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Christ as the *Persona* Speaking according to Origen's First Homily on Psalm 15(16)

Abstract: The discovery of Origen's commentaries on Psalms in 2012 was an event for patristic studies. These commentaries are prepared in the form of homilies. It is said that Origen published them at the end of his life. In preparing his homilies, he applied the allegorical method as he used to do in many of his works. The implied author of Psalm 15(16) speaks in the first person. For Origen, it was evident that the *persona* speaking in Psalm 15(16) was Christ. Indeed, this Psalm belongs to the messianic Psalms. The article draws attention to three points: 1) Christ as the *persona* which has seen no corruption after the death in body; 2) Christ speaking about the Church; 3) Christ's double inheritance corresponding to His double nature: Divine and human. The Son of God (eternal Logos) is connected ontologically to the Father. He is also connected to the people, especially to Christians. The Son of God acts for Christians in the Church. When the Son prays for protection, He prays for Himself and for the faithful. In his commentary on Psalm 15(16), Origen wanted to expose the unity of the Old Testament with the New Testament: God's Son, Logos, Messiah and Christ is the center of both Testaments.

Keywords: Logos, God's Son, Messiah, Christ, Church, Eucharist, Hades

This article concerns Origen's first Homily on Psalm 15(16), belonging to the corpus of ten Psalms (15, 36, 67, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 80, 81) discovered by Marina Molin Pradel in 2012. It is a new collection of patristic texts. The critical edition made by Lorenzo Perrone cooperating with other persons was published by Christopher Marksches of Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften.¹ We will use this version in this article. This

¹ See Origenes, *Homiliae in Psalmos*, in Origenes, *Origenes Werke*. XIII. *Die neuen Psalmenhomilien. Eine kritische Edition des Codex Monacensis Graecus*

collection of Psalms is translated by Joseph W. Trigg and published by the Catholic University in Washington.² This is the translation we use. There are not many publications about these Psalms. We focus our attention on Psalm 15, which belongs to the group of Psalms associated to the cult in the Temple of Jerusalem.³ For our subject, especially the works by Lorenzo Perrone are important; some of them are quoted in this article.

The reader can notice that the first Homily is more elaborate than many other Origen's works. They can be regarded as the crowning of his exegetical works. We see three steps there: the commentary in the form of homily; each homily seems to be presented orally for a group of listeners; then, after the oral presentation, the text was completed and perfected for publication. The author was conscious that he spoke to the public having general education and knowledge of the Bible and theological matters. We share Simonetti's opinion that Origen's exegesis was not destined for *simpliciores*, but for elites.⁴ The homilies are quite long: Psalm 15 is commented in two homilies of about 20 pages each.

According to the Church Tradition, the Old Testament should be referred to the New Testament and especially to Jesus Christ as the Messiah promised by God and foretold by the prophets. Psalm 15 belongs to the main Messianic texts. Our aim is to outline Origen's understanding of this Psalm in the biblical and patristic context. Origen, as the majority of the Church Fathers, analyzed the Holy Scripture in Greek using the Septuagint, but sometimes he checked other translations.⁵ In the Homilies on the Psalms, we can discover some ideas which are to be found in other Origen's works. The teacher of Alexandria, as usual, speaks about Christ in two natures,

314 (eds. L. Perrone – M. Molin Pradel – E. Prinzivalli – A. Cacciari; Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten Jahrhunderte. Neue Folge 19; Berlin – München – Boston, MA: de Gruyter 2015) (= GCS.NF 19).

² See Origen, *Homilies on the Psalms: Codex Monacensis Graecus 314* (trans. J.W. Trigg; The Fathers of the Church 141; Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press 2020).

³ See DeClaissé-Walford *et al.*, "The Book of Psalms," 176.

⁴ See Simonetti, "Lettera e/o allegoria," 98.

⁵ See Perrone, "Origenes alt and neu," 201.

Divine and human. In the quotations from the Homilies on Psalm 15, references to the critical edition in Greek are given and to the English translation as well.

1. Christ as the *persona* who sees no corruption in Hades

At the beginning of his commentary on Psalm 15, Origen says that many Psalms have a Messianic character, but the character of most of them should be deduced; consequently, while reading the text we may, or we may not consider it Messianic. It is not like this with Psalm 15; we find a Messianic interpretation of this Psalm in the Scripture. The most important are the last three verses (9–11). For this reason, Origen starts his commentary from the verse 10: “It has been written in the Acts of the Apostles (2:27) that a passage of this Psalm, ‘You will not abandon my soul in Hades, nor will you allow your devout one to see corruption’ (Ps 15:10) is spoken in the *persona* of the Savior (ἐκ προσώπου τοῦ σωτῆρος). Peter interpreted it together with the other eleven apostles.”⁶

For theologians, the term πρόσωπον is very important; in old Greek it can signify *face*, *front* or *role in the theater*. This word is to be found in the Septuagint in the sense of *face of God* or of Pharaoh (Exod 10:11; 28:30; 34:24). It seems to be normal that this term having so great a tradition in Greek literature was taken over by Christianity. The term πρόσωπον occurs very often in the New Testament, for example in Matt 6:16; Acts 6:15; 1 Cor 13:12; Gal 1:22 and in other places. Origen is one of the first theologians who used the word πρόσωπον in the sense very similar to the sense in which it is used in our times. As we know, people speaking Greek were suspicious towards this word because they supposed that it had a modalistic meaning. The Latin term *persona* had no connotation with modalism. Tertullian used it without hesitation.⁷

Origen interpreted the verses 9–11 of Psalm 15 in a Messianic and Christological sense because Saint Peter gave them such an

⁶ Origenes, *Hom. Ps. 15*, I, 2, 10 (GCS.NF 19, 75; Trigg, 39).

