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ORIGENIANA DUODECIMA

ORIGEN'S LEGACY IN THE HOLY LAND – A TALE OF THREE CITIES: JERUSALEM, CAESAREA AND BETHLEHEM

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DISCERNING QUOTATIONS FROM HERACLEON IN ORIGEN'S COMMENTARY ON THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

I. INTRODUCTION

The first known commentary on a writing in the emerging New Testament, Heracleon's *hypomnēmata* on the Gospel of John, is an important witness to second-century Christian reflection on the Gospels. Unfortunately, Heracleon's interpretations are only extant via references in the later *Commentary on the Gospel of John* by Origen of Alexandria (ca. 185-254 CE)¹, references that all too often are taken to be as trustworthy as an independent manuscript tradition². Although scholars have occasionally noticed that a given point may be part of Origen's response rather than taken from Heracleon³, no systematic analysis has been made

1. Apart from two similar references in Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* IV,9,71-72; *Eclogae propheticae* 25,1.

2. E.H. PAGELS, *The Johannine Gospel in Gnostic Exegesis: Heracleon's Commentary on John* (SBL.MS, 17), Nashville, TN, Abingdon, 1973, pp. 80, 86-91, 94, repeatedly presents quotations from Origen as if they were taken directly from Heracleon, and never discusses the accuracy of Origen's transmission. J.-M. POFFET, *La méthode exégétique d'Héracléon et d'Origène, commentateurs de Jn 4: Jésus, la Samaritaine et les Samaritains* (Paradosis), Fribourg, Presses Universitaires, 1985, p. 47, n. 124 remarks that it is difficult to know whether Origen gives us access to Heracleon's words or merely to his thoughts, but regularly (pp. 31-38, 49-54, 66-74, 86-97, 104-107) presents statements attributed to Heracleon by Origen as if they were quoted directly from Heracleon's work. A. CASTELLANO, *La exégesis de Orígenes y de Heracléon a los testimonios del Bautista* (Anales de la Facultad de Teología, IL/1), Santiago, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, 1998, pp. 56-57, sometimes asserts that Origen is quoting Heracleon verbatim, and often (pp. 55-57, 99-100) presumes this to be the case. A. WUCHERPFENNIG, *Heracleon Philologus: Gnostische Johannesexegese im zweiten Jahrhundert* (WUNT, 142), Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck, 2002, pp. 84, 166-167, 261, 342, often presents quotations as if taken directly from Heracleon, but sometimes (83) notes that Origen may be summarizing rather than quoting Heracleon. K. KEEFER, *The Branches of the Gospel of John: The Reception of the Fourth Gospel in the Early Church* (The Library of New Testament Studies, 332), London, T&T Clark, 2006, p. 33, claims there to be a consensus that "Origen faithfully represented Heracleon's point of view, and quite likely his exact words". E. THOMASSEN, *Heracleon*, in T. RASIMUS (ed.), *The Legacy of John: Second-Century Reception of the Fourth Gospel* (Supplements to Novum Testamentum, 132), Leiden, Brill, 2010, 173-210, p. 174, asserts in no uncertain terms that all forty-eight of Origen's references to Heracleon are "quotations, of varying length", and proceeds (pp. 185, 187, 189, 191) to treat them as trustworthy material without discussing Origen's intermediary role. M. SIMONETTI, *Eracleone e Origene sulla Samaritana*, in *VetChr* 53 (2016) 5-17, systematically treats all of Origen's characterizations of Heracleon's interpretations as facts.

3. For instance, I. DUNDERBERG, *Valentinian Theories on Classes of Humankind*, in *Id.*, *Gnostic Morality Revisited* (WUNT, 347), Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck, 2015, 137-148,

to discern when Origen presents Heracleon's comments verbatim from when he rephrases them⁴, perhaps in light of later "Valentinian" ideas⁵. The aim of this paper is to present a set of criteria for discerning between different modes of attribution in Origen's references to Heracleon, and to apply these criteria to one specific example: Heracleon's interpretation of Jesus's visit to Capernaum in Jn 2,12⁶. Based on a combination of linguistic arguments and comparisons of Origen's renderings to extant originals, we identify four different modes of attribution: (1) *verbatim quotations* are references where the statements attributed to Heracleon are presented as transmitting his actual words; (2) *summaries* are references presented as transmitting the point that Heracleon has made in his writing, but not necessarily the words he has used to express it; (3) *explanatory paraphrases* are references presented as revealing not merely the point expressed by Heracleon, but the underlying argument or dogmatic idea

pp. 143-144, points out that Heracleon nowhere calls the Samaritan woman "a spiritual person" or the healed son of the royal official "an animate person", despite the assertions to the contrary in PAGELS, *Gnostic Exegesis* (n. 2), pp. 68, 83-87; J.A. TRUMBOWER, *Origen's Exegesis of John 8:19-53: The Struggle with Heracleon over the Idea of Fixed Natures*, in *VigChr* 43 (1989) 138-154, p. 139; THOMASSEN, *Heracleon* (n. 2), pp. 182, 187, n. 59.

4. The choices made between quotations, italics, and plain text in editions and translations such as *Der Johanneskommentar*, ed. E. PREUSCHEN (GCS, 10; Origenes Werke, 4), Leipzig, Hinrichs, 1903; W. VÖLKER, *Quellen zur Geschichte der christlichen Gnosis* (Sammlung ausgewählter kirchen- und dogmengeschichtlicher Quellenschriften. Neue Folge, 5), Tübingen, Mohr (Siebeck), 1932; W. FOERSTER, *Die Gnosis*. Bd. 1: *Zeugnisse der Kirchenväter*, Zürich, Artemis, 1969; Origène, *Commentaire sur Saint Jean*, ed. C. BLANC (SC, 120, 157, 222, 290, 385, 120bis), Paris, Cerf, 1966-1996; *Origen. Commentary on the Gospel according to John, Books 1-10*, transl. R.E. HEINE (Fathers of the Church, 80), Washington, DC, Catholic University of America Press, 1989; and T.J. PETTIPiece, *Heracleon: Fragments of Early Valentinian Exegesis: Text, Translation, and Commentary* (M. A. Thesis), Wilfrid Laurier University, 2002, are not explicitly discussed, and do not seem to be based on a consistent analysis.

