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**Origen's rhetoric of identity formation: Origen's
Paulinism in contrast to Hellenism**

by

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ABSTRACT

Key Words

Culture, Desire, Hellenism, Identity, Ideology, Moralism, Origen, Patronage, Paulinism, Rhetoric.

How did Late Antiquity's societies articulate their identities? This dissertation is a study of the construction of textual identities, as revealed by an analysis of Origen's Paulinism which aimed to construct Christian identity in the third century CE. I have chosen extracts from Origen's exegesis of Paul, found primarily in one text, his *Commentary on Romans*, as resources for my examination of identity issues. This text is an extremely helpful example of a deliberate fashioning of Christian identity through Origen's joint use of Hellenistic *paideia* and the Bible. Pierre Bourdieu's notion of *habitus* provides a helpful lens in decoding Origen's and Hellenistic texts. Using *habitus*, the focus is on the rhetoric of identity formation through the fabric of the cultural, social, political, ideological, and literary contexts of Origen's world. The study is more descriptive than polemical. The Greek *paideia* provides an immediate background to Late Antiquity's concept of identity formation. The extant literature of the period comprised the fundamental vehicles of self-definition. This concept of fashioning identity through the construction of texts presents numerous difficulties for the contemporary reader. I will show that Origen used Greco-Roman moral philosophy and rhetoric in interpreting Paul. In seeking Origen's notion of Christian identity, Origen's reading of Romans is shaped by strategies of self-scrutiny and self-formation. Although Origen modifies the Greco-Roman moral philosophies—such as the notion of self-control, transformational narratives, and rhetoric deployment in his exegesis—much of the shared cultural and literary background remains.

Using the Hellenistic nuances of self-control and rhetoric, Origen shows his audience a distinct picture of what a transformed, mature believer should look like, the *humanitas*. The transformation that a believer underwent resulted in a new or intensified form of piety with consequent changes in social affiliations, relations and loyalties. He also uses different descriptions —“new man,” “inner man” and “perfect”—to identify the mature transformed believers. This believer is the *humanitas*, the much sought after identity, with the milieu of the third century C.E. He attempted to create a body of knowledge and to utilize it for the

preparation of a strong Christian identity in the midst of the pressures and temptations of the hegemonic Roman Empire and the pervasive Greco-Roman culture.

Along with the *paideia*, the Roman Empire nurtured and challenged Origen's Paulinism. The Roman Empire did not require individuals, or even communities, to adopt for themselves a distinctly Roman identity to the exclusion of all others. Yet, everyone was required to worship the *genus* of the Emperor. The Roman identity transformed the Greek-barbarian dichotomy into an imperial ideology which claimed Roman supremacy over all other cultures and people. This usurpation of other societies by the Romans is an inverted mirror image of Origen's usurpation of Rome's *Romanitas* or *humanitas* through his Paulinism. Thus, he is to be seen constructing identity through shared forms of symbolic and linguistic construction which were readily available within his socio-political reality.

PREFACE

“We know what we are, but not what we may be.”
William Shakespeare

“Gratitude,” as Cicero would say, is “not only the greatest of virtues, but the parent of all the others.” I have much to be thankful for: to the Lord and to my fellow travelers that I have met in this incredible path. Ever since I can remember, I have felt blissfully lost—yet possessed by a serene identity. This ambiguity has shaped my life profoundly. As I started my theological training in the United States, far from Nagaland (a small state in the North-Eastern part of India), identity became an overriding issue both personally and academically. This lived experience has challenged my assumptions and beliefs, and shattered many illusions. Inevitably, this has caused many “dark nights of the soul.” Reading the church fathers has provided me with a portal to “escape” my troubled soul as well as “refining” my own identity in light of the broader community of believers. The ancient worlds became alive and provided me with a lens to visualize my present world. This project dealing with Origen’s Paulinism as an identity formation exercise is the result of my long journey. And in this path, I have encountered many friends, guides, and kindred spirits that have nurtured as well as challenged me. I am thankful to all of you. Over the years, numerous faculty and graduate student colleagues have been very influential. They have contributed to my work. And ya’ll know who you are.

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Most of this project came through while I was learning the craft of the health care Chaplaincy at the Baylor University Medical Center in Dallas, TX. This made the project challenging while giving me insights that would have been missed before. Human bodies are an amazing creation and sickness seems to rob us of our identities. In learning to become a healer, I have to dig deep within my own being to find strength and my pastoral identity. My peers and colleagues have encouraged me and lifted me up while I was loaded with many burdens. Many thanks to all of you!

I owe a great debt of gratitude to my family. My family reminds me daily that miracles exist everywhere around us. I thank my parents—N. Sashi Jamir and T. Narola Tsüdir—for life and the strength and determination to live it. My loving parents, my competent younger brother, Intimendang Jamir, my two beloved sisters Kerentula and Sentirenla Jamir, and my in-laws (Chubakumzüik Imchen and Amenla along with their two lovely daughters, Katila and Lolenla Imchen) deserve special mention because of their courage, hope, and wise dealings with me. Even though we are oceans apart, it was their constant prayers and intimate dialogue over the years that have inspired and challenged me to penetrate more when I would have given up. They fostered me to go beyond the frontiers of my own knowledge. I hope you will be proud with the end of this journey.

The good Lord has provided me with a spouse that was custom made for me. My dear wife, Yashisangla Jamir, who shares my burdens and my joys, is beyond any knowledge and rubies. She personifies for me the good life that I read about for my research and exemplifies prudent living, by being so balanced and just. I truly become a better *man* because of her. This dissertation is equally her achievement. I cannot imagine and construct my identity without her. In the words of Jean-Paul Sartre, “It answers the question that was tormenting you: my love, you are not 'one thing in my life'—not even the most important—because my life no longer belongs to me. . .you are always me.” Thank you and wherever our journey takes us, this is for you, with my perpetual gratitude.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviations in this dissertation conform to those published in *The SBL Handbook of Style for Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Early Christian Studies* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999), and *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* 3rd Rev. ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003). The abbreviations below are those most frequently used in this dissertation.

Ancient Works

<i>Eth. Nic.</i>	Aristotle, <i>Ethica Eudemia</i>
<i>Pol.</i>	Aristotle, <i>Politica</i>
<i>Rh.</i>	Aristotle, <i>Rhetorica</i>
<i>Rh. Al.</i>	Aristotle, <i>Rhetorica ad Alexandrum</i>
<i>Amic.</i>	Cicero, <i>De amicitia</i>
<i>De or.</i>	Cicero, <i>De oratore</i>
<i>Inv. rhet.</i>	Cicero, <i>De inventione rhetorica</i>
<i>Part. or.</i>	Cicero, <i>Partitiones oratoriae</i>
<i>Dis</i>	Epictetus, <i>Discourse</i>
<i>Phd.</i>	Plato, <i>Phaedrus</i>
<i>Plt.</i>	Plato, <i>Politicus</i>
<i>Ti.</i>	Plato, <i>Timaeus</i>
<i>Ep.</i>	Pliny (the Younger), <i>Epistulae</i>
<i>Enn.</i>	Plotinus, <i>Enneades</i>
<i>Mor.</i>	Plutarch, <i>Moralia</i>
<i>Inst.</i>	Quintilian, <i>Institutio oratoria</i>
<i>Rhet. Her.</i>	<i>Rhetorica ad Herennium</i>
<i>Ben.</i>	Seneca, <i>De beneficiis</i>
<i>Clem.</i>	Seneca, <i>De clementia</i>
<i>Ep.</i>	Seneca, <i>Epistulae</i>

Origen's Texts

<i>ComRom.</i>	Origen, <i>Commentary on Romans</i> . I am citing the book and chapter numbers from J. P. Migne <i>Patrologia Graeca</i> (PG), which corresponds to those in the English translation by Scheck (Fathers of the Church volume 103 and 104) and followed by the chapter numbers in the Critical
<i>CCels.</i>	Origen, <i>Contra Celsum</i>
<i>Princ.</i>	Origen, <i>First Principles</i>
<i>HomGn.</i>	Origen, <i>Homilies on Genesis</i>
<i>HomEx</i>	Origen, <i>Homilies on Exodus</i>
<i>ComJo.</i>	Origen, <i>Commentary on John</i>
<i>HomJer.</i>	Origen, <i>Homilies on Jeremiah</i>
<i>HomNum.</i>	Origen, <i>Homilies on Numbers</i>
<i>HomLuc.</i>	Origen, <i>Homilies on Luke</i>
<i>HomLev.</i>	Origen, <i>Homilies on Leviticus</i>
<i>HomCan.</i>	Origen, <i>Homilies on Canticles</i>

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

This dissertation is a study dealing with the construction of textual identities through Origen's Paulinism, that is, Origen's nuanced exegesis of Paul. It serves as an example of constructing (Christian) identity in the third century CE. I have chosen extracts from Origen's exegesis of Paul, and in particular Paul's *Commentary on Romans* (hereafter *ComRom*), as core proof texts for my examination of identity formation. As we shall see, *ComRom* is an extremely helpful example of a deliberate fashioning of Christian identity through Origen's joint use of Hellenistic *paideia*, that is, in brief, the shared system of classical education, and the Bible (Hammon Bammel, 1990; 1997; 1998; Scheck, 2001 and 2002). This fusion of *paideia* and Origen's Paulinism, presents itself forcefully in his motif of identity formations. Romans, for Origen, was an epistle dealing with transformation by ritualistic and ethical practice through which humans become fundamentally different. Origen's own text-making (*ComRom*) was an identity construction fashioned by tracing paradigmatic figures, like Paul. Through the text, Origen invites the audience to lose their flawed everyday selves in the perfection of the figure.

To state that there are some glaring inter-related lacunae in Origenian studies will be an understatement. In general, there is a lacuna in dealing with Origen's Paulinism. Though it is tacitly implied, it has not received the attention it deserves. Furthermore, Origen's relationship to Hellenism is complex and tangled and the way in which his cultural *paideia* influenced his Paulinism remains unexamined. Typically, Origen has been classified either as a speculative Hellenist who opportunistically used allegorical interpretation to read pagan ideas into the Bible, or as a pious apologist for Christianity, defending it against the threats of Gnosticism and other heresies. The affinity between his biblical exegesis and Hellenism has always been suspect (de Faye, 1929; Bigg, 1968; Berchman, 1984; Koch, 1979; Cadiou, 1935; Nautin, 1977; Hanson, 2002; and Edwards, 2002). In his own lifetime, Origen's reputation had preceded his biblical interpretation, which evoked both admiration and harsh condemnation. Porphyry, in a fragment preserved in Eusebius' *Hist. eccl.* (6.19.8), attests that Origen was well versed in the allegorical works of the Stoics Cornutus and Chaeremon, and of the Neo-Pythagorean and Middle-Platonist Numenius, and that he transferred the ancient allegorical tradition to the interpretation of Scripture. Porphyry

remained convinced that Origen's views of the world and God, and his art of interpretation, were Greek, and that he had turned the Greek ideas into a substratum of alien myths. Such polarized classifications are overly simplistic ways of viewing Origen's vast body of work. Through this project dealing with the rhetoric of identity formation, I intend to demonstrate that Origen's Paulinism provides an overarching narrative to his theological enterprise. In the process, we shall see that Origen's Paulinism reveals a complex relationship between classical *paideia* and loyalty to the God whom the Apostle Paul was advocating. In brief, this dissertation among other things seeks to theorize and demonstrate that Origen's protreptic rhetoric of identity was an ordered, purposeful display of a distinctive way of life and form of worship. This was a subversive ideological ploy against the ever pervasive classical *paideia* and the Roman hegemonic identity. Origen's Paulinism cultivated an alternative way of life.

Put this way, some of the contextual identity questions that naturally arise are:

- How did Late Antiquity's societies or the Roman Empire articulate their identities?
- How did Origen use the Apostle Paul in his hermeneutical and theological project?
- What was Origen's identity rhetoric competing against?

In answering these questions, I propose to show that Origen, like other Hellenistic writers, produced his literary discourses through a deliberate strategy of self-fashioning (Foucault, 1977: 1983). The focus is not necessarily doctrines, but is rather the social relationships and the interplay between ideologies, community definitions and community formations. Nevertheless, social formations do not replace theology. Both considerations are necessary to interpret and understand Origen's Paulinism as an identity-forming exercise.

One of the big pictures in this dissertation is the identity that is found or dislocated within the Roman Empire. In short, becoming Roman meant incorporation into the imperial complex where local cultures lost their native bearings. Conversely, the empire compensated the loss of native identities by enabling the people to become civilized. In short, the nations can become the *humanitas* by following the *Romanitas*, that is, the Roman way of life.

The precise meaning of the term *humanitas* is difficult to define, but it is also one of the crucial elements of this dissertation. Hence, a brief explanation is given here. *Humanitas* is usually translated as “civilization,” but it stood for a complex range of ideas that all played a role in defining the Roman self. It became an ideological justification for the Roman elite to support conquest and domination. According to Greg Woolf, *humanitas* as used by the Romans describes their own culture, and reflects the particular configuration of power that underlay it from the latter first-century BCE (Woolf, 1998: 54-60). It defined the Roman elite as cultivated, enlightened, and humane, entirely fitted to rule a wide empire and to lead others by example. *Humanitas* became a Roman concept, a status embodying an elite culture, yet also appropriate for humanity in general. *Humanitas* encapsulated a set of ideals to which all men might aspire.

As it turns out, *humanitas* became a “central component of Roman culture . . . primarily as a product of reflections prompted by the expansion of Roman power” (Woolf, 1998: 56). Woolf refers to these conceptual aspects of Roman culture as the “transformative power of Rome” where the “Roman rule is presented as providing the conditions for human beings to realize their potential fully, by becoming civilized and so truly human” (Woolf, 1998: 57). In its most highly developed form, *humanitas* “was represented by a series of intellectual and moral accomplishments” and yet also “quintessentially human, the fulfillment of the potential of the *genus humanum*” (Woolf, 1998: 59). The Romans wanted the world to acknowledge their superiority by following their lead. *Humanitas* thus began to have moral overtones.

As the goal of the Roman way of life, *humanitas* reflected a particular configuration of power that underpinned the Roman Empire. As “civilization,” it held the potential and opportunity for non-citizens to develop by becoming subjects of Rome (Woolf, 1998: 55). As a moral standard, it was the highest level of existence. It was a successful campaign to inspire other people to join this ideal state. It allowed for the idea that others who had not achieved its goals might one day succeed, given the correct circumstances and education. It is easy to see why *humanitas* served as an effective element in Roman imperial discourse since it enabled the empire to absorb into its structure a wide variety of other peoples from the cultures it encountered. Matthew Roller has termed this process of assimilation a cultural “mapping” that was encoded in the familiar vocabulary of the Latin language—one

that allowed a charting of “ethical space” (Roller, 2001: 21). Consequently, the concept of *humanitas* was a status that enabled a convergence between the desires of certain provincials and the publicized aim of Rome (Ando, 2000: 68).

As a Roman narrative, *humanitas* is Rome’s vision of historical process. Under the guise of making others better, *humanitas* provided a legitimate rationale for ruling over others. Rome had replaced Greece as the dominant power and had brought *humanitas* to the wider world of the barbarians—those that did not follow the way of the Romans. Through the process of becoming Roman, the barbarian could ultimately acquire *humanitas* and, with the support and approval of imperial Rome, acquire Roman citizenship as a moral person. As such, given the right opportunity, the beneficent empire could close the relational gap—between being a barbarian and being a civilized, moral human. As Woolf points out, “Concepts like ‘civilization,’ *humanitas* or *paideia*, by providing detailed descriptions and definitions of a cultural system and sometimes of the differences between those who adhere to it and those who do not, operate to bind cultural systems into a more coherent and resilient whole” (Woolf, 1998: 56).

Such manifestations of *humanitas* also emphasize that Roman identity was an invention of the authors who wrote about the empire and that such an identity was created for its effect as a colonizing discourse. The legacy of Romanness became a rallying point for Christian authors as they sought to re-define social forms, ethnicity, nationalism, and identity and to re-produce the concept of Roman culture, while transforming it. *Humanitas*, as a civilizing, moral agent and as a superior propaganda tool, articulates itself by imagining, creating, bounding, and maintaining an identity that is at once new and old in continuity with the Greco-Roman identity. Along with the cultural *paideia*, *humanitas* made Roman identity rhetoric almost impossible to oppose. This is the backdrop for Origen’s demonstration of Christian identity as the better alternative, using the gospel of Christ.

To repeat, the objectives of this dissertation seek to trace out Origen’s distinctive identity exegesis. The following Chapter divisions sketch Origen’s identity formation:

- Chapter two examines the extent to which Origen’s Paulinism is a product of the Hellenistic culture’s practice of self-definition as seen in the rhetorical handbooks and moral discourses. *ComRom* displays Origen as one of the many

Hellenistic scholars sharing the same *habitus* and with a concern for championing their versions of *humanitas*. Origen's Paulinism and Hellenism do not refer to two separate cultures, but rather to two different aspects of the same. They are not mutually exclusive.

- Chapter 3 looks at Origen's *paideia* through his use of rhetoric and moral philosophies. In particular, the transformative narratives are scrutinized to trace out similar patterns of identity formations between Origen and Hellenism.
- Chapter 4 connects the contextual references so far with Origen's exegesis of the epistle to the Romans.
- Chapter 5 demonstrates that the systems of patronage and citizenship are highly influential in Origen's demonstration of Christ's kingdom. Origen's nuanced audience-specific teaching frames Christianity as an alternative to *Romanitas*, emphasizing Christianness through loyalty to Christ.
- Chapter 6 examines the extent to which Origen's intense zeal in describing a counter-cultural Christian identity is Christocentric.

Underpinning my investigation lies Origen's relationship to the Pauline texts in the context of his positioning of his Christian theology of identity as the optimal path to a better humanity. Origen's identity formulation uses Paul as a model *exemplum* and as a scriptural hero and it describes a state of ongoing transformation. This transformation is depicted as an interior battle between virtue (the "inner man") and vice (the "outer man"), which is rhetorically represented by the victory of self-discipline, self-mastery and restraint or by the unrestrained reign of vice. The motif of "self-mastery" depicts his semiotic relationship with Hellenism or *Romanitas*. In this regard, the technique of *protrepticus* and the concepts of patron-client relationship are important keys to the correct interpretation of Origen's method and motives. *Protrepticus* is a (philosophic) exhortation to take up a way of life. In striving to sell and deploy the imperial ideology, the imperial writers harnessed it with great efficiency. One of the goals of protreptic discourse is to censure a particular person or group, showing them the error or "warring inconsistency in which they have been floundering" and leading them to the knowledge that "I must not act like this any longer" (Epictetus, *Discourse* 3.23.33-37). Origen's use of Pauline metaphors such as "new creation" or "new man" is a means to provide a socially-embedded process and self-consciousness to Christians (Bourdieu, 1991; 1993). Furthermore, it is to convict an

audience that unless they accept the speaker's wisdom about knowing and doing the right, they are better off dead (Aristotle, *Protrepticus* B 108, 110). Thus, it is a call to *metanoia*, a "change of mind," and a change in their way of life (Lucian of Samosata, *Hermotimus* 86, *Nigrinus* 38.). After that, the exhortation was to embrace or deepen their loyalties to the speaker's way of life.

By way of summation, I want to demonstrate that Origen's Paulinism was forging an identity through his use of the *protreptic* rhetoric and by leveraging ideological and moral discourse from the broader Hellenistic *paideia*. His fashioning of identity was imaginative, flexible, and fluid, appealing to the culture that the Christian way was the most reasonable path, while persuading Christians to grow and mature by understanding the deeper meanings of the Scriptures.

Despite the inherent transitory nature of Origen's argument, the central argument of this dissertation deals with identity, or "Christianness," forged through *ComRom*. This dissertation views identity formation through the fabric of cultural, social, political, ideological, and literary considerations. The study is more descriptive than polemical. The making of Christian identity is not "an absolute and irreducible 'given'"; instead, there is a "widespread consensus that it can be better understood and analyzed as socially constructed" (Lieu, 2004: 13). Such fluidity makes the study of identity construction a tricky project. It is important to note that although Origen has theological views about being a Christian, his most telling arguments are humanistic. Put differently, his identity rhetoric was not only an intellectual and theological project, but was also very much a personal and social one. It was a communal formation, which was formed out of a concern with making humanity better. Rhetorical fashioning of identity and behavior are mutually informing and reinforcing (Gruen, 1992).

Among the competent players within the economy of late antiquity's *paideia*, there are *distinctive* voices, visions, and virtues, but they are not unique because they share the same cultural *habitus*. Origen is one such player. He was versed in the composition of rhetorical discourse, moral philosophies, coded languages, and other fields of discourse. Over all, the contextual nature of this dissertation shall demonstrate the symbolic power of language and in particular, as it relates to creating communal identity. Instead of classical authors and

authorities, he posited the Apostle Paul as the main teacher who could lead the nations to the true potential of *humanitas*. This forms a sharp-edged counterpoint as well as a new ideology in creating social relationships. For the benefit of his audience, he models and visualizes himself in the fashion of his patron Apostle. He defines his mission to the nations in terms of culture-transforming and ideological-power-discourse of his day. Thus, logically, the virtuous, self-controlled, and mature people are those imitating, visualizing, and following the wise sayings of Paul.

In terms of methodology, the dissertation embraces more than just the historical context, literary tradition, genre, or the generic *Sitz im Leben* of Origen's rhetoric of identity construction. Among other things, moralism, intertextuality (Culler, 1982: 135), the notion of the argumentative and rhetorical situation of a text, political stance, and kinship are taken into consideration. Looking at the cultural context of Origen takes scholarship out of a confining captivity, exile, or dispersion imposed by the dual hegemony of either Hellenism or Christianity. A better reading of the texts requires the reader to emerge from the confinements of isolationist mentalities. In pursuing Late Antiquity's rhetorical and moral consideration, I find it helpful to incorporate the critical historiographical perspective using the theoretical insights of the sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu. Bourdieu famously describes *habitus* as follows:

“Systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary to attain them. Objectively “regulated” and “regular” without being in any way the product of obedience to rules, they can be collectively orchestrated without being the product of the organizing action of a conductor (Bourdieu, 1990: 53; 1993: 179).

Reading Origen's Paulinism through Bourdieu's *habitus* visualizes Christian identity as emerging not from isolated texts, but rather from the marriage of a text to the larger socio-cultural-political, narrative, rhetorical, and moral frameworks. *Habitus* remains in time and space, and is thus inevitably a social process. Therefore, the sameness, the shared identity, or humanity in this sense, is much larger than the differences (Clarke, 1971). Because Origen's Paulinism did not originate in a historical and cultural vacuum, but is instead a re-contextualization of Paul, a correct understanding therefore reads his identity of a Christian as a re-construction in light of his *habitus* (Clark, 1957).

2.0 CONSTRUCTING IDENTITY IN LATE ANTIQUITY

2.1 Lacunae in Origenian Studies

There are some glaring lacunae in Origenian studies and in particular, a lacuna in dealing with Origen's Paulinism. Though it is tacitly implied, it has not received the attention it deserves. Furthermore, Origen's relationship to Hellenism is complex and tangled and the way in which his cultural *paideia* influenced his Paulinism remains unexamined. This fact is understandable, for it seems that Origen wanted us to focus on biblical studies or on his theological contributions as opposed to his Hellenistic musings. Yet, this does not represent the ground reality of Origen's life and contribution which is necessarily a compound entity. Origen, it appears, was a prominent philosophical thinker and his cultural *paideia* is woven into the very fabric of his theology (Scott, 1991).

2.1.1 Origen in the Philosopher's Den

Typically, Origen has been classified either as a speculative Hellenist who opportunistically used allegorical interpretation to read pagan ideas into the Bible, or as a pious apologist for Christianity, defending it against the threats of Gnosticism and other heretics. For example, Porphyry remained convinced that Origen's views of the world, God, and his art of interpretation were Greek, and he turned the Greek ideas into a substratum of alien myths (Eusebius, 6.19.8). Such polarized classifications are overly simplistic ways of viewing Origen's vast body of work. Origen's use of the Apostle Paul in his hermeneutics informs his overall theological assumptions, that is, his rhetoric of identity. He sees two primary divine motivations for the inspiration of Scripture: to teach the mysteries of salvation to those who are capable of receiving them and to hide the same from those who are unable to endure the investigation of matters of such importance (*Princ.*, 4.2.8). Origen's identity rhetoric demonstrates this division beautifully as is manifestly evident in his twofold aim of Bible reading and interpretation. As far as Origen was concerned, only the Christian can read, understand, and grow through the revelation of God.

To put it simply, Origen placed his knowledge of Greek and Hellenistic culture and philosophy at the service of the Church. However, such an assertion is not always as certain as it is made to sound. The affinity between his biblical exegesis and Hellenism has always been suspect. In the early twentieth century, Eugene de Faye firmly stated that Origen was a philosopher. Faye, along with Charles Bigg, argued that Origen's thought did not stem from his allegorical interpretation, but rather that Origen used philosophy to confirm his pre-existing ideas (Faye, 1929; Bigg, 1968). Bigg sees Origen as trying to impose his ideas on Christianity. He faults Origen for not seeing the larger meanings of biblical passages on account of his emphasis on individual words. On the other hand, responding to de Faye's strong criticism, Hal Koch argues that Origen's work was a systematic blending of Stoic and Middle Platonic philosophies. Koch sees Origen's work through a salvific lens which is a combination of *pronoia* (divine intervention) and *paideusis* (human understanding) (Koch, 1979). Meanwhile, Jean Daniélou opines that Origen was both a theologian and philosopher at once, and that his thought was an un-systematized mix of a variety of influences, which should not be viewed as revolutionary. He favored Origen as a Christian mystic (Daniélou, 1977). Slowly, by the mid-twentieth century, Origen began to emerge as a man of the third century rather than from outside of it.

As we can see, Origen's ability to employ the intellectual tools of Late Antiquity has always been a controversial issue. Mark Edwards's recent work *Origen against Plato* is a first step toward remedying the problem of the unfair dismissal of Origen as an opportunistic Hellenist (Edwards, 2002). In addressing the common scholarly assumption that, given the pervasiveness of Platonic thought in Alexandria, thinkers could not escape being affected by it, Edwards dismisses such categorical analysis as a "new and dubious science, the epidemiology of knowledge" (Edwards, 2002: 7). Instead, he argues that Origen's primary foundation lies in revelation through the apostles and the prophets, rather than in the philosophical assumptions and foundations of his time. Although this is rather defensive, the overstatement succeeds in making the point about Origen's biblical foundations. Edwards insightfully cautions, "When two intellectual systems are built upon the same terrain, we are likely to learn more about the builders from the differences in masonry than from the quarry which supplied them both with stone" (Edwards, 2002: 5). This metaphor captures his project well and enables a constructive discussion of the thorny problem of Origen's relationship with Hellenism.

Any works dealing with Origen have to be prepared to engage with paradoxes and to be slow to make judgments. Edwards's text also presents a resourceful challenge to what has long been the widespread intellectual-historical assessment of Origen's Platonistic predilections. He claims that Origen's dependence on the technique of allegories was attributed to him by Porphyry (who applied allegory to Greek myths, but not to Scripture) for polemical reasons, in order to cast an ambiguous light on Origen's biblical craft (Edwards, 2002: 145). For Origen, the Bible was simultaneously a historical document, a guide to moral conduct and a reservoir of truth for use in bringing about a virtuous humanity. On the other hand, philosophy was the beginning, a preparatory stage to an ongoing study of the Bible. Throughout both Edwards' polemical text and Crouzel's pioneering studies (Crouzel, 1989: 266), we find an emphasis on upholding Origen as primarily a Christian theologian. It is nevertheless undeniable that Origen's thought was steeped in philosophical scholarship. Any serious study of Origen's theology has to embrace the fact that Origen successfully encounters and masters a diverse range of sparring partners in theological debate, and that he exhibits many influences from his *habitus*. In this study, we examine these knotty relationships through the lens of contextual description. Origen is a mirror for Hellenism and displays both similarities and contrasts to Hellenism. Rather than interpreting Origen's relationship to Hellenism as tense and discordant, this study sees the relationship as an evolving process through which Origen articulates a divergent Christian identity and demonstrates an alternative *humanitas*.

2.1.2 Origen and Paulinism

As mentioned above, despite a tacit acceptance of Origen's dependence on Paul, this influence, never mind his identity rhetoric, has received little or no direct scholarly attention. In the early 20th century, the examinations of Origen's Paulinism by both Walter Völker and Eva Aleith have attempted to survey Origen's use of Paul (Völker, 1930: 258-279; and Aleith, 1937: 98-110). However, their studies lack a genuine interaction with his Paulinism as their main thrust is to demonstrate the overriding Platonism inherent in Origen's interpretation of Paul. They are primarily interested in reading Origen's speculative works (*De Principiis*) and the polemical/controversial treatises (*Contra Celsus*). Further complicating the issue, their critique begins by defining the core of Paul's theology as the doctrine of justification by faith, consequently rendering Origen's Paulinism a

somewhat dubious exegesis. In their enthusiasm to prove Origen's dependence on Platonism, both of the studies disregard the concept of Christian maturity. By mid-century, Henri de Lubac's challenge to "observe Origen at work" in his biblical commentaries and homilies revealed the close parallel between Origen's hermeneutical foundation and Paul's exegetical methods (de Lubac, 2007: 34). De Lubac's study situated Origen within his own milieu and showed his dependence on the Pauline corpus. Paul supplies Origen with several examples of allegory in his letters, providing an apostolic legitimization of the allegorical method. In response to de Lubac, there has been an increasingly positive appreciation of Origen's Paulinism (Scherer, 1957; Bammel, 1985; Roukema, 1988; Heither, 1990; Cocchini, 1992; Scheck, 2008; and Moser, 2005).

However, even in de Lubac's work, the Pauline letters are almost completely neglected in favor of the Old Testament homilies, which are full of allusions and direct reference to the Pauline literature. So, the Old Testament homilies do provide a glimpse into Origen's Paulinism in forging a mature Christian identity. However, they are not the best guide for Origen's use of Pauline texts or to his sophisticated use of Hellenism in constructing a superior *humanitas*. De Lubac's work exhibits Origen's dependence on Paul for his biblical exegesis and theology. Nevertheless, in his discussion of Origen's use of Paul, de Lubac only refers to the *ComRom* four times, and never even mentions any of the other Pauline commentaries. By contrast, citations from the homilies on Genesis, Exodus, and Numbers, demonstrating Origen's use of Paul, abound (Lubac, 2007: 69-77). Even so, de Lubac's insight that Origen's Paulinism consists of the hermeneutical function of Paul as *exemplar* leads the way for subsequent studies including this one. De Lubac's study is weakened by his failure to relate to Origen's writings on the Pauline corpus. Furthermore, he does not deal with Origen's rhetoric of identity. In the past couple of decades, there has been an increase in scholarly focus on Origen's relationship to the Pauline corpus. However, there are still significant lacunae in these works; none of them deals with the issue of transformation in the context of moralism, or the rhetoric of identity. These are crucial theological concepts in Origen's Paulinism but they constitute a neglected area of study.

One of the most recent contributors, Peter Martens, examines Origen's overall use of the Scriptures (Martens, 2004). He gives a thorough account of ancient philology en route to showing Origen as a competent philologist. In this, Martens successfully demonstrates the dubious characterization of allegory and typology as anachronistic modern divisions. This work gives a positive and timely update to Origen's exegesis. However, the use of philology alone to explain Origen's vast cultural intellectual capital falls short. Granted, without philology, our reading of the Scriptures or any ancient text is meaningless, yet there remains a crucial difference between philology as a tool for understanding literary texts and philology as an end in itself. Literature and philology work with different conceptions of what constitutes knowledge. In particular, Martens' philology generally comes down to lexicography and the analysis of grammar. Although this brings clarity to the text, one must remember that a complex theologian such as Origen, schooled in the ancient *paideia*, cultivated profound and haunting enigmas and delighted in leaving his audiences guessing about motives and connections, and that above all, he strove for ambiguity in his choice of words, concepts, and images in order to set one against the other in an interplay that resists neat resolution. *ComRom* for example, is very subtle. Origen presents to us a vision of desire, and its right ordering in relation to God, that does not require a disjunctive approach to virtue and vice. Rather, his vision entertains the thought that the godly ordering of desire is what conjoins the ascetic aims of Christian identity and maturity at their best, and equally judges both of them at their worst. Origen's vision of desire as thwarted, chastened, transformed, renewed, and finally intensified in God, bringing forth spiritual maturity in a number of different contexts, represents a way beyond and through the false Hellenistic alternatives of repression and libertarianism, between *agape* and *eros*, and has curiously more points of contact with the Greco-Roman morality.

Origen accommodates ambiguities in his exegesis as a means to lead the mature person in ways not navigable for the immature. This is crucial in understanding Origen's overall exegetical program. Philology by itself dissects and arranges concepts that should not be probed for the sake of clarity. For example, Origen wants to know "Why has God so organized his witness that the more I learn about it, the more difficult it is to make sense of it?" The answer is simple. To know the language, to be capable of memorizing the text, to have intellectual ability, even to possess the rule of faith is not enough. We interpret truly when we see that the scriptural text teaches the mystery of God, and the carnal eye cannot

see the brightness of the holiness of God. For this reason, the Scriptures humiliate and elude interpretive effort. Furthermore, reading Scripture is difficult because God wants us to pant with desire for interpretive insight so that we become the kind of person “who has devoted himself to studies of this kind with the utmost purity and sobriety and through nights of watching” (*Princ* 4.2.7). By suffering the desert of incomprehension, we get discipline through the text. Thereby our vision is sanctified to see God.

2.2 Nature of This Work

To recap, this project is primarily focused on a description of the rhetoric of identity formation through the fabric of cultural, social, political, ideological, and literary contexts of Origen’s work descriptively. There are two key elements in harnessing the nature of this work.

2.2.1 Greco-Roman *Paideia*

First, the Greek culture or *paideia* provides an immediate background to Late Antiquity’s construction of identity. It appears that identity was not reflected by, but rather was constructed through language. As such, the extant literary texts of the period comprised the fundamental vehicles of self-definition. However, the idea of constructing identity through text presents numerous difficulties and obstacles to the contemporary reader (Buell, 2005). The construction of identity is the enabling and shaping of a fluid imagination, rather than the construction of a rigid doctrine or ethic. An identity consists of recognized characteristics which a group has agreed to possess, rather than its members’ essential characteristics (Lieu, 2004: 24). Thus, identity formations involve the management of stories and myths, the reshaping of traditions, the embellishment of legends, and the recasting of apparently alien cultural legacies with the aim of defining or supporting a distinctive cultural character. Intricate tales of origins, belonging, kinship, and interconnectedness among societies, common heritage, and intercultural associations inevitably evolve out of the identity forming process (Lieu, 2002: 2-3). Negotiating this complex relationship between “sameness” and “difference” seems to have been an important concern of textual identity constructions.

2.2.2 The Roman Empire

Second, the Roman Empire forms another big picture for this study. Therefore, the ways in which the Romans defined themselves is a good place to start when getting to grips with Late Antiquity's identity formation issues. In this regard, two seminal studies by Brunt (1978) and Gruen (1992) emphasize an important facet of Roman self-image under both the Republic and the Principate: that of the beneficent imperialist. Both Brunt and Gruen assume that the Augustan revolution gave Rome an Emperor who symbolized the highest ideals of the Roman *ethos*, and that the rise of *Romanitas*, or Roman ethnic identity, as the inheritance and supersession of Hellenism succeeded in uniting its people into a moral and political community in a way that the independent Greek city-states never had. However, the Roman Empire did not require individuals, or even communities, to adopt for themselves a distinctly Roman identity to the exclusion of all others. Yet, everyone was required to worship the *genius* of the Emperor. The Roman identity transformed the Greek-barbarian dichotomy into an imperial "ideology" which claimed Roman supremacy over all other cultures and people. There are profound complexities and a multiplicity of theories relating to this ideology.

2.2.3 Ideological Battle

Ideology is a term with many different definitions, depending on the theoretical perspective taken. It can be approached as a system which either masks or legitimates the intentions of the economic elite, but it is also a cultural expression used by individuals or groups. In brief, ideology is ideas about power, how power is envisioned, represented, described, expressed, and communicated (Eagleton, 1994). An ideology, for this study, is a set of values, attitudes, interests, and modes of perception and evaluation that is shared, normally unawares, by a given group to set itself apart from other groups and to make sense of its experiences (Davis, 1974: 14). Ideology is often defended against outsiders. When it needs to be defended to insiders, the group is already in the process of dissolution. The Roman Empire usurped many societies, and Origen's project is an inverted mirror. He usurped *Romanitas* or *humanitas* through his Paulinism. Thus, he is to be seen constructing identity through "symbolic forms of various kinds, from everyday linguistic utterances to complex images and texts" (Thompson, 1984: 7).

2.2.4 Habitus

As mentioned, Bourdieu's notion of *habitus* provides a helpful guide to this study. To draw upon and transcend social theories is hard. We have to wrestle with the dichotomies inherent in a given society (e.g., the third-century issues of identity formation). To posit a theory that seeks to understand how cultural forms and institutions bind individuals and groups in a hierarchically stratified social system without any conscious recognition of that fact is not easy to do. Bourdieu attempts to ask and answer challenging questions about the nature of society and to provide answers to those questions. Bourdieu's assertion that all human action contains a strategic element and that all pursuits are geared toward both material and symbolic interests has sparked a great deal of controversy in the sociologist's work. Nevertheless, Bourdieu posits an understanding of human action which holds that, although people are not consciously aware of their motivations, they are not conformists following a given set of rules concerning behavior. Instead, individuals are strategists who respond, through time, to a given challenge, aware of that fact at only a pre-reflective level. As noted, Bourdieu's idea that human actors are practical strategists is linked to one of his most fundamental concepts, the *habitus*.

Alongside this awareness of the role of *habitus* in constructing identity, it is vital to see that such a construction does not always emerge in opposition to specific particularities, but sometimes grows out of a dialog with them. There is an inherent tension here: the followers of Christ, whether Jew or Greek, leave behind their cultural affiliations and enter a newly created universal society, while at the same time they continue to live within their culture under the transforming influence of Christ.

Thus we see that Origen's Paulinism, traced through Bourdieu's lenses, constructs identity in two primary ways. First, Bourdieu argues for a construction that may be labeled as the "space of possibles," defined within a "common framework" which cultural producers share, even as it is historically conditioned and continually shifting (Bourdieu, 1993:179). The contours of Late Antiquity's motifs are therefore deployed as and best understood as a historically conditioned and socially constructed discursive space. In it, different players are performing their plays within the same field. Examining the discursive fields of connotation in which a given motif functions allows us a starting point to map out the

contours of this space and of its possible uses. By situating Origen's rhetorical discourses in the appropriate intersection between the various discursive fields that make its meaningful deployment in Late Antiquity possible, we can then draw out the valences of its usage and function(s) in a more nuanced manner.

Second, Bourdieu is also helpful in drawing specific attention to Origen's Paulinism as he examines the relationship between the symbolic power of language and the work of communal identity formation. Representation of oneself and one's group is never a neutral activity; rather, "[t]he categories according to which a group envisages itself, and according to which it represents itself and its specific reality, contribute to the reality of [the] group" (Bourdieu, 1991: 133). At the same time, the constructive role that language and textual depiction has in constituting and/or contesting a group's identity is effective only insofar as this constructive process is misrecognized (Bourdieu, 1991: 170). Stated a bit differently, the symbolic capital that a given discursive construct carries is on some level arbitrary—but its strategic power to persuade agents within a field, and thus to shape a vision of identity within that field, relies on a misrecognition of the fact that symbolic power is actually transformed and perhaps transfigured from other sources or power. Thus, Origen's Paulinism as a discourse on identity formation depends on the misrecognition of this process which erases the strategies, choices, and power dynamics at play in order to visualize Christian *humanitas* as a given, rhetorical/linguistic response reflecting an extra-linguistic reality. Thus, for Origen, transformation is made possible through one's identification with the work of Christ. The Apostle Paul exemplifies this life.

Visualizing Bourdieu's notion of symbolic power helps address the semiotic relationship between culture, stratification, and power. The struggle for social recognition is a fundamental ideological self-definition of all social life. He sees all cultural symbols and practices, including religious practices, eating habits, philosophy, artistic taste, and language itself as embodying the interests of particular social groups and as functioning to enhance social distinctions. He shows us that language produces and reproduces group and class boundaries. So then, the production of Origen's discourse through textual creation is not devoid of political motive, but rather is an expression of it, creating religious boundaries within the Roman Empire. This is especially relevant to Late Antiquity's notion of performing identity rhetoric.

2.3 Basic Assumptions in Constructing Textual Identity

2.3.1 Identity construction as a necessity

There are three main factors to take into consideration when describing the construction of identity. First, the construction of identity is necessary. It gives us our place in the world and manifests the link between us and the culture in which we live. It answers one of the most fundamental questions of our lives: “Who am I?” For some, this question becomes: “What is a Christian?” The answer is constantly negotiated over time. Hence, identity formation is neither a stable nor a static act, and individuals and groups are constantly shifting their self-understanding through the process of (and revealed through) both oral and written discourses (Hall, 1997: 24). In this regard, Origen’s Paulinism is an attempt to construct and articulate an identity which participates in the Roman Empire and yet simultaneously positions itself as superior to all other identities. It is important to remain aware that the meaning of the term “identity” in modern vocabulary cannot be readily related to its meaning in antiquity. However, in the Greco-Roman world, a robust conceptual framework did exist, embodied in the stories, language, kinship, history, cultural mores, virtues, and the cults of the gods which separated one group of people from another. At some level, the problem of otherness, and the rhetoric of identity, is intimately connected to questions of language, politics, culture, and power.

Therefore, how a particular group chooses to demarcate what counts as difference is a social process, always rooted in the context of a network of relationships. The idea of difference in identities is as old as the Greek civilization. Herodotus describes “Greekness” as consisting of shared blood, language, temples and sacrifices, and customs. Such simple characteristics of boundaries and separation highlight one important element of kinship that forges the identity of a tribe or a nation (*History* 8.144). François Hartog shows that Herodotus manages to construe “Greekness” as a reified entity by drawing together and holding up the practices of even more heterogeneous groups as a mirror to reflect the nature of the “Greek” self. As Hartog puts it, “In the last analysis, to tell of ‘others’ is clearly a way of speaking of ‘us’ since [Herodotus’] narrative is unable to escape from the them/us polarity which constitutes its indestructible framework” (Hartog, 1988: 368). Herodotus’ focus is not on particular fixed characteristics associated with “Greekness,” but rather

emphasizes the importance of boundaries and the transgressive danger associated with crossing them: “truth lies on this side of the frontier, error beyond it” (Hartog, 1998: 111).

Hence, identity construction represents a particularly useful means of exploring periods of change, such as the turbulent third century CE, which forced people to (re)define their positions in the context of the larger Roman world using elements from both the past situation and the new socio-cultural reality (Frideman, 1992: 837-59, 853-6).

Thus, the second important factor is the relationship between the past and the present expressed in rhetorical and moral philosophical concepts. In the Roman world, this relationship was made possible through a homogeneous culture and shared rhetorical conventions which utilized common textual authorities in Homer and Virgil and later Cicero and Quintilian, all of which formed a coded language which educated persons were expected to understand (Brown: 1992). *Paideia*, the shared system of classical education, held sway in every aspect of cultural life, fostering eloquence in civil life and discourse, self-control, loyalty, and other virtuous qualities necessary to becoming a moral person. Rhetoric—the art of persuasion—was widely used by philosophers and politicians, including Christians who used it not only to emulate the broader culture but also to show their *ethos*. However, the Roman imperial power and the Greek *paideia* did not necessarily create a stable cultural synthesis. This led to competing ideological definitions of identity, variously corresponding to Roman political universality, Greek intellectualism, or provincial and local practices and beliefs (Bowersock, 1996; Swain, 1996; Goldhill, 2001; Whitmarsh, 2001). These ideological debates and shared *paideia* enabled Origen to conceptualize Christian identity with an eloquent boldness.

