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## THE PATH TO HOLINESS ACCORDING TO ORIGEN

**Abstract.** The article displays the concept of the path leading to saintliness found within the extant early Christian works of the renowned theologian – Origen of Alexandria (185-253/254). The Alexandrian theologian creatively construes Saint Paul's notions simultaneously employing allegorical exegesis to the biblical texts of the Old Testament. According to Origen, a Christian life is a dynamic process driven by two important life moments: 1) the conversion and baptism as a recovery of the slurred by sin God's image and attaining of the state of initial holiness; 2) complete state of saintliness in the last days, towards which a Christian is progressing in his earthly life in order to perfect the semblance to God in himself through the acquisition of virtues. In Origen's view of holiness, it is neither a state intricate to attain nor reserved only for the chosen ones, yet a bequest given by God at baptism, and at the same time tasked to every believer for life.

**Key words:** path of spiritual perfection, holiness, baptism, Origen.

Among the early Christian writers who undertook issues related to theology of spirituality, one of the founders of the allegorical exegesis of the Bible, an outstanding philosopher and theologian, representing the Alexandrian tradition, Origen (185-253/254), played a unique role.<sup>1</sup> He is considered to be an outstanding preacher and a theoretician and practitioner of prayer,<sup>2</sup> who showed the path of spiritual improvement to a mystical union

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. M. SZRAM, *Chrystus – Mądrość Boża według Orygenes*, Lublin: KUL Publishing House, 1997, p. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. G. BARDY, *Un prédicateur au IIIe siècle*, "Revue pratique d'apologétique" 45(1927), pp. 513-526, 679-698; P. and M.-Th. NAUTIN, *Origène prédicateur* (Introduction), [in:] ORIGÈNE, *Homélie sur Samuel*, SCh 328, Paris: Cerf 1986, pp. 61-69.

with God, and thus remained many centuries ahead of the Spanish mystics.<sup>3</sup> Hans Urs von Balthasar, noting the genius of Origen's thought, said that it was impossible to overestimate his significance for the history of Christian thought. Only to put him next to St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas means granting him the right place in history.<sup>4</sup>

In recent decades, the work of Origen has been carefully examined for biblical exegesis, christology, cosmology, and eschatology.<sup>5</sup> Inquisitive studies on the works of Origen, conducted in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, although not directly concerned with the issue of sanctity, showed the spirituality of Origen and his rich theology of internal life.<sup>6</sup> One of the fundamental works dealing with the above issues is *Das Vollkommenheitsideal des Origenes*<sup>7</sup> by W. Völker, in which he presented Origen as a master of spiritual improvement.

The question of striving for perfection, or attaining holiness, has been raised from the earliest days of Christianity. The entire teaching of the Church of the first centuries was based on the Bible,<sup>8</sup> which for early Christian theologians was the main inspiration for creating various models of holiness. Origen was one of the first Greek theologians to try to define the notion of holiness and in an orderly, though not yet systematic way, show the process of attaining it.<sup>9</sup>

In this article based on the preserved works of Origen, I will try to present his understanding of the path to holiness, based on conversion and baptism, giving the first degree of sanctification. First, however, I will synthetically describe the state of holiness, that is, how Origen understood its essence and how he related it to God and man.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. W. GESSEL, *Die Theologie des Gebetes nach "De Oratione" von Origenes*, München-Paderborn-Wien: Schöningh, 1975; see M. SZRAM, *Chrystus – Mądrość Boża*, p. 8.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. H.U. von BALTHASAR, *Wstęp*, [in:] ORYGENES, *Duch i ogień*, transl. W. Myszor, Cracow: M Publishing House, 1995, p. 7.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. H. CROUZEL, *Orygenes*, transl. J. Margański, Cracow: "Homini" Publishing House, 2004, pp. 85-86.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. K. JASMAN, *Orygenes o doskonałości chrześcijańskiej*, "Ateneum Kapłańskie" 71(1979), no. 92, p. 380.

