

Learning the Language of Scripture:
Origen, Wisdom, and Exegetical Inquiry

Mark Randall James
New York, NY

B.A. in Philosophy, Stanford University, 2003
B. A. in Theology, Cambridge University, 2008

A Dissertation presented to the Graduate Faculty
of the University of Virginia in Candidacy for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Religious Studies

**Learning the Language of Scripture:
Origen, Wisdom, and Exegetical Inquiry**

Mark Randall James

© Copyright by
Mark Christopher Randall James
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED
April 2016

Abstract

Learning the Language of Scripture: Origen, Wisdom, and Exegetical Inquiry offers a new reading of Origen's exegetical procedures as a contribution to the contemporary discussion about the theological interpretation of scripture. Contemporary interpreters are frequently anxious about the arbitrariness of their own procedures. Although Origen is often regarded as the most arbitrary of traditional interpreters, this study argues that his apparent arbitrariness is a sign of a deeper but neglected logic operative in his exegesis.

This study characterizes this logic in terms of wisdom. Origen regards scriptural texts as paradigmatic examples of wise speech. The task of interpreting scripture is to acquire the wisdom displayed in the scriptures by learning to speak as they speak. This dissertation describes three aspects of the process by which Origen seeks to acquire scripture's linguistic competence. First, Origen treats scriptural texts as scripts or words to be spoken, investigating the proper contexts in which they may be used. Second, Origen asks about the underlying rules or 'habits' of scriptural discourse, which he reconstructs through inductive methods. Third, Origen uses analogical arguments to propose new utterances of scripture-like language that boldly push the boundaries of what his community recognizes as acceptable speech. The goal of this process is ultimately the transformation of his human language into the divine speech of the Logos, which this study labels the 'deification of discourse.'

This study then sketches a model of contemporary theological interpretation in terms of the pursuit of wisdom. What emerges is a form of postliberalism that combines a focus on scriptural interpretation with a thoroughgoing commitment to empirical and rational inquiry.

To my parents,
Kent and Jani James,
who taught me to love wisdom

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	vii
Abbreviations	ix
Introduction	1
1. The Problem of Hermeneutic Arbitrariness	1
1.1. The Return to Scripture	1
1.2. Theological Interpretation and Arbitrariness	4
2. Origen and Arbitrariness	10
2.1. Origen as Systematic Theologian	15
2.2. Origen as Man of the Church	17
2.3. Origen as Charismatic Intellectual	21
3. Method: Descriptive Logic	24
4. Learning the Language of Scripture	28
Chapter 1: Origen and the Stoics on Speaking Well	35
1. Stoic Philosophy of Language	38
1.1. Logic	40
1.2. Meaning	46
1.3. The Correctness of Names	51
2. Origen on Language and Logic	57
2.1. The Correctness of Names	58
2.2. Meaning	77
2.3. Logic	84
Chapter 2: The Words of Scripture as Wise Utterances	94
1. Scripture as Script	98
1.1. Speaking the Scriptures	98
1.2. Semantics and the Literal Sense	105
1.3. The Turn to Pragmatics	111
2. Deixis	114
2.1. Place Deixis	117
2.2. Time Deixis	125
2.3. Person Deixis	130
3. Implicature	135
3.1. Homonymy and Implicature	143
3.2. Parables and Implicature	149
Chapter 3: The Grammar of Scriptural Language	156

1. Inquiry and Vagueness.....	157
1.1. Induction and Abduction.....	158
1.2. Analogy.....	166
1.3. Vagueness and Wisdom.....	171
2. Habits of Scripture.....	176
2.1. The Logic of Scriptural Habits.....	181
2.2. Scripture, World, and Interpreter.....	187
2.3. Case Study: ‘Bodily Things are Types of Spiritual Things’.....	207
Chapter 4: The Creation of Scriptural Language.....	212
1. Invention.....	216
1.1. Analogy and Invention.....	222
1.2. Invention of Words.....	228
1.3. Invention of Sentences.....	233
2. Bold Speech.....	240
2.1. The Language of Boldness.....	243
2.2. Boldness as a Scriptural Paradigm.....	247
2.3. Boldness in Uttering Scriptural Sentences.....	253
2.4. Boldness in Formulating New Sentences.....	257
Chapter 5: Wisdom and Scriptural Interpretation.....	278
1. Scripture as Wisdom.....	279
2. Wisdom and Competence.....	283
3. Wisdom and Common Sense.....	288
4. Procedures of Wisdom: The Text and Beyond.....	293
5. Case Studies.....	298
5.1. Robert Jenson: Ecclesial Wisdom.....	299
5.2. Phyllis Tribble: Feminist Wisdom.....	308
Works Cited.....	324

Acknowledgements

I wish to express my gratitude to the many friends, colleagues, and family members who have helped bring this dissertation into being. I take full responsibility, of course, for all errors and shortcomings.

I want to thank the members of my committee, Dr. Peter Ochs (chair), Dr. Robin Darling Young, Dr. Kevin Hart, Rabbi Dr. Vanessa Ochs, and Dr. David Kovacs, for their support and guidance. I am grateful to Dr. Young for mentoring me as a student of patristics and for reading numerous drafts of this study. I am especially debted to Dr. Ochs, my *Doktorvater*, for guiding me through the dissertation process and for shaping me into a philosopher.

Dr. Randi Rashkover, Dr. Joseph Trigg, and Deborah Barer read and commented upon nearly every page of this work. Ashleigh Elser and Rebecca Rine also read portions of this work. Without them, this dissertation would not have been possible.

My participation in a number of reading groups have helped form my instincts and served as incubators for thought. Thank you to Dr. Elizabeth Shanks Alexander and the other members of her rabbinic reading groups, for teaching me to think scripturally and legally. The *Homilies on the Psalms* reading group significantly deepened my understanding of Origen. From years of ‘Wittgenmorgen’ with Paul Gleason & Joe Lenow and of reading Hegel with Dr. Randi Rashkover, my ‘Hegel Havruta,’ I have gained not only insights into language and logic that made this dissertation possible, but also true philosophical friendship, ‘*quasi fomitibus flagrare animos et ex pluribus unum facere.*’

The same is true of my time in the Scripture, Interpretation, and Practice (SIP) program at UVA, which is a community of inquiry because it is a community of friends. I am especially

indebted to Deborah Barer, Ashleigh Elser, Rebecca Epstein-Levi, Nauman Faizi, Kelly Figueora-Ray, Emily Filler, Rebecca Rine, Reuben Shank, and Daniel Weiss.

I am grateful to many others who have sharpened my thinking, including but not limited to Ben Barer, Dr. Jeremy Begbie, Dr. Larry Bouchard, Matthew Burgess, Winn Collier, Julia Cummiskey, Dr. Blaire French, Dr. Harry Gamble, Joelle Hathaway, James Hill, Dr. Mark Hopwood, Brendan Jamieson, Dr. Ruth Jenkins, Dr. Paul Jones, Dr. Judith Kovacs, Cassie Meyer, Kris Norris, Dr. Karl Shuve, Bethany and Stephen Slater, Dr. Michael Thompson, Dr. Susannah Ticciati, and Dr. Simeon Zahl.

I am thankful to Lorenzo Perrone for providing an advance copy of Origen's *Homilies on the Psalms*.

Much of this dissertation was written during a period of uncertain transition that took my wife and I from Charlottesville to New York. I want to express my gratitude to those who generously opened their homes to us for weeks and sometimes months: Bill & Dominique Holbrook, Michael Schwartz, Craig Bunnell & Karen Miller, Travis and Jaime Randall, Sarah and Rebecca Epstein-Levi, and Kelly Figueora-Ray.

I am grateful for the support of my family, both the Randall and James clans. My parents in particular, Kent and Jani James, have shaped the person and the scholar I am in too many ways to express. They have set an example of that love for God expressed in love of wisdom that I find in Origen.

Above all, my wife Christina Randall-James has given of herself, in more ways than I am sure I recognize, to ensure that this portion of our 'family project' became a reality. I am grateful for her faithfulness, her strength, and her wisdom.

Abbreviations

AM	Sextus Empiricus, <i>Against the Mathematicians</i> .
CC	Origen, <i>Contra Celsum</i> .
CJ	Origen, <i>Commentary on John</i> .
CM	Origen, <i>Commentary on Matthew</i> .
CP	Charles Peirce, <i>Collected Papers of Charles Peirce</i> .
CR	Origen, <i>Commentary on Romans</i> .
ComSS	Origen, <i>Commentary on the Song of Songs</i> .
DK	Diels-Kranz, <i>Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker</i> .
DL	Diogenes Laertius, <i>Lives of the Philosophers</i> .
ExMart	Origen, <i>Exhortation to Martyrdom</i> .
HE	Eusebius, <i>Ecclesiastical History</i> .
HomEx	Origen, <i>Homilies on Exodus</i> .
HomEz	Origen, <i>Homilies on Ezekiel</i> .
HomGen	Origen, <i>Homilies on Genesis</i> .
HomJer	Origen, <i>Homilies on Jeremiah</i> .
HomJos	Origen, <i>Homilies on Joshua</i> .
HomPs	Origen, <i>Homilies on the Psalms</i> .
IO	Quintilian, <i>Institutes of Oratory</i> .
JobFrag	Origen, <i>Fragments on Job</i> .
LkFrag	Origen, <i>Fragments on Luke</i> .
LL	Varro, <i>De Lingua Latina</i> .
LS	Long and Sedley, <i>The Hellenistic Philosophers</i> .
LSJ	Liddell, Scott, and Jones. <i>A Greek-English Lexicon</i> .
LXX	Rahlfs, <i>Septuaginta</i> .
NA-27	Nestle-Aland, ed. <i>Novum Testamentum Graecae</i> , 27 th ed.
PA	Origen, <i>Peri Archon</i> .
PG	Migne, J. P. <i>Patrologiae Cursus Completus. Series Graeca</i> .
PH	Sextus Empiricus, <i>Outlines of Pyrrhonism</i> .
PHP	Galen, <i>On the Doctrines of Hippocrates and Plato</i> .
PsFrag	Origen, <i>Fragments on the Psalms</i> .
Sch.	Scholium (-a).
Sch. DThr.	<i>Scholium in Dionysii Thracis Artem Grammaticam</i> .
Sch. Hom.	<i>Scholium in Homerum</i> .
Sorabji	Richard Sorabji, <i>The Philosophy of the Commentators 200-600 AD</i> .
SVF	<i>Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta</i> , ed. J. von Arnim.
UP	Galen, <i>De usu partium</i> .

Introduction

1. The Problem of Hermeneutic Arbitrariness

1.1. *The Return to Scripture*

A diverse range of theologians and scholars have in recent decades grown increasingly dissatisfied with the modern disciplinary divide between historical text scholarship and constructive theology.¹ Emboldened by the profound scriptural theologies of 20th century giants like Karl Barth and Henri de Lubac, a new movement of ‘theological interpreters of scripture’ has sought to recover a pre-modern way of doing theology in which, as de Lubac said, ‘theological science and the explication of Scripture cannot but be one and the same thing.’² They seek to recover not only an overarching vision of scripture’s role in theology, but also exegetical judgment and the various technical skills that enable it. ‘Theology has lost its competence in exegesis,’³ says Rusty Reno, as have many Jewish and Christian communities. One of the urgent theological tasks of the present moment is to return to past masters of theological interpretation, not only as resources for our thinking but as teachers and trainers of our practice. Returning to scripture must include returning to pre-modern exemplars of scriptural interpretation.⁴

¹ A succinct account of the causes and consequences of this divide can be found in Stephen Fowl, ed., *The Theological Interpretation of Scripture* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1997), xii-xvi.

² Henri de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis, Volume 1: The Four Senses of Scripture*, trans. by Mark Sebanc (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 27.

³ R. R. Reno, ‘Series Preface,’ in Ephraim Radner, *Leviticus* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2008), 13.

⁴ Henri de Lubac’s study of Origen was a forerunner of this return to pre-modern exegetes (Henri de Lubac, *History and Spirit*, Anne Englund Nash, trans. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2007)). See also David Steinmetz, ‘The Superiority of Pre-Critical Exegesis’ in Fowl, *Theological Interpretation*, 26-38.

The theological interpretation of scripture is a young movement that has arisen in response to a perceived crisis.⁵ Consequently, there is a good deal more consensus about the problems to which theological interpretation is responding than there is about the best solutions.⁶ One of the most difficult of these problems, it seems to me, is a lingering arbitrariness that afflicts various modern ways of reading and interpreting scripture. Theological interpreters have identified interpretive arbitrariness on several fronts. First, they have called attention to the arbitrariness of the disciplinary divide between theology and the various critical methods of biblical study that dominate the modern academy. Historical biblical scholars frequently represent their own critical methods as the only legitimate way to determine the meaning of the scriptural texts. Theological interpreters, however, argue that this claim lacks warrant, and hence that it arbitrarily forecloses the possibility of a reading of scripture that takes seriously the traditional theological concerns of religious readers. When institutionalized in the Western academy, the arbitrariness of this assumption manifests itself in the unjustified exclusion of interpreters who would use and develop other viable ways of reading.

In order to identify the limits of historical criticism and explicate the intelligibility of traditional reading practices, theological interpreters have drawn on a range of post-modern movements and philosophies, such as the German tradition of philosophical hermeneutics,⁷ Derridean post-structuralism,⁸ and the pragmatism of Charles Peirce.⁹ Theological interpretation

⁵ Some foundational works in theological interpretation include Werner Jeanrond, *Theological Hermeneutics: Development and Significance* (London: Macmillan, 1991); Kevin Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?: The Bible, The Reader, and The Morality of Literary Knowledge* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998); Francis Watson, *Text, Church, and World: Biblical Interpretation in Theological Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994); and Stephen Fowl, *Engaging Scripture* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997).

⁶ My account here follows the introductions to theological interpretation in Fowl, *Theological Interpretation*, and Kevin Vanhoozer, ed., with Craig G. Bartholomew, Daniel J. Treier, and N. T. Wright, *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005).

⁷ For an example of this approach, see Werner Jeanrond, *Theological Hermeneutics*.

⁸ For an example of this approach, see James K. A. Smith, *The Fall of Interpretation: Philosophical Foundations for a Creational Hermeneutic*, 2nd. ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012).

has thrived in the more pluralistic academic environment these critiques have helped create. Sometimes, however, these various post-modern theories have intensified the anxiety felt by theological interpreters about interpretive arbitrariness by giving the impression that arbitrariness is an inextricable feature of all interpretation. While an earlier generation of theologians could — for better or worse — take for granted a relatively stable consensus about canons of proper interpretation, now we are more likely to experience a fragmented conflict of interpretations. Today's theologians today not only dispute what this or that text means; we also hear them asking whether texts have any determinate meaning at all. This worry takes slightly different forms depending on which post-modern theory is to the fore. For James K. A. Smith, the problem is the lack of hermeneutic 'control' that seems to follow from the 'indeterminacy' of texts on post-structuralist accounts.¹⁰ For Robert Jenson, the problem is that 'critical theories' that purport to discover what is really going on beneath the textual appearances ultimately lead to a self-defeating subjectivism.¹¹ Kevin Vanhoozer's *Is There a Meaning in This Text?* reflects the anxiety about arbitrariness in an especially acute form, examining an exceptionally wide range of hermeneutic theories that seem to undo the author, the book, and the reader, threatening interpretive 'anarchy.'¹²

Probably post-modern theories would not loom so large if they did not dovetail with certain common sense assumptions about interpretation widely held in the universities and religious communities of the liberal West. Stephen Fowl's list of relativist slogans encountered by teachers and preachers still resonates after 18 years: 'Nobody's interpretation is better than

⁹ See Peter Ochs, ed., *The Return to Scripture in Judaism and Christianity* (New York: Paulist Press, 1993), 3-54; Peter Ochs, *Peirce, Pragmatism, and the Logic of Scripture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Peter Ochs, *Another Reformation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 8-16.

¹⁰ Smith, *Fall of Interpretation*, 199-221. Cf. Fowl, *Engaging Scripture*, 40-56 and Vanhoozer, *Is there Meaning*, 126-140.

¹¹ Robert Jenson, *Canon and Creed* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010): 79-88.

¹² *Is There a Meaning?*, xi.

anyone else's; everyone has a right to his/her own interpretation; it is rude and not inclusive to fail to accept someone's interpretation as true for that person.'¹³ In many circles, this relativism has arguably given way more recently to a politicization of interpretation in which communities implicitly or explicitly control the results of interpretation according to their own communal doctrines and ethical norms. In these environments, anxiety about the arbitrariness of interpretation among theologians committed to the need for a return to scripture has only increased.

1.2. Theological Interpretation and Arbitrariness

In response to the arbitrary dogmatism of historical criticism on the one hand and the arbitrary relativism of post-modernity on the other, theological interpreters frequently frame theological interpretation as a kind of *via media*. It avoids, according to David Steinmetz, 'the Scylla of extreme subjectivism, on the one hand, and the Charybdis of historical positivism, on the other.'¹⁴ The boundaries of the Christian tradition constitute, for Todd Billings, 'the *spacious* yet *specified* place of wrestling with, chewing on, and performing Scripture.'¹⁵ Theological interpreters have usually understood that the intelligibility of their enterprise depends, however, on showing that their own rules of scriptural interpretation are not arbitrary.

It was a commonplace in the early church that 'scripture interprets scripture,' and most theological interpreters have proceeded in accordance with this slogan. In some vague sense, this slogan suggests, non-arbitrary rules of scripture would have to be rules that in some sense

¹³ Fowl, *Engaging Scripture*, 40.

¹⁴ Steinmetz, 'Pre-Critical Exegesis,' 37.

¹⁵ J. Todd Billings, *The Word of God for the People of God: An Entryway to the Theological Interpretation of Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), xiii.

emerge *from the scriptures themselves*. The paradigmatic instance of this circularity for Christian interpreters is the *regula fidei*, the ‘rule of faith’ which for many early Christians provided a summary of the Biblical narrative as a guide to reading the scriptures. Originally a pattern of oral teaching freely reformulated by second and third century Christians as it suited their specific purpose, the rule of faith came to provide the basic structure of the text of the Niceno-Constantinopolitan creed as well. Nearly all (Christian) theological interpreters of whom I am aware argue that the rule of faith and/or the creeds should play some kind of normative role in theological interpretation. Yet they also insist that these rules are by no means imposed on scripture, but rather are themselves derived from scripture. In his *Introducing Theological Interpretation*, for example, Donald Treier says:

Yet the plurality of potential interpretations did not entail the equal legitimacy of all the various claims, as if the church simply appealed to tradition because the Bible was defenseless...the Rule not only defines and defends parameters for proper interpretation but also derives from Scripture itself. While the “literal sense” of the Bible is not simply or completely transparent, the words of the text restrain and guide the churchly reader, ultimately telling the story of the Triune God.¹⁶

The rule of faith governs the interpretation of those scripture from which it is taken. Thus scripture interprets scripture.

It is not easy to explain how or in what sense this might be possible, however. Without a clear understanding of how one might draw rules of interpretation from scripture, theological interpreters are themselves vulnerable to the charge of arbitrariness, in the manner of other communities who simply impose their own commitments and understandings onto the text of

¹⁶ Daniel Treier, *Introducing Theological Interpretation* of Scripture (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 59.

scripture. Not surprisingly, this is often what historical text scholars take theological interpretation to be. John Barton, for example, who has engaged fairly sympathetically with theological interpreters, nevertheless concludes in the end that their appeals to tradition amount to dogmatism: ‘One cannot establish what the Bible means if one insists on reading it as necessarily conforming to what one already believes to be true — which is what a theological reading amounts to.’¹⁷ Barton is only renewing an old line of attack, however. It is a deep impulse of historical biblical scholarship to attack the dogmatism of appeals to traditional authority, and not necessarily from a posture that is skeptical of faith or theology. In a programmatic and oft-cited essay calling for interpreters to read the Bible ‘like any other book,’ Benjamin Jowett begins by calling attention to the fruitless interpretive debates between different Christian denominations.

It is a strange, though familiar fact, that great differences of opinion exist respecting the Interpretation of Scripture. All Christians receive the Old and New Testament as sacred writings, but they are not agreed about the meaning which they attribute to them. The book itself remains as at the first; the commentators seem rather to reflect the changing atmosphere of the world or of the Church. Different individuals or bodies of Christians have a different point of view, to which their interpretation is narrowed or made to conform. It is assumed, as natural and necessary, that the same words will present one idea to the mind of the Protestant, another to the Roman Catholic; one meaning to the German, another to the English interpreter...¹⁸

¹⁷ John Barton, *The Nature of Biblical Criticism* (Louisville, Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), 164. He is following in the venerable tradition of James Barr, especially his *Holy Scripture: Canon, Authority, Criticism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983).

¹⁸ Benjamin Jowett, ‘On the Interpretation of Scripture,’ in *Essays and Reviews* (London: Longman, Green, Longman, and Roberts, 1861): 330-433, esp. 330.

Although theological interpreters have frequently used him as a foil,¹⁹ Jowett understands himself as a theological reader of ‘Scripture’ and the ‘sacred writings.’ What troubles him is the common assumption that it is ‘natural and necessary’ that the meaning of a text will be ‘narrowed or made to conform’ to the teachings of a particular interpretive tradition. To the extent that this is so, the scriptures cannot serve their proper function as critical norm of the church’s life and faith.

We may find worrisome signs of this arbitrariness in a range of theological interpreters. In his introduction to the *Dictionary of Theological Interpretation*, for example, Kevin Vanhoozer offers what he takes to be a consensus account of theological interpretation. He begins by saying what theological interpretation is not; and the first thing he rejects is that theological interpretation engages in the dogmatically confessional reading criticized by Jowett.

Theological interpretation of the Bible is not an imposition of a theological system or confessional grid onto the biblical text. By theological interpretation, we do not intend to urge readers to return to a time when one’s interpretation was largely dominated by one’s particular confessional theology (e.g., Lutheran, Reformed, Roman Catholic, et al.). While it may be true that exegesis without theological presuppositions is not possible, it is not part of the dictionary’s remit to take sides with a specific confessional or denominational tradition. (On the other hand, we do affirm the ecumenical consensus of the church down through the ages and across

¹⁹ Vanhoozer, for example, characterizes Jowett as saying that, ‘only readers who suspend belief in the text (i.e., who refuse to follow its perlocutions) are qualified to attend to it,’ which hardly does justice to Jowett’s concern with the Bible’s authoritative function as scripture (378). Rusty Reno answers Jowett with a string of rhetorical questions: ‘Are readers naturally perceptive? Do we have an unblemished, reliable aptitude for the divine? Have we no need for disciplines of vision?’ (11). This criticism is especially unfair, as Jowett is not calling for a return to some kind of natural and immediate perception, but rather to the difficult and counter-cultural labor of historical critical inquiry. Steinmetz, ‘The Superiority of Pre-Critical Exegesis,’ is more even-handed, and his criticism of Jowett’s theory of *meaning* hits the mark.

confessional lines that the Bible should be read as a unity and as narrative testimony to the identities and actions of God and of Jesus Christ.)²⁰

The fact that Vanhoozer deals with this objection first is a sign of his anxiety that theological interpretation might be understood in just these terms. But his defense of theological interpretation here gives plenty of fodder for a version of Jowett's worry. While Vanhoozer excludes the imposition of particular theologies or confessional grids onto scripture, he immediately adds that 'on the other hand...the Bible should be read' in line with the ecumenical teaching of the church, presumably in accordance with the ecumenical creeds. What is the force of this 'should'? By introducing this claim here, he gives the strong impression that the creeds *do* play for theological interpreters precisely the controlling role that confessions should not, that of imposing a grid (however broad) onto the scriptural text.

One may raise similar concerns about the way some theological interpreters have defended the use of allegory. As part of what he calls the 'return to allegory' school, Jason Byassee offers the powerful argument that the very tenuousness of allegory makes it especially appropriate as an exegetical method *for Gentiles*.²¹ Most of the Old Testament, he argues, can only be read by Gentiles using allegory; but this method is appropriate to the tenuous status of Christian Gentiles as a people grafted in to Israel: 'As we only belong to Israel tenuously, "against our nature," it is appropriate to read Israel's texts tenuously, "against the letter."' ²² He is concerned, however, to show that the tenuousness of arbitrary does not mean that its use is arbitrary. He does so by pointing to the normative function of the rule of faith: 'allegory must conform with the doctrine

²⁰ Vanhoozer, ed., *Dictionary*, 19.

²¹ Jason Byassee, *Praise Seeking Understanding: Reading the Psalms with Augustine* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007).

²² *Ibid.*, 50.

according to the literal telling of the biblical story in the *regula fidei*.²³ Byassee sees his approach as exemplified by Augustine, who avoids arbitrariness in his allegorizing by recognizing,

that scripture is a unified book with a common *skopos* articulated in the *regula fidei* and then in the church's creeds, and that the purpose now of reading scripture is not to find out what it says as though unaware, but rather to see anew truth already held in delightful new ways.²⁴

For Byassee, theological interpreters should use allegory to enhance the church's language and its grasp of the beauty and mystery of the truth to which it is committed. But Christians learn nothing from allegory that they did not already know — nothing, that is, not already articulated in the literal sense of scripture as governed by the rule of faith.²⁵ If we then recall that for Byassee, much of the Old Testament can only be read by Christians allegorically, it is difficult to see how allegory does not come to function as a principle for replacing the literal meaning of awkward texts with the content of the rule of faith.

With these examples, we have come full circle. If theological interpreters are right to worry that the historical critical scholarship excludes certain traditional ways of reading without reason, it is less clear that they have succeeded in proposing ways of reading that do not suffer from their own lingering forms of arbitrariness. One question to ask in returning to past masters of

²³ Ibid. 50.

²⁴ 114.

²⁵ Understandably, it follows that 'Augustine himself is often tedious reading on the psalms... There is often a difficulty with ancient Christian figurative exegesis: knowing in advance that any interpretation must match the *regula fidei*, must illuminate the figure of Christ, can indeed serve as a sort of imaginative straight-jacket...' (132). While Byassee responds that this failure should be seen as a failure to be sufficiently beautiful, I do not think this adequately deals with the problem of tediousness, not least because beauty is not so easily separated from intellectual discovery as Byassee's account requires.

theological interpretation is whether they have something to teach us about how to correct our modern tendency towards arbitrariness.

2. Origen and Arbitrariness

This dissertation turns to Origen as a compelling model of the non-arbitrary interpretation of scripture. He is in some ways an obvious choice as a teacher of theological interpretation. He is the father of Christian Biblical scholarship and the first to write what we might want to call a systematic theology. If his provocative thought has always made him a ‘sign that will be contradicted,’²⁶ no one can question the brilliance or the piety of the man who earned the nickname ‘Adamantius,’ man of steel. He has been called a ‘complete exegete’ for the abandon with which he threw himself into the study of scripture.²⁷ Over and over again in the history of the church, saints and scholars have drawn on Origen to renew scriptural interpretation in their own time.²⁸ This has continued into the modern period, especially through his contribution to the Catholic *ressourcement* movement.²⁹ Henri de Lubac in particular identified Origen as the fountainhead of traditional Catholic exegesis. Beginning with *History and Spirit*, his study of Origen’s exegesis, and then continuing in his massive *Medieval Exegesis*, de Lubac argued that Origen’s allegory — the ‘spiritual sense,’ as de Lubac preferred to call it — could be made

²⁶ To borrow an apt designation from Henri Crouzel, *Origen*, trans. Henry Worrall (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989), xi. Cf. Joseph Trigg, ‘Introduction,’ in R. P. C. Hanson, *Allegory and Event* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), iii.

²⁷ Bertrand de Margerie, *An Introduction to the History of Exegesis, vol. 1: The Greek Fathers*, trans. Lenord Maluf (Petersham: St. Bede’s, 1993), 113.

²⁸ For a brief summary of this history, see Joseph Wilson Trigg, *Origen: The Bible and Philosophy in the Third-century Church* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1983, 244-58).

²⁹ Besides the works of Henri de Lubac already cited, see Jean Daniélou, *Origen*, trans. Walter Mitchell (London: Sheen and Ward, Ltd., 1955); Hans Urs von Balthasar, ‘Le mystère d’Origène,’ *Recherches de science religieuse* 26 (1936): 513-62; 27 (1937): 38-64; Origen, *Origen: Spirit and Fire*, ed. Hans Urs von Balthasar, trans. Robert J. Daly, S. J. (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1984).

intelligible within a broader Catholic theological framework as a transformative practice integral to spiritual life. By way of de Lubac, Origen has had a not insignificant influence on contemporary theological interpreters of scripture. More recently, patristic scholars like Karen Jo Torjesen and David Dawson have offered compelling accounts of Origen's exegesis that have found receptive ears among theologians.³⁰

Origen's problems are also reminiscent of our own. The church in his day was in the midst of a severe hermeneutic crisis posed by the challenges of Marcion and the various gnostic groups to the church's received ways of reading scripture. Origen devoted his life to teaching his own communities how to return to scriptures they found increasingly alien. Few theologians have been as concerned as Origen with drawing rules about how to read scripture from scripture itself, and with doing so in a manner that avoids arbitrariness. What we seek to learn, Origen purports to know.

Yet despite all this, Origen would not seem to be a very promising model for repairing our own arbitrariness for one simple reason: he is widely regarded as one of the most arbitrary exegetes in the Christian tradition. He is closely identified with the use of allegory, a method of reading that modern readers have often found distasteful if not outright dishonest.³¹ The fact that he uses allegory to derive heterodox proposals with no apparent basis in the plain sense of scripture, such as the pre-existence of souls or the ultimate restoration of all things, seems strong proof of the basic arbitrariness of allegory as a method. His most famous attempt to formulate rules for his use of allegory in terms of the doctrine that scripture has three senses corresponding to the body, soul, and spirit of a person has seemed to many like a bizarre and extrinsic

³⁰ Karen Jo Torjesen, *Hermeneutical Procedure and Theological Method in Origen's Exegesis* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1985); David Dawson, *Christian Figural Reading and the Fashioning of Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

derivation of an interpretive principle from a dubiously Christian anthropology; and in any case, the better part of his exegesis does not seem to conform to the tripartite structure of this theory, further underscoring its apparent arbitrariness.³² In the face of this evidence, many patristic scholars and theologians have concluded in no uncertain terms that Origen's exegesis is fundamentally arbitrary. R. P. C. Hanson is particularly scathing:

In an effort to distinguish objectively between three different senses of Scripture he only succeeded in reaching a position where all distinctions were dissolved in a 'spiritual' sense which was in fact nothing but Origen's arbitrary fancy as to what doctrine any given text ought to contain...[T]o maintain that all passages *must* yield, when allegorized or treated in any way any scholar likes to suggest, a 'spiritual' sense having direct relevance to Christian doctrine, and that many passages must not be taken in their literal sense because their literal sense, though not nonsense, is improper or irrelevant to Christian doctrine or in some way contains statements that ought not to be in the Bible—these are suggestions which it is exegetical suicide to entertain. The best intentions in the world cannot redeem the expositor who adopts these principles.³³

Despite important advances in our understanding of Origen's exegesis since Hanson, no scholar has shown that Origen's exegesis does not suffer from an underlying arbitrariness.³⁴

³¹ On the modern 'revulsion' to allegory, see Andrew Louth, *Discerning the Mystery: An Essay on the Nature of Theology* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1983), 96-131.

³² For a summary of modern scholarship on the three senses, see Olga Nesterova, 'Les interprétations modernes de la doctrine origénienne des "trois sens" de l'Écriture; Pour un examen critique,' *Adamantius* 11 (2005): 184-210.

³³ Hanson, *Allegory and Event*, 257f.

³⁴ The best recent discussion of Origen's arbitrariness can be found in Elizabeth Ann Dively Lauro, *The Soul and Spirit of Scripture within Origen's Exegesis* (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2005), focusing on the charge that Origen applies his theory of three senses inconsistently. She distinguishes two ways Origen's method might be called arbitrary. First, it may be 'subjective' in that it is 'not adequately focused on the text itself' (12). Second, it may be 'inconsistent' in that it is 'variable within and between his theory and practice' (12). She demonstrates persuasively that Origen's theory and practice are much more consistent with one another than is frequently believed. However, she does not try to address the question of whether his practice is adequate in any sense to the text itself.

This objection to my use of Origen has matters exactly backwards. *Origen's appearance of arbitrariness is precisely what makes him a promising source for correcting our own arbitrariness.* It is his appearance of arbitrariness that makes Origen so important for contemporary theologians to reckon with. The reason for this has to do with the way we go about making judgments that something is arbitrary. Analytically, to say that something is arbitrary is to deny rationality to it. It is to deny the existence of an appropriate rule governing it. There are at least two senses in which one might label exegesis arbitrary. First, one might deny that there is any rule at all operative in one's exegesis; one lacks controls or criteria altogether. Second, one might deny that some set of rules are adequate for the task of interpreting scripture; one's rules are inappropriate. The latter case may be described as the absence of a rule of a higher-order, that rule with respect to which one may justify specific hermeneutic rules as appropriate to their object and to the task of interpretation. It is primarily this second sort of arbitrariness with which we are concerned. Our worry is that theological appeals to norms like the rule of faith may permit exegesis to be consistent or regular, yet nevertheless fail to establish an appropriate relation to the text. (Although I speak of 'hermeneutic rules,' we should observe that arbitrariness is not an intrinsically hermeneutic issue. Rather, it is a *logical* issue, where 'logic' is understood in a broad sense to include the examination of rationality.)

The judgment that some interpretive practice is arbitrary is a universal negative judgment. It means that *no possible rule* would make that practice intelligible in the relevant respect. This can be reformulated to make its universality more evident: *any possible rule* is not one that would make that practice intelligible. We all know the difficulty in proving a negative. When a scholar judges that Origen's procedures are arbitrary, we must suppose her to have compared the textual products of Origen's exegetical practice, on the one hand, to those possible procedural rules that

she is able to imagine, on the other. Her judgment is only as reliable as she is able to imagine possible rules.

When Origen appears arbitrary to modern readers, then, this has at least two possible explanations. First, Origen's exegesis is in fact arbitrary. Second, those to whom he appears arbitrary have not yet imagined the rule by which his exegesis operates. The first possibility cannot be discounted. Yet Origen's express commitment to reading scripture according to rules and according to reason has always made this an unsatisfying option. For those readers who share my sense that our own rules of interpretation are afflicted by arbitrariness and in need of correction, the hypothesis that Origen is arbitrary should appear even less satisfying. We have, after all, gone in search of interpretive rules, knowing that there is some rule we do not know. Perhaps the rule we need to imagine is the same rule that might help us understand Origen's procedures. On the other hand, if we discovered that the appearance of arbitrariness in Origen's exegesis is false, that his exegesis has an underlying logic after all, then *ipso facto* we would have imagined a new rule of interpretation in the present — again, perhaps the very rule we are seeking. The concrete empirical task of working out the as-yet unintelligible logic of Origen's exegesis is thus at the same time an act of imagining a new possible rationality for the present. This is why Origen's appearance of arbitrariness is what makes him a promising source for healing our own arbitrariness.

Since the rules by which modern readers have tested Origen's rationality have by necessity been those rules available to modern readers — either rules actually operative in our own practices or rules that we have been able to imagine as possible — scholarly interpretations of Origen's arbitrariness have a tendency to correlate with the hermeneutic possibilities we consider viable in the present. For this reason, the range of scholarly attempts to make sense of Origen's

exegesis provide a useful mirror of our own logical imagination. Following Ulrich Berner, we may distinguish two competing scholarly conceptions of Origen.³⁵ First, some regard Origen as basically a systematic theologian who uses allegory to read his philosophical convictions into the text. This approach corresponds to the modern logic that sharply separates exegesis from theology. Second, some treat Origen as basically a loyal churchman whose exegesis, if sometimes over-bold, was ultimately bounded by ecclesial tradition and integral to the spiritual formation of the Christian. This approach corresponds to those theological interpreters who appeal to traditional norms as a bulwark against arbitrariness. Let us consider these approaches at slightly greater length.

2.1. Origen as Systematic Theologian

A clear and hermeneutically illuminating example of the interpretation of Origen as a systematic theologian is Eugene de Faye in his *Origen and His Work*.³⁶ De Faye was one of the first scholars to see clearly the Middle Platonic context of Origen's thought, rather than interpreting him through the lens of neo-Platonism. When considering Origen's vast exegetical output, De Faye asks about what he calls the 'dominating feature' of Origen's mind, which he poses as a binary choice: 'As a theologian, is he an exegete or a dogmatist?'³⁷ What de Faye means by an 'exegete' is clearly a reader on the model of a historical text scholar, one who seeks

³⁵ See Ulrich Berner, *Origenes* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1981), which develops this framework from a short essay by Crouzel. Berner distinguishes a 'systematic' interpretation of Origen from a 'mystical' or 'non-systematic' interpretation. The former includes scholars like F. C. Bauer, Bigg, von Harnack, de Faye, Koch, Nygren, and Hanson. The latter includes scholars like Bardy, Völker, de Lubac, and Crouzel, to which I would add Peter Martens. Berner also distinguishes scholars who attempt a mediating view, such as Cardiou, Daniélou, and Harl. Berner's conclusion that scholars ought to 'consider Origen at his work' is the driving aim of the present study (99).

³⁶ Eugene de Faye, *Origen and His Work*, trans. Fred Rothwell (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1926).

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 36.

the ‘historical meaning’ of the Scriptural text, that is, ‘the thought of the sacred author, his real feelings or particular opinions.’³⁸ Judged against this standard, de Faye argues that although Origen *aimed* at being an exegete, ‘this is appearance rather than reality. Origen is essentially a Christian thinker or dogmatist,’ that is, a systematic philosophical theologian with a mystical bent.³⁹ Origen arrives at his systematic positions through philosophical argument, and then uses allegorical interpretation as a way of reading his own independently determined views into the scriptural text. Scripture interpretation is eisegesis that permits him to claim divine authority for his own position.

In effect, the Scriptures serve him admirably for illustrating his theology, while providing him with the divine authority which he cannot ignore. It must be recognised that Origen is a Christian philosopher who imagines he is explaining the Scriptures, whereas he is really exploiting them on behalf of his own dogmatic teaching. His commentaries tell us something of his theology, but nothing of the religion of Israel, nothing of the character or function of prophecy.⁴⁰

De Faye can apparently imagine no legitimate exegetical procedure besides that which explicates the text in terms of the thought of its author. Since Origen’s exegesis is clearly not doing *that*, he concludes that it must be arbitrary.

Faye presupposes something like the divide between historical exegesis and systematic theology against which theological interpreters have rightfully been reacting. Faye’s approach to Origen has grown increasingly out of favor, in part due to the same academic trends that have fostered the rise of theological interpretation.

³⁸ Ibid., 37.

³⁹ Ibid., 37.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 38.

2.2. Origen as Man of the Church

A second and more compelling alternative is represented by Henri de Lubac's *History and Spirit*, a work which, as we have seen, has provided a powerful model for more recent theological interpreters. De Lubac offers the classic exposition of Origen's exegesis as a spiritual practice bounded by tradition. Unlike de Faye, he is confident that Origen's spiritual exegesis has an intelligible rationale, one that is authentically Christian, and one from reflecting on which contemporary interpreters of scripture stand to gain much. For de Lubac, the basic logic of allegorical exegesis is the discovery of the New Testament in the Old. He argues that Origen's exegesis should be understood as an attempt to imitate the same exegetical practice as the New Testament authors and to reflect on the same Christian mystery preserved in the church's rule of faith. If Origen has certain speculative excesses, they are subordinate to his deep commitment to Christian teaching and his allegiance to the church. Origen is a 'man of the church,'⁴¹ 'completely ecclesiastical,'⁴² a man who combines his famous piety with a 'a very lively concern for orthodoxy.'⁴³ Ultimately spiritual exegesis is a transformative practice by which the Christian is increasingly conformed to Christ who is embodied in Scripture.

De Lubac's ability to reconstruct the logic of Origen's exegesis owes something, we may suppose, to his more dynamic account of the relation between *his own* historical scholarship and theology than the modernist relation presupposed by de Faye. De Lubac calls attention to the

⁴¹ The phrase of course is Origen's (HomJos 9.8), but de Lubac used it as a slogan for what he saw as Origen's loyalty and submission to the church (*History and Spirit*, 50).

⁴² Ibid., 60.

⁴³ Ibid., 68.

need for the scholar to reanimate the living thought of an ancient author in a way that ceases to be strictly ‘objective.’

It is possible, without taking particular precautions, to make a “historical contribution” to the history of a rite or an institution, indeed, with a few reservations, to that of an idea or a dogma. It is enough to apply the customary rules. But when a spiritual synthesis, lived and reflected within a great intellect, is at issue, what gross or subtle distortions occur in reconstructions produced by an “objective” or “strictly historical” method! ... To reach the heart of a vigorous thought, nothing is as inadequate as a certain pretension to pure objectivity. *If we want to have any chance of understanding it, even as a mere historian, it is necessary, whether we like it or not, to explain to ourselves what we read; it is necessary to translate, to interpret...* Thought is not rediscovered in the same way as a fact is reconstructed.⁴⁴

The scholar’s ability to engage in this active reanimation of an ancient thinker is greatly aided by the fact that he or she participates in the same tradition and is touched by the same living realities.

This work fits into a tradition that touches us ourselves...Living the same faith as Origen, members of the same Church, afloat so to speak, in the same stream of tradition, it would be pointless for us to wish to behave like outside observers in everything concerning him.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Ibid., 12f.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 13.

For de Lubac as for Origen on his account, interpretation requires the reader not only to look at the text in itself, but also to come to know the same reality as the author, aided by a tradition that makes this reality available to past and present readers alike.

Nevertheless, while de Lubac shows that tradition controls Origen's arbitrariness and keeps it within the bounds of orthodoxy, he is forced to admit that Origen's procedures remain arbitrary, at least insofar as their cognitive results are concerned. De Lubac straightforwardly acknowledges that the exegetical principle of reading the New Testament into the Old amounts to a form of eisegesis.

What he insists on, as he insists on his faith itself, is the general relation between the letter and the spirit; it is an unceasing passage that is made, thanks to Christ, from the Old to the New Testament. He sees in it a first principle of Christianity and, so to speak, its act of birth indefinitely renewed in minds and spirits...In this, his ingenuity is at its greatest, and we would often like it to be less subtle. But the creative virtuosity of which he gives proof and which, in most cases, can seem to us as gratuitous as it is personal, is always exercised, in a more or less direct way, at the service of the same profound intuition, of the same great, fundamental truth *received from tradition and perpetually deepened*. Once again, if this idea seems perhaps banal to us today and its orchestration monotonous, it is because we have been living for seventeen centuries on the definitive expression that he was able to forge of it. Undoubtedly, too, it could be said that there is a vicious circle in this process. For it is in virtue of a doctrine already constituted on the relations between the two Testaments that the Old is the subject of an extremely subtle spiritual interpretation, and yet it is in this spiritual interpretation of the texts of the Old Testament that this doctrine is apparently discovered. It is not, so to speak, an aspect of the sacred

text Origen is considering that suggests to him the idea that in reality he already has and that *he projects in his reading*.⁴⁶

Later on he makes this arbitrariness quite explicit:

The details of Origenian exegesis, taken one by one, withdrawn from the living synthesis they illustrate much more than they construct, can often appear to us as so many fantasies, to some degree ingenious or evocative, but without profit for solid knowledge. *The processes of which they are the fruit are themselves often full of arbitrariness, and an arbitrariness that we cannot fail to find very foreign*.⁴⁷

In short, de Lubac has not shown that Origen's exegetical procedures as such avoid arbitrariness, only that Origen's procedural arbitrariness can be managed when it is kept within the bounds of ecclesial tradition, and that even arbitrary spiritual exegesis may serve edifying functions.

2.3. Origen as Charismatic Intellectual

The most promising avenues of approach to Origen's exegesis do not fall straightforwardly into either of the two categories above. Berner also identifies various 'mediating' approaches, exemplified by scholars like Cadiou,⁴⁸ Daniélou,⁴⁹ and Harl,⁵⁰ to which list I would add more

⁴⁶ Ibid., 195f, emphasis added.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 427, emphasis added.

⁴⁸ See René Cadiou, *La Jeunesse d'Origène, histoire de l'école d'Alexandrie au début du iii^e siècle* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1935).

⁴⁹ See Jean Daniélou, *Origen*, trans. Walter Mitchell (London: Sheen and Ward Ltd., 1955), and many other works.

⁵⁰ See Marguerite Harl, *Origène et la fonction révélatrice du Verbe incarné* (Paris: Éd. du Seuil, 1958), and the works cited throughout this dissertation.

recent scholars like Joseph Trigg,⁵¹ Frances Young,⁵² David Dawson,⁵³ and others. My account of Origen develops one such mediating approach, which I label, using Joseph's Trigg's apt phrase, Origen as a 'charismatic intellectual.'⁵⁴

My work takes up several key aspects of this mediating work. First, Origen's posture is fundamentally that of a *learner*.⁵⁵ Both de Faye and de Lubac present Origen as one who approaches the text with some matters already settled, whether through philosophy or traditional authority. The dynamism of Origen's intellectual activity needs to be taken more seriously than these pictures allows. As Hal Koch has shown, the pedagogy of the Word is one of the central organizing theme's of Origen's theology. Origen offers a 'pedagogical idealism' in which the creation in general and the scriptures in particular are oriented towards the progressive formation of wisdom in rational creatures. Karen Jo Torjesen has showed in detail how Origen's scriptural exegesis is organized around stages of learning under the pedagogy of the Word.⁵⁶ Moreover, following Joseph Trigg, we must recognize that Origen's learning is not mere cultural formation but a genuine process of inquiry. Trigg reminds us that Origen followed the results of his inquiry even as it set him against the increasingly monarchical bishop of Alexandria, and even as it led him to reinterpret and expand upon the rule of faith. Origen saw his own interpretive labor as an attempt to acquire the same wisdom and insight possessed by the apostles.⁵⁷ Consequently, his inquiry requires the same inspiring Spirit that spoke to the saints. He is a 'charismatic

⁵¹ See *The Bible and Philosophy* and the other works cited throughout this dissertation.

⁵² See F. M. Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

⁵³ See David Dawson, *Christian Figural Reading and the Fashioning of Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

⁵⁴ Joseph Trigg, 'The Charismatic Intellectual: Origen's Understanding of Religious Leadership,' *Church History* vol. 50, no. 1 (Mar. 1981): 5-19.

⁵⁵ Joseph Trigg reminded me in conversation that the New Testament term μαθητής, traditionally rendered 'disciple,' is more accurately translated 'learner.'

⁵⁶ Karen Jo Torjesen, *Hermeneutical Procedure and Theological Method in Origen's Exegesis* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1985).

⁵⁷ Trigg, *Bible and Philosophy*, 143.

intellectual' because his authority in the Christian community derived not from ecclesial institutions but rather from this inspired insight, rooted in moral discipline, and validated to the community 'in terms of intellectual gifts acquired through open-minded and disciplined study.'⁵⁸ One difficulty facing those who would make sense of Origen's exegesis is to understand the procedural implications of the kind of inspired rationality that Origen believes drives his inquiry.

Second, notwithstanding his philosophical ambitions, his deep spirituality, and a certain fidelity to Christian tradition, Origen's approach to scripture is fundamentally that of a *text scholar*. This has been a central organizing theme of Marguerite Harl's work. She presents Origen as a researcher and a professor with the temperament of a scholar, displayed in his careful use of technical terminology, his cautious attention to textual detail, and his fundamental orientation towards investigation and discovery.⁵⁹ He is not only a philosopher or a theologian but also a grammarian. Origen's extensive familiarity with pagan grammatical scholarship has since been documented in detail by Bernard Neuschäfer in his *Origenes als Philologe*.⁶⁰ Neuschäfer shows Origen at work using intelligible literary procedures in a careful and non-arbitrary way. Since Frances Young's *The Bible and the Formation of Christian Culture*, it has become clear that these literary procedures need to be set in the broader context of cultural formation. Early Christians came to draw on the Bible as a classic analogous to Homer, seeking not only to elucidate its meaning but to imitate its language and to form a culture after its pattern. Origen was a pioneer in this process.

One of the most important fruits of this line of research is to show that questions about interpretation arise, for Origen, within a broader concern for questions about *language*.

⁵⁸ Trigg, 'The Charismatic Intellectual,' 19.

⁵⁹ Marguerite Harl, *Origène et la fonction révélatrice du Verbe incarné* (Paris: Éd. du Seuil, 1958), 364f.

Marguerite Harl has shown that Origen frequently draws conclusions about the ‘semantic habits of the Bible,’ its characteristic patterns of speech such as simplicity, ambiguity, and obscurity.⁶¹ Young’s discussion of the Bible as a classic suggests that Origen should regard its habits of speech not simply as puzzles to solve but as patterns to imitate. The notion of Origen as a scholar seeking to pattern his own speech after that of scripture is central to my account of Origen’s exegesis.

As the title of my dissertation indicates, I believe that the notion of *learning language* provides a powerful vantage point from which to grasp the logic of Origen’s exegetical procedures. The Origen that emerges is one whose dynamic thought and spiritual life, as de Lubac saw, cannot be separated from exegesis in the church. But if Origen is a ‘man of the church,’ he sees the church not so much as a community committed to a particular orthodoxy as a school of learners, a community of inquiry in pursuit of wisdom. Origen is indeed a bold and speculative philosopher, just as de Faye recognized. But his philosophical thought operates *through* his exegesis rather than arising independently of it. I argue that the picture of Origen as a charismatic intellectual learning the wise language of scripture allows us to take up the strengths of both these positions while taking Origen’s exegesis far more seriously than either is able to do.

⁶⁰ Bernard Neuschäfer, *Origenes als Philologe* (Basel: Friedrich Reinhardt Verlag, 1987). Some of this material has been summarized in English by Peter Martens, *Origen and Scripture: The Contours of the Exegetical Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 41-68.

⁶¹ Marguerite Harl, ‘Origène et la sémantique du langage biblique,’ *Vigiliae Christianae* 26, no. 3 (Oct. 1972): 161-187, esp. 175ff.

3. Method: Descriptive Logic

The task of this dissertation is to describe basic rules of reasoning operative in Origen's exegetical procedures. To do so, I adopt a method of logical inquiry developed by the scriptural pragmatist philosopher Peter Ochs. No contemporary thinker has seen more clearly than Peter Ochs the extent to which the problems facing scriptural communities are problems of reasoning that require recourse to logic to repair.⁶² The kind of 'logic' to which Ochs appeals is not, however, 'a modern, foundational science of how scholars in general ought to reason.'⁶³ Rather, Ochsian logic is a mode of philosophical inquiry that describes existing, regional practices of reasoning and offers proposals about how to repair them if necessary. (A logician of this sort might, for example, examine the rules of reasoning operative in the Anglo-American legal system, identify particular rules that tend to generate false convictions, and propose ways those rules might be corrected.) The influence of Ochs' 'logic of scripture' is pervasive on my work, which should be read as my attempt to imagine an 'Origenian pragmatism' analogous to what Ochs calls 'rabbinic pragmatism.'⁶⁴

The method I apply in interpreting Origen is a version of the descriptive logic that Ochs uses in his own analysis of contemporary post-critical Jewish and Christian interpreters of scripture.

⁶² I follow Ochs' discussion in *Return to Scripture*, 37-43. For more technical discussions, see *Logic of Scripture*, 246-325 and *Another Reformation*, 8-16. I have also been influenced by a number of other philosophers who have taken up questions about the logics operative in Jewish and Christian practices in dialogue with Ochs' work, especially Randi Rashkover, 'The Future of the Word and the Liturgical Turn,' in Randi Rashkover and C. C. Pecknold, eds., *Liturgy, Time, and the Politics of Redemption* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006): 1-28; Randi Rashkover, *Freedom and Law* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2011); and Nicholas Adams, *Eclipse of Grace: Divine and Human Action in Hegel* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013).

⁶³ *Return to Scripture*, 41.

⁶⁴ On rabbinic pragmatism, see *Logic of Scripture*, 290-305. On the logic of scripture more generally, see *Ibid.*, 316-325.

Like an ethnographer, I have attempted to become a participant-observer of an intriguing practice...As a philosophic ethnographer, I assumed that it would be possible and useful to identify this practice by describing what Peirce would call its *logica utens*, or embedded rules of operation.⁶⁵

When applied to an ancient text, we must speak of ‘history’ rather than ethnography, but the goal is the same: to become a participant-observer in a strange practice in order to describe its implicit rules of operation. It is because Origen’s practice is *strange* that one must approach it as an outside observer, taking up certain textual products of his practice and trying to reconstruct the rule by which they were produced. It is because our interest in this practice is *logical* that one must approach it as a participant, for one cannot reconstruct normative rules without in some real or imagined way participating in their operation. In the same way, one cannot understand the activity that produced a mathematical text without oneself participating in mathematical reasoning, and one cannot understand the logic of a legal decision without oneself working through the legal procedures by which it was arrived at.

In applying this method to Origen, I have found a useful model in the work of several rabbinic scholars, especially Stephen Fraade’s work on the rabbinic commentary *Sifre Deuteronomy*.⁶⁶ Stephen Fraade characterizes rabbinic texts as ‘the literary face of an otherwise oral circulatory system of study and teaching by whose illocutionary force disciples became sages...’⁶⁷ Texts of this sort demand of their implied readers a certain sort of participation within the ongoing communal discourse and formation of communities of rabbinic sages. They

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Stephen Fraade, *From Tradition to Commentary: Torah and Its Interpretation in the Midrash Sifre to Deuteronomy* (New York: SUNY Press, 1993). I am also indebted to the analyses of rabbinic oral performances of mishnaic texts in Elizabeth Shanks Alexander, *Transmitting Mishnah: The Shaping Influence of Oral Tradition* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

anticipate readers who are themselves rabbinic students, which means, students who are expected to engage with the text by reasoning in a particular way. For the modern historian to take seriously the oral milieu of a text like *Sifre Deuteronomy* requires her to assume, as it were, the role of a rabbinic student. Doing so is a dialogical process with consequences for the practices of modern scholarship, as Ochs himself observes about Fraade: ‘His method is to find *within these [rabbinic] texts* a mode of inquiry that, when reappropriated within the context of modern scholarship, would enable that scholarship to reclaim the dimension of textual meaning it had lost.’

My aim is similar: to seek a mode of inquiry in Origen that will enable modern readers to reclaim or newly imagine ways of thinking that have been lost. I do so by seeking the operative logic underlying Origen’s writings. Since they proceed from a purportedly rational process, the scholarly reader must reanimate this work by adopting, at least in imagination, the posture of his students. We must seek, as de Lubac said, ‘to reproduce within ourselves the movement of the spirit that once made [his texts] come alive.’⁶⁸ To do so is to return the written text to its origin in orality. When reading Origen in contrast to the rabbis, one must make allowances for the fact that his individual personality and authorial voice are far more marked than that of any rabbi in classical rabbinic texts. Although his work too takes place within a religious community, he often stands to a great extent over and against this community as its critic. For this reason, instead of speaking, with Fraade, of an ‘oral circulatory system’ of rabbinic discussion, I will speak instead of Origen’s individual capacity for reasoning and the ‘linguistic competence’ he displays in his speech. The goal of our inquiry is to discover rules that, had they been operative

⁶⁷ *From Tradition to Commentary*, 19.

⁶⁸ *History and Spirit*, 14.

in Origen's exegetical practice, would have led him to speak the words of the texts under consideration.

As I have already suggested, the primary difficulty facing modern readers of Origen is one of logical imagination. How will we imagine previously unknown rules operative in Origen's practice?⁶⁹ In this dissertation I draw on three basic sources in order to identify possible rules. First, Origen offers a great deal of second-order commentary on his own practice. He often explicitly discusses his own exegesis or use of language. Moreover, he frequently marks exegetical categories or operations with consistent terminology. Without assuming in advance that Origen has a perfect self-understanding of his own procedures, I assume that Origen is *prima facie* likely to be a reliable guide to the rules of his own procedures. Second, I also examine other practices of reasoning and inquiry in hopes of identifying rules analogous to those operative in Origen's practice. Often these are ancient practices of inquiry and reasoning available to Origen: logicians, grammarians, scientists, rabbis, and others.⁷⁰ At other times, I draw on modern theory as a source of possible rules, especially contemporary linguistics⁷¹ and Peter Ochs' scriptural pragmatism.⁷² In either case, we may hypothesize that rules discovered in these practices may also be operative in Origen's as well. Third, we should not discount the role of creative insight and intuition in conceiving new rules. Of course whatever their source, the final test is whether the hypothesized rules actually account for Origen's textual products.

My study focuses on a single body of texts, twenty-nine recently discovered homilies of Origen on the Psalms. In April 2012, the original Greek text of these homilies was discovered by

⁶⁹ The activity of seeking hitherto unknown rules to account for observable phenomena is what Peter Ochs calls, following Charles Peirce, 'abduction.' I shall discuss this process at greater length in chapter 3.

⁷⁰ Sometimes it is possible to show historical influence as well; for example, Origen draws explicitly on Stoic linguistics and explicitly offers Greek empirical science as an analogy to his own exegesis. For our purposes, however, it is not necessary to show historical influence: rules analogous to those we identify in these cognate practices may be operative in Origen, whatever the historical relation between his practice and theirs.

⁷¹ See especially the discussion of deixis and implicature in chapter 2.

Marina Molin Pradel in Codex Monacensis Graecus 314, a manuscript that had long been held in Munich.⁷³ They have now been edited and published by Lorenzo Perrone,⁷⁴ although the bulk of my research was based on a provisional transcription of the manuscript that Perrone graciously provided me. Joseph Trigg is currently preparing an English translation. Origen's authorship of the homilies has been firmly established by Lorenzo Perrone.⁷⁵ These homilies are not uncharacteristic of Origen's exegesis as a whole, and indeed some fragments of them were previously known. Nevertheless, they provide an exciting opportunity to take a fresh look at Origen's exegetical practice in light of hitherto unexamined texts.

4. Learning the Language of Scripture

I argue that Origen's exegesis becomes intelligible once we understand its proper aim. As an interpreter of scripture, Origen is not only interested in texts and their multiple meanings. Rather, he approaches the texts of scripture as exemplifying a broader capacity for proper speech. The goal of interpretation is to *acquire the capacity to speak* according to the example of the scriptures, which I refer to as 'learning the language of scripture.'

The goal of Origen's exegesis is not so much understanding the meaning of particular texts as it is the acquisition of *linguistic competence*. A 'competence' is a capacity for successful

⁷² See especially the discussion of abduction, induction, and vagueness in chapter 3.

⁷³ For an account of Cod. Graec. 314, see M. Molin Pradel, 'Novità origeniane dalla Staatsbibliothek di Monaco di Baviera: il Cod. graec. 314,' *Adamantius* 18 (2012): 16-40.

⁷⁴ Lorenzo Perrone, ed., with Marina Molin Pradel, Emmanuela Prinzivalli, and Antonio Cacciari, *Die neue Psalmenhomilien. Eine kritische Edition des Codex monacensis Graecus 314* (Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2015).

⁷⁵ For a thorough discussion of Origen's authorship, see Lorenzo Perrone, 'Origenes rediuius: la découverte des Homélie sur les Psaumes dans le Cod. Gr. 314 de Munich,' *Revue d'Etudes Augustiniennes et Patristiques* 59.1 (2013): 55-93. Perrone considers both external and internal arguments for Origen's authorship. External evidence consists of Jerome's *Letter* 33, which offers a list of Origen's homilies on the Psalms that largely corresponds to those in Cod. Graec. 314; the four Latin homilies on Psalm 36 translated by Rufinus; a long fragment from Origen's second homily on Psalm 15 preserved in Pamphilus' *Apology for Origen*; and a number of parallels in the *catenae*

action in the world. As a *capacity* for action, a competence displays itself in the finite actions one actually performs, but it includes as well all those actions that would have been possible for one to perform, which may well constitute an infinite set. ‘Linguistic competence’ refers to one’s capacity to use language. The linguistic competence underlying the scriptures would be that capacity for using language of which the scriptural texts are exemplary instances. The basic rule of Origen’s exegesis is that the reader should reconstruct the linguistic competence by which the scriptures were produced and conform her own speech to this pattern.

This task has a definite logical character. It requires the exegete to reason from a finite set of actual utterances (the written texts of scripture) to a probably infinite set of possible utterances (the language of scripture). This activity is expansive, a constant movement from the finite region of the actual to the vast space of the possible. Yet it is by no means arbitrary, as we can see in a preliminary way by observing analogous cases in which we acquire competences. One gains an infinite capacity to play an instrument, for example, through observing and practicing a finite set of exercises and songs. Something similar takes place in the acquisition of ordinary linguistic competence: a child learns to speak by observing the finite utterances of the speakers around her. Indeed, perhaps the closest analogy to the logic of Origen’s exegesis is that of the *linguist* reconstructing the competence of ordinary speakers of a language by observing its use. In all of these cases, one takes for granted certain actual performances one regards as basically trustworthy, from which one tries to learn how to produce other possible performances of one’s own.

Origen’s exegesis is different from ordinary language acquisition, however, in one crucial respect. The norms of ordinary usage reconstructed by the modern linguist are the *conventional*

on the Psalms. Perrone then turns to internal evidence: the literary style, the historical and doctrinal background, and the personality of the preacher.

norms of particular speaking communities. Origen, by contrast, is interested in a deeper sense of linguistic competence that he calls ‘wisdom’. ‘Wisdom’ refers to what we might call a global competence for action in the world, an ‘art of living’ according to the ultimate standards of success. This definition is formal. What exactly these standards *are* is a matter that those individuals and communities in pursuit of wisdom debate. ‘Wisdom’ is vague as it pertains to content. Speech too is an action, and so the global competence of wisdom includes the capacity to speak rightly. It is in this sense that Origen aims to reconstruct the ‘linguistic competence’ of scripture: not the authors’ merely conventional capacity to speak Hebrew or Greek, but the underlying capacity to speak *wisely* that he takes the scriptures to exemplify. In learning the language of scripture, Origen seeks to acquire wisdom.

If one wants to call exegesis whose ultimate aim is wisdom ‘philosophy,’ Origen would not object. Nor can we forget that the ‘competence’ and ‘wisdom’ underlying the scriptures is, Origen argues, nothing other than Jesus Christ, God’s Word and Wisdom made flesh. To become wise is, on Origen’s account, nothing less than to conform word and deed to Christ, to acquire the divine rationality of the Logos. Although my focus in this dissertation is logical and procedural, there are rich theological implications of Origen’s approach.

In arguing that Origen’s *procedures* can be understood in terms of his pursuit of wisdom, I mean to downplay the significance of another possible organizing category, namely, the picture of Origen’s exegesis as dominated by the movement from literal to allegorical. To be sure, more often than not, Origen believes that learning to speak the language of scripture involves learning to interpret texts allegorically and speak in extended metaphors. But in my view, allegory is a derivative rather than a basic principle of Origen’s exegesis. While we shall frequently examine examples of allegorical exegesis in what follows, I always show how Origen’s exegetical

decision to use allegory as a procedure is intelligible in terms of the more basic procedures of learning a language that I develop throughout. In this way, I argue that Origen had good reason to use allegory. It is not, at least in Origen's case, an arbitrary procedure. Recognizing that it is not arbitrary does not, however, mean that allegory is beyond criticism; rather, it makes it possible to criticize Origen's use of allegory more effectively by offering criticism on his own terms. To be frank, I do not believe allegory is viable in anything like the general way Origen used it. If there are good reasons to use allegory, there are better reasons not to. This dissertation is somewhat unusual, I think, in that while it clearly belongs to the genre of 'apologies for Origen,' my defense of Origen is consistent with a deep skepticism about allegory.

The primary task of this dissertation is to make the claim that Origen's exegesis is the activity of learning the language of scripture definite by showing how it operates exegetically. In chapter 1, I lay the groundwork for this task by sketching Origen's operative philosophy of language. Origen argues that to account for the linguistic practices of scripture and the Christian community, one must suppose that the ultimate norms of language are norms of rationality and wisdom, not merely linguistic convention. He explicates this view by drawing on Stoic philosophy of language. For Stoic philosophers, language is 'natural' in the sense that the norms of conventional discourse are subject to norms of rationality and harmony with the natural world. The Stoic sage can be defined as an expert in speech, one who 'always says what is true and fitting.' This, I suggest, is an apt formal description of the linguistic competence Origen identifies as underlying the texts of scripture.

In chapters 2 through 4, the core of this dissertation, I describe some of the most important rules of Origen's exegesis as different aspects of the task of learning the language of scripture by reconstructing its underlying competence. In chapter 2, I show that Origen characteristically

treats scriptural texts as a script — words to be spoken. The meaning and function of words depends, however, on the context in which they are used. Consequently, Origen tends to approach scriptural texts by asking about the possible contexts in which they may be used. *Who* may say these words? On what occasion? With respect to what? This task requires not only knowledge of conventional language but also a knowledge of the contexts in which speech may be required and a wise judgment to discern which words should be said on what occasions.

In chapter 3, I show how Origen reconstructs the underlying rules of scriptural discourse. I focus on what Origen calls ‘habits of scripture,’ patterns of scriptural language inferred by induction. These habits of scripture are *ipso facto* habits of wise speech to be imitated by the interpreter. My primary concern is to analyze how Origen reasons from text to habit. I show that he characteristically formulates these habits in a vague way that provide guidance in future cases without determining the meaning of any particular text. The logic of habits depends on the reader’s generally reliable capacity to make case by case judgments about the meaning or function of particular texts.

In chapter 4, I show how learning the language of scripture leads Origen to formulate new words of scriptural language whose content goes beyond what any text of scripture explicitly says. Origen must do so, I argue, as part of the task of reconstructing scripture’s linguistic competence, which governs not only the actual texts of scripture but an infinite number of other possible words of scripture-like speech. In short, the logic of Origen’s own procedures requires him to engage in the kind of bold speculation for which he is famous. Recognizing this provides an opportunity to sketch one aspect of Origen’s theology of exegesis, focusing on his reflections on bold speech. Bold speech is that which the hearer perceives as potentially scandalous or false. For Origen, the divine and inspired discourse of scripture must be bold because to train readers

in wisdom requires correcting their linguistic intuitions. The more advanced one is wisdom, the more bold one's own speech ought also to become. Bold discourse is for Origen a necessary consequence of his own pursuit of wisdom in imitation of the scriptural authors. Origen does not shrink from the inference that wise speech must be inspired and even divine speech, just like the language of the scriptural texts. Learning the language of scripture leads ultimately, on Origen's view, to the deification of one's discourse.

In a concluding chapter, I sketch some implications of my study of Origen for contemporary problems of scriptural interpretation. If we began in search of rules of interpretation and of rationality because of the arbitrariness of our own exegesis, Origen offers *wisdom* as a scriptural name for the operative rules of scriptural reason. I argue that Origen's basic procedures remain viable and plausible as an account of what it might look like in our own context to practice scriptural interpretation as a pursuit of wisdom. A contemporary theology of scripture pursued along Origenian lines would, I argue, be a form of post-liberalism, by which I understand an approach to theology that begins with Christian faith as a concrete cultural-linguistic practice. Origen helps us identify the implicit norms of Christian practice in terms of *wisdom*.

Finally, I should observe that my own method of reconstructing the logic of Origen's exegesis closely parallels the method of interpreting scripture that I attribute to Origen. This is all to the good, for if my thesis is correct, the question Origen asks of scripture is not unlike the question I am asking of Origen. He too assumes that correcting the church's reasoning requires him to reconstruct the wisdom of a text, i.e. the underlying rules by which the words of that text came about. He too discovers these rules first and foremost by trying to attend to second-order clues given in the scriptures themselves; second, by seeking analogues in Greek thinking; and third, by forming his own intuitions as a reasoner. The boldness of scripture is a sign that

scriptural wisdom is beyond his own present linguistic intuitions, just as Origen's apparent arbitrariness is a sign that he may operate according to rules we do not yet understand. He too must observe, but also participate in, the wisdom he seeks. We might say that there are good *logical* reasons why Origen exhorts the readers of John's gospel to 'become another John' to understand it. We too, as it were, must become like Origen to understand Origen.

Chapter 1: Origen and the Stoics on Wisdom

This dissertation argues that Origen's exegesis is best understood as an attempt to learn the language of scripture — to speak according to the patterns of speech the Christian scriptures exemplify. The significance of this claim, however, depends a great deal on the sort of thing one takes language to be, on what we would call one's philosophy of language. Origen was aware of the lively ancient philosophical debates about language in his day, and he took pains to situate his own account of language in the context of these debates. To prepare for investigating his exegesis, this chapter sketches Origen's philosophy of language.

I argue that Origen's philosophy of language was broadly Stoic.⁷⁶ For the Stoics, learning to speak correctly is inseparable from developing wisdom. According to Origen's contemporary, the Peripatetic commentator Alexander of Aphrodisias,

⁷⁶ This chapter adds to a growing scholarly awareness of the influence of Stoic thought on Origen's scriptural philosophy. Early church fathers drew widely on Stoic ideas (cf. Michel Spanneut, *Le Stoïcisme des Pères de l'Église, de Clément de Rome à Clément d'Alexandrie* (Patristica Sorbonensia 1; Paris, Le Seuil, 1957)), and the dominant Middle Platonism of the same period was often highly Stoic-inflected, as documented by John Dillon, *The Middle Platonists: a Study of Platonism, 80 BC to AD 220* (London: Duckworth, 1977). That Origen is much closer to the Middle Platonists than the emerging neo-Platonism articulated by his contemporary, Plotinus, has been demonstrated in studies by Hall Koch, *Pronoia und Paideusis: Studien über Origenes und sein Verhältnis zum Platonismus* (AKG 22; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1932) and Robert Berchman, *From Philo to Origen: Middle Platonism in Transition* (Chico: Scholars Press, 1984). Koch observes many elements of Stoic influence on Origen, including his terminology, his theodicy, his ethics, and his all-important doctrines of the Logos and of Providence, though he nevertheless concludes 'dass es im tiefsten Sinne keine wirkliche geistige Verwandtschaft zwischen Zenon und Chrysipp einersits and dem grossen Kirchenlehrer anderseits gibt (Koch, *Pronoia und Paideusis*, 225). Berchman identifies many Stoic ideas integrated into Origen's epistemology and logic. A growing number of studies have examined Stoic influence in particular areas, such as Henry Chadwick, 'Origen, Celsus, and the Stoa,' *JTS* 48:189/190 (January/April 1947): 34-49 and Panayiotis Tzamalikos, *Journal of the History of Ideas* 52:4 (Oct-Dec 1991): 535-561. To identify Stoic aspects of Origen's thought is not to deny that he is also a 'Platonist' of a sort, especially given the eclectic character of philosophizing in his day.

Where issues around scripture and language are concerned, Stoic influence is even better established. The best introduction to both, in my view, is Marguerite Harl's introduction and notes to the *Philocalia* in Origen, Marguerite Harl, and N. R. M. de Lange, *Philocalie, 1-20: Sur Les Écritures* (Paris: Cerf, 1983). She discusses, among other things, Origen's use of the Stoic doctrine of Providence as an analogy for the inspiration of the Scriptures (60-74), his use of the Stoic theory of meaning (275-9), and their theory of the correctness of names (447-457). The basically Stoic character of his use of Hellenistic grammar has been discussed by Bernard Neuschäfer, *Origenes Als Philologe* (Basel: Friedrich Reinhardt Verlag, 1987), esp. 216-18 and Catherine Chin, 'Origen and Christian Naming: Textual Exhaustion and the Boundaries of Gentility in Commentary on John 1,' *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 14:4 (Winter 2006), 407-436. For other references on logic, semantics, and names see my discussions below.

The Stoics, who define dialectic as the science of speaking well [εὖ λέγειν], take speaking well to consist in saying what is true and what is fitting [τὰ ἀληθῆ καὶ τὰ προσήκοντα], and they regard this as a distinguishing characteristic [ἴδιον] of the philosopher, using [the term ‘dialectic’] of philosophy at its highest. For this reason, only the sage is a dialectician on their view.⁷⁷

The highest aspiration of the Stoic philosopher is not to get behind or outside of language, but rather to cultivate the facility to use it well. As we shall see, everything one might conceivably do with language is part of the province of the sage, from science and formal logic to poetry and rhetoric. In every way, what the sage says should be ‘true and fitting.’ Yet by the same token, the Stoics could not simply take up conventional language as given. The kind of linguistic correctness to which the sage aspires is neither conformity to the conventions of proper Greek and Latin nor the eloquence of the orators. Rather, Stoics aspired to use language according to a deeper harmony with nature, which might require the sage to sit lightly to grammatical norms, even to correct them. Learning to speak well does not mean abandoning natural language, but it may mean changing it or using it in odd ways.

Origen brings this conception of wisdom to bear on the interpretation of Scripture. Origen too does not aspire to the linguistic purity or cultural sophistication that were the aims of the grammarians, nor to some Christian analogue.⁷⁸ Rather, he desires to be a sage, always to say what is true and fitting. This Stoic definition is formal: it does not specify the content of wise

⁷⁷ *On Aristotle's Topics* 1.8-14 = LS 31D = SVF 2.124; trans. LS.

⁷⁸ In the background is Catherine Chin's claim that '[Origen's] project is not an attempt, however, to define Christian "orthodoxy." It is instead an impulse toward the same kind of cultural competence that ancient grammarians attempt to impart' ('Christian Naming,' 430). While I think Catherine Chin is right to call attention to the fact that Origen's exegesis is oriented towards the formation of a kind of linguistic competence rather than with the determination of orthodoxy, she is wrong to frame this competence as analogous to that of the grammarians, a reading which does not do justice to the philosophical character of Origen's exegesis and its orientation towards wisdom.

speech. It functions rather as a regulative ideal, an advance sketch of what conditions would have to be satisfied to identify someone as wise. The Stoics had a Socratic caution about claiming to actually possess wisdom. For Origen, however, there was indeed a sage who possessed all wisdom: Jesus Christ, the embodied Wisdom and Logos of God. To the Stoic formal account of wise speech Origen added what he took to be its material content, the words of Jesus and his imitators recorded in the Scriptures. *These* particular words are true and fitting — if only one knew what they meant and how to use them. Origen's exegesis is an attempt to conform to the image of Christ by learning how to use the language of scripture.

I want to be clear from the outset about one thing I am *not* saying in labeling Origen's philosophy of language 'Stoic.' I do not mean to say that Origen brings Stoic assumptions about language to bear on the Scriptural text *a priori*, as though he had deduced his hermeneutical procedures from Stoic premises. Rather, Origen's arguments for Stoic linguistic theory tend to be regressive (or even, transcendental). He asks the question, 'what theory best accounts for the linguistic phenomena one finds in Scripture?' and develops an answer in terms of Stoic thought. Stoic theory helps Origen make intelligible those Christian habits of speech exemplified by Scripture.⁷⁹ A theory developed in this way helps Origen adjudicate certain specific hermeneutic questions, but it also presupposes that many linguistic phenomena in Scripture can be discerned without appeal to theory. Origen invokes theory *in media res* to resolve a particular exegetical problem. Even his famous theory of Scripture's three senses comes at the end of his scriptural systematic theology rather than the beginning.⁸⁰ My decision nevertheless to begin with philosophy was primarily made on pedagogical grounds. I presume that most modern readers are inclined towards the conventionalism that Origen so sharply rejects, and that our assumptions

⁷⁹ This *logical* claim about the structure of his argument does not contradict the *empirical* claim that his view of Scripture may in fact have been influenced by Hellenistic thought.

about language pose a substantial obstacle to making Origen's treatment of language intelligible (just as, on his view, certain assumptions about language make scriptural linguistic practice unintelligible).

This chapter proceeds in two steps. In part I, I sketch points of Stoic linguistic philosophy that are particularly important for understanding Origen. I look at their conception of 'logic' as a science of speech governed by reason, which enabled them to find wisdom in non-technical discourses like conversation and even poetry. I examine their theory of meaning as a relational entity mediating between utterances and the world. Finally, I outline their theory that names are subject to natural standards of correctness. In part II, I examine the same issues in Origen in reverse order. (This chapter therefore has a chiasmic structure). I begin by examining at length Origen's account of the correctness of scriptural names, which takes up and develops the Stoic theory in light of scripture's usage of names. I then look at Origen's use of the Stoic theory of meaning to account for the presence of solecisms (ungrammatical sentences) in Scripture. Finally, as the chapter comes full circle, I show how Origen appeals to a Stoic conception of 'logic' to explain how the language of Scripture can express wisdom despite its ambiguities and irregularities.

1. Stoic Philosophy of Language

The Stoa developed in many ways the most sophisticated philosophical approach to language developed in the ancient world, and much of their work was appropriated by Middle Platonists as

⁸⁰ PA 4.1-3.

well.⁸¹ But for complex reasons Stoicism went into decline in the 3rd century CE and never really recovered. The future lay with a neo-Platonic synthesis of Plato and Aristotle, a tradition which continues to have an enormous influence on contemporary linguistic thought. The more eclectic Middle Platonic environment that provided the context for Origen's thought would soon disappear, and with it a sympathy for Stoic linguistic thought. The consequent forgetting of Stoicism may have been one of the reasons Origen's exegesis proved such a stumbling block to later generations of ancient readers, to say nothing of modern ones.

One of the consequences of the decline of Stoicism is that the work of the great early Stoics like Zeno and Chrysippus exists only in fragments and the testimony of later authors, many of whom are hostile witnesses. Determining the details of Stoic positions on various issues often requires a good deal of reconstructive detective work, and I lean heavily on the reconstructions of Michael Frede and A. A. Long. For our purpose of illuminating Origen's exegesis, however, the problem is mitigated somewhat, since many of the most important witnesses to Stoic thought are near contemporaries of Origen: Sextus Empiricus, Diogenes Laertius, Plutarch, Galen, Alexander of Aphrodisias, and others. While it is difficult to work out from these witnesses, say, Chrysippus' particular contributions to the development of Stoic logic, their discussions bear directly on the kind of Stoicism available to Origen.

⁸¹ Scholarly interest in Stoic logic and philosophy of language has been growing in recent years. Some of the more important works include Jacques Brunschwig, ed., *Les Stoïciens et leur Logique*, 2nd. ed. (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 2006); Catherine Atherton, *The Stoics on Ambiguity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Michael Frede, 'The Stoic notion of *lekton*,' in Stephen Everson, ed., *Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); A. A. Long, ed., *Problems in Stoicism* (Athlone Press, 1996).

1.1. Logic

The Stoics aspired to bring the whole form and content of their speech into conformity with wisdom. They approached language as the activity of expressing λόγος, ‘reason’ or ‘rational discourse’ and studied language in the context of a philosophical discipline they called ‘logic’ (ἡ λογική) whose object was λόγος itself. In Michael Frede’s apt formulation, ‘one might say that logic for [the Stoics] is the doctrine of what somebody says who is guided by reason.’⁸² Stoic logic is thus concerned with the speech of the sage, that regulative ideal of embodied wisdom around which Stoic thought was oriented. According to Long, ‘As the ideal reference of all human excellences, the wise man in Stoicism fulfills many of the functions of Platonic forms.’⁸³ But while Platonic forms (and Aristotelian essences) are unchanging structures, built on the model of abstractive thought, the Stoic sage is a concrete individual, immersed in the dynamism and flux of the natural world. If the Stoic sage aspires to possess a fixed character, this fixity was itself conceived in dynamic terms as an active harmony with the world.⁸⁴ In Epictetus’ famous formulation, the sage ‘lives in harmony with nature.’⁸⁵

This account of the sage imparts a basic dynamism to their philosophy of language as well.⁸⁶ They understood wisdom and truth as habits of the embodied sage. They distinguished between the ‘true’ as a quality of incorporeal propositions and ‘truth’ as a corporeal possession of the sage.

⁸² Michael Frede, ‘The Origins of Traditional Grammar’ in Michael Frede, *Essays in Ancient Philosophy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 338-362, esp. 343.

⁸³ A. A. Long, ‘Dialectic and the Stoic Sage’ in A. A. Long, *Stoic Studies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996): 85-106, esp. 87.

⁸⁴ In the Heraclitean view of the Stoics, in Marcia Colish’s formulation, ‘process is a sign of vitality, not a sign of incompletely realized being’ (*The Stoic Tradition from Antiquity to the Middle Ages: I. Stoicism in Classical Latin Literature* (New York: Brill, 1990), 25). Cf. SVF 2.463-81, 485-7, 584.

⁸⁵ E.g. *Discourses* 1.6.15, 3.1.25, 3.16.15, and frequently..

⁸⁶ Cf. Long, ‘Dialectic,’ 94. The dynamism of Origen’s thought is also well-known.

λέγεται διαφέρειν τῆς ἀληθείας τὸ ἀληθές
 τριχῶς, οὐσίᾳ συστάσει δυνάμει· οὐσίᾳ μὲν,
 ἐπεὶ τὸ μὲν ἀληθὲς ἀσώματόν ἐστιν (ἄξίωμα
 γὰρ ἐστὶ καὶ λεκτόν), ἡ δὲ ἀλήθεια σῶμα (ἔστι
 γὰρ ἐπιστήμη πάντων ἀληθῶν ἀποφαντική, ἡ
 δὲ ἐπιστήμη πῶς ἔχον ἡγεμονικὸν... συστάσει
 δέ, ἐπεὶ τὸ μὲν ἀληθὲς ἀπλοῦν τί ἐστὶν, οἷον
 ἐγὼ διαλέγομαι, ἡ δὲ ἀλήθεια ἀπὸ πολλῶν
 ἀληθῶν γνώσεων συνίσταται· δυνάμει δέ, ἐπεὶ
 ἡ μὲν ἀλήθεια ἐπιστήμης ἔχεται, τὸ δὲ ἀληθὲς
 οὐ πάντως· διόπερ τὴν μὲν ἀλήθειαν ἐν μόνῳ
 σπουδαίῳ φασὶν εἶναι, τὸ δὲ ἀληθὲς καὶ ἐν
 φαύλῳ· ἐνδέχεται γὰρ τὸν φαῦλον ἀληθὲς τι
 εἰπεῖν.

True is said [by the Stoics] to differ from truth
 in three ways, substance, structure, and
 function. In substance, since what is true is
 incorporeal, for it is a proposition and sayable;
 but truth is a body, for it is scientific
 knowledge capable of stating everything true;
 and scientific knowledge is the commanding-
 faculty disposed in a certain way... In
 structure, since what is true is something
 simple, e.g. 'I am conversing,' but truth
 consists of the knowledge of many true things.
 In function, since truth pertains to scientific
 knowledge but what is true does not do so at
 all. Hence they say that truth is only in a
 virtuous man, but what is true is also in an
 inferior man; for the inferior man can say
 something true.⁸⁷

On this view, truth is not simply the correspondence of sentences or thoughts with the world, nor is it a collection of propositions to which the sage assents. Rather, it is the *capacity* of the sage to utter true propositions on every occasion. Since the Stoics argued that a proposition could change its truth value, this capacity to speak truly must be a highly context-specific one, an ability to say

⁸⁷ OP 2.81-3 = LS 33P.

the right thing at the right time. The Stoics did not give up on correspondence altogether, but they realized that only a mode of activity can correspond to a world in flux.

Stoic logic, the science of this capacity for wise speech, was traditionally divided into two parts concerned with different aspects of speech: ‘dialectic’ and ‘rhetoric.’ Diogenes Laertius reports what were probably very early definitions of these sub-disciplines. ‘Rhetoric’ is ‘the science of speaking well in regard to continuous discourses,’ while ‘dialectic’ is ‘the science of correct discussion in regard to discourses conducted by question and answer.’⁸⁸ Of the two, dialectic was clearly the focus of their logic, as arguably of their whole philosophy. The Stoic logician Chrysippus was especially famous for his contributions in this sphere, so that it was a proverbial saying that ‘if the gods had dialectic, they would use that of Chrysippus.’⁸⁹ In the background was the towering figure of Socrates, whose pursuit of wisdom through ordinary language discussion the early Stoics sought to renew.

