

The problem of the rational faith in Origen with special emphasis on the newly rediscovered Homilies on Psalms

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SUMMARY: Introduction; Origen; 1. Heresy and weak faith; 2. The right order; 3. Rationality and irrationality of the faith; 4. *Koinē ennoia* and *physikē ennoia*; 5. *Lex naturalis* and Epistle to Romans 2:15; 6. Kidneys in *Second Homily on the Fifteenth Psalm*; 7. The epistemological context; 7.1. *Contra Celsum* I 9-11; 7.2. Two forms of belief and their epistemological background.

Introduction

Central moment of the formation of Christian teaching and theology in Antiquity was constituted by working out of different arguments to prove the credibility of Christian faith. The process of crystallization of the orthodoxy has been a natural development, and a teaching like Christian doctrine which possessed divine power could not have existed without successful mission on the level of the high culture and without long and fruitful conversation with the world of classical culture in which the relation between faith and knowledge was a much disputed philosophical topic. The formation of the Christian theological thought dates from the second century and lasts to the fourth one and its first geographic centre has been Alexandria, where the great figures of Clement of Alexandria, Origen and Saint Athanasius made great efforts for answering sceptical question relating to the truth of the Christianity. These achievements could not be realized without a thorough investigation of the general problem of belief and knowledge.

My paper will focus on Origen and I try to show that while investigating the question of the rationality of the Christian faith in the Alexandrian theologian's works one can rely on new evidences as well. As it is well known the top significant event of the recent past of the patristic scholarship was the identification of twenty nine Origenian homilies on the Psalms by Maria Molin Pradel whose surmise has been proved by Lorenzo Perrone in several papers.¹ Now, I don't want to tell you the story of the discovery and the identification of these manuscripts Codex Graecus 314 of the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek. I think there is no counter-evidence against the attribution of this collection of homilies on the Psalms to Origen. For this reason there is no need to tell the story of transmission, cataloguing and content. Rather I try to find new Origenian accounts on the question of the rationality of the Christian faith and information on the notion of $\pi\acute{\iota}\sigma\tau\iota\varsigma$ in these homilies as well.²

The initiator of the investigation dedicated to the relation between faith and knowledge was Clement of Alexandria who saw in the figure of a Christian teacher the missionary of that *paideia*, which has permeated all fundamental aspects of the human life and gave positive answer to the doubts emerged in connection of the Christian teachings.

Trying to solve the problem of belief and knowledge – mainly in the books of the *Stromata* – Clement of Alexandria debated with

- 1 L. Perrone, "Origenes redivivus: la découverte des *Homélie sur les Psaumes* dans le *Cod. Gr. 314* de Munich", *Revue d'études augustinienne et patristiques*, 59 (2013) 55-93, "Riscoprire Origene oggi: prime impressioni sulla raccolta di omelie sui Salmi nel *Codex Monacensis Graecus 314*", *Adamantius* 18 (2012) 41-58, "Rediscovering Origen Today: First Impressions of the New Collection of Homilies on the Psalms in the *Codex Monacensis Graecus 314*", *StPatr* 56 (2013) 103-122.
- 2 I would like thank Lorenzo Perrone that he made me available the first draft of the transcription of these marvellous homilies' text prepared by him with his Italian colleagues, Emanuela Prinzivalli, Chiara Barilli and Antonio Cacciari.

three different groups and views. The common element of these three forms of discussions on the question of the relation between belief and knowledge was that the representative figures of the three groups considered this relation as contrasting one. The Greek philosopher Celsus, who lived in the second century, states the following in Origen's quotation:

“... He urges us to follow reason and a rational guide in accepting doctrines on the ground that anyone who believes people without so doing is certain to be deceived... For just as among them scoundrels frequently take advantage of the lack of education of gullible people and lead them wherever they wish, so also, he says, this happens among the Christians. He says that some do not even want to give or to receive a reason for what they believe, and use such expressions as ‘Do not ask questions; just believe’, and ‘your faith will save you’. And he affirms that they say: ‘The wisdom in the world is an evil, and foolishness a good thing.’”³

In Celsus' opinion Christianity rests on unfounded belief while Greek philosophy possesses knowledge.

The second group of the Gnostics promises hidden, and perfect truths based on special revelation needed *psychikoi*. In this constellation faith and knowledge on the one side and the Gods of Old and New Testaments on the other side are opposites. The third group is the mass of the simple-minded Christian believers who – beyond accepting the simple *kērygma* – cannot aspire to deepen the knowledge in the Christian doctrine. They consider theory and representatives of more articulated doctrine as unfamiliar to true Christianity.

As is well known the common segment of these views is the contrasting character of faith and knowledge. Clement deserves credit for showing the continuity, reciprocity and unity of faith and knowledge

3 *Cels.* I 9, Chadwick's translation with small modification (Origen, *Contra Celsum*, translated with an Introduction and Notes by Henry Chadwick, Cambridge 1953. Reprinted with corrections 1965; 1980.), cf. Mc 5:36; 9:23, Mt 9:22, Lk 17:19; 18:42, 1Cor 1:18.

on the basis of the Scripture and the Greek philosophical tradition. According to him "... faith is not passive acceptance, but the explosive force of a new beginning, a rebirth to new life, a renewing of the mind to the tireless activity which searches for the best reason. ... The act of faith unifies the believer in dependence on one object and source, namely the power of God. Faith is achieved through an interaction between believer and God, between reasoning and perception ... Faith is joined to knowledge by reciprocity in a process of growth. Faith has a firm beginning"⁴ in the Lord or in God's revelation in the Scriptures – which can be regarded as a parallel of Aristotle's first previous and indemonstrable knowledge in the *Analytica Posteriora*.

Origen

According to the interpreters of Clement of Alexandria Origen has less to say on the relation of faith and knowledge.⁵ Unfortunately, we do not possess Origen's *Stomata* which certainly has treated the main topics of the Clementian work under the same title, but I think that Origen knew his predecessor's view on the question of faith and knowledge, he gave well-articulated answers to this problem providing new insights into the topic. Origen's basic ideas on the continuity, reciprocity and unity of faith and knowledge are almost identical with the view of Clement but Scriptural aspects of faith and knowledge are present more strongly than in Clement's work while philosophical aspects are only indicated and these were worked out in more indirect manner. Thus, it is more difficult to find these aspects in Origen's writing than in Clementian *Stomata* where the eighth book is rather an extract of an Aristotelian treatise or treatises on the main problems of scientific demonstration. Origen's views on belief

4 Eric Osborn, *Clement of Alexandria*, Cambridge 2005, 155-160.

5 Eric Osborn, "Arguments for faith in Clement of Alexandria" *VigChr* 48 (1994) 2.

or faith, or rather on Christian faith, needs a reconstruction. He did not call gnostics that Christians who possess knowledge, as Clement did, and he did not share with Clement such incorrect idea that Plato respected the excellence of the *pistis*.⁶

In my contribution I do not deliver this reconstruction of the Origenian view on the relation between faith and knowledge but I am dealing with some questions relating it with special emphasis on the information given by the Homilies on Psalms.

1. Heresy and weak faith

The first topic to be treated in connection of the Origenian notion of faith is its strong or weak quality described in the First and Second Homily on Psalm Seventy seven. According to Origen the heretics' method of searching is defective because they have no firm faith. Commenting the first verse of the Psalm Seventy seven: *Give ear, O my people, to my law: incline your ears to the words of my mouth*, our theologian emphasises that

“In the same way our Saviour and Lord, when arranging the teaching, he did not begin with parables and mysteries but with legislation and teaching. Arriving to the hill he opened his mouth and said: *blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven* (Mt 5:3) etcetera. This all is not a parable but a teaching, and probably one can say in connection of this that *Give ear, O my people, to my law ...*”⁷

In the following Origen identifies the legislation with moral doctrine and he claims that the right order of the formation is that first the law should be learnt and the second step is the search for mystical realities. He says that heretics did not search with right method and pure manner. If they correctly investigated, they would have accom-

6 *Str.* II 4,18,1.