⁷ See Tertullian, *Adversus Praxean*, 7, 3: Sic et Filius ex persona sua confitetur Patrem in nomine Sophiae: ‘Dominus condidit me’ (Prov 8:22).

interpretation. Origen repeated the same affirmation in the second Homily on Psalm 15: “He (Peter) says that David said this, foreseen Christ in spirit. See [...] this Psalm is spoken in the *persona* of Christ.”⁸ As all the Christians, Origen respected the Apostles and treated the books of the New Testament as God’s Word with reverence. For Origen it was important that Peter interpreted Psalm 15 not alone but together with the eleven apostles. Indeed, they were eleven, because Judas was not there. We can say that Peter expressed the faith of the young Church. In so far as we can tell, it was the second opinion expressed by Peter on behalf of all the apostles. The first time he appeared as the head of the apostles when Jesus asked the question, “Who do you say I am?” Peter answered, “You are the Messiah the Son of the living God” (Matt 16:16). Having received the Holy Spirit, Peter for the second time spoke as the representative of all the apostles. It is probably for this reason that Origen attributes great value to Peter’s exposition of Psalm 15.

We can add that also Saint Paul gives a Messianic interpretation to this Psalm: “Therefore he says: ‘You will not let your Holy One see corruption’ (cf. Ps 15[16]:10). For David [...] was laid down and saw corruption, but he whom God raised up did not see corruption” (Acts 13:35–36). Origen, having quoted the fragment from the Acts of the Apostles, declared that Peter explicitly said that Jesus would not see corruption and that his soul would not be abandoned in Hades.⁹

Both Apostles (Peter and Paul) expressed the same opinion on Psalm 15. The key term in the quoted sentence is the word ὅσιος which can be translated as the holy one, devout one, servant, pious, innocent, or blessed one. Each of these terms indicates someone of great dignity. Both Apostles applied this term to the Messiah. It was clear for Origen that Christ was the Holy One about whom the Psalmist had written. The Messianic interpretation of Psalm 15 became part of the Christian tradition, and it has been kept until our times. Origen analyzed the Psalms in the Greek version. Professors J. Łach and S. Łach, having analyzed Psalm 15 in Hebrew, declared that there was no essential difference between the meaning of Ps 16(15) in

⁸ Origenes, *Hom. Ps. 15*, II, 1, 15 (GCS.NF 19, 91; Trigg, 58).

⁹ See Origenes, *Hom. Ps. 15*, I, 2, 5 (GCS.NF 19, 76; Trigg, 40).

the LXX and TM, and a Messianic interpretation of this Psalm was justified in both versions.¹⁰

The reader may ask, why refer to Jesus the text which was written many centuries before Him? Does this conform to its author's intention? We do not know exactly who composed this Psalm. In the Jewish and Christian tradition, the authorship of Psalms was attributed to King David. Peter, Paul and Origen remained in this tradition. While reading Peter's speech we can suppose that he was conscious that some of his listeners were also ready to think that it was David who spoke in this Psalm about himself. Having in mind such hypotheses Peter gave his explanation. In the Acts of the Apostles (2:29–31), we can read: "Brothers, I can say to you with confidence concerning the patriarch David that he died and was buried [...]. Being a prophet, then [...] he spoke looking ahead to Christ's arising, that He would be not abandoned in Hades, nor would his flesh see corruption." Origen copied this fragment from the Acts of the Apostles (2:25–31) and inserted it into his Homily.¹¹ In many English translations the idiom *περὶ ἀναστάσεως* is translated "about resurrection." This term refers to Christ's declaration, "I am the Resurrection and Life" – Ἐγὼ εἰμι ἡ ἀνάστασις καὶ ἡ ζωὴ (John 11:25).

The most important thing is that Peter interpreted Psalm 15, especially the sentence "You will not abandon my soul in Hades, nor will you allow your devout one to see corruption" (Ps 15:10)¹² referring it to Christ, who died, but He did know corruption in the tomb because He was risen up (resurrected). Peter could interpret this sentence in the sense of resurrection because this term and concept were known in Israel. Jesus said to Lazarus' sister, "Your brother will rise again." Martha answered, "I know that he will rise again in the last day of resurrection" (John 11:23). We see here the classical terms for resurrection which were known by a simple woman.

L. Perrone, while commenting on the verses 9–11 of Psalm 15, writes that the First-born (Col 1:18; Rev 1:5) is presented by Origen as the one who goes up in triumph to Heaven with his body – that

¹⁰ See "The Book of Psalms," 150.