Third, there was a self-conscious use of and manipulation of the paradigmatic texts of the classical world. Greek literary theory and practice of the early Principate focused heavily upon the notion of *mimēsis*, of selected models drawn from canonical works. The choice of imitation through exemplars exhibited an author’s reference to the virtues of illustrious forebears. Origen’s judicious choice of the Apostle Paul was itself an expression of cultural identity, a rhetorical self-positioning. Put differently, the identification of particular exemplars was a mode of relating to, and public presentation of, the self. As such, the

construction of Late Antiquity's literary works was itself a construction, negotiation, and exploration of identity.

2.4 Fluidity and Flexibility

2.4.1 Literature, Text, and Identity Making

Lieu insightfully cautions that the reading of texts as rhetorical performance constructs idealized worlds, rather than accurate descriptions of the reality on the ground, though she recognizes the powerful way in which texts do function to construct real worlds. Specifically, she examines the importance of Jewish texts and translation in shaping an identity of their own. She describes the creation and use of texts in defining identity as acts of power (Lieu, 2004: 12). As such, the making of an identity is not static but fluid and perhaps transient and transitory, since it has to be socially constructed (Lieu, 2004: 13; Cohen, 1993: 1-45). Such fluidity makes the study of identity construction a tricky project. Along with the second- and third-century fathers, Origen theorizes that Christianity provides a superior identity to those emerging from the emperor cults, Judaism, or Hellenistic thought. Above all else, such rhetoric stemmed from their belief in revelation by the only true God, as opposed to blindly following the Hellenistic *paideia*. However, it is important to note that although they have theological views about being a Christian, their most telling arguments are humanistic. The rhetoric of identity was not only an intellectual and theological project, but was also very much a personal and a social one. It was a communal formation, formed out of a concern with making humanity better. Rhetorical fashioning of identity and behavior are mutually informing and reinforcing.

Late Antiquity's texts and teachers were attempting to create better citizens and better human beings. Origen did not deviate from this program. He was creating a new world by social construction using what his culture had given him. It is crucial to see how a shared language of practice and symbols can create a common unity, while at the same time accommodating a variety of individual interpretations of these commonly held markers of identity. Such an identity lies in the discourse (Cameron, 1991: 32).

Discourses are more than mere collections of words or extended soliloquies. They are a means to the generation and constitution of social identity through the exercise of power.

They are produced, consumed, and regulated within a culture. The interplay of literature and culture through discourse is an essential aspect of a society. Literature or texts—the locus for debate, dissection, and thus discourse—is the field wherein ideological battles are fought. In the process, they become a crucial constructor of identity. Discourse, especially when it is minted in the texts, is part of the meta-narrative. Texts are not independent objects but part of a process and hence we cannot understand what the texts are saying unless we can conceptualize the cultural grid from where the texts were created and for whom (Lieu, 2002: 3). Text creates its own world with its own parameters and dynamics. Identity is therefore shaped and limited by the cultural situation (its *habitus*). The making of texts creates knowledge and contributes to an accumulated tradition of discourse, simultaneously gaining authority from it and adding to it.

The term “culture” implies that there is such a thing as a homogeneous group, even though there is no need for consensus throughout that group as to the actual content of that culture (Wintle, 1996: 6). At the same time, cultures are involved with one another; they do not exist in isolation. The interaction of cultures makes it an ever-changing construct, a multifarious collective (mental) habituation (Garcia, 1993: 67). If we understand culture to be multifaceted and to contain a series of different positions rather than being a closed or consistent system, then we will begin to see relations between different groups not as either simple accommodation or opposition. Rather we shall see it more as negotiation; where identity and difference are produced as much as defended through controversy (Tanner, 1997). Within the Roman Empire, Hellenism is a descriptive, communicative, and representative force articulated through its texts. Arguably, the culture that Origen champions is itself a mutation of Hellenism. Objections could be raised that the textual material was created and consumed by the literate elite who were necessarily a small minority. This group might be called an “elite culture.” Nevertheless, the imagined community is molded by both top-down initiatives from the centers of cultural power as well as by more or less spontaneous grass-roots movements. Furthermore, oral discourse, perhaps written down later, was the glue which connected these two groups within the culture. It was therefore important that when the literate elite created texts, they should then construct narratives of identity that made the essential concepts conceivable to the masses. In brief, the cultural presence of the *paideia* was widely available throughout the reach of the empire.

2.5 Social Formations

2.5.1 Community definitions

As previously stated, the primary concern of this study is the context within which to read Origen's work. Therefore, the main focus is not necessarily doctrines, but is rather the social relationships and the interplay between ideologies, community definitions, and community formations which contributed to the form and content of Origen's text. At the same time, social formations do not replace theology. Both considerations are necessary to interpret and understand Origen's Paulinism as an identity-forming exercise. Each chapter of this project is therefore geared to a different kind of cultural, social, political and religious underpinning of the broader third-century milieu in order to investigate Origen's vision of Christian identity. They are a deliberation on different social relationships, and the self-defining strategies that cluster around them. In the process, Origen and other Hellenistic writers may at times seem anachronistically modern, in that their literary discourses are a result of their deliberate strategies of self-fashioning. Although the issue of what it meant to be a loyal citizen and a virtuous person was important to both the Empire and to Origen, he transforms them all to show the distinctive superiority of Christianness. In this regard, Michel Foucault gives a basic investigation of the decentered self within postmodern discourse, wherein the individual subject's autonomy has been called into question (Foucault, 1983: 208; 1977: 124-42).

2.5.2 Origen's *Commentary on Romans* and Identity Formation

The *ComRom* illustrates my thesis and social formations in three ways. First, it is a product of the Hellenistic culture's practice of self-definition as seen in the rhetorical handbooks and moral discourses. However, using Hellenistic presuppositions is not the same as accepting their vision of transformation or identity. I shall compare Origen's rhetoric of social formation with the various streams of moralism that were jostling for moral superiority in the third century. Origen's exegesis is above all else a practical enterprise for enacting particular social agendas with ecclesiastical and theological goals. The target audience includes the philosophers, heretics, Jews and Christians. This understanding of the target audience is based on a description of the rhetorical audience in protreptic speeches and letters. The goals of protreptic speech are: to censure a particular person or group,

showing them the error or “warring inconsistency in which they have been floundering” and leading them to the knowledge that “I must not act like this any longer” (Epictetus, *Discourses* 3.23.33-37). Origen’s call for his audience to be citizens of Christ’s kingdom is not just a moment of undivided resistance to Hellenism’s cultural dominance but also a central theological focus of his mission and career.

Second, contextually the *ComRom* reveals Origen’s intense zeal in describing a counter-cultural superior identity that is Christian. Surrounded by perils—political unrest, wars on the frontiers and Christians blacklisted by the imperial policies—Origen was hunted by his own church and in constant nomadic movements to minister and to run from powerful enemies. As the Empire was crumbling from both inside and out—a predicted result of the negligence of morality—Origen’s rhetoric of morality through his use of Paul stands tall as a testimony to his power of belief, strength, and hope. In general, the third century is often seen as a period of crisis, transition, and even collapse. Not only do political and military crises characterize the third century, but also transformations in art, economy, and religion. In art, we move from the flamboyance of the Severan period to what is sometimes flat, linear symmetry of the tetrarchs and Constantine (Bandinelli, 1971; D’Ambra, 1998; Elsner, 1995).

Third, the systems of patronage and citizenship fuel his vision of moral virtue. Origen’s nuanced, audience-specific teaching frames Christianity as an alternative to *Romanitas*, emphasizing Christianness through loyalty to Christ. The *ComRom* is significant within the context of the third century’s intellectual culture. The imagery that Origen utilizes in his interpretation of Romans is rich with metaphors of palaces, celestial kingdoms, vices and virtues personified as important characters and the vivid description of desires in mortal combat. His rhetoric is an implicit message of confrontation: it censures the assumption of the Hellenistic vision of the *humanitas* and exhorts believers to redefine their way of life as citizens of another kingdom under their King, Jesus. This redefinition is a social reformation.

I envision Origen as one of the many Hellenistic scholars sharing the same *habitus* dealing specifically with rhetoric, morality, kinship and patronage, and with a concern for championing their versions of *humanitas*. Any player on the field of discourse may stand

out momentarily and for a specific issue of interpretation. However, his Paulinism sets him apart from the other players and eventually outshines and outlasts many other aspects of Hellenism in its various manifestations. Origen's Paulinism and Hellenism should not be taken to refer to two separate cultures, but rather to two different aspects of the same culture. They are not mutually exclusive. Therefore, while the contrast between Origen's Paulinism and Hellenism is important to this project, I shall focus equal attention on each "ism" that is brought into the comparison. This provides a genuine understanding of each concept on its own premises, and only on that basis will a comparison and contrast between them be genuinely fruitful. Presumption must favor similarity rather than difference. Only on that basis will any claim about differences be valid.

2.6 Implications and Summary of the Study

Underpinning my investigation lies Origen's relationship to the Pauline texts in the context of his positioning of his Christianness as the optimal path to a better humanity. The challenge of this work has been to pull together an understanding of identity from as many ancient sources as possible, so that we might better understand what Origen's theology of maturity is confronting. This effort enables a presentation of his persuasive arguments vis-à-vis identity formation and paraenesis about who or what a Christian is and about how Christians should live. Although Origen is defining and forging a Christian identity in the third-century cultural milieu, he is not innovating in the sense of inventing a new rhetorical discourse or a new Christian identity. He is extracting Christianness both from his dominant culture and from the continuity of the Christian discourse in displaying what a Christian is. I am aware of the growing scholarly consensus regarding the diversity of early Christianity. Rejecting the Eusebian model of Christian history as the linear and triumphant progression of orthodoxy, the preferred model recognizes the rich fluidity and diversity of forms of Christianity in the early centuries of the Common Era. There is no doubt that Christian history in late antiquity includes a series of in-fightings, excommunications, name-callings, alliances, and other challenges. However, this is not the full story of Christianity. The other half is what these fights were about: God. I propose to embrace the tension of both doing theology via revelation and seeing history unfold within the various manifestations of Christianity. Tensions, fluidity, uncertainties, and contradictions are part of the Christian narrative. By tracing Origen's Paulinism, which is rooted firmly in the

culture of late antiquity, we can see how Origen visualized that the Christ as King transforms the world. Concretely, he uses the Apostle Paul and his writings as examples to showcase a Christian identity. Though this is necessarily a subjective project, the goal is a descriptive and contextual consideration of what happened at a particular time and place.

Here it is good to echo Robert Wilken's judicious observation in which he calls attention to the fact that in dealing with the person of Christ or the Holy Spirit, the Fathers drilled deep into the scriptural text, but in discoursing cosmologies or anthropological issues they drew much from the Greco-Roman culture (Wilken, 2006: 14). Conceptualizing Christianity through transformation implies that Christ transforms humanity. This leads to radical changes in social practices. Within third century praxis, conversion to Christianity means seeing the world through new concepts and categories, and to question inherited socio-political norms. As such, transformative experience is about constructing identities. The transformative identity to be had from Christ is not an arbitrary construction but is a coherent result of loyalty to the ultimate King of the world. The hermeneutical interplay between Scripture, Hellenism, and contemporary culture demands a polyphonic theological field. What is needed is a field of play where differences are not flattened out between these multiple horizons. Rather they should be allowed their critical interactions in order to generate a constant flow of fresh insight into the nature of Christian truth and the dynamics of its transition. Since God had now become concrete, visual, incarnated, and accessible as a human, Christian theology was no longer simply a philosophical ideal; it was embodied in the life of an actual person who lived on this earth, Jesus Christ. Christ who shared human life and suffering had already reached the goal and by looking at Him it was now possible to know and imitate God himself. Thus Origen's Paulinism envisions Christ as the goal, the end of all striving, and the one who alone can satisfy human longing. This involves for Origen both the construction of a vibrant *humanitas* and the practice of living it out.

3.0 CLASSICAL *PAIDEIA*: THE CONTEXT FOR ORIGEN'S PAULINISM

3.1 Introduction

This chapter seeks to construct Origen's *habitus* (circa 185–254). In particular, it deals with late antiquity's fashioning of identity by means of symbolism, linguistics, and transformative ideologies. Origen was living in an epoch filled with dangerous ideological warfare (Heather, 2005; Watson, 1999). In the years between 235 and 275, there were at least fifteen emperors. These emperors were highly concerned with how they expressed, created, and maintained their *persona* in order to maximize their control and opportunity. Their expressions therefore permeated social, political, and cultic arenas through their rhetorical proclamations and power plays. Imperial ideology was both reactive and causative in the third-century milieu, and thus a flexible discourse contributed to the changes happening in the empire. In such an empire, ideology becomes a negotiated issue and is contested from reign to reign. Positive image making was an important business for the emperor to survive. It refers to how the emperor perceived himself and his role in the empire, and also how his subjects viewed him. In brief, imperial ideology was about the expression, representation, communication, reception, and manipulation of power by both the imperial center and the emperor's subjects. The battle centered on who could make the empire a better place and what enabled one to do it. For Origen, the answers lay in the Scriptures, whereas from the imperial vantage point and that of the Hellenistic elite, it was traditionalism, pietism, and the cultural *paideia* that created their everlasting empire. This chapter specifically covers programmatic categories that offer possible placement of Origen's *habitus* and suggests that his rhetoric of identity both creates and undermines accepted models and visions of *humanitas*. Broadly speaking, these fall into three broad fields of late antiquity's intellectual realm: rhetorical discourse, moral philosophy, and the ideology behind transformation stories.

3.2 Rhetorical Culture in Origen's *Habitus*

Rhetoric and rhetorical contexts are important, ubiquitous elements in this project. The rhetorical content also implies the method and the medium of the culture, that is, the *paideia* and *habitus* of the third-century milieu. As a medium, rhetoric was the coded language of the educated people. Hence, the people were situated in and saturated with a

way of life that connected them to the classical system of education. Within this common texture of inherited *paideia*, different players articulated rhetorical identities through censorship and in contrast to other competing identity discourses. Building a case for Origen as a rhetorician is not so much a task of determining what textbooks he used or read, or what rhetorical authors he was familiar with; but rather it suffices to assert the broader rhetorical climate of the second- and third-century milieu. In the process of examining what the important rhetorical players were saying about their own craft, we can trace the outline of Origen's rhetorical projects. Ubiquitous conventional assumptions about rhetoric as the literary genre of the educated elite would have assisted Origen's Paulinism in forging a protreptic identity for the Christ-followers. Thus, this section aims to outline succinctly a narrative of rhetorical culture through important scholars and their works, in order to hear Origen's overall rhetoric of identity formation. But first, we shall take a brief overview of the *paideia* that unifies the ancient rhetorical culture.

Teresa Morgan gives two foundational insights into the ancient culture of learning. First, despite the relative paucity of functional literates, the Greek and Roman worlds were "profoundly literate societies." She observes that "from the early third century BCE until the end of the Roman empire, you could be fairly sure of finding a teacher, or more than one, in most towns and villages, in the forum, at the crossroads, in the gymnasium, or in a private house or garden." Second, the typical course of "common" literate education, *enkyklios paideia* was remarkably consistent "across vast geographical distances, a wide social spectrum and a timespan of nearly a thousand years," with "much the same exercises in the same order taught, from the third century BCE onwards, everywhere from the palaces of kings and emperors to the village street" (Morgan, 1998: 3-4). These teachers made sure that the *paideia*, referring to the upbringing of children through training in literacy, virtue, numeracy, and ethnic history, was uniform and well dispersed. As a result, *paideia* came to represent "the classical system of education and training," which could encompass gymnastics, poetry, mathematics, music, astronomy, virtue, ethics, geography, rhetoric, and philosophy. In brief, what the Romans inherited from the Greek *paideia* culture was the "complete pedagogical course of study necessary to produce a well rounded, fully educated citizen" (Tarnas, 1993: 29-30). Thus, *paideia* was a practice of enculturation and a tool of imperialism. Civilization and the rhetoric of *humanitas* were self-referential markers of identity. They were, both literally and metaphorically, boundary-making concepts, which

were continually contested, not only in forging identities, but also in competing for recognition as the premier civilized identity. As Morgan (1998:7) says, “literate education [was] a binding and differential force, an indicator and transformer of cultural status.”

In addition, Tim Whitmarsh masterfully explores the ways in which Greeks living under Roman rule during the second-century CE manifested their identity. He postulates that *paideia* is “(re)constructing their identities as Greeks and empowering themselves as a subject people by creatively retelling the sacred stories of their collective past through (re)articulate poesis in their present, the period of the ‘Second Sophistic’” (Whitmarsh, 2001: 71-88). Whitmarsh reads Greek literature of the Second Sophistic period as productive performances of identity, showing how Greeks of the “Second Sophistic” who mimed and re-narrated sacred stories from Homer and the gnomic poets remade themselves—(re)constructing cultural continuity with their high-status past by creating imagined communities of “universal Hellenism” (Whitmarsh, 2001: 66). The shared or borrowed culture and continuity or the realignment of the stories of the sacred past was powerful enough to subvert and redistribute social power, even effecting ethnic transformation among the Romans. By reconstituting the heroes of Greece’s past in the present and re-narrating Hellenism convincingly as true civilization, Greeks under Roman rule led some of their political “betters” to imitate Greeks anew, to seek to become more Greek than the Greeks themselves in their quest for cultural domination of the known world (Whitmarsh, 2001: 117-120). In other words, the culture of retelling the past through a designated story teller was an effective tool in creating a uniform code for imperial propaganda and ideology.

However, since there was infighting within the empire and no single Roman identity was available in the third century, it is safe to conclude that the Roman imperial power and its *paideia* did not create a stable cultural synthesis. In fact, it propelled authors to define themselves in various relations to Roman political universality, *paideia*, and provincial practices or beliefs. Thus, in the second and third century, “Greekness” was a “culture” to be purchased and mastered through education, and the relational gap between “Romanness” and “barbarian” could be bridged by opportunities and *paideia*. At the same time, Hellenism was increasingly not based on the traditional binary opposition of Greek and barbarian, but within Roman realities, it became “the pluralist, multicultural, Roman-

inspired web that embraced the entire civilized world” (Whitmarsh, 2001: 25). By appealing to common philosophical values and Hellenistic assumptions, the fringe figures such as Origen claimed common ground with their Roman rulers as well as portraying themselves as better or superior. Stated a bit differently, Origen may be seen as demanding a valid identification among his followers and communities based on their ethical standings. Such a formula of usurpation demonstrates their belief in moral superiority which comes from the Scripture and it creates a sort of national identity. In this, Origen is similar to other social brokers who were also harnessing the cultural power to elevate social status and define group identity transactionally (that is, in inter-group ideological and social exchanges across intercultural and interethnic boundaries). Origen redirected the hegemonic cultural power of *paideia*, imitating it within Christian communities to create a uniquely Christian *paideia* that was thought, quite literally, to somatically (re)make “catechumens” into mature men in this new, civilized faith.

3.2.1 Speech Making for the Audience

Perhaps it is worth pointing out that the term *rhetoric* describes the art of public speaking as opposed to writing. As it was practiced in the classical era, rhetorical education was based on the oratorical rather than the literary nature of speech, and declamation was regarded as the pinnacle of rhetorical studies. The main Greek texts dealing with rhetoric come mainly from Plato and Aristotle: Plato’s *Apology*, *Gorgias*, and *Phaedrus*, and Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*. These four texts, in the order listed, describe a gradual progress in the development of philosophical rhetoric. In the *Apology*, rhetoric was portrayed as flattery, which Plato believed could not be compatible with the truth. The *Gorgias* opposed rhetoric, a sham art, to dialectic, a true *technē*. However, it conceded a remote possibility for a noble rhetoric which is concerned with the truth and the good of the soul. In *Phaedrus*, the concept of the noble rhetoric is defined in terms of the leading of the soul to truth and the rhetor’s accommodation to the audience. Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* modified this Platonic understanding. Rhetoric became a true *technē* as much as dialectic was, and was therefore not to be understood merely in terms of styles or emotions but in terms of logical persuasion.

Quintilian defines rhetoric as “the art of speaking well, especially by a virtuous man” (Quintilian, *Inst.* 2.14.5). The virtuous person’s arguments are imbued with more persuasive power because of his audience’s perception of his virtuous nature. In fact, the character (*ethos*) of the speaker significantly affects the audience’s response. In Aristotle, we find three components of speechmaking—the speaker, the speech, and the audience. The audience is the most important of the three, for it is the end (*telos*), or the goal of the speech. The audience also determines the speaker’s choice of genre. Depending on the audience, the speech is either deliberative, forensic, or epideictic. How does a speaker decide which is the right genre for his audience? If the audience is a mere spectator who does not need to make a decision, the speech is one of the epideictic genres. If the audience is a judge of things, it is of the forensic. However, if the audience is a judge of things to decide which policy to take, it is of the deliberative (Aristotle, *Rh.* 1.3.1-3). Aristotle’s rhetorical theory provides three further kinds of proofs or *pisteis*: *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos*. *Ethos* refers to persuasion by the moral character of the speaker. *Pathos* refers to persuasion by arousing emotions of the audience. *Logos* refers to persuasion by the speech itself, and for this, the audience participation is vital, since the speaker develops his argument based upon the fundamental assumptions of his audience (Aristotle, *Rh.* 1.2.3-6.). To know the audience is to know its dominant opinions and unquestioned beliefs. To be a persuasive speaker means to have a good picture of the audience and to build arguments based on their cultural situation. A rhetorician’s method is not one of demonstration, that is, “proving the truth of the conclusion from premises” as is the case with a philosopher or a scientist, but one of dialectic, that is, “transferring to the conclusion the adherence accorded to the premises.” Thus, a speechmaker has to know the accepted values, opinions, or *habitus* of his audience to create a certain value or virtue by way of dialectical reasoning (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969: 4, 20).

Likewise, in his treatise *De Inventione rhetorica*, Cicero says, “We will classify oratorical ability as a part of political science. The function of eloquence seems to be to speak in a manner suited to persuade an audience, the end is to persuade by speech” (Cicero, *Inv. rhet.* 1.5.6). He insists that to perform this task the rhetor should acquire knowledge in virtually all subjects, for he considers “eloquence to be the offspring of the accomplishments of the most learned men” (Cicero, *Inv. rhet.* 1.2). In fact, he sees rhetoric permeating all of *paideia*. He does not accept a separation between philosophy and rhetoric (Cicero, *Inv.*

rhet. 3.16). In placing premier importance on the orator, Cicero established two lasting traditions. First, rhetoric became the means through which the younger generation became responsible citizens. In this regard, George Kennedy opines that Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria* would become the unrivaled classic for fifteen centuries in training young people to become model citizens (Kennedy, 1999: 100-02). Second, Cicero's vision elevated eloquence to the position of the most useful virtue for the maintenance of healthy human societies. He asserts that a wise rhetorician discovers the principles of persuasion to transform the animalistic, violent condition of primitive humanity into one of peaceful social existence. It is the rhetor, characterized by the virtue of self-control, who demonstrates to his audience the practice of virtuous living. It is fair to conclude that the audience and the author were conjoined together in fostering and creating identity and in modeling the constructed identity.

In a real sense, the tripartite rhetoric—forensic, epideictic, and deliberative—cements rhetorical discourse as an audience-specific act centered on the needs of the audience (Aristotle, *Rh.* 1.3.1-3; *Rh. Al.* 142lb5-10; Quintilian, *Inst.* 3.4.14-16). The classical rhetorical tradition assumes that truth exists outside the discourse and that the speaker transfers it to his audience by featuring it in such a way that the truth is made accessible to the audience (Covino and Jolliffe, 1995: 7). They distinguished between “*verba*, the world of words” and “*res*, the prior and substantial world of their references in nature” and recognized the subordinate relation of the former to the latter. It appears that classical rhetoricians used language as a “mirror held up to reality,” and the speaker was the one who featured and transferred it to the audience for the purpose of persuasion (Knoblauch, 1985: 32).

Rhetoric is a verbal act or art. It captures the capital and the economy of the speaker, the audience, and the modes of linguistic interplay in the speaker-audience dynamic. Interestingly, Origen's homiletic activities and textual constructions, as will be indicated, conform to such patterns of oration and speech-making discourse. He performed for his audience according to their needs, thus accommodating in his field of discourse the specificity of audience centeredness. His rhetoric (in forging Christianness) is also epistemic and deploys succinct structural boundaries through definition, association, and classification.

Speech making greatly assisted the new morality or the Christian religion through schoolmen like Origen. Averil Cameron identifies literary discourse as a major force behind the rapid spread of Christianity. She reasons that scholars have “focused more on its [Christianity’s] social and institutional dimensions than on its modes of expression” because of their preconception about literature being “artistic” and thus lacking “factual evidence.” Using Foucault’s insight, she shows how Christianity was successful in developing “a totalizing discourse” (Cameron, 1991: 2, 5, 31). Christianity coped efficiently with various refractory elements in its relation to outside surroundings, and created its own intellectual and imaginative universe, resulting in cultural reproduction and control of communication. Christianity became the major religion because of its successful appropriation of those areas that pagans had thought their own, such as rhetoric, the novel, biography, and other literary genres (Cameron, 1991: 146). Although Cameron does not deal with Origen’s discourses, her astute perception of literary inventions by the Church relates well to Origen’s Paulinism. Scholarship has generally overlooked Origen’s role of speechmaking as a rhetorician. However, as this entire project claims, the role of Origen’s rhetoric in the context of the rhetorical *habitus* of his time is a vital component of an accurate understanding of his words and speech/text-making. It is worth noting that Origen dictated most of his writings to his assistants which instantly gave them a rhetorical character. His works demonstrate his rootedness in the rhetorical *paideia*.

3.2.2 Origen’s Formative Education

Origen is perhaps the first genius of the early Church. Origen sought to expound each and every book of the Bible (Epiphanius, *Pan.*, 64.3.3 and 64.63.8). Epiphanius suggests that Origen contributed some 6,000 volumes. Though the exact number of volumes is not known, it demonstrates the depth of Origen’s encounter with the Scriptures. Origen’s voluminous writings are incredible even in the twenty-first century. Origen did not write a commentary on every single book of the Bible, but his literary output is remarkable. To accomplish this level of production within his milieu, it follows that he was aware of the literary conventions. He was gifted with an encyclopedic knowledge of the Scriptures. Leonides, Origen’s father, made sure that his son was well familiar with the canons of the *enkyklios paideia* (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.*, 6.2). Eusebius mentions that after his father’s death, Origen devoted himself entirely to the study of the humanities. Origen could move

with great ease from the *Timaeus* to the Pauline Epistles. After his father's death, Origen initially supported his family as a *grammaticus* in private instruction (McGuckin, 2004: 4f). In other words, he was qualified to teach the ancient *paideia*. Manlio Simonetti suggests that it is Origen who is responsible for making biblical interpretation into a real science (Simonetti, 1994:39).

In the so-called *Autobiographical Letter*, Origen defends himself against charges of innovation (McGuckin, 2004:2). As he suggests, "When I was giving all my time to the word, accounts of my ability went about, and brought sometimes heretics, sometimes men who had been trained in Greek learning, particularly philosophy; so I decided to examine the notions of the heretics, and also the supposed qualifications of the philosophers for speaking about truth" (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.*, 6.19). He had to deal with philosophy and more importantly support his claims using common methodologies. However, as noted in earlier chapters, among Origen scholars there are no easy answers in ascertaining his rhetorical contribution or usage.

Ronald E. Heine calls attention to Origen's vast Christian education manifested by his broad and exhaustive knowledge of the Scripture. At the same time, such knowledge was possible because of the Greek education, that is, the *enkyklios paideia* (Heine, 1947: 8). Although it is hard to know exactly what Origen specifically studied, a helpful recreation comes from Henri Marrou's work. He points out that primary education began at about age seven, and that when the student was good at rudiments such as reading and writing, he moved up to the secondary stage. This stage lasted until sometime before the student's eighteenth year, the year for entering the *ephebia* (Marrou, 1956:142). Using these educated evidences, it is possible to conceive what Origen's formative learning might have looked like. As previously noted, the teaching of basic rhetoric by the grammar teacher is well attested to by Quintilian. Since rhetoricians are concerned only with declamation on deliberative and judicial themes, the grammar teacher is automatically allowed to teach the first stages of rhetoric. It is also interesting to hear Quintilian's complaints that the *grammaticus* presumes to teach *prosopopoiia* (speech-in-character) and *suasoria* (speech on deliberative themes). This is very revealing. The student learns declamation before joining the school of declamation (Quintilian *Inst.* 2.1.1-3). Rhetoric and philosophy were conjoined from the beginning of education.

3.2.3 Origen in Rhetor's Garb?

Within the last century, the study of rhetoric in patristic exegesis has gained momentum and has achieved wide acceptance (Brown, 1993). However, these studies are mainly based on the fourth- and fifth-century fathers. These studies were prompted not by the modern fascination with rhetorical studies but by their apparent connections to the so-called classical *paideia* and practice of Hellenism. Gregory of Nazianzus studied rhetoric as a fellow student of the Emperor Julian. John Chrysostom was one of the most prominent students of Libanius. Augustine was an able rhetoric teacher, skilled enough to be appointed to the teaching position in Milan. He even wrote *De Doctrina Christiana* as a handbook on rhetoric for the church. When it comes to the Alexandrian church fathers such as Clement and Origen, who grew up in Alexandria, the cradle of Greek studies, there still exist significant lacunae dealing with their use of rhetoric. One exception to this is Philo of Alexandria. Biblical scholars have long carried out research on Philo's rhetoric as an extension of their rhetorical criticism of the Scriptures (Mack, 1984: 81-115; Conley, 1987; Winter, 1997).

As suggested above, Origen scholars are partly to blame for this negligence. Henri Crouzel sees no "trace of the rhetoric of the schools" in Origen since his homilies are basically "sermon, explaining the text verse by verse" (Crouzel, 1989: 29). Joseph Trigg identifies in Origen a grammarian's skills but denies specific rhetorical usages. He says, "[Origen] eschewed the complicated structure and phraseology, the literary allusions, and the vivid imagery that were the stock and trade of public speakers" (Trigg, 1983: 178; 1998: 5-7). Likewise, Werner Schütz opines that while Origen did not reject rhetoric in principle, he was not interested in using the artistic skills of stylistic oratory to influence and persuade his audience (Schütz, 1984: 114-19). Similarly, Frances Young does not find in Origen traces of rhetoric since, in her opinion, his writings do not show the kind of rhetorical elements that we find in Antiochene theologians such as John Chrysostom and the three Cappadocians (Young, 1990: 96-98; 2002: 82-9, 182-3). For Young, the writings of the Antiochenes exhibit important elements related to contemporary rhetorical school training, the *methodikē* which deals with grammatical solecisms, barbarisms, ornamental devices, figures of speech, and so forth. Young judges Origen to be rhetorically inept. She does admit that Origen was located in the *methodikon* and *historikon* tradition. However, she

seems to err in seeing them simply as a methodology in the hands of the *grammaticus* rather than the rhetor. She makes a distinct break between the office of *grammaticus* and that of rhetor. In fact, it appears that all of these scholars make wrong assumptions that deter them from seeing Origen's rhetorical abilities at work. It is a mistake to see a large gulf between the disciplines of the grammarian and the rhetorician. Such a gulf is hard to support by appeal to the historical record. Literary formation is a sub-category of rhetoric. When a student learns Homer under the *grammaticus*, all that he learns becomes indispensable information to be used for the construction of a real speech. There is fluidity between *grammaticus* and the rhetorician. The *grammaticus* could take over the teaching of basic rhetorical exercises from the rhetorician. In fact, the student even learns declamation, which marks the end of the rhetorical education from the *Grammaticus* (Quintilian, *Inst.* 1.4-9).

Apparently, the *paideia* did not erect sharp distinctions between the functions and duties of the rhetorician and the *grammaticus*. To do so would be a rank anachronism. Thus, Trigg's division between what belongs to grammar and what belongs to rhetoric is simplistic at best. To deny rhetorical abilities for not using complicated structure and phraseology or literary allusions misses the point. Crouzel, Trigg, and Young fail to see rhetorical technique in Origen's homilies because they are looking for the wrong markers. They are looking for the vivid imagery of the sophist and a flamboyant style with a non-logical method of delivery. Such a tendency to view rhetoric primarily in terms of ornamentation, devices, and other non-logical methods has a long history leading back to Plato's *Republic* and *Gorgias*, where rhetoric is identified with appearances and opinions. As we have seen, what we find in most Origen scholars is a similarly distorted view of rhetoric. Since Origen does not allow the kind of sophistic rhetoric that we find in John Chrysostom, Gregory of Nazianzus, Jerome, or Augustine, they think that he has little to do with rhetoric. However, when viewed from the trajectory of the Aristotelian rhetoric, as a "counterpart of dialectic" which included invention and arrangement in his rhetorical theory (Aristotle, *Rh.* 1.1.1), Origen the rhetor is visible.

Interestingly, another wave of scholarship sees Origen as a rhetorician. Robert W. Smith has a healthier appreciation of Alexandrian rhetorical techniques. His research into archeological and literary evidence finds that there are only a few epideictic or ceremonial speeches in Alexandria, and most importantly, no funeral speeches (Smith, 1974: 59). This changes the landscape for Origen's use of language. Epideictic genres come from the Second Sophistic rhetoricians. This was their major contribution to the rhetorical discourse. That Alexandria was not a major center for the epideictic genre is a critical clue that the city was not much influenced by this movement. However, Smith finds evidence that Alexandria had Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum*, and some Isocratean works. He does not deny the possibility that contemporary Latin rhetoricians could still be studied in Alexandrian schools (Smith, 1974:63,113). It appears that Christian teachers in Alexandria distanced themselves from the practice of contemporary sophistic schools. These features made the Alexandrian church different from those of North Africa and Asia. Here I am not claiming a theological difference, but merely pointing out the rhetorical styles they chose to use. The Alexandrian theologians seemed to prefer a philosophical type of rhetoric rather than that of the Second Sophistic rhetoricians (Smith, 1974:84,87). Meanwhile, George A. Kennedy describes Origen as a central figure among the Christian apologists and exegetes who "utilized Attic language and style in order to be taken seriously by an educated audience" and "used his trained mind in the best way he could, through the arts of definition, division, and syllogistic reasoning" (Kennedy, 1983:184).

So on closer inspection, Origen's homilies depict Aristotelian *topoi* of definition, division, and syllogistic reasoning, rather than the flamboyant style typical of the Second Sophistic period. Likewise, Robert M. Berchman contends that rhetoric and logic formed a close area of study undertaken by the Alexandrian theologians such as Philo, Clement, and Origen (Berchman, 1984:215-6). Berchman states two false presuppositions that have prevented Origen scholars from having a proper appreciation of Origen's philosophical rhetoric: "The first was the tendency to separate rhetoric from dialectic," and "the second was the belief that Origen being a Christian was hostile to dialectic, i.e., logic and rhetoric" (Berchman, 1984: 210). Elsewhere he says, "They were interpreters of their teachers and thinkers who attempted to solve questions posed by their teachers. They were products of the Middle Academy" (Berchman, 1984:1). He goes on to say, "We cannot state that Philo used an Antiochean source, or that Origen used a specific statement of Albinus or Numenius. This

is due to the nature of our sources and the fact that these thinkers did not use sources in the manner of a modern academic. All that is . . . discernable [is that] conceptual schemes and norms unite sources and that by examining one within the context of others we are aided in reconstructing the content of a thinker's world" (Berchman, 1984:1). This broad approach, which notes a variety of influences, or rather that a given [homogeneous] culture is comprised of myriad elements, rightly implies that all should be given equal weight.

One bit of noteworthy information we have on Origen's school in Alexandria is the fact that he divided the school into two classes. The first was a catechesis class where his former student Heraclas taught the basic Scriptures, and the second was an advanced class where he taught Scripture along with philosophy and encyclical subjects such as geometry and arithmetic. Yet there is no clear mention of rhetoric in his teaching curriculum. Perhaps he might have taught rhetoric among "other subjects" that he taught (Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 6.18.2-4). Likewise, in Caesarea also, he gave encyclical instructions on various branches of study. However, we do not find any mention of rhetoric. We do find, though, that his curriculum included dialectic and argumentation. In his eleventh homily on Genesis, Origen relates Abraham's marriage with his third wife, Cetura, as a type of the legitimate assimilation of pagan philosophies into Christian belief. To use pagan literature and rhetoric creates no problem in principle; only the immature may be harmed by using them because they do not know how to use them. To use pagan sources is useful for "the declaration of our law" and for converting some pagans to the Christian truth. So Origen argues, "if, conquering them with their own theories and methods, we will persuade them to accept the true philosophy of Christ and the true religion of God, then we will seem to have begotten sons from dialectic or rhetoric as if from some foreigners or concubines" (Origen, *HomGen.*, 11.2.248-52).

As it turns out, as a Christian teacher, he creatively leveraged classical rhetoric to tailor his teaching to the needs of his church. Going beyond the surface meaning, Origen sought what lay behind it and beyond it, namely, the intention of the original Author, that is, the Holy Spirit (Origen, *Princ.*, 4.1-3). He used Scripture, as opposed to pagan classics, as the major authority for persuasion. Classical rhetoric provided him with several options for the *narratio*. He transformed them to suit the need of his Christian activities. The rhetor could optionally place the *narratio* in full between the *exordium* and the proof in the form of a

full-scale description of what had happened. Alternatively, he could postpone part of this description to later sections of the speech in the form of incidental narrations, or even do without any *narratio* if he thought it unnecessary (Quintilian, *Inst.*, 4.2.4-8).

In fact, since Origen believed that the Holy Spirit inspired the whole of Scripture, he tried to preach on every part of the text. Thus, it was necessary for him to transform the classical form of the *narratio* to suit the need of his verse-by-verse type of detailed preaching. Hence, he not only strove to accelerate the transformation of the believers, but he simultaneously transformed rhetoric to suit the proclamation of the divine authoritative Scriptures (Origen, *ComJn.*, 13.19.116-117). Origen articulates different levels of meanings from the text to suit his audience (Glad, 1995). He appeals to *ethos*, *logos*, and *pathos*, an argumentation from probability, enthymemes, and various kinds of *topoi* (Hatch, 1970: 108-09). In fact, just like other rhetoricians, Origen shares the practical scope of concern for the wellbeing of his audience. The fact that rhetoric is audience-centered and public in nature sits well with Origen's service to the Church, and nicely accommodates his pastoral duties.

Furthermore, as a presbyter at Caesarea, Origen gave weekly sermons, a long service on Sunday, and shorter services during the week (Nautin, 1977). The mixed demographics at Caesarea reflected the city's large Samaritan and Jewish communities. The Christian church there identified itself with apostolic authority that established the universal Church (Levine, 1975:57-86; 107-12). Thus, Origen was in a situation where he had to define and articulate what a Christian is. His depiction was broad, encompassing all of the problems he had observed within his congregations and the broader debate within his culture, that is, identity issues and, in particular, competing ideas about the mature *humanitas*. In fact, Origen created a new identity to describe the Christian through virtues which were more or less a transformation of the traditional pagan virtues to suit his rhetorical presentation.

It is noteworthy that Origen uses all of the four cardinal virtues of the pagans to characterize the Christians. He makes the case that the locus of these virtues and a host of others are found not in Hellenism but instead within the Christian church. Unlike Aristotle, who puts the virtue of justice in the highest place (Aristotle, *Rh.*, 1.9.6), Origen puts the virtue of endurance in the highest place. Why? Origen was reflecting and speaking on

behalf of Christians who suffer persecution and martyrdom. Along with this, he emphasized the virtue of piety. In *CCels* 8.54 he states, “It is with good reason that we have regarded the offering of our bodies to be tortured and crucified as a matter dear to God if one is crucified for virtue, and is tortured for piety, and dies for holiness.” This is in contrast with the Roman standard definition of piety. Their piety means faithful adherence to the traditional rites and doctrines. Against the false pagan virtue of piety, Origen argues that true piety is not worship based on long tradition, but worship based on the spiritual understanding of the Scripture and right praxis based upon it. Therefore, Christians demonstrate the “depth of wise and ineffable doctrines” “contained in these [Scripture] writings,” whereas, for example, the Jews do not give their ancient tradition proper honor because they fail to look deeply into the Scripture, reading it only superficially (Origen, *CCels* 2.4). Elsewhere, he categorically states that “If anyone wishes to hear and understand these words only literally, he ought to share the lecture-room with the Jews rather than with the Christians. But if he wishes to be a Christian and a disciple of Paul, let him hear him [Paul] saying that the Law is spiritual and announcing that these words are allegorical when they speak of Abraham and his wife and sons” (Origen, *HomGen.*, 6.1.20-5). The Christians are defined in terms of understanding Paul correctly. Against his rhetorical opponents, he shows that all the virtues and good things of their culture truly belonged in the church. For these reasons, Origen’s use of rhetoric serves his purpose in constructing a vibrant Christian identity for his intended audiences.

3.2.4 Summary

Robert Wilken insightfully states, “The Roman Empire was a rhetorical culture, a society that loved words, especially spoken word” (Wilken, 2003: 69). He is interested in showing that the church fathers (like Origen) played smart word games with the broader cultural fabric. As far as Wilken is concerned, Origen was a pioneer in connecting scientifically the two Christian canons through interpretative gymnastics. In this regard, the Apostle Paul was Origen’s guide and teacher (Wilken, 2003: 71-77). As discussed above, Origen is aware of and makes use of techniques of logical argument and persuasion. His knowledge of *ethos* is evident in his use of and quotation from Paul within his Old Testament works, for the enhancement of his own credibility as a scriptural exegete. Furthermore, he invokes the Holy Spirit for a right understanding and delivery of scriptural intentions (Origen,

HomGen., 7.1.1-4). In addition, he appeals to *pathos* as he leverages colorful descriptions of the deceptive nature of the Gnostics or the Hellenistic *paideia* to make his audience feel the danger of associating with them (Origen, *HomGen.*, 7.3.14-21). Thus, it is appropriate to identify counter-Roman rhetoric in Origen's choice of discourse concerning the projection of social identity and the formation of the self (Sinclair, 1993: 561). The public discourse of making rhetoric was designing identity for popular psyche and image (Gleason, 1995; Gunderson, 2003; 2000).

Basing her argument on Origen's primary interest in expositing the scriptural text as opposed to eloquent performance or delivery, Karen Jo Torjesen argues that Origen's homilies are lacking in rhetorical characteristics. Yet, she rightly points out that Origen's orations were persuasions aimed at his audience. What lay at the center of his exegesis and preaching was not "the historical past of the scriptural text" but rather "the presence of the hearer," which originates in the Aristotelian rhetoric (Torjesen, 1986: 12-13). This is crucial in understanding Origen as a rhetor. As we have seen, audience occupies the most important place amongst the three elements of speechmaking—speaker, subject, and audience—because rhetoric is an art of persuasion, and the audience is the *telos* of persuasion. Thus, the most important task of a rhetor is *adapting* their delivery to suit their audience. A skilled speaker will vary the balance of ethical, emotional, and logical argument to achieve the most persuasive performance for their particular audience. In this sense, Origen's rhetorical program covers his entire theological curriculum. However, rhetoric was not an objective use of the language, but rather an intentional project for creating realities (and thus identities) in the mind of the audience. Thus, it is helpful to note that Origen's discourses should be seen as persuasive arguments produced within a coherent world of symbols, praxis, meanings, and logic aimed at harnessing a constructed (superior) identity within the mind of his Christian audience. By challenging traditional Roman religious sensibilities and the Gnostic teachers and immature believers, Origen was able to position himself as a teacher in the mold of the Apostle Paul, whose claim and power rested on the revelation of God. In the next section, the contours of Origen's moral *habitus* are discussed.

