SUMMARY
The present article poses the hypothesis that three of the earliest Paschal writings, the first belonging to Melito of Sardis, the second to an anonymous author whom scholars conventionally call Pseudo-Hippolytus, and the third belonging to Origen, may testify to a special exegetical practice. Besides the fact that all three works were part of, or at least had a strong connection with, the complex liturgical feast of Pascha, they also consist in detailed commentaries on Exodus 12 and share various elements such as mystery language and typological parallels. However, the key common element the present paper emphasizes is that the exegetical exercise at the Paschal Festival in the first three centuries in Asia Minor and Alexandria was not conceived of as mere reading and rational enterprise, but rather as a mystery performance through which the one who does the hermeneutical task suffers personal transformation and encounters the concrete, effective though noetic, manifestations of the Logos. It was pivotal for Melito and Pseudo-Hippolytus and probably developed as a polemical reaction to the pagan mysteries practiced in Asia Minor. Origen most likely took over this kind of exegesis from an ongoing tradition, probably via Clement (if one takes into consideration the Stromateis and references to his lost Peri Pascha), and also articulated it in a complex elaboration in which the elements of Pascha, liturgy, mystery, and exegesis intertwine.

The intent of this article is to investigate the manner in which Christians of the second and third centuries in Asia Minor and Alexandria approached the reading of Scripture in, or in connection with, the liturgical context of the Paschal feast. I will attempt to show how such reading, within that context, was primarily a performance similar to those of the Greek mysteries, rather than merely an intellectual exercise. According to the paschal writings of Melito, Pseudo-Hippolytus, and Origen, scriptural hermeneutics do not seem to imply the solving of an enigma, but rather constitutes an actual participation in, or encounter with, a reality imperceptible by senses: the manifestations of the Logos-Christ. Correspondingly, at the end of the exegetic

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1 Putting it into Aristotle’s words, it was a matter of pathein rather than mathein, of ‘experiencing’ rather than ‘learning’ (see Fr. 15 from Synesius Dion 48, in N. Turchi, Fontes Historiae Mysteriorum Aevi Hellenisticii [Rome, 1930]). Cf. Plutarch Isis 382de and Clement Str 5.71.1.
performance and throughout its course, the exegete is not only a collector of new information; on the contrary, as the ancient Greek used to become the subject of an actual meeting with the manifestations of a god/goddess, so the ancient Christian was the spectator of a transforming encounter, mediated by Scripture, with the various manifestations of the Logos-Christ. Most likely, this kind of exegesis was the reflection of a Christian polemical attitude towards the mystery religions.

Cumulative evidence leads to the hypothesis that this type of mystery exegesis connected with, or part of, the complex liturgical feast of Pascha probably emerged in the second-century Asia Minor and Melito is the first witness to, if not the inventor of, this way of reading Scriptures. Pseudo-Hippolytus developed it and Origen took over this kind of exegesis either from Melito, or from Clement, or from an ongoing tradition.

**Jewish Precedents of Exegesis as Mystery Rite**

The Jewish conception of reading the Torah as an experience that leads to the knowledge of divine mysteries seems to constitute a precedent for the early Christian mystery exegesis. Although various Jewish Diaspora writers such as Aristobulus, Artapanus, Orphica’s author, Pseudo-Phocylides, or Josephus employed terminology of the pagan rites, Philo associated the exegetical practice as religious experience with mystery terminology and Greek techniques of allegorical interpretation. In *Cher*. 42 ff., for example, one can find early roots of interpreting Scripture as a mystery rite. The

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3 Bockmuehl, *Revelation and Mystery*, 78.

4 See Bockmuehl, *Revelation and Mystery*, 76-81. Allegory, for Philo, is a mystical quest (*Som* 1:164).
Alexandrian theologian, as an initiated mystagogue, develops, metaphorically or not, his hermeneutic exercise as a mystery performance and invites the reader to take part in this exercise in order to become an initiated in the divine knowledge. Moreover, in his commentary on Exodus, Philo develops an allegorical exegesis in connection with the Passover narrative.

However, one might suggest that Melito’s, Pseudo-Hippolytus’, and Origen’s innovation consists in connecting the old method of reading Scripture as a religious experience with the Christian typological interpretation, Greek mystery terminology, Jewish terms and images, and the Paschal liturgical celebration. Within this complex context of the Paschal feast, viewed as a central Christian mystery, biblical exegesis acquired the character of a special mystery performance or drama.⁵

**Melito of Sardis’s Mystery Exegesis**

The bishop of Sardis, who is known to have sent an apology on behalf of his fellow Christians to the emperor-philosopher Marcus Aurelius between the years A.D. 169-177,⁶ begins his homily *Peri Pascha* (the date of which is not certain) with a series of paradoxical pairs of terms: he maintains that the mystery of the Pascha (τὸ τοῦ πάσχα μυστήριον) is both old and new, eternal and temporary, perishable and imperishable, mortal and immortal.⁷ Nevertheless, Melito does not contradict himself for the reason that he does not predicate these attributes at the same time, but all the first attributes are

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⁵ While emphasizing mystery terminology, the present article does not deny the existence of Jewish vocabulary and themes in the writings of the above-mentioned Christian theologians. On the contrary, scholars have much emphasized this vocabulary, too.


associated with the old Passover, the Jewish Pesach, while all the second ones refer to the mystery of the new, i.e. Christian, Pascha. This distinction appears to be pivotal for the Melitonean vision.

A. The Old Mystery of Pascha Performed by Moses

As the passages PP 11-14 illustrate, God is the source and agent of the old mystery. In spite of using the term "musth/ρίον" in the singular and not the plural ("τὰ μυστήρια") Melito’s reference of the term is not a philosophical abstraction, but a genuine action performed by human beings and also an action performed by God himself. Succinctly said, it was a cult or mystery performance, not an abstraction. God explains to Moses how to perform during the night the mystery of Israel’s salvation and how the angel of death will bind Pharaoh and punish the Egyptian people. Melito further in PP 15-17 portrays Moses as hierophant officiating at a mystery for the initiated people of Israel:

Then Moses, when he had slain the sheep, and at night (νύκτωρ) performed the mystery (διελέξας τῷ μυστήριον) with the sons of Israel, marked (ισφράγισεν) the doors of the houses to protect the people and win the angel’s respect.9

