

Research Article

Giovanni Hermanin de Reichenfeld*

The Doctrine of Memory in Origen of Alexandria: Intersecting the Theory of Divine Names, Platonic Recollection, and Feminine Perspectives

<https://doi.org/10.1515/opth-2024-0025>

received June 09, 2024; accepted September 04, 2024

Abstract: Posing as the first attempt to study systematically Origen's doctrine of memory, this article pieces together the sparse references to memory in the Origenian literature. While no systematic attempt to investigate memory is traceable in Origen's thought, the psychological function of memory does present itself as a minor but significant element in his theology. First, I clear the way from unnecessary connections to the Platonic doctrine of recollection suggested by the few scholars who have tackled the issue. Then, I frame Origen's understanding of memory within his "doctrines of names." Memory is shown as the result of the nature of names and their ontological capacity to evoke the power of the named object and make it present in the mind of the utterer even before reaching a full intellectual understanding of it. Secondly I analyse biblical characters, especially Zechariah, Mary, and Elizabeth, showing how Origen turned the function of memory into a step of the human ascensive path toward God. The act of seeking God in one's memory is overcome when his presence occurs in contemplation, shifting from an economy of memory/imagination/manifestation to one of presence/contemplation. In the doctrines of divine names, the "memory" is opposed to the "voice," which is the distinctive trait of the new economy. Thirdly I show that, not only men, but also women are presented by Origen as examples of how to overcome the economy of memory, thus becoming "voice" of God. In fact, women represent the shift from memory to voice even better than men. They embody literally the path from "memory" to "voice," as the image that Origen uses to represent this shift is pregnancy, which thus metaphorically expresses the whole history of salvation as a process of spiritual transformation towards God.

Keywords: patristics, Origen of Alexandria, platonism, feminine studies, gender studies, early Christianity, doctrine of memory, doctrine of recollection

1 Introduction

Scholars generally believe that the doctrine of memory has not been developed in detail by Origen. The absence, at least in his preserved writings, of a systematic reference to memory in the constitution of the human subject has been repeatedly stigmatised by scholars.¹ This explains the gap in scholarship, which this article aims to fill, of any study thoroughly dedicated to the understanding of memory in Origen. The strongly

¹ Bigg, *The Christian Platonists of Alexandria*, 242.

* **Corresponding author: Giovanni Hermanin de Reichenfeld**, Dipartimento di Storia Antropologia Religioni Arte Spettacolo (SARAS), Università degli studi di Roma "La Sapienza", Piazzale Aldo Moro 5, 00185 Rome, Italy; Pontificio Istituto Patristico Augustinianum, Via Paolo VI, 25, 00193, Rome, e-mail: giovanni.hermanin@gmail.com, hermanin@patristicum.org

Platonising representation that drove Origenian studies in the twentieth century has often presented the absence of the Platonic doctrine of recollection/anamnesis – with the only, dubious exception of a passage from *On Prayer* 24,3² – as one of the main flaws of Origen's thought. Charles Bigg referred to the absence of both the doctrine of anamnesis and an explicit reference to "God's memory" as a logical weakness in Origen. He further elaborated that it would force us to think of the soul as incarnate in a life of penance in which, however, it cannot be fully aware of what it should learn: "What is the value of a schooling in which each lesson is forgotten as soon as learned?"³ Bigg's assumption is that, had Origen dealt with the problem of memory, he would have done it according to Platonic hermeneutical canons, that is, upholding the doctrine of *anamnesis*, as he seems to do in the aforementioned passage of *On Prayer*.⁴

The following pages will be devoted to debunking this issue, showing that not only Origen reflects on memory, but that he distances himself from the Platonic *anamnesis*. Rather, memory is an integral part of Origen's theory of divine and human names.⁵ According to Origen, in the etymology of each proper name – either human or divine – it is possible to recognise the "memory" of the entity to whom the name is ontologically linked.⁶ Such a close link between Origen's theory of names and the doctrine of memory is particularly visible in the allegorical interpretation of some male and female evangelical figures. For instance, Origen understands Zechariah as the "memory of God" (μνήμη), and his wife Elizabeth as the "promise of God."⁷ Similarly, their son, John the Baptist, is interpreted as an angel sent by God from the heavenly regions to be a "voice" (φωνή) that foretells the "word" (λόγος).⁸ Proposing a close reading of biblical figures that explicate this journey from the "memory" of God (Zechariah) to the "promise" (Elizabeth), to the "voice" (John), and, finally, to the "Word" (the Logos himself), the present article makes use of a feminine-oriented perspective, showing how characters belonging to female gender – in particular, Elizabeth, Mary, the Samaritan woman – are consciously used by Origen to indicate the ascensive path from the memory of God to the full contemplation of the Logos. This implies the idea that women are especially dignified as utterers of God's name, ascending from being the "memory of God" to the "voice of God." As such, this study draws from the methodologies set by different scholars who investigated how ancient authors, including Origen, used feminine and masculine as two complementary conceptual and intellectual metaphorical categories.⁹

The article is divided into three sections. In the first, I analyse the passage of *On Prayer* 24,3 in the original context of the Origenian understanding of names, focusing particularly on the value of "remembering" (ὑπομνήσκω). In the second, I deal with the most explicit occurrence of Origen's doctrine of memory, that

2 The passage runs: "And everyone who sees clearly will, as well, remember the things concerning God (ὑπομνήσκειται) rather than learn them for the first time, even if he thinks he hears them from someone or supposes that he finds out the mysteries of true religion (τῆς θεοσεβείας μυστήρια)."

3 Bigg, *The Christian Platonists of Alexandria*, 242: "He [Origen] has not attempted to get rid of the break of consciousness between the two lives, as Plato did, by the idea of partial reminiscence. Yet if in this life we have no recollection of what happened to us before our birth, why, it may be asked, should we have any knowledge, in a future existence, of what befell us here on earth? What is the value of a schooling in which each lesson is forgotten as soon as learned?."

4 Such line of reasoning and the ultimate connection between "memory" and the Platonic doctrine of anamnesis is also present in Perrone, "La preghiera secondo Origene," 163: "In ultima analisi, il «ricordo di Dio» va aldilà dell'aspetto «immaginario» acquistando una profondità metafisica che sembra richiamare l'anamnesi platonica."

5 By no means this article negates the strong influence that Middle-Platonism had on Origen's theology. However, on the topic of memory, a Platonic framework is impossible to trace. Regarding the relationship between Origen and Platonism see the debate opposing Edwards and Martens: Edwards, "Origen in Paradise;" Edwards, *Origen against Plato*; Martens, "Response to Edwards;" Martens, "Embodiment, Heresy, and the Hellenization of Christianity."

6 Orig. *Cels.* I, 24–25.

7 Orig. *Comm. Jo.* II, 197–8.

8 Orig. *Comm. Jo.* II, 197–8.

9 On Origen's understanding of femininity as an intellectual category see *infra* the contribution of Cerioni, "Feminine Metaphorical Language;" Cerioni, "Origen, Valentinianism and Woman's Role," 79–95; Ramelli, "Constructions of Gender in Origen of Alexandria," 115–60; Prinzivalli, "La donna, il femminile e la Scrittura nella tradizione origeniana," 77–96. On the study of femininity as an intellectual category in Ancient Christianity see: Cerioni, *Revealing Women*; Tervahauta, *Women and Knowledge in Early Christianity*; Clark, "Women, Gender, and the Study of Christian History," 395–426; Børresen and Prinzivalli, *Le donne nello sguardo degli antichi autori cristiani*.

is, his exegesis of Zechariah. In the third, I show how Origen's interpretation of three female characters (Elizabeth, Mary, and the Samaritan woman) exemplifies the shift from "memory" to "presence" and what is the significance of this shift for Origen's doctrine of memory.

2 The Doctrine of Memory and the Doctrine of Names in Origen

As mentioned earlier, *On Prayer* 24 is the only alleged reference to the doctrine of anamnesis. According to this interpretation, "memory" would have to be interpreted as the act of recalling the divine perfections that the soul contemplated before its incarnation.¹⁰ By contrast, I contextualise this passage within Origen's theology of names which, I claim, constitutes the real hermeneutical framework of Origen's theology of memory.¹¹ In *On Prayer* 24,1, Origen wonders how to interpret the command to sanctify the Father's name in the Lord's Prayer, noting that "the implication of the text is that the name of the Father has not yet been hallowed."¹² He then reflects on what the "name" of the Father is and how it should be hallowed:

Now a name is a designation that sums up and describes the particular quality of the one named. For example, Paul the Apostle has a certain quality all his own, both of soul by which he is what he is, and of mind by which he can contemplate certain things, and of body by which he is a certain way. Thus, the special character of these qualities, which is incompatible with anyone else, is indicated by the name "Paul": for no one else is exactly like Paul in these respects. But in the case of human beings, since their individuating qualities are subject to change, their names are rightly changed according to Scripture.¹³

Origen points out that the change of name presented by the Scriptures in the case of Abraham, Paul, and other characters follows the modification of some of the qualities of the subject to whom the name refers. It is therefore impossible to consider the underlying substance the same as it was. The transformation of the name should not be explained in rhetorical terms but as an expression of a change in substance. Such an account of names referring to the very nature of an entity on occasion resembles some theories in circulation but also doesn't duplicate any ancient account that we know, at least.¹⁴ In *Against Celsus* 1,24, Origen stands in clear opposition to both the Aristotelian doctrine, expounded in *On Interpretation*, according to which names are arbitrary *representations* of an object,¹⁵ and to the Epicurean one, according to which they represent an

¹⁰ A long-standing debate exists on the pre-existence of souls in Origen. The scholarly debate opposes different views on the corporeal or incorporeal status of the soul in the original creation and in eschatological destiny. On their incorporeality in the eschatological life, see Martens, "Origen's Doctrine of Pre-Existence," 516–49; Jacobsen, "Genesis 1–3 as a Source for the Anthropology of Origen," 213–32; Lettieri, "Il Corpo di Dio," 1–90. For the idea of an eschatological corporeality of the soul in Origen see: Edwards, "Origen in Paradise," 163–85; Edwards, "Origen's Two Resurrections," 502–18. A more nuanced thesis, according to which Origen did not reject the idea of the resurrection of the body, but he envisioned an eschatological body which is utterly "spiritual" see: Cerioni, "Bodily Souls?," 21–35.

