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## **The religious knowledge and mystical experience by Origen**

1. God and man in the experience of divine communion by Origen – 2. The human participation “with his image” to God’s image – 3. Man’s experience in the inner living of grace – 4. Is Origen a heretic?

### **1. God and man in the experience of divine communion by Origen**

In his first Sermon of the Book of Genesis, Origen praises the image of man:

From here you can see how much greatness had set God in man because he places it beside the sun, beside the moon and beside other wonderful things (...). Therefore, if you are thinking that the greatness of man consisted mainly in the image and his likeness with God, think that He doesn’t mention about the earth, neither about the sun nor about the moon, then his worth is much greater than any resemblance. But, beside all of these, his worth grows by the fact that only him is meant to be a part of the Kingdom of Heaven<sup>1</sup>.

Starting from these words, Origen developed his anthropological view in two directions: the one about the thrihotomical anthropology and the one about the hu-

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<sup>1</sup> ORIGEN, *Sermons of Genesis*, I, 12–13 in: “Scieri alese” [collection “Părinți și Scriitori Bisericești”] (PSB), transl. by T. Bodogae, N. Neaga, Z. Lațcu], Bucharest, 1981.

man participation in God. Both have as the main subject a dialogue between human communion with the divinity<sup>2</sup>.

According to Origen, man is composed of three elements: *pneuma*, or *spiritus* (this we can translate as spirit), then the soul – *psyche* or *anima* and the body – *soma*, *corpus*. The Spirit is the divine element from man, it is that word in Aramaic we call *ruah*. As a gift from God, the spirit is not part of human nature and he does not have the responsibility of his sins. However, the soul is influenced by man and it can even enter a torpid state. As a judge of the soul, the spirit is the intellectual conductor in the fulfilment of the virtues, in the knowledge of God and in prayer, being the adobe of power and man of free will. If man is led by the spirit, he can entirely become spiritual and if he rejects it and turns to the body, he becomes entirely corporal. In his preexistence, this higher element, intellect, heart of hegemonic faculty<sup>3</sup>, according to Origen, he was by himself the spirit in all, like a part of divine essence.

Therefore, through intellect, man is related to the divine and, through the practice of the virtues, he becomes more and more similar to Him. The fact that man is created by the image of Logos offers the great possibility to participate in God's image. However, like an active element of grace, man is submitted to the spirit and represents the passive or receptive aspect of it. Therefore, all is realized by intellect and by the spirit coordination, in other words, the moral and virtuous life, contemplation and prayer. Also, the intellect embraces "the spiritual sensibility", the sight, the hearing, the grouping, the smell and the spiritual taste<sup>4</sup>. Interestingly, although the two elements, spirit and intellect are different, they are inseparable.

In consolidation of these teachings, Origen interprets the first two chapters of Genesis, not in the meaning of two distinct evocations of one and the same creation, but like two distinct creations. He considers that God created firstly the soul, the only one created after His image, immaterial and undivided, and in the second plan He created the body, like the bearer and the support of the soul. We note that Origen does not mention which body it is, the etheric or the earthly one. According to Procopiu from Gaza, it is possible in Origen's thought, that the second creation could signify the falling of soul from his heavenly state in our earthly condition<sup>5</sup>,

<sup>2</sup> H. CROUZEL, *L'anthropologie d'Origen dans la perspective de combat spiritual*, RAM 3 (1955), p. 264–285; J. DUPUIS, *L'Esprit de l'home. Etude sur l'anthropologie religieuse d'Origen*, Brouges, 1967.

<sup>3</sup> H. CROUZEL, *Origen et la „coaissance mystique”*, Burges – Paris 1961, p. 144.

<sup>4</sup> K. RAHNER, *Le debout d'une doctrine de cinq sens spirituals ches Origene*, RAM 13 (1932), p. 113–145.

<sup>5</sup> PROCOPIUS FROM GAZA, *Patrologia Graeca* (PG), Migne (ed.) 87, p. 221.

one of the “coats of skins” (Gen 3:21: “And the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife coats of skins for their clothing”).

From this analysis we can understand that only after the fall of Adam did humanity receive an inferior element which constantly tempts the soul and keeps it far away from its spirit and from its real unity with the body<sup>6</sup>. Consequently, Origen had to name the soul “the mind of body”, an expression which was borrowed from Saint Paul the Apostle (Rom 8:6-7).

Therefore, this body, always inferior and attracted by sin, “the flesh mind” like Adamantios used to say, embraces also the natural beauties that are unreal by themselves. With all the deficiency that the body has by its nature, however, it is this intellect which decides to follow the spirit, this inferior element is not ruined, but can be spiritualized.