3.3 Hellenistic Moral Philosophy

Since antiquity, philosophers and moralists have wrestled with the perennial question of how a person can choose against what they know to be the right thing to do. As early as Plato and Socrates, this same question plagued thinkers' contemplations and became a focal point for understanding theories of human nature and moral choice. In fact, Plato developed a complex theory of the soul to explain how a person can act contrary to his good judgment, and a rich philosophical discourse emerges concerning the psychological foundations of moral and immoral actions. As Martha Nussbaum says, "The Hellenistic thinkers see the goal of philosophy as a transformation of the inner world of belief and desire through the use of rational arguments. And within the inner world they focus above all on the emotions—on anger, fear, grief, love, pity, gratitude, and of their many relatives and subspecies" (Nussbaum, 1996: 78).

By the Hellenistic period, passions and emotions were a central occupation of moral discourse (Price, 1995; Gosling, 1990; Cooper, 1999; North, 1966). The project of "moral psychology" was in large measure a therapeutic attempt at balancing or subduing the passions, so that a person could act morally, or better approximate *eudaimonia*, blessedness or thriving. In general, philosophers devoted a great deal of attention to the definition, categorization, and treatment of human passions. References to medicine within philosophy, and vice versa, were widespread. Philosophers treated excessive or detrimental passions as diseases of the soul, in the way that physicians treated diseases of the body. But concern about the passions was not limited to physicians and philosophers. Historians, novelists, dream interpreters, and dramatists presented grief, fear, pleasure, desire, and anger as potentially detrimental to moral advancement (Dover, 1974; Foucault, 1988; 1990; and Winkler, 1990). Plato's theory sees passions and appetites as rebellious forces inside the soul, and while late Stoics insist that passions are failures of reason, Aristotle gives the emotions a central role in perception and evaluation (Gill, 1997: 5-15). Later philosophers, especially the Stoics, responded to and appropriated Aristotle's theory (Plutarch, *De virtute morali* 440D-452D, and Seneca, *De ira* and *De clementia*).

3.3.1 Roman Moralists

The Roman moralists developed an idea of a relational scale for educating persons and setting them on the path towards virtue. On this scale, a wise man, sage, or teacher occupied one end of the spectrum and represented an ideal type towards which someone making progress hoped to move. The general goal of moral reform was to educate a person in order to move him or her closer to the state embodied by the wise man, with progress being measured by the extent to which this happens. These Hellenistic self-styled sages make broad use of the medical or therapeutic model for explaining their role as ethical teachers who intervene and therapeutically treat the “illness” and “disease” of the soul.

The Socratic maxim that knowledge is equivalent to virtue summarizes a core issue about mind and action. For the early Stoics, the positive program of moral reform involved the correct recognition of three general categories: that which is true (virtue), that which is false (vice), and all other things which are matters of indifference. The Stoics also viewed the soul as material and often discussed the emotions in more “physicalist” terms (Annas, 1992). Playing off Aristotle’s maxim that “man is a political animal,” the Epicureans also insisted that city living has a profoundly negative effect on people’s character and completely warps and perverts their values and self-understanding. As a cure, they described in their texts various types of medicine, describing some as “bitter,” and others as “mild.” Where some people required mere “tonics,” others might require some form of “surgery” (Glad, 1995: 15-175). There is a clear hierarchy implicit between teachers and students, based on that of the doctor and patient (Glad, 1995: 160). These concepts of emotions along with the medical sciences were important conceptual narratives in philosophical discourses among different Hellenistic schools of thought.

Seneca articulates a similar therapeutic scale in several of his letters to Lucillius. In *Epistle* 75, he explains that there are three types of persons making progress. The first are those who in making progress have escaped the “disease of the mind, but not its passions,” for though they have knowledge of the good, they are “not yet sure of it” (Seneca, *Ep* 75.10). The second class of humanity is mostly free of passions, but still not consistently “immune” to them. The third class has progressed further so that they are “beyond the reach of many of the vices and particularly of the great vices, but not beyond the reach of all” (Seneca, *Ep* 75.14). Elsewhere, he writes of the distinction between one making progress towards

wisdom and one who is fully wise as “the difference between a healthy man and one who is convalescing from a severe and lingering illness,” for whom “health means only a lighter attack of disease. If the latter does not take heed, there is an immediate relapse and a return to the same old trouble; but the wise man cannot slip back, or slip into any more illness at all” (Seneca, *Ep* 75.6). At both ends of the scale, goodness and badness are said to be physically entrenched so that the wholly bad person is beyond cure while the wholly good teacher/sage is beyond relapse.

As we can see, the objects of the philosophers’ task are the diseases of the soul, and the remedies for these diseases are different forms of teaching, exhortation, and admonition. Origen does not deviate from these responsibilities. In fact, he follows the moral programs and avails himself of the same methodologies, but makes the Apostle Paul *the* teacher *par excellence*, instead of the teachers from the accepted cultural *paideia* and *habitus*. In the process, he styles himself in Paul’s footsteps in showing humanity the true King and the path to a better citizenship. The practical aspects of the medical task in diagnosing and healing the body’s diseases may have appealed especially to philosophers seeking to ground their more speculative projects.

Plutarch’s *Progress in Virtue*, written around the first and early second centuries CE, provides good evidence of continuation of the therapeutic spectrum. He is an avowed Platonist, and argues against the position of the early Stoics that attaining virtue is sudden and all-or-nothing. Rather he believes that progress must be slow and arduous, and that such progress is fundamental to moral education (Plutarch, *Virt. prof.* 76B). Plutarch is not interested in offering criteria for distinguishing degrees of evil or degrees by which baseness abates. Rather, he seeks to prove that there is a progressive scale in moral transformation. This is perhaps a useful hint for understanding Origen’s use of “perfect,” “mature,” and “spiritual” as different stages of development as believers grow in such a progressive scale.

Likewise, Epictetus, writing also in the mid-first to second century CE, emphasizes the linearity of progress as he urges his student Arrian to choose progress in virtue over easy acceptance by his dissolute friends. He cautions repeatedly that, “No man is able to make progress when he is facing both ways” (Epictetus, *Discourses*, 4.2.4). This presupposes that

making progress is a matter of consistently moving either towards or away from vice and immorality. A key text and some key writers below demonstrate the moral regimen of the late antique period.

3.3.2 The *Tabula of Cebes*

The *Tabula of Cebes*, an anonymous work, probably dating to the first century CE, narrates progress from wickedness to virtue by describing a painting. The *Tabula of Cebes* is an extended narrative that describes an elaborate painting at various stages of moral development. The *Tabula* as a Hellenistic moralizing allegory describes *metanoia* as life-enhancing and liberating, providing a release from ills and a path to true *paideia* (Fitzgerald and White, 1983: 79). The painting involves a series of nested enclosures, each with gates, and women who play symbolic roles explained by the narrator. The (main) interlocutor interprets the picture as a “fable” which narrates progress toward the life of happiness and virtue. The *Tabula* represents progress in virtue pictorially as a long and intrepid journey past obstacles such as *akrasia*, *asôtia*, *aplêstia*, and *kolakeia*, symbolized by various female characters. The character that represents education stands on a secure rock as a sign that “for those arriving, the path which leads to her is safe and secure” (*Tabula*, 18.3). She is located outside the second enclosure so that “she can heal the ones arriving,” he says, “and give them purifying power to drink. Then, when they have been purified she leads them in this way to the Virtues” (*Tabula*, 19.1). This symbolic pictorial enclosure depicting mythic journeys also uses medical imagery (*Tabula*, 2-5).

3.3.3 Philo of Alexandria

Philo of Alexandria provides another penetrating insight into the therapeutic spectrum, and his works greatly influenced Origen. Philo gives broad and varied treatises synthesizing the narratives and practices of the Jewish people with Greek philosophical systems (Dillon, 1997: 139-183). Philo shows signs of Stoic ethics, as well as Platonic moralism. He addresses a complex myriad of issues centering on pleasures, passions, and the goal of self-control or self-mastery. Like other moralists, he appears to assume that different types of moral characters can be organized along a spectrum of possibilities from most virtuous to most vicious. He represents the soul as the site of a struggle between the bad passions, desires, and appetites on the one hand and the good and virtuous mind or reason on the

other. He uses military and political language of warfare, rule, submission, enslavement, and imprisonment, along with the metaphors of death and dying to dramatize this conflict. The good part of the soul is the reasoning faculty, the mind, or the inner person, and is often referred to as virtue, or as the soul in contexts where the “good” soul is opposed to the “evil” body. Similarly, the bad faculties are often identified with passions, desires, and appetites, but also simply with vice, the “evil” body, and the flesh.

Philo praises the virtue of *metanoia*—repentance or ethical transformation—by using starkly dualistic language to describe the changes that the one who repents will experience. Such a person is changed, “from ignorance to knowledge of that for which stupidity is shameful, from folly to prudence, from lack of self-control to self-control, from injustice to justice, from cowardice to daring” (Philo, *Virt.* 180).

3.3.4 Plotinus

Origen’s younger contemporary Plotinus had many things to say about spiritual progress. His metaphysics intimately connects with his spiritual experiences. The practice of virtues assures a connection between the ecstatic and the everyday. The Plotinian virtue expresses itself in a particular style of life and is to be found in a transformation of one’s whole being. This is the virtue of contemplation. It makes one present to Spirit while not excluding presence to other people, the world, and even the body (Hadot, 1986: 233). Humanity’s union with Spirit and the One is a central element in Plotinus. The ascent of the soul radically transforms one’s everyday life, one’s life down below, and one’s relation to oneself, to others, and to the world. In this regard, Hadot says, “The philosopher was less a professor than a spiritual guide: he exhorted his charges to conversion, and then directed his new converts—often adults as well as young people—to the paths of wisdom. He was a spiritual adviser” (Hadot, 1993: 75-76; 1987). The Plotinian notion of turning our attention away from a preoccupation with tangible things and toward the spiritual world is normative among philosophical and moral teachers. In Plotinus, we are not metaphysically divorced from our true self, since the transcendent is present within us, but we find ourselves spiritually distant from it, distracted, unconscious of the deepest level of our self. Thus, we need a transformation of our whole being; there is not some other place to go to find ourselves. Rather we find the divine within us. We are a living temple. This concept of the living temple propels Plotinus to show spiritual progress and discipline that give moral

purification that radically transforms our entire way of being. Such a conception of spiritual progress and of the levels of the self require the self's ascent to be a surpassing of one's individuality, a raising of oneself beyond every kind of autoeroticism. He conceptualizes that the only thing that will lead humanity to God is the inner transformation of one's being, obtained through virtue. He says, "What leads us to him are purifications, virtues, and inner adornments; stepping stones towards the Intelligible; taking up our abode there; and the feasts we celebrate up above" (Plotinus, *En* 4.7,36, 6-10).

3.4.5 Summary

In brief, the preceding section has discussed three central aspects of moral discourse in the Hellenistic period—the construction of passions and emotions as the central goal of ethical reflection, the therapeutic model that prescribes treatment and cure, and progressive movements in becoming a virtuous, moral person. The rhetorician's or the moralist's job is to diagnose the specific problems and to propose remedies. The teacher or sage possesses a varied repertoire of approaches or accommodations to deal with the various issues. Such treatments are carefully applied over a long period. The Hellenistic moralists longed to become the triumphant masters of the self. Such a person would be morally qualified to achieve the highest levels of virtue, having gained an admirable level of control over desire and having crafted it into unique forms. The person's freedom from slavish excesses and passivities would serve as an example for all. In the following section, the motif of transformation is discussed; this becomes a paramount theme in this pursuit of self-control (*enkrateis*).

3.4 Spiritual Exercises in Hellenism: Transformation

As we have seen, passion is one of the principal concerns of Greco-Roman moral philosophy. The studies of Hellenism by Michel Foucault and Pierre Hadot provide a notable backdrop to the study of transformation. Foucault's maxim "care of the self" perceptively captures the ancient and late antique obsession with desire and self-mastery. Foucault's works also reveals the system of classical education and its relationship to virtue ethos. In this, he is very helpful. In general, Christian teachers like Origen turn the Hellenistic notion of desire and self-mastery on its head. Foucault and Hadot rightly identify the principal philosophical problem of the age to be the problem of the passions.

The remedy apparently was a “conversion to the self” achieved through *askesis*, meaning “not asceticism, but the practice of spiritual exercises, though taking itself as its own object of consideration, together with imagination and sensibility” (Hadot, 1995: 81-83; Nussbaum, 1996, 43).

The remedy is to train oneself through the cultivation of good habits and the practice of appropriate discipline or spiritual exercises and not to allow desire or aversion to take as their objects things which are uncontrollable by the will. The cure for the passions was to be found unsurprisingly in therapeutic action, which both Foucault and Hadot identify as the “spiritual exercises,” that is, ways of turning the governing attention of the self onto the self. Foucault is convinced that philosophers of the Hellenistic period advocated active practices of listening, writing, and habitual self-reflection, along with practices of abstinence intended to establish independence from the external world (Foucault, 1977: 101-105). Meanwhile Hadot insightfully notes that Marcus Aurelius’s *Meditations* is not just advice about the disciplines of mind and soul, but the enactment (or practice) of them (Hadot, 1995: 179-205). In brief, the concern about controlling the passions and desires by advocating techniques of self-scrutiny was for progressive growth leading to virtuous living. This includes an examination of one’s thoughts, actions, and dreams, of one’s level of comfort around good people, and of one’s tendencies to excuse personal errors.

Foucault’s works in particular exhibit an astute observation of the Greco-Roman strategies for self-regulation and self-scrutiny. He states, “What is called Christian interiority is a particular mode of relationship with oneself, comprising precise forms of attention, concern, decipherment, verbalization, confession, self-accusation, struggle against temptation, renunciation, spiritual combat, and so on” (Foucault, 1990: 63). In the Foucauldian view, disciplinary and self-restraining operations are not finally contrary to pleasure or desire, but are rather mechanisms for the fabrication of pleasure or desire. The *ethos* of self-mastery is one of transformation of identity. The desires aroused by vice are countered not by restraint but through strategies of growth. Where it helps to support his transformational aims, Origen also advocates a similar notion of self-mastery.

3.4.1 The Stories of Transformation

The concept of transformation as a phenomenological experience was widespread in late antiquity. The construction of identity through the motif of transformation is intricately interrelated with divine identity. It therefore constitutes a sustained exegesis of the human relationship with the gods in contexts where identity and status are continually contested and problematized. David Konstan argues that the novels of the period differ from other ancient literary and philosophic treatments of the struggle of the soul in the face of desire. Instead of the protagonist's soul, the lover's helplessness is on the scene. From this vantage point, the issue is not necessarily about self-control but about moral weakness. The novel deals with the character's faithlessness or struggles in keeping faith with their beloved (Konstan, 1994: 32).

The Golden Ass of Apuleius, a fictional account of transformation, describes the literal, physical metamorphosis of the hero Lucius from an ass back into his natural form as a young man (Walsh, 1994). The story discusses a religious conversion in the mystery religion of Isis, albeit in fictionalized form. In the novel, the protagonist Lucius's degenerate lifestyle leads to a careless dabbling with various passions, vices, and magic, and because of this, he finds himself accidentally transformed into an ass. It appears that reckless desires have controlled his entire life, and his habitual evil deeds have led him into progressive depravity (mostly sex and violence). While seeking to escape from his prison of vice, he comes upon the beach at Cenchreae; ironically, the Apostle Paul will have stopped at this place on his way to Jerusalem. Lucius prays to the moon for deliverance. The moon goddess Isis intervenes, and tells him what he should do to transform himself. The goddess not only delivers him from his earthly predicaments, but through the ever more demanding and secret rites of the mysteries and heavenly journeys, eventually grants him salvation after death. Lucius' metamorphosis is symbolic of his leaving behind his previous life of vanity, enslaved by sex, magic, and lack of self-control, for a new life marked by purity, morality, and self-mastery. He became destined for divine purposes guided by the goddess Isis. Likewise, Ovid's poem *Metamorphoses* also describes a literal, physical metamorphosis: Caesar's transformation from mere humanity into divinity. Caesar is a historical person, not a fictional character, and Ovid's poem emphasizes the common

expectation of such change by his audience, depicting Caesar's transformation after his death into a star, assuring his celestial immortality (Slavitt, 1994).

3.4.2 Judeo-Christian Transformation Stories

It is no surprise that the concept of self-control through transformation was also a chief preoccupation among ancient Jewish and Christian homiletic, narrative, and paraenetic texts. They demonstrate lamentation over the loss of self-control, and the need for one to be restored through self-mastery, discipline, and transformation. These texts treat desire and self-restraint, passion and renunciation, as opposing categories. On the other hand, ancient novels tend to present less clear-cut distinctions. Three such stories—*The Shepherd of Hermas* (Snyder, 1968), *The Acts of Paul and Thecla* (Schneemelcher, 1992), and *Joseph and Aseneth* (Burchard, 2003)—showcase protagonists who are divinely transformed through a complex interplay of ascetic restraint and erotic desire. Each of these tales exercises symbolic language in order to describe identity transformation.

3.4.3 *The Shepherd of Hermas*

The story of *Hermas* is a tripartite work usually classified as an early Christian apocalypse (Osiek, 1999). The text's three divisions contain five visions, twelve mandates (*Man.*), and ten parables or similitudes (*Sim.*). The main point of interest is in the narrative's contemplation of the hero's long, diffuse, and erratic progression through revelation, engaging in self-scrutiny, and being urged toward enhanced manliness. Hermas is known as the *Self-Restrained*. Ironically, his transformation is initiated by an erotically charged encounter with his beautiful former mistress emerging from her bath in the Tiber. This event culminates in a nightlong dalliance with beautiful personifications of virtue. The protagonist is not grappling with an initial conversion experience, but with the need of *metanoia*, and for an increase in his manliness, that is virtue (*Man*, 12.2.5). At times, Hermas protests his innocence, and at others, he laments his corruption. Through dreams, he dialogues with a series of visionary figures that variously castigate him for stupidity, praise him for virtue, and charge him with responsibility to minister to others. In the story, the four most prominent virgins (virtues) are Faith, Self-Control, Power, and Patience; while the four most prominent of the seductive women (vices) are Unbelief, Self-Indulgence, Disobedience, and Desire (*Sim.* 9.15.1-3). What Hermas demonstrates is a

Christian self-formation through progressive transformation (cultivation of manliness), not so much by the suppression of desire as by an abandonment to the right kinds of desire.

3.4.4 *The Acts of Paul and Thecla*

In contrast, *The Acts of Paul and Thecla* is a tale which does not show much interest in the interior conditioning of either the hero or the heroine. Thecla was a beautiful virgin from a good family who is attracted to Paul in their first encounter and who goes through many trials before her desire reaches resolution. The similarities between *Thecla* and the Greek novels appear at first to be insubstantial, descriptive plot elements, which contribute little more than an erotic tinge to the relationship between Thecla and Paul. Thecla's attraction to Paul evolves into a desire for God, and resolution of that desire is not marriage to Paul, but instead her conversion, baptism, and embrace of an ascetic life. Closer examination of the events in Thecla's narrative reveal a significant number of visual elements, which further solidify the resemblance to the Greek novels and the connection to the larger visual discourse.

Thecla is transformed from being a cloistered, pagan virgin, poised to marry the leading man of her city, into being an ascetic, itinerant Christian missionary and teacher. The Greek novels offer fruitful context to the story of Thecla. In Longus's novel *Daphnis and Chloe*, desire is artfully constructed as thoroughly "natural." The shepherd girl and shepherd boy, abandoned children of nobility, move through slow, titillating stages of gazing at one another, bathing one another, kissing one another, attempting unsuccessfully to mate as the sheep do. With gentle and masterful irony, the story depicts their unknowing experiences of the symptoms of desire. Eventually, with the intervention of an experienced woman, sexual tutor/teacher to Daphnis, the couple is prepared for union. With this climactic union comes the discovery of true parentage, by social banqueting, by the arrival of the "city folk" into the country (Zeitlin, 1990: 417-64). Thecla's story visualizes her radical social and religious change as driven both by her apparent infatuation with the Apostle Paul, and by her need to resist male sexual advances. Thecla, as a woman both desirous and desired, takes center stage for episodes in which the apostle engages in no *acts* at all. Like Hermas, she experiences personal and social transformation construed as both Christianization and masculinization, marked by *enkrateia*, yet initiated by a paradoxical experience of desire.

Thecla transforms into a courageous confessor, survivor of attempted martyrdom, and preacher of the gospel. Indeed, the transformation of Thecla from cloistered virgin into gladiator, from passive listener into bold preacher, from pursuer of Paul into intercessor for others, is an example of progressive transformation.

3.4.5 *Joseph and Aseneth*

The story of *Joseph and Aseneth* is a romantic thriller. Like Thecla, Aseneth is high born, gorgeous, and much desired by elite males. The narrative shares affinities with the Greek novels as well. It seems both to imitate and to subvert some of the novels' conventions and ideologies. The text shares with *The Shepherd of Hermas* some interestingly similar elements of cosmology and a crucial emphasis on a heavenly figure who personifies *metanoia*. Along with Thecla and Hermas, Aseneth also shares an intricate interplay of images of purity and self-restraint, motifs of desire, and finally the transformed identity. Yet, Aseneth's story is characterized by minimal external action in its first and most extended sequence. Instead of action, it describes for the audience detailed and vivid settings, clothing, and bodies, as well as using soliloquies, prayers, and dialogue with a striking figure who appears from heaven. At the same time, the allusive range of the story goes well beyond Genesis to a complex play of relationships with other biblical and extra-biblical texts. Sapiential treatments of Woman Wisdom and her counterpart, the Strange Woman, are echoed in descriptions of Aseneth's transformation.

Aseneth, living in cloistered hatred of men and extreme devotion to countless Egyptian gods, becomes the God-venerating, virtuous, radiant wife of the Hebrew Patriarch and the savior of Israel's family. *Joseph and Aseneth* is working with cultural constructions of marriage, desire, and transformation. They are portrayed as a pair who are highborn, beautiful to look at, committed to chastity, but facing obstacles that must be overcome; the novel uses language of initiation and death linked to proving oneself worthy of marriage, and it likens the lovers to divinities in their appearance and their social function (Perkins, 1995: 41-47). Aseneth's desire for Joseph is interwoven with her turn toward the most High God. At first smitten by Joseph's physical beauty, Aseneth undergoes inner and outer transformations, becoming a paradigmatic convert to Israel's God and a fittingly radiant bride for Joseph. The text's symbolism offers little evidence of historical conversion rituals,

but a high view of the full incorporation of converts into Jewish community, and therewith gives a reminder to Jews of their privileges and responsibilities (Cohen, 1999: 150). As her transformation into a virtuous woman progresses, not just her habits, but also her clothes are modified. She transforms herself into an *exemplar* of godly virtues of repentance, clemency, self-control, and service. Later, a heavenly man visits Aseneth. The man identifies himself as the commander of God's hosts, and—with his complete resemblance to Joseph overlaid by extreme manifestations of fire and light—guides Aseneth through a series of experiences performing or announcing her thoroughgoing identity transformation. He requires her to change her clothing. She dresses in a new and distinguished linen robe and wraps one girdle around her waist and another around her breast. She then receives words of acceptance and of promise from the *anthropos*, structured by a threefold repetition of, "Courage, Aseneth, pure virgin." As virgin, she has been sheltered in a walled edifice. As bride, she will become the protective edifice, not a house, but a city, in whom many will be sheltered.

3.4.6 Common Motif from the Stories

The common theme of these three stories is transformation of desire, restraint, and growth in virtue by forsaking vices through the adoption of spiritual habits. The characters are both active and passive participants in their transformation. The protagonists in the tales undergo changes marked by ritualized actions and language resulting in a new or intensified form of piety with consequent changes in identity, social affiliations, and loyalties. The construction of identity through the motif of transformation is intricately interrelated with divine identity. It therefore constitutes a sustained exegesis of the human relationship with the gods in contexts where identity and status are continually contested and problematized.

As previously noted in Judeo-Christian stories, transformations are perceived as intimate contacts between the human and the divine through which the divinity not only imparts knowledge of events on earth, but also can transform the person into a holy agent. This notion is vital to understanding the transformed identity. Aseneth's conversion is structured by two transformative events: her initial encounter with Joseph and her encounter with the heavenly man. Her transformation is apparent in both her physical appearance and in the protection she merits from God.

In the conversion of Thecla, encounter with the hero or a form of deity is the primary initiator of religious transformation and presents conversion as a progressive transformation. The first encounter, which functions as the first stage of conversion, resembles the erotic exchange of the Greek novels. The period of humiliation, which results from the debilitating vision, is the second stage. The divine encounter is the third stage of the conversion. It presents the reversed visual dynamics which are innovations of the erotic paradigm. The fourth stage is the convert's new, holy status established through the empowering divine vision.

Thecla's initial encounter and response to Paul portrays the erotic visual dynamics seen in Greek novels, as do Aseneth's first encounter with Joseph, and Hermas's first encounter with Rhonda, his former mistress. However, it is important to note that Thecla's first encounter with Paul is aural, not visual, though her debilitation is still recognizable. Ironically, Thecla appears in the narrative at her window listening to Paul's words, on the heels of Paul's beatitude about virgin bodies. Before the divine vision transforms Thecla, she endures a period of humiliation because of the encounter with Paul. She sees the Lord in the form of Paul. The vision is filled with biblical imagery. The imagery of the Lamb and the shepherd highlights the spiritual significance of the event. After the vision, she transforms and become a survivor of incredible odds. Once transformed, she takes on a new role in the narrative and begins to make external changes in behavior and appearance that parallel her internal, spiritual transformation. She is eager to follow Paul. She offers to cut off her hair, a physical feature which holds erotic significance for females in ancient literature; it is one of the features frequently included in *encomia* of their beauty. According to Delcourt a woman cutting off her hair is symbolic of breaking away from her feminine past and the established order, which dictates the female identity (Delcourt, 1961: 96-99). The various visions of Hermas accomplish the narrative's goal of showing progressive growth and understanding. In the absence of the visions, Hermas remains in spiritual darkness under the various oracles. The visions he receives will guide and prepare him for the next stage.

3.5 Summary

Among the competent players within the economy of late antiquity's *paideia*, there are distinctive voices, visions, and virtues, but they are not unique because they share the same cultural *habitus*. Origen is one such player. He was versed in the composition of rhetorical discourse, moral philosophies, coded languages, and other fields of discourse. This chapter has shown that the symbolic power of language is effective in creating (communal) identity. Origen's distinctiveness is his Paulinism. This forms a sharp-edged counterpoint as well as a new ideology in creating social relationships. In the following chapters, it will be shown that he posited the Apostle Paul, instead of classical authors and authorities, as the main teacher who could lead the nations to the true potential of *humanitas*. For the benefit of his audience, he models himself in the fashion of his patron Apostle. He defines his mission to the nations in terms of the culture-transforming and ideological power discourse of his day. Thus, logically, the virtuous, self-controlled, and mature people are those imitating, visualizing, and following the wise sayings of Paul. Just as the novelists use transformation to describe the experiences of the novel's character, Origen transforms the same technique by eclipsing Hellenistic versions of identity with his Paulinism. From Paul, he gets his vision of the Christian *humanitas* to prepare for the beatific vision, organized around the reading and interpretation of Paul, between Hellenism and Scriptures, patronage and citizenship, involving both intellect and piety. The next chapter deals with Origen's concept of identity rhetoric.

4.0 ORIGEN'S PAULINISM AS IDENTITY FORMATION

4.1 Introduction

Building on the previous chapters, this chapter begins to articulate Origen's Paulinism in terms of constructing a Christian identity in the third century milieu by examining closely his Pauline exegesis. In Origen's milieu, the term "Christian" was under constant redefinition according to the requirements and strategies of individual writers. It was a practical and a social endeavor, not merely an esoteric or a theoretical speculation. As discussed, one of his primary focuses in the identity-making process was his audience. The audience potentially included multi-ethnic peoples comprising new converts, immature believers, and some mature believers. Origen tends to present the Apostle Paul as the model *exemplum* of an identity centered on Christ. This is done through both his exegesis and the concept of *mimesis*. To do this, Origen uses the motif of progressive transformation exhibiting fluidity and flexibility depicting the growth of a believer in Christ. Such an articulation of identities reflects a network of interrelated and complex performances and growth strategies.

4.1.1 Origen's Exegesis as Identity Making

As demonstrated in Chapter 2, Origen is at home within his *habitus*. Origen's technique and rhetoric in forging Christianness is not only based on a theory of the unity of the text (the Bible) as a theological datum, but also in reading Scripture as a highly interconnected collection of texts, phrases, and words. He views Scripture as a tapestry glued together by the Spirit, and it is through his protreptic Paulinism that he reinforces his notion of the interconnectedness of the Scriptures, even if it is not clearly visible on first inspection. Ronald Heine says, "We will not understand the way Origen reads the Bible if we miss the basic point, that it is always the Holy Spirit who speaks in the text of the Bible" (Heine, 1997: 132). However, beyond these foundational assumptions about his use of Scripture, his precise exegetical technique is more complex and has been subject to various contentious interpretations.

Origen's Paulinism-as-exegesis is a creative art. He assumes and requires the guidance of a teacher in understanding the text or the Apostle Paul, as was appropriate within his cultural *habitus*. This creative discipline requires engagement and imagination. Keeping the practical needs of his students and the broader audience in mind, he employs a tripartite meaning for any given verse, leveraging each depending upon the ability of the student to understand it (Lauro, 2005). He understands that the careful reading of Scripture, along with gradual, steady growth in Christ generates new questions and often yields a range of understandings rather than a single meaning or answer. In brief, Origen grounds theological inquiry within a web of hermeneutical techniques, in imitation of the Apostle. He opines that the "words and teaching of Christ" are the *only* source for the knowledge, which leads humanity towards a "good and blessed life." It includes the "words and deeds" of Moses and the prophets; and the ministry of the apostles who spoke for Christ after his ascension (Origen, *Princ.*, 1.16-17). He creates a web of scriptural texts, implicit allusions to Greco-Roman texts, and lively personality sketches of Christ, the prophets, and the apostles, that brings together many perspectives and intertextualities, just as (*mimesis*) the Apostle Paul before him.

With his eyes set on seeking the hidden or inner meanings of the text (Scripture), Origen was forming communities (cell groups) and providing them with the concepts of identity formation and maturity issues which they needed to re-orient their lives around the realization of who they had become "in Christ." Origen was creating portraits of what a Christian is. Yet each image presented within Origen's corpus captures only a frozen moment from the continuum of transformation. As such, some of his major contours are clear but his Paulinism contains unexpected twists and turns as well. In his vision of a Christian identity, it is possible to have an overarching single identity (e.g., the Apostle Paul as he imitates Christ), but more than likely, it will comprise several, if not myriad, separate identities, some of which may contradict each other. This multifarious, fluid nature of Christianness is a key thematic aspect of Origen's identity-making theology.

However, one thing is clear. Discourses among late antiquity's teachers were centered on their visions of a "new man." Given the importance of the Mediterranean culture's insistence upon its genealogies and pedigree, and Rome's stake in family origins, a "new man" (*novus homo*) had of necessity to be a self-invention, and required a new discourse to

construct the new identity. Conversely, the overall process of creating this “new man” was embodied in the maintenance of a consistent public *persona*. The presented signifiers had to successfully point to the signified; hence, *exemplar* and *exemplum* were important signifiers that demonstrated the constructed identity. Origen wanted to cast the Christians as the *novus homo* with the *virtus* and self-mastery to transform their lives, just as Paul did. In the next section, we shall encounter Origen’s Paulinism as identity rhetoric.

4.2 *Commentary on Romans and creating humanitas*

According to Maurice Wiles, Origen “stands out in splendid isolation at the fountainhead of the Greek exegesis” (Wiles, 1976: 6). Origen wrote commentaries on at least ten of the Pauline epistles, and homilies on at least six of them (Nautin, 1977: 243-45, 253-54, 385-86). In these writings, he was discussing the *novus homo* or the new identity in Christ. These texts, and in particular the interpretation of the texts and the process of interpretation, reveal the constructed identity. The nature and character of a believer comes from reading the Scriptures and through the guide of a teacher who creates the identity. The teacher’s job is to nurture and guide the believers. Teaching is aimed at transformation, spiritual progression, and a comprehension of the inspired meanings, which are not readily visible and which therefore require great efforts in order to be comprehended. Such issues are not unique to Origen. Rather, as discussed in the preceding chapter, they are the pattern of his cultural *habitus*. However, on closer reading, we shall see the distinctiveness of his voice. It lies in his creation of unique Christian *topoi* (for example, Pauline categories of patience, perseverance, courage, and new creations), exhibiting the much needed virtues of endurance, restraint, and piety, that is worthy and spiritually fit for a Christian.

To understand Origen’s exegeted Christian identity, we should recall the practice of ancient rhetoricians mentioned in Chapter 3, who were educated and trained to analyze a text word by word, until every possible allusion and every conceivable relationship of every word had been drawn out. In his pursuit of defining and explaining what it means to be a believer in Christ, Origen subjected scriptural passages to meticulous scrutiny, often appealing to the etymology of a word and offering lucid analytical exegeses. He was constantly driving at the grammatical, philological, philosophical, rhetorical, and the theological implications of a passage. Origen’s Paulinism argues for the significance of the correct interpretation as

well as the proper use of language, which he highly respected in its slightest details and nuances. In the *ComRom*, he also attached a major significance to the “homonyms.” This was an important tool in probing the deeper truths and unveiling the treasures of wisdom which he was convinced lay hidden in every word spoken through the Spirit. He approached this difficulty through the (Aristotelian) notion of homonymity, recognizing that one word may be used to identify two or more completely different identities. He used homonyms himself to couch his own conception of Christian identity. We shall examine selected passages from Romans to demonstrate Origen’s formulation of identity.

In the *ComRom*, Origen deployed typical protreptic cultural stereotypes using polarities of strong-weak, wise-fool, free-slave, Greek-Jew, and mature-immature, both explicitly and implicitly to convict his rhetorical audience to maturity by patient endurance of suffering and self-mastery. His challenge is to exemplify better living in comparison with the *Romanitas*. As stated by Averil Cameron, the transformation of the Roman Empire from pagan to Christian was made possible by the “Christian discourse” (Cameron, 1991: 24). Influenced by Foucault, Cameron is interested in the emergence of Christianity’s distinctive “totalizing discourse.” This discourse is about power plays. Christianity, like all successful social and cultural movements, produced that kind of discourse. In a sense, Cameron successfully claims that, from the beginning, Christianity’s effectiveness in the Roman Empire lay in its capacity to create its own intellectual and imaginative world.

For example, Origen’s discourse about the “new creation” provided self- and social-consciousness for the Christians. This new creation refers to those people who are *in* Christ. These people have heard the call of Paul to follow a new life in Christ, leaving their realm of slavery (of sin and death). As noted, discourse dealing with the formation and contesting of identity is fundamentally about the power to represent. Origen is focused on communicative and transformative power that is also the source of the calling of the community into a relationship with God and one another. In this radical usurpation, Origen is following Paul in breaking down age-old barriers for the followers of Christ. He maintains that ethnic categories and the pride of one’s group identity have now been transformed in Christ. This is not simply individual transformation, but a social process. It necessitates a complete upheaval in their social network and activity. This does not imply a rejection of all the values of the Greco-Roman world. Thus, descriptively Christian

communities have a distinct identity but one which was conceived within a Greco-Roman symbolic universe. Christians were liminal people, on the borders of the Hellenistic world, not quite part of it, and yet retaining significant aspects of its self-image and identity politics. This constitutes the knotty issue of Origen's dalliance between the Scriptures and Hellenistic *paideia* as he tries to usurp the Greco-Roman *humanitas*.

Origen's Paulinism also pictures Paul as a patron, instructor, and exemplar to the nations with a superior *paideia* rooted in the sacred text of Israel. His Paulinism reconstructs Jewish stories through his vision of Christianity; he is empowering believers as a new community by creatively retelling the Judaic stories as their collective past. In her seminal work, *Imitating Paul*, Elizabeth Castelli has argued that "the notion of mimesis . . . in Paul's letters . . . articulates and rationalizes as true and natural a particular set of power relations within the social formation of early Christian communities" (Castelli, 1991: 15). She convincingly demonstrates that Paul's use of the notion of *mimesis*, or imitation, partakes of and exploits the full range of first century associations with the concept. She summarizes as follows: (1) *Mimesis* is always articulated as a hierarchical relationship, whereby the "copy" is but a derivation of the "model" and cannot aspire to the privileged status of the "model." (2) *Mimesis* presupposes a valorization of sameness over against difference, and (3) the notion of the authority of the model plays a fundamental role in the mimetic relationship. Castelli's work on Paul supports implicitly Origen's explicit reliance on the Apostle. The following sub-sections demonstrate Origen's *mimesis* of the Apostle.

4.2.1 The Portrait of a Secret Jew

To illustrate Origen's identity formation Romans 1:16-17 is good place to start. Here he identifies the gospel with God's power to save humanity in contrast with God's destructive power (*ComRom.*, 1.14.1). He makes Christ explicitly the content of the gospel by referring to Revelation 14:6, where Christ is called the "eternal gospel." In contrast to other powers, Christ becomes the main emphasis of God's powerful benefaction toward humanity. Christ is the example of God's faithfulness to his promises. Origen takes the phrase "faithfulness of God" to mean two things: "Either that faith by which God has faith in those to whom he entrusts his oracles or that faith by which those who receive the divine oracles from him believe in God." He goes on to say, "unbelief does not make void the faithfulness of God

which is in us.” Thereby affirming that Christ is God’s gospel, the power of God promised in the oracles, manifested as the King above all kings (*ComRom.*, 2.14.15). Therefore, the gospel is not something to be ashamed of because in it is the benevolent power of God. For anyone that believes in this power, it renders all past division between different ethnicity meaningless and unnecessary. Christ is the embodiment of the (new) beautiful life. As we can see, Origen imitates Paul’s use of Scripture in his rhetorical context in order to forge a new identity in Christ. He uses Paul and Israel’s Scriptures to encourage his audience to see themselves as Jews “of the heart,” to change their habits to live in obedience to the God of Israel, and, thus, to live daily as just humanity of Israel, “living laws” capable of being loyal to their God.

Origen is putting an end to the classical classifications of humanity as either the barbarians or the civilized. This is a radical transformation of the *paideia* dealing with inter-ethnic relationships. Both the Greeks and the Jews bring something to the new community. The law necessitates the gospel. They are not mutually exclusive. In fact, a “person does not possess complete life who has one but not the other” (*ComRom.*, 1.15). Elsewhere he says, “When it comes to the laws and writings, the Jews possess a great advantage in every way; but when it comes to faith, I would say that, comparatively, the Gentiles have a great advantage in every way” (*ComRom.*, 2.14.9). Both the Jews and Greeks have their advantages and drawbacks. At the same time, this makes his scriptural exhortation counter-imperial. In Origen’s hands, it becomes an ethnic protrepsis crafted to prove that believers should not be ashamed of their life-in-Christ because it reflects the absolute justice of Israel’s God, who offered his Son as a noble sacrifice, powerful enough to save all peoples, Jew first and then Greek. There are no more ethnic barriers under the Lord Christ. Age-old identity crises come crumbling down under the reign of Christ.

Origen is aware that Paul uses *prosopopoeia* to launch a debate with a fellow Jewish teacher of Gentiles over the true nature of their *bios* and its *summum bonum*. Among the contemporary interpreters, Stowers recognizes Origen’s erudite reading of Paul by placing Origen within the ancient *paideia* (Stowers, 1994: 126-75). However, in the longest section in which Stowers discusses Origen (Stowers, 1994: 264-69), he relies almost entirely on *Contra Celsum* and on an article by Hammond Bammel (Bammel, 1981: 430-60) and not directly on the *ComRom*. There are a few pages where he seems to be vaguely familiar with

one or two statements from Origen's commentary, but the engagement overall is minimal. Furthermore, Stowers seems to think that the Fathers—like Origen and Chrysostom—have no critical hermeneutical skills. He says, “They have no interest in consistently setting Paul the first-century Jewish apostle to the gentiles into his own context.” In other words, they have no interest in restricting Paul's meaning to a first-century context (Stowers, 1994: 269). This appears to be a deep misunderstanding of Origen's hermeneutics. As we have seen, Origen was constructing the text within the author's milieu. Furthermore, he engages actively in contextual studies as evidenced by his *habitus* and the common *paideia*.

Using Romans 2:17-4:25, Origen sees a protreptic pattern censuring first unnamed Greek rivals and then named Jews (this is similar to Seneca's *Ep. Mor.*, 90). This unit displays an argument between two elite teachers of the same *bios* over the nature of the good. The competition between these two teachers—Greek and Jewish—has been settled by God's Son, as far as Origen is concerned. God reconciled Gentiles by Christ's faith, thereby enabling Gentiles to become secret Jews in deeds eclipsing the work of the law. He uses the word “honor” from Romans 2:7-11 very creatively. He refers to Psalms 49:12 and 20 to demonstrate that what Christians seek is the ultimate honor. This is in contrast to the Mediterranean experience of everyday honor battles. Origen envisions Christians as people who believe in the eternal gospel longing for *the* honor that was available in the Garden of Eden. Christianness enables people to hope for a better kingdom. Honor echoing back to Eden allows humanity to see, hear, and enjoy the fruits of the Garden (*ComRom.*, 2.5.6). Indeed, Origen's program of identity politics seeks to end the Greeks' (or Romans') race against Jews (or Christian) for advantage, making them kin, that is, eschatological (ethnic) Israel (1:16-17) through Christ. Origen is thus combining both Jewishness and Greco-Roman *humanitas* into Christianness. Therefore, it is important to know the right type of Jew.

Interestingly, in Romans 2:17-23, Origen identifies three different Jews. First, he introduces someone who is “a Jew” (i.e., an ethnic Jew), second, one who “calls himself a Jew,” both of whom fail in their Jewishness (*ComRom.*, 2.11.4). Origen is careful not to label all Jews or Judaism as evil or bad. Instead, he envisions the Apostle Paul as an arbiter sitting between the Jews and the Greeks. Paul censors who he thinks is not in line with the gospel. These two portraits represent false Jews who mislead people. Origen constructs a third Jew

to make his point. This Jew is a secret (noetic) Jew. This person has the spiritual circumcision and his “citizenship” even “while living on earth [the Roman Empire] is found in heaven [kingdom of Christ] (*ComRom.*, 2.13.21).” Such a person who has “become a true Jew through faith in Christ” finds their “rest in the law of Christ” and not in any other powers (*ComRom.*, 2.11.9). Thus, Origen protreptically urges, “Let us become a spiritual Israel in place of the carnal Israel” (Origen, *HomLuc.*, 12.6).

What advantage does a secret Jew have in Origen’s exegesis? The advantage has to do with the ability to curb desire because of insights through the Scripture. Circumcision of the heart shows self-mastery over vices and desires. In his exegesis of Romans 2:17-19, he follows Paul’s technique of *prosopopoeia* to show whom Paul is talking to (*ComRom.*, 2.11.2-3). He depicts Paul debating with a fellow Jewish teacher of the Gentiles over the true character of their life and its highest virtuous living (*summum bonum*). This debate involves a staged philosophic argument between two elite teachers of the same life (*bios/humanitas*) over the nature of the good and the beautiful living. Origen first attempts to paint a picture of Paul’s rival, the partner in the diatribe. This rival fancies himself as a teacher, for those who are in the dark, that is, the spiritually blind, and for those who are foolish and mere infants. The basic message of this Jewish teacher comes from the Torah, involving among other things, the critique of idolatry and immorality. Origen perceives that Paul is seriously concerned with the hypocrisy of the teacher. The teacher falls under the first two portraits of the false so-called Jew. By default, Origen is minting the Apostle Paul as the one who can identify the false portraits and thereby aligning himself behind the Apostle as the teacher who can construct a *humanitas* unmatched by the competition.