7 *HomPs*:77, I 5 (f.223r)

plished successfully their morals first and they would have established the faith (*pistis*) first.”⁸ The consequence of the missed order in heretic way of teaching practiced in Alexandria is described in an autobiographic retrospective passage of the Second Homily on Seventy seven Psalm:

“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. Thus, they separated 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.”⁹

Thus, the first thing of the Christian faith is the accept of the main statements of the Christian faith. One can identify these with the apostolic teaching. Origen lays down the main doctrines of *traditio apostolica* in the prologue of the *First Principles*.¹⁰ These are propo-

8 ... ἐζήτησαν γὰρ [sc. Heretics] ... ἀλλ’ οὐχ ὁδῶ ἐζήτησαν οὐδὲ καθαρῶς ἐζήτησαν. εἰ ὀρθῶς ἐζήτησαν, πρῶτον τὰ ἦθη κατώρθωσαν ἅν, πρῶτον τὴν πίστιν ἐβεβαιωτῶσαν· εἶτα, μετὰ τὴν κατόρθωσιν τῶν ἡθῶν οὕτω προκόποντες, ἐληλύθεισαν ἐπὶ τὴν θεολογίαν καὶ τὴν ζήτησιν τῶν βαθυτέρων καὶ μυστικωτέρων. *HomPs*:77, I 5 (f.224r).

9 *HomPs*:77, II 4 (f.233r) Translated by L. Perrone in his lecture at Colloquium Origenianum Undecimum held in Aarhus 2013. August.

10 On the Origenian interpretation of church’s rule of faith, see Gustave Bardy, “La Règle de Foi d’Origène.” *RSR* 9 (1919) 162-196, R.C. Baud, “Les ‘Règle’ de la théologie d’Origène.” *RSR* 55 (1967) 161-208, P. Martens, *Origen and Scripture*, Oxford, 2012, 127-131. Here, I would like to emphasise the science theoretical side of these rules. Origen does not simply appeal to an institutional authority. “Origen defends the church’s position on the basis of its rational cogency and expects that a rigorous insistence on such cogency will maintain the integrity of the church’s doctrine.” J.W. Trigg, “Origen Man of Church” in

sitions constituting the *credo*, to which the Alexandrine adheres as fundamentals. Because of this, the propositions that encapsulate the principal Christian teachings may well be regarded as axioms of his theological researches. What are these axioms and how does Origen inform us on them?

1. There is one God, the Creator, who created and set in order all things from nothing.
2. From the first creation he is the God of all righteous men, of Adam, Abel, Seth, Enos, Enoch, Noah, Shem, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, of the twelve patriarchs, of Moses and the prophets.
3. In the last days, according to the previous prophecies, God sent the Lord Jesus Christ for the purpose of calling Israel, then the Gentiles.
4. The righteous and good God, Father of Jesus Christ, gave the law, the prophets and the gospels. He is the God of both the Old and New Testaments.
5. Jesus Christ was begotten of the Father before every created thing and he ministered to the Father in the creation of all things.
6. In the last times Jesus Christ emptied himself, and was made man, he was born of a virgin and of the Holy Spirit. He was made man, but he still remained god.
7. Jesus Christ suffered and died in truth and not only in appearance. He truly rose from the dead, and after the resurrection he met his disciples again and was taken up into heaven.
8. The Holy Spirit is united in honour and dignity with the Father and the Son. He inspired the saints, the prophets and the apostles.
9. Every rational soul possesses free will and choice, and they will have eternal blessed life or passion according to their merits.

Origeniana Quinta ed. Robert Daly, Louvain, 1992, 54.

10. There exist good angels and powers, the devil and his angels.
11. The world was made by creation, its existence began in time, and it will be annihilated.
12. Beyond the obvious meaning, the Holy texts inspired by the Holy Spirit have deeper meanings.¹¹

Origen collects many problems that are not solved by the Scriptures and are open questions for further discussion. These are the following:

1. Is the Holy Spirit begotten or unbegotten? Is he also a Son of God or not?
 2. What is the origin of the soul¹²?
 3. What is the nature of Satan and his angels?
 4. What was before this world and what will be after it?
 5. Are God, soul, rational creatures corporeal or incorporeal beings?
 6. What is the nature of the angels?
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- 11 Following a more sophisticated analysis and using a more detailed division, more than twelve axioms may be created.
 - 12 The problem is introduced by the method of division worked out in the Platonic tradition: "In regard to the soul, whether it takes its rise from the transference of the seed, in such a way that the principle or substance of the soul may be regarded as inherent in the seminal particles of the body itself; or whether it has some other beginning, and whether this beginning is in time or not, or at any rate whether it is imparted to the body from outside or not; all these are not very clearly defined in the teaching." „*De anima vero utrum ex seminis traduce ducatur, ita ut ratio ipsius vel substantia inserta ipsis corporalibus seminibus habeatur, an vero aliud habeat initium, et hoc ipsum initium si genitum est aut non genitum, vel certe si extrinsecus corpori inditur necne: non satis manifesta praedicatione distinguitur.*" *Princ* Praefatio 5. (In this paper I follow this translation: Origen, *On First Principles*. Translated by George W. Butterworth. Introduction by Henri De Lubac, Harper Torchbooks, New York, 1966.)

7. Are the Sun, the Moon and stars animate beings or not?

Before investigating these questions according to the Alexandrian master, one should start from the obviously true statements of the *tradition apostolica*. In Origen's view these offer the clearest Christian teaching to everybody:

“But the following fact should be understood. The holy apostles, when preaching the faith of Christ, took certain doctrines, those namely which they believed to be necessary ones, and delivered them in the plainest terms to all believers, even to such as appeared to be somewhat dull in the investigation of divine knowledge.”¹³

Although these doctrines are clear teachings, Origen emphasizes the notion of “belief” (*quaecumque necessaria crediderunt, omnibus credentibus*) in the same way as in the first sentence of the prologue:

“All who believe and are convinced that grace and truth came by Jesus Christ and who know Christ to be the truth, in accordance with his own saying, *I am the truth*, derive the knowledge which calls men to lead a good and blessed life from no other source but the very words and teaching of Christ.”¹⁴

13 „*Illud autem scire oportet, quoniam sancti apostoli fidem Christi praedicantes de quibusdam quidem, quaecumque necessaria crediderunt, omnibus credentibus, etiam his, qui pigriores erga inquisitionem divinae scientiae videbantur, manifestissime tradiderunt.*” *Princ* Preamatio 3.

14 „*Omnes qui credunt et certi sunt quod gratia et veritas per Jesum Christum facta sit, et Christum esse veritatem norunt, secundum quod ipse dixit: ‘Ego sum veritas’, scientiam quae provocat homines ad bene beateque vivendum non aliunde quam ab ipsis Christi verbis doctrinaque suscipiunt.*” *Princ* Preamatio I.

