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Book one

## LECTURES IN PATROLOGY

### THE SCHOOL OF ALEXANDRIA

# *BEFORE ORIGEN*

Preparatory edition  
1995

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Reverend Father Tadros Y. Malaty has kindly permitted that his books be published in the COeRL. He has requested that we convey that any suggestions or amendments regarding their translation are welcome, and should be forwarded to:  
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Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, King of Kings and  
Lord of lords



THE BEHOLDER OF GOD  
MARK THE EVANGELIST  
SAINT AND MARTYR



*H.H. Pope Shenouda III, 117th Pope of  
Alexandria and the See of St. Mark*



**His Grace Bishop Daniel**  
**Bishop of Sydney and Affiliated Regions**

**THE SCHOOL OF ALEXANDRIA  
AND THE CONTEMPORARY  
CHURCH**

We are in need of studying the thoughts of the School of Alexandria, especially during the period of the first five centuries. It helps us to attain the divine grace of the Holy Trinity and practice the unity with the Father and the Son through the work of the Holy Spirit. It reveals how the early Church understands the Holy Scriptures, christianizes the Hellenic culture, and faces heresies.

The texts that the Alexandrian Fathers used in this study depend on: Ante-Nicene Fathers, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Ancient Writings of the Church, the Fathers of the Church, Source Christian, etc.

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We hope that this simple work will fill us with the grace of the Holy Spirit.

***Fr. Tadros Y. Malaty***

Jersey City: June 1994

# **INTRODUCTION to the SCHOOL OF ALEXANDRIA**

1. *INTRODUCTION TO THE SCHOOL OF ALEXANDRIA.*
2. *THE CHARACTERISTICS OF ALEXANDRIAN THEOLOGY.*
3. *THE ALLEGORICAL INTERPRETATION OF THE SCRIPTURES.*
4. *THE SCHOOL OF ALEXANDRIA AND THE Gnostics.*
5. *THE SCHOOL OF ALEXANDRIA AND PHILOSOPHICAL ATTITUDES.*

# ***AN INTRODUCTION TO THE SCHOOL OF ALEXANDRIA***

Long before the establishment of Christianity in Alexandria, the city was famous for its many schools. By far, the largest school was the "*Museum*," which was founded by Ptolemy and became the most famous school in the East. In addition, there were the "*Serapeum*" and the "*Sebastion*." Each of these three schools had its own huge library<sup>1</sup>. Justo L. Gonzalez states that the *Museum's* library, whose directors were among the most remarkable scholars of the world, grew to the point where it housed 700,000 volumes, making it an arsenal of knowledge that was astounding for its time. The *Museum*, as its name proclaims, was dedicated to the Muses, and was a sort of university in which the most distinguished writers, scientists, and philosophers gathered and worked. Largely because of these institutions, Alexandria soon became famous as a rich center of knowledge<sup>2</sup>. Numerous Jewish schools were also scattered everywhere<sup>3</sup>.

The geographical position of Alexandria gave a special flavor to the thought that developed in the city. This was all the more important because the intellectual work produced in Alexandria was precisely of the type for which the world was athirst. Egypt had been admired by the ancient Greeks, who saw in it a mysteri

<sup>1</sup>

<sup>2</sup> C. Bigg: *Christian Platonists of Alexandria*, Oxford, 1913, p. 26.

<sup>3</sup> Justo L. Gonzalez: *A History of Christian Thought*, Nashville, 1970, p. 186-7.

<sup>3</sup> Philo claims that there were at his time at least one million Jews (Flac. 43). The Jewish community of Alexandria in the Hellenistic-Roman period was the largest and most important of the Greek-speaking Diaspora. (Birger A. Pearson: *The Roots of Egyptian Christianity* [Studies in Antiquity & Christianity], Philadelphia, 1992, p. 145.



ous land, pregnant with hidden wisdom. Moreover, all the various doctrines emanating from the East converged in Alexandria where they formed an eclectic mass... Jews with their Scriptures were not the only ones who had come to Alexandria, but Babylonians had also come with their astrology, as well as Persians with their dualism, and many others with different and often confused religions<sup>4</sup>.

In other words, Alexandria, the cosmopolitan city, was chosen as a home for learning<sup>5</sup>, and a unique center of a brilliant intellectual life<sup>6</sup>, where Egyptian, Greek and Jewish cultures together with eastern mystic thoughts were nourished and gave rise to a new civilization.

Philip Schaff states,

Alexandria... was the metropolis of Egypt, the flourishing seat of commerce, of Grecian and Jewish learning, and of the greatest library of the ancient world, and was destined to become one of the great centers of Christianity, the rival of Antioch and Rome. There the religious life of Palestine and the intellectual culture of Greece commingled and prepared the way for the first school of theology which aimed at a philosophic comprehension and vindication of the truths of revelation<sup>7</sup>.

In such an environment, there was no alternative but to establish a Christian institution<sup>8</sup> to enable the church to face the battle which was waged by these powerful schools.

It is highly probable that there were well-educated Christians in Alexandria in the apostolic times. In the Acts of the Apostles (18:24 ff.), St. Luke tells of Apollos who was a learned Jew of Alexandria and mighty in the scriptures; he may well have learnt

<sup>4</sup>

*Justo L. Gonzalez: A History of Christian Thought, Nashville, 1970, p. 186-7.*

<sup>5</sup> *H. M. Gwatkin: Early Church History, London 1909, vol. 2, p. 155.*

<sup>6</sup> *J. Lebreton : Hist. of the Primitive Church, London 1949, vol. 3, p. 731. Joseph Wilson Trigg says, [Alexandria was thus easily the greatest intellectual center of the Roman Empire when Origen lived there. We have Alexandria to thank for Origen's compelling intellectual drive and his astonishingly wide interests.] Origen, SCM Press, 1985, p. 7.*

<sup>7</sup> *Philip Schaff: History of the Christian Church, vol. 2, p. 352.*

<sup>8</sup> *De Viris Illustribus 36.*

there the knowledge of Jesus that he possessed before he met Aquilla and Priscilla.

## THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

St. Jerome records that the Christian School of Alexandria was founded by St. Mark himself. He was inspired by the Holy Spirit to establish it to teach Christianity, as this was the only way to give the new religion a solid foundation in the city<sup>9</sup>.

The School became the oldest center for sacred sciences in the history of Christianity<sup>10</sup>. In it, the first system of Christian theology was formed and the allegorical method of biblical exegesis was devised. In this context, Dom. D. Rees states, "The most renowned intellectual institution in the early Christian world was undoubtedly the Catechetical School (*Didascaleion*) of Alexandria, and its primary concern was the study of the Bible, giving its name to an influential tradition of scriptural interpretation. The preoccupation of this school of exegesis was to discover everywhere the spiritual sense underlying the written word of the Scripture<sup>11</sup>."

## ITS DEVELOPMENT

We are not, of course, to think of school buildings in any modern sense; we are not even to think of church buildings. Instruction was in the teacher's private house.

This Christian School started as a Catechetical School, where candidates were admitted to learn the Christian faith and some Biblical studies to qualify for baptism. The deans were in fact catechists. Origen describes the catechist's functions in more

<sup>9</sup>  
<sup>10</sup> *Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate: St. Mark and the Coptic Church, 1968, p. 61.*

<sup>10</sup> *Quasten: Patrology, vol. 2.*

<sup>11</sup> *Nelson : A New Catholic Comm. on the Holy Scripture, 1969, p. 15.*

than one of his books. He had both to teach doctrine<sup>12</sup> and to give instructions on the Christian life. "*If you want to receive Baptism,*" Origen says<sup>13</sup>, "*you must first learn about God's Word, cut away the roots of your vices, correct your barbarous wild lives and practice meekness and humility. Then you will be fit to receive the grace of the Holy Spirit.*"

Bardy has suggested that we are dealing with a philosophical school rather than a catechetical school. But, as Mehat has pointed out, *catechesis* is not merely a simple matter of baptismal instruction. J. Ferguson states that he does not find the two (catechetical and philosophical) incompatible<sup>14</sup>.

Admittance was open to all people regardless of culture, age or background.

By the second century it became quite influential on church life as can be seen from the following:

1. It was able to satisfy the thirst of the Alexandrian Christians for religious knowledge, encourage higher studies and create research work in a variety of fields. G.L. Prestige gives us a picture about the students of Origen, the dean of the School, saying,

So their education was completed. No inquiry was closed to them, no knowledge was withheld from them. They had the chance to study every branch of learning, Greek or foreign, spiritual or sociological, human or divine. "We were permitted with entire freedom to compass the whole round world of knowledge and investigate it, to satisfy ourselves with every variety of teaching and to enjoy the sweets of intellect." To be under the intellectual charge of Origen, says Gregory, was like living in a garden where fruits of the mind sprang up without toil to be happy with gladness by the happy occupants; "he truly was a paradise

<sup>12</sup>

<sup>13</sup> *Against Celsus* 3:15; Jean Daniélou: *Origen*, NY, 1955, p. 10.

*In Leirt. hom* 11:3.

<sup>14</sup>

*John Ferguson : Clement of Alexandria*, Twayne Publishers, NY 1974, p. 15.

to us, after the likeness of the paradise of God;" to leave him was to re-nascent the experience of Adam after the Fall. Few teachers have ever won so remarkable a testimonial from their pupils<sup>15</sup>.

1. It gave birth to numerous spiritual and well-known church leaders along the years. Many of them were deserving to sit on the throne of St. Mark.
2. Through its missionary zeal, it was able to win many souls to Christianity from Egypt and abroad.
3. In a true ecumenical spirit, it attracted students from other nations, many of whom became leaders and bishops in their own churches.
4. It established a common awareness of the importance of education as a basic element in religious structure.
5. It offered the world the first systematic theological studies.
6. It used philosophy as a weapon in dealing with pagan philosophers, and thus beating them by their own game<sup>16</sup>.
7. Although the School of Alexandria was a church school, and had its spiritual and educational effect on the clergy and laymen and many of its deans were ordained Popes, nevertheless it did not interfere in church affairs (organization). G.L. Prestige says,

The chief difference between the Roman and Alexandrian school seems to have lain in a closer relationship between Christian thought and ecclesiastical government in the eastern metropolis. Possibly the popes of Alexandria enjoyed a more sympathetic understanding of the minds of visiting professors, and so may have been better to advise them and control them; certainly they were not faced with

<sup>15</sup>

<sup>16</sup> G.L. Prestige: *Fathers and Heretics*, S.P.C.K., 1968, p. 51-2.

Douglas: *Dict. of the Christian Churches*, p. 26;

the self-assertive ambitions which animated many of the theological legal eagles that flocked to the Roman dovecote. In any case, it may be remembered that for centuries the Egyptian Church was the most highly centralized in Christendom<sup>17</sup>.

## ITS PROGRAM

It would have been a grave error to have confined the School's activities to theology<sup>18</sup>. Its teaching was encyclopedic; first presenting the whole series of profane sciences, and then rising to moral and religious philosophy, and finally to Christian theology, as set forth in the form of commentaries on the sacred books. This encyclopedic conception of teaching was an Alexandrian tradition, for it was also found in Alexandrian pagan and Jewish schools.

From St. Clement's trilogy, consisting of his chief three works: *Protrepticus* (*An Exhortation to the Heathen*), *Paidagogos* (*the Educator*), and *Stromata* (*Miscellanies*), which broadly outlined the School's program at his time, we may conclude that three courses were available:

1. A special course for non-Christians, which introduced candidates to principles of Christianity.
2. A course on Christian morals.
3. An advanced course on divine wisdom and sufficient knowledge for the spiritual Christian.

Worship went side by side with study in the School<sup>19</sup>. Teachers and their students practiced prayer, fasting and diverse ways of asceticism. In addition to continence in food and drink,

<sup>17</sup>

<sup>18</sup> G.L. Prestige: *Fathers and Heretics*, S.P.C.K., 1968, p. 45.

<sup>18</sup> Atiya: *Hist. of Eastern Church*, p. 33; Mourad Kamel: *Coptic Church*, p. 36.

<sup>19</sup> J. Lebreton, p. 732.

they were also continent in earthly possessions<sup>20</sup>. In purity and integrity their lives were exemplary. Celibacy was a recommended ideal, and was observed by many. Jean Daniélou in his book, *Origen*, says<sup>21</sup>,

At that time, philosophers were not so much teachers of theory as masters of practical wisdom. Philosophy meant ceasing to bother overmuch about temporal affairs, such as politics and professional matters, and putting the things of the soul first. The philosopher's ideal was the quest for the perfect life, unlike the rhetorician's, whose object was the glory this world bestows. Conversion, in the ancient world, meant conversion to philosophy<sup>22</sup>.



<sup>20</sup> *Coptic Patriarchate: St. Mark*, p 63. <sup>21</sup> *Origen*, p. 12. <sup>22</sup> See H.I. Marrou: *Saint Augustin et la fin de la culture antique*, p 169 ff.

# ***THE CHARACTERISTICS OF ALEXANDRIAN THEOLOGY***

Besides the main Alexandrian views on allegorism, philosophy, and knowledge (*gnosis*), of which I prefer to speak in separate chapters, the School of Alexandria had the following characteristics.

## **I DEIFICATION (THE GRACE OF RENEWAL) 2**

Many scholars see the core of Alexandrian theology as <sup>3</sup>*Deification or the grace of renewal*. By deification the Alexandrians mean the renewal of human nature as a whole, to attain sharing in the characteristics of our Lord Jesus Christ in place of the corrupt human nature, or as the apostles state that the believer may enjoy "the partaking in the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4), or the new man in the image of His Creator (Col. 3:10). This theological mind draws the heart of the Alexandrians away from the arguments about the definitions of the theological terms to concentrate on attaining the divine grace as being an enjoyment of the unity with the Father, in His only-begotten Son, Jesus, by the work of His Holy Spirit, or attaining Christ Himself who renews our nature in Him.

☒ *For this He came down, for this He assumed human nature, for this He willingly endured the sufferings of man,*

*that by being reduced to the measure of our weakness He might **raise us to the measure of His power***<sup>24</sup>.

■ *The Word of God, became man just that you may learn from a Man how it may be that **man should become god***<sup>25</sup>.

St. Clement of Alexandria

The Alexandrian Fathers, in all their theological views, concentrate on the grace of God as the grace of continuous or dynamic renewal of our nature by the Holy Spirit, who grants us close unity with the Father in the Son; that is communion with God. In Jesus Christ, we not only receive forgiveness of sins by the Holy Spirit, but we also attain a "**new life**" which is free from sin as a divine grace. St. Paul speaks of "putting off the old man" or "the old corruptible nature" and putting on "**the inner man**" or the renewed nature in the Spirit, created after the likeness of God in righteousness and holiness (2 Cor. 5:21; Rom. 8:1). By divine grace, we become members in the Body of Christ, and children of the Father, having the power to practice saintly life, because we are sanctified in Christ and are consecrated to the Father. The believer as a whole, his soul, body, senses, emotions, mind, etc., is sanctified as a tool for righteousness (Rom. 6:13). The Risen Christ is present in the believer's life as a divine gift, granting him inner glorification, as a pledge of the eternal heavenly glories.

This conception of man's renewal in his nature is called "*deification*," because of his sharing in the divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4) and receiving Christ for our righteousness and sanctification (1 Cor. 1:30). Alexandrian theology can be summarized by these words: "God took our humanity, that man may share His life," or "God became man that men may become gods"<sup>26</sup>.

Joseph Sittler stated that the East and West have different ways of speaking about the work of Christ. In the West, that work

<sup>24</sup> Quis Dives Salvetur 37.

<sup>25</sup> Protrepticus 1:8:4.

<sup>26</sup> Fr. T. Malaty: The Coptic Church as a Church of Erudition and Theology, Ottawa 1986. p. 81f.



is centered upon redemption from sin; in the East, it is centered upon the divinization of man. The doctrine of atonement is central to that work in the West. In contrast, in the East the central doctrine is participation, illumination, re-enactment, and transformation. In the West, the work is reunification. The Western Savior is the Eastern Pantocrator<sup>27</sup>.

## II. ONENESS OF LIFE

The School of Alexandria reveals to us the oneness of life in Christ. The dean and his students did not isolate the study of religion, philosophy and science from their church life nor from their daily life. They believed in **one (integral) life in Christ**. This was revealed in their study, worship, conduct, preaching and witnessing to Christ.

Rown A. Greer summarizes Origen's view of Christian life, by stating, "The Christian life is a response to (divine) revelation. We begin to know God and to move toward the face-to-face vision that perfects our fellowship with Him. **The dimensions of this life are ethical, intellectual, and spiritual or mystical; and they involve us in the life of the church and in action in our world**."<sup>28</sup>

St. Athanasius who devoted all his life to defend the divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, is not a Christian philosopher who concentrates on logical arguments separated from practical life, nor is he merely a dogmatic theologian. His main interest is pastoral. His only one desire is to forward the salvation of men<sup>29</sup>. He offers a model of the close relationship between church dogma and piety. He says,

*"For faith and godliness are allied to each other, and are sister.*

<sup>27</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Essays on Nature and Grace, Philadelphia 1972, p.52.

<sup>28</sup> Rown A. Greer: Origen, p. 28.

<sup>29</sup> J. W. C. Wand: Doctors & Councils, 1962,p.29.

*He who believes in Him is godly, and he also who is godly, believes the more<sup>30</sup> ."*

In all his discourses against the Arians, he reveals the sanctification, renewal and regeneration of our own nature by the Crucified Son of God:

*If then for our sake He sanctified Himself (John 17:18, 19) and does this when He became man, it is very plain that the Spirit's descent on Him in Jordan was a descent upon us, because He bears our body<sup>31</sup> .*

*When it is said that He is anointed, since also, when He is baptized, it is we who in Him are anointed, since also when He is baptized, we who are in Him are baptized<sup>32</sup> .*

The deans and students were mostly virgins who devoted their lives to Christ. They lived not only as scholars but as true worshippers, ascetics and preachers. They were eager to devote their lives, contemplating on God through their study of the Bible, without ignoring their role in witnessing to Christ and serving Him. It is no wonder that Origen who devoted his life to studying the Bible attracted many pagans who not only were converted to Christianity but also became martyrs. This oneness of life prepared many deans of the School to be elected as successful Popes.

### **III. SOTERIOLOGICAL THEOLOGY**

Christianity started in Alexandria, Egypt, by a very simple yet deep action. Arianus, a cobbler, cried "O One God" as a needle pierced his hand while repairing St. Mark's shoe. St. Mark, the Apostle and Evangelist, healed his hand in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. He then witnessed to the One God whom Arianus believed in, but did not know. St. Mark told the cobbler about God who heals not only our bodies, but also our human nature through

<sup>30</sup> Paschal Epist. 11: 9.

<sup>31</sup> Against Arians 1:47.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid. 1: 48.

His incarnate Word, Jesus Christ. Arianus was converted to Christianity and was ordained by St. Mark as the first Bishop of Alexandria.

St. Mark who used the healing of Arianus' wound in the name of Jesus Christ as a starting point to preach the Gospel, did not reveal God as a mere idea he believed in, but as the Savior who redeems mankind. This is the basic principle of the Alexandrian theology until today. We know God, not through theoretical discussions, but through His redeeming deeds. God grants us new knowledge, new glorious life and immortality.

Thus, St. Mark truly sowed in our theological soil the seed that has produced fruit through the ages. One of these fruits is the close relationship between theological knowledge and salvation. God bestows knowledge which is not isolated from our salvation. This is clear in the theology of **St. Clement of Alexandria** who usually introduces Jesus Christ as the "*Educator*." He wrote a book called *Paidagogos* "The Educator." He speaks of this Divine *Paidagogue* as the "All-healing physician of mankind"<sup>33</sup>. In other words, divine knowledge, to **St. Clement**, cannot be separated from our salvation. He clearly believes "*It is the will of God that we should attain the knowledge of God, which is the communication of immortality*"<sup>34</sup>. "*The Word ... became Man so that you might learn from Man how man may become god*"<sup>35</sup>.

One of the main features of the School of Alexandria is its **soteriological theology**, that is, a system of theology based principally on the salvation of man. This approach is apostolic, for the apostles in preaching the Gospel witnessed our Lord Jesus as the "Messiah," of whom the prophets foretold as the Savior of mankind. They were not engaged in theological disputes, but were concerned with men's salvation. Their Christological theology depended on soteriological thought. Jaraslov Pelikan states that early

<sup>33</sup>

<sup>34</sup> St. Clement: *Paidagogos*, Book 1, Ch. 2. Section 6.

<sup>35</sup> *Stromata*: 4:6:27.

<sup>35</sup> *Protrep.* 1:8:4.

Christians shared the conviction that salvation is the work of no being less than the Lord of heaven and earth. The oldest surviving sermon in the early church opens with the words: "Brethren, we ought so, to think of Jesus Christ as of God, as of the Judge of living and dead. And we ought not to belittle our salvation, for when we belittle Him, we expect also to receive little<sup>36</sup> ."

Some examples follow:

1. Athenagoras in his *Plea on Behalf of Christians*, writes to the emperor Marcus Aurelius Antonius (161-180) and his son Commodus, refuting the three charges against Christians, but he surpasses the defense by preaching. He sees it as a great opportunity to declare the truth to the emperors, and to anyone who reads this defense to witness evangelical life. **His aim is not only to defend the Christian faith but also to attract everyone to the salvation of Christ.**
2. The early church offers no better example of an intellectual Christian than St. Clement. He insists that the goal of Christian education is "*practical, not theoretical and its aim is to improve the soul, not to teach, and to train it up to a virtuous, not an intellectual, life*<sup>37</sup> ."
3. Origen's writings reveal that his primary interest lies in the salvation of our souls, or as Rown A. Greer states<sup>38</sup> the drama of **the soul's struggle to return to God**. Origen's views of martyrdom, prayer and Scriptures merge into one vision of Christian life as a movement towards a perfect knowledge of God and **perfect fellowship with Him through Christ**.

<sup>36</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Clem. 1:1-2; Jaroslov Pelikan ; *The Christian Tradition*, vol. 1: *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100 - 600 )*, 1961, p. 173.

<sup>37</sup> See Carl A. Volz: *Life and Practice in the Early Church*, Minneapolis, 1990, p. 103, 222; *Paidagogos*, 1:1.

<sup>38</sup> Rown A. Greer: *Origen*, p.28.

Frances M. Young gives an account of Origen's soteriology, saying<sup>39</sup> :

Origen collects together in one place<sup>40</sup> all the titles he can find in scripture which express the nature and work of Christ: Light of the World, Resurrection, the Way, the Truth, the Life, the Door and the Shepherd, Christ and King, Teacher and Master, Son, True Vine and Bread, First and Last, Living and Dead, Sword, Servant, Lamb of God, Paraclete, Propitiation, Power, Wisdom, Sanctification, Redemption, Righteousness, Demiurge, Agent of the good God, High-Priest, Rod, Flower, Stone, Logos. ***These ideas he draws on at random as he discusses Christ's saving work***, in Homilies and commentaries which wander unsystematically from point to point. The only work which is at all systematic is the *De Principiis*; even the *Contra Celsum* takes the form of a commentary on Celsus' anti-Christian arguments, and shows little logical sequence of thought. Yet it seems to the present writer that under this confusing array of ideas, there is a basic pattern to Origen's soteriology, a pattern of conflict between good and evil in which Christ achieves the victory...

Most expositors of Origen's thought have regarded his idea of Christ as Revealer, Educator and Enlightenment, that is, as the Logos of God, as his characteristic view of Christ's saving function. That this should be Origen's main account of Christ's work in the *De Principiis* is not surprising<sup>41</sup>, since this was a work dominated by philosophical issues and ideas. It is also prominent in the *Commentary on John*<sup>42</sup>. ***As the brightness of God's glory, Christ enlightens the whole creation***, and, as the Word, he interprets and presents to the

<sup>39</sup>

Cf. Frances M. Young: The Use of Sacrificial Ideas In Greek Christian Writers From The New Testament to John Chrysostom, Philadelphia, 1979, p. 172-4.

<sup>40</sup> Comm. on John 1:22ff.

<sup>41</sup> De Principiis 1:2:6-8; 3:5:8.

<sup>42</sup> E.g. Comm. on John 1:23-24, 27, 42.

rational creation the secrets of wisdom and the mysteries of knowledge. The Only-Begotten is the Truth, because he embraces in himself, according to the Father's will, the whole reason of all things, which he communicates to each creature in proportion to its worthiness...

Origen can maintain that Christ as Word conquers the opposing powers by reason, "*by making war on his enemies by reason and righteousness, so that what is irrational and wicked is destroyed*"<sup>43</sup>. Right doctrine is a means of conquering sin<sup>44</sup>. The light shines not only on the darkness of men's souls, but has penetrated to where the rulers of this darkness carry on their struggle with the race of men; and shining in darkness the light is pursued by darkness, but not overtaken<sup>45</sup>.

Connected with the idea of Christ as Educator, is another important theme of Origen's soteriology, the description of Him as the *Example of obedience which Christians should follow*, as the Way. This theme finds expression particularly in the call to martyrdom, which is the culmination of observance of "*the entire pattern of living set out in the Gospel*"<sup>46</sup>. This is closely linked with the idea of illumination which we have already considered, since by following Christ to heaven, especially through martyrdom, men will understand as never before, will learn all secrets and understand all mysteries, and will discover the nature of intelligibles and the beauty of Truth<sup>47</sup>. But again this description of Christ's saving work is part of the picture of the struggle against the devil and his angels, for, above all, "*martyrs in Christ despoil with him the principalities and*

<sup>43</sup>

Comm. on John 2:4.

<sup>44</sup>

Comm. on Rom. 6:3.

<sup>45</sup>

Comm. on John 2:21.

<sup>46</sup>

Exhortation to Martyrdom 12; see also Comm. on Rom. 4:10; 7:3, 13; Contra Celsum 7:17; 8:44.

<sup>47</sup>

Exhortation to Martyrdom 13.

*powers and triumph with him, by partaking in his sufferings -among which is his triumphing over principalities and powers which you will soon see conquered and overcome with shame*<sup>48</sup>. " Obedience, self-denial and humiliation, death to sin, the spiritualized martyrdom<sup>49</sup>, is like-wise an imitation of Christ, part of the educative work of the Savior, and an incident in the drama of conquering evil and leading to virtue and participation in the divine nature. ***It was essentially Christ's work to restore what had been corrupted, and deal with the enemy that had caused the corruption***<sup>50</sup> ...

***Christ brings healing to the morally sick***<sup>51</sup>, ***and resurrection and life to the morally dead***<sup>52</sup>. He came into our deadness to deliver mankind from the bondage of corruption<sup>53</sup>. This, too, is part of Christ's conquest of the tyranny of death, sin and the devil, for the devil has the power of death and is the enemy of Him who is the Life<sup>54</sup> ...

The context of soteriological thought is ***dualistic, and the work of salvation is, first the conquest of the powers of corruption, and then the exaltation of man by a process of healing and education***. The conquest of the devil is in fact the most prominent theme of Origen's soteriology. The *De Principiis* spends a chapter on "*How the devil and the opposing powers are, according to the scriptures, a war with the human race*"<sup>55</sup>. The activity of the demons plays a large role in Origen's arguments with Celsus.<sup>56</sup> The *Homilies on Joshua* are full of warfare against the devil, for Joshua's wars

<sup>48</sup>

Ibid. 42.

<sup>49</sup>

Comm. on Rom. 9:39; 5:5-9; Contra Celsum 2:69; De. Principiis 4:4:4.

<sup>50</sup>

De. Principiis 3:5:6.

<sup>51</sup>

Comm. on Matt. 11:18; Contra Celsum 8:72; 3:60.

<sup>52</sup>

Comm. on Rom. 5:1-9.

<sup>53</sup>

Comm. on John 1:25, 28, 35; 2:6; 10:4.

<sup>54</sup>

See Comm. on Rom. 5:1-9; Comm. on Matt. 13:9; In Jos. hom. 8:6.

<sup>55</sup>

De Principiis 3:2; 1:5:1; 3:3:6; 3:5:6.

<sup>56</sup>

Contra Celsum 8:55-57; 1:31; 6:43; 7:17; 8:44,54.

are allegorized as the wars of Christ and his followers against the devil and his angel<sup>57</sup>. In the *Commentary on Romans*<sup>58</sup>, Origen explains the Incarnation and Work of Christ by means of a parable which expresses this soteriological position: there was a just and noble king, who was waging a war against an unjust tyrant, but trying to avoid a violent and bloody conflict, because some of his own men were fighting on the tyrant's side, and he wanted to free them, not destroy them. He adopted the uniform of the tyrant's men, until he managed to persuade them to desert and return to their proper kingdom, and succeeded in binding the "strong man" in fetters, destroying his principalities and powers and carrying off those he held captive. This idea of soteriology appears throughout Origen's work, and cannot be treated "*as belonging to a lower theological level,*" or as "*a mere appendage to the philosophically inclined system in which we find the real Origen.*" It is basic to his whole understanding of salvation, and is the theory to which he turns to explain all soteriological problems.

4. The root of the Athanasian doctrine of the Logos is the idea of redemption<sup>59</sup>. He claims fervently that only God can save the fallen race<sup>60</sup> (*Soteriological interest*). The doctrine of sanctification was always present in the mind of the great Pope of Alexandria as the final purpose of his pastoral efforts, as well as the main goal of his theological dispute, especially in his fight against Arianism<sup>61</sup>.

a. We would not have been redeemed if God Himself had not become man, for man was in need of the Creator to redeem his fallen nature to its origin, bestowing upon it the image of God, and re

<sup>57</sup>

<sup>58</sup> In Jos. hom. 12:1; 7:3-6,7; 9:4:5.

Comm. on Rom. 5:10; 5:1,3, 6,7, 10.; 4:8.

<sup>59</sup> Quasten: Patrology, vol. 3, p.70.

<sup>60</sup> J. N. D. Kelly: Early Christian Doctrines, 1960, p.284.

<sup>61</sup> Fr. Matthias F. Wahba: The Doctrine of Sanctification in relation to Marriage according to St. Athanasius, Ottawa, 1993, p. 2.



storing it from corruption to incorruption. In Him mankind overcame death and was regenerated or recreated<sup>62</sup>.

. Being the Son of God, one and equal with the Father in the same essence (*ousia*), He offered Himself as a self-sacrifice that can pay our debt of sins and achieve divine justice and mercy at the same time.

. He is God who overcame Satan for our sake, granting us the power to tread on him and all his evil angels.

. Being the true God, He restored our honor and bestowed upon us the adoption to the Father in Him by the Holy Spirit. St. Athanasius states,

*He was made man that we might be gods*<sup>63</sup> ...

*For as, although there be one Son by nature, True and Only-Begotten, we too become sons, not as He in nature and truth, but according to the grace of Him that calls, and though we are men from the earth, are yet called gods*<sup>64</sup>."

e. The incarnation introduces us to God. The Incarnate Logos reveals the Father to us, and the Father attracts us to the Son (John 17: 26, 6:44 ).

5. St. Athanasius defends the divinity of the Holy Spirit in his reply to the Arians who believed that He was a creature and less than the Logos. He also writes about the Holy Spirit in four letters addressed to his friend Bishop Serapion. His theology concerning the Holy Spirit is the same concerning Christ. The Holy Spirit must be God, because if He were a creature, we could not participate in His divine nature. He states, "*If by participation in the Spirit, we are made 'sharers in the divine nature' 2 Pet. 1:4. It should not to be doubted that His nature is of God*<sup>65</sup>."

<sup>62</sup> De Inarch. 8, 9.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid. 54.

<sup>64</sup> Orate. Arians, Disc. 3:19.

<sup>65</sup> Epis. ad Serapion 1:24.

#### IV. PENANCE AND REPENTANCE

As the Alexandrian theology is soteriological, it is important to explain the Alexandrian view concerning repentance<sup>66</sup>.

In his *second homily on Leviticus*<sup>67</sup>, Origen says that there are seven ways for sins to be forgiven:

1. baptism,
  2. martyrdom,
  3. almsgiving,
  4. forgiving our brethren's sins,
  5. restoring a sinner,
  6. abundance of charity, and
  7. *"there is also a seventh way, a hard and painful one, and that is by penance, when the sinner drenches his pillow with his tears... and is not ashamed to confess his sin to one of the Lord's priests and ask him for a remedy"*<sup>68</sup>.
- J. Daniélou believes that in this passage "the reference to sacramental confession is quite plain"<sup>69</sup>.

Origen seems to make a distinction among sins, some being graver than others and "one involving exclusion from the community, and the other not"<sup>70</sup>. What he terms "trifling sins" seem not to need the absolution of a priest or the doing of penance<sup>71</sup>.

Origen does indeed share four views with St. Peter of Alexandria (*and St. Cyprian*):

1. There are different classes of sins;

<sup>66</sup> Tim Vivian: *St. Peter of Alexandria, Bishop and Martyr*, Philadelphia, 1988, p. 162 ff.

<sup>67</sup> In *Lev. hom.* 2:4. <sup>68</sup> J. Daniélou: *Origen*, NY, 1975, p. 69. <sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, <sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 70-71. <sup>71</sup> Origen: In *Josh. hom.* 76; Daniélou: *Origen*, p. 71.

2. penance is necessary for forgiveness, at least for major sins;

3. priestly absolution is necessary, at least for some sins;

4. lay persons are not to assume the powers of forgiveness, at least for major sins.

Dr. Vivian believes that it seems reasonable to conclude that the views Origen gives on penance are not merely personal but rather reflect the custom of the Alexandrian church of his day. This is the tradition handed down to St. Dionysius and St. Peter.

In a papyrus fragment on repentance, St. Dionysius argues against severity toward apostates: "*Let us then not repel those who return, but gladly welcome them and number them with those who have not strayed, and thus supply that which is wanting in them*"<sup>72</sup>. St. Dionysius here is arguing that sinners and saints are welcomed to the church, but he points out that those who have strayed are in need of the church's teaching.

## V. THEOLOGICAL TERMS

Many modern scholars look to Origen as the first theologian. His work *De Principiis* ("On First Principles") is perhaps the greatest of Origen works and marks a long step towards the formation of Christian theology.

Concerning theological terms, the Alexandrian School uses Greek philosophical terms to explain Christian doctrines, because of the existing world-wide Greek culture, and in order to deal with the philosophers and heretics. But the Alexandrians were not enslaved to these terms. This is what St. Athanasius explains when he states that *disputes merely about words must not be suffered to divide those who think alike*<sup>73</sup>.

<sup>72</sup> Vivian, p. 165; Feltoe: St. Dionysius, p. 62; St. Dionysius: Letters, p. p. 62-64.

<sup>73</sup> Quod non sint tres de ( That They are not three Gods ).

When Dionysius of Rome misunderstood his namesake, Dionysius of Alexandria who had stated that there are three *Hypostaseis*, mistakenly thinking that this meant three essences, the latter sent an explanation to Rome, affirming his belief in one divine essence<sup>74</sup>.

## VI. DEFINITIONS OF THEOLOGICAL TERMINOLOGY

The Alexandrian Fathers did not give definitions to any theological terminology, because they were interested only in the practice of theology in their worship and daily life. Benjamin Drewery could not find a direct definition to the grace of God through the numerous works of Origen. He deduced it stating, "We may suggest that if Origen had been required to offer a formal definition of grace, he would have responded somewhat as follows: 'Grace is the power of God freely, but not unconditionally, placed at man's disposal, whereby He appropriates through the Holy Spirit the offer of salvation to a new and ultimate life, revealed and enacted in the Scriptures, by the Incarnate Jesus Christ, and made available by Him to the world'<sup>75</sup>."

## VII. ECUMENICAL SPIRIT

Ecumenicism is a spirit that the School of Alexandria spread not by speaking about the unity of churches all over the world but by practicing it in many ways:

. The School attracted many foreign students to study theology, especially the interpretation of the holy Scriptures. Those students later became leaders in their churches. This created a kind of inner unity based on the word of God.

. The deans of the School were very active outside Egypt, because of their love towards the universal church; they were not

<sup>74</sup>

B. Drewery: Origen and the Doctrine of Grace, London, 1960, p. 48; Fr. T. Y. Malaty: The Divine Grace, Alexandria 1992, p. 23.

<sup>75</sup>

Fr. T. Malaty: The Terms: Physis & Hypostasis in the early church, 1987, p. 4.

looking for any personal prestige nor gaining any political power for their church. For example Origen traveled to Rome, Caesarea, Arabia, Tyre, etc.

. The Alexandrian theologians were leaders and pioneers in the ecumenical councils.

. The Coptic manuscripts witness that the Copts translated almost all the Christian literature existing in the world at that time.

Here I refer to H. G. Metropolitan Bishoy's comment on the footnote written by the Catholic publisher of the letters of St. Cyril of Alexandria, which states, "Letter 11 and this Memorandum sent to Rome indicate that in Cyril's day doctrinal matters were referred to Rome for decision<sup>76</sup>." His Grace states that St. Celestine of Rome's response to St. Cyril's letter makes this footnote unacceptable. St. Celestine had in fact stated that the documents which St. Cyril had sent turned his sadness into joy, and his sorrow into happiness. He calls them a remedy from pestilential disease, and a pure spring that transmits to all a proper understanding of our faith<sup>77</sup>. Moreover he says, ***"We rejoice seeing that such vigilance is in your piety that you have already surpassed the examples of your predecessors who always were themselves defenders of the orthodox teaching"***<sup>78</sup>. This is the testimony of the bishop of Rome on the role of the Alexandrians in defending the orthodox faith on the ecumenical level.



<sup>76</sup>

St. Cyril of Alexandria, translated by John I. McEnerney, The Catholic University of America Press Inc, 1987, p. 65, n. 2. <sup>77</sup> Ibid., 67. <sup>78</sup> Ibid., 68.

# ***THE ALLEGORICAL INTERPRETATION OF THE SCRIPTURES***

Allegorism was well established in Alexandrian Judaism, especially by **Philo**<sup>79</sup>, who made a systematic use of it to bridge the chasm between the Old Testament revelation and the Platonic philosophy. Philo compares the literal sense of Scripture to the shadow which the body casts, finding its authentic, profounder truth in the spiritual meaning which it symbolizes<sup>80</sup>. He does not want to depreciate or abolish the literal or the historical meaning, but looks to it as man's body which merits the fullest respect<sup>81</sup>.

The School of Alexandria adopted the allegorical interpretation of the Holy Scripture, believing that it hides the truth and at the same time reveals it. It hides the truth from the ignorant, whose eyes are blinded by sin and pride, hence they are prevented from the knowledge of the truth. At the same time it always reveals what is new to the renewed eyes of believers. **St. Clement of Alexandria** is considered the first Christian theologian (writer) who uses allegorical interpretation, giving a cause of using it in a practical way. He says that the Bible has hidden meanings to incite us to search and discover the words of salvation, which are hidden from those who despise them. The truth is in the pearls which must

<sup>79</sup>

*Philo (c. 20 BC.- c. AD. 50), the Jewish thinker and exegete in whom that literature flourished also lived in Alexandria. He belonged to a prosperous priestly family of Alexandria, and was firmly convinced that the teaching of the Old Testament could be combined with Greek speculation. His philosophy of religion embodies such a synthesis. (Esmat Gabriel: St. Clement of Alexandria, Coptic Church Review, Spring 1980, v.1, No. 1, p. 22.)*

<sup>80</sup> *De confus. ling.* 190.

<sup>81</sup> *De. migrat. Abrah.* 89-93; J.N.D. Kelly: *Early Christian Doctrines*, 1978, p. 9.

not be offered to the swines. His disciple, **Origen**, adds other justifications of using allegorical interpretation to the Scriptures.

Nevertheless a vigorous reaction against the Alexandrian allegorism made itself manifest in the fourth and fifth centuries. Its center was Antioch, which concentrated on the literal sense of the holy Scriptures.

As Kelly says, "It has been fashionable to distinguish different schools of patristic exegesis, notably the Alexandrian with its bias towards allegory, and the Antiochene with its passion for literalism<sup>82</sup>."

## ALLEGORY

The word "allegory," is derived from the Greek "*alla*," meaning "other," and "*agoreuo*," meaning "proclaim." It originally referred to a figure of speech that Cicero defined as a "continuous stream of metaphors<sup>83</sup>." According to St. Augustine, allegory is a mode of speech in which one thing is understood by another<sup>84</sup>. Allegory differs from *the parable* in its more systematic presentation of the different features of the idea which it illustrates, as well as in its contents which are concerned with the exposition of theoretical truths rather than practical exhortation<sup>85</sup>.

## ALLEGORY AND TYPOLOGY

The holy Scriptures use at least three kinds of allegory: figurative allegory, narrative allegory and typological allegory. St. Paul's Ode to Charity (Corinthians 13) is *figurative allegory*. So is Wisdom, as she is presented in Proverbs 8. In some parables - those for instance of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10: 30-35) and the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32) - the allegory is *narrative*. The most characteristic biblical form is the typological allegory, a New

<sup>82</sup>

<sup>82</sup> J.N.D. Kelly: *Early Christian Doctrines*, 1978, p. 72.

<sup>83</sup> Orator 27.94; Everett Ferguson: *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, N.Y., 1990, p. 23.

<sup>84</sup> *De Trin.*, 15:9:15.

<sup>85</sup> F.L. Cross: *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 1990, p. 37.

Testament exegetic method which treats events and figures of the Old Testament as combining historical reality with prophetic meaning in terms of the Gospels and the Christian Dispensation<sup>86</sup>.

Modern distinction between allegory and typology stems from Antiochene criticism of Alexandrian allegory. For example, Jean Daniélou states, "It would be an entire abuse of language to include moral allegory with typology under the one heading of spiritual sense, as opposed to the literal sense: typology is a legitimate extension of literal sense, while moral allegory is something entirely alien: the former is in truth exegesis, the latter is not. Origen was the first to bring together these two interpretations in a forceful synthesis. But they are in reality two distinct approaches, artificially put side by side<sup>87</sup>."

Some scholars distinguish "*allegory*," defined as a method in which earthly realities are interpreted symbolically to refer to heavenly realities, from "*typology*," in which historical reality is interpreted as foreshadowing another, especially the person and work of Christ<sup>88</sup>.

The word "*type*," τύπος in Greek has its basic meaning, 'something struck out; a print, impression of a seal.' The seal is the New Testament event, which has struck out a prophetic impression of itself in the pages of the Old Testament<sup>89</sup>.

J.N.D. Kelly gives a base for the distinction between allegory and typology, saying, ... the word (*allegory*) led to confusion even in the patristic age, and its accepted meaning to day denotes a somewhat different type of exegesis from typology. Since the fathers employed both *typology* and *allegory* (in its

<sup>86</sup>

<sup>87</sup> Cf. John MacQueen: *Allegory*, Methuen & Co, London, 1970, p.18ff.

<sup>87</sup> Jean Daniélou: *From Shadows to Reality, Studies in the Biblical Typology of the Fathers*, p. 64.

<sup>88</sup> Everett Ferguson: *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, N.Y, 1990, p. 23.

<sup>89</sup> John MacQueen: *Allegory*, Methuen & Co, 1970, p. 20.



modern sense), the distinction between the two methods needs to be clearly brought out...

In allegorical exegesis the sacred text is treated as a mere symbol, or allegory, of spiritual truths. The literal, historical sense, if it is regarded at all, plays a relatively minor role, and the aim of the exegete is to elicit the moral, theological or mystical meaning which each passage, indeed each verse and even each word, is presumed to contain...

Typological exegesis works along very different lines. Essentially it is a technique for bringing out the correspondence between the two Testaments: a technique where the Old reflects the New, i.e. prefigures and anticipates the events and personages of the New. The typologist takes history seriously; it is the scene of the progressive unfolding of God's consistent redemptive purpose...<sup>90</sup>

Jean Daniélou also says, "The typology of the Fathers is based on the continuity which exists between the Old and New Testaments"<sup>91</sup>.

## **ALLEGORY AND THE JEWISH EXEGESIS**

According to Philo, the allegorical interpretation of the Scriptures was practiced in Palestinian Rabbinical schools<sup>92</sup>.

In Palestinian Jewish exegesis, allegory provides material for *haggadah*, the interpretation of non-legal passages of Scripture. An example of this Jewish allegorical exegesis is Rabbi Jochanan ben Zakkai's (ca. A.D 70) explanation that a robber receives a lighter punishment than a thief because the thief, by acting secretly, has contempt for God's oversight. Also the interpretation

<sup>90</sup>

<sup>91</sup> J.N.D. Kelly: *Early Christian Doctrines*, 1978, p. 70-1.

<sup>92</sup> Jean Daniélou: *From Shadows to Reality, Studies in the Biblical Typology of the Fathers*, p. 69.

<sup>92</sup> F.L. Cross: *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 1990, p. 37.

that unclean animals, such as the hare and the pig, refer to Greece and Rome.

Although Palestinian allegory is generally more restrained than Hellenistic Jewish allegory and careful in particular to maintain legal validity, Rabbi Akiba (ca. AD. 50-132) could interpret the Song of Solomon allegorically to refer to the love between Israel and God<sup>93</sup>.

The **Alexandrian Jew Philo**, as we mentioned above, uses two kinds of interpretation, literal and allegorical, which he links to the Platonic concept of a dual world - one of which is spiritual and immaterial like God, an archetype and model, and the other world being visible and corporeal. In Philo's opinion the literal sense, the written word, is concerned with appearance, while the allegorical sense expresses only what can be seized by intelligence and leads directly to the truth<sup>94</sup>.

John Dillon in the preface of the book "Philo of Alexandria" says, "Philo did contribute enormously, through the Christian thinkers of the Alexandrian School, to the tradition of spirituality both in the Western Europe and in the Eastern Orthodox world, and the magnificent intellectual tour-de-force constituted by his Platonizing allegory of the Pentateuch deserves recognition and honor<sup>95</sup>."

Jean Daniélou, in his speech of the effect of Philo on the Alexandrian *Didascalia*, assures that the Alexandrian Fathers who adopted Philo's method of interpretation, christianized it, giving it a Christological and more spiritual understanding. He says,

In his treatise on Paradise, Ambrose, who was much influenced by Philo, writes as follows: "***Philo confined his attention to the moral sense, because his Judaic outlook***"

<sup>93</sup>

<sup>94</sup> Everett Ferguson: *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, N.Y, 990, p. 23.

See M. Hermaniuk: *La parabole chez Clement d' Alexandrie (Ephemerides theologicae Lovanienses*, 21, 1945, p. 52); Alexander Kerrigan: *St. Cyril of Alexandria*, Roam 1952, p28.

<sup>95</sup> David Winston: *Philo of Alexandria*, Paulist Press, 1981, p. XIV.

*prevented him from a more spiritual understanding*<sup>96</sup> .”

