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# Origen on the Christological Significance of Psalm 45 (44)

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The book of Psalms was an important source for early Christian thinking about Christ. Some of the Psalms, such as Psalms 2 and 110, were frequently cited in the New Testament, and contributed key concepts to the doctrine of Christ. Others, less noticed in the New Testament, nevertheless played significant roles in the development of Christological doctrine. Not everyone agreed, however, on what should, or should not, be applied to Christ in the Psalms. This study looks at one of these lesser known psalms, and attempts to show how the greatest exegete of the early church carefully distinguished between what is, and what is not, applicable to Christ in it. It allows us to see some of the exegetical discussions that helped shape Christological views a century or more before their formulation in the definition of Chalcedon.

## **Origen's commentaries on the Psalms and their preservation**

Origen wrote three commentaries on the Psalms. The first, composed at Alexandria, covered the first twenty-five Psalms. The second, composed after his move to Caesarea, was much more extensive and reached at least the seventy-eighth Psalm. Finally, he produced a brief work called "Scholia on the whole Psalter". In addition to these commentaries, he also preached a number of sermons on the Psalms.<sup>1</sup> All of these works have perished in their original form. We are dependent, therefore, for our knowledge of Origen's exegesis of the Psalms on fragments of his works preserved in the works of others, and on his treatment of various psalms in his own other works which have been preserved.

The fragments of Origen's work on the Psalms exist in many different forms. By far the most extensive fragments have been preserved in the catenae commentaries. These latter have been collected in works of Migne, Pitra and Cadiou.<sup>2</sup> The catenae fragments must be used with caution, however, as it is often difficult to be certain to whom a particular quotation should be ascribed.

Origen's exegesis of the Psalms has also been preserved in treatises on the Psalms written by those who were influenced by him. These were especially Eusebius and Gregory of Nyssa in the East, and Hilary and Jerome in the West. These men were writing their own commentaries, however, and drew on Origen as one source among others which they used in conjunction with their own exegetical views. And, since ancient authors rarely identified either when they were citing someone else, or whom they were citing, it is usually difficult to know if a particular comment should be attributed to Origen. Jerome's little work entitled *Commentarioli in Psalmos*, however, is an exception. In the preface he refers to Origen's "Enchiridion" on the Psalms, which appears to have been his "Scholia on the whole Psalter". He says that he is going to supplement this work by abbreviating material from Origen's "very extensive work on the Psalterium". What he seems to mean by the latter is everything which Origen had written on the Psalms, for he says he will make use of both the books, which would have been the commentaries, and the homilies of Origen.<sup>3</sup> This work can, therefore, be treated as representing, on the whole, Origen's views on the various psalms.

The other source for our knowledge of Origen's exegesis of the psalms is his treatment of them in his other works. The Psalms was one of the books Origen quoted and used most. Because Psalm 45 was both an important and, in one respect, controversial Christological psalm, Origen discussed it in several of his treatises.

### **The Christological application of Psalm 45 in the Early Church**

The Christological use of Psalm 45 reaches back at least as far as the book of Hebrews, for Psalm 45:6-7 is quoted as addressed to the son of God in Hebrews 1:8-9. Justin, in the

middle of the second century, quotes the whole of the psalm as referring to Christ, but offers no comments on it,<sup>4</sup> and Irenaeus, in the late second century, quotes several verses from it in relation to Christ.<sup>5</sup> Theophilus of Antioch, also in the last half of the second century, applied Psalm 45:1 to Christ,<sup>6</sup> as did Tertullian in the early third century.<sup>7</sup> Cyprian quoted Psalm 45:1–3 and 10–12 in his book of Testimonies to show that the Christ will reign as an eternal king, verse 1 to show that he is the Word of God, and verses 6–7 to show that he is God.<sup>8</sup> Novatian and Hippolytus also applied verses from Psalm 45 to Christ, and especially verse 1.<sup>9</sup>

### Origen's Christological exegesis of Psalm 45

It was not the use of Psalm 45:6–7 in Hebrews, however, which indicated the Christological significance of the psalm to Origen, but rather the word “beloved” in the superscription of the psalm in the Septuagint.<sup>10</sup> This superscription closes with the words, “A song for the beloved”.<sup>11</sup> This shows, Origen says, that “the whole psalm is referred to Christ, of whom the Father says in the Gospel, ‘This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased’” (Matthew 3:17).<sup>12</sup> In another passage he asks, “Why must we speak of the prophecies about Christ in the psalms, when a certain song is inscribed, ‘For the beloved?’” He then follows this citation of the superscription of Psalm 45 with phrases taken from Psalm 45:1–2, which are applied to Christ.<sup>13</sup> In discussing the superscription of Psalm 45 in a Greek fragment preserved from the introduction of what was probably his large Caesarean commentary on the Psalms, Origen relates it to “the beloved of God”, and says that the psalm “both includes his divinity, and reveals the conversion to him of the church of the Gentiles in the statement, ‘Hear, O daughter, and see, and incline your ear,’ etc.” (Psalm 45:10).<sup>14</sup>

