# **Chapter 3: The Apostolic and Prophetic Church according to Iulius Africanus, Origen and Tertullian**

## **Origen, Scripture Doctrine and Sermon**

With Origen (approx. 185/186 - approx. 253/254), like with his contemporary Iulius, we take a further step into the past beyond Eusebius. Although the great scholar of Alexandria and later of Caesarea in Palestine wrote neither a chronicle nor a history of the beginnings of Christianity, he cannot be ignored in our study because he not only had an implicit idea of ​​the beginnings of Christianity, which later became trend-setting, but also had reflected upon the chronology of Christianity, because he had to go against the Chronicler's charge that the Jews (let alone Christianity that appeared much later) is not among the counted venerable old traditions. In his work " Against Celsus " Origen reports of his opponent:

‘Thinking that *between many of the nations there is an affinity* in that *they hold the same doctrine*, Celsus names all the nations which he supposes to have held this doctrine originally. But for some unknown reason he misrepresents the Jews alone, and does not include their race in the list with the others; nor does he say of them either that they *took part in labours* equal to theirs and *had the same notions* or that they *held similar doctrines in many respects*. It is therefore worth while asking him why ever he believed in barbarian and Greek stories about the antiquity of the people whom he mentioned, while it is only this nation whose histories he regards as untrue.’[[1]](#footnote-1)

With some effort Origen tries to use various sources, including different authors, also of non-Jewish origins, but primarily refers to Josephus Flavius, in order to ascribe ancient ‘wisdom’ to the Jewish people,[[2]](#footnote-2) for Celsus ‘had set himself the goal of attacking the origin of Christianity, which derives from the Jews’.[[3]](#footnote-3) Celsus attributes authority and tradition not to Jews, but only to Greeks and Persians:

‘*Linos, Musaeus, Orpheus, Pherecydes, Zoroaster the Persian, and Pythagoras understood these doctrines, and their opinions were put down in books and are preserved to this day*.’[[4]](#footnote-4)

Origen holds against Celsus a Judeo-Christian universalism, which I will go into further below, according to which God expressed a claim to rule over all people through the laws handed down to Moses. In Moses he had chosen a wise man who surpassed all poets and philosophers of other peoples, even if he had to be seen as ‘still far inferior to the Lord’, Jesus Christ:

‘The writings of Moses have moved many even of those alien to Jewish culture to believe, as the Scriptures claim, that the God who first made these laws and gave them to Moses was the Creator of the world. For it was fitting that the Creator of the whole world who appointed laws for the whole world should have given a power to the words that was able to overcome men everywhere. I am saying this without raising as yet any question about Jesus, but still treating of Moses who was far inferior to the Lord, to show that, as my argument will prove, he was far superior to your wise poets and philosophers.’[[5]](#footnote-5)

More than any other writer of early Christianity of Greek tongue Origen became formative for the East and in certain extent also in the West through the translations of his works by Rufinus of Aquila in the fifth century.[[6]](#footnote-6)

Origen gave the most important impetus for the description of the beginnings of Christianity - in addition to many philosophical and theological ideas that ultimately led to the controversy of ‘Origenism’ from the 4th century onwards - through his advocacy and use of the concepts introduced by Irenaeus of Lyon (approx. 177), present in the New Testament together with those of the Old Testament. Even if Origen was not the first Christian writer to present interpretations of the biblical books, including those being now present in the New Testament, the ‘scope of Origen's work’ was ‘legendary’ in antiquity, and, indeed, ‘the vast majority of his work were exegetical writings’, of which unfortunately ‘the greater part has been lost’.[[7]](#footnote-7)

Looking at his exegetical output, it is highly important for his understanding of the beginnings of Christianity that he not only commented on books of the Old Testament, but equally on the New Testament, reckoning these writings to be on par with those of the Old Testament forming an extended Christian Bible. ‘Convinced that the Holy Scriptures were written directly under God's direction’, that is, both the Jewish and the Christian scriptures, he saw himself ‘not obliged to believe in the inerrancy of their literal meaning’.[[8]](#footnote-8) Despite this restriction, which ‘aroused the contradiction of those who saw the authority of Scripture endangered by the admission that the Bible does not always report historical facts’,[[9]](#footnote-9) for Origen the Bible formed the immovable foundation on which his own view of the world, history, philosophy and theology was based. He opens his systematic work of the four books ‘On the principles’ with reference to Scriptures:

‘All who believe and are assured that grace and truth were obtained through Jesus Christ, and who know Christ to be the truth, agreeably to His own declaration, *I am the truth*, derive the knowledge which incites men to a good and happy life from no other source than from the very words and teaching of Christ. And by the words of Christ we do not mean those only which He spoke when He became man and tabernacled in the flesh; for before that time, Christ, the Word of God, was in Moses and the prophets.’[[10]](#footnote-10)

What we are more familiar with today, that Christians read the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments in their worship and in their personal spiritual reading and understand them as their Bible, does not seem to have been common knowledge according to this foreword by Origen. Hence, he must first emphasize that as a Christian he not only wants to orient himself to the words and teaching of Christ, which originate from him ‘after his incarnation’, but that even at the time of Moses and the prophets ‘Christ as the word of God’ was present in these, so these scriptures also have validity for Christians. Origen initiated this consideration from a remark in Paul from, where Paul says: ‘Observe Israel after the flesh’ (1*Cor* 10:18), from which Origen reads that there is ‘obviously an Israel which is according to the spirit’, which he equated with the Church.[[11]](#footnote-11) From this he concluded not only to ‘read the history of Israel as the history’ of the Christian ‘spiritual life’,[[12]](#footnote-12) but he also formulated with *Rom* 9:8 that ‘the carnal children are not children of God’, and with *Rom* 9:6 that ‘not all Israelites are from Israel’, but that the real Israelite is the ‘Jew in secret’, the ‘inner man’, namely the Christian.[[13]](#footnote-13)

This connection between Christian and Jewish heritage leads Origen at the same time to a theory of disinheritance for Israel according to the flesh: ‘But if the promises made in sensual representations are spiritual, then the intended recipients are not physical either.’[[14]](#footnote-14) Bodily, circumcised Jews, who are genealogically traced back to the tribes of Israel, are no longer seen by Origen as recipients of the divine promises, but instead the hidden Jew and inner Christian of the Church has taken the place of the fleshly Jews. Judaism is disowned and the legacy has been overwritten to Christianity, a doctrine that shortly after the Second Jewish War were developed by several authors: Aristides, the Athenian philosopher who in his *Apology* in the mid-second century distinguished three, or, according to the Armenian version of this work, four different peoples of this world, gave the Christians a distinct identity. Christians traced their way of life back to Jesus Christ, no longer to Mose or the Patriarchs, whereas Jews are referred to these. The barbarians related to their gods Beel, Kronos, Eerra and countless others; and the Greeks derive from Zeus, who they also called Dios, and from Helena. The Jews were called Hebrews by their lawgiver Moses and later they had arrived in the promised land. According to Aristides, therefore, Christian trace their origins neither to any of the pagan gods or traditions, neither do they have any relation to the Jewish past, but are solely defined by ‘Lord Jesus Christ’, ‘the Son of the Most High God’.[[15]](#footnote-15)  This not only gives the Christians their own theological etiology, they are also clearly differentiated from the Jews. The only connection of Christians to Jews that Aristide still admits, is the one that can also be read in Paul: that Jesus was born of a Jewish woman who  Aristides called a virgin.[[16]](#footnote-16) Probably at the same time as Aristides, another reader of Paul, Marcion of Sinope (he dies around 160 CE) sees the links between Jews and Christians severed and rejects with the Jewish past also their writings, their law and the divine creator who gave these laws in order to orient Christians exclusively to Jesus Christ and his new edict. Consequently, he thinks of Christians and Jews as a fundamental antithesis, the result of which is that the Jews follow their own tradition, whereas Christians refer to a New Testament with a fundamentally different ethical frame.