*Spiritualia* here denotes the Christological or typological sense, while *moralia* implies philosophical allegory...<sup>97</sup>

This allegorizing of Philo will be adopted by that succession of Alexandrian Didascalia which will transform it into a Christian theology. Not that this will be, as with Philo, the only interpretation; but whereas, until then, typology was the only Christian interpretation, afterwards Origen, St. Ambrose and the Middle Ages will make use of allegory also...<sup>98</sup>

A whole stream of Patristic tradition shows us the union of the Pauline typological “mystery” with the Philonian allegorical “mystery.” While borrowing from Philo his principle, quite unexceptionable in itself, of a hidden meaning in the whole Bible, *the Christian exegesis of Alexandria will give to these themes a meaning which is quite beyond the allegorizing of Philo. It will endow them with the whole mystery of Christ, who is truly the “fullness of grace”*<sup>99</sup> .”

## ALLEGORY AND TYPOLOGY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The term “allegory” is used by St. Paul in Gal. 4:24, “which things contain an allegory.” Some scholars believe that he introduces the allegorical interpretation of the Law by the question “Is it for the oxen that God cares, or says He altogether for our sake?” (1 Cor. 9:10) does not necessarily mean that Paul, besides abolishing this particular law with his advocacy of the abrogation

<sup>96</sup>

<sup>97</sup> IV, 25; C.S.E.L. 281,21.

Jean Daniélou: *From Shadows to Reality, Studies in the Biblical Typology of the Fathers*, Newman Press, 1960, p. 57. <sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 61. <sup>99</sup> *Ibid.* 136.

of the Law as a whole, also denies that this law was ever meant to be taken literally<sup>100</sup>.

The New Testament uses allegory and typology. Here are some examples.

. The Gospels present our Lord Jesus using allegory as a rhetorical device in his own parables (cf. Matt. 13:18-35; Mark 4:12-20, 33-34; Luke 8:11-15), and the two witnesses whose testimony is true (Deut. 19:15; John 8:17-18). The majority of the New Testament parables are examples of prophetic and situational allegory, not involving typology<sup>101</sup>.

. Our Lord interprets allegorically the brazen serpent (Num. 21:9; John 3:14) as a type of salvation by His Cross.

. The words of our Lord in Matt. 12:42 concerning the queen of the south reveals that our Lord uses allegory to speak of the Song of Solomon in terms of the mutual love of Christ and the Church. Solomon is a type of Christ, the Queen of Sheba represents the Church, as well as the New Testament authority for the interpretation is to be found in Matthew 12:42<sup>102</sup>.

. In Matt. 12:40-42 we acknowledge Jonah in the whale's belly as an allegory of the Descent into Hell and Resurrection of our Lord Jesus during Good Friday and Bright Saturday.

. St. Paul sees the relationship between the Church and the Synagogue prefigured in the story of Isaac and Ishmael. He applies allegory to the two mountains, Sinai and Zion, in Galatians 4:22

29. Hagar, Paul says, is a type of Mount Sinai, where Moses later received the Old Law, and so of the Jerusalem of his own day, the site of the Jewish Temple, and the center of the Jewish people and religion. Sarah is a type of the Heavenly Jerusalem of the Christian Church. The miraculous birth of Isaac typifies the virgin birth of

<sup>100</sup>

Cf. M. Guttman, *Das Judentum und seine Umwelt*, I, p. 252; Harry Austryn Wolfson: *The Philosophy of the Church Fathers*, Harvard University Press, 1976, p.42.

<sup>101</sup> Cf. John MacQueen: *Allegory*, Methuen & Co, 1970, p. 23.

<sup>102</sup> Cf. John MacQueen: *Allegory*, Methuen & Co, 1970, p. 20.

Christ, as is further illustrated by the messianic quotation from Isaiah 54:1<sup>103</sup>.

. Allegory is also applied to cleaning out the old leaven at the Passover to indicate the Christian community's purity (1 Cor. 5:6-8).

. Hebrews 8-10 interprets the Levitical sanctuary and sacrificial system as a temporary earthly manifestation of a heavenly reality revealed in Christ<sup>104</sup>.

. In I Corinthians 10:6-13, St. Paul teaches that events mentioned in Exodus and Numbers, while the people of Israel wandered in the wilderness (Exod. 13:21-22; 14:22-29; 16:4,35), prefigure Christian sacraments. He further claims that such happenings are intended "typically" to forewarn Christians about the coming of Christ and the consequences of His ministry.

. In Romans 5:14 St. Paul suggests that Adam was a "type" of the Christ who was to come.

. The main Old Testament personages who typify aspects of the New Testament - 'so great a cloud of witnesses' - are listed in Hebrews 11. They are Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Rahab, Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel and the Prophets. In this list we have a stage in the development of a new point of view, In the full Christian form, this sees history, not as sequence, but as process, directed from Creation and the Fall of Man towards the Incarnation and Redemption, and finally to Judgment Day. The ultimately significant events are concentrated into the few years of the earthly life of Jesus, the carpenter's son from Nazareth. All history becomes a typology, whose meaning is to be assessed in terms of a single humble life which had apparently ended in ignominy<sup>105</sup>.

<sup>103</sup>

<sup>104</sup> Cf. John MacQueen: *Allegory*, Methuen & Co, 1970, p. 21.

<sup>104</sup> Everett Ferguson: *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, N.Y, 990, p. 24.

<sup>105</sup> John MacQueen: *Allegory*, Methuen & Co, 1970, p. 22.

Such explanations illuminate the New Testament idea that all incidents during the old dispensation predicted the major events of the career of Jesus Christ and of the early church, which relived them in a Christian sense. Most obvious analogies concern the flood and the ark, the liberation of the people of Israel from Egypt (the Exodus), the wandering in the wilderness, the crossing of the River Jordan, the later return from exile, and the rebuilding of Jerusalem. Actual historical episodes are seen to foreshadow later events not in a literal but in a spiritual sense; thus, the liberation from Egypt is paralleled in Christ's freeing us from our sins. These types are perpetuated and enormously increased in the writings of the ancient Christian Fathers. Indeed, the Bible is ransacked to extract types regarded as fulfilled in the Christian dispensation, some of them absurd and farfetched...

The use of types in this manner may be said to have entered deeply into Christian prayer, worship, hymnology, and piety generally<sup>106</sup>.

According to St. Augustine, the allegories which New Testament writers find in the Old Testament are not mere rhetorical figures but historical facts ("*non in verbis sed in facto*"); God, the true author of Scripture, foreordained certain facts recorded in the Bible in such a manner as to be, apart from historical reality, also a prophetic announcement of future events<sup>107</sup>.

All the work of the prophets, which is of cardinal importance in the Old Testament, rests on a twofold movement; it recalls the great works of God in the past, but it recalls them only as a foundation for a faith in great works to come. The past is only recalled as a foundation for future hope. As God had set man in Paradise so must Israel wait to be brought into a New Paradise.

<sup>106</sup> *The Coptic Encyclopedia*, p. 2283-4.

<sup>107</sup> F.L. Cross: *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 1990, p. 37

This is precisely the essence of typology, which is to show how past events are a figure of events to come<sup>108</sup>.

In the New Testament, we have four kinds of non-literal interpretations of Old Testament texts:

1. Interpretations dealing with predictions of the first coming of Christ.
2. Interpretations dealing with predictions of the second coming of Christ.
3. Interpretations dealing with the pre-existence of Christ.
4. Interpretations dealing with legal or moral matters.

We refer to these four kinds of non-literal interpretations as adventual, eschatological, pre-existential, and moral, respectively. *All these non-literal interpretations are of the rabbinical midrashic kind; none of them is of the Philonic philosophical kind, except perhaps the pre-existential, which may reflect indirectly some philosophic view.* Still, several instances of adventual, non-literal interpretation is explicitly described by the Philonic terms of allegory, type, shadow, and parable; undoubtedly it is only by mere accident that these terms are not used in connection with other instances of adventual interpretation, and also in connection with eschatological, pre-existential, and moral, non-literal interpretations. Thus, according to St. Paul, for a non-literal interpretation of a text of Scripture to be described by the Philonic term allegorical it is not necessary that it be philosophical. It is with these four kinds of non-literal interpretations found in the New Testament - adventual, eschatological, pre-existential, and moral - of which only some instances of the first kind are described by the term allegory or by the terms type, shadow, and parable, that the Fathers started on their discussion of the allegorical method<sup>109</sup>.

<sup>108</sup>

Jean Daniélou : *From Shadows to Reality, Studies in the Biblical Typology of the Fathers*, Newman Press, 1960, p. 12.

<sup>109</sup>

Harry Austryn Wolfson: *The Philosophy of the Church Fathers*, Harvard University Press, 1976, p.43; Cf. S. Davidson, *Sacred Hermeneutics* (1843); F. W. Farrar, *History of Interpretation*

Finally, it is worthy to note that even the Old Testament uses allegory. A whole book (Song of Songs) cannot be interpreted literally but allegorically. Also it is used in the Prophets, such as in Ezek. 27-32. Tyre is presented as a magnificent merchant ship, wrecked at sea, "The rowers have brought you into great waters; the east wind has broken you in the midst of the seas" Ezek. 28:26. The east wind is Nebuchadnezzar, who captured Jerusalem in 586 B.C. The Egyptian Pharaoh is the Nile crocodile, hooked and thrown out to rot on the desert<sup>110</sup>. Also in the New Testament, there is the Book of Revelation, a connected series of visions, which cannot be interpreted except allegorically.

## **ALLEGORY AND TYPOLOGY IN THE EARLY CHURCH<sup>111</sup>**

Early Fathers such as St. Clement of Rome, St. Irenaeus, and Tertullian<sup>112</sup> continued to use this method of interpretation which is found in the *Epistle of Barnabas*. Chapter 9 of the latter contends that in the dietary laws Moses expounded moral principles in a spiritual manner, but the Jews, being carnal, misunderstood them to refer literally to foods. Moses forbade eating pork in order to discourage associations with swinish people; that is, people who remember the Lord only when they are in need, are just like the pig which does not pay attention to its master while it is greedily feeding at the trough but squeals incessantly when it is hungry.

J. Daniélou<sup>113</sup> states that primitive Christian tradition recognized two senses of Scripture, namely the literal and the

(1886); G. H. Gilbert, *Interpretation of the Bible* (1908); H. de Lubac, "Typologie" et "Allegorisme," *Recherches de Science Religieuse*, 34 (1947), 180-226; J. Daniélou, *Sacramentum Futuri: Etudes sur les Origines de la Typologie Biblique*, 1950.

<sup>110</sup> John MacQueen: *Allegory*, Methuen & Co, 1970, p. 28. <sup>111</sup> Everett Ferguson:

*Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, N.Y, 990, p. 24. <sup>112</sup> F.L. Cross: *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 1990, p. 37. <sup>113</sup> J. Daniélou: *L'Unité des deux testaments dans*

*l'oeuvre d'Origene* (*Revue de Sciences religieuses*, 22 - 1948-p. 45); Alexander Kerrigan: *St. Cyril of Alexandria, Interpreter of the Old Testament*, Rome, 1952, p.26 ff.



typological. The latter is in reality a "Charistic," or "Christological" sense, having Christ in His totality as its object. He also states that there was at least five kinds of **typological** sense in early Christian literature<sup>114</sup>:

1. Typology that aims at discovering the circumstances of Christ's earthly life in the Old Testament. This type of exegesis serves to characterize the Western tradition.
2. Typology, common to all the Fathers, which does not therefore bear distinctive marks of any particular current, scrutinizes the Old Testament with a view to discovering Christ there, not in the exterior circumstances of His earthly life, but in the mysteries which He came to accomplish.
3. Typology that concentrates on those features of the Old Testament which are figures of the Church's sacramental life; it is found in the sacramental catches and is particularly dear to the School of Antioch.
4. Typology which looks in the Old Testament for figures of the role that Christ plays in the souls of believers; it is in Alexandria that this typology is cultivated with special predilection. For this reason some scholars call the School of Alexandria, "the School of the Souls"<sup>115</sup>. This does not mean that the Alexandrian school ignored the sanctification of the body, but it concentrates on the ascent of the souls by the Holy Spirit to heavenly life while the believer still lives in this world, through the study of the Bible and worshipping God in his daily life.
5. Eschatological typology aims at discovering the traits of the Old Testament which are vestiges of Christ's glorious manifestation at the end of time. Daniélou notes that writers of Jewish apocalyptic literature favor this form of interpretation,

<sup>114</sup>

Cf. J. Daniélou: *Les viviers sens de l'Ecriture dans la radition chretienne primitive* (*Ephemerides theologicae Lovanienses*, 24), p. 120-125.

<sup>115</sup> Brian E. Daley: *The Hope of the Early Church*, Cambridge University, 1991, p. 44.

without giving to it a Christological signification. Origen quotes many of them.

Although Marcion rejected allegory along with the Old Testament, allegory played a role in much of the biblical interpretations found in Gnosticism, which extended its use to the New Testament. Valentinus, for example, interpreted the woman in the parable of the leaven (Matt. 13:33-34; Luke 13:20-21) as the fallen *aeon*, Sophia; the three batches of meal as the three classes of human beings, material, psychic, and spiritual; and the leaven itself as the Savior<sup>116</sup>. Valentinus' follower Heracleon interpreted the Gospel of John allegorically, presenting, for example, the "royal officer" of John 4:46-53 as the inferior Creator of the material world<sup>117</sup>.

**St. Clement of Alexandria** believes that the Bible looks like St. Mary the Virgin who brought forth Jesus Christ and her virginity was preserved. Thus we discover spiritual meanings of the Bible, but its meaning is still virgin, as it has many hidden spiritual meanings. However, one must be careful not to exaggerate St. Clement's proneness to allegorism, for he tries not to abandon the historical sense of Scripture, as has often been done by some allegorical interpreters. St. Clement says once and again that the Scriptures do have a literal historical sense<sup>118</sup>.

**St. Clement of Alexandria** distinguishes between literal, mystical, moral, and prophetic interpretations. C. Mondésert states that meditating on the text of the Scripture, St. Clement discovers at least five senses: an historical sense; a doctrinal sense; a prophetic signification; a philosophical sense;

<sup>116</sup>

<sup>117</sup> *Irenaeus, Hear. 1.1.16.*

<sup>118</sup> *Origen, JO. 13.60.416*

<sup>118</sup> *Stromat 1:21; 2:19; 3:6; 6:3,8; 7:3.*

and a mystical sense<sup>119</sup>.

Allegory is developed and carried to excess by **Origen**. He believes that the Logos, the heavenly Groom, is present under the accidents of the Scriptures as Food, Educator and Groom for the soul. "I will endeavor to show," he says, "what the accepted methods of interpretation are, and therefore I will follow the rule which has always been used in Jesus Christ's heavenly Church since the time of the apostles<sup>120</sup>". According to him<sup>121</sup>, the words of the Scriptures should be printed in the soul in one of three ways:

1- The simple people or the uneducated should be edified by the letter itself, which we call the obvious meaning or the straightforward historical sense. Origen himself is the foremost biblical scholar of antiquity and *by no means ignores the literal meaning or the importance of history*<sup>122</sup>, when he thinks that one existed, he considers it inferior to the spiritual. Nearly all would have agreed with the fourth-century Didymus the Blind, who was influenced by Origen, that "in fact it is impossible to understand the spiritual or elevated thought without the shadow, which is the letter, or without the preliminary *propaedeutic* sciences<sup>123</sup>." Origen interprets the past in terms of present faith in Christ, and he shares a tradition which is concerned with spirit rather than letter<sup>124</sup>. The inner spiritual mysteries are concerned with the present: *hodie, etiam hodie*<sup>125</sup>. The spiritual meaning of the law is found only in the mystery of the Cross and of the Church<sup>126</sup>. The Gospels are chiefly concerned with present spiritual realities and point to the eternal gospel, to the time of the parousia when those who have

<sup>119</sup> Clement d' Alexandria, Paris 1944, p. 154; Alexander Kerrigan: *St. Cyril of Alexandria*, Roma 1952, p.29.

<sup>120</sup> *De Principiis* 4:2:2.

<sup>121</sup> *De Princip.* 4:2:4.

<sup>122</sup> H. de Lubac: *Histoire et esprit*, Paris 1950, p. 94.

<sup>123</sup> In *Esaiam* II:3:7; Boniface Ramsey: *Beginning to Read the Fathers*, Paulist Press, 1985, p. 36-7.

<sup>124</sup> H. D. Lubac, p. 92-194; *COQ*, (Osborn, p. 3).

<sup>125</sup> Lubac, p. 149.

<sup>126</sup> Lubac, p. 177.

lived according to the spirit on earth, 'will live in the kingdom of heaven according to the laws of the eternal gospel'<sup>127</sup>. **History remains the starting point for our ascent to the mystery**<sup>128</sup>, because it shows God's condescension, economy, providence and instruction. Law and prophets come together in Christ. The spiritual realities to which both testaments point are the Cross, the resurrection, and the kingdom of heaven; they are not Platonic forms or Gnostic aeons<sup>129</sup>.

Literalism did not mean a blind acceptance of whatever was written in the Bible but the acceptance of the Law as meaningful in everyday life. To prove his point, De Lange also offers five examples of Origen's indebtedness to Rabbinical sources<sup>130</sup>.

Origen prefaces the *Homilies on Leviticus* with an example of how foolish following the literal meaning would be. If taken literally, the entire book of Leviticus would require *Christians "to sacrifice calves and lambs and to offer fine wheat flour with incense and oil."* In the same passage he calls those who insist on a literal meaning "*wicked presbyters*"<sup>131</sup>. He is quick to mention those passages which present particular difficulties. In replying to critics of his allegorical method of interpretation, Origen claims that the letter of the gospel kills<sup>132</sup>. In addition literal teaching also can hinder the work of the Church<sup>133</sup>.

Jean Daniélou gives an example of Origen's interest in the literal and historical meaning, saying,

<sup>127</sup>

<sup>128</sup> Lubac, p. 185, *In Exod. hom. 4:9*.

<sup>129</sup> Lubac, p. 246; *In Num. hom. 5:1*.

<sup>130</sup> Osborn, *COQ*, p. 3.

<sup>131</sup> Gary Wayne Barkley: *Origen; Homilies on Leviticus*, Washington, 1990, p. 14; N.R.M. De Lange: *Origen and the Jews: Studies in Jewish- Christian Relations in Third-Century Palestine*, 1976, Cambridge, p. 103-12.

<sup>132</sup> *In Lev. hom. 1:1*.

<sup>133</sup> *In Lev. hom. 7:5*.

<sup>134</sup> Cf. *In Lev. hom. 6:24-30*; Gary Wayne Barkley: *Origen; Homilies on Leviticus*, Washington, 1990, p. 16.

The second Homily on Genesis is a basic text for our purpose. We shall see how Origen both echoes tradition as he knew it and develops the historical outline in which he discusses difficulties raised against the veracity of the story of the Flood, in particular the very limited size of the ark to contain so many species of animals. Apelles, a disciple of Marcion, ironically remarked that it could hardly hold four elephants. Origen sets out to answer this difficulty. This is an important point, for we see that he does not dream of contesting the historicity of the event but falls back on a symbolic interpretation. He lays down first the literal meaning of the text with the help of all the sources at his command. Then only does he pass on to the allegorical meaning. The story of the ark is not, then, just symbolical. There was a real ark which did once float on the waters, typifying the Church of the future, escaping from the flames of the great conflagration to come. Origen is here more literal than many of the literal exegetes of our own day, a point which P  re de Lubac has made clear in his introduction to the Homilies sur la Gen  se<sup>134</sup>.

Sometimes Origen denies the literal meaning. For example he says, *“Could any man of sound judgment suppose that the first, second and third days (of creation) had an evening and a morning, when there were as yet no sun or moon or stars? Could anyone be so unintelligent as to think that God made a paradise somewhere in the east and planted it with trees, like a farmer, or that in that paradise he put a tree of life, a tree you could see and know with your senses, a tree you could derive life from by eating its fruit with the teeth in your head? When the Bible says that God used to walk in paradise in the evening or that Adam hid behind a tree, no one, I think, will question that these are only fictions, stories of things that never actually happened, and that figuratively they*

<sup>134</sup>

Jean Dani  lou : *From Shadows to Reality, Studies in the Biblical Typology of the Fathers*, Newman Press, 1960, p. 105.

refer to certain mysteries<sup>135</sup>.” It is the same with the New Testament text which says that Satan took Jesus up a high mountain from which he could see all the kingdoms on earth. So much for the impossible and its symbolical interpretation<sup>136</sup>.

2- People at the higher level should find edification for their souls through the moral meaning, or the lessons of the texts for the will.

Jean Daniélou<sup>137</sup> says “it might be said that Origen took from Philo the idea of looking to Scripture for allegories applying to the moral life. This is particularly evident at the beginning of the homilies on Genesis, where the whole of creation is regarded as an allegory of the soul, as the macrocosm of the microcosm. Man and woman are the two parts of the soul. If they are in harmony they have children, i.e., good impulses. The fish, birds, and beasts over which man reigns are the acts proceeding from the heart and soul (the birds) and the desires of the body and movements of the flesh (the fish and the beasts). All this is based on Philo.”

In the *Homilies on Leviticus*, there are several instances of where this moral meaning is emphasized<sup>138</sup>. The moral sense of Scripture speaks to the reason of a person. Reason is the ability to distinguish between good and evil<sup>139</sup>. By offering holy doctrine from God’s word, the priest appeals to the moral sense of his hearers and thus cleanses their consciences<sup>140</sup>.

According to De Lange’s conclusion, commenting on the wider body of Origen’s writing, that “the “moral” sense is not clearly undistinguished from the third [the spiritual]<sup>141</sup>,” is undoubtedly correct. Therefore, the second and third levels of

<sup>135</sup> *De Principiis* 4:3:2.

<sup>136</sup> Jean Daniélou: *Origen*, p. 180.

<sup>137</sup> Jean Daniélou: *Origen*, p.186.

<sup>138</sup> *In Lev. hom.* 1:5; 2:4.

<sup>139</sup> *In Lev.* 9:6.

<sup>140</sup> *In Lev. hom.* 5:3; Gary Wayne Barkley: *Origen; Homilies on Leviticus*, Washington, 1990, p.

17.

<sup>141</sup> *Origen and the Jews*, p. 111.

meaning in Scripture are closely related in Origen's understanding<sup>142</sup>.

3- The perfect should be edified by the mystical or spiritual sense in relation to Christ, or the spiritual Law, as it contains the shadow of the blessings to come. Origen's real interest is the spiritual interpretation of the Scripture. "*The priest*," Origen said explaining Leviticus 1:6 (which mentions skinning the carcass of a sacrificial animal). "*is the one who removes the veil of the letter from God's word and bares the members within, which are the elements of a spiritual understanding*"<sup>143</sup>. For Origen the allegorical meaning is not hard, as he says, "*The spiritual interpretation, however, is not so difficult and hard to come by. For the Bride of the Word, the soul who abides in His royal house - that is, in the Church - is taught by the Word of God, who is her Bridegroom, whatsoever things are stored and hidden within the royal court and in the King's chamber*"<sup>144</sup>."

He recognizes that, as man is composed of body, soul and spirit, in the same way the structure of the Scripture has been planned by God for man's salvation, i.e., the literal, moral, and spiritual senses.

For example, Origen finds in the **ark of Noah** a materialization to his theory, as it was built of three stages. "*In thus ascending by the various stages of accommodation, we arrive at Noah himself, whose name means 'rest' and 'righteous,' which is Jesus Christ.*"

. The bottom serves as the foundation which refers to the literal or the historical explanation of Scripture.

. The higher is the spiritual or the mystical. In his homilies on the Genesis, he says, "*Those who live according to the dictates of the knowledge of the Spirit, and are capable not only of*

<sup>142</sup>

<sup>143</sup> Gary Wayne Barkley: *Origen; Homilies on Leviticus*, Washington, 1990, p. 17.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid*, 1.4

<sup>144</sup> *Comm. on the Songs of Songs*, book 3:13 (ACW).

*governing themselves, but of instructing others, because they are few in number, are typified by the small number of those saved with Noah, as Jesus Christ, the true Noah, has few who are close to him in relation and intimacy to share in his word and understand wisdom.*

c. The middle represents the moral one<sup>145</sup>.

The Scriptures must be interpreted spiritually because they are the work of the Spirit, who unites them in one book<sup>146</sup>, and inspires both writer and reader<sup>147</sup>.

According to Origen the understanding of the Scripture is "the art of arts," and "the science"<sup>148</sup>. "The words of the Scripture are its body, or the visible element, that hides its spirit, or the invisible element. The spirit is the treasure hidden in a field: hidden behind every word"<sup>149</sup>, every letter but even behind every iota used in the written word of God<sup>150</sup>. Thus "every thing in the Scripture is mystery"<sup>151</sup>.

This spiritual understanding of the Scripture is a grace given to the perfect believers by Christ. For only those who have the Spirit of Jesus can understand their spiritual meaning<sup>152</sup>, i.e., to enter this chamber of eternal marriage between Christ and the soul.

We obtain this grace through praying, as we must weep and beg the Lord to open our inner eyes like the blind man sitting by the roadside at Jericho (Mat. 20:30). Origen says that we must pray for we are often beside the wells of running water-God's Scripture-and we yet fail to recognize them by ourselves.

<sup>145</sup> Hom. Gen 2:6. <sup>146</sup> Lubac, p. 297-302; In Num. hom. 16:9; De Principiis 1:3. <sup>147</sup> Lubac, p. 315; Comm. John 32:18. <sup>148</sup> Comm. John 23:46. <sup>149</sup> Hom. Levit. 4:8. <sup>150</sup> Hom. Jerm. 39. <sup>151</sup> Hom. Gen. 10:1. <sup>152</sup> In Ezk. Hom 11:2.



*Every time Moses is read to us, We should pray to the Father of the Word that the words of psalm: “open my eyes: and I will consider the wondrous things of Your law” (Ps. 118:8) may apply in our case too. Unless he opens our eyes himself, how can we see what great mysteries were wrought in the patriarchs, mysteries variously signified by the images of night, marriage and birth?*<sup>153</sup>

The Alexandrian theologians who followed him, from St. Dionysius to St. Cyril, are all to a greater or lesser extent infected with the predilection for allegory; and the same can be said of the Palestinian (Epiphanius was a notable exception) and Cappadocian Fathers.

The **School of Antioch** came on the scene comparatively late. It had a vigorous reaction against allegorism. Though not completely rejecting allegorical interpretation, used it very sparingly preferring the historical sense.

Through the influence of the Alexandrian theologians the tradition of allegory passed to the West, and is visible in the expository writings, for example, of St. Hillary and St. Ambrose. The greatest of Latin exegetes, St. Jerome, though in his later days he became suspicious of allegorism, accepted Origen's three senses of Scripture, deeming that recourse to the spiritual meaning was made necessary by the anthropomorphism's inconsistencies and incongruities with which the Bible abounded. St. Augustine employs allegory with the greatest freedom, delighting particularly in the mystical significance of names and numbers<sup>154</sup>. St. John Cassian<sup>155</sup>, following St. Clement of Alexandria, establishes the division which re-distinguishes four senses, viz. the literal, the allegorical (applying passages to Christ and the Church Militant),

<sup>153</sup>

*In Gen. hom. 12:1.*

<sup>154</sup>

*Cf. J.N.D. Kelly: Early Christian Doctrines, 1978, p. 74-5.*

<sup>155</sup>

*Collat. 14:8.*

the typological or moral (understanding of the soul and its virtues), and the analogical (applying passages to heavenly realities)<sup>156</sup>.

### THE ALEXANDRIANS' JUSTIFICATIONS OF ALLEGORICAL INTERPRETATION

As we have already said, St. Clement believes that allegory incites believers to discover the hidden meanings of the Scripture.

Alexander Kerrgan says,

Much agreement reigns among the older Alexandrians in regard to the *raison d'être* of the spiritual sense. **Clement**, who was primarily a moralist and an educator, is inclined to emphasize its *pedagogical* value: the symbols which intimate it pique curiosity and stimulate the mind to discover the words of salvation<sup>157</sup>.

Other scholars state that the biblical authors, inspired by the Holy Spirit, used allegory to keep simple Christians from doctrines they are not mature enough to handle and piques the curiosity of the more intelligent and spiritually advanced. Finding the deeper meaning is thus the process by which God gradually leads those to whom He would reveal himself from the sensible to the intelligible world. In this way the genuine gnostic, pondering the obscurer passages of the Bible, takes flight from this world to the other and becomes like God.

**Origen** discusses two problems which the early Church faced, concerning the Old Testament:

1. The Jews, who stick to the letter of the prophecies of the Old Testament, were expecting that the Messiah would fulfill them literally, such as He must be their King who reigns over the whole world. Therefore, they refused Jesus as the true Messiah<sup>158</sup>, because He does not literally promise the release of captives (Isa.

<sup>156</sup> F.L. Cross: *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 1990, p. 37.

<sup>157</sup> Alexander Kerrgan: *St. Cyril of Alexandria*, Roma 1952, p. 135 ff.

<sup>158</sup> *De Principals* 4:2:1.

61:1, rebuild what they take to be the true “City of God,” destroy the chariots of Ephraim and the horses of Jerusalem (Zach. 9:10) or eat milk and honey (Isa. 7:22). They could not acknowledge Him as Lord, for they did not see the wolf and the lamb feed together (Isa. 65:25), leopard be at ease with kid, or calf, lion and sheep led together to pasture (Isa. 11:7)<sup>159</sup>. Nicolas De Lange states, “It is no exaggeration to say that, for Origen, the whole of the debate between the Church and the Synagogue can be reduced to the one question of an interpretation of the Scriptures. ‘Jesus is the Son of God who gave the law and the prophets,’ and ‘the religion of Moses and the prophetic writings form the introduction to the faith of Christians;’ Christianity is thoroughly rooted in the Jewish Bible. The difference between Judaism and Christianity is that the Christians perceive the mysteries which are only hinted at in the Bible, whereas the Jews are only capable of strictly literal reading of the text<sup>160</sup>.”

*“Both Jews and Christians,” Origen says, “believe that the Bible was written by the Holy Spirit, but we disagree about the interpretation of what is contained in it. Nor do we live like the Jews, since we consider that it is not the literal interpretation of the law which contains the spirit of the legislation<sup>161</sup>.”*

Elsewhere he says, *“We in the Church do not overlook the fact that Jesus is the Son of God who gave the law and the prophets, but while we have avoided the mythologies of the Jews we derive practical wisdom and education from the mystical contemplation of the law and the prophets<sup>162</sup>.”* Origen often speaks of “Jewish Mythology,” a phrase borrowed from Titus 1:14, and he describes the Jewish mythology as “useless” and “fetid<sup>163</sup>.” There

<sup>159</sup>

<sup>160</sup> *De Principiis* 4:2:1.

<sup>160</sup> N.R.M. De Lange: *Origen and the Jews: Studies in Jewish-Christian Relations in Third-Century Palestine*, 1976, Cambridge, p. 82-3.

<sup>161</sup> *Contra Celsus* 5:60.

<sup>162</sup> *Contra Celsus* 2:6.

<sup>163</sup> *In Lev. hom.* 3:3.

is no doubt that he means by “Jewish myths” the literal interpretations of the law, indeed “Jewish” can be used simply as a synonym for “literal,” but this is an exaggerated and one sided characterization of the Jewish attitude, which is presented as a contrast to Origen’s own, richer interpretation. Indeed, its use is not confined to Jews; he can even apply it to Christians who adopt what is to him a narrow view of the meaning of Scripture<sup>164</sup>.

Origen says, *"If therefore both the Lord and God are "Spirit," we ought to hear spiritually those things which the Spirit says*<sup>165</sup>*."*

2. The Gnostics rejected the Old Testament, for they were scandalized by some passages which refer to God as being angry, or that He regretted or changed His mind. They were scandalized because they interpreted them literally and not spiritually<sup>166</sup>. Origen suggests that allusions to *anthropomorphism*, such as God's anger, are not to be understood literally. *"If you hear of God's anger and wrath, do not think of wrath and anger as emotions experienced by God."* God is simply accommodating human language to serve the purpose of correcting human faults, as a human father corrects a child. *"We too put on a severe face for correcting children, not because that is our true feeling but because we are accommodating ourselves to their level. If we let our kindly feelings show in our face ... we spoil the child."* *But God is not really wrathful or angry, yet we experience the effects of wrath when we find ourselves in trouble on account of our wickedness, which is the discipline of the "so-called wrath of God*<sup>167</sup>*."*

<sup>164</sup>

N.R.M. De Lange; *Origen and the Jews: Studies in Jewish-Christian Relations in Third-Century Palestine*, 1976, Cambridge, chapter 9.

<sup>165</sup>

*In Lev. hom. 1:1.*

<sup>166</sup>

*Ibid.*

<sup>167</sup>

*On Jer. Ohm.*, 18:7-10; Carl A. Volz: *Life and Practice in the Early Church*, Minneapolis, 1990, p. 114.

In *Jos. hom* 9:8 Origen expresses his position with regard to the Old Testament quite admirably. It represents a system which is done away with. Yet the Church, unlike the Gnostics, does not reject it; she preserves it, simply because it contains the type of Christ. But carnal man, the slave of the letter, is incapable by himself of deciphering this type of Christ. Christ Himself must grant that spiritual understanding by bestowing His own Spirit. This is the reason why a spiritual exegesis is so closely linked with the ideal of a spiritual perfection. “*Jesus it is who reads the Law, when he reveals the secrets of the Law. We, who belong to the Catholic Church, do not reject the Law of Moses, but receive it if and when it is Jesus who reads it to us. For it is only if Jesus reads the Law in such wise that through his reading we grasp its spiritual significance, that we correctly understand the Law. Do not think they have grasped the meaning who could say: Was not our heart burning within us when he opened to us the Scriptures, and, beginning at Moses and the Prophets and expounding them all showed that they wrote of him.*” By linking Joshua’s reading of the Law with Jesus’ reading to the disciples of Emmaus, Origen gives us an exegesis of the Matthew type, which is not usual with him, yet which emphasizes the profound continuity of the Old Testament, the Gospel and the interior Christ who instructs each Christian<sup>168</sup>.

**Origen** sees that these two groups of people (the Jews and the Gnostics) misinterpreted the Scripture as they held the literal sense exclusively. For this reason he set his theory that there are three various meanings in the Scriptures, the literal, the moral and spiritual meanings.

Alexander Kerrigan writes<sup>169</sup>,  
Both he and **Origen** allude to a reason that is  
invoked by profane exegetes in justification of the

<sup>168</sup> Jean Daniélou: *From Shadows to Reality, Studies in the Biblical Typology of the Fathers*, Newman Press, 1960, p. 282-3.  
<sup>169</sup> Alexander Kerrigan: *St. Cyril of Alexandria*, Roma 1952, p. 135 ff.

allegorical interpretation of the Homeric poems: the purpose of the higher sense is to explain and transmit Scripture in a manner that is worthy of God.

**Origen** dwells at length on a third reason: the spiritual sense is justifiable on the grounds that the institutions of the Old Testament prefigured Christ. "In what is written in the law," he writes, "everything is either a figure or an enigma of Christ<sup>170</sup>." The spiritual sense, accordingly, is the expression of the relationship of the Old Testament to the New; it aims at discovering the connections that exist between them. This principle is known to **Clement** but he invokes it rarely. (As we shall see presently) it is a cardinal principle of **St. Cyril's** exegetical method. (We have already noted that) **St. Cyril** regards the spiritual sense as a hinge on which his theory of the identity of both Testaments hangs. He expresses his views on this point for the first time during a discussion in which he endeavors to harmonize the implications of texts like Mt. 5,17 f. and Phil. 3, 7-9 (which imply that the Mosaic law is still in force) with those of John. 4, 21-24, Gal. 5, 4 f., Heb. 7,18f., 8, 7-10 and 13 (which imply that the law is abolished)<sup>171</sup>.

In dealing with St. Cyril's views, Kerrgan further writes, Three conclusions are reached which, though formulated negatively, are quite positive in their contents:

1. It is a mistake to hold that the law has been abolished to the extent that none of its prescriptions have any force.
2. It is likewise a mistake to think that it is altogether useless; (*ta anayxaia*), if they are explained, they are still useful.

<sup>170</sup>

<sup>171</sup> *In Ioh. Comm 13:26.*  
*PG 68:137A.*

3. Finally, it is erroneous to claim that the law cannot be used as a proof of the truth<sup>172</sup>.

Three reasons are adduced in support of these conclusions:

1. "the law is a type, shadow, or form of religion that brings forth in childbirth, as it were, the beauty of the truth which is hidden inside<sup>173</sup>."
2. "The law is a teacher that leads beautifully to the mystery concerning Christ<sup>174</sup>."
3. "The law contains the first elements of God's words."

Kerrigan also writes, On these biblical foundations the Patriarch of Alexandria (**St. Cyril**) builds his theory of the higher sense of Scripture. We must not lose sight of the fact that this higher sense is primarily a mode of utterance existing in the Scriptures themselves. A few quotations will illustrate this point. "The law brings forth spiritual things in its depths, as it were, and contains the meaning of more subtle ideas in delicate shadows<sup>175</sup>." With regard to the prophecy of *Aggeus*, Cyril writes: "His discourse is mixed. And the mystical (*Sophia*) befitting spiritual things is buried in the deeds and utterances of history<sup>176</sup>." "Great spiritual wealth," our author remarks elsewhere, "was pounded into the Mosaic oracles<sup>177</sup>."

Of course, in order that these riches be unearthed, the literal sense must necessarily be superseded. On this subject St. Cyril, apparently, can never say too much. "The law is perfect and imperfect at one and the same time. It is

<sup>172</sup>

<sup>173</sup> PG 68:140A.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid 137B.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid 140A.

<sup>176</sup> PG 68:540 B.

<sup>177</sup> Comment. on Agg. Pusey II:243, 16 ff.

<sup>177</sup> Comment on St. John, Pusey II:386, 4 f.

perfect, if it is understood spiritually (since it speaks to us of Christ's mystery). But it is imperfect, if the mind of those who are being instructed does not go beyond the letter. The crudity of the letter is only half-knowledge<sup>178</sup>." In another place the Patriarch states that the law, considered precisely as a system of types and shadows, did not constitute food which could be eaten; to become food, it needed to be transformed into an evangelical *Sophia* and then deflected towards Christ's mystery<sup>179</sup>. Quoting Lev. 19, 23f he endeavors to give a somewhat more artistic finish to these ideas. "...The writings of Moses, since they yield a variegated growth of oracles and are adorned with trees (namely laws concerning each single thing) seem to us to be like most fertile gardens. But you must purify the impurity of each tree, that is to say, you must cut off the worthlessness of history and remove the woodiness of the letter. Then you may reach the heart of the plant, you may investigate the interior fruit of the oracle and make food of it<sup>180</sup>."

Ideas like these **St. Cyril** hears again and again<sup>181</sup>. The saying of St. Paul "*the letter kills but the spirit vivifies*" 2 Cor. 3:6 is frequently invoked and made a universal norm. Just one quotation more: "For the letter kills, that is to say, the letter of the law as the wise Paul says. Of itself the shadow is useless. But in regard to us, who understand, the shadow has become most useful, since it enables us to grasp the things of Christ. It has become, as it were, a kind of spiritual rain which irrigates the earth in a certain fashion. If it is true that the ancient law was bitter and unbearable for the ancients, it has become for us a *Paidagogos* to Christ's

<sup>178</sup>

<sup>179</sup> *Comment on Osee, Pusey I:85, 25ff.*  
PG 68:585 C.

<sup>180</sup> PG 68:585D.

<sup>181</sup> PG 70:1429 A.



mystery, so that we can bring forth fruit in him, by peeling off the thickness of the shadow<sup>182</sup>."

### THE ANTIOCHENE REACTION<sup>183</sup>

There was a reaction against allegorism in Antioch, the ecclesiastical metropolis of Syria, where a tradition of Bible study, with meticulous attention to the text, had been fostered since the days of *Lucian of Antioch* (martyred A.D 312).

The beginnings of the school of Antioch seem to have been very modest; it never could boast a head like Origen<sup>184</sup>. It was not a regular institution with a continuous secession of teachers, like the Catechetical School of Alexandria, but a theological tendency, more particularly a peculiar type of hermeneutics and exegesis<sup>185</sup>.

The Antiochene Fathers used few typological elements in their writings, since their exegesis reduced this element to a minimum<sup>186</sup>.

We noticed that the Alexandrians faced the Hellenic culture, and were obliged to use even their terms to defend the Christian faith and to attract the well-educated pagans and Jews to Christianity. The Antiochenes were strongly influenced by the Jewish literalist tradition of Antioch. They were convinced that the primary level of the interpretation was the *historical* level. They gave attention to the revisions of the text, a close adherence to the plain, natural meaning according to the use of language and the condition of the writer, and justice to the human factor. In other words, its exegesis is grammatical and historical, in distinction from the allegorical method of the Alexandrian School. Yet, as regards to textual criticism, Lucian followed the steps of Origen.

<sup>182</sup>

<sup>183</sup> *Comment on Amos, Pusey I, 535, 19 ff.*

<sup>184</sup> *J.N.D. Kelly: Early Christian Doctrines, 1978, p. 75 f.*

<sup>185</sup> *J. Quasten: Patrology, vol. 2, p. 122.*

<sup>186</sup> *Schaff: History of the Christian Church, vol. 2, p.816*

<sup>186</sup> *Jean Daniélou: From Shadows to Reality, Studies in the Biblical Typology of the Fathers, Newman Press, 1960, p.6.*

Besides the Antiochenes did have regard for the spiritual sense, and the divine element in the Scriptures.

With regard to prophecies and psalms that were generally understood to be Messianic, the Antiochenes allowed for a fuller sense alongside the historical sense. Thus, they understood passages to refer to Christ, the Church and the spreading of the gospel; but they did this only in certain clearly defined circumstances<sup>187</sup>.

J. Quasten states that the scholars in the two different schools were convinced of a deep-seated discord, a fundamental contradiction, in their respective approaches. At Antioch, the object was to find in Holy Writ its most obvious meaning; at Caesarea or Alexandria the search was for the figures of Christ. The one site accused allegory of destroying the value of the Bible as a record of the past, of travestying it into mythological fable; the other dubbed 'carnal' all who clung to the letter. Still between the two there was no absolute opposition; there was even broad agreement on entire traditional exegesis; but special emphasis fell on distinct points of view. For Origen discovers types not just in certain episodes, but in every detail of the inspired word. Each line is filled with mystery. On the other hand, Antioch made it a fundamental principle to see figures of Christ just occasionally, not always, in the Old Testament. Where the resemblance was marked and the analogy clear, only there would it admit a foreshadowing of the Savior. Types were the exception, not the rule; the Incarnation was everywhere prepared, but not everywhere prefigured<sup>188</sup>.

***Lucian of Antioch:*** The Arians and Nestorians claimed descent from, or affinity with, Lucian and his school. J. Quasten states "Its (the school of Antioch) rationalistic tendency led to its becoming the womb of heresy; Lucian, its founder, was the teacher

<sup>187</sup>

Cf. J. Rogerson: *The Study and Use of the Bible*, Grand Rapids, 1988, p. 36.

<sup>188</sup> J. Quasten: *Patrology*, vol. 2, p. 121-2.

of Arius<sup>189</sup>. He was not a prolific writer. St. Jerome refers to his ‘small treatise on faith’ without indication of its contents. He was a Hebrew scholar and corrected the Greek version of the Old Testament from the original. This revision of the Septuagint was adopted by the greater number of the churches of Syria and Asia Minor from Antioch to Byzantium, and was highly esteemed. Large fragments of it are extant in the writings of St. John Chrysostom and Theodoret. Lucian extended his textual criticism to the New Testament also, but limited it most probably to the four Gospels<sup>190</sup>.

Theodoret quotes the following passage from the letter of St. Alexander of Alexandria, ten years after Lucian’s death, which was sent to all the bishops of Egypt, Syria, Asia and Cappadocia.

*You yourselves have been instructed by God; you are not unaware that this teaching, which is setting itself up again against the faith of the Church, is the doctrine of Ebion and Artemas; it is the perverse theology of Paul of Samosata, who was expelled from the Church at Antioch by a councilor sentence of bishops from all place; his successor Lucian remained for a long time excommunicated under three bishops; the dregs of the impiety of those heretics have been absorbed by these men who have risen from nothing....., Arius,<sup>191</sup> Achillas, and the whole band of their companions in malice*

In fact, Arius and the future upholders of his heresy were educated by Lucian at Antioch. Arius himself boasted of being a pupil of his, called himself a ‘Lucianist,’ and addressed Lucian’s successor, Bishop Eusebius of Nicomedia, as ‘Collucianist.’ All this indicates that Lucian is the father of Arianism. Thus this

<sup>189</sup>

*J. Quasten: Patrology, vol. 2, p. 122.*

<sup>190</sup>

*J. Quasten: Patrology, vol. 2, p. 142.*

<sup>191</sup>

*Eusebius: H.E. 1:4.*

heresy has its roots not in Alexandria, where it was first taught, but at Antioch<sup>192</sup>.

The chief theologians concerned with this were *Diodore of Tarsus* (c.330-c.390). The Exegetical School of Antioch produced one of its greatest scholars and teachers in Diodore of Tarsus. Highly esteemed as a pillar of orthodoxy during his lifetime, he was accused of heresy and condemned as the originator of Nestorianism a century after his death<sup>193</sup>.

Eusebius twice mentions him and his glorious martyrdom, but is silent about his theological opinions. St. Alexander of Alexandria, in an encyclical of 321, associates him with Paul of Samosata and makes him responsible for the Arian heresy; he also says that he was excommunicated or kept aloof from the church during the episcopate of Domnus, Timaeus, and Curillus; intimating that his schismatic condition ceased before his death. The charge brought against him and his followers is that he denied the eternity of the Logos, and the human soul of Christ (the Logos taking the place of the rational soul). Arius and the Arians speak of him as their teacher.

In his exegesis, Diodore follows firmly the historical and grammatical method and strenuously opposes the allegorical interpretation peculiar to the Alexandrian School. He does not look for a hidden meaning in the text, but for the sense intended by the inspired writer<sup>194</sup>.

His best work is his Commentary on the Psalms, which gives a good idea of how Antiochene exegesis is both *historical* and *Christological*. David is held to be the author of the Psalms, but, by the gift of prophecy, some of the Psalms refer historically to the times of later kings and prophets, the exile, and even the Maccabean period. His treatment of Psalms 2 and 22 show the two

<sup>192</sup>

*J. Quasten: Patrology, vol. 2, p. 143.*

<sup>193</sup>

*Schaff: History of the Christian Church, vol. 2, p. 813.*

<sup>194</sup>

*J. Quasten: Patrology, vol. 3, p. 397, 8.*

extremes of the Antiochene exegesis. Psalm 2 is about the Lord Jesus Christ, and tells how the Jews handed Him over to Herod and Pilate, how He will save those who believe in Him, and how He will crush those who do not believe. Against this thoroughly Christological interpretation of Psalm 2, Diodore firmly rejects the idea that Psalm 22 has anything to do with Christ in spite of the use of the words of Jesus when He was on the Cross in the opening lines of the Psalm<sup>195</sup>.