In constructing the portrait of the secret Jew (circumcision of the heart), Origen intends to argue against misanthropy based on ethnic differences. He is critical of superiority claims by both the Hellenistic teacher (imperial ideology) and by the hypocritical Jewish teacher (Romans 2:17-29). He argues that God reconciled Gentiles (and Jews) by Christ’s faith, thereby enabling all ethnic groups to be Jews in deed without doing the work of the law, guided by God’s *pneuma*. By placing all people on the same scale and making them just through the faithfulness of his Son, the God of Israel has proven himself righteous. Thus, the Christian God is depicted as a wise sovereign who is faithful to his scriptural promises (in contrast to the power of Caesar). The people made right by this sovereign cultivate an

elite way of life. Therefore, Greeks, Romans, Jews, or other fringe people become one “in Christ.” There is no need for identity contests to establish ethnic superiority. Appropriately, Origen seems to be eloquently portraying Judaism-for-Gentiles to be invulnerable to charges of misanthropy by demonstrating its great advantages, its just treatment, and its equal distribution of benefits to all people, whether Jew or Gentile. In the process, he transforms and re-defines Judaism, circumcision and the law to fit his purposes (an example of his usage of Aristotelian homonyms).

The followers of Christ are thus the true Jews and those truly circumcised. These are matters of the *pneuma* of the heart (*ComRom.*, 2.13.2-7). Through his Son Christ, God has prioritized a pure *pneuma* over the circumcision of the flesh. Therefore, a true Jew possesses a pure *pneuma* governing the body, engendering right action. Such a person could control his passions, do the work of the law, and achieve the highest good. Origen’s portrait of a secret Jew is a bearer of the living law. The Pauline version of Judaism displays the concept of *pneuma*-as-governor achieving what the Hellenistic moralists and the Jewish teachers could not achieve, that is, philanthropic living, and self-mastery. This way of life welcomes all ethnic people without the “work of the law.” They become the masters of the very thing that the *paideia* was aiming for: self-mastery over desire, honorable and virtuous living.

4.3 Desire and self-mastery

Desire, as we have seen, was perhaps the primary concern of Greco-Roman moral philosophy. Evidently, desire was also a key preoccupation of Origen’s rhetorical and parenetic writings. Origen, like the moralists, longed to become the triumphant master of the self. Such persons would be morally qualified to achieve the highest levels of virtue, having gained an admirable level of control over desire and having crafted it into unique forms. Their freedom from slavish excesses and passivities would function as an example for all. As such, the motif of transformation became the paramount theme in the pursuit of self-control (*enkrateis*).

Unsurprisingly, Origen envisions the transformed Paul as a supreme example of self-mastery and thus his protrepsis, that is, a rhetorical technique aimed at converting or

arguing others to the speaker's perspective, is to urge all ethnic groups to follow the Apostle Paul. Origen's Paul is an *exemplar* of a moral being through practices of self-formation and transformation. Saul, the persecutor of the followers of Christ, has become Christ's champion. In Paul, Origen sees both active and passive modes of transformation in becoming the champion for Christ. His writings therefore reflect both these aspects of transformation. The implication here is a mystical reformulation and immortalization process. Every believer should expect such transformation as they grow in the knowledge of God through the onerous task of mining the Scriptures. Paul has taught Christians the proper way to interpret the Bible by revealing the mysterious union of the two testaments. In this regard, Henri de Lubac proposes that Paul's significance to Origen consists of his use of Pauline writings to construct the hermeneutical foundation for his exegetical method (de Lubac, 2007). Origen was very Pauline in his critical decisions about constructing identity, avoiding the seduction of Hellenistic predispositions.

As hinted in the previous chapters, Origen visualizes the Christian formation of identity starting with transformation of the self using vivid depictions of struggles and transfer motifs to describe the transformation of a believer. The "transfer" motif pictures the rescue of humanity from their struggles in the realm of the Evil One and deliverance into the realm of Christ. This is what Theresia Heither meant by *Translatio Religionis*, which she claims as the central theme in Origen's Paulinism (Heither, 1990). After the transfer, the person must grow by mastering desire through the gospel of Christ. Origen depicts the possibility of complete domination, enslavement, and death of the good part of the soul (the mind), at the hands of the bad parts (passions, appetites, and desires). In this struggle, transformation happens simultaneously through God's help and through a complex interplay of ascetic restraint and self-discipline.

Origen's transformation motif is best understood within an implied metaphysical frame of reference. The metaphysical model envisions a change in the status of one's body from fleshly to immortal, from vice to virtue and from death to life. The basic metaphor is one of radical disjunction between past and present, punctuated by the remaking of a person's identity. Thus, interethnic rivalries and differentiation of ethnic status becomes meaningless in light of the transfer. Their struggle makes them the people they are becoming. Origen says, "This body of humility will be transformed so that it should become conformed to the

body of the glory of the Son of God” and that they should regard “the present affliction as momentary and light” (*ComRom.*, 7.4.3). His contrast between the “inner and outer man” is a representative construct to demonstrate the motif of transformation.

4.3.1 Inner and Outer Man

In the *ComRom* and elsewhere Origen invests heavily in the contrast of the “inner man” to the “outer man”. In his interpretation of two separate accounts of human creation in Genesis 1, he shows the relevance of two realities, that of the “inner and the outer man”. Both aspects of the person perceive, mature, and are nourished in their respective states as either spiritual or earthly. As we can see, Scripture with his cultural *paideia* provided a pervasive pattern of symbolism for the inner/outer, corporeal person. Although a hard dichotomy between the culture and the Scripture is impossible to make, the point is one of emphasis. According to Origen, the Apostle envisions “men” comprising “dual aspects; the one he usually calls the outer man and the other, the inner man.” The dual aspects represent two versions of lives. The first life is “according to the flesh and the other is according to the Spirit” . . . the first one is an “outward Jew and the other a Jew in secret” (*ComRom.*, 2.13.34).

As discussed in the preceding paragraphs, the theme of transformation is constantly present, describing the change of humanity’s natural state into something different—a supernatural state. Origen explains Romans 1:5 by contrasting fleshly and spiritual births. He points out that that “born of David’s seed is according to the flesh,” whereas “that which is destined in power, according to the Spirit of holiness, is the Son of God and substantially God” (*ComRom.*, 1.5.2). The implication here is that the *spermatikos* within humanity has the potential to grow into two distinct men. The seed that controls the person determines whether that person is fleshly or spiritual. In this fight for supremacy over the person’s soul, Origen is aware that “the fight must be fought for a long time by those who want to reign in life through Jesus Christ” (*ComRom.*, 5.3.7). Elsewhere he states, “there is within us both the desire of sin, which has a kingdom in the flesh, and there is also the Spirit’s desire, which has a kingdom in the mind” (*ComRom.*, 6.1.4). With these two kingdoms, he identifies two eternal lives. He proposes that citizens of the kingdom of the flesh will rise “in eternal disorder and disgrace.” These lives are not “eternal lives in Christ Jesus . . . the

righteous, on the other hand, who rise in eternal life, have eternal life in Christ Jesus” (*ComRom.*, 6.6.1).

When a person leaves from the first Adam—the progenitor of death—and begins to be a loyal follower of Christ, the destroyer of death, then a new life streams forth (*ComRom.*, 5.2.10). This transfer or “second birth” wipes away “the blemish of the first birth” (*ComRom.*, 5.2.11). Transformation necessitates that the “inner man” move away from her solidarity with the old master to a new solidarity with her new Lord. Here, Origen envisions an organic process of transformation of the believer in which both the deity and the human participate. Those that respond have mastery over the “outer man.” This is the beginning of the new creation—a “new man” and a new law—that abolishes the old life in progressive installments of growth. Likewise, commenting on the similarity between the Jews and Greeks under the yoke of sin and desire, he lays down a strict regimen of disciplines to combat them. So when evil gets “aroused . . . it is gradually driven out by means of instruction, education, and exhortation; and it passes over to virtue” (*ComRom.*, 3.2.9).

4.3.2 Christianness as self-mastery

To recap, for Origen transformation comes about by the Gospel of Christ, which is living in imitation of the Apostle Paul. The locus of transformation is found in the “apostolic writings” and in the “Church” through which the “conversion to God and the transformation of the entire world” is made possible (*ComRom.*, 2.4.5). The “apostolic writings” and the “church” appear to be key axes in Origen’s construction of identity. Origen believes that Greco-Roman moralism ultimately reneges on its promise of renewal and recreation. In contrast, anyone who is spiritual, that is, who is being transformed, “understands what the Spirit would say through Paul” (*ComRom.*, 2.6.1). In explaining Romans 6:19, through sexual (and other ethical) metaphors, he refers to the transformations a believer has gone through in mining the depths of the “apostle writings.” He talks about lustful eyes that wander, alluding to Matthew 5:28, but are transformed to see instead the “poor,” the “weak,” and the “needy”, bestowing philanthropy. He talks about ears that yearned for gossips and character assassinations (Exodus 23:1) but are transformed to censor previous sound bites for the “apostolic writings,” multiplying wisdom. Next, he talks about the evil tongue that participated in all kinds of “obscene speech” but is now

transformed to praise the Lord (Psalm 34:1; Ephesians, 4:25; Zechariah 8:16). Through these ritualistic acts of transformation, Origen is showcasing self-restraint of the Christ's followers which will eventually lead to becoming the *humanitas* by avoiding vices (*ComRom.*, 6.4.2).

In short, the transformed portrait is that of Christians. They are now endowed with a divine sense delivered by the word of God. They become the *humanitas* through their imitation of Christ as exhibited by the Apostle Paul. This making of the spiritual creation allows for a kinship between the Creator and creature and advocates that the proper basis for existence is *mimesis*. Furthermore, the "inner man" created according to the image of God, which controls the "outer man," is akin to God. The "inner man" imitates God as exemplified by the Apostle. Origen refers to the disciples' request of Jesus to "increase our faith" to differentiate between a faith "that has been passed down simply and a faith that is according to knowledge" (*ComRom.*, 8.1.4). For good works to have superior meanings, the believer must undergo constant transformation that increases their initial status of faith until they attain knowledge, which only the "inner man" can achieve.

In Romans 12:1-2, we see another glimpse of Origen's use of various techniques to demonstrate self-mastery. He contrasts between "service" and "worship" as a (protreptic) challenge for his audience. The exhortation is toward service and serves as a reminder of the Jewishness of Christianity. The ritual of animal sacrifices, that is, "bodies of speechless animals" was part of Jewish worship (*ComRom.*, 9.1.3). This speechlessness is in contrast with the rationality of human beings. *Humans* are now the sacrificial medium through the members of their bodies, which, along with their desires, are being put to death. This enables Origen's use of the motif of transformation through the common assumptions of self-control or self-mastery from his *habitus*. Origen's protrepsis paints a portrait of the Christian as a person with control over their desires arising from the disorder of bodily passions. In this regard, Origen often refers to the ears, eyes, hands, and feet of the soul to show their enhanced transformation, development, and the realization of their optimal usage as befitting a mature person in comparison to the sluggish growth of the immature person (*ComRom.*, 9.32.2). These immature people are not new converts but are lazy souls that refuse to grow despite every opportunity afforded to them.

This concept of the sacrificial offering of rational humans demonstrates that Origen's Paulinism is rooted both in the biblical sense of honoring God and in the abilities of a (mature) believer in explaining the deep things of God. The service of believers is an act of sacrifice started by the compassionate God in the giving of his son. Through their own sacrifices, in imitation of God's sacrifice, their souls are "restored" and "renewed" to salvation (*ComRom.*, 9.1.5). This "living sacrifice" must be offered "in a reasonable manner," "examined and thoroughly scrutinized in all its members" (*ComRom.*, 9.1.7). This is Origen's strategy of self-mastery over the evil desires arising out of the members of the body. Failure to curb these desires would be no better than worshipping God with speechless bodies. Origen states clearly that evil desire can dent believers but it can also be fought off with "gentleness, patience, mildness, self-control, faith, truth, and other virtues that dwell within your mind" (*ComRom.*, 9.1.10). The believer's mind is therefore of utmost importance. He identifies that our minds can be renewed firstly by "training in wisdom and meditation upon the Word of God," and secondly, through the "spiritual interpretation of his (God's) law" (*ComRom.*, 9.1.12). Such renewal activities are acts performed by those who worship the Lord with rationality. This is a sign of their transformed hearts and minds which enables them to see beyond the Jewish cultic acts.

4.3.3 Slaves of Virtues as Transformation

These (active) strategies of growth enable the believer to become continuously a new creation. Even though final salvation lies in the future, in the present time, the new creation or the new *humanitas* are Christians who are not weak, but who are strong through their fidelity and loyalty to the true Lord and King. It is in their transformed lives that the Scriptures are fulfilled and manifested most profoundly. The Apostle Paul was able to render his mastery beautifully and was qualified to lead others in that his freedom from slavish constraints allowed him to act in a clear headed and rational manner. Unlike Foucault's description of the moralists' concern for the "care-of-the-self," Origen's Paulinism argues for a working relationship between deity and humanity in order to become a complete human. As such, Origen's motif of transformation visualizes Christianness not as characterized by a passive, self-sufficient, rational subject, but rather by an active posture of obedient submission in which the paradoxical goal is to free oneself from desire, sin, and evil through slavery to the one who laid everything down for the sake

of humanity. In these ways, Origen transforms the Greco-Roman version of self-mastery to reveal Christianness. Therefore, his concept of self-mastery is paradoxical, that is, one can only master oneself if one renounces oneself and becomes the servant of the suffering Messiah, forsaking the one who sits on the imperial throne in Rome. This tension between a secure individual identity and the loss of selfhood seems inherent in Origen's transformation.

Origen persuades the follower of Christ to actively pursue and grow in virtues as manifested by the "apostolic writings" that contribute to the life of the "church." He urges followers of Christ to store up the right treasures. By this, he means to collect treasures that are bound for the kingdom of heaven. Such persons are wise and rich in "relation to God and who, though he lives on earth, has his citizenship in heaven" (*ComRom.*, 2.4.2). Just as in the Hellenistic and Judeo-Christian stories, Origen creates a symbolic world in which those who stand for their loyalty and devotion to Christ do not become victims, nor weak with desires, but rather become the central actors in a drama through which a new way of living is created and maintained. Therefore, the transformation that a believer undergoes results in a new or intensified form of piety with consequent changes in social affiliations, relationships, and loyalties. In this way, the new creation in Christ that is dawning will obscure the current power. To be a believer in this newness of life means becoming a slave of virtues. Origen's protrepsis for the non-believers is loud and clear. They must reject their gods and cultic practices, and become loyal to the gospel of Christ. Only then can they truly begin to be transformed. Rejecting their cultic practices, moral philosophies, or other teachers, they must become slaves of Christ who represents "absolutely all the virtues" (*ComRom.*, 1.1.3).

4.3 MORALITY AND ORIGEN'S *HUMANITAS*

Religion and morality played a key role as a central indicator of "what was to count as 'Roman' and what was not" (Beard, North, and Price, 1988: 212). It is interesting to note that the writing of *ComRom* in 246/248 CE situates Origen's rhetoric of Christian morality in a time when religious practices were paramount in defining cultural group identities. Origen made wide use of the contemporary technical nomenclature available to him. The Greeks and the Hellenistic schools produced sexually based political and moral theories

intended to create a just and harmonious society (Robert Brown, 1987; Gaca, 2003; Goldhill, 2004; 2006; Brown, 1988). Furthermore, the chaos and turmoil caused by third-century political and economic issues served to emphasize the importance of the moral question. Moreover, *ComRom* is situated at a time when Greek philosophy was not yet dead or even moribund or scholastic. Competing schools were jostling for position, and eclecticism and syncretism were underway. To put it differently, this meant that the possibility of cross-fertilization in the theology of a Christian schoolman like Origen was constantly present. However, his understanding of fidelity to the triune God or *pistis* was Judeo-Christian. *Pistis* enabled in Origen a sort of radical commitment and loyalty to Christ. Hence, it is worthwhile to note that Origen's conception of a distinct (Christian) morality springs from the self-revelation of God throughout history but he could not eclipse his *paideia* and cultural *habitus*. His discussion regarding the "wrath of God" demonstrates his Christocentric take on the great moral issues of his milieu and reveals his situatedness to his milieu. For Origen, the failure to curb immorality stems from wrong *pistis* leading to spiritual blindness.

Origen interprets Paul's self-description "slave of Christ" using sexual motifs and marriage. He uses 1 Corinthians 7:21-23 to demonstrate the superiority of singleness over marriage. Singleness meant freedom to pursue the ethos of the new creation without hindrance. Marriage meant constraints and limitations competing with becoming a "slave of Christ." Celibacy is therefore the higher calling. Marriage subordinates the freedom and authority of one's self to that of the spouse. It is interesting to see how Origen alludes to the notion of "freedman", that is, neither free nor entirely a slave, to describe a believer who is married (*ComRom.*, 1.1.2). Why does Origen construe "slave of Christ" in this way? He wants to show that to be a "slave of Christ" above all else means a "slave of the Word of God, of righteousness, truth, and of absolutely all the virtues which are identical with Christ himself" (*ComRom.*, 1.1.3). This understanding influenced his ironical conceptions of morality. Becoming a slave (of Christ) enables (self-) control. Origen's polemic out of Romans 1 implicitly ranks "Romanness" against "Christianness," demonstrating the superiority of Christian teachers and Christianness as the *humanitas* while exposing the unrestrained desires of the Empire. As we can see, the description "slave of Christ" provides an opportunity for Origen to construct polemics against his enemies. In addition,

he wants to draw the portrait of Paul (and perhaps himself) as a strategic and ideological move to place him as commissioned by the Jewish Messiah, the Cosmic King.

4.4.1 Who Deserves The Wrath of God?

As discussed above, Origen understood the two accounts of the creation of humanity in Genesis 1:26-27 and 2:7 to be the creation of two persons in each of us. The first was made in the “image and likeness of God” and the second from the “dust of the earth.” The first is the “inner man” and the second is the “outer man.” Origen sees the whole of creation and of humanity in Genesis 1:26 as created through the agency of God’s word or image, that is, Christ. The bearer of the image of God reflects rationality, spirituality, and incorruptibility. Such a person exhibits the distinction of being a superior human in their mastery of the “outer man” (*ComRom.*, 1.19.8). He constantly interprets “inner man” to refer to humanity created according to the image of God (Origen, *HomGen* 1.13). Origen saw a similarity in function between the word of God and the image of God with the “Image of God” in Genesis 1:26. Both were agents of creation. Christ is the image of the invisible God (2 Corinthians 4:4; Colossians 1:15). Origen deduces that Christ is both the image of the invisible God and the word of God. The Father is Christ’s beginning, and in the same way Christ is the beginning of those who are made according to the image of God. Clearly, for Origen, Christ is the image, and the Father is his model. Likewise, Christ is the prototype, the model for humanity created according to the image. As such, Christ is the mediator who reveals the father to humanity—to become like him as we prepare to meet him. In Origenian praxis, much of the biblical teachings make sense only to the “inner man,” the bearer of the image of God. In contrast, the futility of the wise men and philosophers stems from their distortion of the *Imago Dei*, which leads to false *pistis*, ushering in the “wrath of God.” False *pistis* among other things is not giving loyalty to Christ Jesus. This understanding has a deep impact upon his perception of the hidden meanings of the Scriptures.

It follows that the corruptible image belongs to the “outer man.” The “inner man” has the potential to be transformed into the *Imago Dei*. As both creature and creation, humanity derives its bodies (and lower parts of the soul) from the earth. This is inferior to the

“heavenly man,” the mind, or the spirit. By virtue of humanity’s sharing in the divine spirit, or by being created according to the divine image, humanity has the possibility and potential to be immortal and incorruptible. For Origen, to deny this fact is to join “with those who have exchanged the glory of God for the likeness of the image of the corruptible man” (*ComRom.*, 1.19.8). Thus, it is imperative that the “inner man” be “renewed through knowledge” (*ComRom.*, 1.19.8). This phrase hints at Origen’s scholastic moorings born from his milieu and anchors his research-based theological identity formation. In brief, right belief and knowledge play an important role in transformation and in the subsequent quest for self-mastery.

For Origen, false belief ignites divine wrath. He opines that the wrath of God is against “all impiety and wrongdoing of humans”—an encompassing description of what is wrong with humanity as a whole. Origen concludes that the imperial moralists are in opposition to God. Through their disloyalty to Christ, they “suppress the truth” about God, unleashing divine wrath. In contrast, Origen’s goal is to suppress immorality rather than the truth. The primary candidates for the “wrath of God” are antiquity’s most outstanding personalities, that is, “the wise men of this world and the scholars and the philosophers” (*ComRom.*, 1.16.1). Here Origen’s polemic is simple yet intense. The best of Hellenism merits the “wrath of God.” Their failure is not one of ignorance but one of willful sin. He faults them for having the knowledge of God but of consciously deciding to have the wrong *pistis*. The “wrath of God” originates from heaven, straight from the court of the King. No one can halt or reverse it. Claiming to be wise through their superiority of knowledge and belief, the moralists are actually fools in light of the revelation and unveiled wrath. They need the Christian gospel to escape the divine wrath. This is a rhetorically savvy protrepticus to promote the superior *paideia* of the Christian way, as taught by the apostle.

4.4.2 Moral Discourse and the Teacher

Origen, true to his milieu, is conscious of the importance of a teacher in the development of a person from childhood to maturity. His Paulinism is also a demonstration of the good teacher. Christianity produces teachers that can guide and lead their students to adopt a superior morality and self-mastery. In Christianity, the ultimate source of all truth is God. Consequently, for any morally inclined and discerning individual, the proper goal should be

to attain a perfect knowledge of God, and to gain fellowship with God. This requires a lifetime of dedicated learning and wrestling with the Scriptures. Following the Apostle, he urges his audience to listen for and to discern what is already revealed, and to trust it as a living guide in becoming the *humanitas*. The intended effect of such teaching is that the pupils advance in overcoming errors and gain spiritual insight about controlling themselves.

As stated in Chapter 2, by the Roman period, and especially by Origen's time, philosophers and moralists had developed an idea of a relational scale for educating persons and setting them on the path towards virtue. This relational scale began long before Origen's time. When the student fails to progress through the guidance of the teacher, it affects both of them. The goal of moral teaching was to move a person closer to the state embodied by the teacher or the wise man. Progress was measured by the extent to which this transformation took place. The transformation that a believer underwent resulted in a newer or intensified form of piety with consequent radical changes in social affiliations and loyalties. On the other (negative) end of the spectrum lay total moral decadence. This is the deviant morality. Origen sought to bring about vivid changes within a person. This change was the only way to avoid the "wrath of God." The language for such changes is usually oppositional: pleasure, desire, or lust must be forsaken and self-restraint or self-control must prevail. Along with the *paideia*, he deals heavily with the problems and possibilities of desire as he articulates a (Christian) moral identity.

As we can see, Origen understood late antiquity's educational program well. Philosophy and character formation was an organic entity. Philosophy was the pursuit of wisdom in living that cemented characters, as opposed to mere musings about theories of knowledge. The practical goal was that of virtuous and contented living, whether through the individual efforts of the masters or within the ideal state of the Academy. For Origen the people listed in Romans 1:18-32 are wise men, their students, but their *ethos* deserves the "wrath of God." They had failed in their programs of virtue and exhibited moral bankruptcy despite their elaborate knowledge of growth strategies, formulae of self-control, and understanding of desire. The immoral persons censored in Romans 1:18-32 were his cultural competitors.

Origen echoes that the task of philosophy and of the teacher was to care for the soul. The philosopher was to tend to his own soul and of others in order to make them as good as possible (character formation). The task was to “persuade” people to adopt his vision of the philosophical life. The acceptance of a philosophy was often experienced as a conversion into a new and better way of life. However, the initial conversion was not considered enough. The young believer needed a guide or a teacher. Instead of attacking individual moral acts against the God of Christ, Origen collectively blames the Greco-Roman moralists for idolatry leading to a concert of ethical and moral decadence. The power and responsibilities of the philosophers, coupled with their failures, made them a favorite target of Origen’s rhetoric. It enabled his *protrepsis* to illustrate the portrait of the Apostle.

Interestingly, Origen also produces an illustration of God as the great physician. This makes a lot of sense in light of the harmony of philosophy and medicine within his cultural *habitus*. He narrates how a person might go against the wishes of the physician by eating and drinking rotten foods, producing ill health and sickness. This person might be restored back to health if he listens to the advice of the physician. God, the great physician, wishes good things for humanity, but each individual deserves their unjust acts and justice (*ComRom.*, 2.6.3). For Origen, the main thrust of Romans 2:8-9 is to show that God does not necessarily rain down ill-health, fury, or anguish upon humanity but that such things are the result of bad choices, evil desires, and of living in the fallen realm. Yet, God is able to restore them and give them their life back. He states that “in the Holy Scriptures the sicknesses of the soul are enumerated and the remedies described so that those who subject themselves to the Apostle’s instructions” are cured (*ComRom.*, 2.6.4). Thus, when they recover their health they may say, “(Psalm 103:2-3) Bless the Lord, O my soul, who heals all your diseases” (*ComRom.*, 2.6.4). Restoration of the soul from desires is a form of healing.

4.4.3 Desires and Domination

To repeat, desires were the central preoccupation of moral discourse of the Hellenistic *paideia* (Nussbaum, 1994; Cooper, 1999). Despite subtle differences, there was general agreement and a common assumption that passions and desires caused moral problems in the soul. Where theories differed, their arguments comprised of competing theories about

the soul, desires, the role and nature of emotions and the appropriate means of correcting them in light of their theories of knowing what is right and wrong. The notion of self-control of appetite—both sexual and *gourmand*—is thus intrinsic to the debate about Roman self-identity. Therefore, polemic against enemies is imbued with charges of effeminacy and of sexual overindulgence. Origen’s favorite dictum of Christian moral superiority in moral diatribe is that the “inner man” controls the “outer man.” On the other hand, those who follow the Hellenistic moralities have given over the “desires of their hearts” to impurities and have “degraded their bodies,” leading to unrestrained and unhealthy desires (*ComRom.*, 1.18.2).

Origen’s interpretation of the *Imago Dei* involves another layer of interpretation. He plays with the distinctions of *Adam* as male and female (Origen, *HomGen.*, 1.15-17). He describes the “inner man” as two separate but harmonious entities: spirit and soul. Symbolically, the spirit is distinguished as male; the soul as female. The command of the Lord to “multiply and increase” is dependent upon their harmonious union. This has serious implications for his identity rhetoric. The productivity of the two is dependent upon their ability to curb fleshly enthusiasms that cause disharmony. Dominion over the created realm and the beasts symbolizes a mastery of bodily desires and the impulses of the flesh. Instead of subduing the beasts, such persons worship them. The right *pistis* means having proper relations with the creation while honoring the Creator. This is possible through harmony between the maleness and the femaleness in the soul.

4.4.3 The Battle for the Soul

Plotinus provides a parallel understanding to Origen’s concept of the soul. Plotinus’ concern over soul, true to Plato, viewed the soul as the midpoint between the “flesh” and the “mind.” He saw moral choices as the driving forces to decide whether to follow the higher reason or the lower bodily appetite (Plotinus, *Enn.*, 4.7.1.20). Similarly, Origen conceives of the soul as midway between flesh and spirit, symbolizing a moderate moral position between the two extremes. Either “it [the soul] gives assent to the desires of the spirit or it is inclined toward the lusts of flesh” (*ComRom.*, 1.18.5). The alliance forged by the soul has deep consequences. If the soul supports the flesh, then the person becomes fleshly; if it supports the spirit, the person becomes spiritual (*ComRom.*, 1.18.6). He sees

the powers and lords of the infernal realms locked in fatal battle over the human soul with the good forces. True to his firm convictions of the freedom of the will, for Origen, the ultimate choice in this battle lies with the soul (Origen, *Princ.*, 3.1.1; 3.1.6). It is important for Origen that “the matter is not done by force nor is the soul moved in either of the two directions by compulsion” (*ComRom.*, 1.18.7). He thought it to be impossible to maintain the goodness of divine providence unless free choice lay at the root of evil in the cosmos. Thus, the decision to choose life or death (the last enemy) determines the outcome of the various battles. When the soul chooses life over death, it is “hastening to eternal life” seeking “glory and honor and incorruption” (*ComRom.*, 2.5.6). By eternal life he means among other things “knowledge” about God, and by incorruption he is referring to resurrection.

Interestingly, Philo also distinguishes between bodily death or mortality and a type of moral death. The death of the soul does not convey actual destruction, but rather the total domination and enslavement of the good part of the soul. Philo interprets God’s warning to Adam not to eat of the tree of life by distinguishing between two types of death. He writes:

The death of the man is the separation of the soul from the body, but the death of the soul is the decay of virtue and the bringing in of wickedness. It is for this reason that God says not only “die” but “die the death,” indicating not the death not common to us all, but that special death, properly so called, which is that of the soul becoming entombed in passions and wickedness of all kinds (Philo, *Leg.*, 1.105-106).

Origen mirrors this concept with his use of the soul in the contentious battle for control of the person. Rather than actual death, the death of the soul conveys the total domination and enslavement of the soul by immoralities.

At the same time, it is important to distinguish between Origen and Philo. Speaking of the soul, Origen points out that a human is a “soul using a body” (Origen, *Ccels.*, 6.71; 8.38; and *Princ.*, 4.2.7). Concurrently, he holds that a human being is an inseparable unity. Although soul and body may seem to be distinguished from each other, a human being is a single entity (Origen, *ComJo.*, 13.50). Such views highlight his polemics against Marcion and Valentinus. Their ideas were characterized by reducing humanity to the incorporeal, believing a human to be soul and neglecting the body. Against this, Origen preserves the idea of humanity as “one” union comprising two parts. This unity is not available in the person itself or in independent subsistence away from God.

Origen draws an interesting analogy to show his version of morality (*ComRom.*, 1.18.9-10). He imagines the triad—soul, body, and spirit—to be roommates in a house. He describes the soul as the most important personality in this house. The others play their roles as counselors of the soul. Outside of their house, two armies are encamped. One of them is led by piety with its armies of virtues. The other army consists of ungodliness made up of excess and lust. These constituents of ungodliness exhibit lack of self-control. The soul has the option to invite one of the armies into the house. The role of the counselors is important, yet the ultimate decision to listen or reject their advice lies with the soul. The point that Origen illustrates so vividly for his audience is the power of the soul and the logical implication of the decision. Depending upon which army walks in, both desires and self-mastery are at stake (*ComRom.*, 1.18.2). The rejected army moves away from the soul, leaving the invited army as the sole power. He uses this roommate story to explain the degradation identified in Romans 1:18-32. When the “soul has exchanged the truth of God for a lie and, letting into herself the servants of ungodliness and faithlessness, worships and serves the creature instead of the Creator, who is blessed forever”, then all kinds of moral deviance overtake the soul, completely empowering the person and embodying evil itself (*ComRom.*, 1.18.9). To recap, Origen portrays the soul as a pivotal part of humanity. It defines its existence either by choosing to be influenced, moved, and directed by the spirit of God and proper instruction from the word of God, or by the devil and false teachers. The soul’s choice has major implications for right belief or disbelief.

4.4.5 Right *Pistis* and Christianness

In *ComRom*, the distinction between right and wrong *pistis* has to do with the issue of worship. Right worship consists of acknowledging and honoring the Creator, but the wrong *pistis* worships and honors creation. As we have seen, it is important for Origen to demonstrate that moral deviance emerges when humans worship creation and start caring for the self without acknowledging the Creator. Abnormal, lustful sexual desires are one expression of this mutated belief system. Right allegiance belongs to the Creator. Thus, Origen names the Creator specifically, as “the Father and the Son and Holy Spirit” (*ComRom.*, 1.18.10; 1.16.5). Unlike the Foucauldian “care of the self,” Origen’s Paulinism makes space for the Creator that demands and deserves humanity’s *pistis*. The Creator is the one who provides care for humanity as the creature learns to live in the newness of life.

An example of Origen's predilection towards meticulous study is illustrated when he notes that Paul writes, "God handed them over" three times in Romans 1:18-32 (*ComRom.*, 1.19.2). Origen interprets this to refer to three classes of people. All three groups are headed in the wrong direction through their worship and honoring of the wrong things, allowing the armies of vice to become entrenched within their souls. He interprets the first group, characterized by "the ungodliness of those who worship idols," to be indicative of the pagans. The second groups, "those who serve created things rather than the Creator," are the wise men and philosophers. The third are "those who have not approved (or choose) to acknowledge God," meaning the heretics (*ComRom.*, 1.19.6). In varying degree, these classes of people were all rivaling the Christian identity. Despite their best efforts, they are unable to stop the avalanche of moral decadence. They do not have any screen of protection from the coming wrath of God. Impious actions and unnatural indulgences of the passions both evidenced and facilitated their total loss of judgment. Seneca makes a similar point by describing the man who has wholly succumbed to passion, and thus wholly lost his mind (Seneca, *Ep. mor.*, 39.3-6).

Origen's commentary on Romans 1:18-32 celebrates one of humanity's basic elements—its God-given (sexual) energies. These energies can erupt in creativity and life-enhancing intimacy as well as in uncontrolled self-love. Origen's Paulinism calls for mastery over the energies of our nature. Thus, his understanding of "slave of Christ" is "singleness" to ensure constant loyalty in the service of the Creator. Origen cautions that these desires mentioned in Romans 1:18-32 lie coiled in waiting to spring upon humanity, if we are not careful. Self-mastery begins by asserting loyalty to the Creator not to the creation. True self-care is the realization of the Creator's role in our lives. The worship of creation is a symptom of self-love, manifesting in unnatural use of God-given sexual energies.

Origen's Paulinism dealing with right *pistis* and the wrath of God is one of the many reflections upon a long tradition of philosophical and moral interest. We can hear two major distinct echoes in Origen's exegesis. First, as pointed out by Stanley Stowers, there are significant similarities between Romans 18:1-32 and the Greco-Roman "decline of civilization narratives" (Stowers, 1994: 85-104). Origen describes and censors the classical traditions in light of their moral failures. He takes full advantage of the clichés and stereotypes from his culture to reveal Christianness in contrast to the other religious

identities. Second, the passage echoes the Exodus motif demonstrating God's rescue of humanity from the historical slave-market of Egypt (de Lubac, 2007: 91). This Exodus metaphor represents the action of the Creator God against lesser gods and created entities of Egypt, revealing what he [Origen] thought of the Hellenistic *paideia*. Humanity in its present condition is tangled up with the whole of creation. They are simultaneously chained in slavery and death. They are waiting for the great rescue. Only the Creator can liberate humanity and the *cosmos* from the chains of various passions. Philosophy needs the teaching of Christ. The people of God traveling through the wilderness towards their inheritance of self-mastery are an act, teaching, and demonstration of the Creator, who demands their fidelity.

The rescued people know and see three kinds of treasures. In explaining the "treasure of wrath" in Romans 2:5, Origen refers both to Luke 12:21 and Philippians 3:20 to reveal contrasting citizenships with different mindsets. The first treasure deals with earthly riches, which the Lord forbids them from hoarding. The second treasure is in heaven and they are commanded to collect it (Matthew 6:19-20). Finally, the third treasure deals with wrath. In explaining the "day of wrath," he takes his audience back to the Jewish prophets, Amos, Joel, Zephaniah, and Isaiah. These prophets speak about dark, dangerous, and miserable days in conjunction with the coming of the Lord. The effects that he wants demonstrate his use of the entire Bible as one whole tapestry. The teachers of the *paideia* deserve the day of the Lord in its full intensity and wrath because they are suppressing the truth about God while claiming their identity as teachers of the way of life. The people of God know that following the wise men or the Greco-Roman *paideia* means collecting treasures that reap the wrath of God (*ComRom.*, 2.4.2). For Origen, this ability to discern such classifications of treasure display what the best of Hellenism has missed. The philosophers are fools suffering with blindness and they therefore possess an inferior identity in comparison to the identity of one who can see the true treasure and seek it out. In the following paragraphs, we shall see how the motif of self-mastery reveals for Origen the superiority of Christianness.

4.5 Demonstrating Christianness

Romans 7:7-25, an anguished cry for deliverance from the sinful body, has a kaleidoscope of interpretations. The core issue is that of the identity of the speaker: who the “I” is. Is this an autobiographical reference, or is Paul describing someone else? Origen’s exegesis of these verses demonstrates a formation of Christian identity as the superior *humanitas* in the Greco-Roman world. In these verses, he uses prosopological exegesis to explain the Apostle Paul (Kennedy, 1983: 64 and Clark, 1957). *Prosopopoeia* or prosopological exegesis (speech-in-character) is a rhetorical and literary technique in which the speaker produces speeches that represent another person or type of character rather than describing himself (Theon, *Progymnasmata*, 2.115.11-118.5; Hermogenes, *Progymnasmata*. 9.1-43). Familiarity with this technique enabled Origen to articulate how Paul reached different audiences with diverse needs as he designed his imitation of the life of Christ. Origen’s exegesis begins with the historical Paul and aims to explain the Gospel of Christ, and then moves to clarify and define the identity of a mature believer in the third century. This deals with both the physical and the metaphorical and the interior battle between vice and virtue. All of these are constructed textually.

The writing of the *ComRom* is itself a demonstration of Origen’s adoration of the power of text. Thomas P. Scheck speculates, “Perhaps the *Commentary* [on Romans] was written in an anticipation of Rome’s approaching 1000-year Jubilee, as an enthusiastic outcropping of Christian pride over the inspired document addressed to the church in the Eternal City” (Scheck, 2002: 9). It was a time when the Great Roman Empire was about to have her millennial celebration (248 CE). Laden with the emperor’s messages of good news, inspiration, and private hopes for human progress, it took place in a world far more insecure than even our contemporary times. It was an age increasingly burdened with socio-political unrest, wars, pestilence, and economic decline (*CCels.*, 3.15). The collapse of the fabric of the empire made the social conservatives cling to their Greco-Roman pride, and in particular to their *humanitas*, their way of life, and their accomplishments. To demonstrate difference from the perceived Roman way of life was dangerous. It was not safe to be Christian.

In this matrix, Origen appears to leverage his Paulinism in order to solidify the believers into one body in Christ. This is conceivable if we consider two contextual scenarios. First, the social, political, and religious identity of Christians in the third century took shape in a period when they were considered public enemies and a threat to the well-being of the Empire. In a culture where polytheism and the imperial cult formed the bedrock of religious, social, and political order, Christian monotheism and fealty to Jesus Christ was a crime punishable by death. The *Romanitas* embraced both the sense of loyalty to the traditional customs of Rome and public devotion to the gods in traditional cultic acts. For Rome, a true religion, whose fruit was piety, was distinguished by respecting, honoring, and working in harmony with its ancestral tradition, whereas superstition (a false religion), whose outcome was atheism with regard to the traditional divinities, inevitably disturbed and deviated from the ancestral tradition. To the broader culture and the social elite, Christianity was an evil, godless deviance from the ancestral tradition. After all, the Christians refused to bow down to established tradition because of their loyalty to Jesus (Wilken, 1986).

Second, the discourse about morality and self-control in the formation of a true *humanitas* provides another important context. The discourse of self-control was intrinsic to the forging of identity, and conversely to the creating of imaginary or metaphorical boundaries. As such, texts are rhetorical constructs and authors are engaged in rhetorical construction. People constructed their texts, as they are accessible to us, for their development and self-understanding (Cameron, 1991: 1-47). Hence, Origen's construction of a Christian *humanitas* was implicitly subversive in its competition with the established norms of the Roman Empire and Hellenistic heritage. Therefore, the primary concern for the players—Hellenistic teachers and Origen—is textual identity, that is, with identity as textually constructed, with a conviction that the texts do not tell us about some antecedent reality, “Christianness” or “*Romanitas*,” but that both of these are processes, constructs, achieved through texts. Next, we deal with an aspect of the making of the textual identities, speech-in-character.

4.5.1 Speech-in-character and Identity Formation

The definition of *prosopopoeia* developed by the classical *paideia* is hard to describe. One succinct definition from Theon's *Progymnasmata* is as follows: "Speech-in-character is the introduction of a character who speaks words clearly appropriate to himself and to the matters being presented" (Theon, *Prog.* 2.118.12-14). It is important to remember the flexibility afforded by multiple possible implementations of this technique. The character employed may be either a fictional or a historical person (Quintilian, *Inst.* 4.1.28, 69). Furthermore, the character is not necessarily represented by a single individual, but may rather be a composite stereotype of a certain kind of person, such as a military general or a husband (Theon, *Prog.* 2.115.14-19; Hermogenes, *Prog.* 9.13-17). The range of the character extends to gods, cities, the dead and even virtues and vices (Hermogenes, *Prog.* 9.4-6). Such personification of a concept in the form of a character amplified an argument in order to arouse emotion in the audience. In particular, the speaker aimed to arouse the emotion of pity (Demetrius, *Eloc.* 265-266; Theon, *Prog.* 2.117.6-32). Therefore, the speech-in-character became a distinct rhetorical technique in diatribes and in constructing identity diatribes (Epictetus, *Diatr.* 1.4.28-29; 1.9.12-15; 1.26.5-7; 3.24.68-70).

In such a culture, aural perceptions were a common mode of comprehension and knowing (Clark, 1971). Thus, a good orator had to compose, communicate, and converse or *speak* well to make their message effective and transformative. Paul's discourse in Romans 7:7-25 is a classic example of tutored aural comprehension and of *prosopopoeia*. Greek and Latin books had no punctuation, units, or any textual arrangements in the modern sense of a book. The cultural *habitus* of oral culture ensured that students learned to read well. Thus, a comprehensive identification of *the speaker* formed an important aspect of elementary education. The readers must correctly identify the speakers in the text: "Who is speaking?" Since Paul does not indicate the speaker in Romans 7:7, he must have had a good reason and he must have assumed that the speaker's identity would be obvious to his Roman audience.

Furthermore, *prosopopoeia* employs the voice of the first person singular in creating a monologue and a personality. In the *Progymnasmata*, soliloquy is evident in tragic monologues. Therefore, the “I” of Paul is a well-known and highly developed technical tool of rhetoric, popularly used by philosophers and moralists when dealing with the subject matter addressed in Romans 7:7-25. The topic of this passage, common within both Paul and Origen’s milieus, is the happy past of the “I” before becoming aware of the law (7:7b-8), the current state of misery (7:9), and the future predicament (7:24). These dilemmas are recurring themes of the cultural *habitus* and those who adopted a solution to these basic problems had the potential of becoming the *humanitas*. A classic example of speech-in-character demonstrates Origen’s prosopological exegesis.

The ancient story of *Medea* provides us with an excellent example of *prosopopoeia*, which is used by numerous authors to make their own rhetorical and contextual points. In Euripides’ *Medea*, the wronged wife (Medea) says, “I am being overcome by evils. I know that what I am about to do is evil but passion is stronger than my reasoned reflection and this is the cause of the worst evils for humans” (*Medea*, 1077-80). Medea’s husband (Jason) betrays her and she avenges the wrong done to her by killing both his new bride and her own children. These acts of revenge are extreme and excessive. Euripides gives her a tragic soliloquy just before she murders her children. In this monologue, she wavers in her decision regarding whether or not to kill them. However, in the end she cries, “How I love them! I can no longer look at them . . . I understand what ills I am about to dare, but my heart is master of my deliberations” (*Medea*, 1077-80). The loss of self-control is lamented. Both *Medea* and Romans 7:7-25 are the anguished expression of the conflict between what the speaker wants to do and what she actually does, between wanting to do what is right and actually doing what is wrong. This is the conflict between the mind and desires, that is, the conflict between virtues and vices. There is no textual proof that Paul is explicitly quoting *Medea* but the reference and allusions are hard to miss. The allusions between these ancient texts are signs and coded language of their common cultural *habitus*. Paul is using what has become a common rhetorical device in Greco-Roman ethical debates about how to understand the conflict between wanting to do what is right and yet not actually being able to do it.

As we can see, both Medea's and Paul's "I" know what is right but still manage to do the wrong thing. In their power, the desires overwhelm her mind and dominate her against her will, persuading her to do what she knows to be wrong. The conceptual references of such a monologue lie with antiquity's obsession with self-mastery. For Origen, self-mastery is the task of avoiding the "death of the soul" (an idea that may be influenced by Philo, *Leg.*, 1.106-107). The idea conveys the mind's radical disempowerment at the hands of the evil desires. As Origen states, Paul might have "personified sin, who seemed to have seduced man by means of an opportunity afforded it by the commandment in order to make desires seem sweet, and the soul, while enticed by the sweetness of desires, dies by transgressing the commandment that said, 'you shall not desire'" (*ComRom.*, 6.9.10).