Origen's understanding of Psalm 45:10 in reference to the conversion of the Gentiles is repeated in a sermon on the birth of Moses. There he takes Pharaoh's daughter to represent the church of the Gentiles, to whom the words of Psalm 45:10 are addressed. “This”, he says, “is the daughter who leaves her father's house and comes to the waters to be washed from the sins which she had contracted in her father's house.”<sup>15</sup> Gregory of Nyssa, in a passage clearly influenced by Origen, joins the

Christological understanding of the inscription with a citation of verse 6, and then adds a reference to the conversion of the Gentiles by alluding to Psalm 45:14 and 10, which, he says, teach us “what virgin is brought to him for marriage, who is not considered worthy of this unless she forget her father.”<sup>16</sup> Eusebius, too, followed Origen, and took Psalm 45:10 to be addressed to the church of the Gentiles.<sup>17</sup>

There can be no question that Origen took Psalm 45 to be a significant Christological psalm. Even such unlikely verses as Psalm 45:8–9 receive a Christological application.<sup>18</sup> The focus of his Christological exegesis, however, is on the first seven verses, and it is there that I will concentrate.

We begin with *Contra Celsum* 1.56, where Origen argues, on the basis of Psalm 45:1–7, for the divinity of Christ. Celsus had reproached Christ on the basis of his passion (1.54). Origen replies that two advents of Christ were prophesied, a first in which he would be subject to human passions and humiliation, and a second in which he would be in his divinity alone. He chooses to prove his point by quoting from Psalm 45, which, he says, “is entitled ‘a song for the beloved’, where Christ is clearly addressed as God.”<sup>19</sup> Origen has reference in this assertion to Psalm 45:6, and perhaps also to Psalm 45:7. He clearly takes the nominative “God” in verse 6 to be used as a vocative.<sup>20</sup> He may have also read the first nominative “God” in verse 7 as a vocative, though this is not so clear. After this opening assertion Origen quotes statements taken from Psalm 45:2–5. He interrupts the quotation after verse 5 to call special attention to the fact that Christ “is called God” in verses 6–7. He then quotes these verses, and comments, “Notice that the prophet addresses a God whose throne is for ever and ever, and that a sceptre of equity is the sceptre of his kingdom; he says that this God has been anointed by a God who is his God, and that he has been anointed because he loved righteousness and hated iniquity more than his fellows.”<sup>21</sup> He then notes that he once confounded a wise Jew with this passage. The latter “did not know what to make of it”, and finally answered, consistent with his Judaism, that verse 6 is addressed to God, and verse 7 to the Messiah.

This passage sets two significant problems for Origen’s understanding of Psalm 45 into sharp relief, and we shall further narrow our focus to these two problems. (1) Why has

Psalm 45:1 been omitted from this Christological discussion? (2) What is the Christological meaning of Psalm 44:6-7? We begin with the second problem.

### Christ as God and man, Psalm 45:6-7

The point of contention that Origen has with the interpretation above given by the Jew is that Origen takes both verses to be addressed to Christ. First, he identifies the king of Psalm 45:5 with Christ.<sup>22</sup> This understanding of Christ as king in 45:5 is then carried over to 45:6 in relation to "the sceptre of your kingdom", which he always interprets as being in the hand of Christ, and being the sceptre of *his* kingdom.<sup>23</sup> God, who is addressed in verse 6, is then identified with Christ, who, Origen says, "is clearly God".<sup>24</sup> In *Contra Celsum* 1.56 Origen notes explicitly that the address "O God" in 45:6 is addressed to Christ.

The Christological identification of 45:7 was simpler, because of the phrase, "God has anointed you", which Origen consistently took to refer to the anointing of Christ with the Holy Spirit.<sup>25</sup> The difficulties in this verse lay in two other phrases. First, why is loving righteousness and hating iniquity given as the reason for the anointing, and second, why is it said to be beyond his fellows? Origen was able, however, to make creative use of both difficulties.

