

**REDISCOVERING ORIGEN TODAY:
FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF THE NEW COLLECTION OF HOMILIES
ON THE PSALMS IN THE *CODEX MONACENSIS GRAECUS 314****

The discovery of the manuscript

At the beginning of the spring I came across a website announcing the publication of an Italian novel entitled *La lettera perduta di Origene* (“Origen’s Lost Letter”)¹. The author of the book was unknown to me and from the short announcement I could only guess that it had presumably been written in the fashion of *The Da Vinci Code*. Nevertheless, I was rather curious and impatient to receive the book around Easter, just to find out how Origen could have provided inspiration for a thriller. I could never imagine that at the same time, precisely on Holy Thursday, a really lost Origen unexpectedly came to light in Munich, thanks to the discovery by an Italian paleographer, Marina Molin Pradel, entrusted with the preparation of the new catalogue of the Greek manuscripts in the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek. Marina Molin Pradel carefully checked the list of the anonymous collection of homilies on the Psalms transmitted by *Cod. Mon. Gr. 314* and compared it with catalogues of similar patristic texts. Of course she was shocked, when she noticed, shortly before closure, that the beginnings and the ends of four homilies on Psalm 36 contained the original Greek text of Rufinus’ Latin translations of the same sermons. Since the library was closed for the Easter holiday she had to wait in a state of excitement and anxiety until the following Tuesday to verify her first impressions. She could then confirm them and address the issue of the attribution to Origen of the *corpus* as a whole. In fact, the manuscript, probably from the beginning of the 12th century – as we shall see later – has preserved a series of homilies which to a large extent corresponds to Jerome’s list of the homilies of Origen on the Psalms included in his *Letter 33* to Paula. Marina Molin Pradel went farther and was able to observe some excerpts from the homilies in the *catenae*, that is the exegetical commentaries in form of anthologies, under the name of Origen. Though this external criterion is not undisputable of itself (because attributions are often mistaken), now it received a different weight in light of the corresponding passages in the new homilies.

At that point I was asked for my opinion on the manuscript by Anna Pontani, a specialist of Byzantine Studies at Padua University, who invested me with the task of official advisor, in the name of Marina Molin Pradel and the Munich Library. It was the 21st of May, a day after the first earthquake in our region and it goes without saying that a second quake immediately shook in my mind. Since that moment, also because the Staatsbibliothek wished to make the discovery known worldwide as soon as possible, I never ceased looking at the manuscript – that incredibly was accessible online! – and transcribing its text. At first the external circumstances were not at all favourable. How often I wished for myself in the midst of an undescribable euphoria that at least the earth remain still. I saw later on, as a ‘prophetic’ response to such concerns, a passage in which Origen comments upon earthquakes. In the *1st Homily on Psalm 77*, referring to the ending of the *Gospel of John* (Jn 21, 25: “Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written”), he assumes that, had

* Lecture at the Institute of Advanced Studies of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (July 9, 2012). I thank Aryeh Kofsky for the careful revision of my English text.

¹ Florio LAMI, *La lettera perduta di Origene*, Firenze 2011.

all the words by Jesus to his disciples been recorded, the world certainly would have collapsed, inasmuch as God's words are so mighty that they shake earth and heaven. It is revealing to see how Origen supports this view by recalling on the one hand the last words of Jesus on the cross – to be understood as a powerful prayer to the Father – and on the other hand both the earthquake and the solar eclipse following them (Mt 27:51; Lk 23:44-45)². This passage is the first piece of evidence to authenticate the attribution to Origen to which I would like to draw your attention today.

To stress the exceptional character of the discovery, there is no need now to recall the long and painful history of Origen's reception in connection with his writings, read more often in a Latin translation than in the original Greek, at least in the western world from Late Antiquity to the early Renaissance. Suffice it to say that the new finding does not come from papyri as was the case more than 60 years ago with the Tura papyri, when some unknown writings such as the *Dialogue with Heraclides* or the *Treatise on Easter* emerged in Egypt. Here we have to do with a forgotten manuscript of presumably Constantinopolitan origins, that according to Marina Molin Pradel should have arrived in Venice during the 15th or 16th centuries. After reaching the florid book market of the city, it was purchased by a German bibliophile, Johann Jakob Fugger (1516-1575), a member of the rich bankers' family of Augsburg, together with other older manuscripts and several modern copies of still unpublished Greek texts, which he used to collect in Venice for a decade (1548-1558). Finally, in 1571 this important collection of Greek manuscripts came into the possession of Albert the Fifth, the Duke of Bavaria (1528-1579). The manuscript went almost unnoticed in the course of the following centuries, due also to a mistake by Ignaz Hardt, the author of the last catalogue of Greek manuscripts in Munich (published between 1806 and 1812): he erroneously indicated four homilies "on Psalm 31" instead of Psalm 36, thus misleading the users who wished to check eventual contacts with the known homilies of Origen³.

The 'format' of the manuscript still awaits deeper investigation, especially in relation to the Byzantine cultural background that fostered its transcription in the 11th-12th centuries. The history of transmission of Origen's writings in Byzantium has not yet received much attention and, at least to my knowledge, we are better informed about an earlier period, of which Photius remains our main witness⁴. The attribution of the collection to Michael Psellus by a later hand added to the last folio of the manuscript probably in the 15th century, though misguided – because the homilies have nothing to do with the Byzantine author or with the verse commentary on the Psalms put under his name – perhaps points to a religious and cultural milieu which was still capable of appreciating texts of this kind, even if preserving them in an anonymous way (or perhaps presenting them under the fictitious cover of a famous humanist like Psellus). Apart from the closest setting of the manuscript, we have to ask ourselves according to what criteria a collection of this sort has been assembled. Let us have a

² H77Ps I (ff. 235v-236r): φέρε γὰρ καθ' ὑπόθεσιν ὅσα ἐλάλει περὶ θεοῦ ὁ Σωτὴρ τοῖς μαθηταῖς εἰς ἀναγραφὴν ἔρχεσθαι, οὐκ ἦνεγκεν ἂν ὁ κόσμος, ἀλλὰ σεισμὸν ἂν τινα πεπόνθει καὶ ταραχήν. λέγεται γὰρ ἀπὸ τῶν θείων λόγων σείσεσθαι τὴν γῆν καὶ τὸν οὐρανὸν ξειρίζεσθαι. καὶ εἰ χρὴ τὴν αἰτίαν εἰπεῖν τοῦ σεισμοῦ τοῦ γενομένου ἐν τῷ πάθει τοῦ Σωτῆρος καὶ τῆς ἐκλείψεως τῆς ἡλιακῆς, ἐροῦμεν ὅτι ἐπεὶ τὸ μέγεθος τῆς πρὸς τὸν Πατέρα εὐχῆς παράδοξον ἦν, ἐκίνησε καὶ τὰ στοιχεῖα καὶ τὸν κόσμον. Origen deals in several writings with the cosmic repercussions of the death on the cross. See L. PERRONE, *La morte in croce di Gesù epifania divina del mistero del Logos fatto carne (Origene, Commentariorum Series in Matthaeum, 138-140)*, in "Adamantius" 16 (2010) 286-307, especially pp. 301-304.

³ For the history of the manuscript and its description see M. MOLIN PRADEL, *Novità origeniane dalla Staatsbibliothek di Monaco*, in "Adamantius" 18 (2012) (forthcoming).

⁴ É. JUNOD, *Origène et la tradition alexandrine vus par Photius dans sa Bibliothèque*, in L. PERRONE (ed.), *Originiana Octava: Origen and the Alexandrian Tradition*, Leuven 2003, 1089-1102.

look at the catalogue of its pieces and at the correspondences with Jerome and Rufinus (the analogies are highlighted in bold).

Cod. Mon. Gr. 314	Jerome, Ep. 33 ⁵	Rufinus
1) <i>Hom. I in Ps. 15</i> (ff. 1r-16r) 2) <i>Hom. II in Ps. 15</i> (ff. 16v-30r)	<i>In XV^o homelie III</i>	
3) <i>Hom. I in Ps. 36</i> (ff. 30r-42r) 4) <i>Hom. II in Ps. 36</i> (ff. 42r-51v) 5) <i>Hom. III in Ps. 36</i> (ff. 51v-68v) 6) <i>Hom. IV in Ps. 36</i> (ff. 68v-83r)	<i>In XXXVI^o homelie V</i>	<i>Hom. I-V in Ps. 36</i>
7) <i>Hom. I in Ps. 67</i> (ff. 83r-98v) 8) <i>Hom. II in Ps. 67</i> (ff. 98v-115v)	<i>In LXVII^o homelie VII</i>	<i>Hom. I-II in Ps. 37</i> <i>Hom. I-II in Ps. 38</i>
9) <i>Hom. I in Ps. 73</i> (ff. 115v-128v) 10) <i>Hom. II in Ps. 73</i> (ff. 129r-139r) 11) <i>Hom. III in Ps. 73</i> (ff. 139r-154r)	<i>In LXXIII^o homelie III</i>	
12) <i>Hom. in Ps. 74</i> (ff. 154v-162r)	<i>In LXXIII^o homelia I</i>	
13) <i>Hom. in Ps. 75</i> (ff. 162r-170v)	<i>In LXXV^o homelia I</i>	
14) <i>Hom. I in Ps. 76</i> (ff. 170v-183v) 15) <i>Hom. II in Ps. 76</i> (ff. 183v-193v) 16) <i>Hom. III in Ps. 76</i> (ff. 193v-204r) 17) <i>Hom. IV in Ps. 76</i> (ff. 204v-213v)	<i>In LXXVI^o homelie III</i>	
18) <i>Hom. I in Ps. 77</i> (ff. 214r-228r) 19) <i>Hom. II in Ps. 77</i> (ff. 228v-242v) 20) <i>Hom. III in Ps. 77</i> (ff. 242v-248v) 21) <i>Hom. IV in Ps. 77</i> (ff. 248v-263v) 22) <i>Hom. V in Ps. 77</i> (ff. 263v-273v) 23) <i>Hom. VI in Ps. 77</i> (ff. 273v-283r) 24) (ff. 283r-299r) <i>Hom. VII in Ps. 77</i> 25) <i>Hom. VIII in Ps. 77</i> (ff. 299r-315r) 26) (ff. 315r-329r) <i>Hom. IX in Ps. 77</i>	<i>In LXXVII^o homelie VIII</i>	
27) <i>Hom. I in Ps. 80</i> (ff. 329r-344v)	<i>In LXXX^o homelie II</i>	

⁵ The list is given according to P. NAUTIN, *Origène. Sa vie et son œuvre*, Paris 1977, 229, 258.