             And yet, such apologetic statements by  Marcion or Origen cloud the fact, which will not be immediately understood by today’s readership which is so used to the canonical writings of the New Testament being at the heart of Christianity, that both the words and the deeds of Christ were far from being the sources or the foundation that brought people together as Christians. At least as far as we shall see, the people were not pulled by the words and teachings that Aristides, Marcion and Origen had in mind and set on papyrus or leather. As Origen comes to speak of Christ’s words and teachings and wants to relate them to the times of the Jewish past, he refers already to written traditions which, however, were only produced a few generations before Origen. Just like Irenaeus who became the first propagator of the four Gospels and the further collection of Christian writings, Origen pushes the authority of these writings by producing commentaries, sermons, putting together his Hexapla and referring to them in his systematic works.[[17]](#footnote-17)

Origen certainly had a few predecessors. Ptolemy, for example, had commented on the prologue of *John's Gospel* in Rome after the middle of the 2nd century, and Heracleon soon afterwards commented on the entire *Gospel of John* and probably also on the *Gospel of Luke* (although in a pre-canonical form). Yet, we find hardly any voice before Irenaeus of Lyon, who around the year 177 defends the previously criticized *Gospels of Mark*, *Matthew*, *Luke* and *John*, as we do not find - apart from the exceptions mentioned – people citing narratives from these writings and hardly any reference to them.

              With Irenaeus’ commitment to these gospels and the wider collection of Christian writings, the situation obviously changed or, at least, Irenaeus paved the way on which Origen systematically built with his sermons and commentaries so that he created a solid bridge between the Jewish scriptures and the writings of Paul and other works written and read by Christians. And it seems that Origen had a large share that these Christian writings became seen as divinely inspired just like Jewish writings were believed to be. In order to justify the divine inspiration for these late writings, Origen made use of the Stoic idea of the *logos spermatikos*, ventured before already by Justin, that the divine seed or spark has always been present in the world, and that this divine spark can be concentrated in particular people and at certain times. Origen, then asserts that this Logos exists in its fullness only in God and Christ, even if it were already present in preforms and models as, for example, in Mose, God’s great lawgiver and minister, and in his prophets of old. Origen deduces from Paul’s ‘testimony in his letter to the Hebrews’ that ‘Moses and the prophets spoke filled with the Spirit of Christ and accomplished all their deeds’, i.e. that even they had received God’s message through the voice of Christ, who spoke to them, for it says in the *Letter to the Hebrews*:

‘24 By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh’s daughter. 25 He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. 26 He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward.’ (*Heb.* 11: 24-26)

It astonishes that Origen introduces Christian writings as authoritative, while at the same time being critical of them. In this he shows himself a text-critical scholar who is nuanced about the literary characteristic of these writings, as one can see from his comments about *Hebrews*. Eusebius transmits the following passage from Origen’s *Homilies to the Epistle to the Hebrews*:

‘11. That the verbal style of the epistle entitled *To the Hebrews*, is not rude like the language of the apostle, who acknowledged himself ‘rude in speech’ that is, in expression; but that its diction is purer Greek, any one who has the power to discern differences of phraseology will acknowledge. 12. Moreover, that the thoughts of the epistle are admirable, and not inferior to the acknowledged apostolic writings, any one who carefully examines the apostolic text will admit.’[[18]](#footnote-18)

Eusebius adds that Origen ‘later remarks’:

’13. If I gave my opinion, I should say that the thoughts are those of the apostle, but the diction and phraseology are those of some one who remembered the apostolic teachings, and wrote down at his leisure what had been said by his teacher. Therefore if any church holds that this epistle is by Paul, let it be commended for this. For not without reason have the ancients handed it down as Paul’s. 14. But who wrote the epistle, in truth, God knows. The statement of some who have gone before us is that Clement, bishop of the Romans, wrote the epistle, and of others that Luke, the author of the Gospel and the Acts, wrote it.’[[19]](#footnote-19)

Origen therefore joins a church tradition that considered the *Letter to the Hebrews* to be Pauline, even if he knew with this tradition that it was definitely not written by Paul. His search for the true author also shows, however, that he was not satisfied with the pseudonymity of this writing and that he researched whether it could not be ascribed to one of the well-known greats of the literary Christian world. Of interest is that Origen mentions potential authors who have knowledge of Paul, for the *First Letter of Clement to the Corinthians* twice refers to Paul, and Paul is one of the major protagonists of the *Acts* which Origen attributes to the Gospel-writer Luke.

The very fact that Origen wants to assure himself of the trustworthiness of such a work like *Hebrews* shows the high value that he attaches to these written testimonies in his argumentation and it also reflects that he is dealing with a collection, the boundaries of which are clear despite a few writings still being under dispute. It is precisely in this context of the canonical range of the collection and the importance of the writings contained in the Old and New Testaments, that Origen comes to speak about history. Within it he develops his idea of ​​the beginnings of Scripture and, as part of these, of the beginnings of Christianity. Even if the beginnings of Scripture are viewed more critically today and their divinely inspired origine seen as a theological-apologetic position, the resulting conclusion for the origin and normative power of the Bible, especially of the New Testament Scriptures, has left a deep mark to this day.

Origen opens the fourth book of *On the principles* again with a reference to the Scriptures as the basis of his argumentation, even if he only now wants to provide the proof in this book why he considers these scriptures to be ‘divine’. However, because he knows about the circularity of this argument, he tries to provide a rational reason for it, drawing on history, as we will see. He starts his historical reflection about Scriptures:

‘1. Since, in our investigation of matters of such importance, not satisfied with the common opinions, and with the clear evidence of visible things, we take in addition, for the proof of our statements, testimonies from what are believed by us to be divine writings, viz., from that which is called the Old Testament, and that which is styled the New, and endeavour by reason to confirm our faith; and as we have not yet spoken of the Scriptures as divine, come and let us, as if by way of an epitome, treat of a few points respecting them, laying down those reasons which lead us to regard them as divine writings.’[[20]](#footnote-20)

According to Origen, the empirical knowledge of universal history is required to support Scripture:

“The lawgivers and wisdom teachers - mainly those of the Greeks, of course - have not been able ... to call people of other languages ​​and nations to observe their laws and to adopt their teachings; yes, they didn't even try to do this because they rightly considered it impossible from the outset ... ... So what the (earlier) philosophers and pagan lawgivers considered impossible, that Moses and Christ accomplished, namely they found countless followers among Greeks and barbarians, although these not only had to leave their traditions, but now as Jews they were exposed to hatred, and as Christians also exposed to dangers and death’.[[21]](#footnote-21)

Origen begins his deliberations with the idea of colonial expansion, according to which people of other languages ​​and nations should be brought to observe laws and even to adopt views different from their own. For his accusation that the previous philosophers and pagan lawgivers had not been able to convince people to make these moves and to turn away from their own traditions and to accept foreign way of living and thinking, implicitly assumes that his religious endeavour aimed at converting people, turning them towards his own legal and cult practice. What was stated above about Orosius is therefore also true in the case of Origen - we are dealing with a form of ​​universalist requirements that seem, however, more rhetorical than really practical.