In Diodore's formula 'We do not forbid the higher interpretation and *theoria*, for the historical narrative does not exclude it, but is on the contrary the basis and substructure of loftier insights... We must, however, be on our guard against letting the *theoria* do away with the historical basis, for the result would then be, not *theoria*, but allegory'<sup>196</sup>.

**Theodore of Mopsuestia**<sup>197</sup> (c. 350-428): Diodore's pupil, Theodore, was like his teacher born at Antioch. He studied rhetoric and literature under the famous sophist Libanius, in whose school he began his lifelong friendship with St. John Chrysostom. Highly esteemed by his contemporaries but condemned as a heretic 125 years after his death, he shared the fate of his master Diodore of Tarsus. He is the most typical representative of the Antiochene school of exegesis and by far its most famous author. His works show that he was much more restrained in using the Christological interpretation of the Old Testament.

Photius<sup>198</sup> seems acquainted only with an interpretation of Genesis. He states in his very biased report:

Read the work of Theodore of Antioch entitled Commentary on Genesis, the first book which contains seven volumes. The style is neither brilliant nor very clear.

<sup>195</sup>

*Ibid.* 38.

<sup>196</sup> Praef. in Pss. (ed. Maries, *Recherches de science religieuse*, 1919), p. 88. Kelly, p. 776-7.

<sup>197</sup> J. Quasten: *Patrology*, vol. 3, p. 401ff.

<sup>198</sup> *Bibl. cod.* 38.

The author avoids the use of allegory as much as possible, being only concerned with the interpretation of history. He frequently repeats himself, and produces a disagreeable impression upon the reader. Although he lived before Nestorius, he vomits up his doctrines by anticipation. This is that Theodore of Mopsuestia, from whom on several occasions John Philoponus demanded a serious explanation of his method of interpretation in his own work on the Creation.

Theodore is the first interpreter to insist that the Psalms must be read against a historical background. He recognizes the Davidic authorship of all the Psalms but at the same time is convinced that the context and setting of many of the Psalms are altogether unsuitable to David. His solution to this problem is that those Psalms which reflect another period were written by David, but as a prophet revealing the future state of Israel. Thus he classifies the Psalms chronologically from David to the Maccabees. He maintains that the prophetic horizon of David did not reach further than the Maccabees, and that there is consequently no direct Messianic message in the Psalms. He justifies the Messianic use in the New Testament as an accommodation. But he recognizes four exceptions: Ps. 2; 8; 44;

109. Though he does not regard even these as properly Messianic in the sense of referring to the future prepared for the chosen people, he explains the Messianic interpretations proposed by the allegorical school of Alexandria which violate his sound principle that each Psalm must be treated as a literary whole and that a verse cannot be divorced from its context<sup>199</sup>.

**Theodoret of Cyrrhus** (c.393-c.460): His exegetical works deal with a large number of the Old Testament books. These works shows the Antiochene attitude in the method of interpretation.

<sup>199</sup>

J. Quasten: *Patrology*, vol 3, p. 404.

The practical illustrations of the Antiochene method are to be found in the sermons of the other great representative of this School **St. John Chrysostom** (c.347-407), who is furthermore deeply rooted in the common tradition and furnishes a large number of typical interpretations<sup>200</sup>.

The sermons of St. John Chrysostom give evidence of his strict and intelligent training in the tenets of that School. Always anxious to ascertain the literal sense and opposed to allegory, he combines great facility in discerning the spiritual meaning of the Scriptural text with an equal ability for immediate, practical application to the guidance of those committed to his care. The depth of his thought and the soundness of his masterful exposition are unique and attract even modern readers. He is equally at home in the books of the Old and the New Testaments and has the skill to use even the former for the conditions of the present and the problems of daily life<sup>201</sup>.

He combines the historical interpretation of his predecessors with doctrinal and didactic gifts.

St. John Chrysostom brings out the same point when he divides<sup>202</sup> Scriptural statements into:

- . those which allow a 'theoretical' in addition to the literal sense,
- . those which are to be understood solely in the literal sense, and
- . those which admit only of a meaning other than the literal, i.e. allegorical statements.

Valid though this contrast is, it should not be pressed to the extent of overlooking the underlying unity, at the deeper level of typology, of the fathers' approach to the Scriptural revelation.

<sup>200</sup>

Jean Daniélou: *From Shadows to Reality, Studies in the Biblical Typology of the Fathers*, Newman Press, 1960, p. 6.

<sup>201</sup> J. Quasten: *Patrology*, vol. 3, p. 433.

<sup>202</sup> *De creat.* PG 56:459, Kelly 76.

There is general agreement about cardinal issues, such as that Adam, or again Moses the law-giver, in a real sense, foreshadowed Christ; the flood points to baptism, and also to the judgment; all the sacrifices of the old law, but in a pre-eminent way the sacrifice of Isaac, are anticipations of that of Calvary; the crossing of the Red sea and the eating of manna looks forward to baptism and the Eucharist; the fall of Jericho prefigured the end of the world. The list of correspondences could be expanded almost indefinitely, for the fathers were never weary of searching them out and dwelling on them. They unanimously believe that what Origen calls the Jewish mystery (or dispensation) in its entirety' was, as it were, a rehearsal of the Christian mystery. Alexandria, famous in the late second and third centuries for its Matt school, became the home of allegorical exegesis, with the great Biblical scholar, Origen, as its leading exponent.

Despite differences of emphasis among the Antiochene Fathers, the whole believed that allegory was an unreliable, indeed illegitimate, instrument for interpreting Scripture. The true key to its deeper spiritual message where this was not already fully explicit, as in genuine prophecy, was what they called 'insight.' By this they meant the power of perceiving, in addition to the historical facts set out in the text, a spiritual reality to which they applied themselves to indicate. Thus they accepted typology proper indeed, the classic definition of a type as 'a prophecy expressed in terms of things' was framed by Chrysostom but tried to rescue it from being exploited arbitrarily. For *theoria* to operate they considered it necessary

- . that the literal sense of the sacred narrative should not be abolished,
- . that there should be a real correspondence between the historical fact and the further spiritual object discerned, and
- . that these two objects should be apprehended together, though of course in different ways.





## ***EXAMPLES OF THE ALEXANDRIAN ALLEGORY AND TYPOLOGY***

The following is an attempt to give a clear picture of Alexandrian allegory and typology through some examples. Although it is extremely hard task to do; it is considered worthwhile.

### **THE NUMBERS**

The mystical significance of numbers was developed especially at Alexandria, beginning with Philo and developed by Origen. Jean Daniélou<sup>203</sup> gives signs of Origen's dependence on Philo, saying, The third sign... is to be seen in the way he treats symbolism in certain cases. One thing, however, needs pointing out in this connection, and that is that there is a certain amount of ***numerical symbolism*** in the Bible itself, where it often constitutes the literal meaning of the text. The use of the number seven is a case in point. It is clear that there is a feeling for symbolism in the Bible; it is discernible, for instance, in the story of creation. Hence, when Origen says that the "*number six seems to denote effort and labor and the number seven to signify rest*"<sup>204</sup>, he is proceeding on the same lines as Scripture itself. But when referring to the number fifty, Pentecost and the number one hundred, which he takes to denote fullness, he says, "*The people who were refreshed by (= resting in, ) the food that Jesus gave them had to be in groups of a hundred - which is a sacred number, dedicated to God because of the monad in it - or in groups of fifty, a number signifying remission, as you can see from Pentecost and the*

<sup>203</sup>

Jean Daniélou: Origen, p. 184f.

<sup>204</sup>

Comm. on Matt. 14:5

*mystery of the Jubilee, which took place every fifty years*<sup>205</sup>,” he is combining the legitimate symbolism of the Bible with pagan symbolism. It is true that fifty is a symbol of forgiveness in the Old Testament, both in the case of the Jubilee and in the case of the annual celebration of Pentecost. And Origen may very likely be right when he claims to find the same thing in the New Testament. But when he takes a hundred as a symbol of perfection, he is inserting into this genuine symbolism a kind of symbolism which is based on external considerations and foreign to the text. The idea that a hundred is the holy number par excellence is in fact embedded deep in Hellenistic tradition...

St. Ambrose, St. Augustine, St. Jerome, Caesarius of Arles and others borrowed their numerical symbolism from Origen.

**\* Number 2 = The two Testaments**

Concerning the sacrifice of peace, the priest eats the meat through two days (Lev. 7:17). Origen comments, *“To the best of my understanding, I think in these two days the two Testaments can be understood”*<sup>206</sup>. In other words, through the two Testaments we can participate in the spiritual sacrifice of peace, joy and thanksgiving. The holy Scripture reveals God’s pleasure in believers, and the believers’ joy with their God.

For St. Augustine number two refers to love. He says,

*The precepts of love, given to us by the Lord, are two: “You shall love the Lord Your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind;” and, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets” (Matt. 22:37-40). With good reason did the widow cast “two mites;” all her substance, into the offerings of God. With*

<sup>205</sup>

*Ibid 11:3.*

<sup>206</sup>

*In Lev. Hom. 5:9.*

*good reason did the host take “two” pieces of money for the poor man who was wounded by the robbers. Jesus spent two days with the Samaritans, to establish them in love<sup>207</sup> .*

**\* Number 3 = The Holy Trinity, the resurrection of Christ, the three kinds of sin, and the three elements of man.**

*Abraham knew that he prefigured the type of things to come, he knew Christ would be born of his seed, to be offered as a true victim for the whole world and the resurrection of the dead... He arrived at the place to which the Lord had directed him on the third day (Gen. 22:4). The third day is always a fit one for mysteries. When the people went forth from Egypt they offered sacrifice to God on the third day (Exod. 3:18), and the Lord’s Resurrection is on the third day<sup>208</sup> .*

**Origen** sees in these three days which precede the Passover the Paschal “triduum” of the Lord<sup>209</sup> . *Pharaoh did not allow the children of Israel to go forward to the place of signs, and wished to prevent them advancing till they could enjoy the mysteries of the third day. Hear what says the Prophet: “The Lord will revive us after two days: on the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight.” The first day is for us the Lord’s passion; the second that of the descent into hell, and the third that of the Resurrection. That is why, on this third day, God will go before them, by day a pillar of cloud, and by night a pillar of fire. If, according to what we said above, the Apostle rightly teaches us that these words enshrine the mystery of baptism, then it will follow that “those who are baptized in*

<sup>207</sup>

<sup>208</sup> *On the Gospel of St. John, tr. 17:6.*

<sup>209</sup> *Origen: In. Gen. hom. 8:1, 4.*

<sup>209</sup> *Jean Daniélou: From Shadows to Reality, Studies in the Biblical Typology of the Fathers, Newman Press, 1960, p. 186.*

*Christ Jesus are baptized into his death and buried together with him" (Rom 6:3), and rise with him on the third day. When you have made your own the mystery of the third day, God will begin to lead you and himself to show you the way of salvation*<sup>210</sup>.

By the "Mystery" of the three days Origen is able to harmonize the crossing of the Red Sea with the general theology of Baptism as a sharing in the death and Resurrection of Christ. Later he sees in the pursuit of the Egyptians a stereotype of the devils straining to keep the soul from Baptism<sup>211</sup>.

Through the trip of the wilderness, the camp of the people was divided into four divisions, each one consisted of three tribes (Num. 2). According to Origen, **it was a symbol of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit**. He States that the inhabitants of the four corners of the world are censured by the Holy Trinity alone, those who call God and sit with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of the Heaven (Matt. 8:11)<sup>212</sup>.

**Number 3** refers also to the three kinds of sin.

*Man's way of sinning is three fold: sin is committed in deed, or in word or in thought*<sup>213</sup>. What is the "journey of three days" which we are to go, that going out from Egypt we can arrive at the place in which we ought to sacrifice? I understand "way" to refer to him who said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." (John 14.6.) We are to go this way for three days. For he who "has confessed with his mouth the Lord Jesus and believed in his heart that God raised him from the dead" **on the third day**, "will be saved" (Cf. Rom 10:9). This, therefore, is "the way of three days" by which one arrives at the place

<sup>210</sup>

<sup>211</sup> In Exod. hom 5:2.

Jean Daniélou: *From Shadows to Reality, Studies in the Biblical Typology of the Fathers*, Newman Press, 1960, p. 187.

<sup>212</sup> In Num. hom. 2:2.

<sup>213</sup> Origen: In Exod. Hom. 6:3.

*in which the "sacrifice of praise"(Cf. Ps. 49.14.) is sacrificed and offered to the Lord. What we have said pertains to the mystical meaning. But if we also require a place for the moral meaning which is very useful for us, we travel a "journey of three days" from Egypt if we thus preserve ourselves from all filth of **soul, body, and spirit**, that, as the Apostle said, "our spirit and soul and body may be kept whole in the day of Jesus Christ"(1 Thess 5:23). We travel a "journey of three days" from Egypt if, ceasing from worldly things we turn our **rational, natural, moral** wisdom to the divine laws. We travel a "journey of three days" from Egypt if, purifying our words, deeds, or thoughts - for these are the three things by which men can sin - we would be made "pure in heart" so that we could "see God" (Cf. Matt. 5:8).*

*\* **Numbers 5, 50, 250, and 500** And the number five hundred, or two hundred and fifty, either contains the mystery of the five senses perfected a hundred-fold in Him; or else, as being the pardonable number, fifty multiplied five times, it signifies the remission of sins that is bestowed through Him<sup>214</sup>.*

St. Augustine like Origen believes that number five refers to the five senses. However he gives another explanation to number fifty, as he says, The number of fifty is made up by multiplying 7 by 7, with the addition to 1, for 7 times 7 makes 49. (Number 7 refers to perfection, for on the seventh day God rested after the creation) And the 1 is added to show that there is one who is expressed by seven on account of His sevenfold operation; and we know that it was on the fiftieth day after our Lord's resurrection that the Holy Spirit was sent, for

<sup>214</sup> Origen:Comm. on the Songs of Songs, book 1:3 (ACW).

whom the disciples were commanded to wait according to the promise (Acts 4; 2:2-4)<sup>215</sup>.

**\* Number 10**

*Now the number ten is a sacred one, not a few mysteries being indicated by it*<sup>216</sup>.

**\* Numbers 22, 273 and 1000**<sup>217</sup> According to **Origen**, the Levites were counted (Num. 3). The count of all the males a month old and upwards. They were 22,000. The numeral 22 coincides with the number of the Hebrew Alphabet, the numeral 1000 is a symbol of heaven. As if their work was to register the names of all the people in a heavenly language so that everyone may share in the heavenly glory.

The number of the firstborns from all the people of Israel was 22,273. The 273 souls were left uncompensated for. For the redemption of each one of them, 5 golden shekels were to be presented to Aaron and his sons. The numeral 273 is a symbol of our redemption through baptism or spiritual birth. The physical birth requires the fetus to remain two hundred and seventy days in his mother's womb (9 X 30 = 270), and this spiritual birth is accomplished by 3 immersions. As for the five shekels they symbolize the sanctification of the five senses, so that we may resemble the five wise virgins (Matt. 25).

**Number 25 Origen**<sup>218</sup> states that the Levites start their work at age 25, spending five years for attaining their experience (Num. 4).

<sup>215</sup>

<sup>216</sup> *On the Gospel of St. John, tr.122:8.*

<sup>217</sup> *Origen: Commentary on John 2:29.*

<sup>218</sup> *In Num. hom. 4.*

<sup>218</sup> *In Num. hom. 5.*

Number 25 denotes the perfect sanctification of the five senses (both spiritual and physical:  $5 \times 5 = 25$ ).

**\* Number 300**

*With regard to these foxes (Judges 15:3-5) that differ from and disagree with one another, however, the number three hundred itself signifies that there are three kinds of sins. For every sin is committed either in deed, or in word, or by the consent of the mind<sup>219</sup>.*

Jean Daniélou says, The length (of the ark of Noah) of 300 cubits unites 100 and 3. The number 100 indicated fullness and “contains the mystery of the totality of the Spiritual creation, as we read in the Gospel, when it is said that a man having a hundred sheep and losing one of them left the ninety-nine others and went to seek the lost one.... This ‘hundredth,’ the fullness of Spiritual creation, does not subsist of itself, but proceeds from the Trinity and receives from the Father, through the Son and Holy Spirit, the length of life, that is the grace of immortality; it is because of this multiplied by three, so that having fallen from the ‘hundred’ through ignorance, it is restored in the three hundred by the knowledge of the Trinity.” The breadth has fifty cubits, “*because that number is consecrated to redemption and remission.*” It is the interpretation already given by Clement<sup>220</sup> and comes from Philo<sup>221</sup>. The number thirty contains the same “mystery” as

300. Finally, the top of the building leads to the number one because ‘one God is Father and Lord ; there is one faith of the Church and one baptism’ and “all things hasten to

<sup>219</sup>

<sup>220</sup> Origen: *Comm. on the Songs of Songs*, book 3(4):15 (ACW).

<sup>221</sup> *Stromata* 6:2.

<sup>221</sup> *De Mut. Nom.* 228

the one end of divine perfection<sup>222</sup>.” Origen has worked out his own theology in these mysteries of the ark as Clement has previously worked out his.



## THE NAMES

Ronald E. Heine says, “Etymological exegesis of names is one of the techniques of Origen's allegorical interpretation of Scripture. This is his attempt to draw spiritual significance from the meaning of the names of various persons and places in the Scriptural narrative by relating the names to words from which they are derived or, what is often the case, which they resemble<sup>223</sup>.”

### \* Aaron and his sons = Christ and His apostles

Origen states that our Lord Jesus Christ is “Aaron,” and His apostles are the sons of Aaron. According to Lev. 10:9, they do not drink wine or strong drink when they go into the Tent of Witness or when they approach the Altar. In other words they cannot rejoice while we are in iniquity, and are in need of Christ’s redeeming work and the apostles’ ministry<sup>224</sup>.

*According to the authority of the Apostle Paul, our Lord and Savior is called “the High-priest of the good things to come” Heb. 9:11. Thus, this one is “Aaron,” but “his sons” are His apostles to whom He Himself was saying, “My little children...” John 13:33... Let us now see how our Savior drinks no wine “until He drinks it” with the saints “anew in the kingdom of God” (Matt. 26:29). My Savior even now laments my sins. My Savior cannot rejoice while I continue in iniquity. Why not? Because He is “an Advocate for our sins before the*

<sup>222</sup>

*In Gen hom. 2:5.*

<sup>223</sup>

*Ronald E. Heine: Origen, Homilies on Genesis and Exodus - Frs. of the Church, 71, p. 389.*

<sup>224</sup>

*For more detail see our book Leviticus (in Arabic), p. 95 ff.*



*Father,” as John, his fellow priest, proclaims, saying that  
“if anyone should sin, we have an Advocate before the  
Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous; and He Himself is the  
Propitiation for our sins” (1 John 2:1-2)....  
As long as we do not act so that we may ascend to  
the kingdom, He cannot drink alone the wine which He  
promised to drink with us. Therefore, He is in sorrow as  
long as we persist in error<sup>225</sup>.*

**\* Agar and Sara**

For Origen<sup>226</sup> the opposition of Agar and Sara is not the opposition of two historical peoples. It is rather a stereotype of the interior conflict which goes on in each individual Christian. The historical conflict becomes that of Jew and Christian which each of us bears in himself. Thus the history of nations becomes the history of the individual soul, a transposition along the lines of authentic typology<sup>227</sup>.

**\* Balaam**

From the symbolic aspect, Origen<sup>228</sup> believes that the angel who appeared to Balaam, depicts the Angel of God who was leading His people (Exod. 23:43), while Balaam represents the non-believers, his name denotes "vain people." As for the donkey it refers to the simple Church that serves non-believers. The Church that reveals to them what they cannot perceive.

**\* Bethabara**

*They say that Bethabara is pointed out on the banks  
of the Jordan, and that John is said to have baptized there.*

<sup>225</sup>

<sup>226</sup> *In Lev. hom. 7:2.*

<sup>227</sup> *In Genesis hom 7:2.*

<sup>227</sup> *Jean Daniélou: From Shadows to Reality, Studies in the Biblical Typology of the Fathers, Newman Press, 1960, p. 141.*

<sup>228</sup> *In Num. hom. 13, 14.*

*The etymology of the name, too, corresponds with the baptism of him who made ready for the Lord a people prepared for Him; for it yields the meaning "House of preparation," while Bethany means "House of obedience"<sup>229</sup>.*

**\* Etham (Exod. 13:21) = signs for them** *Etham, they say, is translated in our language as "signs for them," and rightly so, for here you will hear it said: "God was preceding them by day in a column of cloud and by night in a column of fire" (Exod. 13:21). You do not find this done at Ramesse nor at Socoth, which is called the second encampment for those departing. It is the third encampment in which divine signs occur. Recollect what was read above when Moses said to Pharaoh, "We will go a journey of three days in the wilderness and sacrifice to the Lord our God" (Exod. 5:3). This was the three days to which Moses was hastening and Pharaoh was opposing, for he said, "You shall not go far" (Exod. 8:28 [LXX 8:24]). Pharaoh would not permit the children of Israel to reach the place of signs; he would not permit them to advance so that they could enjoy fully the mysteries of the third day. Hear what the prophet says: "God will revive us after two days, and on the third day we will arise and live in his sight" (Hos. 6:2). The first day is the passion of the Savior for us. The second is the day on which he descended into hell. The third day is the day of resurrection (Cf. Matt. 16:21). Therefore, on the third day "God went before them, by day in a column of cloud, by night in a column of fire" (Cf. Exod. 13:21)<sup>230</sup>.*

**\* Jacob and Esau**

Since Jacob now stands for the Church, Esau, the older brother, will represent the Jews. Origen comments on Genesis

<sup>229</sup>

*Origen: Commentary on John 6:24.*

<sup>230</sup>

*Origen: In Exod. hom. 5:2 (Ronald E. Heine).*

25:23: “How the one people (the Church) has overcome the other (the Synagogue), and how the elder is the servant of the younger, is known even to the Jews, although they do not believe it<sup>231</sup>.” The implication of the last words is that the argument is familiar to the Jews, but that they do not realize that it works against themselves. Again, read Jacob as a symbol for the Church, Origen finds new meaning for the sheep won from Laban<sup>232</sup>.

#### \* Jesus and Joshua

Origen notes that this name appears for the first time in Exod. 17:9, when Moses sends Joshua to fight against Amalek:

We meet the name of Jesus for the first time when we see him as head of the army. From this first acquaintance with the name of Jesus I learn the mystery of its symbolism (*sacramentum mysterii*): Jesus is the leader of the army<sup>233</sup>.

#### \* Moses = The Law

*This Church, therefore, coming from the Gentiles finds Moses in the marsh lying cast off by his own people and exposed, and gives him out to be reared. He is reared by his own family and spends his childhood there. When, however, "he has grown stronger" (Exod. 2:10), he is brought to her and adopted as a son. We have already frequently argued in many places that the Law is referred to as Moses. The Church, therefore, coming to the waters of baptism, also took up the Law. The Law, however, had been enclosed in "a basket" and smeared with pitch and "bitumen" (Cf. Exod. 2:3). The*

<sup>231</sup>

Origen: In Gen. hom. 12:3; cf. In Rom. 2:7.

<sup>232</sup> Origen: Contra Celsus 4:43; St. Paul had similarly identified the Jews with Ishmael, the Church with Isaac (Gal. 4:21-31.); N.R.M. De Lange: Origen and the Jews: Studies in Jewish-Christian Relations in Third-Century Palestine, 1976, Cambridge, p. 80.

<sup>233</sup>

In Josh. hom. 1:3.

"basket" is a kind of covering woven together from twigs or papyrus or even formed from the bark of trees. The infant placed within this basket was seen exposed. The Law, therefore, was lying helpless enclosed in coverings of this kind, besmeared with pitch and bitumen. It was dirty and enclosed in cheap and offensive meanings of the Jews until the Church should come from the Gentiles and take it up from the muddy and marshy places and appropriate it to itself within courts of wisdom and royal houses. This Law, however, spends its childhood with its own people. With those who are not able to understand it spiritually. It is little, an infant, and has milk as its food. But when Moses comes to the Church, when he enters the house of the Church, he grows stronger and more robust. For when the veil of the letter is removed "perfect and solid food" (Cf. Heb 5:12-14) is discovered in its text. But let us also take up the Law of God to ourselves when we come to the waters even if we had Pharaoh as father, even if "the prince of the world" (John 16:11) begot us in evil works. Let not its cheap and obscure cover of the letter be despised by us. Let us give up what is small and milky. Let us take up what is perfect and robust and let us set these up within the royal dwellings of our heart. Let us have Moses large and strong. Let us think nothing small, nothing lowly about him, but let him be totally magnificent, totally distinguished, totally elegant. For whatever is spiritual, whatever of elevated understanding is great in every respect. And let us pray our Lord Jesus Christ that he himself might reveal and show us in what manner Moses is great and elevated (Cf. Exod. 11:3). For he himself "reveals" it to whom he wishes "by

the Holy Spirit" (Cf. 1 Cor 2:10). "To him belong glory and sovereignty forever and ever. Amen." (Cf. 1 Pet. 4:11)<sup>234</sup>.

### \* Og

Victory over Og (crookedness), the king of Bashan "Shame." So we destroy every distorted thought that will deter us from preoccupying ourselves with heavenly matters, and every disgrace is removed, consequently we enter into the inner divine glory.

### \* Sara = princess (royal virtue)

*I think that Sara which is interpreted "princess" or **having the sovereignty is the type of virtue**, because virtue is in the mind. That is true virtue which lives with a wise and faithful husband. That is why God said to Abraham, 'In all that Sara has said to you, hearken to her voice': words which do not fit a merely carnal marriage<sup>235</sup>.*

### \* Sephora and Phua

The king of Egypt called Sephora and Phua, the midwives and asked them to kill the Hebrew males and preserve the males; but they disobeyed him for they feared God. According to Origen "Sephora" means a "sparrow," and "Phua" means either "blushing" or "modest." The two midwives also refer to the Two testaments.

*For one midwife is like a sparrow who teaches lofty things and calls forth souls to fly to the heights on rational wings of instruction. The other, who is blushing or modest, is moral. She regulates morals, teaches modesty, and institutes integrity. It seems to me, however, since Scripture says of these women, "Because they feared God, they did not carry out the command of the king of Egypt" (Exod. 1:17), that the two midwives serve as a figure of the two Testaments.*

<sup>234</sup>

<sup>235</sup> Origen: In Exod. hom. 2:4 (Ronald E. Heine).

Origen: In Genesis hom. 6:1.

*"Sephora," which is translated as sparrow, can be applied to the Law which "is spiritual" (Cf. Rom 7 ;14). But "Phua," who is blushing or modest, indicates the Gospels which are red with the blood of Christ and glow reddish through the whole world by the blood of His passion. The souls, therefore, which are born in the Church are attended by these Testaments as if by midwives, because the entire antidote of instruction is conferred on them from the reading of the Scriptures. But let us apply these words also to ourselves. If you too fear God, you do not carry out the command of the king of Egypt. For he commands you to live in pleasure, to love the present world, to desire present things (Cf. 1 John 2:15-16). If you fear God and perform the office of midwife for your own soul, if you desire to confer salvation on it, you do not do these things. You keep alive the male which is in you. You attend and assist your inner man (Cf. 2 Cor 4:16) and seek eternal life for him by good actions and understandings<sup>236</sup>.*

#### **\* Sihon**

According to Origen<sup>237</sup>, Sihon (Num. 21:12-30) means "haughty" and "barren." He refers to the devil, the king of the Amorites "bitterness." He is the king of the evil world (John 14:30; 12:31), who grants sinners a kind of bitterness. He resists God's peace, so he ends up being defeated. As for the battle field it was called Jahaz "the fulfillment of the commandment," where we are triumphant (Jer. 6:16), by the blade of the Spirit which is God's word (Eph. 6:17). Hence we occupy all his land from Arnon to Jabbok (i.e. from the curses up to the struggles, we enter into the land of curses, and we struggle until it is superseded by blessings), and we occupy Heshbon, meaning "reckoning or thought"

<sup>236</sup>

<sup>237</sup> Origen: In Exod. hom. 2:2,3 (Ronald E. Heine).  
In Num. hom. 12.

moreover we recover our ideology after it had been under the proud enemy's control.



## THE EVENTS

### \* Adam

*Just as through having Adam as the first example, the head, of our natural mode of birth, we are all said to have in this respect one body, even so do we register Christ as our head through the divine regeneration of his death and resurrection which has become a pattern for us<sup>238</sup>.*

. **The coat of skin Origen** states that the Fall has caused man to put on the garments of mortality and of frailty. These are the "**coats of skin**" (Gen. 3:21) made by God for Adam and Eve when they were being expelled from Paradise<sup>239</sup>. Following Philo and the Gnostics, who had interpreted the coats of skin as bodies<sup>240</sup>, Origen sees the Fall not simply as a moral but as a metaphysical event. The Fall means that man enters a world which is separate from God<sup>241</sup>, and takes on a dual nature of spirit and of flesh because he is now clothed in a physical body.

### . **Ark of Noah**

Jean Daniélou says<sup>242</sup>, We noted (previously) that Noah is considered explicitly as a type of Christ... Origen cites Gen. 5:29: "he shall comfort us concerning our work and toil." But he adds

<sup>238</sup>

*Origen: Commentary on John, fragment 140; based on Drewery 132.*

<sup>239</sup> *Against Celsus 4:40.*

<sup>240</sup> *Philo : Quaest in Gen. 1:53. For the Gnostics see Clement: Stromata 3:95:2 and Irenaeus : Adv. Haer 1:5:5.*

<sup>241</sup> *Comm. Rom. 3:3 Pg 14:9338C.*

<sup>242</sup> *Jean Daniélou: From Shadows to Reality, Studies in the Biblical Typology of the Fathers, p. 107-8.*

that this cannot apply to Noah. *“How can it be true that Noah will give rest to Lamech or to the people then on earth, or how was there in the time of Noah an end to the sadness, or how was the crude upon the earth lifted (Gen 5:29), seeing that the divine anger was revealed as very great.....But if you consider our Lord Jesus Christ of whom it is said: ‘Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sin of the world’ and ‘Come to me, all you that labor, and I will refresh you’, you will find that it is he who has truly given rest to the world and freed man from that curse<sup>243</sup>”*... Origen next deals with the building of the ark: *“It is to this spiritual Noah who has given rest to man and taken away the sin of the world that the order was given to build the ark with square columns.”* These square columns indicate firmness according to an idea which comes from Philo, and which we have found in Clement of Alexandria. Origen sees in this a type of the Doctors of the Church who fight against the assaults of the heretics. This idea is always present in the “Gnostic” point of view.

**\* Drawing water from a well = depth of knowledge** *Rebecca came with the other women to draw water from the well and because she came every day to the well, it was possible for her to be found by Abraham’s servant and married to Isaac. You think that these are myths, and that the Holy Spirit only records history in the Scriptures. Here is an instruction for the soul and spiritual teaching which instructs you to come daily to the wells of the Scriptures... All that has been written, points to mysteries: Christ wishes to wed you, too, and for that reason sends his servant to you. This servant is the word of the prophets.*

<sup>243</sup>  
In Gen. 2:3.



*You cannot be wed to Christ, if you have not at first  
received him<sup>244</sup>.*

**Origen** borrows from Philo this symbolism of the wells as the “depths of knowledge,” and gives it quite a different significance<sup>245</sup>.

**\* The souls who descended into Egypt with Jacob (Exod. 1:5) =  
The spiritual birth in Jesus Christ through the Gospel.**

*Those are the souls which Jacob begot. I do not think that any man can beget a soul unless, perhaps, he be someone like that man who said, "For although you have many thousand teachers in Christ, you have not many fathers. For in Christ Jesus I begot you through the Gospel." (1 Cor. 4.15.) Such are those men who beget and give birth to souls, as he says elsewhere, "My little children, with whom I am in labor again, until Christ be formed in you." (Gal. 4.19.) For others either do not wish to have the trouble of this kind of begetting or are not able. In short, what did Adam himself say at the beginning? "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh." (Gen. 2.23.) He does not add, however, "and soul of my soul."<sup>246</sup>*

**\* The death of Joseph (Exod. 1:6-7) = The death of Jesus Christ.**

*"Joseph," the text says, "died and all his brothers and all that generation. But the sons of Israel increased and were multiplied and were extended into a great multitude and became very strong, for the land multiplied them." (Exod. 1.6-7.) While Joseph was living it is not reported that the sons of Israel were multiplied nor is anything at all mentioned about increases and multitudes in these times...*

<sup>244</sup>

<sup>245</sup> Origen: In. Genesis 10:2; Baehrens p. 94-5.

<sup>245</sup> Jean Daniélou: *From Shadows to Reality, Studies in the Biblical Typology of the Fathers*, Newman Press, 1960, p. 143.

<sup>246</sup> Origen: In Exod. hom. 1:3 (Ronald E. Heine).

*If, therefore, Joseph die in you also, that is, if you assume the dying of Christ in your body and you make your members dead to sin, then "the sons of Israel are multiplied" in you. (Exod. 1.7.) The "sons of Israel" are interpreted as good and spiritual senses. If, therefore, the senses of the flesh are put to death, the senses of the spirit increase, and while the vices in your are dying daily, the number of virtues is being increased<sup>247</sup>.*

**\* The enslaved sons of Israel in Egypt (Exod. 1:14) = The enslaved senses or virtues of the soul through sin.**

*If the Lord guides us, and our understanding, illuminated by the Lord, always remembers Christ, as Paul writes to Timothy, "Remember that Christ Jesus has arisen from the dead," (2 Tim 2.8.) as long as it remembers these things in Egypt, that is in our flesh, our spirit holds the kingdom with justice and does not exhaust the sons of Israel, whom we said above to be the rational senses or virtues of the soul, "by mind and brick," (Exod. 1.14.) nor does it weaken them with earthly cares and troubles. Its purpose is that you, who hear these words, who perhaps have already received the grace of baptism and have been numbered among the sons of Israel and received God as king in yourself and later you wish to turn away and do the works of the world, to do deeds of the earth and muddy services, may know and recognize that "another king has arisen in you who knows not Joseph," (Exod. 1.8.) a king of Egypt, and that he is compelling you to his works and is making you labor in bricks and mud for himself. It is he who leads you by whips and blows to worldly works with magistrates and supervisors put over you that you may build cities for him<sup>248</sup>.*

<sup>247</sup>

*Origen: In Exod. hom. 1:4 (Ronald E. Heine).*

<sup>248</sup>

*Origen: In Exod. hom. 1:5 (Ronald E. Heine).*

**\* The killing of the males and the preservation of females (Exod. 1:15-16) = The destruction of the abilities and desires of the soul and the preservation of the lusts and desires of the flesh.**

*Let us inquire, therefore, why the king of Egypt, who is "the prince of this world," (Cf. John 16.11.) does not wish the male children to be preserved and wishes the females preserved. If you remember, we have often pointed out in our discussions that the flesh and the passions of the flesh are designated by the females, but the man is the rational sense and the intellectual spirit<sup>249</sup>. Pharaoh, king and prince of Egypt, therefore, hates the rational sense which is able to understand heavenly things, to perceive God, and "to seek the things which are above." (Col. 3.1.) He desires this sense to be killed and destroyed. He desires, however, that whatever things are of the flesh live. And what pertains to bodily matter he desires not only to live, but also to be increased and cultivated. For he wants everyone to understand fleshly things, desire temporal things, and seek "the things which are on the earth." (Cf. Col. 3.1-2.) He wants no one to "lift his eyes to heaven," (Cf. Luke 18.13.) no one to inquire whence he has come here, no one to remember the fatherland of Paradise<sup>250</sup>.*

In his *Homilies on Leviticus*, Origen says, "It (the calf) is a male without blemish (Lev. 1:3). It is truly a male, which does not know the sin which is of female fragility<sup>251</sup>."

**\* Pharaoh = Satan**

Origen comments on the meeting between Moses and Pharaoh, saying that as Moses stood before Pharaoh, let us also stand against him.

<sup>249</sup>

Cf. Philo L.A. 3.23.243; QE. 1.8.

<sup>250</sup> Origen: In Exod. hom. 2:1 (Ronald E. Heine).

<sup>251</sup> Origen: In Lev. hom 1:2:8.

*Let us neither bow nor bend, but let us stand "having girded our loins with the truth and having shod our feet with the preparation of the Gospel of peace" (Eph. 6:14-15). For thus the Apostle exhorts us saying, "Stand, therefore, and do not again submit to the yoke of slavery"(Gal. 5.1). For the longer we stand firmly and staunchly the weaker and feebler Pharaoh will be. If, however, we begin to be either feeble or doubtful, he will become stronger and firmer against us. And truly that of which Moses gave a figure is fulfilled in us. For when Moses "lifted his hands" Amalec was conquered. But if "he cast" them "down" as though weary and put down weak arms, "Amalec would become strong" (Cf. Exod. 17:11). So, therefore, let us also lift our arms in the power of the cross of Christ and "let us raise holy hands" in prayer "in every place without anger and dispute"(Cf 2 Tim. 2:8) that we might deserve the Lord's help. For the apostle James also urges this same thing, saying, "Resist the devil and he will flee from you" (Jas. 4:7). Therefore, let us go in full confidence that not only "may he flee from us," but also "Satan may be ground under our feet," as also Pharaoh was drowned in the sea and destroyed in the deep abyss<sup>252</sup>.*

### **\* The Exodus**

Origen explains that through love the soul ascends on the mountain of Beauty<sup>253</sup>, and realizes her journey. The longing of the soul for God is like the longing of Israel for the promised land. It is a yearning for Paradise and when purified allows the soul to pass the flaming swords of the cherubim and gain access to the tree of life<sup>254</sup>. Or it is the pilgrim's desire for his true city, the heavenly Jerusalem<sup>255</sup>.

<sup>252</sup>

Origen: In Exod. hom. 3:3 (Ronald E. Heine).

<sup>253</sup>

Origen: On Prayer, 17:2].

<sup>254</sup>

Origen: An Exhortation to Martyrdom, 36.

<sup>255</sup>

Origen: De Principiis 4:3:6.

*Moreover, when the soul sets out from Egypt of this life to go to the promised land, she necessarily goes by certain roads.. and observes certain stages that were made ready by the Father from the beginning... Who will be found worthy and so understanding of the divine mysteries that he can describe the stages of that journey and ascent of the soul and explain either the toils or the rest of each different place? For how will he explain that after the first and second stages Pharaoh is still in pursuit?...<sup>256</sup>*

*Therefore, we must go forth from Egypt. We must leave the world behind if we wish "to serve the Lord." I mean, however, that we must leave the world behind not in space, but in the soul; not by setting out on a journey, but by advancing in faith. Hear John saying these same things: "Little children, do not love the world nor those things which are in the world, since everything which is in the world is the desire of the flesh and the desire of the eyes" (1 John 2:15-16)<sup>257</sup>.*

**\* The Pasch St. Clement of Alexandria** describes the Passover in Philonian fashion as *"the transition from the love of things of the sense to those of the intellect"*<sup>258</sup>.

**Origen** also says, *"'Pasch' means 'passing over.' To celebrate the Pasch without ceasing is to pass over unceasingly in thought, word and deed from the things of earth to God, and to hasten on towards the City of God"*<sup>259</sup>.

<sup>256</sup> Origen: *In Number. Hom 27:4.* <sup>257</sup> Origen: *In Exod. hom. 3:3* (Ronald E. Heine). <sup>258</sup>

*Stromata 2, 11, 140, 11; Jean Daniélou: From Shadows to Reality, Studies in the Biblical*

*Typology of the Fathers, Newman Press, 1960, p. 217.*

<sup>259</sup> *Against Celsus 8:22.*

In His homilies on the Numbers **Origen** gives the Pasch an eschatological meaning<sup>260</sup>. He believes that the feast of the Pasch is a shadow of the heavenly Pasch:

*Raising our minds to the third Pascha, which will be celebrated among myriads of angels in the most perfect festivity (cf. Heb. 12:22) and with the happiest exodus, is not necessary at the same time, especially since we have spoken more fully and lengthily than the text required*<sup>261</sup>.

\* **The trip in the wilderness** **Origen** believes that the journey included forty-two stops. This reminds us of what came in Matthew 1 that there were forty-two generations between Abraham and Christ. This seems to symbolize the history of salvation through human race. It is a chariot that carries us across the road of salvation which the Lord Himself has prepared for us to elevate us from one glory to another (Ps. 84:7), and from strength to more strength. Moreover, most of these stops had names bearing symbolic meanings.

**Origen** sees in the march from Marah to Elim the passing from the Law to the Gospel<sup>262</sup>.

*The Red Sea receives the Israelites who did not doubt and delivered them from the perils of the Egyptians who pursued them: and so the whole history of the Flight from Egypt is a type of salvation obtained through Baptism. Egypt represents the world, in which we harm ourselves if we live badly; the people are those who are now enlightened (= baptized): the waters, which are for these people the means of salvation, represent Baptism; Pharaoh and his soldiers are the Devil and his satellites*<sup>263</sup>.

St. Didymus the Blind

<sup>260</sup>

<sup>261</sup> In Num. hom. 26:4

<sup>262</sup> Origen: Comm. on John 10:18:111.

<sup>263</sup> Jean Daniélou: From Shadows to Reality, Studies in the Biblical Typology of the Fathers, Newman Press, 1960, p. 173.

<sup>263</sup> De Trinitate 2:14.

**\* Sweetening the bitterness of the water**

*When Moses sweetened the waters with his staff, he proclaimed beforehand the salvation of all mankind. For he was a type of Christ; his staff was a type of the Cross; the bitter waters were a type of the water of the Pool of Bethsaida, of no avail to those without faith, but in which those who had faith found their healing<sup>264</sup>.*

St. Didymus the Blind

**\* Manna = What is this** *The interpretation of the name signifies this same thing, for manna means, "What is this?" See if the force itself of the name does not provoke you to learning so that when you hear the Law of God read you always inquire and ask and say to the teachers, "What is this?" For this is what manna means. Therefore, if you wish to eat manna, that is if you desire to receive the word of God, know that it "is small and very subtle like the seed of the coriander." It is partially vegetable by which it can nourish and recreate the weak, for "he who is weak eats vegetables"(Rom. 14:2). It is also partially hard and, therefore, is "as frost." It is also very white and sweet. For what is whiter, what more splendid than divine instruction? What is sweeter or what more delightful than the words of the Lord which are "beyond honey and the honeycomb?"(Cf. Ps. 18:11.)... But if it is plain from the divine Scriptures that on the Lord's Day God rained manna and on the Sabbath he did not, let the Jews understand that already at that time our Lord's Day was preferred to the Jewish Sabbath. Even then it was revealed that on their own Sabbath no grace of God descended to them from the sky; no bread of heaven, which is the word of God, came to them. For a prophet also*

says elsewhere: "The sons of Israel will sit for many days without a king, without a prince, without a prophet, without a victim, without a sacrifice, without a priest" (Hos. 3:4.) On our Lord's Day, however, the Lord always rains manna from the sky... But someone says, "If you say that the word of God is manna, how does it produce worms?" The worms in us come from no other source than from the word of God. For he himself says, "If I had not come and spoken to them they would not have sin" (John 15:22). If anyone, therefore, sins after the word of God has been received, the word itself becomes a worm in him which always pricks his conscience and gnaws at the hidden things of his heart<sup>265</sup>.

### **\* Stretching the hand of Moses**

The usual Christian interpretation of Moses' arms is to see in them a symbol of the Cross. Like R. Eliezer he takes the arms to represent men's actions: *'If our actions are elevated and do not rest on the ground, Amalek is defeated... Thus if the people keeps the law, it raises up Moses' arms and the adversary is defeated; if it does not keep the law Amalek is strengthened'*

*I think that by this figure Moses also represents two peoples, showing that one is the people of the Gentiles, which raises Moses' arms and extends them, that is to say elevates what Moses wrote and establishes its understanding on a high level and thereby conquers, while the other is the people which, because it does not raise Moses' arms or lift them off the ground, and does not consider that there is anything deep or subtle in him, is conquered by its enemies and laid low<sup>266</sup>.*

<sup>265</sup>

<sup>266</sup> Origen: In Exod. hom. 7:5 (Ronald E. Heine).

In Exod. hom. 11:4 ; N.R.M. De Lange: Origen and the Jews: Studies in Jewish-Christian Relations in Third-Century Palestine, 1976, Cambridge, p. 82.



Similarly, Moses praying with outstretched arms signifies either the lifting of the mind above earthly things<sup>267</sup>, or salvation through Christ's Cross<sup>268</sup>, or the spiritual interpretation of the Law<sup>269</sup>.

### \* Sin

Through the believer's spiritual struggle against bodily lusts he expects temptations and he must acknowledge their advantages. Growth is a painful process, and that temptation and struggle never leave us until we have attained the maturity of perfection. He sees that "*Sin*" (Num. 33:36) means temptation, and that there is no other way of embarking on our journey to the Promised land except passing by through it. For Origen temptation is as a testing of gold in the fire. It is also a providential process by which we are fashioned into what we should be. God is a divine goldsmith who brings us as vessels to the fire, strikes us with His hammers into an object of beauty suitable for his grandeur<sup>270</sup>.

### \* Moses and Joshua

For Origen Moses is normally the type of the Law, not of Christ, and in this sense Moses is contrasted with Joshua. Origen is led through this to some curious ideas. For instance manna will be contrasted with Joshua's keeping of the Passover, as the Old Testament with the New: the crossing of the Red sea with the crossing of the Jordan which is a true type of Baptism. Moses' death at the entrance of the promised land which Joshua entered, is the end of the Old Testament at the threshold of the New<sup>271</sup>. For Origen the basket covered with pitch in which the baby Moses lay is "the Law interpreted in a gross and casual sense by the Jews<sup>272</sup>."

<sup>267</sup>

<sup>268</sup> *In Jos. hom. 11:4.*

<sup>269</sup> *Ibid 3:3.*

<sup>269</sup> *Ibid 11:4; Jean Daniélou: From Shadows to Reality, Studies in the Biblical Typology of the Fathers, Newman Press, 1960, p. 222.*

<sup>270</sup> *Ibid 27:12.*

<sup>271</sup> *In Jos. hom. 1:3.*

<sup>272</sup> *Jean Daniélou: From Shadows to Reality, Studies in the Biblical Typology of the Fathers, Newman Press, 1960, p. 220.*

Origen suggests that Joshua's succession to Moses is a type of the Gospel succeeding the Law.

