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“Earn the Grace of Prophecy”: Early Christian Prophecy as Practice

A dissertation presented

by

Jung Hyun Choi

to

The Faculty of Harvard Divinity School

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Doctor of Theology

In the Subject of

New Testament and Early Christianity

Harvard University

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Advisor: Professor Laura S. Nasrallah Jung Hyun Choi

"Earn the Grace of Prophecy": Early Christian Prophecy as Practice

Abstract

This dissertation explores discussions of prophecy in early Christianity focusing on Origen of Alexandria's works. It argues that Origen engages the contested terms of prophetic activity to persuade his audience(s) toward the cultivation of a particular moral self.

The dissertation situates early Christian discourse on prophecy within a larger philosophical conversation in the Greco-Roman world from the first to fourth centuries C.E., in which cultivating a properly religious self involves discipline or *askēsis*. Some early Christian debates about prophecy are predicated on the idea that certain practices are necessary to be considered worthy of the indwelling of the divine/the Holy Spirit. Using Pierre Hadot's insights, the dissertation contends that discourses on prophecy in early Christianity call for training in a particular way of living, and thus could be influential to early Christians regardless of whether they would ever attain the status of prophet or not.

By encouraging his Christian readers to participate in reading and studying the Scripture as a way to purify their souls, Origen argues that everyone needs to cultivate himself or herself to be worthy to receive spiritual gifts such as prophecy. In his *Commentary on Romans*, Origen turns Paul's exhortation to "strive for spiritual gifts, and especially that you may prophesy" (1 Cor 14:1) into a more general call to cultivate

virtue through scriptural study. In *Contra Celsum* and *the Homilies on Numbers*, Origen invites the readers to participate in disciplined training so that they may become worthy instruments of the divine, just as the prophets are. The dissertation also compares Origen's arguments with those of the *Shepherd of Hermas* and Iamblichus's *De Mysteriis*, demonstrating that the ancient discussions of prophecy deploy similar strategies to persuade the audiences to participate in particular disciplined training, even if they have different ideas about what the best form of prophecy may be.

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Abbreviations

This dissertation uses abbreviations for journals, serial titles, and ancient texts as found in *SBL Handbook of Syle* (Peabody, MA: Hendrikson, 2014).

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Introduction

Topic and Thesis

This dissertation analyzes discussions of prophecy in early Christian literature and argues that these debates work rhetorically, to persuade the reader or hearer toward the construction of a particular kind of Christian self. I focus on some of the writings of the famous early Christian thinker Origen in which he addresses prophecy: *Commentary on Romans*, *Contra Celsum*, *the Homily on Numbers*, and *De Principiis.* While Origen's texts on prophecy are the main focus of this dissertation, I also bring in various comparanda—both Christian and non-Christian works, and in particular the *Shepherd of Hermas* and Iamblichus's *De Mysteriis*. My project contextualizes the early Christian debates about prophecy within a larger philosophical conversation in the Greco-Roman world from the first to fourth centuries C.E., in which cultivating a properly religious self is an important discipline or ἄσκησις.

In a class on "Introduction to New Testament" which I taught at a well-known seminary, a student told the class, "I believe in the Scripture only because I believe that the Holy Spirit *held* the arms of the humans when they were writing the Scripture. I also believe that prophets were inspired by the Holy Spirit just like that!" It seems to me that his statement is undergirded by two assumptions: first, that scripture is inspired, and, second, that the idea of some connection between human agency and divine agency[1] in

[1] For the discussions on human and divine agency in antiquity, see Troels Engberg-Pedersen, "Self-Sufficient and Power: Divine and Human Agency in Epictetus and Paul," in *Divine and Human Agency in Paul and His Cultural Environment,* ed. John M. G. Barclay and Simon J. Gathercole (London; New York: T&T Clark, 2006), 116-39; Engberg-Pedersen,

prophecy. This second theological assumption, that is, the understanding that a prophet passively receives revelation from the divine, is particularly interesting to me. The student's opinion about prophecy is far from unique. It reflects an influential popular understanding in the modern world. This understanding operates in the scholarship on prophecy in antiquity as well. There is a significant strand of scholarship that has been invested in reading ancient Christian texts in such a way that human activity in prophecy is excised, as we shall see in the following section. While early Christian texts that mention prophecy often have an apologetic and polemical nature, modern scholars oftentimes have failed to recognize how their arguments intertwined with the idea that certain practices are necessary in order to become a prophet or to be considered a worthy dwelling-place for the divine/the Holy Spirit.

This dissertation seeks to give a richer history of early Christian debates about prophecy and to uncover evidence of early Christian thinkers who considered prophecy to be undergirded by certain practices and exercises of the self. Thus, the dissertation contributes to the development of a broader cultural history of understanding prophecy and self in the ancient Mediterranean world. To reach these broader goals, this dissertation asks: To what extent, and in what ways, did Origen as well as others who wrote about prophecy argue that the prophets depend on the divine? How do early Christian texts, specifically that of Origen, deal with the question of what it means to be a prophet who communicates with the divine? [2] What kinds of human efforts in prophecy

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Cosmology and Self in the Apostle Paul: The Material Spirit (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), esp. 106-38.

[2] For a discussion of the theme of the self in antiquity, see, *inter alia,* David Brakke, Michael L. Satlow, and Steven Weitzman, eds., *Religion and the Self in Antiquity* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2005); Christopher Gill, *Personality in Greek Epic,*

are portrayed as being cultivated or contested? In trying to answer these questions, this dissertation seeks to demonstrate how Origen in particular and Origen's two notable comparanda (namely, the *Shepherd of Hermas* and Iamblichus's *De Mysteriis*) engage the contested terms of prophetic activity in order to persuade their audience(s) toward the cultivation of a certain kind of self.

By reading Origen's works in conversation with Hermas and Iamblichus, we can have a better understanding of how early Christianity was "a fluid religious phenomenon, or set of phenomena, very much in the formative phase."[3] In this fluidity, Christian texts share common philosophical arguments with "pagan" counterparts regarding prophecy. This dissertation will demonstrate that the discussions of prophecy in a variety of texts serve as a means of constructing identity, negotiating and renegotiating boundaries, and crafting an ideal self that is worthy of divine indwelling. As we shall see in the following chapters, the discussions of prophecy are oftentimes inextricably connected to discussions of disciplined practices—bodily and philosophical/intellectual. The cultivation of a particular philosophical self is thus often at the heart of the discussions on prophecy. As we shall see in Chapters 2 and 3, prophets are presented as models for ethical imitation by the audience.

Tragedy, and Philosophy: The Self in Dialogue (New York: Oxford University press, 1996); Guy Stroumsa, *Barbarian Philosophy: The Religious Revolution of Early Christianity* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999); D. Shulman and Guy Stroumsa, *Self and Self-Transformation in the History of Religions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

[3] Ellen Bradshaw Aitken, *Philostratus's Heroikos: Religion and Cultural Identity in the Third* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2004). Aitken argues, "Christian identity gradually developed, not as a uniform phenomenon, but rather as an amalgam of diverse constructs taking shape in a variety of historical places and social circumstances," 33. Also see Maren Niehoff, "A Jewish Critique of Christianity from Second-Century Alexandria: Revisiting the Jew mentioned in *Contra Celsum*," *JECS* 21.2 (2013): 152; Judith M. Lieu, *Christian Identity in the Jewish and Graeco-Roman World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

Many writers—both Christian and non-Christian—use similar arguments about prophecy and prophetic experiences and attempt to persuade their respective audiences to craft themselves vis-à-vis the divine. Even as he participates in this discursive struggle, Origen also takes pains to distinguish Christian prophetic practices from non-Christian prophetic practices. The nature of "true" Christian prophetic practice, as Origen sees it, is established over and against other types of prophecies, as they emerge from pagan divine practices or other Christian prophetic traditions.[4] By encouraging his Christian readers to participate in both bodily and intellectual practices, Origen argues that everyone needs to cultivate themselves to be worthy to receive spiritual gifts such as prophecy. In this way, Origen discusses prophecy and spiritual gifts in an ethical register, for moral formation is integral in this cultivation.

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[4] My perspective stems from scholarly discussions that examine prophecy in terms of power struggles among Christian groups or between the Christian and the non-pagan world. I am interested in the function of rhetoric in these debates. See, for example, the works of Antoinette Clark Wire, *The Corinthian Women Prophets: A Reconstruction through Paul's Rhetoric* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990); Christine Trevett, *Montanism: Gender, Authority and the New Prophecy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Karen King, "Prophetic Power and Women's Authority: The Case of the Gospel of Mary (Magdalene)," in *Women Preachers and Prophets through Two Millennia of Christianity,* ed. Beverly Kienzle and Pamela J. Walker (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 21-41; Laura Salah Nasrallah, *"An Ecstasy of Folly": Prophecy and Authority in Early Christianity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003); Giovanni Bazzana, *Autorità e successione: Figure profetiche nei testi del giudeo-cristianesimo antico* (Milano: Edizioni Biblioteca Franciscana, 2004).

For the rhetorical critical method that emphasizes power struggles, see Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Rhetoric and Ethic: The Politics of Biblical Studies* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), esp.105-10, 128; Schüssler Fiorenza, "Re-Visioning Christian Origins: In Memory of Her Revisited," in *Christian Origins: Worship, Belief, and Society,* ed. Kiernan J. O. Mahoney (New York: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003), 225-50.

Cultural Context

In the ancient Mediterranean world, discussions of prophecy were ubiquitous. As John Hanson and Laura Nasrallah discuss, phenomena such as prophecy,[5] divination, possession, and inspiration in antiquity are considered to be part of the same phenomenon, namely, as Nasrallah dubs them, "prophetic experience(s)."[6] I will employ this terminology of "prophetic experience(s)" because it allows me to bracket the question of the applicability of modern categories of prophecy to antiquity, for modern categories of prophecy map quite poorly to ancient articulations of the prophetic relationship between the divine and the human.

Drawing upon this scholarship, I examine the way in which Origen in particular made attempts to privilege certain practices intended to cultivate a particular prophetic self, while denying legitimacy to other practices. My research investigates crucial terms that undergird Origen's thoughts about prophecy, divination, possession, and inspiration.

Early Christian writers often attempt to persuade the audience of their own understanding of prophecy, frequently in relation to, or over against, divination.[7] The

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[5] The term prophecy (προφητεία, *prophetia*) has a particularly broad meaning in antiquity. In its simplest form, it means the verbal message given by the divine. See David Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World* (Grand Rapids, MI: William E. Eerdmans, 1983), 23-47; R. W. L. Moberly, *Prophecy and Discernment* (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 1-40.

[6] "Arguments about the phenomenon that encompasses divination, prophecy, dreams, visions, ecstasy—a phenomenon to which I shall refer using the term 'prophetic experience(s)'—are launched in contexts of struggle and debate" (Nasrallah, *An Ecstasy of Folly*, 9); John S. Hanson, "Dreams and Visions in the Graeco-Roman World and Early Christianity," in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt: Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neuren Forschung*, ed. H. Temporini and W. Haase (Berlin, New York: De Gruyter, 1972), 23.2:1395-1427.

[7] For an excellent survey on this theme, see "Prophecy and Divination," in J. Reiling, *Hermas and Christian Prophecy: A Study of the Eleventh Mandate* (Leiden: Brill, 1973), 58-96.

overlaps and relationships between prophecy and divination[8] are well documented and have received significant scholarly attention, for instance in Aune's particularly valuable analysis of prophecy and divination.[9] Especially in the late second and early third centuries CE, conversations about prophecy and divination happened across boundaries among important groups of intellectuals as well as on the "popular" level.

In addition, a revival of traditional religion under Hadrian rekindled a keen interest in divination, which resulted in reviving the ancient prophetic shrines and in establishing new oracles. Then, the Antonine revival led to a revitalization of illustrious oracles such as Delphi, Didyma, and Claros. In this religious-historical atmosphere, it was all the more crucial for Christian thinkers to consider how their ideas of prophecy fit with those of others, to investigate the connection between Christian prophecy and broader Christian identity,[10] and to articulate acceptable practices in order to construct an identity of Christianity amongst different and competing practices and religions.[11]

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[8] Sarah Iles Johnston and Peter T. Struck, eds., *Mantikē: Studies in Ancient Divination* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2005), esp. David Frankfurter, "Voices, Books, and Dreams: The Diversification of Divination Media in Late Antique Egypt," 233-54, and Sarah Iles Johnston, "Delphi and the Dead," 283-306; Sarah Iles Johnston, *Ancient Greek Divination* (Malden, MA; Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell Pub., 2008).

[9] Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity,* 23-47. See also Christopher Forbes, *Prophecy and Inspired Speech: In Early Christianity and its Hellenistic Environment* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1997), 279-302.

[10] Polymnia Athanassiadi, "Dreams, Theurgy and Freelance Divination: The Testimony of Iamblichus," *JRS* 83 (1993): 115; Athanassiadi, "The fate of oracles in late antiquity: Didyma and Delphi," *DChrAE* (1989-90): 271-8; Herbert William Parke, *The Oracles of Apollo in Asia Minor* (London: Croom Helm, 1985); S. Swain, "Plutarch, Hadrian and Delphi," *Historia* 40 (1991): 318-30; Johnston, *Ancient Greek Divination*; Heidi Marx-Wolf, *Spiritual Taxonomies and Ritual Authority: Platonists, Priests, and Gnostics in the Third Century C.E.* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016).

[11] "Christian identity gradually developed, not as a uniform phenomenon, but rather as an amalgam of diverse constructs taking shape in a variety of historical places and social

Just as it was a common practice that people in antiquity circumscribed boundaries among "prophetic experience(s)" and tried to figure out the relationships of these phenomena, so it was quite common that people discuss practices—both philosophical and bodily— that could lead to prophecy, and the importance of proper preparation for prophecy. These practices were prevalent in both Christian and non-Christian (be they Jewish or "pagan") groups,[12] and thus the audience in the ancient Mediterranean was familiar with the concept, whether they agreed with the practices or not.

While some scholars have noticed in the literature of antiquity a tendency to assume that certain practices are necessary before prophecy can occur, this has not been a major focus of the studies of prophecy.[13] Thus my dissertation contributes to the scholarship by examining the discussions of prophecy of one of the most important early Christian thinkers, Origen. Juxtaposing Origen's thought with two key comparanda, especially the *Shepherd of Hermas* and the work of Iamblichus, allows me to analyze

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circumstances" (Maren Niehoff, "A Jewish Critique of Christianity," 152). Also see Lieu, *Christian Identity*.

[12] For the provisional value of these groupings, see Kristi Upson-Saia, *Early Christian Dress: Gender, Virtue, and Authority* (New York: Routledge, 2011). "The terms 'pagan' and 'heathen'—employed by early Christians to designate non-Christian and non-Jewish Romans—have come under scrutiny in recent years. Michele Salzman and Maijastina Kahlos have shown, however, that alternative terms, such as 'polytheists' or 'adherents of Greco-Roman cults and religion' are equally problematic and imprecise" (Upson-Saia, *Early Christian Dress*, 109 n. 5). For a detailed discussion of this topic, also see M. R. Salzman, "Pagans and Christians," in the *Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies*, ed. Susan Ashbrook Harvey and David G. Hunter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 187-79.

[13] For example, Peter Brown, "Martyrdom, Prophecy and Continence: Hermas to Tertullian," in *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 65-82; Giovanni Bazzana," 'Il corpo della carne di Gesù Cristo,'" 122; Violet MacDermot, *The Cult of the Seer in the Ancient Middle East: A Contribution to Current Research on Hallucinations Drawn from Coptic and other Texts* (London: Wellcome Institute of the History of Medicine, 1971).

better alternative ways of thinking about antiquity. By analyzing these texts, this dissertation aims to fill the lacuna by attending to the broad and persistent strain of discourses about practices that lead to prophecy in the Greco-Roman world.

Regarding practices necessary for prophecy, one might think only of pilgrimage to an oracle or of awaiting divine insight in order to experience ecstasy or a prophetic moment in antiquity.[14] Yet the discussions of prophecy in various works describe people cultivating themselves in order to be able to prophesy. Preparation for prophecy involves the inculcation of both bodily and intellectual dispositions,[15] and training in virtue is vital in this preparation. Practices that lead to prophecy are inextricably linked to preparing one's soul in a proper way, for prophecy is considered to be an enterprise that takes place in the soul.[16]

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[14] Regarding these practices, see Johnston, *Ancient Greek Divination.*

[15] See Julia Annas, *Hellenistic Philosophy of Mind* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1992), esp. 103–120; Martha Nussbaum, *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994); Christopher Gill, "The Emotions in Greco-Roman Philosophy," in *The Passions in Roman Thought and Literature*, ed. Susanna Morton Braund and Christopher Gill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 5-16; Juha Sihvola and Troels Engberg-Pederson, eds., *The Emotions in Hellenistic Philosophy* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1998); Margaret Graver, *Cicero on the Emotions: Tusculan Disputations 3 & 4* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002); Christopher Gill, *The Structured Self in Hellenistic and Roman Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 207–324.

[16] In *Apophthegmata Patrum*, we find another illuminating instantiation on the *topos* of preparation coupled with receiving mystery from God. "A pagan priest came to the desert of Scetis and stayed overnight in the cell of one of the monks. Observing the austere way of life of the monks, he asked his host whether, by such a life, they did not receive revelations from their god. When the monk answered no, the priest was surprised and said, 'As long as we perform the sacred rites to our god, he [sic] conceals nothing from us but reveals his [sic] mysteries to us. And you, undergoing so many bodily penances, vigils, and ascetic exercises, say that you have no revelation?'" (William Harmless, *Desert Christianis: An Introduction to the Literature of Early Monasticism* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004], 178).

As we shall see in Chapter 1, one set of practices that leads to prophecy is connected to scripture: that is, reading, exegetical, and commentarial practices, which were thought to purify the soul. As Pierre Hadot puts it, "each commentary was considered a spiritual exercise […] because the reading of each philosophical text was supposed to produce a transformation in the person reading or listening to the commentary."[17] Cultivating a properly religious and moral self through philosophical exercises (ἀσκήσεις) is thus important, as we shall see in the following chapters. Chapter 2 discusses controlling the emotions, and Chapter 3 explores specific spiritual exercises—both physical and philosophical practices—such as practices of discernment, training in knowledge, and participation in abstinence).

The association between purity and prophecy is significant. Fasting is understood as a way to foster purity in one's life. For example, in *Exhortation to Chastity* 10:5, Tertullian discusses purity of life coupled with prophecy. "'For purification produces harmony,' she [the holy prophetess Prisca] says, 'and they see visions, and when they turn their faces downward, they also hear salutary voices, as clear as they are secret.'"[18] Indeed, Robin Lane Fox, in his *Pagans and Christians,* says: "In the pagan world, fasting was deliberately practiced at cults and oracles to elicit significant dreams and 'receive' the gods' inspiration."[19] For example, in Cicero's *De Divinatione*, while discussing natural divination, Quintus is concerned to "dispute the inference that a few false dreams

[17] Hadot, *What is Ancient Philosophy*? (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 155.

[18] See Peter Brown, "Prophecy and Continence," 65-82; Giovanni Bazzana, " 'Il corpo della carne di Gesù Cristo,'" 122.

[19] Robin Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians* (New York: Knopf, 1987), 396.

invalidate the entire enterprise" (1.29.60). This concern leads Quintus to argue that "untrustworthy dreams come to ill-prepared people, and those unskilled interpreters misconstrue the meaning of dreams and oracles" (1.29.60).[20] Cicero's argument drew on the long-held philosophical tradition from Plato as well as Pythagoras. He says, "then Pythagoras and Plato, who are most respectable authorities, bid us, if we would have trustworthy dreams, to *prepare* (*praeparatos)* for sleep by *following a prescribed course in conduct and in eating*" (1.30.62, emphasis added).[21] Although Cicero criticizes those who participate in these practices, these passages are a potent example of how the preparation for dreams, ecstasy, divination, and prophecy is a prevalent topic in the ancient Mediterranean. What Cicero discussed is still relevant in Iamblichus's works, as we shall see in Chapter 3, when Iamblichus discusses rituals of preparation for prophecy at shrines such as Delphi and Claros.

History of Scholarship on Prophecy

Scholars have produced multitudes of works discussing early Christian prophecy. In one avenue of scholarship, early Christian prophecy is examined in terms of form criticism, as in the works of Hermann Gunkel and David Aune.[22]

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[20] Marcus Tullius Cicero, *Cicero on Old Age, on Friedship, on Divination*, trans. W. A. Falconer, LCL 154 (Cambridge, MA; London, U.K.: Harvard University Press, 1923), 290-95.

[21] "Iam Pythagoras et Plato, locupletissimi auctores, quo in somnis certiora videamus, praeparatos quodam culta atque victu proficisci ad dormiendum iubent" (*De Divinatione*, II. lviii.119).

[22] Hermann Gunkel, *The Influence of the Holy Spirit: The Popular View of the Apostolic Age and the Teaching of the Apostle Paul*, trans. Roy A. Harrisville and Philip A. Quanbeck (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979); David Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity*.

Many of the scholarly discussions analyze prophecy in early Christianity in terms of "charismatic origins"[23] and subsequent degradation based on Max Weber's sociological theory, either implicitly or explicitly, including the discussions of Gunkel, Aune, James Dunn, Adolf von Harnack, H. von Campenhausen, and Cecil Robeck.[24]

Another strand of scholarly discussion examines prophecy in terms of power struggles among Christian groups or between the Christian and the so-called pagan world, and is interested in the function of rhetorical forms, such as the works of Christine Trevett, Antoinette Clark Wire, Laura Nasrallah, and Giovanni Bazzana.[25] My perspective stems from the insights of this second group of scholars. What still remains to be explored, and what will be my contribution, is the examination of prophecy in the context of cultivation of a proper self that is open to and worthy of God/the divine.[26]

This study also contributes to scholarship on prophecy in early Christianity by demonstrating ideological problems in one significant strand of scholarship. This scholarship assumes that human agency is theologically problematic. One cannot but

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[23] Nasrallah, *An Ecstasy of Folly*, 18.

[24] James Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit: A Study of the Religious and Charismatic Experience of Jesus and the First Christians as Reflected in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997); Adolf von Harnack, *The Mission and Expansion of Christianity*, trans. James Moffatt (Glouchester, MA: Peter Smith, 1972); H. von Campenhausen, *Fathers of the Greek Church* (London: A.&C. Black, 1963); Cecil M Robeck, *Prophecy in Carthage: Perpetua, Tertullian and Cyprian* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 1992).

[25] Antoinette Clark Wire, *The Corinthian Women Prophets;* Christine Trevett, *Montanism*; Nasrallah, *An Ecstasy of Folly*; Giovanni Bazzana, *Autorità e successione*.

[26] One of the crucial lines of scholars in prophecy and prophetic experiences take the optic of the anthropological studies. For example, Karen McCarthy Brown, *Mama Lola: a Vodou Priestess in Brooklyn* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001); Mary Keller, *The Hammer and the Flute: Women, Power, and Spirit Possession* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002); Giovanni Bazzana's *Jesus and Beelzebul: Early Christian Possession and Exorcism in an Anthropological Perspective* (in preparation).

notice that theological convictions lurk behind the work of contemporary biblical scholars, that is, "an Augustinian or Protestant anxiety lest human agency be thought to diminish the all-sufficiency and sovereignty of the divine agent."[27] This mainly Protestant penchant is surely at work in the case of translating various phrases/verbs regarding prophetic activity. The translation of ζηλόω in 1 Corinthians 14:1 (14:39 as well as 12:31) is a case in point that reflects the scholarly tendency that I problematize.

1 Cor 12:31	"But *strive for* the greater gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way." (NRSV) ζηλοῦτε δὲ τὰ χαρίσματα τὰ μείζονα. Καὶ ἔτι καθ' ὑπερβολὴν ὁδὸν ὑμῖν δείκνυμι.
1 Cor 14:1	"Pursue love and *strive for* the spiritual gifts, and especially that you may prophesy." (NRSV) Διώκετε τὴν ἀγάπην, ζηλοῦτε δὲ τὰ πνευματικά, μᾶλλον δὲ ἵνα προφητεύητε.
1 Cor 14:39	"So, my friends, *be eager to* prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues." (NRSV) ὥστε, ἀδελφοί μου, ζηλοῦτε τὸ προφητεύειν, καὶ τὸ λαλεῖν μὴ κωλύετε γλώσσαις·

Most contemporary scholars have translated ζηλόω "to strive to obtain."[28] However, many scholars have resisted this translation because this implies human effort.[29] To borrow J. Reiling's terms, this translation "undoubtedly denote[s] a human activity."

[27] John Barclay, "Introduction," in *Divine and Human Agency in Paul and his Cultural Environment,* ed. John M. G. Barclay and Simon J. Gathercole (London; New York: T&T Clark, 2006), 3.

[28] For the discussion of this translation, see Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text,* NIGTC (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000), 1082-87.

[29] For example, Johannes Louw, "The Function of Discourse in a Sociosemiotic Theology of Translation Illustrated by the Translation of zeloute in 1 Corinthians," *Bible Translator* 39.3 (1988): 329-35.

Reiling asks, “But how can human activity go together with a gift from God?"[30] To give another example, Anthony Thiselton, in his commentary on 1 Corinthians, maintains, “to read [ζηλόω] *strive for* can be pastorally misleading and theologically doubtful.”[31] In a similar fashion, Pheme Perkins, in her recent commentary on 1 Corinthians, does not consider it tenable to understand ζηλοῦτε in 1 Cor 14:1 as imperative (“strive for”).[32]

According to many translators and interpreters of 1 Corinthians 14, if human efforts are emphasized in prophecy, the prophecy cannot be true, or belongs to another category, such as mysticism.[33] Such arguments are not limited to Paul and 1 Corinthians. For example, Lindblom argues that Origen's concept of a prophet is of a mystic.[34] By allocating Origen’s prophetic practices to the realm of mysticism, Lindblom ignores the rhetorical nature of texts on prophecy, and creates a simplified dichotomy between unpredictable phenomena and complete human effort in relation to prophecy. In this way,

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[30] J. Reiling, *Hermas and Christian Prophecy: A Study of the Eleventh Mandate* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 147.

[31] Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 1083.

[32] Pheme Perkins, *First Corinthians,* Paideia: Commentaries on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012), 150.

[33] Similarly, Robert Hauck argues, “Origen’s views on prophecy have usually been treated in relation to his exegesis or his mysticism.” Robert J. Hauck, *The More Divine Proof: Prophecy and Inspiration in Celsus and Origen* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1989), 106.

[34] J. Lindblom asserts, "...religious training plays no part in the religious life of the prophets. Mysticism is in large measure a religion of effort." J. Lindblom, *Prophecy in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962), 309. According to G.von Rad, the prophets got their revelations "suddenly and completely unpredictably." G. von Rad, *Theologie des Alten Testaments* (München: Kaiser, 1960), 72. On discussions of Origen and his mysticism, see, among others, Andrew Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition from Plato to Denys* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1981). Louth argues: “This ultimate theoria comes: we can be ready for it, we can prepare for it, we cannot, however, elicit, for it is theoria of that which is beyond knowledge, beyond the reach of the power of our understanding” (*The Origins of Christian Mystical Tradition,* 14).

modern scholars wrongly limit the definition of prophecy and eliminate some key texts regarding prophecy.[35] While not negating the scholarship on Origen and mysticism, I want to challenge the scholarly prejudice behind the view that Origen only discusses mysticism, not prophecy.

History of Scholarship on Origen

Scholarship about Origen had long been split, with some arguing that Origen was an intellectual (though not quite a thoroughly systematic thinker[36]) and others that Origen was a mystic.[37] Harl Koch thoroughly examines Origen's ideas in terms of παιδεία (teaching and education), and *pronoia* (providence). Koch, however, does not pay much attention to the issues of spiritual warfare, prophecy and inspiration, and demonology, which are reflected in Origen's works. M. Harl develops Koch's thesis. In constrast, Henri Crouzel focuses on the mystical nature of Origen's ideas. His thesis is popular and

[35] Scholars have also followed early Christian polemics and have argued that at some point in antiquity, prophecy ceased. But this, too, is an ideologically driven argument and draws on the "periodization of prophecy" which Nasrallah discussed in her *Ecstasy of Folly*. As Nasrallah points out, in the discussions on prophecy, "the periodization of prophecy" serves as an important means of constructing identity, negotiation and renegotiation boundaries, and claiming authority. Many early Christian authors read the prophetic texts in the Hebrew Bible from the perspective of the "Christ-event." For instance, instead of reading Isaiah in its own historical context, early Christian authors interpreted the messages of Isaiah as pointing towards Jesus's coming. Origen (*Contra Celsum* 2:8) and Cyprian (*Treatise* 12:1.3), for instance, read many passages in Isaiah were understood be prophecies of Jewish unbelief in Jesus. Thus, the nature of prophet and prophecy were ultimately transformed and differed from those of the Hebrew Bible. The role of the prophet and prophecy no longer pointed to a future event. For a good discussion on the theme of the cessation of prophecy, see Niels C. Hvidt, "Prophecy's Alleged Cessation in Early Christianity," in *Christian Prophecy: The Post-Biblical Tradition* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 73-81.

[36] J. W. Trigg, "Was Origen Systematic? A Reappraisal," *StPatr* 41; 260; Ulrich Berner, *Origenes* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1981).

[37] For a helpful enumeration of past Origenist scholarship, see Peter Martens, *Origen and Scripture: The Contours of the Exegetical Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 3-4.

influential in scholarship on Origen. Instead of subscribing to one side of the dichotomy, however, in my analysis of Origen's works, I draw on insights from both of these arguments that are represented by Koch, Harl, and Crouzel.

Some recent scholarship focuses on Origen as a biblical exegete and scholar. Peter Martens explores in greater detail Origen's works in terms of scriptural practice, examining the way in which Origen in his exegetical works aligns "moral progress" with "exegesis" and "spiritual gifts." Martens forcefully notes that those who are "worthy" and "pure" (and hence moral) could become good exegetes of scripture. Martens' discussion concerns the enterprise of Origen's scriptural exegesis. However, his observation also applies to other aspects of Origen's thoughts, especially to his understanding of spiritual gifts and prophecy. Thus, those who are "worthy," namely, "those who have made some moral progress on the itinerary of the Christian faith"— as Martens put it— could receive spiritual gifts.[38]

Other scholarship focuses on Origen's grand theological narrative, namely, the centrality of pedagogical structure in Origen's thought.[39] Torjesen specifically examines the way how the idea of progressive training of individual readers frames the general

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[38] Martens, *Origen and Scripture*, 161.

[39] Karen Jo Torjesen, *Hermeneutical Procedure and Theological Structure in Origen's Exegesis* (Berlin; New York: De Gruyter, 1986), esp. 70-107; Peter Martens, *Origen and Scripture*; Catherine Chin, "Who is the Ascetic Exegete? Angels, Enchantments, and Transformative Food in Origen's *Homilies on Joshua*," in *Asceticism and Exegesis in Early Christianity: The Reception of New Testament Texts in Ancient Ascetic Discourses* (Göttingen, Germany: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013), 203-18; Mark S.M. Scott, *Journey Back to God: Origen on the Problem of Evil* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University, 2012).

Winfried Gruber argues that Origen's exegesis is conducted with a pedagogical structure, "which posits many layers of meaning in the scriptures that correspond to individual levels of understanding of the audience." Winfried Gruber, *Die Pneumatische Exegese bei den Alexandrinern: Ein Beitrag zur Noematik der Heilgen Schrift* (Graz: Akademische Druck- U. Verlagsanstalt, 1057), 5, 77. As cited in S. Hong "Origen's Rhetoric as a Means to the Formation of the Christian Self" (Ph.D. diss., Claremont Graduate University, 2004), 12.

structure of Origen's exegesis of the Song of Songs, Numbers, Jeremiah, and the Gospels.[40] In my dissertation, I join these scholars who have moved beyond the limited approach to Origen as either an intellectual or a mystic, working toward the demonstration of prophecy for Origen as a matter of training the whole self. In doing so, my dissertation contributes to this larger discussion by exploring prophecy and cultivation in Origen, which is squarely overlooked in Origen scholarship, especially in the Anglophone world.[41]

Theoretical Foundations:

Contestation, Persuasion, and Cultivation[42]

Origen (as well as other thinkers in Greco-Roman culture) engages the *contested* terms of prophetic activity in order to *persuade* his audience(s) toward the *cultivation* of a certain kind of self. These three points—contestation, persuasion, and cultivation—are

[40] Judith Kovacs convincingly suggests that Torjesen's scholarly observation is equally applicable to the Pauline corpus. Judith L. Kovacs, "Servant of Christ and Steward of the Mysteries of god: the Purpose of a Pauline Letter according to Origen's *Homilies on 1 Corinthians*," in *In Dominico Eloquio=In Lordly Eloquence*, ed. Paul M. Blowers et al. (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002), 169.

[41] It is a telling example that *The Westminster Handbook to Origen* does not have any entry devoted to prophecy, among its 79 entries. John Anthony McGuckin, ed., *The Westminster Handbook to Origen* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004). Italian scholarship has produced an important study of Origen and prophecy, see Giovanni Filoramo, "Profezia," in *Origene. Dizionario: La cultura, il pensiero, le opera,* ed. A. Monaci Castagno (Roma: Città nuova, 2000), 376-79; Filoramo, "Lo Statuto della profezia in Origene," in *Veggenti, Profeti, Gnostici: Identità e conflitti nel cristianesimo Antico* (Morcelliana, 2005), 205-18; Filoramo, "Vero e false profeta in Origene," in *Veggenti, Profeti, Gnostici*, 219-39. However, what is still missing is the analysis of Origen's prophecy in terms of the cultivation of a proper self, which is the topic of this dissertation.

[42] For the useful schema of contestation and cultivation with different subject matter, that is, angels, see Ellen Muehlenberger, *Angels in Late Ancient Christianity* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

central to my dissertation. These main areas of focus of this dissertation, however, operate on different levels. Contestation and persuasion have been amply discussed in the scholarly landscape in the fields of New Testament and early Christianity in general, and in the field of prophecy in particular. The idea of cultivation in the context of prophecy, in contrast, is my contribution to the scholarly discussion about prophecy in early Christianity, as many scholars have ignored how early Christian sources discuss the formation of a self who is able to prophecy.

Contestation and Persuasion

This dissertation draws on feminist scholarship which influenced my research at three levels: historiography, rhetoric, and the discussions of gender and prophecy. First, my research is influenced by feminist historiography that emphasizes that ancient literature should be read not as descriptive but as prescriptive—as engaged in struggling over and contesting practices and ideas. Enacting a feminist historiography, I focus on the way in which the authors authorize, valorize, or erase particular practices in their texts.[43] Second, in doing so, my primary methodology for analyzing these texts consists of a rhetorical-critical method. The rhetorical-critical method recognizes ancient texts as engaged in persuasive linguistic practices with a particular rhetorical-historical

[43] See, *inter alia*, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (London: SCM, 1995); Elizabeth A. Clark, "The Lady Vanishes: Dilemmas of a Feminist Historian after the 'Linguistic Turn,'" *CH* 67 (1998): 1–31; Anne Jensen, *God's Self-Confident Daughters: Early Christianity and the Liberation of Women,* trans. O.C. Dean, Jr. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996); Ross Shepherd Kraemer, *Her Share of the Blessings: Women's Religions among Pagans, Jews, and Christians in the Greco-Roman World* (New York: Oxford, 1992); Mary Rose D'Angelo and Ross Shepherd Kraemer, eds., *Women and Christian Origins* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

situation.[44] By rhetoric, I refer to two things. Firstly, I pay attention to the ancient techniques of rhetoric, which are well attested in antiquity.[45] Second, I also refer to more recent definitions and studies of rhetoric that emphasize power and persuasion. I draw on theories of rhetoric as discussed by Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, and thus I analyze historical texts as rhetorical, that is, I ask how and to what ends the text persuades. Analyzed in this light, texts both make claims about who can and has acted effectively in the world, and attempt to produce conditions for practice, enabling certain people to act effectively and preventing others from doing so. The practices discussed in the texts are prescribed in order to persuade the readers and hearers to cultivate a certain type of self.