<sup>7</sup> W. VÖLKER, *Das Vollkommenheitsideal des Origenes*, Tübingen: Mohr, 1931.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. A. MŁOTEK, *Pismo św. w życiu pierwszych chrześcijan*, "Ruch Biblijny i Liturgiczny" 30(1977), pp. 310, 314.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. H. CROUZEL, *Orygenes*, p. 274

## 1. HOLINESS AS THE LORD'S GIFT AND THE HUMAN RESPONSE

According to Origen, holiness should be the attitude of every Christian, which should be acquired and grow throughout his life until he reaches its fullness. That is why Origen addressed the issue of holiness as one of the main themes in his works. He largely touched on the pastoral aspect of holiness, showing first of all the way to achieve it, but he also reflected on its essence. Here I will attempt to show Origen Adamantius's concept of holiness and its relation to God and man.<sup>10</sup>

To show the essence of holiness, Origen referred to the etymology of the Greek term *hagios*, which means *holy*. The word consists of a core derived from the noun *ge* – “earth”, negated by attaching the prefix *alpha privativum*. Translated literally, *hagios* means someone unearthly, detached from the affairs of this world, staying out of the earth, completely devoted to God.<sup>11</sup> As Origen noted, this is not about disconnecting defined in terms of the location, but the mode of conduct.<sup>12</sup> Only God fully meets these criteria, who is the model and source of holiness. In the homily to the Book of Leviticus, Origen comments on the verse “You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy” (Leviticus 19:2): “He said, as I stay away and I move away from everything that takes worship and honor away from me, whether on earth or in heaven, as I am superior to all creatures, and I move away from everything that I have created, for you stay away from all who are not saints and did not devoted themselves to God.”<sup>13</sup>

The author constructs the definition of human holiness in a descriptive manner, using the style characteristic of the patristic homily and the method of allegorical biblical exegesis. From the above text it can be concluded that the definition of holiness – according to Origen – consists of two elements,

<sup>10</sup> Origen was nicknamed “Adamantius” (“man of steel”) by his contemporaries.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. ORIGENES, *In Leviticum homiliae* XI, 1, ed. M. Borret, SCh 287, Paris: Cerf, 1981, pp. 146-148, “ipse sermo in graeca lingua, quod dicitur ἅγιος quasi extra terram esse significat. Quicumque enim se consecraverit Deo, merito extra terram et extra mundum videbitur; potest enim et ipse dicere: super terram ambulantes conversationem in caelis habemus”, transl. S. Kalinkowski: ORYGENES, *Homilie o Księdze Kapłańskiej*, PSP 31/2, Warsaw: Academy of Catholic Theology Press, 1985, p. 150.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. *ibid.*: “Segregari autem dicimus non locis, sed actibus, nec regionibus, sed conversationibus”.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*: “Sicut ego, inquit, segregatus sum et longe separatus ab omnibus, quae adorantur vel coluntur sive in terra, sive in caelo; sicut ego excedo omnem creaturam atque ab universis, quae a me facta sunt, segregor: ita et vos segregati estote ab omnibus, qui non sunt sancti nec Deo dedicati;” transl. S. Kalinkowski: ORYGENES, *Homilie o Księdze Kapłańskiej*, PSP 31/2, p. 150.

pointing to two aspects of the state of holiness. The first aspect is negative. It is related to renunciation, or rejection of evil. It consists in separating and moving away from the mundane world (*segregare, separare, extra terram et extra mundum esse*). Origen described it as separation and alienation (*semotus et segregatus*) from the contagion of sin and keeping away from the worldly deeds and lusts that are not coming from from God (*separare a terrenis actibus et a concupiscentia mundi, quae non est a Deo*).<sup>14</sup> The second aspect is positive. It is connected with the choice of the highest Good, that is, the dedication of man to God (*dedicatio, consecratio Deo*). Origen described it in the following way: “When you cut yourself off from all this (*cum ergo separaveris te ab his omnibus*), from what is earthly and sinful, sacrifice yourself to God as if you were sacrificing the first-born calf (*devoxe te Deo tamquam primogenitum vitulum*).”<sup>15</sup>

In summary, it can be said that, according to Origen, holiness is the renunciation of the worldly affairs and devotion to God. It should be noted that in his definition of holiness, Origen stressed its dynamic nature, thus encouraging us to attain it. He presented it in the form of a road, showing its initial stage as the rejection of evil, and its goal as the full acceptance of good. Although both elements of Origen’s definition of holiness are essential for its existence, he often emphasized the negative element, because there is no dedication to God without conversion, that is, there is no entry to the path to holiness. Origen’s opinion that the very state of conversion, culminating in baptism, deserves to be called holiness, refers to the biblical concept of Holy Apostle Paul, where the baptized are called saints.<sup>16</sup>

When analyzing Origen’s concept of the Christian’s holiness, it is necessary to mention the issue of the holiness of God Himself, who alone is truly and always holy.<sup>17</sup> He is the source of the sanctification of man. Moreover, He calls man to participate in His divinity.<sup>18</sup> In his homilies, Origen pointed to the difference between the holiness of God and of man, saying, “that He who sanctifies is holy because He is always holy. For those who are sanctified, it must be said that they are not just saints but saints sanctified.”<sup>19</sup> In

<sup>14</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Romans 6:22, 1 Corinthians 1:2, Ephesians 4:21-24, Philippians 1:1, Colossians 1:1.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. ORIGENES, *In Numeros homiliae XI*, 8, ed. L. Doutreleau, SCh 442, Paris: Cerf 1999, p. 60: “vere autem et semper sanctus solus est Deus.”