*We must explain the death of Moses, for if we understand how Moses died we shall understand how Jesus reigns. If you see Jerusalem destroyed, the altar overthrown, no sacrifices or holocausts, nor priests nor Levites: when you see all this finished, say that Moses the servant of the Lord is dead. If you do not see anyone come three times before the face of the Lord, or offering gifts in the temple, killing the Paschal lamb, eating unleavened bread, offering first fruits, or consecrating the first born, when you see none of these things being done, then say that the Lord's servant Moses is dead. But when you see peoples embracing the faith, churches being built, altars no longer drenched with animal's blood, but consecrated with the precious blood of Jesus Christ, when you see priests and Levites no longer occupied with the blood of goats and bulls, but with word of God through the grace of the Holy Spirit, then say that Jesus has taken and occupies the chief place in succession to Moses, not Jesus the son of Mary, but Jesus the Son of God... When you see that Christ our Passover has been immolated, and you eat the unleavened bread of sincerity, when you see the good earth of the Church yielding fruit thirty, sixty and a hundred fold, I mean widows, virgins and martyrs, when you see the people of Israel increased, of those who are born not of blood, nor of the will of man, nor of the will of the flesh, but of God, and when you see the sons of God who were scattered, gathered together in him: when you see the people keeping the Sabbath not by refraining from toil but from sin: when you see all these things, say that Moses the servant of the Lord is dead and that Jesus, the Son of God, , has all authority<sup>273</sup>.*

In this passage the whole traditional typology of the Passover, the Sabbath, the sacrifices, the priesthood are united in one of the most beautiful texts ever inspired by typology<sup>274</sup>.

And Joshua who succeeded Moses was a type of Jesus Christ, who brings about the substitution of the preaching of the Gospel for dispensation through the law. And even if those Paul speaks of were baptized in the cloud and in the sea, there is something harsh and bitter in their baptism. They are still in the fear of their enemies, crying out to the Lord and to Moses. But the baptism of Joshua which takes place in sweet and drinkable water is in many ways superior to the earlier one<sup>275</sup>.

The crossing of the Red Sea is for Origen a type of the dispensation of the Law, which is bitter and harsh, because it is based on fear, while the crossing of the Jordan is the type of true Baptism in the spirit and water. The baptism of Joshua is in many ways superior to that earlier one, religion having by this time grown clearer and assumed a becoming order<sup>276</sup>.

*In the former case, they kept the Passover in Egypt and then began their journey, but with Joshua, after crossing the Jordan on the tenth day of the first month they pitched their camp in Galgala; for a sheep had to be procured for the banquet after the baptism of Joshua. Then the children of Israel, since the children of those who came out of Egypt had not received circumcision, were circumcised by Joshua with a very sharp stone; the Lord declares that He takes away the reproach of Egypt on the day of Joshua's baptism. Then the children of Israel kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the month, with much greater gladness than in Egypt, for they ate unleavened*

<sup>274</sup>

Jean Daniélou: *From Shadows to Reality, Studies in the Biblical Typology of the Fathers*, Newman Press, 1960, p.241.

<sup>275</sup> Cf. In Jos. hom 6, Jean Daniélou: *From Shadows to Reality, Studies in the Biblical Typology of the Fathers*, Newman Press, 1960, p. 263.

<sup>276</sup>

Jean Daniélou: *From Shadows to Reality, Studies in the Biblical Typology of the Fathers*, Newman Press, 1960, p. 263.

*bread of the corn of the Holy Land, and fresh food better than manna. For when they received the land of promise God did not entertain them with scantier food, nor when such a one as Joshua was their leader did they get inferior bread. That will be plain to anyone who thinks of the true Holy Land and of the Jerusalem above. "Hence it is written in the same Gospel: Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness and are dead: if anyone eats of this bread he shall live forever. For the manna, though it was given by God, yet was bread of travel, bread supplied to those still under discipline, well fitted for those under tutors and governors. But the bread Joshua managed to get from corn cut in the country, in the land of promise, others having labored and his disciples reaping that bread was more full of life, distributed as it was to those who, for their perfection, were able to receive the inheritance of their fathers"*<sup>277</sup>.

*And you who have just abandoned the darkness of idolatry, and wish to give yourself to the hearing of the Divine Law, then it is that you begin first to leave Egypt. When you have been included in the number of the catechumens and begin to obey the precepts of the Church, you have passed over the Red Sea. And if you come to the sacred font of Baptism and if in the presence of the orders of Priests and Levites you are initiated into those venerable and noble mysteries which are known only by those permitted to know them, then, having passed over the Jordan while the priests are ministering, you shall enter into the land of promise"*<sup>278</sup>.

**\* Crossing Jordan** *But the baptism to Joshua, which takes place in quite sweet and drinkable water, is in many ways superior*

<sup>277</sup> *In Jos. hom. 6:45.*

<sup>278</sup> *In Jos. hom. 4:1.*

*to that earlier one, religion having by this time grown clearer and assuming a becoming order. For the ark of the covenant of the Lord our God is carried in procession by the priests and Levites, the people following the ministers of God, it, also, accepting the law of holiness. For Joshua says to the people, “Sanctify, yourselves against tomorrow; the Lord will do wonders among you.” And he commands the priests to go before the people with the ark of the covenant, wherein is plainly showed forth the mystery of the Father’s economy about the Son, which is highly exalted by Him who gave the Son this office; “That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things on earth and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” This is pointed out by what we find in the book called Joshua, “In that day I will begin to exalt You before the children of Israel.” And we hear our Lord Jesus saying to the children of Israel, “Come hither and hear the words of the Lord your God. Hereby you shall know that the living God is in (among) you;” for when we are baptized to Jesus, we know that the living God is in us. And, in the former case, they kept the Passover in Egypt, and then began their journey, but with Joshua, after crossing Jordan on the tenth day of the first month they pitched their camp in Galgala; for a sheep had to be procured before invitations could be issued to the banquet after Joshua’s baptism<sup>279</sup> .*

**\* The feasts** *Now in what manner, in those heavenly things of which the shadow was present to the Jews on earth, those will celebrate festivals who have first been trained by tutors and governors under the true law, until the fullness of the time should come, namely, above, when we shall be*

*able to receive into ourselves the perfect measure of the Son of God, this it is the work of that wisdom to make plain that which has been hidden in a mystery; and it also may show to our thought how the laws about meats are symbols of those things which will there nourish and strengthen our soul<sup>280</sup>.*

**\* Jericho** *Jericho that is, the world will collapse. The end of the world, as we know, is often referred to in the Sacred Books...<sup>281</sup>.*

*One of the presbyters, in his interpretation, said that the man who set forth is Adam, Jerusalem is Paradise, Jericho the world, the thieves the invisible powers, the priest the Law, the Levites the Prophets, the Samaritan Christ, the wounds disobedience, the beast of burden the Body of Christ, the inn, which takes in every one, the Church, the Samaritan's promise the second coming of Christ<sup>282</sup>.*

**\* The Trumpets** *But each one of us must achieve these things in his own self. By faith you have Jesus as leader in you. Make the trumpets resound with the Holy Scriptures, if you are a priest. Draw forth from them the meanings and instruction which merit for them the epithet of "resounding". Sing in them, in psalms and hymns, in prophetical mysteries of the Law, in the doctrines of the Apostles. If you sound on these trumpets and bear the ark of the covenant seven times round the city, that is, if you do not separate the symbolical (mystica) precepts of the Law from the precepts of the Gospel, if you bring forth from yourself a joyful harmony, that is, if the whole population of your thoughts and desires*

<sup>280</sup>

<sup>281</sup> Origen: Commentary on John 10:12.

<sup>282</sup> Origen: In Jos. hom. 6:4.

<sup>282</sup> Origen: In Luc. hom 34.

*gives a harmonious sound, give forth a joyous shout, for the world in you is overcome and destroyed<sup>283</sup>.*

**\* Rahab**

Origen states that Rahab was a type of the Church of the Gentiles. The expression: “They dwell in the midst of Israel until this day,” cannot apply to the historical Rahab. It must be a prophecy:

*“If you wish to understand more clearly how Rahab was incorporated into Israel, see how the branch of the wild olive is grafted onto the trunk of the good olive tree, and you will understand how those who are grafted into the faith of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are rightly said to be incorporated into Israel until this day. We, branches of the wild olive tree, who were prostitutes adoring wood and stone instead of the true God. We have been truly incorporated into this root until this day<sup>284</sup>.”*

**\* The ass and the colt**

*Now Jesus is the word of God which goes into the soul that is called Jerusalem, riding on the ass freed by the disciples from its bonds. That is to say, on the simple language of the Old Testament, interpreted by the two disciples who loose it: in the first place him who applies what is written to the service of the soul and shows the allegorical sense of it with reference to her, and in the second place him who brings to light by the things of the future. But He also rides on the young colt, the New Testament; for in both alike we find the word of truth which purifies us and drives away all those thoughts in us which incline to selling and buying<sup>285</sup>.*

<sup>283</sup>

Origen: In Jos. hom. 7:2.

<sup>284</sup>

Origen: In Jos. hom 7:5.

<sup>285</sup>

Origen: Commentary on John 10:18.

*Mark and Luke say that the two disciples, acting on their Master's instructions, found a foal tied, on which none had ever sat, and that they loaded it and brought it to the Lord. Mark adds that they found the foal tied at the door, outside on the road. But who is outside? Those of the Gentiles who were strangers from the covenants, and aliens to the promise of God; they are on the road, resting under a roof or a house, bound by their own sins, and to be loosed by the twofold knowledge spoken of above, of the friends of Jesus. And the bonds with which the foal was tied, and the sins committed against the wholesome law and reprov'd by it, for it is the fate of life, in respect of it, I say, they were not inside but outside the door, for perhaps inside the door there cannot be any such bond of wickedness<sup>286</sup>.*

**\* The crowning of Christ**

St. Clement saw the crowning of Christ with thorns prefigured in the Bush<sup>287</sup>, while St. Hilary saw in the Bush which was not burnt up the Church surviving persecutions<sup>288</sup>.



## OTHER EXAMPLES

**\* Absence and Presence of Christ** *For when He allows the Church to suffer persecution and tribulations, He seems to her to be absent; and again when she goes forward in peace and flourishes*

<sup>286</sup>

<sup>287</sup> Origen: Commentary on John 10;18.

<sup>288</sup> Paidagogos 2:8.

<sup>288</sup> Jean Daniélou: *From Shadows to Reality, Studies in the Biblical Typology of the Fathers*, Newman Press, 1960, p. 224.



*in faith and good works, He is understood as being present  
with her<sup>289</sup> .*

**\* Apple tree** *The Bride, therefore, desires to sit down in the shadow of this apple tree (Song 2:3): this is either the Church, as we said, under the protection of the Son of God, or else the soul fleeing all other teachings and cleaving to the Word of God alone; the Word whose fruit, moreover, she finds sweet in her throat by continual meditation on the Law of God, chewing as it were the cud thereof like a clean animal<sup>290</sup> .*

**\* Bosom of Christ** *And after that, leaning on Jesus' breast he says to Him, 'Lord, who is it?' We are undoubtedly given to understand that John on this occasion reposed on the ground of Jesus' heart and amid the inward meanings of His teaching, there seeking and searching the treasures of wisdom and knowledge that are his in Christ Jesus. And indeed I think the term 'the bosom of Christ' is not unfitting, if it be taken as denoting the place of holy teachings<sup>291</sup> .*

**\* (A bright) cloud** *But what might the bright cloud, which overshadows the just, be? Is it, perhaps, the fatherly power, from which comes the voice of the Father bearing testimony to the Son as beloved and well pleasing, and exhorting those who were under its shadow to hear Him and no other one? But as He speaks of old, so also always does He speak through what He wills. And perhaps, too, the Holy Spirit is the bright cloud which overshadows the just, and prophesies of the things of God, who works in it,*

<sup>289</sup>

*Origen: Comm. on the Songs of Songs, book 3:11 (ACW).*

<sup>290</sup> *Origen: Comm. on the Songs of Songs, book 3:5 (ACW).*

<sup>291</sup> *Origen: Comm. on the Songs of Songs, book 1:2 (ACW).*

*and says, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well-pleased;" but I would venture also to say that our Savior is a bright cloud. When, therefore, Peter said, "Let us make here three tabernacles,"...One for the Father Himself, one for the Son, and one for the Holy Spirit. For a bright cloud of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit overshadows the genuine disciples of Jesus; or a cloud overshadows the Gospel and the law and the prophets, which is bright to him who is able to see the light of it in the Gospel, and the law, and the prophets<sup>292</sup>.*

**\* (Fawns of the) deer** *The Lord Himself, then, feeds the fawns of the deer (Job 39:1-4) like these, that is, of those who pour out their thoughts on the Lord, that He Himself may feed them and guard them in the pangs of birth, when by the fear of the Lord they have conceived in their womb, and have given birth, and have brought forth the spirit of salvation<sup>293</sup>.*

**\* Dog** *Let others, then, who are strangers to the doctrine of the Church, assume that souls pass from the bodies of men into the bodies of dogs, according to their varying degree of wickedness; but we, who do not find this at all in the divine Scripture, say that the more rational condition changes into one more irrational, undergoing this affection in consequence of great slothfulness and negligence<sup>294</sup>.*

**\* The Door** *But as one cannot be in the Father or with the Father except by ascending from below upwards and coming first to the divinity of the Son, through which one*

<sup>292</sup>

*Origen: Commentary on Matthew 12:42.*

<sup>293</sup>

*Origen: Comm. on the Songs of Songs, book 3:12 (ACW).*

<sup>294</sup>

*Origen: Commentary on Matthew 11: 17.*

*may be led by the hand and brought to blessedness of the Father Himself, so the Savior has the inscription "The Door." And as He is a lover of men, and approves the impulse of human souls to better things, even of those who do not hasten to reason (the Logos), but like sheep have a weakness and gentleness apart from all accuracy and reason, so He is the Shepherd<sup>295</sup>.*

**\* The dowry of the Church** *For, just as the Church's dowry was the volumes of the Law and the Prophets, so let us regard natural law and reason and free will as the soul's betrothal gifts<sup>296</sup>.*

**\* Dove and turtle-dove** *Her eyes, moreover, are compared to doves, surely because she understands the Divine Scriptures now, not after the letter, but after the spirit, and perceives in them spiritual mysteries; for the dove is **the emblem of the Holy Spirit**. To understand the Law and the Prophets in a spiritual sense is, therefore, to have the eyes of a dove. So her eyes are called doves here; but in the Psalms a soul of this sort longs to be given the wings of a dove (Ps 67:14), that she may be able to fly in the understanding of spiritual mysteries, and to rest in the courts of wisdom<sup>297</sup>.*

Origen believes that the turtle-dove is a symbol of purity, for the male does not accept but one female, even if the female died<sup>298</sup>.

**\* The eyes** *Our Lord laid his hands physically on a blind man's eyes and gave him back his sight; he also stretched out his*

<sup>295</sup>

*Origen: Commentary on John 1:29.*

<sup>296</sup>

*Origen: Comm. on the Songs of Songs, book 1:1 (ACW).*

<sup>297</sup>

*Origen: Comm. on the Songs of Songs, book 3:1 (ACW).*

<sup>298</sup>

*Fr. Tadros Y. Malaty: Leviticus, Alexandria 1990, p. 28 (in Arabic).*

*hands spiritually over the eyes of the Law. Those eyes had been blinded by the carnal interpretation of the scribes, but the Lord restored their sight, for those to whom he meant to make the Scriptures plain were to see and understand the Law spiritually<sup>299</sup>.*

**\* The face** (Song 2:14) *It is, without a doubt, the sort of face that is daily being renewed according to the Image of Him who created it, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but is holy and without blemish, even as the Church which Christ has presented to Himself (2 Cor. 4:16; Col. 3:10; Eph. 5:27) - in other words, the souls who have reached perfection. And all of these together make up the body of the Church. This body truly will appear as beautiful and comely, if the souls of which that body is constituted preserve in all the comeliness of perfection<sup>300</sup>.*

**\* Field** *Each soul, therefore, has, as we said, her field, which she tills and plants and sows on the lines that we have mentioned. But there is also one common field that belongs to all the daughters of Jerusalem together (Song 2:7; Gen. 27:27); of that Paul says: You are God's husbandry (1 Cor. 3:9). Let us take this field as meaning the common practice of the Church's faith and way of life, in which assuredly are heavenly powers and forces of spiritual graces. To the cultivation of this field every soul, who is now called daughter of Jerusalem because she knows her mother is the heavenly Jerusalem, must of necessity bring some contribution; and she must desire this to be made worthy of being a heavenly possession<sup>301</sup>.*

<sup>299</sup>

*Origen: In. Gen. 15:7*

<sup>300</sup>

*Origen: Comm. on the Songs of Songs, book 3 (4):14 (ACW).*

<sup>301</sup>

*Origen: Comm. on the Songs of Songs, book 3:10 (ACW).*

**\* Fig tree**

*'The fig tree,' He says, 'has put forth her buds.' The spirit of man, of which the fig tree is a figure, does not yet bear the fruits of the spirit - love, joy, peace, and the rest (Gal. 5:22); but it is beginning now to put forth buds of them<sup>302</sup>.*

**\* Fire on the altar**

*Observe that there always ought to be "fire on the altar" Lev. 6:1-3. And you, if you want to be a priest of God, as it is written, For every one of you will be priest of the Lord" Isa. 61:6... If, therefore, you want to exercise the priesthood of your soul, let the fire never depart from your altar. This is what the Lord also taught in the Gospels that "your loins be girded and your lamps burning" Luke 12:35. Thus, let the "fire" of faith and the "lamp" of knowledge always be lit for you<sup>303</sup>.*

**\* The flesh of sacrifice = The word of God**

Origen comments on the words, "nothing will remain of the flesh until morning" (Cf. Lev. 12:6, 10.), saying,

*It commands them to eat this new and fresh meat of the same day; it prohibits yesterday's meat... Hear these things, all you priests of the Lord, and understand more attentively what they say. The flesh, which is allotted to the priests from the sacrifices, is the word of God that they teach in the Church. For this they are reminded by the mystical figures that when they have begun to bring the word to the people, they do not bring 'Yesterday's'<sup>304</sup>.*

**\* (Little) Foxes**

<sup>302</sup>

*Origen: Comm. on the Songs of Songs, book 3 (4):14 (ACW).*

<sup>303</sup> *Origen: In Lev. Hom. 4:6:2 (G.W. Barkley).*

<sup>304</sup> *In Lev. hom. 5:8. (Gary Wayne Barkley- Frs of the Church).*

*This, then, is why it is said: 'Catch the little foxes.' Suitably indeed He bids them to be caught and taken while they are still little. For as long as a bad thought is only beginning, it is easily driven from the heart. But if it comes again and again, and goes on for long, it surely leads the soul to agree with it; and, once agreed to and entrenched in the heart, it is certain to result in the commission of sin. It must, therefore, be caught and driven out while it is still incipient and small; otherwise, when it has grown up and become a matter of habit, it can no longer be driven out.*

*Thus, Judas too had a beginning of evil in his love of money; and that was for him a 'little fox'<sup>305</sup>.*

**\* The friends and companions of the Bridegroom**

*Now the friends and companions of the Bridegroom -who, on the mystical interpretation, can be taken, as also we remarked before, either as the angels or even the prophets, or as the patriarch - appear as speaking the words quoted to the Bride<sup>306</sup>.*

**\* Garments of the Word of God** *In Psalm 44 also it is said to the Beloved, to whom also the Psalm itself is addressed: Myrrh and a drop and cassia perfume Your garments. From the garments of the Word of God, therefore, which denote the teaching of wisdom, myrrh proceeds, a symbol surely of the death He underwent for humankind. The drop, as we said before, denotes His self-emptying of the form of God and His condescension in assuming the form of a servant. And cassia likewise, because this kind of plant is said to be nourished and to grow together where it rains incessantly,*

<sup>305</sup> OrigenComm. on the Songs of Songs, book 3 (4):15 (ACW).

<sup>306</sup> Origen: Comm. on the Songs of Songs, book 2:8 (ACW).

*points to the redemption of mankind bestowed through the waters of Baptism<sup>307</sup> .*

*\* (The left) hand of Christ This left hand (Song 2:6), then, the Church, whose Head is Christ, desires to have beneath her head, and she wills to have her head protected by the faith of His Incarnation<sup>308</sup> .*

*\* Harts and Mountains I am moved also by a passage in the hundred and third Psalm which reads: The high hills for the harts. We have indeed remarked already, with reference to the harts, that that may be taken as meaning the saints, who came into this world in order to destroy the poison of the serpent. But let us see now what the high mountains are which appear as being reserved for the harts alone, and which none can scale unless he be a hart. My own opinion is that it is knowledge of the Trinity that is called high mountains; no one can achieve possession of that, unless he be made a hart<sup>309</sup> .*

*\* Key And he enters in, as a temperate man, through an opened gate the gate of temperance by the key which opens temperance; and, as a righteous man, by another gate- the gate of righteousness which is opened by the key of righteousness; and so with the rest of the virtues. For I think that for every virtue of knowledge certain mysteries of wisdom corresponding to the species of the virtue are opened up to him who has lived according to virtue; the Savior giving to those who are not mastered by the gates of Hades as many keys as there are virtues, which open gates*

<sup>307</sup> Origen: Comm. on the Songs of Songs, book 2:10 (ACW).

<sup>308</sup> Origen: Comm. on the Songs of Songs, book 3:9 (ACW).

<sup>309</sup> Origen: Comm. on the Songs of Songs, book 3:12 (ACW).

*equal in number, which correspond to each virtue  
according to the revelation of the mysteries<sup>310</sup>.*

**\* The (spiritual) kiss** *And this is the truer, closer, holier kiss (Song 1:2), which is said to be granted by the Bridegroom - Word of God to the Bride -that is to say, to the pure and perfect soul; it is of this happening that the kiss, which we give one to another in church at the holy mysteries, is a figure<sup>311</sup>.*

**\* Net** *And the kingdom of heaven is likened, unto the variegated texture of a net, with reference to the gated texture of a net, with reference to the Old and the New Scripture which is woven of thoughts of all kinds and greatly varied. As in the case of the fishes that fall into the net, some are found in one part of the net and some in another part, and each at the part at which it was caught, so in the case of those who have come into the net of the Scriptures you would find some caught in the prophetic net; for example, of Isaiah, according to this expression, or of Jeremiah or of Daniel; and others in the net of the law, and others in the Gospel net, and some in the apostolic net ; for when one is first captured by the word or seems to be captured, he is taken from some part of the whole net<sup>312</sup>.*

**\* The rod** *He does not remain in Himself, but appears to go beyond His earlier state. Going forth, then, and becoming a rod, He does not remain a rod, but after the rod He becomes a flower that rises up, and after being a rod He is made known as a flower to those who, by His being a rod,*

<sup>310</sup> Origen: Commentary on Matthew 12: 14. <sup>311</sup> Origen: Comm. on the Songs of Songs, book 1:1 (ACW). <sup>312</sup> Origen: Commentary on Matthew 2:12.



*have met with visitation. For "God will visit their iniquities with a rod," that is, Christ<sup>313</sup>.*

**\* The Rod of Moses = The Cross of Christ** *As far as I can perceive, I think that this Moses, who comes to Egypt and brings the rod with which he punishes and strikes Egypt with the ten plagues, is the Law of God which was given to this world that it might reprove and correct it with the ten plagues, that is the commandments which are contained in the Decalogue. But the rod by which all these things are done, by which Egypt is subjugated and Pharaoh overcome, is the cross of Christ by which this world is conquered and the "ruler of this world" (Cf. John 16:11). with the principalities and powers are led in triumph (Cf. Col. 2.15). The significance of the fact that the rod, having been cast forth, becomes a dragon or serpent, and devours the serpents of the Egyptian magicians who "had done likewise"(Cf. Exod. 7:10-12), is indicated in the statement in the Gospel which shows that the serpent represents wisdom or prudence, "The serpent was wiser than all animals and beasts which were in paradise." (Gen. 3:1) Therefore, the cross of Christ whose preaching appeared as "foolishness" (Cf. 1 Cor. 1:18), this cross which Moses, that is the Law, contains, as the Lord said: "For he wrote about me,"(John 5.46.) this cross, I say, of which Moses wrote, after it was cast forth in the earth, that is once it came to be believed in by men, was changed into wisdom and such a great wisdom that it devoured all the wisdom of the Egyptians, that is of this world. For consider how "God made the wisdom of this world foolish" (Cf. 1 Cor. 1:21.) after he manifested "Christ, who was crucified, to be the power of God and wisdom of God" (Cf. 1 Cor. 1:23-24.) and now the whole*

*world has been caught by him who said, "I catch the wise in their own craftiness" (1 Cor. 3:19)<sup>314</sup>.*

**\* Roe**

*Well, we have been saying that according to the natural scientists who study the characteristics of animals, the dorcas - that is, the roe (Songs. 2:9)- takes its name from a power that is inborn in it; it is called the dorcas because of its keen sight - that is, para to oxyderkésteron. But the deer is the enemy of the serpents, and wages war on them; with the breath of its nostrils it drags them out of caves, it destroys the bone of their venom and then enjoys them as food. Maybe my Savior is a roe in respect of His sight, and a deer in respect of His works<sup>315</sup>.*

**\* River and Sea**

Jean Daniélou says, It is well known that the Hebrews often took the sea and the river as figures of the dragon's dwelling-place and the realm of evil - concrete symbols suggesting the struggle between Christ and Satan. In Philo's mental world the sea was still an evil element, but it had become a figure of the "disturbance caused by the passions," and the river had come to represent the instability of human things. The strange thing is that both interpretations are found in Origen side by side. Thus, the sea<sup>316</sup> is the "life of man, a stormy thing everywhere in the world;" but also the "mountain of iniquity, i.e., Satan, is cast into the sea, i.e., into the abyss." It is the same with the river. The river of Babylon is the "river of this world"<sup>317</sup>," and again it is the

<sup>314</sup>

<sup>315</sup> Origen: In Exod. hom. 4:6 (Ronald E. Heine).

<sup>316</sup> Origen: Homilies on the Songs of Songs, 2:!! (ACW).

<sup>317</sup> Comm. on Matt. 10:12.

<sup>317</sup> In Ezek. hom. 1:5.

river “where the dragon’s lair is<sup>318</sup>.” Two different ideas of evil are implied in the two sets of images<sup>319</sup>.

I think that St. Jerome borrowed the two meanings from Origen when he interpreted Jonah 2:3 “For You cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas, and the floods surrounded me.” He believes that it is the words of Christ Himself, who was in the depth of the sea, the salty and bitter water of agony, but these sufferings had been changed into the sweet water of the river, of which it is said, There is a river whose streams shall make glad the city of God” Ps. 46:4.

**\* Sachet of a myrrh-drop**

*Her saying, 'A sachet of a myrrh-drop is my Nephew to me,' (Song 1:13) denotes, therefore, the mystery of His bodily birth; for the body, with which the myrrh of the divine power and sweetness in Christ is bound, does seem to be a 'sachet' in a sense, and as it were a band on His soul<sup>320</sup>.*

**\* Soul**

In his *Homilies on the Leviticus*<sup>321</sup>, Origen states that sometimes the Holy Scripture refers to the sinner by the word “soul,” for he is natural. The Scripture does not call him a person (man) for he lost the image of God and the likeness to Him; nor a spirit, for he does not live in spirit<sup>322</sup>.

**\* Sweetness of the soul’s voice**

*For thus also said the most wise prophet David: Let my speech be sweet to Him (Ps. 103:34). And the voice of the soul is sweet when it utters the word of God, when it*

<sup>318</sup>

*Ibid.*, 13:4.

<sup>319</sup>

Jean Daniélou: *Origen*, p. 184-5.

<sup>320</sup>

*Origen: Comm. on the Songs of Songs*, book 2:10 (ACW).

<sup>321</sup>

*In. Lev. Hom.* 2.

<sup>322</sup>

*Cf. Fr. Malaty: Leveticus*, p. 43.(in Arabic).

*expounds the faith and the doctrines of the truth, when it unfolds God's dealings and His judgments<sup>323</sup>.*

**\* Sword**

*In Isaiah, however, He said that His mouth had been set by His Father as a sharp sword, and that He was hidden under the shadow of His hand, made like to a chosen shaft and kept close in the Father's quiver, called His servant by the God of all things, and Israel, and Light of the Gentiles. The mouth of the Son of God is a sharp sword, for "The word of God is living, and active, and sharper than any two edged sword, and piercing to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart". And indeed He came not to bring peace on the earth, that is, to corporeal and sensible things, but a sword, and to cut through, if I may say so, the disastrous friendship of soul and body, so that the soul, committing herself to the spirit which was against the flesh, may enter into friendship with*

*God<sup>324</sup>.*

**\* The Tabernacle and the Temple**

Origen exhorts us to refuse to build merely lifeless temples; for our body is a temple of God, and the best of these temples is the body of Jesus Christ. The temple which has been destroyed will be rebuilt of living and most precious stones, with each of us becoming a precious stone in the great temple of God. As living stones we must also be active. For if, says Origen, I raise my hands in prayer, but leave hanging the hands of my soul instead of raising them with good and holy works, then the raising of my hands is not an evening sacrifice. In a concrete application, Origen remarks that good and holy speech is an offering to God, but bad speech is

<sup>323</sup>

<sup>324</sup> Origen: *Comm. on the Songs of Songs*, book 3 (4):14 (ACW).

Origen: *Commentary on John* 1:36.

an offering to idols; and whoever listens to bad speech eats what has been offered to idols<sup>325</sup>.

*Each one of us, however, can also **build a tabernacle for God in himself**. For if, as some before us have said, this tabernacle represents the whole world, and each individual also can contain an image of the world, why can not each one also complete a form of the tabernacle in himself? He ought, therefore, to apply **the pillars of the virtue** to himself, silver pillars, that is, rational patience. For it is possible indeed that a man have what appears to be patience but it is not rational. That man, therefore, has pillars, but they are not silver; but that man who suffers because of the word of God and bears it bravely is decorated and protected by silver pillars... It is also possible to extend **the courts** in yourself when your heart enlarges in accordance with the word of the Apostle to the Corinthian: "You also be enlarged" (2 Cor. 6:13). One can also defend himself with **bars** when he has bound himself with the unanimity of love. One can stand on silver bases when he stations himself upon the stability of the word of God, the prophetic and apostolic word. It is possible to have a gilded capital on the pillar if the golden capital on it is the faith of Christ. "For the head of every man is Christ" (Cf. 1 Cor. 11:3). But one can stretch out ten courts in himself when he is enlarged not only in one or two or three words of the Law, but can extend the breadth of spiritual understanding in the whole Decalogue of the Law, or when one produces the fruit of the spirit: joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, moderation, faith, temperance, when love, which is greater than all, has been added. Let that soul which will not give "sleep to its eyes" nor "sleep to its eyelids" nor*

*"rest to its hours," "until it find a place for the Lord, a tabernacle for the God of Jacob" (Ps. 131:4-5). Let that soul, I say, have further in itself **also an immovable altar** on which it may offer sacrifices of prayers and victims of mercy to God, on which it may sacrifice pride as a bull with the knife of temperance, on which it may slay wrath as a ram and offer all luxury and lust like he-goats and kids. But let him know how to separate for the priests even from these "the right arm" and "the small breast" and the jaws, that is, good works and works of the right hand (for let him preserve nothing evil); the whole small breast, which is an upright heart and a mind dedicated to God and jaws for speaking the word of God. Let him also understand that **the candlestick** must be placed in his own sanctuary, that his "lamps" may be always "glowing and his loins girded" and he himself be "as a servant who awaits his master to return from a wedding" (Luke 12:35-36). For the Lord also said of these lamps, "The lamp of your body is your eye" (Matt. 6:22). But let him place that candlestick in the south that it may look to the north. For when the light has been lit, that is when the heart is watchful, it ought always to look to the north and watch for "him who is from the north," as also the prophet says he saw "a kettle or pot kindled and its face was from the face of the north," for "evils are kindled from the north for the whole earth" (Jer. 1:13-14). Watchful, therefore, apprehensive, and zealous, let him always contemplate the slyness of the devil and always watch whence temptation may come, whence the foe may invade, whence the enemy may creep up. For the apostle Peter also says, "Your adversary the devil walks around like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8). Let **the table** also which has **the twelve loaves** set forth be placed in the northern part looking to the south. Let the apostolic word, in number as in power, be those loaves on it. By using it incessantly - for it is commanded*

that they be put "before the Lord" daily - one may again look to the south whence the Lord comes, "For the Lord will come from Theman" (Heb. 3:3), as it is written, which is from the south. Let him have an altar of incense in his innermost heart also, that he too may say, "We are a good odor of Christ" (2 Cor. 2:15). And let him have **an ark of the covenant** in which are the tables of the Law, that "he may meditate on the Law of God day and night" (Ps. 1:2). And let his memory become an ark and library of the books of God because the prophet also says those are blessed who hold His commands in memory that they may do them (Cf. Ps. 105:3). Let there be put back within him also **a jar of manna**, a fine and sweet understanding of the word of God; and let there be a rod of Aaron within him, a priestly teaching and a blooming sternness of discipline. But over and above all this splendor let him wear **the adornment of the high-priest**. For that part which is the most precious in man can hold the office of high-priest. Some call it the overseer of the heart, others, rational understanding, or intellectual substance, but whatever it is called, it is that part of us in which we can have a capacity for God. Let that part in us, therefore, as a kind of high priest, be adorned with garments and costly jewels, with a long linen priestly garment. This is the kind of garment which reaches the feet, covering the whole body. This signifies that first of all the whole man be clothed with chastity. Let him afterwards receive also the cape adorned with jewels in which the splendor of works is arranged, "that men seeing your works may magnify the father who is in the heaven" (Cf. Matt. 5:16). And let him also receive on his breast the legion, which can be called the oracular breastplate, which is adorned with four rows of stones. But also let the golden plate which is called petalus shine brightly on his forehead. "Truth" and "manifestation" are

said to have been placed on both of these. In these objects which are said to be placed on the breast, I perceive the message of the Gospel which, in its fourfold order, sets out to us the truth of the faith and the manifestation of the Trinity, referring all things to the head, that is to say, to the nature of the one God. There is in these objects, therefore, all truth and all manifestation of the truth. If you, therefore, wish to perform the high priesthood properly for God let the message of the Gospel and the faith in the Trinity always be held in your breast. The message of the Apostle agrees with this both in its force and estimation, so that the name of God may always be held in the head and all things may be referred to the one God. Let the high priest also **have his coverings on his inner parts**; let him have his private parts covered "that he may be holy in body and spirit" (Cf. 1 Cor. 7:34), and pure thoughts and deeds. Let him also have bells around the hem of his garment so that the Scripture says, "when he enters the sanctuary he may give a sound and not enter with silence" (Cf. Exod. 28:35). And these bells, which ought always to sound, have been placed on the fringe of the garment. The purpose of this, I think, is that you might never keep silent about the last times and the end of the world, but that you might always ring forth and dispute and speak in accordance with him who said: "Remember your last end and you will not sin. (Sir 7.40.) In this manner, therefore, our inner man is adorned as a high priest to God that he may be able to enter not only the sanctuary, but also the Holy of Holies; that he may be able to approach the mercy seat where the cherubim are and thence God may appear to him. The sanctuary can be those things which a holy way of life can have in the present world. But the Holy of Holies, which is entered only once, is, I think, the passage to heaven, where the mercy seat and the cherubim are located and where God will be able to appear to the pure in heart, or because the Lord says:



"Behold, the kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:21)<sup>326</sup> .

**\* (The Materials of the) Tabernacle** *Its faith can be compared to gold; the word of preaching to silver; bronze to patience; incorruptible wood to the knowledge which comes through the wood, or to the incorruptibility of purity which never grows old, virginity to linen; the glory of suffering to scarlet; the splendor of love to purple; the hope of the kingdom of heaven to the blue. Let those, however, be the materials from which the whole tabernacle is constructed, the priests are clothed, and the high priest is adorned. The prophet speaks in another passage about the nature and quality of their clothing: "Let your priests be clothed with justice" (Cf. Ps. 131:9). All those garments, therefore, are garments of justice. And again the apostle Paul says, "Put on heartfelt mercy" (Col. 3:12). They are also, therefore, garments of mercy. But the same apostle no less also designates other more noble garments when he says, "Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and give no attention to the flesh for lusting" (Rom. 13:14). Those, therefore, are the garments with which the Church is adorned*<sup>327</sup> .

**\* Treasure** *The treasure hidden in the field is the various meanings devised by that wisdom which is hidden in the mystery, meanings masked by the things that strike our sight... The things of heaven and the kingdom of heaven are as it were pictured in the Scriptures*<sup>328</sup> .

**\* (Voice of the) turtle-dove**

<sup>326</sup>

Origen: In Exod. hom.9:4 (Ronald E. Heine).

<sup>327</sup>

In Exod. hom.9:3 (Ronald E. Heine).

<sup>328</sup>

Origen: Comm. Matthew. 10:5.

*Then also will she hear 'the voice of the turtle-dove' (Song 2: ), which surely denotes that wisdom which the steward of the Word speaks among the perfect, the deep wisdom of God which is hidden in mystery. The fact is indicated by the mention of the turtle-dove; for this bird spends its life in the more hidden and remote localities, away from crowds; it loves either mountainous wastes, or the secret parts of the forests, is always found far from the multitude, and is a stranger to crowds... The voice of the turtle-dove is heard indeed, as we have said, not just through the various prophets; it is the voice of God's own wisdom that is heard on earth<sup>329</sup>.*

**\* Veil** *In the Law of Moses, the light was hidden and covered with a veil. When Jesus came, it shone out, because the veil was then removed and the blessings which had been only foreshadowed in the letter were suddenly revealed<sup>330</sup>.*

**\* Vine and Bread** *It is somewhat difficult to show the difference between the vine and bread, for He says, not only that He is the vine, but that He is the bread of life. May it be that as bread nourishes and makes strong, and is said to strengthen the heart of man, but wine, on the contrary, pleases and rejoices and melts him, so ethical studies, bringing life to him who learns them and reduces them to practice, are the bread of life, but cannot properly be called the fruit of the vine, while secret and mystical speculations, rejoicing the heart and causing those to feel inspired who take them in, delighting in the Lord, and who desire not only to be nourished but to be made happy, are*

<sup>329</sup> Origen: *Comm. on the Songs of Songs*, book 3(4):14 (ACW).

<sup>330</sup> *De Principiis* 4:6.

*called the juice of the true vine, because they flow from it<sup>331</sup>.*

*Yes, and the vines also are said to be in flower, and to have yielded their sweet smell. The various churches too that are found all over the world can certainly be called flowering vines and vineyards. For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the man of Juda, His pleasant plant (Isa. 5:7). These vineyards, then, are said to flower when they first come to faith; but when they are adorned with the sweetness of godly works, then they are said to have yielded their sweet smell<sup>332</sup>.*

*And those holy and blessed angelic powers with whom all the elect and blessed - who will themselves be as the angels of God - will be associated by virtue of the resurrection, they are the flowering vines and vineyards that impart to every soul her fragrant odor, and the grace which she received from her Creator at the first and now, after losing it, has again recovered. And with the sweetness of their celestial fragrance they drive away at last the stench of the mortality and corruption, that the soul has laid aside<sup>333</sup>.*

**\* Way** *It behooves us, therefore, to hasten to straight ways and to stand in the paths of virtue, lest it happen that when the Sun of Justice comes straight over us, finding us crooked and turned aside, He look askance at us and we be made black<sup>334</sup>.*

## **\* The wells**

<sup>331</sup>

*Origen: Commentary on John 1:33.*

<sup>332</sup>

*Comm. on the Songs of Songs, book 3(4):15 (ACW).*

<sup>333</sup>

*Origen: Comm. on the Songs of Songs, book 3(4):14 (ACW).*

<sup>334</sup>

*Origen: Comm. on the Songs of Songs, book 2:2 (ACW).*

1. Origen<sup>335</sup> says that we have many wells (Num. 21). One denotes **the knowledge of the Father**, the other **of the Son** (John 8:18); and the third **of the Holy Spirit** (John 14:16,17). Because of the distinction between the three *Hypostaseis* we have many wells, but one spring (Prov. 5:15,16 LXX) because of the oneness of the *ousia* and the nature of God.

Through these wells, many holy marriages had been realized (Rebecca: Gen. 24:16; Rachel: Gen. 29:2; Saphora: Exod. 2:15). For through the living divine knowledge, we are united with kindness, wisdom and other virtues.

The noble leaders who dug the wells (Num. 21:16-20 LXX) are the prophets who covered, by the letters, the well of the divine knowledge through their prophecies concerning Christ.

2. He also says that **the whole Holy Scriptures** which consist of the Law, prophets, evangelic and apostolic writings are but one well, and cannot be dug or inspected except by the kings and the nobles, who alone uncover the well and strip it of its literal concept, revealing the depths of the Lord's and Savior's redeeming work<sup>336</sup>.

*When I take to explaining the words these men used long ago and look for a spiritual meaning in them, when I try to lift the veil that hides the Law, I am doing what I can to bore a well. Yet at once the friends of the letter take up the slanderous cry against me. They attack me and say that there can be no truth that does not rest on the earth. But for our part, as we are servants of Isaac, we must prefer wells of running water and springs. We must keep far away from these men with their untruths, We will leave them the earth, since they love it so<sup>337</sup>.*

<sup>335</sup> In Num. hom. 6.

<sup>336</sup> In Num. hom. 12.

<sup>337</sup> In Gen. hom. 13:3.

*We too must take care, for we are often beside the wells of running water - God's Scriptures - and yet we fail to recognize them for what they are .... We must be always weeping and begging the Lord to open our eyes. The blind men sitting by the road side at Jericho (Matt. 20:30.) would not have had their eyes opened unless they had shouted after the Lord. And yet, why am I talking about the opening of our eyes as if it were something still to come? Our eyes have already been opened. Jesus came to open the eyes of the blind, and the veil that covered the Law has already been lifted<sup>338</sup>.*

**\* Windows** *We can take the windows (Song 2:9) as meaning the bodily senses through which life or death gains entrance to the soul; for that is what the prophet Jeremiah means when speaking of sinners, he says: Death is come up through your windows (Jer. 9:21. How does death come up through windows? If the eyes of a sinner should look on a woman to lust after her; and because he who has thus looked upon a woman has committed adultery with her in his heart, then death has gained entrance to that soul through the windows And also, when she listens to the Word of the eyes... God and takes delight in the reasonings of His wisdom and knowledge, to her the light of wisdom enters through the windows of her ears. Origen*

**\* Winter**

Origen says *"For winter is now past... the flowers have appeared in our land... the voice of the turtle is heard. " He first applies it to the soul. "The soul is not made one with God's Word." he says, "Until the winter and the storms- the passions and the vices- have been dispelled and she has ceased to be disturbed and tossed about by every wind of doctrine ( Eph. 4:14) .*

<sup>338</sup>  
In Gen. 7:6.

*When everything like that has gone from her and the storm of her desires has left her, the flowers of virtue will blossom in her and she will hear the voice of the dove. She will hear, that is to say, his words of wisdom who dispenses the word to the perfect, the wisdom of the Most High God, hidden in the mysteries. That is what is meant by the word 'dove'<sup>339</sup>."*

**\* Women**

*We have often said that women symbolize the flesh and the passions, while man symbolizes reason and thought. That is why Pharaoh, King of Egypt, a type of this world, orders the males to be put to death, as he abominates reason which can aspire after heavenly things<sup>340</sup>.*

<sup>339</sup> Comm. on Song 4.<sup>340</sup>

Origen: In Exod. hom. 2:1.

# ***THE SCHOOL OF ALEXANDRIA AND THE Gnostics***

In the apostolic age, before the appearance of the *Gnostic* movement as a school (or schools), or as separate sects, the apostles dealt with false teachings similar to the *Gnostic* systems, as in 1 John and the pastoral epistles.

The study of *Gnosticism* entered a new phase, however, with the discovery of a large collection of Coptic *Gnostic* documents found at Nag-Hammadi (*Chenoboskion*) in Upper-Egypt in 1945<sup>341</sup>. Before this discovery all our information on the *Gnostic* sects and doctrines relied on anti-*Gnostic* writings, such as those of SS. Clement of Alexandria, Irenaeus, Hippolytus, and Epiphanius. This discovery has made available a wealth of original documents that are being studied now for the first time.

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<sup>341</sup> J.M. Robinson: *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, San Francisco, 1981, the Introduction.

# GNOSIS

## *GNOSIS AND GNOSTICISM*

Charles W. Hedrick<sup>342</sup> states, “In general, the term *gnosticism* is applied to a series of widespread and rather diverse religio-philosophical movements in late antiquity and nevertheless are understood to have some similarities. Although a precise definition of gnosticism and a clear dating for its emergence in the Hellenistic world are still matters of scholarly debate, working definitions have generally included certain elements. It is understood to have an anti-cosmic or world-rejecting stance... The ignorant or slumbering spiritual elements reside in the material, in humankind, like dying embers in a cold fire-pit.”

Ever since the first international conference on the origins of *gnosticism* held at Messina, Italy, in 1966, scholars have made a distinction between *gnosis* and *gnosticism*. The term *gnosticism* is reserved for the developed gnostic systems of the second century A.D, while *gnosis* is used when referring to similar phenomena prior to the second century. This distinction, however, has not generally been followed<sup>343</sup>.

***Gnosticism*** is a modern term, not attested to in antiquity. Even the term *gnostic* (Gr., *gnostikos* "knower"), as found in patristic writings, was never used to indicate a general spiritual movement but rather applied only to a single, particular sect.

***Gnosticism*** designates a complex religious and philosophical movement that started probably before Christianity and flourished from about 100 to 700 A.D. There were many Christian, Jewish and pagan *Gnostic* sects that stressed salvation through a secret "**knowledge**" or "*Gnosis*." The term "***Gnostics***" was first applied by second and third century patristic writers to a large number of teachers, such as Valentinus, Basilides and many

<sup>342</sup> Nag Hammadi, *Gnosticism, and Early Christianity*, Hendrickson Publishers, 1986, p.1.

<sup>343</sup> Ibid. 2.



others; all of whom were regarded by the Church Fathers as Christian heretics. Although Marcion and his community stand somewhat apart, certain features are common to the movement as a whole.

Today *gnosticism* is defined as a religion in its own right, whose myths state that the Unknown God is not the creator (Demiurge, YHWH); that the world is an error, the consequence of a fall and split within the deity; and that man, spiritual man, is alien to the natural world and related to the deity, and he becomes conscious of his deepest self when he hears the word of revelation. Unconsciousness, not sin or guilt, is the cause of evil<sup>344</sup>.