I also examine the way in which Origen in particular denigrates his rhetorical opponents who uphold different ideas on prophecy. In this way, instead of attempting to pin down "Montanists" or "Gnostics" as Origen's main rhetorical opponents, as many scholars of Origen have done, I rather argue that there is no single rhetorical opponent against whom Origen writes in his works. Origen engages multiple opponents in order to construct Christian identity.

Origen takes pains to distinguish Christian prophetic practices from non-Christian prophetic practices. Under the rubric of non-Christian prophetic practices, Origen in effect includes *all* the prophetic practices that he deems problematic, be they enacted by

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[44] Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Rhetoric and Ethic,* esp. 105-10; 128; Schüssler Fiorenza "Re-Visioning Christian Origins," 225-50.

[45] For example, George A. Kennedy, *Classical Rhetorics and Its Christian and Secular Tradition from Ancient to Modern Times* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980) ; Margaret M. Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation: An Exegetical Investigation of the Language and Composition of 1 Corinthians* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1991).

non-Christian prophets and mantic prophetic practices, or intra-Christian dissenters.[46] Origen thus polemicizes not only against "pagan" prophets, but also against Christian ones that he deems to be problematic.[47]

Third, with the insights of feminist scholarship, I also challenge some modern scholarship on gender and prophecy. Some scholars posit the main imagery of interaction between human beings and the divine in prophecy as a kind of "divine rape."[48] The theme of "prophecy as penetration" is commonly expressed in many literary works in antiquity.[49] This popular theme is used in sexual invectives and polemics in order to discredit the opponents, as we shall see in Chapter 2. Modern scholars often have uncritically duplicated the ancient rhetoric. For example, Gail Corrington argues that the theme of divine rape, which also shows in the case of Pythia at Delphi, is also exhibited in Montanist women prophets. She uncritically confuses a rhetorical *topos* with the reality, neglecting that gender politics are used as a polemic. As we shall see in detail in

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[46] This last point concerning Christians who are not yet "mature," Origen discusses in greater detail in his fragmentary *Homilies on 1 Corinthians*, which is a major source in my chapter on Origen and his exegesis on 1 Corinthians 11-14.

[47] See Jennifer Wright Knust, *Abandoned to Lust: Sexual Slander and Ancient Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006).

[48] Gail Paterson Corrington, "The 'Divine woman?' Propaganda and the Power of Celibacy in the New Testament Apocrypha: A Reconsidering," in *Women in Early Christianity*, ed. D. Scholer (New York: Garland, 1993), 169-182: see especially 171-2.

[49] For example, Aeschylus's *Agamemnon* portrays Apollo as seducing Cassandra when she prophesies. The god's desire for her makes her prophecy possible.

> Cassandra: It was the seer Apollo who appointed me to this office.
> Chorus: Can it be that he, a god, was smitten with desire?
> Cassandra: Oh, but he struggled to win me, breathing ardent love for me.
> Chorus: Came ye in due course to wedlock's rite. (*Agamemnon* 1202-1207)
> Cited in Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 239.

Chapter 2, for example, Origen associates the female with the passive, and polemically argues that the Pythian prophetesses are penetrated by demonic spirits.

Discussions of gender are often intertwined with the discussion with prophecy. In analyzing the gender imagery in Greek tragedies in the classical Greek period, Ruth Padel claims, "The mind—like a woman in society, like female sexuality in relation to male—is acted upon, invaded, a victim of the outside world (especially of divinity)."[50] Although Padel's subject matter is in the classical Greek period, her analysis is pertinent for Greco-Roman culture as well. For example, Tertullian in his *Prescription against Heretics* attempts to disclaim the prophetess Philumene, using the trope of lack of control. He portrays Philumene as one "who permits thoughts and beliefs to penetrate her mind without being scrupulously just as she allows her body to be penetrated by men."[51] Anne Jensen argues that the manuscript traditions of the prophetess depict her as a woman who is passive and unable to resist the approaches of evil spirits.[52]

In this way, early Christian debates over prophecy are usually rhetorically constructed such that the prophet should be passive (and thus feminized)[53] before the

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[50] Ruth Padel, *In and out of the Mind: Greek Images of the Tragic Self* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 111.

[51] Tertullian, *Prescription againt Heretics,* 6. 25.30. Philumene is also mentioned in Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 5.13. For a discussion of Philumene, see Brad Windon, "The Seduction of Weak Men: Tertullian's Rhetorical Construction of Gender and Ancient Christian 'Heresy,'" in *Mapping Gender in Ancient Religious Discourses,* ed. Todd Penner and Caroline Vander Stichele (Leiden; Boston, MA: Brill, 2006), 457-78.

[52] Anne Jensen argues that the early recensions of the manuscript traditions depict Philumene particularly as a woman with a stereotype of passive one, whereas the later recensions have slightly different portrayal of her. Anne Jensen, *God's Self-Confident Daughters: Early Christianity and the Liberation of Women,* tran. O.C. Dean, Jr. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 304.

[53] Regarding passiveness versus activeness as one way of thinking about gender and sexuality, see Giulia Sissa, *Sex and Sensuality in the Ancient Word* (New Haven, CT; London:

divine. I complicate the contemporary scholarly discussions on early Christian prophecy that imitate ancient rhetoric and assume that prophets are passive.

Cultivation

Throughout this dissertation, I argue that the writers of these ancient texts on prophecy often exhort their audience to attain a certain ethical standard and to cultivate a particular self. In developing this new focus on cultivation in studying prophecy, I draw on Pierre Hadot to develop a framework to study how literature on prophecy functions to train the reader or hearer toward particular dispositions that are worthy for prophecy. I use Hadot in order to understand not merely how a Christian individual is formed, but even more how ideal Christian communities are inscribed, for I am interested in the formation of the self in the context of social locations of the readers and hearers of the texts that I examine.[54]

Hadot delineates "spiritual exercises"[55] as endemic in the cultural and religious context of many early Christian writers, including Origen. In Greco-Roman culture, Hadot accentuates, it was critical to cultivate a philosophical self. Just as to cultivate a proper disposition in philosophical and theological terms is important, so is it to cultivate

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Yale University Press, 2008); Marilyn B. Skinner, *Sexuality in Greek and Roman Culture* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005); Thomas Walter Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990); Bernadette Brooten, *Love Between Women: Early Christian Responses to Female Homoeroticism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

[54] Particularly with this idea, the question lies on the potential possibilities of women scribes at the time, and women pupils in Origen's schools. These women scribes and pupils are potentially encouraged to have a disposition to be worthy of the divine to dwell on.

[55] Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault* (Oxford, New York: Blackwell, 1985).

a proper disposition in one's heart and body.[56] Examining a shift in education,[57] Hadot argues that the reading and exegesis of texts took a central place in the curriculum of philosophical classes, and the students were encouraged to write and transmit commentaries on classical texts such as Plato's works. The teachers not only taught their pupils, but also assumed "the role of genuine directors of conscience who cared for their students' spiritual problems."[58] Hadot examines the way in which the emphasis on education in the time—reading, exegetical and commentarial practices focused on the texts— are practices for the soul's intense purification. As he puts it, "each commentary was considered a spiritual exercise […] because the reading of each philosophical text was supposed to produce a transformation in the person reading or listening to the commentary."[59]

Recent studies in various fields have employed Hadot's "spiritual exercises" as a useful tool of explaining disciplines and training.[60] For instance, some scholars have explored how the self is disciplined in stories of martyrdom. Nicole Kelley in particular provides an innovative way of studying early Christian martyr acts, suggesting that we

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[56] See Hadot, "Spiritual Exercises," in *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, 81-125.

[57] Hadot, "Philosophical Schools in Imperial Period," in *What is Ancient Philosophy*? (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 146-71.

[58] Hadot, *What is Ancient Philosophy*?, 156.

[59] Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, 83, 155.

[60] Elizabeth A. Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory: Early Christian Culture Making* (New York: Colombia University Press, 2004), 86; Nicole Kelley, "Philosophy as Training for Death: Reading the Ancient Christian Martyr Acts as Spiritual Exercises," *CH* 75:4 (2006): 723-47; Karen King, "Martyrdom and its Discontents in the Tchacos Codex" in *Proceedings of the International Congress on the Tchacos Codex Held at Rice University, Houston Texas, March 13-16, 2008* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2010); Mikael Haxby, "The First Apocalypse of James: Martyrdom and Sexual Difference" (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 2013).

read them as "instrument(s) of discipline," by which ancients audience are exhorted to train themselves as potential martyrs.[61] She cogently argues that, regardless of whether such Christians really became martyrs or not, they were encouraged to adopt a particular lifestyle to prepare themselves to become martyrs. Drawing on Hadot's scholarship as well as Kelley's insights, I contend that discourses on prophecy in early Christianity call for training in a particular way of living, and thus could be influential to early Christians regardless of whether they would ever attain the status of prophet or not.

Chapter Organization

The argument of the three chapters develops in the following manner. Chapter 1, "Prophecy and Scriptural Practice: 'Be Worthy to Receive Charismata,'" focuses on Origen's *Commentary on Romans* 9:1-3, exploring the way in which Origen provides a compelling glimpse of prophecy as a relationship between the divine and the human insofar as human beings can desire and attain prophecy. In the commentary, by weaving 1 Corinthians 14:1 into his exegesis of Romans 12:6-8, Origen aims at reinforcing his over-arching premise that the gifts of God are located in a complex synthesis in divine-human relationship and his more specific premise that prophecy is necessitated by the relationship between God and humanity. In the absence of a *Commentary on 1 Corinthians*, and given that his *Homilies on 1 Corinthians* now only exists in fragments, Origen's *Commentary on Romans* gives us a crucial lens to

[61] The works of both Kelley and Haxby help me to develop my research on cultivation in terms of prophecy in early Christianity. "The study of 'preparation for martyrdom' thus focuses on how texts shaped by martyrdom discourse could produce such a new practice economy." Haxby, "The First Apocalypse of James,"13.

understand his analysis of 1 Corinthians 11-14, one of the most substantial discussions of prophecy in the New Testament.[62]

This chapter explores the way in which Origen emphasizes participation in prophecy and spiritual gifts, and seeks to persuade his (Christian) readers to cultivate a life worthy to receive the spiritual gifts, especially prophecy. According to Origen, the worthy life is based on cultivating virtues such as self-control. Origen suggests an implicit way to cultivate virtue: by reading and exegeting scripture. I read Origen as a biblical exegete *par excellence*. It is essential to start by exploring Origen's scriptural practice, which runs throughout his corpus. In the following two chapters, deploying the rhetorical-critical methodology, I will examine the ways in which Origen, the author of the *Shepherd of Hermas*, and Iamblichus deploy similar discussions and use similar rhetorical strategies but with different targeted audiences.

Chapter 2, "A True Prophet as a Mouthpiece of the Spirit?: Cultivating Virtue and Control," continues to demonstrate how Origen engages the contested terms of prophetic activity in order to persuade his audience(s) toward the cultivation of a certain kind of self, and to examine the way in which Origen discusses prophecy, a particular spiritual gift, regarding cultivating a particular self that is worthy of the Holy Spirit. In order to better understand the way in which Origen's texts exhort readers to cultivate themselves to be a proper self vis-à-vis the Holy Spirit, this chapter will bring in the *Shepherd of*

[62] I draw on Karen Jo Torjesen's argument that "Origen uses the term 'perfect soul' for those who are ready to understand the mysteries; 'perfect' does not mean that the soul has reached the highest level of its development, but rather that it has freed itself from vice and established itself in virtue such that it is now able *to receive the mysteries*" (emphasis mine). Karen Jo Torjesen, *Hermeneutical Procedure and Theological Method in Origen's Exegesis* (Berlin; New York: Walter De Gruyter, 1986), 60, n. 36.

Hermas (especially Mandate 11)[63] as a major conversation partner with Origen's substantial discussions on prophecy in *Contra Celsum Book* 7[64] and *Homilies on Numbers* 14-17 ("The Book of Balaam").

When we put Origen's work alongside the *Shepherd of Hermas*, the three foci that operate in this project—contestation, persuasion, and cultivation— are clearly shown. These discussions of prophecy are ultimately connected to the theme of personhood and self, and the discussions of prophecy oftentimes interweave with the question of who is a good person. Since the texts that we examine exhort the readers and audience to participate in a disciplined training for a particular self in which the divine may dwell, the question of what is a good human intersects with the discussion of who is a true prophet. Origen's works and the *Shepherd of Hermas* show how prophecy and prophet are contested categories insofar as these texts express different ideas regarding what constitutes true prophecy and a true prophet. Yet in modeling their own views of a true prophet and true prophecy, the texts agree on the centrality of cultivation in becoming a true prophet. Works such as Origen's and the *Shepherd of Hermas* are not manuals to be a prophet, but rather serve to educate and thus influence the (Christian) audience in a particular way.

Having compared Origen's works with the *Shepherd of Hermas*, which is a potent instantiation of Christian counterpart that holds a seemingly different idea on true

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[63] Bart D. Ehrman, ed. and trans., *The Shepherd of Hermas*, The Apostolic Fathers (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 161-473. English translation follows but sometimes modifies Ehrman.

[64] Origen, *Contra Celsum*, trans. Henry Chadwick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953); Origen, *Contre Celse*, ed. Marcel Borret, 5 vols., Sources chrétiennes 132, 136, 147, 150, 227 (Paris: Cerf, 1967-76). English translation follows but sometimes modifies Chadwick.

prophecy as a lack of control, and yet that has similar rhetorical strategies, in Chapter 3 "'Earn the Grace of Prophecy': Prophecy, Training, Preparation," we will examine the ways in which Origen and Iamblichus deploy similar discussions and use similar rhetorical strategies but with a different targeted audience. Sharing Middle-Platonic philosophical perspectives, both texts engage contested notions of prophetic activity and extensively discuss the practices that lead to prophecy. In this chapter, I read Origen's *De Principiis 3.3.3* along with Iamblichus's *De Mysteriis 3*, and thus examine how Origen's work is in conversation with Middle Platonic traditions about opening oneself to the divine. This chapter underlines how early Christian discourses on prophecy are situated in Greek culture, where cultivating a properly religious self is an important discipline.

Origen prescribes a *program* that is geared towards *preparation* for prophecy, which may lead to "earning the grace of prophecy."[65] I discuss preparation for prophecy in terms of Christian exercises (ἀσκήσεις). The practitioner is instructed to purge himself/herself of all traces of impurity by elaborate rituals of seclusion, fasting, ablution, etc. Origen explicates prophetic practices in terms of his comprehensive understanding of God's pedagogy, that is, the divine plan for training and teaching every human according to the image of God. Through the discussions in this chapter, we will be able to see that the accounts of prophecy and the exhortation to cultivate oneself to be a worthy instrument for the divine were privileged loci for the discursive philosophical and theological discussions in both Christian and non-Christian texts.

[65] *De Principiis* 3.3.3. Origen says, that one "devotes oneself wholeheartedly to God and denounces the daemons."

Chapter 1

Prophecy and Scriptural Practice: "Be Worthy to Receive *Charismata*"

> But in these things the question is asked whether in us or from us *a certain kind of prophecy can exist that is not entirely from God but derives even in small measure from human efforts.* This will be viewed as totally impossible to other people, but with Paul it is clearly approved when he says, "*Strive for the spiritual gifts, but most of all that you should prophesy.*"
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> – Origen, *Comm.Rom.* 9.3.8[1]

> For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. For as one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.
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> – Apostle Paul, Letter to the Romans 12:3-8[2]

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[1] Sed in his quaeritur si potest esse aliqua in nobis uel ex nobis profetiae species quae non totum habeat ex Deo sed aliquantulum eitam ex humanis studiis capiat. Hoc quidem apud ceteros ualde impossibile uidebitur, apud Paulum tamen euidenter probatur dicentem: 'aemulamini autem dona maiora magis autem ut profeteis.'

The critical edition of Origen's *Comm.Rom.* is from Caroline P. Hammond Bammel et al., eds., *Der Römerbriefkommentar des Origenes: Kritische Ausgabe der Übersetzung Rufins Buchs 1-10* (Freiburg: Herder, 1990-1998). References cite the book and chapter number in PG, which Thomas Scheck followed in his English translation. Origen, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, Books 1-5*, trans. Thomas Scheck, The Fathers of the Church 103 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America, 2001); Origen, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, Books 6-10*, trans. Thomas Scheck, The Fathers of the Church 104 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America, 2002). English translation follows Scheck unless otherwise noted.

Origen composed his *Comm.Rom.* in Caesarea around 243. See Bammel, ed., *Der Römerbriefkommentar des Origenes* (1985), 300-01.

[2] **3** Λέγω γὰρ διὰ τῆς χάριτος τῆς δοθείσης μοι παντὶ τῷ ὄντι ἐν ὑμῖν μὴ ὑπερφρονεῖν παρ' ὃ δεῖ φρονεῖν, ἀλλὰ φρονεῖν εἰς τὸ σωφρονεῖν, ἑκάστῳ ὡς ὁ θεὸς ἐμέρισεν μέτρον πίστεως. **4** καθάπερ γὰρ ἐν ἑνὶ σώματι πολλὰ μέλη ἔχομεν, τὰ δὲ μέλη πάντα οὐ τὴν αὐτὴν ἔχει πρᾶξιν, **5** οὕτως οἱ πολλοὶ ἓν σῶμά ἐσμεν ἐν Χριστῷ, τὸ δὲ καθ' εἷς ἀλλήλων μέλη. **6** ἔχοντες δὲ χαρίσματα κατὰ τὴν χάριν τὴν δοθεῖσαν ἡμῖν διάφορα, εἴτε προφητείαν κατὰ τὴν ἀναλογίαν τῆς

In Book 9 of his *Commentary on Romans* (*Comm.Rom.* hereafter), Origen provides a potent glimpse of prophecy as a relationship between the divine and the human. He argues that human beings can desire and attain prophecy. By weaving 1 Corinthians 14:1 into his interpretation of Romans 12:6-8, Origen aims at reinforcing his over-arching premise that the gifts of God (χαρίσματα) are located in a complex synthesis of divine-human relationships and, specifically, that prophecy is inextricably connected to the relationship between God and humanity.

It is appropriate to start our discussions of Origen's ideas about prophecy with his biblical interpretation, for Origen is *par excellence* a biblical scholar.[3] Thus, to fathom the ways in which Origen strategically deploys prophecy, we will start our investigation with Origen's biblical interpretation in commentaries.[4] This chapter focuses on his

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πίστεως, **7** εἴτε διακονίαν ἐν τῇ διακονίᾳ, εἴτε ὁ διδάσκων ἐν τῇ διδασκαλίᾳ, **8** εἴτε ὁ παρακαλῶν ἐν τῇ παρακλήσει, ὁ μεταδιδοὺς ἐν ἁπλότητι, ὁ προϊστάμενος ἐν σπουδῇ, ὁ ἐλεῶν ἐν ἱλαρότητι. All biblical quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) unless otherwise noted.

[3] Henry de Lubac claims and Henry Crouzel later affirmed. Thus Origen's commentaries and homilies are important materials for tracing his concept of prophecy and prophets. Henri de Lubac, *History and Spirit: The Understanding of Scripture According to Origen*, trans. A.E. Nash (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1976); Henri Crouzel, *Origène et la "connaissance mystique"* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1961); Crouzel, *Origen: The Life and Thought of the First Great Theologian*, trans. A.S.Worrall (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989).

[4] Joseph W. Trigg, in his *Origen: The Bible and Philosophy in the Third Century Church,* contends that "Origen's practice of commentary took a variety of forms of expression: exegetical notes (*scholia*) and commentaries *per se*, the *Hexapla*, tractates, sermons. Origen's sermons were delivered in prompt (extemporaneously); stenographers took notes of these oral performances, which then were edited in the form of the written homilies that remain to us. Thus the homilies had a double rhetorical life as oral presentations (to potentially widely diverse audiences) and study documents." Joseph W. Trigg*, Origen: The Bible and Philosophy in the Third Century Church* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1983), 176-77.

Comm.Rom. 9.1-9.3, where Origen discusses Romans 12:3-8, in order to explore Origen's notion of prophecy as a joint enterprise between God and human beings.

The topics that this chapter explores are threefold. First, I examine the theme of free will and divine grace in Origen's understanding of prophecy. I do so in order to demonstrate how this theme interacts with Origen's interpretation of Romans 9.1-9.3, particularly with his focus on prophecy among spiritual gifts and his emphasis on both divine and human participation.[5] Put differently, Origen understands that prophecy, as well as other spiritual gifts (χαρίσματα), is a cooperation between the divine and the human. Second, this chapter explores the way in which Origen's discussions in *Comm.Rom.* 9:1-3 aims to persuade his audience to cultivate the sort of self that is worthy of receiving spiritual gifts. That is, Origen emphasizes a moral component in the reception of the charism of prophecy. In discussing the theme of spiritual gifts, Origen ultimately taps into broader ancient conversations about human and divine agency.[6] Third, this chapter also explores how Origen understands prophecy and other gifts from God. I argue that Origen emphasizes not only the cultivation of the self and the self's relation to God, but also the communal aspect of prophecy. He shifts Paul's exhortation

[5] For this double emphasis, see Gunnar Af. Hällström, *Charismatic Succession: A Study of Origen's Consept [sic] of Prophecy* (Helsinki: Toimittanut Anne-Marit Enroth, 1985). While Hällström's notion of double emphasis in prophecy—human efforts and divine grace—is useful for my work, I do not agree with his arguments that there is a neat development from prophecy to teaching. It is much more nuanced.

[6] The scholarship on divine agency and human participation in antiquity is vast. For example, Troels Engberg-Pedersen, in his "Self-Sufficient and Power: Divine and Human Agency in Epictetus and Paul," in *Divine and Human Agency in Paul and His Cultural Environment,* ed. John M. G. Barclay and Simon J. Gathercole (London; New York: T&T Clark, 2006), 116-39; Engberg-Pedersen, *Cosmology and Self in the Apostle Paul: The Material Spirit* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

to "strive for spiritual gifts, and especially that you may prophesy" (1 Cor 14:1) into a more general call to cultivate virtue through scriptural study.

I begin this chapter by briefly exploring commentarial practices in Greco-Roman culture and especially in Alexandria, the city that birthed Origen's thoughts, in order to place Origen's interpretive methods into context. A careful analysis of the source (*Comm.Rom.* 9.1-9.3) follows. I explore the way in which Origen frames the topic of prophecy as well as other spiritual gifts. By carefully analyzing several section in *Comm.Rom.* 9.1-9.3, I then trace how Origen explores the human-divine relationships in spiritual gifts, in general, and in prophecy, in particular, and brings in 1 Corinthians 14:1 to reinforce his premise that prophecy is the prime locus for the relationship between human and divine. Finally, the chapter explores Origen's commentarial/exegetical practices, particularly examining Origen's explication of Romans in relation to Paul's corpus as a whole, and Origen's attempts to inculcate certain practices in the (Christian) readers/audience.

Commentarial Practices and Moral Formation in the Greco-Roman World

In order for us to better contextualize the thrust of Origen's exegetical practices, it is necessary to analyze the Greek intellectual and cultural matrix within which Origen writes. Pierre Hadot in his *Philosophy as a Way of Life* delineates what he dubs as "spiritual exercises,"[7] as a key philosophical, educational, and personal practice of antiquity, a practice that extended to many early Christian writers. In Greco-Roman

[7] Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, 81-125.

culture, as Hadot accentuates, it was critical to cultivate a particular philosophical self, that is, a self that is open to spiritual formation of some sort.

The understanding that reading and careful interpretation of the texts is one of the ways for the soul's intense purification coheres with elite emphasis upon *paideia* more broadly at the time. Παιδεία signifies not just education; as Henri Marrou defines, παιδεία is "a collective technique which a society employs to instruct its youth in the values and accomplishments of the civilization in which it exists."[8] The meaning of παιδεία also has another important rendering: "culture." Thus, παιδεία is also more broadly construed to mean, to borrow Nasrallah's succinct phrasing, a "larger set of cultural practices."[9]

Origen engaged in broader discourses and adopted a scholarly form of commentary/scriptural practice similar to that of Philo. Regarding the scriptural and commentarial practices which were prevalent in the Greco-Roman world, Maren R. Niehoff specifically examines Second Temple Judaic practices, particularly in Alexandria.[10] There, the Alexandrian Jew, Philo, further develops his scriptural and commentarial practices as part of this larger Graeco-Roman cultural activity.[11] Similarly,

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[8] Henry Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity*, trans. Geroge Lamb (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1956), xiiii; Ilaria Ramelli, "Late Antiquity and the Transmission of Educational Ideals and Methods," *A Companion to Ancient Education* 120 (2015): 267.

[9] Laura Nasrallah, *Christian Reponses to Roman Art and Architecture: The Second-Century Church amid the Spaces of Empire* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 30.

[10] Maren R. Niehoff, "A Jewish Critique of Christianity from Second-Century Alexandria: Revisiting the Jew mentioned in *Contra Celsum*," *JECS* 21.2 (2013): 151-75; Niehoff, "Commentary Culture in the Land of Israel from an Alexandrian Perspective," *DSD* 19 (2012): 442-63.

[11] Niehoff, "Commentary Culture," 444.

Origen seems to explicitly problematize the biblical text and to offer literary solutions, as he is deeply immersed in the contemporary Greek discourse on education and cultivation of a particular self, by carrying on the tradition of academic inquiry into the biblical text, which Philo was also deeply engaged in.[12]

Hadot analyzes the philosophical schools of the time, saying, "All of them linked their therapeutics to a profound transformation of the individual's mode of *seeing* and *being*. The object of spiritual exercises is precisely to bring about this transformation."[13] Hadot delineates one of the most important developments in philosophical practices in the imperial period: a shift in education. The reading and interpretation of texts took a central place in the curriculum of philosophical schools as students were encouraged to write and transmit commentaries on the classical texts such as Plato's works. Teachers did not just teach the pupils, but also assumed "the role of genuine directors of conscience who cared for their students' spiritual problems."[14] Hadot examines the way in the educational emphases of the time, on reading, exegetical, and commentarial practices, were thought to purify the soul.[15] As he puts it, "each commentary was considered a spiritual exercise […] because the reading of each philosophical text was

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[12] Niehoff, "Commentary Culture," 449. Alexandrian Biblical interpretation originates from the second century B.C.E. Demetrius, whose fragmentary works Eusebius preserved (pp. 445-49).

[13] Hadot, *What is Ancient Philosophy?*, 83.

[14] Ibid., 156.

[15] Thus in the cultural milieu of paideia, Second Sophistic writers were commenting and retelling the shared past. See Tim Whitmarsh, *Greek Literature and the Roman Empire: The Politics of Imitation* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2001); Withmarsh, *Ancient Greek Literature* (Cambridge, UK; Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2004).

supposed to produce a transformation in the person reading or listening to the commentary."[16]

Commentarial practices in the Roman imperial period are also discussed by Frances M. Young, who notes how early Christian interpretive practices are performed within their larger intellectual and cultural milieu. This context can be noted especially in the "process whereby the books of scripture were substituted for the Graeco-Roman classics as the basis for Christian education, with the same methods utilized and similar outcomes expected."[17] Young also points out the centrality of the "moral meaning of the Graeco-Roman classics" for school teachers in the rhetorical-intellectual tradition who sought after "truth and ethics not just in philosophical books, such as those of Plato, but also in classics such as Homer."[18]

An equally important point to note in the intellectual milieu is the nearly ubiquitous nature of scriptural/commentarial practices for Jews and Christians. As Young succinctly notes, "All kinds of people could attend this 'school', not just the elite, and its aim was to produce lifelong learners progressing in understanding of the truth and in living according to the way of Christ through teaching offered on the basis of the scriptures."[19] David Brakke also examines the pervasive nature of scriptural practice in early Christianity when he writes,

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[16] Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, 155.

[17] Frances M. Young, "Interpretation of Scripture," in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 848; Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

[18] Young, "Interpretation of Scripture," 848.

[19] Ibid., 851.

> This scriptural practice should not be distinguished from study and contemplation in terms of learned versus unlearned, or rational versus irrational, or even scientific versus inspired. Rather, the practices of effacing one's own identity as reader and writer and of producing new texts that mimic the genres of existing scriptures construct different understandings of how scripture is inspired, how learning is applied, and how divine knowledge is revealed. Again, we are not dealing here with an alternative canon or a competing Bible, but with a specific way of reading and writing within a religious movement.[20]

As we have briefly seen, Hadot, Young, and Brakke focus on scriptural practice in early Christianity by reiterating the centrality of commentarial practice in the Graeco-Roman world and by examining the way in which early Christian scriptural practice stems from the intellectual world to which it belonged. As these scholars explicate early Christian culture as ingrained in Hellenistic intellectual culture generally, it is necessary to examine the intellectual tradition in Alexandria which formed Origen's intellectual and spiritual life in order to better contextualize the thrust of Origen's exegetical practice.

While Alexandrian tradition influenced Origen in his spiritual and intellectual life, Caesaera is where Origen stayed in the later part of his life and wrote most of his commentaries and preached regularly. While recognizing Caesarea's significance, however, I consider Alexandria as the crucial factor in the formation of Origen's thought.[21] Even though *Comm.Rom.* and many other commentaries were written in

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[20] David Brakke, "Scriptural Practices in Early Christianity: Towards a New History of the New Testament Canon," in *Invention, Rewriting, Usurpation: Discursive Fights over Religious Traditions in Antiquity*, ed. David Brakke, Anders-Christian Jacobsen, and Jörg Ulrich (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2012), 263-80; quotation in 275.

[21] On understanding Origen in the Alexandrian intellectual tradition, see Karen Jo Torjesen, "The Alexandrian Tradition of the Inspired Interpreter," in *Origeniana Octava: Origen and the Alexandrian Tradition*, ed. L. Perrone (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2003), 287-302; David T. Runia, "Origen and Hellenism", in *Origeniana: Octava,* 43-8; John A. NcGuckin, "Origen as Literary Critic in the Alexandrian Tradition," in *Origeniana: Octava,* 121-36; Peter W. Martens, "Interpreting Attentively: The Ascetic Character of Biblical Exegesis according to Origen and Basil of Caesarea," in *Origeniana: Octava,* 1115-23.

Caesarea after Origen was expelled from Alexandria, it is clear that the city's influence was formative.

Alexandria was the center of intellectual life in the Roman Empire and the hub of Roman administration of Egypt. The Alexandrian intellectual tradition displays a double emphasis on education through scriptural practice and moral formation. In "Alexandria: A School for Training in Virtue," Robert Wilken argues that Origen, as a philosopher, encouraged his students and readers of his works to espouse a new way of life, that is, "the philosophical life." He says, "to 'philosophize' meant turning from one's former ways, fundamentally changing one's life—not simply to be 'reformed (*emendari*),' said Seneca, but to be 'transformed (*transfigurari*).'"[22]

In a recent comprehensive study of Origen, Martens emphasizes the pedagogical aspect of Origen's thought. Martens examines Origen's notion of the ideal interpreter of Scripture who is "holy" and "worthy of" the divine mystery, deftly indicating that the formation of the interpreter's soul is connected to the interpretation of scripture.[23] Origen's grand theological narrative, namely, the centrality of pedagogical structure in Origen's thought, is amply discussed by scholars in addition to Martens including Karen

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Caesarea Maritima was the city where diverse populations interfaced with one another. Hans Bietenhard, *Caesarea, Origenes und die Juden* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1974); Lee I. Levine, *Caesarea under Roman Rule*, Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity (Leiden: Brill, 1975); John McGuckin, "Caesarea Maritima as Origen Knew It," in *Origeniana Quinta*, ed. Robert J. Daly (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1992), 3-25; Anders-Christian Jacobsen, "Conversion to Christian Philosophy—the case of Origen's School in Caesarea," *Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum/Journal of Ancient Christianity* 16.1 (2012): 145-57.

[22] Wilken, "Alexandria: A School for Training in Virtue," 20-1.

[23] Martens, *Origen and Scripture*, 160.

Torjesen, Judith Kovacs, and Catherine Chin.[24] Torjesen specifically examines how the idea of progressive training of individual readers frames the general structure of Origen's interpretation of the Song of Songs, Numbers, Jeremiah, and the Gospels. Kovacs convincingly suggests that Torjesen's scholarly observation is equally applicable to the Pauline corpus.[25]

Drawing on this scholarship, I argue that Origen's *Comm.Rom.* 9:1-9:3 aims at inculcating a specific disposition in the readers and hearers, that is, a life worthy to receive spiritual gifts and prophecy in particular, and asserts that the cultivation of this worthy life involves the of scripture. Origen invites and educates the readers/audience on the path towards virtue. In this way, Origen's discussions on prophecy and spiritual gifts are embedded in the educational and cultural practices of his time. On the one hand, Origen, as a teacher, *educates* the Christian audience/readers to cultivate a particular way of life that equips them to receive the Holy Spirit, spiritual gifts, and prophecy. On the other hand, Origen maintains that cultivating such a worthy and holy life goes in tandem with studying the scripture (e.g., *Comm.Rom.* 9.1.12.). Both this emphasis on education and the cultivation of the self displays the strong cultural practices that operated in the time of the Roman Empire generally and in Alexandria particularly.

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[24] Karen Jo Torjensen, *Hermeneutical Procedure and Theological Structure in Origen's Exegesis*, esp. 70-107; Peter Martens, *Origen and Scripture: The Contours of the Exegetical Life*; Catherine Chin, "Who is the Ascetic Exegete? Angels, Enchantments, and Transformative Food in Origen's Homilies on Joshua," in *Asceticism and Exegesis in Early Christianity: The Reception of New Testament Texts in Ancient Ascetic Discourses* (Göttingen, Germany: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013), 203-18; Mark S.M. Scott, *Journey Back to God: Origen on the Problem of Evil* (New York: Oxford University, 2012).

[25] Judith Kovacs, "Servant of Christ and Steward of the Mysteries of God": The Purpose of a Pauline Letter according to Origen's Homilies on 1 Corinthians" in *In Dominico Eloquio= In Lordly Eloquence* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002), 169.