5. Origen may have had access to multiple sources of information regarding "Valentinian" theology, including heresiological literature such as the *Against the Heresies* by Irenaeus of Lyons (ca. 130-202 CE), but also personal interaction with contemporary "Valentinians", and with his patron Ambrose – cf. Origen, *CC prol.* 1; III,1; IV,1; *Clo* I,2,9; II,1,1; VI,2,6. All of those sources may have been more familiar with later dogmatic developments than with Heracleon's particular views. H. LANGERBECK, *Die Anthropologie der alexandrinischen Gnosis: Interpretationen zu den Fragmenten des Basilides und Valentinus und ihrer Schulen bei Clemens von Alexandrien und Origenes*, in H. DÖRRIES (ed.), *Aufsätze zur Gnosis* (Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen / Philologisch-historische Klasse, 3/69), Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1967, 38-82, pp. 67-72; and WUCHERPFENNIG, *Heracleon Philologus* (n. 2), pp. 332-357, have both argued that Origen, in his responses to Heracleon, presumes later "Valentinian" positions that are unattested in Heracleon.

6. M. SIMONETTI, *Eracleone e Origene*, in *VetChr* 3 (1966) 111-141, p. 135, remarks that this passage illustrates the conflict between Origen and Heracleon especially well, in that they both use the same methodology, but disagree on doctrinal cornerstones.

on which this point rests; and (4) *mere assertions* are references where Heracleon's views are presented without any stated basis in his writing. Although only the first mode constitutes a claim to reflect Heracleon's *ipsisima verba*, the second will also be considered to be trustworthy material for studying Heracleon's methods and views. In paraphrases and assertions, Origen may be conflating Heracleon's comments with the views of later "Valentinian" teachers.

II. ORIGEN'S QUOTATION PRACTICES

References to previous literature are an important feature of Origen's writings, especially in his commentaries, whose structure is based on a series of running quotations – generally called *lemmata* – from the commented text. References and responses to the views of earlier authors are recurring features not only in *Against Celsus*, but also in his *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, where he in four dozen passages refers and responds to Heracleon's previous interpretations. Several of his more emphatic criticisms concern the lack of scriptural quotations to prove Heracleon's point of view⁷. Origen's insistence on evidence from the scriptures does not, however, imply that all his references to previous writings are verbatim quotations. Among ancient writers, it was a common and expected practice to adapt what one quoted to the grammatical, stylistic, and argumentative needs of the new context, and it was not uncommon to use a quotation in a whole other sense than the original author intended⁸.

7. C.J. BERGLUND, *Origen's Vacillating Stances toward his "Valentinian" Colleague Heracleon*, in *VigChr* 71 (2017) 541-569, pp. 559-563, 567-569. This insistence on scriptural proof implies neither that Origen neglected logic and common sense, nor that he viewed the scriptures as a simple collection of true propositions, nor that he neglected the role of human authors in their composition. See R.P.C. HANSON, *Origen's Doctrine of Tradition*, London, SPCK, 1954; Eugene, OR, Wipf and Stock, 2004, pp. 48-52; M.W. HOLMES, *Origen and the Inerrancy of Scripture*, in *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 24 (1981) 221-231, pp. 221-224; P.W. MARTENS, *Origen and Scripture: The Contours of the Exegetical Life* (Oxford Early Christian Studies), Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2012, pp. 101-106.

8. P.A. BRUNT, *On Historical Fragments and Epitomes*, in *The Classical Quarterly* 30 (1980) 477-494, pp. 478-481; C.D. STANLEY, *Paul and the Language of Scripture: Citation Technique in the Pauline Epistles and Contemporary Literature* (Society for New Testament Studies. Monograph Series, 69), Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992, pp. 258-264, 342-343; D. LENFANT, *The Study of Intermediate Authors and Its Role in the Interpretation of Historical Fragments*, in *Ancient Society* 43 (2013) 289-305, pp. 293-303; C.J. BERGLUND, *Evaluating Quotations in Ancient Greek Literature: The Case of Heracleon's hypomnēmata*, in J. VERHEYDEN – T. NICKLAS – E. HERNITSCHKE (eds.), *Shadowy Characters and Fragmentary Evidence: The Search for Early Christian Groups and Movements* (WUNT, 388), Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck, 2017, 201-231, pp. 206-217.

Origen does not use a standard formula to introduce his references to earlier works, but constructs a new formula to fit every particular occasion, and to connect the excerpt to the context in which he is using it. Although many of the variations in Origen's attribution formulas may be made simply for rhetorical variation, we will argue below that a few particular variations correspond to different modes of attribution. This argument will be based on linguistic theory, and confirmed by comparisons of Origen's references to their extant originals.

1. *Verbatim Quotations*

Ancient authors sometimes used phrases such as κατὰ λέξιν (“literally”) or πρὸς ῥῆμα (“to the word”) to specify that a particular quotation was presented without adaptations⁹. Origen occasionally uses αὐταῖς λέξεσιν (“with the same words”) in this sense – for instance to assert that the exhortation “Do not be afraid of those who kill the body” appears, word by word, in both Matthew and Luke¹⁰. A comparison with Matthean and Lukan manuscripts confirms this assertion¹¹, and we may presume that when Origen uses this phrase in relation to Celsus or Heracleon¹², he is presenting a verbatim quotation. More commonly, Origen introduces verbatim quotations by use of a single *verbum dicendi* – such as φησί(ν) (“he says”) – either preceding the attributed statement or inserted a few words into it. One example is the following quotation from 2 Thess 2,11-12:

“For this reason”, he says (γὰρ φησί), “God sends them a powerful delusion to make them believe in the lie, so that all who has disbelieved the truth and taken pleasure in unrighteousness will be condemned”¹³.

