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The “Ultimate” Origen: the discovery of the Munich Codex.

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ABSTRACT: The article illustrates the importance of the discovery in 2012 of *Codex Monacensis Graecus* 314, containing 29 homilies on the Psalms by Origen. It is not only one of the most important finds of early Christian literature in Greek in the last decades, but it is also a major contribution to the study of the Alexandrian teacher and to the history of biblical interpretation in Late Antiquity. The 29 homilies represent nowadays the largest body of sermons among the writings of Origen, which are poorly preserved in their original language. They also provide interesting clues for assigning the homilies to the final period in the life of Origen.

KEY-WORDS: Origen, homilies, manuscript, psalms, exegesis

*The heritage of early Christian literature:
lost and found*

It is not surprising that the study of early Christian literature – in Greek and Latin, but also in Syriac and other languages of the Christian Orient – has been marked in modern times by a series of important discoveries of texts. Due to a persistent

cultural interest for the Christian past since the Renaissance, in spite of all the religious and scientific transformations until the contemporary age, the literary heritage of ancient Christianity continued to unveil now and then some of its hidden treasures. As we know, the production of texts in Late Antiquity by Christian authors was fostered in the wake of what we could call, albeit to a limited extent, a ‘democratization of culture’¹. It was especially pastoral and missionary concerns that contributed to encourage such literary activity, starting with the dissemination of the canonical texts of the Holy Scriptures. Other cultural products, too, enjoyed larger audiences, such as apocryphal writings, collections of homilies, monastic works, and the lives of the saints. A constantly renewed readership guaranteed to some of these a more or less permanent success – including, of course, such masterpieces as the *Confessions* of St. Augustine – and conferred to them the status of Christian ‘classics’. Towards the end of Late Antiquity many such writers came to be regarded as “Fathers of the Church” and their writings acquired a doctrinal authority which often resulted in a long *Wirkungsgeschichte*². Others, on the contrary, enjoyed only a limited circulation because they addressed a restricted public or were more closely connected with the concrete context in which they were produced, and this made them appear later on somehow anachronistic and outdated. This is especially the case for those texts and authors that, in light of the doctrinal developments within ancient Christianity, appeared to have lost their topical interest or were rejected as unorthodox or heretical. Mainstream Christianity thus eliminated many texts which did not conform with the doctrinal tenets of the established churches, or, in the best case, preserved them to some extent embedded in polemical works of ecclesiastical authors who wrote with the express purpose of fighting against their heterodox ideas³.

Nevertheless, it would be simplistic to assume that the preservation of the literary heritage of early Christianity strictly depended upon such dogmatic criteria. Concerns of doctrinal nature surely played their part, but they were not the only factor which influenced the selection and transmission of ancient Christian texts to posterity. As I have already hinted at, significant changes of the historical and cultural context – among these one should reckon with the growing estrangement

¹ On Christian origins see, for instance, the essays collected in *The Early Text of the New Testament*, ed. by C.E. HILL and M.J. KRUGER, Oxford 2012; especially L. HURTADO, *Manuscripts and the Sociology of Early Christian Reading* (*ibid.*, 49-62). For the later period, the ‘classic’ approach by E. AUERBACH, *Literatursprache und Publikum in der lateinischen Spätantike und im Mittelalter*, Bern 1958 is still relevant. H.Y. GAMBLE, *Books and Readers in the Early Church. A History of Early Christian Texts*, New Haven - London 1995 offers a general overview.

² TH. GRAUMANN, *Die Kirche der Väter. Vätertheologie und Väterbeweis in den Kirchen des Ostens bis zum Konzil von Ephesus (431)*, Tübingen 2002.

³ For a short presentation on the preservation of early Christian writings, see R. GOUNELLE, *La transmission des écrits littéraires chrétiens*, in *Histoire de la Littérature Grecque Chrétienne. Introduction*, sous la responsabilité de E. NORELLI et B. POUDERON, Paris 2008, 113-138.

between the different regions of the Roman Empire in Late Antiquity, first mostly between its Greek and Latin halves, and subsequently also between Byzantium and Eastern Christianities – led to the disappearance of many writings or to their restricted circulation. But we should also not ignore purely material causes, as the deterioration of manuscripts, the dismantling of libraries, or, more generally, the lack of care for books, especially in the absence of monasteries and schools. All these factors, in many instances, affected the literary heritage of Christian antiquity, especially in times of turmoil.

We can evaluate only partially the extent of such textual losses, mainly with the help of ancient catalogues containing lists of authors and their writings, from the *Ecclesiastical History* of Eusebius of Caesarea in the fourth century to the catalogue of ecclesiastical writers, Greek and Syriac, composed by Ebed Jesu ('Abdisho' Bar Berika), the Nestorian bishop of Nisibis, at the beginning of the fourteenth century⁴. In view of such information, we are entitled to think that of all the centuries of Christian Antiquity until the very threshold of the Middle Ages, it was perhaps the second century that witnessed the most serious textual losses. This was, indeed, a crucial period for the formation of Christian identity and the establishing of ecclesiastical institutions. Let us just remember the unhappy destiny of major authors such as Justin the Martyr or Irenaeus of Lyons. For both of them only a modest amount of their literary activity has survived, especially if we compare what has survived with the evidence offered by Eusebius of Caesarea on their literary production. The case of the bishop of Lyon, who lived at the turn of the third century and was a main figure of pre-Constantinian Christianity, is particularly striking. The greater part of his *Adversus Haereses*, his theological masterpiece and an invaluable source for reconstructing the doctrines of the Gnostic schools of the second and third centuries, has not survived in its Greek original. Nowadays we can read it in its entirety only thanks to a Latin translation; other than this, only a few fragments in Greek and an Armenian translation of the last two books have made it through the centuries⁵.

