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## An analysis Of Origen's charismatic ideology in his Commentary on the Gospel of John

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An Analysis of Origen's Charismatic Ideology in His

*Commentary on the Gospel of John*

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts  
Department of Religious Studies  
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## Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my daughter, Alexandria, who is my new inspiration in life! I hope you dance!

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An Analysis on Origen's Charismatic Ideology in his  
*Commentary on the Gospel of John*

Kimberly W. Logan-Hudson

ABSTRACT

This thesis aims to examine whether Origen projects a charismatic ideology within his *Commentary on the Gospel of John*. Five characteristics will be utilized during the process: (1) Charismatic authority is given directly from God and only God; (2) Those who have been chosen sought and maintain the position; (3) Individuals must recognize this authority along with others; (4) Those with charismatic authority must mediate God's word for others; (5) This authority may only belong to individuals within the one body of the church.

In analyzing Books 1, 2, 6, and 10 along with these five characteristics, the thesis will present Origen's charismatic ideology and determine how it functioned between him and those who held a more traditional view concerning the structure of the Christian Church.

## Chapter One

### Introduction

This thesis seeks to analyze the 3rd century Christian theologian Origen and his *Commentary on the Gospel of John* using an idea of charismatic ideology proposed by Joseph W. Trigg in his article “The Charismatic Intellectual: Origen’s Understanding of Religious Leadership.”<sup>1</sup> After this analysis, this thesis will then examine the findings against the historical backdrop of Origen’s and Bishop Demetrius’ controversy, which ends with Origen’s relocation to Caesarea. This is because Origen wrote his early books of this commentary during his feud with Demetrius and the later books after his relocation to Caesarea. Therefore, by examining Books 1, 2, 6, and 10 of Origen’s commentary in the light of Trigg’s five characteristics, and then by examining the historical information regarding the feud, this thesis seeks to provide a possible insight into Origen’s beliefs on the structure of the Christian church.

Thus, my thesis is that Origen’s charismatic ideology regarding religious leadership of the Christian church, which he articulated in his *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, changed after his conflict with Bishop Demetrius. The requirement changed from all leaders having charismatic authority to there being room for both types of leaders in the church, those who possessed a charismatic authority and those who possessed a traditional authority.<sup>2</sup> Thus, leaders who have charismatic authority can

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<sup>1</sup>Joseph W. Trigg, “The Charismatic Intellectual: Origen’s Understanding of Religious Leadership,” *Church History* 50, no. 1 (March 1981): 5–19.

<sup>2</sup> There will more regarding the term ‘charismatic’ as well as the difference between a charismatic type of leader versus the more traditional type often associated with the orthodox Christian church in the following chapters as it appears to Origen. However, in a brief explanation, it appears that when Origen depicts a ‘charismatic’ type, he explains it as someone who behaves in a prophetic manner. Max Weber defines a ‘prophet’ as an individual who has charisma, “who proclaims a religious doctrine or divine commandment.” Max Weber, *Sociology of Religion* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1991). 46. The traditional authority is received by the election of other leaders and they follow standard form of rules and regulations set forth by other leaders within the church.

work alongside of leaders who hold more of a traditional leadership role often associated with the Christian church.

Discovering whether Origen did change his requirement over religious leadership is important because it provides a glimpse into the history of an influential Christian theologian of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century. Incidentally, scholars often argue for Origen's position on religious leadership in the church as being one where he/she should have charismatic characteristics in order to lead. Consequently, they have come to this conclusion by examining explicit accounts in an array of Origen's writings. However, in an analysis of Origen's *Commentary on the Gospel of John* using five characteristics provided by Joseph W. Trigg against the historical backdrop of Origen's and Bishop of Demetrius' controversy, I found that Origen changed his strict requirement and instead appears to provide a possible compromise. This is more than likely a direct result of his feud with Demetrius where afterwards Origen began to argue that there was room for leaders who have charismatic authority to exist within the church alongside of leaders who have more of a traditional role. Thus, while Origen did argue for leaders to have charismatic authority as a prerequisite for church leadership, an encounter with Bishop Demetrius which resulted in his relocation to Caesarea, does appear to have slightly changed his argument if not permanently, at least for a brief period while he articulated his charismatic ideology in his *Commentary on the Gospel of John*. By not examining this factor closely and just accepting the fact that Origen only always argued for more of a 'spiritual' or 'charismatic' type of leader would be missing out on a direct experience which may depict the struggles of an important influential Christian theologian who helped develop and shape Christianity during his time.

Chapter two begins with a brief analysis on some previous studies of Origen's beliefs regarding religious leadership within the church. Then, chapter three continues



with a detailed examination of Joseph Trigg's article and his five characteristics used for analyzing Origen's charismatic ideology in his writings. This chapter also presents Trigg's argument for Origen's charismatic ideology as being a possible reason for Origen's and Bishop Demetrius' controversy, which ends in Origen's relocation to Caesarea.

Thus, with the desire to present the evidence in an as objective manner as possible, the analysis of text begins with a close examination of Books 1, 2, 6, and 10 of Origen's *Commentary on the Gospel of John* along with the five characteristics provided by Trigg. Consequently, chapters four through seven are examinations of each Book separately. For example, the analysis of Book one takes place in chapter four. Then, chapter eight presents the interpretation of the previous analysis of chapters four through seven in which the charismatic ideology was examined in light of the five characteristics provided by Trigg. Chapter eight also examines Origen's charismatic ideology as found in these four books against the historical backdrop of the controversy between Origen and Bishop Demetrius. By doing so, this examination provides some insight into Origen's view of the structure of the church.

## Chapter 2

### Analysis of Previous Studies on Origen's Concept on Religious Leadership

Origen was a 3rd century theologian who lived during a complex and formulating time in proto-orthodox<sup>3</sup> Christianity's history. Incidentally, the leadership roles such as the bishops, presbyters, and deacons within the proto-orthodox church were already in place during this time.<sup>4</sup> Be that as it may, some discrepancies over who held or the manner in which they held the authoritative positions occurred. In fact, Origen appears as a proto-orthodox theologian and teacher who voiced his opinion on the matter of religious leadership throughout his lifetime.<sup>5</sup> His argument may be observed in either an implicit or explicit fashion in many of his writings. This thesis will investigate whether he articulated it in his *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, Books 1, 2, 6, and 10.

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<sup>3</sup>Bart D. Ehrman, *Lost Christianities* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003]. Ehrman provides two different categories concerning orthodoxy- 1) orthodoxy & 2) proto-orthodoxy. Orthodoxy means the Christian tradition from the 4th century, and Proto-orthodoxy means the orthodox Christian tradition with characteristics from before the 4th century. I have found this minor modification of the terms helpful in my growing understanding of the Christian tradition during the first four centuries. It has been especially helpful for understanding the historical development process of the Christian tradition, because Ehrman contends that orthodox Christianity was not necessarily clearly defined until Christianity became the official religion of Rome. Therefore, I will utilize both terms in order to help in the clarification process.

<sup>4</sup>Joseph W. Trigg, *Origen: The Bible and Philosophy in the Third-Century Church* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1983), 27.

<sup>5</sup>Henri Crouzel, *Origen* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989), 221–23 Also see Joseph W. Trigg, "The Charismatic Intellectual: Origen's Understanding of Religious Leadership," *Church History* 50, no. 1 (March 1981): 5–19 and Trigg, *Origen: The Bible and Philosophy in the Third-Century Church* and Joseph W. Trigg, *Origen* (London: Routledge, 2002) and Everett Ferguson, "Origen and the Election of Bishops," *Church History* 43, no. 1 (March 1974): 26–33.

While Origen appears to have continually made an argument for ‘charismatic’<sup>6</sup> leadership roles within the church throughout his lifetime, his controversy with Bishop Demetrius of Alexandria is perhaps his most famous. Consequently, it is this argument that leads to his relocation from Alexandria to Caesarea where Origen would spend the rest of his life. It is likely that this feud became personal and may even seem as Origen’s only strife with an official leader of the church. However, according to Pierre Nautin, in his *Origène: sa vie et son oeuvre*<sup>7</sup> Origen actually had a “persistent inability to get along with his official ecclesiastical superiors”.<sup>8</sup> Instead, Origen’s “reverence for his [heavenly] father, not respect for the church as an institution, accounts for his continued loyalty to the church.”<sup>9</sup>

It is Nautin’s work that Joseph Trigg uses as a base for his argument that Origen and Bishop Demetrius disagreed over whether or not leaders should hold charismatic ideology<sup>10</sup> versus the more traditional ideological leadership roles associated with the orthodox Christian church. There will be more regarding this subject and Trigg’s study in the following chapter, but briefly, the term ‘charismatic’ for Trigg<sup>11</sup> appears to mean leadership roles which are based on an individual’s behavior. This behavior is like a prophet, which appears more ‘spiritual’ in nature, meaning that he/she claims divine

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<sup>6</sup>The term ‘charismatic’ will be explained in further detail in chapter three. However, briefly it appears that Origen refers to someone who behaves in a prophetic manner. Max Weber defines a ‘prophet’ as an individual who has charisma, “who proclaims a religious doctrine or divine commandment.” Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1991), 46.

<sup>7</sup>Pierre Nautin, *Origène: Sa Vie et Son Oeuure* (Paris, 1977) this citation comes from Trigg, “The Charismatic Intellectual: Origen’s Understanding of Religious Leadership,” 5. Trigg mentions him in other works as well.

<sup>8</sup>Trigg, “The Charismatic Intellectual: Origen’s Understanding of Religious Leadership,” 5 Here Trigg is paraphrasing Nautin from his Nautin, *Origène: Sa Vie et Son Oeuure* 414.

<sup>9</sup>Joseph W. Trigg, “The Charismatic Intellectual: Origen’s Understanding of Religious Leadership,” *Church History* 50, no. 1 (March 1981): 5. Again, Trigg is paraphrasing Nautin from his Nautin, *Origène: Sa Vie et Son Oeuure*, 414.

<sup>10</sup>There will be a detailed analysis regarding Trigg’s characteristics of Origen’s charismatic ideology in the following chapter. Trigg provides 5 characteristic in which to measure Origen’s charismatic ideology- these are discussed in detail as well in the next chapter.