For the Stoics, then, ‘the sage is always a dialectician,’⁹⁰ the significance of which appears best by contrast with Aristotle’s position. According to Aristotle, dialectic does not produce knowledge because it reasons merely from ‘opinion.’⁹¹ While the dialectical examination of ordinary language is instrumentally useful for the philosopher, the ambiguities, vagueness, and conventionality of ordinary language make it an unreliable medium for philosophical discourse or the expression of wisdom. Rather, the Peripatetic philosopher seeks clear concepts, which Aristotle understands as mental entities independent of language. Aristotle tends to take the

⁸⁸ DL 7.41-4 = LS 31A.4f. Alexander’s definition of dialectic as a science of ‘speaking well’ does not contradict this; see Long, ‘Dialectic,’ 86f.

⁸⁹ DL 7.180.

⁹⁰ DL 7.83 = SVF 2.130 = LS 31C.

⁹¹ *Topics* 100a29.

clarity of geometry as his model of rationality, so that science should take the form of a system of general propositions developed by deduction from clear and axiomatic premises.⁹²

For the Stoic sage, by contrast, wisdom took the paradigmatic form of reliable skill in reasoned conversation. Since dialectical argumentation is a linguistic practice, the Stoic sage consequently had to be an expert in natural language as well. Early Stoics inherited from the so-called ‘Dialecticians’ an analytical interest in the kinds of sophisms to which the ambiguities and anomalies of natural language may give rise. As Stoicism developed, their early interest in dialectical question and answer evolved into a broader concern with language in all its possible uses. It was probably Chrysippus who made ‘dialectic’ a science of signification, dividing it into a part concerned with ‘utterances,’ i.e. material linguistic signifiers, and another concerned with ‘things signified,’ i.e. everything one may use language to express. Diogenes’ summary of what dialectic contains shows how broad a discipline it had become:

[The topic] of significations [is divided] into the topics of impressions and derivatively subsistent sayables — propositions, complete sayables, predicates and similar actives and passives, genera and species, along with also arguments, argument modes and syllogisms, and sophisms which depend on utterance and on states of affairs...Dialectic also includes the specific topic of actual utterance, mentioned above, which sets out written utterance and what the parts of language are, dealing also with solecisms and barbarisms, poetry, ambiguity, euphony, music, and according to some Stoics, definitions, divisions and expression.⁹³

On this conception, dialectic includes what we would call formal logic and philosophy of science. It also, however, comes to encompass the topics that would become the traditional

⁹² *Post. An.* 2.1.

subject matter of grammar: ‘written utterance,’ ‘the parts of language,’ ‘solecisms and barbarism,’ and even ‘poetry.’⁹⁴ No possible use of language was excluded.

Since recent Origen scholarship has called attention to his training in ancient grammatical methods, it is worth dwelling on the significance of placing the concerns of grammar *within* the broader sphere of logic, as the Stoics did. This move implies that the rules of grammatical correctness (‘Hellenicity’ and ‘Latinity’) analyzed by the grammarians must themselves be subordinated to deeper rational norms of correctness. To underscore this point, the Stoic text scholar Crates rejected the term ‘grammarian’ altogether as a label for his scholarly activity in favor of the term ‘critic.’ ‘Grammar’ is merely a ‘servant’ of criticism, he said, for without logic it can only produce empirical knowledge of the particulars of conventional language: glossing rare words, establishing accents for texts, and the like.⁹⁵ The ‘critic,’ by contrast, must possess ‘experience in all of logical science.’

If the Stoics submitted even poetry to rational criticism, this is because they came to view poetry as a possible vehicle for the expression of wisdom.⁹⁶ Strabo, for example, criticizes the view of the ‘philologist’ Eratosthenes that poetry is merely for pleasure, as well as the view that poetry may serve as a propaedeutic to wisdom. Rather, good poetry is full of wisdom, for ‘only

⁹³ DL 7.43f = LS 31A7, 9.

⁹⁴ Cf. Sextus, AM 1.92f; Frede, ‘Traditional Grammar,’ 353-8.

⁹⁵ AM 1.79, and cf. his student Tauriscus’ division of ‘criticism’ into the logical, empirical, and historical parts (AM 1.7.248). This division is plainly drawn along epistemological lines, on which see further below.

⁹⁶ On the Stoics and poetry see Phillip De Lacy, ‘Stoic Views of Poetry,’ AJP 69 (1948): 245-63; Claude Imbert, ‘Stoic Logic and Alexandrian Poetics,’ in Schofield, Burnyeat, and Barnes, eds., *Doubt and Dogmatism: Studies in Hellenistic Epistemology*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), 182-216; Emily Batinski, ‘Seneca’s Response to Stoic Hermeneutics,’ *Mnemosyne*, fourth series, 46:1 (Feb. 1993): 69-77; and G. R. Boys-Stones, ‘The Stoics’ Two Types of Allegory’ G. R. Boys-Stones, ed., *Metaphor, Allegory, and the Classical Tradition: Ancient Thought and Modern Revisions* (Oxford: OUP, 2003), 189-216. Boys-Stones traces the development of a shift in the Stoic understanding of poetry and hence of allegory. Earlier Stoics believed the original humans lived in a golden age of conformity to nature in which philosophy was unnecessary. Early poetry contained wisdom accessible by allegory, but these early Stoics did not view poetry as intentionally philosophical products. Beginning with Posidonius, later Stoics rejected the notion of a golden age, and consequently came to treat poetic wisdom as intentionally philosophical and allegorical.

the sage is a poet.’⁹⁷ This view led the Stoics to seek philosophical wisdom by interpreting poetic texts, Homer above all, which they often understood as speaking philosophical truths veiled by allegory.⁹⁸ But their interest in poetry was not primarily in the content of classical texts. Rather, as Michael Frede has argued, they were primarily interested in poetry ‘to construct or reconstruct the language the wise man would use.’⁹⁹ Since the poet had a famous ‘license’ to use otherwise grammatically incorrect forms, the implication is that the wise might at times criticize conventional forms of speech in the interests of reason. For example, Varro argued:

<p>Quas novas verbi declinationes ratione introducitas respuit forum, his boni poetae, maxime scaenici, consuetudine subigere aures populi debent, quod poetae multum possunt in hoc: propter eos quaedam verba in declinatione melius, quaedam deterius dicuntur. Consuetudo loquendi est in motu: itaque solent fieri et meliora deteriora et deteriora meliora; verba perperam dicta apud antiquos aliquos propter poetas non modo nunc dicuntur recte, sed etiam quae ratione dicta sunt tum, nunc perperam dicuntur.</p>	<p>Those new inflectional forms that are introduced by reason but are rejected by the forum, these the good poets, especially the dramatists, ought to force upon the ears of the people and accustom them to them. For the poets have great power in this: they are responsible for the fact that certain words are now spoken with better inflections, and others with worse. The usage of speech is [always] in motion: this is why better words sometimes become worse, and worse words become better; words spoken wrongly by some of the ancients are on account of the poets influence now spoken correctly, and on the other hand</p>
---	---

⁹⁷ Strabo 1.2.3.

⁹⁸ Already Porphyry argued that Origen appropriated Stoic allegory in his own exegesis (He 6.19.8). Origen knows some of Chrysippus’ allegorical interpretations of Homer and criticizes him by name: CC 6.48.

⁹⁹ Frede, ‘Origins,’ 357.

some that were then spoken according to
reason, are now spoken wrongly.¹⁰⁰

But if the sage submits conventional language to rational criticism and correction, this is not because he seeks to escape language but rather, as it were, to stretch or expand its rational capacity. Origen, as we shall see, sees the language of Scripture as accomplishing something similar.¹⁰¹

1.2. Meaning

The most distinctive Stoic contribution to the philosophy of language, their doctrine of the *lekton*, is an attempt to articulate how rationality (λόγος) is immanent in the use of language as it is in the whole dynamic cosmos. According to Sextus Empiricus,

There was another disagreement among philosophers [concerning what is the bearer of truth]: some took the sphere of what is true and false to be ‘the signified’, others ‘utterance,’ and others ‘the process that constitutes thought.’ The Stoics defended the first opinion, saying that three things are linked together, ‘the signified,’ [τὸ σημαινόμενον, i.e. the *lekton*] ‘the signifier,’ [τὸ σημαῖνον] and ‘the name-bearer’ [τὸ τυγχάνον]. The signifier is an utterance [τὴν φωνήν], for instance ‘Dion’; the signified is the actual state of affairs revealed by an utterance [αὐτὸ τὸ πράγμα τὸ ὑπ’ αὐτῆς δηλούμενον], and which we apprehend as it

¹⁰⁰ *De Lingua Latina* 9.17; cf. 9.5. In Origen’s day, Chrysippus was remembered for trying to correct the speech of the Athenians, presumably on logical grounds (Galen *De diff. puls.* 10 = SVF 2.24; AM VIII.125f; Cicero *De fato* 8.15; qtd. Frede, ‘Origins,’ 357;).

¹⁰¹ For example, John McGuckin argues that Origen treats scripture as a kind of ‘hyper-rational’ poetry (John McGuckin, ‘Origen as Literary Critic in the Alexandrian Tradition,’ in Lorenzo Perrone, ed., *Origeniana octava: Origen and the Alexandrian Tradition* (Leuven: Leuven University Press and Peeters, 2003), vol. 1: 121-136, esp. 129. He adds that the famous quarrel between poet and philosopher is resolved ‘when the poet is himself the philosopher, an insight Origen did not fail to appreciate from his reading of Plato and an element which the many critics of the allegorical method as undisciplined and ill-directed have not generally appreciated’ (129f).

subsists in accordance with our thought [τῇ ἡμετέρᾳ παρυφισταμένον διανοίᾳ], whereas it is not understood by those whose language is different although they hear the utterance; the name-bearer is the external object [τὸ ἐκτὸς ὑποκείμενον], for instance, Dion himself. Of these, two are bodies — the utterance and the name-bearer; but one is incorporeal — the state of affairs signified and sayable [τὸ σημαϊνόμενον πρᾶγμα καὶ τὸ λεκτόν], which is true or false.¹⁰²

The Stoics identified the ‘sense’ (σημαινόμενον) of an utterance with what they called the *lekton* or ‘sayable’ (λεκτόν), which they distinguished from utterances, concepts, and things. Sextus describes the *lekton* as an immaterial entity ‘linking together’ two corporeal entities, the ‘signifier’ or ‘utterance’ and the ‘name-bearer’ or ‘external object.’

If the *lekton* is neither the signifier, nor the concept, nor the thing in the world, what then is it? Sextus is struggling to describe the *lekton* as a relational entity, mediating between two terms: linguistic utterances and the world. Viewed from the side of language, the *lekton* is some ‘sayable’ linguistic content that ‘subsists in accordance with thought,’ which it does in a language-specific manner. It is not a thought, but rather the repeatable and shareable linguistic content of a thought. From this vantage point, the *lekton* is a semantic concept, close to what Frege called the ‘sense’ of an expression.¹⁰³ On the other hand, viewed from the side of the world, the *lekton* is some intelligible aspect of the world capable of being expressed in language: facts, but also the functions of various speech acts. The *lekton* is identically something grasped in

¹⁰² AM 8.11 = LS 33B = SVF 166.

¹⁰³ Gottlieb Frege, ‘Sense and Reference,’ *Philosophical Review* 57, no. 3 (May 1948): 209-230. ‘Sense’ was offered as a translation for *lekton* by Benson Mates, *Stoic Logic* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1953), among others. Michael Frede criticizes this view, in ‘The Stoic notion of a *lekton*,’ in *Language*, ed. Stephen Everson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) arguing that ‘fact’ is a better translation. In my view, ‘sense’ and ‘fact’ as translations of *lekton* are two sides of the same coin, since the intention of the Stoic view is precisely to identify linguistic and empirical structures.

thought and something that may obtain in the world. There is no ontological gap between language and world: the same *logos* is capable of being realized in both.¹⁰⁴

Once again a contrast with Aristotle will be illuminating. For Aristotle, utterances, thoughts, and things are sufficient elements to account for meaning. His followers clearly and firmly rejected the need to interject the Stoic *lekton*.¹⁰⁵ Aristotle's basic model of language is expressed most succinctly in *De Interpretatione* 16a:

Ἔστι μὲν οὖν τὰ ἐν τῇ φωνῇ τῶν ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ	Thus spoken [words] are symbols of
παθημάτων σύμβολα, καὶ τὰ γραφόμενα τῶν ἐν	affections of the soul, and written [words] are
τῇ φωνῇ. καὶ ὥσπερ οὐδὲ γράμματα πᾶσι τὰ	symbols of spoken words. And just as letters
αὐτά, οὐδὲ φωναὶ αἱ αὐταί· ὧν μέντοι ταῦτα	are not the same for all, neither are utterances;
σημεῖα πρώτων, ταῦτα πᾶσι παθήματα τῆς	but the affections of the soul, of which things
ψυχῆς, καὶ ὧν ταῦτα ὁμοιώματα πράγματα ἤδη	of which they are direct signs, are the same
ταῦτά.	for all, and so are the things of which
	[affections of the soul] are likenesses. ¹⁰⁶

On this view, human communities establish arbitrary correlations between spoken words (φωναὶ) and mental affections. These 'affections of the soul' are mental realities that exist in the mind, of which the most important subset are thoughts/concepts (νοήματα), on which Aristotle soon focuses his attention. The meaning of an utterance is, on this view, simply the conceptual content with which a word or a sentence is correlated. But while the relation between names and

¹⁰⁴ Thus Long and Sedley, for example, say, 'the Stoics can be interpreted as filling a gap in [Aristotle's] most celebrated doctrine of meaning. Identify 'meanings' with thoughts *simpliciter*, and you leave it unclear how your and my distinct acts of thinking can be the same meaning. By distinguishing rational impressions from sayables while at the same time connecting them together through the concept of subsistence, the Stoics have shown that the meaning of a thought is something which is transferrable, through language, across minds' (LS 201).

¹⁰⁵ See, for example, Ammonius, *On Aristotle's De interpretatione* 17.24-8 = LS 33N.

thoughts is arbitrary and conventional, these mental affections are ‘likenesses’ of real things (πράγματα), by virtue of which they are natural, ‘the same for all.’ The semantic content of an utterance — its sense — is a psychic reality standing between words and things.

These respective theories have implications for the correspondence that obtains between language, thought, and world, implications that become especially manifest in the respective speech-act theories developed in the Aristotelian and Stoic traditions. According to D. M. Schenkevald,

To Aristotle the relation between language and thought is mainly a one-to-one relationship, in the sense that spoken words are symbols of thought and represent exactly what one thinks. It is true that Aristotle is aware of ambivalence of language, and the distinctions of ὁμώνυμα and συνώνυμα, which is of great import in *Topics* and *Soph. Elench.*, points to this awareness, but in his few remarks on σχήματα λέξεως he never exploits this awareness... To the Stoics, however, the *lekta* were not the wordings of thought, but the action and things thought which are expressed in sentences. This means that these sentences are not identical with the *lekta*, whereas the Peripatetic λόγοι are sentences. These asomatic *lekta* do not seem to have an unchangeable way of expression. For the external signs of the various *lekta* (the sentences) may have the same verbal mood (ἔστω, ὑποκείσθω), but represent different *lekta*.¹⁰⁷

Consequently, Aristotelians distinguished types of speech act that corresponded directly to the grammatical form of the sentence: ἀποφαντικός (assertion), corresponding to the indicative mood; εὐκτικός (wish), corresponding to the optative mood; προστακτικός (command), corresponding to the imperative mood; ἐρωτηματικός (question), corresponding to the

¹⁰⁶ *De int.* 16a.

interrogative mood; and κλητικός (address), corresponding to the vocative.¹⁰⁸ The correspondence between verbal expression and meaning is very close. The mature Stoic theory, by contrast, articulated at least ten different speech acts bearing no direct correspondence to grammatical mood: assertoric, interrogative, question, dubitative, imperative, swearing, imprecative, addressing, hypothetical, and quasi-decision. All of these speech acts are *lekta*. The list shows that the *lekton* is not narrowly the ‘sense’ of an utterance but something more like ‘the final function of the sentence in its situation,’ what we would call its illocutionary force.¹⁰⁹

While Aristotelians tended to interpret speech-acts in terms of their effect on the minds of their hearers (if not expressing a truth, then bringing about doubt, calling to attention, etc.), Stoic speech acts are activities in the world which have a reality independent of what any language user thinks about it. And since the function of a sentence is a relation between an utterance and pragmatic features of the context in which it is uttered, the interpreter of a sentence must take both into account. It is precisely because the function of an utterance also depends on its context that the structure of an utterance’s content — i.e. of its *lekton* — is not necessarily isomorphic with the utterance. It follows that the significance of a sentence cannot be determined without considering how it might be used. For this reason, Stoic studies of ambiguity tended to begin with an actual utterance and then map out the possible *lekta* that could be construed from that utterance in relation to various contexts of utterance.¹¹⁰ Meaning on the Stoic view is not merely correspondence.

¹⁰⁷ D. M. Schenkeveld, ‘Stoic and Peripatetic kinds of speech act and the distinction of grammatical moods,’ *Mnemosyne* 37 (1984): 291-353, esp. 324f.

¹⁰⁸ Schenkeveld, ‘Speech act,’ 295f.

¹⁰⁹ Schenkeveld, ‘Speech act,’ 326.

¹¹⁰ Galen *de capt* 4.106.16ff = SVF 2.153; DL 7.62; qtd. Schenkeveld, ‘Speech act,’ 325.

1.3. The Correctness of Names

Similar impulses characterized the Stoic approach to the famous question explored in Plato's *Cratylus* of whether names are 'by nature' or 'by convention.' In a passage to which we shall return, Origen himself offers a summary of this debate which provides important testimony to the Stoic view.

λόγος βαθὺς καὶ ἀπόρητος, ὁ περὶ φύσεως	The subject of the nature of names is a deep
ὀνομάτων· πότερον, ὡς οἶται Ἀριστοτέλης,	and mysterious matter. The question is
θέσει εἰσὶ τὰ ὀνόματα ἢ, ὡς νομίζουσιν οἱ ἀπὸ	whether, as Aristotle thinks, names are by
τῆς Στοᾶς, φύσει, μιμουμένων τῶν πρώτων	imposition; or, as the Stoics think, by nature,
φωνῶν τὰ πράγματα, καθ' ὧν τὰ ὀνόματα,	in that the first utterances are imitations of the
καθὸ καὶ στοιχεῖά τινα τῆς ἐτυμολογίας	things, to which the names correspond, for
εἰσάγουσιν, ἢ, ὡς διδάσκει Ἐπίκουρος, ἐτέρως	which reason they introduce certain principles
ἢ ὡς οἴονται οἱ ἀπὸ τῆς Στοᾶς, φύσει ἐστὶ τὰ	of etymology; or, as Epicurus teaches
ὀνόματα, ἀπορηξάντων τῶν πρώτων	(differently from what the Stoics think),
ἀνθρώπων τινὰς φωνὰς κατὰ τῶν πραγμάτων.	names are by nature, in that the first humans
	burst out with certain sounds corresponding to
	things. ¹¹¹

¹¹¹ CC 1.24. The Greek is: 'Λεκτέον δὲ καὶ πρὸς τοῦτο ὅτι ἐμπίπτει εἰς τὸ προκείμενον λόγος βαθὺς καὶ ἀπόρητος, ὁ περὶ φύσεως ὀνομάτων· πότερον, ὡς οἶται Ἀριστοτέλης, θέσει εἰσὶ τὰ ὀνόματα ἢ, ὡς νομίζουσιν οἱ ἀπὸ τῆς Στοᾶς, φύσει, μιμουμένων τῶν πρώτων φωνῶν τὰ πράγματα, καθ' ὧν τὰ ὀνόματα, καθὸ καὶ στοιχεῖά τινα τῆς ἐτυμολογίας εἰσάγουσιν, ἢ, ὡς διδάσκει Ἐπίκουρος, ἐτέρως ἢ ὡς οἴονται οἱ ἀπὸ τῆς Στοᾶς, φύσει ἐστὶ τὰ ὀνόματα, ἀπορηξάντων τῶν πρώτων ἀνθρώπων τινὰς φωνὰς κατὰ τῶν πραγμάτων.'

The debate was complicated by a basic ambiguity in these key terms, as many ancient commentators were already aware.¹¹² There was, on the one hand, the question of the *origin* of words: do they arise through some intentional agency (human or divine), or are they result of some non-intentional process? On the former thesis, names arise ‘by imposition,’ on the latter, ‘by nature.’ On the other hand, there is the question of the standard of correctness by which words should be judged: are they somehow *appropriate* to the things named, or are names unconstrained by any standard independent of naming conventions themselves? On the former view, names are subject to a ‘natural’ standard of correctness, while on the latter they are merely ‘conventional.’ Our concern is primarily with this second issue of correctness.

The positions Origen ascribes to Aristotle and the Stoics look like summaries of the positions defended in Plato’s *Cratylus* by Hermogenes (the conventionalist character) and Socrates, respectively. I have already discussed Aristotle’s conventionalism in the context of his theory of meaning. Since he believes names are the product of human agency and subject to no natural standard of correctness, he believes names are ‘by convention’ in *both* of the above senses. This conventionalism is rooted in his assumption that language is natural by virtue of one-to-one correspondence between language and world, for which reason he assumes that if names were by nature, they would be the same for all. This ideal of a one-to-one correspondence between words and names was given more expansive treatment in a standard collection of four objections to the naturalness of names attributed to the pre-Socratic philosopher Democritus. While Aristotle argued from the differences between languages, Democritus argues from the irregularity within a single language.

¹¹² See James Allen, ‘The Stoics on the origin of language and the foundations of etymology’ in Dorothy Frede and Brad Inwood, eds., *Language and Learning: Philosophy of Language in the Hellenistic Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005): 14-35, esp. 18-21. He cites Proclus, *In. Crat.* 7.18ff; Ammonius *In Int.* 34.20; Stephanus *in Int.* 9.7-10, 13, and Origen CC 1.24.

Democritus who said that names are due to imposition formulated this idea in four arguments. First, from homonymy: different things are called by the same name; therefore, the name is not natural. Second, from polyonymy: for if different names apply to one and the same thing, they apply to one another as well, which is impossible. Third, from the changing of names: if names are natural, why did we change the name of Aristocles to Plato and that of Tyrtamus to Theophrastus? Fourth, from the deficiency of similar [derivative] terms: why from ‘thought’ do we say ‘to think,’ but from ‘justice’ we do not also derive a verb?¹¹³

Homonymy, polyonymy, and name-changing in particular disrupt the ideal of a one-to-one correspondence of words and things.¹¹⁴

The same ideal of correspondence, however, governs the Socratic naturalist position explored in the *Cratylus* and defended as a doctrine by many Platonists. As articulated by the later commentators, this view asserts that names are ‘by convention’ in that they originate in the intentional activity of name-givers (human or divine). But they are ‘by nature’ in that these name-givers, possessing wisdom, were able to choose names that revealed the nature of things by *imitating* them. Etymology allows Socrates to account for elements of non-correspondence by appeal to a historical narrative: ancient users of language were wiser than those in the present, who have, we might say, fallen into conventionality. Whatever natural correctness names possess must be a result of the wisdom of an original name-giver, who had to have knowledge of things *prior* to choosing a name for them. Even if names are subject to a natural standard of correctness,

¹¹³ Democritus ap. Proclum in Crat. Pasquali 16, lines 23-37 = Democritus fr. 26 DK = Sorabji 7(c)1.

¹¹⁴ Democritus’ fourth argument, from the irregularity of word-derivations, shows that on his view, in a natural language the relations between words would also be isomorphic with the corresponding relations in the world.

then, whatever knowledge one acquires by reflection on language is derivative from this pre-linguistic knowledge, which the philosopher ought ultimately to seek.

In short, Aristotelian conventionalists and Platonic naturalists tend to agree that correspondence is the single standard of linguistic correctness, disagreeing only about whether this standard is or should be realized in the structure of names themselves. The view Origen attributes to the Stoics — ‘the first utterances are imitations of the things to which the names correspond, for which reason they introduce certain principles of etymology’ — is in fact an apt summary of this *Platonic* view, sketched in the *Cratylus*.

As a summary of *Stoicism*, however, it is misleading. James Allen has shown that the Stoic theory of names in fact called into question key assumptions of the Socratic position in the *Cratylus*.

Socrates maintains that to have a chance of succeeding an account [of names] must satisfy two requirements ([*Cratylus*] 422cd):

- (a) There must be a single standard of correctness for all words, both the primary words and those whose meaning is explained by the words from which they are derived.
- (b) This standard must be such that, by conforming to it, names indicate or reveal the things whose names they are.

To this end, though not without hesitation, Socrates puts forward his mimetic account of word composition.¹¹⁵

The Stoics, by contrast, do not assume that there is *one* standard of linguistic correctness, nor do they assume that there is *one* function names must perform. Rather, they developed a theory of

¹¹⁵ Allen, ‘Origin of language,’ 30f.

names that sought to accommodate a variety of ways a name might be ‘naturally’ appropriate to what it names.

Stoic philosophers and linguists tended to approach language by beginning with the conventional meaning of a word and then asking, in an open-ended way, *why* this particular word has the meaning it does. As formulated most explicitly in Augustine’s *De dialectica*, Stoic etymologists came to articulate three principles of natural correctness: similarity, opposition, and proximity.¹¹⁶ ‘Similarity’ refers to a wide variety of mimetic relations that expand on those sketched in the *Cratylus*. There is a similarity *in sono*, such as onomatopoeia: *tinnitus* sounds like the clash of bronze, *hinnitus*, like the neighing of horses. There is similarity by synaesthesia:¹¹⁷ *mel* sounds sweet, as honey tastes; *crux* has a harsh sound, as a cross is painful.¹¹⁸ These mimetic principles, Augustine says, provide the basic elements from which other words are formed,¹¹⁹ and so to this extent mimesis retains a certain priority in accounting for the function of names.

But the principles of ‘opposition’ and ‘proximity’ are non-mimetic relations between names and things. ‘Opposition’ is the *contrary* of a mimetic correspondence, by which a word signifies the opposite of what it seems to imitate. For example, Latin *bellum*, ‘war’, is derived from *bella*, ‘beautiful’, because war is *not* beautiful. By the principle of ‘proximity,’ the meaning of words

¹¹⁶ See the discussion in Allen, ‘Origin of language,’ 32-4, and A. A. Long, ‘Stoic linguistics, Plato’s *Cratylus*, and Augustine’s *De dialectica*’ in Dorothy Frede and Brad Inwood, eds., *Language and Learning: Philosophy of Language in the Hellenistic Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005): 36-55, esp. 37f.

¹¹⁷ *De dialectica* 10.1-3.

¹¹⁸ 10.3-9. Varro also argues that some names correspond to their object by virtue of synaesthesia: ‘Some syllables are harsh, others smooth . . . harsh ones include *trux*, *crux*, *trans*; smooth ones *lana*, *luna*.’ □ (Varro, fr. 113G; qtd. Long, ‘Stoic linguistics,’ 134.)

¹¹⁹ *De dialectica* 10.9-11; 11.13f. Another principle of similarity, which Allen calls ‘similarity *in re*,’ ‘allows a word to be transferred — either with or without phonetic alteration — to an item that resembles the item to which it was first applied (10.10-13) (17). *Crura* (legs) is derived from *crux* (cross) because both things are long. and words like between a word and a thing, as in the examples above. Another principle of word-formation (not mentioned by Augustine) also operates by similarity, namely, what Allen calls ‘compressed definition’ (33). For example, the Stoics derived καρδία from κράτησις (dominion) and κυρεία (authority) because the heart is the ruling part of the

can arise metonymically by virtue of some real connection between name and thing. Augustine gives as an example of proximity the word *vincula*, ‘bonds,’ which he derives from *vis*, ‘power,’ because bonds bring about a powerful effect. In this case, it is the causal relation between what *vis* signifies (power) and what *vincula* signifies (bonds) that accounts for the derivation of the latter from the former. Similarly, the Stoic theologian Cornutus, whom Origen may have read,¹²⁰ traces the name of ‘Pluto,’ the god of the underworld, to *πλουτος*, ‘wealth,’ because all things, being corruptible, are his property.¹²¹ He is not *like* wealth; rather, to name him ‘wealth’ is to name him metonymically by his real relation to wealth.

In an observation that anticipates Origen’s theory of names, however, some Stoics came to recognize that a name might be correct by virtue of the effects one brings about in speaking it. Cornutus sometimes offers etymologies of the names of Greek gods in terms of the performative power of their name.¹²² He proposes that the name of Ares, God of war, is derived from the word *ἄρσαι*, ‘to be pleasing or fitting.’ This name, he supposes, was given not because Ares *is* pleasing, but so that ‘those who addressed him thus would mollify him.’¹²³ In this way, an iconic feature of the name (its relation to the notion of being pleasing) is not itself the significance of

soul (Galen, PHP 206.13ff). We already find something similar in the *Cratylus*: Socrates derives *ἄνθρωπος* from the phrase *ἀναθρων ὁ ὀπωπε*, ‘one who observes closely what he has seen’ (399c).

¹²⁰ According to Porphyry in HE 6.18.8.

¹²¹ *Epidr.* 5.5.7-9, qtd. David Dawson, *Allegorical Readers and Cultural Revision in Ancient Alexandria* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 33.

¹²² Although it should be noted that Cornutus tends to identify these as etymologies ‘by opposition,’ on the grounds that what the name asserts is the opposite of the truth.

¹²³ *Epidr.* 21.41.2f, qtd. Dawson, *Allegorical Readers*, 29; see also the interpretation of Hades by contradiction in *Epidr.* 5.5.4-7, Dawson 33. This kind of analysis anticipates both Origen’s theory of names, discussed below, and the argument that names are natural because of their theurgic power that we find in neo-Platonists like Iamblichus, drawing on traditions about the power of names in Hermetic texts and the *Chaldean Oracles*. Cf. John Dillon, ‘The Magical Power of Names in Origen and Later Platonism,’ in R. Hanson and H. Crougee, eds., *Origeniana Tertia* (Rome, 1985): 203-16.

the name, but rather something that may be deployed in speech for its performative effect on the god.¹²⁴

In sum, the Stoic theory of names is distinctive for abandoning the idea of a single standard of correctness. Instead, they recognized a variety of non-mimetic natural relations between words and things. It has sometimes been argued that there is a tension within Stoic linguistic theory between their non-mimetic theory of sentence meaning and their mimetic theory of names.¹²⁵ The truth is that these theories are closely aligned. In both cases, the Stoics sought to show how mimetic and structural elements of linguistic expressions may be brought into a variety of meaningful relations with the world. Mimesis is an element of meaning and intelligibility, but on its own it cannot account for the many things rational beings use language to do.

2. Origen on Language and Logic

For Origen, the true sages are not Zeno or Chrysippus, but those saints who spoke the words of Christian scripture, and above all, Christ himself. Origen assumes that Christians should imitate their wisdom by continuing their scriptural linguistic practices. But some Christians practices were called into question by many both within and without the church, and Origen draws on Stoic philosophy of language to help make these practices intelligible. If Origen's thinking about language has a strongly Stoic cast, then, this is not because he starts with Stoic assumptions. Rather, his reasoning begins with Christian linguistic practices whose existence he

¹²⁴ It seems to have been an Epicurean insight that a *causal* relation could be a natural one. On their view, names were originally an immediate causal response to stimuli, analogous to laughter or sneezing (LS 19A-B). They, however, argued that this is the *only* natural relation. The Stoics, by admitting a variety of such relations, were able to integrate names of this sort into a much more expansive theory of names. They also come to see that names may be *causes* as well as *effects* of things.

¹²⁵ Thus e.g. A. C. Lloyd, 'Grammar and Metaphysics in the Stoa,' in A. A. Long, ed., *Problems in Stoicism* (London: 1971): 58-74; Dawson, *Allegorical Readers*, 31-5.

takes for granted and from which his reasoning begins. He usually appeals to Stoicism *in media res* to address questions that arise in the context of exegesis or specific challenges to Christian practice raised by their opponents.

In each of the following examples, Origen addresses the wisdom of a specific feature of scriptural language: its insistence that particular proper names are correct, especially the divine name (2.1); its ungrammatical constructions (2.2); and its difficult or cryptic language (2.3). Implicit in these practices, Origen argues, is a philosophy of language not unlike Stoic naturalism, one in which speaking correctly requires not only knowledge of linguistic conventions but also and ultimately wisdom. Yet he does not take up Stoicism unchanged. Rather, in each case showing that Christians speak well requires expanding or altering the Stoic theory in some of its details. A distinctive philosophy of language emerges, for Origen, from the study of scripture itself, one which bears upon the interpretation of scripture and the ongoing speech of Christians.

2.1. The Correctness of Names

We saw that unlike some Platonists, Stoic philosophers defended the view that names are ‘by nature’ in the sense that names are naturally appropriate to things in a variety of possible ways. Origen explicitly endorses this view and uses it to make sense of the specific ways in which scripture uses names, especially its implication that certain names are *correct*.¹²⁶ He assumes that

¹²⁶ For discussions of names in Origen, see R. P. C. Hanson, *Allegory and Event* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1959): 205-7; Dawson, ‘Magical Power,’ Origene, *Esortazione al Martirio*, intro., trans., and ed. Celestino Noce (Rome: Urbaniana University Press, 1985), 182-4; Neuschäfer, *Origenes als Philologe*, 140-55; Naomi Janowitz, ‘Theories of Divine Names in Origen and Pseudo-Dionysius,’ *History of Religions* 30:4 (May 1991): 359-372; Robbert M. van den Berg, ‘Does it Matter to Call God Zeus? Origen, *Contra Celsum* I.24-5 Against the Greek Intellectual on Divine Names,’ in George H. van Kooten, ed., *The Revelation of the Name YHWH to Moses* (Boston: Brill, 2006): 169-86; and Chin, ‘Origen and Christian Naming.’

there are many possible ways a name may be correct, and so in his exegesis he adopts the posture of the Stoic philosopher, investigating what particular natural relation obtains in each case. In his discussion of the name of God, this investigation leads Origen to propose another possible ‘natural’ relation between names and things, namely, that names may be *effective* in relation to the things they name.

I begin with two preliminary examples that show the range of scriptural uses of names that Origen identifies and which he finds Stoic philosophy helpful for explicating. In the first example, Origen discusses the scriptural habit of giving etymologies for words, exemplified by the etymology of the Hebrew word אִשָּׁה (‘woman’) in Genesis 2:23. In the second example, Origen observes the scriptural habit of changing the name of human beings. I then examine at length Origen’s defense of Christian martyrs for refusing to call on God using pagan names like ‘Zeus.’ In each case, Origen draws on Stoic terminology and theory to show that using names in these ways are appropriate to things.

2.1.1. *Natural names*

In his *Letter to Africanus*, Origen appeals to Stoic etymology in the course of an interpretation of Genesis 2:23, which offers an etymology of the Hebrew word אִשָּׁה (‘woman’). He does so in response to a letter from Africanus questioning the authenticity of the Greek portions of Daniel. Africanus had pointed out that the story of Daniel and Susannah turns on a Greek wordplay, from which he infers that this portion of the story could not have been written in Hebrew. Origen responds that the translators could have discovered a way of expressing an originally Hebrew wordplay in an analogous Greek expression. Origen points out that on some

occasions translators have done something similar with scriptural etymologies, in support of which Origen discusses the etymology of $\pi\psi\chi$ ('woman').

...καὶ ἐν ταῖς ἡμετέραις γραφαῖς κεῖνται τινες	In our scriptures are found many so-called
οἰονεὶ ἐτυμολογίαι αἵτινες παρὰ μὲν Ἑβραίοις	etymologies which are appropriate in Hebrew
οἰκείως ἔχουσι, παρὰ δὲ ἡμῖν οὐχ ὁμοίως.	but not in our language. We should not be
Οὐδὲν οὖν θαυμαστὸν, ὥκονομηκεῖν τοὺς	surprised, then, if the translators so
ἐρμηνεύσαντας τὰ περὶ τὴν Σωσάνναν ἀνευρεῖν	administered the story of Susannah that they
ἦτοι σύμφωνον τὸ ἐβραϊκὸν — οὐ γὰρ	discovered either a derivative [Greek] name
πεῖθομαι — ἢ ἀνάλογον τῷ συμφωνοῦντι ἐν τῷ	with the same sound as the Hebrew — though
ἐβραϊκῷ ὄνομά τι παρώνυμον. Πῶς δὲ ἐν τῇ	I doubt this — or else something analogous to
ἡμετέρᾳ Γραφῇ κεῖται τὸ τοιοῦτον,	it. Let us observe how something like this is
παραστήσομεν. Φησὶν ὁ Ἀδὰμ ἐπὶ τῇ γυναικὶ	given in our scripture. When the woman was
οἰκοδομηθεῖση ὑπὸ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐκ τῆς πλευρᾶς	built up by God from the man's rib, Adam
τοῦ ἀνδρός· Αὕτη κληθήσεται γυνή, ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ	said, 'She shall be called "woman," because
ἀνδρός αὐτῆς ἐλήφθη. Φασὶ δὲ οἱ Ἑβραῖοι	she was taken from man.' Now the Hebrews
ἐσσὰ μὲν καλεῖσθαι τὴν γυναῖκα· δηλοῦσθαι δὲ	say the woman was called ' <i>essa</i> ,' and it is
ἀπὸ τῆς λέξεως τὸ ἔλαβον, ὡς δῆλον ἐκ τοῦ·	clear from the text that this means 'taken,' as
Χὼς ἰσουὼθ ἐσσά, ὅπερ ἐρμηνεύεται·	is evident from the words, ' <i>Chos isouoth</i>
Ποτήριον σωτηρίου λήψομαι· ἵς δὲ τὸν ἄνδρα,	<i>essa</i> ,' which is translated, 'I have taken the
ὡς φανερόν ἐκ τοῦ· Ἐσρή αἴς, ὅπερ ἐστί·	cup of salvation' (Psalm 115:4 (LXX)). But
Μακάριος ἀνὴρ. Κατὰ μὲν οὖν Ἑβραίους ἵς καὶ	' <i>is</i> ' means 'man,' as is clear from the words,
ἐσσὰ ἀνδρός, ὅτι ἀπὸ ἵς ἀνδρός αὐτῆς ἐλήφθη	' <i>Esrei ais</i> ,' that is, 'Blessed is the man'
αὕτη. ¹²⁷ Οὐδὲν οὖν θαυμαστὸν ἐρμηνεύσαντάς	(Psalm 1:1). According to the Hebrews, then,

¹²⁷ The text is corrupt here; see the discussion in de Lange, *Philocalie*, 577-8.

τινας τὸ περὶ Σωσάννης Ἑβραϊκὸν, ἐν
 ἀπορρήτοις, ὡς εἰκὸς, πάλαι παρ’ αὐτοῖς
 κείμενον, καὶ παρὰ τοῖς φιλομαθεστέροις καὶ
 φιλαληθεστέροις σωζόμενον, ἥτοι κυρίως
 ἐκδεδωκέναι τὰ τῆς λέξεως, ἢ εὐρηκέναι τὸ
 ἀνάλογον τοῖς κατὰ τὸ Ἑβραϊκὸν παρωνύμοις,
 ἵνα δυνηθῶμεν οἱ Ἕλληνες αὐτοῖς
 παρακολουθεῖν. Καὶ γὰρ ἐπ’ ἄλλων πολλῶν
 ἔστιν εὐρεῖν οἰκονομικῶς τινα ὑπὸ τῶν
 ἐρμηνευσάντων ἐκδεδομένα· ἅπερ ἡμεῖς
 τετηρήκαμεν συνεξετάζοντες πάσας τὰς
 ἐκδόσεις ἀλλήλαις.

‘*essa*’ [comes from] ‘*is*’ and means ‘from
 man,’ because she was taken from an ‘*is*’, her
 husband. We should not be surprised, then, if
 certain translators of the [lost] Hebrew text of
 Susannah — which may possibly have been
 laid up among them in secret since ancient
 times, and preserved by those who love
 learning and truth — either gave the exact
 wording [of the Hebrew] or found some
 analogy to the Hebrew words, that we Greeks
 might be able to follow them. For in many
 other cases we find a text aptly rendered by
 the translators, which I have discovered in the
 course of collecting the various editions [for
 the Hexapla].¹²⁸

The details of Origen’s argument are somewhat opaque, in part because the text is corrupt. Origen apparently derives the word $\pi\psi\alpha$, ‘woman,’ from the root $\kappa\psi\gamma$, ‘to take.’ In proof of this he cites the transliterated Hebrew of Psalm 116:13a, ‘I will take up the cup of salvation’ ($\text{כִּי-תִשָּׂאֵנִי כַּסֵּאֲךָ}$). Origen believes that $\pi\psi\alpha$ (‘woman’) is related to the word $\kappa\psi\gamma$ (‘I will take up’), signifying that the woman was ‘taken’ from the man. Origen’s argument seems to depend on the fact that both were transliterated into Greek as *essa*, a fact which he would have known from the

¹²⁸ *Letter to Africanus* 18 (12).

second column of the Hexapla.¹²⁹ Origen was not the only one to offer this etymology, for in his Greek translation of Genesis, Theodotion translates ‘woman’ here as λῆψις, ‘taken.’¹³⁰ Origen presumably knew Theodotion’s translation, since it was another one of the Hexaplaric columns. This etymology, it should be acknowledged, is implausible. The word for ‘take’ in Genesis 2:23 is not אָשָׁה, as Origen’s etymology implies, but לָקַח. The word ‘woman’ is also written with a *shin* while ‘take’ is written with a *sin*, a fact which is obscured by the identical Greek transliteration of these words that Origen uses. Instead, the plain sense of the text is that the word אָשָׁה (‘woman’) is derived from the word אָדָם (‘man’), just as the woman herself is derived from the man.¹³¹ Origen seems to be alluding to this etymology as well when he says that ‘essa’ means ἀνδρὸς, ‘from man.’ Whether this is in fact the case and if so, whether he sees this second etymology as contradicting or complementing the former is difficult to say, since the text is corrupt at this point.

As Origen observes, there are many such etymologies given in the scriptures: etymology is a characteristic scriptural linguistic practice. Origen adopts the Greek technical term ‘etymology’ to describe it, albeit with a certain embarrassment — ‘as it were etymologies’ (οἷοι εἰς ἐτυμολογίαι) — probably in acknowledgement of the Hellenistic provenance of the term. The word ‘etymology’ seems to have been coined by the Stoics, probably Chrysippus,¹³² and although many Greek philosophers used etymology, in Origen’s discussion of the Stoic view of names (quoted above), Origen specifically associates etymology with the Stoics and connects it

¹²⁹ The roundabout way Origen demonstrates the meaning of the Hebrew words for man and woman is an indication that his knowledge of Hebrew was fairly superficial, as Nicholas de Lange points out: (*Philocalie* 576).

¹³⁰ See the texts quoted in de Lange, *Philocalia*, 557; Field, *Hexapla*, 1.15; Jerome *Qu. Heb. Gen sur* Gen. 2:13, CCL 72 p. 5; Latin translation of CM 14.16. According to Nicholas de Lange, Origen’s appeal to a Jewish source for this etymology, ‘n’est qu’un camouflage, destiné à prêter autorité à ce qui suit’ (*Philocalie* 576). But since Theodotion also understood the etymology this way, and since it is not outside the bounds of rabbinic wordplay, there is no need to doubt Origen’s claim that he has learned this etymology from discussion with Jews.

¹³¹ *Genesis Rabbah* 18.4 takes it this way.

¹³² The term is first attested in the titles of Chrysippus’ books (DL 7.200; thus Allen, ‘Origins of Language,’ 14).

to their doctrine that names are by nature.¹³³ That doctrine may be in the background here as well, for Origen's discussion of translating etymologies bears upon the common objection to the naturalness of names from the fact that there are many different languages.¹³⁴ Origen identifies two ways that a Hebrew usage may be retained in translation: the same word may appear in both Hebrew and Greek,¹³⁵ or, more likely, a clever translator may select or even invent words that are related to one another in an analogous way in multiple languages. The effect would be to use Greek in a way that imitates Hebrew usage. Since Origen believed that Hebrew was the original natural language, doing so would presumably make Greek more natural as well.¹³⁶

In another text, *On Prayer*, Origen uses the Stoic account of the function of a proper name to make sense of scripture's habit of changing names. The context is Origen's discussion of the phrase 'hallowed be Thy name' in the Lord's Prayer, which leads him to ask about the function of proper names and the difference that the holiness of the divine name makes. After offering a technical definition of a proper name derived from Stoic sources [1], he argues that human names are rightly changed by Scripture because human beings themselves change [2]. He then argues by contrast that just as God is unchanging, so too He has one holy name [3].

¹³³ CC 1.24, and see the discussion of this text below.

¹³⁴ In other contexts, Origen responds to this difficulty by appealing to the Jewish tradition that Hebrew was the original language, given by God, and hence that its mode of speech is uniquely natural. He sees other languages as the work of lesser divine beings, beginning at the Tower of Babel. Origen usually gives etymologies of Hebrew words, particularly of proper names (Joseph Trigg, *Origen: The Bible and Philosophy in the Third-Century Church* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1983), 155). The idea of a fall away from a divine original language was proposed in the *Cratylus*, and it was a common Stoic and Platonic trope.

¹³⁵ This is not intrinsically impossible. Greek words like σαββατον ('Sabbath,' 'week') and the names of the letters of the alphabet were of Semitic origin.

¹³⁶ The Septuagint made no attempt to do so in this case, obscuring the underlying Hebrew etymology; but Origen claims to have observed examples of these well-administered translation in the other Greek translations he gathered when producing his Hexapla. Their translations of this very verse are an illuminating case in point. We have already observed Theodotion's attempt to preserve the etymology by translating 'woman' as λήψις ('taken'). Symmachus, whose translation also appears in the Hexapla, has a more subtle solution. (Jerome calls it 'pulchre': *Qu, Heb. Gen sur* Gen. 2:13, CCL 72 p. 5, qtd. de Lange, *Philocalie*, 575.) Assuming the plain sense derivation of 'woman' from 'man,' he translates 'woman' using the coinage ἀνδρίς, which looks like a feminine counterpart to ἀνδρὸς, the

[1] ὄνομα τοῖνυν ἐστὶ κεφαλαιώδης
 προσηγορία τῆς ἰδίας ποιότητος τοῦ
 ὀνομαζομένου παραστατική· οἷόν ἐστι τις ἰδία
 ποιότης Παύλου τοῦ ἀποστόλου, ἡ μὲν τις τῆς
 ψυχῆς, καθ’ ἣν τοιάδε ἐστὶν, ἡ δὲ τις τοῦ νοῦ,
 καθ’ ἣν τοιῶνδὲ ἐστὶ θεωρητικός, ἡ δὲ τις τοῦ
 σώματος αὐτοῦ, καθ’ ἣν τοιόνδε ἐστὶ. τὸ τοῖνυν
 τούτων τῶν ποιότητων ἴδιον καὶ
 ἀσυντρόχαστον πρὸς ἕτερον (ἄλλος γάρ τις
 ἀπαράλλακτος Παύλου ἐν τοῖς οὖσιν οὐκ ἔστι)
 δηλοῦται διὰ τῆς Παῦλος ὀνομασίας.

[1] A name is a summary appellation
 indicating the peculiar quality of the one
 named. For example, there is a certain
 peculiar quality of Paul the Apostle: of soul,
 according to which he is such and such; of
 mind, according to which he contemplates
 such and such; and of his body, according to
 which he is such and such. The peculiarity of
 these qualities and their incompatibility with
 an other are indicated by the name ‘Paul’ (for
 no other is indistinguishable from Paul in
 these respects).

[2] ἀλλ’ ἐπὶ ἀνθρώπων, οἷονεὶ ἀλλασσομένων
 τῶν ἰδίων ποιότητων, ὑγιῶς κατὰ τὴν γραφὴν
 ἀλλάσσεται καὶ τὰ ὀνόματα· μεταβαλοῦσης
 γὰρ τῆς τοῦ Ἀβραὰμ ποιότητος, ἐκλήθη
 Ἀβραάμ, καὶ τῆς τοῦ Σίμωνος, ὁ Πέτρος
 ὠνομάσθη, καὶ τῆς τοῦ διώκοντος τὸν Ἰησοῦν
 Σαοῦλ, προσηγορεύθη ὁ Παῦλος.

[2] But the Scripture rightly changes the
 names of human beings, since their peculiar
 qualities are also changed. For when the
 quality of Abram was altered, he was called
 Abraham; and when the [quality] of Simon
 [was changed], he was named Peter; and when
 the [quality] of Saul who persecuted Jesus
 [was changed], he was called Paul.

[3] ἐπὶ δὲ θεοῦ, ὅστις αὐτός ἐστιν ἄτρεπτος καὶ

[3] But since God remains always unaltered

genitive of ‘man’ (ἀνὴρ). Origen mentions this derivation in CM 14.16. This example shows how a translator might actually correct conventional Greek usage to bring it into line with Hebrew usage.

ἀναλλοίωτος αἰεὶ τυγχάνων, ἓν ἐστὶν αἰεὶ τὸ	and unchanging, the name which he bears, as
οἶονεὶ καὶ ἐπ’ αὐτοῦ ὄνομα, τὸ <u>≤ό≥</u> ὧν ἐν τῇ	it were, is always one: ‘He who is,’ as is said
Ἐξόδῳ εἰρημένον ἢ τι οὕτως ἂν λεχθησόμενον.	in Exodus, or something similar. Because,
ἐπεὶ οὖν περὶ θεοῦ πάντες μὲν ὑπολαμβάνομεν	therefore, we all suppose something about
τι, ἐννοοῦντες ἅτινα δὴ ποτε περὶ αὐτοῦ, οὐ	God and understand certain things about him,
πάντες δὲ ὃ ἐστι (<u>σπάνιοι γὰρ καὶ, εἰ χρὴ</u>	but we do not understand what he is — for
λέγειν, τῶν σπανίων σπανιώτεροι οἱ τὴν ἐν	rare and, if it can be said, rarer than rare, are
πᾶσιν ἀγιότητα καταλαμβάνοντες αὐτοῦ),	those who grasp his holiness in all respects —
εὐλόγως διδασκόμεθα τὴν ἐν ἡμῖν ἔννοιαν περὶ	we are rightly taught that the conception of
θεοῦ ἁγίαν γενέσθαι...	God among us is holy... ¹³⁷

Origen defines a ‘name’ as ‘a summary appellation indicating the peculiar quality of the one named.’¹³⁸ This definition closely parallels that of the Stoic linguist Diogenes of Babylon, from whom it is almost certainly derived. Diogenes distinguished an appellative [προσηγορία] from a proper name [ὄνομα]. An appellative is ‘that part of discourse that signifies a common quality [μέρος λόγου σημαῖνον κοινὴν ποιότητα],’ such as ‘human’ or ‘horse.’ A proper name, by contrast, ‘that part of discourse that indicates a peculiar quality [δηλοῦν ἰδίαν ποιότητα],’ such as ‘Diogenes’ or ‘Socrates.’¹³⁹ The name ‘Paul,’ for example, describes that which distinguishes Paul from all other individuals, which as Origen notes, includes a qualitatively unique body,

¹³⁷ *On Prayer* 26.2.

¹³⁸ Cf. *SelGen* 17.5 (PG 12.116A). In his second *Homily on Numbers*, Origen offers a definition of a ‘sign’ as ‘those things by which the unique characteristics of each person are designated; for instance, all human beings are alike, to be sure, but there is a certain unique distinction in each one, either in our face or height or posture or dress.’ Evidently a proper name is a species of what Origen calls a ‘sign.’ Origen gives as an example the unique properties of each individual’s handwriting — although we write the same letters, we do so in a recognizably individual way. He then applies the same logic to qualities of the soul: ‘there is a certain chastity that is uniquely Peter’s and another that is Paul’s, even though it may seem one and the same,’ and likewise with the other virtues (2.2.2).

¹³⁹ DL 7.58 = SVF 3 Diogenes 22 = LS 33M.

soul, and mind.¹⁴⁰ Proper names are, on this view, something like definite descriptions.¹⁴¹ Origen applies the same analysis to God. By giving God a name and calling it holy, scripture teaches that the individual quality of God — ‘what he is’ (ὃ ἐστὶ) — is beyond our ken.

His discussion emerges from an observation about a habitual scriptural usage. While scripture often says that God has one, unchangeable name, it frequently changes the names of human beings. Origen argues that this pattern of scriptural usage is sound (ὀυγιῶς). His argument betrays a certain anxiety about the issue of names changing, most likely because the changing of names was a common objection to the thesis that names are natural.¹⁴² This objection, as we saw earlier, assumes that a ‘natural’ relation between name and thing would take the form of a fixed 1:1 correspondence.¹⁴³ Origen, however, recognizes a more dynamic correspondence between the changeable *usage* of a name and the *dynamic process* a thing undergoes. It may be natural, he argues, to change the name of changing things. The Stoics sought a similar correspondence between the sage’s dynamic capacity for speech and the changing world about which he speaks. Origen identifies a deep affinity between their theory of language and the must way Christians speak in response to the transformative character of Christian life. In short, Origen recognizes

¹⁴⁰ This thesis also accounts for the fact that when one is given a name, as he says elsewhere, one ‘participates in the reality named’ (CJ 20.267). We may become, for example, ‘another Abraham,’ if we imitate his qualities (CJ 20.3.16).

¹⁴¹ A. C. Lloyd, ‘Definite Propositions and the Concept of Reference,’ in *Les Stoïciens et Leur Logique* (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1978): 251-72, esp. 288.

¹⁴² Proclus, *Commentary on the Cratylus* 16, p. 5, 25f; qtd. Harl, *Philocalie*, 421.

¹⁴³ The *Cratylus* raises this issue from the opposite direction. On Socrates’ view, the correct name of a thing expresses what it is, which Socrates understands as its unchanging essence. In a brief epilogue to the dialogue, however, Socrates points out that this sort of knowledge would seem to be impossible if the empirical world is always changing and in flux, as Heraclitus taught, for it must ‘inevitably, in the very instant while we are speaking, become something else and pass away and no longer be what it is’ (*Cratylus* 439d). This coda raises doubts about whether our use of names could ever be adequate to a world in flux, which is one reason why Platonists take the unchanging Forms instead as the object of true knowledge.

that a name is natural only when rightly used. To know a name is to possess a capacity to use it correctly in the face of change, to speak it of the right person at the right time.¹⁴⁴

2.1.2. *Effective names*

Origen's concern with the natural usage of names comes more to the fore in his most explicit discussions of Stoic philosophy of language, which occur in a family of three passages that directly addresses the ancient question of whether names are 'by nature' or 'by convention.' Each discussion occurs in the same context: his defense of the Christian refusal to call God by name of any pagan deity, even unto death.¹⁴⁵ In an anti-Christian tract, a certain Celsus had argued that 'it make no difference' [μηδὲν διαφέρειν], whether one calls the high God 'Zeus,' as the Greeks do, or uses an Indian or an Egyptian name.¹⁴⁶ Like many pagans, Celsus had no objection to monotheism of a certain sort; but he criticized the Jewish and Christian refusal to use pagan proper names for this God. Origen regarded the apparently inclusive 'linguistic monotheism'¹⁴⁷ upheld by Celsus and his ilk not merely as an academic problem but as an existential challenge to Christian confession. He appeals to philosophy of language 'lest anyone

¹⁴⁴ After reporting the tradition of Democritus' four objections to the naturalness of names, Proclus offers brief rebuttals to each. His response to the changeability of names is fruitful to compare to Origen's. The argument from the changing of names, he says, 'is a proof that names are natural because we exchange those laid down without authority and outside of nature for others in accordance with nature' (*in Crat.* 16, 23-37 = DK 26). For Proclus too, by changing names, he argues, we bring them into accordance with nature. But Proclus seems to assume that by changing names in this way, we progress from an *incorrect* name to a *correct* one; he treats nature, by contrast, as fixed. For Origen, by contrast, we may change from a name that is correct when said at one time to a name that is correct when said at another. That is, if for Proclus we change names because our language has errors that require correction, for Origen we change names because nature itself changes.

¹⁴⁵ *ExMart* 46, CC 1.25, 5.46.

¹⁴⁶ CC 1.24.

¹⁴⁷ On this idea, see Janowitz, 'Divine Names,' 362.

should trick us with sophistry or in any way defile our reasoning' by making the martyr's devotion to the particular names of the Christian God seem superfluous.¹⁴⁸

Both Celsus and Origen frame the issue in terms of Christian assumptions about language as displayed in Christian linguistic practice. Origen aims to 'defend the conduct of Christians,'¹⁴⁹ which Origen regarded as standing in continuity with the practices recorded in scripture. In the *Exhortation to Martyrdom*, Origen observes that Christians use no names for God except 'those used by the prophets and our Lord and Savior himself,' names such as Sabaoth, Adonai, and Shaddai. There is, he says, 'no other custom among those who worship as we do, and among the prophets, and Christ the fulfillment of the Law, and his apostles.'¹⁵⁰ Scripture also offers explicit second-order teachings and commands about the name of God. In this connection, Origen quotes Exodus 3:14, 'this is my name, there is no other'¹⁵¹ and he observes that Moses and the prophets explicitly commanded that no names of other gods may be spoken in prayer.¹⁵² But although Origen thinks the Christian refusal to use pagan names for God is rooted in scripture, his primary concern is with the intelligibility of Christians continuing this linguistic practice in the present. Origen adapts the Stoic account of names in order to demonstrate this intelligibility. Ultimately, Origen suggests, Christian martyrdom itself reflects a deeper wisdom than one finds in pagan philosophy, expressed not least in the commitment of the martyr to use language in particular ways.

I have observed that the Stoic theory of names was noteworthy for not specifying the standard of correctness to which names should be held — and in particular, not assuming that this standard is necessarily mimetic correspondence. Origen is most Stoic precisely because of

¹⁴⁸ *ExMart* 46. Cf. CC 1.25, 5.46: Christians should 'prefer to endure all manner of suffering rather than acknowledge Zeus to be God.'

¹⁴⁹ CC 1.25.

¹⁵⁰ *ExMart* 46.

his similar openness to a variety of standards of naturalness.¹⁵³ I have already cited his description of the three philosophical schools above which, by distinguishing the Stoic and Epicurean accounts of naturalness, demonstrates his awareness that a variety of natural standards are possible. In his *Exhortation to Martyrdom*, Origen's summary of the issue reflects the openness with which he approaches the question of the relation between words and things.

Πάλιν τε αὖ ὑπολαμβάνοντές τινες θέσει εἶναι	Furthermore, there are some who suppose that
τὰ ὀνόματα καὶ οὐδεμίαν αὐτὰ ἔχειν φύσιν	names are merely conventional and have no
πρὸς τὰ ὑποκείμενα, ὧν ἐστὶν ὀνόματα,	relation by nature to the things for which the
νομίζουσι μηδὲν διαφέρειν, εἰ λέγοι τις· σέβω	names stand. And so they think there is no
τὸν πρῶτον θεὸν ἢ τὸν Δία ἢ Ζῆνα, καὶ εἰ	difference whether a person says 'I worship
φάσκοι τις· τιμῶ καὶ ἀποδέχομαι τὸν ἥλιον ἢ	the first god' or 'Dios' or 'Zeus,' and whether
τὸν Ἀπόλλωνα καὶ τὴν σελήνην ἢ τὴν Ἄρτεμιν	a person affirms 'I honor and welcome the
καὶ τὸ ἐν τῇ γῇ πνεῦμα ἢ τὴν Δήμητραν καὶ	sun' or 'Apollo,' 'the moon' or 'Artemis,' 'the
ὅσα ἄλλα φασὶν οἱ Ἑλλήνων σοφοί.	spirit in the earth' or 'Demeter,' and all the
	others of which the sages of the Greeks
	speak. ¹⁵⁴

A 'conventional' name is one that 'has no relation' to what it names, such that it 'makes no difference' which name one uses. The implication is that a 'natural' name is one that does have

¹⁵¹ *ExMart* 46.

¹⁵² *CC* 5.46.

¹⁵³ There are many other examples of Stoic influence on Origen's theory of names and his use of etymology. Like the Stoics (and one view proposed in the *Cratylus*), Origen argued that there was an original natural language, spoken by Adam, which he identified as Hebrew and claims is authored by God. Only after Babel did the divine language of Hebrew become the particular possession of the Jews, while the languages of other nations were authored by angels or princes (*HomNum* 11.4.4). See Janowitz, 'Theories of Divine Names,' 362ff.

¹⁵⁴ *ExMart* 46.

some relation, such that the particular name one uses does make a difference — but which relation in particular remains to be specified.

In each of the passages in which Origen explicitly discusses the question of whether divine names are ‘by nature,’ he says almost nothing about their mimetic function. Rather, he focuses on what he calls ‘effective names,’ names which have a power to bring about some effect in relation to a specific individual.¹⁵⁵ Origen offers several examples of this effective power. First, Origen points to the power of Jesus’ name to expel demons in the context of exorcisms.¹⁵⁶ Second, he points to the effective use of divine names in the context of theurgy. In *ExMart*, for example, he argues that ‘if names were merely conventional, demons or any other invisible powers when summoned would not obey those who know their names and name the names that have been given.’¹⁵⁷ The basic concern is that by calling on God according to the name of a pagan god, one would bring about the effect of summoning a demon rather than the true God. Third, Origen points to the power of names in the context of spells and incantations. In these cases too, he argues, it is the name itself which has power, which he proves by pointing to the fact that spells are ineffective if one replaces a name with a translation of its lexical meaning.

Each example is designed to show that proper names have power in relation to specific individuals, whether human, demon, or divine. This power, he emphasizes, adheres in the physical structure of each particular name, rather than any translatable semantic content that name might also have. In *ExMart* 46, he makes this point in the context of his discussion of theurgy:

¹⁵⁵ CC 1.24.

¹⁵⁶ CC 1.25, noting that he had already discussed this issue earlier in CC 1.8.

¹⁵⁷ CC 1.24f.

νυνὶ δὲ φθόγγοι τινὲς καὶ συλλαβαὶ καὶ μετὰ	But as it is, certain sounds and syllables and
προσπνεύσεως ἢ ψιλότητος ἢ ἐκτάσεως ἢ	expressions, aspirated or unaspirated and with
συστολῆς ὀνομασίαι ἀπαγγελλόμεναι ἄγουσι	a long or a short vowel, when they are spoken
τάχα τινὶ φύσει ἀθεωρήτῳ ἡμῖν τοὺς	aloud, by some unseen nature immediately
καλουμένους.	bring to us those who are summoned.

In CC 1.24, Origen makes the same point when discussing the power of spells:

Ἔτι δ' εἰς τὸν περὶ ὀνομάτων τόπον λεκτέον	And one should also say on the subject of
ὅτι οἱ περὶ τὴν χρῆσιν τῶν ἐπωδῶν δεινοὶ	names that those skilled in the use of spells
ἱστοροῦσιν, ὅτι τὴν αὐτὴν ἐπωδὴν εἰπόντα μὲν	testify that speaking the spell itself in its own
τῇ οἰκείᾳ διαλέκτῳ ἔστιν ἐνεργῆσαι ὅπερ	language is able to bring about what the spell
ἐπαγγέλλεται ἢ ἐπωδὴ· μεταλαβόντα δὲ εἰς	is claimed to do. But if it is transferred to any
ἄλλην οἰανδρητοῦν φωνὴν ἔστιν ἰδεῖν ἄτονον	other language, it is seen to be weak and able
καὶ οὐδὲν δυναμένην. Οὕτως οὐ τὰ	to accomplish nothing. Thus it is not what is
σημαινόμενα κατὰ τῶν πραγμάτων ἀλλ' αἱ τῶν	signified about certain things, but rather the
φωνῶν ποιότητες καὶ ιδιότητες ἔχουσί τι	qualities and properties of the sounds that
δυνατὸν ἐν αὐταῖς πρὸς τὰδε τινὰ ἢ τὰδε.	have in themselves a certain power to do this
	or that. ¹⁵⁸

Origen expands upon his claim that a translated name can ‘accomplish nothing’ in *Contra Celsum* 5.45, clarifying that this extends not only to divine names but also to the names of

¹⁵⁸ The phrase ‘qualities and properties’ [ποιότητες καὶ ιδιότητες] is an allusion to the Stoic definition of a unique individual as ‘peculiarly qualified’ (Syrianus, *On Aristotle's Metaphysics* 28,18-19 = LS 28G = SVF 2.398; Simplicius, *On Aristotle's Categories*, 222.30-3 = LS 278H = SVF 2.378). The suggestion is that the unsubstitutable individuality of the sounds that constitute a proper name are an image of the individuality of that which they name.

human beings like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, or Israel, particularly when used in connection with God. The phrase ‘God of Abraham, God of Isaac, and God of Jacob,’ for example, is not effective when translated into Greek, which Origen gives as: ‘God of the chosen father of the echo, God of laughter, and God of him who strikes the heel.’

Origen’s argument turns on the distinction between proper names and common nouns. It is only the proper names of pagan gods that Christians reject; the use of the common noun ‘God’ is perfectly legitimate in whichever language it is translated.

Λεγέτωσαν δὲ καὶ Σκύθαι τὸν Παπαῖον θεὸν	And let the Scythians say that Pappaeus is the
εἶναι τὸν ἐπὶ πᾶσιν· ἀλλ’ ἡμεῖς οὐ πεισόμεθα,	God of all; but we will not assent. For we
τιθέντες μὲν τὸν ἐπὶ πᾶσι θεόν, ὥς δὲ φίλον τῷ	grant that there is a God of all, but we do not
λαχόντι τὴν Σκυθῶν ἐρημίαν καὶ τὸ ἔθνος	name God by the proper name ‘Pappaeus,’ but
αὐτῶν καὶ τὴν διάλεκτον οὐκ ὀνομάζοντες τὸν	regard it as agreeable to the [demon] who
θεὸν ὥς κυρίῳ ὀνόματι τῷ Παπαῖον. Σκυθιστὶ	occupies the desert of Scythians and their
γὰρ τὸ προσηγορικὸν τὸν θεὸν καὶ αἰγυπτιστὶ	people and language. However, the one who
καὶ πάσῃ διαλέκτῳ, ἧ ἕκαστος ἐντέθραπται,	uses the appellative name ‘God’ in Scythian
ὀνομάζων οὐχ ἁμαρτήσεται.	or Egyptian or in any other language in which
	he has been raised, will not be sinning. ¹⁵⁹

Origen draws a distinction between a proper name (κυρίῳ ὀνόματι), that of the Scythian deity Pappaeus, and a common noun (τὸ προσηγορικόν), ‘God.’ While the proper name ‘Pappaeus’ establishes a specific relation to a particular (demonic) individual to whom the name is suited,

So there is a kind of mimesis here, but it is the singular *use* of the name that imitates the singularity of that which is names.

¹⁵⁹ CC 5.46.

the common noun ‘God’ establishes no such relation. In *Contra Celsum* 1.24, he offers a similar defense of the Christian use of ‘τὸ κοινὸν ὄνομα τὸ θεοῶς’ (‘the common noun θεοῶς’), which Christians use ‘ἄορίστως’ (indefinitely). That is, a common noun like God does not itself determine which individual or individuals possess the quality signified by the word. A Christian may use the term ‘God,’ as pagans do, for in doing so they leave open *which* individual god it is that possesses the quality of divinity.

Origen’s terminology reflects the Stoic distinction between proper names and common nouns that we examined in the previous section. By identifying an effective *power* of names, however, Origen offers an implicit correction of the Stoic view. For the Stoics, both common nouns and proper names fail to make a sentence ‘definite;’ that is, neither reliably identifies a single existent individual as the subject of a proposition.¹⁶⁰ Only deictic terms like demonstratives (e.g. ‘this,’ ‘that’) and first/second person pronouns (e.g. ‘I,’ ‘you’) succeed in denoting a definite individual, by directly identifying an individual that appears to the senses.¹⁶¹ But if, as Origen claims, a name *effects something* in relation to the individual being whose name one speaks, then by the same token, it would seem to succeed in establishing a definite referent for a sentence. This is why, in uttering a name like ‘Zeus,’ one cannot help but speak of the individual demon who, under that name, masquerades as the true God, even if one intends to do otherwise. Support for this interpretation can be found in Origen’s discussion of the Tetragrammaton in his 14th *Homily on Numbers*. Numbers 22:9 and 20 say that ‘God [ὁ θεός] came to Balaam.’ Origen finds it troubling that God would appear to this false prophet, and so he asks whether it is possible that this text refers to some god other than the God of Israel.

¹⁶⁰ Lloyd, ‘Grammar,’ 285.

<p>In Hebraeorum litteris nomen Dei, hoc est Deus, vel Dominus, diverse scribi dicitur. Aliter enim scribitur Deus, quicumque Deus: aliter Deus ipse, de quo dicitur: ‘Audi, Israel, Dominus Deus tuus, Deus unus est.’ Iste ergo Deus Israel, Deus unus et creator omnium, certo quodam litterarum signo scribitur, quod apud illos tetragrammaton dicitur. Si quando ergo sub hoc signo in Scripturis scribitur Deus, nulla est dubitatio quin de Deo vero et mundi creatore dicatur. Si quando vero aliis, id est communibus litteris scribitur, incertum habetur utrum de Deo vero, an de aliquo ex illis dicatur, de quibus Apostolus dicit.</p>	<p>In the literature of the Hebrews, the name of God, that is, ‘God’ or ‘Lord,’ is said to be written in different ways. For anything that is called a god is written in one way, and the God himself of whom it is said, ‘Hear O Israel, the Lord your God is one God,’ is written another way. Thus that God of Israel, the one God and Creator of all things, is written with a certain determinate sign comprised of letters, which they call the ‘tetragrammaton.’ So whenever God is written in the Scriptures by this sign, there is no doubt that it is said of the true God and Creator of the world. But whenever it is written in other letters, that is, common ones, it is considered uncertain whether it is said of the true God or one of those gods of whom the apostle speaks.¹⁶²</p>
---	--

As in *Contra Celsum*, here too Origen observes that the word ‘god’ in itself permits ambiguity as to its referent, either ‘the true God or one of those [false] gods of whom the apostle speaks.’¹⁶³

By contrast, Origen argues that a ‘determinate sign’ for ‘the name of God’ — the

¹⁶¹ See Paolo Crivelli, ‘Indefinite Propositions and Anaphora in Stoic Logic,’ *Phronesis* 39.2 (1994): 187-206, and my discussion of deixis in chapter 2.

¹⁶² HomNum 14.1.3 = PG 12.677B-C. Trans. Thomas Scheck, *Homilies on Numbers* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press Academic, 2009), edited.

¹⁶³ The reference is to 1 Corinthians 8:5f, as Origen goes on to show.

Tetragrammaton — is something like a rigid designator that always fixes the referent of a sentence as the God of Israel. This seems to be one of the powers Origen ascribes to proper names in *Contra Celsum*.

Origen's account of effective names has implications for the kind of wisdom entailed in knowing these names: it is a wisdom derived from empirical experience with the *use* of these names. The sage must examine the relation between words and things to discover the causal relations between them. This is why, when discussing the analogous power of spells, Origen says,

οἱ περὶ τὴν χρῆσιν τῶν ἐπωδῶν δεινοὶ	Those skilled in the use of spells relate that
ἱστοροῦσιν, ὅτι τὴν αὐτὴν ἐπωδὴν εἰπόντα μὲν	when one says the spell in its own language, it
τῇ οἰκείᾳ διαλέκτῳ ἔστιν ἐνεργῆσαι ὅπερ	brings about what it promises; but when it is
ἐπαγγέλλεται ἢ ἐπωδὴ· μεταλαβόντα δὲ εἰς	translated into any other language, it is seen to
ἄλλην οἰανδηποτοῦν φωνὴν ἔστιν ἰδεῖν ἄτονον	be weak and able to do nothing. ¹⁶⁴
καὶ οὐδὲν δυναμένην.	

Origen appeals to the empirical experience — that which one can ‘see’ (ἰδεῖν) — of those who use spells. The verb ἱστορεῖν, ‘relate’ or ‘recount,’ was, among other things, a technical term in scientific discussion of inference, referring to a person's testimony to that which they had experienced themselves.¹⁶⁵ These experts know something about the effects of these names that they have learned empirically. Moreover, since it is not the abstract structure of a name but its concrete embodiment that has efficacy, the power of names can only be observed when actually

¹⁶⁴ CC 1.25. See the parallel in CC 5.46.

¹⁶⁵ E.g. in Galen, *On the Sects*, 2.

uttered. Consequently, expertise with the use of divine names is highly context specific. Each names operates in a manner that is specific to the language and locale of a people.

<p>Διὸ καὶ δύναται ταῦτα τὰ ὀνόματα, λεγόμενα μετὰ τινος τοῦ συμφυοῦς αὐτοῖς εἰρμοῦ, ἄλλα δὲ κατὰ αἰγυπτίαν ἐκφερόμενα φωνὴν ἐπὶ τινῶν δαιμόνων, τῶν τάδε μόνα δυναμένων, καὶ ἄλλα κατὰ τὴν Περσῶν διάλεκτον ἐπὶ ἄλλων δυνάμεων, καὶ οὕτω καθ' ἕκαστον τῶν ἐθνῶν, εἰς χρείας τινὰς παραλαμβάνεσθαι. Καὶ οὕτως εὐρεθήσεται τῶν ἐπὶ γῆς δαιμόνων, λαχόντων διαφόρους τόπους, φέρεσθαι τὰ ὀνόματα οἰκείως ταῖς κατὰ τόπον καὶ ἔθνος διαλέκτοις.</p>	<p>Therefore these names can be used for a specific purpose, when said in a certain connection natural to them; and so also with other names according to the Egyptian language, which are invoked upon certain demons who are able to do specific things; and so with other names according to the Persian dialect, invoked upon other powers, and thus according to each of the nations. Thus also it will be discovered that the names of the demons of the earth, who occupy different places [i.e. as the tutelary deities], are appropriate to the dialects belonging to each place and people.¹⁶⁶</p>
--	---

Each name has its own particular power because it operates in relation to real, concrete entities, albeit demonic ones.¹⁶⁷

In sum, there are various powers of divine names that go beyond their mere conventional denotation in a particular language. These names have causal power in relation to that which they

¹⁶⁶ CC 5.46.

¹⁶⁷ Interestingly, this argument shares with Epicurus the insight that introducing causality into an account of the function of names helps explain cultural-linguistic difference. For both, different peoples use different names in response to the different conditions specific to their own contexts.

name, a relation which proves that these names are not merely conventional but rather natural, in the broader Stoic sense of this term. Consequently, there is wisdom implicit in the linguistic practices of the martyrs, and by extension, in the practices of the scriptures that they are imitating.

2.2. *Meaning*

I offer a somewhat briefer discussion of Origen's appropriation of the Stoic account of meaning.¹⁶⁸ In a passage preserved in the *Philocalia*, Origen appeals to this Stoic account of meaning to account for two related features of scriptural usage. First, many sentences of scripture are solecistic (i.e. ungrammatical), and thus seem to violate elementary rules of correct speech. Second, the apostles call attention to their uneducated and ineloquent speech to argue that the very weakness of their language is a proof of the power of God. Origen proposes that this description of the mode of apostolic speech offers a key to the interpretation of scriptural solecisms: the reader must examine not only the utterance and the grammatical rules that govern it, but the things about which an utterance is spoken, wherein God's power is displayed. Origen expresses this insight in the language of Stoic philosophy: only by attending to things can the reader understand 'the things signified' (σημαινόμενα) by a scriptural text.

The text reads:

¹⁶⁸ For discussions of Origen's use of the Stoic *lekton*, see Louis Roberts, 'Origen and Stoic Logic,' *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association*, vol. 101 (1970): 434-44, esp. 433-7; J. M. Rist, 'The importance of Stoic logic in the *Contra Celsum*,' in A. H. Armstrong, H. J. Blumenthal & R. A. Markus, eds., *Neoplatonism and Early Christian Thought: Essays in Honour of A.H. Armstrong* (Variorum Publications, 1981), 64-78, esp. 76f; Berchman, *Middle Platonism*, 205f and 210; Chin, 'Christian Naming,' 410-20; and the texts cited below discussing *Philocalia* 4.

Ὁ διαιρῶν παρ' ἑαυτῷ φωνὴν καὶ σημαινόμενα The one who distinguishes between the
καὶ πράγματα, καθ' ὧν κεῖται τὰ σημαινόμενα, utterance, the things signified, and the states
οὐ προσκόψει τῷ τῶν φωνῶν σολοικισμῷ, ἐπὰν of affairs to which the things signified are
ἐρευνῶν εὐρίσκη τὰ πράγματα, καθ' ὧν κεῖται referred, will not stumble at a solecism in the
αἱ φωναὶ, ὕγιῃ - καὶ μάλιστα ἐπὰν ὁμολογῶσιν utterances, if when he investigates, he finds
οἱ ἅγιοι ἄνδρες τὸν λόγον αὐτῶν καὶ τὸ the things to which the utterances are referred
κήρυγμα οὐκ ἐν πειθοῖς σοφίας εἶναι λόγων, to be sound— and especially if the holy men
ἀλλ' ἐν ἀποδείξει πνεύματος καὶ δυνάμεως. confess that their word and preaching is not
with persuasive words of wisdom, but with a
demonstration of the Spirit and of power.¹⁶⁹

Origen's remarks are provoked by a 'solecism in the utterances' of scripture. A 'solecism' was standardly defined as an error in the combination of words and contrasted with a 'barbarism' as an error in a single word.¹⁷⁰ Unfortunately, the particular solecism to which Origen refers here is unknown. This passage was excerpted, the Philocalists tell us, from the lost fourth book of his *Commentary on John*. Since the extant second book comments only as far as John 1:7, and the next extant book, the sixth, begins with exegesis of John 1:19, Origen's comments are probably a response to a solecism in the text of the first chapter of John's gospel between verses 8 and 18. Marguerite Harl proposes verse 12 as the best candidate: "ὅσοι δὲ ἔλαβον αὐτόν, ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς

¹⁶⁹ *Philocalia* 4.1. On this important passage, see Marguerite Harl, 'Origène et la sémantique du langage biblique,' *Vigiliae Christianae* 26, no. 3 (Oct. 1972): 161-187, esp. 182f; Harl, *Philocalie*, 274-281; Neuschäfer, *Origenes*, 213f;

¹⁷⁰ See Blank 233f and the texts quoted there. Apollonius Dyscolus defines a 'barbarism' as 'an error in a single word' and a 'solecism' as 'errors in the grammatical combination of the words in a phrase' (*Syntax* 3.4.8). A *scholium* to Dionysius Thrax has, 'Solecism is an error concerning the syntax of the parts of the sentence [λόγος] ... barbarism is an error of pronunciation occurring in a word [λέξις]' (Sch. DThr (Lond). 446.35-447.28). See also Polybius, *On Barbarism and Solecism* 283.1-5, 285.10-11 Nauck; Anonymous, *On Barbarism and Solecism* 290.1-2, 9 Nauck; Ps-Herodian *On Solecism and Barbarism* 309.1-5 Nauck. All these are qtd. Blank 233f.

ἐξουσίαν τέκνα Θεοῦ γενέσθαι...” [But as many as received him, he gave to them authority to become children of God].¹⁷¹

Pour un lecteur attentif au moindre détail de la rédaction des textes, l’anacoluthé est remarquée: après une proposition qui donne déjà un sujet à la phrase (ὅσοι), la proposition principale suppose un autre sujet pour le verbe ἔδοκεν. Bien qu’il s’agisse là d’un tour qui n’est pas incorrect, il passait pour tel aux yeux d’Origène.¹⁷²

In confirmation of this hypothesis, Harl points out that in one of the catenae to John, Origen quotes this text in a more grammatical form: “Ὅσοι δὲ ἔλαβον αὐτὸν ἔσχον ἐξουσίαν τέκνα θεοῦ γενέσθαι” [But as many as received him had authority to become children of God].¹⁷³ Even if this was the solecism on which Origen was commenting, however, his specific exegetical remarks have been lost.

It is clear from the selection in the *Philocalia*, however, that some regarded the solecisms of the Christian scriptures as a threat to their intelligibility. Origen appeals to the Stoic theory of meaning to demonstrate that it is possible to understand the meaning of even an ungrammatical utterance if one considers it in light of its subject matter. To show this, Origen invokes a distinction between three elements of language: the utterance [φωνή], the things signified [σημαινόμενα], i.e. the sense, and the states of affairs to which the things signified are referred [πράγματα], i.e. the referent.¹⁷⁴ Using this terminology, Origen argues that the interpreter should

¹⁷¹ Harl, *Philocalie* 1-20, 274f.

¹⁷² Harl, *Philocalie* 1-20, 275.

¹⁷³ CJ fr. 7.

¹⁷⁴ Origen’s influential predecessors Philo and Clement each draw a distinction along the same lines. Philo makes a clearly Stoic distinction between τὰ ὀνόματα, τὰ σημαινόμενα, and τὸ τύγχανον or τὸ πρᾶγμα (*Leg. All.* 2.15 = SVF 2.166). Clement distinguishes between τὰ ὀνόματα, τὰ νοήματα, and τὰ ὑποκείμενα πράγματα (*Str.* 8.8.23.1). Since Clement refers to the sense as a ‘concept’ which ‘imitates’ the things, however, the operative theory of language would seem to be Aristotelian.

‘investigate’ or ‘research’ ‘the things’ [τὰ πράγματα] about which the text speaks, which may prove to be ‘sound’ [ὀγυής] even if the text is not. By this he seems to mean that because one has or may acquire independent knowledge of what a solecistic text like John 1:12 is about, one can work out what the author is trying to say. We do this sort of thing all the time in ordinary conversation, e.g. when someone misspeaks.

Origen’s remarks here should not be understood as giving instructions about how to interpret a solecism to one who does not believe doing so is possible, but rather as analyzing *how* this happens, as it obviously does. His point is not that solecisms are the only sort of utterance that we interpret with reference to the subject matter, but rather that they exemplify the more general fact the interpretation of words requires an investigation of things as well. We may infer this from the fact that Origen turns from a narrow focus on solecisms to a broader discussion of Paul’s apostolic pedagogy. In 1 Corinthians, Paul points the readers of his letters to look past the words themselves to the realities that the Spirit has worked in the Corinthian community, which constitute a ‘demonstration of the Spirit and of power.’ Paul implies that understanding his letters requires more than merely grammatical facility. As in the interpretation of solecisms, one must have extra-textual knowledge of their subject matter as well. Origen invokes a philosophical theory of meaning to show that it is a general feature of language that meaning is not merely a function of words in isolation, but rather of words in relation to the things about which they speak.

Most scholars have argued that his appeal to a distinction between utterance, sense, and state of affairs reflects his appropriation of the Stoic theory of the *lekton*.¹⁷⁵ Origen’s key terms φωνή

¹⁷⁵ See, for example, Harl, *Philocalie* 1-20, 276; Bernhard Neuschäfer, *Origenes als Philologe* (Basel, 1987): 212f; and Catherine Chin, ‘Origen and Christian Naming: Textual Exhaustion and the Boundaries of Gentility in Commentary on John 1,’ *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 14.4 (2006): 410-420, esp. 413-415. To be sure, neither here nor anywhere else in his corpus does Origen unambiguously use the distinctively Stoic term *lekton*. □ The only

(utterance), σημαίνόμενα (signifieds), and πράγματα (states of affairs) are indeed consistent with the Stoic distinction, but a surer sign of Stoic influence is the procedural consequence he draws from this distinction. Exhorting someone to ‘investigate the things’ would have had philosophical overtones,¹⁷⁶ and it was the Stoics who sought to articulate a theory of meaning that would account for the need for this kind of investigation. As we saw earlier, the Stoics took a particular interest in the interpretation and logical function of solecisms, and Chrysippus even seems to have anticipated Origen in arguing for tolerance of solecistic speech.