The picture that I have painted so far is meant to help us appreciate, in the context of the numerous losses that affected the *Nachlass* of early Christian literature, the happy compensation provided by the many discoveries of texts, both those we knew by their fragments or only by their title and also some new and hitherto completely unknown writings. The case of Irenaeus is once more instructive, inasmuch as his *Epideixis* (or *Exposition of the Apostolic Doctrine*), one of the writings

⁴ A. CARRIKER, *The Library of Eusebius of Caesarea*, Leiden – Boston 2003 provides the best reconstruction of the stock of books originally preserved by the first Christian library of Caesarea Maritima, in Roman Palestine.

⁵ See L. PERRONE, *Eine 'verschollene Bibliothek'?: Das Schicksal frühchristlicher Schriften (2.-3. Jahrhundert) – am Beispiel des Irenäus von Lyon*, in "Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte", 116 (2005) 1-29.

mentioned by Eusebius, was discovered only at the beginning of the last century (in 1904) in a unique Armenian manuscript dating from the thirteenth century. We now possess not only an extremely interesting document for the positive teaching of Irenaeus, that is, one exempt of a directly polemical context, but also the example of a work of didascalical, if not properly catechetical nature addressing the same doctrinal issues of the *Adversus Haereses* but with a larger audience in mind.

Furthermore, the discovery of the *Epideixis* offers us an example of a fortunate situation from which the scholarly world has repeatedly profited in the course of the last two centuries, after the initial intensive phase of discoveries in the age of Humanism and the Renaissance: Greek texts (and not only the Christian ones), lost in their original, can survive in translations into various oriental languages. There is no need, I think, to remind you here of the extraordinary importance of the discovery of the Coptic Nag Hammadi Library in 1945, just two years before the other most important find of the past century for the study of the Hebrew Bible, the Judaism of the Second Temple period, and the origins of Christianity. I am referring, of course, to the scrolls found in the caves of Qumran near the Dead Sea. Nag Hammadi and Qumran were two invaluable *Glücksfälle*, whose impact on scholarship still continues to be felt nowadays. Both of them have essentially modified our view, on one hand, of the most immediate background of the New Testament and, on the other, of the rise of Christianity and the making of its 'orthodoxy'.

Such major discoveries were accompanied by other similar episodes until the very recent discovery of the *Gospel of Judas* in the Codex Chacos a few years ago⁶. Moreover, they were not limited to texts that did not belong to 'mainstream Christianity' or survived exclusively under the cover of translations into languages different from Greek and Latin, as it happened with the Gnostic writings which survived in Coptic. Even the study of St. Augustine, the most important exponent of ecclesiastical literature in Latin, has benefited from such chance finds of texts. These did not come to light in papyri emerging from the sand of the Egyptian or the Judaeian desert, but were unexpectedly found in European libraries, where they were peacefully slumbering for centuries waiting for an enterprising discoverer. In this way, thanks first to Johannes Divjak (in 1975) and then to François Dolbeau (in 1990), a considerable batch of Augustinian texts could be added to the huge corpus respectively of the letters and the sermons transmitted under the name of the bishop of Hippo. The exploration of the stacks of libraries and the preparation of new catalogues, which occasioned the finds of Divjak and Dolbeau, led in 2007 to the latest discovery of unedited sermons of Augustine: it happened in the University Library of Erfurt during the preparation of a new catalogue of the Latin manuscripts⁷.

⁶ For an overview of the first reactions to this discovery, see J.-D. KAESTLI, *L'Évangile de Judas: quelques réflexions à la suite du colloque de Paris*, in "Adamantius", 13 (2007) 282-286.

⁷ See now Sant'Agostino, *Sermoni di Erfurt*. Introduzione, traduzione e note di G. CATAPANO, Venezia 2012.

Origen from Tura to Munich:

Codex Graecus 314

In a sense, Origen of Alexandria (ca. 185-254) can be regarded as the Greek counterpart to Augustine for the role his works and thought have played in the history of Christianity, although appreciation of his role sensibly varies among Christian scholars according to their different attitudes and preconceptions. Not everybody has shared the high esteem in which he was once held by Erasmus of Rotterdam, when he declared that he learnt much more from a single page of Origen than from ten of Augustine⁸. Yet dogmatic prejudice against the Alexandrian author, who was formally condemned by the Council of Constantinople in 553, had negative effects on the transmission of his writings. Only a small fraction of them has survived in the original language, in the most cases unfortunately in a fragmentary form, whereas many works have been saved in Latin translations, not always beyond reproach, made by Jerome or Rufinus between the end of the fourth and the beginnings of the fifth century. Strong reservations and concern for Origen's lack of orthodoxy were not the sole factor responsible for the poor preservation of the great *corpus* of our 'Adamantius', to call him by the nickname Jerome and others used to qualify Origen as the most prolific author of Christian antiquity. Eusebius of Caesarea, while listing his writings half a century after his death, already noted that some of them had gone missing, or were not available in the library of Caesarea. In other words, the immense literary output of the Alexandrian was itself a deterrent for proper conservation and faithful transmission of his *œuvre*. We are still much impressed by the endless catalogue of the writings of Origen that Jerome copied in his famous *Letter 33* to Paula, the Roman *matrona* who followed him to Bethlehem. He took this lengthy list from Eusebius, but in spite of its apparent exhaustive character, it is still not a complete catalogue. One single example will suffice here, namely that of the several works that Origen wrote on the Psalms.

This probably was the most expanded, if not the most valuable chapter of his manifold activity as an exegete of the Bible. In fact, Origen began to comment on the Psalms already during his Alexandrian period, when he wrote a *Commentary on Psalms 1-25*; this seems to have been his first written work after an initial period of oral teaching⁹. After he settled in Caesarea of Palestine (around 232), he began anew

⁸ P. TERRACCIANO, *Omnia in figura: L'impronta di Origene tra '400 e '500*, Roma 2012, 133-170.