Origen, *Commentary on the Romans*: Why 1 Corinthians in Romans?[26]

Before we plunge into *Comm.Rom.*, however, I should explain something of the process by which I came to this text. 1 Cor 14:1 and verses with similar wordings, such as 1 Cor 12:31 and 1 Cor 14:29,[27] are crucial passages for my overall argument in the dissertation. Naturally, I wanted to find Origen's commentary or sermons on this letter of Paul. Moreover, Origen emphasizes Pauline epistles as the resources for his thought more generally. [28] Among the Pauline epistles, 1 Corinthians and Romans emerge as central texts.[29] A search of the *Biblia Patristica* yields 3,827 references to Romans, the most

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[26] Vasile Mihoc and Daniel Patte, eds., *Greek Patristic and Eastern Orthodox Interpretations of Romans* (London; Bloomsbury: T&T Clark, 2013); Patout Burns, Jr., trans. and ed. with Constantine Newman, *Romans: Interpreted by Early Christian Commentators* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2012); Mark Reasoner, *Romans in Full Circle: A History of Interpretation* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005); Kathy Gaca and L. L. Welborn, eds., *Early Patristic Readings of Romans* (New York: T&T Clark, 2005); Douglas J. Moo, *Encountering the Book of Romans* (Grands Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014); Riemer Roukema, *The Diversity of Laws in Origen's Commentary on Romans* (Amsterdam, Netherlands: Free University, 1988).

[27] 1 Cor 14:1 "Pursue love and *strive for* the spiritual gifts, and especially that you may prophesy." (NRSV)

1 Cor 12:31 "But *strive for* the greater gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way." (NRSV)

1 Cor 14: "So, my brothers and sisters, strive to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues." (My translation)

[28] Origen, *Comm.Rom.,* 9. Maureen Beyer Moser, *Teacher of Holiness: The Holy Spirit in Origen's Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2005), 154ff; Richard Ashby Layton, "Origen as a Reader of Paul: A Study of the Commentary on Ephesians" (Ph.D. diss., University of Virginia, 1996), 21-4.

[29] Joseph Trigg argues that many cornerstones of Origen's theology are grounded in 1 Corinthians. It was even suggested that the reason why Origen did not write a commentary on 1 Corinthians is that he did not feel the need to write one since he extensively uses the epistle to "buttress key concepts" as Joseph Trigg says, across his corpus. 1 Corinthians is one of the most important texts in the New Testament that substantially discuss prophecy, and the longest and most extensive discussion of Christian prophecy in the New Testament is found in 1 Corinthians

among the Pauline letters, and 3,572 references to 1 Corinthians in Origen's corpora.[30] Yet Origen did not write a commentary on 1 Corinthians and the extant *Homilies on 1 Corinthians*—which is extremely fragmentary—does not contain his interpretation of 1 Corinthians 12-14.

Origen refers extensively to 1 Corinthians in book 9 of *Comm.Rom.*, which is logical because certain sections of Romans reflect the same topics and even some of the same language of arguments found in 1 Corinthians. These two texts—Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12-14—are often discussed together by New Testament scholars. Regarding the discussions of spiritual gifts, Romans 12 is often considered to be a précis of 1 Corinthians 12-14. Origen's reference to 1 Corinthians 12-14 is most extensive in book 9.2-3, in which he analyzes Romans 12:3-8. Origen's *Comm.Rom.* 9:1-3 serves as an indispensable locus to examine Origen's understanding of prophecy, and themes such as the human-divine relationship in prophecy.[31]

Subscribing to a particular mode of interpretation, namely, to "interpret scriptures with scriptures,"[32] Origen weaves Romans 12:3-8 with his interpretation of 1 Corinthians

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12-14. Joseph Trigg, *Origen: The Bible and Philosophy in the Third-Century Church* (London: SCM, 1983), 49-52.

[30] Kovacs, "Servant of Christ and Steward of the Mysteries of God," 150.

[31] The noun προφητεία is the most occurring form of the word group in the New Testament, occurring 144 times. It occurs 37 times in Matthew, six times in Mark, 30 times in Luke-Acts, 14 times in John, and, 14 times in the Pauline corpus. Of these, five occur in 1 Corinthians (1 Cor 12:28; 29; 14:29; 32, 37), three in Romans (Rom 1:2; 8:21; 11:3), and the others in 1 Thess 2:15, with four in Ephesians and Titus (including the "list" in Eph 4:11). Anthony Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 957. G. Friedrich, "προφητεία," *TDNT*, 6:781-861.

[32] Kovacs, "Servant of Christ and Steward of the Mysteries of God," 154; J. C. Beker, *Paul the Apostle: The Triumph of God in Life and Thought* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 94-108, 351-55.

12-14.[33] It is clear that Origen sees similarities between Romans and the passages in 1 Corinthians:

> This is why to me [Origen] he [Paul] appears to be teaching, when writing both to the Romans and to the Corinthians, that there are three ways for grace to be received, in order that he might indicate that something is done even by us in this, but the greater part is based upon the generosity of God. (*Comm.Rom.* 9.3.3)[34]

As a biblical exegete, Origen notes that both Romans and 1 Corinthians share the theme of divine agency and human participation,[35] and both discuss "the spiritual gifts" from God, in which the rhetorics of grace, the will of God, and human reception of the spiritual gifts appear.[36]

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[33] Origen, considering the Pauline corpus as a single unit, explores the issue of unity and diversity, and freely draws on other Pauline works to interpret a certain text in question. As Ronald Heine succinctly notes, Origen "considered the Holy Spirit to be the author of all Scripture, Scripture's obscurities were to be solved by searching for similar topics and, especially, vocabulary in other passages throughout the Bible which could then be applied to the passage being studied [….] To find the key to open Scripture's meaning one must search for similar words and ideas that are scattered throughout the Scriptures." Ronald Heine, "Origen," in *The Routledge Companion to Early Christian Thought*, ed. D. Jeffrey Bingham (London; New York: Routledge, 2010), 193. Peter Martens, *Origen and Scripture: The Contours of the Exegetical Life*, (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 3.

[34] Unde mihi uidetur tam ad Romans quam ad Corinthios scribens tres capiendae gratiae modos docere ut et ex nobis in eo agi aliquid ostendat, plurimum tamen in Dei largitione consistere.

[35] As a few examples of the recent trend of scholarship on divine agency and human participation/agency, see Jason Maston, *Divine and Human Agency in Second Temple Judaism and Paul: A Comparative Study* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010); John M.G. Barclay and Simon J. Gathercole, eds., *Divine and Human Agency in Paul and His Cultural Environment* (London: T&T Clark, 2006); Troels Engberg-Pedersen, *Cosmology and Self in the Apostle Paul*, esp. 106-137.

[36] Paul draws on the interplay between grace and spiritual gifts in Romans 12. As Jewett notes, "There is a *paronomasia* that links the congregational χαρίσματα ("charismatic/spiritual gifts") to the divinely granted χάρις ("gift of grace") received by each Christian in 12:6." Robert Jewett, *Romans: A Commentary*, Hermeneia, ed. Eldon Jay Epp and Roy David Kotansky (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 707.

The Human-Divine Relationship in Prophecy

Origen's analysis of the seeming divergence between Romans 8 and 1 Corinthians 12 serves to reinforce his overarching theme of the relationship between faith/choice/humanity and grace/the divine, fitting well within my attempt to overcome the unhelpful binary between faith and grace in God's dealing with humanity, in general, and in spiritual gifts, particularly.[37] As I shall show in more detail below, Origen interprets prophecy in the context of a double emphasis on divine grace and human efforts, and in doing so, he aims at cultivating a specific disposition among readers and hearers. For the discussion of prophecy in terms of both divine grace and human elements, I draw on Gunnar Af Hällstrom's scholarship.[38] The human-divine relationship for Origen does not denote that two actors (the human and God) have equal powers in the relationship; it is clear for Origen that the highest and greatest actor is God.[39] As many scholars maintain, Origen's overall thought operates in a framework of questions regarding the relationship between divine providence and human free will, as we shall also see in Chapter 3.[40]

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[37] Regarding this point, see Charles Raith, *Aquinas and Calvin on Romans: God's Justification and Our Participation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); Thomas P. Scheck, *Origen and the History of Justification: The Legacy of Origen's Commentary on Romans* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008).

[38] Gunnar Af Hällstrom, *Charismatic Succession: A Study on Origen's Consept [sic] of Prophecy* (Helsinki: Toimittanut Anne-MaritEnroth, 1985), 10-5, 45-8.

[39] In another of his works, *Contra Celsum*, Origen succinctly puts: "We affirm that human nature is not sufficient in any way to seek God and find him [sic] with purity unless it is helped by the one who is the object of the search" (*Cels.*, 7.42).

[40] See Hal Koch, *Pronoia und Paideusis: Studien über Origenes und sein Verhältnis zum Platonismus* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1932); Henri Crouzel, *Origène et la "connaissance mystique"* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1961); Henri De Lubac, *History and Spirit: The Understanding of Scripture According to Origen*, trans. A. E. Nash (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius

Themes such as fate, free will, and providence are interwoven in the matrix of prophecy and divination in antiquity. For example, Maximus of Tyre questions, "If divination exists, what is left of Free Will?"[41] Origen also contends that human free will is integral to prophecy, which is, in a way, a Christian counterpart to divination insofar as it is the site of a convergence of the divine and the human.[42] Origen by no means initiates the discussion of human free will in early Christianity. In "An Early Christian View on a Free Will: Origen," Michael Frede explores how Origen augments the theme of a human free will among other early Christians, such as Justin Martyr and Tatian. Justin Martyr, in

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Press, 1976); G. W. Butterworth, trans., *Origen on First Principles* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1936; Repr., Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1973).

In the time of early Christianity, questions such as fate and prophecy, human agency and divine agency, cosmology etc. were important fabric of religio-societal culture. For fate and cosmology, see Nicola Denzey Lewis, *Cosmology and Fate in Gnosticism and Graeco-Roman Antiquity* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2013).

On human freedom and grace in Origen's works, see W. J. P. Boyd, "Origen on Pharaoh's Hardened Heart: A Study of Justification and Election in St. Paul and Origen," *StPatr* 7/1 (1966): 434-42; Henri Crouzel, "Theological Construction and Research: Origen on Free Will," *Scripture, Tradition, and Reason: A Study in the Criteria of Christian Doctrine: Essays in Honour of Richard P.C. Hanson,* ed. Richard Bauckham and Benjamin Drewery (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), 239-65; Constantine N. Tsirpanlis, "Origen on Free Will, Grace, Predestination and their Ecclesiological Implications," *PBR* 9 (1990): 95-121; Robert L. Wilken, "Justification by Works: Fate and the Gospel in the Roman Empire," *Concordia Theological Monthly* 40 (1969): 379-92; Michael Frede, "An Early Christian View on a Free Will: Origen," in *A Free Will: Origins of the Notion in Ancient Thought,* ed. A. A. Long (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2011), 102-24; Mark S. M. Scott, *Journey Back to God: Origen on the Problem of Evil* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University, 2012), 74ff.

[41] The important work of Alexander of Aphrodisias, also called *De Fato*, written toward the beginning of the third century. Robert L. Wilken, "Justification by Works: Fate and the Gospel in the Roman Empire," *Concordia Theological Monthly* 40 (1969): 382.

[42] "Origen's purpose was to show that human being possesses free will and that, for this reason, rewards and punishments, praise and blame had meaning. He wanted to show that the life of virtue, or of vice, was in human being's power." Wilken, "Justification by Works: Fate and the Gospel in the Roman Empire," 386. Lyman writes, "Origen's speculations dramatized how creation was both estranged from God and longing for reunion—a leitmotif actually shared with Gnosticism but stripped of Gnostic determinism. Indeed, Origen's cosmology in his on First Principles and related texts appears as a grand apology for providence and for the interconnected freedom of Creator and creatures." J. R. Lyman, *Christology and Cosmology: Models of Divine Activity in Origen, Eusebius, and Athanasius* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 47-69.

his *First Apology*, writes: "We have learned from the prophets and declare as the truth, that penalties and punishments and good rewards are given according to the quality of each person's actions" (*First Apology* 43).[43] As Justin Martyr specifically demonstrates that the issue of free will is at stake in prophecy, Origen's project was to emphasize human free will as the crux of the reception of the gift of prophecy.

Origen essentially grapples with an important question: "to what extent is a human being dependent on God?"[44] If spiritual gifts are to be understood in the context of an amalgam of the human and divine relationship, Origen poses another question: what would be the implication of Paul's mandate, "to strive for prophecy" shown in 1 Corinthians 12-14? Indeed, what would be the implication when such an injunction ("to strive for prophecy") could be an oxymoron for some who think that human beings could not possibly strive for prophecy and that human beings receive prophecy passively from the divine, as if they were radio transmitters, or, to use the more common image from antiquity, as if they were musical instruments touched by the divine? Origen argues that Paul's mandate is not an oxymoron. On the contrary, according to Origen, the imperative to strive for prophecy fits his theological framework, which emphasizes the cultivation of a particular self that is worthy to receive the Holy Spirit and spiritual gifts.

Origen deepens his discussion by taking pains to analyze the Greek phrase κατὰ τὴν ἀναλογίαν τῆς πίστεως ("according to the measure of faith," Romans 12:6),[45]

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[43] As cited in Wilken, "Justification by Works," 379-92.

[44] Troels Engberg-Pedersen,"Self-Sufficient and Power: Divine and Human Agency in Epictetus and Paul," in *Divine and Human Agency in Paul*, 116.

[45] Because we only have Origen's words here in Latin, through the translation (and interpretation) of Rufinus, it is important to offer a brief comment on the Latin rendition of the text that Rufinus works on. The Vulgate translates the Greek phrase κατὰ τὴν ἀναλογίαν τῆς

arguing with philological meticulousness. Origen considers the phrase "according to the measure of faith" so important that he extends the meaning of the phrase to encompass all the other spiritual gifts that Paul lists in Romans 12:3-8, even though Paul's original text connects this phrase to prophecy only:

> So then, he [Paul] is declaring that the diversities of the spiritual gifts are given "according to the rule of faith" of each so that, for example, when grace has been received anyone may become this or that member in the body of Christ. (*Comm.Rom.* 9.3.2)[46]

Origen applies the singular measure of faith to "the diversities of the spiritual gifts" (*diuersitates gratiarum*)—such as prophecy, ministry, teaching, exhortation, giving, showing mercy, and love (in *Comm.Rom.* 9.3.6)—not just prophecy. When Origen discusses prophecy in other places, he oftentimes juxtaposes or combines prophecy with other spiritual gifts, as he has done in *Comm.Rom.* 9, as we shall in Chapter 3.

Trying to make sense of the correlation between the "diversities of graces" and the "measure of faith" in spiritual gifts, which is "the cause of the graces that are to be received,"[47] Origen turns to the seeming divergence between Romans 12:6-8 and 1 Cor 12:7-11. Romans 12:6-8 associates *prophetia* ("prophecy") with *fides* ("faith"), with faith

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πίστεως, "according to the measure of faith" into Latin as *secundum rationem fidei,* "according to the rule of faith." As scholars have noted, it would be anachronistic to consider Latin translation of "the rule of faith" in Romans 12:6 as "a body of apostolic doctrine sustained by a tradition of teaching in the church." Robert Jewett, *Romans: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 172. About the succinct definition of the rule of faith as "a body of apostolic doctrine sustained by a tradition of teaching in the church," see Paul Griffiths, *Songs of Songs* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2011), xii.

[46] Secundum mensuram ergo fidei uniuscuiusque diuersitates dari pronuntiat gratiarum, ut uerbi causa accepta quis gratia illud uel illud membrum in Christi corpore fiat.

[47] *Comm.Rom.* 9.3.3.

functioning as a criterion of gifts of God.[48] 1 Corinthians12, however, has no overt correlation between human faith and prophecy. For Origen, Roman 12:6 emphasizes faith: "the measure of faith as the *cause* of the graces that are to be received" (*mensuram fidei causam capiendarum posuit gratiarum*). In contrast, 1 Corinthians stresses the volition of God over and against human free will, as shown in the expression *prout vult* ("as the Spirit wills") in 1 Cor 12:7 and 12:11.[49] 1 Corinthians 12 emphasizes grace and divine agency: "the Spirit allots to each one as the Spirit wills." Even though at the first glance, Origen differentiates the emphases in these two texts, he actually tries to understand the commonality from the two Pauline texts, when he surmises that Paul teaches "three ways for grace to be received" (*tres capiendae gratiae modos*) in both Romans and 1 Corinthians. Instead of elaborating the "three ways" that he notices, Origen makes broad distinctions among three elements related to grace: 1) some faith is within human beings who *merit* the grace; 2) for others, faith is "*given* for that which benefits" by the Spirit/God; 3) the Spirit "allots [faith] as the Spirit wills" (*Comm.Rom.* 9.3.3). Thus Origen thoroughly investigates the themes of faith and divine agency in these sections. Moreover, while attending to particularities of these texts, Origen negotiates the seeming difference between them, and argues that the relationship between the divine and humanity is complementary.

[48] As paraphrased from Jewett, *Romans,* 52. Another possible question ensues: Would this then mean that those who have more faith would receive a gift of prophecy?

[49] 1 Cor 12:7; "But one and the same Spirit works every thing, allotting to each one as he wills." 1 Cor 12:11; "But to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for that which benefits." Regarding the volition of the Spirit, see Wayne Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2000), 199.

"Be Worthy of the Spiritual Gifts and especially Prophecy"

Throughout *Comm.Rom.* 9.1-3, Origen seeks to persuade his (Christian) readers to cultivate a specific disposition. This disposition involves a life that is ready to receive the Holy Spirit. According to Origen, the worthy life takes cultivating virtues such as self-control, when Origen thoroughly explores the notion that the Holy Spirit abides in a holy person. He moves on to discuss the importance of cultivating a disposition that involves a life that is *worthy* to receive the spiritual gifts such as prophecy. Origen develops the theme of the importance of human efforts in the enterprise of spiritual gifts, shown in the repeated use of ἄξιος or ἀξιόω ("be worthy of, earn") and cognate verbs (such as καταξιόω). Most of the texts use *mereo* and its cognates, which means "deserve," "earn," "merit," or "acquire."[50] Since the majority of Origen's corpus exists in the Latin translation by Rufinus, the textual evidence on *mereo* and its cognates is greater. *Mereo* cognate verbs appear in several other places in Origen's corpus such as *Comm.Rom.* and *De Principiis* 3.3 (as we shall examine in Chapter 3).[51] Since the terminology of earning or meriting also explicitly appears in Origen's *Contra Celsum*, which is mostly preserved in Greek (*Cels.* 7.7), it is clear that the terminology of "be worthy of" and "deserve"

[50] One might ask question whether mereo and the original Greek which Origen used (ἄξιος, ἀξιόω, and καταξιόω) are related. These words are similar in meaning (be worthy of, merit) and is thus used in Hebrews 10:29, Genesis 4:13 (only in Vulgate, not in Greek manuscripts), Genesis 42:21, Deuteronomy 7:10, Joshua 11:20, Judges 12:3, and 20:10 etc. The Vulgate has usually used *dignum/digna* to translate the Greek adjective ἄξιος. *Mereo* was used in Deuteronomy 7:10 in Vulgate with the English rendering of "deserve" (NRSV) (e.g., Hebrews 10:29). *Commereo* connotes a negative sense (e.g. Numbers 22:29). For this discussion, see "ἄξιος," *TDNT*. P.G.W. Glare, ed., *The Oxford Latin Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), s.v. "*mereo*."

[51] Since the majority of Origen's corpus exists in the Latin translation by Rufinus, the textual evidence of *mereo* and its cognates is greater.

(ἀξιόω-cognates) belongs to Origen's thoughts, rather than the innovation of Rufinus, the translator.

While it is important for one to *earn* or *be worthy of* spiritual gifts, God's grace is more important because it confers spiritual gifts. Origen explains this idea in Book 9 of *Comm.Rom.* "The gift" means that God/the divine confers something to humans, and humans receive something from God/the divine. In this mutual enterprise between the divine and the human beings, Origen includes the important point of "being worthy of" the spiritual gifts. Throughout the *Commentary on the Romans*, Origen revisits this theme. We see examples in the following.

Comm.Rom. 9.3.4	Someone is great enough to *merit receiving* a higher grace. (tanta quae excelsiorem gratiam mereatur accipere.)
Comm.Rom. 9.3.5	For if in the present age God gives grace to each one "according to the measure of faith," doubtless God will also give grace to each one in the future on behalf of the measure of *merits*. (si enim in praesenti saeculo dat Deus unicuique gratiam secundum mensuram fidei, sine dubio et in futuro dabit unicuique gratiam pro mensura meritorum.)
Comm.Rom. 9.3.7	Each is given by God through grace and there is something in us that *merits* grace according to the measure or rule of each person. (ita etiam in unoquoque horum quae enumerauimus a Deo per gratiam dari est et in nobis aliquid ad cuius unusquisque mensuram uel rationem gratiam promeretur.)

In this way, Origen aims at striking a balance between human choice and divine volition as regards gifts from God. In emphasizing both grace and freedom, Origen does not

"stress freedom somewhat at the expense of grace" as many scholars have mistakenly maintained.[52]

While Origen highlights human choice, he also argues that the grace given by God initiates and conditions the dynamics of *charismata*: "these things will be nothing if they do not have the grace given by God; for if the grace of the Spirit is absent from them, they cannot be members of the body of Christ" (*Comm.Rom.* 9.3.7).[53] He goes on to say, "There is something in us that merits grace according to the measure or rule of each person" (9.3.7). In the previous passage, Origen interprets Romans 9:3-5: "To each according to the measure of faith that God has allotted (*unicuiue sicut diuisit Deus mensuram fidei*)" (9.2.12). Origen explains the meaning of the saying that "each should know and understand what the measure of the grace of God is in himself/herself, the measure that s/he has merited to attain through faith." According to Origen, God allocates various kinds of grace to each person in conformity with the person's faith, and thus Origen views faith and grace as complementary or mutually compatible.

The Cultivation of a Self through Moral Formation and Scriptural Study

How, then, does Origen seek to convince the audience to cultivate a particular self worthy of receiving the spiritual gifts and, by extension, God's mercy? Origen returns to

[52] For the scholars who have discussed Origen in this way, see John Anthony McGuckin, ed., *The Westminster Handbook to Origen*, 115.

[53] Hans Urs Von Balthasar, ed., *Origen, Spirit and Fire: A Thematic Anthology of His Writings,* trans. Robert J. Daly (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1984), 193.

the refrain of moral formation through virtues and the study of Scriptures to constitute a proper Christian self. In commenting on Romans 12:1-2, Origen notes,

> But now Paul exhorts believers in Christ to present their 'bodies as a sacrifice living, holy, and pleasing to God [….] He calls a [sacrifice] in which *the Holy Spirit dwells 'holy,*' in accordance with what he has said in another passage, 'or do you not know that you are a temple of God and the Spirit of God dwells in you?' (*Comm.Rom.* 9.1.5, emphasis added).[54]

This discussion of how the Holy Spirit dwells in a holy place in *Comm.Rom.* 9.1.3-5 sets the groundwork for his later discussion of the spiritual gifts in *Comm.Rom.* 9.2-3. There, Origen analyzes explicitly the way in which God endows people with spiritual gifts and the importance of becoming a good person to receive such a gift. This point broadly correlates with his later discussion, even though Origen does not mention explicitly spiritual gifts (especially prophecy) in these earlier passages (*Comm.Rom.* 9.1).

In exhorting the audience to cultivate itself, Origen draws on a broader cultural discussion of the formation of the moral and virtuous self. *Comm.Rom.* 9.1.10 reads,

> See to it then lest, when anger enters your heart, it make you conformed to this world. In a similar way *evil desire* and greed and the other things in which the present world takes delight may imprint the form of the present world upon you. But if, instead, *gentleness, patience, mildness, self-control, faith, truth, and the other virtues* should dwell within your mind, they make you conformed to the future world and they would render such a beautiful form to your soul [….] The apostolic words exhort us [….] to be *transformed into the resemblance of each of the virtues* and thus only then, when the face of the heart has been unveiled, can we behold the Lord's glory, having been transformed by such an image. As to how we may be transformed into these things, he [Paul] teaches us when he [Paul] says, 'by the renewing of your minds.'[55]

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[54] Nunc autem Paulus obsecrat credentes in Christo ut corpora sua exhibeant hostiam uiuentem sanctam placentem Deo[…] Sanctam dicit in qua Sanctus Spiritus habitat secundum quod et in alio loco dixit: 'aut nescitis quia templum Dei estis et Spiritus Dei habitat in uobis?'

[55] Emphasis added. It is important to note Origen's emphasis on mind and intellect. Uide ero ne forte cum uenit ira in cor tuum conformem te faciat huic saeculo; similiter autem et concupiscentia mala et auaritia ceteraque quibus praesens seaculum delectatur formam tibi saeculi praesentis imponant. Si uero e contrario mansuetudo patientia lenitas continentia fides uertitas ceteraeque uirtutes habitent in sensu tuo conformem te futuri saeculi faciunt et ita

As is shown in this passage above, Origen exhorts the readers or hearers of his work to train themselves through the cultivation of good habits and the practice of appropriate discipline or spiritual exercises such as virtue and not to allow desire to take over their lives. Virtues such as "wisdom, justice, courage and moderation" are broadly admired in Greco-Roman philosophical conversations and exhortations, as Plato noted in *Politeia* 427e-434d. [56] To these four cardinal virtues, Origen adds "gentleness, patience, mildness, faith, and truth."[57]

In emphasizing the cultivation of virtues and the control of desires for a mind free from sins and greed, Origen points out the specific practices that lead the Christian audience/readers towards an ideal life. He explicitly suggests "training in wisdom and meditation upon the Word of God, and the spiritual interpretation of his law."[58] The full passage reads,

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pulchram animae tuae speciem reddent ut uerbum […] Sed adhortatur ex hoc sermo apostolicus ut illa abiecta ad singularum uirtutum speciem reformemur, et ita demum possimus reuelato uultu cordis gloriam Domini speculari ab huiusmodi imagine transformati. Quomodo autem in haec transformemur ipse edocet dicens: 'renouatione sensus uestri.'

[56] "Origen mentions the cardinal virtues also in Ps 10.6; ComMt 12.12; HomLk 8.4; 35.9; HomLv 7.1" (Scheck, trans., *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, Books 6-10*, 202, n. 65).

[57] Virtues also include justice (*Comm.Rom.* 9.2.7), prudence, "moderation" (swfrosu/nh, *soberietas*: *Comm.Rom.* 9.2.8.), temperance ("temperantia") (*Comm.Rom.* 9.2.10). Origen even notes that "this *temperantia* is regarded as one of the four general virtues" (*Comm.Rom.* 9.2.10).

[58] Many scholars have stressed the role of Christian prophets as interpreters of Scripture. Gerhard Daytzeberg emphasized prophecy in early Judaism and early Christian was to a great extent, an interpretive phenomenon. Gerhard Dautzenberg, *Urchristliche Prophetie: ihre Erforschung, ihre Voraussetzungen im Judentum und ihre Struktur im ersten Korintherbrief* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1975), 43-121, 122-48; Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy in 1 Corinthians*, 263-88. But in most of the cases, prophecy as interpretation of Scripture refers to interpretation of the Hebrew Bible.

> Our mind is renewed through training in wisdom and meditation upon the Word of God (*per exercitia sapientiae et meditationem*), and the spiritual interpretation of his law (*legis eius intellegentiam spiritalem*). And to the extent that it makes daily progress by reading the Scriptures, to the extent that its understanding goes deeper, to that extent it becomes continuously new and daily new. I [Origen] do not know if anyone can be renewed who is lazy in respect to the Holy Scriptures and training in spiritual understanding, by which it becomes possible not only to understand what has been written, but also to explain more clearly and to reveal more carefully. (*Comm.Rom.* 9.1.12)[59]

Origen tries to shape his audience and attempts to convince the readers to form a specific disposition by encouraging them *not* to be positioned on the side of those who are "lazy in respect to the Holy Scriptures and training in spiritual understanding." Furthermore, Origen encourages the audience to not just understand the Scripture but also to explain the Scripture when they have proper zeal in respect to the Holy Scriptures and training in spiritual understanding. Soon after this passage, Origen quickly explains, "Yet it is possible that not every mind is capable of being renewed so as to be broadened by the understanding of knowledge" (*Comm.Rom.* 9.1.13). In this way, Origen draws on a powerful discourse in late antiquity on how the soul is the locus for contact between the divine and the human being, and thus the soul should be prepared to receive inspiration from the divine.

The theme of the Word of God continues at the forefront of Origen's discussions in *Comm.Rom.* 9.2:

> I [Origen] myself think, however, that grace is present in the Word of God, not only for those who teach the Church, if their words are as we have described above, not so much to delight as to prick the hearer and lead him/her to some

[59] Renouatur autem sensus noster per exercitia sapientiae et meditationem uerbi Dei et legis eius intellegentiam spiritalem, et quanto suis cotidie ex scripturarum proficit lectione quanto altius intellectus eius accredit tanto semper nouus et cotidie nouus efficitur. Nescio autem si potest renouari sensu qui piger est gera scripturas diuinas et intellegentiae spiritalis exercitia, quibus possit non solum intellegere quae scripta sunt uerum et explicare apertius et manifestare diligentius .

> degree of advancement in virtue but you will also discover that it is this way in nearly everything that is done in life. For one person has grace both in what s/he does and in what s/he says; and someone else, though s/he speaks more wisely and behaves with greater diligence and effort from time to time, neither in her/his words nor in her/his deeds finds grace […] (*Comm.Rom.* 9.2.4)[60]

Continuing his rhetoric from previous sections, such as *Comm.Rom.* 9.1.12-13, Origen emphasizes two points: First, grace present in the Word of God influences everyone in the church, not just the teachers in the Church. Second, the Word of God pertains to every aspect of (Christian) life including behavior and speech and sets them "to some degree of advancement in virtue." Hadot has noted that ancient philosophical schools "linked their therapeutics to a profound transformation of the individual's mode of *seeing* and *being*. The object of spiritual exercises is precisely to bring about this transformation."[61] In a similar way, Origen continues to exhort the audience to take up a way of life that profoundly transforms them.

Commentary on Romans 9.3.8: "Strive for Prophecy"

After he attends to the tightly knit web of grace and human efforts involved in spiritual gifts, and after he maintains the importance of virtues and scriptural study in forming a Christian self, Origen focuses upon each of the seven gifts—prophecy,

[60] Ego autem puto non solum in uerbo Dei ecclesiam docentibus adesse gratiam si talis sit sermo qualem supra diximus qui auditorem non tam delectet quam stimulet et ad profectum aliquem uirtutis adducat; sed et in omnibus fere quae aguntur in uita ita esse deprehendes. Est enim aliquis qui et quod agit et guod loquitur habet gratiam; et alius qui interdum et prudentius loquitur et diligentius ac laboriosius agit neque in uerbis neque in gestis suis inuenit gratiam.

[61] Hadot, *What is Ancient Philosophy?,* 83.

ministry, teaching, exhortation, giving, presiding, and showing mercy—that Paul mentions in Romans 12:6-8.[62]

In *Comm.Rom.* 9.3.8, he starts to carefully explore prophecy in the context of grace and human efforts, giving prophecy an *ethical register*.[63] Since this passage is so crucial, I cite it in full:

> However, in these things the question is asked whether in us or from us *a certain kind of prophecy can exist that is not entirely from God but derives even in a small measure from human efforts.* This will be viewed as totally impossible to other people, but with Paul it is clearly approved when he says, "*strive for the spiritual gifts, but most of all that you should prophesy.*" There the Apostle is showing that, just as one is zealous for ministry and teaching and exhortation, etc., through his exhibiting zeal and effort toward these things, in a similar way this should happen for prophecy. (*Comm.Rom.* 9.3.8, emphasis added)[64]

This passage weaves Origen's interpretation of Romans 12:6-8 together with 1 Corinthians 12:31 and 14:1. By juxtaposing these texts, Origen tries to bolster his claim that prophecy should be understood in the context of the close relationship between divine mercy and human participation. Trying to answer a question ("whether in us or from us a certain kind of prophecy can exist that is not entirely from God but derives

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[62] Romans 12:6-8: "We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness."

[63] Moser, *Teacher of Holiness,* 143.

[64] Sed in his quaeritur si potest esse aliqua in nobis uel ex nobis profetiae species quae non totum habeat ex Deo sed aliquantulum eitam ex humanis studiis capiat. Hoc quidem apud ceteros ualde impossibile uidebitur, apud Paulum tamen euidenter probatur dicentem: 'aemulamini autem dona maiora magis autem ut profeteis.' In quo sicut aemulatur quis ministerium et doctrinam et exhortationem et cetera per hoc quod adhibet erga haec studium ac laborem ita et erga profetiam fieri debere ostendit apostolus. Unde profetia intellegenda est haec quam docet Paulus non illa esse per quam dicitur: 'haec dicit Dominus;' illa enim usque ad Iohannem stetit secundum quod in euangelio scriptum est: 'lex et profetae usque ad Iohannem;' sed illa de qua idem apostolus ait: 'qui profetat hominibus loquitur aedificationem et exhortionem et consolationem.'

even in a small measure from human efforts,") Origen brings another Pauline text on prophecy into this conversation: "strive for the spiritual gifts, but most of all that you should prophesy."[65] His use of 1 Corinthians 12:31 and 14:1 at this juncture is far from a departure from Origen's original topic;[66] on the contrary, Origen's extensive use of 1 Corinthians 12-14 models the exegetical procedure that he employs to explain Romans 9:3-8.

1 Corinthians 12:39 and 14:1 provoke an important discussion about the relationship between the divine and the human in the moment of prophecy, both in an ancient and a modern context.[67] Origen was not the only one to address thoughtfully these verses. Many interpreters of 1 Corinthians 14:1 would raise a similar question to that of Origen's interlocutor: Would it be ever possible for the people to "strive for prophecy" (ζηλοῦτε)?[68] Origen's answer is a resounding yes, for as he discussed in the previous sections, he considers human efforts and divine grace as mutually constitutive in receiving spiritual gifts and prophecy. His position diverges from that of many contemporary scholars who cast doubt on the idea that prophecy in antiquity could be actively sought. Just as we saw in the Introduction, the translation of ζηλόω in 1

[65] Also, see 1 Cor 12:31 "But strive for the greater gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way." The complete verse for 1 Cor 14:1 is "Pursue love and strive for the spiritual gifts, and especially that you may prophesy." On discussions on the ideologies behind the translation of ζηλόω, see the section on "History of Scholarship on Prophecy," in the Introduction chapter of this dissertation.

[66] Caroline P. Bammel, "Augustine, Origen and the Exegesis of St. Paul," *Augustinianum* 32 (1992): 341-68. "Origen's typical way of writing commentaries is to thoroughly exegete line by line, to the point of giving impression that he sometimes seems to lose the track of the biblical passage or book that he is commenting on."

[67] Bammel, 50.

[68] Origen's particular attempt to answer this question has contemporary resonance as well. Regarding this discussion that frames my dissertation, see my Introduction chapter.

Corinthians 14:1, 39 as well as 12:31 is a case in point. Most contemporary scholars have translated ζηλόω "to strive to obtain." However, many scholars have resisted this translation because, to borrow Reiling's terms, it would "undoubtedly denote a human activity" in the pursuit of spiritual gifts.[69]

As Origen brings 1 Corinthians 12:39 and 14:1 to bear in his interpretation of Romans 9:6, he argues that prophecy is a phenomenon still current in Christian communities, saying: "it is possible for us to exhibit zealous effort to attain this kind of prophecy, and it also lies within our power that the prophecy that is from God should be added unto us" (*Comm.Rom.* 9.3.8). Origen considers that prophecy remained possible even in his day.[70] He does not relegate prophecy or spiritual gifts into the past. Origen does not subscribe to what some would call "the cessation of prophecy."[71]

Just as Origen widens the scope of the injunction "according to rule of faith" in Romans 6:8 (which Paul connects only to prophecy) to include all the spiritual gifts in

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[69] For a good discussion on this issue, see J. P. Louw, "The Function of Discourse in a Sociosemiotic Theology of Translation Illustrated by the Translation of zeloute in 1 Corinthians," *Bible Translator* 39.3 (1988): 329-35.