28) <i>Hom. II in Ps. 80</i> (ff. 344v-359v)		
29) <i>Hom. in Ps. 81</i> (ff. 359v-371r)	<i>In LXXXI^o homelia I</i>	

As evidenced from the synopsis, the number of homilies on Pss. 73 (3), 74 (1), 75 (1), 77 (9), 80 (2) and 81 (1) conforms exactly Jerome's list, taken from the catalogue of Origen's writings included by Eusebius in his *Life of Pamphilus*. As for the four homilies on Psalm 36, instead of the five in Jerome's list and Rufinus' translation, interestingly also the *catenae* have no Greek fragments from the fifth homily. Our collection thus gives evidence of the fact that its text must have gone lost some time earlier. To what extent the actual series of Origen's homilies on the Psalms simply depends upon the casualties of the text transmission or rather goes back to a selection of pieces responding to distinct criteria or interests will be one of the tasks of future research. The moment has not yet come for this kind of consideration, though the assembling of these particular pieces among the 122 homilies on the Psalms known to us from the list of Jerome obviously demands an explanation.

In order to provide it, one should also take into account what place Origen accorded precisely to these psalms in the whole *corpus* of his writings. But this task is far from easy, due to the huge amount of quotations from the Psalms in the works of the Alexandrian. Moreover, if we check the repertory of *Biblia Patristica*, a considerable lot of these quotations goes back to *catenae* fragments of disputed authenticity. Yet, at least in one case, we are already allowed to deliver a preliminary answer. The largest group of sermons is the one dealing with Psalm 77. The nine homilies indeed comment upon a rather lengthy psalm, but there was probably a more cogent reason for devoting so much time and space to it. Namely Origen appears to have been interested in the heresiological implications of Psalm 77 with regard to the "sons of Ephraim" (Ps. 77:9). Now, Jerome has an interesting remark in the preface to his *Commentary on Hosea*, where he remembers that Origen wrote not only a special work on "the name of Ephraim in Hosea" (*Περὶ τοῦ πῶς ὀνομάσθη ἐν τῷ Ὡσηὲ Ἐφραΐμ*) but also another writing (*volumen*) on the same topic, though only partially known to Jerome, that is without beginning and end⁶. Bearing this remark in mind, we cannot but underline the fact that precisely the same approach is claimed for in the *2nd Homily on Psalm 77*.

Καὶ οὐ χεῖρον ὀλίγων ὑπομνησθῆναι ὑπὸ τοῦ Ὡσηὲ προφητειῶν ὀνομαζουσῶν τὴν Ἐφραΐμ, ἵν' ἴδωμεν ἐκεῖ μάλιστα ἐπὶ τίνος λαμβάνεται τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ Ἐφραΐμ (<i>H77Ps II, f. 231r l. 23-231v l. 3</i>).	"And it is not bad to remember some of Hosea's prophecies which mention Ephraim, in order to see more specifically to whom the name of Ephraim is applied".
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The external witness of the catenae

To support the attribution to Origen of some of the new homilies we can partially rely on the external witness of the *catenae*. As I remarked above, the exegetical excerpts appearing

⁶ *S. Hieronymi presbyteri, Commentarii in prophetas minores*, ed. M. ADRIAEN, CCL 76, Turnhout 1969, p. 4, 119-125: *Origenes parvum de hoc propheta scripsit libellum cui hunc titulum posuit: Περὶ τοῦ πῶς ὀνομάσθη ἐν τῷ Ὡσηὲ Ἐφραΐμ; hoc est: Quare appellatur in Osee Ephraim, volentes ostendere quaecumque contra eum dicuntur, ad haereticorum referenda personam. Et aliud volumen, quod et capite careat et fine*. Cf. M.C. PENNACCHIO, *Mysteria sunt cuncta quae scripta sunt. Una ricostruzione dell'esegesi origeniana di Osea*, in "Adamantius", 6 (2000) 26-50, p. 26; EAD., *Propheta insaniens. L'esegesi patristica di Osea tra profezia e storia* (SEAug, 81), Roma 2002, 39.

there under the name of Origen generally demand a careful examination to establish their authenticity. Often enough the name of the author has been confused or the piece is assigned to more than one name. These complicated materials have gone through several investigations and attempts for establishing some precision and order in the course of the 19th and the 20th centuries. Nowadays their critical assessment is the task of colleagues working in Berlin on the new critical edition of Origen's commentaries on the Psalms. In a conference that I organised in Bologna last February to encourage this project – resulting in a good omen for the discovery of the new homilies – we came to realize even more sharply how challenging it is first to sort out the authentic materials and second to distinguish them according to the different exegetical genres of Origen's *œuvre* as interpreter of the Bible, *i.e.* commentaries, *scholia* and homilies⁷. Thanks to the new evidence we can better appreciate the value of the sources provided long ago in two well-known collections of fragments on the Psalms: that of Andrea Gallandi in the 17th volume of the *Patrologia Graeca* and the *Analecta Sacra* of Jean-Baptiste Pitra. Especially the second collection has preserved important pieces of a commentary on Psalm 77 that largely correspond to the text of some of the new homilies⁸. Further excerpts on Psalms 67 and 81 can be added to our external evidence, contributing in turn to support the attribution. Working comparatively with sources of this kind is indeed one of the most fascinating aspects in the history of interpretation of the Bible in Christian antiquity. Yet for reasons of time I shall provide only one test case that should hopefully be paradigmatic enough to illustrate in what way the *catenae* have made their extrapolations from the text of our homilies. It is a commentary on Psalm 77, 18 (“And they tempted God in their hearts, in asking meat for the desire of their souls”) taken from the *5th Homily on Psalm 77*, which has moreover a significant parallel in Origen's Treatise on Prayer (*Orat XXIX*, 14), as we shall be able to appreciate in a further step.

Cod. Mon. Gr. 314	Gallandi, PG 17	Pitra, <i>Analecta Sacra</i> III
<i>Hom. V in Ps. 77</i>	[In vv. 30-31, col 140 C9-D6]	[In v. 18, col. 114]
<p>πάντων γὰρ κόρος ἐστίν· οὐχ ὕπνου μόνον⁹, ἀλλὰ καὶ βρωμάτων κόρος ἐστίν. ὄρα οὖν τὴν τοῦ θεοῦ οἰκονομίαν· ὄρων λαὸν ἐπιθυμητήν, καθάραι ἀπὸ τῆς ἐπιθυμίας βουλόμενος αὐτόν, ἔώρα ὅτι λόγῳ διδασκαλικῷ οὐ καθαίρεται, ἀλλ' αὐτῇ τῇ ἐπιθυμίᾳ γινομένη προσκορεῖ καθαίρεται, ἔπεμψεν τὸ ἐπιθυ-</p>	<p>ὄρων λαὸν ἐπιθυμητήν καὶ καθάραι αὐτόν ἀπὸ τῆς ἐπιθυμίας βουλόμενος, ἔώρα ὅτι λόγῳ διδασκαλικῷ οὐ καθαίρεται, ἀλλ' αὐτῇ τῇ ἐπιθυμίᾳ γινομένη προσκορεῖ.</p>	<p>ὄρα δὲ τὴν τοῦ θεοῦ οἰκονομίαν· ὄρων λαὸν ἐπιθυμητόν, καὶ καθάραι αὐτόν ἀπὸ τῆς ἐπιθυμίας βουλόμενος, ἔώρα ὅτι λόγῳ διδασκαλικῷ οὐ καθαίρεται, ἀλλ' αὐτῇ τῇ ἐπιθυμίᾳ</p>

⁷ For a preliminary assessment of the results of the conference see G. DORIVAL, *XII Convegno del Gruppo Italiano di Ricerca su Origene e la Tradizione Alessandrina. “I commenti di Origene ai Salmi: contributi critici e prospettive d’edizione”* (Bologna, 10-11 febbraio 2012): *Bilan, problèmes, tâches*, in “Adamantius”, 18 (2012) (forthcoming).

⁸ Already Pitra was confident to reconstitute almost the whole commentary on Ps 77 thanks to the *catenae*: “Praeter majorem psalmum CXVIII, nullus alius est quam abundantiori Origenis commentario auctum reperimus, non solummodo in Vaticanis codd., quorum plerique parciore sunt, sed maxime in optimis codd. Laurentianis, inscriptis sub Plut. v, 14 et Plut. vi, 8, quos locuplete symbolo confirmant codd. Veneti apud Gallandium. Quibus si instituto nostro licet addere, quantumvis exilia, novem et decem scholiola a Maurinis collecta, et fusiora Gallandii, integer fere commentarius restitueretur” (J.-B. PITRA, *Analecta Sacra*, Parisiis 1888, III, 110 n.). For a critical appreciation of the evidence from the *catenae* see R. DEVRESSE, *Les anciens commentateurs grecs des Psaumes*, Città del Vaticano 1970.

