Origen on the Authorial Intention of Scripture

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Scholars, preachers, and others have increasingly recognized that historical-critical approaches to the Bible have often failed to train the ear to hear the text as the living Word of God.[1] Historical biblical criticism has typically attempted to uncover the intention of the human author, whereby what the historical Amos or Paul meant in their context defines the singular meaning of the text.[2] This has led to the reconstruction of traditions behind the canonical text, the sifting of what Amos himself may have said from what a later editor may have added, and reduction of the Bible to discrete texts reflecting the diverse views of their authors absent an overarching unity.[3] Underlying and reinforcing historical-critical methods is the assumption of a *qualitative* historical distance between the story narrated by the text and our present world.[4] Among other results, these methods demand expertise in ancient languages and cultures to bridge the distance and uncover the single, objective meaning intended by the author; biblical authority stands or falls on the success of this enterprise.

Critics of historical-critical interpretation recognize the many benefits these methods have yielded and recommend consulting them on an ad hoc basis.[5] Nevertheless, given that the reconstruction of ancient cultures or ancient texts does not vouch for the authority of Scripture in the church, scholars have taken a step back to ask just what Scripture is and how it fits into the economy of salvation. What is needed is an account of the unity within the text, and the unity among the world immediately depicted by the text and us. Such an account must be theological if the Bible is to function authoritatively for the church.

Among three recent examples, Telford Work offers "a fully Trinitarian account of Scripture, establishing and exploring its divine and human character and its salvific purpose in its Church setting and beyond."[6] He develops a Christological analogy with respect to Scripture: it is a fully human and a fully divine reality united for the sake of our salvation. Stephen E. Fowl is interested in how the formation of personal, ecclesial, and pneumatological interpretive

practices emerge from Scripture and in turn condition the reading of it,[7] while John Webster develops a sustained account of Holy Scripture

> in terms of its role in God's self-communication, that is, the acts of Father, Son and Spirit which establish and maintain that saving fellowship with humankind in which God makes himself known to us and by us. The 'sanctification' of Scripture (its 'holiness') and its 'inspiration' (its proceeding from God) are aspects of the process whereby God employs creaturely reality in his service. . . .[8]

The constructive interests of Work, Fowl, and Webster are rooted in a long tradition. The theological interpretation of Scripture has sought guidance from pre-critical (patristic, medieval, reformational) exegesis that recognized multiple levels of meaning in the text. In this paper I turn to the exegetical writings of the third-century Christian teacher Origen, who taught that God was the author of Scripture and that this authorial intention determines what Scripture is, its unity, and its function. However, the reading proper to the text is anything but literalistic or mechanistic; rather it leads to layers of meaning.

According to John 13:4, Jesus "put aside his garments" before washing his disciples' feet. Origen comments that just as Jesus was clothed with cloth garments, so the eternal Word, or Logos, was clothed with flesh (*CJn* 32.4.44).[9] The adornment of the Word made flesh in part consists of "a fabric of passages joined with passages and sounds joined with sounds" (*CJn* 32.4.45). As the Word is clothed with flesh in Jesus, so the Word is clothed in passages and sounds in the form of Scripture. The humbling act of footwashing represents God's accommodation to the human condition, either as Jesus Christ or as Scripture, for the purpose of salvation. However, to the modern historical-critical reader, the human author of the Fourth Gospel was simply reporting the event of the footwashing when he wrote that Jesus "put aside his garments." Surely that author did not *intend* to be saying something about the nature of Scripture and its relationship to the incarnation. Origen here exhibits the multi-faceted allegorical, or spiritual, interpretation that is famously or infamously associated with his name.

Allegory, God, and the Human Soul

Origen (ca.185-250) contends there are two main senses of Scripture – the literal or historical and the spiritual or allegorical.[10] According to Karen J.

Torjesen, "The exposition of the historical sense seeks to clarify, rationalize and elaborate the historical situation referred to in the text. The allegorical or spiritual sense seeks to explain the meaning of the historical situation in terms of the soul, the spiritual life and the church."[11]

Allegorical interpretation has been criticized for centuries. Recently, R.P.C. Hanson charged that Origen reduces history to a mere "charade for showing forth eternal truths about God." Origen's method denies the possibility that history is "the place where through tension and uncertainty and danger and faith [human beings] encounter God as active towards them."[12] However, the category of history as it figures in Origen's interpretation of Scripture is neither neglected nor a mere cipher; rather it is recast in a broader theological context in light of the specific intention of the true author and of a plausible object of that author: the progress of the soul. Origen certainly assumes the events recorded in Scripture actually happened; however, his interest as an interpreter is not primarily in history but in the description of the necessarily temporal and material conditions under which the triune God provides Scripture as a way for *present* fallen temporal and material souls to return to God. For soteriological reasons, Origen wants to show how the temporal framework depicted in Scripture is *our* time. History *per se* is the site of God's activity for us.