With all this emphasis, amiable in essence, the body, by Origen’s conception, is very clumsy and his weaknesses are hard to overcome.

Therefore, we can see how Origen approaches the soul’s immateriality in order to understand where he wants to reach when we refer to the renunciation of material things. For Origen, only the Holy Trinity is immaterial<sup>7</sup> Regarding the word “immateriality”, we can understand in the first instance the body absence and also, in a moral way, a state of bliss for those that are still free from eternal happiness. Otherwise, as we have seen, as a consequence of original sin, there is an etheric body of preexistence that had received an earthly “quality” In this state, the body, although it is good, as the Holy Scriptures shows, it is in the process of transformation, like any material thing (Gen 1:10: “and God saw that it was good”)<sup>8</sup>.

Although, Origen considers that the souls had fallen in bodies because of their mishandling, he says that their determination also falls upon the bodies, which are their temples. Therefore, the etheric body subsists in the earthly body, like *logos spermatikos*, after death and he will sprout and form the heavenly body. From this link, Origen believes that the heavenly quality becomes earthly when the soul has dressed himself with body and then, his earthly quality becomes heavenly, when the soul will be separated from the body<sup>9</sup> Considering this fact, Origen finds the

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<sup>6</sup> Saint Maximus demonstrates in his *Ambigua* that the souls do not preexist the bodies and also that these do not come in the bodies to punish them. They were created at the same time with the bodies and this creation is good and progress well, especially that all the created things are created by God with the purpose to rise up through their forces and through the help of our Lord for attending the highest resemblance, a union with Him in eternity (PG 91, 1328).

<sup>7</sup> ORIGEN, *De Principiis*, in PSB VI, I, 6, 4, II, 2, 2, IV, 3, 15.

<sup>8</sup> ORIGEN, *Commentary of John Gospel*, in PSB VI, XII, 42, 280.

<sup>9</sup> ORIGEN, *Cata Celsus*, in PSB VI, VII, 4.

body like a “vehicle” of intellect, preexistent both in the original fall and also in his state of salvation<sup>10</sup>, and after the death, the soul keeps its corporal coating, which is deducted by Origen from the Parbola with “unmerciful rich-man and the poor Lazarus” and about the “showing of Samuel to Saul”<sup>11</sup>. Here the difference between the two characters, sinners and the just, due to the fact that the first of them have no spirit whatsoever because God had retired his gift from them<sup>12</sup>. Therefore, the soul and the body will go together in hell, where man will suffer eternal punishment and torment.

After this combination between the teaching of the Holy Scripture and Greek philosophy, we will try to make a brief sketch of Origen’s teaching about “image and likeness” In this way, we point out that for Origen only Christ is “the image of God”, statement that he infers from the text of Colossians, where Saint Paul the Apostle says that The Savior is “the image of the unseen God” (Col I, 15)<sup>13</sup>. From this idea forward, we understand that man cannot be created only “after God’s image”, the one that became man. Therefore, only The Son can be named “Image of God”, while man is just “after the image”, or “the image of The Image”

Therefore, the expression “after the image” is a dynamic reality that tends to enrich his model in order meet Him. This idea is a starting point, like a shaman who must grow<sup>14</sup>. The top of this rise is certainly “the resemblance with God” that will coincide with the seeing of God. In this way, the expression “after image”, used frequently by Origen, designates the participation of man as God’s Image. Therefore, the Logos, as Image of God, is the first image between God and humanity and also the most direct model provided to the people’s likeness<sup>15</sup>. This background of human nature that defined the relationship between soul and God helps with the

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<sup>10</sup> Origen devalues the human body and believes that he is like a cave for the soul. Therefore, Saint Maximus sees in the body a constructive part of the human being. The body and the soul together are the work of God. At the eternal happiness, the man was entirely called, thereby; the communion with God wasn’t a loss of man as a spiritual and corporal person.

<sup>11</sup> METHODIUS FROM OLIMP, *About Resurrection*, III, XVII, 2–5.

<sup>12</sup> ORIGEN, *De Principiis*, II, 10, 7; *Commentary of Romans Epistle*, in: PSB VI, II, 9.

<sup>13</sup> In these cases, Saint Irenaeus from Lyon considers that the image of God is in the Incarnated Logos, with His double nature, that is from eternity in the divine plans. While Crouzel tried to explain that Origen had seen in the image of God and the human being also, the existence of this aspect can’t be contested.

<sup>14</sup> H. CROUZEL, *Origèn et la „cooissance mystique”*, p. 154.