He sets forth the problem in his discussion of the title Christ in relation to that of the title King.<sup>26</sup> He takes the statement that he was anointed *because* he loved justice and hated iniquity to indicate that "he did not receive the anointing at the same time with his being, as something coexistent and created at the same time with himself."<sup>27</sup> He notes that anointing refers to sovereignty, and asks, "Is, then, the sovereignty of the Son of God added later and not congenital with him? And how could the firstborn of all creation, when he was not a king, later have become a king because he had loved justice, and that when he happened to be justice?"

Origen answers the questions he has raised in this discussion by noting that when we think of him as Christ his human nature is before us, especially when we think of him "in relation to the soul which became both troubled and sorrowful because of his humanity." On the other hand, "his kingly nature is

obvious when he is considered according to the divine.” He carries the discussion further by appealing to Psalm 72:1–2, which speaks of “the king” and “the king’s son”. There, he says, “‘king’ is used of that preeminent nature of the firstborn of all creation. . . And ‘the king’s son’ is used of the human nature which is assumed, which is formed and shaped in accordance with justice by that nature.” These two, he says, in what may be a vague allusion to 1 Corinthians 6:16–17, “have been brought together into one Word”, and the things which are said of them are “no longer related as of two individuals, but as of one.” M. J. Rondeau notes that in this passage Origen sets forth a true Christology, but without the technical terms of later theology. He distinguishes two realities in Christ, the Son of God and the man who is assumed. The first, she says, is king in his being itself. He is also justice and is endowed with the divine prerogative of judging. The second, endowed with a human soul, is formed according to justice, and on this basis deserves to be Christ and son of the king.<sup>28</sup> His reference to the “soul” in this discussion should be noted, for this is the focal point of the next major discussion of Psalm 45:7 that we will consider.

Origen uses Psalm 45:7 in *On First Principles* 2.6.4<sup>29</sup> as the key scriptural proof that the reason the soul of the human Jesus was chosen to be united with the eternal divine Son of God was that this soul had clung “to God from the beginning of the creation and ever after in a union inseparable and indissoluble” so that it became one spirit with him “in a pre-eminent degree”, in the sense in which Paul says that “‘he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit’” (1 Corinthians 6:17).<sup>30</sup> Origen has reference in this discussion to his belief that all souls pre-exist their union with bodies, and that all souls, except that of Jesus, chose to turn away from God in this state of pre-existence. He then quotes the prophetic word of Psalm 45:7 as proof that it was “as a reward for its virtues” that the soul of Jesus was chosen for this “unity with God”, and comments, “As a reward for its love, therefore, it is anointed with the ‘oil of gladness’, that is the soul with the word of God is made Christ; for to be anointed with the oil of gladness means nothing else but to be filled with the Holy Spirit.” This much explains what it means to be anointed with “oil of gladness” because “you have loved righteousness”, the latter being understood of the pre-existent

clinging to God. But "you have hated iniquity" is also part of the reason given in Psalm 45:7 for the anointing.

One of the problems the early Fathers had with ascribing a rational soul to Jesus was that "souls are by their nature capable of good and evil".<sup>31</sup> Origen understood the phrase, "you have hated iniquity", to answer this problem. The reason, he says, that this phrase was added was because "to hate iniquity is the same thing which the scripture says of him: 'He did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth.'" Other Scriptures are quoted in addition, "all of which shows that no consciousness of sin existed in him." Origen was aware, however, that this explanation left the sinlessness of Christ in the realm of the will, and did not eliminate the possibility of sin from the soul assumed by the eternal Son of God. He goes on to argue, therefore, that the persistence of this soul's love and purpose in clinging to God resulted in the destruction of "all susceptibility to change" so that what began as an act of will "was by the influence of long custom changed into nature", and consequently the human soul in Christ was not susceptible to sin.<sup>32</sup>

Origen also includes a discussion of what it means to be anointed with "oil of gladness beyond your fellows" in this same passage.<sup>33</sup> "Fellows" are taken to be the prophets, the apostles, and, perhaps, also Christians in general who minister "to the salvation of men everywhere".<sup>34</sup> These all share in the anointing with the Holy Spirit according to their capacity. The phrase, "beyond your fellows", however, "indicates that the grace of the Spirit was not given to" this soul "as to the prophets, but that the essential 'fulness' of the Word of God himself was within it, as the apostle said, 'In him dwelleth all the fulness of the godhead bodily.'" <sup>35</sup>