<sup>18</sup> Cf. IDEM, *In Leviticum homiliae XI*, 1.

<sup>19</sup> IDEM, *In Numeros homiliae XI*, 8, SCh 442, p. 60: “ergo est quod qui sanctificat sanctus est, quia semper sanctus est; qui autem sanctificantur, non simpliciter sancti, sed sanctificati sancti

Origen's opinion God "has always been holy, and His holiness has no beginning, because [...] the substance of the Trinity has not received holiness from the outside, but it is holy by its very nature."<sup>20</sup> The holiness of God is subject to Himself and He always abides in His holiness.

According to Origen, God is the main source of sanctification of man, and each of the Persons of the Trinity has a specific function. The Father is the principle and source of holiness for the whole Trinity and all the people. The Son shows the way to salvation by His holiness. The Holy Spirit carries out the sanctifying action in the soul of man. In his work *On Principles*, Origen emphasizes that "the Holy Spirit is a sanctifying power in which all participate who deserve to be sanctified by His grace,"<sup>21</sup> and "therefore, through the participation in the Holy Spirit, man becomes holy and spiritual."<sup>22</sup> The gift of holiness results from the nature of the Holy Spirit. Thus, He alone can be the author of all sanctification.<sup>23</sup>

Origen says that man is called by God, who "is holy," to become sanctified: "God [...] is said to be holy, and people are commanded to become holy, as if they were not always like that."<sup>24</sup> Origen stresses both the call of God, and the response of man expressed in a specific way, full of dynamic spiritual progress, understood as the recovery of the image of God and striving to gain a likeness to God. He emphatically emphasizes the role of God, who, by showing initiative, urges people to come closer to Him and thereby attain holiness.

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dicendi sunt"; transl. S. Kalinkowski: ORYGENES, *Homilie o Księdze Liczb*, PSP 34/1, Warsaw: Academy of Catholic Theology Press, 1986, p. 113.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., SCh 442, p. 58: "sed semper fuit sanctus, nec initium sanctitas eius accepit, [...] sola enim Trinitatis substantia est quae non extrinsecus accepta sanctificatione, sed sui natura sit sancta", PSP 34/1, p. 113.

<sup>21</sup> IDEM, *De principiis* I, 1, 3, ed. H. Crouzel, M. Simonetti, SCh 252, Paris: Cerf 1978, p. 94: "sed virtus profecto sanctificans est, cuius participium habere dicuntur omnes, qui per eius gratiam sanctificari meruerint;" transl. S. Kalinkowski: ORYGENES, *O Zasadach*, Źródła Myśli Teologicznej (hereafter: ŹMT) 1, Cracow: WAM Publishing House, 1996, p. 60.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., IV, 4, 5 (32), SCh 268, Paris 1980, p. 412: "ita et participio spiritus sanctus et spiritalis efficitur," ŹMT 1, p. 384.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. B. CZĘSZ, *Pneumatologia Ojców Kościoła*, [in:] *Duch, który jednoczy. Zarys pneumatologii*, ed. M. Marczewski, Lublin: KUL Publishing House, 1998, p. 89.

<sup>24</sup> ORYGENES, *In Numeros homiliae* XI, 8, SCh 442, pp. 58-60: "de Deo [...] dicitur quia est sanctus, homines autem, quasi qui non semper fuerint, iubentur ut fiant sancti," PSP 34/1, p. 113.

## 2. THE PROCESS OF THE PURSUIT OF THE HOLY PEOPLE TOWARDS FULL HOLINESS

As already emphasized, the pursuit of holiness – according to Origen – is a long-term process of developing the image and likeness of God in oneself. Thus, it has a dynamic character. A general description of the pursuit of holiness will now be presented, which should be shared by all Christians in earthly life, according to Origen.