The text further explains how the Israelites, unlike the Egyptians, sacrificed the sheep, ate the Pascha, performed the mystery (τὸ μυστήριον τελείται), and became marked with a sign able to respect the angel of death.10 In contrast, the Egyptians remained uninitiated into the mystery (ἀμυητοί τοῦ μυστήριου), not taking part in the Pascha (ἀμοιροὶ τὸν πάσχα), without the seal of blood (ἀσφράγιστοι τοῦ αἵματος), and thus without the protection of the spirit. Consequently, they easily fall prey to the angel that, in one night, “made them childless.”11

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8 PP 3.11-18: “Old is the law, but new the word; temporary the model, but eternal the grace; perishable the sheep, imperishable the Lord” (Hall, On Pascha, 3).
9 Melito, PP 15.88-91. S. G. Hall comments: “Melito regards the Pascha as an initiatory rite with apotropaic effect, and insinuates into 14-16 the language of Christian baptism an unction [implying much mystery language], especially σφράγιζεν, χρίζεν, πνεῦμα, ἀμύητος” (Hall, Melito, 9, n.5). Another scholar, A. Stewart-Sykes, argues that Peri Pascha might be an early liturgy; see The Lamb’s High Feast: Melito, Peri Pascha, and the Quartodeciman Paschal Liturgy at Sardis (Leiden: Brill, 1998).
10 The seal of blood may have a similar function with the protective mystery charm (amulet or talisman) against the natural calamity or plague (Cf. P. Kingsley, Ancient Philosophy, Mystery, and Magic. Empedocles and Pythagorean Tradition [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995] 307-312).
11 PP 16.92-17.104. Criticizing the Egyptians for not being initiated in the mystery of the Pascha might be seen as a general polemic against the pagans. Moreover, Melito in many pages describes Egypt’s punishment in terms of mourning, death, and darkness of Hades. For the connection between children and mystery, see P. Lambrechts, „L’importance de l’enfant dans les religions à mystères,” Hommages W.
While in PP 18-30 Melito describes the calamity and mourning that the angel of death spread over the whole land of Egypt, in 31-33 he explains that the Lord-Christ worked within the old mystery as life, type, and spirit.

**B. The theory of types as connection between the two mystery series**

The exegesis of Exodus 12 may have originated in the Jewish tradition of the Pesach Haggadah in which the father of every family explains to his children the story of exodus, and will become a pattern for future paschal homilies or treatises, as one can see in Melito, Pseudo-Hippolytus, Origen, and partially in the homilies newly ascribed to Apollinarius of Laodicea. Moreover, Pseudo-Hippolytus and Origen follow the same bipartite Melitenean structure: while the first part being an exposition of the paschal figures and types of the old mystery from Exodus 12, the second part becomes an illustration of the true or prefigured realities. First comes the type or the Pesach, second the antitype or the Pascha.

Melito describes the relationship between the old and new mystery of Pascha through typological exegesis, a method that the author took over from previous Christian exegetical tradition. The old sacred Scriptures of the Jewish people (Scriptures accepted by the Christians as well) express ideas and depict Old Testament events that came to be associated with the events of the divine economy after the Incarnation. For instance, in 1 Cor 10:1-11 and Gal 4:21-31, Paul associates the crossing of the Red Sea with the Christian Baptism, in which case the crossing of the sea is a figure or type (ο τυπος) for the Christian sacrament (το αντιτύπον). Following the same logic, the manna of the desert was the figure of the Eucharist, while the pillar of cloud or fire was the figure of Christ himself. Scholars have called this type of exegesis *typology*, and it was a communality of the majority of Christian writers of the first three centuries. This fact prompted Jean Daniélou to view typology as the Christian exegesis *par excellence*.13

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13 For a detailed analysis of the central biblical themes which received a typological interpretation in the first centuries (e.g. Adam, Noah, the flood, Abraham sacrificing Isaac, the exodus or the fall of Jericho), see Jean Daniélou’s classic *Sacramentum Futuri: Études sur les origines de la typologie biblique*. According to his perspective, allegory was of Philonean inspiration and essentially Greek. However, for
However, at least for Melito, Pseudo-Hippolytus, and Origen, typology seem to play the function of connecting the two series of mysteries by relating an old figure or type with its corresponding antitype. Furthermore, typology reveals the unique source and agent of the two series of mysteries, the Logos-Christ and thus the fact that there is only one mystery developed in different grades and stages.

C. Melito’s Term μυστήριον: From 'Secret' to 'Performance'

The main exegetes who preceded Melito, namely Justin, Tertullian, and Irenaeus, continued to use the method of typology originated in the Pauline writings, especially for the theological polemics in which they were involved. Within these polemics, major opponents were the Jewish readers, who did not see in Scriptures the Christological meanings described for instance by Justin. Furthermore, also take into account both Marcionite theologians, not very lenient towards obscure scriptural passages, and the ironies of philosophically educated Greeks, such as Celsus, Porphyry or the emperor Julian the ‘Apostate’. The idea of obscure words was not new, since as early as the book of Proverbs 1:6, one encounters a reflection on the concepts of parable (παραβολή), obscure word (σκοτεινὸς λόγος), or enigma (αἰσθήμα). Centuries later, Justin would call these obscure passages mystery (μυστήριον) or symbol (σύμβολον), and Christian theologians would interpret them mainly typologically.

It is worth mentioning that, although the term μυστήριον appears in the Pauline corpus, a development of exegesis as mystery performance or cult does not seem to materialize in Christian context before Melito. In Justin, for instance, the term can be encountered when the writer claims that prophecies describe future events through parables, mysteries, and symbols of events (ἐν παραβολαῖς ἡ μυστηρίος ἡ ἐν

Henri de Lubac, on the basis of Gal 2:24, allegory was as Christian as typology. Moreover, for de Lubac “Origen’s allegorism is typological” and the distinction between typology and allegory seems to be analogous to that between theory and practice (“Typologie et allégorisme,” *Revue des sciences religieuses* 34 [1947] 220-221). Other researchers such as H. Crouzel see in allegory the method through which various terrestrial realities symbolize celestial realities, while typology is the method through which one historical reality denotes another historical reality, especially post-incarnational, or an event having Christ as subject. See Crouzel, *Origen* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989) 80-81.

Justin's theological rationale was that the Holy Spirit manifests itself through parable and in a hidden way (ἐν παραβολῇ δὲ καὶ παρακεκαλυμένως).

It seems that in the Justinean and Irenean theological visions Christ’s coming was perceived as producing major exegetical consequences, namely that Christ discloses the obscure words of the old holy writings. Irenaeus claims that the good news about Christ was hidden (κεκρυμμένος) in prophecies and symbolized through types and parables (διὰ τύπων καὶ παραβολῶν ἐσμαίνετο) which could be understood only at the time of their fulfillment.