Rondeau again draws attention to the "remarkably refined Christology" which Origen has constructed from Psalm 45. The Christ, she says, has a human soul of the same nature as all souls, and therefore, free to choose good or evil. It is impeccable, however, which is not true of the souls of others. And it is precisely by the use that the soul of Jesus made of its freedom that it was impeccable. It chose to cling to the Word so closely that it was transformed by this union so that it became impeccable. Origen thereby reconciles the freedom and the impeccability of the Christ by explaining the second by means of the first, while respecting both.<sup>36</sup>



I noted earlier that there is a Greek fragment in Justinian's *Letter to Menas* which purports to be taken from Book 2 of Origen's *On First Principles*, and which quotes Psalm 45:7 as the basis for "the man" becoming "Christ".<sup>37</sup> It appears to be drawn from the beginning of *On First Principles* 2.6.4. It is put forward to show that Origen said that "the Lord was a mere man", who became Christ "by reason of his goodness". Psalm 45:7 is then quoted to support this. This fragment should not be taken to represent what Origen really said here, as opposed to Rufinus' Latin translation, simply because the fragment is in Greek. Justinian's letter, which is a condemnation of Origenism, stems from the sixth-century controversy between the one-nature Cyrillian Christological tradition, and the Antiochian two-nature tradition. He stood in the Cyrillian tradition. The fragment can be correctly understood only when read in the context of that controversy. "Mere man" could be used in this controversy by those who held to the one-nature Cyrillian Christology to refer to the Antiochian view that the Christ possessed a human soul as well as flesh.<sup>38</sup> In this sense, the fragment correctly represents Origen's thought. The phrase, "mere man", however, was not so neutral an expression in the controversy as this usage might suggest. It was this same phrase, but with the meaning that Christ was a normal man whom God adopted to be the Christ, that had been used in the third century to describe the condemned teaching of Paul of Samosata and other adoptionists. The phrase was used, therefore, in the later Christological controversy to link the Antiochene Christology, and especially that of Nestorius, with Paul of Samosata. The assertion that Origen taught that "the Lord was a mere man" was intended to associate his teaching with Artemas or Paul of Samosata,<sup>39</sup> and to condemn it by association. Justinian's assertion, on the basis of Origen's use of Psalm 45:7, that the latter believed that Christ was a mere man, who for his human goodness became Christ, is a good example of the capricious use of texts, if not the actual rewriting of texts, in the Christological controversy of the sixth century.

### **Should the "word" of Psalm 45:1 be applied to Christ?**

I turn now to the other problem noted above, namely the fact that Origen does not use the statement in Psalm 45:1,

“My heart has uttered a good word”, in his Christological interpretation of the psalm.<sup>40</sup> I pointed out earlier that both Theophilus of Antioch and Tertullian, among others, had applied this verse to Christ. It appears that the Gnostics may have also used this verse, though we have no explicit citation of it in Gnostic writings that have been preserved. Irenaeus says of them, however, that they think they can explain the generation of the Logos from the Father by transferring “the production of the word of men which takes place by means of a tongue to the Word of God”.<sup>41</sup> He himself strongly rejects all human explanations of the generation of the Logos, and especially this one.<sup>42</sup> It is also possible that the Monarchians used this verse in setting forth their Christology.<sup>43</sup> Common to all who used this verse of Christ was the assumption that it explains the process of the generation of the Logos. It explains both where the Logos was prior to his generation, namely in the Father’s “heart”, which Tertullian even refers to as the “womb” of God’s heart,<sup>44</sup> and the means of his generation, i.e., a process analogous to that of human speech which expresses thought in the form of words.

Origen’s rejection of the Christological use of Psalm 45:1 is present in muted form in a commentary fragment on Psalm 45:1, whose authenticity we can trust in its general meaning because of its coherence with his exegesis of this verse in his *Commentary on John*. He begins by commenting on the verb in the verse, “He said ‘belched forth’ instead of ‘cried out’, not to say that the *Son* is a belch, but the *declaration about him*” [emphasis mine].<sup>45</sup> He then says that the speaker of these words must be David. It cannot be the Father speaking to the Son, for “if the Father proclaimed his works to the Son, he will be found speaking to one who is ignorant and who was born later than the works, and he [i.e. the Son] will no longer know all things which have come to be through him.”<sup>46</sup>

It is in Book I of the *Commentary on John*, however, that Origen strongly polemicizes against the application of this verse to Christ. In a long discussion, from 1.125 to 1.287, Origen argues against those who consider the title “Word” to be *the* title which describes the Christ. They consider that the other titles are used figuratively of him, but that this one alone properly names him.<sup>47</sup> Origen’s first step in his argument against this view is to list the numerous titles applied to Christ

in the Bible to ask why this particular one should be thought to have such a unique significance while so many others are disregarded.<sup>48</sup>