2. The right order

The beginning of the way of life is faith and righteousness. Faith is founded on the basis of moral and it is somehow a practical thing and not an epistemological issue where a belief may be a pure hypothesis. For Origen faith and morality represent initial matters and *vita activa*, which is followed by contemplation. This latter in the end, in ἀποκατάστασις constitutes pure intellectual practice. In the first book of Commentary on John Origen tells us:

“One meaning [that is of the term ἀρχή] involves change, and this belongs, as it were, to a way and length which is revealed by the Scripture: *The beginning of a good way is to do justice.* (Prov 16:7 [LXX]). For since a *good way* is very great, we must understand that the practical, which is presented by the phrase *to do justice*, relates to the initial matters, and the contemplative to those that follow. I think its stopping point and goal is in the so-called restoration (ἀποκατάστασις) because no one is left as an enemy then, if indeed the statement is true, *for he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. And the last enemy to be destroyed is death.* (1Cor 15:25-26) For at that time those who have come to God because of the Word which is with him (cf. Jn 1:1) will have the contemplation of God as their only activity, that, having been accurately formed (Cf. Gal 4:19) in the knowledge of the Father, they may all thus become a son, since now the Son alone has known the Father.”¹⁵

15 Ἡ μὲν γὰρ τις ὡς μεταβάσεως, αὕτη δὲ ἐστὶν ἢ ὡς ὁδοῦ καὶ μήκους· ὅπερ δηλοῦται ἐκ τοῦ «Ἀρχὴ ὁδοῦ ἀγαθῆς τὸ ποιεῖν τὰ δίκαια». Τῆς γὰρ «ἀγαθῆς ὁδοῦ» μεγίστης τυγχανούσης, κατὰ μὲν τὰ πρῶτα νοητέον εἶναι τὸ πρακτικόν, ὅπερ παρίσταται διὰ τοῦ «Ποιεῖν τὰ δίκαια», κατὰ δὲ τὰ ἐξῆς τὸ θεωρητικόν, εἰς ὃ καταλήγειν οἴμαι καὶ τὸ τέλος αὐτῆς ἐν τῇ λεγομένῃ «ἀποκαταστάσει» διὰ τὸ μηδένα καταλείπεσθαι τότε ἐχθρόν, εἴγε ἀληθὲς τὸ «δεῖ γὰρ αὐτὸν βασιλεύειν, ἄχρι οὗ θῆ ἅπαντας τοὺς ἐχθροὺς αὐτοῦ ὑπὸ τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ· ἔσχατος δὲ ἐχθρὸς καταργεῖται ὁ θάνατος». Τότε γὰρ μία πρᾶξις ἔσται τῶν πρὸς θεὸν διὰ τὸν πρὸς αὐτὸν λόγον φθασάντων ἢ τοῦ κατανοεῖν τὸν θεόν, ἵνα γένωνται οὕτως ἐν τῇ γνώσει τοῦ πατρὸς μορφωθέντες πάντες † ἀκριβῶς υἱός, ὡς νῦν μόνος ὁ υἱὸς ἔγνωκε τὸν

This text shows the all-embracing picture of Origenian metaphysical view: the starting point of this development of perfection is the human condition. To this human condition is attached the *πρᾶξις* on the basis of the faith, which presupposes human bodies and human community with different levels of eminence and human morality. The final goal is the *ἀποκατάστασις*, in which the created being recovers his initial pure rational condition. In this goal *θεωρία* unifies God and created beings where there is no difference between these created beings and there is no need to practice in the normal sense of the word *praxis*. In *Commentary on John*, Origen refers to his *Homily on Luke* where he gave an interpretation of “breakfast” and “supper”. He attaches “breakfast” to ethical introduction and to the Old Testament, and “supper” to the further development to theory, mystical teaching and to the New Testament¹⁶. A similar compari-

πατέρα: *ComJob* I, 91-92. In this paper I follow Heine’s translation: *Commentary on the Gospel of John*. 2 vols. Translated by Ronald E. Heine, Books 1-10, 1989, Books 13-32, 1993, Washington, (ACW No. 80, 89)..

- ¹⁶ “In the homilies on the Gospel according to Luke, we compared the parables with one another, and asked what ‘breakfast’ means according to the divine Scriptures, and what ‘supper’ represents according to them. And now, therefore, let it be said that breakfast is the first nourishment, which is suited for catechumens, and precedes the completion of the spiritual day in this life. Supper, on the other hand, is the final nourishment, and is served to those who have already further in their understanding. Someone might also explain it differently and say that breakfast refers to the meaning of the Old Scriptures, but supper refers to the mysteries which have been hidden in the New Testament.” (translated by Heine) Ἐν ταῖς εἰς τὸ κατὰ Λουκᾶν ὁμιλίαις συνεκρίναμεν ἀλλήλαις τὰς παραβολάς, καὶ ἐζητήσαμεν τί μὲν σημαίνει τὸ κατὰ τὰς θείας γραφὰς ἄριστον, τί δὲ παρίστησιν τὸ κατ’ αὐτὰς δεῖπνον. καὶ νῦν τοῖνυν λελέχθω, ὅτι ἄριστον μὲν ἐστὶν ἡ πρώτη καὶ πρὸ τῆς συντελείας τῆς ἐν τῷ βίῳ τούτῳ ἡμέρας πνευματικῆς τοῖς εἰσαγομένοις ἀρμόζουσα τροφή· δεῖπνον δὲ ἡ τελευταία καὶ τοῖς ἤδη ἐπὶ πλεῖον προκεκοφόσι παρατιθεμένη κατὰ λόγον. καὶ ἄλλως δ’ εἶποι ἄν τις ἄριστον μὲν εἶναι τὸν νοῦν τῶν παλαιῶν γραμμάτων, δεῖπνον δὲ τὰ ἐναποκεκρυμμένα τῇ καινῇ διαθήκῃ

son between eating and drinking can be found in another fragment of the Origenian explanation of Luke 15:23, where λόγος ἠθικός is opposed to λόγος ἐποπτικός,¹⁷ and in *Commentary on John*, where ἠθικὰ μαθήματα and ἀπόρρητα καὶ μυστικὰ θεωρήματα represents the contrast between bread and drink.¹⁸ In the same work Origen connects the verse “come and see”¹⁹ to active life (τὸ πρακτικόν) and “... contemplation (θεωρία) subsequent to the successful completion of acts.”²⁰ In the same way, the Origenian distinction between Maria and Martha connects θεωρία, τὸ τῆς ἀγάπης μυστήριον, πνευματικῶς understanding and conversion from Paganism to the former, Jewish-Christianity, πραξίς, corporal interpretation appropriate to multitude to the latter.²¹

μυστήρια. *ComJoh* XXXII 5-7. Basic teaching as moral see: *HomNum* XXVII 1,2 (SC 461 p. 272).

17 Fragm. 218 to Luke 15:23. (GCS 321).

18 *ComJoh* I 208.

19 Jn 1:39.

20 *ComJoh* II 219.

21 *HomLc* fragm. 171, (GCS 298), *ComJoh* fragm. 80, (GCS 547, 23). “*Your kingdom come. If the kingdom of God* (Mt 6:10) according to the word of our Lord and Saviour *comes not with observation: neither shall they say, Lo here! or lo there! but the kingdom of God is within you* (Lk 17:20-21), *for the word is nigh you, even in your mouth, and in your heart* (Rom 10:8), it is evident that he who prays that *the kingdom of God* dwells in himself as in a well-ordered city, so to speak. Present with him are the Father and Christ who reigns with the father in the soul that has been perfected, in accordance with the saying which I mentioned a short time ago *we will come unto him, and make our abode with him* (John 14:23). And I think that by God’s kingdom is meant the blessed state of the reason and the ordered condition of wise thoughts; while by Christ’s kingdom is meant the words that go forth for the salvation of those who hear them and the works of righteousness and the other virtues which are being accomplished: for the Son of God is the Word and Righteousness.” *Orat* XXV 1 (GCS 356, 26-357, 13) (Oulton’s translation with small modification. On Prayer. In *Alexandrian Christianity. Selected translation of Clement and Origen*. Edited by Henry Chadwick/ John E.L. Oulton, translated by John E.L. Oulton, Louisville 1954,