Invoking this theory does not only enable Origen to account for how the interpretation of solecisms is possible, however. He also suggests that solecisms have a positive function of inviting readers, as Paul did, to engage in an investigation and a demonstration of things, an activity more characteristic of the wisdom of philosophers than the eloquence of orators. Barbarism and solecism together were generally understood to exhaust the possible errors of speech, and they represent the contrary of those ideals of grammatical correctness and linguistic purity referred to as ‘Hellenism’ or ‘Latinity,’ which were foundational virtues of the orator. Drawing on Pauline and philosophical critiques of eloquence, however, Origen turns the objection to solecism on its head. Scriptural usage employs solecism as a challenge to Hellenistic ideals of conventional correctness and eloquence.

possible text of which I am aware is a passage in his Homily on Psalm 80, in which he uses the word λεκτα in parallel with σημαίνόμενα. Probably it simply means ‘what is said’ rather than bearing its technical Stoic sense (HomPs 80.1.3 = *Picta frag.* 80.1 = PG 17.149).

¹⁷⁶ It was a frequent refrain of Plato that the sophistic orator knew only techniques of persuasion, not the actual ‘facts’ (πράγματα) about which he sought to persuade (e.g. *Gorgias* 459b-c). In the *Ion*, Plato presses the same point in relation to interpreters of poetic texts. It was common to regard Homer in particular as expert in all human knowledge and to infer from this that, as Blank puts it, ‘those expert in Homeric poetry will be expert in everything’ (112; cf. the texts cited there). The classical rhapsode purported to be an expert in ‘all arts, all human affairs concerned with virtue and vice, and in divine matters’ (*Republic* 10.598de, qtd. Blank, *Grammarians*, 112), as Cicero later argued that the orator needed knowledge of all things to be able to discourse about anything (*On the Orator* 2.2; cf. Aristotle *Rhetoric* 1.2, 1355b26-35; qtd. Blank, *Grammarians*, 330). So too it was often claimed that the grammarian had to know a variety of other arts (Quintilian 1.4.4f; Vitruvius 1.3), and indeed, according to a preface to Thrax, that the ‘functions’ [ἔργα] of grammar are ultimately all human knowledge (Sch. DThr. (Vat) 115.15).

Ἄτε δὲ οὐκ ἀσυναίσθητοι τυγχάνοντες οἱ	But because the apostles were not ignorant of
ἀπόστολοι τῶν ἐν οἷς προσκόπτουσι, καὶ περὶ ἃ	the things in which they stumbled and to
οὐκ ἡσχόληνται, φασὶν ἰδιῶται εἶναι τῷ λόγῳ,	which they gave no concern, they say that
ἀλλ' οὐ τῇ γνώσει· νομιστέον γὰρ αὐτὸ οὐχ	they are 'simple in word but not in
ὑπὸ Παύλου μόνον ἀλλὰ καὶ ὑπὸ τῶν λοιπῶν	knowledge' (2 Cor. 11:6) — for one should
ἀποστόλων λέγεσθαι ἅν· ἡμεῖς δὲ καὶ τό·	suppose that this would be said not only by
Ἔχομεν δὲ τὸν θησαυρὸν τοῦτον ἐν	Paul but also by the other apostles. And we
ὀστρακίνοις σκεύεσιν, ἵνα ἡ ὑπερβολὴ τῆς	too 'have this treasure in earthen vessels, so
δυνάμεως ᾗ τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ μὴ ἐξ ἡμῶν·	that the abundance of power might be from
	God and not from us' (2 Cor. 4:7). ¹⁷⁷

In this and the surrounding passage Origen sketches what Harl refers to as 'les deux langages' — a language of human wisdom, 'caractérisé par un style (φράσις) qui a de la beauté (κάλλος), de l'ornement (περιβολή), de la cohérence (ἀκολουθία), un bel arrangement de mots (σύνθεσις λέξεως ou λέξεων)' and in contrast, the inspired language of the apostles, which though poor (εὐτελής) and an object of derision by the Greeks (εὐκαταφρόνητος), exercises a great power and attraction over human beings.¹⁷⁸ Despite or even because of its simple and solecistic style, the language of scripture is the vehicle for divine persuasive power to operate through its words. The same simple style, Origen remarks, should be imitated by Christians in the present as well: 'we too,' he says, speak in this way. The apostolic 'language' is not limited to the authors of scripture, but characterizes the way Christians should continue to speak.

¹⁷⁷ *Philocalia* 4.2.

¹⁷⁸ Harl, *Philocalie*, 279f.

In the example above, Origen seems to grant that solecism is an unintentional consequence of the apostles' lack of Greek education. This is not, however, Origen's only way of framing scriptural solecisms. Bernard Neuschäfer has sketched two basic strategies,¹⁷⁹ roughly correlated with the traditional contrast between the *unintentional* solecisms of the uneducated and the *intentional* solecisms of poets exercising their poetic 'license.'¹⁸⁰ Often Origen frames the solecisms of scripture as intentional violations of conventional forms of speech in order to express a deeper wisdom, in effect treating scripture as a kind of philosophical poetry. An example is Origen's interpretation of Hosea 12:4:

... ἔκλαυσαν καὶ ἐδεήθησάν μου, ἐν τῷ οἴκῳ	'They wept and made a request of me; in the
ὦν εὑροσάν με. καὶ ἐκεῖ ἐλάληθη πρὸς αὐτόν.	house of On they found me.' And there he
	spoke to him.

In a fragment of his *Commentary on Hosea*, Origen argues that the shift from plural to singular is solecistic. The implied speaker in the final sentence is the same as the quoted speaker in the first sentence, namely, the prophet Hosea. But then why does the text describe his interlocutors first in the plural ('they wept...they requested...they found') and then in the singular ('to him')?¹⁸¹ Origen argues that the grammatical shift in number corresponds to a change undergone by the community. In the course of speaking to the prophet, Origen argues, the community finds God and by doing so, changes from being divided (and hence appropriately described in plural terms) to being united (and hence appropriately described as singular). When one takes into account the changing character of the community to which this utterance referred, one can discover a

¹⁷⁹ Neuschäfer, *Origenes*, 212-5.

¹⁸⁰ Strictly speaking, in this case the ungrammatical utterance is no longer considered a solecism.

correspondence in light of which the solecism is actually appropriate, a correspondence which also hints at a deep insight into the effects of conversion on communal life.

Although he regards this solecism as intentional, however, Origen's procedures here are no different than what he commends in *Philocalia* 4. Here too he investigates the things — communities and the changes they undergo — in order to understand the text. Moreover, there is a certain analogy here with Origen's interpretation of scriptural names. There too Origen was confident that *some* relation obtains between names and things by virtue of which they are correct, but what that relation is varies and must be determined on a case by case basis. So it is with scriptural solecisms. Though each has a meaning and a wise purpose — their use, we might say, is 'natural' — there is no single rule for determining how a solecism will function in any given case.¹⁸²

2.3. *Logic*

In the previous sections I have documented Origen's conviction that scriptural language displays a wisdom that is not exhausted by grammatical or conventional norms. Learning to interpret wise discourse of this kind requires the reader to develop an analogous wisdom of her own, which requires not only knowledge of words but also of things. The Stoics called the science of wise speech 'logic,' as we have seen, a science which ultimately came to include all the ways one might use language in conformity with reason. So it is not surprising that when

¹⁸¹ This is, apparently, a so-called 'solecism of number': Neuschäfer, *Origenes*, 212.

¹⁸² For this reason, there is no need to see a contradiction between Origen's treatment of unintentional solecisms in *Philocalia* 4 and intentional solecisms as in the *Commentary on Hosea*, as Neuschäfer does (*Origenes* 213). There is a contradiction here only if one assumes that every solecistic utterance must be appropriate in the same way, an assumption akin to those Platonists who assume every word must be correct according to the same standard. Rather, what is characteristic of Origen's exegesis is the investigation and discovery of various the various possible relations

Origen seeks a Greek term for the science of language by which he interprets the scripture, he opts for the term ‘logic.’ As for the Stoics, so too for Origen: logic is the science of language governed by wisdom.

In what follows, I focus on his two most explicit discussions of ‘logic’ (*logices; rational disciplina; τὸν λογικὸν τόπον; τῶν λογικῶν*) itself: his introduction to his commentary on the *Song of Songs*, preserved in Rufinus’ Latin translation, and a portion of his commentary on Genesis 1:16, preserved in Greek in the *Philocalia*.¹⁸³ In both cases, he tends to characterize logic as a discipline focused on language and necessary for the interpretation of Scripture.¹⁸⁴ In Rufinus’ translation of Origen’s introduction to the *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, he says

Est enim logices, et velut nos dicimus	For it is logic (which is, as we say, rational)
rationalis, quae verborum dictorumque videtur	that contains the meaning of words and
continere rationes, proprietatesque, et	utterances, and that teaches about proper and
improprietates, generaue, et species, et figuras	improper meanings, genera and species, and
singulorum quoque edocere dictorum...	the tropes of every single utterance... ¹⁸⁵

Later he identifies logic as that discipline to which Solomon alludes in the beginning of Proverbs, when he exhorts his readers to attend carefully to the words of the wise.

that might make an utterance appropriate to its subject matter. Scripture is solecistic in part to provoke this sort of investigation.

¹⁸³ See also *Philocalia* 25.2, Lam. frag. 14, HomGen 6.3, 14.3, HomEx 3.3; and cf. Harl, *Philocalie* 1-20, 110-118 and Somos, *Logic and Argumentation*, 13-22.

¹⁸⁴ See also CM 17.7. For Origen’s appeal to ‘logic’ in the context of the ancient philosophical curriculum, see Marguerite Harl, ‘Les trois livres de Salomon et les trois parties de la philosophie dans les prologues des *Commentaires sur le Cantique des Cantiques*,’ in Jürgen Dummer, ed., *Texte und Textkritik* (TU 133; Berlin, 1987), 249-269; Somos, *Logic*, chapter 1.

¹⁸⁵ PG 13.73B-C.

Et ideo dicit innocentibus per sapientiam dari	And therefore [Solomon] says that subtlety is
astutiam, sine dubio ne in verbo Dei	given to the innocent by wisdom, doubtless
decipiantur fraude sophistica. Sed in hoc mihi	lest they be deceived in the Word of God by
videtur rationalis disciplinae meminisse, per	sophistical fraud. But in this, he seems to
quam doctrina verborum dictorumque	indicate the discipline of logic, by which the
significantiæ discernuntur, et uniuscujusque	teaching about the significations of words and
sermonis proprietas certa cum ratione	utterances is discerned, and the proper sense
distinguitur.	of any particular word is reliably
	distinguished by reason. ¹⁸⁶

Origen describes logic as a discipline focused on linguistic meaning (*rationes, significantiae*) in various aspects: proper and improper meanings; terms that refer to genus or species; and ‘figuras,’ presumably a translation of *τρόπος*.¹⁸⁷ He also emphasizes that logic is itself part of the ‘wisdom’ by which the innocent interpret scripture.

In *Philocalia* 14, Origen offers a similar description of logic in the course of an exegetical discussion. Genesis 1:16-7 say that God creates the sun and moon ‘εἰς ἀρχὰς’ [to be a ruler] of the day and the night respectively. In verse 18, it adds that God set them in place ‘εἰς τὸ ἄρχειν’ [to rule]. Origen argues that by describing their creation first by using nouns and only later by using verbs, the text hints at the ontological priority of substances over their activities.¹⁸⁸

Recognizing this, he says, requires learning from

¹⁸⁶ PG 17.34C-D.

¹⁸⁷ As in Quintilian 9.1.9. See the discussion of Origen’s interpretation of tropes in Neuschäfer 218-227.

¹⁸⁸ He rightly observes that Aquila’s ‘most precise’ translation preserves the same formal structure in different words, ‘authority’ (ἐξουσίαν) / ‘to have authority’ (ἐξουσιάζειν).

οἷς ἐμέλησε τῆς τῶν σημαιομένων ἐξετάσεως,
ἐν τοῖς τόποις τοῖς ἔχουσι συζυγίαν
προσηγοριῶν καὶ κατηγορημάτων...

those who concern themselves with the
investigation of things signified, where they
deal with the derivation of appellatives and
predicates...¹⁸⁹

Later he expands upon this discipline that investigates ‘things signified,’ explicitly designating the discipline he has in mind as logic (‘τὸν λογικὸν τρόπον’):

Ἐπιστησάτω δ’ ὁ δυσπαραδέκτως ἔχων
τούτων, εἰ δύναται ἠθικὸν πρόβλημα ἢ
φυσιολογούμενον ἢ θεολογούμενον, χωρὶς
ἀκριβείας σημαιομένων καὶ τῶν κατὰ τὸν
λογικὸν τρόπον τρανουμένων, ὃν δεῖ τρόπον
παρίστασθαι. τί γὰρ ἄτοπον ἀκούειν τῶν
κυριολεκτουμένων ἐν ταῖς διαλέκτοις, καὶ
ἐφιστάνειν ἐπιμελῶς τοῖς σημαιομένοις; ἔστι
δὲ ὅπου παρὰ τὴν ἄγνοιαν τῶν λογικῶν
μεγάλως περιπίπτομεν, μὴ καθαίροντες τὰς
ὁμωνυμίας καὶ ἀμφιβολίας καὶ καταχρήσεις καὶ
κυριολεξίας καὶ διαστολάς...

If any one doubts the soundness of the
preceding reasoning, let him consider whether
a problem in ethics, or physics, or theology,
can be properly conceived without precision
about what is signified, and without making
them clear according to logic. What absurdity
is there in listening to those who determine
the exact meaning of words in [various]
languages, and in carefully attending to what
is signified? And we sometimes through
ignorance of logical matters fall into great
errors, because we do not clear up homonyms,
ambiguities, extended applications of words,
proper literal meanings, and divisions of
punctuation...¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁹ *Phil.* 14.1.

¹⁹⁰ *Phil.* 14.2.

To the list of logical issues given in the *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, Origen adds homonyms, ambiguities, and διαστολάς, ‘divisions,’ which probably refers here to various kinds of decisions about punctuation.¹⁹¹

Some scholars, noting that Origen’s description of logic focuses on language, have argued that Origen has in view grammar or at least a science of language less expansive than Stoic logic.¹⁹² Clearly Origen’s ‘logic’ includes the kinds of issues studied by grammarians, but as we have seen, Stoic logicians also dealt with grammatical issues of the sort Origen mentions.¹⁹³ They argued that philosophical logic rather than merely grammar was necessary for the interpretation of poetry; Origen invokes logic in the context of a commentary on *Song of Songs*, which Origen identifies as a work of drama.¹⁹⁴ The logic he has in view is plainly a *philosophical* activity, for Origen frames it as part of the traditional philosophical curriculum:

Generales disciplinae quibus ad rerum

The basic disciplines through which one

¹⁹¹ Later in the same passage he clarifies that he is referring to ‘τὴν διαστολὴν τῶν στιγμῶν.’

¹⁹² Harl, ‘Les trois livres,’ 252 n. 17 refers to Origen’s logic as a ‘science du langage.’ Martens translates the term in ComSS as ‘linguistics’ (79). Martens comments that ἡ λογικὴ τέχνη ‘often encompassed in antiquity far more than what is customarily meant by logic today. “Linguistics” is probably a more helpful translation since it catches better the wide spectrum of this ancient scholarly discipline: it certainly included inquiry into the patterns of argument expressed through language (resembling our logic), but it also comprised an assessment of language itself, that is, the sorts of issues philologists addressed’ (79). Martens’ description of ancient logic dovetails with mine, but it does not justify the translation ‘linguistics,’ which is a modern term for a science of language *as distinguished from* inquiry into patterns of argument. ‘Logic’ remains the best translation, for in our own context ‘logic’ need not refer narrowly to formal logical inquiry into patterns of argument, as Martens supposes. German idealists, phenomenologists, and pragmatists all tend to use ‘logic’ in a much more expansive sense. By translating ‘linguistics,’ Martens obscures the fact that the *character* of ‘logic’ is itself one of the things at issue in using the term, then and now.

¹⁹³ Indeed, the range of topics Origen gives is similar to the broad range of topics the Stoics included within logic. Diogenes Laertius’ list of topics in Stoic dialectic included most of the elements Origen mentions here: ambiguity, definitions, genera and species, and predicates. Origen also goes on to emphasize the use of logic in resisting ‘sophistical arguments’ (thus rightly Somos, *Logic and Argumentation*, 15f); the analysis of sophisms was certainly a major feature of Stoic dialectic as well.

¹⁹⁴ ComSS Prol.1. See also CC 6.7, a fascinating parallel in which Origen argues on the basis of several scriptural wisdom texts that ‘dialectic’ is necessary for the interpretation of scripture.

scientiam pervenitur tres sunt, quas Graeci	attains knowledge of things are the three
ethicam, physicam et theoricen apellaverunt,	which the Greeks called ethics, physics, and
nos has dicere possumus moralem, naturalem et	epoptics; these we may call the moral, natural,
inspectivam. Nonnulli sane apud Graecos etiam	and contemplative. There are admittedly some
logicen, quam nos rationalem possumus dicere,	among the Greeks who also count logic as a
quarto in numero posuere. Alii non extrinsecus	fourth, which we may call rational. Others
eam, sed per has tres quas supra memoravimus	have said that the latter is not extrinsic, but is
disciplinas innexam consertamque per omne	rather interwoven through these three
corpus esse dixerunt...quam utique	disciplines which we mentioned above and is
disciplinam, non tam separari quam inseri	incorporated into the whole group...This
caeteris convenit et intexi.	branch of discipline certainly requires not so
	much to be separated from the others as to be
	mingled and interwoven with them. ¹⁹⁵

Origen correlates the disciplines of ethics, physics, and ‘epoptics’ with the three traditional books of Solomon, from which, Origen claims, this philosophical curriculum ultimately derives. Proverbs corresponds to ethics, Ecclesiastes to physics (because it teaches the vanity of the natural world), and Song of Songs to epoptics. ‘Epoptics’ (based on a well-established emendation of the term *enoptica* which appears in the manuscripts) was a term used by Plato, Aristotle, Plutarch, and Clement, to refer to the grasp of spiritual mysteries, which for Origen comes through the exegesis of the Song of Songs.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁵ ComSS Prol.3, trans. Lawson.

¹⁹⁶ See Somos, *Logic*, 13 n. 25.

A slightly different tripartite division of philosophy into logic, ethics, and physics, which originated with Xenocrates in the Platonic Academy,¹⁹⁷ was adopted in some form by many Platonists and nearly all the Stoics.¹⁹⁸ In several texts, Origen himself refers to this more traditional triad,¹⁹⁹ and Origen is obviously alluding to it here as well. The fact that Origen has replaced ‘logic’ with ‘epoptics’, however, poses certain difficulties, for besides Origen’s own claim to the contrary, there is no evidence that any Greek philosopher used the tripartite scheme of ethics, physics, and theology proposed by Origen.²⁰⁰ Most likely the triad of disciplines listed by Origen is his own invention. We can identify several reasons for his modifying the elements of the traditional curriculum. First, he could not include theology within physics, as the Stoics did, since he rejected the idea that God is part of the physical world. But Origen also (rightly) regards the number three as traditional, which in any case also offers a suggestive parallel to the three books of the Solomonic corpus. To separate physics and theology while retaining the number three, Origen bumped logic from the list. But rather than demoting logic to the status of an *organon*, as on the Aristotelian account of logic, Origen insists that logic is integral to philosophy. It is either a fourth distinct philosophical discipline, or more likely, ‘mingled and interwoven with [the other three].’²⁰¹ The etymological link between ‘logic’ and the ‘Logos’

¹⁹⁷ Cf. Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, 23.

¹⁹⁸ See Aetius 1 Preface 2 = LS 26A; DL 7.39-41 = LS 26B; Plutarch *Stoic self-contradictions* 1035A = LS 26C; etc.

¹⁹⁹ See SVF 2.35-44, which includes citations from both Philo (*De agricultura* §14 = SVF 2.39) and Origen (CM vol. III p. 778 = SVF 2.40), both of which refer to this more traditional triad in the order physics, ethics, and logic. This shows that notwithstanding Origen’s argument here, he is aware of the more standard division of philosophy. Here again he correlates ‘logic’ with the discipline used for the interpretation of Scripture. See also Harl, *Philocalie*, 110-118.

²⁰⁰ Although some philosophers did distinguish ‘theology’ from ‘physics’ as separate subdivisions of ‘physics’ in a generic sense. The Stoic Cleanthes offered a six-part scheme correlating in theology, obviously by subdividing logic, ethics, and physics into pairs: rhetoric, dialectic, ethics, politics, physics, theology (DL 7.41 = LS 26B(4)). So too the Platonist Alcinous distinguishes ‘theology’ and ‘physics’ as coordinate sciences, where both (along with mathematics) are part of a broader ‘theoretical’ science (*Handbook* 7.1).

²⁰¹ Some Stoics argued in a similar fashion that all the philosophical disciplines were inseparably intertwined with one another (DL 7.40 = LS 26B(4)).

would not have been far from Origen's mind.²⁰² As Jonathan Barnes notes, early Christians 'literally worshipped Reason,'²⁰³ which is especially apropos of Origen.

If logic deals with language *and* philosophical argument, this is because the words of sages are themselves spoken in a distinctive manner determined by their knowledge of logic. Particularly in the book of Proverbs, Origen claims, Solomon shows that 'he was neither ignorant of the rational science nor refused to deal with it.'²⁰⁴ Solomon does so in several ways. First, the title of the book, *pro-verbs*, 'denotes that one thing is openly said, and another is inwardly meant.'²⁰⁵ Second, Solomon shows that he 'discriminates between the meanings of words;' for Proverbs begins by using a short succession of closely related words pertaining to wisdom and knowledge, which Origen takes as a sign that Solomon 'distinguishes knowledge from wisdom, and instruction from knowledge, and represents the understanding of words as something different again.'²⁰⁶ Third, he says in Proverbs that, 'subtlety is given by wisdom to the innocent,' which Origen glosses, 'doubtless lest they should be deceived in the Word of God by sophistic fraud.'²⁰⁷ Solomon, in other words, teaches that wisdom and logic are necessary to interpret the scriptures correctly. Finally, Solomon teaches that the scriptures use 'different modes of expression and sundry forms of speech' by referring in Proverbs 1:6 to 'the parable, and dark speech, and the sayings of the wise, and riddles.'²⁰⁸ In his mode of expression, Origen adds, 'following the custom of the ancients, [Solomon] unfolds immense and perfect truths in short

²⁰² I do not think Origen could agree with Somos that 'logical ideas have no direct theological relevance' (*Logic* 8).

²⁰³ Barnes, 'Galen, Christians, logic' 19.

²⁰⁴ ComSS Prol. 3, trans. Lawson.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

and pithy phrases.’²⁰⁹ The ‘ancients’ here most likely includes Greek sages like Heraclitus, known for their cryptic philosophical epigrams.

To this we should add one more observation. Origen hints that when Christians take up logic, they do so not only as a tool for interpreting Scripture but also because their own speech should, like Solomon’s, be characterized by wisdom. By meditating on Solomon’s enigmatic sayings, Origen says, ‘the heart of a man is enlarged, when he is able, by taking statements from the Divine Books, to expand by fuller teaching the things that are said briefly and in enigmatic ways.’²¹⁰ Logic is that discipline that enables the Christian sage, by way of interpreting scripture, to speak wisely — and more expansively — herself. This vision of logic is above all a Stoic one.

211

3. Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that Stoic thought about language provides the best introduction to Origen’s philosophical assumptions language. For Origen as for the Stoa, the sage is one who always says what is true and appropriate. The sage thus subjects her speech to standards of correctness rooted in ‘nature.’ By the same token, disciplines that take conventional language

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ For this reason, there is a certain danger in approaching Origen’s logic in the way Somos does in his *Logic and Argumentation*. Somos rightly recognizes that the character of ancient logic was contested and that it ultimately included ‘rationality in the broadest sense’ (preface). But he tends to treat logic as separate from scriptural interpretation. ‘... the topic of logic is quite different from that of exegetical activity, spirituality and prayer in terms of importance’ (preface). His book deals with ‘the common intersection of the Origenian and modern use of the word *logica*,’ which risks obscuring the unity of Origen’s distinct conception of logic (10). Somos goes on in chapter 10 to argue that because Origen complements his use of Stoic inference schemes and terms with those drawn from Aristotle and available to Middle Platonists, Origen’s logic is not primarily Stoic. This claim may be true in the sense that, like other Middle Platonists, he drew on the logical resources of both Aristotle and the Stoa, so that there is no reason to see his logic as Stoic *to the exclusion* of Platonistic nor to posit any direct influence of a teacher or text who is ‘Stoic’ in a narrow sense. But to understand how Origen could *identify* the science of exegesis as ‘logic,’

alone as their object are inadequate for grasping language in all its relations. Origen follows the Stoa in arguing that *logic* is necessary for interpreting the words of the wise; in viewing meaning as a non-subjective relation between words and things; and in seeking the many ways that names may be appropriate to what they name. We also saw how logic, meaning, and naming take on a distinctly Christian cast in Origen's philosophy of language, influenced by the particular portrait of wisdom he finds in the Christian Scriptures.

Beginning in the next chapter, my aim is to show how this general conception of wisdom and language generates the particulars of Origen's exegesis. Exegesis itself is an activity of learning to speak the language of scripture, an activity which is nothing other than imitating Christ — by learning to speak scripture's words as one's own (chapter 2), by mastering the general rules governing its speech (chapter 3), and by producing bold new speech of one's own (chapter 4).

neither Aristotle nor those Platonists who took Aristotle's logic as a faithful development of Plato's are likely to be much help.

Chapter 2: The Pragmatics of Scriptural Utterances

In a homily on Psalm 15, Origen describes his aims as a reader by quoting the words of Paul. “If you have heard Jesus speaking these things [the words of Psalm 15], hear also Paul commanding you, ‘imitate me as I imitate Christ!’” (1 Cor. 11.1). Paul’s command to imitate himself and Christ extends, Origen argues, to the very words that Christ speaks, including those he speaks through the psalm that Origen is interpreting:

For this reason [Christ] says these things, that we might have a kind of sketch (ὕπογραμμὸν) of what we should imitate, that we also might say, ‘I will bless the Lord who knit me together,’ that we also might say, ‘yet through the night my kidneys disciplined me.’²¹²

Yet the words of this psalm pose very starkly the difficulties one faces in imitating Christ’s speech in scripture. Why exactly would a Christian pray ‘through the night my kidneys disciplined me?’ More importantly, what would she mean in praying this?

The question does not primarily concern the *past* or *historical* meaning of the phrase. It is first and foremost a question of the meaning of one’s own words, words that, though they are taken from an ancient text, nevertheless quite literally come out of one’s own mouth. Origen liked to quote the proverb, ‘the heart of a sage will understand the [words] that come out of his own mouth,’²¹³ which both summarizes the problem and situates its possible solution in the context of the wisdom tradition. This proverb provides an apt summary of the concerns of this chapter. Origen treats the words of scripture as ‘words that come out of his own mouth,’ words

²¹² HomPs 15.2.4.

that the Christian in pursuit of wisdom ought to perform and make her own.²¹⁴ But in thus uttering the words of scripture, I may not know what I am saying; or I may think I know and find it objectionable. The task of the wise exegete is thus to ‘understand the words’ of scripture as they might come out of his own mouth.

To make sense of this, Origen brings to bear on the interpretation of scripture his broadly Stoic conception of language that I sketched in the previous chapter. The Stoics rejected a purely *grammatical* conception of linguistic competence that reduces it to the mastery of cultural norms: ‘Hellenicity’ or ‘Latinicity.’ Instead, they defended a *logical* conception of linguistic competence in which linguistic usage must itself be evaluated by its adequacy to its subject matter (πράγμα). The competent speaker is not primarily the cultured elite but the sage, whose words are always true and well spoken. Origen adopts this formal conception of the sage and finds it realized in the words of scripture, which embody the wisdom of the Logos. Interpretation of scripture thus takes the general form of *learning the language of scripture*.

Over the course of the next three chapters, through a close examination of his recently discovered *Homilies on the Psalms*, I will offer a detailed sketch of how Origen models this wisdom hermeneutic as an activity of learning the language of scripture. In this chapter, I argue that Origen treats the words of scripture performatively as sentences to be uttered. A text may be uttered in a range of possible contexts, and so performative exegesis must include the investigation of a great deal of extra-textual material, including features of possible occasions of utterance and of the subject matter to which an utterance is referred.

²¹³ ‘καρδία σοφοῦ νοήσῃ τὰ ἀπὸ τοῦ ἰδίου στόματος’ (Proverbs 16:23 LXX). For other uses by Origen, see CJ 6.21, 25; 13.316; 28.174; CM 12.41; CR 2.14 and 10.43.

²¹⁴ I have taken the notion of scripture as script from Rebecca Rine, ‘The Song of Songs as Scripture and Script: Performance, Pedagogy, Patristics’ (Dissertation, UVA 2012): 39-40. It should be noted that Rine limits her argument to the scholarly use of a performative theory of language for the academic analysis of patristic texts. But as I showed in the previous chapter, Origen himself has an explicit theory of language that is similar to what Rine

This chapter builds on a growing body of work on the performative character of patristic exegesis in general and Origen's exegesis in particular.²¹⁵ In my view, the most sophisticated contribution to this discussion is that of Rebecca Rine in her recent dissertation. She contrasts a performative approach to language with, on the one hand, approaches that rely on 'structuralist' conceptions of language and that tend to reduce language to a relation between texts and meanings, and on the other hand, approaches that rely on 'post-structuralist' or 'rhetorical' conceptions of language and that tend to reduce language to a relation between texts and users. What she calls a 'performative theory' is one that analyzes the function of an utterance as a dynamic relationship between the objects that the utterance signifies and those patterns of usage/performance by which it signifies. What an utterance means and what it does are, on this view, inseparable. She explicates this through the helpful analogy of the text as a script:

In the same way that an actor performs the words of a script, the fathers perform the words of the Song - by speaking them in a new communicative context. The analogy is not a strict one, for actors speak only the words of the script, using intonation, timing, staging, costuming, and other techniques to mediate the script to an audience. The fathers' speech, by contrast, is not limited to

calls a 'performative' one, namely, that provided by Stoic logic. Performative questions and categories are themselves an explicit dimension of Origen's exegesis, which further confirms the importance of Rine's proposal.

²¹⁵ Karen Jo Torjesen, *Hermeneutical Procedure and Theological Method in Origen's Exegesis* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1985) called attention to the role of quotation and learning how to speak in the context of the scriptural pedagogy of the Logos. Francis Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997) places the exegesis of scripture in the oral context of ancient paideia. Chapter 5 in particular (97-116) shows how exegesis leads to the use of scriptural language in the patristic orations. Cf. Rine's discussion of performativity in both in 'Scripture and Script', 248-60. David Dawson, *Christian Figural Reading and the Fashioning of Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 15, speaks of a 'performative' rather than a 'semiotic' approach to scripture. Catherine Chin, 'Origen and Christian Naming: Textual Exhaustion and the Boundaries of Gentility in Commentary on John 1,' *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 14:4 (Winter 2006), 407-436 displays Origen's exegesis as a performance of a cultural-linguistic facility in a 'Christianicity' analogous to Hellenicity. Chin's analysis is powerful, so long as one keeps firmly in view that for Origen, Christian patterns of speech ('Christianicity') are appropriate not because of their cultural correctness but because of their appropriate relation to what is true. Olivier Munnich, 'Le rôle de la citation dans l'écriture d'Origène,' in Sylwia Kaczmarek and Henryk Pietras, eds., *Origeniana Decima* (Walpole: Peeters Publishers, 2011): 507-538, shows how the language of scripture functions for Origen as langue, units of utterance from with which he creatively develops his own thought.

the words of the Song; they mediate these words to their listeners by placing them in a new literary context in addition to a new communicative context. Nevertheless, this difference is one of degree rather than kind: just as an actor employs gestures or expressions to bring a script to life, the fathers insert “additional lines” into the script so as to enliven it and make it comprehensible for their listeners. Viewed performatively, then, the words of the Song are a script, and the writings of the fathers are performances of that script. In the fathers’ works, the dynamic potential of the Song’s signs has been actualized.²¹⁶

In what follows I show how Origen’s exegetical theory and practice are built around assumptions about the performativity of language. Origen regards the sentences of scripture as words to be performed by uttering them in new communicative contexts. This assumption gives rise in Origen to two basic stages of analysis. One must first examine biblical sentences according to the conventional sense of the words and the syntactic conventions of the language, but without specifying a particular context of performance. This *semantic* level of analysis, which I consider in part I, is what Origen labels κατὰ λέξιν, ‘according to the text [alone].’ But in Origen’s view, most uses of a text are not functions of semantic conventions alone, but rather depend on the relationship between the text and the conditions under which it is uttered: e.g. the referent of a text, its implied speaker, the appropriate occasion for uttering it, figures of speech it uses, the reason for uttering it, and so on. These effects depend on the hearer or reader drawing a variety of inferences that go beyond properties of the text itself, and the outcome of these inferences need not be conventionally determined. Most of Origen’s analysis operates at this *pragmatic* level, which requires him constantly to be drawing inferences warranted by the

Cf. also Robert Louis Wilken, ‘In Defense of Allegory,’ *Modern Theology* 14:2 (April 1998): 197-212, especially his point that, ‘Allegory is about privileging the biblical language’ (206).

²¹⁶ Rine, *Scripture and Script*, 39-40.

relation between the text and extra-textual realities, requiring an investigation of both. In part II, I show how Origen draws inferences about the performative conditions under which a text may be uttered by attending to his exegesis of *deixis*. In part III, I show how Origen investigates the logical relation between an utterance and its subject matter by attending to the text's *implicature*. In both cases, since more is involved in using a text than the text itself, the exegete must investigate a great many things besides the text itself. She must be a linguist and a logician, not merely a historian or a grammarian.

1. Scripture as Script

1.1. *Speaking the Scriptures*

Origen regards the sentences of scripture as scripts, words the Christian is to learn and whose use she is to master. Often the most appropriate speaker of this script is God, and the primary use the Christian must learn is how to hear them.²¹⁷ However, I focus on the myriad cases throughout the scriptures, especially in the Psalms, in which Origen interprets the scriptures as a script that the Christian herself is supposed to perform by placing them on her own lips. It is easy enough to multiply texts in which Origen makes this point in his *Homilies on the Psalms* alone.²¹⁸ To his comments on Psalm 15 above, we may add the following examples:

HomPs 77.6.2:

²¹⁷ This is the case, for example, with prophetic texts like Jeremiah. See Torjesen, *Hermeneutical Procedure*, 52.

²¹⁸ Also: HomPs 15.1.3: 'The Savior recounts his own prayer to us, so that by recounting it, he might also teach us to pray;' PsFrag 118.125 (390.1-3): 'Let the one who serves in all action and understanding and does all things according to his word, say, 'I am your servant' (Ps. 118:125);' and HomPs 36.3.11.

Ἐλεγον τότε διστάζων, ὅτι τί εἶπω περὶ τοῦ
πνεύματος οὐκ οἶδα. Ἐδίδαξέν με ὁ προφήτης
τί δεῖ λέγειν περὶ τοῦ πνεύματος· ἐμνήσθη γάρ,
φησὶν, ὁ θεὸς ὅτι σὰρξ εἰσιν.

I just spoke hesitatingly [about the soul of the
sinner changing from spirit to flesh], because I
do not know what I should say concerning the
spirit. But the prophet taught me what one
should say about the spirit; for he says, ‘God
remembers that they are flesh’ (Ps. 77:39a).

HomPs 67.1.1

Μαθητῆς ἐστὶ τοῦ εἰπόντος· μάθετε ἀπ’ ἐμοῦ,
ὅτι πραῖς εἰμι καὶ ταπεινὸς τῇ καρδίᾳ, ὁ
τοσαῦτα περὶ ἑαυτοῦ ἐπὶ τὸ μετρίωτερον
εἰπὼν...

The disciple of the one who says, ‘Learn from
me, for I am meek and humble at heart’ (Mt.
11:29) says the same things about himself, so
far as it is appropriate...

HomPs 77.9.1

Παῦλος, ὅσον ἐπὶ τῇ κατὰ θεὸν αὐτοῦ προκοπῇ
καὶ τῷ ἀπὸ ἀληθείας λέγειν· ὅσοι οὖν τοῦτο
τέλειοι φρονῶμεν, ὡς τέλειος δυνατὸς ἦν καὶ
οὕτως δυνατῶς ὥστε λέγειν· πάντα ἰσχύω ἐν τῷ
ἐνδυναμοῦντι με Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ τῷ κυρίῳ μου.

Paul, in as much as he was far advanced
towards God, said truly that, ‘We who are
perfect should think this way’ (Phil. 3:15).
Being perfect, he was also [fully] able, and
thus he was able to say, ‘I can do all things
through the one who strengthens me,’ (Phil.
4:13) Christ Jesus my Lord.

HomPs 76.2.4

Ὡςπερ δὲ οἱ λόγοι κἂν ἐξίωσιν ἐκ στόματός

But just as the words that come out of my

μου, ὧσι δὲ ἀνεπίληπτοι καὶ θεῖοι, οὐκ εἰσὶν	mouth, if they are blameless and divine, are
ἐμοῦ ἀλλὰ τοῦ θεοῦ, ὥστε θαρροῦντά με	not mine but God's, so that I may boldly say,
λέγειν· ἢ δοκιμὴν ζητεῖτε τοῦ ἐν ἐμοὶ λαλοῦντος	‘or do you seek proof that Christ speaks in
Χριστοῦ...	me...’ (2 Cor. 13:3)

In these examples — I shall consider many others in the course of this dissertation — Origen interprets words of scripture by placing them on someone's lips. Often Origen's point in doing so is ethical: by imitating her teachers, the Christian must learn to be the kind of person who can say words of Christ (HomPs 67.1.1) or of Paul (HomPs 76.2.4) appropriately.²¹⁹ Sometimes, however, as in HomPs 77.6.2, a scriptural text provides language to use in resolving a theological question. The language scripture provides may itself be puzzling, as we noted with reference to HomPs 15.2.4. In each case, the point is not (just) to explicate the meaning of the scriptures but to learn how to use them. The scriptures are a script.

In the background are ancient study and liturgical practices in which the reading of the written word is closely bound up with its oral performance. As Frances Young says,

Reader reception was universally through the oral medium and reading even in private was aloud...Rhetorical education encouraged reading aloud as practice for declamation and the use of literature as great speech to emulate in composition. Reading a manuscript without word division or punctuation required the kind of oral realisation that most of us need to read a musical score: it is not easy to do it in one's head.²²⁰

²¹⁹ ‘...the exegesis of the words of prayer describes an attitude of the soul, the situation of the one who is praying. The exegesis of prayer is an interpretation of the soul of the one who is praying’ (Torjesen, *Hermeneutical Procedure*, 26-9, esp. 27).

In recognition of these difficulties, ancient grammarians included διορθώτικον (text-criticism) and αναγνώστικον (reading and construal of the text) as foundational classroom practices and skills preliminary to the more advanced exegetical procedures called ἐξηγητικόν.²²¹ Pierre Hadot emphasizes that philosophical education and training were also oriented towards the oral context of dialogue. ‘More than other literature, philosophical works are linked to oral transmission because ancient philosophy itself is above all oral in character...In matters of philosophical teaching, writing is only an aid to memory, a last resort that will never replace the living word.’²²²

The oral recital of scriptural texts was also integral to particular church practices with which Origen was greatly concerned. The words of Scriptures were prayed in private or as part of the church’s liturgy.²²³ The name of Jesus was uttered in exorcisms or healings.²²⁴ And not least, by Origen’s day both Old Testament and New Testament texts were read publicly as part of church gatherings.²²⁵ This last use was tied especially closely to their status as Scripture, so that debates about the canon were typically framed as debates about which texts should be publicly read.²²⁶

²²⁰ Young, *Biblical Exegesis*, 11-13.

²²¹ On these divisions see Young, *Biblical Exegesis*, 82-89, and Peter Martens, *Origen and Scripture: Contours of the Exegetical Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012): 41f, though neither gives more than passing attention to αναγνώστικον. Origen’s discussion of the power of reading a text one does not understand is interesting in this connection: cf. *Philocalia* §12 and Harl’s discussion (394-7).

²²² Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, ed. Arnold I. Davidson, trans. Michael Chase (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995): 62.

²²³ Origen states explicitly that the scriptures teach us what we ought to pray by giving us actual words to say: cf. *On Prayer* 2.2. Moreover, sometimes we *lack* the words to pray, as in texts like Romans 8:26, ‘we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes on our behalf with unutterable groanings,’ and 1 Cor. 14:14, ‘If I speak in tongues, my spirit prays but my mind is without fruit.’ In his commentary on Romans 8:26 in CR 7.6, Origen imagines the Spirit as a school-teacher sounding out letters for his student to learn, so that in performing this inarticulate elementary speech the teacher becomes in a way like the beginner. This is a powerful image of the Spirit teaching one the language of scripture. I thank Joseph Trigg for pointing me to this text.

²²⁴ In Origen, see CC 1.6, 24, 46, 67, et al. For exorcism in the 1st and 2nd centuries, cf. Graham H. Twelftree, *In the Name of Jesus: Exorcism Among Early Christians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007).

²²⁵ Harry Gamble, *Books and Readers in the Early Church* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995): 211-31.

²²⁶ ‘The [canonization] debate was framed in terms of content and authorship, but the practical issue was whether those documents should be publicly read’ (Gamble, *Books and Readers*, 215).

Most important for our purposes, scriptural texts were *memorized*. Origen was famous for the vast amount of scripture he had committed to memory, beginning from boyhood.²²⁷ According to Eusebius,

[Origen] already had laid down no small foundation in his study of the faith, having been trained in the divine Scriptures even from his boyhood. Certainly he spent no ordinary amount of labor on these, for his father, in addition to the usual curriculum of studies, gave these no secondary consideration. On every occasion, for example, before attending to the secular subjects he urged him to train himself in the sacred studies, requiring him each day to study and recite. And these studies were not without purpose in the boy's mind, who, on the other hand, labored so zealously at these that the simple and superficial readings of the sacred words did not satisfy him, but he sought for something more, and already at that age busied himself with deeper speculations, so that he even caused his father annoyance, as he inquired what the intent of the inspired Scripture really was.²²⁸

This quotation illustrates how naturally the practice of memorization generates questions about the meaning of the words that come out of one's mouth. Nor is it merely a question of their meaning when one is studiously rehearsing the words. To memorize a text is to acquire a capacity to utter it, and it is likely that words one has memorized will seep into one's own speech in other contexts. This is all the more true in the ancient world, where writers intentionally cultivated the imitation of classical texts, leading to a highly intertextual style of speech and

²²⁷ See the discussion and texts cited in Martens, *Exegetical Life*, 176 n.66.

²²⁸ Eusebius, *HE* VI.2. From the translation by Roy J. Deferrari, *Ecclesiastical History, Books 6-10* (Washington: CUA Press, 1955), 6.

writing.²²⁹ This sort of formation is evident in Origen's case, who not only quotes scripture frequently but whose patterns of speech are heavily shaped by scriptural language.²³⁰ The constant presence of scriptural texts on Origen's own lips and nearly every page of his writing is a very strong indication that he regards scriptural texts as scripts to be performed.

Origen exhorted his hearers to memorize the scriptures as well:

πολλάκις ἔρχεται τις ζητῶν μαθεῖν νοήματα	Frequently someone comes to me who seeks
κείμενα ἐν τῇ ἱερᾷ γραφῇ, καὶ κεκρυμμένως	to learn the concepts contained in the holy
κείμενα, μηδὲ εἰδὼς ῥητὸν εὐαγγελικόν, μηδὲ	scripture, and contained there in a hidden
μεμνημένος λόγος ἀποστολικοῦ, μὴ εἰδὼς τί	manner. But they come without knowing the
προφήτης λέγει καὶ τί δὲ ἐν τῷ Βιβλίῳ τῷδε	gospel text, without remembering the word of
γέγραπται. εἴποι δ' ἂν τις πρὸς ἐκεῖνον	the apostle, without knowing what the prophet
εὐκαίρως “πλάτυνον τὸ στόμα σου, εἰ θέλεις	says and what is written in such and such a
πληρωθῆναι τὸ στόμα σου διὰ τοῦ μαθάνειν	book. Someone might say to this person at the
ταῦτα, περὶ ὧν πυνθάνη”. ἐὰν οὖν τις μέλλοι	appropriate time, “‘widen your mouth’ (Ps.
νοεῖν τὰ ἱερὰ γράμματα, μὴ ἄλλην παρασκευὴν	80:11), if you want your mouth to be filled
ἔχέτω ἢ ἀπὸ τῆς μνήμης ἔχέτω τῶν γραφῶν·	with these teachings, about which you would
λαλοῦμεν γὰρ τὰ θεῖα οὐκ ἐν διδακτοῖς	learn.” If therefore someone is going to
ἀνθρωπίνοις σοφίας λόγοις, ἀλλ' ἐν διδακτοῖς	understand the holy letters, let him prepare in
πνεύματος, πνευματικοῖς πνευματικὰ	no other way than by committing the
συγκρίνοντες.	scriptures to memory. For we speak divine

²²⁹ Young offers a rich discussion of allusion and quotation in the orations of Gregory Nazianzen in *Biblical Exegesis*, 97-117. Most of what she describes applies to Origen as well, though as a scientist, of sort, he is much more concerned to *justify* his use of words. See also Rine, ‘Script and Scripture’, 66-123, esp. the patterns of quotation discussed in 71-76.

²³⁰ Cf. Rolf Gögler, *Zur Theologie des biblischen Wortes bei Origenes* (Dusseldorf: Patmos, 1963), especially his discussion of ‘Die Sprache des Origenes’ (28-33). His observation that ‘Die Sprache der Hl. Schrift hat die Sprache des Origenes geprägt’ (30) anticipates my thesis that Origen aims to learn the language of scripture.

things, ‘not in words of wisdom taught by
human beings, but in [words] taught by the
Spirit, comparing spiritual things with
spiritual things’ (1 Cor. 2:13).²³¹

This passage both explicates and models the ‘widening of the mouth’ that follows from the memorization of scripture. By putting memorized Scriptures to use, one may ‘speak divine things.’ Origen models how to do so with several texts that he, presumably, has memorized himself. In the case of Paul’s words in 1 Cor. 2:13, Origen seamlessly integrates them into his own discourse about memorization by quoting them without further comment.²³² In his discussion of Psalm 80:11b, however, Origen reflects on the appropriate conditions under which one may adopt a scriptural text as one’s own words. The words of the lemma, ‘widen your mouth, and he will fill it,’ are puzzling if taken literally, as Origen argued in a discussion preceding the quoted section. How does one ‘widen’ one’s mouth, and what kind of filling can one expect? Origen argues that instead of speaking these words in a literal sense, one should use them figuratively with reference to memorization. Instead of regarding them as an exhortation about the generic good of memorization, however, Origen argues that there is a particular occasion under which these words may be rightly used in this figural sense. ‘Someone might say’ these words to a specific kind of person (one who wants to understand scripture but has not memorized it) and at a specific time (ἐνκαίρως, ‘at the appropriate time’). Only contextualized in this way do the puzzling words ‘widen your mouth, and he will fill it’ function as a sentence about the way scriptural memorization leads to further insights.

²³¹ HomPs 80.2.5.

1.2. *Semantics and the Literal Sense*

When one approaches the interpretation of Scripture as an attempt to gain a facility to use it, a distinction between two levels of understanding is natural. There is, on the one hand, what the text seems to mean when one simply recites it; there is, on the other, the various possible uses to which it might be put by using it appropriately in particular contexts. Stoic linguists drew a distinction at just this point, one that has close parallels in contemporary pragmatics. In his extensive study of Stoic and Aristotelian theories of speech acts, D. N. Schenkeveld compares the Stoic distinction between *λέξις* and *λόγος* to a distinction proposed by Searle between the *semantic* level of communication and the *pragmatic* level.²³³ The semantic level is ‘that part of the total information conveyed [by an utterance] which is contributed by the linguistic properties of the sentence.’ The pragmatic level refers to ‘those factors which have to do with the actual speech-situation.’²³⁴ Semantics refers to reflection on *λέξις* — the text or expression in light of the relevant linguistic conventions. Pragmatics refers to reflection on *λόγος* — the various *uses* to which sentences may be put, including the assertion of truths, but also other speech acts, poetry, and rhetoric. Such a distinction is apropos for Stoic philosophers concerned with mastering the art of dialectic. The semantic level of information conveyed by the utterance alone covers what one can learn from simply hearing a sentence without consideration of context. But as the sophisms that so exercised Chrysippus and other Stoic logicians show, what a sentence

²³² The modern scholarly tendency to place verses in quotation marks and include scriptural references can obscure the integration of scriptural language into patristic discourse.

²³³ The Searlian terminology derives, in turn, from Charles Morris, *Foundations of the Theory of Signs* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1938). Morris was a student of Charles Peirce, who develops Peirce’s triadic semiotic into a distinction between three branches of a science of semiotics: syntactics, semantics, and pragmatics.

²³⁴ D. M. Schenkeveld, ‘Studies in the History of Ancient Linguistics: II. Stoic and Peripatetic Kinds of Speech Act and the Distinction of Grammatical Moods,’ *Mnemosyne*, 4th Series, vol. 37, fasc. 3/4 (1984): 291-353, esp. 326.

seems to signify on an initial hearing is often misleading. The pragmatic level required them to consider its function in the actual discourse of which they were a part and evaluate its truth, moving from superficial λέξις to the underling λόγος. This fruitful distinction could then be applied in other contexts, as it was by later Stoics. In the previous chapter we noted that the Stoic Crates argued that texts cannot be properly understood on a purely grammatical basis. Without what he called ‘logic,’ the grammarian is left only with features of language that can be understood from the text alone: rare words, accents, and such trivial matters.²³⁵ Crates’ distinction between grammar and logic closely parallels Searle’s between semantics and pragmatics.

The problem facing one memorizing a text or hearing it read liturgically is similar. Since what one understands is abstracted from the use of a text with reference to a particular context, one apprehends the text in accord with its semantics alone. And this is exactly the level of understanding that Origen’s notion of the literal sense aims to distinguish. The very names he most frequently gives this sense suggest this: κατὰ λέξιν (‘according to the text’) and κατὰ ῥητὸν (‘according to what is said’). Words like λέξις and ῥητὸν were part of Origen’s vocabulary for referring to linguistic utterances, that is, physical objects, whether spoken (φωνή, ῥημα) or written (λέξις). Lexically, we would expect that a reading κατὰ λέξιν or κατὰ ῥητὸν would be one that restricts itself to the written or spoken text alone. (That Origen uses these terms interchangeably underscores the fact that for him, a written text is typically something to be performed by speaking it). It would thus restrict itself to precisely the kind of information Searle calls semantic.

²³⁵ A.M. 1.79. On Crates, see David Blank’s commentary in Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Grammarians*, 140f.

Scholars have long observed that Origen's 'literal' sense is neither the sense intended by the author nor the meaning of a text when referred to a particular historical context.²³⁶ Rather, the most careful examinations of Origen's literal sense have focused on two important features, both of which must be kept in view. First, the literal sense may be described, following Crouzel, in *epistemological* terms as 'the raw matter of what is said, before, if it were possible, any attempt at interpretation is made.'²³⁷ Crouzel's definition locates the literal sense in the event of speaking a text prior to any interpretation or reflection. I would simply clarify that 'raw matter' should be taken as a synecdoche for that intellectual content that one apprehends when the material textual utterance sounds in the ear. The literal sense may then be reformulated as that which one understands or causes another to understand by reciting a text in a neutral context. It is, we might say, the *unexamined* sense of scripture: that which a competent speaker automatically understands when repeating a text for the purpose of memorizing it, or hearing it read liturgically, without thinking any further about the meaning or use of the words one is saying.

Second, the literal sense can be described in *procedural* terms, following Tigcheler in his monograph on the Origenist Didymus the Blind.²³⁸ Tigcheler hypothesized that his results would apply to Origen as well, which scholars who have considered the question have endorsed.²³⁹ Tigcheler shows that Didymus not only distinguished between two level of reading — one oriented towards material realities, the other towards immaterial — but that he also worked with

²³⁶ Henri de Lubac, *History and Spirit*, Anne Englund Nash, trans. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2007), 128-143, esp. 129; Young, *Biblical Exegesis*, 187f.

²³⁷ Henri Crouzel, *Origen* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998), 62. Cf. Henri Crouzel, 'Pourquoi Origène refuse-t-il le sens littéral dans ses homélies sur l'Hexateuch?' *Bulletin de Littérature Ecclésiastique* 70 (1969), 241-63; and Patricia Cox Miller, 'Origen and the Witch of Endor: Toward an Iconoclastic Typology,' *Anglican Theological Review*, 66 (1984), 137-47.

²³⁸ J. H. Tigcheler, *Didyme l'Aveugle et l'exégèse allegorique, son commentaire sur Zacharie* (Nijmegen: Dekker & van de Vegt, 1977).

²³⁹ See, for example, Torjesen, *Hermeneutical Procedure*, 10f, and F. M. Young, 'Alexandrian and Antiochene Exegesis' in Alan J. Hauser and Duane F. Watson, eds, *A History of Biblical Interpretation*, vol 1 (Erdmanns: Grand Rapids, 2003), 334-354, esp. 338.

a clear distinction between sense and reference.²⁴⁰ The literal sense (πρὸς ῥητόν, κατὰ λέξιν) refers to the sense of the text for a reader who attends solely to what may be inferred from the physical text or utterance itself (in relation to its conventional idiom). This is exactly Searle's semantic level. Since the operative conventions of a text may be unknown, this sort of reading often takes the form of clarifying them — for example, the meaning of difficult words. The literal sense must be distinguished, however, not only from a text's figural sense (κατ' ἀλληγορίαν), but also from its various possible referents, both corporeal (καθ' ἱστορίαν) and incorporeal (κατ' ἀναγωγήν). Referents and figural senses are established through usage, and hence fall under Searle's pragmatics.

These two perspectives — epistemological and procedural — are complementary. The apparent contradiction in the fact that Crouzel describes the literal sense as an *immediate* sense while Tigcheler describes a procedure (hence, a mediation) for determining it can be resolved by pointing out that to understand a text 'immediately' presupposes that one already possesses a facility with the relevant linguistic conventions. The kinds of procedures that Tigcheler outlines at the literal level aim at creating in a hearer the linguistic conventions necessary for her to apprehend a text immediately in the way that Crouzel describes. For it is a familiar fact, and one of great concern to Origen, that one may recite words that one does not understand, even literally. In the *Philocalia*, Origen reflects on the extreme case in which one memorizes a text without understanding any of the words one is saying.²⁴¹ In such a case, one experiences the text merely as sounds or syllables, without any sense.²⁴² In another case, a reciter may understand the

²⁴⁰ He also offers a list of earlier scholars who neglect this crucial procedural distinction, including Henri de Lubac. Despite the important discussion in Young, *Biblical Exegesis*, 187f, this distinction is still neglected all too frequently in discussions of patristic exegesis.

²⁴¹ Even the sounds alone have a beneficial effect, he argues, like a medicine that works without one's conscious awareness: *Philocalia* 12.

²⁴² According to DL 7.57 (= LS 33A), Stoic logicians distinguished between 'utterance' (φωνή), 'speech' (λέξις), and 'discourse' (λόγος). Any vocal sound is an utterance, but only sound that is 'articulated' (ἐναρθρον) in such a

bulk of what she utters, yet not understand one or two difficult words, for which the grammatical clarification of words (γλωσσηματικόν) is necessary.²⁴³ Many of the texts the church read aloud, especially Septuagint texts with their loan-words, coinages, and Semitic constructions, could be extremely puzzling.²⁴⁴ If, however, one is sufficiently competent in the language, then the immediate apprehension of the sense of a sentence as one speaks or hears it is what Origen refers to as its literal sense.

It requires a further act of investigation, however, to establish that some corporeal referent exists to which the text might refer in its literal sense. Every well-formed sentence has a literal sense, but not every such sentence has a corporeal referent. A realistic text may be fictional, for example.²⁴⁵ A facility with conventional language makes possible an immediate and subjective apprehension of the text, but its non-literal senses and any possible referents must be tested by reason.²⁴⁶ With these kinds of questions, however, the reader moves beyond semantics to pragmatics, to a logical consideration of the possible *uses* of a text to refer to such and such an object with such and such an effect.²⁴⁷ In any case, ‘literal’ and ‘allegorical’ do not exhaust the

way that it can be divided into elements and written in letters is *speech*. In turn, only *significant* speech is discourse. As an example of insignificant speech, Diogenes offers the nonsense syllables ‘blituri.’ One who memorizes a text without understanding its words apprehends it in this way, as mere speech — λέξις but not λόγος.

²⁴³ On which see Bernard Neuschäfer, *Origenes Als Philologe* (Basel: Friedrich Reinhardt Verlag, 1987), 140-155.

An interesting example occurs in HomPs 36.1.1, where Origen notes with some delight that the LXX translators have used a word according to a usage ‘unknown both to philologists and to the uneducated.’

²⁴⁴ One might also have an utterance related to its reference without expressing any sense. When using a text for prayer, one might, for example, know its referent (God) but not fully understand what one is praying. More starkly, Origen emphasizes that the power of the name of God confessed by the martyr is an effective relation that obtains between the name and God, totally independent of whether one understands the name also to express some translatable *sense* (CC 1.24f). Origen himself draws the comparison to magical incantations.

²⁴⁵ As Hans Frei reminds us: *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), esp. 1-16.

²⁴⁶ There is an analogy here to the Stoic theory of perception. The senses make proposals that take the form of propositions (ἄξιωματα), but these propositions must themselves be tested by reason before the sage assents to them. On this point, see Robert M. Berchman, Robert M, *From Philo to Origen: Middle Platonism in Transition* (Chico: Scholars Press, 1984), 214.

²⁴⁷ There is a parallel both historically and formally between Origen and those tannaitic rabbinic circles associated with Rabbi Ishmael. In his hermeneutical study of *Mekhilta de Rabbi Ishmael* and the *Sifre Numbers*, Azzan Yadin-Israel, *Scripture as Logos: Rabbi Ishmael and the Origins of Midrash* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), calls attention to the technical vocabulary of ‘hearing’ scripture. In these texts, ‘hearing’ the scriptures refers to a reader’s passive grasp of the meaning of a scriptural text without any need for interpretation (Yadin-

ways a text may signify for Origen; there is more that goes beyond the literal sense than merely the allegorical senses.

It will be useful to display this briefly in an example. The following is fairly typical.

μη παρέλθωμεν δὲ μηδὲ τὸ ῥητὸν κατ' αὐτό,	But let us not go beyond the text taken at face
ἀλλ' ἴδωμεν εἰ δύναται ἔχειν τινὰ νοῦν ἢ λέξις	value, but rather see if it is possible that there
ἢ λέγουσα· εἰδοσάν σε ὕδατα καὶ ἐφοβήθησαν,	is some insight contained in the text which
ἐταράχθησαν ἄβυσσοι, πλῆθος ἤχους ὑδάτων.	says, 'O waters, see and be afraid; O deeps,
ἐπέρχεται δὴ μοι λέγειν, ὅτι πάντα ἐνψύχονται	tremble, full of the sound of waters.' (Ps.
καὶ οὐδέν ἐστιν ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ κενὸν ψυχῆς·	76:17-18a). For it occurs to me to say that
πάντα δὲ ἐνψύχονται σώμασι διαφόροις.	everything is ensouled, and there is nothing in
	the world devoid of soul; but everything is
	ensouled in different kinds of body. ²⁴⁸

Origen has already offered a figural reading of the words 'O waters, see and be afraid...' Here he returns to the literal sense (τὸ ῥητὸν κατ' αὐτό) to show that the text (ἢ λέξις) in itself has 'some insight' to teach. I simply want to observe two things about this passage. First, the 'literal sense' clearly refers to a strict semantic construal of the words of the psalm, to the effect that the waters

Israel, *Scripture*, 36). Generally the midrash rejects this passively understood reading in favor of an alternative reading that requires some form of argumentation (ידין), usually with reference to another scriptural text. On this account, what these rabbis label 'as it is heard' (כשמעו) appears to refer to a stage of reading very similar to Origen's κατὰ λέξιν. There does seem to be a difference in the theological evaluation of this stage, however. The rhetoric of the R. Ishmael midrashim generally implies that where possible, the passive reception of unmediated 'hearing' is the ideal posture. Although the reading initially heard does not endure, 'their initial mention indicates that the reader has intervened only after the preferred path of passive receptivity has proven to be untenable' (Yadin-Israel, *Scripture as Logos*, 44). By contrast, Origen's rhetoric is frequently hostile to the literal sense and always conscious of its limitations. Both agree, however, that one's immediate apprehension of textual meaning must frequently be rejected in favor of a reading established by argument and appeal to texts beyond the *lemma* itself. Given that the Ishmael *midrashim* would have been circulating in Palestine during the period in which Origen lived there, this parallel indicates that there may indeed be a substantive procedural issue at stake between Origen and his Jewish interlocutors concerning literalism, *contra* Martens, *Origen and Scripture*, 135-160.

really have the capacity to see and fear. It is to show the plausibility of the text even on this literal construal that he goes on to defend the thesis that ‘everything is ensouled.’²⁴⁹ On this reading, Origen hypothesizes that even the waters are the kind of being that literally have the capacity to respond when addressed, to see and be afraid. Second, Origen does not assume the literal sense really obtains as a matter of course; indeed, there is good reason in this case to suppose it does not. Rather, he has to demonstrate that this literal sense can be spoken of actual corporeal referents, which is just what he goes on to do. The literal sense is what one immediately apprehends, but whether a text on this interpretation may truly refer to anything is a separate matter.

1.3. The Turn to Pragmatics

In the remainder of this chapter, I aim to display the pragmatic character of Origen’s exegesis in more detail. Pragmatic readings involve inferences beyond what can be established by information the text itself provides. The inferential character of pragmatics is essential for the interpreter of Origen to bear in mind. If one assumes that the proper task of exegesis is to clarify or translate the express content of the text, then Origen’s procedures cannot help but appear extraordinarily arbitrary. But pragmatic effects are by no means arbitrary, as the enormous development of an empirical science of pragmatics over the last half century demonstrates. It is simply that the interpretation of pragmatic uses of language depend on the reader to draw inferences from extra-textual information — background information, observable facts, features of the context of utterance, etc. One cannot hope to understand Origen’s exegesis without

²⁴⁸ *HomPs* 76.3.2.

²⁴⁹ Origen proposes the same possibility at PA III.1.2.

recognizing that his investigation of the text is always an investigation of the world at the same time. It is in recognition of the inferential character of pragmatics that the Stoics (and Origen) preferred to call it ‘logic.’ Because interpreting the text requires investigating the world, the skills necessary for exegesis are not narrowly textual but ultimately identical with wisdom itself.

Given the close parallel between the Stoic distinction between λέξις and λόγος and the contemporary one between semantics and pragmatics, I propose to take my guide in what follows from some of the central issues in contemporary pragmatics. According to Stephen Levinson in his introduction to pragmatics,²⁵⁰ pragmatics generally includes at least five major topics.

1. *Deixis*, which concerns ‘the ways in which languages encode or grammaticalize features of the context of utterance or speech event, and thus also concerns ways in which the interpretation of utterances depends on the analysis of that context of utterance.’²⁵¹ This includes phenomena like demonstrative pronouns, adverbs of time and place, tense, etc.

2. *Implicature*, which provides a theory of ‘how it is possible to mean...more than what is literally expressed by the conventional sense of the linguistic expressions uttered.’²⁵² This is primarily a theory of how language users draw inferences beyond the conventional meaning of an utterance in the course of a speech event on the basis of assumptions about the intentions of participants in a conversation, and includes phenomena like irony and hyperbole.

3. *Presupposition*, which deals roughly with the role of background assumptions in the assessment of the import of an utterance but not asserted by the utterance itself.²⁵³ The old

²⁵⁰ Stephen C. Levinson, *Pragmatics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

²⁵¹ Levinson, *Pragmatics*, 54.

²⁵² Levinson, *Pragmatics*, 97.

²⁵³ Levinson, *Pragmatics*, 180.

chestnut ‘have you stopped beating your wife yet?’ is an example of a question that turns on a presupposition.

4. *Speech acts*, which concerns what linguistic expressions may be used to do, especially beyond the assertion of truth and falsity. This includes a consideration of acts like promising, commanding, or praying.

5. *Conversational structure*, which deals with the organization of conversation and with ‘how coherence and sequential organization in discourse is produced and understood.’²⁵⁴

Each of these topics was examined with greater or lesser sophistication by ancient grammarians and logicians. The Megarian logician Eubulides, for example, developed paradoxes and sophistical arguments that highlighted the failure of Aristotelian syllogistic to deal with presupposition,²⁵⁵ raising issues that were of ongoing concern to Stoic logicians like Chrysippus. Aristotelians and Stoics each developed theories of the types and functions of speech acts.²⁵⁶ Dialectic, with its orientation towards the encounter between questioner and answer, had at least a tangential interest in pragmatic questions about conversation. I shall examine ancient thinking on deixis and implicature at greater length below.

Most of these pragmatic functions of language were also of interest to Origen. I focus on two: deixis and implicature. I first examine how Origen interprets texts containing explicit deixis of place, time, and person by asking about the conditions under which he might utter those words himself. In these texts it is particularly evident that the text is a script and that Origen is aiming to learn the language of scripture. I then examine how Origen’s exegesis of scriptural text leads him to investigate its implicatures by drawing inferences, provoked by the text, on the basis of

²⁵⁴ Levinson, *Pragmatics*, 286.

²⁵⁵ Peter Seuren, ‘Eubulides as a 20th-century semanticist,’ *Language Sciences* 27 (2005): 75-95.

²⁵⁶ Schenkeveld, ‘Studies.’

facts in the world. In these examples the philosophical and logical character of Origen's exegesis comes especially to the fore.

2. Deixis

The most straightforward way that linguistic utterances relate to context is through the phenomenon of *deixis*. Ancient grammarians and logicians had a sophisticated understanding of deictic expressions, focused on the use of demonstrative pronouns like 'this,' 'I,' or 'you.' These pronouns can be put to multiple uses, not all of which are deictic. We find in Apollonius Dyscolus, for example, a distinction between δεικτικὴ and ἀναφορά, i.e. a *deictic* and an *anaphoric* function for these pronouns.²⁵⁷ According to Paolo Crivelli,

The ancient grammarians distinguish between the anaphoric and the deictic use of the pronoun.

When one uses a pronoun deictically, one refers to a present object which is selected by means of an indication (e.g. the use of 'this' when one utters the sentence 'This is an earring' while indicating a particular object). On the other hand, when one uses a pronoun anaphorically, the contribution of the utterance of the pronoun depends on another utterance of some expression to which the utterance of the pronoun is somehow connected (e.g. the use of 'he' when one utters the sentences 'I met John. He was very well dressed' or 'Someone is ringing at the door. He is looking for you').²⁵⁸

²⁵⁷ *De synt.* II.11f. According to Levinson, if a deictic expression refers to some entity in the situation of utterance, 'an anaphoric usage is where some term picks out as referent the same entity (or class of objects) that some prior term in the discourse picked out' (*Pragmatics* 67). Somewhat more loosely, anaphora is intra-textual reference while deixis is extra-textual.

²⁵⁸ Paolo Crivelli, 'Indefinite Propositions and Anaphora in Stoic Logic,' *Phronesis* 39.2 (1994): 187-206, esp. 195. He quotes a vast number of primary text in proof of this: Apol. Dys. *Pron.* 5.20-2, 6.26-7.7; *Syntax* 38.11-12; 138.10-14; *Sch. DThr.* 68.11-15, 14.9-12, 16-17; 215.33-216.1; 240.28f; 256.21-27; 257.10f; 394.31-395.1; 395.4-6; 419.35-7; 421.12f; 520.36f. For longer discussions see Michael Frede, *Di stoische Logik* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck

Since anaphora referred to something not itself present to the senses, Apollonius called it ‘δεῖξις τοῦ νοῦ’ (deixis of the mind).²⁵⁹ Grammarians and Stoics differed as to whether an anaphoric pronoun rendered a proposition definite. The grammarians accepted that it did, while Stoics argued that only a deictic expression used in a concrete speech situation could establish a definite referent, because only in this way could some empirical individual be presented to the senses.²⁶⁰ Their rigorism on this point was related to their logical interest in clarifying the conditions under which a proposition could be empirically verified. A deixis of the mind alone could not determine an empirical object.

Modern linguists have taken up many of these ancient insights and greatly expanded upon them. In his introduction to pragmatics, Stephen Levinson says,

The term [deixis] is borrowed from the Greek word for pointing or indicating, and has as prototypical or focal exemplars the use of demonstratives, first and second person pronouns, tense, specific time and place adverbs like *now* and *here*, and a variety of other grammatical features tied directly to the circumstances of utterance... [Deixis] concerns ways in which the interpretation of utterances depends on the analysis of that context of utterance.

261

& Ruprecht, 1974), 52f; A.C. Lloyd, ‘Definite Propositions and the Concept of Reference’ in *Les Stoïciens et leur logique. Actes du colloque de Chantilly, 18-22 septembre 1976*, ed. J. Brunschwig (Paris: Vrin, 1978): 285-295, esp. 286, 294; and U. Egli, ‘The Stoic Concept of Anaphora,’ in *Semantics from Different Points of View*, eds. R. Bäuerle, U. Egli, and A. von Stechow (New York: Springer, 1979), 266-83, esp. 272f.

²⁵⁹ Apol. Dys. *Syntax* 135.12-136.4; Priscian *Inst.* XVII 57, 142.17-20. Cf. Crivelli, ‘Indefinite Propositions,’ 195.

²⁶⁰ Cf. Charles Kahn, ‘Stoic Logic and Stoic LOGOS,’ *Archive für Geschichte der Philosophie* 51.2 (1969): 158-172, who says, ‘The existence of the subject and the truth of the assertion are thus guaranteed by the familiar Stoic criterion of evident perception or “irresistible impression” (φαντασία καταληπτική)’ (160). See also Lloyd, ‘Definite Propositions,’ 288, and Crivelli, ‘Indefinite propositions,’ 202ff.

²⁶¹ Levinson, *Pragmatics*, 54.

Deixis usually functions in an ‘egocentric’ way, relative to a presumed ‘deictic centre’ occupied by the speaker at the time and place of her utterance.²⁶² This information is not given by the utterance itself but rather through features of the context specified by its use. By separating the utterance from a particular discursive situation, moreover, written utterances particularly exacerbate the lack of information necessary for interpreting a deictic utterance because they underdetermine this deictic center.²⁶³

Consider, for example, finding the following notice on someone’s office door:

(1) I’ll be back in an hour.

Because we don’t know *when* it was written, we cannot know when the writer will return.²⁶⁴

Much of Origen’s exegesis of sentences involving deixis aims at reconstructing this center, the appropriate context or contexts in which a scriptural sentence may be spoken. This information is not usually given in the utterance itself; it requires the exegete to make an independent (i.e. extra-textual) investigation. In speaking of a multiplicity of possible contexts of utterance, I should emphasize that Origen does not deny that texts have historical authors who may communicate their intentions through writing. The point is simply that the same words committed by an author to writing may serve (and may even be intended to serve) other

²⁶² Ibid., 63f.

²⁶³ See Paul Riceour, *Interpretation Theory* (Fort Worth: TCU Press, 1976): “The absence of a common situation generated by the spatial and temporal distance between writer and reader; the cancellation of the absolute here and now by the substitution of material external marks for the voice, face, and body of the speaker as the absolute origin of all the places in space and time; and the semantic autonomy of the text, which severs it from the present of the writer and opens it to an indefinite range of potential readers in an indeterminate time—all these alterations of the temporal constitution of discourse are reflected in parallel alterations of the ostensive character of the reference” (35).

functions as well.²⁶⁵ So the exegete must demonstrate in each case the possible performative conditions of the utterance in question. It may be that a past individual is one or the only possible speaker of a scriptural text; but as we have already seen, many texts may very well be taken up on the lips of Christians in the present as well.²⁶⁶

In this section I show how Origen investigates the appropriate performance of what Levinson calls the three ‘traditional categories’ of deixis — that of place, time²⁶⁷ and person — as they appear in scriptural texts.²⁶⁸ In each case, Origen assumes that Scripture provides sentences with deictic expressions as scripts to be used at other times and places by other speakers. Origen’s exegesis attempts to discover the possible occasions of utterance, which occasions the text itself typically leaves indeterminate. Origen works less like a historian and more like a linguist.

2.1. Place Deixis

Place deixis ‘concerns the encoding of spatial locations *relative* to the location of the participants in the speech event,’ using expressions like demonstratives (e.g. ‘this’/‘that’) and

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

²⁶⁵ The above quote from Levinson illustrates this well. Levinson’s intention in writing the utterance, ‘I’ll be back in an hour’ is not to communicate his own schedule but rather to invite his readers to reflect on the linguistic properties of the quoted sentence. Origen’s exegesis often becomes a good deal more intelligible if we assume he is thinking more like a linguist asking what a sentence can possibly *do* than he is like a historian, asking what a sentence *did* at a particular point in time.

²⁶⁶ Origen’s theory of scripture’s three senses asserts, as I understand it, that *most but not all* sentences of scripture have an appropriate context of utterance in the past, and *all* have an appropriate context of utterance in the present and the future.

²⁶⁷ Deixis of time was not part of the ancient theory of deixis because of its orientation towards determining the subject of an utterance. But Stoic logicians were acutely aware of the temporal specificity of utterances. As has frequently been remarked, the Stoics recognize *no* utterances that are not temporally indexed. ‘An *axioma* is a proposition as asserted at a particular time and place’ (Long and Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, vol 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 205).

²⁶⁸ Levinson also adds two more recent additions to the linguistic theory of deixis: ‘discourse deixis,’ which concern the encoding of reference to the text or discourse itself (*Pragmatics* 85-89) and ‘social deixis,’ which concerns the encoding of social distinctions (*Pragmatics* 89-94). I shall return to the former in the context of what I call ‘canons of scripture’ in the next chapter.

adverbs of place (e.g. ‘here’/‘there’).²⁶⁹ Place deixis includes as well deictic reference to spatial entities like physical objects.

The following example is one of the more noteworthy passages in the recently rediscovered manuscript of Origen’s *Homilies on the Psalms*. It offers a rare example of Origen engaging in an explicit discussion of δεῖξις.²⁷⁰ He begins with the notion that ordinary deixis operates by presenting an object to the senses in an actual speech situation through the use of gestures. But he then applies the same logic to his doctrine that the human person has spiritual senses corresponding to our bodily ones. Just as a demonstrative pronoun may be used for corporeal deixis, he argues, so too it may be used for an ‘intellectual deixis’ that refers discourse to definite objects of these spiritual senses. The result is a spiritualization of deixis that accounts for how a corporeal text may successfully refer to an invisible entity like God.

Psalm 77:54 relates how God establishes Israel on his mountain after victory over his enemies at the Red Sea:

καὶ εἰσήγαγεν αὐτοὺς εἰς ὄρος ἁγιάσματος	And he brought them to his mountain of
αὐτοῦ,	holiness,
ὄρος τοῦτο, ὃ ἐκτίσαστο ἡ δεξιὰ αὐτοῦ.	this mountain, which his right hand made. ²⁷¹

Origen’s exegesis focuses on the deictic function of the demonstrative pronoun ‘τοῦτο’ (‘this’):

καὶ ἐκεῖνον μὲν τὸν λαὸν τότε εἰς ὄρος, ἐπεὶ	[He led] that people [Israel] in the past to the
--	--

²⁶⁹ Levinson, *Pragmatics*, 62.

²⁷⁰ Cf. CJ 2.66f; CM 12:19; 16:10; and see my discussions of these texts in the footnotes below.

²⁷¹ Psalm 77:54 (LXX).

τυπικὰ ἐποιοῦν τὰ πράγματα, εἰς ὄρος
 ἀγιάσματος σωματικοῦ, σὲ δὲ εἰς ὄρος
 ἀγιάσματος περὶ οὗ λέγει ὁ ἀπόστολος· ἀλλὰ
 προσεληλύθατε Σιών ὄρει καὶ πόλει θεοῦ
 ζῶντος, Ἱεροσαλὴμ ἐπουρανίῳ, καὶ μυριάσιν
 ἀγγέλων, πανηγύρει. ἐκεῖνο τὸ ἀληθῶς ὄρος
 τοῦ ἀγιάσματος ἐστὶ τοῦ θεοῦ, ὄρος τοῦτο ὃ
 ἐκτίσαστο ἡ δεξιὰ αὐτοῦ. τὸ μὲν τοῦτο
 σωματικῶς εἰκὸς δεδεῖχθαι ὑπὸ τοῦ προφήτου
 ἐν Σιών καὶ νῦν δὲ τοῦτο τὸ ὄρος δείκνυται νῶ
 τῷ βλέποντι νοητὸν ὄρος. ὥπερ ὀφθαλμοῖς
 σώματος ἡ δεῖξις σώματος γίνεται, οὕτως
 ὀφθαλμοῖς ψυχῆς ἡ δεῖξις νοητῆ γίνεται, ὥστε
 τοῦτο μὴ ἐν κενοπαθείᾳ λέγεσθαι, νῶ βλέποντι
 οὐσίαν καὶ ὑπόστασιν νοητοῦ.

mountain, the mountain of bodily holiness,
 because they performed their acts as types;
 but [he leads] you to the mountain of holiness
 about which the apostle speaks: ‘but he has
 brought you to Mount Zion and the city of the
 living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to the
 assembly of countless angels’ (Heb. 12:22).
 This is that which is truly the mountain of
 God’s holiness, ‘this mountain which his right
 hand created’ (Ps 77:54b). The ‘this’ was
 probably used by the prophet in Zion to
 indicate [by deixis] bodily; but even now the
 ‘this’ indicates [by deixis] to the intellect
 which sees an intellectual mountain. As the
 deixis of the body occurs with respect to the
 eyes of the body, so the deixis of the intellect
 occurs to the eyes of the soul, so that ‘this’ is
 said with respect to the intellect that sees the
 essence and subsistence of what is intellectual,
 not as an empty sensory affection.²⁷²

²⁷² *HomPs* 77.8.4.

Origen's exegesis operates here on both a corporeal and a spiritual level: the events that occurred in Israel's history occurred as types that may be renewed spiritually for Christians.²⁷³ The analogy between these events has consequences for Christian speech, for where similar events take place, the very words that may be used of one may be used with respect to the other as well.

Origen's exegesis turns on his account of the historical usage of the phrase 'this mountain' by a prophet to refer to Mt. Zion. He assumes the mountain is *Zion* (not Sinai, as one might have expected) presumably because the epigraph of the psalm attributes it to Asaph, whom Origen placed in the retinue of David. Origen's basic historical exegesis proceeds by positing an actual speech situation in which Mt. Zion is physically within sight of the prophet and his hearers. Origen takes the written text as a record of what words the psalmist said when actually standing upon Mt. Zion, where it functioned in a bodily sense: the psalmist used these words 'to indicate [δεδειχθαι] bodily.' The Greek word δεδειχθαι (indicate) is cognate with the word δεξις (deixis) that appears in the following sentence. This line of interpretation clearly presumes the text may serve a deictic function only in an actual speech situation, in which the prophetic speaker may bring about 'the deixis of the body [that] occurs with respect to the eyes of the body.' Origen probably means that the psalmist's utterance, complemented by gestures of some kind, directed the corporeal eyes of his hearers at some past time to the mountain of Zion itself.²⁷⁴

The same sentence, however — 'he brought them to his mountain of holiness, this mountain, which his right hand made' — may also be said with reference to the spiritual Mt. Zion to which 'the apostle' refers in the book of Hebrews. By quoting the apostle, Origen establishes the

²⁷³ As Dawson says, 'What is historical is an occurrence, and the ethical task is to read in a way that allows or enables that occurrence to "happen" again for the present-day reader' (*Christian Figural Reading*, 137). Origen's language here is adapted from 1 Corinthians 10:6, 11, texts he frequently quotes in this connection.

²⁷⁴ The only significant parallel in Origen of which I am aware is a scholion to Luke (PG 17.329). In a discussion of the fact that John's name signifies 'ὁ δεικνύς,' [the indicator], Origen says that John the Baptist would 'indicate with his finger [τῷ δακτύλῳ δεινύειν] the One who is present and say, "Behold, the Lamb of God!"' Here too we have a

identity of the referents of Hebrews 12:22 and Psalm 77:43 when used in this sense. The ‘mountain of holiness’ in the psalm, Origen says, is also ‘that about which [the apostle also] speaks [περὶ οὗ λέγει];’ the relative pronoun asserts the identity of the referents. In the next sentence Origen asserts this identity even more explicitly by using a deictic expression of his own: ‘*this* [mountain in the book of Hebrews] is the true mountain of holiness [in Psalms].’ Although Origen does not explain why he assumes these texts may refer to the same thing, his primary reason is undoubtedly that both use similar language. If the psalm speaks of God ‘bringing’ his people to ‘the mountain of holiness,’ the apostle says ‘he has brought you to Mt. Zion...the heavenly Jerusalem.’ Notice that from a performative perspective, there is no reason to assume that Origen is claiming that the prophet *intended* his words to be used in this way. We need only interpret Origen as claiming that the same words used by the prophet may also legitimately be used to refer to the same heavenly Mt. Zion to which the book of Hebrews refers. Origen has, we might say, gone *looking* for another referent for the psalm — but this is just what anyone must do when asking performative questions about the possible uses of a particular form of words. The content of Origen’s claim is best summarized thus: one who speaks of a spiritual Mount Zion as the apostle does in Hebrews 12:22 could legitimately use the language of Psalm 77:54 to refer to the same thing.

That Origen has performance in question is clear. He specifies a particular *time* when these words may bear a spiritual sense — ‘now’ — and he explicitly describes his interpretation as an account of how the verse ‘is said’ (λέγεσθαι). More importantly, Origen’s analogy with the corporeal speech-act of the ancient prophet implies that something similar must occur in the present. That is, the utterance must be spoken in an actual context in which the ‘eyes of the soul’

deictic reference, in an actual speech situation, secured by the use of bodily gesture in relation to something present to the senses.

of its hearers might be referred to the spiritual mountain of which it speaks, perhaps the liturgical setting in which Origen is delivering his homily, just as the prophet's utterance only referred truly to Zion if uttered in the sight of Zion.

