are both in error in claiming that there are two Holy Spirits. This reading, suggested by Butterworth, shows that the duality present in such groups' treatments of the Son and the Father are thus applied to Spirit.<sup>21</sup> Given the complicated nature of Gnostics celestial hierarchies and cosmologies, it is not difficult to imagine that Origen could have understood there to be two "holy spirits" in these systems. An alternate reading, suggested by Tite, is that Gnostics, though displaying dualism in their treatments of the Father and Son, have no grounds or evidence to divide the person of the Spirit; Origen is actually performing a "hypothetical rhetorical ploy" to show the absurdity of their

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*the Spirit* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2009), 139. For more on *pneuma* in Platonism, see H.A.S. Tarrant, 'Pneuma-Related Concepts in Platonism', *Prudentia* supplementary number 1985 (1985), 55-60.

<sup>20</sup> For Origen and Gnosticism, see Gilles Quispel, 'Origen and the Valentinian Gnosis', *VC* 28.1 (1975), 29-42; Anthony Meredith, 'Origen, Plotinus and the Gnostics', *The Heythrop Journal* XXVI (October 1985), 383-398; ; Tite, 'Holy Spirit', 131-164; J.D. Dubois, 'Le titre christologique d'Evangeliste et la polemique d'Origene contre les Gnostiques', in *Origeniana Sexta* (Leuven: Peeters, 1995), 27-36; Anne Paquier, 'La doctrine des denominations de Dieu dans le valentisme: Comparaison avec Origene', in *Origeniana Octava* (Leuven: Peeters, 2003), 355-365; or Christoph Marksches, 'Gnostics', in *The Westminster Handbook to Origen*, 103-06.

<sup>21</sup> Butterworth, *On First Principles*, 116, n.3 cites *In Ep. ad Titum Frag.* (Lomm. V. 287 f.) as evidence: "Moreover, if there are any who say that it was one Holy Spirit who was in the prophets, but another who was in the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, they commit one and the same offence of impiety as those who, so far as in them lies, cut and rend the nature of the deity, by saying that there is one God of the law and another of the gospels."

exegesis.<sup>22</sup> Tite supplements this with references to Valentinian cosmology, noting that the division of the Spirit does not agree with Gnostic cosmologies present in the writings of Tertullian and Irenaeus. While it is difficult to know exactly what error Origen had in mind in *princ.* 2.7.1, his overall point is the same: although Gnostic groups have access to Scripture and possess some sense of the truth, their incorrect understandings about the Holy Spirit serve as evidence of their incorrect doctrine.<sup>23</sup> Therefore, for Origen, belief in the Holy Spirit's personal existence is not only important, but essential in correct knowledge of God.<sup>24</sup>

One interesting influence potential influence on Origen that deserves mention is Philo of Alexandria.<sup>25</sup> Though Philo, no doubt, had influence on Origen's exegesis, it is possible that he had some influence on Origen's pneumatology.<sup>26</sup> Given that he was both Jewish and a philosopher, he does not fit neatly into the categories of those who are wrong about the Holy Spirit.<sup>27</sup> Influenced both by Jewish thought and philosophy, Philo's use of *pneuma* reflects both: like Wisdom, *pneuma* is given to all at creation and makes the human *nous*

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<sup>22</sup> Tite, 'Holy Spirit', 134-37.

<sup>23</sup> Tite, 'Holy Spirit', 135, says, "Origen's theological position on the personhood of the Spirit is essential for this rhetorical ploy to hold persuasive power; thus, this section of *De Principiis* makes an explicit effort to support the distinct personhood of the Spirit in an attempt to polemically refute theologies of his opponents."

<sup>24</sup> Hällström, *Fides*, 75-76, notes also Origen's criticism of Montanist pneumatology in *com.in.Cor* 74 (JTS X 41-42) and *fr.in.Tit* (PG XIV 1306 A, in *de Labriolle* 1913, No.57). Hällström interprets statements in *princ.* 2.7.3 to be directed at the Montanists, including their lack of differentiation between spirits and their low notion of the Spirit.

<sup>25</sup> Origen mentions Philo directly in *Cels* 4.51, 6.21; *com.in.Mt* 15.3. See de Lange, *Origen*, 16-17.

<sup>26</sup> For the influence of Philo on Origen's exegesis, see Annewies van den Hoek, 'Philo and Origen: A Descriptive Catalogue of their Relationship', *The Studia Philonica Annual* 12 (2000), 44-121; David T. Runia, *Philo in Early Christian Literature: A Survey* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1993); Daniel Boyarin, 'Philo, Origen, and the Rabbis on Divine Speech and Interpretation', in *The World of Early Egyptian Christianity: Language, Literature, and Social Context: Essays in Honor of David W. Johnson* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2007), 113-129.

<sup>27</sup> Philo seems to actually have held to what Origen says the Jews don't (*Cels.* 2.31): he calls the Logos the 'firstborn of God' (*Agr.* 12 (51), *Conf.* 28 (146), *Somn.* 1.37 (215)), from de Lange, *Origen*, 43. de Lange also notes, "Both the Logos and the Spirit have left their traces on rabbinic thought, but their home was that other Jewish tradition to whose ideas and beliefs Philo is our main guide."

rational (*Leg.* 1.31-38).<sup>28</sup> With regard to the divine spirit, one scholar has noted that “Philo unequivocally describes the spirit as an *hypostasis*”, a conclusion reached based on the various personal roles the Spirit plays throughout Philo’s writings.<sup>29</sup> Some examples of these hypostatic roles include visiting and leading to truth, as well as characteristics like invisibility and complete wisdom.<sup>30</sup> This potential connection may be worth examining.

## Hypostatic Language

The reality of the Holy Spirit’s personal existence is most clearly evidenced in Origen’s use of the term *hypostasis* for the Spirit. We have already seen that in *Jo.* 2.75, Origen speaks of “three *hypostases*”, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.<sup>31</sup> Here, facing Monarchian arguments which state that the Holy Spirit possesses no “distinctive essence” (οὐσίαν ἰδίαν) from the Father and the Son, Origen is the first to articulate a formula of three divine persons.<sup>32</sup> While Origen opposes the philosophers and Gnostics by simply asserting that the Spirit exists, he employs more sophisticated arguments for those who believe in the Spirit’s existence, but incorrectly.<sup>33</sup> The importance of the Spirit’s hypostatic existence is also

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<sup>28</sup> *Pneuma* for Philo is the mind or rational aspect of the soul, given to all. cf. *princ.* 2.7.2.

<sup>29</sup> John Levison, ‘The Prophetic Spirit as an Angel According to Philo’, *HTR* 88.2 (April 1995), 189-90, citing Paul Volz, *Der Geist Gottes und die verwandten Erscheinungen im Alten Testament und im anschließenden Judentum* (Tubingen: Mohr, 1910), 160. Levison quotes Volz: “the personal character of the Philonic *pneuma* normally retreats into the background, despite its hypostatic character. The reason for this lied probably in Stoic influence, from which Philo took over the panpsychic *pneuma*, and moreover in the Philonic conception of the Logos, alongside which the *pneuma* could never be fully developed.”

<sup>30</sup> Levison, ‘Prophetic Spirit’, 189. Also see Levison’s treatment of divine spirit/inspiration in ‘The Angelic Spirit in Early Judaism’, in *Seminar Papers Series – SBL* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1995), 273-74.

<sup>31</sup> SC 120:254; Heine, 80:114.

<sup>32</sup> For the anti-Monarchian context of this statement, see Andrew Radde-Gallwitz, ‘The Holy Spirit as Agent, Not Activity: Origen’s Argument with Modalism and Its Afterlife in Didymus, Eunomius, and Gregory of Nazianzus’, *VC* 65.3 (2011), 227-48 ; Ronald E. Heine, ‘The Christology of Callistus’, *JTS* 49.1 (1998), 56-91. For a recent study on the impact of Monarchianism on Origen’s theology, see Waers, ‘Monarchianism’.

<sup>33</sup> In the context of this statement (e.g. *Jo.* 2.74), Origen highlights the distinction of the divine persons, citing Mt 12.32/Mk 3.29 (blasphemy of the Holy Spirit) to show that the Spirit is different from the Son.

evidenced in fragments from the *Commentary on John*.<sup>34</sup> In *fr.in.Jo.* 37, Origen famously notes that the “Spirit is a substance (οὐσίαν)... not, as some think, an activity (ἐνέργειά) of God, who lacks... distinct existence.”<sup>35</sup> The idea that the Holy Spirit is merely an “activity” (ἐνέργειά) of God is a characteristic of Monarchian thought.<sup>36</sup> Origen also provides references to biblical passages like Jn 3.8 (“the Spirit blows where he wills”) and 1 Cor 12.11, Acts 15.28, Acts 13.2, and Acts 21.10-11 in order to demonstrate that the Holy Spirit “wills” and “wishes”; he possesses his own volition and thus a distinct existence (ὑπάρξενως ιδιότητα).<sup>37</sup> In the midst of this, Origen asserts that the Spirit has οὐσίαν to drive home the point.<sup>38</sup> It should be noted that there is another version of this fragment, *fr.in.Jo.* 123, which repeats the same phrase as *fr.in.Jo.* 37, except that *hypostasis* replaces *ousia*.<sup>39</sup> Though we have seen in Chapter 1 that Origen often uses *ousia* and *hypostasis* in similar ways for the Son, his application of this term to the Holy Spirit in a personal sense represents a significant development in Trinitarian theology.<sup>40</sup> Origen is the first eastern Christian

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<sup>34</sup> For the reliability of the *Jo.* fragments, see Ronald E. Heine, ‘Can the Catena Fragments of Origen’s Commentary on John Be Trusted?’, *VC* 40.2 (1986), 118–34.

<sup>35</sup> σημαίνει δὲ τοῦτο καὶ οὐσίαν εἶναι τὸ πνεῦμα. οὐ γάρ, ὥς τινες οἴονται, ἐνέργειά ἐστὶ θεοῦ, οὐκ ἔχον κατ’ αὐτοὺς ὑπάρξενως ιδιότητα (GCS 10:513–514; Radde-Gallwitz, 229–230).

<sup>36</sup> Radde-Gallwitz, ‘Holy Spirit’, 235 n.19, notes that this is a Monarchian (Sabellian) belief, as evidenced in Epiphanius, *haer.* 62.1.4–9.

<sup>37</sup> See also *princ.* 1.3.7, in which the Spirit as distributing the spiritual gifts according to his will.

<sup>38</sup> Note also *princ.* 1.3.2: “the substance (*substantiam*) of the Holy Spirit was of such authority and dignity that saving baptism is not complete” (Behr, 1:68–69).

<sup>39</sup> τινες γὰρ οἴονται ἐνέργειαν εἶναι θεοῦ, μὴ ἔχον ἰδίαν ὑπόστασιν. For more on the reliability of the fragments, see Radde-Gallwitz, ‘Holy Spirit’, 229–31. See also *fr.in.Jo.* 36: καὶ ὅρα μὴ ἄρα ἐπινοίας μόνης ἀλλ’ οὐχ ὑποστάσεως διαφορὰν ἔχει πρὸς τὸ πνεῦμα.

<sup>40</sup> Though Plotinus is also credited for using the formula of three *hypostases*, this seems actually to be the work of his student Porphyry, who edited the title of *Enn.* 5.1 to read “On the three Hypostases that constitute the principles” (Περὶ τῶν τριῶν ἀρχικῶν ὑποστάσεων) and recreates the formula elsewhere (*Enn.* 5.3). Ramelli (‘Hypostasis’, 326–337) has argued that Plotinus’ does not use *hypostasis* in the manner Origen does, that is, to refer to an individuated existence or person. For example, in referring to Plato’s ἡ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ φύσις in *Enn.* 6.8.13 (Philebus, 20d line 1, 54c line 10, 60b lines 4–10), Plotinus changes φύσις to ὑπόστασις, and immediately after to οὐσία. Ramelli argues that Porphyry may actually have been aware of Origen’s use of *hypostasis* and transferred the concept onto Plotinus’ triad of principles.

theologian to technically distinguish three divine persons, a development which occurs in the context of anti-Monarchian polemic.<sup>41</sup>

There are also instances in the Latin texts in which Origen affirms the Holy Spirit's personhood. In *hom.in.Lc* 25.5, Origen also notes that Marcionites are "unwilling to understand a third person (*tertiam personam*) besides the Father and the Son, a divine and exalted nature".<sup>42</sup> Instead, they understand the Paraclete of John 14.16 to be the apostle Paul.<sup>43</sup> In *hom.in.Num* 12.1.4, commenting on Numbers 21.16-18 and the "wells which he speaks of as having one Spring", Origen notes that the first well is "the knowledge of the unbegotten Father", the second "the recognition of the only begotten Son" and the third is "the knowledge of the Holy Spirit".<sup>44</sup> Origen comments that "the Son is different from the Father, and that he is the Father and not also the Son", as well as that "[the Holy Spirit] too is different (*distinctio*) from the Father and from the Son", quoting Jn 8.18 and Jn 14.16-17 as evidence. He goes on to conclude that,

...there is this distinction of the three persons (*trium distinction personarum*) in the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, which is recalled in the plural number of the wells. Yet of these wells there is one spring. For the substance and nature of the Trinity is one.<sup>45</sup>

Origen's language in this passage indicates his concern to defend the distinction of divine persons, suggesting a Monarchian opponent similar to passages we have seen in *Jo.* (e.g.

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<sup>41</sup> Nautin, *Origène*, 370-71, 425-27, dates *On First Principles* to 229/30 and *Commentary on John* to 230/31. Tertullian's *Against Praxeas*, a work with strong Trinitarian emphases, is dated by Evans to around 213 CE (Ernest Evans, intro to *Tertullian's Treatise Against Praxeas* (London: SPCK, 1948), 18.

<sup>42</sup> SC 87:333; Lienhard, 94:107.

<sup>43</sup> See *com.in.Rom* 2.11.2, 6.9.2.

<sup>44</sup> SC 442:76; Scheck, 63.

<sup>45</sup> SC 442:76-78; Scheck, 63. This is followed with: "But he has carefully expressed the mystical language, so that what was said in the plural of the persons would be in keeping with the substance in the singular."

1.151-152, 10.246). Though Origen's statements concerning Trinitarian personhood are paralleled elsewhere (e.g. *Jo.* 2.75), commentators have noted that the last line appears to be an addition of Rufinus, which seems true given the context.<sup>46</sup>

Origen's intent in this passage is to distinguish between Trinitarian persons, seen particularly in his use of *distinctio*.<sup>47</sup> His use of "one Spring" is problematic, however, in that it is unclear what the spring actually is, whether the Father or even something else.<sup>48</sup> This imagery is also potentially vulnerable to criticisms of tritheism, given that the foundation for Trinity and the relationship between persons is unclear.<sup>49</sup> Origen is not building a model for Trinity here; he is speaking of the knowledge of the individual persons, not the persons themselves. His intent in this passage is to express the mystery of Christian knowledge of three personal or individuated existences, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, as revealed in the allegorical interpretation of Scripture.<sup>50</sup>

## The Status of the Spirit

For Origen, the Spirit clearly has a personal existence. But exactly what type of existence the Spirit is, i.e. his nature and origin, is a question that Origen cannot confidently answer.

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<sup>46</sup> *hom.in.Num* 12.1.4. Though it is possible that Rufinus' fingerprints may be over this entire section, it is difficult to imagine him inventing an entire illustration, given the problematic feature that it would have possessed for him.

<sup>47</sup> See Ch. 1. p.26-28.

<sup>48</sup> The passage may be suggesting a shared divine nature as the fount of all the springs, which is a stereotypical characteristic of later Latin Trinitarianism, and generally foreign to Origen's thought.

<sup>49</sup> Compare with Gregory of Nazianzus' comments about Peter/James/John not being consubstantial in *or.* 31.19.

<sup>50</sup> While Origen uses the term *epinoia* commonly for the Son's various titles and functions, he does not do so often with the Spirit. The only places he seems to do so are in *fr.in.Jo* 36 and 121, which are from the same work, commenting on how the Holy Spirit is only water in ἐπινοία (as opposed to nature) in a discussion of Jn 7.38-39. εἰ γὰρ περὶ τοῦ πνεύματος εἴρηται ὡς ὕδωρ ζῶν ποταμῶν δίκην ἐκπορευόμενον ἐκ τοῦ πιστεύοντος, ἐπινοία μόνη διοίσει τοῦ πνεύματος τὸ ὕδωρ (*fr.in.Jo* 36; GCS 10:511). Note Origen's comments in *princ.* 2.7.3: "the same Spirit becomes that and is understood to be that which the person, who is worthy to partake of him, needs" (Behr, 2:219). Origen often speaks of the multiplicity of the Spirit in terms of the virtues of Is 11.2 – see Appendix. .

This issue appears to be the background behind Origen's struggle with whether or not the Spirit is created (e.g. *princ.* 1.3.3) or whether he can rightly apply certain characteristics true of the Son to the Spirit.<sup>51</sup> In this section, we will examine issues regarding the Holy Spirit's origin and nature that appear in Origen's writings. Through this examination, we will see that Origen's tendency when speaking of the Spirit's existence is to emphasize ontological hierarchy, particularly in the Spirit's inferiority to and dependence on the Son. But even when dealing with such issues, Origen often only provides ambiguous responses, likely due to Scripture's lack of testimony on such subjects. Though the Spirit for Origen plays an important role in God's saving work, a point which we will examine in the next chapter, exactly who or what the Spirit is is a question that is not answered definitively in the way that Origen articulates the Son's identity.<sup>52</sup>

### Created or Uncreated?

One question about the Holy Spirit that occupies Origen's particular interest is whether or not the Spirit is created.<sup>53</sup> His struggle is not with the label "creation" for the Spirit, which he does with the Son, but whether or not the Spirit is actually a finite creature. The problem for Origen is that Scripture is not clear on this topic. Though Origen does not answer this question in *On First Principles*, we can look elsewhere to identify both the cause of this curiosity and his answer to the question: book 2 of the *Commentary on John*. In *Jo.* 2.73, commenting on *Jn* 1.3, Origen brings up the question of whether or not the

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<sup>51</sup> While Origen affirms that the Holy Spirit is divine, in certain places Origen makes statements that seem to suggest that the Holy Spirit is an angelic being – see Appendix.

<sup>52</sup> Origen simply spends less time on the ontology of the Spirit's origins – see Bruns, *Trinität*, 128.

<sup>53</sup> See *princ.* Pref.4, 1.3.3. This idea also appears in Pamphilus, *Apol.* 66-72 (Scheck, 120:70-72). Because Pamphilus' work is only preserved in Rufinus' translation, there is the possibility that Rufinus has altered this. It is worth noting that the idea that the Spirit is uncreated appears in Adamantius, *dial.* 1.2 (803).

Spirit should be included amongst “all things” that were made through Christ. His answer is that “[we] must accept that the Holy Spirit too was made (ἐγένετο) through the Word, since the Word is older (πρεσβυτέρου) than he.”<sup>54</sup> As we have seen in Chapter 2, “older” is Origen’s way of indicating ontological priority.<sup>55</sup> Following a distinction of the Spirit’s identity from the Son’s in *Jo.* 2.74, Origen attempts to discern the exact identity of the Holy Spirit in relation to the Father and the Son. He presents several options for the Spirit’s identity: (1) the Spirit is a being inferior to the Son and is included in the “all things” that were made through him (cf. *Jo.* 1.3, *Col.* 1.16), (2) he is “unbegotten” like the Father, or (3) he is not personally distinct from the Father and the Son.<sup>56</sup> Origen must rule out the third option, given the argument he makes for the Spirit’s personal existence against the Monarchians. He is also forced to reject the second, as “uncreated” is a title unique to the Father.<sup>57</sup> Therefore, Origen is left only with the first option, in which the Spirit must be included in the “all things” that are made through the Son.<sup>58</sup>

But we must not be too quick to react to such statements.<sup>59</sup> Given how Origen uses the language of “older”, he is not necessarily saying that the Spirit was created at a certain point in time. A created Holy Spirit also conflicts with descriptions Origen uses elsewhere

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<sup>54</sup> SC 120:252; Heine, 80:113. Dillon, ‘Origen and Plotinus’, 20, argues that Origen’s discussion of the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Son is informed by his knowledge of the Platonic World-Soul, particularly its relation to the Intellect.

<sup>55</sup> cf. Numenius, *fr.* 16. The emphasis in *princ.* on shared Trinitarian eternality (e.g. *princ.* 4.4.1) may be Rufinus’ attempts to smooth this out.

<sup>56</sup> SC 120:254; Heine, 80:113. Origen does not consider that the Spirit could not be “begotten” like the Only-Begotten Son.

<sup>57</sup> Jerome, *Ep. ad Avitum* 2, and Justinian, *Ep. ad Mennam* (Koetschau *fr.* 7; Berh, 2:598.5), both testify that the Father alone is *agennetos* for Origen – he does not distinguish between “uncreated” and “unbegotten”. See Bruns, *Trinität*, 131.

<sup>58</sup> Hauschild, *Gottes Geist*, 143, 149, believes that this is a point that Rufinus has specifically sought to suppress.

<sup>59</sup> For treatments, see e.g. Crouzel, *Origène: et la ‘connaissance mystique’* (Paris: Desclée De Brouwer, 1961), 97-98; G.L. Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought* (London: SPCK, 1952), 134-48.



like incorruptible,<sup>60</sup> incorporeal,<sup>61</sup> and eternal,<sup>62</sup> or, as we will see, that he ministers to spiritual entities alongside the Son. But more significantly, Origen speaks of the Son as the “oldest (Πρεσβύτατον) of all created beings” (*Cels.* 5.37) or that “the Father is his beginning (ἀρχὴ)” (*Jo.* 1.104).<sup>63</sup> These statements are not indicative of Origen’s belief in the Son’s created nature; there are plenty of examples that testify otherwise. They instead testify to his belief in the Son’s ontological dependence on the Father.<sup>64</sup> In these statements, Origen is simply making a point about the ontological origin of the Spirit in the Son through a nuanced reading of biblical language.<sup>65</sup>

Origen supplements his conclusion of the “created” nature of the Spirit with the aforementioned *hypostasis* quote in *Jo.* 2.75, as Trinitarian a statement as appears in Origen’s writings, and then describes the Spirit as “the most honored (τιμιώτερον) of all things made (γενομένων) through the Word, and he is [first] (πρῶτον) in rank of all the things which have been made (γεγεννημένων) by the Father through Christ.”<sup>66</sup> From these

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<sup>60</sup> *hom.in.Ex* 6.5; *Cels.* 4.28, 4.37 (quoting *Wis* 11.27; 12.1-2).

<sup>61</sup> *princ.* 4.4.5; *Cels.* 7.27, 6.70. The nature of his work is to make believers incorporeal (*Jo.* 6.162, *Cant.* 4.14, *philoc.* 1.15). Origen’s statement in *princ.* 1.1 that the Spirit cannot see the Son is not a statement about the Spirit’s inability, but about a shared invisible and spiritual nature within a tiered cosmology. cf. Justinian, *ep. ad Mennam*, Jerome, *Ep. ad Avitum* 2 (Koetschau *fr.* 9; Behr, 2:598.6). Also note Jerome, *Jo. Hier.* 7 (Behr, 2:596.1) and Epiphanius, *haer.* 64.4: for Origen, angels cannot see the Spirit or men see angels.

<sup>62</sup> *com.in.Mt* 12.20; *princ.* 4.4.1, 1.2.9.

<sup>63</sup> *Cels.* 5.37 (SC 147:114; Chadwick, 294). *Jo.* 1.104 (SC 120:114; Heine, 80:55). Williams, *Arius*, 138, defines Origen’s use of *arche* as “an origin and ‘rationale’ of existence in the being of God.” See also Ch. 2 for Origen’s use of “created” language; also note Origen’s interpretation of Proverbs 8, in *princ.* 1.2.3; *Jo.* 1.115, 1.191. Though Origen does not maintain clear technical distinctions in his use of this language, the Son as the will from the mind of the Father (e.g. *princ.* 1.2.6) fits Williams’ (*Arius*, 141) definition of “created”.

<sup>64</sup> E.g. that the Father is the Son’s “beginning” (*Jo.* 1.102).

<sup>65</sup> With these ideas in mind, *princ.* Pref.4 and 1.3.3 might be viewed suspiciously. However, we also have the witness of Jerome in *Ep. ad Avitum* 2. In contrast, Pamphilus and Rufinus both appeal to Origen’s supposed belief that the Spirit is not created (alongside the *homousios*) to refute those who say he believed otherwise.

<sup>66</sup> SC 120:254-256; Heine, 80:114. This clearly contradicts the statements made in Pamphilus and Rufinus. But again, Origen’s views are more complicated than simply “created”, which may have precipitated their arguments.

statements, it is clear that the Holy Spirit is not simply another created being; he is mentioned in the same breath as the Father and the Son, both here and in *Jo.* 2.77, and is distinguished above the remaining “all things” made through the Son.<sup>67</sup> But Origen follows this in *Jo.* 2.76 with another statement confirming the Spirit’s “created” ontological status. He notes,

The Holy Spirit seems to have need of the Son ministering (διακονοῦντος) to his *hypostasis*, not only for it to exist, but also for it to be wise, and rational, and just... and whatever else to be by participation (κατὰ μετοχήν) in the aspects (ἐπινοιών) of Christ.<sup>68</sup>

Origen affirms what he has said elsewhere but in further detail; the statement only confirms that the Spirit is ontologically dependent on and derived from the Son. Because the Spirit is one of the “all things”, he derives attributes like wisdom, rationality and justice from the Son who is the source of these attributes for all else but himself.<sup>69</sup> The Son thus ministers his attributes to creation, seen particularly in his manifestation of the virtues or *epinoiai* of 1 Cor 1.30.<sup>70</sup> Viewed in this way, the Spirit’s participation in the Son for his attributes is a normal part of Origen’s divine framework – it actually parallels the Father-Son ontological relationship.<sup>71</sup> Therefore, though he speaks of the Spirit as a “creature” of the Son, even in the context of arguing for the Spirit’s ontological inferiority, Origen never outrightly affirms that the Spirit was made at a certain point in time or that the Spirit is

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<sup>67</sup> *Jo.* 2.77 is one of Origen’s most distinct Trinitarian statements – it will be mentioned again briefly later in this chapter and analyzed in more detail in the next chapter.

<sup>68</sup> SC 120:256; Heine, 80:114. See also *Cels.* 8.17, 8.18.

<sup>69</sup> In the same way that the Son is not αὐτοαγαθόν like the Father, but dependent on him. See Justinian, *Ep. ad Mennam* (Koetschau fr. 6; Behr, 2:597.4); Jerome, *Ep. ad Avitum* 2. Taken from his reading of Mk 10.18.

<sup>70</sup> His discernment of these particular attributes, as we have noted, is based on the literal reading of certain passages of Scripture (e.g. 1 Cor 1.30).

<sup>71</sup> E.g. *com.in.Mt* 14.6: “... in which [the Spirit] who, participates in Christ no only so far as He is Spirit, but in Christ as He is Wisdom...” (GCS 40:288; ANF 10:498).

the same as other “created” nature.<sup>72</sup> Instead, he chooses to place the Spirit alongside both Father and Son, in name and in work, but distinguishing his existence from theirs.<sup>73</sup>

To understand Origen’s struggle, however, we must remember that Origen does not afford the Spirit a role in creation. Because the Spirit does not partake in this act alongside the Father and Son, Origen cannot apply the creator/creation distinction so neatly to the Spirit, leaving the Spirit in an awkward position.<sup>74</sup> If the Spirit is not a creator, then does that not imply that he was made at some point in time? Though on the one hand the Spirit is clearly the divine Spirit who participates in the divine work, on the other, there is no clear scriptural support for Origen that the Spirit creates or is creator. The fact that Jerome, who had access to Origen’s works and translated some of them, testified that Origen struggles with this shows that it was likely an issue that Origen never fully resolved. In addition, there is tension between the Son-Spirit and the Son-creation relationship; if the Son images the Father, does the Spirit image the Son? This seems to be the logical conclusion, but given Scripture’s teaching on humanity as the image of the Son, the Spirit

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<sup>72</sup> There is a clear resistance to this in certain Rufinus-translated statements, e.g. *com.in.Rom* 6.7.19: “I am aware... that certain mindless people have treated ‘newness of the Spirit’ in such a way that they can say that the Spirit is new, as if he did not exist previously nor was he known by the ancients... For the Spirit is in the law, he is in the Gospels, he is always with the Father and the Son; and he always is, was, and shall be, just like the Father and the Son” (SC 543:156; Scheck, 104:29). Or *com.in.Rom* 1.18.10: “We, however, worship and adore only the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and no created thing” (SC 532:258; Scheck, 103:96-97).

<sup>73</sup> While many scholars affirm hierarchy in Origen’s Trinitarian thought, they do not follow the implications of his statements. E.g. Bruns, *Trinität*, 128-135, brings up the issue of whether this passage shows relational derivation or ontological subordination, but seems to conclude, on the basis of the Spirit’s immutability and shared will, that the Spirit is consubstantial with the Father (see also Simonetti, ‘Note’, 283-84). Plaxco, ‘Didymus’, 42 n.3, notes that many scholars, beginning with Crouzel (e.g. *Origen*, 172), have incorrectly assumed for Origen that eternal generation and inferiority are mutually exclusive. Plaxco notes that in Origen’s Middle Platonic milieu, “Platonists were capable of ordering entities in a primal series without worry that any of the series is ‘temporal’.”

<sup>74</sup> Moser, *Teacher*, 86, argues that Origen “sees an ontological divide between spirit and matter (with human and divine spirit on the same side of the divide)” while “Christians of the Nicene period see a fundamental divide between Creator and creature.”

is left in an awkward place.<sup>75</sup> But Origen never dwells on either of these issues in his writings, leaving the Spirit's origins a mystery.

## Inferior and Superior

Following his treatment of the Spirit's ontological inferiority, Origen follows with statements that suggest the Spirit's inferior role and ability. Beginning with the issue of why the Spirit is more honored than Christ in some Scripture (*Jo.* 2.79), Origen argues that the harsh judgment in the blasphemy of the Spirit (*Mt* 12.32) is due to the scope of each person's work; "all spiritual beings have a share in Christ", while the Spirit is only given to those who are "considered worthy" and have turned away from their sins.<sup>76</sup> He also argues that the Spirit's sending of the Son in Isaiah 48.16 is not an indication of ontological superiority, but is a reference to the incarnation (*Jo.* 2.81-82).<sup>77</sup> Origen takes issue with this because sending, like "creation" or "older" is understood as an indication of ontological priority; the sender is prior to and greater than the one who is sent.<sup>78</sup> For Origen, the Father alone is unsent; he sends the Son as "leader" (*Jo.* 2.83), while the Son also sends the Spirit.<sup>79</sup> In most cases, God himself is the giver of the Spirit,<sup>80</sup> e.g. in *Cels.* 6.70,

God is always giving a share of His own Spirit to those who are able to partake of Him, though he dwells in those who are worthy not by being cut into sections and divided up.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> E.g. *princ.* 1.2.6, see Ch. 2 p. 67.

<sup>76</sup> *Jo.* 2.80 (SC 120:258; Heine, 80:115). We will revisit this topic later in this chapter

<sup>77</sup> For a similar issue, see *Cels.* 1.46.

<sup>78</sup> This is paralleled in Origen's understanding of the Father-Son relationship, particularly the language of begottenness and image. Also see Bruns, *Trinität*, 127.

<sup>79</sup> SC 120:260; Heine, 80:116. See Origen's interpretation of *Jn* 14.16: *princ.* 2.7.1, *hom.in.Lc* 25.5. *Jn* 20.22: *com.in.Mt* 12.11, *com.in.Rom* 6.13.7, *Jo.* 28.129, *princ.* 1.3.7, *Cels.* 7.51, *hom.in.Lc* 27.5. *Is* 42.5: *princ.* 1.3.4. *Joel* 2.28: *hom.in.Lev* 5.2.4, *princ.* 2.7.2, *com.in.Mt* 10.18. Also see *hom.in.Num* 27.13.2 (*Jn* 3.34, *Jn* 3.8), 17.4.4 (*Jn* 7.38).

<sup>80</sup> E.g. *princ.* 1.1.3, *hom.in.Num.* 6.2.1. Also see *com.in.Eph* 1.14, 1.18-20a.

<sup>81</sup> SC 147:353; Chadwick, 384. Origen's concern in this passage is to emphasize the attributes of the Spirit which he shares with God, e.g. incorporeality, universality, omnipresence, indivisibility.

For Origen, God sends the Spirit to work salvation in individual believers; it is an economic sending, not an indication of processions.<sup>82</sup> We should remember that Origen does not possess a defined metaphysical sense of divine processions in the way later writers do.<sup>83</sup> Had Origen possessed such terminology for the Spirit's metaphysical origin, he would likely have been quick to apply it (e.g. like the Father as only "unbegotten" and the Son as "only-Begotten"), rather than dwelling on the question of the Spirit's status.<sup>84</sup>

But more importantly, following his clarification on sendings, Origen notes that the activity to restore (διορθώσεται) the earth (cf. Rom 8.21) "fell... in some way to the Holy Spirit" (Jo. 2.83).<sup>85</sup> He continues: "[s]ince the Spirit cannot bear it, he sends forth the Savior because he alone is able to bear such great conflict." The Spirit, therefore, joins with the Father to send the Son in the incarnation, promising to descend onto the incarnate Son at his baptism and to "cooperate in the salvation of men" (Jo. 2.83).<sup>86</sup> Origen suggests that the Spirit was initially responsible for the renewal of creation on his own. But because of

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<sup>82</sup> See *princ.* 2.6.5, 2.7.2, 2.10.7; *com.in.Rom* 4.1.15, 6.13.7, *pasch.* 26.

<sup>83</sup> It should be noted that more technical references to the Spirit's "procession" (e.g. Jn 15.26) are mostly confined to Latin works: e.g. *princ.* 3.5.8, 4.2.9; *com.in.Rom* 6.13.3, 7.1.2; *Cant.* Pro2; *hom.in.Jos* 3.2. Appears once in *philoc.* 1.16.

<sup>84</sup> One of Origen's most unique treatments in the sending of the Spirit is *com.in.Mt* 13.18 (GCS 40:226-230; ANF 10:485-486), his exegesis of the "little children" of Mt 18.4. Noting how both Savior and Spirit are sent by the Father for the salvation of men (Is 48.16, 8.18), Origen notes the ambiguity in the interpretation of divine sendings in Is 48.16. Origen suggests it could mean that God and Spirit both send the Son or that the Father sends both Savior and Spirit. His conclusion is that God sends Son and Spirit, which is different from Jo. 2.81 (note that *com.in.Mt* is a later work; it could represent change or maturation). But the most unique part of this passage is Origen's interpretation of the "little child" as the Holy Spirit, who "humbled himself for the salvation of men." He concludes that to humble oneself is to imitate the Spirit who "descended from His own perfection" and was "set by Jesus in the midst of the disciples." This is humiliation and incarnation language, a clear paralleling of the Spirit's work to Christ's. It is also notable that the Spirit was "called by Jesus" to this work, further subordination language and an indication of the Spirit's particular role in indwelling the saints. See Maspero, 'Remarks on Origen's Analogies for the Holy Spirit', in *Origeniana Decima* (Leuven: Peeters, 2011), 564-67.

<sup>85</sup> SC 120:260; Heine, 80:115-116. καὶ ὥσπερ εἰ ἐπέβαλλέ πως τῷ ἁγίῳ πνεύματι ἡ πρᾶξις αὕτη, ἥντινα ὑπομένειν οὐ δυνάμενον προβάλλεται τὸν σωτῆρα, ὡς τὸ τηλικούτον ἄθλον μόνον ἐνεγκεῖν δυνάμενον.

<sup>86</sup> SC 120:260; Heine, 80:116.

his inferior ability, the incarnate Son was sent to perform the work of salvation, which the Spirit comes to cooperate in. Although Origen does not refer to this in any of his other writings, his inclusion of this idea here suggests that the Spirit's particular sphere of influence and role in the divine work is not simply an economic division, but indicates actual capability.<sup>87</sup> Unable to accomplish salvation on his own, the Spirit works alongside the Son to restore humanity. However, while this passage testifies to Origen's belief in the inferior capability and lesser or subordinate work of the Spirit, the working of salvation is still clearly Trinitarian. But within that concept of Trinity, there is a clear sense of greater and lesser, which indicates both economic and ontological hierarchy.<sup>88</sup>

Statements indicating the Spirit's inferiority, however, should be balanced with others which testify to the Spirit's superior status over the rest of creation. In *Jo.* 13.151, Origen comments that the Savior and the Holy Spirit "transcend all created beings... by their exceeding pre-eminence (ὑπεροχῇ)".<sup>89</sup> He follows this, however, by saying that "the Father exceeds the Savior as much (or even more) as the Savior himself and the Holy Spirit exceed the rest".<sup>90</sup> Though the Son and Spirit together are not part of "the rest", this statement reveals again Origen's need to reinforce his tiered divine hierarchy. Origen also speaks of the exalted status of the Spirit by paralleling his titles to the Son's. He notes in *com.in.Rom* 7.1.2 that while there are many spirits and many sons, there is only one Holy Spirit and

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<sup>87</sup> The Spirit's fragility is also reflected in his interpretation of the blasphemy of the Spirit (Mt 12.32), which is the casting out of the Spirit from the believer due to sin. See esp. *Jo.* 2.80. This also confirms that the Spirit's work comes at a later point in the maturity of believers (e.g. *princ.* 1.3.4).

<sup>88</sup> On the basis of passages like these, the idea that there is "no greater or lesser in the Trinity" (e.g. *princ.* 1.3.7) should be rejected. For a treatment on the reliability of the relevant Jerome and Justinian fragments, see Bruns, *Trinität*, 137-42.

<sup>89</sup> SC 222:114; Heine, 89:100. See Lyons, *Cosmic*, 105-106, Ch. 1 n.92, for an explanation of the difference between this passage and *com.in.Mt* 15.10.

<sup>90</sup> SC 222:114; Heine, 89:100. Followed by *Jo.* 13.152: "although the Savior transcends in his essence (ὑπερέχων οὐσίᾳ)... nevertheless, he is not comparable with the Father in any way."

only one who is Son by nature.<sup>91</sup> Origen interprets the title “firstfruits of the Spirit” in Romans 8.23 as indicating the preeminence of the Spirit over other spirits, mirroring the Son’s title as firstborn of all creation.<sup>92</sup> This suggests that Origen considers the Son and Spirit as a duality of divine beings who sit under the Father, superior to and ministering to creation. Similarly, Origen affirms that the knowledge of God is incomprehensible to all but Christ and the Holy Spirit (*Jo.* 2.172).<sup>93</sup> Though in other places Origen suggests that the Spirit’s capacity to know the Father is inferior to the Son’s, this knowledge cannot be compared to creation’s, both in content and capacity. This superior knowledge is necessary for the Spirit’s role in revelation, which Origen’s supports often by quoting 1 Cor 2.10.<sup>94</sup>

Origen also parallels the Son and the Spirit in the work that they do.<sup>95</sup> This is particularly clear in his exegesis of Isaiah 6, which suggests corresponding roles of the Son and Spirit in revealing the Father.<sup>96</sup> In *Cels.* 1.46, another passage arguing for the existence of the Spirit, Origen sees a parallel in the Father’s sending of both the Son and the Spirit, the latter to fulfill prophecy.<sup>97</sup> Though Origen’s descriptions of the parallel work of the Son and Spirit do not suggest equality at the level of Irenaeus’ two hands of God,<sup>98</sup> it is clear

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<sup>91</sup> SC 543:244; Scheck, 104:61.

<sup>92</sup> In Origen’s understanding, there are other ministering spirits that guide the soul until it is worthy of receiving the Spirit of adoption, who is the “firstfruits of Christ” (*com.in.Rom* 7.5.3, 9.30.2).

<sup>93</sup> SC 120:322; Heine, 80:141. See also *com.in.Rom* 8.13.9: the Spirit is called the “depth of the knowledge” of God (1 Cor 2.10) (SC 543:586; Scheck, 104:190).

<sup>94</sup> See Ch. 5, p.200. The Spirit’s knowledge will be discussed shortly.

<sup>95</sup> A particularly interesting passage which concerns the Holy Spirit is Origen’s treatment of whether the Holy Spirit is the principle of John the Baptist in *hom.in.Lc* 4.4 (SC 87:130-132; Lienhard, 94:18). Origen toys with the idea that John’s spirit was actually the Holy Spirit incarnate, which seems to have been the view of certain Gnostics. Lienhard, ‘Origen’s Speculation on John the Baptist, or: Was John the Baptist the Holy Spirit?’, in *Origeniana Quinta* (Leuven: Peeters, 1992), 449-453, notes that Origen’s views on this passage and his willingness to speculate change over time, seen in his more conservative approach in interpreting this passage (*Lk* 1.15) in *com.in.Mt* 13.2 (GCS 40:176-185; ANF 10:475-477).

<sup>96</sup> *princ.* 1.3.4.

<sup>97</sup> SC 132:198; Chadwick, 42. Union examples: *com.in.Rom* 6.7.19, *hom.in.Ez* 9.1.2.

<sup>98</sup> Irenaeus, *haer.* 4 Pref.4, 4.2.5, 5.6.1, 5.28.4.

that in Origen's mind the Son and Spirit are sent by the Father and work side-by-side to fulfill a single mission.<sup>99</sup> Manlio Simonetti has argued that Origen's writings contain two Trinitarian schema: (1) a "vertical Trinitarian scheme" which agrees with the ontological hierarchical formulations we have mentioned above and (2) a "triangular Trinitarian scheme" in which Son and Spirit work side by side under the Father.<sup>100</sup> This parallel work serves to distinguish the Son and Spirit from the rest of creation, placing them both above other spiritual beings.<sup>101</sup> While the triangular scheme is not Origen's primary way of speaking of the Holy Spirit and Trinitarian relations, it appears on occasion in Origen's higher and allegorical interpretations of Scripture.<sup>102</sup> Origen's understanding of the Holy Spirit, then, is characterized by contradictions and tensions; on the one hand he emphasizes the Spirit's inferior ontological status and ability, on the other he places the Spirit next to the Son in his work. This indicates Origen's belief that the Spirit is less than Father and Son, but is still a divine being who participates in the divine work in his own particular way.

## The Spirit's Knowledge

Another issue that appears in Origen's treatment of the Holy Spirit is the Spirit's knowledge of the Father. In *princ.* 1.3.4, Origen denies that the Spirit comes to know the

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<sup>99</sup> See esp. *com.in.Rom* 6.11.3: "what the Spirit does, Christ also does, and the things that are Christ's the Spirit does" (SC 543:200; Scheck, 104:47). Also see *princ.* 1.3.4, *com.in.Rom* 8.11.7, *Cant.* Pro2, for parallels of Mt 11.27 with 1 Cor 2.10.

<sup>100</sup> Simonetti, "Note sulla teologia trinitaria di Origene", in *Vetera Christianorum* 8.1 (1971), 292-96. Simonetti also notes the parallel between the Alexandrian tradition of Origen and the Asiatic tradition of Irenaeus (295) and argues that the triangular schema exists because Origen does not want to make the Spirit a second and inferior mediator whose work is simply a duplication of Christ's (296).

<sup>101</sup> Ministering to them, e.g. *hom.in.Num* 18.2.2, *hom.in.Lev* 5.2.4, *hom.in.Lc* 23.7.

<sup>102</sup> For more examples of this scheme, see esp. Origen's interpretation of the seraphim of Isaiah 6 in Appendix.



Father out of ignorance, or “through the Son’s revelation”.<sup>103</sup> This issue arises due to tension between verses that speak of the Son and Spirit’s knowledge of the Father: Mt 11.27 (“no one knows the Father except the Son, and he to whom the Son chooses to reveal him”) and 1 Cor 2.10 (“for the Spirit searches out everything, even the deep things of God”). The conclusion in *princ.* 1.3.4 is that the Spirit’s ignorance and mediated knowledge are firmly rejected. But this conclusion must be compared with similar statements in the *Commentary on John*. In *Jo.* 2.127, Origen says,

[T]hat the Holy Spirit also is instructed (μαθητεύεται) by [the Son] is clear from what is said about the comforter and the Holy Spirit (Jn 16.14). Now we must inquire very carefully if the Spirit, by being instructed, contains all things which the Son, who is from the beginning, knows by contemplating the Father.<sup>104</sup>

Here, Origen has no problem affirming, on the basis of Scripture, that the Spirit is taught by the Son. In line with his earlier discussion of the Spirit’s inferior status, his question here is actually whether the Spirit “contains all things” that the Son contains. Similarly, in *Jo.* 13.221, Origen suggests that the Son receives his spiritual food from the Father “without the intervention of any other being”, but that “it is not out of place to say that the Holy Spirit is nurtured (τρέφεσθαι)”, though he does not have any scriptural text for this.<sup>105</sup> In both passages, Origen seems to be protecting the Son’s unique knowledge of the Father as

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<sup>103</sup> Behr, 1:73. See Rowan Williams, ‘The Son’s Knowledge of the Father in Origen’, in *Origeniana Quarta* (Innsbruck: Tryolia-Verlag, 1987), 146-153. Williams, 150, notes that there is tension even in the Son’s knowledge of the divine: “logically, the Son cannot know the Father in his simplicity, but only as an infinite depth never to be fully sounded... Two central religious impulses collide – the need to assert the uncircumscribable nature of the divine, and the need to speak of it in terms of action and love, of limitless gift and accessibility in grace”.

<sup>104</sup> SC 120:290-292; Heine, 80:128.

<sup>105</sup> SC 222:150; Heine, 89:113-114. Commenting on Jn 4.32, that Jesus also requires “spiritual meat” or that “he is always replenishing himself from the Father alone who is without need and sufficient in himself” (*Jo.* 13.219; SC 222:148; Heine, 89:113). Waers, ‘Monarchianism’, notes a parallel in Novatian – that the Spirit is considered inferior to the Son because he receives from him (*De Trin.* 16.3).

his Image and Word, as well as a Trinitarian hierarchy of persons. Origen is thus unwilling to speak in the same way of the Spirit's knowledge of the Father; he clearly believes that the Spirit's knowledge, much like his existence, is mediated through the Son.<sup>106</sup> The issue in *Jo.* 2.127 is the Spirit's capability – does the fact that the Spirit and his knowledge are mediated by the Son mean that his ability to know the Father is less than the Son's? Origen leaves this question unanswered here, though he seems to suggest this elsewhere. In *Jo.* 13.231, Origen notes:

...one holy being will differ from another in comprehending something greater from the Father's will, or something more of his will, or something more distinct in comprehension with another. And again one being comprehends God's will in a different degree than another.<sup>107</sup>

Though referring to the angelic beings' comprehension of the Father's will, Origen may be implying that the Spirit has less knowledge of the Father's will than the Son by virtue of his inferior nature and capacity.<sup>108</sup> Speaking of the Son, Origen notes that he has “comprehended the complete will of God and does it, for which reason he is also his image” (*Jo.* 13.231). He continues, however, that “we must also take the Holy Spirit into consideration”, which may be his inclusion of the Spirit with the Son, or possibly even with the “remaining holy beings” who do not contradict the will of God, but are not “formed according to the complete will.”<sup>109</sup> This is not, however, an affirmation that the Spirit's knowledge of God is the same as that of creation; in *Jo.* 2.172, Origen notes that “the knowledge of God is incomprehensible to all but Christ and the Holy Spirit” and

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<sup>106</sup> Also see *Jo.* 20.263; the Holy Spirit and angelic beings do not speak through their own resources (SC 290:289; Heine, 89:260). Both this and *Jo.* 2.127 are Origen's interpretations of Jn 16.14.

<sup>107</sup> SC 222:156; Heine, 89:116.

<sup>108</sup> The context of this statement is a discussion of Jn 4.34 and the Son's knowledge of the will of the Father.

<sup>109</sup> SC 222:156; Heine, 89:116. Again, an indication of the difference in the nature of created beings and the Son/Holy Spirit. Bruns, *Trinität*, 134, argues that the role of the Holy Spirit is to perfect the will of the heavenly Father.

consistently refers to the necessity of the Holy Spirit in humanity's reception of the knowledge of God.<sup>110</sup> The issue here is not about the Spirit and creation, but about the Spirit and the Son; Origen shows indecisiveness only in making potentially impious claims about divine persons that come about through the logic of his divine hierarchy. But the greater proof is found in *or.* 2.4:

our mind would not even be able to pray... unless the Spirit who searches everything, even the depths of God (1 Cor 2.10), first praises and hymns Him whose depths He has searched out and has understood as far as he is able.<sup>111</sup>

This passage, if any, seems to be a confirmation that the Spirit's knowledge of God is limited.

Do these passages contradict *princ.* 1.3.4? Yes and no. Origen's more reliable statements seem to suggest that the Spirit has knowledge of the Father through the Son, which contradicts the overall sense of *princ.* 1.3.4. But in the *Jo.* statements, Origen is not concerned about the Spirit's "progression" or knowledge from ignorance. Instead, he assumes that all beings that are not the Son contemplate and know the Father through the mediation of the Word. Though there is potentially conflict between this idea and the Spirit's knowledge of the Father in 1 Cor 2.10, Origen does not seem to see them as conflicting – this appears to be a concern of Rufinus. Therefore, Origen's *Jo.* statements do not directly contradict this idea, but they do not fully support them either. The issue in the statement translated by Rufinus is that the Spirit's reception of the knowledge of God *ad extra*, much like the issue of his "creation", assumes that the Spirit is a finite being who receives his knowledge at some point in time. But in Origen's Greek writings, there is no

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<sup>110</sup> SC 120:322; Heine, 80:141.

<sup>111</sup> GCS 3:301-302; Greer, 85.

such tension. In the Greek writings, Origen seems to believe that the Spirit is eternal, though there is not extensive testimony of this.<sup>112</sup> We have one clear attestation:

[Christ] might gain for those who had been delivered the right to be baptized in spirit and soul and body, into the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, which represent the three days eternally present at the same time (τρεῖς ἡμέραι εἰσὶν ἅμα ἐνεστηκυῖαι αἰωνίως) to those who by means of them are sons of light.<sup>113</sup>

Origen often speaks of the Son's eternality and immutability because they are necessitated by the Father.<sup>114</sup> As the Father is eternal, his Son and Word must come forth from him eternally and never at some point in time. But eternality and immutability are not logically necessary for the Spirit's nature in the same way because Origen conceives of the Spirit's mode of generation in relation to the Son. Therefore, Origen does not often speak of the Spirit's eternality and leaves himself vulnerable to criticism. Though it is possible to make a case logically for Origen's belief in the Spirit's eternality based on the Spirit's place in the divine economy of salvation, the fact that Rufinus feels a need to affirm Origen's belief in the Spirit's uncreated nature and seems to have corrected Origen on this point in multiple places demonstrates that it was a point on which Origen was not consistently clear.

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<sup>112</sup> E.g. *princ.* 4.4.1 and 1.2.9. See also Tite, 'Holy Spirit', 148; Lyman, *Christology*, 70.

<sup>113</sup> *com.in.Mt* 12.20 (GCS 40:115; ANF 10:462). This statement is made in the context of a discussion of spirit/soul/body and parallels them to the Father/Son/Spirit. Though this is not a theme that occurs frequently in Origen's writings, the paralleling of Trinitarian members with the tripartite human faculties is not that far off from how Origen sees the work of each member. Origen's mention of the "three days" appears to be to highlight the distinct individuality of each Trinitarian member as well as the eternal character of each person. But this imagery is vulnerable to the criticism of tritheism and should not be taken by itself as a summary or as emblematic of Origen's Trinitarian thought. Origen's point in this passage is to emphasize the eternal individuality of each Trinitarian member and to highlight the potential correspondence of each member with its human parallel.