<sup>11</sup>Chapter 3 is almost completely devoted to defining charismatic as Trigg uses it. Briefly, however, Trigg appears to form a similar definition as Max Weber’s on prophets. See footnote #5 in this chapter.

connection in order to express the divine's wishes; and therefore, may or may not follow the institutional rules beginning to be formed as well as enforced within the proto-orthodox Alexandrian church.<sup>12</sup>

While Trigg chooses to use the phrase 'charismatic ideology' for Origen's beliefs on authoritative positions within the church, other scholars may use slightly different terms or phrases. The differences are slight, but all in all they all tend to agree. For example, Henri Crouzel in his book *Origen*, explains that Origen felt the clergy were neither depicting nor did they have the 'holiness' necessary for their position.<sup>13</sup> He continues to explain how Origen felt ecclesiastical hierarchy was too political and therefore allowed for too much manipulation and greed. For evidence he sites a few of Origen's writings in which Origen appears to explicitly express his negative feelings toward clergy who failed to meet the requirements of holiness according to him.

Another scholar, Everett Ferguson in his article "Origen and the Election of Bishops," approaches the subject by way of examining Origen's argument for how bishops should be elected. He explains that Origen's most explicit passage regarding the selection of clergy may be found in his *Homily in Numbers 13.4*:

...But the leaders in office of the churches should learn not to designate by testimony nor to deliver the leadership of the churches as an inheritance to those who are related to them by blood or are associated with them by fleshly closeness, but to submit to the choice of God and not to choose that one whom human affection commends but to grant entirely to the judgment of God the choice of successor...<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Trigg, "The Charismatic Intellectual: Origen's Understanding of Religious Leadership" And Weber, *The Sociology of Religion*, 46.

<sup>13</sup>Crouzel, *Origen*, 222.

<sup>14</sup>Ferguson, "Origen and the Election of Bishops," 26.

Ferguson proposes that Origen was not only expressing his sincere thoughts, but also reflecting the different selection process which was practiced in different regions during his time.<sup>15</sup> For his evidence he examines several of Origen's works and concludes that even though Origen was presenting regional differences, Origen's main concern was that the person elected had a characteristic similar to the "theme of inspired or prophetic designations."<sup>16</sup>

Thus, similar to Nautin, Crouzel, and Trigg, Ferguson also presents Origen's beliefs regarding religious leadership. Overall, Origen seems to have desired as well as expressed his belief that clergy of the church should have a type of 'holy,' 'spiritual,' or 'charismatic' presence in their character in order to be eligible for leadership. Consequently, all four of these scholars utilize all of Origen's works while presenting their arguments, and for the most part, appear to look for the most direct lines of evidence where Origen expresses his opinion in an explicit manner. However, in his article "The Charismatic Intellectual: Origen's Understanding of Religious Leadership," Joseph Trigg presents another implicit manner as a possible way for examining Origen's 'charismatic ideology.' This charismatic ideology, which Origen seems to articulate in his *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, will be examined against Origen's historical controversy with Bishop Demetrius.

However, while all of these scholars appear to agree with Origen's requirement that all leaders within the Christian church should have a 'charismatic' type of authority, they do so for several different reasons. For example, Ferguson explains that regional differences may have accounted for Origen's differences on the matter. Crouzel touches on it in his famous descriptive and historical book on Origen; and then Trigg argues that Origen was a 'charismatic intellectual,' whose charismatic ideology in which is found in

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<sup>15</sup>Ferguson, "Origen and the Election of Bishops," 27.

<sup>16</sup>Ferguson, "Origen and the Election of Bishops," 33.

his works, caused his controversy with Bishop Demetrius, which ended in Origen's relocation to Caesarea.

In an interesting observation while reading these scholarly works, I noticed that most are only using explicit accounts found within Origen's writings as their evidence. Trigg, however, does describe an alternative method for examining the evidence, but he does not appear to do a thorough and detailed exegesis on any one work.<sup>17</sup> This being said, these examination of the evidence does still provide a solid and useful study of Origen's thoughts on the matter. And, while there is nothing wrong with finding the most direct and explicit line of evidence regarding the matter, it may, however, allow room for error because it may allow for the possibility for one to overlook implicit accounts, which can in fact provide some more information on the subject. Thus, one may miss out on the up close and personal experiences of an individual who was an influential Christian theologian of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century. Some may disagree and feel that Origen's personal experiences were of no major importance, but I would disagree and argue that it very well could be of major importance because this may in fact reflect why a particular region, as Ferguson claims, may have certain requirements regarding religious leadership. For example, as a result of Origen's controversy with the Bishop Demetrius, Origen relocated to Caesarea where he appears to have been a very important influential member of this Christian congregation. Therefore, his change in requirement regarding the leadership roles may have influenced the region's outlook on religious leadership rather than the region having an influence on Origen's position.<sup>18</sup>

Thus, while I agree with all of the above scholars that Origen does believe religious leadership should be held by those who display a 'charismatic' type of

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<sup>17</sup> This is my observation after reading Trigg's articles and books. However, Trigg is an Origen scholar and may very well have done so before coming to his conclusions.

<sup>18</sup> Incidentally, this argument may appear as one similar to the argument of which one came first the chicken or the egg; it still is of significance for research regarding the matter.

characteristics in order to be leaders within the Christian church. I disagree that he always held onto this strict requirement throughout his lifetime. Consequently, there does appear to be at least one incident where Origen compromises and argues that there is room in the church for both type of leaders who either have ‘charismatic’ authority or traditional authority. My conclusion comes from my analysis of Origen’s *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, which is provided in the following chapters.

## Chapter 3

### Description of Charismatic Ideology

The project at hand is to analyze Books 1, 2, 6, and 10 of Origen's *Commentary on the Gospel of John* and determine whether Origen projects a charismatic ideology within it. In order to accomplish this, a guideline or formula will need to be established. The guideline or formula that I have adopted for this analysis comes directly from Joseph W. Trigg's article "The Charismatic Intellectual: Origen's Understanding of Religious Leadership."<sup>19</sup>

In this article, Trigg argues that Origen held a charismatic ideology regarding the structure<sup>20</sup> of the church. Those who have authority or leadership roles within the church are or should be those who have charismatic authority and not simply ecclesiastical in the more traditional manner associated with orthodox Christianity.<sup>21</sup> As Trigg explains, "...Origen's understanding of authority is distinctive in the Christian tradition: he validates charisma in terms of intellectual gifts acquired through open-minded and disciplined study."<sup>22</sup> Thus, he argues that Origen believes religious leadership should belong to those who have charismatic authority versus authority which is given and controlled by other church leaders within the church.<sup>23</sup> Consequently, he provides a fair and detailed argument which not only depicts Origen's charismatic ideology, but also

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<sup>19</sup>Joseph W. Trigg, "The Charismatic Intellectual: Origen's Understanding of Religious Leadership," *Church History* 50, no. 1 (March 1981): 5–19.

<sup>20</sup>The term 'structure' will mean the leaders within the church, such as the bishops, priests, and deacons.

<sup>21</sup>Trigg, "The Charismatic Intellectual: Origen's Understanding of Religious Leadership".

<sup>22</sup>Trigg, "The Charismatic Intellectual: Origen's Understanding of Religious Leadership," 19.

<sup>23</sup> There will be more regarding the difference between charismatic authority versus traditional authority throughout this paper, but briefly the traditional authority is associated with the orthodox church. Thus, leaders are elected by other leaders and they all follow a standard form of rules and regulations set forth by other leaders within the church.



concludes that Origen believed all leaders within the church should have this charismatic authority before he/she could lead. This authority comes through an intellectual process, much like Origen's own journey of studying and teaching scripture.

Trigg provides five specific characteristics for determining Origen's charismatic ideology. He explains that Origen derives the ideology from the Apostle Paul. Trigg also found this term 'charismatic' in Rudolph Sohm, who derived it from Max Weber and used it in his work on ecclesiastical law.<sup>24</sup> Along with these five characteristics, Trigg incorporates explanations from the epistles of Paul for illustration.<sup>25</sup> These five characteristics are as follows:

- (1) God confers charismatic authority, not through human mediation (as by ordination) but directly. Paul claimed that he was 'an apostle-not from man nor through man, but from Jesus Christ and God the Father.'<sup>26</sup>
- (2) Since God has conferred this authority, it is men's duty to defer to it. Thus charisma demands and elicits free obedience. Paul says to Philemon: 'though I am bold enough in Christ to command of you what is required, yet for love's sake I appeal to you.'<sup>27</sup>
- (3) This means that individuals, by recognizing it, verify charismatic authority. Thus, Paul says: 'If to others I am not an apostle, at least I am to you; for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.'<sup>28</sup>
- (4) Charisma mediates God's

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<sup>24</sup>Trigg, "The Charismatic Intellectual: Origen's Understanding of Religious Leadership," 7 Trigg sites Rudolph Sohm, *Kirchenrecht*, vol.1 (Leipzig, 1892) & Max Weber, *On Charisma and Institution Building*, ed. S. N. Eisenstadt (Chicago, 1968), p. 46, and Ulrich Brockhaus, *Chrisma und Amt* (Wuppertal, 1972).

<sup>25</sup>Trigg, "The Charismatic Intellectual: Origen's Understanding of Religious Leadership," 7.

<sup>26</sup>Rudolph Sohm, *Kirchenrecht*, Vol. 1 (Leipzig, 1892), 29-35 & 58-59 From Trigg, "The Charismatic Intellectual: Origen's Understanding of Religious Leadership," 7-8. & Galatians 1:1.

<sup>27</sup>Joseph W. Trigg, "The Charismatic Intellectual: Origen's Understanding of Religious Leadership," *Church History* 50, no. 1 (March 1981): 8. From Sohm, *Kirchenrecht*, Vol. 1, 27-28 & 56 & Philemon 8.

word. Thus Paul claimed to speak by the same spirit that inspired the prophets and assigned to his opinions an importance comparable to that of traditional ‘words of the Lord.’<sup>29</sup> (5) Charismatic authority, by its very nature, can belong only to individuals. Thus the point of Paul’s simile of the body is to show that God has bestowed his gifts differently on different individuals.<sup>30</sup>

Once Trigg establishes his criteria for Origen’s charismatic ideology, he examines a variety of Origen’s works and finds evidence that Origen was following a pattern in which one may find these five characteristics.