Only because Origen's exegesis is oriented towards the performative use of this psalm does he feel the need to sketch a theory of intellectual deixis, one that accounts in philosophical terms for how a form of speech originally used to refer to a corporeal mountain may also be used to refer to a heavenly one. Origen's strategy is to argue that spiritual deixis works in a manner analogous to bodily deixis. As ordinary physical deixis directs the eyes to something that appears before them, so intellectual deixis directs the intellect to something that appears to it. In both cases, the linguistic signifier is identical (the word 'τοῦτο') — the difference is a matter of its function to indicate a corporeal or spiritual object. Origen's use of the phrase 'ἡ δεῖξις νοητῇ' [intellectual deixis] recalls Apollonius' use of the similar phrase 'δεῖξις τοῦ νοῦ,' noted above. But while Apollonius uses it to refer to the reader's intellectual recognition of anaphora in a text, for Origen the expression refers to a genuine mental deixis to extra-textual realities.²⁷⁵

²⁷⁵ CM 12.19 also draws a parallel between a deixis that appeals to the senses and a 'logical deixis' (τὴν λογικὴν δεῖξιν). In this text, the latter refers to a logical argument that presents some necessity to the mind. This seems to differ from the spiritual deixis discussed in *HomPs* 77.8.4, which presents a concrete entity to the spiritual sense. In CM 16.10, Origen argues that the word 'behold' as uttered by the *narrator* in the verse, 'behold, two blind men were seated beside the road...' (Matthew 20:30) contains a deictic reference (δεῖξιν περιέχει). At first blush this seems like ordinary deixis. But Origen then continues, 'since therefore by the indicating word [δεικνύντι δὲ λόγῳ] we are able to follow along with the two blind men and see them, we say that Israel and Judah, those before the sojourn of Jesus, were blind men...' leading to an allegory about the blindness of Israel. It is not clear how the deixis in this text can enable its present hearers to 'see' either the two blind men or the two peoples in anything besides an intellectual sense. The intellectual deixis in this case seems to be primarily anaphoric. In CJ 2.66, Origen apparently uses the word δεῖξις to refer to anaphora. Origen is commenting on John 1:1-2: 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. This one [οὗτος] was in the beginning with God.' Origen worries that the second sentence is superfluous. His demonstration that the sentence says something new turns on the function of the demonstrative pronoun οὗτος, which Origen refers to as 'δεῖξις.' According to Heine, 'the demonstrative pronoun, "this one", which is the subject of [the fourth clause], sums up [the third]... Origen takes the demonstrative pronoun in [the fourth clause] to point to the immediately preceding proposition..., so that "this one" is equivalent to saying "God the Word."' (Ronald E. Heine, 'Stoic logic as handmaid to exegesis and theology in Origen's commentary on the Gospel of John,' *The Journal of Theological Studies* 44.1 (1993): 90-117.) On this reading, its function is anaphoric. To account for reference of a text like John 1 to the real *eternal* Word as existing outside the text, however, a theory like the one Origen develops here might be useful and is perhaps implicit.

What are these extra-textual realities? Origen describes them positively as ‘the essence (οὐσίαν) and substance (ὕπόστασιν) of what is intellectual.’ Origen also describes what the intellect apprehends by way of contrast with ‘empty sensory affection’ (κενοπαθεία). ‘Κενοπαθεία’ is a very rare word. According to LSJ it means, ‘unreal sensation.’ LSJ records only one usage of the word, Sextus Empiricus AM 8.184, which is also the only occurrence of the word in the entire TLG corpus. Sextus uses the word κενοπαθεία to characterize the Democritean theory of sense perception:

ἐπείπερ ὁ μὲν Δημόκριτος μηδὲν ὑποκεῖσθαι
φησι τῶν αἰσθητῶν, ἀλλὰ κενοπαθείας τινὰς
αἰσθήσεων εἶναι τὰς ἀντιλήψεις αὐτῶν, καὶ
οὔτε γλυκύ τι περὶ τοῖς ἐκτὸς ὑπάρχειν, οὐ
πικρὸν ἢ θερμὸν ἢ ψυχρὸν ἢ λευκὸν ἢ μέλαν,
οὐκ ἄλλο τι τῶν πᾶσι φαινομένων· παθῶν γὰρ
ἡμετέρων ἢν ὀνόματα ταῦτα.

For on the one hand, Democritus says that
nothing underlies the senses, but that what
they apprehend are merely certain empty
passions of the senses, and that neither the
sweet, the bitter, the hot, the cold, the white,
the black, or any thing else that appears
subsists outside of us; for these are merely
names for our own passions.²⁷⁶

Democritus developed ‘a thorough critique of the trustworthiness of the senses,’ viewing all secondary qualities as purely conventional and subjective.²⁷⁷ The term κενοπαθεία in Sextus’ usage refers to here to a Democritean subjective appearance that reveals nothing about entities outside the experiencing subject. Sextus goes on to contrast this with the views of the Epicureans, who claim that what appears to the senses is always true, and the Peripatetics and

²⁷⁶ Sextus A. M. 8.184.

²⁷⁷ G.S. Kirk, J. E. Raven, and M. Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 409; and see the discussion 409-413.

Stoics, who hold that sometimes what appears is true and sometimes false.²⁷⁸ Sextus uses the verb ὑποκείσθαι and the noun ὑπόστασις to refer to those existent individual entities to which the senses may give reliable testimony.

Origen's similar contrast between κενοπαθεία and ὑπόστασις probably signifies the same thing. The intellect has the capacity to 'see' entities that are not empty affections of the subject but real external realities with qualities ('being') and a substrate of which one may predicate those qualities ('substance'). Intellectual deixis is the linguistic mechanism by which a speaker may point a hearer to this intellectual object as it appears to the mind, just as she may direct him to an object of the senses. By drawing this parallel between the deictic mechanisms of sense and intellect, moreover, Origen makes especially clear that he has in view concrete spiritual existences analogous to the concrete particulars apprehended by our senses, rather than mere abstractions. The notion that Forms are subsistent individuals rather than mere abstractions is the Platonic view, and as David Dawson has rightly emphasized, for Origen too 'spiritual' reality is not abstract but concrete.²⁷⁹ However, populated as it is by analogues of physical realities — such as spiritual mountains, angels, and liturgies — Origen's spiritual realm is clearly far less abstract than Plato's. And as this example shows, one mechanism by which scriptural language can be used to refer to such things is spiritual deixis of place.

²⁷⁸ Sextus A.M. 8.185.

²⁷⁹ Dawson, *Christian Figural Reading*, 50

2.2. Time Deixis

Time deixis ‘concerns the encoding of temporal points and spans relative to the time at which an utterance is spoken’ using verbal tense and adverbs of time (e.g. ‘now’/‘then’).²⁸⁰ Psalm 76:11-12, for example, contains the time deictic expression ‘now’ along with the person deictic expression ‘I’:

11 καὶ εἶπα· νῦν ἀρξάμην,	11 And I said: ‘Now I will begin.’
αὕτη ἡ ἀλλοίωσις τῆς δεξιᾶς τοῦ ὑψίστου.	This is the changing of the right hand of the
12 ἐμνήσθην τῶν ἔργων κυρίου,	highest.
ὅτι μνησθήσομαι ἀπὸ τῆς ἀρχῆς τῶν	12 I remembered the works of the Lord,
θαυμασίων σου...	Because I will remember your wonders from
	the beginning.

Origen’s exegesis turns on decoding the referents of these deictic expressions. Since the announcement of a beginning is not appropriate for all people at all times, Origen seeks to clarify *which* speakers at *what* times can rightly do so. I will focus on the beginning of the homily, in which Origen identifies that the appropriate time to utter these words is when the speaker has arrived at a new threshold in her spiritual progress.²⁸¹

²⁸⁰ Levinson, *Pragmatics*, 62.

²⁸¹ In paragraphs 2-3, Origen argues that verses 11b-12 further explicate the particular conditions under which the words ‘now I will begin’ are uttered. In paragraph 2, for example, Origen asks *why* one should say ‘now I will begin,’ and finds the answer in v. 11b: when one understands ‘the changing of the right hand of the highest.’ Origen takes this as a reference to the incarnation. In paragraph 3, Origen further specifies *when* one should say, ‘now I will begin,’ and finds the answer in verse 12: when one remembers the works of the Lord and his wonders from the beginning. Since these works are written in scripture, Origen takes this as a reference to a new grasp of scripture’s teaching.

Ὁ βιοῦς κατὰ θεὸν πολλάκις ἐν προοιμίῳ ὧν	The one who aims to live a godly life
τοῦ βίου τοῦ κατὰ θεὸν οἶεται τὴν ἀρχὴν	frequently supposes that he has made a
πεποιθῆσθαι τοῦ βιοῦν καθὼς χρὴ βιοῦν. ἐπὶ δὲ	beginning of living as he ought to live, when
νοήσας τὴν διαφορὰν τοῦ προοιμίου τοῦ κατὰ	he is only in the prelude of the godly life. But
θεὸν βίου γένηται μετὰ τὸ προοίμιον ἐπὶ τὴν	having come to understand the difference
ὁδὸν τοῦ κατὰ θεὸν βίου, ἐπιγινώσκων ὅτι	between the prelude of the godly life [and its
πρότερον μὲν ἐδόκει ἄρχῃσθαι, οὐκ ἦν δὲ	beginning], he sets out after the prelude upon
ἀρξάμενος· ὕστερον δὲ ἔγνω τίς ἡ ἀρχή, φησὶ	the way of the godly life, having come to
τὸ νῦν ἡρξάμεν.	recognize that though earlier he seemed to
	have begun, he had not [yet] begun. But later,
	when he knows what the beginning is, he
	says, 'Now I will begin!' ²⁸²

These are the first words of a homily that will devote many paragraphs to identifying possible times at which the sentence 'Now I will begin' is rightly uttered. Although Origen does not say so explicitly, his extended attention to this sentence suggests that he regards it as somewhat paradoxical. Probably the issue is this: while the psalmist speaks of a beginning 'now,' at the time of utterance, his words come in the middle of the psalm, after many apparent professions of piety. It seems that the psalmist has *already*, in some sense, begun.²⁸³ How can the psalmist say 'now I will begin?' if he is already in the middle?

Origen's proposal is that one may undertake a kind of new beginning when one reaches a new threshold in one's progress, from which vantage point one's earlier efforts seem fruitless.

²⁸² *HomPs* 76.2.1.

²⁸³ He has already, for example, cried to the Lord (v. 2), sought him in his suffering (v.3), and remembered the Lord with rejoicing (v. 4).

What had seemed like a beginning now appears as a mere ‘prelude.’²⁸⁴ Origen expands upon this summary by enumerating a variety of specific examples of occasions that fit the same pattern. Many of these are examples of those in the church: one whose Christian piety is improper because of bad doctrine but later has this doctrine corrected by good teachers; an Ebionite coming to recognize that the law is shadows; a Jew becoming a Christian; and a Christian who comes to recognize the deeper mysteries of faith. Other examples, however, are secular: one who arrives at a new beginning in his education or in his training in a craft.

After doing so, Origen makes explicit that his hearers should themselves become speakers of these words by making the same sort of progress in their own character.²⁸⁵

εἶτα ταῦτα μὲν ἐπὶ τῶν μέσων τεχνῶν γίνεται	These things are said about the middle of
καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν κατὰ ἄγνοιαν πραγμάτων	[learning] expertises and in cases where,
προκαταλαβόντων ψυχὴν πρὸ τῆς γνώσεως,	before acquiring knowledge, the soul had
οὐχ οἷον δὲ καὶ ἐκάστου ἡμῶν τὴν ἀρχὴν τῆς	earlier grasped certain matters in error. So too
κλήσεως εἶναι ὑποσυγκεχυμένην, ὕστερον δέ	each of us should do the same: when the
ποτε ἔρχεσθαι ἐπὶ τὴν τράνωσιν ὅτε καὶ ὁ	beginning of our calling is confused but at a
συναισθηθεὶς τρανώσεως λέγει· νῦν ἡρξάμην.	later time we arrive at clarity, then the one
ἐγὼ πολλάκις ἤκουσα ὁμολογούντων πιστῶν	who has grasped this clarity says: ‘Now I will
πλείονα χρόνον ἐν τῇ πίστει πεποιηκότων καὶ	begin.’ I have frequently heard this sort of
μεμαθηκότων τὰ τῆς πίστεως μυστήρια, ἥνικα	confession from believers who have practiced

²⁸⁴ For another example of Origen’s discussion of the paradoxes of beginning, see Dawson, *Christian Figural Reading*, 133.

²⁸⁵ This analogical application of the words of the psalms to his hearers is very common, as observed in Torjesen, *Hermeneutical Procedure*, 26-9. In this case, however, Origen makes no explicit reference to the psalmist at all. Although we should probably infer that Origen would include the psalmist as one who said these words on a similar occasion, his primary concern is not with the experience or self-understanding of the psalmist, but rather with the appropriate use of his words. His question is linguistic, not historical.

ἐὰν περιτύχωσι διδασκάλῳ καλῶς τρανοῦντι,	the faith for some time and have learned the
λεγόντων ὅτι νῦν ἡρξάμην Χριστιανὸς	mysteries of faith, when it happens that [they
γενέσθαι, νῦν μανθάνω πρῶτον τί ἐστὶ	learn] some especially illuminating teaching,
Χριστιανισμός. ταῦτα δὲ λέγουσιν οὐχὶ τέλεον	that they say, ‘now I will begin to be a
ἀθετοῦντες τὰ πρότερα, ἀλλ’ ὁρῶντες ὅτι	Christian, now I am learning for the first time
πρότερον μὲν οὐ συνίεσαν τῶν μυστηρίων,	what Christianity is.’ But they say these
ἀρχὴν δὲ ἔχουσι τοῦ νοεῖν ὅτε τετεύχασι	things, not completely denying what came
διδασκαλίας ἀγαθῆς. καὶ ἡμεῖς οὖν πειραθῶμεν	before, but seeing that before they did not
τοιούτοι γενέσθαι ὥστε εἰπεῖν διὰ τὴν	understand the mysteries, but now they have a
προκοπὴν ἡμῶν τῇ διαθέσει· νῦν ἀρηάμην.	beginning of understanding when they are
	equipped with good teaching. Let us too,
	therefore, endeavor to be the sort of person
	who is able to say, on account of the progress
	in our disposition, ‘Now I will begin!’ ²⁸⁶

This passage makes the performative character of Origen’s exegesis unmistakable. Origen has taught his hearers a rule for the usage of this expression by enumerating examples of its proper use. To anticipate the next section, here as is often the case the appropriate occasion is primarily delineated in ethical terms: one should ‘be the sort of person’ who is able to say these words. The ethical imperative follows, however, from the fact that these are words the Christian ought to learn to say at the appropriate time.

In this instance, Origen offers little in the way of explicit argumentation. He does not, as in the previous example, begin by establishing some historical occasion on which these words were used and argue by analogy. Nor does he bring to bear some other scriptural text. For the most

part, Origen simply appeals directly to the linguistic intuitions of his hearers. This implies that his hearers already have the linguistic capacity to use this sentence once it is properly contextualized, even if it sounds puzzling when it first hits the ear. This is confirmed by the fact that Origen appeals empirically to the actual usage of ordinary Greek speakers in their education and to that of ordinary Christians, who ‘frequently say’ something like ‘now I will begin’ when they arrive at a new level of understanding. Whatever mysteries scriptural language may contain, the language of scripture is not wholly other than that of conventional Greek.

Although this passage builds towards its ethical conclusion, its most interesting aspect is the way Origen’s performative exegesis allows him to articulate a reading that is *general* without formulating claims that are omnitemporal or that render superfluous the particular wording of the text. Instead of making a general claim by replacing this deictic utterance with a non-temporally indexed one, Origen gives general rules for its proper use. Origen does not explicate the paradoxical phrase ‘now I will begin’ by substituting a non-temporally indexed sentence of the sort preferred by Aristotelians. Instead, by describing how to *use* the expression at a particular stage of Christian discipleship, Origen retains the very wording of the utterance with its time deixis. This suggests that Origen’s goal is not (only) to learn to speak *about* the temporal process of Christian life but (also) to learn to speak *within* that temporal process in an appropriate way. Origen seeks temporal language adequate to the dynamism and temporality of Christian life.²⁸⁷

Situating the usage of this utterance within a process, in turn, enables Origen to account for its paradoxical quality and make it productive. Rather than seeking a conceptual account of time of the sort that Greek philosophers struggled to articulate, Origen learns to inhabit time by learning to use a saying that, in Origen’s hands, takes on an aphoristic and paradoxical quality. In

²⁸⁶ *HomPs* 76.2.1.

the paradox of saying ‘Now I will begin’ while in the middle, Origen identifies a scriptural clue about a very specific temporal phenomenon. For on the one hand, these words express the disjunction between ‘now’ and a prior beginning that appears, from a later vantage point, as a false start. At the same time, Origen insists that these words should not be used so as to give the impression that one’s new beginning lacks continuity with what preceded it. Origen does not abandon the first beginning, but instead describes it as a ‘prelude,’ a kind of beginning before the beginning. Likewise, he observes that, ‘they say these things, not completely denying what came before, but seeing that before they did not understand the mysteries, but now they have a beginning of understanding when they are equipped with good teaching.’²⁸⁸ Even a new beginning within a dynamic process retains a relation of continuity with what came before.

2.3. Person Deixis

Person deixis ‘concerns the encoding of the role of participants in the speech event in which the utterance in question is delivered,’ through the use of pronouns (e.g. ‘I’/‘you’) and associated predicate agreements.²⁸⁹ For Origen, person deixis characteristically leads him to ask about the appropriate identity of the speaker (and hearer) of scriptural texts. We already observed this in the previous example, in which Origen sought to identify possible speakers of the words ‘now I will begin.’

²⁸⁷ Cf. Lloyd, ‘Definite Propositions,’ 292, comparing Alexander’s preference for omnitemporal sentences with the Stoic assumption that every sentence is relative to some present time of its utterance. Origen follows the Stoics.

²⁸⁸ This comment is probably tacitly directed at the notion of continuity presupposed, in different ways, by Marcionites and Valentinians, who do in fact ‘completely deny what came before.’ Most of Origen’s examples are of those who turn from overly literal ways of reading — Jews, Ebionites, or simple Christians — towards a deeper understanding. The dualists also offer a deeper understanding, but one that imposes too sharp a ‘new’ beginning. The same logic of novelty within continuity that requires an individual to speak in this paradoxical way is also the logic that requires the Christian community to uphold the unity of God and the scriptures even after the new beginning accomplished in Christ.

Person deixis plays a very important role in Origen's exegesis. It is the main issue in one of Origen's central analytic categories, namely, *προσῶπον* or *persona* (the implied speaker as distinct from the author). The term *προσῶπον* refers to a 'face' and, by extension, to the masks used by actors in ancient theater.²⁹⁰ By metonymy, it was used by Alexandrian literary critics to refer to the character or *persona* adopted by a speaker in a drama or other text.²⁹¹ Origen himself explicitly observes the dramatic context of the term,²⁹² a reminder that *persona* is plainly a performative category. It refers to the implied role a speaker adopts in performing a particular utterance. The question about the *persona* of a text is the question of who may speak it — not a historical question but a linguistic one.

The category of *persona* enables Origen to resolve interpretive difficulties by identifying the corresponding figure of *προσωποποιία* (personification) in a scriptural text. Origen interpreted the Song of Songs as a drama between lover, beloved, and their friends, which required him to ask of each verse *who* is speaking these words, i.e. which *persona* is speaking.²⁹³ The same category can be used to distinguish the actual person of the prophet from the implied *persona* in which his prophecy is spoken. Many psalms, for example, are recorded by ancient authors prophetically in the *persona* of Christ.²⁹⁴ So too Origen uses the category of *persona* to talk about the inspiration of the scriptures: although the Holy Spirit is the author, he speaks through the *persona* of a particular prophet.²⁹⁵

²⁸⁹ Levinson, *Pragmatics*, 62.

²⁹⁰ LSJ III.1.

²⁹¹ Cf. Neuschäfer, *Origenes als Philologe* 263-268 (on its pagan use) and 268-276 (on Origen); Lorenzo Perrone, 'The Bride at the Crossroads: Origen's Dramatic Interpretation of the Song of Songs,' *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 82/1 (2006): 69-102, esp. 84f; Martens, *Origen and Scripture*, 58f.

²⁹² *HomPs* 81.1.3, *JobFrag* 41.5a.

²⁹³ *Philocalia* 7, *ComSS* prol.1; and cf. Neuschäfer, *Origenes als Philologe*, 270f.

²⁹⁴ See Origen's extended discussion of this issue in 77.1.2. Cf. also 74.1.1.

²⁹⁵ Homily on 1 Sam 28; cf. Neuschäfer, *Origenes als Philologe*, 276.

These examples show that *persona* is not an intrinsically historical category. The appropriate speaker of the words of a text *may* be an individual in the past, as in the case of Jeremiah; but words may also be written that are most appropriately spoken by someone in the future, as when prophets write in the *persona* of Christ. Moreover, even if one can assign the words of a text to a particular historical speaker, this does not preclude some later speaker from taking up those words in imitation of the earlier one. As we have already seen, Origen very often regards the task of the reader as imitating scriptural authors by taking up their words in precisely this way. The historical words of Jeremiah may be taken up by those in the present who are *like* Jeremiah, and the same applies to the characters in the Song of Songs and, indeed, to Christ himself. Origen frequently quotes Paul when exhorting his hearers to imitate the speech of scriptural speakers: ‘imitate me as I imitate Christ.’²⁹⁶

Here is an example of this performative dynamic from Origen’s first homily on Psalm 76 (LXX).²⁹⁷ Origen first uses the category of *persona* to draw a literary distinction between the author and implied speaker of the psalm on account of the psalm’s epigraph: ‘Εἰς τὸ τέλος, ὑπὲρ Ἰδιθούμ· τῷ Ἀσάφ ψαλμός.’ [Unto the end, for Idithoum, a psalm by Asaph]. As he does with other psalms, Origen interprets the dative phrase ‘τῷ Ἀσάφ’ as a reference to the psalm’s author, Asaph, the author of a number of psalms whom Origen regarded as an inspired prophet. If Asaph is the author, however, who is Idithoum? Origen identifies him as the Idithoum who, according to 1 Chronicles 16:41-2, was assigned the role of temple singer, a role which presumably would have involved singing psalms. Hence Origen interprets the words of the epigraph, ‘a psalm for Idithoum, by Asaph,’ as teaching that Asaph authored the psalm for Idithoum to perform: ‘Asaph

²⁹⁶ 1 Corinthians 11:1. In the *Homilies on the Psalms*, see 15.2.4 and 77.9.1. In his broader corpus, see CJ 19.57; 20.279; 28.18, 25, 34, 196; CM 10.15, 16.1, HomJer 16.3, et al. (These and other citations given in *Biblia Patristica*).

²⁹⁷ See also *HomPs* 81.1.3.

wrote it, but Idithoum took and spoke the psalm.²⁹⁸ To this extent, Origen has offered a historical hypothesis about the original conditions under which this psalm was performed.

The primary significance of this text, however, is that the same words may appropriately be performed in the present by one who shares the character of Idithoum. Origen describes the *persona* of the psalm not as Idithoum the individual, but rather as an instance of a man with righteous character: ‘the *persona* which [Idithoum], being righteous, adopts, is that of a righteous man.’²⁹⁹ Yet while Origen uses the general term ‘righteous,’ he does not treat its meaning as clear. Indeed, what righteousness looks like is just what the psalm comes to teach: “Ἰδῶμεν οὖν τίνα ἄν ὁ δίκαιος λέγῃ καὶ δι’ ὅλου τοῦ ψαλμοῦ τηρήσωμεν, ἵνα τοιοῦτοι γενώμεθα ὡς καὶ αὐτοὶ τοιαῦτα εἶπεῖν” [Let us therefore see what the righteous man would say and observe it through the whole psalm, so that we ourselves might be similar and say similar things]. ‘Similar things’ presumably includes words other than those actually recorded in the psalm, but in the discussion that follows, it is clear that central to Origen’s meaning is that the Christian should learn to use the very words of the psalm itself.³⁰⁰ For example, the righteous person not only says, in the words of Psalm 76:2, ‘with my voice I cried to God,’ but he offers up other body parts as well:

ἢ ἀναθῶμεν - εἰ δεῖ οὕτως εἶπεῖν - τοὺς	And we should offer up, so to speak, the eyes
ὀφθαλμοὺς τῷ θεῷ, ἵνα βλέπωμεν πάντα κατὰ	to God, that we might see everything in a
θεὸν καὶ μύωμεν δὲ ὅπου μὴ χρὴ βλέπειν.	godly way and that we might close our eyes
	where we should not look. ³⁰¹

²⁹⁸ HomPs 76.1.1. ‘ὁ μὲν Ἀσάφ ἔγραψεν, ὁ δὲ Ἰδιθοῦμ ἔλαβε καὶ εἶρηκε τὸν ψαλμόν.’

²⁹⁹ HomPs 76.1.1. ‘καὶ οὗ λαμβάνει πρόσωπον δίκαιος ὢν, τοῦτο δικαίου ἐστίν.’ It is not entirely clear why Origen regards Idithoum as righteous. He states that this fact can be learned, ‘not only from this book [i.e. Psalm 76] but also from the first book of Chronicles.’ Presumably he has in view the pious content of the words uttered in Psalm 76 and the fact that 1 Chronicles 16:41f accords Idithoum a place of honor in the temple.

³⁰⁰ HomPs 76.1.3 says, for example, ‘...not only do we speak the first verse but also the second, saying...’

³⁰¹ HomPs 76.1.2.

Imitation of scriptural speech thus leads to the formulation of new speech, a dynamic which we shall examine at greater length in chapter 4.

In any case, the words of the psalm serve provide empirical evidence about the proper actions and speech of a righteous person, and the primary task for the Christian reader is to imitate them. Identifying Idithoum's speech as that of a 'righteous man' does not make it superfluous, as though the details of the psalm could be *replaced* by an abstract definition of righteousness. Rather, the meaning of 'righteousness' remains vague until determined by an examination of Idithoum's concrete character as displayed in the words of the psalm. The hermeneutical rule here is not simply 'be righteous' — we do not yet know what that is! — but 'be righteous by imitating Idithoum.' The details of the text remain indispensable.

After this introduction, we are not surprised that the first words of the psalm involve person deixis: 'With my voice I cried to the Lord,' where on Origen's interpretation, 'I' may refer to any speaker who is righteous like Idithoum. The details of the subsequent argument are less important for our purposes than his conclusion that this verse, by speaking generally of 'my voice,' intimates the way that all the speech of the righteous person should be an offering to God. Instead of offering 'irrational animals' [ἄλογα ζῷα] or even lifeless objects to God, when human beings offer their every word to God, they make an offering of what is most worthy of God, namely, the 'rational animal' [ζῷον λογικόν] that we are. Ultimately, to learn to speak the words of the psalm (and by extension, the rest of scripture) is to learn the proper use of one's rationality.

πεποίκε, καὶ τῷ λόγῳ χρῶνται οἱ πολλοὶ οὐ	rational, and the many do not use their reason
καλῶς. Ἡμεῖς οὖν αὐτοὶ τὸν λόγον, ὃν ἔδωκεν	well. We ourselves, therefore, offer to God the
ἡμῖν, ἀναθῶμεν τῷ θεῷ, ἵνα ἀεὶ περὶ θεοῦ καὶ	reason that he gave us, that we might always
τῶν τοῦ θεοῦ διαλεγώμεθα, ἵνα ἀεὶ εἰς	discuss God and the things of God, that we
οἰκοδομὴν καὶ ὠφέλειαν ψυχῆς λέγωμεν·	might always engage in discourse for the
ἀναθῶμεν τὴν φωνὴν τῷ θεῷ, ἵνα πᾶσα ἡ φωνὴ	edification and profit of the soul. Let us lift up
ἡ κατὰ θεὸν...	the voice to God, that every voice might be
	according to God... ³⁰²

The right use of reason and of speech are tightly bound. Learning to speak rightly — to ‘always discuss God and the things of God,’ and ‘engage in discourse for the edification and profit of the soul’ — is inseparable from learning ‘to use reason well.’

3. Implicature

The previous examples demonstrated Origen’s sensitivity to the presence of place, time, and person deixis in scriptural utterances. Because the referent of deictic expressions is dependent on the context of use, learning to speak the language of scripture requires learning the appropriate occasions on which to utter these sentences.

I now turn to another central pragmatic category, implicature. The term ‘implicature’ was coined by Grice to offer a theory of how a speaker can ‘mean’ more than ‘what is literally

³⁰² *HomPs* 76.1.2.

expressed by the conventional sense of the linguistic expressions uttered.’³⁰³ It occurs when a speaker can assume the hearer will draw certain inferences about what the speaker intended on the basis of ‘a set of over-arching assumptions guiding the conduct of conversation.’³⁰⁴ These inferences are pragmatic because they depend on background knowledge and other features of the context of utterance that go beyond what the utterance itself expresses. The background assumptions that guide these inferences he labels ‘maxims of conversation’, governed by an underlying *co-operative principle*: ‘make your contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged.’³⁰⁵ The maxim of *Quality*, for example, requires that you ‘try to make your contribution one that is true’ by avoiding statements you believe to be false or for which you lack evidence. The maxim of *Quantity* requires you to make your contribution as informative as required for the purpose of the exchange but without superfluity. The maxim of *Relevance* requires that you make your contribution relevant. The maxim of *Manner* requires that you make your speech ‘perspicuous’ by avoiding obscurity and ambiguity and remaining brief and orderly.

Grice’s point is not that people always hold these rules to the letter. Rather, as Levinson clarifies, his point is that we tend to interpret expressions that superficially violate these maxims as adhering to them on a deeper level. For example,

A: Where’s Bill?

B: There’s a yellow VW outside Sue’s house.

³⁰³ Levinson, *Pragmatics*, 97. I follow Levinson’s systematic exposition, which is developed out of H.P. Grice, ‘Logic and Conversation,’ in *Studies in the Way of Words*, ed. H.P. Grice (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989): 22-40.

³⁰⁴ Levinson, *Pragmatics*, 101.

³⁰⁵ Levinson, *Pragmatics*, 101.

Here B's contribution, taken literally, fails to answer A's question, and thus seems to violate at least the maxims of Quantity and Relevance. We might therefore expect B's utterance to be interpreted as a non-cooperative response, a brushing aside of A's concerns with a change of topic. Yet it is clear that despite this *apparent* failure of co-operation, we try to interpret B's utterance as nevertheless co-operative at some deeper (non-superficial) level. We do this by assuming that it is in fact co-operative, and then asking ourselves what possible connection there could be between the location of Bill and the location of a yellow VW, and thus arrive at the suggestion (which B effectively conveys) that, if Bill has a yellow VW, he may be in Sue's house.³⁰⁶

An implicature is an inference that one draws to preserve the assumption of co-operation in the face of superficial indications to the contrary. One does so by forming hypotheses beyond the semantic content of an utterance that preserve basic assumptions about the co-operative nature of the interaction.³⁰⁷

Levinson offers one important correction to Grice that will be important in what follows. He points out that to account for certain implicatures we must posit an independent background assumption not mentioned by Grice. Levinson calls this, a 'principle of informativeness,' summarized by the maxim: 'read as much into an utterance as is consistent with what you know about the world.'³⁰⁸ For example, Levinson argues that we normally interpret the word 'and' in the sentence 'He turned on the switch and the motor started' as implicating that turning on the switch *caused* the motor to start. Our ability to do this has nothing to do with the conventional meaning of the word 'and,' but is rather an inference we draw on the basis of our background

³⁰⁶ Levinson, *Pragmatics*, 102.

³⁰⁷ Levinson, *Pragmatics*, 104.

³⁰⁸ Levinson, *Pragmatics*, 147. Note that 'read into' in this context means to draw an inference about the speaker's intentions, not about the semantic content of the utterance.

knowledge about cars. A similar maxim seems to hold, Levinson notes, when interpreting utterances such as riddles.³⁰⁹

Levinson says that ‘unlike many other topics in pragmatics, implicature does not have an extended history.’³¹⁰ One sign of this is that Grice himself coined the term ‘implicature.’ Ancient thinkers certainly, however, observed that linguistic utterances may imply more than they expressly say and discussed examples similar to those identified by Grice and contemporary linguists. Grammarians analyzed many such uses of language in the context of rhetoric. Particularly relevant is the term ‘ἔμφασις,’ which could refer to a form of words that suggests an unstated meaning, effecting a kind of ‘stretching’ (ἐπίτασις) or ‘amplification’ (αὔξησις) of the sense.³¹¹ Pseudo-Plutarch defines ἔμφασις as ‘that which, by suggestion, brings about a stretching of what is said.’³¹² Phoebammon says ἔμφασις is ‘when one does not state the matter itself, but implies it through other things.’³¹³ The trope is related to allegory and other forms of obscure speech that Origen characteristically found in Scripture.

Blank and Atherton have suggested that in Stoic technical usage, the terms ἔμφασις and παρέμφασις might even appropriately be translated ‘implicature’³¹⁴ Chrysippus, for example, discussed an implicature of privative forms like ἀχίτων (shirtless), ἀνυπόδετος (shoeless), and ἀνάριστος (dinnerless). He points out that people do not predicate these words of birds, even

³⁰⁹ See the discussion at 145ff.

³¹⁰ Levinson, *Pragmatics*, 100.

³¹¹ Neuschäfer, *Origenes*, 226. It was debated whether to classify it as a rhetorical trope, as in Trypho, *trop.* 3 (p. 199.-15-20) or a figure, as in Phoebammon, *fig.* 3 (p. 65.27-66.5) (qtd. 455 n. 629). The word ἔμφασις could also be used to refer to a more lively expression, in roughly the modern English sense of ‘emphasis.’ This is attested in Demetrius, *De eloc.* 53, Aristides, *Ars. rhet.* (= *Rhet. Gr.* 2 p. 495f) and other texts in the scholia, as discussed in Neuschäfer, *Origenes*, 227.

³¹² Ps-Plutarch, *Hom.* 26; qtd. Neuschäfer, *Origenes*, 455 n. 631. The Greek is: ‘ἔστι καὶ ἔμφασις, ἥπερ δι’ ὑπονοίας ἐπίτασιν τοῦ λεγομένου παρίστησιν.’ Trypho, *trop.* 3, p. 199.15f, is very similar: ‘ἔμφασίς ἐστι λέξις δι’ ὑπονοίας αὐξάνουσα τὸ δηλούμενον.’

³¹³ Phoebammon, *fig.* 3 (p. 65.27-66.5), qtd. Neuschäfer, *Origenes*, 455 n. 631. The Greek is: ‘ἔμφασις δέ ἐστιν ὅταν μὴ αὐτό τις λέγῃ τὸ πρᾶγμα, ἀλλὰ δι’ ἐτέρων ἐμφαίνῃ...’

³¹⁴ David Blank and Catherine Atherton, ‘The Stoic Contribution to Traditional Grammar,’ in *The Cambridge Companion to the Stoics*, ed. Brad Inwood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003): 310-327, esp. 326f.

though in a strict sense it is true that a bird is shirtless or shoeless. Chrysippus calls these ‘habitual’ privatives and explains this phenomenon in terms of implicature: ‘they indeed signify the bare removal [of a property], but they also signify a certain implicature,’³¹⁵ namely, that what the thing is said to lack belongs to it habitually. We may call *people* ‘shirtless’ because it only makes sense to deny that someone who habitually wears a shirt is, in this case, not wearing one. Grice’s theory of conversational implicature even helps to explain Chrysippus’ observation. Since birds never wear clothes, it is superfluous to state that they do so, and hence to call a bird ‘shirtless’ would violate the maxim of quantity.³¹⁶

Origen sometimes uses these terms in the sense of ‘implicature’ as well. Several key texts are discussed by Bernard Neuschäfer.³¹⁷ In Luke 1:76, for example, Zechariah blesses his son John by saying, ‘and you [καὶ σὺ], child, will be called prophet of the most high.’ Origen says that the words καὶ σὺ ‘contain an implicature [ἐμφασιν ἔχει], as though it said, “just like I and the other prophets.”’ That is, when used in this context, the word ‘and’ should be taken in the strong sense of ‘also’ and implies that John is being compared to the other biblical prophets. Or: in a scholium to Genesis 9:6, Origen observes that only Canaan, the son of Ham, is expressly mentioned in the genealogy of Noah’s children. This is said ἐμφαντικῶς, he argues. Since the narrative makes clear that Ham and Canaan were wicked, this text comes to teach that physical descendants can turn from the pious life of their ancestors. Canaan is called ‘son of Ham’ implicating that he is *not* son of Noah — in an ethical sense.³¹⁸ On another occasion, not mentioned by Neuschäfer,

³¹⁵ Simplicius, *In Ar. cat.* 395.11f. The Greek is: ‘σημαίνει μὲν καὶ ψιλὴν ἀναίρεσιν, σημαίνει δὲ καὶ παρέμφασιν τινα, ὅτε καὶ κατὰ στέρησιν λέγεται.’

³¹⁶ Chrysippus wrote a whole work on implicature, now lost (DL 7.192). See the other examples discussed in Blank and Atherton, ‘The Stoic Contribution,’ 327.

³¹⁷ Besides the following examples, see schol. Gen 20:4 = PG 12.117A11-B2, schol Lam 1:6 fr. 18 (GCS 6, p. 242.16-19). Neuschäfer also discusses cases in which Origen speaks of one translational variant as ἐμφατικώτερον than another, and notes pagan and Christian parallels (120, 130, 385 n. 150, 391 n. 197).

³¹⁸ Neuschäfer wrongly includes this on a list of texts in which, he claims, Origen uses ἐμφασις not in the sense of implicature but rather to refer to a lively or emphatic form of speech (227, 455 n. 635). Neuschäfer is also wrong to

Origen uses the Stoic term *παρεμφαίνω* in a similar manner. Origen is commenting on the story in which Jesus' parents leave him behind in the temple in Jerusalem, only to find him wisely discussing Torah with teachers of the law. Origen observes that Mary says 'your father' in reference to Joseph, while in his response, Jesus says 'my father' with reference to God. Origen then argues,

<p>ὅτι ἐτίμησεν αὐτὸν τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον τῇ τοῦ πατρὸς προσηγορίᾳ καὶ τὰ λοιπὰ ..., μήπως αὐτοὺς καταλέλοιπεν. Ὁ δὲ Κύριος, ἀφείς ἀνθρωπίνην δοῦναι ἀπόκρισιν, θεῖαν δίδωσι, παρεμφαίνων, ὅτι Θεὸς εἶη σεσαρκωμένος.</p>	<p>The Holy Spirit honored [Joseph] with the title 'father' and the rest, lest [Joseph] abandon them [i.e. Mary and Jesus]. But the Lord, instead of giving a human reply, gives a divine one, implicating that God may become incarnate.³¹⁹</p>
--	---

Jesus' simple reference to God as 'my father' implicates [*παρεμφαίνων*] for Origen something deeper, namely, that it is possible for God to become incarnate. Presumably it implicates this under the assumption that only a human who was incarnate God could appropriately refer to God as 'my father.'

The modern theory of implicature helps us recognize that an implicature is not part of the conventional meaning of an expression but rather an inference that one draws only after one has decoded its literal sense. These inferences go beyond what the text says by drawing inferences in

include schol. Lam 1:6, fr. 18 on this list. The LXX reads, 'Καὶ ἐξῆλθεν ἐκ θυγατρὸς Ζιων πᾶσα ἡ εὐπρέπεια αὐτῆς.' Origen notes that the text says her beauty 'went out' ('ἐξῆλθεν') rather than saying that it was 'carried out' (ἐξεκομίσθη) by her enemies as plunder, and that by doing so, it spoke 'ἐμφατικώτερον.' Neuschäfer claims, "Dies kann aber nur bedeuten: Die Version ἐξῆλθεν ist anschaulicher und aussagekräftiger als die Fassung ἐξεκομίσθη" (227). Surely, rather, the point is that the compressed verb 'went out' suggests by implication all the further details Origen the commentator makes explicit, i.e. it is an implicature. The other texts Neuschäfer points to, however, do probably use ἔμφασις in the modern sense of a lively expression: LkFrag 181, CC 6.57.

³¹⁹ Schol. in Luke PG 17.329.

light of what one knows or can discover about the world, in light of certain background assumptions about the type of communication in which one is engaged. Now as Grice already knew, the background assumptions permitting the conversational variety of implicature that he describes are not always operative. In different kinds of communicative exchanges, different kinds of pragmatic inferences may be drawn. In a courtroom, for example, there is no presumption that a witness is being cooperative besides the bare requirement that the strict sense of their words be true; and so lawyers must elicit very precise statements whose interpretation requires no implicature.³²⁰

The kinds of implicatures that Origen draws depend on his own assumptions about the manner in which scriptural discourse functions as a communicative exchange between the Holy Spirit and human readers. We saw that Grice makes ‘perspicuity’ a maxim of manner; so too, in a similar manner, many ancient grammarians and logicians made perspicuity a norm governing proper speech.³²¹ For Origen, however, the manner of scripture is characteristically *obscure*. Marguerite Harl has called attention to the importance of this:

Origène précise comme on ne l’avait pas fait avant lui ce qui, dans le langage biblique, entraîne l’ἀσάφεια... Origène nomme, comme cause de confusion et d’obscurité, les ambiguïtés du vocabulaire, l’homonymie, l’emploi des tours figurés, et, pour la syntaxe, les ruptures de construction ou les fautes de grammaire, par exemple les passages non justifiés du singulier au pluriel, ou inversement. Ces faits ne sont pas pour lui dus au hasard: ils relèvent de la volonté divine d’enseigner secrètement quelque vérité spirituelle.³²²

³²⁰ Levinson, *Pragmatics*, 121.

³²¹ Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1404b 1-2; DL 7.59; Cicero, *Orator*, 79. Cf. Michael Frede, ‘Principles of Stoic Grammar,’ in *The Stoics*, ed. John M. Rist (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 27-76, esp. 38.

³²² Marguerite Harl, ‘Origène et les interprétations patristique grecques de l’<<obscurité>> biblique,’ *Vigiliae Christianae* 36 (1982): 334-371, esp. 352.

Harl's insight can be reformulated as a claim about Origen's assumptions about scripture's pragmatics. Origen assumes that God's communications in Scripture operate according to a deep principle of co-operation. The various kinds of obscurity that Harl catalogues here, which in their literal sense appear to be floutings of this co-operative principle, function instead as implicatures, permitting inferences by which the text implicates (without expressly saying) 'spiritual truth.'³²³

Origen interprets scriptural obscurity according to a further pragmatic principle that we might label the principle of 'maximum informativeness.' We saw that Levinson identified a principle of informativeness summarized by the maxim, 'read as much into an utterance as is consistent with what you know about the world.' Origen, I suggest, operates with an even stronger version of this maxim: 'read as much into an utterance as is consistent with what you know *or could possibly discover* about the world.' Put slightly more loosely, Origen frequently assumes that the words of scripture require the reader to engage in a very open-ended investigation characteristic of genres like riddles, puzzles, and problems. These kinds of utterances intentionally remain open to the results of investigations in the actual world, so that what the text communicates is not only a function of its semantics (κατὰ λέξιν) but a pragmatic inference drawn on the basis of the relation between semantic meaning and discoverable facts about the world. A correct interpretation will depend in part on the truth of what one discovers. Exegesis is, for this reason, a *logical* activity not only a grammatical one.³²⁴

³²³ See also Harl, *Philocalie*, esp. 59-157.

³²⁴ Hans-Georg Gadamer argues that we cannot understand the discourse of another person without reflecting on its subject matter (*Truth and Method*, 2nd ed, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Continuum, 2004). Gadamer develops this point through a reading of Plato (355-61), whose arguments were repeatedly taken up by philosophical readers in antiquity. If an exegete takes seriously, however, that one cannot understand an utterance without also investigating its subject matter, then she must, as Origen did, constantly investigate not only the text but a good deal of extra-textual material as well. This is very important to bear in mind, for often what appears like an 'arbitrary' claim about the 'meaning' of a text appears much more plausible as a claim about a relation between the text and some subject matter. Thus Neuschäfer rightly distinguishes Origen's logical criticism from the merely

If this conception of a communicative exchange is clearly not that of ordinary conversation, neither does Origen adopt it arbitrarily. Rather, Origen sees scriptural communication as analogous to other specific paradigmatic contexts in which we typically accept that speech is obscure, above all in the uses of language that characterize wisdom literature and gnomic philosophical aphorisms.³²⁵ Scripture's obscurity is largely a function of its wisdom.

The following examples display this interrelation between exegesis of the textual utterance and investigation of the world, and the implicatures that result.

3.1. Homonymy and Implicature

In the following example, Origen interprets a sentence of Psalm 36 against the background assumption that it is said *truly* (ἀληθῶς), which here is roughly equivalent to Grice's maxim of quality.³²⁶ Taken in its literal sense, the text is patently false — what Grice calls a *flouting* of the maxim that an utterance should be true. This flouting requires Origen to seek another interpretation on the basis of knowledge acquired through investigation. Insofar as this interpretation turns on the truth or falsity of the utterance, it requires the interpreter to consider the text in relation to its possible referent. Origen concludes that the text is a homonym and may

aesthetic criticism of Dionysius Thrax and others, glossing its object as 'des Zusammenhangs von sprachlichem Ausdruck und sachlicher Wahrheit' (*Origenes als Philologe*, 249). In general, logical exegesis falls under what Neuschüafer labels judgment or criticism (247-286).

³²⁵ See especially ComSS Prol.3.

³²⁶ On other occasions in the *Homilies on the Psalms* the word 'truly' seems to have this sense, e.g. 36.2.1, 36.3.11, 76.1.6, 77.2.4, etc. More often, however, Origen uses the word ἀληθῶς in a stronger sense of words that have a deeper (usually spiritual) truth. We look for the (spiritual) land which is *truly* flowing with milk and honey (HomPs 15.1.6). We learn what is *truly* eros from the Song of Songs (HomPs 67.2.2). Christ's words *truly* shake the earth (HomPs 77.1.1). The heretics are *truly* called thieves (HomPs 77.1.6). Despite anthropomorphic language in Scripture, God is not *truly* subject to passion (HomPs 77.9.1). The distinction between these two uses is not a hard and fast one. See also 15.2.10, 36.3.11, 73.1.1, 4, 6, 73.3.4, 73.3.8, 75.1.2, 76.1.5, 76.2.1 (discussed above), 76.2.7, 76.3.2, 77.1.1, 77.8.4 (discussed above), 80.2.3, et al.

rightly be uttered in a spiritual sense³²⁷ of spiritual referents. The process by which Origen rejects the literal referents and settles on the spiritual for the proper use of this text should be understood, I suggest, as a kind of pragmatic implicature.

In Psalm 36:25b, we read, ‘I have not seen a righteous person forsaken.’ Origen begins by identifying, by way of summary, two different ways this sentence may be spoken and thus heard: the bodily and the spiritual.

... καὶ οὐκ εἶδον δίκαιον ἐγκαταλελειμμένον.	‘...I have not seen a righteous man forsaken’
ἐὰν σωματικῶς ἀκούης, ψευδὸς ἐστὶ. πολλοὶ	(Ps. 36:25b). If you hear this bodily, it is false.
γὰρ δίκαιοι ἐγκατελείφθησαν· ἐὰν δὲ	For many righteous people were forsaken. But
πνευματικῶς, ἀληθὺς.	if [you hear it] spiritually, [it is said] truly. ³²⁸

Origen assumes that the scripture is spoken truly (i.e. according to Grice’s maxim of quality). Since righteous people obviously suffer — they are forsaken in the *bodily* sense — one must interpret the scripture as implying a deeper, spiritual kind of non-forsakenness. Origen outlines this in the next section, drawing on language from Hebrews’ summary account of the sufferings of the righteous in the Old Testament.

οἷον εἰ νομίζεις τὸ ἐγκαταλείπεσθαι διὰ	For [many righteous people are forsaken,] if
πτωχείαν γενέσθαι, τὸ ἐγκαταλείπεσθαι ἐπὶ	you consider it ‘being forsaken’ to become
ἀσθηνείας σώματος γενέσθαι, τὸ	poor; or if you consider it ‘being forsaken’ to

³²⁷ Robért Somos rightly observes that Origen’s investigations of homonymy are not merely grammatical but *logical*: ‘as in the case of the difference between the literal and non-literal senses of the statements and commands of Scripture, so too in connection with homonymy the question of truth and falsity may emerge. Therefore, in this sense, homonymy has a logical character as well’ (*Logic and Argumentation*, 63; and see all of chapter 5).

³²⁸ *HomPs* 36.4.3.

ἐγκαταλείπεσθαι ἐπὶ τῷ διώκεσθαι γίνεσθαι καὶ	become sick in one's body; or if you consider
περιέρχεσθαι ἐν ἐρημίαις. οἱ δίκαιοι	it 'being forsaken' to be persecuted and to
ἐγκατελείφθησαν· περιῆλθον γὰρ ἐν μηλωταῖς,	wander in solitude. The righteous are
ἐν αἰγείαις δέρμασιν, ὑστερούμενοι, θλιβόμενοι,	forsaken: 'they went about in skins of sheep
κακουχούμενοι, ἐν ἐρημίαις πλανώμενοι καὶ	and goats, destitute, persecuted, tormented,
ὄρεσι καὶ σπηλαίοις καὶ ταῖς ὀπαῖς τῆς γῆς.	they wandered in the desert and in the
	mountains, and in caves and holes in the
	ground' (Heb. 11:37b, 38b). ³²⁹

Origen explicates the *bodily* sense of being forsaken in terms of things like becoming poor, sick, persecuted, and wandering alone. Probably he considers it obvious that the righteous experience these things, but in any case he quotes a long litany of the sufferings of the righteous in Hebrews 11:37-38. And he offers the negation of the words of Psalm 36:25b — 'The righteous *are* forsaken' — as a summary of this passage. Here is a striking example of learning to speak the language of scripture. Origen must recognize not only that the words of Psalm 36:25b are rightly used in a spiritual sense, but also that their exact negation is rightly said in the literal sense. Sometimes the reader of scripture one must learn to say the opposite of what scripture does.

Origen then introduces the notion of *spiritual* forsakenness.

οὐκ ἐγκατελείφθησαν· προφητῆται γὰρ ὄντες	But they were not forsaken: for it was
περιῆλθον ἐν μηλωταῖς. οὐκ ἐγκατελείφθησαν·	prophets who went about in skins of sheep.
εἰ γὰρ καὶ ἦσαν ἐν ἐρημίᾳ ἀνθρώπων, ἀλλὰ ἦν	They were not forsaken: for if they were in the
πλῆθος μετ' αὐτῶν ἀγγέλων. ὅτε ἦν Ἑλισαῖος	desert so far as human beings are concerned,

³²⁹ HomPs 36.4.3.

ἐν ἐρημίᾳ ἀνθρώπων, ἀλλὰ φυγὼν τὴν	yet there was a multitude of angels with them.
ἀνθρώπων ἐρημίαν μετὰ στρατοπέδου ἀγγέλων	Elisha was once in the desert so far as human
ἦν. γέγραπται γοῦν· ὦ κύριε, ἄνοιξον τοὺς	beings are concerned, but when he fled the
ὀφθαλμοὺς τοῦ παιδαρίου τούτου καὶ ἰδέτω ὅτι	desert of human beings, he was with an army
πλείους οἱ μεθ' ἡμῶν τοὺς μετ' αὐτῶν καὶ ὁρᾷ	of angels. For it is written, “O Lord, open the
τὸ ὄρος πλήρες ἵππων καὶ ἀρμάτων πυρός...	eyes of your servant and let him that those
	with us are more than those against us.’ And
	he saw the mountain full of horses and
	chariots of fire.” (cf. 2 Kings 6:16-17) ³³⁰

Origen now puts on his own lips the words of the psalm in a sense that he affirms. He does so by pointing to two facts in light of which the sentence may be uttered in a true sense. First, he points out that those who appeared destitute were nevertheless prophets, and hence they were certainly not forsaken by God. Second, he claims that even when abandoned by human beings in the desert, the righteous were surrounded by angels. In the text above he points to the example of Elisha; in the immediately following portion, he mentions Jacob’s ladder. Clearly he takes these episodes as paradigmatic for all the righteous. In light of these facts, Origen may then infer that it is true that the righteous are never forsaken, in the sense of being forsaken by God in spiritual matters.

After explicating the Jacob story, he then concludes:

ταῦτά μοι διὰ τοῦτο οὐκ εἶδον δίκαιον	I have said these things on account of the text,
ἐγκαταλελειμμένον· οὐ γὰρ καταλείπεται ἐν	‘I have not seen a righteous person forsaken.’

³³⁰ HomPs 36.4.3.

πνευματικοῖς ὄν. καὶ οὐ χρεῖαν ἔχων ἐν	For he is not forsaken in spiritual things. And
σωματικοῖς ζημιοῦμαι ἐγκαταλειπόμενος· ἔχω	though I am ruined and forsaken, I have no
πνευματικά. ἔξεστί μοι ἐγκαταλειπομένῳ	need of bodily things: I have spiritual things.
σωματικῶς εἰπεῖν ἐκεῖνα τὰ ἀποστολικά	It is lawful for me, being forsaken bodily, to
καυχήματα· ἄχρι τῆς ἄρτι ὥρας καὶ πεινῶμεν	speak these apostolic boasts: ‘To the present
καὶ διψῶμεν καὶ γυμνιτεύομεν καὶ	hour we are hungry and thirsty, we are poorly
κολαφιζόμεθα καὶ κοπιῶμεν καὶ ἀστατοῦμεν,	clothed and beaten and homeless, and we
ἐργαζόμενοι ταῖς ἰδίαις χερσί. καὶ ἔξεστί μοι	grow weary from the work of our hands’ (1
ἐγκαταλειπομένῳ σωματικῶς λέγειν·	Cor. 4:11-12). And it is lawful for me, being
λοιδοροῦμενοι εὐλογοῦμεν, διωκόμενοι	forsaken bodily, to say: ‘when reviled, we
ἀνεχόμεθα, δυσφημούμενοι παρακαλοῦμεν. ἀλλ’	bless; when persecuted, we endure; when
ἐπεὶ οὐκ ἐγκαταλείπομαι, εὐδοκῶ ἀσθενείαις,	slandered, we speak kindly’ (1 Cor. 4:12). But
ἐν ὕβρεσι καὶ ἀνάγκαις, ἐν διωγμοῖς καὶ	because I am not forsaken, ‘I am content with
στενοχωρίαις ὑπὲρ Χριστοῦ. δύο οὖν	weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions,
ἐγκαταλείψεις...	and calamities for the sake of Christ’ (2 Cor.
	12:10) Thus there are two [kinds of]
	forsakenness...

By distinguishing these two modes of forsakenness, Origen can show that while it is obviously false that ‘I have never seen a righteous person forsaken’ *bodily*, the Christian has good grounds for asserting this *spiritually*. To train the ears of his hearers to distinguish these two modes of reference, Origen himself utters this sentence or its negation numerous times in both senses. ‘The righteous are forsaken,’ he says baldly above, after defining this forsakenness in terms of poverty, sickness, and abandonment. By then quoting Hebrews, he implies that the type of situation recounted in the book of Hebrews is the appropriate occasion for the bodily utterance of

the sentence, ‘The righteous are forsaken.’ Now he makes the opposite point that precisely for the one who is forsaken bodily is it lawful to utter ‘the apostolic boasts’ of Paul. In both cases he expressly states that a Pauline text is ‘lawful’ to speak when one is ‘forsaken,’ showing again that his concern is with the conditions for the usage of scriptural language. Bodily forsakenness is itself an occasion on which specific Pauline utterances are appropriate. Origen has, we might say, shown how these three particular scriptural utterances — Psalm 36:25b, Hebrews 11:37f, and 1 Corinthians 4:10f — can be organized as part of a single grammar of bodily forsakenness.

Origen complements this clarification of the bodily semantics of forsakenness with a similar demonstration of its spiritual usage. In the previous section, he repeated the very words of the psalm twice — ‘they were not forsaken’ — before enumerating instances in which the spiritual truth of this statement is apparent. Here he applies again the same words to himself, ‘because I am not forsaken...’ and then immediately quotes Paul’s confession of his contentment amidst sufferings. The implication is that Paul’s ability to speak in this way is intelligible only because, notwithstanding his physical trials, like the prophets of old he too has not been forsaken by God.

Notice that nothing in the passage itself suggests that there are two kinds of forsakenness. Rather, these two kinds correspond to two stages in Origen’s investigation, a semantic and a pragmatic. The obvious semantic sense of ‘forsaken’ is the bodily one, but this is self-evidently false and hence flouts the maxim of truthfulness. Instead of rejecting the text, however, Origen seeks an implicature on the basis of other information he knows or can discover that would permit a true interpretation of the words. He discovers this in the example of suffering prophets and apostles, whom God nevertheless does not abandon. Origen shows little interest in what the psalmist intends. Instead, Origen aims to show that when said in certain contexts — of Elisha, of

Paul — the words may be used truly. All of this suggests that the discovery here of a homonymy between two senses of ‘forsakenness’ is really the discovery of an implicature.

3.2. *Parables and Implicature*

In his comments on Psalm 36:1-2 (LXX), Origen treats the text as an utterance that requires a logical examination to demonstrate that it was well-said (καλῶς). That the speech of the Logos and hence the words of scripture are *well-said* is perhaps the most general axiom governing Origen’s whole approach to Scripture. Origen frequently frames his exegesis as a demonstration that some text is *well-spoken* (καλῶς³³¹) or, which is closely related, *appropriate* (ἁρμοζῶ³³², ἐφαρμοζῶ³³³). Frequently it is not at all self-evident how a particular text is appropriate, however, and so to show that it is appropriate requires Origen to engage in an investigation of the text and of that to which it refers. When Origen then draws inferences on the basis of this investigation that preserve the well-said character of the text, these are implicatures.³³⁴

³³¹ This is one of Origen’s most common evaluative terms. In HomPs 15.2.2, Origen argues that it is *well-said* when Jesus says, ‘I bless the Lord who composed me’ (Ps. 15:7a). In HomPs 36.3.12, Jesus teaches that it is *well-said* that, if you cursed one of his followers, you also cursed him. In HomPs 77.9.4, Jesus is *rightly* said to curse (!). In HomPs 81.1.1, it is well-said that ‘you are gods.’ See also: HomPs 36.3.11 (of teaching), 67.2.3-4 (of singing), 67.2.8 (of writing), 73.3.2, 76.1.2, 76.2.1, 77.6.3, 77.7.3, 77.9.4, 77.9.6, 80.2.6. καλῶς can also be used of right actions: e.g. HomPs 15.1.3, 36.1.4-5, 36.3.1, 36.4.2, 74.1.1, 74.1.4, 76.2.4, 77.1.5, 77.2.7, 77.4.4, 77.4.8, 77.8.3, 80.2.1. In HomPs 76.2.4, he uses the same term to draw a parallel between right words and right deeds. The clear implication is that both speech and deeds are modes of creaturely performance that are subject to the norms of wisdom (i.e. correspondence with the Logos).

³³² Typically ‘appropriateness’ obtains between a text and some possible referent: HomPs 67.1.3 (the text ‘He who believes in me is not judged’ is appropriate (ἁρμόζει) to the holy and blessed ones); HomPs 67.1.5 (which asks how the words of the psalm 67, ‘God rose,’ can be said appropriately of the savior); HomPs 77.2.7 and 77.8.8 (the words of Psalm 77 are appropriate to the heretics); also HomPs 73.1.1, 73.2.5, 77.9.6. Occasionally, the ‘appropriateness’ obtains between texts that speak of the same thing: e.g. in HomPs 77.8.8, three texts about ‘slavery’ (Rom. 8:15, John 8:34, Psalm 77:61a) are appropriate to each other, showing that Psalm 77:61a may also be uttered, like the New Testament texts, of slavery *to sin*. See Harl, *Philocalie*, 88f.

³³³ HomPs 73.1.1.

³³⁴ Alternatively, one might say that Origen treats parables like the text below as puzzles or riddles to solve. One might analyze such a text as containing a kind of imperative — ‘solve me!’ These texts would then function as a kind of ‘indirect speech act,’ that implicates an illocutionary force despite its indicative surface structure. According

Psalm 36:1-2 compares evil-doers to grass:

μὴ παραζήλου ἐν πονηρευομένοις	Do not be provoked to envy by those who do
μηδὲ ζήλου τοὺς ποιοῦντας τὴν ἀνομίαν,	evil,
ὅτι ὡσεὶ χόρτος ταχὺ ἀποξηρανθήσονται	Nor envy those who practice lawlessness,
καὶ ὡσεὶ λάχανα χλόης ταχὺ ἀποπεσοῦνται.	For as grass they will quickly be withered,
	And like the sprout of an herb they will
	quickly fall away. ³³⁵

For Origen, the primary task will be to discover in a fuller sense *how* the wicked are like grass.

To begin with, however, he first paraphrases the psalm.

ἐὰν καὶ σὺ ζηλώσης τὴν ἀνομίαν, ταχέως	And if you envy the lawless, you will quickly
ἀποξηρανθήσῃ. καὶ τοῦτο δὲ κράτει ὅτι, ἐὰν	be withered. And grasp this fact, that if you
ζηλώσης τοὺς ποιοῦντας τὴν ἀνομίαν, ταχέως	envy those who practice lawlessness, you will
παραπλησίως λαχάνοις χλόης ἀποπεσεῖ. πῶς	quickly fall away similarly to the sprout of an
οὖν ὡς χόρτος ταχὺ ἀποξηρανθήσονται οἱ	herb. How then do evildoers, whom we ought
πονηρευόμενοι, οὓς οὐ δεῖ παραζηλοῦν;	not to envy, wither quickly as grass? ³³⁶

Origen's paraphrase expresses only the semantic content of the text itself, without presupposing anything further about its purport or rationale. It simply repeats the fact that a similarity exists between those who envy evil-doers and the rapid withering of grass. The purpose of his

to Levinson, inferential theories of indirect speech acts often draw heavily on Gricean implicature: *Pragmatics*, 263-76, esp. 270-4.

³³⁵ Ps. 36:1-2.

³³⁶ *HomPs* 36.2.

paraphrase is to clarify the syntax of the comparison by inserting clearer logical connectives: ‘if’ one does the things condemned in the first two lines, ‘then’ one will wither and fall as grass does. He also expands the comparative word ‘ὥσει,’ ‘as,’ into the more explicit παραπλησίως, ‘similarly.’ He plainly regards the question with which the section ends, however — ‘how then do the evil-doers...wither as grass?’ — as one that would go beyond what the text expressly says, whose answer will require knowledge acquired from an independent consideration of grass and the wicked in themselves. The inferences he draws as a result of these investigations are purported *implicatures* of the text beyond its express, semantic content, drawn in light of Origen’s principle of maximum informativeness.

After expanding on the ethical teaching of the psalm by quoting a parallel passage in Isaiah 40:6-7, Origen offers a demonstration of his own to show how evildoers and grass are aptly (καλῶς) compared.

καλῶς δὲ χόρτῳ παρέβαλε τοὺς	And he aptly compares evildoers to grass,
πονηρευομένους, δυνάμενος ἄλλα μυρία εἰπεῖν.	when he could have said countless other
καὶ τούτου καλῶς ἀπόδειξις αὕτη ἐστίν· ὁ	things. And here is an apt demonstration of
χόρτος τροφή κτηνῶν ἐστι, τὸν αὐτὸν τρόπον	this: grass is the food of beasts, just as evil-
οἱ πονηρευόμενοι τροφή εἰσιν ἀνθρώπων τῶν	doers are the food of people who destroy their
καταχρωμένων αὐτῶν τῇ δόξῃ, τῷ πλούτῳ, τῇ	glory, wealth, and success. For it is as though
εὐτυχίᾳ· οἶονεὶ γὰρ ἐσθίουσιν αὐτοὺς ὡς	they eat them like grass. And just as the
χόρτον. καὶ ὥσπερ οἱ δίκαιοι ἐσθίουσιν ἄρτον	righteous eat the bread that Paul is — for not
ὄντα τὸν Παῦλον, οὐ μόνον γὰρ τὸν σωτῆρα	only the Savior but also Paul [is bread], for it
ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸν Παῦλον. γέγραπται γὰρ· οἱ πάντες	is written, ‘We are all one bread’ (1 Cor.
εἷς ἄρτος ἐσμέν, καὶ οἶονεὶ μιμησάμενος τὸν	10:17), and Paul seems to be imitating the

σωτήρα ὄντα ἄρτον ὁ Παῦλος τρόφιμος γίνεται Savior who is bread — so those with worldly
 τοῖς ἀκούουσιν αὐτοῦ, οὕτως χόρτος εἰσὶν glory before the many and those who flatter
 ἔνδοξοι τοῦ κόσμου τοῖς πολλοῖς καὶ them are grass. ‘Therefore as grass they will
 κολακεύουσιν αὐτούς. ὥσει χόρτος οὖν ταχὺ quickly be withered, and like the sprout of an
 ἀποξηρανθήσονται καὶ ὥσει λάχανα χλόης ταχὺ herb they will quickly fall away.’³³⁷
 ἀποξηρανθησονται καὶ ταχὺ ἀποπεσοῦνται.

Here Origen’s exegesis becomes philosophical. While a historical reader might try to locate the psalm within the broader conventional thought world of ancient Israelite religion or its LXX translation in the context of Hellenistic Judaism, Origen’s interest is focused on investigating the content of the utterance itself. How is it that this comparison is aptly drawn or well-said (καλῶς)? Origen’s philosophical intent is suggested by the fact that he claims to offer a rational demonstration (ἀπόδειξις) of the aptness of the psalmist’s speech. But no answer is given in the text itself or in the conventional understanding of an author or reader in some historical context. Rather, Origen seeks an answer in the subject matter itself. That is, he actually investigates evil-doers and grass and seeks to understand what similarities obtain between them.

Origen observes that grass is eaten by beasts, not human beings. So too the wicked are ‘devoured’ by other human beings, who act therefore like beasts. No textual detail suggests this particular insight. Origen’s concern, moreover, is not primarily with showing that the psalmist intended this reading, but rather that his claims about the wicked are true. It is their truth, discovered by investigation, that demonstrates the aptness of the scriptural saying. Other scriptural texts then further confirm the aptness of speaking of human beings as ‘eating’ one

³³⁷ *HomPs* 36.2.

another.³³⁸ Jesus compares himself to ‘bread’ eaten by his disciples, as Paul speaks of himself and the community as ‘one bread.’ As the scripture speak of righteous human beings as food for others, so it is reasonable to see in wicked human beings a likeness to the grass eaten by beasts. Since this is an inference that Origen has drawn on the basis of his investigation in order to uphold the assumption that the text is well-spoken, it is an *implicature*.

Although Origen offers an extended comparison between grass and evil-doers, Origen’s interpretation of Psalm 36 is not ‘allegorical’ in the usual sense. Allegory typically establishes a correspondence between the elements of the literal sense of the text and some other non-literal sense or reference. Had this text merely recounted the growth and fall of a flower, for example, Origen might have offered an allegory of this text in terms of the rise and fall of the wealthy. But here, both terms of the correspondence are given in the text, since it directly asserts that there is a similarity between grass and evil-doers. Origen’s exegesis does not take the form of establishing further correspondences between textual details, but rather of filling in details of a correspondence stated only vaguely in outline. This leads to a second important difference from allegory. Most of the correspondences examined by Origen are not given as details in the text, but are rather the fruit of his own investigation. Scripture binds him to seek a similarity between grass and evil-doers and to affirm that it obtains in the particular respects that Scripture states. But Scripture’s open-ended comparisons invites a further investigation of these matters, one which leads him to articulate his own point-by-point correspondences between the things themselves.

To say that the inferences the text requires one to draw to demonstrate that it is well-spoken are part of its ‘meaning’ in a broader sense is to suggest that the text is more like a puzzle to be investigated or a task to be executed than it is the explicit communication of a message. As the

³³⁸ This is what, in the next chapter, I shall refer to as a ‘habit of scripture.’

solution to a puzzle is not usually given in the words by which it is posed, and as the fulfillment of a task is not usually accomplished simply by examining the words by which it was executed, so too here: the words of the text demand a further performance that cannot be executed without investigating more than simply the details of the text. But in light of the principle of maximum informativeness, Origen sees his own insights as part of the communicative intention of the divine author, and this is what makes them implicatures. For this reason, to interpret this text requires Origen also to seek out new discoveries in the world to which the text is referred.

Although less overtly than in the other cases we have examined, in this case too we must say that Origen is learning to *use* scriptural language. For the result of his inquiry in this case is that he discerns a real pattern of humans relations of which ‘eating’ is consistently an appropriate metaphor, one displayed in many texts and many possible utterances.³³⁹

4. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have begun to show what it means that Origen seeks to learn the language of scripture. Like a child hearing and imitating the words of her parents, Origen regards the texts of scripture as utterances to be learned and performed. I showed that this orientation requires Origen not only to examine the semantics of the text (κατὰ λέξιν) as one apprehends it when reciting or memorizing it, but to pose pragmatic questions about the relation between the text and the world. I showed that Origen as a pragmatic reader is acutely aware of some of the central issues in contemporary pragmatics, namely, deixis and implicature.

³³⁹ In the next chapter, I shall show how Origen formulates this kind of insight as a ‘habit of scripture’ that functions as a general rule for the wise use of language.

Implicit in much of this discussion has been the fact that certain rules and regularities exist in scripture's wise discourse. The task of the following chapter is to examine how, for Origen, the sage proceeds from an analysis of the individual sentences of scripture to an account of the rules governing their usage.

Chapter 3: The Grammar of Scriptural Language

In chapter 2, I showed that Origen characteristically treats the text of scripture as utterances that the reader of scripture must learn to use. Since the function of an utterance is relative to the occasion on which it is uttered, the exegete must clarify the conditions under which scriptural texts may wisely be said and elucidate their function when used under those conditions. This discussion left only implicit, however, what will be the explicit concern of this chapter: that the language of scripture is governed by rules. Scripture is always, for Origen, the textual manifestation of a complex of rational rule-governed behavior. Origen's investigation of these rational rules of scriptural discourse is the concern of the present chapter. I argue that Origen learns the rules of scriptural discourse through an *inductive* mode of inquiry by which he reasons from particular examples of linguistic usage to the underlying rules. To understand Origen's exegetical procedures, we must take them seriously as a process of inquiry.

I focus on Origen's use of analogical arguments to formulate patterns of scriptural usage that he calls 'habits of scripture.' The center of this chapter — indeed, of the entire dissertation — is my analysis of the logic operative in Origen's reconstructions of these habits (2.1). Habits of scripture, I argue, are vaguely formulated hypotheses that guide exegetical judgments in future cases without simply determining them. In light of his philosophy of language, this logic comes to operate at many levels of Origen's exegesis. Origen assumes that the habits of scripture express wisdom, that they are true or appropriate with respect to their subject matters. So although Origen observes habits of scripture that are mainly grammatical (and similar to contemporary philological inquiry), he also tends to reason that habits observed in scripture should correspond to habits of the world (2.2.1) and to the habits of the wise interpreter (2.2.2).

Indeed, habits of scripture ought also to be the habits of his own speech. It follows that one may simply assert habits of scripture *directly* as statements about the world, without making explicit their origin in an inductive process of inquiry (2.2.3). This entails that almost any sentence of Origen's, not simply those labeled 'habits of scripture,' may operate according to the same inductive logic. Some of Origen's more perplexing theological or hermeneutical claims become intelligible once we recognize their inductive origin (2.3).

Before examining Origen's inductive procedures, however, I begin by laying some groundwork. The first section introduces several key distinctions taken from pragmatist philosophy and shows their relevance for the understanding of ancient inductive reasoning. I first introduce Charles Peirce's distinction between *abduction* (the hypothetical proposal of a rule) and *induction* (the empirical testing of a rule) and suggest that an analogous distinction can be identified in Greek empirical scientists of the Imperial Period (1.1). I then show how these modes of argument function in the context of the grammatical use of *analogy* to reconstruct the rules of spoken language, which provides the closest parallel to Origen's own reconstructions of scriptural language (1.2). Finally, I discuss Peter Ochs's account of the role of *vagueness* in the formulation of general claims, as exemplified by the Biblical wisdom tradition (1.3).

1. Inquiry and Vagueness

Origen's inductive activity can be compared to two other traditions of inductive inquiry: the Greek *technai* or 'expertises,' of which grammar was widely regarded as a paradigmatic instance, and the Biblical wisdom tradition. Both traditions formulated empirical regularities in characteristically *vague* ways, thus leaving judgments about particular cases to be decided later

on a case by case basis. The Biblical wisdom texts tended to formulate these general insights in a cryptic and poetic form. Greek natural science tended rather to formulate its insights as clear rules with explicitly acknowledged exceptions. Both, however, recognized that the way we speak about general truths must reflect the fact that empirical inquiry always remains open to new experiences and exceptional cases.

Origen's scriptural inquiry straddles these two traditions. In its most elementary forms, it differs little either in method or in terminology from the kind of inquiry we find in Greek grammarians. But for Origen more profound wisdom tends to require more difficult language to express it. As Origen's inquiry passes from merely grammatical comments to summaries of scriptural wisdom, his own language becomes more paradoxical or aphoristic, more like scriptural wisdom texts. We shall begin to see this in the present chapter, but the most striking examples will occur in the following chapter, as Origen proposes new speculative language of his own.

1.1. Induction and Abduction

For the purposes of my analysis of Origen, it will be useful to introduce some terminology for the analysis of empirical inference borrowed from Charles Peirce's analysis of modern scientific method. Peirce analyzes scientific inquiry as an ongoing cyclical process involving three basic kinds of inference, which he labels *abduction*, *deduction*, and *induction*. Abduction refers to the process of forming a plausible conjecture to account for some phenomena under investigation.

The inquiry begins with pondering these phenomena in all their aspects, in the search of some point of view whence the wonder shall be resolved. At length a conjecture arises that furnishes a possible Explanation, by which I mean a syllogism exhibiting the surprising fact as necessarily consequent upon the circumstances of its occurrence together with the truth of the credible conjecture, as premisses. On account of this Explanation, the inquirer is led to regard his conjecture, or hypothesis, with favour. As I phrase it, he provisionally holds it to be "Plausible"; this acceptance ranges in different cases—and reasonably so—from a mere expression of it in the interrogative mood, as a question meriting attention and reply, up through all appraisals of Plausibility, to uncontrollable inclination to believe... Its characteristic formula of reasoning I term Retroduction [i.e. abduction], i.e. reasoning from consequent to antecedent.³⁴⁰

An abduction is the proposal of a rule, with some degree of plausibility, that if true would account for certain observable facts.³⁴¹ It is the creative act of formulating a hypothesis.

After the second stage of inquiry, 'deduction,' in which one clarifies the implications of an abductive hypothesis, by 'induction' one tests this hypothesis for its experiential adequacy.

The purpose of Deduction, that of collecting consequents of the hypothesis, having been sufficiently carried out, the inquiry enters upon its Third Stage, that of ascertaining how far those consequents accord with Experience, and of judging accordingly whether the hypothesis is sensibly correct, or requires some inessential modification, or must be entirely rejected. Its characteristic way of reasoning is Induction.³⁴²

³⁴⁰ Charles Peirce, *Collected Papers of Charles Peirce*, Paul Weiss and A. Burks, eds. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1935, 1958), 6:469.

³⁴¹ For discussions of abduction, see Ochs, *Logic of Scripture*, 28-31 and Umberto Eco, *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 39-43.

³⁴² CP 6:473. Peirce goes on to discuss three distinct stages of induction: the 'classification' of objects of experience under general ideas, the actual 'probation' or experiment, and the 'sentential' stage of appraising the significance of one's experiment.

At the heart of induction is what Peirce goes on to call ‘probation,’ i.e. the active performance of an experiment or other intervention in the world. In light of the results of probation, one has reason to affirm, modify, or correct one’s initial hypothesis with some probabilistic confidence. Inquiry is, on this model, an ongoing cyclical process, one that produces reliable but fallible empirical knowledge.

We need to exercise caution in applying these categories, developed for the analysis of modern practices of scientific inquiry, to ancient inquiry. It is noteworthy, however, that as recent scholarship on the history of the philosophy of science has shown, practicing scientists during the Imperial Period came to develop accounts of their own scientific practice as ongoing processes of proposing and testing hypotheses, accounts which thus anticipate this Peircean model of inquiry. The most significant figures are Apollonius Dyscolus the grammarian,³⁴³ Ptolemy the exact scientist,³⁴⁴ and above all, Galen the physician.³⁴⁵ Since Origen worked in the same milieu and frequently appealed to the empirical sciences as a paradigm of his own exegetical activity, there is also reason to suppose that their proto-scientific processes of inquiry may have analogues in Origen’s exegesis.³⁴⁶ Of these figures, Galen offers the most extensive

³⁴³ Cf. David Blank, ‘Analogy, Anomaly, and Apollonius Dyscolus,’ in S. Everson, ed., *Language* (Cambridge; Companions to Ancient Thought, 3): 149-65.

³⁴⁴ Cf. A. A. Long, ‘Ptolemy *On the Criterion*,’ Andrew Barker, *Scientific Method in Ptolemy’s Harmonics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); and Mark J. Schiefsky, ‘The Epistemology of Ptolemy’s *On the Criterion*,’ in *Strategies of Argument: Essays in Ancient Ethics, Epistemology, and Logic*, ed. Mi-Kyoung Lee (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014): 301-331.

³⁴⁵ For recent work on Galen’s epistemology and scientific method, cf. Michael Frede, ‘Galen’s Epistemology’ in *Essays in Ancient Philosophy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987): 279-298; R. J. Hankinson, ‘Hellenistic biological sciences,’ in *Routledge History of Philosophy, volume 2: From Aristotle to Augustine*, ed. David Furley (New York: Routledge, 1997): 320-355; R. J. Hankinson, ‘Epistemology,’ in *The Cambridge Companion to Galen*, ed. R. J. Hankinson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008): 158-178; and Glen Cooper, ‘Astronomy, Medicine, and Galen: The Beginnings of Empirical Science’ in *The Traditional Mediterranean: Essays from the Ancient to the Early Modern Era*, ed. Jayoung Che and Nicholas C. J. Pappas (ATINER, 2011): 161-171.

³⁴⁶ E.g. PA 4.1.7, *Philocalia* 2.4-5; 6; 10. Medicine, however, had an especially privileged place, as D.G. Bostock says: ‘For Origen the art of medicine was the clearest possible parable of the Gospel in action’ (‘Medical Theory and

discussions of method, and so we shall focus on him.³⁴⁷ As we shall see, his distinction between ‘invention’ (εὑρεσις, *inventio*) and ‘testing’ (πείρα) in particular anticipates the Peircean distinction between abduction and induction.

Ancient discussions of scientific method generally took place in the context of disputes about τεχνη (‘expertise’). Even before Plato, the practitioners of various disciplines such as grammar, music, and medicine purported to possess a specialized expertise that distinguished the sort of knowledge they possessed from that which may be acquired by the use of common sense and everyday reasoning processes. By Origen’s day, a general outline of what constituted an expertise or *techne* had long emerged. David Blank lists four generally agreed criteria:

[a *techne*] should have a certain goal, distinct from those of other *technai*; it should be useful; it must be able to reach its goal; it must establish what is right and wrong to do, so that, while even an untrained person may accidentally do the right thing, only the technical practitioner can explain that and why it is right...³⁴⁸

Theology in Origen' in R.P.C. Hanson and Henri Crouzel, eds. *Origeniana Tertia* (Rome: Edizioni dell'Ateneo, 1985): 191-199, esp. 191.

³⁴⁷ It is doubtful that Origen knew Galen’s work in particular. Eusebius knows Galen, and testifies to the influence of his logic on a heretical group of Roman Christians in the late 2nd century CE (HE 5.28.3-19). The influential Peripatetic commentator Alexander of Aphrodisias, a contemporary of Origen, wrote an entire work against Galen, preserved in Arabic. So there is no *prima facie* reason why Origen could not have been familiar with Galen’s work. Robert Grant argues that this is indeed the case. He claims that *HomJer* 39 (= *Philocalia* 10.2), which we shall examine below, must be a reference to Galen’s treatise *UP* xi.14, that his reference to Celsus as an ‘Epicurean’ in CC 1.8 is likely a reference to Galen’s *De libris propriis* 16, p. 124, 4 Müller, and that the order in which Origen treats topics in CC 1.9-10 suggests he is following a written source, likely Galen’s *De ordine librorum* 1 (80.11-81.2 Müller). See R. M. Grant, ‘Paul, Galen, and Origen,’ *Journal of Theological Studies* 34:2 (Oct. 1983): 533-536, and R. M. Grant, *Heresy and Criticism* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993): 100. Jonathan Barnes argues that there is no reason to believe that Origen knew of Galen (Jonathan Barnes, ‘Galen, Christians, logic’, in Jonathan Barnes, *Logical Matters* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2012), 12 n. 2). He makes this comment in passing, but one reason for suspicion is that, as Bernard Neuschäfer shows, Origen does not seem to be aware of Galen’s account of the various medical schools in CC 3.12, nor does he tend to follow Galen’s account of physiological details in texts like PA 2.10.4 and CM 13.6 — though Origen may have received some Galenic medical ideas through a handbook (Bernard Neuschäfer, *Origenes Als Philologe* (Basel: Friedrich Reinhardt Verlag, 1987), 195-201, esp. 196 and 198.

³⁴⁸ Blank, *Grammarians*, xx.

By these criteria, technical practitioners sought to distinguish the theoretically-grounded expertise they claimed to possess from the sort of practical know-how available even to the untrained person. Unlike the ordinary speaker, the grammarian could reliably explain the rules of pure Greek or Latin. Unlike the folk healer, the doctor could offer an explanatory account of why certain treatments are correct.

Within each of the *technai* methodological disputes arose between ‘empiricists’ and ‘rationalists’ about the sort of reasoning necessary for technical expertise.³⁴⁹ The terms, like the dispute itself, seem to have originated in medical circles.³⁵⁰ According to Galen, at issue was the proper method of discovering the knowledge that constitutes the expertise (*techne*) of the doctor. Both parties generally agreed that the knowledge of medical practice arises by experience from empirical particulars. The question is whether ‘experience’ alone is adequate to determine the rules of medical practice, or whether experience must be used in conjunction with ‘reason.’

οἱ μὲν τὴν ἐμπειρίαν μόνην φασὶν ἀρκεῖν τῇ τέχνῃ, τοῖς δὲ καὶ ὁ λόγος οὐ σμικρὰ δοκεῖ συντελεῖν... ἡ μὲν ἑτέρα διὰ πείρας ἰοῦσα πρὸς τὴν τῶν ἰαμάτων εὕρεσιν, ἡ δ’ ἑτέρα δι’ ἐνδείξεως.	Some [i.e. the Empiricists] say that experience alone suffices for the art, whereas others [i.e. the Rationalists] think that reason, too, has an important contribution... The one proceeds by means of experience to the discovery of medicines, the other by means of indication. ³⁵¹
---	---

‘Experience’ in this context does not refer narrowly to perception, but more broadly to habits of association acquired by our natural learning processes through repetition, memory, and the

³⁴⁹ My account follows Blank, *Grammarians*, xvii-xxxiv.

³⁵⁰ Blank, *Grammarians*, xxv-xxvii.

³⁵¹ *Sects* 1.1, trans. Frede.

testimony of others.³⁵² The sorts of inferences the empiricists accepted they called *epilogismos*, which proceeds on the basis of ‘commemorative’ signs, i.e. the habitual association of one observable object with another.³⁵³ By *epilogismos* one might infer, ‘If there is smoke, there is fire,’ because smoke is habitually observed in association with fire. In rejecting ‘reason’ (λόγος), then, the empiricists did not reject all inference and thinking. Instead, they rejected the validity or necessity of a particular sort of specialized reasoning that could infer facts about the underlying natures and causes of objects. This sort of reasoning was called *analogismos*, and it proceeded by ‘indication,’ i.e. by inference from observable entities to in principle unobservable entities such as natures and causes.³⁵⁴ By *analogismos* one might infer, ‘If we sweat, we must have pores.’ The dispute between rationalists and empiricists was, according to Galen, primarily about the validity and necessity of drawing inferences about unobservable entities.³⁵⁵

Galen developed a position that mediated between empiricism and rationalism. Since he accepts the necessity of drawing indicative inferences, he is strictly speaking a rationalist.³⁵⁶ But he is more confident than most rationalists in the general reliability of experience as far as it goes. Moreover, while he regards the construction of a rational theory as necessary for medical practice, he is acutely conscious of the unreliability of rational speculation when not disciplined by empirical testing. The doctor, he says, must, ‘spend a great deal of time testing and justifying [what he learns], seeing what accords with observable facts and what does not; and on this basis he will accept some doctrines and reject others.’³⁵⁷ In practice, Galen gives the pronouncements

³⁵² Galen in *Subf. Empf.* 4.50-1 defines experience as ‘the observation or memory of things which one has seen to happen often and in a similar way’ which he later expands to include testimony (qtd. Hankinson, ‘Epistemology,’ 172).