4.5.2 Origen's use of *Prosopopoeia*

In linking Romans 7:7-25 with *prosopopoeia* Origen claims that it is "customary in the Holy Scriptures for saints to take on the *persona* (character) of sinners, or for teachers to take upon themselves the weakness of disciples." He goes on to say, "we are indeed taught in greatest detail in the book of Psalms when it says, "There is no peace in my bones before my sins, for my iniquities have gone over my head; they have weighed down on me like a burden. My wounds have grown foul and have festered before my foolishness. I am afflicted with wretchedness and utterly bowed down (Psalms 38:3-6). Almost all the Psalm is written in this way" (*ComRom.*, 6.9.12). As far as Origen is concerned, David could not have said these things about himself. This is an example of the Scriptures' accommodation of human frailties and immaturity in order to help us to understand and to see the truth. From Origen's viewpoint, God's accommodation to humanity is one of the fundamental keys to understanding the Scriptures.

Furthermore, it is interesting to note that the conservative, second century elitist philosopher Celsus's polemic against Christianity made extensive use of *prosopopoeia*. Origen's rebuttal to Celsus's damaging charges against Christianity includes a critique of Celsus's *prosopopoeia* (*CCels.*, 1.28.1). Celsus' most damaging use of *prosopopoeia* in arguing against Christianity is a Jewish character, talking to or about Jesus. Origen censors Celsus's *prosopopoeia* because of Celsus's failure in properly characterizing an ethnic Jew.

In other words, Celsus's Jew is not a good portrait of a Jew. Origen opines that Celsus's portrait of the Jew looks like a skeptical philosopher or an Epicurean (*CCels.*, 1.43). To correct Celsus's misinformed characterization, Origen employs his own *prosopopoeia* to address an imaginary Jew who responds in the way Origen believes a typical Jew would.

For Origen, Celsus's failed characterization lies in his misunderstanding of the Jewish history, especially concerning the prophecies. Origen points out that there are multiple prophets in the Jewish Scriptures that speak of the coming Messiah (Christ) rather than the lone prophet Celsus describes. This one prophet system works for the Samaritans or Sadducees, but not for a typical Jew, as portrayed by Celsus (*CCels.*, 1.49). As we can see, Origen not only uses *prosopopoeia*, but also calls for its stricter, more nuanced and sophisticated use while employing characterization in a diatribe. Read this way, Origen presents himself as a capable orator/rhetorician arguing for a distinctive and legitimate use of speech-in-character.

Elsewhere, Origen contrasts his understanding of divine *prosopopoeia* with that of Celsus' charges against Scripture's use of anthropomorphic languages to describe God. One of Celsus's criticisms against Christianity was that the Scriptures use crude and unrefined theology in attributing to God passions like love and anger (*CCels.*, 4.71). Origen reasons that God sometimes spoke from his own person in Scripture but when addressing the weak, he used *prosopopoeia* appropriate to their fleshly level of understanding. The principle of accommodation, as outlined in the rhetorical handbooks and as understood by Origen, became an important arsenal in his Paulinism, defense, debate, and deliberation when forging Christianness.

4.5.3 Staging Growth in Romans 7:7-25

In brief, Origen's exegesis of 5:18-21 sets up his *prosopological* exegesis of Romans 7:7-25. In 5:18-21 he outlines the cosmic reign of the tyrant Death and the life-giving rule of Christ. Adam's transgression opened the door to the tyrants Sin and Death. Sin then hastily dominated the entire creation, even before the giving of the Mosaic Law and even over those who did not imitate Adam's transgression (5:12-14). Hence, the "law of Sin" ruled all flesh for Death by allowing the passions to hold sway and moral decadence to run wild in

creation's members. Origen used this takeover by the law of Sin and Death to exhort and persuade believers to refuse to let Sin rule in their bodies. He did this by asking them to remember their baptism in Christ, meaning that they had died to Death (6:3-4) and had become obedient to the way of Christ (6:17). Origen took his cue from Paul's employment of military metaphor in stating that death is the wage of those who fight under the tyrant Sin (*ComRom.*, 6.1.2-9).

Within each believer lay two warring kingdoms. Origen states the existence of "both the desire of sin, which has a kingdom in the flesh, and also the Spirit's desire, which has a kingdom in the mind" (*ComRom.*, 6.1.4). The issue here is the kinds of desire produced by the warring kingdoms. "The wages owed to those serving as soldiers under King Sin . . . are discharged in death" (*ComRom.*, 6.6.2). When the spiritual desires control a person then their members become "weapons of righteousness for God, the king," who rewards them by bestowing eternal life (*ComRom.*, 6.1.8). Once in power, these weapons are effectively deployed to counter any rebellion by the forces of wickedness. Either way, humans are enslaved to one of these two kings. Humanity cannot serve two masters. A person is either under Sin or under Righteousness. Origen knows that at one time, we were all under the yoke of the Evil master. Yet, there are people to whom the Gospel of the true King is proclaimed when we choose "to obey it, not in just any way whatsoever, or with mere words, but from the heart, from the soul, with complete devotion; then we are liberated from servitude to sin and we become slaves of righteousness" (*ComRom.*, 6.3.6). This has drastic ramifications. For the slaves of righteousness, the "gates of righteousness" (Psalm 118:19) have been flung open to display the palace with all the virtues (*ComRom.*, 6.3.9). These virtues make the believers become the *humanitas*.

While contrasting the kingdoms of Sin and Righteousness, Origen is careful not to fall victim to the heretics, such as Marcion. He does not state that the Law is sin, because when God renews his covenants with his people, the older covenants are not broken but are rather renewed. In other words, the Law is reaffirmed while revealing newer economies to work out the divine plans. To make this clear, he states that "The Spirit is in the law, he is in the Gospel, he is always with the Father and the Son and he always is, was, and shall be, but just like the Father and the Son. Consequently, he is not new, but he renews those who

believe when he leads them from the old evils to the new life and the new observance of the religion of Christ, and when he makes spiritual men out of carnal ones” (*ComRom.*, 6.7.19).

So far, Origen has given us a metaphorical picture of the tyrant Sin and his rule over the creation. He depicts the bondage of human souls caused by the usurper, resulting in all kinds of moral decadence and the death of the good *persona* of the soul. When the King of Righteousness comes to take the souls back to where they belong, the fleshly desires do not easily surrender. This is the inner conflict of the “inner and outer man,” or vice *versus* virtue. These battles depict stages in Origen’s strategies of growth for the Kingdom of Righteousness. As such, the King of Righteousness reaches out only to a few people and “in a hidden manner” (*ComRom.*, 6.8.2). That is, depending upon the spiritual status of the person, they either welcome the King of Righteousness or stay with King Sin. Paul’s use of “I” or speech-in-character helps him to describe the conflict—cosmic as well as interior—between good and bad depending upon the status of the mind. If a person is merely in the flesh and under the dominion of Sin, he does not know that the law is spiritual. However, if he is under the dominion of the Spirit of God, he knows that the law is spiritual.

To make this point clearer, Origen argues that believers have been rescued from the rule of the Mosaic Law because they have already died to Death (7:1-6). Death has released them and therefore has no dominion over them. This release was ordered not because the Law is sin but because the tyrant Sin had overpowered it, deceiving people’s minds (7:11) and stopping them from doing the good that the (natural) law of their minds and the law of God together taught them was right (7:18, 21-25). Freedom from the tyrant means that the believer now lives with another law, “the law of the Spirit of life” which is the “same thing as the law of God” (*ComRom.*, 6.11.2). Believers are out of the realm of the law of Sin and Death through the greater law of the *pneuma* of Christ, and this enables them to do good.

Romans 7:7 begins with a sudden change in voice following a rhetorical question that serves as a transition from Paul’s authorial voice that has previously addressed the readers explicitly in 6:1-7:6. The ancient audience and readers would have immediately noted that the tone of the letter changes. A character change is taking place. They would have heard that the character of 7:7-25 speaks with great personal *pathos* of coming under the law at some point, learning about his desire and sin, and being unable to do what he wants to do

because of enslavement to the flesh. The passage is a coherent *ethos* within a specific life situation. This further enforces that Paul is articulating a stereotypical characterization of a person. It portrays emotions, moral dispositions, inner thoughts, and complaints. The passage displays a distinctive relationship between the law of sin and of death. They are making the person miserable and causing civil wars in the person's mind. These two central characters smear the goodness of the Mosaic Law. Origen knows that Romans 7:7-12 is meant as an answer to the rhetorical question of 7:7: "What shall we say? Is the Law sin? Absolutely not!" Romans 7:13-25 is meant to answer a second rhetorical question in 7:13: "Therefore, did what is good [i.e., the law] become death for me? Absolutely not!" In answering these two rhetorical questions, the character defends the goodness of the law: "The law is holy, and the commandment is holy and just and good" (7:12); "For we know that the law is spiritual" (7:14). Thus, the Law provides a clear knowledge of what is sinful. There is another claim that the speaker makes by using the 10th commandment, "You shall not desire." Sin, by using the commandment against desire as an opportunity, produced all manner of desires in him, making explicit his lust of desires. These two claims together pressurize the terrifying situation. Although affirming that desire is wrong, they nevertheless insist that the character is incapable of resisting it, that he does not do what he knows is good but instead does the evil he does not want to do.

Again, Origen's reading of these verses demonstrates his Hellenistic *paideia* and his competence as a player within the field of his discourse partners (Neuschäfer, 1987: 263-76). It is interesting to see that the 10th Commandment, "You shall not desire" is missing the object of the desire. It is the desire itself (*epithumia*) that is of interest, because *epithumia*, as evident from the preceding chapters and paragraphs, is one of the principal vices in Greco-Roman moral philosophy. Different philosophical schools understood the nature of desire differently and consequently understood the remedies differently. Origen observes that Paul is portraying the identity of every believer. The character stands for all believers, with a reference to the time in childhood before rationality or knowledge of right and wrong set in. The speaker is not Paul and therefore it is not an autobiographical description of Paul. Furthermore, Origen notes that Jews do not speak of a time in their life when they lived "without the law." Origen masterfully points to the contradiction between what Paul's character says here and what Paul describes of himself in other parts of his epistles. He lists 1 Corinthians 6:19 and Galatians 3:13 and 2:20 to demonstrate the stark

difference with Romans 7:7-25. In the other epistles, Paul is speaking autobiographically. Through a *prosopological* reading, we can see the different stages of the character's relationship to the law depicting growth towards maturity. Origen sees types, ranging from the person who has just come to accountability under the natural law of reason, to the one who does not understand the causes of his condition, to the new convert who knows his condition but still struggles for self-mastery.

Using a few rhetorical questions himself, he demonstrates the difference and the relationship between the law and sin. Did the male and female in the Garden of Eden hide from the Lord God because the Mosaic Law convicted them? Did Cain know he committed murder through the Mosaic Law? Did the Pharaoh of Egypt know that he had sinned against the righteous King through the Law of Moses? The answers to these questions are one and the same. Absolutely not! These people knew their sin before the advent of the Mosaic Law. They were convicted of their works which demonstrate the will of the tyrant. They were convicted through that law which is written in everyone's hearts alluding to 2 Corinthians 3:3 (*ComRom.*, 6.8.3). Origen reasons that there was a time when humanity lived without the natural law referring to childhood. On the other hand, Paul being the Hebrew of Hebrews, lived constantly with the Law of Moses. When Paul was unaware of the natural law, sin existed but was dormant. As natural law awakened, sin exercised its desires (*ComRom.*, 6.8.7).

Clearly for Origen true to his cultural *habitus*, the power of sin comes from *epithumia* (desire). Echoing the motif of self-mastery, Origen is showing one of the (Christian) ways of mastering desire. Here, when Paul's "I" says, "I died", Origen interprets it to mean the death of the soul. It is the complete domination, enslavement, and "death" of the good part of the soul, the mind, at the hands of the bad parts, the desires. This is the condition of the person in Romans 1:18-32. This death is characterized by *akrasia* or moral weakness, and Origen is validating Paul's rhetoric for self-mastery through the *paideia* of Christ.

The philosophically inspired discourse concerning the death of the soul ties together a number of difficult aspects of Romans 7. In fact, the claim (in 7:9-10) that "sin came to life and I died" makes sense within the context of the death of the soul and this allows for a more coherent reading of 7:7-25. Therefore, Origen says, "when the commandment that is

‘both holy and just and good,’ comes, sin revives in us and kills us—‘for sin, receiving an opportunity through the commandment, seduced me and through it killed me’—there is no accusation against the commandment. But the opportunity by which sin killed me came from the commandment” (*ComRom.*, 6.8.9). This discourse about soul-death illuminates Paul’s exhortations and Origen’s persuasion to die to sin and live in Christ. Furthermore, it depicts the violent struggle between passions, sin, flesh, and body, on the one hand, and the “inner man,” the *nous*, and God’s *pneuma*, on the other. All of these struggles are stages in the growth of the person in becoming a mature believer by conquering *epithumia*. In this light, Origen explains Paul’s “I” by personifying sin and speaking through the character of sin, who has “become a sinner beyond measure by an opportunity of the commandment” (*ComRom.*, 6.8.10).

As in the story of Medea, the character depicted by Paul does not understand his own action, because the evil desire has become deeply entrenched in his soul. The will of such a person is not “yet strong and robust enough that it may determine for itself that it must struggle even to the point of death for the sake of the truth” (*ComRom.*, 6.9.6). Even if the person can take delight in the law of God, as personified by the “inner man,” the “outer man” is still strong. This person has received the initial stage of transfer to follow the King of Righteousness, but he is still young and cannot accomplish the good things he intends in his heart. The analogy of growth and the motif of growth in Origen’s theology of maturity are seen explicitly here. He explains that the strategies for growth involve work. This is very slow work requiring the delicate art of practice to become skilled. In other words, no one becomes wise instantaneously because someone wills it. The will has to be backed up by disciplined living involving the art of “zealous study,” “solicitude,” and “watchfulness,” among other things to become wise (*ComRom.*, 6.9.9). For Origen, Christians exemplify this person: the one that has become wise, an identity that has eclipsed the longings of the Greco-Roman *paideia*.

4.5.4 Becoming Christian

Romans 7:7-25 as a speech-in-character depicting the death of the soul along with the lack of self-control seems to make sense to Origen. This becomes one of his bases for comparing and competing with Hellenism’s version of *humanitas*. The use of the rhetorical

“I” also demonstrates his pastoral sensitivity to different levels of people in his audience and he accommodates them by classifying and defining the multiple states of the “I.” *ComRom* is not just a polemic or explanation of Paul’s epistles. It is above all else a rhetoric of identity. Along with his contemporaries, Origen’s goal of moral reform was to move a person closer to the state embodied by the teacher (Paul) through education that is by learning the text (Scriptures). Chapter 6 deals with the concept of progressive growth or the journey of the soul, but for now, it is important to see that progress was measured by the extent to which this transformation took place. The transformation that a believer underwent resulted in a new or intensified form of piety with consequent changes in social affiliations, relations, and loyalties (Chapter 5 deals with this very issue). Such a spiritual mindset forms the immediate context for his rhetoric of Christian personhood. The weapons of sin, corruption, and vices dominate the flesh. However, the “inner man” created in the image of God is incorruptible and has its own “special nature” (*ComRom.*, 7.4.8). By this he means the transformation that takes place through the “inner man.” This “inner man” controls Christians and they exhibit the mark of a superior *humanitas*. They are “rational and intellectual,” because they have the “knowledge of God,” and they are the ones who have the “capacity for receiving the Holy Spirit,” which gives them the power to become the true *Romanitas/humanitas* (*ComRom.*, 7.4.8). The “inner man” clearly surpasses and ascends above everything pertaining to the body.

4.6 Summary

Like his contemporaries, Origen understood rhetoric as primarily a verbal art reflecting the continued historical primacy of the oratorical character of a speech, and this appropriates Origen’s preaching activity as primarily an oral presentation. Furthermore, it suggests that his rhetoric is situationally contingent or “audience centered.” When he did use or allude to other texts through his culturally induced philosophical presuppositions, he transformed the classical form of the *narratio* to suit his expository/rhetorical needs. For Origen, the Apostle Paul is above all else a wise teacher whose focus is always on the student (the audience). Good teachers know their students’ limitations and the level at which they are able to comprehend, and are thereby able to teach them appropriately. For example, Jesus accommodates himself to the level of the Samaritan woman at the well of Jacob and leads her to a higher level according to her capacity for truth (Origen, *ComJn.*, 13.19.116-117).

Paul is the perfect teacher who adapts himself to the specific situations and levels of his audience. This is what Origen strives to emulate for himself. Sometimes Paul takes a gentle approach to his audience by sharing his personal weaknesses, while at other times he utilizes harsh diatribe to force his audience to change their wrong *ethos*. As a good steward, Origen gauges his instruction to the level (“weak” or “strong”) of the pupil, and either exhorts the weaker reader to more perfect behavior, or discloses God’s lofty mysteries to the more advanced student. Thus, he customizes his teachings according to the level of his audience as is most efficacious to persuade them to become the true *humanitas*. He creatively provides the third-century Christians with a competitive set of Christian virtues. Origen is aware of the moral teacher’s role and their importance in the development of a person from childhood to maturity. This is true both metaphorically and physically. The teachers are the keepers of knowledge. Origen assumes that, other than Christianity, all other Hellenistic teachers failed to understand the source of truth. As we shall see in Chapter 6, this requires a lifetime of dedicated learning and wrestling with the Scriptures. Origen devoted his life to such a quest for perfect knowledge and communion with God. He persuaded his audience to listen, discern what is already revealed, and trust it as a living guide. Origen confronts his learned textual culture by weaving a seamless narrative of cultural familiarity and competence and opens up a window for us to look into Paul’s theology. Origen’s Paulinism as an identity construct demonstrates how cultural and religious authenticity is related to character development. Both Origen and the cultural *paideia* were involved in the same issue. They were creating, competing, censoring, and contending for a superior identity to show their way, their teaching, and their texts as the better alternative to their opponents. As far as Origen was concerned, Christianness means endurance to do good and virtuous works because they are seeking “glory and honor and incorruption” leading to eternal life (*ComRom.*, 2.7.5).

5.1

Introduction

From Chapters 2, 3, and 4 the tensions and fractures intrinsic to the ancient discourse of ethno-identity are now apparent. These tensions ensured that any given person's identity was the product of many competing ideologies. The positioning of "citizen" as the fundamental insider term drove the ancient logic of citizenship discourse. This insider valence could be appropriated and directed elsewhere, thereby questioning the value of a politically institutionalized citizenship and validating other modes of allegiance, belonging, and identity politics. Origen's portrayal of Christianness shows his subtle reading of Paul through his contrast of kings, citizenships, patrons, and loyalties. There is also a nuance contrast between Roman imperial riches and the treasures of Christ's Kingdom. He reasoned that if a person's citizenship lies with the kingdom of Christ, her treasures must also be in Christ. For Origen, "treasures" is primarily a reference to mature scriptural understandings. A Christian is the renewed *humanitas*, who can access these treasures and reap a rich harvest in order to enhance their virtues by making everything new. This portrait of renewal underlines the superiority, fluidity, inner organic unity, and the *humanitas* of Christianness in view of his goal of opening the mind's eyes to seeing the treasures of spiritual truth and meanings of the reality of the one true God.

Contextually, the system of patronage (*amicitia*) provides the contrast between the two citizenships. Patronage was one of the main methods of navigating society's many levels of stratification. It was also frequently exploited as a good metaphor for depicting divine-human relationships (Blok, 1969:366; Gellner and Waterbury, 1977:1-7). These relationships were generally long lasting, bonded by the exchange of resources or services between unequal partners. In the system of patronage, one partner was always considered to occupy a higher position in the hierarchy than that of the other. The ultimate head of the patronage system was the Emperor in Rome. Patronage is a ubiquitous *habitus* of Origen's milieu and a suitable measure by which to gauge his vision of identity, social networks, and loyalties in the Greco-Roman way of life.

Origen's Paulinism as a protreptic rhetoric aims to usurp the role of ultimate *patronus* occupied by the Emperor. While this might be viewed as radical, his methodology is anything but. The genre of protreptic literature spanning from fourth-century BCE Athens to second- and third-century CE Alexandria is a testimony to the lasting prominence of the figure of the philosopher-king. For people or ethnic groups aligned with Greek or Roman elites, the most popular protreptic claim was that of producing wise rulers, teachers, or statesmen, in order to support their ethnic and imperial domination over other peoples. The imperial role of *protrepsis* connects speculative philosophers and rulers, who used the figure of the philosopher-king for their mutual benefit. In the late second century, the Stoic Emperor Marcus Aurelius united philosophy and Roman *imperium* in one person. A union like this, between philosophy and kingship, was reinforced when sages taught rulers to live out the ideal of the philosopher-king. Sages from Plato and Aristotle to Philodemus, Seneca, and Dio Chrysostom wrote letters and composed speeches instructing rulers that philosophy was the *sine qua non* of just rule and that the ideal of the philosopher-king was its embodiment. As such, *protrepsis* represented both the promise of world supremacy to philosophic rulers and the assurance of virtue, freedom, and salvation to those under their care.

In brief, Origen is following an established strategy aimed at usurping rulers. He is using *protrepsis* to subvert the superiority of Hellenism and *Romanitas* through cultural resistance. At the same time, he is also showing Christians how to live under the rule of Christ as citizens of heaven, by the virtue of self-lowering and living in peace. His *protrepsis* exemplifies the way rhetoric can both mediate the truth of a dominant cultural narrative to its subjects and provide a means to subvert it by exposing the cultural rules that empower it.

5.2 *Amicitia* in the Greco-Roman Society

To say the least, the matrix of the Greco-Roman world was a “patronal” society supported by networks of allegiances and exchange. It is out of these networks and reciprocal relationships that identity rhetoric and morality also derive the most meaning. According to Seneca, these networks were the “chief bond of human society” (*Ben.*, 1.4.2; Saller, 1982;

Danker, 1982). An understanding of this concept is assumed by Origen and is a vital key to the interpretation of human/divine interactions in his writings. This conceptual framework molded the attitude of worshippers' interactions with their gods, whether Isis, Zeus, or the God of Israel. Both Origen and the other players participated in this common cultural *paideia* (patron-client relationship), which included Mediterranean views of gods, cultic devotion, kinship, race, and the hierarchy of human relationships. When Augustus became *Princeps*, he took on the role of the *pater pateriae*, becoming the symbolic patron of all Roman citizens and demanding their loyalty.

In this cultural matrix—*cursus honorum*—the patron could bestow various resources. The powerful or wealthy patrons gave *beneficia* to their clients—the inferior, the helpless, and the less fortunate. Patronage brought protection, deliverance, assistance, or safety to both individuals and communities. Patrons also acted as mediators for non-citizens needing access to civic institutions (Millet, 1992: 34). Such non-citizens lay completely outside of the social hierarchy. Comparatively, Origen shows that Christ gives benefaction to everyone, because of his position as the Cosmic Lord. Origen envisions Paul's Christ, the Jewish Messiah, as the sole patron of the world (Friedlaender, 1965: 1.207-11; Carcopino, 1940: 171-73; Saller, 1982). In competition with the Roman expansions, Origen's Paulinism was creating alternative social networks.

5.2.1 Forming Social Networks

The recent work of Philip A. Harland (2003) provides a helpful overview of the social networks of the Greco-Roman world. Harland's models include the household, the voluntary associations, the synagogue, and the philosophic or rhetorical schools. His study concentrates mainly on inscriptions to study the various social networks. In this way, he adds new vitality to an old subject, as much of his inscription work is new to the study of Early Christianity. Harland's study also provides a valuable contextual framework to visualize Origen's vision of the two citizenships.

Harland argues that the Greco-Roman guilds provide the best sociological context for understanding both the Jewish synagogues and the Christian congregations in the first

centuries of the Christian era. Such networks are made up of households, centered on a common ethnic or geographic origin, locality or real estate, and similar cultic rituals. Harland's thesis is that the associations which made up these social networks were not always subversive, as is often claimed in secondary works, but that they filled a vital role in maintaining the social status quo and in bringing honor to the imperial family. He conjectures that the structure defined by these associations not only functioned within citizens' social life, but that they also participated in the broader civic life. No doubt, comparing the Christian house churches with the Greco-Roman voluntary associations allows us to detect elements of much similarity. However, there were also some major ways in which the two groups differed.

The similarity among Greco-Roman social networks and associations alone does not define the cells comprised of the Christ-followers. Harland seeks to be sensitive to the similarities within the social networks and fails to aggressively address the subversive nature of the Christian message and its teachers and cell-leaders. Harland concludes his comparison of associations, synagogues, and congregations with the definition that they are [all] "small noncompulsory groups that could draw their membership from several possible social network connections within the polis" (Harland, 2003:211). Perhaps this definition gives a reasoned understanding of the ancient social networks. In these few sections, the aim is to trace the distinctiveness of Christianness through Origen's own experiences and in particular through his Paulinism.

For Harland, as important as it is, monotheism does not comprise the sole answer in differentiating Christianity from other social networks (Harland, 2003: 264). In his zeal to show how the civic associations were integrated into the day-to-day fabric of the broader society, Harland falls short in identifying some major areas of difference, notably the subversive use of patronage by the Christians. While the cells of Christ-followers resemble the associations of the wider social networks, Harland fails to see the sectarian nature of the Christian cell groups, and the dilemma they faced as a new religious "sect"—that is, that they came from Judaism but needed to remain distinct, all within a shared *habitus*. The Christian cells of believers in private homes were not simply participating in the empire-

wide cultic associations; they were also actively resisting some characteristic features—especially civic and religious duties—of their social fabric.

The patronage of the cell groups, that is, those who were providing support for them, is a paradigmatic issue, because a hierarchal system of relationships implies an ultimate source of authority. In the case of the Roman Empire, this was Caesar. For the Christian the ultimate patron is Christ. This was a deep ideological conflict between the mainline culture and the Christ-followers. As such, Harland underestimates the extent to which the deep-seated nature of Christian belief may have differentiated their communities from others. This point was underlined by the Christians themselves and by contemporary non-Christian observers (Wilken, 1984). Harland holds that the occasional tension between the Roman authorities and Christian groups was not policy-driven but provincially-driven through local authorities. He cites the letter between Pliny the Younger and Trajan concerning the Christians (10.96-97), Hadrian's letter of advice to the proconsul of Asia (*Eccl. eccl.*, 4.9.1-3), and the *Martyrdom of Polycarp* (8.2). Rightly, all three instances are local issues.

Still, the evidence that Harland uses does not prove Roman acceptance of them. Even more so, the issue of “us” versus “them” inherent in the Greco-Roman system of socio-political reality cannot be underestimated. From early on, the reign of Nero provided a glaring example of using the Christians as a foil to deflect blame for the Empire's misfortunes. This policy established the “Neronian precedent,” which survived after Nero's persecution as an article of jurisprudence whereby a Christian could be condemned on the basis of name alone. Pliny's letters that Harland uses are good examples of this identity profiling. As a trained lawyer, Pliny asks whether the name “Christian” is sufficient to condemn or whether some act must be proved. The Emperor answers back to his provincial administrator that there must be some definite charge against Christians in order to avoid problems of blackmail.

To recap, similarity did exist between the social connections of the Christian community and those of the wider culture, but there were also deep-seated differences. Christians were not aligned with the established civic cultic message, rituals, and patriotisms. For example, the issue of monotheism became recognized as an act of sedition, meriting Pliny's report to

the Emperor. Christians lived in the Greco-Roman world, but in reality, they were living on the margins. From the fringes, they were espousing a different identity, an identity that challenged the accepted views of history, gods, and myths. Those that followed Christ through teachers like the Apostle Paul or Origen became part of an inclusive household where ethnic and social distinctions, and some contemporary gender distinctions, were irrelevant for determining who was “in Christ.” Such a believing community, demonstrating oneness and unity of persons who are in Christ, posed a threat to the outside socio-political observers. At the same time, under Christ, the cell members believed that it [the community] embraced *all persons*, through their loyalty to Christ.

5.2.2 Social Formations and Worship

In Seneca’s writings, the system of patronage even took on a spiritual nature. He writes, “There is a great difference between the matter of a benefit and the benefit itself, and so it is neither gold nor silver nor any of the gifts which are held to be most valuable that constitutes a benefit, but merely the goodwill of him who bestows it” (*Ben.* 1.5.2). He asserted the need for adherence to a set daily practice to be taken to a new level. He placed great emphasis upon the attitude of the patron as a good and a moral person. Giving, in other words, must be selfless, with no motivation for self-promotion or reward. If she is a noble person and if she is appropriately grateful, a client should make her intentions clear, and reciprocate. Loyalty and submission was the proper response.

With Seneca’s spiritual concept in mind, let us look at the recent work on patronage by Zeba Crook. He lists five deep-seated ways of understanding the implications of patronage (Crook, 2004: 91-150). First, Crook reasons that there is ample evidence of patrons recruiting clients: rather than the client approaching the patron, the patron tended to approach the clients in order to give benefaction. Such a relationship was common in both the content and the production of literature, and between human-to-human relationships or between divinity and humanity. Origen’s huge literary production was made possible by the assistance of his patron Ambrose. The call of a god to a human is exemplified in the call of Asclepius to Aristides, Isis to Lucius and Christ to Paul, to name but a few examples. Second, teachers and rhetoricians were important patrons in that the teachings of a good

teacher were highly prized; this was indeed a benefaction to the individual and to the community. The teachings of the teacher saved the people from lack of knowledge, liberating them from false beliefs, and moving them away from immaturity towards maturity. Third, there were three appropriate responses by the clients: prayer, praise, and proselytism. Clients spread the good deeds of their patrons to other prospective clients by publically praising, praying, and evangelizing in the name of their patron. Fourth, the clients realized for themselves how their lot was changed because of their patron's grace. Clients, therefore, engaged in *synkrisis* to relate how their lot in life had changed because of their patron. *Synkrisis* is a rhetorical comparison of before and after, of life without and with the benefits of the patron. Finally, there was the concept of grace or benefaction. This is the idea of a patron being good, kind, and moral for the sake of his clients. In all of these concepts, the notion of loyalty between the patrons and clients was explicitly present. Seen within the system of patronage, these concepts demonstrate a vibrant socio-political-religious system which was so embedded that it shaped the way of life and peoples' relational identities.

Later (see 5.2.5) a closer look at Origen's life in Alexandria will provide a helpful context for this project in light of Harland and Cook's studies. In particular, the dynamics of a third century Christian community reveal an interesting contrast between the popular understanding of social networking and patronage and Origen's use of patronage to build the Christian community.

5.2.3 Social Etiquette and Identity Formation

As in the other communities and associations, wealthy patrons within the Pauline communities had more material resources than those (i.e., their clients) who came to their homes for meetings, worship, and *agape* fellowship, and thus they could serve as hosts and leaders (for example, Prisca and Aquila, Philemon and Apphia, Phoebe and a long list of household hosts in Romans 16:3-16). It would seem that families and households remained the hub of mission and the locus of assembly as the messianic/Christ movement continued its spread across the Mediterranean world. Until at least the third century the believers meetings at individual homes served as the loci of the movement's mission (Allmen, 1981;

Banks, 1980; Bartchy, 1999:68-78; Branick, 1989; Esler, 1997: 121-149; Joubert, 1995: 213-223; Martin, 1996; Osiek and Balch, 1997). Thus, there is a high probability that in the second and mid third centuries (at least until the time of Origen's death), the Christian places of worship were not corporately owned, but remained private properties. House fellowships, like other contemporary civic groupings, had certain persons who performed managerial and decision-making functions that distinguished them from, and perhaps ranked them above, the other cell members.

Helpfully, Harry Maier has shown that such patrons continued to act as the primary teachers and administrators of the congregations they hosted, at least in the Asian and Roman churches in the Common Era (Maier, 1991). It is highly possible that in the second century local preaching and worship was under the control of people who had achieved this position based more on their wealth and social standing than on their exegetical or theological acumen or knowledge of the Scriptures. In turn, patrons played a large role in shaping what version of the Christian message was put before the believers who gathered in their homes, either because they themselves were the primary ministers and teachers of the congregation, or because they held the authority to open or shut the doors of their houses to particular members and potential teachers. In this way, patrons could act as independent brokers controlling the transmission of teaching and the selection of Christian leaders without any reference to a local ecclesiastical hierarchy. Private homes as sacred spaces became important centers within which to live out a Christian's faith and to socialize. These cells of believers were the basic unit of the Christian social network and were a powerful component of its identity. They were places to be seen and heard.

5.2.4 Becoming Christian and the Household

Perhaps it is false to perceive a strict division between social and theological identity. These two identity markers were inextricably interwoven in the second- and third-century Christian life and discourse. Hence, the issue of social unity makes the role of patrons an important facet in discussing late antiquity's Christian theological issues. Christians shared with their broader culture the criteria of social connections in self-definitional discourses as

(at least in theory) a perfect external reflection of the more subjective, internal criteria for membership in the group.

In this regard, 20th century scholarship that highlights the social history of early Christianity provides us with a good basis from which to understand both Christianity and the societies it was a part of. In particular, Peter Lampe's detailed study of the Roman church in the first two centuries highlights the connection between the organizational fragmentation of the Roman community and its notorious theological diversity (Lampe, 1987: 300-345). L. Michael White has also contributed a valuable collection of archaeological, epigraphic, and literary evidence for early Christian meeting places, with special attention to the importance of patronage (White, 1990-1997: I. 102-39, II. 33-257). The effects of worshipping in domestic space have a direct co-relation with the development of leadership structures and the discourse of heresy in late first- and early second-century churches. The overall dominant motif that emerges is that domestic meetings in private homes provided the social bonds for Christian congregations from the apostolic period until well into the third century (Alexander, 2002: 229-49). Thus, the role of the homeowner as the *de facto* chief leader became an all-encompassing position of power creating a viable source for identity formation.

5.2.5 Power, Patrons, and Social Bonds

As discussed above, the patron both directly and indirectly influenced the doctrinal, ethical, and ritual character of the Christian congregations. Therefore, when we think about how the struggle over identity—orthodoxy versus heresy, or Christianness versus *Romanitas*—were played out in Christian communities across the empire in the first three centuries, we must imagine it doing so against the backdrop of cells of believers congregated in private homes. Perhaps it is not unimaginable that the familiar offices of second-century churches—bishop, presbyter, deacon—would then have developed organically out of this sort of *ad hoc* leadership of early congregations by their prominent members, especially the owners of the houses where each cell met. Furthermore, the patron could handpick their choice to lead the cell or to teach. These powerful acts came with the use of space to create, forge, and maintain identity. Harry Maier (1991) has shown that even in the middle of the second

century, such patrons continued to act as the primary teachers and administrators of the congregations they hosted. Maier draws specifically from letters of Ignatius (c. 117) and 1 Clement (c. 90) and the *Shepherd of Hermas* (c. 90-40). Furthermore, even in the 150s, Justin Martyr is both host and primary instructor of what seems to be a fully functional congregation that meets in his house (see *1 Apol.* 61.65-67).

The house owners as cell leaders became literally the gatekeepers of the community. As wielders of the social power of deciding who is “in” or “out,” they exerted considerable force in shaping the social life of the believers. When we look into Origen’s early career in Alexandria, we see the powerful influence of a house owner displaying the system of patronage at work. After the martyrdom of his father, Origen’s turbulent teenage years were a time when he himself was dependent upon the grace and benefaction of a patron. He was received and supported by an unnamed wealthy and prominent Alexandrian woman. He lived and worked in her house (the space for cultic worship). Conceivably, her patronage enabled him to finish his studies. The elevation of Origen’s status from that of an unknown youth to the status of *de facto* head of the catechetical school in prestigious Alexandria is probably also in part due to the power and influence of his patron.

There is an interesting twist in this saga of Origen’s relationship with this homeowner. At the same time as she was supporting Origen, the patron was also making space for a certain teacher, Paul of Antioch, whom Origen regarded as a heretic. According to Eusebius, the cell members welcomed Paul as a teacher and many others came to listen to him. He observes gravely that Paul was a magnet for both “heretics” and “orthodox believers” who gathered both for instruction and for prayer, in which Origen stubbornly refused to participate (*Eccl. eccl.*, 6.2.13-14). Perhaps Eusebius is overtly and rightly concerned to show the orthodoxy of Origen in his early years, but his observation of two teachers in conflict within the same cell worship center provides a window to see how home owners influenced and maintain social bonds. Although Eusebius does not document what was so vile about Paul’s teaching, he goes to great lengths to emphasize that Origen refused to worship with Paul. However, this did not precipitate a break away from the patron’s home. Both Origen and Paul needed their patron and her space in order to bond with the community and to survive. Appropriately, they did not have a voice without her patronage

in their community. The coexistence of Paul and Origen in the same space under the same patron muddies theological purity based on orthodoxy or heresy, but it clearly demonstrates the patron's ability to sustain teachers and cell members. What can we learn from these two roommates about identity formation in the third century (at least in Alexandria)?

That Origen and Paul were rival teachers sharing the same space demonstrates a unique characteristic of early Christian worship. They were both under the same patronage and unable to move away from their patron's space, at least for some time. She was an independent broker, controlling the transmission of teaching and the selection of Christian leaders without any reference to a local ecclesiastical hierarchy. This episode demonstrates the house church owner's power to construct Christian teaching and thus form identity (by employing teachers like Origen or Paul). It also shows Origen's sensitivity to the unknown (heretical?) teaching of Paul. Origen was already creating (at least, conceptually) another space and thus a separation from those that departed from his perceived teaching of the Scriptures. Seeing that the Apostle Paul influenced his entire exegetical and theological enterprise, it is not unimaginable that he disagreed with Paul of Antioch's use of the Apostle.

In addition to passing on teachings, the lectures and catechetical classes of both Paul of Antioch and his housemate Origen provide us with a valuable illustration of the complex role of teachers. It is doubtful whether Paul's students had any awareness that they were dabbling in heresy by attending his lectures; that was Origen's assessment, not theirs. It would seem that Origen did not have an issue with Paul's students being involved with Paul. Perhaps Origen wanted to persuade Paul's students to see their teacher's deviant teaching solely by articulating his own Paulinism and thereby exposing and censoring his rival.

The saga of Origen and Paul of Antioch reminds us of the late antique culture. For them social involvement came first; commitment to a theological position came later. When trying to understand why certain people embraced one version of Christianity rather than another, the responsibility for the decision therefore lies less in the content of the theology than with the social factors. However, this does not mean that beliefs did not matter. In fact,

beliefs, rituals, and customs and everything else that makes up religious capital contributed significantly to the loyalty of long time members. Neither Paul's nor Origen's role as teachers seems to have been self-sufficient. Not only did they share their need of their patron but they also competed for the same students. An uneasy yardstick was created by their presence both within the community generally and at specific gatherings. In seeking to understand the interplay between the organization of the second- and third-century churches, the discourse of what makes a Christian and the experience of becoming orthodox (or heretical), we must therefore also take into account the protreptic deployment of identity-rhetoric. From the example of Origen and Paul, we must also remain sensitive to the fact that this rhetoric often advanced a prescriptive ideal, not a description of reality.

Another episode of Origen's life shows the influence and power of a patron in his life. After helping to convert Ambrose from Valentinianism to the orthodox teachings of the Church, Origen became a recipient of Ambrose's patronage. As a wealthy and influential Alexandrian, Ambrose was in a position to transfer onto Origen the social status needed to enable Origen's scholarly works, and the financial support to prolong his career. Eusebius writes about Ambrose:

“[He] not only plied Origen with innumerable verbal exhortations and encouragements, but also provided him unstintingly with what was necessary. For as he dictated there were ready at hand more than seven short-hand writers, who relieved each other at fixed times, and as many copyists, as well as girls skilled in penmanship; for all of whom Ambrose supplied without stint the necessary means (*Eccl. eccl.*, 6.23.1-2).

In short, Ambrose commissioned literary productions from Origen. He was directly responsible for most of Origen's huge literary output. In his *Commentary on John* (*ComJn*) Origen refers to Ambrose as “God's taskmaster” (*ComJo.*, 5.1). The relationship between Ambrose and Origen was *personal* for the *duration* of their lives and they were *asymmetrical* (Saller, 1982: 1).

5.2.6 Determining the Society of Benefaction

Origen was grounded in a patronal society. At the same time, it is viable to see that he insisted and subverted the dominant benefaction system. The Christians brought about new social formations that forged new moral habits and created a gentle and humane attitude.

Origen's polemic included the notion that Christians are to consider themselves under obligation to all races and social classes (*CCels* 3.54). It appears that Christians are to disregard age-old distinctions and to provide service to all people in a time when they themselves did not have any rights under the Empire. Evidently, the breaking of barriers and tearing down of the walls of separation was one of his projects, as was the re-formation of the (new) community. It is not surprising to see why Celsus would be so upset that many simple folk were speaking to members of elite households and successfully enlisting them for the new movement (*CCels.*, 3.55). Origen insisted that those who represented Christ are to bring benefit to the "greatest possible number and, so far as they can, to win over . . . through their love for humanity every one without exception—intelligent as well as simple" (*CCels.*, 6.1). The Christians become the message, medium, and benevolence to the broader culture.

These subversive themes and messages were not peripheral topics. Origen focused intently on the communicative and transformative power that called communities into a relationship with God and with one another. This is a radical vision of his Paulinism and invalidates the age-old ethnic race for supremacy. Ethnic categories and pride in any group identity have been transformed in Christ. Origen views his communities as forged out of a life-transforming event that is conversion to Christianity. This is not simply individual transformation, but a social process. It necessitates a complete upheaval in the respective social network and activity, particularly since Hellenistic religion was a basic and inherent aspect of existence. God's beneficence toward humanity pulls down the curtain that separated ethnic groups from each other. This was something that classical *paideia* did not even try to do. Their virtue was based on the assumption of their cultural superiority and the moral inferiority of the "other" tribes or ethnic peoples. Contextually, the Jews and the Greeks and other associations or groups were jostling for moral and spiritual superiority, which often resulted in political influence and power. Through his kingly deeds, Christ had unveiled the divine plan. Christ had drawn back the curtain on the grand design; and this had been done, not in the sense merely of communicating information, but through action, as had always been promised in the Hebrew Scriptures.

5.2.7 Summary

To summarize, contextually speaking, the formation of identity is a social endeavor. It encompasses a social identity that is subjectively defined and is constantly being formed in exchanges and negotiations across group boundaries. As discussed in the preceding paragraphs, Origen understood identities in terms of social formations. Hence, identity depends on the maintenance of a social identity through boundaries and margins. Therefore, a Jew or a Christian was a Jew or a Christian because both he and other groups identified him as such. Now let us see how Origen envisioned the identity of the Christian cell groups and their role in the context of the third-century milieu.

5.3 Two Kingdoms and Two Citizenships

From the preceding sections, we have seen that Origen's Paulinism harnesses the idea of celebrating a kingdom alongside the true patron or King. In fact, this theme reverberates throughout his work on the Epistle to the Romans (*ComRom*). Along with the system of patronage, it is an argument based upon his theological understandings of (re)creation, Fall, Adam, Christ, and the law(s) (Roukema, 1988: 9). Although this project cannot look at all of them in detail, these key concepts are identity markers which signify Christianness. Origen explains that all races—Jews and *ethnē*—are the same since they all exist under the authority of a king. They are either subject to the king of life or subject to the king of death. If humanity remains under the reign of death, it will inevitably lead back to the chaos as it was in the beginning (Gen 1:2). In order to avoid this chaos, transfers between the kingdoms are necessary. The essence of religion has been transferred from the Jews to the *ethnē*, from the letter to the Spirit, from the dominion of death to the kingdom of life (*ComRom.*, 9.1.1). These transfers show that the kingdom ruled by Christ is better for humanity. Using the transfer motif, Origen reasons that everyone, including the apostles, can fall away from the kingdom of grace, and on the other hand, God's enemies, including the heretics and the Devil, can become God's friends if they willingly transfer their citizenship into his Son's kingdom. The two races—Jews and *ethnē*—personify the transfers demonstrating God's salvation in action. They both have the chance to become the loyal followers of the Jewish God and King. Henri de Lubac claims "Origen transposes the history of Israel's wars, its captivities, its deliverance, its victories, in order to apply them

to the Christian life. All of Scripture is for him the book of the Lord's combats" (de Lubac, 2007: 214). The Lord at war secures humanity's freedom and a citizenship unmatched by any other powers. De Lubac says, "It is a matter of exterminating the adverse powers and of establishing the kingdom of God everywhere; and yet, it will be an entirely internal struggle: it is in the heart of each soldier that the enemy must be pursued and annihilated" (de Lubac, 2007: 215).