For Melito, on the contrary, the term μυστήριον seems to signify a performance or cult rather than a secret or enigma. Trying to frame Melito’s Sitz im Leben, it is worth mentioning the rise of allegorical techniques of interpretation in the first century AD with Middle Platonists and Neo-Pythagorians, with Herakleitos and Cornutus. Philo and other Jewish writers were also important players. Moreover, Bockmuehl investigated the application of these techniques in the domain of mysteries: “The mystical technique appears not to have been practiced before Plutarch (c. A.D. 45-120), but it went on to find rich development in the second and third centuries, e.g. in Numenius and Porphyry.” As I have noted above, Melito applied these techniques in connecting the two (old and new) mysteries of Pascha. One might suppose that the Sardisian Christian bishop adopted this strategy as a polemical reaction to the mystery context of the Asia Minor of the second century. One should not overlook the fact that “Ephesians’ Artemis” had been celebrated in festivals at least until A.D. 262 when Goths destroyed the Artemesion. At the same time, Cybele, the other mother goddess, if not identical to Artemis, was celebrated in the northeastern Anatolian regions and the worship of Cybele was spread from here all over

15 Dial. 68.6. J.D.B. Hamilton noticed that “Justin’s use of mysterion is non-cultic” and Clement was the first to contrast the mysteries of Dionysios with the ‘holy mysteries’ [in the plural] of Christ (e.g. Protrep. XII.118.4); see Hamilton’s “The Church and the Language,” 479-94, esp. 484-85.
16 Ibid., 52.1. Clement of Alexandria also maintains the idea that the entire Scripture was written in parables (see Str. V.25.1).
17 The following fragment is illustrative for this theological vision: “And when Isaiah calls Him [Christ] the Angel of mighty counsel, did he not foretell Him to be the Teacher of those truths which He did teach when He came [to earth]? […] For if the prophets declared obscurely (παρακεκαλυμένως) that Christ would suffer, and thereafter be Lord of all, yet that [declaration] could not be understood by any man until He Himself persuaded the apostles that such statements were expressly related in the Scriptures” (Dialogue with Trypho 76, ANF 1).
19 Bockmuehl, Revelation and Mystery, 79-80.
20 Bockmuehl, Revelation and Mystery, 80; see also note 87.
the Roman Empire.\footnote{For the large extent of Cybele worship in Asia Minor, see for instance M. J. Vermaseren, \textit{Corpus Cultus Cybelae Attidisque (CCCA)}, Vol. I Asia Minor (Leiden, New York: E. J. Brill, 1987). For festivals of Cybele and Attis, see M. J. Vermaseren’s \textit{Cybele and Attis. The Myth and the Cult} (London: Thames and Hudson, 1877), esp. 21-3, 110-2. For Jupiter’s worship in Asia Minor, see also M. Hörig and E. Schwerheim, \textit{Corpus Cultus Iovis Dolicheni (CCID)} (Leiden: Brill, 1987) 3-16.} Attis was also venerated in connection with Cybele, while Sebazios had his special mysteries, which in time had become a sort of Asia Minor version of the Dionysian ones.\footnote{R. Follet, K. Prümm, “Mystères,” \textit{Suppl. au Dictionnaire de la Bible} (t.VI; 1960) 1-225.} The most important cities of Asia Minor may be then encountered in the stories about Apollonius of Tyana, a famous Neo-Pythagorean prophet and philosopher. His biography, written and often mythicized by Philostratos around A.D. 240, offers an emblematic picture for the mentalities of that time. Another case, not less famous, was that of Alexander of Abonuteichos, the second-century prophet satirized by Lucian of Samosata, the satire in itself being a testimony of his celebrity. Asia Minor of the second century was, therefore, the center of a significant bloom of mysteries and mystery mentalities. Within this context, the Christian polemical reaction, and particularly that of a bishop as Melito, cannot be a surprise.\footnote{This attitude is not unique in Melito’s works. Fr. 8b from his \textit{On Baptism}, might be a polemic with the myth of Isis (the earth) who bathes in rains and river (Osiris, cf. Plutarch, \textit{Isis} 364a; 367a; Sallustius 4.3) and the myth of Helios (either Apollo or Attis) who descends into the Ocean. Melito compares them with Christ as the Sun (ἥλιος) of dawn and king of heaven (Hall, \textit{Melito}, 71-3). Compare this title with Apollo’s title of king (άυτός) in \textit{Orphica} 34. Moreover, in his \textit{Apology} to Marcus Aurelius, Melito clearly states: “We are not devotees of stones [probably the statues] which have no sensation, but we are worshippers of the only God who is before all and over all” (Hall, \textit{Melito}, Fr. 2, 65).}

Moreover, one may find similarities between the role that the reading of Exodus 12 and its commentary or homily play in the Paschal celebration and the role the transmission (παράδοσις) of the ἱεροὶ λόγοι in the context of mystery cults.\footnote{Burkert argues that books were used and played an important role in the mysteries especially in the second part, the παράδοσις, when the hierophant used to transmit the ἱεροὶ λόγοι and explain them. See W. Burkert, \textit{Ancient Mystery Cults} (Cambridge, London: Harvard University Press, 1987) 69-78.} Placed between the stage of purification (καθαρμός) and that of the highest revelation (ἐποπτεία), the stage of παράδοσις was one of transmission of sacred knowledge and a preparation for the vision of the mysteries.\footnote{Burkert shows that the mysteries of Dionysos implied three degrees. First, in Plato’s \textit{Symposium}: 1. ἐλεγχός = purification (201d-202c); 2. instruction, including the myth of origin (203b-e); 3. ἐποπτικὸ (210a). Then Clement, \textit{Str.} 5.11.71 (καθαρμός, δίσωσικαλα, ἐποπτεία) and Theon of Smyrna 14: καθαρμός, παράδοσις, ἐποπτεία (Burkert, \textit{Ancient Mystery Cults}, 153-154).} Melito, too, invites his initiants to understand and see the mystery of the Lord. The sensorial modality of this discovery is seeing, the standard sensorial modality in the mysteries: “If you want to see the mystery
of the Lord (τὸ τοῦ κυρίου μυστήριον ἰδέσθωι)..." During the stage of the ‘Christian’ paradosis, the Christian initiand has to reconstruct and try to see the series of manifestations of the economic mysteries in their traces in Scripture. In this way the Christian may become a μυστης in Christ’s mysteries.