3. Rationality and irrationality of the faith

The beginning of Christian faith is connected to some irrational moments which are connected to Jesus Christ's divine power radiated among men during his earthly activity and resurrection. Jesus Christ's and his apostles' wonders and acts representing *demonstration of power* against Greek proofs have the following characteristics: they have a superhuman demonstrative force, and they overcome many listeners' resistance in a short time, because of the radical new character of the teaching. The preaching produces sometimes involuntary conversion in the listeners²² and persisting in the new doctrine that they are able to fight in danger of death against the powers of organized and well governed enemies having great numerical superiority in all respect.²³ At the same time the Christian teaching is a rational doctrine. It should be emphasized first that the divine Logos and Wisdom is the ontological and epistemological fundament of the existence and activities of all rational creatures.²⁴ Rational creatures are made in the image of God, and the kinship of God and rational creatures consists in the intellect.²⁵

reissued 2006, 238-387.). In *SelPs* (PG XII, 1581D) intelligence get to the kingdom of heavens (door of the knowledge), θεωρία via πρακτική ἀρετή (doors).

22 "It shall be said that many have come to Christianity as it were in spite of themselves, some spirit having turned their mind suddenly from hating the gospel to dying for it by means of a vision by day or by night." *Cels* I 46.

23 *Princ* IV 1,1-2; 5 *ComJob* I 241, *Cels* I 26; 29; 46; 61-63, II 79, III 39; 42; 68; 79, IV 32.

24 *Princ* I 3,8 "This Son, then, is also the truth and the life of all things that exist; and rightly so. For the things that were made, how could they live, except by the gift of life? Or the things that exist, how could they really and truly exist, unless they were derived from the truth? Or how could rational beings exist, unless the Word or reason had existed before them? Or how could they be wise, unless wisdom existed?" *Princ* I 2,4.

25 „*Deus pater omnibus praestat ut sint, participatio vero Christi secundum id, quod verbum vel ratio est, facit ea esse rationabilia.*" *Princ* I 3,8.

In *Contra Celsum* III 40 Origen states *expressis verbis* that the fundamental theses of the Christian teaching are in perfect harmony with common conceptions:

“Consider whether the doctrines of our faith are not in complete accord with the common conceptions (Ὅρα δὲ εἰ μὴ τὰ τῆς πίστεως ἡμῶν ταῖς κοιναῖς ἐννοίαις) when they change the opinions of people who give a fair hearing to what we say. For even if the perverted idea, supported by much instruction, has been able to implant in the multitude the conception that images are gods and the objects made of gold, silver, ivory, and stone, are worthy of worship, nevertheless the common conception demands that we do not think of God as corruptible matter at all, nor that He is honoured when men make images of Him in lifeless material objects, as though they were made *in his image*²⁶ or were symbols of Him. That is why Christians forthwith say of images that *they are not gods*²⁷, and maintain that created objects such as these are not comparable with the Creator, and are worth little beside the supreme God who created, holds together, and governs the universe. And the rational soul, which at once recognizes that which is, so to speak, akin to it, discards the images which it has hitherto thought to be gods, and assumes its natural affection for the Creator; because of this affection for Him it also accepts the one who first showed these truths to all nations by the disciples whom he trained, and whom he sent out with divine power and authority to preach the message about God and His kingdom.”²⁸

4. *Koinē ennoia* and *physikē ennoia*

What are these common conceptions in Origen? How the true beliefs and common conceptions are formed out? How can be considered common conceptions as rational beliefs?

26 Gen 1:26.

27 Acts 19:26.

28 *Cels* III 40. Translated by Chadwick.

Our theologian says as follows in the first book of *Contra Celsum*:

“... for people who affirm the righteous judgement of God, it would have been impossible to believe in the penalty inflicted for sins unless in accordance with the common conceptions all men had a sound conception of moral principles. There is therefore nothing amazing about it if the same God has implanted in the souls of all men the truths which He taught through the prophets and the Saviour; He did this that every man might be without excuse at the divine judgement, having the requirement of the law written in his heart (Rom 2:15).”²⁹

In a normal case *koinē ennoia* is a well formed and true concept whose root is implanted into us by God.³⁰ Common is this conception because the group of such conceptions “constitutes a form of tacit knowledge possessed by all humans qua rational beings.”³¹ The notion of *koinē ennoia* has a normative aspect: it presupposes an uncorrupted developmental process by which humans possess right views.³² Thus, *koinē ennoia* cannot be identified with different opinions of *consensus gentium*, because it is possible to create incorrect concepts and considering them as *koinai ennoiai*. Due to this problematic character of *koinai ennoiai* philosophical schools heavily discussed the correctness of *koinai ennoiai* adapted by the rival philosophical schools while they also maintained that there exist true *koinai ennoiai*.³³ Origen high-

29 ... τοῖς εἰσάγουσι κρίσιν δικαίαν θεοῦ ἀπεκέκλειστο ἂν ἢ ἐπὶ τοῖς ἁμαρτανομένοις δίκη, μὴ πάντων ἐχόντων κατὰ τὰς κοινὰς ἐννοίας πρόληψιν ὑγιῆ περι τοῦ ἠθικοῦ τόπου. Διόπερ οὐδὲν θαυμαστὸν τὸν αὐτὸν θεὸν ἄπερ ἐδίδαξε διὰ τῶν προφητῶν καὶ τοῦ σωτῆρος ἐγκατεσπαρκέναι ταῖς ἀπάντων ἀνθρώπων ψυχαῖς· ἵν’ ἀναπολόγητος ἐν τῇ θείᾳ κρίσει πᾶς ἄνθρωπος ᾗ, ἔχων τὸ βούλημα «τοῦ νόμου γραπτὸν» ἐν τῇ ἑαυτοῦ καρδίᾳ· *Cels* I 4. Chadwick’s translation with small modification. I prefer “common conceptions” to “universal ideas” for *koinai ennoiai*.

30 *Philoc* XXIII 9 (SC 160, 18-24), *Cels* I 4-5.

31 Henry Dyson, *Prolepsis and Ennoia in the Early Stoa*, Berlin/New York 2009, 48.

32 Henry Dyson, *Prolepsis and Ennoia in the Early Stoa*, 62.

33 Interpreters connect Origen’s view on *physikē ennoia* and *koinē ennoia* with Sto-

lights as well, that Epicurean and Stoic philosophers could not grasp the natural conception (*physikē ennoia*) of God: “Not even they have been able to perceive clearly the natural conception of God’s nature, as being entirely incorruptible, simple, uncompounded, and indivisible.”³⁴

icism. (Cécile Blanc’s introduction to the fourth volume of *CommJob* SC 290, p. 10, Marcel Borret’s note to Cels I,4 SC 132, p. 84-87, Michel Spanneut, *Le stoicisme des Pères de l’Église*, Patristica Sorbonensia 1, du Seuil, 1957, 204-230, Chadwick’s note to I,4 in his translation (p. 8). I am inclining to consider his stand-point as a Platonic one. The Middle-Platonic Alcinous says the following in connection with *physikē ennoia*:

“Intellection (*noēsis*) is the activity of the intellect as it contemplates the primary objects of intellection. There seem to be two forms of this, the one prior to the soul’s coming to be in this body, when it is contemplating by itself the object of intellection, the other after it has been installed in this body. Of these, the former, that which existed before the soul came to be in the body, is called intellection in the strict sense, while, once it has come to be in the body, what was then called intellection is now called ‘natural conception’ (*physikē ennoia*), being, as it were, an intellection stored up in the soul... The natural concept is called by him [Plato] ‘simple item of knowledge’, ‘the wing of the soul’ (*Phdr* 246e), and sometimes ‘memory.’” Alcinous, *The Handbook of Platonism*, translated by John Dillon, Oxford 1993, 7. I think that Dillon’s comment is relevant for the understanding of Origen’s words on *physikē ennoia* and *koinē ennoia*:

“Pure intellection, then, is the immediate cognition of the Forms by a disembodied mind. When the mind is ‘installed’ in a body ... its activity is to be termed rather *physikē ennoia*, ‘natural concept’, or, better perhaps, ‘natural concept-formation’. This is a distinctively Stoic term, adopted by A[lcinous] to express a Platonist concept. For the Stoics, a *physikē ennoia*, also termed a *prolēpsis*, or ‘preconception’, is a concept that arises naturally in the soul of man as a result of repeated similar sense-perceptions, in contrast to concepts which we acquire by a conscious process of learning and attention. A Platonist such as A[lcinous] can accept this formulation, with the qualification that what the repeated sense-perceptions are doing is stirring up in our minds a recollection (*anamnēsis*) of a Form, which we are then enabled to discern as immanent in sensible particulars.” Alcinous, *The Handbook of Platonism*, 67-68.

³⁴ Cels IV 14.

In Origen's opinion the great differences of the condition of newborn children, their rudimentary mental state, illness³⁵, the false views spread by ancient customs³⁶, the impossibility of rational choice of philosophical school³⁷, and the fallacious reference to *physikai ennoiai*³⁸ erect serious obstacles against the correct use of the rationality. Thus, an alleged "common conception" may be a deformed and unreliable traditional view or, more exactly, there are teachings that vindicate to be items of common truths but in reality they are false ones.³⁹ It is clear that Origen could not simply rely on "common conception" in the non-Christian environment. At the same time, the "common conception" of God as Creator and provident divine power offers the framework for rational thinking. "Common conceptions" or "common opinions" and evidence based on sense perceptions may be a common segment of Greek theist theologies and Christian doctrines. Hence the credibility and plausibility of the Christian teachings and that the religious doctrine may form a coherent view, which is not in opposition to the general concepts of human beings. Similarly, the empirical accounts of the principal historical events of Jewish and Christian faith offer obvious data that are compatible with our evidence.

35 *Cels* I 33.

36 "Quarreling and prejudice are troublesome in that they make men disregard even obvious facts, preventing them from giving doctrines to which they have somehow become accustomed, which colour and mould their soul. Indeed a man would more readily give up his habits in other respects, even if he finds it hard to tear himself away from them, than in the case of his religious opinions. Nevertheless, men of fixed habits do not easily abandon even what is not connected to religion." *Cels* I 52. As far as the idea is concerned, Chadwick confers Seneca *Epist* 71, 31, but I would add Aristotle *Met* α 3, 995a.

37 *Cels* I, 10, Gregory of Thaumaturgus, *Paneg* 13,151.

38 Forms of evil teaching, that is corn-poppies strewn by the devil, are named by these terms in *ComMt* X 2 (SC p. 146). The adepts of different philosophical schools could not elucidate the *physikē ennoia* referred to God: *Cels* IV 14.

39 *ComMt* X 2 (SC 146), *Cels* IV 14.

Origen's view on common conceptions shows that according to him natural theology concurs with basic Christian teachings.⁴⁰ This conclusion is in perfect harmony with his doctrine of logic, delivered in *Fourteenth Homily on Genesis*, according to which Abimelech represents the discipline of logic. Origen says that

“Now Ochozath means ‘containing’ and Phicol ‘the mouth of all’ but Abimelech himself means ‘my father is king’. These three, in my opinion, figuratively represent all philosophy, which is divided into three parts among them: logic, physics, ethics, that is [this is the Latin translator’s, Rufinus’ explication], rational, natural, moral. The rational is that which acknowledges God to be the father of all, that is, Abimelech.”⁴¹

The only possible interpretation of this strange passage is that in Origen's view our natural and rational thinking leads to accepting that there is one God who created and rules the world. We find an interesting supplement to the theist view of natural theology in the First homily on Seventy seven Psalm. Origen emphasises that in Scripture

- 40 It is important, that *koinē ennoia* is an acceptable general view for Origen, but it is not enough for demonstrative theological science. “Now in our investigation of these important matters we do not rest satisfied with common opinions and the evidence of things that are seen, but we use in addition, for the manifest proof of our statements, testimonies drawn from the scriptures which we believe to be divine, both from what is called the Old testament and also from the New, endeavouring to confirm our faith by reason.” *Princ* IV 1,1. In the fragment from the Third book of *Commentary on Genesis*, *koinē ennoia* is connected to truth: there exist two powers or faculties in us. The first ignores conversational and educative speeches and it takes no need of truth because it inclines to pleasures. The second, based on the common notions and protreptic speech, investigates truth. *Philoc* XXIII 9 (SC 160, 18-24). In *Cels* I 4, human beings possess by *koinai ennoiai* the seeds of right conduct. In *Cels* I 5 the right way of worship of God is implanted in us by these common concepts. *Communis opinio* in *Princ* II 8,1 provides evidence that all living beings possess a soul.
- 41 *HomGen* XIV 3,39-50 (SC 342) Heine's translation p. 200. (Origen, *Homilies on Genesis and Exodus*. Translated by Ronald E. Heine, Washington 1982 (ACW No. 71), pp. 47-224.)

there are a lot of textual corruptions. Sometimes the devil also produces mistakes in the manuscripts for misleading us and heretics like Marcion. He says: “For this reason it is reasonable to believe not much on the basis of the Scriptures but rather on the world and the order of the world.”⁴² Similarly, on Jesus Christ’s divinity the churches’ powers and the quick dissemination and victory of the Christian teaching in all over the world offer the first true information. And it is more advantageous to go further to the scriptural proofs of his divine existence only after perceiving these empirical facts. The first part of this thought is an allusion to the kosmo-teleological argument delivered on the basis of Saint Paul’s Letter to Romans 1:19-20: *Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God has showed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead.*

5. *Lex naturalis* and Epistle to Romans 2:15

All Origenian speculations on common conceptions and the starting points of the faith rest on solid scriptural basis. It is important characteristic of Origenian thinking that his references to the true or alleged common conceptions can be found in relation to the God and ethical topics. Thus, principal content of these conceptions is not an epistemological issue but religious doctrine. The Scriptural basis of connecting philosophical common conceptions with Christian teaching providing natural law is the text of Epistle to Romans 2:15, where Saint Paul is speaking about law inscribed in the hearts of the Gentiles.