<sup>114</sup> See Ch. 1, p.50. As we have seen, the Father's sending of the Spirit (e.g. Jn 14.16, 14.26; Acts 2.33) is economic (e.g. *Cels.* 1.46). As Williams, *Arius*, 138, notes, "If we take for granted the divine changelessness, as Origen and his interpreters did, what is said of God must be timelessly true: if part of what is said of God is that he is one term of a relation, the other term must also be eternal." See also Widdicombe, *Fatherhood*, 69-71.

## Divine Attributes and the Spirit's Holiness

Origen's lack of clarity concerning the nature of the Holy Spirit can similarly be found in how he treats the Spirit's possession of the divine attributes. Origen himself does not grapple with this subject; however it is a part of Origen's pneumatology that has been significantly altered by Rufinus and is accepted without question by most scholars. As we have seen in Chapter 1, the Father alone is the source of all things; all that he is he is essentially.<sup>115</sup> Throughout his writings, Origen differentiates between God's nature and that of created being, seen in his use of terms like "essential" and "accidental" to describe the possession of attributes.<sup>116</sup> With humanity, Origen believes that "no rational being whatsoever possesses blessedness (τὴν μακαριότητα) by nature (οὐσιωδῶς) as an inseparable attribute (ἀχώριστον συμβεβηκός)" on the grounds that essential possession is characteristic only of God (Jo. 2.124-25).<sup>117</sup> In *Cels.* 6.44, Origen even says,

It is not possible for that which is good accidentally (κατὰ συμβεβηκός) and consequently to be good in the same sense as that which is good in its own nature (τῷ οὐσιωδῶς); goodness in the former sense will never be absent from the man who... receives the living bread for his preservation.<sup>118</sup>

In these contexts, however, it should be clarified that Origen is speaking only of God the Father. As we have seen, the Son, though not *autoagathos*, is certain attributes "for

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<sup>115</sup> Crouzel, *Origen*, 181, argues that while some scholarship has denied that Origen makes a fundamental distinction between Creator and creation (as in Scripture) and instead focuses more on Platonic intelligible/spiritual or perceptible/material distinctions, Origen's use of essential/accidental categories proves that he speaks in the categories of Creator/creation.

<sup>116</sup> See his extended treatments in *Cels.* 6.44, *philoc.* 24.4. Also see Plaxco, 'Didymus', 90-95 for background on philosophical use.

<sup>117</sup> SC 120:288-290; Heine, 80:127. See also *princ.* 1.2.4. In *princ.* 1.1.7, he considers it an absurdity that intellectual nature should be "an accident or corollary to bodies" while individual senses are substantial (Behr, 1:35).

<sup>118</sup> SC 147:286; Chadwick, 361. Οὐ γὰρ οἷόν τ' ἦν ὁμοίως εἶναι τῷ οὐσιωδῶς ἀγαθῷ ἀγαθὸν τὸ κατὰ συμβεβηκός καὶ ἐξ ἐπιγενήματος ἀγαθόν. Similar discussions appear in *princ.* 1.2.4, 1.2.10, 1.2.13, 3.1.8, 4.4.7, 4.4.8.

himself”, which may suggest essential possession.<sup>119</sup> οὐσιωδῶς also appears once for the Son in the context of attributes, referring to his divinity.<sup>120</sup> While Origen speaks about the importance of the Son’s divinity, he is clear in other places that divinity comes from the Father.<sup>121</sup> As we have seen in Chapter 2, Origen does not believe in a shared divine nature or attributes in the way later writers do; his understanding of these things is patchwork, a system formed from Platonic logic and an amalgamation of various passages of Scripture.<sup>122</sup>

But significant to this discussion, Origen never uses the language of “essence” and “accident” in a Trinitarian or pneumatological sense in any of his Greek writings. Instead, when speaking of the Holy Spirit, Origen only speaks of the Spirit’s attributes as being mediated through the Son (e.g. *Jo.* 2.76); there is nothing that the Spirit is “for himself”. The issue, therefore, lies in discerning whether or not Origen would have used “essential” language to describe the Holy Spirit’s possession of divine attributes like goodness or divinity or especially holiness. On the one hand, Origen speaks of the Holy Spirit as “incorruptible”, drawn from his readings of Wisdom 11.27 and 12.1-2.<sup>123</sup> Assuming the Holy Spirit is not creaturely, it is possible that Origen believes he possesses his attributes

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<sup>119</sup> In *Jo.* 2.125, “for himself” is both αὐτῷ and ἑαυτῷ (SC 120:290; Heine, 80:127-128).

<sup>120</sup> *dial.* 5.9 (SC 67:66; Daly, 54:61): Ἐπὶ λέγουσιν τινες ὅτι τὰ μὲν περὶ τῆς θεότητος οὐσιωδῶς οὕτω προσφέρων Ἰησοῦ Χριστῷ τὴν θεότητα ὡμολόγησα ἀνάστασιν νεκροῦ σώματος ἐπὶ τῆς ἐκκλησίας. “With regard to the divinity, some object that, while admitting the substantial divinity of Jesus Christ, I did so in such a way that I professed before the Church the resurrection of a dead body.” The Monarchians (*alogoi*) believed that the divinity of Christ could not be distinguished from the divinity of the Father, which would destroy the divine monarchy (see Irenaeus, *haer.* 3.11; Epiphanius, *haer.* 51). Given the context, it is very possible that οὐσιωδῶς may just be a reference to a “real” divinity.

<sup>121</sup> E.g. in Christ the fullness of divinity dwells bodily (*Jo.* 1.60), that in his nature divinity is his beginning (*Jo.* 1.107) or that his divinity leads to the Father (*Jo.* 1.189), power of divinity came to dwell among men through Christ (*Cels.* 4.5).

<sup>122</sup> It is therefore simplistic to state, like Crouzel, *Origen*, 181, that Son and Spirit “possess [deity] as their own and perfectly, without possibility of increase or decrease.”

<sup>123</sup> See *Cels.* 4.28, 4.37. Also note descriptions of the Spirit as unchangeable (*princ.* 1.3.4) or the long list in *hom.in.Ex* 6.5: immutable, invisible, incorruptible, without beginning or end, creator (SC 321:184; Heine, 71:291). This statement, however, should be viewed with some suspicion.

οὐσιωδῶς, if this simply means immutably. But if by οὐσιωδῶς Origen means innately or by virtue of his essence or being, it is more difficult to affirm, especially given *Jo.* 2.76. What we know for certain is that οὐσιωδῶς is not a term favored by Origen in his Greek writings and is never used in a Trinitarian sense.<sup>124</sup>

One thing we do know is that Origen does not say the opposite – that the Holy Spirit possesses anything *by accident*.<sup>125</sup> Though the Spirit appears to be immutable in his nature, he possesses what he has through the mediation of the Son. Therefore, his goodness and divinity are not comparable to the Father's; his rationality and righteousness and sanctification are not comparable to the Son's. There is no equality in the possession of these attributes. In Origen's Latin translations, however, Rufinus clearly takes liberties with this language. For example, in *princ.* 1.6.2, he says,

For in this Trinity alone, which is the author of all things, does goodness exist essentially (*substantialiter*); others possess it as an accident (*accidentem*) and something that can be lost; and only then are they in blessedness, when they participate in holiness and wisdom and in divinity itself.<sup>126</sup>

The assumption in this statement is a shared Trinitarian or divine nature, in which all three members possess their attributes equally and perfectly. It should also be noted that the Latin *substantialiter* and *naturaliter*, only ever occur together in a Trinitarian sense in *On First Principles*.<sup>127</sup> This statement directly contradicts the fragments from Justinian and

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<sup>124</sup> Apart from *dial.* 5.9, Origen uses it twice of the Son (*or.* 27.12, *Jo.* 6.188) to argue for the Son's real existence.

<sup>125</sup> Berchman, *Platonism*, 152, notes that though the Son and Spirit are "logically generated", they are "accidental", though he says Origen does not use this term for *hypostasis*. Berchman also notes that Origen "does not use the term 'symbebekos-accidens' to define these theologicals because the nature of their generation is different from the other created intelligibles and sensibles. They are created logically, and not temporally, from the mind of the Father."

<sup>126</sup> Behr, 1:107. See also *princ.* 1.4.3, 1.5.5, 1.8.3.

<sup>127</sup> E.g. *princ.* 1.2.4, 1.5.5, 1.8.3. They are used most often to contrast divinity with creation's accidental goodness or mutability.

Jerome which say that the Father alone is goodness itself (αὐτοαγαθόν) while the Son is not.<sup>128</sup> As we have seen, Justinian and Jerome's fragments are closer in representing Origen's views in that they speak of the Son's goodness as derived from the Father. Therefore, while we can affirm that Origen believed that the Son and Spirit possessed their attributes immutably and eternally, being nothing "by accident", it is unlikely that Origen would have affirmed a statement like this. We should also take into consideration the idea that the Father is beyond *ousia*; in his essence and nature he is incomparable with any other being.<sup>129</sup> To speak in such a way is to compromise the transcendence of the Father. The language used here is thus more Trinitarian than Origen actually is; Rufinus seems to be using an argument from silence to amplify Trinitarian unity and the distinction of the Son and Spirit's ontological statuses from creation.<sup>130</sup>

If Rufinus' statements about shared Trinitarian attributes are in doubt, we must also consider the other "essential" statements in *On First Principles* about the Spirit's innate holiness. Two such statements, in *princ.* 1.5.5 and 1.8.3, read:

...to be blameless (*immaculatum*) exists essentially (*substantialiter*) in none except the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, but holiness (*sanctitas*) is an accidental quality in every created being...<sup>131</sup>

Similarly, also, the nature (*natura*) of the Holy Spirit, being holy (*sancta*), does not admit of pollution, for it is naturally (*naturaliter*) or substantially (*substantialiter*) holy. If any other nature is holy, it is so sanctified (*sanctificetur*) by the reception or the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, not having this by nature (*non ex sua natura*), but as an accidental (*accidens*)

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<sup>128</sup> Justinian, *Ep. ad Mennam* (Koetschau fr. 6; Behr, 2:597.4); Jerome, *Ep. ad Avitum* 2.

<sup>129</sup> E.g. *Cels.* 6.64, 7.38 – in Ch. 1.

<sup>130</sup> E.g. in *princ.* 1.3.3, 1.5.5.

<sup>131</sup> *princ.* 1.5.5; Behr, 1:103.



addition to it, for which reason, as an accidental addition, it may also be lost.<sup>132</sup>

These statements suggest that the Holy Spirit must possess innate holiness to sanctify all that is not holy by nature. While it is clear from Origen's Greek writings that holiness is not an accidental attribute for the Spirit or that the Spirit ever needed to be sanctified in time, these statements assume things about the Holy Spirit's nature that are a step beyond what Origen actually affirms. In addition, as will be argued in Chapter 5, the portrayal of sanctification in these passages as an abstract distribution of the attribute of holiness is inconsistent with how Origen speaks of the work of sanctification throughout his writings, both in Greek and in Latin. Instead, Origen uses the verb *hagiazō* as a confirmation or consecration of those who are already living holy lives for God; it is an assistance and an indication of status more than a bestowal of an abstract quality.<sup>133</sup> These passages thus reveal Rufinus' attempts to import a fourth-century understanding of the Holy Spirit's work into Origen's system.<sup>134</sup> For Rufinus, given that Origen describes the scope of the

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<sup>132</sup> *princ.* 1.8.3; Behr, 1:137. See also *princ.* 1.3.8: "there is at present the grace of the Holy Spirit, that those who are not essentially holy may be made holy by participating in it" (Behr, 1:81).

<sup>133</sup> This understanding of sanctification, as we will see, is a fourth century development that occurs because of a need to include the Holy Spirit in the work of creation. The important players in this are Basil of Caesarea and Psalm 33.6 (32 LXX).

<sup>134</sup> One scholar who has attempted to defend the validity of the statements above and the Holy Spirit's sanctifying work is Henning Ziebritzki (*Heiliger Geist*, 214-20), following the lead of Manlio Simonetti ('Sull' interpretazione di un passo del De Principiis'). Though affirming a graded-hierarchy in Origen's understanding of Trinity, Ziebritzki argues that the suspicious statements in *princ.* 1.3.7 can be reconciled with Origen's actual theology without attributing this to Rufinus. For Ziebritzki, the perfectly unified Trinitarian work in the act of sanctification demonstrates that there is no greater or less within the work of the Trinity as demonstrated in this passage. The restriction of the Spirit's work to sanctifying the saints simply demonstrates that there is no difference between *operatio specialis* and *operatio praecipua* as there is for Father and Son. Christoph Bruns (*Trinität*, 144-153) has challenged this argument, noting that the distinction of roles in the giving of gifts (*princ.* 1.3.7) contradicts this very point and that Ziebritzki's distinction between the Father and Son's different modes of work (i.e. *operatio specialis* and *operatio praecipua*) are contradicted by the idea that the Spirit himself is the "hypostasis of grace" who is mediated by the Son and worked by the Father. Bruns concludes that the "greater or less" statements should be viewed as Rufinus' interpolation.

Spirit's work as being in the saints in *princ.* 1.3.6 and 1.3.7, it is only logical that the Spirit would play the role of the "principle of holiness" in a way that parallels the Father and the Son's primary roles as the principles of being and rationality and fitting to his role of sanctification.<sup>135</sup> It is notable, however, that how Origen actually tends to speak of sanctification, as a confirmation and assistance, is actually preserved in the discussion that follows this in the text of *princ.* 1.3.7-8. Therefore, statements confirming the Spirit's innate holiness, like *hom.in.Num* 11.8.1, must be questioned:

I think that the Holy Spirit is so holy that he has not been sanctified; for to him no sanctification has come in addition and from elsewhere, which was not there previously. On the contrary, he was always holy, his sanctity did not have a beginning... But every creature will be called "holy sanctified things" either by the privilege of the Holy Spirit or by reason of its merits.<sup>136</sup>

While this statement could reflect Origen's actual views, it still contains hints of Rufinus' preferred language and concerns. But given its treatment of sanctification in the last sentence and the absence of *substantialiter* language, this statement appears to be less freely translated than those in *princ.* above.

When we strip away the pneumatological statements that are likely the work of Rufinus, we are left with a Holy Spirit less defined than many would like. Origen's treatment of the Spirit's identity leaves many questions open ended and unresolved. In attempting to reconstruct Origen's pneumatology, we must recognize Origen's belief that the Holy Spirit is a lesser being than Father and Son, both in ontological status and ability. But we must

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<sup>135</sup> Thus, logically, if the Spirit works within the saints and other rational beings, it would make sense for the Spirit to sanctify creation. This is at odds, however, with several points in Origen's theology: (1) Origen is notorious for not giving the Spirit a place in the work of creation, which is suggested in Ps 33.6, (2) the Spirit is said only to work in those who are pure or holy, which contradicts the work of giving purity or holiness, (3) given how Origen understands the problem of evil and emphasizes human free will (e.g. *princ.* 2.9, 3.1) and the individual's role in self-sanctification, it minimizes the human effort so important to Origen.

<sup>136</sup> SC 442:58; Scheck, 60.

also recognize that Origen affirmed the Spirit's divinity as well as his unity with the Son and Father. Origen's pneumatology, therefore, is a theology in tension; he himself recognizes this tension, choosing in places not to go any further in trying to explain what the Spirit is. But where Origen is clear, the most positive and noteworthy parts of both his pneumatology and Trinitarian theology, are in the places where he speaks about what the Spirit does in the context of a unified, Trinitarian work. It is this aspect of his Trinitarian theology, the inseparable work of the divine persons in the enacting of salvation, that has the greatest influence on later writers, and which we will be the subject of the rest of this study.

## **The Holy Spirit and Trinity in Origen's Theology**

In this section we will examine how Origen speaks about the Trinity, which I have noted is predominantly in the context of a shared divine work. This will show that while Origen's articulation of who or what the Holy Spirit is is not entirely clear, what the Spirit does for him is certain. Though he conceives of Father, Son, and Spirit as individual subsistences on different ontological levels, they are unified by a common divine work. But before we address this, we must reconsider what Origen does not do when speaking about Trinity and Trinitarian unity.<sup>137</sup> First, as we have seen, Origen does not conceive of an equality of status amongst divine Trinitarian persons. While a degree of ontological unity exists in the dependence of the lower principle on the higher, Origen does not use these relationships as a primary basis for Trinitarian unity. Second, Origen does not ground his understanding of Trinitarian unity in the language of "divine substance" or even "divine nature" in his

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<sup>137</sup> It may not be technically correct to speak of Origen's theology as "Trinitarian" in the way that scholars understand the term. Because of the metaphysical nuances that this term carries and Origen's less-loaded use of the term *trias*, it might actually be more accurate to speak of his theology as being "triadic" rather than "Trinitarian".

Greek writings.<sup>138</sup> In the one instance where Origen speaks of the “divinity (θεϊότητι) of the power of the invocation of the venerable Trinity (τῆς προσκυνητῆς τριάδος)” (Jo. 6.166), it is in the context of baptism and the giving of the divine gifts.<sup>139</sup> While the Son and Spirit are clearly divine beings, this statement is an exception and not the rule; Origen generally does not speak of a shared divinity or divine nature.<sup>140</sup> With the Son, Origen occasionally speaks of the divinity of Christ (cf. Col 1.19, 2.9), but this is often in reference to the indwelling of the divine Son in the incarnation.<sup>141</sup> In several places, Origen’s insistence on Christ’s true divinity comes in the context of Monarchian opposition (e.g. *dial.* 5.9).<sup>142</sup> But this does not mean that Origen believes that the Son and Father share equally in divinity. Although the Son is the “minister of deity to all the other gods” (Jo. 2.19), Origen speaks often of the Son’s inferior divinity compared to the Father’s.<sup>143</sup> This is because the Father alone is αὐτόθεος (Jo. 2.17), the source of divinity for all else (Jo. 2.20).<sup>144</sup> Even the Son has “drawn divinity into himself (σπάσας τῆς θεότητος εἰς ἑαυτόν)”, testimony of Origen’s belief that the Son’s divinity comes through his participation (μετοχῇ) in the Father, who is “very God” (τὸ αὐτόθεος) (Jo. 2.17).<sup>145</sup> But there are further issues. Through the Son, the

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<sup>138</sup> As we have seen in Chapter 1, a shared substance is unfitting language as it suggests materiality.

<sup>139</sup> SC 157:254-256; Heine, 80:216. Origen tends to use divine adjectivally much more often than he speaks of an abstract nominal divinity.

<sup>140</sup> For example, he frequently refers to the Holy Spirit as the “divine Spirit”, especially in *Cels.* (e.g. Jo. 2.6, 13.141; *com.in.Rom* 2.3.2; *hom.in.Ez* 2.2.2; *hom.in.Num* 6.3.2; *com.in.Mt* 10.22; *Cant.* 1.4; *Cels.* 1.19, etc.), or even speaks of the “divine power” of the Holy Spirit (*princ.* 4.3.15), or calls the Spirit “a divine and exalted nature” (*hom.in.Lc* 25.5; SC 87:333; Lienhard, 94:107), but nowhere does he discuss the Spirit’s divinity. There is evidence, however, comparing *princ.* to the *Philocalia* text, of Rufinus replacing “divine power” with “Holy Spirit” (*princ.* 4.3.4), “spirit” with Holy Spirit” (*princ.* 4.2.9), or even inserting “Holy Spirit” where it is not attested in the Greek (*princ.* 4.2.1, 4.2.8).

<sup>141</sup> E.g. Jo. 1.60, 1.107; *Cels.* 4.5, 4.15; *com.in.Rom* 3.8.4.

<sup>142</sup> The issue in Jo. 2.16, which has been discussed in Chapter 1, is that Monarchians either deny the Son’s divinity or subsume his existence into the Father’s. See Waers, ‘Monarchian’, 283-85. This is not an issue with the Spirit.

<sup>143</sup> SC 120:218-220; Heine, 80:99. E.g. Jo. 13.152, 13.234

<sup>144</sup> SC 120:216; Heine, 80:100.

<sup>145</sup> SC 120:216; Heine, 80:99.

saints also can participate in divinity: “it was by his ministry that they became gods, for he drew from God that they might be deified (θεοποιηθῆναι), sharing ungrudgingly also with them according to his goodness” (Jo. 2.17).<sup>146</sup> The saints come to possess divinity through the Son, led by the incarnation to his divine form (Cels. 4.15); through the “divinity of the Son... [they are] led also to the blessedness of the Father” (Jo. 1.189).<sup>147</sup> Because the saints also can share in this divinity through participation, divinity cannot be used by Origen as a basis for divine unity, as is the case with invisibility, immateriality, spirituality, etc.<sup>148</sup> But there is a further issue: Heracleon’s use of *homoousios* to speak of a shared *ousia* between spiritual people and God would likely also have been in the back of Origen’s mind.<sup>149</sup> Given this point and Origen’s emphasis on God’s transcendence, it is only natural that Origen consistently spoke of divinity in degrees and derivation.<sup>150</sup> Therefore, while the Son possesses true divinity in a degree and manner greater than creation (and we can include the Spirit also), and though Father/Son/Spirit are all clearly divine persons whose divinity separates them from creation, Origen chooses not to speak of a shared “divine nature”.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> SC 120:216; Heine, 80:99.

<sup>147</sup> Cels. 4.15 (SC 136:220; Chadwick, 194); Jo. 1.189 (SC 120:154; Heine, 80:72). See also *com.in.Eph* 1.22b-23 (Heine, 116): “the whole Church of Christ is the body of Christ which is animated by his divinity and filled with his Spirit.”

<sup>148</sup> Note Jo. 32.338: “the mind that has been purified and has ascended above all material things, that it may scrupulously contemplate God, is made divine (θεοποιεῖται) by what it contemplates” (SC 385:332; Heine, 89:406).

<sup>149</sup> Jo. 13.148-50. See Ch. 1, p.47.

<sup>150</sup> See Jo. 13.150: “Now they do not see that everything [which is of the same substance is] also capable of the same things. And if the spiritual nature (ἡ πνευματικὴ φύσις), which is of the same substance (ὁμοούσιος) [with the divine nature] was capable of committing fornication, it is dangerous even to imagine [how many] unholy, godless, and impious things follow for the doctrine of God so far as they are concerned” (SC 222:112; Heine, 89:99). The bracketed portions are lacunae in the text which have been inserted by Preuschen. Origen affirms human possession of a spiritual nature, which explains his avoidance in applying this language to God.

<sup>151</sup> The tendency for many scholars is to force onto Origen metaphysical terms and concepts that are familiar to him. Even participation is not offered as grounds for unity between divine persons. References to shared traits like shared intellectual light (*princ.* 4.4.9), that “the Father is light and in his light, which is the Son, we see the light of the Holy Spirit” (*com.in.Rom* 5.8.9: SC 539:474; Scheck, 103:357), is in reference to shared illuminating work. Therefore, even those like

Instead, as we have seen in Chapter 1, the Son is united to the Father by will, “as an act of will proceeding from the intellect.”<sup>152</sup> While Origen does not expand at length on the Spirit’s relationship to the Son or Father in the same way, there are passages that suggest something similar. For example, in *hom.in.Num* 18.2.2, Origen says that the Son and Spirit “know the mind of the Lord... and participate in his counsel and will.”<sup>153</sup> In *Jo.* 13.321, Origen “takes the Holy Spirit into consideration” when examining the Son’s full comprehension of the will of God, or as Origen summarizes: “there is one goal from one God through one Jesus Christ stored up for both in one Holy Spirit.”<sup>154</sup> Additionally, in *Jo.* 2.87-88, following his treatment of the Spirit’s nature, Origen cites a passage from the *Gospel According to the Hebrews* to call the Holy Spirit the “mother of Christ”.<sup>155</sup> Origen’s interpretation of this obscure reference is that the Holy Spirit is the mother of Christ “because she does the will of the Father in heaven”, like others who do the will of the Father can be called brothers and sisters (cf. Mt 12.50).<sup>156</sup> Therefore, what unites the Trinitarian persons in Origen’s mind, even more than a divine nature, is a shared divine will and work. Origen is consistent in articulating a unified Trinitarian work of salvation, in which all three members play

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Lyman (*Christology*, 51), who acknowledge Origen’s separation of divine persons *kat’ousian* yet affirm a single divinity or *ousia* or nature in the Trinity are incorrect. More recently, Bruns, *Trinität*, esp. 154-57, has come closer in his recognition of the ontological issues in Origen’s Trinitarianism, his Monarchian context, and his general avoidance of essence/substance language, but falls prey to the same issue: an insistence on essential or substantial unity looking forward to the fourth century. Moser, *Teacher*, 131, argues that “divinity is Spirit” for Origen, on the basis of Jn 4.24, but Origen does actually say this, nor does he appeal to spirituality as Trinitarian unity.

<sup>152</sup> *princ.* 1.2.6 (Behr, 1:49), also 4.4.1; *Cels.* 8.12.

<sup>153</sup> SC 442:318; Scheck, 111.

<sup>154</sup> SC 222:210; Heine, 89:137.

<sup>155</sup> SC 120:262; Heine, 80:116-117. See István Pásztori-Kupán, “The Holy Spirit as the Mother of the Son? Origen’s Interpretation of a Surviving Fragment from *The Gospel according to the Hebrews*”, in *Origeniana Nona* (Leuven: Peeters, 2009), 285-291. Bruns, *Trinität*, 155-56, incorrectly interprets this as affirming the consubstantiality of the divine nature. cf. *hom.in.Jer* 15.4.2.

<sup>156</sup> He notes that these expressions can also be applied to divine beings. Given his sensitivity to hierarchy, it can be assumed that the Spirit is the “Mother” to the incarnate Christ, which still testifies, to a degree, of the Spirit’s superiority to humans.

unique and complementary functions, as we will see below and in the next chapter.<sup>157</sup> While a unity based on will faces the same issues as a divinity of participation, Origen chooses to lean on the noetic and spiritual action of the divine persons, showing his discomfort in speaking of unity in essential or generally metaphysical terms, or in language or metaphors that can be interpreted materially.<sup>158</sup> But his greater emphasis is on the divine and spiritual goal to which all three persons lead the saints. In considering how Origen thinks about the divine persons, we must continually keep in mind the outside factors influencing his thought, whether Platonic structures of hierarchy or even the negative influence of groups like Gnostics and Monarchians.<sup>159</sup> Origen would have rejected many assumptions modern scholars bring into their readings of him on the basis of one or more of these issues.

When Origen speaks of Trinity, he begins with existence as a tiered hierarchy in which the Father is the source and origin of all things.<sup>160</sup> Within the divine hierarchy, the Father is greater than the Son, who is greater than the Spirit, who in turn is above all of creation.

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<sup>157</sup> Georg Kretschmar, *Studien zur frühchristlichen Trinitätstheologie* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1956), 7-8, has argued for the Trinitarian structure of Origen's soteriology and cosmology.

<sup>158</sup> In his interpretation of related scriptural passages, it is clear that Origen consistently tries to avoid this conclusion.

<sup>159</sup> Origen cannot help but be influenced by divine models, particularly in his contemporary Middle Platonism, which are innately dynamic in character. Lyman, *Christology*, 51, notes, "will is not accidental or exclusive of substance, but is part of the entity constituting the category of person in Origen". Lyman also provides a summary of scholarship: Rius-Camps thinks Origen uses a Stoic sense of *pneuma*, as God permeating all, while Simonetti defines Trinity as "a triad of individuals with shared power". Scholarship, including Simonetti, Holtz, Berchman, recognizes the dynamic character of Origen's ontology, which "consciously fuses essence and activity... to define and link God and creation as well as Father, Son, and Spirit."

<sup>160</sup> Lyman, *Christology*, 37, notes: "Contra Dorrie and Barnard, a notion of hierarchical divinity was not foreign to early Christians and was not necessarily incorporated into early theology as a Platonic assumption; it in fact served soteriological purposes and reflected some problems of scriptural exegesis."

This tiered order is most obvious in the Trinitarian image that Origen envisions (via Rufinus) in *princ.* 1.3.5:

I am of the opinion, then, that the working of the Father and of the Son takes place in both saints and sinners, in rational human beings and in dumb animals, and even in things which are without life, and in absolutely everything that exists; but that the working of the Holy Spirit does not at all extend into those things which are without life, or into those which though living yet are dumb; nor is it even found in those who, though rational, still lie in wickedness, not having converted to better things.<sup>161</sup>

This statement confirms the wider scope of the work of the Father and the Son, but the limitation of the Spirit's work to saints, those who "are engaged in good actions and abide in God" (*princ.* 1.3.5).<sup>162</sup> This statement can be supplemented by Justinian, *Ep. ad Mennam*, who says of Origen,

The God and Father, who holds the universe together, is superior to every being that exists, for he imparts to each one from his own existence that which each one is; the Son, being less than the Father, is superior to rational creatures alone (for he is second to the Father); the Holy Spirit is still less, and dwells in the saints alone. So that in this way the power of the Father is greater than that of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and that of the Son is more than that of the Holy Spirit, and in turn the power of the Holy Spirit exceeds that of every other holy being.<sup>163</sup>

The Father's domain is all things, the Son's the rational, the Spirit's the saints. Each Trinitarian member occupies a different step on the divine hierarchy, ministering downwards to those below as befitting his particular place. The Father ministers to the existence of the Son and lesser beings, the Son ministers to the Spirit and lesser beings,

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<sup>161</sup> Behr, 1:75.

<sup>162</sup> Behr, 1:75

<sup>163</sup> Koetschau *fr.* 9; Behr, 2:598.6. Justinian's statements are echoed in the earlier statements we find in Jerome (*Ep. ad Avitum* 2), both of which Koetschau places in *princ.* 1.3.5. *princ.* 1.3.5 carries similar ideas, but with softened language, as well as removing language which suggests superiority.



the Spirit to the holy rational beings.<sup>164</sup> The Spirit's particular sphere of influence is amongst the saints, humans who are holy and pure, seeking God. Though the work is united, the economy is still hierarchical; even when Origen places Son and Spirit on equal footing in the work of revelation, the Father is still above both. Simply put, Origen is not preoccupied with Trinity for the sake of Trinity in the way that later writers are or in the way Rufinus portrays him in *On First Principles*. Although some scholars have emphasized the importance of the Trinitarian structure of the first three chapters of *On First Principles*, which is a significant point, we must remember that Origen immediately follows his section on the Holy Spirit with rational beings in 1.4.<sup>165</sup>

### Binitarianism or Trinitarianism?

Given the status of the Spirit, how valid is the criticism that Origen's theology is binitarian?<sup>166</sup> Are statements like *Cels.* 7.70, where Origen notes that "Christians [should] avoid worshipping anything other than the supreme God and His Logos, the firstborn of all creation,"<sup>167</sup> or language suggestive of "two gods" (e.g. *Cels.* 8.12, *dial.* 2.26) indicative of a fundamentally binitarian rather than Trinitarian orientation?<sup>168</sup> Recent scholarship has pointed out that early Christian theology that can truly be characterized as binitarian

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<sup>164</sup> E.g. *hom.in.Lc* 23.7, *com.in.Rom* 7.1.2. Also "discernment of spirits" (1 Cor 12.10) in *hom.in.Num* 27.11.2, *hom.in.Ex* 3.2. Origen only a few times mentions the Spirit's work with reference to spiritual/angelic beings.

<sup>165</sup> E.g. Charles Kannengiesser, 'Divine Trinity', 231-249. For a discussion of the structure of *princ.*, see Behr, 1:xxviii-lvi. Note also other places where Origen mentions angels after Trinitarian persons, e.g. *com.in.Rom* 1.18.10, *hom.in.Lc* 3.1. See Danielou, *Origen*, 252.

<sup>166</sup> E.g. from Hauschild and Studer (see McDonnell, 'Spirit', 9).

<sup>167</sup> SC 150:176; Chadwick, 453. Origen's understanding of worship of God is seen in *Cels.* 8.4: "The man who has ascended to the supreme God is he who, without any divided loyalty whatever, worships Him through His Son, the divine Logos and Wisdom seen in Jesus, who alone leads to Him those who by all means try to draw near to God..." (SC 150:186; Chadwick, 456). Also *Cels.* 8.6, *or.* 33.6. Statements where Trinity is worshiped are only in Latin (e.g. *com.in.Rom* 1.16.5, 1.18.10).

<sup>168</sup> Or *Cels.* 8.13; *Jo.* 1.35, 13.151.

contains particular characteristic features.<sup>169</sup> Binitarianism prior to Origen is characterized by the lack of distinction between Logos and Spirit, i.e. a “spirit Christology”.<sup>170</sup> In these theologies, it is not that the Spirit is necessarily subordinated or even diminished, but that there is no clear sense of the personhood of the Spirit; the Spirit and his work are subsumed into the Son. Origen does not fit the criteria for this definition of binitarianism. Though Origen places greater emphasis on the person of the Son, often at the expense of the Spirit, it is difficult to lump him in with earlier writers who focus even less attention on pneumatology.<sup>171</sup> In this regard, we should view Origen’s pneumatology as being a development of his received tradition.<sup>172</sup>

So is Origen’s theology fundamentally binitarian? If we hold to Bucur’s definition, then he is clearly not. But if we are using binitarian to refer to a theology which is not Trinitarian by later metaphysical and ontological terms and standards, that Trinity permeates the entirety of his theological vision, then he may be. Origen simply has more interest in the

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<sup>169</sup> Bogdan Bucur, *Angelomorphic*, xxviii, notes that early Christian binitarianism is often the result of unclear distinction between Logos and Spirit and that binitarianism and “spirit Christology” are two aspects of the same phenomenon (e.g. Kretschmar, Barbel). Bucur also notes that original binitarianism (e.g. Loofs) confused Christ and Spirit (*Geistchristologie*) and sought to explain the Platonic influence (16<sup>th</sup> CE+ Unitarians) for the “new history of religions school” (see Bucur, “Early Christian Binitarianism”: From Religious Phenomenon to Polemical Insult to Scholarly Concept’, *Modern Theology* 27.1 (January 2011), 104).

<sup>170</sup> Bucur, *Angelomorphic*, xxviii. Also relevant articles by Anthony Briggman: ‘Measuring Justin’s Approach to the Spirit: Trinitarian Conviction and Binitarian Orientation’, *VC* 63.2 (2009), 107–37; ‘Re-Evaluating Angelomorphism in Irenaeus: The Case of Proof of the Apostolic Preaching 10’, *JTS* 61.2 (2010); ‘Spirit-Christology in Irenaeus: A Closer Look’, *VC* 66.1 (2012), 1–19.

<sup>171</sup> However, there are places in which the Son and Spirit’s roles overlap in Origen’s writings, e.g. in sanctification, revelation, vivification. Christoph Marksches, ‘Der Heilige Geist im Johanneskommentar des Origenes: Einige vorläufige Bemerkungen’, in *Origenes und sein Erbe: Gesammelte Studien* (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 2007), 107–26, has argued convincingly against the binitarian characterization of Origen by scholars like Hauschild.

<sup>172</sup> Though it is notable that Origen does not build on the Spirit’s role in creation, which is present in Theophilus of Antioch, Irenaeus. This only becomes standard in the fourth century, when writers like Basil realize the need for united Trinitarian operation in all divine work, resulting in the greater emphasis on the Spirit’s participation in creation, drawing mostly from Ps 33.

person of the Son and has more to work with.<sup>173</sup> But we should also take into consideration Simonetti's "triangular scheme" – that in a number of instances, Origen intentionally places the Spirit next to the Son in their shared work in revealing the Father.<sup>174</sup> Therefore, Origen is neither "binitarian" by this definition, nor is he properly "Trinitarian". But as has been mentioned, one of the major goals of this study is not to evaluate Origen by such standards. Instead, in studying Origen, the goal should be to better understand in what ways he speaks of Trinity, that is, what type of Trinitarianism or even triadic theology he actually possesses.

### The Holy Spirit as Principle of Perfection

Within Origen's Trinitarian economic framework, the Spirit's particular role is to initiate the inner work of salvation and to lead believers into the divine life. The Spirit's work is thus necessary in this Trinitarian economy, as Origen demonstrates in *princ.* 1.3.5:

Nevertheless, it seems proper to inquire what is the reason why he who is born again by God unto salvation has need of both the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and will not obtain salvation apart from the entire Trinity, and why it is impossible to become a partaker of the Father or the Son without the Holy Spirit. In discussing these things it will undoubtedly be necessary to describe the working particular to the Holy Spirit, and that which is particular to the Father and the Son.<sup>175</sup>

The main difference between the work of the Father/Son and that of the Spirit is that the Spirit's influence does not include the non-living and non-intelligent, "nor is it even found in those who, though rational, still lie in wickedness [1 Jn 5.19], not having converted to better things" (*princ.* 1.3.5).<sup>176</sup> Instead, the Spirit's work is in those who "already turn to

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<sup>173</sup> Kritikos, 'Platonism', 411-417, notes that the Spirit plays almost a purely soteriological role in Origen's system; the cosmological function is assigned to the Son.

<sup>174</sup> See p. 125. In this scheme, however, the Father is clearly higher than both Son and Spirit.

<sup>175</sup> Behr, 1:73-75.

<sup>176</sup> Behr, 1:75.

better things and walk in the ways of Jesus Christ... those who are engaged in good actions and abide in God" (*princ.* 1.3.5).<sup>177</sup> The *telos* of Origen's theological system is similar to that of Platonism: the noetic and rational, the knowledge of God. But Origen's worldview is inherently biblical and contains an additional factor that hinders the attainment of the knowledge of God: sin.<sup>178</sup> In *princ.* 1.3.6-7, following comments on the Father and Son and participation in the Word, Origen cites Jn 15.22 to show that rational humans are aware of good and evil and are responsible for sin.<sup>179</sup> The Spirit works to lead worthy believers from flesh into life.<sup>180</sup> While all humans possess a rational capacity, only Christians can fully exercise that rational capacity by overcoming these obstacles.<sup>181</sup> Therefore, in the way that the Logos serves as the principle of rationality (e.g. *Jo.* 2.20), through which one can come to know the invisible Father,<sup>182</sup> the Holy Spirit can be understood in Origen's system as the principle of perfection, through whom sin can be overcome and the Logos can be properly known.<sup>183</sup> As Origen states in *or.* 2.6: "the discussion of prayer is so great a task that it requires the Father to reveal it, His Firstborn Word to teach it, and the Spirit to enable

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<sup>177</sup> Behr, 1:75.

<sup>178</sup> Karen Jo Torjesen, *Hermeneutical Procedure and Theological Method in Origen's Exegesis* (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1985), 77, defines sin for Origen as "the specific form of the distance between perfection and the existing human condition. The primary issue of sin is not that of past sin understood as legal offence requiring forgiveness, but that those forms of existence which destroy the soul's growth toward perfection must be changed."

<sup>179</sup> This rationality is given through the Word. Origen also cites Gen 2.7, but gives two options for its interpretation: (1) it refers generally to all human beings and their participation in God, or (2) it refers to the Spirit of God and thus is not given to all but only to the holy.

<sup>180</sup> Tite, 'Holy Spirit', 152-54, notes materiality and bodily have parallels to *Auth. Teach.* 28.6-9, and the Spirit's role in upward progress has similarities in Jewish teaching.

<sup>181</sup> Origen's theological system seems to hold to two levels of rationality: a basic one possessed by all rational beings, and a higher one, only available by those who are pure and confirmed by the Spirit.

<sup>182</sup> In the way that the Father is the source of good (*princ.* 1.8.3) and divinity (*Jo.* 2.20)

<sup>183</sup> Borrowing from Kannengieser ('Trinity', 246) who has noted that the Spirit functions as a "principle of salvation" for Origen (see esp. *Cels.* 6.79). Torjesen, *Exegesis*, 72, citing Volker (*Vollkommenheitsideal*, 1931), has noted three stages in the Christian's progress toward God which relate to the Trinitarian persons: purification, knowledge, and perfection. While the Holy Spirit is no doubt significant, the overall work of salvation is accomplished by the three Trinitarian persons, the Spirit's role being as the helper or perfecter of that initial work.

(ἐνεργοῦντος) us to think and speak rightly of so great a subject.”<sup>184</sup> In this sense, the Spirit functions as a sort of pre-epistemological principle, that which allows the saints to utilize the fullness of their rational capacity.<sup>185</sup>

This pneumatological role is particularly apparent in the later parts of *princ.* 1.3. Origen discusses biblical passages that deal with sin and the flesh in *princ.* 1.3.7.<sup>186</sup> He mentions that the withdrawal of the Spirit from the unworthy (i.e. sinners) leads to death (Ps 103.29-30) and discusses the Spirit’s renewing work (Col 3.9; Rom 6.4).<sup>187</sup> This is to show that the Holy Spirit “will not dwell in all, nor in those who are flesh, but in those whose earth has been renewed.”<sup>188</sup> This is also demonstrated in the New Testament in the Spirit’s coming on believers after baptism (Acts 8.18) and the resurrection of Christ (Jn 20.22) to the apostles. Those who walk in the newness of life (Rom 6.4) can receive “the newness of the grace of the Holy Spirit” (*princ.* 1.3.7). Origen follows this with a reiteration of the Spirit’s work only in the saints (citing 1 Cor 12.3, Acts 1.8).<sup>189</sup>

The Holy Spirit’s role, therefore, is that through his grace, those who are not “essentially holy” can become holy by participating in the Spirit’s holiness, and having,

... firstly, from the God and Father, that they should be; secondly, from the Word, that they should be rational beings; thirdly, from the Holy Spirit, that they should be holy – they become capable of Christ anew, in respect of his being the Righteousness of God... and those who have been deemed worthy

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<sup>184</sup> GCS 3:303; Greer, 86.

<sup>185</sup> The Spirit’s role as revealer will be treated in Ch. 5. Also see *or.* 28.8: “But consider the person inspired by Jesus as the apostles were and who can be known by his fruits (cf. Mt 7.16, 20; Lk 6.44) as someone who has received the Holy Spirit and become spiritual by being led by the Spirit as a son of God to do everything by reason (cf. 1 Cor 2.14-15; Rom 8.14; Gal 5.18)” (GCS 3:380; Greer, 150). Crouzel, *Origen*, 200, calls the Spirit the “spiritual ‘milieu’ in which knowledge is produced.”

<sup>186</sup> Citing Gen 6.12, 6.3.

<sup>187</sup> Behr, 1:77.

<sup>188</sup> *princ.* 1.3.7; Behr, 1:77.

<sup>189</sup> Behr, 1:79. Origen follows this by mentioning the blasphemy of the Spirit. The last half of *princ.* 1.3.7 contains some of the more obviously doctored Rufinus statements, e.g. the denial of greater or less or separation in the Trinity.

to progress to this level by the sanctification of the Holy Spirit will attain, no less, to the gift of wisdom according to the power and working of the Spirit of God.<sup>190</sup>

The Spirit's work leads to the renewal and restoration of true life and true rationality, providing the requisite holiness to know more fully and deeply the knowledge of God. The Spirit represents the moral and ethical side of divine knowledge; through the help of the Spirit one can attain the vision of the Son. In line with Plato's understanding of "like by like", one must become pure in order to see what is pure.<sup>191</sup> This takes place as the Spirit leads and sanctifies believers, guiding them into various "stages of progress" by which believers can reach the "highest and perfect stage" (*princ.* 1.3.8).<sup>192</sup> It is this overall work of salvation which Origen describes as "declarations regarding the unity of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (*princ.* 1.3.8).<sup>193</sup> For Origen, the Spirit is the beginning of the Christian life, the means through which participation in God is initiated for believers.<sup>194</sup> As Origen notes in *Jo.* 13.321, "there is one goal from one God through one Jesus Christ stored up for both in one Holy Spirit".<sup>195</sup> This journey begins with the work of the Spirit, the lowest rung on the ladder of progress in the knowledge of God.

## Trinitarian Statements

We will conclude this section with a brief examination of several Trinitarian statements that display Origen's Trinitarian tendencies. These statements are significant because they all follow the same general pattern of Trinitarian work that we have described thus far, even though two of the statements are in Latin and the others are in Greek. These

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<sup>190</sup> *princ.* 1.3.8 (Behr, 1:81). Gifts and wisdom will be discussed in the next chapter.

<sup>191</sup> See Ch. 1, n.20.

<sup>192</sup> Behr, 1:83.

<sup>193</sup> Behr, 1:83.

<sup>194</sup> *Jo.* 2.77; *Cels.* 5.1, 6.64, 6.79. Balas, 'Participation', 266, notes a difference between natural participation in the Father and Son and supernatural participation, which is in all three persons.

<sup>195</sup> SC 222:210; Heine, 89:137.

statements allow us to fairly examine Trinitarianism at it appears in Origen's actual thought, as well as his understanding of the Spirit's particular role in the Trinity, which will be discussed more fully in the next chapter. The statements are as follows:

...this, which is called the gift of the Spirit, is ministered (*ministratur*) through the Son and worked (*inoperatur*) by the God and Father. *All these are worked by one and the same Spirit, diving to each as he wills* (1 Cor 12.11).<sup>196</sup>

And there is again another grace of the Holy Spirit, which is bestowed (*praestatur*) upon the deserving, through the ministry (*ministrata*) of Christ and the working (*inoperata*) of the Father, in proportion to the merits of those who have become capable of receiving it.<sup>197</sup>

...the Holy Spirit supplies [παρέχειν] the material [ὕλη] of the gifts from God to those who are called saints thanks to him and because of participation [μετοχήν] in him. This material of the gifts... is made effective [ἐνεργουμένης] from God; it is administered [διακονουμένης] by Christ; but it subsists [ὑφεστώσης] in accordance with the Holy Spirit.<sup>198</sup>

...by the grace of God poured forth (ἐκχεομένη)... through that minister (ὑπηρέτου) of unsurpassed grace to us, Jesus Christ, and through that fellow worker (τοῦ συνεργοῦ) with the will of God, the Spirit, these realities have become possible for us.<sup>199</sup>

In each statement, the Father is the source of all things, the one who initiates the divine work. This is seen in the use of the Latin *inopero* and its Greek cognate ἐνεργέω.<sup>200</sup> Similarly, ἐκχέω, in a more metaphorical sense refers to the Father as the source of divine grace, further illustrated in the διὰ clause which includes both the Son and the Spirit. The

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<sup>196</sup> *princ.* 1.3.7; Behr, 1:80-81.

<sup>197</sup> *princ.* 1.3.7; Behr, 1:78-79. *Est alia quoque etiam spiritus sancti gratia, quae dignis praestatur, ministrata quidem per Christum, inoperata autem a patre secundum meritum eorum, qui capaces eius efficiuntur.*

<sup>198</sup> *Jo.* 2.77 (SC 120:236; Heine, 80:114).

<sup>199</sup> *or.* 1.1 (GCS 3:298; Greer, 81). δὲ καὶ ἀμετρήτῳ ἐκχεομένη ἀπὸ θεοῦ εἰς ἀνθρώπους χάριτι θεοῦ διὰ τοῦ τῆς ἀνυπερβλήτου εἰς ἡμᾶς χάριτος ὑπηρέτου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ τοῦ συνεργοῦ πνεύματος βουλήσει θεοῦ δυνατὰ γίνεται.

<sup>200</sup> Though *inopero* does not carry the same divine nuances of ἐνεργέω, it is clearly a translation of it. Crouzel, *Origen*, 184, notes that God is not a “lazy God”, but acts through his Son and Spirit – he is the “center of unity of will which guides the activities of the three Persons.”

Son's role is equally consistent; he is consistently the ministering or mediatory figure who stands between the Father and the created world.<sup>201</sup> This is seen in his repeated use of *ministro* and διακονέω.<sup>202</sup> The use of ὑπηρέτης suggests something similar and may even be hinting at the subordinate status of the Son which we have discussed previously.<sup>203</sup> Whether in the downward action of the Father or the upward leading of men to the Father, the Son serves as mediator between God and creation.<sup>204</sup>

The Spirit's particular role and function, described in a variety of different terms, is also consistent. In every statement, the Spirit plays a distributing function, marked by the use of verbs like *divido*, *praesto*, and παρέχω. The last two in particular even carry the sense of “to furnish” or “to supply”, possibly with a greater end or goal in mind.<sup>205</sup> The major difference in these statements is the object that is given: in two examples it is grace and in two others it is gift. Exactly what Origen is referring to by these terms will be explained in detail in the next chapter. But for now, we can say that these four statements all similarly state that the Holy Spirit is associated with the direct application of blessings from God through his indwelling presence in the believer.<sup>206</sup> In these statements, it is clear that Origen has a firm understanding of what the Spirit does, as well as a defined vision of

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<sup>201</sup> See esp. *princ.* 2.6.1 (1 Tim 2.5) for the Son as mediator. Also see *princ.* 2.2.2, Pref.4. Crouzel, *Origen*, 188: “The mediating role of the Son in his divinity even rebounds in some measure onto his inner being, for if the Father is absolutely One, the Son, One in his hypostasis, is multiple in his titles, his *epinoiai*...”

<sup>202</sup> E.g. the Word is the “minister of deity (διάκονον τῆς θεότητος) to all the other gods” (*Jo.* 2.19: SC 120:218-220; Heine, 80:99); the divine Logos “administers (τοῦ διοικοῦντος) the whole world” (*Cels.* 7.70: SC 150:176; Chadwick, 453), cf. *Cels.* 5.10-31, 8.31. In the incarnation, he unites humans to the divine because “this soul is intermediate (*media*) between God and men” (1 Tim 2.5), referring to the power of his perfected life (*com.in.Rom* 3.8.4, cf. *hom.in.Lev* 9.10). For 1 Tim 2.5, also see *Jo.* 2.209; *com.in.Rom* 8.5; *princ.* 1.2.7, 2.6.1, 2.6.3; *Cant.* 1.3.

<sup>203</sup> The Word assumes a body in order to “minister (ὑπηρετῆσαι) his goodness to men through a body like his” (*Jo.* 2.187: SC 120:334; Heine, 80:145).

<sup>204</sup> For the Son's ministering work, see Ch.2 n.103233, 234.

<sup>205</sup> The Spirit's giving role is implied in the fourth statement.

<sup>206</sup> E.g. in *hom.in.Gen* 2.5, in which immortality is from the Father through the Son and Holy Spirit.



Trinitarian unity. In these statements, we see a consistent Trinitarian order, in which the Father works through the Son who works through the Spirit. In turn, the Spirit supplies the gifts which lead upward to the Son, and ultimately to the Father. It is in the context of the work of salvation, whose goal is creation's return to the Father, that Origen's Trinitarian thought and pneumatology must be understood.

## THE GIFT AND GRACE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Continuing where the last chapter left off, this chapter will elaborate on the Holy Spirit's role in Origen's Trinitarian statements, which affirm both a hierarchy of divine persons and a shared Trinitarian work (e.g. *princ.* 1.3.5).<sup>1</sup> On the basis of these Trinitarian statements, this chapter will argue that the Holy Spirit's role in Origen's Trinitarian economy is to bestow the divine gifts and graces, a work initiated by God and mediated by the Son, a necessary part of Origen's cosmological and soteriological vision. Rather than minimizing the Spirit's role, Origen uses this framework to emphasize the importance of each Trinitarian person in the divine work of salvation. In these Trinitarian statements, we see the downward unified action of God in giving divine assistance necessary for the working of salvation.<sup>2</sup> This downward divine movement is significant because it allows the saints to progress upward; both movements are enacted in the saints by the personal indwelling of the Spirit. So far, scholarship has not focused on the roles and functions which the Holy Spirit plays in Origen's theological system. By examining and determining them, we will not only gain a greater grasp of his pneumatology, but also his Trinitarian theology, soteriology, and overall theological vision. Therefore, this chapter will examine the exact role of the Holy Spirit in Origen's use of "gift" and "grace" language in the context of the downward action of God in Origen's Trinitarian statements.

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<sup>1</sup> *princ.* 1.3.7 (2), *Jo.* 2.77, or. 1.1. Several treatments of Origen's pneumatology rightly identify the soteriological functions of the Spirit in his writings, e.g. Berthold, 'Origen', 447; Tite, 'Holy Spirit', 152, 162; Moser, *Teacher*, 173; Bruns, *Trinität*.

<sup>2</sup> Moser, *Teacher*, 87, calls this work of the Spirit God's *exitus* into the world and humanity's *reditus* to God. Though Origen does not use Moser's exact language, his treatment of the Spirit's work consistently shows this pattern, particularly in the work of the Spirit. Chapter 5 will examine the the upward leading of the Spirit.