Brief comments about Origen's doctrines of the Trinity, the soul, and salvation are in order here. The persons of the Trinity have different kinds of jurisdictions and missions in creation and redemption. The Father is the source of all things that have existence. Christ, however, is what makes certain beings rational (*OFP* 1.3.8). The eternal Son is the image of God, variously described as God's Wisdom or Word, the Logos, rational principle, meaning and intelligibility proceeding from God's goodness. The Logos assumed human nature in Jesus Christ to fulfill its purpose as saving mediator between God and creatures (*OFP* 2.6.1). That the rational principle permeating creation is Jesus Christ means that God has provided appropriate means for all beings to achieve their appointed ends. Significantly for us, the capacity of some beings for rationality gives them the ability to make moral choices. While the Logos is all truth however encountered, the Holy Spirit dwells in souls that live virtuously according to this truth and thus participate intimately in the Logos. Whereas sinners can have existence and rationality, the Holy Spirit is the grace of holiness particular to the Christian life and necessary for a true share in God (*OFP* 1.3.6-8). Humans start their spiritual ascent with the Holy

Spirit through growth in holiness and virtue, grasp the rational principles of the world in the Son, and then contemplate the Father as the source of all things. From Father to Son to Spirit, the jurisdictions of the persons are increasingly specific, and in that sense there is a subordinationism in God.[13] But the three are together one essence and one God, and are exclusively incorporeal. God has no body.

Everything that is not God has a body. Souls are rational/spiritual bodies that have "cooled" in relation to God and have been lodged in the material world from which they are to ascend to God. The progress of the soul is from the corruptible physical body to the incorruptible spiritual body of the resurrection, and thus requires knowledge of the Logos and the sanctifying grace of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus and the Samaritan Woman at the Well

In John 4:1-26 Jesus has a conversation with a Samaritan woman at Jacob's well. At the outset of his *Commentary on John*, Origen says the woman represents "the heterodox when they study the divine Scriptures" (*CJn* 13.1.6). The well may represent Scripture and water the kind of interpretation. The water coming from Jacob's well is that which assuages physical thirst and satisfies temporarily. Jesus tells the woman that whoever receives living water has inside herself a well-spring leaping to eternal life (*CJn* 13.3.14). Whoever drinks from Jacob's well grasps only a part of the Scriptures, but whoever partakes of the water Jesus gives has the whole of Scripture. Jesus converses with the woman in order to draw out from her a request for living water, since asking for a divine gift reflects the turn of the will from lower to more spiritual things (*CJn* 13.1.5). That she was physically thirsting is an important first step, for such desire put her in a position to encounter Jesus and to see the benefits of having a "well-spring" (of interpretive capacity) within herself.

Jesus says to the woman, 'Go, call your husband, and come here.' The woman responds, 'I do not have a husband.' Jesus says, 'You have said well "I have no husband," for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband.' Origen explains that whatever law of interpretation one uses may be called that soul's "husband," since a law of interpretation rules the soul as a husband rules a wife (*CJn* 13.8.43). The five husbands may represent the five senses, which denote a law of interpretation according

to physical senses (*CJn* 13.9.51). The death of these husbands means that interpretation according to the letter and senses alone has passed away. The sixth, who is not truly a husband at all, is a false method of spiritual interpretation. This sixth husband is Gnostic exegesis, which regarded the law according to the letter and the whole material world as evil rather than a shadow of future good things (*CJn* 13.10.61).

For Origen, interpretation by means of the senses is a positive first step, and this distinguishes him from the Gnostics. The water of Jacob precedes and creates the desire for the water of Jesus. The woman is evidently on a path of spiritual progress because she recognizes that her current "husband" represents a wrong way of interpreting and thus is no husband at all. Because of the physical water – interpretation according to the senses – she moves to a higher level and begins to recognize she is speaking with the Logos clothed in flesh.