⁹ The most influential reconstruction of Origen's exegesis of the Psalms has been proposed by P. NAUTIN, *Origène. Sa vie et son œuvre*, Paris 1977, 261-292. Concerning the precedence of the *Commentary on Psalms 1-25*, see É. JUNOD, *Du danger d'écrire, selon Origène*, in *Origeniana Decima. Origen as Writer*. Papers of the 10th International Origen Congress, ed. by S. KACZMAREK-H. PIETRAS, Leuven 2011, 91-108.

to interpret the Psalms and produced a large series of *tomoi*, that is, very detailed ‘books’ of comments for every single Psalm, and for some even more than one book: according to Jerome’s list, these commentaries numbered more than 40 books, albeit (as I mentioned) he did not include into the catalogue all the pieces we know about from Origen himself¹⁰. And this was not all; the Alexandrian also wrote *scholia* on the Psalms, shorter exegetical notes that might be viewed either as a supplement to the missing commentaries or as drafts in preparation for new *tomoi*¹¹. Furthermore, he explained the Psalms in sermons delivered to the Christian community of Caesarea; the works resulting from this activity amounted to 120 items in the catalogue compiled by Jerome, yet again, presumably, not a complete one. Such an extensive exegetical production survived only to a limited extent. On one hand, in Greek, through a few pieces transmitted in an anthology called the *Philokalia* (traditionally attributed to Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nazianzus)¹² and through excerpts made by the exegetical *catenae* on the Psalms. On the other hand, a Latin translation of nine *Homilies on Ps 36, 37 and 38* by Rufinus is also extant¹³.

This was the state of our textual tradition until April 2012, when Marina Molin Pradel discovered twenty-nine Greek homilies of Origen on the Psalms in the *Codex Monacensis Graecus* 314; this is, presumably, a manuscript of Constantinopolitan origin copied at the beginning of the twelfth century and kept since the last quarter of the sixteenth century in the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek in Munich. In this case, too, the find was made possible by work undertaken in preparation for a new catalogue. The Munich library, while putting its Greek codices on line, started to publish a more detailed description of them than the one which can be found in the catalogue of Ignaz Hardt printed almost two centuries earlier. Marina Molin Pradel, while carefully inspecting the *Codex Graecus* 314, first noted that the anonymous collection of sermons, falsely connected in a later period with the name of the byzantine scholar Michael Psellus, included four homilies on Ps 36 and not on Ps 31,

¹⁰ For instance, we no longer have a *tomus* on Ps 47, attested in *Contra Celsum* VII, 31. For the list of the *tomoi*, see NAUTIN, *Origène*, cit., 249.

¹¹ On the critical debate concerning the *scholia* see the recent contribution by F.X. RISCH, *Die Scholien des Origenes zu den Psalmen. Bemerkungen zur zweiten Randkatene im Codex Vindobonensis theol. gr. 8* (forthcoming in “Adamantius” 20 [2014]).

¹² See *Origène. Philocalie, 1-20: Sur les Écritures et La Lettre à Africanus sur l’histoire de Suzanne* (SC 302), Paris 1983; *Origène. Philocalie 21-27, Sur le libre arbitre*, Intr. trad. et notes par É. JUNOD (SC 226), Paris 1976. Both volumes contain fragments, respectively, from the *Commentary on Psalm 1* (= *Phil.* 2-3) and the *Commentary on Psalm 4* (= *Phil.* 26).

¹³ Concerning the list of the homilies, see NAUTIN, *Origène*, cit., 258; for the critical edition of the Latin homilies, *Origène. Omelie sui Salmi, Homiliae in Psalmos XXXVI – XXXVII – XXXVIII*, a cura di E. PRINZIVALLI, Firenze 1991; *Origène. Homélie sur les Psaumes 36 à 38*, texte critique établi par E. PRINZIVALLI, Intr., trad. et notes par H. CROUZEL et L. BRÉSARD (SC 411), Paris 1995.

as recorded by Hardt¹⁴. Next, to her great surprise, their text proved identical with that of the first four homilies of Origen on the same psalm, so far accessible only in the Latin version by Rufinus, and a meager set of Greek fragments. Going one step further, Marina Molin Pradel was able to identify excerpts from other homilies of the same manuscript transmitted in the *catenae* under the name of Origen, the most important *testimonia* being the copious selections made from the long series of nine homilies on Psalm 77¹⁵. It was at that moment that she cautiously suggested to restore to Origen the paternity of the whole collection, and asked for my expertise, which I was very happy to contribute, confirming, in my turn, the attribution before an official announcement of the discovery was made on 12 June 2012.

Without going again through all the details of the process that Marina Molin Pradel and myself have applied in order to confirm the authenticity of the new corpus, I would simply like to add a further *testimonium* to the external criteria supporting the attribution to Origen. In addition to the *Letter 33* of Jerome (whose list, in spite of some apparent discrepancies, essentially corresponds to the order of the Munich collection)¹⁶, the four Latin homilies on Psalm 36 in Rufinus' translation, and the *catenae* fragments for at least a good number of the new sermons¹⁷, we can rely also on an important Latin fragment: an excerpt taken from the *Second Homily on Psalm 15* figures in the Latin version of the *Apology of Origen* written by Pamphilus with the help of his disciple Eusebius of Caesarea, and translated by Rufinus. This is quite a remarkable piece on the "earthly body" of the risen Christ, which Pamphilus exploited in order to argue for Origen's adherence to the Christian dogma of the resurrection of the flesh¹⁸. As for the inner criteria, which I tried to exploit systematically from the very first moment of my acquaintance with the

¹⁴ I. HARDT, *Catalogus codicum manuscriptorum graecorum Bibliothecae Regiae Bavaricae*, I-V, München 1806-1812 (Vol. III, 267-268). The list of the new Munich collection is as follows: 2 *Homilies on Psalm 15*; 4 *Homilies on Psalm 36*; 2 *Homilies on Psalm 67*; 3 *Homilies on Psalm 73*; 1 *Homily on Psalm 74*; 1 *Homily on Psalm 75*; 4 *Homilies on Psalm 76*; 9 *Homilies on Psalm 77*; 2 *Homilies on Psalm 80*; 1 *Homily on Psalm 81*.