First, we will examine Origen's understanding of the Spirit's role in the giving of the spiritual gifts. Though the Spirit provides a multitude of gifts, Origen most heavily emphasizes the word of wisdom and word of knowledge of 1 Corinthians 12.8. Following this, we will examine Origen's use of the phrase "grace of the Holy Spirit" to show that the Spirit's work is ultimately an empowerment for believers in their pursuit of the divine. But for Origen, grace, as well as gift, are often synonymous with the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit himself, the personal manifestation of God's grace in believers. In the last part of this section, we will consider Origen's thought on the exclusivity of the giving of the Spirit, examining who can receive the Spirit, and when and how the Spirit begins to work in individuals, focusing specifically on the Spirit's role in baptism.

## **The Giver of the Gifts**

In Origen's writings, the Spirit is consistently portrayed as the giver of the gifts of God. This is a notable point as the Spirit as giver of the divine gifts is not a very common pneumatological theme in Christian writing prior to Origen.<sup>3</sup> Origen's emphasis on this theme is seen in statements like *princ.* 2.7.3: the Holy Spirit is the one "in whom is every manner of gift."<sup>4</sup> In this discussion of how the spiritual man apprehends Christ and the Spirit, Origen lists revelation as one of the many gifts that the Spirit gives.<sup>5</sup> Origen finds biblical basis for this in 1 Corinthians 12.8's "word of wisdom" and "word of knowledge," important spiritual gifts which will be discussed shortly. Similarly, in *com.in.Rom* 9.24.3,

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<sup>3</sup> There is only a general awareness of this theme; the relevant biblical verses are not dwelt on at length or developed theologically. Clement is aware of the "sevenfold gift of the Spirit" in Isaiah 11 (*paed.* 3.12.87), but rarely speaks of gift, particularly with reference to the Spirit. Irenaeus does occasionally mention the "gift of the Holy Spirit" (e.g. *haer.* 3.11.8) or the Spirit's gifts in 1 Cor 12 (*haer.* 4.20.6), but does treat either at length.

<sup>4</sup> Behr, 2:219. *in quo omnis est natura donorum.*

<sup>5</sup> We should view with caution, however, the comment which follows on the Spirit's revelation of the nature of the Trinity, which reflects Rufinus' theology more than Origen's.

commenting on Romans 12.6-8, Origen claims that “the Apostle is showing us that all that is good is from God and is given through his Holy Spirit.”<sup>6</sup> He then cites James 1.17 as evidence, even though James 1.17 and Romans 12.6 both lack specific reference to the Spirit.<sup>7</sup> Origen’s reading of the Spirit into these verses betrays an already-conceived conception of the Spirit as the giver of God’s gifts.<sup>8</sup> In all of these examples, the Spirit distributes the divine gifts by virtue of his indwelling presence in believers.<sup>9</sup>

A significant statement concerning the Spirit’s role as the giver of God’s gifts occurs in a Trinitarian context in *Jo.* 2.77:

...the Holy Spirit supplies (παρέχειν) the material (ὕλη) of the gifts from God to those who are called saints thanks to him and because of participation (μετοχήν) in him. This material of the gifts... is made effective (ἐνεργουμένης) from God; it is administered (διακονουμένης) by Christ; but it subsists (ὑφεστώσης) in accordance with the Holy Spirit.<sup>10</sup>

This statement follows Origen’s description of the Trinity as “three *hypostases*” (*Jo.* 2.75), the Spirit as “most honored of all things made through the Word” (2.75) and as needing “the Son ministering to his *hypostasis*” to possess the divine attributes (2.76).<sup>11</sup> The Trinitarian order of work is consistent with what we have seen in the last chapter: the

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<sup>6</sup> SC 555:160; Scheck, 104:221-222.

<sup>7</sup> He also comments that Paul never goes into detail about the “gifts of the graces that are given through the Holy Spirit”, though “prophecy or ministry or teaching or exhortation (Rom 12.6-8) ... can pertain to these spiritual gifts.” The gifts that he is referring to here are morality and grace and goodness, and not those of 1 Cor 12.

<sup>8</sup> In *com.in.Rom* 6.13.3, Origen links the Spirit taking from the Father (Jn 16.14) and the Son (Jn 17.10) to argue for his single identity.

<sup>9</sup> Origen clearly draws this from 1 Cor 12.4, though he does not comment on this verse.

<sup>10</sup> SC 120:236; Heine, 80:114. Οἶμαι δὲ τὸ ἅγιον πνεῦμα τήν, ἢν’ οὕτως εἶπω, ὕλην τῶν ἀπὸ θεοῦ χαρισμάτων παρέχειν τοῖς δι’ αὐτὸ καὶ τὴν μετοχὴν αὐτοῦ χρηματίζουσιν ἁγίοις, τῆς εἰρημένης ὕλης τῶν χαρισμάτων ἐνεργουμένης μὲν ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ, Διακονουμένης δὲ ὑπὸ τοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὑφεστώσης δὲ κατὰ τὸ ἅγιον πνεῦμα. See parallel in *princ.* 1.3.7.

<sup>11</sup> See Ch. 3, p.119.

Father is the source of all things and is the one from whom all gifts ultimately come,<sup>12</sup> the Son is the mediatory figure who ministers the gifts of the invisible God,<sup>13</sup> the Spirit is the one who “supplies” or “furnishes” (παρέχειν) the gifts to worthy saints.<sup>14</sup> The Spirit’s sanctifying and indwelling work are also referenced here, shown in the fact that “thanks to him” (δι’ αὐτὸ) and because of participation (μετοχήν) in him believers can be called saints.<sup>15</sup>

This statement is unique because the Spirit not only supplies the “gifts”, but the “material” (ὕλη) of the gifts.<sup>16</sup> The majority of Origen’s uses of ὕλη are in line with its most common definitions, e.g. “matter”<sup>17</sup> or “the stuff of which a thing is made” (i.e. material),<sup>18</sup> both of which suggest something physical or material.<sup>19</sup> ὕλη also does not appear elsewhere

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<sup>12</sup> The use of ἐνεργεω for God the Father is quite common in Origen’s writings, indicating God’s initiating work in creation and salvation (e.g. *Jo.* 1.181, 2.103, 10.68; *Cels.* 1.31, 7.35, 3.31). Lampe (PGL), 473, defines it as: “effect, contrive, bring to pass”. cf. Alcinous, *Did.* 10.2 (164.20).

<sup>13</sup> Lampe (PGL), 350, defines διακονέω as “supply wants of, afford assistance to... (of abstracts)” (e.g. Clement, *str.* 1.26) or “(III) ref. work of Christ” (351). διακονέω is also at times used of angels and other beings (e.g. *Cels.* 1.25, 4.4, 6.79 (Holy Spirit); *Jo.* 1.165, 10.5, 10.182), but is used consistently in this way of Christ (see *Jo.* 1.241, 1.230, 2.76). The Son does not give gifts, except life (*princ.* 1.2.4), reason (*princ.* 1.3.7). Also see *Jo.* 6.15, 6.292, 20.390.

<sup>14</sup> Participation in the Spirit “is possessed... only by the holy ones” or “the Holy Spirit is bestowed only upon the holy ones” (*princ.* 1.3.7, Behr, 1:79). LSJ: for incorporeal things, παρέχω can have the meaning of “afford, cause”.

<sup>15</sup> Balas, ‘Participation’, 268, notes that the Spirit enables people to participate in Christ, which in turns leads to a higher participation in God. For participation and “sanctified” status, see Ch. 5.

<sup>16</sup> This construction only appears here in Origen’s writings. In *or.* 27.8 (GCS 3:367-368; Greer, 140-41), Origen gives the Stoic meaning of ὕλη, though this is not what he means here. Crouzel, *Origen*, 201, defines ὕλη as having the same meaning as “nature”, the charisms “correspond to a certain extent to what scholastic theology was to call actual graces, that is graces attached to an act or to a function”. Edwards, *Origen*, 76, however, notes that “no Platonist could have toyed with the conceit that the Holy Spirit conveys the ‘matter’ of divine benevolence”, interpreting matter here as literal matter which God uses as an instrument of divine love.

<sup>17</sup> LSJ notes that it first appears in Aristotle (e.g. *Gen. et Corr.* 320a2; *Met.* 1032a17); in later writers, opp. to intelligent and formative principle (νοῦς), e.g. Proclus, *Inst.* 72; Iamblicus, *Comm.Math.* 4.

<sup>18</sup> LSJ: e.g. Plutarch (2.802b; S.Fr.844).

<sup>19</sup> Also suggested in the Latin *materia*. The majority of Origen’s uses of both these words are as material, e.g. *Cels.* 3.40-42; *Jo.* 1.103; *princ.* 2.1.4, 4.4.6. Origen also speaks of the saints living an immaterial and bodiless life (*Jo.* 1.97) and contrasts spiritual vs. material (*Jo.* 19.147).

alongside the Spirit, except in the context of the rejection of material things.<sup>20</sup> Is Origen here potentially referring to some physical or material element of the Spirit or the gifts? This is highly unlikely, especially given his citation of 1 Corinthians 12 (spiritual gifts) immediately after this in *Jo.* 2.78. Nowhere are the Spirit's gifts described in material terms; Origen tends to emphasize their spiritual nature and the spiritual character of those who receive them.<sup>21</sup> The Spirit's presence also mediates the immaterial and invisible God: "it is God's work to dwell (ἐπιδημεῖν) invisibly (ἀοράτως) by His Spirit and by the Spirit of Christ in those whom He judges it right to dwell" (*Cels.* 5.1).<sup>22</sup> Those Origen calls "saints," i.e. spiritual believers, transcend physical, and corporeal things; participation in the Spirit is incorporeal in nature and begins with the rejection of the material.<sup>23</sup> It is thus implausible that Origen would have understood the spiritual gifts to be material.

Origen is not suggesting that these gifts are physical or material, but uses ὕλη to emphasize the Spirit's direct agency in providing the gifts to material beings. Lampe defines Origen's usage of ὕλη here as "(metaphorically) matter, substance, ref. 1 Cor. 12.4-6."<sup>24</sup> The Spirit's causing the gifts to subsist (ὑφεστώσης) emphasizes the fact that these gifts have their reality or existence because of the Spirit.<sup>25</sup> Some have suggested that ὕλη here refers to the Spirit as the "spiritual material" of the Son.<sup>26</sup> It should be noted, however, that the Spirit is

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<sup>20</sup> E.g. the Spirit removes what is material: *Jo.* 6.162, *Cels.* 6.70. cf. *hom.in.Num* 6.2.1.

<sup>21</sup> The Spirit makes spiritual: *princ.* 2.8.2, 4.2.7, 4.4.5; *Jo.* 1.197; *or.* 9.2, 28.8; *com.in.Rom* 2.6.6.

<sup>22</sup> SC 147:14; Chadwick, 264.

<sup>23</sup> See esp. *Jo.* 20.89; *com.in.Eph* 1.14 or the suspicious statements in *princ.* 1.3.8, 4.4.5. The immaterial nature of participation in the Spirit is necessary because the Spirit allows participation in the Father or the divine: *com.in.Rom* 4.9.12; *Cels.* 6.64. Lyman, 64, *Christology*, calls participation "not abstract, but intimacy increasing quality".

<sup>24</sup> Lampe (PGL), 1430: "subsist, exist as a substance or entity... of grace, ref. 1 Cor.12.4-6".

<sup>25</sup> Plaxco, 'Didymus', 158-59, has noted, that "the 'material of the gifts' is given *hypostasis* 'according to' the Holy Spirit" (ὑφεστώσης). However, Plaxco's assertion that the Spirit's *hypostasis* is the ὕλη of the gifts is more difficult to prove.

<sup>26</sup> Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, vol. 1 (London: Mowbrays, 1975), 138-48, from Plaxco, 'Didymus', 116. cf. *princ.* 1.3.8, 2.2.1 (spiritual material).

never referred to as the “material” of the Son. But Origen understands that because of his status and role, the Spirit can have direct contact with material beings, by which he supplies the spiritual gifts directly to them.<sup>27</sup> Though this is not an affirmation that the Spirit has or takes on any material properties because of his indwelling of the saints, the Spirit’s performance of this particular role should be considered in the context Origen’s hierarchical Trinitarian tendencies and the functions each person plays.

Is Origen consistent in his use of this Trinitarian model wherever he speaks of gifts? In most places, the giving of χάρισματᾶ is associated with the particular work of the Spirit and is based on passages like 1 Corinthians 12.<sup>28</sup> But Origen also commonly employs other scriptural language regarding the giving of gifts, for example that the Father is the giver of gifts (e.g. James 1.17).<sup>29</sup> Origen’s understanding of God as the initiator of the gifts complements the Spirit’s role as the direct supplier of the gifts, given the Father’s distance from material beings and his largely initiatory function. In many instances, Origen shows intent to preserve these roles, especially where he speaks of God giving his gifts *through* the Spirit, which is also reflected in scriptural language (e.g. 1 Cor 12.8).<sup>30</sup> But Origen’s use of this formula in *Jo.* 2.77, *princ.* 1.3.7, and in more subtle forms elsewhere attests to its importance, suggesting that Origen consistently conceives of God’s giving of his blessings and gifts through the mediation of the Son and the indwelling of the Spirit.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> cf. *princ.* 1.3.5.

<sup>28</sup> E.g. *Cels.* 1.44, 3.18, 7.23; *Jo.* 13.354.

<sup>29</sup> See *hom.in.Num* 12.3.3 (1 Cor 8.6); *com.in.Rom* 9.3.7 (1 Cor 12.9); *Jo.* 6.231. God gives blessings through the Holy Spirit: *princ.* 1.4.2; *com.in.Rom* 1.8, 10.14.10.

<sup>30</sup> E.g. *hom.in.Num* 9.6.3; *com.in.Rom* Pref.2, 3.9.8; *com.in.Mt* 14.6; *Cels.* 3.18, 3.46, 6.13.

<sup>31</sup> See *com.in.Rom* 8.5.2, 8.13.9; *hom.in.Jer* 10.1.1; *hom.in.Gen* 2.5; *Jo.* 1.89; *or.* 33.1.

## The Greater Gifts

The Holy Spirit's role in the distribution of the spiritual gifts is to confirm, enhance and perfect the abilities which the saints possess, which we will see more fully, shortly. Similar to the Trinitarian distribution of the gifts, the specific gifts that the Spirit gives also have a Trinitarian and soteriological *telos*. This is apparent in the instances in which Origen explains the gifts of the Spirit, which are most often the revelatory gifts "word of wisdom" and "word of knowledge" in 1 Corinthians 12.8. But before we address Origen's understanding of these gifts, we will examine two passages where Origen considers the greatest gift of the Spirit. This examination will show that the greater purpose of the Spirit's work in supplying spiritual gifts is to provide the saints with the necessary tools to begin their ascent into the knowledge of God and the participation of the divine.

Origen addresses the greatest gift of the Spirit and its purpose in *com.in.Rom* 4.9.12. Commenting on Romans 5.3-5, Origen says that the greatest gift of the Holy Spirit is love.<sup>32</sup> He brings up an ambiguity in the text, namely that God's love in v.5 can be either "that love by which we love God" (objective genitive) or "that love by which we are being loved by God" (subjective genitive), the former which he asserts requires no explanation. On the latter, he notes that:

But if that love by which we are being loved by God is instead to be understood here [...] it is certain that he is putting down love as the highest and greatest gift of the Holy Spirit so that, just as the gift was first received from God, through this [gift], but which we are loved by God, we are able to love God himself.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> For more of Origen's discussion on the primacy of love (1 Cor 13.13), see *com.in.Rom* 5.10.15.

<sup>33</sup> SC 539:314-316; Scheck, 103:292. The omitted portion is a quotation of 1 Jn 4.19.



God's love for the saints fuels the saints' love for God. The Spirit bestows the love for God to the saints, allowing them to serve and worship God. Origen also links God, the Son, and the Spirit together by their mutual association with love: as God is love (cf. 1 Jn 4.8), the Spirit is also the "Spirit of love" (2 Tim 1.7) and the Son is the "Son of love" (Col 1.13). These shared titles reflect that "it is certain that both the Son and the Holy Spirit are to be understood as springing from the one fountain (*fonte*) of the paternal deity (*paternae deitatis*)."<sup>34</sup> While the fact that the Spirit bestows the love of God is significant, love itself is not the end goal. There is a greater purpose:

From the fullness of the Spirit (*cuius abundantia*), the fullness of love (*abundantia caritatis*) is infused (*infunditur*) into the hearts of the saints in order to receive participation (*participationem*) in the divine nature, as the apostle Peter has taught [cf. 2 Pt 1.4], so that this gift (*donum*) of the Holy Spirit, the word which the Lord said might be fulfilled ... [Jn 17.21] ... This is, of course, to be sharers (*participes effecti*) of the divine nature by the fullness of love furnished (*ministratae*) through the Holy Spirit.<sup>35</sup>

Love is the most important gift because the love of God, given by the Spirit, allows humans to become participants in the divine nature. It is also notable that Origen understands the Spirit's gift of love as a fulfillment of John 17.21: "they may all be one... as you, Father, are in me and I am in you." Origen does not key in on the unity of believers, but only on the unification of believers with God, the "may they also be in us."<sup>36</sup> In furnishing the love of God and allowing for believers to participate in the divine nature, the Spirit thus fulfills

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<sup>34</sup> *com.in.Rom* 4.9.12 (SC 539:316; Scheck, 103:292). This phrase does not occur anywhere else in the Latin works, but we do see "paternal substance" (*com.in.Rom* 2.6, 3.8), "paternal majesty" (*com.in.Rom* 5.8), "paternal blessing" (*hom.in.Num* 17.6.18), "paternal learning" (*Cant.* 2.5). It is possible that this reflects Origen's theology, but as with any affirmations of Triune unity in Rufinus' Latin translations, it should be viewed with some suspicion.

<sup>35</sup> *com.in.Rom* 4.9.12 (SC 539:316; Scheck, 103:292-293).

<sup>36</sup> This reflects Origen's tendency to emphasize personal salvation over corporate.

the promise of Christ to the Father, accomplishing the ultimate goal and purpose of the human life in the realization of salvation.

A second “most important gift” passage is found in *com.in.Rom* 7.5.5, Origen’s discussion of Romans 8.23. In this section, Origen weighs out different interpretations of “firstfruits of the Spirit”, one being that the “various gifts” of the Spirit are in fact “many spirits”.<sup>37</sup> In this interpretation, the Holy Spirit, given “more vastly and magnificently than in the rest” is called the “firstfruits of the Holy Spirit”. This exalted status of the Holy Spirit is linked with his role in adoption (Rom 8.15), that he allows saints to be united with the heavenly church. While saints are those who “have received from the Holy Spirit the best and chosen gifts”, they still wait “for the adoption of sons”, spiritual perfection resulting in adoption. While adoption is not explicitly called the greatest gift, Origen understands the function of the Spirit as helping to perfect believers in order that they might merit adoption. Adoption, therefore, is reserved not for anyone, but only for those who have received the Spirit and exhibit worthiness befitting adoption.

It is important to note that while Origen seems to contradict himself in these two passages, both adoption and love, as he describes them, are facets of the greater goal of participation in the divine nature.<sup>38</sup> Love refers to the saint’s response to the initial act of grace and love of God; adoption refers to God’s acceptance of perfected saints into his family. The greater point and the reason why the Spirit’s gifts are important to Origen is the goal of these “greatest gifts”: the believers’ union with God.

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<sup>37</sup> SC 543:280; Scheck, 104:75. For a fuller discussion on the “firstfruits of the Spirit”, see Appendix.

<sup>38</sup> See *hom.in.Num* 12.3.3 (SC 442:98; Scheck, 68): when we offer faith/love to God, he bestows the various gifts of Holy Spirit.

## Word of Wisdom and Word of Knowledge

The vast majority of references to the gifts of the Spirit in Origen's writings are to the "word of knowledge" and "word of wisdom" (1 Cor 12.8).<sup>39</sup> Origen considers these to be the greatest and highest of the gifts in the list found in 1 Corinthians 12, confirmed in their position at the top of the list.<sup>40</sup> Their priority also reflects the importance Origen places on the noetic aspect of the Christian life. A simple explanation of what these gifts are is given in *Cels.* 6.13:

Divine wisdom, which is not the same thing as faith is first of what are called the spiritual gifts of God; the second place after it, for those who have accurate understanding of these matters, is held by what is called knowledge...<sup>41</sup>

For Origen, the word of knowledge and word of wisdom do not refer to a special type of revelatory event. Rather, they are the special possession of divine wisdom and knowledge, reserved for worthy believers.<sup>42</sup> These gifts are given to individuals to help them search the depths of God.<sup>43</sup>

The word of wisdom refers specifically to divine wisdom which is given through the Spirit.

In *Cels.* 7.23 Origen writes:

But if by wisdom one understands Christ, since Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God [1 Cor 1.24], we say not only that a man wise in this sense can come to the Father, but also that the man adorned with the

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<sup>39</sup> See Ronald Kydd, 'Origen and the Gifts of the Spirit', *Église et Théologie* 13 (1982), 111-116. Kydd's major argument is that Origen believes that the spiritual gifts of the NT are still active in his day, though to a lesser degree.

<sup>40</sup> *Jo.* 13.354; *princ.* 2.7.3, 2.10.7; *com.in Mt* 14.6.

<sup>41</sup> SC 147:210; Chadwick, 327.

<sup>42</sup> See also *com.in.Rom* Pref.2: God "teaches man knowledge (Ps 94.10) ... and gives the word of wisdom through the Spirit" (SC 532:138; Scheck, 103:53).

<sup>43</sup> *Cels.* 6.17; cf. 1 Cor 2.10, Ps 103.6 LXX.

spiritual gift called “the word of wisdom” [1 Cor 12.8], which is conferred by the Spirit, is far superior to people who are not so adorned.<sup>44</sup>

In this passage, Origen argues, *contra* Celsus, that Jesus teaches that only the wise, those who have the wisdom of God, are able to come to the Father. Though the Son himself is the manifestation of God’s very wisdom, the word of wisdom can only be attained through the Holy Spirit, who leads the saints to Christ. Thus the gift of wisdom allows for the attainment of divine Wisdom.<sup>45</sup> This wisdom is often contrasted with worldly wisdom on the basis of various biblical passages, especially 1 Corinthians 2, particularly verses 12-13<sup>46</sup> and 14-15.<sup>47</sup>

There are two other features frequent in Origen’s discussions of the “word of wisdom”. The first is that divine wisdom is cyclical: growth in wisdom reveals the greater need for the Spirit, the giver of wisdom. In *princ.* 2.7.3, Origen says,

For, to some is bestowed by the Spirit the word of wisdom... and so to each person who is able to receive him, the same Spirit becomes that and is understood to be that which the person, who is worthy to partake in him, needs.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> SC 150:68; Chadwick, 414.

<sup>45</sup> See also *princ.* 1.3.8: “those... who have been previously sanctified through the Holy Spirit; and those who have been deemed worthy to progress to this level by the sanctification of the Holy Spirit will attain, no less, to the gift of wisdom according to the power of working of the Spirit of God” (Behr, 1:81). See also *Cant.* Pro.3, *com.in.Rom* 9.3.7.

<sup>46</sup> See *princ.* 2.8.2, 4.2.3; *Jo.* 13.35; *or.* 1.1; *com.in.Mt* 14.14; *philoc.* 1.10, 2.3; *Cant.* 3.12.

<sup>47</sup> *princ.* 3.6.6; *com.in.Rom* 2.14.15, 9.30.2; *pasch.* 40; *hom.in.Jer* 12.1.1; *hom.in.Num* 26.4.3; *hom.in.Gen* 16.4; *hom.in.Lev* 2.2.4; *Cels.* 6.71. Origen also compares the “words of wisdom” of the world in 1 Corinthians 2.4 to those from God, noting that the latter is “the word by which God’s wisdom is explained more clearly through the power of the Spirit” (*com.in.Rom* 8.6.5: SC 543:488; Scheck, 104:151). In *Cels.* 6.13, Origen calls human wisdom “a means of education for the soul, divine wisdom being the ultimate end” (SC 147:210; Chadwick, 326). It is only available for “those whose ability is superior and stands out among all those who are adherents of Christianity” and not ordinary people.

<sup>48</sup> Behr, 2:219.

The one who is worthy of the Spirit's work and wisdom recognizes through the Spirit that there is a greater need for the Spirit in his life.<sup>49</sup> Growth in wisdom also allows for a greater understanding of the Spirit. In *com.in.Rom* 7.13.9, Origen states,

But the wisdom of God has granted that this same thing be understood of the Holy Spirit as well, where it says, "The Spirit of the Lord filled the earth, and he who contains all things, has knowledge of his voice" (Wis 1.7). If, therefore, the Son is called "God over all" and the Holy Spirit is recorded to contain things...<sup>50</sup>

The "same thing" refers to the idea that the Spirit, like the Son, is not "later than the Father, but from the Father".<sup>51</sup> While this particular passage contains questionable Rufinus-inspired language, the point that Origen makes about the Spirit is similar to the one above: greater wisdom results in greater understanding of the Spirit, both in his work and person.

A second point is that the Spirit is also frequently associated with wisdom on the basis of other biblical passages. One such passage is Isaiah 11.2, which describes the "Spirit of the Lord" as the Spirit of wisdom, understanding, and knowledge.<sup>52</sup> In places where he cites this verse, Origen emphasizes the presence of these attributes in believers through the Spirit.<sup>53</sup> Origen also frequently relates Ephesians 1.17's "Spirit of wisdom and revelation" with the Spirit's gift of wisdom.<sup>54</sup> Though none of these examples are the "word of

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<sup>49</sup> E.g. *hom.in.Lc* 24.1-2.

<sup>50</sup> SC 543:368; Scheck, 104:110. Also note Wis 7.25 and "emanation" language in this section of *com.in.Rom* (cf. *princ.* 1.2.10).

<sup>51</sup> This is followed by "clearly the essence of the Trinity... are shown to be one", which seems to be added by Rufinus.

<sup>52</sup> For more on the Holy Spirit as the spirits of Isaiah 11, see Appendix.

<sup>53</sup> In *hom.in.Num* 6.3.2 the subject is Christ – the Spirit has never rested on others in the same way as Christ, shown in Christ's possession of these attributes (SC 415:148-150; Scheck, 22). In *com.in.Mt* 13.2, the Spirit dwells in Christ so that he may also dwell in believers.

<sup>54</sup> *com.in.Eph.* 1.13 (Heine, 103): "just as the Holy Spirit makes that person holy on whom he comes (γενόμενον ἐπὶ τινι, ἅγιον ποιεῖ), and 'the spirit of the 'wisdom' makes one wise, and the 'spirit of the 'understanding' makes one understanding, so also the one on whom 'the Spirit of the promise' comes is, perhaps, already in the promise." Also see *com.in.Mt* 12.10: "Father... revealing revelation... those who take away every veil from the heart and receive 'the spirit of wisdom and

wisdom”, it is clear that all of these references refer to the same general idea: the Spirit’s bestowal of divine wisdom.

The “word of knowledge” similarly refers to the divine knowledge that the Spirit gives.<sup>55</sup> As Origen notes in *Cant.* 3.12, “to those to whom He gives the power of seeing God, He gives the Spirit of knowledge and the Spirit of wisdom, that by the same Spirit they may see God.”<sup>56</sup> The “word of knowledge” is the special knowledge or hidden mysteries of God which are only accessible to the saints.<sup>57</sup> Depending on the recipient, the gift of knowledge is given by the Spirit in different degrees: “the Holy Spirit granted fuller spiritual grace in respect of the gift of knowledge to some” (*Cant.* 3.12).<sup>58</sup> This knowledge is conditioned on the rational capacity and holiness of the individual believer.<sup>59</sup>

As discussed in earlier chapters, Origen believes that the knowledge of God is “incomprehensible to all but Christ and the Holy Spirit” (*Jo.* 2.172).<sup>60</sup> As Christ is the “depth of wisdom” (Rom 11.33), the Holy Spirit is the “depth of the knowledge” (Rom 11.33), who knows the “deep things of God” (1 Cor 2.10).<sup>61</sup> Origen notes,

But we pray that there may shine in our hearts the light of the knowledge of the glory of God (2 Cor 4.6), by the Spirit of God dwelling in our imagination

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revelation’ of God (Eph 1.17)” (GCS 40:85; ANF 10:456). Other related examples include Wis 7.23 (*mart.* 49, *or.* 28.2) and Mt 15.9 (*com.in.Mt* 11.1).

<sup>55</sup> Origen frequently appeals to 1 Cor 2.10 for the Spirit’s knowledge of the Father. Origen’s use of this verse will be discussed in Ch. 5.

<sup>56</sup> SC 376:650; Lawson, 26:227.

<sup>57</sup> *Cant.* 2.4: “we have received... the spirit that is of God, that we may know the things that are given us from God” (cf. 1 Cor 2.7, 12) (SC 375:438; Lawson, 26:127).

<sup>58</sup> SC 376:650; Lawson, 26:227.

<sup>59</sup> E.g. *com.in.Rom* 7.4.8: “But the renewal of the inner man, inasmuch as it is rational and intellectual, consists in the knowledge of God and in the capacity for receiving the Holy Spirit” (SC 543:266; Scheck, 104:69).

<sup>60</sup> See *com.in.Rom* 8.11.7: “But he who searches all things, even the depths of God,” (1 Cor 2.10) the Holy Spirit, knows everything, and he himself makes it known to whom he wants to reveal it” (cf. Mt 11.27) (SC 543:554; Scheck, 104:177).

<sup>61</sup> See *com.in.Rom* 8.13.9.

and representing to us the things of God. 'For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God' (Rom 8.14).<sup>62</sup>

Again, though Origen does not specifically mention the "word of knowledge", it is clear that the spiritual gift is one way of expressing the Spirit's revelatory function, a point he bases on multiple biblical verses. Therefore, for Origen, "all knowledge of the Father is acquired through the revelation of the Son in the Holy Spirit" (*princ.* 1.3.4) or "if we *turn to the Lord*, where also is the Word of God, and where the Holy Spirit reveals spiritual knowledge, *the veil is removed*" (*princ.* 1.1.2).<sup>63</sup>

The gifts of the word of knowledge and word of wisdom are thus divine wisdom and knowledge supplied by the Holy Spirit.<sup>64</sup> A more practical way in which these ideas may be understood can be found in *princ.* 2.7.4:

But the Paraclete, who is called the Holy Spirit, is so called from his work of consolation (for *paraklesis* is termed *consolatio* in Latin); for anyone who has deserved to participate in the Holy Spirit, by the knowledge of ineffable mysteries, undoubtedly obtains consolation and gladness of heart. When he has come to know, by the direction of the Spirit, the reasons for all things that happen – why and how they happen – his soul can in no respect be trouble or accept any feeling of sadness; nor is he alarmed by anything, as, clinging to the Word of God and his Wisdom, he calls *Jesus 'Lord' in the Holy Spirit*.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> *Cels.* 4.95 (SC 136:420-422; Chadwick, 259). See also *hom.in.Num* 10.3.4: "what else is the 'perfection of knowledge' if not to know the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?" (SC 415:288; Scheck, 49). cf. *com.in.Rom* 3.8; *hom.in.Ez* 1.15.

<sup>63</sup> Behr, 1:71, 1:27, respectively. Note the unusual use of "word of knowledge" in *hom.in.Jud* 8.5: "Moreover, we, if only we would present our feet, the Lord Jesus is ready 'to wash the feet' of our soul and cleanse them with heavenly dew, with the grace of the Holy Spirit, with the word of knowledge" (SC 389:200; Lauro, 119:108).

<sup>64</sup> See esp. *hom.in.Lev* 1.1.4: "Thus the Lord himself, the Holy Spirit himself must be entreated by us to remove (*auferre*) every cloud and all darkness which obscures the vision of our hearts hardened with the stains of sins in order that we may be able to behold (*contueri*) the spiritual and wonderful knowledge of his Law... (Ps 118.18)" (SC 286:70; Barkley, 83:30).

<sup>65</sup> Behr, 2:221. Citing 1 Cor 12.3, also cf. Jn 14.26-27.

Origen's interpretation of the "Paraclete" passage in John is that the Spirit gives divine knowledge, by which the soul finds comfort and meaning in the events of life.<sup>66</sup> Though Origen does not refer to either gift here, it is evident that both refer to the saints' understanding of the deeper things of God. Though he does not specifically distinguish them, the important point for Origen is that these gifts are given by the Holy Spirit exclusively to believers who are worthy and capable of receiving the mysteries of God.<sup>67</sup>

Origen also often refers to the Spirit's giving of the words of wisdom in knowledge in the context of scriptural interpretation. Scripture, which is inspired by the Holy Spirit, is the means to man's higher knowledge about the Son of God.<sup>68</sup> But Origen notes that the spiritual nature of the Scriptures "is not known by all but only by those on whom the grace of the Holy Spirit is bestowed in the word of wisdom and knowledge" (*princ.* Pref.8).<sup>69</sup> Origen even calls the hidden meaning of Scripture the "treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col 2.3).<sup>70</sup> Only through the help of the Spirit who "searches even the deep things of God" (1 Cor 2.10) can "the depths of the divine wisdom and knowledge" (Rom 11.33) be understood.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Worldly wisdom, particularly in 1 Cor 2.8, is not mentioned in this statement, but is cited in a passage just prior to this with reference to knowing Christ (*princ.* 2.7.3).

<sup>67</sup> Moser, *Teacher*, 144-46, notes that the gifts of the Spirit demand and assist in ethical behavior, even calling this the "imitation of the Spirit".

<sup>68</sup> E.g. *princ.* 1.3.1. We will discuss Origen's understanding of the Holy Spirit's role in the inspiration and interpretation of Scripture in Ch. 5.

<sup>69</sup> Behr, 1:19. See also *princ.* 4.2.7, in which the interpreter can "trace out the sense of the Spirit of God hidden in profundity and concealed by an ordinary narrative style, pointing in another direction, and that thus he might become an associate in the Spirit's knowledge and a partaker in the divine counsel" (Behr, 2:511). Also *Jo.* 10.266: "we ourselves need the wisdom of the special Spirit to understand such great matters in a way fitting the sacred subject" (SC 157:546; Heine, 80:314).

<sup>70</sup> *princ.* 4.3.11 (Behr, 2:549).

<sup>71</sup> *princ.* 4.3.14 (Behr, 2:557). See also *com.in.Rom* 8.13.9 for the link between Rom 11.33 and 1 Cor 2.12.



In other places, Origen refers directly to these gifts in his own act of exegesis. In his interpretation of the parable of the unforgiving servant (Mt 18.23) in *com.in.Mt* 14.6, Origen appeals to “the assistance of Christ who is the Wisdom of God” which can occur “if only there be granted to us also concerning these things, the word of wisdom which is given from God through the Spirit, and the word of knowledge which is supplied according to the Spirit.”<sup>72</sup> Though Origen more often speaks of the word of knowledge and word of wisdom as things which must be received in order to interpret Scripture,<sup>73</sup> he once refers to the gift itself as something examined: “By the grace of the Holy Spirit, then, let us investigate the word of wisdom, in order that we might be able to turn Paul’s mind”.<sup>74</sup> Though Origen again does not differentiate between the two gifts in this context, both are viewed as necessary tools for the right interpretation of Scripture.

## The Lesser Gift of Faith

Although the word of wisdom and word of knowledge indicate the Spirit’s work in more elite believers, Origen’s description of the Spirit as giver is also seen in the gifts he gives to more ordinary believers: the gift of faith. Like the words of wisdom and knowledge, the gift of faith displays the Spirit’s perfection or enhancement of the saints’ innate abilities. In the list of spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12, Origen only really shows concern for three: the word of wisdom and knowledge, and faith, the third on the list.<sup>75</sup> For Origen, the gift

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<sup>72</sup> GCS 40:288; ANF 10:498. This follows an explanation of the agency of the Spirit (1 Cor 2.11) in interpreting the esoteric teachings of Christ.

<sup>73</sup> E.g. *hom.in.Jos.* 26.2: “... this power of the divine word is concealed in that place, to whom a discourse (*sermo*) of knowledge and a discourse of wisdom is granted, so that at the opportune time that soul, which was filled up with the word of wisdom and the word of knowledge through the gift of the Spirit...” (SC 71:494; Bruce, 105:217). See also *Cels.* 1.44, where Origen comments that the man who has the word of wisdom “will also explain the reason for the opening of the heavens and the form of the dove” at Jesus’ baptism” (SC 132:192; Chadwick, 41).

<sup>74</sup> *com.in.Rom* 5.10.7 (SC 539:508; Scheck, 103:371).

<sup>75</sup> See *com.in.Rom* 3.10.2. Also called the “third generation” (*hom.in.Lev* 5.3.8).

of faith is inferior to the first two gifts and is “placed third in Paul’s catalogue of gifts” (Jo. 20.285) after the other two.<sup>76</sup> The inferiority of this gift also indicates the inferiority of the believer, as Origen notes in Jo. 13.354:

Those who walk in faith, on the other hand, are inferior to the former in rank, although faith is a gift according to the saying, “And to another, faith in the same Spirit” (1 Cor 12.9).<sup>77</sup>

Origen’s understanding of the gift of faith is what can be described as a simple faith.<sup>78</sup> While some have the ability to grasp the mysteries of God, not all possess this mental capacity. Those who “walk by sight” are those who possess the higher gifts; lesser believers, those who “walk in faith” are instead given the gift of faith (Jo. 13.354). Thus intellectually superior believers have “knowing with respect to believing” while those who have the gift of faith “only believing” (Jo. 19.20).<sup>79</sup>

But the gift of faith is greater than normal faith.<sup>80</sup> It is given by God in his divine goodness and grace.<sup>81</sup> The gift of faith, then, appears to be a completion of faith, which in character is full and perfect (*com.in.Rom* 3.11.2). In fact, Origen speaks of the Holy Spirit as being

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<sup>76</sup> SC 290:296; Heine, 89:264. Hierarchy in the spiritual gifts: Jo. 2.157, 13.354, 19.20, 20.285; *Cels.* 3.46, 6.13, 7.23; *fr.in.Lc* 162. *mart.* 15.1. In *com.in.Mt* 14.16, celibacy is the greater gift. Other spiritual gifts are mentioned, but are not dwelt on as extensively, e.g. tongues (*com.in.Rom* 1.13.16), the discernment of spirits (*hom.in.Ex* 3.2, *hom.in.Num* 27.11.2, *hom.in.Ez* 2.2.4), prophecy (*com.in.Rom* 1.1.4), virginity/marriage (*com.in.Rom* 1.12). Other random gifts include revelation (*hom.in.Ex* 4.2), intercession (*hom.in.Ex* 5.3), or even existence (*princ.* 4.5.2). There is little room for charismatic experience in Origen’s theological system. Moser, *Teacher*, 138 n.5, notes that Origen sees some gifts as spiritual and some as not.

<sup>77</sup> SC 222:228-230; Heine, 89:144.

<sup>78</sup> For a treatment, see Gunnar af. Hällström, *Fides Simpliciorum According to Origen of Alexandria* (Helsinki: Societas Scientiarum Fennica, 1984). Hällström, 26-27, notes that while many terms are used of the simple, *alogos* denotes the “intellectual deficiency of simple faith”, one that is not supported by arguments. Origen’s description of such people is as those who do not exercise dialectic and possess no system of Christian doctrine (34), and are inclined toward sensible things (35).

<sup>79</sup> SC 290:56; Heine, 89:171.

<sup>80</sup> Hällström, *Fides*, 42, agrees, noting the divine origin of this faith.

<sup>81</sup> *com.in.Rom* 4.5.3, 9.3.7.

given to those who have turned to God in full faith.<sup>82</sup> This agrees with Origen's tendency to understand the spiritual gifts as things not charismatic in nature, but as the fullness or perfection of capacities that humans already possess.

Origen's understanding of the gifts of the Spirit's reflects his elitist tendencies when speaking of Christian progress and knowledge.<sup>83</sup> This tendency, as we have seen, is present in Origen's belief that the Holy Spirit and gifts of the Spirit are given according to the measure of the capacity of the recipient.<sup>84</sup> With the spiritual gifts, it is clear that certain people receive the higher revelatory spiritual gifts while others cannot.<sup>85</sup> Another gift that is relevant to this idea is the gift of prophecy.<sup>86</sup> Gunnar Hällström's detailed study argues that prophecy for Origen is primarily an Old Testament phenomenon, which has been replaced in present times by the apostles, and later, charismatic teachers.<sup>87</sup> But as apostles and current teachers contribute to the *paideusis* of humanity, they can also be called

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<sup>82</sup> Turning in faith results in the reception of the grace of the Spirit (*hom.in.Lc* 26.3, *Cant.* 2.9) or even the gifts of the Spirit (*hom.in.Num* 12.3.3).

<sup>83</sup> For treatments of leadership and "charisms" see Joseph W. Trigg, 'The Charismatic Intellectual: Origen's Understanding of Religious Leadership', *CH* 50.1 (1981), 5-19.; Gunnar af. Hällström, *Charismatic Succession: A Study on Origen's Concept of Prophecy* (Helsinki: Publications of the Finnish Exegetical Society 42, 1985). Origen's understanding of leadership is not based around apostolic succession, but favors gifted leaders or "charismatic instructors" who have been gifted by God to teach the people. The leader must be given gift from God, possess, essentially, the charisms/gifts mentioned above (see Hällström, *Charismatic*, 4, 20).

<sup>84</sup> E.g. *Cant.* 3.12; *com.in.Rom* 6.13.7, 7.5.5; *princ.* Pref.3, 1.3.7; *Cels.* 7.51. This is also true of wisdom and knowledge: *princ.* 1.3.8, 2.7.2, 2.7.3, 2.7.4; *Cels.* 3.18, 7.7, 7.23; *hom.in.Jos.* 3.2; *Jo.* 13.354.

<sup>85</sup> E.g. *Jo.* 20.285, *com.in.Rom* 4.5.3. Those filled with the Spirit are called "learned souls" (*hom.in.Jos* 20.1). Also note Tite's treatment of spiritual gifts ('Holy Spirit', 156), where he notes an evangelistic emphasis in the Spirits' gifting, as well as their Valentinian parallels: e.g. Spirit as revelatory, purifying agent, empowering force for mission.

<sup>86</sup> Though Origen frequently refers to the Spirit's role in inspiring Old Testament prophecy, he does not speak of prophecy often in the context of the New Testament or afterwards. Hällström, *Charismatic*, 32, argues that Origen believed that prophecy came to an end through Christ (e.g. *fr.in.Jo* 12, 74; *com.in.Mt* 10.21, 11.1).

<sup>87</sup> Hällström, *Charismatic*, 37-38. Hällström defines prophecy as "the knowledge that makes obscure matters known through speech, the understanding of the structure of the universe, of the operation of the elements and periods of time", citing *com.in.1Cor* 55. Hällström also notes Origen's mention of a second type of prophecy, a "revealing of the secrets of the heart" (*com.in.Rom* 9.2; 1 Cor 14.24-25), which for Origen is a lesser type of prophecy.

prophets.<sup>88</sup> Both in prophecy and the noetic spiritual gifts, Origen heavily emphasizes the need for intellect or mental capacity.<sup>89</sup> Therefore, Origen makes a distinction between educated believers who have the ability to receive the Spirit's knowledge and simple believers who cannot:

For this reason you would not find ordinary people partaking of divine wisdom, but those whose ability is superior and stands out among all those who are adherents of Christianity. And no one would *expound the truths of divine wisdom to those who are very uneducated slaves or quite ignorant*.<sup>90</sup>

He follows this by saying that “the most insignificant of us Christians has been delivered from this lack of education and ignorance, whereas the most intelligent understand and comprehend divine hope” (*Cels.* 6.14).<sup>91</sup> While Origen does not seem to believe that there is a difference between the holiness of educated and uneducated believers, it is clear that he views mental ability as being necessary to achieve the heights of divine knowledge.<sup>92</sup> In this sense, it is clear that the Spirit does not work equally in all and that all believers do not achieve the same level of participation in the divine.

Even though possession of the gifts is not equal, the Spirit's gifts represent God's personal working in humanity, the first and necessary step in the upward progress to the divine. Though Origen's understanding of the spiritual gifts is by no means egalitarian, it is

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<sup>88</sup> Hällström, *Charismatic*, 38. The modern teacher of the church requires the Spirit in his interpretation of Scripture (Hällström, *Charismatic*, 44, citing *hom.in.Lev* 13.1).

<sup>89</sup> Hällström, *Charismatic*, 17, citing *fr.in.Jer.* 15.

<sup>90</sup> *Cels.* 6.13 (SC 147:210; Chadwick, 327).

<sup>91</sup> SC 147:212; Chadwick, 327. Also note *Cels.* 7.51, where he comments that “receive the Holy Spirit” (Jn 20.22) “points to a gift which is different in quality from that indicated by the saying, ‘You will be baptized by the Holy Spirit not many days hence [Acts 1.5]’” (SC 150:134; Chadwick, 438). There is a difference between those who have a “limited conception of God” and those, living a life continually led by the Spirit, who are “inspired to a greater degree”.

<sup>92</sup> On the other hand, educated non-Christians may be intellectually capable of receiving the word of wisdom and word of knowledge, but cannot receive the Holy Spirit and thus cannot receive the gifts of higher knowledge. The main emphasis is their inability to understand Scripture properly – see Hällström, *Fides*, 43-57.

consistent with his overall worldview and the *telos* of God's saving work. In this soteriological system, the Spirit, in giving the divine gifts, is the point of contact between God and man, the actualizer of the blessings of God within humanity.

## The Grace of the Spirit

As we have seen in Origen's Trinitarian formulae, "grace of the Spirit" is an important phrase that, alongside the "gifts of the Spirit", highlights the Spirit's role in the divine work of salvation. Though the expression does not have a clear scriptural referent,<sup>93</sup> by the fourth century it was a regularly used phrase, a development likely influenced by Origen's usage.<sup>94</sup> So what does "grace of the Spirit" mean? In many instances, it parallels Origen's use of "gift of the Spirit", signifying the unmerited gifts which God bestows to humanity. But "grace of the Spirit" also carries a strong nuance of empowerment; God gives the grace of the Spirit in order to assist believers in their spiritual progress. In this section, we will see that "grace of the Spirit" refers to the gracious work of God via the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, who works to empower humanity for good works and progression in the spiritual life. It also at times is used to refer to the presence of the Spirit himself – the Spirit is the divine manifestation of that grace in the saints.<sup>95</sup> While the working of grace is not restricted to the Spirit, Origen envisions the gracious coming of the Spirit on believers as

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<sup>93</sup> Origen quotes Hebrews 10.29 ("spirit of grace") in *hom.in.Lev* 11.2.4; *hom.in.Jer* 13.2; *hom.in.Ez* 5.3.2; *Cels.* 8.10. Zech 12.10 is not quoted in Origen's writings. Prior to Origen, "grace of the Spirit" is used, but sporadically – it never explained. E.g. Justin Martyr: *dial.* 9.1, 29.1, 87.5; Clement: *str.* 1.14.1; Irenaeus: *haer.* 5.8.1, 3.24.1.

<sup>94</sup> Didymus: *spir.* 2.35, 3.76, 5.197. Basil: *spir.* 16.38, 16.40, 22.53, 26.61; *fid.* 3; *ep.* 188; *ep.* 200; *ep.* 164. Gregory of Nazianzus: *or.* 21.9, 34.6; *ep.* 185. Gregory of Nyssa: *ep.* 9, *beat.* 3, *eun.* 3.6.39. The development of this phrase, both before and after Origen, deserves further study.

<sup>95</sup> We will also see that "gift of the Spirit" can refer to the Spirit himself as gift.

an initiatory and necessary step in the process of salvation, testimony to the fact that the Spirit's work is a coherent and essential part of Origen's theology.<sup>96</sup>

The phrase "grace of the Spirit" appears in two of Origen's Trinitarian statements, one in Latin and one in Greek. Both of these examples display the same Trinitarian economy of salvation and the Spirit's particular role in that work. The first of these statements appears in *princ.* 1.3.7:

And there is again another grace of the Holy Spirit which is bestowed upon the deserving, through the ministry of Christ and the working of the Father, in proportion to the merits of those who have become capable of receiving it.<sup>97</sup>

The Latin *praestatur* carries meanings of "furnish/supply", "make available", and "hand over". Its nuances are similar to the Greek "supply" (παρέχειν) in *Jo.* 2.77. With the Father and the Son, Origen uses the same verbs as above, showing consistency in the roles the Father and the Son play in Trinitarian work. The emphasis on this passage is on the Trinitarian order of the giving of grace and the "special activities" of each member of the Trinity: the Father's special activity is to "give natural life", the Son's is to "confer the natural gift of reason", and the Spirit's particular activity is the giving of grace. While the proximity of this passage to the Trinitarian order of the giving of gifts in *princ.* 1.3.7 may suggest that Origen is simply repeating the same idea, the terms used for the Spirit are different, representing different aspects of his indwelling and distributing work.

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<sup>96</sup> E.g. grace and truth come through Christ (*princ.* Pref.1, *Jo.* 6.36), the Son "pouring himself through his grace into our minds" (*princ.* 2.9.4; Behr, 2:243). Access to grace through Christ (*com.in.Rom* 4.8.5, 5.2.5). Grace is present on all levels of divine work; there is one grace (*com.in.Rom* 10.38).

<sup>97</sup> Behr, 1:79. *Est alia quoque etiam spiritus sancti gratia, quae dignis praestatur, ministrata quidem per Christum, inoperata autem a patre secundum meritum eorum, qui capaces eius efficiuntur.*

A similar Trinitarian formula also appears in a work preserved in Greek. In *On Prayer* 1.1, Origen says,

[B]y the grace of God poured forth (ἐκχεομένη)... through that minister (ὑπηρέτου) of unsurpassed grace to us, Jesus Christ, and through that fellow worker (τοῦ συνεργοῦ) with the will of God, the Spirit, these realities have become possible for us.<sup>98</sup>

Again the roles are similar: the Father holds the initiating role, Christ again ministers, through the Spirit. Here, however, Origen does not specify the Spirit's particular role, simply choosing the title "fellow worker," as well as establishing his basis for Trinitarian unity: shared will.<sup>99</sup> It should be noted that the Spirit's work parallels that of the Son – they share a single *dia*. The Spirit as "fellow worker" may also indicate the personal presence of the Spirit working alongside and in man, thus making spiritual knowledge possible.<sup>100</sup>

But what exactly is the "grace of the Spirit"? In certain instances, Origen's use of "grace of the Spirit" mirrors his use of "gift of the Spirit". For example, "grace" is used with reference to the spiritual gifts.<sup>101</sup> In *princ.* 1.3.8, from the Holy Spirit, the sanctified man is able "to receive the grace of wisdom and knowledge", which are the revelatory gifts in 1 Corinthians 12.<sup>102</sup> Also, in *princ.* Pref.3, certain individuals "receive from the Holy Spirit himself the grace of language, wisdom and knowledge".<sup>103</sup> In other instances, Origen speaks of the "gift of the grace of the Spirit", which emphasizes the fact that the grace of the Spirit is

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<sup>98</sup> *or.* 1.1 (GCS 3:297; Greer, 81): δε καὶ ἀμετρήτῳ ἐκχεομένη ἀπὸ θεοῦ εἰς ἀνθρώπους χάριτι θεοῦ διὰ τοῦ τῆς ἀνυπερβλήτου εἰς ἡμᾶς χάριτος ὑπηρέτου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ τοῦ συνεργοῦ πνεύματος βουλήσει θεοῦ δυνατὰ γίνεται.

<sup>99</sup> See Chs. 1 and 3. cf. *Jo.* 13.228.

<sup>100</sup> This would also testify to Origen's emphasis on shared will.

<sup>101</sup> See *princ.* Pref.3, 1.3.8; *com.in.Rom* 7.5.4; *hom.in.Jud* 8.5.