### THE WORD "*GNOSIS*"<sup>345</sup>

The Greek word *gnosis* is derived from the Indo-European root "*gno*," and is also preserved in English word "know," and Sankrit word "*jnana*," which means "knowledge." The term has long been used in comparative religion to indicate a current of antiquity that stressed awareness of the divine mysteries. This was held to be obtained either by direct experience of a revelation or by initiation into the secret, esoteric tradition of such revelations.

### PRE-CHRISTIAN *GNOSIS* 34

The experience of *gnosis* was highly esteemed at the beginning of our era in various religious and philosophical circles of Aramaic and Greco-Roman civilization.

1. It is a key word in the scrolls of the *Jewish Essene* sect found at Qumran.

2. *Gnosis* was used in Greek to indicate self-awareness. The inscription on the temple in Delphi reads "*gnothi seauton*" (know yourself). A saying in a recently discovered Armenian collection attributed to *Hermes Trismegistos* ("thrice-greatest

344 The Encyclopedia of Religion, article Gnosticism. 345 The Coptic Encyclopedia, v.4, p. 1147-8; The Encyclopedia of Religion, article Gnosticism. 346 Ibid.

Hermes," identified with the Egyptian god Thoth) is "*He who knows himself, knows the All.*" The author of **Poimandres** expresses the same insight: "*Let spiritual man know himself, then he will know that he is immortal and that Eros is the origin of death, and he will know the All.*" And to illustrate this saying the author tells the story of a divine being, *Anthropos* (Man), who becomes enamored of the world of (lower) nature and so falls into a material body. Most Hermetic treatises take up a short saying and expound on it in this manner. They also preserve the impact of Egyptian mythology.

3. The **Platonists** interpreted *gnosis* as meaning that man, by turning his attention inward, could abstract from the sense perception and passion to uncover reason to know the being.

4. In contrast, the **Stoics** argued that man could only know himself by looking outwards to the providence and harmony of the cosmos and so discover that man is a part of a whole (*the Stoa is holistic*).

5. **Undogmatic skeptics**, who were against both schools, proved that man could not know anything with certainty, especially about God, and therefore he should humbly acknowledge his limitations. Under their influence, the Platonists admitted that the One God of *Parmenides*, who is Being itself, cannot possibly be known and therefore is invisible, unutterable, and unknowable. The only *gnosis* of this *Agnostos Theos* (Unknown God) is the awareness that He cannot be known. In Greek, *estin autou Gnosis he agnostia*. As a result, many were led to the realization that God or the gods must reveal Himself or themselves in order to be perceived. *Gnosis* thus became an intuitive knowledge of immediate revelation or of an esoteric tradition of such revelation for the elect.

**CHRISTIAN GNOSI** 34

**S** 7

W.H.C. Frend believes that *gnosis* held a worthy, if limited place, in the Jewish and the earliest Christian scales of values. "Knowing" God to Jews meant acknowledging that Yahweh was God and recognizing the acts of God. Indeed, the Septuagint describes God as the "God of knowledge" (1 Sam. 2:3), and the word "*gnosis*" is used to denote this. The representative and teacher of *gnosis* is the pious sage and Servant of the Lord (Is. 53:11), and *gnosis* is denied to the worldly-minded and to sinners<sup>348</sup>.

According to the holy Scriptures the first man used to enjoy "the sound (voice) of the Lord God walking in the garden" (Gen. 3:8). God used to meet His most beloved creature, man, and granted him the true knowledge of Himself, His mysteries, and His will. Even after the fall of man, God started a dialogue with Adam and Eve and offered them the knowledge of His redeeming plan. God directed creation towards natural law, the prophets' sayings, and towards Himself to reveal knowledge. As sin is an obstacle for attaining knowledge, God, the Logos Himself, came to our world to destroy its dominion over our hearts and to establish His divine kingdom, revealing his super knowledge through the work of his Holy Spirit in our sanctified inner man. The New Testament concentrates on the divine revelation as the source of our knowledge, which is realized within our inner man through personal fellowship with Christ as members of His Holy Body, His Church.

In other words, we can summarize our concept of Christian knowledge as follows:

1. The Incarnate Word of God is the source of knowledge.
2. Knowledge is received through the Church, as the body of Christ, especially by participation in the Eucharist.
3. Knowledge is revealed in our inner man, if it has been purified and sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

4. The knowledge of God and His eternal glory can be realized partially in this world, through our unity with the Father in His Only-Begotten Son, by the work of the Holy Spirit, and completed in the world to come.





# GNOSTICISM

## ORIGINS

Some German scholars, such as R. Reitzenstein, W. Bousset and R. Bultmann, have strongly supported the concept of pre-Christian *Gnosticism*<sup>349</sup>. The sophisticated second-century religio-philosophical systems did not get that way overnight, since it would appear that a certain amount of lead time is required for their development<sup>350</sup>. Those scholars believe that *gnosticism* is of Iranian origin. This hypothesis has been abandoned; the alleged Iranian mystery of the "saved savior" has been disproved. At present, many scholars are inclined to believe that *gnosticism* is built upon Hellenistic-Jewish foundations and can be traced to centers like Alexandria, which had a large Jewish population. Polemics in the writings of the Jewish philosopher Philo, who himself was an opponent of local heresies, make it clear that he knew Jewish groups that had already formulated certain basic elements of *gnosticism*, though a consistent system did not yet exist in pre-Christian times<sup>351</sup>.

Brian E. Daley writes, "It (*Gnosticism*) was rather a type of elitist religious thought, present in Jewish and philosophical pagan circles, as well as a fairly wide range of Christian ones that claimed privileged access to a kind of knowledge that could revolutionize the believer's understanding of existence"<sup>352</sup>. John Ferguson states, "*Gnosticism* is thus to be seen as a trend or tendency rather than as a well-defined philosophical or religious stance"<sup>353</sup>.

In Christianity, the movement appeared first as a school (or schools) of thought within the Church, which posed a serious problem both to the interpretation of the gospel, and the life and

<sup>349</sup> Cross: *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 1990, p. 574. <sup>350</sup> Nag Hammadi, *Gnosticism, and Early Christianity*, Hendrickson Publishers, 1986, p. 2. <sup>351</sup> *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, article *Gnosticism*. <sup>352</sup> Brian E. Daley: *The Hope of the Early Church*, Cambridge 1991, p. 25. <sup>353</sup> John Ferguson : *Clement of Alexandria*, Twayne Publishers, NY 1974, p. 38.

the worship of believers<sup>354</sup>. It soon established itself in all principal centers of Christianity; and by the end of the second century the Gnostics had mostly become separate sects<sup>355</sup>.

*Gnosticism* in various forms persisted for several centuries. The sect of the Manichees, founded by Mani, a Persian of the 3rd century, spread as far as Turkestan and survived there until the 13th century; meanwhile the possibly related sects of the Albigenses and Cathari had appeared in France, Germany and Italy. One sect of Gnostics, the Mandaean, has survived in Mesopotamia until the present day<sup>356</sup>.

## GNOSTIC TEACHINGS

Although the *Gnostics* shared certain basic convictions, they disagreed with each other on practically everything else.

1. Most of the *Gnostic* schools were thoroughly **dualistic**, setting an infinite chasm between the spiritual world and the world of matter. They agreed in refusing to attribute the origin of the material order to the ultimate God, the God of goodness. Their systems were based on the inseparable division and antagonism between the Demiurge or "creator god" and the supreme unknowable Divine Being.

This belief had its effect on the concept of "salvation." All the Gnostic groups were agreed that redemption was a possibility - that it was possible for us to 'wake up,' free our souls (the spiritual element) from our bodies (the material element), and negotiate successfully the perilous path which leads to our spiritual home<sup>357</sup>.

2. In some systems the creation of the material universe is believed to result from **the fall of Sophia** (wisdom); this creation is viewed as evil. From the Divine Being, the Demiurge was derived by a longer or shorter series of emanations or "*aeons*." He,

<sup>354</sup> Brain E. Daley: *The Hope of the Early Church*, Cambridge, 1991, p. 25.

<sup>355</sup> *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 1990, p. 573. <sup>356</sup>

*Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 1990, p. 574. <sup>357</sup> Cf. David N. Bell: *A Cloud of Witnesses*, Michigan 1989, p. 27.



through some mischance or fall among the higher aeons, was the immediate source of creation and ruled the world, which was therefore imperfect and antagonistic to what was truly spiritual.

The Samaritans, the last survivors of the ten tribes of northern Israel, were and are heterodox Jews who keep the Law while rejecting the rest of the Bible. They transmit a certain tradition about Wisdom as the personal creator of the world. According to Simon, Wisdom, the spouse of the Lord, was called the Holy Spirit and is God's first idea, the mother of all. She descended to the lower regions and gave birth to the angels by whom the world was created. She was overwhelmed and detained by these world powers so that she could not return to her abode. She was even incarnated and reincarnated in human bodies, such as that of the Helen of Greek mythology and poetry. Finally, she came to dwell as a whore in a brothel in Tyre, Phoenicia, where Simon, "the great power" of God, found and redeemed her. In the *Apocryphon of John* as well as in the school of Valentinus, this Sophia model has been combined with the *Anthropos* model. Both are pre-Christian in origin<sup>358</sup>.

### 3. Usually Gnostics **divided men into two or three classes:**

a. The "spiritual" (*pneumatics*) are those who have illuminated souls. Into the constitution of some men there had entered a seed or spark of Divine spiritual substance, and through "*gnosis*" this spiritual element might be rescued from its evil, material environment and be assured of a return to its home in the Divine Being. They were freed by knowledge from the constraints of ignorance, the Law, and the fears of the coming judgment.

The leaders were teachers, both men and women, not ecclesiastics. They were regarded as servants of Demiurge, and fit

only to exercise authority over the mass of uninitiated Christians<sup>359</sup>.

. The "fleshy" (*hylics*) or "material," are slaves of matter, and are earthbound. To those ignorant faithful, the ordinary Christians, Christ had appeared on earth and revealed the truths in the four gospels, but these truths were no more than the pabulum of the nursery. To the Gnostics He had revealed far more; and thus they could produce a large number of non-canonical Gospels and similar treatises to prove it. This was what Christ had really taught, this was the true Christianity; not a system which asked only simple faith, but a system which demanded intellectual understanding and secret knowledge, a system not for the many, but for a few; a system not for sleep-walkers, but for spiritual athletes; a system not for believers, but for *knowers*<sup>360</sup>.

. The Gnostics add a *psychic*, intermediate class.

Some scholars have sharply criticized **St. Clement of Alexandria**, considering that he was affected by *Gnosticism* in making a distinction between classes of Christians: on the one hand, there is the unsophisticated beginner who clings to the externalities of the faith; on the other hand, there is the advanced *gnostic* Christian who beholds the mysteries of God and abides in communion with God through a heart full of understanding. These detect a Stoic influence at this point, the Stoic discrimination of those who are advancing. Other scholars believe that he distinguishes between them, but not as two classes. On the contrary he believes that all Christians are babies in Christ, and in need of continuous learning. He also, in opposing Gnosticism, believes that none, except Jesus Christ is perfect. G. Florovsky says that St. Clement does not make a distinction among classes, but reinforces the dynamic nature of spiritual growth from being

359 W.H.C. Frend: *The Rise of Christianity*, Philadelphia, 1984, p. 200.

360 David N. Bell: *A Cloud of Witnesses*, Michigan 1989, p. 27, 28.

"babes" in Christ to constant growth in the faith: spiritually and intellectually<sup>361</sup>.

St. Clement states **that all Christians who receive baptism are babies in Christ and are in need of constant growth through the teaching and the training of the**

***Paidagogos***. He says, '*Pedagogy* is a training of children<sup>362</sup>', and then raises the question who those are that the Scripture calls 'children.' They are not, as the Gnostics claim, only those who live on a lower level of Christian faith whereas the Gnostics alone are perfect Christians. All those who are redeemed and reborn by baptism are children of God<sup>363</sup>: '*Being baptized, we are illuminated; illuminated we become sons; being made sons, we are made perfect; being made perfect, we are made immortal*<sup>364</sup>.'

Here I quote some sayings of St. Clement concerning **spiritual childhood**:

*Therefore the name "childhood" is for us a lifelong season of spring, because the truth abiding in us is ageless and our being made to overflow with that truth, is ageless too. For wisdom is ever fruitful. Ever fixed unchangeable on the same truths, ever constant*<sup>365</sup>.

*You have become old in superstition; as young, enter into the practice of piety. God regards you as innocent children*<sup>366</sup>.

*The Educator and Teacher is there naming us **little ones**, meaning that we are more ready for salvation than the worldly wise who, believing themselves wise, have blinded their own eyes*<sup>367</sup>.

<sup>361</sup> Georges Florovsky: *Byzantine Fathers of the fifth century*, 1987, p.

82. <sup>362</sup> *Paidagogos* 1:5:12:1. <sup>363</sup> Quasten: *Patrology*, vol. 2, p. 9. <sup>364</sup>

*Paidagogos* 1:6:26:1. <sup>365</sup> *Paidagogos* 1:5:20. <sup>366</sup> *Protrepticus* 10. <sup>367</sup>

*Paidagogos* 1:6:32 (*Frs. of Church*).

*We ought now to be in a position to understand that the name 'little one' is not used in the sense of lacking intelligence. Childishness means that, but 'little one' really means 'one newly become gentle,' just as the word 'gentle' means being mild-mannered. So, a 'little one' means one just recently become gentle and meek of disposition*<sup>368</sup>.

*Childlikeness is the foundation for simplicity and truthfulness. 'For upon whom shall I look,' it is said in the Scripture, 'if not the meek and the peaceful?' (Isa. 66:2)*<sup>369</sup>

*But whatever partakes of eternity assumes, by that very fact, the qualities of the incorruptible; therefore, the name 'childhood' is for us a life-long spring time, because the truth abiding in us is ageless and our being, made to overflow with that truth, is ageless, too*<sup>370</sup>.

*'The children,' the Scripture says, 'shall be put upon the shoulders, and they shall be comforted on the knees, as one whom the mother comforts, so will I comfort you' (Isa. 66:12,13). A mother draws her children near her; we seek our mother, the Church*<sup>371</sup>.

*'Now that I have become a man,' Paul continues, 'I have put away the things of a child.' He is not referring to the growing stature that comes with age, nor yet to any definite period of time, nor even to any secret teaching reserved only for men and the more mature when he claims that he left and put away all childishness. Rather, he means to say that those who live by the Law are childish in the sense that they are subject to fear, like children afraid of ghosts, while those who are obedient to the Word and are completely free are, in his opinion, men*<sup>372</sup>.

<sup>368</sup> Paidagogos 1:5:19 (Frs. of Church, 23).

<sup>369</sup> Paidagogos 1:5:19 (Frs. of Church, 23).

<sup>370</sup> Paidagogos 1:5:19 (Frs. of Church, 23).

<sup>371</sup> Paidagogos 1:5:19 (Frs. of Church, 23).

<sup>372</sup> Paidagogos 1:6:32 (Frs. of Church).

Concerning perfection, **St. Clement** believes that the *Gnostics* attain a kind of perfection, even while they are living here in this world, for by the divine grace they become Christlike. He also assures that no man is perfect in all things at once. *"I know no one of men perfect in all things at once, while still human, though according to the mere letter of the Law, except Him alone who for us clothed Himself with humanity... But Gnostic perfection in the case of the legal man is the acceptance of the Gospel, that he that after the Law may be perfect"*<sup>373</sup>.

1. The secret knowledge that the Gnostics claimed to possess was acquired, not by perseverance in moral rectitude, but by a sudden illumination that enabled them to understand the ways of God, the universe, and themselves. It was knowledge that freed them and revealed the mysteries of truth, and rent the veil which concealed how God controlled the creation<sup>374</sup>.
2. Despite their reliance on the methods and attitudes of current philosophy, they claimed to have succeeded contemptuously as not "having the possibility" of **understanding reality**. "We alone know the unutterable mysteries of the spirit," the *Nassene* (Snake) sect claimed (c. 200). Only its initiates could bring order into "the disorder of the world." Gnostics claimed that they were the "true brothers" on whom the love of the Father had been poured out<sup>375</sup>.
3. Many of the Nag-Hammadi writings are **Christ-centered**. Their understanding of Christ, the Scriptures and man differed fundamentally from that of members of the Church. The function of Christ was to come as the emissary of the supreme God, bringing "*gnosis*." As a Divine Being, He neither assumed a properly human body nor died, but either temporarily inhabited a human being (Jesus) or ***assumed a merely phantasmal human appearance***<sup>376</sup>.

373 *Stromata* 4:21. 374 W.H.C. Frend: *The Rise of Christianity*, Philadelphia, 1984, p.199. 375 W.H.C. Frend: *The Rise of Christianity*, Philadelphia, 1984, p.199. 376 *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 1990, p. 573.

One form of *Gnosticism* was "*Docetism*," a heresy that threatened the young church. The Greek word "*dokein*" means "to seem," or "appear to be." *Docetists* believed that Jesus Christ was not a real man but only seemed to be so; according to them, He did not have a body, but simply passed through the Virgin without being fashioned of her substance.

According to St. Irenaeus<sup>377</sup>, Saturninus (c. 120) "declared that the Savior was unborn, incorporeal and without form ... For to marry and bear children, he says, is of Satan."

Valentinus (2nd century) also taught that Christ united himself with the man Jesus who was born through Mary and not of Mary<sup>378</sup>. He passed through her as through a channel.

Marcion's doctrine was that Jesus did not have a human soul nor an earthly body. He was not born of Mary, but appeared suddenly in Judaea with imaginary flesh, a full grown man ready to start immediately his ministry<sup>379</sup>.

Appelles conceded genuine flesh to Christ, but a celestial body. It came down from heaven into this world, and not of Mary.

7. The Gnostics and their orthodox opponents hotly debated the **relationship between the Old and New Testaments**. This went to the heart of the rival schemes of salvation. Was the Old Testament the prefiguration or introduction to the New, as in Hebrews 10, or was it wholly alien - the work of an inferior being or an evil archon?<sup>380</sup>

The great Egyptian Gnostics seem to all have been of Jewish birth. The adherents of Basilides claimed, "We are no longer Jews and not yet Christians." The followers of Valentinus reported, "When we were Hebrews, we were orphans."

377 Adv. Haer. 1:24:2. PG. 7:674-5 378 Origen: In Epist. ad Galat. PG 14:1298. 379 Origen: In Epist. ad Titum. PG 13:1304. 380 W.H.C. Frend: The Rise of Christianity, Philadelphia, 1984, p. 208.

Nevertheless, Basilides and Valentinus both proclaimed a God beyond the Old Testament God<sup>381</sup>.

The teaching of the Gnostics concerning the antagonism that exists between the Law and the Gospel called forth a vigorous reaction on the part of ecclesiastical writers, especially the Alexandrian Fathers.

The Alexandrian Fathers *emphatically stressed the fundamental unity of both phases of revelation*. **St. Clement of Alexandria** expressed his views on this point in no uncertain terms: the two Testaments form but one single saving Testament, given by one God by means of one Lord and which, in spite of the diversity of ages and generations, extends from the constitution of the world unto us<sup>382</sup>. **Origen** inculcates the unity of authorship of both revelations<sup>383</sup>. One is not surprised to find that **St. Cyril** subscribed to similar tenets<sup>384</sup>, following the Alexandrian tradition<sup>385</sup>.

The immediate consequence of the common origin of both Testaments is the doctrine that the teachings of the Law and the Prophets are in perfect agreement with that of Christ and the apostles. Ecclesiastic *writers describe it in terms of a comparison borrowed from music*. **St. Clement of Alexandria** speaks of the ecclesiastical symphony of the two choirs - the Old and the New Testaments - and of the choristers of which they are formed<sup>386</sup>. **Origen** opposes heresy by stating, "*the sublimity of gospel-preaching, filled with the symphony of the doctrines common to the Testaments that are styled Old and New*"<sup>387</sup>. He also writes, "*the whole of Scripture is but one single instrument of God, perfect and*

<sup>381</sup> The Encyclopedia of Religion, article Gnosticism. <sup>382</sup> Stromata 7:17:107; 6:13:106. <sup>383</sup> De Principiis praef. :4. <sup>384</sup> PG 70:565A: "The whole of Scripture form but one book, because it was spoken by the one Holy Spirit." <sup>385</sup> Alexander Kerrigan: St. Cyril of Alexandria, Roma 1952, p. 131 ff. <sup>386</sup> Stromata 6:11:88. <sup>387</sup> In Ioan. Comm. 5:8.

*harmonious, which renders one consonance that is formed of different sounds*<sup>388</sup>."

The early Fathers stressed the harmony of both Testaments to the extent of claiming that they are identical. **No writer of the early period claimed that the apostles' knowledge was superior to that of the prophets.** St. Clement of Alexandria describes the charism of the apostles by analogy to that of the prophets: the apostles, he argues, were *prophtai* and *dixaio* at the same time,<sup>389</sup> who "*share the fragrant anointing of the Holy Spirit by means of prophecy*;"<sup>390</sup> "Nobody will ever equal the prophets and the disciples of the Spirit"<sup>391</sup>.

**Origen** is much more explicit, teaching *ex professo* that the knowledge possessed by the perfect in times preceding Christ's advent was not less than that of the apostles who were instructed by Christ<sup>392</sup>. For according to St. Paul, the revelation of mysteries is made to the apostles by means of the prophetic writings. The prophets, thanks to their wisdom, must certainly have understood their own statements; hence, they grasped what was manifested to the apostles. It is true that the mode of knowledge is different since the prophets contemplated the mysteries before they were realized, whereas the apostles beheld them as already accomplished. However, this difference is only accidental; Christians, who will witness Christ's second coming will know nothing more than the apostles who foretold of this event; similarly, the wisdom of the apostles could not have outstripped that of the patriarchs, Moses and the prophets<sup>393</sup>.

**St. Cyril** speaks in glowing terms about the prophets and the excellence of their knowledge<sup>394</sup>, but he very rarely institutes a

<sup>388</sup> In Matt. Comm. 2. PG 13:832 C. <sup>389</sup> Stromata 5:6:38. <sup>390</sup> Paed. 2:8:61. <sup>391</sup> Stromata 1:9:45.

<sup>392</sup> In Ioan. Comm. 6:4:24. <sup>393</sup> Ibid. 6:3-6. <sup>394</sup> For example, Comm. on Osee, Pusey I, 236, 16 ff.: "Accurate knowledge of future events strikes the minds of the prophets, because the Holy Spirit flashes the matter on them."



comparison between them and the apostles. On one occasion, however, he confesses that he felt "inclined to crown Isaias not only with the grace of prophecy but also with the prerogatives of the apostles ... The views to which the older Alexandrians had committed themselves practically deny all real development of the faith; the patriarchs, prophets and apostles were all endowed with equal knowledge and their predictions already contained the whole of Christ's doctrine. On the other hand, St. Cyril, shows leanings which can be interpreted as somewhat favoring the idea of a real development; as we shall see, he espouses the idea that a gradual spiritualization of religion takes place during the prophetic period. Statements made by him with reference to the superiority of the gospel to the old dispensation<sup>395</sup> show that he was conscious of the fact that further development took place in New Testament times. He clung to the doctrine favoring the identity of both Testaments. In his very first exegetical work St. Cyril writes, "*The New Testament is sister to and closely related to the Mosaic oracles; indeed it is composed of the selfsame elements. We can show that the "life in Christ" is not remote from conduct in accordance with the Law, provided that the ancient ordinances are given a spiritual interpretation*"<sup>396</sup>."

8. Fr. Matthias F. Wahba in his thesis, "The doctrine of Sanctification in relation to Marriage according to St. Athanasius," dealt with the Gnostics' view of marriage<sup>397</sup>. He states that **St. Clement** explained that the *Gnostic's* dualist view of creation led to **two opposing attitudes toward marriage and sexuality**: the extreme of a rigorous and negative asceticism on the one hand, and

<sup>395</sup> "The law was an exercise leading to righteousness; it was a vestibule to the manner of life prescribed by the gospel... It constitutes us in justice. But evangelical teaching leads to something that is beyond this (PG 68: 521 ff.); "We shall see accordingly by means of these things that the manner of living according to the law is unquestionably inferior to that of the gospel; it is not free from the accusation of fleshly desires nor has it been liberated from earthly concupiscence; but the divine and evangelical manner of living is spiritual and faultless and possesses incomparable beauty" PG 69:462 D). <sup>396</sup> PG 68:137. <sup>397</sup> Presented to the Graduate School of the University of Ottawa, 1933, p. 35-45.

a licentious antinomianism on the other. Both repudiate nature; the one through abstention and the other through excess<sup>398</sup>.

**St. Clement** believes that they regarded birth as evil because the world is evil. It is the evil creator of the material universe who gave the command, "Increase and multiply," (Gen. 1:28) to fill the world with brutish men and women. They asserted that no spiritual, or even psychic (ordinary), believer in the Gospel would engage in sexual intercourse, and thereby increase the number of the brutish who are in any case predetermined to damnation<sup>399</sup>.

Ascetic Gnostics placed a great reliance on the Gospel according to the Egyptians. For example, in a dialogue between Jesus and Salome, she asks, "Until when shall men die?" He answers her, "As long as women bear children." In another passage, Jesus says, "I come to destroy the works of the female"<sup>400</sup>.

At the other extreme were the licentious groups. They denounced private property, marriage, and the repressive nature of the Decalogue. "The followers of Carpocrates and (his son) Epiphanes," says Clement, "think that wives should be common property"<sup>401</sup>.

Midway between the two extremes, the rigidly ascetic and the freely licentious, were Basilides and Valentinus. Basilides and his son Isidore allowed marriage on the ground that it is better to marry than to burn (cf. 1 Cor. 7.9), but marriage was to be avoided by the man who was ambitious to attain perfection. After his death, Basilides' followers departed from their master's teaching and fell into licentious ways, "by living lewder lives than the most uncontrolled heathen, they brought blasphemy upon his name"<sup>402</sup>.

*398 Stromata, III. 1-5. 399 Stromata, III. 12. 400 Stromata 3:63-64. 401 Stromata, III.5; cf. Irenaeus, Against Heresies 1.25.5; R.M. Grant, "Gnostic Spirituality," in Christian Spirituality: Origins to the Twelfth Century, New York, Crossroad, 1985, edited by B. McGinn and J. Meyendorff in collaboration with J. Leclercq, p. 49. 402 Stromata, III.3, p.41.*

According to St. Irenaeus, Basilides taught that the practice of all lusts was a matter of indifference, and said, "Marrying and bearing children are from Satan"<sup>403</sup>. "Gnosticism, then, could not sanctify marriage as long as it had such an attitude towards matter and body; both, for the Gnostics, are evil. The *Gnostic* texts of Nag-Hammadi agree that marriage and procreation, as instigated by archontic powers, have no place in the perfect life"<sup>404</sup>.

*Gnosticism* was never interested in ethics and morality. As pneumatics, the Gnostics believed that they would be saved, not by means of conduct, but because they were spiritual by nature. On the contrary, St. Clement states, "*works follow knowledge, as the shadow follows the body.*"

Gnostics generally regarded the world of ordinary experience and work as having only a low grade of reality, and promised escape from matter and union to the transcendent source of being to the favored few who accepted the esoteric knowledge that the group possessed<sup>405</sup>.

Finally, we can acknowledge the Alexandrians' struggle against Gnosticism from Origen who debated with a certain bishop, Heracleides, that *Gnosticism* was about to reappear in a new guise as a rival universal religion molded by a genius Mani<sup>406</sup>. Athanasius, also, repeatedly mentions Mani together with Marcion and Valentinus as schismatic groups<sup>407</sup>.

## **GNOSTICISM AND ALEXANDRIA**

The most important center of *Gnosticism* was Alexandria which had become the heir of Jewish traditions, classical thought,

<sup>403</sup> St. Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.*, I.24; Noonan, *Contraception*, p. 66; Mackin, *What is Marriage?*, p. 87. <sup>404</sup> *The Testimony of Truth* (IX. 3:29) affirms that marriage is an invention of the Mosaic law, and sees the law's defilement manifested in the commands "to take a husband or a wife, and to beget, and to multiply." *The Hypostasis of the Archons* depicts the commands to marry and procreate as deception invented by archontic powers to enslave humanity; cf. E.H. Pagels, "Exegesis and Expositions," pp. 261-270. <sup>405</sup> Brian E. Daley: *The Hope of the Early Church*, Cambridge 1991, p. 25. <sup>406</sup> H. Chadwick, *Alexandrian Christianity*, p. 177, 314 ff. <sup>407</sup> *Ad Ep. Aeg.*, 4, p. 24; *Con. Ar.*, I.3, p.307; *Ad Adelphium.*, 2, p.575

and the old mysticism of oriental religions<sup>408</sup>. It was in Alexandria that the greatest doctors of *Gnosticism* - Basilides, Carpocrates and Valentinus - flourished. St. Athanasius frequently refers to them, as well as to Marcion, warning of their danger to Christian doctrine. St. Clement of Alexandria, "the most reliable of early Christian writers on *Gnosticism*," provides us with a systematic analysis of the various sects.

## 1. Basilides

Basilides was a theologian of *Gnostic* tendencies, according to St. Irenaeus<sup>409</sup>, and a teacher at Alexandria. His work fell within the reigns of Hadrian (117-138) and Antoninus Pius (138-161). He and Isidore, his son and disciple, were prodigious workers. Basilides wrote a gospel, of which we have only one fragment. Origen says that this heretic had the audacity to write a gospel, and this work is mentioned by St. Ambrose and St. Jerome. It is possible that Basilides reworked the canonical Gospels to make them favorable to *Gnostic* doctrine<sup>410</sup>. He also wrote a biblical commentary, the *Exegetica*, in twenty-four books; and some Odes.

His system is difficult to reconstruct, since only fragments of his writings survive, and conflicting accounts are given by SS. Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, and Hippolytus. According to Hippolytus, Basilides taught a wholly transcendent God, who created an evolving universe and planted in it an elect race. Besides biblical material he used secret traditions supposedly

408 B. Walker, *Gnosticism*, p.11-12; G.W. MacRae, "Nag Hammadi and the New Testament" in *Gnosis: Festschrift für Hans Jonas. In Verbindung mit Ugo Bianchi*, Gottingen, 1978, p. 150; R.M. Grant, *Gnosticism and Early Christianity*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1959, p. 13; id., *Gnosticism: A Source Book of Heretical Writings from the Early Christian Period*, New York, Harper, 1961, p. 16. 409 Adv. Haer. 1:24:1. 410 J. Quasten: *Patrology*, vol. 1, p.128.

derived from St. Peter and St. Matthias, some *Gnostic* doctrines, and elements of Platonic and Stoic philosophy.

According to Basilides, when the time was right, Jesus was enlightened at His baptism in the river Jordan (a typically Jewish-Christian notion). Jesus is considered to be the prototype of all spiritual men who through His revealing word became conscious of the innermost being, the Spirit, and rose up to the spiritual realm. When the entire third sonship (the Spirit in the spiritual man) has redeemed itself, God will take pity on the world, and he will allow the descent of "the great unconsciousness" upon the rest of mankind. Thereafter, no one will have even an inkling that there was ever anything like the Spirit. Basilides foresaw a godless and classless society<sup>411</sup>.

Basilides seems to have been one of those many liberal Jews who had left behind the concept of a personal Lord as a belief in the Unknown God. He looked to Yahweh as an aggressive deity and the Jews as a people who took after him, aspiring to subjugate other nations<sup>412</sup>. Basilides hated Judaism as he knew it in his own time and makes no claim for his followers that they were a "new Israel"<sup>413</sup>, "perhaps an interesting comment on feelings in Alexandria during the years between the Jewish rebellion of 115 AD and the up-rising of Bar Kochba in A.D 132. Nevertheless, Basilides was basically Jewish in his attitudes. His followers in St. Irenaeus' day are recorded as asserting that "while they were no longer Jews, they were more than Christians," as though for them Judaism was still a norm<sup>414</sup>.

Basilides' concerns, however, were moral as well as metaphysical. He aimed at explaining the paradox of divine goodness and human suffering - why must a Christian who had supposedly been redeemed by Christ undergo a martyr's death?

<sup>411</sup> *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, article *Gnosticism*. <sup>412</sup> *St. Irenaeus: Adv. Haer. 1:24:2*; *St. Epiphanius: Medicine Box 24:2*. <sup>413</sup> *W.H.C. Frend: The Rise of Christianity, Philadelphia, 1984, p. 205*. <sup>414</sup> *St. Irenaeus: Adv. Haer. 1:24:6*.

Basilides<sup>415</sup> was quoted by St. Clement<sup>416</sup> as stating that even the man Jesus of Nazareth, had sinned, hence the crucifixion! All suffering, Basilides asserted was the result of sin. Individual confessors might not be grievous sinners but they possess a capacity and desire to sin. Their sufferings might be regarded therefore as those of a child who suffers simply because of an innate sinful quality or perhaps through sin committed in a previous life. Suffering and death therefore, were forms of atonement<sup>417</sup>. In due time a heavenly light would descend and raise up Jesus to summon the elect; they will ascend to the highest heaven, while other beings come to rest in destinations appropriate to their capacities. He was accused of teaching Docetism, Metempsychosis, and other doctrines that were later condemned. His followers soon formed a separate sect; but his own teachings may perhaps have been typical of an ill-defined and speculative theology that was prevalent in Alexandria in his day<sup>418</sup>.

Basilides accepted the Platonic view of "providence," that in no sense could providence be held responsible for evil. Evil, therefore, was independent of God and resulted from the actions of another deity, namely the God of the Old Testament, Yahweh, the chief of the creator angels. True Christians would therefore reject the Old Testament and confess Christ, but not Jesus as crucified because that was merely material worship. They would identify themselves with the spiritual Christ as spirit to spirit. Similarly, Scripture was to be interpreted spiritually through the use of allegory on which the words of Homer "the poet" as well as of Paul "the apostle" could throw light on its true meaning. This demanded mastery of a range of Greek philosophy and poetry as well as of existing Jewish and Christian exegesis<sup>419</sup>.

*415 Wxegetica, 23. 416 Stromata 4:128. 417 W.H.C. Frend: The Rise of Christianity, Philadelphia, 1984, p. 206. 418 F.L. Cross: The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, 1990, p. 141. 419 W.H.C. Frend: The Rise of Christianity, Philadelphia, 1984, p. 206.*

J Quasten<sup>420</sup> states that the following practical conclusions can be drawn from the summary of Basilides' teaching which St. Irenaeus mentions<sup>421</sup>:

- . Knowledge (*gnosis*) proceeds from the principalities which form the world.
- . Only a few, one in a thousand, two in ten thousand, are able to possess the true knowledge.
- . Mysteries should be kept secret.
- . Martyrdom is futile.
- . Redemption affects only the souls, and not the body, which is subject to corruption.
- . Every action, even the most heinous sins of lust, is a matter of perfect indifference.
- . The Christian should not confess Christ the crucified but Jesus, who was sent by the Father. Otherwise he remains a slave and under the power of those who formed our bodies.
- . Pagan sacrifices ought to be despised, but can be used without any scruple because they are nothing.

## 2. CARPOCRATES

He was a *Gnostic* teacher of the 2nd century who was probably a native of Alexandria. His disciples, the "Carpocratians," who survived until the 4th century, preached a licentious ethic, the transmigration of souls, and the doctrine that Jesus was born by natural generation. His son Epiphanes wrote a treatise "On Justice," in which, under the influence of Plato's "Republic", he advocated a community of women and gods. However, this tradition about Carpocrates has been disputed, and may possibly rest on a confused account of a cult of the Egyptian deity Harpocrates<sup>422</sup>.

<sup>420</sup> *Patrology*, vol. 1, p. 247-9. <sup>421</sup> *Adv. Haer.* 1:24:3-4. <sup>422</sup> F.L. Cross: *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 1990, p. 243.

According to St. Irenaeus<sup>423</sup>, Carporates and his followers maintained that the world and the things which are there-in were created by angels greatly inferior to the unbegotten Father. They also held that Jesus was the son of Joseph and was just like other men with the exception that he differed from them in that his soul was steadfast and pure so he remembered perfectly those things which he had witnessed within the sphere of the unbegotten God. On this account, a power descended upon him from the Father by which he might escape from the creators of the world; they also said that He, after passing through them all and remaining in all points free, ascended again to him. This position of Jesus was by no means unique because in the same way the soul which is like that of Christ can despise those rulers who were the creators of the world, and in like manner receives power for accomplishing the same result. This idea appealed so much to some of the Carpocratians that some of them arrogantly declared themselves to be similar to Jesus, while others haughtily maintained that they were superior to his disciples, such as Peter, Paul and the rest of the apostles.

Images of some of them were painted or made with them having a likeness of Christ, and portraying Jesus among them. They crowned these images and set them up along with the images of Pythagoras, Plato, Aristotle and others. They also had other modes of honoring these images in the same manner as the gentiles<sup>424</sup>.

The Carpocratians also practiced magical arts and incantations, philters and love potions, and had recourse to spirits, dreams, demons and other abominations, declaring that they possessed power to rule over not only the princes of this world but also over the things in it<sup>425</sup>. Carpocrates was a contemporary of Valentinus because according to St. Irenaeus one of his women

<sup>423</sup> Adv. Haer. 1,25,1; Cf. J. Quasten, vol. 1, p.

266-7. <sup>424</sup> Adv. Haer. 1,25, 6, ANF vol. 1, p. 351. <sup>425</sup>

Adv. Haer. 1, 25, 3, ANF vol. 1, p. 350.



disciples, Marcellina, went to Rome during the reign of Pope Anicetus (154-165 AD), and seduced many.

### 3. Valentinus

The greatest *Gnostic* of all time was the poet Valentinus. Despite his Latin name, he was born in the Nile Delta around the year 100 A.D and educated in Alexandria. He created an academy for free research, which in turn formed a loose network of local groups within institutional religion. Even among his opponents Valentinus became renowned for his eloquence and genius. He was probably the most influential of the Gnostics and had a very large following (*frequentissimum collegium inter haereticos*). Several of his disciples founded schools of their own. They included Theodotus in the East, and Ptolemaeus, Heracleon, Florinus, and Marcus in the West<sup>426</sup>, all contributed to the spread and development of *Gnosticism* in Italy, Alexandria, and Gaul respectively, down to the end of the century.

According to St. Irenaeus and others he was a native of Egypt whose disciples claimed that he had been taught by Theodas, a pupil of St. Paul. He lived in Rome from c. A.D 136 to c. 165 and had hopes of being elected Bishop "on account of his intellectual force and eloquence" (*quia et ingenio poterat et eloquio*<sup>427</sup>) St. Jerome, by no means one of the kindest critics, wrote of him, "No one can bring heresy into being unless he is possessed by the nature of an outstanding intellect and has gifts provided by God. Such a person was Valentinus<sup>428</sup>."

Until the discovery of the Nag-Hammadi library, Valentinus's ideas could be guessed only from accounts given by his opponents, especially St. Irenaeus<sup>429</sup>. Though no work actually bears his name, a group of four works from Nag-Hammadi - the *Gospel of Truth*, the *Gospel of Philip*, the *Exegesis on the Soul*,

<sup>426</sup> F.L. Cross: *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 1990, p. 1423.

<sup>427</sup> Tertullian, *Adv. Valentiniaros*, iv. <sup>428</sup> St. Jerome: *Comm. on Hosea* 11:10.

<sup>429</sup> St. Irenaeus 3:1:1, 4:1; St. Epiphanius: *Medical Box* 31:9:1-22.

*and the Treatise on Resurrection to Rheginus* - appear to have close affinities with each other and correspond to some extent with St. Irenaeus' account of Valentinus's ideas. Another important treatise, *The Teachings of Silvanus*, seems to have been contemporary with Valentinus and may also reflect some aspects of his thought. The *Gospel of Truth*, a meditation on the true eternal gospel proclaimed by Christ to awaken man's innermost being (the unconscious Spirit) was probably written by Valentinus himself around A.D 150. His most influential production was a systematic theology known to us only in the developed and modified form given down to us by his disciples. It appears to have been based on the Ophite system and to have incorporated Platonic and Pythagorean elements. Valentinus, like Basilides, saw God as a single, transcendent, and utterly unknowable Being, but originating not from "absolutely nothing" but from the Primal Cause or Depth (*Bythos*). After countless ages Depth emanated his spouse, called Womb or Silence (*Sige*) and eventually these two, representing Male and Female principles, brought forth the Christ, or Logos, upon whom all aeons (half ideas, half angels) depend and through whom the All is coherent and connected. He also states that the couple - Depth and Silence - emanate Understanding (*Nous*) and Truth (*Aletheia*). From these follow Word and Life, and Man and Church, and eventually thirty Aeons are produced, pair by pair, male and female (compare Gen. 1:27), representing Christian (or Jewish) concepts and virtues to complete the heavenly or spiritual world or *Pleroma*. The last aeon was Wisdom (*Sophia*). She, desiring to know the unknowable Father, fell into the darkness of despair and gave birth to a premature and malformed infant *laldabaoth* (probably "*Child of Chaos*"), by whom the universe with all its imperfections was created. Thus the visible world owes its origin to the fall of Sophia, the youngest of these, whose ultimate offspring was the Demiurge who was identified with the God of the Old Testament. The subsequent struggle between *laldabaoth* and Wisdom was responsible for the mixture of good and evil, virtues and passions, in the world and in individuals. A Savior, Jesus, is sent to Wisdom. He "forms

Wisdom according to understanding" and separates her from her passions, and thus sets in train the events that lead to similar processes of salvation in the visible universe<sup>430</sup> .

Redemption was effected by Christ, who united Himself with the man Jesus (either at his conception or at His baptism) to bring man the redeeming knowledge (*gnosis*) of His origin and destiny. This *gnosis*, however, is given only to spiritual men or the "*pneumatics*," i.e. the Valentinians who enter the *pleroma* through it, whereas other Christians (called "*psychics*" after 1 Cor. 2.14 etc.) attain by faith and good works only the middle realm of the Demiurge; the rest of mankind (called "*hylics*", being engrossed in matter) are given over to eternal perdition.

On the basis of this metaphysical view, Valentinus and his followers valued both sex and marriage, at least for the *pneumatics*. A preserved fragment from the school of Valentinus gives the following interpretation of Jesus' statement in the Gospel of John that the Christian's life is in the world but is not from it (John. 17:116): "Whosoever is in the world and has not loved a woman so as to become one with her, is not out of the Truth, and will attain the Truth; but he who is from the world and unites with a woman, will not attain the Truth, because he made sex out of concupiscence alone." The Valentinians permitted intercourse only between men and women who were able to experience it as a mystery and a sacrament, namely, those who were *pneumatics*. They forbade it between those whom they called *psychics* (Jews and Catholics) or *hylics* (materialists), because these two lower classes knew nothing but libido. As the only early Christian on record who spoke lovingly about sexual intercourse and womanhood, Valentinus must have been a great lover<sup>431</sup> .

The Jung Codex contains five Valentinian writings:

1. *The Prayer of the Apostle Paul*.

<sup>430</sup> W.H.C. Frend: *The Rise of Christianity*, Philadelphia, 1984, p. 207. <sup>431</sup> *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, article Gnosticism.

2. *The Apocryphon of James* is a letter purporting to contain revelations of the risen Jesus, written by James, his brother. In reality, it contains Valentinian speculations grafted onto the root and fatness of the olive tree planted beside the waters of the Nile by Hebrew missionaries from Jerusalem (c. 160).

3. *The Gospel of Truth*.

4. *The Epistle to Rheginos* concerning the Resurrection is an explanation of Paul's views: already, here and now, man anticipates eternal life, and after death he will receive an ethereal body.

5. *The Tripartite Treatise* is a systematic and consistent exposition of the history of the All. It describes how the Spirit evolves through the inferno of a materialistic (pagan or "*hylic*") phase and the purgatory of a moral (Jewish and Catholic or "*psychic*") phase to the coming of Christ, who inaugurates the paradiso of final consummation, in which spiritual man becomes conscious of himself and of his identity with the Unknown God. The author, a leader of the Italic (Roman) school of Valentinianism, was most likely Heracleon (c. 170). It was against this shade of Valentinian *gnosis* that Plotinus, the Neoplatonic philosopher, wrote his pamphlet *Against the Gnostics* (c. 250)<sup>432</sup>.

#### 4. The Manichaeans

In the second half of the third century, the great *Gnostic* Mani (216-277) sent his missionaries Papos and Thomas to Egypt, where they settled in Lycopolis, on the Nile above the Thebaid in Middle Egypt. There they proselytized among the pupils of the Platonic philosopher Alexander of Lycopolis, who wrote a preserved treatise against them. They also seem to have translated, or to have had translated, the Manichaean writings found at Madinat Madi in 1930-1931 (kephalaia, psalms, homilies, etc.)

<sup>432</sup> *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, article *Gnosticism*.

from East Aramaic into sub-Akmmimic, the Coptic dialect of Lycopolis and the surroundings.

According to Valentinus, every man has a guardian angel or Self who gives *gnosis* to his counterpart, but also needs the man or woman to whom he belongs because he cannot enter the *pleroma*, the spiritual world, without his other half. Mani taught that every Manichaean has a twin, who inspires him and leads him to the light, but at the same time Mani held that the eternal Jesus suffers in matter and is to be redeemed by the *Gnostic*. Jacob Boehme says that God is an ocean of light and darkness, love and ire, who wants to become conscious in man.

The God of *gnosticism* is Being in movement<sup>433</sup>.

### **WHY DID GNOSTICISM SPREAD IN ALEXANDRIA?**

There are at least five reasons for the success of *Gnosticism* in Alexandria, especially in the early centuries:

1. In contrast to other religions, *Gnosticism* first appeared in the city not as a religious sect or school but as an attitude accepted by some pagans, Jews and even Christians. The Gnostics took advantage of the importance of Alexandria as a center of interchange of religious ideas and as the intellectual meeting point between Jew and Greek.
2. The pseudo-Christian Gnostic sects could offer a religious system, with a guaranteed way of salvation, and much more similar to the pagan systems, from which the converts were changing<sup>434</sup>.
3. The Gnostics tried to answer the following problems:

If God was Goodness, why was there evil in the world, unless the matter from which it was created was irredeemably bad?

If God is good, who created the evil?

<sup>433</sup> Quispel, Gilles in *The Coptic Encyclopedia*, p. 1149-51. <sup>434</sup>  
Cf. David N. Bell: *A Cloud of Witnesses*, Michigan 1989, p. 28.

If the universe was not governed by Fate, how did one explain calamity, sickness, and sudden death?

What was the use of attempting to practice moral excellence when one might be swept away overnight?

4. *Gnosticism* provided the well-educated members with the sense of superiority, as they felt that they alone are trustworthy of the divine mysteries.

5. Many of the founders of the Christian Gnostics belonged to Pre-Christian Gnosticism, who instead of surrendering their former beliefs, they only added some Christian doctrines to their Gnostic views. They also were very interested in literature, thus they wrote many apocryphal gospels, epistles and apocalypses and attributed many of it to St. Mary, the disciples, and the apostles, which had a tremendous effect because of its popular content.