Trigg<sup>31</sup> also provides a brief description of the relationship between Origen and the Bishop of Alexandria, Demetrius. He reports that the two had a continual strife regarding the structure of the church. In a nut shell, he believes that Origen argued that those who had leading roles within the church should have all the characteristics provided above in regards to charismatic authority. However, according to Trigg, Demetrius disagreed and argued for apostolic succession, claiming himself and others like him to have the authority of leadership based on an inherited type of position coming from the apostles. Origen, however, saw the leadership roles, including those of the apostles as being more of an individual position which is only given directly from God. Therefore,

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<sup>28</sup>Trigg, “The Charismatic Intellectual: Origen’s Understanding of Religious Leadership,” 8 From Sohm, *Kirchenrecht, Vol. 1*, 51–52 & 1 Corinthians 9:2 (also 2 Corinthians 3:2, Philippians 4:1, and 1 Thessalonians 2:19).

<sup>29</sup>Trigg, “The Charismatic Intellectual: Origen’s Understanding of Religious Leadership,” 8 From Sohm, *Kirchenrecht, Vol. 1*, 29 & 2 Corinthians 4:13; & 1 Corinthians 7:30.

<sup>30</sup>Trigg, “The Charismatic Intellectual: Origen’s Understanding of Religious Leadership,” 8 From Sohm, *Kirchenrecht, Vol. 1*, 116–18 & Ernst Kasemann, *Perspectives on Paul* (Philadelphia, 1971) & J. H. Schutz, *Paul and the Anatomy of Apostolic Authority* (London, 1975).

<sup>31</sup>Within the article, Trigg derives his thinking from two previous scholars, Marguerite Harl, *Origene et la Fonction Revelatrice Du Verbe Incarne* (Paris, 1958) & Pierre Nautin, *Origene: Sa Vie et Son Oeuvre* (Paris, 1977) see also Pierre Nautin, *Lettres et Ecrivains Chrétiens Des II et III Siècles* (Paris, 1961). However, these works were not used directly in this thesis.

anyone may be chosen for the position as long as they have all or perhaps most of these characteristics.

Overall, Trigg's article appears very convincing and interesting. I was so interested in Trigg's conclusions that I wondered whether an analysis of Origen's *Commentary on the Gospel of John* could perhaps articulate Origen's charismatic ideology. If so, then could it perhaps reflect a possible conflict between Origen and more traditional Christian leadership, which Demetrius is believed to represent? Perhaps this analysis might provide an insight into whether Origen believed all leaders within the church should hold charismatic authority or should it be held for a select few who work along side of the more traditional leaders found within the church.

Why Origen's *Commentary on the Gospel of John*? As is well known, parts of this particular commentary were written before Origen was relocated to Caesarea, and the other parts were written afterward. Books 1, 2, 6, and 10 are fairly complete and were the most recent books written both before and after the relocation. Incidentally, if Origen was in fact projecting his charismatic ideology upon more traditional Christian leadership, such as the Bishop Demetrius, then perhaps these four Books may reflect this difference regarding the structure of the church. In fact, perhaps, Origen's commentary either indirectly or even directly reflects Origen's and Demetrius' conflict over the subject of leadership roles.

Thus, this thesis examines Books 1, 2, 6, and 10 of Origen's *Commentary on the Gospel of John* while following Trigg's guidelines for clarifying charismatic authority within Origen's works. Each Book will be examined separately and will have its own chapter with the aim to keep the evidence as clear and objective as possible. After examining each Book separately, there will be a chapter containing my interpretation of the evidence. As mentioned earlier, my intention is to investigate whether Origen projects a charismatic ideology within his *Commentary on the Gospel of John*.

Incidentally, I hope that this examination may also provide some possible intention of Origen's goals toward the structure of the Church. For example, did he believe all who held a leadership position within the church should have charismatic authority or should those who have it stand alongside those who lead but do so in more of a traditional manner?

## Chapter 4

### Origen's *Commentary on the Gospel of John*: Book 1

In the first book of Origen's *Commentary on the Gospel of John*<sup>32</sup> (*Comm. Jn*), Origen alludes to his charismatic ideology on many occasions. One characteristic which appears almost immediately is that God elects those to have charismatic authority. Incidentally, Origen projects this belief in his analogy of the 144,000 who are described as the ones "having his name and the name of his Father written on their foreheads" found in the Apocalypse of John (*Comm. Jn.* 1:3). According to Origen, the 144,000 represent a group who are elected by God to represent and participate in certain roles within the structure of Christianity; thus, at the same time also depicting different levels of spirituality. He explains:

Just as the people of old, who were called the people of God...which engaged in the service of the Divine, was divided into additional priestly and Levitical orders, so I think, all the people of Christ according to the hidden man of the heart, who bear the name Jew inwardly and who have been circumcised in spirit possess the characteristics of the tribes in a more mystical manner (*Comm.Jn.* 1:1).

As may be inferred from this quote, Origen understands the Christian structure of the church to be similar to the Jewish structure of priest, prophets, and members of tribes

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<sup>32</sup>Allan Menzies, *Ante-Nicene Fathers Vol. 9* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2004) Also consulted the translation by Joseph W. Trigg, *Origen* (London: Routledge, 2002) as well as Ronald E. Heine, *The Fathers of the Church Vol. 80* (Washington: The Catholic University of American Press, 1989).

found in the Old Testament. Thus, according to Origen, like the Jewish system, Christians appear to be elected by God to serve different purposes within the church.

However, while these 144,000 are said to be chosen or elected directly by God, it is their responsibility (144,000) to seek, maintain, and perhaps even advance within the system. For example, Origen writes- "...and no one could learn the song except the 144,000 who were purchased from the earth. These are those who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are those who follow the Lamb wherever he goes. These were purchased from men, the first fruits for God and for the Lamb, and no lie was found in their mouth, for they are blameless" (*Comm. Jn. 1:3*). In this verse, Origen points out that the 144,000 were the only ones elected by God to learn the song, but at the same time, these were the ones elected because they not only followed the Lamb of God but also were virgins. Thus, these elected sought, maintained, and appear to have advanced their position by being virgins.

Origen continues with his analogy by comparing the apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers within the church (*Comm. Jn. 1:18*). These positions all have a place and appear to be designed by God in order to serve the one body of the church. As may be recognized, most of these positions hold some type of authority within the church, and for Origen, many of these positions belong to those who have been given charismatic authority directly from God. For example, Origen writes- "For there are those who understand those men who have been truly instructed by Jesus to be greater than the other creatures, some being such, some think, by nature, others, according to others, also by the principle related to the more difficult struggle" (*Comm. Jn. 1:172*). Therefore, there are those who God conferred their charismatic authority in which they worked for as well as maintained it. Consequently, they should also be recognized by other individuals within the structure to have charismatic authority.

Intertwined within Origen's articulation of the requirements necessary for those who are recognized by others as having charismatic authority is the responsibility to mediate God's word to others. Origen appears to comply with this characteristic in two ways. One is in a parallel with Jesus. The other is in a parallel with the apostles, prophets, evangelists, and teachers. Thus, prime examples used by Origen are Jesus, the apostle Paul, and John the Baptist. He uses them to show how a Christian should, if elected, mediate God's word. As Origen explains:

But do not be surprised if Jesus announces the good things which happen to be nothing other than himself to those who are about to announce the good things, For the son of God announces the good things of himself to those who are able to learn of him without the aid of others. But he who treads upon the mountains and announces the good things to them does not despise the poor in soul since he was instructed by the good Father who makes 'the sun' rise 'on the bad and good' and rains 'on the just and unjust' (*Comm. Jn. 1:65*).

Here, Origen explains that Jesus taught about himself; and therefore, those elected by God that hold one of the above positions should in turn also teach God's Word. But, how would one know who was truly capable and spoke the truth? According to this passage, it would be those who do not despise those 'poor in the soul'. This appears to be the ones who do not maintain as high a spiritual level as those who are like the apostle, prophets, evangelists, and teachers. Another example is with passage 75- "But if there are among men those who are honored with the ministry of evangelists, and Jesus himself preaches the good news and preaches the gospel to the poor..." (*Comm. Jn. 1:75*). Thus, according to Origen, when one possesses charismatic authority, one should also take the responsibility to mediate God's word.

Incidentally, Origen also appears to support the qualification that individuals hold charismatic authority alone. However, they use it through the one body of the church.<sup>33</sup>

As Origen writes:

Now we understand the moon and stars to be analogous to the bride, the Church, and the disciples, who have their own light or a light acquired from the true sun to illuminate those who have not been able to provide a source of light in themselves. For example, we will say that Paul and Peter were a 'light of the world,' but the world of which the apostles were a light was the general run of those instructed by them, who, while they were illuminated, on the one hand, could certainly not illuminate others (*Comm. Jn.* 1:163).

By examining this passage, it appears that Origen believes certain individuals hold the charismatic authority by themselves (the disciples, who have their own light); and therefore, they are expected to help others who may not be capable of acquiring their own light. Also, Origen uses parallels to demonstrate this as well. For example, in passage 18, Origen writes- "Furthermore, if God placed apostles, prophets, and evangelists, and pastors and teachers, in the Church..." (*Comm. Jn.* 1:18). Here, Origen is describing that God places individuals in certain roles within the church. The use of these examples appear to imply that charismatic authority is held by individuals, and then the individuals working through the church make the one body.

Therefore, while Origen is organizing and examining the beginning of the Gospel of John, he does appear to project a charismatic ideology through Book 1. He articulates the concept that God elects those he/she wishes to have charismatic authority. However,

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<sup>33</sup>There will be more details on the one body of the church in Book 10, where Origen appears to focus on all Christians being all one body through the church.



while those with charismatic authority are personally selected, they are personally responsible to seek as well as maintain it. Once these two criteria are met, then the charismatic authority should be recognized by others so that he/she can then be mediators of God's Word. Lastly, Origen appears to believe the charismatic authority is only given to individuals. This is why, according to Origen, there are different positions within the church, which in turn acts as one body which is the church.