⁹ A clear allusion to Homer, *Il.* 13, 636: πάντων μὲν κόρος ἐστί, καὶ ὕπνου... (I thank Filippomaria Pontani for discovering it).

<p>μούμενον. ἤδει ὅτι μίᾳ ἡμέρας τυχόντες τοῦ ἐπιθυμουμένου, ἔτι ἐπιθυμήσουσιν, ἀλλὰ καὶ δύο ἡμερῶν πάλιν ἐπορέγονται, κἂν ἐπὶ πλείονας δὲ ἡμέρας μεταβαίνωσι τοῦ ἐπιθυμουμένου, ὥστε ἀποστραφῆναι αὐτοὺς τὸ ἐπιθυμούμενον, ἐπέχουσι τὴν ἐπιθυμίαν, ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς ἐπὶ τριάκοντα ἡμέρας πολλά τὰ ἐπιθυμούμενα. ἔφαγον ἐπιθυμοῦντες, ἐκορέσθησαν. ἐπὶ τοσοῦτον γὰρ ἔφαγον διὰ τὸ ἀπληστον τῆς ἐπιθυμίας, ὥστε γενέσθαι αὐτοῖς εἰς χολέραν. ὅτε γέγονεν αὐτοῖς τοῦτο, ἐτελεύτησαν καὶ ἐξῆλθεν αὐτῶν ἡ ψυχὴ καθαρὰ ἀπὸ τῆς ἐπιθυμίας, τοῦτο πραγματευομένου τοῦ θεοῦ, διὰ τοῦ δυνατοῦ τρόπου τῆς καθάρσεως, καθᾶραι αὐτούς. ἀλλὰ γενόμενος κατὰ τὸν τόπον καὶ συγκρίνων πνευματικὰ πνευματικοῖς (1 Cor 2:13) εὑρίσκον τὸν λαὸν δις φαγόντα ὀρτυγομήτραν, ἅπαξ μὲν ἠνίκα εὐθέως ἐξῆλθεν ἐκ γῆς Αἰγύπτου, τὸ δεύτερον, ὡς ἐν τοῖς Ἀριθμοῖς ἀναγράφεται, ἠνίκα κακῶς εἶπον τὸν ἄρτον τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ διάκενον αὐτὸν ὠνόμασαν (Nm 21:5). τί δήποτε οὖν ἐπὶ μὲν τῷ προτέρῳ φαγεῖν αὐτοὺς τῆς ὀρτυγομήτρας οὐδεμία ὀργὴ ἀνέβη ἐπ' αὐτούς (Ps 77:31a), ἐπὶ δε τῷ δευτέρῳ τὸ τοιοῦτο γεγένηται; ζητῶν γὰρ κατ' ἐμαυτὸν καὶ θέλων ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ εὐρεῖν καὶ λαβεῖν, τοιαῦτά τινα ἐνενοοῦν (ff. 264r l. 15-265r l. 9).</p>	<p>πάντων γὰρ κόρος ἐστίν· οὐχ ὕπνου μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ βρωμάτων, διὸ ἐπεμψεν αὐτοῖς ὀρτυγομέτραν ἐπὶ τριάκοντα ἡμέρας.</p> <p>οἱ δὲ τῇ ἀπληστίᾳ χρησάμενοι, χολερικῶ πάθει διεφθείροντο.</p> <p>δις δὲ εὑρίσκω τὸν λαὸν φαγόντα ὀρτυγομήτραν, ἅπαξ μὲν ἠνίκα εὐθέως ἐξῆλθεν ἐκ γῆς Αἰγύπτου· τὸ δεύτερον, ὡς ἐν τοῖς Ἀριθμοῖς ἀναγράφεται, ἠνίκα κακῶς εἶπον τὸν ἄρτον τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ διάκενον αὐτὸν ὠνόμασαν (Nm 21:5), ὅτε καὶ ὀργὴ ἀνέβη ἐπ' αὐτούς (Ps 77:31a), ὡς τάχα κάτω που οὔσα πρὶν ἢ ἀμάρτωσιν.</p>	<p>γυνομένη προσκορεῖ. πάντων γὰρ κόρος ἐστίν· οὐχ ὕπνου μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ βρωμάτων, διὸ ἐπεμψεν αὐτοῖς ὀρτυγομέτραν ἐπὶ τριάκοντα ἡμέρας.</p> <p>οἱ δὲ τῇ ἀπληστίᾳ χρησάμενοι, χολερικῶ πάθει διεφθείροντο.</p> <p>δις δὲ εὑρίσκω τὸν λαὸν φαγόντα ὀρτυγομήτραν, ἅπαξ μὲν ἠνίκα εὐθέως ἐξῆλθεν ἐκ γῆς Αἰγύπτου· τὸ δεύτερον, ὡς ἐν τοῖς Ἀριθμοῖς ἀναγράφεται, ἠνίκα κακῶς εἶπον τὸν ἄρτον τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ διάκενον αὐτὸν ὠνόμασαν (Nm 21:5), ὅτε καὶ ὀργὴ ἀνέβη ἐπ' αὐτούς (Sal 77:31a), τάχα ὡς κάτω που οὔσα πρὶν ἢ ἀμάρτωσιν.</p>
<p><i>Peri euchês XXIX, 14</i></p>		
<p>καὶ φανερόν ὅτι ὅσον οὐκ εἶχον τὰ ἐπιθυμούμενα, κόρον οὐκ ἠδύναντο αὐτῶν λαβεῖν οὐδὲ παύσασθαι τοῦ πάθους· ἀλλὰ καὶ ὁ φιλόανθρωπος καὶ ἀγαθὸς θεὸς, διδοὺς αὐτοῖς τὸ ἐπιθυμούμενον, οὐχ οὕτως ἐβούλετο διδόναι, ὥστε καταλιπέσθαι ἐν αὐτοῖς ἐπιθυμίαν. διόπερ φησὶ μὴ μίαν ἡμέραν φάγεσθαι αὐτοὺς τὰ κρέα (ἔμενε γὰρ ἂν τὸ πάθος αὐτῶν ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ πεπυρωμένη καὶ φλεγόμενη ὑπ' αὐτοῦ, εἰ ἐπ' ὀλίγον τῶν κρεῶν μετελήφεσαν), ἀλλ' οὐδὲ ἐπὶ δύο δίδωσιν αὐτοῖς τὸ ἐπιθυμούμενον ἡμέρας· βουλόμενος δὲ αὐτὸ προσκορῆς αὐτοῖς ποιῆσαι, οἰοεὶ οὐκ ἐπαγγέλλεται ἀλλὰ τῷ συνιέναι δυναμένῳ ἀπειλεῖ δι' ὧν χαρίζεσθαι αὐτοῖς ἐδόκει, λέγων· <i>οὐδὲ πέντε μόνας ποιήσετε ἡμέρας ἐσθίοντες τὰ κρέα οὐδὲ τὰς τούτων διπλασίους οὐδὲ ἔτι τὰς ἐκείνων διπλασίους, ἀλλ' ἐπὶ τοσοῦτον φάγεσθε, ἐφ' ὅλον κρεωφαγοῦντες μῆνα, ἕως ἐξέλθῃ ἐκ τῶν μυκτῆρων μετὰ χολερικοῦ πάθους τὸ νενομισμένον ὑμῖν καλὸν καὶ ἡ περὶ αὐτὸ ψεκτὴ καὶ αἰσχροῦ ἐπιθυμία.</i></p>		

The synopsis shows how the excerptors have worked (columns 2 and 3, in bold), by reducing and simplifying the arguments of the longer elaboration in the homily. The preacher comments on Numbers 11, a famous biblical story that Origen likes to exploit as a paradigm

of God's providence, usually naming his activity for the salvation of men by the term οἰκονομία, 'design', that we find also here. It is part of such providential strategy to apparently let the desire of man be satisfied even to the utmost excess, so that he might be filled with 'repletion' and 'disgust', κόρος (again an important term in Origen's vocabulary, especially in relation to the precosmic fall of the intellects), and thus be freed from his desire. For this reason, God sends to the Israelites in the desert flesh as food for a whole month (Nm 11:20). Now, the *catenae* move the initial sentence with the clear allusion to Homer (πάντων γὰρ κόρος ἐστίν, "in all there is repletion") to another place, so that in the excerpts it functions not as a premise but as a corollary to the assertion of God's pedagogical device with regard to human desire, instead of having recourse to 'instruction' (λόγῳ διδασκαλικῶ): not words but experience itself will help to purify man from the excess of desire.

The *catenae* also omit the short preamble to the formulation of a *quaestio* on the biblical passage commented upon¹⁰. It is the reference to 1 Cor 2:13 (πνευματικὰ πνευματικῶς συγκρίνοντες, "to compare spiritual things with spiritual things"), a crucial passage for Origen's pneumatic exegesis of the Scriptures conceived by him, so to say, as an intertextual orchestration of similar passages¹¹. But a typical trait of the exegetical technicalities is also lost in the *catenae*: "Now that I have come to this passage..." (γενόμενος κατὰ τὸν τόπον) – a formula introducing the following question (ἀπορία): why, in view of the two pericopes in which the Bible speaks of the quails as the food given by God to the Israelites (Ex 16:13 and Nm 11:19-20), only with regard to the second it is said that "the wrath of God rose up against them" (Ps 77:31)? The *catenae* eliminate the introduction of the *quaestio* but maintain its content, though omitting again an interesting detail of the exegetical method adopted by the Alexandrian. Before answering the problem, Origen declares that he has tried to find himself a solution, while wishing to receive it from God (ζητῶν γε κατ' ἑμαυτοῦ καὶ θέλων ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ εὐρεῖν καὶ λαβεῖν, τοιαῦτά τινα ἐνεύουσι), a synergy between the initiative of the interpreter and the divine help, which is once again very typical of Origen.

