

THE SHRINE *of* WISDOM

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EXTRACTS FROM THE TREATISE TEN DOUBTS CONCERNING PROVIDENCE

BY PROCLUS

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PART II*

3. In the third place the doubt consequent to this deserves to be considered, since it likewise requires much attention; namely, if Providence is the cause both of things definite and indefinite, whether It is the cause of both these according to one and the same thing, or according to different things. For if according to the same thing, how can It perceive in Its knowledge that *this* thing which is produced by It will be definite, but *that* indefinite? But if according to different things, how will It any longer remain one in hyparxis, if *this* thing which pertains to It is one thing, but *that* another? Invoking, therefore, Divinity to illuminate the reason which perfects our conceptions on this subject, we must say to ourselves that Providence is established in *the One* (and this is the same with *the Good*). For everything which is of a providential nature, if we believe in common conceptions, always procures some real or apparent good for the objects of its providential care; nor is providential anything else than beneficent energy. But we have before observed that to impart good is the same thing as to impart unity, because *the One* is good, and *the Good* is one; and this has been ten thousand times asserted.

The one of Providence, however, is exempt from all the beings of which It is the productive and perfective cause, and is un-receptive of variation of every kind. Providence, therefore, being no one of these, but established above every *specific essence*, and nevertheless producing all things according to the most profound union, possesses a power uncircumscribed and incomprehensible

* For Part I, which deals with the first two Doubts, see *Shrine of Wisdom*. No. 49.

by all things; so that neither can any one of the natures which subsist from It, nor all of them taken collectively, unfold the power which pre-exists in It, or receive and comprehend the immensity of It in Its bosom. But all things being, as it were, absorbed by Providence, they participate of It in some way or other, according to the natural adaptation of each to this participation.

The infinite power of Providence, being comprehensive of all the powers of the natures which are the subjects of Its providential energy, generates as well as contains them according to the most profound union in the infinite depths of Itself, just as It imparts to all things a union commensurate to each. For neither is *the One* everywhere the same: for instance, in incorporeal natures and in bodies; nor in perpetual bodies and in such as are corruptible. For the union of perpetual is greater than that of corruptible bodies; or how could the former remain indissoluble, but unity perish in the other? To which also it may be added that an incorporeal nature is more proximate to *the One*, but body, on account of the extreme separation of its parts, falls very far short of *the One*. Nor must it be doubted whether one thing is in a greater degree one than another; since we see that everything by diminution always becomes something different from that which is prior to itself, till it proceeds to the extremity of the order to which it belongs.

Providence, therefore, subsisting according to transcendent union, and possessing infinite power, some of the natures which are produced by It and partake of Its beneficent energy (though all things proceed from and participate of Providence), subsist according to *the one* by which they are connascently bounded, but others subsist according to the infinite, indefiniteness being connascent with their essence. For imitations of the infinite which is with Providence subsist here through *indefiniteness*; but the imitations of Its unity through *bound*. Hence you may say that Providence possessing through *the one* of Itself the cause of definite natures, but through infinity the cause of such as are indefinite, knows and generates both of them definitely; just as Intellect knows and produces incorporeally both that which subsists according to the form of the incorporeal essence and that which subsists according to the form of body. But you will speak rightly if you say that of the things produced, these, indeed,

are definite on account of *the one*, but those are indefinite on account of infinity. For neither are beings which have a necessary existence without infinity, nor such as are contingent without bound. For the latter are entirely terminated in the bound of necessity, and the former, being eternal essences from a necessity of nature, partícipate of infinite power. Or whence do they derive this perpetuity and an invariable sameness of subsistence? Here, indeed, *the one* predominating, and on account of this, causing that which is generated to be necessary, and being the cause of the binding together of the infinite; but there the infinite predominating and causing *the one* to be diminished through flying from the infinite which runs above it and comprehends it in its embrace. Providence, however, possesses a knowledge of both these though, as we have already said, Its knowledge is according to that which is more excellent than the things which It knows,* and It antecedently comprehends in Its knowledge a power productive of the peculiarity of each, and causes this thing to be characterized by bound, but that by infinity.

That it is requisite, however, that there should be a knowledge of the indefinite in beings superior to us must be admitted at present, as being elsewhere demonstrated, but we now alone investigate after what manner it is effected. And this likewise will become manifest. For the universe would not be one, nor the government of it according to Intellect, if this government was not definite; and of those things of which there is the same order there is a certain colligation.

It is necessary, however, to attribute this knowledge either to daemons alone—for as they are proximate to things in the sub-lunary region, they appear to have a knowledge of and to preside over them—or this knowledge must be attributed to the Gods prior to daemons, to whom the Gods commit the providential inspection of all mundane affairs. But if they perceive *indefinite* things definitely, why, if we ascribe this power to daemons, should we not admit that this in a much greater degree is possible to the Gods, so as to grant that They know temporal concerns untemporally, *indefinite* things definitely, and that They provide for indefinite natures according to a definite mode of knowledge?

* For knowledge subsists according to the nature of that which knows, and not according to the nature of that which is known. This is admirably illustrated by Proclus in his commentary on the Parmenides of Plato. See vol. iii of my translation of Plato, p. 82. T. Taylor.

For if, indeed, they are unable to know things indefinite definitely—but this is possible to daemons—then the Gods will be deprived of a knowledge of this kind through want of power, which is absurd. And if it should be said that They do not wish to possess this knowledge, this would be attended with a much greater absurdity than to assert that They are not able to possess it; since, though They give subsistence to things of this kind, They would be unwilling to pay a providential attention to Their own productions. Or on this hypothesis it must likewise be granted that not all mortal natures, and particulars, and everything which the world contains were produced by the Gods. And some things, indeed, were (immediately) fabricated by the one Father of the universe, but others by the Mundane Gods, yet through the command of Their Father, Who at the same time through Them produced these. But it is not lawful for those beings who produce other things either immediately or mediately to neglect the Gods.