D. Christ the Pascha: The New Mystery

Starting with PP 66, Melito describes the series of manifestations of the mystery that the Logos performed in the new times, i.e., after his Incarnation. The emblematic thing is that the same Logos-Christ performs both mystery series. While in the old times he suffered in Abel, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses or David, in the new series of mysteries the same Logos-Christ takes flesh in the virgin and suffers passions, death, burial, resurrection, and thus causes humans’ salvation from death. The whole history of salvation is therefore envisioned as the mystery of Logos-Christ’s economy.

Moreover, one can identify a double dynamic of the connection between the figure (τῦπος) of the old mystery and the Logos-Christ. On the one hand, though in a hidden way, the Logos manifests itself towards or within the type. In a chain of rhetorical questions addressed to the angel of death, Melito exclaims:

It is clear that your respect was won when you saw the mystery of the Lord occurring in the sheep, the life of the Lord in the slaughter of the lamb, the model of the Lord in the death of the sheep; that is why you did not strike Israel, but made only Egypt childless.


27 PP 59-60: “Therefore if you wish to see the mystery of the Lord, look at Abel who is similarly murdered, at Isaac who is similarly bound, at Joseph who is similarly sold, at Moses who is similarly exposed, at David who is similarly persecuted, at the prophets, etc.” (Hall, On Pascha, 33).

28 PP 32.203-33.212. For the pre-incarnational economy of the Logos-Christ, see also IP 81-88, or 96, in which Christ is depicted as the one who created the world and man, saved Israel from Egypt, and
On the other hand, a reverse dynamic emerges from the type towards the antitype as far as it is in its antitype that mystery of the type is fulfilled and the old obscure words of the sacred text may find their meaning. As the bishop of Sardis explains to his church fellows: “What is said and what is done is nothing, beloved, without a comparison and preliminary sketch. (Οὐδὲν ἔστιν, ἀγαπητοὶ, τὸ λεγόμενον καὶ γινόμενον δίχα παραβολής καὶ προκεντήματος).”29 He further explains that every important construction needs a preliminary sketch (τὸ προκέντημα) made out of wax, clay or wood. In the economic process, this preliminary sketch is the mystery hidden in the Old Testament events and known only by the prophets. Melito does not conceive of the sketch as completed work (ἐργον), but merely the image of its future fulfillment; in his own words, what is going to be (after the Incarnation) may be seen in the image of the type (τὸ μέλλον διὰ τῆς τυπικῆς εἰκόνος ὀρᾶται).30

The old mystery is then involved into the dynamism of being changed into its antitype, as expressed here: “For indeed the law has become word, and the old new […], and the commandment grace, and the model (τύπος) reality (ἀλήθεια), and the lamb a Son, and the sheep a Man, and the Man God.”31 Using a different metaphor, the type is not changed into its antitype but only transfers its power to the antitype: “The model was made void, conceding its power (ἡ δύναμις) to the reality, and the law was fulfilled, conceding its power to the gospel.”32

While the economic series is fulfilled in the mystery of the Pascha,33 the level of initiation remains opened and the fulfilled mystery always new in its being rediscovered:

The mystery of the Lord having been prefigured well in advance and having been seen through a model (διὰ τοῦ ὄραθέν), is today believed in now that it is fulfilled (τετελεσθέντα), though considered new by men. For the mystery of the Lord is new and old.34

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29 PP 35.217-218.
31 PP 7.41-9.
32 PP 42.271-2.
33 “[T]he mystery of the Pascha has been fulfilled in the body of the Lord (τὸ τοῦ πάσχα μυστήριον τετελεσθείς εν τῷ τοῦ κυρίου σώματι) [PP 56.396-397].”
34 PP 58.405-412.
This sentence assumes that the mystery of economy is one, though manifested in various ways. Hidden in the letters of the ancient Scriptures and within the divine economy, it remains to be forever new in every process of being rediscovered.

**Pseudo-Hippolytus’s Paschal Mystery Exegesis**

Pseudo-Hippolytus, an anonymous author who most likely lived in the same province – Asia Minor – and not much later than Melito, developed a similar vision.\(^{35}\) In general, Pseudo-Hippolytus is indebted to Melito both in terms of homily structure or theological perspective. For him, biblical exegesis is mystery performance as well. Declaimed within the liturgical context of the paschal night after the reading from Exodus 12, the homily becomes the explanation of the ιεροὶ λόγοι (now in the Christian version of θεία γραφή) of the mystery:

> While the divine Scripture (θεία γραφή) has mystically (μυστικῶς) pre-announced this sacred feast (ιερὰ ἱερτή)\(^{36}\) [of Pascha], we will now investigate the revealed things in minute detail and search for the hidden mysteries of Scripture in response to your prayers. We will not suppress the truth in what is written, but contemplate through the figures the accuracy of the mysteries (τὴν δὲ ἀκριβεῖαν τῶν μυστηρίων διὰ τῶν τύπων θεοροῦντες).\(^{37}\)

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\(^{35}\) R. Cantalamessa’s position in *L’Omelia “In S. Pascha” dello Pseudo-Ippolito di Roma. Ricerche sulla teologia dell’Asia Minore nella seconda metà del II secolo* (Milano: Societa Editrice Vita e Pensiero, 1967) has been accepted by a large number of scholars such as J. Daniélou, A. Grillmeier, B. Botte, M. Simonetti, S. G. Hall, C. C. Richardson, G. Kretschmar, F. Blanchetière, M. G. Mara, and E. Mazza. At the same time, P. Nautin, H. D. Allendorf, or G. Visona maintain a four or five century position. Visona, in a series of articles – e.g. “Pseudo-Ippolito In s. Pascha: note di storia e di critica del testo,” *Aevum* 59 (1985) 107-123; “Pseudo-Ippolito In s. Pascha 53 e la tradizione dell’enkrateia,” *Cristianesimo nella storia* 6 (1985) 445-488; “L’interpretazione sacrametale di Io. 19,34 nello Pseudo-Ippolito In s. Pascha 53,” *RSLR* 21 (1985) – and his book *Pseudo Ippolito. In sanctum Pascha. Studio, edizione, commento* (Milano: Vita e pensiero, 1988), offers several examples of theological terms and themes shared by Pseudo-Hippolytus and a large plethora of theologians from the second to the fifth centuries. The consequence would be that there are many difficulties in dating *In s. Pacha*. However, an early date might be suggested on the basis of certain Pseudo-H Hippolytean points which hardly would have occurred in a paschal homily of the post-Origenian era: the Melitonean structure and method of articulating the discourse, the anthropomorphism (the idea needs a longer argumentation, which I offered in my presentation at the conference “Living in Antiquity: Jews, Greeks, and Christians,” Villanova University, Oct. 5-7, 2005), the tendency to binitarianism, or Spirit Christology. K. Gerlach also associates *In s. Pascha* with the Asian homiletic tradition and the ‘theological conversation’ of the second and third centuries (*The Antenicene Pascha. A Rhetorical History* [Leuven: Peeters, 1998] 161, 387 and 403).