³⁵³ *Sects* 1.11.

³⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁵ *Sects* 1.13-15.

³⁵⁶ Frede, ‘Galen’s Epistemology,’ 287.

³⁵⁷ *De naturalibus facultatibus* II.178-80; qtd. Hankinson, ‘Hellenistic Biological Sciences,’ 344.

of reason the status of hypotheses that require further testing: ‘reason suggests and [empirical] testing demonstrates [λόγος ὑπαγορεύει καὶ ἡ πείρα δείκνυσιν].’³⁵⁸

As Michael Frede has shown, what Galen comes to see with particular clarity is the need for a rational method of *invention* in scientific work. The term ‘invention’ or ‘discovery’ (εὑρεσις, *inventio*) was originally a rhetorical term for the process by which an orator discovers and elaborates the subject matter of his speech.³⁵⁹ For Galen, it refers to the methods used by the scientist to discover new experiential knowledge. In his *On the Sects*, Galen distinguishes a number of such methods used by empiricists. First, there is ‘incidental’ experience, in which one learns something without any intentional act, e.g. when one learns that blood flows from wounds because it so happens that someone nearby was wounded. Other kinds of experience, however, emerge through some intentional trial or experiment. There is ‘extemporary’ experience, in which ‘we deliberately come to try something, either led by dreams or forming a view as to what is to be done in some other fashion.’³⁶⁰ By pointing to *dreams* as the source of a hypothesis to test, Galen calls attention to the creative and mysterious origin of new ideas. Galen also speaks of ‘imitative’ experience, in which something that has worked in the past ‘is tried out again for the same disease.’³⁶¹ In this sort of case, one generates a hypothesis by supposing that the result obtained in a single case is a more general rule. In Peircean terms, each is a strategy for generating an abduction.

Galen also describes a method he calls ‘transition to the similar’ that has particularly important parallels in Origen’s exegesis. Transition to the similar was a method of discovering treatments in response to genuinely new cases, a particularly important mode of invention

³⁵⁸ *De sanitate tuenda libri vi*, Kühn 6.126; cf. *Ad Glauconem de medendi methodo libri ii*, 11.79.

³⁵⁹ E.g. Cicero, *De inventione*.

³⁶⁰ *Sects* 2.3, trans. Frede.

³⁶¹ *Ibid.*

because it was primarily the doctor's ability to offer successful treatment in these sorts of cases that demonstrated his possession of the expertise of medicine. 'Transition to the similar' is a form of analogical argument, by which one guesses a treatment in a new case by applying a proven remedy from a different cause that is analogous in some respect.

By means of this device, they often transfer the same remedy from one affection to another and from one place affected to another, and they proceed from a previously known remedy to one quite similar... This kind of transition, as a whole, amounts to a method of invention but not yet invention itself, before the test has been made. But once one has put what one expected to the test, it already is trustworthy, if it has been confirmed by this, no less so than if it had been observed many times to happen in the same way. This experience which one has as a result of the transition to the similar they called practiced, because one has to be practiced in the art if one wants to find something out in this way. But all the other experiences which were made before one had this kind of experience and which were needed to bring about the art can also be made by anyone.³⁶²

On Galen's description, 'transition to the similar' amounts to an argument by analogy from one case to another, i.e. from one's previous experience to a proposed hypothesis about how to proceed in a new case. Here he makes especially clear that a method of 'invention' permits the doctor to formulate hypotheses about correct treatments in such cases, but that they also require proof through empirical 'testing' (πείρα).³⁶³ Like Peircean abduction, invention produces a

³⁶² Ibid.

³⁶³ *Sects* 2.4.

hypothesis that is only plausible and fallible; it requires an empirical test, the activity that Peirce called induction.³⁶⁴

1.2. *Analogy*

Ancient grammarians understood the task of reconstructing the rules of language as a mode of induction, and the issues that arise in this context provide close analogues to Origen's own attempts to reconstruct the rules of scripture. Grammarians generally understood their discipline to be a *techne*, concerned primarily with identifying those norms of correct or pure speech they called 'Hellenism' or 'Latinity.' Indeed, although grammarians taught and interpreted literary texts, it was primarily their knowledge of the rules of correct speech that they understood as constituting a genuinely technical expertise (*techne*). This is especially evident in the tripartite division of grammar reported by Sextus Empiricus:³⁶⁵ there was an 'expert' part (*technikon*), which deals with, 'the elements [of language, i.e. letters and syllables], the parts of a sentence, orthography, and Hellenism, and what follows from these;' a 'historical' part (*historikon*), in which grammarians 'teach about persons...places...or transmit traditions about fictions and myths;' and a 'special' part (*idiaiteron*), in which grammarians 'examine what concerns poets and writers, where the grammarians explain what is unclearly said, judge the sound and the

³⁶⁴ For rationalists, this sort of analogical argument was not sufficient without other forms of inquiry, especially anatomy: *Sects* 2.5.

³⁶⁵ This division apparently originated with Asclepiades, as Sextus says later (AM 1.252). A similar division is attested by Seneca (Ep. 88.3) who calls the first part a concern 'for language,' and Diomedes 1.426.18, who refers to it as 'the rational study of correct speaking and writing' in opposition to 'knowledge of poets and writers and the ready exposition of histories' (qtd. Blank, *Against the Grammarians*, 147). A similar two-part division of grammar, probably originating with Varro, is also attested in other sources. Quintillian, for example, divides grammar into 'correct speech and explanation of poets,' later labeling correct speech alone as the 'methodical' (i.e. technical) rather than the 'historical' part of grammar (1.4.2, qtd. Blank, *Against the Grammarians*, 147; cf. 1.9.1. See the whole discussion in Blank, 146-8.

unsound, and sort the genuine from the spurious.’³⁶⁶ The implication of this division, drawn largely along epistemological lines,³⁶⁷ is that only the ‘expert’ part of grammar constitutes grammar as a properly technical expertise. This is also why Sextus devotes the majority of his skeptical attack to this expert. The upshot is this: the ‘expert’ part of grammar was that aspect that dealt with the rules of writing and speaking, i.e. the correct *use* of language, and not with exegesis or interpretation as such.

In grammar as in other disciplines, there was a debate between rationalists and empiricists focused on how the rules of correct usage were to be determined. As David Blank says, the basic issue was ‘whether grammar should be regulated by rule and theory or by observation of usage.’³⁶⁸ Rationalists sought to bring conventional written and spoken Greek under rational rules using rational arguments from etymology and especially analogy.³⁶⁹ Empiricists tended to make the customary usage of one’s community the sole or primary criterion of correct speech.³⁷⁰ It was assumed that a ‘rational’ norm would be one that displays some kind of regularity, which is why ‘reason’ and ‘analogy’ were so closely linked. It was also generally recognized that ordinary usage was evidently full of irregularities. So in practice, as Catherine Atherton shows,

³⁶⁶ AM 1.92f.

³⁶⁷ This is in contrast to the four-part division of grammar, on the basis of the order of classroom activities, that has dominated discussion among patristics scholars of Origen’s use of Hellenistic grammar. The commentaries on Thrax generally presuppose a four part division of grammar into reading, textual criticism, exegesis, and criticism, and they explain that it reflects the course of the classroom hour (Blank, *Against the Grammarians*, 147; cf. Sch. DThr. 12.5ff and 135.7ff). This division is the basis of Neuschäfer’s often cited study *Origenes als Philologe* as well as Peter Martens, *Origen and Scripture : the Contours of the Exegetical Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

³⁶⁸ Blank, *Grammarians*, xxxv.

³⁶⁹ For this reason, Sextus’ criticism of rationalist grammar culminates in a discussion of Hellenicity focused on the failure of analogy as a criterion: AM 1.176-240.

³⁷⁰ Quintilian, an empiricist of sorts, says that ‘Custom...is the surest teacher of speaking’ (IO 1.6.3). His other two categories, ‘authority’ and ‘antiquity,’ are empiricist in spirit as well, hence he lists them separately from ‘reason.’ Sextus considers the possibility of treating the speech of an ancient author like Homer as a rational criterion of correctness, but easily shows that it this is simply another form of custom: AM 1.200-8.

‘the debate was over how [language’s] irregularity should be managed,’³⁷¹ and hence, over the extent and function of analogical arguments.

In their simplest forms, analogical arguments infer judgments about contested cases on the basis of their similarity to clear cases.³⁷² Thus one could define analogy simply as ‘the comparison of similar things,’ as we find in a scholium to Dionysius Thrax.³⁷³ This comparison could be expressed in a compressed form as a comparison between two terms, ‘as A, so B.’³⁷⁴ But strictly speaking an analogy is a comparison involving four terms, ‘as A is to B, so C is to D.’ For example, Sextus Empiricus rehearses the argument that as the form κτᾶσθαι is derived from κτῆσις, so χρᾶσθαι should be derived from χρῆσις.³⁷⁵ (These arguments are reminiscent of Galen’s ‘transition to the similar,’ which proposes a judgment about a new case on the basis of a pattern of analogy that obtains in clear cases.) Since implicit in analogical arguments is that similar cases are governed by a single underlying rule, analogy could also be framed as a procedure for reconstructing general rules (κανόνες) from particular cases.³⁷⁶ For example:

ἡ τῶν ὁμοίων παράθεσις δι’ ἧς συνίστανται οἱ	[Analogy is] the comparison of similar things
τῶν ὀνομάτων καὶ ῥημάτων κανόνες.	through which the rules of nouns and verbs
	are demonstrated. ³⁷⁷

³⁷¹ Atherton, ‘Grammarians,’ 244.

³⁷² On analogy, see D. Fehling, ‘Varro und die grammatische Lehre von der Analogie und der Flexion,’ *Glotta* 35 (1956): 214-70; 36 (1957): 48-100; Elmar Siebenborn, *Die Lehre von der Sprachrichtigkeit und ihren Kriterien* (John Benjamins, 1976).

³⁷³ Schol. 14.11. The Greek is: ‘Ἀναλογία λέγεται ἡ τῶν ὁμοίων παράθεσις.’ Cf. 309.9, 169.29, AM 1.199.

³⁷⁴ For example, ‘καὶ τὸ πηρόξ ὀξυτόνως δεῖ ἀνγινώσκειν, ὥς τὸ πηλός’ (Schol. DT 454.20f).

³⁷⁵ Sextus AM 1.197; cf. Varro LL 10; Schol. Hom. *Iliad* 1.216, and the discussion in Siebenborn, *Sprachrichtigkeit*, 64ff.

³⁷⁶ Siebenborn, *Sprachrichtigkeit*, 66f.

³⁷⁷ Schol. DT 309.6-36, qtd. Fehling, ‘Varro,’ 238.

ἡ τῶν τεχνικῶν κανόνων ἀπόδοσις ἐκ
 παραθέσεως τοῦ ὁμοίου γενομένη.

[Analogy] is the demonstration of technical
 rules by the comparison of what is similar.³⁷⁸

On these definitions, analogy has become a full-blown inductive process of inference from particular to general, a mode of argumentation by which the grammarian demonstrates the rule of speech underlying a collection of similar instances.

Grammarians used analogical arguments with different degrees of confidence. Some were happy to pursue analogical arguments even if they contradicted the usage of authoritative speakers. For these grammarians, if empirical usage contradicts the results of ‘rational’ argument, usage simply had to be corrected. Often the results were comical, as critics of grammarians loved to point out.³⁷⁹ But others, while being willing to correct ordinary usage with reference to speakers (such as Homer) whose usage they deemed authoritative, also tended to see their task as reconstructing rather than correcting the underlying competence displayed by these authoritative speakers. For these grammarians, the use of analogy to reconstruct the linguistic competence of these speakers took a form closer to that of Galenic scientific inquiry: it required using analogy abductively to propose hypotheses about the rules of language that still had to be tested inductively against ordinary usage. Apollonius Dyscolus in particular came to adopt this vision of grammar, as David Blank has shown.³⁸⁰ For him, it is not enough to collect empirical examples of usage, made by ordinary speakers by bringing cases under ‘the sense of hearing,’ that is, by testing the grammaticality of particular forms against their own linguistic intuitions.³⁸¹ Rather, the grammarian uses analogy to formulate hypotheses that explain the *reason* (τί) for or

³⁷⁸ Schol. DT 454.14ff, qtd. Fehling, ‘Varro,’ 238.

³⁷⁹ See e.g. AM 1.206. See Blank, *Grammarians*, 206f and Atherton, ‘Grammarian,’ 244f.

³⁸⁰ Blank, ‘Analogy, Anomaly, and Apollonius Dyscolus.’

³⁸¹ See e.g. *Syntax* 3.9.

the *nature* (τὸ ποιῶν) of the ungrammatical forms.³⁸² Without a theory of this sort, ordinary users cannot correct their errors reliably with reference to a rational ideal of correct speech displayed by traditional authors.

Προφανῶν οὐσῶν τῶν τοιούτων συντάξεων	Since constructions like these are obvious,
οἰήσονται τινες, κἂν μὴ παραλάβωσι τὸν	some people think that even if they don't pay
λόγον, διασφύζειν τὰ τῆς συντάξεως. Οὗτοι δὲ	attention to reason, they will still preserve
ὁμοίον τι πείσονται τοῖς ἐκ τριβῆς τὰ σχήματα	proper syntax. These people are a lot like
τῶν λέξεων παρεληφόσιν, οὐ μὴν ἐκ δυνάμεως	those who have acquired the forms of words
τῶν κατὰ παράδοσιν τῶν Ἑλλήνων καὶ τῆς	simply by knack, but not from the
συμπαρεπομένης ἐν αὐτοῖς ἀναλογίας· οἷς	[explanatory] power of the tradition of the
παρακολουθεῖ τὸ εἰ διαμάρτοιεν ἕν τι σχήματι	Greeks and the analogy implicit in [their
μὴ δύνασθαι διορθοῦν τὸ ἀμάρτημα διὰ τὴν	usage]. These people are in the situation that
παρακολουθοῦσαν αὐτοῖς ἀπειρίαν.	if they make a mistake with some form, they
	cannot correct their error because of the
	ignorance arising from [their practice]. ³⁸³

Nevertheless, analogy on its own is fallible; it must be tested empirically against observable usage. Apollonius thus constructs an ideal of speech through a basically empirical approach to traditional authors, using scientific methods similar to Galen's to propose and test hypotheses about the rules governing their exemplary speech.

³⁸² *Syntax* 3.6.

³⁸³ *Syntax* 1.60.

The unreliability of analogical inference was in fact a commonplace in certain circles. A scholium to Thrax observes forthrightly that ‘analogy is not without error.’³⁸⁴ For this reason, among those with less systematic ambitions than Apollonius Dyscolus, a more pragmatic attitude prevailed. For Quintilian, whose task as a teacher of oratory is the formation of competent speakers, a theoretical system of the sort which Apollonius aspired to construct does not provide adequate guidance for the case-specific needs of the orator. While Quintilian too appeals to rational analogy, he does so only as one useful criterion of Latinity among a number of others (usage, antiquity, authority) for making judgments about correct speech in contested cases. None on its own is a sure criterion; and all require ‘judgment’ to apply rightly in particular cases.³⁸⁵ For Quintilian, then, the rules developed by analogy are heuristic generalizations or rules of thumb that guide judgment without obviating the need for wise judgment in particular cases. Quintilian’s view suggests a view of linguistic competence (and rhetorical eloquence) as a capacity for case-specific judgment that cannot fully be reduced to rules in advance.

1.3. Vagueness and Wisdom

Origen, as we shall see, tends to treat rules of scriptural discourse in a similar way as heuristic rules of thumb that require judgment to apply in particular cases. To understand the logic of his inquiry into the rules of scriptural discourse, we need to analyze the function of heuristic rules of this sort. I do so in terms of another Peircean category, *vagueness*. As Peter Ochs has argued, scriptural discourse is characteristically vague, especially in the writings of the wisdom tradition, which ‘defer the activity of completing their definitions or meanings to some

³⁸⁴ Schol. DThr. 471.24. The Greek is: ‘ἡ ἀναλογία οὐ παντάπασιν ἔχει τὸ ἀπταιστον.’ Cf. IO 1.6.12, and the discussion in Fehling, ‘Varro,’ 256ff.

other occasion.³⁸⁶ Ochs has shown that vagueness plays an important role in facilitating empirical inquiry. When used in the context of an inductive process of inquiry, vague formulations may play the important role of expressing a provisional claim that remains open to the results of further inquiry. Origen, I shall argue, uses vagueness in just this way.

Following Peirce, Ochs use the term ‘vague’ in contrast to the term ‘general’ as two species of indeterminacy. A sign is *general*, Peirce says, ‘in so far as it extends to the interpreter the privilege of carrying its determination further.’ He tends to use universally quantified propositions as examples: ‘Man is mortal,’ i.e. *all* men are mortal. He comments, ‘To the question, What man? the reply is that the proposition explicitly leaves it to you to apply its assertion to what man or men you will.’ By contrast, a sign is *vague* ‘in so far as it reserves further determination to be made in some other conceivable sign, or at least does not appoint the interpreter as its deputy in this office.’ He tends to use existentially quantified propositions as examples, as here: ‘A man whom I could mention seems to be a little conceited.’ He comments: ‘The *suggestion* here is that the man in view is the person addressed; but the utterer does not authorize such an interpretation or *any* other application of what she says. She can still say, if she likes, that she does *not* mean the person addressed.’³⁸⁷ A general sign gives an interpreter all the information she requires to apply its truth freely in each and every case that satisfies the rule it expresses. By contrast, Peirce says, vagueness restricts the freedom of the interpreter by withholding certain relevant information. For as Ochs explains, a vague sign ‘refers to something particular (thus,... it is not merely nominal and does not allow the interpreter to do with it as he or she pleases) but...it has yet to identify this particular explicitly (and, thus,... it is not

³⁸⁵ IO I.6.3; cf. IO I.5.5, 40; also Varro, LL I.50.489. On this see Atherton, ‘Grammarians,’ 244.

³⁸⁶ Peter Ochs, *Peirce, Pragmatism, and the Logic of Scripture* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 9

³⁸⁷ CP 5.447.

determinate and does not preclude further discussion and interpretation.’³⁸⁸ The interpreter’s freedom is restricted because the vague sign refers her to a particular but to some extent unknown object (just as for Peirce, existential quantification is the paradigm of vagueness).

For this reason, the interpreter must either await further information from the sign-giver or engage in a fallible investigation by her own lights. Which she should do often depends on the context in which a vague sign is operative. For example, if a student paper is vague, a teacher gives it a bad grade because it was the responsibility of the student to more fully illuminate the object in question (her paper topic). So too in the kind of oblique insult Peirce gave as an example above, the utterer strategically retains the right to elucidate the sign further to maintain plausible deniability. When *Romeo and Juliet* begins with a summary, ‘From forth the fatal loins of these two foes / A pair of star-cross’d lovers take their life,’ one function of this vague summary is to whet the appetite of the audience to receive further signs from the players as the drama unfolds — signs, of course, which the audience is not at liberty to alter while watching the play. But other vague signs tend rather to provoke the interpreter to an independent investigation of a particular object. For example, a character in a detective story might realize, ‘One of us in this room is a murderer!’ Here vagueness directs the group to an investigation with a very determinate goal, and one with high stakes: identifying a specific murderous individual. At other times, a vague sign may invite an investigation whose character is more meditative. The pregnant vagueness of a good poem may have this effect: ‘April is the cruelest month’ should, among other things, invite the reader to ponder the ironies of spring flowers blossoming after a brutal season of war.

Precisely because vague signs may be used to leave something contingent on further inquiry, they are particularly apt for making generalizations in the course of an ongoing process of

³⁸⁸ Ochs, *Logic of Scripture*, 181.

inquiry that leave some further investigation as a task for a later reader. A vague sign is only made definite, Ochs says, with respect to particular contexts of interpretation or investigation.³⁸⁹ This may be illustrated with reference to Biblical aphorisms that summarize patterns of general experience in a vague way. For example,

Wounds from a friend can be trusted,

But an enemy multiplies kisses.³⁹⁰

Lying behind a proverb like this is an implicit body of empirical experience. This proverb, for example, implies that many cases have been observed in which an apparent ‘wound’ was an act of friendship, while a multitude of apparent ‘kisses’ was the work of an enemy. A proverb like this could reflect the insight of a single sage — Proverbs is attributed by tradition to ‘Solomon,’ and one might compare the aphorisms of Heraclitus — but proverbs live in the oral life of some community. As Gerhard von Rad says the experience a proverb formulates is ‘the common possession of a nation or of a broad stratum within a nation,’ at least so long as that proverb continues in circulation.³⁹¹ A proverb that no longer crystallizes the experience of a community in a plausible manner tends to die, passing out of oral circulation.

The truth that a proverb expresses does not apply universally. Rather, proverbs function in relation to speakers or communities who, by exercising wise judgment, are trusted to determine the appropriate circumstances of the proverb’s application. For example, the above proverb does not mean that *every* wound is the work of a friend, nor even that every wound from every friend can be trusted. Rather, it means something like: *some* wounds from *some* friends can be trusted,

³⁸⁹ Ochs, *Logic of Scripture*, 9.

³⁹⁰ Proverbs 27:6.

but it will require judgment to discern which. By virtue of this vagueness, one can be very confident that the proverb is true — i.e. that there are many cases in which it applies — while being quite uncertain as to whether it applies in any *particular* case.³⁹²

One of the attractions of vague formulations is that they permit their users to affirm their truth with a high degree of certainty, precisely because in doing so they may withhold judgment about particular cases. This is what Peirce called ‘inductive certainty,’ which he glossed, ‘the sort of certainty we have that a perfect coin, pitched up often enough, will *sometime* turn up heads.’³⁹³ Notice the vagueness of this sentence: while he affirms vaguely that a coin will *sometime* turn up heads, he leaves indeterminate the particular occasions with respect to which this truth applies. That is, the truth of Peirce’s vague sentence does not entail on any occasion that *this* time the coin will turn up heads. That judgment depends on factors specific to the context of interpretation, in this case, the results of an actual coin flip.³⁹⁴

³⁹¹ Gerhard von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel*, James D. Martin, trans. (London: SCM Press, 1972), 3.

³⁹² The vagueness of wisdom discourse is one of the implicit themes of the book of Job. One of the errors that Job’s friends make is that they treat truths formulated aphoristically as though they applied in Job’s case as a matter of course, instead of treating them as *vague* formulations that require examination of the particulars of his case. Proverbs 13:9, for example, teaches an apparently general truth: ‘The lamp of the wicked is extinguished.’ Clearly such a proverb is true with respect to cases such as those in which someone’s evil actions bring disaster upon her own head. Yet the truth this proverb expresses has limits that Job’s friends foolishly neglect. Bildad quotes a similar proverb and applies it immediately to Job: ‘The light of the wicked fails, the flame of his fire does not shine. The light in his tent darkens; His lamp fails him’ (Job 18:5). Job, however, recognizes counter-examples in cases such as his own suffering and that of the poor (Job 21:23-26). To express this insight, he reformulates Bildad’s proverb to show that it applies in some non-zero plurality of cases (but certainly not in all): ‘How seldom does the lamp of the wicked fail...’ (Job 21:17). Notice that if it is interpreted vaguely, Bildad’s saying is not false: there remains some important set of cases of which it is appropriately said that ‘the light of the wicked fails.’ But *Job*’s individual case, and the countless cases of the suffering poor, are not such cases. ^{□1} While the experiential wisdom a proverb expresses may apply generally, one cannot assume it applies universally without the exercise of wisdom. The book of Job also suggests that underlying Bildad’s logical error (applying a general proverb as though it were universal) is an ethical failure to show compassion on Job and to notice the injustice suffered by the poor.

³⁹³ CP 6.474.

³⁹⁴ Unlike Peirce’s more logical examples, Biblical wisdom texts tend to use a distinctly poetic mode of vagueness. Biblical aphorisms usually take the form of what von Rad calls ‘epigrammatic poetry’ (*Wisdom*, 26). They have a density of expression that tends to provoke their readers to meditate on the subject matter of the proverb. ‘Wounds from a friend can be trusted,’ for example, presumably invites us to compare painful criticism to physical wounds, and also to ask what constitutes a *true* friend. By this poetic form, proverbs not only presuppose wisdom in their users but also have the potential to help form it by provoking reflection and learning. This is related to that quality of *obscurity* that Origen sees as characteristic of scriptural discourse, which as we saw in the previous chapter, requires an investigation of its readers which we analyzed in terms of ‘implicature.’ As we shall see over the course of this

2. Habits of Scripture

Like ancient grammarians, Origen is engaged in a process of empirical inference from particular authoritative texts and the rules of correct speech that they exemplify; and like rationalist grammarians, he is committed to the use of fallible analogical arguments to discover the underlying rules of scriptural language. It is the logic of Origen's empirical inquiry into the rules of scriptural discourse that will concern us in the remainder of this chapter.

I focus on the 'habit' of scripture, which was, for Origen, a regular pattern of linguistic usage displayed in analogous utterances of scripture. While these utterances are empirically observable, the rules by which these particulars are governed must be inferred. The relation between particular cases and general rule is exemplarity: the utterances of scripture exemplify the habits of which they are instances.³⁹⁵

A habit of scripture must be carefully distinguished from its linguistic formulation. A formulation of a scriptural habit is a proposal in language about the general features of the habit. Since a pattern is not necessarily exhausted by its observable instances, a formulation of a habit of scripture may also be treated as a hypothesis about the rule by which observable cases of scriptural language will bear upon other cases. A formulation of a habit of scripture thus has both *inductive* and *abductive* elements. The formulated habit should be displayed in particular

chapter and the next, Origen's own generalizations and speculative proposals sometimes take on a similarly aphoristic or poetically dense quality. □

³⁹⁵ Many scholars have observed that Origen frequently draws inductive conclusions about the generic character of Scriptural language, among them Marguerite Harl, 'Origène et la sémantique du langage biblique,' *Vigiliae Christianae* 26:3 (Oct. 1972): 161-187; Bernard Neuschäfer, *Origenes Als Philologe* (Basel: Friedrich Reinhardt Verlag, 1987), 143-148; Peter Martens, *Origen and Scripture: The Contours of the Exegetical Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012): 83-5; Maurice Wiles, 'Early Exegesis of the Parables,' *Scottish Journal of Theology* 11 (1958): 287-301, makes a similar point about the parables, which are for Origen 'a special case of what is true of Scripture as a whole' (288).

observable cases, and to that extent it may be verified by induction. But as a hypothesis about the rule governing new or difficult cases, it is also an abduction. Since Origen typically formulates habits of scripture in such a way as to require further inquiry in order to apply that habit in a particular case, his formulations are also *vague*. Habits of scripture thus exemplify the relation between vagueness and inquiry that Ochs identifies as characteristic of the wisdom tradition.

I want to focus on two closely related terms: συνήθεια (‘custom,’ ‘usage’) and ἔθος (‘custom,’ ‘habit’).³⁹⁶ Both terms were used to refer to observable patterns of behavior in general. In an exegetical context, they refer to *empirical regularities in linguistic usage*. Of the two, συνήθεια (‘usage’) tends to be the narrower term. For grammarians it referred to conventional usage of linguistic expressions, especially words and grammatical forms. It was often cited as a criterion of correct speech in opposition to ‘analogy’ or ‘reason,’ suggesting that it connotes language considered in its merely conventional aspect.³⁹⁷ Grammarians could use it with reference to the usage of a people or a regional dialect, or with reference to the idiom of a particular author, such as the ‘usage’ of Homer. As Neuschäfer shows, Origen uses this term in more or less this grammatical sense to characterize the conventional usage of Scripture, often by contrast with the usage of conventional Greek.³⁹⁸

The term συνήθεια appears twice in a grammatical context in the *Homilies on the Psalms*.³⁹⁹

HomPs 36.1.1⁴⁰⁰

³⁹⁶ Sextus explicitly treats them as synonymous: PH 1.146.

³⁹⁷ See e.g. Sextus Empiricus, *AM* 1.176-240, and the commentary in Blank, *Grammarians*, xxxiv-xl and 201-4.

³⁹⁸ On συνήθεια, see Neuschäfer, *Origenes*, 143-148, esp. n. 36. He observes that in HomPs 36.1.1, Origen distinguishes the usage of trained ‘philologists’ from that of the ‘uneducated’ multitudes. Cf. also Amneris Roselli, ‘ὁ τεχνίτης θεός: la pratica terapeutica come paradigma dell’operare di Dio in Phil. 27 e PA III 1,’ in *Il cuore indurito del Faraone: Origene e il problema del libero arbitrio*, ed. Lorenzo Perrone (Marietti: Bologna, 1992): 65-84, esp. 67; Robért Somos, *Logic and Argumentation in Origen* (Aschendorff Vorlag, 2015), 80f.

³⁹⁹ He also uses cognate adverbial forms: συνήθως (HomPs 15.2.9) and συνήθῃ (HomPs 36.4.1 of the custom of the Greeks). For a non-exegetical use, see HomPs 77.2.7.

τίς οὖν ἡ διαφορὰ τοῦ παραζηλοῦν παρὰ τὸ
ζηλοῦν κατανοητέον. οὐ πάνυ τίς ἐστὶν ἡ λέξις
Ἑλληνικὴ οὐδὲ τέτριπται ἐν τῇ συνηθείᾳ τῶν
Ἑλλήνων...

We must therefore consider what is the
difference between ‘παραζηλοῦν’ and
‘ζηλοῦν.’ [The former] is by no means a
Greek expression, nor is it customary in the
usage of the Greeks...

HomPs 15.2.9

Καὶ ἄλλως μὲν ἡ συνήθεια ὀνομάζει τὴν
γνώσιν τῆς ἀμαρτίας. Οἶδε γὰρ ὁ πολὺς τί ἐστὶν
ἀμαρτία, ἄλλως δὲ ἡ γραφή...ἔδει γὰρ
συνεξετασθῆναι τὸ ξενιζόντως λεγόμενον παρὰ
τὴν συνήθειαν τῶν πολλῶν.

[Greek] custom uses ‘knowledge of sin’ with
a different meaning. For the multitude ‘know’
what sin is [in one way], but the scripture
[uses this expression] differently...For it was
necessary to investigate what was said [in
scripture] strangely, contrary to the custom of
the many.

In both of these examples, Origen uses συνήθεια in the context of drawing a contrast between Greek and Scriptural usage of individual words. He explains the Septuagint coinage παραζηλοῦν (36.1.1) and discusses scripture’s idiomatic use of the phrase ‘to know sin’ to mean engaging in sin rather than knowing what sin is (15.2.9). Origen is acutely aware of the scriptures as a foreign literature, which even in Greek posed difficulties for ordinary Greek speakers. In the first passage, he draws a clear contrast between scriptural usage and that of the ‘Greeks.’ In the second, he notes that Scripture speaks ‘ξενιζόντως’ (‘strangely’), which connotes foreignness. In

⁴⁰⁰ Cf. the similar contrast in PG 12.1144 (a text, however, of dubious authenticity).

both cases, συνήθεια refers to the conventional usage of a particular linguistic community or body of work.

The word ἔθος, ‘habit,’ usually has a somewhat broader meaning for Origen. It does not necessarily refer to the mere customary mode of expression, but may refer more broadly to patterns of speech that involve sentences in relation to their referents. To speak of a ‘habit’ of scripture is thus to describe scripture as exhibiting a pattern of behavior that tends to bring into play the natural relation of language to things. By virtue of its relation to things, habits of scripture become important units of Origen’s theological discourse, as we shall see. (To the extent that habits of scripture reflect underlying grammatical rules of scriptural language, my account of Origen has certain similarities with what are sometimes called ‘post-liberal’ accounts of doctrine.)

Origen uses ἔθος four times with reference to a scriptural habit in the *Homilies on the Psalms*:⁴⁰¹

HomPs 36.1.4:⁴⁰²

ἔθος ἐστὶ τῇ γραφῇ δύο ἀνθρώπους εἰσάγειν καὶ καθ’ ἕκαστον ὁμώνυμα ποεῖν τοῦ ἑτέρου τῶν ἀνθρώπων.	It is a habit of scripture to introduce two human beings [i.e. an ‘inner’ and an ‘outer’], and to name each by homonymy with the other human.
---	--

⁴⁰¹ In 77.1.2, he also goes on to speak of his ἔθος as an interpreter (see the discussion below). To these texts we may add the following texts attributed with some likelihood to Origen. ‘It is the habit [ἔθος] for the prophets in the Septuagint frequently to announce things about Christ as though they had already happened [i.e. in the past tense]’ (PG 12.1104). ‘The scripture has the habit [ἔθος] of referring to habits [ἔξεις] instead of those who possess them. For thus Paul says, “Love never fails...”’ (PG 12.1617). There are many other examples in Origen’s work, e.g. CC 6.59, 70, 74, CJ 10.34, ExMart 28.13, *De oratione* 27.13, FragJer 52, PG 13.805.

⁴⁰² The same text is found in *Excerpta in Psalmos* PG 17.120.

HomPs 67.1.2:⁴⁰³

ἔθος ἐστὶ τῇ γραφῇ πολλαχοῦ τοῖς
προστακτικοῖς ἀντὶ εὐκτικῶν χρῆσθαι.

It is a habit of scripture frequently to use an
imperative in place of an optative.

HomPs 77.1.2:

τοῦτο οὖν ἔθος ἐν ἐνὶ ψαλμῷ, ἔσθ' ὅτε οὐχ ἓν
εἶναι ὁ πρόσωπον τὸ λέγον, ἀλλὰ πλείονα.

This then is a habit in some psalms, that there
is sometimes not only one *persona* speaking
but many.

HomPs 81.1.3:

ἔθος ἐστὶ τῷ θεῷ λόγῳ, ἐάν ποτε ἡμᾶς ἐπάρῃ
καὶ ὑψώσῃ ταῖς ἐπαγγελίαις, πάλιν κωλύειν
ἡμῶς διὰ τὰ ἁμαρτήματα ἡμῶν...

It is a habit in the divine word, when it lifts us
and exalts us with promises, later to rebuke us
on account of our sins...

As these examples show, habits range from observations about grammatical functions (67.1.2) and literary devices (77.1.2) to theologically suggestive generalizations about the dynamics of the divine pedagogy (81.1.3) and the deep analogy between the inner and outer human beings (36.1.4). Even the grammatical habits, moreover, concern the relation of verbal expression to meaning rather than merely a customary mode of expression as such.

⁴⁰³ A similar comment appears in a fragment of questionable authenticity attributed to Origen: 'Κατά τινα τῆς Γραφῆς συνήθειαν εὐκτικῶς εἰρημένον, ὡς τό· Ἀγιασθήτω τὸ ὄνομά σου· ἐλθέτω ἡ βασιλεία σου, ἀντὶ τοῦ· ἀγιασθεῖη καὶ ἔλθοι. Καὶ ἐν ψαλμοῖς μυρία ἐστὶ τοιαῦτα, ὅποῖον τὸ γενηθήτω ἡ ὁδὸς αὐτῶν σκότος καὶ ὀλίσθημα. Τοῦτο δέ φαμεν, εἰδότες καὶ ἀλλαχοῦ τηρεῖσθαι τὰ τοιαῦτα προστακτικῶς ἐν τῷ· Γενηθήτω φῶς καὶ τοῖς ὁμοίοις' (Pitra, ad Psalm 150:3-5).

2.1. The Logic of Scriptural Habits

In this section, I examine the logical function of Origen's formulations of 'habits' of scriptural language. I do so by analyzing an example that remains primarily within the narrow sphere of grammar. Origen's procedure in this case is not unlike the kinds of philological arguments routinely used by historical text scholars today, and as such it will serve as an important point of reference.

Habits of scripture have two important logical features. First, a 'habit' of scripture brings scriptural data to bear on a difficult text in a way that combines inductive and abductive modes of inference. The dynamic between the labor of inductive testing and the creative abductive proposal of exegetical hypothesis is, I suggest, central to Origen's exegesis. Second, Origen's formulations of habits of scripture are characteristically vague. Their vagueness involves Origen in an epistemic trade-off characteristic of wisdom discourse more generally. As we shall see, vaguely formulated rules allow one to describe general patterns of reality with a high degree of confidence; but on the other hand, their vagueness means that they cannot be directly applied to any particular case. Habits of scripture are a form of general knowledge that require further investigation and wise judgment to apply in particular cases.

Psalm 67:1 begins by addressing God in the imperative mood: 'ἀναστήτω ὁ θεός,' 'let God arise!' Since imperative sentences typically function as commands, one might infer from this verse that human beings may command God. Origen argues that this text need not be understood in that way. An imperative such as we find in this text may function not as a command but as an

optative expression of a wish.⁴⁰⁴ To introduce this hypothesis, Origen appeals to a ‘habit’ of scripture.

<p>Πρῶτον εἰδέναι χρὴ ὅτι ἔθος ἐστὶ τῇ γραφῇ πολλαχοῦ τοῖς προστακτικοῖς ἀντὶ εὐτικῶν χρησθαι. Καὶ εὐρήσεται μὲν τοῦτο πολλαχοῦ, ἀρκεῖ δὲ νῦν παραθέσθαι ἀπὸ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου ὅτι διδάσκων ἡμᾶς ὁ σωτὴρ ἡμῶν εὐχεσθαι, οὐ διδάσκει ἵνα προστασσώμεν τῷ θεῷ, ἀλλ’ ἵνα προστακτικαῖς φωναῖς εἴπωμεν τὰ εὐτικά· λέγεται γάρ, φησί, πάτερ ἡμῶν ὁ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς, ἁγιασθήτω τὸ ὄνομά σου· ἔλθετω ἡ βασιλεία σου· γενηθήτω τὸ θέλημά σου, ἀντὶ τοῦ ἁγιασθεῖν τὸ ὄνομά σου, ἔλθοι ἡ βασιλεία σου, γένοιτο τὸ θέλημά σου.⁴⁰⁵</p>	<p>First it is necessary to know that it is a habit of scripture frequently to use imperatives in place of optatives. This can indeed be found frequently, but it is sufficient for now to compare [the text] from the gospel, where our Savior teaches us to pray. He does not teach that we should command God, but that we should say optative things in imperative utterances. For what he says — ‘our Father, who is in heaven, let your name be hallowed, let your kingdom come, let your will be done’ — is said in place of ‘may your name be hallowed, may your kingdom come, may your will be done.’</p>
---	--

Origen’s argument is, I trust, fairly intuitive even for modern readers. To show that it is possible for an imperative to function as an optative in Psalm 67:1, Origen points to clear examples of the same in other cases, in this case taken from the Lord’s Prayer. Origen infers from the fact that what is actual in some cases is also possible in others.

Let us explicate this argument in a bit more detail. First, Origen establishes that this habit exists by a simple form of induction: he enumerates similar cases that exhibit the proposed

⁴⁰⁴ Both Origen’s observation and his terminology were common among grammarians. See Neuschäfer, *Origenes*, 208-10.

regularity.⁴⁰⁶ He explicitly cites three familiar petitions from the Lord's Prayer, but adds that other examples can be found in scripture 'frequently.' These examples are selected because they are similar to one another in some respect, that is, they are related by analogy. As it happens, in commenting on the Lord's Prayer in *On Prayer* he appeals to the same habit of scripture, but in that case he runs the argument in reverse. There he points to examples of grammatically imperative prayers in the Psalms as part of an argument that the Lord's Prayer should be taken optatively as well.

In an inductive argument, a general rule is logically dependent on particular cases. So it is here: to prove that the habit obtains, Origen enumerates particular cases that he regards as evident in themselves, without reference to the habit in question. Nor does he determine these cases by any other rule or by appealing to, say, a theory of language or a hermeneutic principle. Rather, to establish these instances he treats it as sufficient to make a case-specific appeal to the ear of his hearers, assuming that his audience will accept these on independent grounds as clear cases of imperatives that function as optatives. He probably regards it as uncontroversial that the Lord's prayer is a prayer not a command, but in saying that Jesus 'does not teach that we should command God,' he may be alluding more specifically to the fact that the Lord's Prayer is explicitly framed as a petition in Matthew 6:9.

Second, however, Origen brings the rule exhibited in these clear cases to bear on the difficult case of Psalms 67:1 by abduction. A habit of scripture is not, then, an observable set of cases, but rather an ampliative claim about the underlying pattern they exhibit — a pattern that may also be exhibited in other cases. But these cases cannot simply be subsumed under the rule, as though the rule alone were adequate to determine their function in advance of considering the factors

⁴⁰⁵ *HomPs* 67.1.2.

⁴⁰⁶ On induction in Origen, see Rob  rt Somos, *Logic and Argumentation*, 55, 71-87.

specific to the case. Rather, in relation to the difficult case of Psalm 67:1 the habit functions as a hypothesis. We know this because Origen does not treat the habit in itself as determining the meaning of this text, but only as providing a plausible interpretation.⁴⁰⁷ For while invoking the habit of Scripture disrupts the apparent obviousness of reading the text as a command, Origen goes on at length to defend the claim that Psalm 67:1 should be regarded as an optative by offering further arguments specific to this particular text. He would not need to do this if the habit itself determined the reading. More importantly, he then goes on to suggest that it is possible after all to command God, at least in a certain sense. At most, then, the invocation of the habit warrants the hypothesis that this particular case too might be an instance of the pattern. But this must be verified by showing in a particular case that this hypothesis yields an intelligible reading.⁴⁰⁸ He brings the habit to bear on this case as an abduction.

Third, Origen's formulation of this habit is vague, particularly as to the frequency with which it obtains. He says simply that 'frequently' (πολλαχοῦ) imperatives function as optatives. This is not a *universal* judgment governing *every* case. Habits admit exceptions (as in the following example); or as in the present example, a habit may itself be an exception to a general rule that obtains more often. For it is presumably the case that *most* imperatives do not function as optatives, even though some do. (The prevalence of this rule — most imperatives function as imperatives — is one reason why Origen worries that his audience will assume this is *always* the case). The non-universal character of a habit is what we would expect, since habits are proved by induction. By induction one cannot prove definitively that a universal rule obtains, only that counter-examples have never yet been observed.

⁴⁰⁷ More precisely, from $\exists x P(x) \rightarrow Q$, it follows that $\Diamond \exists x P(x) \rightarrow Q$ and that $\neg \forall x \neg P(x) \rightarrow Q$.

⁴⁰⁸ Compare *HomPs* 36.1.4: 'Let us come, then, after many examples [establishing the habit of scripture that an inner and an outer human correspond], to the text that lies before us...' and *HomPs* 77.1.2: 'But if this [habit] occurs in some psalms, let us investigate if also here we might understand something similar.'

Origen is also vague about the specific cases in which the habit obtains. In itself, his formulation of the habit — ‘frequently [scripture] uses imperatives in place of optatives’ — *does not specify any particular cases at all*. It is not equivalent, say, to a *list* of specific data points or a conjunction of singular judgments, as though it implied, ‘the habit obtains in the following cases: *this one* and *this one* and *this one*...’ So while each piece of evidence that he cites is further cumulative proof that the habit exists, no *particular* piece of evidence is necessary to his argument. One could disagree with some of the examples Origen cites or could have cited while still agreeing that the general habit exists. This helps explain the off-hand way Origen cites evidence for the existence of the habit: ‘it is sufficient for now to compare...’ His hearers do not need to agree with Origen about every case (or indeed, about any particular case), so long as they grant *some* of them, and so it is sufficient to cite a few cases he regards as sufficiently clear.

It follows that even though a habit is logically dependent on its instances, one may usually assert that a vaguely formulated habit exists with more certainty than one has about any particular case. This is not as counter-intuitive as it may seem; it is a direct consequence of the fact that a vague formulation does not commit itself to the determination of any particular case. One can say ‘I sometimes get the flu’ far more confidently than one can say, ‘I have the flu here and now,’ and one can say ‘I generally like action movies’ far more confidently than one can say, ‘I will like *this* action movie.’ In the same way, one can be confident that *some* imperatives function as optatives, even if one disagrees with Origen’s particular examples. Because of the vagueness with which these rules are formulated, to show that one does not obtain would require demonstrating that all or nearly all apparent instances of the rule are in fact not. It has a strong degree of what Charles Peirce calls ‘inductive certainty.’

By contrast, a universal rule is difficult to be certain about, since it is disproved by a single counter-example; but granting the validity of the rule, its application in particular cases is straightforward. Because the rule is universal, it requires no judgment to apply in any given case. As soon as one recognizes that a woman is pregnant, the rule asserts, one can be fully confident that she has been with a man. This example also demonstrates the fragility of universal rules, for it admits rare but revealing counter-examples. A Christian might point, for example, to the Virgin Mary. Moreover, it is now possible for a woman to become pregnant through artificial means. So while the rule is easy to apply, it also fragile and, in this case, false. As is often the case, however, this universal rule becomes both true and secure simply by reformulating it in a vague way: *most* pregnant women have been with a man. By doing so, one treats pregnancy as a probable rather than a necessary sign of having been with a man. Because this later formulation trades on the vagueness of the word ‘most,’ one can assent to it with a fairly high degree of confidence; but one cannot apply this knowledge with confidence to any particular case without further investigation. Perhaps *this* woman was artificially inseminated!

There is, then, a certain epistemic trade-off involved in formulating habits of scripture vaguely. By induction one can be very confident that certain general patterns obtain, precisely because one leaves for some later occasion the determination of particular cases. This is not because their determination is arbitrary, but simply because their determination must be made on the basis of factors particular to the case. A habit of scripture thus behaves in a manner similar to the heuristic rules of Greek empiricists or the aphoristic wisdom of scriptural proverbs.

2.2. *Scripture, World, and Interpreter*

For the remainder of this chapter, my aim is to show that what Origen calls ‘habits of scripture’ are operative in many more cases in his exegesis than those he explicitly labels as such. Their significance extends far beyond the mere second-order description of scriptural language. Rather, habits of scripture are functionally interchangeable with statements about the world and instructions to language users and interpreters. The basic reason for this is Origen’s assumption that the language of scripture is not merely a convention, but rather appropriate to the things about which it speaks.

In what follows I focus on the transition from second-order description of scriptural habits to claims about the world and claims about the interpreter. First, since a habit of scripture accords with that about which it speaks, to learn how scripture speaks is at the same time to learn about things by learning how to speak appropriately about them. For this reason, *a habit of things corresponds to a habit of scripture*. Second, to the extent that a habit of scripture is not only a summary of observable cases but a hypothesis about how to decide novel or difficult cases, a habit of scripture gives guidance to the interpreter as well. It does not do so by determining any particular interpretation or set of interpretations. Rather, by disrupting the apparently obvious meaning of a difficult text, identifying a habit of scripture shows that some hitherto unconsidered alternative interpretation is possible and must therefore be examined. *A habit of inquiry corresponds to a habit of scripture.*⁴⁰⁹

⁴⁰⁹ For example, ‘ἐδείχθη πολλάκις ἡμῖν ὅτι Δαυὶδ ἀντὶ τοῦ Χριστοῦ ὀνομάζεται’ (*HomPs* 77.9.6), and the same habit in *HomPs* 67.2.3. Speaking of Scriptural references to Joseph and Ephraim, he says, ‘ἡρμηνεύσθη δὲ ἡμῖν πολλάκις οὗτος εἰς τοὺς σχίζοντας ἀπὸ τῆς ἐκκλησίας ἑτεροδόξους ὄντας’ (*HomPs* 80.1.6), which he defends at greater length in a discussion of Hosea in *HomPs* 77.2.3; and cf. *HomPs* 77.9.5. Further examples: *HomPs* 75.2 and 76.3.2.

Habits of scripture are not *only* second-order formulations about scriptural language, then, but may lead directly to theological claims about the world or practical instructions for the interpreter. In either case, however — and this is critical to understand — the same inductive and abductive logic of habits remains operative. When Origen’s assertions about the world or instructions about interpretation arise from habits of scripture, they retain the same vagueness we observed in habits of scripture. They are not universal rules, but more like proverbs, general summaries or rules of thumb that require wisdom and judgment to apply in particular cases.

2.2.1. Habits of the World

Let us consider first how a habit of the world may correspond to a habit of scripture. In this example, Origen comments on the words ‘delight yourself in the Lord’ in Psalm 36:4. He worries that the word ‘delight’ denotes a bodily pleasure that should not be applied to God. To generate an alternative interpretation, Origen appeals to one of his favorite habits of scripture: scripture habitually uses words that apply to the physical body (the ‘outer human’) with reference to the soul (the ‘inner human’) as well. Origen infers from this consistent pattern of analogous usage that a real analogy obtains in the corresponding things as well. That is, the grammar of scriptural speech about the soul is analogous to the grammar of its discourse about the body for the simple reason that souls are analogous to bodies. Discerning this habit helps Origen identify an allegorical use of this psalm.

ἔθος ἐστὶ τῇ γραφῇ δύο ἀνθρώπους εἰσάγειν	It is the habit of scripture to introduce two
καὶ καθ’ ἕκαστον ὁμώνυμα ποιεῖν τοῦ ἑτέρου	humans and to make of the one human a

τῶν ἀνθρώπων· λέγω δὲ τὰ τοῦ χειρόνος καὶ
κατὰ τὸν κρείττονα καὶ σχεδὸν πάντα τὰ τοῦ
χειρόνος ἔχει καὶ ὁ κρείττων. ὁ μὲν γὰρ χείρων,
οὗτος ὁ σωματικὸς ἐσθίει. ἔστι δέ τις καὶ τροφή
τοῦ ἔσω ἀνθρώπου, περὶ ἧς λέγεται· οὐκ ἐπ’
ἄρτῳ μόνῳ ζήσεται ἄνθρωπος, ἀλλ’ ἐπὶ παντὶ
ρήματι ἐκπορευμένῳ διὰ στόματος θεοῦ
ζήσεται ἄνθρωπος. ἔστι τι ποτὸν καὶ τοῦ ἔσω
ἀνθρώπου· πίνομεν γὰρ ἐκ πνευματικῆς
ἀκολουθούσης πέτρας καὶ πίνομεν τὸ ὕδωρ τὸ
πνευματικὸν καὶ ἅγιον. ἔστιν ἔνδυμα τοῦ ἔξω
ἀνθρώπου, ἔστιν ἔνδυμα καὶ τοῦ ἔσω
ἀνθρώπου. ἐὰν γὰρ ἁμαρτωλὸς ᾦ, ἐνεδύσατο
κατάραν ὡς ἱμάτιον· ἐὰν δὲ δίκαιος ᾦ, ἀκούει·
ἐνδύσασθε τὸν κύριον Ἰσοῦν Χριστὸν καὶ
ἐνδύσασθε σπλάγχχα οἰκτιρμῶν, χρηστότητα,
ταπεινοφροσύνην, πραότητα, μακροθυμίαν. καὶ
τί με δεῖ λέγειν τὰ τοῦ ἔσω ἀνθρώπου τίνα
πρόπον ὁμώνυμα τοῖς ἔξω ἐστί; πανοπλίαν ἔχει
ὁ κατὰ τὸν ἔξω ἄνθρωπον στρατιώτης καὶ ὁ
κατὰ τὸν ἔσω ἄνθρωπον στρατιώτης ἐνδύσεται
τὴν πανοπλίαν τοῦ θεοῦ πρὸς τὸ δύνασθαι
στῆναι πρὸς τὰς μεθοδείας τοῦ διαβόλου.
ἔλθωμεν οὖν μετὰ πολλὰ παραδείγματα ἐπὶ τὸ
προκείμενον, ἵνα ἴδωμεν τί δηλοῦται ἐκ τοῦ

homonym of the other; and I say the things of
the lesser also of the better, and the better
contains nearly everything that the lesser
does. For the lesser [food], this bodily one
eats. But there is also a certain food of the
inner human, about which it is said, ‘a person
shall not live by bread alone, but a person
shall live by every word that proceeds from
the mouth of God’ (Dt. 8:3). There is also a
certain drink of the inner human: for we drink
‘from the spiritual rock that followed them’ (1
Cor. 10:4) and we drink the water that is
spiritual and holy (cf. Jn. 4:14). There is
clothing of the outer human, and there is also
clothing of the inner human. For if someone is
a sinner, ‘he put on cursing as a garment’ (Ps.
108:18a LXX) but if he is righteous, he hears:
‘put on the Lord Jesus Christ,’ (Rom. 13:14)
and ‘put on compassion, goodness, humility,
meekness, patience’ (Col. 3:12). And why is it
necessary to speak of how the inner human is
homonymous to the outer? For the soldier
according to the outer human has armor and
the soldier according to the inner human puts
on the armor of God, in order ‘to be able to

κατατρύφῃσιν τοῦ κυρίου καὶ δώσει σοὶ τὰ
αἰτήματα τῆς καρδίας σου.

stand against the schemes of the devil' (Eph.
6:11). Let us then after many examples come
to the present text, that we might see what is
indicated by the text, 'delight yourself in the
Lord and he will give you the requests of your
heart.'⁴¹⁰

The term 'habit' functions in this text just as it did in the previous example. First, Origen proves that this habit exists *inductively*, by enumerating cases from throughout the scriptures that satisfy the general rule that things pertaining to the human body are also used in a spiritual way. Origen treats the rule as logically dependent on the cases, since he treats their meaning as evident independent of the rule they come to establish. Second, Origen brings this habit to bear *abductively* on the case in question, not to determine it but rather as a hypothetical proposal whose applicability in this particular case still needs to be demonstrated. After introducing the habit, Origen still says, 'let us come after all these examples to see what is indicated' by this text, and then goes on to investigate the kinds of spiritual delights that might be appropriate for the Christian. Finally, Origen remains *vague* about the extent to which this habit obtains, although in this case he believes it applies broadly indeed. We find that the inner human contains 'almost everything' (σχεδὸν πάντα) the outer does, but the caveat is important: it does not necessarily hold in *every* case. The rule is not universal, then, and it still requires judgment to work out whether and how this rule applies in the case at hand, which Origen's exegesis goes on to do.

But unlike the habit in the first example, which was primarily grammatical in character, Origen views this pattern of scriptural naming as indicative of a corresponding analogy between

body and soul. This is evident from the way Origen frames his examples of scriptural usage in terms of their referent: ‘there is also a certain food of the inner human, about which it is said...’ ‘There is also a certain drink...’ ‘There is clothing of the outer human, and there is also clothing of the inner human.’⁴¹¹ Origen assumes that the psalm’s language of ‘delight’ may be used in a similar way of related things.

A number of commentators have observed that Origen tends to assume that scriptural symbols are used in consistent ways — that, for example, Solomon is generally a type of Christ, the Ephraimites of the heretics, and so on.⁴¹² He tends to assume this even of texts separated by vast historical and cultural distances. Here, for example, Origen takes the use of language in Paul and John as a clue to the psalm. An historical reader would presumably regard this as anachronistic; Hanson’s criticism is characteristically sharp. He calls this practice a ‘conventional allegory’ that rests on nothing more than ‘the arbitrary decision of the allegorist.’⁴¹³ Even ancient grammarians, however, recognized that usage differs between different authors, in different historical epochs, and in different linguistic communities.

One might appeal to the unified divine authorship of scripture to account for Origen’s assumption, but it is difficult to see why divine authorship should have just this implication. The deeper rationale is, it seems to me, linguistic. Origen is a linguistic naturalist, as we have seen, who assumes that wise usage is appropriately said in relation to the things it is about. Origen also assumes that scriptural discourse exemplifies this wisdom. He may therefore infer from scriptural habits of speech that certain corresponding habits obtain in the things themselves — in this case, that there is a real isomorphism between the outer and the inner humans. In a

⁴¹⁰ HomPs 36.1.4.

⁴¹¹ Origen frequently uses this expression, ‘there is an X’ when introducing an allegorical interpretation.

discussion of the same homonymy in the introduction to his *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, Origen speaks explicitly of the need to draw an inference from patterns of linguistic usage to the natures of the underlying things to which they refer:

The thing we want to demonstrate about these things is that the divine Scriptures make use of homonyms; that is to say, they use identical terms (*per similes appellationes, immo per eadem vocabula*) for describing different things. And they even go so far as to call the members of the outward man by the same names as the parts and dispositions of the inward man; and not only are the same terms employed, but the things themselves are compared with one another (*non solum vocabulis, sed et rebus ipsis sibi invicem comparantur*).⁴¹⁴

As a linguistic naturalist, Origen infers that scripture's habit of applying outer names to the inner has a rationale that lies in the things themselves: 'not only are the same terms employed, but the things themselves are compared with one another.' From a pattern of scriptural metaphors Origen infers a pattern of analogical relations in the underlying things.⁴¹⁵ If this habit bears upon the interpretation of Psalm 36, then, it is not a direct inference from scripture's habit of usage. Rather, the inference is an indirect one by way of things. Origen infers from this habit of scripture a corresponding habit of things, which in turn suggest to Origen a possible referent with respect to which this text may be uttered. There are two abductions here, not just one.

⁴¹² See Frances M. Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997): 133-137, and Ronald Heine, 'Reading the Bible with Origen,' in *The Bible in Greek Christian Antiquity*, ed. and trans. Paul M. Blowers (Notre Dame: Notre Dame Press, 1997): 131-148, esp. 136-139.

⁴¹³ R. P. C. Hanson, *Allegory and Event* (London: SCM Press, 1959), 248.

⁴¹⁴ Quoted Somos, *Logic and Argumentation*, 66. See also *Dialogue with Heraclides* 11.16-12.14 and 15.28-23.1.

⁴¹⁵ Scholars have frequently observed that this isomorphism between outer/inner humans is broadly Platonic. Somos comments, for example, 'This may be regarded as an isomorphic relation between the sensible and the intelligible, which offers a Platonic vision about the structure of reality' (Somos, *Logic*, 66). But it is equally important to observe that this 'Platonic' isomorphism is inferred inductively from patterns of scriptural usage.

Where the things about which one speaks remain consistent, it is reasonable to suppose that patterns of speech about these things will also display a certain degree of consistency, even across different speakers in different historical contexts. For the consistency is not a function of historically relative conventions but of the things in relation to which these conventions function. We can see this in more common sense cases. In different times and places the same ocean rises and falls with the tide. A naturalist would anticipate that where the tide behaves in the same way, so the usage of various languages would correspond to these habits of the ocean. She would expect different languages to develop analogous ways of speaking of ‘high’ and ‘low’ tide, of the ebb and flow of waves, and so on. Similarly, in different times and places the human body has had relatively consistent features. Insofar as this is the case, we would expect different linguistic communities to use language about the human body in analogous ways — to speak similarly about eyes and ears, their relation the face and head, and so on.⁴¹⁶ This example is apropos of Origen’s, for he clearly supposes that if there is an ‘inner’ human, it would be, as it were, part of the furniture of the cosmos as well. So just as usage about physical bodies tends to be similar in different times and places, he supposes that the usage of the wise about spiritual bodies will display a similar consistency. In short, scriptural unity is not only a function of its divine author but of the consistently appropriate relation of wise discourse to things.

The same set of assumptions means that scriptural texts that speak in general about *things* may also function as clues about habits of scriptural usage concerning those things. Conversely, as I shall show in the following section, Origen himself may formulate a habit of scripture as a direct assertion about things. There are two examples of this in the above passage. First, Origen

⁴¹⁶ The point is not that oceans or bodies are fixed, only that insofar as they remain similar the naturalist expects linguistic usage to reflect this similarity. Where things change — if oceans dry up or human bodies are altered by technology — the naturalist would expect usage to change as well. On this, see my discussion of name-changing in chapter 1.

adopts the Pauline description of our ‘inner’ and ‘outer’ human to characterize this habit of scripture. In 2 Corinthians 4:16, Paul says that ‘even though our outer human is wasting away, our inner human is being renewed day by day.’ By using the same word ‘human’ of two different aspects of our person, Paul plausibly hints that there is a real analogy between the two in some respect. Origen seeks to explicate this analogy by drawing on the other instances of scriptural usage that he organizes as this ‘habit’ of scripture.

The second example is Paul’s exhortation in Ephesians to put on the ‘armor of God.’ Origen refers to this text with a rhetorical question — ‘why is it necessary to speak of how the inner human is homonymous with the outer?’ — that suggests he is particularly impressed with this example. One can see why: after speaking of the armor of God, Paul proceeds to explicate it in detail.

13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to withstand on that evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. 14 Stand therefore, and fasten the belt of truth around your waist, and put on the breastplate of righteousness. 15 As shoes for your feet put on whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace. 16 With all of these, take the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17 Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.⁴¹⁷

For the reasons I have just sketched, Origen would anticipate that Paul’s reference to ‘the armor of God’ could be explicated in detail, just as he assumes about the ‘inner human.’ But in this case, Paul provides powerful confirmation of this hermeneutic impulse by actually enumerating the specific details of this spiritual armor himself: the belt of truth, the breastplate of

⁴¹⁷ Ephesians 6:13-17 (NRSV).

righteousness, etc. Each particular image draws an analogy between the equipment of the body and various modes of spiritual protection and weaponry.

Once again Origen glosses this pattern of Pauline usage with reference to the things it is about. Paul shows, he claims, that ‘the soldier according to the outer human has armor and the soldier according to the inner human puts on the armor of God.’ Paul has in effect done the work of organizing an entire habit of correct usage by which the inner human puts on armor analogous to that of outer human. The term ‘armor of God’ in turn hints at the underlying analogy between the inner and outer human, an analogy which Origen expands by analogy with Paul’s elaboration of the armor of God. In this way, a scriptural text can function both as first-order claims about the world and as second-order clues to the appropriate habits of speech one should adopt in relation to the world.

As we saw in the previous chapter, Origen’s concern in discussing Psalm 36 is to show how and why these words may be performed appropriately, where this appropriateness is a function of the relation between these words and the things they are about. Psalm 36 may be said of a delight of the soul not (necessarily) because the psalmist intended us to do so (though he may have), but primarily because there really is a delight of the soul about which these words are rightly uttered. Origen’s proposed usage becomes allegorical because of the underlying analogy of the things.

2.2.2. Habits of Inquiry

Now let us see how a habit of the interpreter also corresponds to a habit of scripture. Often, as in this example, it does so by introducing some plausible interpretive possibility that readers

are liable to neglect. In short, inductively proven habits of scripture can generate rules of reading if one recognizes that for Origen reading is primarily inquiry. The habits of a reader must correspond to the habits of the text she is reading in that she must make it her practice to ask in each case whether or not a relevant habit in fact obtains.

This is especially clear in Origen's interpretation of Psalm 77:2, where Origen connects his own habit ('ἔθος') as an interpreter with a corresponding habit of scripture. The psalm begins with the words:

ἀνοίξω ἐν παραβολαῖς τὸ στόμα μου,	I will open my mouth in parables,
φθέγγομαι προβλήματα ἀπ' ἀρχῆς·	and I will expound problems from the
ὅσα ἠκούσαμεν καὶ ἔγνωμεν αὐτὰ	beginning;
καὶ οἱ πατέρες ἡμῶν ἀνήγγειλαν ἡμῖν...	whatever we have heard and known, our
	fathers announced them to us... ⁴¹⁸

As Origen observes, Matthew's gospel explicitly puts the words of the first verse into the mouth of Jesus, implying that they are spoken in his *persona*.⁴¹⁹ Origen aims to show that the whole of Psalm 77 may appropriately be used in a way that is consistent with Matthew's interpretation of verse 1 as words rightly spoken by Jesus. This faces a difficulty, however, for according to Origen, the words that follow may not appropriately be said by Christ. While the psalm says that 'whatever we have heard and known, our fathers announced to us,' Origen points out that Christ claims to have learned many of his teachings directly from the heavenly Father.

⁴¹⁸ Ps 77:2. As Origen notes in *HomPs* 77.1.1, Matthew 13:35 quotes the last phrase as 'ἀπὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου.'

⁴¹⁹ Matthew 13:35. See my discussion of *persona* in chapter 2.

To resolve this problem, Origen argues that the speaker or *persona* of this psalm changes in the middle (as it does in a dialogue or an antiphonal psalm). To show that this proposal is plausible, he appeals to a habit of scripture. Unlike the previous cases we have examined, he does not explicitly formulate this habit until the end of his discussion.

<p>τοῦτο οὖν ἔθος ἐν ἐνὶ ψαλμοῖ, ἔσθ' ὅτε οὐχ ἓν εἶναι ὁ πρόσωπον τὸ λέγον, ἀλλὰ πλείονα. εἰ δὲ τοῦτο ἐν τισι ψαλμοῖς γίνεται, ζητητέον εἰ καὶ ἐνθάδε τὸ παραπλήσιον ἐστὶ νοητέον.</p>	<p>This then is a habit in some psalms, that sometimes there is not only one <i>persona</i> speaking but many. But if this occurs in some psalms, let us investigate if also here we might understand something similar.⁴²⁰</p>
--	--

This habit displays the same logical features of the other habits we have seen. First, this habit is formulated vaguely in two respects. Origen is, in the first place, vague about the frequency with which the habit obtains. He says only that it obtains ‘sometimes.’ (Presumably the habit of psalms changing *personae* represents an exception to a more common general pattern of psalms being spoken in a single *persona*.) His formulation is also vague as to how this habit obtains. It does not, for example, specify which *personae* will speak, because decisions like this have to be worked out on a case by case basis. Origen appeals to this habit abductively as a hypothesis, while recognizing that it still requires a case specific investigation of the text, as he says: ‘But if this occurs in some psalms, let us investigate if also here we might understand something similar.’

⁴²⁰ HomPs 77.1.2.

Origen also offers an inductive proof that this habit exists by enumerating examples that likewise contain a shift of *persona*. He does so in the immediately preceding portion of this homily, focusing primarily on Psalm 31 (LXX):

καὶ γὰρ πολλαχοῦ ἐν τινὶ ψαλμῷ πλείονα	For also frequently in a certain psalm multiple
πρόσωπα λέγεται. Καὶ παραδείγματος ἕνεκεν	<i>personae</i> speak. As an example it suffices to
ἀρκεῖ ἐπὶ τοῦ σωτῆρος λαβεῖν τὸν τριακοστὸν	take the Psalm 31, concerning the Savior:
πρῶτον ψαλμόν· μακάριοι ὧν ἀφέθησαν αἱ	‘Blessed is the one whose lawless deeds were
ἀνομίαι καὶ ὧν ἐπεκαλύφθησαν αἱ ἁμαρτίαι	forgiven, and blessed is the man whose sins
μακάριος ἀνὴρ, οὗ οὐ μὴ λογίσηται κύριος	were covered, whose sin the Lord will not
ἁμαρτίαν οὐδὲ ἔστιν ἐν τῷ στόματι αὐτοῦ δόλος.	reckon and in his mouth there is no guile’
Καὶ τοῦτο μὲν τὸ πρόσωπον διδασκαλικώτερον	(Psalm. 31:1b-2 LXX). And the [words],
τὸ λέγον· μακάριοι ὧν ἀφέθησαν αἱ ἀνομίαι,	‘blessed is the one whose lawless deeds were
καὶ δύναται ἐκ προσώπου λέγεσθαι τοῦ	forgiven’ is spoken in a more didactic
προφήτου ἢ ὑπὸ τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος ἢ ὑπὸ	<i>persona</i> . It could be spoken in the <i>persona</i> of
τοῦ Χριστοῦ. Ἰδωμεν δὲ ἐν τοῖς ἐξῆς	the prophet or of the Holy Spirit or of Christ.
ὁμολογουμένως μεταβάλλον τὸ πρόσωπον· τὴν	But we observe that afterwards the <i>persona</i>
ἁμαρτίαν μου ἐγνώρισα καὶ τὴν ἀνομίαν μου	becomes confessional: ‘I have known my sin
οὐκ ἐκάλυψα... Συνετιῶ σε καὶ συμβιβῶ σε ἐν	and my lawlessness I have not hidden... I will
ὁδῷ ταύτῃ, ἣ πορεύσῃ. Ἀλλὰ ἀντικρὺς ὁ μὲν	instruct you and teach you in the way, which
λέγων· συνετιῶ σε καὶ συμβιβῶ σε ἐν ὁδῷ	you should go’ (Psalm 31:6, 8). But obviously
ταύτῃ, ἣ πορεύσῃ, ὁ θεός ἐστιν. Ὁ δὲ λέγων· τὴν	the one who says, ‘I will instruct you and
ἁμαρτίαν μου ἐγνώρισα καὶ τὴν ἀνομίαν μου	teach you in the way you should go’ is God.
οὐκ ἐκάλυψα, ἄνθρωπός ἐστιν	But the one who says, ‘I have known my sin
ἐξομολογούμενος τὰ ἴδια παραπτώματα.	and my lawlessness I have not hidden’ is a

human beings confessing his own
transgressions.

Origen establishes the changing *personae* of these verses with reference to specific details of each text. At one point he explicitly appeals to what is ‘obvious’ (ἄντικρυς), showing that he is appealing to the case-specific judgment of his hearers rather than using a general rule to determine the meaning of this psalm. Showing that the *persona* speaking changes in the course of a single psalm is, in turn, inductive evidence for the general claim that scriptural psalms habitually change their *persona*. Origen describes this psalm as an ‘example’ (παραδείγμα), which is a technical term for a case from which one reasons by induction.⁴²¹

Particularly noteworthy, however, is that Origen begins this discussion not, as in other cases, by describing a scriptural habit, but rather by announcing a habit of his own:

ὥς ἔθος ἡμῖν ἐπὶ τῶν ψαλμῶν καὶ τῶν	As it is our habit in the psalms and prophets to
προφητειῶν ζητεῖν τί τὸ πρόσωπον τὸ λέγον,	inquire what <i>persona</i> is speaking, so also here
οὕτως καὶ ἐνθάδε ζητητέον τίς ὁ λέγων...	let us inquire who is speaking... ⁴²²

In light of his subsequent discussion of scripture’s habit of using multiple *personae*, it is evident that Origen’s habit as an interpreter corresponds to this habit of scriptural speech. The interpretive habit is to engage in a particular kind of investigation, namely, ‘to inquire what *persona* is speaking.’ The interrogative character of this interpretive habit corresponds to the hypothetical character of the habit as a hypothesis.

⁴²¹ E.g. Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1356b10-15. Robért Somos discusses Origen’s use of this term in PA.praef.10, its source in Aristotle, and its translation as ‘exemplum’ in Rufinus (*Logic and Argumentation*, 55f).

2.2.3. *Implicit Habits of Scripture*

The fact that habits of scripture are convertible with habits of the world and habits of interpretation has an important implication for Origen's own use of language. Sometimes what he formulates as a general statement about the world or a general rule of interpretation may have a habit of scripture as its basis. This implies that the content of these claims, even when not explicitly connected to the scriptural text, cannot be fully separated from its context within the ongoing exegetical process of inquiry. Indeed, the language in which Origen generalizes about scriptural patterns of speech is itself indebted to scripture, part of his broader attempt to speak as scripture does. We have already seen an example of this phenomenon in a previous example, when Origen interpreted Paul as giving a second-order indication that a habit of exists by way of a first-order claim about the 'inner' and 'outer' man. Here I suggest that Origen's own first-order statements may function in a similar way.

Recognizing that habits of scripture need not be formulated as meta-linguistic utterances considerably broadens the significance of their empirical logic for the interpretation of Origen's texts. For it means that the logic of scriptural habits sketched in the previous sections may apply to many of Origen's apparently direct theological claims. General claims about the world or interpretation may retain the vagueness and obscurity characteristic of scriptural discourse. They may require wisdom to apply and admit exceptions. So too his formulations of hermeneutic rules may themselves be summaries of prior exegetical experience, whose applicability in any

⁴²² *HomPs* 77.1.2.

particular case must still be demonstrated exegetically. They too may have exceptions.⁴²³ If I am right, many of his speculative teachings or hermeneutic principles should be regarded as inferences from inductively discovered habits of scripture, as in the examples below. The same logic appropriate to claims about habits would then apply to these claim as well. They may, for example, have unstated exceptions or remain open to falsification through further inquiry.⁴²⁴

To show that direct claims about the world and about interpretation cannot be separated from the inductive activity by which they were formulated, I will show that they function in Origen's argument in more or less the same way as a habit of scripture does. Since these formulations will not make their empirical character explicit by using the words συνήθεια or ἔθος, however, it will be helpful first to identify some other words that Origen characteristically uses in conjunction with these terms to refer to the process of induction.

1. Origen has a variety of ways of referring to the plurality of examples from which he argues inductively. Origen refers to the habits in 67.1.2 and 77.1.2 as obtaining πολλαχοῦ ('frequently') in the scriptures. With reference to a point of scriptural usage he speaks similarly of gathering texts πολλαχόθεν ('from many places').⁴²⁵ In 36.1.4 and 77.1.2 he refers to these cases directly as παραδείγματα, 'examples.' These and similar terms may indicate that Origen is proceeding inductively.⁴²⁶

⁴²³ It is often observed that Origen's exegetical practice does not consistently follow his stated theory that scripture has three senses. The inference that something has gone wrong here may simply be a failure to understand the logic of Origen's exegesis. If the theory that scripture has three senses is the inductive *result* of inquiry applied *abductively* to future cases, there is no reason to suppose that *Origen* assumes this theory will apply in every case. It would be more like a heuristic guide.

⁴²⁴ Recall that, as I showed in chapter 1, the Stoics regarded the truth of general sentences involving common nouns as dependent on the truth of particular sentences involving deictic reference to a particular existent entity. For this reason, a general sentence may be regarded as a kind of shorthand summary of a capacity to formulate particular sentences, just as the Stoics regarded 'truth' more broadly as a capacity to formulate true sentences. So too with Origen, I believe, a general sentence is often a kind of shorthand summary of a capacity for speech.

⁴²⁵ HomPs 67.2.7.

⁴²⁶ These terms appear frequently in Origen's *Homilies on the Psalms*. πολλαχοῦ: HomPs 67.2.3, 75.6, 77.2.3. πολλάκις: HomPs 36.3.9, 73.1.6, 75.2, 76.3.2, 76.3.3, 77.1.1, 77.9.6, 80.1.6. More often in his *Homilies on the Psalms*, Origen uses this word to refer to generalizations about the empirical world: 36.1.1, 36.2.2, 36.2.3, 36.3.6,

2. Origen also uses a wide variety of expressions and idioms to describe the procedure itself of gathering and enumerating similar cases. When demonstrating the habit of scripture in 67.1.2, Origen speaks of ‘comparing’ (παρατίθημι) similar texts.⁴²⁷ To establish a point of usage in 36.1.1, Origen speaks of ‘gathering’ (συνάγω) examples.⁴²⁸ These terms, which Origen uses frequently, may indicate elsewhere that Origen’s procedure is inductive.⁴²⁹

HomPs 36.3.9 show how Origen can formulate a *de facto* habit of scripture as a direct statement about reality. When this happens, his formulations tend to retain the vagueness characteristic of the scriptural language they come to summarize. An apparently straightforward theological assertion may therefore function like a heuristic or a proverb — even a riddle. For this reason, interpreters of Origen need to take into account the fact that even when formulated in an apparently universal or direct way, his assertions may function more like proverbs or heuristic summaries of implicit exegetical work. One cannot assume that Origen uses words in a univocal

73.1.9, 76.1.8, 76.2.1, 77.3.4, 77.4.4, 77.5.4, 77.8.6, 80.2.5. *πολλαχῶς*: HomPs 73.1.6. Origen compares texts *πολλαχόθεν*: HomPs 67.2.7. Origen uses these and other expressions when enumerating multiple examples or at least asserting that he could do so. Origen also refers often to particular enumerated instances as *παραδείγματα*, ‘examples,’ in HomPs 36.1.4; 35.4.2, 3; 67.2.5; 74.4; 76.1.5; 77.1.2; 77.7.6; referring narrowly to grammatical paradigms: HomPs 15.1.8, 36.4.2. Origen uses it once to refer to an example of a scribal error: HomPs 77.1.1. Origen can refer to an analogical argument as one ‘κατά τι παράδειγμα’ (HomPs 76.4.4), and indeed some of the uses above could perhaps be translated ‘paradigm,’ i.e. an example from which one reasons by analogy. On the other hand, often *πάρδειγμα* refers simply to an illustration — a case that is not cited to establish a rule but only to clarify its content. Twice he introduces an illustration uses the phrase ‘νοήσεις δὲ τὸ λεγόμενον ἀπὸ παραδείματος’ [you will understand what I mean by an example]: HomPs 76.1.7 and 77.8.6; cf. 36.1.1. Other examples of *πάρδειγμα* to illustrate a rule are: HomPs 76.1.8; 76.2.1, 3; 36.1.4; 36.3.1; 36.4.2; 67.2.6. The word *παραδειγματίζω*, ‘to shame, make a spectacle of,’ which Origen uses in HomPs 77.2.4, probably after Hebrews 6:6 and Colossians 2:15, is unrelated to these logical uses. Each of these terms may indicate that Origen is implicitly articulating a habit of scripture.

⁴²⁷ See also HomPs 15.1.9, 36.3.9, 36.4.3, 67.2.3, 77.2.7, 77.7.1, 77.7.2, 77.9.4.

⁴²⁸ See also HomPs 15.1.9.

⁴²⁹ Origen also cites several scriptural texts to exhort his hearers to gather texts from many places in scripture; these also may be indications that Origen is proceeding inductively. The most common of these texts is 1 Corinthians 2:13: ‘compare spiritual things with spiritual things,’ in e.g. HomPs 15.2.5, 36.1.1, 76.3.3, and frequently in his broader corpus. On Origen’s use of this proof-text, see Rolf Gögler, *Zur Theologie des biblischen Wortes bei Origenes* (Dusseldorf: Patmos, 1963): 46ff; Hanson, *Allegory and Event*, 180ff; Heine, ‘Reading the Bible,’ 136ff; Martens, *Exegetical Life*, 61f. Other similar passages include Deuteronomy 19:15, which says that one can only establish a point ‘by the mouth of two or three witnesses’ (HomPs 15.2.1, 80.2.2.), and John 5:39, where Jesus commands his hearers to ‘search the Scriptures’ (HomPs 77.8.2.). In a few cases Origen also uses terms drawn from the technical empiricist vocabulary around induction, which also probably indicates that his line of argument is inductive: *τῇ πείρᾳ*, ‘by testing’: 77.2.4; *τηρέω*, ‘to observe’: 77.9.6.

manner, nor that his claims apply without exception, nor that the content of his claims can be separated from the habits of scriptural usage from which they are derived.

Psalm 36:18 says that the Lord ‘knows the days of the blameless.’ Origen is struck by the fact that the text singles out divine knowledge of the blameless for mention. Does not God know everything? Rather, Origen defends a general statement about God: ‘the Lord does not know everything but only good things.’ But this formulation is a *de facto* habit of scripture, as though Origen had said, ‘it is a habit of scripture to speak of God knowing good things only.’ Such a rule does not make explicit what it would mean to say that God’s knowledge is limited in this way. It does not translate the language of scripture into a clearer account of divine knowledge; indeed, it has a paradoxical or riddling quality to which Origen was not insensitive. Origen’s formulation summarizes a puzzling general pattern of scriptural discourse whose significance it remains to investigate in particular cases. In this way, one comes to learn the language of scripture by mastering its grammar of the word ‘know.’

<p>γινώσκει κύριος τὰς ἡμέρας τῶν ἀμώμων καὶ ἡ κληρονομία αὐτῶν εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα ἔσται. κατὰ τὰς γραφάς, ὡς πολλάκις τετηρήκαμεν καὶ εἰρήκαμεν, ὁ κύριος οὐ πάντα γινώσκει ἀλλὰ μόνον καλά· ἀνγοεῖ γὰρ τὰ κακὰ ὡς ἀνάξια ὄντα τῆς γνώσεως αὐτοῦ. παρετιθέμεθα τὸ εἶ τις ἐν ὑμῖν προφήτης ἢ πνευματικὸς ἐπιγνωσκέτω ἃ γράφω ὑμῖν ὅτι θεοῦ ἐστίν· εἰ δὲ τις ἀγνοεῖ, ἀνγοεῖται. ἐχρησάμεθα δὲ καὶ τῷ νῦν δ’ ἐγνωκότες θεὸν μᾶλλον δὲ γνωσθέντες</p>	<p>‘The Lord knows the days of the blameless, and their inheritance will be forever’ (Ps 36:18). According to the Scriptures, as we have frequently observed and said, the Lord does not know everything but only good things. For he is ignorant of evil things as being unworthy of his knowledge. We compared the text, ‘if there is a prophet among you or someone spiritual, let him recognize that what I am writing to you is of</p>
---	---

ὕπὸ θεοῦ. παρειτιθέμεθα τὸ ἔγνω κύριος τοὺς	God; but if someone is ignorant, he is
ὄντας αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀποστήτω ἀπὸ ἀδικίας πᾶς ὁ	unknown [to God]’ (1 Cor. 14:37f). And we
ὀνομάζων τὸ ὄνομα κυρίου. πάντως δὲ εἴ ποτε	also used the text, ‘knowing God, or rather,
εὐρεθείη γνωσκομένη ἡ ἀσέβεια τῶν	being known by God’ (Gal. 4:9). We
ἀμαρτωλῶν, ὡς ἐπὶναν μέντοι τὸ γνωσκόμενον	compared the text, ‘The Lord knows those
καλόν ἐστιν! εἰ δὲ τοῦτο, τὰς τῶν ἀμαρτωλῶν	who are his, and let all who name the name of
ἡμέρας οὐ γινώσκει κύριος ἀλλὰ τὰς τῶν	the Lord keep away from injustice!’ (2 Tim.
ἀμώμων. ἄξιοι γάρ εἰσιν αἱ τῶν ἀμώμων	2:19). And undoubtedly if you ever find the
ἡμέραι τῆς γνώσεως τοῦ θεοῦ.	impiety of sinners being known, it is said
	rather of something good in them that is
	known! And if this is the case, the Lord does
	not know the days of sinners but the days of
	the blameless. For the days of the blameless
	are worthy of being known by God. ⁴³⁰

That Origen’s claim has an inductive basis is, in this case, fairly clear. First, he says that his claim is ‘according to the Scripture.’ Second, he uses the terminology of empirical and inductive investigation. He describes the sentence ‘the Lord does not know everything but only good things’ as something ‘πολλάκις τετηρήκαμεν’ [frequently observed] in the scriptures. He refers to his procedure as one of ‘comparing’ scriptural texts. Furthermore, his argument itself proceeds inductively, by enumerating a number of examples that exemplify his stated rule. The cases Origen considers are of two kinds: either God is said *not* to know someone who is unspiritual (1 Cor. 14:37f); or God is specifically said to know *particular* good people, implying that he does not know others (Gal. 4:9, 2 Tim. 2:19). This plurality of examples establish by induction

Scripture's general habit of asserting or implying that God is ignorant of those that are not good. Finally, Origen brings this habit to bear on the lemma, 'the Lord knows the days of the blameless' (Ps. 36:18) to propose a similar interpretation here. Origen's terminology and mode of argument are characteristic of what Origen elsewhere calls a habit of scripture. Despite its general form, 'the Lord does not know everything but only good things' should be understood as a summary of a pattern of scriptural usage. It could just as well have been formulated in meta-linguistic terms, along these lines: 'it is the habit of Scripture to speak of the Lord as not knowing everything but only good things.' Under the hypothesis that Scriptural discourse is paradigmatically wise, there is very little difference between these two formulations.