If, however, the Gods *wish* to provide for things indefinite definitely and are able to effect this, They will both entirely provide for them and, while providentially attending to them, will know perfectly the desert of the subjects of Their providential care. And the Gods, indeed, will possess this knowledge exemptly, extending to all things Their providential attention: but daemons, distributing into parts the superessential illuminations which they receive from Them, are allotted a different praefecture. But all things are full of the Gods; some providing for certain things immediately, but others, as we have said, for other things through daemons as media: not that the Gods are incapable of being present with all things, but last natures are not able of themselves to participate such as are primary. The inaptitude of participants likewise, by insinuating itself, becomes sometimes an obstacle to the enjoyment of the beneficent influence of the Gods, and to the conscious perception of the providential activities of daemons. That, however, which possesses a proper adaptation, has the Gods immediately present with it, and hence knows when it is known by Them, and begins to *see* Providence descending into it, of whose guardian care it was ignorant prior to its adaptation, and which it had participated immanifestly. But if someone sleeping in the light of the sun and being illuminated by it should be ignorant during his sleep that he was thus illuminated,

and on waking should see himself surrounded by the solar splendour, he might then think that this light was not present with him before, because he, on account of his ignorance, was not present with the light. Then, therefore (i.e. when a thing becomes adapted to the participation of the Gods), the indefinite also becomes definite, and is converted to Divinity with Whom the indefinite subsisted definitely, and from thence derives, through participation, bound. For prior to its conversion to Divinity it was indeed, with reference to itself, indefinite, but not such to Divinity; but conformably to His Nature had with Him a definite subsistence and was known to Him as a thing separated from Him through its own indefiniteness, but not so separated as to escape all bound; for in this case, falling into the abyss of nonentity, it would become latent; but it is cut off from Him in such a way as neither to be without bound, nor yet to be perfectly established in it. After its conversion, however, it both has a knowledge of its own indefiniteness, and of the pre-existing bound by which indefiniteness is adorned.

This will likewise follow if we admit that good accedes to all things from Providence alone, in the same manner as intelligence proceeds from Intellect, and life and vital motion from Soul. But, if everything which lives in any way whatever lives on account of Soul, and everything intelligent intellectually perceives on account of Intellect, it is evident that whatever participates of the good of Providence possesses this good on account of Providence, though the participant should rank among partial natures and things which participate of It only at times and not always. For it is requisite to lead everything to its fountain from which the whole series of it is derived. If anything, therefore, which the world contains is benefited, it is benefited on account of Providence; and this is not only the case with eternal, but likewise with corruptible natures; and not only with definite, but also with such as are indefinite, whether each of these receives its proper good from Providence immediately or is first benefited by It through media. For intermediate beings do not subvert the gifts of the causes prior to themselves, but render the inaptitude of last natures adapted to the participation of such as are primary, corroborating them by their own forerunning illuminations. Hence things which are more proximate to Providence enjoy and are adorned by It in a greater degree; just as we must admit

from common conceptions that the natures which are nearer to the sun are more illuminated by it than those which are more remote from it; that the beings which are more proximate to Soul are more vital; and those which are nearer to Intellect are more perfect in intellectual perception. For proximity is said to be that which it is on account of the alliance of its essence to the things to which it is near, and remoteness is so called on account of its essential elongation from something else. It being admitted, therefore, that Providence is nothing else than that which imparts good to all things, those natures which more largely participate of It are in a greater degree benefited and adorned. Hence it is not requisite that everything should be proximately suspended from Providence, but it is proper that intermediate natures should be suspended from those that are proximate to Providence; for this causes the latter to enjoy the good of Providence by themselves and the former to be in want, as it were, of other colligations, in order to receive the good which It imparts. For if there were not a co-ordination of all things with reference to *the One*, neither would the world be one; or if all things participated of their adorning cause after the same manner, there would not be an order of things adorned. If, therefore, there are both order and co-ordination, the former giving distinction to all things and causing some things to be prior and others posterior, but the latter converting divided natures to one good—if this be the case it is necessary that all things should participate of Providence, but that the participations should not be the same; that all should participate, indeed, on account of co-ordination; but not of the same things, on account of order which causes some things to be first, others to be second, and others to be successive to these. For, as Plato says, every power which is motive of greater is much more motive of less things, and obtaining dominion over stronger, it will much more predominate over more debile natures. There,* however, Will concurring with Power, it is necessary that Providence should extend its beneficent care to things of a less excellent nature. For it must not be said that Providence is able, indeed, but unwilling to effect what It is able to effect; since whatever good men are able to accomplish they also wish to accomplish. Nor is the power of Providence without will, nor Its will without power;

* i.e. with Providence.

since the latter would render appetite vain, and the former would cause power to be imperfect.

All things, therefore, as I have said, according to the order which they possess, derive their subsistence from Providence; and of the beings which are generated and are not always, some are essentially produced from It and from eternal beings: but others have their generation through eternal beings, not because Providence is indigent of things posterior to Itself for the production of these, but these, in consequence of being much distant from it, require to the participation of It the influence of the beings which It proximately produced. If, however, though Providence is present everywhere and in all things, yet the same good is not in all things, we ought not to be surprised. For this is the work of the most excellent Providence, to impart good indeed to all things, but to measure the participation of it by the desert of the recipients; and for everything to receive only as much as it is able to receive, whether essence causes a difference, as in souls and bodies (for the good of these is not the same because the essence is not the same), or whether their desert arises from energy alone, as we say that Souls differently energizing always receive from Providence different allotments. And all Souls, indeed, have allotments from Providence; but some submit to their allotment with facility, and others with difficulty because they cannot be converted to Providence without obstacle. This, therefore, must be admitted. For that it is most true that there is also a particular Providence may be assumed by directing our attention to sublunary affairs, because all these contribute something to the universe and no one of the things which it contains is superadventitious, though we are not able to perceive the causes from which it is derived. To which it may be added that in certain Souls also the power of Providence is displayed. But it would be ridiculous to admit that these things thus subsist and others do not, if all things existed after a similar manner. On this subject, however, enough has been said.

ORIGEN

IN order to appreciate the work of Origen and the impression he made upon Christian thought, both in his own day and in later times, it is necessary to take a general view of the conditions in which his teachings were given out. The period during which he lived—from A.D. 182 onwards—was, for the Church in the provinces of the Roman Empire, and especially in Alexandria, one of great turbulence, both external and internal. The Christian faith was holding its own amid a host of rival systems. The civil authority was sometimes tolerant, sometimes hostile, and the feeling of the masses was, on the whole, against the Christians.