<sup>15</sup> In Origen’s theology, the expression “after image” does not apply to the body because, in this case, God Himself would be corporal. The subject is the soul or rather the intellect or, sometimes, the rationale-logos from man, that participates in the Divine Logos. In other words, in the earthly body already exists a logos, like a growing force that, after the death of the earthly body, will sprout to give birth to the body of glory. H. CROUZEL, *Les critiques addresses par Methode et ses contemporains à la doctrine origénienne du corps ressuscité*, “Revue Gregorianum”, 53 (1972), p. 679–716.

approach to the soul for this model. His first knowledge consists of the fact that man was created in the image of God and has the possibility to enrich His resemblance. In this profound intimacy, man fond his Creator after his only image.

According to Origen, “the man’s likeness to God” will be realized at the Resurrection and in the final happiness, when the human race will know its real resemblance. He will be one with his “resemblance”, when the one “after the image” (the man) advances in likeness and becomes capable of knowledge. This rise made Origen to consider that the man, between resurrection and death, is without body, although he attributes some corporal coating to the human soul representing the body’s vehicle, situated only around the soul<sup>16</sup>. Anyway, Origen thinks that the glorious body, the one after the Resurrection, is different from any other earthly body.

We can find the same argument at Origen when he refers to the Body of Christ. Therefore, after the Resurrection, Jesus showed Himself to His Disciples “in an intermediary state, between the weight of body before the passion and the state of a pure soul, emptied by this weight”<sup>17</sup>. The mortality of the body of Jesus Christ had become an etheric and divine quality and His flesh changed its qualities to live in ether. In other words, Origen denies the resurrection of the body and makes of it a separate chapter, before the process of total spiritualization.

All of these teachings are mentioned to show the evident error of the Alexandrian Teacher. Therefore, Crouzel and others try the rehabilitation of Origen. In one of his books, Crouzel says that

sometimes the anti-Origen writers had used a small number of texts, quoting them without an original meaning. Although, they don’t take into account the different meanings that Origen gives to the word body<sup>18</sup>.

Crouzel’s theories are contradicted right from Origen’s teaching about the apocathastasis which leads to the person’s dissolution and finally to pantheism. It is very true that in Origen’s conception we can find a material pantheism, similar to the one from the stoic philosophy, but he is not far away from the spiritual pantheism. Anyway, sometimes he is uncertain, without understanding the real sense of the

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<sup>16</sup> H. CROUZEL, *Le theme platonicien du véhicule de l’âme chez Origen*, “Revue Didaskalia” 7 (1977), p. 225–237.

<sup>17</sup> ORIGEN, *Cata Celsus*, II, 62.

<sup>18</sup> H. CROUZEL, *Le theme platonicien du véhicule de l’âme chez Origen*, p. 343.

Bible. In another situation, Origen does not make any commentaries or he entirely goes in the wrong direction.

## 2. The human participation “with his image” to God’s image

Adam, the first man, because of the freedom that he got in the act of creation, chose the image and the adoption of the devil in place of God. In the next second, he was covered with various images generated by sin, which overlapped his heavenly image. The guiltiest of these the following dawn was, according to Origen, the devil who crushed man by his intellect when he was in the preexisting state of the soul. But, with all the evil action of Satan and with all his imaginings used to covert the icon painted by the Son of God into the being of man, the image was not destroyed and continued to exist in all human beings, like water in Abraham’s fountain the one that the Philistines filled with mud<sup>19</sup> Naturally, nobody could clean this mess from the soul of man, but only The One who created him, our Lord Jesus Christ purified the fountain of our existence by all the trash that the devil put inside them. Therefore, the image of God stays intact inside man and by Christ’s Passion he can return to his original state.

In the above, we can understand that Origen analyses the relationship between man and God through the humanity of Christ. Therefore, the soul was united with Logos from his preexistence and became, in certain measure, that of Logos Himself. In fact, only he stayed in unity with Logos and became Logos, as iron put in fire that became himself fire<sup>20</sup>. Therefore, the soul is, like the Logos, “in God’s shape” (Phil 2:6)<sup>21</sup>, possessing the good in a substantial way, a quality proper to the divinity, not as the accidental one, as in the case of other creatures. From His Incarnation, The Logos takes also the inferior part from the human race without which He would be a perfect man. Obviously, Origen recognizes that this part could not be a source of temptation, but is still the source of all disturbances, of sorrows and of all suffering.