Origen himself admits that neither philosophers nor pagan lawgivers were able to move people to adopt different laws and teachings. Yet, he believes that Jews in this respect were more successful and even more so Christians. In making this claim, he broadens the foundation on which the fundamental division of universal history could be built between a history of Gentiles and, separated from these, that of Jews and Christians. In Orosius we have seen how these early ideas that we find in Origen were picked up and developed into the divide between a time before and after Christ (BCE/CE). Beyond that, however, Origen’s narrowed view, focussing on the writings of the Christians, leads him, however, to see history not beginning with the creation of the world nor with Adam or even Abraham, but projected from Christ’s words. The earlier Jewish and pagan past is exclusively looked at from his Christian perspective. Without going into the detailed chronological argumentation and counter-argumentation as developed by Origen in *On the principles* and *Against Celsus*, I would like to take a look at some of his fundamental considerations that directly concern the beginnings of Christianity.

Obviously Origen had to deal with representatives of the position who, like Celsus, used the proof of age to criticize Christianity, according to which Jesus Christ only ‘a few years ago he taught this doctrine and was considered by the Christians to be son of God’.[[22]](#footnote-22)

Strikingly, Origen does not deny the claim that the teaching of Jesus is still a recent one and that Christians have not been around for very long. But he turns the tables and directs the criticism of age into a piercing argument for the divine power of Christianity:

‘Could it have happened apart from God’s providence that in so few years Jesus, desiring to spread his teaching and message, has been able to do so much that in many parts of the contemporary world a large number of Greeks and barbarians, wise and stupid, have been so disposed towards his doctrine that they fight for Christianity to the point of death to avoid abjuring him, which no one is related to have done for any other doctrine?’[[23]](#footnote-23)

For Origen it is a sign of divine support that Jesus was able to spread his message so quickly and made converts who were even prepared to die as martyrs for what Origen terms ‘Christianity’. Not very differently he turns the criticism against Jesus’ modest or even insignificant familial background into a powerful proof of divine support. Celsus criticized Jesus’ descent because he was said to be born by ‘a virgin ..., came from a Jewish village and from a poor country woman who earned her living by spinning, ... driven out by her husband, who was a carpenter by trade, as she was convicted of adultery’, so that ‘she was wandering about in a disgraceful way’ and ‘secretly gave birth to Jesus’; and ‘because he was poor he hired himself out as a workman in Egypt, and there tried his hand at certain magical powers on which the Egyptians pride themselves; he returned full of conceit because of these powers, and on account of them gave himself the title of God’.[[24]](#footnote-24) Yet, Origen answers Celsus by pointing out that these humble origins of Jesus speak in favour of him, as he rose from poor circumstances, without having received in the least a general education, without rhetoric and philosophical teachings to being able to overcome all obstacles ‘could devote himself to teaching new doctrines and introduce to mankind a doctrine which did away with the customs of the Jews while reverencing their prophets, and which abolished the laws of the Greeks particularly in respect of the worship of God?’[[25]](#footnote-25)

Hence, the beginnings of the Christ movement after Jesus’ death is strong evidence for divine support, as otherwise one would wonder, how

‘his disciples did not see him after he rose from the dead and were not convinced that there was something divine about him ... that they were not afraid to suffer the same fate as their master and met danger boldly, and that they left their homes to obey Jesus’ will by teaching the doctrines which he gave to them.’[[26]](#footnote-26)

Conversely, according to Origen it was the disciples’ encounter and experience of the risen Christ from the dead and the conviction of his divine nature that helped them to overcome their fear, to follow in the footsteps of Jesus and to preach about him.[[27]](#footnote-27)

For Origen, the power of the Gospel is core, namely a Gospel which, according to Jesus’ own prophecy, ‘is preached in all the earth’.  Christian universalism, therefore, goes back to Jesus’ own words and deeds, has been started and became already implemented during his life and was his explicit will to be continued after his death and resurrection. For Origen, this universalism itself is ‘clear evidence’ that ‘God really became man and brought salutary teachings to the people’.[[28]](#footnote-28) It is less the divine incarnation of the Logos that provides an explanation or even justification for the divinity of Scripture and demonstrates why Jesus’ message was able to penetrate broad strata of society. Based on his claims of a universal presence of Jesus’ message, and by reading the written Christian, divinely inspired Scriptures, he develops his retrospective views and concepts of the early history of the Church and prospectively his eschatological outlook, from which he then critically reflects on his own ecclesiastical experience.

Looking back into the Jewish Scriptures he reads them, especially the prophetic prophecies, as promises and announcements of Jesus, the Christ, for example *Hos.* 3:4: ‘The children of Israel shall sit many days, there being no king, nor ruler, nor sacrifice, nor altar, nor priesthood, nor responses.’[[29]](#footnote-29) Origen introduces this quote:

‘For it is clearly manifest from the history, and from what is seen at the present day, that from the times of Jesus there were no longer any who were called kings of the Jews; all those Jewish institutions on which they prided themselves – I mean those arrangements relating to the temple and the altar, and the offering of the service, and the robes of the high priest having been destroyed.’[[30]](#footnote-30)

Origen speaks not only of ‘history’ which could well mean the more distant events of the year 70 with the destruction of the temple, but rather of those much closer to him of the second Jewish war of the years 132-135, in which, indeed, with the altar of the Temple of Jerusalem also other ‘Jewish institutions’ were abolished or disappeared, the priest’s office, that of the High Priest and the sacred city was turned into a Roman city and its functionaries. In fact, Origen reflects just like the canonical Gospels this loss of an entire Jewish infrastructure in Jerusalem. Against the response to him that the prophecy of *Hosea* pointed to the one (or perhaps even two) patriarch of the Jews in the times of Origen, he replies and points out that since the destruction of the temple no longer any sacrifice existed, and and thus the patriarchy had gone.[[31]](#footnote-31)

Origen turns from the Jewish past to the ‘Gentiles’ who ‘believed in God through Christ’, an ‘election’ that he sees announced in the Jewish Scriptures, here in the book of *Deuteronomy* (*Deut.* 32:21): ‘For they, He says, moved Me to jealousy with that which is not God, they have provoked Me to anger with their idols; and I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a people, and will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation’. Origen identifies the foolish non-people with the church of the Gentiles who were converted to God and chosen by God through the appearance of Jesus Christ and his disciples. As for Paul (1 *Cor.* 1:26), not what is wise, but what is foolish will called by God, so that the foolish shame the wise and the one who previously had importance, but is now reduced to be no more than a fleshly Israel.[[32]](#footnote-32)