### **THE ALEXANDRIAN FATHERS AND *GNOSTICISM***

The Christian ministers and teachers of the first centuries were forced to keep a continual eye on *Gnosticism*, which was a threat, a rival rather than an influence<sup>435</sup>.

*Gnosticism* was a vital part of the thought-world of St. Clement; much of his writing was polemic against it, and at the same time it influenced his categories of thought<sup>436</sup>.

St. Clement's objection to *Gnosticism* is that it lay outside the church and is offensive to human freedom of will and common sense. In his own optimistic outlook, St. Clement believes that humans are reasonable beings. Christianity had to be interpreted in terms of the ultimate harmony between Scripture and philosophy.

***Therefore, Gnostic dualism, libertinism, and fatalism could not be the true Christian revelation***<sup>437</sup>.

W.H.C. Frend writes,

435 Cf. David N. Bell: *A Cloud of Witnesses*, Michigan 1989, p. 29. 436 John Ferguson : *Clement of Alexandria*, Twayne Publishers, NY 1974, p. 38. 437 W.H.C. Frend: *The Rise of Christianity*, Philadelphia, 1984, p.370.

Faith remained the foundation of Christianity, but the Christian advanced from faith towards knowledge, that is, an ever-deeper understanding of the Word of God, not achieved in a sudden flash of illumination, but through a life dedicated to obedience to God's will. Thus it was that the believer became "like God" enjoying a freedom from all passions that hindered the soul's ascent to perfection and deification. Few could attain this state. Clement's *Gnostic* was as much the member of a spiritual elite as the *Gnostic's* counterpart and shared the latter's ultimate aim. The differences between Clement and the Alexandrian Gnostics were, however, equally important. Clement's religion was monotheist as well as being church-oriented and he was profoundly influenced by Philo's Platonism. For him also, God was absolutely transcendent, "unity but beyond unity, transcending the monad"<sup>438</sup>, "and embracing all reality and infinitely greater than all his works. He could be known, however, through his Son, or Word (Logos), not a Demiurge or lesser creator-god, but his image, mind, and reason, inseparable from himself"<sup>439</sup>. As J.N.D. Kelly pointed out, "the Word was like the *Nous* of middle-Platonism and Neo-Platonism; the Word was at once unity and plurality, comprising in Himself, His Father's ideas and also the active forces by which He animates the world of creatures"<sup>440</sup>. He reflected God rather than contrasted with God, while the Spirit was light issuing from Him, to illuminate the faithful (through the prophets and philosophers) pervading the world and drawing humans towards God. There was no dualism in Clement's religion. For him, the Trinity consisted of a hierarchy of three graded Beings, and from that concept - derived from Platonism - depended much of the remainder of his theological teaching.

<sup>438</sup> *Paidagogos* 1:8:71. <sup>439</sup> *Stromata* 4:25:156. <sup>440</sup> *Early Christian Doctrines*, p. 127.

In addition, Clement had an optimistic view of human beings and their relation to God. The world was created by God and therefore was good. Man and woman had been made in the image of God, and had the means within themselves to progress toward God. There was no "natural evil" and no impassable categories of Spiritual Men, Psychics, and Hylics as in the *Gnostic* systems. Christ was Teacher (*paidagogos*) of humankind rather than Illuminator of the few. Understanding - itself the fruit of moral progress - was true *Gnosis*<sup>441</sup>.

St. Clement loathed the Gnostics, not least the Carpocratians, for their fatalism and libertinism<sup>442</sup>.

### **ST. CLEMENT'S VIEW OF *GNOSIS* OR "*KNOWLEDGE*"**

It is no exaggeration to praise St. Clement as the founder of speculative theology. If we compare him to St. Irenaeus of Lyons, it is evident that he represents an altogether different type of teacher. St. Irenaeus was the man of tradition, who derived his doctrine from apostolic preaching and regarded every influence from the surrounding culture and philosophy as a danger to the faith. St. Clement was the courageous and successful pioneer of a school that purposed to protect faith by making use of philosophy. Together with St. Irenaeus he fought against the false *Gnosis*. However, St. Clement did not remain merely negative against the false *gnosis*; he set up a true and Christian *Gnosis*<sup>443</sup>.

Before St. Clement, the word "*Gnostic*" was identified as a heretic, for throughout the first two centuries, some heresies appeared under the title "*Gnostics*" in various forms. They believed - that knowledge (*gnosis*) is the main way of salvation. The reaction of many church leaders (such as Tertullian) was to attack "knowledge" and "philosophy" as enemies of "faith." The

441 W.H.C. Frend: *The Rise of Christianity*, Philadelphia, 1984, p.370. 442 W.H.C. Frend: *The Rise of Christianity*, Philadelphia, 1984, p.372. 443 Esmat Gabriel: *St. Clement of Alexandria*, *Coptic Church Review*, Spring 1980, v.1, No. 1, p. 25.



School of Alexandria faced the *Gnostic* heresies, which were spread in the East, not by attacking "knowledge" (*gnosis*), but by giving a new concept of "knowledge" that helps believers even in their faith. The Alexandrian School adopted philosophy as a way that leads to faith, and looked to knowledge as a divine gift.

St. Clement of Alexandria emphasizes the following:

I. The title "*Gnostic*" does not refer to a heretic but to the orthodox Christian who attains the divine *gnosis* (knowledge) from the Holy Spirit, by illumination through Christ (the Logos) in the light of the tradition of the church. St. Clement writes, "*Here are the notes that characterize our Gnostic: first, contemplation; then the fulfillment of the precepts; finally the instruction of good men. When these qualities are encountered in a man, he is a perfect Gnostic. But if one of them is missing, then his Gnostic is crippled*"<sup>444</sup>." According to Walter Volker, while St. Clement's *gnosis* is animated by a basic concern for regulating one's life, it is above all a knowledge of the Scriptures in which everything is illuminated through Christ (the Logos), in the light of the tradition of the Church<sup>445</sup>.

II. *Gnosis* is the principle and author of every action conforming to the Logos<sup>446</sup>.

III. The *Gnostic* is called to know God (*ginoskein*) or *epignonai*<sup>447</sup>, to see God<sup>448</sup>, and to possess Him<sup>449</sup>.

. It is to the extent that the *Gnostic* attains this state that he becomes the equal of the angels<sup>450</sup>.

. The grace of *gnosis* comes from the Father through the Son<sup>451</sup>.

<sup>444</sup> Walter Volker: *Der wahre Gnostiker nach Clemens Alexandrinus*, Berlin-Leipzig, 1952, Louis Boyer: *The Spirituality of the N. T. and the Fathers*; 1960, p. 265f. <sup>445</sup> Strom. 2:10:46. <sup>446</sup> Ibid 6; 6:2. <sup>447</sup> Ibid 2: 47: 4 ; 7: 47:3. <sup>448</sup> Ibid 7: 68: 4. <sup>449</sup> Protrep 106: 3; 113:3. <sup>450</sup> Strom 7: 57: 5.

VI. Christ is the source of knowledge (*gnosis*), who grants us His knowledge through baptism, by making God known to us from the fact that the eyes of our souls are purified<sup>452</sup>.

VII. Christ gives us *gnosis* also through reading the Scriptures<sup>453</sup>.

VIII. The true *Gnostic* desires knowledge, struggles to practice goodness not in fear but in love. He is full of love towards God and men, fulfills the will of God, a man of prayer, witnessing to God daily (as a martyr), and never fears death<sup>454</sup>.

IX. Those who know (the Son) are called sons and gods<sup>455</sup>. The Logos of God was made man so that you might learn how man can become god<sup>456</sup>.



451 Ibid 5: 71: 5. 452 Paed. 1: 28: 1. 453 Stromata. 7: 103: 5. 454 See the Early Fathers of the School of Alexandria, p. 77ff. 455 Strom. 6: 16: 146. 456 Protrep. 11.

# ***THE SCHOOL OF ALEXANDRIA AND PHILOSOPHICAL ATTITUDES***

## **ALEXANDRIA AND HELLENIC CULTURE**

In Alexandria, Greek thought exercised its strongest influence on the Hebrew mind. According to Jewish tradition, the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament) was realized in Alexandria, by 72 elder Jews, by the order of Ptolemy Philadelphus (*B.C 285-246*) for his famous library. This work constitutes the beginning of Jewish-Hellenistic literature. Philo (*c. B.C 20 - c. 50 A.D*), the Jewish thinker and exegete in whom that literature flourished, also lived in Alexandria. He belonged to a prosperous priestly family of Alexandria, and was firmly convinced that the teaching of the Old Testament could be combined with Greek speculation. His philosophy of religion embodies such a synthe

sis<sup>457</sup>.

## **HELLENIC PHILOSOPHY**

To understand the relationship between the School of Alexandria and Hellenic philosophy we must view the role of the latter in the lives of well-educated men in the beginning of the Christian Church. The most important influence within the Roman empire came not from the Romans but from the Greeks. Roman power and Roman law controlled the military, political, social, and economic life of the empire; Greek thinking controlled the minds

<sup>457</sup>

Esmat Gabriel: St. Clement of Alexandria, Coptic Church Review, Spring 1980, v.1, No. 1, p. 22.

of men<sup>458</sup>. Greek philosophy tried to build a world on the meaning of life and the world to come, to affect the practical life of men in all realms: in politics, law, art, social relations, knowledge, religion, etc. Thus the Greek philosophers were not people sitting behind their desks writing philosophical books. If they had done nothing but philosophize about philosophy, we would have forgotten their names long ago<sup>459</sup>.

## THE SCHOOL OF ALEXANDRIA AND PHILOSOPHY

Many scholars believe that Hellenic philosophy, especially Platonism, had its effect on the Alexandrians, and consider some leaders of the Alexandrian Christians as Platonist or Neo-Platonist.

F. L. Cross states that beginnings of the interweaving Platonism with Christian thought go back to St. Clement of Alexandria and Origen<sup>460</sup>. Origen himself states that the use of philosophy by Christian leaders dates back to St. Pantaenus, the teacher of St. Clement. Even before St. Pantaenus, Athenagoras was a philosopher whose strong perseverance, in the School qualified him to become the dean of the theological School of Alexandria without undressing the pallium of philosophers. **Athenagoras** is considered the first known Christian who with his faith, carried a tendency towards philosophy.

Now, I give answers to the following questions:

*a. What is the view of the early Alexandrians, especially St. Clement and Origen, on Greek philosophy?*

*b. Why did the School of Alexandria use Philosophy?  
And to what extent?*

### ***a. St. Clement's view on Greek Philosophy***

In his speech on the effect of St. Clement on his disciple Origen, Joseph Wilson Trigg says,

<sup>458</sup> Harry R. Boer: A Short History of the Early Church, Michigan, 1976, p. 7.

<sup>459</sup> Paul Tillich: A History of Christian Thought, NY, 1968, p. 3.

<sup>460</sup> F. L. Cross, The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, 1990, p. 1102.

Like Clement, Origen believed that diligent study can enable us, with God's aid to pass from mere faith in the essential doctrines of Christianity to an intimate knowledge of God, and no one is more likely to have mediated this optimism to Origen than Clement. It seems likely, as well, that it was Clement who showed Origen the possibility of a reasoned defense of the ecclesiastical tradition against heretical Gnostics and fired Origen with the desire to produce the theological system he himself hoped to achieve. Clement may have been more systematic than he appears to have been, his baffling and diffuse style only a subterfuge to protect profound teaching from the vulgar and them from it, but it seems more likely that Clement's style mirrored his mind better than he would himself have cared to admit<sup>461</sup>.

The writings of St. Clement prove how steeped his thought was in the Greek classics. His works contain over 700 quotations from some 300 pagan authors, an achievement which well justifies Cayre's remark that his prodigious erudition was unsurpassed even by that of Origen<sup>462</sup>.

John Ferguson states,

At the time when Clement was growing up there were four main schools of Greek philosophy, Platonist, Aristotelian or Peripatetic, Stoic, and Epicurean; Marcus Aurelius had established chairs of these four in Athens.

Behind all four, however, lay the tradition of Ionian natural philosophy. This began with a group in Miletus somewhere about 600 B.C. Mythical elements remained in their work, but fundamentally they were asking new questions and giving a new sort of answer. They were examining the natural world, trying to reduce it to its simplest terms, to understand its structure, and the process of change by which presumably simple elements might produce the

<sup>461</sup> Joseph Wilson Trigg: Origen, SCM Press, 1985, p. 65, 66.

<sup>462</sup> F. Cayre: Manual of Patrology, Paris, 1936, p. 179.

extraordinarily varied and complex world we know. Clement perhaps knew their work only or mainly at second hand. So do we, and Clement remains one of our more important sources for these early thinkers. Their answers moved from the simple to the complex, from the isolation of a single element such as water, to a fully fledged atomic theory, though on speculative rather than on experimental grounds. In between had appeared two towering figures, Parmenides and Heraclitus<sup>463</sup>.

St. Clement's virtue is in his courage, his fearless approach into dialogue with Hellenic philosophy and culture<sup>464</sup>. He realized that his missionary task would be hopeless unless he was able to interpret Christian truth in terms which educated inquirers could accept. His aim, however, was to convert members of the community of educated Alexandrian Greeks, some of whom previously might have been attracted to a Judaism of the type represented by Philo. Just as Philo had presented Judaism as the highest form of wisdom and the means by which humankind would come to "see God," so St. Clement urged that Christianity was the end to which all current philosophy had been moving. Some scholars call him a Christian Philo<sup>465</sup>. He opens his *Exhortation to the Greeks* with a fine, challenging passage in which he compares the music of Amphion and Orpheus (which according to legend charmed the animals) with the true music of heavenly Christianity. Christianity was the new melody superior to that of Orpheus. Christ is the incarnate God, "*becoming man in order that such as you [Gentiles] may learn from man how it is even possible for man to become a god [theos].*" Elsewhere (*Stromata*), he encourages Christians to become missionaries themselves. "*The word of our Teacher did not stay in Palestine as philosophy stayed in Greece, but was poured*

<sup>463</sup> John Ferguson : Clement of Alexandria, Twayne Publishers, NY 1974, p. 31.

<sup>464</sup> Georges Florovsky: The Byzantine Fathers of the Fifth Century, vol. 8, 1987, p. 81.

<sup>465</sup> Robert J. Daly: The Origins of the Christian Doctrine of Sacrifice, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1978, p. 113.

out over all the world persuading Greeks and barbarians alike<sup>466</sup>." To be a Christian and not to try to influence one's neighbor was to be an unprofitable servant. Christians should become preachers and writers of the word<sup>467</sup>.

He sometimes affirms that the philosophers **took their best ideas from the Hebrews**<sup>468</sup>. But he also asserts that they knew truth by **a direct action of God**, in a fashion similar to that by which the Jews received the Law<sup>469</sup>.

*As many men drawing down the ship, cannot be called many causes, but one cause consisting of many; - for each individual by himself is not the cause of the ship being drawn, but along with the rest; - so also philosophy, being the search for truth, contributes to the comprehension of truth; not as being the cause of comprehension, but a cause along with other things, and cooperator; perhaps also a joint cause. And as the several virtues are causes of the happiness of one individual; and as both the sun, and the fire, and the bath, and clothing are of one getting warm: so while truth is one, many things contribute to its investigation. But its discovery is by the Son*<sup>470</sup>.

Therefore *"the same God that furnished both Covenants that of the Law and that of Philosophy was the giver of Greek philosophy to the Greeks, by which the Almighty is glorified among the Greeks"*<sup>471</sup>.

W.H.C. Frend says,

Early in the *Stromata*, he admits that there were coincidences between Christian truth and the beliefs of Greek philosophers. Even if these hit on the truth accidentally,

<sup>466</sup>

*Stromata* 6:18:167.

<sup>467</sup>

W.H.C. Frend: *The Rise of Christianity*, Philadelphia, 1984, p. 286, 370.

<sup>468</sup>

*Stromata* 1:25; 5:14.

<sup>469</sup>

Justo L. Gonzalez: *A History of Christian Faith*, vol. 1, 1979, p. 197.

<sup>470</sup>

*Stromata* 1:20 (ANF, 2: 323).

<sup>471</sup>

*Stromata* 6:5. (ANF, 2: 323).

this suggested that God had revealed Himself to them also<sup>472</sup>. His wisdom was not confined to the Hebrews. No race was deprived of the opportunity of apprehending God, and so philosophy must be God-given. It ranked "among the good things of Providence"<sup>473</sup>. Plato, plagiarist though he may have been, also prepared the way for the Greeks to accept the Christian faith. Philosophy shared with the Law "in making ready the way for him who is perfected in Christ." Its role, however essential, was still merely preparatory. Of itself it was "too weak to do God's commands." Its duty was "to prepare the way for the teaching that is royal in the highest sense of the word, by making men self controlled, by moulding character and making them ready to receive the truth"<sup>474</sup>.<sup>475</sup>

Some scholars believe that St. Clement was himself an **electic** in philosophy<sup>476</sup>, but his master St. Pantenaeus was if anything a Stoic. St. Clement tried to pick the best from Stoicism and from the Platonic system, and it looks very much as if he owed much of his Platonic borrowings to Athenagoras<sup>477</sup>.

Joseph Wilson Trigg says,  
Philosophers, beginning with Aristotle, had composed "*Exhortations*" to adopt the philosophic way of life as practiced in their schools...

Clement, by this choice of literary form, advertised Christianity as a philosophy consistent with the ideals of Hellenism. The Logos who became incarnate... spoke most clearly, he claimed, through Moses and Isaiah, but the Logos also spoke through Euripides and Plato.

<sup>472</sup>

Stromata 1:19:94:1.

<sup>473</sup>

Stromata 1:5:28.

<sup>474</sup>

Stromata 1:16:80:6.

<sup>475</sup>

W.H.C. Frend: The Rise of Christianity, Philadelphia, 1984, p.370.

<sup>476</sup>

Stromata 1:7:37:6.

<sup>477</sup>

Joseph Hugh Crehan: Athenagoras, Newman Press, 1956 (ACW, vol. 23), p. 6.



Clement knew the classics of Greek literature and the Bible equally well, and he wove them together artfully in the *Exhortation*. Thus the legendary poet Orpheus became a symbol of Jesus, whose "new song" of salvation charmed, in Clement's presentation, even "the offspring of vipers" and "sheep in wolves" clothing." "Imitate Odysseus," he said in considerably more words, "ignore the siren-song of customary pagan religious practices so that you may arrive at the safe haven of the Logos." Especially since Clement was probably himself a convert, the *Exhortation* illustrates the factors that could lead a cultivated pagan to Christianity as well as the ways a Christian could assimilate Hellenism<sup>478</sup>.

J. Quasten says,  
Thus Clement goes far beyond Justin Martyr, who speaks of the seeds of the Logos to be found in the philosophy of the Greeks. He compares it to the Old Testament in so far as it trained mankind for the coming of Christ. On the other hand, Clement is anxious to stress the fact that philosophy can never take the place of divine revelation. It can only prepare for the acceptance of the faith. Thus, in the second book, he defends faith against the philosophers.

St. Clement places himself squarely within the tradition of Justin and Athenagoras, and against the attitude of Tatian and Tertullian. Unlike them, he did not use his learning to batter down the ideals of contemporary society but used the writings of poets and philosophers constructively to build his case for Christianity. He was inclined, however, to parade his knowledge artlessly like a collector, and was ready to draw some new, Christian significance from their works<sup>479</sup>.

<sup>478</sup> Joseph Wilson Trigg, Origen, SCM Press Ltd, 1985, p. 55. <sup>479</sup>

W.H.C. Frend: The Rise of Christianity, Philadelphia, 1984, p.369.

It is worthy to note that St. Clement saw, it is true, **the great danger of a Hellenization of Christianity**, as did St. Irenaeus, and, with him, fought against the false and heretical *Gnosis*. But St. Clement's distinction is that he did not remain merely negative in his attitude but over against the false *gnosis* set up a true and Christian *gnosis*, which placed in the service of the faith the treasure of truth to be found in the various systems of philosophy<sup>480</sup>.

*The Hellenic philosophy does not, by its approach, make the truth more powerful; but by rendering powerless the assault of sophistry against it, and frustrating the treacherous plots laid against the truth, is said to be the proper fence and wall of the vineyard*<sup>481</sup>.

### **b. Origen's view on Greek Philosophy**

According to Origen, the Bible does not discourage the pursuit of philosophy<sup>482</sup>. Logic is of great utility in defending Christianity, though the greatest arguments establishing the truth of the Gospel are not natural but the supernatural guarantees of miracle, fulfilled prophecy and the miraculous expansion of the Church in face of powerful prejudice and governmental opposition<sup>483</sup>. He writes that “*philosophy and the Word of God are not always at loggerheads, neither are they always in harmony. For philosophy is neither in all things contrary to God's law nor is it in all respects consonant.*” He proceeds in this passage to list some of the points of agreement and disagreement. Many philosophers say there is one God who created the world; some have added that God both made and rules all things by his Logos. Again, in ethics and in their account of the natural world they almost all agree with us. But they disagree when they assert that matter is co-eternal

<sup>480</sup> Quasten: Patrology, vol. 2, p. 20.  
<sup>481</sup> Stromata 1:20:100.

<sup>482</sup> Contra Celsum 6:7.

<sup>483</sup> Ibid. 1:2 ; Henry Chadwick: History and Thought of the Early Church, London, 1982, p. 185.;

with God, when they deny that providence extends below the moon, when they imagine that the power of the stars determines our lives or that the world will never come to an end<sup>484</sup>.

Sometimes **Origen** praises philosophy and sciences. According to him, "*all wisdom is from God*"<sup>485</sup>, "whether it be knowledge of philosophy, of geometry, of medicine or music"<sup>486</sup>. We can use philosophy as Moses had the advantage of the advice of Jethron, his father-in-law.

He deals with many philosophical problems, such as man's free-will, the divine Providence, the relationship between God and man etc... He does not believe in a certain philosophy, but chose what is good in every theory. He states that Platonism contained truths present in the biblical account about reality.

According to Origen, knowledge inflames our love, grants us perfection of the soul, its purification, and thus attains likeness to the Son of God.

Like St. Clement, Origen attacks the Stoics for their materialism, pantheism and deterministic doctrine of world-cycles<sup>487</sup>. He distinguishes the Christian doctrine of God's providential care from the Stoic idea of God as a material immanent force<sup>488</sup>. The Stoic doctrine of natural law and of 'universal notions' of God and conscience he accepts without the least demur<sup>489</sup>.

Rowan A. Greer says,

We are left in a circle. On the one hand, Origen begins with scripture, and his careful reading of it yields the theological conclusions that comprise his views as a

<sup>484</sup>

In Gen. hom. 16:3; Cf. Principiis 1:3,1; Contra Celsum 4:8:47; Henry Chadwick: History and Thought of the Early Church, London, 1982, p. 186.

<sup>485</sup> In Num. hom 18:3.

<sup>486</sup> In Gen. hom 11:2.

<sup>487</sup> Contra Celsum 4:67-8; 5:20; De Principiis 2:3,4.

<sup>488</sup> Contra Celsum 6:71.

<sup>489</sup> Comm. on John 1:37; 8:41; Contra Celsum 3:40; 8:52; Henry Chadwick: History and Thought of the Early Church, London, 1982, p. 186..

whole. From this point of view he is certainly a Christian and, indeed, a Biblical theologian. On the other hand, Origen approaches scripture with preconceptions that are in great part determined by his philosophical training and bent of mind. At this level it is possible to charge him with simply importing Greek philosophy into his interpretation of scripture. The resulting puzzle is not easily solved...

In the first instance Origen's importance lies in bridging the gap between Christianity and the Graeco-Roman world. He was able to expound the Gospel in terms meaningful to his pagan contemporaries and perhaps more important, to Christians who retain that culture even upon conversion...

This was Origen's point of view and his conviction was that Christianity had the power to transform the old culture and make it fruitful<sup>490</sup>.

In his eleventh *homily on Exodus*, Origen says, "*If we too ever find evidence of wisdom in a pagan writer, we should not automatically reject his ideas just because of his name. The fact that the law we follow was given us by God does not entitle us to swell with pride and refuse to listen to the wise. No; as the Apostle says (I Thess. 5:21), we should 'scrutinize it all carefully, retaining only what is good'*"<sup>491</sup>.

At the same time, Origen was not like his teacher St. Clement, a philosopher who was converted to Christianity, therefore he was not in sympathy with Greek philosophy. Jaroslav Pelikan<sup>492</sup> says, "One of the most decisive differences between a theologian and a philosopher is that the former understands himself as, in Origen's classic phrase, '*a man of the church*'"<sup>493</sup>, 'a spokesman for

<sup>490</sup>

Rowan A. Greer: Origen, Introduction.

<sup>491</sup>

Jean Daniélou: Origen, NY, 1955, p. 18.

<sup>492</sup>

Jaroslav Pelikan: The Christian Tradition, vol. 1, Chicago, 1971, p. 3.

<sup>493</sup>

Hom. on Lev. 1:1; Hom. on Jos. 9:8; Hom. on Isa. 7:3.

the Christian community." The only master he ever acknowledges is the Logos speaking through the Scriptures.

Origen warns us from philosophy, for the pagans abused it by mixing their own errors with the truth, and thus it cannot teach the will of God<sup>494</sup>. He also declares that philosophy has no power to renew our nature.

He concentrated on assuring its falseness and insufficiency, because he was **afraid of the beauty of philosophical expressions** that may deceive believers. In his letter to St. Gregory Thaumaturgus he states that philosophy looks like gold which the Hebrews took from Egypt, instead of using it in establishing the Tabernacle they made the golden bull.

Origen condemns philosophy as he says, "*Do not covert the deceptive food philosophy provides, it may turn you away from the truth*"<sup>495</sup>, "it is because the pagans spoiled it by introducing their errors, that it teaches nothing of God's will"<sup>496</sup>. He indicates the errors in philosophical systems, and endeavors to preserve his disciples from them, but above all he is anxious lest they should be led astray by a strange master, who would lead them to forget Christ, or at least might lessen the exclusive fidelity which they owe to him. His ideal is St. Paul's, and he wished to say in his turn. "Who shall separate us from the Charity of Christ?" He added, "*I can say this in all confidence: neither the love of profane letters, nor the sophisms of philosophers, nor the frauds of astrologers concerning the supposed courses of the stars, nor the divination of demons, full of lies, nor any other science of the future sought by evil artifices, will be able to separate us from the Charity of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord*"<sup>497</sup>."

<sup>494</sup>

In Psalms 36:3,6.

<sup>495</sup>

In Lev. hom 10:2.

<sup>496</sup>

In Ps. hom 26:3, 6.

<sup>497</sup>

In Judic. hom 3:3: (5:5); See Lebreton, p.805-6.

His system in teaching philosophy and pagan leanings can be summarized in two points:

I. Origen used to start his teaching with "rhetoric," then some scientific knowledge such as physics, mathematics, geometry and astronomy<sup>498</sup>. This was only a preparation, followed by the study of philosophy.

II. He wished his disciples to know something about all the philosophical theories except that of Abecareans, and not to stress on one of them. St. Gregory the Wonder-maker gives an account of this system by saying<sup>499</sup>, "*In every philosophy he picked out what was true and useful and set it before us, while what was erroneous he rejected ... He advised us not to give our allegiance to any one philosopher even though he should be universally acclaimed as perfect in wisdom, but to cleave to God alone and His prophets.*"

Origen was a student of Ammonius Saccas<sup>500</sup>, who was an unorthodox eclectic Platonist... What could have persuaded Origen to follow such an orthodox Platonism? Perhaps, because Origen did not agree with the Stoics that the divine *ousia* was material, that knowledge of God and reality rested on a materialist epistemology alone, and that everything was determined by fate. Origen desired to use Platonism to refute arguments made by Gnostic and Stoic Christians concerning the relationship between deity and creation, fate, and free-will. His criticisms of Gnosis and the Stoa on first principles and creation precisely indicates at what point Origen found himself obliged to follow Ammonius, Maximus, Pantaenus, and Clement. Each viewed both Platonists and Aristo

<sup>498</sup>

Or. Paneg. 6:8. PG. 10:1072 a-c.

<sup>499</sup> Ibid. 6:14, 15. PG. 10:1902c, 1903b.

<sup>500</sup>

J.W. Trigg says, "The Platonic philosopher Ammonius Saccas (c. 175 - 242) wrote nothing, and it is notoriously difficult to reconstruct his doctrines, but he taught Origen and Plotinus, the two most influential thinkers of the third century, as well as other men eminent in their time. The historical record is confusing, but it seems that Origen could not have met Plotinus since Origen had left Alexandria permanently before Plotinus became Ammonius' student." (Joseph Wilson Trigg: Origen, SCM Press, 1985, p. 66).

telians as allies in their attempt to correct falsehoods of Gnosis and Stoicism. Maximus, Pantaenus, and Clement concurred that Hellenic Platonists possessed incomplete knowledge about first principles and the world. They argued that the Christian had the duty to complete the incomplete truths pronounced by Platonists by testing their postulates on the basis of biblical knowledge<sup>501</sup>.

**c. Why did the School of Alexandria use Philosophy? And to what extent?**

1. The School of Alexandria did not aim to separate believers, especially the leaders of the church, from contemporary cultures, as long as these cultures helped them progress in all or some aspects of life. Its interest in science and philosophy is very clear from its encyclopedic teachings. Studying philosophy and rhetoric were considered the two principal ways to a complete education at that time, and studying philosophy was less likely to offend Christians than the study of literature.

Philip Schaff<sup>502</sup> states that the Alexandrians as well-educated persons made much freer use of the Greek philosophy. For **Origen** philosophy is the jewels which the Israelites took with them from Egypt and turned into ornaments for their sanctuary, though they also wrought them into the golden calf. Philosophy is not necessarily an enemy to truth, but may and should be its handmaid, and neutralize the attacks against it.

In one of his letters, **St. Dionysius** encourages believers to read philosophical books, even the unorthodox ones. He states that God revealed Himself to him through his extensive readings, saying to him<sup>503</sup>: *“Study anything you lay your hand on; you are competent to examine and prove everything - this gift was from the start the cause of your faith.”* He accepted the vision and never

<sup>501</sup>

Berchman, p. 27ff.

<sup>502</sup>

Philip Schaff, History of the Christian Church, vol. 2, p. 353.

<sup>503</sup>

The third letter on baptism addressed to Philemon the Roman Presbyter. Eusebius: H. E. 7:7:1 3.

abandoned the desire of reading. This enabled him to carry the attack into the enemy's country.

**Origen** studied philosophy not out of love, but to preach those who had a philosophical education. He gained many students from the *Museum*. In this he initiates **St. Pantenau**s, and **St. Clement**. W. Volker<sup>504</sup>, the German theologian, states that St. Clement is nothing if not a Christian, who likes to present himself under the guise of a Platonic or Stoic philosopher in order to speak the same philosophical language as the heathens and to convert them to Christianity by showing them that a Christian is not forbidden to express himself in terms of Greek philosophy. Accordingly, the borrowing of elements of Greek philosophy has only an instrumental importance: they are purely exterior terms, covering an orthodox and genuine Christian thought, which, however, is not substantiated by them.

2. The Platonist considered the Bible as not worthy of serious consideration, because it was written in highly unliterary Greek and none of its books conformed to accepted genres<sup>505</sup>. The School of Alexandria undertook the task of reconciling the Bible to Hellenism, particularly the philosophy of Plato.

The Alexandrian leaders adopted philosophy, perhaps as a positive answer against those who criticized the Christian faith as if it prevented men from philosophical education. Celsus, in the second century says that while indeed there are some educated Christians, the majority commonly say, "Do not ask questions, only believe. Faith will save you. Wisdom is an evil thing and foolishness good<sup>506</sup>." Galen, the distinguished medical writer of this time, caustically remarks, "If I had in mind people who taught their pupils in the same way as the followers of Moses and Christ

<sup>504</sup>

<sup>505</sup> Cf. Salvatore R.C. Lilla: St. Clement of Alexandria, p. 3.

Joseph Wilson Trigg, Origen, SCM Press Ltd, 1985, p. 52.

<sup>506</sup>

Origen, Contra Celsum, 1:9. see Henry Chadwick: Alexandrian Christianity, Philadelphia, 1954, p. 18.



teach theirs - for they order them to accept everything on faith - I should not have given you a definition<sup>507</sup>."

3. The Alexandrians found in some philosophical statements great usefulness as an immunization or an antidote against the heresy of Gnosticism. The Gnostics had done what St. Paul said he was not going to do (Gal. 1:11, 12; 1 Cor. 1:17); they adorned the faith of the New Testament with "persuasive words of wisdom." St. Clement undertook to set up a new Christian philosophy in opposition to that of the Gnostics, a philosophy based at once upon what they considered the true principles of the Greek philosophers and upon the traditional beliefs of the Church<sup>508</sup>. He confronted the heretical Gnostics with Plato's belief that we must look after the needs of the body for the sake of the harmony of the soul, citing Plato *Republic*<sup>509</sup>. St. Clement also clarified that in asceticism, the genuine Gnostic does not neglect the body's legitimate needs since he considers the body a part of God's good creation.

**Origen** aimed to refute the first principles of Christian Gnosticism and Stoicism. Joseph Wilson Trigg concluded that, in Origen's view, Plato and the Bible were in profound agreement in rejecting the Gnostics, but there was far more to their compatibility than simply agreement on the goodness of the world and its Creator:

The Christianity of Origen's time, even as it rejected the Gnostics' hatred of the world, taught its followers to despise the fundamental cravings for comfort, sex, and the continuation of life itself that tie us to the world. Plato's dictum that we should take flight from this world to become like the divine, so far as we can, found its echo in Paul's "Set your mind on things that are above, not on

<sup>507</sup>

See R. Walzer: Galen on Jews and Christians, 1949, p. 48-56; see Henry Chadwick: Alexandrian Christianity, Philadelphia, 1954, p. 18.

<sup>508</sup> Harry Austryn Wolfson: The Philosophy of the Church Fathers, Harvard University Press, 1976, p. 14.

<sup>509</sup> Stromata 4:5:18.

things that are on earth" (Col. 3:2). If Plato complained that the body was a prison house in which the soul was tightly bound like an oyster in its shell, Paul asked who would deliver him from this body of death (Rom. 7:24).

Ammonius may have made a particular point of the incompatibility between Plato and the Gnostics. Certainly no one more fully agreed with Origen in this regard than Plotinus. Plotinus unambiguously affirmed the goodness of the created order while being aware of its limitations<sup>510</sup>.

1. Alexandria, with its scientific tradition and the interest generally shown by its educated upper classes in religious and philosophical questions, was to prove the most favorable soil for the development of a Christian theology utilizing a learned intellectual basis<sup>511</sup>.
2. The Alexandrians adopted philosophy, perhaps because they acknowledged that some well-educated people who accepted philosophy were free of pagan mythology and despised pagan worship. Plotinus' reply to a student who invited him to a festival is famous, "It is for these beings to come to me, not for me to go to them"<sup>512</sup>.
3. The Alexandrians adopted some philosophers, such as Plato to their Christian needs. They used some philosophical terms, statements and ideas which are in harmony with the biblical concepts, but they did not depend on their philosophical basis and concepts. They almost use philosophical language to express their faith and Christian doctrines and concepts, without deviating from the Christian truth.

Philip Schaff says, The Platonic philosophy offered many points of resemblance to Christianity. It is spiritual and idealistic,

<sup>510</sup> Joseph Wilson Trigg: Origen, SCM Press, 1985, p. 72.

<sup>511</sup> Karl Baus: From Apostolic Community to Constantine, NY, 1965, p. 210.

<sup>512</sup> Joseph Wilson Trigg: Origen, SCM Press, 1985, p. 66.

maintaining the supremacy of the spirit over matter, of eternal ideas over all temporary phenomena, and the preexistence and immortality of the soul; it is theistic, making the supreme God above all the secondary deities, the beginning, middle, and end of all things; it is ethical, looking towards present and future rewards and punishments; it is religious, basing ethics, politics, and physics upon the authority of the Lawgiver and Ruler of the universe; it leads thus to the very threshold of the revelation of God in Christ, though it knows not this blessed name nor his saving grace, and obscures its glimpses of truth by serious errors. Upon the whole the influence of Platonism, especially as represented in the moral essays of Plutarch, has been and is to this day elevating, stimulating, and healthy, calling the mind away from the vanities of earth to the contemplation of eternal truth, beauty, and goodness<sup>513</sup> .

For example, Salvatore R.C. Lilla<sup>514</sup> states that many modern theologians believe that **St. Clement of Alexandria**, as the first Christian philosopher and writer, was not a Platonic, a Stoic or an Aristotelian, but an eclectic. He believes that Christianity is perfect in itself, needs no help from profane culture; it can only deign to borrow a few elements or terms from the philosophical systems which are not so removed from the truth it represents, provided that this does not contaminate its purity and causes no prejudice to its originality. St. Clement appears, in this way, as a wise Christian philosopher who, being already enlightened by the truth of his own religion, is able to judge what is right and what is wrong in the heathen philosophy, and deems it worthy to borrow from it elements which are not in disagreement with his religious principles.

St. Gregory the Wonder-worker tells us how **Origen** took his disciples through all the different systems of Greek philosophy,

<sup>513</sup>

<sup>514</sup> Schaff: History of the Christian Church, vol. 2, p. 725.

Clement of Alexandria, p. 2f.

omitting nothing and advising them not to devote themselves exclusively to any master, even if they found one universally regarded as perfect in wisdom, but to "cleave to God alone and his prophets"<sup>515</sup>. This is the view of the Alexandrians who were not Platonists nor Neo-Platonists but they were theologians and churchmen, even when they were in sympathy with Greek philosophy, especially Platonism.

Here we give some examples of how Christianity used the Hellenic culture in a biblical way:

a. The **Platonic dual world**: Some scholars see the Alexandrian eschatological attitude as an effect of the Platonic dual world: the world of senses and that of "*Ideas*." Plato spoke of essential reality, of "ideas" (*ousia*) as the true essences of things. At the same time we find in Plato, and even stronger in later Platonism and Neo-Platonism, a trend toward the devaluation of existence. The material world has no ultimate value in comparison with the essential world<sup>516</sup>. The Alexandrians concentrated on the world to come, or heavenly life, and looked to the present life as a temporary one. St. Clement states<sup>517</sup> that the earthly Church is a copy of the heavenly one, that is why we say that God's will may be accomplished on earth as it is in heaven. He also wrote, "*If you enroll yourself as one of God's people, heaven is your country, God your legislation*"<sup>518</sup>. It is not a Platonic view but a biblical one. The Old Testament concentrates on God's blessing in this world, for believers at that time were like children, in their dealing with the heavenly God and eternal life. The heavenly Logos came to raise up our hearts to *heaven*, asking us to start our prayer by addressing it to our *heavenly* Father. He directed our sight to the *heavenly* kingdom which He establishes within us, as a pledge of eternal life, at the same time He presents Himself as the "Resurrec

<sup>515</sup> Or Pang. 14 PG 10:1093A; cf. J. Daniélou: Origen, NY 1955, p. 73.

<sup>516</sup> Paul Tillich: A History of Christian Thought, NY, 1968, p.6.

<sup>517</sup> Stromata 4:8:66.

<sup>518</sup> Ibid. 6:14.

tion," and "Eternal Life." St. Paul considered himself an ambassador of the *heavenly* Christ for he acknowledged that Christ raised him as from the dead, and granted him to sit with Him in *heaven* (Eph. 2:6).

It is also not a Platonic view but a biblical one when St. Clement exalts martyrdom as the culmination of Christian perfection<sup>519</sup>, transforming a way of death into a way of life. We depend on the words of our Lord, "He who loses his life for my sake will find it" (Matt. 10:39). St. Clement explained that we may lose our life when we expose it to physical danger, but overcoming daily the soul's habitual attraction to immoderate pleasures is also a "practice of death."

Nevertheless, there are certain points where Origen has substantial disagreements (with Platonism). He rejects the doctrine of the *Timaeus* that the Creator God made souls but delegated the making of bodies to inferior powers<sup>520</sup>. He will not admit that the cosmos is divine or that the stars are gods (though he believes the stars probably have souls)<sup>521</sup>. He unambiguously teaches creation *ex nihilo*: creation is not out of relative but out of absolute non-being. "*I cannot understand how so many eminent men have imagined matter to be uncreated.*" Origen also rejects the view that this material world will never come to an end. Plato's doctrine that, although the cosmos is created and so is in principle corruptible, yet by God's will it will never in fact be destroyed. This holds good in Origen's view not of the sensible world, but of the higher world, the heavenly realm of ideas lest anyone suppose that it exists only in our minds as a metaphysical hypothesis<sup>522</sup>.

Paul Tillich states, "Also in Plato the *inner aim of human existence* is described - somewhere in the *Philebus*, but also

<sup>519</sup>

Stromata 2:20:108-9.

<sup>520</sup>

Contra Celsum 4:54.

<sup>521</sup>

Contra Celsum 5:6-13.

<sup>522</sup>

De Principiis 2:3:6; Henry Chadwick: History and Thought of the Early Church, London, 1982, p. 189-90.

practically everywhere in Plato - as becoming similar to God as much as possible. God is the spiritual sphere. The inner *telos* of human existence is participation in the spiritual, divine sphere as much as possible...<sup>523</sup>" Again it is a biblical trend to discover the kingdom of God within us (Luke 17: 21), and to participate in the divine nature as St. Peter tells us (2 Peter 1:4). The Alexandrians' view of man's deification is based on the Old and New Testaments. St. Clement says, "*The Word of God became Man (John 1:14) just that you may learn from a man how it may be that man should become god*"<sup>524</sup>," and "*It is possible for the Gnostic already to have become god, 'I said, you are gods, and sons of the Highest' (Ps. 132:6)*"<sup>525</sup>". I will speak in more detail of the Alexandrian *deification* as a divine grace in the next chapter.

. It has been said, "When the church Fathers 'think' their **mysticism**, they Platonize"<sup>526</sup>. Christian mysticism has a biblical basis, as our Lord directs our sight towards our inner man (Luke 17:12) to discover His kingdom there. The Alexandrians always strongly emphasized that biblical mysticism is closely related to **the work of the Holy Spirit**, especially the illumination, purification and perfection of the believers' souls. St. Anthony the Great, as the father of the monastic family, was the first saint called "the bearer of the Spirit" (*pneumataphoras*)<sup>527</sup>. St. Athanasius says, "We need the Spirit's grace in our sanctification"<sup>528</sup>.

. Paul Tillich views **providence** as the fourth point in which the Platonic tradition was important:

In the late ancient world the anxiety of accident and necessity, or fate, as we would call it today, represented by the Greek goddesses *Tyche* and *Haimarmene*, was a very

<sup>523</sup>

<sup>524</sup> Paul Tillich: A History of Christian Thought, NY, 1968, p.6.

<sup>525</sup> Protrepticus 1:8:4.

<sup>526</sup> Stromata 4:22, 23.

<sup>527</sup> Joseph Wilson Trigg: Origen, SCM Press, 1985, p. 67.

<sup>528</sup> Apophthegmata Patrum, 1960, Anthony the Great.

<sup>529</sup> Contra Arians 1:50.

powerful thing. In Romans 8, where we have the greatest hymn of triumph in the New Testament, we hear that it is the function of Christ to overcome the demonic forces of fate. The fact that Plato anticipated this situation by his doctrine of providence is one of his greatest contributions. This providence, coming from the highest god, gives us the courage to escape the vicissitudes of fate<sup>529</sup>.

J.W. Trigg adds, "Another area where Origen found Platonism and Christianity singularly compatible was in their simultaneous insistence on *the activity of divine providence and human freedom and moral responsibility*<sup>530</sup>."

It was impossible for the Alexandrians to ignore the "divine Providence" for two reasons: it was an essential Biblical teaching, and it was one of the chief subjects of discussion among philosophers at that time. Jean Daniélou states "The major characteristic of philosophical speculation in the second century was that it was all directed to the problem of the relationship between God and man", i.e. to the problem of Providence philosophers. They were divided into two groups: the atheists - Epicureans and Aristotelians - denied Providence or limited its scope; the others - Stoics, Platonists and Pythagoreans - defended it, each in a slightly different way. The problem of Providence was a topic that philosophers were mostly interested in the second and third centuries<sup>531</sup>.

According to St. Paul "in everything God works for good with those who love him, who are called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28), and according to Plato "all things that come from the gods work together for the best for him that is dear to the gods"<sup>532</sup>. Here I repeat what I have written as an introduction to my book, *The Divine Providence*<sup>533</sup>.

<sup>529</sup>

Paul Tillich: A History of Christian Thought, NY, 1968, p.6.

<sup>530</sup> Joseph Wilson Trigg: Origen, SCM Press, 1985, p. 72.

<sup>531</sup> J. Daniélou, p. 74.

<sup>532</sup> Plato Republic 10:612 e-613 a.

<sup>533</sup> The Divine Providence, 1990, p. 3.

Many of the ancient philosophers, such as Philo, Cicero, Seneca, Epictetus, Marcus Aurelius and others, contemplated the universe, its mighty laws, its capabilities, its beauty etc. They believed in God's providence as a fact, but frequently, they limited it to the creation of the universe with its laws; believing that God left the universe after its creation, and the control of its laws. The Alexandrian Fathers looked upon philosophy as a divine gift that partially revealed the truth but not with a full view. They believed in God's providence in its biblical sense; namely it embraced all creation in general and man in particular. It surpassed time and space, for it was concerned with man even before his creation, i.e., before the time when he was in the Divine Mind, and it still takes care of him on earth and will continue acting into eternal life, or in the world to come. Divine Providence cares for believers, unbelievers and irrational creatures. This is revealed through God's tender mercies, kindness and chastening; through the pleasant events, and through the evil (sorrowful) ones.

f. Paul Tillich sees the fifth element that was added to the Platonic tradition as coming from Aristotle:

The divine is a form without matter, perfect in itself. This is the profoundest idea in Aristotle. This highest form, called "God," is moving the world, not causally by pushing it from the outside, **but by driving everything finite toward him by means of love...** He said that God,...moves everything by being loved by everything. Everything has the desire to unite itself with the highest form, to get rid of the lower forms in which it lives, where it is in the bondage of matter<sup>534</sup>.

Christianity offers The Incarnate Logos, who manifests Himself as true love. He loved us firstly, and grants us Himself as the source of love.