¹¹ Regarding the significance of the doctrine of names in Origen, in addition to the passage already mentioned in Orig., *Or.* 24:2–3, see: Orig. *Mart.* 46; *Cels.* I, 24–25; *Comm. Jo.* 6.40–41; *Hom. Ios.* 13.2; 13.4; *Hom. Num.* 25.3; 27.5; 27.13; *Hom. Gen.* 17.5. By "doctrine of names" I mean Origen's understanding of the relation between words and objects which, in Origen's case, appears to include a nonreferential use of divine names. See: Janowitz, "Theories of Divine Names in Origen and Pseudo-Dionysius," 360.

¹² Orig. *Or.* 24,1: "ὡς μηδέπω ἁγιασθέντος τοῦ ὀνόματος τοῦ πατρὸς."

¹³ Orig., *Or.* 24, 2: "ὄνομα τοῖνυν ἐστὶ κεφαλαιώδης προσηγορία τῆς ἰδίας ποιότητος τοῦ ὀνομαζομένου παραστατική· οἷόν ἐστι τις ἰδία ποιότης Παύλου τοῦ ἀποστόλου, ἢ μὲν τις τῆς ψυχῆς, καθ' ἣν τοιάδε ἐστίν, ἢ δέ τις τοῦ νοῦ, καθ' ἣν τοιῶνδε ἐστὶ θεωρητικός, ἢ δέ τις τοῦ σώματος αὐτοῦ, καθ' ἣν τοιόνδε ἐστὶ. τὸ τοῖνυν τούτων τῶν ποιότητων ἴδιον καὶ ἀσυντρόχαστον πρὸς ἕτερον (ἄλλος γάρ τις ἀπαράλλακτος Παύλου ἐν τοῖς οὖσιν οὐκ ἐστὶ) δηλοῦται διὰ τῆς "Παῦλος" ὀνομασίας. ἀλλ' ἐπὶ ἀνθρώπων, οἷον εἰ ἀλλασσομένων τῶν ἰδίων ποιότητων, ὑγιῶς κατὰ τὴν γραφὴν ἀλλάσσεται καὶ τὰ ὀνόματα." For the Greek text see: Koetschau, *Origenes Werke II*. For the English translation see: Greer, *Origen. An Exhortation to Martyrdom, Prayer*.

¹⁴ Regarding Origen's philosophical knowledge, see: Limone, *Origene e la filosofia greca*.

¹⁵ Orig. *Cels.* 1,24; Arist., *Int.* 16, 1. Aristotle distinguishes between the mental representation of objects that are "always true" because they respond to the same ontological and logical categories, and the spoken utterance of these representations which, by contrast, is symbolic and arbitrary. See: Parmentier, "Semiotic Mediation," 359–85.

utterance of sound created by the first men following the reaction to the sensations provoked by objects.¹⁶ Some points of contact, as already noted by Dillon, can be found with the Platonic doctrine of *Cratylus* – and, one could add, to its later revision by Alcinoüs – where the name's correctness derives from its ability to describe the object as it is in itself.¹⁷ Dillon, together with other scholars, has also highlighted the link between Origen's doctrine and some magical texts, namely the Nag Hammadi *Greek Magic Papyri*, the *Corpus Hermeticum*, and the *Chaldean Oracles*, whence Origen had supposedly borrowed the idea expressed in *Against Celsus*, 1,25 according to which names lose their original power when translated.¹⁸ Origen also shows familiarity with the Stoic doctrine according to which names exist in nature because they are imitations of the things signified, thus making the study of etymologies possible.¹⁹ In this regard, Keough pointed out that Origen's doctrine of names – and, one could add, his whole theory of knowledge – is indebted to the Stoic ideas reported by Diogenes Laertius. In particular, he inherited the idea of a substantial difference between the proper name of something (ὄνομα), which would reveal the specific mode of being of a subject, and common nouns (προσηγορία), which indicates a general property to an entire class of subjects.²⁰

Despite the various points of contact with other doctrines on names – which Origen discusses in great accuracy – it would be incorrect to understand Origen's doctrine of names as a Christian shuffling of other philosophical ideas.²¹ Language, according to Origen, is not a human convention and names are by no means arbitrary; rather, they are a *manifestation of the power of the subject* to which they refer, as Origen explains at length in *Against Celsus*.²² In Stoic terms, we could say that names, according to Origen, are always “proper names” inasmuch as they are directly connected with the specific mode of being of the named object. Unlike in Stoicism, they cannot however be regarded as an imitation of the object in the intellect, being rather a phonetic expression that corresponds to the ontological reality. Origen deems the study of the etymologies of Hebrew names to be fundamental: being the “original” language, Hebrew maintains the connection between name and named, a bond that can only be *explained* in other languages but not *translated* with a different name. In fact, the translation of the name breaks the ontological bond that binds it to the named.²³ For this reason, Origen strenuously opposes the idea, expressed by Celsus, that “it makes no difference whether one calls the supreme God by the name used among the Greeks, or by that, for example, used among the Indians, or by that among the Egyptians.”²⁴ On the

¹⁶ On the Epicurean doctrine of names see: Epicurus, *frag.* 334 Usener; See his *Ep. ad Herodotum* in Diog. Laert. X, 75, and Lucretius, V, 1028 ff. Diogenes of Oenoanda, *frag.* 10 col. in.

¹⁷ Plato, *Cratylus*, 428e. Alcinoüs, *Epitome*, 6. See also: Clem. Al. *Strom.* 1,143,6. In this regard see: Dillon, “The Magical Power of Names in Origen and Later Platonism,” 203–16.

¹⁸ See: *Corpus Hermeticum*, 16, 2; *Chaldean Oracles*, 58 ff. The same idea is present in Iamblichus, *On the Mysteries*, VII, 5 and in later Neoplatonic theurgy. See Dodds, “Theurgy and its Relationship to Neoplatonism,” 63. On the influence of this cultural milieu on Origen see: Bostock, “Origen, the ‘Son of Horus’, in his Egyptian Milieu,” 76–7. Other scholars have negated the influence of those texts on Origen's thought. Underlining how vacillating Origen's stances over the enigma of the divine names are, Usacheva claims that Origen's belief in the supernatural power of divine names should rather be read in the light of the logical and grammatical techniques of his biblical studies. See: Usacheva, *Knowledge, Language and Intellection from Origen to Gregory Nazianzen*, 83–9.

¹⁹ Orig. *Cels.* I,24. For the stoic doctrine of etymology see: Cicero, *de Nat. Deor.* 24, 62; Diogenianus ap. Eus. *P.E.* VI, 8, 8, 263 c. Varro, *de Re Rustica*, I, 48, 2 ff.; Dio Chrys. *Orat.* XVI, 28.

²⁰ Diog. Laert. VII,58; Keough, “Divine names in the Contra Celsum,” 205–16. Concerning the Stoic theory of names, see: Brunschwig, “Remarks on the Stoic Theory of the Proper Noun,” 39–56. For studies underlining Origen's mastery in stoic logic see: Usacheva, *Knowledge, Language and Intellection*, 93–8; Heine, “Stoic Logic as Handmaid to Exegesis and Theology in Origen,” 90–117; Rist, “The Importance of Stoic Logic in the Contra Celsum,” 64–78. On the strong debt that Origen's theory of knowledge held toward stoicism see: Orig. *Comm. Jo.* XX, 167; Cocchini, “Conoscenza,” 80–4.

²¹ For an evaluation of Origen's knowledge and mastery of the philosophical tradition in *Against Celsus* see: Edwards, “Origen, Celsus, and the Philosophers,” 278–92.

²² Orig. *Cels.* I, 24–25. In this regard, see: Janowitz, “Theories of Divine Names in Origen and Pseudo-Dionysius,” 359–72.

²³ For this reason, Origen believes that spells cannot be translated, or they would lose their effect (*Cels.* 1,25): “I have to say further that experts in the use of charms relate that a man who pronounces a given spell in its native language can bring about the effect that the spell is claimed to do. But if the same spell is translated into any other language whatever, it can be seen to be weak and ineffective.” In this regard, see: Orig. *Princ.* I, 8, 1; *Hom. Jes. Nav.* XXIII, 4; *Hom. Num.* XIV, 2.