Therefore, only the soul, which is created from God’s image, can participate in the Father and Son. This means that the humans can receive the deification and can progress in it and, from the Son’s work where they became gods and sons of light, like the Psalmist used to say (Ps 89). In fact, each Divine Person has his own role

<sup>19</sup> ORIGEN, *Sermons on Genesis*, XIII, 3–4.

<sup>20</sup> ORIGEN, *De Principiis*, II, 6, 4–6.

<sup>21</sup> ORIGEN, *De Principiis*, II, 6, 6.

in the enlightening of man. The Father is the Light which reflects the Son, like the Psalmist says: “in your light we will see light” (Ps 35:9). Especially in the Son we can find all the illuminated names, mentioned in the Holy Scripture: the Word’s Light, the Real Light, the Light of Peoples, the Sun of Justice, the Sunrise. From here we understand that God’s light comes inside the one that receives it and in that, the man that wise is in Christ became light by himself. This way, the living in the light will not be complete other than in eternity, when all the saints will become only light in the Sun of Justice.

According to Origen, the participation in God is a dynamic concept in which the image tends to meet the model and to be like him. Therefore, when God announces His plan at Genesis, He mentions both the image and resemblance (Gen 1:26). After this moment and once the act of creation the Scripture mentions only the concept of image and overlooks the resemblance, meaning that the image will be fulfilled in the likenesses to Parusia, in other words “when the Savior shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is” (I J 3:2). Therefore, the participation of the soul in Son implies the acquirer of the quality of God’s Son, meaning that by becoming the man He becomes son of God through Son’s work.

In the same way we can understand the qualities of Christ and Grease, Wisdom and Logos in Christ, in which man can be, in Son, “Christ” and grease of God, a wise and rational being, λογικός. In this way, the life of the believer involved in God will be a happy one, the man having an only work to do.

Then – says Origen – all those who will reach God through the Word which in Him will have an only work, namely to know God and be, therefore, educated in the knowledge of the Father, as the new only one Son knows the Father<sup>22</sup>.

So the Son knows the one who participates in Him because this one is inside Him and through Him, so, the believer knows the Father in the way only that the Son knows Him.

In the process of deification, Adamantios thinks that the incarnate Logos forms the believer in the way that Jesus Himself, when He was in His mother’s womb, went to welcome John, while he was also in Elisabeth’s wombs<sup>23</sup>. So, the Word takes image in the Christian through the work of good acts, the virtues being Christ our Savior Himself, which is “the Virtue fully animated and alive”<sup>24</sup>. In this work,

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ORIGEN, *Commentary on John*, in PSB VI, I, 16, 92.

<sup>23</sup> ORIGEN, *Commentary on John* VI, 49 (30), 252–256.

<sup>24</sup> ORIGEN, *Commentary on John* XXXII, 127.

the soul of the believer becomes conceived by the incarnated divine Logos, which is present in him from creation. This theme is in correspondence with the indwelling of the Holy Trinity in the soul through the Mystery of Baptism, that we can find at Saint Paul the Apostle and at Saint John the Evangelist<sup>25</sup>.

Without doubt, the problem of the birth of soul by the Word of God or the one of the birth of the Word by the soul has a considerable extension in Origen's thinking<sup>26</sup>. For him, the Holy Virgin Mary is the model of this theme and so "any virgin and unbroken soul who conceives from the Holy Spirit to give birth to the Father's will is the Mother of Jesus"<sup>27</sup> Because of this, the Savior is born in a continuous way in the soul of the believer, His birth being closely related to His reception. Naturally, the spring of this birth is the Father which became visible through Christ's "virtue", because the Lord is each virtue in part and all virtues together. Therefore, if the soul does not give birth to Christ in his spiritual life, he cannot be saved, in other words, even Jesus' birth would not have effects in the salvation order if Christ was not born from each man<sup>28</sup>. Consequently, "Christ is in each man and the birth of man comes from Christ the Logos"<sup>29</sup> The argument is very clear: when Christ was on the cross and entrusted John to his Mother, saying "there is your son", meaning that John had not become a natural son of the Holy Virgin, but a son by grace<sup>30</sup>. But, as John is considered the son of the Holy Virgin only in this way, in the same way the believer is born by God in His Son or through the work of his good deeds<sup>31</sup>. It is very clear that the one who participates in God through the incarnated Son of God will see the Father the same way the Father sees the Son<sup>32</sup>.

Therefore, the man in God remains available only for God, giving Him a good place to walk around his soul, to sleep or to eat in it together with the Holy Trinity<sup>33</sup>. Then, God, being present in man, grows and fulfills in his heart and, after that, by increasing the contemplation, man can grow in wisdom, age and grace<sup>34</sup>. But, if

<sup>25</sup> In time, this theme was used in some other writings, like the Epistle to Diognet and in Hypolit's script. See *The Epistle to Diognet*, XI, 4, XII, 7.