¹¹ See Origenes, *Hom. Ps.* 15, I, 2, 5 (GCS.NF 19, 76; Trigg, 40).

¹² See Ps 15:9; Origenes, *Hom. Ps.* 15, I, 2, 5 (GCS.NF 19, 76; Trigg, 40).

is his *anabasis* – Christ’s ascension into Heaven with body is an exemplary paradigm for the divinization of human body.¹³ For better understanding of this sentence quoted by St. Peter, we should turn our attention to the meaning of the term *Hades*. It is a translation of the Hebrew term Sheol. J. Jeremias explains that when this term is used in the New Testament. It signifies “the world of the dead persons” who have lost their bodies; they will go out from this “world” on the Day of Resurrection; in this sense the dead remain there for a certain time. H. Pietras supposes that Origen had no clear concept of Sheol or Hades. His idea probably was: “Christ was in the tomb in body; He entered into Hades in soul, but He remained in union with the Father in spirit.”¹⁴

Jeremias reminds us that Hades must not be confused with Gehenna which is a space of perpetual rejection by God.¹⁵ The word *Hades* was translated into Latin as *infernum*.

The concept of a “place” of waiting of the dead occurs in the New Testament. St. Peter wrote: “Christ [...] went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison; because they formerly did not obey when God’s patience waited in the days of Noah” (1 Pet 3:19). This prison, not in the material sense of the word, was a place for those who were not obedient to God during their life on earth, but who were not completely rejected. Peter used the words “prison” because he (probably) did not want to use the pagan term “Hades.” The concept of a place (or a space) of temporary stay of the dead is to be found in the works of the oldest Christian theologians.¹⁶ Clement of Alexandria wrote, “Wherefore the Lord preached the Gospel to those in Hades. Accordingly, the Scripture says: ‘Hades says to Destruction: We have not seen His form, but we have heard His voice’ (Job 28:22; Deut 4:12). It is plainly not the place, which, the words above say, heard the voice, but those who have been put in Hades, and have abandoned

¹³ See Perrone, “Et l’homme,” 215.

¹⁴ Pietras, “Kerygmaticzna treść”, 118.

¹⁵ See Jeremias, “Hades,” 148–149; Smentek, “Eschatologia trynitarna,” 234.

¹⁶ See Pietras, “Eschatologia,” 48–51. The author gives references to the Bible: Eccl 9:10; Rev 20:13–14; 1 Pet 3:19–21, and to *Hermae Pastor*, IX, 16, 5–7; Clemens Alexandrinus, *Stromata*, II, 9, 44, 1–4, and Hippolytus Romanus, *Comm. Dan.*, IV, 2, 4.

themselves to destruction, like persons who have thrown themselves voluntarily from a ship into the sea. They, then, are those that hear the Divine power and voice.”¹⁷ Clement referred to Hermas.¹⁸ Both Hermas and Clement did not hesitate to use the pagan term “Hades” attributing to it a Christian meaning.

Origen, following Christian tradition, believed that Christ, having been crucified, entered Hades to visit the dead. He descended there in accord with the plan of salvation, because every region needed to be visited by Christ Jesus, including the place beneath the earth.¹⁹ So, in the time from the crucifixion (Friday evening) until Sunday morning Christ was in Hades. L. Perrone points out that only the soul of Christ went down to Hades.²⁰ It is to be understood that the scenario of visiting the dead in Hades had as the aim presenting the universal character of salvation in Christ: all the just people are saved by Him independently of the time of their life on earth. The idea of Christ descending into Hades was expressed by certain old creeds and conserved by many theologians.²¹ In the Creed written by Tyrannius Rufinus c. 404 the faithful confessed Christ who *crucifixus sub Pontio Pilato et sepultus, descendit ad inferna, tertia die resurrexit a mortuis*.²² Here the term *infernum* is used in plural *ad inferna*. Origen, following St. Peter (Acts 2:27–28), declared that the last two verses of Psalm 15 had a Christological character, and he felt authorized to interpret all the other verses of this Psalm in the same sense. We can see Origen’s method. He says: Christ has died because of His human nature, He was risen because of His Divine nature. It was not only His personal victory; through His resurrection He granted freedom and new life to the people who lived in the past.

¹⁷ See Clemens Alexandrinus, *Stromata*, VI, 45, 1, SC 446, 150, my own translation.

¹⁸ See Hermas, *Hermae Pastor*, IX, 16, 5–7, quoted by Clemens Alexandrinus, *Stromata*, II, 44, 1–4.

¹⁹ See Origenes, *Hom. Ps.* 15, I, 2, 5 (GCS.NF 19, 76; Trigg, 40).

²⁰ See Perrone, “Abstieg,” 330.

²¹ See Kelly, “Early Christian,” 378–383.

²² See Denzinger, “Symboles,” § 16 (other old creeds §§ 10–76).