Within the Christian community itself there was much difference of opinion on points of doctrine, and many heresies were springing up, partly on account of lack of intellectual training, and partly as a result of a literal interpretation of the Scriptures. In consequence of this there was much fanaticism and superstition. Many of the Bishops were extremely dogmatic and rigid in their views, limited in outlook, and suspicious of any departure from the letter of the Scriptures.

In Alexandria especially, as in the rest of the Christian world at that period, there was a large element of non-Christian culture, and the Faith needed defence against the attacks of critics who were trained in the art of sophistical argument.

In the Western world as a whole there was at this time an urgent need for the expression of a lofty ideal of religion, for the pure teachings of the Greek theologians had suffered eclipse, and many of the so-called religions which were given out to the multitude were degraded in character, and abounded with superstitious practices. Christianity, by its purity and beauty, appealed strongly to a large number of sincere and highly cultured seekers of truth, but on account of the narrowness of the orthodox interpretation, it failed in many cases to satisfy their needs.

Origen, in line with the principles followed by his master Clement, helped to bridge this gulf between secular knowledge and religion. These two pioneers of a new understanding and a more philosophical interpretation of Scripture "represent not so much the Christian tradition (of their day) as the atmosphere of

learned and educated thought at Alexandria in the half century before Plotinus migrated to Rome. They were loyal, and in intention, at least, orthodox Christians, but there was none of that antipathy to secular culture which at other times and places has erected a barrier between sacred and profane studies.”*

Our knowledge of the life of Origen, called Adamantius, is gained chiefly from the *Apology* of Eusebius and Pamphilus, of which only the first book remains. Origen himself tells us very little, but some light is thrown upon his influence and method of teaching by Gregory of Neo-Cæsarea. There is a difference of opinion as to his nationality: he is called an Egyptian by one authority, but Porphyry states that he was a Greek. His father's name was Leonidas, which tends to confirm the latter opinion.

Origen was born about A.D. 185, probably at Alexandria. He was the eldest of seven sons. The name Origen is said to be derived from the Egyptian Deity Horus, and the name Adamantius means “firmness.”

Even in childhood he showed promise, and it is said that he asked his father, who taught him to repeat passages of the Scriptures, to explain the inner meaning of the words.

When Origen was seventeen years old his father, who probably held a position of some authority in the Christian community, was executed in the persecution of A.D. 202. A letter is recorded in which Origen exhorts Leonidas to hold steadfastly to his convictions, and to consider as secondary the temporal welfare of his family.

After the death of Leonidas his property was confiscated, and Origen, who had been trained in the school of Clement and Pantænus, and was now studying Greek science and art, began to teach grammar and literature in order to contribute towards the support of his mother and younger brothers. At the age of eighteen he was informally appointed master of the catechetical school at Alexandria in place of Clement, who had been persuaded to flee from persecution.

Origen, owing to his youth and apparent insignificance, escaped the notice of the hostile civil authorities, and so capable was his teaching and direction of the school that soon afterwards his appointment was officially confirmed by Demetrius, Bishop of Alexandria.

* W. R. Inge in *The Philosophy of Plotinus*.

Origen now determined to devote himself to study and teaching, and accordingly he sold his books and supported himself on the small sum received for them by following a very abstemious mode of life, while he studied all the available works on religion and philosophy. He is said to have attended the lectures of the great Neoplatonist, Ammonius Saccas, and was taught the Hebrew language and literature by eminent rabbis, becoming familiar with the symbolical modes of interpretation which he used to a great extent in his commentaries and other writings.

Through his interest in Greek philosophy he drew upon himself the disapproval of one section of the Church, but, on the other hand, this knowledge enabled him to deal with the problems of non-Christian Greeks and others trained in the many philosophic schools of that period.

The catechetical school increased in numbers, and Origen appointed as his assistant his friend Heraclas, a fellow-student with him under Ammonius Saccas. The principles of teaching adopted in the school are given in the farewell address delivered by Gregory of Neo-Cæsarea on Origen's retirement, and in it a glowing tribute is paid to the master to whom Gregory owed his spiritual education, who had enkindled in him "a love for the most lovely of objects, philosophy."

In this address it is pointed out that Origen considered the study of the character, tendencies, and failings of the pupils to be of paramount importance. Premature opinions were adjusted by the use of logic and dialectic, weaknesses were gently pointed out, and the students were encouraged to train the mind by patient and persistent effort, and to develop the qualities of endurance, steadfastness, and thoroughness. "In the true Socratic manner, he sometimes overthrew us by argument if he saw us restive and ready to leave the path. The process was at first unpleasant and painful to us, but thus he purified us, preparing us for the reception of truth by testing us, questioning us, and offering problems for our solution."

Language was regarded as a vehicle for the most accurate presentation of truth rather than as a means for the display of empty rhetoric, and logic was used for the strict examination of beliefs, not for the gaining of a superficial victory in argument. The "lofty and divine and most lovely" study of nature was pursued by means of geometry first, which formed a secure

foundation, and which would include the other mathematical disciplines; next followed physics, the study of the laws of nature, and then came the moral sciences, both practical and theoretical, for the purpose of inculcating through careful self-examination and self-discipline the four cardinal virtues—prudence with practical wisdom, temperance or self-control, fortitude, and justice or righteousness.

Origen was himself a living example of the practice of his own precepts, for, says Gregory, he was “the first teacher who truly led me to the pursuit of Greek philosophy by bringing theory into a vital union with practice. In him I saw the inspiring example of a man at once wise and holy.”

The object of the teaching as a whole was to aid the pupil “to become like God, with a pure mind, and to draw near to Him and to abide in Him.” The students were trained to exercise the reason in discriminating between truth and error, and under the capable guidance of their master they were encouraged to investigate the religious, philosophical, and poetic writings of all nations with an open mind, with a view to the removal of prejudice, and the development of universality of outlook.

The course of instruction was designed to lead gradually up to the study of theology, the end of which is the surpassingly beautiful vision of the Divine. In his *De Principiis** Origen writes, “The contemplation of the works of God stirs us with an incomparably great longing to learn the principles, the purpose, the method of creation. This desire, this passion, has indeed been implanted in us by God, and as the eye seeks light, as our body craves for food, so our mind has innately the characteristic and natural desire of knowing the truth of God and the causes of what we observe. . . . This desire is a Divine endowment.” And again, “Man must rise in Christ above the sensible to the intelligible.”