Apart from the movable ν of κριθῶσι(ν), Origen's quotation matches available manuscripts precisely. A similar lack of adaptations recur in several similar examples¹⁴.

9. See the discussion in A. VAN DEN HOEK, *Techniques of Quotation in Clement of Alexandria: A View of Ancient Literary Working Methods*, in *VigChr* 50 (1996) 223-243, p. 233.

10. Origen, *Exhortatio ad martyrium* XXXIV,70-72 (GCS 2, 31,13-15 KOETSCHAU; ET: mine): οἱ ἀναιρούντες οὖν ἡμᾶς σώματος ζωὴν ἀποκτένουσι· τοιοῦτον γάρ ἐστι τό· “μὴ φοβηθῆτε ἀπὸ τῶν ἀποκτενόντων τὸ σῶμα”, αὐταῖς λέξεσιν ὑπὸ Ματθαίου καὶ Λουκᾶ εἰρημένον.

11. Cf. Lk 12,4 and Mt 10,28, where Origen gives text-critical support to the *Codex Bezae* reading φοβηθῆτε, while *Sinaiticus* and *Vaticanus* has φοβεῖσθε.

12. Cf. Origen, *CC* I,12,1; II,20,49; II,49,21; *Clo* VI,23,126.

13. Origen, *Clo* II,30,182 (SC 120bis, 334,24-27 BLANC; ET: mine): Διὰ τοῦτο, γάρ φησι, πέμπει αὐτοῖς ὁ θεὸς ἐνέργειαν πλάνης εἰς τὸ πιστεῦσαι αὐτοὺς τῷ ψεύδει, ἵνα κριθῶσι πάντες οἱ μὴ πιστεύσαντες τῇ ἀληθείᾳ, ἀλλ' εὐδόκησαντες τῇ ἀδικίᾳ.

14. Compare, for instance, Origen, *Clo* II,10,70 to Rom 1,1-5; *Clo* II,10,78 to 1 Cor 12,4-6; and *Clo* II,10,72 to Heb 1,2.

2. *Summaries*

Origen's habit of presenting verbatim quotations does not, however, extend to all statements presented with a *verbum dicendi*. For instance, when he asserts that "the apostle says (φησί) that teachers are also appointed in the assembly"¹⁵, this speech report, given in indirect speech (*oratio obliqua*), is not a verbatim quotation of 1 Cor 12,28, where Paul also speaks of apostles and prophets, but a summary¹⁶. In general, speech reports given in indirect speech are not limited to what was actually said, but are free to introduce information inferred from the context or from general knowledge of the situation, or even express the reporting speaker's understanding of what the utterance means in an assumed context¹⁷.

In Ancient Greek, indirect speech is formed either with accusative and infinitive, as in φησὶ γράψειν ("He said that he would write"), or by the use of a complementizer such as ὅτι or ὡς ("that"), as in φησὶ ὅτι γράψει ("He said that he would write")¹⁸. Distinguishing between direct and indirect speech is rather complex, partly because ὅτι is sometimes used to introduce a statement that can only be read as direct speech, such as φησὶ ὅτι γράψω ("He said: 'I will write'"), and partly because ancient Greek authors may switch rather abruptly from indirect to direct speech, sometimes within the same sentence, without making this transition explicit¹⁹. While it might appear strange that ὅτι may be used to introduce either a direct quotation or an indirect report, this is indeed how this phenomenon is generally described²⁰. However, Emar Maier has recently

15. Origen, *Cio* I,3,19 (SC 120bis, 64,44-45 BLANC): ὁ ἀπόστολός φησι τετάχθαι ἐν τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ καὶ διδασκάλους.

16. Cf. 1 Cor 12,28: Καὶ οὗς μὲν ἔθετο ὁ θεὸς ἐν τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ πρῶτον ἀποστόλους, δεύτερον προφήτας, τρίτον διδασκάλους...

17. F. COULMAS, *Reported Speech: Some General Issues*, in Id. (ed.), *Direct and Indirect Speech* (Trends in Linguistics. Studies and Monographs, 31), Berlin, De Gruyter, 1986, 1-28, pp. 2-6; C.N. LI, *Direct Speech and Indirect Speech: A Functional Study*, *ibid.*, 29-45, pp. 29-30, 41; E. MAIER, *Switches between Direct and Indirect Speech in Ancient Greek*, in *Journal of Greek Linguistics* 12 (2012) 118-139, pp. 118-119; K. ALLAN, *Reports, Indirect Reports, and Illocutionary Point*, in A. CAPONE – F. KIEFER – F. LO PIPARO (eds.), *Indirect Reports and Pragmatics: Interdisciplinary Studies* (Perspectives in Pragmatics, Philosophy & Psychology, 5), Cham, Springer, 2016, 573-591.

18. LI, *Direct Speech* (n. 17), p. 29; C. BARY, *Tense in Ancient Greek Reports*, in *Journal of Greek Linguistics* 12 (2012) 29-50, p. 29; MAIER, *Switches* (n. 17), pp. 119-122.

19. MAIER, *Switches* (n. 17), pp. 122-129. Both these phenomena are recognized by N. TURNER, *Syntax*, in J.H. MOULTON (ed.), *A Grammar of New Testament Greek*, vol. 3, Edinburgh, Clark, 1963, 1-417, pp. 325-326.