2. Christ speaking about the Church

Having explained the last three verses of Psalm 15, Origen went to the beginning of this Psalm. He started by quoting the first verse: “Protect me, o Lord, because I have hoped in you – I have said to the Lord” (Ps 15:1). And he gave his interpretation of this verse: the Savior pronounced His own prayer because He wanted to teach us to pray.²³ Why should the Savior pronounce such a prayer? Why does the Son need protection? Origen explains that “the Savior is in want of the Father”; only God of the Universe is completely independent, and He needs nothing from anybody.²⁴

According to Origen, only the Father is the principle of being – the Son is begotten by Him, while all the other things are created by Him. The Son is ontologically close to the Father. His moral and spiritual and ontological union with the Father is expressed, among others, by the prayer; we can see it in Christ’s Great Prayer (John 17:1–26). The Son is united with God the Father and with the people as well, especially with Christians. He pronounces *His* prayer for *His* people and *with His* people. He identified himself with the people. Origen quotes Christ’s words, “When I was hungry, you gave me food; when I was thirsty, you gave me drink” (Matt 25:35). The place of identification of Christ with His people is the Church. It is known that, based on such teaching, Christians organized help for widows, orphans, and poor people.²⁵

Origen wrote, “You are composite, having a body inferior to the being of your soul and to the nature of your spirit. But my Savior is composite through the Church, insofar as his body, about which He prays: Protect me, Lord.”²⁶ We see a parable: a human being has two inferior parts (soma and psyche) and Christ in His mystical Body has inferior parts: they are Christians. It is an allusion to the teaching of St. Paul about the Church as Body of Christ (1 Cor 12:12–27) which was developed largely by Clement of Rome²⁷ and continued by many

²³ See Origenes, *Hom. Ps. 15*, I, 3, 15 (GCS.NF 19, 76; Trigg, 40).

²⁴ See Origenes, *Hom. Ps. 15*, I, 3, 15 (GCS.NF 19, 76; Trigg, 40).

²⁵ Śrutwa, “Praca,” 212–236.

²⁶ See Origenes, *Hom. Ps. 15*, I, 3, 20 (GCS.NF 19, 77; Trigg, 42).

²⁷ See Clemens Romanus, *Epistula I ad Corinthios*, 38, 1–4.

other theologians.²⁸ The invocation of the Psalmist “Protect me, Lord” can be understood as the prayer of Christ in the Church. He asks for protection for Himself and for the faithful. It is to be presumed that Origen does not mean the same kind of protection.

In conformity with his initial thesis, Origen gives a Christological interpretation to the third verse of Psalm 15: “He has made wonders for the holy ones who are in his land (Ps 15:3).” This verse is not present in English versions of the Bible,²⁹ but it is in Greek version and in Latin version. Origen quoted this verse from the Septuagint. The editor of the French Bible explains that the sense of this verse is obscure. As is to be expected, Origen declares that the One who “made wonders” is God of Israel, and “the holy ones” are the Hebrew people wandering through the deserts under the direction of Moses assisted by the men such as Caleb, Joshua and Eleazar; “the Holy Land” is Kanaan as the Promised Earth; by “wonders” all the extraordinary events which happened on the way from Egypt to Kanaan should be understood. It is the first level of understanding of this verse (historical sense). Jewish people remain on this level.

Christians go further and understand this verse figuratively: the Church is God’s land. Those who are within the boundaries of the Church, may enjoy God’s wonders.³⁰ On the one hand, people of Israel saw wonders on their way to the Holy Land (Kanaan). On the other hand, Christians see wonders while being in the Church. In the historical sense, the term “holy ones” signifies the people of Israel. In the allegorical sense it signifies Christians. Origen completes this statement by another verse of the Psalm: “Therefore, it has been said: ‘He has made wonders for the holy ones who are in his land; all His things willed are in them’” (Ps 15:3).³¹ In whom are all the things? In the people living in God’s land, i.e. in the Church. The faithful of the Old Testament were called “saints” or “holy” (Exod 19:6; 22:30; 30:29). In the New Testament Christ is called “saint” (Acts 3:14) and Christians were also called “saints” or “holy” (Rom 1:7; 12:13;

²⁸ See Grabowski, “The Church,” 3–229.

²⁹ See “New American Bible,” “Catholic Good News,” “Holy Bible.”

³⁰ See Origenes, *Hom. Ps.* 15, I, 6, 5 (GCS.NF 19, 84; Trigg, 49).

³¹ See Origenes, *Hom. Ps.* 15, I, 6, 5 (GCS.NF 19, 84; Trigg, 49).

15:25.31; 1 Cor 6:1; 7:14; 2 Cor 1:1; 8:4). The Church is the place of dealing with God and of sanctification of the faithful. The connection of God to His people is expressed by the sentence: “Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy [...]. You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy” (Lev 11:44–45).