Origen described the pursuit of holiness as a spiritual path.<sup>25</sup> It was symbolized by the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt and wanderings through the desert. In Origen's opinion, it is first of all the work of God, who in His pedagogy, constantly creates the circumstances that encourage man to conversion, wanting to bring him to full maturity and eternal happiness.<sup>26</sup> Spiritual life is a constant conversion of the Christian, the culmination of which is baptism.<sup>27</sup>

While talking to people with different levels of spirituality, Origen emphasized that holiness is a process in the Christian life that begins with conversion. Therefore, when preaching his sermons to people who were at the beginning of their path to holiness, he paid special attention to the negative element defined as the “renunciation of the worldly affairs.” He did this by using many biblical metaphors, for example, “if as for the death of Abraham, what can we say more than the Word of God says in the Gospel: let us pray for such a death, in the words of the Apostle, so that we may die for sin and live for God. This is how the death of Abraham must be understood: it spread his womb so that all the saints who come from the four ends of the earth, could be carried by angels into the womb of Abraham.”<sup>28</sup> From the quoted text, the negative and positive aspects contained in the definition of

<sup>25</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, XXVII, 2.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. P. AUBIN, *Le problème de la conversion. Étude sur un terme commun à l'hellénisme et au christianisme des trois premiers siècles*, Théologie historique 1, Paris: Beauchesne, 1963, pp. 137-157.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. E. STANULA, *Życie duchowe w ujęciu Orygenes* [Introduction], [in:] ORYGENES, *Homilie o Księgach Liczb, Jozuego, Sędziów*, PSP 34/1, Warsaw: Academy of Catholic Theology Press, 1986, p. 29.

<sup>28</sup> ORIGENES, *In Genesim homiliae* XI, 3, ed. H. de Lubac, L. Doutreleau, SCh 7 bis, Paris: Cerf, 1996, p. 286: “Optemus ergo et nos huiusmodi mortem, sicut et Apostolus dicit, ut moriamur peccato, vivamus autem Deo. Tali namque Abrahae mors intelligenda est, quae in tantum dilataverit sinus eius ut omnes sancti, qui de quattuor terrae partibus veniunt, in sinus Abrahae portentur ab angelis”; transl. S. Kalinkowski: ORYGENES, *Homilie o Księdze Rodzaju*, PSP 31/1, Warsaw: Academy of Catholic Theology Press, 1985, pp. 116-117.

holiness can be extracted, which is depicted as “dying for sin and living for God (*moriatur peccato, vivamus autem Deo*).”<sup>29</sup> Again, both of the above elements can be noted in the following passage: “sinners are heavy. [...] Saints, however, do not drown, but walk on water, because they are light and not burdened with sin. After all, the Lord walked on water because He really knew no sin. [...] Therefore, one who attains salvation, attains it through fire; if he had some kind of lead, the fire would purge and melt it so that all would become good gold; for it was stated that the gold of this earth which the saints are supposed to possess is good.”<sup>30</sup> The formulation of lightness of saints points to the negative aspect connected with the necessity of rejection of sins, while the statement about the gold of the earth to be possessed by the saints can be considered a synonym for choosing God and devotion to Him, that is, the positive aspect of the process of sanctification.

In the dynamic journey towards Christian perfection, baptism plays a fundamental role, which makes man sanctified (*consecratus, sanctificatus*) in a certain way.<sup>31</sup> The sacrament of Christian initiation is also the main stage on the way to full sanctification and the necessary means to obtain it. From that moment, every Christian begins the right pilgrimage of spiritual “ascension” to God, that is, the pursuit towards full holiness, which does not mean he is free from committing wicked deeds.

In conclusion, it should be noted that holiness is a process in the Christian life that begins with the stage of conversion, including devotion to God. According to Origen, baptism is the foundation of holiness, at the full implementation of which the Christian life aims. The stages of Origen’s path to holiness will be discussed in detail below.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> IDEM, *In Exodum homiliae* VI, 4, ed. M. Borret, SCh 321, Paris: Cerf, 1985, pp. 180-182: „Peccatores graves sunt. [...] Sancti autem non demerguntur, sed ambulat super aquas, quia leves sunt et peccati pondere non gravantur. Denique Dominus et Saluator super aquas ambulavit, ipse enim est qui vere peccatum nescit. [...] Idcirco igitur qui salvus fit per ignem salvus fit, ut, si quid forte de specie plumbi habuerit admixtum, id ignis decoquat et resoluat, ut efficiantur omnes aurum bonum, quia aurum terrae illius bonum esse dicitur, quam habituri sunt sancti”; transl. S. Kalinkowski: *ORYGENES, Homilie o Księdze Wyjścia*, PSP 31/1, Warsaw: Academy of Catholic Theology Press, 1985, p. 202.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. IDEM, *In Leviticum homiliae* IX, 4.