Origen has harsh words for the once chosen people, whose place a non-people have taken. He reads the new beginning already in *Ps*. 45 (44) as an announcement of Christ, even though, he ‘held his teaching office only for a short period of time’ ‘teaching for about a year and several months’, yet, he underlines, that ‘his teaching and his belief in God had filled the entire world’.[[33]](#footnote-33)

From these first sections of his fourth book of *De principiis*it becomes sufficiently clear how Origen describes the beginnings of Christianity. It is the preaching and teaching of Christ that have brought a few Jews and the mass of Gentiles to the forgiveness of sins and turned them to God. Christ’s Epiphany, his teaching, his birth in Bethlehem, even ‘the appearance of the apostles who were sent by Jesus to all ends of the world to proclaiming the Gospel’, Origen finds announced in the Jewish Scriptures, for Origen supported by the *Book of Acts*, when he reads in *Acts* 5:12: ‘The apostles performed many signs and wonders among the people. And all the believers used to meet together in Solomon’s Colonnade’. What reads today like a circular argument, is prove enough for Origen, namely these promises of prophecy for ‘the divinity of Jesus’, while simultaneously he shows ‘the writings which prophesied of Him were divinely inspired; and that those documents which announced His coming and His doctrine were given forth with all power and authority, and that on this account they obtained the election from the Gentiles’.[[34]](#footnote-34)

Origen explains why one cannot go beyond this circular conclusion by pointing out that only with the advent of Christ did

‘the divinity of the prophetic declarations, and the spiritual nature of the law of Moses, shine forth. For before the advent of Christ it was not altogether possible to exhibit manifest proofs of the divine inspiration of the ancient Scripture; whereas His coming led those who might suspect the law and the prophets not to be divine, to the clear conviction that they were composed by (the aid of) heavenly grace. And he who reads the words of the prophets with care and attention, feeling by the very perusal the traces of the divinity that is in them, will be led by his own emotions to believe that those words which have been deemed to be the words of God are not the compositions of men.’[[35]](#footnote-35)

This statement reveals that Origen had a non-Jewish audience in mind, people who were sceptical of the nature of the Jewish Scriptures which, according to Origen only turned out to be of divine character since Christ proofed the prophetic announcements to be correct. Only Christians are, therefore, retrospectively capable of revealing the real content of what was previously veiled. This concealment, Origen thinks, is the reason why the Jews at that time and most Jews also at his own time could not understand their own Scriptures, whose ‘letters contain the shadow’ which was and will only be removed by the radiance of Christ.[[36]](#footnote-36) Concealment and mantling do not only apply to the Jewish Scriptures, but also to the cosmos, the systematic arrangement of which by God is neither simply caught by earthly eyes nor detectable from the order of sun, moon and stars, nor easily from the fate of human beings, even if a scientific study of this nature is being undertaken and ‘the object and reason of the impulses, and phantasies and natures of animals, and the structure of their bodies, being carefully ascertained by those who attend to these things’. Consequently, man, whether a Jew or a pagan, is confronted in his human weakness with a ‘hidden glory of teachings’ which human beings cannot reveal even applying the best scientific methods.[[37]](#footnote-37)

Origen’s first look at the beginnings of Christianity falls on Christ as a teacher and is focused on his apostles as teachers. From there, his focus turns to the past, to the beginning of creation, then to Jewish and also pagan history, before moving to his present time where Origen sees himself not less confronted with the problem of the hiddenness of God. Yet, one must not only approach the concealed God with caution, one must also become aware of the scattered fictions and obscurities, annoyances, impulses and contradictions that God one stumbles upon in in creation and in the law and in history, i.e. in the Old and New Testament.[[38]](#footnote-38) The dark passages serve to ensure that one does not take everything one sees at face value, but aims at a deeper meaning beyond the letter. For, according to Origen, there are people who can only perceive the surface, others who penetrate deeper, yet, only the selected and spiritually oriented people can perceive the spiritual context of the things that have happened and are supposed to happen, so that what is real is ‘hidden to the crowd’.[[39]](#footnote-39)

Origen admits that there are fictional things in Scripture, things that could not possibly have happened, or things that might have existed but did not actually happen, and there are such things in the law of Moses that can only be found out through deeper reflection, even though these explain the rationale for some laws to exist at all.[[40]](#footnote-40) Origen adds that similar things can also be assumed for the Gospels and the writings of the apostles. Here, too, the fictional elements have been mixed with the real ones, for example, when one reads in the Old Testament

‘about the intercourse of Lot with his daughters, and about the two wives of Abraham, and the two sisters married to Jacob, and the two handmaids who bore him children’[[41]](#footnote-41)

or, Origen adds, who will accept it as a true story when the Gospel says that

‘the devil leading Jesus up into a high mountain, in order to show him from thence the kingdoms of the whole world, and the glory of them. For who is there among those who do not read such accounts carelessly, that would not condemn those who think that with the eye of the body – which requires a lofty height in order that the parts lying (immediately) under and adjacent may be seen – the kingdoms of the Persians, and Scythians, and Indians, and Parthians, were beheld, and the manner in which their princes are glorified among men? And the attentive reader may notice in the Gospels innumerable other passages like these, so that he will be convinced that in the histories that are literally recorded, circumstances that did not occur are inserted.’[[42]](#footnote-42)

Origen does not want to deny every biblical and historical truth, but the basic task of man is to ‘carefully examine what is true in terms of the letter and what is impossible’.[[43]](#footnote-43) He is very personally in a sermon admitting that

‘sometimes when you read the Scripture and search in it for what a passage means, one is overcome by a certain sadness, even a pain, not because you think, the Scripture is mistaken or it contains something wrong, but because it contains an expression and an account of the truth in which one cannot see what is supposed to be true’.[[44]](#footnote-44)

For our purpose it is significant to note that given the breadth of topics that Origen is interested in and covers in his works, it is astonishing that he almost entirely spares the history of the origins of Christianity and seems rather disinterested in the further development of the church.[[45]](#footnote-45) The widespread dissemination of the preaching of the gospel seems to have been proof enough for him for the divinity of both Scripture and of whom Scriptures testifies. All further historiography seems to fall under the same verdict of Origen that he cast on the contents of Scriptures: ‘The explanation of all that is said in the Scripture, and what is being mentioned of the deeds in these, is to serve the Holy Spirit and the faith in Christ, to which we believers are called’.[[46]](#footnote-46) Accordingly, he critically questions Luke about the information that he gives in *Lk.* 2:4: ‘It happened in those days when an edict was issued by Emperor Augustus to register the whole world’ stating: ‘Evangelist, what help is this report supposed to offer me?’[[47]](#footnote-47)

With regards his criticism of reading the Scriptures as historiographical writings, Origen seems to be a prime example, but he is representative of many early Christians who

‘were not interested in objectively reconstructing the life and thought of earlier communities of Christians (and Jews). Their sole concern was to make Scripture immediately relevant to the lives of their congregations, and they did so by collapsing the distinction between text and interpretive community that is so sacrosanct in modern biblical scholarship’.[[48]](#footnote-48)