5.3.1 Creator and Creation

Christians were once enemies of God, but are now at peace through the death of his Son (*ComRom*, 4.12.1). This peace among Christ's followers mirrors the *pax Romana*, but aims to supersede it in its status and scope. The peace that Christ instituted is cosmic. Beginning with Romans 5:12, Origen starts to explain why Christ had to die and how his death enables the transfer of citizenship between the kingdoms. Again, this must be understood within the context of some vital categories: the Fall, humanity, soteriology, and creation. Every one of these categories—Adam, fall, preexistence and creation—is a major topic in itself. I cannot do justice to them here. However, I intend to highlight the most important assumptions and the consensus of scholarship to facilitate proper understanding of the two kingdoms with two different citizenships. It is sufficient to say that the notion of sinful tendency inherited from Adam is not intended by Origen to replace the concept of a previous fall of the individual soul but is considered alongside it. Origen presupposes that the powers in earth and in heaven are the creation of the one God and rightfully belong to this Creator God. Hence, all human existence may be traced back to this source, that is, the patron and the Creator.

In dealing with these categories—the Fall, humanity, soteriology, and creation—Origen has to deal with a perplexing diversity of Jewish, Christian, and Gnostic views, as well as apocryphal literature (Tennant, 1903; Williams, 1927; Bostock, 1987: 259-264). He attempts to give answers appropriate to the text while accounting for the different levels of ability of the people hearing or reading his interpretations. Origen does not merely allegorize or deny the existence of Adam. For him, Adam was a historical figure. Origen goes on to talk about how Adam begets Seth according to his own image. Furthermore, it is

important to note that Origen understands the story of Paradise and the Fall as providing clear details—God planting a garden, the trees, God walking with Adam, Adam hiding beneath the tree—which cannot be taken literally but only as a symbolic interpretation (*Princ.*, 4.3.1). However, he does not state what that symbolic interpretation is. Likewise, he also regards the concept of the Fall as a mystical truth which he envisions as a gradual descent of the rational creatures from their original condition, involving the assumption of bodies (*Princ.*, 1.3.8). For Origen, Adam’s clothing in animal skins is a sign of mortality and weakness, which came from the corruption of the flesh (*HomLev.*, 6.2). These features point to concealed mysteries, which lead to deeper meanings. Believing that we cannot understand such things until we *see* the truth in its fullness, he avoids dogmatic answers. To inquire too deeply or to speak fully about the creation and the Fall of Lucifer is beyond human abilities. He states, “We practice a pure piety towards the creator and praise the beautiful things that he has created, without defiling the divine things even by naming them” (*CCels.*, 4.48). Origen is primarily concerned not to misuse the doctrine of God or attribute elements that would veil the goodness of God, the ultimate benefactor and patron. He goes on to say that “the man who is evicted from the paradise together with his wife . . . has a meaning which is ineffable and mystical” (*CCels.*, 4.40). This is perhaps one of Origen’s most mystical teachings. It refers to secret “truths . . . which are not appropriate for the simple minded and for the ears of the common crowd.” This is a “mystery” (quoting 1 Corinthians 15:51) and hence it is “usually applied to the deeper and more mystical doctrines which are highly concealed from the multitude” (*CCels.*, 5.19).

Nonetheless, in his attempt to find an adequate explanation of the Fall, he uses Ezekiel 28:11-19 (*Princ.*, 1.4.4). He points to “an adverse power” which “was formerly holy and blessed” who fell “from this state of blessedness” down into the earth and from that time iniquities abounded in him. This Fall was a choice. Origen vehemently denies that the Fall happened because of his (adverse power) nature (*Princ.*, 1.4.4). Nevertheless, this “adverse power” explains the two kingdoms at war. The implication is that the battle did not start in the visible creation but that it originated in another dominion that is beyond our realm.

Elsewhere Origen also relates this “adverse power” as the Fall of the “one.” He does not explain the use of this number and refrains from further descriptions. The “one” is certainly not Adam and Eve, but is the “one” who fell first. The “one” becomes the ruler of the kingdom that is waging war against the true king. Elsewhere, he names this “one” as a “dragon,” or a “big sea monster” (as in Job 3:8, see *CCels.*, 4.43). The fall of the dragon marks the advent of bodily nature, and creation of matter itself (*ComJo.*, 19.20, cf. 1.27). Elsewhere, he refers to the fallen “one” as the “man killer” and to the fall of Adam as “death” (*ComJo.*, 26 and 27). This is because Adam drove himself out of the life that was in the Son (*ComJo.*, 20.25). All earthly life starts in the realm of the “man killer,” this “adverse power.” This subjection explains, as well as forms, the basis of humanity’s existence: Adam followed the “one” and humanity follows Adam. In this condition, both the Jews and the *ethnē* share the same lot. The void between divinity and the creation has become a deep abyss under the king of sin and death outside of the kingdom of life (*Princ.*, 4.4.1. cf. *ComJo.*, 20.28). Only a good king can close this gap for his people. We can imagine that ministering in the third-century Roman Empire made Origen’s Paulinism even more potent as he contrasted identities based on the loyalties of two different kingdoms: the king in Rome clearly has a serious contender in Origen’s Paulinism.

Origen’s provisional understanding of the Fall emerges clearly in *Contra Celsum*. He says, “We have exposed a few of our views according to our faith in Scripture; we did so having committed a bold venture upon the subject, and having made a risky venture; in fact, however, we have said nothing” (*CCels.*, 6.44). All of his ideas about the Fall and the concept of “all” in Adam (as in Rom 5:12) should be understood through this lens of having “said nothing.” In brief, Origen’s Paulinism is not concerned with inherited sin but with the differentiation of the earthly realm from the heavenly realm. He is more interested in the development of the “inner man.” For example, when he responds to Celsus about the “superior wisdom” which Paul spoke among the “perfect,” he asks Celsus to look carefully at Pauline epistles and comprehend their meanings (*CCels.* 3.19-20 and 7.38). In these epistles, the mature believers find hidden meanings and treasures for the growth of the “inner man,” thereby withstanding the realm of the “man killer.”

5.3.2 Adam, Humanity, and Christ

Origen reasons that, since Adam means ‘man,’ Adam represents humanity and everyone stands condemned in Adam’s transgression (*CCels.*, 4.40). The most perplexing concept here is “*in Adam*.” How did it come about that we all die in Adam? Romans 5:12 provides an answer for Origen. It is well known that Rufinus shortens Origen’s whole *Commentary* into 10 books out of 15 books. Romans 5:12 is no exception. For example, Bammel thinks that Origen’s exegesis was lengthy in this section and Rufinus might have found some material unsuited to his intended readers. However, she thinks that Rufinus has maintained the truthfulness of the accounts (Bammel, 1985: 52, 58-60). Furthermore, it is reasonable to see that Origen also did not want to make explicit statements because he considered this a mystical doctrine. The simple and easy answer is that the dragon gained power over men by means of the disobedience of Adam (*ComRom*, 5.1.3 and *CCels.* 1.31). Thus, because of Adam’s sin, humanity stands condemned to transience and degradation (*ComRom*, 5.4.2). Yet, Origen is still perplexed. He wants to know why Paul says that sin entered through Adam, when the woman sinned before him and the serpent before her (*ComRom*, 5.1.13). In other words, why blame Adam?

Origen opines that the progression of human descent in the Scripture, which is also the subject of death, always goes back to the man not to the woman. As an example, he uses the story of Levi, who supposedly was already in the loins of Abraham when Melchizedek met him (Hebrews 7:9-10). By this analogy, he wants to show that all men were in the loins of Adam when he was still in Paradise (*ComRom*, 5.1.14). This progression from Adam influences his exegesis of Romans 5:14 and 3:12 (*ComRom*, 5.1.24). He is arguing that it is possible, when one reaches the age of reason, to turn away from the teaching of one’s parents and to leave Adam, who engendered death or taught one to die, and to follow Christ.

It is in these exegeses that the identity transfer motifs become prominent. Instead of talking about “original sin” Origen lays out the themes of two kings and loyalties. These two kings mirror how sin and death came through one Adam and how life and grace came through another Adam. For the creation of the new identities, the kings, as well as the citizens, are involved in a cosmic war. He refers to Matthew 7:7-8 to explain the battle plans and

defenses against the ruler of death and sin (*ComMatt* 5.4). The king who controls the entire cosmic realm represents a greater power.

To make his metaphors and personifications clearer he also alludes to I Corinthians 15:22, where Paul says, “all will be made alive.” Origen notes that Paul did not say “all have been made alive,” or “all are being made alive” (*ComRom.*, 5.1.5). Origen is thinking of the present time where the battle is waged between the two powers and the work that is involved to secure complete victory. The future tense implies the time when *all*—the Jews and the *ethnē*—in Christ will be made alive because the last realm of the enemy, namely death, will be destroyed. Thus, the completion of transfer lies in the future. In the present, those who continue to live according to (the first) Adam subject themselves to the “adverse power.”

The context of the Roman Empire in the third century seems to heighten the metaphors of the kingdoms. Christ’s loyal citizens should obey their king while resisting other forces and understand that they are already in the greatest kingdom. Imperial Rome might appear to control all (or many) people, but the Davidic Messiah has already established his kingdom by fulfilling the Jewish Scriptures. In reality then, the Roman Empire does not control the loyal citizens of the Son’s kingdom. Such an understanding of loyalties might have been common. Since the Christians will not bow to the cult of the Emperor, they became targets for disloyalties and treated as scapegoats in times of national disasters.

In order to display the elevated position of the Apostle, Origen points to the parable of the faithful steward from Luke 12:42 and interprets Paul as the faithful and wise steward (*ComRom.*, 5.1.9). The king himself is escorting Paul and shows him the royal treasures, and the many rooms of the palace including the Queen’s chamber. The different rooms in the palace illustrate different treasures. They walk into a room through a door but come out through another door. This becomes the norm of the excursion. In other words, logic and consistency were not the norm of this preview of the king’s treasures. If we do not keep track of Paul’s footsteps, we will be lost. Paul tries to put down in words everything that he sees, hears, and touches in the place. However, the apostle cannot describe adequately because of the limitations inherent in the human realm. The wealth and beauty of the

Cosmic King eludes humanity. It is important to note Origen's concern to keep the mystery of the palace (*ComRom.*, 5.1.9). This was a unique excursion. Paul was given a perspective of things that were hidden to many. Thus, Paul's teaching illumines many and is far superior to other rival teachers. Origen is apprehensive that people will misunderstand Paul. Origen remembers Paul's own confession of knowing in part and understanding in part (1 Corinthians 13:9, 12). He therefore cautions his readers that what Paul knows in part is already complicated and hard for many to understand (*ComRom.*, 5.1.11).

In explaining Romans 5:14, Origen contrasts Adam as a type of Christ by opposites. The contrast between the first and second Adam is important in Origen's overall identity theology. The first Adam represents the living soul, while the second Adam is the life giving spirit (*ComRom.*, 5.2.4). As discussed in Chapter 4, Origen distinguishes between the "inner man" and the "outer man" in Pauline exegesis (via 2 Corinthians 4:16 and Genesis 1:27). The "inner man" belongs to the citizenship of heaven, under the true king. The last enemy, death, cannot touch him there. However, the "outer man" is still vulnerable to the sin of Adam. This man is under the spell of darkness and deceit. Origen wants to show and contrast that

"Life is much stronger than death, and righteousness than sin, and by this means to teach that if sin and death were able to exercise dominion in this way in men, having received a beginning from the disobedience of the one man, how much more powerfully and deservedly will life reign through righteousness, receiving its beginning through the obedience of the one, namely Christ; Christ, I say, who came to this task not from the compulsion of his nature but moved by compassion alone" (*ComRom.*, 5.2.5).

Evidently, for Origen, the "inner man" in Adam represents Christ, while the "outer man" represents the fallen state of the creation. The rightful king, as a type of Adam, confuses Origen, but he thinks that it has something to do with identity/salvation: dealing with mortality and immortality. He says, "Who transfers these types and the shadow (dealing with Adam and the works of Moses and the prophets) of the law to the future age considers them to be an image of the heavenly ministries which are to be fulfilled in that heavenly Jerusalem" (*ComRom.*, 5.1.14). This verse strengthens his descriptions of being in the image of God and the cosmic battles over the fallen state of humanity to make the transfers of their citizenships.

Elsewhere, Origen interprets Adam as Christ and Eve as the church, inspired by 1 Corinthians 15:45 and Ephesians 5:30-32. As the father of all souls, Christ parallels Adam as the father of all humanity, while Eve as the Church includes fallen humanity or citizens of the kingdom of darkness among her offspring (*Princ.*, 4.3.7). Furthermore, the “old man” of Romans 6:6, Ephesians 4:22 and Colossians 3:9 personifies the “(outer) man” who lives according to the fallen Adam. Such people subject themselves to transgression and death because they are ultimately under the dominion of the kingdom of darkness; the realm of the “man killer.”

The point of all this juxtaposition of metaphors of the cosmic powers, “inner and outer man,” alongside the Roman Empire, is that humanity mirrors its ruler (*ComRom.*, 5.7.8). A person cannot be loyal to two kings at the same time. Once a person changes loyalties from one kingdom to the other kingdom, the rules and systems of the previous dominion have no power over them. Thus, he constructs a rhetorical impossibility in explaining Romans 6:1-2 by alluding to 1 Timothy 1:19. Once we transfer our citizenships from the “kingdom of sin and death” into the “kingdom of life and righteousness,” the “tyranny of sin and death” no longer rules over us. If it does, then this is the “shipwreck of one’s faith” (*ComRom.*, 5.7.8).

Origen understands death here as the death of the soul with some nuanced differences in the various occurrences (*ComRom.*, 5.1.19). This death came upon *all* humanity through the actions of the first Adam. There is only one remedy to escape this crippling hold on humanity. Those who are in Christ (meaning those who have already died to the world though still in the world) belong to the kingdom of heaven (*ComRom.*, 5.1.18-19). There are three degrees of death. First, “through sin death came into this world.” Second, “Death passed through to all men.” Third, “Death exercised dominion from Adam until Moses.” He goes on to say:

“Knowing that there exist certain distinctions in each of these things, he has now made known the time when it entered and when it began to exercise dominion. It entered, he says, at that time when the first man transgressed. He has told us how it entered. He says, “through sin.” And now he is designating the time period of its *rule* as being from Adam until Moses. But as to when it will have passed through to all men he has not made known” (*ComRom.*, 5.1.30).

For Origen’s Paul, death is the last and the greatest enemy (1 Corinthians 15:26). This returns to the motif of God and creation, with the human race poised in between, belonging

within the latter but called to reflect the image of the former. Idolatry had reversed God's intended order; humans had worshipped that which was not God, had ceded power to that which, being itself corruptible, could only bring death. Now, in the Davidic Messiah, humanity has been restored; death has been defeated, and creation itself, far from being shunned as essentially evil, awaits its redemption.

In explaining the types of death, Origen is strongest in personifying death as a "tyrant" who invaded the "dominions" of the "rightful king" (*ComRom.*, 5.1.31; 4.8.1; 5.10.11). The only solution to this mess is the Cosmic King, the Davidic Messiah. This is because, through the king's own death and "resurrection he has already destroyed the dominions of death" (*ComRom.*, 5.1.37). Origen recognizes that for the Jews, sin means breaking the Torah, which results in death. To correct such a narrow understanding of sin, Origen reaches back into the Jewish annals for their heroes and legends, reminding his students that all of them died before the Torah came into existence. He lists characters like Abel, Cain, Enoch, Methuselah, and Noah to show that every one of them died as result of living in the *cosmos* (*ComRom.*, 5.1.20; 5.1.21). The rhetorical point for Origen is that both the Jews and the *ethnē* are in sin with or without the Torah.

Origen molds his exegesis to accommodate his third-century milieu in light of the imperial ideology. And hence, this creation, which is the visible world, is different from the invisible world. The term "visible world" refers to what is corporeal, while "invisible" applies to incorporeal (*Princ.*, 1; pref. 8-9; 1.7.1; 4.3.15; *CCels.*, 6.64; 7.46). Pauline authority, namely Colossians 1:16 and Ephesians 1:21, bolster Origen's notions about the different modes of existence and the ranks of life (*Princ.*, 1.5.1). He sees the notion of kingdoms encompassing multiple levels of *cosmos* (*Princ.*, 1.7.1). In all these references to the seen and unseen divided by different rulers and realms, Origen is tracing and articulating the cosmic powers that battle for the control of humanity. What is at stake is the "life" of the entire human race.

Origen's Paul describes how sin came into the world and not into humanity; whereas death came not into the world but to humanity (*ComRom.*, 5.1.32). More specifically, death did not just come to us but passes through us (*ComRom.*, 5.1.22; 5.1.18; *Princ.*, 2.3.6). Here, the "world" refers to humanity living under the realm of the "man-killer." Likewise, Origen

takes “men” to refer to those who have come out of the kingdom of darkness after realizing that they belong to the kingdom of cosmic Christ, their maker. Therefore, because of the transfer, death merely passes through them.

Origen is curious to know how Paul could have lived without knowing the law. He conjectures by framing the law not in terms of Mosaic Law but as natural law (as in Stoicism). Paul’s living without the law therefore refers to the time before Paul had the “power of distinguishing right and wrong” or the “ability to consider what is proper and what is improper” (*ComRom.*, 5.1.26). Here, Origen is also potentially arguing against Basilides’ understanding of Paul having inhabited another body before he came to be in the body of the Apostle. Against such interpretations, Origen reasoned that sin existed but that Paul was unaware of it. In other words, sin existed without being reckoned as on Paul’s account (*ComRom.*, 5.1.26).

5.4 Citizenships: Domination and Meekness

Perhaps a brief note about *Romanitas*-as-domination could enable us to shape Origen’s identity construct better and hear his protreptic rhetoric. Using the Hellenistic version of *oikoumenē*, the Romans typically stereotyped all peoples and classified everyone as inferior to them. They saw their ethnic Roman supremacy as divinely ordained and the “others” as inferior because of their lower natures. Teachers like Origen struggled to bring their underground movements into the mainstream. An example of provincial censorship of Christ-followers provides us with a specific example of what underground cell groups went through.

The correspondence between Emperor Trajan and the provincial administrator Pliny the Younger from the second century CE—as already referred to in Harland’s study—gives us a good glimpse into the contrast between the Christians’ views of worshipping their Creator/patron/king and the accepted cult of the Emperor. Pliny reports that Christians were being accused of not honoring the Emperor or worshipping according to his cult, and of forming illegal associations. To restore order and to defuse tensions, Pliny organized interrogations in which accused Christians were given the chance to redeem themselves by

offering sacrifices before the altar of the Emperor. Such episodes are revealing in that they show that the provisional administrators were in charge not only of maintaining order but also of religious observance, in conjunction with loyalty to the state. As Pliny shows, the two are inter-related and not exclusive (Pliny, *Ep.* 10.96-97).

Evidently, the role of *Romanitas* as an arm of the Empire was primarily responsible for maintaining supremacy over other peoples in three ideological ways. First, the concept of “cosmic hierarchy” enshrined the idea that the Romans were the greatest people. Second, the elevation of the Emperor to the top of this cosmic hierarchy as the son of God completed the Roman transformation of their own identities. Third, the role of the patronage system enabled Romans to hold in debt the nations and peoples they conquered by distributing benefaction. Within this construct, Christians were in a precarious position as they demonstrated their way of life. Thus, protreptic rhetoric was an important part of Christian teachers’ arsenal for making their case. *Romanitas* was used to legitimize the Romans’ self appointed place, destiny, and dominion over everyone they encountered. Stated a bit differently, the Romans thought they owned the world and Caesar was the patron.

Subversively, Origen’s Paulinism maintains that the Jewish God was a beneficent ruler who proved his justice to all people by freeing everyone from sin through a royal act of *fides* by his Son, the crucified Jewish Messiah (Romans 3:21-26). This is in contrast to the ideal of *Romanitas*, where only a few were able to attain citizenship. In contrast, Paul distributed wise and powerful sayings to everyone about the Jewish kinship under one Father, Creator, and God. He reveals the justice of kings David and Solomon as a representation of God’s benefaction to all people. And now through the death and resurrection of the Jewish Messiah, God made Christ into a royal benefactor for all peoples, thereby justifying, freeing, and shaping their identities.

Read this way, *protrepsis* permitted Origen to speak as Paul did, unashamed of the gospel of God. *Protrepsis* allowed him to develop his rhetoric of identity, clearly defined in the language of patrons, clients, and citizenships. He maintained that God (Romans 13:1-2) ordains the powers of the earth. Those who resist or do not pay proper loyalty to their

kings, do so against the will of God (*CCels.*, 8.65.10-14). He does draw the line at oaths or loyalties taken by the *genius* of the Emperor (*CCels.*, 8.65.26-37). This is a departure from the accepted view that ascribed the security of humanity to the Emperor. This security was the bedrock of the imperial ideology and deification of the Emperor. Origen insists,

“We deny, however, that all things which are on the earth have been given to the emperor, or that whatever we receive in this life we receive from him. For whatever we receive rightly and honourably we receive from God, and by His providence, as ripe fruits, and “corn which strengtheneth man’s heart, and the pleasant vine, and wine which rejoiceth the heart of man.” And moreover, the fruit of the olive tree, to make his face to shine, we have from the providence of God” (*CCels.*, 8.67.23-29).

Implicitly appealing to the decay of Roman morality, political instability, and their rhetoric of superiority, Origen protreptically surfaces the benefits of Christianity: showcasing the supremacy of the Christ-followers’ *ethos* and *bioi*. This elevated the Christians to the role of possessing the good life as wise rulers because they follow the supreme King.

5.4.1 Origen’s *Protrepsis* and the Rhetoric of Identity

The view that wise kingship was based on the *paideia* of God and that good rulers should imitate their actions therefore rooted the king’s every judgment in divine instruction (Seneca, *Clem.*, 1.7.1; Dio Chrysostom, *Ora.*, 1.37-40). The assumption that the king was guided by the *pronoia* of God therefore enabled the king to embody not only the four cardinal virtues of justice, courage, self-control, and wisdom, but also every kingly quality of the gods. These virtues were both relational and hierarchical. However, in reality, the moral standing of the Emperors often fell far short of these kingly virtues, resulting in widespread oppression of their subjects. Nevertheless, minorities that failed to conform to the established ideas of kingship and identity politics were persecuted and excluded from the mainstream culture. Such despotic regimes of censorship provided fertile soil for subversive usages of protreptic speeches. By adopting the power of *protrepsis* as a rhetoric of identity, Origen deploys not only the standard rhetorical tool of *protrepsis*—philosophic ideals of virtue, ethnic stereotyping, a comparison of rivals, and the other structural elements of *protrepsis*—but also the *topos* of the wise king in order to criticize the Empire and the dominant culture. *Protrepsis* allowed him to elevate the Christian culture and its versions of identity over those of the Greco-Roman rulers and to convince his audience of the supreme sovereignty of the Jewish God.

With rigor, Origen's Paul stipulates that Christ's dominion is over all creation in two ways. First, as the Creator of all things and bearing authority over all things, he holds all things under subjection by the force of his majesty and by the compulsion of power (*ComRom.*, 9.41.4). In this way, Christ as the Cosmic King rules over all, whether creatures like it or not. Second, in a more nuanced way, Christ rules as the good Son of the good Father. He does not want to influence rational spirits towards obedience to his law by compulsion, but he waits for them to come of their own accord. And he would rather persuade by teaching than by commanding, by inviting rather than compelling. Nevertheless, "The name of 'Christ' is a designation" says Origen, "pertaining to his unique character as the Word placed in flesh (John 1:14), and is a sign of the one who reconciles the world to God" (*ComRom.*, 9.41.8). The next paragraph depicts Origen's *protrepsis* in constructing Christ as the true ruler of the world.

5.4.2 The Rule of the Cosmic King

To recap, Origen's metaphors of rule, kings, and kingdoms are centered on a visible representation of the Davidic Messiah as the Cosmic King. The cosmic rule of Christ is obviously one of Origen's perennial arguments against the imperial ideology and Roman supremacy. He detects in Romans 5:1 that Paul began a new, protreptic call to peace. He says,

"It is obvious from this that the apostle is inviting everyone who has understood that he is justified by faith and not by works to that 'peace which passes all understanding'... Peace reigns when nobody complains, disagrees, is hostile or misbehaves... Let us therefore have peace, so that the flesh will no longer be at war with the Spirit, nor will the law of God be opposed by the law of our members . . . let us all agree, let us all think alike, let there be no dissension either among ourselves or between us and outsiders, and then we shall have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. But let it most definitely be known that anyone in whom the vice of injustice is found can never have peace. For as long as he is thinking how he can hurt his neighbor, as long as he seeks after ways of causing harm, his mind will never be at peace" (*ComRom.*, 4.8.1-3).

Here Origen traces Paul's protreptic urging to peace by defining rule using a populist model, giving his audience good cause to imitate it, and further by instructing them how to do so. Origen uses Paul's urging to make his own protreptic discourse toward the virtue of self-lowering. The self-lowering of Christ had released them (the Romans and the world) from the Tyrant Death and had given them his life-giving Spirit. Using *synkrisis* he shows that Christ's just act of dying to Death alone created the lawful rule within his body. Christ

suffered for his people when they were not loyal to his kingdom, and now calls them to suffer as he had, for those yet to join his kingdom. Why? Because Christ lowered himself in order to give benefaction to his followers; his loyal followers were to follow suit. This is a just kingly act.

In the *ComRom*, Romans 5:1-11 becomes a protreptic speech encouraging Christians to stand firm in their loyalty to Christ. The good life is found in the body of Christ which is permeated by his Spirit. Using the Empire as a foil, Origen both countered and usurped the stoic idea of spirit as a cosmic governor and the Romans' notion of their supremacy through Caesar. At the same time, he urged believers to hear and know that they were commissioned by their king to suffer with him. Origen's *protrepsis* was thus aimed at usurping kingdoms and kings and deepening the loyalties of the citizens.

Origen is quite aware that Paul uses *prosopopoeia* to let Scripture, the prophets, King David, and God himself testify to pivotal ethnic claims: that a free and sovereign God had redefined the nation of Israel as a multi-ethnic people. In explaining Romans 5:12-21, he gives a series of staccato proofs to demonstrate the cosmic reign of the Tyrant Death and the life-giving rule of Christ. These are two different and contrasting rulers. Again, Origen personifies death as a "tyrant" who invaded the "dominions" of the "rightful king" (*ComRom.*, 5.1.31). In this saga, he sees Moses as a "commander" sent by the rightful king to push back the aggressor and to enable humanity to come back to their rightful kingdom. This is warfare between the rulers of darkness and the rightful king over humanity who have fallen and lost their identity through deceit. Read this way, Origen's Paulinism views the Jewish history as a soteriological drama encapsulating the entire race. The institution of sacrificial systems and the rites of the Jewish cultic practices are the work of the king through his commander to provide humanity with a way back into the kingdom of life. When the commander could no longer restrain the enemy, the king sends the prophets to strengthen the work of the commander. When their works also could not reign in the Tyrant, the king himself comes to make the identity transfers possible.

Thus far, Origen sees Sin and Death as false kings who tyrannized the *cosmos* and prohibited the right government of the mind outside of Christ. On the other hand, the crucifixion and subsequent resurrection were kingly acts to free the masses from Sin's grip,

to create the rule of life for the people, and to offer a citizenship better than that of the *Romanitas*. Therefore, it is only by submitting to the rule of Christ that humanity can regulate their actions (self-mastery), fulfill the demand of God's law, and become adopted heirs of God. The royal Christ was Origen's solution to the problems of cosmic tyranny by Sin. Thus, Origen's Paulinism announces the good news of the Jewish Messiah and the royal throne of Christ. The good news has both social and political implications. The cultural logic assumed by Origen is that only a good king can overcome the universal reign of tyranny and bring about the rule of order and a better benefaction. Christ the Cosmic King conquered the tyrant for the great benefit of everyone.

5.4.3 The Demise of the Reign of Death

In Origen's Paulinism, why is Death on the throne in the first place? Death started reigning once it entered into the created realm through the portal of sin. After that, Origen visualizes Death establishing a permanent throne to control the body (*ComRom.*, 5.7.3). The person apparently has no control over his life. This is the loss of self-mastery. The intervention of the Jewish God has provided a way to usurp Death. This grace in the form of Christ came to humanity to serve them and die for them, and, ironically, to conquer Death (*ComRom.*, 5.7.2-3). The new rule and creation that Christ brings belongs to the "New Man" and Christians' loyalty to Christ is a sign of their exodus from the stronghold of Death. The motif of Christ-followers dying or expelling sin from their bodies is in imitation of what Christ has already done.

Origen's Paulinism uses Israel's Scriptures to articulate this caging in of Death. Echoing Job 3:9, Origen equates the sea monster with the last enemy (*ComRom.*, 5.10.10). He also refers to Psalm 30:9 by means of *prosopopoiia* to show the destruction of the last enemy. He reads the Psalmist as speaking on behalf of Christ (*ComRom.*, 5.10.10). The almighty king is depicted covertly as a meek person and goes down to the pit to be "under the tyrant's sphere of rule" and proclaim the good news about his rule and kingdom to those who will listen (*ComRom.*, 5.10.11). This is Christ's clandestine mission to subdue the strongman (Matthew 12.29). The Cosmic King who adorns himself with the form of a slave to subject the last enemy becomes humanity's peace deal with the enemy. Following the

Apostle Paul (Colossians 1:20), Origen stipulates that Christ has made peace “through the blood of his cross” and that there are cosmic consequences for this act. It affects “the things on earth” along with “the things in heaven” (*ComRom.*, 5.10.14). Furthermore, his death consequently made peace possible with God. It started the process of reconciliation (*ComRom.*, 5.12.5). These acts surpass any other contender’s kingly acts.

As a result, the last enemy, Death is defeated and his reign of terror has ended. At the same time, Origen acknowledges that the ultimate knockout punch against Death remains in the future. Hence, Death or the false king is alive, but not reigning. Death is conquered in principle, but not yet exterminated (*HomNum.*, 8.3-4). His powers are inferior and lacking the grandeur of the cosmic reign of Christ. Origen calls this a “robbing” (*ComRom.*, 5.1.37).

Thus far, in Origen’s cosmology there are two kings. Humanity must choose between the king whose “yoke is sweet and burden light” and the one “whose reign is heavy” like a “leaden disk” (*ComRom.*, 5.6.8). Origen is urging his students towards peace, by exhorting them to follow the Prince of Peace. This peace is in direct contrast to the *pax Romana*. It is an exhortation for loyal followers of Christ to live peacefully and humbly with their neighbors.

Origen also understands Paul’s rhetoric of doing good through suffering for glory in a specific manner. In particular, this is a sort of participative suffering with the Cosmic King’s passion experience. Boasting in sufferings is not an end in itself but it is about leading to various virtues. In other words, suffering produces patience and patience is one of the virtues of the soul, and thus there is no doubt that suffering is neither evil nor neutral but good for the soul. It is therefore, in bearing with the dregs of humanity in broadcasting the Gospel of the Jewish God that Christian identity is maintained and proclaimed. This identity to share in the king’s own suffering is the superior identity for Origen.

Hence, the creature and creation took a decisive turn with the actions of the Creator, that is, the events of Christ’s incarnation, death, and resurrection. These events shape the life of those in Christ. Viewing Origen’s Paulinism within the contextual matrix of *Romanitas* and patronage—as in Romans 5:6-8—his *protrepis* comes through. To repeat, Origen’s

Paulinism as a rhetoric of identity is an urging to take up his way of life which is shaped like Christ. He is articulating, defining, defending, and narrating his vision of the Christian life for his broader audience as exemplified by his exegesis of Romans 5:1-11. Christian faithfulness to their king manifests itself as the citizens act as Christ's agents by "doing good" (*agathopoiein*). Just as Christ lowered himself in order to make the "weak" strong, his followers are to follow suit. This is the call of Christ.

5.4.4 Origen's Usurpation of Roman Rule

Origen recognized that Paul began a new protreptic call to peace in Romans 5:1. God's gift of righteousness ended the division between Greeks and Jews for advantage and brought the elite benefits of noetic Judaism to Roman Gentiles wishing to be 'kings' (3:21-26, 4:13-25). He sees Paul urging the Roman churches to suffer, exemplifying the salvific rule (1:5, 5:1-15:13). The two realities of suffering and peace exist together with ease in Origen's exegesis. When the followers of Christ "have peace with God," they concurrently declare open warfare with the devil. Origen states, "We enter more into peace with God at that time when we are preserving in warlike hostility against the devil and when we struggle furiously against vices of the flesh . . . one will be near God at that very moment when he is resisting the devil" (*ComRom.*, 4.8.4).

5.4.5 Christ, the Ruler of Peace

Origen inaugurates Paul's "urging to peace" (Romans 5:1-11) with an exhortation to imitate Christ's efficacious self-lowering for the sake of others. The reasons for peace are to "boast in the hope of the glory of God" and "in suffering." Origen divides glories into three phases. The first refers to Moses and his ministries. The incarnation is the second glory. Both of these have already taken place and are thus visible. The third glory lies in the future. It is the second coming of the King (*ComRom.*, 48.9). He views these three levels of glory as representative levels of growth within believers. This implies that only the spiritually mature can understand the third phase of the glory. The transformation enabled by the Holy Spirit prepares believers to visualize this final level of glory (*ComRom.*, 4.9.10).

Thus, from the fullness of the Spirit, the fullness of love is infused into the hearts of the saints in order to receive participation in the divine nature, so that through this gift of the Holy Spirit, the word which the Lord said might be fulfilled. And the person who is “expanded by the virtues cannot be constrained” (*ComRom.*, 4.10.9). The Incarnation and the Cross ultimately point to the love and service of Christ. Origen, convinced that Paul is an excellent exemplar of Christ, articulates that it is beyond doubt that the Apostle would have undergone tremendous afflictions, sufferings and self-giving unless he was filled with an overwhelming love for his mission (*ComRom.*, 4.9.10). Clearly, Origen sought to demonstrate a self-emptying life for his culture, imitating the life of Christ.

Using the Cosmic ruler as the model to imitate, Origen’s Paul presents his first proof with an exhortation to suffering with salvific benefits (5:3-5) and an *exemplum* of Christ’s suffering kingship (5:6-10). For Origen, Romans 5:3-5 proves that suffering leads to virtue and, in turn, to high status. Thus, Christians can boast in their suffering because God’s grace has strengthened them. It is a power manifested through weakness. Lowering themselves in service to others is a new discipline with eager expectations of future glory (*ComRom.*, 4.9.1). Afflictions produce boasting that does not involve the ego, but rather, the patience that is required to grow into a virtuous human being. The issue Origen depicts for his audience is the display of Christian suffering as good and virtuous. However, how one is afflicted matters; thus, the issue is not that affliction exists but how it is manifested in the lives of the afflicted. Is it contributing to their growth in Christ? (*ComRom.*, 4.9.8-9). Redemptive suffering takes place in the lives of the Christians because Christ himself through his own incarnating love bestows them with the suffering love. This is what life looks like under the ruler of peace. It is unlike Hellenistic visions of suffering.

Voluntary suffering or affliction for a cause is an oxymoronic concept within the Hellenistic *paideia*. Epictetus provides a glaring example. He contrasts the perspective of the Cynic king and the Roman elite on voluntary suffering in the following excerpt:

“[The Cynic] needs to be flogged like an ass, and while he is being flogged, he must love the men who flog him, as though he were the father or brother of them all. But that is not our way. If someone flogs you, go amidst and shout, ‘O Caesar, why do I have to suffer under your peaceful rule?’ . . . [The Cynic is] persuaded that whatever of these hardships he suffers, Zeus is exercising him . . . [he did not blame God] who had sent him into the world, for mistreating him. No, he took pride in his distress” (Epictetus, *Discourses*, 3.22.50-61).

Read in this way, elite Romans treated the Cynic king's boast in suffering as shameful irrationality rather than a deed of love or imitation for the sake of his community. However, Christ, Paul, and Origen view suffering as a "good deed" of a loving king (5:4). In 5:6-10, the ultimate *exemplum* is Christ, displaying how the king's own voluntary suffering for the sake of the "weak" was for a greater benefaction that rendered all believers just and holy (5:8-10).

While the Greeks or the Romans might be willing to sacrifice themselves for a benefactor, or perhaps a sage, the Lord Christ, through whom all have access to God's presence (5:1-2), presented an even greater good by dying for the dregs of humanity. Christ is the redefined, long-awaited Messiah of the Jewish prophets, and Origen, using the standard of the Greco-Roman benefaction, demonstrates that he can perfect everyone, including the Romans. However, if they choose to follow this true king, they must show their gratitude and loyalty by suffering with him. Resisting the enemy is having peace with Christ, the Cosmic King. They therefore find peace through the door of Christ and through boasting in suffering. Therefore, Romans 5:1-11 portrays Christ as *the* Lord and benefactor who delivers glory as a kingly *exemplum* for his followers to imitate. Christ the Cosmic King is greater and above all rule and authorities.

The people of the Cosmic King Christ are empowered to speak boldly and live peacefully knowing that it is the king who will vindicate them. Rulers and authorities can persecute the new people, but their identity will always be grounded in the Lord who rescued them from the evil realm, and thus they are exiting and eclipsing the fallen realm. They are now the superior people as they withstand various forms of oppression for the sake and name of Christ.

5.5 Loyalty and Glory of the Christians

Another example of Origen's distinctive praxis lies in his understanding of glory. God in Christ reveals the promise of the first glory. The second is manifested profoundly in the incarnation powered by the Holy Spirit. This glory draws Christians into relationship with the Father, through the Son and the Spirit. The third glory is for those who have heard the

urging of the Apostle Paul to maintain peace with humanity as they wait for the arrival of their king. As the world waits for the conclusion of the divine plan, Christians enjoy the best possible scenario. They are vindicated and at peace, with access to the treasures of the king's palace, grace, and grounds for boasting about their identities as citizens under the Cosmic King. Compared to the Hellenistic search for glory, Paul provides believers the "hope of sharing the glory of God" (Romans 5:2). Origen assumes that once the good news is heard, many will come to see the conquering king and the ruler of the world. Origen's use of suffering, afflictions, and glory facilitated his subversion of Greco-Roman moralism, the cult of the Emperor, and the *Romanitas*, to stabilize third-century believers living in the realm of the Roman Empire by calling *anyone* who wished to rise above the dregs of humanity by becoming loyal subjects of the Jewish Lord. This is the locus of power with which to remake humanity in a better life by the strength of the Cosmic King's abilities, deeds, and faithfulness.

As discussed, patronage falls within the Greco-Roman system of associations and cell groups, and Origen's protreptic usurpation of the imperial patronage is an important context for understanding his identity theology. Some chief themes so far are traced below:

- (a) Cell groups were part of the *habitus* of the Roman world. Within this construct lie
- (b) *patron/benefactor* and *clients*: that is, God or powerful individuals in relationship with humanity or homeowners and their clients/followers; which leads to
- (c) humans/clients bestowing *honor*, *praise*, and *glory* on the benefactor, while living in a certain way to demonstrate that this relationship possesses
- (d) an ethos of *peace*, *purity*, and *holiness* in conjunction with and in contrast to the Greco-Roman moralism, in order to show *loyalty* to the patron. Jesus Christ provides the ultimate *exemplum* for this type of relationship.

Therefore, God judges Jesus as a holy person, both loyal to him and now favored by him. This Christ is above all names and patrons, and is Lord of the world. His followers are therefore citizens of the best possible kingdom and they in turn should be loyal to his kingly proclamations and live virtuously.

5.5.1 The Supreme Benefactor: Israel's God

Just as the Roman elite lauded the state religion under Caesar and lamented the introduction of foreign superstitions, Origen acknowledges and lauds the God of the Jews as the source of good, order, and sustenance in the world, and laments the immaturity of Christ-followers. God was always the Creator and benefactor (*Princ.*, 1.4.3). Against the Marcionite understanding of God based on the Apostle Paul, he critiques Marcion's rejection of the Hebrew God (*Princ.*, 2.5.1). Instead, he presents Christ the King of the Jews as the broker of God's benefits. When he takes up the challenge to counter Celsus's damaging censorships against Christianity he presents Christ as the best teacher. Through his teachings, Christ not only embodies the richness of Hellenistic *paideia* but also goes beyond it. Christ offers communion, union, and intimate knowledge of God. In fact, Origen challenges Hellenism to produce another teacher like Christ, whose "system of doctrines and opinions" were so "beneficial to human life," that they were able to save humanity from the dregs of wicked desires (*CCels.*, 2.8; 2.5). Using the analogy of medical sciences, he pictures the arrival of Christ as the coming of a master physician into a city racked with plague, in which the other physicians had exhausted all their knowledge and training (*HomLk.*, 13.2). Through the teaching of Christ, humanity comes to know the mind of God, because he is God. The student who listens to Christ is elevated to "friendship with God," which is to be in a state of "communion with the divine." In this way, the student can rise to the level of the divine/perfect life (*CCels.*, 3,28).

Furthermore, the incarnation of Christ is the ultimate accommodation for humanity. Citing Philippians 2:7, Origen says, "By that same power by which he humbled himself, he grows. He had appeared as weak, because he had assumed a weak body . . . The Son of God 'had emptied himself' and for that reason, again he is filled with wisdom" (*HomLk.*, 19.2). Christ lowered himself to become an example for Christians to follow (Romans 5). The death of Christ was for the "common good" (*CCels.*, 1.31). This benefit reaches "all humanity" (*CCels.*, 2.33).

5.6 Summary

Origen has effectively demonstrated the demise of death and the breaking down of ethnic barriers. The demonstration reflects his firm belief in the cosmic reign of Christ. In the Christ events lay the revelation of the world-righting divine faithfulness and the divine clean-up of the world's disease mired in inter-ethnic rivalries jostling for power and supremacy. But now, the dregs of humanity are recycled by the kingly acts of Christ. Origen's demonstration of the just rule of Christ is an ethnic argument. Through Christ, humanity can see that God is the good shepherd who has removed the fence line and welcomed everyone into his pasture regardless of their ethnic differences. However, Origen is not arguing that the welcome alone removes all differences between peoples. God is impartial in his inclusion of peoples, not blind to the existence of peoples. Origen is not simply rejecting all values espoused by the Greco-Roman world. His understanding requires a complete reevaluation of past lifestyle, not necessarily its eradication. Thus, Christian communities have a distinct identity under the Cosmic King, but one which was developed out of a Greco-Roman symbolic universe. Their identity was not formulated in contradistinction to Hellenism, but rather, in association with it. They were to be a liminal people, on the border of the Hellenistic world, but not quite part of it. Yet they retained significant aspects of its self-understanding and identity.

In Origen's Paulinism, the church is a Christian's first family and their primary allegiance is rightly placed in Christ Jesus. They are to find their identity *together in Christ* above everything else. Being one of the loyal followers of Christ is to be a more determinative reality and identity than anything else. Implicitly, his Paulinism is a *paraenesis* to the Christians, and a clear warning that if they were to hold anything to be more important than their Christian identity (for example Roman citizenship), they were practicing idolatry and deceiving themselves. It is precisely by affirming, denouncing, and transforming Greco-Roman stereotypes of *humanitas* that Origen teaches Christians why they should embrace their identity as elite members of the kingdom of Christ. From the beginning, Christianity's effectiveness throughout the Roman Empire lay in its capacity to create cell groups/associations and to generate its own intellectual and imaginative world.