534

Paul Tillich: A History of Christian Thought, NY, 1968, p. 7.



g. For the Stoics, *logos* means man's ability to recognize reality; we could call it "theoretical reason." It is man's ability to reason. **Because man has the logos in himself, he can discover it in nature and history.** From this it follows for Stoicism that the man who is determined by the natural law, the Logos, is the *logikos*, the wise Man. Originally the Stoics were Greeks; later they were Romans. Some of the most famous Stoics were Roman emperors, for example, Marcus Aurelius. They conceived of the idea of a state embracing the whole world, based on the common rationality of everybody. Some see that this was something which Christianity could take up and develop. There is a difference, however because the Stoics did not have the concept of sin. They had the concept of foolishness, but not sin. Therefore, salvation in Stoicism is a salvation through reaching wisdom. In Christianity salvation is brought about by divine grace. These two approaches are in conflict with each other to the present day<sup>535</sup>.

h. Some scholars believe that the **allegorical interpretation** of the Holy Scriptures, which the Alexandrians adopted, is one of the principal effects of the Hellenic culture on some Jews and Christians, especially, Philo of Alexandria, and the early Alexandrian Fathers.

Joseph Wilson Trigg says,

According to Clement, the biblical authors, inspired by the Holy Spirit, used allegory for much the same purpose he had set himself in the composition of the *Stromateis*: allegory keeps simple Christians from doctrines they are not mature enough to handle and piques the curiosity of the more intelligent and spiritually advanced. Finding the deeper meaning is thus the process by which God gradually, by means of parable and metaphor, leads those to whom God would reveal himself from the sensible to the intelligible world. *In this way the genuine Gnostic, pondering the obscurer passages of the Bible, takes flight from*

*this world to the other and becomes like God. Such an understanding of the Bible and how it is interpreted easily enabled Clement to reconcile it to Platonism.... Frequently he borrowed, without necessarily acknowledging them, the Platonizing interpretations of Philo*<sup>536</sup>.

In fact the Alexandrian Fathers used the allegorical interpretation and were affected by Philo, but they added to him or corrected him, using a Christian basis.

. Athenagoras' technique in developing argument is manifestly Platonic: there is the analogy from agriculture and the manual arts besought to suggest lines of thought; the derivation game is played in the manner of the *Cratylus*. It does not mean that he was Platonic. His firm rejection of the transmigration of souls is proof enough of that<sup>537</sup>.

. Paul Tillich believes that Greek philosophy and Christianity do agree in revealing **the need of a savior**:

What was said about the character of the founders of these philosophical schools was very similar to what the Christians also said about the founder of their church. It is interesting that a man like Epicurus - who later was so much attacked by the Christians that only some of his fragments remain - was called *soter* by his pupils. This is the Greek word which the New Testament uses and which we translate as "savior." Epicurus the philosopher was called a savior. What does this mean? He is usually regarded as a man who always had a good time in his beautiful gardens and who taught an anti-Christian hedonistic philosophy. The ancient world thought quite differently about Epicurus. He was called *soter* because he did the greatest thing anyone could do for his followers - he liberated them from anxiety. Epicurus, with his materialistic system of atoms, liberated them from the fear of demons which permeated the

<sup>536</sup>

Joseph Wilson Trigg: Origen, SCM Press, 1985, p. 61.

<sup>537</sup>

J.H. Crehan: Athenagoras (ACW), vol. 23, 1956, p. 15..

whole life of the ancient world. This shows what a serious thing philosophy was at that time<sup>538</sup> .

I think there is no need to explain that there is no link between the Stoics' concept of the savior and that of Christians, the only possible link is that all human beings feel in need of a Savior.

Christians recognize that the Savior can't be other than God Himself or the Word of God, of whom the prophets foretold for many centuries before His coming, who alone is the divine Teacher and the Creator who grants us new life. He renews our nature, joins us with Himself, accomplishes the divine sentence of death against us by sacrificing Himself on our behalf as a Priest and Victim at the same time, conquers death and grants us the risen life, conquers our enemy Satan, raises us up to heaven, and grants us divine knowledge<sup>539</sup> .

**St. Clement** explains in his writings,

*The Word... has appeared as our Teacher, He by whom the universe was created. The Word who in the beginning gave us life when He fashioned us as Creator, has taught us the good life as our Teacher, that He may afterwards, as God, provide us with eternal life. Not that He now has for the first time pitied us for our wandering; He pitied us from old, from the beginning,. But now, when we were perishing, He has appeared and has saved us*<sup>540</sup> .

k. Paul Tillich also sees that Greek philosophy and Christianity agree in revealing **the need for wisdom**, as he says, "Another consequence of this skeptical mood was what the Stoics called *apatheia* (apathy), which means being without feelings toward the vital drives of life such as desires, joys, pains, and instead being beyond all these in the state of wisdom<sup>541</sup> ." The Alexandri

<sup>538</sup>

Paul Tillich: A History of Christian Thought, NY, 1968, p 5.

<sup>539</sup>

For more details see our book: Man & Redemption, Alexandria, 1991, p. 14-23.

<sup>540</sup>

Protrept. 1:7.

<sup>541</sup>

Ibid.

ans in a biblical concept reveal the divine Logos Himself as the Wisdom, who offers Himself to His believers that they may receive Him.

. Some scholars see that St. Clement and Origen distinguish between simple believers who accept the Christian faith on authority and the tiny elite group of spiritual Christians who seek to know the deep things of God. For Plato, the intellectual elite is the spiritual elite because the intellect is the faculty of the soul which alone can attain to the vision of true being<sup>542</sup>.

. David N. Bell<sup>543</sup> says, "Just as Platonism laid great stress on the spiritual side of things, so too, the Christian Platonists of Alexandria were far happier when dealing with the spiritual world than with the material one. Thus, they *tended to stress the divinity of Christ at the expense of His humanity...*"

To clarify the Alexandrian view on this matter we notice the following points:

I. The Alexandrians faced two serious attitudes: the Gnostic and the Arian. The former denies the body of Christ and the latter denies His divinity. In facing the Gnostics, the Alexandrians emphasized the true Body of Christ. For example, St. Athanasius, in his letter to Adelphius, states:

*Let them learn from your piety that this error of theirs belongs to Valentinus and Marcion, and to Manichaeus, of whom some substituted (the idea of) Appearance for Reality, while the others, dividing what is indivisible, denied the truth that "the Word was made Flesh, and dwelt among us" John 1:14. . . .*

*We do not worship a creature. Forbid the thought. For such an error belongs to heathens and Arians. But we worship the Lord of creation, Incarnate, the Word of God. For the flesh also is in itself a part of the created world,*

<sup>542</sup>

Plato: Phaedrus 247c; Joseph Wilson Trigg: Origen, SCM Press, 1985, p. 74.

<sup>543</sup>

A Cloud of Witnesses: Michigan 1989, p. 44.

*yet it has become God's body. And we neither divide the body, being such, from the Word, and worship it by itself, nor when we wish to worship the Word do we set Him far apart from the Flesh, but knowing, as we said above, that "the Word was made flesh", we recognize Him as God also, after having come in the flesh. Who, accordingly, is so senseless as to say to the Lord: "Leave the Body that I may worship You"....?*

*But the leper was not one of this sort, for he worshipped God in the Body, and recognized that He was God, saying: "Lord, if You will, You can make me clean" (Matt. 8:2). Neither by reason of the flesh did he think the Word of God a creature; nor because the Word was the maker of all creation did he despise the Flesh which He had put on. But he worshipped the Creator of the universe as dwelling in a created temple, and was cleansed. So also the woman with an issue of blood, who believed, and only touched the hem of His garment, was healed (Matt. 9:20), and the sea with its foaming waves heard the incarnate Word, and ceased its storm (Matt. 8:26)...These things then happened, and no one doubted, as the Arians now venture to doubt, whether one is to believe the incarnate Word...*

In facing the Arians, the Alexandrians emphasize the divinity of Christ. They were more interested in writing on Christ's divinity, perhaps because the Gnostics who truly had a huge number of Apocryphal books, but these were aimed at those who had philosophical attitudes, while the Arians used popular songs and preaching to gain the multitude.

II. The Alexandrians stress the divinity of Christ, but not on the expense of His humanity, because they believe that when we belittle our Savior, we belittle His gifts and grace to us.

III. In our traditional liturgical prayers, we usually confirm Christ's complete humanity, saying: "He was incarnate and became man."

IV. St. Athanasius writes a book on the "incarnation of the Word." His purpose is to confirm Christ's divinity without ignoring His humanity. He says:

*If then He wept and was troubled, but it was proper to the flesh, and if too He besought that the cut might pass away, it was not the Godhead that was in terror, but this affection too was proper to the manhood.*

*He knows (the day and hour), but as showing His manhood, in that to be ignorant (Mark 13:32) is proper to man, and that He had put on flesh that was ignorant, being in which He said according to the flesh: "I know not."*

m. Salvatore R. C. Lilla, in his book: "Clement of Alexandria," starts Chapter 2 on "Ethics," saying, "Some scholars both of the last and of the present century have studied Clement's views, and have attempted either to give a general sketch of them or to stress their dependence on Stoicism, or to point out their Christian character which according to them, remains uncorrupted even if the language used is sometimes borrowed from Greek philosophy." Then he deals with the problem of the relations between Clement's ethical doctrines and those of Philo, of middle Platonism, and of Neo-Platonism.

St. Clement tells us three definitions of happiness according to Speusippus<sup>544</sup>:

I. A state of perfection in things natural (this definition anticipates largely the Stoic definition: "living in according with Nature".

II. A freedom from disturbance (Aochlesia).

III. A result of the Virtues.

Here, St. Clement accepts the Stoic and Platonic doctrines but in a biblical concept, for to him, Christ, the Educator and Lo

<sup>544</sup>

Speusippus (B.C. 407-339), the son of Plato's sister Potone, succeeded him as head of the Academy and presided over it until his death in B.C. 339 (cf. John Dillon: The Middle Platonists, NY 1977, p. 18).

gos, is the ruler both of nature and of human morals<sup>545</sup>. He grants us the freedom from inner disturbance and the only source of virtues and goodness.



<sup>545</sup> Lilla, p. 64.

**THE DEANS  
*OF THE*  
SCHOOL OF ALEXANDRIA**

**1**

***BEFORE*  
ATHENAGORAS**

A quick glimpse of the names which headed the Christian School of Alexandria provides self-evidence of the history of the school and its rank among similar institutions. Among these are Athenagoras, Pantaenus, Clement, Origen, Heraclas, Alexander, Dionysius, Theognostes, Peter, Macarius, Didymus the Blind, as well as Athanasius the Apostolic, Cyril of Alexandria, Dioscorus etc.



# ***YOSTIUS, EUMENIUS AND MARCIANIUS***

The western historians do not mention Yostius, Eumenius, and Marcianus, the first three deans of the School of Alexandria, for the following reasons:

1. Since the pastoral care of the Fathers kept them quite busy, especially with non-Christians, they either had little opportunity to write or their writings were lost.
2. The learned philosopher Athenagoras influenced the School greatly due to his philosophical ability; which brightened his star over his predecessors. Hence the beginning of the School was related to him, especially that his writings were universally interchanged from the first century even though his name as a writer was not mentioned as we shall see. Many historians believe Athenagoras was the first principal of the School.



## **1. YOSTIUS**

St. Jerome<sup>1</sup> mentions that St. Mark the Apostle and Evangelist is the founder of the Christian School of Alexandria. Further more Coptic references mention that the Apostle, in his last days, appointed Yostius as the new dean of the School. The new dean was the contemporary of four Patriarchs who succeeded St. Mark, until he was ordained Patriarch for Alexandria in the year 121 A.D.

Pope Anianus, who was ordained by St. Mark himself, took care of the School, and all who joined it renounced the world to devote their lives to the worship and service of God, living in

<sup>1</sup> *De Viris Illustribus*, 36.

true love and spiritual peace; there was no rich nor poor among them, for the rich gave their money to the poor, to be rich in God. They ate once a day at sunset, both men and women alike in this respect<sup>2</sup>.

We can say that the two most important characteristics of the School were the combination of study with spiritual life, such as prayer, fasting and almsgiving. It was open and men and women were co-admitted to the School.



## 2. EUMENIUS

One of the righteous men of Alexandria, who succeeded Yostius in the leadership of the School and Patriarchate is Eumenius.

Though we know nothing about his speeches or writings, he was known as pure and chaste, famous for ordaining a large number of priests for preaching. He sent them in all directions of the Egyptian country, Nuba, and the Five Western Cities in North Africa to spread the Christian faith<sup>3</sup>. In his time the Adrian persecution of Christians increased, and many Copts were martyred, such as St. Sophia from Manf, whose body was transferred by Emperor Constantine to Constantinople, and who built a church in her name “Agia Sophia.”

Eumenius took care of his people as an Archbishop for twelve years and three months during the reigns of Emperors Hadrian and Antoninus Pius. He was laid to rest on 10 Babah near the remains of St. Mark in the Church of Buclais in Alexandria.

<sup>2</sup> Fr. Menassa Al-Komos: *The History of the Coptic Church*, 1924, p. 21 (in Arabic).

<sup>3</sup> Selim Soliman: *The History of the Coptic Nation*, 1914, p. 356 (in Arabic).

### **3. MARCIANIUS**

Born in Alexandria, Marcianus was appointed dean of the School, and in 144 A.D he was ordained Patriarch. He persevered at a time when the persecution by Caesar Antony was severely stirred. Marcianus took care of his people as an Archbishop for ten years and two months during the reign of Emperor Antoninus Pius. He was laid to rest on 6 Toba 154 A.D, near the remains of St. Mark in the Church of Buclais in Alexandria.



**THE DEANS  
*OF THE*  
SCHOOL OF ALEXANDRIA**

**2**

**ATHENAGORAS**  
***(The Apologist)***

# ***THE EARLY APOLOGISTS***

## **THE FIRST APOLOGIES**

As Christianity gradually separated from Judaism and came to feel its own character as a new faith, competing with various ethnic, philosophic, and mysterious religions in the Roman world and facing objections and persecution, it began to be conscious of itself and its responsibility to give answers to the criticisms and attacks that were made against it. Moreover, educated men and scholars were converted to Christianity in great numbers. They found that truth compelled them quite naturally to enter in discussion with pagan philosophers<sup>1</sup>. This was the beginning of the Christian apologetic literature that soon took shape in a series of apologies and dialogues in defense of the new religion<sup>2</sup>.

Christianity and Christians were attacked by the pagan philosophers, the Jews and sometimes by the emperors. In the second century, pagan philosophers began to attack Christianity. Only some of their writings are known<sup>3</sup>:

1. The speech of the famous rhetor Fronto of Cirta, the teacher of Marcus Aurelius, against the Christians<sup>4</sup>.
2. In a satire *De morte Peregrini* (c. 170) Lucian of Samosata, who had been a member of the Christian community for some time<sup>5</sup>, mocks the Christians for their love of the brethren and their contempt of death<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> B. Altaner: *Patrology*, NY, p. 114. <sup>2</sup> Edgar J. Goodspeed: *A History of Early Christian Literature*, 1966, p. 93. <sup>3</sup> Altaner: *Patrology*, p. 115. <sup>4</sup> Min. Fel., Oct. 9,6; 31,2. <sup>5</sup> Chs. 11-16. <sup>6</sup> Chs 12f.

3. The attack of the Platonist Celsus (c. 178), preserved for the greater part in Origen's work against him.

The tradition of hostility against the Christians on the part of the philosophers was continued in the later centuries, especially among the neo-Platonists, e.g. Prophyry, Hierocles and Emperor Julian.

J.H. Crehan starts his introduction to Athenagoras, saying, When the emperor Domitian sent for the surviving 'brethren of the Lord' from Palestine, and having examined them about their descent from David dismissed them in peace, the age of the Apologies may be said to have begun. To all Christians it had been made clear that if they could gain access to the emperor, even to the most erratic and cruel of emperors, and state their case to him, there would be a very good chance of justice being done to them. From this episode and from the wider activities of the emperor Hadrian, who traveled much in the eastern part of his empire, the Christians gathered courage to come forward with answers to the odious calumnies of... cannibalism, of incest and atheism, which a pagan, sometimes interested and sometimes uncomprehending, leveled against them.<sup>7</sup>

Some scholars state that the apologists began by presenting petitions to Hadrian on his visit to Athens in 124 A.D. After the martyrdom of St. Polycarp of Smyrna, St. Justin wrote to Antoninus Pius around 156 A.D. Three more addressed Marcus Aurelius in 176 A.D, after the suppression of a revolt. This appeal failed with the bloody martyrdom in Gaul, and Tatian delivered a violent counterattack addressed not to the emperors but to Greeks in general. A few years later St. Theophilus, bishop of Antioch, created an apologetic Jewish-Christian theology which was soon modified by better theologians. Petitions to the emperors had ceased and apologists wrote for non-Christian groups or individuals in order to tell outsiders about Christian truth.

<sup>7</sup> Joseph Hugh Crehan: *Athenagoras*, Newman Press, 1956 (ACW, vol. 23), p 3

The defense of Christianity was not only undertaken by clergy men but also by laymen. It was not part of the official preaching of the Church.

Those writers were contemporaries of the Gnostics but took a very different path. Instead of esoteric spiritualism the apologists confidently used philosophical reason, and though they attacked philosophers they used their language whenever they could. They thus created the basic method of traditional Christian theology<sup>8</sup>.

As Leslie W. Barnard says,

The Apologists did not hesitate to use technical philosophic terms which were the current stock-in-trade of educated pagans. It is however; an error to believe that in doing this they so hellenized Christianity as to dilute central doctrines. They were first and foremost churchmen and

***their object was to christianize Hellenism, not to hellenize Christianity...*** We should not, therefore, expect in their writings a full exposition of the Christian Faith such as would be given to Christians. Their purpose was apologetic and we cannot therefore reconstruct from their writings, with the possible exception of Justin Martyr, a systematic statement of their beliefs<sup>9</sup>.

Quite apart from the apologetic writings' effect on the pagans to whom it might, or might not, be delivered, it had the effect of supplying less educated and less experienced Christians with arguments to use when they were exposed to persecution. Thus one finds that the work of Athenagoras carries arguments and turns of phrase which appear again in the *Acts* of the martyr Appolonius who was put to death in Rome by Commodus in 185 A.D.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Robert M. Grant: *Greek Apologists of the Second Century*, Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1988, p. 11. <sup>9</sup> Leslie W. Barnard: *Athenagoras*, Paris, 1972, p.11. <sup>10</sup> Joseph Hugh Crehan: *Athenagoras*, Newman Press, 1956 (ACW, vol. 23), p 3.

The Apologists set before themselves three objectives<sup>11</sup> :

1. They challenged the widely current calumnies and were at particular pains to answer the charge that the Church was a peril to the State.
2. They exposed the immoralities of paganism and the myths of its divinities, at the same time demonstrating that the Christian alone has a correct understanding of God and the universe. Hence they defended the dogmas concerned with the unity of God, monotheism, the divinity of Christ and the resurrection of the body.
3. Not content with merely answering the arguments of the philosophers, they went on to show that this very philosophy, because it had only human reason to rely upon, had either never attained truth, or that the truth it had attained was but fragmentary and mingled with numerous errors. Christianity offers the absolute truth, since the Logos, the Divine Reason Himself, comes down upon earth, and Christianity is the divine Philosophy. Their method was to exhibit Christianity to emperors and to the public as politically harmless and morally and culturally superior to paganism.

## THE APOLOGISTS

This name was especially given to Christian writers who first addressed themselves to the task of making a reasoned defense and recommendation of their faith to outsiders. They belonged to the period when Christianity appeared first in converts among the educated classes, and was also in conflict with the State over its very right to exist. Their object was to gain a fair hearing for Christianity, to dispel popular slanders and misunderstandings, and to provide for this purpose some account of Christian belief and practice. They had to meet **pagan philosophy** and the general outlook which it influenced, specifically **Jewish objectors**. They

<sup>11</sup> *Johannes Quasten: Patrology, vol. 1, 1992, p. 186-7.*



devoted much attention to the application of Old Testament prophecy toward Christianity, and to the position of the divinity of Christ in relation to monotheism, and especially in connection with the latter doctrine elaborating the teaching on the Logos and winning its permanent place in Christian theology.

Except for Tertullian, they were not primarily theologians, at the same time they laid the foundation of the science of God. We find in their works the beginnings of a formal study of theological doctrine, since they neither aimed at scientific organization nor attempted to bring the whole body of revelation within their scope.<sup>12</sup>

## 1. THE AUTHOR OF THE PREACHING OF PETER

The *Preaching of Peter* is written in St. Peter's name, probably from the reign of Hadrian<sup>13</sup>. It is chiefly significant as the first of the Christian apologies. This book itself has long since disappeared but **St. Clement of Alexandria** uses quotations of the Apostle<sup>14</sup>. **Origen** who had some substantial information about it, raises the question whether it is genuine or not genuine or mixed between genuine and not<sup>15</sup>.

It combines philosophical discussion of attributes with a biblical emphasis on God as the Creator. It explains that God cannot be worshipped in the manner of the Greeks, nor in that of the Jews. Its criticism of Judaism is close to what Aristides provides. The Jewish prophets wrote about the coming of Christ and His crucifixion.

<sup>12</sup> Johannes Quasten: *Patrology*, vol. 1, 1992, p. 187. <sup>13</sup> Robert M. Grant: *Greek Apologists of the Second Century*, Westminster, Philadelphia, 1988, p. 39. <sup>14</sup> *Stromata* 6:39-41, 43, 48, 58, 125. <sup>15</sup> *Commentary on John* 13:17.

## 2. QUADRATUS

Quadratus is the oldest apologist of Christianity. We are indebted to Eusebius for all we know of him. Edgar J. Goodspeed says, “It was natural that intelligent Christians should undertake to repel these attacks (against Christianity) and defend themselves against the hostility of the empire. A beginning in this direction was made in Egypt, very early in the second century, in the *Preaching of Peter*. But a more formal appeal to the emperor himself was soon after written by a Greek named Quadratus and presented to the emperor Hadrian perhaps at Athens when Hadrian visited that city in 125 A.D or later in 129 A.D<sup>16</sup> .”

## 3. ARISTIDES<sup>17</sup> (2nd cent.)

The writing of apologies for Christianity came into being by the figure of the Christian philosopher and Apologist Aristides. Until recent times our only knowledge of him came from brief references in Eusebius and St. Jerome. In 1878 a part of his ‘*Apology*’ in an Armenian translation was published in Venice by the Mechitarists. In the year 1889 the American scholar, Rendel Harris, discovered in the “Monastery of St. Catherine” on Mount Sinai, a complete Syriac translation of the *Apology*. This Syriac version enabled J. Armitage Robinson to prove that a Greek text of the *Apology* was not only extant but had been edited for some time in the form of a religious novel dealing with Barlaam and Joasaph. The author of this novel, a monk of the “Monastery of St. Saba” in Palestine in the seventh century, presents the *Apology* as made by a pagan philosopher in favor of Christianity<sup>18</sup> .

According to Eusebius, Aristides delivered his *Apology* to the Emperor Hadrian at the same time as another apologist, Quadratus, viz. in 124 A.D. But J. R. Harris advanced strong arguments in

<sup>16</sup> Edgar J. Goodspeed: *A History of Early Christian Literature*, 1966, p. 95-6.

<sup>17</sup> F.L. Cross: *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 1990, p. 84. Edgar J. Goodspeed: *A History of Early Christian Literature*, 1966, p. 98.

<sup>18</sup> Johannes Quasten: *Patrology*, vol. 1, 1992, p. 192.

favor of the view that these Apologies were in fact both addressed to Antoninus Pius (d. 161) early in his reign.

Aristides sought to defend the existence and eternity of God, and to show that Christians had a fuller understanding of His nature than either the Chaldeans, the Greeks, the Egyptians or the Jews, and that they alone loved according to His precepts. He presents the Christian way, which he strongly commends, although he speaks of the Christians as well as of the other four groups in the third person. The closing chapters, 15-17, give a fine picture of early Christian practices and morals.

The influence of the four Gospels is clearly seen in Aristides' account of the Christians; indeed, he probably refers to them when he invites the emperor to examine the Christians' books (16: 3, 5). Aristides is also strongly influenced by the "*Preaching of Peter*." He sees in the Christians a new race, as it is shown in the book of the "*Preaching*." He seems to have known the Acts and probably Romans and I Peter. His way of referring to the writings of the Christians as his sources suggests the possession of a larger Christian library.

Aristides states that the Christians alone have the only true idea of God and 'they above all the nations of the world have found the truth. For they acknowledge God the Creator and Maker of all things in the only begotten Son and in the Holy Spirit; and besides him they worship no other' (15). That the Christians worship the one true God manifests itself particularly in their purity of life which Aristides praises highly:

*They have the commandments of the Lord Jesus Christ himself graven upon their hearts and these they observe, looking for the resurrection of the dead and for the life in the world to come. They do not commit adultery nor fornication, nor do they bear false witness, nor covet the things of others; they honor father and mother, and love their neighbors; they give right judgment and they never do to others what they would not wish to happen to them*

*selves. They comfort such as wrong them and make friends of them. They are eager to do good to their enemies. They are meek and gentle. They refrain themselves from all unlawful intercourse and all impurity. They despise not the widow and oppress not the orphan. He that has gives ungrudgingly to him that has not. If they see a stranger they take him under their roof and rejoice over him, as it were their own brother. For they call themselves brethren not after the flesh but after the spirit. They are ready to lay down their own lives for the sake of Christ. They keep His commandments without swerving, living righteous and holy lives as the Lord their God commanded them. And they give thanks unto Him every hour for all meat and drink and other blessings. Verily then this is the way of truth which leads those who travel therein to the eternal kingdom promised by Christ in the life to come (15).*

The topology of Aristides is limited in scope, its style unaffected and its thought and disposition artless. Nevertheless for all its simplicity, its tone is lofty.

#### **4. ARISTO OF PELLA**<sup>19</sup> (c. 140 A.D)

Pella was a city in Perea, in which the Christians of Jerusalem were warned to take refuge when the Roman armies gathered about Jerusalem to besiege it in 66-70 A.D.<sup>20</sup> It was one of the ten cities that formed the league known as the Decapolis. Aristo may have been a descendant of those Jerusalem refugees. His writings, probably this very dialogue of his, supplied some material to Eusebius on the subject of the Bar-Cochba<sup>21</sup> rebellion against Rome

<sup>19</sup> Edgar J. Goodspeed: *A History of Early Christian Literature*, 1966, p. 99 f.; J. Quasten: *Patrology*, vol. 1, p. 195 f.

<sup>20</sup> Eusebius: *Church History* 3:5:3.

<sup>21</sup> Bar-Cochba in Aramaic means "son of star" cf. Num. 24:17. This name is found only in Christian sources. By the Jews the name is given as Simeon. He was a leader of a Jewish rebellion in Palestine. Its purpose was to resist the project of the Emperor Hadrian to rebuild Jerusalem as a Greco-Roman city, with a temple of Jupiter on the site of the former Jewish temple. He was accepted as the Messiah.

(132-35 A.D.), and Eusebius mentions Aristo as the source of some of his information about it <sup>22</sup>.

He seems to be the first Christian apologist who defends Christianity in written tract against Judaism. The dialogue is represented as taking place between a Judaeo-Christian named Jason and an Alexandrian Jew named Papiscus and became the model for a whole series of such Jewish-Christian dialogues. The discussion ends with the Jew Papiscus acknowledging Christ as the Son of God and asking for baptism.

The first mention of it is in the famous *True Discourses* which Celsus, about 178 A.D, directed against Christianity. This work has disappeared for a long time, but Origen <sup>23</sup> extensively quotes a good deal of it in order to defend Christianity. Origen defends this short treatise. He points out that the tract was intended for people at large and hence ought not to have provoked unfavorable comment from any open-minded person. According to Origen, this apology describes, “how a Christian supported by Jewish writings (the Old Testament) carries on an argument with a Jew and goes on to prove that the prophecies pertaining to Christ find fulfillment in Jesus, while the opponent in a plucky and not unskilled fashion takes the part of the Jew in the controversy <sup>24</sup> ..”

Coming between Celsus and Origen, St. Clement of Alexandria mentions the book in the sixth book of his *Outlines*. St. Jerome, in his *Commentary on Galatians* <sup>25</sup>, remembers that he has read in the *Dialogue of Jason and Papiscus* that he who is hanged is reproach by God. St. Jerome also says that the *Dialogue* says: “*In the Son God made the heavens and the earth.*”

Toward the end of the fifth century another man named Celsus made a Latin translation of the *Dialogue*. This has disappeared, but the preface he wrote for it has survived and it informs

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* 4:6:3 <sup>23</sup> *Against Celsus*, 248 A.D.. <sup>24</sup> *Against Celsus* 4: 52. <sup>25</sup> 3:13.

us that Jason was a Jewish Christian and Papiscus an Alexandrian Jew who was finally converted by Jason's arguments.

## 5 ST. JUSTIN THE

26

### MARTYR

St. Justin the Martyr is the most important of the apologists of the second century and one of the noblest personalities of early Christian literature. He employs both the early forms of apologetic: the dialogue and apology. He was born in Flavia Neapolis in Palestine, the ancient Sheeted, the modern Nablus. His parents were pagans. He himself tells us<sup>27</sup> that he traveled into the Greek world to complete his education, and visited various philosophical schools.

Justin tried first the school of a Stoic, then that of a Peripatetic, and finally that of a Pythagorean. None of these schools convinced or satisfied him. The Stoic failed because he gave him no explanation concerning God's being. The Peripatetic insisted that Justin pay him the tuition immediately, which Justin answered by avoiding his lectures. The Pythagorean demanded of him to study music, astronomy and geometry first. Justin had no inclination to do so. Platonism, on the other hand, appealed to him for a time, until as he walked along the sea-shore an old man convinced him that the Platonic philosophy could not satisfy the heart of man and called his attention to the prophets who alone announced the truth. *"When he had spoken," St. Justin relates, "these and many other things, which there is no time for mentioning at present, he went away, bidding me attend to them; and I have not seen him since. But straightway a flame was kindled in my soul; and a love of the prophets, and of those men who were friends of Christ, possessed me. And whilst revolving his words in my mind, I found this philosophy alone to be safe and profitable. Thus and for this reason I became a philosopher, and I could wish that all men were of the*

<sup>26</sup> Johannes Quasten: *Patrology*, vol. 1, 1992, p. 196 f.; Edgar J. Goodspeed: *A History of Early Christian Literature*, 1966, p. 101 f.; F.L. Cross: *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 1990, p. 770.

<sup>27</sup> *Dialog.* 2-8.

same mind as myself, not to turn from the doctrines of the Savior<sup>28</sup>.”  
The quest for truth led him to Christianity.

We also learn from him that the heroic contempt which Christians entertained for death played no small role in his conversion: “*I myself used to rejoice in the teaching of Plato and to hear evil spoken of Christians. But, as I saw that they showed no fear in the face of death and of all other things which inspire horror, I reflected that they could not be vicious and pleasure-loving*.”<sup>29</sup> The sincere quest for truth and humble prayer brought him finally to accept the faith of Christ:

After his conversion, which occurred most likely in Ephesus, he devoted his entire life to the defense of the Christian faith. Clothed in the *palladium*, a cloak worn by Greek philosophers, he traveled about, an itinerant teacher. He arrived in Rome during the reign of Antoninus Pius (138-161 A.D) and founded a school there. One of his pupils was Tatian, destined later to become an apologist. St. Justin suffered martyrdom in Rome between 163 and 167 A.D.

Justin was a prolific writer. Eusebius<sup>30</sup> lists eight works of Justin - two *Apologies*, *Against the Greeks*, the *Refutation*, *On the Sovereignty of God*, *Psaltes* (perhaps a hymnbook), *On the Soul*, and a *Dialogue against the Jews*. Eusebius also mentions a work of Justin, *Against Marcion*<sup>31</sup>, but, when he proceeds to quote from it, he quotes from what we know as the *Apology*. But Justin’s contemporary Irenaeus also mentions *Against Marcion* and quotes from it a sentence that is not found in the *Apology*: Eusebius also mentions elsewhere, in Justin’s own words, a work *Against all Heresies*, which he had probably never seen. This work is now lost. Only three of his works have come down to us, his two *Apologies* against the Greeks, written about 150 A.D and his *Dialogue with the Jew Trypho*, written between 155 and 160 A.D.

<sup>28</sup> *Dial.* 8. <sup>29</sup> *Apol.* 2,12. <sup>30</sup>  
*Eusebius: H. E.* 4:18. <sup>31</sup>  
*Ibid.* 4:11:8.

He is the first Christian thinker to seek to reconcile the claims of faith and reason. He holds that traces of the truth are to be found in pagan thinkers, since all men share in the 'generative' or 'germinative' Word; but Christianity alone is the truly rational creed. The reason why the Word became incarnate is to teach men the truth and to redeem them from the power of demons.

#### 6. TATIAN (c. 160)

A native Syrian (or Assyrian) by birth, was of pagan parents. He was educated in Greek rhetoric and philosophy. He journeyed westward to Athens and Rome between 150 and 165 in the pursuit of his studies. In Rome he met St. Justin the Martyr and became a Christian, although he was not among the group arrested at the time when Justin was martyred. Later he returned to Syria, and it was probably there, about 172 A.D., that he became the leader, if not the founder, of the *Encratites*<sup>32</sup> (i.e., the Abstinent) sect, which belongs to the group of Christian Gnostics, discouraging marriage as adultery, condemning the use of meat in any form, the drinking of wine, and going so far as to substitute water for wine in the Eucharistic service. For this reason the adherents of this sect were called the *Aquarii*. They also denied the salvation of Adam. St. Irenaeus discusses his heretical views.

He is the author of an apology, usually called "*Oration Against the Greeks*." It is a passionate defense of the divine purity of Christianity combined with a violent attack on every aspect of Greco-Roman culture and religion, which is represented as a mass of evil, incompatible with the Christian Faith. While St. Justin in his defense of Christianity paid high respect to non-Christian philosophy, his disciple Tatian betrays a determined hatred of all that

<sup>32</sup> Tatian stood at the head of a long line of Christians who were called "Encratites" (the "Chaste Ones," from the Greek word *enkrateia*, meaning "chastity" or "self-control"). The Encratites interpreted the stories about Adam and Eve in the opening chapters of Genesis as an account of the fall of humanity from a pristine, Spirit-filled existence into the sinful, mortal condition now epitomized by human sexuality. Only by rejecting marital intercourse and procreation, the Encratites taught, could people be restored to their original, spiritual condition intended by God the Creator. (David G. Hunter: *Marriage in the Early Church*, Minneapolis, 1992, p. 13.)



belongs to Greek civilization, art, science and language. Theses are all in his mind foolish, deceitful and immoral. Tatian declares, and tries to prove, that Moses is more ancient than Homer and dwells upon the immoralities celebrated in Greek sculpture. With all this polemic he interweaves a sketch of Christian views, especially about demons and morals and declares himself a champion of this barbarian philosophy. At the end of his Apology, Tatian presents himself for any criticism: *“These things, O Greeks, I, Tatian, a disciple of the barbarian philosophy, have composed for you. I was born in the land of the Assyrians, having been first instructed in your doctrines, and afterwards in those which I now undertake to proclaim. Henceforward, knowing who God is and what is His work, I present myself to you prepared for an examination concerning my doctrines while I adhere immovably to that mode of life which is according to God.”*

He criticized poor men who sold themselves to be murdered and rich men who bought the prospective victims<sup>33</sup>.

As the pagans burned the corpses of some Gallican martyrs and swept down their ashes into the river Rohne, and still others were torn by wild beasts so that they may not remain upon earth, and had no hope of the resurrection, Tatian said, *“even if fire makes my flesh vanish, the cosmos contains its vaporized matter, and if I am consumed on rivers and in seas or torn apart by wild beasts, I am laid up in the treasures of a rich Master.”*<sup>34</sup>

Tatian insisted that he paid taxes and gave due honor to the emperor<sup>35</sup>. He also urged that he did not desire wealth or military command<sup>36</sup> “

According to J. Quasten the main part of this work has the following four sections:

I. The first section (Chs. 4,3-7,6) contains a Christian cosmology.

<sup>33</sup> *Oration, ch 23.*

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.* 6. <sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

4. <sup>36</sup> *Ibid.* 11.

I. A definition of the Christian concept of God (Ch. 4,3-5).

1. The relation of the Logos to the Father, the formation of matter and the creation of the world (Ch. 5).
2. A description of the creation of man, of the resurrection, and of the last judgment (Ch. 6-7,1).
3. The creation of the angels, the freedom of the will, the fall of the angels, the sin of Adam and Eve, bad angels and demons (Ch. 7, 2-8).

II. A Christian demonology (Ch. 8-20).

I. Astrology is an invention of the demons (Ch. 8-1 I).

1. To overcome the power of the demons, we must endeavor to reunite our soul with the *pneuma*, the heavenly spirit. Originally this *pneuma* lived in the bosom of the first man, but was expelled by the first sin, which was the work of the demons (Ch. 12-15,1).
2. The demons are images of matter and iniquity. They are not able to do penance, but men are images of God and are thus able to attain immortality by self-mortification (Ch. 15,2- 16, 6).
3. Man must not fear death because he is obliged to reject all matter in order to gain immortality (Ch. 16, 7-20).

. Greek civilization in the light of the Christian attitude toward life (Ch. 21-30).

. The foolishness of all Greek theology forms a sharp contrast to the sublimity of the mystery of the incarnation (Ch. 2 I).

1. The Greek theaters are schools of vice (Ch. 22-24).
2. Greek philosophy and law are contradictory and deceitful (Ch 25-28).
3. Against this dark background of Greek civilization the superiority of the Christian religion shines forth brightly (Ch. 29-30).

IV. The age and moral value of Christianity (Ch. 31-41).

1. The Christian religion is older than all others because Moses lived before Homer, long before all the lawgivers of Greece (Ch. 31, 1-6, 36-41).
2. Christian philosophy and Christian conduct of life differ from the wisdom of the Greek writers (Ch. 31,7-35).

His chief claim to fame is the “*Diatessaron*,” a history of the life of Christ compiled from the four gospels which was used in the Syriac Church until the 5th century, when Rabbula of Edessa perhaps replaced it by the Peshitta version because its author was considered a heretic. Among his literary opponents were St. Irenaeus, Tertullian, St. Clement of Alexandria, St. Hippolytus and Origen. It is possible that his memory in the Syriac Church is preserved under the name of Addai. Eusebius tells us that Tatian left a multitude of writings, but most of these are unknown.

## 7. ST. APOLLINARIS OF HIERAPOLIS

Claudius Apollinaris, was bishop of Hierapolis during the time of Marcus Aurelius (161-180). Eusebius reports about him <sup>37</sup> :

Of the many writings of Apollinaris which have been widely preserved, the following have reached us: A treatise to the above-mentioned emperor (Marcus Aurelius), five books *Against the Pagans*, two books *On the Truth (peri alethias)*, two books *Against the Jews*, and after this the treatises which he wrote against the heretic opinion of the Phrygians (Montanists) which had begun not long before, and was then, as it were, beginning to sprout, while Montanus with his false prophecies marked the beginnings of the error (heretic thought) <sup>38</sup> .

Another work of Apollinarius, not mentioned by Eusebius, but known to the author of the *Chronicon paschale*, is called “On Easter” (*peri tou pascha*). The two quotations which the author of the *Chronicon* cites seem to suggest that Apollinarius was against

<sup>37</sup> Johannes Quasten: *Patrology*, vol. 1, 1992, p. 228-9.

<sup>38</sup> *Hist. Eccl.* 4,27.

the quartodeciman dating of Easter. Apart from a few fragments, all his writings are lost.

## 8

39

### • MILTIADES

Miltiades, the rhetorician, closely resembles Apollinaris in that he writes against Montanists, Greeks, and Jews, and addresses rulers of this world a defense of the philosophy which he followed. He was born in Asia Minor. A contemporary of Tatian, he was, most probably, also a pupil of St. Justin.

Unfortunately, all his writings have been lost; but Tertullian<sup>40</sup> and Hippolytus<sup>41</sup> report that he defended Christianity against pagans as well as against heretics. According to Eusebius<sup>42</sup> he wrote an *Apology for Christian Philosophy* which he addressed to ‘temporal rulers.’ According to St. Jerome, the ‘rulers’ were the emperor Marcus Aurelius (I61-I80) and his co-regent Lucius Commodus (I61-I69). Valesius, cited by Salmon, supposes that he wrote to the provincial governors, while Valesius himself suggests that Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus were in view<sup>43</sup>. His use of *kosmikoi archontes* when addressing rulers and his allusion to 1 Corinthians 2:6-8, show that he was not as conciliatory as Appollinaris, Melito, or Athenagoras.

Of a similar apologetic nature is his work *Against the Greeks*, in two books, and another work *Against the Jews*, also in two books. The treatise which he composed against the Montanists deals with the question *That a Prophet Should not Speak in Ecstasy*, and explains that the Montanistic prophets were pseudo-prophets. Another anti-heretical treatise of Miltiades is directed against the Valentinian Gnostics.

<sup>39</sup> J. Quasten: *Patrology*, vol. 1, p. 228; Robert M. Grant: *Greek Apologists of the Second Century*, Westminster, Philadelphia, 1988, p. 103.

<sup>40</sup> Adv. Valent. 5.

<sup>41</sup> Eusebius, Hist. Eccl. 5,28,4.

<sup>42</sup> Hist. Eccl. 5,17,5.

<sup>43</sup> G. Salmon in *Dictionary of Christian Biography*, vol. III, p. 916.

## 9. ST. THEOPHILUS (later 2nd cent.)

According to Eusebius<sup>44</sup> St. Theophilus was the sixth bishop of Antioch in Syria. He was born near the Euphrates, of pagan parentage and received a Hellenistic education. Not until he had reached maturity, and even then only after long consideration and a study of scripture, did he become a convert to Christianity<sup>45</sup>.

Of his writings, only his *Apology*, in three books addressed to his pagan friend Autolycus, has survived. Its purpose is to set before the pagan world the Christian idea of God and the superiority of the doctrine of creation over the immoral myths of the Olympian religion.

In brief J. Quasten's account on this work is quoted below:

In the first book he speaks of the essence of God, who can be seen only by the eyes of the soul:

*God is seen by those who are enabled to see Him, when they have the eyes of their soul opened; for all have eyes; but in some they are overspread, and do not see the light of the sun. Yet it does not follow because the blind do not see, that the light of the sun does not shine; but let the blind blame themselves and their own eyes... as a burnished mirror, so ought man to have his soul pure. When there is rust on the mirror, it is not possible that a man's face be seen in the mirror; so also when there is sin in a man, such a man can not behold God<sup>46</sup>.*

He also deals with the absurdities of idolatry and with the difference between the honor paid to the emperor and the worship due to God. He treats the meaning and importance of the name Christian, which had been mocked by his adversary. And after an explanation of the belief in the resurrection he closes with the

<sup>44</sup> Eusebius: *H.E.* 4:20. <sup>45</sup> J. Quasten: *Patrology*, vol. I, p. 236, *Ad Autolycum* 1:14. <sup>46</sup> *Ad Autol.* 1:2.

words: “*Since you said, ‘Show me your God,’ this is my God and I counsel you to fear Him and to trust Him* <sup>47</sup> .”

The second book contrasts the teachings of the prophets, who were inspired by the Holy Spirit, with the foolishness of the pagan religion and the contradictory sayings of the Greek poets concerning the gods and the origin of the world. The account of Genesis regarding the creation and the fall of man, is analyzed in detail and explained allegorically. At the end the author quotes some of the instructions of the prophets on the manner of worshipping God rightly and on the proper conduct of life.

The third book demonstrates the superiority of Christianity from the moral point of view. Theophilus uses the chronology of the world to prove that Moses and the prophets preceded all philosophers.

Among his lost treatises are writings against Marcion and Hermogenes.

St. Theophilus is the first theologian to use the word Triad (*trias*) for the union of the three Persons (*Hypostaseis*) in the Godhead. He also distinguishes between the Logos internal or immanent in God and the Word emitted or uttered by God <sup>48</sup> .

## **10. MELITO, BISHOP OF SARDIS**

Melito, bishop of Sardis in Lydia, is one of the great lights of Asia in the second century. He is a prolific writer on a wide variety of subjects. About the year 170 A.D he addressed an apology for the Christians to the emperor Marcus Aurelius, of which only fragments are preserved by Eusebius and in the *Chronicon paschale*. He is the first to advocate solidarity of Christianity with the Empire. The Empire and the Christian religion are foster sisters; they form a pair. In addition, the Christian religion means blessing

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.* 1:14. <sup>48</sup> *Ad Autol.* 2:10.

and welfare to the empire<sup>49</sup>. In his writings there is an anti-Gnostic insistence on the true humanity of Christ, and on the unity of the Old and New Testaments.

### 11. THE EPISTLE TO DIOGNETUS

The Epistle to Diognetus is an apology for Christianity composed in the form of a letter addressed to a high-ranking pagan, Diognetus. (For more details see our book: *The Apostolic Fathers*.)

### 12. MINUCIUS FELIX<sup>50</sup> (2nd or 3rd century)

An author of the *Octavius*. Apparently an African, he wrote in Latin an elegant defense of Christianity in the form of a conversation between Octavius, a Christian, and Caecilius, a pagan, who was converted by the argument. The book refutes the common charges against Christians, argues the case for monotheism and divine providence, and attacks pagan mythology, but says little of specifically Christian doctrines. It is probably a 3rd century work.

### 13. TERTULLIAN (c. 160- c. 225)

An African Church Father, brought up in Carthage as a pagan. Quintus Septimius Florens Tertullianus received a good education in literature and rhetoric. It seems that he visited Athens and Rome in his youth. He may have practised as a lawyer, though identification with the jurist Tertullian is improbable. He was converted to Christianity before 197 A.D. According to St. Jerome he became a priest, but there are other indications that he remained a layman. He joined the Montanist sect. He was the author of a long list of apologetic, theological, controversial, and ascetic works.

Among his Apologetic writings he addressed a work *To the Heathen* (*Ad Nations*, two books), in which he protested against the laws condemning Christians without examining their behavior.

<sup>49</sup> Eusebius: *H.E* 4:26:7-8. <sup>50</sup> F.L. Cross: *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 1990, p.920.

He also wrote his great *Apology*, addressed to the Roman governors of provinces, and an address *To the Martyrs* who were in prison.

#### 14. HERMIAS

Nothing is known about this Christian philosophical writer. He wrote the “*Irrisio*” or “*Mockery of the Heathen Philosophers*,” or “Satire on the Profane Philosophers,” which satirizes the conflicting opinions of pagan writers on the human soul (Chs. 1-2), and the fundamental principles of the universe (Chs. 3-10). The apology is clearly the work of a writer of very mediocre attainments. Modern authors have assigned various dates to the ‘Irrisio’ from the 2nd to the 6th century.