20. A few scholars have discussed this problem. P. WINTER, *Ὅτι Recitativum in Luke 1 25, 61, II 23*, in *HTR* 48 (1955) 213-216, suggests that some instances may be explained by an underlying Hebrew *kî recitativum*. T. DAIBER, *Wisset! zu einem angeblichen Anakoluth in Mk 2,10 bzw zum ὅτι recitativum*, in *ZNW* 104 (2013) 277-285, pp. 282-284, connects the practice to later usage in Byzantine Greek and Church Slavonic.

proposed that ὅτι should be understood uniformly as introducing indirect speech, and that a sentence such as φησὶ ὅτι γράψω should be understood as a case when the author first introduces a speech report in indirect speech, only to immediately switch to direct speech²¹. In the context of this investigation, where variation between different modes of attribution is expected, Maier's model removes a level of complexity in the analysis while still representing the same complexity in the data. It is therefore worth considering whether Origen uses ὅτι to introduce indirect speech reports.

Origen's practice in this regard may be illuminated by a paragraph in which he makes two comparable references to Eph 5,8²², and uses infinitive in one case, and ὅτι in the other:

If it was not said in Paul that (ἐλέγετο ὅτι / 1) we once were in darkness but now are shining in the Lord, [...]. But now Paul claims to be (φησὶ γεγονέναι / 2) once darkness, but now light in the Lord – so it is possible for darkness to turn into light²³.

Origen changes the original wording in both references. In the first, ἦτε (“you were”) is altered to ἡμεθα (“we were”). In the other, this verb is replaced by γεγονέναι (“to have become”). The first reference also changes the noun φῶς (“light”) to the participle φωτεινοί (“shining”). There is no significant difference in the amount of adaptation made to the two versions, so there seems to be no need to distinguish between the two ways to form indirect speech reports²⁴. Thus, whenever Origen presents an attributed statement in indirect speech – either by use of infinitive constructions or preceded by ὅτι – he may be presenting a summary rather than a verbatim quotation.

21. MAIER, *Switches* (n. 17), pp. 129-130, 133-136. Maier does not specify to which dialects of ancient Greek his arguments refer, but since he quotes examples from Acts and from Plutarch (ca. 46-120 CE) he seems to have considered *Koinē* as well as Attic Greek. An alternative to Maier's view is to speak of a third category. COULMAS, *Reported Speech* (n. 17), pp. 6-10, reviews seven such proposals, all of which have less precision than Maier's model.

22. ἦτε γὰρ ποτε σκότος, νῦν δὲ φῶς ἐν κυρίῳ.

23. Origen, *Clo* II,20,135-136 (SC 120bis, 300,22-28 BLANC; ET: mine): Εἰ μὴ γὰρ ἐπὶ Παύλου ἐλέγετο, ὅτι «ἡμεθα ποτε ἐν σκότῳ, νῦν δὲ φωτεινοὶ ἐν κυρίῳ», [...] Νῦν δὲ ὁ Παῦλός φησι γεγονέναι «ποτὲ σκότος, νῦν δὲ φῶς ἐν κυρίῳ», ὡς δυνατοῦ ὄντος τοῦ σκότος εἰς φῶς μεταβαλεῖν.

24. Similarly, in Origen, *CC* VIII,29, Origen uses the formula φησὶ δὲ καὶ ὁ Παῦλος ὅτι (“Paul also says that”) to introduce a slightly rephrased version of 1 Cor 8,8, in *Clo* XX,32,285, Origen uses φησὶν ὅτι (“he says that”) to introduce a reworded rendition of Phil 1,29, and in *Clo* XIII,2,11, Origen uses the formula γέγραπται ὅτι (“it is written that”) to present a rephrasing of Ex 17,3LXX. There are also cases where ὅτι is used to introduce an almost verbatim quotation, such as the reference to Jn 18,28 in *Clo* XXVIII,14,119, or the reference to Mk 1,35 in Origen, *Orat* XIII,1.

3. *Explanatory Paraphrases*

In many of the cases where Origen rewrites the passages to which he refers, he is not merely summarizing, but expressing the point of the original author in his own words. This is the case when he presents two short quotations from Rom 7,8-9, and proceeds to synopsise an important point in Paul's teaching on sin:

Accordingly, the apostle says (φησί / 1): "Without law, sin is dead", and adds (καὶ ἐπιφέρει / 2): "when the commandment came, sin was revived" – generally teaching (καθολικὸν διδάσκων / 3) that sin has no influence in itself, before the law and the commandments²⁵.

The first two references are almost verbatim quotations²⁶, but the third attribution formula καθολικὸν διδάσκων ("generally teaching") indicates that what follows is Origen's attempt to articulate how he perceives Paul's teaching in this area – based, one may presume, not only on the words quoted here but on a more general understanding of Pauline theology. Since such an articulation is separated from Paul's words by a process of interpretation, we may call it an "explanatory paraphrase".

Origen's explanatory paraphrases are not always true to the views expressed by the quoted author. This is clear from a reference to Rom 4,17, where Paul remarks that God, when he calls Abraham a father to many nations in Gen 17,5, is referring to what does not yet exist – Abraham's line of future descendants – as if it already does:

The apostle does appear to use "the things that do not exist" not for what does not exist in any number or any way, but for the morally bad, thinking (νομίζων / 1) that "things that do not exist" are the things that are evil. For "the things that do not exist", he says (γάρ φησὶν / 2), "God called as if they did".