It would therefore not be surprising if Origen had also interpreted this Scripture spiritually in his *Homilies to the Acts of the Apostles*, as indicated by the only fragment that has survived from this work.[[49]](#footnote-49) Further interpretations of the *Acts of the Apostles* can only be found in the late third and finally in the fourth century, written by Eusebius’s teacher Pamphilus of Caesarea,[[50]](#footnote-50) Eusebius of Emesa,[[51]](#footnote-51) Ephrem the Syrian[[52]](#footnote-52) and John Chrysostom.[[53]](#footnote-53) While Ephrem’s text, which has only been preserved in Armenian translation, contains a number of his own views on the early history of Christianity, which are discussed below on certain topics, Chrysostom complains at the opening of his sermon on this work that his audience does not even know this book of the New Testament, let alone that it is familiar with its content or its author,[[54]](#footnote-54) and precisely for these reasons, he has decided to present the *Book of Acts* in detail and - following Origen – to show that all that Christ had foretold in the Gospel was realized in the history of the early church, both the promised persecutions and the success of the sermon ‘in the entire world’.[[55]](#footnote-55)

Indeed, the *Acts of the Apostles* appear to have been a rarely read work in the early days of Christianity.[[56]](#footnote-56) Up until the time just before Irenaeus, i.e. around the year 177, we know of no one who has ever quoted this book, there are at best remote parallels (which could also point to elements being incorporated into *Acts*), somaybe the book was not yet known or not even produced before Irenaeus:

Any ‘certain attestation for *Acts* is later [than c140], but it may be dated securely to probably not much later than the middle of the second century if it was written – as seems all but certain – by the same author as *Luke*, and this coheres with *Acts* being known and used by the time of Irenaeus.’[[57]](#footnote-57)

We shall have to come back to *Acts* below.

So if *Acts* is of little help for Origen to think about the beginnings of Christianity, while he is focussing instead on the incarnation of the Word of God and the preaching of the Gospel, how does he view the origin of the Church?

On the one hand, his statements read astonishingly ahistorical, on the other hand they had and still have the effect of a historicizing reading of them, especially of the New Testament writings, an effect which should not be underestimated. And interestingly, Origen’s remarks have this historicizing effect until today, not despite, but because he wanted to read these texts theologically, and not historically. He praised the biblical writings so highly, as divinely, and made them the centre of his reasoning, so that they were soon read as God’s message not only about spiritual things, but misunderstood also as divine oracles about the course of history.

Based on his scriptural orientation, Origen sees with Paul the beginning of Christianity in Christ as its foundation.[[58]](#footnote-58) Origen read from Paul in 1*Cor.* 3:9-15:

‘9 For we are co-workers in God’s service; you are God’s field, God’s building. 10 By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as a wise builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should build with care. 11 For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12 If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, 13 their work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person’s work. 14 If what has been built survives, the builder will receive a reward. 15 If it is burned up, the builder will suffer loss but yet will be saved—even though only as one escaping through the flames.’

At this point Origen explains that ‘we are not only God’s fields, but even God’s building’, which is why he asks about the architect of the whole.[[59]](#footnote-59) According to Origen, because of the grace given to him, Paul is the wise architect who built the building on the foundation of Christ, as ‘the church in Corinth did not exist before Paul’.[[60]](#footnote-60) Paul, however, is not only the architect of the church for Corinth on Christ’s foundation, but, as he himself explains in *Rom*. 15:19-20, he ‘fulfilled the preaching of the gospel of God from Jerusalem to Illyria’, whereby he ‘took on him to preach the gospel where Christ was not yet known by name’, so that he would not build on somebody else’s foundation’.[[61]](#footnote-61) For Origen, Paul ‘writing books’ counts equally as ‘building houses’, an image that can be found again in *Lk.* 6:48, because in these books he indicates how bishops, presbyters, deacons and the rest of the community should behave in the Church.[[62]](#footnote-62)

Interestingly, none of the ministers mentioned here, including the whole of the church, is an architect, but they are all masons who continue to build on the foundation according to the apostle’s instructions, they are builders, among whom Origen includes himself, when he

“refers the words of the apostle immediately to himself, in order not to lead anybody to the church. If he brings bad souls to her, he builds on the foundation using wood, straw and hay; but if he gets some of those to join ... who excelled in the church, then he builds using precious stones’.[[63]](#footnote-63)

According to Origen, it was teachers like himself who continued to wall up the building of the church, who preached the gospel and brought selected, new members to the church. Certainly, it was ‘the apostles who laid this foundation of Jesus Christ in Judea, while the apostle (Paul) and his collaborator Barnabas established it among the Gentiles’, as stated in *Rom* 11:13 (‘apostle of the Gentiles’) and *Gal.* 2:9 (‘For they shook hands with me and Barnabas as a sign of communion, that we should be preach among Gentiles, but they should [preach] amongst the circumcision’).[[64]](#footnote-64) There is a ‘clear dividing line’ between the Apostles on the one hand and the teachers on the other (and, thirdly, the ministers of the Church and the other members).[[65]](#footnote-65)

              For Origen, apostles are “always messengers, then as now in his times. To be an apostle means to be somebody who is sent ... Apostleship seems to be something temporary, at least something dynamic, not an institution or a permanent authority that could be inherited by others’.[[66]](#footnote-66) In contrast to apostles who were laying the foundation stones in the beginnings of Christianity, the church ministers that can be found later in the churches do no longer possess the spiritual and mental dignity that the apostles have, but distinct from these one that is external, material and visible in the world.[[67]](#footnote-67) In addition to these two, the first group of servants, and the teachers, Origen knows a further group of servants who are sent by the king, namely ‘the apostles after the ascension of Jesus and their co-workers and successors’.[[68]](#footnote-68) Teachers, therefore, are more precisely these co-workers and successors of the second group of servants and apostles, who already belong to the time after Jesus’ ascension, and these all are prophets and servants of the word,[[69]](#footnote-69) women and men,[[70]](#footnote-70) or, according to a passage in *De principiis*, it is the whole church that is thus placed in the succession of the apostles.[[71]](#footnote-71)

With Origen ‘there is hardly any mention of the bishop as the shepherd ...’ and yet he knows the hierarchy of Christ, bishops, presbyters, deacons and ‘all those who are outstanding in the faith’.[[72]](#footnote-72) Yet, he also sees the bishop primarily as a student and teacher:

‘These are the two works of the high priest, that he either learn from God through Scripture reading and frequent meditation, or that he teach the people. But he is only allowed to teach what he himself has learned from God; not from his own heart or from purely human insight, but what the Holy Spirit teaches.’[[73]](#footnote-73)

Bishops as teachers do not inherit their office because they were successors of the apostles, as we read in Eusebius, but because they taught and learned from God, and only to the extent that they were taught they gained authority. Hence, this authority does not come to them either from themselves (consequently also not through possibly divine visions), from their own study or from the human side at all, but from the fact that they have been instructed by the Holy Spirit. What this means is not immediately clear, but is derived from the distinction described, which Origen sees as valid for all believers, namely whether they are beginners, advanced or spiritually gifted and pneumatics. Even though the latter are no apostles or successors of apostles, they are nevertheless ‘similar’ to the apostles and are therefore ‘priests according to the high priest, have received knowledge of divine therapy and know, instructed by the Holy Spirit, for which sins one should offer sacrifices when and in what way, and they also know for whom one is not allowed to off these’.[[74]](#footnote-74)