²⁴ Orig. *Cels.* I, 24: “μηδὲν διαφέρειν τῷ παρ’ Ἑλλήσι φερομένῳ ὀνόματι τὸν ἐπὶ πᾶσι θεὸν καλεῖν, Δία ἢ τῷ ἰδεῖνα, φέρ’ εἰπεῖν, παρ’ Ἰνδοῖς ἢ τῷ δεῖνα παρ’ Αἰγυπτίοις.” For the Greek text see: Koetschau, *Origenes Werke I-II*. For the English translation see: Chadwick, *Origen. Contra Celsum*.

contrary, considering the pagan gods to be nothing more than disguised demons, Origen explains that each of their names possesses an ontological link with the demon to which it refers.²⁵ The belief that names are ontologically linked to the subjects also allows Christians to activate the powers to which the names refer. This is why they must avoid pronouncing the names of pagan gods, in order to prevent the risk of summoning the corresponding entity.²⁶ On the other hand, by pronouncing God's names in an appropriate manner, Christians are able to perform miracles.²⁷

Within such a framework, Origen explains in *On Prayer* 24 that the change of names that occurred to Abraham and Paul should not be understood as a simple *representation* of their spiritual transformation, but as a direct *manifestation* of it. In his *Commentary on John* Origen explains that, when a *logikos* approaches God, he undergoes a substantial ontological change that alters his primary qualities, marking the change of his natural status that results in the shift of his ontological class of beings.²⁸ Origen explains that the world is constituted by rational creatures that are hierarchically disposed according to the order dictated by their degree of noetic participation in God.²⁹ The highest rational creatures are unified with God to the point of being defined themselves as “gods”:

There are certain gods (θεοί) of whom God (ὁ θεός) is god ... There are other beings besides the gods. Some of this are called “thrones”, other are said to be “principalities”, and others besides these are called “dominions” and “powers.”³⁰

Regarding these classes of rational beings, Origen explains that it is possible to call ἄνθρωπος every rational creature, claiming that:

The names of higher powers are not names of the natures of living beings, but of orders (οὐχὶ φύσεων ζώων ἐστὶν ὀνόματα, ἀλλὰ τάξεων) of which this or that rational nature (λογικὴ φύσις) has been prepared by God.³¹

If, however, common names express their belonging to an ontological class, proper names express the very nature of the subject. The significance of Origen's interpretation of the nature and meaning of names stands, therefore, in the idea that the name evokes a person's history. In other words, Abraham is called by his name because this is a phonetic expression of his personal history. In each name, therefore, is engraved the “memory” of the subject to whom it is referred. By their very nature, the proper names of rational creatures bring about the memory of their history.

The relationship between entities and names is further complicated in the case of the “name of God” by the fact that, in Origen's words, “God is always invariable and immutable, consequently always has the same name, that of ‘he who is’ as it is written in Exodus, and some analogous definition.”³² Returning to the problem of *On Prayer* 24, namely, in what sense the name of God is sanctified, Origen explains that God is holy in all his works in such a way that holiness represents a permanent property of his immutable essence and, accordingly, of his name. Consequently, when we speak of God's “name” we do not indicate, as it is in the case of rational

²⁵ Orig. *Cels.* I, 25; 5, 46: “For we do not suppose that Zeus and Sabaoth are identical. On the contrary, we hold that there is nothing divine about Zeus at all, but that a certain daemon delights in being so called, who is no friend to men or to the true God.”

²⁶ Orig. *Cels.* I, 25; IV, 33-34; *Mart.* 46.

²⁷ Orig. *Cels.* 1.25. Orig. *Or.* 24.2. In this regard, in the *Against Celsus*, Origen polemicalises against the anti-Christian accusation of performing magic through the invocation of divine names. Origen explains that, although Christians are indeed endowed with great power, miracles come from the invocation of Jesus' name and his story, certainly not from magical practices.

²⁸ Orig., *Comm. Jo.* I, 88; II, 146; I, 212-4.

²⁹ On the composition and hierarchy of the sensible and of the rational world according to Origen see: Hermanin de Reichenfeld, *The Spirit, the World and the Trinity*, 114-52.

³⁰ Orig., *Comm. Jo.* I, 212-4: “Εἰσὶ τινες θεοὶ ὧν ὁ θεὸς θεός ἐστιν [...] Εἰσὶ δὲ παρὰ τοὺς θεοὺς, ὧν ὁ θεὸς θεός ἐστιν, ἕτεροί τινες οἱ καλοῦνται «θρόνοι» καὶ ἄλλοι λεγόμενοι «ἀρχαί, κυριότητές τε καὶ ἐξουσίαι» παρὰ τούτους ἄλλοι.” For the Greek text see: see Blanc, *Commentaire sur saint Jean*. For the English translation see Heine, *Commentary on the Gospel According to John*.

³¹ Orig., *Comm. Jo.* II, 146. “ἐπὶ τῶν κρείττονων δυνάμεων τὰ ὀνόματα οὐχὶ φύσεων ζώων ἐστὶν ὀνόματα ἀλλὰ τάξεων, ὧν ἡδε τις καὶ ἡδε λογικὴ φύσις τέτευχεν ἀπὸ θεοῦ.”

³² Orig. *Or.* 24, 2: “ἐπὶ δὲ θεοῦ, ὅστις αὐτός ἐστιν ἀτρεπτος καὶ ἀναλλοίωτος αἰεὶ τυγχάνων, ἐν ἐστὶν αἰεὶ τὸ οἶονεῖ καὶ ἐπ' αὐτοῦ ὄνομα, τὸ „<ὁ> ὧν“ ἐν τῇ Ἐξόδῳ εἰρημένον ἢ τι οὕτως ἀν' λεχθησόμενον.”

creatures, the ontological manifestation of a substance, meaning, borrowing Aristotelian language, of an ontological subject of properties. Rather, God's names are understood in two distinct ways.

On the one hand, God's names express God's properties which, since God is immutable, are in turn immutable and eternal. In this sense, it is not possible to understand as proper names of God the *epinoiai* of the Son mentioned in the *Commentary of John*.³³ While some of them represent the Son in-himself (Wisdom, Logos, Truth, Light, Life), some others are ways through which the Son helps less rational beings to understand him.³⁴ Nevertheless, Origen warns the reader not to consider these aspects as related to the essence of the Son: "No one takes offence when we distinguish the aspects (ἐπινοίας) of the Saviour, thinking that we also do the same with his essence (τῇ οὐσίᾳ)."³⁵ The *epinoiai* are only logical aspects of the Son through which he manifests his properties and acts in the world, being only *logical* aspects of his essence rather than *ontological* entities, as I have shown elsewhere.³⁶ In addition, no *epinoia* can be preached as a proper name of the Father, that is, the only self-sufficient God (αὐτόθεος ὁ θεός ἐστι),³⁷ because he surpasses all attributes and descriptors:³⁸

God the Father of the truth (ὁ πατήρ τῆς ἀληθείας θεός) is more than (πλείων) and greater than (μείζων) the truth and, being the Father of Wisdom, is greater than and surpasses Wisdom (ὁ πατήρ ὧν σοφίας κρείττων ἐστὶ καὶ διαφέρων ἢ σοφία), to this extent he transcends (ὑπερέχει) being true light.³⁹

In this sense, Origen explains that the biblical commandment "thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain" should be understood as the sinful attribution to God of properties (that is, names) that are not his own.⁴⁰

On the other hand, Origen deemed all rational beings who bear witness to God to be recognised as "names of God." Every rational being bears witness to God through his own name and through the invocation of divine names. In the *Commentary on John*, for example, Origen explains how the Lord is called Sabaoth because of the existence of certain *logikoi*, called Sabai, who proclaim and serve him.⁴¹ In a few pages, it will be shown that this is true not only for male but also for female names, who are deemed to reveal God just as their male counterparts.

It is within this theoretical framework that Origen writes that phrase which has been understood by many scholars as a reference to the doctrine of recollection.⁴² In the passage, Origen refers to the fact that rational creatures are able to understand God because the "names" used in Scripture to describe him are a direct manifestation of his being, thus explaining that every rational creature can become a witness of God "because of the name."⁴³ Origen quotes the passage from *Deuteronomy* 32:2-3, explaining that those who call on the name of the Lord bear fruit in all the souls who hear them thanks to the Lord's name own properties.⁴⁴ In this

³³ For studies on the *epinoiai* in Origen's thought see, among the many: Hermanin de Reichenfeld, *The Spirit, the World and the Trinity*, 39–72; Jacobsen, *Christ, the Teacher*, 122–33; Greggs, *Barth, Origen and Universal Salvation*, 55–84, 152–70; Lettieri, "Il nous mystico," 177–275; Hanson, "Did Origen teach," 200–2; Williams, "The Son's Knowledge of the Father," 146–53.

³⁴ Orig. *Comm. Jo.* I, 52–60, I, 203; VI, 100–108; VI, 222.

³⁵ Orig. *Comm. Jo.* I, 200: "Μηδεὶς δὲ προσκοπτέτω διακρινόντων ἡμῶν τὰς ἐν τῷ σωτῆρι ἐπινοίας, οἰόμενος καὶ τῇ οὐσίᾳ ταῦτόν ἡμᾶς ποιεῖν."

³⁶ For a discussion on the difference between logical aspects (*epinoiai*) of the Son and ontological existence of the hypostases in Origen's Trinity see: Hermanin de Reichenfeld, *The Spirit, the World and the Trinity*, 39–72.

³⁷ Orig. *Comm. Jo.* II, 16–18.

³⁸ Orig. *Comm. Jo.* I, 51–52; II, 149–151; XIX, 37.

³⁹ Orig. *Comm. Jo.* II, 151: "ὁ πατήρ τῆς ἀληθείας θεός πλείων ἐστὶ καὶ μείζων ἢ ἀλήθεια καὶ ὁ πατήρ ὧν σοφίας κρείττων ἐστὶ καὶ διαφέρων ἢ σοφία, τούτῳ ὑπερέχει τοῦ εἶναι «φῶς ἀληθινόν»."