We should note the conjectural quality of the interpretations Origen proffers. He does not demand that readers accept iron-clad correspondences, as if five husbands *must* mean five senses and nothing else. Rather, he suggests a web of meanings in which the spiritual person may recognize the truth and find edification. In his exegetical and systematic writings alike, Origen frequently commends possible interpretations or arguments to the reader's judgment.

Jesus explains what his life-giving water consists of and how he is its source. He tells the woman the time is coming when the worship of God will not be circumscribed to a particular physical place like Mt. Gerizim or Jerusalem. Rather, "God is spirit, and those worshiping him must worship him in spirit and truth." Origen explains what it means to say God is light, fire, and spirit (*CJn* 13.21.124). These are not speculative assertions but clues to *how* human souls in bodies may move towards God. God as light refers to God's illumination of the mind (*CJn* 13.23.136). God cannot be truly known with the physical senses because God is not visible. Instead, the soul's affinity with God is in the realm of the intelligible. As Mark Edwards writes, "[O]ur nature is such that it cannot apprehend the word of God without a conversion of the intellect: to know is to be changed and thus to be morally united with the known."[14] God as spirit refers to the eternal life that God's life-giving spirit shares with those united to God. Christ is the source of this life for us, because the mission of the Logos is to dwell among the people in order to lift their eyes to spirit (*CJn* 13.24.146). As fire, God is the power that consumes our vices and passions tying us to

the materiality that blinds us to the spiritual wisdom that God is (*OFP* 1.1.2; *CJn* 13.23.139). Moral formation is a condition for spiritual interpretation because the same movement from the material to the spiritual is operative in each.

On two levels, the theme of Origen's commentary is the interpretation of Scripture. At the level of the historical event, Jesus identifies himself as the Logos by presenting himself as the key to unlocking the full truth in Scripture. At a spiritual level, the story is applied to the progress of the soul. It is Scripture, the Logos clothed in passages and sounds, not in flesh, that brings the soul to realize that in spiritual interpretation of Scripture, the soul encounters the Logos and thus participates in a God who is light, spirit, and fire. Origen applies a spiritual interpretation to a passage that he claims is historically and literally about spiritual interpretation. The soul who truly interprets John 4 relives the encounter with Jesus by performing the very interpretation Jesus is talking about. The contemporary reader of the Gospel of John (and Origen's commentary) learns that her own reading is the subject of the text. In this encounter with the text, she is as present to Christ as was the woman at the well.

Yet the story of the Samaritan woman is not *only* an allegory for spiritual interpretation of Scripture. Origen writes, "I think that, in relation to knowledge as a whole, the Scriptures as a whole are to be understood as most meager elements and the briefest introductions, even when they are understood accurately" (*CJn* 13.5.30). Scripture does not contain all truth, and even understood rightly is as meager as Jacob's water compared with Jesus' eternal water. For what larger process is Scripture merely an introduction? For Origen, it is the spiritual progress of soul, which entails but is not exhausted by the reading of Scripture. Thus, John 4 may not be only about the exegesis of Scripture but about the formation of a soul that can make a certain kind of use of Scripture.

What Scripture trains us to do is to see spiritually. Furthermore, the introductory nature of Scripture may also be accounted for in terms of a distinction between the Holy Spirit and the Son, or Logos. While the Logos is itself all truth, the Spirit makes this truth accessible by clothing it in words and passages. The habits and virtues required for a spiritual reading are imparted by the Spirit to those whose holy lives make their souls a dwelling place for the Spirit. The Spirit uses Scripture to bring us face to face with the Logos – Jesus Christ.

The Footwashing of the Disciples

Origen's commentary on Jesus' footwashing in John 13:1-15 shows just how different his conception of the historical sense of Scripture is from a common contemporary one. It also illustrates how the Holy Spirit prepares for, guides, and perpetuates spiritual interpretation. Origen explains that Jesus' washing of the disciples' feet is a cleansing of their sins; the dust on the feet represents worldly sins.

Peter virtually rebukes Jesus when he tells Jesus not to wash his feet. Jesus replies, "What I am doing you are not aware of now, but later on you shall know," and "If I do not wash you, you have no part with me." How can Peter, the first of the apostles, appear the least knowledgeable of all? This presents an example of what Origen elsewhere describes as a "stumbling block" in Scripture (*OFP* 4.2.9). The Holy Spirit often conceals truth under surface meaning in order to train the reader to seek out the spiritual meaning. Origen writes, "Divine things are communicated to [human beings] somewhat obscurely and are the more hidden in proportion to the unbelief or unworthiness of the inquirer." The unworthy reader may propose a literal interpretation that leads to error. Incongruities are inserted into the text "in order that the very interruption of the narrative might as it were present a barrier to the reader and lead him to refuse to proceed along the pathway of ordinary meaning" (*OFP* 4.2.9). But the treasure the Spirit has buried in the text can be unearthed by the grace of the same Spirit who shapes the disposition of the *searching* reader.