¹⁵ On the circumstances of the discovery and the initial process that led to their attribution to Origen, see M. MOLIN PRADEL, *Novità origeniane dalla Staatsbibliothek di Monaco di Baviera: il Cod. graec. 314*, in "Adamantius", 18 (2012) 16-40.

¹⁶ Among my publications (*infra*, n. 20), I refer especially to: "Origenes rediuius": *La découverte des homélies sur les Psaumes dans le Cod. Gr. 314 de Munich*, in "Revue des Études Augustiniennes et Patristiques", 59 (2013) 55-93.

¹⁷ In addition to the already known fragments of the four *Homilies on Psalm 36*, we find some for the two *Homilies on Psalm 67*, the *Homily on Psalm 74*, the *Homily on Psalm 75*, the first *Homily on Psalm 76*, the nine *Homilies on Psalm 77*, the two *Homilies on Psalm 80* and the *Homily on Psalm 81*. As a result, twenty-one of the twenty-nine homilies are confirmed by the material in the *catenae*, though usually we are talking about a mosaic-like exploitation of modest dimensions.

¹⁸ *H15Ps II,8* (ff. 26^r-27^r) = Pamph., *Apol.* 142-145, in *Pamphile et Eusèbe de Césarée. Apologie pour Origène*, Texte critique, traduction et notes par R. AMACKER et É. JUNOD (SC 464), Paris 2002, 228-232.

manuscript, I shall have the opportunity to talk about them later on dealing with the expected consequences of the discovery.

The exceptional find of the Munich codex is not only the most important discovery of a text of Origen in the last seventy years after the Tura Papyri, but is also one of the memorable events in the recovery of the literary heritage of early Christianity that has taken place in the aftermath of Nag Hammadi and Qumran. In 1941 the papyri found at Tura, a place near to Cairo, brought to light texts of Origen together with writings of Didymus the Blind. In particular, they revealed several extensive excerpts from the original text of Origen's *Commentary on Romans*, until then known only in the Latin version by Rufinus, and two new remarkable writings: the *Dialogue with Heraclides* and a so-called *Treatise on Easter*¹⁹. Especially these last two works have contributed to improving our knowledge of Origen's public activity and to a better appreciation of his exegetical and theological work. Now, I believe the twenty-nine new *Homilies on the Psalms* will help in their turn to promote further investigation both on the Alexandrian author and on the history of the patristic interpretation of the Psalms, traditionally the best known book of the Old Testament for any Christian readership and, as such, a constant source of inspiration for Christian doctrine and practice.

*The significance of the Munich Codex
for the research on Origen and ancient Christianity*

The work on the new collection of homilies has just begun, but one can reasonably predict that the Munich manuscript will enjoy a remarkable reception²⁰. First of all, as I tried to show before, we should consider the context of Origen's literary *œuvre* and its precarious fortune throughout history. Before any other consideration, the twenty-nine pieces added to his homiletic *corpus* deserve to be appreciated merely for the fact that they represent the largest collection of his

¹⁹ Cf. J. SCHERER, *Le commentaire d'Origène sur Rom. III.5-V.7*, Le Caire 1957; *Entretien d'Origène avec Héraclide*, Introduction, texte, traduction et notes de J. SCHERER (SC 67), Paris 1960; B. WITTE, *Die Schrift des Origenes "Über das Passa"*, Textausgabe und Kommentar, Altenberge 1993.

²⁰ For some initial reactions and comments see M. MOLIN PRADEL-L. PERRONE, *Die Homilien des Origenes zu den Psalmen*, in *Das Alte Testament und sein Umfeld. Vom Babylonischen Talmud zu Lassos Bußpsalmen. Schätze der Bayerischen Staatsbibliothek*, Luzern 2013, 85-87; L. PERRONE, *Riscoprire Origene oggi: prime impressioni sulla raccolta di omelie sui salmi nel Codex Monacensis Graecus 314*, in "Adamantius", 18 (2012) 41-58; ID., *Rediscovering Origen Today: First Impressions of the Newly Discovered Collection of Homilies on the Psalms*, in *Studia Patristica LVI/4*, ed. by M. VINZENT, Leuven 2013, 103-122; ID., *Une nouvelle collection de 29 homélies d'Origène sur les Psaumes: le Codex Graecus 314 de la Bayerische Staatsbibliothek de Munich*, in "Medieval Sermon Studies", 57 (2013) 13-15; L. LUGARESI, *Paradossi patristici: il popolo cristiano come "non-nazione"*, in "Hermeneutica" (2013) 159-172.

sermons extant in Greek. Unfortunately, next to the Munich codex there is not much more preserved in the original language: twenty *Homilies on Jeremiah* and one on *1 Samuel 28 (On the Witch of Endor)*²¹. On the whole, there are truly meager remains when compared to the hundreds of sermons that have been transmitted in Latin, so that, if for nothing else than for this reason alone, the Origen's Munich Greek homilies prove to be particularly precious and rewarding.