[70] In the context of polemic over and against the rhetorical other of the so-called pagan in *Contra Celsum* 7.7, for instance, Origen maintains that prophecy is still existent in Christianity, while Celsus casts a doubt on such a claim in the part of Christianity. See Chapter 2 of this dissertation.

[71] The issue of cessation of prophecy takes a different turn in early Christian prophecy. Many early Christian authors read the prophetic texts in the Hebrew Bible from the perspective of the "Christ-event." For instance, instead of reading Isaiah in its own historical context, early Christian authors interpreted the messages of Isaiah as pointing towards Jesus' coming. Origen (*Contra Celsum* 2:8) and Cyprian (*Treatise* 12:1.3), for instance, read many passages in Isaiah as prophecies of Jewish unbelief in Jesus. Charles Kannengiesser, *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis*, vol.1 (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2004), 311; R. L. Wilken, "*In novissimis diebus*: Biblical promises, Jewish Hopes and Early Christian Exegesis," *JECS* 1 (1993): 1-19. Thus, after the "Christ-event" was realized, that is, Jesus came, died, and was resurrected, there was no need of such prophecy at all. For a good discussion on the theme of the cessation of prophecy, see Niels C. Hvidt, "Prophecy's Alleged Cessation in Early Christianity," in *Christian Prophecy: The Post-Biblical Tradition* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 73-81.

Comm.Rom. 9.3.5-7, he places prophecy on the same plane as other gifts insofar as it is possible to *cultivate* the gift of prophecy. According to Origen, Paul shows, by saying "strive to prophesy," that "just as one is zealous (*aemulatur*) for ministry and teaching and exhortation (*ministerium et doctrinam et exhortationem*), etc., through her exhibiting zeal and effort (*studium ac laborem*) toward these things, in a similar way this should happen for prophecy."[72] In this way, Origen couches spiritual gifts in moralistic terms.[73] Spiritual gifts, like moral qualities, can be and should be cultivated.[74] Origen pushes Paul's ideals in a certain direction. On the one hand, he emphasizes a human responsibility to receive spiritual gifts. On the other, he enjoins his readers or hearers to participate in cultivating themselves to be worthy to receive spiritual gifts.

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[72] With Paul it is clearly approved when he says, "Be zealous for the greater gifts, but most of all that you should prophesy." There the Apostle is showing that, just as one is zealous for ministry and teaching and exhortation, etc., through his exhibiting zeal and effort toward these things, in a similar way this should happen for prophecy.

[73] For useful discussions about Origen's thoughts on moral inquiry, see Martens, "Conduct: Moral Inquiry," in *Origen and Scripture*, 161-91. For further works on Origen's views on the moral life, see W. Capitaine, *De Origenis Ethica* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1898); W. Völker, *Das Vollkommenheitsideal des Origenes: Eine Untersuchung zur Geschichte der Frömmigkeit und zu den Anfängen christlicher Mystik* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1931); G. Bardy, "Les idées morales d'Origène," *Mélanges des Science Religieuse* 13 (1956): 23–38; P. Nemeshegyi, "La morale d'Origène," *Revue d'ascétique et de mystique* 37 (1961): 409–28; G. Gruber, ZΩH—*Wesen, Stufen und Mitteilung des wahren Lebens bei Origenes* (Munich: Max Hueber, 1962); B. J. M. Bradley, "Arete as a Christian Concept: The Structural Elements of Origen's Doctrine" (Ph.D. diss., University of Cambridge, 1976); J. Dillon, "Plotinus, Philo and Origen on the grades of virtue," in *Platonismus und Christentum: Festschrift für Heinrich Dörrie*, ed. H.D. Blume and F. Mann (Münster: Aschendorffsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1983), 92–105; R. Wilken, "Alexandria: A School for Training in Virtue," in *Schools of Thought in the Christian Tradition*, ed. P. Henry (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 15–30; E. Schockenhoff, *Zum Fest der Freiheit: Theologie des christlichen Handelns bei Origenes* (Mainz: Matthias-Grünewald, 1990); J. J. Alviar, *Klesis: The Theology of the Christian Vocation According to Origen* (Dublin: Four Courts, 1993); F. Cocchini, "Il progresso spirituale in Origene," in *Spiritual Progress: Studies in the Spirituality of Late Antiquity and Early Monasticism*, ed. M. Sheridan and J. Driscoll (Rome: Centro studi S. Anselmo, 1994), 29–45; L. F. Pizzolato and M. Rizzi, eds., *Origene maestro di vita spirituale/Origen: Master of Spiritual Life (Milano, 13–15 Settembre 1999)* (Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 2001).

[74] Moser, *Teacher of Holiness,* 145.

In establishing prophecy as a current phenomenon in Christian communities, and in understanding prophecy and spiritual gifts in human-divine relationship, Origen takes ζηλοῦτε (strive for, or be zealous for) as Paul's command to a diachronic and universal Christian audience.[75] While the discussions in *Comm.Rom.* 9.1.1-9.3.7 pertain to the cultivation of a proper self that is worthy to receive spiritual gifts, the paragraphs in *Comm.Rom.* 9.3.8-14 show that Origen is not only interested in the individual, but also argues for the cultivation of the self in relation to diachronic Christian community (that is, Paul speaking to us all over time) and in relation to the community of Christians reading Origen's commentaries (a kind of ecclesiastical-scholastic group).

One of the ways Origen accentuates his emphasis on community is by attempting to link prophecy with teaching and moral discussions. It is noteworthy that in the last paragraph in which he discusses prophecy (*Comm.Rom.* 9.3.10), Origen applies the term *sermo* to prophecy.[76] *Sermo* in Latin has two meanings: sermon and moral discussion. I agree with Scheck who chooses to translate *sermo* as "moral discussion," for this rendering connects well to Origen's overall arguments.[77] Elsewhere, Origen invites the audience to participate in the scriptural practice along with Origen as the teacher (e.g., *Comm.Rom.* 9.1.12). And, as we have seen in the Introduction, Peter Martens explores

[75] About Origen's understanding of the diachronic and universal audience, see Caroline Bammel, "Augustine, Origen and the Exegesis of St. Paul"; Judith Kovacs, "Servant of Christ and Steward of the Mysteries of God."

[76] *Comm.Rom.* 9.3.10. Etenim cum moralis in ecclesia sermo tractatur tunc uniuscuiusque intra semet ipsum conscientia stimulatur recognoscentis ex his quae dicuntur propria peccata et recordantis si qua forte in occulto commiseri. Interdum autem et aestimatio ipsa prudentium uel ex uultu uel ex moribus uel ex motu uniuscuiusque colligentium profetiae speciemtenet. Haec nobis de profetiae gratia dicta sint.

[77] Scheck, *Origen: Commentary on Romans*, 209.

the way in which Origen considers his audience as participants in his scriptural interpretation.[78]

Origen considers it to be utterly significant that (Christian) audience/readers should be encouraged to cultivate a moral profile. Just as Origen notes that it is imperative for Christians, in general, to engage in scriptural interpretation, so he invites the Christians to participate in the program of cultivating moral profiles for themselves in order to receive spiritual gifts and prophecy. This theme of the cultivation of spiritual gifts clearly is evident when he involves in the audience in their own moral formation:

> And therefore, it is possible *for us* to exhibit zealous effort to attain this kind of prophecy, and it also lies *within our power* that the prophecy that is from God should be added unto us, as we pay attention to the rule or measure of faith by which we do these things. (*Comm.Rom.* 9.3.8, emphasis added)[79]

Origen augments Paul's idea and applies it to the wider audience, for Origen believes that Pauline epistles are not limited to the immediate and historical audience of a particular community. According to Origen, Paul's epistles are meant to be read by a universal and diachronic Christian community, and Origen interprets them as relevant to this broad context. Zooming in on his own audience, Origen constantly invites his own audience (including himself) into Paul's epistles, as signaled by his use of "we" language.

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[78] Martens notes that "Origen's larger exegetical enterprise where he enrolled his congregants not as an audience, but as participants in his project of scriptural exegesis." Martens, *Origen and Scripture*, 188.

[79] Et ideo adhibere studium ad huiuscemodi profetiam possibile nobis est et est in nostra potestate ut nobis in haec operam dantibus secundum rationem uel mensuram fidei qua haec facimus addatur et illa quae ex Deo est profetia.

Commentary as Polemics: Origen Joins a Larger Debate about Prophecy

So far, we have looked at the logics of Origen's *Comm.Rom.* to see that he enjoins his readers or hearers to cultivate themselves to pursue prophecy and spiritual gifts, in the context of Christian practices of scriptural interpretation. But what might Origen be arguing against? That is, what other Christian ideas regarding spiritual gifts is Origen seeking to temper or to exclude? To answer this, we return to the crucial passage of *Comm.Rom.* 9.3.8. In it, Origen seeks to control the definition of prophecy by citing Luke 16:16.

> This is why this prophecy should be understood as that which Paul teaches, not that through which one says, "Thus says the Lord." For that latter was in effect until John, according to what is written in the Gospel, "The law and the prophets were until John." Rather it is that concerning which the same apostle says, "He who prophecies speaks to people for their edification and exhortation and consolations." So then, for Paul, "prophecy" is mentioned when anyone speaks to people for their edification and when anyone speaks for their exhortation and consolation. (*Comm.Rom.* 9.3.8)[80]

Origen specifies that the prophecy to which Paul refers in 1 Corinthians 12:39 and 14:1 ("Strive to prophesy") is to be understood "as that which Paul teaches, not that through which one says, 'Thus says the Lord.'"[81] That is, Origen is splitting hairs in his definition

[80] Unde profetia intellegenda est haec quam docet Paulus non illa esse per quam dicitur: 'haec dicit Dominus;' illa enim usque ad Iohannem stetit secundum quod in euangelio scriptum est: 'lex et profetae usque ad Iohannem;' sed illa de qua idem apostolus ait: 'qui profetat hominibus loquitur aedificationem et exhortationem et consolationem.' Profetia ergo dicitur apud Paulum cum quis loquitur hominibus ad aedificationem et cum loquitur ad exhortationem et consolationem;

[81] For the relationship between prophet and priest, see, D. Kyrtats, "Prophets and Priests in Early Christianity: Production and Transmission of Religious Knowledge from Jesus to John Chrysostom," *International Sociology* 3 (1988): 365-83. This article argues that Origen draws on the religious knowledge and authority which begins from the Hebrew Scripture and probably ends with John the Baptist.

of prophecy. He argues that Paul's discussion of prophecy refers to "edification," "exhortation," and "consolation," and that this sort of prophecy should be pursued with "zealous effort" even in the present. Yet there is another kind of prophecy that only existed up to the time of John the Baptist, a kind of prophecy in which one spoke in God's own voice, often marked in scriptures by the phrase "Thus says the Lord." Origen differentiates the kind of prophecy by which God speaks directly through a medium/prophet, where the usual format starts with "thus says the Lord," from the kind of prophecy to which Paul refers in 1 Corinthians 12 and 14.

Why is Origen so particular about the definitions of prophecy? Origen tries to fend off his rhetorical opponents. He attempts to control the definition of prophecy that is relevant among Christian communities by trying to inscribe what he takes to be a correct understanding of prophecy among the Christian audiences/readers. Some have argued that Origen opposes the so-called Montanists (or New Prophecy as its adherents called it). Yet he does not explicitly denounce this group, and certainly so-called Montanists were not the only Christians of his time who participated in prophetic practices that privileges loss of the control, as we shall see in the following chapters. Thus I argue that there is no single rhetorical opponent against whom Origen aims his discussions on prophecy in *Comm.Rom.* 9.3.

Yet we do get a glimpse in this passage of Origen's careful circumscription of prophecy away from speaking as or in the voice of the divine and toward prophecy as practices of exhortation and consolation. As we shall see in the next chapter, Origen thinks that in the moment of prophecy, prophets do not lose their consciousness and thus retain their control, whereas Philo deems that a prophet relinquishes his or her self-

control to the control of the divine/the Spirit.[82] Origen also criticizes the Pythia, positioning her as the stock figure of pagan prophecy, whose loss of control is problematic. Origen contrasts Pythia, a passive and sexually lax prophetess, to a prophet such as Moses, who demonstrates masculine control in his interactions with the Spirit. As we shall see in Chapter 3, Origen criticizes the others, namely, "they," who subsume all who participate in problematic prophetic phenomena, be they non-Christians or Christians.[83]

We find confirmation of this redefinition of prophecy, likely in relation to other Christians, in a passage in 1 Corinthians 14: 6-12,

> Those who speak in a tongue and do not interpret ought not to speak since their words are undifferentiated and unintelligible. Paul refers to teachings of a more theoretical or contemplative nature as a flute and harp since they do not treat the moral life, while *he calls the exhortation to virtue a bugle*. For this reason one could maintain that the obscure parts of Scripture, for example, the discussions of sacrifices in Leviticus and of the tabernacle in Exodus, should not be read unless *someone interprets and makes their meaning clear*. (*Homilies on 1 Corinthians*, emphasis added)[84]

Here Origen discusses the trope of musical instrument as prophet, albeit briefly. The sounds of musical instruments were often used as metaphors of unintelligible or prophetic

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[82] With the test-case of Balaam. John R. Levison*, Filled with the Spirit* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 328.

[83] Origen discusses this last point concerning Christians who are not yet "mature" in greater detail in his fragmentary *Homilies on 1 Corinthians*.

[84] Claude Jenkins, ed., "Origen's *Homilies on 1 Corinthians* (fragments)," *Journal of Theological Studies* 10 (1909), 36. English translation is taken from Judith Kovacs, trans. and ed., *1 Corinthians: Interpreted by Early Christian Commentators* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005), 231. καὶ οἱ λαλοῦντες γλώσσῃ καὶ μὴ διερμηνεύοντες οὐκ ὀφείλουσι λαλεῖν, ὡς μὴ διδόντες διαστολὴν τοῖς λόγοις εἰς τὸ νοηθῆναι· τὰ μὲν οὖν τῆς θεωρίας δόγματα αὐλὸν καὶ κιθάραν εἶπεν ὡς μηδὲν ἐμφαίνοντα ἠθικόν, τοὺς δὲ ἐπ᾽ ἀρετὴν προτρεπομένους σάλπιγγ<α>· διὰ τοῦδε ἔστιν> εἰπεῖν ὅτι τὰ ἀσαφῆ τῆς γραφῆς, οἷον τὰ περὶ θυσιῶν ἐν Λευϊτικῷ καὶ τῆς σκηνῆς ἐν Ἐξόδῳ, οὐ δεῖ ἀναγιγνώσκειν, εἰ μή τις αὐτῶν σαφηνίζει τὸν νοῦν τῇ διηγήσει.

language. 1 Corinthians draws on the analogy of musical instruments in 1 Corinthians 14:7-8. The analogy of "flutes and harps and bugles" which give distinct notes (14:7-8) is similar to the analogy adapted by Plutarch's Cleombrotus, in *On the Obsolescence of Oracles* (431 B), to explain the demise of Delphi ("when the demigods withdraw and forsake the oracles, these lie idle and inarticulate like the instruments of musicians.") [85] Similarly, Philo describes the prophetic phenomenon: "he is filled with inspiration, as the reason withdraws and surrenders the citadel of the soul to a new visitor and tenant, the divine spirit which plays upon the vocal organism and dictates words which clearly express its prophetic message" (*On the Special Laws* 4:49).

While there is meager evidence for prophetic practice that Origen opposes in *Comm.Rom.* 9.3, he inscribes a correct kind of prophecy, the prophecy which "should be understood as that which Paul teaches." Two later writers who refer to 1 Corinthians 14:1 or 14:39 shed light on how Origen tries to connect prophecy with teaching and scriptural discussion. Cyril of Alexandria takes a similar position to Origen in understanding prophecy. He writes in allusion to 1 Corinthians 14:1-5,

> I mean the gift of prophecy, that is, the ability to interpret the words of the prophets. For once the Only Son had become man and suffered and been raised and the plan for our salvation had been accomplished, what sort of prophecy was required or what things still needed to be foretold? In these verses, therefore, prophesying must mean *simply* this: *the ability to interpret the prophecies*. (emphasis added)[86]

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[85] For example, Plutarch, "On the Obsolescence of Oracles," especially 418d, 431a, 436f, 437d, 404f. Philo, *Who is the Heir* 266. Christopher Forbes, "Early Christian Inspired Speech and Hellenistic Popular Religion," *Novum Testamentum* 28 (1986): 266.

[86] English translation is taken from Kovacs, *Corinthians: Interpreted by Early Christians Commentator*, 230; Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on 1 Corinthians: Sancti patris nostri Cyrilli Archiepisopi Alexandrini in D. Joannis Evangelium: accedunt fragmenta varia necnon tractatus ad Tiberium diaconum duo,*vol. 3, ed. Philip Edward Pusey (Brussels: Culture et Civilisation, 1965), 291-92.

In a similar vein, Ambrosiaster, writing in the fourth century, contends, "Paul urges them to desire prophecy earnestly, so that they might become stronger through constant discussion and explanation of the law of God and learn that the preaching of the false prophets is wrong."[87] Origen does not explicitly dichotomize "constant discussion and explanation of the law of God" and "the preaching of the false prophet" as Ambrosiaster does. What is clear, however, is that Origen is on a similar trajectory in tightly connecting prophecy to discussion of scripture. One possible explanation to understand the implicit polemics in Origen's discussion in *Comm.Rom.* 9.8ff is the canonization process, as one of the main thrusts of canonization is, arguably, to protect early Christianity from its contemporary practitioners of prophecy.[88] The prescriptive nature of canonization reveals the existence of those who participate in various kinds of prophetic activities. While the paragraph in *Comm.Rom.* 9.3.8-9.3.14 reflects Origen's polemical concern, I argue that Origen's pedagogical program (which we have seen in Origen's *Comm.Rom.* 9.1-9.3.7) is also clearly shown here. Origen continues to return to the refrain of a moral formation, virtue, and scriptural discussion.[89]

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[87] English translation is taken from Kovacs, *1 Corinthians: Interpreted by Early Christian Commentators*, 241; Ambrosiaster, *Commentary on 1 Corinthians: Commentarius in Epistulas Paulinas*, CSEL 81, ed. Heinrich Josef Vogels (Vienna: Hoelder-Richler-Tempsky, 1966-1969), 160-63.

[88] For example, Lee M. McDonald and James A. Sanders, *The Canon Debate* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2002); Bruce M. Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament: Its Origin, Development, and Significance* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987).

[89] A fourth-century work titled *Debate of a Montanist and an Orthodox Christian* is a good example of the relationship between prophecy and biblical teaching and shows a fascinating conversation regarding various aspects of prophecy. See Ronald E. Heine, *The Montanist Oracles and Testimonia* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1989), 112-27.

Tertullian is also an interesting case in our discussion. He is particularly keen on claiming that the Montanist prophets are true prophets, because they are following the biblical teaching, debunking the claim of "false prophets" given by many other writers. He argues that prophecy is

In this text, when Origen connects prophecy to teaching, scriptural discussion, consolation, and exhortation[90] he seems to participate in taxonomizing prophetic phenomena, which is a well-attested Greco-Roman practices. For example, Plato famously makes a distinction between prophecy as inspired prophecy and prophecy as interpretation, work that was allotted to the augur.[91] Nasrallah argues these ancient thinkers such as Plato, Philo, and Tertullian offer "threefold and fourfold lists," and that "they offer several definitions, but they settle on one as best."[92] However, as we shall see in the following chapters, it is not clear whether Origen settles on one definition of prophecy as the best one. In *Comm.Rom.*, it seems to be clear that Origen connects prophecy to teaching and moral discussion, as he was bound by the Pauline text. In *De Principiis* 3, which we shall investigate in Chapter 3, Origen seems to connect prophecy to contemplation. Instead of trying to figure out Origen's definition of prophecy, my work rather focuses on the way in which Origen strategically deploys his discussions on

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not entirely new, but it is in line with what the biblical teaching, and the rule of faith (*regula fidei*) he is trying to foster. He is particularly important in understanding the issue of the source of authority: whether a revelation gains authority only when it is congruent with the biblical teaching or not. Other authors such as those found in Epiphanius criticized that the Montanist oracles are not following the biblical teaching, so their prophecy is false. But Tertullian negates their claims. See Tertullian, *On Fasting,* 1.

[90] Romans 12, in its brief discussion on spiritual gifts, is commonly considered as a kind of epitome of 1 Corinthians 12-14. As most New Testament scholars have agreed, for Paul, one of the most significant concerns in 1 Corinthians 14 is to set up what he considers to be a proper relationship between speaking in tongues (*glossolalia*) and prophecy. Origen, on the other hand, does not show much interest in figuring out a relationship between glossolalia and prophecy. He is concerned with a different matter, that is, the relationship between the divine and the human, and prophecy is a prime example for how this relationship is sorted out.

[91] Plato, *Timaeus* 71e-72b; *Phaedrus* 244 a-d. James Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit*, 228; Levison, *Filled with the Spirit*, 192; idem., *First Century Judaism*, 151-58, 208-9.

[92] Nasrallah, *Ecstasy of Folly*, 58.

prophecy and uses the discussions on prophecy rhetorically in order to persuade his readers and hearers in a certain way.

Conclusion

This chapter explores the ways in which Origen emphasizes participation in prophecy and spiritual gifts, and seeks to persuade his (Christian) readers to cultivate a specific disposition. This disposition involves a life worthy to receive the spiritual gifts, especially prophecy. According to Origen, the worthy life requires cultivating virtues such as self-control. However, Origen gives no specific instruction for how to cultivate the self, as he does in *De Principiis* 3.3.3 (see discussion in Chapter 3). Rather, Origen suggests an implicit way to cultivate virtue: it is by reading and exegeting the scripture. Origen is engaged in commentarial/exegetical practices, driven by his explication of Romans in relation to a) Paul's corpus as a whole and b) the ethics/practices Origen is trying to inculcate in his community. Origen's reading of Paul places Origen within existing traditions of παιδεία insofar as Origen focuses on reading and interpretation of the texts as fundamental for the purification of the soul ("*training* in wisdom").

As we saw above in the last sections of this chapter, we only hear Origen's voice as he rhetorically constructs his opponents who uphold different ideas on prophecy. In the following chapters, I will explore other texts which demonstrate the diversity of competing voices on prophecy, both within Christianity and with other philosophical trends of the day.

Chapter 2
A True Prophet as a Mouthpiece of the Spirit? Cultivating Virtue and Control

In the previous chapter, I demonstrated that Origen interprets Romans 12:3-8 together with 1 Corinthians 12-14 in his *Commentary on Romans* 9.1-9.3, arguing that spiritual gifts, in general, and prophecy, in particular, are cultivated by human work as well as by God's grace. We saw that Origen understands prophecy to be deeply intertwined with a moral formation, and how his *Commentary on Romans* implicitly denigrates his rhetorical opponents who uphold different ideas on prophecy. The current chapter continues to demonstrate how Origen engages the contested terms of prophetic activity in order to persuade his audience(s) toward the cultivation of a certain kind of self, turning to different materials in Origen.

In order to better understand the way in which Origen's texts exhort the readers to cultivate themselves to be a proper self vis-à-vis the Holy Spirit, this chapter engages the *Shepherd of Hermas* (especially Mandate 11) to draw out similarities and differences with Origen's substantial discussions on prophecy in *Contra Celsum Book* 7 and *Homilies on Numbers* 14-17 ("The Book of Balaam"). I do so not to argue some genealogical relationship between Origen and the *Shepherd*, although we do know that Origen knew the text. Rather, the chapter demonstrates that both Origen and the author of the *Shepherd of Hermas* show how prophecy is a contested category, and each writer attempts to persuade the audience(s) to cultivate particular selves vis-à-vis the Holy Spirit. When we put Origen's works alongside the *Shepherd of Hermas*, the three foci that operate in this dissertation—contestation, persuasion, and cultivation—clearly

emerge. These discussions on prophecy are ultimately connected to the theme of personhood and self, while the discussions on prophecy oftentimes interweave with the question of who is a good person.

This chapter is comprised of two parts. The first part examines the discussions about prophecy in the *Shepherd of Hermas*. I read the *Shepherd of Hermas* as a potent voice that understands a (true) prophet in a way that differs from Origen. As we have seen in the previous chapter, Origen denigrates the kind of prophecy by which God speaks directly through a medium/a prophet, where the usual format starts with "thus says the Lord." *Commentary on Romans* of course highlights Origen's voice and his constructions of rhetorical opponents who he thinks hold problematic understandings of prophecy. If we read it alone, we might stand in danger of joining his vilification of those with whom he disagrees. The *Shepherd of Hermas* provides an example of the diverse competing voices and a different Christian viewpoint which Origen implicitly engages.

When read together with Origen's works on prophecy, the *Shepherd of Hermas* functions as a potent comparandum to shed a light on what is at stake in the discussions on prophecy. While the notion that prophecy and the prophet are distinctively moral pervades the writings of Origen and the *Shepherd of Hermas*, they offer different arguments. The *Shepherd of Hermas* considers one of the hallmarks of true prophecy to be its involuntary and passive nature, a viewpoint with which Origen vehemently disagrees.

Contrary to the *Shepherd of Hermas*, Origen emphasizes self-control throughout the process of prophecy. The second part of this chapter engage with Origen's *Contra Celsum* Book 7 and Balaam's story in his *Homilies on Numbers* 14-17 in order to see

how Origen deploys rhetorical constructions of prophecy. Origen's *Contra Celsum* polemicizes against loss of control in so-called "pagan" prophecy, trying to constitute a Christian prophecy over against the so-called pagan prophecy and mantic practices. *Contra Celsum* demonstrates a complex rhetorical strategy that inscribes the rhetorical opponents as passive in prophecy. These discussions on prophecy intertwine with the theme of control and the loss of control, and the gender of prophet is at stake as well. In engaging these issues, Origen attempts to persuade the readers and hearers to develop a self that is differentiated from pagan prophets and other Christian prophets. Origen's *Homilies on Numbers* 14-17 deals with the fact that Balaam, who is not a worthy prophet, is nonetheless chosen to prophesy. Origen rejects the model of loss of control by the spirit in the moment of prophecy, a model adopted by the *Shepherd of Hermas*. Instead, Origen interprets the prophet Balaam allegorically insofar as Balaam is portrayed as a person who is being gradually changed.

The *Shepherd of Hermas*: Why the *Shepherd of Hermas*?

The *Shepherd of Hermas*[1] provides an important example of the diverse competing voices and a Christian *comparandum* which Origen implicitly engages. The *Shepherd of Hermas* was one of the most popular works in early Christianity, and its popularity spread through the entire Mediterranean region.[2] It has been widely agreed

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[1] Bart D. Ehrman, ed. and trans., *The Shepherd of Hermas,* The Apostolic Fathers, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003). English translation follows but sometimes modifies Ehrman.

[2] Carolyn Osiek, *The Shepherd of Hermas*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999). "From the papyri [Epistula Iacobi Apocrypha], it appears that Hermas, with his full description of prophetic activity within the church communities (Mand XI) belonged to the most popular

that the provenance of the *Shepherd of Hermas* is Rome, and its date of production is the early or mid second century.[3] Given the huge popularity of the *Shepherd of Hermas* to the Christian audience and Origen's familiarity with the text, I consider the *Shepherd of Hermas* as a potent example of a Christian text that both participates in a popular and longstanding ancient discourse on prophecy as characterized by loss of human control.[4]

Origen's works reveal his familiarity with the *Shepherd of Hermas*, which Origen cites in many places, even if he never engages the text implicitly in his discussions of prophecy past and present gifts.[5] He refers to the *Shepherd of Hermas*, for example, in order to support his own argument about two spirits or two angels that work in a human being, which we shall explore in Chapter 3.[6]

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reading of early Christian Egypt," 39. J. Van Der Vilet, "Spirit and Prophecy in the Epistula Iacobi Apocrypha (NHC i.2)," *Vigiliae Christiane* 44 (1990): 25-53.

[3] Osiek, *Hermas*, 18. Geoffrey Hahneman is one of the unusual voices in placing *The Shepherd of Hermas* in the East. Geoffrey Mark Hahneman, *The Muratorian Fragment and the Development of the Canon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press; New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 34; Ehrman, *The Shepherd of Hermas*, 162. The usual dating of the text is reached largely on the basis of the Muratorian fragment that locates the composition of the *Shepherd of Hermas* right after the middle of the second century. However, in recent years that traditional dating has become more and more questionable since, on the one hand, there are papyri of the Shepherd that seems to date from the early second century (see A. Carlini, "Testimone e testo: il problema della datazione di PIand I 4 del Pastore di Erma," in *SCO* 42 (1992): 17-30), but the entire can be rediscussed and anticipated also on other terms (see A. Gregory, *Disturbing Trajectories:* 1 Clement, *the* Shepherd of Hermas*, and the Development of Early Roman Christianity*, in *Rome in the Bible and the Early Church,* ed. P. Oakes (Carlisle, Paternoster, 2002), 142-66.)

[4] The *Shepherd of Hermas'* three sections consist of five visions, twelve mandates (or commandments) and ten *parable*s (or similitudes). The scholarly consensus is that the text was written by a single author over a long period of time. Osiek, *Herma*s, 9-10.

[5] For example, *De Principiis* 3.2 and *Homilies on Numbers* 8. In his *Commentary on Romans* 10:31, Origen claims that Hermas in Rom 16:14 is the same Hermas, the protagonist in *Herm*. Scheck argues that although Origen does not view the *Shepherd of Hermas* as canonical, he considers the work to be immensely useful and even "divinely inspired." Scheck, *Homilies on Numbers*, 33.

[6] *De Principiis* 3.2. English translation is from Butterworth, *De Principiis*, 216. "Moreover *the book of the Shepherd asserts the same thing*, teaching that two angels attend each

A True Prophet as a Mouthpiece of the Spirit:

Mandate 11contains an extended discussion of prophecy and related phenomena.[7] It presents a singular instance regarding prophecy: in discussing several criteria of a true prophet,[8] this work asserts that passivity, loss of control, or involuntariness is one of the major markers of true prophecy.[9]

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human being, and saying that whenever good thoughts arise in our heart they are suggested by the good angel, and whenever thoughts of the opposite kind they are the inspiration of the bad angel" (emphasis added).

[7] As I have shown in the Introduction, it is widely recognized that in antiquity prophecy, oracles, dreams, and visions are all closely related. Patricia Cox Miller notes, "According to Hermas, the revelatory visions were dreams [….] The term used by Hermas to characterize his fine visions, *horaeseis*, was a metaphor of seeing, like the Latin *visio*, that constituted part of the technical vocabulary of oneiric description in antiquity." Patricia Cox Miller, "'A Dubious Twilight': Reflections on Dreams in Patristic Literature," *Church History* 55 (June, 1986): 133. See also Eric Robertson Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Boston, Beacon Press: 1957), 105; Peter Brown, *The Making of Late Antiquity*, 65**.**

[8] The categorization of "false prophet" has a long history spanning from the earliest Christian literature to the present day. There are several criteria for deciding whether a person is a false prophet or not. The *teaching* of the false prophet is one of the criteria. For example, Simon has been understood by many as a pro-Gnostic, and has been a target of many early Christian writers such as Irenaeus who criticized Simon's "erroneous teaching." Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 1. 23. An equally important strategy in calling the other false prophet is to criticize the other's practice. The *Didache* is a case in point. It offers a simple principle: the true prophet's conduct matches his/her teaching. If s/he a true prophet, s/he would not ask for money after s/he speaks a prophecy to a believer; s/he would not stay more than three days in a believer's home, etc. (*Didache*, XI. 1-12). What is to be noted is that the fusion between the two categories—wrong teaching and wrong conduct—happens often.

Cyprian, in the third century, also deploys the rhetoric of false prophets to silence his opponents: Cyprian does not play down the reality and importance of the prophetic spirit. In his *Letters* and *Treatises*, he stresses the prophetic activities in his own community, calling those who prophesy beyond the boundary of his communities false prophets. He cannot condone those who "elect their own bishops and elders" and claim that they are prophets in their own right. According to him, true prophets exist only inside his believing community. It is no wonder that he was harshly critical of the Montanist movement. By calling other prophets false, Cyprian aimed at creating and maintaining the order and purity of the group where he belonged and pastored. Cecil M. Robeck, *Prophecy in Carthage: Perpetua, Tertullian and Cyprian* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 1992), 72-3.

[9] Giovanni Bazzana," 'Il corpo della carne di Gesù Cristo ' (P. Ox. I.5): conflitti ecclesiologici nel cristianesimo del II secolo," *Adamantius* 10 (2004): 100-22.

> [A true prophet] never gives an answer to anyone when asked, nor does s/he speak in private. The Holy Spirit does not speak when the person wants to speak, but when God wants him/her to speak. (Mandate 11.8) [10]

The argument that a prophet speaks when God wants him/her to speak instead of speaking on his or her own exhibits a certain passivity[11] or involuntariness for the prophet. One marker of a true prophet is a lack of control over her/himself and over the content of the prophecy.[12] A false prophet, however, controls the content of the prophecy that he/she utters. A false prophet chooses what to speak according to the desires of the people who ask him/her questions.

> And so, these double-minded people (οἱ δίψυχοι) come to him/her [a false prophet] as if s/he were a diviner (soothsayer) (ὡς ἐπὶ μάντιν), and ask him/her what will happen. And that false prophet, having no power of the divine spirit in himself/herself, speaks with them in light of the requests and evil desires they have, and s/he fills their souls as they themselves wish. (Mandate 11.2)[13]

The author of the *Shepherd of Hermas* likens the false prophet to a μάντις, a diviner or soothsayer. Mandate 11 also criticizes the spirit that works in the false prophet.

> But the spirit (τό πνεῦμα) that, when consulted, speaks in light of human desires is earthly and insubstantial, having no power. And it does not speak at all unless it is consulted. (Mandate 11.6)[14]

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[10] English translation follows Ehrman's with my modification. καὶ οὐδενὶ οὐδὲν ἀποκρίνεται ἐπερωτώμενος, οὐδὲ καταμόνας λαλεῖ, οὐδὲ ὅταν θέλῃ ἄνθρωπος λαλεῖν, λαλεῖ τὸ πνεῦμα <τὸ> ἅγιον, ἀλλὰ τότε λαλεῖ, ὅταν θελήσῃ αὐτὸν ὁ θεὸς λαλῆσαι.

[11] Passivity is, to use Marilyn Skinner's terms, "a bankruptcy of will and nerve." Marilyn Skinner, *Sexuality in Greek and Roman Culture* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005), 212.

[12] Cf. Bazzana, "'Il corpo della carne di Gesù Cristo'," 111. "A decisive factor is likely able to be identified in the role that Paul claims for control of the oracles and the intelligibility (*nous*) of those who exercises the prophetic charism."