<sup>102</sup> Behr, 1:81

<sup>103</sup> Behr, 1:13. Also *princ.* Pref.8. There is undoubtedly lexical similarity shared between grace and gift.

given by God.<sup>104</sup> In *com.in.Rom* 9.24.2, Origen refers to Paul's discussion of the "gifts of the graces that are given through the Holy Spirit" (*Rom* 12.6), in which "graces" are the spiritual gifts of *Romans* 12.6-8.<sup>105</sup> In examples like these, it is difficult to distinguish between Origen's uses of these two terms.<sup>106</sup>

But what exactly is the "grace" that the Spirit imparts? Is it something abstract? Is it a particular spiritual gift? Or is it even a reference to the Spirit himself? Discerning this is difficult as Origen's usage varies widely across his writings. As Benjamin Drewery has noted, "there is no formal and comprehensive definition of Grace in any of the voluminous writings of Origen", primarily because it was it was never an issue that needed one for him.<sup>107</sup> But Drewery, through an exhaustive study of Origen's use of the term, provides the following definition:

Grace is the power of God freely but not unconditionally placed at man's disposal, whereby he appropriates through the Holy Spirit the offer of salvation to a new and ultimately eternal life revealed and enacted in scripture by the incarnate Jesus Christ and now made available by him to the world.<sup>108</sup>

Drewery's definition correctly highlights Origen's tendency to speak of grace as empowerment. He also identifies the goals of grace as salvation and eternal life, which we have linked with the work of the Spirit.<sup>109</sup> Drewery also notes the Trinitarian emphasis

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<sup>104</sup> Other examples of "gift of grace of the Spirit": *princ.* Pref.8; *hom.in.Lev* 8.11.15; *hom.in.Num* 9.9.1; *com.in.Rom* 9.24.2.

<sup>105</sup> SC 555:158; Scheck, 104:221. An odd use of "grace" in *hom.in.Num* 9.9.1: "Secondly, he buds, when he has been reborn and receives the gift of grace by the sanctification of the Spirit of God" (SC 415:262; Scheck, 44).

<sup>106</sup> See esp. *hom.in.Gen* 15.3: "hear the apostle Paul warning these who were worthy to receive the gifts of the Spirit and grace" (GCS 29:205; Heine, 71:206). Here they seem to be different, but what they are is not explained.

<sup>107</sup> Benjamin Drewery, *Origen and the Doctrine of Grace* (London: The Epworth Press, 1960), 17.

<sup>108</sup> Drewery, *Origen*, 48.

<sup>109</sup> Drewery is also correct in pointing out the Spirit as the personal offerer of that salvation, as well as highlighting the onus that Origen places on the recipient to work out his own salvation by



consistently present in Origen's discussions of both grace and salvation. But grace is not the same as salvation; Origen differentiates between them in *hom.in.Lc* 26.3 and between grace and the forgiveness of sins in *com.in.Rom* 9.15.1.

## Grace as Empowerment

A significant nuance in Origen's use of "grace of the Spirit" is that grace is not simply a specific gift or general unmerited favor, but is the Spirit's empowerment of believers for salvation.<sup>110</sup> A favorite construction for Origen is "through the grace of the Spirit," which he often uses to introduce the spiritual gifts or other blessings that the grace of the Spirit brings forth.<sup>111</sup> The most common of these statements refer to revelation, e.g. *hom.in.Lev* 13.6.2, that holy mysteries can be received "through the grace of the Holy Spirit."<sup>112</sup> But in addition to the reception of mysteries, the grace of the Holy Spirit allows for the proper interpretation of these mysteries, as seen in *hom.in.Lev* 9.1.1:

...by your prayers... we might be able to receive the grace of the Spirit through whom we may have the strength (*valeamus*) to explain the mysteries that are contained in the Law.<sup>113</sup>

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cooperating in the work of God through the Spirit. However, Normal Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 140 n.39, has noted that Drewery is one of few scholars hostile to the idea of deification in Origen, emphasizing other terms more foreign to Origen (citing Drewery, *Origen*, 44-46).

<sup>110</sup> But sometimes a more general sense of grace is intended, e.g. *com.in.Rom* 4.5.2. It should be noted that both the ideas of deification/divinization and salvation are consistent with Origen's language. Origen's understanding of the grace of God as that which helps in man's ascent of the soul shares similarities with that of Philo – see John Barclay, "By the Grace of God I Am What I Am": Grace and Agency in Philo and Paul, in *Divine and Human Agency in Paul and his Cultural Environment* (London: T&T Clark, 2006), 146-48.

<sup>111</sup> Gifts generally: *com.in.Rom* 9.3.7, *Cant.* 3.12, *princ.* 2.7.2. It should also be noted that Origen does not necessarily use the language of "power" (e.g. *dunamis*) for grace, but that my argument revolves around the Spirit's empowering work, seen especially in his use of this type of language.

<sup>112</sup> SC 287:224; Barkley, 83:244. Other related: *princ.* 2.10.7; *or.* 1.1; *com.in.Rom* 1.13.6 (tongues), 4.5.3 (faith), 5.10.7, 9.3.7, 9.6.3, 10.9.2; *hom.in.Lev* 9.1.1; *hom.in.Num* 23.9; *hom.in.Jos.* 8.1.

<sup>113</sup> SC 287:70; Barkley, 83:176.

Origen chooses to emphasize the idea of empowerment to describe the necessary work of the Spirit for interpreting the Old Testament.<sup>114</sup> Similarly, in *hom.in.Jos.* 8.1, he says that, “you ought to know that those things that are read are indeed worthy of the utterance of the Holy Spirit, but in order to explain them we need the grace of the Holy Spirit”.<sup>115</sup> There are numerous other references to the grace of the Spirit empowering interpretation of Scripture, particularly in the gifts of the “word of wisdom” and “word of knowledge” in 1 Cor 12.8, which we have already discussed.<sup>116</sup>

The grace of the Spirit also allows for the reception of other non-revelatory gifts or blessings. Gifts engendered by the grace of the Spirit include tongues (*com.in.Rom* 1.13.6), prophecy (*com.in.Rom* 10.9.2, *hom.in.Num* 23.9), service (*com.in.Rom* 10.1.5), and the aforementioned gift of faith (*com.in.Rom* 4.5.3). There are also other more abstract attributes or blessings that the grace of the Spirit provides, e.g. the love of God is “flooded [into hearts] through the grace of the Holy Spirit” (*com.in.Rom* 4.9.1).<sup>117</sup> The grace of the Spirit also allows for sanctification, as we see in *hom.in.Lev* 5.12.8: after the heart has been cleansed,

... it remains that the grace of the Holy Spirit be added to it, and then it becomes “a breast of presentation” but also a “limb of separation” or “of taking away” (*Lev* 7.34).<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> This again reflects Origen’s understanding of the revelatory gifts of 1 Cor 12 as simply being revelation.

<sup>115</sup> SC 71:218; Bruce, 105:85. This is followed with the word of wisdom and knowledge (1 Cor 12.8). Origen does not use the “through” formula here.

<sup>116</sup> See esp. *princ.* 2.10.7, *com.in.Rom* 5.10.7. Other examples include *princ.* 1.7.3 (teach), “treasure of grace” (*hom.in.Num* 9.6.3), “holy mysteries” (*hom.in.Lev* 13.6.2), or even the “concealed Word” (*com.in.Rom* 9.36.2).

<sup>117</sup> SC 539:302; Scheck, 103:186. Also *com.in.Rom* 4.9.12.

<sup>118</sup> SC 286:262; Barkley, 83:114. Also see *princ.* 1.1.3, *com.in.Rom* 7.1.2.

Origen here likens the life of the Christian to an Old Testament sacrifice. Once the believer has cleansed himself of sin, the grace of the Holy Spirit comes, sanctifying the offering and making it pleasing to God.<sup>119</sup> While believers purify themselves, the grace of the Spirit sanctifies them in the sense of ritualistic consecration. This agrees in part with the idea that the “grace of the Holy Spirit” is the means by which those things which are not “holy in essence,” or innately in possession of holiness, can be “made holy by participating in [this grace]” (*princ.* 1.3.8).<sup>120</sup>

The grace of the Spirit also results in significant theological shifts in the individual, including membership in the body of Christ (*com.in.Rom* 9.3.7). Similarly, in *princ.* 1.3.7, for those who are worthy, “through the grace of the Spirit, *laying aside the old human being with his actions* (Col 3.9), they begin to *walk in the newness of life* (Rom 6.4).”<sup>121</sup> This function, vivification, is particularly important in Origen’s pneumatology; the Spirit helps convert the believer from life in the flesh to life in the Spirit (or spirit).<sup>122</sup> Finally, the grace of the Spirit also enables Christian service, particularly ministering.<sup>123</sup> These examples demonstrate Origen’s use of the “grace of the Spirit” in a dynamic sense, as continually working and moving to a goal. Though Origen does not explicitly use the language of “power” for the grace of the Spirit, it is clear that this grace is an enabling or empowering work by which the saints can accomplish what they need. The grace of the Spirit, therefore, encompasses all aspects of the Christian life, from the individual working out of salvation

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<sup>119</sup> See *princ.* 1.3.8, 1.1.3 (sanctifying power).

<sup>120</sup> Behr, 1:81. In contrast to Father who gives existence and Christ who makes rational (1.3.8). While this statement clearly rings of Rufinus, it is not entirely at odds with Origen’s theology, but contains some extra additions.

<sup>121</sup> Behr, 1:77.

<sup>122</sup> See Ch. 5, p.226.

<sup>123</sup> *hom.in.Jos.* 2.1, *com.in.Rom* 10.1.5.

to the equipping of the body for service.<sup>124</sup> As Origen comments, “those in the present age are vain people, because they are without the grace of the Holy Spirit” (*hom.in.Num* 15.4.1).<sup>125</sup> While there is clearly overlap between “gift” and “grace”, from these examples it is clear that gift refers to more specific works or blessings, while grace is all-encompassing and causal.

## Grace as the Spirit’s Indwelling Presence

But not only does Origen understand the “grace of the Spirit” as a general and practical empowerment of believers through the working of the Spirit, he often refers to the grace of the Spirit as the indwelling presence of Spirit himself, the personal manifestation of the grace of God for the believer.<sup>126</sup> This tendency is most apparent where Origen speaks of the dwelling of the grace of the Spirit or when the grace of the Spirit is removed. In *fr.in.Lc* 231, Origen notes that, “The *mina* is the grace of the Holy Spirit, and the one who has this grace cannot be punished unless he is first stripped of it.”<sup>127</sup> The removal of the grace of the Spirit here is not just the removal of grace, but the Spirit himself from the believer who has sinned. Another example can be found in *hom.in.Num* 7.2.5:

This [withdrawal of grace, leprosy] shows that even if the grace of the Holy Spirit is in someone and that person disparages and detracts, it withdraws

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<sup>124</sup> Through grace does not appear often in *Cels.*, in one instance (7.44) Origen notes that “God is known by a certain divine grace, which does not come about in the soul without God’s action, but with a sort of inspiration” (SC 150:116; Chadwick, 432). Though Origen does not mention the Spirit here, the work mentioned is similar to the Spirit’s enabling Christians to use their rational faculties rightly.

<sup>125</sup> SC 442:212; Scheck, 90.

<sup>126</sup> Bruns, *Trinität*, 136, 156, calls the Spirit the “hypostasis of grace”. The phrase “grace of the Spirit” is by nature difficult to interpret; it is hard to know whether in most cases whether Origen is specifically referring to that which the Spirit possesses (subjective genitive) or whether the Spirit himself is the grace (genitive of apposition).

<sup>127</sup> SC 87:544; Lienhard, 94:220. Commenting on Lk 19.24.

from that person after the detraction, and then the soul is filled with leprosy.<sup>128</sup>

In this example, the removal of the grace of the Spirit, the Spirit's presence, causes the soul to fall back into a state of sin.<sup>129</sup> Additionally, in *hom.in.Lev.* 8.11.15, the "gift of the grace of the Spirit" is described metaphorically or allegorically as oil.<sup>130</sup> Attempting to explain the deeper meaning of the sprinkling of oil by the priest in Leviticus 14.16 (*hom.in.Lev* 8.11.14), Origen makes an exegetical link between purification rites in the Old Testament and the Spirit's work in sanctification, with the oil representing the Spirit's presence. After purification, the "sevenfold virtue of the Holy Spirit" comes upon the subject, which Origen describes as "being filled with the Holy Spirit, by whom he can receive the best 'robe and ring'".<sup>131</sup> The "robe and ring" are the spiritual blessings that the believer receives through the Spirit.<sup>132</sup> Given that the Holy Spirit is often associated with oil in Origen's writings, it is evident that the "grace of the Spirit" here refers to the presence of the Spirit himself.<sup>133</sup> Grace, therefore, encompasses the entirety of the work of the Spirit through his mediating presence; it is impossible to separate the person of the Spirit from this particular concept. To be "filled with the grace of the Spirit" is not simply to overflow with divine grace, but to be indwelt by the divine manifestation of that grace, the indwelling power of God, the Holy Spirit (*hom.in.Jos.* 20.1).<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> SC 415:176-178; Scheck, 27.

<sup>129</sup> See also *hom.in.Lev* 6.2.5: "If you are not 'humble and peaceful,' the grace of the Holy Spirit cannot live within you, if you do not receive the divine words with fear. For the Holy Spirit departs from the proud and stubborn and false soul." Prior to the reception of the grace of the Spirit, one must "be cleansed by the law... restrain vice... having taken on gentleness and humility" (SC 286:274; Barkley, 83:119).

<sup>130</sup> SC 287:67; Barkley, 83:175. Also see *princ.* 2.6.5; *hom.in.Num* 8.11.15; *Cant.* 1.1, 2.9. Spirit as incense: *hom.in.Num* 9.5.2.

<sup>131</sup> For sevenfold spirit, see Appendix.

<sup>132</sup> For Spirit as ring, see Moser, *Teacher*, 110-18.

<sup>133</sup> E.g. *princ.* 2.6.4 (Ps 45.7), *Cant.* 1.3.

<sup>134</sup> SC 71:404; Bruce, 105:173.

This tendency to speak of the “grace of the Spirit” as the Spirit himself is also at times present in Origen’s use of the singular “gift of the Spirit”. Origen occasionally differentiates between the singular “gift of the Spirit”, the gift of the indwelling presence of the Spirit,<sup>135</sup> and plural “gifts of the Spirit”, or the charismatic gifts of 1 Corinthians 12.<sup>136</sup> An example of this can be found in *princ.* 2.7.2:

...the principal (*praecipuus adventus*) coming of the Holy Spirit to human beings is declared after the ascension of Christ to heaven rather than before his coming. For before that, the gift of the Holy Spirit (*donum sancti spiritus*) was conferred upon only the prophets and upon a few others; if there happened to be any among the people deserving of it...<sup>137</sup>

While prophets who received the Spirit received the gift of prophecy, “gift” here does not refer to the prophetic gift, but to the coming of the Spirit on the prophets and on others worthy of it.<sup>138</sup> The Spirit’s presence as gift is also reflected in the fact that the gift of the Spirit can be removed. In *hom.in.Num.* 6.3.6, using the example of David, Origen notes that for the unworthy “the gift can be given back”.<sup>139</sup> While this “gift” refers at least partially to prophecy in both Moses and David, it is a more general reference to the Spirit’s presence. In *princ.* 2.10.7, speaking of the unworthy, “the gift of the Spirit will certainly be withdrawn from his soul, and the portion which remains, that is, the substance (*substantia*) of the

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<sup>135</sup> In the sense of Acts 2.38, 10.45; maybe Heb 6.4. Moser, *Teacher*, 137, calls the Spirit’s presence the greatest gift.

<sup>136</sup> See esp. *com.in.Rom* 4.5.3. Though sometimes singular can refer to spiritual gifts: *hom.in.Ex* 3.2, in which the “gift of the Holy Spirit” refers to the particular “discernment of spirits” in 1 Cor 12.10 (SC 321:92; Heine, 71:250) or *Cant.* 4.15: ‘wings of a dove covered with silver,’ which denotes the flights of reason through the gift of the Holy Spirit” (SC 376:712; Lawson, 26:253).

<sup>137</sup> Behr, 2:217. This may also be the case in the Trinitarian statement in *princ.* 1.3.7, though it is difficult to know given the context.

<sup>138</sup> The emphasis in this passage is on the believer’s ability to understand the deeper meaning of scripture through the Spirit, even mention of the “innumerable multitudes of believers who, although not all are able to explain in order and with clarity the logic of spiritual understandings” those things discerned by the Spirit (*princ.* 2.7.2; Behr, 2:219). cf. *hom.in.Jos.* 3.2.

<sup>139</sup> SC 415:154; Scheck, 23.

soul [will be] divided off and separated from that Spirit”.<sup>140</sup> While the Spirit works in those who merit his presence, he is just as easily removed when the person falls into sin.

The distinction between the singular “gift” of the Spirit versus the “gifts of the Spirit” is most evident where they appear together. Origen at times speaks of the “gift of the Spirit” as that which allows for the reception of the gifts of the Spirit.<sup>141</sup> In *hom.in.Jos* 26.2, the soul is “filled up with the word of wisdom and the word of knowledge through the gift (*donum*) of the Spirit”.<sup>142</sup> There is also clear semantic overlap with “grace of the Spirit”, e.g. in *hom.in.Num.* 3.1.2:

For in the holy Scriptures I find that some catechumens were worthy to be indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and others who had received baptism were unworthy of the grace of the Holy Spirit (*sancti Spiritus gratia*). Cornelius was a catechumen, and before he came to the waters, he merited to receive the Holy Spirit [cf. Acts 10.47]. Simon has received baptism, but because he approached this grace with hypocrisy, he is rejected from the gift of the Holy Spirit (*a dono Spiritus sancti*) [cf. Acts 8.13].<sup>143</sup>

In this example, “indwelling” and “grace,” as well as “reception” and “gift” all refer to the Spirit’s presence in the individual believer.<sup>144</sup> Origen’s theological concern in this passage is clear: evildoers like Simon Magus are not worthy of the gift of the Spirit’s presence.

We see, therefore, that “gift” and “grace” of the Spirit can both refer to the Spirit’s presence in Origen’s writings. This does not mean, however, that they are synonyms. Origen’s use of the two terms together testifies to this: e.g. the “gift of grace” (*hom.in.Num* 9.9.1) or “gifts

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<sup>140</sup> Behr, 2:267. See also *princ.* 1.3.7 (Behr, 1:77), where God’s Spirit is taken away from the unworthy (citing Gen 6.3, Ps 104.29-30 (103 LXX)).

<sup>141</sup> E.g. *princ.* 2.7.2, 2.10.7; *Cels.* 7.51; *Cant.* 4.15; *hom.in.Num* 6.3.6; *hom.in.Ex* 3.2; *com.in.Rom* 7.5.5, *hom.in.Ez* 6.5, *hom.in.Jos.* 3.2, 26.2. Again, Origen’s usages can be difficult to distinguish.

<sup>142</sup> SC 71:494; Bruce, 105:217. Also *hom.in.Jos.* 3.2: after perfection “whether anyone, after all these things, deserves to receive the gift of the Spirit” (SC 71:134; Bruce, 105:45)

<sup>143</sup> SC 415:76; Scheck, 9.

<sup>144</sup> “Grace” in the last sentence refers to baptism and not that of the Holy Spirit. We will discuss this passage again in the next section.

of the graces” (*com.in.Rom* 9.24.2).<sup>145</sup> But the important point in Origen’s use of these terms is that they attest to his understanding of the Spirit’s role in salvation: the Holy Spirit is inseparable from the gifts and graces from God that he provides; salvation is possible because the Spirit is the personal manifestation of grace given by God to assist believers.

## The Tenuous Nature of the Grace of the Spirit

The restricted nature of the Spirit’s work, both in his indwelling presence and in his distribution of the divine gifts, is an important facet of Origen’s pneumatology that reveals the influence of older pneumatological traditions and Origen’s own theological concerns. For Origen, the Spirit’s work is not universal; it is reserved for those who are spiritually deserving. Therefore, Origen often speaks of the Holy Spirit and his gifts as being removed from believers who fall into sin, emphasizing the moral and ethical demands the Spirit’s presence requires.<sup>146</sup> He also speaks of non-Christians and ordinary believers as being unable to partake in the Spirit’s divine wisdom, due either to moral or mental inability.<sup>147</sup>

Origen finds precedence for this belief both in Scripture and in the tradition before him. Even in the Old Testament, Origen sees cautionary examples in both Moses and David:

But if such a great prophet as Moses is shown by the testimony of Scripture to have had the Spirit of God in him at one time, but at another time not to have had it, namely at the moment of sin, then it is certain that a similar idea should be maintained respecting the rest of the prophets.<sup>148</sup>

Following this, Origen even comments that David “demands back the gift that had been taken from him” in Psalm 51.12. For Origen, no one is immune; even patriarchs Moses and

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<sup>145</sup> *hom.in.Gen* 15.3.

<sup>146</sup> Moser, *Teacher*, 144-145, citing *com.in.Rom* 9.24.2-3, notes that the gifts of the Spirit both demand and assist in ethical behavior – they are a “moral imperative”.

<sup>147</sup> See *Cels.* 3.18, 6.13, 7.23.

<sup>148</sup> *hom.in.Num.* 6.3.5 (SC 415:152-154; Scheck, 23).



David committed acts that cause the Spirit's withdrawal from them. Origen even claims that the Holy Spirit has "forsaken the Jews because of impious acts against God and the one prophesied by the prophets among them" (*Cels.* 7.8).<sup>149</sup> Though the Spirit dwells in a different manner and quality after the coming of Christ, the Spirit's departure from believers due to sin and impurity is an ever-present danger for believers; he constantly warns of it.<sup>150</sup>

The idea that the Spirit flees from sin stems from the "sensitive spirit" tradition that Origen has inherited, particularly evident in the *Shepherd of Hermas*.<sup>151</sup> In *Hermas*, the Holy Spirit is a weak spirit who departs from its host when an evil spirit comes in.<sup>152</sup> Though Origen does not portray the Spirit in the same way as *Hermas*, he has inherited the overall sense of the idea, seen especially in his interpretation of the blasphemy of the Spirit (Mt 12.32).<sup>153</sup> Origen interprets this verse as the indwelt believer's rejection and casting out of the Holy Spirit by the committing of sin. His emphasis is more on the believer's willful disobedience than on the Spirit's weakness. For example, in *hom.in.Num* 6.3.1, commenting that the Holy Spirit does not just "'rest' on just any men, but on the saints and the blessed... those

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<sup>149</sup> SC 150:32-34; Chadwick, 401. Origen notes the difference in level of possession of the Spirit, particularly in OT vs NT. In *com.in.Rom* 6.13.8, he notes several levels, including "divine inspiration" (Jn 20.22), in the manner in Acts (Acts 2.4), in the manner of Saul in prophecy (1 Sam 10.10), after the resurrection (Lk 24.32) (SC 543:222-224; Scheck, 104:56-57). See Hällström, *Charismatic*, 11-12.

<sup>150</sup> *princ.* 2.10.7; *Jo.* 20.89, 28.55; *hom.in.Reg* 9.1; *hom.in.Num* 6.3.5; *hom.in.Gen* 15.3; *Cant.* 3.13.

<sup>151</sup> E.g. *Hermas: Mand.* 3.4, 5.2, 10.1, 10.2; Clement of Alexandria: *paed.* 2.10.100, *str.* 2.13.56.1. For more about this idea and its background, see J.E. Morgan-Wynne, "The 'Delicacy' of the Spirit in the Shepherd of Hermas and in Tertullian", *StPatr* 21 (1989), 154-57.

<sup>152</sup> Bogdan Bucur, 'The Son of God and the Angelomorphic Holy Spirit: A Rereading of the Shepherd's Christology', *Zeitschrift Für Die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft Und Kunde Der Älteren Kirche* 98.1-2 (January 2007), 124 n.15, notes H. Opitz's tracing of this theme in *Shepherd of Hermas* to a Jewish-Christian exegesis of 1 Sam 16.14-15 (LXX).

<sup>153</sup> See *princ.* 1.3.2, 1.3.7; *Jo.* 2.80, 19.88, 28.134; *or.* 27.15; *hom.in.Ex* 3.2; *Cels.* 4.5, *hom.in.Lev* 6.2.5, *com.in.Rom* 7.1.3. For treatments, see Tite, 'Holy Spirit', 155 n.63; Moser, *Teacher*, 37-39.

‘who are pure in heart’ [Mt 5.8] and on those who purify their souls from sin”, Origen notes that,

After all, since the Holy Spirit “rested” in view of the purity of their heart, the sincerity of their mind and the capacity of their understanding, he becomes immediately active in them and wastes no time, wherever material that is worthy of his action is available.<sup>154</sup>

For those worthy of the Spirit’s indwelling presence, the Spirit is always actively at work.<sup>155</sup> Origen cannot imagine the Spirit dwelling within an individual without having any outward effect. Those who cooperate with the Spirit in holy living, whose wills are aligned to the will of God, are privileged to receive the Spirit and his gifts. If the Spirit worked in the unworthy, God would be committing a great injustice (*princ.* 1.7.4).<sup>156</sup> Origen’s assumption is that one who has chosen life in the Spirit should not or cannot turn back to the flesh (i.e. Gal 3.3).<sup>157</sup> The Spirit can only dwell and work where he is a welcome guest.<sup>158</sup> And where he is welcome, he comes to fill more fully those who continue to cooperate with his leading.<sup>159</sup> Though the “weakness” of the Spirit is present to some degree in Origen’s understanding of the blasphemy of the Spirit and in the limitation of the Spirit’s presence and work to the saints (*princ.* 1.3.5), Origen shows intent to upgrade his pneumatology from this tradition.<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> SC 415:148; Scheck, 22.

<sup>155</sup> E.g. *hom.in.Jos.* 26.2, *Cant.* 4.15, *com.in.Rom* 7.5.5.

<sup>156</sup> Behr, 1:127. This passage discusses John’s filling with the Spirit (Lk 1.41) and how it must be by merit.

<sup>157</sup> *hom.in.Num* 26.7.1, *com.in.Mt* 12.5. Related is Origen’s treatment of Hebrews 10.29, in which sin is spurning the Son and Spirit (see *Cels.* 8.10; *hom.in.Ez* 5.3.2, 12.1.3; *hom.in.Lev* 11.2.4; *hom.in.Jer* 13.2). Also see his reading of Heb 6.4 (*Jo.* 20.89, 28.55, 28.126; *com.in.Rom* 5.7.9).

<sup>158</sup> See Basil Studer, *Trinity and Incarnation: The Faith of the Early Church* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1993), 110. The Holy Spirit seeks out worthy hosts: *Cant.* Pro2, 3.13.

<sup>159</sup> *princ.* 1.7.4, *com.in.Mt* 13.18, *com.in.Rom* 6.13.7.

<sup>160</sup> Instead of the Spirit’s weakness, Origen’s explanation lies in the restricted nature of the Spirit’s work in the divine economy as befitting his ontological status. As the Holy Spirit, he only

But more importantly, holiness and purity are necessary because the Spirit's presence marks the entry into the participation in the divine.<sup>161</sup> By participating in the indwelling work of the Spirit, the saint is able to participate in God himself (*Cels.* 6.64).<sup>162</sup> Drawing from 1 Cor 3.16 and 6.19, Origen frequently uses the image of the human body as temple for the Spirit, a holy and divine dwelling place.<sup>163</sup> While the Spirit requires holiness for his indwelling, growth in holiness and obedience allows for both the Father and Son to make their home within the believer.<sup>164</sup> The image of temple also represents the place or the goal to which the Spirit leads believers. For example, in *Jo.* 19.57, Origen notes that, "if anyone is an imitator of Christ, let him come to the spiritual temple of God" and that one reaches the temple "following the Spirit, which is able to lead him to it".<sup>165</sup> In *hom.in.Lc* 15.3,

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works in the Holy. Evil spirits, however, still remain a part of Origen's theology; the Spirit is opposed to such spirits: see Moser, *Teacher*, 48-51.

<sup>161</sup> E.g. *Jo.* 2.77, *Cels.* 5.1. Also note in *pasch.* 26, that the Spirit is needed to converse with the flesh of Christ (Nautin, 204; Daly, 54:42). Note also Origen's references to 1 Cor 6.17, that the one united to the Lord is "one spirit" with him: *princ.* 2.10.7; *or.* 26.3; *com.in.Rom* 1.5.3, 3.6.5, 6.1.5; *hom.in.Cant* 2.8; *Cels.* 6.47.

<sup>162</sup> "[God] is participated in, rather than participates; and He is participated in by those who possess the Spirit of God" (SC 147:338; Chadwick, 379). See also *Jo.* 2.77; *Cels.* 6.79, 6.70: "God is always giving a share of His own Spirit to those who are able to partake of Him, though he dwells in those who are worthy not by being cut into sections and divided up" (SC 147:353; Chadwick, 384).

<sup>163</sup> *hom.in.Lev.* 6.5.2; *com.in.Rom* 1.18.10, 6.9.2, 6.13.6, 9.1.5.

<sup>164</sup> *hom.in.Gen.* 1.17, *hom.in.Cant* 2.7, *hom.in.Jer* 8.1.2. In *com.in.Rom* 1.18.10, Origen also states that one can make oneself holy so that angels can dwell, then the Holy Spirit (SC 532:258; Scheck, 103:97). Also *hom.in.Jos.* 13.1, when evil spirits are expelled/annihilated from the soul, Jesus makes it "the dwelling place of God" (Eph 2.2) and "the temple of the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor 6.19) (SC 71:306; Bruce, 105:126). In *hom.in.Num* 23.2.2, the Holy Spirit "offers a feast, when he sees more temples prepared for himself in those who are being converted to God" (SC 461:110; Scheck, 140). One odd reference to the Spirit occurs in *com.in.Mt* 12.20 (GCS 40:115; ANF 10:462), where Origen notes that the deliverance of the Son through his death and resurrection is also from "the profane spirit (βεβήλου πνεύματος) who transforms himself (τοῦ μετασχηματιζομένου) into the Holy Spirit". What he means by this is unclear, given especially a reference to the Trinitarian baptismal formula and eternity of the three persons immediately after (see Ch. 3 n.113).

<sup>165</sup> SC 290:82-84; Heine, 89:181-182. For Origen, the Spirit also mediates the presence of Christ via the virtues (*com.in.Rom* 6.13.9, 7.9.2; *Cels.* 8.18). Whoever manifests the virtues of Christ (righteousness, sanctification, redemption) possesses the Spirit of Christ. The title "Spirit of Christ" is also significant as it indicates a direct link that the Spirit makes between Christ and sanctified believers. Though Moser, *Teacher*, 141 n.8, citing *com.in.Rom* 6.13.9, equates the gifts of the Spirit with the virtues of Christ's *epinoiai*, and the "spirits" as the "gifts" (140), this reduction is simplistic and is not reflected in Origen's actual language. For Spirit and the virtues, see Appendix.

commenting on Lk 2.27, those who “wish to hold Jesus” must also “struggle with every effort to possess the guiding Spirit and come to God’s temple”.<sup>166</sup> In these examples, the temple represents the deeper knowledge and presence of God which can only be attained by the Spirit’s guidance. The Spirit who leads the believer in the process of *theosis* requires absolute purity and holiness because he himself is God’s presence and leads believers deeper into the presence and knowledge of God himself.<sup>167</sup> Rejection of the work of the Spirit is the rejection of the work and presence of God himself; sin must be taken seriously.

## Grace and Free Will

Origen’s use of grace language to describe the work of the Spirit raises the issue of the conflict between grace and free will in Origen’s writings.<sup>168</sup> As scholarship abounds on this subject, this section will not treat this topic at length, but will merely highlight ways in which Origen deals with issue as related to the working of the Spirit. Because Origen speaks of the grace of the Spirit as being merited, there is a sense in which God’s work appears to be conditioned on the working of the believer. Drewery recognizes this tension in his definition of grace: God’s grace is given freely and without compulsion, but is “not

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<sup>166</sup> SC 87:234; Lienhard, 94:63. He also notes in *hom.in.Lc* 38.5 that to “display before the common crowds what the Holy Spirit has revealed and entrusted to me” is to “sell doves, that is, the Holy Spirit” – and results in being cast out of God’s temple (SC 87:446; Lienhard, 94:158).

<sup>167</sup> While Origen does not make a direction connection with the Spirit and God based on the title “Spirit of God”, this connection is obvious (e.g. *Cels.* 5.1, 6.64, 6.70). Though Origen seems to affirm that “Spirit of God” and “Spirit of Christ” are the same Spirit (*com.in.Rom* 6.13.3, 7.1.2), he seems to make distinctions between the two titles (e.g. *ep.* 2). He most often speaks of the “Spirit of God” in the context of scriptural usage, and favors several functions: revelation (1 Cor 2.11, 2.14), adoption (Rom 8.14), freedom from the flesh (Rom 8.9), prophecy (general OT).

<sup>168</sup> For Origen on free will, see Henri Crouzel, ‘Theological Construction and Research: Origen on Free Will’, in *Scripture, Tradition and Reason: A Study in the Criteria of Christian Doctrine: Essays in Honour of Richard P C Hanson* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), 239-265; W.J.P. Boyd, ‘Origen on Pharaoh’s Hardened Heart: A Study of Justification and Election in St Paul and Origen’, *StPatr* 7 (1966), 434-442; Joseph O’Leary, ‘Grace’, in *The Westminster Handbook to Origen*, 114-117. For a discussion of grace and justification, see relevant works by T. Scheck and C.P. Hammond Bammel in the bibliography. For the problem of evil, see Mark Scott, *Journey Back to God: Origen on the Problem of Evil* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

unconditionally placed at man's disposal."<sup>169</sup> Origen's doctrine of God necessitates God's priority in all divine action; he must always give freely and unconditionally, out of his goodness and generosity and never under compulsion. But he does not want to discount human participation in that work; divine-human synergism is of central importance to his soteriology.<sup>170</sup> While Origen's emphasis on merit appears to make God's grace dependent on human effort, it is incorrect to say that Origen believes that good works merit blessings.<sup>171</sup> Instead human holiness is a necessary minimal condition by which the grace of the Spirit can dwell and work. Grace, therefore, is a gift that can be claimed by those who live according to God's will; it is a conditional gift that is freely given.<sup>172</sup>

Origen is aware of the potential conflict between divine sovereignty and human free will in his theology, as related to the Spirit. On two separate occasions he attempts to reconcile this issue. A first place where he addresses this issue is in *com.in.Rom* 4.5.3, a discussion of Abraham and faith in Rom 4.16-17.<sup>173</sup> Origen grapples with the issue that Abraham's act of faith to receive grace is not grace at all. He describes grace as "a favor, not for a debt but for kindness." Origen then links Abraham's faith with the gift of faith in 1 Corinthians 12.9: Paul "asserts that the gift of faith as well is granted along with other gifts through the Holy

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<sup>169</sup> Drewery, *Origen*, 48.

<sup>170</sup> Some scholars have commented that Origen places too much emphasis on free will, resulting even in Jerome calling him the father of Pelagianism. O'Leary, 'Grace', 115, notes: "If Origen stresses freedom somewhat at the expense of grace, it might equally be claimed that Augustinianism defends grace at the expense of freedom."

<sup>171</sup> E.g. statements like "the grace of Spirit which is given to the faithful" (*princ.* 2.11.5; Behr, 2:275) suggest this, but must be understood in their overall context.

<sup>172</sup> O'Leary, 'Grace', 115: "Salvation depends on how well we use our free will, in synergy with the assistance of divine grace, or perhaps even independently of grace: God gives us the capacity to conquer temptation, not the conquest itself, for then there would be no struggle and no merit (*princ.* 3.2.3)." O'Leary also cites Origen's echoing of Philo in the "radical dependence on grace for our basic activities of perception and thought" (e.g. *princ.* 3.1.12).

<sup>173</sup> SC 539:236; Scheck, 103:259. For a comparison of Origen's commentary on this passage with other writers, see Karl Schelkle, *Paulus Lehrer der Väter: die altkirchliche Auslegung von Römer 1-11* (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1956), 132-140.

Spirit... in order to show that even faith is given through grace.”<sup>174</sup> He supports this by also citing other Pauline passages that suggest that faith is a gift granted by God: 1 Cor 12; Rom 12.3, 6; 1 Cor 12.9; Phil 1.29; Lk 1.37.<sup>175</sup> While faith must be exercised by humans to receive grace, God must first give faith as a gift. Because faith is a gift, God can never be indebted or constrained; he always initiates salvation. The saints receive and cooperate with the grace that God gives through the perfection of the gift of faith. This solution, however, is more monergistic than how Origen speaks of free will in other places in that greater priority is placed on God’s giving of faith.<sup>176</sup> It also leaves the issue of why or to whom faith is given unresolved.

A second example appears in *com.in.Rom* 9.3.3. Here Origen denotes three ways by which one receives grace: (1) by the Spirit giving it (1 Cor 12.11), (2) by the measure of faith, (3) for that which benefits (1 Cor 12.7).<sup>177</sup> The last of these options, which we have not seen thus far, is commented on at greater length than the others:

In light, however, of his statement that grace is given “for that which benefits” (cf. 1 Cor 12.7), it can also come to pass that even if the measure of faith in someone is great enough to merit receiving a higher grace, if the Holy Spirit, when he looks into the future, judges that it will not benefit the recipient, he inevitably apportions it to each one as he wills and as is beneficial.<sup>178</sup>

While, in the previous example, Origen explains God’s priority in giving the gift of faith, here he resolves the issue by emphasizing God’s priority in the action of giving grace itself. In order for grace to be received, he notes, “something is done even by us in this, but the

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<sup>174</sup> SC 539:236; Scheck, 103:259.

<sup>175</sup> See *com.in.Rom* 9.3.7. cf. *Jo.* 20.32 (Phil 1.29).

<sup>176</sup> While it agrees to a degree with Origen’s understanding of the gift of faith, the tension between grace and free will is not resolved through the gift of faith.

<sup>177</sup> SC 555:98-102; Scheck, 104:205-207.

<sup>178</sup> *com.in.Rom* 9.3.4 (SC 555:100; Scheck, 104:206).

greater part is based on the generosity of God.” Origen’s explanation is a predestinarian solution that resembles Arminianism in how and why grace is received. It attempts to bypass the divine sovereignty/human free will issue by placing priority on the Spirit’s decision, which is made based on the future effectiveness of this gift. But Origen still holds firmly to the importance of human free will in this: “But it is God’s judgment whether grace is given for that which benefits and becomes useful to the one who receives it; it is also in him whether he wills it to be given at all”.<sup>179</sup>

Though Origen’s proposed solutions do not fully resolve the issue of divine sovereignty and human free will, we must consider them in light of his context and the issues that he is facing. Origen is dealing with the issue of why some who seem to have merited God’s grace and the Spirit by their outward actions have been denied this grace and power. More specifically, he is dealing people who pursue holiness for the wrong reasons or who receive higher divine teachings but have become prideful or even lazy. Origen’s point is that the spiritual gifts which come from God are not owed to people for their good behavior; they are not free for the taking.<sup>180</sup> While there is clearly “something in us that merits grace according to our measure” (*com.in.Rom* 9.3.7), God is ultimately the one who chooses to give.<sup>181</sup> God, who sees all, knows the hearts of people and thus gives the gifts to those who deserve them. The Spirit, therefore, does not come to dwell and work in those whose hearts and wills are not conformed to God, even if their actions seem to merit it; his presence would be ineffective.

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<sup>179</sup> *com.in.Rom* 9.3.3 (SC 555:98-100; Scheck, 104:206).

<sup>180</sup> In this, Origen shows concern for the fatalism present in Gnosticism and other religious systems – see Lyman, *Christology*, 47-48.

<sup>181</sup> “If the grace of the Spirit is absent from them, they cannot be members of the body of Christ” (*com.in.Rom* 9.3.7: SC 555:104; Scheck, 104:208).

Origen's solution to the problem of free will, therefore, results in an uneasy tension between divine sovereignty and human volition. Wanting to emphasize the unseen heart of true believers, he explains God's bestowal of grace as being conditioned on future use and reception of that grace, and thus stresses human effort in receiving this reward.<sup>182</sup> But in Origen's mind, God is totally sovereign in this act; there is no threat to God's free agency. We might sum up Origen's conclusion in this way: God helps those who help themselves; he does not reward those who are not willing to cooperate with him. Those whose lives and will are conformed to God's, who are striving for perfect union with him, are able to receive the gifts that he gives. Or as Origen himself exhorts: "by doing the will of God become worthy of becoming one with the Son and the Father and the Holy Spirit".<sup>183</sup> From Origen's struggle with this idea, we can thus further confirm the importance of the Spirit in the divine salvific work, as well as his personal agency and decision in the midst of that work. Grace, therefore, for Origen, always refers to the initiating and one-sided act of God, which, though undeserved, requires cooperation and effort. With the "grace of the Holy Spirit", Origen's emphasis is the same; the saints must cooperate with the leading of the Spirit to continue to merit his presence and divine work.

## **Baptism and the Exclusivity of the Spirit**

The final issue that we will discuss in this chapter is when and on what basis the Spirit begins to dwell in individual believers, particularly by illuminating Origen's understanding of the Spirit's role in baptism.<sup>184</sup> While not a discussion of the grace or gift of the Spirit,

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<sup>182</sup> Lyman, *Christology*, 66, notes the importance of the will in the goal of divinization: the "ultimate spiritual goal was not static intellectual contemplation, but a continual and active union with God (*Cels.* 8.72)". But this is not with reference to the Spirit.

<sup>183</sup> *mart.* 39 (GCS 2:37; Greer, 70), citing Jn 17.21.

<sup>184</sup> For standard treatments of baptism, see Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church: History, Theology, and Liturgy in the First Five Centuries* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2009), 400-28;



this section will help to frame Origen's understanding of the Spirit's indwelling of believers, i.e. the coming of his "grace", in the overall process of conversion and through the rite of baptism. In understanding the restricted nature of the Spirit's presence in the baptism of the Spirit, we will also reinforce the scope of the Spirit's work in the Trinitarian hierarchy, seen in *princ.* 1.3.5. As this section will show, though baptism is without a doubt important to Origen, it does not guarantee the coming of the Spirit. His emphasis on the worthiness of the recipient for the Spirit's presence is present also in his theology of baptism. Instead, Origen distinguishes water baptism from the baptism of the Spirit. Baptism of the Spirit is a significant theological concept for Origen; it not only marks the Spirit's entry into a believer but is an event initiated by Christ for the salvation of believers, contrasted sharply with the judgment of the baptism of fire.

In *hom.in.Num* 3.1.2, a discussion about catechumens and baptism, Origen states the following:

For not all who are from Israel are Israelites," (Rom 9.6) nor are all who have been washed in the water immediately also washed by the Holy Spirit; just as, on the contrary, not all who are numbered among the catechumens are estranged from and devoid of the Holy Spirit. For in the holy Scriptures I find that some catechumens were worthy to be indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and others who had received baptism were unworthy of the grace of the Holy Spirit.<sup>185</sup>

Origen's point is that water baptism does not guarantee the possession of the Holy Spirit.<sup>186</sup>

Using the examples of Acts 10 and Acts 8, Origen shows that Cornelius was not baptized

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Ledegang, *Mysterium Ecclesiae: Images of the Church and Its Members in Origen* (Leuven: Peeters, 2001), 684-86; C. Blanc, 'Le baptême d'après Origène', *StPatr* 11 (1972), 113-24.

<sup>185</sup> SC 415:76; Scheck, 9. For catechumens and requirements, see H. J. Auf der Maur and J. Waldram, 'Illuminatio Verbi Divini – Confessio Fidei – Gratia Baptismi: Wort, Glaube und Sakrament in Katechumenat und Tauf liturgie bei Origenes', in *Fides Sacramenti, Sacramentum Fidei*, ed. H.J. Auf der Mar (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1981), 52-67, 89-95.

<sup>186</sup> See also *hom.in.Ez* 6.5, *Jo.* 6.169.

before he received the Spirit, while Simon Magus did not receive the Spirit in spite of his baptism. The Spirit's presence is instead conditioned on purity: the believer's life and character lead to the Spirit's indwelling presence, rather than simply an external rite.<sup>187</sup> Those like Simon who "approached this grace with hypocrisy" are similarly "filled with all deceit and deception, son of the devil, enemy of all justice" (Acts 13.10) and thus do not receive the Spirit. Though most catechumens do not yet possess the Holy Spirit, it is entirely possible that some already do and others will never, even when they are baptized.

What purpose does baptism have for the believer then? For Origen, one must be baptized to enter the kingdom of heaven.<sup>188</sup> But water baptism is not viewed as a "single act that constitutes a person a Christian"; rather, it is "only a stage marking the achievement of an acceptable level of morality during the catechumenate and obligating the Christian to maintain that level and, if possible, advance beyond it."<sup>189</sup> For Origen, the washing with water "is a symbol of the soul's purification as it washes from itself all the filth which comes from evil" and is the "beginning and source of divine gifts" (Jo. 6.166).<sup>190</sup> The washing thus "prepare[s] the way for [the Spirit] in advance of those who approached it genuinely" (Jo. 6.167), those who come with an attitude of humility.<sup>191</sup> For those who approach baptism rightly, baptism is a "washing of regeneration" or "bath of rebirth", which takes place by

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<sup>187</sup> See Ferguson, *Baptism*, 411.

<sup>188</sup> Jn 3.5: *com.in.Rom* 2.7.3, 2.7.6, 5.8.3. The baptized are marked by their deadness to sin (*com.in.Rom* 5.8.3).

<sup>189</sup> Trigg, *Origen*, 194. Ferguson, *Baptism*, 408, however, notes that Trigg ('A Fresh Look at Origen's Understanding of Baptism', *StPatr* 17.2 (1982), 959-65) is incorrect in interpreting the difference between water baptism and Spirit baptism as two separate rites.

<sup>190</sup> SC 157: 254; Heine, 80:216. Baptism as cleansing sins: Jo. 6.250; particularly water and Holy Spirit: *mart.* 30; *com.in.Rom* 5.9.11; *hom.in.Num* 7.2.2. Baptism is also associated with deliverance from evil spirits (*hom.in.Jud* 7.2, see Ferguson, *Baptism*, 415).

<sup>191</sup> SC 157: 256; Heine, 80:216. See also *hom.in.Lev* 6.1.5, Jo. 1.40. An interesting fragment (*fr.in.Jo.* 36) also speaks of the "begetting" (*gennethenai*) of the believer in the water through the Spirit, as well as suggesting at the spiritual character of the baptismal water by the Trinitarian formulation. Heine, 'Catena', 119, has suggested it is unreliable.

the hands of Jesus through the renewal of the Spirit (cf. Ti 3.5)<sup>192</sup>. The washing of regeneration and rebirth is what Origen also calls the “baptism of the Spirit” (Lk 3.16), where the Spirit comes to dwell in the believer.<sup>193</sup> This occurs only for those who have died to sin (*com.in.Rom* 5.8.3) and are cleansed by the law (*hom.in.Lev* 6.2.5).<sup>194</sup> Much like with the gifts and graces of God, baptism offers the gift of the Spirit for those whose lives and attitudes are worthy of the Spirit’s presence. But, Origen notes, while many are baptized, the Spirit who comes in baptism is from God does not appear in everyone “after the water” (*Jo.* 6.169).<sup>195</sup> Therefore, as Origen stresses, water baptism is “a benefit for the one who repents,” but results in greater judgment for those who do not (*Jo.* 6.165).<sup>196</sup>

The baptism of the Spirit marks the introduction of the Spirit’s indwelling presence in the believer. While the baptism of the Spirit is clearly linked with water baptism, it can occur at the same time, before, or even after water baptism.<sup>197</sup> But this does not mean that baptism is a multi-part process.<sup>198</sup> As we have seen, baptism symbolizes the purification of the soul and marks the point at which the soul is ready for the Spirit’s indwelling. In an ideal situation, the Spirit comes upon the believer at baptism in conjunction with the

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<sup>192</sup> *Jo.* 6.169 (SC 157: 256; Heine, 80:216).

<sup>193</sup> Origen’s understanding of this stems from his readings of verses like Mt 3.11/Mk 1.8/Lk 3.16 and Jn 1.33, as well as Acts: 1.5, 11.16, etc. See *Jo.* 1.238, 2.85, 2.217, 6.125, 6.159, 32.79; *com.in.Rom* 5.8.3; *Cels.* 1.48.

<sup>194</sup> As Origen notes in *com.in.Rom* 6.13.7, “this gift should be sought by merits and preserved by the blamelessness of one’s life... and the purer the soul is returned, the more generously the Spirit is poured into it” (SC 543:222; Scheck, 104:56).

<sup>195</sup> SC 157: 258; Heine, 80:216.

<sup>196</sup> SC 157: 254; Heine, 80:215.

<sup>197</sup> See *princ.* 1.3.7 (Behr, 1:77): “Finally, for this reason the Holy Spirit was handed over *through the laying-on of the apostles’ hands* after baptism (Acts 8.18, Tit 3.5).” Ferguson, *Baptism*, 127, notes that Auf der Mar (‘*Illuminatio*’, 84) does not think the imparting of the Holy Spirit is part of a particular rite in baptism, but simply a church practice.

<sup>198</sup> Trigg, *Origen*, 194, has argued that this baptism is “not second rite Christians undergo, but an act of Spirit signifying the Christian’s entry into a more perfect life.” See also Lampe, *The Seal of the Spirit: A Study in the Doctrine of Baptism and Confirmation in the New Testament and the Fathers* (London: SPCK, 1967), 165.

water, indicating that the symbol reflects the truth of a pure life and genuine heart. Therefore, though water baptism should be simultaneous with the baptism of the Spirit, this is not always the case.

For Origen, Old Testament baptism and the baptism of John are inferior foreshadowings of the baptism that Christ brings.<sup>199</sup> But John's baptism of Jesus is supremely important for Christians, initiating true baptism and serving as the model of baptism for Christians.<sup>200</sup> At the baptism of Jesus, Origen notes that the Holy Spirit "came down for the forgiveness of the world's sins" (*hom.in.Lc* 27.5).<sup>201</sup> The important point in this is that the Holy Spirit "remains and does not pass on" (*Jo.* 2.84); it "has been bound to him and can no longer fly away" (*Jo.* 6.220).<sup>202</sup> The reason for the Spirit's remaining is Christ's perfection (*hom.in.Num* 6.3.4, 6.3.7); he is filled with the Spirit to the utmost capacity (*hom.in.Lc* 29.1).<sup>203</sup> This filling results in a perfection of union between the human soul and the Holy Spirit, leading Origen to describe Christ as one "distinct from all others... led by the Holy Spirit" (*hom.in.Lc* 29.2).<sup>204</sup> The Spirit's remaining is an indication that Christ is the Savior,

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<sup>199</sup> *Jo.* 6.168-69, see Ferguson, *Baptism*, 400-06. In *Jo.* 6.162, Origen emphasizes the spiritual nature of Christ's baptism (purification and repentance) to that of John's. For Old Testament e.g., see *hom.in.Ex.* 5.1.

<sup>200</sup> See *Jo.* 2.84, 6.220, 6.262; *hom.in.Lc* 27.5; *Cels.* 1.40; *hom.in.Lc* 7.1.

<sup>201</sup> SC 87:348; Lienhard, 94:114. Paralleling the incarnate language of *com.in.Mt* 13.18. This is not saying that the descent of the Spirit forgives sins, but is a necessary step in the divine plan for the forgiveness of sins.

<sup>202</sup> SC 157: 296-298; Heine, 80:228. For emphasis on "remain", see also *Jo.* 1.238, 2.85, 2.217, 6.220, 13.405; *hom.in.1Reg* 7.4; *hom.in.Num* 6.3.3-4, 6.3.7; *hom.in.Is* 3.2. This emphasis is particularly strong in *Jo.* 2.84 – Origen continues that "perhaps [the Holy Spirit] would have passed on among men who cannot constantly bear his glory" (SC 120:260; Heine, 80:116). For "remain" vs. "continue to remain", see *hom.in.Num* 6.3.4, cf. Philo, *Gig.* 28.