## Chapter 5

### Origen's *Commentary on the Gospel of John*: Book 2

Moving on to Book 2 of Origen's *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, Origen continues to articulate the same characteristics for reflecting his charismatic ideology. Following a similar pattern as in Book 1, Origen describes that charismatic authority is an elected position given directly from God. Thus, in Origen's opinion since this position is elected directly from God, then it should be recognized as an official position within the church. However, they hold different individual positions than the more traditional ecclesiastical hierarchy associated with the orthodox church. These two characteristics, God elects those with charismatic authority and only individuals can be given this authority, can be realized from his parallels of the apostle Paul and John the Baptist- "For God announced his gospel before through the prophets. The prophets were his servants, and had an understanding of the 'through whom.' And again, God gave Paul and the others 'grace and apostleship for the obedience of faith in all nations,' and he gave it through Christ Jesus, the Savior, who had the 'through whom'" (*Comm. Jn. 2:71*). Here, Origen explains that the prophets, a category which John the Baptist fits into as well as the apostle Paul, received their 'grace' (charismatic authority) directly from God. Also, both of these figures depict individual roles, but both work toward one goal within Christianity,<sup>34</sup> which is mediating God's word within the one body of the church.

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<sup>34</sup>Within the commentary, Origen depicts the concept that all within Christianity are participating in the one body of the church. This is especially apparent in Book 10.

Another example comes with an explanation of John the Baptist: “John was born as a ‘gift’ from God indeed, from the ‘memory’ concerning God related to the ‘oath’ of our God concerning the Fathers, to prepare ‘for the Lord a prepared people,’ to bring about the completion of the old covenant which is the end of the Sabbath observance” (*Comm. Jn. 2:198*). Thus, John was specifically elected by God in order to prepare the way for Jesus Christ, and in the process he represents an individual who has a specific job, but is still working toward one goal within Christianity. Incidentally, the church did not elect him to perform the task, God did.

As in Book 1, Origen continues to use parallels with figures like the prophets, apostles, evangelists, and teachers as examples of charismatic authority that aid in mediating God’s word. Even so, according to Origen, it is still God’s decision to intervene and then to place those within particular leadership positions of the Christian church. As demonstrated with the examples of Paul and John the Baptist above, God selected them to have charismatic authority, which in turn places them in specific positions that mediate God’s word within the system. Since Paul and John the Baptist are also recognized by others as having charismatic authority, Origen can use them as examples for his theological understanding.

As briefly mentioned above, Origen continues to use these figures as examples throughout his commentary, and while doing so he defends their type of individual position within Christianity. For example, “...there are many grounds capable of producing faith. Sometimes some are not struck by one proof, but by another. Therefore, God has numerous inducements to present to men that they might accept that the God who is over all created things has become incarnate” (*Comm. Jn. 2:202*). In the next few passages, he explains how important the prophets are to Christianity, not only because they predict the coming of Christ, but also because they demonstrate that God elects individuals in order to perform specific tasks within the church. As he writes: “...He,

therefore, who maintains that there is no need for the prophetic witness to Christ wishes to deprive the choir of prophets of their greatest gift. For what would prophecy, which is inspired by the Holy Spirit, have that is so great, if one exclude from it those matters related to the dispensation of our Lord” (*Comm. Jn. 2:208*). This passage may allude to his desire to depict that an intellectual independent position exists within the church by God’s election. This position which contains all the characteristic of charismatic authority, comes directly through God, not from human mediation. If God elected the prophets, apostles, and then others who hold positions of charismatic authority, then in Origen’s line of thinking, no one may truly take it away.

While God is believed to elect those with charismatic authority, those elected are not only responsible for working to receive it, they in turn are responsible for maintaining it as well as teaching others God’s message. As Origen explains: “...just as many of the genuine disciples of Christ were honored to be witnesses of Christ, so the prophets who have apprehended him have received the gift of God to announce Christ in advance, teaching not only those after the sojourn of Christ what they must think about the Son of God...”(*Comm. Jn. 2:207*). Here, Origen equates Christian disciples as being similar to the prophets. They both have received charismatic authority and in turn teach others God’s message. Even so, Origen provides some criteria for determining who is considered to really possess this authority. In another passage, for example, Origen explains:

...Every man, however, is not called a [man] of God, but only the one who is devoted to God (as Elias and the men of God recorded in the Scriptures). In the same way, every man can, in the more general sense, have been sent from God but, properly speaking, only the one who appears in life for the

divine ministry and service of salvation of the human race can be said to have been sent by God (*Comm. Jn. 2:183*).

In this passage, Origen appears to insinuate that there are levels of spirituality within Christianity. Within these levels, however, any man may receive charismatic authority, but in turn he/she has to demonstrate his/her devotion to God. As he explained, charismatic authority is recognized by appearing 'in life for the divine ministry and service of salvation' for mankind. Therefore, one that receives this authority must act in such a way as to receive it and then in order to keep it, one has to serve within 'divine ministry' and help others.

Interestingly, in this book, Origen appears to stress how those with charismatic authority have more of an intellectual capacity for properly interpreting God's word. For example, in passage 168, Origen defends his interpretation on John's scripture: "Now if someone thinks we have added what has not been written....But John wrote the words, 'The darkness did not overcome it,' for those who have the intellectual capacity to understand the things that are commonly passed over subsequent to what has been written..."(*Comm. Jn. 2:168*). In this passage, Origen appears to defend his allegorical approach to interpret scripture. Consequently, he implies that his ability to interpret scripture comes directly from God because God elects individuals to have the intellectual charismatic authority to do so. As Origen explains: "It is instead the life which is added to the Word which is completed in us when a share from the first Word is received....Once this life exists in us, it also becomes the foundation of the light of knowledge" (*Comm. Jn. 2:156*). This passage helps to depict the process toward receiving a charisma that allows one in to have the knowledge necessary to interpret scripture in order to teach the Word. And again in passage 161, Origen appears to compare those who have charismatic authority to those without it: "For to walk in darkness indicates blameworthy action; and to hate one's own brother is to fall away

from that which is properly called knowledge. But also because he who is ignorant of divine matters, by that very ignorance, walks in darkness...(Comm. Jn. 2:161). Here, he equates those who are ignorant with darkness and if one has darkness, then he/she will fall away from knowledge. Thus, depicting knowledge or intellect as a desired goal.

Consequently, while Origen continued his examination into the Gospel of John, he appears to also continue articulating his charismatic ideology in Book 2. God directly appoints those to have charismatic authority. Those who received it were able to maintain the position by mediating God's Word. Included in the process of receiving the authority, Origen appears to believe that they have more of a natural capacity for properly interpreting God's word. Thus, it is their job to mediate God's words to others. Also, as Origen projects with his use of parallels of the prophet John the Baptist and the apostle Paul, those with charismatic authority not only recognize their authority, but also are recognized by others to have it. While they are recognized by others to have it, they also have individual positions, but are still participating in the one body of the church.

## Chapter 6

### Origen's *Commentary on the Gospel of John*: Book 6

Book 6 of Origen's commentary also continues to reflect his charismatic ideology in all the same categories as found in Books 1 and 2. However, in the beginning, his tone and focus shifts and appears to stress that those elected are done so directly by God to serve as types of mediators. As mediators, they may actually serve Christianity in slightly individual ways, but still act as one through the one body of the church. According to Origen, the individual roles working together are absolutely necessary in order for the one body of the church to be a solid unit without fractions. For example, in passage 1, Origen provides a metaphor:

Every House, in order to be built as solidly as possible, is built in fair and calm weather that nothing may prevent it from being bodily constructed. The purpose is to make it capable of withstanding the rush of flood, the onslaught of river, and all the other things which are apt to test the weak parts of buildings when a storm occurs, and show those which have been constructed with the excellence proper to them (*Comm. Jn. 6:1*).

Here, Origen appears to equate the house with the church, and the structure should be built without any difficulties between those responsible for the structure. By doing so, then the church will be able to withstand complications from outside sources. However, if those within are in conflict, then the church will be weak and subject to fall.

Following Paul, Origen appears to imply that the one body of the church must be formed without any disagreement between the individuals who are working within. If there is turmoil among those working within, then the one body of the church is not possible, since the individuals are at odds with one another. As Origen states: "...Such a structure is certainly built when the soul is experiencing the peace which passes all understanding, and is calm, and separated from all trouble, and is by no means tossed by waves. At such a time God correctly cooperates in building with the one who has proposed to complete this most excellent work" (*Comm. Jn.* 6:2). In this example, Origen's articulation of his charismatic ideology comes when he explains that God elects those individuals, who have sought and maintained their charismatic authority by working to complete God's work. Thus, the charismatic individuals who help to maintain a calm environment, receive God's cooperation in building a strong structure, which is the Christian church.

Hence, those who have received charismatic authority are expected to use their abilities for mediating God's word. Incidentally, one method of mediating God's word for Origen is with the 'proper' interpretation of scripture. As he states, "Although the storm at Alexandria seemed to oppose us we dictated the words which were given us as far as the fifth book, since Jesus rebuked the winds and the waves of the sea. But after we had proceeded for a while in the sixth book we were rescued from the land of Egypt, when the God who led the people from Egypt delivered us" (*Comm. Jn.* 6:8). Here, Origen appears to apply the story of God's deliverance of the Jews from Egypt as a metaphor for his own situation between him and the Bishop of Alexandria Demetrius, which resulted in Origen's relocation to Caesarea.

While Origen appears to desire to have others like Demetrius recognize his authority, Origen's reason for the departure may be due to his interpretation of scripture, which so far in his *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, regularly appears to articulate



Origen's charismatic ideology. As Origen explains above, 'we dictated the words,' referring to his interpretation of scripture, which according to him, the authority comes from God. The 'storm at Alexandria' (Bishop Demetrius) did not seem to agree with Origen's method and/or theology; thus, resulting in his relocation to Caesarea. Even so, Origen believes his charismatic authority has been given to him directly from God; therefore, no one has the power to take it away. And, since God elects those to have the authority, Origen places his present situation as well as the eventual outcome into the hands of God. For example, in passage 11, Origen prays:

May God give ear to our prayer, that the body of the whole discourse can be united, and that misfortune, which can cause a break of any kind in the sequence of the Scripture, no longer interrupt. And be aware that I make this second beginning of the sixth book very eagerly because what we dictated previously in Alexandria, for some reason or other, has not been brought (*Comm. Jn. 6:11*).

In this passage, Origen alludes to his charismatic ideology by praying that God, who elected him as an individual to interpret scripture, will allow him to continue and help others through his interpretation of the Gospel of John even though he has not been recognized by Demetrius to do so. Thus, Origen recognizes his charismatic authority, but has not yet convince all within the church.