In A.D. 211 Origen visited Rome, but was recalled by Demetrius. Four years later, at the outbreak of persecutions, he went to Cæsarea in Palestine, where he was invited by Alexander, Bishop of Jerusalem, and Theoctistus, Bishop of Cæsarea, to preach at the services of the Church. Demetrius, however, strongly disapproving of this action, and of Origen’s omission to ask his consent, recalled him.

* The quotations, except where otherwise indicated, are from the *De Principiis*, translated by the Rev. F. Crombie.

Origen's life after his return was wholly devoted to study and writing, the direction of the school being entirely left to Heraclas. Through the generosity of a wealthy convert named Ambrosius the services of a number of scribes were placed at his disposal for receiving dictation and making transcriptions, and Origen's great work, the *Commentary on the Gospel of St. John* was begun. After this the important work *De Principiis* was written. Both of these books had a wide influence on account of their original and striking character. In the treatise *De Principiis* much of the pure philosophy of the Greeks was expressed in terms of Christianity, and certain doctrines held by some branches of the Church were denied as, for example, that of eternal punishment, and it was possibly owing to this cause that Demetrius began to view Origen with suspicion.

About A.D. 228 he was sent to Achaia to refute certain heresies, and before returning was again invited to Cæsarea, where the two Bishops, Alexander and Theoctistus, without previously consulting Demetrius, consecrated him presbyter.

After visiting Ephesus and Athens he returned to Alexandria to be met by the open antagonism of Demetrius, who regarded the action of the two Bishops at Cæsarea as an affront to his authority. The accusations of heresy and insubordination were made to the authorities at Rome against Origen, two councils were called, and in A.D. 232 he was excommunicated and deprived of his office.

The four main points upon which his views were judged to be heretical were :

1. That the Souls of men had subsisted in a state of purity previous to their birth in a physical body, and that their birth was a consequence of a freely chosen departure from this condition.
2. That the human Soul of Jesus Christ had subsisted in union with the Divine Nature before His incarnation on this earth as related in the Bible.
3. That our material bodies will be transformed into more refined and purer substance, shining "in the splendour of celestial bodies" when the human nature has become transformed in the resurrection.
4. That all men and all influences militating against God will finally be restored to the Good, through the mediation of Christ,

Three centuries later, at a Synod held at Constantinople, the works of Origen were again formally condemned, though in the intervening time they had received some measure of appreciation, and steps were taken to suppress his following in Palestine. Yet the greater part of his work has borne the test of time, and has had the support that it deserves.

Erasmus speaks of him as having not only accomplished a work of outstanding merit, but also as having pointed out the sources and underlying reasons of the theological art.

After his excommunication Origen settled at Cæsarea, where the Bishops, disregarding the judgment of Rome, urged him to preach and teach as before. Some of his devoted adherents followed him, and at Cæsarea he found many earnest disciples. A school of philosophy was founded which was attended by many distinguished and able students, both Pagan and Christian. Lectures and explanations of the Scriptures were resumed, and, in addition, Origen with unceasing energy produced voluminous commentaries on the Old and New Testaments, as well as books of homilies.

In A.D. 235, during the persecution of Maximus, he escaped to Cappadocia, but returned in two years, and then gave up his active work in the school. It was on this occasion that Gregory of Neo-Cæsarea gave the farewell address in which is expressed the devotion, gratitude, and deep appreciation of the pupils.

Although he had been teaching for thirty years, Origen had regarded his experience as insufficient to justify the publication of his discourses, but in A.D. 246, when he was sixty-one years of age, he permitted them to be given to the world. He carried on his many and varied activities for some years longer, until in A.D. 250, during the persecution of the Emperor Decius, he was imprisoned and tortured with such cruelty as to bring him almost to the point of death. During these very severe ordeals Origen wrote to his friends stimulating and cheerful letters which they described as being "full of help to those needing encouragement." On the death of Decius in A.D. 251 Origen was set free, but his health was broken through his sufferings, and he died at Tyre in A.D. 253 at the age of sixty-eight.

The great influence that he had upon those with whom he came into contact was largely due to the natural charm of his warm-hearted and sympathetic nature, combined with great intellectual gifts, gentleness of manner, and a balanced outlook.

Gregory tells of his "sweet grace and persuasion, mingled with a certain constraining power," and of the love called forth in others in response to the ardent love of mankind which radiated from him. He was the most learned Biblical scholar of his day, yet a great humility and an unusual freedom from the desire to dogmatize are shown by the manner in which he frequently contented himself with presenting his arguments to the reader and leaving him to form his own judgments upon them, as when, after discussing the union of the Divine and the human elements in the person of Jesus Christ, he added, "The above are the thoughts which have occurred to us when treating of subjects of such difficulty as the incarnation and Deity of Christ. If there be anyone, indeed, who can discover something better, and who can establish his assertions by clearer proofs from holy Scriptures, let his opinion be received in preference to mine."

Origen was the unofficial arbiter and peacemaker of the Eastern Church. His life, full of difficulties and trials, had moulded in him a beauty of character which aroused universal veneration and devotion. The manner in which the truths he taught were mirrored in his daily life was a source of inspiration to all who knew him, and his help was sought by people of every rank and calling.

Before his banishment from Tyre he had written the beginning of his *Hexapla*, Commentaries on the Canticles, also Commentaries on the Gospel of St. John, and on Exodus, as well as a collection of writings called *Miscellanies*, Treatises on Prayer, Freewill, and the Resurrection, and the valuable work *De Principiis*. After his arrival at Cæsarea he wrote Commentaries on the First Epistle to the Corinthians, on Ezekiel and Deuteronomy, on the Canticles (ten books), and on other books and passages of the Old and New Testaments, Homilies, the *Exhortation to Martyrdom*, the *Letter to Julius Africanus*, and eight books *Contra Celsum*, in which he refuted certain arguments against Christianity.

The aim of the Commentaries was to enable students to penetrate below the surface meaning of the Scriptures. A symbolical mode of interpretation was used which has led to much dispute as to his orthodoxy, but it is universally acknowledged that Origen was the first to adopt this method of analysis, which has been widely copied since his day. His Homilies also were the first published works of the kind.

The aim of his most criticized work, the *De Principiis*, was to give systematized expression, in terms of Christianity, to the basic principles which underlie not only the Christian religion, but all others. Such a work would appeal to minds trained in Greek philosophy and would supply a means for the reconciliation of principles already regarded as true with those presented under other names in Christianity.