<sup>203</sup> SC 87:360; Lienhard, 94:119. Origen notes in *hom.in.Lc* 29.1 that the filling is greater than Paul's and the other apostles'.

<sup>204</sup> SC 87:360; Lienhard, 94:119. Lyman, *Christology*, 65, notes the "process which Origen describes in his account of the union between Jesus' soul and the Logos", seen in his continual attention (*tonos*) to God. She also notes, 74, that Christ's soul was "essentially *treptos*, yet remained with the Logos by *proairesis*", citing *princ.* 2.6.5. Thus, Christ's soul becomes "the archetype for the reunion of all souls with God through the Logos; action and essential being are not confused" (75)

a fulfillment of Isaiah 11.2 (*hom.in.Num* 6.3.3).<sup>205</sup> But for believers, the most significant point about the Spirit's remaining on Christ is that:

He, therefore, received the Spirit which remained on him that he might be able to baptize those who come to him with that very Spirit which remained.<sup>206</sup>

By his perfect union with the Spirit, Christ enables Christians to receive the Holy Spirit in a greater way than was possible before.<sup>207</sup> Through this new indwelling, union with God becomes possible, as indwelt Christians follow the leading of the Spirit (*hom.in.Lc* 29.2) and imitate the character of Christ.<sup>208</sup> For Origen, the fact that Christ himself baptizes with the Holy Spirit is significant; Christ “reserves for himself” this act (*Jo.* 6.125).<sup>209</sup> It should be noted briefly here that while Origen clearly refers to a Trinitarian baptismal formula,<sup>210</sup> it is not something that he ever treats at length.<sup>211</sup> Though the frequency of references to the

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and conformity of wills is stressed (e.g. *princ.* 3.6.5) rather than an “automatic congruence of nature” (77).

<sup>205</sup> See also *com.in.Mt* 13.2. This is in contrast to regular people, on whom the Spirit merely “rests” (*hom.in.Num* 6.3.1-2).

<sup>206</sup> *Jo.* 6.220 (SC 157:298; Heine, 80:228). The Spirit remains so Christ can baptize with the Spirit: *Jo.* 1.238, 2.85, 2.217. In *com.in.Rom* 5.8.3, he refers to this baptism as being “from above”.

<sup>207</sup> I.e. compared to Old Testament prophets.

<sup>208</sup> *hom.in.Lc* 27.5 – believers are also called “to imitate the innocence of doves”, i.e. the Spirit (SC 87:348; Lienhard, 94:114). See Moser, *Teacher*, 146-47.

<sup>209</sup> SC 157:226; Heine, 80:204. Also *Cels.* 1.48. Christ is the one who baptizes with Holy Spirit and fire: *hom.in.Jer* 2.3.1, *Jo.* 32.79. In *com.in.Rom* 2.13.32, Origen notes that “many baptism were necessary before the baptism of Christ... and many purifications were carried out before the purification of the Holy Spirit” (SC 532:412; Scheck, 103:162). Christ’s work through the Spirit is the ultimate work of purification and salvation that the works of the Old Testament point to. In *hom.in.Num* 7.2.2, he notes that “baptism was an enigma... but now, in reality, it is a ‘regeneration in water and in the Holy Spirit’” (SC 415:174; Scheck, 26).

<sup>210</sup> Particularly where he quotes Mt 28.19, e.g. *Jo.* 6.166, *princ.* 1.3.2, *com.in.Rom* 5.8.7-9, *hom.in.Gen* 13.3, *hom.in.Ez* 7.4, *hom.in.Ex* 8.4, *com.in.Mt* 12.20.

<sup>211</sup> Some scholars, however, view the Trinitarian baptismal formula as being central to his understanding of Trinity, e.g. Bruns (*Trinität*, 137), Kretschmar (*Studien*, 128), Ziebritzki (*Heiliger Geist*).

Trinitarian baptismal formula suggest its importance, Origen makes more individual references to the work of the Son and the Spirit in baptism.<sup>212</sup>

The baptism of the Holy Spirit is often contrasted with the baptism of fire,<sup>213</sup> particularly in Origen's discussions of Luke 3.16 and Mt 3.11: "I baptize you with water... But he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire."<sup>214</sup> The baptism of fire is also distinct from physical water baptism and the baptism of the Spirit.<sup>215</sup> However, similar to the baptism of the Spirit, it removes evil from the heart of the individual. While the baptism of the Spirit takes place through repentance and cooperation with the Spirit, the baptism of fire is an eschatological judgment, a burning away of evils.<sup>216</sup> We see this in *hom.in.Ez.* 1.13:

God removes evil from us in two ways, by Spirit and fire. If we are good and attentive to his precepts, and we learn his words, he removes our evils by the Spirit, according to what is written: "But if by the Spirit you put to death the works of the flesh" (Rom 8.13)... But if the Spirit has not removed evils from us, we stand in need of the purification of fire.<sup>217</sup>

The judgment or purification of the baptism of fire can be avoided by those who receive the Spirit's baptism and maintain a purity of life.<sup>218</sup> But the baptism of fire is also reserved

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<sup>212</sup> Esp. in *princ.* 1.3.2, *Jo.* 1.166. Note *com.in.Rom* 5.8.7 – Origen finds it unfitting to talk about Father and Spirit in the context of Christ's death (SC 539:470-472; Scheck, 103:536-537).

<sup>213</sup> Holy Spirit as fire: *Cels.* 6.70, *com.in.Rom* 6.13.8, *pasch.* 26. As fire going out: *hom.in.Lev* 9.9.7, *hom.in.Gen* 15.3.

<sup>214</sup> *hom.in.Lc* 24.1: baptism with Holy Spirit and fire are different things; the apostles were never baptized with fire (SC 87:324; Lienhard, 94:103). Also see *Jo.* 1.238, 2.85, 6.125, 6.15; *Cels.* 4.13, 5.15; *hom.in.Lev* 15.3.3; *hom.in.Jer* 16.6.

<sup>215</sup> Ferguson, *Baptism*, 400-01, notes a fourfold use of baptism in Origen: (1) shadows/types in the OT (including John), (2) Christian water baptism, (3) the spiritual baptism by the Spirit, (4) the eschatological baptism of fire. Martyrdom is sometimes a fifth form of baptism.

<sup>216</sup> *Cant.* 1.1 (SC 375:212; Lawson, 26:72): "And the kind of *cassia* employed is one that is very hot and burning... and that either denotes the fervor of the Holy Spirit or else is a type of judgment by fire that is yet to come."

<sup>217</sup> SC 352:88; Scheck, 62:42. See also *hom.in.Jer* 2.3.1; *Jo.* 32.79; *Jo.* 13.23; *hom.in.Ez* 13.2.5. Those "not cured by the baptism of the Holy Spirit" are baptized with fire as "they were unable to be purged by the purification of the Holy Spirit" (*hom.in.Ez.* 5.1.2: SC 352:192; Scheck, 62:79).

<sup>218</sup> *hom.in.Jer.* 2.3.2. Also *hom.in.Lc* 24.2: "If anyone desires to pass over to paradise after departing this life and needs cleansing, Christ will baptize him in this river and send him across to the place he longs for. But whoever does not have the sign of earlier baptisms, him Christ will not

as a means of salvation for fallen or unworthy believers, even those who have formerly possessed the Spirit.<sup>219</sup> It also appears to be the ultimate fate of sinners and non-believers, which suggests Origen's universalism.<sup>220</sup> Origen undoubtedly considers the preservation of the baptism of the Spirit to result in a better fate than needing the baptism of fire.<sup>221</sup> In this sense, fallen believers and unbelievers seem to suffer the same fate, the forced removal of sins through fiery judgment. Therefore, the baptisms of Spirit and fire function as a sort of carrot and stick: the Spirit works and confirms the purification of believers through his indwelling presence (the carrot), but those unwilling will be purified through judgment (the stick).

We see, therefore, that baptism marks the initiation of the Spirit's presence and work in the believer. The fuller indwelling of the Spirit, compared to that of the Old Testament saints, is enabled by Christ's baptism and perfect union with the Holy Spirit. This newer and greater possession of the Holy Spirit allows for entry into the knowledge of and participation in the divine. Though the Holy Spirit's coming is associated with baptism, it is not guaranteed by it; the Spirit only comes to dwell in those who are worthy. Though ideally the Spirit should come at baptism, where the water symbolizes the purity of the

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baptize in the fiery bath. For, it is fitting that one should be baptized first in 'water and the Spirit' (Jn 3.5). Then, when he comes to the fiery river, he can show that he preserved the bathing in water and the Spirit" (SC 87:326; Lienhard, 94:103-104).

<sup>219</sup> *hom.in.Jer* 2.3.1: "another man, after he has believed, after he has been deemed worthy of the Holy Spirit, after he has sinned again, Jesus washes in fire, so that it is not the same man who is baptized by Jesus in the Holy Spirit and in fire" (SC 232:244; Smith, 97:26). Origen also notes in *hom.in.Jer.* 2.3.3 that one "who has kept the baptism of the Holy Spirit" shares in the first resurrection, while the one "who needs baptism from fire" is tested by the fire as he has "hay and stubble to burn" and will be saved in "another resurrection" (SC 232:246; Smith, 97:27). This may be a reference to the *apokatastasis*.

<sup>220</sup> See *hom.in.Lc* 26.3: "One and the same baptism will be turned into condemnation and fire for the unworthy and for sinners; but to those who are holy and have been turned to the Lord in total faith, the grace of the Holy Spirit, and salvation, will be given" (SC 87:340; Lienhard, 94:110).

<sup>221</sup> But it does not seem that those who have lost the Spirit can regain him: see *Cels.* 6.52; *princ.* 1.3.7; *com.in.Rom* 6.13.7, 8.11.14.

soul, for some the Spirit comes prior to or after it. While Origen's theology of baptism raises questions about Christian belief and the presence of the Holy Spirit, i.e. whether all Christians can possess the Holy Spirit, Origen's concerns are clearly in the practical outworking of the Christian life as a reflection of a purified inner status.<sup>222</sup> But baptism for Origen serves as a marker, the beginning of the Spirit's giving of his gifts and graces; continued participation in the Spirit's work and leading ultimately results in perfection and salvation.

## Conclusion

This chapter has examined the Holy Spirit's role in the downward focused Trinitarian work of salvation in Origen's system. As has been demonstrated, the Holy Spirit's work is the practical and direct working of the divine plan of salvation; the assistance for believers through the giving of the divine spiritual gifts and the manifestation of the empowering grace of God. Though it is difficult to say that this concept pervades the entirety of Origen's literary corpus, it is clear that it is a subject which he has considered at length and tries to detail systematically, at least in certain places.<sup>223</sup> But Origen is consistent in articulating the Spirit's particular place as dwelling within the saints, working alongside them in their attainment of the goal of the knowledge of the Son and the Father. This is the unique work

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<sup>222</sup> Though not said explicitly, passages like *hom.in.Num* 3.1.2 suggest that many who identify as Christians and receive baptism never have their sins purged or receive the Spirit. They are Christians only in name; their loyalty to the flesh is greater than their loyalty to God. The fact that their fate is the same as unbelievers also supports this.

<sup>223</sup> Marksches, 'Heilige Geist', 125, provides some helpful comments: "Natürlich wäre es vermessen zu behaupten, daß Origenes bei jedem Satz, den er in über zwanzig Jahren Arbeit aufschrieb oder diktierte, stets und immer die Reihenfolge ‚von Gott durch Christus im Geist‘ im Hinterkopf hatte und daraufhin kritisch alle Texte prüfte... Aber mir scheint freilich, daß man an sehr Vielen Stellen - wie der Autor Origenes - doch die Konstitutionsrichtung des Gnadenwirkens von Gott her durch den Logos im Heiligen Geist im Hinterkopf haben sollte, selbst wenn Origenes nicht an jeder Stelle die ganze Reihe aufzählt oder expliziert, ja an den meisten Stellen das *διὰ Χριστοῦ* entfaltet und das *ἐν πνεύματι* dafür zurücktritt."



of the Spirit, the divine person who, by virtue of his status, can cooperate with the saints to initiate them into the participation of the divine. The idea that the Holy Spirit's work is always in conjunction with the effort of the believer is an important feature in Origen's pneumatology. It also explains Origen's restriction of the Spirit's work to the saints and unique features in his pneumatology like his understanding of the baptism of the Spirit or his interpretation of the blasphemy of the Spirit. But it is problematic in that it suggests different levels of the Spirit's workings from person to person; there is no single uniform work of the Spirit. For Origen, however, it is not an issue; the Spirit's work is effective to the degree one can participate with him. The Spirit's role in leading to greater participation, his upward-leading work in salvation, will be the subject of the next chapter.

## REVELATION, SANCTIFICATION, AND THE HOLY SPIRIT

This chapter will examine two major roles of the Holy Spirit in Origen's theology: revelation and sanctification. These two functions are also indicative of the upward work of the Spirit, the assistance the Holy Spirit provides to lead the believers in the process of *theosis*. Both works are characterized by a synergistic participation, the saints cooperating with the Holy Spirit in the working of salvation. If sanctification refers to the Spirit's work on the physical or moral level, revelation refers to the Spirit's work on the mental or intellectual level. While these two functions do not encompass the entirety of the work that the Spirit does, they are two of the most significant and primary ways in which the Spirit directs believers toward to the Son, the image of the Father.<sup>1</sup> They are also reflective of the Spirit's role in Origen's Trinitarian hierarchy and economy – the Spirit is always pointing and leading upward to the Son and the Father.

We will begin this discussion by examining Origen's use of "revelation" language for the Spirit. Analysis will reveal that Origen's understanding of the Spirit's revelatory work is drawn heavily from 1 Corinthians 2.10-11 and the Spirit's special knowledge of the Father through his "searching" of him. For Origen, the Spirit is the revealer of divine mysteries, the illuminator and teacher sent by the Son. While there is some overlap between the revelatory roles of Son and Spirit, Origen's tendency is to speak of the Son as the object of the Spirit's revelatory work and the Scriptures, which he has inspired, as the means through which he reveals. In the second half of this chapter, we will examine the Spirit's

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<sup>1</sup> Another role of the Spirit, present often in Origen's discussions of Romans, is vivification. This role will be mentioned briefly in the section on sanctification. Prophecy, which we have discussed in Ch. 4, is primarily an Old Testament phenomenon.

work in sanctification. For Origen, sanctification refers to the Spirit's assistance with and confirmation of the believers' holy living, by which he offers them up to the Father. Sanctification is a process in which the onus is placed on the individual saint to "sanctify" or "purify" himself in cooperation with the assistance of the Spirit. Through this work of the sanctification, the Spirit leads believers upward to the resemblance of and vision of the perfect image of the Son, by which they are able to see the Father, the goal of this work.

## **The Holy Spirit as Revealer**

This section will examine the nature of the Spirit's revelatory work and the basis on which Origen grounds it, beginning with Origen's use of "reveal" language and other related terms. We will also clarify the Spirit's particular work in revelation compared with the Son's. While what or how the Spirit reveals is at times difficult to discern in Origen's writings, most often the Spirit reveals divine mysteries or the Son; the context of revelation is most often in scriptural interpretation. But the Spirit's revelation is a consistent function he plays, always directed at a higher goal or vision, consistent with the place and functions he holds.<sup>2</sup>

## **The Scriptural Basis for the Spirit's Revealing Work**

Origen's portrayal of the Spirit as revealer begins with his reading of 1 Corinthians 2.10-11. In these verses, Origen finds a framework for a divine economy of revelation that emphasizes the personal work of the Spirit in the believer's acquisition of spiritual truths. God's hidden wisdom (1 Cor 2.7), the mystery of his nature concealed from the world, is "revealed (*revelo/ἀποκαλύπτω*) to us through the Spirit" (1 Cor 2.10).<sup>3</sup> While

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<sup>2</sup> Contra Hauschild, *Gottest Geist*, 131, who mentions how little Origen talks about the Spirit's revelation, even in 1 Cor 2.10.

<sup>3</sup> E.g. *hom.in.Num* 12.2.4.

*revelo/ἀποκαλύπτω* are important terms that describe the Spirit's particular revealing action,<sup>4</sup> Origen also uses a variety of other terms to speak of this same function: *profero* (ἐκφέρω),<sup>5</sup> *demonstro*,<sup>6</sup> *cognosco* (γινώσκω),<sup>7</sup> and *nosco* (γνωρίζω).<sup>8</sup> It should be noted that *cognosco* and *nosco* are more common than the rest, likely due to their link to 1 Cor 2.11.<sup>9</sup> The Spirit's revelatory function is possible because he "searches (ἐραυνᾷ/*scrutatur*) everything, even the depths of God" (1 Cor 2.10) and thus knows the divine mysteries.<sup>10</sup> The importance of these verses to Origen is seen in his frequent use of the revelatory formula of 1 Cor 2.10: 'God reveals (*revelat*) through (*per*) the Spirit'.<sup>11</sup> Origen even uses this formula consistently without any scriptural citation.<sup>12</sup> In this formula, Origen finds precedence for a divine order or work in revelation. Similar to the giving of the divine gifts, Origen depicts

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<sup>4</sup> *Revelo*: *princ.* 1.1.2, 1.3.4; *com.in.Rom* 8.11.7; *Cant.* Pro2.

<sup>5</sup> See *hom.in.Num* 12.1.5, *princ.* 4.2.7. *Profero*, and its Greek equivalent ἐκφέρω, is used only indirectly of the Spirit: *de sacramentis filii dei [...] repleti divino spiritu protulerunt* (Behr, 2:510).

<sup>6</sup> In *princ.* 2.7.2, mysteries in Scripture are revealed (*demonstratur*) through the grace of the Spirit (*per gratiam sancti spiritus*) (Behr, 2:218). It often carries the simple sense of "show", but carries an active sense, e.g. Jn 5.20, Mk 14.15. The Greek δεικνυμι is often used as an equivalent, but there are others: γνωρίζω (Ps 25.3), ἐμφανίζω (Wis 18.18), προσφέρω (1 Macc 7.33).

<sup>7</sup> See *princ.* 1.3.4, 2.7.4. Other biblical examples include Ps 9.16 (*cognoscitur Dominus*), Ps 48.3, or 1 Jn 4.2 (*in hoc cognoscitur Spiritus Dei*).

<sup>8</sup> See esp. *com.in.Rom* 8.11.7: The Spirit "makes known" what he knows, similar to the passive use of *cognosco*. The use of this verb in this sense, particularly of God and mysteries, is well attested in the New Testament: see Col 1.27, Eph 3.3, Eph 1.9, Rom 9.22, Acts 2.28, Jn 17.26, Jn 15.15.

<sup>9</sup> E.g. *princ.* 1.3.4: *Omnis enim scientia de patre, 'revelante filio', in spiritu sancto cognoscitur* (Behr, 1:70).

<sup>10</sup> Origen cites the second half of 1 Cor 2.10 more than the first: *princ.* 4.2.7, 4.4.8, 1.3.4; *com.in.Rom* 8.11.7, 9.3.9, 8.13.6; *hom.in.Num* 18.2.2; *Jo.* 2.6; *com.in.Mt* 14.11. In *princ.* 4.3.14, he calls this "the depths of the divine wisdom and knowledge" (Rom 11.33) (Behr, 2:557).

<sup>11</sup> ἡμῖν δὲ ἀπεκάλυψεν ὁ θεὸς διὰ τοῦ πνεύματος. In the NT, the Son (Mt 11.27, Lk 10.22) and Father (Mt 11.25, Lk 10.21, Lk 16.17) more often reveal. Origen seems to follow this trend in his writings. Son: *princ.* 1.3.4, *hom.in.Ex* 2.4, *hom.in.Num* 18.2.2. God/Father: *princ.* 1.3.4; *or.* 2.6; *com.in.Rom* 3.8.5, 3.8.8; *hom.in.Num* 12.1.5.

<sup>12</sup> E.g. *hom.in.Num* 12.1.5: *manifestavit Deus per spiritum suum* (SC 442:78). *Manifesto* (φανερώω) is often used of Jesus' self-revelation (Jn 1.31, 2.11), the revelation of God (Rom 1.19), or his attributes (Rom 3.21, 14.25). See also *com.in.Rom* 1.18.4: *per Sanctum Spiritum summ... aperiatur* (SC 532:252; Scheck, 103:94). The Latin *aperio* is most used in the sense of 'to open', though 'reveal' is also possible, often of God (e.g. Lam 2.14). One potential Greek equivalent is τραχηλίζω, a hapax legomena, which appears in Hebrews 4.13: "all are naked and *laid bare* to the eyes of the one to whom we must render an account" (NRSV).

the Spirit in a mediatory role in divine revelation, seen in his use of the prepositions *per/διὰ*,<sup>13</sup> or *in/ἐν*.<sup>14</sup> Revelation “through the Spirit” begins with the initiation of the Father and is accomplished through his Spirit.<sup>15</sup> But God is also at times the object of revelation, as Origen notes in *princ.* 1.3.4: “all knowledge of the Father is acquired through the revelation (*reuelante*) of the Son in the Holy Spirit”.<sup>16</sup> God, therefore, both reveals through and is made known by his Son and Spirit.<sup>17</sup> Both downward and upward movements highlight the invisible God’s act of self-disclosure by means of his more visible mediators. Origen’s emphasis on roles and hierarchy is also seen his repeated mention that Christ is revealed “through the Holy Spirit”,<sup>18</sup> which Origen cites 1 Cor 12.3 to support.<sup>19</sup> God, therefore, reveals through his Holy Spirit and Son; the Son reveals the Father, while the Spirit reveals the Son. In these examples, there is a distinct hierarchy in the order of revelation, with the lower making the higher known.<sup>20</sup>

Although the Spirit knows and reveals the “depths of God” (1 Cor 2.10), Origen’s Trinitarian hierarchy is evident in the fact that he does not often speak of Spirit revealing the Father

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<sup>13</sup> E.g. *princ.* 1.3.4; *com.in.Rom* 3.8.5, 3.8.8; *hom.in.Num* 12.2.4. See esp. *com.in.Rom* Pref.2, *hom.in.Num* 17.3.2. Origen prefers 1 Cor 2.10 to other verses, e.g. Eph 3.5, 1 Pet 1.12.

<sup>14</sup> See *princ.* 1.3.4, *com.in.Rom* 8.13.9. Revelation ἐν πνεύματι appears in Eph 3.5 and ὑπὸ τοῦ πνεύματος τοῦ ἁγίου in Lk 2.26, though Origen does not cite either.

<sup>15</sup> This is also the case for the Son whose revelation is more direct – see Ch. 2.

<sup>16</sup> Behr, 1:71

<sup>17</sup> God as the object of revelation is seen particularly when Origen cites both Mt 11.27 and 1 Cor 2.10, placing the Spirit and Son in tandem (see *princ.* 1.3.4; *com.in.Rom* 3.8.8, 8.11.7; *hom.in.Num* 18.2.2).

<sup>18</sup> *hom.in.Num* 12.1.5. See also: *princ.* 4.4.8, 2.7.3; *com.in.Mt* 14.5. The Spirit also reveals through the power of the Word (*princ.* 4.2.7). Note the Spirit’s revelation of the Trinity (suspicious) in *hom.in.Jos* 3.2.

<sup>19</sup> For 1 Cor 12.3, see *princ.* 1.3.7, 2.7.3; *or.* 22.3; *Jo.* 32.128. Origen says that Christ cannot be confessed until the Spirit is sent (see *Jo.* 32.399, 13.187). On one occasion, the Son reveals the Spirit (*hom.in.Ex* 2.4).

<sup>20</sup> The Spirit is known through Scripture – see Ch. 3. Tite, ‘Holy Spirit’, 138, finds parallels for the Spirit’s revealing function in Gnostic writings, esp. *Gospel of Truth* 26.3-27.8.

directly.<sup>21</sup> Instead, the Spirit more frequently reveals spiritual knowledge (*princ.* 1.1.2) or spiritual meaning (*princ.* 4.2.7), most often in the context of Scripture.<sup>22</sup> Even in the context of prophecy, the Spirit reveals truths and mysteries.<sup>23</sup> This may be due to a belief in the Spirit's inferior knowledge of the Father. As we have seen in Chapter 3, Origen asserts that the Spirit knows the Father through the Son (*Jo.* 2.127), inasmuch as he participates in him as Word and Wisdom (*com.in.Mt* 14.6). Origen also suggests the Spirit's limited capacity for knowledge.<sup>24</sup> He notes in *or.* 2.4:

For our mind would not even be able to pray unless the Spirit prayed for it as if obeying it, so that we can not even sing and hymn the Father in Christ with proper rhythm, melody, measure, and harmony unless the Spirit who searches everything, even the depths of God (1 Cor 2.10), first praises and hymns Him whose depths He has searched out and has understood as far as he is able (ὡς ἐξίσχυσε, κατείληφεν).<sup>25</sup>

While Origen cites 1 Cor 2.11 to refer to the Spirit's special knowledge of God, distinguishing him from creation,<sup>26</sup> he never comments on the exact nature of the "thoughts" or the "depths" or the implications that this has for the person of the Spirit.<sup>27</sup> Given Origen's understanding of the Spirit's origins and nature, this passage suggests his selectivity in reading 1 Cor 2.11 – the Holy Spirit knows the thoughts or the depths of God, but not to the

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<sup>21</sup> E.g. *com.in.Rom* 8.11.7. He does not reveal in the same manner as the Son: see *princ.* 1.1.2, 2.7.2, 4.2.7, 4.3.14; *com.in.Rom* 1.18, *hom.in.Num* 12.2.4.

<sup>22</sup> See *princ.* 1.1.2, 1.3.4; *Cant.* Pro2. Crouzel, *Origen*, 101-102, notes that the "object of knowledge is the divine mystery (*mysterion*)... [the knowledge of] the celestial world is also contained in the Son, Image of the Father... the Mystery is not an idea, but a Person, the Son, and in spite of the multiplicity of 'theorems', that is of objects of contemplation which it provides, the Intelligible World finds its perfection in the unity of the Person of the Son, one and multiple."

<sup>23</sup> See *princ.* 2.7.2, 4.2.7; *Jo.* 6.15; *philoc.* 1.14; *Cels.* 1.43. Reveals doctrines: *Cels.* 6.17; prophecy: *Jo.* 1.284, 2.208.

<sup>24</sup> See *Jo.* 2.76, 13.228.

<sup>25</sup> GCS 3:302; Greer, 85. The first line is an odd statement – it is difficult to know what Origen means by this: οὐδὲ γὰρ δύναται ἡμῶν ὁ νοῦς προσεῦξασθαι, ἐὰν μὴ πρὸ αὐτοῦ τὸ πνεῦμα προσεῦξεται οἷον ἐν ὑπηκόῳ αὐτοῦ.

<sup>26</sup> *com.in.Rom* 8.13.6; *Jo.* 2.172, 2.6. For Origen's use of 1 Cor 2.11, see Crouzel, *Connaissance*, 125-26; Hauschild, *Gottes Geist*, 131.

<sup>27</sup> 1 Cor 2.11: *or.* 1.1, *com.in.Rom* 8.13.6, *com.in.Mt* 13.2, *Cant.* Pro.2, *Cels.* 4.30.

degree that a man's *pneuma* knows his thoughts.<sup>28</sup> Instead, the limited nature of the Spirit's knowledge is similar to what we have seen in Chapter 3. It is possible, however, that the "thoughts" of God could be the forms contained within Wisdom; by participating fully and perfectly in Wisdom, the Spirit possesses the fullness of the knowledge of the Son.<sup>29</sup> But Origen does not ever comment on this – he simply restricts the Spirit's revelatory work to the object of the Son or divine mysteries, through the medium of Scripture, consistent with his cosmological hierarchy and the Spirit's place within it.<sup>30</sup> But the Spirit's work in revelation is absolutely necessary, as Origen notes in *princ.* 1.3.1:

We, however, by faith in that teaching which we hold for certain to be divinely inspired, believe that it is possible in no other way to explain and to bring to human knowledge a higher and more divine teaching regarding the Son than by means of those Scriptures alone which were inspired by the Holy Spirit...<sup>31</sup>

Even in the Rufinus-translated *On First Principles*, we see the Christological emphasis in the Spirit's divine work of revelation and the necessity of that revelation for the saints.<sup>32</sup>

Technically speaking, Origen does not make a distinction in the language he uses for the Son and Spirit's respective revealing functions. For example, in the aforementioned *princ.* 1.3.4, we see: "all knowledge of the Father is acquired (*cognoscitur*) through the revelation (*reuelante*) of the Son in the Holy Spirit".<sup>33</sup> Similarly, in *princ.* 4.2.7, Origen states that

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<sup>28</sup> Basil of Caesarea uses 1 Cor 2.11 as an argument for the Spirit's equal divinity (*Spir.* 16.40, 19.50; *Eun.* 3.4; *ep.* 8).

<sup>29</sup> Especially given his Middle Platonic descriptions of the first and second persons.

<sup>30</sup> In many of the instances where Origen refers to "divine mysteries", the scriptural context suggests he is speaking of the mysteries of the Son hidden in Scripture (esp. OT). Torjesen, *Exegesis*, 108-24, argues that the Son is the content of all Scripture – that in it the Spirit points to the Son.

<sup>31</sup> Behr, 1:67. Similar references and usage: *princ.* 4.2.2, 4.3.15, Pref.4, Pref.8; *Cels.* 4.17. People can also be inspired, especially prophets: *Jo.* 2.208, 28.153; *hom.in.Num* 16.9.4, 23.9, 26.3.2; *Cels.* 4.5.

<sup>32</sup> Allows for contemplation: *or.* 9.22; *Cels.* 4.95, 7.44; *Jo.* 13.32. The Spirit also allows people to glorify Christ and God: *Jo.* 32.352; *or.* 33.1, 33.6.

<sup>33</sup> Behr, 1:71.

mysteries are “made known” (*cognita*) and “revealed” (*revelata*) through the Spirit (*per spiritum*), using both of the Spirit simultaneously.<sup>34</sup> We see in both of these cases that Origen uses the same language to speak of the revealing work of the Son and Spirit. In addition to this, Origen also once interchanges their roles, referring to the Son as also “searching all things”<sup>35</sup> and the Spirit as “making [God] known to whom he wants to reveal.”<sup>36</sup> As we have seen, Origen emphasizes a combined work and similarity of function, e.g. “the Son and the Holy Spirit know and participate in [the Father’s] counsel and will” (*hom.in.Num* 18.2.2).<sup>37</sup> This is also seen in the “as the Son... so the Spirit” construction that demonstrates the concurrent work of the Spirit and Son in leading to the Father in Mt 11.27 and 1 Cor 2.10-11.<sup>38</sup> As Origen notes:

For the Father alone knows the Son, and the Son alone knows the Father,  
and the Holy Spirit alone *searches out even the depths of God*.<sup>39</sup>

Origen’s citations of Mt 11.27 testify of the Son’s special relationship with and knowledge of the Father abound.<sup>40</sup> Though Origen clearly believes that the Son’s knowledge of the Father is greater than the Spirit’s, he views Mt 11.27 and 1 Cor 2.10 as demonstrating their parallel revelatory functions, seen in his citation of them together to demonstrate the special knowledge that the Son and Spirit possess of the Father.<sup>41</sup> Though Origen does not

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<sup>34</sup> Behr, 2:508-509. E.g. 1 Jn 4.2: ‘by this you know (*cognoscitur*) the Spirit of God...’

<sup>35</sup> *com.in.Rom* 9.3.9: *ita et verbum Dei omnia etiam quae in occulto sunt perscrutatur* (SC 555:106; Scheck, 104:209).

<sup>36</sup> See *com.in.Rom* 8.11.7. This appears to be a reference to Mt 11.27.

<sup>37</sup> SC 442:318; Scheck, 111.

<sup>38</sup> See *princ.* 1.3.4, *com.in.Rom* 3.8.8, *hom.in.Num* 18.2.2. In *princ.* 1.3.4, both reveal because they know the Father. Similar points made on the basis of other scripture: *or.* 1.1 (1 Cor 2.12-13); *com.in.Rom* 8.13.6 (Rom 11.28-36; Jn 17.10 and 1 Cor 2.11). For emphasis on parallel functions, see *com.in.Rom* 6.11.3.

<sup>39</sup> *princ.* 4.4.8; Behr, 2:579. cf. Jn 10.15, 17.25.

<sup>40</sup> References include: *princ.* 1.1.8, 1.2.6, 1.2.8, 2.6.1; *Jo.* 1.93, 1.278, 13.146, 19.16, 20.46, 32.355; *Cels.* 6.17, 6.65, etc. Also note Jn 14.6 and 14.9 (*princ.* 1.2.6, *Cels.* 8.12) which testify to the Son unique revelation of the Father.

<sup>41</sup> E.g. *princ.* 1.3.4, 4.4.8; *com.in.Rom* 8.11.7, 8.13.6; *Cels.* 6.17.



comment on the difference between knowing and searching, it is possible that he views the terms as reflecting the level of knowledge that each possesses of the Father.<sup>42</sup> But the important point in this is that Origen views the revelatory work of the Son and Spirit as a unified and parallel work, a feature which appears in both Origen's Latin and Greek writings. It is seen in Origen's references to Christ as wisdom of God (1 Cor 1.24) and the Spirit as knowledge of God (1 Cor 2.10) in *com.in.Rom* 8.13.9. It is especially clear in the numerous places in which Origen allegory interprets images like the images of the eyes of the dove (Song 1.15) or the two olive trees (Zech. 4.3) in *Cant.* 3.1 as the Son and the Holy Spirit.<sup>43</sup> It is most apparent in Origen's interpretation of Christ and the Spirit as the two seraphim in Isaiah 6.2 and living creatures in Hab 3.2.<sup>44</sup> In these images, Origen seems to be suggesting that the Son and Spirit work together to reveal the invisible Father.

But throughout his writings, Origen establishes a theological difference between their revelatory functions. Nowhere does Origen speak of the Spirit in "image" or "reflection" language, or similar language that implies the Spirit's direct reflection of the Father.<sup>45</sup> This direct revelation is reserved for the Son, whose titles indicate his proximity to and resemblance of the Father.<sup>46</sup> As we have seen, Origen does not draw any ontological significance in the Father's sending of the Spirit (Jn 15.26) or the Spirit's searching of the Father (1 Cor 2.11).<sup>47</sup> Instead, his concern is to restrict the Spirit's work to that which fits

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<sup>42</sup> In one instance, however, the Word searches the Father, which Origen draws from Heb 4.12 (*com.in.Rom* 9.3.9). The Spirit is never depicted as knowing or seeing as the Son does, suggesting that all that the Spirit does the Son can do too, but not vice versa.

<sup>43</sup> SC 376:498; Lawson, 26:170-171. See also Maspero, 'Analogies', 567-78.

<sup>44</sup> *princ.* 1.3.4, 4.3.14; *com.in.Rom* 3.8.6. Note again Simonetti's "schema triangolare" ('Note', 292). For more, see Appendix.

<sup>45</sup> Origen, however, is unwilling to go as far as his pupil Gregory Thaumaturgus, who calls the Spirit the image of the Son (*ymb.*).

<sup>46</sup> E.g. Mt 11.27, Jn 6.46, Jn 1.18.

<sup>47</sup> See Ch. 3, p.121. E.g. *com.in.Rom* 7.1.2. For Jn 15.26 see: *princ.* 3.5.8, *Cant.* Proz.

his status – the general revelation of the divine mysteries of the Son by his indwelling presence, often in the context of Scripture (e.g. *princ.* 4.2.7). The gifts of the words of wisdom and knowledge, one of many ways in which Origen speaks of the Spirit’s revelatory work, are similarly confined to the divine mysteries and scriptural interpretation.<sup>48</sup> Therefore, though Origen suggests in his use of 1 Cor 2.10 and parallel allegory imagery that the Son and the Spirit together reveal the Father, this is not an indication of the object of revelation, but rather their shared general goal and function in making the Father known. The primary content of the Spirit’s revelation is the Son, particularly in the context of Scripture. Therefore, the Spirit’s revelation is also depicted as being inferior to the Son’s, due to his lesser knowledge. But he works to lead believers to the Son. For Origen, the Spirit’s work in revelation, seen in 1 Cor 2.10-11, is thus necessary for the human understanding of God. The Spirit’s revelation is thus not lacking; all that humans can know about God begins with his revelation through the Spirit. But it is an initiatory revelation, leading the saints into the knowledge of the Son and not directly to the mystery of the Father. Whether in the context of scriptural interpretation (*Jo.* 2.6) or prayer (*or.* 2.4), Origen uses 1 Cor 2.10-11 as a basis for human possession of divine knowledge. Unless the Spirit works to reveal on this more basic level, humans cannot hope to attain the knowledge of God who is unknowable, invisible, inscrutable, and unsearchable.<sup>49</sup>

## Illumination and Teaching

There are two other related terms that are used frequently by Origen of the Spirit. The first is that the Spirit “illuminates” (φωτίζω/*illumino*).<sup>50</sup> Biblically, precedence for God’s

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<sup>48</sup> Wisdom: *princ.* 1.3.8, *Jo.* 19.20. Knowledge: *Cant.* 3.12, *com.in.Rom* 3.10.2.

<sup>49</sup> See *com.in.Rom* 8.13.5.

<sup>50</sup> Origen consistently uses both φωτίζω (*princ.* 4.2.7, 4.2.8; *com.in.Mt* 14.5, *philoc.* 1.15, *or.* 2.6) and λάμπω (*Cels.* 7.4, *princ.* 4.1.7, 4.1.6) for the Spirit.

illuminating work can be found in passages like 1 Cor 4.5, Eph 3.9, and Heb 6.4. Though Origen quotes Heb 6.4 in relation to the Spirit's work, the roles of enlightening or illuminating are never specifically designated to the Spirit in Scripture.<sup>51</sup> However, the Spirit is often associated with light, allowing believers to "see the light in his light" (Ps 36.9).<sup>52</sup> Given Origen's description of the mysteries of God as dark and imperceivable, the illuminating work of the Spirit is required to navigate these depths.<sup>53</sup> Therefore, the Spirit is continually "shining (λάμψαι) ... the light of the knowledge of the glory of God" (*Cels.* 4.95).<sup>54</sup> Origen's use of φωτίζω/*illumino* with the Spirit reinforces the Spirit's similarity to the Father and Son and the divine nature of his revealing work.<sup>55</sup>

For Origen the Spirit "reveals" divine mysteries, but often "illuminates" the believer in order to receive those mysteries.<sup>56</sup> The Spirit's illuminating work is most often mentioned

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<sup>51</sup> *Jo.* 28.126, *hom.in.Num* 13.5.2, *com.in.Rom* 5.7.9, *hom.in.Jer* 13.2. It is clear from these passages that Origen sees being "enlightened" as a characteristic for those who are true Christians. He seems to think that this is through the Spirit, using verses like Heb 6.4 for this. But he also speaks of the Spirit working only in those already holy or enlightened. It is not clear from his reading of Eph 6.4 that he reads it of the Spirit.

<sup>52</sup> See *hom.in.Gen* 13.4. Also *com.in.Rom* 5.8.9: "For the Father is light and in his light, which is the Son, we see the light of the Holy Spirit" (SC 539:474; Scheck, 103:357). cf. *hom.in.Num* 6.2.1, 23.5.2; *hom.in.Gen* 6.1; *Jo.* 1.36.

<sup>53</sup> Dark: *princ.* 4.3.11, *philoc.* 1.27 (citing Is 45.3). Also the darkness over the abyss in Gen 1.2 (*hom.in.Is* 4.1) or Holy Spirit removing darkness (*hom.in.Lev* 1.1.4).

<sup>54</sup> SC 136:422; Chadwick, 259. Origen is quoting 2 Cor 4.6; he does not use this word often. Also note use of a cognate in *hom.in.Lev* 4.8.2 of Christ and in *com.in.Rom* Pref.2 of God, quoting Jn 1.9. Note *princ.* 2.7.3, where the Spirit "enlightens" (*inluminare*) about the nature of the Trinity, a statement which we should view with suspicion.

<sup>55</sup> E.g. used in the sense of 'teach' by God in OT passages like Ezra 9.8, Ps 13.3, 18.28, 19.8. Other OT examples include references to the pillar of fire (Neh 9.12, Ps 105.39), to God's words giving understanding (Ps 119.130), and God's wisdom illuminates the face (Ecc 8.1). Significant NT references include the Word's enlightening (Jn 1.9), cf. 1 Cor 4.5, Eph 1.18/Eph 3.9. An interesting usage appears in 2 Tim 1.10 (bringing life). Also see Rev 21.23, 22.5. Eph 1.17-18 is only quoted by Origen in *com.in.Mt* 12.10.

<sup>56</sup> See *hom.in.Gen* 13.4; *hom.in.Ex* 4.5; *hom.in.Lev* 4.8.2, 6.6.6; *Jo.* 20.89. This is also used of the Spirit's work in prophets (*Cels.* 7.4) and apostles (*princ.* 4.2.7). While it is used with reference to people generally, the specific target of the Spirit can be the mind (*mens*: *hom.in.Lev* 13.1.1), soul (ψυχή: *philoc.* 1.15, *com.in.Mt* 14.5, *princ.* 4.2.8), reason (ἡγεμονικόν: *com.in.Mt* 14.5).

in the context of scriptural interpretation.<sup>57</sup> Origen notes in *hom.in.Lev* 6.6.6 that believers are “illuminated (*illuminati*) by the law of the Holy Spirit” through which spiritual grace in Christ is attained, a construction he does not use elsewhere.<sup>58</sup> The necessity for believers to be illuminated attests to the significance that the flesh plays in Origen’s system. As the saints are unable to know God because of sin and the flesh, through the illuminating work of the Spirit, they are transformed in glory (2 Cor 3.18) and are prepared to receive divine truths.<sup>59</sup>

The second role, the Spirit as the one who “teaches” (*doceo/διδάσκω*), is drawn heavily from his readings of Jn 14.26 and 16.13.<sup>60</sup> For Origen, the Spirit’s teaching and revealing are similar, as seen in *princ.* 1.3.4:

[...] the Holy Spirit ... who proceeds from the Father, he will teach you all things, and will bring to your remembrance all things that I have said to you (Jn 14.26). And one must understand, therefore, that as the Son, who alone knows the Father, reveals him to whom he will, so the Holy Spirit, who alone searches even the deep things of God (1 Cor 2.10), reveals God to whom he will. For the Spirit breathes where it wills (Jn 3.8).<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> See esp. *com.in.Rom* 3.8.13.

<sup>58</sup> SC 286:297; Barkley, 83:128.

<sup>59</sup> See *Jo.* 32.336.

<sup>60</sup> Another example of the Spirit teaching in the NT is in Lk 12.12. Origen references this in *mart.* 34, in the context of what to say before martyrdom (GCS 2:29-30; Greer, 64). But Origen seems to prefer the wording of Jn 14.26. While the John 16.13’s “guide you in all truth” (Latin *docebit*) is used, the Greek form (ὁδηγέω) does not appear in his Greek writings. It is also worth noting that Origen does not appear to use other verbs used of the Spirit, such as “disclose” in Jn 16.13 (Grk ἀναγγέλλω, Latin *adnuntio*), and only rarely uses “bring to remembrance” in Jn 14.26 (Grk ὑπομνήσκω, Lat *suggero*), e.g. in *princ.* 2.7.2 and potentially in *Jo.* 10.15 (ὑποβαλλομένων, SC 157:390), both in regard to interpretation.

<sup>61</sup> Behr, 1:73. For Spirit as teacher, see Moser, *Teacher*, 118-29. Moser understands Christian pedagogy in *com.in.Rom* to take place in what she calls the “school of the Spirit,” which refers to the education through various spirits leading upward to the Holy Spirit (*Teacher*, 54, citing *com.in.Rom* 7.1.4). For Moser, the significant point about the Holy Spirit as teacher is his ability to adjust to the levels of his students, seen in his groaning (Rom 8.26; *com.in.Rom* 6.9.12) and teaching of elementary principles, e.g. the alphabet (*Teacher*, 121-22; *hom.in.Num* 27.13), and leading to spiritual heights (127).

Like 1 Cor 2.10-11, Origen uses Jn 14.26 and the Spirit's role as teacher to demonstrate the Spirit's affinity to and work alongside the Son.<sup>62</sup> While Origen more frequently comments on verses discussing the basis of the Spirit's role as revealer, he does not do so as often for the Spirit's role as teacher, finding the testimony of Jn 14.26 and 16.13 sufficient.<sup>63</sup> The content of the Spirit's teaching does not differ significantly from that of his revelation.<sup>64</sup> However, in the context of Jn 14.26 and 16.13, the Spirit's teaching is the fulfillment or explanation of Christ's teachings, especially the spiritual interpretation of the Old Testament and Christ's parables.<sup>65</sup> This is also the case with the Old Testament, which requires the Spirit's teaching to be properly interpreted.<sup>66</sup> Thus, while Christ teaches, the true content of his teaching cannot be received until the Spirit, who knows the content of Christ's parables, speaks (*com.in.Mt* 14.6).<sup>67</sup>

In addition to these things, the Spirit teaches believers about proper living.<sup>68</sup> This refers to is the Spirit's help in the daily life of believer, against the struggles with sin and the flesh. The Spirit is even said to empower others to teach, which Origen draws from 1 Cor 2.13.<sup>69</sup> Origen is clear that any spiritual teaching or scriptural interpretation that comes from man's wisdom has no power; only the Spirit's teaching in Scripture to those who have been

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<sup>62</sup> Moser, *Teacher*, 132-33, notes that God is teacher of human knowledge (*com.in.Rom* Pref.2, 2.14.19) and the Son also (8.5.6, 10.6.8). Scholarship has focused primarily on Son as teacher (citing Studer, *Trinity*, 86; Harl, *Origène*, 243-68, Koch, *Pronoia*, 62-78).

<sup>63</sup> But the Spirit is taught by the Son (*Jo.* 2.127) and his knowledge similar in character to that of angelic beings because of the Son's mediation (*Jo.* 20.263).

<sup>64</sup> See *princ.* 2.7.4: "the Paraclete is the Holy Spirit, teaching things greater than can be uttered by the voice, and, if I may so speak, which are unutterable and *which it is not lawful for a human being to utter* (2 Cor 12.4), that is, which cannot be indicated by human language" (Behr, 2:221).

<sup>65</sup> See esp. *Cels.* 2.2, *com.in.Rom* 9.36.2.

<sup>66</sup> See *hom.in.Lev* 13.1.1, *hom.in.Gen* 10.2.

<sup>67</sup> GCS 40:288; ANF 10:498. E.g. *Cels.* 3.62: "the divine Logos was sent as a physician to sinners, but to those already pure and no longer sinning as a teacher of divine mysteries" (SC 136:142; Chadwick, 170).

<sup>68</sup> See *Cels.* 6.79. Fighting the flesh: *com.in.Rom* 7.6.5.

<sup>69</sup> See *princ.* 4.2.3, *philoc.* 2.3, *com.in.Mt* 14.14.

illuminated is worthwhile and effective. There are other places where Origen states that the Spirit teaches, but without any obvious or consistent scriptural reference, evidence of his regular association of this role with the Holy Spirit.<sup>70</sup> Similarly to the Spirit's work in revelation, the Spirit's teaching does not ultimately belong to himself, but to God. Origen states that 'God "teaches man knowledge" and "gives the word of wisdom through (*per*) the Spirit"', references to Ps 94.10 and 1 Cor 12.8 (*com.in.Rom* Pref.2).<sup>71</sup> Or as Origen notes in *hom.in.Jer* 10.1.1, "the 'Father who is in heaven teaches either by himself or through Christ in the Holy Spirit or through Paul... provided only that the Spirit of God and the Word of God dwell and teach.'<sup>72</sup> God, therefore, is the teacher of all, but the Spirit teaches specific things about God and Scripture directly to people. The Spirit's teaching function is also tied closely to the Spirit's title of "Paraclete" in Jn 14.26 and 16.13.<sup>73</sup> As Paraclete, the Spirit does not simply speak on his own, but receives from Christ and announces (Jn 16.14).<sup>74</sup> While Origen associates the title Paraclete with the Spirit's comforting role,<sup>75</sup> he also interprets the title with reference to the Spirit's bringing of fuller and greater spiritual truths.<sup>76</sup>

The Spirit's work in teaching and illumination are part of the same greater work of revelation. In illumination, the Holy Spirit enlightens believers, removing the darkness of

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<sup>70</sup> See *or.* 28.9; *hom.in.Lev* 6.6.4; *Cant.* Pro.3 (of Solomon); *hom.in.Gen* 8.1 (Paul); *princ.* 2.7.3, 2.7.4; *com.in.Mt* 12.11 (Jn 20.22); *Jo.* 13.35 (1 Cor 2.12-13).

<sup>71</sup> SC 532:138; Scheck, 103:53.

<sup>72</sup> SC 232:396; Smith, 97:94.

<sup>73</sup> cf. *Cant.* Pro.2: "Wherefore this Paraclete, the Spirit of Truth who proceedeth from the Father, goes about trying to find souls worthy and able to receive the greatness of this charity, that is of God, that He desires to reveal to them" (SC 375:124; Lawson, 26:39).

<sup>74</sup> *Jo.* 20.263.

<sup>75</sup> See *princ.* 2.7.4, *Cant.* Pro.2. He also notes that Christ is called Paraclete in *princ.* 2.7.4. In *Cant.* 3.1, Origen notes Paraclete means "advocate" in the sense of advocate for sins.

<sup>76</sup> See *com.in.Rom* 9.36.2, in which Origen cites Jn 16.12-13, interpreting the "all things" as greater spiritual truths (Rom 14.2). See also *hom.in.Jos* 3.2 (Jn 16.12-14), though the Trinitarian statement at the end ("in him is fulfilled the perfection of the Trinity") is suspicious.

sin, while bringing to light the deep and dark truths about God, particularly in Scripture. In teaching, the Spirit instructs believers in divine truths and right living, confirming or clarifying the teachings of Christ. These roles also further confirm Origen's understanding of the unity of the divine work and the roles the persons play; the Spirit, working directly in worthy believers, guides and leads them to the right knowledge of the Father and the Son.

## Scripture and Spirit

The primary way in which the Spirit's revelation takes place is through the medium of Scripture.<sup>77</sup> This is because the Spirit is the inspirer of all Scripture.<sup>78</sup> Drawing from 2 Tim 3.16, Origen believes that the divine scriptures were inspired by the Holy Spirit.<sup>79</sup> Origen also says in multiple places that the Spirit himself writes (*scribo*) Scripture,<sup>80</sup> or speaks directly in it.<sup>81</sup> Origen also refers to the Spirit as speaking through writers of Scripture.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> E.g. *princ.* 1.3.1. See also *princ.* 2.7.2, *com.in.Rom* 1.18.4, *hom.in.Num* 12.2.4. As Crouzel, *Origen*, 103, notes, each divine person has his part in imparting knowledge, "the Spirit unveils the spiritual meaning of the Scriptures which He inspired". Bruns, *Trinität*, 239, notes, "Er ist der Garant dafür, dass sich ihm Buchstaben der Heiligen Schrift das Urwort, die Weisheit und Wahrheit des Vaters vergibt."

<sup>78</sup> For Origen on the inspiration of Scripture, see Nardoni, 'Origen's Concept of Biblical Inspiration', *The Second Century* 4 (1984): 9-23; H.J. Vogt, 'Die Lehre des Origenes von der Inspiration der Heiligen Schrift: Ein Vergleich zwischen der Grundlagenschrift und der Antwort auf Kelsos', *Theologische Quartalschrift* 170 (1990), 97-103; Martens, 'Why Does Origen Refer to the Trinitarian Authorship of Scripture in Book 4 of *Peri Archon*?', *VC* 60 (2006), 1-8. For the Spirit's particular role in inspiration, see Peter Martens, *Origen and Scripture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 194-96; Torjesen, *Exegesis*, 42-43.

<sup>79</sup> There is conflict between *princ.* 4.2.1 and the Greek *Philocalia* text – the Spirit is not mentioned in the latter (Behr, 2:484) – see n.84 below.