Frequently, as in Book 1 and 2, Origen relies on parallels with the prophets and apostle for depicting his charismatic ideology. One depiction is with individuals found within Christianity, like the prophets or apostles, who hold different levels of spirituality within the one body of the church. According to Origen, these levels allow for different methods and perspectives to be used, but ending in the same realization of God's Word. Because of this, different levels of understanding exist. For example, Origen writes:

This much was revealed to the prophets. But the things which will be have not been revealed in the same manner to those who understand but do not see what is prophesied accomplished, as to those who see their fulfillment with their own eyes. This happened in the case of the apostles. For in their way, in my opinion, they understood the events no more than the fathers and the prophets. It is true of them, however, that ‘what in other generations was not revealed as it has now been revealed to the apostles and prophets, that the gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and participants in the promise in Christ,’ insofar as the apostles understand the mysteries and perceive the self-evident truth through the completed event (*Comm. Jn. 6:28*).

Here, Origen is comparing examples of the prophets and apostle who appear to show characteristics of charismatic authority. First, in this passage, prophets and apostles represent an elected position by God because they are the ones in which God reveals the information. The prophets who existed before the coming of Christ still had the capability of understanding, due to God. Thus, Origen appears to depict the prophets and apostles as having charismatic authority, where their job is to mediate God’s word with the authority provided. Incidentally, many within Christianity respect the prophets and apostle; thus, in turn they may respect current prophets or apostle charismatic figures, like Origen for example. When individuals within Christianity, like Demetrius perhaps, recognize those with charismatic authority, then there will be peace within the one body of the church.

Another example Origen uses for individuals who are recognized by others as having charismatic authority is with John the Baptist. In fact, Origen’s depiction of him

appears to dominant the second half of Book 6. Often times John is described as also having the charismatic authority for mediating God's word. For example, "Just as he who is the Son of God strictly speaking uses a word when he is none other than the Word (for he himself was the Word in the beginning, the Word with God, the Word which was God), so John, the servant of that Word, uses his voice to point to the Word when he is none other than the voice if we understand Scripture in the proper sense" (*Comm. Jn.* 6:94). Hence, similar to Jesus, John the Baptist is selected individually by God in order to perform a specific task within Christianity. Therefore, he appears to hold an charismatic type of position within the one body of the church.

Thus, as in Book 1 and 2, Origen continues to articulate his charismatic ideology throughout Book 6. Charismatic authority is described as being an elected position given to individuals directly from God. Those who have received it, sought and worked to maintain it, either through teaching, prophesizing, or interpreting scripture. While it is important for one to recognize for himself that he has charismatic authority, it remains important for other individuals within Christianity to recognize it as well. If not, then Origen probably would not spend so much time arguing how individual positions exist and function within the one body of the church.

## Chapter 7

### Origen's *Commentary on the Gospel of John*: Book 10

Book 10 of Origen's *Commentary* continues to reflect his charismatic ideology as seen in the previous books. First, charismatic authority is an elected position given directly from God. This position has been sought and maintained by the elected individuals. While God elects those individuals with charismatic authority in order for them to mediate God's message, they should be recognized by other individuals as having charismatic authority. Incidentally, only individuals may have charismatic authority, but since it exists within the one body of the church, it remains all one entity.

However, while Origen continues to articulate all of these characteristics, his focus appears to shift somewhat with more of a depiction on how individuality works within the one body of the church. For example, he states: "Both, however, (I mean the temple and Jesus' body) according to one interpretation, appear to me to be a type of the Church, in that the Church, being called a 'temple,' is built of living stones, becoming a spiritual house 'for a holy priesthood,' built 'upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus being the chief corner stone'" (*Comm. Jn.* 10:228). Here, Origen uses his allegorical method for depicting how the church becomes the 'new' temple. It is not just a material building, but a living breathing entity, built of 'living stone' meaning Christians. The church is to be a 'spiritual house' where those elected by God to have charismatic authority, should continue to seek and maintain God's word through the one body of the church.

As may also be inferred from this passage, Origen implies that Jesus, prophets, and the apostles held positions similar to those who have charismatic authority during Origen's time. According to him, they are the 'foundation,' thus allowing the current elected (holy priesthood) with authority to continue building the spiritual house (church). Incidentally, he appears to present himself and those like him to be a part of this one body. For example, he wrote a commentary on the Gospel of John, and he does appear to have an intellectual ability to study and interpret scripture allegorically. By doing so, he and others can better mediate God's word for others to understand and become members of the church. As he explains: "If the body of Jesus is said to be his temple, it is worth asking whether we must take this in a singular manner, or must endeavor to refer to each of the things recorded about the temple analogically to the saying about the body of Jesus, whether it be the body which he received from the Virgin, or the Church, which is said to be his body, since we too are called members of his body by the apostle" (*Comm. Jn.* 10:263). Thus, it is up to him and others like him, who have charismatic authority to use the allegorical method for understanding and mediating God's word.

Origen's allegorical method appears key to his understanding and defense against the discrepancies found within scripture. According to Origen, it serves to keep all one within the one body of the church. As Origen explains:

For the teaching concerning them, being different than themselves, can, since it is stored up in the mysteries of Scripture, be named figuratively 'feet' of the lamb. We must also not abstain from the entrails and the inner and hidden parts. We must, however, approach all the Scripture as one body, and not break or cut through the most vigorous and firm bonds in the harmony of its total composition.

This is what they have done who have, so far as it is in their power, broken the unity of the Spirit in all the Scripture (*Comm. Jn. 10:107*).

Here, Origen argues for scripture to be kept and read as one whole spiritual entity. In order to accomplish this task, one must look at the ‘mysteries of Scripture’ (allegorical) so that one may examine it as ‘one body.’ If one gets caught up in the literal meaning and/or gets caught up in the contradictions, then one may fail to realize the power is with the ‘harmony of its total composition.’ Therefore, while one who has charismatic authority may mediate God’s word through scripture, he/she has some requirements in the process. By properly interpreting scripture, one with charismatic authority will not only maintain his/her authority, but will also allow for others to recognize the authority.

Origen continues using scripture as an example for individuality and spiritual levels within the one body of the church. For example, in passage 15:

But to grasp some notion of the evangelists’ intention concerning such matters, we must also say the following. Assume that God, his words to the saints, and his presence, which is present with them when he reveals himself at special times in their progress, are set before certain people who see in the Spirit. Since there are several and they are in different places, and by no means all receive the same benefits, assume that each one individually reports what he sees in the Spirit about God, his words, and his manifestations to the saints... (*Comm. Jn. 10:15*).

In this passage, Origen articulates all of the same characteristics of his charismatic ideology. First, God elects ‘certain people’ to have charismatic authority because he ‘reveals himself at special times in their progress.’ Thus, individuals are selected at

particular times within their spiritual journey to mediate God's word. By mediating God's word, they maintain their position. Interestingly, Origen also appears to believe that those with charismatic authority may progress to different spiritual levels. This may be concluded when he states that God 'reveals himself at special times in their progress.' By progressing to different spiritual levels, it allows for individual perspectives of God's message; therefore, allowing for the differentiation found within scripture.

Consequently, it also allows for the differentiation between members found within the one body of the church. As Origen continues to explain with passage 15:

The result would be that one man would report about these things which were said and done by God to this just man at this place, and another would report about the things that were prophesied and accomplished for another, and another would want to teach us about a third man besides the two previously mentioned. And assume that there is also a fourth man who acts in a way that is analogous to the three concerning something. Now let these four men agree with one another concerning certain things suggested to them by the Spirit, and let them differ a little concerning other things, so that their accounts are like this: God appeared to so-and-so at this time in this place, and he has done these things to him as follows; he appeared to him in a form such as this, and led him to this place where he did these things (*Comm. Jn. 10:15*).

Therefore, one may see and interpret God's word from different perspectives, 'and let them differ a little concerning other things.' However, one still remains united through the one body of the church, 'let these four men agree with one another concerning certain things suggested to them by the Spirit.'

However, while individuality exists in one form or another, all are united through belief in Jesus, whose body Origen equates with the church. According to Origen, this concept is crucial for keeping Christianity in synchronization and/or balanced with its members and also within the world. As Origen states:

And then the many members will be one body, when all who are the many members of the body become one body. It is the prerogative of God alone, who will mix the body together, to make the distinction of foot and hand and eye and hearing and sense of smell of those who complete the head in the one case, and the feet in the other, and the rest of the members, the weaker and humbler, and the shameful and the honorable (*Comm. Jn. 10:237*).

Once again, Origen uses a Pauline metaphor for depicting how all are one within the church. As with a body, there are individual parts, but those parts all work for one body. In a similar way, members of the church may play different roles, but are all working within the same entity. All individuals within the church/body work separately, but also do not work outside of the church/body. Thus, if an arm/member is removed, then it would cease to work on its own. It also would cease to work for the whole entity, which may very well weaken the body. Therefore, making it very important for all the parts/members to remain whole.

Thus, along with Origen's charismatic ideology, which allows for individuality, is Origen's belief that all are still one through "the whole body of Jesus, his holy Church" (*Comm. Jn. 10:304*). As mentioned previously, Origen continues incorporating Jesus metaphorically within his understanding and explanation, "Just as the perceptible body of Jesus has been crucified, buried, and afterwards raised up, so the whole body of the saints of Christ have been crucified with Christ and now no longer live. For each of them, like



Paul, boasts in nothing else than ‘in the cross of our Lord Christ Jesus,’ through whom he has been crucified to the world and the world to him” ( 1 Peter 2:9; *Comm. Jn.* 10:230). And again, “We learn from Peter that the Church is a body and a house of God built from living stones, a spiritual house for a holy priesthood” (*Comm. Jn.* 10:266). All of these provide examples into how Origen’s charismatic ideology works within the whole framework of Christianity. As seen before, Origen uses Jesus, Paul, and Peter as examples of individuals with all of the characteristics required for those who were elected by God as charismatic authorities. They all sought and maintained God’s elected position by holding similar, but slightly different roles in mediating God’s word. And, while all three are recognized by others within Christianity as having this authority, they also all have maintained their own individuality within the one body of the Church.