Origen was conscious that God’s people of the Old Testament and the people of the New Testament were not holy in the strict sense of this term. What the honorable title “saint” expresses is more likely the greatness of their vocation to the fullness of life in God. In this sense Origen interpreted the verse 4 of Psalm 15: “Their weaknesses have been multiplied; they hasten after these things.” He means the weaknesses of the people living in the Holy Land and of those who are going to the Holy Land.³² For the people of the Old Testament, the term “holy land” was the Promised Earth (Kannan) as the place of living and waiting for the Messiah. For the people of the New Testament, the “holy land” is the Church as the place of living and waiting for the second coming of Christ. In this sense, those who *are* in the Holy Land, in fact *are on the way* to the Holy Land in the full sense of the word, i.e., to God’s Kingdom (Heaven). The weaknesses of God’s people do not destroy their vocation because “power is made complete in weakness and whenever the holy one is weak, then he is strong, and the just person flourishes in weaknesses.”³³ To conclude this reasoning, Origen quotes St. Paul: “When I am weak, then I am powerful” (2 Cor 12:10). As we remember, Christian theory and practice in penitential matters were based on the awareness of human weaknesses. The faithful may obtain forgiveness of their sins because of Divine mercy. In this fragment of the Commentary on Psalm 15, we see Origen’s method. He says: Christ as God’s Son asked the Father for protection, He was begotten by the Father and remained with Him in a permanent union. While being in the world in human nature, He prayed to the Father for the protection for His people who were convoked to be sanctified in the Church.

³² See Origenes, *Hom. Ps.* 15, I, 7, 20 (GCS.NF 19, 84; Trigg, 50).

³³ See Origenes, *Hom. Ps.* 15, I, 7, 20 (GCS.NF 19, 84; Trigg, 50).

3. Christ's double inheritance

In all his works, Origen had in mind the concept of the Logos as the Mediator between God the Father-Creator and the created things, especially the people. It is said that Origen was inspired by Philo of Alexandria, who wrote in one of his works: "Every man in regard of his intellect is connected to divine reason (Logos), being an impression or a fragment or a ray of that blessed nature; but in regard of the structure of his body he is connected to the universal world. For he is composed of the same materials as the world, that is of earth, and water, and air and fire, each of the elements having contributed its appropriate part towards the completion of most sufficient materials, which the Creator was to take in order to fashion this visible image."³⁴

Scholars point out that Philo attributes to the Logos the second place after God. The Logos of Philo is not God, but the first-born son of God. The human being, through the support of the Logos, can be raised toward God.³⁵ As we know, Philo's concept of God was based on the Bible of the Old Testament, where God is presented in a very personal way, but – some scholars say – in his concept the Logos was not a personal being but rather God's reason or God's thought, even if he calls him "the oldest son of God" or second God.³⁶ For Origen it was evident that God is a personal being and the Logos is God's Son having all the personal qualities.³⁷ Christians remember the statement of St. John: "God is love" (1 John 4:8) – love is a quality of personal beings. According to Origen, love is connected to wisdom.³⁸

We notice certain elements of Philo's concept in Origen's interpretation of the verse 5 of Psalm 15: "The Lord is the portion of my inheritance and of my cup. You are the one restoring my inheritance to me". Origen explains that the Savior has two inheritances, on higher and lower levels. God is the one on the higher level. His people, called sometimes "holy ones," are on the lower level. Christ shares "the good things" from the Father with Christians.³⁹ Double inheritance is based

³⁴ Philo Alexandrinus, *De opificio mundi*, 146.

³⁵ See Joachimowicz, "Introduction," 24.

³⁶ See Joachimowicz, "Introduction," 25.

³⁷ See Szram, "Osobowy charakter," 187–200.

³⁸ See Szram, "Chrystus – Mądrość Boża," 172.

³⁹ See Origenes, *Hom. Ps.* 15, I, 8, 5 (GCS.NF 19, 86; Trigg, 51–52).

on the double nature of Christ: Divine and human; theologians should expose the truth about both (*utriusque naturae veritas demonstratur*).⁴⁰

The work of the Logos is to transfer Divine and spiritual goods to the people and to represent the people before God the Creator, “representing” means interceding for the people. Old Christian writers used to say: because of His Divine nature Christ is consubstantial with God the Father, and because of His human nature Christ is consubstantial with the people. The term “portion of inheritance” can be understood as a position (between God and people) or task or duty or activity or mission or function of the Logos.

Origen tried to interpret the term “cup” (ποτήριον) which is used in the verse 5 of Psalm 15: “The Lord is the Savior’s portion of inheritance and his cup. We drink the Savior and we eat the Savior: the Logos is ‘living bread coming down from heaven’ (John 6:51) and ‘the true vine’ (John 15:1)”.⁴¹ As we see, Origen refers the metaphor of the cup to Christ as the Logos, i.e. as the Word of God and as the true bread and wine. The term “word” means Divine message or Divine teaching; the terms “bread and wine” mean Eucharist. According to Origen, since we eat Him and His flesh and since we drink His blood, the Savior enters our nature and experiences something on our part. He remains as the complete Logos when we eat Him, and He remains complete even when we drink Him.⁴² The Logos remains complete in this sense: it is not diminished when people eat him. As we can see in the history of salvation, “the nature of the Logos as spiritual food is changeable, adopting the needs and possibilities of those who eat”⁴³. Origen followed the Christian tradition in this matter: St. Ignatius of Antioch also wrote about the unification with Christ through His Body and Blood.⁴⁴

Origen refers the metaphor of the cup from Psalm 15 neither to other Psalms nor to the other sayings of Christ. For example, in Psalm 116 we can read: “I will lift up the cup of salvation and call

⁴⁰ See Origenes, *De principiis*, II, 6, 2, SC 252, 322.