In Origen's account, Peter's ostensible ignorance is evidence of his growth in virtue. By the end of the story, the lesson Peter learns is about the shape of the Logos' pedagogical mission. Peter acted impetuously in the past, but "since he was aware of how impulsive he had been earlier, he derived the greatest benefit, becoming the most steadfast and patient" (*CJn* 32.5.61). Peter's censure of Jesus' desire to wash his feet thus reflects good intentions and the reverence of a student for his teacher. While Peter's undisputed holiness and virtue prepared him to receive the Logos, he did not yet see the true meaning of a seemingly irrational action – a teacher washing his students' feet.

"What did Jesus do when he washed the disciples' feet?" asks Origen. "Did he not, by washing their feet . . . make them beautiful, so that they might be ready to preach the good news?" (*CJn* 32.7.77) Using an interpretive technique by which the meaning of a single word, object, or symbol is drawn from one part of Scripture and applied to another, Origen evokes Romans

10:15 and Isaiah 52:7: "How beautiful are the feet of those who proclaim good news of good things" (*CJn* 32.7.78). This is why footwashing is necessary for the disciples to have a part of Jesus. One must have "beautiful feet" in order to proclaim Christ.

Footwashing makes the disciples into such witnesses in at least two ways. First, "washing their feet" represents Jesus' teaching them how to avoid sin and acquire virtue. In antiquity, effective teaching was measured not in assent to propositions but by whether learners changed their way of life and followed in the way of truth.[15] Because Jesus is the teacher, the teaching is effective, and by living according to the Logos the disciples have a share in the Logos. The virtue of the disciples, as interpreters, is an important restraint on fanciful or arbitrary spiritual interpretation. An interpreter who is truthful and charitable, for example, will tend to give interpretations consistent with his character and thus the presence of the Holy Spirit in him.

Second, Jesus turns students into teachers. "Jesus washes his disciples' feet as their teacher and his servants' feet as their lord" (*CJn* 32.10.115). The distinction of teacher and lord is important because the mission of the Logos is not exhausted by its teaching function. "And this is the purpose of the teacher – in his capacity as teacher – in relation to his disciple, to make the disciple like himself, so that he may no longer require his teacher in that capacity, even if he still needs him in some other capacity" (*CJn* 32.10.118). By contrast, a lord does not wish for a servant to become a lord (*CJn* 32.10.120). For a teacher to teach effectively and to make a teacher out of the student, he must first come down to the student's level. This is what Peter did not understand.

At an historical level, the story is about Peter learning how and why Jesus, the Logos, humbles himself to be an effective teacher. Through spiritual interpretation, the contemporary reader also learns how the Logos humbles itself in the form of Scripture to make her the subject of the Logos' teaching action. Just as Jesus' washing of Peter's feet seemed a stumbling block to Peter, so the text itself contains a stumbling block that is overcome when the reader resolves to see Peter's censure of Jesus as the barrier redirecting attention to how Peter is being taught and thus how to become a student like him. Jesus' action prepares the disciples to accommodate the truth of the Logos to others – to preach and to teach in the church. Origen himself is such a teacher. As a student of Scripture, he has been effectively taught by the

Logos and thus he and his commentary are incorporated into God's pedagogical rationality.

That the Logos humbles itself to wash the feet of the disciples and to clothe itself in the form of Scripture says something about who God is. The Gnostics believed that the Logos did not unite itself to the material realm but brought a secret teaching only for the spiritual elite. Origen's assumption that Jesus' footwashing is fully the action of Logos, and thus of God, means that this God extends salvation to all and assists the ascent of the soul regardless of how advanced or simple it is. Scripture has a "body," or literal meaning, in order to be accessible to all, even beginners (*OFP* 4.2.4). For precisely this reason, spiritual interpretation is required as a later stage in the process. The Gnostics believed the Old Testament law was evil, not a preparation for Christ. But Origen held the Old Testament is part of God's pedagogical strategy by which those who lack spiritual understanding can follow the literal meaning of the law, for example, and grow in the virtue that will later enable a deeper interpretation. Though Origen seems to disparage the physical, he explicitly rejects the Gnostic option. The material realm is not evil, nor is its significance self-contained. Rather, creation points to the source and end in God, and God's intention to return all things to himself.