<sup>26</sup> G. AEBY, *Les missions divines de Saint Justin a Origène*, Fribourg 1958, p. 164.

<sup>27</sup> ORIGEN, *Frag. Mathew*, 281, GCS XII/1.

<sup>28</sup> ORIGEN, *Sermons on Genesis*, III, 7; *Sermons on Jeremiah*, IX, 1, *Sermons on Luke*, XXII, 3.

<sup>29</sup> ORIGEN, *Cata Celsus*, VI, 9.

<sup>30</sup> ORIGEN, *Commentary on John*, I, 4 (6), 23.

<sup>31</sup> ORIGEN, *Sermon on Jeremiah*, IX, 4.

<sup>32</sup> ORIGEN, *Commentary on John*, X, 16, 92–99.

<sup>33</sup> ORIGEN, *Commentary on Song of Songs*, II, GCS 8, p. 164, 1.20.

<sup>34</sup> ORIGEN, *Sermons on Luke*, XXI, 5,7.



man does not strive in the work of activating virtues, the Savior “will be killed” by his sins and the Master will not fit into his soul that was narrowed by sin<sup>35</sup>.

In consequence, the man that is in communion with God is nourished by the grace of the Holy Spirit with spiritual nourishment made by the divine word of revelation. Therefore, he becomes, through contemplation, reaching very high states of spiritual movement and sharing heavenly mysteries, as Christ Himself is nourished by Father in His Birth<sup>36</sup>. So, as the Lord is nourished by Father, in the same way the Son shares the peoples who participate in Him, the nourishment that He receives from His father, because “the only food of the world is the divine nature of God”<sup>37</sup>. We can understand that, according to Origen, not all the believers receive the same nourishment, but each of them according to the work and the participation in God. It is also true that, from the Son’s part the help and communication are considerable. They take the perfect form to adapt to each believer. Therefore, for all, the Word is converting inside them and transforms them in Him through participation. In this transformation man is deified in one gradual way, because he receives really the life of the incarnated Logos. Thus, the likeness of man with God will coincide with the participation of man in Christ and with meeting God face to face.

### 3. Man’s experience in the inner living of grace

Origen prays and contemplates the Son of God “sometimes in his own humanity” We say here “sometimes” because Origen does not pray to Jesus the Man, believing that He did not remain in his Body after Resurrection and then He is not really incarnated God. Because of this, his prayer faces more a God which is immanent to the soul, whom most of his doxologies from the end of his Sermons are addressed to<sup>38</sup>. Nevertheless, for the Alexandrine theologian, Christ is the creator Word in which everything was created, in which there are the Life and Light, the Word which came to teach the humans and which, for all of these, was made body. He is the Word of life that was seen by the Apostles with their own eyes, heard with their own ears and touched with their own hands. He is the One who was seen by the seer of Apocalypse in the sky on His waiting hours, the victorious knights, the

<sup>35</sup> ORIGEN, *Sermons on John*, XX, 6, 40–45.

<sup>36</sup> Origen thinks that the birth of Son is eternal and continuous, where Father gives Him His divinity.

<sup>37</sup> ORIGEN, *Sermons on Isaiah*, III, 3.

<sup>38</sup> H. CROUZEL, *Les doxologies finales des homélies d’Origène selon le texte grec et les versions latines*, *EcO* 20 (1980), p. 95–107.

King of Kings and the Master of Masters. At the end of days He will come to punish the army submitted to the devil. His Incarnation was fulfilled to incarnate His message in the human person, in the acts and human gesture. The human images used in the Old Testament shows the fact that God came into the world as a man to be understood and known by people. For this point of view, Christ, the incarnated Son of God, was revealed following his Father, not like a fantasy, but real and present in the human nature with the mission to discover the divinity in an accessible way. His Passions are indispensable for all of us, if we can appropriate them by our facts. “Why shall I say that Christ came into the world only with the body that he received from Mary, says Origen, if I don’t believe that He came in my body also?”<sup>39</sup> For his birth be useful to man, he must generate in Him the same redeeming effects as it occurred in Jesus Christ. God respects the man’s freedom and, in consequence, his requests have the purpose to approach Him in a personal manner.