In this passage, Origen's first attribution seriously misrepresents Paul's point. Paul is referring to the future descendants of Abraham, who will exist at some point in the future, but Origen claims that he refers to evil – which, he argues, does not really exist, since it was not included in the original creation. The second attribution, by contrast, is a more faithful

25. Origen, *CIO* II,15,106 (SC 120bis, 280,8-12 BLANC; ET: mine): Φησί τοίνυν ὁ ἀπόστολος· «Χωρὶς νόμου ἁμαρτία νεκρά», καὶ ἐπιφέρει· «Ἐλθούσης δὲ τῆς ἐντολῆς ἢ μὲν ἁμαρτία ἀνέζησεν» καθολικὸν διδάσκων περὶ τῆς ἁμαρτίας ὡς μηδεμίαν ἐνέργειαν αὐτῆς ἐχούσης πρὶν νόμου καὶ ἐντολῆς·

26. Origen leaves out a γάρ and drops a movable ν of ἀνέζησεν. The phrase καὶ ἐπιφέρει ("and adds") marks a gap in the quotation. Cf. Rom 7,8-9: ...χωρὶς γὰρ νόμου ἁμαρτία νεκρά. ἐγὼ δὲ ἔζων χωρὶς νόμου ποτέ, ἐλθούσης δὲ τῆς ἐντολῆς ἢ ἁμαρτία ἀνέζησεν....

rephrasing²⁷. Similarly to the formula καθολικὸν διδάσκων (“generally teaching”), the more interpretative verb νομίζων (“thinking”) indicates a freer rendering. When Origen makes similar references to Heracleon, we cannot take for granted that he is representing Heracleon’s views correctly.

4. *Mere Assertions*

In a number of cases where Origen refers to the views or doctrines of his opponents, he does not specify any source material from which the opinion in question has been taken²⁸. Such references may be called “mere assertions”. The most prominent of Origen’s mere assertions concerning Heracleon is the brief introduction of his predecessor: “Heracleon, who is said to be an acquaintance of Valentinus”²⁹. The phrase “who is said to be” (λεγόμενον εἶναι) does not present the association of Heracleon to Valentinus as taken from Heracleon’s writing or in any other way derived from Heracleon’s self-presentation, but as hearsay.

Although there is no question that Origen does present Heracleon as an associate of Valentinus³⁰, and although we have no particular reason to doubt this information³¹, we may want to consider how much weight we want to put on a point that may be repeated from previous sources rather than based on Heracleon’s own words³². Based on his association with Valentinus, existing scholarship often takes for granted that Heracleon’s interpretations of the Fourth Gospel is determined by a “Valentinian” dogmatic system such as the one described by Irenaeus³³, including the

27. Origen has altered the order of the phrases, and replaced καλοῦντος (“calling”) with ἐκάλεσεν (“called”).

28. See, for instance, his reference to the views of Marcion in Origen, *Clo* X,6,24.

29. Origen, *Clo* II,14,100 (SC 120bis, 274,1-2 BLANC; Brooke’s fragment 1; ET: mine): τὸν Οὐαλεντίνου λεγόμενον εἶναι γνῶριμον Ἡρακλέωνα.

30. Pace M. KALER – M.-P. BUSSIÈRES, *Was Heracleon a Valentinian? A New Look at Old Sources*, in *HTR* 99 (2006) 275-289, pp. 279-282, who have attempted to argue that λεγόμενον εἶναι indicates not only that Origen reports information he has received from others, but also that he “did not consider Heracleon a Valentinian”. Although Kaler and Bussières manage to pose interesting questions, their argumentation makes too much of these two words and their radical conclusions are not sustained by available evidence. See also THOMASSEN, *Heracleon* (n. 2), pp. 173-174.

31. As pointed out by THOMASSEN, *Heracleon* (n. 2), p. 173, Heracleon’s association with Valentinus is a point on which all our sources agree.

32. Cf. Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* II,4,1; Tertullian, *Val.* IV,1; Hippolytus, *Haer.* VI,4,1; VI,29,1; VI,35,6, all of which mention Heracleon’s association with Valentinus.

33. For instance, H. STRUTWOLF, *Gnosis als System: Zur Rezeption der valentinianischen Gnosis bei Origenes* (Forschungen zur Kirchen- und Dogmengeschichte, 56), Göttingen,

theory of the three human natures, according to which some humans, “the spiritual ones” (οἱ πνευματικοί) are predestined for salvation, while another group, “the material ones” (οἱ ὕλικοί) are irredeemably lost³⁴. But if this association is only based on hearsay, Origen may have used it in a similar way, and presumed Heracleon to share the heterodox positions of later “Valentinian” teachers, as suggested by Langerbeck and Wucherpfennig³⁵. If we can discern when Origen quotes Heracleon verbatim from where he is summarizing or paraphrasing him, we may also be able to discern instances where he is reading later “Valentinian” theology into Heracleon’s comments. In the following analysis, Heracleon will therefore not be presumed to maintain any heterodox views unless such doctrines are necessary to understand his interpretations.

III. VISITING CAPERNAUM

The criteria presented above for discerning between different modes of attribution in Origen’s references to Heracleon may now be applied to one specific example. In Jn 2,12, Jesus and his disciples are said to spend a few days in Capernaum before going up to Jerusalem for the Passover festival. Origen writes:

Heracleon, however, when he interprets “After this, he went down to Capernaum” says (φησί / 1) that it once again reveals a beginning of a new direction (οἰκονομία), since “went down” (Jn 2,12) is not said without reason. And he says (φησί / 2) that “Capernaum” signifies these outermost [parts] of the world, the material (ὕλικός) [parts] into which he had descended. And since the place was unsuitable, he says (φησὶν / 3), “he is not said to have

Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993, pp. 114-125, uses Heracleon as a source for the doctrinal system of “valentinianischen Gnosis”. CASTELLANO, *Exégesis* (n. 2), pp. 15-22, 181-183, presents Heracleon as a “gnóstico valentiniano” and concludes that his exegesis constitutes a failed attempt to legitimize the “Gnostic Valentinian” doctrine in the Church. E. THOMASSEN, *The Spiritual Seed: The Church of the “Valentinians”* (Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies, 60), Leiden – Boston, MA, Brill, 2006, pp. 103-118, interprets Heracleon’s reflections in the context of debates between eastern and western “Valentinianism”. I. DUNDERBERG, *Beyond Gnosticism: Myth, Lifestyle, and Society in the School of Valentinus*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2008, pp. 2-5, 15, accepts that Heracleon developed his own theological ideas, but still presumes Heracleon to be a credible source for the doctrines of the “School of Valentinus”.

34. Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* I,1-7. Cf. M.R. DESJARDINS, *Sin in Valentinianism* (SBL.DS, 108), Atlanta, GA, Scholars Press, 1990, pp. 12-16; K. RUDOLPH, *Gnosis: The Nature and History of an Ancient Religion*, transl. R.M. WILSON, San Francisco, CA, HarperSanFrancisco, 1984, pp. 320-322.

35. See note 5 above.

done or said anything there”. Had, then, our Lord not been recorded in the other Gospels as having done or said anything in Capernaum, perhaps we would have considered if his exegesis was acceptable. But now ...³⁶.

Origen goes on to summarize an extensive number of gospel passages in which actions and utterances of Jesus are connected to the town of Capernaum, including Jesus’s preaching of the kingdom in Mt 4,12-17, the man with the unclean spirit in Mk 1,21-27, and Peter’s fever-ridden mother-in-law in Lk 4,38. He concludes:

We have presented all this about what has been said and done by the Savior in Capernaum to refute the exegesis of Heracleon, who says (λέγοντος / 4): “Therefore, he is not said to have done or said anything there”. Let him either grant that there are two meanings of “Capernaum”, present and argue which ones they are, or – if he is not able to do this – let him refrain from saying that the Savior has visited any place fruitlessly³⁷!

Four statements are attributed to Heracleon in this passage, and previous scholarship tends to take all four as verbatim quotations. Preuschen presents all four references as quotations. Völker and Foerster present the first three as quotations, but leave out the fourth one. Blanc presents all four in plain text, but Heine presents the fourth one within quotation marks. Pettipiece presents the first three in italics, but leaves out the fourth. Wucherpfennig first presents the three first references in italics, but later identifies the first as a summary, and treats the second and third as verbatim quotations. Pagels quotes from the first two references as if directly from Heracleon³⁸.

36. Origen, *Clo* X,11,48-49 (SC 157, 414,1–416,11 BLANC; Brooke’s fragment 11; ET: mine): Ὁ μέντοι γε Ἡρακλέων τὸ «Μετὰ τοῦτο κατέβη εἰς Καφαρναοὺμ αὐτὸς» διηγούμενος ἄλλης πάλιν οἰκονομίας ἀρχὴν φησι δηλοῦσθαι, οὐκ ἀργῶς τοῦ «Κατέ <βη>» εἰρημένον· καὶ φησι τὴν Καφαρναοὺμ σημαίνειν ταῦτα τὰ ἔσχατα τοῦ κόσμου, ταῦτα τὰ ὑλικά εἰς ἃ κατῆλθεν· καὶ διὰ τὸ ἀνοίκειον, φησίν, εἶναι τὸν τόπον οὐδὲ πεποικῶς τι λέγεται ἐν αὐτῇ ἢ λελαληκῶς. Εἰ μὲν οὖν μηδὲ ἐν τοῖς λοιποῖς εὐαγγελίοις πεποικῶς τι ἢ λελαληκῶς ἐν τῇ Καφαρναοὺμ ὁ κύριος ἡμῶν ἀνεγέγραπτο, τάχα ἂν ἐδιστάξαμεν περὶ τοῦ παραδέξασθαι αὐτοῦ τὴν ἐρμηνείαν. Νυνὶ δὲ

37. Origen, *Clo* X,11,58-59 (SC 157, 418,55–420,62 BLANC; Brooke’s fragment 11; ET: mine): Ταῦτα δὲ πάντα περὶ τῶν ἐν Καφαρναοὺμ τῷ σωτῆρι εἰρημένων καὶ πεπραγμένων παρεστήσαμεν ὑπὲρ τοῦ ἐλέγξει τὴν Ἡρακλέωνος ἐρμηνείαν λέγοντος· Διὰ τοῦτο οὐδὲ πεποικῶς τι λέγεται ἐν αὐτῇ ἢ λελαληκῶς. Ἡ γὰρ δύο ἐπινοίας διδῶτω καὶ αὐτὸς τῆς Καφαρναοὺμ καὶ παριστάτω καὶ πεισάτω ποίας· ἢ τοῦτο ποιῆσαι μὴ δυνάμενος ἀπιστάσθω τοῦ λέγειν τὸν σωτῆρα μάρτην τινὶ τόπῳ ἐπιδημηκέναι.

38. GCS 10, 180-181 PREUSCHEN; SC 157, 415-419 BLANC; transl. HEINE (n. 4), pp. 266-268; VÖLKER, *Quellen* (n. 4), pp. 68-69; FOERSTER, *Gnosis* (n. 4), pp. 218-219; PETTIPIECE, *Heracleon* (n. 4), p. 68; PAGELS, *Gnostic Exegesis* (n. 2), pp. 52, 67, 85; WUCHERPFENNIG, *Heracleon Philologus* (n. 2), pp. 51, 60-64, 94.

	<i>Statement 1</i> <i>φησί</i>	<i>Statement 2</i> <i>φησί</i>	<i>Statement 3</i> <i>φησίν</i>	<i>Statement 4</i> <i>λέγοντος</i>
<i>Preuschen</i>	Quotation	Quotation	Quotation	Quotation
<i>Völker</i>	Quotation	Quotation	Quotation	–
<i>Foerster</i>	Quotation	Quotation	Quotation	–
<i>Blanc</i>	Plain text	Plain text	Plain text	Plain text
<i>Heine</i>	Plain text	Plain text	Plain text	Quotation
<i>Pettipiece</i>	Italics	Italics	Italics	–
<i>Wucherpfeffnig</i>	Summary	Quotation	Quotation	–
<i>Pagels</i>	Quotation	Quotation	–	–
<i>Berglund</i>	Summary	Summary	Quotation	Quotation

All four attributions are made with a single *verbum dicendi*, either *φησί* (“he says”) or *λέγοντος* (“who says”). The first two attributed statements are presented in indirect speech using accusative and infinitive, but the third and fourth appear in direct speech. According to the criteria presented above, the first and second attributions are presented as summaries, while the third and fourth are presented as verbatim quotations.