Much of what is given is on similar lines to the teaching of Clement, particularly with regard to the doctrine of the Logos, but as a systematic presentation and unfoldment of basic truths, the work heralded a new era in Christian thought. This power of lucid and orderly exposition of fundamental principles was no doubt a fruit of the training which Origen had received at Alexandria under Ammonius Saccas, for the work is coloured throughout by a knowledge and application of the principles of Greek philosophy, and appropriate illustrations are given here and there from the writings of Plato. There is also evident the influence of a system of philosophy very similar to that expressed by the great Neoplatonist Plotinus, who was also a pupil of Ammonius Saccas, and a contemporary of Origen.

The first book of the *De Principiis* deals with the nature of God, the second with the universe, and to some degree with the principle of Soul, while the third book examines more particularly the activities of man. The fourth lays down the principles for the correct interpretation of the Scriptures, illustrating these by examples taken from the Old and New Testaments.

A short account of the Plotinian teachings on these three heads, God, the universe, and man, will assist in the understanding of the Hellenic influence which is so marked in the *De Principiis*, and which was to some extent responsible for those views which were condemned as heterodox by some of Origen's superiors in the Church.

The three hypostases, or basic principles of the Plotinian Trinity are The ONE, Nous, and Soul. The ONE, the Source of all, is the Principle of Principles, the First Manifestation of the Absolute.

From the ONE proceeds the Principle of Nous, the Divine Essence, Life, and Intellect, Whose beneficent influences are imparted to all manifested things in due measure through Soul, the third hypostasis of the Trinity.

Nous, in its aspect as the Spiritual Universe, the Spiritual Realm of divine Ideas, incomparably beautiful, inconceivably powerful, at once a unity and a plurality, is reflected, as it were, under conditions of limitation in the material universe, which is rooted in and depends upon the eternal Realm of immutable, monadic Principles.

Soul, universal and individual, is unitive and creative, the self-conscious, self-motive, self-subsistent principle which imparts form and ordered movement to body.

Man, according to Plotinus, subsists as Archetypal Man in Nous, where Intellect, the Intelligible, and the Intelligent are one. The Archetypal Man is the Eternal Word or Logos, possessing in terms of Himself all the principles and powers of Nous, which He manifests through mankind in the objective world, even as Nous is reflected in the world of time and space. Being made in the image of the Divine, He is a tri-unity, and His threefold characteristic is participated by individual man, who in Spirit is eternally united to Nous, but through his immortal Soul can touch and know both the Eternal and the transient, and impart to body the principles by which it is enabled to exist and to manifest life and order.

The purpose of the human Soul is to unite itself consciously with the Divine, and to work for the perfective union of all mankind with God.

Origen, in the *De Principiis*, when dealing with the nature of the Christian Trinity, teaches that God, in His Super-essential Nature, is incomprehensible to the mind of man, which can, however, by contemplating and considering the plan of the universe and the works of Providence learn something about the attributes of the Divine ONE. God, he says, when considered from the standpoint of Intellect or Mind, is to be regarded as of the nature of "an uncompounded Intellect." He is Sanctifying Power, and thus may be called a Fire, as consuming all impurities. He is unique Perfection. "God is to be thought of as Unitive Intellect, admitting no additions of any kind, so that He cannot be believed to have within him a greater and a less, but is such that He is in all the Monad and the Unity, and is the Mind and Source from which all that is of an intellectual nature takes its beginning. Hence He is above space and time and magnitude: He can receive no addition, for He is all-perfect." This conception

of the Divine has a resemblance to that of the ONE, the First Hypostasis of Plotinus.

Origen represents Christ as the Eternal Wisdom, and here is seen a correspondence with Nous, the second aspect of the Plotinian Trinity.

“The only-begotten Son of God is His Wisdom, hypostatically subsisting. . . . No one can believe that God the Father ever subsisted without having manifested His Wisdom, . . . therefore Wisdom was before any beginning that can be either comprehended or expressed . . . forming beforehand and containing within Himself the kinds and beginnings of all creatures. In the same way we must understand Him to be the Word (Logos) of God, because He is, as it were, the interpreter of the secrets of the Divine Intellect. Whatever we have predicated of the Wisdom of God will be appropriately applied and understood of the Son of God in virtue of His being the Life, the Word, the Truth, and the Resurrection.”

Origen has here introduced the Spiritual Unity of Eternal Ideas, the Divine Wisdom, and has identified It with the Logos, the Eternal Word, and with the Christ. This interpretation of Christ through the Platonic idea of the Word or Logos, the Universal Creative Expression of God, was the means adopted by St. John and the Fathers of the Church who followed in his footsteps for adapting the presentation of Christianity to the outlook of minds steeped in a culture derived from the beautiful ideals of Platonism. The way had already been prepared by Philo who had combined the Hebrew teachings with the ideals of Greek philosophy very early in the first century. “The fruit of that inspiration (which is revealed in the opening words of St. John’s Gospel) was the yoking of the Greek genius to the cause of Christ, and the forging of the great body of Greek thought concerning Christ which alone enabled the Church, and therefore civilization, to survive the barbarian deluge.”*

The work of Christ, according to Origen, is to manifest the threefold glory of God, and to lead men back to the Father.

“The Son accordingly is the Truth and Life of all things which exist: and with reason. For how could those things which were created live unless they derived their being from Life? Or how could those things which are truth exist unless they came down

* J. S. Hoyland in *The Great Forerunner*.

from the Truth? Or how could rational beings exist unless the Word or Reason had previously existed? But since it was to come to pass that some also should fall away from Life, and bring death upon themselves for their declension—for death is nothing else than a departure from Life—and as it was not to follow that those beings which had once been created by God for the enjoyment of Life should utterly perish, it was necessary that before death there should be in existence such a power as would destroy the coming death, and that there should be a resurrection, the type of which was our Lord and Saviour, and that this resurrection should have its ground in the Wisdom, and Word, and Life of God.”

“The only-begotten Son of God . . . embracing in Himself all whom He subjects to the Father, and who by Him come to salvation, along with them and in them is Himself said to be subject to the Father; all things subsisting in Him, and He Himself being the salvation and fulness of those who obtain salvation.”