He then comes explicitly to the use of Psalm 45:1. Those who disregard all these other names, and think “they have a clear answer to what the Son of God is” in the title Word, “continually use the verse, ‘My heart uttered a good word’ as though they think the Son of God is an expression of the Father occurring in syllables.”<sup>49</sup> Origen opposes this view, first, on the theological ground that it fails to give the Son of God substance, or essence. A pronounced word is an insubstantial thing, and cannot be understood by anyone to be a son.<sup>50</sup> The title Word, he argues, must be treated as all the other titles. One “must disclose the meaning of what is named from the title, and produce appropriate proof to show how the Son of God is said to be this name.”<sup>51</sup> He then sets out to show how this is done by discussing the many other titles of Christ in the Bible, in preparation for discussing how one should understand the title Word when it is used of Christ.<sup>52</sup> He comes finally to the title Word, and on the basis of his previous discussion of the other titles, says, to take only one of his examples, that just as Christ is “entitled ‘light of the world’ because of his activity of enlightening the world”, so he is called “ ‘Word’ [i.e. Reason], because he removes everything irrational from us and makes us truly rational beings who do all things for the glory of God...”<sup>53</sup>

Before he closes the discussion of the proper way to understand the title Word, he again explicitly takes up Psalm 45:1, which, he says, “many cite very frequently as if they understood it.” This time he opposes the interpretation that takes this verse to speak of Christ as the Word with an exegetical argument. He begins by granting, but only for the sake of argument, that “the Father speaks these words”.<sup>54</sup> What, he asks, can God’s “heart” mean in a literal sense? For if “word” is to be taken literally, then surely the same is true also of “heart”. He argues that to take “heart” literally raises the problem of anthropomorphism, and, therefore, “heart” cannot be understood in a literal sense of God. He then considers the verb “uttered”, which in its normal usage means to belch forth. A belch, Origen says, brings “hidden wind into the open”. He then suggests, surely with a smirk on his face, that perhaps

“the Father belches forth visions of the truth in a disconnected manner and produces their form in the Word, and for this reason the Word is called the image of the invisible God.” He immediately disavows that this is his view, but says he has said these things in order to be able to accept that it is the Father who said, “ ‘My heart has uttered a good word,’ in agreement with the view of the many interpreters mentioned previously.”<sup>55</sup>

Origen has done here what he often does in his exegesis, that is, he has shown to what ridiculous conclusions one is led if the text is read literally.<sup>56</sup> This step is usually followed by the conclusion that the text must be read spiritually, or allegorically, but the reading Origen proposes for Psalm 45:1 could be considered allegorical only marginally, if at all. His proposal is that one cannot take this verse as God speaking of and to the Son, but that it must be taken to be the prophet David speaking of and to the Christ. The “good word” which David brings forth is to be understood as “a prophecy about Christ”.<sup>57</sup> The strange verb is to be understood to indicate that it is a prophecy which the prophet “is not able to restrain”. Psalm 45:2a is David’s word about the Christ. Psalm 45:2bff. are words he addresses to the Christ himself.<sup>58</sup>

Origen then notes an objection which those who want the words of Psalm 45:1 to be spoken by the Father will raise. It must surely be the Father who says to the church in Psalm 45:10, “Hear, O daughter....” He agrees with this objection, but nullifies its significance by pointing out that changes of persons speaking in the psalms is a frequent phenomenon, so that there is no difficulty with understanding David to be the speaker in the first nine verses of the psalm and the Father to begin speaking at verse ten.<sup>59</sup>

## Conclusion

The exegesis of Psalm 45:1 which Origen opposed worked from two assumptions. (1) It assumed that the “word” of this verse is to be identified with the “Word” of John’s prologue. (2) It assumed that God is the speaker in Psalm 45:1. Given these assumptions, it could explain how the “Word” of John’s prologue was “with God”, and how it was subsequently generated.<sup>60</sup> Origen used theological and exegetical arguments

to reject both of these assumptions, and the consequent conclusion. He rejected this application of Psalm 45:1 to Christ because it suggested the generation of Christ on the analogy of a spoken work which lacks substance. For Origen Christ possessed his own individual substance apart from the Father. He considered Psalm 45 to be an important Christological psalm, but thought it had nothing to say about the title "Word" which is used of Christ in John's prologue.