<sup>80</sup> See *Cant.* 2.2, 2.4; *hom.in.Gen* 4.3, 7.1, 14.3; *com.in.Mt* 14.11; *hom.in.Lc* 19.4; *hom.in.Ex* 4.2, 5.3. Origen does not eliminate human agency; in *hom.in.Num.* 16.9.4 he states that Scripture was "written down through the Spirit" (*per spiritum scripta sunt*) (SC 442:264; Scheck, 101). See *com.in.Rom* 2.13.12, *hom.in.Lc* 1.1. The Greek most commonly used is ἀναγράφω (see *hom.in.1Reg.* 4.2, *hom.in.Jer* 19.11, 16.9.1; *com.in.Mt* 14.11, *Cels.* 3.5), usually translated as "record". Origen also refers to Scripture as the "writings of the Spirit" (*sancti Spiritus litteris*): *hom.in.Num* 27.1.7, *hom.in.Jer* 28.1.6, *Jo.* 10.273 (πνεύματος γραμμάτων; SC 157:552).

<sup>81</sup> See esp. Hebrews (e.g. Heb 3.7, 9.8, 10.15). E.g. *hom.in.1Reg.* 4.3, *Jo.* 6.248, *hom.in.Jud* 4.2.

<sup>82</sup> The Latin prepositions *in* and *per* are both used frequently and almost interchangeably. For example, the Spirit says (*ait*) through (*per*) Solomon (*hom.in.Num* 12.1.2, SC 442:74) or speaks

Origen views Scripture as a single unified work, inspired by the Spirit who speaks is in the same voice through all of it.<sup>83</sup> Therefore, in addition to inspiring it, the Spirit bestows (*donare*) or hands down (*tradere*) all of Scripture in order to give spiritual truth to edify believers.<sup>84</sup> The Spirit consistently is the inspirer of Scripture; rarely is this work attributed to Christ.<sup>85</sup> The Spirit's inspiration of Scripture results in a physical medium through which God speaks; it parallels the Spirit's role of indwelling the saints. By beginning with the physically written words of Scripture, believers can learn the divine mysteries, by which they can come to contemplate the Logos and know the Father.<sup>86</sup>

Characteristic of Origen, however, is his insistence on the inaccessibility of the divine truths of Scripture as a direct cause of the Spirit. The Spirit "conceals" meaning in the text of Scripture.<sup>87</sup> This is known as the "deeper sense" of Scripture, the Spirit's true intention.<sup>88</sup>

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(*vocat/καλεῖ*) through (*per/διὰ*) Isaiah (*princ.* 4.3.11, cf. *hom.in.Jer* 5.1.1). He also spoke (*est locutus*) in (*in*) Paul (*hom.in.Ez* 2.2.3; SC 352:104), or says (*loquatur*) through (*in*) Paul (*com.in.Rom* 2.6.6). cf. Mt 22.43, Mk 12.36.

<sup>83</sup> *princ.* Pref.4, 4.2.8; *com.in.Mt* 14.4; *hom.in.Ex* 5.3; *hom.in.Lev* 13.4.2; *Jo.* 10.107. Bruns, *Trinität*, 240, emphasizes the Spirit's role in the inspiration of Scripture as founded in the will of the Father.

<sup>84</sup> See *princ.* 4.3.4, *com.in.Rom* 5.8.4. In the Greek of *princ.* 4.3.4 (*philoc.*), it is not the Spirit but the "divine power" (θεῖα δύναμις) who gives (ἐκλαμβάνειν) the Scriptures. Evidence seems to show that Rufinus added the Spirit in several places to greater emphasize his role (e.g. *princ.* 4.2.1, 4.2.9).

<sup>85</sup> But Christ is linked with prophecy: *princ.* Pref.4; *Jo.* 6.15; *com.in.Rom* 2.5.4; *com.in.Mt* 14.11. However, Origen's reference to the "eyes of the dove" in *Cant.* 3.1 (SC 376:498; Lawson, 26:170) links Christ and the Spirit together in interpretation. Additionally, Origen once credits inspiration to angels (*princ.* 3.3.4), or even the Word (*princ.* 4.2.8-9), and Trinity (4.2.2, 4.2.7). See Martens, 'Holy Spirit', 127.

<sup>86</sup> Crouzel, *Origen*, 70: "If the Revelation is the Christ, the Scripture is only revelation indirectly, making possible the mediation of the Christ, to the extent that it expresses and shows Him." Bruns, *Trinität*, 239: "setzt [der Heilige Geist] unter der äußeren Hülle des buchstäblichen Wortsinns den Sohn als Selbstmitteilung des Vaters gegenwärtig, so dass die Heilige Schrift wirklich das vom Heiligen Geist verbürgte Wort des Vaters ist."

<sup>87</sup> The main Latin words used are *contego* (*princ.* 4.2.7, 4.3.11), *occulto* (*princ.* 4.2.8, 4.3.11, *com.in.Rom* 2.4.8), and *obtego* (*hom.in.Ex* 12.3, *Cant.* 1.3). Other terms used are *involveret* (*princ.* 4.2.8, in the sense of "wraps up") and *velabat* (cf. 2 Cor 3). The Greek attestations of this both use forms of κρύπτω (*princ.* 4.2.8, 4.3.11), the first replaced by *occultaret* in the Latin, the second by *conteguntur*.

<sup>88</sup> *princ.* 4.2.8; *hom.in.Lev* 13.1.2; *Jo.* 10.300. Examples like *hom.in.Gen* 4.3, 7.1, 14.3 show Origen's insistence that historical narrative are not preserved by the Spirit just for the sake of telling history, but for spiritual truths.



Origen uses words like or dark (*obscurus/σκοτεινός*), unseen (*invisibiles/ἀοράτους*), and concealed (*absconditos/ἀποκρύφους*) to describe Scripture's mysteries, language drawn from Is 45.3 and influenced by passages like Col 2.3 and Mt 13.44 and 13.35.<sup>89</sup> Concealment is in the form of "figures and enigmas" (*figuras et enigmata*),<sup>90</sup> e.g. difficult passages or inconsistencies in the Old Testament<sup>91</sup> or Christ's parables.<sup>92</sup> This is to keep this deeper knowledge away from the inexperienced or unworthy who will "trample" it as they are not able to receive it (Mt 7.6).<sup>93</sup> The true spiritual meaning of Scripture is like the treasure hidden in the field (Mt 13.44), intended only for those who are worthy and can find it.<sup>94</sup> Without the Spirit's help, these truths would not only be difficult to grasp, but entirely impossible to attain (*princ.* 4.3.14).<sup>95</sup> Therefore, only through the power and grace of the Spirit can one come to a right interpretation.<sup>96</sup> This is what Origen calls the "spiritual sense" (*spiritalem sensum/πνευματικόν*) of Scripture<sup>97</sup> or an interpretation "worthy of the

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<sup>89</sup> All of these appear in *princ.* 4.3.11. Also see *Jo.* 2.6.

<sup>90</sup> *com.in.Rom* 3.7.6 (SC 539:112; Scheck, 103:211). See also: *princ.* Pref.8, 2.2.2, 2.10.7; *hom.in.Num* 18.4.6, *hom.in.Ez* 2.2.2.

<sup>91</sup> See esp. Heb 9.8, 3.7, 10.15. Origen quotes Heb 9.8 in *princ.* 2.2.2. Though he does not explicitly quote this or the other verses often, his comments on the Old Testament shows its influence. cf. *Tim* 4.1.

<sup>92</sup> *hom.in.Ez* 11.2.1, *com.in.Mt* 14.12. Note also *com.in.Mt* 14.6, in which Origen attributes the giving of mysteries to Christ, who speaks directly in the parables.

<sup>93</sup> *hom.in.Num* 18.4.6, *com.in.Mt* 11.17 (Ex 22.31). They are not completely abandoned, however, as the Spirit provides help in the plain sense of Scripture (*com.in.Mt* 11.17, *com.in.Rom* 2.4.8).

<sup>94</sup> *com.in.Rom* 2.4.8, *princ.* 4.3.10-11.

<sup>95</sup> Bruns, *Trinität*, 242, notes that readers of Scripture must be inspired in the same way as the writers of Scripture.

<sup>96</sup> Power: *hom.in.Lev* 9.1.1, *com.in.Rom* 5.10.10, 8.6.5. Grace: *hom.in.Lev* 9.1.1, *com.in.Rom* 5.10.7. Wisdom: *Jo.* 10.266. General appeal to Holy Spirit for help in interpretation: *com.in.Mt* 14.6; *hom.in.Ez* 2.2.2, 2.2.3, 7.10.4, 11.2.4; *princ.* 2.7.2, *Jo.* 13.361, *com.in.Rom* 1.18.4. Martens, *Origen*, 181-82, notes Origen's refers to God, Spirit, but primarily to Son assisting in the interpretation of Scripture. While Martens is not wrong in this observation (simply by numbers), this does not contradict this discussion in that the work of revelation, even in Scripture, is understood by Origen as a Trinitarian work. One can ask for the Spirit's help in interpreting his Scriptures while still appealing to the Logos, the principle of rationality, in exercising this function (e.g. *Jo.* 1.89).

<sup>97</sup> *hom.in.Lev* 5.5.1 (SC 286:229; Barkley, 83:99), *Jo.* 13.361 (SC 222:232-234; Heine, 89:146).

Spirit”.<sup>98</sup> For the discerning reader, the minute details and difficult passages of Scripture indicate the need for spiritual interpretation.<sup>99</sup> An emblematic passage in Origen’s understanding of Scripture can be found in *pasch.* 26-27:

If the Spirit is given from God and God is a devouring fire (Deut 4.24; Heb 12.29), the Spirit is also a fire, which is what the Apostle is aware of in exhorting us to be aglow with the Spirit (Rom 12.11). Therefore the Holy Spirit is rightly called fire, which is necessary for us to receive in order to have converse with the flesh of Christ, I mean the divine Scriptures, so that, when we have roasted them with this divine fire, we may eat them roasted with fire...<sup>100</sup>

Origen highlights the spiritual nature of interpretation in the association with the Spirit and fire, as well as the ultimate Christological content of Scripture.

Origen thus links scriptural interpretation with spiritual progress. While Scripture can be read by all, unbelievers and immature believers are not privy to the spiritual sense. Those who remain in the flesh are unable to interpret Scripture properly and cannot uncover the deeper meanings and truths within it. One example of this is Origen’s use of 2 Cor 3.14-18 and the veil of “duller understanding” (vv.14-16) or the literal interpretation in the reading of Scripture (*princ.* 1.1.2).<sup>101</sup> Literal interpretation is associated with life in the flesh, an existence devoid of the Spirit’s working. The statement “the Lord is the Spirit” in v.17 indicates the Spirit’s personal agency in removing the veil and the need to “entreat” him.<sup>102</sup> Only through the removal of the veil and the Spirit’s illumination can the saints can grasp

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<sup>98</sup> *com.in.Mt* 12.14, *hom.in.Lc* 9.1, *Jo.* 10.273 (τοῦ πνεύματος ... ἄξιον; SC 157:552), *hom.in.Num* 16.9.4 (*digne Deo et sancto Spiritu*; SC 442:262).

<sup>99</sup> Details: *princ.* 4.2.8; *hom.in.Ex* 2.1, 3.3; *hom.in.Num* 27.1.7; *Cant.* 2.4. Difficult passages: *princ.* 3.1.17, *Jo.* 10.266.

<sup>100</sup> Nautin, 204-206; Daly 54:41-42. Note his citation of 2 Cor 3.6 prior to this. He continues in *pasch.* 29: “But if through the Spirit they see the true circumcision... they are eating the word cooked with the Spirit” (Nautin, 210; Daly, 54:42-43).

<sup>101</sup> Behr, 1:27. Also *Cels.* 5.60, which he associates with the Jews.

<sup>102</sup> *hom.in.Lev* 1.1.4, 4.1.

the Spirit's true intention in Scripture.<sup>103</sup> By growing in holiness and becoming increasingly filled with the Spirit, believers can become move beyond the sensible "letter" of Scripture (2 Cor 3.6) to interpretation by the Spirit.<sup>104</sup>

## Summary

As God is invisible and unknowable, it is only by his initiative in the coming forth of his Word and the sending of his Spirit that he can be known.<sup>105</sup> The Spirit's role in God's work of revelation is the initiation of believers into the divine mysteries, which he accomplishes through his indwelling presence and his inspiration of and help in interpretation of the Scriptures. As the Spirit's particular sphere of influence is in the material world, that is, in the saints, he inspires the Scriptures to guide believers in their worship and contemplation.<sup>106</sup> In the Scriptures, the Spirit makes known the incarnate Christ and the eternal Logos, the level depending on the reader's interpretive ability. As teacher, he reminds of and clarifies the Old Testament and Christ's teachings; as illuminator he shines his divine light to make the light of the Son, who reflects the Father, known. Generally, in keeping with the structure of his divine hierarchy, Origen speaks of the Son as the object of the Spirit's revealing work, though at times the Spirit reveals divine mysteries or the Son and Spirit together reveal the Father. Though Origen is unclear on how much of the Father the Spirit knows and comprehends, or whether the Spirit has direct access to the Father,

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<sup>103</sup> *princ.* 1.1.2, *com.in.Mt* 10.14. At times the Spirit unveils (*hom.in.Lev* 1.1.4), in others the believer (*princ.* 1.1.2) or even the Lord (*hom.in.Gen* 6.1).

<sup>104</sup> Filled: *hom.in.Ez* 1.11.2. Letter: *Cels.* 6.70, 7.20; *Jo.* 1.36; *com.in.Rom* 2.5.4, 6.13.2; *hom.in.Num* 5.1.1, 17.4.5; *hom.in.Lev* 13.6.2.

<sup>105</sup> *Jn* 4.24; *princ.* 1.1.1; *Jo.* 1.36, 13.124; *hom.in.Lc* 26.1; *hom.in.Lev* 4.1; *Cels.* 2.71, 6.70, 7.27. Origen's emphasis in this verse is that God must be worshipped spiritually, linked to the Spirit in spiritual exegesis (*Jo.* 1.36, *Cels.* 6.70).

<sup>106</sup> This is in contrast to the Son who reveals the Father on the noetic and more abstract level in the divine forms.

it is clear that the Spirit's revelation is necessary for the knowledge of the divine. For Origen, the Spirit's roles in revealing, illuminating, inspiring, and even giving life are all part of the same work, the Spirit's making known the things of God to lead believers upward in the process of salvation.<sup>107</sup> By concealing truths within the words of Scripture, the Spirit also calls the saints to spiritual living and the exercising of their noetic capacity, helping their conversion from fleshly to spiritual understanding. In doing so, he leads believers to work together with him to receive this special revelation, the treasures of the depths of the knowledge of God.

## The Holy Spirit as Sanctifier

The Holy Spirit's work in sanctification is a central characteristic of Christian pneumatology. In Origen's writings also, the fact that the Spirit is the *Holy Spirit* and that the Spirit "sanctifies" (*sanctifico*/ἁγιάζω) are important to his pneumatology.<sup>108</sup> But what exactly does Origen mean by the term "sanctify"? In this section, we will examine how Origen understands this idea, distinguishing it from the interpolated statements of Rufinus in *On First Principles*. We will see that for Origen, sanctification is the continual process by which the Holy Spirit assists the saints in their rejection of sin and the flesh and confirms and strengthens them in their holy living. The Spirit's work in sanctification, though indicative of his lower status as he alone dwells in the saints, is an initiatory step in which he leads worthy believers and presents them to the Son and Father. This work of

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<sup>107</sup> Though in *hom.in.Num* 17.3.2, 17.4.5; *com.in.Rom* 2.5.4, the Spirit comes after the removal of the veil.

<sup>108</sup> Scriptural basis for sanctification: Rom 15.16, 1 Cor 6.11, 2 Thess 2.13, etc. For Spirit sanctifying: Rom 15.16 (*com.in.Rom* 10.11.1), 1 Cor 6.11 (*com.in.Rom* 4.8.2, *hom.in.Jos* 6.4). Origen's use of Rom 1.4, "Spirit of holiness" in *com.in.Rom* 7.13.8; *Jo.* 2.70, 19.31; *com.in.Mt* 11.17. Spirit is called "holiness": *princ.* 1.3.8; *com.in.Rom* 8.13.8, 1.5.3. He is also called "sanctifying power" (*princ.* 1.1.3), which seems to be in opposition to materialism, but is vulnerable to Monarchian interpretation.

sanctification is part of the overall divine process of salvation and deification, a work which also includes the Son and the Father.

## Clarifying the Meaning of Sanctification

Sanctification, by definition, is the act or process of becoming holy. But what this means for Origen needs to be clarified. In Chapter 3, we looked at two statements about the Spirit's sanctification in *princ.* 1.5.5 and 1.8.3:

...to be blameless (*immaculatum*) exists essentially (*substantialiter*) in none except the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, but holiness (*sanctitas*) is an accidental quality in every created being...<sup>109</sup>

Similarly, also, the nature (*natura*) of the Holy Spirit, being holy (*sancta*), does not admit of pollution, for it is naturally (*naturaliter*) or substantially (*substantialiter*) holy. If any other nature is holy, it is so sanctified (*sanctificetur*) by the reception or the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, not having this by nature (*non ex sua natura*), but as an accidental (*accidens*) addition to it, for which reason, as an accidental addition, it may also be lost.<sup>110</sup>

The sense of these statements is that the Holy Spirit, by virtue of his essential possession of the divine attribute holiness, can bestow holiness on creatures which are not holy by nature, i.e. angels and humanity.<sup>111</sup> This understanding of sanctification, however, becomes prominent only in the second half of the fourth century, particularly in the writings of Basil of Caesarea. Basil interprets Psalm 33.6 (32.6 LXX) as displaying the Spirit's participation in the act of creation, specifically in the sanctification of the heavenly powers.<sup>112</sup> Basil thus

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<sup>109</sup> *princ.* 1.5.5; Behr, 1:103.

<sup>110</sup> *princ.* 1.8.3; Behr, 1:137. See also *princ.* 1.3.8. Note also the appeal to the universal scope of the Spirit's sanctification in statements like *com.in.Rom* 1.5.3 (*praebet omnibus sanctitatem*; SC 532:184; Scheck, 103:71) or *hom.in.Lev* 13.6.2 (*ex quo sanctificatur omne quod sanctum est*; SC 287:224; Barkley, 83:244), as well as similar statements in *hom.in.Num* 11.8.1, *princ.* 3.5.8.

<sup>111</sup> This seem to be the general understanding of this idea for most scholarship on Origen that accepts these statements as authentically Origen's.

<sup>112</sup> E.g. *spir.* 16.38, 19.49; *Eun.* 3.4; *ep.* 8; *hom.in.Ps* 15.4 (32).

uses this verse to argue for the Spirit's divinity as demonstrated in the inseparable Trinitarian operation in creation.<sup>113</sup>

But Origen's pneumatology is not Basil's. As we have seen in Chapter 3, Origen does not hold to the Spirit's innate possession of holiness or any other attributes; all that the Spirit has is mediated through the Son (*Jo.* 2.76). Also, as seen in Chapter 2, Origen does not even hold to such a theology of divine attributes; the Father's attributes cannot be known, while the Son manifests the attributes "for us" in his interaction with creation. Origen does not speak of a set of shared divine attributes; these ideas only exist in forms in the Son as Wisdom. Such attributes are possessed in differing degrees; thus Origen intentionally speaks of Trinitarian unity on the basis of other ideas. Therefore, the statements in *princ.* that testify to a shared divine goodness (e.g. *princ.* 1.6.2) or holiness (*princ.* 1.4.2, 1.5.5) or even divinity should be viewed with suspicion.<sup>114</sup>

Because of these points, we must view the interpretation of Psalm 33.6 (32.6 LXX) and statements which hold this view of sanctification in Rufinus translated works with suspicion. Specifically, in *princ.* 1.3.7, Psalm 33.6 is used to demonstrate a Trinitarian work of sanctification the "one fount of deity... by the spirit of his mouth sanctifies all things worthy of sanctification."<sup>115</sup> The interpretation of "spirit of his mouth" as the Holy Spirit precedes Origen, particularly in the writings of Irenaeus and Theophilus of Antioch.<sup>116</sup> But Origen shows awareness of this interpretation and chooses to reject it: "Some think that

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<sup>113</sup> See Ayres, *Nicaea*, 216-17; Basil Studer, 'Zur Frage der dogmatischen Terminologie in der lateinischen Übersetzung von Origenes' de Principiis', in *Epektasis: Mélanges patristiques offerts au Cardinal J. Daniélou*, ed. J. Fontaine and C. Kannengiesser (Paris: Beauchesne, 1972), 408 n.40.

<sup>114</sup> E.g. the "unity of the divinity in the Trinity" in *hom.in.Is* 1.4, which is translated by Jerome.

<sup>115</sup> Behr, 1:79. Also attested in *com.in.Rom* 5.2.4 and *hom.in.Lev* 5.2.4, though simply with reference to the Spirit. This is not to deny a Trinitarian understanding of sanctification, simply this conception of it.

<sup>116</sup> Irenaeus: *haer.* 1.22.1, 2.34.3, 3.24.2; *dem.* 5. Theophilus: *Autol.* 1.7.

these words (Ps 33.6) apply to the Savior and the Holy Spirit, although they can show that the heavens were established by the Word of God...”<sup>117</sup> The reason Origen rejects this interpretation is because his cosmology is Word-centered and has no room for the Spirit in the work of creation.<sup>118</sup> The Spirit’s work, instead, is found in rational beings who are “already turning to better things and walking in the ways of Jesus Christ,” that is, the saints (*princ.* 1.3.6).<sup>119</sup> The inclusion of Psalm 33.6, therefore, is uncharacteristic of Origen’s system and is indicative of Rufinus’ editing.<sup>120</sup>

If this is the case, how does Origen understand the Spirit’s work in sanctification? And given that the Son is “sanctification for us” (1 Cor 1.30), how is this related to the Spirit’s role in this work?<sup>121</sup> Rather than an abstract bestowal of attributes, Origen understands the Spirit’s sanctification to be a holistic and synergistic process in which the Spirit works in tandem with believers’ efforts, assisting and guiding them as they purify themselves.<sup>122</sup> Sanctification is the confirming and strengthening presence of the Spirit in the fight against sin and the flesh. But essentially, it is also the Spirit’s declaration of consecration

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<sup>117</sup> *Jo.* 1.288 (SC 120:204; Heine, 80:93).

<sup>118</sup> E.g. *princ.* 1.3.5, 1.3.7.

<sup>119</sup> Butterworth, 117 n.1, commenting on *princ.* 2.7.2, notes that “The Spirit is given potentially to all, but his effective working is confined to the saints, of Old and New Testament times alike.”

<sup>120</sup> Koetschau (following Schnitzer), thinks that the citation of Ps 33.6 in *princ.* 1.3.7 has been interpolated by Rufinus, as it contradicts his *fr.* 9 from Justinian’s *Ep ad Mennam* (see Butterworth, 37 n.6). Also cf. *princ.* 4.4.3.

<sup>121</sup> The Spirit gives the gift of sanctification: *com.in.Rom* 7.1.2, *hom.in.Num* 9.9.1, *Cels.* 1.64. In *com.in.Rom* 8.11.8, Christ gives the gift.

<sup>122</sup> Though not speaking of sanctification specifically, Origen’s understanding of the process of sanctification is best articulated by Crouzel, who speaks of the Spirit as “the power which brings the seed to fruition, which makes the ‘after-the-image’ grow into the perfect likeness” (*Origen*, 98) or “he is to be found... in the saints and it is he who is preparing the Church, purified of her sins, to become a holy people” (*Origen*, 201). Other scholars that say similar things about sanctification in Origen include Hauschild (*Gottes Geist*, 181), Ziebritzki (*Heiliger Geist*, 219), and Simonetti (‘Note’, 296-98). Torjesen (*Exegesis*, 81), says something similar, but uses the language of “purification”. Bruns, *Trinität*, 262-64, correctly recognizes Origen’s nuanced and fuller understanding of sanctification, particularly in its relation to progress and *theosis*, but equates inspiration with sanctification (240), confusing two parts of one greater work as the same.

of the purity of the individual, the recognition of worthiness to receive the Spirit's presence and see the Son, the presentation of the holy believer to the Father as a sacrifice. This understanding of sanctification highlights Origen's emphasis on the practical aspect of salvation over the abstract. It also agrees with the Son as "sanctification for us" (1 Cor 1.30) in that the Spirit's work becomes a confirmation of the presence of the Son within the individual believer through the putting on of the virtues.<sup>123</sup>

A first point of evidence for this is in deciphering Origen's understanding of sanctification is to look at how he uses "sanctify" language, particularly *sanctifico* (Latin) and ἁγιάζω (Greek). In Scripture, there is abundant witness to the overall sanctifying work of God, even of the Spirit.<sup>124</sup> But while *sanctifico* is often attributed to the Spirit in Origen's Latin works, ἁγιάζω is not frequently attested in the Greek works. This may be in part due to Rufinus, but also because of context. In the *Commentary on Romans*, in which *sanctifico* most often appears, Origen is commenting on passages in Romans (e.g. Rom 15.16) which deal directly with the Spirit's sanctifying work. Such passages, however, are not treated at length anywhere else in Origen's writings, especially in the Greek. Another important passage regarding the Spirit's sanctification is 1 Corinthians 6.11, which Origen quotes in *hom.in.Jos* 6.4: "you have been washed, you have been sanctified (*sanctificati estis*/ἡγιασθητε) in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God."<sup>125</sup> While

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<sup>123</sup> *princ.* 4.4.5. Also Crouzel, *L'image*, 172, that participation in God is an equivalent to our theology of sanctifying grace.

For sanctity as participation, see Jeffery David Finch, 'Sanctity as Participation in the Divine Nature according to the Ante-Nicene Eastern Fathers, Considered in the Light of Palamism', unpublished doctoral thesis, Drew University, 2002), 221-56.

<sup>124</sup> Spirit sanctifying: *Cant.* 4.14; *com.in.Rom* 6.11.3, 8.5.2 (Heb 12.23). *princ.* 3.5.8 should be viewed with suspicion, esp. based on its use of Jn 15.26.

<sup>125</sup> SC 71:190-192; Bruce, 105:73. The context here is the fall of Jericho, the verse used to describe Rahab as an example of one who has moved from spiritual prostitution into faith.



the verse itself is evidence for the Spirit's particular work in sanctification, Origen does not comment on it where he quotes this work, finding instead other points of interest.<sup>126</sup>

However, there are places in Origen's Greek writings where the Spirit sanctifies.<sup>127</sup> In places in the *Commentary on Ephesians*, a fragmentary work preserved in Greek, Origen speaks of the Spirit "making holy" (ἁγίον ποιεῖ) by virtue of his presence (*com.in.Eph* 1.13).<sup>128</sup> Origen's logic here is straightforward: the coming of the Holy Spirit on an individual makes one holy. Exactly what this means, however, is not entirely clear from the context. One clear instance in which ἁγιάζω does appear is in *fr.in.Lc* 205:

[The body/spirit/soul] are sanctified (ἁγιάζεται) by the leaven of the Holy Spirit, so that by the Holy Spirit they become one lump, in order that "our whole body and spirit and soul may be kept blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ".<sup>129</sup>

This passage is a commentary on Luke 13.21, in which the kingdom of God is compared to yeast mixed in with flour. Origen understands the leavening power of the yeast in this parable to be the unifying work of the sanctification of the Spirit, particularly the aligning of the unruly flesh with the desires of the spirit. When all aspects of the human being are sanctified, they are brought together and the whole man can be brought to God. Rather than being a supplying of holiness, sanctification here is depicted as a holistic and internal process of restoration. The reference to the day of the Lord adds an eschatological dimension, suggesting sanctification as an ongoing process of growth and maintenance

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<sup>126</sup> See *com.in.Rom* 4.8.2, where he similarly quotes it but does not mention the Spirit.

<sup>127</sup> NT uses with the Father of the Son in Jn 10.36, Father of people in Jn 17.17; Christ of himself in Jn 17.19, Christ of the church in 1 Cor 1.2, Heb 10.10, Eph 5.26, Heb 2.11; Christ and the Spirit together in 1 Cor 6.11; God in 1 Thess 5.23; the word/prayer in 1 Tim 4.5.

<sup>128</sup> Heine, 103. Commenting on Eph 1.13. Also *com.in.Eph* 4.30: "once we have received the imprints of the HS, may become holy (ἅγιοι γενώμεθα), that is, that the 'human spirit'... and the soul..." (Heine, 199).

<sup>129</sup> SC 87:538; Lienhard, 94:210.

that is completed at the coming return and judgment of Christ. In the same way that Christ's *parousia* is the manifestation of the fullness of God's saving work, the Spirit's work of sanctification presents the wholeness and fullness of the restored human being, brought back to God in its original created intention. In addition, this understanding of sanctification also carries ritualistic or sacrificial undertones. The references to "lump" and "leaven" bring to mind purity laws and sacrifice in the Old Testament, the main difference here being that the leaven in this context is a good thing, the sanctification or consecration of the Spirit. There is an obvious depiction here of the unified human being offered as a sacrifice to God, a sacrifice made possible and prepared by the Spirit.

A similar understanding of sanctification can be found also in some of Origen's Latin works. Though obviously edited statements about the Spirit's work in sanctification can be found in works like *On First Principles*, the presence of this idea in Origen's Latin translated writings attests to his overall conceptual consistency. For example, in *hom.in.Lev* 9.2.3, Origen notes,

For "the tunic" that was the flesh of Christ was "sanctified" (*sanctificata*), for it was not conceived from the seed of man but begotten of the Holy Spirit.<sup>130</sup>

Given that the Son is "sanctification for us", would it be right to say that the Holy Spirit gave an external holiness to the human body of Christ? The answer is no: Christ does not need to be made holy. Instead, the Spirit's sanctification seems to refer to the initial consecration or ordering of the flesh of Christ at his human conception.<sup>131</sup> Given that the

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<sup>130</sup> SC 287:76; Barkley, 83:179.

<sup>131</sup> For the Spirit's conception of Christ, see *Cels.* 1.66; *princ.* Pref.4; *hom.in.Lc* 19.4; *Jo.* 10.38, 32.191; *com.in.Rom* 3.8.4, 1.5.4, *hom.in.Num* 27.3.2; *hom.in.Lc* 20.6. The Spirit begets Christ and dwells in his soul: *com.in.Rom* 3.8.5, 3.8.6; *com.in.Mt* 13.2, *hom.in.Lc* 29.2. In *com.in.Rom* 3.8.6, Origen also notes that the Spirit dwells in the soul of Christ alongside the Son (SC 539:134; Scheck, 103:221). This Christological language sounds almost Antiochene in nature. The Spirit, however, is distinguished from the spirit of man, though Origen does not elaborate on this.

flesh is by nature aligned against the Spirit, the Holy Spirit's sanctifying work is necessary in order for Christ to live a truly perfect life and to be offered to the Father. Another example can be found in *hom.in.Num* 9.9.1: "Secondly, he buds, when he has been reborn and receives the gift of grace by the sanctification (*sanctificatione*) of the Spirit of God."<sup>132</sup> Here, Numbers 17.8, the budding of Aaron's staff, is interpreted allegorically as Christ coming from the root of Jesse. Christ is the perfect man who bears the fruits of the Spirit (i.e. his budding) and serves as an example for spiritual believers to follow. In Origen's order of events, new life language comes first, followed by the sanctification of the Spirit, which leads to the reception of the gift of grace.<sup>133</sup> This suggests the following order of events of spiritual progress in believers: (1) in turning to life in the Spirit, the believer is reborn or is given life, (2) following which, the Spirit sanctifies the individual, working only after conversion and holy living, indicative of the free choice of the individual in the process of salvation, (3) after which the believer is given the gift of grace, which refers to the greater work of empowerment for salvation in the plan of God. A final example appears in *hom.in.Num* 11.8.1. Following the phrase "so holy that he has not been sanctified", Origen says, "But every creature will be called "holy sanctified things" (*sanctificata sancta*) either by the privilege of the Holy Spirit or by reason of its merits."<sup>134</sup> Here also the Spirit's work is a pronouncement of holiness, the title "holy" being received either by the Spirit or by one's own merits. This suggests a synergistic process of sanctification; one can qualitatively be called holy by one's own holy work or by the privilege of the Spirit who bestows that title. While this quote suggests that these are different events, Origen elsewhere is

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<sup>132</sup> SC 415:262; Scheck, 44. cf. *hom.in.Lev* 13.6.2 for sanctification and grace of the Spirit.

<sup>133</sup> *Cant.* 4.14 (SC 376:680; Lawson, 26:240), "those who receive the power of the Holy Spirit and are sanctified by Him and filled with His gifts," after which they are "uplifted on the Holy Spirit's wings" to "celestial places".

<sup>134</sup> SC 442:58; Scheck, 60.

consistent in explaining the order of this process: self-purification always comes before the indwelling of the Spirit.<sup>135</sup> Regarding the idea of “privilege”, sanctification is often associated with grace for Origen; namely, those who are sanctified are made so through the Spirit’s grace.<sup>136</sup> While sanctification through the Spirit’s grace seems to imply that the recipient is unworthy or undeserving of it, Origen insists that the grace of the Spirit is only for those who are worthy.<sup>137</sup>

A similar sense of sanctification can be found in the *Commentary on Romans*, but with reference to the body of Christ, the church. Again, Origen brings together the ideas of sacrifice and holistic unification, the Spirit working to bring the restored body of the Church before God. In *com.in.Rom* 8.5.2, he notes that,

Now those whom he offers to the Father the Holy Spirit receives in order to sanctify (*sanctificet*) them and give them life as members of the heavenly church of the first born ones and to restore them in the solidity and perfection of the whole body.<sup>138</sup>

Again we see the repeated theme of the Spirit’s sanctification or consecration being necessary to offer the believer to the Father.<sup>139</sup> This is coupled with the giving of life, both sanctification and vivification working for the purpose of restoration. This quote, which alludes to Heb 12.23, also suggests that the sanctification of the Spirit is the means by which believers are joined not only to God but also to each other in the body of the church. The Spirit’s sanctification, therefore, is restorative and unitive, having a greater influence than

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<sup>135</sup> Self-purification (to receive the Holy Spirit): *hom.in.Num* 6.3.1, *com.in.Rom* 10.9.2, *hom.in.Lev* 5.12.8, *hom.in.Lev* 8.11.15. See also *Jo.* 6.250, 32.75, 32.86.

<sup>136</sup> The grace of the Spirit also “cleanses” (purgare) in *hom.in.Jud* 8.5; *hom.in.Lev* 5.12.8, 8.11.15; *princ.* 1.3.7 (Col 3.9). Spirit’s grace associated with revealing in *princ.* 2.7.2, *com.in.Rom* 9.36.2.

<sup>137</sup> See esp. *princ.* 1.1.3, 1.3.8, 1.7.4.

<sup>138</sup> SC 543:470; Scheck, 104:143.

<sup>139</sup> See *com.in.Rom* 9.1.5, 10.11.4. Origen sees a connection between Romans 12.1 and 15.6 in that both reflect the need for the Spirit’s indwelling presence in the believer (drawing connection with Jn 14.6, 1 Cor 13.6, Col 3.5).

simply in the individual believer. This emphasis on group consecration is also present in *com.in.Rom* 10.11.4: “Therefore he adds finally, ‘in order that the offering of the Gentiles may become accepted, sanctified (*sanctificata*) in the Holy Spirit (Rom 15.16).”<sup>140</sup> The Spirit, whether in the context of the individual or the group, serves to realign the misdirected portions of the body, his work allowing them to be acceptable offerings before God. In both of these passages, Origen seems to explain sanctification through Romans 15.16, in the context of sacrifice and offering, even though he does not quote it.<sup>141</sup> A final example can be found in *com.in.Rom* 8.11.8:

For all who are saved are engrafted into this root, and from this holy, first portion the entire lump of the human race is sanctified (*sanctificatur*). And truly, just as the holy root supplies the fertility of sanctity to the branches that abide in it, as it gives life (*uiuificat*) through its own Holy Spirit to those who cling to it, as it cultivates them by the word...<sup>142</sup>

Again we see the sacrificial language of “lump” (*massa*) used with regard to humans, again in a corporate sense. While Christ is the source and the root of all sanctification, the Spirit is the agent of Christ who gives life to those who choose to cling to the root.<sup>143</sup> Not only does the Spirit sanctify, but he vivifies those who cling to the root, Christ.<sup>144</sup> The Spirit’s work in vivification refers to the conversion of the believer from flesh and death to Spirit and life, drawing from passages like 2 Corinthians 3.6.<sup>145</sup> Vivification and sanctification are

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<sup>140</sup> SC 555:332; Scheck, 104:278. The Spirit here is also called the “fount of sanctification”, which we have seen is suspicious language, given Origen’s tendency to only speak of the Father as the fount (see *princ.* 1.3.7, *com.in.Rom* 4.9.12).

<sup>141</sup> Rom 15.16: *sanctificata in Spiritu Sancto/ἡγιασμένη ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ*. See use in *com.in.Rom* 10.11.1, 10.11.4.

<sup>142</sup> SC 543:556; Scheck, 104:178-189.

<sup>143</sup> I.e. that Christ is “sanctification for us”, the idea that sanctity is made available to all through Christ who manifests the virtues in his life and work, which believers participate in.

<sup>144</sup> See also *hom.in.Num* 9.9.1, *com.in.Rom* 8.5.2 above. Also see *com.in.Rom* 6.11.3 for the distinction between the two terms and for the Spirit paralleling Christ in this work.

<sup>145</sup> Examples of giving life, citing 2 Cor 3.6: *princ.* 1.3.7; *Jo.* 13.361; *or.* 28.3; *com.in.Rom* 2.12.1, 6.11.3, 6.12.2; *pasch.* 26; *Cels.* 7.20. Also *com.in.Rom* 3.6.7 (*Jn* 16.63).

part of the same overall process; there is some semantic overlap between these two functions.<sup>146</sup> While the Spirit continues to supply life by means of his indwelling presence, the emphasis in vivification is the initial movement of the believer to life in the Spirit.<sup>147</sup> Sanctification, on the other hand, is a broader work which involves the restoration and consecration of the entire individual, resulting in the eventual offering of the wholeness of the body, both individual and corporate, to God. Both works involve the realignment of misplaced members and the correcting of misdirected wills, but sanctification places a greater emphasis on the final goal of deification and the resemblance of Christ. It should be noted, however, that sanctification is most often described in the context of individual, rather than corporate, salvation.<sup>148</sup> It is this aspect of salvation, which follows closely with Origen's ascetic tendencies, that is imitated by many who follow him.<sup>149</sup>

From these examples, we see that sanctification does not have to be an abstract generation of holiness. Instead, sanctification is understood by Origen to be a restorative or unifying work, a consecration before God, or even the bestowing of the title "holy". This does not mean that Origen could not think differently elsewhere or that sanctification has no lexical flexibility. Rather, when addressing suspicious phrases that appear most often in *On First Principles*, we should be careful of the context in which these words or phrases are being used. Even an examination of the Latin *sanctifico* in less systematic and more textual

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<sup>146</sup> Origen describes the Spirit as leading believers to reject the flesh and sin and to instead put on the virtues of Christ: *com.in.Rom* 6.13.9; *Cels.* 7.4, 8.18, etc.

<sup>147</sup> Spirit as newness or as "making spiritual" (*spiritalis facit*): *com.in.Rom* 6.7.19 (SC 543:156; Scheck, 104:29). Note also *hom.in.Num* 20.2.3 (SC 461:28; Scheck, 125): "those generated from the Holy Spirit are loved before good works". *hom.in.Num* 6.3.7 (SC 415:154-156; Scheck, 23): the Spirit deems certain sinless individuals as unworthy for dwelling.

<sup>148</sup> Thus Basil Studer's criticism that Origen speaks of the Spirit most often in the "context of individual soteriology rather than of ecclesiology" (*Trinity*, 83, citing H.J. Vogt, *Das Kirchenverständnis des Origenes*, 330-6).

<sup>149</sup> See McDonnell, 'Spirit', 22. This trend is apparent in Athanasius, Basil, and Gregory of Nyssa.

contexts reveals a use of “sanctify” that resembles the biblical verses that Origen would have likely looked to with reference to the Spirit’s work in sanctification, e.g. Romans 15.16.<sup>150</sup> The Spirit’s work in sanctification, therefore, is better defined for Origen as the Spirit’s work in the overall process of salvation, the preparation and perfection of both individual and church before God.

## Purification and Cleansing

In addition to *sanctifico*/ἀγιάζω, there are other words that Origen frequently associates with the Spirit that are related to purification or cleansing, often in the context of baptism, and which carry many of the same ideas as sanctification. Returning to 1 Cor 6.11, believers are “washed (*abluti estis*/ἀπελούσασθε) [and] ... sanctified in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God.”<sup>151</sup> Again, in the two places where Origen mentions this verse, he does not specify what exactly the Spirit does or how either of the verbs apply to the Spirit. The only thing clear from these verses is that both Christ and the Spirit are involved in the work of justification and sanctification, which are somehow linked with baptism. In *hom.in.Lev* 4.8.2, however, Origen links 1 Corinthians 6.11 with Titus 3.3-5, particularly v.5: “He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit” (NRSV).<sup>152</sup> Origen quotes both of these verses as evidence of the transformation and sanctification of the Gentiles by Christ and the Spirit.<sup>153</sup> In *hom.in.Lev* 4.8.2, Origen does not pick out any technical distinctions in the differences in vocabulary

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<sup>150</sup> But even in *princ.* 1.3.6-1.3.8, this sense of sanctification is preserved in the overall discussion.

<sup>151</sup> See *hom.in.Jos* 6.4.

<sup>152</sup> SC 286:190; Barkley, 83:82. See also *Cels.* 1.64.

<sup>153</sup> Simonetti, ‘Note’, 294, notes the paralleled sanctifying work of the Son, e.g. *hom.in.Num* 17.4.4, *hom.in.Lev* 4.3.2.

between these two verses, but cites both to demonstrate how the one who comes to Christ with faith “touched the flesh of the sacrifice and is sanctified.”<sup>154</sup> Both of these verses have clear references to baptism, the phrases “washing of regeneration” (*lavacrum regenerationis*/λουτροῦ παλιγγενεσίας) and “washing” (*abluti estis*/ἀπελούσασθε) being evidence of this. It is also notable that in the text of Titus 3.3-5, the work of renewing (*renovationis*/ἀνακαινώσεως) is attributed to the Spirit in the context of baptism.<sup>155</sup> Origen does not necessarily key in on these terms here or in other places where he quotes Titus 3.3-5, citing it only in general reference to the regeneration of baptism or specifically to the giving of the Spirit at baptism.<sup>156</sup> In either case, he uses both as evidence for the Spirit’s involvement in the overall process of sanctification and renewal that is initiated by faith and confirmed in baptism.

There are other places, however, where Origen makes particular distinctions in “renewal” and “regeneration” language. Baptism “takes place with the renewal (ἀνακαινώσεως) of the Spirit” (*Jo.* 6.169), or is defined as “regeneration (*regeneratio*) in water and in the Holy Spirit” (*hom.in.Num* 7.2.2).<sup>157</sup> In both of these examples, the Spirit’s work of renewing or regenerating cannot be separated from the rite of baptism. Both of these terms refer to the Spirit’s particular role in the overall process of salvation, particularly to vivification that accompanies the rite of baptism.

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<sup>154</sup> SC 286:190; Barkley, 83:82.

<sup>155</sup> For more on baptism, see Ch. 4.

<sup>156</sup> General work in baptism: *hom.in.Num* 7.2.2, *hom.in.Lev* 4.8.2. Giving of Spirit in baptism: *Cels.* 1.64, *princ.* 1.3.7, *Jo.* 6.169.

<sup>157</sup> *Jo.* 6.169 (SC 256; Heine, 80:216); *hom.in.Num* 7.2.2 (SC 415:174; Scheck, 26). Another reference appears in *princ.* 1.3.7, where the Spirit’s “renews (*renovet*) the face of the earth” in Ps 104.29-30 (Behr, 1:77). While Origen elsewhere reads the verse to describe the Spirit’s dwelling in believers after baptism, he uses it here to emphasize the Spirit’s departure from the unworthy.



There are also a variety of other terms that describe the same work of the Spirit. Origen frequently uses the imagery of washing to describe the cleansing or purifying work of the Spirit, particularly in baptism.<sup>158</sup> In John 13, Christ “wash[es] the feet” (*lavare pedes*) of souls with the grace of the Spirit (*hom.in.Jud* 8.5).<sup>159</sup> While it is not entirely clear whether Origen is making a reference to baptism, he understands the Spirit’s coming and dispensation of knowledge as “cleansing” (*purgare*), a work initiated by Christ through the Spirit.<sup>160</sup> This washing and cleansing, however, is a work that is done synergistically: we must “present our feet” in order for Christ to wash them with the grace of the Spirit. Baptism is clearly Origen’s intention when he describes it as a cleansing (*mundati*) in water and the Holy Spirit and in the blood of the Lord (*hom.in.Jos* 3.5).<sup>161</sup> This is also the case where he notes that the Spirit purifies (*purificatio*) at baptism (*com.in.Rom* 2.13.32). A third related example can be found in *com.in.Rom* 5.9.11: “sin’s innate defilement” is “washed away (*ablui*) through water and the Spirit.”<sup>162</sup> Finally, Origen notes that God “removes evil” (*mala aufert*) either through fire or the Spirit who helps put to death the works of the flesh (*Rom* 8.13).<sup>163</sup> While sanctification refers more to the pronouncement of holiness and renewal

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<sup>158</sup> The Spirit is associated often with water in Origen’s writings: in *Jo.* 13.36, things learned of the Spirit are as from a fountain of water (SC 222:50; Heine, 89:77). Also see *hom.in.Gen* 10.2, *hom.in.Num* 12.2.4. In *hom.in.Num* 17.4.4, the Spirit and Christ are both rivers, with the rivers of Scripture nourishing the soul (SC 442:290).

<sup>159</sup> SC 389:200; Lauro, 119:108. Other related references appear in *Jo.* 32.75 and 32.86, in which the Spirit comes on disciples who have already had their feet washed by Christ. Also see *Jo.* 6.167, which uses *νίπτω* instead of *ἀπολούω* for Jesus’ washing (SC 157:256; Heine 80:216).

<sup>160</sup> Also see *Cels.* 7.8: the Logos purifies (*κεκαθαρμένους*) souls (SC 150:34; Chadwick, 402). The cognate of this is found in *hom.in.Lev* 7.4.5, where the Father/Son/Spirit cleanse (*fueris mundatus*) together (SC 286:332; Barkley, 83:144). cf. Heb 9.14, Eph 5.26, which are not quoted by Origen.

<sup>161</sup> SC 71:144; Bruce, 105:50. *Purgo* appears also in *hom.in.Ez* 5.1.2 (SC 352:192), but referring to the baptism of the Spirit.

<sup>162</sup> SC 539:498; Scheck, 103:367.

<sup>163</sup> *hom.in.Ez* 1.13 (SC 352:88; Scheck, 62:42). In the OT, its usage is in the sense of God taking away something bad, cf. *Rom* 8.13. See also *hom.in.Ez* 5.1.2, in which certain people are unable to be “purged” (*purgari*) by the purification (*purificatio*) of the Spirit, a reference to the baptism by fire (SC 352:192).

and regeneration to the giving of life, this cluster of terms all share in common the idea of cleansing or removal. The Spirit's work at baptism, therefore, is to remove the dominating influence of the flesh by cleansing or purging the sins of the willing believer.<sup>164</sup> This again demonstrates Origen's understanding of the Spirit's work in salvation as being in conjunction with the believer's action. The work of sanctification, therefore, cannot occur in the presence of sin; sin must first be washed away by the believer's cooperation with the Spirit in order for the Spirit to indwell and sanctify.

Both in this chapter and the last, we have seen that Origen views the Spirit's participation as necessary in the rite of baptism. This is seen not only in his references to the baptismal formula of Matthew 28.19, in which he states that baptism is incomplete without the Spirit's name in the recitation of the baptismal formula,<sup>165</sup> but also in passages like John 1.32-34 and Matthew 3.11, which testify to the Spirit's work in baptism.<sup>166</sup> Another important verse for Origen is John 3.5, in which baptism through water and the Spirit are required to enter the kingdom of heaven.<sup>167</sup> All of these examples testify to the agency of the Spirit in the conversion of believers, cleansing them and turning them towards the spiritual life.

Another significant feature in Origen's understanding of sanctification and purification, which we have seen also in the last chapter with grace, is the importance that he places on

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<sup>164</sup> While Origen at places speaks of the Spirit's giving of life outside of the context of baptism, his discussion of baptism and use of "cleansing" or "purification" language shows that the vivifying work of the Spirit involves the work that takes places at baptism.

<sup>165</sup> Quoted in: *com.in.Rom* 5.2.11, 5.8.7, 8.5.8; *hom.in.Ez* 7.4; *hom.in.Num* 12.2.5 *hom.in.Gen* 13.3; *or.* 26.4. In *princ.* 1.3.2, Origen uses Mt 28.19 to argue that baptism cannot be without the Spirit, demonstrating the "great authority and dignity" of the person of the Spirit.

<sup>166</sup> See *Cels.* 1.48 (Jn 1.32-34); *Jo.* 6.220 (Jn 1.33), 6.222 (Mt 3.11); *hom.in.Lc* 27.1; *com.in.Rom* 5.8.3, *mart.* 30.

<sup>167</sup> See *com.in.Rom* 2.7.3, 2.7.6, 5.8.3, 5.9.11; *hom.in.Num* 7.2.2.

the will of the individual to make the Spirit's work effective. This is seen particularly in Origen's emphasis on the believer's work in self-purification. For example, in *hom.in.Num* 6.3.1, "the Spirit of God rests... on those who purify (*purificant*) their souls from sin" or that believers are united with the Spirit "when they have cleansed (*emundauerint*) themselves of all filth and have become holy vessels" (*com.in.Rom* 10.9.2).<sup>168</sup> It is also seen in his repetition of scriptural language like walking in the newness of life (Rom 6.4),<sup>169</sup> walking according to the Spirit (Gal 5.25),<sup>170</sup> or believers making themselves fit to receive the Spirit.<sup>171</sup> For Origen, the true Christian is the one who has rejected the flesh and has chosen life in the Spirit. Those who continue to sin or to fall to the flesh are not truly Christian and do not have the Spirit, who is the mark of new life and reception into God's family. The centrality of the flesh vs. Spirit (or spirit) conflict in daily living is thus seen in his repeated references of Pauline passages that warn about this conflict: Galatians 5.17,<sup>172</sup> 1 Corinthians 2.14,<sup>173</sup> Galatians 6.8,<sup>174</sup> Romans 8.13,<sup>175</sup> and Romans 8.9.<sup>176</sup> But this does not mean that sanctification can take place without the Spirit.<sup>177</sup> With regard to the Pauline "flesh" verses, Origen refers more to the Spirit's work in the context of these verses (e.g.

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<sup>168</sup> *hom.in.Num* 6.3.1 (SC 415:148; Scheck, 22); *com.in.Rom* 10.9.2 (SC 555:324; Scheck, 104:275). *Jo.* 32.75: must be cleansed (καθαρίζω) to receive the Spirit (SC 385:220; Heine, 89:356). One exception to this is *Cels.* 7.8, in which it is the Logos who purifies (κεκαθαρμένοις) and then the Spirit dwells (SC 150:34; Chadwick, 402).

<sup>169</sup> *princ.* 1.3.7.

<sup>170</sup> *com.in.Rom* 6.12.10. Also *hom.in.Num* 23.5.2: soul united to the Lord no longer seeks worldly things (SC 461:128; Scheck 144).

<sup>171</sup> See *Jo.* 13.141; *com.in.Rom* 10.7.4. Also *princ.* 1.5.2: "every rational creature, therefore, is capable of praise and censure" (Behr, 1:91).

<sup>172</sup> *princ.* 3.2.3; or. 29.1; *com.in.Rom* 6.1.3, 6.8.5, 6.9.11, 7.6.4.