Of the Holy Spirit, Origen writes, “The Spirit of God which was borne upon the water, as it is written, in the beginning of the creation of the world is, I am of opinion, none other than the Holy Spirit, so far as I can understand. . . . Whenever Spirit is named without that adjunct which denotes quality, the Holy Spirit is to be understood. . . . Nothing in the Trinity can be called greater or less, since the Fountain of Divinity alone contains all things by His Word and Reason, and by the Spirit of His Mouth sanctifies all things which are worthy of sanctification.”

Here the third Divine Hypostasis of Plotinus, Creative Soul, can be recognized in the Creative Spirit of God, borne upon the water, and the Spirit of His Mouth.

Origen briefly shows the activities of the Trinity in relation to man in the passage, “God the Father bestows existence upon all men; participation in Christ renders them rational beings, capable of virtue or vice. On this account, therefore, is the grace of the Holy Spirit present that those beings which are not holy in their essence may be rendered holy by participation in It. . . . Each one by participation in Christ makes progress and advances to higher degrees of perfection, . . . and by partaking of the Holy Spirit, becoming purer and holier, he obtains, when he is made worthy, the grace of wisdom and knowledge; for in this way he who is such as his Creator wished him to be will receive from

God power to abide for ever . . . inseparably united with Him Who Is."

Here can be seen a reminiscence of the Platonic teaching of the ONE and the GOOD: for from the ONE Who Is, all beings proceed, and they return at last perfected to the GOOD.

Origen deals next with the Universe. It is evident that he recognizes both a Spiritual World, corresponding to Nous, and a material universe. In meeting the objection of someone who said, "If the world had its beginning in time, what was God doing before the world began?" he says, "We can give a logical answer when we say that not then for the first time did God begin to work when He made this visible world. . . . This point is not idly to be passed by, that the Holy Scriptures have called the creation of the world by a new and peculiar name, terming it *katabole*, which has been improperly translated into Latin by *constitutio* (beginning). For in Greek *katabole* signifies rather to bring downwards. Also in the passage of St. John, 'and there will be tribulation in those days such as has not been seen since the beginning of the world,' the word *katabole* is again used.

"It seems worth while, then, to inquire what is meant by this new term. I am of opinion that even as the end and consummation of the saints will be in that (spiritual) realm which is not seen, and which is eternal, so we must conclude, as is frequently pointed out in the preceding pages, that rational creatures had also a similar beginning and subsisted undoubtedly in that which is not seen and is eternal, and that there has been a descent from a higher to a lower condition, and from this it follows that by the use of the word *katabole* a descent from a higher to a lower condition, shared by all in common, is indicated."

Origen points to the work of Providence Which foresees the needs of all creatures. "We are indeed to suppose that the world was created of such quality and capacity as to contain not only all those Souls which were to be trained in this world, but also all those Powers which were prepared to attend and serve and assist them."

The relation of the Creator to His creation is clearly set forth, for "God created all things by number and measure." Origen regards Nature as perpetual, but not infinite, and time as the register of the world's life: creation itself, however, is timeless. He considers that the Creator is not separated from His creation,

and because God is perfect, His creation also must be perfect, in spite of seeming disorder. This material world, therefore, in itself, must be the best possible, otherwise the Creator could not be omnipotent and all-wise. Not only does God do nothing evil, but He leaves undone nothing good.

This is clearly the Platonic truth with regard to Providence, but in a different setting.

Origen believed that the variety of the world was held together by the Power and Reason of God as by one Soul. "How is heaven the Throne of God, and the earth His footstool, save by His Power filling all things in heaven and earth?"

The reconciliation of this variety with the unity of the beginning and the end was, however, a problem of some difficulty, and it was left as an open question whether at the attainment by all beings of the consummation of final unity all variety would disappear.

Under the third of the main divisions of the *De Principiis* the nature of man is discussed. The subject is dealt with in a manner reminiscent of the teaching of Greek philosophy with regard to the Ideal Spiritual Archetype of humanity.

Christ is the head of mankind, therefore all men partake of His Nature and, through their affinity with Him, may be united to the Father. "The only-begotten Son of God . . . both made all things and loves what He made. For since He is Himself the invisible Image of the invisible God, He conveyed invisibly a share in Himself to all His rational creatures, so that each participates of Him in proportion to the ardour of the love he cherishes for Him.

"But since, agreeably to the faculty of freewill, variety and diversity characterize human souls, so that one attaches itself with a more intense, another with a feebler devotion to the Author of its being, that Soul (anima) regarding which Jesus said, "No one shall take My life (animam) from Me, inhering ever and indissolubly in the Father, and receiving Him wholly, and passing into His light and splendour, was made with Him in a pre-eminent degree one Spirit. . . . This hypostasis of Soul, being intermediate between God and the flesh—it being impossible for a Divine Nature to mingle with body without an intermediary—the God-man is born."

"And it was not opposed to the nature of that Soul as a rational

agent to receive God, into Whom, as into the Word, and the Wisdom, and the Truth, it had already entered."

In a similar manner, says Origen, Christ is ever being born in those Souls which unite themselves to Him.

Each individual Soul can gain an ever-increasing knowledge of God, for the Soul is immortal and its power of participating in Intellectual Light is characteristic of an incorruptible essence.

The longing for truth, he says, is innate in the human Soul. "Now we have received this desire (for knowledge of truth) from God, not in order that it should never be gratified or be capable of gratification; otherwise the love of truth would appear to have implanted by God into our minds to no purpose. Whence, also, even in this life, those who devote themselves with great labour to the pursuits of piety and religion, although obtaining only some small fragments from the immense treasures of Divine Wisdom, yet from the very circumstance that their Soul is engaged in these pursuits derive much advantage; and because their minds are directed to the study and love of truth they are made fitter for the instruction that is to come. . . . And indeed if anyone be pure in heart and holy in mind and much practised in perception, he will, by making more rapid progress, quickly ascend to a place in the air, and reach the Kingdom of Heaven through those mansions, so to speak, in the various regions which the Greeks have called spheres, but which holy Scripture has called heavens, in each of which he will first clearly see what is done there, and in the second place will discover the reason why things are so done: and thus he will pass through all gradations, following Him Who hath passed into the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, Who said, "I will that where I am, these may be also."

"And thus the rational nature, growing by each individual step . . . enlarged in understanding and in power of perception, is raised to perfect knowledge, no longer at all impeded by those carnal senses, but increased in intellectual growth; and ever gazing purely and, so to speak, face to face, on the causes of things, it attains a twofold perception: firstly, that by which it ascends to the Truth (namely to that state in which it contemplates causes), and secondly, that by which it abides in It, having the solutions of problems and the understanding of things as the food on which it may feast.