Recognizing this equivalence explains several other aspects of Origen's argument. First, a habit of scripture was a summary of a pattern of scriptural usage. So too here, Origen's formulation does not translate or restate in clearer language the meaning of the scriptural texts he cites. Instead, his formulation preserves and even heightens the difficult language of the cited texts, especially their use of the word 'know.' Origen offers only a very partial explication of the meaning of this difficult pattern of speech: 'he is ignorant of evil things as being unworthy of his knowledge.' This gloss is not a definition of the word 'knowledge' as it applies to God, since it itself uses the word 'knowledge' and one cannot use the *definandum* in its definition. Rather, Origen is giving something like a clarification of the conditions under which this word is used: divine 'knowledge' is not predicated of sinners, who are unworthy of it. Whether there might be other senses in which God *does* know sinners is left unexamined. For Origen is not interested in replacing scriptural language with something clearer or more precise, but rather in adopting scripture's pattern of speech as his own. One learns from Origen, in effect, the general rule that one should say of God that he does not know sinners.

⁴³⁰ *HomPs* 36.3.9.

Second, a habit, we saw, need not obtain universally; it may permit exceptions, or even itself be the exception to a more general rule. If it is a habit of scripture to say that ‘God does not know sinners,’ it does not follow that this sentence is rightly said in every case, nor that it might not also be true to say, in a different sense, that God does know sinners. Indeed, Origen explicitly observes that it admits exceptions: ‘if you ever find the impiety of sinners being known, it is said rather of something good in them that is known!’ That Origen is concerned with scripture’s usage of the word ‘know’ is clear, first, because he speaks of ‘finding’ this to be the case (i.e. by observing it in other scriptural texts) and second, because he explicates how such a text ‘is said.’ To be sure, there is no contradiction between these two patterns of usage: if in the first case we say that God does not ‘know’ sinners because of their unworthiness, here we learn that in cases when we do say that God knows sinners, it is because there is nonetheless some good in them. In both cases, Origen begins with a pattern of scriptural usage and explicates its meaning in particular cases. It takes wisdom, then, to know what one means by saying that God does not know sinners.

In sum: Origen’s formulation of a theological claim about divine knowledge retains the ambiguity and obscurity of the scriptural discourse it summarizes, and thus takes on something of the character of a cryptic aphorism. To put the same point rather more sharply: if Origen seeks to imitate the language of scripture, Origen scholars should expect to find the same sorts of linguistic phenomena in Origen’s own discourse that Origen regards as characteristic of scriptural discourse.

2.3. Case Study: ‘Bodily Things are Types of Spiritual Things’

Recognizing the existence of implicit habits of scripture has important implications for how scholars interpret Origen. If one separates Origen’s general formulations from their context within an exegetical argument, one is liable to treat them as the clear principles rather than heuristic guidelines. This can, in turn, lead to the impression that Origen’s exegesis is arbitrary or inconsistent. By way of conclusion, let me adumbrate the significance of these examples by discussing an example from a more familiar text of Origen. In the 10th book of his *Commentary on John*, Origen offers an extended allegorical interpretation of the Passover laws in Exodus. His discussion culminates in a general statement that has generated a great deal of commentary:

<p>Οὐ γὰρ νομιστέον τὰ ἱστορικὰ ἱστορικῶν εἶναι τύπους καὶ τὰ σωματικὰ σωματικῶν, ἀλλὰ τὰ σωματικὰ πνευματικῶν καὶ τὰ ἱστορικὰ νοητῶν.</p>	<p>For one should not suppose that historical things are types of historical things and bodily things [are types] of bodily things; rather, bodily things [are types] of spiritual things and historical things [are types] of intellectual things.⁴³¹</p>
---	--

Origen is often understood in this passage as articulating a basic metaphysical commitment (and one with a strongly Platonic cast) that has determined his preceding exegesis of the Passover story. That is, interpreters frequently assume that Origen is arguing deductively from theory to practice. Because physical reality images an underlying spiritual reality, exegesis of scriptural

⁴³¹ CJ 10.19.110.

texts concerning physical things must also discover the spiritual things of which they are images.

Harold Buchinger, for example, says of Origen's exegesis in this passage,

...das ist aber nur auf Basis seiner totalen Allegorisierung möglich. Abschließend faßt Origenes die Unstimmigkeit der horizontalen Typologie und die damit verbundene Notwendigkeit einer transzendentalen Hermeneutik biblischer Texte und Ereignisse zu einem vielzitierten Prinzip zusammen...Damit sprengt Origenes nicht nur die typologische Relation zwischen Altem und Neuem Testament; er gewährt auch Einblick in seine umfassende Weltsicht, die fundamental durch die Transzendierung der gesamten raum-zeitlichen Wirklichkeit auf die geistige und intelligible bestimmt ist.⁴³²

Origen's exegesis of this particular text is determined by his fundamental worldview. Hanson reads this text in a similar way, and then uses it as an occasion to comment on Origen's subjective exegesis:

Statements such as these suggest that Origen allegorized according to a regular and objective set of rules, however oddly these rules may have been conceived. But in fact no such rules can be deduced in Origen's application of allegory. His use of it breaks all rules and is unchartably subjective. He is determined to deduce his own theology from the Bible . . . We may give an account of the characteristics of his "spiritual" sense, but we must not pretend that we can discern any rules that govern it.⁴³³

⁴³² Harold Buchinger, *Pascha bei Origenes* (Innsbruck-Wien: Tyrolia-Verlag, 2005), 440.

⁴³³ Hanson, *Allegory and Event*, 245.

Notice what Hanson assumes a text like this *does*. It should provide rules that make exegesis ‘regular and objective.’ It should ‘govern’ his discernment of the spiritual sense. As Hanson (correctly) notes, Origen’s exegesis cannot easily be conformed to any such rule, and so he infers that Origen’s exegesis is ‘unchartably subjective.’

But the function of this rule need not be understood in this way. Suppose we understand this instead as an implicit appeal to an inductively warranted habit of scripture, as though Origen had first said, ‘it is the habit of scripture frequently to make physical things types of spiritual things.’ From this habit of scripture, we may suppose, he inferred a habit of the world — physical things are frequently types of spiritual things — and a corresponding habit of interpretation put to use in the preceding discussion — one should investigate whether and how in particular cases a physical thing is a type of a spiritual thing. On this interpretation, the Platonism of Origen’s statement need not be understood as an *a priori* metaphysical commitment, but rather as a use of Platonic language to explicate an observable pattern displayed in the scripture. The formulation is an abductive generalization of this pattern, and as such, one cannot assume that it applies in every case without demonstrating this inductively on a case by case basis. So too the function of the hermeneutical rule would not be to determine or govern interpretation, but rather to propose a class of interpretations whose validity it remains for the exegete to prove (or not). One need not assume that in every case ‘physical things are types of spiritual things,’ though this may prove to be the case.

Several features of CJ 10 point in this direction. First, the rule is offered at the *end* of exegesis rather than the beginning. This suggests that it is the conclusion of his argument rather than its basis; and in any case, it shows that Origen has not explicitly drawn on this rule to warrant his exegesis of this passage. Instead, Origen quotes texts about the typological function

of the Passover and other biblical liturgies.⁴³⁴ More importantly, he also goes to great lengths to prove that a bodily interpretation of the Passover as a type of Christ's body cannot account for all the details of the text, which is one reason he seeks instead an interpretation that applies it to the soul.⁴³⁵ Finally, Origen acknowledges exceptions to this general rule in other contexts. For example, in CM 12.3 he argues that Jonah is a type of the death and resurrection of Christ — a 'bodily' thing being a type of another 'bodily' thing in just the way Origen seems to exclude in CJ 10. In short, Origen gives many indications that he is working inductively rather than deductively. It is reasonable to assume that Origen's general formulation is not the principled basis of his exegesis but its inductive fruit.

3. Conclusion

I have demonstrated in this chapter how Origen's exegesis proceeds from the performative and logical examination of the usage of particular sentences (chapter 2) to the formulation of grammatical rules governing this usage. We saw that Origen's exegetical procedures should be understood as part of a process of inductive inquiry into these rules with analogies in the ancient empirical sciences and the Biblical wisdom tradition. Origen's exegesis is a process of making hypotheses whose validity must be tested by further empirical inquiry.

We also observed that since Origen views scripture's habits of speech as wise (true and appropriate to their subject matter), he may simply assert a habit of scripture without calling attention to its inductive origin. The investigation of scriptural language, we might say, is one that concerns Origen directly, one that has direct consequences for how he himself uses

⁴³⁴ CJ 10.16.88-91.

⁴³⁵ CJ 10.16.92-8.

language. In the next chapter, we shall draw out the full implications of this conception of scriptural language.

Chapter 4: The Creation of Scriptural Language

I have argued that Origen's scriptural exegesis should be understood as a process of reconstructing the wise linguistic competence underlying the texts of scripture. This requires Origen to ask how to use the words of scripture by investigating the various contexts and manners in which scriptural words may rightly be said (chapter 2) and by investigating the habits and underlying rules governing scriptural discourse (chapter 3). Linguistic competence is not simply a matter of putting to use the words of others, however. It also includes a capacity to speak words of one's own. A child has not learned to speak if she simply repeats the words of her parents; rather, through a process both imitative and creative, she must learn to say new things for herself. So it is with wisdom: one has not learned to speak wisely until one can produce wise words of one's own. If reading scripture is a process of formation in wisdom, then wise exegesis must include *invention* — the generation of new insights expressed in new words.

Origen liked to express this in the words of Sirach 21:15: 'If a man of understanding hears wise discourse [λόγον σοφὸν], he will praise it and add to it.' In his 6th *Homily on Jeremiah*, Origen applies this proverb to his own invention of new scripture-like language:

<p>Τὸ μὲν οὖν ἐνταῦθα γεγραμμένον ἐστίν· Κύριε, οἱ ὀφθαλμοί σου εἰς πίστιν· ἐπεὶ δὲ λόγον σοφὸν ἐὰν ἀκούσῃ ἐπιστήμων, αἰνέσει αὐτὸν καὶ ἐπ' αὐτὸν προσθήσει, ὅρα πόσα ἔστιν ποιῆσαι ἀπὸ τοῦ κύριε, οἱ ὀφθαλμοί σου εἰς πίστιν. Φησὶν ὁ Παῦλος· Νυνὶ δὲ μένει τὰ τρία ταῦτα, πίστις,</p>	<p>Therefore it is written here, 'Lord, your eyes are on faith' (Jer. 5:3). But because 'if a man of understanding hears a wise word, he will praise it and add to it' (Sir. 21:15), see how much it is possible to make from the words, 'Lord, your eyes are on faith.' Paul says, 'but</p>
---	--

<i>ἐλπίς, ἀγάπη· μείζων δὲ τούτων ἡ ἀγάπη· ὥς</i>	now these three remain: faith, hope, and love;
<i>ὀφθαλμοὶ κυρίου εἰς πίστιν, ὀφθαλμοὶ κυρίου</i>	but the greatest of these is love' (1 Cor.
<i>εἰς ἐλπίδα, ὀφθαλμοὶ κυρίου εἰς ἀγάπην· ἐπεὶ</i>	13:13). As the eyes of the Lord are on faith, so
<i>δὲ ἐστὶν πνεῦμα δυνάμεως καὶ ἀγάπης καὶ</i>	the eyes of the Lord are on hope, the eyes of
<i>σωφρονισμοῦ, ὥς ὀφθαλμοὶ κυρίου εἰς ἀγάπην,</i>	the Lord are on love. But because there is a
<i>οὕτως ὀφθαλμοὶ κυρίου εἰς δύναμιν, οὕτως οἱ</i>	spirit 'of power and love and prudence,' (2
<i>ὀφθαλμοὶ κυρίου εἰς σωφρονισμόν, ὀφθαλμοὶ</i>	Tim. 1:7), as the eyes of the Lord are on love,
<i>κυρίου ἐπὶ δικαιοσύνην, οὕτως ἐπὶ πάσας</i>	so the eyes of the Lord are on power, so the
<i>ἀρετὰς ὀφθαλμοὶ κυρίου.</i>	eyes of the Lord are on prudence, the eyes of
	the Lord are on righteousness — the eyes of
	the Lord are on all the virtues. ⁴³⁶

After praising the wise words of scripture in Jeremiah 5:3 — 'Lord, your eyes are on faith' — Origen adds to them by formulating analogous words of his own: the eyes of the Lord are also 'on love,' 'on hope,' and indeed 'on all the virtues.' It is the logic of Origen's creative formulation of new speech that shall occupy us in this chapter. To understand this logic is to grasp how even in his most speculative moments, Origen's exegesis is by no means arbitrary.⁴³⁷

This chapter examines Origen's invention of new language from two vantage points: procedural and theological. In the first section, I demonstrate the basic continuity between Origen's invention of new scripture-like language and his interpretive procedures as analyzed in the previous two chapters. Whether Origen is seeking an interpretation of a difficult text or inventing a new form of speech, Origen tends to ask the same basic question — when and how can the words in question be rightly said? — and to commend ways of speaking by their

⁴³⁶ HomJer 6.1.

analogical relation to observable habits of scripture. In emphasizing this procedural continuity, this section is, as it were, anti-climactic by design: Origenian speculation, far from being an arbitrary departure from responsible exegesis, is simply more of the same. The primary difference between interpretation and invention is not procedural but epistemological. Origen can assume a text of scripture is spoken correctly, whereas it may be that some formulation of his own must be rejected.

Nevertheless, we should not neglect the bold implications of this view. In seeking to acquire a capacity to speak the language of scripture, even to produce new scripture-like words of one's own, one seeks ultimately to become an equal of the scriptural authors and to reproduce the inspired activity by which they themselves composed the scripture. For this reason, Origen's production of new scripture-like language sheds a particularly clear light on the theological framework of Origen's exegesis. In the second section, I argue that Origen's exegesis should be understood as an activity of *imitatio scripturae* whose end is nothing less than the *deification of discourse*. I borrow the phrase '*imitatio scripturae*' from Azzan Yadin-Israel's analysis of the Ishmaelian tradition of rabbinic midrash, which provides a suggestive contrast to Origen.⁴³⁸ For Yadin-Israel, the Ishmaelian rabbis imitate scripture instead of a God who is too transcendent for human beings to imitate:

If midrash is, in fact, a religious ideal, then the model presented by the Mekhilta and the Sifre

Numbers denies the ideal of *imitatio Dei* — not possible with a transcendent God — and replaces

⁴³⁷ For a classic statement of this view, see R. P. C. Hanson, *Allegory and Event* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1959): 248, 257f.

⁴³⁸ One should recall that in the latter portion of his life, Origen moved to Palestine and very likely came into contact with rabbinic sages (Joseph Trigg, *Origen: The Bible and Philosophy in the Third-century Church* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1983): 133f). For a broader treatment of Origen's relationship to Judaism, see Nicholas de Lange, *Origen and the Jews* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976).

it with *imitatio Scripturae* . . . ‘Torah spoke the language of man.’ It is only Torah that speaks the language of man; the language of God is radically, categorically unattainable.⁴³⁹

Origen too imitates scripture; but for him, by virtue of the incarnation of the divine Logos, the words of scripture constitute the embodied speech of the Logos and hence the language of God. What I have spoken of throughout this dissertation as the wise ‘linguistic competence’ underlying the scriptures must have been identical, for Origen, with the divine Logos itself. Thus for Origen, *imitatio scripturae* is at one and the same time *imitatio Christi et Dei*, and learning the language of scripture is governed by the patristic logic of deification. If God became human that human beings might become divine, so the Logos spoke ‘the language of man’ that men might speak the language of God. To learn the language of scripture is ultimately to identify one’s own speech with that of the divine Logos, a dynamic of which Origen regarded Paul as exemplary, when he said: ‘or do you seek proof that Christ speaks in me?’ (2 Cor. 13:3).⁴⁴⁰

This deification of discourse manifests itself paradigmatically (though not exclusively) in the characteristic boldness of Origen’s speculation. When Origen reflects on his own speculative activity, he frequently does so by applying to his own speech the language of boldness that the scriptures apply to the divine speech of the apostles and of Christ. Origen’s discussions of boldness shall be our guide in the second section. As we shall see, for Origen, faithful *imitatio scripturae* requires imitating even scripture’s boldness, manifested above all in one’s ability to produce new difficult or obscure utterances that go boldly beyond what the scriptures have written. Origen’s ability to engage in bold speculation is, in short, a probable sign that he has begun to possess the divine wisdom that is the goal of Christian philosophy.

⁴³⁹ Azzan Yadin-Israel, *Scripture as Logos: Rabbi Ishmael and the Origins of Midrash* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 141.

1. Invention

In the previous chapter, I observed an ‘abductive’ moment in Origen’s empirical inquiry into the rules of scripture, whereby he brought observed patterns of scripture to bear on new cases as a hypothesis that requires further inquiry to confirm. I connected this to the concern among ancient empirical scientists like Galen to articulate a method of ‘invention’ by which the scientist may discover new knowledge. That chapter implicitly began to show how the creative or imaginative dimension of Origen’s exegesis may be understood as part of a coherent process of inquiry. In this chapter, we return to Origen’s use of invention, this time focusing on invention as an activity of producing new speech. This section returns invention to its home in the context of rhetoric, where it signifies the art of the discovery and arrangement of the subject matter about which the orator would speak.⁴⁴¹ In doing so, however, we must continue to bear in mind that Origen’s inventive proposals have the character of hypotheses about what kind of speech is consistent with the habits of scripture. Speculation too, as we shall see, operates according to the logic of analogy.

An earlier generation of scholars tended to downplay the influence of rhetoric on Origen’s speech.⁴⁴² Robert Berchman, however, showed that Origen does draw on rhetorical traditions, though not so much the eloquence of the Second Sophistic as a Middle Platonic tradition of philosophical rhetoric, in which eloquence is subordinated to logic and inquiry.⁴⁴³ In this view, speaking well is inseparable from reasoning well. While Berchman focuses mainly on invention

⁴⁴⁰ See HomPs 15.1.7 (discussed below), 67.1.1, 80.2.3, 81.1.3, and frequently in his broader corpus.

⁴⁴¹ Cicero, *De inventione* I.7;

⁴⁴² See the discussion in Robert M. Berchman, *From Philo to Origen: Middle Platonism in Transition* (Scholars Press: Chico, 1984), 217f.

in the development of arguments in his theological works, a number of other scholars have called attention to Origen's use of invention in his homilies.⁴⁴⁴ Le Boulluec has called attention to 'la puissance inventive du texte construit par l'exégète,'⁴⁴⁵ in which Origen takes up and expands the language of scripture in developing his own thought. Le Boulluec identifies this as rhetorical-philosophical *invention*, and describes the dynamic as a 'textualisation de la pensée,'⁴⁴⁶ Olivier Munnich's study of Origen's *Homilies on Jeremiah* develops these insights by describing the intertextual ways Origen uses scripture not only to help him interpret difficult texts but also to engender his own linguistic creativity.⁴⁴⁷ Origen's own language emerges from scriptural language, so that scripture functions not so much as a *text* (an actual utterance with a particular meaning) but as *langue* (the language or vocabulary out of which many meanings may be produced).

L'exégète utilise ici le texte scripturaire, non comme objet d'étude, mais comme *mode de formulation* de sa propre pensée; il ne s'agit pas seulement pour lui d'interpréter l'Écriture par l'Écriture mais de *penser* un lieu scripturaire avec les ressources *lexicales* et *syntactiques* que lui offre l'Écriture elle-même.⁴⁴⁸

⁴⁴³ Berchman, *Philo to Origen*, 215.

⁴⁴⁴ Besides Le Boulluec and Munnich, discussed below, see Pádraig O'Cleirigh, 'Topoi of Invention in Origen's *Homilies*,' in Gilles Dorival and Alain le Boulluec, eds., *Origeniana Sexta* (Leuven University Press, 1995): 277-286.

⁴⁴⁵ Alain Le Boulluec, 'Les représentations du texte chez les philosophes et l'exégèse scripturaire d'Origène. Influence et mutations,' in R.J. Daly, ed., *Origeniana Quinta* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1992).

⁴⁴⁶ Le Boulluec, 'Les représentations,' 111.

⁴⁴⁷ Olivier Munnich, 'Le rôle de la citation dans l'écriture d'Origène,' in Sylwia Kaczmarek and Henryk Pietras, eds., *Origeniana Decima* (Walpole: Peeters Publishers, 2011): 507-538, esp. 520f.

⁴⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 528.

Although Munnich speaks of scripture providing a ‘logique’ and a ‘mode de raisonnement’ for this activity,⁴⁴⁹ he does not describe this logic and connect it to Origen’s other exegetical procedures. This description is my aim in this section.

Origenian speculation arises, I argue, as a logical consequence of his conception of exegesis as learning the language of scripture. In particular, it is a consequence of the logical relation between textual utterance and the underlying linguistic competence. An utterance is an action, while a competence is a concretely existing *habitus* for action. The set of utterances in a text, including scripture, is actual and finite, but the competence they express includes an infinite number of other possible performances. For this reason, exegesis that aims at forming competence must be an expansive movement from the finite to the infinite. In a similar way, the capacity of a musician is determined by what is *possible* for her, not merely by the actual performances by which she demonstrates her competence. Her competence includes an ability to perform an infinite set of songs, most of which she has never yet played, even songs that do not yet exist. At the same time, this infinite capacity is acquired by practice and performance with some finite set of songs. Learning to play has the logical character of a movement from the finite to the infinite. So it is with learning a language.

This infinite character of linguistic competence was not wholly unknown to ancient thinkers, but it proved difficult for prevailing models of rationality to accommodate, since Greek thinkers tended to identify rationality with the imposition of finitude and limit. For this reason, Origen’s contemporary Sextus Empiricus could exploit the infinity of linguistic competence as a skeptical argument against the possibility of ‘grammar’ as a methodological expertise of language. According to Sextus, a certain Chaeris proposed a definition of grammar focused on the linguistic competence of ordinary speakers:

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid., 529.

Χάρης δὲ ... τὴν τελείαν φησὶ γραμματικὴν
ἔξιν εἶναι ἀπὸ τέχνης καὶ ἱστορίας⁴⁵⁰
διαγνωστικὴν τῶν παρ' Ἑλλήσι λεκτῶν καὶ
νοητῶν ἐπὶ τὸ ἀκριβέστατον, πλὴν τῶν ὑπ'
ἄλλαις τέχναις.

Chaeris says that complete grammar 'is a skill
which diagnoses from expertise and research
the things said and thought by Greeks as
accurately as possible, except those things
which come under other kinds of expertise.'⁴⁵¹

Sextus argues that this expertise would have to include knowledge of an infinite or unlimited set of things, and that no method for an infinite knowledge could exist.

οὗτος δὲ περὶ πᾶσαν Ἑλληνικὴν φωνὴν καὶ
περὶ πᾶν σημαίνονμενον καταγίνεσθαι ταύτην
θέλει. ὅπερ, εἰ θεμιτὸν εἰπεῖν, οὐδὲ θεοῖς
ἀνυτόν ἐστιν. ὥς γὰρ καὶ πρότερον ἐλέγομεν,
οὐδεμία μέθοδος συνίσταται περὶ τι ἄπειρον,
ἀλλὰ καὶ μάλιστα αὐτὴ⁴⁵² τοῦτο περατοῖ· τῶν
γὰρ ἀορίστων ἡ ἐπιστήμη δεσμός ἐστιν· τὰ δὲ
σημαίνοντα καὶ σημαίνόμενα τῶν πραγμάτων
ἐστὶν ἄπειρα· οὐκ ἄρα ἐστὶν ἡ γραμματικὴ
τέχνη περὶ τὰ σημαίνοντα καὶ σημαίνόμενα.
καὶ μὴν παντοῖαι γίνονται τῶν φωνῶν
μεταβολαὶ καὶ πρὸ τοῦ γεγόνασι καὶ εἰσαῦθις

[Chaeris] wants [grammar] to be in force
concerning every Greek word and every
signified thing which, if it is not impious to
say so, is not even possible for the gods. As
we also said earlier, there is no
methodological treatment of anything
unlimited, but in fact method itself, more than
anything else, limits it, since knowledge is a
tying-down of the unlimited. The signifiers
and signifieds of things are unlimited,
therefore the expertise of grammar is not
about the signifiers and signifieds. Moreover,

⁴⁵⁰ Blank inserts 'καὶ ἱστορίας' on the basis of the parallel in DThrax. 118.11, and I follow him here (Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Grammarians*, trans. and commentary by D. L. Blank (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998)).

⁴⁵¹ AM 1.76, trans. Blank.

⁴⁵² Following Blank, I read αὐτὴ for αὕτη.

γενήσονται· φιλομετάβολον γάρ τί ἐστιν ὁ	many changes occur, have occurred before,
αἰών, οὐκ εἰς φυτὰ μόνον καὶ ζῷα ἀλλὰ καὶ εἰς	and will occur again in words, for time is fond
ῥήματα. περὶ ἐστῶσαν δὲ ἀπειρίαν, οὐχ ὅτι	of change not only in plants and animals, but
γε ⁴⁵³ καὶ μεταβάλλουσιν ἀμήχανόν ἐστι γινῶσιν	also in words too. But it is impossible to find
ἀνθρωπίνην εὐρεῖν. οὐδὲ ταύτη ἄρα ἡ	human knowledge of a fixed infinitude — let
γραμματικὴ συστήσεται.	alone of a changing one. So grammar will not
	exist in this way either. ⁴⁵⁴

Sextus recognizes two respects in which linguistic competence is infinite. First, conventional Greek (like any natural language) permits one to say an infinite number of linguistic utterances with an infinite number of corresponding meanings. Second, the conventions of a language are always changing. The perfect linguistic competence to which the grammarian aspires would thus, in Sextus' view, have to bring under clear and finite rules not only an infinite number of present possibilities, but furthermore, the infinite future possibilities that have not yet arisen. He regards this as impossible, 'even for the gods.'

Sextus' account helps us see why for Origen, the infinity of linguistic competence must show itself in an infinite demand to *say new things* — whether actualizing some hitherto potential possibility of one's existing language or even changing a language altogether.⁴⁵⁵ For while the text of scripture records a finite number of utterances, the rules that govern them, whose

⁴⁵³ Reading οὐχ ὅτι γε instead of οὐ τοί γε with Blank.

⁴⁵⁴ AM 1.81-3, trans. Blank.

⁴⁵⁵ The possibility of an exegesis that *changes* scriptural language is beyond the scope of this chapter, but it is certainly part of Origen's conception of language. David Dawson in particular has called attention to the central role of *transformation* in Origen's exegesis. If 'events may alter the character of prior events,' (David Dawson, *Christian Figural Reading and the Fashioning of Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 133) making old things into gospel, that is in part because the old words are able to say and do new things in the new context created by Christ's incarnation. This was already a central theme of Henri de Lubac: 'To tell the truth, Jesus Christ, therefore, does not come to *show* the profound meaning of the Scriptures, like a teacher who has no part in the things

reconstruction we analyzed in the previous chapter, extend to an infinite number of possible utterances. This is why if reading scripture is a matter of being formed according to its habits of speech, then one's capacity for scriptural speech will have to show itself in utterances besides those explicitly recorded in scripture. To speak the language of scripture is to be able to invent new utterances of that language.

This description also makes clear why the logic of habits that we analyzed in the previous chapter will continue to operate in this context as well. The basic exegetical task is the same: to reconstruct rules of scriptural discourse by arguing analogically from its observable utterances. The primary difference is that in the examples in this chapter, Origen uses analogical arguments to confirm the viability of proposed new utterances rather than to interpret utterances given in scripture. And here it is worth noting another contrast with Sextus. Sextus calls attention to the fallibility of analogy as a criterion of linguistic correctness. As I argued in the previous chapter, Origen recognizes this as well, which is why he treats analogical arguments as probabilistic rather than necessary. Sextus draws from this fallibility a skeptical conclusion: the only possible criterion of correct speech is 'usage,' and learning to speak is merely 'assimilation and observation' to a given community's habits of speech.⁴⁵⁶ For Origen, an approach like this would be impossible for a number of reasons. First, Origen regards the actual speech of the Christian community as fallible and in need of correction.⁴⁵⁷ Merely observing and assimilating to the community's conventional speech would not reliably yield wisdom; on the contrary, by acquiring wisdom, Origen hopes to propose changes to the community's way of speaking.

he explains. He comes, actually, to *create* it, through an act of his omnipotence' (Henri de Lubac, *History and Spirit*, Anne Englund Nash, trans. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2007), 310).

⁴⁵⁶ AM 1.176.

⁴⁵⁷ On Origen's criticism of 'the many,' see esp. Gunnar af Hällström, *Fides Simpliciorum according to Origen of Alexandria* (Helsinki: Societas Scientiarum Fennica, 1984).

It would be more correct to say that Origen aims to observe and assimilate to the usage of scripture, as some proposed to learn correct speech and wisdom by conforming to an ancient authority like Homer.⁴⁵⁸ Here, however, the problem is that scripture contains merely a finite set of utterances, while linguistic competence, as we have seen, requires one to be able to say an infinite number of things. At best, scripture can function as *exemplary* of an underlying competence that — insofar as the exegete is not yet wise — the exegete must reconstruct by some process of argument. Origen deploys analogy as a principle for doing so, yet always with Sextus' skeptical consciousness that analogical arguments are probable rather than necessary — even or especially when used in the context of inspired speculation.

1.1. Analogy and Invention

I showed in chapter 3 that analogical arguments about 'habits of scripture' are one of the basic ways that Origen proposes interpretations of difficult texts. In this section, I offer an overview of Origen's production of new scripture-like speech that calls attention to the central role played by analogical arguments in this context as well. This sets the stage for two longer discussions of specific examples, in which I demonstrate in detail the basic continuity between Origen's exegetical procedures of interpretation and of invention.

To identify analogical arguments, which are ubiquitous in Origen's writing, I shall take my clue from Origen's terminology. Analogical arguments are frequently indicated by the pair

⁴⁵⁸ Appeal to Homer as a standard of correct Greek was very common: see e.g. AM 1.200-8; Ps-Herodian, *On Solecism and Barbarism* 311.5-7; and the discussion in Blank, *Against the Grammarians*, 225-232.

ὥσπερ/οὕτως, which appear on nearly every page of his work, or some equivalent.⁴⁵⁹ To be more explicit, Origen sometimes uses the word [τὸ] ἀνάλογον and derivatives.⁴⁶⁰ Arguments that proceed by way of analogy are often designated κατὰ [τὴν] ἀναλογίαν.⁴⁶¹ Origen sometimes explicitly distinguishes two different kinds of analogical argument, which are thus two basic procedures for generating new scripture-like utterances. In some cases, including HomPs 73.1.7 and 77.7.2 below, the analogy is between terms that are opposites of or contraries to one another. Origen often identifies analogical arguments of this sort with some form of the word [τὸ] ἐναντίον,⁴⁶² ‘the opposite.’ These may accordingly be called analogy *by opposition*. In other cases, the analogical terms are similar without any opposition between them. Analogical arguments of this sort are more common and are not usually designated by an explicit term; these arguments are, in a sense, analogies *simpliciter*. Occasionally, however, Origen designates these arguments with some form of the word παραπλήσιον, ‘similar.’⁴⁶³ These may be called analogy *by similarity*.

⁴⁵⁹ Frequently Origen substitutes ὡς for ὥσπερ; instead of οὕτως Origen often uses the longer phrase τὸν [τ]αὐτὸν τρόπον. See e.g. HomPs 15.1.6, 9; 36.1.1, 2, 3; 36.3.1; 36.4.2; 67.2.8; 73.3.4; 75.1, 4; 76.1.3, 4, 6, 9, 10; 76.4.3; 77.2.6; 77.4.4; 77.5.5; 77.7.1, 5, 7; 77.8.3, 4, 6, 9; 80.1.1; 81.2.5.

⁴⁶⁰ HomPs 36.1.1; 36.3.4; 36.3.5; 35.3.10; 67.1.9; 67.2.7; 73.2.1; 75.6; 77.2.6; 77.7.7; 77.9.5. Several analogies are especially frequent: the body is an analogy for the soul (HomPs 15.2.3, 5; 36.4.3) and physical weapons (especially in the psalms, bow and arrows) are analogous to spiritual ones (HomPs 36.3.2, 3; 76.3.5); physical objects in this world are analogous to those in the world to come (HomPs 67.1.5; 67.2.3). Synonymous words are analogous to one another (HomPs 77.5.3, 80.1.2). Origen also uses the term in the sense of ‘proportion’: the glories of our resurrection bodies are assigned in proportion to our merit (HomPs 76.2.5); the rich assign seats in proportion to the wealth of their guests (HomPs 67.2.5). Also: οἱ ἀναλόγους: HomPs 15.2.2.

⁴⁶¹ HomPs 15.1.9; 15.2.5; 36.4.2; 73.1.2; 77.8.5; 80.1.1. The adverb ἀναλόγως, used in HomPs 15.2.2, means more or less the same thing. Origen also uses the expression κατὰ [τὴν] ἀναλογίαν to mean ‘proportionally.’ In the extant *Homilies on the Psalms*, he always does so in the context of the just proportion of God’s final judgment: HomPs 73.3.4, 74.4, 77.6.2.

⁴⁶² τὸ ἐναντίον: HomPs 36.2.1, 8; 67.2.5, 7; 73.3; 75.7; 77.4.8. Often in the plural genitive, τῶν ἐναντίων: HomPs 67.2.7, 75.2, 77.7.2, 80.2.3. Origen refers to these analogical arguments by opposition through a family of related expressions: ἐκ τοῦ ἐναντίου most frequently (HomPs 36.2.8; 36.3.10; 67.1.9; 73.3.9; 74.1; 77.7.2, 5; 77.9.4), as well as ἐκ τῶν ἐναντίων (HomPs 36.3.2), κατὰ τὰ ἐναντία (HomPs 81.3), περὶ τῆς ἐναντίας (HomPs 36.3.6) and ἐναντίως (HomPs 67.2.5). Opposing terms in analogies by opposition Origen designates with the substantive [τὸ] ἐναντίον, ‘the opposite,’ (HomPs 36.2.1, 8; 67.2.5, 7; 73.3; 75.7; 77.4.8), often in the plural genitive, τῶν ἐναντίων (HomPs 67.2.7, 75.2, 77.7.2, 80.2.3), or frequently, a corresponding adjectival form (HomPs 67.2.7; 73.1.9; 73.2.5; 77.4.7; 77.7.2, 4, 5, 6).

⁴⁶³ He refers to terms compared in an analogical argument using the substantive or adjectival use of [τὸ] παραπλήσιον (substantive: HomPs 67.1.8; 76.2.1; 77.1.2; 77.4.8; 77.7.3; adjectival: HomPs 76.3.1; 77.2.4; 77.8.6.),

Analogical arguments concern not only the content of some scriptural text, but its linguistic form as well. A text from his homily on Psalm 73 is particularly illuminating in this respect. By framing a proposal for a new utterance as something ‘disciples of Christ’ are ‘able to say,’ Origen makes the point that he is not only drawing an inference about some new theoretical insight or content, but rather proposing a particular linguistic formulation that is as part of the broader competence of the Christian speaker.

ὥς καὶ Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ μαθηταὶ καὶ δυνάμενοι	And because as disciples of Christ Jesus we
λέγειν οὐ μόνον περὶ νόμου τὸ οἶδμεν γὰρ ὅτι	are also able to say not only concerning the
ὁ νόμος πνευματικός ἐστιν, ἀλλὰ καὶ περὶ τῶν	law, ‘for we know that the law is spiritual’
προφητῶν ὅτι οἶδμεν γὰρ ὅτι οἱ προφηταὶ	(Rom 7:14), but also concerning the prophets,
πνευματικοὶ εἰσιν, πειραθῶμεν ἕκαστον τούτων	<i>‘for we know that the prophets are spiritual,’</i>
ἐρμηνεύσαι...	let us try to offer an interpretation of each of
	these things [said in psalm 73]...

Origen justifies the a new formulation by analogy with a saying of Paul. If Christians may certainly say, as Paul said, ‘we know that the law is spiritual,’ so by analogy they should be able to say, ‘we know that *the prophets* are spiritual.’ The proposal turns on a real analogy that obtains between the law and the prophets, but it also bears an analogy to Paul’s utterance in its linguistic structure. As a consequence of the fact that Origen uses analogy to justify a specific way of speaking, both sentences have the same grammatical form: ‘we know that X is spiritual.’

or he describes his procedure as proceeding παραπλησίως (HomPs 36.1.1-2.) or κατὰ τὸ παραπλησίως (HomPs 67.2.6.). Origen often uses these words outside of the context of an analogical argument simply to denote that something is ‘similar’ to something else. παραπλησίως: HomPs 76.1.8 (though here he is multiplying similar instances of a rule, the argument is not by analogy). τὸ παραπλήσιον in various inflections: HomPs 36.2.1, 76.4.2, 77.2.6, 77.6.2, 80.2.3

Origen does not always say as explicitly as he does here that his analogical arguments warrant proposals about new ways of speaking. But the structural parallels between Origen's analogical argument here and those in less explicit cases give a strong indication that even in less explicit cases, Origen uses analogy to commend new forms of scripture-like language. In each of the following cases, for example, Origen's argument concludes with a phrase or sentence whose surface form is analogous to that of some scriptural text. (Origen's proposed formulations are given in italics.)

HomPs 36.2.1

Ὡςπερ οὖν οὐ πᾶς ὁ λέγων μοι· κύριε, κύριε,	For just as 'Not all who say to me, "Lord,
εἰσελεύσεται εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τῶν οὐρανῶν,	Lord!" will enter into the kingdom of heaven,
ἀλλ' ὁ ποιῶν τὸ θέλημα τοῦ Πατρὸς μου τοῦ ἐν	but only the one who does the will of my
τοῖς οὐρανοῖς, οὕτως οὐ πᾶς ὁ λέγων	Father in heaven' (Matthew 7:21), <i>so also not</i>
ὑποτάσσεσθαι τῷ Κυρίῳ, καὶ ὅσον ἐπὶ τῇ φωνῇ	<i>everyone who says they submit to the Lord,</i>
λέγων τοῦτο ποιεῖν· ἀληθῶς ὑποτάσσεσθαι τῷ	inasmuch as they simply say in speech that
Κυρίῳ ἀπὸ τῶν ἔργων χαρακτηρίζεται.	they do so; only from his works is he
	described truly as submitting to the Lord.

HomPs 76.2.7

ἐκεῖνοις γοῦν λέγεται ἀνχοῦσιν εἶναι υἱοῖς τοῦ	To those who boast that they are sons of
Ἀβραάμ· εἰ ἦτε τέκνα τοῦ Ἀβραάμ, τὰ ἔργα τοῦ	Abraham, it is said, 'if you were children of
Ἀβραάμ ἂν ἐποιεῖτε, ὥστε ἠρνήσαντο διὰ τῶν	Abraham, you would do the works of
ἔργων καὶ τῆς εἰς τὸν θεόν μου Ἰησοῦν	Abraham' (John 8:39), so that through their
Χριστὸν ἀπιστίας μὴ εἶναι υἱοὶ τοῦ Ἀβραάμ,	works and their disbelief in the God of my

οὕτω δὲ καὶ τοῦ Ἰσαάκ, οὕτω δὲ καὶ τοῦ
Ἰακώβ.

Jesus Christ, they denied that they were sons
of Abraham, and *so also of Isaac, and so also
of Jacob.*

HomPs 73.1.7

ὅσα γέγραπται εἰρηκέναι, ὅσα δὲ καὶ ἄλλα
ἐστὶν ἃ οὐ γέγραπται πεπονηρεῦσθαι ἐκεῖνον,
οὐδ' αὐτὸν γὰρ οἶμαι τὸν κόσμον χορῆσαι, οὐ
μόνον περὶ τῶν ἄλλων τοῦ Ἰησοῦ πράξεων τὰ
γραφόμενα βιβλία, ἀλλὰ καὶ περὶ τῆς τοῦ
διαβόλου πονηρεύσεως...

As many as were written to be spoken
[openly], and as many other fornications [of
the devil] as were not written, I do not think
'the whole world could contain the books that
could be written' (John 21:24) not only
concerning the other works of Jesus, *but also
concerning the fornications of the devil...*

HomPs 77.7.2

Ὡςπερ οὖν τὴν πόλιν Χριστὸς ποταμὸς
εὐφραίνει καὶ ποταμοὶ ἀπὸ τῶν μαθητῶν αὐτοῦ
ἐξέρχονται, πηγῆς ὕδατος ἀλλομένου εἰς ζωὴν
αἰώνιον, οὕτως ἐναντίοι τῇ ἀληθείᾳ λόγοι καὶ
αὐτοὶ εἰσι ποταμοί, ἀλλὰ ποταμοὶ ἐχθροὶ τῷ
ποταμῷ τοῦ θεοῦ.

Therefore, just as Christ as 'a river makes glad
the city' (Ps 45:5 LXX), and rivers go out
from his disciples, 'a spring of water gushing
to eternal life' (John 4:14), *so there are words
that oppose the truth and they too are rivers,
but rivers that are enemies to the river of God.*

Each analogical argument leads to a formulation that goes beyond what the scriptural lemma says on the basis of an analogy that obtains between a phrase in the scriptural text and the corresponding phrase in Origen's proposed formulation. For example, saying 'Lord, Lord' is

analogous to saying ‘I submit to the Lord,’ and so we may suppose that in both cases, words alone are not sufficient to guarantee entry into the kingdom of heaven (HomPs 36.2.1). Abraham is analogous to Isaac and Jacob, and so in each case, one should say that if you were truly his children, you would do his works (HomPs 76.2.7). Jesus and the devil are analogous, such that one may say of the devil’s works something scripture says of Jesus’ works (HomPs 73.1.7). There is an analogy between the generativity of the words of the righteous and of the enemies of God, and so one may speak of both as ‘rivers’ (HomPs 77.7.2). In each case, the analogy between the linguistic form of a scriptural sentence and Origen’s proposal confirms that here too his concern is with imitating scriptural language, not only augmenting its content.

The fact that Origen’s proposed sentences are analogous in form to the words of scripture is a central feature of his *imitatio scripturae*, and it has important consequences for how we understand Origen’s own language. For one thing, it suggests that his analogical proposals — and perhaps his speech in other cases as well — are intended to obey the same global semantic habits that, as Marguerite Harl has shown, Origen attributes to scriptural discourse in general: simplicity, obscurity, ambiguity, carefully crafted sequence, etc.⁴⁶⁴ This opens the possibility that Origen might propose a new utterance whose meaning or use, like some words of scripture, *he himself does not fully understand*. Indeed, because Origen’s arguments often turn on linguistic analogies rather than solely on the content of a scriptural text, Origen might at times be more confident that a proposed sentence is something that Christians may say than he is confident that he knows what they should mean in saying it.⁴⁶⁵ Origen might have good reason to propose new

⁴⁶⁴ Marguerite Harl, ‘Origène et la sémantique du langage biblique,’ *Vigiliae Christianae* 26, no. 3 (Oct. 1972): 161-187. I shall focus below on boldness as another characteristic of the semantic habits of scriptural discourse, and Origen’s.

⁴⁶⁵ Indeed, if any sentence may have many possible uses, the inductive logic of habits I sketched in the previous chapter would lead us to suspect that this is in fact the general rule. That is, we can always be more confident that a sentence has *some* proper use than we can be sure that we have identified a specific occasion for its proper use or

forms of speaking whose explication requires further inquiry even from himself.⁴⁶⁶ We shall see several indications of this as we consider increasingly bold examples of Origenian speculation.⁴⁶⁷

1.2. Invention of New Words

The procedural significance of the above examples becomes clear once one recognizes that the same relation of analogy that obtains between a scriptural utterance and Origen's proposed new utterances is identical to the relation that obtains between individual instances of a habit of scripture. This suggests that the same exegetical logic operative in Origen's use of habits of scripture might be operative in the context of Origen's invention of scriptural language as well. This is what I show in the following two examples. Whether in the context of interpretation or invention, Origen proceeds in the same empirical way: he enumerates examples of scriptural language by induction which he then uses to generate a hypothesis by abduction. In both cases, consequently, his hypotheses have the logical force of probability rather than necessity. These examples help us begin to see how even Origen's speculation can be part of a process of empirical inquiry into the scriptures.

In this first example, I discuss a passage in Origen's second homily on Psalm 67 to demonstrate the continuity between the analogical arguments he uses to propose a new form of speech and those he uses when determining the meaning of a difficult text. This example centers on Origen's coinage of a new word — ἀντινύμφος, 'anti-bridegroom' — which he proposes as a

adequately determined its meaning in any particular use. Once again, by tolerating vagueness in theological language, one can attain a greater 'inductive certainty' about the possible truth or appropriateness of what one says.

⁴⁶⁶ Origen considered it possible that scriptural prophets did not fully understand their own words, though he ultimately rejected this view: CJ 6.21-30, esp. 24.

⁴⁶⁷ By the same token, the historical scholar should take care not to assume that the meaning of Origen's own words was transparent to himself. One cannot investigate what Origen understood by some theological concept without attending to the variety of ways with which he speaks about the concept.

way of referring to the devil by analogy to the word ἀντίχριστος, ‘anti-Christ.’ This example is unusual, because Origen more often proposes new sentences than coining individual words.⁴⁶⁸ But coinage provides a particularly illuminating example of Origen’s creation of new scripture-like speech for several reasons. First, it is unequivocally a creative act. Second, a word in itself forms part of one’s linguistic competence but is not yet as such an utterance that asserts something; in structuralist terms, a word is *langue*, not *parole*. For this reason, we may be sure that when Origen coins a word he is proposing a new possibility for language. Nevertheless, his arguments for this proposal follow the same logic of analogy that we analyzed in the previous chapter.

Origen is commenting on Psalm 67:6, which refers to God as ‘the judge of widows.’ Origen investigates whether it is also possible to use these words in a figurative sense with reference to spiritual ‘widows’ of some kind, a possibility which he develops through a complicated series of arguments. First, he reasons that if someone is a widow, she was necessarily married to some bridegroom; by the same token, in speaking of a spiritual widow, one would imply the existence of a corresponding spiritual bridegroom from which the widow is separated. Second, Origen believes that scripture leaves little doubt that Christ may be called the bridegroom of the soul, referring to the possibility of union between the soul and Christ. Third, by calling God the ‘judge’ of widows, this verse implies that there are different kinds of widows between whom

⁴⁶⁸ Origen uses the verb πλάσσω, which literally means to shape or to form, and could mean to form a word by coining. It certainly implies a creative act. In HomPs 76.1.6, he uses the more unusual verb παραπλάσω: ‘If the memory of God exults, what will his presence do for the one who perceives it? I shall coin a word for it: it *super-exults*.’ [εἰ γὰρ ἡ μνήμη τοῦ θεοῦ εὐφραίνεται, ἡ παρουσία αὐτοῦ τῷ αἰσθανομένῳ αὐτῆς τί ποιήσει; παραπλάσω ὄνομα αὐτῷ κἀγὼ· ὑπερευφραίνεται.] An analogical argument is implicit. Paul’s expression, ‘grace super-abounds’ [ὑπερεπερίσσευσεν ἡ χάρις] could also be in the background as a paradigm for the word he coins here (Romans 5:20). For other coinages see CJ 19.22.149, FrRm 29, HomJer 18.6.

God must judge.⁴⁶⁹ Origen hypothesizes that God does so on basis of the quality of their bridegrooms.

By this course of argument, this text about widows leads Origen to ask whether there is some other bridegroom besides Christ to whom the soul might be united. The devil is the obvious candidate; and in the course of arguing that the devil should indeed be understood as this alternative bridegroom, Origen proposes the term ‘anti-bridegroom’ as an appropriate way to refer to the devil in this aspect.

<p>ἀλλὰ ἴδωμεν καὶ τὸ κριτοῦ τῶν χηρῶν. ὥς καὶ χριστὸς καὶ ἀντίχριστος, ὥς φῶς ἀληθινὸν καὶ μετασχηματιζόμενος εἰς ἄγγελον φωτός, οὕτω νυμφίος καί, εἰ δεῖ πλάσαντα ὄνομα εἰπεῖν, ἀντινύμφιος ἀνάλογον τῷ ἀντίχριστος. μνηστεύεται οὖν νομίμως μὲν τὴν ἀνθρωπίνην ψυχὴν ὁ Χριστός, παρανόμως δὲ ὁ διάβολος· καὶ βούλεται αὐτῆς νυμῖος γένεσθαι, ἵνα ποιῇ αὐτὴν ἐφθαρμένην. οὕτως ἐθέλησέ ποτε φθεῖραι τὴν Εὐάν, οὕτως ἐθέλησέ ποτε φθεῖραι τὴν Κορινθίων ἐλλησίαν, ὅπερ φοβηθεῖς ὁ ἀπόστολος καὶ θεραπεῦσαι βουλόμενος τὴν φθαρησομένην, ἐὰν ἀκούσῃ τῶν λόγων αὐτοῦ,</p>	<p>But let us also consider [the phrase] ‘judge of widows’ (Ps. 67:6a). Just as there is both a Christ and an anti-Christ, and just as there is a true light’ and one who ‘takes the form of an angel of light’ (2 Cor. 11:14), so also there is a bridegroom and, if it is necessary to speak with a coined word, an ‘anti-bridegroom’ analogous to the ‘anti-Christ.’ Therefore Christ is lawfully betrothed to the human soul, but the devil is unlawfully [betrothed] — and he intends to become its bridegroom that he might corrupt it. Thus he desired once to corrupt Eve, thus he desired once to corrupt</p>
--	--

⁴⁶⁹ This claim undoubtedly reflects a misunderstanding of the Hebrew root יָדַע, which appears in the MT and is presumably that from which the Greek τὸ κριτοῦ was translated. In Hebrew, God may ‘judge’ widows by acting as their champion or deliverer, which implies no division between kinds of widows. I would emphasize that my concern throughout has been with the logic of Origen’s procedures, not the adequacy of any particular exegetical claim. Indeed, only when we see Origen’s arguments as arguments (and hence, as non-arbitrary) can we begin to criticize him on his own terms.

εἶπεν· φοβοῦμαι δὲ μήποτε ὡς ὄφρις ἐξηπάτησα τὴν Εὐάν τῇ πανουργίᾳ αὐτοῦ φθαρῇ τὰ νοήματα ὑμῶν ἀπὸ τῆς ἀπλότητος τῆς εἰς Χριστόν. the Corinthian church, for which the apostle was afraid. And intending to heal the one who might be corrupted if she should hear his words, [Paul] said, ‘I am afraid lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your thoughts may be corrupted from purity towards Christ’ (2 Cor. 11:3).⁴⁷⁰

Origen’s argument is clearly analogical. It is framed by the comparative terms ‘ὡς’ and ‘οὕτω,’ and he states outright that the word ἀντινύμφιος is ‘analogous’ (ἀνάλογον) to the word ἀντίχριστος. He enumerates scriptural examples — Christ, anti-Christ, true light, false light — as an inductive demonstration of the existence of what we now recognize as a habit of scripture displayed in these analogical cases.⁴⁷¹ He might have formulated it by saying something like: ‘it is a habit of scripture to apply falsely to the devil a name that applies truly to Christ.’ More specifically, Origen is making an analogical argument of the four term form: $A : A' \rightarrow B : B'$. If ‘Christ’ (A) corresponds to ‘anti-Christ’ (A’), then so should ‘bridegroom’ (B) correspond to ‘anti-bridegroom’ (B’). Origen expands the analogy with two further terms: ‘true light’ and ‘one who comes as an angel of light,’ which satisfy the general rule that scripture applies names falsely to the devil that apply properly to Christ, though in this case without expressing this with the grammatically analogous prefix ἀντι-.

⁴⁷⁰ HomPs 67.2.7.

⁴⁷¹ Scripture uses the title ‘Christ’ of Jesus, but the Johannine epistles also use the title ‘anti-Christ’ a title for his deceptive adversary (1 John 2:18, 22, 4:33; 2 John 7).[□] Similarly, John’s gospel speaks of Jesus as the ‘true light’ (1 John 2:18, 22, 4:33; 2 John 7), while the expression ‘one who takes the form of an angel of light’ is a direct quotation from 2 Corinthians 11:14. Finally, scripture refers to Christ as the ‘bridegroom’ in several parables, and the image is suggested by Paul’s use of Adam/Eve as types of Christ and the church (Eph. 5:25-33).

The analogy is logical, not merely grammatical, for it depends not only on the grammatical forms of the words but also on the appropriate relationship between a pattern of naming and those things named according to that pattern. ‘*There is* a Christ and an anti-Christ’ he says, invoking not only the names but their existing referents. Scripture’s habit of speaking about the devil corresponds to the way that the devil opposes Christ but in such a way as to present himself as a counterfeit to what Christ is truly. Adding the prefix ἀντι- to a name of Christ signifies this opposition and false imitation in a particularly apt and succinct way. Nevertheless, neither the fact that Christ is the bridegroom nor the grammatical analogy between the words ‘anti-Christ’ and ‘anti-bridegroom’ seem to constitute a definitive argument. Rather, Origen feels the need to go on to demonstrate that the word ‘anti-bridegroom’ may aptly be used to refer to the devil by virtue of other facts he knows about the devil. Thus Origen draws on 2 Corinthians 11:3 to show that the devil really is the kind of being who tries to seduce and corrupt a soul that ought to be united to Christ, for which reason the title ‘anti-bridegroom’ is appropriate.

This argument closely parallels the kinds of exegesis we examined in previous chapters. Here too, Origen establishes a habit of scripture by induction and applies the rule by abduction to a questionable case. In this case, however, the questionable case is not a difficult text but a word he has proposed himself. This suggests that for Origen, interpretation and invention are both aspects of the same process of learning to speak the language of scripture by drawing analogical inferences from its observable habits of speech.

1.3. *Invention of New Sentences*

This dynamic is even clearer in a passage from Origen's second homily on Psalm 36. The passage turns on Paul's extended metaphor of the armor of God in Ephesians 6:11-18, which as we saw in the previous chapter, Origen treats as an exemplary instance of a habit of scripture. In this passage, Origen uses analogy to expand Paul's metaphor by speaking of a corresponding armor of the devil. What is particularly striking is that Origen's argument does not distinguish at all between the interpretation of difficult texts and the invention of new language. Origen does both as part of the same activity of learning to speak according to the habits of scripture. Because Origen develops an extended metaphor, we might speak of Origen as engaging in allegory. But it would be incorrect to say that he is engaging in allegorical *interpretation*, since many of the terms for which he proposes spiritual meanings are given in no text. Rather, he is engaged in an allegorical *invention* by which he produces allegorical correspondences of his own. Through *imitatio scripturae*, he is not so much clarifying what Paul meant as he is reproducing the activity by which Paul produced the metaphor of an armor of God in the first place.

Origen's comments are occasioned by Psalm 36:14, which speaks of the 'sword' (ῥομφαίαν) and 'bow' (τόξον) of sinners.

ῥομφαίαν ἐσπάσατο οἱ ἁμαρτωλοί,	The sinners draw their sword,
ἐνέτειναν τόξον αὐτῶν τοῦ καταβαλεῖν πτωχόν	they stretch out their bow to slay the poor and
καὶ πένητα.	impoverished.

Since sinners cannot reliably be said to use these and other military equipment in a literal sense (referring to physical equipment), Origen seeks a figurative sense in which these terms may be

used to refer to spiritual weapons and armor. He does so by showing that the words of this psalm may function as part of the broader grammar of spiritual warfare exemplified by Paul's extended metaphor of the armor of God in Ephesians 6:16ff.

<p>οὐ γὰρ πάντες οἱ ἁμαρτωλοὶ ἔχουσι ῥομφαίαν σωματικὴν, ἀλλὰ μήποτε ὥσπερ ἔστι τις πανοπλία θεοῦ καὶ θώραξ δικαιοσύνης καὶ λέγεται μάχαιρα τοῦ πνεύματος καὶ θυρεὸς τῆς πίστεως, οὕτως ἔστι τις πανοπλία τοῦ διαβόλου, ἣν ἐνδέδεται ὁ ἁμαρτωλὸς ἄνθρωπος. ἰδὼν δὲ τὴν πανοπλίαν τοῦ θεοῦ, ἀντίθετος ἐκάστῳ ὀνόματι ὅπλου τῆς πανοπλίας τοῦ θεοῦ τὸ ἐναντίον, ἵνα ἴδῃ τὴν πανοπλίαν τοῦ διαβόλου, καὶ κατανοήσῃς ἀμφοτέρους τοὺς στρατιώτας, τὸν τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τοῦ διαβόλου, ἐνδύσασθαι τὸν θώρακα. ὁ θώραξ τῆς δικαιοσύνης ἀπὸ τῆς πανοπλίας ἔστι τοῦ θεοῦ, ἔστι τις καὶ θώραξ ἀδικίας, καὶ ἔστι τις περικεφαλαία σωτηρίου. ἐνδέδεται καὶ ὁ ἁμαρτωλὸς περικεφαλαίαν ἀπωλείας. ἔστι τις ἐτοιμασία τοῦ εὐαγγελίου, ἔστι τις ἐκ τοῦ ἐναντίου. οἱ πόδες αὐτῶν ἐπ' ἀδικίαν τρέχουσι καὶ ὑπόδημα δῆλον ὅτι ἐτοιμότητος εἰς τὴν ἁμαρτίαν. ἔστι τις θυρεὸς πίστεως, ἔστι τις καὶ θυρεὸς ἀπιστίας. οὕτως ἔστι τις μάχαιρα τοῦ</p>	<p>For not all sinners have a bodily sword, but perhaps just as there is a certain 'armor of God' and a 'breastplate of righteousness' and one speaks of a 'sword of the spirit' and a 'shield of faith,' (cf. Eph. 6:11-17), so there is a certain armor of the devil, which the sinful person puts on. But seeing the armor of God, one should set the opposite against each name of an implement of the armor of God, so as to see the armor of the devil. And one should consider how both soldiers, the one of God and the other of the devil, put on their breastplate. The breastplate of righteousness is from the armor of God, but there is a certain breastplate of unrighteousness. There is also a helmet of salvation, and a helmet of destruction put on by the sinner. There is equipment for the gospel, and there is the opposite. 'Their feet run after' injustice (Prov. 1:16) and it is clear that their sandal is prepared for sin. There is a shield of faith, and</p>
--	---

πνεύματος, ἔστι τις καὶ μάχαιρα τοῦ πονηροῦ	there is also a shield of unbelief. And so too
πνεύματος· ταύτην ἐσπάσαντο οἱ ἁμαρτωλοί.	there is a sword of the spirit, and there is a
ἀπορρίψωμεν τὰ ὅπλα τῆς ἁμαρτίας καὶ	sword of the evil spirit — it is this that the
ἀναλάβωμεν τὰ ὅπλα τῆς δικαιοσύνης, τὰ δεξιὰ	sinners draw. Let us cast off the implements
καὶ ἀριστερά, ὡς ὀνόμασέ που ὁ ἀπόστολος	of sin and take up the implements of
ὅπλα ἀδικίας.	righteousness on both the right and the left,
	just as the apostle spoke somewhere of the
	‘instruments of injustice’ (2 Cor. 6:7). ⁴⁷²

Although Origen does not explicitly use the term ‘habit’ of scripture here, we saw in the previous chapter that Origen treats the armor of God as part of such a habit, and the same logical features of a habit are on display here.⁴⁷³ Origen’s focus in this passage, however, is on expanding the metaphor through an analogy by opposition. Origen argues that ‘seeing the armor of God, one should set the opposite against [ἀντίθετος...τὸ ἐναντίον] each name of an implement of the armor of God, so as to see the armor of the devil.’ More precisely, Origen seeks to show that the same noun may be applied with a contrary valence to both the saint and the sinner: ‘both soldiers [of God and of the devil] put on their breastplate,’ and so on. Usually Origen also substitutes the logical contrary of whatever adjective or qualification the scripture gives to some element of the armor of God. For example, he replaces ‘salvation’ with its opposite, ‘destruction’ — ‘There is a helmet of salvation, and a helmet of destruction put on by the sinner’ — or ‘faith’ with its opposite, ‘unbelief’ — ‘there is a shield of faith, and there is also a shield of unbelief.’ The result

⁴⁷² HomPs 36.2.8. See also the continuation of this discussion in HomPs 36.3.2.

⁴⁷³ Origen enumerates analogous examples of the armor of God by induction, whose interpretation Origen regards as evident. Origen signals that his proposal is an abductive hypothesis by adding the qualification ‘μήποτε,’ ‘perhaps.’ Origen’s argument depends on the relation of appropriateness between words (‘armor,’ ‘sword,’ etc.) and their referents, introduced with the same phrase, ‘there is a certain X.’ His argument leads to a proposal about the possible use of a scriptural utterance, namely, ‘the sinners draw their sword.’

of this process is to generate a way of speaking about the armor of the devil that is analogous to how Paul speaks about the armor of God. The analogy is not only linguistic, however, for the plausibility of this argument rests on the real opposition in the underlying things: God and the saints on the one hand, the devil and the sinners on the other. While Origen frequently uses analogy by opposition on the basis of this underlying moral dualism, in this case it is especially appropriate, since it is surely difficult to think of the saint as a spiritual soldier without positing an opponent for her to fight.

Origen does not only expand Paul's metaphor by proposing language of his own, however; he also identifies instances of scriptural usage that also accord with his proposed grammar of speech about an armor of the devil. In these cases, Origen's exegesis is closer to what we saw in the last chapter, in which he used habits of scripture to propose ways of using difficult scriptural texts. First, Origen suggests that Proverbs 1:16, 'their feet run after evil' (he quotes: 'after injustice') could be taken as part of the same family of metaphors. To show this, Origen expands it through a brief argument: if their feet run after evil, surely the sandals with which their feet are figuratively clad can be called 'prepared for sin,' contrary to the sandals that Paul mentions, 'prepared for the gospel' (Eph. 6:15). Second, Origen quotes Paul's injunction to cast off the 'instruments of injustice' (2 Cor. 6:7) as an implicit summary of this whole contrary habit of scripture. Just as in the previous chapter, Origen treated the phrase 'inner man' as a second-order summary of a habit of scriptural metaphors about the body, so here he takes 2 Cor. 6:7, which refers to the 'instruments [ὄπλα] of unrighteousness,' as a summary of this habit of scriptural metaphors concerning evil spiritual weapons. Paul's sentence is not only an ethical injunction, then, but implies at the same time a rule of investigation: 'identify what *particular* instruments of injustice exist, and cast them off.' Finally, the 'sword of sinners' in Psalm 36:14 that occasioned

this investigation becomes an instance of this broader habit on the interpretation Origen proposes.

Origen is not primarily concerned in this example with explicating the meaning of Paul's metaphor so much as he is with taking it up and expanding it. We may describe his exegesis as filling in the gaps in a habit of scripture partially modeled by Paul and other scriptural authors. Interpretation and invention are fundamentally in continuity with one another because Origen is concerned primarily with reconstructing the underlying habits of scripture and learning to speak in accordance with them.

It is worth recalling that 'Paul' (i.e. the purported author of Ephesians) must have engaged in an activity something like this when writing Ephesians 6:13-17, for his metaphor of the armor of God is itself adapted from earlier scriptural texts. Paul says:

διὰ τοῦτο ἀναλάβετε τὴν πανοπλίαν τοῦ	Therefore take up the whole armor of God,
Θεοῦ, ἵνα δυνηθῆτε ἀντιστῆναι ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ	so that you may be able to withstand on that
τῇ πονηρᾷ καὶ ἅπαντα κατεργασάμενοι	evil day, and having done everything, to stand
στῆναι. στήτε οὖν περιζωσάμενοι τὴν	firm. Stand therefore, and fasten the belt of
ὀσφὺν ὑμῶν ἐν ἀληθείᾳ , καὶ ἐνδυσάμενοι	truth around your waist , and put on the
τὸν θώρακα τῆς δικαιοσύνης , καὶ	breastplate of righteousness . As shoes for
ὑποδησάμενοι τοὺς πόδας ἐν ἐτοιμασίᾳ	your feet put on whatever will make you
τοῦ εὐαγγελίου τῆς εἰρήνης , ἐν πᾶσιν	ready to proclaim the gospel of peace . With
ἀναλαβόντες τὸν θυρεὸν τῆς πίστεως, ἐν ᾧ	all of these, take the shield of faith, with
δυνήσεσθε πάντα τὰ βέλη τοῦ πονηροῦ τὰ	which you will be able to quench all the
πεπυρωμένα σβέσαι· καὶ τὴν	flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the
περικεφαλαίαν τοῦ σωτηρίου δέξασθε, καὶ	helmet of salvation , and the sword of the

τὴν μάχαιραν τοῦ Πνεύματος, ὃ ἐστὶν ῥῆμα Spirit, which is the word of God.
 Θεοῦ.

Many of these images are borrowed from texts scattered throughout Isaiah:

καὶ ἔσται δικαιοσύνη ἐξωσμένος τὴν ὀσφὺν And he will have **his waist girded with**
 αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀληθεία ἐκκενός τὰς πλευράς... righteousness, and his side enclosed with
truth...⁴⁷⁴

καὶ ἐνεδύσατο δικαιοσύνην ὡς θώρακα καὶ And he put on **righteousness as a breastplate**
 περιέθετο περικεφαλαίαν σωτηρίου ἐπὶ τῆς and he put **a helmet of salvation** upon his
 κεφαλῆς... head...⁴⁷⁵

ὡς ὥρα ἐπὶ τῶν ὀρέων, ὡς πόδες How beautiful on the mountains are **the feet**
 εὐαγγελιζομένου ἀκοὴν εἰρήνης... **bringing a good report of peace...**⁴⁷⁶

The image of a breastplate of righteousness was later taken up and expanded in the book of Wisdom, which adds the summary expression the ‘whole armor’ (πανοπλίαν) of God:

λήμψεται πανοπλίαν τὸν ζῆλον αὐτοῦ καὶ He will take his zeal as his **whole armor**, and
 ὀπλοποιήσει τὴν κτίσιν εἰς ἄμυναν ἐχθρῶν· he will arm all creation to repel his enemies.
 ἐνδύσεται θώρακα δικαιοσύνης καὶ He will put on **righteousness as a**

⁴⁷⁴ Isaiah 11:5.

⁴⁷⁵ Isaiah 59:17.

⁴⁷⁶ Isaiah 52:7.

περιθήσεται κόρυθα κρίσιν ἀνυπόκριτον·
 λήμψεται ἀσπίδα ἀκαταμάχητον ὁσιότητα,
 ὅξυνεῖ δὲ ἀπότομον ὀργὴν εἰς ῥομφαίαν...

breastplate and wear impartial justice as a
 helmet; he will take holiness as an invincible
 shield, and sharpen stern wrath for a sword...

477

Paul neither comments on nor quotes these scriptural texts; rather, he puts the language of these earlier scriptural texts to a new use in his letter, gathering and reorganizing this family of metaphors into his own discussion of divine armor. He expands the metaphor by adding elements of his own, such as the ‘flaming arrows of the evil one.’ When considered in relation to Isaiah and Wisdom, the imagery of Ephesians even appears rather bold, for the ‘breastplate of righteousness’ and ‘helmet of salvation’ that Paul says the Christian should wear are, for these earlier texts, elements of the armor that God himself wears. While the intertextual connection between Ephesians and these earlier texts could be purely verbal, it is certainly tempting to inquire whether there might be more to it — whether Paul *knew something* in using Old Testament metaphors about God’s armor to describe the armor of Christians.

Origen, at any rate, assumes that Paul knows something in speaking as he does, and that Origen may in turn learn and imitate this wisdom. In expanding upon Paul’s metaphor, it is as though Origen asks, ‘what does Paul know about scripture and about spiritual warfare that would lead him to adapt scriptural language in the way he does?’ Origen’s own exegesis aims to develop the same skill exercised by Paul, which displays itself not only in understanding what Paul actually said but in developing Paul’s metaphors in analogous speech of his own. Origen’s *imitatio scripturae* extends to the very process by which Paul and the other authors of scripture produced their own scriptural writings. A comparison with the practice of Valentinus may be

illuminating. As David Dawson showed in his study of Valentinus' *Gospel of Truth*, the gnostic teacher 'erases the line between text and commentary, as interpretation becomes new composition.'⁴⁷⁸ Origen, to be sure, always leaves the line between text and commentary in place — the text (or the Logos who acts through it) is always the Pedagogue, the commentator always the learner. Nevertheless, Origen is like Valentinus in that for him too, interpretation becomes new composition.

2. Bold Speech

Grasping the logic of these procedures as *imitatio scripturae* has led us into the heart of some of Origen's most difficult and controversial claims about scripture. First, speaking the language of scripture means speaking according to the form of scriptural language, including its obscurity, ambiguity, and difficulty. Second, speaking the language of scripture ultimately requires reproducing the very process by which the scriptural authors themselves spoke, out of the same inspired wisdom and capacity for speech that the scriptural authors possessed. It is no wonder Origen so often said things like, 'Just as the one who was ordered to speak these things had need of the Holy Spirit, so he who wishes to expound their hidden significance has need of the same Spirit'⁴⁷⁹ or that the meaning of John's gospel 'no one can understand who has not leaned on Jesus' breast nor received Mary from Jesus to be his mother also.' that whoever would understand John's gospel must become 'another John.'⁴⁸⁰

⁴⁷⁷ Wisdom 5:17-20 (NRSV).

⁴⁷⁸ David Dawson, *Allegorical Readers and Cultural Revision In Ancient Alexandria* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 128.

⁴⁷⁹ HomEz 2.2, qtd. de Lubac 361, and see the other texts quoted there.

⁴⁸⁰ CJ. 1.4.23, trans. Heine.

The potential dangers of this approach were pressed against Origen almost from the beginning. Already in his *Apology for Origen*, Pamphilus states as the basic charge against Origen and his followers that they ranked ‘both Origen himself and his words at the same level as the holy apostles and prophets.’⁴⁸¹ The charge that Origen is over-bold or dangerously speculative has often been renewed against him in the history of the church, as has Pamphilus’ response: that Origen ‘speaks with a great fear of God and in all humility,’ as evidenced by the conjectural character of his exegetical proposals and his practice of entertaining multiple possible interpretations of the same text.⁴⁸² His speculative boldness is checked by his modesty and diffidence.

In fact both interpretations are not without textual warrant, and even contemporary scholarly interpretations of Origen often turn on how one construes the relationship between his boldness and his modesty. In his essay, ‘Origen’s Modesty,’ Joseph Trigg has called attention to what we might call this dialectic between modesty and boldness in Origen’s exegesis.⁴⁸³ Trigg insists on doing justice to the boldness of Origen, which his apologists have sometimes downplayed. This boldness, he shows, is evident in his frequently expressed aim of becoming like the apostles in moral perfection and spiritual understanding, his aspiration to attain an inspired wisdom by which he can say things ‘beyond what is written’ in the scriptures.⁴⁸⁴ At the same time, Trigg identifies two aspects of genuine Origenian modesty. First, ‘Origen is genuinely modest in so far as he always recognizes a need for divine assistance.’⁴⁸⁵ Among other things, this requires the

⁴⁸¹ *Apology* 1, trans. Heine.

⁴⁸² *Apology* 3, trans. Heine. Modern defenders of Origen, from Pico della Mirandola and Daniel Huet to Henri Crouzel have often renewed the same line of argument.

⁴⁸³ Joseph Trigg, ‘Origen’s Modesty’ in Elizabeth A. Livingstone, ed., *Studia Patristica XXI* (1989): 349-55. Already from Denis we hear of Origen as ‘toujours humble et modeste dans ses plus grandes audaces’ (*De la philosophie d’Origène*, 558).

⁴⁸⁴ CJ 13.33f.

⁴⁸⁵ ‘Modesty,’ 353. Origen shows a willingness to correct misunderstandings held by the vast majority of believers, to expand upon the rule of faith, and even to reinterpret some of its articles. Although Origen frequently

exegete to wait for revelation when faced with the obscure language of scripture, rather than rushing in to interpret as was characteristic, on Origen's view, of his gnostic opponents.⁴⁸⁶

Second, 'Origen is modest in the sense that, while gratefully aware of the grace he had received, he always considered himself on the way, not one who has entirely arrived.'⁴⁸⁷ The disciple is always progressing — indeed, study of the scriptures will continue even after death.⁴⁸⁸

In the rest of this chapter, I want to show in some detail how this conception of boldness manifests itself exegetically. Origen saw boldness as a characteristic formal feature of scriptural discourse, especially in texts that express more profound wisdom. To learn the language of scripture required Origen to imitate scripture's boldness more and more as he advanced in wisdom. Origen frequently labeled words of scripture and words of his own as bold, primarily because they tended to strike Origen's hearers as counter-intuitive, even dangerous. Bold sentences are often those that best exemplify Origen's speculative tendencies. Procedurally, then, to commend a bold statement is to offer a correction of his hearer's linguistic intuitions, one that invites his hearers to a wisdom that is more difficult but for that very reason more profound.

But this activity also has profound theological significance. If boldness is a feature of scriptural discourse, that is because, on Origen's account, boldness is characteristic of divine speech. To conform one's own speech to the pattern of scriptural boldness by speaking speculatively must therefore be seen as an part of the process of deification, a *deification of discourse*. Following Trigg, we might say that modesty is a function of human dependence upon a transformation effected by divine grace, while boldness is one of the fruits and works of this

characterizes his own interpretations as hypotheses and conjectures, Trigg argues that often Origen is using the rhetorical device of 'understatement' (350), quoting the definition in *Ad Herennium* IV.38: 'in order to avoid the impression of arrogant display, we moderate and soften the statement of [something].' I shall consider a clear example of this below.

⁴⁸⁶ 'Modesty,' 354, making reference to Harl, *Philocalie*, 51-7.

⁴⁸⁷ 'Modesty,' 354.

⁴⁸⁸ CJ 32.3; PA 2.11.5; et al.

grace.⁴⁸⁹ Thus to eschew bold speech would be to call into question the possibility of our deification; but to eschew the appropriate modesty would be to deny God as its origin, the Logos as its pattern, and the Spirit as that by which it is realized.

Although the theme of boldness culminates in Origen's production of new, speculative language, it extends throughout his exegesis more broadly. This gives us an opportunity to recapitulate our argument that Origen's exegesis is an attempt to learn the language of scripture through the lens of scriptural boldness. This section thus examines three aspects of Origen's attention to boldness which, we might say, correspond to three stages in the deification of the Christian reader of scripture: the boldness of the scriptural authors themselves (2.2); the boldness of the Christian in taking up scriptural words on her own lips (2.3); and the boldness required to speak new scripture-like words (2.4). Before examining these aspects, however, I begin with an overview of the terminology of boldness and some general observations (2.1).

2.1. The Language of Boldness

In his *Homilies on the Psalms*, Origen uses a family of related terms for calling attention to boldness, most of which he has borrowed from the language of scripture. This terminology will be our initial clue to passages about Origen's boldness. Often Origen prefaces a statement of his own using a verb or adjective denoting boldness in conjunction with a verb of speech.

Sometimes Origen uses the word θαρρέω, 'I will be bold,' with a speaking verb.⁴⁹⁰ This formulation is similar to Hebrews 13:6, a text which probably serves as Origen paradigm, which

⁴⁸⁹ As Trigg says, Origen's 'humility before God, can embolden him before men' ('Modesty,' 353).

⁴⁹⁰ HomPs 15.1.4, 15.2.8, 36.2.1, 67.2.5, 76.2.4 (x2). In HomPs 67.1.2 (discussed below) we find, 'θαρροῦντα... ἀντιπροστάζει τῷ θεῷ,' where Origen uses as the verb of speech one meaning 'command back.' He uses this verb twice without a speaking verb to refer to other bold actions besides speech: HomPs 36.1.5 and 67.2.7.

introduces a quotation of Psalm 117:6 (LXX) with the words, ‘so that you may be bold [θαρροῦντας] to say...’ Paul frequently uses the verb θαρρέω in a more general way to describe his own boldness as an apostle,⁴⁹¹ and he implies that the same boldness should characterize all Christians who walk by faith.⁴⁹² The same verb appears 33 times in the Septuagint, typically when exhorting individuals or the nation to bold and fearless action.⁴⁹³ Most notably, however, the word appears in Proverbs 1:21 as a characterization of the speech of wisdom, which ‘boldly speaks [θαρροῦσα λέγει] in the gates of the city.’

More commonly Origen uses some form of the verb τολμάω, ‘I dare.’ This verb occurs most frequently in the construction ‘τολμῶ καὶ λέγω’⁴⁹⁴ or τολμάω with a verb of speech in the infinitive.⁴⁹⁵ It also appears as ‘τολμήσω καὶ ἔρῶ,’⁴⁹⁶ in a number of other verbal constructions,⁴⁹⁷ or the comparative ‘τολμηρότερον’ with a verb of speech.⁴⁹⁸ This was a common term in Paul, who writes ‘very boldly’ (τολμηρότερον) to the Romans,⁴⁹⁹ who ‘dares’ (τολμάω) to say only what Christ has accomplished in him through word and deed,⁵⁰⁰ who shall ‘dare’ to boast as others do.⁵⁰¹

Origen can also frame his own bold speech as an expression of παρρησία. I shall gloss this ‘free speech,’ which means something like ‘the liberty to say anything without being afraid of

⁴⁹¹ 2 Cor. 10:1-2.

⁴⁹² 2 Cor. 5:6-8.

⁴⁹³ E.g. Gen. 35:17, Ex. 14:13, 20:20, etc.

⁴⁹⁴ HomPs 67.1.3; 73.3.4 (x2); 76.3.3; 77.9.5; 80.1.1; 80.2.3. The variant ‘ἀποτολμῶ καὶ λέγω’ occurs in HomPs 15.2.7, where Origen introduces the hypothesis that a text has a scribal error.

⁴⁹⁵ HomPs 36.3.11, 67.1.3, 67.2.7, 73.1.6, 74.2, 77.4.6. A special case is the construction ‘εἰ δεῖ τολμήσαντα εἰπεῖν,’ which appears in HomPs 36.4.1; 67.2.6; 73.3.9; 76.1.9; 76.2.5.

⁴⁹⁶ HomPs 15.1.9; 73.3.6.

⁴⁹⁷ Other expressions: HomPs 15.1.6 (‘μέλλει τι ὁ λόγος τολμᾶν καὶ τολμᾶν μέγα’), 77.1.2 (‘οὐκ ἂν οὖν ἐγὼ ἐτόλμησα, εἰ μὴ ὁ Ματθαῖος εἶπεν’), and 77.9.6 (‘οἷον τολμήσαιμι’ ἂν καὶ εἶποιμι’). HomPs 80.1.7 has the variant ἀποτετολμημένον, attributed to a prophet.

⁴⁹⁸ HomPs 15.2.4, 67.1.2 (of Paul, who is ‘ἐμοῦ τολμηρότερος’), 77.1.6, 77.6.1.

⁴⁹⁹ Rom. 15:15.

⁵⁰⁰ Rom. 15:18.

⁵⁰¹ 2 Cor. 11:21; cf. 2 Cor. 10:1, 2, 12; Phil. 1:14.

retaliation.⁵⁰² This word appears frequently in the New Testament to describe the confidence or frankness that characterizes the speech of the apostles or other Christians,⁵⁰³ especially before God.⁵⁰⁴ In several passages,⁵⁰⁵ Origen uses language of boldness in connection with two other New Testament terms, ἐξουσία (‘freedom,’ ‘authority’) and ἐλευθερία (‘freedom’). The New Testament speaks often of Jesus as one who speaks with ‘authority’ (ἐξουσία),⁵⁰⁶ as Paul speaks of his apostolic ‘authority’ (ἐξουσία).⁵⁰⁷ Paul often speaks of the spiritual ἐλευθερία (‘freedom’) of Christians.⁵⁰⁸

Other Origenian terms, though not themselves scriptural, function as part of the same semantic network of boldness and sometimes appear in Origen’s work in conjunction with the scriptural terms above. Very frequent is the imperative ‘μὴ ὀκνεῖ λέγειν,’ ‘do not shrink from saying,’ which he uses to invite his hearers to use a particular formulation.⁵⁰⁹ We also find the verbs κινδυνεύω or παρακινδυνεύω (‘to risk danger’) with a speaking verb,⁵¹⁰ and other derivative formulas.⁵¹¹ There are a number of rarer expressions Origen uses to call attention to the paradoxical or surprising content of bold speech.⁵¹²

⁵⁰² This apt definition is from Joseph Trigg, in conversation.

⁵⁰³ Acts 2:29, 4:29, 6:10 D, 28:31, 2 Cor. 7:4, Eph. 6:19, Philemon 8, etc.

⁵⁰⁴ Eph. 3:12, Heb. 3:6, 10:19, 35, 1 John 2:28, 3:21, 4:17, 5:14; cf. 1 Th. 2:2.

⁵⁰⁵ HomPs 67.1.2, 77.9.2.

⁵⁰⁶ Mt. 9:6, Mark 2:10, Luke 5:24, and many other places.

⁵⁰⁷ 1 Cor. 7:37, 9:4ff, 9:18, 2 Cor. 10:8, 13:10; also Hebrews 13:10.

⁵⁰⁸ Rom. 8:21, Gal. 2:4, 5:1, 1 Cor. 10:29, 2. Cor. 3:17, etc.

⁵⁰⁹ HomPs 15.1.7, 36.2.7, 36.3.3, 36.4.1, 36.4.2 (x2), 36.4.3, 67.1.8, 73.1.6 (x2), 73.1.10, 77.7.4, 77.8.9 (x2). He also uses the variants ‘μὴ ὀκνεῖ ὀνομάσαι’ (HomPs 67.2.6) and ‘οὐκ ὀκνῶ φάναι’ (HomPs 76.4.4). The word also appears twice where Origen exhorts the community to speech-acts: confession (HomPs 73.3.8) and prayer (76.1.3). Very often Origen uses this expression when inviting his hearers to utter a Scriptural text rather than a novel formulation. This is probably because Origen does not encourage the same freedom in his (presumably less spiritually mature) listeners as he exercises himself.

⁵¹⁰ κινδυνεύω: HomPs 36.3.2, 75.7. παρακινδυνεύω: HomPs 76.4.3.

⁵¹¹ HomPs 67.1.3: Paul speaks ‘παρακινδυνευμένως’ to his hearers of God’s ‘foolishness.’ In HomPs 73.3.6, Origen says that the Bible gives us an elliptical formula so that we can add our own corresponding words to it ‘χωρὶς κινδύνου!’ The verb κινδυνεύω also appears in other contexts referring to danger or risk: HomPs 77.9.2, 6; 80.1.2.

⁵¹² HomPs 77.6.1: ‘ἀδόξως γε ἐρῶ.’ HomPs 15.2.4: ‘Οὐ λέγω ὅτι ἀμύχανόν ἐστι,’ to say that we imitate not only the humanity but also the divinity of Christ. HomPs 36.4.3: ‘ἀλλὰ καὶ παραδοξότερον ἐρῶ.’ HomPs 81.1: not only does the spirit and soul become divine, but ‘τὸ δὲ τούτων πάντων θαυμασιώτερον,’ even the body becomes divine!

Although the majority of cases in which Origen speaks of ‘bold’ speech are those in which he commends daring, it should be borne in mind that the risk involved in speaking boldly is genuine. Origen speaks critically of the Jews for their boldness in rejecting Christ;⁵¹³ an ignorant scribe for daring to change the text of Matthew’s gospel;⁵¹⁴ or those who dare to ask what profit there is in righteousness.⁵¹⁵ Some bold words should not be dared: one should not, for example, say that ‘a human ate the bread of angels’ in a physical sense.⁵¹⁶ If learning the language of scripture requires boldness in speaking new utterances, this is because speech, especially theological speech, is fraught with *risk*.