42 Διὰ τοῦτο εὐλογόν ἐστι τὴν πίστιν ἔχοντα, οὐ τοσοῦτον διὰ τὰς γραφὰς ὅσον διὰ τὸν κόσμον καὶ τὴν τάξιν τὴν ἐν αὐτῷ... *HomPs* 77, I 2, (f. 215v-f.216r)

As for the difference between Jewish law and natural law, Origen emphasizes in his *Commentary on Epistle to Romans* that such laws, as the prohibition of homicide, lying, stealing and the prescription of the respect for parents should be regarded as *lex naturalis*. According to him, this may perhaps be true for the concept of the unique creator God:

“It is certain that the Gentiles who do not have the law are not being said to do naturally the things of the law in respect to the Sabbath days, the new moon celebrations, or the sacrifices written about in the law. For it was not that law which is said to be written in the hearts of the Gentiles. The reference is instead to what they should not commit murder or adultery, they ought not steal, they should not speak falsely, they should honor father and mother, and the like. Possibly it is also written in the hearts of the Gentiles that God is one and the Creator of all things. And yet it seems to me that the things which are said to be written in their heart agree with the evangelical laws, where everything is ascribed to natural justice. For what could be nearer to the natural moral senses than that those things men do not what done to themselves, they should not do to others? Natural law is able to agree with the law of Moses according to the spirit but not according to the letter.”⁴³

- 43 Translated by Scheck. *ComRom* II 9. p. 131. (Chapter number is different from the numbering in the text edition of SC.) *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, translated by Thomas P. Scheck, Books 1-5, 2001, books 6-10, 2002. Washington. (ACW No. 103, 104.) „*Certum est quod gentes quae legem non habent naturaliter quae legis sunt facere non pro sabbatis vel numeniis dicantur vel sacrificiis quae in lege scripta sunt. Non enim haec lex in cordibus gentium dicitur scripta. Sed hoc est quod sentire naturaliter possunt: verbi gratia ne homicidium ne adulterium faciant, ne furentur ne falsum dicant, at honorent patrem et matrem et horum similia. Fortassis et quod deus unus et creator sit omnium scriptum est in cordibus gentium. Magis tamen mihi videntur haec quae in corde scripta dicuntur cum evangelicis legibus convenire ubi cuncta ad naturalem referuntur aequitatem. Quid enim ita naturalibus sensibus proximum quam ut quae nolunt sibi fieri homines haec ne faciant aliis? Legi vero Mosi concordare lex naturalis secundum spiritum non secundum litteram potest.*” *ComRom* II 7,1,1-15 (SC p. 346-348.)

This law, inscribed into the rational part of the soul, is superior to written law, says Origen against Celsus.⁴⁴ As far as the Mosaic law concerns, according to the Origenian view “natural law is able to agree with the law of Moses according to the spirit but not according to the letter.”⁴⁵ But it would be too simple to identify *lex naturalis* and *lex naturae* with the natural teaching of the divine Word implanted in us in Origen’s writings. Although it is true that all rational creatures take rationality from the *Logos* this fact does not imply that all elements of natural laws are rational or divine issues. The first movements of the soul and the instinct of self-preservation, which are connected to the body, are similarly considered by Origen as moments of the law of nature.⁴⁶ Although the starting points of the knowledge of good and evil are planted in the rational creature, these components offer only a possibility for using knowledge in the right way, and, in a narrow sense, due to our natural constitution, we also possess the seeds of evil.

“...[W]e derive the beginnings and what we may call the seeds of sin from those desires which are given to us naturally for our use.”⁴⁷

These desires in themselves do not come from the devil but constitute the possibility of their improper use.

44 *Cels* V 36-37.

45 „*Legi vero Mosi concordare lex naturalis secundum spiritum non secundum litteram potest.*” *ComRom* II 7,1,1-15 (SC p. 346-348.)

46 „*Omnis anima, cum ad supplementum aetatis advenerit, et velut naturalis in ea quaedam lex coeperit sua iura defendere, primos sine dubio motus secundum desiderium carnis producit, quos ex consupiscentiae vel irae fomite vis incentive commoverit.*” *HomExod.* IV 8. (SC 142, 32-37). This *lex naturalis* is called *instinctus naturalis* in Rufinus’ Latin translation of *Princ* III 2,2,13, Görgemanns-Karpp 566. (Vier Bücher von den Prinzipien, hrsg., übersetzt, mit kritischen und erläuternden Anmerkungen versehen von Herwig Görgemanns/Heinrich Karpp. Texte zur Forschung Band 24. Darmstadt 1976.)

47 *Princ* III 2,2. Cf. *HomPs* 37, II 6-8.

6. Kidneys in *Second Homily on the Fifteenth Psalm*

The difference of the good or bad inclinations attached to different beliefs and representing the law of nature can be found in the spiritual localisation of these inclinations. The good inclinations are inscribed in the heart, that is in the *hēgemonikon*, in the rational faculty, and bad inclinations are formed in the loin (*lumbus*).⁴⁸ But what is the case when the rational faculty's formation is not yet finished? How did God implant the natural law in the *hēgemonikon* if the *hēgemonikon* has not been formed? The *hēgemonikon*, that is, the intellect makes the decision⁴⁹ but babies cannot make decision. And in the adults how can intellect product false judgements? Generally speaking Greek philosophical decision-theories always suffer from the difficulty that according to them the faculty of decision is the intellect but humans often make bad decisions, which would be impossible if intellect possessed knowledge as its nature demand it. This difficulty insists a more complex theory of developmental processes. Origen offers a highly articulated theory on the psychological basis of the formation of beliefs and free decision in the third book of *First Principles* but in that systematic work his research on the formation of decision focuses on outward influences.⁵⁰ At the same time the rediscovered *Second Homily on the Fifteenth Psalm* provides some sporadic elements of a more articulated picture from a viewpoint of innatism.

48 The place of the origin of sin is the loin (*lumbus*): „Istius [sc. *draco, serpens, diabolus, Satanas* – R.S.] fortitude in umbilico est ; nec dubium, nam principium malorum omnium in lumbo versatur.” *HomEz* VI 4,27-31 (SC 222), *HomLev* VI 6,40 (SC 292).

49 *Princ* III 1,3-4.

50 Naturally, the Origenian anthropology is a more complex issue. There is some difference between *nous* and *hēgemonikon* as it is proved by Henri Crouzel: „L'anthropologie d'Origène: de l'archè au telos” in: Ugo Bianchi/ Henri Crouzel (eds.), *Arché e Telos. L'antropologia di Origene e di Gregorio di Nyssa. Atti del colloquio Milano 17-19 Maggio 1979*, Milano 1981, 37.

Interpreting Psalm 15:7, *my kidneys also instruct me in the nights*⁵¹ Origen identifies the speaker Psalmist with Christ and highlights that outside of Scripture there is no idea of kidneys representing consciousness and other function or processes of the soul.

In this homily the kidneys are the places of the seeds and roots of good and bad thoughts and opinions.⁵² Origen uses different words

⁵¹ Origen mentions the kidneys in *HomLev* VI 6,40 as well.

⁵² The basis of this opinion is that according to Origen kidneys are the place of male's sexuality and the spermatogenesis happens in the kidneys. This view is present in the Second homily on Psalm 15, (*HomPs.15*, II 5, [f. 23r-23v] and in the *catena*-tradition, as well: (*sel. in Ps.* PG XII, 1213 C-1216 C). "It is a metaphor of the kidneys in which seeds and procreative faculties stand together and this is the place of the generative pores. Now, perhaps there are some thoughts in the soul analogous to the seeds as inner production of good acts and true theories. And sensible kidneys instruct the perfect temperance so, that a prudent man's thought does not allow the nocturnal emission." Μετείληπται δὲ ἀπὸ τῶν νεφρῶν, ἐν οἷς γοναὶ καὶ σπερματικαὶ δυνάμεις συνίστανται, τοῖς γεννητικοῖς χορηγοῦσαι πόροις. Κὰν τῇ ψυχῇ τοίνυν ἐστὶ νοήματά τινα τοῖς σπέρμασιν ἀνάλογα, κατὰ τὰ ἔνδον γεννήματα ἐν ἀγαθαῖς πράξεσι καὶ θεωρίαις ἀληθιναῖς. Καὶ οἱ αἰσθητοὶ δὲ νεφροὶ παιδεύουσι τὸν ἄκραν ἔχοντα σωφροσύνην, ἕως καὶ τῆς νυκτὸς ἐπεχόμενοι σῶφρονος λογισμοῦ τὰς σωματικὰς ἐκρεῖν γονάς. (*sel. in Ps.* PG XII, 1213 D-1216 A). More dubious is the authenticity of those fragments in which kidneys represent the part passible of the soul. In the interpretation of Psalm 25:2, "scorch my reins and my heart" one can read the following comment: "Kidneys are symbols of the passible part of the soul, that is the irascible and desirous, while heart is the logical part of it." (Πύρωσον τοὺς νεφροὺς μου, κ. τ. ἐ. Νεφροὶ μὲν σύμβολόν εἰσι τοῦ παθητικοῦ μέρους τῆς ψυχῆς, τουτέστι θυμοῦ καὶ ἐπιθυμίας· καρδία δὲ τοῦ λογιστικοῦ, *sel. in Ps.* PG XII, 1273 C). Cf. "Ὅτι ἐξεκαύθη ἡ καρδία μου, καὶ οἱ νεφροὶ μου ἠλλοιώθησαν, κ. τ. ἐ. "He means under the name of heart the reasoning part and under the kidneys the passible part from which irascible and desirous faculties come." Καρδίαν μὲν λέγει τὸ διανοητικόν, νεφροὺς δὲ τὸ παθητικόν, ἀφ' οὗ τίκτεται τὸ τε ἐπιθυμητικόν καὶ τὸ θυμικόν, ((Ps 72:21). *sel. in Ps.* PG XII, 1528 B-C). See the interpretation of Ps. 138:13 in fragm. Ps. (ed. J.B. Pitra, *Analecta sacra spicilegia Solesmensi parata*, vol. 3, Paris, Tusculum 1884 (I used the text of TLG)) where kidney is associated to fear: "For you