The controlling Christological imagery in the psalm for him was the royal imagery of Psalm 45:6-7. Here he found the psalm to speak clearly of the divinity of Christ, and also to refer to his humanity when it speaks of God anointing him "with the oil of gladness". Christ was fully human for Origen, consisting of both body and soul, as every other person. But he was also God, and could be so designated, as Origen understood him to be in Psalm 45:6-7. This did not mean that Christ was identical with the Father, as some had maintained, but that, like the Father, he possessed the essence of divinity.

## Notes

- 1 Jerome, *Epistle* 33. In this article I use the numbering of the psalms as they appear in the NRSV, but I have translated in each instance from the Septuagint, which was the Old Testament text Origen used. The numbering of the psalms differs after Psalm 9, the numbering in the Septuagint being one number lower than that in English Bibles, which follow the numbering of the Hebrew Old Testament. The difference was the result of the combination of Psalms 9 and 10 as one psalm in the Septuagint. The verse numbers in the Septuagint also differ in the Psalms in that the superscriptions of the psalms are numbered as verse 1.
- 2 J. P. Migne, *Patrologiae Cursus Completus*, Series Graeca (1862) 12.1053-1686; 17.105-149 (hereafter abbreviated as PG); J. B. Pitra, *Analecta Sacra* II (1884) 395-483; III (1883) 1-364 (hereafter abbreviated as Pitra, AS II or III); and R. Cadiou, *Commentaires inédits des Psaumes* (Paris: Société d'édition 'les belles lettres', 1936).
- 3 J. P. Migne, *Patrologiae Cursus Completus*, series Latina, Supplementum II (Paris: Éditions Garnier Frères, 1960), 29-30; hereafter abbreviated as PL Sup. II. Some think that Jerome's work entitled *Tractatus sive homiliae in Psalmos* is only a translation of some of Origen's work on the Psalter. See M.-J. Rondeau, *Les commentaires patristiques du Psautier* I, *Orientalia Christiana Analecta* 219 (Rome: Pont. Institutum Studiorum Orientalium, 1982) 158-161, and the works cited there. I pass by this debate, however, as Psalm 45 is not one of the Psalms treated in this work.

- 4 *Dialogue* 38.3-5.
- 5 *Against Heresies* 4.33.11.
- 6 *To Autolycus* 2.10; 2.22
- 7 *Against Praxeas* 7.1; *Against Hermogenes* 18.6; *Against Marcion* 2.4.1. On the use of this verse by Theophilus and Tertullian see R. Grant, *Gods and the One God* (London: SPCK, 1986) 130, and *Jesus after the Gospels* (London: SCM Press, 1990) 72-73.
- 8 *Testimonia* 2.29; 2.3; 2.6.
- 9 *De trinitate* 13.1; 15.6; 17.2; P. Nautin, *Le dossier d'Hippolyte et de Mélicon*, *Patristica I* (Paris: Les éditions du Cerf, 1953) 179.
- 10 So, too, Hippolytus, *ibid.*
- 11 The superscription in the Hebrew Bible should probably be translated, "A song of love," or, perhaps, as the NIV renders it, "A wedding song".
- 12 PL Sup. II, 51.
- 13 *On First Principles* 4.1.5. This passage is preserved in Greek in the *Philocalia* of Basil and Gregory of Nazianzus.
- 14 PG 12.1064B. He does not quote the superscription.
- 15 Exodus Homily 2.4; R. E. Heine (trans.), *Origen: Homilies on Genesis and Exodus*, *Fathers of the Church*, 71 (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1982) 246. Origen cites Psalm 45:10 again in Exodus Homily 8.6, where he says simply that these are God's words addressed to all people. He does not specify the conversion of the Gentiles in this reference.
- 16 R. E. Heine (trans.), *Gregory of Nyssa's Treatise on the Inscriptions of the Psalms* (Oxford, forthcoming), II.162-163. J. McDonough and P. Alexander (eds.), *Gregorii Nysseni In Inscriptiones Psalmorum; In Sextum Psalmum; In Ecclesiasten Homiliae*, *Gregorii Nysseni Opera*, 5 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1962) 126.
- 17 Pitra, AS III, 441.
- 18 Homily 2.3 on the Song of Songs, and *Commentary on the Song of Songs* 2.4.3.
- 19 H. Chadwick (trans.), *Origen: Contra Celsum* (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1965) 51; hereafter abbreviated as *Cels.* and referred to by book and paragraph numbers.
- 20 Cf. also the passage from Gregory of Nyssa cited above, which is dependent on Origen's exegesis. Gregory says that this psalm teaches "whose throne is forever", which shows that he understood the noun "God" in verse 7 to be a vocative.
- 21 *Cels.* 1.56. When Origen takes the noun God with the definite article in Psalm 45:6 to refer to Christ, he appears to contradict his own grammatical exegetical remarks on John 1:1. In discussing this verse he notes how precisely John has used the definite article, where, he asserts, its presence with the noun God indicates God the Father, who created the universe, and the noun God without the article refers to God the Word, who is divine by reason of his participation in God the Father (R. E. Heine, trans., *Origen Commentary on the Gospel according to*