### 3. THE STAGE OF CONVERSION AND PREPARATION FOR BAPTISM – CATECHUMENATE

In the early history of the Church, a special institution preparing the adoption of the sacraments of Christian initiation, and at the same time coinciding with the first stage on the path to holiness according to Origen, was a catechumenate, which was starting to get organized.<sup>32</sup> The role of the catechumenate was the moral preparation, or conversion<sup>33</sup> and then giving instructions, especially concerning the sacrament of baptism.<sup>34</sup> The celebration of the sacrament of baptism required an introduction into the Christian mysteries, which consisted in conversion to a new faith and transformation of life, and instruction in the field of morality and doctrine. All this required time and appropriate catechumenal practice.<sup>35</sup> In this regard, Origen in his homily on the Book of Exodus listed the basic tasks of the candidate for baptism: “If [...] we come to receive the grace of baptism, by rejecting all other gods and masters, we confess only to God the Father and the Son and the Holy spirit. And if by making this confession we do not love the Lord our God with all our hearts and souls and we do not cling to Him, we are not a part of the Lord, but we remain as if on the borderland: we experience the hostility of those whom we avoid and do not gain the kindness of the Lord, with Whom we seek refuge, but we do not love Him with all our hearts.”<sup>36</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Cf. J.N.D. KELLY, *Początki doktryny chrześcijańskiej*, transl. J. Mrukówna, Warsaw: PAX Publishing House, 1988, p. 149; B. MOKRZYCKI, *Katechumenat wczesnochrześcijański*, “Communio” 3(1983), no. 1, pp. 9-27; M. DUJARIER, *Krótką historia katechumenatu*, transl. A. Świeykowska, U. Grajczak, Poznań: “W drodze” Publishing House, 1990; E. STANULA, Cz. KRAKOWIAK, *Katechumenat. Starożytność. Aspekt katechetyczny i liturgiczny*, [in:] *Encyklopedia Katolicka*, vol. VIII, Lublin: Learned Society of the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, 2000, column 1055-1058; Cz. KRAKOWIAK, *Katechumenat chrzcielny dorosłych w Kościele posoborowym*, Lublin: KUL Publishing House, 2003, pp. 35-109; *Kościół, świat i zbawienie we wczesnym chrześcijaństwie*, ed. J. Naumowicz, *Studia Antiquitatis Christianae* 17, Warsaw: Academy of Catholic Theology Press, 2004, pp. 179-241; M. SZRAM, *Katechumenat*, [in:] *Leksykon pedagogiki religii. Podstawy – koncepcje – perspektywy*, ed. C. Rogowski, Warsaw: Verbinum Publishing House, 2007, pp. 312-316.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. ORIGENES, *In Leviticum homiliae* VI, 2.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. IDEM, *Commentarii in Iohannem* IV, 14.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. H. BOURGEOIS, B. SESBOUE, P. TIHON, *Historia dogmatów*, vol. III: *Znaki Zbawienia*, transl. P. Rak, Cracow: M Publishing House, 2001, p. 52.

<sup>36</sup> ORIGENES, *In Exodum homiliae* VIII, 4, SCh 321, p. 254: “Cum ergo venimus ad gratiam baptismi, universis aliis diis et dominis renuntiantes solum confitemur Deum Patrem et Filium et Spiritum sanctum. Sed hoc confitentes nisi toto corde diligamus Dominum Deum nostrum et tota anima ac tota virtute adhaereamus ipsi, non sumus effecti pars Domini, sed velut in confinio quo-



This statement of Origen shows that the basic condition for baptism is conversion, covering the two aforementioned aspects: renunciation of pagan idols (*aliis et diis dominis renuntiantes*), or abandoning old lifestyle, evil and infidelity to God, and then turning to the true God and devotion to Him (*adhaereamus ipsi*),<sup>37</sup> which takes place at the level of love and consists in accepting and confessing the faith in the Triune God.