In effect, this challenges the Roman moral superiority and the accepted *paideia* of Hellenism. This discourse is about revelation, appealing to the hidden truths. It is also a social construction based on the Jewish Bible and the events that took place in Jesus' life as narrated by the Apostles and eventually embodied in the believer through the Holy Spirit. In constructing a distinctive Christian identity, Origen hermeneutically redefines the claims of the *Romanitas*. This provides an antidote to following the false king (the Caesars of the world: Sin, Death, or provincial governors) and conforming as citizens to a lower realm (of darkness or *Romanitas*). Jesus' followers are not necessarily revolutionaries, but are rather emissaries of a new order because Jesus transforms kingship and authority. The world is turned upside-down by this king. Origen's reading of Romans places the new communities in sharp counter-cultural movement against the prevailing norms of the Greco-Roman Empire and the Jewish world. Rulers and authorities can persecute the new people, but these people have their identity forged in the Lord and are already rescued from the evil realm.

Finally, Origen's vision of the *humanitas* is not simply a defense of a set of beliefs or ideas. It is primarily a defense of the community that is real, oppressed, and loyal to a kingdom other than the Roman Empire. His *protrepticus* calls everyone that trusts in the message of Christ to have a meaningful relationship with the kingdom of Christ. As a citizen of the heavenly city, Origen knows that the yearnings of humanity can only be satisfied in God and that the hope for peace will only be realized in fellowship with God. As loyal citizens of the heavenly city of Christ's kingdom, Christians participate in the life of the earthly city to transform, renew, or transfigure the old creation for the dawning of the new creation, which God had already begun through the Cosmic King.

6.0 ORIGEN'S RHETORIC OF IDENTITY: SEEING GOD AND CHRISTIAN *HUMANITAS*

6.1 Introduction

Thus far, we have traced Origen's Paulinism as an identity construction within his socio-cultural *habitus*. This identity rhetoric is not unique but constructed using the Hellenistic *paideia*. Where does this identity lead us in terms of the Christian life of a transformed, Christian *humanitas*? Does it naturally align with the broader Hellenistic virtue ethics? Perhaps there is no single "right" answer to this question. Overall, Origen's theology is idiosyncratic and cannot be easily classified into any particular type. It is perhaps best regarded as *sui generis*. Nevertheless, Origen offers us a trajectory toward an *ethos* of a Christian *humanitas*, rather than a *self-standing* theory. At the heart of the dispute between the Greco-Roman *paideia* and Origen lie, not differing exegetical methodologies, but differing visions of *humanitas*. Origen's *protrepsis* against his cultural *habitus* is not founded upon an outright rejection of the intrinsic elements of his *paideia*, but rather upon his specific rejection of the popular conceptions of *humanitas*. This chapter investigates the culmination of Origen's rhetoric of identity with a metaphor of the vision as it relates to identity construction. This vision is about seeing things as they really are.

6.2 Morality and Maturity

Although there is a close relationship between maturity and morality, there remain differences. The focus here is maturity not morality. Morality is primarily about internalization of values, virtues, or rules. However, maturity is the transformation of character that demonstrates itself and become an *exemplum* for other people. Origen's protreptic Paulinism is not so much interested in the internalization of morality as it is with the formation of Christ-like character through self-lowering and sacrifice, and the resulting externalization of that character. At the same time, morality and maturity are organically related; a believer cannot have maturity without the internalization of virtues. Thus, Origen's Paul is concerned deeply with spiritual transformation, or to say it a bit differently, growth-as-transformation. Given the cultural *habitus* of his *paideia*, the only way a person can become virtuous is by doing virtuous acts following those who have become masters.

Similar to his cultural *paideia*, Origen is also working out of and contributing to the tradition of virtue ethics for two reasons. First, his emphasis on contemplation as a form of training, coupled with his conception of Christ as the perfect model, invokes but also revises an Aristotelian approach. Second, his conception of the form of the virtues as strong, mature, and perfect deepens the trajectory found in Hellenistic *paideia*. One becomes virtuous, one becomes like Christ, through the *paideia* of imitation, that is, by following Christ as the Apostle Paul demonstrated. In this regard, Origen's ethics is somewhat Aristotelian, as a comparison with Aristotle will make clear.

According to Aristotle, "Virtue or excellence is a characteristic involving choice, [which] consists in observing the mean relative to us, a mean which is defined by a rational principle, such as a man of practical wisdom would use to determine it" (*Eth. Nic.*, 2.1107a). Virtue is therefore primarily a trait acquired through observation, as it is modeled by a virtuous person, that is, a wise person of practical reason. With a model in front of them, the believers or the students then strive to become virtuous themselves by imitating the virtuous person. Aristotle demonstrates that the pursuit of virtue is bound to deeds, that good works are not simply the end toward which one strives, but the means to reach the goal. Thus, it is through sustained efforts and habits cultivated out of good deeds that a virtuous life is possible. Aristotle's famous maxim says, "We became just by doing just acts, temperate by doing temperate acts, brave by doing brave acts" (*Eth. Nic.*, 1103b3). Aristotle cautions against short cuts or an easy path to virtuous living. He says, "Acting in accord with virtue must occupy a lifetime. For one swallow does not make a spring nor does one fine day summer" (*Eth. Nic.*, 1098a115-116). Becoming a virtuous person by practicing virtuous deeds in imitation of the master takes a long time. Aristotle requires vigor and determination for the journey in becoming like the teacher.

Although Origen himself does not explicitly engage Aristotle or any Greek teacher as an interlocutor, the basic structure of his character formation is quite similar. Origen says, "Genuine transformation of life comes from reading the ancient Scriptures, learning who the just were and imitating them," and he adds, "learning who were reprov'd and guarding against falling under the same censure" (*HomJe.*, 4.5). Analogous to Aristotle, Origen's *humanitas* program demands that a student becomes virtuous through a nurturing habit in which one seeks to imitate a virtuous person or teacher. For Origen's Paulinism, that

virtuous person is Christ. Since Christ is qualitatively different from the wise man of Aristotle's polis, the result of following after him is different as well. Jesus' virtues do not entirely contradict those of the classical Greek world, for Jesus clearly acts with courage, generosity, and temperance, to name just a few. But his primary virtue, that of self-lowering, sacrifice, self-giving, incarnational love, or becoming the suffering servant, could hardly be considered "wisdom" from the perspective of the Hellenistic *paideia*. To repeat, for Origen, the ethos of self-lowering and living peacefully with one's neighbors shines forth not merely as a happy medium between excess and deficiency, but as a radical extreme, afforded even to those who are beneath him in dignity, and this is what it means to live virtuously as elite kings.

Moreover, Origen's vision of a wise person differs from Aristotle's wise man in another important way. For Aristotle, the wise man of practical reason is a moral exemplar that one seeks to imitate. For Origen, Christ is the moral exemplar that one seeks to imitate, but he is also much more than this, for he is himself the Cosmic King. Insofar as Christ is an exemplar, he is not just the best exemplar available, he is the perfect exemplar, and the kind of goodness that he models surpasses all other kinds, not only quantitatively but also qualitatively. Thus, one who follows Christ, rather than the wise man, need not worry that he is being led astray by someone who is good in some respects but not in others. Thus, one who consciously endeavors to follow Christ becomes more "virtuous" and thus more mature. This is due to their loyalty to the Cosmic King. They are living as elite citizens with humility and in peace with their neighbors. Such a life is possible because of God's benefactions and because of his son, the Cosmic King, who enables his citizens by transforming their sight in order that they see him for who he truly is.

To reiterate, in the third-century milieu, there were many competing ideologies of superiority and self-serving philosophic interest and many groups were lobbying for their versions of the *humanitas*. Among these interest groups, becoming the *humanitas* of the empire is not just an ideal but is itself one of the ultimate goals. Despite the ideological differences, virtue serves as a prerequisite for insight and superior living. Christian virtue ethics involve the direct contemplation for an alternative vision and participation in the life of God. Consequently, Origen's protreptic Paulinism is much more than simply a battle of ideologies or a rebuttal of his *habitus*. Rather, for Origen, becoming the *humanitas* occurs

because the gospel of Christ provides a special lens through which one can see the provisional goodness of his *habitus*, *paideia*, and other teachers. In a sense, Origen's Paulinism is all-embracing, because the Cosmic King purifies, purges, and teaches the life-restoring principles necessary to reaching one's fullest potential as a creature, life as it was meant to be.

6.2.1 Constructing New Creation

Origen's Paulinism argues that the new creation, involving the transformation of the individual and the cosmic presence of the reign of Christ, has already begun. The best place to re-imagine and to visualize this new reality is the cell group. In a strict sense, for Origen, there is no meaningful distinction between his theology of maturity, his rhetoric of identity and his ethics, because his Paulinism is fundamentally a protreptic account of God's work of usurping the popular visions of *humanitas*, and of transforming Christ-followers into the image of Christ. Community formation is accomplished through the transformation of the souls. The central motif here is growth both as a sacrifice and as transformation.

Origen's Paulinism sees suffering both as a tension which exists as a part of life in this realm and also as a means to conform believers to the image of Christ. In fact, Origen's Paulinism is not simply, or even primarily, about a formula for reading the Scriptures. Rather, it is about envisioning a new creation. The renewed creation incorporates itself into the cultural memories of the Christ-followers as an identity-forming event and thus becomes a cultural category visible to everyone. Like all textual interpretation in his *habitus*, the meaning of such an event must lie as much in the recollection and representation of the meaning, especially given the transient nature of the meaning itself. Remembering or visualizing the teachings of Christ or Paul is always best done in the re-telling. The nuances, emphases and even perhaps some distortion and deliberate amnesia are all part of Origen's Paul and its subsequent vision, in the construction of an identity that rivals the accepted *humanitas*.

Read this way, Origen's Paulinism is the ability for the Christ-followers to see what God has not only done or will do, but what God is currently doing, that is, recreating the world for a new *humanitas*. Loyal citizens of Christ must see that their growth through suffering is a powerful transformation in order to become like Christ. This requires a change in vision

or seeing. The role of the community is indispensable. There were no rogue spiritual teachers or leaders outside of the home-based cells or associations.

6.2.2 Origen's Paul as Becoming like Christ

To reiterate, Origen's Paulinism was not about constructing theoretical or methodologically focused systematic theologies, but was about addressing everyday concerns of his associations. Origen says,

“Christ is formed in those who strive for perfection . . . when the wisdom of God would be preserved in them, the wisdom that Paul speaks among the perfect, as in 1 Corinthians 2:6, pure and without even the smallest deviation into error . . . If these are clearly formed in them, having become conformed into his image they will be seen in that form in which [Christ] is in the form of God.” (*ComRom.*, 7.7.4).

Like a good rhetorician, Origen's Paul is firmly audience-centered. Creating a better humanity is the overriding concern. He is intentionally usurping the dominant *humanitas* and portraying Paul as the *exemplum* of maturity. He is simultaneously continuing with and breaking away from the broader Greco-Roman community, and is establishing a community that allows for social integration while maintaining proper boundaries necessary for a salient group identity (Mitchell, 1992: 236). Romans 8:29 and 12:1-2 are related passages, relevant to the theme of conformity to the image of Christ, with Romans 12:1-2 alluding back to Romans 8:29. In turn, they refer back to Romans 5:12-21, where Christ is contrasted with Adam. Together they announce that the new life has come through Jesus Christ. Resurrection, as in Romans 6:4, defines the newness of life, and the Cosmic King embodies this newness. Romans 8:17-18 shows the present reality of the King's people. Ideally, this demonstrates that the virtue of self-lowering is a characteristic of Christ leading his people to glorification with him. Christ's self-lowering is the prototype for all who are becoming the heirs of God.

For Origen, virtue is also more than knowledge; it is ultimately about the imitation of Christ (*CCels.*, 8.17). Knowledge comes through the Christian Scriptures, in contrast to the popular *paideia*. Virtue is the practical exercise of achieving the *summum bonum* according to the divine commandments. The ability to see things as they are is a gift from the Creator to his creatures. Origen states,

“Certainly, it is probable that the knowledge of God is beyond the capacity of human nature; still by God’s benevolence and love to man, and by supreme divine grace, the knowledge of God extends to those who by God’s foreknowledge have been previously predetermined, because they would live lives worthy of Him after He was made known to them” (*CCels.*, 7.44).

The struggle and journey serves as a challenge for the readers to endure until they can also see and unite harmoniously with their beloved. The journey toward God is a lifelong process and a difficult one. Believers are continually beset by hardships and some are even prone to lapses. Thus their spiritual progress is not steady, but combines progression and regression.

Thus, becoming the new creation is hard work. Origen says, “First you must die to sin so that you can be buried with Christ; for a burial is required for a dead person. For if you are still living to sin, you cannot be buried with Christ . . . since your old man is still alive you cannot walk in newness of life” (*ComRom.*, 5.8.4). The renewed or reconstructed life is not another *paideia* per se, but a change of citizenship. “Dying to sin” invokes the conclusion of an epic battle, that is, the defeat of the tyrant and the beginning of a new life marching toward the cosmic king. Christ-followers—the “new man”—are on track to becoming like the teacher after their usurpation of the tyrant. Such believers have been buried together, raised, and now live together with and in Christ, because they have the knowledge of God (*ComRom.*, 5.8.9). Thus, they can see things as they were meant to be perceived. For Origen, death to sin must come first, before identifying with the acts of Christ—death, burial, and resurrection—and then reigning with him (*ComRom.*, 5.3.8).

Without loving God, a citizen cannot claim mastery over self even if he is endowed with the knowledge of God. Origen takes the motif of loving God within the sphere of friendship as a legitimate component in humanity’s relationship with God. He stipulates that the reconstructed identity of a believer is based on friendship. He alludes to characters like Moses and Jesus’ twelve disciples. He makes distinctions about the levels of intimate friendship between these godly characters and he also uses the ultimate enemy at the end of the spectrum (*ComRom.*, 4.12.2). He is contrasting the levels of connections and also showing the extreme side, representing the fallen realm. What determines these degrees of separation or levels of intimacy?

Amicitia (friendship) with the cosmic king is indeed an intimate relationship. The openness of Christ to his followers may be reciprocated by imitating his kingly acts. Thus, mimicking Christ's kingly acts not only determines who may behold God face-to-face but also the degree of intimacy and the intensity of the beatific vision. For Origen, it is simply the tenacity of the believer. He says that it requires a "great deal of effort and sweat," that is, people who are tenacious enough to "ask for what is not seen, knock on that which is closed, and seek what is hidden" (*ComRom.*, 5.1.4). This is a battle and the "fight must be fought for a long time by those who want to reign in life through Jesus Christ" and to see Christ (*ComRom.*, 5.3.7). The present life "is one of effort and work, in which merits may be procured through good conduct" (*ComRom.*, 5.1.5). These acts are determinative of our visions in the future. Thus, the transformation of sight becomes an all-encompassing concept to understand Origen's Paulinism pertaining to protreptic identity rhetoric.

6.3 Transformation of Sight

Just as Origen constructed identity through interpretation of the text, transformation of sight happens when one learns to collect treasures in Christ's kingdom, that is, by learning to grow through the act of reading the Scripture. Perhaps this transformation might look like a Platonic vision of contemplation whereby the beginning of transformative sight originates with the material elements of the world and gradually transforms higher and more spiritual realities, in the end seeing a glimpse of the Platonic forms themselves, and the One who resides behind them. However, this would be a grossly inaccurate correlation between Origen and the Platonic ascent. They look similar because they inhabit the same *habitus*. Once dissected, the Hellenistic notion of visualizing the *humanitas* and seeing God are radically different from Origen's Christocentric vision of a mature believer. Christian vision of God returns us to a consideration of seeing things as they are. This happens within the space of the Cosmic King's body, which other major Hellenistic players would deny.

By using 1 Corinthians 13:13, Origen says, "We will be given the perfection of faith in the great resurrection from the dead of the whole body of Jesus, his holy Church . . . [and] faith which [will come] through sight is much better, if I may put it this way, than faith 'through a mirror and a riddle' like our present knowledge" (*ComJo.*, 10.304). Faith and sight serve

as metaphors for knowledge of God, and faith with sight implies a deeper knowledge, an ability to see things as they really are. Thus, if the culmination of the Christian life lies in the age to come in the form of the vision whereby one sees God face to face, the perennial question is, how do Christians prepare to receive this vision in the earthly realm? Origen visualizes the Apostle preparing believers in two ways. First, they are to practice and start living virtuous lives which enable them to do the second thing, that is, to live as elite citizens of the cosmic king. This pierces the veil of spiritual reality, thereby participating more directly in the life of God through his son Christ. There is a dialectical relationship between virtuous living and the status of citizen in Christ's kingdom. Regardless of the active or passive aspects of the Christian journey in becoming a mature *humanitas*, it should be noted that the spiritual transformation of sight occurs only in participation with Christ, usurping the Hellenistic *paideia*.

Origen states that hope undergirds a believer's salvation and not by sight. This hope enables believers to undergo suffering with patience as they await for the ultimate face-to-face encounter with God (*ComRom.*, 7.5.2). The loyalties of the believers are strong enough to provide the endurance necessary until the ultimate face-to-face encounter with the Cosmic King. Echoing Luke 17:5, Origen wants to "increase the faith" of the loyal citizens (*ComRom.*, 4.1.11). The accumulation of virtues is possible through faith.

Virtue and vice serve different masters, and both types of act deserve their just reward or retribution. Faithless (sinful) acts mean becoming un-Christ-like. Such a person receives the wages of sin. Faithless (evil) acts or vices are paid in full when the worker is discharged. This wage of sin is death (*ComRom.*, 4.1.15). The wage for serving the Cosmic King is eternal life, that is, to contemplate God by beholding God. To begin the epic journey of beholding God, the soul starts by abandoning evil deeds (*ComRom.*, 4.1.20).

Origen's "insight into the essence of scripture" is that it is "the great sacrament of the real presence of the divine WORD in the world" (Balthasar, 2001: 10). Beginning with the text, that is, the Scripture, it is extended both metaphorically and literally in order to see the creation of God, or another text through the acts of Christ. Thus, the transformation of sight functions as an important metaphor to describe Origen's exegetical aims. Living peacefully is more than a metaphor in describing the reenactment of the deeds of Christ. For Origen,

Christ-followers are “gods-in-the-making, so to speak, whose divinization will only be complete in the eternal blessedness, when the ‘after-the-image’ will have progressed to complete likeness . . . The ‘after-the-image’ is one of Origen’s numerous approximations of sanctifying grace” (Crouzel, 1989: 95). Becoming like Christ requires humanity’s active participation, i.e., listening to the right teachers, such as Paul, to collect treasures and work for virtues. These treasures are the superior insight that requires hard study of the text, since no heavenly visitors are forthcoming.

The transformation that Origen’s Paulinism is dealing with comes with hope and possibilities. If humanity can visualize such a mechanism at work they “become sons, somehow within the Only Son” and they are endowed with the capacity to “see the Father in the same way that the Son sees Him” (Crouzel, 1989: 98). Origen drawing from Colossians 3:10, 2 Corinthians, 3:18 and 4:16 uses a strict Christ centric exhortation “to bear the image of the heavenly, after casting off the image of the earthly; that is to say, by living according to the Word of God, we are to be renewed and remade in the inner man after the image of God, who created him” (*ComRom.*, 5.1.15). Learning to live “according to the Word” is a superior experience to seeing heavenly visitors, since Christ is the ultimate visual portrait of what God is. Such living exemplifies growth-as-sacrifice, and its labors merit the treasures of the king’s palace. People living this way became an example for the believers, because such transformative growth does not “come to pass in those who are lazy or inactive but rather in those who are gradually making progress, and who at first sin only a little, then later even less, and ultimately, if they are able to attain it, who no longer sin at all” (*ComRom.*, 6.11.2). Elsewhere, he states, “putting to death of the deeds of the flesh should come through repentance, and [it does] not [come] suddenly but gradually” (*ComRom.*, 6.14.5). Therefore, to see the Word is to know and recognize the cosmic king while avoiding the exacting labors of the tyrant.

Elsewhere Origen stipulates that transformation implies having eyes that see the goodness of the creation. This is the capacity to become a faithful steward of the created realm (*ComJo.*, 13.280). Origen finds that the ability to gain superior eyesight is the ability to see the goodness of the Creator’s creation. It is the ultimate vision of the heavenly visitor, the Christ. As the teacher, Origen provides a preparatory interpretative lens, which adequately supports the life of the inner man by enabling him to hear, see, and understand the divine

mysteries by removing weak or simple understandings. In this act as a teacher, Origen's Paulinism is like a corrective lens for the people. Alluding to John 12:44 Origen opines that Christ is showing to the Father a believer's hope and in turn the believer can see the Father through the Son (*ComRom.*, 4.4.11).

As a transformative remedy for the outer man, Origen's Paulinism provides the cells of Christ-followers from all corners of the empire comprising of multi-ethnic peoples protection, salvific sight, and preparation for the beatific vision. Since the therapy is particular to a preparatory stage, it therefore functions as a space where invisible things of God are seen, by means of the things that are visible. In fact, the whole existence in this fallen realm serves as "a metaphor for spiritual realities," since the spiritual realities are hidden from humanity (Harl, 1958: 140-45). It is analogous to learning to interpret Scripture spiritually, that is, learning to see beneath the literal body of the text for the spiritual undertones or soul of the text. Afflictions and sufferings are one way to see things clearly. The misfortunes that torment the "mind and body" are nothing in comparison "to the future glory that will be revealed" to people that endure, and they will see things that "eye has not seen nor ear heard nor has entered the heart of man" (*ComRom.*, 7.4.2).

The encounter between Jesus and the Samaritan woman serves as an example of favoring sight over faith. In particular, Origen is concerned with the faith of the village people in John 4. The people believed because they also saw Christ and heard him: "It is better to walk by sight than by faith" (*ComJo.*, 13.348-53).

The cells of believers have naturally opted for the primacy of an eyewitness from the very beginning. More importantly, what we find in Origen is nothing short of a conviction, that sight is better than faith (*ComRom.*, 3.7.7). This conviction is grounded in the narrative of the biblical texts, stories, and in Paul's teachings. Mature people are able to see that which is not visible to a child or an immature believer. Thus, spiritual sight is superior to religious faith. Faith, although good, is an inferior blessing when compared to sight. Sight completes faith. Origen says, "We will be given the perfection of faith in the great resurrection from the dead of the whole body of Jesus, his holy Church . . . [And this] faith which [will come] through sight is much better, if I may put it this way, that faith 'through a mirror and a riddle' like our present knowledge" (*ComJo.*, 10.304). Faith together with sight provides a

deeper grasp of God. By itself, faith is basic, naked and weak, but when combined with sight knowledge becomes imbued with treasures from the king's palace. Thus, faith and sight supplement knowledge dealing with divine mysteries. Against the popular theories of vision and the common stories, Origen was forging a Pauline *paideia* of thinking about God.

Balthasar, a keen Origenian scholar, depicts the relationship between moral and spiritual transformation by using the metaphor of fire. God is flame, which is simultaneously “consuming fire” and “the light in which there is no darkness.” This fire burns downward, consuming the bowels of the spirit, “dredging out of the heart until it has become the pure space” of “the light alone which is radiating through it.” Only then, can the flames of longing thrust outwards into the world and upwards into the heavens. As transforming love, “this fire is impatience that is content with nothing that is preliminary or imaged,” and as transforming wisdom “it is like an X-ray that pierces through finite things until their essence becomes visible” (Balthasar, 2001: 12-13). Origen's motif of the transformation of sight is the penetrating eye.

In Romans 1:5, Origen sees both Paul and Christ as apostles. Christ was sent by the Father just as Christ sent Paul, and they both received grace—the “endurance of labors” (*ComRom.*, 1.7). Origen accentuates Paul's desires to visit Rome as an opportunity to impart them with spiritual gifts. This trip is for strengthening the cells of believers in Rome. Origen envisions Paul's apostolic ministry to the Romans as imparting spiritual gifts in order that they might see clearly. Paul's desire to preach the gospel to believers in Rome (Romans 1:15) is more than mere proclamation. It refers to the ongoing transformative work of teaching and discipleship that builds on an initial teaching. Just like his patron Paul, Origen focuses on this ongoing work of teaching and maturing of initial faith into sight.

6.3.1 Right Food for Growth

Commenting on Christ's statement in John 4:32, Origen engages in a lengthy exegesis demonstrating once again his view of the Fall, the Son's relationship with the Father, and the salvific work of Christ in perfecting those who are striving to become mature (*ComJo.*, 13.193-249). Jesus' statement about “meat to eat” provides rich metaphors with which to construct a diet for the Christ-followers. Origen notes that all rational creatures need

spiritual food to survive. He says, “Physical bodies . . . fluctuating in nature, are nurtured by the food that replaces what perishes, but the spiritual parts . . . are nurtured by incorporeal thoughts, words, and sound actions. These higher spiritual parts will not be dissolved into non-being if they should not be nurtured . . . but . . . they lose their distinctive character” (*ComJo.*, 13.204). There are differing sorts of spiritual food. For example, new born craves rational or pure milk and the weak consume vegetables. Solid foods are reserved for those who can differentiate evil from good (*ComJo.*, 13.207-210). The right diet is vital for perfecting humanity. Origen’s Paulinism, delivering transformative sight, is the superior diet that caters for each level of the believers. Thus, Origen’s Paulinism pictures God as accommodating himself to human weaknesses. Christ is able to meet the need of every individual soul. If Christ’s incarnation was necessary for reasons of accommodation, it was also necessary for Christ to be glorified. This is for the sake of humanity, in order to become an *exemplum*, and to correct the fall by re-creating a new creation and a new man out of the old man. Therefore, when a believer receives the incarnate Christ and believes, they are “at the beginning” of the soul’s journey to perfection (*ComJo.*, 1.58).

Origen is sensitive to those infants in Christ. He is aware that he needs to keep on feeding basic interpretation to those in need, to raise them up to the level of higher teachings. At the same time, it also implicitly shows how a Christian must live on the edge of the symbolic Greco-Roman universe and as a citizen of the Cosmic King. It is a constant effort to live as people-in-transition. Simplicity and refinement was Origen’s constant challenge as he harvested Pauline Epistles.

6.3.2 Treasures and Wrath

In describing Romans 2:5-6, Origen talks about a fat heart. He says, “When a person knows what things are good and yet does not do the good, we have to believe that he has contempt for good things through the hardness of his heart. But whenever the subtle spiritual sense of understanding is not welcomed there is fatness of the heart” (*ComJo.*, 2.4.1). Such hearts are collecting a treasure of wrath. They are the result of the *imago Dei* not becoming like Christ. Origen generally describes treasure as wealth and riches of various kinds. Yet, he

uses it differently depending upon his needs. Elsewhere, he use treasures as wrath dispensed in the Day of Judgment (*ComJo.*, 2.4.2).

Origen gives three meanings to describe these treasures. First, he refers to those treasures (vices) that Christ does not want his followers to have in this earthly realm. Rather, Christ wants them to have the second type of treasure, which is found in his kingdom (Matthew 6:19-20). The third type of treasure is in Romans 2:5-6 (*ComJo.*, 2.4.2). Origen wants a Christ-follower to be one who is “wise and rich in relation to God (Luke 12:21) and who, though he lives on earth, has his citizenship in heaven” (*ComJo.*, 2.4.2).

Growing into maturity is God’s work in action, and Origen’s Paulinism is a strong medicine administered by retelling the message of Paul, while transforming the third-century milieu. The farmer in Matthew 13:44 provide Origen with an example to illustrate his case about the treasure. The farmer sells everything he owns to buy the field and dig up the treasure. The selling, buying, and digging for the sake of the treasures are all part of Origen’s protrepsis to urge his audience toward deeper loyalties to the Cosmic King (*ComJo.*, 2.4.8). The farmer saw the treasure and acted accordingly. Such loyalties are an essential preparation for the Christocentric vision.

Just like the multiple uses of the treasure analogies, Origen’s Paulinism also contrasts different kinds of glories. In this case, Origen is using the Torah and the New Covenant to comment on Romans 2:7-11. He alludes to 1 Corinthians 3:18 to describe transformation in action as it leads a believer from glory to glory (*ComJo.*, 2.5.4). The Law of Moses is a glory, but it is overshadowed by the greater glory of Christ and his teachings. The Christ-followers have the potential to achieve greater glories or in-depth understandings of the divine mysteries if they persevere in good works (virtues). To them belongs the ultimate glory, the resurrection which is the necessary step to behold God, face-to-face (*ComJo.*, 2.5.5). Such a believer who endures until the end “honors the Father and the Son,” showing “the proper honor and devotion to wisdom, justice, and truth, and to all things which Christ is to be” (*ComJo.*, 2.5.6). These people not only know but also can visualize the essence of eternal life itself. They know that life in the kingdom of Christ begins with the “knowledge of God and Christ Jesus” (*ComJo.*, 2.4.8).

Elizabeth Lauro wisely suggests that, “at the very least, Origen understands Scripture’s soul and spirit to interact in a way that reforms the attentive believer into a likeness of God’s own virtue and wisdom, or Christ himself” (Lauro, 2005: 240). Becoming like God presupposes battling with the forces beyond humanity with the help of God and working tenaciously at acquiring virtues. “Man was indeed made in the image of God in the beginning,” Origen says, “but the likeness was postponed so that he might first trust in God and thus become like him and might himself hear that everyone who trusts in him becomes like him” (*ComRom.*, 4.5.11). Those who are seeking after God in slavish abandonment can visualize eternal life. These are the elite followers of Christ who know that they belong in the realm of the cosmic Christ. Before the believers are rewarded with the beatific vision, they are given the opportunity to visualize an ecstatic longing for the vision by renewing their passions for their king; and by seeing good works as a vital part that drives their transformation (*ComRom.*, 2.7.4; 2.7.1; 2.6.1-5).

6.3.3 Controlling Sex and Self-Mastery

Among other things, two actions are intimately connected in visualizing God. First, Christ-followers are required to cease from evil deeds. Second, pursuing good deeds is organically connected to becoming the *humanitas*, who can see God (*ComRom.*, 1.12.2). Origen uses circumcision as an example to demonstrate two ways of seeing things. “Circumcision” Origen states bluntly is cutting “off a certain part of the genital organ through which the succession of the human race and fleshly propagation is served . . . The reason why the cutting is inflicted upon the genital organs and not upon the other bodily parts is to clarify that the vices of this sort do not come to the soul from its own essence but rather by an inborn impulse and by the incentive of the flesh” (*ComRom.*, 2.13.20). The motif here is of an ongoing struggle, not only over self-mastery but also of human fertility. Circumcision is not merely the sign of the covenant in some capricious and purely external thing as if it were a ritual scar. In a sense, Abram’s penis—and the penises, the sexual potency, of his descendants—is what the covenant is about. God is demanding that Abram concede, symbolically, that his fertility is not his own to exercise without divine activity. Human sexual autonomy is an affront to God’s control over life.

The ability to see that God is in control requires a certain level of maturity. In order to see this Origen's Paulinism presupposes another type of circumcision. The second circumcision's scar is visible to those that can see. This is the Pauline spiritual circumcision. Origen says, "Spiritual circumcision means to cut off and throw away from the heart every unclean thought and all impure passions" (*ComRom.*, 1.13.22). The control of God via the inner man created in the image of God extends the metaphor of seeing God's activity in creating a new man. Alongside with the Greco-Roman moralists, Origen is urging his listeners to flee from the sexual wilderness. Self-mastery, for Origen, is not about morality per se, but about power. That is, who is in control? Genital submission, not genital aggression, (slaves of Christ) is Origen's answer to the perennial issue of his milieu. Thus, celibacy is the higher calling. The great moral dilemma of the empire, control of sexual excess, clearly has an answer in the God of Abraham. The knowledge to see this answer is specific and it is found according to Origen in teachers like Paul.

Origen sees a semiotic relationship between the two circumcisions. He says, "Circumcision of the heart means to hold no base and unworthy opinions concerning the faith; circumcision of the flesh means to commit nothing unclean and defiled in our works and actions. For whoever becomes uncircumcised and unclean in one of these areas is prohibited by the utterances of God from entering into the sanctuary" (*ComRom.*, 2.13.23). Only those with clear vision can enter into the King's palace because they were able to work out their way through the long journey by seeing things as they are. Origen's deepest and most humble desire was to be found as a faithful teacher of Christ's good news, just as the Apostle before him demonstrated, and to model for the cells of believers the act of seeing God's truth, kingdom, and accumulate the right treasures by becoming faithful citizens under the rule of Christ. As such, the notion of "body," "soul," and "spirit" in Origen's exegetical program are visible yet transitory boundary markers for the benefit of these loyal citizens.

6.4 Stages of Growth

Karen Jo Torjesen advocates that the threefold distinction in Origen's exegesis does not refer to three levels of meaning in the text itself: the literal, moral, and mystical meanings. Rather, she says, "this is a mistaken interpretation of Origen, both of his theory of exegesis and of his actual practice. It results from reading back the familiar structures of medieval

exegesis into Origen or from reading forward by superimposing Philo's hermeneutical structure onto Origen" (Torjesen, 1985: 22). Instead, Torjesen argues, this distinction refers to stages of movement within the hearer. The listener moves from merely hearing the text as a plain recitation of the Bible, to seeing the text in their own lives, thus to applying the text and hearing the text with significance of its interpretation. Perhaps, Torjesen has shown us the progressive march of a believer's journey toward seeing the beatific vision. She has correctly pointed us toward Origen's concern with the movement that leads from the text to the hearer. The fundamental insight here is that Origen is more interested in the movement (or growth) than he is in the movement from text to its meaning. However, a strict division between the two is not possible.

For Torjesen, Origen's vision of the journey of the soul operated as the organizing principle of Origen's Old Testament interpretation. The evidence supports the idea that Origen did have a concept of a journey of the soul, marked by three successive stages, in which the soul progressed from holiness and knowledge to perfection. However, Origen is not always as clear as Torjesen makes out Origen to be. On the other hand, Torjesen does not see Origen as a competent rhetorician and neither does she pay the broader *paideia* the attention it deserves. As such, her work is limited, though helpful in gauging the journey of the soul in becoming conformed to Christ.

Triads are pervasive in Origen's work. Origen expounds the three stages around the motif of the flesh: first, the flesh is not obedient to the soul and yields to its own desires; second, making some progress, the flesh becomes ready to be obedient to the will of the soul; third, in the mature state the flesh is put to death with its passions and desires (*HomJos.*, 22.2). Origen also categorizes three levels of knowledge corresponding to the journey of the Israelite: profane knowledge when the Israelites were in Egypt; knowledge of the law, which corresponds to manna; and the knowledge of the saints from the fruit of the Promised Land. The first is preparatory knowledge, the second is the preparation in the law for the next stage, and the third is the achievement of the sublime stage of maturity (*HomJos.*, 6.1).

These tripartite levels, stages, and growth patterns are Pauline construct as in 1 Corinthians 3:2 and Romans 14:2. Origen classifies the three groups of Christians according to the degrees of their spiritual progress. They are the beginners, the intermediates, and the perfect

or mature. Perhaps Origen might be charged with making Christian divisions between the elite and the common. Yet, he is quite aware of its Pauline and Scriptural warrant. He states that there are various degrees of spiritual progress among Christians “although all are contained within one faith and are washed in the one baptism. However, progress is not one and the same for all, ‘but each one in his own order’” (*HomGen.*, 2.3). When Origen speaks of the simple and the perfect, he is not thinking of static divisions. He rejects any self-complacency or Gnostic views of determinism. In reality, there is no strict demarcation between the classes of the Christians, but of difference in degrees, all in the gradual process of becoming perfect from the state of simple faith (Crouzel, 1989: 114-15). Helpfully, Gunnar af Hällström says,

“Origen does not want to divide Christianity into two [or three] classes. He does his utmost to teach the simplices in order to raise them to the level of advanced Christians . . . Origen could hardly have indicated more strongly that the rift between him and the simplices was serious, a rift that almost implies Christianity on different levels. Origen could, however, include simple faith in his theory of spiritual progress as a legitimate though lamentable stage in the process of spiritual growth” (Hällström, 1984: 94).

That Origen explicitly classifies three groups of Christians according to the degrees of their spiritual progress is ubiquitous, that is, the beginners, the intermediate, and the perfect or mature (*Princ.*, 4.2.4; *CCels.*, 4.16; *HomJos.*, 9.9; *HomLev.*, 1.4; *ComCant.*, 1.1.). These three types of believers have three different levels of hearing and seeing God. There are different types of spiritual foods corresponding to the stages of progress: milk for the beginners; vegetables for those making progress, but who yet are still weak; and solid foods only for the mature (*ComCant.*, Prol; *HomGen.*, 14.4; *HomLev.*, 1.4; *HomNum.*, 27.1; *HomJos.*, 9.9; 22.2; *CCels.*, 4.18). All of the food types are various levels of being in Christ and of harvesting the Word in helping the believer to see God.

Origen effectively uses food analogies to contrast different levels of listeners among the Christ-followers. He does not advocate forcing people to consume solid food when they are not ready. Instead, he recommends the use of “milk” and recommends a further diet: if one is “weak in the faith, let him take the oracles of God in the form of vegetables” (*ComRom.*, 2.14.14). Origen presupposes that Paul’s agenda was to “show either how salvation came to those who lived according to the law before the coming of Christ, or how on the basis of

Israel's unbelief, salvation would be bestowed upon the Gentiles through the coming of the savior" (*ComRom.*, 3.1.3).

Blind Jews could thus not see Jesus as their messiah and could not stand to hear that Jesus is their king. Only those people who can understand that "God destroys man in respect to what is human, in order that afterward he can make him into a god at that time when God shall be all in all" can see the re-creation of the world (*ComRom.*, 3.1.11). Humanity as gods-in-the making is the new man whom Origen describes as having the vital characteristics of "seeing, hearing, and walking" in other words, with the ability to "perceive in every food," because "he is perfect" and in some instance to eat vegetables because "he is weak" (*ComRom.*, 9.36.3). The ability to discern what to eat is a sign of seeing things as they are. Such person may eat all things, meaning they grasp all things (*ComRom.*, 4.6.4).

As the liminal people, Christ-followers are aware of the way of peace, that is, the way of Christ (*ComRom.*, 3.5.2). This is what Origen calls the "Vision of Peace" (*ComRom.*, 3.5.2). Depending upon their allegiances, the citizens can behold two visions of peace. Only one rewards them with the vision, beholding God.

The citizens of Christ are the noetic Jews who can see God with circumcised eyes. They have the scar of the spiritual circumcision. They are conditioned to receive the vision of God by their reconstructed identity. Origen characterizes these people as having the "fear of God" before their "eyes," this is not the "fleshly eyes—for nothing visible or bodily is intended here—but [it is about] the eyes of the mind, with which both the understanding and the instruction of the fear of God are discerned" (*ComRom.*, 3.5.3). Origen echoes Psalm 34:10 to link the fear of God and spiritual vision. It is precisely the fear of God that "renders a man perfect and he lacks nothing to such a degree" (*ComRom.*, 3.5.3). Although none of the Christ-followers are justified in their degree of Christ-likeness, nonetheless, God enables each of his citizens with "every disposition and every drive by which he can press forward and advance toward virtue" (*ComRom.*, 3.6.2).

Origen is concerned with providing the right diagnosis for the right person, in order to make them healthy believers with the capacity to see things as they really are. All creation, including the fallen realm, serves and works as a mirror, to project and reveal the invisible

and spiritual realities of God. Thus, “just as when our eyes rest upon something made by an artist . . . our mind burns to know how and in what way and to what purpose it was made, far more and beyond all comparison with such things does our spirit burn with a longing to know the way and wherefore of the works of God which we see. This longing, this love, we believe, has been without doubt planted in us by God” (*Princ.*, 4.25). Elsewhere, following the Apostle, Origen shows that “this visible world teaches us about that which is invisible, and that this earthly scene contains certain patterns of things heavenly. Thus, it is possible for us to mount up from the things below to the things above . . . And perhaps the correspondence between all things on earth and their celestial prototypes goes so far, that even the grain of mustard seed . . . which is the least of all seeds, has something in heaven whose image and likeness it bears” (*ComCant.*, 3.12). The task is to search for the spiritual meanings (treasures) inherent in the created order, by learning to see the spiritual truths that are present throughout Scripture, as the Apostle taught.

Robert L. Wilken judiciously conjectures, “Christians reasoned . . . [and] Theory was not an end in itself, and concepts and abstractions were always put at the service of a deeper immersion in the *res*, the thing itself, the mystery of Christ and of the practice of the Christian life” (Wilken: 2003, xvii-xviii). This could precisely describe Origen’s view of the spiritual journey as he attempted to describe for his multilayered audiences the beauty of the beatific vision. This spiritual journey is the journey that makes a person virtuous with all the accolades of the Greco-Roman time honored traditions and *paideia*. However, there was something new among the Christ-followers. As Wilken says,

Early Christian thinking. . . was as much an attempt to penetrate more deeply into the mystery of Christ, to know and understand what was believed and handed on in the churches, as it was to answer the charges of critics or explain the faith to outsiders. Christian thinkers were not in the business of establishing something; their task was to understand and explain something. The desire to understand is as much part of believing as is the drive to act on what one believes. . . For the critics of Christianity had an uncanny sense of what made the new religion unique, and in their response the earliest Christian thinkers saw with unparalleled acuity what gave Christianity its distinctive character (Wilken, 2003: 3).

Hence, erudite teachers like Origen, under sustained intellectual attacks for going against the accepted wisdom of the day, laid down what it is that made the followers of Christ a distinctively virtuous people as they waited for second coming of their redeemer king. In

the waiting mode, a mature believer conforms to their status as an heir of Christ's realm by hearing the voice of the right teachers like Paul (or Origen). The voice of the teachers enables radical living:

If we bear the likeness of his death, by which he died to sin, we ought also to hope for the likeness of his resurrection. But he [Paul] shows how this can come about when he says that our old man needs to be crucified together with Christ. Our old man should be understood to refer to our previous life which we led in sins and whose end and destruction, so to speak, we fashioned when we received within ourselves the faith of the cross of Christ, through which the body of sin is destroyed in such a way that our members which were enslaved to sin should no longer serve it but God (*ComRom.*, 5.9.2).

Origen also cautions that humanity does not die the same death as Christ did but it is possible to imitate Christ (*ComRom.*, 5.9.4). The distinction between the Creator and creature remains. This knowledge made Christians truly human, under the Cosmic King.

6.4.1 Incarnation Transforms the *Paideia*

Within the classical *paideia*, it was axiomatic that all knowledge of God came through the activity of the mind, purged of impressions received by the senses. Such reasoning was common since Plato's treatise on cosmology, the *Timaeus*. Celsus, a sharp critic of the Christ-followers, used the authority of Plato to correct Christian teachings. He stated, "If you shut your eyes to the world of senses and look up with the mind, if you turn away from the flesh and raise the eyes of the soul, only then will you see God" (*CCles.*, 7.24; 7.36). It is through the mind's eye that humanity sees God. Thus, to acquire knowledge of God humanity, one must *train the mind* to turn away from sensible things and rise to higher spiritual realities by hearing the words of the Apostle. Celsus wisely appeals to this philosophical axiom to argue against Christ-followers and charge them with blindness. They were introducing (and listening to) novel ideas and were easily seduced by sensible things. They were interested in flesh and blood, going against the time-honored traditions of the *paideia* which advocated transcending mundane, earthly things. The revolting notion that gods appeared to humans, or that they were revealed through a human being was everything the classical tradition stood against. If this were true, their beloved concept of seeing God through the mind's eye would become invalid (*CCles.*, 4.2). This is one of the subtle but major clashes—visualizing God.