In addition, the survival of *Codex Graecus 314* invites us to take a fresh look at the history of the transmission of Origen's writings from Late Antiquity to Byzantium and the western Middle Ages. This remains a neglected field of studies, despite the flourishing of the scholarship on the Alexandrian author which has continued practically without interruption since the patristic *ressourcement* launched in France short before the World War II. Admittedly, it is not easy to reconstruct the paths along which Origen's writings traveled in East and West until their first editions in modern times. Nevertheless, in the last decades we have come to know much better, at least for certain periods and geographic areas, the intellectual networks which acted as transmitters of Origen's heritage, for instance, to the Latin West²². Now, as a further corollary of some interest for the future history of its textual tradition, one may point to the fact that *Codex Graecus 314* presents features so far unique, from a codicological point of view, which still await special investigation: on the one hand, they show traces of a distinct transmission in two separate *tomoi* of the longest series of sermons in the Munich collection, for instance in the case of the nine *Homilies on Psalm 77*²³; on the other, the four *Homilies on Psalm 76* are qualified in the manuscript rather unusually as 'improvised speeches' (ἔσχεδιασμένα), though they do not actually look so²⁴. This feature prompts us to reconsider the interplay of orality and transcription with regard to the preaching activity of Origen and, more generally, in the way sermons of Late Antiquity were collected and transmitted.

More important for the development of our studies will surely be the renewed investigation and appraisal of the specific contribution offered by Origen to the Christian interpretation of the Psalms (incidentally, this is not devoid of interest also for the history of Jewish exegesis, and in saying this, I have in mind the Judaeo-

²¹ Also the *Homilies on Jeremiah* have been transmitted anonymously in a unique codex of about the same age (11th-12 cent.) as the *Cod. Gr. 314*: the *Codex Scorialensis* of Madrid (see *Origenes Werke*. 3. Bd: *Jeremiahomilien, Klageliedkommentar, Erklärung der Samuel- und Königsbücher*, hg. von E. KLOSTERMANN, 2. bearb. Aufl. hg. von P. NAUTIN, GCS, Berlin 1983, xi).

²² See e.g. E.A. CLARK, *The Origenist Controversy: The Cultural Construction of an Early Christian Debate*, Princeton 1992; G. SFAMENI GASPARRO, *Origene e la tradizione origeniana in Occidente. Letture storico-religiose*, Roma 1998.

²³ See f. 273v: Εἰς τὸν οἷζ' <ψαλμὸν> [Ms. τόμος] ε', τόμος α'; τόμος β' εἰς τὸν οἷζ' <ψαλμὸν>, ὁμιλία ς'.

²⁴ See f. 170v: Εἰς τὸν ος' <ψαλμὸν> ἔσχεδιασμένα ὁμιλία.

Christian and rabbinic influences to which Origen exposed himself in Alexandria and, more directly, in the Palestinian milieu of Caesarea). Notwithstanding the Christian use of the Psalms, already attested in the New Testament and practiced by authors such as Justin, Irenaeus, or Hippolytus, there is no doubt that we should regard Origen as the true ‘archetype’ when it comes to the Christian appropriation of the Psalms²⁵. He was, indeed, well aware of their distinctive role both for Jews and Christians. It was because of this conviction that he did not content himself with the current Greek translations of the Old Testament, but for the Psalms, besides the canonical text of the Septuagint and its revisions by Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion, he went around looking for other versions that could provide further comparative material. He succeeded in finding out two or three more, one of which he discovered in a jar near Jericho, that is, quite interestingly, in a place close to Qumran²⁶.

Origen, relying on his unique scholarly tool, i.e., the *Hexapla* – the huge synopsis of the Old Testament with the Hebrew text and all the Greek translations at his disposal – addressed the task of interpreting the Psalms with an incisive philological approach, shared again in Christian Antiquity with similar intensity only by Jerome. But philology was for him in the service of exegesis, and this was concerned, first of all, with the problem of identifying “the person who speaks” (τὸ πρόσωπον τὸ λέγων) in the Psalms. The Alexandrian was the first to give the answer which most of the subsequent writers would adopt, until Augustine and his famous *Expositions on the Psalms* (*Enarrationes in Psalmos*): the subject speaking is either the person of Christ himself, as God and man, or the Church, the community of the faithful as the ‘body of Christ’. Within the bounds of this approach, which, however, should not be understood too schematically and uniformly (as it always happens when facing the dynamic thought of Origen and his approach to the text of the Bible), the Alexandrian dealt with the issues of the theological (and also philosophical) discourse of his own age, focussing again on the debate on human freedom and salvation as part of his polemic against the heterodox tenants of Gnosticism and Marcionism. So he developed his own view of the history of salvation leading man to deification, while stimulating on the one hand the simple Christians to improve their knowledge of the Bible and the Christian beliefs and, on the other hand, proposing a

²⁵ For an overview, see M.-J. RONDEAU, *Les commentaires patristiques du Psautier (III^e-V^e siècles)*. I: *Les travaux des Pères grecs et latins sur le Psautier. Recherches et bilan*; II: *Exégèse prosopologique et théologie*, Roma 1982, 1985.

²⁶ Our witness is Eusebius of Caesarea, *HE* VI,16,3: ἔν γε μὴν τοῖς Ἑξαπλοῖς τῶν Ψαλμῶν μετὰ τὰς ἐπισημοὺς τέσσαρας ἐκδόσεις οὐ μόνον πέμπτῃν, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἕκτῃν καὶ ἑβδόμῃν παραθεῖς ἐρμηνείαν, ἐπὶ μιᾶς αὖθις σεσημειώται ὡς ἐν Ἱεριχοῦ εὐρημένης ἐν πίθῳ κατὰ τοὺς χρόνους Ἀντωνίνου τοῦ υἱοῦ Σευήρου. A. GRAFTON–M. WILLIAMS, *Christianity and the Transformation of the Book*, Cambridge, Ma.–London 2006, 89-90, 206-207 emphasize the importance of the *Hexapla* and try to reconstruct the exact dimensions of such a huge enterprise.

high model of perfection for all the community of the faithful, even if this often forced Origen to denounce their compromises and failures.