The catechumenal path to baptism, or pre-consecration, contained a key element, which was listening to the word of God, consisting in a preliminary acquaintance with the teaching of Christ. Persons preparing to receive baptism were introduced into the Holy Bible and listened to the moral catechesis during the congregations, and could participate in the Liturgy of the word of God during the Sunday Eucharist. These practices were to lead to a request for baptism.<sup>38</sup> However, further learning and understanding of the teaching, leading to full sanctification, was possible only after baptism. To emphasize the above requirement, Origen used the biblical image of a well of water (cf. Genesis 26:18-22).<sup>39</sup> Using the method of allegorical interpretation of the Bible, he pointed out that he understood the concept of “wells” (*putei*) as the books of the Holy Bible. God Himself who sanctifies man is the “living water” (*aqua viva*), that refreshes the listeners. Before the catechumen receives baptism in the name of the Holy Trinity, he must listen to the word of God, which the priests preach, and understand it in a spiritual way, although he certainly can not yet grasp the depth of its spiritual content. Thanks to the word of God man converts to the Creator, cleans himself of iniquities that stain the soul, and becomes worthy to receive the sacrament of baptism. The living water from the well of the word of God is the preparation for the baptismal washing, which Origen defines as washing the soul of all filth and the beginning and source of God’s favors for one who sacrifices himself to God.<sup>40</sup>

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dam positi et illos offensus patimur, quos refugimus, et Dominum, ad quem confugimus, propitium non efficimus, quem non ex toto et integro corde diligimus”, PSP 31/1, p. 226.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. E. STANULA, *Życie duchowe w ujęciu Orygenes*, p. 17.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. H. BOURGEOIS, B. SESBOUE, P. TIHON, *Historia dogmatów*, p. 53.

<sup>39</sup> ORIGENES, *In Genesim homiliae* XIII, 3, SCh 7 bis, pp. 318-320: “Exeuntes [...] pueri Isaac per universum orbem terrae foderunt puteos et aquam vivam omnibus ostenderunt baptizantes omnes gentes in nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus sancti. [...] sed et unusquisque nostrum qui verbum Dei ministrant puteum fodit et aquam vivam quaerit, ex qua reficiat auditores. Si ergo incipiam et ego veterum dicta discutere et sensum in iis quaerere spiritalem, si conatus fuero velamen legis amovere et ostendere allegorica esse quae scripta sunt, fodio quidem puteos”, PSP 31/1, p. 128.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. IDEM, *Commentarii in Iohannem* VI, 33.

To sum up, it should be emphasized that in the early history of the Church the three-year period of the catechumenate began with the conversion of a man and led to the adoption of baptism. According to Origen, it was a preparatory stage for receiving the gift of sanctification, which was the sacrament of baptism.

#### 4. BAPTISM AS THE FOUNDATION OF HOLINESS AND PRE-SANCTIFICATION

In Origen's view, the key moment on the path towards sanctification is to receive the sacrament of baptism.<sup>41</sup> As a result, a man becomes holy in a certain way. Origen describes it in one of his homilies: "And so you were consecrated on the altars of God through the grace of baptism, and you became a clean animal. If, however, you do not keep the Lord's commandment, which says: Behold, you have been healed, sin no more, so that something worse will not happen to you, but when being clean you have tarnished yourself again with the stain of sin and from virtue you moved to licentiousness, and from purity to impurity, for reasons of your own doing, you brought the fate of the scapegoat and the desert upon yourself, even though you were a clean animal."<sup>42</sup>

In the above statement, Origen shows the first of the sacraments of Christian initiation as a consecration (*consecratio*) of a man that he can develop in himself or lose. Baptism initiates in the Christian the state of holiness through preliminary sanctification and purification of all sins. As a result – according to Origen – the Christian becomes a holy (*sanctus*), sanctified (*sanctificatus*) person.<sup>43</sup>

Origen presents the sanctifying character of the sacrament of baptism in the context of the Christian's participation in the Eucharist, recognizing it as an essential condition for joining the table of the Lord as a feast for the clean, or holy people. In one of his homilies he says that "no one can listen to the Word of God unless first sanctified, that is, if he is not a saint with his

<sup>41</sup> Cf. E. STANULA, *Życie duchowe w ujęciu Orygenesesa*, p. 29.

<sup>42</sup> ORIGENES, *In Leviticum homiliae* IX, 4, SCh 287, p. 86: "Et tu ergo per gratiam baptismi consecratus es altaribus Dei et animal factus es mundum. Sed si non custodias mandatum illud Domini, quod dixit: Ecce, sanus factus es; iam noli peccare, ne quid tibi deterius contingat, sed, cum esses mundus, rursus te peccati inquinamento maculasti et ex virtute ad libidinem, ex puritate ad immunditiam declinasti, tuo vitio, cum animal mundum fueris, sorti te apompaei eremique tradidisti", PSP 31/2, p. 130.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. IDEM, *In Exodum homiliae* XI, 7, SCh 321, p. 350.

body and spirit, and if he does not wash his clothes. After all, he will soon be invited to the wedding feast, will consume the flesh of the Lamb and drink the cup of salvation. [...] Once your clothes were washed, when you came to the grace of baptism, you were cleansed on the body, you were cleansed of all dirt of the body and spirit.”<sup>44</sup>