\(^{36}\) For ιερὰ ἱερτή, see especially Od. 21.258; Hdt. 1.31; 147, Th. 2.15; 4.5, and A. Eu. 191, where ἱερτή (used for nine times in the homily) denotes a religious feast. Melito employed the noun especially in the expression μεγάλη ἱερτή (*PP* 79.565; 92.677).

For the author, while the types (οἱ τύποι), symbols (τὰ σύμβολα), and mysteries (τὰ μυστήρια) have occurred in Israel in a visible way (ὁρατῶς), they reach their completion in the Christian Pascha in a spiritual modality (πνευματικῶς τελεσιουργούμενα).  

The new Paschal mystery is the common celebration of all (κοινὴ τῶν ὅλων πανήγυρις), eternal feast of angels and archangels, life for the entire world, wound of death, food for humans, sacred ritual (ἱερὰ τελετή) of the heaven and earth, and prophesizes old and new mysteries which can be scrutinized in a visible way (ὁρατῶς βλεπόμενα) on earth and perceived through the mind (νοούμενα) in heaven.  

Pseudo-Hippolytus, as a mystagogue knowing the mysteries of Scripture, guides his new initiates on the traces of the scriptural mysteries, namely over the types, connecting them with their antitypes. In this way, he remakes the history of divine economy in its double aspect: in Law and Incarnation. Egypt pre-announced (προαναγγέλλω) the truth (ἀληθεία) in figures (οἱ τύποι) and the Law pre-interpreted (προερμηνεύω) it in images/copies (εἰκόνες), bringing into being only the shadow of the things to come (τῶν μελλόντων σκιώ). But the Christian initiand can discover the models of those copies (τῶν εἰκόνων τὰ μορφώματα) and the completions of the figures (τῶν τύπων τὰ πληρώματα), and, instead of shadow, the accuracy and confirmation of the truth (ἡ ἁκρίβεια καὶ βεβαιώσις τῆς ἀληθείας).  

Contemplation (θεωρία) and to contemplate (θεωρέω) a feast (πανήγυρις or ἱερωτή), as well as associated verbs such as ὀρᾶω and νοεῖω, reflect a mystery terminology which recalls a basic fact of mystery cults, namely that of seeing what is manifested in the ceremony. The so-called θεωρεῖ ἦσαν ambassadors or spectators at the oracles or games. See, for instance, Pl. Phd 58b; Pl. Lg 650a; D. 21.115; X. Mem 4.8.2; Decr. Byz. ap. D. 18.91; Plb. 28.19.4; S. OT 1491.

38 IP 7.1-3. The verb τελεσιουργέω, especially in its participial forms as τελεσιουργόν, as well as the noun τελεσιουργία often occur, for instance, in Iamblichus’s treaty De Mysteriis, most likely written in the same period. See Iamblichus: De mysteriis, E.C. Clarke, J.M. Dillon, and J.P. Hershbell, trans. (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2004).

39 For the religious character of πανήγυρις, see Archil. 120; Pl.O. 9.96; Hdt. 2.59, 58; Th. 220. For its connection with the verb (θεωρέω), see Ar. Pax 342 and Decr. ap. D. 18.91.

40 Liddel-Scott’s A Greek-English Lexicon translates τελετή through rite, esp. initiation in the mysteries (Hdt. 2.171; And. 1.111; Pl. Euthd 277d; Hdt. 4.79), mystic rites practiced at initiation (E. Ba 22, 73 (lyr.), Ar. F. 121; Pax 413, 419; Id. Ra 1032; D. 25.11; Pl. Phdr 244e; Id. R. 365a, Prt. 316d; Isoc 4.28), a making magically potent (PMagPar 1.1596, PMagLond 46.159, 121.872) a festival accompanied by mystic rites or sacred office, Decr. ap. D. 59.104, or theological doctrines (in a plural form in Chrysipp. Stoic. 2.17). Τελετή means ‘rite’ as early as the Orphic tradition from at least the fifth century B.C., as one can see in G. S. Kirk, J. E. Raven, and M. Schofield, The Presocratic Philosophers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983) 221.

41 IP 3.30-31.

42 IP 2.9-10.
Akin to Melito, pseudo-Hippolytus divides mysteries into old and new and envisages the divine economy developed over two stages, the boundary between them being the event of the Incarnation. While in the first part of the homily, the author follows the pre-figurations of the future antitypes, in the second part he describes the mysteries of the truth (τὰ τῆς ἀληθείας μυστήρια). Incarnation, Passion, Resurrection, and Ascension. Taking over a Pauline idea from Col 2:9, the homilist expresses the Incarnation in this way: “compressing in himself all the greatness of the divinity […] without diminishing the glory.”

An important dimension of mystery ceremony regards the real participation in a sacred or consecrated substance, i.e., the process of eating the consecrated offerings (τὰ ἱερὰ). For the Israelites, in Pseudo-Hippolytus’ view, the consecrated offerings eaten in a mystery rite consisted in the paschal lamb. But for Christians, the paschal lamb is just the figure of the Christian Pascha and Eucharist. In addition, the mystery substance Christians eat with spiritual knowledge brings death’s defeat. The author does not speak metaphorically in either case, but concretely. Another main element of mystery celebrations consists in the preservation of the secrets performed and contemplated in the ceremony within the group of initiated people. Now, the group is the ecclesia and the central secret is eating the Pascha or the sacred body of Christ.

Pursuing this intelligible or noetic itinerary of contemplating the divine manifestations of the Logos in figures and truth, Christians turn out to be initiated in the old and new things with a sacred knowledge (οί τὰ καινὰ καὶ παλαιὰ μετὰ γνώσεως ἱερῶς μεμυημένοι); in other words, of the old and new manifestations of the divine economy.

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43 IP 7.5.
44 IP 45.10-13: πάν τὴς θεότητος εἰς ἑαυτὸν συναθροίσας καὶ συναγαγὼν […] ὁ δὲ […] τῇ δόξῃ δαπανοῦμενος.
45 IP 50.5-6.
46 IP 40 and 41.
47 IP 4.1-2.
Mystery Exegesis in Origen's Paschal Treatise

Mystery exegesis may be also encountered in the Origenian paschal treatise discovered at Tura in 1941. According to extant vestiges, there were a few other paschal documents at the time Origen wrote his treatise. Among them, those belonging to Apollinarius of Hierapolis and Clement of Alexandria are fragmentary preserved in the Byzantine document entitled the *Chronicon pascale*. In spite of reduced quantity of preserved material, one can identify two new central ideas that emerged within these documents and both are preserved in the Origenian treatise.