“And in all things this food is to be understood as the contemplation and understanding of God, which is of a measure appropriate to this nature which was made and created.”

Man’s true work, according to Origen, is the liberation of all creation from the bondage of slavery. “The hope, indeed, of freedom is entertained for the whole of creation—of being liberated from the corruption of slavery—when the sons of God who are scattered abroad, or who fell away, shall be gathered together into one, when they shall have fulfilled all their duties in this world, which are known to God alone, the Disposer of all things.”

Of this consummation he writes further: “I am of the opinion that the saying that God is All in all, means that He is All in all in each individual person. Now He will be All in all when all that any rational understanding, cleansed from the dregs of any sort of vice, and with every cloud of wickedness completely swept away, can either feel, or understand, or think, will be wholly of God, and when it will no longer behold or retain anything else than God, but when God will be the measure and standard of all its movements: and thus God will be ‘All,’ for there is nothing that is impossible to the Omnipotent, nor is anything incapable of restoration to its Creator.

“And this result must be understood to be brought about not suddenly, but slowly and gradually, seeing that the process of amendment and correction will take place imperceptibly in the individual instances during the lapse of countless and unmeasured ages, some outstripping others and tending by a swifter course towards perfection, while others follow close at hand, and some, again, a long way behind; and thus . . . the last enemy is finally reached who is called death, so that he may also be destroyed and be no longer an enemy. When, therefore, all rational Souls shall have been restored to a condition of this kind, then the nature of this body of ours will undergo a change into the glory of a spiritual body. . . . And in this condition we are to believe that it will abide for ever, for we have ‘a house, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.’ ”

In his teachings with regard to God, the universe, and man, Origen expresses his views clearly and logically, but when he discusses the subject of Angels and their relation with Spirit and Soul, he fails to reach a truly logical conclusion.

He regards Angels as rational Souls, which depart from the Good, equally with human Souls, and he regards all variety of rank, power, and operation, both in Angels and men, as arising from a greater or lesser degree of freely chosen defection from God.

In this theory of the cause of variety, two essential points are overlooked, the first of which depends upon a recognition of the truth that unity with the Divine is not the same as identity with Him, although the greatest possible similitude to God of which any nature is capable is a pre-requisite for union. Unity, therefore, is compatible with variety.

If this truth is kept in mind, it will be evident that the Angelic Hierarchies, which manifest the perfection of the Divine Plurality, constitute a unity when regarded as a whole, and are united to God through this unity, but through the variety of their operations, they apply His Unific Power to all creation.

In the second place the truth is overlooked that while a freely-chosen falling away from God must imply disorder and misuse of power, yet these effects are not present in those realms in and upon which the Angelic powers operate and in which the influence of man is not directly exerted. On the contrary, the results of their activities bring order into the world; for in the processes of Nature, the operations of cosmic law are unfailing and inerrant, no disorder is evident in the circulations of the heavenly bodies, nor in the cycles of the seasons. This perpetuity of Nature and the perfection and stability of the external world are emphasized by Origen, but he does not here appear to reach the logical conclusion that there must be a subsistence in eternal perfection, in terms of the Angelic Hierarchies, of the manifold underlying rational principles upon which the universe depends for its life and the ordered succession and perpetuation of cosmic operations.

In the fourth book of the *De Principiis*, Origen takes up a very definite position with regard to the interpretation of the Scriptures. He insists upon the necessity for this, and illustrates his statements by instances both of obviously incorrect interpretations and of those which he regards as true. He finds a spiritual meaning within the whole of the sacred writings, and declares that man will fall into great error unless he learns to do this.

In general, he says, "we must attend to the character and force of the phrases and not argue sophistically, regardless of the meaning of the expression." As a guide to interpretation he

follows certain principles: "By Solomon in the Proverbs we find some such rule as this enjoined respecting the Divine doctrines of holy Scripture, and do thou portray them in a threefold manner, in counsel and knowledge to answer words of truth to them who propose them to thee." This is in order that the simple man may be edified by the "flesh," as it were, of the Scriptures, for so we name the obvious and historical sense; while he who has ascended a certain way may be edified by the "Soul," as it were; and the perfect men among whom, the Apostle says, "we speak the Wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden Wisdom which God hath ordained before the ages unto our glory," may be edified by the spiritual truth. For as man consists of body, Soul, and Spirit, so also does Scripture.

"The careful reader must, in obedience to the Saviour's injunction to 'search the Scriptures,' carefully discover to what degree the literal meaning is true, and to what degree impossible, and, so far as he can, trace out by similar statements the meaning everywhere scattered through Scripture which cannot be understood in a literal signification.

"Who is so foolish as to suppose that God, after the manner of a husbandman, planted a paradise in Eden towards the East, and placed in it a tree of life, visible and palpable, so that one tasting of the fruit by the bodily tongue obtained life? Cain, also, when going forth from the Presence of God, certainly appears to lead thoughtful men to inquire what is the Presence of God, and in what manner can anyone go out from It? . . . These things figuratively indicate certain mysteries, the history having taken place in images, and not literally. The Gospels themselves have similar narratives. It must be our object to grasp the whole meaning which connects the account of that which is literally impossible with that which is historically true, and with what is allegorically understood in respect of its not having literally occurred. For with respect to the Scripture our opinion is that the whole of it has a spiritual, but not the whole a literal, meaning.

"However far a man may advance, and however great the progress made by unremitting study assisted by the Grace of God . . . he will yet, having discovered certain of the objects of his search, see again others still to be sought out. . . . Therefore it is to be desired that everyone according to his strength should ever stretch out to those things that are before; both to better

works, and to a clearer apprehension and understanding through Christ Our Saviour, to Whom be glory for ever."

The chief value to tradition of the work of Origen is twofold. In the first place he embodied in Christianity certain basic principles of philosophical truth, and thus helped to establish it upon the reasonable foundation necessary for its preservation. In the second place he introduced a method of interpretation of the Old and New Testaments which, in its main outline at least, has since been generally adopted. There are few to-day who would deny that every literal truth has a spiritual meaning, yet in view of the prevalent tendency to allow material things to obscure the vision of that which is above and within, the world may still learn from this devoted servant of humanity to seek for and value above all else "the contemplation and understanding of God, which is of a measure appropriate and suitable to this nature of man, and which should be observed by everyone of those who are beginning to see God, that is, to understand Him through purity of heart."