Providing characteristics of baptism on the basis of Origen’s homily, we have to say that one of the most important features of baptism mentioned by the author is immersion in Christ’s death and resurrection to a new life. Origen says: “it is necessary that those being baptized in Christ are baptized in His death and buried with Him and resurrected with Him on the third day; according to the Apostle they were resurrected [by Christ] and put in the heavenly places. If you accept the mystery of the third day, God will lead you on the way of salvation.”<sup>45</sup> In the text above, Origen sticks to the biblical teaching, following the idea of St. Paul, taken from the Letter to the Romans, and emphasizes the inner meaning of baptism and its spiritual effectiveness.<sup>46</sup> Baptism is the sacrament of the mystery of death and resurrection, which makes it closely related to the Paschal Mystery of the Son of God. According to Origen, Christians are united with Christ in baptism, that’s why baptism is a kind of immersion in Christ’s passion and death (*in morte ipsius baptizentur*) and is a resurrection to a new life, or leaving the kingdom of Satan, and moving into the kingdom of Christ (*simul se cum suscitavit, simul que fecit sedere in coelestibus*).<sup>47</sup> Christ comes to man through baptism, raises him from the dead and makes him saved on earth, and therefore holy, which has not happened to anyone outside the Church. Origen understands the Church as a community of those saved on earth, and not those who are to be possibly saved under certain conditions in an unknown future.<sup>48</sup> It is in baptism that man receives a new life in Christ and enters the path to absolute perfection.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid.: “Nemo [...] potest audire verbum Dei, nisi prius fuerit sanctificatus, id est nisi fuerit sanctus corpore et spiritu, nisi vertimenta sua laverit. Ingressurus est enim paulo post ad coenam nuptialem, manducaturus est de carnibus Agni, potaturus est poculum salutaris. [...] Lota sunt enim semel vestimenta tua: cum venisti ad gratiam baptismi, purificatus es corpore, mundatus es ab omni inquinamento carnis ac spiritus”, PSP 31/1, p. 262.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., V, 2, SCh 321, pp. 154-156, PSP 31/1, pp. 193-194.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. J.N.D. KELLY, *Początki doktryny*, p. 159.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. E. STANULA, *Życie duchowe w ujęciu Orygenesy*, p. 17.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. H. PIETRAS, *Kościół jako wspólnota zbawionych*, [in:] *Świętość a dobro (Materiały konferencji naukowej zorganizowanej 20 listopada 2008 roku w Krakowie przez Polskie Towarzystwo Teologiczne)*, ed. J. Żelazny, Cracow: Unum Publishing House, 2008, pp. 63. 71.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. K. JASMAN, *Orygenes o doskonałości*, p. 381.

To sum up, it should be said that according to Origen, baptism is the foundation of holiness, which the Christian is fully capable of realizing. The believer becomes in some way sanctified (or consecrated) through baptism. Baptism as the foundation of holiness is at the same time a fundamental step on the way to full sanctification and the necessary means to obtain it.

#### 5. THE FURTHER WAY TO FULL PERSONAL SANCTIFICATION

Now, I will present a detailed description of the process of attaining full holiness, which, according to Origen, the Christian has to undergo in earthly life. I will attempt to rank the stages that the Christian has to move through on his way to holiness.

Origen emphasizes repeatedly in his works that sanctity is not achieved immediately. It is a constant process of converting to God, which Origen calls stepping up, the soul's ascension to God, turning from one virtue to another. As the consciousness of the Christian identity grows, man gets to know who he is and where he is going. This knowledge creates the will to realize the ideal of sanctity and to ask God for help in achieving it.<sup>50</sup> The state of personal sanctity is initiated by the previously discussed sacrament of baptism. It ends a section of the road that can be called purifying from sin and pre-adherence to Christ.<sup>51</sup>

In his homilies, Origen used the allegorical interpretation to show the Christian ideal of holiness, symbolized by biblical events.<sup>52</sup> First of all, the symbolic picture of approaching God, interior change and spiritual development is the migration of the chosen people from Egypt through the desert, which ends with the entrance to the promised land.<sup>53</sup> I will refer to this symbolism, while discussing the stages from the initial state of holiness, begun with baptism, to its perfect fullness.

