

**0185-0254 – Origenes – A Letter From Africanus About Susanna**

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## A Letter to Origen from Africanus About the History of Susanna.

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GREETING, my lord and son, most worthy Origen, from Africanus.<sup>3026</sup> In your sacred discussion with Agnomon you referred to that prophecy of Daniel which is related of his youth. This at that time, as was meet, I accepted as genuine. Now, however, I cannot understand how it escaped you that this part of the book is spurious. For, in sooth, this section, although apart from this it is elegantly written, is plainly a more modern forgery. There are many proofs of this. When Susanna is condemned to die, the prophet is seized by the Spirit, and cries out that the sentence is unjust. Now, in the first place, it is always in some other way that Daniel prophesies—by visions, and dreams, and an angel appearing to him, never by prophetic inspiration. Then, after crying out in this extraordinary fashion, he detects them in a way no less incredible, which not even Philistion the play-writer would have resorted to. For, not satisfied with rebuking them through the Spirit, he placed them apart, and asked them severally where they saw her committing adultery. And when the one said, “Under a holm-tree” (*prinos*), he answered that the angel would saw him asunder (*prisein*); and in a similar fashion menaced the other who said, “Under a mastich-tree” (*schinos*), with being rent asunder (*schisthenai*). Now, in Greek, it happens that “holm-tree” and “saw asunder,” and “rend” and “mastich-tree” sound alike; but in Hebrew they are quite distinct. But all the books of the Old Testament have been translated from Hebrew into Greek.

2. Moreover, how is it that they who were captives among the Chaldæans, lost and won at play,<sup>3027</sup> thrown out unburied on the streets, as was prophesied of the former captivity, their sons torn from them to be eunuchs, and their daughters to be concubines, as had been prophesied; how is it that such could pass sentence of death, and that on the wife of their king Joakim, whom the king of the Babylonians had made partner of his throne? Then if it was not this Joakim, but some other from the common people, whence had a captive such a mansion and spacious garden? But a more fatal objection is, that this section, along with the other two at the end of it, is not contained in the Daniel received among the Jews. And add that, among all the many prophets who had been before, there is no one who has quoted from another word for word. For they had no need to go

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<sup>3026</sup> [See Routh's *Reliquiæ*, vol. ii. p. 115; also Euseb., i. 7, and Socrates, ii. 35. He ranks with the great pupils of the Alexandrian school, with which, however, he seems to have had only a slight personal relation. Concerning this Epistle to Origen, and the answer of the latter, consult Routh's very full annotations (*ut supra*, pp. 312–328). Concerning Gregory Thaumaturgus, the greatest of Origen's pupils, we shall know more when we come to vol. vi. of this series. He died *circa* 270.]

<sup>3027</sup> Nolte would change ἡστραγαλωμένοι (or ἀστραγαλώμενοι, as Wetsten. has it), which is a ἄπαξ εἰρημένον, into στραγγαλωμένοι or ἐστραγγαλωμένοι, “strangled.” He compares Tob. ii. 3.

a-begging for words, since their own were true; but this one, in rebuking one of those men, quotes the words of the Lord: "The innocent and righteous shalt thou not slay." From all this I infer that this section is a later addition. Moreover, the style is different. I have struck the blow; do you give the echo; answer, and instruct me. Salute all my masters. The learned all salute thee. With all my heart I pray for your and your circle's health.



## A Letter from Origen to Africanus.

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ORIGEN to Africanus, a beloved brother in God the Father, through Jesus Christ, His holy Child, greeting. Your letter, from which I learn what you think of the Susanna in the Book of Daniel, which is used in the Churches, although apparently somewhat short, presents in its few words many problems, each of which demands no common treatment, but such as oversteps the character of a letter, and reaches the limits of a discourse.<sup>3028</sup> And I, when I consider, as best I can, the measure of my intellect, that I may know myself, am aware that I am wanting in the accuracy necessary to reply to your letter; and that the more, that the few days I have spent in Nicomedia have been far from sufficient to send you an answer to all your demands and queries even after the fashion of the present epistle. Wherefore pardon my little ability, and the little time I had, and read this letter with all indulgence, supplying anything I may omit.

2. You begin by saying, that when, in my discussion with our friend Bassus, I used the Scripture which contains the prophecy of Daniel when yet a young man in the affair of Susanna, I did this as if it had escaped me that this part of the book was spurious. You say that you praise this passage as elegantly written, but find fault with it as a more modern composition, and a forgery; and you add that the forger has had recourse to something which not even Philistion the play-writer would have used in his puns between *prinos* and *prisein*, *schinos* and *schisis*, which words as they sound in Greek can be used in this way, but not in Hebrew. In answer to this, I have to tell you what it behoves us to do in the cases not only of the History of Susanna, which is found in every Church of Christ in that Greek copy which the Greeks use, but is not in the Hebrew, or of the two other passages you mention at the end of the book containing the history of Bel and the Dragon, which likewise are not in the Hebrew copy of Daniel; but of thousands of other passages also which I found in many places when with my little strength I was collating the Hebrew copies with ours. For in Daniel itself I found the word "bound" followed in our versions by very many verses which

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<sup>3028</sup> [See Dr. Pusey's *Lectures on Daniel the Prophet*, lect. vi. p. 326, 327; also *The Uncanonical and Apocryphal Scriptures*, by Rev. R. W. Churton, B.D. (1884), pp. 389-404. S.]