The ends of the two quotations are clear, since both are followed by sentences in which Origen undoubtedly is responding to Heracleon. Their beginnings are less clear. The main clause – οὐδὲ πεποιηκώς τι λέγεται ἐν αὐτῇ ἢ λελαληκώς (“he is not said to have done or said anything there”) – is identical in both cases, which gives a strong impression that it is quoted verbatim from Heracleon’s writing. The causal sub-clauses, however, do not match, and it is likely that Origen has either summarized καὶ διὰ τὸ ἀνοίκειον εἶναι τὸν τόπον (“and since the place was foreign”) into διὰ τοῦτο (“therefore”), or expanded the latter into the former. The forms of these two references give no definite reason to prefer one of these scenarios to the other, and we can only conclude that the causal connection between the foreignness of the place and the fact that Jesus is not said to have done or said anything in Capernaum may be inferred by Origen rather than expressed by Heracleon.

Origen’s first summary informs us that Heracleon has remarked that the verb κατέβη (“went down”) is not chosen without a reason. This suggests that Heracleon is performing a γλωσσηματικόν (“word study”) on the verb καταβαίνω (“go down”), an indication of his literary-critical interests³⁹.

39. On γλωσσηματικόν as a method of Greco-Roman literary criticism, see H.-I. MARROU, *Histoire de l’éducation dans l’antiquité*, Paris, Seuil, ⁵1960, pp. 229-242; B. NEUSCHÄFER,

How this downward motion is significant is revealed by the second summary, in which Heracleon is said to have interpreted the travel itinerary of Jn 2,12 as a metaphor for Christ's descent into the material realm⁴⁰. The expression τὰ ἔσχατα τοῦ κόσμου ("the outermost parts of the world") seems consistent with the outlook of the Johannine prologue: from the perspective of an eternal Logos originating in the immediate proximity of the Father, the material world may indeed be described as a remote periphery⁴¹.

The Greek word οἰκονομία (here: "direction") is a multivalent term that is often used to denote the management or stewardship of a family or a government. In early Christian usage it often denotes Christ's salvific ministry on earth⁴², or God's salvific plan for humanity⁴³. Justin Martyr (ca. 100-165) and Origen both remark that the Incarnation brought an end to the old οἰκονομία and initiated a new one, where God's grace is extended to include non-Jews⁴⁴. Origen also uses the term to denote

Origenes als Philologe (Schweizerische Beiträge zur Altertumswissenschaft, 18), Basel, Reinhardt, 1987, pp. 139-140; F.M. YOUNG, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997, pp. 85-89; T. VEGGE, *Paulus und das antike Schulwesen: Schule und Bildung des Paulus* (BZNW, 134), Berlin, De Gruyter, 2006, pp. 113-115; MARTENS, *Origen and Scripture* (n. 7), pp. 41-42; C.J. BERGLUND, *Interpreting Readers: The Role of Greco-Roman Education in Early Interpretation of New Testament Writings*, in F. WILK (ed.), *Scriptural Interpretation at the Interface between Education and Religion* (Themes in Biblical Narrative, 22), Leiden, Brill, 2018, 204-247, pp. 225-236. Heracleon's interest in literary criticism is studied by WUCHERPFENNIG, *Heracleon Philologus* (n. 2).

40. On this point, I agree with THOMASSEN, *The Spiritual Seed* (n. 33), pp. 107-108: "Heracleon begins his reading of the text with the descent to Capernaum, which he interprets as an allusion to the *katabasis* of the Saviour into matter. Capernaum is the material world". I disagree with PAGELS, *Gnostic Exegesis* (n. 2), p. 56, who asserts that Heracleon explains that Capernaum symbolizes the spiritual condition of total ignorance, the standpoint of the "hylics". I agree with SIMONETTI, *Eracleone e Origene* (n. 6), p. 135, that Heracleon refers to the Savior's descent into the material world, but disagree with his insistence to view this "material world" within the theory of the three human natures.

41. The attempt by WUCHERPFENNIG, *Heracleon Philologus* (n. 2), pp. 60-64, to argue that Heracleon's philosophical view of the material world is influenced by the philosopher Numenius of Apamea (second century CE), whose views has parallels in other "Valentinian" texts, appears to make altogether too much of Heracleon's characterization of the material world as remote and lower compared to the original location of the Logos.

42. Justin, *Dial.* 30,3; 31,1; 67,7; 103,3; Origen, *Clo* VI,53,273; X,27,164; *CC* II,9,67; II,26,7; II,65,4; II,69,2; VI,78,17.

43. Ignatius, *To the Ephesians* XVIII,2; XX,1; Justin, *Dial.* 45,4; 120,1; 134,2; 141,4.

44. Justin, *Dial.* 87,5; Origen, *CC* IV,9,4; V,20,21. Cf. J.W. TRIGG, *God's Marvelous Oikonomia: Reflections of Origen's Understanding of Divine and Human Pedagogy in the Address Ascribed to Gregory Thaumaturgus*, in *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 9 (2001) 27-52, pp. 34-39. See also G.L. PRESTIGE, *God in Patristic Thought*, London, SPCK, ²1952, pp. 57-67; H.S. BENJAMINS, *Oikonomia bei Origenes: Schrift und Heilsplan*, in G. DORIVAL – A. LE BOULLUEC (eds.), *Origeniana Sexta: Origène et la Bible / Origen and the Bible* (BETL, 118), Leuven, Peeters, 1995, 327-331; G. RICHTER, *Oikonomia* Berlin, De Gruyter, 2005, pp. 192-201, 214.

specific episodes in Jesus's earthly activities, such as the wedding at Cana, the descent into Judea, or the interaction with the fig-less fig tree⁴⁵, and may have understood it in the same sense here – that at this point in the narrative, Jesus's work in Cana is concluded, and a new episode begins. In order to understand in what sense Heracleon is using the term, however, we should look at the context in which he is using it. Here, οἰκονομία appears alongside the second summary, where Heracleon is said to interpret Jn 2,12 as a metaphor for Jesus's descent into the material world. In the only other instance where οἰκονομία is attributed to Heracleon, the context is expressed similarly: “that he would descend from his majesty and take flesh”⁴⁶. It is therefore highly likely that Heracleon's is using οἰκονομία to refer to the new stage in God's salvific plan that begins at the appearance of Christ⁴⁷.