Origen presented the spiritual path to holiness in the 27<sup>th</sup> homily to the Book of Numbers. He said: "in the spiritual sense [...] leaving Egypt can be understood [...] as abandoning the pagan life and getting to know the Law

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<sup>50</sup> Cf. E. STANULA, *Życie duchowe w ujęciu Orygenesesa*, p. 29.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, p. 38.

of God.”<sup>54</sup> He described two stages of the path as a peculiar way to the Father.<sup>55</sup> The soul goes from one place to another – which Origen understands as the stages of growing up in holiness – until it reaches God Himself, who is the end of its pilgrimage. Wandering is the man’s response to God’s call to holiness.

According to Origen, the Book of Numbers is a book of journey, movement, and also of the desert. It describes the “order of the Lord”, that is, the path of transformation of a corporeal person into a spiritual one. This transformation takes place through successive stages of the soul’s perfection in virtue.<sup>56</sup> They are symbolized by the Hebrew names of particular towns where Jews were staying, while going to the promised land, interpreted by Origen with the allegorical method. For example, the name of the Sin meaning “thorn bush” or “trial” refers to the state of difficult spiritual trials; and the name of the Rafaka town meaning “health,” to which the Israelites came, means that the soul regains health.<sup>57</sup>

Origen’s way of presenting the “wandering” of the soul undoubtedly contains Platonic and Stoic ideas. However, it should be emphasized that the main source of his interpretation is the mystical way of understanding the Holy Bible, in which the historical details of the Book of Numbers take on a symbolic meaning. They refer primarily to Christ, the Church and eschatological time, as well as to the individual soul and human inner life.<sup>58</sup>

Origen says that the stages of the journey merge into three groups, forming the essential parts of the path to full holiness. The later theology of spirituality will call them the ways of purification, enlightenment and unification. According to this pattern, the first part of the soul improvement path consists in its release from the influence of Satan and strengthening in the faith – this is the stage of purification.<sup>59</sup> In the second part of the journey, God leads the soul through the desert, where it grows in faith and virtue, is tested and regains its spirituality, or communion with the Holy Spirit.<sup>60</sup> This

<sup>54</sup> ORIGENES, *In Numeros homiliae* XXVII, 2, SCh 461, p. 280: “videri posse spiritaliter exire unumquemque de Aegypto, vel cum relinquentes gentilem vitam ad agnitionem divinae legis accedimus”, PSP 34/1, p. 266.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. *ibid.*: “Sed et anima cum de Aegypto vitae huius proficiscitur, ut tendat ad terram reprobationis, pergit necessario per quasdam vias et certas quasque, ut diximus, conficit mansiones”.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. *ibid.*; see. E. STANULA, *Życie duchowe w ujęciu Orygenesesa*, p. 19.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. ORIGENES, *In Numeros homiliae* XXVII, 11-12.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. E. STANULA, *Życie duchowe w ujęciu Orygenesesa*, pp. 19-20.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. ORIGENES, *In Numeros homiliae* XXVII, 4.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, XXVII, 5-6.

happens when the soul is filled with the light of knowledge, by the power of which it sees the full spiritual reality. This part of the journey of the soul will be afterwards called the way of enlightenment.<sup>61</sup> According to Origen, however, the Christian does not stop at the above-mentioned stage. His soul goes on, gaining higher degrees of perfection. By receiving enlightenment, or understanding God's plan for salvation, it strives for ultimate union with God. The end of the soul's journey is the promised land, that is, the attainment of a state of perfection in the "heavenly Jerusalem."<sup>62</sup> This last part of the soul's journey to full holiness, which Origen named entering the promised land, will be called unification.<sup>63</sup>

The gradual immersion in the mysteries of God's Wisdom is explained by a significant ontological difference that occurs between God and the human soul and the resulting cognitive limitation of the soul. In a way, the human soul will get used to God and become more and more fully acquainted with Him, progressing from one stage of enlightenment to the next through the Wisdom of God,<sup>64</sup> because it will "look at the true light that enlightens everyone and withstand the splendor of true majesty."<sup>65</sup> The full union with God, and thus final sanctification, will take place only after the resurrection.

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<sup>61</sup> Cf. J. DANIÉLOU, *Origène*, Paris: La Table Ronde, 1948, pp. 294-295.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. E. STANULA, *Życie duchowe w ujęciu Orygenesesa*, p. 29.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. J. DANIÉLOU, *Origène*, pp. 295-301; see. E. STANULA, *Życie duchowe w ujęciu Orygenesesa*, p. 24.

<sup>64</sup> Cf. M. SZRAM, *Chrystus – Mądrość Boża*, p. 298.

<sup>65</sup> ORIGENES, *In Numeros homiliae* XXVII, 5, SCh 461, p. 292, PSP 34/1, p. 270.

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