⁴⁰ Orig. *Or.* 24, 3.

⁴¹ Orig. *Comm. Jo.* I, 215: "We must believe that there are other spiritual beings besides these [Thrones, Principalities, Dominations and Powers] to whom we do not usually give a name. The Hebrew used to call one species of these beings Sabai (who was their ruler and none other than God), and from which the name Sabaoth was derived." See also *Cels.* I, 25.

⁴² Perrone, "La preghiera secondo Origene," 163; Bigg, *The Christian Platonists of Alexandria*, 242.

⁴³ Orig. *Or.* 24, 3. A similar view is held by Origen in the *Homilies on Joshua*, 20,1, where he maintains that the automatic power of divine names is effective even when it is not understood by the mind: "There are a multitude of powers within us which have been assigned to our souls and bodies, which, if they are whole, when the Holy Scripture is read, are benefitted and become stronger, even if 'our mind is unfruitful'."

⁴⁴ Orig. *Or.* 25,3. See *Dt.* 32:2-3.

sense, human beings have the power to sanctify God's name on earth, making its power manifest. He then goes on to say:

But the one who is able to utter speech “like rain,” which works together with those who hear it for the production of the fruits of their souls, ... this man can do all this because of the name. Since he understands that he needs God to bring all this to perfection, he calls Him to his side as the true provider of what I have mentioned. And everyone who sees clearly will, as well, remember the things concerning God (ὑπομνήσκειται) rather than learn them for the first time, even if he thinks he hears them from someone or supposes that he finds out the mysteries of true religion (τῆς θεοσεβείας μυστήρια).⁴⁵

The use of the verb ὑπομνήσκω and the general Platonic echo of the passage might recall Plato's *Meno*, *Phaedrus* or *Phaedo*.⁴⁶ Even more, this conception seems to uphold Alcinous' doctrine of the recollection of abstract and nonrepresentational contents by means of innate conceptions that make our philosophical reasoning possible.⁴⁷ However, the previous analysis of divine names in Origen shows that this affirmation is not at all linked to a presumed “recollection” of what the soul has already learned in another life – an idea which, incidentally, would be difficult to reconcile with what Origen states in *De Principiis* regarding the inadequacy of Plato's doctrine of ideas.⁴⁸ Rather, it must be placed within the Origenian framework of the doctrine of names. First, it should be noted that everyone who speaks about God does so “because of the name.” Therefore, Scriptural names for God – Adonai, Sabaoth, and Christ's *epinoiai*⁴⁹ – are an expression of God's economy of salvation, bearing in their own nature the “memory” of God's action in the world. Secondly (and most importantly), the invocation of the name causes the divine properties or agents connected with these names, here referred to by the term μυστήρια, to be immediately evoked. In this process, the verb ὑπομνήσκω signifies that knowledge of the mysteries is immanent in the names of God, which “remind” the divine truths to the rational souls. In other words, the utterance of God's name evokes the presence of God in the believers' heart. As a consequence, when human beings reflect on God's names they do not “learn,” but rather “remember” God's mysteries, because those mysteries had already been made present through the very utterance of the names. As the name is the *manifestation of the power of the subject* to which it refers, the ascensional path of every creature toward God begins with the utterance of God's name and its related power.

3 The “Memory of God” and the Character of Zechariah

The Origenian understanding of memory within the theology of names is evident also in the passages scattered throughout Origen's corpus where he explicitly deals with “memory” and “remembering.” The “memory of God” is often presented as a psychological means with the imaginative function of preparing the believer for

⁴⁵ Orig. *Or.*, 24,3: “ὁ τε δυνάμενος ἀποφθέγξασθαι ὑετὸν, τοῖς ἀκούουσι συνεργοῦντα τῇ καρποφορίᾳ τῶν ψυχῶν αὐτῶν ... διὰ τοῦτο ταῦτα δύνатаι. ταῦτα ἐπινοήσας ἑαυτὸν δεόμενον θεοῦ τοῦ τελειοῦντος καλεῖ παρ' ἑαυτὸν τὸν τῶν προειρημένων κυρίως χορηγόν· πᾶς τε τρανῶν καὶ τὰ περὶ τοῦ θεοῦ ὑπομνήσκειται μᾶλλον ἢ μαθάνει, κἂν ἀπὸ τίνος ἀκούειν δοκῇ ἢ εὐρίσκειν νομίζῃ τὰ τῆς θεοσεβείας μυστήρια.”

⁴⁶ See Plato, *Meno*, 81a10–e3 and 85d6–86c4; *Phaedrus* 274e–275b; *Phaedo*, 72e–78a. On Plato's theory of recollection and its different interpretations in modern scholarship see: Castagnoli, “The *Phaedo* on Philosophy and the Soul,” 182–205; Judson, “The *Meno*,” 160–81.

⁴⁷ Alcinus, *Epitome*, 4. Alcinus challenged the empiricist Stoic epistemology of his own time by proposing a form of “cognitive dualism” modelled on the sharp distinction between doxastic and epistemic cognitive states derived from *Timaeus* 28–29. This interpretation allows a distinction between knowledge acquired through experience and used in ordinary cognitive life to reason about empirical objects and a set of innate and abstract natural conceptions that allows for philosophical reasoning. For a critical discussion of the way in which Middle and Neo-Platonism understood the platonic doctrine of anamnesis/recollection see: Brittain, “Plato and Platonism,” 668–95. See also: Scott, *Recollection and Experience*.

⁴⁸ Orig. *Princ.* II, 3, 6; I, 2, 2; See also *Princ.* I, 4, 4–5 where he affirms that ideas are present in Christ, that is, in Wisdom, but not as a separate world. Forms are not autonomous beings, but logical attributes of the hypostasis of the Son, i.e. *epinoiai*. See *supra*, footnote 36.

⁴⁹ Orig. *Cels.* I, 24; V, 45; *Comm. Jo.* I, 151ff.; I, 161; I, 222–224; II, 89; VI, 298; XIX, 147.

the true contemplation of God. Accordingly, he who prays to God is urged to leave all sensible images behind and to purify as to “remind himself (ὑπομνήσκω) so far as he is able of the Majesty whom he approaches.”⁵⁰ This work of purification turns memory from sensible images to its remembrance of God.⁵¹ Memory is thus the imaginative function that makes people turn to their interiority and refrain them from doing evil.⁵² Memory is presented both in its positive function of preparation and in its negative function of retainer of evil images that prevent the full contemplation of God.⁵³ In both cases, memory is both a container of earthly images and an active function of the human mind with a proper imaginative capacity of preparing the human mind for the next level of knowledge, that is, the noetic one.⁵⁴

Such interpretation of memory as “preparation” and its connection to the doctrine of names is particularly evident in Origen’s exegetical interpretation of the character of Zechariah, whose very name he interprets as the “memory of God.” In the *Commentary on John*, the *Homilies on Luke*, and the *Homilies on the Psalms*, Origen systematically proposes a dichotomic interpretation that opposes the “memory” of God represented by Zechariah with his presence.

In the *Homilies on Luke*, Zechariah’s mutism caused by his lack of faith in the angel’s announcement is a symbol of the prophets’ silence after the coming of Christ.⁵⁵ His refusal to believe in John’s forthcoming birth expresses his obstinacy to linger in an economy marked by “memory” even when this has lost its connection with the Word (λόγος). Zechariah is a figure of the Old Testament economy, which possessed the “memory of God.” Such memory, after the manifestation of the Logos, has been overcome. Zechariah is therefore defined as ἄλογος both in the sense of “unable to speak” and in the sense of “irrational,” just as irrational are the rituals of the Jews that have lost their contact with the Logos.

More sophisticated is the interpretation given in the *Commentary on John*, where Zechariah’s etymology is related to the birth of John the Baptist, who is the “voice” (φωνή) paving the way for the “Word” (λόγος):

And perhaps it is because Zechariah disbelieved in the birth of the voice (φωνή) which makes known the Word of God (λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ) that he loses his voice and regains it when the voice (φωνή) which is the forerunner of the Word is born. For a voice must be listened to so that the mind can afterwards receive the word (λόγος) revealed by the voice. It is for this reason that John is also a little older than the Christ.⁵⁶

Zechariah does not believe because he is still immersed in the Old Testament economy characterised by the *memory* of God rather than his *presence*.⁵⁷ Thus, Zechariah’s decision to call his son “John” rather than by his own paternal name should be understood within the theory of names:

⁵⁰ Orig. *Or.*, 31, 2: “πάντα πειρασμὸν καὶ λογισμῶν ταραχὴν ἀποβελήκοντα ἑαυτὸν τε ὑπομνήσαντα κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν τοῦ μεγέθους, ᾧ προσέρχεται.” On the connotation of this spiritual exercise as a form of anachoresis see: Orig. *Cels.* VII, 44; *Hom. Ps.* H. 36 Ps. IV, 1; *Hom. Ps.* H. 36 Ps. V, 5; Perrone, “La preghiera secondo Origene,” 159. Perrone also underlines that, although Origen depends on Clement of Alexandria’s conception of prayer, Clement never refers to the function of memory as that of preparation for prayer, being rather focused on the presence of God (161). In this regard see: Le Boulluec, “Les réflexions de Clément sur la prière,” 398.

⁵¹ On the importance of this theme in the conception of prayer in Patristic authors see: Filoramo, “Aspects de la prière continue,” 55–66.