In conclusion, Book 10 of Origen’s commentary continues to reflect his charismatic ideology, even though there are variations in his message. As mentioned above, in this book, Origen appears to focus more on how all within Christianity are one through the one body of the church. Again, he uses parallels, metaphors, and allegory as tools for his conclusions, but also while doing so, depicts his ideology. First, God elects those to have charismatic authority. Those who are elected sought and maintain their position. While they should recognize their authority, other individuals should also recognize it. When God provides charismatic authority, those elected should in turn mediate God’s word. Charismatic authority can only be held by individuals. These individuals are individuals, who may provide slightly different perspectives, as seen with scripture, but they are all one through the one body of the church.

## Chapter 8

### Interpretation of Books 1, 2, 6, and 10

Now that Books 1, 2, 6, and 10 have been analyzed and compared with the five characteristics used for measuring Origen's charismatic ideology, an interpretation of the findings can occur. As may already be realized, it does appear that Origen projected a charismatic ideology in some form or another while he was writing his *Commentary on the Gospel of John*. However, questions still arise, such as to what degree or level does his charismatic ideology exist within his overall perspective for religious leadership in Christianity? And also, can his interpretation on the Gospel of John depict his larger historical disagreement between him and the bishop Demetrius of Alexandria? In other words, since Origen wrote his *Commentary on the Gospel of John* during his conflict with Demetrius, then perhaps the conflict influenced Origen's interpretation of the gospel. Thus, this analysis may help provide some insight into Origen's and Demetrius' conflict. The analysis may or may not support the conclusion that Origen's charismatic ideology was a factor in his relocation to Caesarea.

Incidentally, as demonstrated in the previous four chapters, all five charismatic ideological characteristics are depicted throughout all four books. However, as may be expected, they are used contextually. For example, in Book 1, the first characteristic, in which charismatic authority must be given directly from God, appears to be stressed more than in the other books. Then, in Book 10, the last characteristic in which only individuals can receive and have charismatic authority but are still one whole collective unit in the church, appears to dominate the theme. Why is this? Once again, the questions arise, could there be a link to his interpretation on the Gospel of John with the

historical backdrop of Christianity during this time? Did Origen's argument with Demetrius regarding religious leadership influence Origen's interpretation on the Gospel of John, especially since he wrote part of it before his relocation to Caesarea and then the other part afterward? Thus, by investigating his commentary it may in turn reflect this influence, therefore providing an insight into the controversy. And again, did Origen and Demetrius disagree so intently on religious leadership that it lead to Origen's relocation from Alexandria to Caesarea?

The tension between bishop Demetrius and Origen appear to have reached a point of no return between the years of 230-34 C.E.<sup>35</sup> As mentioned earlier, this is the period where Origen was writing his *Commentary on the Gospel of John*. This was also during the time of Origen relocation from Alexandria to Caesarea. Consequently, it is believed that one of the disagreements between Origen and Demetrius was over religious leadership within the church.<sup>36</sup> Joseph Trigg, a Origen scholar, sums up the difference as- "Ultimately it was a conflict between organizer and an intellectual."<sup>37</sup> He explains that Demetrius held an hierarchal understanding toward religious authority contrary to Origen's charismatic understanding of religious authority.<sup>38</sup> Demetrius used his position as bishop for making claims and decisions within the church, in other words he was the source for the power and authority within the church of Alexandria.<sup>39</sup> Typically, he did not have to answer to anyone, except maybe other bishops, like Pontain of Rome.<sup>40</sup> He was interested in the "standardization of doctrine according to the rule of faith,"<sup>41</sup> versus Origen's seemingly free spirited (allegorical) orientation toward doctrine. In other

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<sup>35</sup>Joseph W. Trigg, *Origen: The Bible and Philosophy in the Third-Century Church* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1983), 130 Also see, Joseph W. Trigg, *Origen* (London: Routledge, 2002), 15–35.

<sup>36</sup>Trigg, *Origen: The Bible and Philosophy in the Third-Century Church*, 130–46 Trigg also mentions several other issues between them, but thinks that the controversy over religious leadership was crucial.

<sup>37</sup>Trigg, *Origen: The Bible and Philosophy in the Third-Century Church*, 130.

<sup>38</sup>Trigg, *Origen: The Bible and Philosophy in the Third-Century Church*, 140–41.

<sup>39</sup>Trigg, *Origen: The Bible and Philosophy in the Third-Century Church*, 140.

<sup>40</sup>Trigg, *Origen: The Bible and Philosophy in the Third-Century Church*, 138.

<sup>41</sup>Trigg, *Origen: The Bible and Philosophy in the Third-Century Church*, 132.

words, while Origen also wanted an institution based on rule of faith, he also desired for “the intellectual and spiritual”<sup>42</sup> to remain within the church. Therefore, standardization of scripture would be to claustrophobic and perhaps too soon for Origen at this particular time within Christian history. For Origen, too many questions remain within doctrine for standardization to occur within Christianity.

Thus, Origen may very well have believed that those with charismatic authority should remain within the larger framework of the church. If they remain, then work could continue toward a better more clarified understanding of God’s word. For Demetrius, however, this concept may have appeared very dangerous to either the stability of the church and/or his position within. Incidentally, Trigg chooses to sum it up as a disagreement between an organizer and an intellectual, placing Origen in the intellectual category and Demetrius in the organizing category. Interpreting this statement probably depends on how one understands and defines the terms ‘intellectual’ and ‘organizer’. At first glance, it may appear that Origen sits on top an intellectual plateau, high above the leaders of the church during his time. However, I do not think this was the case. Demetrius could not have been stuck in some cave with no intellectual ability whatsoever. I have no doubt that he also was very intellectual, but basically disagreed with someone like Origen, especially on the matter of standardization. Incidentally, I agree with Trigg’s category of ‘organizer’ for Demetrius. This is because his role and function within history as the Bishop of Alexandria helped form and organize the church in the traditional sense. He worked for standardization, which helped organize

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<sup>42</sup>Trigg, *Origen: The Bible and Philosophy in the Third-Century Church*, 131 I believe these two terms ‘intellectual and spiritual’ are used to reflect Origen’s charismatic ideology versus a more traditional ideology. Intellectual as I understand the term used here reflects Origen’s continual desire to seek and study doctrine for better understanding God’s word. Spiritual as I understand the term used here reflects Origen’s seemingly free thinker. I say seemingly, because Origen still appears to have qualifications for charismatic authority. Even so, the term spiritual for Origen may be a term to describe someone who does not require as much structure and physical objects. Perhaps someone who may be capable of letting go, as they say. For example, someone who may be able to sky dive without too much thought or worry about lost of life. Or perhaps someone who does not necessarily need to actually touch or feel something in order to believe. For example, someone who can believe that there is a Santa Clause without actually seeing him.

and bring stability within the structure of the church. Standardization, however, may have been too rigid for Origen, who seems to believe that the church was not yet ready for such structure.

Be that as it may, it appears that the two Christians disagreed. Demetrius actions display a leader who may have very well felt that Origen's charismatic ideology was just too vague, in which allowed for too much subjectivity within the system. In turn, Origen's actions and his writings depict an individual who believed in the church, but desired a continuing investigation into God's word, and in particular for Origen, an investigation into scripture. Consequently, a person who is capable of performing this task, in Origen's opinion, is one who has charismatic authority. This authority is not without qualification, in fact, it appears to be an intellectual process, where one must meet the five specific characteristics which have already been examined in the previous chapters of this thesis.<sup>43</sup>

As mentioned above, these five characteristics necessary for Origen's charismatic ideology appear in all four books examined. However, varies characteristics appear to be stressed over another on certain occasions. While variation is expected due to content of the gospel of which he was writing his commentary. The question still remains as to whether or not his controversy with Demetrius affected his interpretation on the Gospel of John? Consequently, I am choosing to examine how Origen uses his characteristics for charismatic authority within the four books of his commentary. By measuring how he persistently uses these characteristics along with his relocation to Caesarea, then perhaps one of the elements regarding their controversy may be relevant in their feud.

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<sup>43</sup>This may be why Trigg used the term 'intellectual' for Origen in his analysis of the controversy between Origen and Demetrius. However, instead of just the term intellectual, I see it as more of an intellectual process. This is because it appears that Origen believes in seeking God's message through scripture rather than simple just having faith.

As mentioned above and may be inferred in chapter four, in Book 1, Origen appears to stress the first characteristic that God confers those who have charismatic authority over the other four. Being chosen directly by God gives those with charismatic authority, authority over all in terms of their gift, even the bishop. Therefore, they answer to no one and technically no one can change this factor. Consequently, while this characteristic appears more definite in Book 1, it still remains an important element within all of the books. Therefore, Origen may very well have desired those against his charismatic ideology (Demetrius, for example) to know that in his line of thinking, no one, except God, could really control anyone who held charismatic authority. Because of this, one with charismatic authority may seem out of the ordinary at times, but they should be allowed a free rein since they are direct mediators of God's word.

Book 2 continues with Origen stressing the first characteristic necessary for charismatic authority. As mentioned above, this characteristic remains a strong element throughout all four books. Be that as it may, a part of characteristic number five appears to become strong within his interpretation of this book. Number five's criterion is that charismatic authority may only be held by individuals, which in turn may be considered one through the one body of the church. However, while the second part of this characteristic appears within Origen's explanations, the first part seems applied more than others, and many times it is intertwined within the first characteristic. He accomplishes this by using parallels with the apostle Paul and John the Baptist for examples of those who have charismatic authority. For example, Origen writes about John the Baptist "John was born as a 'gift' from God indeed, from the 'memory' concerning God related to the 'oath' of our God concerning the Fathers, to prepare 'for the Lord a prepared people,' to bring about the completion of the old covenant which is the end of the Sabbath observance (*Comm. Jn. 2:198*). Here, John is individually elected by God to perform a specific task in preparations for Christianity. Thus, he represents an

individual with a specific function and role, who works within the system and helps build a collective society. And, since John the Baptist and the apostle Paul are respected individuals within Christianity during this time period, Origen can use them as examples in order to help defend his position that individual ideas and roles may still exist within the one body of the church.