First, while Melito’s and Pseudo-Hippolytus’s homilies were Quartodeciman and developed the etymology of the Greek word πάσχα from the Greek verb πάσχω (to suffer, to be affected), Apollinarius and Clement were anti-Quartodeciman. Second, Clement had access to Philo’s writings and for Philo the word πάσχα does not have its origins in the Greek πάσχω, but in the Hebrew פסח (pesach). In his turn, Origen perhaps inherited these two ideas from Clement, namely the anti-Quartodeciman position and the idea that πάσχα means “crossing,” or “passage.”

It seems that the conception of Pascha as passage was a Jewish common place, as far as Josephus translated it by ἐπερβασία (traspasa), Philo by διάβασις (crossing over) and διαβατήρια (passing over), while Aquila rendered it with υπέρβασις. Either from Clement or directly from Philo, Origen took over the term of διάβασις. In fact, the

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50 *Chronicon pascale*, PG 92.80c-81a.
51 Philo, *Congr*.100-106. For Clement, see *Chronicon pascale*, PG 92.81a-c. Moreover, according to Eusebius’ testimony (HE, IV,26.4; VI,13,9), Clement also wrote a treatise entitled *Peri Pascha* and used, for its redaction, Melito’s treatise with the same title, *Peri Pascha*. For * setSize* 557, see L. Koehler and W. Baumgartner, *Lexicon in Veteris Testamentis* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1958) 769: nif.: grow lame; qal: 1. be lame, limp; 2. limp over at, pass over, spare (as in Ex 12:13,23,27); nif. impf.: be lamed; pi. impf.: limp (worshipping) around (1 Kg 18:26).
52 *Art* II, 313.
53 *Leg* iii, 94,154,165; *Sacrif* 63; *Migr* 25; *Her* 192; *Cong* 106; *Spec* ii,147.
55 Clement, *Str*. II, XI, 51.2. The link between the meaning of Pascha and passage can be encountered in rabbinic traditions, for instance in *Mishnah Pesahim* X.5 and *Exodus Rabbah* 12.2, and also in Melito’s *PP* 68.472-6.
Greek word πάσχα represents a transcription of the Aramaic אחספ, pasha.\textsuperscript{56} Again, through the same Clement or from the original source, Origen took over the Philonian idea that πάσχα refers allegorically to the passage from the sensible to the intelligible world.\textsuperscript{57} It is worth mentioning that, to a certain extent, this idea is also implied in the tradition that originates in Melito, as we have seen in Pseudo-Hippolytus (e.g. IP 3:30-31; 7:1-3).

Scholars have emphasized Clement’s mystery exegesis in \textit{Protrepticos} and \textit{Stromateis}, and most likely the Alexandrian mystery tradition from Philo to Clement inspired Origen.\textsuperscript{58} K. J. Torjensen’s article, “The Alexandrian Tradition of the Inspired Interpreter,”\textsuperscript{59} is of considerable help for the present investigation. The Alexandrian interpreter, in fact, has a prophetic function. Through the study of Scripture, the interpreter becomes a visionary of the things divine and able to mediate or disclose divine knowledge. As Torjensen explains that mentality:

Origen, as exegete, has penetrated the divine mysteries of Scripture, because he has lived the life of a prophet, the holy life. Like the prophets he has undergone, experienced and exemplified the transformative process created by knowledge of the divine.\textsuperscript{60}

\textit{A. Paschal Mystery Exegesis and the Eucharistic Sacrifice}

Scholars have also shown that Origen is indebted to the bishop of Sardis for different aspects of his hermeneutics.\textsuperscript{61} The exegesis as a mystery performance at the Paschal feast might also be of Asia Minor inspiration. According to Origen, the τεραί γραφαί describe


\textsuperscript{57} Philo, \textit{Spec.} II,145-147; \textit{Mos.} II,224; \textit{Her.} 192; \textit{Migr.} 25; \textit{Quaest. Ex.} 4-19.


\textsuperscript{60} Torjensen, “The Alexandrian Tradition,” 295.

\textsuperscript{61} Campbell Bonner emphasized the Melitonian inspiration of the Origenian passage \textit{HLv} X.1, where Origen describes the relation between the Old and New Testament through the image of the preliminary sketch; see \textit{The Homily on the Passion by Melito, Bishop of Sardis} (Studies and Documents XII; Cambridge, 1940) 56-72. In a similar way, Jean Daniélou proved that Origen quoted the Sardisian for a few times, e.g. in \textit{CPs} III.1, \textit{CGn} I.26, or \textit{CMt} X.9-11 (“Figure et événement chez Meliton”, in \textit{Neotestamentica et patristica} [Leiden: Brill, 1962] 290-292). The large amount of Melitonian themes, and especially their diversity, and that of the Origenian treatises in which they have been taken over, may constitute an argument for the idea that the bishop of Sardis was an important theological authority for the great Alexandrian.
how God ordered to the ancient Israelites to fulfill a sacred service (ἱεροτρηματίζειν) and a sacred sacrifice (ἱεροθυσία) in a mystical way (μυστηριωδῶς).

As for the new mysteries, the Alexandrian preserves the traditional distinction between type/figure and antitype/truth and makes the following Eucharistic statement:

We have to sacrifice the true lamb (πρόβατον) in order to be sanctified/consecrated priests (ἱεροθεοματείς) or to come closer to the priestly status and have to burn and eat his flesh. [...] He Himself says that this Pascha is not sensible (ἀισθητόν) but intelligible (νοητόν): If you do not eat my flesh and drink my blood, you will not have life in yourself (Jn 6:53). Should we eat His flesh and drink His blood in a sensible way? But if He speaks in an intelligible way, then Pascha is not sensible, but intelligible.

In this fragment, the Pascha is identified with the Eucharist, and the Jewish Pesach consequently becomes the type of the Christian Eucharist. Origen then inserts his exegetical vision in this liturgical or ritualistic context. If one takes a look at the goal of the Paschal ritual, one can notice that the participants in this ritual (expressed in the plural first person) have to become consecrated priests or sanctified, or at least closer to the priestly status. The verb exploited in this context is ἱεροῖν, which means, in the active voice, “to make holy or to consecrate to the gods,” while in the passive voice, as in the present passage, has the meaning of “being a consecrated priest.” The conception most likely recalls the idea of universal or general priesthood (see 1 Pt 2:5), as long as every partaker of the Eucharist actually sacrifices (θυσία) and eats Christ’s body.