Despite all the differences to the priestly and high priestly office of the Jews, Origen’s description of the influence of the biblical writings, especially the Old Testament, is clear. Although the existence of the church offices of bishop, priest or presbyter, deacons, widows and virgins, also preachers and teachers was already a matter of course for him, on the one hand bishop and priest / presbyter were not ‘clearly differentiated from each other’, and Origen knows different ladders of hierarchy.[[75]](#footnote-75) Important are not the physical offices and with them the human personalities that carry out these duties, but the spiritual basis that carries them: ‘Behind every visible, sensible’ bishop Origen sees standing a spiritual bishop, an angel, and behind all bishops, he sees the one bishop enthroned, Jesus Christ – as we read in 1*Petr.* 2:25 that Christ is ‘the shepherd and the bishop of your souls’ (ἐπὶ τὸν ποιμένα καὶ ἐπίσκοπον τῶν ψυχῶν ὑμῶν) - or as *Job* 20:29 states that God himself.[[76]](#footnote-76) Origen also thinks about the material concerns and necessary needs of the other officials, in order to give the clergy freedom and opportunity to devote themselves entirely to the study of Scripture and its interpretation and preaching, following the example of Jesus, as Paul reports: ‘whoever preaches the gospel also lives of the gospel’ should receive material remuneration.[[77]](#footnote-77) Even if Origen does not rule out this intensive preoccupation with the Scriptures for laypeople, and he even admits to them that they care for their own salvation by studying it,[[78]](#footnote-78) for him the separation between clergy and laity is already self-evident, despite his emphasis on the communal character of the church.[[79]](#footnote-79)

In many ways, Origen focussed more strongly than Eusebius to the writings of the Old and New Testaments, but also developed his own ideas, in particular concentrating on the spiritual interpretation in teaching and sermons, which he highlighted as being important for the beginnings and the further development of the Church. Such concentration on the spiritual aspects of the Scriptural texts is also obvious with regards to those sources that are later read as historical witnesses for the beginnings of Christianity, especially the canonical Gospels and the *Acts of the Apostles.*

In his *Homilies to Luke’s Gospel*, especially in his interpretation of its preface (*Lk.* 1:1-4), Origen points out that according to this passage many ‘tried’ to compile a report, but only Matthew, Mark, John and Luke would not have tried, but would have ‘written their gospel (actually) filled with the Holy Spirit’.[[80]](#footnote-80) These ‘servants of the Word have seen from the beginning and handed down to us’ (*Lk.* 1:2) not the human, historical appearance of the Lord and Savior, not what Pilate, Judas or the multitude who wanted to have Jesus crucified, saw, but they have recognized ‘the word that the Savior meant’ when he said: ‘He who saw me saw the Father who sent me’ (*Jn.* 14:9).[[81]](#footnote-81) Consequently, neither the Gospels of the New Testament nor the *Acts of the Apostles* are primarily reports of the historically past, but spiritual readings to get to know about the spiritual nature of life. A consequence of this is that everyone can be the addressee of these writings, all are meant by the one who is called ‘Theophilus’ (*Lk.* 1:3), because they all belong to the ‘people of Israel’, among whom, according to *Ps.* 15:37, there are no ‘weaklings, because everyone can see the truth’.[[82]](#footnote-82)

Correspondingly, Origen also indicates, in defense of the criticism of Celsus, that the resurrected one did not show himself to everyone, especially not to those ‘who mistreated him’, and not ‘to the one who had condemned him’,[[83]](#footnote-83) but, indeed, to those to whom he appeared, he did so ‘according to the comprehension of those who saw’. Moreover, only the sprititual beings were able to see him as the Risen One.

As we have seen Origen strives to surmount the physical, purely historical events (τὰ γεγονένα) and to push towards what he thought were the real things (τὰ πράγματα).[[84]](#footnote-84) And yet, he does not want to forget history, since ‘the history of the perception of things is extremely useful too’.[[85]](#footnote-85) Origen even set out to visit the physical and geographical places which he found mentioned in the Scriptures,[[86]](#footnote-86) although there is ‘almost total silence of the sources until the fourth century about what later came to be known as the “holy places”’.[[87]](#footnote-87) For Origen, however, true is what goes beyond of what has been reported verbatim and presupposes an understanding of content that is hidden in the obvious. With this advance beyond the letter, it is important to realize that one ‘cannot assert one’s own interpretation with all certainty’, as this would be the sign of a careless person ‘who lost the perception of human weakness and has forgotten who he is’. Origen only grants such security only ‘to perfect people’ who reliably know that they were taught by the Lord Jesus himself, or to those ‘who received divine answers in heaven’, pointing to the apostles and Paul only.[[88]](#footnote-88)

Unfortunately, Origen’s sermons on the *Acts of the Apostles* have been lost except for a fragment, ‘but the numerous passages in his surviving works, in which passages from the *Acts of the Apostles* occur, show that he dealt intensively with this book’,[[89]](#footnote-89) however, following his exegetical and homiletic principles, he will presumably have read this text hardly as history, but rather as spiritual history and interpreted it accordingly.[[90]](#footnote-90)

We can summarize that Origen reads the beginnings of Christianity through the glasses of the writings of the Old and New Testaments, but he understands them primarily as spiritual, not as historical literature, in that the wording of the texts leads to the spiritual reading and the knowledge of the word of God. In his extensive preaching and commentary work and with his radical focus on the Holy Scriptures, Origen paved the way for these writings to become Holy Scriptures, even divinely inspired ones, and through this for the impact that these writings gained, also – certainly against Origen’s own views – by those readers who later took them as historically reliable literature. Even if Eusebius, for example, true to Origen’s tradition, still used these texts with great reluctance as the basis for his construction of the beginnings of Christianity, in the years following him, they formed more and more (and today irrevocably) the historical basis on which the history of the beginnings of Christianity is being written.

Akinean, N. (1921). Srboyn Ep̕remi Asorioy Meknowt̕iwn gorcoc̕ aṙak̕eloc̕ Vienna, Mxit̕arean Tp.

Barnes, T. D. (1996). Constantine and Eusebius. Cambridge, Mass. [u.a.], Harvard Univ. Pr.

Compton, M. B. (1996). Introducing the Acts of the Apostles: A Study of John Chrysostom's *On the Beginning of Acts*. PhD diss. Charlottesville, University of Virginia.

Conybeare, F. C. (1926). The Commentary of Ephrem on Acts. The Beginnings of Christianity. Part I. The Acts of the Apostles J. H. Ropes. London, Macmillan and Co. **III**.

Gerber, C. (1997). Ein Bild des Judentums für Nichtjuden von Flavius Josephus Untersuchungen zu seiner Schrift "Contra Apionem". Leiden [u.a.], Brill.

Gregory, A. F. (2003). The Reception of Luke and Acts in the Period before Irenaeus: Looking for Luke in the Second Century. Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck.

Hauser, D. C. (1992). Origen and the Historicity of the Church. Origeniana Quinta. R. J. Daly. Leuven, Leuven University Press**:** 467–473.

Jenkins, C. (1908). "Origen on I Corinthians." The Journal of Theological Studies **9**: 231-247.

Maraval, P. (2002). "The Earliest Phase of Christian Pilgrimage in the Near East (before the 7th Century)." Dumbarton Oaks Papers **56**: 63–74.