⁴¹ Origenes, *Hom. Ps.* 15, I, 9, 5 (GCS.NF 19, 87; Trigg, 52–53).

⁴² See Origenes, *Hom. Ps.* 15, I, 9, 5 (GCS.NF 19, 87; Trigg, 52–53).

⁴³ Bardski, “Symbolism”, 91.

⁴⁴ See Ignatius Antiochenus, *Epistula ad Romanos*, VII, 3.

on the name of the Lord” (v. 12). This verse can be interpreted in the Messianic sense. Christ said in Gethsemane, “Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me” (Luke 22:42). Here the cup signifies suffering. It seems that Origen preferred to stay with the application of the term “cup” to the concept of food: the Word of God and Eucharist, because he wanted to say that not only the Son, but also the Father could be considered nourishment. For proving such a statement, Origen quotes a fragment from the Bible: “They have abandoned me, a spring of the water of life” (Jer 2:13). It is God the Father who speaks; that means that God can be called “water of life” and in that sense He is drinkable. Origen also quotes a sentence from the Gospel: “A human being will live upon every utterance coming out of God’s mouth” (Matt 4:4). It is the Divine Logos who comes from the Father (or from God’s mouth). Consequently, Origen says that the body is nourished and without nourishment it dies. The soul is nourished with its own proper nourishment. It is nourished with Christ himself, and without such a nourishment it dies.⁴⁵

Origen’s metaphor of nourishment should be placed in the context of his teaching on the food in physical and spiritual sense which he expressed in his other books. F. Soler made a summary of his opinions in this matter: “Origen here configures an explicit analogic ratio between the growth, desire, food and beverages of the body, with the growth, desire, food and beverages of the mind. This is also a consequence of a theology where the focus is on participation: all rational beings exist because they participate in the existence derived from the Father. Eating and drinking metaphors are functional well in this regard because they denote participation; the only one who does not need to participate to exist is the Father because he is not-needy nor derived from another.”⁴⁶

We find a teaching about the spiritual nourishment in Origen’s book “On prayer.” The author quotes two sentences of Christ: “My Father gives you the true Bread from Heaven. For the Bread of God is He who comes down from Heaven and gives life to the world” (John 6:32–33). This Bread is Christ Himself who said: “I am the

⁴⁵ See Origenes, *Hom. Ps.* 15, I, 9, 10 (GCS.NF 19, 89; Trigg, 55).

⁴⁶ Soler, “The theological use,” 17.

Bread of Life” (John 6:35). According to Origen the true Bread nourishes the true man who is made in God’s image, and the one who is nourished by such a Bread becomes like the Creator. The one who is nourishing by the Word (Logos) is capable of receiving the Wisdom of God?⁴⁷ As we remember, God’s Logos was identified by Origen with personified Wisdom. Basic teaching about this is to be found in Prov 8:22–36 and in Sir 24:1–10.

As we see, Origen considers Christ to be the Bread of Life and Food – Christ’s Body become flesh.⁴⁸ By such food the theologian understands not only Eucharist but the whole work of Christ in human nature: His message and His work. There are many fragments where Origen, while speaking about Divine food, does not speak exactly about Eucharist, but we can suppose that he also takes it into consideration. We can see Origen’s approach to this question in his commentary on the Lord’s Prayer. For our subject the following invocation is important: Τὸν ἄρτον ἡμῶν τὸν ἐπιούσιον δὸς ἡμῖν σήμερον (Matt 6:9). This sentence was translated into Latin: *Panem nostrum supersubstantialem da nobis hodie*. The term ἐπιούσιος is translated into Latin as *supersubstantialis*, its meaning is “essential.” It seems to be correct because this term comes from οὐσία – “essence.” The same sentence from the Gospel of Luke is translated: *Panem nostrum quotidianum da nobis hodie* – “give as our daily bread” (Luke 11:2–4). It seems to be simplified. Origen explained that this word seems to be a compound from οὐσία – essence as the term signifying the bread that contributes to the essence of human being. Because spirituality is more important than body, the term ἐπιούσιος should be referred to immaterial things, which should have priority in Christian life.⁴⁹ Such an opinion is deduced from Christ’s words: “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God” (Matt 4:4; Deut 8:3). B. Czyżewski, having examined the phrase ἐπί οὐσία in Origen’s interpretation, declares that it signifies “the highest level of the substance of bread that

⁴⁷ See Origenes, *De oratione*, 12, GCS 3, 297–403.

⁴⁸ See Origenes, *De oratione*, 12, GCS 3, 297–403.

⁴⁹ See Origenes, *De oratione*, 12, GCS 3, 297–403.

is the supernatural bread.”⁵⁰ S. Kalinkowski supposes that Origen accepted Eucharist also as food or bread, but only on the first level of Christian formation.⁵¹ He put accent on the allegorical and mystical understanding of Eucharist.