[13] οὗτοι οὖν οἱ δίψυχοι ὡς ἐπὶ μάντιν ἔρχονται καὶ ἐπερωτῶσιν αὐτόν, τί ἄρα ἔσται αὐτοῖς· κἀκεῖνος ὁ ψευδοπροφήτης, μηδεμίαν ἔχων ἐν ἑαυτῷ δύναμιν πνεύματος θείου, λαλεῖ μετ' αὐτῶν κατὰ τὰ ἐπερωτήματα αὐτῶν καὶ κατὰ τὰς ἐπιθυμίας τῆς πονηρίας αὐτῶν, καὶ πληροῖ τὰς ψυχὰς αὐτῶν καθὼς αὐτοὶ βούλονται.

[14] τὸ δὲ πνεῦμα τὸ ἐπερωτώμενον καὶ λαλοῦν κατὰ τὰς ἐπιθυμίας τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἐπίγειόν

With the same intensity with which the *Shepherd of Hermas* criticizes the false prophet, it also pillories those who associate with the false prophet by asking him questions.

> All those who are double-minded and who are constantly changing their minds, consult the oracle (μαντεύονται) as do even the gentiles. And they bring a greater sin upon themselves by committing idolatry this way. For the one who asks (ἐπε-ρωτῶν) a false prophet about any matter is an idolater, devoid of the truth, and foolish. (Mandate 11.4)[15]

The *Shepherd of Hermas* thus employs a common slander against Greco-Roman oracular prophecy, or divination, according to which the false prophet is one who just speaks what others desire to hear.[16]

Why does the *Shepherd of Hermas* takes pains to contest the practice of consulting an oracle, and asking questions (ἐπερωτάω)[17] which, as Robin Lane Fox puts it, is a "'neutral technology' of prophecy" in antiquity?[18] The rhetorical strategy of the *Shepherd of Hermas* is to argue that a true prophet is passive or involuntarily prophesies, for he or she is "never consulted (οὐκ ἐπερωτᾶται)" (Mandate 11.5), nor does the prophet

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ἐστι καὶ ἐλαφρόν, δύναμιν μὴ ἔχον· καὶ ὅλως οὐ λαλεῖ ἐὰν μὴ ἐπερωτηθῇ.

[15] ὅσοι δὲ δίψυχοί εἰσι καὶ πυκνῶς μετανοοῦσι, μαντεύονται ὡς καὶ τὰ ἔθνη, καὶ ἑαυτοῖς μείζονα ἁμαρτίαν ἐπιφέρουσιν εἰδωλολατροῦντες· ὁ γὰρ ἐπερωτῶν ψευδοπροφήτην περὶ πράξεώς τινος εἰδωλολάτρης ἐστὶ καὶ κενὸς ἀπὸ τῆς ἀληθείας καὶ ἄφρων.

[16] Osiek, *Hermas*, 142. *Contra* Reiling, *Hermas and Christian Prophecy*, 37. See David Aune, "Her. Man. 11.2: Christian False Prophets Who Say What People Wish to Hear," *JBL* 97 (1978): 103-4.

[17] An important example from non-Christian culture would be the Delphic oracle. At Delphi, after people bring their questions, the Pythia delivers answers from Apollo. For this practice, see Sarah Iles Johnston, "The Divine Experience: Delphi and Dodona," in *Ancient Greek Divination* (Malden, MA; Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell Pub., 2008), 33-75.

[18] Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, 389.

speak on her/his own.[19] Thus the *Shepherd of Hermas* incorporates a trope that a prophet functions as a sort of mouthpiece for God.[20]

Cultivate Passivity to Become an Appropriate Vessel

True prophecy in the *Shepherd of Hermas* is understood to be passive and involuntary. Moreover, the *Shepherd of Hermas* emphasizes that a spirit invades (and occupies) and fills human beings in the moment of prophecy. This work emphasizes, too, that the Holy Spirit and the evil spirit invade and penetrate certain kinds of people. That is, the Holy Spirit occupies virtuous people, while the evil spirit invades empty people, as similar sorts attract each other. Mandate 11 states: "The devil (ὁ διάβολος) fills (πληροῖ) a false prophet with his own spirit so that he may be able to break down some of the righteous people" (Mandate 11.3).[21] In contrast, "the angel of the prophetic spirit lying on (κείμενος) that person fills him/her, and once the person is filled, she/he speaks

[19] In order to contextualize this discussion, it is helpful to examine the work of Epictetus. For example, in the *Handbook: Guides to Stoic Living*, Epictetus discusses the meaning of diviner (*mantis*) and divination (*mantike*), noting, "therefore, do not bring desire and aversion to the diviner (for, if you do, you will be fearful of what you may hear), but go with the understanding that everything that happens will be indifferent and of no concern to you, for whatever it may be it is in your power to make good use of it, and that no one can hinder you in this." Keith Seddon, *Epictetus's Handbook and the Tablet of Cebes: Guides to Stoic Living* (London; New York: Routledge, 2005), 124.

[20] For example, an oracle attributed to Montanus by Epiphanius: "For Montanus says, for instance: 'Behold, man is like a lyre, and I flit about like a plectron; man sleeps, and I awaken him; behod, it is the Lord who changes the hearts of men and gives men a heart." Ronald E. Heine, *The Montanist Oracles and Testimonia*, 3.

[21] αὐτὸς γὰρ κενὸς ὢν κενὰ καὶ ἀποκρίνεται κενοῖς· ὃ γὰρ ἐὰν ἐπερωτηθῇ, πρὸς τὸ κένωμα τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἀποκρίνεται. τινὰ δὲ καὶ ῥήματα ἀληθῆ λαλεῖ· ὁ γὰρ διάβολος πληροῖ αὐτὸν τῷ αὐτοῦ πνεύματι, εἴ τινα δυνήσεται ῥῆξαι τῶν δικαίων.

in the holy spirit to the congregation, just as the Lord desires" (Mandate 11.9).[22] The phenomenon of *Geisterfüllung*[23] is also discussed in Mandate 5.1:

> "Be patient (Μακρόθυμος)," he said, "and have understanding and you will have power over all evil deeds and do everything that is righteous. If you are patient, the holy spirit that dwells (κατοικοῦν) in you will be pure, not overshadowed by another, evil spirit, but living openly, it will rejoice and be happy along with the vessel (σκεύους) in which it dwells (κατοικοῦν), and it will serve God in great joy, having within it a sense of well-being. But if any bad temper enters it, immediately the holy spirit, which is sensitive,[24] feels suffocated; and not having a pure place it seeks to leave (ἀποστῆναι). For it is suffocated (πνίγεται) by the evil spirit, not having a place to serve the Lord as it wishes, being polluted by the bad temper. For the Lord dwells in patience, but the devil in bad temper. And so, when both spirits dwell in the same place, it is unprofitable and evil for that person in whom they dwell. (Mandate 5.1.1-4)[25]

Both Mandate 5 and Mandate 11 indicate some presupposition that the human can be possessed by a spirit, even if the technical terms ἔκστασις or the noun form of κατέχω that are usually used to denote possession or trance do not appear in the text. Osiek

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[22] Mandate 11.9. ὅταν οὖν ἔλθῃ ὁ ἄνθρωπος ὁ ἔχων τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ θεῖον εἰς συναγωγὴν ἀνδρῶν δικαίων τῶν ἐχόντων πίστιν θείου πνεύματος, καὶ ἔντευξις γένηται πρὸς τὸν θεὸν τῆς συναγωγῆς τῶν ἀνδρῶν ἐκείνων, τότε ὁ ἄγγελος τοῦ πνεύματος τοῦ προφητικοῦ ὁ κείμενος ἐπ' αὐτῷ πληροῖ τὸν ἄνθρωπον καὶ πλησθεὶς ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἐκεῖνος τῷ πνεύματι τῷ ἁγίῳ λαλεῖ εἰς τὸ πλῆθος καθὼς ὁ κύριος βούλεται.

[23] One example of "spirit-filling" in a Greek source is Pollux, *Onomasticon* 1.15, which describes how a prophetic spirit flows into a human being. Reiling, *Hermas and Christian Prophecy*, 114.

[24] Regarding the sensitive and delicate spirit, J. E. Morgan-Wynne, "The 'Delicacy' of the Spirit in the *Shepherd of Hermas* and in Tertullian," *Studia Patristica* 21 (1989): 154-57.

[25] My translation. Μακρόθυμος, φησί, γίνου καὶ συνετός, καὶ πάντων τῶν πονηρῶν ἔργων κατακυριεύσεις καὶ ἐργάσῃ πᾶσαν δικαιοσύνην. ἐὰν γὰρ μακρόθυμος ἔσῃ, τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον τὸ κατοικοῦν ἐν σοὶ καθαρὸν ἔσται, μὴ ἐπισκοτούμενον ὑπὸ ἑτέρου πονηροῦ πνεύματος, ἀλλ' ἐν εὐρυχώρῳ κατοικοῦν ἀγαλλιάσεται καὶ εὐφρανθήσεται μετὰ τοῦ σκεύους ἐν ᾧ κατοικεῖ, καὶ λειτουργήσει τῷ θεῷ ἐν ἱλαρότητι πολλῇ, ἔχον τὴν εὐθηνίαν ἐν ἑαυτῷ. ἐὰν δὲ ὀξυχολία τις προσέλθῃ, εὐθὺς τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον, τρυφερὸν ὄν, στενοχωρεῖται, μὴ ἔχον τὸν τόπον καθαρόν, καὶ ζητεῖ ἀποστῆναι ἐκ τοῦ τόπου· πνίγεται γὰρ ὑπὸ τοῦ πονηροῦ πνεύματος, μὴ ἔχον τόπον λειτουργῆσαι τῷ κυρίῳ καθὼς βούλεται, μιαινόμενον ὑπὸ τῆς ὀξυχολίας. ἐν γὰρ τῇ μακροθυμίᾳ ὁ κύριος κατοικεῖ, ἐν δὲ τῇ ὀξυχολίᾳ ὁ διάβολος. ἀμφότερα οὖν τὰ πνεύματα ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ κατοικοῦντα, ἀσύμφορόν ἐστιν καὶ πονηρὸν τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ ἐκείνῳ ἐν ᾧ κατοικοῦσιν.

argues that the terms ἀποστῆναι ("leave") and πνίγεται ("feel suffocated") in Mandate 5.1.3 suggest a possession. Mandate 5 2.2 has another example of possession, according to Osiek, when a bad temper, which is frequently described as an attribute of the evil spirit, sees "those who are empty and of two minds" at rest, "it barges in violently (παρεμβάλλει) itself into their hearts."[26] In contrast, the *Shepherd of Hermas* does not use such a violent and forceful image for the holy spirit, which is portrayed as gentle.

The *Shepherd of Hermas*'s concept of prophecy as a passive phenomenon is also demonstrated by its use of images of vessels or containers (σκευή) in Mandate 11.13 and Mandate 5.2.6.[27] In contemporaneous literature, σκευή is sometimes used to denote a human being. [28] With respect to prophecy, this image reflects the understanding that a human being harbors a spirit (either good or evil) as the source of prophecy. The image of a jar (κέραμος) in Mandate 11.15 is also used in a similar vein. These images undergird the idea of an occupation by a spirit and are used to emphasize the passivity of a prophet in the sense of the loss of control over oneself.

Since the holy spirit occupies virtuous people and an evil spirit invades empty people, it is crucial for the *Shepherd of Hermas* that one cultivate oneself to be virtuous in order to attract the Holy Spirit. Put differently, it is important to create an adequate

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[26] Osiek, *Hermas,* 119-20. Mandate 5.2.2. ὁταν γὰρ ἴδῃ τοὺς τοιούτους ἀνθρώπους εὐσταθοῦντας, παρεμβάλλει ἑαυτὴν εἰς τὴν καρδίαν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐκείνου. To see a larger context of the *Shepherd of Hermas*: while he was "praising God's creations, how great and powerful they are," Hermas "went into a sleep," which is a common expression for trance, and it seemed that he was "seized by the spirit/Spirit, which "lifted him beyond rough country to a level plain" (Vis. 1.1.3-1.2.2). Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, 382.

[27] In the entire Mandate, σκευή appears only in these two sections.

[28] C. Maurer, "σκευή," *TDNT*, 1039.

condition for becoming a vessel in which the divine can dwell.[29] For example, Mandate 11.7b-8 discusses the way in which one can discern a true prophet. An important criterion is his or her (way of) life.

> You must discern the person with the divine spirit[30] by his/her way of life. First, the one who has the spirit that comes from above is meek (πραῦς), mild or gentle (ἡσύχιος), and humble; s/he abstains from all evil and the vain desire of this age; s/he makes herself/himself more lowly than all others.[31]

The same terms that are used in Mandate 11.8—meek, mild or gentle are deployed in the next passage:

> For when these spirits dwell in one and the same vessel with the Holy Spirit, the vessel no longer has sufficient space but is stuffed to the brim. And so the sensitive spirit, which is not accustomed to dwelling with an evil spirit nor with bad temper, leaves the person and *seeks to live with meekness and mildness*. (Mandate 5.2.5-6, emphasis added)

The holy spirit searches for those who are meek and mild in order to dwell with them. Read together, both Mandate 11.8 and Mandate 5.2.5-6 of the *Shepherd of Hermas* not only describe, but also implicitly *prescribe*, the characteristics of a (true) prophet. The prophet is meek and mild. This ethical condition is crucial so that s/he may *invite* the Holy Spirit to dwell in her/him and so that s/he, vessel-like, may contain the Holy Spirit.

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[29] The text itself does not describe the exact *method* of cultivating the properly prophetic self. The technical term ἄσκησις (philosophical exercise) and its cognate appear once in Mandate 8. 10, when *The Shepherd of Hermas* exhorts the readers to cultivate an ethical stance and to "train in righteousness (δικαιοσύνην ἀσκεῖν)." However, despite the apparent lack of the technical term ἄσκησις, which is greatly developed in ascetic practices in various forms, we can detect similar practices.

[30] In the passage above, "the person with the divine spirit" is discussed in the context of discerning a prophet, and thus the text seems to equate the prophet and "the person with the divine spirit."

[31] Mandate 11.7b-8: ἀπὸτῆς ζωῆς δοκίμαζε τὸν ἄνθρωπον τὸν ἔχοντα τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ θεῖον. 8. πρῶτον μὲν ὁ ἔχων τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἄνωθεν πραῦς ἐστι καὶ ἡσύχιος καὶ ταπεινόφρων καὶ ἀπεχόμενος ἀπὸπάσης πονηρίας καὶ ἐπιθυμίας ματαίας τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου
καὶ ἑαυτὸν ἐνδεέστερον ποιεῖ πάντων τῶν ἀνθρώπων.

If s/he is neither meek nor mild, the Spirit will not dwell in the person. If she or he is no longer virtuous, the Spirit will leave the person.[32]

How then does this text conceive of making oneself virtuous so that the Holy Spirit can dwell within a person? One of the ways is that she or he must control desire (ἐπιθυμία).[33] As B. Diane Lipsett cogently argues in her *Desiring Conversion: Hermas, Thecla, Aseneth*, the terms ἐγκράτεια and ἐπιθυμία[34] are "workhorse words within this text's register of virtue language. Though in later Christian texts ἐγκράτεια becomes a technical term for celibacy, the use here is broader."[35] The *Shepherd of Hermas* thus evinces its own philosophical concerns over desire, a concept highlighted in the Greco-Roman schools of moral philosophy in controlling passions.[36] For example, Epictetus

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[32] This view that connects prophecy to morality is prevalent in many writings. For example, see James L. Kugel, ed., *Poetry and Prophecy: The Beginnings of a Literary Tradition* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990). "The typical Jewish view, inherited from the rabbis, is that prophets were supposed to be 'wise, strong and wealth,'" 35.

[33] An analysis by a concordance reveals an important aspect of prophecy in the *Shepherd of Hermas* in connection with ἐπιθυμία. The significance of this term, ἐπιθυμία, and its cognates, is shown by its many uses (28!) in the entire Mandate. Of these 28 times, 25 occur in Mandate 11 and 12; four occur in Mandate 11; 21 in Mandate 12; two in Mandate 6.2.5; one in Mandate 8.1.5.

[34] Osiek discusses both Stoic and Jewish-Christian influence in the discussion of desire (*epithumia*), when she says, "desire is usually understood negatively, especially under Stoic influence […] But in the Jewish-Christian context, Hermas realizes that not all desire is bad. This dualism of desires could well correspond to the good and bad desire of Jewish two-ways moral teaching." *Hermas,* 148 n. 1. However, her facile division between Stoic and Jewish-Christian influences is not so helpful.

[35] Diane Lipsett also draws on Foucault's description of the term's general usage in the moral philosophical tradition, citing Foucault, "Enkrateia, with its opposite, akrasia, is located on the axis of struggle, resistance, and combat; it is self-control, tension, 'continence'; enkrateia rules over pleasures and desires, but has to struggle to maintain control." Michel Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure*, trans. Robert Hurley, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 2 (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 65; B. Diane Lipsett, *Desiring Conversion: Hermas, Thecla, Aseneth* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 21-2.

highlights "desires and aversions," – passions, that is, "inappropriate emotions caused by errors of judgment, in particular desire (*epithumia*), fear (*phobos*), intense pleasure (*hedone*), and grief (*lupe*)."[37] Mandate 10.2, for example, shows a discussion of how grief (λύπη) impacts the holy spirit: "So listen, you foolish one, he said, to how grief (λύπη) wears out the holy spirit and then again saves it. […] Both double-mindedness and irascibility, therefore, grieve the holy spirit." Thus, it is important to have a control over one's emotions, such as grief, in order for the good spirit to keep dwelling within the person.[38]

Mandates 9-11 in the *Shepherd of Hermas* also emphasize the importance of the discerning of spirits—an important early Christian issue as we shall see in detail in Chapter 3— and actively intertwine such discernment with judging false and true prophecy.[39] The point of the struggle or discernment is this: the person is responsible for which kind of spirit predominates in him/her.

In sum, in the *Shepherd of Hermas*, two interlocking themes emerge: first, (true) prophecy is presented as a passive experience (in the sense that the prophet is the mouthpiece of God), and, second, there is a strong suggestion that a certain cultivation is

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[36] Or "extirpation of passions." See Martha Nussbaum, "The Stoics on the Extirpation of the Passions," *Apeiron* 20 (1987): 122-77.

[37] Lipsett, *Desiring Converstion*, 11; A. A. Long, "Epictetus on Emotions," in *From Epicurus to Epictetus: Studies in Hellenistic and Roman Philosophy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006), 381.

[38] Bad desires need to be resisted and controlled, whereas people need to succumb to and submit (υποτάσσειν) to good desires. This is succinctly stated in Mandate 12:1-2. "He said to me: 'Get rid of all evil desire from yourself, and put on the desire that is good and reverent, for if you are clothed with that desire, you will despise the evil desire and bridle it as you wish.'" Here lies the tension between controlling/bridling evil desire and putting on the good desire.

[39] David Hunter, "The Language of Desire: Clement of Alexandria's Transformation of Ascetic Discourse," *Semeia* 57 (1991): 95-111.

required, in order to be a right vessel for the Spirit to indwell. It is necessary to cultivate self-control (ἐγκράτεια) to be a proper self to receive the Holy Spirit. However, at the moment of prophecy, the tenor has shifted: Now a lack of self-control is the hallmark of true prophecy.

Is Everyone a Potential Prophet?

As we have seen above, the *Shepherd of Hermas* exhorts the audiences to cultivate a particular way of life so that they may both *invite* the holy spirit to dwell in them and *contain* the holy spirit. I suggest that *Shepherd of Hermas* conveys the idea that anyone can *potentially* become a prophet, as long as the divine spirit dwells in her/him.[40] Reiling maintains, "*charismata* for Hermas are not extraordinary endowments, but moral qualities [and] virtues."[41] Hermas serves as a good example of one who participates in the cultivation of these moral qualities and virtues. He develops into a prophet while he participates in preparations for prophecy such as fasting and cultivating virtues.[42] For example, Hermas fasts before he receives visions: "After fifteen days of fasting and many

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[40] Scholars have discussed whether the prophet is a "specialist in mediating divine revelation" or an "ordinary member of the church." See David Aune, "Who prophesied in Early Christianity?" in *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean*, 198; Reiling, *Hermas and Christian Prophecy*, 97; idem, "Prophecy, the Spirit and the Church," 73-4.

Aune discusses the theme that in early Christianity all believers were "potential, if not actual prophets" in a theological, not a historical sense. Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity,* 195. Aune also discusses how this theme that all people are potential prophets is reflected in Plutarch (*De sera numinis* 566c; *De def. orac*. 413e-432b; *De gen. Socr.* 588d-e, 589b-c), and also in Philostratus (*Vita Apoll*. iii. 42). Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity*, 349 n.13; Reiling, *Hermas and Christian Prophecy*, 124-25, 135-36, 146.

[41] Reiling, *Hermas and Christian Prophecy*, 146.

[42] As we saw in the Introduction, fasting is a well-attested practice that leads to prophetic experiences.

prayers to the Lord, the knowledge of the writing was revealed to me" (Visions 2.2.1 and 3.1.2). For the *Shepherd of Hermas*, fasting engenders "the humility of spirit": "Every request needs humility of spirit. Fast, then, and you will receive from the Lord what you ask" (Vision 3.10.6). I argue that the text implicitly tries to shape readers so that they will adopt a prophet's way of life, and thus influences early Christian readers regardless of whether they would ever attain the status of prophet. The *Shepherd of Hermas* engages with the themes of virtue and control as criteria of a true prophet, and encourages the audience to cultivate a self that can harbor the holy spirit.

Origen's *Contra Celsum* Book 7

The Wrong Form of Prophecy

In *Contra Celsum* book 7[43] and in his treatment of Balaam's story in the *Homilies on Numbers* 14-17, Origen deploys the same themes of virtue and control as the criteria of the true and worthy prophet. On the surface, Origen's discussions might differ from the *Shepherd of Hermas*. While the *Shepherd of Hermas* emphasizes the lack of control as a marker of true prophecy, Origen refutes this idea. Yet Origen is in agreement with the *Shepherd of Hermas*, since both exhort the audience to inculcate certain virtues, just as the prophets did.

[43] Celsus claims that Christianity is a religion of false prophecy. Jesus is the Magus, who fails to understand divine wisdom. According to Celsus, Jesus is merely possessed by the daemons who reside in the lower realm. Against the criticism from Celsus, Origen claims that Christianity is a religion with true prophets. Furthermore, Origen deflects Celsus's criticism against Christianity by arguing that the criticism from Celsus does not apply to Christianity; it is applied to the "heretical" groups that Origen opposes. So, according to him, Christianity as he understood it is comprised of the true prophets, whereas the so-called heretical groups, as he tries to construct them, are full of false prophets. Dale Martin, *Inventing Superstition*: *From the Hippocratics to the Christians* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 140-43.

Origen emphasizes the importance of worthiness, morality, and virtue as necessary qualities of the prophet. Origen also has another key emphasis in his understanding of prophecy: a distrust of losing control of one's consciousness during prophecy. Origen emphasizes that the will of God initiates prophecy, but he equally emphasizes the will and control of the prophet during prophecy. He defies the notion that the moment of prophecy is involuntary and involves losing control of one's consciousness.

In the *Contra Celsum*, this theme of the moral character of a prophet is emphasized in several places (*Cels.* 2.51; 4.95; 5.42; 7.3). [44] In addition, over against Pythia, Origen emphasizes "those of the prophets in Judea,"—who are "our" prophets—as the champions of virtues, such as strength, courage, and a holy life, which makes them "worthy of" (ἄξιος) God's spirit":[45]

> That is the reason why we reckon of no account the predictions uttered by the Pythian priestess, or by the priestesses of Dodona, or by the oracle of Apollo at Claros, or at Branchiade, or at the shrine of Zeus Ammon, or by countless other alleged prophets; whereas we admire *those of the prophets in Judaea*, seeing that their strong, courageous, and holy life *was worthy of* God's Spirit, whose prophecy was imparted in a new way which had nothing in common with the divination inspired by daemons. (*Cels.* 7.7, emphasis added)[46]

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[44] Origen, *Contra Celsum,* trans. Henry Chadwick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953); Origen, *Against Celsus: Contre Celse*, ed. Marcel Borret, 5 vols, Sources chrétiennes N°132, 136, 147, 150, 227 (Paris: Cerf, 1967-76). English translation follows Chadwick, unless otherwise noted.

[45] It is all the more significant to consider that Origen, along with other early Christian writers, takes great pains to distinguish between the Jews and the Christians. See Susanna Drake, *Slandering the Jew: Sexuality and Difference in Early Christian Texts* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013).

[46] Διόπερ ἐν οὐδενὶ μὲν τιθέμεθα λόγῳ τὰ ὑπὸ τῆς Πυθίας ἢ Δωδωνίδων ἢ Κλαρίου ἢ ἐν Βραγχίδαις ἢ ἐν Ἄμμωνος ἢ ὑπὸ μυρίων ἄλλων λεγομένων θεοπρόπων προειρημένα· τὰ δ' ὑπὸ τῶν ἐν Ἰουδαίᾳ προφητευσάντων τεθήπαμεν, ὁρῶντες ὅτι ἄξιος ἦν αὐτῶν ὁ ἐρρωμένος καὶ εὔτονος καὶ σεμνὸς βίος πνεύματος θεοῦ, τρόπῳ προφητεύοντος καινῷ καὶ οὐδὲν ἔχοντι παραπλήσιον ταῖς ἀπὸ δαιμόνων μαντείαις.

As we have seen in Chapter 1 and will see in Chapter 3, Origen's emphasis on "being worthy of" the Holy Spirit[47] (or seeking "to deserve/earn" the Spirit[48]) recurs throughout his works such as *Commentary on Romans* and *De Principiis*. Origen highlights that the Holy Spirit chooses the prophet "on account of the quality of their lives" (*Cels.* 7.7). In a later passage, Origen reiterates that the prophets "received the divine Spirit because of purity of life" (*Cels*. 7. 18).[49]

This Jewish and Christian prophetic purity stands in contrast to the Pythia. In *Contra Celsum* 7, Origen constructs Christian prophecy over against the so-called pagan prophecy and mantic practices, with the Pythia as the target of his polemic. He employs the Pythia as a useful epitome of pagan mantic practices more generally, and thus through the invective against Pythia, Origen essentially polemicizes the "pagan" prophecy as something fundamentally different from the Christian prophecy.

Origen's polemic against Pythia is two-fold: First, according to Origen, the Pythia lacks virtue and morality that is necessary for the prophets, as we have just seen above. Secondly, the Pythia loses control. Origen develops a sexualized polemic against Pythia, in saying,

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[47] For Origen, the Holy Spirit, God's spirit, and the divine spirit are equivalent. See Pablo Argarate, "The Holy Spirit in Prin I. 3," *Origeniana Nona: Origen and the Religious Practice of his Time*, ed. G. Heidl and R. Somos (Leuven; Walpole, MA: Peeters, 2009), 25-48.

[48] Greek (ἄξιος) is mostly translated as "worthy of." Latin (*mereo*), which is probably used to translate Greek (ἄξιος) in Origen's works, has wider linguistic parameters such as "deserve," "earn," "merit," and "be worthy of." For a more discussion, see Chapter 1 of this dissertation.

[49] According to Origen, "the prophets, according to the will of God, said without any obscurity whatever could be at once understood as beneficial to their hearers and helpful towards attaining moral reformation" (*Cels*. 7. 10).

> Indeed, of the Pythian priestess—the oracle that seems to be more distinguished than the others—it is related that while the prophetess of Apollo is sitting at the mouth of the Castalian cave she receives a spirit through her womb. (*Cels.*, 7.3.25)[50]

Origen's sexualized invective against the Pythia is grounded in a physiological understanding of prophecy commonly found in Greco-Roman discourses on prophecy. Plutarch, in his *On the Obsolescence of Oracles*, for example, famously narrates "the dangers of prophecy," discussing how prophecy is popularly understood as the loss of control, and even penetration and divine rape enacted by a male god on a female seer, as we have seen in the introduction chapter:[51]

> For many annoyances and disturbances of which she is conscious, and many more unperceived, lay hold upon her body and filter into her soul; and whenever she is replete with these, it is better than she should not go there and *surrender herself to the control of the god*, when she is not complete clean (as if she were a musical instrument, well strung and well tuned), but in a state of emotion and instability. (*On the Obsolescence of Oracles*, 437 D, emphasis added)[52]

Plutarch participates in a broader understanding of *pneuma* as "a physical entity that enters the body and produces a condition free of mental restraint—enthusiasm."[53] In *On*

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[50] Ἱστόρηται τοίνυν περὶ τῆς Πυθίας, ὅπερ δοκεῖ τῶν ἄλλων μαντείων λαμπρότερον τυγχάνειν, ὅτι περικαθεζομένη τὸ τῆς Κασταλίας στόμιον ἡ τοῦ Ἀπόλλωνος προφῆτις δέχεται πνεῦμα διὰ τῶν γυναικείων κόλπων·

[51] Dale Martin, *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 239-42. Plutarch, in *Moralia* 437 D, explicitly discusses that the issue of the control by God and the loss of the control is ingrained in the discourses on prophecy.

[52] πολλαὶ μὲν γὰρ αἰσθομένης πλείονες δ᾽ ἄδηλοι τό τε σῶμα καταλαμβάνουσι καὶ τὴν ψυχὴν ὑπορρέουσι δυσχέρειαι καὶ κινήσεις· ὧν ἀναπιμπλαμένην οὐκ ἄμεινον ἐκεῖ βαδίζειν οὐδὲ παρέχειν ἑαυτὴν τῷ θεῷ μὴ παντάπασι καθαρὰν οὖσαν ὥσπερ ὄργανον ἐξηρτυμένον καὶ εὐηχές, ἀλλ᾽ ἐμπαθῆ καὶ ἀκατάστατον.

[53] Levison, *Inspired: The Holy Spirit and the Mind of Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2013), 92. For a helpful discussion on this topic, see idem., *Filled with the Spirit* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, UK: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 178-201.

the Obsolescence of Oracles (405 C), he posits a more explicitly sexualized understanding of prophecy when he says, "a pure, virgin soul, becomes the associate of (σύνειμι) the god." As Dale Martin points out, the better translation of σύνειμι might be "to have sexual intercourse."[54]

In maligning Pythia, Origen thus draws on the sexual invective which is a mode of constructing and denigrating the "Other." Furthermore, Origen has a particular spin in the sexual polemic that she "loses control" in arguing that Pythia loses control of *consciousness*. As Jennifer Knust succinctly sums up, "sexualized invective serves several purposes at once: outsiders are pushed further away, insiders are policed, and morality is both constituted and defined as 'Christian'."[55] Through sexualized polemic against Pythia, Origen depicts the Pythia and her prophecy as an outsider to the pure practices of "the prophets in Judaea," who are treated as proto-Christian. Contrary to Pythia, "the one who is inspired by the divine spirit," argues Origen, "ought to possess the clearest vision at the very time when the deity is in communion with him."

Origen levels criticism against Pythia and her ecstasy. Origen claims that the Pythia is an "alleged prophetess (τὴν δὴθεν προφητεύουσαν)," in order to devalue her as a prophetess. The fact that Origen uses "prophet" to refer to Pythia, instead of another term such as "diviner," I would suggest, means that Origen tries to directly juxtapose the "pagan" prophecy with the "Christian" prophecy.

> It is not the work of divine spirit to lead the alleged prophetess into a state of ecstasy and frenzy so that she loses possession of her consciousness. The person

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[54] Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 240.

[55] Jennifer Wright Knust, *Abandoned to Lust: Sexual Slander and Ancient Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006). Susanna Drake, *Slandering the Jew,* 10.

> inspired by the divine spirit ought to have derived from it far more benefit than anyone who may be instructed by the oracles to do that which helps towards living a life which is moderate and according to nature, or towards that which is of advantage or which is expedient. And *for that reason he ought to possess the clearest vision at the very time when the deity is in communion with him.* (*Cels.* 7.3, emphasis added)[56]

Origen drives a wedge between prophets who lose consciousness and prophets who keep clear vision in the moment of communication with the divine. Origen opines, "Because of the touch, as it were, of what is called the Holy Spirit upon their soul they possessed clear mental vision and became more radiant in their soul, and even in body, which no longer offered any opposition to the life lived according to virtue (κατ᾽ ἀρετὴν)" (*Cels*. 7.4).[57] Again, Origen tightly connects virtue to possessing clear mental vision in the moment of prophecy, crafting a particular way of prophecy as a right form of prophecy.

Origen questions, "If the Pythian priestess is out of her senses and has *not control of* her faculties when she prophesies, what sort of spirit must we think it which poured darkness upon her mind and rational thinking?" (*Cels*. 7.4).[58] Chadwick translates "οὐκ ἐν ἑαυτῇ ἐστιν" as "she loses control," but a more literal translation would be "she is not in herself." Origen tightly connects the loss of control of consciousness with the loss of bodily control. Put differently, for Origen, Pythia is sexually vulnerable both in physical

[56] Ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ εἰς ἔκστασιν καὶ μανικὴν ἄγειν κατάστασιν τὴν δῆθεν προφητεύουσαν, ὡς μηδαμῶς αὐτὴν ἑαυτῇ παρακολουθεῖν, οὐ θείου πνεύματος ἔργον ἐστίν· ἐχρῆν γὰρ τὸν κάτοχον τῷ θείῳ πνεύματι πολλῷ πρότερον παντὸς οὑτινοσοῦν τοῦ ἀπὸ τῶν χρησμῶν διδασκομένου τὸ συμβαλλόμενον εἰς τὸν μέσον καὶ κατὰ φύσιν βίον ἢ πρὸς τὸ λυσιτελὲς ἢ πρὸς τὸ συμφέρον ὠφεληθῆναι καὶ διορατικώτερον παρ᾽ ἐκεῖνο μάλιστα καιροῦ τυγχάνειν, ὅτε σύνεστιν αὐτῷ τὸ θεῖον.

[57] καὶ διὰ τῆς πρὸς τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτῶν, ἵν᾽ οὕτως ὀνομάσω, ἁφῆς τοῦ καλουμένου ἁγίου πνεύματος διορατικώτεροί τε τὸν νοῦν ἐγίνοντο καὶ τὴν ψυχὴν λαμπρότεροι ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ σῶμα, οὐδαμῶς ἔτι ἀντιπρᾶττον τῷ κατ᾽ ἀρετὴν βίῳ.

[58] Εἰ δ᾽ ἐξίσταται καὶ οὐκ ἐν ἑαυτῇ ἐστιν ἡ Πυθία, ὅτε μαντεύεται, ποδαπὸν νομιστέον πνεῦμα, τὸ σκότον καταχέαν μαντεύεται, ποδαπὸν νομιστέον πνεῦμα, τὸ σκότον καταχέαν τοῦ νοῦ καὶ τῶν λογισμῶν.

body and mind.[59] In his *Prescription against the Heretics*, he discredits the prophetess Philumene, using the trope of lack of control. He portrays Philumene as one "who permits thoughts and beliefs to penetrate her mind without being scrupulously just as she allows her body to be penetrated by men."[60]

In a similar way, Origen explicates his understanding of prophecy in gendered terms. Origen seems to believe that women cannot be true prophets. Although Origen puts Mary in the ranks of the prophets because of the Holy Spirit in her (*Homilies on Luke* 8:1)[61] and the Philipp's four daughters in the Acts of the Apostles, he tries to minimize the existence of women prophets in the Scripture. For example, in his *Homilies on 1 Corinthians*, Origen comments on women's prophesying in the Corinthian church (1 Corinthians 14:33b-36).