to denote these starting-points: *διαλογισμῶν σπέρματα*, and *ρίζαι καὶ ἀρχαὶ τῶν νοημάτων*. He says: “And, perhaps, when he [Christ] investigates the kidneys, he is investigating and researching the contents within the souls and not only things came up into the heart.”⁵³ Thus, according to this account the first phase of the good or bad decision is that the soul investigates these thoughts contained by the kidneys, which are located under the heart from the time of the birth. These are potential issues. When the soul accomplishes this research she is not in direct connection with bad thoughts. Thus, in Christ only the good thoughts “go up” into the heart, that is, into the rational part of the soul. This whole process, which begins with the investigation of the seeds of thought and ends with the action, is the realization of something potential because virtue and ignobility are formed by good or bad actions whose central moment is the decision of the *hēgemonikon*.

have possessed my kidneys” (“Ὅτι σὺ ἐκτήσω τοὺς νεφροὺς μου) (Ps. 138:13). Whose kidneys are possessed by the Lord, he should say: My whole desire is in your presence. The kidneys is said to be impressed by fear. Therefore he says: I feared you in all respect because your sentence has been always before my eyes. Οὐτινος τοὺς νεφροὺς κτᾶται ὁ Κύριος, λεγέτω τό· Κύριε, ἐναντίον σου πᾶσα ἡ ἐπιθυμία μου. Νεφροὺς εἶναί φησι τοὺς φόβῳ πληκτομένους· λέγει οὖν· “Ὅτι σὲ διαπαντὸς ἐφοβούμην, ἐπεὶ πρὸ ὀφθαλμῶν εἶχον ἀεὶ τὴν σὴν κρίσιν. (cf. PG XII 1661 C: “Blessed are whose kidneys are properties of the Lord.” In the interpretation of Psalm 72:21. “thus, my heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my kidneys” (“Ὅτι ἐξεκαύθη ἡ καρδία μου, καὶ οἱ νεφροὶ μου ἠλλοιώθησαν) kidneys are the home of impious thoughts (Νεφροὺς τοὺς λογισμοὺς ἀσεβεῖς φησι·) Ps. 72:21. In these texts the connection between male’s sexuality and passion is obvious.

- 53 Καὶ τάχα τοὺς νεφροὺς ἐταζει, ὅτε τὰ ἔτι ἐναποκείμενα σπερματικῶς τῆ ψυχῆ, καὶ οὐδὲ προαναβεβηκότα ἐπὶ τὴν καρδίαν, ἐρευνᾷ καὶ ἐξετάζει. (*HomPs* 15, II 3, f. 19r) I think that among the three kinds of thought formed in the heart, according to Origen these are the ones coming from the soul itself. The second type of suggestion comes from the devil and its angels, and third type is the divine inspiration. *Princ* III 2,4.

7. The epistemological context

Until now I focused on the religious and biblical aspect of the rational faith. But it would be misleading the picture without mentioning Origen's answer to Celsus' and without the investigation of the Alexandrine theologian's connection to Aristotle's science theory worked out in *Analitica Posteriora* which inspired Clement of Alexandria as well.

7.1. Contra Celsum I 9-II

As far as Origen's answer to Celsian critics against the alleged Christian uncritical attitude, Origen does not deny the fact that the greater part of the Christians is in want of rational belief but he emphasises the importance of the connection of simple faith with moral progress:

“... if every man could abandon the business of life and devote his time to philosophy, no other course ought to be followed but this alone. ... However, if this is impossible, since, partly owing to the necessities of life and partly owing to human weakness, very few people are enthusiastic about rational thought, what better way of helping the multitude could be found other than that given to the nations by Jesus.”⁵⁴

As far as the rationality of the faith concerns he used the philosophical argument worked out in the New Academy and adapted by Cicero and Theophilus.

Origen says:

“Why is it not more reasonable, seeing that all human acts depend on faith, to believe in God rather than in them [that is different local gods which are not identical with the supreme God – R. S.]? Who goes on a voyage, or marries, or begets children, or cast seeds into the ground, unless he believes that things will turn out for the better, although it

54 *Cels* I 9.

is possible that the opposite may happen – as it sometimes does? But nevertheless the faith that things will turn out for the better and as they wish makes all men take risks, even where the result is not certain and where things might turn out differently. Now if it is hope and the faith that the future will be better which maintain life in every action where the result is uncertain, is it not more reasonable for a man to trust in God than in the outcome of a sea voyage or of seed sown in the earth or of marriage to a wife or any other human activity?⁵⁵

7.2. *Two forms of belief and their epistemological background*

There is an interesting division of the notion of belief in the third homily on Seventy seven psalm. Commenting the verse of 22, *because they believe not in God, and trusted not in his salvation*, Origen says: “it is right thing believing not only God but in God.” According to him belief of God has two forms: believe God (πιστεύειν τῷ θεῷ) and believe in God (πιστεύειν ἐν τῷ θεῷ). Believing in God is a better thing than believing God. The beginning of the development is to believe God, because after that we will be in the God and staying there we will believe in the God himself...⁵⁶

I think this short remark can be interpreted on the basis of the First book of *Commentary on John*, where a long list of Christ’s ἐπίνοιαι can be found. Among these terms ἀρχή has special importance which occurs in the quoted passage of the third homily of Seventy seven psalms as well.

Naturally, the interpreters’ attention has been focused on that part of the commentary, where Origen developed the application of the terms – in our case the term of ἀρχή – to the *Logos* or to Christ as

55 *Cels* I II.