*John Books 1-10*, The Fathers of the Church, 80 [Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1989] 98-99. This volume, along with the subsequent Volume 89, are hereafter abbreviated as *Io.* and cited by book and paragraph number of the commentary). He appears to use this distinction again in interpreting John 13:31-32 (*Io.* 32.321ff.), though he does not discuss the article explicitly there (see R. E. Heine, "Stoic Logic as Handmaid to Exegesis and Theology in Origen's Commentary on the Gospel of John," *Journal of Theological Studies*, NS 44/1 [April, 1993] 97-98, 111). Origen clearly takes the noun God with the article to be used of Christ in Psalm 45:6, if not also in 45:7. In his own comments on these verses in *Cels.* 1.56, however, he omits the article with the noun God when he uses it of Christ, when he says "he is called God", and again when he says, "the prophet addresses a God...". Origen may have intended his statement in *Io.* 2.13 to refer only to Johannine usage, although he seems to like to use the distinction himself also.

- 22 PG 12.1429C.
- 23 PG 12.1429D-1432A; E. Klostermann, E. Benz, and U. Treu, *Origenes Matthäuserklärung II Die lateinische Übersetzung der Commentariorum Series*, Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten Jahrhunderte, Origenes XI (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1976) 262.
- 24 PG 12.1429D; R. Cadiou, *Commentaires inédits*, 79. Cadiou's cross reference to *On Prayer* XXVI [sic. XXIII], 4 is clearly mistaken. The identification there of Christ with the throne of the Father is completely dependent on Matthew 5:34, and has nothing to do with Psalm 45:6.
- 25 *Commentary on the Song of Songs* 1.3.11; Homily 1.2 on the Song of Songs; *Contra Celsum* 6.79; *On First Principles* 2.6.4; cf. B. Kramer, "Eine Psalmenhomilie aus dem Tura-Fund" *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik*, 16 (1975) 200. This latter may not, however, be a homily of Origen.
- 26 *Io.* 1.191-197.
- 27 Hilary, in an exegesis of Psalm 45:7 which seems to reflect Origen's views, argues against those who use the anointing in this verse to show that "He does not possess the power of nature that God has, while God, who anoints Him to be His God, has been preferred before Him." Hilary rejects the application of the anointing to the birth of Christ, and argues that it occurred at the baptism. He was not made God by the anointing, but was born as God. The anointing has to do with the sanctification of the man Christ. He denies that the Word which was in the beginning was anointed, and says, "The anointing is later than God. Since that birth of the Word was not anointed, because it was in the beginning with God, then that must have been anointed in God which comes afterwards in the dispensation, in so far as He is God. And since God is anointed by His God, then everything pertaining to a slave that He received in the mystery of the flesh is anointed" (S. McKenna, trans., *Saint Hilary of Poitiers, The Trinity*, The Fathers of