<sup>173</sup> *princ.* 2.8.2, 3.6.6; *Cels.* 6.71, *hom.in.Gen* 16.4, *hom.in.Lev* 2.2.4, *hom.in.Num* 26.4.3; *Cant.* 1.4, *hom.in.Jer* 12.1.1, *com.in.Rom* 2.14.15.

<sup>174</sup> or. 19.2; *hom.in.Gen* 5.6, 6.8; *hom.in.Num* 23.8.

<sup>175</sup> *Cels.* 7.38, 7.4, 7.52; or. 13.4; *com.in.Rom* 1.10.3, 2.13.7, 2.13.35, 6.14.3.

<sup>176</sup> *Jo.* 13.359, *Cels.* 7.45; *hom.in.Gen* 7.2, *com.in.Mt* 13.2, *com.in.Rom* 6.7.4, 6.12.8. Romans 8.10: *com.in.Rom* 6.13.5.

<sup>177</sup> While Hauschild, *Gottes Geist*, 141, recognizes the importance of the Spirit in this work, he also notes that the Spirit is theologically superfluous, given the work of Christ and the work of man.

putting to death the flesh, sowing in the Spirit, and opposition of sin and flesh) than he does to the Spirit's work in sanctification or cleansing.<sup>178</sup> The Spirit's role in this struggle is multi-faced: he initiates believers into the spiritual life, moving them from death to life, flesh to spirit, but also assists them in their continual overcoming of it. Because the goal of the Christian life is the knowledge of God, the Christian must continually reject sin and fleshly inclinations to receive greater spiritual truths from the Spirit.<sup>179</sup> Therefore, while human effort is needed to cooperate with the Spirit, it is only through the Spirit that believers can be brought from death to life, overcome the flesh, and full sanctification accomplished.

## Sanctification and Trinity

We have seen so far that the Spirit's work of sanctification is a practical work, assistance by which sin and flesh can be overcome and the believer's efforts in purity confirmed. It is also a consecratory work, marking saints as holy and presentable to the Father. In Origen's writings, however, sanctification is not a work which is limited to the Spirit; it also involves the other Trinitarian persons. Origen often speaks of sanctification in both Christological and Trinitarian contexts, highlighting the importance of this process in the overall work of salvation.<sup>180</sup> In places where Origen refers to the sanctification of the Son, Father, or Trinity, he is not speaking merely of indwelling assistance, but the work of the perfection

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<sup>178</sup> E.g. *com.in.Rom* 6.14.4 (Gal 5.5), *hom.in.Num* 26.7.1 (Gal 3.3).

<sup>179</sup> See esp. *Cels.* 7.44, or. 9.2

<sup>180</sup> Simonetti, 'Note', 296-98, recognizes Origen's Trinitarian understanding of both inspiration and sanctification, identifying Father as "efficient cause", Son as "instrumental cause", and Spirit as "material cause". Both Simonetti and Ziebritzki (*Heiliger Geist*, 214-20), though wrong in their assessment and acceptance of *princ.* 1.3.7 (see Ch. 3 n.134) correctly identify Origen's Trinitarian tendencies in how he understands sanctification and salvation. See also Bruns, *Trinität*, 265-66.

of the saint, the restoration of the image of God in the individual, the greater overall ends of salvation and deification.

As we have seen in Chapter 2, the Son for Origen is “sanctification for us,” drawn from his reading of 1 Cor 1.30. In addition, there are a number of other places where Origen speaks of the sanctification of the Son. For example, in *Jo.* 1.247,

...he has become sanctification itself for us, whence the saints are sanctified, and has become redemption. And each of us is sanctified by that sanctification and redeemed in relation to that redemption.<sup>181</sup>

Additionally, in *hom.in.Jer* 8.2.1, Origen says that, “and when he is sanctification, he is what enables those faithful and dedicated to God to become holy.”<sup>182</sup> In these examples, there seems to be at least some overlap between the sanctifying functions of Son and Spirit.<sup>183</sup>

But at the same time, the sanctifying work of the Spirit is not understood by Origen to be something entirely different from the sanctification of the Son. In some places, it is noted that they sanctify together, e.g. *com.in.Rom* 6.11.3:

For what the Spirit does, Christ also does; and the things that are Christ’s the Spirit does. For just as those whom the Holy Spirit sanctifies Christ sanctifies, so also those whom the Spirit of life sets free life also sets free.<sup>184</sup>

In this passage Origen parallels the work of the Son and the Spirit, similar to what he says about revelation.<sup>185</sup> The Spirit’s work of sanctification, therefore, is not an independent work, but is part of the greater work which Christ does. These parallel roles speak of a

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<sup>181</sup> SC 120:182; Heine, 80:83.

<sup>182</sup> SC 232:358; Smith, 97:77. An example in Latin is *com.in.Rom* 9.42.10 (SC 555:250; Scheck, 104:252): “they are sanctified through the Word of God and prayer” (cf. 1 Tim 4.4-5).

<sup>183</sup> See *hom.in.Jud* 8.5.

<sup>184</sup> SC 543:200; Scheck, 104:47. Other places where sanctification and giving life are together: *com.in.Rom* 8.5.2, 8.11.8; *Jo.* 13.361.

<sup>185</sup> The subject of this passage is the Spirit’s role in giving life, the source of life being the Son himself. See also *Jo.* 1.112, 1.188.

greater unity in the divine work. As Origen says in *hom.in.Lc* 27.6, “all sanctification... come[s] from the Holy Spirit in Christ Jesus.”<sup>186</sup>

Though Origen does not explain the difference between how Son and Spirit sanctify, we can potentially work out Origen’s understanding of the Son’s sanctification by considering his theology of Christ’s *epinoia*. Christ as “sanctification” or “holiness” means he is the manifestation of these things for believers, the epitome of holy perfection. If we take the Son as “sanctification for us” (1 Cor 1.30) into consideration, added to Origen’s understanding of the Spirit’s sanctification above, we can gain a fuller picture of the greater work of sanctification. Christ, in his *epinoia* of sanctification realized in the incarnation, the more abstract holiness of God in the forms of the divine Word revealed. The Spirit’s work, rather than being something separate from the Son’s, allows the saints to see and understand and participate in the Son in the various aspects he becomes for creation, e.g. sanctification. As Christians participate in the Spirit, they are conformed in the image of the Son and are united with Christ in his virtues, participating in him also.<sup>187</sup> Therefore, the Son’s sanctification makes holiness available to believers by manifesting it in his life and in the ideal form, while the Spirit assists in the process of sanctification more practically by helping them fight against the flesh and leading them upward towards the image of the Son, confirming their holy living. In any case, because the Son sends the Spirit

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<sup>186</sup> SC 87:350; Leinhard, 94:114: *sed omnis sanctificatio, tam in corde, quam in verbis, et in opere, a sancto Spiritu veniat in Christo Jesu* (trans. Jerome). Also see *princ.* 1.3.8, *Cant.* 4.14.

<sup>187</sup> Crouzel, *Origen*, 95, notes that participation is “dynamic”, that “the image rejoins the model and reproduces it”. See also Torjesen, *Exegesis*, 71-72, who says that, “Divinization in Origen is the restoration of the soul to its original state of perfect knowledge of God. It is achieved by the imitation of God, by an imitation of both his virtues and his knowledge.” cf. *Cels.* 8.18. Torjesen, 72, also notes Origen’s description of the progress of the soul in the three books of Solomon (Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs) as the “three divisions of Greek science – ethics, physics and enoptics” (*Cant.* Pref.3; Lawson, 26:40). These divisions may also correspond to the individual roles of the Trinitarian persons.

and the Spirit is always participating in the work of the Son, what the Spirit does can be considered to be an extension of what the Son is already doing.

Sanctification is also at times spoken of in a Trinitarian sense.<sup>188</sup> For example, in *Jo.* 1.249, Origen asks his readers to “consider if the Father is the ‘sanctification’ of our sanctification himself, in the same way as the Father is the head of Christ, while Christ is our head.”<sup>189</sup> Additionally, in *hom.in.Jer* 17.4.1, commenting on Jeremiah 17.12-13, Origen refers to the “throne of glory, our sanctification (*sanctificatio*)”, which is either Christ or the Father as “he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are all from one” (Heb 2.11).<sup>190</sup> Following this, in *hom.in.Jer* 17.4.3, Origen goes on to say that when one sins, “he leaves Christ and leaves God... the unjust leaves righteousness, profane leaves sanctification” (1 Cor 1.30).<sup>191</sup> As the goal of the Son’s “sanctification” is the Father, and all that is in the Son comes from the Father, the Father can be considered the ultimate source of sanctification. Given that Origen understands the Spirit’s work to always be in the context of a greater Trinitarian work initiated by the Father and mediated by the Son, it is reasonable that he views the overall goal of sanctification in this way: the restoration of the image in which the saint was originally created, the image of the Son. The Spirit’s role in this, therefore, is the moral and ethical aspect of this work, the indwelling presence who helps convert the saint from death to life, continually assisting and confirming the saint in holiness, guiding them upward towards Christ, and ultimately sealing them as he offers them to his Father.

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<sup>188</sup> *hom.in.Lev* 7.4.5: “unless you were cleansed in the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, you could not be clean” (286:332; Barkley, 83:144). He keys in on the “third time” with Peter and the sheet in Acts 10.

<sup>189</sup> SC 120:182; Heine, 80:83. But he only considers this. cf. 1 Cor 11.3.

<sup>190</sup> SC 238:166; Smith, 97:183. The text of *hom.in.Jer* 17.4.1 goes from Latin to Greek – the first reference to “sanctification” is in Latin, the second in Greek (ἀγίασμα).

<sup>191</sup> SC 238:168; Smith, 97:184.

## Conclusion

In this chapter, we have seen that “revelation” and “sanctification” are two important components in how Origen understands the Spirit’s work in leading believers upwards in their spiritual progress. Through these functions, the Spirit ultimately guides believers to the spiritual and rational knowledge of the Son, through whom they see the Father. If we accept Torjesen’s definition of divinization (see n.187), the Spirit’s work in sanctification can be coupled with revelation, the noetic aspect of salvation, to describe the restoration of humanity to its original created intention, a work which is without a doubt Trinitarian in character and central to Origen’s overall theological vision.<sup>192</sup> These two roles thus represent the Spirit’s assistance in both the moral and rational, indicative of the importance of this work. An example of the relationship between these two functions can be seen in *princ.* 1.3.8:

.... and when one who is sanctified by this participation in the Holy Spirit is made purer and cleaner, he more worthily receives the grace of wisdom and knowledge so that, when all stains of pollution and ignorance are removed and cleansed, he may receive so great an advance in cleanliness and purity that what he received from God – that he should be such – is such as to be worthy of God, of him who gave it indeed to be pure and perfect; so that the one who is thus may be as worthy as he who made him be this.<sup>193</sup>

Origen also notes that it is “the work of wisdom, to instruct and to train them and lead them on to perfection by the strengthening and unceasing sanctification of the Holy Spirit, by which alone they are able to attain God” (*princ.* 1.3.8).<sup>194</sup> This work of salvation is ultimately a process; the works of sanctification and revelation continue through the life of believers who continue to fight sin and the flesh, while growing in the knowledge of

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<sup>192</sup> Torjesen, *Exegesis*, 72.

<sup>193</sup> Behr, 1:81.

<sup>194</sup> Behr, 1:81.



God. It is only at Christ's return or the perfection of all things that the flesh can become fully subject to the Spirit and the fullness of knowledge is attained.<sup>195</sup> We see, therefore, that without the Spirit's assistance in sanctification, revelation, and even vivification, believers cannot begin their journey to the goal of participation in the divine. While the Spirit's role in this work attests to his inferior status to the Son and the Father, given his work ultimately points to them, it also affirms his importance in the divine work of salvation. For Origen, it is only through the practical, indwelling assistance of the Holy Spirit, that believers can be initiated into the imitation and contemplation of the divine.

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<sup>195</sup> E.g. *hom.in.Num* 18.4.5.

## CONCLUSION

Who is the Holy Spirit to Origen? Although Origen at times struggles to articulate the Spirit's exact identity, he affirms the singular and personal identity of the Holy Spirit. He argues for the Spirit's personhood in the face of various systems which either do not recognize such an entity, are ignorant of his existence entirely, subsume him into the Godhead, or divide him into a multiplicity. While Origen's worldview contains a diversity of spiritual beings, the Holy Spirit alone is unique and exalted in his existence, the sole divine Spirit or the "firstfruits" of many spirits. But in Origen's generally Middle Platonic hierarchical cosmological framework, the Holy Spirit is a being less than the Son, who is less than the Father. The Spirit, therefore, receives his existence and attributes through the mediation of the Son, who in turn receives his from the Father. For this reason Origen is willing to call both Son and Spirit "created" and speaks of the Spirit's knowledge and ability as being less than the Son's. Origen's hierarchical understanding of the divine relations is thus built with the framework of a Middle Platonic cosmology, but is buttressed with biblical support. At the top of the system is the most high God, transcendent and ineffable. God ministers to creation primarily through his Son, his Word and Image who reveals him. But in many instances, Origen places the Holy Spirit alongside the Son in a parallel mediatory and revelatory role. The Son and Spirit are the two greatest beings under the Father, who know the Father as Son and search his depths as Spirit, revealing the invisible God and ministering what is from him to the rational and holy creation. But though Origen occasionally places the Spirit next to the Son or includes the Spirit with the Son and the Father, precedence for which he finds both in Scripture and the Christian tradition, nowhere does he state that the Spirit is equal or consubstantial with either.

Instead, preserving the hierarchy inherent in his thought, Origen bases Trinitarian unity in a shared divine work of salvation. Though Origen speaks of a single divine plan and economy of salvation, the members who carry out that plan differ in both status and ability. Origen's pneumatology, therefore, is a pneumatology of tension: though his instincts are to speak of the Spirit's exalted status and nature, he often finds himself speaking of the Spirit's inferiority and inability. Because the Christian tradition he has inherited has little to say about the Spirit's origin, and the philosophical tradition which has influenced him has no such figure in its schemes, Origen has no role for the Spirit in the divine work of creation, and struggles to discern whether the Spirit is created or uncreated. He thus leaves certain questions about the Spirit's identity and nature unanswered.

What does the Holy Spirit do in Origen's theology? In this Origen is confident. While Trinity in his writings is not an idea based in an abstract divine substance or essence, it is manifested in a three-fold divine work of salvation. In their work and will, the three persons, Father, Son, and Spirit, are perfectly united, accomplishing the will of the Father. In this economy, the Spirit's lower status is evident as his work alone is restricted to the saints, less and smaller in scope than that of the Father who is available to all creation and the Son whose work is amongst rational beings. The Holy Spirit's particular function is to build up and strengthen those who are already becoming like God. He is the divine person who works primarily amongst the physical and fleshly, seen in his dwelling in the saints and creation of the medium of Scripture. But even in this plan of salvation, all three members are fully active. The Father as head initiates or energizes the divine plan, the Son ministers it in his mediatory place, the Spirit supplies the gifts and graces of God, those empowerments and abilities which the saints require in their working of salvation, a gift which is realized by the presence of the Spirit himself. But because he is the Holy Spirit,

the divine Spirit, he can only indwell and work with those who desire his presence and shun evil, those who are seeking God. The Spirit's restriction to the saints, therefore, is also practical – it shows that his work is only effective for those who choose to cooperate with him. But his work is greater in quality for those whose mental and rational capacities are greater – those who can comprehend the divine truths and contemplate the image of the Son. For such believers, the Spirit inspires the Scriptures, hiding divine truths and assisting in their discovery. The Spirit, therefore, is the gateway to the divine, the initiator of the saints into the knowledge of God, the revealer of the divine Son. The Spirit's work is inseparable from the person of the Son; his perfect indwelling of the incarnate Christ allows for his special filling of the saints. Through the Scriptures and the Spirit, believers are led first to the incarnate Christ, and then to the contemplation of the Son's divine and noetic forms. In the daily lives of the saints, the Spirit continually works to sanctify and consecrate, confirming and strengthening the believers in their pursuit of holiness and the knowledge of the divine; he makes them *pneumatikos* and acceptable to the Father.

Origen's pneumatology, then, is not a superfluous part of his theology, but is a practical and necessary doctrine. In this system, the Holy Spirit is the divine guide who leads and spurs on believers to reach the greatest of spiritual heights. He is the participatory God, the principle of perfection, the initiator of deification. In Origen's pneumatology, we see his creative and innovative theologizing at work, forming a theological system which is practical and grounded, yet simultaneously abstract and speculative. Origen draws his teaching from a wide variety of biblical texts, preserving scriptural language where he thinks it is clear, wrestling with it where he finds it uncertain. At times he performs spectacular bits of high-flying allegorical exegesis, at other times he is surprisingly grounded and literalistic, taking what Scripture says at face value. While at times Origen

comes to his own unique conclusions, his exegetical and theological moves are ultimately motivated by the desire to tell the story and plan of salvation, to systematize and clarify what he sees in Scripture, all for the assistance of believers. Origen firmly believes that what Scripture says is true and that his theologizing work affirms its authority, revealing the highest of its truths. Therefore, in his pneumatology, Origen finds a way to weave the purely biblical doctrine of the Holy Spirit into a greater divine cosmological framework which contains undeniable traces of Platonism. The result of this is a unique and intricate theological tapestry in which the Spirit is the divine guide, the initiator and helper of the saints in their journey to the Father. While elements of Origen's pneumatology can actually be described as needing development or clarity – because Origen himself is unclear or uncertain, not because of theological “immaturity” – it should be obvious now that Origen possesses a defined understanding of what the Holy Spirit does as well as the goal of the Spirit's work.<sup>1</sup>

### Can we read Origen fairly?

Returning to the issue mentioned in the introduction to this study, can we as modern readers avoid unnecessary anachronisms and read Origen fairly? Or more specifically, can we accept and appreciate Origen's unique contributions to Trinitarian theology without evaluating him by the standards of Nicaea? The answer to these questions is, of course, “yes”, but this task requires discipline. We must first avoid asking the types of questions or making the types of statements that are vulnerable to this. For example, Crouzel's assertion that Origen's Trinitarian vocabulary “was not yet sufficiently precise”, that is,

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<sup>1</sup> By lacking or requiring development, I do not mean in the sense that it is lacking as a Trinitarian system, i.e. compared to the fourth century. I simply refer to the fact that the entirety of this theology is not fleshed out and that there are inconsistencies at times in the way he speaks of the person of the Holy Spirit, particularly regarding his origin.

when compared to Nicaea, is the type of statement we must avoid.<sup>2</sup> In his own time, for his own purposes, Origen's Trinitarian vocabulary did what it needed to do – it defended against the extremes of heresy that plagued the church in Origen's time. We must remember that Origen is not concerned with the issues of Arianism. The Son cannot be *homousios* with the Father, while the Son and the Spirit can be called “created” – these mean entirely different things for him. To affirm such statements would have been to accept the excesses of Valentinian Gnosticism or to deny the monarchy of the Father. Whether or not Origen would have affirmed later standards of orthodoxy, had he known of them, is speculation which is impossible to prove.

Instead, Origen's pneumatology and Trinitarian theology should be accepted for what they are and appreciated in their own right. To approach Origen's Trinitarian theology fairly is to approach the simple summaries of Rufinus with caution; Origen's actual thought must be sought in spite of the work of Rufinus. In looking at his theology as a system, scholars of Origen should seek to examine the entirety of his thought, sensitive to both development and alterations in his writings, rather than picking or choosing portions of Origen that better suit certain theological needs or agendas. While the more positive reception of Rufinus' translations is a positive and necessary step, they must be always be received with a grain of salt, with an awareness that they are a specific individual's interpretation of Origen and that editing is heavier in some places than in others.

Rufinus' translations ought not simply to be unconditionally accepted or vilified, but must be viewed for what they are. More than simply Origen or Rufinus, they are writings which portray Origen as a third-century saint and theological father which meet the needs

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<sup>2</sup> Crouzel, *Origen*, 171. Crouzel is correct, however, in noting that Origen's Trinitarian theology, compared to Nicaea, “held its equivalent in a dynamic rather than ontological mode.”

of the fourth century church. A more clear discernment of the various differences that exist between the authentic Origen and the Rufinus-Origen could even help to provide further insight into the theology of Rufinus himself, the issues that Rufinus was facing in his time, and the particular ways in which supporters of Origen found him useful and influential. Therefore, one might say that the Rufinus-Origen almost needs to be treated as a separate figure, even as a case study for how important thinkers were read and used in late antiquity.

The trends throughout Origenian scholarship to read Origen in light of different influences, e.g. as philosopher or Christian mystic, or against the growing influence of various Gnostic or even Monarchian groups, are all significant and helpful as they reveal the various facets of the complex backdrop against which we can understand Origen's thought. However, to place too much weight on one of these at the expense of all the others is a danger that should be avoided. This is not to say that all such influences or portrayals are equal, but that any scholar of Origen must recognize and seek to treat such issues in a balanced manner. Scholars of Origen must acknowledge that Origen viewed himself as a man of the church who taught Christian doctrine, but did so in a specific manner and context, having come from a particular educational background and facing issues unique to his time. Therefore, the tools he uses and the answers he come up with are inextricably linked to the knowledge he possesses and the challenges which he faced.

Practically speaking, as this study has sought to show, this means scholarship needs to become more comfortable with the idea that Origen may have actually been an ontological subordinationist. In Origen scholarship, there has been too strong a tendency to claim that Origen's subordinationism is merely economic or referring only to origin. In Origen's time, ontological subordination was not an issue; as articulated in scholarship, it was a primary concern of fourth century writers. In the third century, acceptable language and concepts

were less strictly defined. But Origen is not intentionally choosing to submit the Son to the Father and the Spirit to the Son against an established tradition. Instead, he is probing and exploring, using the scriptural and philosophical tools and logic that he possesses in order to build a system that is scriptural and reasonable. The real Origen did not find the Son's inferiority to the Father a problem; he instead found issue with the denial of the Son's real existence or the compromising of the Father's unity and simplicity. In the same way that we would not affirm that Plontinus or Numenius affirmed an equality or shared divine substance amongst their triads, we cannot do so for Origen. Origen's theology does not need saving – the real Origen does not care what we think about him. To answer the question posed in the title of Killian McDonnell's article, "does Origen have a Trinitarian doctrine of the Holy Spirit?", the answer is yes, but his Trinitarianism is uniquely his own.<sup>3</sup>

### **Different Origenes and the Secret Doctrine of the Trinity**

In navigating Origen's theology, readers inevitably face the task of differentiating two Origenes: the real man living and writing in the third century versus the fourth-century ideal of that man, stemming from the mind of Rufinus. In this study, I have sought to read Origen more accurately, to provide a template by identifying terms and concepts which have been imported into his writings. This task, discerning the real Origen from the Rufinus-translated Origen, has been and will continue to be an issue for Origen scholarship.

But as should have been made clear in this study, discerning Origen's actual theology is also made difficult because of the different systems or even different Origenes that appear

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<sup>3</sup> McDonnell's conclusions ('Spirit', 33-34) are for the most part spot-on, except for his insistence on a non-ontological subordination. But the question itself may be problematic.



throughout his writings. What I mean by this is that Origen's inclination to provide multiple interpretations – to speak to different audiences based on their level of spiritual capacity – results in different understandings of his theology. This is no more apparent than in examining his pneumatology. For example, if we examine the works that were cited in the different chapters of this study, we will notice that references to the Holy Spirit's practical work are dominated by his homiletic works, those oriented to the common believer which are generally pastoral in nature. In these more practical and straightforward writings, we see a portrait of the helping Spirit, the one who assists and guides believers through the struggle of everyday life. The Spirit's identity, i.e. who he is and where he comes from, are rarely a concern in these types of writings. But Origen leaves the exploration of the divine mysteries, for example the Spirit's identity or the nature of the Son, to works and contexts in which speculation is more appropriate, that is, for audiences more in tune with both the intellectual and spiritual.

We see, therefore, that there are different levels of teaching that Origen has for the Holy Spirit. For basic believers, those concerned with day-to-day issues, those who are either morally or intellectually incapable and are concerned with superstition and survival, the Holy Spirit is the powerful spirit who is greater than all other spiritual beings. For those more knowledgeable about the faith and are contributing to the life of the church, the Spirit is the one who gives the gifts and empowers. For those who have peered into the depths, the Spirit is the divine Spirit, who sits alongside the Son beneath the Father. This is most clearly visible in Origen's interpretations of the "firstfruits of the Spirit" of Romans 8.23 in *com.in.Rom* 7.5.3-7.<sup>4</sup> On the most basic level, the Holy Spirit is understood as

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<sup>4</sup> See Appendix.

multiple spirits; on the highest, the Spirit's single personhood and place next to the Son are emphasized. It is also notable that *On First Principles* 1.3, though containing a reference to the divine mystery of the seraphim of Isaiah 6, a higher divine teaching, reveals more of the Spirit's work on a practical level.<sup>5</sup> The highest level of understanding about the Spirit, e.g. the allegorical images of the seraphim, firstfruits, doves, or olive trees, those which reveal the image of the Trinity in which the Spirit is placed side-by-side with the Son, are reserved for Origen's more esoteric and challenging works.<sup>6</sup> This tells us that Origen's doctrine of the Trinity is in fact a secret doctrine – the divine mystery of who God is or how God works is not available to all Christians. Instead, for Origen, the more one grows in the faith, the more capable the saint is to receive divine knowledge; the more intimate one becomes with the Spirit, the higher and more glorious the Holy Spirit becomes and the more clearly the Trinity is seen. At its highest level, Origen's theology is most Trinitarian. When considering Rufinus' translations, particularly the places where he embellishes Origen's Trinitarianism, we should be aware that this was the Origen that Rufinus sought to bring to light. The result of this is the occasional burst of awkwardly placed fourth century pro-Nicene Trinitarian declarations in his translated versions of Origen's works. Though scholarship has recognized this feature in Origen's exegesis, it must also be considered when tackling certain aspects of his theology.

To conclude, although Origen is considered to be one of the most important theologians in the history of the church, he is a figure who deserves further attention as a thinker in his own right. Rather than using Origen to advance particular theological agendas,

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<sup>5</sup> It is also notable that the gist of the Spirit's particular work, which we have discussed in Chapter 5, is generally preserved in the later parts of that section.

<sup>6</sup> Particularly in books considered more "spiritual", e.g. the Gospel of John and Song of Songs. *Cels.* also contains some, but we can assume that the audience of this work possesses some philosophical knowledge, meaning they are more mentally capable.

scholarship is still necessary on many areas of Origen's thought, in all its confusion and complexity, in light of the particular background and contexts of his time. In order to better recognize Origen's exceptional contributions and achievements in exegesis and theology, his brilliant and creative mind, his influence on the tradition as a whole, and to maximize his place in the Christian tradition, to do him service as the great teacher of the church he was, we must all learn to better read and appreciate him for who and what he was, in all his idiosyncrasies and eccentricities.

## Appendix: Origen and Angelomorphic Pneumatology

The purpose of this section is to add further clarity to Origen's understanding of the identity of the Holy Spirit. While we know that for Origen the Holy Spirit is a being lower than the Father and Son and higher than creation, this still does not fully answer the issue of how he conceives of the Spirit's existence and nature, or the metaphysical place he occupies. Is the Spirit indisputably a divine person or is he among the ranks of created beings, e.g. angels? In this section, we will see that while Origen at times uses angelic imagery to describe the Spirit's person and work, he does not conceive of the Spirit in strictly angelic terms or status, in contrast to some of the tradition which he has inherited.

A recent trend in scholarship has been the increasing use of the term "angelomorphic" to describe early Christian portrayals of Christ and the Spirit. The term can be traced back to Jean Danielou who first uses it in the following summary:

These then are the strictly Jewish Christian conceptions of angelomorphic Christology, those which have been borrowed from the angelology of later Judaism, and in which Christ and the Holy Spirit are represented in their eternal nature, and not simply in their mission, by means of the imagery of various angelic beings.<sup>1</sup>

"Angelomorphic" is a term which recognizes the complex development of Christian theology, acknowledging the influence of Jewish thought on the development of early Christian theology. Danielou's definition suggests that orthodox Trinitarian belief developed through the lens of Jewish angelic thought and language. While Danielou's study offers a number of examples, some more convincing than others, the term "angelomorphic" is used only once here and summarily. Adding to this, Crispin Fletcher-

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<sup>1</sup> Jean Danielou, *The Theology of Jewish Christianity*, trans. J.A. Baker (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1964), 146.

Louis has used the term “angelomorphic” to mean “wherever there are signs that an individual or community possesses specifically angelic characteristics or status, though for whom identity cannot be reduced to an angel.”<sup>2</sup> Where for Danielou angelic imagery is a representation of both “eternal nature” and “mission”, a metaphorical description of divine persons and work, Fletcher-Louis suggests that the identity of the individual “cannot be reduced to an angel”, which leaves the door open for angelic status. The assumption underlying Fletcher-Louis’s use of this term, however, is not that Christ or others are angels or of the same status as angels, but that these angelic characteristics or motifs are used to describe a wide range of persons, both those above angels in status (i.e. Christ) and lower (i.e. humans).<sup>3</sup> He does not assume a particular status of Christ prior to the use of angelic imagery; the status of the individual is left ambiguous.<sup>4</sup>

Other scholarship has drawn attention to the angelic character of the Spirit of God in the Old Testament and related second-temple and first century texts. Of particular importance has been the work of John Levison, who has focused primarily on articulating the angelic characteristics of the divine spirit in the Old Testament, but also in first-century Jewish writers like Philo and Josephus.<sup>5</sup> Levison’s work does not draw significantly on the stream of angelic Christian scholarship, nor does he read these texts as precursors to Christian theology, but reads Jewish texts in their own contexts. But while Levison’s work is important in providing insight into understandings of the Spirit in first-century Judaism

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<sup>2</sup> Crispin Fletcher-Louis, *Luke-Acts: Angels, Christology and Soteriology* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997), 13-15. Also in Bucur, *Angelomorphic*, xxvi.

<sup>3</sup> Fletcher-Louis, *Angels*, 15. This is seen in Jewish texts from across the second temple and early rabbinic periods.

<sup>4</sup> See also Charles A. Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology: Antecedents and Early Evidence* (Leiden, Brill, 1998). For a thorough background on the scholarship, particularly Angel Christology, Jewish angelic mystic influence, and Gnosticism, see 7-25.

<sup>5</sup> See John Levison, ‘The Angelic Spirit in Early Judaism’, *Seminar Series SBL* 34 (1995), 464-93; *The Spirit in First-Century Judaism* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), and other related articles.

and earlier, it is not concurrent with or conversant with Christian angelomorphic scholarship.

In patristic scholarship, the most important treatment of angelomorphic pneumatology has been the work of Bogdan Bucur. Bucur's work makes the natural step in tying together angelomorphic Christological scholarship with Levison's work on Old Testament and first-century Jewish pneumatology. Bucur has applied this methodology in his treatment of a number of early Christian texts and writers, including the book of Revelation, Shepherd of Hermas, Justin Martyr, and even Aphrahat.<sup>6</sup> His book focuses primarily on the tradition underlying the pneumatology of Clement of Alexandria, focusing on Clement's identification of the Holy Spirit as the seven *protocists* or "seven first-created angels" (i.e. sevenfold Spirit in Isaiah 11 and Revelation), a theme which seems to feature prominently in Clement's lesser known and fragmentary texts.<sup>7</sup> A major point in Bucur's argument is that Clement, drawing heavily from an angelomorphic theological tradition, does not seem to think of the Holy Spirit "in his individual substance" or as "a distinct hypostasis", but focuses instead on portraying the Spirit as God's working in the world.<sup>8</sup> While Bucur's hypothesis is not without its issues, at the very least it highlights the fact that pre-Nicene pneumatology is not as clearly developed as it might seem. Given that many of the works

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<sup>6</sup> These figures are the topics of the chapters of Bucur's *Angelic Pneumatology*, as well as a number of articles.

<sup>7</sup> Bucur, *Angelomorphic*, 5, admits that his thesis is not original; he draws from the work of the relatively obscure work of Christian Oeyen (*Eine fruhchristliche Engelpneumatologie bei Klemens von Alexandrien* (1965)). Bucur draws primarily from what he calls "the other Clement", which includes fragmentary works like the *Hypotyposeis*, *Eclogae*, *Excerpta*, *Adumbrationes*, which are not usually considered when examining Clement's corpus. Bucur's controversial thesis rests on the placement of weight on these more controversial and relatively unpreserved works.

<sup>8</sup> Bucur, *Angelomorphic*, 80. Citing Ziebritzki, *Heiliger Geist*, 123.

Bucur treats are direct influences on Origen, a question which arises is the extent to which Origen's pneumatology contains these angelomorphic characteristics.

The term, "angelomorphic", however, has its share of difficulties. First, as we have seen with Fletcher-Louis, it is by nature imprecise. The shift in scholarship from "angelic" to "angelomorphic" allows for a broader range of usage, but creates more questions than it answers when it comes to identity and status. That is, how much angelic language or imagery must be used in order for one's Christology or pneumatology to be considered angelomorphic? For example, in Gieschen's *Angelomorphic Christology*, Origen and other third and fourth-century writers are labelled angelomorphic in their Christology, simply because of the presence of certain angelic images or verses, even if these represent a minority.<sup>9</sup> Second, while "angelomorphic" is a label that is more fitting for Christology, it runs into further issues when used with pneumatology. With Christology, it is clear for many writers that Christ, though described in angelic language, is not an angel; titles like Word of God suggest his special status above angelic beings.<sup>10</sup> This is seen particularly in early Christian writers like Justin Martyr, who at times calls Christ "angel", but does not seem to conceive of Christ as one of many angels.<sup>11</sup> But in writers who speak of the Holy Spirit in angelic terms, the Spirit's identity is not nearly as distinct; there is also little interest in distinguishing the Holy Spirit from other spiritual beings. Thus, the simpler label "angelic pneumatology" might actually be more fitting. But given the presence of Trinitarian formulae and the majority usage of the singular "Holy Spirit", we must

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<sup>9</sup> Gieschen, *Angelomorphic*, 195. Other figures include Hippolytus, Novatian, Lactantius, Eusebius, in addition to earlier writers.

<sup>10</sup> Contra certain older scholars like Martin Werner, *The Formation of Christian Dogma: An Historical Study of its Problem*, trans. S.G.F. Brandon (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1957), 121-25, who argues that Angel Christology was the first Christology of Christianity.

<sup>11</sup> E.g. *1 apol.* 63.

acknowledge that there was some understanding of the uniqueness of the Holy Spirit or Spirit of God as seen in Scripture, in both the Old Testament and the New. The term “angelomorphic”, however, will have to suffice as it has made its way into common usage and because there is simply no other term or even terms that can fully explain the range of thought concerning the Holy Spirit in this period.<sup>12</sup>

In determining what constitutes an angelomorphic pneumatology, there are two shared theological characteristics. First, Bucur has pointed out that many earlier Christian writers are essentially binitarian in their theological outlook and possess what is called a “spirit Christology”.<sup>13</sup> This means God is viewed only as Father and Son, or first and second gods. Such writers have a tendency to obfuscate the identities of the Son and the Spirit or even to ignore the Spirit entirely.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, the Son often performs many of the roles that are typically applied to the Spirit or is even called “Spirit”. In the cases of Justin Martyr or Clement, the Spirit is not clearly distinguished as an individual person; either Christ is called the Spirit or texts typically used with reference to the Holy Spirit texts are applied to him.<sup>15</sup> However, this does not apply to everyone before Origen: Anthony Briggman has shown that this label is improper for Irenaeus because Irenaeus’ Trinitarian theology does not possess these elements.<sup>16</sup>

A second common feature in many earlier Christian writers is also related to the ambiguous identity of the Holy Spirit: the normally singular Spirit is often referred to or

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<sup>12</sup> See Bucur, *Angelomorphic*, xxv-xxvii.

<sup>13</sup> See Bucur, “‘Early Christian Binitarianism’: From Religious Phenomenon to Polemical Insult to Scholarly Concept”, *Modern Theology* 27:1 (2011), 102-20.

<sup>14</sup> E.g. Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, etc.

<sup>15</sup> Anthony Briggman, ‘Measuring Justin’s Approach to the Spirit: Trinitarian Conviction and Binitarian Orientation’, *VC* 63.2 (2009) 107-37.

<sup>16</sup> Anthony Briggman, ‘Re-evaluating Angelomorphism in Irenaeus: The Case of “Proof of the Apostolic Preaching” 10’, *JTS* 61.2 (2010), 583-595.



described as a multiplicity of spirits. While the Holy Spirit may at times or even predominantly be referred to in the singular, there is a tendency to speak of the Spirit as many spirits or even as the first of many spirits. In many of these instances, particularly in the *Shepherd of Hermas* or in Bucur's Clement, the Spirit is described as four women or the seven first created spirits.<sup>17</sup> Precedence for this is found in the Old Testament in places like Isaiah 11.2 and Zechariah 3.9, and even in Jewish works like the *Testament of Reuben*.<sup>18</sup> We see this also in the New Testament, especially with the "seven spirits" that appear throughout the book of Revelation (e.g. 1.4, 3.1, 4.5).

With the "seven spirits" tradition, there appears to have been a long-standing belief in the indwelling presence of the seven holy spirits in believers, in contrast with the indwelling of equivalent evil spirits in evildoers.<sup>19</sup> Apart from the difference in number, this belief also resembles the Qumranic "two spirits" tradition and the belief that certain spirits are within and in control of an individual.<sup>20</sup> In the *Testament of Reuben* 2.2, it is through the seven good spirits that man can do God's work (2.4-8), while the seven evil spirits lead men astray.<sup>21</sup> Evidence for the continuation of this belief into Christianity is evidenced in the New Testament, particularly in places where seven evil spirits are said to indwell individuals: Matthew 12.45, Luke 8.2, and Luke 8.26. While it cannot be concluded in all of

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<sup>17</sup> Note the possible influence of the four or seven archangel traditions (Gabriel, Michael, Raphael, Uriel, Raquel, Remiel and Saraquel) and Lord of spirits (1 Enoch 20, 46).

<sup>18</sup> Potential related NT references include Mt 12.45; Lk 8.2, 11.26 (evil); Rev 3.1, 4.5, 5.6. For *Testament of Reuben*, see Moser, *Teacher*, 40-41.

<sup>19</sup> See Levison, 'Angelic Spirit', 480-86; also A.E. Sekki, *The Meaning of Ruach at Qumran*, SBL Dissertation Series 110 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), 145-171.

<sup>20</sup> See Danielou, *Jewish Christianity*, 357-62. This is also present in the *Epistle of Barnabas*, *Shepherd of Hermas*, *Didache*, and even the Clementine epistles.

<sup>21</sup> These seven good spirits in 2.3 are: life, sight, hearing, smell, speech, taste, procreation. Eight he notes as sleep. Spirits of error (3.3): fornication, insatiableness, fighting, obsequiousness or chicanery, pride, lying, injustice. Eighth again is sleep. It should be noted that the good spirits have nothing in common with the spirits of Isaiah 11.2.

these examples that the good spirits were understood to be the Holy Spirit, the influence of this tradition is clear. It is particularly notable in the *Shepherd of Hermas*, both in the portrayal of the Holy Spirit as multiple spirits, but also because of Hermas' emphasis on the conflict between the indwelling presences of the sensitive holy spirit and evil spirits (*Mand.* 5.1, 5.2). The influence of this tradition continues on to Origen in his assumption of the need to remove evil spirits from the soul to allow room for the Holy Spirit (*hom.in.Num* 6.3.1, *hom.in.Jos* 13.1) and his interpretation of the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit (Mt 12.31) as believers turning to a life of sin, presumably allowing the reentry of evil spirits (*princ.* 1.3.7, *Jo.* 28.124-125). The description of the Holy Spirit as seven spirits is also present in Origen, particularly in the context of Isaiah 11.2.

With these points in mind, is it correct to describe Origen's pneumatology as "angelomorphic"? As we have seen, Origen's Christology and pneumatology, though grounded in a Trinitarian hierarchy, are built on the personal distinctions between the Son and the Spirit most clearly visible in the language of *hypostasis*; the identity of either the Son or the Spirit is never in question. This is in stark contrast to many earlier writers who do not seek to distinguish the more generic "holy spirit" from evil spirits or speak of the Spirit as seven spirits freely and without explanation. For these writers, it is clear that the received, more familiar Jewish tradition clearly taking has precedence over any potential Trinitarian tendencies. But Origen shows active concern to clarifying the Spirit's distinct personhood and roles. As Bucur himself says, Origen is "clearly aware of, although not satisfied with, this theological tradition."<sup>22</sup> This does not mean that Origen is always clear or consistent in articulating the nature of the Spirit. There are many places in which

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<sup>22</sup> Bucur, *Angelomorphic*, 81, citing Osborn, *Clement of Alexandria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957), 152-53.

Origen's pneumatology lacks clarity or where he struggles to articulate what he considers to be a worthy doctrine of the Holy Spirit. But on the whole, the picture that Origen paints of the Spirit is consistent, one in which the Spirit sits above the created angelic and spiritual order in status, but especially in function. While at times described in certain angelic imagery, the Spirit is not one of them. We will now examine exactly how Origen deals with angels or spirits and the Holy Spirit, not completely distancing himself from the tradition he has inherited, yet building a new and different theology, setting him apart from other writers of his time. In order to establish the context for Origen's use of angelic imagery and language, we will begin with his use of it for the person of the Christ. This will serve as evidence that, while Origen at times uses such angelic imagery, it does not necessarily indicate angelic personhood or status.

## Angelic Imagery and Christ

In Origen's writings, angelic imagery is used to describe the work or even persons of both the Son and the Spirit.<sup>23</sup> Origen's use of angelic imagery for the person of the Son, in particular, attests that he can do this without conceiving of the Son as an angelic being. Joseph Trigg has pointed out several ways in which the Son can be spoken of as "angel" (*angelos*): (1) as a title whose functions are not apparent, (2) functionally as messenger of God, (3) "dispensational", or as taking on the angelic nature as in the Incarnation, and (4) that the Son has an angelic nature.<sup>24</sup> He notes, however, that Origen only operates in the first three categories and "expressly denies" the fourth.<sup>25</sup> Unfortunately Origen has in the

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<sup>23</sup> Gieschen, *Angelomorphic*, 195-96, marks out some of what he thinks are angelomorphic points in Origen's Christology which will be discussed: the Son and Spirit as seraphim, the Son as angel of great counsel, *Cels.* 5.8, etc.

<sup>24</sup> Trigg, 'The Angel of Great Counsel: Christ and the Angelic Hierarchy in Origen's Theology', *JTS* 42.1 (1991), 37.

<sup>25</sup> Trigg mentions Huet, Simonetti, Crouzel as those who agree.

past been accused of this very point, particularly in his exegesis of Isaiah 6, which will be examined shortly.<sup>26</sup> In the case of Isaiah 9.6, Origen reads *angelos* as “messenger” and focuses on the revealing function of the Son.<sup>27</sup> Origen even ties Isaiah 9.6 to Colossians 1.16 in order to demonstrate that Christ is not an angel by nature, but that he became one for their redemption (*Jo.* 1.218-19), a controversial and confusing point in his theology.<sup>28</sup> Thus, Origen rejects Christ as angel, choosing instead to highlight the annunciatory work of Christ.

But in another instance, Origen shows awareness of this tradition and does not seem to refute it. In *Cels.* 5.53, Celsus is noted to have taken issue with the incarnation: “let us assume that [Christ] really was some angel...”<sup>29</sup> Celsus then goes on to question whether or not God has sent other “angels” in the Jewish or Christian tradition, as well as the absurdity in thinking that Christ could be such a figure. Origen, responding to this, focuses most of his attention on demonstrating that God sent various “angels” throughout history to do his work.<sup>30</sup> He comments, however, that “we do not accept this from Celsus as a concession” and instead notes that Jesus’ ministry “was not the work merely of an angel but... ‘of the angel of great counsel,’” again citing Is 9.6. Though Origen refers to Christ repeatedly as “Logos” throughout this section, possibly in an attempt to appeal to common philosophical ground, he never explicitly denies that Christ is an “angel”, even calling him “the angel of God who comes for the salvation of men” and affirming that his mission had

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<sup>26</sup> E.g. at Second Council of Constantinople in 553 or by Photius who misunderstands the seraphim imagery, or even by Arians (see Trigg, ‘Angel’, 35-36).

<sup>27</sup> *Jo.* 1.278 (SC 120:198; Heine, 80:91). Trigg, ‘Angel’, 41-43, notes the precedence in reading this verse as showing Christ as the head of the angelic hierarchy in writers like Clement, Justin, and Gnostic writers. He also says that Tertullian and Novatian also read it functionally, not as nature.

<sup>28</sup> SC 120:166; Heine, 80:77. See Trigg, ‘Angel’, 44-45.

<sup>29</sup> SC 147:148; Chadwick, 305. Also see *Cels.* 8.27.

<sup>30</sup> For example, in *Cels.* 5.54 he deals with the muddle of Celsus’ understanding about various angels coming to men (citing Enoch) and Gen 6.2 (*Cels.* 5.55).

greater significance than others sent from God (*Cels.* 5.58).<sup>31</sup> But given the flow of the argument, what Origen seems to be doing is more in line with what we have seen in *Jo.* 1.218: he is appealing to Christ as messenger (*angelos*) rather than an actual angel. Celsus' major issue is not about angels per se, but that he has not seen evidence that God has ever sent any messengers to humanity. Origen's concern is to demonstrate that there is ample testimony of God sending such messengers, Christ being the greatest of all of them.

In addition, while Origen in places describes Christ as being at the head of the angelic hierarchy, this does not mean that he is one of the angels.<sup>32</sup> In *Jo.* 1.291, as Word and Power, Christ is called the "highest and best" of those powers.<sup>33</sup> While "powers" here seems to be a reference to spiritual beings, Origen makes the point that Christ is "the Lord of the powers" (2 Kgs 19.20 LXX), and not simply one of them. This also demonstrates Origen's emphasis on the mediatory function shared by Christ and the angels, as well as the important role that angels and spiritual beings play in Origen's theological system, ministering to believers and performing God's work and will wherever they go.<sup>34</sup> Christ's titles of "Son" and "Firstborn" further emphasize Origen's understanding of Christ as the leader and greatest power of the rational and spiritual world; by his exalted status he rules over and mediates God to all lesser beings.

But Origen makes clear the distinction between Christ and the angels. For example, Christ himself is said to reveal things to the angels (*Jo.* 13.41) or that angels see the Father through him (*Jo.* 20.47). Angels, as well as the Holy Spirit, speak not from their own resources, but

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<sup>31</sup> SC 147:158; Chadwick, 309.

<sup>32</sup> See *hom.in.Jos* 6.2 (quoting *Jos* 5.13-14, Col 1.16).

<sup>33</sup> SC 120:206; Heine, 80:94. Trigg, 'Angel', 45, notes that Christ as the head of the powers (e.g. *Jo.* 1.291) is not indicative of an angel Christology – "as the Logos, he begins with a divine nature."

<sup>34</sup> See esp. Moser, *Teacher*, 46-55.

through Christ (*Jo.* 20.263).<sup>35</sup> Origen's belief that Christ is the high priest of the angels (*Cels.* 5.4) or that he becomes an angel to angels (*Jo.* 1.217) points to the fact that Christ himself cannot be counted as one of them.<sup>36</sup> Even though there are some functional similarities, Christ's work is clearly superior to that of angels; those who are illuminated by Christ have no need for ministering apostles or prophets or even angels (*Jo.* 1.165). The most obvious statement is found in *Jo.* 13.151:

This is why we say the Savior and the Holy Spirit transcend all created beings, not by comparison, but by their exceeding pre-eminence. The Father exceeds the Savior as much (or even more) as the Savior himself and the Holy Spirit exceed the rest.<sup>37</sup>

"The rest" here is used with reference to angels, spirits, souls, and any other beings. Christ, therefore, with his titles "Word", "Wisdom", and even "Son", is not identified with the angels but exists on a level above them, ministering to them as they in turn minister to others.

## **Angelic Imagery and the Spirit**

Origen's treatment of the Holy Spirit's relation to angelic beings is slightly more difficult to decipher than that of Christ. Though in certain places he uses similar descriptions for the Spirit, the greater amount of biblical testimony and the tradition before Origen lead to greater obscurity on the exact nature of the Spirit's identity. But although Origen uses angelic imagery for the Holy Spirit, it is difficult in any of these examples to reduce the Spirit's identity to that of an angelic being. Even in what we have just seen, there appear

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<sup>35</sup> SC 290:286; Heine, 89:260. The placing of the Holy Spirit next to the angelic spirits may suggest that he is not one of them. The reason why the Son is not included here is because as Wisdom and Word, he speaks from his own resources.

<sup>36</sup> See *Cels.* 7.65-70.

<sup>37</sup> SC 222:114; Heine, 89:100.

to be conflicting statements within the same work: *Jo.* 20.263 suggests that the Holy Spirit is similar to angelic spirits and is dependent upon the Word (i.e. “created”), while *Jo.* 13.151 says clearly that the Spirit exceeds them all.<sup>38</sup> However, this conflict can be explained if we take into consideration Origen’s tiered cosmological hierarchy and the language that he frequently uses for personal relations.<sup>39</sup> Even in *Jo.* 13.151, Origen is adamant that the Son is exceeded by the Father.<sup>40</sup> The Father, therefore, is the highest being, followed by his Son, his Spirit, then the rest of creation. As the Son depends on the Father for his existence, so the Spirit also relies on the Son. This means the Spirit and other angelic spirits are similarly inferior to and dependent on the Son, but not that they are the same in nature or status.

The Holy Spirit and the other spirits, however, share certain overlapping functions. For example, in *princ.* Pref.10, Origen comments on the existence of “certain angels of God and good powers” who are involved in ministering (*ministrant*) to God salvation to men.<sup>41</sup> He notes, however, that “when these were created, or of what kind of being, or how they exist, is not explained with sufficient clarity.”<sup>42</sup> As with the Holy Spirit, Origen is uncertain about the exact identities of such angelic or spiritual powers. In the tradition Origen has inherited, there is a long history of referring to angelic or spiritual beings as fighting over

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<sup>38</sup> Also *com.in.Mt* 12.40: because the Holy Spirit had not yet come prior to Christ’s glorification (Jn 7.39), the Spirit that spoke through Peter (Mt 17.4) was a spirit “which had not yet been triumphed over (μηδέπω τεθριάμβευτο) in the cross” (GCS 40:158; ANF 10:471). Bucur, *Angelomorphic*, 81-82, notes this is reminiscent of the *Shepherd of Hermas*, and *com.in.Rom* 7.1.2, where the Spirit is called *hegemonikon* (Latin *principalis*) with reference to Ps 50.14 and Rom 8.23. See also Moser, *Teacher*, 63.

<sup>39</sup> See esp. Ch. 3.

<sup>40</sup> SC 222:114; Heine, 89:100. While transcendent in essence (ὑπερέχων οὐσίᾳ), the Savior does not compare with the Father (*Jo.* 13.152). This contradicts many of the Rufinus translated statements and even Jerome’s criticism (*Ep. ad Avitum* 14; Butterworth, 326 n.1) that the Father, Son, Spirit share the same substance with created beings.

<sup>41</sup> Behr, 1:21.