Apart from the external confirmation of the *catenae*, our passage from the *5th Homily on Psalm 77* finds an eloquent parallel in the explanation devoted by Origen to the sixth demand of the *Our Father* in the *Peri euchês* (*Orat XXIX*, 13-14). Here he has recourse to Nm 11 to support the idea of the providential nature of temptation, endowed as such with both a diagnostic value and a therapeutic effect. By adopting medicinal notions, as often in his writings, Origen warns against a too quick recovery from illness, because this can easily lead one to be imprudent and fall ill again. Only a prolonged exposition to illness, producing a deep awareness of the danger and evil inherent in it, can truly liberate from the disease. The scriptural argument is taken once more from Nm 11, whereas the *Treatise on Prayer* comments upon the dynamics of desire and purification from it in a more thorough approach.

Even in the absence of this fundamental parallel, the short piece taken from the *5th Homily on Psalm 77* has such an open origenian *Kolorit*, thanks to its stylistic features and exegetical technicalities that I am led to confirm the indication of the *catenae* and to attribute the whole homily to Origen. Taking now the lead precisely from the assumption that the Alexandrian teacher is characterised by his own recognisable style as interpreter of the Bible, I shall try to

¹⁰ For Origen's recourse to the (Aristotelic) and Alexandrian method of *quaestio et responsio* see my contributions: *La parrhêsia di Mosè. L'argomentazione di Origene nel Trattato sul libero arbitrio e il metodo delle "quaestiones et responsiones"*, in L. PERRONE (ed.), *Il cuore indurito del Faraone. Origene e il problema del libero arbitrio*, Genova 1992, 31-64; "*Quaestiones et responsiones*" in *Origene: Prospettive di un'analisi formale dell'argomentazione esegetico-teologica*, in "Cristianesimo nella storia", 15 (1994) 1-50.

¹¹ See F. COCCHINI, *Il Paolo di Origene. Contributo alla storia della recezione delle epistole paoline nel III secolo*, Roma 1992, 118-123.

detect in the homilies the inner criteria for vindicating their origenian authenticity. By proceeding in this way I shall mostly rely on some lines of investigation that I have tried to develop in some recent contributions. They will provide us, in my opinion, with useful keys to approach Origen’s texts and through these to catch a glimpse of his own personality.

*The subjectivity of the interpreter
and his historical and doctrinal context*

It is almost a common opinion to assert that Origen did not like to speak about himself. Yet for a preacher like him, who was also constitutively a teacher, it was almost impossible not to put his own subjectivity at stake, first and foremost with the intent of establishing an active relation with his audience. This is generally the case with the Alexandrian, both as teacher and as preacher, and we do not lack instances for that also in the new homilies. Our first example is from the *2nd Homily on Psalm 77*, in which Origen introduces a personal reminiscence allowing us by the way to catch a glimpse of his historical context and, I would venture, also of his own personal awareness.

<p>καὶ τοῦτο τῇ πείρᾳ ἴσμεν· ἐν γὰρ τῇ πρώτῃ ἡμῶν ἡλικίᾳ πάνυ ἤνθουν αἱ αἱρέσεις καὶ ἐδόκουν πολλοὶ εἶναι οἱ ἐν αὐταῖς συναγόμενοι. ὅσοι γὰρ ἦσαν λίχνοι περὶ τὰ μαθήματα τοῦ Χριστοῦ μὴ εὐποροῦντες ἐν τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ διδασκάλων ἱκανῶν διὰ λιμὸν μιμούμενοι τοὺς ἐν λιμῷ ἐσθίοντας κρέα ἀνθρώπινα, ἀφιστάμενοι τοῦ υἱοῦς λόγου, προσεῖχον λόγοις ὁποιοσδήποτε καὶ ἦν συγκροτούμενα αὐτῶν τὰ διδασκαλεῖα. ὅτε δὲ ἡ χάρις τοῦ θεοῦ ἐπέλαμψε διδασκαλίαν πλείονα, ὁσημέραι αἱ αἱρέσεις κατελύοντο καὶ τὰ δοκοῦντα αὐτῶν ἀπόρρητα παραδειγματίζεται καὶ δείκνυται βλασφημίαν ὄντα καὶ λόγοι ἀσεβεῖς καὶ ἄθεοι (<i>H77Ps II, f. 233 r ll. 5-23</i>).</p>	<p>“We know this by experience: in our early age the heresies were flourishing and many seemed to be those who assembled around them. All those who were eager for the teachings of Christ, lacking clever teachers in the church, because of such famine imitated those who in a famine eat human flesh. They separated thus from the healthy doctrine and attached themselves to every possible teaching and united themselves in schools. Yet, when the grace of God radiated a more abundant teaching, day after day the heresies broke up and their supposed secret doctrines were brought to light and denounced as being blasphemies and impious and godless words”.</p>
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Given the large heresiological development on the “sons of Ephraim” (Ps 77:9-10) in this homily, the preacher is led to introduce a retrospective view of his life. In his youth heresies were still ‘flourishing’ and their adepts assembled in ‘schools’ (διδασκαλεῖα), apparently in contradistinction to the ‘church’ (ἐκκλησία), which in its turn seems to be almost depicted as still being in a minority situation. How to avoid here thinking of the Alexandrian background between the 2nd and the 3rd centuries, and the much disputed question about the ‘heterodox’ origins of its Christianity? Whatever historical milieu the preacher may have had in mind, he clearly denounces a cultural gap that especially the teachers of the Alexandrian school were able to overcome: at the time there were not enough ‘clever teachers’ (διδασκάλων ἱκανῶν) in the church, that is people capable of responding to the challenge of masters like Marcion, Valentinus and Basilides, to mention only the conventional triad of the best known heresiarchs of the 2nd century. Not incidentally this same triad comes up in the *5th Homily on Psalm 77*, out of concern against those who by opposing Law and Gospel, Old and New Testament “misunderstand the Scriptures and mislead the simple”¹².

¹² *H77Ps V* (f. 271r ll. 12-17): οὕτως γὰρ Μαρκίωνες, οὕτως Οὐαλεντῖνοι, οὕτως Βασιλείδαι, καὶ ὅσοι ἄλλον εἰσάγουσι θεὸν παρὰ τὸν τοῦ νόμου παρεκδεχόμενοι ἀπατῶσι τὰς καρδίας τῶν ἀκάκων.

Going back to our passage from the *2nd Homily on Psalm 77*, I cannot resist the temptation to find in it a further personal echo going deeper than the mere recollection of the past. The more abundant ‘teaching’ (διδασκαλία) opposed to the ‘famine’ (λιμός) of the beginnings is in my eyes a clear hint not only to the ecclesiastical teachers of the Alexandrian school who preceded Origen, like Pantaenus and Clement, but also to himself and his fruitful activity as teacher, first in Alexandria and then in Caesarea. As we know, Origen converted to ecclesiastical Christianity his sponsor Ambrosius, previously a follower of Valentinian Gnosticism, and successfully engaged himself in public debates with heretics as well as Jewish teachers. If the heresiological background of our homilies mainly points to the fight against Marcionites and Gnostics, we have some evidence of public occasions of dispute with these adversaries. The *1st Homily on Psalm 77* mentions a debate with some Marcionites in which Origen was led to invoke the testimony of the universe itself as an argument on behalf of God as its creator, in response to their criticisms against the Scriptures of the Old Testament¹³.

The subjectivity of the interpreter presents itself in a more direct form, every time the preacher tries to stimulate his audience. For those who are acquainted with Origen’s way of writing and his ‘gymnastic’ method, our homilies provide many interesting passages. Among them, a characteristic feature consists in formulations that Origen presents as ‘audacious’, since they go against the tide of common opinions or accompany the effort of the preacher to distill a more impressive sentence, not seldom by way of approximation or a paradoxical statement¹⁴. The *4th Homily on Psalm 77* witnesses the concern of the preacher, who still hesitates vis-a-vis his public whether he should or not further enlarge the perspective on spiritual food, a theme of primary importance for Origen’s thought. Commenting upon Ps 77:23-24 (“Yet he commanded the clouds from above, and opened the doors of heaven, and rained upon them manna to eat, and gave them the bread of heaven”), he elaborates on the necessity of spiritual food not only for men and angels, but also for Christ himself, adding an avowal which has some analogies with a similar passage in the *Dialogue with Heraclides*. In both cases, after avowing first his embarrassment, Origen goes on with his argument, by appealing – as he does in the *4th Homily on Psalm 77* – to a hearer being ‘wise’ (συνετός)¹⁵.

καὶ τολμᾷ τι ὁ λόγος δι’ αὐτὰς τροφὰς εἶπειν, εἶγε ἀκαίρως τολμήσει ἐπὶ τοῦ τοιοῦτου ἀκροατηρίου τοιαῦτα εἶπειν· τολμησάτω δὲ καὶ μὴ τολμησάτω, καὶ λεγέτω καὶ κρινέτω... (H77Ps IV, f. 254r).	“My speech dares to say something because of this same food, even if it will be out of place to dare before such an audience and say such things. It should dare and should not, it should say and evaluate...”
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¹³ H77Ps I (ff. 216 r-v): οἷς ἀπὸ Μαρκίωνος διαλεγόμενος, εἰρηκέναι δύο προκειμένων· πιστεύειν τῇ γραφῇ, ὡς ὑμεῖς λέγετε πρὸς τὸν Πατέρα, ἢ πιστεύειν τῷ κόσμῳ καὶ τῇ τάξει πρὸς τὸν δημιουργόν.