Merk, A. (1924). "Der neuentdeckte Kommentar des hl. Ephraem zur Apostelgeschichte." Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie **48**(1): 37-58.

Müller-Abels, S. (2003). Der Umgang mit "schwierigen" Texten der Apostelgeschichte in der Alten Kirche. The Book of Acts as Church History. Apostelgeschichte als Kirchengeschichte. T. Nicklas and M. Tilly. Berlin, New York, De Gruyter**:** 347-371.

Nicklas, T. (2003). The Book of Acts as Church History. Text, Textual Traditions and Ancient Interpretations = Apostelgeschichte als Kirchengeschichte = Text, Texttraditionen und antike Auslegungen. Berlin [u.a.], de Gruyter.

Origen and J. T. Lienhard (1996). Homilies on Luke ; Fragments on Luke. Washington, D.C., Catholic University of America Press.

Origenes, H. Chadwick and Origenes (1965). Contra Celsum. Cambridge, Univ. Pr.

Origenes and K. Metzler (2010). Werke mit deutscher Übersetzung Bd. 1,1. Die Kommentierung des Buches Genesis. Berlin [u.a.], De Gruyter

Herder.

Schillebeeckx, E. (1975). Jesus. Die Geschichte von einem Lebenden. Freiburg im Breisgau [u.a.], Herder.

Schillebeeckx, E. (1977). Christus und die Christen. Die Geschichte einer neuen Lebenspraxis. Freiburg Basel Wien, Herder.

Schillebeeckx, E. (1990). Menschen. Die Geschichte von Gott. Freiburg im Breisgau [u.a.], Herder.

Schneider, G. (1980). Die Apostelgeschichte. I. Teil. Freiburg i. Br., Herder.

Shuve, K. (2012). The Patristic Reception of Luke and Acts: Scholarship, Theology, and Moral Exhortation in the Homilies of Origen and Chrysostom. Issues in Luke-Acts: Selected Essays. S. A. Adams and M. Pahl**:** 263-286.

Stevens, G. B. (1999 [1889]). Chrysostom: Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles to the Romans. Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers. Peabody, MA, Hendrickson Publishers**:** 1/328.

Tzamalikos, P. t. s. (2007). Origen. Philosophy of History & Eschatology. Leiden [u.a.], Brill.

Vogt, H. J. (1974). Das Kirchenverständnis des Origenes. Köln [u.a.], Böhlau.

Vogt, H. J. and W. Geerlings (1999). Origenes als Exeget. Paderborn [u.a.], Schöningh.

Williams, R. (1995). "Origenes/Origenismus." Theologische Realenzyklopädie **25**: 397-420.