In his first Homily on Psalm 15, Origen wanted to say: as the faithful have Christ (His Body and Blood) as nourishment, in the same way Christ has the Father as nourishment, and He has the Father as his cup.⁵² So, “God is drinkable” not only for the people, but also for the Son, probably not in the same sense. Origen declares that the Savior “needs nourishment and drink.” He never neglects his own nourishment, but always keeps watch and is nourished by the Father. The souls who stop being nourished cannot live. What about the Son? Origen did not discuss such a question: “If He were, hypothetically, not to be nourished, I do not know what would follow.”⁵³ He believed that the Son could not stop existing because His immortality is not something acquired, but it belongs to His nature. “The Savior is immortal because immortality is supplied to Him.”⁵⁴ The Son received immortality, but He received it in the act of being begotten by the Father; we can say that immortality belongs ontologically to Son’s nature; for this reason, we can say that He is eternal,⁵⁵ though this term in Greek was not very clear.⁵⁶ Origen used it in his other works.

Here are two fundamental affirmations of Origen: close union of the Father with the Son, and a kind of dependence of the Son on the Father. Such dependence is called moderated subordinationism or anti-subordinationism:⁵⁷ the Son is dependent on the Father not only in His function or mission, but also in His being. We can better

⁵⁰ Czyżewski, *Teocentryzm i antropocentryzm*, 157.

⁵¹ Kalinkowski, “Orygenes o Eucharystii”, 71.

⁵² See Origenes, *Hom. Ps.* 15, I, 9, 10 (GCS.NF 19, 87; Trigg, 53).

⁵³ Origenes, *Hom. Ps.* 15, I, 9, 15 (GCS.NF 19, 89; Trigg, 55).

⁵⁴ Origenes, *Hom. Ps.* 15, I, 9, 20 (GCS.NF 19, 89; Trigg, 55).

⁵⁵ See Orbe, “Introduction,” I, 277.

⁵⁶ See Nieścior, “Theological themes,” 71–72.

⁵⁷ See Ramelli, “Origen’s anti-subordinationism,” 24–25; Starowieyski, “Orygenes,” 758. J. Woliński speaks about orthodox subordinationism in opposition to Arian subordinationism (“De l’économie,” 229).

understand this teaching when we take into consideration Origen's opinion on the relationship between the Son and the Father. In his "Commentary on the Gospel of St. John" we find the following teaching: the true God is the God (ἀληθινὸς οὖν θεὸς ὁ θεός). Other gods who were formed after Him are like reproduction of the One Prototype (πρωτότυπος).⁵⁸ The image-Prototype of those numerous images is the Logos, which is from the beginning with God (ὁ πρὸς τὸν θεὸν ἔστι λόγος), continues to be God because it is with God. It would be not God if it were not at the beginning with God, and if it would not continue to contemplate the depth of the Father.⁵⁹

This is Origen's fundamental affirmation in Christological matters: the Son is Divine, He has the Divine nature, He is God, but not in the same way as the Father. The Father is the Principal God (ὁ θεός and αὐτόθεος) while Son is God by participation in the Divinity of the Father. The participation in the being and Divinity of the Father does not diminish the Divinity of the Son. L. Ayres wrote: "The name of the Father implies the existence of a child, and if God is truly called Father, the Son's generation must be eternal. The Son's existence thus seems to be essential to God's being and that is what God from all eternity wills to be. Thus, we see that while the Father is superior to the Son, Origen works to make the Son intrinsic to the being of God: subordinationism is an inappropriate word describing this theological dynamic."⁶⁰ The Son is the First among all the other beings coming from God: archangels, angels and people. Origen calls them also gods without attributing them the true divinity, they are instead divinized or sanctified by dealing with God the Father and with His Son and with the Holy Spirit.⁶¹ The Son is holy by nature, the others can be sanctified. The difference between the Logos and other beings is great and essential.

⁵⁸ Grzywaczewski, "La relation", 318–327.

⁵⁹ See Origenes, *Comm. Jo.*, II, 18, SC 120 bis, 225.

⁶⁰ Ayres, "Nicaea," 22–23.

⁶¹ There are three levels (*gradus*) of Divine operation: the Father acts on the level of creation; the Son (Logos) acts on the level of rationality; the Holy Spirit acts on the level of sanctification. See Origenes, *De principiis* I, 3, 5–8, SC 252, 152–165. The three Persons of the Trinity remain in union in *operatione ad extra*.

In those considerations we see Origen's method. He says: the Son in His divinity is united to the Father and God is His cup, i.e., spiritual food and drink. He is permanently with God (John 1:1). Christ in His human nature is united with the people, especially with Christians. He is a spiritual bread and drink offered to them in the Church. Because of His both natures coexisting in the hypostatic union,⁶² Christ-Logos can be the Mediator between God the Father and the humanity.

Conclusion

The most important statement in the First Homily on Psalm 15 is: the *persona* speaking in this Psalm is God's Son – the eternal Logos. Origen did not feel obliged to deduce such a statement from the text of Psalm. He took it for granted: it is St. Peter who applied the last two verses of Psalm 15 to Jesus Christ. When the psalmist says – “You will not abandon my soul in Hades” – he thinks about Christ who died, but did not remain in the tomb. He is risen and appeared to the Apostles. Christ is not only risen, but He went down into Hades to liberate the people who remained there. The term “Hades” is taken from Hellenic tradition. This term was introduced into the Septuagint to translate the Hebrew term Sheol. In this sense, this old Greek word, used at first in pagan context, became a theological term in Christianity.