If this presentation gives only a summary glimpse into the width and depth of Origen's interpretation of the Psalms, it is possible perhaps to better grasp its impact on ancient Christian literature, when we recall the names of the subsequent authors who were influenced by the Alexandrian. For the sake of brevity, let us simply recall Eusebius of Caesarea and Didymus the Blind in the East; Hilary of Poitiers, Ambrose of Milan and Jerome in the West. The Munich collection gives us the possibility of directly confronting their writings with the new texts of Origen although it is true to say that his influence on the subsequent commentators has always been presumed, especially for many of the authors just mentioned. This is the case, above all, of the *Tractatus in Psalmos* of Jerome: more than thirty years ago, an Italian scholar called Vittorio Peri claimed that this series of homilies, apparently held by Jerome in Bethlehem for his monastic community, should be regarded, in reality, as a translation of texts of Origen with a few adaptations and the necessary updating²⁷. At present, a preliminary examination of the many parallels between the *Tractatus* and the Munich sermons provisionally proves that Jerome certainly had these texts before his eyes and used them as long as they suited his own approach.

Of course, the history of the reception of Origen's *Homilies on the Psalms* in ancient Christianity, Greek and Latin begins with a chapter that we normally think we know already and well enough, too: the small and clever selection that Rufinus made from a much larger literary body by translating the nine *Homilies on Psalms 36-38*. Apart from the different choice adopted by the translator, when compared to the 'anthologization' made by the compiler of *Codex Graecus 314*, as often with Rufinus we cannot escape the question: to what extent his version remains faithful to the original text? Scholars repeatedly discussed this problem, especially in light of the most controversial work of Origen, the dogmatic treatise *On the Principles (Perì archôn)*, that provided the chief arguments for his condemnation in 553. Long before the Constantinopolitan council, Rufinus was concerned with defending the Alexandrian from accusations of heresy which became almost inescapable on account of the developments in trinitarian theology of the fourth century. Consequently, it is generally assumed that he intervened in the text he was translating in order to make it conform with the current orthodoxy. With regard to the homilies, they did not address dogmatic issues so openly as the *Perì archôn*; as such, the textual manipulations of Rufinus seem to have been less direct and their impact less massive. Yet, until the discovery of the Munich Codex, we were able to

²⁷ V. PERI, *Omellie origeniane sui Salmi. Contributo all'identificazione del testo latino*, Città del Vaticano 1980.

compare his translations only with a limited set of Greek excerpts²⁸. For the first time we now have entire sermons in the original language. This will help us to verify much more precisely the attitude of the Latin translator *vis-à-vis* the Greek original. As provisionally shown by the investigation of Emanuela Prinzevalli, the editor of the Latin *Homilies on the Psalms*, we have to reckon again with a mixed picture as far as the *ratio translationis* is concerned: fidelity goes hand in hand with a certain amount of freedom, changes and adaptations, mainly dictated by the necessity to address a Roman public living in a historically and culturally different context.

The Latin translation of the *Homilies on the Psalms* was not the only form of (more or less faithful) use and adaptation of the Greek text. Origen's sermons have undergone a by far much more radical process of anthologization as a result of the selections and cuts made by the compilers of *catenae*. Their external testimony is indeed a precious one and as such it contributes to the authentication of *Codex Graecus* 314 – as I observed before –, but such excerpts are very often rather tiny fragments and give evidence of textual manipulation, though mainly for the sake of literary normalization and simplification. The exegetical *catenae* – which we nowadays are led to consider *prima facie* almost as a kind of literary aberration – enjoyed an enormous and constant success from Late Antiquity to the Byzantine Middle Ages. Contrary to this first (and superficial) impression, they are an important source for recovering texts that were otherwise lost, as it happens with Origen's *Commentaries on the Psalms*. Those who put together these exegetical anthologies were to some extent free from too rigid concerns of orthodoxy, so that they felt less embarrassed when excerpting texts of Origen and naming him as an author. Yet they did not always indicate this and the textual tradition often confused the attributions, mixing up the names of the authors. Before the discovery of the Munich codex, research on the *catenae* represented the obligatory path towards any recuperation of Origen's interpretation of the Psalms. As clearly shown by the *catenae* fragments on Psalm 118, edited by Marguerite Harl, one can discover rich treasures even in very fragmentary portions of the original text²⁹. A team of researchers at the Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften has been working for several years to prepare a new critical edition of the comments of Origen and Eusebius of Caesarea on the Psalms preserved in the *catenae*. This is a particularly difficult task and one year before the find of Munich, in order to support the enterprise of my Berlin colleagues and friends, I organized a conference in Bologna on the "Perspectives for the edition of Origen's commentaries on the Psalms"³⁰. Two years

²⁸ See A. GRAPPONE, *Omellie origeniane nella traduzione di Rufino. Un confronto con i testi greci*, Roma 2007.

²⁹ *La chaîne palestinienne sur le Psaume 118* (Origène, Eusèbe, Didyme, Apollinaire, Athanase, Théodoret), ed. M. HARL, I-II (SC 189), Paris 1972.

³⁰ For an assessment of its results made two months before the discovery of *Codex Graecus* 314, see G. DORIVAL, *XII Convegno del Gruppo Italiano di Ricerca su Origene e la Tradizione Alessandrina*. "I

later, we are unexpectedly in the possession of a large set of new texts which the compilers of *catenae* used for their selections: in a sense, we have gone through a true 'scholarly revolution'!