Origen and Present Debates

The contemporary reader may charge that Origen has arbitrarily allegorized a story that is obviously about service and a ritual practice exemplifying it. Surely Jesus' act of service is the story's historical referent. While we should consider this view, along with others, we can nevertheless learn something from Origen's reading strategy. Both his interpretation and the contemporary one presume what happened back then is to be repeated or re-enacted in the present.

Origen is helpful in today's debates by reminding us that the unity between the past and present is not based on our interpretive efforts to understand, for example, the social significance of footwashing in the ancient world (though such understanding will undoubtedly be illuminating). Rather, our community with the Samaritan woman is rooted in God's activity – God's desire to save both her and us and to use the testimony of the former as a means to the latter. Attending to the Holy Spirit's intention in placing a particular text before us leads to plausibly interpreting footwashing in terms of increasing the capacity of disciples to become teachers and to make the Logos accessible

to others. Such an interpretation is "historical," but not if history is assumed to be an external, neutral category. The character of history itself is defined within the text[16] as the sphere in which God places the incarnate Logos and the text of Scripture before our senses so that we may be drawn upwards to God. Origen believes God's divine economy "operates in the same way in Scripture and in the natural world, in the salvation of the cosmos and in each individual soul. . . ."[17] Since history is the context God has provided for souls to ascend, Scripture as the Word clothed in passages and sounds is an appropriate, enduring way for this ascent to be realized *in time* and *at all times* because by its nature it draws the soul from the material letter to the saving spirit.

In addition Origen helps us think about the authority of Scripture. This authority is soteriological. It is neither an inherent quality of the text nor strictly subjective in corresponding to merely human experiences. Its authority is a function of how God has placed it before us as an aid to our movement towards God. Yet, in light of how the historical-critical method has often made the Bible inaccessible to the "ordinary" reader without facility in ancient languages, cultures, and textual traditions, Origen's framework gives the text back to all those God intends to save (for Origen, a universal intention). There is certainly an essential role for human teachers and authoritative interpreters of the text, though their expertise is valid only if soteriologically oriented. Indeed, the teacher shows herself to be a teacher of the text not by reporting on what it definitively means but by initiating others to see the levels of spiritual meaning.

Multiple meanings are consistent with the text's purpose. Debates about interpretation ought not to be conducted as if there is a decisive, timeless interpretation. David C. Steinmetz contends that "The medieval theory of levels of meaning in the biblical text, with all its undoubted defects, flourished because it is true, while the modern theory of a single meaning with all its demonstrable virtues, is false."[18] The transformative encounter with the text is already an aspect of the text's meaning, and it yields meaning differently to those at different stages of their spiritual journey. Yet, pure subjectivism is avoided because meaning is linked with God's saving intentions that are decisively revealed even though the drama is not yet completed.

The embrace of multiple meanings can also help us appropriate insights from a theologian as controversial as Origen, some of whose teachings were

condemned at the Second Council of Constantinople in 553.[19] We need not adopt his view of materiality, cosmology, the equation of Jewish interpretation with literal interpretation, or even his account of the soul, in order to be taught by him. We may prefer to think of ongoing conversion rather than spiritual ascent, for example. Given his conjectural and multiple interpretations, learning from Origen would not commit us to adopting his particular interpretations. He would himself demand that even our historical-critical knowledge, which insofar as it is true is the witness of the Logos, be brought to bear on the reading of Scripture so long as this serves the author's soteriological intention.

Finally, Origen is a helpful guide because he pushes us to think about the intrinsic connection between what a text is, what it is for, and how it is to be interpreted. For him, the whole of Scripture is a text like no other. It is unified in its author's unique intention to guide the soul to salvation. Scripture does this by being what it is – a text. Clothed by the Holy Spirit in passages and sounds, the Logos presents itself as the message and incorporates readers and interpreters into itself. In the interpretive movement from the literal to the spiritual, the soul gains a greater share in the Logos and inches the cosmos towards the time that God will be "all" and "in all" (*OFP* 1.4.4, referring to 1 Cor. 15:28).

Notes

[1] See Waldemar Janzen, "Canon and Canonical Scripture Interpretation," *Vision: A Journal for Church and Theology* 6 (2005): 22-31; Roy A. Harrisville and Walter Sundberg, *The Bible in Modern Culture: Baruch Spinoza to Brevard Childs*, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002).