Origen had the unique opportunity of responding to this elite culturally conservative intellectual philosopher. Origen understood very well Celsus' argument of reaching God through the ascent of the mind. The "how to" or mental steps of ascending towards divinity proved to be a worthy battleground for Origen in conceptualizing seeing God. Origen refutes the axiomatic ascent of mind alone to God by referring to the incarnation. God's own son descended to the human realm as a historical person. He says, "I admit that Plato's statement quoted by Celsus is noble and impressive. But consider whether the Holy Scripture shows more compassion for humankind when it presents the divine Word, who was in the beginning with God . . . as becoming flesh in order to reach everyone" (*CCels.*, 7.42). Origen was usurping one of the most beloved theological axioms of the classical world to portray the Christian *humanitas*. The Cosmic King became what the culture thought was unimaginable in order to show the way. Now those that can hear the voice of the king are enabled to become fully human. This radical vision of seeing God through the king's self-lowering, initiated the demise of viewing the mind as the sole player in grasping the knowledge of God.

To state the obvious, the incarnation made it possible for humanity to find, see, and hear God. However, this is not as simple as it perhaps sounds. Origen states, "We affirm that human nature is not sufficient in any way to seek God and find him with purity unless it is helped by the one who is the object of the search" (*CCels.*, 7.42). Origen's Paul bears witness that all *ethnē* "knew God," because, "God manifested it to them" (*CCels.*, 7.42). This is the shift in the cultural *paideia*. The knowledge of God now begins with God descending not the other way around, that is, the mind's ascent to God. This is the benefaction of the Cosmic King. Origen's Paulinism views seeing as more simply than beholding something. It is a type of discernment and an identity marker through the discernment process.

According to Balthasar, Origen recognized first and most profoundly that the descent of Christ is the paradigmatic event that orients finite humanity both ontologically and pedagogically to his infinite source. Origen perceives that God descends to man so that man might come to understand that God is radically other, and so that humanity's fulfillment resides in his decision to turn to God in an act of loving ascent. Balthasar writes, "Flight from the world is thus not the word which describes Origen's customary attitude. Rather,

this attitude would best be characterized by the formal directional movement which can be read from the contents of the first sphere: the way to God as ascension . . . In this everything is actually graded upwards, everything directed to the *ascensions in corde*” (Balthasar, 2001: 8). This Origenian understanding of ascent, namely that Origen’s logos-theology is grounded in *metanoia*, a turning away from fallen realm towards the infinite Other, the realm of Christ, guarantees that the infinite is in no way dependent on the finite. Thus, Origen “seeks in the biblical, earthly history for the image of the heavenly history, instead of interpreting the one body-soul, human history as an image of the divine history descending to us” (Balthasar, 2001: 20). Elsewhere, Balthasar teaches that ascension toward God is humanity’s chief longing where creatures may enjoy the “Creator’s way of being” (Balthasar, 1987: 353).

Balthasar gives careful attention to the Christ who not only restores a right relation of humanity to God in an ontological sense, but also in a pedagogical sense by the way he lived out his life. He says, “What the incarnation of God could alone mean for the redemption of man from this sin is now suddenly clear: It is the restoration of this right fundamental relation—lived out by a paradigmatic man—and in such a way that it leads to the most inconceivable exaltation of man to communion with God” (Balthasar, 1987: 357).

Balthasar’s Origenian theology argues that the nonpareil life of Christ is the perfect “lived out” pedagogical expression of the ontological difference. Humanity does not so much effect “the countermovement to Christ—even with grace. Rather, she is a Christian only in the exact imitation of Christ’s movement” (Balthasar, 1987: 357). Unlike the Foucauldian dictum of “care of the self” for Balthasar, the life and activity of Christ, lived out in obedience and love for the Father, is to be imitated. In a sense, it is a reckless abandonment of the self in the pursuit of imitating Christ. This act of following Christ overcomes the self-centered focus and turn to the self as the measure of reality. Thus, following Origen, Balthasar moves away from the innermost part of the self as the locus for the presence of God and the fulfillment of self, the very place where man has too often identified himself with God. The emphasis is placed on the God who has descended. Balthasar is arguing that the danger of misunderstanding the self occurs when one exclusively directs one’s attention either “inward” or “upward” in the hope of attaining union with God without balancing these, indeed grounding them, in that which is outside the self. In other words, if humanity

does not acknowledge nature and the flesh as the locus of salvation, we run the risk of either understanding the self in terms of identity (inward) or a kind of Platonism (upward). Inwardness, or ascent, without being determined by the revelation of God who appears in the natural realm and speaks to humanity from the flesh, is thus doomed to be moribund.

What Balthasar learns from Origen is profoundly important. Hearing Christ and Scriptures through the Apostle are the superior axioms for seeing God. The gospel as mediated through the Apostle is called the “proof of the Spirit and of power,” it has a “proof that is proper to itself and is more divine than the dialectical arguments of the Greeks” (*CCels.*, 1.2). Against the learned culture of his milieu, Origen was showing a new way. For his cultural *paideia*, God was not the end or conclusion of an argument, that is, the end of a search or the first cause. However, for Origen, the incarnated Christ was the beginning point of seeing God’s face. Eventually the faithful citizens will see the Cosmic King with all his splendors. The Apostle Paul became Origen’s proof. Therefore, when a believer learns to read and hear Scripture spiritually with Paul, it assists them in seeing things as they are. Origen explicitly likens the end goal of the vision to the spiritual city of Jerusalem. Believers whose “soul has a natural exaltation and sees spiritual things clearly and sharply is a citizen of this city” (*ComJo.*, 10.132). It is fitting that he links this visual metaphor to the spiritual city of Jerusalem, because it is in the historical, earthly city of Jerusalem, the city of the king, that the incarnation of the cosmic king took place.

To reiterate, for Origen, it is only through sight that faith becomes perfected. Such knowledge of putting sight and faith together organically makes Origen’s teaching on maturity harder and more radical than the liberalizing of his *habitus*. Faith in God must be supplemented by knowledge. He alludes strongly to the Apostles plea to Christ to “Increase our faith” as a maxim of having faith or being a loyal subject of Christ with knowledge because believers can hear Christ, and thereby, see him more clearly (*ComRom.*, 8.1.3). Doing good deeds is important but if someone does it through knowledge and understanding, it is superior. Christians become this person.

Because of God’s descent, Balthasar also maintains that for Origen not all knowledge and insight into the divine begins with dialectic, but rather with faith (Balthasar, 2001: 9). Thus, it is by faith that a space opens for true gnosis to be imparted. Balthasar says,

“The Origenian starting point is clear: the life of the Lord as *transitorium Domini* and thus, for the upward-climbing Christian, as the (absolutely, completely indispensable) “lowest” stage; and thus faith as the (again completely indispensable) starting point of insight, precisely in the sense in which Origen calls gnosis “perfect faith” and calls faith “initial insight;” and thus finally, on the other hand, the (certainly never clearly expressed) tendency to let the Gnostic grow out of the domain of faith solely from hearing. In these things lies the almost boundless Origenism of the Fathers” (Balthasar, 2001: 9-10).

Hence, the *descensus Christi* becomes the starting point of insight. Thus, to state that the transformation of sight happens through moral development means that just as a child develops from seed, but not all seeds go on to become children, so likewise not all of the seed of Abraham go on to become children of Abraham in the moral sense of the word. Not all children of Abraham’s biological descent live up to the moral example, which he exemplifies. Origen’s Paul says, “If you mortify your members which are earthly, if you, casting off all the passion of lust, keep your body dead and liable to none of these vices, you as well can produce the best fruits from it . . . Your seed and your works can ascend to heaven and become works of light and be compared to the splendor and brilliance of the stars, so that when the day of resurrection arrives, you will stand out in brightness as one star differs from another star” (*ComRom.*, 4.6.9). Such a person is a noetic Jew, a true heir of Abraham (*ComRom.*, 4.7.5).

In such a context, growth-as-sacrifice means identifying with dying, rising with Christ, and walking in newness of life. This is the transformative process to become righteous and capable of hearing and seeing God. It means living in the newness of life in the norm worthy of the resurrected life. “The Apostle is teaching,” says Origen thus we must listen so “that we [can have] . . . hope for . . . the renewal of our body.” It “is itself restored incorruptibly from corruption . . . so that when it is made spiritual, it can also enjoy the good things that are unseen. Since we do not now see these good things in the present age, we await them through hope and we long for them through patience” (*ComRom.*, 7.5.11). This path renews, cleanses, and prepares the person for the vision that presents those who see with a face-to-face encounter with the Creator.

6.4.2 Beholding God

Thus far, Origen's Paul has demonstrated that the Cosmic King descended into the fallen realm for humanity so that humanity may ascend to behold God. The ascent ends in seeing God face-to-face. This ascent begins with lower things and only subsequently rises to a consideration of higher realities. A believer begins by hearing Christ in his incarnated embodiment, but later they are able to hear and see him in his full glory. This ascent is not to be confused with intellectual ascent that begins with a consideration of the spiritual significance of the lower aspects of the created order, because if that is the only starting point, a believer will not ascend. Humanity is born into the fallen realm and the spiritual things do not come naturally. Humanity needs a light, a voice crying in the wilderness, and a teacher to demonstrate the way. Exodus is an illustration of the journey, an ascending journey to behold God. What the Jews understood to be "crossing of a sea," according to Paul was "the Holy Spirit" (*HomExo.*, 5.1). The Holy Spirit, according to Origen, is like a "teacher who accepts a student who is both a raw recruit and completely ignorant of the alphabet. In order to be able to teach and instruct him, he is forced to stoop down to the elementary attempts of the student and he himself first pronounces the name of each letter so the student learns by repeating" (*ComRom.*, 7.6.5). The seer is guided, nurtured, and directed by the seen in the journey.

To reiterate, in-depth hearing and seeing comes through a transformative process, a journey. However, Origen is not lucid in identifying the various stages of the journey. When he does describe the journey, there is an echo of the spiritual ascent of the soul toward perfection in a way which is similar to the Platonic language about the contemplative life. Conversely, the divine love as God's benefaction is the piston that drives the transformative journey in Origen's Paulinism, not just humanity's pursuit of God.

Origen is clear on what it means to be beholding the Lord's glory (2 Corinthians 3:18). He states,

"Whoever contemplates that glory of the only-begotten with an unveiled face, i.e., with a complete understanding of faith, will steer the acuteness of their mind, by the same image in which he goes from the law to the Gospels and to the coming of the Savior in the flesh, when the gaze of the heart is enlightened by faith (Eph 1:18) to the [Lord's] second coming in glory. Such a person will be transformed from the

present glory to that of the future glory which is hoped for . . .[N]o one is able to deserve to become receptive to that future glory unless he should already undertake a certain use and exercise of it here, according to what the Apostle says, by looking intently in a mirror and in a riddle” (*ComRom.*, 4.8.9).

By means of sharing the future glory in the present realm, the loyal believers are prepared for the ultimate vision. Such lives are modeled by perpetual contemplation and by fighting the good fight. They learn to control the desire of the flesh while accentuating the muscles of the spirit. Unlike the Hellenistic *paideia*, God is the key player in making the road, lighting it, and performing it himself. By hearing such glorious deeds of the Lord, his followers may lower themselves in service to humanity.

Origen’s Paulinism used the fear of the cosmological-political situation under the tyrant to exhort believers to refuse to let sin reign in their bodies. Origen says, “If anyone dies to sin, it is certain that he dies by means of repentance” (*ComRom.*, 5.7.5). The dying of the tyrant happens because the loyal followers of Christ are struggling, fighting, and winning the war against sin. Grace abounds because of sin. This is a state of being in which sin is dying. The overwhelming power of grace (God’s benevolence) kills sin, and thus grace abounds. This act of God makes his people free to pursue virtues that nurture them for aural clarity and to see things as they are. Without the tyranny of sin, the soul pursues deeper living with the king in the shadow of his justice, mercy, and by loving the things of God. As rulers-in-life, the Christ-followers could hardly afford to be governed by Death. The journey leads to that “one palace for all the virtues, whose gates the righteous man demands to be thrown open for himself in the name of righteousness” (*ComRom.*, 6.3.9). In this palace, the loyal believers see what was but a shadow before.

6.4.3 *Paideia* of Imitation to hear the Apostle

Thus far, we have seen that the concept of imitation is the ancient ethical and pedagogical theory, which held that learning takes place by imitating exemplary figures (Castelli, 1991: 81-85; Russell, 1981: 99-113). Origen uses the literary style and structure of the *encomium*. With roots extending to the fifth-century classical Athens, this form of rhetoric has as its central purpose the praise of persons in public oratory that seeks to impress upon its hearers the salutary nature of the shared values the subject of the speech exemplified, and to rouse them to fervent response in kind. Such species of rhetoric is commonplace and common

knowledge which is discussed and prescribed in all the Greco-Roman rhetorical handbooks from the fourth century BCE into the Roman imperial period (Aristotle, Anaximenes, Cicero, Quintilian, Theon). *Encomium* were endlessly taught and reenacted in the progymnasmata of the Greco-Roman *paideia* under the watchful eyes of the teacher. Such uniform *paideia* which extend across the literary studies indicate a well-known and stable form of cultural and social practice which was a backbone of Hellenistic civic and social life. This tradition, a mainstay of the Hellenistic *paideia*, engenders in Origen the powerful sense that the Apostle is a supreme example of lived virtue, which is to be imitated by hearing his words. At this juncture, we see the complex blending of life and text, of identity imaging and word, imitation and exegesis, and a self-conscious dynamic common to the cultural *paideia* in the third-century milieu. In order to imitate Paul, the audience, was an auditor, had to work their senses and formulate an identity through their aural activities. In interpreting Paul, Origen formulates a powerful prototypical identity and then represents that image in such vivid terms that all will see it and its brilliance which rivals the other forms of identity rhetoric. Russell talks about this imaging of image that is created by the power of the words. He says, “The concept of *phantasia*” is “the mental power that can visualize what the eye has never seen.” He adds, “At this point, writers like ‘Longinus’ and Quintilian invoke also the rhetorical precept (known to Aristotle, and indeed commonplace) that a certain degree of emotional excitement in the speaker is necessary for the adequate projection of emotion of others” (Russell, 1981: 110-11).

Clearly, the idea of imitation is not unique, but imitating Christ is clearly a Pauline echo and distinctive as in 1 Corinthians 4:16; 11:1; Ephesians 5:1; Philippians 3:17; 1 Thessalonians 1:6; 2:14; 2 Thessalonians 3:7, 9. Imitating Christ as opposed to other prototypes demonstrated that the cell members were listening to Paul. This concept played a key role for Origen’s Paulinism when expressing the viability of various ethical positions and strengths amongst the Christ-followers. The imitation of Christ is not a mindless, literal mimicry or uncreative emulation of historical incidents. Rather, it involves listening to the Apostle and then transforming oneself and becoming united with Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit. Origen was preparing his cells of believers to meet their king; he kept this eschatological perspective in mind (Crouzel, 1978: 25-33). Origen’s Paul was fervent in his belief that eschatological messianic expectation was fulfilled in the person of Christ,

who thus became the center of spirituality. Thus, the rule of Christ and the loyalty of his citizens determined growth, transformation, and the ability to see things as they are.

However, just like other areas of Origen's discussion, his teaching of how God ruled among the faithful was usually qualified and highly nuanced. This is similar to the "Hellenistic thinkers" who "see the goal of philosophy as a transformation of the inner world of belief and desire through the use of rational arguments. And within the inner world they focus above all on the emotions—on anger, fear, grief, love, pity, gratitude, and on their many relatives and subspecies" (Nussbaum, 1996: 78). Origen's rhetorical protrepsis is calling for the continual transformation of the inner man to form *humanitas* under Christ and to see things clearly by listening to him and his Apostle. Averil Cameron has contributed to this concept effectively. Although, her work does not include Origen's Paulinism, nevertheless, her study contributes to the Alexandrian identity rhetoric. She says, "The self-conscious Christian creates his own self, and does so through the medium of texts, which in turn assume the function of models . . . Written *Lives* were mimetic; real ascetic discipline in turn imitated the written *Lives*. Like visual arts, early Christian discourse presented its audience with a series of images. The proclamation of the message was achieved by a technique of presenting the audience with a series of images through which it was thought possible to perceive an objective and higher truth." (Cameron, 1991: 57). Origen seems to have mastered this vision methodology as his *habitus* demanded and subversively usurped the accepted vision and *humanitas*.

For Origen's Paul, the deciding factor between who we were, who we are, and who we will become is not necessarily about forgetfulness and recollection. Instead, it is also about what we desire and about the moral choices that we make. Desire, itself, is morally indifferent. The Greeks distinguish between willing, which is honorable, rational longing, and desire which is excessive, irrational longing, as discussed in chapter 2 and 4. Origen's focus, then, is on the importance of what we desire—to do the will of God or of the Tyrant—and this focus is contrasted with the subversive notion of becoming the *humanitas*. According to Balthasar, given Origen's "tendency to bring together the human spirit and the God-Spirit into the infinite, the material pole of creation inevitably suffered devaluation. Oversimplified, it is only the material pole that is subject to death on the cross" (Balthasar, 2001: 19-20). Balthasar goes on to critique Origen's view of the body by stating, "Instead

of understanding the one body-spiritual, ensouled reality of the world as a unified image that points beyond itself to the infinity of God, the body, the letter, becomes of itself the image that really points to the truth of the sphere of the spirit” (Balthasar, 2001: 19-20). Perhaps, this is a misunderstanding of Origen’s use of the Creator and creature’s relationship. The soul’s preoccupation with the body is the problem, not the body itself. Origen’s belief and use of the incarnation, as a construct to see God, prevents any absolute rejection of the body’s good, for the earthly body of Christ, while not true in the same sense as the unveiled Word in heaven, nevertheless reveals the Word.

Even so, Balthasar also says that any assertion of a “doctrine that the soul at the height of its ascent, gets rid of the body [is] an opinion that strikes against all principles of Origen’s ontology and against his, at core, thoroughly orthodox doctrine of the resurrection” . . . Balthasar continues to say, “from body to spirit, from material image to ideational truth is a way not to the destruction of body and image, but to its transformation, eclipse and ‘sublation’ only in the Hegelian sense” (Balthasar, 2001: 16). This does not make Origen’s spirituality radically different from other versions of becoming truly human, but it does distinguish it as peculiarly Pauline. Origen and Paul’s version of *humanitas* is Christocentric.

Balthasar continues, “In its inner form, then, the thought of Origen is a contribution to the consummation of its one single object, and this is the voice, the speech, the Word of God and nothing else” (Balthasar, 2001: 1). Balthasar rightly sees the mysticism of the Logos as the basis of Origen’s thought. Insofar as every creature is an expression of the Logos of God, it exists in a symbolic relation with the Creator. In the Logos, this relation is the product of the Incarnation. In Christ, the divine person became human. The symbol of this mystical body of Christ is the visible body, the cells of believers. The Logos is present within the Christ-followers as the sacred Scripture. Hence, the vital role of harvesting treasures from the text to see the riches of the king’s palace in becoming a mature citizen of Christ.

6.5 Summary

For Origen, the Apostle Paul (and the Bible) offered a vision of what life should be, not merely in abstract terms, but in practical insights, which would offer the believer hope, and would sustain Christian identity through the adversities and obstacles of daily Hellenistic cultural *paideia*. He saw in the biblical stories an account of the journey of the soul back to God. To reach glorification, the soul must progress on a journey. Using Paul and the available resources from Hellenism, he paints a picture of the journey of the soul. The Christian identity alone makes the soul endure the journey and finally see God.

Origen's optimistic humanism believes that the highest function of the intellect is knowing God and specifically "seeing" God not only with our minds but also through hearing the Apostle. The final goal of all-human knowing is seeing God. Hence, in Origen's protreptic rhetoric (of identity), he turns the platonic impossibility of knowing the Creator on its head. Origen begins with the basic principles that knowing God is both possible and actual: possible, that is, when believers actually see God (after resurrection) and believe truly in God (in this realm) with their hearts, minds, and souls. Such act(s) truly makes Christianness better than *Romanitas* because they are becoming the creatures they are meant to become, truly human.

7.0 CONCLUSION

7.1 Origen in Context

That Origen's place in the history of Christianity has for many years been consigned to the shadows cannot be blamed entirely on the fact that Origenism was anathematized. As a theologian, Origen's thoughts blur existing genre distinctions and definitions. Furthermore, the goal of his theological project is not to reveal an all-seeing perspective on his contemporary reality, that is, to show the third-century society its way to the future, but rather it is to ask about its being-in-itself. The crux of Origen's identity rhetoric, and perhaps throughout his entire project, is his sensitivity to the diversities of humanity based on their hearing status or growth levels, that is, their way of being. This is more than an esoteric or theoretical understanding. Origen's rhetorical aim is to communicate with everyone at their own level. In the end, Origen's Paulinism helps his listeners glimpse the promised *facie ad faciem*.

As outlined in Chapters 1 and 2, there are some glaring inter-related lacunae in Origenian studies. In general, there is a lacuna in dealing with Origen's Paulinism. Though it is tacitly implied, it has not received the attention it deserves. Furthermore, Origen's relationship to Hellenism is complex and tangled and the way in which his cultural *paideia* influenced his Paulinism remains unexamined. This project tackles this thorny issue in cementing his protreptic identity formation centered on his Paulinism. Origen was at home in his cultural *habitus* and *paideia*. He confronted his rivals fueled by the vision of creating the new world. This was an ideological warfare. Along with his cultural *habitus*, Origen was struggling in various ways to exert a claim over the classical *paideia* which had long been established as the main staple of education for the elite. The project of forming and re-forming a distinctive identity for Christians in the empire demanded great imaginative effort, ingenuity, persuasive eloquence, and power. In this contextual matrix, Origen produced his brilliant *protrepsis*, which was a fusion of imagination and Christian revelation, wrought together within Hellenism to assert the primacy of the Christians over the *Romanitas* or any other rival groups. With his eyes set on seeking the hidden or inner meanings of the Scripture, he was forming communities or cell groups and providing them

with the concepts of identity formation and maturity that they needed in order to re-orient their lives with the realization of who they were becoming “in Christ.”

In Chapter 3, I explored the situation that existed among the competent players within the economy of late antiquity’s *paideia*, in which there are *distinctive* voices, visions, and virtues, but they are not unique because they share the same cultural *habitus*. Origen is one such player. He was versed in the composition of rhetorical discourse, moral philosophies, coded languages, and ideological fields of discourse. Over all, this project has shown the symbolic power of language and its effectiveness in creating identity. Origen’s distinctiveness is his Paulinism. This forms a sharp-edged counterpoint as well as a new ideology in creating social relationships. Origen posits the Apostle Paul as the main teacher who can lead the nations to the true potential of *humanitas*. For the benefit of his audience, he models himself in the fashion of his patron Apostle. He defines his mission to the nations in terms of the culture-transforming and ideological power discourse of his day. Thus, logically, the virtuous, self-controlled, and mature people are those imitating, visualizing, and following the wise sayings of Paul. Just as the novelists used transformation motifs to describe the experiences of the novel’s character, Origen transforms the same technique by eclipsing Hellenistic versions of identity with his Paulinism. From Paul, he gets his vision of the Christian *humanitas* to prepare for the beatific vision, organized around his reading and interpretation of Hellenism and the Scriptures, patronage and citizenship, and involving both intellect and piety.

7.2 Origen’s Paulinism and Identity Formation

In large measures, the dissertation present study deals with the construction of textual identities through Origen’s Paulinism. In particular, it serves as an example of constructing Christian identity in the third century CE. Origen’s exegesis of Paul, and in particular Paul’s *ComRom*, undergirded this identity formation dissertation. In particular, the *ComRom* proved to be an extremely helpful example of a deliberate fashioning of Christian identity through Origen’s joint use of Hellenistic *paideia* and the Bible. Nevertheless, Origen’s use of Paul is not a single systematic production, but rather it is a series of

somewhat fragmented interventions and ideological and tactical maneuvers. Moreover, *ComRom* is a subversive attempt to discredit the Greco-Roman religious mindset in terms of its discursive history, literature, power and governments, moralities, and its ethics of the self. Origen re-directs God-language to focus on history and on the immanent struggle of identity and subjectivity. This struggle suited his rhetorical *protrepsis*, not only in witnessing the deeds of Christ as the Cosmic King, but also in forming an identity for Christ-followers.

In Chapter 4, I demonstrated that Origen deployed typical protreptic cultural stereotypes using polarities of strong-weak, wise-fool, free-slave, Greek-Jew, and mature-immature, both explicitly and implicitly to move [or influence] his rhetorical audience toward maturity by patient endurance of suffering and self-mastery. His challenge is to exemplify better living in comparison with the *Romanitas*. Origen's protreptic rhetoric is not simply intended to expound ideas for their own sake, but is rather aimed to urge people to see the world as he sees it, that is, according to the Pauline teachings. His Paulinism is a means to secure his audience's happiness, the health of their souls, their salvation from ignorance, and their becoming the creatures they are meant to become. In this way, Origen offers the benefaction of Christ to people in the form of teachings that will liberate them. His *protrepsis* is not only about recruiting people. It is also an exhortation for people to live like their patron(s) and is about changing the behaviors of his audience. His *protrepsis* not only convinces but also moves to action.

Origen's Paulinism demonstrates that Hellenism cannot understand itself without first understanding its implicit connection to and development within the constructs of religious belief and practice. In a sense, Hellenism and identity rhetoric are conjoined. They came about through nationalism, moralism, and religious traditions, and the conditions of their knowledge are therefore embedded in religious dogma and ideals. Origen sees nothing wrong with the religious influence upon the thought and practice of Hellenism, but he believes that they are wrong in their religious assumptions. In this construct, morality was a superb instrument of power woven through the fabric of the Empire. Such powers were used to marginalize groups such as the Christians, while rationalizing the state-sanctioned

religious practices. In response, Origen's Paul claims that this is not the deed of the Cosmic King, bringing justice, but is instead another power that cannot bring peace to the nations. Following the Cosmic King, the ultimate patron, as discussed in Chapter 5, Origen's Paulinism set out to free the followers of Christ from the chains of the tyrants: Sin and Death. Origen's Risen Lord was eclipsing the Roman Caesar and eradicating the realm of death. Instead of isolating the Christ-followers into an ideological hideout, Origen places his ideological discourse among other players and faces some of the perennial issues of the milieu. As such, Origen's Paulinism presents a vision of desire, and its right ordering in relation to God, that does not require a disjunctive approach to virtue and vice. Instead, Origen's Paulinism entertains the conception that the godly ordering of desire is what conjoins the aims of Christian identity and maturity. Origen's vision of desire as thwarted, chastened, transformed, renewed, and finally intensified in God, bringing forth spiritual maturity in a number of different contexts, represents a way beyond and through the false Hellenistic alternatives of repression and libertarianism, between *agape* and *eros*, and, curiously, has more points of contact with the Greco-Roman morality than difference. Abandonment to the right kind of desire, instead of subduing desire as a whole, provides an antidote to following a false king, Sin, or the Greco-Roman Caesar, and enables followers to be conformed as citizens of the Christ's kingdom.

7.3 The Rhetoric of Identity

The questions proposed in Chapter 1 can now be briefly summarized and answered. First, how did Late Antiquity's societies articulate their identities? It appears that identity was not only reflected by, but rather was constructed through language. As such, the extant literatures of the period comprised the fundamental vehicles of self-definition. The construction of identity is a shaping of the imagination rather than a construction of a rigid doctrine or ethic. An identity is to consist of recognized characteristics which a group has agreed to possess, rather than of its members' essential characteristics. Intricate tales of origins, belonging, kinship, and interconnectedness among societies, common heritage, and intercultural associations inevitably evolve out of the identity forming process. Negotiating this complex relationship between "sameness" and "difference" has been an important concern of textual identity constructions.

As this dissertation has demonstrated, the Roman Empire forms a large context for this study. Therefore, how the Romans defined themselves became a good place to start when getting to grips with Late Antiquity's identity formation issues. In this regard, I have argued that an important facet of Roman self-image under both the Republic and the Principate was that of the beneficent imperialist. The Augustan revolution gave Rome an Emperor who symbolized the highest ideals of the Roman *ethos*, and the rise of *Romanitas*, or Roman ethnic identity, as the inheritance and supersession of Hellenism, succeeded in uniting its people into a moral and political community in a way that the independent Greek city-states never had. However, the Roman Empire did not require individuals, or even communities, to adopt for themselves a distinctly Roman identity to the exclusion of all others. Yet, everyone was required to worship the *genius* of the Emperor. The Roman identity transformed the Greek-barbarian dichotomy into an imperial "ideology" which claimed Roman supremacy over all other cultures and people. This identity hegemony was the matrix from which Origen's identity constructions take shape.

Second, how did Origen use the Apostle Paul in his hermeneutical and theological project? In this dissertation, I have attempted to classify and elucidate a single theme that unifies Origen's Paulinism and perhaps his entire *oeuvre*, namely, the rhetoric of identity. I have argued that Origen's agenda—insofar as one is allowed to speak of an agenda—was consistent though not static: engaging in protreptic rhetoric of identity formation. Origen understood identity formation as exemplified by the Apostle Paul, and the Apostle appears as a paradigmatic figure in his construction of *logos*-based theology. Origen's Paulinism is a distinctive construct and is committed to the descending *logos* as the interpretive key of reality, focusing humanity's attention on the presence of God in the created realm. Origen's Paulinism provides an overarching narrative to his theological enterprise. It also reveals a complex relationship between classical *paideia* and loyalty to the God whom the Apostle Paul is advocating. Origen, like other Hellenistic writers in producing their literary discourses, had a deliberate strategy of self-fashioning. Therefore, the focus is not necessarily doctrines, but is rather the social relationships and the interplay between ideologies, community definitions, and community formations.

By choosing the Apostle as his portrait of the “new man,” Origen is simultaneously affirming, denouncing, and transforming the Greco-Roman stereotypes of *humanitas*. He exhibits his portrait of Paul to his audience as an argument about why they should embrace this identity as elite members of the kingdom of Christ. He maintains that ethnic categories and pride in group identities have now been transformed in Christ. As we have seen, this is not a wholesale rejection of Hellenism. His Paulinism requires a complete re-evaluation of one’s previous way of life, not necessarily its eradication.

Third, what was Origen’s identity rhetoric competing against? Contextually speaking, Origen’s Paulinism as identity-forming exegesis was positioning his distinctive Christianness as the optimal path to a better humanity. This effort enables a presentation of his persuasive arguments vis-à-vis identity formation and paraenesis about who or what a Christian is and about how they should live. Although Origen is defining and forging a Christian identity in his third-century cultural milieu, he is not innovating in the sense of inventing a new rhetorical discourse or a new Christian identity. He is extracting Christianness both from his dominant culture and from the continuity of the Christian discourse in displaying what a Christian is. In other words, Bourdieu’s notion of *habitus*, as documented in Chapter 2, provided a helpful portal to situate Origen as one of the culturally informed textual architects. By tracing Origen’s Paulinism which is rooted firmly in the culture of late antiquity, we have seen that Origen visualized Christ as King transforming the world. Concretely, he uses the Apostle Paul and his writings as examples to showcase a Christian identity. Though this study has necessarily been a subjective one, it has also been a descriptive and contextual consideration of what happened at a particular time and place under the hegemonic Greco-Roman identity.

Again, the contentious issue centered on who could make the empire a better place and what enabled one to do it. For Origen, the answers lie in the Scriptures, whereas from the imperial vantage point and the Hellenistic elitist, it was traditionalism, pietism, and the cultural *paideia* that created their everlasting empire. As documented in Chapter 3, the contentions cover programmatic categories that offer possible placement of Origen’s *habitus* and suggest that his rhetoric of identity both creates and undermines accepted models and visions of *humanitas*. Broadly speaking, these fall into three broad fields of late

antiquity's intellectual realm: rhetorical discourse, moral philosophy, and the ideology behind transformation stories.

Rhetorical *paideia* explains Origen's judicious use of Paul in his explication of a Christian *humanitas*, as Chapter 3 also demonstrates. Furthermore, the transformation stories as outlined in Chapter 3—in particular, the *Shepherd of Hermas*, *Paul and Thecla*, and *Joseph and Aseneth*—serve more than an anecdotal purpose. They establish a crucial contextual consideration in showcasing another side of the vibrant Hellenistic culture war over identity constructions. The common themes in the transformation narratives are the change of desire, restraint, and growth in virtue by forsaking vices through the adoption of spiritual habits. As the stories demonstrated, the characters are both active and passive participants in their transformation. The protagonists in the tales undergo changes marked by ritualized actions and language resulting in a new or intensified form of piety with consequent changes in identity, social affiliations, and loyalties. The construction of identity through the motif of transformation is intricately interrelated with divine identity. Origen harnessed this motif to demonstrate his own distinctive Christianness against other competing identities. His Paulinism as a subversive tool constitutes a sustained exegesis of the human relationship with the Cosmic King where identity and status are continually contested and problematized.

7.4 Creator and Creatures

As documented in Chapter 4, Origen's discourse about the "new creation" provided self- and social-consciousness for the Christians. This new creation refers to those people who are *in* Christ. These people have heard the call of Paul to follow a new life in Christ, leaving their realm of slavery to sin and death. Discourse dealing with the formation and contesting of identity is fundamentally about the power to represent. Origen is focused on communicative and transformative power that is also the source of the calling of the community into a relationship with God and one another. In this radical usurpation, Origen is following Paul in breaking down age-old barriers for the followers of Christ.

While not denying the creature's resemblance to God, Origen wants to underscore the creature's creatureliness. Because humanity is created, it is necessarily at a remove from God. The creature becomes more fully like the Creator, not by transcending her creatureliness, but rather by embracing it—by becoming the *humanitas*—that is, by becoming humble and receptive to God's working in her and through her. There are two primary forces at work in the shaping of a believer's soul to become like Christ by unleashing the "inner man" over the "outer man." First, the person who seeks to follow the Cosmic King is subject to an act of transferring citizenship, and Christ himself empowers and sustains this act. Second, although Origen does not provide a step-by-step explanation of how this process unfolds, his thought contains several clues that can be pieced together into a coherent framework composed of three elements: (1) an act of contemplation, (2) a holy way of life (self-lowering, living in peace with God and neighbor); (3) the acceptance of a God-given mandate of living virtuously.

Unsurprisingly, the Son's loyal obedience to the Father becomes an important model for the believer's own life in Christ. Incarnation is the Creator God's bestowal of love. It is a benefaction that rivals any patron's generosity. This act of the Triune God does not suffocate and restrict human freedom, but in fact preserves humanity's pursuit of virtues, so that human beings become co-actors rather than marionettes. The cells of believers within the third-century milieu are encouraged to act like Christ, to live like kings. This enables a believer to become a co-regent along with Christ. Hence, Origen's prescription for becoming what one is intended to be is straightforward: become *like* Jesus. Christ remains the single model of perfected human existence. By imitating Christ through virtuous acts, humanity transforms itself from fallen nature into perfected human nature.

7.5 The Cosmic Christ

The work and motif of the Cosmic King plays an important role in Origen's Paulinism. When the Cosmic King finally exterminates his enemies, then the reality of perfection will be a fulfilled goal for all of creation. The final victory of Christ reveals the blessedness of our perfection and announces the summation of the work begun in the incarnation. In describing the transfer of people between the two realms, Origen resorts to military

metaphors. Humanity is depicted as “captives conquered by sin,” held by “the enemy of the human race” (*ComRom.*, 3.7.14). Christ is presented as the liberator from this bondage. Christ became “wisdom from God and righteousness and holiness” and “redemption” (*ComRom.*, 3.7.14). Christ paid a price to set the captives free. According to Origen, the currency in question involves wisdom, righteousness, and holiness. All these salient features of Christ thus become a mark in becoming a loyal follower of Christ.

Origen’s contemplation of the price that Christ paid becomes conceptual support for his *protrepsis*. Christ-followers must practice self-lowering, which is not an optional undertaking, but is a sign of maturity. Origen says, those in Christ are “those who have now been reformed and corrected and stand firm in his perfection” (*ComRom.*, 3.10.3).

Origen’s Paulinism was offering both a cultural critique of the Roman identity and also the way of the Jewish Messiah as an alternative to the Greco-Roman cultural dominance and imperial ideology. Origen has sought to erect an identity under Christ, which can withstand the corrosions of Greco-Roman *paideia*, morality, and imperial outbursts against the Church. Origen’s assumption is based on an ordered *cosmos*. There is no clear boundary between self and society. The individual self is embedded in the bigger narrative of the church and participates in the divine *cosmos* under the Cosmic King Christ.

As discussed in Chapter 5, Origen’s Paulinism as a protreptic rhetoric aims to usurp the role of ultimate *patronus* occupied by the Emperor. The cell groups or the church becomes a Christian’s first family and their primary allegiance is rightly placed in Christ Jesus. It is precisely by affirming, denouncing, and transforming Greco-Roman stereotypes of *humanitas* that Origen teaches Christians why they should embrace their identity as elite members of the kingdom of Christ. From the beginning, Christianity’s effectiveness throughout the Roman Empire lay in its capacity to create cell groups and associations and to generate its own intellectual and imaginative world. This challenges the Roman moral superiority and the accepted *paideia* of Hellenism. At the same time, this provides an antidote to following the false king (the Caesars of the world: Sin, Death, or provincial governors) and to conforming as citizens to a lower realm (the realm of darkness or *Romanitas*). Jesus’ followers are not necessarily revolutionaries, but are rather emissaries

of a new order because Jesus transforms kingship and authority. The world is turned upside-down by this king. Origen's reading of Romans places the new communities in sharp counter-cultural movement against the prevailing norms of the Greco-Roman Empire and the Jewish world. Rulers and authorities can persecute the new people, but these people have their identity forged in the Lord and are already rescued from the evil realm.

Finally, Origen's vision of the *humanitas* is not simply a defense of a set of beliefs or ideas. It is primarily a defense of the community that is real, oppressed, and loyal to a kingdom other than the Roman Empire. His *protrepticus* called everyone that trusted in the message of Christ to have a meaningful relationship with the kingdom of Christ. Origen knew that the yearnings of humanity could be only be satisfied in God, and that the hope for peace would only be realized in fellowship with God. As loyal citizens of the heavenly city of Christ's kingdom, they participate in the life of the earthly city to transform, renew, or transfigure the old creation for the dawning of the new creation, which God had already begun through the Cosmic King.

7.6 Maturity-as-Sacrifice and Growth-as-Transformation

In brief, Origen's Paulinism argues that the new creation, involving the transformation of the individual and the cosmic presence of the reign of Christ, has already begun. The best place to re-imagine and to visualize this new reality is the cell groups, mostly distinctly visible in their sufferings. In a strict sense, for Origen, there is no meaningful distinction between his theology of maturity, his rhetoric of identity and his ethics, because his Paulinism is fundamentally a protreptic account of God's work of usurping the popular visions of *humanitas*, and of transforming Christ-followers into the image of Christ. Community formation is accomplished through the transformation of the souls. The central motif here is growth both as a sacrifice and as transformation. Chapter 6 brings this discussion to a close by emphasizing the pervasive usage of the Hellenistic notion of virtue and of seeing things as they really are. This presupposes a concept of sight that is either transforming or transformed. Stated differently, transformative restoration is a journey.

A rough estimate of Origen's theology of growth can now be summarized. Chapter 3 documented the discourse about transformation. There I demonstrated that Origen the moralist formulates an identity from his moral psychology of sorts. The soul first receives knowledge of the world through natural and moral philosophy, and is introduced to the Logos in His humanity. Second, the soul receives knowledge of itself, in terms of its nature, cause, and purpose. Then the soul progresses to knowledge of the eternal and invisible, along with the knowledge of the eschatological future. Origen's Paulinism argues for the eschatological and historical orientation of Christian thought. Read this way, perfection does not necessarily belong to the original state or reality.

Are there in Origen's Paulinism individually varied levels of holiness, perfection, or morality? As Chapter 6 shows, the degree of sanctity and becoming like Christ is based in part on the freely willed response of the individual to the Divine benefactions and the endurance to stay in the path of progressive growth. These relate directly to the degree of transformation and the ability of the loyal followers to see things as they really are. Origen's Paulinism is also highly suggestive and uncertain about advising for his audience whether there is a perpetual progress in moral growth or perfection. Perhaps there is an implication of an end of the journey which has not yet been reached.

Nonetheless, Origen's version of the *humanitas* depicts a genuinely created being who is ever dependent on the Creator and not, as in Platonism or the *paideia*, inherently divine. It logically follows that even in Christ's kingdom the creature must continue to possess certain creaturely attributes. In fact, there is the potential for infinite growth through the face-to-face encounter with the Creator. In his conception of God as the source of all life, virtue, and morality, Origen is clearly Christocentric while rooted firmly within the *paideia* or his *habitus*. The entire concept of spiritual growth, though it clearly exists and is even an important principle in Origen's Paulinism, is unevenly developed. As a rhetoric of identity formation and as an ideological battle for the contentious title of *humanitas*, Origen's Paulinism is a discourse on the spiritual life. The ontology behind the spiritual life is certainly dynamic, and in many ways he is trying to move beyond the categories of a Greco-Roman *paideia* as well as its solutions.

Chapter 6 dealt with the issue of *seeing* God. Origen suggests that the highest function of the intellect is knowing God and specifically “seeing” God not only with our minds but also through hearing the Apostle. The final goal of all human knowing is seeing God. Hence, in Origen’s protreptic rhetoric, he turns the platonic impossibility of knowing the Creator on its head. Origen begins with the basic principles that knowing God is both possible and actual: possible, that is, when believers actually see God and believe truly in God (in this realm) with their hearts, minds, and souls. Such acts truly make Christianness better than *Romanitas*.

The third century was a time when the so-called civilized world was experiencing the theater of humanity’s darkest hour, but in Origen, we witness a very human miracle. Origen’s protreptic Paulinism constructed a community that was able to spread and grow into many sections of the Roman Empire. Origen was a catalyst for this grass-roots movement. His homilies, commentaries, and in particular his Paulinism depicted what Christians lives are supposed to be when they are in and under Christ. Origen gave the Christians something bigger than the Hellenistic moralists gave. He articulated a mission that was bigger than all believers put together: the *humanitas* as Christ’s loyal citizens. For Origen, the Scriptures and Paul, rather than the classical *paideia*, provided the argot—and theological, philosophical, and rhetorical underpinnings—of Christian identity, definition, and interpretation strategies for maturity.

Regarding the issue of becoming the perfect humanity in this realm, Origen is optimistic yet cautious. He says, “The more one makes progress, the longer the path becomes and the more it stretches toward the infinite,” because “the wisdom of God is without end,” and “the more one enters into it, the more one meets the incomprehensible” (*HomNum.*, 17.4). This is the case because the fight rages on as the enemy is defeated in principle, but he is not yet exterminated. Origen’s Paulinism assumes that the prophets and the Law are but a shadow and image of what the believer has in Christ. Likewise, the gospel of Christ is but a shadow of the gospel of eternity (Crouzel, 1989: 259). There is a difference between this life of perfection and the future life of perfection, even if it is a matter of degree rather than of kind. However, the new covenant is without successor (*HomGen.*, 6.3). Thus, believers

as princes- and princesses-in-waiting are a liminal people living within the boundaries of the current fallen kingdom and the coming kingdom that began through the deeds of Christ but awaiting the full cosmic dominance. As elite citizens of this coming kingdom, believers are learning to see things more clearly here, and are in the process of becoming the kind of people who can see God forever.

Origen's maturity-as-transformation or growth-as-sacrifice is not fruitful in the conventional sense of generating universal norms that can then be applied to particular situations. Rather, his existential focus on the particularity of the third-century milieu intentionally resists such caustic tendencies. However, his ethos of forming, constructing, and reconstructing identity is pertinent to every culture and time, and has a universal appeal. He emphasizes scriptural exegesis that is coherent to provide some theoretical guidance for the Christian ethos, yet flexible enough to permit a plurality of possible theories as legitimate.

Upon completion of this study, it is possible to state that Origen's protreptic rhetoric of identity was an ordered, purposeful display of a distinctive way of life and form of worship. It called upon loyal followers of Christ to have a meaningful relationship with the kingdom of Christ. As citizens of the heavenly city, the desires of the believers could be satisfied only in God, and the hope for peace would be realized only under the Cosmic King.

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