Hades must not be confused with Gehenna. The difference is great: Hades is a place or space, not in material sense of the word, where those people remain after their death, who were not perfected enough for entering Heaven. Christ went there to make them go out and go to the House of the Father. Later, this place or space was called “Paradise.” Gehenna is the place or space, not in material sense of the word, of definitive rejection by God. It is called Hell. The teaching about Hades and Gehenna are in the New Testament. According to scholars such as Larry Hurtado and Malcolm Peel, in the second century and thereafter there was no more well-known and popular

⁶² According to the Council of Chalcedon (451), Christ has two natures: Divine and human which remain in a hypostatic union; they act together because of the *communicatio idiomatum*. See Lament, “The nature,” 16.

belief among early Christians.⁶³ By the scenario of Christ liberating the dead from Hades, the Church wanted to express a fundamental statement: Christ is saving not only the faithful who are alive, but also those who lived in the past. In other words, the work of salvation in Christ is not limited by time.

It is known that Origen was inspired by Philo of Alexandria in his teaching about the relationship of the Son with the Father. In other verses of Psalm 15, Origen shows Christ acting for the faithful in the Church. When He says to the Father in prayer: “Protect me, Lord”, He prays for Himself and for Christians. It is evident that people need God’s protection. The Son has Divine nature, and He is ontologically connected to the Father. He is the Mediator between God and people. The Son also needs a kind of protection because God the Father is the principle of being for Him. Origen did not take into consideration a hypothetical possibility: the Son turning away from the Father. The people of Israel experienced God’s protection while going from Egypt to Kanaan. The promised Land of Kanaan was a figure of the Church. Christians need God’s protection while being in the Church for two reasons: they have their weaknesses and they are still on the way through the Church to the true Promised Land, that is to God’s Kingdom. God is holy and Christians were also called holy, not in the strict sense of the word, but because they are convoked to the fullness of life in God.

In Psalm 15 it is said that Christ has two inheritances confirming His two natures: Divine and human. He is consubstantial with the Father, and He is consubstantial with people. He said: “The Lord is my cup.” By the term “cup” Origen understood food and drink. Christ needs to be nourished permanently by the Father, He is united with Him. Christians need natural food, but also spiritual food: it is the Word of God and Eucharist – Christ’s Body and Blood. They are invited to “eat” and to “drink” Christ. Such bread and drink are needed for eternal life. God the Father is holy by nature and the Son is holy by nature as well. Christians can be sanctified by dealing with God in the Church.

⁶³ See Hurtado, “Lord Jesus Christ,” 628–229. See Peel, “The ‘Descensus ad Infernos,’” 27; Grillmeier, “Der Gottessohn,” 1–53; 184–203.

Origen's interpretation of Psalms in the Christological sense, especially of Psalm 15, can be justified by Christ's statement: "Everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets, and the Psalms must be fulfilled. Then, he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures" (Luke 24:44). Origen believed that he had good understanding of the Holy Scripture, and he wanted to share his knowledge with others through his writings, including his Commentary on Psalms.

Chrystus jako „osoba mówiąca” w Pierwszej Homilii Orygenesa do Psalmu 15(16)

Abstrakt: Odkrycie komentarza Orygenesa do dziesięciu psalmów w 2012 roku było znaczącym wydarzeniem dla studiów patrystycznych. Komentarze te zredagowane są w formie homilii. Przypuszcza się, że Orygenes opublikował je pod koniec życia. Orygenes posługuje się w nich, podobnie jak wielu innych swych dziełach, alegoryczną metodą interpretacji Pisma Świętego. Autor Psalmu 15 mówi w pierwszej osobie. Dla Orygenesa było rzeczą oczywistą, że tą osobą (*prosōpon*) jest Chrystus. Istotnie, Psalm 15(16) należy do psalmów mesjańskich. Niniejszy artykuł dotyczy trzech rzeczy: 1) Chrystus jako osoba, której ciało nie doznało rozkładu po śmierci; 2) Chrystus mówiący o Kościele; 3) podwójne dziedzictwo Chrystusa odpowiadające dwu naturom – boskiej i ludzkiej. Syn Boży (wieczny Logos) jest związany z Bogiem Ojcem ontologicznie. Jest on także związany z ludźmi, szczególnie z chrześcijanami. Syn Boży działa na rzecz chrześcijan w Kościele. Jeśli Syn prosi Boga Ojca o protekcję, to prosi o nią dla siebie, a także dla wierzących. W swym Komentarzu do Psalmu 15(16) Orygenes chciał podkreślić jedność Starego Testamentu z Nowym: w centrum obu znajduje się Logos jako Syn Boży, Mesjasz i Chrystus.

Słowa kluczowe: Logos, Syn Boży, Mesjasz, Chrystus, Kościół, Eucharystia, Hades

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