⁵² Orig. *Comm. Rom.* VI, 1.

⁵³ See: Orig. *Or.* 91; 13,3. See: Monaci Castagno, “Un invito alla vita perfetta. Il ΠΕΡΙ ΕΥΧΗΣ,” 131.

⁵⁴ Perrone recognises the imaginative function of memory in Origen. Nevertheless, his interpretation of the passage of *Or.* 24,3 as a reference to the Platonic doctrine of recollection does not account for the shift between “memory” and “presence,” symbolised by the dichotomy between “sensible” and “noetic” knowledge. See: Perrone, “La preghiera secondo Origene,” 162–3.

⁵⁵ Orig. *Hom. Luc.* V, 1–3.

⁵⁶ Orig. *Comm. Jo.* II, 194–5: “Καὶ τάχα διὰ τοῦτο ἀπιστήσας ὁ Ζαχαρίας τῇ γενέσει τῆς δεικνυούσης τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ φωνῆς ἀπόλλυσι τὴν φωνήν, λαμβάνων αὐτήν, ὅτε γεννᾶται ἡ πρόδρομος τοῦ λόγου φωνή. Ἐνωτίσασθαι γὰρ δεῖ φωνήν, ἵνα μετὰ ταῦτα ὁ νοῦς τὸν δεικνύμενον ὑπὸ τῆς φωνῆς λόγον δέξασθαι δυνηθῇ. Διόπερ καὶ ὀλίγῳ πρεσβύτερος κατὰ τὸ γεννᾶσθαι ὁ Ἰωάννης ἐστὶ τοῦ Χριστοῦ.”

⁵⁷ An interesting reference to the name Zechariah is also present in Origen, *Homilies on Isaiah*, V, 3. Here Origen refers to the prophets Zechariah who lived under King Uzziah, described in 2Chr.26, mentioning him, according to Jerome’s translations, as *Zacharias qui intellegebat*. Origen underlines that as long as Zechariah lived the king did what it is right in the sight of the Lord, but when he died the king fell in disgrace and did evil. In the context of the Old Testament economy Zechariah, the memory of God, is the one who keeps King Uzziah loyal to the Lord while his death stands for God’s absence. However, Origen paradoxically explains

Now the name “Zechariah” is said to mean “memory,” (μνήμη) and “Elizabeth” “oath of my God,” or “Hebdomad” “Sabbath of my God.” John was born as “gift” from God indeed, from the “memory” concerning God related to the “oath” of my God concerning the Father to prepare for the Lord a prepared people.⁵⁸

The passage is particularly revelatory not only because it indicates the symbolic meaning of the names of Zechariah, John, and Elizabeth but also because it shows the intimate connection between the names and the realities to which they refer. John the Baptist, son of “memory” and “prophecy,” is interpreted as an angel of God who descends from the heavenly regions to proclaim the Logos. His very name is part of that ontology of divine names according to which rational beings are called by a name that manifests their salvific functions. John is “grace” because he is φωνή, the “voice” that foretells the λόγος. On the other hand, Zechariah’s insistence on calling his son by the name of John, rather than by his paternal name, is explained by the fact that the appearance of the “voice” entails an overcoming of the usefulness of memory. The voice implies the presence of what is referred to, while memory indicates only its remembrance. Neither John could have been called “Zechariah,” because the name must be a manifestation of the power of the subject. Origen elaborates on this aspect in the *Commentary on the Psalms* when dealing with the passage from Psalm 76:3. “I have sought the Lord and I have not been lost. My soul refused to be comforted; I remembered (ἐμνήσθην) my God and I rejoiced”.⁵⁹ Origen first recognised the function of memory as something good and as a source of consolation and rejoicing.⁶⁰ Then, he adds:

To remember God is already a great good, and the holy ones have names, so that their names signify remembering God. “Zechariah” is interpreted “memory of God,” since “Zachar,” according to the Hebrew language, is “memory.” When someone is remembering the Lord, the father prays for what he would possess by means of his son’s name.⁶¹

True to the idea that the name represents the essence of things, the saints call their children Zechariah so that they will “remember God,” as opposed to many people who call their children by profane names such as Φιλάργυρος so that they may become rich.⁶² If Zechariah is the name that best suits an Old Testament prophet, whose task was to remind people of God, the Baptist could not be called by this name, as Origen explains in another passage:

Therefore, I want to say why John is not called Zechariah. Well then, someone is wanting to remember God when God is absent; by remembering (μεμνήσθαι) him he makes clear that God is not present (πάρεστιν) with him. But for one who is present, there is no need for memory about the one present.⁶³

that Zechariah’s death is not an entirely bad thing: *Volo quiddam simile interponere bonae rei, quae huic contraria est*. The text does not specify how Zechariah’s death is good, but I think it might be possible to understand it as a reference to the fact that, while Zechariah’s death marks the beginning of Uzziah’s evil deeds, it also marks the start of a superior economy of salvation, just as it happens in the case of John the Baptist.

58 Orig. *Comm. Jo.* II, 197–8. «Ζαχαρίας» δὲ «μνήμη» εἶναι λέγεται, ἡ δὲ «Ἐλισάβετ» «θεοῦ μου ὄρκος» ἢ «θεοῦ μου ἐβδομάς». Ἀπὸ θεοῦ δὴ «χάρις» ἐκ τῆς περὶ θεοῦ «μνήμης» κατὰ τὸν τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν «ὄρκον» τὸν περὶ τοὺς πατέρας ἐγεννήθη ὁ Ἰωάννης

59 Orig. *Hom. Ps.* H. 1 Ps. 76, I, 6. On the first part of the quotation Origen explains that he seeks God without losing himself only he who, possessing the right voice of truth, does not allow himself to be led astray by attributing to God characteristics – we could say, names! – which do not belong to him.

60 Orig. *Hom. Ps.* H. 1 Ps. 76, I, 6: “Whenever something is painful or when, at times, we come wholly under the domination of pain and affliction, we do not even listen to the one who comforts us, but say, “My soul refused to be comforted.” But if we want, after being dominated by mental disturbance and refusing to be comforted, to be comforted and to rejoice, it suffices to remember God. For he adds and says: *I remembered God and rejoiced*.”

61 Orig. *Hom. Ps.* H. 1 Ps. 76: “Μέγα ἀγαθὸν καὶ μεμνήσθαι τοῦ θεοῦ ἥδη· οἱ ἅγιοι καὶ ὀνόματα ἔχουσιν, ἐπώνυμοι ὄντες τοῦ μεμνήσθαι τοῦ θεοῦ. Ζαχαρίας γὰρ ἐρμηνεύεται “μνήμη θεοῦ,” ἐπεὶ τὸ “ζαχάρ” κατὰ <τὴν> Ἑβραίων φωνὴν ἐστὶ “μνήμη”. Μνημονεύων γὰρ τις κυρίου, ὃ εὐχεται ὁ πατήρ ὑπάρξαι τῷ γεννηθέντι υἱῷ.” For the Greek text see: Perrone, *Origenes Werke XIII*. For the English translation see: Trigg, *Origen: Homilies on the Psalms*.

62 Orig. *Hom. Ps.* H. 1 Ps. 76.

63 Orig. *Hom. Ps.* H. 1 Ps. 76: “Διὰ τούτου θέλω εἰπεῖν διὰ τί Ἰωάννης οὐ καλεῖται Ζαχαρίας. Ὁ τοίνυν ἀπόντος θεοῦ θέλων μεμνήσθαι, διὰ τοῦ μεμνήσθαι αὐτοῦ δηλοῖ ὅτι οὐ παρέστιν αὐτῷ ὁ θεός, τῷ δὲ παρόντι οὐ χρεῖα ἐστὶ μνήμης τῆς περὶ τοῦ παρόντος.”

The figure of John, who is the voice (φωνή) announcing Christ no longer falls within the realm of memory (μνήμη), but into that of presence (παρεῖμι). The function of memory in Origen is thus finally made explicit, marking its incompatibility with the Platonic doctrine of recollection. In fact, remembering is an inferior function of knowledge because memory corresponds to a mental image of something. This is also the reason why the precursor angel of Christ, John the Baptist, is called the “son of memory,” that is, of Zechariah, but cannot be identified with it. He overcomes the memory in the name of the “voice” (φωνή) that makes the Word (λόγος) fully present:

Since, then, John said, “Look at the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world,” and he was going to show forth the Son of God, God the logos, for this reason he is not called, as his predecessor was, “Zechariah” and “Remembering God,” but “Showing” (Δείκνυμι). And let us ourselves pray to move from “Remembering God” to “John,” so that we may see him present, because we have no more use for the memory of God, but for the vision of God, because of his presence, since indeed, “Blessed are the pure in heart, since they shall see God.” For if the memory of God makes glad, his presence to someone who senses it does what? I am coining a term for that: “it overgladdens” (ὑπερευφραίνει).⁶⁴

The function of memory, manifested in Zechariah and his name, gives ground to the eschatological vision of the Logos. This one is accomplished through φωνή, that is, through John the Baptist, the son of memory who overcomes it. Through John’s testimony, rational creatures transmute their voices into the Word, realising their very own nature of *logikoi*. Just as in the case of the passage of *On Prayer* 24, Origen’s understanding of memory is confined to a psychological function that either imperfectly compensates for the absence of true contemplation or is used as preparation for a forthcoming contemplation.⁶⁵ As such, memory can be used as a theological function that accounts for the spiritual transformative path engaged by the soul.