<sup>42</sup> Behr, 1:21-22. *sed quando isti create sint, uel quales, aut quomodo sint, non satis in manifesto distinguitur.* Origen also continues about the lack of clarity in tradition about sun, moon, and stars. On this topic, see A. Scott, *Stars*, 113-64.

individual persons.<sup>43</sup> But even in Origen's writings, it is clear that good spirits assist believers: e.g. the prophets receive divine spirits because of their purity (*Cels* 7.18) or "all spirits minister to the life of human beings" (*com.in.Rom* 9.30.2).<sup>44</sup> Similarly, evil spirits must be cast out in order for this ministry to take place.<sup>45</sup>

But instead of placing the Holy Spirit on this level, Origen frequently elevates the Holy Spirit to a position above spirits and angelic beings. For example, in *com.in.Rom* 7.1.2, discussing the phrase "Spirit of adoption", Origen explains the following about the Holy Spirit:

I believe that he is called the governing Spirit that it might be shown that indeed there are many spirits but among them the Holy Spirit, who is named "governing", holds sovereignty and dominion.<sup>46</sup>

He follows this by explaining that the Spirit's place above other spirits and his possession of "sovereignty and dominion" is similar to the Son's place over many sons.<sup>47</sup> Although the Holy Spirit works similarly in ministering salvation, Origen distinguishes the Holy Spirit from these other spirits, for example in his discussion of the Holy Spirit as the "firstfruits of many spirits" (*com.in.Rom* 7.5.3), or in the passages cited above. In addition, the Holy Spirit requires greater sanctity for his indwelling presence: "they might become worthy not only for angels to enter but indeed also a habitation of the Holy Spirit and a dwelling place

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<sup>43</sup> E.g. in the "weak spirit" tradition, see Ch. 4. Moser, *Teacher*, 50, notes the "two angels" tradition present in *Hermas* and the Dead Sea Scrolls represents a "cosmic and psychological" battle between good and evil spirits over the human soul, which is also a common theme in *com.in.Rom*, esp. 7.4.15, 1.19.9.

<sup>44</sup> SC 555:180; Scheck, 104:227. Origen uses the *com.in.Rom* statement to justify the reception of the Holy Spirit from God (1 Cor 2.12).

<sup>45</sup> See *hom.in.Num* 13.5.2, 6.3.1; *hom.in.Jos* 13.1.

<sup>46</sup> SC 543:244; Scheck, 104:61.

<sup>47</sup> SC 543:244; Scheck, 104:61. He also adds: "there is one who is by nature the Son and only-begotten from the Father, though whom all sons are named, so also there are indeed many spirits, yet there is one who truly proceeds from God himself" (cf. *princ.* 3.5.8; *Cant.* Pro2). Given Origen's non-technical understanding of procession, this should be viewed with suspicion.



of the Father and the Son (Jn 14.23).<sup>48</sup> Unlike the tradition before him, e.g. *Hermas*, Origen does not say that the evil spirits drive out the Holy Spirit; the Holy Spirit departs from believers on his own volition because of willful sin. This demonstrates that Origen does not see the Holy Spirit and evil spirits as being on the same level, either in status or power. In other places where spirits are mentioned, the Spirit is grouped with the Son instead of with the spirits.<sup>49</sup> Origen even places the Spirit alongside the Son in the roles of teaching and instructing angels.<sup>50</sup> While the Spirit is similar to other spirits in some regards, he holds a special status over them, due to his distinct role and nature.<sup>51</sup> This is seen in Origen's discussions on creation's mutable and accidental nature, which includes angels.<sup>52</sup> In addition, the spiritual gift of the discernment of spirits (1 Cor 12.10) is understood as the ability to distinguish good and evil spirits, an empowerment enabled through the Holy Spirit.<sup>53</sup> All of this reflects the fact that Origen affirms belief in the angelic hierarchy or the existence of various spiritual beings, many of whom have an effect on the human soul. But compared to those before him, Origen places greater emphasis on the priority of the Holy Spirit over these other spiritual beings, placing him in both work and status closer to the Son. In many places, Origen seems to see the Holy Spirit as "working in and through many lesser spirits", to accomplish the work of salvation.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> *com.in.Rom* 1.18.10 (SC 532:258; Scheck, 103:97), citing 1 Cor 6.19.

<sup>49</sup> See *hom.in.Lc* 3.1, *hom.in.Num* 13.5.2, *Jo.* 6.67.

<sup>50</sup> See *hom.in.Lc* 23.1, 23.7.

<sup>51</sup> Moser, *Teacher*, 48, notes that only the divine Spirit is properly spiritualized; other spirits, e.g. angels or evil spirits, "[are] somewhat corporeal, though not fleshly" and are often "bound to, or associated with, specific locations."

<sup>52</sup> *princ.* 1.5.3, 1.8.1. The Holy Spirit is not included in these discussions.

<sup>53</sup> See *hom.in.Num* 27.11.2, *hom.in.Ez* 2.2.4, *Cels.* 3.2.

<sup>54</sup> Moser, *Teacher*, 49-51, describes this as the "School of God's Spirit", in which the Holy Spirit is the "head Teacher" over other lesser teachers. Citing passages like *com.in.Rom* 7.6.5, 9.30.1, and 7.1.4, Moser envisions a system in which believers work their way upwards through various spirits until they are able to meet the Holy Spirit himself (54). While Moser's idea has some merit, it is

Although Origen views the Holy Spirit as greater than other angelic and spiritual beings, there are other features of his pneumatology that appear angelomorphic in character and reflect the influence of writers like Hermas and Clement. In the rest of this section, in order to evaluate whether or not Origen's pneumatology is angelomorphic by the standards that we have established above, we will examine a number of key or problematic passages in which Origen seems to describe the Holy Spirit either as an angel or as a multiplicity of spirits. An examination of these passages will show that while the influence of the angelomorphic tradition on Origen is clear, Origen does not affirm it; he instead uses this teaching to build a pneumatology that fits his own theological needs. For example, with the angelomorphic characteristic of the Spirit's multiplicity (i.e. the Holy Spirit as multiple spirits), we will see that Origen takes an existing teaching and shapes it into a doctrine about the Spirit's varied works, rather than personhood, which agrees with his overall theological scheme.

## The Son and Spirit as Seraphim in Isaiah 6

One passage that has received a significant amount of attention in scholarship has been Origen's comments on Isaiah 6 in *princ.* 1.3.4.<sup>55</sup> Danielou's treatment emphasizes the sources on which Origen based his exegesis, making clear connections to Philo.<sup>56</sup> Much of the attention in scholarship has focused on the provenance of this teaching and the possible identities of Origen's "Hebrew master", as well as the impact of Jewish theology

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difficult to find sufficient evidence of an actual systematized account of this in Origen's writings, especially compared to the hierarchy of *epinoiai* in the Son.

<sup>55</sup> See esp. Danielou, *Jewish Christianity*, 134-40; Gedaliahu G. Stroumsa, 'Le couple de l'ange et de l'Esprit: traditions juives et chrétiennes', *Revue Biblique* 88.1 (1981), 42-61; Trigg, 'Angel', 38-41.

<sup>56</sup> Danielou, *Jewish Christianity*, 134-38; Kretschmar, *Studien*, 62-94. In Philo, the two seraphim are the two cherubim supporting the Ark of the Covenant, the kingly and creative powers of God, which surround the only-begotten Logos (*Deo* 9, *QE* 2.68).

and exegesis on Origen's theology.<sup>57</sup> The passage is significant because of the angelic imagery it contains:

And my Hebrew master used to say that those two seraphim, which are described in Isaiah as six-winged, crying one to another, and saying, *Holy, holy, holy, Lord of Sabaoth*, were to be understood of the only-begotten Son of God and of the Holy Spirit. And we think that that expression also, which is in the song of Habbakuk, *In the midst of the two living creatures (or of the two lives), you will be known*, ought to be understood of Christ and of the Holy Spirit.<sup>58</sup>

The point that Origen makes in this passage is theological. The image of the Father, not fully visible in the throne room scene, testifies to his invisible and ineffable nature.<sup>59</sup> Origen's inclusion of the Habakkuk passage (3.2 LXX) further hints at the unified revealing function of the Son and the Spirit, and even at a shared status. Thus Origen's placing of the Son and the Spirit together as partners or co- "animals" or "living beings" is significant. The greater purpose of this imagery is to reveal a point about the Trinity: in their roles and functions, the Spirit and Son work together side-by-side to glorify and reveal the invisible Father.<sup>60</sup> Immediately following this, Origen even includes a Trinitarian formula of revelation: "all knowledge of the Father, when the Son reveals him, is made known to us through the Holy Spirit." Though this Trinitarian image may suggest an inferiority in nature or subordination of the Son and the Spirit to the Father, functionally, they are

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<sup>57</sup> For a summary of the scholarship, see Trigg, 'Angel', 38 n.12.

<sup>58</sup> *princ.* 1.3.4; Behr, 1:71-72. Contains quotations from Is 6.2-3, Hab 3.1. Note the parallel fragment in Justinian, *Ep. ad Mennam* (Koetschau fr. 8; Butterworth, 32). See also *princ.* 4.3.14; *com.in.Rom* 3.8.6.

<sup>59</sup> See Ch. 1.

<sup>60</sup> Trigg, 'Angel', 39: "his recognition in in this chapter that the Holy Spirit must be credited same mode of existence as the Son represents a significant the development of Trinitarian thought." Trigg cites Rius-Camps (*El dinasmo trinitario* (1970), 2-79), Saake ('Der Tractatus pneumatologico-philosophicus' (1973), 91-114), and Crouzel ('Les personnes' (1976), 109-23).

placed above creation as mediators, consistent with the understanding of Trinity that we have seen so far in Origen's writings.<sup>61</sup>

Origen's references to these verses elsewhere further confirm and expand on *princ.* 1.3.5. Two other places where this verse is referenced, *princ.* 4.3.14 and *hom.in.Is* 4.1, emphasize the Son and the Spirit covering the Father rather than revealing.<sup>62</sup> In *hom.in.Is* 1.2, the seraphim, or the Son and the Spirit, "preserve the mystery of the Trinity... because even they themselves are holy".<sup>63</sup> Their cry of "Holy, Holy, Holy" is "a saving confession to all", which lifts up those who hear it (1.3).<sup>64</sup> Similarly, in *hom.in.Is* 4.1, "only the Savior and the Spirit, who were always with God, see his 'face'".<sup>65</sup> Additionally, Origen notes in *hom.in.Is* 4.1 that "no one but the Holy Spirit is able to hear of the sanctity of God that is announced by the Savior; just as, on the other hand, no one but the Savior alone is able to inhabit the sacredness of God that is announced by the Holy Spirit." In these examples, Origen is concerned with explaining the complementary and parallel roles of the Son and the Spirit, particularly that only they can see the glory of the Father and share in his sanctity; they are the gatekeepers who simultaneously cover and reveal the Father's mystery. However, Origen does note that the angels may also behold the Father's face (Mt 18.10), as well as the "beginnings of the activities." Humans, however, cannot see God as "the seraphim hide his feet from human beings; for the last things cannot be told as they are."<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Again, note Simonetti's "triangular scheme" ('Note', 292-96), see Ch. 3, p.125; Ch. 5, 205-06.

<sup>62</sup> In *princ.* 4.3.14, he goes on to mention other holy spirits and powers, who possess knowledge through the Son and Spirit and possess it to varying degrees.

<sup>63</sup> GCS 33:244; Scheck, 68:886.

<sup>64</sup> Origen also notes that the threefold cry reflects the perfect number of the Trinity (*hom.in.Is* 4.1), showing the abundance of sanctity. This should be viewed with suspicion. cf. *hom.in.Num* 11.8.1.

<sup>65</sup> GCS 33:257-258; Scheck, 68:898.

<sup>66</sup> *hom.in.Is* 4.1 (GCS 33:257-258; Scheck, 68:898).

But does the use of angelic imagery suggest angelic identity or status? While the previous references reveal the content of Origen's interpretation of these verses, other references help us better understand Origen's actual approach, i.e. the application of his exegesis. In *Cels.* 6.18, Origen states the following:

I could quote the statements about the seraphim, as they are called by the Hebrews, described by Isaiah as hiding the face and the feet of God, and about what are called the cherubim, which Ezekiel portrayed, and of their shapes, as it were, and of the way in which God is said to be carried upon the cherubim (Is 6.2, Ez 1.5-27; 10.1-21). But as these things are expressed in a very obscure form because of the unworthy and irreligious who are not able to understand the deep meaning and sacredness of the doctrine of God, I have not thought it right to discuss these matters in this book.<sup>67</sup>

Given that *Contra Celsum* is an apologetic work written for a broader audience, Origen chooses not to expand on the deeper and more spiritual meaning of the seraphim in Isaiah 6 because the audience is not worthy to hear such an interpretation.<sup>68</sup> Similarly, in *Jo.* 6.23, he notes in passing the “mystery of the one seated on the throne and of the seraphim and their wings”, referencing also the cherubim of Ezekiel 1.4-28.<sup>69</sup> But again, Origen does not elaborate on the meaning of these passages, choosing instead to “leave it to the readers to decide and to examine what they wish about these matters” (*Jo.* 6.24).<sup>70</sup> He follows this by commenting that the previous generation of Christians have no less knowledge than the apostles who were taught directly by Christ as Christ reveals mysteries directly to them as well. While the audience of the *Commentary on John* is clearly more worthy and prepared to receive such lofty spiritual teaching, Origen passes here, choosing to reveal this truth at a more fitting time.

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<sup>67</sup> SC 147:224; Chadwick, 331.

<sup>68</sup> He also mentions these verses in *Cels.* 1.43 and 1.48 as being (Jewish) spiritual visions.

<sup>69</sup> SC 157:146; Heine, 80:174. This reference occurs in a list of examples of allegorical interpretation in the Old Testament.

<sup>70</sup> SC 157:146; Heine, 80:174.

Origen approaches the “cherubim” of Ezekiel 1 similarly to his reading of the seraphim.<sup>71</sup> Origen understands the four living creatures of 1.5-14 to be the cherubim (*hom.in.Ez* 1.15).<sup>72</sup> Origen comments that “Cherubim means ‘fullness of knowledge’ and whatever is full of knowledge becomes a cherubim that God rules.”<sup>73</sup> The four faces, therefore, refer to “things that are to be saved [which] bend the knee before the Lord Jesus.” They can also refer either to heavenly/earthly/infernal things (Phil 2.10) plus the things above the heavens (Ps 148.4) or to the tripartite soul plus the will (*hom.in.Ez* 1.16). Origen concludes: “And we all become Cherubim that are under God’s feet, to which the wheels of the world are connected, and they follow these things.”<sup>74</sup> Those things that are under the wheel are under the powers of the world; Christians have been delivered from such things. Origen’s allegorical interpretation of this passage shows that the cherubim themselves are not important, but are to be interpreted spiritually as an image of wholly obedient Christians.

With this in mind, how should we understand Origen’s use of the seraphim imagery in Isaiah 6? If we take into consideration his interpretation of Ezekiel 1 or even Exodus 25, we must conclude that Origen is not making a point about angels or angelic status. In the same way that the cherubim represent a greater spiritual picture of human obedience to God, the vision of the seraphim reveals a deeper spiritual truth about the nature of the Trinity. Therefore, to say that the image of the seraphim testifies of the Son and Spirit’s angelic status is equivalent to saying that the image of the cherubim reveals the angelic

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<sup>71</sup> See Moser, *Teacher*, 101-09, on the Logos and Spirit as the cherubim of the Ark of the Covenant (Ex 25.17-22) in *com.in.Rom* 3.8.1-14, *hom.in.Ex* 9.3, 13.3. Origen’s emphasis on this passage is similarly the cherubim as “fullness of knowledge” (*com.in.Rom* 3.8.5) and the Son and Spirit as indwellers of the incarnate soul of Christ. Both together allow Christ’s soul to rise on wings and fly (*com.in.Rom* 3.8.6) (SC 539:132-134; Scheck, 103:219-221).

<sup>72</sup> He references Psalm 80.1 to show this.

<sup>73</sup> SC 352:92; Scheck, 62:44. See also *com.in.Rom* 3.8.5; *hom.in.Num* 5.3.2, 10.3.4; *Cant.* 2.8. cf. Philo, *Mos.* 2.97.

<sup>74</sup> SC 352:94; Scheck, 62:45.

nature of the tripartite human being. Granted, Origen is using angelic imagery to describe the Son and the Spirit; by definition, this depiction may be angelomorphic. But their status or character is never in question. Rather than appealing to Jewish angelic theology, Origen is using this tradition to do allegory, to explore and explain the divine truths. Therefore, for those worthy, Isaiah 6 reveals a mysterious truth about the Trinity; the seraphim serve as an analogy for Trinitarian work.

For many scholars, the primary issue with Origen's use of Isaiah 6 is not the interpretation itself, but his reference to the "Hebrew master". For many, if the "Hebrew master" is not a Christian, Origen is acknowledging the interpretive authority and divine knowledge of a non-believer.<sup>75</sup> This has led many scholars to believe that the Hebrew master must have been a convert to Christianity.<sup>76</sup> While it is clear that Origen was indebted to certain Jewish traditions, even exegetical, it is difficult to imagine him placing more weight on this interpretation by nature of that fact. As we have seen in Chapter 3, Origen believes that the boundaries of Jewish knowledge of God extend to an awareness of the Son and possibly the Spirit, but ignorance that the Son of God is the Word (*Cels.* 2.31).<sup>77</sup> If the Hebrew master was simply a well-informed Jew, then we have further testimony that Origen consulted various sources, whatever insight he found useful for his own exegesis and theology.<sup>78</sup> But it should be noted that most Jewish scholarship in Origen's time did not

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<sup>75</sup> See Kretschmar, *Studien*, 63-94; de Lange, *Origen*, 25-27.

<sup>76</sup> E.g. Hanson, *Allegory and Event* (London: SCM, 1959), 174; Cadiou, *Origen, His Life at Alexandria* (London: B. Herder, 1944), 59; S. Krauss, 'The Jews in the Works of the Church Fathers', *Jewish Quarterly Review* 5 (1892-3), 154.

<sup>77</sup> This exegesis, however, does not reveal anything about the incarnate Christ, which is the context of this statement.

<sup>78</sup> Which is at least possible given Philo's hypostatic understanding of the Spirit of God – see Ch. 3, p.112.

show much love for allegory.<sup>79</sup> At the same time, more so than earlier works like the *Shepherd of Hermas* or even those of Justin Martyr, Origen shows an awareness of the Jewish tradition, but chooses to move beyond them in his pneumatology. Ultimately, we cannot determine the exact identity of this master, whether an actual Jew, a convert to Christianity, or even Philo himself. But the significance of this figure is simply in leading Origen to a previously unknown divine truth in the interpretation of Scripture.

## The Spirit's Multiplicity and Isaiah 11.2

A second pneumatological feature present in Origen's writings is the sevenfold nature of the Spirit. This is a feature, as we have seen, that makes its way to Origen in a tradition running from Revelation through Hermas and to Clement of Alexandria, drawn from places like Isaiah 11.2, Zechariah 3.9 and Revelation 1.4.<sup>80</sup> It portrays the Holy Spirit of the Old Testament not as a single figure, but as a multiplicity of spirits. With Origen, the influence of this tradition is most apparent in his interpretation of Isaiah 11.2.<sup>81</sup> Though tradition both before and after Origen speaks of the sevenfold character of the Spirit, Origen interprets this text in a very particular way. Origen first assumes the single personhood of the Spirit, seen in places like *princ.* 2.7.1<sup>82</sup> and *com.in.Rom* 7.1.2.<sup>83</sup> While

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<sup>79</sup> de Lange, *Origen*, 105; Hanson, *Allegory*, 35. E.g. Jews impugn appearance of Holy Spirit in form of dove (*Cels.* 1.46).

<sup>80</sup> Moser, *Teacher*, 37-41, notes the place of works like the *Shepherd of Hermas* and the *Testament of Reuben* (2.1-3.8) as a backdrop behind Origen's writings, as traditions he inherited. Also see Tite, 149-51. For Clement of Alexandria, the significant angelomorphic passages (in Bucur, *Angelomorphic*, 32) are Is 11.1-2; Zech 4.2, 10; Rev 1.4, 5.6, 8.2. For notes on the frequent use together of Is 11.2 and Zech 3.9 in Patristic literature, see Karl Schlütz, *Isaias 11:2 (Die sieben Gaben des Heiligen Geistes) in den ersten vier christlichen Jahrhunderten* (Munster: Aschendorff, 1932), 34.

<sup>81</sup> See *hom.in.1Reg* 18; *hom.in.Num* 9.9, *Cant.* 3.12. Also note multiple references in *fr.in.Ps.*

<sup>82</sup> "[W]e have never known of two Holy Spirits being preached by any one" (Behr, 2:217). cf. *fr.in.Tit* (PG 14:1304d-1305a).

<sup>83</sup> SC 543:244; Scheck, 104:61. He argues that the various spirits, e.g. Spirit of Christ, Spirit of God, and governing Spirit (Ps 51.11-12), are all one and the same Holy Spirit. Also see *or.* 22.3.



Origen frequently speaks of the multiplicity of spirits, both evil and good, he never speaks of more than one Holy Spirit.<sup>84</sup>

Origen interprets Isaiah 11.2's "seven spirits" as the seven virtues of the Spirit, the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit representing the fullness of all virtues within the individual.<sup>85</sup> The lengthiest treatment of this, taken from Origen's treatment of the "seven women" in Isaiah 4.1, appears in *Homilies on Isaiah* 3.1:

The seven women are one; for they are the Spirit of God [cf. Is 11.1]. And those seven are one; for the Spirit of God is "the spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the spirit of counsel and of virtue, the spirit of knowledge and of piety, the spirit of the fear of the Lord" (Is 11.2-3). That *wisdom* suffers "reproach" from the many wisdoms that rise up within it; that true *understanding* sustains "reproach" from false understandings; that great *counsel* is reproached by many counsels that are not good; that *virtue* is cursed by a certain one that promises that it is virtue, although it is not virtue; that *knowledge* endures "reproach" by a certain falsely named knowledge that steals its name (cf. 1 Tim 6.20); that *piety* is faulted by that one that, though it claims to be piety, is impiety and instructs the impious; that *fear* suffers "reproach" by that one that is reckoned to be fear; for many promise divine fear, but they do not fear with knowledge (cf. Rom 10.2).<sup>86</sup>

The mention of seven, i.e. the seven women of Isaiah 4.1, leads Origen directly to the seven spirits of Isaiah 11.2, the seven virtues of the Spirit. Origen's emphasis in his commentary is to explain how the seven women or seven virtues suffer "reproach", which he interprets as the wisdom of Christ rejected by the wisdom of the world. Origen continues in his commentary by explaining how the "seven women", or the Spirit of God in his seven virtues, rest on Christ differently from all those who came before him, i.e. the Old Testament saints.<sup>87</sup> Isaiah 11.2, for Origen, is fundamentally a prophetic text which anticipates the

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<sup>84</sup> In *hom.in.Num* 13.5.2, Origen speaks of a plurality of spirits which are holy in character, i.e. angels. "Divine spirit" is a title that appears in nearly all of Origen's writings, esp. in *Cels.* Divine spirits: *Cels* 7.18.

<sup>85</sup> Spirit and the virtues: *com.in.Rom* 4.9.4-7; *hom.in.Num* 2.2.3, 6.3.1; *Cels.* 7.4, 8.18.

<sup>86</sup> GCS 33:253; Scheck, 68:894.

<sup>87</sup> This interpretation is paralleled in *hom.in.Num* 9.9.2, 6.3.1-4; *com.in.Mt* 13.2.

coming of the perfect person of Christ, realized in the resting of the virtues of the Spirit upon him.<sup>88</sup> Origen supplements this by commenting that the “seven women will take hold of one man” is Christ who assumes a human body (*hom.in.Is* 3.3). Through Christ, on whom the Spirit of seven women rested, communion with these “women” is also granted, allowing believers to be “wise and understanding in God, and the other virtues might adorn our soul in Christ Jesus” (*hom.in.Is* 3.3).<sup>89</sup>

In other places where Origen comments on this verse, he similarly emphasizes the Spirit and the Spirit’s virtues dwelling in the person of Christ. For example, in *hom.in.Num* 6.3.2, he says that,

But notice that on no other is the Spirit of God described as having rested with this sevenfold virtue. Doubtless this is because the prophecy concerns the very substance (*substantia*) of the divine Spirit, which “rests on the shoot that was proceeding from the stock of Jesse” (Is 11.1-2). Because that substance (*substantia*) could not be explained under one term, it is set forth under diverse designations.<sup>90</sup>

Origen’s use of *substantia* here resembles his use of *hypostasis* or *ousia* to speak of the personhood of Father, Son, and Spirit.<sup>91</sup> This parallels Origen’s description of the Son as one in *substantia* in *com.in.Rom* 5.6.7: “Christ is indeed one in essence (*substantia*) but may be designated in many ways according to his virtues (*virtutibus*) and operations

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<sup>88</sup> *hom.in.Is* 3.2. The “one bread” of Isaiah 4.1 is also a reference to the food of the word of God who is the living bread (Jn 6.51). He notes also in *hom.in.Is* 3.3: “Let no one think that “wisdom,” “understanding,” and the other spirits need anything, because they have other food, since the entire dispensation has but one kind of food, God’s essence (*natura*)” (GCS 33:257; Scheck, 68:897). Alfons Fürst, ‘Jerome Keeping Silent: Origen and His Exegesis of Isaiah’, in *Jerome of Stridon: His Life, Writings and Legacy*, ed. A. Cain and J. Lössl (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009), 143, thinks Jerome has added this.

<sup>89</sup> Similar to how Origen understands Christ’s baptism – see Ch. 4.

<sup>90</sup> SC 415:150; Scheck, 22. *Sed vide quia supra nullum alium 'spiritus Dei requievisse' septemplici hac virtute describitur, per quod sine dubio ipsa illa divini spiritus substantia, quae, quia uno nomine non poterat, diversis vocabulis explanatur, 'requiescere super virgam, quae de stirpe Iesse procederet, prophetatur.*

<sup>91</sup> E.g. Jo. 2.75, see Ch. 3.

(*operationibus*).<sup>92</sup> Given the tendency in most Rufinus-translated works to speak of a shared Trinitarian *substantia*, it seems likely the Spirit's particular *substantia* reflects Origen's actual language (i.e. *ousia*). This also parallels the Son's *epinoiai*, that though one in person or essence, he shows multiplicity in the varied aspects of his ministry. Therefore, the Spirit's substance is substance "is set forth under diverse designations" (*diversis vocabulis explanatur*), much like the various *epinoiai* of the Son. These multiple designations of the Spirit are not as comprehensive or varied as the Son's, but similarly refer to the virtues that he brings to realization by his indwelling presence in believers. Therefore, in the same way that the Son manifests or becomes the virtues of God in an abstract sense, the Spirit's resting upon and dwelling within perfected believers allows for the manifestation of the divine virtues *in concreto*. While Origen does not often use *epinoia* to speak of the Spirit, it is clear that he sees the Son and Spirit's work as parallel in this way.<sup>93</sup> Performance of the Spirit's seven virtues thus leads to the Son's indwelling as the virtues and the reception of his various *epinoiai*, leading upward to the mystery and contemplation of the Father.<sup>94</sup> Though the Father is one and cannot be described as multiple in any way, Origen allows the Son and Spirit to display different aspects in their work and functions.

A related discussion occurs in *hom.in.Lev* 8.11.14, a discussion of priestly purification. Origen states that,

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<sup>92</sup> SC 539:450-452; Scheck, 103:348. See *Cels.* 2.64, PA 1.2.1, 1.2.13, 4.4.1; *Jo.* 1.10, 1.19, 1.20. References to: titles like grace, righteousness, peace, life, truth, the Word (1 Cor 1.30, Eph 2.14, Jn 14.6, Jn 1.1).

<sup>93</sup> See Ch. 3, n.50.

<sup>94</sup> *princ.* 4.4.10: the "virtues which exist in God essentially (*per substantiam*) and which may exist in the human being through diligence and the imitation of God" and which in God "exist forever (*semper sunt*)" (Behr 2:582-83). Contrast this to the virtues of Christ in Ch. 2.

...after the sacrifices of offerings, the order was that he call the sevenfold virtue of the Holy Spirit upon him as he said, “Return to me the joy of your salvation and strengthen me with a princely spirit” (Ps 50.14).<sup>95</sup>

Origen’s emphasis in these passages is that Christ, the perfect person, possesses the fullness of the virtues, indicated by the number seven, seen in the perfect indwelling presence of the Spirit. Christ is the paragon of the Christian believer; the fullness of the Spirit’s presence manifested in the virtues is what Christians must strive for. The Holy Spirit can only indwell and manifest these virtues in those who live pure and holy lives in imitation of Christ. As Origen notes, those with pure hearts and who imitate God receive “the Spirit of God, who dwells in images of virtue” and “sits on those... who are formed like him” (*Cels* 8.18). Therefore, the Spirit brings the completion of the virtues to those who imitate Christ in the virtues. This tendency is also seen in one instance where Origen treats Revelation 1.4. Origen notes in *hom.in.Lev* 3.5: “the virtue of the Holy Spirit is evidently designated under the mystery of the seven spirits.”<sup>96</sup> We see, therefore, for Origen, that the mention of seven spirits or the number seven generally leads him to Isaiah 11.2 and the seven virtues of the Spirit.

There also exists an interesting philosophical parallel to Origen’s treatments of the Spirit and sevenfold virtue. In his article on virtue in Gregory of Nyssa, Andrew Radde-Gallwitz has argued for what he calls the “reciprocity thesis”: with both God and humans, the various virtues necessarily entail one another, “whoever has one virtue has them all.”<sup>97</sup> This comes hand-in-hand with what Radde-Gallwitz calls the “inseparability thesis”, which says

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<sup>95</sup> SC 287:66; Barkley, 83:175.

<sup>96</sup> SC 286:144; Barkley, 83:62. This is a reference to the sevenfold sprinkling of blood in Lev. 4.16-17, which Origen links to Rev 1.4. Other references to seven spirits in Revelation: *hom.in.Num* 3.3 (Rev 1.4); *com.in.Mt* 16.27 (Rev 3.1). No clear citations of Rev 4.5, 5.6.

<sup>97</sup> Andrew Radde-Gallwitz, ‘Gregory of Nyssa on the Reciprocity of the Virtues’, *JTS* 58.2 (2007), 537.

that the virtues are inseparable from each other; if one is taken away, the others are destroyed.<sup>98</sup> Both of these themes, Radde-Gallwitz notes, were common in ancient philosophy, and are present in Gregory of Nyssa's understanding of the virtues.<sup>99</sup> Though Radde-Gallwitz's article is about virtue in Gregory of Nyssa, this scheme also seems to apply to Origen's understanding of the virtues of the Spirit. This idea is most fully realized in Origen's depiction of the fullness of the Spirit and his virtues dwelling upon the person of Christ, the image of Christian perfection. It is evident that for Origen, the Spirit does not simply bring one or two of the virtues, but that his presence indicates the fullness of the virtues in an individual. In this sense, individual virtues do not represent steps in progress in the way Christ's *epinoiai* do. However, progress is still possible in the greater manifestation of these virtues, seen in the perfect model of Christ. Therefore, Origen constantly emphasizes the need for the believer's purity and exercising of all of the virtues in order to maintain the presence of the Spirit.

### The Spirits of the Storehouses in Jeremiah 10.13

Another example of the Spirit's multiplicity is found in *hom.in.Jer* 8.5.3. Origen comments here on the "winds" in Jeremiah 10.13 ("he brought forth the winds from the storehouses"):

These spirits (πνεύματα) are in the *storehouses*. What are the *storehouses* (θησαυροὶ)? *In whom are the storehouses of wisdom and knowledge hid?* (Col 2.3) These *storehouses* are in Christ. So from there these *winds* (οἱ ἄνεμοι) come, these *spirits*, so that one may be wise, and another may be faithful, and another may possess *knowledge*, and another is one who receives some kind of gift of God. *For to one is given through the spirit the word of wisdom,*

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<sup>98</sup> Radde-Gallwitz, 'Virtues', 538, notes that in these theories, "the virtues are non-identical but reciprocal", compared to other theories, e.g. in Socrates and the Stoics, for whom the virtues are identical.

<sup>99</sup> See John M. Cooper, 'The Unity of Virtue', in *Reason and Emotion: Essays on Ancient Moral Psychology and Ethical Theory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 76-117.

*and to another the word of knowledge according to the same spirit, to another faith by the same spirit (1 Cor 12.8-9)*<sup>100</sup>

Prior to this quote, Origen identifies the “storehouses of winds” as “storehouses of spirits” on the basis of their lexical similarity and the fact that both are “stored up”.<sup>101</sup> Origen then links the “storehouses of spirits” with Isaiah 11.2. Unlike the passages we have seen previously, Origen does not discuss the Spirit’s resting on Christ, but instead describes Christ as the source of these spirits. He also comments afterwards that the various “orders” (1 Cor 15.23) are found in different “storehouses,” all of which dwell in Christ (*hom.in.Jer* 8.6.1).<sup>102</sup> Origen justifies this by quoting Colossians 2:3: “in Christ are hid the storehouses of wisdom and knowledge.” One can come to Christ, the “storehouse of the storehouses” or “Lord of lords” or “King of kings” when he is “worthy of the spirits from the storehouses of God.”<sup>103</sup> Additionally, Origen also links these passages to the gifts of the Spirit in 1 Corinthians 12.8-9.

What are we to make of the pneumatological content of this passage? First, we must recognize that in this bit of allegorical interpretation, Origen throws together a number of scriptural passages to make Christological and pneumatological points. Origen’s main point is that the various divine virtues and gifts have their source in Christ. This idea, Christ as “storehouse of storehouses”, is actually similar to what we see elsewhere in Origen,

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<sup>100</sup> SC 232:368; Smith, 97:81. He cites Isa 11.2-3, 2 Tim 1.7 to list the various types of spirits that are in the “storehouses of spirits.”

<sup>101</sup> *hom.in.Jer* 8.5.2: “So God ‘made lightning for the rain and he brought forth the winds from the storehouse’ (Jer 10.13). These ‘winds’ are then in the ‘storehouses’? Or is it that it is not clear in what consists the nature of these things which blow on the earth? But there are certain ‘storehouses’ of ‘winds’ as storehouses of spirits: ‘a spirit of wisdom and understanding, a spirit of counsel and might, a spirit of knowledge and piety, a spirit of the fear of God (Is 11.2-3), a spirit of power and love and of temperance (2 Tim 1.7).’ And you yourself can bring together from the Scriptures these winds” (SC 232:366-368; Smith, 97:81).

<sup>102</sup> SC 232:368; Smith, 97:81-82.

<sup>103</sup> SC 232:368; Smith, 97:82.

for example Christ as the Wisdom and Word of God, the one in whom the ideas and forms of God exist, or in the idea that the Holy Spirit's origin and virtues all originate from the person of the Son.<sup>104</sup> Though he does not elaborate on Is 11.2 or 1 Cor 12.8-9, Origen immediately refers to them in his explanation of “winds”, which he interprets as “spirits”. While Origen never mentions the singular “Holy Spirit” in this passage and speaks of “spirits” and “winds” only in the plural, he also refers to the multiple “storehouses” as the single person of Christ and even refers to a pneumatological passage that speaks of the single Holy Spirit: 1 Cor 12. *hom.in.Jer* 8.6.1 even uses “worthiness” language, which we have seen Origen consistently uses to speak of the conditional nature of the Holy Spirit's indwelling.<sup>105</sup>

In this passage, Origen does not necessarily deny the single personhood of the Holy Spirit, but appears instead to be explaining the Spirit's role and functions in the language of Jeremiah 10:13. Because the Spirit, like Christ, can be multiple in his virtues and functions, he and his gifts can be described as multiple spirits, which appears elsewhere in Origen's writings.<sup>106</sup> Though in certain contexts Origen intentionally emphasizes the Holy Spirit's singularity, in others he has no issues in speaking of the Holy Spirit's virtues and gifts as multiple spirits.<sup>107</sup> Although the language in question is somewhat problematic in that it casts a shadow of doubt on other places where Origen only speaks of the Holy Spirit in the singular, we must take into consideration that Origen was not bound by tradition in this respect; he felt free to speak of both Son and the Spirit in the language of multiplicity to speak of the wide-ranging scope and effects of their work. We must also take in

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<sup>104</sup> See Ch. 2 for Christ as Wisdom/Word. See *Jo.* 2.76 for Christ as source of the Holy Spirit.

<sup>105</sup> ἐπὶ ἅν γένωμαι ἄξιος τῶν πνευμάτων τῶν ἀπὸ θησαυρῶν τοῦ θεοῦ (SC 323:370; Smith, 97:82).

<sup>106</sup> Particularly in the second interpretation of the “firstfruits of the Spirit” of Rom 8.23 in *com.in.Rom* 7.5.3 below.

<sup>107</sup> I.e. in the context of Gnostic or Marcionite polemic – see Ch. 3.

consideration the possibility, given that this passage is in Greek, that other passages may have been touched up by Rufinus to emphasize the Spirit's single personhood.

A second and similarly difficult example can be found in *com.in.Mt* 13.2, in which Origen says,

For it is possible for several spirits not only worse, but also better, to be in the same man. David accordingly asks to be established by a free spirit (πνεύματι ἡγεμονικῷ), and that a right spirit (πνεῦμα εὐθέες) be renewed in his inward parts. But if, in order that the Saviour may impart to us of the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and reverence (Is 11:2), he was filled also with the spirit of the fear of the Lord (πνεύματος φόβου θεοῦ); it is possible also that these several good spirits (πλείονα κρείττονα πνεύματα) may be conceived as being in the same person.<sup>108</sup>

This passage comes in the context of Origen's discussion of whether the spirit of Elijah is the same as the Spirit of God in Elijah. The specific presence of the Spirit of God is noted in verses like Romans 8.16 and 1 Corinthians 2.11, or in the Holy Spirit's filling John in his mother's womb "before Christ in the spirit and power of Elijah."<sup>109</sup> Origen's conclusion is that the spirit and power of Elijah is in John, whereas only Elisha only possessed Elijah's spirit. Origen's use of Isaiah 11.2 here is also curious; while speaking of the indwelling of the singular Spirit of God throughout the passage, he seems to indicate here a reading of Isaiah 11.2 as multiple spirits. He even uses the example of the indwelling of these "several good spirits" to make a case for the idea that Elijah's spirit could also be upon John. In addition, Origen's reference to the "right spirit" in Psalm 51.10 also seems to assume that this spirit and the "free spirit" are different entities.

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<sup>108</sup> GCS 40:181; ANF 10:476. καὶ γὰρ δυνατόν πλείονα πνεύματα εἶναι ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ, οὐ μόνον χείρονα ἀλλὰ καὶ κρείττονα.

<sup>109</sup> GCS 40:181; ANF 10:476.



One particularly notable feature in this passage is Origen's mention of the several "worse" spirits that can dwell in man. This indicates belief in the presence of indwelling evil spirits in those who are not believers, a topic that we have mentioned previously. It is a theme that we see in the New Testament, for example in Matthew 12.45, Luke 8.2, Luke 8.26, and more elaborately in Jewish works like the *Testament of Reuben* 2.2.<sup>110</sup> The reference to the various spirits, then, particularly those which David possessed, appear to indicate Origen's belief in other good spirits that can dwell within the believer.<sup>111</sup> The "right spirit", "free spirit", and even "spirit of the fear of the Lord" appear to be lesser spirits which prepare for the spirits of Is 11.2, which are imparted by Christ himself. This idea is also suggested later in this same discussion, where Origen mentions that Elijah is "in some sort a word inferior (ὑποδεέστερος) to 'the Word who was made in the beginning with God, God the Word'" and comes "as a preparatory discipline (προγύμνασμα) to the people prepared by it, that they might be trained for the reception of the perfect Word."<sup>112</sup> Therefore, in the same way that the "word" of Elijah prepares people for the reception of the greater Word, the lesser spirits prepare for the indwelling of the greater Spirit. Throughout the passage, Origen consistently articulates the unique and special indwelling of the Spirit of God, different from the spirit of man within him (1 Cor 2.11).<sup>113</sup> Though Origen's use the imagery of the multiplicity of spirits for the one Holy Spirit creates problems for the modern reader, it is evident that he consistently spoke this way of the Holy Spirit, simultaneously emphasizing the Spirit's plurality and status over other spiritual beings.

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<sup>110</sup> See n.21.

<sup>111</sup> See Moser, *Teacher*, 69-76.

<sup>112</sup> GCS 40:183; ANF 10:476.

<sup>113</sup> The issue in this passage is that the spirit of Elijah is also different from the spirit of man – which is why he discusses this issue in the first place.

## The Firstfruits of the Spirit in Romans 8.23

One final and related reference to the multiplicity of spirits appears in Origen's treatment of Romans 8.23, specifically the meaning of the phrase "firstfruits (*primitias/ἀπαρχὴν*) of the Spirit" in *com.in.Rom* 7.5.3-7.5.7.<sup>114</sup> As is typical for Origen, several different potential explanations for "firstfruits" are given: (1) that the Holy Spirit is "preeminent" (i.e. firstfruits) over all other ministering spirits as the Spirit of adoption who allows one to "be united with the Church of the firstborn ones, which is in heaven", (2) that "many spirits" are in fact the gifts of the Spirit (in 1 Cor 14.12, 14.32), the "firstfruits" referring to the greatest gift (of adoption) which is given to the apostles, who groan (Rom 8.23) while waiting for others to receive it,<sup>115</sup> (3) that as Christ is the "firstborn of all creation" (Col 1.15), the Spirit is the "firstfruits of many spirits". Origen does not settle on one interpretation, instead letting the reader choose which is most valid.<sup>116</sup> It is possible, then that Origen considers all of these to be valid interpretations and not necessarily mutually exclusive.<sup>117</sup>

The first interpretation, the Holy Spirit as the first among many spirits, poses some interesting issues. Origen begins by linking the term "firstfruits" to Numbers 18.27 and Exodus 34.26, Old Testament passages discussing the giving of the best and first portions to God. Using an example of wine and a winepress, he suggests that the Spirit and other ministering spirits are all "composed of the same fruit (*frugis*) or fluid (*liquoris*) from which

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<sup>114</sup> SC 543:276-282; Scheck, 104:74-76. See also *hom.in.Lev* 2.2.5. *princ.* 1.7.5 cites the same verse, but not the firstfruits. For a treatment, see Tite, 'Holy Spirit', 149-152.

<sup>115</sup> *com.in.Rom* 7.5.5.

<sup>116</sup> *com.in.Rom* 7.5.7: "But the reader should test which of these agrees most with the apostolic intention" (SC 543:282; Scheck, 104:76).

<sup>117</sup> Moser, *Teacher*, 139, notes the various interpretations, but focuses only on first-fruits as virtues or gifts. Tite, 'Holy Spirit', 150, argues that the first interpretation notes hierarchical structure on the cosmological plane, the second on an anthropological plane, citing Torjesen, "Body," "Soul," and "Spirit" in Origen's Theory of Exegesis', *Anglican Theological Review* 67 (1985), 17-30. Tite, 151, also comments on the increasing spiritual levels in Origen's interpretations, seen in his final interpretation about the "ontological, and indeed primordial notion" of Son and Spirit.

the rest comes”, whether from the press or what is left on the ground.<sup>118</sup> While Origen does not use the language of “essence” or “nature” here, the imagery of liquid almost seems to suggest something material. In addition, Origen describes the preeminent Spirit’s place as first among many spirits. As he does elsewhere, Origen notes that these spirits are important in ministering salvation (Heb 1.14) and even notes that they acts as “tutors and guardians” until the soul reaches maturity.<sup>119</sup> Once maturity is reached, the Spirit of adoption, that is, the Holy Spirit, is received and the believer through this adoption is brought into the church (Heb 12.23). The title “Spirit of adoption” also indicates the Holy Spirit’s primacy as the “firstfruits” of the Spirit.<sup>120</sup> Origen also highlights the difference between the Holy Spirit and other ministering spirits, their difference being similar to that of a son and a slave (Gal 4.1). The Spirit’s particular function as the Spirit of adoption is not unique to this passage, nor is the Spirit’s place as the head over other spirits.<sup>121</sup> This particular interpretation’s primary point, the superiority of the Holy Spirit over other spirits, appears to be the lowest level interpretation, intended for those who are still concerned with good and evil spirits and who need comfort about this topic.

The second interpretation (7.5.4) reads “firstfruits” as the Holy Spirit and the “gifts or graces” of the Spirit as the “many spirits”.<sup>122</sup> This does not differ significantly with Origen’s

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<sup>118</sup> SC 543:276; Scheck, 104:74. Note Origen’s discussions of Spirit as greatest of spirits elsewhere: *com.in.Rom* 2.9.3-4; 7.2.1; 7.4.11. cf. *Jo.* 2.75.

<sup>119</sup> Tite, ‘Holy Spirit’, 149, indicates that this represents a hierarchical structure of spirits, in contrast to aeons and archons in Valentinian cosmology. Though *daemon* in the ancient world did not necessarily have connotations of an evil spirit, Origen seems to use it in this way – for demons and angels, see Moser, *Teacher*, 76-83.

<sup>120</sup> Tite, ‘Holy Spirit’, 148, notes similarities between the first interpretation and the *Tripartite Tractate*, where the Holy Spirit is the chief ministering spirit.

<sup>121</sup> E.g. *Rom* 8.15; *or.* 22.2; *com.in.Rom* 1.1.1, 4.9.1; *hom.in.Ez* 4.5.2; *com.in.Mt* 11.14, 13.26; *Cant.* 2.5; *Cels.* 1.57, 8.6. Origen’s tendency in using this verse is to speak of the Spirit as bringing people into the church, to unity with Christ.

<sup>122</sup> SC 543:280; Scheck, 104:75. Tite, ‘Holy Spirit’, 150, notes that these are the “attributes or spiritual endowments” for the edification of the church, to the “partitioning of the Holy Spirit’s

treatment of the winds and storehouses in *hom.in.Jer* 8.5.3. What is notable, however, is that Origen does not discuss the gifts of the Spirit in 1 Corinthians 12. Instead, he focuses his attention on 1 Cor 14.32 (“The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets”) and how such spirits are not inferior to prophets in the way the Son is not inferior to the Father (1 Cor 15.28).<sup>123</sup> Origen’s interpretation of the “many spirits” as the gifts of the Spirit (7.5.5) makes the point that the apostles attained these gifts to minister the gospel. This hints at the gifts of the Spirit in 1 Corinthians 12 and even the virtues of Isaiah 11.2, but neither are mentioned. Origen instead highlights that the apostles, particularly Paul, have received the gift of the Spirit “more vastly and magnificently than in the rest”, which is why “firstfruits” is a fitting term. However, those who have “received from the Holy Spirit the best and chosen gifts” will wait for their eventual adoption, which is their perfection. Again, while the identity of these gifts is unclear, it is evident that they are given for service and that those who receive them will experience groaning and suffering (Rom 8.23) in anticipation of their full adoption. This is seen particularly in Origen’s continuing comments (7.5.8-7.5.9) that the “firstfruits of spiritual grace” on the apostles and leaders in the church (Rom 11.16, 1 Cor 12.28) lead to the availability of such gifts for all who have “attain[ed] the grace of baptism”. Thus, Origen emphasizes the Spirit’s place in adoption (esp. in Rom 6.23, 8.16).<sup>124</sup> This interpretation, therefore, is intended for those who have moved beyond concern for elemental powers and understand the need for the Holy Spirit

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attributes or power.” He also notes that the “various” spirits of the second interpretation refer to the “partitioning of the Holy Spirit’s attributes or power” and that Origen makes clear “spiritual hierarchical demarcations” in his mention of the apostles.

<sup>123</sup> SC 543:278; Scheck, 104:75. While the idea that the spirits are not subject to the prophets is likely Origen, the second statement is suspicious.

<sup>124</sup> *com.in.Rom* 7.5.9, also cites Gal 4.4-5. With regard to adoption and redemption, he notes that they are both received “through a mirror and in a riddle”, pointing out the incomplete nature of adoption (1 Cor 13.10, 12).

to receive the spiritual gifts and adoption. It is more practical than the rest as it portrays the Spirit's working within the church.

The final and shortest explanation (7.5.7) is that the title “firstfruits of many spirits” parallels Christ's title as “firstborn of all creation” (Col 1.15). Origen does not explain this any further, but seems to imply a special place or status of the Spirit similar to that of Christ.<sup>125</sup> As Christ is the “firstborn of all creation” (Col 1.15) and superior to all things under the Father, the Spirit is the “firstfruits of many spirits”, superior to all things made through the Son. While Origen ultimately leaves it to the reader to decide, it seems evident that the third interpretation is the highest and greatest of the three. Only the third reveals divine mysteries that must be given by God – it is an interpretation of truths on the divine plane.<sup>126</sup> As one grows in spiritual understanding, one moves from spirits to Spirit, from multiplicity to singularity, seen most gloriously in the work of the Holy Spirit in the Trinity.<sup>127</sup>

Origen's discussion of the “firstfruits of the Spirit” brings up many of the same issues we have seen in his treatments of Isaiah 11.2, but also brings resolution. While Origen in certain places speaks of the Holy Spirit in the context of the many spirits, this understanding of the Holy Spirit reflects a lower or inferior spiritual knowledge. In addition, the Holy Spirit's gifts and virtues can be described as multiple spirits, which minister to the saints and lead them to their adoption, the “firstfruit” of these gifts. But more importantly, those who are spiritual and knowledgeable will understand that there

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<sup>125</sup> SC 543:282; Scheck, 104:76. cf. *com.in.Rom* 7.1.2.

<sup>126</sup> Tite, ‘Holy Spirit’, 151: while the first two options are “diffusive understandings of the Holy Spirit, while the third is Trinitarian.”

<sup>127</sup> Tite, ‘Holy Spirit’, 152, noting the similarity of the first interpretation to that of the Valentinians, suggests that Origen's interpretive format may have been a rhetorical device that “would highlight the ‘inferior’ hermeneutical approach of the Valentinians.”

is one Holy Spirit who sits beside the Son in his personhood and work. Like Origen's interpretation of Isaiah 6, this divine or Trinitarian interpretation is secret and mysterious, that which only the most spiritual believers can attain. In this regard, Origen's pneumatology can be multiple and singular – multiple in work and level, but singular in identity.

### **A Review: Is Origen's Pneumatology Angelomorphic?**

Returning to the point raised at the beginning of this chapter, we must ask again whether Origen's pneumatology is angelomorphic. The answer to this question is both yes and no – yes in that Origen on occasion uses the image of angels or spirits to describe who the Holy Spirit is and what the Holy Spirit does, if this is what constitutes angelomorphic. But Origen has clearly distanced himself from many of the writers before him – he does not possess a binitarian or spirit-Christology theology, nor is the single personhood of the Spirit lost for the sake of his multiplicity. Instead, what we see is Origen using a variety of biblical language and imagery, influenced by Jewish and early Christian angelic spirit traditions, but not controlled by them. He uses their material to build his own structure. Origen also seeks to maintain a balance between the Spirit's singularity and multiplicity; emphasizing his personhood alongside the Father and the Son, but speaking about the multi-faceted nature of his work and his manifestation in believers as the sevenfold virtue. Therefore, we can conclude that Origen's predominant conception of the Spirit was as a singular divine person, not completely different from other spirits by virtue of his "created" and derived existence, but greater than them, ministering to them, and leading them in ministry. For Origen, the Spirit is clearly exalted over them due to his eternal nature, his special knowledge of the Father, his perfect participation in the divine will, and his side-

by-side working with the Son in the execution of the divine plan of salvation, particularly in the revelation of the Father. By progressing in the faith, one can move from the elementary spirits and the basic work of the Holy Spirit to the understanding of the divine identity of the Holy Spirit and his work alongside the Son.

Though Origen's pneumatology contains ambiguities and issues of its own, it represents an intentional change from the tradition before him, an ambitious endeavor that seeks to account for and clarify the identity and work of person of the Spirit as described in Scripture, preserving to some degree his received tradition, but integrating his understanding of the person of the Holy Spirit into his overall cosmology and theological framework. We must not forget that Origen's articulation of this pneumatology takes place in the context of various systems of thought, both Christian and non-, which either do not acknowledge or possess "incorrect" views about the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the Spirit, for Origen, is not reduced to a theological concept, but must be recognized as the working presence of God, necessary for all believers. Rather than criticizing Origen for possessing an immature or undeveloped pneumatology, we must recognize him as someone who understood the power and work of the Holy Spirit and helped bring about clarity concerning the Spirit's identity which did not exist prior to him. Though tensions exist in his pneumatology, they are a necessary result of his struggle to build a comprehensive theology with the scattered materials that he possesses.

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