MYSTIC VERSE

Hid are the saints of God;
 Uncertified by high angelic sign;
 Nor raiment soft, nor empire's golden rod
 Marks them divine.
 Theirs but the unbought air, earth's parent sod,
 And the sun's smile benign;
 Christ rears His throne within the secret heart
 From the haughty world apart. —*Keble.*

* * *

Awake, glad heart, get up and sing!
 It is the birthday of thy King.
 Awake, awake,
 The sun doth shake
 Light from his locks, and all the way
 Breathing perfumes, doth spice the day.
 —*Henry Vaughan.*

IAMBlichus' EXHORTATION TO THE
STUDY OF PHILOSOPHY*

THE TRAINING OF HUMAN CHARACTER

THERE are three forms of the Soul, namely, the first by which we reason (the rational), the second by which we are courageous or spirited (the spirited or irascible), and the third by which we desire (the desiderative). Each of these has characteristic motions of its own. Any one of these parts or elements, therefore, which is indolent and keeps its motions inactive becomes most feeble, but it becomes very strong by the exercise of its powers. Wherefore we should be careful that the motions of the respective elements are harmonious with each other. And especially the principle part of the Soul, which God has given to everyone as a daemon, and which elevates us from the earth to our celestial affinity (cognate place), since we are not a terrestrial but a celestial plant—this element must be especially and chiefly cultivated and exercised.

Now he who vehemently labours to satisfy the cravings of desire and ambition will have none but mortal thoughts, and himself becomes mortal so far as it is possible; and he is least absent from this condition when he fosters the mortal nature. But he who is strenuously devoted to the acquisition of knowledge and true wisdom, and employs his most vigorous exertions in this one pursuit—this man, if he grasps the truth, must necessarily have thoughts which are immortal and divine, and so far as it lies in human nature to possess immortality, he lacks nothing thereof; and since he ever cherishes the Divine, and keeps in good estate the guardian spirit which dwells within him, he must be happy above all. And the care of this for every man is the same, namely, that he give to each part its appropriate motions and nourishment.

Now to the divine part of us are akin the motions, thoughts, and revolutions of the whole universe. These every man should follow, restoring the revolutions in the mind that are corrupted by our wanderings about generation by learning the harmonies and revolutions of the universe so as to render the thinking Soul like the object of its thought according to her primal

* The Editors wish to express their thanks to Mr. R. P. Johnson for his kind permission to print this translation from the Greek by T. M. Johnson.

nature: and when he has made it like, he will obtain the end, which is that most excellent life which was set by the Gods before mankind for time present and time to come.

For, indeed, it is not profitable to make the multifarious monster, desire, strong by feeding him, nor is it right to nourish the lion, the spirited (irascible or courageous) element, and its members, and make them strong in us, and yet to starve and enfeeble the man, the rational element, to such an extent as to leave him at the mercy of the guidance of either of the other two, without making any attempt to habituate or reconcile them to one another.

Much more, indeed, must the divine man in us be made the master of the many-headed beast (desire), nursing and rearing the tame parts of it, and checking the growth of the wild, making the nature of the spirited (irascible) element (the lion) his ally; and thus to pursue his training on the principle of concerning himself for all jointly, and reconciling them to one another and to himself. And he who so acts will be best in every respect; he who acts contrariwise has nothing of sanity. And in the superior character integrity (beauty and honesty) shines forth; for by the divine element the brutal (irrational) part of our nature is subjugated. It is disgraceful for a man to be in a contrary condition, for in that state the gentle is enslaved by the wild, and the best by the most wicked, and the divinest part of himself is enslaved by the most ungodly and accursed, which does great injustice to his Soul. And, indeed, intemperance has been censured time out of mind for the reason that during its outbreaks the concupiscent or desiderative element receives more liberty than it ought to have: again, self-will (arrogance) and discontent are censured when the spirited (irascible) element grows and increases out of all harmony or beyond the right proportion; again, luxury is censured because it effeminates man by begetting cowardice in him, and, finally, the names of flattery and servility are rightly used whenever one subjugates the spirited element to the turbulent monster, and in order to gratify this animal's insatiable craving for money, trains the spirited element from the first, by a long course of insult, to become an ape instead of a lion. Moreover, other evils flow from this fount which debauch the best element of our nature. Therefore, only by being governed by our divine and prudent

element will we be happy. Thus, so far as nature permits, all will be alike and friends, subject to the same government. This is plainly the intention of law, which is the common friend of all the members of a state, and also of the government of children, which consists in withholding their freedom until the time when we have formed a constitution in them, as we would in a city, and until by cultivating the noblest principle of their nature we have established in their hearts a guardian and a sovereign, the very counterpart of our own—then we allow them to be free.

Therefore the man who has Intellect will direct all his energies through life to this one object: in the first place, honouring those studies which will impress the highest character upon his Soul, while at the same time he despises all others. And as for his bodily habit and support, in the second place, far from living devoted to the indulgence of the brute, irrational pleasure, he will show that even health is not primarily an object with him, and that he does not attach pre-eminent importance to the acquisition of health or strength or beauty, unless they are likely to make him temperate; because in keeping the harmony of the body in tune, his constant aim is to preserve the symphony which resides in the Soul—which must be done if one wishes to become a true musician (philosopher). Moreover, in the acquisition of wealth, he will avoid increasing it to an indefinite extent, which would bring him endless troubles and cares; but looking to his inward constitution or polity and being very careful lest any of his elements therein should give way owing to a superabundance or scantiness of substance, holding by this principle, he will, to the best of his ability, add to or spend his pecuniary means. And finally, in reference to honours—with the same standard constantly before his eyes—he will be glad to taste and partake of those which he thinks will make him a better man. But he will shun, in private and in public, those which he thinks likely to break up his existing condition or habit of rectitude. And it is plain that, wasting no time on other things, he will concentrate all his energies on one thing, namely, the acquisition of Wisdom (intellectual insight), and will do all things subject to the guidance and supremacy of Intellect. This is nothing else than to philosophize, so that, according to this reasoning, above all it is especially necessary that those should philosophize who wish to become happy.