Most of the time, however, Origen is commending some bold way of speaking, and in these cases the boldness is usually a matter of the apparent difficulty or scandal of the formulation he is proposing, particularly to his less spiritually mature congregation. In one illuminating text, Origen exhorts his community to boldly (θαρρήσης) say that Jesus ‘rides upon the setting sun’ (67:5), he adds the caveat, ‘κἂν δύσφημον αὐτόθεν φαίνεται λέγεσθαι,’ ‘even though in itself it appears slanderous to say.’⁵¹⁷ To learn to say these words correctly is, of course, to understand the sense in which they may be said without scandal. In HomPs 67.1.3 (discussed below), Origen describes a sentence that Paul was ‘bold’ (ἐτόλμησεν) to say as spoken ‘with risk, as though to hearers that did not know how to hear’ (παρακεκινδυνευμένως ὡς πρὸς τοὺς ἀκροατὰς μὴ εἰδότας ἀκούειν). The ‘risk’ is clearly the fact that his audience is liable to misunderstand.⁵¹⁸

From this vantage point, we may say that ‘bold’ speech represents areas in which the linguistic

⁵¹³ HomPs 73.1.2.

⁵¹⁴ HomPs 77.1.1.

⁵¹⁵ HomPs 36.2.2.

⁵¹⁶ HomPs 77.4.5; cf. 36.2.2, 80.2.2.

⁵¹⁷ HomPs 67.2.5. These errors may take the form of saying something poorly in its own right, but the problem may also be saying more than one’s hearers can bear, words whose danger lies in their capacity to be misinterpreted. See HomPs 67.1.3 and 77.4.6, both of which deal with the discretion with which Scriptural authors speak boldly.

⁵¹⁸ HomPs 67.1.3, and cf. 77.4.6.

intuitions of his hearers require the most drastic correction, where he is pushing the boundaries of the wisdom of his audience.

2.2. *Boldness as a Scriptural Paradigm*

Despite the risk of appearing slanderous or of courting misunderstanding, Origen insists on speaking boldly to train his congregation to speak the language of scripture. In doing so, he saw himself as imitating the pattern of scriptural language and pedagogy. The thoroughly scriptural language in which, as we have seen, he describes his own boldness is itself an important indication that he sees his bold speech as *imitatio scripturae*. But in several passages, Origen explicitly remarks on the boldness or freedom of the scriptural authors, of Christ, or of the Holy Spirit who inspires their bold speech.

Psalm 80:6 (LXX), for example, says that, ‘When [Israel] went out from Egypt, it understood a language that it had not known.’ Origen takes this to mean that Israel only began speaking Hebrew at the Exodus, a detail not explicitly mentioned in the book of Exodus, and so Origen remarks on the boldness of the Spirit for adding to the scriptural text:

εἶτα μετὰ ταῦτα λέγεται περὶ ὅλου τοῦ λαοῦ	After these things a mystery is spoken
μυστήριον μὴ γεγραμμένον ἐν τῇ Ἐξόδῳ, ἀλλ’	concerning the whole people [of Israel] which
ἀποτετολμημένον ὑπὸ τοῦ ἐν τῷ προφήτῃ	is not written in the book of Exodus, but has
πνεύματος...	been boldly ventured by the Spirit [speaking]
	by the prophet... ⁵¹⁹

Usually, however, scriptural texts display boldness because what they say is formulated in such a way as to be liable to abuse or misinterpretation. This is evidently the case with Psalm 77:65, which compares the Lord to ‘one strong and drunk with wine.’

ἐγὼ εἰ εἰρήκειν τὸν θεὸν ὡς δυνατὸν καὶ	If I say that God arises ‘as one strong and
κεκραιπαληκότα ἐξ οἴνου ἀνίστασθαι, τίς οὐκ	drunk with wine,’ who among those who love
ἂν ἐλάβετό μου τῶν φιλαιτίων λέγων ὅτι μέθην	to find fault would not censure me, saying,
καὶ κραιπάλην φέρεις ἐπὶ τὸν θεόν, ἄνθρωπος	‘You apply intoxication and drunkenness to
διδασκόμενος ὅτι οὐδὲ ἄνθρωποι μέθουσι	God, yet human beings are taught that, “no
βασιλείαν θεοῦ κληρονομήσουσιν; ἀλλ’ ὅμως	drunk person will inherit the kingdom of
τὸ ἅγιον πνεῦμα ἐν τῇ ἐλευθερίᾳ τοῦ λέγειν	God” (1 Cor. 6:10)? But the Holy Spirit
ἐξουσία τυγχάνον εἶπεν τὸν θεὸν διανίστασθαι	having authority in its freedom of speech, says
ποτε ὡς δυνατὸν καὶ κεκραιπαληκότα ἐξ οἴνου.	that God sometimes awakes ‘as one strong
	and drunk with wine.’ ⁵²⁰

In saying that the Holy Spirit possesses ‘authority in freedom of speech [ἐν τῇ ἐλευθερίᾳ τοῦ λέγειν ἐξουσία],’⁵²¹ Origen uses terms that the New Testament more commonly applies to the authoritative boldness of the apostles and Christ. The implication of both these passages is that for Origen, boldness is an inspired work of the Holy Spirit.

In another text, Origen labels words of Paul ‘bold’ when he imagines them spoken by the Word himself. In 1 Corinthians 15:28, Paul says, ‘When all things submit to him, then the Son himself will be submitted to the one who submitted all things to him.’ These words, Origen points out, could imply that Christ is not yet perfectly obedient to the Father. Rejecting this

⁵¹⁹ HomPs 80.1.7.

interpretation, Origen argues that Paul intends instead to teach the ‘philanthropy and goodness’ of the Word, who though he always does what the Father wills, yet he ‘does not consider himself to be submitted so long as anything remains that is not yet submitted to the Father.’ When Origen then imagines the eschatological future time at which the whole church submits to God, Origen describes the Word as saying these words of Paul — and characterizes his doing so as ‘bold.’

Τότε δὲ αὐτὸν ἐν ὑποτασσομένοις ἀριθμεῖ καὶ	But then he will number himself among those
θαρρεῖ λέγειν ὑποτέταγμαι τῷ θεῷ, ὅτε πάντα	who are submitted, and he will be bold to say,
παρίστησιν ὑποτεταγμένα τῷ λόγῳ.	‘I am submitted to God!’ when all things are
	submitted to the Word. ⁵²²

This text highlights well the stakes of bold scriptural speech. Precisely those texts that are most liable to misinterpretation contain some of the profoundest insights — in this case, that Christ’s identification with his people is so radical that *his own* submission is, in a certain sense, incomplete apart from that of the church.

One passage in the *Homilies on the Psalms* not only accentuates the boldness of scriptural speech and connects it clearly to the depths of the mystery that this language expresses, but also shows how Origen himself seeks to imitate that boldness in his own speech. We pick up Origen’s text in the middle of an argument he makes frequently: while God is immutable *in se*, Scripture speaks of God changing because his aspect changes in relation to us. After quoting several texts in support of God’s immutability (Ps. 101:27f, Micah 3:6), Origen argues that Paul, in imitation of Christ himself, models the same divine pattern of gracious change in relation to those in need.

⁵²⁰ HomPs 77.9.2; cf. Pitra 130.22-28.

⁵²¹ See also HomPs 76.4.6, in which Origen speaks of the Word ‘daring to speak’ concerning his flesh as food.

Παῦλος μὲν οὖν ἄνθρωπος δι' ἀγάπην καὶ
 φιланθρωπίαν ἐκάστῳ γενόμενος, οὗ χρήζει ὁ
 εὐεργετούμενος, λέγεται· ἐγενόμην τοῖς
 Ἰουδαίοις ὡς Ἰουδαῖος, ἵνα Ἰουδαίους
 κερδήσω· τοῖς ὑπὸ νόμον ὡς ὑπὸ νόμον, ἵνα
 τοὺς ὑπὸ νόμον κερδήσω· τοῖς ἀνόμοις ὡς
 ἄνομος, μὴ ὢν ἄνομος θεοῦ ἀλλ' ἔννομος
 Χριστοῦ, ἵνα κερδήσω τοὺς ἀνόμους· τοῖς
 ἀσθενέσιν ὡς ἀσθενής, ἵνα τοὺς ἀσθενεῖς
 κερδήσω· τοῖς πᾶσι γέγονα πάντα ἵνα πάντως
 τινὰς σώσω.

Thus Paul, a human being, who because of his
 love and philanthropy became whatever was
 required for each person who was to be
 benefited, said: 'to the Jews I became as a
 Jew, that I might gain Jews; to those under the
 law, as one under the law, that I might gain
 those under the law; to the lawless, as a
 lawless one (not [truly] lawless with respect to
 God, but under the law of Christ), that I might
 gain the lawless; to the weak, as one who is
 weak, that I might gain the weak. I have
 become all things to all that by every means I
 might save some' (1 Cor. 9:20-22).⁵²³

Paul's claim that he becomes weak to gain the weak leads Origen's to discuss boldness. Origen argues that in becoming weak, Paul is imitating Christ. As evidence of this, Origen points to Paul's language about 'the weakness of God,' which Origen regards as especially bold.

ἀλλὰ τίνος ὢν μιμητὴς Παῦλος ταῦτα ποιεῖ;
 τολμᾷ καὶ λέγω· Χριστοῦ, ὃς ἐγένετο
 ἀσθενέσιν ἀσθενής, ἵνα τοὺς ἀσθενεῖς
 κερδήσῃ. καὶ ἔστι τὸ ἀσθενὲς τοῦ θεοῦ

But as whose imitator does Paul do these
 things? I am bold and say: [as an imitator] of
 Christ, who became weak to the weak, that he
 might gain the weak. And 'the weakness of

⁵²² HomPs 36.2.1.

⁵²³ HomPs 67.1.2. For a close parallel, see HomPs 79.9.1.

ισχυρότερον τῶν ἀνθρώπων. οὐ μόνον γὰρ τὰ	God is stronger than human beings' (1 Cor.
ἀσθενὲς τοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὃ ἐσταυρώθη ἐξ	1:25). For not only the weakness of Christ,
ἀσθενείας, ἰσχυρότερόν ἐστιν τῶν ἀνθρώπων,	who was crucified by weakness, is stronger
ἀλλ' ἐτόλμησεν ὁ ἀπόστολος εἰπεῖν - ὡς	than human beings, but the apostle was bold
ἐξουσίαν ἔχων λέγειν τὰ ἀληθῆ καὶ εἰπὼν ὅτι	to speak, as one having freedom to speak the
τὸ ἀσθενὲς τοῦ θεοῦ ἰσχυρότερον τῶν	truth, even to say that 'the weakness of God is
ἀνθρώπων - παραβόλως πάνυ καὶ	stronger than that of human beings' —
παρακεκινδυνευμένως ὡς πρὸς τοὺς ἀκροατὰς	speaking very parabolically and with risk, as
μὴ εἰδότας ἀκούειν. φησὶ γάρ· τὸ μωρὸν τοῦ	though to hearers that did not know how to
θεοῦ, σοφώτερον τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἐστίν.	hear. For he says, 'the foolishness of God is
	wiser than human beings' (1 Cor. 1:25). ⁵²⁴

Origen describes a chain of imitation, Christ imitating God and Paul imitating Christ. This pattern of imitation underlies Origen's argument that two different scriptural texts may be rightly said of Christ. First, Origen applies to Christ words Paul uses of his own ministry: he 'became weak to the weak, that he might gain the weak.' He then immediately applies to Christ words Paul uses of God: 'the weakness of Christ...is stronger than human beings.' In both cases, Origen assumes that what may be said of the imitator may also be said of the one being imitated, a principle which permits Origen to produce new Christological formulations on the basis of the Christ's likeness to God, on the one hand, and his likeness to his faithful disciples, on the other. Origen uses the formula, 'I am bold and say' (τολμῶ καὶ λέγω) to introduce his application of Paul's words to Christ's ministry. Origen's boldness consists, it would seem, not only in using

⁵²⁴ HomPs 67.1.2. For a close parallel, see HomPs 79.9.1.

Paul's words about becoming weak, but especially in his daring to expand upon them by applying them to Christ as well.

In speaking of Paul as an 'imitator' of Christ, Origen is alluding to 1 Corinthians 11:1, in which Paul exhorts his readers to, 'imitate me as I imitate Christ.' His allusion to it here is a hint that he and his readers should continue the same pattern of imitating Paul — not only by becoming weak to gain the weak, but more overtly in this passage, by imitating his bold speech. For the same formula Origen uses to introduce his own bold speech he uses as well to introduce *Paul's* words about the weakness of God. To be sure, Paul's boldness exceeds Origen's, a fact of which Origen leaves no doubt by his reduplication of the language of boldness. The apostle 'was bold to speak' (ἐτόλμησεν...εἰπεῖν), and again, he spoke 'with risk' (παρακεκινδυνευμένως). Origen also characterizes Paul as 'having authority to speak' (ἐξουσίαν ἔχων λέγειν), language which may allude to Paul's discussion of his apostolic freedom in the immediately preceding passage of 1 Corinthians.⁵²⁵ He may also be implying that Paul's pedagogy imitates Christ's, who, as the gospels say many times, brought 'a new teaching with authority (ἐξουσίαν).'⁵²⁶ This is further confirmed by the fact that Origen uses other language applied to Jesus' ministry to describe Paul. Paul speaks 'parabolically (παραβόλως) to those who hear but 'do not know how to hear,' no doubt an allusion to Jesus' pedagogy through parables and the refrain 'he who has ears to hear, let him hear,' with which he often hinted that his parables required interpretation.⁵²⁷ This parallel is also not without difficulties, since parables are paradigmatically *obscure* discourse while the trouble with *bold* speech seems to be that it is all too open. But this problem is more apparent than real. Jesus' parables themselves involve many openly bold comparisons

⁵²⁵ Paul's discussion there is focused on his apostolic freedom of *action* (1 Cor. 9:4-5: 'do we need have authority to eat and drink? do we not have authority to take a believing wife...'), whereas Origen speaks of a freedom displayed in speech; but Origen probably regards Paul's apostolic freedom of action as exemplary of a broader freedom that includes bold speech as well.

(such as when he compares God to an unjust judge),⁵²⁸ while Paul's utterance here is, despite its boldness, obscure or parabolic in the sense that it cannot be taken at face value.

Origen, we should infer, imitates the same pedagogy in turn, and in this connection we should observe that Origen pivots (as Paul does) from a divine weakness that is stronger than human strength to a divine *foolishness* that is wiser than human wisdom. In quoting this text, Origen suggests that the bold and paradoxical expressions he has been discussing are themselves part of this foolish wisdom. Once again the stakes of bold speech become clear: despite the risk of implying that God is changeable or even properly weak and foolish, these bold formulations are necessary to express the deepest wisdom of God, demonstrated in the depths of his love for humankind.

2.3. Boldness in Uttering Scriptural Sentences

Since certain scriptural texts were daring utterances even for their wise authors, it is not surprising that for ordinary Christians, who are only progressing in wisdom, to utter the same words might also be an activity fraught with risk. Accordingly, when Origen specifies the proper occasion for the utterance of scriptural words (the activity we examined in chapter 2), he sometimes calls attention to the risk or boldness of doing so. A common way he does so is through some variant of the formula, 'ἐὰν ἴδῃς...μὴ ὀκνεῖ λέγειν' 'if you see X, do not shrink

⁵²⁶ Mark 1:22, 27, et al.

⁵²⁷ Mark 4:9, et al.

⁵²⁸ Luke 18:1-8.

from saying Y.⁵²⁹ X designates the proposed occasion for speaking, while Y refers to the scriptural words one should utter. For example:

HomPs 73.1.10

ἐὰν ἴδῃς ψυχὴν ἤδη μετεωροποροῦσαν, ἤδη	<i>If you see</i> a soul already traveling through the
φανταζομένην τὰ ἐπουράνια, αἰχμάλωτον	air, already imagining heavenly things, going
γενομένην ὑπο τῆς ἁμαρτίας καὶ πεσοῦσαν, μὴ	into exile by sin and falling, <i>do not shrink</i>
ᾧ κνεί λέγειν ὅτι ἐβεβήλωσαν τὸ σκήνωμα τοῦ	from saying about such a person that the
θεοῦ αἱ δυνάμεις αἱ ἀντικείμεναι ἐπὶ τοιοῦτον.	opposing powers ‘defiled the dwelling place
	of God’s name’ (Psalm 73:7). ⁵³⁰

HomPs 77.7.4

...κἂν βλέπῃς τοῦς τοιούτους, ὅτι πονοῦσι καὶ	And <i>if you see</i> similar people, that they labor
αὐτοὶ καὶ εἰσιν ἐν πόνοις ἅλλ’ ἐν πόνοις ἁγίοις	and are in the midst of labors, but labors that
παραδοθῆναι τῇ ἀκρίδι, μὴ ᾧ κνεί περὶ αὐτῶν	are worthy to be given over [as it were] to the
λέγειν, ἅπερ γέγραπται καὶ περὶ τῶν	locust, <i>do not shrink</i> from saying about them,
Αἰγυπτίων· καὶ τοὺς πόνους αὐτῶν τῇ ἀκρίδι.	what was written also concerning the
	Egyptians: ‘and [he gave] their labors to the
	locust’ (Psalm 77:46b).

HomPs 15.1.7.

⁵²⁹ HomPs 15.1.7, 36.2.7, 36.3.3, 36.4.1, 36.4.2 (x2), 36.4.3, 67.1.8, 73.1.6 (x2), 73.1.10, 77.7.4, 77.8.9 (x2). He also uses the variants ‘μὴ ᾧ κνεί ὀνομάσαι’ (HomPs 67.2.6) and ‘οὐκ ᾧ κνῶ φάναι’ (HomPs 76.4.4). The word also appears twice where Origen exhorts the community to speech-acts: confession (HomPs 73.3.8) and prayer (76.1.3). Very often Origen uses this expression when inviting his hearers to utter a Scriptural text rather than a novel formulation. This may suggest that Origen does not encourage the same freedom in his (presumably less spiritually mature) listeners as he exercises himself.

⁵³⁰ HomPs 73.1.10.

διὰ τοῦτο, εἴπερ βούλει ταχύνειν ἐπὶ τὸ ὁδεῦσαι For this reason, *if you intend* to hurry on the
ἐπὶ τὰ ἀγαθὰ, μὴ ὀκνεῖ εὐδοκεῖν ἐν ἀσθενείαις way to good things, *do not shrink* from giving
καὶ τοιοῦτος εἶναι ὡς φάσκειν· ὅταν ἀσθενῶ, thanks in weakness and being such as to say,
τότε δυνατός εἰμι. ‘When I am weak, then I am strong.’⁵³¹

By addressing his hearers with the phrase ‘do not shrink,’ Origen indicates that using scripture in this way involves some difficulty or risk that might lead his hearers to refrain from doing so. In the first two examples above, the difficulty may lie in seeing an analogy between the moral life and the history of Israel at the destruction of the temple (HomPs 73.1.10) or during the Egyptians plagues (HomPs 77.7.4). In HomPs 15.1.7, the difficulty is more evident. Because ‘weak’ and ‘strong’ are logical contraries, the expression, ‘When I am weak, then I am strong’ is paradoxical on its face.

These sorts of texts create a particularly useful teachable moment, an occasion to correct the basic linguistic intuitions of his hearers about what kind of speech is possible and appropriate. HomPs 76.2.4 in particular, however, suggests that the boldness of wise speech is a consequence of the *deification of discourse*, and it is thus worthwhile to examine in greater detail. Origen’s argument turns on Paul’s bold claim in 2 Corinthians 13:3 that Christ speaks through him.

...ἢ δοκιμὴν ζητεῖτε τοῦ ἐν ἐμοὶ λαλοῦντος ...or do you seek proof that Christ speaks in
Χριστοῦ; me?⁵³²

⁵³¹ HomPs 15.1.7.

⁵³² A similar example is HomPs 36.3.11: ‘if you see someone not speaking his own words but those of God, and being bold to say, “or do you seek proof that Christ speaks in me?”...’

Origen cites this text in the context of his commentary on Psalm 76:13, ‘I will be concerned with all the works of God.’ He argues that the phrase ‘the works of God’ can be said with reference to our own works, insofar as God works in them, and that it is especially these works of God about which we should properly be ‘concerned.’ Origen justifies this principle by drawing an analogy between our deeds and our words. Our words, when spoken rightly, should be attributed no longer to ourselves but to Christ, as proof of which he cites 2 Corinthians 13:3.

<p>ὅσα καλῶς γίνεται, ταῦτα θεοῦ ἐστίν, οἷον οἱ λόγοι καλοὶ τοῦ θεοῦ εἰσιν. οὐ γὰρ τὰ ἴδια τις λέγει καλῶς, ἀλλὰ τὰ τοῦ θεοῦ λέγει. ὥσπερ δὲ οἱ λόγοι κἂν ἐξίωσιν ἐκ στόματός μου, ὥσι δὲ ἀνεπίληπτοι καὶ θεῖοι, οὐκ εἰσὶν ἐμοῦ ἀλλὰ τοῦ θεοῦ, ὥστε θαρροῦντά με λέγειν· ἢ δοκιμῇν ζητεῖτε τοῦ ἐν ἐμοὶ λαλοῦντος Χριστοῦ, οὕτως κἂν πράττω καλῶς ὥστε τὰ ἔργα πάντα ἐλέσθαι τοῦ λόγου τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ ἀεὶ κατὰ τὴν ἐντολὴν τοῦ θεοῦ εἶναι ἐπιτελούμενα, τοῦ θεοῦ ἐστίν... Τί οὖν ἐστὶ τὸ λεγόμενον· μελετήσω ἐν πᾶσι τοῖς ἔργοις σου ἢ δηλονότι τὰ σὰ ἔργα πράσσω μελετήσω;</p>	<p>Whatever is done well is of God, just as good words are of God. For someone does not speak well when he speaks his own words, but rather when he speaks those of God. If words come out of my mouth, yet if they are firm and divine, they are not mine but God’s, so that I am bold to say, ‘or do you seek proof that Christ speaks in me?’ So too if I act well, all my works are of God, if they are taken from the word of God and always completed according to God’s command... Why then is it said that ‘I will be concerned with all the works of God,’ except to make clear that I will be ‘concerned with your works’ by putting them into practice?⁵³³</p>
--	--

⁵³³ HomPs 76.2.4.

At issue is the character of the words one speaks, which is a sign of their true origin. Only if they are ‘firm and divine,’ may one be bold to say, in imitation of Paul, that ‘Christ speaks in me.’ Wisdom — speaking ‘well’ (καλῶς) — is ultimately a matter of speaking these ‘divine’ words, which Origen claims may include not only the words of scripture but also other ‘words that come out of my mouth.’ The utterance of 2 Corinthians 13:3 functions as a kind of performative commentary on Origen’s argument, in that the very words of scripture by which Paul affirmed that Christ was speaking in him exemplify the bold and divine discourse to which Origen exhorts his hearers.⁵³⁴ This sentence is *bold*, no doubt, because to speak it is not only to present oneself as an equal of Paul, but also to identify one’s own words as divine. The thrust of his argument — that whatever we do or say well should be attributed to God rather than ourselves — shows that the word ‘divine’ applied to our language ought to be taken in a fairly strict sense.

2.4. Boldness in Formulating New Sentences

Boldness is also and especially a feature of those occasions when Origen speculatively proposes new utterances that go beyond those given in scripture. With these examples, we arrive finally at Origen in his most speculative mode; and as we shall see, even here the basic logic of analogy continues to operate, justifying his claim that these speculative proposals are consistent with the underlying habits of scripture. But by virtue of their analogy to the language of scripture, Origen’s speculative sentences tend to show their boldness by imitating the obscurity or aphoristic character of scriptural language, in such a way as to invite further interpretation and meditation, just as the words of scripture do.

⁵³⁴ It is possible that Origen calls these words ‘firm’ corresponding to Paul’s claim to possess a ‘proof,’ while calling them ‘divine’ because their source is no longer Paul but Christ.

Origen's bold formulation of new sentences can be observed in these typical examples:

HomPs 15.2.8

ὁ βουλόμενος προσκοπτέτω τῇ ἐμῇ φωνῇ· ἐγὼ	Let whoever wants to stumble at my
θαρρῶν λέγω ὅτι ὡς πρωτότοκός ἐστιν ἐκ τῶν	utterance; I will be bold and say that just as he
νεκρῶν, οὕτως καὶ πρῶτος σάρκα ἀνήγαγεν εἰς	is the firstborn from the dead, so also he first
οὐρανόν.	took up flesh to heaven.

HomPs 73.3.6

ὁ λέγων τῷ δικαίῳ· ποῦ ἐστιν ὁ θεός σου, δοκεῖ	The one who says to the righteous, ‘where is
τὸν δίκαιον ὀνειδίζειν, τὸ δὲ ἀληθές τὸν	your God?’ (Ps. 41:4) seems to curse the
Κύριον ὀνειδίζει. ἐγὼ δὲ τολμήσω καὶ εἶπω· ὁ	righteous, but in truth he curses the Lord. And
τὸν δίκαιον ὀνειδίζων, τὸν Κύριον ὀνειδίζει. μὴ	I will be bold and say: whoever curses the
νομίσητέ με ἔξω τῆς γραφῆς τολμᾶν!	righteous, curses the Lord. Don’t suppose I
	speak boldly beyond [what] the scripture
	[permits]!

HomPs 76.3.3

Διὰ τοῦτο οὐ μόνον ὅταν ἀμαρτάνωμεν χρείαν	For this reason we need God to help us not
ἔχομεν βοηθοῦντος τοῦ θεοῦ, ἀλλ’ ἐγὼ τολμῶ	only when we sin, but I will be bold and say:
καὶ λέγω· ὅταν τελειωθῶμεν πλείονος βοηθείας	when we are perfect, we need even more help!
δέομεθα.	

HomPs 77.9.6

Οἷον τολμήσαιμ' ἂν καὶ εἴποιμι ὅτι Παύλου τοῦ	I might be bold and say that the one who
προδότου μαθητῆς ἐστὶν ὁ προδότης τῶν	betrays the disciples of the Word is a disciple
μεμαθηκότων τὸν λόγον· Παύλου δὲ τοῦ	of Paul the betrayer [before his conversion];
ἀποστόλου μαθητῆς ἐστὶν ὁ μιμησάμενος	but the one who imitates the [subsequent] life
Παύλου τὸν βίον καὶ τὴν ἀποστολὴν.	and apostleship of Paul is a disciple of Paul
	the apostle.

The boldness of these sentences consists to a great extent in the fact that they press the boundaries of what his audience recognized as appropriate Christian speech. That is not to say that these examples would have struck his audience as overtly heretical; but each has the air of something counter-intuitive or paradoxical. For example, to show that Christ's was the 'first' flesh taken to heaven, Origen has to give reasons later in the passage for believing that other plausible candidates — Enoch⁵³⁵ and Elijah⁵³⁶ — were not in fact taken up physically to heaven as Jesus was. The notion that cursing the righteous is equivalent to cursing the Lord may have seemed to identify God too much with human beings; but Origen goes on to list examples of just this sort of identification. The idea that the perfect need more help rather than less seems to upset the expected correlation between perfection and self-sufficiency. To think of Paul, the great apostle, having 'disciples' in those who persecute the church would surely have been an unusual reversal. By teaching his hearers to accept each of these sayings as legitimate, Origen corrects their linguistic intuitions and thus advances their ability to speak the language of scripture.

These kinds of formulations should be compared to the difficult aphorisms of the Biblical wisdom literature. Like aphorisms, these bold sayings are not, as a rule, clear and precise, but rather vague and provocative. They have a poetic density that invites ongoing reflection and

meditation; like habits of scripture, as we saw in the previous chapter, their linguistic formulation is inseparable from their content. For this reason, Origen's speculative formulations should not necessarily be interpreted as firm defenses of settled theological opinions in clear language. Rather, scholars should consider whether they are intended to function provocatively within an ongoing process of formation and inquiry. Origen's own words, in imitation of scripture, may demand the kind of interpretive labor that the canonical scriptures require from its readers.

I would like to examine two final examples that show Origen labeling his production of new scripture-like speech bold. In the first, I focus on Origen's exegetical procedures, showing once again that they are intelligible if understood as an inductive attempt to reconstruct and expand the linguistic competence underlying scripture's words. In the second example, I show how defending the appropriateness of a new utterance passes into meditating expansively on its meaning, so that Origen's homily very nearly becomes a commentary on his own provocative utterance. The content of this meditation is the *παρρησία* ('freedom of the speech') of the Christian in prayer, and so this text also gives us another opportunity to expand upon the theological context of Origen's bold speech — in this case, the surprising reciprocity between God and human beings accomplished by the incarnation that permits us to speak boldly even before God.

2.4.1. 'You prepare all the territories of heaven'

In Origen's third homily on Psalm 73, he explicitly labels the speculative production of a bold new sentence by the same inductive and analogical arguments that we observed in the first

⁵³⁵ Genesis 5:24.

⁵³⁶ 2 Kings 2:11-12.

part of this chapter. If the deification of discourse requires inspiration from God, it does not occur apart from rational inquiry.

In Psalm 73:17a the psalmist prays, ‘σὺ κατηρτίσω πάντα τὰ ὅρια τῆς γῆς,’ ‘you prepare all the territories of the earth.’ Once again we pick up the argument in the middle. Origen has argued that according to its surface sense (ἐπὶ τῷ ῥητῷ), the psalmist refers to God setting limits to the territories of the various nations. Origen then argues for an allegorical usage for the same sentence, referring it to ‘territories’ not in the present earth but in another ‘earth,’ that eschatological earth to which Isaiah 65:17 refers when prophesying about ‘the new heaven and new earth.’ Isaiah’s reference to a new heaven coordinate with the new earth, however, suggests to Origen the possibility of formulating a new and bolder utterance by analogy:

ἐγὼ δὲ ἐπαναβαίνω τῷ λόγῳ καὶ τολμῶ καὶ	But I shall ascend by reason and be bold and
λέγω ὅτι σὺ κατηρτίσω πάντα τὰ ὅρια τοῦ	say, ‘you prepare all the territories of
οὐρανοῦ...	heaven’. ⁵³⁷

This bold utterance is built analogically on the pattern of Psalm 73:17a, ‘you prepare all the territories of the earth,’ merely replacing the word ‘earth’ with ‘heaven,’ on the basis of an implicit analogy between the two. The link is not merely verbal; rather, Origen is seeking speech adequate to a subject matter he already knows something about (Isaiah’s ‘new heaven and new earth’ to come).⁵³⁸ Isaiah’s conjunction of these terms shows that the Christian needs to be able to speak about her future inheritance both in terms of an ‘earth’ and a ‘heaven.’

⁵³⁷ HomPs 73.3.4.

⁵³⁸ Other texts are probably in the background as well, such as Jesus’ teaching that the meek shall ‘inherit the earth’ (Mt. 5:5) but also that Christians shall enter ‘the kingdom of heaven’ (Mt. 18:3) a phrase Origen uses in the subsequent discussion below.

Although Scripture does not explicitly speak about territories of heaven prepared for Christians, Origen arrives at this formulation ‘by reason’ (τῷ λόγῳ). In particular, he argues by analogy, a mode of argument that for Origen, generally had probabilistic rather than necessary logical force. That his argument is merely probabilistic is confirmed by the fact that he develops several other analogical arguments in support of his bold formulation. First, he appeals to his hearers’ common sense intuitions about the grammar of discourse about ‘heaven,’ showing that in the literal context, speaking about ‘territories’ of heaven must refer to the locations of the various stars.

καὶ ὥσπερ ἐν τοῖς ἄστροις κατήρτισε τὰ ὅρια	Just as he prepares for the stars the territories
τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, ἵνα οἶδε μὲν οἱ ἀστέρες κατὰ τὴν	of heaven, so that these stars might be in the
ἄρκτον ὧσιν, ἄλλοι δὲ κατὰ τὴν μεσημβρίαν	north, others in the south, and others in the so-
καὶ ἄλλοι ἐπὶ τοῦ ζωοφόρου καλουμένου, καὶ	called Zodiac, and this star in Ursa Major
ἔτι ὅδε μὲν ὁ ἀστήρ πρὸς αὐτῇ τῇ ἄρκτῳ, ὅδε	itself, that one further off; in the same way,
δὲ ὀλίγω πορρωτέρω· τὸν αὐτὸν τρόπον, ἵνα οἱ	those inheriting the kingdom will receive
βασιλείαν κληρονομοῦντες ὅρια λάβωσιν ἐν	territories in heaven which God has
οὐρανῷ ἃ κατηρτίσατο ὁ θεός.	prepared. ⁵³⁹

The basic thrust of the argument in this passage is to establish that in our ordinary literal speech about the physical heavens, it is appropriate to speak as well about ‘territories.’ That Origen sees the need for this argument indicates that he sees the boldness of his proposed utterance not only in its speculative reference to a spiritual heaven beyond the spiritual earth, but also in the fact that the phrase ‘territories of heaven’ has an odd ring to it even when used in a literal way. To

⁵³⁹ HomPs 73.3.4.

establish the legitimacy of this usage, he appeals to the fact that we tend to speak about stars occupying specific locations: ‘in the north,’ ‘in the south,’ ‘in Ursa Major,’ and so on.

Although Origen develops a correspondence between the literal heaven and the kingdom of heaven, it is once again not an allegorical *interpretation*, since no text of scripture refers to the ‘territories of heaven’ for which he identifies a spiritual correlate. Instead, we must again speak of allegorical *invention*. Origen develops an extended metaphor using empirical details of the physical sky, in particular, the fact that stars occupy specifiable locations in the sky. Since in speaking about ‘heaven’ scripture compares the eschaton vaguely to the sky, Origen proposes that other aspects of our grammar about the empirical sky are transferable to our speech about the eschaton as well — that what we say about the physical heaven we should be able to say about the spiritual heaven as well. Origen’s bold formulation about ‘territories of heaven’ specifies one particular aspect of this grammar.

Having clarified that it is *stars* that occupy the ‘territories of heaven’ in the physical sky, Origen can then offer a further scriptural argument for his proposed utterance by enumerating instances of scripture’s habit of comparing the resurrection to stars.⁵⁴⁰

ἵνα δὲ ἔτι πεισθῇς ἀπὸ τῶν γραφῶν ὅτι, ἐὰν	But that you might be further convinced from
ἄξιός γένῃ βασιλείας οὐρανῶν, ὅρια τινὰ λήψῃ	the Scripture that, if you are worthy of the
ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ ἀπὸ τῶν ἀστέρων τῶν	kingdom of heaven, you will receive certain
εἰρημένων, μετάβηθι ἐπὶ τὸν λόγον τῆς	territories in heaven from the so-called stars,
ἀναστάσεως ὁμοιούμενον ἄστροις· ἄλλη γὰρ	draw an inference from the word comparing
δόξα ἡλίου, ἄλλη δόξα σελήνης, ἄλλη δόξα	the resurrection to stars: for ‘there is one glory

⁵⁴⁰ The stars were a favorite topic of Origen’s speculation. See Alan Scott, *Origen and the Life of the Stars* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991).

ἀστέρων· ἀστὴρ γὰρ ἀστέρος διαφέρει ἐν δοξῇ, of the sun, another glory of the moon, another
οὕτως καὶ ἡ ἀνάστασις τῶν νεκρῶν, ὡς οὖν glory of the stars; for stars differ in glory from
τούτοις τοῖς ἄστροις ἔστησεν ὁ θεὸς ὅρια ἐν other stars' (1 Cor. 15:41). And thus it is with
οὐρανῷ, τὸν αὐτὸν τρόπον, ἐὰν γένησθε φῶς the resurrection of the dead: just as God
τοῦ κόσμου καὶ γένηται ἀληθῶς τὸ ὑμεῖς δέ establishes for such stars territories in heaven,
ἐστε ὡσεὶ τὰ ἄστρα τοῦ οὐρανοῦ τῷ πλήθει, in the same way, if you become 'the light of
θήσεται ὑμῖν ὅρια ὁ θεός, οὐκ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ἀλλ' the world' (Mt. 5:14) and if it should come
ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ. about that you are truly 'like the stars of
heaven in number' (Ex 32:13), God will
establish territories for you, not on earth but in
heaven.⁵⁴¹

First, Origen quotes at length Paul's teaching that the glory of the resurrection bodies will be analogous to heavenly bodies (1 Cor. 15:41). Second, he alludes to Jesus' teaching that Christian should become 'the light of the world' (Mt. 5:14), which is a possible way of speaking about stars, since they likewise illuminate the world. Third, he refers to the promise in Exodus 32:13 that God's people shall be 'like the stars of heaven in number.' None of these texts refers specifically to the territories of stars, but Origen is able to show that scripture compares God's people to stars in several other aspects: their glory and their number. Origen's proposed utterance extends this scriptural habit to their territory by analogy.⁵⁴² Origen's speculative proposal is consistent with the scriptures, not because it represents an interpretation of any particular scriptural text, but because it is consistent with the habits of speech, the underlying linguistic

⁵⁴¹ HomPs 73.3.4.

⁵⁴² It is also noteworthy that Origen uses the verb μεταβαίνω to invite his hearers to 'draw an inference' from scripture's pattern of comparing the resurrection to the stars. Origen may be using this verb in the technical sense of

competence by which the scriptural authors knew that it was legitimate to draw various comparisons between the resurrection and stars.

Origen cannot resist offering another bold utterance, defended by the same kinds of inductive and analogical arguments.

καὶ τί λέγω ἐν οὐρανῷ; τολμῶ καὶ λέγω ὅτι	But why do I say ‘in heaven’? I will be bold
ὕπὲρ τὸν οὐρανὸν ἐν πᾶσι τοῖς οὐρανοῖς ἔσται	and say, ‘beyond heaven, there will be
τὰ ὅρια τῶν δικαίων. οἱ οὐρανοὶ γὰρ	territories of the righteous in all the heavens.’
διηγοῦνται δόξαν θεοῦ καὶ εἰς πάντα	For ‘the heavens declare the glory of God’
ἀναβαίνειν τοὺς οὐρανοὺς δύναται ὁ	(Ps. 18:2), and the one who follows Jesus is
ἀκαλουθῶν τῷ Ἰησοῦ, περὶ οὗ γέγραπται·	able to ascend to all the heavens. It is written
ἀρχιερέα ἔχομεν μέγαν διεληλυθότα τοὺς	about him, ‘we have a great high priest who
οὐρανοὺς, Ἰησοῦν τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ, εἰπόντι	went through the heavens, Jesus the son of
τῷ μαθητῇ ὅπου νῦν ὑπάγω, οὐ δύνασαι μοι	God’ (Heb. 4:14), and he said to the disciple
νῦν ἀκολουθεῖσαι, ἀκολουθήσεις δὲ	[Peter], ‘where I am going now, you cannot
ὑστερον· διελήλυθε δὲ τοὺς οὐρανοὺς,	follow me now, but you will follow me later’
δηλονότι Πέτρος, οὗ πύλαι ἄδου οὐ	(Jn. 13:36). ⁵⁴³
κατισχύουσιν, ἀκολουθήσει αὐτῷ διερχομένῳ	
τοὺς οὐρανοὺς.	

Origen quotes two passages that establish that Scripture refers to ‘heavens’ in the plural. The analogical argument for this second bold formulation is implicit: if the righteous will (in the eschaton) follow Jesus through the heavens, then just as God prepares for them territories in

a ‘transition [μετάβασις] to the similar,’ which we analyzed in the previous chapter, a form of inductive argument by analogy used to bring past experience to bear on cases with which one has no direct experience.

earth and in (the one or lowest) heaven, so too he prepares territories for the righteous in *all* the heavens.

2.4.2. *Commanding back to God*

This final example shows Origen reflecting on the possibility that human beings may exercise *παρρησία* (‘freedom of speech’) to command God because of a surprising reciprocity that may obtain between God and humanity as a consequence of the incarnation. Although Origen is ostensibly defending the appropriateness of a bold practice of speech — commanding God — each stage of his argument deepens and enriches his readers’ understanding of what commanding God entails and why one should do so. This example shows how Origen’s bold speech, patterned after the language of scripture, may come to provoke ongoing reflection and inquiry just as scripture itself does. Origen’s own wise speech may come to play the role of scriptural discourse in the formation of wisdom in his hearers.

This passage continues Origen’s discussion of Psalm 67:2-4, which we began examining in the previous chapter. The psalm records imperatives addressed to God, such as ‘let God arise.’ We saw that Origen began with the common sense observation that sometimes an imperative functions as an optative, expressing a wish rather than a command. Here Origen develops the bolder alternative proposal that we may command God after all.⁵⁴⁴ Although his discussion begins as a proposal concerning how we may use the words of Psalm 67:2-4, the discussion that ensues entirely ignores the content of Psalm 67 and focuses solely on showing in general that Christians may sometimes command God. For this reason, I treat this text as a proposal for a new

⁵⁴³ HomPs 73.3.4.

scripture-like sentence along the lines of, ‘one who is commanded by God...commands God back’ (some variant of which Origen repeats several times, as we shall see).

Origen summarizes his argument using a rhetorical understatement, placing his bold proposal on the lips of ‘someone bolder than I.’⁵⁴⁵

εἴποι δ’ ἄν τις ἐμοῦ τολμηρότερος ὅτι ταῦτα	But someone bolder than I might say that
δύναται εἰρηῆσθαι καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν προστακτικῶν.	these things [i.e. the imperatives in Psalm
	67:2-4] can be said even as commands.

To show that we may command God and draw out the significance of doing so, Origen develops no less than five different lines of analogical argument. In summary form, Origen will argue: 1) as scripture requires equality between humans who command (masters) and those who are commanded (slaves), so an analogous equality obtains between God and his human slaves; 2) as scripture records God humbling ‘asking’ us to obey his commands, so conversely we may ‘ask’ him to obey ours; 3) as Christ served his disciples and permitted Peter to command him, so it may be with other disciples as well; 4) as God is judged together with us, so *a fortiori* he may be commanded by us; and 5) as a human son may sometimes command his father, so we may sometimes command God as our Father. Each argument concludes with an exhortation to display the ‘freedom of speech’ or ‘confidence’ (παρρησία) before God that the New Testament treats as characteristic of Christian speech, by commanding God.

⁵⁴⁴ It is also worth noting that this interpretation is more ‘literal’ in the sense that he construes the text in accordance with its surface grammar. See the similar example in HomPs 76.3.2, discussed in chapter 2.

⁵⁴⁵ On understatement, see Trigg, ‘Modesty,’ 350.

Let us examine briefly the stages of this argument, before ending with some more general observations. First, Origen argues by analogy with the scriptural ideal of reciprocity between master and slave.

εἰ γὰρ ἐντολὴν ἀπὸ τοῦ λαλοῦντος ἐν Παύλῳ	For if masters have received a command from
Χριστοῦ εἰλήφασιν οἱ δεσπόται τὸ δίκαιον καὶ	Christ who spoke in Paul, ‘return justice and
τὴν ἰσότητα τοῖς δούλοις παρέχεσθαι καὶ ὁ	equality to slaves,’ (Col. 4:1) and if the good
καλὸς δεσπότης παρέχει τὴν ἰσότητα τοῖς	Master returns equality to his slaves, how is it
δούλοις, τί ἄτοπὸν ἐστὶ τὸν προστασσόμενον	irrational if one who is commanded by God
ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ λαμβάνοντα προστάγματα,	and who receives commands, and who has
θαρροῦντα ἐπὶ τῷ τετηρηκέναι τὰ προστάγματα	observed these commands, commands God
μετὰ τινος παρρησίας οἷον ἐν ἀντιπροστάξει τῷ	back, boldly and with a certain freedom of
θεῷ εὐχόμενον;	speech, when he prays?

The issue is not only equality (ἰσότητα) in general, but rather the particular equality between one who commands (a master) and the one he commands (a slave).⁵⁴⁶ Origen argues by analogy to our relation to God, on the assumption that the human master acts in imitation of God.⁵⁴⁷

Second, Origen draws an analogy that turns on the reciprocity of human and divine asking.

Καὶ παραμυθήσεται τὸ τοιοῦτον ἀπὸ ῥητῶν	And such a one is encouraged by other texts
ἐτέρων περὶ τούτων γεγραμμένων καὶ ἐρεῖ·	written concerning these things and he will
αἰτοῦμαι τινα κύριον τὸν θεὸν ἡμῶν	say: ‘I will ask the Lord our God for

⁵⁴⁶ The political implications of this reading are potentially radical, but beyond the scope of my argument.

⁵⁴⁷ He may have in mind the fact that in both Colossians 4:1 and Ephesians 6:9, Paul’s exhortations to masters are rooted in the fact that God is, in turn, their Master.

πειθόμενος τῷ εἰπόντι· πᾶς ὁ αἰτῶν λαμβάνει.
 Οὕτως οὖν, ὥσπερ ἡμεῖς αἰτοῦμεν ἀπὸ τοῦ
 θεοῦ, καὶ αὐτὸς ὁ θεὸς ἀναγέγραπται ὡς καὶ
 αὐτόθεν καὶ κοινότερον ἐμφαινόμενον οὐ
 τηρῶν τὸ ἀξίωμα τοῦ θεοῦ, ἀλλὰ αἰτῶν τινα
 ἀφ' ἡμῶν· οἶονεὶ γάρ, ἵν' οὕτως ὀνομάσω,
 ταπεινοφρονεῖ ὁ θεὸς ἀφ' ἡμῶν αἰτῶν ἃ
 γέγραπται αὐτὸν αἰτεῖν. Τί δὲ αἰτεῖ; Ἄκουε ἐκ
 τοῦ· καὶ νῦν, *Ἰσραήλ, τί κύριος ὁ θεός σου αἰτεῖ*
σοῦ ἀλλ' ἢ φοβεῖσθαι κύριον τὸν θεόν σου,
πορεύεσθαι ἐν πάσαις ταῖς ἐντολαῖς αὐτοῦ καὶ
ἀγαπᾶν αὐτὸν καὶ λατρεύειν κυρίῳ τῷ θεῷ σου
ἐξ ὅλης τῆς καρδίας σου καὶ ἐξ ὅλης τῆς ψυχῆς
σου; Ὡς οὖν αἰτεῖ ἀφ' ἡμῶν, οὕτως καὶ ἡμεῖς
 αἰτοῦμεν ἀπ' αὐτοῦ λαμβάνοντες παρρησίαν
 τοῦ προστάσσειν αὐτῷ, ἐὰν τηρῶμεν αὐτοῦ τὰ
 προστάγματα.

something, being persuaded by the one who
 says, “Everyone who asks receives” (Matthew
 7:8/Luke 11:10).’ Thus just as we ask from
 God, it is written about God that freely and
 with the appearance of being more like our
 equal, he does not maintain the dignity of
 God, but asks something of us — as though
 God, so to speak, humbles himself below us
 by asking what it is written that he asks. And
 what does he ask? Hear from the text, ‘And
 now, Israel, what does the Lord your God ask
 of you, but that you fear the Lord your God,
 walk in all his commands, love him, and
 worship the Lord your God with all your soul’
 (Deut. 10:12-13). As he asks from us, so we
 also ask from him and receive the boldness to
 command him, if we keep his commands.

Origen points that it is not only we who ask of God; rather, God also ‘humbles himself below us,’ by adopting the posture of one who asks something of us. The connection between asking and commanding is somewhat opaque, but Origen seems to be making two related points. First, if Christians are promised that they will receive whatever they ask, this includes asking for ‘the boldness to command him.’ Second, however, Origen is impressed by the fact that when scripture uses the word ‘ask’ of God, the *content* of what God asks is precisely that we ‘walk in all his commands.’ Thus not only does scripture promise in general that we may ask freely of

God; it also shows that when God humbles himself to ‘ask’ of us, what he asks is includes that we keep his ‘commands.’ So by analogy, under certain circumstances (‘if we keep his commands’) we may ask the God whom we imitate for the boldness to command him in return.

Third, Origen argues *a fortiori* that it is less remarkable that Christians, who shall become heirs of God, should command him, than it is that in the incarnation, the son of God came as a servant and obeyed the commands of human beings.

<p>Οὐ γάρ ἐστι μείζον τὸ προστάζειν τῷ θεῷ τοῦ κληρονόμον αὐτοῦ γενέσθαι· οὐκ ἔστι μείζον τὸ προστάζειν τῷ θεῷ τοῦ συγκληρονόμον αὐτῷ γενέσθαι τοῦ Χριστοῦ αὐτοῦ· οὐκ ἔστιν μείζον τὸ προστάζειν τῷ θεῷ τοῦ τὸν τηλικούτον υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ γεγονέναι ἐν μέσῳ ἀνθρώπων, οὐχ ὡς τὸν ἀνακείμενον ἀλλ’ ὡς τὸν διακείμενον, τὸν διακονοῦντα· οὐκ ἔστι μείζον τὸ προστάζειν τῷ θεῷ τοῦ ἐκδύσασθαι τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ θεῖναι τὰ ἱμάτια καὶ λαβεῖν λέντιον καὶ ζώσασθαι καὶ βαλεῖν εἰς νιπτῆρα καὶ ὕδωρ καὶ νίψαι τοὺς πόδας τῶν μαθητῶν. Ἀλλὰ κατὰ τὸν νιπτόμενόν ἐστι καὶ νοήσαντα ὅτι καθαρίζεται ἐκ τοῦ νίπτεσθαι· καὶ προσδοκῶν ὅτι λαμβάνει μερίδα παρ’ αὐτοῦ ἐκ τοῦ νίπτεσθαι καὶ προστακτικῶς λέγει αὐτῷ, οὐχ ὅτι ἡμεῖς ἄξιοι τοῦ προστάσσειν ἐσμέν, ἀλλ’ ὅτι πολλή ἐστιν ἡ</p>	<p>For it is not greater to command God than to be his heir. It is not greater to command God than to be a co-heir with his Christ (cf. Rom. 8:17). It is not greater to command God than for such a son of God to come among human beings, not as one who is served but as one who serves, as a servant (cf. Luke 22:27). It is not greater to command God than for the son of God to disrobe, ‘take off his outer robe, take a towel, tie it around himself, pour water into a basin, and wash his disciples’ feet’ (cf. John 13:4-5). But after being washed and understanding that he is purified through washing; and recognizing that he receives a share with him by being washed, [Peter] even speaks to him with commands — not because we are worthy to command him, but because</p>
--	--

φιλανθρωπία καὶ ἡ χρηστότης τοῦ θεοῦ πρὸς	great is the love of humanity and the kindness
ἡμᾶς. Ακούωμεν γὰρ καὶ τοῦ· ἀγαπητοί, ἐὰν ἡ	of God to us. For let us hear the text,
καρδία μὴ καταγινώσκη, παρρησίαν ἔχομεν	‘Beloved, if our hearts do not condemn us, we
πρὸς τὸν θεὸν καὶ ὁ ἐὰν αἰτῶμεν λαμβάνομεν	have freedom of speech before God and
ἅπ’ αὐτοῦ, ὥς φησιν ὁ Ἰωάννης ἐν τῇ ἐπιστολῇ·	whatever we ask we receive from him’ (1
μόνον οὖν ἡ καρδία μὴ καταγινωσκέτω,	John 3:21f), as John says in his epistle.
ἀλλ’ ἐχέτω παρρησίαν πρὸς τὸν θεὸν τὸ	Therefore let our hearts not condemn us, but
συνειδός.	let our conscience have freedom of speech
	before God.

Origen focuses on the servanthood of the incarnate Jesus, focusing on the occasion in which Jesus, acting as a servant while washing Peter’s feet, permitted Peter to command him. Although Origen does not mention Peter by name, he clearly refers to the encounter between Jesus and Peter in John 13:4-10.

4 ἐγείρεται ἐκ τοῦ δείπνου καὶ τίθησιν τὰ	4 [Jesus] got up from the table, took off his
ἱμάτια, καὶ λαβὼν λέντιον διέζωσεν ἑαυτόν· 5	outer robe, and tied a towel around himself.
εἶτα βάλλει ὕδωρ εἰς τὸν νιπτῆρα, καὶ ἤρξατο	5 Then he poured water into a basin and began
νίπτειν τοὺς πόδας τῶν μαθητῶν καὶ ἐκμάσσειν	to wash the disciples’ feet and to wipe them
τῷ λεντίῳ ᾧ ἦν διεζωσμένος. 6 ἔρχεται οὖν	with the towel that was tied around him. 6 He
πρὸς Σίμωνα Πέτρον· λέγει αὐτῷ Κύριε,	came to Simon Peter, who said to him, “Lord,
σύ μου νίπτεις τοὺς πόδας; 7 ἀπεκρίθη Ἰησοῦς	are you going to wash my feet?” 7 Jesus
καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ Ὁ ἐγὼ ποιῶ σὺ οὐκ οἶδας ἄρτι,	answered, “You do not know now what I am
γνώση δὲ μετὰ ταῦτα. 8 λέγει αὐτῷ Πέτρος Οὐ	doing, but later you will understand.” 8 Peter

μὴ νίψῃς μου τοὺς πόδας εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα.	said to him, “You will never wash my feet.”
ἀπεκρίθη Ἰησοῦς αὐτῷ Ἐὰν μὴ νίψω σε, οὐκ	Jesus answered, “Unless I wash you, you have
ἔχεις μέρος μετ’ ἐμοῦ. 9 λέγει	no share with me.” 9 Simon Peter said to him,
αὐτῷ Σίμων Πέτρος Κύριε, μὴ τοὺς πόδας	“Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and
μου μόνον ἀλλὰ καὶ τὰς χεῖρας καὶ τὴν	my head!” 10 Jesus said to him, “One who has
κεφαλὴν. 10 λέγει αὐτῷ ὁ Ἰησοῦς Ὁ	bathed does not need to wash, except for the
λελουμένος οὐκ ἔχει χρεῖαν εἰ μὴ τοὺς πόδας	feet, but is entirely clean...
νίψασθαι, ἀλλ’ ἔστιν καθαρὸς ὅλος...	

Origen points out that Peter responds to Jesus’ washing ‘with commands’ (προστακτικῶς). Presumably Origen is referring to two sentences of Peter: ‘You will never wash my feet’ (13:8), and after Jesus demurs, ‘wash not my feet only but my hands and my head also’ (13:9). Origen states, however, that Peter commands Jesus after having understood that he must be washed to be purified and to receive a share with Jesus. This is difficult to reconcile with the text of John, since Peter’s commands seem to provoke these lessons from Jesus rather than presupposing his knowledge of them. Either Origen has forgotten the order of events in this narrative, or he is implying that somehow Peter already knew the lessons contained in Jesus words before Jesus spoke them. In any case, two things are clear. First, Origen regards Peter’s behavior in this episode as exemplary, which is why the fact that Peter commands Jesus gives reason to suppose that we might be able to command God as well. Second, although the freedom that permits human beings to command God is contingent upon having a clear conscience — ‘if our hearts do not condemn us’ — for Origen it is ultimately rooted in divine grace, a consequence not of our ‘worth’ but of ‘the love of humanity and kindness of God.’

Fourth, Origen argues *a fortiori* from the fact that God is himself said to be judged with us, which is greater than merely being commanded.

Καὶ ἵνα ἔτι μᾶλλον πεισθῶμεν περὶ τῆς
παρρησίας, ἣν ἔχειν βούλεται τὸν ἄνθρωπον
πρὸς αὐτὸν ὁ θεός, παραθήσομαι ὅπερ τάχα
μεῖζόν ἐστι τοῦ προστάξει τῷ θεῷ· τὸ μέλλειν
μετ' ἐμοῦ κρίνεσθαι ὁ κριτής. Διὸ λέγει
ἄνθρωπος· ὅπως ἂν δικαιωθῇς ἐν τοῖς λόγοις
σου καὶ νικήσης ἐν τῷ κρίνεσθαί σε, ὅπερ οἱ μὴ
νοήσαντες πεποιήκασιν ἐν τῷ κρίνεσθαί με. Οἱ
δὲ τοιοῦτοι τί ποιήσουσι καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν ἄλλων
ρήτῶν ἔνθα γέγραπται· αὐτὸς κύριος εἰς κρίσιν
ἥξει μετὰ τῶν πρεσβυτέρων τοῦ λαοῦ καὶ μετὰ
τῶν ἀρχόντων αὐτοῦ; Ἄλλ' εἰ τοῦτο οὐδέπω
σαφῶς σοι παρίστησιν ὅτι ὁ κριτής οἶονεῖ μετὰ
σοῦ κρίνεται, ἄκουε τοῦ· δεῦτε καὶ ἐλεγχθῶμεν,
λέγει ὁ κύριος. Ἐπέτρεψέν σοι ὁ κύριος εἰπεῖν
μετὰ παρρησίας πρὸς αὐτόν, καταστήσας
ἐαυτόν, ὅποια ἔλεγχος εἶναι δοκεῖ, ἔαν καὶ
φαντάζη ὅτι δύνασαι αὐτὸν ἐλέγξει ὥς
ράθυμήσαντα ἀπὸ τῆς πρὸς σὲ προνοίας καὶ
εἵπης μετὰ παρρησίας τὰ τοιαῦτα.

And that we might be yet further convinced
concerning this freedom of speech that God
intends human beings to have towards him, I
will compare something that is perhaps
greater than commanding God — the fact that
the Judge is going to be judged with me. For it
is a human being who says, ‘That you might
be justified in your words and victorious when
you are judged,’ (Ps. 50:6 LXX) which some
who lack understanding have changed to,
‘when you judge me.’ But what will such
people do about these other words which are
written: ‘The Lord himself will enter into
judgment with the elders of the people and
with his rulers?’ (Isaiah 3:14). But if this does
not yet prove to you clearly that the Judge is,
as it were, judged with us, hear the text:
‘Come and let us be convicted together, says
the Lord.’ (Isaiah 1:18 LXX) The Lord
exhorts you to speak to him with freedom of
speech, making himself seem to need
conviction of a sort, so that if you should

imagine that you can convict him of being
careless in his providence towards you, you
might say these things with freedom.

Here we may observe a very practical reason that the church needs to cultivate an ear for bold speech. A scribe, coming across a difficult formulation in a scriptural text, may conclude that the text contains an error and correct the text in favor of something more straightforward. Psalm 50:6 says to God, as Origen reads it, that ‘you are victorious when you are judged [ἐν τῷ κρίνεσθαι σε].’⁵⁴⁸ Although one might take κρίνεσθαι as a middle infinitive, so that the line reads, ‘you are victorious when *you judge*,’ Origen takes κρίνεσθαι as a passive, so that God is himself the object of judgment. Origen may have regarded this reading as more consistent with the courtroom language of the previous clause, which has God ‘being justified’ (δικαιωθῆς), i.e. being the object of a positive verdict, which presumably implies that he has been judged. That God too is judged is undoubtedly a surprising statement, because of which, Origen tells us, ‘some who lack understanding [οἱ μὴ νοήσαντες]’ — presumably he is referring to scribes — changed the text to read, ‘you are victorious when you judge *me* [κρίνεσθαι με].’⁵⁴⁹ As we observed earlier, in other contexts, Origen can castigate scribes for being overly bold in changing texts. Here, however, their problem is lack of boldness, or at least an inability to recognize the characteristic boldness of scriptural discourse. Ironically, preserving the exact letter of scripture depends in this case on appreciating the speculative boldness of the scriptures.⁵⁵⁰

⁵⁴⁸ This text is also quoted by Paul in Romans 3:4.

⁵⁴⁹ Neither Rahlfs, *Septuaginta* nor NA-27 records any text with this reading.

⁵⁵⁰ Interestingly, the consequence of Origen’s emphasis on scriptural boldness is, in this case, that he prefers the *lectio difficilior*, although this is by no means a general rule in Origen’s textual criticism.

Finally, Origen returns to the logic of incarnation, this time stressing not the divine descent but the adoption of human beings as brothers and sisters of Christ.

<p>Καὶ ἀκόλουθον δέ ἐστι τῷ πνεύματι τῆς υἰοθεσίας καὶ τῷ οὐκέτι εἶ δοῦλος, ἀλλὰ υἱός· καὶ ὁ πατήρ σου ἐστὶν ὁ θεὸς καὶ ἀδελφός σου ὁ κύριος ὁ λέγων· διηγήσομαι τὸ ὄνομα σου τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς σου, μᾶλλον δὲ τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς μου, ἐν μέσῳ ἐκκλησίας ὑμνήσω σε. Τί παράδοξον υἱὸν παρρησίαν ἔχοντα πρὸς τὸν πατέρα, οὐ καταισχύνοντα τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς υἰοθεσίας, προστασσόμενον ὑπὸ τοῦ πατρός, ἀντιπροστάζει τῷ πατρί, ἀξιοῦντα περὶ ὧν βούλεται;</p>	<p>And consistent with this is the text, ‘by the spirit of adoption,’ and, ‘you are no longer a slave, but a son.’ And your father is God, and your brother is the Lord who says, ‘I will announce your name to your brothers,’ or rather, ‘to my brothers; I will sing to you in the midst of the church’ (Ps. 21:23 LXX, Hebrews 2:12). How is it remarkable if a son has freedom of speech towards his father, not being ashamed of the spirit of adoption, but being commanded by his father, to command his father back, if he is worthy of what he desires?</p>
--	--

Let us step back now and reflect on this discussion as a whole. At one level, we may describe it as drawn-out inductive argument to the effect that it is a habit of scripture to speak of a surprising reciprocity between God and human beings and the ‘freedom of speech’ that this permits. Most of these arguments themselves present inductively more local habits of scripture, such as scripture’s habit of presenting Jesus as a servant or its habit of speaking of God as being judged. In none of these cases does scripture explicitly teach that human beings may command God, although especially in the first three arguments Origen gathers a fascinating collection of texts that provide the basis for analogical arguments that deal specifically with commanding. We

have seen that analogical arguments typically have probabilistic rather than necessary force; and the fact that Origen attacks the question of commanding God from so many varied (and sometimes tenuous) vantage points suggests that he himself does not regard any one of these arguments as necessary. A cumulative argument, as we saw in the previous chapter, is such that one may have much greater certainty about the vague rule one proves than one has about the specific instances of this rule that one offers. This is surely the case here as well. Although each particular argument may be rather tenuous, the over all effect is to commend a rather speculative claim with a much higher degree of confidence. In any case, Origen's argument is clearly an inductive one, similar to those we have examined in this chapter and the previous one.

But Origen is not simply arguing for the viability of some proposed utterance. This argument also progressively enriches our understanding of why and how we might command God, the significance of which is not obvious on the surface. In effect, then, Origen is meditating on an utterance of his own, which has an obscurity not unlike that of the scriptures. And although we can summarize the results of his meditations in terms of a reciprocity between God and humankind and the 'freedom of speech' that results, it is important to observe that this insight is very much the *fruit* of an inductive process rather than its presupposition. Origen's meditation proceeds by way of analogical arguments focused as narrowly as possible on our ability to command God. The result is to bring into relation with one another a variety of texts and themes that are not obviously 'incarnational' on the surface, such as the equality of masters and slaves, our ability to 'ask' of God whatever we like, and texts that speak of God being judged. Incarnation enters into this text not so much as its explicit subject matter but rather as the deep grammar governing habits of scriptural discourse about Christian freedom of speech.

In sum, this passage shows Origen at great length learning the language of scripture in all the ways that I have sketched: using scriptural texts in his own speech, identifying habits of scripture, and expanding scriptural language with words of his own. And it shows how this activity culminates in a characteristic boldness that speaks with God as a kind of equal — though to be sure, by virtue of the grace with which he descends to human beings.

Chapter 5: Wisdom and Scriptural Interpretation

We began our investigation with a suspicion that some contemporary theological hermeneutics suffer from a lingering arbitrariness, and particularly a dogmatic tendency to determine the results of interpretation in advance. In search of non-arbitrary hermeneutic rules, we turned to Origen, in hopes that by discovering the deep rules of his approach to interpretation, we might at the same discover rules applicable in our own context. The rule we have discovered is *wisdom*, the rational competence displayed in the words of scripture and towards the formation of which exegesis proceeds. Interpretation governed by the rule of wisdom as described by Origen takes the procedural form of learning the language of scripture.

In this chapter, I offer some concluding meditations as to how this rule of interpretation might play out in a contemporary context. The closest theological analogues to the proposal that I will develop in the rest of this chapter are those postliberal theologians who have made wisdom a central category of their work.⁵⁵¹ The philosopher Peter Ochs has offered the most extensive

⁵⁵¹ Among others I would include David Kelsey, *What's Theological About a Theological School?* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993); Dan Hardy, *God's Ways with the World: Thinking and Practising Christian Faith* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), and Randi Rashkover, *Freedom and Law* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2011). Wisdom has also been a central theme in a good deal of feminist theological reflection. The feminine term 'Sophia' can organize a wide sphere of female language about God, as in Elizabeth Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Discourse* (New York: Crossroad, 1992). 'Wisdom' is also a promising category in terms of which to recognize the competence and knowledge possessed by those who have been oppressed, on which see Mary McClintock Fulkerson, *Changing the Subject: Women's Discourses and Feminist Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 386-393. David Ford has probably done the most to develop an approach to theology as the pursuit of wisdom whose central practice is the 'wisdom interpretation' of scripture, but which investigates everything, which remains open to history's complexities, to wisdom from other traditions, and to the cry of the sufferer. David Ford is also especially concerned, in a manner very like Origen, to describe as expansively as possible the variety of ways the Christian should use language, what I have called the Christian's linguistic competence. Ford develops this competence in terms of five 'moods' of speech: 'Faith is explored in terms of five 'moods' rooted in cries: the indicative that affirms or denies; the imperative of command and obedience; the interrogative that questions, probes, suspects, and tests; the subjunctive exploring possibilities of what may or might be, alert to surprises; and the optative of desire... *The theological wisdom of faith is grounded in being affirmed, being commanded, being questioned and searched, being surprised and open to new possibilities, and being desired and loved*' (Ford, *Christian Wisdom*, 5).

analysis of the operative logic of this postliberal wisdom in terms of the logic of pragmatism.⁵⁵² (Stoic logic plays for Origen something like the role pragmatic logic plays for postliberalism). The recapitulation of Origenian wisdom that I develop here is a contribution to this theological and logical work.

In this chapter, I develop Origen's account of scripture as wisdom in a more contemporary idiom. After a summary account of this view (5.1), I develop three procedural aspects. First, I show how the notion of 'competence' overcomes an overly rigid focus on textual 'meaning' (5.2). Second, I call attention to the role of common sense and linguistic intuition in wisdom's operation (5.3). Third, I suggest that, following Origen, our interpretation of scripture might be less arbitrary if we organized exegesis around the demand to *examine* each particular text (5.4). Finally, I offer two case studies of contemporary interpreters whose actual exegesis resonates with Origen's: Robert Jenson and Phyllis Trible (5.5).

1. Scripture as Wisdom

It will be helpful to begin by reformulating Origen's use of scripture in terms of the questions David Kelsey poses of theologians in his classic study of scriptural authority, *Proving Doctrine*. Kelsey argues that it is analytic in the concept of scripture (or we might say: implicit in the church's practice of reading scripture) that particular texts possess some kind of authority for the Christian community. But there is no single account of scriptural authority; rather, different theologians construe this authority differently in accordance with the sort of wholeness they

⁵⁵² See esp. Ochs, *Another Reformation*.

ascribe to the text.⁵⁵³ Any such ascription is a hypothesis, or as Kelsey says, ‘an imaginative judgment that tries to catch up in a single metaphor the utter singularity and full complexity of the mode in which God is present among the faithful.’⁵⁵⁴

For Origen, the judgment that scripture is ‘wise’ plays this organizing role. Origen shows that the framework of wisdom can give certain key indications of *how* we ought to proceed in learning from scripture, which we may usefully explicate in terms of four further analytical questions posed by David Kelsey.

1. *What aspect of scripture is taken to be authoritative?*

The *linguistic competence* exhibited in the words of scripture.

2. *What is it about this aspect that makes it authoritative?*

The fact that this competence displays supreme *wisdom*.

3. *What sort of logical force seems to be ascribed to the scripture to which appeal is made?*

The words of scripture are true or well-spoken when uttered in the appropriate context.

4. *How is the scripture that is cited brought to bear on theological proposals so as to authorize them?*

Broadly speaking, scriptural texts *exemplify* correct ways of speaking or *give instructions* about how to speak, including the ways I sketched in chapters 2-4: as scripts to be used, as instances or formulations of general rules, or as paradigms for analogical utterances.

⁵⁵³ David Kelsey, *Proving Doctrine: The Uses of Scripture in Modern Theology* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1999), 103.

To approach scripture as wise discourse is thus to situate questions about its meaning in the broader context of how to speak and act rightly in the world.

As a solution to the arbitrariness of our hermeneutic rules, wisdom is certainly very promising. For if arbitrariness is a lack of reason, wisdom is surely some construal of rationality. To identify scripture as ‘wise discourse’ and to insist that its interpretation requires wisdom is to make rejecting arbitrariness an explicit hermeneutic principle. To demand wisdom of the interpreter is to do little more than make explicit what was implicit in our initial worry about arbitrariness.

Moreover, it is not implausible to argue, as Origen does, that wisdom might be a fruitful *scriptural* category in terms of which to talk about scriptural authority. It is, after all, a habit of scripture to characterize its own discourse as wise in nearly every one of its genres. For the Law, we may cite Deuteronomy 4:6:

You must observe [these laws] diligently, for this will show your wisdom and discernment to the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, “Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people!”

The prophets speak of the wisdom that follows from being inspired by the Spirit:

The spirit of the LORD shall rest on him,
the spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the spirit of counsel and might,

⁵⁵⁴ Ibid., 167.

the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.⁵⁵⁵

In an apocalyptic text like Daniel, this theme of inspired wisdom is intensified, as the suffering of Israel makes understanding events seem humanly inscrutable:

[God] gives wisdom to the wise

And knowledge to those who have understanding.

He reveals deep and secret things...⁵⁵⁶

That the so-called ‘wisdom’ texts are concerned with wisdom goes without saying, though it is worth recalling that the Psalms also begin with an exhortation, characteristic of the wisdom tradition, to the daily study of the law: ‘His delight is in the law of the LORD, and on His law he meditates day and night.’⁵⁵⁷ Paul can say in a summary way that the Old Testament Scriptures are ‘able to make you wise unto salvation.’⁵⁵⁸

The New Testament continues to characterize its own discourse in terms of wisdom. Paul frequently calls attention to the divine wisdom ironically expressed in the apparent ‘foolishness’ of his own message:

For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.⁵⁵⁹

⁵⁵⁵ Isaiah 11:2.

⁵⁵⁶ Daniel 2:21f.

⁵⁵⁷ Psalm 1:2.

⁵⁵⁸ 2 Timothy 3:15.

⁵⁵⁹ 1 Corinthians 1:21.

Paul then refers to Christ as ‘the power of God and the wisdom of God,’ an allusion to the wisdom Christology that, for the one who believes the gospel, is the root and telos of scriptural wisdom. This wisdom Christology is developed in other epistles, but most explicitly in John, where ‘Word’ stands in for ‘Wisdom’: ‘In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.’⁵⁶⁰ But the synoptic gospels also present Jesus Christ as the embodiment of wisdom whose human ministry includes that of a wise teacher. Luke makes a point of this throughout his gospel, beginning with Jesus’ growth in wisdom.⁵⁶¹ One could cite many other examples.

In short, we have good reason to suppose that if scripture is going to signify a rule for its own interpretation, ‘wisdom’ might refer vaguely to that rule. Scripture, of course, has a great deal to say about wisdom. One of Origen’s great insights was that scriptural texts that specify the character of wisdom, especially its way of speaking, may be read as specifications of the character of scriptural discourse as well.

2. Wisdom and Competence

Wisdom is a competence,⁵⁶² a global capacity to speak and act in a manner appropriate to the context. The practice of scriptural interpretation should presuppose that the text exhibits this competence, reconstruct this competence, and seek to form the same wisdom in its practitioners.

One of the primary reasons Origen’s exegesis appears arbitrary is that while reconstructing an underlying competence has criteria, these criteria are not narrowly textual. They involve

⁵⁶⁰ John 1:1.

⁵⁶¹ Luke 2:52.

⁵⁶² Wisdom is fundamentally a skill or capacity. In Hebrew חכם, ‘wise,’ may refer to artisans and other technical experts (Is. 3:3, Ex. 35:35, Isaiah 10:13, et al.) or denote an amoral cunning (2 Sam. 13:3, etc.), as well as to

going ‘beyond’ the text in two principal ways. First, a competence is an *activity in and of the world*. For this reason, claims about linguistic competence are inevitably claims about the world in which that competence is performed at the same time. As we saw in chapter 2, this means that one must approach a particular text asking questions of *pragmatics* — what one can *do* with it in particular contexts — as if it were a script. In doing so, one is investigating not only the text but the *relation* between the text and these contexts, and the results of such an investigation depend at least as much on the empirical facts determining any given context. But these facts are not themselves given in the text.

Second, a competence is *infinite*. If a linguistic utterance is a finite physical object, a linguistic competence is a habit of action that consists of a capacity for producing an infinite number of physical utterances in particular contexts. The difference between a text and a competence is the difference between some *actual* thing and some infinite set of *possibilities*. More precisely, the logical form of a competence is an infinite set of conditional instructions in which the antecedent specifies an occasion and the consequent specifies a set of appropriate utterances — sentences like, ‘If this friend is crying, you may/must say X (or Y, or Z...)’ Obviously such sentences can make explicit only in a very partial way the contents of one’s linguistic competence, which is largely an intuitive awareness rather than an explicitly formulated set of rules. The infinity of a competence derives primarily from the infinity of possible contexts in which speech may be demanded, but as well from the fact that usually many things are appropriately said in any given context. There are many false or inappropriate things to say, but also many true and appropriate words. For a commentator to reason from text to the competence it exemplifies is to reason from something actual and finite to something possible

‘wisdom’ in the broader sense of this dissertation. See Gerhard von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel*, trans. James D. Martin (London: SCM Press, 1972), 20f.

and infinite. Moreover, bridging the gap between finite case and infinite rule requires a *creative* act. We have seen two different aspects of this creativity — first, in the creative act of forming a hypothesis about the rules governing scriptural speech (chapter 3), and second, in the creative act of proposing new formulations (chapter 4). This creativity would appear arbitrary, however, only if removed from its context in a broader activity of wise inquiry.

To better see the significance of organizing exegesis around the formation of competence, it will be helpful to contrast the approach I have sketched in this dissertation with an alternative approach focused on the elucidation of a text's meaning. Literary critic Northrop Frye offers a particularly clear formulation of this view: for him, *all commentary is allegory*.

It is not often realized that all commentary is allegorical interpretation, an attaching of ideas to the structure of poetic imagery. The instant that any critic permits himself to make a genuine comment about a poem (e.g. "In *Hamlet* Shakespeare appears to be portraying the tragedy of irresolution") he has begun to allegorize. Commentary thus looks at literature as, in its formal phase, a potential allegory of events and ideas... We have actual allegory when a poet explicitly indicates the relationship of his images to examples and precepts, and so tries to indicate how a commentary on him should proceed. A writer is being allegorical whenever it is clear that he is saying "by this I *also* (*allos*) mean that."⁵⁶³

By 'commentary' Frye means establishing a correspondence between what a text says and something else: the events, ideas, or whatever that it means. *All* commentators, he says, establish some relation of the form 'X (also) means Y.' 'Actual allegory,' when the author gives some

⁵⁶³ Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), 89f.

explicit indication of what ideas to attach to the text (such as we find in the Parable of the Sower or the Pilgrim's Progress) is merely a special case of what is always true of commentary.

The various 'approaches' that dominate so much contemporary study of the Bible — historical-critical, literary, post-structuralist, political, feminist, theological, etc. — may be understood as particular sets of instructions for generating allegories in Frye's sense. We may take examples from one illustrative text, the *Cambridge Companion to Biblical Interpretation*.⁵⁶⁴ A historian like John Barton might establish a correspondence between a word in the text and classes of referent in the original historical context: 'when in Philippians 1:1 we read in the Authorized Version of "bishops and deacons", a historical critic would point out that these terms did not mean what they later came to mean, as titles for two levels in the developed church hierarchy of later times, but referred to quite different officials in the early Pauline churches.'⁵⁶⁵ One might, with Joseph Blenkinsopp, establish a correspondence between certain texts and their theme: the 'covenant of the pieces' in Gen. 15 and the Sinai-Horeb pericope in Exodus 19-34 speaks of 'a conditional divine promise to Israel's ancestors.'⁵⁶⁶ A poststructuralist like David Rutledge establishes a correspondence between the Garden of Eden in Genesis 2:4b-3:23 and the ideology it expresses, namely, 'the disturbed dream of patriarchy, at once representing the highest degree of patriarchal power, and troubled by a nervous awareness of its own contingent foundations...'⁵⁶⁷ A political reader like Ched Myers establishes a correspondence Jesus parable in Mark 3:27, that one must 'bind the strong man' before plundering his house, and certain

⁵⁶⁴ John Barton, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Biblical Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

⁵⁶⁵ John Barton, 'Historical-critical approaches,' in *Cambridge Companion*, 9-20, esp. 11.

⁵⁶⁶ Joseph Blenkinsopp, 'The Pentateuch,' in *Cambridge Companion*, 181-197, esp. 183.

⁵⁶⁷ Qtd. Robert R. Carroll, 'Poststructuralist approaches, New Historicism and postmodernism, in *Cambridge Companion*, 50-66, esp. 60.

elements of the political environment in first century Palestine: ‘Jesus intends the overthrow of the “strong man”—the scribal establishment represented by the demon.’⁵⁶⁸

In each case, what the text says *means* something else, articulated by the commentator. Commentary is a matter of establishing correspondences between the text and this something else, as determined by the rules of one’s particular approach. Now this framework may appear so formal as to be almost vacuous; and the logic of commentary so described captures only a small part of the kind of reading we find in Origen, oriented as it is to the acquisition of a competence for the use of language. Sometimes, to be sure, Origen offers formulations of what a text means. But these formulations are only part of a broader concern with giving *instructions about how to speak*. In particular, I have sketched at least three ways of engaging with scripture that are not primarily concerned with establishing a correlation between text and comment.

1. The commentator may *specify conditions under which a text may appropriately be used or performed*.
2. The commentator may *formulate general habits of speech observed in the scriptures*.
3. The commentator may offer *proposals for new utterances that are related by analogy to scriptural discourse*.

Each of these activities can be called ‘interpretation’ in a loose sense, but they are not primarily focused on ‘understanding’ what a text or an author says as such. Indeed, to give instructions about how to speak does not necessarily require one to determine the meaning of a scriptural text — or even of one’s own utterances. One’s instructions about the use of words may be consistent with a number of possible interpretations. Moreover, in each of these kinds of commentary, the relation between a text and the competence it exemplifies is not the sort of 1:1 correspondence we find between text and ‘meaning’ in the kinds of commentary Frye describes.

⁵⁶⁸ Qtd. Tim Gorringer, ‘Political readings of Scripture,’ in *Cambridge Companion*, 67-80, esp. 73.

For in each case the commentator takes into consideration something besides the text — the world in which it is performed; the infinite set of possibilities that constitutes a competence; the new things one discovers to say.

There is an irony here: Origen the arch-allegorist is far *less* allegorical than those commentators who read only to discover the ‘meaning’ of a text!

3. Wisdom and Common Sense

In his pursuit of wisdom, Origen does not proceed in the manner of a foundationalist, grounding his account of wisdom in certain foundational principles. He has not, for example, turned to philosophy to provide fundamental canons of rationality, although his account of wisdom has deep resonances with Stoicism, as I have shown. Nor has he simply drawn canons of rationality from tradition, since he can appeal to wisdom to criticize tradition, although he believes Christianity on the whole possesses a more profound wisdom than that of the philosophers. Nor can he draw wisdom immediately from one or more particular scriptural texts, since on his view, scriptural texts must themselves be examined by wisdom, although he certainly believes that the scriptures embody and teach this wisdom.

Rather, I suggest we see this account of wisdom as emerging from certain deep-seated common sense beliefs and capacities already operative in the linguistic practice of the Christian community.⁵⁶⁹ This kind of common sense develops differently in different contexts and different communities, but it emerges from instincts and capacities that human beings have by virtue of being animals — motor skills, the use of our senses, feelings of pleasure and pain, etc. Most of our common sense is operative in our capacity to use ordinary language. Our capacity to

use a word like ‘fire,’ for example, is bound up with our practical understanding of the danger it may pose and the sorts of things one may do with fire. In learning to use words, we learn at the same time how to form our expectations in response to the speech of others, how to draw certain kinds of inferences, and undertake certain kinds of action in the world.

Origen also starts with what we might call an *ecclesial* common sense specific to the Christian community, embodied in the linguistic usage of those ordinary Christians Origen called ‘the many’ and ‘the simple.’ This ecclesial common sense, it seems to me, is more or less what Robert Jenson takes the rule of faith to be:

The rule of faith, the *regula fidei*, was a sort of communal linguistic awareness of the faith delivered to the apostles, which sufficed the church for generations. This gift of the Spirit guided missionary proclamations, shaped instruction, identified heresy, and in general functioned wherever in the church’s life a brief statement of the gospel’s content was needed.⁵⁷⁰

In calling it a ‘communal linguistic awareness,’ Jenson means to highlight the fact that written formulations of this rule — in creeds and in those pre-creedal writings that preceded them — are contestable summaries of a deeper communal facility to use language in accordance with Christian commitments about God and the world.

In addressing its hearers in ordinary language, scripture presupposes these common sense capacities for using language. Everyday and ecclesial common sense enter into Origen’s exegetical procedures through his frequent appeals to the linguistic intuitions of his hearers to make judgments about specific cases. He assumes his hearers are able to identify certain occasions as appropriate times for saying, ‘Now I will begin.’ He assumes his hearers can

⁵⁶⁹ My account of common sense is influenced by Peter Ochs, *Logic of Scripture*, 316-22.

recognize that certain imperatives function as optatives when said in certain contexts. These kinds of appeals show that Origen assumes his hearers already know something about how to use language and something about the world in which they must use it — even if what they know is fallible and in need of correction.

The decisive issue is that while linguistic capacity must be *learned*, to learn some capacity presupposes a more elemental capacity. Ordinary language presupposes the sorts of capacities a child acquires in the first several years of her life, as wisdom in turn presupposes ordinary language and emerges out of it. Moreover, these sorts of capacities are acquired in a particular way: inductively and empirically. The elemental logic of wisdom that I have sketched in this dissertation might be described as a clarification of what is involved in the kinds of empirical learning processes by which the acquisition of ordinary language passes into wisdom. As further confirmation of this, we may appeal to the presence of common sense wisdom in the Biblical wisdom tradition. Some proverbs are not in any straightforward sense ‘theological,’ but seem rather to reflect the kind of common sense lessons a reasonably prudent and observant person could have acquired through ordinary experience.

The heart may ache even in laughter,

And joy may end in grief.⁵⁷¹

A numerous people is the glory of a king;

Without a nation a ruler is ruined.⁵⁷²

⁵⁷⁰ Robert W. Jenson, *Canon and Creed* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 2010), 15.

⁵⁷¹ Proverbs 14:13.

⁵⁷² Proverbs 14:28.

The words of a fool lead to strife;

His speech invites blows.⁵⁷³

He who spurns discipline hates himself;

He who heeds reproof gains understanding.⁵⁷⁴

Since these sorts of insights are rooted in everyday experience, it would also be surprising if their validity were much dependent upon rules specific to a particular religious tradition. Wisdom may travel between traditions, as the queen of Sheba traveled to Solomon's court.⁵⁷⁵ This is also reflected in the remarkable fact that a chapter of the book of Proverbs is taken nearly verbatim from the Egyptian wisdom text Amenemope.⁵⁷⁶

Nevertheless, the full possession of wisdom, as represented in the Christian scriptures and as understood by Origen, goes well beyond common sense. The ultimate horizon of wisdom is a knowledge of the mysteries of creation and of God himself.