56 “Καλὸν τὸ πιστεύειν οὐ μόνον τῷ θεῷ, ἀλλ’ ἐν τῷ θεῷ... μεῖζόν τί ἐστι τὸ πιστεῦσαι ἐν τῷ θεῷ τοῦ πιστεῦσαι τῷ θεῷ. ἀρχὴ δὲ προκοπῆς τὸ πιστεύειν θεῷ, ἵνα μετὰ τοῦτο γενόμενοι ἐν τῷ θεῷ καὶ σπάντες πιστεύσωμεν αὐτῷ τῷ θεῷ...” *HomPs* 77, III 5, (f. 248r-f. 248v).

a name. Nevertheless, discussing the ἀρχή before its application to Christ an Aristotelian idea not without theological relevance emerges in this work.⁵⁷

Commenting on the word of ἀρχή Origen speaks in the following way:

“There is also a beginning that pertains to learning, according to which we say that the letters of the alphabet are the beginning of writing. In accordance with this the apostle says, *Although, because of the time, you should be teachers, you have need that someone teach you again the rudiments of the beginning of the oracles of God.*⁵⁸ Now the beginning pertaining to learning is twofold. One involves its nature and the other its relation to us. It is as we should say in the case of Christ that, on the one hand, in his nature, divinity is the beginning. But, on the other hand, in his relation to us who are not able to begin from the greatness of the truth about him, it is his humanity, according to which Jesus Christ, and he crucified, is proclaimed to infants. So in accordance with this we say that in nature Christ is the beginning of learning insofar he is *the wisdom and power of God.*⁵⁹ But in his relation to us the beginning of learning is *the Word became flesh*⁶⁰ that he might dwell among us who are able to receive him only in this manner at first.”⁶¹

57 I tried to show this firstly at the conference of *Origeniana octava*: “An Aristotelian science-methodological principle in Origen’s *Commentary on John*.” In: *Origeniana Octava. Origen and the Alexandrian Tradition. Papers of the 8th International Origen Congress Pisa, 27-31 August 2001*, Lorenzo Perrone (ed., collab. P. Bernardini and D. Marchini), Leuven, Peeters 2004, vol. I. 547-552.

58 Heb 5:12.

59 1Cor 1:24.

60 Jn 1:14.

61 Ἔστιν ἀρχὴ καὶ ὡς μαθήσεως καθ’ ὃ τὰ στοιχεῖα φαμεν ἀρχὴν εἶναι γραμματικῆς. Κατὰ τοῦτό φησιν ὁ ἀπόστολος ὅτι «Ὁφείλοντες εἶναι διδάσκαλοι διὰ τὸν χρόνον, πάλιν χρειαν ἔχετε τοῦ διδάσκειν ὑμᾶς τίνα τὰ στοιχεῖα τῆς ἀρχῆς τῶν λογίων τοῦ θεοῦ». Διττὴ δὲ ἡ ὡς μαθήσεως ἀρχή, ἡ μὲν τῇ φύσει, ἡ δὲ ὡς πρὸς ἡμᾶς· ὡς εἰ λέγοιμεν ἐπὶ Χριστοῦ, φύσει μὲν αὐτοῦ ἀρχὴ ἡ θεότης, πρὸς ἡμᾶς δέ, μὴ ἀπὸ τοῦ μεγέθους αὐτοῦ

There is a striking similarity between these ideas and Aristotle's wording in the first chapter of his *Posterior analytics*, where the Stagirite tells us that "... all teaching and all intellectual learning come about from already existing knowledge"⁶², and explains the concept of this previous knowledge by giving the following description:

"Things are prior and more familiar in two ways; for it is not the same to be prior by nature and prior in relation to us, nor to be more familiar and more familiar to us. I call prior and more familiar in relation to us what is nearer to perception, prior and more familiar *simpliciter* what is further away; and these are opposite to each other. Depending on things that are primitive is depending on appropriate principles; for I call the same thing primitive and a principle."⁶³

It is clear that what is principle for Aristotle from a science-meth-
odological viewpoint, it is also for Origen. The Stagirite aims to defend himself against the paradox of *Meno*. In the Platonic dialogue *Meno* and Socrates agree that it is impossible to learn and know the

δυναμένους ἄρξασθαι τῆς περὶ αὐτοῦ ἀληθείας ἢ ἀνθρωπότης αὐτοῦ, καθ' ὃ τοῖς νηπίοις καταγγέλλεται Ἰησοῦς Χριστός, καὶ οὗτος ἐσταυρωμένος· ὡς κατὰ τοῦτο εἰπεῖν ἀρχὴν εἶναι μαθήσεως τῇ μὲν φύσει Χριστὸν καθ' ὃ σοφία καὶ δύναμις θεοῦ, πρὸς ἡμᾶς δὲ <τὸ> «ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο», ἵνα σκηνώσῃ ἐν ἡμῖν, οὕτω μόνον πρῶτον αὐτὸν χωρῆσαι δυναμένοις. *ComJoh* I, 106-107.

62 Πᾶσα διδασκαλία καὶ πᾶσα μάθησις διανοητικὴ ἐκ προὑπαρχούσης γίνεται γνώσεως. Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics* I, 71a 1-2. Translated by J. Barnes. In *The Complete Works of Aristotle*. The Revised Oxford Translation Edited by Jonathan Barnes I. Vol. 1984, 115-116.

63 Πρότερα δ' ἐστὶ καὶ γνωριμώτερα διχῶς· οὐ γὰρ ταῦτὸν πρότερον τῇ φύσει καὶ πρὸς ἡμᾶς πρότερον, οὐδὲ γνωριμώτερον καὶ ἡμῖν γνωριμώτερον. λέγω δὲ πρὸς ἡμᾶς μὲν πρότερα καὶ γνωριμώτερα τὰ ἐγγύτερον τῆς αἰσθήσεως, ἀπλῶς δὲ πρότερα καὶ γνωριμώτερα τὰ πορρώτερον. ἔστι δὲ πορρωτάτω μὲν τὰ καθόλου μάλιστα, ἐγγυτάτω δὲ τὰ καθ' ἕκαστα· καὶ ἀντίκειται ταῦτ' ἀλλήλοισι. ἐκ πρώτων δ' ἐστὶ τὸ ἐξ ἀρχῶν οἰκείων· ταῦτὸ γὰρ λέγω πρῶτον καὶ ἀρχήν. Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics* I, 71 b 34-72 a 7. Translated by Jonathan Barnes.

things because in the first case, if you know what you are looking for, the inquiry is unnecessary, and in the second case, if you do not know what you are looking for, the inquiry is impossible.⁶⁴ To avoid the paradox situation Aristotle stresses the inner differentiation of the knowledge. The previous knowledge or learning is not identical with the perfect knowledge.

The fact that the true intellectual content of the Aristotelian science-methodological principle has not been exhausted here by the Alexandrine does not mean that Origen leaves this principle out of consideration. One of Aristotle's two kinds of previous knowledge stem from the perception – this is for Origen Christ's human nature – the other one, which, according to Aristotle's wording, is "more familiar *simpliciter*" or "what is further away"; that is the most important logical principles, i. e. the principle of contradiction and the *tertium non datur* are in Origen's view the basis of rationality, the divine nature of Jesus Christ. These first elements of the knowledge are not demonstrable starting points. Believing God in the Third homily on Seventy seven psalm corresponds to the acceptance of Jesus Christ and believing in the God refers to the progress in Jesus' divine nature.

Thus, it is obvious, that the question of the connection between belief and knowledge has been an important problem in Origenian theology. The concept of previous knowledge could not be grasped without the investigation of the difference between knowledge without proof and verified truth, scientific demonstration. As we have seen the first Christian thinker who was able to deal with these problems, Clement of Alexandria built his solution on a work which was inspired by Aristotle's *Posterior analytics*. Clementian arguments for the indispensability of the belief and the *per se* unknowability of the Father plays an essential role in Origen's theology, too, but his wording is quite different from that of Clement's and in the case of Clement we

64 Plato, *Meno* 80d.

cannot find the distinction between Christ's human nature as beginning in relation to us and Christ's divine nature as beginning in his nature. Here, Origen goes further. In this respect it can be obtained again that general impression on the relation between Clement and Origen that Origen knows well Clement's works, uses them, but the content of his own work is so ample that his ideas cannot be reduced to Clementian solution as the final source.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ The Hungarian Research Fund (OTKA project K 81278) supported my research.