We can see, in this respect, the great themes of Origen’s theology. The principal subject of all this is the interior living of Christ, namely the man acquisition of what is said about Christ, or an imitation of Christ. In this way, the soul, like all the prophets and righteous from the Old Testament, is approaching God as a bride approaches his bridegroom. The Song of Songs reveals this union in one special way, when presents the soul as bride in relationship with the God–Bridegroom.

Then, in line with the Old Testament, Origen continues to develop his ideas in the New Testament also. On the one hand, his interpretation is applied to Christ and to His Church and, on the other hand, to the ascetic soul as bride of Christ. The images are suggested especially in two passages from the Epistle to Corinthians of Saint Paul the Apostle. The first passage is described by the words: “but he who is united to the Lord is one spirit” (I Cor 6:17). And, the second one says that “the virgin gives her mind to the things of the Lord, so that she may be holy in body and in spirit” (I Cor 7:34). The most important thing in this vision is the relationship soul – bride and Bridegroom – Christ. In this way, soul – bride is one of the Church, as the Bride of Christ. His increase in the communion with God shows his desire to be intimate with God starting from this life and perfected in heaven in one progressive way, “until the undying day of Kingdom of Heaven” Without doubt, the basis of the union between soul and God is given by the union between God and His Church.

As we have seen so far, in his Commentary of Song of Songs, Origen often shifted from soul to Church, which is possible because he considered that the Logos is united with the soul from eternity, when He was the Bridegroom of the

<sup>39</sup> ORIGEN, *Sermons on Genesis*, III, 7.

eternal Church, composed from all “intellects”, which only the original falling will turn into angels, men and demons. In this way, in the act of incarnation, in order to meet the bride fallen in body by his mistake, appears the reality of clothing the Bridegroom with our earthly nature. Obviously, this union will not be perfect until the moment when the Father will be united with His Son, in His transfigured humanity. Likewise, Origen says that the beginning of union will be done in the human Baptism as “first Resurrection” (Rom 6:3, Apocal 20:5-6). From this moment, the Christian life that begins and stays in part, “in a glass, darkly” (I Cor 13:12), to distinguish from the final Resurrection which will be “face to face” (I Cor 13:9-11).

From this moment, his Christian life remains partial, “like in the mirror, darkly”, different from the final resurrection that will be “face to face” (I Cor 13:9-11). It is sure the fact that any divagation of the soul from this union is an infidelity by Christ the Bridegroom and can be considered lasciviousness with dark. In this way, the souls of heretics are guilty of adultery with Satan. So are those who apostatized in persecution of the one who let himself in the hand of carnal thoughts, state considered in contradiction with the mystical wedding between soul and the heavenly Bridegroom.

From all this we can understand that the soul love with God starts this ascendance to his meeting with Christ, the Bridegroom. In his effort he suffers from the injuries of love. Isaiah had talked about the arrow of love a long time ago with Incarnation, when he said that the Logos, “the Servant of God”, is like a sharp arrow penetrating the heart of the one who loves God (Is 49:2: “and he has made me like a polished arrow, keeping me in his secret place”). In its turn, the bride-soul is “injured by love”<sup>40</sup>, and the archer is the Father, or the Son, the arrow is evidently, the Son. That Son is also the wound that the arrow makes in the soul of the one in love, thereby the soul is the heart of the love of Christ and wants to live permanently in Him, being an awake drunk, like Saint Gregory of Nyssa used to say.

Another aspect of the unity of the soul with God is, according to Origen, martyrdom like a supreme devotion of man to Christ and like perfect unity between him and the heavenly Bridegroom. In this context, the martyr’s death is like death without sin of Jesus Christ, which offers a saving value through the Sacrifice of the cross. Therefore, starting from the baptism, the man is transformed in his body, which means that in Christ death does not touch the divine nature, but the human nature that the Logos was united with<sup>41</sup>. Christ is so “free from death”, stronger

<sup>40</sup> ORIGEN, *Commentary on Song of Songs*, 2:5.

<sup>41</sup> ORIGEN, *Sermons to Jeremiah*, XIV, 6.

than death, to free us from his slavery<sup>42</sup>. In his turn, the martyr, as a following of Christ, is the most profound disciple of God in the acts of Death and Resurrection. Although, through his sacrifice he receives the forgiveness for his sins, defying the power of darkness through his patience and his zeal for God. In this way, the martyr participated in the eternal light, receiving the incorruptibility and eternal immortality. He knows from experience that Christ is the resurrection and his eternal happiness. Because of this, the first resurrection received through Baptism worked in him without the gift of immortality to sin, through the martyrdom he participated in the life of Christ and received the second resurrection through which he enters directly the Kingdom of Heaven. Therefore, after resurrection, says Origen, the deadly body “will take” the immortality without changing his substance, but by keeping his quality.