The Lord created me [i.e. Wisdom] at the beginning of His course,

As the first of His works of old...

I was with [God] as a confidant,

A source of delight every day,

Rejoicing before Him at all times...⁵⁷⁷

Whence does wisdom come?

⁵⁷³ Proverbs 18:8.

⁵⁷⁴ Proverbs 15:32.

⁵⁷⁵ 1 Kings 10:1-13.

Where is the source of understanding?
 It is hidden from the eyes of all living,
 Concealed from the fowl of heaven...
 God understands the way to it;
 He knows its source.⁵⁷⁸

Christians trust that this wisdom is summarized in Jesus Christ, the Word and Wisdom of God.

In the beginning was the Word. And the Word was with God, and the Word was God...And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.⁵⁷⁹

I want their hearts to be encouraged and united in love, so that they may have all the riches of assured understanding and have the knowledge of God's mystery, that is, Christ himself, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.⁵⁸⁰

Few have sought this wisdom with the intensity, creativity, and boldness of Origen. If I emphasize the roots of wisdom in empiricism, it is not to deny this speculative horizon. The systematic theologian need not fear that a theology rooted in wisdom, induction, and scriptural exegesis will in any way be tame or reductive.

The fact that Origen reverts to the rules operative in common sense and ordinary language might appear question-begging to one who finds herself in the grip of a fundamental anxiety

⁵⁷⁶ Proverbs 22:17-23:11. See W. O. E. Oesterley, *The Wisdom of Egypt and the Old Testament in Light of the Newly Discovered 'Teaching of Amen-en-ope'* (New York: Macmillan, 1927).

⁵⁷⁷ Proverbs 8:22, 30.

⁵⁷⁸ Job 28:20f, 23.

⁵⁷⁹ John 1:1, 14.

⁵⁸⁰ Colossians 2:2-3.

about the arbitrariness of all interpretation. A skeptic of this sort is famously difficult to answer, nor is it absolutely impossible that her anxiety is well-founded. It is, however, impossible that she will be able to use language to resolve her anxieties without dogmatically presupposing what she is supposed to prove. No author can commit a theory or theology to words without presupposing her own capacity to use language and that of her intended audience. If one's situation is so dire that one has lost faith in language altogether, one could only pray for resurrection: 'Lord, can these bones live?' If, however, the anxious theologian finds herself inclined to engage in philosophy or constructive theology — and if this inclination is not merely presumption and temptation — then the scope of the arbitrariness that threatens cannot be as total as it seems. Instead, she should suppose that some part of her facility with language is generally reliable and may contribute to the correction of the rest. Something of this pragmatic spirit is visible in Origen's exegesis.

4. Procedures of Wisdom: The Text and Beyond

Origen's framework for scriptural interpretation is an attempt to make explicit the operations of our linguistic competence in order to facilitate the correction and expansion of what we are able rightly to say and do with scriptural language. He does this by organizing exegesis in such a way as to make explicit our own reasoning processes in relation to particular texts. As we saw in chapter 2, Origen always takes the starting point of exegesis to be that 'sense' which a reader understands immediately upon hearing or reading a text, prior to any explicit labor of reasoning. Origen's terminology for this way of apprehending the text (*κατὰ λέξιν*, *κατὰ ῥητὸν*, etc.) is sometimes confusingly translated 'literal,' but it is much better understood as what we might call

the *unexamined sense* of scripture. It is a basic axiom of Origen's exegesis that *not all texts are capable of being interpreted in the way we understand them prior to examining them*. The real duality operative in Origen's exegesis is not the one between 'literal' and 'allegorical,' but this much more basic duality between unexamined and examined readings.

By setting up exegesis in this way, Origen ensures that everything the reader does, every step of exegesis, is available for examination and criticism. He overcomes arbitrariness by demanding a reason. The procedures that we examined over the course of the previous chapters each describe ways of going 'beyond' the unexamined sense of the text: by identifying various occasions in which it has been and might be rightly used; by reconstructing the underlying patterns and rules from which it was produced; by saying new things. Each is a contestable human act, and though the horizon of each is wisdom itself, the ability to perform these activities is continuous with common sense capacities for learning and using ordinary language. The one who knows how to speak a language knows how to make judgments about the use of words in contexts, possesses underlying habits of speech, and says new things all her own. There should be no suspicion that what Origen describes here is arbitrary just because he operates more like a linguistic reconstructing a competence than a historian reconstructing a meaning.

Every reader goes 'beyond' the text in one or more of the ways Origen describes here. Origen is not distinctive for going 'beyond.' Rather, what is distinctive is the logic by which he does so. Modern readers often try to answer these sorts of questions in terms of a theory given in advance. Origen, by contrast, frames exegesis in such a way as to require that these sorts of questions be answered locally, by exercising case-specific judgment with reference to particular texts within the course of exegesis. Doing so allows him to demand a much more thorough

accounting for the steps of exegesis than one inclined to resolve these questions in terms of an advance theory are usually able to do.

An illuminating example is Origen's treatment of context as an aspect of the proper occasion of speech, examined in chapter 2. Modern readers and Origen both recognize the role of context in determining the meaning of an utterance. But modern readers frequently frame the problem of context as something like this: with respect to which context should normative interpretation of scripture be directed? Answers to this question may then take the form of global delimitations of context in advance: interpret with respect to the *original* context, or the *canonical* context, or the *ecclesial* context, and so on. As such, these rules are logically universal: interpret *all* texts of scripture with respect to X (or Y, or Z...) context(s).

Origen's approach, by contrast, is to pose the problem of context in a manner local to each text of scripture. Rather than considering possible *general* contexts of interpretation in advance, each act of exegesis must take the form of an investigation of possible contexts in which the words of a text may rightly be said. The claims that result are not universal but singular or particular: *this* text (and hence, *some* text) may rightly be said in X context. Only by examining many particular cases could one begin to generalize about patterns of scriptural context and anticipate general rules of interpretation. (From Origen's perspective, one who determines in advance the proper context of interpretation is saying something like: the *only possible* context in which all the words of scripture may rightly be said is X.)

Is there a logical reason for this difference of procedure? The key issue, it seems to me, is that Origen presupposes a linguistic competence in his hearers, which includes their fallible but reliable capacity to make certain kinds of judgments about what to say on certain occasions. From this vantage point, the great danger to interpretation is to judge *precipitously*, arbitrarily

limiting one's capacity by failing to consider some possible use of language. The exegetical task is to multiply possibilities, to investigate possible contexts, an activity which *ipso facto* expands the range of what it is possible for one to say. Learning to discern contexts is itself part of that wisdom which is the fruit of scriptural interpretation.

But suppose one assumes that readers and hearers have no linguistic competence of their own, no capacity for making case-specific judgments about possible contexts of use. It might then seem that for such readers questions of context could only be made arbitrarily, that there is no good reason to use a text in this way in this context or in that way in that context. To the one who makes this assumption, the problem would then appear to be not that there are too few exegetical possibilities but too many; and the task would seem to be to delimit a rule in advance of exegesis to stave off the arbitrariness that would otherwise arise. In short, if one neglects the practical capacities of language users, instructions about exegesis must take the form of a theory determining practice.

There is another issue, however. While our theorist assumes that ordinary readers have no common sense wisdom, in the process she must put extraordinary confidence in her own wisdom. By determining the proper contexts of interpretation in advance of examining particular cases, she presumes to know, for every text of scripture, to which contexts it may and may not be referred. Implicit in this presumption is that she possesses a global competence to determine contexts of use. Yet she likely presumes to know all this without having exhaustively examined each and every text of scripture. She certainly presumes to know it without having considered every possible context in which a text may be used. Such a theorist is in serious danger of dogmatically failing to consider some viable possibility. Worse, by framing her own determination of context as a condition for exegesis, she makes it very difficult to submit this

determination to criticism in the course of exegesis. The possibility that learning how to discern contexts may itself be part of the wisdom scripture has to teach is foreclosed in advance.

Perhaps the best response to such an exegete would be to call her attention to the many and various case-specific judgments that ordinary readers of scripture frequently make about the possible uses of scripture. We might consider claims like the following:

Say the *Sanctus* at such and such a point in the liturgy.

Paul's epistle to the Romans was appropriate for the context of first century Roman Christians.

This is not a case where 'wounds from a friend can be trusted' applies.

Jesus Christ is the most appropriate speaker of Isaiah 53.

It is almost always a good time to pray: 'Our Father, who art in heaven...'

If you are a Gentile, do not assume that everything written in the Law is obligatory for you.

Do not read Song of Songs until you are ready.

This too is a time to say, 'let justice roll down like a mighty river.'

Each of these examples gives an indication about what context is or is not appropriate for using some text of scripture; and in each case, we can imagine trying to make explicit the case-specific rationale for the judgment. For example, the fact that Paul's letter to the Romans names specific

individuals in the Roman church is a powerful reason for assuming it ought to be read with respect to that (original?) context. For some, the fact that Paul is an apostle is reason enough to take his words to the Romans as true. But other texts — proverbs, liturgical texts — seem positively to demand being read and used in many contexts. Similarly, the Law itself seems to specify that community upon which it is obligatory and to envision institutional mechanisms for interpreting its rules in the future. It would be arbitrary, in the face of these particulars, to suppose that one ought to answer questions about context in advance.

5. Case studies

The best way to see the viability of the approach to scriptural interpretation that I am defending may be to see it in practice. There are many interpreters of scripture whose practice can be fruitfully analyzed in terms of wisdom as I have sketched above. I focus on two: Robert Jenson and Phyllis Trible. These are arguably strange bedfellows. Jenson is one of the leading theological interpreters, while Trible is a feminist biblical scholar. Both, however, exemplify an approach to exegesis one might call learning the wise language of scripture. Nor should the very different contents of their theologies trouble us. The rules of scriptural interpretation I have described are formal by design. The results will differ according to the wisdom of the individuals and communities that use them.

5.1. Robert Jenson: Ecclesial Wisdom

Robert Jenson is one of the leading and most sophisticated theological interpreters. He has edited volumes on theological interpretation,⁵⁸¹ is an editor and contributor in the *Brazos* commentary series as well as having written a theological commentary on the Song of Songs.⁵⁸² I focus on his brief study, *Canon and Creed*, which offers some theological reflection on scripture, the rule of faith, and attendant themes, as well as performing several examples of theological exegesis.

5.1.1. The Rule of Faith

Several things are important to observe about Jenson's approach. First, Jenson is a profoundly empirical thinker, who characteristically begins by observing facts about the actual discourse and practice of the Christian community, rather than setting out an *a priori* theoretical framework. To explicate the notions of 'canon' and 'creed,' for example, he says that he will 'refrain from prior definitions,' such as one might drawn from a general theory of tradition or textuality. Rather, he attends to the empirical — and in this context, this means primarily historical — facts about the development of the Christian community, so far as these can be ascertained by normal historical methods of study.

the bulk of this chapter will be historical, since clarifying and relating the notions of canon and creed, as these actually appear and function in the church's discourse, is inseparable from

⁵⁸¹ Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson, eds., *Reclaiming the Bible for the Church* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995).

reviewing certain aspects of the actual development of the Christian canon and the Christian creed; that is to say, of the phenomena to which these terms point.⁵⁸³

The theologian asks about empirical actualities — the church's discourse and its historical development. He argues, for example, that both canon and creed take the form of a *narrative*. Narrative is not necessarily a general feature of all religions, but something he observes in Christian discourse. As an empirical fact, it might be otherwise, as he states in drawing a suggestive empirical comparison between Christianity and rabbinic Judaism:

The Mishnah is a legal complex; and rabbinic Judaism reads the Tanakh fundamentally as Torah, given theological-historical context by the nonlegal writings. The New Testament tells and comments a story that claims to culminate one told by the Old Testament; and the church reads the Old Testament fundamentally as narrative history with this telos, given its moral structure by Torah.⁵⁸⁴

As Jenson attends to the actual discourse of the Christian community, so his approach to theology is fundamentally concerned with forming Christian *speech* as the church lives through time— and doing so with a characteristic boldness reminiscent of Origen.⁵⁸⁵ Scripture is a collection of texts that helps secure the identity of the community's speech over time: 'it provides a norm for the message on the authenticity of which the perdurance of the church does

⁵⁸² Robert W. Jenson, *Song of Songs* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 2005).

⁵⁸³ Jenson, *Canon and Creed*, 11.

⁵⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 24.

⁵⁸⁵ This interest in learning to speak over the course of history may have been a lesson he learned from Origen. One of his earliest studies, *Knowledge of Things Hoped For* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), devotes a whole chapter to a careful study of Origen's use of theological language. His claim that, for Origen, 'The life of the children is therefore a history of the refinement and enlargement of their language, with the eschatological speaking

indeed depend—“the gospel”—a message that is itself primarily verbal and linguistically fluid.⁵⁸⁶ The *speech* of the church preceded the writing of the New (though not the Old) Testament, for ‘the church perdured without a New Testament for more than a century.’⁵⁸⁷ We have already seen that for Jenson, the rule of faith, from which the creeds would eventually develop, is a memory and summary of the church’s ‘communal linguistic awareness.’⁵⁸⁸ It summarizes the church’s linguistic competence. The rule of faith is not inherently written:

The *regula fidei*, though directed and attuned to statement in language, was not itself written or even memorized; the phrase “communal linguistic awareness” in the previous paragraph was carefully chosen. The early pastors and theologians who invoked the rule of faith in their teaching, liturgical instructions, or polemics lived in a community experienced as immediately identical with that of the Lord’s first witnesses, a community that was for them a single living reality embracing the Lord, his immediate witnesses, and themselves. They located the “rule” of this community’s faith in its communal self-consciousness.⁵⁸⁹

Jenson appeals to Irenaeus as archetypal of this ‘confidence in the community’s communal consciousness’ which was ‘in fact a confidence in the guiding presence of the Spirit.’⁵⁹⁰ Irenaeus speaks, for example, of the church which though scattered throughout the world ‘believes these things as if she had one soul and one and the same heart.’⁵⁹¹ This confidence explains the fact that ‘when the early pastors and theologians adduced the rule, they could be very free in stating it

of God and the blessed as goal and limit’ parallels my own argument in this dissertation — but it also arguably describes Jenson’s own approach to theology (46).

⁵⁸⁶ Jenson, *Canon and Creed*, 14.

⁵⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁵⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁵⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹¹ AH 1.10.1, qtd. Jenson, *Canon and Creed*, 15.

and yet be confident that the momentarily appropriate formulation expressed the very same rule as other and perhaps verbally quite different formulations.⁵⁹² The rule refers to the implicit norms governing the community's use of language, expressed in increasingly fixed form to meet specific needs, such as baptismal confession or the rejection of heresy.

Jenson never speaks of the role of the rule of faith as 'determining' the meaning of scripture. A sure sign of this is that Jenson can appeal to the scriptures to criticize the rule, just as Origen does. As it was usually cited, 'the rule did not support the church's native way of reading the Old Testament as history...[it] skipped straight from the creation to the incarnation, and thus right over the whole of God's history with old Israel.'⁵⁹³ So while the rule helped the church preserve its founding Old Testament canon in response to the challenge of Marcion, 'it did not open itself to the theological shape of the Old Testament's own narrative, and so it could not support the Old Testament's specific role in the church's practice.'⁵⁹⁴ Jenson imagines a creed that might have been: '[we believe]...in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who as the Word given to Moses led Israel out of Egypt...'⁵⁹⁵ Since it is too late to change the creeds now, he offers instead a rule for teachers: 'churchly instruction in the creed should emphasize how the second article's opening "Christ" and "Lord" derive their meaning from God's history with Israel, and in reciting the creed we should always be aware of this reference.'⁵⁹⁶ Canon and creed, on his view, are interdependent.

Now it is important to observe at this point a relative difference between Irenaeus and Origen. Origen is relatively less confident in the church's actual linguistic competence than Irenaeus is. Both are anti-gnostic and anti-Marcionite, but Origen, we might say, feels a need to

⁵⁹² Jenson, *Canon and Creed*, 15f.

⁵⁹³ Ibid., 29.

⁵⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁹⁵ Ibid., 31.

say new things that Irenaeus does not. Consequently, the rule of faith for Irenaeus as for Jenson is primarily a matter of the *content* of the church's proclamation. Now to be sure, this permits a great deal of freedom for the exercise of wisdom. Jenson is arguably one of the boldest and most speculative theologians presently working, and he is famous for offering his bold speech in an aphoristic style reminiscent of the wisdom tradition and of Origen. Still, for Origen the church's linguistic competence is more emphatically an ongoing practice of investigation than it is for Jenson. Taking his paradigms in the wisdom texts, Christian faith is for Origen an ongoing learning process. The church is a 'school,' and history itself is the space of the divine pedagogy. We might say that Origen's conception of scripture is closer to the one that Jenson attributes to rabbinic Judaism, scripture as 'Torah,' i.e. wise instruction.⁵⁹⁷ The narrative about this divine Wisdom made flesh is central, but it organizes the many other things the Christian might discover and learn to speak about, some of which turn on investigating the empirical world. There are other things the Christian must learn to say as well. And as I have continually emphasized, at least some of what the Christian says she learns from meditating neither on canon nor on creed, but on the empirical world itself.

Jenson proposes as an experiment to treat the 'creed' (i.e. the church's linguistic awareness) as a kind of *critical theory*. For Jenson, modernity characteristically asks 'critical' questions, initially and paradigmatically in the scientific context: 'one decisive innovation [leading to modern science] was a deliberate policy of asking such questions, a methodological suspicion that the appearances of things are a screen behind which reality hides itself.'⁵⁹⁸ (It should be emphasized that Jenson offers no principled objection to the scientific enterprise, and draws freely on the results of natural science and historical criticism.) He continues by observing that

⁵⁹⁶ Ibid., 50.

⁵⁹⁷ Ibid., 24.

one may apply a similar suspicion to texts, such that, ‘the suspicion of appearances becomes suspicion of what a text initially appears to say,’ often leading to insights into the underlying agendas of authors or tradents.⁵⁹⁹ The variety of particular critical theories with which we are familiar — he cites ‘postcolonial theory’ and ‘womanist theory’ — each posit a particular vantage point from which this insight into the underlying agenda of a text may be grasped. Jenson argues that the logical conclusion of this practice is an interpretive nihilism: ‘such critique unmask the question about what a text truly says as itself the last great appearance, and interpreters are therefore free themselves to be up to whatever they want with the text.’⁶⁰⁰

To say that the ‘creed’ is a kind of critical theory, then, is to propose that

The community positioned to perceive what a scriptural text is truly up to is the church, and the creed is the set of instructions for discerning this agenda. The needed suspicious eye is the eye trained in the church to distrust all human religiosity, also as it may appear in Scripture...And it is the triune God who is up to something with these texts, whose agenda is to be discovered, to be affirmed by the church and denounced by others.⁶⁰¹

Since the creed formulates the linguistic awareness of the community, the community is presumably positioned to perceive the agenda of scripture by virtue of the *linguistic awareness* that she possesses, or what we might call her own commitment to what wisdom consists in. Despite the rhetorical parity Jenson establishes between modern critical theories and the creed, it seems to me that the church’s linguistic awareness is of a very different order from these critical theories. Critical theories tend to treat language as conventional, which is why it ends up

⁵⁹⁸ Ibid., 80.

⁵⁹⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁰ Ibid., 81.

appearing radically manipulable by human agendas. But for Jenson, Christians uphold the possibility that language has a grip on reality: ‘Believers in the triune God suppose that because the Creator and his Word are one God, reality and language can meet within this God’s creation...’⁶⁰² This is why Jenson can say that in practice, his ‘critical theory’ amounts to little more than reading under the supposition that the creed and the canonical text are true in a common sense way.⁶⁰³ Nor is this something about which she has *a priori* certainty; the supposition that she trusts by faith may turn out to be wrong, as Jenson often emphasizes. Nor does Jenson tell us whether, given his assumptions, modern critical theories might yet have something to teach, once the nihilism that their critical approach threatens is forestalled — though Jenson’s free use of historical criticism suggests that he would be open to *ad hoc* uses of other critical theories.

5.1.2. *Genesis 1:1*

Against this background, let us consider his interpretation of Genesis 1:1. Jenson focuses on ‘a difference about translation that is in fact a dispute about interpretation.’⁶⁰⁴ Should the verse be translated in the traditional manner as a main clause — ‘In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth’ — or as a subordinate clause, following historically-oriented translations like the NRSV: ‘In the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth...’? The former translation implies that creation has an absolute beginning in God. The latter implies that ‘God creates by working on something’ as in the many creation myths of the ancient Mediterranean

⁶⁰¹ Ibid.

⁶⁰² Ibid., 82.

⁶⁰³ Ibid., 82f.

⁶⁰⁴ Ibid., 89.

peoples, including Plato's reworking of this myth in *Timaeus*.⁶⁰⁵ Jenson regards this as a problem of 'interpretation' rather than 'translation' because the Hebrew can be construed in either way. We saw that, for Origen, there is a semantic dimension of language that is a function of the structure of an utterance and the relevant linguistic conventions, which pragmatic uses of the text presuppose.

Where the text itself is ambiguous, he appeals to his creedal critical theory:

A mind committed to the creed as its critical guide, and suspicious of human religion, may think: these interpreters-translators have 1:2 and its parallels in the history of religions in their sights, and suppose that, in view of the parallels, the chaos described there must be antecedent to or coeval with the creating mentioned in 1:1.⁶⁰⁶

Jenson does not question their historical reconstruction: 'myth of that sort may well have provided the language of 1:2.' The trouble is that 'The NRSV's translators have thus made a possible source of the text's language determine the text's interpretation and have then translated to fit that interpretation.'⁶⁰⁷ There is both a hermeneutic and a moral error here, Jenson argues, of which the latter is much the more important. By translating in this way, the NRSV 'softens the Old Testament's challenge to humanity's normal religious predilections.'⁶⁰⁸ We find an absolute beginning not only hard to imagine but difficult to accept, since it undermines our fallen hope to establish a foothold in something outside God. The traditional translation, by contrast, by insisting on our absolute beginning, upholds 'a drastically revisionist metaphysics' of creaturely

⁶⁰⁵ *Timaeus* 30A.

⁶⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 90.

⁶⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 90.

⁶⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 90.

contingency.⁶⁰⁹ The creed plays a critical role in this insight through its ‘unmitigated confession of God the Creator.’ By summarizing this element of the gospel narrative with such clarity, it resists our sinful attempts to distort it and enables us to see this dynamic at work in historicizing translations.

His focus on this moral problem implies that the hermeneutic failure, which he mentions only in passing, is primarily a symptom of this deeper rebellion against God. The hermeneutic failure is this: ‘modern exegetes often prefer to interpret reconstructed ancestor texts instead of the texts on the canonized page; after all, making such reconstructions is much of what they are trained to do.’⁶¹⁰ From our vantage point, what is most interesting is that the dispute between Jenson and these historians concerns too possible ways the same words may be *used*. Both agree that they might be and probably were used to speak of a demiurge forming the world from something pre-existent. But this need not preclude later editors, or theological readers, from using the words in a different way that is more consistent with the wisdom they find in the scriptures as a whole. Performativity helps account for the new use of the old book (Genesis) in the canonical context. Without violence to their semantics, the words of the old text may be used in a new way that reflects a new and deeper understanding. This re-use of language is only superficially different from the process by which language from ancient myths was reworked into Genesis 1. The community’s claim to truth, embodied in its communal linguistic awareness, is an important element of the church’s justification for hearing the words of Genesis 1:1 in a more absolute way.

Interestingly, Jenson goes on to offer an analogical reformulation of Genesis 1:1 in a manner similar to Origen’s novel formulations. The creed (and, he might have added, many scriptural

⁶⁰⁹ Ibid., 91.

⁶¹⁰ Ibid., 90.

texts) identify the creator God as the Father of Jesus. ‘Therefore we may gloss Genesis 1:1: “In the beginning the Father of Jesus created the heavens and the earth.”’⁶¹¹ The gloss is not, clearly, intended as a paraphrase, a claim about the ‘meaning’ of Genesis 1:1. It is rather an *inference* from Genesis 1:1 to some other formulation, on the basis of other information from the creed. The point is that the gloss is *true*, a well-spoken sentence similar to what we find in scripture. Jenson then draws a further, more speculative inference: ‘the contingency of the world is founded in the contingency of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection...the contingently particular story of Jesus *is* the universal truth of created reality; and therefore universal truth is itself a contingent fact and not an abstract necessity.’⁶¹² Like Origen, Jenson is known for bold formulations, as these instance. They can be explained on the same basis: both men as readers are constantly engaged not only in trying to understand what is written on the page, but to learn how to speak correctly in the present, a task which involves not only hermeneutics but also wisdom.

5.2. Phyllis Tribble: *Feminist Wisdom*

Phyllis Tribble offers another example of what wise interpretation of scripture might look like, one in which learning to speak the language of scripture takes place in the context of a deeply feminist wisdom. I do not know if she would identify herself as a ‘post-liberal,’ but her work certainly emerges in the same milieu in response to some of the same pressures. Her works *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*⁶¹³ and *Texts of Terror*⁶¹⁴ offer close readings of scriptural texts

⁶¹¹ Ibid., 92.

⁶¹² Ibid., 92.

⁶¹³ Phyllis Tribble, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978).

⁶¹⁴ Phyllis Tribble, *Texts of Terror* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984).

framed as experiments in biblical theology, at a time of crisis in the discipline. She draws on the work of Childs' canonical criticism and the emerging literary approaches to the Bible that influenced many post-liberals and theological interpreters. Still, she is usually labeled a biblical critic. She is, as Walter Brueggeman said in 1984, 'one of the most effective practitioners of rhetorical criticism, and...perhaps the most decisive voice in feminist exposition of biblical literature.'⁶¹⁵

5.2.1. *Learning to Tell Sad Stories*

In *Texts of Terror*, Phyllis Tribble sets herself the task of 'telling sad stories,' 'tales of terror with women as victims' — Hagar, Tamar, the unnamed concubine dismembered in Judges, and the daughter of Jephthah.⁶¹⁶ Her book, which began as oral lectures, is fittingly labeled 'telling' — for she seeks not only to understand these Biblical narratives but to put them to use in her own speech. Learning to tell sad stories as scripture does is part of learning to speak the language of scripture.

Tribble insists from the outset that this sort of reading requires careful attention to the particulars of these text, without prematurely bringing their stories under the control of some over-arching doctrinal principle or narrative. She lists four pitfalls that contemporary readers face in telling these stories, of which the last two are especially relevant:

Third, to subordinate the suffering of the four women to the suffering of the cross is spurious.

Their passion has its own integrity; no comparisons diminish the terror they knew. Fourth, to seek

⁶¹⁵ Tribble, *Texts of Terror*, ix.

⁶¹⁶ Ibid., 1.

the redemption of these stories in the resurrection is perverse. Sad stories do not have happy endings.⁶¹⁷

Even the cross and the resurrection must not function in such a way as to deprive these stories of their own inner logic. Her close readings unfold with little explicit reference to Christian ‘doctrine,’ not least because, as she implies here, it too often has the function of silencing even the few women whose stories have been included in the scriptures. If she formulates rules of reading, their function is (like Origen’s) to demand that she attend to the details of each particular story in its integrity. The rule that ‘sad stories do not have happy endings’ specifies one aspect of this integrity, very likely on inductive grounds. It is a habit of scripture, after all, that the stories of many Biblical women in fact end in tragedy; and like Origen, the function of this appeal is to multiply possibilities. She grants that Christ’s story ends in redemption, and implies that many other stories follow this pattern; she simply insists on the possibility that other stories end differently.

Alongside these pitfalls, she offers two key ‘guides for telling and hearing the tales.’ The first establishes a the relation between the Bible and the world which it represents.

To perceive the Bible as a mirror is one such sign. If art imitates life, scripture likewise reflects it in both holiness and horror. Reflections themselves neither mandate nor manufacture change; yet by enabling insight, they may inspire repentance. In other words, sad stories may yield new beginnings.⁶¹⁸

⁶¹⁷ Ibid., 2.

⁶¹⁸ Ibid.

To her rule that sad stories do not have happy endings, Tribble adds the counterpart that ‘sad stories may yield new beginnings.’ But in the context of her claim that the Bible mirrors the world, we see (as was already implicit) that the same rules that apply for telling biblical stories apply in the life of women whom the Bible’s tales reflect and imitate. As for Origen, so for Tribble the Bible speaks *rightly* about the world, so that the grammar of speech learned about the one informs and is informed by the other.⁶¹⁹

The many possible ways in which the bible mirrors the world, however, must be determined. The bible ‘reflects [life] in both holiness and horror.’ Horror is an interpretive possibility that some readers are liable to neglect. Tribble reminds us that the Bible may speak rightly precisely by reflecting a horror, for in so doing it may enable ‘insight’ into the horrors of life and inspire ‘repentance’ that may yield new beginnings. For this reason, interpreting the Bible is not separable from reflecting on the world, a point that Tribble underscores by recounting encounters with specific women that occasioned her choice to tell these stories:

Choice and chance inspire my telling these particular tales: hearing a black woman describe herself as a daughter of Hagar outside the covenant; seeing an abused woman on the streets of New York with a sign, “My name is Tamar”; reading reports of the dismembered body of a woman found in a trash can; attending worship services in memory of nameless women; and wrestling with the silence, absence, and opposition of God.⁶²⁰

These Biblical stories exemplify patterns of violence against real women in the real world, a fact to which these women sometimes call attention themselves in using the names of Biblical women to interpret their own experience — as ‘daughter of Hagar’ or ‘Tamar.’ The connection

⁶¹⁹ See also her discussion of ‘the clue between the text and the world’ in *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* 5-8.

between text and world enables telling these stories to occasion a repentance that leads to healing.

As a second guide, Tribble also appeals to the traditional principle that ‘scripture interprets scripture’.

Pondering an individual narrative evokes associations with other texts; studying other texts illuminates a single story. This kind of dialectic informs my telling of sad tales. Among the many scriptural allusions I employ throughout the essays, three sets of passages constitute leitmotifs: the suffering servant songs of Second Isaiah, the passion narratives of the Gospels, and the eucharistic sections of the Pauline Epistles. These familiar passages receive, however, unfamiliar applications. Women, not men, are suffering servants and Christ figures. Their stories govern the use of leitmotifs. Scripture thus interpreting scripture undercuts triumphalism and raises disturbing questions for faith.⁶²¹

As Tribble suggests here and we shall see in more detail further on, the method Tribble is describing has suggestive parallels to the ways we saw Origen seeking to learn the language of scripture. First, she uses ‘scriptural allusions,’ putting the old words of scripture to new uses as Origen did. Second, this activity is grounded in an inductive study of similar scriptural texts, and particularly those organizing texts that she calls ‘leitmotifs.’ In Origen’s terminology, we might say that she has identified scripture’s habit of telling sad stories and used these various stories to acquire the same capacity herself. But she insists that the stories of these women ‘govern’ the use of leitmotifs — which is to say that she seeks language in scripture appropriate to *their*

⁶²⁰ Tribble, *Texts of Terror*, 1f.

⁶²¹ *Ibid.*, 2f.

particular case. If doing so requires her to make ‘unfamiliar applications,’ we shall see that this includes formulating new scripture-like language by analogy with what is written.

Tribble describes her methodology as a form of ‘literary criticism,’ focused on the detailed study of the ‘final form’ of the canonical text using linguistic and rhetorical analysis. She takes advantage of more traditional historical critical work, but this literary vantage point evidently gives her a certain freedom to consider the relation between the text and the present world. This process is guided, in turn, by ‘feminism,’ which she calls a ‘perspective.’ In the terms of this dissertation, I am inclined to see ‘feminism’ as it functions in Tribble’s work as something like a summary of the wisdom she brings to bear as a reader of scripture. Like all learners, she begins *already knowing something*, and this knowledge is evidently shaped by her own experience as a woman. The wisdom of her ‘feminist hermeneutic’ is evident in its openness to context-specific judgment about the possible uses of any given text.

One [feminist] approach documents the case against women. It cites and evaluates long neglected data that show the inferiority, subordination, and abuse of the female in ancient Israel and the church. By contrast, a second approach discerns within the Bible critiques of patriarchy. It upholds forgotten texts and reinterprets familiar ones to shape a remnant theology that challenges the sexism of scripture. Yet a third approach [Tribble’s] incorporates the other two. It recounts tales of terror *in memoriam* to offer sympathetic readings of abused women. If the first perspective documents misogyny historically and sociologically, this one appropriates the data poetically and theologically. At the same time, it continues to search for the remnant in unlikely places...⁶²²

⁶²² Ibid., 3.

There is no way of knowing in advance which texts will be signs of misogyny and which signs of the remnant, or indeed how one text might function as both. Multiplying possibilities thus requires her to investigate, to examine the details of each particular text.

Thus I read Tribble as exemplifying one whose wisdom is ‘feminist’ in that it is rooted in the experiences of women, and who turns to these particular scriptures to develop her capacity to speak wisely about the reality of violence against women. We may even gloss her wisdom in the Stoic terms I applied to Origen. She wants to learn how to speak these texts *truly* — so that her telling of them enables the Bible to really mirrors the horror of the world — and *appropriately* — so that her telling of these stories provokes in her hearers the repentance they ought to.

5.2.2. *Learning to Speak Isaiah 53*

Against this background, let us consider her reading of one particular story: the rape of Tamar. Her reading of this story is especially fitting, since it is focused on wisdom themes. Tribble sees in this tale a commentary on the remarkable wisdom of Tamar, even in the face of extraordinary suffering, and the cruel foolishness of her brother Amnon. She gives the story the label, ‘The Royal Rape of Wisdom.’⁶²³ Tribble divides the tale into three episodes. In vv. 1-9c, Amnon plots the rape of his half-sister Tamar in conjunction with his advisor, Jonadab. In vv. 9d-18, Amnon lures Tamar to his bedroom by feigning illness, rapes her, and then sends her away desolate. In vv. 19-22, Tamar’s full brother Absalom counsels silence as the text foreshadows the revenge Absalom will take upon Amnon several years later. The rape of Tamar is both structurally and thematically the center of the story.

⁶²³ Ibid., 37.

I would like to call attention to several aspects of Tribble's exegesis that echo Origenian insights. First, Tribble uses the servant song in Isaiah 53 as what she calls a *leitmotif* in terms of which to understand Tamar's story. The first page of this chapter displays an image of Tamar's name on a tombstone with the words, 'A woman of sorrow and acquainted with grief,' applying to Tamar words from Isaiah 53 typically applied by Christians to Christ — after changing the subject from 'man' to 'woman.' Later, in commenting on the narrator's description of Tamar as 'desolate,' Tamar expands upon these words from Isaiah:

Raped, despised, and rejected by a man, Tamar is a woman of sorrows and acquainted with grief. She is cut off from the land of the living, stricken for the sins of her brother; yet she herself has done no violence and there is no deceit in her mouth. No matter what Absalom may plan for the future, the narrator understands the endless suffering of her present.

Compare these verses from Isaiah 53:

3 He is despised and rejected by men,
A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief...
8 For he was cut off from the land of the living,
For the transgressions of My people He was stricken...
9 Because He had done no violence,
nor was any deceit in His mouth...

In the introduction, she labeled this way of using scripture 'allusion.' This indicates that she puts the same words of Isaiah 53 to a new use in a new context. Although her use of the words with

reference to Tamar clearly does not require establishing that the prophet *intended* these words to be applied to Tamar, an allusion is not for that reason arbitrary. Rather, the legitimacy of applying the words to Tamar turns simply on the kinds of criteria we always use when determining what to say on what occasion. She offers these words as *appropriate* to Tamar, by appeal to the linguistic intuitions of contemporary readers, who after all know something about rejection and sorrow, about violence and deceit, which Tribble assumes they will recognize in Tamar's case as well.

She does not, of course, apply the exact words of Isaiah, but rather a variation that makes their subject female and turns the servant's opponent into a single individual (not 'men' but 'a man,' not 'my people' but 'her brother'). We may suppose that behind this usage lies the sort of analogical argument we saw in Origen: as Tamar in her sufferings is analogous to the one of whom this passage speaks, so the language appropriate to the one is appropriate to the other.

Her reuse of this passage suggests several things. First, it calls attention to the way Isaiah's text privileges men, even as it shows that one possible response to this privilege is to take up words applied to a man and use them with reference to a woman instead. Second, it suggests that Tamar's story and these other texts of terror may lead to insights into the sufferings recounted in the servant songs. We saw that in her introduction, Tribble insists on a rule of speech: sad stories do not have happy endings. Although she does not recall this point here, her use of Isaiah 53 is a reminder that *as narrated in Isaiah*, the 'sad story' of the suffering servant also does not have a happy ending. Isaiah 53 tells of one who suffers for the sins of others, but it gives no hint that this suffering culminates in resurrection, only that 'he was cut off from the land of the living.' Surprisingly, Tribble hints that the *most appropriate* use of Isaiah 53 is for victims of terror who saw no happy ending. Third — and notwithstanding her initial insistence that these stories have

their own integrity — the Christological echoes of this text are, at least for Christian readers, inescapable. Tribble may perhaps be inviting us to see a secret affinity between the crucified Christ and those women who have been victims of violence and terror — and in this way, to see glimpses of the possibility that, as she says, ‘sad stories may yield new beginnings.’ In this case, as Tamar observes, the narrative hints at this in the way Absalom shows compassion on his sister, seeks justice on her behalf, and celebrates her legacy by naming his own daughter ‘Tamar’ (14:27). ‘From aunt to niece have passed name and beauty so that rape and desolation have not the final word in the story of Tamar.’⁶²⁴

5.2.3. *The Grammar of ‘Wisdom’ and ‘Love’*

Another Origenian aspect of Tribble’s reading of this story is the way she learns insights that turn on the ambiguity of the key words ‘wise’ and ‘love.’ These ambiguities yield insights because the ambiguous grammar of these words corresponds to the ambiguity of the phenomena they signify. There is wisdom, and there is a foolishness that masquerades as wisdom. There is love, and there is lust that masquerades as love.

Take wisdom first. In v. 3, the text relates that Jonadab is a ‘very crafty’ man. The Hebrew word Tribble translates ‘crafty’ is *hakam*, usually translated ‘wise.’ Jonadab shows his ‘wisdom’ by devising the scheme with which Amnon will rape Tamar. But this wisdom is in fact foolishness, for it leads ultimately to Amnon’s downfall. Tamar herself states this at the very moment when Amnon is trying to rape her.

‘I, where would I carry my shame?’

⁶²⁴ Ibid., 55.

You, you would be like one of the fools in Israel' (13:13ab)

Amnon's course is not wise but foolish, for it forebodes disaster for both of them. Tamar pleads that Amnon marry her instead. Tribble comments that, 'her words are honest and poignant; they acknowledge female servitude,' which indicates that Tamar possesses a tragic wisdom appropriate to her circumstances, by which she acts as best she can notwithstanding the injustice which makes her impotent.⁶²⁵ Tamar's reference to 'fools' hints at her own wisdom by contrast; and so Tribble proposes new language for Tribble that goes beyond what the text explicitly says, even giving the Hebrew. Tribble is a 'wise woman,' an *issah hakama*.⁶²⁶ In this light, the story is about the true wisdom of Tamar over against the false wisdom of Jonadab:

Though Jonadab advised Amnon to seek David's help, how different was that counsel. Over against Jonadab stands Tamar. Wisdom opposes craftiness. In light of her words, not only Amnon but also Jonadab is a fool. Yet in this story victory belongs to the fools.⁶²⁷

For Tribble, then, this story is a model of wise speech under the conditions of powerlessness — tragic speech that despite its wisdom cannot avert disaster — and a testimony to the deceptive craftiness by which the powerful effect suffering and bring about disaster. These insights are expressed in the shifting grammar of the word *hakam*, with its double meaning of 'wise' and 'crafty.'

⁶²⁵ Ibid., 45.

⁶²⁶ Ibid., 48.

⁶²⁷ Ibid., 46.

More briefly, we may note a similar ambiguity in the word ‘love’ (‘*ahab*’). At the beginning of the story, the narrator states that Amnon ‘loved’ Tamar (vv. 1, 4). But immediately after the rape is accomplished, the narrator says,

Then hated her Amnon a hatred great indeed.

Truly great(er) the hatred which he hated her than the love with which he loved her. (13:15ab)

Trible’s comment is apropos: ‘Violence in turn discloses hatred, the underside of lust. With profound insight, the story teller interprets the terror of the act.’⁶²⁸ As ‘wisdom’ has its false counterpart is Jonadab’s craftiness, so has ‘love’ its false counterpart in lust: ‘This line shows that all along the desire was lust, not love. Having gratified itself, lust deepens into hatred.’⁶²⁹ This insight rings true; yet it is worth observing that *the text* on its face seems to say something different. At each point the narrator states that Amnon ‘loved’ Tamar, even here when he describes this love passing into hatred. *How does Trible know that Amnon’s ‘love’ was lust all along?* She has, I believe, done just what Origen says we must: she has interpreted the text by bringing her wisdom to bear on the subject matter. She knows something about love, knows that true love cannot express itself as violent rape. The wise among her readers know this too from experience. While on its surface, the text seems to naively attribute to Amnon a love that passes into hatred, Trible draws on her wisdom to identify a deeper meaning, a ‘profound insight’ into the operations of lust and hatred. If the ambiguous grammar of the text has something to teach us about the world, wise experience of the world also helps us recognize this ambiguity in the text.

⁶²⁸ Ibid.

⁶²⁹ Ibid., 47.

5.2.4. *Narrowing the Contexts*

Finally, in her conclusion to this reading, Tribble uses the Tamar story to develop what she calls an ‘ironic reflection’ on wisdom in the book of Proverbs.

As a textbook for young men, Proverbs often exploits women for its own purposes. The foreign female symbolizes the wicked woman from whom Dame Wisdom can protect the male. Just such a contrast prevails when a teacher exhorts a young man:

Say to wisdom, “My sister are you,”
 and call insight an intimate friend
 to preserve you from the loose woman,
 from the adventurer with her smooth words.

(Prov. 7:4-5, RSV)

Only here does Proverbs designate wisdom “sister.” The familiar term resonates with our story because Amnon does call wisdom his sister. Yet at this point ironies commence...Obedient to the first line of the proverb, Amnon did say to Tamar the wise woman, “My sister are you.” His embrace, however, produced a royal rape of wisdom...Saying to wisdom “My sister are you,” and calling on an intimate friend [Jonadab] for insight, Amnon was truly preserved “from the loose woman, from the adventurer with her smooth words.” Yet *she* was never his temptation. His evil was his own lust, and from it others needed protection. Hence, Amnon’s behavior exposes the misogynist assumption of this proverb to inspire a different perspective. Moreover, compassion for Tamar requires a new vision. If sister wisdom can protect a young man from the loose woman, who will protect sister woman from the loose man, symbolized not by a foreigner

but by her very own brother? Who will preserve sister wisdom from the adventurer, the rapist with his smooth words, lecherous eyes, and grasping hands? In answering the question, Israel is found wanting—*and so are we*.⁶³⁰

Trible's reading takes Proverbs 7:4-5 as a key to what one can only call an allegorical reading of 2 Samuel 13. Both texts contain a sister who symbolizes wisdom and an intimate friend who offers insight. But the two texts proceed along very different lines. In Proverbs, sister wisdom protects the young man from the danger represented by the loose and foreign woman. In 2 Samuel, sister wisdom is herself in need of protection from her brother and the 'intimate friend' from whom he seeks counsel. This reading calls attention to the androcentrism of the book of Proverbs, once again by suggesting new forms of scripture-like speech. If there is a loose woman, there is also a 'loose man' from whom the wise woman needs protection — from the very young man to whom alone Proverbs is directed. By seeing this possibility, Trible invites her readers to consider our own complicity in the continued violence against women, and to repent of it.

I would like to observe one feature of this reading that situates Trible herself within the very wisdom tradition she criticizes for its misogyny. Trible does not seem to reject the validity of Proverbs 7:4-5 altogether. Instead, at several points she goes out of her way to imply that it has its own limited range of appropriate applications. 'Amnon was truly preserved from the loose woman,' she says, just as the proverb predicts. It is simply that the one thing needful has in his case been omitted, namely, the evil and violence that originates in *his own* lust. Again she says, 'If sister wisdom can preserve a young man from the loose woman...' implying that, sometimes, she *does*. Her strategy is not to contradict this proverb outright, but rather to curtail the range of

⁶³⁰ Ibid., 56f.

cases in which it may be applied. Drawing on her own feminist wisdom and on what she has learned from the story of Tamar, she identifies another set of cases that the words offered in Proverbs tend to neglect (especially because of their underlying misogyny). To remedy this, she proposes new speech and exhorts is to new action appropriate to those cases as well. It may be — Tribble does not tell us — that the cases in which sister wisdom needs protection from the rapist are far more than those in which the young man needs protection from the loose woman. Proverbs 7:4-5 may be the exception rather than the rule.

In my second chapter I showed that Origen interprets scripture by asking about the occasions on which scriptural words are rightly said. This strategy permits a reader to accept the validity of a scriptural formulation while severely curtailing the range of its application. This is arguably what Tribble is doing here, and in doing so, she is imitating the wisdom tradition itself, while also showing how the wisdom tradition can be a liberating one. In her reading of Proverbs through Tamar's story, she shows how the *words* of even a patriarchal text may express wisdom; and she shows that one strategy for discovering this wisdom is to construe words that the privileged one understands as universal as applying in some more restricted set of cases, and then to use her own wisdom to speak new words in accordance with the scriptures.

6. Conclusion

The account of wisdom I have defended here is highly formal and procedural. It underdetermines the full content of what Christians might want to say about scripture, let alone what they might want to say in speaking the language of scripture. In ordinary time, while Christians would surely not want to deny that scripture is wise, they might for very good reason

want to offer more determinate accounts of scripture's function — as, for example, inspired discourse, or testimony, or the speech of God, or whatever. To say that scripture is 'wise discourse' does not say enough. Yet *in a time of hermeneutic crisis*, this underdetermination is precisely what is needful. In our day we have lost confidence in our determinate accounts of scripture's function and the rules by which we read it. To return to scripture as wisdom is to come to scripture in a manner appropriate to those who have lost confidence, as those who recognize their need to learn new rules, and indeed their need to learn *how to learn* new rules.

These are also, it seems to me, the conditions under which Christians ought especially to return to Origen. Perhaps no Christian reader has so aligned his whole person with the scriptures, and perhaps in no Christian has the fire of the Word burned so intensely — to heal, but also to destroy. There is a reason that a community more settled in its orthodoxies should look suspiciously on such a man. But if our problem is lingering arbitrariness and the physical and spiritual violences wrought by unreason; if we lack the capacity to imagine rules of reasoning adequate to the task of interpreting scripture in our time; then we need a man like Origen to model the rigorous pursuit of a deeper and more daring rationality.

Works Cited

1. Primary Texts

Alcinous / Albinus

The Handbook of Platonism.

Platonis dialogi secundum Thrasylli tetralogias dispositi, vol. 6. K.F. Hermann, ed. Leipzig: Teubner, 1853: 147-151.

The Handbook of Platonism. John Dillon, trans. with introduction and commentary. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993.

Apollonius Dyscolus

On Syntax.

De la construction. J. Lallot, ed. *Histoire des doctrines de l'Antiquité classique* 19. Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1997.

The Syntax of Apollonius Dyscolus. Fred W. Householder, trans. with commentary. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1981.

Aristotle

The Complete Works of Aristotle. The Revised Oxford Translation. Vols. 1-2. Jonathan Barnes, ed. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984.

On Interpretation

Aristotelis categoriae et liber de interpretatione. L. Minio-Paluello, ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1949 (repr. 1966): 49-72.

Posterior Analytics

Aristotelis analytica priora et posteriora. W.D. Ross, ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964 (repr. 1968): 3-183.

Topics

Aristotelis topica et sophistici elenchi. W.D. Ross, ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958 (repr. 1970): 1-189.

Rhetoric

Aristotelis ars rhetorica. W.D. Ross, ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959 (repr. 1964).

Augustine

On Dialectic

De Dialectica. B. Darrell Jackson, trans. with introduction and notes. J. Pinborg, ed. Boston: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1975.

Cicero

On Invention

On Invention. Best Kind of Orator. Topics. H. M. Hubbell, trans. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1949.

On the Orator.

Cicero: De Oratore, Book III. David Mankin, ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.

Cicero on the Ideal Orator (De Oratore). J. M. May and J. Wisse, trans. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.

Clement

Stromata

Clemens Alexandrinus, vols. 2, 3rd edn. and 3, 2nd edn. L. Früchtel, O. Stählin, and U. Treu, eds. *Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller* 52(15), 17. Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2:1960; 3:1970: 2:3-518; 3:3-102.

Cornutus

Compendium of Greek Theology.

Cornuti theologiae Graecae compendium. C. Lang, ed. Leipzig: Teubner, 1881.

Diogenes Laertius

Lives of Eminent Philosophers.

Diogenis Laertii vitae philosophorum, 2 vols. H.S. Long, ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964.

Epictetus.

Discourses.

Epicteti dissertationes ab Arriano digestae. H. Schenkl, ed. Leipzig: Teubner, 1916: 7-454.

Eusebius

Ecclesiastical History

Eusèbe de Césarée. Histoire ecclésiastique, 3 vols. G. Bardy, ed. SC 31, 41, 55. Paris:

Éditions du Cerf, 1:1952; 2:1955; 3:1958,

Ecclesiastical History, Books 6-10. Roy J. Deferrari, trans. Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1955.

Galen

On the Doctrines of Hippocrates and Plato.

Galen. On the doctrines of Hippocrates and Plato. P.H. De Lacy, ed. Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1978.

On His Own Writings

Claudii Galeni Pergameni scripta minora, vol. 2. G. Helmreich, J. Marquardt, and I. Müller, eds. Leipzig: Teubner, 1891: 91-124.

On Hygiene

Galen de sanitate tuenda libri vi. K. Koch, ed. Leipzig: Teubner, 1923.

On the Method of Healing, to Glaucon

Claudii Galeni opera omnia, vol. 11. C.G. Kühn, ed. Leipzig: Knobloch, 1826 (repr. Hildesheim: Olms, 1965): 1-146.

On the Order of His Own Books

Claudii Galeni Pergameni scripta minora, vol. 2. G. Helmreich, J. Marquardt, and I. Müller, eds. Leipzig: Teubner, 1891: 80-90.

On the Sects

Claudii Galeni Pergameni scripta minora, vol. 3. G. Helmreich, J. Marquardt, and I. Müller, eds. Leipzig: Teubner, 1893: 1-32.

Three Treatises on the Nature of Science. R. Walzer and M. Frede, trans. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1985: 1-20.

On the Use of Parts of the Body

Galenus de usu partium libri xvii. G. Helmreich, ed. Leipzig: Teubner, 1:1907; 2:1909: 1:1-496; 2:1-451.

New Testament

Novum Testamentum Graece, 27th ed. E. Nestle, E. Nestle, B. Aland, and K. Aland. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1993-1996.

Origen

Homilies on Genesis

Origenes Werke 6: Homilien zum Hexateuch in Rufins Übersetzung. Part 1: Die Homilien zu Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus. W. A. Baehrens, ed. Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1920: 1–144.
Homilies on Genesis and Exodus. R. E. Heine, trans. FOTC 71. Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1982: 47–224.

Homilies on Exodus

Origenes Werke 6: Homilien zum Hexateuch in Rufins Übersetzung. Part 1: Die Homilien zu Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus. W. A. Baehrens, ed. Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1920: 145–279.
Homilies on Genesis and Exodus. R. E. Heine, trans. FOTC 71. Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1982: 227–387.

Homilies on Numbers

Origenes Werke 6: Homilien zum Hexateuch in Rufins Übersetzung. Part 2: Die Homilien zu Numeri, Josua und Judices. W. A. Baehrens, ed. Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1921: 3–285.
Homilies on Numbers. T. P. Scheck, trans. C. A. Hall, ed. Ancient Christian Texts. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009.

Homilies on Joshua

Origenes Werke 6: Homilien zum Hexateuch in Rufins Übersetzung. Part [2](#): Die Homilien zu Numeri, Josua und Judices. W. A. Baehrens, ed. Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1921: 286–463.

Homilies on Joshua. B. J. Bruce, trans. C. White, ed. FOTC 105. Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2002.

Homilies on Samuel

Homélie Sur Samuel. Nautin, P. and M. T. Nautin, ed. SC 328. Paris: Cerf, 1986.

Origen. J. W. Trigg, trans. London: Routledge, 1998: 199–209.

Homilies on the Psalms

Die neue Psalmenhomilien. Eine kritische Edition des Codex monacensis Graecus 314.

Lorenzo Perrone, ed., with Marina Molin Pradel, Emmanuela Prinzivalli, and Antonio Cacciari. Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2015.

Fragments on the Psalms

La chaîne palestinienne sur le Psaume 118. Vol. 1. M. Harl and G. Dorival, ed. SC 189.

Paris: Cerf, 1972.

Analecta sacra spicilegio Solesmensi parata, vols. 2 and 3. J.B. Pitra, ed. Paris: Tusculum, 2:1884; 3:1883: 2.444-483; 3.1-236, 242-245, 248-364.

Commentary on the Song of Songs

Origenes Werke 8: Homilien zu Samuel 1, zum Hohelied und zu den Propheten, Kommentar zum Hohelied in Rufins und Hieronymus' Übersetzung. W. A. Baehrens, ed. Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1925, 61–241.

The Song of Songs: Commentary and Homilies. R. P. Lawson, trans. ACW 26. New York: Newman Press, 1957, 21–263.

Homilies on Jeremiah

Homélies sur Jérémie. P. Nautin, ed. SC 232, 238. Paris: Cerf, 1976–1977.

Homilies on Jeremiah. Homilies on 1 Kings 28. J. C. Smith, trans. FOTC 97. Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1998: 3–273.

Homilies on Ezekiel

Origenes Werke 8: Homilien zu Samuel 1, zum Hohelied und zu den Propheten, Kommentar zum Hohelied in Rufins und Hieronymus' Übersetzung. W. A. Baehrens, ed. Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1925: 319–454.

Homilies 1–14 on Ezekiel. T. P. Scheck, trans. ACW 62, New York: Paulist Press, 2010.

Commentary on Matthew

Origenes Werke 10: Origenes Matthäuserklärung, 1. Die griechisch erhaltenen Tomoi. E. Klostermann and E. Benz, ed. Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1935–1937.

Commentary on Matthew, books 1, 2 and 10–14. J. Patrick, trans. *Ante-Nicene Fathers* 9, 411–512.

Series of Commentaries on Matthew

Origenes Werke 11: Origenes Matthäuserklärung, 2. Die lateinische Übersetzung der Commentariorum Series. 2nd ed. E. Klostermann, E. Benz, and U. Treu, ed. Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1976.

Homilies on Luke

Origenes Werke 9: Die Homilien zu Lukas in der Übersetzung des Hieronymus und die griechischen Reste der Homilien und des Lukaskommentars. 2nd ed. M. Rauer, ed. Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1959.

Homilies on Luke. J. T. Lienhardt, trans. FOTC 94. Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1996.

Commentary on John

Origenes Werke 4: Der Johanneskommentar. E. Preuschen, ed. Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1903.
Commentary on the Gospel of John. Books 1–10. R. E. Heine, trans. FOTC 80. Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1989.

Commentary on the Gospel of John. Books 13–32. R. E. Heine, trans. FOTC 89. Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1993.

Commentary on Romans

Der Römerbriefkommentar des Origenes: Kritische Ausgabe der Übersetzung Rufins. Vols. 1–3. C. P. Hammond Bammel, ed. Freiburg: Herder, 1990, 1997, 1998.

Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans. Books 1–5. T. P. Scheck, trans. FOTC 103. Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2001.

Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans. Books 6–10. T. P. Scheck, trans. FOTC 104.

Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2002.

Exhortation to Martyrdom

Origenes Werke 1: Die Schrift vom Martyrium, Buch 1–4 gegen Celsus. P. Koetschau, ed.

Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1899: 3–47.

Origen: An Exhortation to Martyrdom, Prayer, First Principles: Book IV, Prologue to the

Commentary on the Song of Songs, Homily 27 on Numbers. R. A. Greer, trans. and
intro. H. U. von Balthasar, preface. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1979: 41–79.

Against Celsus

Contre Celse. SC 132, 136, 147, 150, 227. M. Borret, ed. Paris: Cerf, 1967, 1968, 1969,
1969, 1976.

Origen: Contra Celsum. H. Chadwick, trans. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953.

On Prayer

Origenes Werke 2: Buch 5–8 gegen Celsus, die Schrift vom Gebet. P. Koetschau. Leipzig: J.

C. Hinrichs, 1899: 297–403.

Origen: An Exhortation to Martyrdom, Prayer, First Principles: Book IV, Prologue to the

Commentary on the Song of Songs, Homily 27 on Numbers. R. A. Greer, trans. and
intro. H. U. von Balthasar, preface. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1979: 81–170.

On First Principles

Origenes. Vier Bücher von den Prinzipien. 3rd ed. H. Görgemanns and H. Karpp, ed.

Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1992.

Origen: On First Principles. G. W. Butterworth, trans. Gloucester: Peter Smith, 1973.

Hexapla

Field, F, ed. *Origenis Hexaplorum quae supersunt sive veterum interpretum graecorum in totum Vetus Testamentum fragmenta.* 2 Vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1875.

Philocalia

Philocalie, 1–20: Sur les Écritures. M. Harl, ed. SC 302. Paris: Cerf, 1983.

The Philocalia of Origen: A Compilation of Selected Passages from Origen's Works made by St. Gregory of Nazianzus and St. Basil of Caesarea. G. Lewis, trans. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1911.

Plato

Complete Works. John M. Cooper, ed. with introduction and notes. D. S. Hutchinson, ass. ed. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997.

Pseudo-Herodian

On Solecism and Barbarism.

A. Nauck, *Lexicon Vindobonense.* St. Petersburg: Eggers, 1867 (repr. Hildesheim: Olms, 1965): 294-312.

Quintilian

Institutes of Oratory

Institutio Oratoria. H.E. Butler, trans. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge: Harvard University press, 1920.

Septuagint

Septuaginta, 2nd ed. Alfred Rahlfs and Robert Hanhart, eds. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006.

Sextus Empiricus

Against the Mathematicians

Sexti Empirici Opera rec. H. Mutschmann, vol iii: *Adversus Mathematicos Libros I-VI continens*, iterum. J. Mau, ed. Leipzig: Teubner, 1961.

Against the Grammarians (Adversus Mathematicos I). D. L. Blank, trans.with introduction and commentary. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998.

Outline of Pyrrhonism

Outlines of Phyrrhonism. R. G. Bury, trans. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1933.

Sextus Empiricus: Outlines of Scepticism, 2nd ed. J. Annas and J. Barnes, eds. Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Varro

On the Latin Language

On the Latin Language: Books VIII-X and Fragments. Roland G. Kent, trans. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1938.

2. Secondary Texts

Adams, Nicholas. *Eclipse of Grace: Divine and Human Action in Hegel.* Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013.

Alexander, Elizabeth Shanks. *Transmitting Mishnah: The Shaping Influence of Oral Tradition.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

Allen, James. 'The Stoics on the origin of language and the foundations of etymology,' in *Language and Learning: Philosophy of Language in the Hellenistic Age.* Dorothy Frede and Brad Inwood, eds. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005: 14-35

Atherton, Catherine. 'What Every Grammarian Knows.' *The Classical Quarterly* 46:1 (1996): 239-260.

—. *The Stoics on Ambiguity.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

Babstock, D.G. 'Medical Theory and Theology in Origen' in *Origeniana Tertia.* R.P.C. Hanson and Henri Crouzel, eds. Rome: Edizioni dell'Ateneo, 1985: 191-199.

Barker, Andrew *Scientific Method in Ptolemy's Harmonics.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Barnes, Jonathan. 'Galen, Christians, logic,' in *Logical Matters: Essays in Ancient Philosophy II.* Maddelena Banelli. ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2012: 1-21.

Barr, James. *Holy Scripture: Canon, Authority, Criticism.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983.

- Barton, John. *The Nature of Biblical Criticism*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2007.
- , ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Biblical Interpretation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- Barton, Stephen C. 'New Testament Interpretation as Performance.' *Scottish Journal of Theology* 52 (1999): 179-208.
- Batinski, Emily. 'Seneca's Response to Stoic Hermeneutics,' *Mnemosyne*, fourth series, 46:1 (Feb. 1993): 69-77.
- Berchman, Robert. *From Philo to Origen: Middle Platonism in Transition*. Chico: Scholars Press, 1984.
- Berner, Ulrich. *Origenes*. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1981.
- Bigg, C. *The Christian Platonists of Alexandria*. Oxford: 1886.
- Billings, J. Todd. *The Word of God for the People of God: An Entryway to the Theological Interpretation of Scripture*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010.
- Blank, David, trans. with introduction and commentary. *Against the Grammarians*. Sextus Empiricus. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998.
- . 'Analogy, Anomaly, and Apollonius Dyscolus' in *Language*. S. Everson, ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.
- Blank, David and Catherine Atherton. 'The Stoic Contribution to Traditional Grammar,' in *The Cambridge Companion to the Stoics*, Brad Inwood, ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003): 310-327.
- Boyarin, Daniel. *Intertextuality and the Reading of Midrash*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990.

- Boys-Stones, G. R. 'The Stoics' Two Types of Allegory' in *Metaphor, Allegory, and the Classical Tradition: Ancient Thought and Modern Revisions*. G. R. Boys-Stones, ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003: 189-216.
- Braaten, Carl E. and Robert W. Jenson, eds. *Reclaiming the Bible for the Church*. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995.
- Brunschwig, Jacques, ed. *Les Stoïciens et leur Logique*, 2nd. ed. Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 2006.
- Buchinger, Harold. *Pascha bei Origenes*. Innsbruck-Wien: Tyrolia-Verlag, 2005.
- Byassee, Jason. *Praise Seeking Understanding: Reading the Psalms with Augustine*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007.
- Cadiou, René. *La Jeunesse d'Origène, histoire de l'école d'Alexandrie au début du iiiie siècle*. Paris: Beauchesne, 1935.
- Chadwick, Henry. 'Origen, Celsus, and the Stoa.' *JTS* 48:189/190 (January/April 1947): 34-49.
— . *Early Christian Thought and the Classical Tradition*. London: Oxford University Press, 1966.
- Chin, Catherine. 'Origen and Christian Naming: Textual Exhaustion and the Boundaries of Gentility in Commentary on John 1.' *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 14:4 (Winter 2006): 407-436
- Clark, Elizabeth A. *The Origenist Controversy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992.
- Colish, Marcia. *The Stoic Tradition from Antiquity to the Middle Ages: 1. Stoicism in Classical Latin Literature*. New York: Brill, 1990.

Cooper, Glen. 'Astronomy, Medicine, and Galen: The Beginnings of Empirical Science,' in *The Traditional Mediterranean: Essays from the Ancient to the Early Modern Era*. Jayoung Che and Nicholas C. J. Pappas, eds. (ATINER, 2011): 161-171.

Crivelli, Paolo. 'Indefinite Propositions and Anaphora in Stoic Logic.' *Phronesis* 39.2 (1994): 187-206.

Crouzel, Henri. *Origène et la 'connaissance mystique.'* Bruges/Paris, 1961.

—. 'Pourquoi Origene refuse-t-il le sens littéral dans ses homélies sur l'Hexateuch?' *Bulletin de Littérature Ecclésiastique* 70 (1969): 241-63

—. *Origen*. A.S. Worrall, trans. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998.

Daley, Brian E. 'Origen's *De principiis*: A Guide to the "Principles" of Christian Scriptural Interpretation,' in *Nova et Vetera: Patristic Studies in Honor of Thomas Patrick Halton*. John F. Petruccione, ed. Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1998: 3-21.

—. 'Is Patristic Exegesis Still Usable? Reflections on Early Christian Interpretation of the Psalms.' *Communio* 29 (Spring 2002): 185-216.

Daniélou, Jean. *Origen*. Walter Mitchell, trans. London: Sheen and Ward Ltd., 1955.

Davis, Ellen and Richard Hays, eds. *The Art of Reading Scripture*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003.

Dawson, David. *Allegorical Readers and Cultural Revision In Ancient Alexandria*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992.

—. *Christian Figural Reading and the Fashioning of Identity*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002.

De Faye, Eugene. *Origen and His Work*. Fred Rothwell, trans. London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1926.

- De Lacy, Phillip. 'Stoic Views of Poetry,' AJP 69 (1948): 245-63
- De Lange, Nicholas. *Origen and the Jews: Studies in Jewish-Christian Relations in Third-Century Palestine*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976.
- De Lubac, Henri. *History and Spirit*. Anne Englund Nash, trans. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2007.
- . *Medieval Exegesis. Volume 1: The Four Senses of Scripture*. Mark Sebanc, trans. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998.
- De Margerie, Bertrand. *An Introduction to the History of Exegesis, Vol 1: The Greek Fathers*. Lenord Maluf, trans. Petersham: St. Bede's, 1993.
- Denis, J.-F. *De la philosophie d'Origène*. Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1884.
- Dewey, John. *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1938.
- Dillon, John M. *The Middle Platonists: a Study of Platonism, 80 B.c. to A.d. 220*. London: Duckworth, 1977.
- . 'The Magical Power of Names in Origen and Later Platonism,' in *Origeniana Tertia*. R.P.C. Hanson and Henri Crouzel, eds. Rome: Edizioni dell'Ateneo, 1985: 203-16.
- Dively Lauro, Elizabeth Ann. *The Soul and Spirit of Scripture Within Origen's Exegesis*. Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2005.
- Eco, Umberto. *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984.
- Egli, U. 'The Stoic Concept of Anaphora,' in *Semantics from Different Points of View*. R. Bäuerle, U. Egli, and A. von Stechow, eds. New York: Springer, 1979: 266-83
- Fehling, D. 'Varro und die grammatische Lehre von der Analogie und der FLexion.' *Glotta* 35 (1956): 214-70; 36 (1957): 48-100.

- Ford, David. *Christian Wisdom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Ford, David and Graham Stanton. *Reading Texts, Seeking Wisdom: Scripture and Theology*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003.
- Fowl, Stephen. *Engaging Scripture*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1997.
- , ed. *The Theological Interpretation of Scripture*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1997.
- Fraade, Stephen. *From Tradition to Commentary: Torah and Its Interpretation in the Midrash Sifre to Deuteronomy*. New York: SUNY Press, 1993.
- Frede, Michael. *Die stoische Logik*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1974.
- . *Essays in Ancient Philosophy*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987.
- . ‘The Stoic notion of *lekton*,’ in *Language*. Stephen Everson, ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994: 109-128.
- Frege, Gottlieb. ‘Sense and Reference.’ *Philosophical Review* 57, no. 3 (May 1948): 209-230.
- Frei, Hans. *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974.
- Frye, Northrop. *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957.
- Fulkerson, Mary McClintock. *Changing the Subject: Women’s Discourses and Feminist Theology*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994.
- Gadamer, Hans-Georg. *Truth and Method*, 2nd ed. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, trans. New York: Continuum, 2004.
- Gamble, Harry. *Books and Readers in the Early Church*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995.
- Gögler, Rolf. *Zur Theologie des biblischen Wortes bei Origenes*. Dusseldorf: Patmos, 1963.
- Grant, R.M. *The Earliest Lives of Jesus*. London: SPCK, 1961.
- . ‘Paul, Galen, and Origen.’ *Journal of Theological Studies* 34:2 (Oct. 1983): 533-536.

- . *Heresy and Criticism*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993.
- Grice, H.P. 'Logic and Conversation,' in *Studies in the Way of Words*. H.P. Grice. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989: 22-40.
- Hadot, Pierre. *Philosophy as a Way of Life*. Arnold I. Davidson, ed. Michael Chase, trans. Oxford: Blackwell, 1995.
- Hällstrom, Gunnar af. *Fides Simpliciorum according to Origen of Alexandria*. Helsinki: Societas Scientiarum Fennica, 1984.
- Hankinson, R. J. 'Hellenistic biological sciences,' in *Routledge History of Philosophy, volume 2: From Aristotle to Augustine*. David Furley, ed. New York: Routledge, 1997: 320-355.
- Hankinson, R. J. 'Epistemology,' in *The Cambridge Companion to Galen*. R. J. Hankinson, ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008: 158-178.
- Hanson, R. P. C. 'Origen's Interpretation of Scripture Exemplified from his Philocalia.' *Hermantenna* 63 (1944): 47-58.
- . *Allegory and Event*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002.
- Hardy, Dan. *God's Ways with the World: Thinking and Practising Christian Faith*. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996.
- Harl, Marguerite. *Origène et la fonction révélatrice du Verbe incarné*. Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1958.
- . 'Origène et la sémantique du langage biblique,' *Vigiliae Christianae* 26, no. 3 (Oct. 1972): 161-187.
- . 'Origène et les interprétations patristique grecques de l'«obscurité» biblique,' *Vigiliae Christianae* 36 (1982): 334-371.

—. ‘Les trois livres de Salomon et les trois parties de la philosophie dans les prologues des *Commentaires sur le Cantique des Cantiques*,’ in Jürgen Dummer, ed., *Texte und Textkritik* (TU 133; Berlin, 1987), 249-269.

Harl, Marguerite and N. R. M De Lange, ed. and introduction. *Philocalie, 1-20 : Sur Les Écritures*. Paris: Cerf, 1983.

Heine, Ronald E. ‘Stoic logic as handmaid to exegesis and theology in Origen’s commentary on the Gospel of John.’ *The Journal of Theological Studies* 44.1 (1993): 90-117.

—. ‘Reading the Bible with Origen’ in *The Bible in Greek Christian Antiquity*. Paul M. Blowers, ed. and trans. Notre Dame: Notre Dame Press, 1997: 131-148.

Heine, Ronald E. *Origen: Scholarship in the Service of the Church, Christian Theology in Context*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Hughes, Kevin. ‘The “Fourfold Sense”: De Lubac, Blondel and Contemporary Theology.’ *Heythrop Journal* 42 (2001): 451-62.

Imbert, Claude. ‘Stoic Logic and Alexandrian Poetics,’ in *Doubt and Dogmatism: Studies in Hellenistic Epistemology*. Malcom Schofield, Myles Burnyeat, and Jonathan Barnes, eds. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980: 182-216.

Janowitz, Naomi. ‘Theories of Divine Names in Origen and Pseudo-Dionysius.’ *History of Religions* 30:4 (May 1991): 359-372.

Jeanrond, Werner. *Theological Hermeneutics: Development and Significance*. London: Macmillan, 1991.

Jenson, Robert W. *The Knowledge of Things Hoped For*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969.

—. *Song of Songs*. Louisville: John Knox Press, 2005.

—. *Canon and Creed*. Louisville: John Knox Press, 2010.

- Johnson, Elizabeth. *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Discourse*. New York: Crossroad, 1992.
- Jowett, Benjamin. 'On the Interpretation of Scripture,' in *Essays and Reviews*. London: Longman, Green, Longman, and Roberts, 1861: 330-433.
- Kahn, Charles. 'Stoic Logic and Stoic LOGOS.' *Archive für Geschichte der Philosophie* 51.2 (1969): 158-172
- Kannengiesser, Charles and William L. Petersen, eds. *Origen of Alexandria: His World and Legacy*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988.
- Kelsey, David. *What's Theological About a Theological School?* Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993.
- . *Proving Doctrine: The Uses of Scripture in Modern Theology*. Harrisburg: Trinity, 1999.
- Kirk, G.S., J. E. Raven, and M. Schofield, eds. *The Presocratic Philosophers*, 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.
- Klostermann, E. 'Formen der exegetischen Arbeiten des Origenes.' *Theologische Literaturzeitung* (Oct. 1947), cols. 202-8.
- Koch, Hall. *Pronoia und Paideusis: Studien über Origenes und sein Verhältnis zum Platonismus*. Berlin: AKG 22; de Gruyter, 1932.
- Lamberton, Robert. *Homer the Theologian : Neoplatonist Allegorical Reading and the Growth of the Epic Tradition*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986.
- Lash, Nicholas. *Theology on the Road to Emmaeus*. London: SCM, 1986.
- Le Boulluec, Alain. 'Les représentations du texte chez les philosophes et l'exégèse scriptuaire d'Origène. Influence et mutations,' in *Origeniana Quinta*. R.J. Daly, ed. Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1992.

- Levinson, Stephen C. *Pragmatics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.
- Lienhard, Joseph. 'Origen and the Crisis of the Old Testament in the Early Church.' *Pro Ecclesia* 9 no. 3 (2000): 355-66.
- Lindbeck, George. *The Nature of Doctrine*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984.
- Lloyd, A. C. 'Grammar and Metaphysics in the Stoa,' in *Problems in Stoicism*. A. A. Long, ed. London: Athlone Press, 1971: 58-74
- . 'Definite Propositions and the Concept of Reference,' in *Les Stoïciens et Leur Logique*. Jacques Brunschwig, ed. Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 2006: 251-72.
- Long, A. A. 'Ptolemy *On the Criterion*: an epistemology for the practicing scientist,' in *The Question of "Eclecticism": Studies in Later Greek Philosophy*. John M. Dillon and A. A. Long, eds. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988: 176-207.
- . *Problems in Stoicism*. London: Athlone Press, 1996.
- . 'Dialectic and the Stoic Sage' in *Stoic Studies*. A. A. Long. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996: 85-106,
- . 'Stoic linguistics, Plato's *Cratylus*, and Augustine's *De dialectica*' in Dorothy Frede and Brad Inwood, eds., *Language and Learning: Philosophy of Language in the Hellenistic Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005): 36-55
- Long, A. A. and D. N. Sedley. *The Hellenistic Philosophers, volume 1: Translations of the Principal Sources, with Philosophical Commentary*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987.
- Louth, Andrew. *Discerning the Mystery: An Essay on the Nature of Theology*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1983.

Martens, Peter. *Origen and Scripture: the Contours of the Exegetical Life*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.

—. ‘Origen Against History? Reconsidering the Critique of Allegory.’ *Modern Theology* 28:4 (October 2012): 635-656.

McGuckin, John. ‘Origen as Literary Critic in the Alexandrian Tradition,’ in *Origeniana octava, vol. 1: Origen and the Alexandrian Tradition*. Lorenzo Perrone, ed. Leuven: Leuven University Press and Peeters, 2003: 121-136.

Miller, Patricia Cox. ‘Origen and the Witch of Endor: Toward an Iconoclastic Typology.’ *Anglican Theological Review* 66 (1984): 137-47.

Morris, Charles. *Foundations of the Theory of Sign*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1938.

Munnich, Olivier. ‘Le rôle de la citation dans l'écriture d'Origène,’ in *Origeniana Decima*.

Sylwia Kaczmarek and Henryk Pietras, eds. Walpole: Peeters Publishers, 2011: 507-538.

Nesterova, Olga. ‘Les interprétations modernes de la doctrine origénienne des “trois sens” de l'Écriture; Pour un examen critique.’ *Adamantius* 11 (2005): 184-210.

Neuschäfer, Bernhard. *Origenes Als Philologe*. Basel: Friedrich Reinhardt Verlag, 1987.

O’Cleirigh, Pádraig. ‘*Topoi* of Invention in Origen’s *Homilies*,’ in *Origeniana Sexta*. Gilles Dorival and Alain le Boulluec, eds. Leuven: University Press, 1995: 277-286.

Ochs, Peter, ed. *The Return to Scripture in Judaism and Christianity*. New York: Paulist Press, 1993.

—. *Peirce, Pragmatism, and the Logic of Scripture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

—. *Another Reformation: Postliberal Christianity and the Jews*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011.

- Oesterley, W. O. E. *The Wisdom of Egypt and the Old Testament in Light of the Newly Discovered 'Teaching of Amen-en-ope.'* New York: Macmillan, 1927.
- Celestina Noce, ed., trans., and introduction. *Esortazione al Martirio*. Origene. Rome: Urbaniana University Press, 1985.
- Peirce, Charles Sanders. *Collected Papers of Charles Peirce*. Paul Weiss and A. Burks, eds. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1935, 1958.
- Perrone, Lorenzo. 'The Bride at the Crossroads: Origen's Dramatic Interpretation of the Song of Songs.' *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 82/1 (2006): 69-102.
- . 'Origenes rediuius: la découverte des Homélies sur les Psaumes dans le Cod. Gr. 314 de Munich.' *Revue d'Etudes Augustiniennes et Patristiques* 59.1 (2013): 55-93.
- Perrone, Lorenzo, ed., with Marina Molin Pradel, Emmanuela Prinzivalli, and Antonio Cacciari. *Die neue Psalmenhomilien. Eine kritische Edition des Codex monacensis Graecus 314*. Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2015.
- Pradel, M. Molin. 'Novità origeniane dalla Staatsbibliothek di Monaco di Baviera: il Cod. graec. 314.' *Adamantius* 18 (2012): 16-40.
- Prat, Ferdinand. *Origène. Dictionnaire de la Bible*. 2nd e, vol. 5. F. Vigoroux, ed. Paris: Letouzey et Ané, [1907]-1912: cols. 1875-6.
- Rashkover, Randi. 'The Future of the Word and the Liturgical Turn,' in Randi Rashkover and C. C. Pecknold, eds. *Liturgy, Time, and the Politics of Redemption*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006: 1-28.
- . *Freedom and Law*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2011.
- Reno, R. R. 'Series Preface,' in *Leviticus*. Ephraim Radner. Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2008.
- Ricoeur, Paul. *Interpretation Theory*. Fort Worth: TCU Press, 1976.

Rine, Rebecca. 'The Song of Songs as Scripture and Script: Performance, Pedagogy, Patristics.'

Dissertation, UVA 2012.

Rist, J. M. 'The importance of Stoic logic in the *Contra Celsum*,' in *Neoplatonism and Early*

Christian Thought: Essays in Honour of A.H. Armstrong. A. H. Armstrong, H. J.

Blumenthal & R. A. Markus, eds. London: Variorum Publications, 1981: 64-78.

Roberts, Louis. 'Origen and Stoic Logic.' *Transactions and Proceedings of the American*

Philological Association, 101 (1970): 434-44.

Roselli, Amneris. 'ὁ τεχνίτης θεός: la pratica terapeutica come paradigma dell' operare di Dio

in Phil. 27 e PA III 1,' in *Il cuore indurito del Faraone: Origene e il problema del libero*

arbitrio. Lorenzo Perrone, ed. Marietti: Bologna, 1992: 65-84.

Sarisky, Darren. 'What is Theological Interpretation? The Example of Robert W. Jenson.'

Journal of Systematic Theology 12, no. 2 (April 2010): 201-216.

Schenkeveld, D. M. 'Stoic and Peripatetic kinds of speech act and the distinction of grammatical

moods.' *Mnemosyne* 37 (1984): 291-353.

Schiefsky, Mark J. 'The Epistemology of Ptolemy's *On the Criterion*,' in *Strategies of*

Argument: Essays in Ancient Ethics, Epistemology, and Logic. Mi-Kyoung Lee, ed. New

York: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Scott, Alan. *Origen and the Life of the Stars*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991.

Seuren, Peter. 'Eubulides as a 20th-century semanticist.' *Language Sciences* 27 (2005): 75-95.

Siebenborn, Elmar. *Die Lehre von der Sprachrichtigkeit und ihren Kriterien*. Amsterdam: John

Benjamins, 1976.

Smith, James K. A. *The Fall of Interpretation: Philosophical Foundations for a Creational*

Hermeneutic, 2nd. ed. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012.

- . *Who's Afraid of Relativism?* Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014.
- Somos, Robért. *Logic and Argumentation in Origen*. Münster: Aschendorff Vorlag, 2015.
- Sorabji, Richard. *The Philosophy of the Commentators 200-600 AD, Volume 3: Logic and Metaphysics*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005.
- Spanneut, Michel. *Le Stoïcisme des Pères de l'Église, de Clément de Rome à Clément d'Alexandrie*. Patristica Sorbonensia 1. Paris, Le Seuil, 1957.
- Steinmetz, David. 'The Superiority of Pre-Critical Exegesis,' in *The Theological Interpretation of Scripture*. Stephen Fowl, ed. Oxford: Blackwell, 1997: 26-38.
- Stroumsa, Guy G. 'Clement, Origen, and Jewish Esoteric Traditions' in *Origeniana Sexta*. Gilles Dorival and Alain le Boulluec, eds. Leuven: University Press, 1995: 53-70.
- . *Hidden Wisdom : Esoteric Traditions and the Roots of Christian Mysticism*. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996.
- Tighelel, J. H. *Didyme l'Aveugle et l'exégèse allegorique, son commentaire sur Zacharie*. Nijmegen: Dekker & van de Vegt, 1977.
- Torjesen, Karen Jo. *Hermeneutical Procedure and Theological Method in Origen's Exegesis*. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1985.
- Treier, Daniel. *Introducing Theological Interpretation of Scripture*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008.
- Trible, Phyllis. *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978.
- . *Texts of Terror*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984.
- Trigg, Joseph Wilson. 'The Charismatic Intellectual: Origen's Understanding of Religious Leadership.' *Church History* 50:1 (Mar. 1981): 5-19.
- . *Origen: The Bible and Philosophy in the Third-century Church*. Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1983.

- . 'Origen's Modesty,' in *Studia Patristica XXI*. Elizabeth A. Livingstone, ed. Leuven: Peeters, 1989: 349-55.
- Twelftree, Graham H. *In the Name of Jesus: Exorcism Among Early Christians*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007.
- Van den Berg, Robbert M. 'Does it Matter to Call God Zeus? Origen, *Contra Celsum* I.24-5 Against the Greek Intellectual on Divine Names,' in *The Revelation of the Name YHWH to Moses*. George H. van Kooten, ed. Boston: Brill, 2006: 169-86.
- Vanhoozer, Kevin. *Is There a Meaning in this Text? The Bible, the Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998.
- . *First Theology: God, Christ, and Hermeneutics*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2002.
- Vanhoozer, Kevin, ed., with Craig G. Bartholomew, Daniel J. Treier, and N. T. Wright. *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005.
- Völker, Walther. *Das Vollkommenheitsideal des Origenes*. Tübingen: Mohr, 1931.
- Von Balthasar, Hans Urs. 'Le mystère d'Origène.' *Recherches de science religieuse* 26 (1936): 513-62; 27 (1937): 38-64.
- , ed. *Origen: Spirit and Fire*. Robert J. Daly, S. J., trans. Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1984.
- Von Rad, Gerhard. *Wisdom in Israel*. James D. Martin, trans. London: SCM Press, 1972.
- Watson, Francis. *Text, Church, and World: Biblical Interpretation in Theological Perspective*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994.
- Wiles, M. F. 'Early Exegesis of the Parables,' *Scottish Journal of Theology* 11 (1958): 287-301.
- . 'Origen as Biblical Scholar,' in *The Cambridge History of the Bible*. P. Ackroyd and C. F. Evans, eds. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970: 103-38.

Wilken, Robert. 'Origen's *Homilies on Leviticus* and *Vayikra Rabbah*' in *Origeniana Sexta*.

Gilles Dorival and Alain le Boulluec, eds. Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1995: 81-91.

—. 'In Defense of Allegory.' *Modern Theology* 14:2 (April 1998): 197-212.

Work, Telford. *Living and Active: Scripture in the Economy of Salvation*. Grand Rapids:

Eerdmans, 2002.

Yadin-Israel, Azzan. *Scripture as Logos: Rabbi Ishmael and the Origins of Midrash*.

Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004.

Young, Frances. *The Art of Performance*. London: Darton, Longman, and Todd, 1990.

—. *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

—. 'The Fourth Century Reaction against Allegory.' *Studia Patristica* 30 (1997):120-5.

—. 'Alexandrian and Antiochene Exegesis' in *A History of Biblical Interpretation*, vol 1. Alan J. Hauser and Duane F. Watson, eds. Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 2003: 334-354.