> Realizing that all were speaking and had permission to speak if a revelation came to them (1 Cor 14:30), Paul says, "the women should keep silence in the churches." Now the disciples of the women, who had become pupils of Priscilla and Maximilla, not of Christian the bridegroom, did not heed this commandment. […] even if the daughters of Philip prophesied, they did not speak in the churches. We do not find this reported in the Acts of the Apostles. Nor is this found in the Old Testament. Yes, it is attested that Deborah was a prophetess, and Miriam the sister of Aaron, taking a drum, led off the women. But you will not find it written that Deborah publickly addressed the people, as Jeremiah and Isaiah did. (*Homilies on First Corinthians*)[62]

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[59] In analyzing the gendered imageries in Greek tragedies in the classical Greek period, Padel claims, "The mind—like a woman in society, like female sexuality in relation to male—is acted upon, invaded, a victim of the outside world (especially of divinity)." Ruth Padel, *In and Out of the Mind*, 111.

[60] As we saw in the Introduction of this dissertation, Tertullian criticized Philumene.

[61] William Rusch, "Mary," in *The Westminster Handbook to Origen*, 150.

[62] English translation is from Kovacs, *1 Corinthians: Interpreted by Early Christian Commentators*, 239-40; Origen, "Homilies on 1 Corinthians," *JTS* 10 (1909): 41-2. Ὡς γὰρ πάντων λεγόντων καὶ δυναμένων λέγειν, ἐὰν ἀποκάλυψις αὐτοῖς γένηται, φησὶν Αἱ γυναῖκες ἐν ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις σιγάτωσαν. ταύτης δὲ τῆς ἐντολῆς οὐκ ἦσαν οἱ τῶν γυναικῶν μαθηταί, οἱ μαθητευθέντες Πρισκίλλῃ καὶ Μαξιμίλλῃ, οὐ Χριστοῦ τοῦ ἀνδρὸς τῆς νύμφης. ἀλλ' ὅμως εὐγνωμονῶμεν καὶ πρὸς τὰ πιθανὰ ἐκείνων ἀπαντῶντες. τέσσαρές φασι θυγατέρες ἦσαν

Kovacs notes that he "quotes and abridges the Septuagint, which differs from the Hebrew text. He does not mention that the verse [Exodus 15:20] calls Miriam a "prophetess."[63]

Balaam an Unworthy Prophet: the *Homilies on Numbers* 14-17[64]

Origen mobilizes the Pythia to represent prophetic practices of "the Other," and begins to construct a portrait of prophetic practices for Christians and the Jews on whose scriptures Christians rely. Contrary to the Pythia, the Hebrew prophets are virtuous and do not lose control of consciousness in the moment of prophecy, a communication with the divine. But what if one of "our Hebrew prophets" does not have necessary ethical qualities? What is worse, what if he seems to lose control in the moment of prophecy?

We find just such a story in Balaam. Yet Origen defends Balaam as a prophet—because the story is in the scripture. Origen tries to solve this problem by allegorically reading Balaam as someone undergoing training and making progress. Origen then begins to utilize Balaam as a *pedagogical* example for the Christian audiences, while interpreting Balaam allegorically.

Φιλίππου τοῦ εὐαγγελιστοῦ καὶ προεφήτευον. εἰ δὲ προεφήτευον, τί ἄτοπόν ἐστι καὶ τὰς ἡμετέρας, ὡς φασὶν ἐκεῖνοι, προφήτιδας προφητεύειν; ταῦτα δὲ λύσομεν. πρῶτον μὲν λέγοντες ὅτι Αἱ ἡμέτεραι προεφήτευον, δείξατε τὰ σημεῖα τῆς προφητείας ἐν αὐταῖς· δεύτερον δὲ εἰ καὶ προεφήτευον αἱ θυγατέρες Φιλίππου, ἀλλ' οὐκ ἐν ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις ἔλεγον· οὐ γὰρ ἔχομεν τοῦτο ἐν ταῖς Πράξεσι τῶν Ἀποστόλων. ἀλλ' οὐδ' ἐν τῇ παλαιᾷ· Δεββῶρα μεμαρτύρηται προφῆτις εἶναι, λαβοῦσα δὲ Μαριὰμ ἡ ἀδελφὴ Ἀαρὼν τὸ τύμπανον ἐξῆρχε τῶν γυναικῶν. ἀλλ' οὐκ ἂν εὕροις ὅτι Δεββῶρα ἐδημηγόρησεν εἰς τὸν λαὸν ὥσπερ Ἱερεμίας καὶ Ἡσαΐας·

[63] Kovacs, *1 Corinthians: Interpreted by Early Christian Commentators*, 240.

[64] The "Book of Balaam" (which is the traditional rabbinic name for the material) is an extended narrative couched in the book of Numbers. R.W. L. Moberly, "Elisha and Balaam," in *Prophecy and Discernment* (Cambridge, U.K.; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 138.

Numbers 22-24 characterizes Balaam, a foreign seer. With his ability to curse and bless as well as tell the future, he eventually saves Israel and follows YHWH's command to bless Israel. For Origen, the prophet Balaam in Numbers is quite a problematic figure, for various reasons. Given that Origen considers virtue and morality to be essential to a prophet, it is understandable that Origen is puzzled with Balaam who is viewed either as a villain, a diviner and magician who is a herald of the Magi, or as a hero who prophesies about Christ.[65] What is more problematic for Origen is that Balaam's portrayal in Numbers does not fit into Origen's understanding of prophecy as an active and controlled phenomenon. Given Origen's emphasis on human free will, which is shown throughout my dissertation, his focus on the mind as the locus of prophecy and on the active mind in the moment of prophecy is crucial. Origen struggles to fit the troubling figure of Balaam into his theological landscape, and his grappling with the story in Numbers allows us to shed a different light on Origen's understanding of prophecy.

"God put God's Words in his Mouth."

In *Contra Celsum* 7, as we saw, Origen emphasizes "those of the prophets in Judea"—who are "our" prophets—as the champion of virtues, such as strength, courage, and a holy life which makes them "worthy of" (ἄξιος) God's spirit. In describing Balaam, one of the prophets in the Hebrew Scripture, Origen concedes that Balaam is not

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[65] J. R. Baskin, "Origen on Balaam: The Dilemma of the Unworthy Prophet," *Vigiliae Christianae* 37 (1983): 22-35; Robert M. Berchman, "Arcana mundi between Balaam and Hecate: prophecy, divination, and magic in later Platonism," *Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers* 28 (1989): 107-83; Catherine Chin, "Who is the Ascetic Exegete? Angels, Enchantments, and Transformative Food in Origen's Homilies on Joshua," in *Asceticism and Exegesis in Early Christianity: The Reception of New Testament Texts in Ancient Ascetic Discourses* (Göttingen, Germany: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013), 203-18.

worthy (*dignus*) to receive prophecy.[66] Yet Origen does not pillory Balaam for his unworthiness, as he criticized the Pythia. Instead, Origen emphasizes that "God put God's words into his mouth," although his heart was "not 'yet able to have room for the word of God" (*Hom. Num.* 15.2.2).[67] Paying attention to the phrase that God "put a word into his mouth" (Numbers 23:16), Origen notes:

> If Balaam had been *worthy* (*dignus*), God would not have put his word in his mouth, but into his heart. But now, since the desire for reward was in his heart (*cor*) and he was greedy for money, the word of God was put not in his heart, but in his mouth. (*Hom.Num.* 14.3.2, emphasis added)[68]

While explicating five prophecies that Balaam uttered in Numbers 22, Origen keeps juxtaposing "God's words in Balaam's mouth" and "Balaam's heart." This repetition is significant, for Origen understands that heart (or mind) is the locus where prophecy occurs.[69] Just as Latin term *cor* has different meanings such as heart, soul, and spirit, so does the original καρδία, which can be rendered as heart, soul, and mind.[70] One of the primary meaning of καρδία is mind, as shown in Origen's *Contra Celsum* 6:

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[66] Karl A. E. Enenkel and Walter Melion, eds., *Meditation-Refashioning the Self: Theory and Practice in Late Medieval* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2010), 391.

[67] Origen, *Homilies on Numbers*, trans. Thomas P. Scheck, Ancient Christian Texts (Downers' Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2009); Origène, *Homélies sur les Nombres*, SC 415, 442, and 461 (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1996-2001). English translation follows Scheck, unless otherwise noted.

[68] Si dignus fuisset Balaam, uerbum suum Deus non in 'ore eius', sed in corde posuisset. Nunc autem quoniam in corde eius desiderium mercedis erat et cupidus pecuniae, uerbum Dei non in corde, sed in ore eius ponitur.

[69] The original Greek of Origen's *Homilies on Numbers* is lost, but it survives in Latin.

[70] G.W.H. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), s.v. "καρδία."

> Furthermore, in our view because God is not corporeal, God is invisible. But God may be seen by those who can see with the heart (καρδία), that is to say, the mind (ὁ νους), though not with an ordinary heart, but with a pure heart. (*Cels.* 6. 69)[71]

I suspect that Origen's contrast between mouth and heart/mind in the *Homilies on Numbers* draws on the *topos* of the prophet as the mouthpiece of God.

Some other ancient readers of the Balaam story pick up this imagery in their interpretation of Balaam's story. Philo, for example, in his *Life of Moses* (I. 273-74),[72] tries to solve the conundrum of how Balaam, a villain, was able to prophesy by suggesting that Balaam essentially becomes a mouthpiece of God.[73] Philo states that

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[71] Ἀλλὰ καὶ ὁ θεὸς καθ' ἡμᾶς τῷ μὲν μὴ εἶναι σῶμα ἀόρατός ἐστιν· τοῖς δὲ θεωρητικοῖς καρδίᾳ θεωρητός, τουτέστι νῷ, καρδίᾳ δὲ οὐ τῇ τυχούσῃ ἀλλὰ τῇ καθαρᾷ.

[72] Philo, *De vita Mosis*, I. (273-74); J. R. Levison, "The Prophetic Spirit as an Angel According to Philo," *Harvard Theological Review* 88 (1995): 189-207, 191; idem, *Filled with the Spirit*, esp. 154-77; idem, "The Debut of the Divine Spirit in Josephus' Antiquities," *Harvard Theological Review* 87 (1994): 123-38.

[73] Philo portrays Moses as an ultimate masculine prophet, who participates in the ascetic practices associated with prophecy. William Loader analyzes how Moses was engaged with "constant self-discipline and temporary abstinence." "Philo is not in favor of people simply rushing off into the wilderness to engage in contemplation before they have developed the necessary self-discipline within the context of a socially and politically active life." William Loader, *Philo, Josephus, and the Testaments on Sexuality* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2011), 100. As Philo writes:

> Moses also represents Balaam, who is the symbol of a vain people, stripped of his arms, as a runaway and deserter, well knowing the war which it becomes the soul to carry on for the sake of knowledge; for he says to his ass, who is here a symbol of the irrational designs of life which every foolish man entertains, that "If I had had a sword, I should ere now have slain Thee." And great thanks are due to the Maker of all things, because he, knowing the struggles and resistance of folly, did not give to it the power of language, which would have been like giving a sword to a madman, in order that it might have no power to work great and iniquitous destruction among all whom it should meet with. *But the reproaches which Balaam utters are in some degree expressed by all those who are not purified, but are always talking foolishly, devoting themselves to the life of a merchant, or of a farmer, or to some other business, the object of which is to provide the things necessary for life.* As long, indeed, as everything goes on prosperously with respect to each individual, he mounts his animal joyfully and rides on cheerfully, and holding the reins firmly he will by no means consent to [….] (*De Cherubim* 32-3, emphasis added) English translation follows Yonge*, A Treatise on the Cherubim*.

Balaam loses his consciousness when the spirit of God possesses him, albeit briefly, and speaks through him. As Levison explains Philo's reading, the angel spirit "made Balaam's mind inoperative"[74] and this angel "directs his vocal organs, guides the reins of speech, and employs his tongue actually accomplished this when it reappeared, identified as the prophetic spirit."[75] Josephus, too, a half century later, highlights over and over again the fact that Balaam was "not in himself" (*Ant*. 4. 118), "unconscious" (*Ant*. 4. 119), and that he lost the possession of his "mental faculties" (*Ant*. 4. 121).[76] This description of Balaam by Josephus is similar to Origen's polemical portrayal of Pythia, who loses control—literally, who was not in herself—and loses consciousness in the moment of prophecy.

In the *Homilies on Numbers*, thus, in an interpretation of the story of Balaam, Origen expounds his view of prophecy. J. R. Baskin argues, "Origen's view of prophecy is clear. The true prophet collaborates in the delivery of the divine message; he speaks with his heart, and is perforce a righteous man. Yet, to bring all people to righteousness, unworthy men may occasionally serve as vessels for the divine message, though they will

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In *De Cherubim* 32, Philo juxtaposes Moses and Balaam and portrays Balaam as the antithesis of Moses. While Moses is the culmination of control and poise, which are the important traits of masculinity, Balaam is the opposite with his lack of control. See Colleen Conway, "Gender and Divine Relativity in Philo of Alexandria," *Journal for the Study of Judaism* (2003): 471-491. I am thankful to Olivia Stewart, who provided me with this idea in our private conversation.

Origen, however, interestingly does not portray Balaam as effeminate. I suggest that Origen views the Hebrew Bible as a Christian prerogative, and thus Origen rather tries to utilize Balaam as a model for the Christian audience instead.

[74] Levison, "The Prophetic Spirit," 192.

[75] Ibid., 191.

[76] J. R. Levison, *Of Two Minds: Ecstasy and Inspired Interpretation in the New Testament World* (Texas: Bible Press, 1999), 19.

always speak with their mouths, not with their hearts."[77] As Baskin interprets it, Origen divorces the *content* of Balaam's prophecy from the *person* of the prophet. Thus, Origen tries to solve the problem that Balaam was chosen to prophesy.

Yet Origen's *Homilies on Numbers* 14-17 add another component to the complex matter of Balaam and prophecy, which Baskin did not notice: Balaam is now interpreted allegorically,[78] Origen portrays him as participating in "the journey to the wisdom of God" (*Hom. Num.* 17. 4.4). Origen allegorizes the problematic prophet Balaam, whose name means "vain people" (*populous uanus*):[79] he can be understood as a person who gradually learns to be engaged with God. In the *Homiles on Num*bers 27, a section which is very close to his description of Balaam, Origen writes that how these stories are understood to be an allegory of the soul's advancement:

> He [God] posits two journeys of the soul. 'One is the means of *training the soul in virtues* through the Law of God when it is placed in flesh; and by ascending through certain steps it makes progress as we have said, *from virtue to virtue*, and uses these progressions as stages." The other is a journey by which the soul gradually ascends to the heavens after the resurrection. It does not reach the highest point "unreasonably, but … is led throughout many stations. In them it is enlightened…illumined at each stage by the light of Wisdom, until it arrives at the Father of Lights Himself. (*Hom. Num.* 27, emphasis added)

[77] Baskin, "Origen on Balaam: The Dilemma of the Unworthy Prophet," 30.

[78] The literature for allegory in Origen's works is vast. See K. J. Torjesen, *Hermeneutical Procedure and theological Method in Origen's Exegesis* (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1986); J. Whitman, *Allegory: The Dynamics of an Ancient and Medieval Technique* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987); Peter Martens, "Revisiting the allegory/typology distinction: The case of Origen," *JECS* 16 (2008): 283-96; idem, *Origen and Scripture.*

[79] *Hom. Num.* 14.4.1.

Commenting on the passage of Numbers 24:1-3,[80] Origen allegorically interprets the verse that Balaam "sees that it is good in the sight of the Lord to bless Israel." He notes that "those people who are now a vain people, and those teachers who detain that people in vanity by not believe in Christ, will one day see, namely, 'in the last days.'" Origen continues to posit that Balaam's eyes "have been opened", and that "it is as if those eyes, [which] were closed up to this point, will now be opened through the spirit of God 'who came on him' when the veil was removed" (*Hom. Num.* 17. 3.1).[81] Thus Balaam, who first has only prophecy "on his mouth," not "in his heart," now has progressed to "see" God. I suggest that Origen portrays Balaam as the one on the ladder to be more mature and holy. The gradual development of Balaam's character can be observed in the text, which serves rhetorically as a good exemplar of moral progress to the audience.

While discussing Balaam's story in the *Homilies on Numbers* 14-19, Origen emphasizes Balaam's gradual "pursuit of wisdom and knowledge" (*Hom. Num.* 17.3.5). Balaam now becomes a model for a person who always "strives for what is ahead" (*Hom. Num.* 17.4.4).[82] Just as Origen augments and pushes Paul's ideas in his *Commentary on Romans*, as we saw in the previous chapter, Origen in his *Homilies on Numbers* augments the scripture of Numbers, emphasizing the development of the unworthy prophet,

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[80] Numbers 24:1-3: And Balaam, seeing that it is good in the sight of the Lord to bless Israel, did not go out according to custom to meet the auspices, but turned his face toward the desert. And Balaam, lifting up his eyes, observes that Israel had set up their camps by tribes; and the Spirit of God came to him. And he took up his parable and spoke.

[81] Sed videamus jam quae sint quae in tertia prophetia proloquatur Balaam. "Dixit, inquit, Balaam filius Beor, homo vere videns, dixit, audiens verba fortis, qui visum Dei vidit in somnis, revelati oculi ejus." Mirum profecto est quomodo tantae laudis dignus habeatur Balaam, qui accepta parabola sua, haec de semetipso pronuntiat.

[82] Moberly, *Prophecy and Discernment*, 131-49.

Balaam. As Moberly succinctly maintains, for Origen, "moral failure induces spiritual blindness."[83] For Origen's Balaam, then, regaining morality is the key to regaining spiritual vision. In his attempt to make sense of the biblical story of the enigmatically unworthy prophet Balaam, Origen shifts the focus of the story to one of his central theological themes: even an unworthy person could have a hope of salvation and, more importantly, everyone is expected to participate in the journey to God.

As the *Shepherd of Hermas* does, Origen draws on the theme of virtue as the pre-requisite of a prophet. Balaam, who was known for his lack of virtue, is transformed by Origen. Balaam now represents a journey of *the soul* in virtue by participating in moral progress. In this way, Balaam's story has an edifying value for the Christian readers and audience, encouraging the audience to participate in moral formation as well. In another Homily, Origen enjoins the audience, "thus let all of us, as far as our ability allows, strive for the prophetic life" (*Homily on Jeremiah* 14:5). In *Contra Celsum* 7, which we just saw, "the prophets, according to the will of God, said without any obscurity whatever could be at once understood as beneficial to their hearers and helpful towards attaining moral reformation" (*Cels*. 7.10). Even Balaam's story in Numbers can educate, showing a soul that has the power to strive for perfection and sanctity, and thus benefitting all by this story.

Conclusion

This chapter examined the way in which the *Shepherd of Hermas* and Origen's *Contra Celsum* 7 and *Homilies on Numbers* 14-17 discuss prophecy and prophets as

[83] Ibid., 147.

cultivating virtues or as developing in their morality. In doing so, these texts seek to persuade their readers and hearers to cultivate a particular kind of self. The first part of this chapter focused on the way in which the *Shepherd of Hermas* emphasizes virtue and other ethical qualities of a prophet as well as a necessary cultivation to be a prophet through a moral formation. These are similar strategies to Origen's. However, in the moment of prophecy, the *Shepherd of Hermas* subscribes to the discourse of prophecy that favors the loss of control, which Origen disagrees with. In *Contra Celsum* 7, drawing upon this discourse on prophecy, the loss of control, Origen uses a sexualized invective against Pythia whose female physiology ("receiving a spirit through her womb") is negatively portrayed. From this concrete context emerges the importance of virtue and morality as the qualification for a true prophet, which in turn serves to circumscribe the Christian prophecy against "the Other." Likewise, Origen's *Hom. Num.* 14-17 consistently sustains the same notion of prophecy that one should not lose control while prophesying. In order not to dismiss, but to defend, the existence of the troubling prophet Balaam in the divinely-inspired Scripture, Origen offers an allegorical interpretation of this story, utilizing him as a pedagogical example for the Christian audience.

In the next chapter, with the comparison between Origen's *De Principiis* 3 and Iamblichus's *De Mysteriies* 3 (a non-Christian conversation partner with Origen), we will examine how Origen and Iamblichus deploy similar discussions and use similar rhetorical strategies but with a different targeted audience. Sharing elements of Middle Platonic philosophy, both texts engage the contested notions of prophetic activity and extensively discuss the practices that lead to prophecy and "prophetic experience(s)." With their

discussions, these two texts aim at persuading their respective audience(s) toward the cultivation of a certain kind of self.

Chapter 3
"Earn the Grace of Prophecy": Prophecy, Training, and Preparation

The previous chapter compared Origen's works with the *Shepherd of Hermas*, which is a potent instantiation of a Christian counterpart that holds a different idea about true prophecy as a lack of control, and yet which has similar rhetorical strategies. In this chapter, I read Origen's *De Principiis* 3.3,[1] the locus of the most sustained and substantial discussion of prophecy in *De Principiis,* along with Iamblichus's *De Mysteriis* 3.[2] Both authors are influenced by Middle-Platonic traditions about opening oneself to the divine; both Christian (Origen) and non-Christian (Iamblichus) emphasize the relationship between human activities and divine agency. By discussing preparations that lead to prophecy, both Origen and Iamblichus ultimately debate the issue of the prophetic self, that is, what it means to be a prophetic person, one who communicates with the divine. Both of them would argue that a prophet and a diviner is not like being a radio transmitter that just passively receives the revelation of the divine. They argue that philosophical exercises (ἀσκήσεις), such as self-control, lead to prophecy. To use the common *topoi*

[1] Origen, *Origenes Werke*/*De principiis:* Vol 5, ed. Paul Koetschau (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1899-1919). English translation carefully follows but sometimes emends that of G. W. Butterworth. Origen, *Origen on First Principles*, trans. G. W. Butterworth (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1936; Repr., Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1973).

[2] Primary text: Édouard des Places, *Jamblique. Les mystères d'Égypte* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1966), 38-215. The welcome new translation is *Iamblichus: On the Mysteries (De mysteriis)*, ed. Emma C. Clarke, John M. Dillon, and Jackson P. Hershbell (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003). English translation carefully follows but sometimes emends that of Clarke, Dillon, and Hershbell.

employed by Origen and Iamblichus, it is important to become an appropriate vessel and instrument to harbor the divine, or a clean house where the divine may dwell.

While some recent scholars have analyzed Origen and Iamblichus together,[3] this scholarship does not discuss their shared interest in practices that lead to prophecy and divination. The present chapter demonstrates how both Origen's *De Principiis* and Iamblichus's *De Mysteriis* deploy prophecy in order to encourage the audiences to cultivate a particular self. Moreover, in this chapter as in the others, I fill a scholarly lacuna by examining prophecy in terms of (human) practices of preparation for prophecy, demonstrating how discussions of prophecy in these works tap into discourses in late antiquity concerning how to cultivate a properly religious self.

De Principiis 3: Human Freedom and God's Providence

Throughout this dissertation, I have asked these questions: To what extent do the authors of these texts argue that prophets depend on the divine in prophecy?[4] What kinds of human efforts in prophecy are portrayed as assumed, cultivated, or contested? While *Homilies on Numbers* and *Commentary on Romans* engaged in close interpretations of scripture, and while *Contra Celsum* was involved in constructing "pagan" prophecy as sexualized and other, Origen's *De Principiis* 3.3—which has traditionally been seen as

[3] For example, Jason B. Parnell, "The Theurgic Turn in Christian Thought: Iamblichus, Origen, Augustine, and the Eucharist" (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 2009); Heidi Marx-Wolf, "High Priests of the Highest God: Third-Century Platonists as Ritual Experts," *JECS* 18:4 (2010): 481-513.

[4] My first question draws on the question asked by Troels Engberg-Pedersen, in his "Self-Sufficiency and Power: Divine and Human Agency in Epictetus and Paul," in *Divine and Human Agency in Paul and His Cultural Environment,* ed. John M. G. Barclay and Simon J. Gathercole (London; New York: T&T Clark, 2006), 116-39. He asks a fundamentally theological question: "to what extent is a human-being dependent on God?," 116.

the first work of Christian systematic theology— takes up these themes and explores prophecy with greater philosphical clarity.[5]

The main theme of book 3 of *De Principiis* is the intricate correlation between God's providence (*pronoia*/*providentia*) and human will (*propositum* or *pro arbitrii sui libertate*).[6] Providence is fundamental for Origen's understanding of human engagement with God.[7] Origen makes claims about the goodness of God and emphasizes human free will and human responsibility. Origen delves into a fairly sustained discussion of prophecy in 3.3, for prophecy is the focal site for thinking about human beings and the human-divine relationship. The human soul, the locus of prophecy, is open to both daemonic and divine powers. The human being, with her own free will, chooses which influence will be a governing power for her soul. As Henry Chadwick sums up, Origen is concerned that "human beings are not automata, deterred from acts only by some external cause or consideration."[8]

As we have seen throughout this dissertation, Origen—as a biblical scholar *par excellence*—develops his themes on prophecy and inspiration in an engagement with

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[5] For this discussion, see the Introduction Chapter of this dissertation, the section on the history of scholarship on Origen.

[6] Regarding the place of Book 3 in the overall schema of *De Principiis*, see Origen*, Traité des principes,* trans., Henri Crouzel and Manlio Simonetti (Paris: Éditions du Cerf): vol. 1 (SC 252, 1978), 15-22; vol. 4 (SC 269, 1980), 55. Hal Koch in his classical study of *Pronoia und Paideusis* argues that providence is the central issue that Origen discusses and responds in his treatise.

[7] Andrew Louth, "Pagans and Christians on providence," in *Texts and Culture in Late Antiquity: Inheritance, Authority, and Change* (Swansea: The Classical Press of Wales, 2007), 279-97.

[8] Henry Chadwick, "Philosophical Tradition and the Self," in *Late Antiquity: A Guide to the Postclassical World,* ed. G.W. Bowersock, Peter Brown, and Oleg Grabar (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), 76.

biblical texts. At the outset of *De Principiis* 3.3, Origen develops this idea in relation to 1 Corinthians 2:6-8,[9] while offering his own interpretation of "the threefold wisdom," that is, a "wisdom of God (*dei sapientian*)," a "wisdom of this world (*sapientiam huius mundi*)," and a "wisdom of the rulers of this world (*sapientiam principum huius mundi*)." According to Origen, the wisdom of this world exists in such things as "all the arts of poetry, grammar, rhetoric, geometry and music (*omnis ars poëtica vel grammatical vel rhetorica vel geometrica vel musica*)," and "medicine (*medicina*)" (*Princ.* 3.3.2). On the contrary, the wisdom of the rulers of this world is, argues Origen, "the secret and hidden philosophy of the Egyptians and the astrology of the Chaldeans and Indians, who profess a knowledge of high things, and further the manifold and diverse opinions of the Greeks concerning the divine nature."[10] As we shall see a bit later, the ability to distinguish between these two forms of wisdom is one of the important steps for the preparation for prophecy.

After distinguishing these two wisdoms, Origen eventually names the "opposing powers (*contrariae virtutes/potestates*)" as the source, or, in Origen's terms, "fathers" of these wisdoms (*Princ.* 3.3.2). In *De Principiis* 3.3.3, Origen tightly aligns "the rulers of this world" with "the opposing powers,"[11] revealing his spiritual understanding of "the

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[9] 1 Cor 2:6. "Yet among the mature we do speak wisdom, though it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to perish. But we speak God's wisdom, secret and hidden, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. None of the rulers of this age understood this; for if they had, they would not have crucified the lord of glory."

[10] *De Principiis* 3.3.2. 'Sapientiam vero principum huius mundi' Aegyptiorum secreta et occulta philosophia et Chaldeorum astorologia et Indorum de scientia excelsi pollicentium, sed et Graecorum multiplex variaque de divinatate sententia.

[11] *De Principiis* 3.3.3. "So we must suppose the 'rulers of this world' also to have acted, those beings, namely, that are called by this title because they are spiritual powers who have been appointed to exercise rule over certain definite nations in this world." The rulers of this world are "spiritual powers."' Regarding the 'wisdom of this world', Origen also indicates "those spirits

rulers of this world" as demonic powers.[12] Origen thus constructs a dichotomy between good spirits and bad spirits, or in other words, "divine providence" and "the opposing powers" (*Princ.* 3.2.4).

De Principiis 3.3.3: "Earn the Grace of Prophecy"

Using prophets as exemplars, Origen shows readers how to strive for prophecy by adopting the way the prophet trains himself/herself in a particular way of living. Since *De Principiis* 3.3.3 is significant to my analysis, I cite the entire passage here:

> As the holy and immaculate souls, after devoting themselves to God with all affection and purity, and after preserving themselves free from all contagion of evil spirits (*daemonum*), and after being purified by lengthened abstinence, and imbued with holy and religious training (*disciplinis*), they assume by this means a portion of divinity, and earn (*promerentur*)[13] the grace of prophecy, and other divine gifts.
> So also are we to suppose that those who place themselves in the way of the opposing powers, i.e., who purposely admire and adopt their manner of life and habits, receive their inspiration, and become partakers of their wisdom and doctrine. And the result of this is, that they are filled with the working of those

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who control the 'wisdom of this world." So, Origen connects both the wisdom of this world and the wisdom of the rulers of this world to the spiritual powers that control them. In discussing the wisdom of this world, Origen talks about the control of the daemons, "whom they call divine," and the "spirit of a kind of madness.

In *De Principiis* 1.5 and 3.2, we see a fairly organized treatment of daemons. Origen offers his own interpretation of traditional ideas about daemons. Traditionally, daemons are considered to be quasi-divine, neither good nor bad. But Origen reinterprets daemons as more akin to demonic and evil beings. Origen is certainly not the one who introduces the interpretation of daemons as demons, which are evil. Dale Martin discusses the notion of daemon as it appears in *Contra Celsum*. Martin, *Inventing Superstition,* 177-80.

[12] Anthony Thiselton argues that Origen is one of the earliest writers to interpret "the rulers gof this world" in 1 Corinthians 2 in spiritual terms. Of course, Thiselton does not take so-called gnostic writings into consideration. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 234. Regarding the different interpretations on "the rulers" such as spiritual and political, see pp. 234-39.

[13] *Promerentur* means "deserve," "earn," or "acquire." Butterworth chooses "win." The translation in Ante Nicene Fathers opts for "earn," which I choose. Roberts-Donaldson, trans., *Origen*, Ante Nicene Fathers, vol. 4 .

spirits to whom they have subjected themselves as slaves (*famulatui subiugarint*).[14]

In *De Principiis* 3.3.3, Origen delves into a polemic. Prophecy plays a vital role in Origen's juxtaposition of two groups: those who devote themselves to God and those who are open to the opposing powers. I provide here a binary diagram that explicates Origen's ideas.

Orientation	
Devote oneself to God.	Place oneself in the way of "opposing powers."
Method/Means	
1. Preserve oneself free from all contagion of evil spirits. 2. Purified by lengthened abstinence. 3. Imbued with holy and religious training.	Admire and adopt their ("opposing powers") manner of life and habits.
End Result	
1. They assume a portion of divinity. 2. Earn the grace of prophecy and other divine gifts.	1. Receive their inspiration, and became partakers of their wisdom and doctrine. 2. They are filled with the working of those spirits ("opposing powers") to whom they have subjected themselves as slaves.

[14] *De Principiis*, 3.3.3. Quae hoc modo geri arbitranda sunt, quod sicut sanctae et inmaculatae animae, cum se omni affectu omnique puritate voverint deo et alienas se ab omni daemonum contagione servaverint et per multam abstinentiam purificaverint se et piis ac religiosis inbutae fuerint disciplinis, participum per hoc divinitatis adsumunt et prophetiae ceterorumque divinorum donorum gratiam promerentur: ita putandum est etiam eos, qui se opportunos contrariis virtutibus exhibent, id est industria vita vel studio amico illis et accepto, recipere eorum inspirationem et sapientiae eorum ac doctrinae participes effici. Ex quo fit ut eorum inoperationibus repleantur, quorum se prius famulatui subiugarint. My translation closely follows Butterworth's.

I shall explore each of these sections—orientation, method and means, and the end result, in turn.

Orientation: To Choose the Right Divinity

Origen posits that it is crucial to have the right orientation. Put differently, it is important to choose the right divine power for inspiration. After mapping out the spiritual terrain for the world, Origen is concerned with how human beings are required to choose, with their own free will, either good spirits or bad spirits to guide and influence them. This idea is also shown in a subsequent passage of *De Principiis* 3.3.5, in which Origen posits, "for a soul is always in possession of free will, as well when it is in the body as when it is without it; and freedom of will is always directed either to good or evil."

Origen's preoccupation with demarcating legitimate versus illegitimate or good versus bad sources of power follows in the steps of other early Christian apologists, such as Justin Martyr and Tatian, who argued that most of Greek culture lay under the control of deceptive demons. Justin Martyr's *First Apology* 14:1 is especially similar to Origen's discussions in that they both portray both demonic and good powers as vying for control of human beings.[15] We have also briefly seen in Chapter 2 how the *Shepherd of Hermas* draws on the theme of discernment of spirits. Drawing on this common strategy used by

[15] "Indeed we warn you to be careful lest the daimons [...] should mislead you and turn you from reading and understanding what we have said. They struggle to make you their slaves and servants. They ensnare, now by apparitions in dreams, now by tricks of magic, all those who do not fight with their all for their own salvation—even as we also, after our conversion by the Word, have separated ourselves from those daimons and have attached ourselves to the only unbegotten God through his son" (*First Apology* 14:1). Cited from Denise Kimber Buell, 249. For more discussions on this matter, see Denise Kimber Buell, "Imagining Human Transformation in the Context of Invisible Powers: Instrumental Agency in Second-Century Treatments of Conversion," in *Metamorphoses: Resurrection, Body and Transformative Practices in Early Christianity* (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2009), 249-70.

early Christian writers, Origen emphasizes the need for spiritual discernment.[16]

In the beginning of *De Principiis* 3.3, while discussing "threefold wisdom," Origen alludes to 1 Corinthians 2:6-8. An extant fragment from his *Homilies on 1 Corinthians* discusses the same passage:

> We disclose the wisdom of God not to novices or beginners or those who have not yet demonstrated soundness of their conduct. But when a person has *trained his faculties by practice in the appropriate way to distinguish good from evil* and becomes capable of hearing wisdom, then we speak wisdom among the mature. (emphasis added)[17]

Here Origen alludes to Heb. 5:14 ("But solid food is for the mature, for those whose faculties have been trained by practice to distinguish good from evil"). This verse emphasizes the importance of training one's faculties by practice to separate good from evil. This idea undergirds Origen's understanding of prophecy: to discern and choose the right divinity as a source of inspiration is the first step in prophecy. To exercise spiritual discernment would then be a necessary practice.[18]

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[16] Robert Hauck, *The More Divine Proof: Prophecy and Inspiration in Celsus and Origen* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1989), 106.