4 Female Prophetic Voices: Mary, Elizabeth, and the Samaritan Woman

The process of turning memory into vision is mirrored in Origen’s interpretation of the female figures of Mary, Elizabeth, and the Samaritan woman. Being all born in the economy of memory, they become able to utter a prophetic voice after their encounter with the Word. As such, these evolving figures perfectly encompass the Origenian understanding of the feminine as embodying the transformative power of God. As in many other instances discussed in this volume, his exegesis of female characters serves as a narrative expedient to explore the more complex nuances of his theology.⁶⁶

In Luke 1, Mary’s voice filled Elizabeth with the Holy Spirit and, in turn, Elizabeth’s voice is prophetic when she blesses Mary’s womb. Similarly, the Samaritan woman’s conversion in John 4 makes her an apostolic voice to others. In all three instances, Origen’s interpretation establishes an ascensive path between φωνή and λόγος, voice and word. In addition, before the encounter with the Logos, both the Samaritan woman and Elizabeth show an understanding of God which is not based on vision but rather on *memory*. Origen interprets the Samaritan woman as the type of the heterodox, allegorically represented by the five husbands.⁶⁷ Following

⁶⁴ Orig. *Hom. Ps. H. 1 Ps. 76*: “Ἐπεὶ οὖν καὶ ὁ Ἰωάννης ἔλεγεν· Ἴδε ὁ ἀμνὸς τοῦ θεοῦ ὁ αἴρων τὴν ἁμαρτίαν τοῦ κόσμου καὶ ἐμελλε δεῖκνυναι τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ, τὸν θεὸν λόγον, διὰ τοῦτο οὐ καλεῖται ὡς οἱ πρότεροι “Ζαχαρίας” καὶ “μνημονεύων θεοῦ,” ἀλλὰ “δεῖκνυς”. Καὶ ἡμεῖς δὲ αὐτοὶ εὐχόμεθα ἀπὸ τοῦ μεμνησθαι θεοῦ ἥκειν ἐπὶ τὸν Ἰωάννην, ἵνα αὐτὸν ἴδωμεν παρόντα ὅτι οὐκέτι ἡμῖν μνήμης, ἀλλὰ ὁράσεως θεοῦ χρεῖα διὰ τὸ παρῆναι αὐτόν· ἐπεὶ περ μακάριοι οἱ καθαροὶ τῇ καρδίᾳ, ὅτι αὐτοὶ τὸν θεὸν ὁψονται. Εἰ γὰρ ἡ μνήμη τοῦ θεοῦ εὐφραίνει, ἡ παρουσία αὐτοῦ τῷ αἰσθανομένῳ αὐτῆς τί ποιήσει; Παραπλάσω ὄνομα αὐτῷ κάγω· “ὑπερευφραίνει”. ”

⁶⁵ In this sense, memory and contemplation are steps in the ascensive path that human beings undergo from sensible to true intellectual knowledge. See: Orig. *Cels. VI, 20*; Orig. *Comm. Rom. I, 16*.

⁶⁶ See, in this regard, Cerioni, L. “Origen, Valentinianism and Women’s Role,” 79–95. For the understanding of femininity as a continuum or spectrum see, in this very volume, Cerioni, “Feminine Metaphorical Language.”

⁶⁷ On Origen’s exegesis of the Samaritan woman see: Hermanin de Reichenfeld, “God is the Spirit or the Spirit is God?,” 173–92; Cerioni, “Origen, Valentinianism and Women’s Role,” 79–95; Simonetti, “Eracleone e Origene Sulla Samaritana,” 5–17; Klöckener,

the encounter with Jesus, the Samaritan woman is turned into a spiritual Christian who leads others to salvation through her apostolic voice:

He also uses this woman as an apostle, as it were, to those in the city. His words inflamed the woman to such an extent that she left her water jar and went into the city and said to the men, “Come, see a man who has told me everything that I have done. Could this not be the Christ?” ... So that the disciples came and were amazed that she, too, a mere woman and easily deceived, was considered worthy of engaging in a conversation with the Word.⁶⁸ ... Here, then, a woman proclaims Christ to the Samaritans, and at the end of the Gospels also the woman who saw him before all the others tells the apostles of the Resurrection of the Saviour.⁶⁹

The woman becomes worthy of entering into conversation with the word/logos and is here entrusted with the mission of spreading the gospel to humankind, becoming a *voice* who spreads the *word*.⁷⁰ It is also worth noting that the water jar left behind by the Samaritan woman at the well represents the old economy and heterodox teachings. She is the type of the changing occurring to a rational creature passing from the *memory* of God – that is, knowing that a Messiah was to come but held false and confused teachings – to the *vision* that transforms her into a voice.

The same kind of ascensional path from memory to voice (φωνή) and word (λόγος) is found in the figures of Mary and Elizabeth, which are interpreted by Origen in relation to the works of their respective sons. This is particularly the case of Elizabeth since her son – John the Baptist – is the “voice” (φωνή) who foretells the “word” (λόγος):

That John was benefited in his formation by the infant still being formed when the Lord came to Elizabeth in his mother will be clear to one who has understood the comments we have made about John being the Voice, but Jesus the Word. For there is a loud voice (φωνή) in Elizabeth when she is filled with the Holy Spirit because of Mary’s greeting, ... and the mother become the mouth, as it were, and prophetess of the Son when she cries out with a loud cry and says: “Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb.”⁷¹

The relationship between Mary and Elizabeth is shaped according to that between Jesus and John the Baptist.⁷² Therefore, Mary bears a predominant position in comparison to Elizabeth. Origen defines her as not only mother of Christ but also “mother of all those who have Christ in them,” adding that “Mary, who is superior, goes to Elizabeth, who is inferior, just as the Son of God goes to the John the Baptist.”⁷³ Just as Mary was filled of the Holy Spirit after the coming of Jesus in her womb, so Elizabeth was filled by means of her son, John the

“The Samaritan Woman in Origen’s Commentary,” 67–80; Simonetti, “Origene, il pozzo di Giacobbe e l’άνήρ della samaritana,” 21–34.

⁶⁸ Orig. *Comm. Jo.* XIII, 169: “Οἰονεὶ δὲ καὶ ἀποστόλῳ πρὸς τοὺς ἐν τῇ πόλει χρῆται τῇ γυναικὶ ταύτῃ, ἐπὶ τοσοῦτον ἐξάψας αὐτὴν διὰ τῶν λόγων, ἕως ἀφείσα τὴν ὑδρίαν αὐτῆς ἢ γυνὴ ἀπελθούσα εἰς τὴν πόλιν εἶπη τοῖς ἀνθρώποις· «Δεῦτε, ἴδετε ἄνθρωπον, ὃς εἶπέν μοι πάντα ἃ ἐποίησα· μήτι οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ Χριστός; ... ὡς ἐλθόντας τοὺς μαθητὰς θαυμάζειν εἰ καὶ αὕτη ἤξιώται θῆλὺς τις < καὶ εὐ > εξαπάτητος οὖσα, τυχεῖν τῆς ὁμιλίας πρὸς αὐτὴν τοῦ λόγου.”

⁶⁹ Orig. *Comm. Jo.* XIII, 179: “Ἐνθάδε μὲν δὴ τοῖς Σαμαρείταις γυνὴ εὐὰ γελίζεται τὸν Χριστόν, ἐπὶ τέλει δὲ τῶν εὐαγγελίων καὶ τὴν ἀνάστασιν τοῦ σωτῆρος τοῖς ἀποστόλοις ἢ πρὸ πάντων αὐτὸν θεασαμένη γυνὴ διηγείται.” It is worth noting, however, that Origen also underlines the subordinate role of the Samaritan woman in the history of salvation: “But neither is this woman thanked by the Samaritans because she had proclaimed the good news of the perfection of their faith ... nor is that woman entrusted with the first-fruit of the touch of Christ.” The reason for such comment should be found in the subsequent quotation of Jn. 20,27, where Thomas is asked to touch the body of Christ, as this happens *after* the resurrection.

⁷⁰ For an interpretation that underlines the Samaritan’s femininity as a theologically relevant factor in Origen’s exegesis see: Cerioni, “Origen, Valentinianism and Woman’s Role,” 79–95. On the relevance of the Samaritan woman’s episode for Origen’s argument on human dignity see: Klöckener, “The Samaritan Woman in Origen’s Commentary,” 67–80.

⁷¹ Orig. *Comm. Jo.* VI, 254–5: “Ὅτι μέντοι γε εἰς τὴν μόρφωσιν ὠφέληται ὁ Ἰωάννης ἀπὸ τοῦ ἐτι μορφουμένου, τοῦ κυρίου, γενομένου ἐν τῇ μητρὶ πρὸς τὴν Ἐλισάβετ, τῷ κεκρατηκότι τῶν εἰρημένων περὶ τοῦ φωνῆν μὲν εἶναι τὸν Ἰωάννην, λόγον δὲ τὸν Ἰησοῦν δῆλον ἔσται. Μεγάλῃ γὰρ φωνῇ γίνεται ἐν τῇ Ἐλισάβετ πληρωθείσῃ πνεύματος ἁγίου διὰ τὸν ἀσπασμὸν τῆς Μαρίας, ... καὶ οἰονεὶ στόμα τοῦ υἱοῦ καὶ προφητὴς ἢ μήτηρ γίνεται ἀναφωνοῦσα κραυγὴ μεγάλη καὶ λέγουσα· «Εὐλογημένη σὺ ἐν γυναιξὶν καὶ εὐλογημένος ὁ καρπὸς τῆς κοιλίας σου.»”