The 'new' and the 'old' Origen

I have tried to give an overview of some of the consequences brought about by the discovery of *Codex Graecus* 314 for the study of Origen and ancient Christianity, with regard to the recovery of the literary heritage of the Alexandrian author, the history of its textual tradition, the importance of the new source for an overall reconstruction of the patristic interpretation of the Psalms and its further reception through translation into Latin and selective appropriation of the Greek text in the *catenae*. Obviously, there is still more to be said, but I would like to conclude with a question that one cannot avoid: what is the contribution of the twenty-nine *Homilies on the Psalms* to our knowledge of Origen? More precisely, what is the relation between the 'new' Origen and the 'old'? Do the Munich sermons simply confirm the picture of the Alexandrian author, that we have long had, or do they add anything to it or change it in any significant way?

As soon as I began working on the manuscript, I had to face these questions. But I could not satisfy myself with the immediate and easy reply that I gave first to myself and then to some of my colleagues and friends: "How would you react, if you would discover a lost symphony of Mozart? Would you not be happy enough to say just: 'This is indeed a piece of Mozart!'" It goes without saying that a genius has always his own imprint, and so my reading of the manuscript was initially led by the intention to find the 'identity markers' for Origen's distinctive personality, and the well known characteristics of his work and thought. After a short while, I was already overwhelmed by the amount of clues, motifs, and parallels that I was able to detect, so that I could attribute the homilies to the Alexandrian without any hesitation, on account of the internal criteria as well. Understandably, in my first impressions of the corpus I privileged the resemblances by emphasizing, for instance, how the preacher Origen continues to act as a grammarian in relation to his text of the Bible, without forgetting thus his initial profession in Alexandria³¹: he not only explains occasionally the scriptural use of the imperative mood instead of the expected optative (as he does in the *Treatise on Prayer*); he also discusses problems of textual criticism concerning passages both in the Old and the New Testament, and in some

commenti di Origene ai Salmi: contributi critici e prospettive d'edizione" (Bologna, 10-11 febbraio 2012): Bilan, problèmes, tâches, in "Adamantius", 18 (2012) 364-366. The contributions of this conference are due to be published in "Adamantius", 20 (2014).

³¹ I refer here to my first contribution: PERRONE, *Riscoprire Origene oggi: prime impressioni sulla raccolta di omelie sui salmi nel Codex Monacensis Graecus 314*, cit., especially pp. 48-58.

instances he even goes back to the Hebrew text³². Alternatively, he makes frequent recourse to an interpretative method that he regularly adopts in his other writings, by addressing the Scripture as a ‘repository’ of *quaestiones* and by generally recommending this aporetic approach as an exercise comparable to the topical *problēmata* examined by teachers and students in the schools of philosophy³³. He displays in these sermons once again a moderate use of rhetorics, which nevertheless betrays a perceptible interest for some aspects of everyday’s life in an urban centre of the Mediterranean like Caesarea of Palestine. For instance, he is attracted by sport and theatre, exploiting similes and metaphors extracted from the agonistic world to a greater extent and with more vividness than he does elsewhere³⁴.

In this way, while going through the folios of *Codex Graecus* 314, I gradually came to recognize a ‘familiar voice’ and at the same time to appreciate, so to say, its different modulations, both from a literary and from an exegetical point of view. I also started to discover now and then some novelties and was forced to think about which period in the literary activity of Origen this series of homilies might belong to. The preacher himself offers us a precious clue for a possible temporal setting, when on one occasion he goes back to the time of his youth in an autobiographical ‘confession’ which, since then, has probably become the best known passage from the Munich codex. I quote it once more, just to give you at least some taste of the content of our homilies.

Καὶ τοῦτο τῆ πείρᾳ ἴσμεν^α. ἐν γὰρ τῆ
 πρώτῃ ἡμῶν ἡλικίᾳ πάνυ ἤνθουν αἱ
 αἰρέσεις καὶ ἐδόκουν πολλοὶ εἶναι οἱ
 ἐν αὐταῖς συναγόμενοι. Ὅσοι γὰρ ἦσαν
 λίχνοι περὶ τὰ μαθήματα τοῦ Χριστοῦ,
 μὴ εὐποροῦντες ἐν τῆ ἐκκλησίᾳ
 διδασκάλων ἱκανῶν, διὰ λιμὸν
 μιμούμενοι τοὺς ἐν λιμῷ ἐσθίοντας
 κρέα ἀνθρώπινα, ἀπιστάμενοι τοῦ
 ὑγιοῦς λόγου, προσεῖχον λόγοις
 ὁποιοισδήποτε, καὶ ἦν συγκροτούμενα
 αὐτῶν τὰ διδασκαλεῖα. Ὅτε δὲ ἡ χάρις
 τοῦ θεοῦ ἐπέλαμψε διδασκαλίαν
 πλείονα, ὁσημέραι αἱ αἰρέσεις
 κατελύοντο καὶ τὰ δοκοῦντα αὐτῶν
 ἀπόρρητα παραδειγματίζεται καὶ
 δείκνυται βλασφημίαι ὄντα καὶ λόγοι

“We know this by experience: in our early age the heresies were flourishing and many seemed to be those who gathered 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 went astray 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 blasphemies and impious and godless words.”.

³² In my contribution to the “Colloquium Origenianum Undecimum” (Aarhus, 26-30 August 2013) I have treated these passages in more depth: *The Find of the Munich Codex: A Collection of 29 Homilies of Origen on the Psalms* (forthcoming). The engagement with issues of textual criticism is certainly more impressive in *Cod. Gr.* 314 than in the *Homilies on Jeremiah*.

³³ *H77Ps* II,6 (f. 225r).

³⁴ See respectively *H77Ps* IV,4 (f. 251v) and *H81Ps* 3 (ff. 364r-v).

ἀσεβεῖς καὶ ἄθεοι³⁵.