Nevertheless, for Origen, the martyr remains the perfection of knowledge in God because the Logos is, for him, the source in which the disciple sinks, taking as companion the prayer that transforms his life with the price of a crucified asceticism. Yet, Origen is not a fanatic. More than that, he condemns any challenge that come from the pagan authorities. So, after him, the Christian, without accepting in any way the apostasies, must love the enemies of his faith, preventing any physical or moral offence from their part.

#### 4. Is Origen a heretic?

About everything that has been mentioned so far, it is necessary a question and a reply: Is Origen a heretic? Without doubt, he is a great exegete and Christian writer with his own position in our theology and spirituality. There is no need to start a “competent and supported campaign of popularization” to build another dimension of the great Christian thinker from the third century. The Romanian theologian fathers knew who he was and what he had left behind for the Church. They also know his great mistake and they do not try to exculpate, or to excessively condemn.

As we know, Origen was condemned like a heretic at the fifth and sixth Ecumenical Councils. From then, his work was almost entirely destroyed or, sometimes, as Rufin used to say, interpolated by heretics. From all of his writings, the most important one is *Pery Arhon* or *De Principiis*, heavily used by Origenists in their interest. Rufin de Aquelea translated this book in Latin in order to defend Origen.

<sup>42</sup> ORIGEN, *Commentary of Song of Songs*, III; *Commentary to Mathew*, XVI, 8.

Anywise, Rufin's translation was made in the spirit of Origen's teaching. However, the admirers of Adamantius try to rehabilitate him.

Let us now analyse the opinion of the most important supporters of Origen and of the one who condemned his opinions. Therefore, the specialists in Origen work think that "the fragments of Ieronim and Justinian complete the part that Rufin has omitted"<sup>43</sup>. In this case, Ieronim, in his *Epistle to Avitus*, has created a heretical anthology of Origen's texts. Apparently, these things make us wonder, with Dumitru Stăniloae

this admission, even as hypothetical alternative, of such potential conflict towards the Christian firm belief, doesn't show a contradiction in Origen's soul between the Church's faith and these conflicting possibility?<sup>44</sup>.

By research we can understand that the condemnation is by far ambiguous: on the one hand, Origen is accused of some isolate conclusion from this work; on the other hand, they admitted these as alternative, contrary to the Church's teaching. Crouzel, for instance, is aware that many

can't be satisfied with his exposure about Origen's eschatology because it lays stress on some nuances, hesitations, discordant phrases on the theme of resurrection and apocathastasis<sup>45</sup>.

Then, he says that these things make us believe that

it is a deficiency of Origen that had serious consequences and made him be accused of multiple heresies (...) He was not concerned never enough to "define" what he wanted to say, meaning to try to propose a complete and balanced opinion concerning any matter, gathering, in the same text, the antithetical tension, particular to Christian teaching, in order to leave less space for the possibility of malicious interpretation<sup>46</sup>.

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<sup>43</sup> ORIGEN, *De Principiis*, in SC 252, 1978, *Introduction*, p. 28.

<sup>44</sup> SAINT MAXIMUS THE CONFESSOR, *Ambigua*, PSB 80, *Introduction*, p. 9.

<sup>45</sup> H. CROUZEL, *Origène et la „cooissance mystique”*, p. 350.

<sup>46</sup> H. CROUZEL, *Origène et la „cooissance mystique”*, p. 235.

Then, the teaching about soul preexistence and the falling version are “the most obsolete part from the origenist thinking. These will be developed and systematized, becoming one of the essential points of the posterior Origenism”<sup>47</sup>.

From the desire to combat the Valentinians and Marcionites heretics, Origen used the platonic Greek philosophy, far away from the true teaching of Church<sup>48</sup>. Only in the Sermon of Genesis we can find many wrong ideas about anthropology and christology together. Here

Origen hesitates without knowing to conciliate all the teaching from Scripture: sometimes, he doesn't express any opinion at all, other times ventures and expresses his opinion in one way or another<sup>49</sup>.

Another error of Origen is related to subordinations; in contradiction with the orthodox belief. Even Crouzel admitted, with regard to this matter, that in Origen's work are “some clumsy texts”, and the most delicate is this one:

We say that our Savior and the Holy Spirit, beyond all creatures without any comparison and in a transcendental way, but they are separated from the Father in the same way<sup>50</sup>

Because of this teaching, Origen becomes the precursor of Arianism and of the Monophysite heresies, Monothelite and iconoclastic. As we can see, his Arian conception about the Son of God was not born from the doctrine about Logos, but from the idea of a preexistent soul of the Word.