Origen's response is based on the understanding that Heracleon has argued that Jesus *never* did or said anything in Capernaum, and enumerates several healings and speaking events located in Capernaum as described in the Synoptics⁴⁸. In view of the summary in statement 2, however, it appears unlikely that Heracleon would argue that Jesus never did or said anything in a Capernaum that he interpreted as a metaphor for the material existence into which Jesus descended from the eternal realm. Such an argument would be contradicted by every sayings report and healing narrative in the Gospels. His comment more likely refers to the evangelist's choice not to describe any words or actions by Jesus at this particular point in his narrative. The διὰ τοῦτο (“therefore”) may have referred to a reason for this choice that Heracleon found plausible – perhaps that the evangelist refrained from expanding on Jesus's activities in Capernaum to avoid drawing his readers' attention from the metaphorical meaning of the travel itinerary.

45. Origen, *CIO* X,3,10; X,3,13; X,8,37; X,21,126.

46. Origen, *CIO* VI,39,198 (SC 157, 278,33-34 BLANC; Brooke's fragment 8; ET: mine): κατέλθῃ ἀπὸ μετέθους καὶ σάρκα λάβῃ.

47. On this point I agree with THOMASSEN, *The Spiritual Seed* (n. 33), pp. 108-109, who maintains that “The word must thus refer to the divine plan of salvation, and the assumption of flesh by the Savior must form part of this plan”. I disagree with WUCHERPFENNIG, *Heracleon Philologus* (n. 2), pp. 94-95, who argues that Heracleon uses the term to state that a new major division of the Fourth Gospel begins at 2,12.

48. Origen, *CIO* X,8,37-38; X,9,42; X,12,62-66. This material is cited not only to refute Heracleon's interpretation, but also to substantiate Origen's own argument that Capernaum, which etymologically means ἀγρός παρακλήσεως (“field of exhortation”), is a place for exhortations to righteous action, while Cana is a location for joyful celebration. See Origène, *Commentaire sur Saint Jean*, ed. BLANC (SC, 157) (n. 4), p. 406, n. 1; transl. HEINE (n. 4), p. 264, n. 63; WUCHERPFENNIG, *Heracleon Philologus* (n. 2), p. 64.

Origen's response fits well with a "Valentinian" world-view in which the material world is not a concrete reality shared by all humanity, but a category of particularly unfortunate individuals, who are predestined to perdition and beyond all possible aid, even from Christ. But this world-view seems to be presupposed only in Origen's response, and not in the quotations from Heracleon. If Heracleon interpreted Jn 2,12 as a metaphor for Christ's descent from his eternal glory into the material world, and identified this descent as the beginning of a new stage in God's plan, his reading cannot be said to represent a heterodox opinion. On the contrary, it seems to be in line with the outlook of the author of the Fourth Gospel, and with Justin's and Origen's remarks about the new οἰκονομία originating with the Incarnation.

IV. CONCLUSION

This paper has presented a set of criteria for discerning four different modes of attribution in Origen's references to Heracleon. Statements attributed with a *verbum dicendi* and presented in direct speech (*oratio recta*) are categorized as verbatim quotations, which purport to present Heracleon's *ipsissima verba*. Statements attributed with a *verbum dicendi* but presented in indirect speech (*oratio obliqua*) – whether by use of an accusative-with-infinitive construction or by use of ὅτι – are presented as summaries, claiming to transmit the point that Heracleon has made in his writing, but not necessarily the words he has used to express it. Attributions made with more interpretive verbs, indicating that Origen's presentation is separated from Heracleon's words by a process of interpretation, are viewed as explanatory paraphrases, presented as revealing not merely the point expressed by Heracleon, but the underlying argument or dogmatic idea on which this point rests. Lastly, what is attributed to Heracleon with no stated basis in his writing is considered mere assertions. While only the first category purports to contain information that can be used to reconstruct Heracleon's actual words, the second also claims to be trustworthy material for studying his methods and views. Within the two latter categories, however, Origen may have used the views and reasoning of later "Valentinian" teachers to interpret and describe Heracleon's interpretations.

By using these criteria to analyze Origen's references to Heracleon's comments on Jn 2,12, we have identified two summaries and one, partly repeated, verbatim quotation. Judging from this material, Heracleon interprets Jesus's travel itinerary of Jn 2,12 as a metaphor for Christ's descent

into the material world, which reveals the beginning of a new οἰκονομία – a multivalent term that in this context may refer to a new stage in God's salvific plan that begins at Christ's incarnation. Heracleon's reflections on Jn 2,12 seem not to be based on any heterodox dogmatic position, but seem to be in line with the version of early Christianity presented by the Fourth Gospel. Further analysis will be necessary to determine to what extent Heracleon's interpretations of other Johannine passages express heterodox theology. Careful application of these criteria to all passages where Origen interacts with Heracleon's interpretations may allow us to discern what Origen quotes from Heracleon's *hypomnēmata* from what he infers based on the views of later "Valentinian" teachers – thereby providing a more secure foundation for future scholarship on Heracleon.

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