¹⁴ See, for instance, the singular expression “the intestine of the soul” in H77Ps IV (ff. 250r l. 24-250v l. 4): οὐ γὰρ δυνάμεθα ἕξιν ἔχειν ἀγγελικὴν, καὶ χωρεῖν ὅσα χωροῦσιν ἄγγελοι μαθήματα, ἀλλ’ εἰ δεῖ οὕτως ὀνομάσαι, τὸ ἔγκατον τῆς ψυχῆς ἡμῶν ὀλίγα χωρεῖ καὶ βραχέα δέχεται. I have dealt with these linguistic and stylistic aspects in *Approximations origéniennes: notes pour une enquête lexicale*, in *EUKARPA. Εὐκάρπα. Études sur la Bible et ses exégètes*, réunies par M. LOUBET et D. PRALON, en hommage à Gilles Dorival, Paris 2011, 365-372.

¹⁵ H77Ps IV (f. 255r ll. 2-6): ἀρκεῖ μοι μέχρι τούτων φθάσαντι καταλιπεῖν τῷ ἀκροατῇ, ἐὰν ἡ συνετός, λόγον σοφὸν ἀκούσαντι αὐτὸν καὶ ἐπαινέσαντι αὐτόν, προσθεῖναι ἐπ’ αὐτόν. Now and then Origen has recourse to the model of the curious hearer, as in H67Ps I (ff. 94v l. 23-95r l. 1): ἀλλὰ νοῆσαι θέλω, φησὶν ὁ ἀκροατής, πῶς ἡ μέλισσα ποιεῖ μέλι καὶ παρακολουθεῖ κηρίου γένεσις. On Origen’s view of the reader / hearer see my contribution *Le commentaire biblique d’Origène entre philologie, herméneutique et réception*, in *Des Alexandries II: Les métamorphoses du lecteur*, sous la direction de CH. JACOB, Paris 2003, 271-284.

Ἄγωνιῶ καὶ εἰπεῖν, ἀγωνιῶ καὶ μὴ εἰπεῖν. Διὰ τοὺς ἀξίους θέλω εἰπεῖν, μὴ ἐγκληθῶ ὡς τῶν δυναμένων ἀκούειν ἀποστερήσας τὸν λόγον· διὰ τοὺς μὴ ἀξίους ὀκνῶ εἰπεῖν, διὰ τὰ προειρημένα, μὴ ποτε ῥίψω τὰ ἅγια κυσὶν καὶ βαλῶ τοὺς μαργαρίτας τοῖς χοίροις (Orig., *Dial* 15).

“To speak makes me embarrassed, and not to speak makes me embarrassed. Because of those who are worthy I would speak, lest I be accused of depriving of the word those able to understand it. Because of the unworthy I shrink from speaking for the reasons I have given, lest I should be flinging holy things to dogs and casting pearls before swine”.

Philology at the service of exegesis

The rediscovery of the ‘grammarian’ (γραμματικός) in the exegete is among the most important results of Origen’s studies in the last decades¹⁶. His adherence to the practice of Alexandrian philology – illustrated best by the great enterprise of the *Hexapla*, the synoptic edition of the Septuagint translation with the Hebrew text and other Greek versions – is confirmed by our homilies, although the sermons were of themselves not so apt for textual criticism as the commentaries or other more technical writings. Yet Origen is always concerned with the reliability of the biblical text he is commenting upon, in as much as to prevent attacks by his adversaries (first of all the Marcionites). In the *First Homily on Psalm 77* Origen rectifies an ‘error of writing’ (γραφικὸν σφάλμα) in his copy of the *Gospel of Matthew*, conforming to the well known textual criticism he adopts elsewhere in his writings. A misguided copist, as he observes, reading the passage in which the evangelist quotes Ps 77:2 (Mt 13:35) as a prophecy of Asaph, erroneously substituted this name with the more familiar name of prophet Isaiah. Origen thus sees himself entitled to proceed here to the necessary διόρθωσις and so reconstitute the original name¹⁷. He then takes the opportunity of recalling the principles of biblical textual criticism by confronting the Septuagint translation with the other versions or ‘editions’ (ἐκδόσεις) and checking the Greek with the Hebrew text. Contrary to the arbitrary way Marcion had adopted for eliminating any connection with the Jewish Bible in his text of the Gospel¹⁸, Origen recommends this approach as the correct method, also to prevent any ‘disharmony’ (διαφωνία) in the Scriptures. He applies it again in the *5th Homily on Psalm 77*, with regard to the Septuagint text of v. 31a, where he found the variant ἐν πλείοσιν instead of ἐν πίοσιν, to be regarded as the correct reading (ἀπέκτεινε ἐν τοῖς πίοσιν αὐτῶν, “and slew the fattest of them”), inasmuch as this conformed both with another Greek version (ἐν τοῖς λιπαρωτέροις αὐτῶν) and with the Hebrew text (מְשִׁמְשֵׁם)¹⁹.

¹⁶ After the classic study of B. NEUSCHÄFER, *Origenes als Philologe*, Basel 1987, see lately P.W. MARTENS, *Origen and Scripture. The Contours of the Exegetical Life*, Oxford 2011, 25-40.

¹⁷ *H77Ps* I (f. 214v ll. 1-15): Παραφράσαντος τὸ ῥητὸν τοιαῦται λέξεσιν οὕτως ἐνθάδε εἰρημένον τοῦ Ματθαίου, γέγονε δὲ περὶ τὰ ἀντίγραφα τοῦ εὐαγγελίου σφάλμα γραφικόν· ἵνα γάρ, φησι, πληρωθῇ τὸ εἰρημένον ὑπὸ Ἡσαίου (Mt 13, 35) "ἀνοίξω ἐν παραβολαῖς τὸ στόμα μου" (Sal 77, 2). Εἰκὸς γὰρ ἓνα τινὰ τῶν ἀρχῆθεν γραφόντων μὴ ἐπιστήσαντα μὲν ὅτι ἔστιν ὁ Ἀσάφ προφήτης, εὐρόντα δὲ τὸ ἵνα πληρωθῇ τὸ εἰρημένον ὑπὸ Ἀσάφ ὑπειληφέναι ὅτι ἀμάρτημά ἐστι καὶ τετοληκέναι διὰ τὸν ξενισμὸν τοῦ ὀνόματος τοῦ προφήτου ποιῆσαι ἀντὶ τοῦ Ἀσάφ Ἡσαίου.

¹⁸ The criticism to Marcion’s textual criticism is rather detailed. See *H77Ps* I (f. 215v): ἐπιβουλεῖ τοίνυν καὶ ταῖς γραφαῖς ὁ διάβολος, ἀλλὰ οὐ διὰ τοῦτο ἡμᾶς χρῆ τολμᾶν καὶ προπετῶς ἤκειν ἐπὶ τὴν διόρθωσιν. τοιοῦτον γάρ τι παθὼν καὶ ὁ Μαρκίων καὶ ὑπολαβὼν ἡμαρτήσθαι τὰς γραφὰς καὶ τοῦ διαβόλου γεγονέναι παρεγγραφὰς, ἐπέτρεψεν ἑαυτῷ διορθοῦν τὴν γραφήν. καὶ ἐπιτρέψας, ἦρεν ἐκ βῆθρων τὰ ἀναγκαῖα τῶν εὐαγγελίων, τὴν γένεσιν τοῦ σωτῆρος, καὶ ἄλλα μυρία καὶ ὀπτασίας καὶ προφητείας καὶ τὰ ἀναγκαῖα τοῦ ἀποστόλου.

¹⁹ *H77Ps* V (f. 266r l. 23-266v l. 6): πρῶτον δὲ θέλωμεν πείσαι τὸν ἀκροατὴν, ὅτι ἡμάρτηται τὸ λέγον ἀντίγραφον· ἀπέκτεινε ἐν τοῖς πλείοσιν αὐτῶν. πρῶτον μὲν γὰρ οὐκ ἔχουσιν αἱ λοιπαὶ ἐκδόσεις τὸ ἀνάλογον τοῖς πλείοσιν ἀλλ’ ἐν τοῖς λιπαρωτέροις αὐτῶν. καὶ αὐτὸ δὲ τὸ Ἑβραϊκὸν οὕτως ἔχει. The most important passages on textual criticism can be found in *CMt* XV 14 and *CIo* VI 41, 208ff. On Origen’s

Apart from these cases of textual criticism, the competence of the grammarian appears at its best in the *1st Homily on Psalm 67*, finding a precise parallel in Origen's commentary on the *Our Father* which is part of the *Peri euchês*, the Treatise on Prayer (*Orat XXIV*, 5). Before commenting upon the initial verses of the Psalm (Ps 67:2-4), the preacher observes that it is the 'custom' (ἔθος) of Scripture to make use of expressions in the imperative mood, instead of the optative, when addressing 'prayers of demand' (εὐκτικά) to God. The Alexandrian exemplifies such custom with the first three demands of the *Our Father* and rewrites them from the aorist imperative in the optative mood (doing the same also for the verses of the Psalm). This form should be expected as the proper one both from a grammatical and a theological point of view.