Apocathastasis or universal restoration is also one of his famous misconceptions. The effect of these two fundamental errors is the universal return of souls to the original state.

In conclusion, we can say that Origen's defenders strive to rehabilitate their teacher. Nevertheless, Stăniloae says,

we can't admit any antithesis which can be cancelled reciprocally; for example, that Son is both identical and non-identical in nature with Father; or that in the future life we will have and at the same time we will not have bodies<sup>51</sup>.

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<sup>47</sup> H. CROUZEL, *Origène et la „cooissance mystique”*, p. 293.

<sup>48</sup> These teachings will inspire all heretics from the fourth and sixth century.

<sup>49</sup> H. CROUZEL, *Origène et la „cooissance mystique”*, p. 349.

<sup>50</sup> ORIGEN, *Commentary of John Gospel*, XIII, 25, 151.

<sup>51</sup> SAINT MAXIMUS THE CONFESSOR, *Ambigua, Introduction*, p. 10.

Therefore, the absolution of Origen from his errors is a very delicate thing today especially that the Origenism was convicted as heresy in two Ecumenical Councils.

Then, Origen is not an anonymous writer to be treated separated from his principal beliefs. Origen was influenced by the gnostic philosophy, although he created his personal overviews, using the Christian terminology. We also know that his teachings were spread by his disciples in many places. In this context, his errors aroused many contradictions that everyone who knew his way of thinking and was lost, did not make it only from a personal initiative, but because Origen was a teacher with a great reputation, known by all his contemporaries and disciples. Even if we have in mind the historical and philosophical context of Origen's life, in which he was educated, the absolution of his heresies is a serious mistake. In this context, Saint Basil the Great says that Origen "throwing in the ocean of knowledge and drowned in many ways" Without doubt, the source of his errors is the philosophical stone from which he could not be separated .

As far as we have seen, the mystical theme from Origen's teaching and experience concerns both God and man, his mystical orientation, with platonic origins, are formed around the relationship between type and image. According to him, the divine world of mysteries is similar to the platonic world of ideas, having perfect existence and intelligibility, and the world of senses is an image of mysteries and has a reality only through intention and participation.

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**Abstract:** In this study we shall attempt to discover the most important aspects from Origen's doctrine and his mysticism. Also, we aim to give some solution, from the orthodox point of view, to the problem of the doctrinal errors of Origen. Therefore, in our first part we have made a short analysis about the problem of God and man in the experience of divine communion. Here we can find the anthropological terminology used by Origen in his writings. The second part of our study follows the progress of man from image to the resemblance with God. In this respect, Origen says that "the Father is the Light which reflects the Son, like the Psalmist says: «in your light we will see light»" Man experience in the inner living of grace is the third part of our research. In the last chapter, we address the question: "Is Origen a heretic?" This way, we emphasize his doctrinal contribution to the start of the Church's teaching through his anthropological terminology. On the other hand, Origen had made some doctrinal errors, which are identified in the memory of the Christian Church.

**Keywords:** Origen, divine communion, image of God, religious knowledge, mystical experience.

**Streszczenie: Poznanie religijne oraz doświadczenie mistyczne u Orygenesu.** W niniejszym studium autor podjął się próby dotarcia do najważniejszych aspektów mistycznej nauki Orygenesu. Jednocześnie wskazał pewne rozwiązania dotyczące jego błędów doktrynalnych widziane z perspektywy prawosławnej. W pierwszej części opracowania dokonano krótkiej analizy kwestii Boga i człowieka w doświadczeniu boskiej komunii, co pozwoliło ukazać terminologię antropologiczną obecną w pismach Orygenesu. Z kolei część druga artykułu dotyczy ewolucji postrzegania człowieka z „bycia obrazem” do „bycia podobnym Bogu”. W tym kontekście Orygenes zauważa, że „Ojciec jest światłem, które oświeca Syna, zgodnie ze słowami psalmisty: «w Twoim świetle oglądamy światło»”. Trzecią część opracowania streszczają słowa: „w swym wnętrzu człowiek doświadcza życia łaski”. W ostatnim paragrafie autor podjął się próby odpowiedzi na pytanie: Czy Orygenes był herezykiem?, gdzie dowartościował doktrynalny wkład tego wielkiego pisarza w początkową naukę Kościoła, wskazując jednocześnie na szereg błędów, jakich się Orygenes nie ustrzegł.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Orygenes, wspólnota z Bogiem, obraz Boży, poznanie religijne, doświadczenie mistyczne.