[17] Jenkins, ed., "Origen's *Homilies on 1 Corinthians* (fragments)," *Journal of Theological Studies* 9 (1908): 238-39. English translation is taken from Kovacs, trans. and ed., *1 Corinthians: Interpreted by Early Christian Commentators*, 38. ἀναπτύσσομεν οὖν τὴν σοφίαν τοῦ θεοῦ οὐ τοῖς εἰσαγομένοις οὐδὲ τοῖς ἀρχομένοις οὐδὲ τοῖς μηδέπω ἀπόδειξιν τοῦ ὑγιοῦς βίου δεδωκόσιν· ἀλλ' ὅτ' ἂν γυμνασάμενος ὃν δεῖ τρόπον τὰ αἰσθητήρια πρὸς διάκρισιν καλοῦ τε καὶ κακοῦ ἐπιτήδειος γένηται καὶ πρὸς τὸ ἀκοῦσαι σοφίαν, τότε λαλοῦμεν σοφίαν ἐν τοῖς τελείοις· σοφίαν δὲ λέγω οὐ τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου οὐδὲ παραπλησίαν τῆς σοφίας τῶν ἀρχόντων τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου.

[18] There is ample discussion on spiritual discernment as an important practice to be inculcated in religious persons in late antiquity. For example, Karen King, *The Secret Revelation of John* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), esp. 177-238. For a helpful discussion on the issue of spiritual discernment as a practice, see Mikael Haxby's dissertation, "The *First Apocalypse of James*: Martyrdom and Sexual Difference," 57.

Methods to Prophecy

As shown by the diagram above, Origen maintains that Christians—as Origen constructs them— and another group (either non-Christians or intra-Christian dissenters) share remarkably similar technologies of prophecy and inspiration. Put differently, both groups are engaged in similar practices that lead to prophecy. This is no surprise: as we shall see later in the case of Iamblichus's *De Mysteriies*, both Origen and Iamblichus draw on ancient discourses about the communication with the divine in terms of practices that lead to prophecy, divination, and ecstasy.

Origen underscores that to be "purified by lengthened abstinence (*per multam abstinentiam purificaverint*)"[19] is one of the practices that lead to prophecy. Origen does not specifically explain what he means by "abstinence" here, although he explicitly correlates prophecy and sexual abstinence in his other writings.[20] As Henri Crouzel argues, for Origen, "the chaste body is the temple of the Trinity in which the soul made in the image of God officiates as the priest of the Holy Spirit."[21] As we have seen in the second chapter, the prevalence of the idea that sexual abstinence and prophecy are related is shown in Origen's *Contra Celsum* 7.5, in which Origen discusses the Pythia and her

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[19] On Origen and ascetic practices, see Vincent Wimbush, "Asceticism," in *The Westminster Handbook to Origen*, 64-6; Henri Crouzel, *Origen: The Life and Thought of the First Great Theologian*, 135-49.

[20] Hällström, *Charismatic Succession*, 12. Origen's *Homilies on Luke* XVII (108. 24-109.7); *Homilies on Jeremiah* XX 7 (189. 3-8). Origen usually does not concern about fasting as a practice to ascend to God. See Veronika E. Grimm, "Food and Fasting in Origen and Eusebius," in *From Feasting to Fasting* (London; New York: Routledge, 1996): "A virtuous life and sexual purity were, in his eyes, the essential demands facing those who wished to approach the divine," (143).

[21] Crouzel, *Origen*, 137.

sexual status. Origen disparages the divination practice at the Delphic oracle, but nonetheless, he acknowledges the discourse that correlates prophecy and abstinence.[22] Along with abstinence and purification, Origen emphasizes "the holy and religious training (*disciplinis*)" as practices that lead to prophecy. For Origen, it is important to train one's body and soul to defend oneself from the bad external influences.

De Principiis reflects a fairly consistent view of how people obtain spiritual gifts through preparatory practice. In several places in *De Principiis*, Origen also uses the theme of "being worthy of" or "earn/merit" the spiritual gifts. In *De Principiis* 3.3.3, which is cited in full above, Origen talks about those who "earn the grace of prophecy." At the outset of *De Principiis* Book 1, preface 3, Origen opts for the similar term *mereo* which means "merit, deserve or earn,"[23] when he maintains,

> But the following fact should be understood. The holy apostles, when preaching the faith of Christ, took certain doctrines, those namely which they believed to be necessary ones, and delivered them in the plainest terms to all believers, even to such as appeared to be somewhat dull in the investigation of divine knolwedge. The grounds of their statements they left to be investigated by such as should *merit the higher gifts of the Spirit* and in particular by such as should afterwards receive through the Holy Spirit the graces of language, wisdom and knowledge There were other doctrines, however, about which the apostles simply said that things were so, keeping silence as to the how or why; their intention undoubtedly being as should prove to be lovers of wisdom, with an exercise on which to display the fruit of their ability. The people I refer are *those who prepare*

[22] As we saw in Introduction, the scholarship on prophecy and continence/abstinence is vast. For a classic example, Peter Brown, "Prophecy and Continence," in *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 67: "Both Jew and Pagan believed that sexual asceticism is linked to prophecy." Brown argues that "writing in the latter part of the second century, men like Irenaeus, at Lyon and Tertullian, at Carthage, tended, rather to think of the body as undergoing a slow but sure preparation to take upon itself the awesome weight of the Spirit of God," 68. Brown's observation also applies to Origen.

[23] For this discussion, see Chapter 1 of this dissertation.

> *themselves* (*praeparaent*) *to become worthy and capable of receiving wisdom*. (emphasis added)[24]

In this passage, Origen argues that people participate in "preparing themselves to become worthy and capable of receiving wisdom," which is, in other words, to "merit the higher gifts of the Spirit."[25] Later in Book 4 of *De Principiis*, he also discusses "the prophets and the apostles (*prophetas et apostolos*)" who are the "servants of the truth (*ministros veritates*)" and who participate in this practice:[26]

> These mysteries which were made known and revealed to them by the Spirit, the *prophets portrayed figuratively through the narration of what seemed to be human deeds and the handing down of certain legal ordinances and precepts*. The aim was that not everyone who wished should have these mysteries laid before his/her feet to trample upon, but that they should be for the one who had devoted oneself to studies of this kind *with the utmost purity and sobriety and through nights of watching,* by which means perchance he/she might be able to trace out the deeply hidden meaning of the Spirit of God, concealed under the language of an ordinary narrative which points in a different direction, and that so s/he might become a sharer of the Spirit's knowledge and a partaker of her/his divine counsel. (*Princ.* 4.2.7, emphasis added)[27]

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[24] Illud autem scire oportet, quoniam sancti apostoli fidem Christi praedicantes de quibusdam quidem, quaecumque necessaria crediderunt, omnibus credentibus, etiam his, qui pigriores erga inquisitionem divinae scientiae videbantur, manifestissime tradiderunt, rationem scilicet assertionis eorum relinquentes ab his inquirendam, qui spiritus dona excellentia mererentur et praecipue sermonis, sapientiae et scientiae gratiam per ipsum sanctum spiritum percepissent; de aliis vero dixerunt quidem, quia sint, quomodo autem aut unde sint, siluerunt, profecto ut studiosiores quique ex posteris suis, qui amtores essent sapientiae, exercitium habere possent, in quo ingenii sui fructum ostendrent, hi videlicet, qui dignos se et capaces ad recipiendam sapientiam praepararent.

[25] As we saw in Chapter 1, Origen juxtaposes prophecy with other spiritual gifts.

[26] Origen uses Ephesians 4 in this discussion.

[27] Quae illi mysteria, cognita sibi et revelata per spiritum, velut humana quaedam gesta narrantes vel legales quasdam observantias praceptaque tradentes figuraliter describebant; ut non qui velit haec velut conculcanda ante pedes haberet exposita, sed qui se huiuscemodi studiis cum omni castimonia et sobrietate ac vigiliis dedidisset, ut per haec forte in profundo latentem sensum spiritus dei et sermonis usitata narratione aliorsum prospiciente contectum investigare potuisset, atque ita socius scientiae spiritus et divini consilii particeps fieret.

Origen understands that God's mysteries are not readily revealed to everyone who wished," but to "the one who had devoted oneself to studies of this kind with the utmost purity and sobriety and through nights of watching." In this way, Origen weaves together knowledge and wisdom as the spiritual gifts that are given to those who are ready to receive them. In the two passages above, indeed, Origen does not explicitly discuss prophecy, as he does in *De Principiis* 3.3.3, when he argues that spiritual gifts are earned by those who are worthy to receive them. Furthermore, Origen understands prophecy as something akin to knowledge and wisdom, drawing from Paul's language in 1 Corinthians, as we saw in Chapter 1 as well.

Attain the Portion of Divinity and Earn the Grace of Prophecy

Origen posits that Christian prophetic practices are ultimately about "attaining the portion of divinity (*participum per hoc divinitatis adsumunt*)." Origen's understanding of divine inspiration refers to the idea that prophets participate in, and thus receive a portion of divinity (*Princ.* 3.3.3). This idea, that through the act of purification (*puritas*) prophecy is earned, can be better understood in the context of Origen's overall theology of *apokatastasis*. Put differently, the return to the Creator through receiving Christ is a central tenet of Origen's thought. Sanctity, which is gained through various practices— both bodily and noetic— plays an important role in "producing within the saints the capacity to receive Christ and through him to return to the Father."[28]

[28] Pablo Argarate, "The Holy Spirit in Prin I. 3," 45. The idea of *apokatastasis*, that is, universal restoration, takes an important space in Origen's thought world. For example, we get a glimpse of this idea, based on the Pauline epistles (especially 1 Cor 15), in *De Principiis* 3.5.6: "The only-begotten son of God, Logos and Wisdom of the Father, must reign until he has put his enemies under his feet and destroyed the last enemy, Death, embracing in himself, at the end of the world, all those whom he subjects to the Father and who come to salvation thanks to

Prophecy requires a pure soul. *De Principiis* 3.3.3 argues that, to attain divinity, the human being needs to "preserve oneself free from all contagion of evil spirits," to be "purified by lengthened abstinence," and to be "imbued with holy and religious training." This theme of purification is also found, as we have seen in Chapter 2, in *Contra Celsum* Prophets who are truly "inspired" (θεοφορέω, *Cels.* 4.95) are "illuminated in mind and soul" (7.7; 7.21), and "participate in" and are "filled with divinity and a divine spirit" (3.5; 3.81; 4.8; 7.4).[29] In *Contra Celsum* 3.5, Origen also portrays Moses as one who participates in the spirit of God (μετέχων θειοτέρου πνεύματος), not being a sorcerer (γόης) as Celsus claims.[30] For Origen, Moses and other prophets in the Hebrew Bible are called "friends with God," for they earned communion with God.[31]

Origen argues that one must purify oneself before becoming a prophet. This idea is also clearly shown in his other work, especially *On Prayer*, in which he says, "the soul

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him…This is the meaning of what the Apostle says about him: "When all is submitted (*subiectus*) to him, then the Son himself will submit (*fuerint subiecta*) to him who has subjected (*subiectus*) everything to him, so that god may be all in all."

The Latin term used here (*subicio*), the Greek equivalent of ὑποτάσσω, highlights Origen's theory of universal restoration to God. According to Origen, all creatures eventually need to be subject to the only-begotten Son of God, and to the God Godself. Ilaria L. E. Ramelli, "Christian Soteriology and Christian Platonism: Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, and the Biblical and Philosophical Basis of the Doctrine of Apokatastasis," *Vigiliae Christianae* 61 (2007): 313-56, 317; Ramelli, "Origen's Doctrine of Apokatastasis," *Origeniana Decima* (2009): 659-60; Mark S. M. Scott, "The Physician of Souls," in *Journey Back to God: Origen on the Problem of Evil* (New York: Oxford University, 2012), 74-100; Paul M. Blowers, "Doctrine of Creation," in *Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies*, ed. Susan Harvey and David Hunter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 910.

[29] Hauck, *The More Divine Proof*, 130.

[30] Ibid., 133.

[31] "We are free to believe that in the pure and pious soul of Moses, who rose above all that is created, and united himself to the Creator of the universe, there dwelt a divine spirit which showed the truth about God far clearer than Plato" (*Cels.* 1.19). This imagery is very similar to that of Philo in *Vit. Mos*. 1.27. Hauck, *The More Divine Proof,* 130.

of the disciple or the simple Christian must be *purified* before there can be any expectation of standing in the divine presence."[32] So it seems that Origen not only *describe*s but also *prescribes* the condition of being a prophet: a holy and undefiled one becomes a prophet, and only a holy and undefiled one can become one.[33]

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[32] Julia Konstantinovsky, "Prayer," in *The Westminster Handbook to Origen*, 175-6.

[33] As we shall soon see, Iamblichus engages these themes. But so too we can find a prior example in Philo of Alexandria. *De Cherubim* does not specifically discuss divination and prophecy. Given that prophecy is understood to be "a faculty within the soul," in the second and third century, however, it offers an illuminating point wherein we could explore the theme of preparation for the divine to enter into one's soul. "Since, therefore, God thus invisibly *enters into this region of the soul*, let us prepare (παρασκευάζωμεν) that place in the best way possible, to be an dwelling place worthy of God." (*De Cherubim*, 98-105, emphasis added) English translation follows Yonge, *A Treatise on the Cherubim.* The use of hortatory subjunctive in the text above ("let us prepare [παρασκευάζωμεν]") is noteworthy. My reading is that this rhetorical convention reflects strong discourses embedded in late antiquity, that is, the strong pedagogical and parenetic philosophical and theological tradition that persuades the readers or audience or hearers into inculcate a certain kind of self. Later in this text, Philo likens a soul to a house, and human beings need to make their souls as spiritual houses of God, fitting dwelling places for God. This thought portrays the relationship between the human and the divine as the divine inhabits the human being. This idea is similar to Origen's own ideas in *De Principiis* 3.3.6,

> On this account a strict guard must be kept over our heart day and night and no place must be given to the devil, but all our actions must be such that God's ministers, that is, 'the spirits who have been sent forth to minister to them' who have been called to 'inherit salvation', may find a place within us and may delight to enter the guest-chamber of our soul; and dwelling in us, that is in our heart, may rule us with the better counsels, if so be they shall find the habitation of our heart adorned by the practice of virtue and holiness. Propter quod die noctuque cor nostrum omni custodia conservandum est, et 'locus non est dandus diabolo,' sed omnia agenda sunt, quibus ministri dei (hi videlicet 'spiritus, qui ad ministerium missi sunt eorum, qui ad hereditatem salutis vocati sunt') inveniant in nobis locum et delectentur in gredi hospitium animae nostrae et habitantes apud nos, id est in corde nostro, melioribus nos consiliis regant, si tamen habitaculum cordis nostri virtutis et sanctitatis cultu 'invenerint exornatum.'

Philo and Origen turn to a discourse of late antiquity, namely, that of cultivating oneself to become a suitable dwelling place for the divine to dwell through proper preparations. However, their ideas are divergent in an important way. The most important difference of these two thinkers is that while Origen emphasizes the human's ability to be united with the divine, Philo's thought is predicated on the unbridgeable abyss between the divine and human beings. Philo understands ecstasy as the suitable way to prophetic experience, whereas Origen does not. For example, in *Who is the Heir of the Divine Things?* (259), Philo claims that the prophet is simply the instrument (Ὄργανον) used by God to reveal God's will. And when possessed, the prophet does not have any awareness of what he/she proclaims, and nor understanding of what he/she utters.

De Principiis 4.2.7 also expresses an idea of prophecy that fits within Origen's larger framework of communicating with God, being like God, and partaking of God:[34] The mysteries which were made known and revealed to them by the spirit, the prophets portrayed that they should be for the one who had devoted oneself to studies of this kind *with the utmost purity and sobriety and through nights of watching,* by which means perchance he/she might be able to trace out the deeply hidden meaning of the Spirit of God, concealed under the language of an ordinary narrative which points in a different direction, and that so s/he might become a sharer of the Spirit's knowledge and a partaker of her/his divine counsel.

This process of attaining the divine is completed through two steps: "the active life of moral, spiritual and intellectual preparation (*praxis*) and true contemplation (*theoria*)," in Alan Paddle's words.[35] Scholars have noted the close relationship between contemplation and prophecy in Origen's thoughts. In their arguments, for Origen, prophecy equates with being able to "see" God. For example, Giovanni Filoramo notes

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[34] "According to Origen, the goal of the spiritual life of human being is to attain a similarity with God, following Plato's ideals as well as the insights from Genesis 1, 26." Argarate, "The Holy Spirit in *Prin* I, 3," 45. For Origen's understanding of contemplation, see Alan G. Paddle, "Contemplation," in *The Westminster Handbook to Origen*, 81-3. As we shall see, Iamblichus also says that the soul must attain union with the gods (τοῖς θεοῖς ἑνωθῇ) (*De Mysteriis* 3.11).

[35] Alan Paddle, "Contemplation," in *The Westminster Handbook to Origen*, 81. Before Origen, Clement of Alexandria employs the notions of *praxis* and *theoria* in Christian mystical and ascetic context, borrowing from classical philosophy. Called as the *vita activa* and the *vita contemplative* in the Western Christian tradition, *praxis* (doing, acting) and *theoria* (gazing, contemplating) originally refer to two connected activity, "the political and the philosophical." And then they turned to signify "two aspects of the life of any thinking person." Plato, *Statesman* (258E). Paddle, "Contemplation," 81.

Regarding discussions on contemplation, see Bernard McGinn, "Asceticism and Mysticism in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages," in *Asceticism*, ed. Vincent L. Wimbush and Richard Valantasis (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 58-74, 61; R. Somos, "Christianity as Practical Philosophy in Origen," in *Origeniana Nona,* 328-36.

that, for Origen, the "prophet is, first of all, one who is able to 'see God'." He goes on to say, "prophets are predisposed to a particular form of contemplation (*theoria*), which culminates in prophetic activity."[36] While I initially agreed with Filoramo's arguments, I came to realize that it would be hard to systematize Origen's definitions of prophecy. As we saw in Chapter 1 on the discussions of the *Commentary on Romans*, Origen connects prophecy to interpretation and teaching, as he was bound by the Pauline text. In *De Principiis* 3, the precise contours of the relationship between prophecy and contemplation in Origen's thoughts are not fully worked out, but it seems to be clear that Origen understands both contemplation and prophecy in a larger theological narriave, namely, the centrality of pedagogical structure in Origen's thought. Thus instead of trying to figure out Origen's definition of prophecy, my work rather focuses on the way in which Origen strategically deploys his discussions on prophecy and rhetorically uses them to persuade his readers and hearers in a certain way.

The Prophets: The Model for a Christian Self

In *De Principiis* 3.3, Origen regards prophets as the ideal models who work best in showing how the Christian audiences can understand the right form of communication with the divine, just as we saw in Chapter 2.[37] They also exemplify particular actions one can take in the present to cultivate the self in relation to the divine. With the *past* prophets as models, the audience members are encouraged to participate in the spiritual path. My

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[36] Giovanni Filoramo, "Profezia," in *Origene. Dizionario,* 473-75.

[37] Prophets in the Jewish Scripture are explicitly mentioned as exemplars to be imitated in *Contra Celsum* 7.30 as well. Hällström, *Charismatic Succession,* 43; Ilaria L. E. Ramelli, "Origen's Exegesis of Jeremiah: Resurrection Announced Throughout the Bible and its Twofold conception," *Augustinianum* 48.1(June, 2008): 59.

reading is that Origen not so much exhorts everyone to become a prophet, but rather rhetorically encourages the audiences to adopt the same dispositions and actions of the prophets.[38]

The prophets, in Hauck's terms, "stand at the summit of the spiritual path,"[39] and are the best representatives of the life of virtue. To cite *De Principiis* 4.2.7 again:

> The mysteries which were made known and revealed to them by the spirit, the prophets portrayed that they should be for the one who had devoted oneself to studies of this kind *with the utmost purity and sobriety and through nights of watching,* by which means perchance he/she might be able to trace out the deeply hidden meaning of the Spirit of God, concealed under the language of an ordinary narrative which points in a different direction, and that so *s/he might become a sharer of the Spirit's knowledge and a partaker of her/his divine counsel*.

While Origen does not directly argue that the audience is to become prophets or to strive to prophesy (just as he argued in *Commentary on Romans,* as we have seen in Chapter 1), he commends prophets as examples and models.

Prophets are models for the way the divine works and communicates in human lives. As we saw in Chapter 2, Origen, in the *Contra Celsum*, maintains that God's prophets are "studied by those who desire to be more perfect Christians" (*Cels.* 7.49). In *De Principiis* 2.7.3, Origen notes,

> So, too, I think, is it the case with *the Holy Spirit, in whom is every manner of gift.* For to some is granted by the Spirit the word of wisdom, to others the word of knowledge, to others faith and thus to *each individual one who is able to receive oneself* the same Spirit becomes and is apprehended as the very thing of which s/he, *who has been deemed worthy to partake of God*, stands in need. (emphasis added)[40]

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[38] In this way, as we have briefly seen in Chapter 2, Origen enjoins the audience, "thus let all of us, as far as our ability allows, strive for the prophetic life" (*Homily on Jeremiah* 14:5).

[39] Hauck, *The More Divine Proof*, 121.

[40] This passage includes an allusion to 1 Corinthians 12:8-9. Ita arbitror etiam de spiritu sancto, in quo omnis est natura donorum. >Aliis< namque praebetur >per spiritum sermo

In this passage, Origen discusses the work of the Holy Spirit in conjunction with a gift that is not limited to prophecy. He claims that each individual has the potential to receive the Spirit,[41] and those who are able to receive the Spirit are equated to those who "have been deemed worthy to partake of God." Given that prophecy is understood as a gift (χάρισμα) of the Holy Spirit, it is noteworthy how Origen describes God as bestowing God's own spirit to the qualified people, those who are "able to partake of God" (*Cels.* 6.70).[42]

Several scholars have asserted that, for Origen, only the select few (saints) can attain true contemplation, *theoria*, after "a long prior period of prayer, study, and the struggle to master human passions through ascetic practice."[43] I would argue instead that Origen also stresses is that *everyone*—not just a few—must have a certain orientation toward divinization (*theosis*). As Ilaria Ramelli put it, "all must acquire the likeness of God through our deeds and deliberate choices."[44] Martens also points out the tension in Origen's thoughts between the position that all human beings participate with the

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sapientiae, aliis sermo scientiae, aliis fides<; et ita per singulos, qui eum capere possunt, hoc efficitur vel hoc intellegitur ipse spiritus, quo indiget ille, qui eum participare meruerit.

[41] Scholars often discuss the theme of all Christians as potential prophets in relation to New Testament texts, distinguishing for example between the view of prophets in Paul's letters and in Luke-Acts. Forbes, *Prophecy and Inspired Speech*, 190-92. Forbes also discusses "the theological conception of the New Testament writers that in some sense 'all the Lord's people are prophets,' and the discussion of prophecy in 1 Corinthians, and in the Shepherd of Hermas." Forbes, *Prophecy and Inspired Speech*, 242. Also see the discussion in Chapter 2 of this dissertation.

[42] *Cels.* 6.70, emphasis added. "God is always giving a share of God's own Spirit to those who are able to *partake of* God, though God dwells in those who are worthy not by being cut into sections and divided up."

[43] Alan G. Paddle, "Contemplation," 82.

[44] Ramelli, "Origen's Doctrine of Apokatastasis," 352.

divine/God versus only a select, deserving few.[45] Drawing on these scholarly insights, I argue that in Origen's writings, Christians are encouraged to strive to be united with God whether they attain the ultimate goal of *theoria* or not.

Polemics Against the Other: They Choose the Wrong Spirit

In *De Principiis* 3.3, Origen uses the example of prophets to refute unnamed opponents, disparaging those who choose the wrong spirits and arguing in favor of "the prophets and apostles, who attended upon the divine responses (*divinis responsis*) without any mental disturbance" (*Princ.* 3.3.4).[46] Origen highlights the human being's own will and discernment in the enterprise of correct prophecy and inspiration when he says,

> On the other hand a person receives the energy and control of a good spirit (*boni vero spiritus recipit quis enerigiam vel inopereationem*), when he/she is moved and incited to what is good and inspired for things heavenly and divine; just as the holy angels and God worked in the prophets, inciting and exhorting them by holy suggestions to strive towards better things, though certainly in such a way that it rested with the person's own will and judgment whether or not the person was willing to follow God's call to the heavenly and divine. (*Princ.* 3.3.4.)[47]

According to Origen, the prophets are inspired, but retain their own will, while participating with the divine.

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[45] Peter Martens, "Holy Spirit," in *The Westminster Handbook to Origen*, 126. Also, Hauck*, The More Divine Proof*, 123 n. 40.

[46] Sunt omnes vel prophetae vel apostolic, qui divinis responsis sine ulla mentis obturbatione ministrabant. Butterworth translates *divinis responsis* as "divine oracles." But I think the better translation is "divine responses."

[47] Boni vero spiritus recipit quis energiam vel inoperationem, cum movetur et provocatur ad bona et inspiratur ad inoperationem, cum movetur et provcatur ad bona et inspiratur ad caelestia vel divina; sicut sancti angeli et ipse deus inoperatus est in prophetis, suggestionibus sanctis ad meliora provocans et cohortans, ita sane ut maneret in arbitrio hominis ac iudicio, si sequi velit aut nolit ad caelestia et divina provocantem.

Throughout book 3 of *De Principiis* (and as we saw in other texts such as *Commentary on Romans*,) Origen emphasizes the role of human freedom in differentiating and choosing sources of inspiration. And "they"—those whom Origen criticizes—admit the "opposing powers," are inspired by them, and "subject themselves as slaves to those spirits" (*Princ.* 3.3.3). Origen employs the rhetoric of slavery (*famulatus*), in other places, such as his *Commentary on Romans* 6.3.[48] Commenting on Romans 6:16 ("If you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin or righteousness"), Origen claims, "By our own will, through own consent and not coercion, we show ourselves slaves of either sin or justice."[49] In *De Principiis* 3.3, in contrast, Origen refrains from describing Christians in terms of the rhetoric of slave, while he portrays the opponents as slaves. Here he tries to evoke the negative association of a slave, emphasizing the slave's passivity. I do not argue that Origen always criticizes passivity. When Christians choose to submit themselves to God, Origen argues, passivity is positive: it is important to choose to be a good vessel and instrument for God. Yet Origen uses passivity negatively in order to discredit the opponents.

Origen's use of the *topos* of vessel/receptacle is another rhetorical device to accentuate the passivity of the opponents.[50] In *De Principiis* 3.1.20, Origen refers to 2 Tim 2:20-21: "If a human being therefore purges himself/herself, the one shall be a vessel of honor, sanctified, and suitable for the Master's use, and prepared for every good

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[48] Origen, *Commentary on Romans*, 6.3, PG 14:1060.

[49] Origen goes on to say, "We should always remember this and not make excuses for our sin, blaming the devil, the demands of nature, fate, or the position of the stars."

[50] See Chapter 2 of this dissertation.

work." 2 Timothy dichotomizes "vessels (σκεύη, *vas*) of honor" and "vessels of dishonor," maintaining that those who admit the right source of divinity become vessels of honor, and those who admit the "opposing powers," become vessels of dishonor. In *De Principiis* 3.3, however, Origen limits the *topos* of vessel to those who are on the path of the evil spirits and receive their inspiration.

> Then in regard to those who teach another doctrine of Christ than that which the rule of scripture allows, it is not superfluous to think whether it is with treacherous intentions that the opposing powers, in their efforts to check the faith of Christ, have devised certain fabulous and at the same time impious dogmas, or whether in face even they, after hearing the word of Christ, have been unable either to banish it from the secret recesses of their consciousness or to retain it in a pure and holy form, and so have introduced, through the vessels that suited their purpose (*per vasa opportune sibi*)[51] and, if I may call them so, through their prophets (*per prophetas suos*), different kinds of error contrary to the rule of faith. (*Princ.* 3.3.4)

Origen uses the *topos* of vessels and makes these *vasa* syntactically parallel to their prophets. He thus argues against his rhetorical opponents, accentuating their passivity. They become the vessels to be *used* by the "opposing powers."

In contrast, when "the soul is inspired (*inspiratur*) and moved (*movetur*) by the presence of a spirit of the better kind," Origen maintains, the soul does not experience any "mental disturbance or aberration whatsoever as a result of the immediate inspiration or exhaling (*imminenti adspiratione*) and does not lose the free judgment of the will (*iudicium liberum*)" (*Princ.* 3.3.4). Origen dissociates the Christian practice of prophecy from non-Christian or intra-Christian counterparts. Origen does not simply argue that the

[51] Indeed the most illustrious discussion of this theme comes from Plato, who famously, in *Phaedrus* 244 a-c, creates his own taxonomy of madness and inspiration. Butterworth translates "*per vasa opportuna sibi*" as "through the agency of vessels that suited their purpose." Butterworth, *Origen: On First Principle*, 226. But I think that "through the vessels that suited their purpose" is correct, for the use of "agency" here is somewhat unwarranted.

others who are under the influence of the bad spirits are all possessed, but singles out loss of self-control as a major characteristic of the opponents:

> Now the bad spirits work in two ways; that is, they either take whole and entire possession of the mind (*possederint mentem*), so that they allow those in their power neither to understand nor to think, as is the case, for example, with those who are popularly called 'possessed,' whom we see to be demented and insane (*amentes et insanos*), such as the people who are related in the gospel to have been healed by the savior; or they deprave the soul. (*Princ.* 3.3.4)

Origen readily connects possession to madness (μανία), a familiar *topos* in antiquity. And in an earlier section, Origen also mentions a "spirit of a kind of madness." We have seen that in *De Principiis*, Origen rejects a positive evaluation of madness in relation to prophecy, and constructs possession as an aberrant condition that is characteristic of his opponents. Origen takes pains to distinguish divine inspiration and possession, and categorically criticizes possession, by claiming that those who admit good spirits do not experience possession by the spirit and by saying that the evil spirits are oftentimes to possess and "take complete and entire possession of the mind (*penitus exintegro eorum possederint mentem*)" of those who admit them (*Princ.* 3.3.4).

Iamblichus's *De Mysteriies* 3

By reading Origen's *De Principiis* 3.3 alongside Iamblichus's *De Mysteriis* 3,[52] we shall see that Origen's discussions of prophecy, inspiration, and possession are grounded in a religio-cultural context wherein the discussions on prophecy and divination

[52] Space precludes a detailed account of the other works of Iamblichus such as *De Anima* or *Vit. Pyth.*, so this research will be confined to *De Mysteriies* 3. Henri Dominique Saffrey, Alain-Philippe Segonds, *Jamblique: Réponse à Porphyre (De mysteriis),* Collection des universités de France. Série grecque, 496 **(**Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2013).

are the privileged site of philosophical and theological discussions.[53] I focus on Iamblichus and ask the following questions: What elements do their theologies have in common? What kinds of common discourses do these works draw on? While emphasizing the divine origins of theurgy, Iamblichus elaborates the condition one needs to create in order to receive the divine. Addressing these questions allows me to see how early Christian discourse on prophecy is situated within a larger philosophical conversation in the Greco-Roman world.

There are several reasons why Iamblichus's *De Mysteriies* 3 proves to be a good conversation partner for Origen's *De Principiis* 3.3. One of the most conspicuous is that Iamblichus's *De Mysteriis* is arguably "the most extensive surviving treatise from the ancient world on divination, sacrifice and other polytheistic religious phenomena,"[54] and it is considered to be the only extant work that discusses oracles.[55] *De Mysteriis* is a later work than Origen's *De Principiis*,[56] and I do not argue for any literary dependency between these two works. By comparing these two distinctive works, I am certainly not aiming to compare two representative works from Christianity and a Greco-Roman "pagan" camp. In contrast to some, who have read Origen's *De Principiis* 3.3 as a polemic against the "pagan" world (or a "Gnostic" work), I argue that Origen, alongside

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[53] Nasrallah, *Ecstasy of Folly*, 3.

[54] Peter T. Struck, "Iamblichus, *De Mysteriis*, Book 1," in *Religions of Late Antiquity in Practice*, ed. Richard Valantasis (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 489.

[55] Plutarch's works on Delphic oracles are the other rare occasion that the author labors to explain prophecy.

[56] *De Principiis* is considered to have been written some time between 220 and 230 C.E. *De Mysteriis* is considered to have been written sometime between 280 and 305 C.E. Emma Clarke et al., *Iamblichus: On the Mysteries (De Mysteriis),* Introduction, xxvii, see footnote 46. xxvii.

someone like Iamblichus, engages in a broad and complex conversation regarding prophecy, divination, and possession as a means to communicate with the divine.

Origen and Iamblichus have different understandings of possession during prophecy: Origen's Latin text uses the term *possidere*, while Iamblichus uses the term κατοχή. Origen rejects a positive evaluation of madness in relation to prophecy, and constructs possession as an aberrant condition that is characteristic of his opponents, whereas Iamblichus privileges possession as an ideal form of divination. As we have seen above, Origen maintains that a person adopts a specific program that prepares him/her to "earn the grace of prophecy," and that the emphasis is on the control of the human soul so that one may resist possession by evil spirits. Iamblichus is similar to Origen insofar as he, like Origen, emphasizes that one must prepare for prophetic experiences.

Iamblichus's Philosophical Project

Iamblichus's *De Mysteriis* 3 is rhetorically constructed to refute claims by Porphyry, his peer. Porphyry, in his *Letter to Anebo,* criticized theurgy as dangerously close to magic,[57] which impacts the lower and irrational self, and understood theurgy as the technique of augurers, haruspices, oneiromancers, and medium.[58] Reacting to Porphyry's criticism of theurgy, Iamblichus wrote *De Mysteriis* in order to defend and

[57] Porphyry's understanding of divination and theurgy was far from unique. Augustine also criticizes theurgic divination as an effort to control the gods. Augustine, *The City of God,* 10, trans. Marcus Dodds (New York: Random House, Inc., 1950). Many modern scholars followed Porphyry and Augustine until recently. For example, E. R. Dodds disparaged *De Mysteriis*, characterizing it as "a manifesto of irrationalism." E. R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1951), 287.

[58] Charles M. Stang, "From the Chaldean Oracles to the Corpus Dionysiacum: Theurgy Between the Third and Sixth Centuries," *Journal for Late Antique Religion and Culture* 5 (2011): 1-13.

reinterpret theurgy. Iamblichus attempts to justify the ancient cults of the Greco-Roman worlds, by "arguing for the philosophic legitimacy of time-honored sacrifices and rites of divination."[59] Iamblichus champions theurgic rituals, which are, in Gregory Shaw's terms, "a *theion ergon*, a 'work of the gods' capable of transforming man to a divine status."[60]

Crucial to these discussions on theurgy is the relationship between human effort and divine work. Porphyry criticized theurgy, for he thought that theurgy emphasizes human efforts and thus diminishes the role of the gods. In contrast, Iamblichus balances the roles of human and divine agency in theurgy: while he privileges divine agency as the primary force in theurgy, Iamblichus highlights the importance of human participation.