Cod. Mon. Gr. 314	<i>Peri euchês XXIV, 5</i>
<p>πρῶτον εἰδέναι χρῆ ὅτι ἔθος ἐστὶ τῇ γραφῇ πολλαχοῦ τοῖς προστακτικοῖς ἀντὶ εὐκτικῶν χρῆσθαι καὶ εὐρήσεται μὲν τοῦτο πολλαχοῦ. ἀρκεῖ δὲ νῦν παραθέσθαι ἀπὸ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου, ὅτι διδάσκων ἡμᾶς ὁ σωτὴρ ἡμῶν εὐχεσθαι, οὐ διδάσκει ἵνα προστάσωμεν τῷ θεῷ, ἀλλ' ἵνα προστακτικαῖς φωναῖς εἴπωμεν τὰ εὐκτικά· λέγεται γάρ, φησι, Πάτερ ἡμῶν ὁ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς, ἀγιασθήτω τὸ ὄνομά σου· ἐλθέτω ἡ βασιλεία σου· γενηθήτω τὸ θέλημά σου (Mt 6:9-10), ἀντὶ τοῦ ἀγιασθεῖν τὸ ὄνομά σου, ἔλθοι ἡ βασιλεία σου, γένοιτο τὸ θέλημά σου. ἐὰν οὖν λέγεται καὶ ταῦτα προστακτικαῖς φωναῖς, ἀκούωμεν ἀντὶ εὐκτικῶν. οὐδεὶς γὰρ προστάσσει τῷ θεῷ, οὐδὲ λέγει περὶ αὐτοῦ τὸ ἀναστήτω ὁ θεός (Sal 67:2a), ἀλλ' εὐχεται καὶ φησὶν· ἀνασταίη ὁ θεὸς καὶ διασκορπισθεῖεν οἱ ἐχθροὶ αὐτοῦ, καὶ φύγοιεν οἱ μισοῦντες αὐτὸν ἀπὸ προσώπου αὐτοῦ, ὡς ἐκλείπει καπνός, ἐκλείπειεν· ὡς τήκεται κηρὸς ἀπὸ προσώπου πυρός, οὕτως ἀπόλουντο (Sal 67:2-3). ἐχρήσατο δὲ νῦν τῷ εὐκτικῷ ἤδη γυμνῶς καὶ σαφῶς· οὕτως γοῦν ἀπόλουντό, φησιν, οἱ ἁμαρτωλοὶ ἀπὸ προσώπου τοῦ θεοῦ. καὶ οἱ δίκαιοι εὐφρανθήτωσαν ἀντὶ τοῦ εὐφρανθεῖν, ἀγαλλιάσθωσαν ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ ἀντὶ τοῦ ἀγαλλιάσθαι, τερφθήτωσαν ἐν εὐφροσύνῃ (Sal 67, 3b-4) ἀντὶ τοῦ τερφθεῖν (H67Ps I, ff. 85r l. 1-85v l. 8).</p>	<p>ἔτι περὶ τοῦ ἀγιασθήτω τὸ ὄνομά σου (Mt 6:9) καὶ τῶν ἐξῆς προστακτικῶν χαρακτήρι εἰρημένων λεκτέον ὅτι συνεχῶς προστακτικοῖς ἀντὶ εὐκτικῶν ἐχρήσαντο καὶ οἱ ἐρμηνεύσαντες, ὡς ἐν τοῖς ψαλμοῖς· ἀλαλα γενηθήτω τὰ χεῖλη τὰ δόλια, τὰ λαλοῦντα κατὰ τοῦ δικαίου ἀνομίαν (Ps 30:19), ἀντὶ τοῦ γενηθεῖν καὶ ἐξερευνησάτω δανειστής πάντα τὰ ὑπάρχοντα αὐτῷ· μὴ ὑπαρξάτω αὐτῷ ἀντιλήπτωρ (Ps 108:11-12) ἐν τῷ ἑκατοστῷ ὀγδόῳ περὶ Ἰούδα· ὅλος γὰρ ὁ ψαλμὸς αἰτησίς ἐστι περὶ Ἰούδα, ἵνα τάδε τινὰ αὐτῷ συμβῇ. μὴ συνιδῶν δὲ ὁ Τατιανὸς τὸ γενηθήτω οὐ πάντοτε σημαίνει τὸ εὐκτικὸν ἀλλ' ἔσθ' ὅπου καὶ προστακτικόν, ἀσεβέστατα ὑπέιληφε περὶ τοῦ εἰπόντος γενηθήτω φῶς (Gn 1:3) θεοῦ, ὡς εὐξαμένου μᾶλλον ἢ περὶ προστάξαντος γενηθῆναι τὸ φῶς· "ἐπεὶ", ὡς φησιν ἐκεῖνος ἀθέως νοῶν, "ἐν σκοτῷ ἦν ὁ θεός". πρὸς ὃν λεκτέον, πῶς ἐκλήψεται καὶ τὸ βλαστησάτω ἡ γῆ βοτάνην χόρτου (Gn 1:11) καὶ συναχθήτω τὸ ὕδωρ τὸν ὑποκάτω τοῦ οὐρανοῦ (Gn 1:9) καὶ ἐξαγαγέτω τὰ ὕδατα ἐρπετὰ ψυχῶν ζώσων (Gn 1:20) καὶ ἐξαγαγέτω ἡ γῆ ψυχὴν ζώσαν (Gn 1:24). ἄρα γὰρ ὑπὲρ τοῦ ἐπὶ ἐδραίου στήναι εὐχεται συναχθῆναι τὸ ὕδωρ τὸ ὑποκάτω τοῦ οὐρανοῦ εἰς συναγωγὴν μίαν (Gn 1:9), ἢ ὑπὲρ τοῦ μεταλαβεῖν τῶν βλαστησάντων ἀπὸ γῆς εὐχεται τὸ βλαστησάτω ἡ γῆ (Gn 1:11); ποίαν δὲ χρεῖαν ὁμοίαν ἔχει τῷ χρῆζειν φωτὸς τῶν ἐνύδρων καὶ πτηνῶν ἢ χερσαίων, ἵνα καὶ περὶ τούτων εὐχεται; εἰ δὲ καὶ κατ' αὐτὸν ἄτοπον τὸ περὶ τούτων εὐχεσθαι, προστακτικαῖς ὀνομασίαις εἰρημένων, πῶς οὐ τὸ ὅμοιον λεκτέον καὶ περὶ τοῦ γενηθήτω φῶς (Gn 1:3), ὡς μὴ εὐκτικῶς ἀλλὰ προστακτικῶς εἰρημένον; ἀναγκαίως δέ μοι ἔδοξεν, ἐν ταῖς προστακτικαῖς φωναῖς εἰρημένης εὐχῆς, ὑπομνησθῆναι τῶν παρεκδοχῶν αὐτοῦ διὰ τοὺς ἡπατημένους καὶ παραδεξαμένους τὴν ἀσεβῆ διδασκαλίαν αὐτοῦ, ὧν καὶ ἡμεῖς ποτε πεπειράμεθα.</p>

recourse to the *Hexapla*, see O. MUNNICH, *Les Hexaples d'Origène à la lumière de la tradition manuscrite de la Bible grecque*, in G. DORIVAL, A. LE BOULLUEC (éd.), *Origeniana Sexta*, Leuven 1995, 167-185.

As a matter of fact, grammatical concerns are connected to exegetical and doctrinal interests. In the case of *Peri euchês*, the recognition of the peculiar use of the imperative mood in the Greek Bible is accompanied by a polemic with Tatian, who by generalizing this grammatical feature thought that also God's command in Gen 1:3 (*γενηθήτω φῶς*, "let there be light") should be seen once more as an expression equivalent to the optative mood; consequently, according to Origen's rebuttal, Tatian impiously regarded God's words in the creation narrative as a prayer and not as an order. In our homily, the preacher subsequently relativizes in a sense his grammatical distinction and puts forth the idea that also man can 'command' God, though attributing it to a hypothetical suggestion of someone 'more audacious' than him (εἴποι δ' ἂν τις ἐμοῦ τολμηρότερος). To sum up this surprising development, Origen sees it as a consequence of the 'freedom of speech' (παρρησία) accorded to the righteous who, as sons of God, enjoy their 'adoptive sonship': "Is there anything paradoxical – as the Alexandrian asks himself – if a son, endowed with freedom of speech towards his father and without making ashamed the spirit of adoptive sonship, receiving an order from his father, commands him in his turn, asking him what he wants?"²⁰.

The rhetorics of the preacher

To enter into the details of the exegesis of the Psalms provided by the new homilies would demand too much time, especially with regard to some noteworthy passages of historical interest. Yet, since I am in Jerusalem, I cannot avoid quoting the long explanation of the name 'Sion' as the place of God's dwelling in the *First Homily on Psalm 73*. Commenting upon Ps 73:2 ("this mount Sion wherein thou hast dwelt") the preacher first introduces a triple etymological interpretation, according to which Sion has to be regarded as "the place of oracles, the place of visions and the place of observation" (τὸ...χρηματιστήριον καὶ τὸ ὄραματιστήριον καὶ τὸ σκοπευτήριον), by the way creating apparently once more a new word (ὄραματιστήριον); then he criticizes the Jews for believing that God still dwells in Sion, "where quadrupeds and gentiles dwell", instead of interpreting spiritually this place as the soul "endowed with intellect and vision"²¹. Archaeologists and historians will certainly be eager to exploit this remark. I can only add for the moment that it presumably betrays a direct inspection of Mount Sion, when Origen came to Jerusalem and preached here upon the invitation of bishop Alexander²².