- the Church, 25 [Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1954] 468, 476-477). The discussion of Psalm 45:7 is in Book 11.10, 18-20. In this not totally lucid exposition, Hilary holds the same view as Origen on the distinction between the origin of the Son of God and the anointing.
- 28 *Les commentaires patristiques du psautier*, II, *Orientalia Christiana Analecta* 220 (Rome: Pont. Institutum Studiorum Orientalium, 1985) 108.
- 29 G. W. Butterworth, trans., *Origen On First Principles* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966) 111-112; hereafter abbreviated as *princ.* with references to book, chapter, and paragraph numbers. I follow the Latin version of Rufinus in this paragraph. There is a Greek fragment from Justinian for a part of the paragraph which is also translated by Butterworth. The fragment, however, as I will show later, misrepresents Origen's understanding, in intention at least.
- 30 *Princ.* 2.6.3.
- 31 *Ibid.* 2.6.5.
- 32 *Ibid.* Cf. 4.4.4.
- 33 *Ibid.* 2.6.4,6; cf. *Cels.* 6.79.
- 34 For the latter, see *Cels.* 6.79.
- 35 *Princ.* 2.6.4.; cf. 4.4.4.
- 36 *Les commentaires patristiques*, II, 111-112.
- 37 See note 29 above. Greek text in H. Görgemanns and H. Karpp, *Origenes vier Bücher von den Prinzipien*, *Texte zur Forschung*, 24 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1976) 364.
- 38 J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (New York: Harper & Row, 1960) 160, has noted that the doctrine that Christ had a human soul came under attack as early as the second half of the third century. It continued to be attacked throughout the post-Chalcedonian period. See P. T. R. Gray, *The Defense of Chalcedon in the East (451-553)*. *Studies in the History of Christian Thought*, 20 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1979) 61-68.
- 39 See Pamphilus, *Apologia pro Origene* 5, PG 17.578C-579A.
- 40 This statement is omitted both in the citation of phrases from Psalm 45:1-2 in *princ.* 4.1.5, and in the citation of Psalm 45:1-7 in *Cels.* 1.56.
- 41 *Against Heresies* 2.28.5; trans. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1 (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1969) 400; cf. *ibid.* 1.14.1. Could Irenaeus have reference to some such statement as appears in *The Gospel of Truth* 40.23-25, "When therefore it pleased him that his name which is uttered should be his Son...?" Trans. G. W. MacRae in J. M. Robinson (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Library in English* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977) 48. On this see H. W. Attridge, "The Gospel of Truth as an Exoteric Text," in C. W. Hedrick and R. Hodgson, Jr. (eds.), *Nag Hammadi, Gnosticism, and Early Christianity* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1986) 249-251, and, J. Daniélou, *The Theology of Jewish Christianity*, 1 (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1964) 147-163.



The following statement in *The Teaching of Silvanus* 112.30–35, contains the two key concepts of Psalm 45:1, namely the uttered word and the heart of God from which it comes. “It is Thou who hast given glory to Thy Word in order to save everyone, O Merciful God. (It is) he who has come from Thy mouth and has risen from Thy heart....” Trans. M. L. Peel and J. Zandee, *Ibid.* 359. Cf. Pamphilus, *Apologia pro Origene* 5, PG 17.587C.

42 *Against Heresies* 2.28.6.

43 For a discussion of the Monarchian question in relation to Psalm 45 see A. Orbe, “Origenes y los Monarquianos,” *Gregorianum*, 72/1 (1991), 55–66. Orbe does not think Origen is arguing against a Monarchian exegesis of Psalm 45:1. See further on Origen’s debate with the Monarchians, *ibid.* 39–72 and H. Hagemann, *Die Römische Kirche* (Freiburg: Herder, 1864) 300–328. Hagemann thinks the Monarchians to whom Origen refers in *Io.* 2.16–17 are to be identified with Callistus and Hippolytus in Rome. I have suggested in another study that Origen’s entire exegesis of John 1:1–2 in the first two books of his *Commentary on John* is directed primarily at the Monarchians (“Stoic Logic as Handmaid,” 92–100). It would take me beyond the limits of the present study to attempt to identify precisely against whom Origen is arguing in his exegesis of Psalm 45:1. I can only say that the possible range of opponents is very wide, and that the verse was widely used as a Christological statement.

44 *Against Praxeas* 7.1; so, too, Theophilus, *To Autolytus* 2.22, though in 2.10 he locates the Logos in God’s bowels (*splanchna*).

45 PG 12.1428C. If the further comment on the “good word” from a different catena, that it “indicates either virtue or knowledge of God” is also authentic, then Origen has suggested more than one meaning for the term (*ibid.* 1428D). This would not be unusual for Origen, but there is nothing to confirm the authenticity of this comment, except that it does not identify the “good word” with the “Word” of John’s prologue.

46 R. Cadiou, *Commentaires inédits*, 77. The text of PG 12.1428C is nearly identical with that of Cadiou. It reads: “For if the Father proclaimed to the Son, the Son will be found to be ignorant and born later than the works.”

47 *Io.* 1.125.

48 *Ibid.* 1.126–150.

49 *Ibid.* 1.151.

50 *Ibid.* 1.151–152.

51 *Ibid.* 1.153.

52 *Ibid.* 1.155–265. Note especially 1.156, where Origen says that this seemingly excessive digression “will serve as preparation for what is to come”.

53 *Ibid.* 1.267.

54 *Ibid.* 1.280.

55 *Ibid.* 1.283.

- 56 See, for example, Homily 10.2 on Exodus.
- 57 Cf. PG 12.1428C, quoted above, where Origen says, what was “belched forth” was “the declaration about him”.
- 58 *Io.* 1.284–285.
- 59 *Ibid.* 1.286–287.
- 60 Though Origen is not addressing Novatian, these assumptions and the way they were used are especially clear in the latter’s arguments in *De trinitate* 13.1; 15.6; and 17.2.