⁷² See: Orig. *Comm. Jo.* VI, 256. See also Orig. *Hom. Luc.* VII, 1.

⁷³ Orig. *Comm. Jo.* VI, 259: “ἢ διαφέρουσα Μαρία πρὸς τὴν ὑποδεστέραν Ἐλισάβετ ἔρχεται καὶ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ πρὸς τὸν βαπτιστήν.”

Baptist, as Origen explains in the *Homilies on Luke*: “So there is no doubt on this point. Elizabeth, who was filled with the Holy Spirit at that moment, received the Spirit on account of her son.”⁷⁴ Before being filled by the Holy Spirit by means of her son, Elizabeth, whose name Origen takes to manifest the “oath of my God,” was paired with her husband Zechariah, whose name, as already discussed, manifested “memory.” In other words, Elizabeth had a knowledge of God which is based on *memory* rather than on vision. Therefore, it is their respective children that made both Mary and Elizabeth able to prophecy:

Elizabeth prophesies before John; before the birth of the Lord and Saviour, Mary prophesies. Sin began from the woman and then spread to the man. In the same way, salvation had its first beginnings from women. Thus, the rest of women can also lay aside the weakness of their sex and imitate as closely as possible the lives and conduct of these holy women whom the Gospel now describes.⁷⁵

The soteriological role of the two women is therefore structured according to the idea that Mary and Elizabeth are to the female gender just the same as Jesus and John are to the male. Thus, names of both genders have connections to God’s names, both men and women have the power to recall God’s power. Both women became prophetesses after their pairing with the Logos, which happens through their sons for Mary and Elizabeth whilst through the encounter with Jesus for the Samaritan woman. This schema of changing by means of meeting the Logos is found also in Origen’s interpretation of the *Song of Songs*, where the bride (either the soul or the church) changes her status by the union with the husband (the Logos).⁷⁶ In the Samaritan woman’s case, the paring with the Logos outclasses that with the Old Testament and heterodox economy. In the case of Elizabeth, her previous mate Zechariah, representing “memory” itself, is overcome by the meeting with her son John, the voice. In Mary’s case, bearing the Word in her womb made her so filled with the Holy Spirit as to make her able to pass it to both John and to her mother. After such encounters, they are turned into apostles to others, becoming representatives of the theological category of the “voice,” just like John the Baptist, and announcing the mysteries of the word/logos.⁷⁷ Such a process of spiritual transformation takes the form of a renovation from a previous condition, when they only held a *memory* of God, to a condition when they possess the vision of the Logos and, consequently, they act as apostolic and prophetic voices to others.

5 Conclusions

Posing as the first attempt to understand Origen’s doctrine of memory, this article has proposed an analysis of the little we know about such a topic in Origen’s theology. While no systematic attempt to enquire about memory is traceable in Origen’s thought, the psychological function of memory does present itself as a minor but significant element. Having cleared the way from any unnecessary connection to the Platonic doctrine of recollection, Origen’s understanding of memory has been connected to the framework of the doctrine of names. Memory is shown as the result of the very nature of names and their ontological capacity to evoke the power of the object named and make it present in the mind of the utterer even before its full intellectual understanding. The analysis of biblical characters, especially Zechariah, has further shown how the

⁷⁴ Orig. *Hom. Luc.* VII, 3: *Non est itaque dubium quin quae tunc repleta est Spiritu Sancto, propter Filium sit repleta.* For the Latin text see: Rauer, *Origenes Werke IX*. For the English translation see: Lienhard, *Origen: Homilies on Luke*.

⁷⁵ Orig. *Hom. Luc.* VIII, 1: *Ante Joannem prophetat Elizabeth, ante ortum Dominis Salvatoris prophetat Maria. Et quomodo peccatum coepit a muliere, et deinceps ad virum usque pervenit: sic et principium salutis a mulieribus habet exordium, ut caetera quoque mulieres, sexus fragilitate deposita, imitentur vitam conversationemque sanctarum earum, quae vel maxime nunc in Evangelio describuntur.* Ambrose took from Origen the very same idea in *Ambr. Exp. Luc.* II.28.

⁷⁶ Orig. *Comm. Cant.* I, 3, 12–13; I, 4, 7–10; I, 5, 8–9; II, 4, 11; IV, 1, 1–3. As already noted, associating women’s sexual relationships with the search for God is a recurrent trait in Origen’s writings. See: Cerioni, “Origen, Valentinianism and Woman’s Role,” 88; Ramelli, “Constructions of Gender in Origen of Alexandria,” 115–60.

⁷⁷ Orig. *Comm. Jo.* VI, 256: “For all these things occurred that Mary might share with John, who was still in his mother’s womb, some of the power she had after she conceived, and that he might share some of the prophetic grace he received with his mother.”

psychological function of memory has been turned by Origen into a theological category of the path of ascension of human beings toward God. The seeking of God in memory is overcome when his presence occurs, shifting from an economy of memory/imagination/manifestation to one of presence/contemplation. The intellectual significance of the theological category of memory and the need to overcome it is not only mirrored but even displayed by Origen in a feminine perspective. Not only men and women are equal representatives of the divine names in their becoming “voice” of God, thus overcoming “memory.” Women seem to represent such shift even better than men, as they *embody* – even literally, considering that the image that Origen uses is that of pregnancy – precisely the path from “memory” to “voice,” inasmuch revealing the whole history of salvation as a process of spiritual transformation for the better.

Funding information: The publishing costs were covered from the project OriGen, managed by Dr. Lavinia Cerioni, funded from the European Unions Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement 894506.

Author contribution: The author confirms the sole responsibility for the conception of the study, presented results, and manuscript preparation.

Conflict of interest: The author states no conflict of interest.

References

Ancient sources

- Baehrens, Wilhelm. *Origenes Werke VI. Homilien zum Hexateuch in Rufins Übersetzung. Die Homilien zu Genesis, Exodus und Leviticus.* (GCS 29). Leipzig: Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1920.
- Baehrens, Wilhelm. *Origenes Werke VII. Homilien zum Hexateuch in Rufins Übersetzung. Die Homilien zu Numeri, Josua und Judges.* (GCS 30). Leipzig: Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1921.
- Baehrens, Wilhelm. *Origenes Werke VIII. Homilien zu Samuel I, zum Hohelied und zu den Propheten. Kommentar zum Hohelied, in Rufins und Hieronymus' Übersetzungen.* (GCS 33). Leipzig: Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1925.
- Barbàra, Maria Antonietta. *Origene. Commentario al Cantico dei Cantici. Testi in lingua greca.* Bologna: EDB, 2005.
- Blanc, Cecile. *Origène. Commentaire sur saint Jean.* (SC 120). Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1966.
- Borret, Marcel, Luc Brésard, and Henri Crouzel, (eds.). *Origène. Commentaire sur le Cantique des Cantiques.* Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1991.
- Brésard, Luc and Henry Crouzel. *Origène. Commentaire sur le Cantique des Cantiques.* (SC 375, 376). Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1991, 1992.
- Burnet, John. *Platonis Opera: Recognovit Brevique Adnotatione Critica Instruxit.* Oxford: Oxford Classical Texts, 1900–1907.
- Chadwick, Henri. *Origen. Contra Celsum.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1990.
- Clarke, Emma C. *Iamblichus: On the Mysteries.* Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003.
- Cooper, John and Dori S. Hutchinson. *Plato: Complete Works.* Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1997.
- Greer, Rowan. *Origen. An Exhortation to Martyrdom, Prayer, First Principles: Book IV, Prologue to the Commentary on the Song of Songs, Homily XVII on Numbers.* New York: Paulist Press, 1979.
- Heine, Roland E. *Origen. Commentary on the Gospel According to John. Books 1–10.* Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1989.
- Heine, Roland E. *Origen. Commentary on the Gospel According to John. Books 13–32.* Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1993.
- Klostermann, Erich and Pierre Nautin. *Origenes Werke III. Jeremiahomilien, Klageliederkommentar, Erklärung der Samuel und Königsbücher.* (GCS 6). Berlin: De Gruyter, 1983.
- Koetschau, Paul. *Origenes Werke I. Die Schrift vom Martyrium, Buch I–IV Gegen Celsus.* (GCS 2). Leipzig: Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1899.
- Koetschau, Paul. *Origenes Werke II. Buch V–VIII Gegen Celsus. Die Schrift Von Gebet.* (GCS 3). Leipzig: Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1899.
- Koetschau, Paul. *Origenes Werke V. De principiis.* (GCS 22). Leipzig: Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1913.
- Lienhard, Joseph. *Origen: Homilies on Luke.* Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1996.
- Perrone, Lorenzo. *Origenes Werke XIII. Die neuen Psalmenhomilien: Eine kritische Edition des Codex Monacensis Graecus 314.* (GCS Neue Folge, 19). Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015.
- Preuschen, Erwin. *Origenes Werke IV. Der Johanneskommentar.* (GCS 10). Leipzig: Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1903.