Among the many other aspects that deserve to be mentioned, I shall limit myself to point first of all to some fascinating traces of Origen's acquaintance with ancient sciences, about

²⁰ *H73Ps I* (ff. 87r l. 21-87v l. 7): καὶ ἀκόλουθον δέ ἐστι τὸ πνεύματι τῆς υἰοθεσίας (Rm 8:15) καὶ οὐκέτι εἰ δοῦλος, ἀλλὰ υἱός (Gal 4:1): καὶ ὁ πατήρ σου ἐστὶν ὁ θεός καὶ ἀδελφός σου ὁ κύριος, ὁ λέγων· διηγῆσομαι τὸ ὄνομά σου τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς σου, μᾶλλον δὲ τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς μου, ἐν μέσῳ ἐκκλησίας ὑμνήσω σε (Ps 21:23). τί παράδοξον υἱὸν παρρησίαν ἔχοντα πρὸς τὸν πατέρα, οὐ κατασχύνοντα τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς υἰοθεσίας, προστασσόμενον ὑπὸ τοῦ πατρός, ἀντιπροστάξει τῷ πατρί, ἀξιούντα περὶ ὧν βούλεται;

²¹ *H73Ps I* (f. 122v ll. 15-24): Ἰουδαῖοι χαμαὶ βλέπουσι τὴν γραφὴν καὶ ἔλκουσιν αὐτὴν ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν, οἰόμενοι τοῦτο Σιών εἶναι, ὅπου ὁ κτίσας θεὸς τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν κατεσκήνωσε. καὶ νῦν ἐν τῷ ὄρει κατεσκήνωσεν ὁ θεὸς κατ' ἐκείνους, ὅπου κατασκηνοῦσι τετράποδα καὶ ἔθνη. ἀλλ' ἡμεῖς ὄρος Σιών, ὅπου κατεσκήνωσεν ὁ θεός, λέγομεν εἶναι τὴν μεγαλοφυῆ ψυχὴν, τὴν διανοητικὴν, τὴν διορατικὴν.

²² See my article *Origene e la Terra Santa*, in O. ANDREI (ed.), *Caesarea Maritima e la scuola origeniana: multiculturalità, forme di competizione culturale e identità cristiana*. XI Convegno del Gruppo Italiano di Ricerca su Origene e la Tradizione Alessandrina, Arezzo 22-23 settembre 2011 (forthcoming).

which we possess remarkable evidence in many of his writings²³. We find, for instance, astronomic observations in the *Second Homily on Psalm 77*, with regard to the movements of the sun and the moon or the constellations of stars²⁴. It is part of the ‘technical wisdom’ (τεχνικόν) of an ancient commentator to exploit eventually a knowledge of musical harmony and instruments, as we see from the very detailed treatment in the *Second Homily on Psalm 67*. Here Origen, reflecting on the distinction between ‘singing’ (ᾄδειν) and ‘singing with musical accompaniment’ (ψάλλειν), not only displays his familiarity with musical theory and performance, but he even seems, by way of a rhetorical redundancy, to have created a new word (φωναλειπτική) for the ‘technique of training the voice’ (τέχνη φωνασικὴ καὶ φωναλειπτική), to be added to his creative series of *hapax legomena*²⁵.

By appealing to this kind of notions Origen develops his doctrinal arguments or contributes to nourish his preaching rhetorics. That the Alexandrian was able to exploit some rhetorical devices is once again to be reckoned among the most interesting results of recent research. In the context of the interpretation of the Psalms, one should especially remember the technique of ‘personification’ (προσωποποιία) and with it the universal recourse, among patristic commentators of the Psalms, to the ‘prosopological exegesis’, that is the identification of the ‘person speaking’ (τὸ πρόσωπον τὸ λέγον) in the psalm, as attested especially in the new corpus by the *1st Homily on Psalm 77*²⁶. Yet in the tradition of homiletic rhetorics a recurrent aspect is given by the use of *exempla*. Origen also likes to weave his discourse with extensive paradigms, whose selection is not at all devoid of interest for us, inasmuch as these *exempla* often betray a keen attention for some realms of a real or mental world. I shall try to show it with two passages taken from different homilies, both pointing to Origen’s fundamentally ‘agonistic’ conception of the spiritual existence.

The first passage figures in the *Fourth Homily on Psalm 77*, in the context of the above mentioned discourse on spiritual food. If the condition of a Christian can be compared, for the Alexandrian, to that of an athlete, he must follow an apt and rigorous diet, analogously to what happens with those who participate in the ‘olympic games’ (τῶν ὀνομαζομένων μεγάλων γυμνικῶν). These athletes are submitted to strong controls by the “chief judges” and by their instructors. The preacher probably depends upon a literary source or tradition (as shown by the introductory formula ἱστορεῖται), that I was not yet able to check, and yet he provides an extremely vivid description of the training of the athletes that goes far beyond a

²³ See lately G. DORIVAL, *Origène, la création du monde et les savoirs antiques*, in *Prolongements et renouvellements de la tradition classique*. Études réunies par A. BALANSARD, G. DORIVAL, M. LOUBET, Aix-en-Provence 2011, 295-307.

²⁴ A. SCOTT, *Origen and the Life of the Stars. A History of an Idea*, Oxford 1991. One should note also the mention of the αντίχθων γῆ in *H36Ps II*: ἔστιν τις ἄλλη γῆ ἢ λέγεται παρά τισιν ἀντίχθων.

²⁵ *H67Ps II* (f. 99v): ζητῶ οὖν εἰ τοῦτο προσέταξεν ὁ τῶν ὄλων θεὸς ἢ ὁ Χριστὸς ἢ τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον, ἵνα μηδὲν ἄλλο νοεῖται κατὰ τὸ ἄσατε τῷ θεῷ (Sal 67:5) ἢ ἑκκλισις τῆς φωνῆς, ἢν ἡμῶν μάλλον δύνανται ποιεῖν οἱ μουσικοὶ καὶ ὅσοι μεμελετήκασιν ἀσκεῖν αὐτῶν τὴν φωνὴν καὶ μεγαλύνειν καὶ μεγαθύνειν διὰ τινος τέχνης φωνασικῆς καὶ φωναλειπτικῆς. The reading of the ms. is φωναλιπτικῆς. I thank my colleague Antonio Cacciari for helping me to explain this *hapax* (φωναλειπτικός < φωνή + ἀλειπτικός). On *hapax legomena* in Origen see my article *Approximations origéniennes...* (n. 14).

²⁶ *H77Ps I* (f. 217r l. 5-8): ὡς ἔθος ἡμῖν ἐπὶ τῶν προφητῶν καὶ τῶν προφητεῶν ζητεῖν τί τὸ πρόσωπον τὸ λέγον, οὕτως καὶ ἐνθάδε ζητητέον τίς ὁ λέγων. On prosopological exegesis, see M.-J. RONDEAU, *Les commentaires patristiques du Psautier (III^e-V^e siècles)*, vol. II: *Exégèse prosopologique et théologie*, Roma 1985. For its connections with ‘personification’ cf. A. VILLANI, *Origenes als Schriftsteller: ein Beitrag zu seiner Verwendung von Prosopopöie, mit einigen Beobachtungen über die prosopologische Exegese*, in “Adamantius”, 14 (2008) 130-150.

topic treatment²⁷. We understand now much better the fact that in the *First Homily on Psalm 38*, preserved only in the Latin translation of Rufinus, Origen praised as the ‘greatest ability’ (*summa virtus*) of those who fight in wrestling the standing up to the knocking of the rivals without showing any sign of suffering²⁸. In this same homily we find a hint to the musical and poetic ‘competitions’ of the Greeks matched by the similitude of the ‘theatrical competitions’ (θυμελικοὶ ἀγῶνες) in the *Homily on Psalm 81*²⁹.

This homily provides us with the second passage, while bringing to the fore Origen’s well known propensity for the use of theatrical metaphors³⁰. The explanation of Ps 81:2 b (πρόσωπα ἀμαρτωλῶν λαμβάνετε, “you accept the persons of sinners”) lent itself to go back to the motif of man as an actor assuming different masks / roles / faces on the ‘scene’ (θυμέλη) of the world. On the one hand, Origen exploits the negative implications of the verse (meaning to ‘accept’ or ‘making distinctions’ for the persons of the sinners); on the other hand, he employs the comparison of theatre as an unavoidable element for all those engaged in the ‘competition’ (ἀγών) of the world, from men to angels. To assume a ‘role’ can thus be seen at a double level: positively, when man assumes the face of the angels or even of God; negatively, when he takes on that of the Antichrist or of the devil. We cannot exclude even here Origen’s dependence upon a literary topos, but once again the way he treats it by applying the theatrical image to all the orders of the spiritual creatures appears quite typical of him, especially when we compare our homily with the corresponding passages on man within the cosmic theatre in the *Treatise on Prayer*. Also with regard to this peculiar treatment of the spiritual fight in the face of God, of the angels and the demons, it is possible to argue that Jerome’s *Tractatus in Ps. 81* is dependent on Origen’s homily. In fact Jerome introduces the explanation with a sentence clearly deriving from the initial statement in the homily (ἀνακεχωρηκότα τοιοῦτον λόγον = *alia interpretatio sacratio*)³¹, whereas he adapts and simplifies the *exemplum* by applying it to the monastic discourse on the passions.

Cod. Mon. Gr. 314	Jerome, <i>Tract. in Ps. 81</i>
<p>ἔστιν χωρὶς τῶν εἰρημένων εἰπεῖν καὶ εἰς τὸ πρόσωπα ἀμαρτωλῶν λαμβάνετε (Sal 81, 2b), ἀνακεχωρηκότα τοιοῦτον λόγον· ὥσπερ οἱ ἐπὶ τῆς σκηνῆς πρὸς τὰ δράματα, ἂν μεμελετήκασι,</p>	<p><i>Ceterum est alia interpretatio sacratio. Solet in theatris unus homo frequenter diversas habere personas. Nunc ingreditur in mulierem, nunc in virum, nunc in regem; et qui in rege processerat,</i></p>

²⁷ *H77Ps IV* (ff. 251v l. 12-252r l. 3): ἡ οὐχ ὄρας τί ἱστορεῖται περὶ τῶν ἀγῶνων τούτων τῶν ὀνομαζομένων μεγάλων γυμνικῶν; οἱ πάρεσι πεμπόμενοι ὑπὸ τῶν Ἑλληνοδίκων, οἱ ἐπιτηροῦντες τὸν ἀθλητὴν πῶς ἐσθίει· καὶ ὥσπερ τοῖς γυμνασίοις παρατυγχάνουσι καὶ ἐπιτηροῦσιν, εἰ κατὰ νόμον γίνεται καὶ κατὰ λόγον τὰ γυμνάσια, οὕτω παρατυγχάνουσι τοῖς ἀθληταῖς καὶ τρεφομένοις καὶ ὑποφωνοῦσι τρεφομένοις ὡς ἀγωνιζομένοις καὶ παρ’ αὐτὸν τὸν καιρὸν τρέφεσθαι φασίν· καλῶς ἐσθίεις, γενναίως ἐσθίεις, ἐλπίδας ἔχεις ἀγαθᾶς.