[2] Benjamin Jowett, professor of Greek at Oxford, wrote in 1859: "Scripture has one meaning – the meaning which it had in the mind of the Prophet or Evangelist who first uttered or wrote, to the hearers or readers who first received it. . . .The true use of interpretation is to get rid of interpretation, and leave us alone in the company with the author." Cited in David C. Steinmetz, "The Superiority of Pre-Critical Exegesis," in *The Theological Interpretation of Scripture: Classic and Contemporary Readings*, ed. Stephen E. Fowl (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1997), 26. Steinmetz concedes that no contemporary biblical scholar would make such a bald claim, yet the disagreement would not be with this basic hermeneutical theory but "over the application of that theory to . . . exegetical practice," 27.

[3] Gerald T. Sheppard, *The Future of the Bible: Beyond Liberalism and Liberalism* (Toronto: United Church Publishing House, 1990), 43.

[4] Robert W. Jenson, "Hermeneutics and the Life of the Church," in *Reclaiming the Bible for the Church*, eds., Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 103. R.

R. Reno observes that modern readers have come to assume that the difficulty in understanding Scripture derives from the neutral fact of our historical distance from the strange world of 2000 years ago. Reno replies that our true distance from the text is a spiritual one resulting from the hard demands of the Gospel. We try to hide our sinful recoil at these hard demands by reckoning it as a historical problem. R. R. Reno, *The Ruins of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2002), chapter 10.

[5] E.g., Stephen E. Fowl, *Engaging Scripture: A Model for Theological Interpretation* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1998), chapter 7.

[6] Telford Work, *Living and Active: Scripture in the Economy of Salvation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 2.

[7] Fowl, *Engaging Scripture*.

[8] John Webster, *Holy Scripture: A Dogmatic Sketch* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 8-9.

[9] References to Origen's work are made parenthetically in the paper. *CJn = Commentary on John* in Joseph W. Trigg, *Origen* (London: Routledge, 1998). *OFP = On First Principles*, ed. and trans. G.W. Butterworth (New York: Harper & Row, 1966).

[10] Karen J. Torjesen carefully considers Origen's discussion in *OFP* 4.2.4 of a three-fold distinction in Scripture between its "body", "soul" and "spirit." See "'Body', 'soul' and 'spirit' in Origen's Theory of Exegesis," *Anglican Theological Review* 67 (1985): 19-24. The literal and the historical are not the same moment; the former refers to words themselves and the latter to the event. Cf. Karen J. Torjesen, *Hermeneutical Procedure and Theological Method in Origen's Exegesis* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1986), 139. I am not attending to this literal sense of Scripture in this paper.

[11] Karen J. Torjesen, "Origen's Interpretation of the Psalms," *Studia Patristica* 17.2 (1982): 945.

[12] R.P.C. Hanson, *Allegory and Event: A Study of the Sources and Significance of Origen's Interpretation of Scripture* (London: SCM Press, 1959), 364.

[13] I am persuaded by Kilian McDonnell that Origen's subordinationism is functional but not ontological. Kilian McDonnell, "Does Origen Have a Trinitarian Doctrine of the Holy Spirit?" *Gregorianum* 75 (1994): 5-35.

[14] Mark Edwards, "Christ or Plato? Origen on Revelation and Anthropology," in *Christian Origins: Theology, Rhetoric and Community*, eds. Lewis Ayres and Gareth Jones (London: Routledge, 1998), 20.

[15] Torjesen, "'Body,' 'Soul,' and 'Spirit'," 17.

[16] Cf. Robert W. Jenson: "[T]he community from which Scripture comes and which is its immediate community of interpretation is simply the same community, the church, that we are . . . . The historical distance that faith must indeed keep open, and of which historical-critical reading can maintain awareness, is the distance between Moses and the later prophets, between Jesus and Paul, between Paul and us, but never between the story as a whole and us, never between the biblical community as a whole and us." Jenson, "Hermeneutics," 104.

[17] Joseph W. Trigg, "Introduction," in *Origen* (London: Routledge, 1998), 62.

[18] Steinmetz, "Pre-critical Exegesis," 37.

[19] Noting that sympathizers and critics alike often interpreted short passages out of context and took speculative hypotheses as Origen's definitive views, Trigg reminds us that Origen "died a confessor in the communion of the church," Trigg, "Introduction," 64.