This passage of the *2nd Homily on Psalm 77* provides indeed a unique testimony when compared to the scanty autobiographical statements of the Alexandrian author³⁶. It can be read as a short summary of Origen's life and activity. Born in a city like Alexandria and in a moment in which the Christian community had not yet overcome the explosive situation of the second century with its challenge of Gnosticism and Marcionism, Origen – as we know from his biography in the sixth book of the *Ecclesiastical History* of Eusebius – began teaching in order to make up for the lack of ecclesiastical teachers. According to his testimony, at the time of his youth many frequented the 'schools' (διδασκαλεῖα) of the heretics, because the Church did not yet dispose of 'good teachers'; now, on the contrary, he could point to a completely different situation, inasmuch as ecclesiastical doctors in his eyes had succeeded in dismantling the teachings of the heretics.

If we can regard such comment as an indirect self-disclosure of our preacher, then the Origen who speaks in these homilies is a man in his old age, approaching the end of his life not without a certain satisfaction for the work he has done as 'a man of the Church'. This is altogether not the only clue for placing the Munich homilies in the final years of Origen's literary activity. Occasionally, the preacher resorts to self-quotation in just the same way he does it elsewhere, that is, in order to recommend the interpretation he has produced on another occasion or in a previous writing, either for his own sake, i.e., in order to spare himself the trouble of a new treatment of the biblical passage he is commenting upon, or on behalf of the audience, which should look there for a more thorough explanation³⁷. So, for instance, since the Munich homilies deal with the interpretation of Hosea, one of the Minor Prophets, to whom Origen dedicated a commentary recorded by Eusebius among his last works, together with the *Contra Celsum* and the *Commentary on Matthew*, the preacher refers his audience to it³⁸. This would imply a dating of the sermons (at

³⁵ H77Ps II (f. 233r).

³⁶ On the limits of 'autobiography' in Origen, see my article: *Origen's 'Confessions': Recovering the Traces of a Self-Portrait*, in *Studia Patristica*. Vol. LVI, Papers presented at the Seventeenth International Conference on Patristic Studies held in Oxford 2011, ed. by M. VINZENT, Volume 4: *Rediscovering Origen*, Leuven-Paris-Walpole/MA 2013, 3-27.

³⁷ I have analyzed this aspect in: *Origenes pro domo sua: Self-Quotations and the (Re-) Construction of a Literary Œuvre*, in *Origeniana Decima. Origen as Writer*. Papers of the 10th International Origen Congress, University School of Philosophy and Education "Ignatianum", Kraków, Poland, 31 August – 4 September 2009, edited by S. KACZMAREK and H. PIETRAS, Leuven – Paris – Walpole/MS 2011, 3-38.

³⁸ H77Ps IX,6 (f. 326v). Cf. Eus., *HE* VI,36,2 (590,18-22): ἐν τούτῳ καὶ τὰ πρὸς τὸν ἐπιγεγραμμένον καθ' ἡμῶν Κέλσου τοῦ Ἐπικουρείου Ἀληθῆ λόγον ὀκτῶ τὸν ἀριθμὸν συγγράμματα συντάττει καὶ τοὺς εἰς τὸ κατὰ Ματθαῖον εὐαγγέλιον εἴκοσι πέντε τόμους τοὺς τε εἰς τοὺς δώδεκα προφήτας, ἀπ'

least those on Ps 77) around 249, shortly before the persecution of Emperor Decius, during which Origen was arrested. Such a *terminus post quem* is supported also by another passage in which Origen declares to have changed his mind with regard to the interpretation of Dt 32,8-9, a fundamental text that he used as a proof in favor of his doctrine of the ‘angels of the nations’. Introducing here a major *retractatio*, he declares that he does not relate it anymore to the tower of Babel story and the ensuing dispersion of the nations (as he had done up to the time of his *Contra Celsum*), but to the exodus of Israel from Egypt³⁹.

If the suggested chronology is correct, we could properly speak of the ‘ultimate Origen’ in the case of the Munich Codex: the 29 *Homilies on the Psalms*, instead of being by an unexpected and happy chance simply the most recently available work of the Alexandrian author, would also represent the last (or one of the last) manifestations of his literary activity. I do not want to make too much of the *retractatio* just mentioned, but I would simply emphasize that in it the searching mind of Origen comes again to the fore. We have enough evidence in the sermons to support the impression that despite his old age he was still looking for new explanations of the Scriptures. As hinted at by the conclusion of the *Homily on Psalm 74*, an interpreter of the Bible such as Origen, a *didaskalos* of the format he strove to be throughout all his life, that is always inspired as here by the model of the Logos himself, in contrast to the professions of the grammarian and the philosopher falling after a while into an unavoidable repetition of their teachings, could only be engaged in an interpretation that constantly renewed itself.⁴⁰

L.P.

ὄν μόνους εὕρομεν πέντε καὶ εἴκοσι. NAUTIN, *Origène*, cit., 248-249, 382-383 dates the *Commentary on the Twelve Prophets* to 245-246.

³⁹ H77Ps VIII,1 (ff. 299r-v).

⁴⁰ See H74Ps 6 (ff. 161v-162r): Ἐγὼ δὲ ἀπαγγελῶ εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα, ψαλῶ τῷ θεῷ Τακῶβ (Ps 74,10). Ὁ διδάσκαλος καὶ κύριος ἡμῶν τοσαῦτα ἔχει μαθήματα ὡς ἀπαγγέλλειν οὐκ ἐπὶ δέκα ἔτη, ὡς ἀπαγγέλλει γραμματικὸς καὶ οὐκ ἔχει τί διδάξει οὐδὲ ὡς φιλόσοφος ἀπαγγέλλει παραδιδούς καὶ οὐκέτι ἔχει καινότερόν τι εἶπη, ἀλλὰ τοσαῦτά ἐστι τὰ μαθήματα τοῦ Χριστοῦ ὥστε αὐτὸν ἀπαγγέλλειν εἰς ὅλον τὸν αἰῶνα.