²⁸ *H38Ps I, 5* (Prinzivalli, 336-338): *Hi qui in agonis certamine mutuis inter se verberibus agunt, in his semper praeprare conantur, ut illata sibi ab adversariis verbera fortiter ferant nec sensum doloris accipiant et est eis summa virtus: lacertorum ictus vel calcium absque dolore suscipere. In quibus ille est perfectior, qui ad ictum vulneris nullum recipit stimulum doloris.* For the use of athletic metaphors in Origen see P. ROSA, *Giobbe ἀθλητῆς nei Padri della Chiesa: fortuna di un’immagine*, in “Adamantius”, 13 (2007) 152-173.

²⁹ *H38Ps I, 2* (Prinzivalli, 326): *Apud Graecos quicumque carmina vel sonos musicos conscribebant, quibus eis visum fuisset in agone ea canenda praestabant: et fiebat ut alius quidem coronaretur in agone, alius autem victori conscriberet carmen.*

³⁰ See *Orat XX, 2 e XXVIII, 3* and the fine analysis provided on these *loci* by L. LUGARESI, *Il teatro di Dio. Il problema degli spettacoli nel cristianesimo antico (II-IV secolo)*, Brescia 2008, 514-522.

³¹ Origen rather means a rarer or singular explanation, as we see from *Clo XIX, 15, 93*: ἐπὶ δὲ ἴδωμεν ἐκ τῆς παραθέσεως τῶν ῥητῶν ἐκεῖνα, τότε ζητήσομεν εἰ καὶ τοῦτο ὑπ’ αὐτῶν περὶ τοῦ σωτῆρος λέγεται βαθύτερον τι βλεπόντων. ὅτι δε κατὰ ἀνακεχωρηκότας λόγους καὶ μὴ κατημαξευμένους ἔφασκον.

πρόσωπα λαμβάνουσι νῦν μὲν βασιλέως, νῦν δὲ οἰκέτου, νῦν δὲ γυναικός, νῦν δὲ οἰουδήποτε, καὶ ἔστιν ἰδεῖν ἐν τοῖς θυμεικοῖς ἀγῶσι πρόσωπα λαμβάνοντας τοὺς ἀγωνιζομένους. τοιοῦτόν τι μοι νόει καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς τοῦ κόσμου θυμέλης γίνεσθαι. πάντες γὰρ οἱ ἀγωνιζόμενοι αἰεὶ πρόσωπα λαμβάνομεν· ἐὰν μὲν μακάριοι ὦμεν οἰονεὶ πρόσωπον λαμβάνομεν τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ λέγομεν· *υἱὸς ἐγέννησα καὶ ὑψωσα, αὐτοὶ δέ με ἠθέτεσαν* (Is 1, 2). πάλιν, ἐὰν δίκαιοι ὦμεν, πρόσωπον λαμβάνομεν Χριστοῦ καὶ ἀνθρωποὶ ὄντες λέγομεν· *πνεῦμα κυρίου ἐπ’ ἐμέ, οὗ εἶνεκεν ἔχρισέν με, εὐαγγελίσασθαι πτωχοῖς ἀπέσταλκέν με* (Is 61, 1; Lc 4, 18). οὕτω δὲ καὶ πρόσωπον ἄδικου δίκαιος λαμβάνει, κατὰ τὸ γεγραμμένον καθὼς τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον λέγει· *σήμηρον ἐὰν σκληρύνητε τὰς καρδίας ὑμῶν* (Sal 94, 7-8). λαμβάνει δὲ καὶ πρόσωπον ἀγγέλου ἀγίου ὁ ἐνθουσιῶν ἀπὸ ἀγγελικῆς δυνάμεως, ὡσπερ ὁ λέγων· *ὁ ἄγγελος τοῦ πνεύματος τοῦ λαλοῦντος ἐν ἐμοί*. ταῦτα μὲν περὶ τῆς χώρας τῆς κρείττους. ἔστιν δὲ καὶ κατὰ τὰ ἐναντία ἰδεῖν ὃν μὲν τινα λαμβάνοντα πρόσωπον τοῦ διαβόλου, ὃν δὲ πρόσωπον τοῦ ἀντιχρίστου, ἄλλον πρόσωπον λαμβάνοντα δαιμονίου (*H81Ps*, ff. 364r l. 12-365r l. 5).

rursum in servum procedit.

Dixi exemplum ut de carnali venire possimus ad spiritale. Et nos diversas personas accipimus. Quando enim irascor, personam leonis adsumo; quando res alienas rapio, lupi personam adsumo; quando vero crudelis sum et interficio, adsumo personam crudelis. Sed quomodo qui sunt peccatores, in peccatis habent diversas personas, sic e contrario qui sancti sunt, habent et ipsi diversas personas, sed in bono. Quando elemosynam facio, habeo personam quasi clementis; quando vero bene iudico, habeo personam boni iudicis; quando vero iniuriam patior et humilis sum, habeo personam humilis. Infelix est, qui plures in malo habet personas; felix, qui diversas personas habet in bono (Jerome, *Tract. in Ps. LXXXI*, CChSL LXXVIII/2 Adriaen, p. 85 ll. 75-90).

*Conclusion:
a familiar voice*

I doubt having succeeded in presenting an orderly picture of the several arguments that led me to corroborate the attribution to Origen of the new homilies. Being obliged to make a selection of cases, I hope nevertheless that it appears persuasive enough. Rediscovering today the author to whom I dedicated more than two decades of my scholarly life could not but bring me to a state of mind in which one expects to hear a voice that has become familiar. Perhaps I did not completely resist this temptation, but I should also add that Origen always imposes himself with a peculiar discourse reflecting his world, his doctrines and personality. Though he never repeats himself schematically (we have extremely few cases of mere rewriting), he is clearly recognisable from the way of speaking and dealing with the contents he addresses, always with the accompaniment of some characteristic motifs and accents. Occasionally he could also have recourse to the mood of the ‘confession’, revealing a sharp awareness of the many challenges for a preacher facing an audience eager of listening to an exceptional man, as we see from the remarkable introduction to the *First Homily on Psalm 67*. Responding here to the praise of the ‘pope’ (πάππα as the name of the bishop, like in the *Dialogue with Heraclides*), who apparently had introduced him with many compliments and words of great expectation for the speech the preacher was going to deliver, Origen replies by inviting the community to pray God together with him so that he may receive inspiration for his discourse. The audience should then come to recognise the presence of such an inspiration in his own words³².

³² *H67Ps* I (f. 83v ll. 7-23): ἐγὼ δὲ ἤκουσα τῶν εἰρημένων οὐχ ὡς ἤδη ὄντων, ἀλλ’ ὡς ἤκουσαν οἱ πραεῖς· ὁ μὲν Ἰακώβ τῆς εὐλογίας τοῦ Ἰσαάκ, οἱ δὲ δώδεκα πατριάρχαι τῶν εὐλογιῶν τοῦ Ἰακώβ. ἐκεῖνα γὰρ αἱ εὐλογίαι οὐπω μὲν ἦσαν περὶ τοὺς πραεῖς, προεφητεύοντο δὲ ἐσόμεναι. οὕτω δὴ

Let me conclude in turn in a mood of ‘confession’, while expressing to the Institute of Advanced Studies and to you all my sentiments of sincere thanks. During my first stay at the Institute in spring 1993, as a guest of Yoram Tsafrir’s group on Roman and Byzantine archeology in Palestine, I wrote my first long essay on Origen, devoted to his method of ‘questions and answers’³³. Almost twenty years later, in June 2010, at the end of an unforgettable sabbatical spent with the colleagues of our research group on “Personal and Institutional Religion”, I finished my book on *Prayer according to Origen*³⁴. Two years later, commenting now in this familiar and amicable atmosphere on a discovery that archaeologists are certainly able to appreciate but that I would never have imagined myself, I should say with the subtitle of my book that truly “the impossible has been made possible”.

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εὐχομένων ὑμῶν ἐπιδιδόναι ἐν τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ καὶ προφητεία ἔσται τὰ εἰρημένα ὑπὸ τοῦ πάπα περὶ ἡμῶν, προφητεία μᾶλλον εἶπερ ὡς ἤδη προσόντα ἡμῖν. οἶδα γὰρ ὅτι οὕτω ἐστὶν γεγενημένα. ἐπεὶ δὲ πείθομεν πάντα λόγον χωρὶς παρουσίας Χριστοῦ τῆς ἐν τῷ λέγοντι κενὸν καὶ ἀπὸ γῆς εἶναι, εἶναι δὲ ἀδύνατον λόγον οὐράνιον ἐπιδημεῖν χωρὶς τοῦ πέμποντος αὐτὸν Πατρὸς Θεοῦ.

³³ “*Quaestiones et responsiones*” in *Origene: Prospettive di un'analisi formale dell'argomentazione esegetico-teologica* (n. 18).

³⁴ *La preghiera secondo Origene: l'impossibilità donata*, Brescia 2011.