1. Orig., C. Cels. I 14, trans Origenes, H. Chadwick and Origenes (1965). Contra Celsum. Cambridge, Univ. Pr.. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. See Orig., C. Cels. I 14-16; ibid. I 16 he refers to Jos., *Contra Apionem*; on this see Gerber, C. (1997). Ein Bild des Judentums für Nichtjuden von Flavius Josephus Untersuchungen zu seiner Schrift "Contra Apionem". Leiden [u.a.], Brill. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Orig., C. Cels. I 16, trans. Origenes, H. Chadwick and Origenes (1965). Contra Celsum. Cambridge, Univ. Pr.. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Orig., C. Cels. I 16, trans. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Orig., C. Cels. I 18, trans. (slightly altered) ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. The bibliography on Origen is vast, see for an introduction with lit. Williams, R. (1995). "Origenes/Origenismus." Theologische Realenzyklopädie **25**: 397-420. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Orig., De princ. praef. 1 (trans. xxx). [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Orig., De princ. IV 3,6. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Williams, R. (1995). "Origenes/Origenismus." Theologische Realenzyklopädie **25**: 397-420. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Orig., De princ. IV 3,6. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Orig., De princ. IV 3,6. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Arist., Apol. 2 (Arm.). [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. *Ibid*.; see *Gal.* 4:1. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. On Origen’s endeavour to promote the Christian Scriptures, see Barnes, T. D. (1996). Constantine and Eusebius. Cambridge, Mass. [u.a.], Harvard Univ. Pr. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Euseb. Caes., Hist. eccl. VI 25,11-12. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Euseb. Caes., Hist. eccl. VI 25,13-14. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Orig., *De princ*. IV 1,1. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Vogt, H. J. and W. Geerlings (1999). Origenes als Exeget. Paderborn [u.a.], Schöningh. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Orig., C. Cels. I 26, trans. Origenes, H. Chadwick and Origenes (1965). Contra Celsum. Cambridge, Univ. Pr.. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Orig., C. Cels. I 26, trans. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Orig., C. Cels. I 28, trans. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Orig., C. Cels. I 29, trans. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Orig., C. Cels. I 31, trans. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. This remains as a stock argument in the repertoire of Christian apologetics to our very days, see, for example, the trilogy of Schillebeeckx, E. (1975). Jesus. Die Geschichte von einem Lebenden. Freiburg im Breisgau [u.a.], Herder, Schillebeeckx, E. (1977). Christus und die Christen. Die Geschichte einer neuen Lebenspraxis. Freiburg Basel Wien, Herder, Schillebeeckx, E. (1990). Menschen. Die Geschichte von Gott. Freiburg im Breisgau [u.a.], Herder. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Orig., *De princ*. IV 1,2. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Here quoted according to Orig., *De princ*. IV 1,3. The standard translation is ‘For the Israelites will live many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred stones, without ephod or household gods.’ [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Ibid. We do not go into the question here, whether or not Origen’s view reflects Jewish cult reality in his days. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. See Orig., *De princ*. IV 1,4. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Orig., *De princ*. IV 1,5. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Orig., *De princ*. IV 1,6. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Orig., *De princ*. IV 1,7. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Orig., *De princ*. IV 1,8. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. See ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Orig., *De princ*. IV 1,9. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Orig., *De princ*. IV 1,16. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. See Orig., *De princ*. IV 1,9. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Orig., *Hom. in Luc*. 19,5 (here and later own trans.). [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. See, for example, the long list of topics that he gives, but where the beginnings of Christianity are left out, Orig., *De princ.* IV 1,14: ‘we have to sketch what seem to us to be the marks of the (true) understanding of Scriptures. And, in the first place, this must be pointed out, that the object of the Spirit, which by the providence of God, through the Word who was in the beginning with God, illuminated the ministers of truth, the prophets and apostles, was especially (the communication) of ineffable mysteries regarding the affairs of men (now by men I mean those souls that make use of bodies), in order that he who is capable of instruction may by investigation, and by devoting himself to the study of the profundities of meaning contained in the words, become a participator of all the doctrines of his counsel. And among those matters which relate to souls (who cannot otherwise obtain perfection apart from the rich and wise truth of God), the (doctrines) belonging to God and His only-begotten Son are necessarily laid down as primary, viz., of what nature He is, and in what manner He is the Son of God, and what are the causes of His descending even to (the assumption of) human flesh, and of complete humanity; and what, also, is the operation of this (Son), and upon whom and when exercised. And it was necessary also that the subject of kindred beings, and other rational creatures, both those who are divine and those who have fallen from blessedness, together with the reasons of their fall, should be contained in the divine teaching; and also that of the diversities of souls, and of the origin of these diversities, and of the nature of the world, and the cause of its existence. We must learn also the origin of the great and terrible wickedness which overspreads the earth, and whether it is confined to this earth only, or prevails elsewhere. Now, while these and similar objects were present to the Spirit, who enlightened the souls of the holy ministers of the truth, there was a second object, for the sake of those who were unable to endure the fatigue of investigating matters so important, viz., to conceal the doctrine relating to the previously mentioned subjects, in expressions containing a narrative which conveyed an announcement regarding the things of the visible creation, the creation of man, and the successive descendants of the first men until they became numerous; and other histories relating the acts of just men, and the sins occasionally committed by these same men as being human beings, and the wicked deeds, both of unchastity and vice, committed by sinful and ungodly men. And what is most remarkable, by the history of wars, and of the victors, and the vanquished, certain mysteries are indicated to those who are able to test these statements. And more wonderful still, the laws of truth are predicted by the written legislation; - all these being described in a connected series, with a power which is truly in keeping with the wisdom of God. For it was intended that the covering also of the spiritual truths - I mean the bodily part of Scripture - should not be without profit in many cases, but should be capable of improving the multitude, according to their capacity’. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Orig., *Hom. in Luc*. 9,1. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. Orig., *Hom. in Luc*. 11,6. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Shuve, K. (2012). The Patristic Reception of Luke and Acts: Scholarship, Theology, and Moral Exhortation in the Homilies of Origen and Chrysostom. Issues in Luke-Acts: Selected Essays. S. A. Adams and M. Pahl**:** 263-286. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. See Orig., *Hom. 4 in Acta* (PG 14, 829-832). [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Pamphil., *Exp. capitum Actuum apostolorum* (PG 10, 1549-53), who, however, seems to read *Acts* as somebody, interested in the history of early Christianity. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Euseb. Emes., *In Acta apostolorum* (PG 86, 561). Here, too, a certain interest in historical events shines through. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. See Akinean, N. (1921). Srboyn Ep̕remi Asorioy Meknowt̕iwn gorcoc̕ aṙak̕eloc̕ Vienna, Mxit̕arean Tp. An English translation in Conybeare, F. C. (1926). The Commentary of Ephrem on Acts. The Beginnings of Christianity. Part I. The Acts of the Apostles J. H. Ropes. London, Macmillan and Co. **III**. On his specific views about the beginnings of Christianity in which he distinguishes himself from those of Irenaeus, seeMerk, A. (1924). "Der neuentdeckte Kommentar des hl. Ephraem zur Apostelgeschichte." Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie **48**(1): 37-58. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. On the two series of homilies see Ioh. Chrys., *Hom. in Acta* (PG 60, 13-384); an English translation is given by Stevens, G. B. (1999 [1889]). Chrysostom: Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles to the Romans. Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers. Peabody, MA, Hendrickson Publishers**:** 1/328. The introduction to his commentary in Ioh. Chrys., *In principium actorum* (PL 51, 67-112); an English translation of it is given in Compton, M. B. (1996). Introducing the Acts of the Apostles: A Study of John Chrysostom's *On the Beginning of Acts*. PhD diss. Charlottesville, University of Virginia. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. See Ioh. Chrys., *Hom. in Luc.* 1 (PG 60, 11). [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. Ibid. (PG 60, 12). [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. On the few commentaries and homilies see Schneider, G. (1980). Die Apostelgeschichte. I. Teil. Freiburg i. Br., Herder. See also Nicklas, T. (2003). The Book of Acts as Church History. Text, Textual Traditions and Ancient Interpretations = Apostelgeschichte als Kirchengeschichte = Text, Texttraditionen und antike Auslegungen. Berlin [u.a.], de Gruyter. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. Gregory, A. F. (2003). The Reception of Luke and Acts in the Period before Irenaeus: Looking for Luke in the Second Century. Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. See Jenkins, C. (1908). "Origen on I Corinthians." The Journal of Theological Studies **9**: 231-247. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. Orig., *In I Cor. 3,9-15* (243-244 Jenkins). [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. Ibid. 244. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. Vogt, H. J. (1974). Das Kirchenverständnis des Origenes. Köln [u.a.], Böhlau. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. Orig., *In I Cor. 3,9-15* (244-245 Jenkins). [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. See Vogt, H. J. (1974). Das Kirchenverständnis des Origenes. Köln [u.a.], Böhlau. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. Orig., *In Mt. 22,2-*4 (GCS 12, 197). [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. See for women as *feminas minstras in ecclesia* Orig., *In Rom. 10,17* (PG 14, 1278B); 8,10 (PG 14, 1188-1189). [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. Orig., *De princ. IV 2,2* (GCS 5, 308, 15). [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. Orig., *In Cant. 3* (GCS 8, 189, 6-7). [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. Orig., *Hom. in Lev. 6,6* (GCS 6, 369, 21-23). [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. Orig., *Orat*. 28,9 (GCS 2, 381, 2ff.). [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. See Vogt, H. J. (1974). Das Kirchenverständnis des Origenes. Köln [u.a.], Böhlau. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. Orig., *Hom. in Num.* 11,2 (GCS 7, 78, 22-23). [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. See Orig., *Hom. in Jes. Nav.* 17,3 (GCS 7, 405, 13-14). [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. See Orig., *Hom. in Ier.* XI,3. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. Orig., *Hom. in Luc.* 1 (GCS Origenes 9, 4,11-12); see Origen and J. T. Lienhard (1996). Homilies on Luke ; Fragments on Luke. Washington, D.C., Catholic University of America Press. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. Orig., *Hom. in Luc. 1* (GCS Origenes 9, 7, 16-8,8); see ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. Vgl. Orig., *Hom. in Luc. 1* (GCS Origenes 9, 10, 4-11,10), ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. Orig., *C. Cels.* II 64, own trans., see also Origenes, H. Chadwick and Origenes (1965). Contra Celsum. Cambridge, Univ. Pr. [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. Vgl. Orig., *C. Cels.* II 69; see Hauser, D. C. (1992). Origen and the Historicity of the Church. Origeniana Quinta. R. J. Daly. Leuven, Leuven University Press**:** 467–473. [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. Orig., *Sel. in Num.* (PG 12, 577); see Tzamalikos, P. t. s. (2007). Origen. Philosophy of History & Eschatology. Leiden [u.a.], Brill. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. Orig., *In Ioh.* 6, 60. [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. Maraval, P. (2002). "The Earliest Phase of Christian Pilgrimage in the Near East (before the 7th Century)." Dumbarton Oaks Papers **56**: 63–74. [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
88. So Orig., In Gen. Frg. zu Gen. 1,1-5 Origenes and K. Metzler (2010). Werke mit deutscher Übersetzung Bd. 1,1. Die Kommentierung des Buches Genesis. Berlin [u.a.], De Gruyter

    Herder. [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
89. Müller-Abels, S. (2003). Der Umgang mit "schwierigen" Texten der Apostelgeschichte in der Alten Kirche. The Book of Acts as Church History. Apostelgeschichte als Kirchengeschichte. T. Nicklas and M. Tilly. Berlin, New York, De Gruyter**:** 347-371. [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
90. See Orig., In Acta. Hom. 4(PG 14, 829-832). [↑](#footnote-ref-90)