Furthermore, Origen associates another Eucharistic theme with the Paschal one: Those who eat the sacred body will receive life, while those who do not eat will not have any defense before the angel of death which is called here with a term from the Epistle to the Hebrews 11:28, “the destroyer” (ὁ ὀλοθρευτὴς). Origen further operates with a new distinction among those who will survive the destroyer, putting forward the degrees of advancement in mysteries. First are the perfect ones, those who fight for their purity and eat from the lambs’ flock and wheat bread. This food is purer and more appropriate to

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62 Origen, Peri Pascha 39.9-29.
63 Origen, PP 13,3-35. On passage 26, he explains how the flesh, i.e. the Scripture, does not have to be eaten green, which means literally interpreted, but burned on the fire of the Holy Spirit, and in this way spiritually read.
64 Liddell-Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon, v.1, p.823. For textual references, see Pl.Lg.771b; Inscriptiones Graecae, Voluminum ii et iii, ed. J. Kirchner, 1126.16; Berl.Sitzb.1927.8; Aeschin. I.19.
those who live spiritually (λογικωτάς; more precisely, akin to the Logos). They are followed by those still under sin and eating from the kids’ flock and barley bread.66

B. Mystery Exegesis and Paschal Liturgical Context

Origen also associates with the Paschal context an exegesis focused on Scripture: “If the lamb is Christ and Christ is the Logos, what is the flesh of the divine words in that case if not the divine Scriptures?”67 A few pages further, he states more confidence: “we participate in Christ’s flesh, this is the divine Scriptures.”68 One may notice that, for the Alexandrian theologian, the exegetical process was not one of accumulating new data, but one of participating in a mystery wherein the initiand becomes capable of eating the intelligible flesh of God.69 Moreover, he further develops this idea making a parallel to the mystery idea of the dismembered deity.70 According to him, only those who struggle towards eating the ‘entrails’ (τὰ ἐντοσθίδια) of the divine body will be able to see (ὁψονται) the depths of God (τὰ βάθη τοῦ θεοῦ).71 He further clearly specifies the idea that the one who eats the entrails of the divine body becomes an initiate in the mysteries (ὁ ἐν μυστηρίοις μυστηριούς).72

Employing mystery terminology, Origen sets his discourse in a Greek mystery framework. Nonetheless, in spite of the mystery terminology present in the text, the content is Christian liturgical and the context in which the discourse is placed is also Christian, very similar with those of Melito, Clement and Ps-Hippolytus. Expressing Christian cult in mystery terminology, Origen has a double discursive intention: Christian cult is also a mystery and, moreover, it is a superior mystery. One can reasonably suppose that Melito, Pseudo-Hippolytus, Clement, and Origen had the same narrative strategy as

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66 Origen, PP 23.
67 Origen, PP 26.5-8.
68 Origen, PP 33.1-3.
70 As Burkert affirms: “The basic idea of an initiation ritual is generally taken to be that of death and rebirth” (Burkert, Ancient Mystery Cults, 99). He further gives examples from various mystery cults such as Isis and Osiris, Dionysos and Persephone. The Mithraic monuments also “indicate that the day of the initiation ritual was a new birthday; the mystes was natus et renatus.” Burkert, 100). Cf. M. Eliade, Rites and Symbols of Initiation: The Mysteries of Birth and Rebirth (New York: Harper & Row, 1975, c1958).
in the case of taking over Greek philosophical terminology, namely polemizing against the Greek communities that constituted their environment at the time. Consequently, their strategy towards Greek philosophy and mysteries was one of borrowing terminology and claiming that Christianity is the true philosophy and the receptacle of the highest mysteries.\(^{73}\)

In his text, Origen assumes that Christians take part in Christ’s body in varying degrees: part of them in the head, others in the hands, feet, chest, entrails or viscera.\(^{74}\)

There are, therefore, different degrees of initiation and those who eat the viscera reach the highest level, becoming initiated in the meaning (\(\lambda \dot{\omicron} \gamma \omicron \zeta\)) of the mystery of Incarnation, which is cardinal.\(^{75}\) Thus Origen can conceive of a hierarchy among paschal mysteries. While the Old-Testament Paschal mysteries (\textit{mysteria paschae} [in Lat.]) have been changed at the coming of the New Testament, the New-Testament mysteries (\textit{mysteria} [Lat.]) will be removed, in their turn, at the time of resurrection.\(^{76}\)

The Origenian exegetical itinerary, as well as the Melitonian one, displays and make discernible the manifestations of the Logos in Scriptures. It is a way by which the words of the sacred text turn into transparent enigmas and mirrors of the things to come. (Here the Alexandrian recalls the famous 1 Cor 13:12.) In Origen’s view, the flesh, blood, and bones, which have to be eaten, represent symbolically the elements of the sacred text through which the heavenly realities may be envisioned. While ‘bones’ refer to the words (\(\alpha \iota \lambda \dot{\varepsilon} \varepsilon \varepsilon \omicron \zeta\)) of Scripture and ‘flesh’ to the meanings (\(\tau \alpha \nu \omicron \omicron \mu \alpha \tau\alpha\)), ‘blood’ is the faith which saves from the ‘destroyer’.\(^{77}\) The parallel to the myth of the

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\(^{73}\) One may notice that the Greek mystery and philosophical themes and terms are not the only instruments through which Origen builds his exegesis in \textit{Peri Pascha}. He employs Jewish or Jewish-Christian ascetic themes and terminology as well. To overcome sensoriality and to avoid sexuality (see pages 35-37) as preparation for eating Pascha, or to participate in the heavenly mysteries, all of these are features belonging to the Jewish ascetic and ascensional framework. Torjensen’s position is emblematic in expressing interpreter’s ascension and transformation: “The myth of ascent provides a locative framework in which the teacher is «translated» into the realm of the divine and through proximity to the divine is assimilated to the divine and then returns as a mediator. This transmigration or translocation of the teacher renders him godlike. Philo, Clement, Origen, Valentinus used this myth to imagine a cosmology that orients the human toward the divine and to imagine a process of ascent which orients the soul’s transformative ascent or return to its original nature.” (Torjensen, “The Alexandrian Tradition,” 295).

\(^{74}\) Origen, \textit{PP} 30 and 31.

\(^{75}\) Origen, \textit{PP} 31.25-27.

\(^{76}\) Ibid., 32.20-28. As de Lubac noticed in his \textit{Histoire et Esprit. L’intelligence de l’Écriture d’après Origène} (Paris: Cerf, 2002) 219, the idea of the three Pascha (Jewish, Christian, and heavenly) comes forth in other Origenian writings, too, such as \textit{HNm} XI.4, \textit{CMt} 80, or \textit{Clo} X.16.18.