- Prinzivalli, Emanuela. *Origene. Omelie sui Salmi, Homiliae in Psalmos XXXVI-XXXVII-XXXVIII*. Bologna: EDB, 1991.
- Rauer, Max. *Origenes Werke IX. Die Homilien zu Lukas in der Übersetzung des Hieronymus und die griechischen Reste der Homilien und des Lukas-Kommentars*. (GCS 49). Leipzig: Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1925.
- Simonetti, Manlio. *Origene. Il Cantico dei Cantici*. Milano: Lorenzo Valla, 1998.
- Trigg, Josef. *Origen: Homilies on the Psalms. Codex Monacensis Graecus 314*. Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2020.
- Waterfield, Robin and Andrew Gregory. *Plato. Timaeus and Critias*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Literature

- Bigg, Charles. *The Christian Platonists of Alexandria*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913.
- Børresen, Kari Elisabeth and Emanuela Prinzivalli (eds). *Le donne nello sguardo degli antichi autori cristiani*, 77–96. Trapani: Il pozzo di Giacobbe, 2013.
- Bostock, Gerald. "Origen, the 'Son of Horus,' in his Egyptian Milieu: the Influence on Origen of Contemporary Egyptian Practice." In *Origeniana nona: Origen and the Religious Practices of his Time*, edited by György Heidl and Róbert Somos, 61–80. Leuven: Peeters, 2009.
- Brittain, Charles. "Plato and Platonism." In *The Oxford Handbook of Plato, 2nd edn*, edited by Gail Fine, 668–95. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019.
- Brunschwig, Jacques. "Remarks on the Stoic Theory of the Proper Noun." In *Papers on Hellenistic Philosophy*, edited by Jacques Brunschwig, 39–56. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.
- Castagnoli, Luca. "The *Phaedo* on Philosophy and the Soul." In *The Oxford Handbook of Plato, 2nd edn*, edited by Gail Fine, 182–205. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019.
- Cerioni, Lavinia. "Feminine Metaphorical Language: Platonic Resonances in Origen of Alexandria." *Open Theology* 10:1 (2024), 20240008.
- Cerioni, Lavinia. "Origen, Valentinianism and Woman's Role." *Patristica Nordica Annuaire* 38 (2023), 79–95.
- Cerioni, Lavinia. *Revealing Women. Feminine Imagery in Gnostic Christian Texts*. Turnhout: Brepols, 2021.
- Cerioni, Lavinia. "Bodily Souls? Paradoxical Bodies in Origen's Theology of Progress." *Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum* 23:1 (2019), 21–35.
- Clark, Elizabeth. "Women, Gender, and the Study of Christian History." *Church History* 70:3 (2001), 395–426.
- Cocchini, Francesca. "Conoscenza." In *Origene: dizionario. La cultura, il pensiero, le opere*, edited by Adele Monaci Castagno, 80–4. Rome: Città Nuova, 2000.
- Dillon, John. "The Magical Power of Names in Origen and Later Platonism." In *Origeniana tertia*, edited by Richard Hanson and Henri Crouzel, 203–16. Rome: Edizioni dell'Ateneo, 1985.
- Dodds, Eric Robertson. "Theurgy and its Relationship to Neoplatonism." *Journal of Roman Studies* 37 (1947), 55–69.
- Edwards, Mark. "Origen in Paradise: A Response to Peter Martens." *Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum* 23:2 (2019), 163–85.
- Edwards, Mark. "Origen, Celsus, and the Philosophers." In *The Oxford Handbook of Origen*, edited by Ronald Heine and Karen Jo Torjesen, 278–92. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022.
- Edwards, Mark. *Origen against Plato*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002.
- Edwards, Mark. "Origen's Two Resurrections." *The Journal of Theological Studies* 46 (1995), 502–18.
- Filoramo, Giovanni. "Aspects de la prière continue dans le christianisme ancien." In *Veggenti Profeti Gnostici*, edited by Giovanni Filoramo, 55–66. Brescia: Morcelliana, 2005.
- Greggs, Tom. *Barth, Origen, and Universal Salvation: Restoring Particularity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Hanson, Richard P. C. "Did Origen teach that the Son is ek tēs ousias of the Father?." In *Origeniana Quarta*, edited by Lothar Lies, 200–2. Innsbruck: Tyrolia-Verlag, 1987.
- Heine, Ronald. "Stoic Logic as Handmaid to Exegesis and Theology in Origen's Commentary on the Gospel of John." *The Journal of Theological Studies* 44 (1993), 90–117.
- Hermanin de Reichenfeld, Giovanni. *The Spirit, the World and the Trinity. Origen's and Augustine's Understanding of the Gospel of John*. Turnhout: Brepols, 2021.
- Hermanin de Reichenfeld, Giovanni. "God is the Spirit or the Spirit is God? Origen's and Augustine's Interpretations of John 4:24 and their Understanding of God's Essence." In *Perspectives on Origen and the History of his Reception*, edited by Alfons Fürst, 173–92. Münster: Aschendorff, 2021.
- Jacobsen, Anders Christian. *Christ, the Teacher of Salvation: A Study on Origen's Christology and Soteriology*. Münster: Aschendorff Verlag, 2015.
- Jacobsen, Anders-Christian. "Genesis 1–3 as a Source for the Anthropology of Origen." *Vigiliae Christianae* 62 (2008), 213–32.
- Janowitz, Naomi. "Theories of Divine Names in Origen and Pseudo-Dionysius." *History of Religions* 30 (1991), 359–72.
- Judson, Lindsay. "The Meno." In *The Oxford Handbook of Plato, 2nd edn*, edited by Gail Fine, 160–81. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019.
- Keough, Shawn W. J. "Divine names in the Contra Celsum." In *Origeniana nona: Origen and the Religious Practices of his Time*, edited by György Heidl and Róbert Somos, 205–16. Leuven: Peeters, 2009.
- Klöckener, Monnica. "The Samaritan Woman in Origen's Commentary on John Seen from a Modern Perspective of Human Dignity." In *Perspectives on Origen and the History of his Reception*, edited by Alfons Fürst, 67–80. Münster: Aschendorff, 2021.

- Le Boulluec, Alain. "Les réflexions de Clément sur la prière et le traité d'Origène." In *Origeniana Octava: Origen and the Alexandrian Tradition*, edited by Lorenzo Perrone, 397–407. Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2003.
- Lettieri, Gaetano. "Il Corpo di Dio. La Mistica Erotica del Cantico dei Cantici dal Vangelo di Giovanni ai Padri." In *Il Cantico dei Cantici nel Medioevo*, edited by Rossana Guglielmetti, 3–90. Firenze: Sismel, 2008.
- Lettieri, Gaetano. "Il nous mistico. Il superamento origeniano dello Gnosticismo nel Commento a Giovanni." In *Il Commento a Giovanni di Origene: il testo ed i suoi contesti*, edited by Emanuela Prinzivalli, 177–275. Firenze: Pazzini Editore, 2005.
- Limone, Vito. *Origene e la filosofia greca. Scienze, testi, lessico*. Brescia: Morcelliana, 2018.
- Martens, Peter. "Response to Edwards." *Zeitschrift Für Antikes Christentum* 23:2 (2019), 186–200.
- Martens, Peter. "Embodiment, Heresy, and the Hellenization of Christianity: The Descent of the Soul in Plato and Origen." *The Harvard Theological Review* 108:4 (2015), 594–620.
- Martens, Peter. "Origen's Doctrine of Pre-Existence and the Opening Chapters of Genesis." *Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum* 16 (2013), 516–49.
- Monaci Castagno, Adele. "Un invito alla vita perfetta. Il ΠΕΡΙ ΕΥΧΗΣ di Origene." In *Il dono e la sua ombra. Ricerche sul ΠΕΡΙ ΕΥΧΗΣ di Origene*, edited by Francesca Cocchini, 116–38. Roma: Ist. Patristico Augustinianum, 1997.
- Parmentier, Richard. "Semiotic Mediation: Ancestral Genealogy and Final Interpretant." In *Semiotic Mediation. Sociocultural and Psychological Perspectives*, edited by Elizabeth Mertz and Richard Parmentier, 359–85. Orlando FL: Academic Press, 1985.
- Perrone, Lorenzo. *La preghiera secondo Origene. L'impossibilità donata*. Brescia: Morcelliana, 2011.
- Prinzivalli, Emanuela. "La donna, il femminile e la Scrittura nella tradizione origeniana." In *Le donne nello sguardo degli antichi autori cristiani*, edited by Kari Elisabeth Borresen and Emanuela Prinzivalli, 77–96. Trapani: Il pozzo di Giacobbe, 2013.
- Ramelli, Ilaria. "Constructions of Gender in Origen of Alexandria." In *Constructions of Gender in Religious Traditions of Late Antiquity*, edited by Shaina Sheinfeld, Juni Hoppe, and Kathy Ehrensperger, 115–60. London: Rowman and Littlefield, 2024.
- Rist, John M. "The Importance of Stoic Logic in the Contra Celsum." In *Platonism and its Christian Heritage*, edited by John M. Rist, 64–78. London: Variorum Reprints, 1985.
- Scott, Dominic. *Recollection and Experience: Plato's Theory of Learning and Its Successors*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.
- Simonetti, Manlio. "Eracleone e Origene sulla Samaritana." *Vetera Christianorum* 53 (2016), 5–17.
- Simonetti, Manlio. "Origene, il pozzo di Giacobbe e l'ἀνὴρ della samaritana." *Augustinianum* 56 (2016), 21–34.
- Tervahauta, Ulla (ed.). *Women and Knowledge in Early Christianity*. Leiden: Brill, 2017.
- Usacheva, Anna. *Knowledge, Language and Intellection from Origen to Gregory Nazianzen. A Selective Survey*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2017.
- Williams, Rowan D. "The Son's knowledge of the Father in Origen." In *Origeniana Quarta*, edited by Lothar Lies, 146–53. Innsbruck: Tyrolia-Verlag, 1987.