These different appraisals of theurgy partly results from the inherent tension present in the term "theurgy" (θεουργία), which means "the work of God" (ἔργον θεοῦ). As Charles Stang analyzes, depending upon how you translate the genitive (θεοῦ)—whether it is a subjective genitive or objective genitive— the meaning of the term, θεουργία, shifts. If one chooses the "subjective axis," then, as Stang argues, θεουργία is understood as the gods' work "presumably in and through the theurgist, in which case he becomes a sort of vessel for divine action."[61] If one chooses an "objective axis," then θεουργία rather refers to the theurgists's works to the gods. Porphyry takes up this second understanding of θεουργία, arguing that the concept is undergirded by the notion that humans can manipulate gods. In this rhetorical context, Iamblichus attempts

[59] Shaw, *Theurgy and Soul*, 233.

[60] Gregory Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul: The Neoplatonism of Iamblichus* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), 5.

[61] Stang, "From the Chaldean Oracles to the Corpus Dionysiacum," 4.

to rebuke Porphyry's position by emphasizing that theurgy is the act of the gods, who take control in theurgy. For Iamblichus, divine agency is the ultimate cause of divination and theurgy. At the same time, he emphasizes the necessary steps to prepare for the adequate instrument for the divine to dwell.

Taxonomy of Divination and Theurgy

It was a common practice in antiquity to circumscribe boundaries among prophetic experience(s) as we have seen throughout this dissertation. In advancing his arguments, Iamblichus also constructs his map of the prophetic experiences, denies legitimacy to some practices and privileges others. Iamblichus's work indeed shows an impressive array of terminology of prophetic experiences, and Iamblichus is keen on arranging related and contested phenomena such as theurgy, divination, and possession in his religious landscape.[62]

Iamblichus makes a close connection between θεουργία and μαντεία, placing μαντεία under the rubric of θεουργία. For Iamblichus, θεουργία and μαντεία are almost synonymous in that the eventual aim in both practices is to be reunited with the divine through virtue. At the end of book 3 of *De Mysteriis*, Iamblichus sums up his ideas concerning the right understanding of μαντεία in conjunction with θεουργία;

> This, then, is *one kind of power of oracle which is undefiled and sacerdotal, and truly divine* (Ἓν οὖν τοῦτό ἐστι τὸ ἄχραντον καὶ ἱερατικὸν θεῖόν τε ὡς ἀληθῶς γένος τῆς μαντείας); and "this does not need," as you say, "either myself or anyone else as umpire, in order that I prefer it to any others;" but it is itself entirely removed from all, supernatural, and eternally pre-existent, neither admitting any comparison nor pre-eminence among many; it is free from all this,

[62] For discussions on prophetic experiences, see the Introduction chapter of this dissertation.

> and takes precedence all according to its uniform self. And *it is proper for you and everyone who is a genuine lover of the gods to surrender oneself to it wholly. For in such a fashion arises, at the same time, both infallible truth in oracles, and perfect virtue in souls.* With both of these, *ascent to the intelligible fire is granted to theurgists*, and a process which indeed must be proposed as *the goal of all foreknowledge and every theurgic operation*. (*Myst.* 3.31, emphasis added)[63]

For Iamblichus, θεουργία, μαντεία, and μαντίκη are crucial to the process of unity with the divine, which is the philosophical and religious goal. At the end of *De Mysteriies*, Iamblichus highlights this understanding yet again, when he says "*Only divine oracle, therefore, united with the gods, truly imparts to us a share in divine life*, partaking as it does in the foreknowledge and the intellections of the gods is filled with all goods" (*Myst.* 10.4, emphasis added).[64] Thus contrary to Porphyry, Iamblichus argues that θεουργία is not magic, but rather is an integral philosophical and religious exercise of transforming one's soul and of participating in a journey back to the divine.

After placing divination under the rubric of theurgy,[65] Iamblichus collapses the categories of possession and divination, just as many writers and thinkers in the Greco-

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[63] English translation follows Clarke and Dillon with my modifications. Ἓν οὖν τοῦτό ἐστι τὸ ἄχραντον καὶ ἱερατικὸν θεῖόν τε ὡς ἀληθῶς γένος τῆς μαντείας· καὶ τοῦτο οὐχ, ὡς σὺ λέγεις, διαιτητοῦ δεῖται ἢ ἐμοῦ ἢ ἄλλου τινός, ἵν' αὐτὸ ἐκ πολλῶν προκρίνω, ἀλλ' αὐτὸ ἐξῄρηται πάντων, ὑπερφυὲς ἀίδιον προϋπάρχον, οὐδὲ παράθεσίν τινα ἐπιδεχόμενον οὔτε ὑπεροχήν τινος ἐν πολλοῖς προτεταγμένην· ἀλλ' ἀπολέλυται <καὶ> καθ' ἑαυτὸ μονοειδὲς πάντων προηγεῖται. Ὧι δεῖ καὶ σὲ καὶ πᾶς ὅστις ἐστὶ γνήσιος τῶν θεῶν ἐραστὴς ἐπιδοῦναι ἑαυτὸν ὅλον· ἐκ γὰρ τοῦ τοιούτου τρόπου παραγίγνεται ἅμα τε καὶ ἐν ταῖς μαντείαις ἡ ἄπταιστος ἀλήθεια καὶ ἐν ταῖς ψυχαῖς ἡ τελεία ἀρετή. Μετὰ τούτων δὲ ἀμφοτέρων δίδοται τοῖς θεουργοῖς ἡ πρὸς τὸ νοητὸν πῦρ ἄνοδος, ὃ δὴ καὶ τέλος δεῖ πάσης μὲν προγνώσεως πάσης δὲ θεουργικῆς πραγματείας προτίθεσθαι.

[64] Μόνη τοίνυν ἡ θεία μαντικὴ συναπτομένη τοῖς θεοῖς ὡς ἀληθῶς ἡμῖν τῆς θείας ζωῆς μεταδίδωσι, τῆς τε προγνώσεως καὶ τῶν θείων νοήσεων μετέχουσα καὶ ἡμᾶς θείους ὡς ἀληθῶς ἀπεργάζεται· ἡ δὲ αὐτὴ καὶ τὸ ἀγαθὸν ἡμῖν γνησίως παρέχει, διότι πεπλήρωται τῶν ἀγαθῶν ὅλων ἡ μακαριωτάτη τῶν θεῶν νόησις·

[65] Shaw, "Divination in the Neoplatonism of Iamblichus," 233.

Roman world did, including Plato, the author of *Shepherd of Hermas*, and Philo, as we have seen in the previous chapters. He considers true divination to involve possession, reflecting a clear influence from Plato who connects divine madness to divination (*Phaedrus* 244a-c). Many scholars have noted how Iamblichus maintains that divine inspiration (ἐπίπνοια, θεοφορία, or ἐνθουσιασμός) and divine possession (κατοκωχή or κατοχή) are closely tied. In effect, these two terms—divination and possession—are even used interchangeably in many cases in *De Mysteriis*.[66]

Iamblichus is critical about what sort of divination is correct, and thus attempts to distinguish two kinds of divinations, following a well-attested tradition of creating a taxonomy of prophetic experiences.[67] First, he explores genuine divination, as represented in the three prominent inspired oracles (ἔνθεον μαντεῖον) in Delphi, Claros, and Didyma.[68] These are the examples of "another kind of divination, well-known and most splendid" (*Myst*. 3. 11). Secondly, Iamblichus discusses an inferior kind of divination, which is "private and not public" and "which stand[s] on magical characters" (*Myst.* 3.13). This latter mode of divination is also characterized as "accomplished by human skill, which partakes largely of guessing and supposition" (*Myst.* 3. 15).

Iamblichus relies on Neoplatonic ideas that the soul is associated with the divine and *noetic* (intelligible), and, in the moment of possession, a deity illuminates the human

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[66] Shepherd, "Iamblichus on Inspiration," 138-9; Clarke, *Iamblichus' De Mysteriis: A Manifesto of the Miraculous*, 70-86; Addey, "Divine Possession and Divination in the Graeco-Roman World: The Evidence from Iamblichus's *On the Mysteries,*" 172.

[67] His distinction between "genuine" and "human" divinations follows the taxonomy of divinations of genuine and artificial kinds of divination, which we discussed in Chapter 1.

[68] Emma C. Clarke, *Iamblichus' De Mysteriis: A Manifesto of the Miraculous* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), 63-5.

soul, which keeps a reflection of the divine light.[69] According to Iamblichus, true divination takes place when the soul is "united to the gods through such a liberated activity," and when the soul receives "the truest plenitudes of intellections" (*Myst*. 3.3). Iamblichus goes on to say, "But if the soul weaves together its intellections and its divine part with higher powers, then its own visions will be purer."[70]

Iamblichus turns to the *topos* of the inspired person as an instrument. In discussing the oracle at Colophon, he says,

> This holds aloof from no one who, through a kindred nature, is in union with it; but it [inspiration] is immediately present, and uses the prophet as an *instrument* while he is neither himself nor has any consciousness of what he says or where on the earth he is, so that even after prophesying, he sometimes scarcely gets control of himself. (*Myst.* 3.11, emphasis added)[71]

In an earlier part of *De Mysteriis*, Iamblichus also maintains,

> I would like to make clear the characteristic signs of those who are truly possessed (κατεχομένων) by the gods. For if they have *subjected* (ὑποτεθείκασιν) their entire life as a *vehicle* or *instrument* (ὡς ὄχημα ἢ ὄργανον) to the gods who inspire them, either they exchange their human life for the divine, or they direct their own life towards the god. (*Myst.* 3.4, emphasis added)[72]

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[69] Addey, "Divine Possession and Divination in the Graeco-Roman World," 175-7.

[70] Οὐ μὴν ἀλλ' ὁπόταν γε καὶ τοῖς θεοῖς ἑνωθῇ κατὰ τὴν τοιαύτην ἀπόλυτον ἐνέργειαν, αὐτὰ τὰ ἀληθέστατα δέχεται τηνικαῦτα πληρώματα τῶν νοήσεων, ἀφ' ὧν ἀληθῆ μαντείαν προβάλλει· <καὶ> τῶν θείων ὀνείρων ἐντεῦθεν τὰς γνησιωτάτας ἀρχὰς καταβάλλεται. Ἀλλ' ἐὰν μὲν τὸ νοερὸν ἑαυτῆς ἡ ψυχὴ καὶ τὸ θεῖον συνυφαίνῃ τοῖς κρείττοσι, τότε καὶ τὰ φαντάσματα αὐτῆς ἔσται καθαρώτερα, ἤτοι περὶ θεῶν ἢ τῶν καθ' ἑαυτὰς ἀσωμάτων οὐσιῶν, ἢ ὡς ἁπλῶς εἰπεῖν περὶ τῶν εἰς ἀλήθειαν συμβαλλομένων τὴν περὶ τῶν νοητῶν.

[71] αὕτη τοίνυν οὐδενὸς ἀφέστηκε τῶν ἐχόντων διὰ τῆς οἰκειότητος συναφὴν πρὸς ἑαυτήν· πάρεστι δ' εὐθὺς καὶ χρῆται ὡς ὀργάνῳ τῷ προφήτῃ οὔτε ἑαυτοῦ ὄντι οὔτε παρακολουθοῦντι οὐδὲν οἷς λέγει ἢ ὅπου γῆς ἐστιν· ὥστε καὶ μετὰ τὴν χρησμῳδίαν μόγις ποτὲ ἑαυτὸν λαμβάνει·

[72] Βούλομαι δὴ καὶ ἐν τούτοις τὰ τεκμήρια τῶν ὀρθῶς κατεχομένων ὑπὸ τῶν θεῶν παραδεῖξαι· εἰ γὰρ τὴν ἑαυτῶν ζωὴν ὑποτεθείκασιν ὅλην ὡς ὄχημα ἢ ὄργανον τοῖς ἐπιπνέουσι θεοῖς, ἢ μεταλλάττουσιν ἀντὶ τῆς ἀνθρωπίνης ζωῆς τὴν θείαν, ἢ καὶ ἐνεργοῦσι τὴν οἰκείαν ζωὴν πρὸς τὸν θεόν.

Whereas Origen categorically criticizes possession by the divine because of a person's loss of control, Iamblichus considers the complete possession by the divine as the right form of divination. Although these two authors have different understandings of possession in relation to prophecy (for Origen) and divination (for Iamblichus), they agree on an important element: Iamblichus, like Origen, highlights a cultivation of a particular self or disposition toward the gods. Iamblichus thus emphasizes a preparation for possession by the divine through philosophical and bodily practices.

Preparation for Divination

In discussing the human agency in theurgy and divination, Iamblichus highlights the necessary preparation for divination. The first step for the preparation for the divination would be to discern the right divinity before submitting oneself to the divine. In *De Mysteriies* 3.3.4, Iamblichus describes (and also prescribes) "those who have *subjected* (ὑποτεθείκασιν) their entire life as a *vehicle* or *instrument* (ὡς ὄχημα ἢ ὄργανον) to the gods who inspire them." Iamblichus employs "instrument" to refer to a human being whose consciousness is, to borrow Emma Clarke's words, "eclipsed, not annihilated, by the divine force."[73] In a similar vein, Addey argues that "According to Iamblichus, it is not the case that the recipient has no consciousness at all: the central point is that the inspired individual is not conscious of anything else except the gods."[74]

[73] Emma C. Clarke, *Iamblichus' De Mysteriis: A Manifesto of the Miraculous* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), 83.

[74] Addey, "Divine Possession and Divination in the Graeco-Roman World," 174.

Just as Origen distinguishes two ways in which the bad spirits work in *De Principiis* 3.3.4,[75] Iamblichus divides the forms of the divine possessions into two categories: first of all, "the god possesses us, or we become wholly the god's property, or we exercise our activity in common with the god" (*Myst.* 3.5). Since Iamblichus considers complete possession to be the true form of divination, he calls for "the right discernment of it (ἐπιγνώσεως)," that is, "genuine possession" (τῆς ἀληθινῆς ἐνθουσίσεως)" (*Myst.* 3.5).

After discussing the significance of discerning the right divinity who will possess the diviner, Iamblichus also explores a diviner's ritual preparations. Iamblichus explicates rituals as mechanisms that help the souls of the diviners to become more receptive to divine inspiration. Regarding the oracle at Colophon, Iamblichus writes.

> Even before drinking, he fasts the whole day and night, and after becoming divinely inspired, he withdraws by himself to sacred, inaccessible places, and by this withdrawal and separation from human affairs, he *prepares for the reception of the god by making himself undefiled*; and through these means, he has the inspiration of god illuminating the pure sanctuary of his own soul, and providing for it an unhindered divine possession, and a perfect and unimpeded presence. (*Myst.* 3. 11)[76]

Emma Clarke and John Dillon translate the middle part of this passage ἄχραντον

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[75] Now the bad spirits work in two ways; that is, they either take whole and entire possession of the mind, so that they allow those in their power neither to understand nor to think, as is the case, for example, with those who are popularly called 'possessed,' whom we see to be demented and insane, such as the people who are related in the gospel to have been healed by the savior; or they deprave the soul.

[76] καὶ πρὸ τοῦ πίνειν δὲ οὕτως ἀσιτεῖ τὴν ἡμέραν ὅλην καὶ νύκτα, καὶ ἐν ἱεροῖς τισιν ἀβάτοις τῷ πλήθει καθ' ἑαυτὸν ἀνακεχώρηκεν ἀρχόμενος ἐνθουσιᾶν, καὶ διὰ τῆς ἀποστάσεως καὶ ἀπαλλαγῆς τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων πραγμάτων ἄχραντον ἑαυτὸν εἰς ὑποδοχὴν τοῦ θεοῦ παρασκευάζει· ἐξ ὧν δὴ εἰς καθαρὰν ἕδραν τῆς ἑαυτοῦ ψυχῆς ἐλλάμπουσαν ἔχει τὴν τοῦ θεοῦ ἐπίπνοιαν, ἀκώλυτόν τε αὐτῇ παρέχει τὴν κατοκωχὴν καὶ τὴν παρουσίαν τελείαν ἀνεμπόδιστον.

ἑαυτὸν εἰς ὑποδοχὴν τοῦ θεοῦ παρασκευάζει as "he purifies himself for receiving the god." But my rendering—"he *prepares* for the reception of the god by making himself undefiled"— follows the Greek text more closely. The water that the prophet drinks provides him with "the receptivity and purification of the luminous spirit in us, through which we are able to receive the god" (μὲν ἐπιτηδειότητα μόνον καὶ ἀποκάθαρσιν τοῦ ἐν ἡμῖν αὐγοειδοῦς πνεύματος ἐμποιεῖ, δι' ἣν δυνατοὶ γιγνόμεθα χωρεῖν τὸν θεόν) (*Myst.* 3.11). This vocabulary "to prepare" appears again in the same passage, when Iamblichus discusses the oracle at Branchidai.

> And as for the woman at Branchidai who gives oracles, it is either by holding the staff first given by a certain god that she is filled by the divine radiance; or else when sitting on the axle she predicts the future; or whether dipping her feet or skirt in the water, or inhaling vapor from the water, at any rate, she receives the god: *prepared and made ready by any or all of these preliminaries for his reception from without, she partakes of the god*. This is what is shown by the abundance of sacrifices, the established custom of the custom of the whole ritual, and everything that is performed with due piety *prior to divination*: also the baths of the prophetess, her *fasting for three whole days*, abiding in the innermost sanctuaries, already possessed by light, and rejoicing in it for a long time. (*Myst.* 3. 11)[77]

These passages by Iamblichus are similar to Origen's ideas insofar as they portray the practices that lead to prophetic experiences (divination for Iamblichus and prophecy for Origen). The ritual preparation includes practices such as fasting (ἀσιτία,[78] associated

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[77] English translation follows Clarke and Dillon with my modification. Καὶ μὴν ἥ γε ἐν Βραγχίδαις γυνὴ χρησμῳδός, εἴτε ῥάβδον ἔχουσα τὴν πρώτως ὑπὸ θεοῦ τινος παραδοθεῖσαν πληροῦται τῆς θείας αὐγῆς, εἴτε ἐπὶ ἄξονος καθημένη προλέγει τὸ μέλλον, εἴτε τοὺς πόδας ἢ κράσπεδόν τι τέγγουσα τῷ ὕδατι ἢ ἐκ τοῦ ὕδατος ἀτμιζομένη δέχεται τὸν θεόν, ἐξ ἁπάντων τούτων ἐπιτηδεία παρασκευαζομένη πρὸς τὴν ὑποδοχὴν ἔξωθεν αὐτοῦ μεταλαμβάνει. Δηλοῖ δὲ καὶ τὸ τῶν θυσιῶν πλῆθος καὶ ὁ θεσμὸς τῆς ὅλης ἁγιστείας καὶ ὅσα ἄλλα δρᾶται πρὸ τῆς χρησμῳδίας θεοπρεπῶς, τά τε λουτρὰ τῆς προφήτιδος καὶ ἡ τριῶν ὅλων ἡμερῶν ἀσιτία καὶ ἡ ἐν ἀδύτοις αὐτῆς διατριβὴ καὶ ἐχομένης ἤδη τῷ φωτὶ καὶ τερπομένης ἐν πολλῷ χρόνῳ·

[78] As we have seen in the Introduction, fasting as one of the bodily practices for prophecy has been discussed by some scholars.

with the oracle at Branchidai), withdrawal into a sacred, inaccessible place and abiding there (at the oracle at Colophon). Origen similarly emphasized the importance of practices that lead to prophecy, such as "purification by lengthy abstinence," and "being imbued with holy and religious training" (*Princ.* 3.3.3). Just as Origen discusses that the purpose of this practice is to be united with God (at least for Christians), so too does Iamblichus suggest that through these preparatory rituals, prophets and diviners "partake of God."

Is Everyone a Potential Theurgist/ Diviner?

Sharing the conceptual background of Platonism,[79] Iamblichus and Origen both understand divination and practice in a certain orientation toward divinization. I argued that Origen argues that everyone has a certain orientation toward divinization (*theosis*).[80] According to Iamblichus as well, the way to "partake of God" through proper ritual is not just for certain people but for everyone, at least theoretically. This notion is specifically expressed in *De Mysteriies* 3.12,

> If, then, we have started these things correctly, the divine power of the gods is bounded by nothing divisible, neither by place, nor by a divisible human body,

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[79] On Iamblichus's Neoplatonism, see Chrystal Addey, "Consulting the Oracle: The Mantic Art and Its Causation in Iamblichus' *De Mysteriis*," in *Metaphyical Patterns in Platonism: Ancient, Medieval, Renaissance, and Modern Times,* eds. John. F. Finamore and Robert M. Berchman (New Orleans: University Press of the South, 2007), 73-87; Anne Sheppard, "Iamblichus on Inspiration: *De Mysteriis* 3.4-8," in *The Divine Iamblichus: Philosopher and Man of Gods,* ed. H. J. Blumenthal and E. G. Clarke (London: Bristol Classical Press, 1993), 138-43; Gregory Shaw, "Divination in the Neoplatonism of Iamblichus," *Mediators of the Divine: Horizons of Prophecy, Divination, Dreams and Theurgy in Mediterranean Antiquity,* ed. Robert M. Berchman (Atlanta, GA: University of South Florida, 1998), 224-67.

[80] As Ilaria Ramelli put it, "all must acquire the likeness of God through our deeds and deliberate choices." Ramelli, "Origen's Doctrine of Apokatastasis," 352.

> nor by a soul contained in any single form of divisible entities, but being separate by itself and indivisible, *it is wholly present everywhere to those who are able to share in it*. And it both illuminates from without and fills all things, and permeates all the elements […]And existing itself prior to the totality of things, it is sufficient, by its own separateness, *to fill all things to the extent that each is able to share in it*. (emphasis added)[81]

The "divine power of the gods" is ever present for "those who are able to share in it," and "each one is able to share in" the divine power of the gods. As to Iamblichus's idea that everyone has a potential to be united with the divine, Gregory Shaw notes,

> Iamblichus had been led to the higher reaches of Platonism by Porphyry, and although Porphyry also introduced Iamblichus to theurgy it was Iamblichus who discovered its deeper significance. For Porphyry, theurgy functioned as a mere *preparation* for the philosophic life and was to be left on the periphery of its higher disciplines. Iamblichus, on the other hand, moved theurgy from periphery to center, not only in the life of the philosopher, but for anyone who worshiped the gods. (emphasis added) [82]

For Iamblichus, is the divination potentially open to everyone? Would everyone become a diviner? We have seen above that Shaw argues, "true divination, according to Iamblichus, was equivalent to divinization, making the soul divine."[83] Since everyone has a trace of divine light in herself, she is capable of being united with the divine, just as the (true) diviners did. In *De Mysteriies* 3.11, Iamblichus invites the readers to devote themselves to "one kind of oracle which is undefiled and sacerdotal, and truly divine," when he says, "it is proper for you and everyone who is a genuine lover of the gods to

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[81] Εἰ δὴ ταῦτα ὀρθῶς εἰρήκαμεν, ὑπ' οὐδενὸς οὔτε τόπου οὔτε μεριστοῦ σώματος ἀνθρωπίνου οὔτε ψυχῆς κατεχομένης ἐν ἑνὶ εἴδει μεριστῶν περιείληπται μεριστῶς ἡ μαντικὴ τῶν θεῶν δύναμις, χωριστὴ δ' οὖσα καὶ ἀδιαίρετος ὅλη πανταχοῦ πάρεστι τοῖς μεταλαμβάνειν αὐτῆς δυναμένοις, ἔξωθέν τε ἐπιλάμπει καὶ πληροῖ πάντα, δι' ὅλων τε τῶν στοιχείων διαπεφοίτηκε, γῆν τε καὶ ἀέρα καὶ πῦρ καὶ ὕδωρ κατείληφεν, οὐδέν τε ἄμοιρον ἑαυτῆς οὔτε τῶν ζῴων οὔτε τῶν ἀπὸ φύσεως διοικουμένων ἀπολείπει, ἀλλὰ τοῖς μὲν μᾶλλον τοῖς δὲ ἧττον ἀφ' ἑαυτῆς δίδωσί τινα μοῖραν προγνώσεως· αὐτὴ μέντοι πρὸ τῶν ὅλων προϋπάρχουσα αὐτῷ τῷ χωριστῷ ἑαυτῆς ἱκανὴ γέγονεν ἀποπληρῶσαι πάντα, καθ' ὅσον ἕκαστα δύναται αὐτῆς μετέχειν.

[82] Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul,* 14.

[83] Ibid., 232.

surrender (or submit) oneself to it wholly, which produces the true oracles and good virtues." Iamblichus models his audience by trying to persuade them to have a particular disposition and by placing the readers on the side of "genuine lover of the gods."[84]

As Johnston indicates, the μαντίς (diviner/prophet) "makes a profession out of something that, arguably, anyone could do to some extent."[85] Iamblichus, like Origen, does not claim that every person should become a *prophet/diviner*, but does implicitly attempt to persuade his readers to cultivate within themselves an appropriate disposition to practice the prophetic self, that is, the self that is open oneself to be united with the divine, and follows the example of oracular diviners. In this way, Iamblichus engages prophetic experiences in order to persuade his audience toward the cultivation of a certain kind of self.

Conclusion

Juxtaposed with Iamblichus, we see that Origen fits within a larger cultural and philosophical context that focuses on proper maintenance of the self as a means to attaining the divine. We have seen in the previous chapter that Origen defines Christian and Judean prophets over and against someone like the Pythia, constructing her as outside the bonds of true prophecy. Yet, in this chapter, instead of seeing differences between Christian and non-Christian notions of prophecy and divination, we have instead noted important similarities between Iamblichus and Origen regarding human agency and divine power, and preparation practices for cultivating the prophetic self. On the surface,

[84] Later, he also exhorts the audience to "surrender to it wholly" (*Myst.* 3.31).

[85] Johnston, *Ancient Greek Divination*, 115.

they seem to discuss different subject matters: Origen discusses true/good and false/bad prophecy in *De Principiis* 3.3, and Iamblichus discusses sophisticated/genuine and vulgar/dubious divination in *De Mysteriies* 3. Yet they deploy similar rhetorical strategies when they emphasize the cultivation of a religious self by encouraging the audiences to participate in disciplined trainings so that they may submit themselves to the divine.

Conclusion

This dissertation has shown that Origen as well as the author of the *Shepherd of Hermas* and Iamblichus engage the contested terms of prophetic activity in order to persuade their audience(s) toward the cultivation of a properly religious self. While ancient depictions and discussions of prophecy sometimes represent the prophet as passive and overcome by the divine in the moment of prophecy or ecstasy, I have shown that such views on prophecy are set forth in multiple ways. Thus I complicate contemporary scholarly discussions on early Christian prophecy that imitate ancient rhetoric by assuming that human activity should be non-existent in prophecy. Since the early Christian texts about prophecy often have an apologetic and polemical nature, modern scholars often have failed to recognize how this debate is predicated on the idea that certain practices are necessary in order to become a prophet or to be considered worthy of the dwelling of the divine/the Holy Spirit. Through Origen's works as well as the selected comparanda, I have demonstrated that ancient discussions on prophecy deploy similar strategies in order to persuade the audiences to participate in disciplined training.

Origen places prophecy in the midst of a common larger argument about the cultivation of the self in relation to the divine. In his discussions of prophecy, he does not urge the audience to become prophets. His point is not that they should become prophets, but that they should have the disposition of a prophet. He uses the example of prophets in order to show readers how to adopt the way the prophet trains himself/herself in a certain way of living. Origen invites them to participate in disciplined training so that they may become proper and worthy instruments of the divine, just as the prophets were.

In making these arguments, I have largely drawn on Pierre Hadot's insights in which he accentuates that cultivation of a particular philosophical self. Using Hadot has allowed me to intervene in a scholarly conversation that too often is stuck in the question of how mystical or intellectual Origen is, or whether early Christians thought that human activity should be required or invited in the act of prophesying. Using Hadot's insights, I contend that discussions about prophecy in early Christianity call for training in a particular way of living, and thus could be influential to early Christians regardless of whether they would ever attain the status of prophet or not. Thus, this dissertation offers contributions to early Christian studies and the scholarship on Origen.

First, combining rhetorical criticism with Hadot's ideas as a lens to think through the intellectual and bodily orientations prophecy necessitates, this dissertation has developed an argument for understanding the complexities of discourses on prophecy in early Christianity.[1] I argue that Origen brings together the notion of the prophet with that of the crafting of self (including a self that interprets scripture.)

This methodology proves to be helpful in exploring ancient debates about whether prophecy is involuntary—involving human passivity and a lack of human will— or active—involving the prophet's volition. Through the analysis of Origen's works as well as the *Shepherd of Hermas* and Iamblichus's *De Mysteriies,* I have demonstrated that whether these texts privilege involuntary or voluntary mode of prophecy, they agree on the importance of inculcating a particular moral self among the readers, and attempt to encourage the audience to participate in certain training.

[1] This is one of this dissertation's contributions, for Hadot's work usually attends to "philosophical" or "theological" texts, but hasn't focused on the issue of prophecy.

Second, this dissertation draws on current scholarship on Origen, which highlights the centrality of pedagogical structure in Origen's thought, and especially which aligns moral progress with the interpretation of the Scripture. In expanding on this scholarship on Origen by connecting his understanding of prophecy to his larger pedagogical structure, this dissertation also contributes to the study of Origen. I have argued that Origen thinks that those who are "those who have made some moral progress on the itinerary of the Christian faith" –as Martens put it—could receive spiritual gifts in general and prophecy in particular.[2]

I have made these arguments by means of close readings of various Origen's texts, sometimes in conjunction with other ancient writers. Chapter 1 analyzed Origen's discussion of spiritual gifts and prophecy in *Comm.Rom.* 9.1-9.3. First, emphasizing the human-divine relationship, Origen tries to encourage the audience to inculcate a self that is worthy to receive the spiritual gifts and prophecy through moral formation and scriptural study. Second, using the letters of Paul, Origen encourages the audience to participate in the interpretation of the Scripture, teaching, and moral discussions, each of which he portrays as a form of prophecy (*Comm.Rom.* 9.3.8).

Chapter 2 engaged the *Shepherd of Hermas* (especially Mandate 11) to draw out similarities and differences between Origen's substantial discussions on prophecy in *Contra Celsum Book* 7 and the *Homilies on Numbers* 14-17 ("The Book of Balaam"). The *Shepherd of Hermas* provides an example of the diverse competing voices and the different Christian viewpoints which Origen implicitly engages. This chapter demonstrated three themes. First, I analyzed how the theme of control and lack thereof also functions as a major criterion of a true prophet. The central question that this chapter

[2] Martens, *Origen and Scripture*, 161.

examines is the significance of a text's depiction of a prophet as a mouthpiece of the Spirit (or not): Who is a *true* and *worthy* (to use Origen's favored terminology) prophet in these texts? Second, I investigated how moral formation is considered as another criterion of whether one is a true prophet or not. The question (what is a good human?) intertwines with the question (who is a true prophet?). Origen argues that a true prophet must be in control. In contrast, in the *Shepherd of Hermas*, (true) prophecy is presented as a passive experience (in the sense that the prophet is the mouthpiece of God). Third, I demonstrated that discussions about prophecy use rhetoric to ask the reader or hearer to cultivate a particular kind of moral and theological self. These writings, such as Origen's works and *Shepherd of Hermas*, are not manuals to become a prophet, but rather serve to encourage the (Christian) audience in a particular way. By reading how the true prophet acts in the texts, the readers and hearers of the text are by extension exhorted to undertake the same practices (such as controlling emotions). They both agree that a certain cultivation is required, in order to be a right vessel for the Spirit to indwell.

Having compared Origen's works with the *Shepherd of Hermas*, which is a potent instantiation of a Christian counterpart that holds a seemingly different idea on true prophecy as a lack of control, and yet which has similar rhetorical strategies, I moved on to Chapter 3 which employed Iamblichus's *De Mysteriies* 3 as a point of comparison for Origen's *De Principiis* 3 and saw how these two texts deploy similar discussions and use similar rhetorical strategies but with a different target audience. Origen discusses prophecy in terms of specific spiritual exercises—both physical and intellectual/philosophical practices. These include practices of discernment and training

in knowledge (for example, to discern the right divinity/spirit, to preserve oneself from the evil spirits, to participate in abstinence, etc.).

Focusing on Origen's *De Principiis* 3, Chapter 3 examined four facets of Origen's use of prophecy. First, in the context of his emphasis on human freedom and providence, Origen discusses practices that can lead to prophecy. Second, Origen uses the rhetoric of prophecy, but does not describe a present capacity to prophesy. He rather places prophecy in the midst of a common larger argument about the cultivation of the self in relation to the divine. Prophecy also functions as a prime example for Origen to discuss how a person interacts with the external influences (either the true divine or the daemonic). Third, Origen uses past prophets as models for the cultivation of a Christian self that is "prophetic," but does not necessarily prophesy. Fourth, one of the most pertinent ways to examine the notion of the self is to view how the other is constructed. Origen delves into polemics against the other, that is, the opponents, whom he regards as using their freedom incorrectly and losing their self-control. Iamblichus's work provides a broader context for Origen's ideas about prophecy. Privileging possession as a genuine form of divination, Iamblichus highlights the importance of ritual preparations to become a right instrument (ὄργανον) of the divine.

As we have seen throughout this dissertation, Origen—as a biblical scholar *par excellence*—develops his themes on prophecy through engagement with biblical texts. In Chapter 1, we have seen how Origen exercises scriptural practice on his discussions of prophecy. Yet Origen's use of scriptural practice is not limited to his commentaries. In Chapter 2, I have demonstrated how Origen tries to solve the problem of Balaam in the *Homilies on Numbers*. Chapter 3 also demonstrated that Origen, in *De Principiis*,

engages with the Scripture (such as 1 Corinthians 2 and 2 Timothy 2) in his discussions on prophecy. In this way, I deliberately span multiple genres in Origen's corpus to show a consistent element in Origen's thoughts, that is, that his discussions about prophecy work rhetorically toward the construction of a Christian self among his audiences.

A major but tacit motivation in my research for this dissertation has been questions about gender and the historical possibilities for women and men participating in religious practices in early Christianity. As the last words of this dissertation, I want to mark the implications of my thesis for this key interest. We have seen in this dissertation how passivity in prophecy or divination is linked to the feminine and is marked as problematic by several of our key texts. Moreover, we have seen how Origen attempts to deny the legitimacy of prophetic practices by women.[3] Reading against the grain of the arguments that obfuscate the presence of women prophets, however, we can see the historical presence of women prophets in early Christianity.[4] Given Origen's hesitation about women who prophesy, and given my findings in this dissertation, we may ask: Does Origen only call men to cultivate a proper self that is worthy for the Holy Spirit's dwelling? Origen had women pupils, and the readers and hearers of Origen's writings must have comprised both men and women. Thus women were also potentially encouraged to cultivate a self that is open to the divine, and that is worthy to be a proper instrument and vessel. We have seen how Origen urges the readers and hearers to participate in disciplined training with virtues of courage, justice, and self-mastery. We then can also ask: Are men and women assigned different kinds of virtues, when Origen

[3] See esp. Chapter 2.

[4] See Introduction Chapter.

exhorts the audiences to cultivate a particular self? That is, are the virtues gendered?[5] I hope, in future research, to continue to explore these questions.

[5] For example, Karen Jo Torjesen argues, "Men were assigned the virtues of courage, justice, and self-mastery. Women were assigned the virtues of chastity, silence, and obedience." Karen Jo Torjesen, *When Women were Priests: Women's Leadership in the Early Church and the Scandal of their Subordination in the Rise of Christianity* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993), 115.

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