Incidentally, Book 6 also stresses the importance of individual roles within the structure of the church. However, he brings in the characteristic that those elected directly by God to have charismatic authority are expected to serve as mediators of God's word. While these mediators may have individual roles within the church, they can be placed into one entity since, in Origen's opinion, all Christians are considered one through the church. Also, as seen before, Origen uses parallels of the prophets and apostles for depicting his ideology. Consequently, John the Baptist is used and appears as a dominant figure throughout the second half of the book. As mentioned in the analysis of Book 6 of chapter 6 in this thesis, John is an individual Christian figure who is elected by God with the distinct purpose to mediate God's word. As Origen explains, "Just as he who is the Son of God strictly speaking uses a word when he is none other than the Word (for he himself was the Word in the beginning, the Word with God, the Word which was God) so John, the servant of that Word, uses his voice to point to the Word when he is none other than the voice if we understand Scripture in the proper sense" (*Comm. Jn.* 6:94). Here, Origen depicts John as being similar to Jesus in the sense that John is an individual who was elected to serve as a mediator of God's word. However, while John is depicted as being similar to Jesus, he is still an individual and worked individually in order to further the cause of Christianity. Consequently, in the prologue of Book 6, Origen also appears to stress characteristic number three, in which an individual with charismatic authority not only needs to recognize this ability for his/herself, but also by other individuals within the church. This factor may have

something to do with his relocation to Caesarea, especially since he was defending himself against Demetrius. Also, now more than ever Origen may have felt that he needed to establish his authority in his new location as well as defend it in Alexandria.

In book 10, Origen focuses on demonstrating how individuality works within the one body of the church. This can be noticed with the example, “Both, however, (I mean the temple and Jesus’ body) according to one interpretation, appear to me to be a type of the Church, in that the Church, being called a ‘temple,’ is built of living stones, becoming a spiritual house ‘for a holy priesthood,’ built ‘upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus being the chief corner stone” (*Comm. Jn.* 10:228). As mentioned in the analysis of this book, Origen uses an allegorical method for depicting his vision and understanding of how Christian members fit into the church as one entity. All are one through their communal belief in Jesus. However, while all are one, Origen proposes the idea that all have individual roles to play for the process of building and strengthening the Church. Incidentally, those who have charismatic authority are a part of the process. In this example, Origen once again uses individuals like Jesus, apostles, and prophets as having charismatic authority; therefore, those with it currently also work individually, but through the belief and actions of Jesus all Christians are still one entity. And, as mentioned in chapter seven, Origen appears to imply that he and others like him, who study and interpret scripture allegorically, have been given charismatic authority directly from God; and therefore, fulfill the requirement to mediate God’s word. This role is done on an individual basis and may not fall into the standard more traditional leadership roles within the church during Origen’s time. Hence, a possible reason for Origen to defend his position on charismatic ideology.

Consequently, in examining these four books for a charismatic ideology against the historical backdrop of Origen’s and Bishop Demetrius’ controversy in mind, it does seem to hold some possible coincidences, which may reflect their differences over the



structure of the church. First, Origen appears very persistent in articulating his ideology, especially the first characteristic, where God elects those to have charismatic authority. As mentioned above, this characteristic appears fairly consistent throughout all four books. Even so, it is stressed in Book 1 above all the rest. Then in Book 2, the first part of the fifth characteristic, in which this authority may only be held individually, appears as the dominant projected element. Book 6 appears to stress individual roles along with the fourth characteristic, in which those with charismatic authority are responsible for mediating God's word becomes the major focus. However, in the beginning of Book 6, the third characteristic in which others within the church need to recognize an individual who holds charismatic authority, carries a sense of urgency. Then, in Book 10, Origen appears to stress how individuality, in which he seems to categorize those with charismatic authority into, can exist and function within the one body of the church.

Thus, while Origen does appear to articulate a charismatic ideology through his *Commentary on the Gospel of John* the question remains as to whether or not his controversy with Bishop Demetrius was an influence in his interpretation? Consequently, there does appear to be some type of correlation between the commentary and the controversy between the two Christians. In Book 1, for example, Origen appears to stress the fact that God elects those to have charismatic authority. This gives those who hold this authority over all others. Therefore, someone who has this authority may seem or be hard to control. As Trigg mentions, this factor may have seemed very threatening to someone like Demetrius, who wanted to control or oversee what members did within his church.<sup>44</sup>

Then, in Book 2, Origen stresses that this authority may only be held by individuals. Thus, someone who has this authority may perform or be performing a

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<sup>44</sup>Joseph W. Trigg, "The Charismatic Intellectual: Origen's Understanding of Religious Leadership," *Church History* 50, no. 1 (March 1981): 5–19 Also see Trigg, *Origen: The Bible and Philosophy in the Third-Century Church*, 138–46.

completely different role within the church. For example, Origen was a teacher, who used an allegorical method in his interpretation of scripture. This type of role and method was not necessarily used by all within the church, thus placing Origen into the category of an individual. Even so, since he was elected directly by God to do so, then it should be acceptable within the church. As mentioned above, Origen used parallels of Christian figures like John the Baptist, to depict how individual roles may apply to a communal atmosphere such as the Christian church. However, individuality may have seemed a threatening concept to the current leaders, like Demetrius, of Christianity during Origen's time.

Even so, leaders of Origen's time often struggled with the difficult concept of faith and intellect for many prospect members as well as members within Christianity. This could be especially true when someone from the Greco-Roman culture would question Christian beliefs and the conflicting accounts found in scripture. Thus, someone was needed who could connect both concepts and defend Christian beliefs in the larger Greco-Roman world. Trigg explains that the church and its leaders, Demetrius included, needed Origen for his ability to attract the Greco-Roman intellectual world, which Origen tended to do with his allegorical method.<sup>45</sup> However, church leaders, especially Demetrius, wanted to have control over the interpretation in order to move toward standardization.<sup>46</sup> But, Origen did not think that this was possible at this particular time because in his opinion more examination of scripture was necessary before standardization could occur. Consequently, Demetrius may have felt threatened and accused Origen of being too much of an individual in his role within the Christian church. Thus, while interpreting Book 2, Origen may be reflecting this disagreement by stressing how individual roles may exist within the one body of the church.

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<sup>45</sup>Trigg, "The Charismatic Intellectual: Origen's Understanding of Religious Leadership" Especially see, Trigg, *Origen: The Bible and Philosophy in the Third-Century Church*, 138–46.

<sup>46</sup>Trigg, *Origen: The Bible and Philosophy in the Third-Century Church*, 132.

As mentioned earlier, Books 1 and 2 were written before Origen's relocation to Caesarea and during Origen's controversy with Demetrius. In 232, Demetrius wrote a letter to the Bishop Pontian of Rome, complaining of the bishops of Palestine appointing Origen as a member of their congregation.<sup>47</sup> Demetrius claimed that Origen was a eunuch and therefore, this action was against the standard ecclesiastical method. Also, he claimed that Origen was a heretic, in which he mentioned some of Origen's friendships with Gnostics and pagan philosophers.<sup>48</sup> Consequently, Origen successfully defends himself, but in the end it leads to his relocation to Caesarea in 234.<sup>49</sup>

After Origen's relocation, he writes Book 6 of his *Commentary on the Gospel of John*. In the prologue of this book, Origen appears to explicitly confront his feud with Demetrius which ended in his relocation to Caesarea. One of his famous comparisons is when he explains that his relocation is similar to that of God's deliverance of the Jews from Egypt, "Although the storm at Alexandria seemed to oppose us we dictated the words which were given as far as the fifth book, since Jesus rebuked the winds and the waves of the sea. But after we had proceeded for a while in the sixth book we were rescued from the land of Egypt, when the God who led the people from Egypt to delivered us" (*Comm.Jn.* 6:8). Hence, Origen depicts the situation between him and Demetrius as a 'storm' which 'seemed to oppose us;' however, Origen claims to have 'dictated the words which were given' up to the fifth book. Thus, Origen's interpretation of the Gospel of John, which he feels is dictated to him by God, appears to have been a part of his controversy with Demetrius. And as seen so far in this thesis, Origen continually depicts his charismatic ideology within his commentary. Consequently, it appears that Demetrius was opposed to Origen's dictation of scripture, which depicts this ideology; therefore, presenting one possible reason for Origen's relocation to Caesarea.

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<sup>47</sup>Trigg, *Origen: The Bible and Philosophy in the Third-Century Church*, 138.

<sup>48</sup>Trigg, *Origen: The Bible and Philosophy in the Third-Century Church*, 138.

<sup>49</sup>Trigg, *Origen: The Bible and Philosophy in the Third-Century Church*, 139.

Incidentally, in Book 6, Origen also stresses the fourth characteristic necessary for those with charismatic authority, which is the responsibility to mediate God's word. As mentioned above, Origen explains that he dictates the words which were given to him, even though there are those who oppose it. This is because Origen appears to believe that he has charismatic authority and therefore they should continue to mediate God's word:

May God give ear to our prayer, that the body of the whole discourse can be united, and that misfortune, which can cause a break of any kind in the sequence of the Scripture, no longer interrupt. And be aware that I make this second beginning of the sixth book very eagerly because what we dictated previously in Alexandria, for some reason or other, has not been brought (*Comm. Jn.* 6:11).

As explained in the chapter which analyzed Book 6, here Origen prays to God, who elected him to have charismatic authority, to help him continue interpreting scripture, even though he has been interrupted due to the controversy in Alexandria. In an interesting observation in Book 6, Origen's tone and focus seems almost desperate for the recognition of others within Christianity. This may very well be due his disagreement with Demetrius. First, he had to defend his theology against Bishop Demetrius and others within the church of Alexandria. His almost seemingly continual defense in Alexandria came to a climax when he ultimately had to explain himself to the Bishop of Rome so as to avoid excommunication from the church. Then, after relocating to Caesarea, he seems to feel as though he should defend his controversy with Demetrius to the members of the church. He may also most likely have felt somewhat defensive in presenting himself to a new Christian congregation.

Hence, Book 6 appears to reflect Origen's controversy with Demetrius more so than the others. This is especially true for the prologue where he is defensive in his

actions in interpreting scripture. According to him, he has been elected by God in order to mediate God's word through scripture. While doing so, his allegorical method may place him into an individual category different than a bishop, but still one through the church because he is working for the Christian community as one whole unit. He, Origen, recognizes his authority to do so, but is struggling to get others, Demetrius, within the church to also recognize it. Be that as it may, he explains that he will continue to interpret scripture as God dictates it to him because in his opinion God, who is above all others in authority, has elected him to do so.