\(^{77}\) \textit{PP} 33.20-34.2.
dismembered deity carries on with the idea of a new birth (παλιγγενεσία). For Origen, the true Pascha has to refer, in a spiritual way, to the passage from darkness to light, which is a new birth (γενεσία). The meaning of a new birth cannot be different from the passage to a perfect behavior (τέλεια πολιτεία) and a perfect love (τέλεια ἀγάπη), which may start from this earthly existence.

The goal of this study does not justify further detailing of the Origenian exegesis, which has been explored by so many previous scholars. However, an important issue that requires further attention regards the relationship between mystery exegesis and Origen’s general exegetical view. According to his theory of the triple sense, Origen distinguishes between the literary/historical, moral/psychological, and allegorical/spiritual/mystical exegesis. The last of these is the most important for the present investigation. The concept that Scripture is abundant in mysteries permeated by the Holy Spirit, and that exegesis produces a change within the initiated interpreter occurs also in Clement, from whom Origen most likely took it.

Could one qualify the typological exegesis of Origen's *Peri Pascha* (where the word “allegory” does not occur, just as it does not occur in Melito and Ps-Hippolytus) as different from allegory, as in Daniélou’s solution, or identical, as in Lubac’s position? Or,

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78 Origen, *PP* 3 and 4.
79 *PP* 4.36-5.2.
80 For a thorough presentation and a very comprehensive bibliography on Origen’s exegesis, see, for example, C. Kannengiesser, *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis* (vol. I; Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2004) 536-574.
81 It is worth mentioning that Origen did not write his *Peri Pascha* in his youth, but the work represents a mature undertaking, done during his stay in Caesarea between 235-248; i.e. between the writing of his commentaries on John and those on Matthew, most likely around 245 (Guéraud and Nautin, *Origène*, 109).
83 Cf. de Margerie, *Introduction*, 95-112. Analyzing Clement’s exegesis, de Margerie states: “Pour dégager la signification et la vie cachées sous cette parole [Christ’s word], le croyant doit s’assimiler à ces vérités, se purifier par la pratique des commandements pour participer à la sainteté de Dieu.” (de Margerie, *Introduction*, 97). For textual data in Clement, see *StV*. 24.1; 25.1; 56.2-57.2; 93.4; VI. 124.4-6; 126.1-4; 127.4; 131.3-5.
finally, could one make a distinction between the horizontal and the vertical dimensions, as Crouzel proposes? In Origen’s view, the end of mystical initiation is not obvious in terms of horizontal or vertical spatiality. There are fragments in which Christ is encountered on earth where his body is consumed, similar to the texts of the two Asia Minor theologians, and fragments in which the vertical dimension is evident, as well as the implied allegory.

Consequently, on the one hand, Origen preserves the mystery exegesis developed by the Asia Minor theologians. On the other hand, he emphasizes more powerfully the Platonic distinction between the sensible realities and their intelligible models.\(^8^5\)

An important observation is that the vertical dimension cannot be found in the Pauline fragment about allegory, where the two wives of Abraham refer to the Old and New Testament (Gal 4:20-24). Due to its very large original sense (“speaking about something else”), the notion of “allegory” has, therefore, a broader extension than that of “typology.” Perhaps a more suitable distinction to the textual data is that that F.M. Young employs, namely typology is a form of allegory.\(^8^6\) For this reason, allegory can incorporate typology as a genus incorporates a species. From a historical perspective, the extensive Alexandrian use of allegory brought a larger hermeneutical freedom than the Asia Minor theologians did. But this freedom at times brought speculative constructions lacking a sound connection with the biblical text.

However, according to one of Burkert’s illuminating insights, any allegory in a religious context is mystical, as Demetrius and Macrobius illustrate.\(^8^7\) In this way, the typology used in a mystery context, including those of the three Christian authors analyzed in this article, might also be considered an allegory.

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\(^8^5\) E.g. *CC* 2, *Clo* 1.24. Certain Platonic distinctions (especially that between paradigm and copy) also occur in Melito (e.g. *PP* 37-39) and Pseudo-Hippolytus (e.g. *IP* 2:1-8; 6:8-10). Moreover, the last one also discloses the idea that the mystery exegesis translates the exegete from the sensible to the intelligible world (*IP* 3:30-31; 6:8-10).


\(^8^7\) Burkert, *Ancient Mystery Cults*, 78-82. Demetrius, in his *On Style* 101 (300 BC-100AD), stats that “the mysteries too are expressed in the form of allegory, in order to arouse consternation and dread, just as they are performed in darkness and night.” Macrobius, in *Sc* 1.2.17f, concurs: “Thus the mysteries themselves are hidden in the tunnels of figurative expression.” See Burkert, *Ancient Mystery Cults*, 79.
Concluding remarks

The chain of argument of the present paper leads to the tentative conclusion that biblical exegesis in the Paschal context of the first three centuries in Asia Minor and Alexandria was part of a complex liturgical-exegetical system. Within that context, it was not a mere pious reading or an intellectual exercise but rather a cultic investigation through which the one who does the hermeneutical task undergoes transformation and encounters the concrete manifestations of the Logos. It seems that it played a similar role with the transmission and explication of the ἱεροὶ λόγοι in the mystery cults.

Moreover, the Asia Minor theologians developed a theory of two mysteries or series of manifestations of the Paschal mystery where the typology had the function of connecting the two series. On the basis of Burkert’s understanding of allegory, one may also affirm that the typology used in a mystery context is a form of allegory.

Origen, in his turn, probably took over the mystery exegesis of Pascha from diverse media, such as Philo, Clement, and Asia Minor theologians and developed it in connection with, if not even within the context of, the Paschal feast. The Alexandrian theologian also employed in his Peri Pascha the two mysteries theory together with the theory of types. In addition, Pseudo-Hippolytus and Origen elaborated Eucharistic features in connection with the feast of Pascha.

Generally speaking, it might be suggested that Melito, Pseudo-Hippolytus, and Origen associated the Paschal liturgical event with an exegetical moment in which, as in a dramatic performance, the audience was asked to discover and contemplate God’s manifested mysteries in Abel’s, Isaac’s, Jacob’s, or Joseph’s sufferings, in the sacrificed lamb and the salvation from Egypt, as well as in Christ’s Incarnation, salvific Passions, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension. Paschal exegesis was therefore not an abstract ratiocination, but a cultic activity, which should involve Christ’s contemplation.