In Book 10, Origen still articulates his charismatic ideology, but does not appear as defensive in his explanations. Be that as it may, he does appear to focus on depicting how individuality works within the one body of the church. All Christians are one through their communal belief in Jesus Christ even though they may appear to have individual roles within the church. This idea should be in mind when reading the discrepancies between scripture because differences are present. Even so, the differences are not meant to break members apart, but to bring different interpretation together. Thus, scripture and members mimic each other because just as scripture has slight differences so too do Christians who may have different roles within the church. This is how all of the differences within Christianity can still come together and be one entity.

Incidentally, this idea of individuality still being communal within Christian society also mimics Origen in thought and action. Origen has a charismatic ideology in which appears in his interpretation of the Gospel of John. However, not all those within, Demetrius for example, appear to agree with his ideology. Therefore, even though Origen has a feud with Demetrius, he still does follow his belief that all Christians should continue to work toward being one through the church. Thus, he does relocate to Caesarea as his bishop wanted. His action depicts his respect for the authority of the current leaders of the church as well as his belief in the importance of keeping the church

together as one institution. However, he still maintains his belief that there is room for a slightly separate authority, one which may follow categories such as the charismatic authority characteristics, in which concentrates on mediating God's word.

In conclusion, the conflict between Origen and Bishop Demetrius does appear to be articulated within Origen's *Commentary of the Gospel of John*. As mentioned above, the prologue of Book 6 appears to depict the controversy explicitly, especially when Origen compares his situation as being like that of the Exodus. However, the other three books appear to depict the controversy in an implicit manner. For example, in all four Books, Origen articulates his charismatic ideology, but his focus appears to change. Incidentally, this change appears to possibly be influenced by his conflict with the Bishop Demetrius. Book 1, for example, stresses how God confers charismatic authority. Then, Book 2, stresses how those who have charismatic authority, which was given to them directly from God, can only have it on an individual bases. Hence, an individual has it directly from God, and then that individual works within the Christian system; thus, being one unit through that individuals actions. However, it does not work in the opposite direction. The church does not hold it as a communal element in which they (the leaders) dictate who has it and what is interpreted regarding scripture. As mentioned above, this may very well have made Origen's charismatic ideology seem dangerous to leaders of the church, such as Demetrius for example.

Thus, Book 1 and 2 appear to implicitly depict elements of conflict in Origen's and Bishop Demetrius' controversy. Incidentally, the two particular characteristics regarding charismatic ideology in which Origen stresses in Book 1 and 2 seem to coincide with Origen's role and position within the church of Alexandria. And, as mentioned above, this charismatic authoritative position would probably have been

threatening to leaders such as Bishop Demetrius.<sup>50</sup> Therefore, providing a reason for Origen to articulate and defend his charismatic ideology within his *Commentary on the Gospel of John*.

The beginning of Book 6, explicitly depicts Origen's controversy with Bishop Demetrius and appears to reflect Origen's frustration as well as need to be accepted from others within the community of the church in Alexandria as well as in his new location Caesarea. Consequently, he demonstrates that there have been those within Christianity's history, like John the Baptist for example, whom held individual roles and displayed charismatic type of behavior, but still worked for the one body of the church. Thus, they are still involved in the Christian society as one unit, because their individual role works for the whole community as one complete unit. Even so, the Bishop may very well have believed this to be dangerous since the one who held this position was under no human supervision; thus, allowing for too much freedom in the interpretation of scripture which could lead to too many factions within the church.

In Book 10, Origen still articulates his charismatic ideology, but focuses his attention onto how individuality works within the one unit of the church. Incidentally, while this particular book continues to reflect Origen's charismatic ideology, he does not appear to be as defensive in his writing. This may very well reflect that the feud between Bishop Demetrius and Origen had subsided and therefore while Origen continues to articulate his beliefs on charismatic authority, it is not reflected in the shadow of the controversy between him and Demetrius. Thus, the need to defend his role and position was perhaps not so critical during this time, but while the process of standardization was occurring, Origen was arguing against it, especially since he did not feel that interpretation of scripture was finished during his time.

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<sup>50</sup>Trigg, "The Charismatic Intellectual: Origen's Understanding of Religious Leadership" Also see Trigg, *Origen: The Bible and Philosophy in the Third-Century Church*, 138–46.

## Chapter 9

### Conclusion

This thesis has analyzed Books 1, 2, 6, and 10 of Origen's *Commentary on the Gospel of John* along with five characteristics Trigg has used for describing a charismatic ideology. The results show that his charismatic ideology was used consistently, thus allowing for the conclusion that Origen did articulate a charismatic ideology in his commentary. The next step was to examine the evidence against the historical backdrop of Bishop Demetrius' and Origen's controversy.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Origen wrote Books 1 and 2 while still located in Alexandria during his controversy with Bishop Demetrius. Then he wrote Book 6 and 10 after his relocation to Caesarea. As shown in previous chapters, Book 1 and 2 display all five of Origen's characteristics for charismatic authority. In Book 1, the first characteristic which God confers charismatic authority is stressed. Then, in Book 2, the fifth characteristic in which only individuals may receive and have this authority becomes the main focus. These two characteristics combined depict a possible reason for Demetrius to view Origen as a threat in his organizing process of the Alexandrian church. Origen, feeling this pressure of organization as well as standardization in regards to the interpretation of scripture, appears to be articulating his charismatic ideology in these two chapters more so than the others. Consequently, he appears to have stressed two characteristics which would continue to give him authority over Demetrius. For example, if God confers charismatic authority and gives it only to individuals, then technically no one but God could control that individual within the church. Thus, someone like Origen could continue to interpret scripture in the manner he/she feels is dictated to them by



God. Therefore, Demetrius, who worked toward standardization of scripture as well as ecclesiastical organization, would most likely not have appreciated Origen's charismatic ideology, thus providing a probable cause for Demetrius' desire for Origen to be excommunicated.<sup>51</sup>

After Origen's relocation to Caesarea, there is no doubt about Origen's distress over his controversy with Demetrius. Even so, he still holds onto his charismatic ideology and continues to reflect it throughout his commentary. Consequently, his argument appears a little weakened by the relocation; therefore, Origen appears defensive in his writing. For example, he seems to express the charismatic characteristic in which one with this authority should mediate God's word. In doing so, he also appears to desire for others within the church to recognize his charismatic authority. Thus, Origen may feel weakened from his feud, and therefore reflects these two characteristics more so than the others which in turn may demonstrate his need for being defensive over the matter.

Soon after the prologue in Book 6, Origen stresses the characteristic in which one with an individual charismatic authoritative role still works collectively within the one body of the church. Thus, Origen may have been defending his role as a teacher and interpreter of scripture, which may appear as an individual or isolated role within the church. This defense would have been needed, especially since one of Demetrius' accusations against Origen to the Bishop of Rome was that he was a heretic. Heretics are those who go against the mainstream, and since Demetrius felt that he could not control Origen in his interpretation of scripture, then he must have felt Origen should be branded as a heretic. Therefore, Origen needed to defend his seemingly individual role and interpretation of scripture. Even though he successfully defended himself from excommunication, he still had to relocate to Caesarea and most likely still felt a need for

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<sup>51</sup>Joseph W. Trigg, *Origen: The Bible and Philosophy in the Third-Century Church* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1983), 16 Origen faced excommunication from the church, but he successfully defended himself. However, he was relocated to Caesarea, which may be regarded as a kind of punishment.

explaining his beliefs; thus, resulting in his projection of a defensive tone in Book 6 of his commentary.

In Book 10, however, Origen's tone seems even-handed in his articulation of his charismatic ideology. He focuses on how individuality may exist in the one body of the church. As mentioned previously in this thesis, in Book 10, Origen confronts the discrepancies found among the four gospels. Origen explains that even though differences occur, all may still be included through the community's belief in Jesus. Incidentally, according to Origen, this also should be the case in regards to leadership roles within the church. Leaders with charismatic authority are chosen on an individual bases directly from God, and then their work helps to build the one body of the church. Thus, leaders who may seem independent in their actions, may still be included as long as they hold a communal belief in Jesus and work for the one body of the church.

Incidentally, as mentioned above, while Origen is still reflecting his charismatic ideology in Book 10, his tone does not seem as defensive. Because of this, one may argue that Origen's and Demetrius' controversy had subsided, thus allowing him to argue for his belief, but do so in more of a relaxed manner; therefore, presenting a more relaxed tone in his beliefs.

Be that as it may, overall Origen still appears to reflect his belief that the leaders within the church should have charismatic authority. Consequently, Origen appears to remain firm in this belief throughout his *Commentary on the Gospel of John*. However, in Book 6, Origen becomes defensive in his articulation of charismatic authority. Also, instead of all the clergy having charismatic authority as a prerequisite for their position, Origen now appears to be presenting an argument that there is room for clergy to either have it or not. This may reflect Origen's attempt to provide a possible resolution over how someone with charismatic authority, like Origen perhaps, may reside alongside one with more of a standard or traditional claim to authority, like Demetrius.

Thus, by analyzing Origen's *Commentary on the Gospel of John* in light of the five characteristics provided by Joseph Trigg,<sup>52</sup> it appears that Origen clearly held onto a charismatic ideology during his time in proto-orthodox Christianity's history. Origen's charismatic ideology projected his belief in Books 1 and 2 that the clergy should have a charismatic authority versus the more traditional standard authority associated with the church. For example, charismatic authority is appointed by God rather than appointed by another leader, like the bishop appointing another bishop, etc. Even so, he does appear to compromise in Books 6 and 10 and instead projected his belief that there was room for both types of leaders in the church. In Origen's case, he appears to present himself as an individual who has charismatic authority in order to interpret scripture allegorically. Since God appointed this authority to him, then no one else, including Bishop Demetrius, can control him; hence, making him a possible threat to Demetrius' organization and standardization process in proto-orthodox Christianity's history. Eventually, the structure of the church will become more firm in its structure as well as in its standardization of scripture resulting in a formation which may be considered more like the traditional orthodox church; however, during the organization process there does appear to be at least one individual, Origen, within proto-orthodox Christianity who desired a different formation of the church, one which included a charismatic authoritative role for the structure of the church.

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<sup>52</sup>Joseph W. Trigg, "The Charismatic Intellectual: Origen's Understanding of Religious Leadership," *Church History* 50, no. 1 (March 1981): 5-19.

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