#### 15 THE SAYINGS OF SEXTUS

51

The so-called *Sayings of Sextus* are a collection of pagan moral sentences and rules of life, which were attributed to the Pythagorean philosopher Sextus. At the end of the second century, a Christian author (of Alexandria?) revised them. Origen is the first to mention these Sayings. In his *Contra Celsum*<sup>52</sup> he recalls a beautiful saying in the writings of Sextus, which is known to most Christians: “*The eating of animals*,” says he, “*is a matter of indifference; but to abstain from them is more agreeable to reason*.” Rufinus translated 451 of these sayings from the Greek into Latin. In the preface of this Latin version, he identifies without grounds the Pythagorean Philosopher Sextus with the Roman Bishop and martyr Sextus II (257-58). But St. Jerome<sup>53</sup> protested strongly against this blunder.

<sup>51</sup> J. Quasten: *Patrology*, vol. 1, p. 170-1. <sup>52</sup> *Contra Celsum* 8:30. <sup>53</sup> *Comm. in Ez. ad 18,5ff., Comm. in Jr. ad 22,24ff., Ep. 133, ad Ctesiph., 3.*



Some scholars state that Platonic ideas regarding purification, illumination and deification, and the Platonic concept of God inspire the majority of these sayings. Temperance in food, drink, and sleep are counseled. Marriage is not recommended. It is possible that St. Clement of Alexandria is the Christian author who revised them.

# ***ATHENAGORAS THE APOLOGIST***

## ***HIS LIFE***

Athenagoras is a great philosophic personality, despite this he is ignored by the first historians like Eusebius and St. Jerome. Even his *Plea* (*Embassy* or *Legatio*) addressed to the two emperors Marcus Aurelius Antoninus and his son co-ruler Lucius Aurelius Commodus, spread without his name and was wrongly attributed to St. Justin before the fourth century.

Athenagoras is a contemporary of Justin and Tatian<sup>1</sup>. Methodius, bishop of Olympus, who was martyred in 311, is the first and almost the only patristic writer to quote Athenagoras' work. In five or six places he shows dependence upon the *Embassy*, though only once does he refer to Athenagoras by name<sup>2</sup>. Epiphanius<sup>3</sup> and Photius<sup>4</sup> have used this passage of Methodius and recall the name of Athenagoras<sup>5</sup>.

## **HIS LIFE**

We don't know much about his life. He is a philosopher holding an academic position in the *Museum* at Alexandria, and is regarded as a leader in paganism. He was attracted to search in Christianity for mistakes and corruption just as other Platonic philosophers.

<sup>1</sup> W.A. Jurgens: *The Faith of the Early Fathers*, Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota, 1970, vol. I, p. 69.

<sup>2</sup> *De res.* 37.1

<sup>3</sup> *Adv. Haer.* 64.

<sup>4</sup> *Biblioth.* 234.

<sup>5</sup> Joseph Hugh Crehan: *Athenagoras*, Newman Press, 1956 (ACW, vol. 23), p. 7.

He was anxious to write against Christianity. He read the Holy Scriptures in order to aim his shafts of criticism more accurately, but he was so powerfully seized by the Holy Spirit that he became a defender of the faith he was attacking. Not only was he converted to Christianity (c. 176), but he also became one of the most famous deans of the Christian Theological School.<sup>6</sup>

Philip of Side, (deacon of St. John Chrysostom), in Pampylia, who flourished in the early part of the fifth century, gives an account of Athenagoras' life in a fragment preserved, according to Dodwell 12, by Nicephorus Callistus or some other late Greek historian:<sup>7</sup>

Athenagoras was the first head of the school at Alexandria flourishing in the times of Hadrian and Antoninus, to whom also he addressed his *Legatio* for the Christians; a man who embraced Christianity while wearing the garb of a philosopher, and presiding over the academic school. He, before Celsus, was bent on writing against the Christians; and studying the divine scriptures in order to carry on the contest with greater accuracy, was thus himself caught by the Holy Spirit, so that, like the great Paul, from a persecutor he became a teacher of the faith which he persecuted. Philip says that Clement, the writer of the *Stromata*, was his pupil, and Pantaenus was the pupil of Clement. Pantaenus too was Athenian, and was a Pythagorean in his philosophy.

Athenagoras did not address the *Legatio* to Hadrian and Antoninus but to Marcus Aurelius and Commodus, as the ascription to the work shows. As J. H. Crehan believes<sup>8</sup> that it is just possible that Philip may have misread the ascription in his MS. of the *Legatio* which read *Aurelius Antoninus* and Lucian Aurelius Commodus.

<sup>6</sup> William Scodel : *Athenagoras*, Oxford 1972, p IX. <sup>7</sup>

Leslie W. Barnard: *Athenagoras*, Paris, 1972, p.13. <sup>8</sup>

Leslie W. Barnard: *Athenagoras*, Paris, 1972, p.14.

The personality of Athenagoras has special importance, as he is the first philosopher whose strong perseverance in the School qualified him to become the dean of the theological School of Alexandria without undressing the palladium of philosophers, and considered as the first known Christian who with his faith, carried a tendency towards philosophy. Rev. B. P. Pratten says, “His work opens the way for Clement’s elaboration of Justin’s claim, that the whole of philosophy is embraced in Christianity. It is charming to find the primal fountains of Christian thought uniting here, to flow on for ever in the widening and deepening channel of Catholic orthodoxy, as it gathers into itself all human culture, and enriches the world with products of regenerated mind, harvested from its overflow into the fields of philosophy and poetry and art and science.”<sup>9</sup>

### ATHENAGORAS AND ALEXANDRIA

There is an evidence which supports the connection of Athenagoras with Egypt. This is found in a passage in his work *On the Resurrection* 12: “For instance (to make use of an illustration, that our meaning may be clear), a man makes a house for his own use; but for cattle and **camels** and other animals of which he has need he makes the shelter suitable for each of them; not for his own use, if we regard the appearance only, though for that, if we look at the end he has in view, but as regards the immediate object from concern for those for whom he cares.” It seems unlikely that Athenagoras would not have mentioned a shelter for camels in such a casual way as this, unless he was familiar with this animal in his everyday experience. The camel was unknown in Greece and Asia Minor but in Egypt it was used in the postal service and would have been a familiar sight in the streets.<sup>10</sup>



<sup>9</sup> *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 2, p. 125.<sup>10</sup> Leslie W. Barnard: *Athenagoras*, Paris, 1972, p.15.

## ***HIS WRITINGS***

Athenagoras writes two important works: the ***Pleading for Christians***, and the ***Resurrection of the Dead***. He writes with a philosophic mind, as he was brought up with Greek culture, with an eloquence in writing. Leslie W. Barnard comments on his writings, saying that “Athenagoras’ *Legatio* and *De Resurrectione* are, as he believes, the only apologetic writings of the early period which can seriously rival, in scope and learning Origen’s masterly work *Contra Celsum*. Their fate was in fact to be the same as Origen’s masterpiece for Origen’s enormous influence on later ages lay primarily in the field of biblical explanation and in asceticism rather than in apologetic. The influence of the *Contra Celsum* was, in contrast, not very great; and Athenagoras, and his writings, suffered an equal eclipse: they were almost unknown in Christian antiquity<sup>1</sup>.”

### **HIS PLEA (*Embassy, Presbeia, or Legatio*)**

In c. 177 A.D Athenagoras wrote a plea (37 Chs.) on behalf of Christianity, addressed to the emperor and his co-ruler son. The purpose was to show the falsity and absurdity of the calumnies against Christians and ends in a calm entreaty for just judgment. He proved that Christian worship and teachings were more reasonable and moral than those of their accusers. He appealed to Greek philosophers and poets, in support of his claims.

C.C. Richardson believes that Athenagoras did not give his apology as a public oration in the Emperor’s presence, while L.W. Barnard states that the account in *Legatio II* reads as if Athena

<sup>1</sup> Leslie W. Barnard: *Athenagoras*, Paris, 1972, p.51.

goras actually addressed the Emperor in person<sup>2</sup>. According to W.R. Schoedel the title “*Embassy*” is adopted by those who see in the *Plea* an address intended to be delivered before the emperors in person, and that we are driven to the conclusion that Athenagoras was constructing an oration in the forensic style in obedience to the rules of rhetoric<sup>3</sup>.

As Monachino suggests, the *Plea* looks like an “open letter” to the emperors destined for the general public and not for himself or certain Christians<sup>4</sup>.

Leslie W. Barnard explains the historical circumstances of addressing this apology, saying,

The known history of the decade 170--180 throws some further light on this question. In 172 there had been a rebellion in Egypt against Rome engineered by the Bucoli, “herdsmen” from the Delta region, during which the Romans had been defeated in pitched battle and Alexandria nearly captured. This was followed, early in 175, by the revolt of Cassius, Governor of Syria, against Marcus Aurelius, who was soon recognized as Emperor in most of the Eastern provinces including Egypt. However within three months and six days Cassius was dead - slain by a centurion named Antonius - and by 28 July Marcus was once again recognized in Egypt as Emperor. Marcus seems to have spent the winter of 175-6 in Alexandria and, considering the city’s fervent adherence to Cassius’ cause, he treated it with magnanimity and moderation: “while in Egypt he conducted himself like a private citizen and a philosopher at all the schools and temples, in fact everywhere.” This fact is significant and must have been known to the Christians. Is it fanciful to suggest that Athenagoras was favorably impressed with the Emperor’s philosophic bearing in Alexandria and felt that, at least, he would give

<sup>2</sup> Leslie W. Barnard: *Athenagoras*, Paris, 1972, p. 22.<sup>3</sup>

W.R.. Schoedel: *Athenagoras*, Oxford, 1972, p. XII, XIII.<sup>4</sup>  
*Ibid.* XIII.

him a hearing as a Christian philosopher? And ... why does he refer to the Emperor as a philosopher and appeal obliquely and subtly to Marcus' thought in developing his argument? In any event it would seem that we should not be too skeptical about the historical basis of *Leg. II* although no doubt, Athenagoras also intended his apology to have a wider circulation in the Graeco-Roman world<sup>5</sup>.

The *Embassy* reflects slight acquaintance with predecessors or contemporaries, and in turn it finds no echo before Methodius in the early fourth century. Such neglect is not unique, for the *Meditations* of the emperor too are not mentioned before the fourth century<sup>6</sup>.

### **Its features**

1. This plea is written in a more moderate, learned and wise manner than that of Justin. It is non-rhetorical. It aims apparently at giving a clear, calm and unemotional statement of the Christian case<sup>7</sup>. As a loyal subject of the emperors Athenagoras asks them for a prescript ordering judges (normally provincial governors) to examine the conduct of Christians and “not pay attention to meaningless labels or to false charges from the prosecution<sup>8</sup>.” He states that Christians do not object to punishment if they are found guilty, but they demand a fair trial such as that enjoyed by equal rights like other citizens. It was a product of having the Holy Spirit working in his life.
2. Athenagoras was contemporary to Tatian, the disciple of Justin, but differed from both in his defense as can be seen in the following:

<sup>5</sup> Leslie W. Barnard: *Athenagoras*, Paris, 1972, p. 24. <sup>6</sup> Robert M. Grant: *Greek Apologists of the Second Century*, Westminster, Philadelphia, 1988, p.

101. <sup>7</sup> Philip Carrington, *Early Christian Church*, vol 2, p 238. <sup>8</sup> *Embassy* 2.3; Robert M. Grant: *Greek Apologists of the Second Century*, Westminster, Philadel

phia, 1988, p. 101.

a. He knows Greek philosophy and Hellenic culture more than Tatian. He did not share Justin's feelings of hatred to philosophy, but used terms clarifying the wisdom of the Greeks, though at the end proving the conflict between them, as philosophers who built their arguments by seeking themselves; whereas prophets are inspired by the Holy Spirit to testify all together for the divine truth. Athenagoras spoke of Christianity as if equal to philosophy. So he compared the Christian beliefs to the divine truth; which for the unbelievers is not logic. Christianity is a divine Supreme Declaration, as it is shown in The prophets' lives; which is not a human proof. According to Schoedel, "It is with some justification, then, that Athenagoras makes use of the resources of Hellenism to express Christian truth. He not only aligns himself with the best that had been thought and said by the Greeks, but he also seeks to express himself in a form that would commend his message to the cultured<sup>9</sup>."

. Athenagoras is famous for clarity of thought and strength of negotiation. He is more eloquent than Justin in language and organization, which made him the most preferred defender of Christianity.

. He transcends Justin in his moderation and logic, not writing in sermons, targeting clearly to present a case for Christians quietly not emotionally, pointing to the falseness of the accusations against Christians. Athenagoras is distinguished among the apologists by his gentlemanly tone<sup>10</sup>. Unlike that of Tatian, Athenagoras' pen provides light without heat<sup>11</sup>. His delicacy in writing and talking proves that the whole world - cities and persons - enjoyed good treatment. Only Christians were persecuted by rumors of heresies. "*If anyone can prove any crime against us, we are ready to bear the consequences.*"

<sup>9</sup> W.R. Schoedel: *Athenagoras*, Oxford, 1972, p. XVIII.

<sup>10</sup> Joseph Hugh Crehan: *Athenagoras*, Newman Press, 1956 (ACW, vol. 23), p.4.

<sup>11</sup> W.A. Jurgens: *The Faith of the Early Fathers*, Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota, 1970, vol. 1, p.69.



3. In his defense he overlooks justification to preach, and declares the truth in front of the two emperors.

4. Athenagoras is a bookish man<sup>12</sup>.

1. Athenagoras' organization of materials is orderly. His style is atticism<sup>13</sup>.
2. Athenagoras' acquaintance with literature and mythology is somewhat more profound. He quotes Homer eighteen times, Hesiod twice, Pindar once, Aeschylus once, Euripides seven times, Callimachus once...

### His defense

Athenagoras analyzes the three accusations against Christians at that time: cannibalism, Atheism and Oedipean<sup>14</sup> ideals. The pagans misunderstood the behavior of Christians, they falsely accused them of the following:

1. **Atheism**, because Christians refused to recognize the heathen gods of the "cities," to participate in the national traditional rites of their feasts, or to perform honors to the emperors of a sacral nature. They considered this conduct as disloyalty to the emperor and to the state, and hatred of gods and mankind. Apparently Christians were suspect not because they taught a new theology but because they rejected the old ways<sup>15</sup>.

In his reply to this charge, Athenagoras associates himself with the philosophical against popular religion and seeks to show that Christians are in harmony with the best that had been thought and said. He confirms that Christians believed in one God only, not various gods. This unity was not strange to Greek thinking but accepted by many poets and philosophers. They are not accused of

<sup>12</sup> W.R.. Schoedel: *Athenagoras*, Oxford, 1972, p. XIV.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* XVIII.

<sup>14</sup> Oedipus whom the psychologists have appropriated in modern times, was beguiled into committing incest with his mother Iocasta.

<sup>15</sup> Embassy 1:1,2; Eusebius: *H.E.* 7:11:6-11; W.R.. Schoedel: *Athenagoras*, Oxford, 1972, p. XIV.

atheism, though their proofs were feeble and Christians proofs accepted divine declaration and prophetic teachings through the bible, accepting God with pure hearts. Christians do not worship many gods, and do not offer incenses, do not worship creatures but their Creator, believing in the supreme God, who is the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

He clarifies that Christians are loyal to governors, praying for their stability and goodness. Athenagoras presents his political view mixed with theology.

*As all things have been subordinated to you, father and son, who have received the kingdom from above--"for the king's life is in God's hand, says the prophetic Spirit-so all things have been subjected to the one God and the Word from him, known to be his inseparable Son"*<sup>16</sup>.

Robert M. Grant states that this is not only rhetoric but theology. The quotation from the prophetic Spirit comes from Proverbs 21:1, while the rest of the passage echoes the New Testament. 1 Corinthians 15:25-28 teaches the eschatological subordination of everything to the Son and the Father, while in Matthew 28:18 the risen Christ states that "all power in heaven and on earth" has been given Him. The emperors' power is also of divine origin, however, not only according to Romans 13 but more specifically in John 19:11, where Jesus says, "You would have no power over me if it had not been given you from above." Clearly, then, Athenagoras is willing to use Christological terms in reference to the imperial father and son<sup>17</sup>.

2. **Cannibalism** (*Thyestean banquets*), evident in the celebration of the Eucharist (the body and blood of Christ). This accusation was untrue, since Christians do not murder anyone, and were terrified of witnessing executions, and disallowed women to

<sup>16</sup> Embassy 18.2. <sup>17</sup> Robert M. Grant: *Greek Apologists of the Second Century*, Westminster, Philadelphia, 1988, p. 102.

abort children, because of their belief in the resurrection of the body.

3. **Incest**, or Oedipean intercourse, because of their close meetings in celebrating the Church sacraments, with a strong relation between Christians, both sexes sharing, even the study in the School of Alexandria, led to the doubts of pagans about those meetings, so they accused them of Oedipean cults to destroy those closed meetings.

The philosopher clarifies that Christian morals do not accept the false accusations of Oedipean cults, as they trust that God sees their thoughts, hearts, looks, their respect for each other and their adherence to the sanctification of chastity and marriage. Athenagoras draws attention to their peaceful and blameless life: *“We are so far from committing the excesses of which we are accused, that we are not permitted to lust a woman in thought. We are so particular on this point that we either do not marry at all, or we marry for the sake of children, and only once in the course of our life.”*

In his defense to clarify the supreme Christian life, he uses the same proof as the learned Justin against Celsus, since Christianity alone could raise the small flock to high virtues no philosopher could reach<sup>18</sup>. Justin tells of one Christian in Egypt who volunteered to be castrated by the prefect of Egypt to show that the charge of promiscuity in Christian assemblies was false<sup>19</sup>. The freedom of the Christians from crimes was a common ground to all the apologists, such as Tertullian<sup>20</sup> and Minucius Felix<sup>21</sup>.

Finally, Athenagoras acknowledges that the true accusation against the Christian was the name<sup>22</sup>, as St. Peter (1 Peter 4:15f.) and many Christian apologists said<sup>23</sup>.

<sup>18</sup> Embassy 1. <sup>19</sup> 1 Apology 29. <sup>20</sup> Apology 45. <sup>21</sup> Minucius Felix 33:6. <sup>22</sup> Embassy 1. <sup>23</sup> Pliny's letter to Tarajan 96.

## ON THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD

He also wrote a treatise “*On the Resurrection of the Dead*.” It is probably the best early Christian treatise on the subject<sup>24</sup>. It shows skillful understanding, and is regarded as the first attempt ever made by a Christian writer to prove this dogma by means of philosophical arguments and not by revelation and the biblical texts alone<sup>25</sup>.

He wrote that essay as his fellow colleagues doubted about body resurrection, and caused many people to stumble along the understanding of the Christian faith. The persecutors knew the secret of strength in martyrs was their hope in resurrection, so they damaged the martyr’s possessions, thinking that they destroyed their hope in resurrection.

Rev. B.P. Pratten says, “I think this treatise is a sort of growth from the mind of one who has studied in the Academe, pitying yet loving poor Socrates and his disciples. In addition, it is the outcome of meditation on that sad history in the Acts, which expounds St. Paul’s bitter reminiscences, when he says that his gospel was, “to the Greeks, foolishness<sup>26</sup>.”

R.M. Grant believes that this work is a third or early-fourth century production directed against Origen’s doctrine on the resurrection. W. Schoedel accepts his arguments and extends them<sup>27</sup>.

L.W. Barnard refuses this attitude, saying,

Grant’s view that *De Resurrectione* is directed primarily against Origen’s doctrine of the resurrection is again difficult to maintain. The treatise never mentions Origen by name, which is significant, and, apart from the allusion to I Cor. 15:53 in *De Res. 18*, never directly quotes any biblical texts. This is odd if he is confuting so great a Christian bib

<sup>24</sup> Altaner: *Patrology*, p 130. <sup>25</sup> Bishop Gregorius: *The Coptic Church (paperback)* p 4. <sup>26</sup> *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 2, p. 126. <sup>27</sup> W. Schoedel: *Athenagoras: Legatio and De Resurrectione*, Oxford, 1972, p. XXV-XXXII.

lical expositor as Origen. It seems much more likely that the author has in mind philosophical inquirers who were unfamiliar with the Christian belief in the resurrection or, at least, were in an early stage of instruction. This is, I submit, shown by indications in the treatise itself that the work, in its present form, was intended as a public lecture. In *De Res.* 23 the author says: “*we have not made it our aim to omit nothing that might be said, but to point out in a summary way to those who have assembled what ought to be thought concerning the resurrection, and to adapt to the capacity of those present the arguments bearing on this question.*” And in Ch. 1 he speaks of a plea for the truth being addressed to skeptics and doubters as a kind of prolegomenon to an exposition of the truth to those sufficiently advanced to receive it. This suggests the hand of one accustomed to give lectures in rhetoric and would certainly fit the connection with the Alexandrian Catechetical school mentioned by Philip of Side<sup>28</sup>.

We also cannot ignore that this work closely agrees with the style and the thought of the *Legatio*, and that they were written by the same hand and assigned to the same period. Both works have many words in common as a cursory inspection of the index to Schwartz’s edition shows 37. Moreover the same quotations appear in both works. Thus in Leg. 12 Athenagoras quotes the saying “sleep and death are twin brothers” from Iliad I6.672 and this is repeated in *De Res.* 16. And as Athenagoras says, at the end of the *Legatio*, that he is putting aside the argument for the resurrection for the present, the presumption is that he intended to deal with the subject later<sup>29</sup>.

It consists of 25 chapters, divided into two parts; the first (Chs. 1 to 11) is the negative side, answering objections of philosophers to the resurrection of the bodies. The second (Chs. 11 to

<sup>28</sup> Leslie W. Barnard: *Athenagoras, Paris, 1972, p. 30.*

<sup>29</sup> Leslie W. Barnard: *Athenagoras, Paris, 1972, p. 31.*

25) was the positive side, proving the truth of the resurrection. Thus, we can say the first part discusses “*God and the Resurrection*,” and the second “*Man and the Resurrection*.”

### I. *Objections refuted* (Chs. 1-11)

Athenagoras opens his work with a distinction between a “*plea for the truth*,” addressed to skeptics and doubters, and an “*exposition of the truth*,” addressed to those who were prepared to accept the truth; he notes that the exposition is more valuable and important. However that pagan hostility to the Christian doctrine of the resurrection of the dead made it necessary for him to give precedence to the plea over the exposition. Athenagoras’ distinction justifies the effort to supply as much as possible of the missing “exposition” in defense of which the “plea was made”.<sup>30</sup> He repeats the same idea in chapter 11, as he summarizes what he had written:

*The discourse in defense of the truth is inferior in nature and force, for the refutation of falsehood is less important than the establishment of truth; and second in order, for it employs its strength against those who hold false opinions, and false opinions are an after growth from another sowing and from degeneration...*

*But, notwithstanding all this, it is often placed first hand sometimes as it is found more useful, because it removes and clears away beforehand the disbelief which disquiets some minds, and the doubt or false opinion of such as have but recently come over. And yet each of them is referable to the same end, for the refutation of falsehood and the establishment of truth both have piety for their object: not indeed, that they are absolutely one and the same, but the one is necessary, as I have said, to all who believe and those who are concerned about the truth and their own salvation; but the other proves to be more*

<sup>30</sup> Jaroslav Pelikan: *The Christian Tradition*, vol.1, Chicago, 1971, p. 121.

*useful on some occasions, and to some persons, and in dealing with some*<sup>31</sup>.

In **the first part**, Athenagoras refutes all the philosophers' objections about the resurrection, due to lack of knowledge of God, His power, and His will in the resurrection,

a. **Regarding knowledge**, God who creates bodies, knows how to raise them.

*For He from whom, antecedently to the peculiar formation of each, has not concealed from either the nature of the elements of which the bodies of men consist, or the parts of these from which He was about to take what seemed to Him suitable for the formation of the human body, will manifestly, after the dissolution of the whole, not be ignorant whither each of the particles has passed which He took for the construction of each*<sup>32</sup>.

b. **Regarding power**, God who could create, can also raise up the dead.

*Moreover, that His power is sufficient for the raising of dead bodies, is shown by the creation of these same bodies. For if, when they did not exist, He made at their first formation the bodies of men, and their original elements, He will, when they are dissolved, in whatever manner that they may take place, raise them again with equal ease; for this, too, is equally possible to Him*<sup>33</sup>.

c. **Regarding God's will**, the resurrection realizes God's justice and is in harmony with His Divine power. Athenagoras states that it cannot be shown that God does not will a resurrection, for there is no injustice in the resurrection.

<sup>31</sup> *De Resurrectione* 11 ANF.

<sup>32</sup> *De Resurrectione* 2. ANF.<sup>33</sup>  
*De Resurrectione* 3. ANF.

*For that which is not accordant with his will is so either as being unjust or as unworthy of Him. And again, the injustice regards either him who is to rise again, or some other than he. But it is evident that no one of the beings exterior to him, and that are reckoned among the things that have existence, is injured. Spiritual natures cannot be injured by the resurrection of men, for the resurrection of men is no hindrance to their existing, nor is any loss or violence inflicted on them by it; nor, again, would the nature of irrational or inanimate beings sustain wrong, for they will have no existence after the resurrection, and no wrong can be done to that which is not<sup>34</sup>.*

*And, besides, with creatures that have no notion of justice there can be no complaint of injustice. **Nor can it be said either that there is any injustice done as regards the man to be raised,** for he consists of soul and body, and he suffers no wrong as to either soul or body. No person in his senses will affirm that his soul suffers wrong because, in speaking so, he would at the same time be unawares reflecting on the present life also; for if now, while dwelling in a body subject to corruption and suffering, it has had no wrong done to it, much less will it suffer wrong when living in conjunction with a body which is free from corruption and suffering. The body, again, suffers no wrong; for if no wrong is done to it now while uniting a corruptible thing with an incorruptible, manifestly will it not be wronged when uniting an incorruptible with an incorruptible. No; nor can any one say that it is a work unworthy of God to raise up and bring together again a body which has been dissolved: for if the worse was not unworthy of him, namely, to make the body which is subject to corruption and suffering, much more is the better not unworthy, to make one liable to corruption or suffering<sup>35</sup>.*

<sup>34</sup> De Resurrectione 10 ANF. <sup>35</sup>  
De Resurrectione 10. ANF.



He defends his position against their objections that the bodies of men after dissolution come to form part of other bodies; and that things broken cannot be restored to their former state. Similarly God is not in want of the will to raise the dead - for it is neither unjust to raise men, nor to restore other beings; nor unworthy of Him - as is shown from the works of creation.

In chapter four Athenagoras presents the philosophical objection to the fact that some human bodies have become part of others; and then he refutes this objection.

*These persons, to wit, say that many bodies of those who have come to an unhappy death in shipwrecks and rivers have become food for fish, and many of those who perish in war, or who from some other sad cause or state of things are deprived of burial, lie exposed to become the food of any animals which may chance to light upon them. Since, then, bodies are thus consumed, and the members and parts composing them are broken up and distributed among a great multitude of animals, and by means of nutrition become incorporated with the bodies of those that are nourished by them, in the first place, they say, their separation from these is impossible; and besides this, in the second place, they adduce another circumstance more difficult still. When animals of the kind suitable for human food, which have fed on the bodies of men, pass through their stomach, and become incorporated with the bodies of those who have partaken of them, it is an absolute necessity, they say, that the parts of the bodies of men which have served as nourishment to the animals which have partaken of them should pass into other bodies of men, since the animals which meanwhile have been nourished by them convey the nutriment derived from those by whom they were nourished into those men of whom they become the nutriment<sup>36</sup>.*

<sup>36</sup> De Resurrectione 4 ANF.

In the following chapters, Athenagoras refutes this objection, giving the following proofs:

a. In chapter five, Athenagoras refers to the processes of digestion and nutrition.

*But it appears to me that such persons, in the first place, are ignorant of the power and skill of Him that fashioned and regulates this universe, who has adapted to the nature and kind of each animal the nourishment suitable and correspondent to it, and has neither ordained that everything in nature shall enter into union and combination with every kind of body, nor is at any loss to separate what has been so united<sup>37</sup>.*

- . The risen body is different from the present (chapter 7).
- . Nothing is impossible to God.

*To bestow any serious attention on such arguments would be not undeserving of censure, for it is really foolish to reply to superficial and trifling objections. It is surely far more probable, yea, most absolutely true, to say that what is impossible with men is possible with God<sup>38</sup>.*

## II. *Reality of it proved* (Chs. 12-25)

**The second part** gives proofs of resurrection related to man. According to Athenagoras the resurrection is based not only on the *judgment of men* as some believe, but on two main purposes: to realize *the aim of the creation of man*, and man's nature. In other words, without the resurrection, on one hand man who is the beloved creature is created by God in vain, and on the other hand the resurrection realized his nature which God granted him.

<sup>37</sup> *De Resurrectione* 5 ANF.

<sup>38</sup> *De Resurrectione* 9 ANF.

a. It is necessary for man whom God created as a sane being to live forever (11 -13). Man as a rational being, is destined for eternal survival . Man was created in the image of God to know Him and to be a perpetual beholder of the divine Wisdom.

*But God can neither have made man in vain, for He is wise, and no work of wisdom is in vain; nor for His own use, for He is in want of nothing...*

*He made him for the sake of the life of those created, which is not kindled for a little while and then extinguished...*

*But since this cause is seen to lie in perpetual existence, the being so created must be preserved for ever, doing and experiencing what is suitable to its nature, each of the two parts of which it consists contributing what belongs to it, so that the soul may exist and remain without change in the nature in which it was made, and discharge its appropriate functions (such as presiding over the impulses of the body , and judging of and measuring that which occurs from time to time by the proper standards and measures),and the body be moved according to its nature towards its appropriate objects, and undergo the changes allotted to it, and, among the rest (relating to age, or appearance, or size), the resurrection. For the resurrection is a species of change, and the last of all, and a change for the better or what still remains in existence at that time<sup>39</sup> .*

*So that, from what has been said, it is quite clear that the resurrection is plainly proved by the cause of man's creation, and the purpose of Him who made him... And in our investigation the cause of their creation is followed by the nature of the men so created, and the nature of those created by the just judgment of their maker upon them, and all these by the end of their existence<sup>40</sup> .*

<sup>39</sup> De Resurrectione 12 ANF.

<sup>40</sup> De Resurrectione 13 ANF.

b. Man is made of body and soul, and this unity is broken by death and raised anew by resurrection (14 -17). His dual nature requires perpetuity of existence in order to attain the true end of rational life. Athenagoras argued at length that the confession of God as the Creator required a doctrine of resurrection as the completion of the divine purpose, and that “*the reason for (man’s) coming to be guarantees his resurrection for without this he would not be permanent as man*”<sup>41</sup>. The ultimate end of man’s being is not oblivion or pleasure. It cannot be attained on earth, hence the necessity of a reconstitution.

*For many, in discussing the subject of the resurrection, have rested the whole cause on the third argument alone, deeming that the cause of the resurrection is the judgment. But the fallacy of this is very clearly shown, from the fact that, although all human beings who die rise again, yet not all who rise again are to be judged: for if only a just judgment were the cause of the resurrection, it would of course follow that those who had done neither evil nor good namely, very young children would not rise again; but seeing that all are to rise again, those who have died in infancy as well as others, they too justify our conclusion that the resurrection takes place not for the sake of the judgment as the primary reason, but in consequence of the purpose of God in forming men, and the nature of the beings so formed*<sup>42</sup>.

c. Because of the necessity of a retribution in the next world in which the body, too, must share, the body should share the soul in the reward of the coming world (18 -23). The body is partner to the soul in good and bad acts and both must be rewarded together. It is moreover unjust to reward or punish the soul alone, hence the necessity of a divine judgment upon the body and soul.

*Man, therefore, who consists of the two parts, must continue for ever. But it is impossible for him to continue*

<sup>41</sup> Emb. 13; Jaroslav Pelikan: *The Christian Tradition*, vol.1, Chicago, 1971, p. 51-2.

<sup>42</sup> *De Resurrectione* 14 ANF.

*unless he rise again. For if no resurrection were to take place, the nature of men as men would not continue. And if the nature of men does not continue, in vain has the soul been fitted to the need of the body and to its experiences; in vain has the body been fettered so that it cannot obtain what it longs for obedient to the reins of the soul, and guided by it as with a bridle...*

*But if vanity is utterly excluded from all the works of God, and from all the gifts bestowed by Him, the conclusion is unavoidable, that, along with the interminable duration of the soul, there will be a perpetual continuance of the body according to its proper nature<sup>43</sup>.*

*I mean man, consisting of soul and body, and that such man becomes accountable for all his actions, and receives for them either reward or punishment. Now, if the righteous judgment awards to both together its retribution that either the soul alone should receive the wages of the deeds wrought in union with the body (for this of itself has no inclination to the faults which are committed in connection with the pleasure or food and culture of the body), or that the body alone should (for this of itself is incapable of distinguishing law and justice), but man, composed of these, is subjected to trial for each of the deeds wrought by him; and if reason does not find this happening either in this life (for the award according to merit finds no place in the present existence, since many atheists and persons who practice every iniquity and wickedness live on to the last, unvisited by calamity, whilst, on the contrary, those who have manifestly lived an exemplary life in respect of every virtue, live in pain, in insult, in calumny and outrage, and suffering of all kinds) or after death (for both together no longer retaining anything of its former structure or form, much less the remembrance of its actions): the result of all this is very plain to every one, namely, that, in the language*

<sup>43</sup> *De Resurrectione* 15 ANF.

*of the apostle, “this corruptible (and dissoluble) must put on incorruption,” in order that those... who were dead, having been made alive by the resurrection, and the parts that were separated and entirely dissolved having been again united, each one may, in accordance with justice, receive what he has done by the body, whether it be good or bad<sup>44</sup>.*

Athenagoras states that man would be more unfavorably situated than the beasts if there were no resurrection.

*For if no judgment whatever were to be passed on the actions of men, men would have no advantage over the irrational creatures, but rather would fare worse than these do, inasmuch as they keep in subjection their passions, and concern themselves about piety, and righteousness, and the other virtues<sup>45</sup>.*

d. Man was created to enjoy eternity which does not exist here but in the afterlife (24-25).

*It is absolutely necessary that the end of man’s being should appear in some reconstitution of the two together, and of the same living being<sup>46</sup>.*



<sup>44</sup> *De Resurrectione* 18 ANF.

<sup>45</sup> *De Resurrectione* 19 ANF.

<sup>46</sup> *De Resurrectione* 25 ANF.

# ***HIS THEOLOGY AND THOUGHTS***

## **1. GOD**

I. As a Christian apologist, Athenagoras' conception of God is biblical. He was the first to attempt to give philosophical and scientific proofs about monotheism, that which the prophets witnessed for<sup>1</sup>. He does this by a study of the relation of the existence of God to place<sup>2</sup>. As a philosopher he wishes to show, in philosophical and scientific terms, that God is accessible to the human mind<sup>3</sup>. He is careful to ***adapt from Middle Platonism only what he needs for his purpose*** and he is able to set forth clearly the Christian concept of God as a loving Creator of the universe and of men<sup>4</sup>, and Father<sup>5</sup>.

II. His idea of God is fundamentally biblical. Athenagoras is confident that God's providence guides the righteous through all difficulties<sup>6</sup>. God is for him the Creator whose providence guides and governs all men's lives in their smallest details<sup>7</sup>. God, as ***the Father***, controls the world splendidly<sup>8</sup>, and nothing is beyond the reach of His guardianship and forethought<sup>9</sup>. God works upon matter much as a potter works upon his clay, fashioning it and giving it differentiation, shape, and order<sup>10</sup>, indeed there is an analogy

<sup>1</sup> Embassy 5-9. <sup>2</sup> Quasten: Patrology, vol. 1, p. 232. <sup>3</sup> Leslie W. Barnard: Athenagoras, Paris, 1972, p 81. <sup>4</sup> Embassy 12. <sup>5</sup> Ibid. 13, 27. W.R.. Schoedel: Athenagoras, Oxford, 1972, p. XVII. <sup>6</sup> De Resurrectione 18. <sup>7</sup> Embassy 16,25. <sup>8</sup> De Resurrectione 18. <sup>9</sup> Embassy 15.

between man's creative activity and God's. From His hand and mind come all created beauty seen on earth<sup>11</sup>.

W.R. Schoedel suggests the following scheme<sup>12</sup>:

. There is a general providence of God connected with the "law of reason," extending over the whole material world and over men as physical organisms.

. There is a restricted providence delegated to angels who have been set over aspects of creation; some of these angels, including the prince over matter, exercised their freedom and violated their office. The angels, with their offspring the demons, move men to folly, the prince over matter creates disorder in human affairs.

. There is a particular providence of God "over the worthy." This is not the Middle Platonic hierarchy with particular providence in the hands of the demons.

III. The heart of his belief is the unique, creative activity of God. He holds that the purpose of life is an inseparable companionship with the ultimate realities, an unceasing and exultant contemplation and service of the Creator as He is in Himself<sup>13</sup>, and that *contemplation would be the Christian's lot for all eternity*<sup>14</sup>.

. God, who is the Father, is also transcendent, unbegotten, possessing goodness, separated from matter which He nevertheless shapes in His creative purpose. He is Light *inaccessible*, Himself a universe of perfection and beauty, superior to the exigencies of change and decay, uncaused by anything outside of Himself<sup>15</sup>.

. *Goodness* is inseparably connected with God's Nature: "*This goodness is annexed to Him and co-existent with Him as surface is with body. It is nothing without Him, and, not being a part*

<sup>11</sup> Embassy 34. <sup>12</sup> W.R. Schoedel: *Athenagoras*, Oxford, 1972, p. XVII, XVIII. <sup>13</sup> *De Resurrectione* 25. <sup>14</sup> Barnard: *Athenagoras*, p. 91. <sup>15</sup> Barnard: *Athenagoras*, p. 91



*of Him, but, as it were, a necessary consequence of His being, so united and so closely allied to Him as the color blue is to the sky or golden yellow is to fire*<sup>16</sup>.” It is noticeable that Athenagoras does not say that God is goodness but that God has goodness. By this he avoids the Platonic identification of the form of the Good with the highest soul, that is God, and since the Good must communicate itself, so avoids a theory of emanations from God<sup>17</sup>.

VI. Athenagoras<sup>18</sup> argues that God is one, but unlike a human individual who is created and corruptible, composite and divisible (into parts), God is unbegotten, impassable and indivisible, and therefore not composed of parts.

VII. Athenagoras’ belief in the resurrection of the body<sup>19</sup> illustrates the completeness of his reliance on God’s power<sup>20</sup>.

VIII. **The power of God and His will are inseparable.** For all what God wills is possible to Him, or as Athenagoras says,

*For why should I speak of their correspondence each with each, and of their connection with one another? If indeed we ought to use the word connection, as though they were separated by some difference of nature; and not rather say, that what God can do he can also will, and that what God can will it is perfectly possible for Him to do, and that it is accordant with the dignity of Him who wills it*<sup>21</sup>.



<sup>16</sup> Embassy 10. <sup>17</sup> Barnard: Athenagoras, p. 86. <sup>18</sup> Supp. 8:2. <sup>19</sup> Embassy 31:4; 36:1-3. <sup>20</sup> W.R.. Schoedel: Athenagoras, Oxford, 1972, p. XVIII. <sup>21</sup> De Resurrectione 11 ANF.

## 2. THE TRINITARIAN FAITH

Athenagoras' doctrine of God culminates in Trinitarian theology<sup>22</sup>. The essential passage is as follows:

*"I have given sufficient proofs that we are not atheists, but hold God to be one, unbegotten, eternal, invisible, suffering nothing, comprehended by none, circumscribed by none, apprehended by mind and reasoning alone, girt about with light and beauty and spirit and power indescribable, Creator of all things by his Word, their embellisher and master.*

*We do indeed think also that God has a Son - please let no one laugh at the idea of God having a Son! This is not a case of the myths of the poets who make the gods out to be no better than men; we have no such ideas about God the Father or the Son. The Son of God is Word of the Father in thought and power. All things were made through Him and after His fashion. **The Father and the Son are one, the Son being in the Father and the Father in the Son by the powerful union of the Spirit - the Son of God is Mind and Word of the Father.***

*Now, if in your exceeding great sagacity, you wish to investigate what is meant by the Son, I will tell you in brief. He is the first-begotten of the Father. He did not indeed come to be, for God was from the beginning Being eternal Mind and had His Word within Himself **being from eternity possessed of a Word**; but He proceeded to become thought and power over the elements of undifferentiated nature when all the material elements were like a substrate in quiescence and the heavier elements lay mixed with the lighter. The Spirit of prophecy agrees with this account saying, 'The Lord made Me in the beginning of His works' (Prov 8:22). Then again this same **Holy Spirit** that works in those who utter prophecy, we call **an outflow from God***

<sup>22</sup> Embassy 10:2-5; 4:2; 12:3; 18:2; W.R.. Schoedel: Athenagoras, Oxford, 1972, p. XVIII.

*flowing out and returning like a ray of the sun. Who then would not be amazed hearing those called atheists who call God Father and Son and Holy Spirit, proclaiming their power in unity and their diversity in rank (order)?*<sup>23</sup>

I. The Trinitarian faith is in harmony with monotheism, as he says,

*...neither are we atheists who acknowledge and firmly hold that He is God who has formed all things by the Logos, and hold them by His Spirit*<sup>24</sup>.

II. God is a simple Spirit, supreme, perfect, able to do anything<sup>25</sup>. Showing that Christians were not polytheists, he became the **first Christian writer to treat of the Trinity in philosophical terms**<sup>26</sup>. He says that the essential works of Christians is, “to see the way of the Son with The Father,” what is the unity of the Son with the Father, what is the unity of all three, and the distinction of the united: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He spoke accurately and with perfect understanding of the unity of God, the unity of the Trinity.

*...they (the Christians) know God and His Logos, what is the oneness of the Son with the Father, what the communion of the Father with the Son, what is the Spirit, what is the unity of these three, the Spirit, the Son, the Father, and their distinction in unity*<sup>27</sup>.

**II. The Son is the uncreated Mind, Word, and Wisdom of the Father.** Athenagoras states strongly the divine nature of the Logos but, unlike Justin, he does not base the Son’s divinity upon the fact of His divine sonship, i.e. His generation from the Father, but with greater philosophical insight he derives the Son’s divinity

<sup>23</sup> Embassy 24, PG 6:908-9. <sup>24</sup> Embassy 6:3. <sup>25</sup> Embassy 27. <sup>26</sup> Michael O’Carrol: Trinitas, A Theological Encyclopedia of the Holy Trinity, Michael Glazier,

Inc., Wilmington, Delaware, 1987, p41. <sup>27</sup> Embassy 12.

from His being the Mind and Reason of the Father. Thus the logos -Son exists essentially and eternally within the deity and He is designated “God” together with the Father without distinction<sup>28</sup>.

Athenagoras emphasizes in Johannine terminology the intimate union of the Father and the Logos - Son: “*The Father and Son are one. The Son being in the Father and the Father in the Son*”<sup>29</sup>. In *Embassy* 12 he speaks of the unity of the Son with the Father and the sharing of the Father. This intimate, eternal, union and equality does not however obliterate the distinction between the Father and the Logos - the Son. This distinction becomes apparent *economically*, in that the Son is subject to the Father’s Will and Thought<sup>30</sup>.

Athenagoras warned from the philosophic way of understanding “The Father and Son,” and ensured “**The Son**” is an **everlasting Being with the Father**. The real danger for him was that the pagan would be ready to accept the idea of God having a son with his memories of the son of Zeus had by Alcmena or others. The Son of God is not like sons of men for He is His Word in idea and actualization. He is the unity with Him, for He is in the Father, and the Father in Him.

For Athenagoras<sup>31</sup>, God being eternally “*endowed with Reason (Logikos), had the Logos within Himself eternally, and that, therefore, the Son as Logos did not come into existence*,” but was eternal. He states that the unoriginate, eternal and invisible God created, adorned, actually governs the universe by His Word, who is the Son of God.

What Athenagoras wants to say is obviously that the Son is eternal although begotten and hence pre-existent to all creation, and that He is in fact the one who organized the material creation

<sup>28</sup> Barnard: *Athenagoras*, p. 101.

<sup>29</sup> *Embassy* 10. <sup>30</sup> Barnard:

*Athenagoras*, p. 98. <sup>31</sup>

*Athenagoras: Supp.* 10:2.

from an undifferentiated state into a world of order, weight, and measure.<sup>32</sup>

Athenagoras holds that the Logos is the agent of the Father in creation<sup>33</sup>, closely following St. John and St. Paul, but his teaching is peculiar in describing the logos as the “*idea of all material things*” and holding that “*all things were made through Him and agreeably to Him*”<sup>34</sup> which draws out the meaning of Col. 1:16f. The logos is, for Athenagoras, the power or energy of the divine mind operating in conditions of space and time. As such He not only possesses an ideal plan of the cosmos but has the power to bring that plan into concrete existence. He proceeds from the inner life of the Godhead and from the creation onwards continues in perpetual relation with the cosmos as God’s vice-agent, the Governor and Upholder of the Universe<sup>35</sup>.

. The Holy Spirit is described as an **outflow (effluence)** (‘atto’ppoidv) **of the Father**, coming forth and returning like a ray of light from fire or beam of the sun<sup>36</sup>. He says “*We confirm the Holy Spirit himself inspired the prophets, flowing from God and reflecting Him*”<sup>37</sup>. The term “aporrsia” (outflow) to the Holy Spirit cannot imply His subordination to the other two *hypostaseis*, for the Three are joined several times<sup>38</sup>.

. Athenagoras asserts the place of **the Holy Spirit as the eminent power in creation**. God has created all things by His Word and holds them in being by the Spirit that is from Him<sup>39</sup>.

VI. That divine Persons should have such *êiêiûiéá* (fellowship or kinship)<sup>40</sup>. Some interpreters of his work have made him say that it is by kinship in one divine *nature* that the Three are

<sup>32</sup> Joseph Hugh Crehan: *Athenagoras*, Newman Press, 1956 (ACW, vol. 23), p. 133.

<sup>33</sup> Embassy 4, 6, 10, 18. <sup>34</sup> Embassy 10 <sup>35</sup> Barnard: *Athenagoras*, p. 100. <sup>36</sup> Joseph

Hugh Crehan: *Athenagoras*, Newman Press, 1956 (ACW, vol. 23), p. 22. <sup>37</sup>

Embassy 10, 24. <sup>38</sup> Ibid. 10, 12, 24. <sup>39</sup> Ibid. 6:3. <sup>40</sup> Embassy 12.

one, but that would be to make the Divine Persons no better than the instances of a universal, like men sharing in a common humanity. He can hardly have meant this<sup>41</sup>. Crehan suggests<sup>42</sup> that Plato may have predisposed him to adopt the term. Barnard states that Plato nowhere suggests that Persons might have such a (*koinonia*), it seems more probable that Athenagoras has merely drawn on the earlier Christian use of this term in 2 Cor. 13:14 where it is used in connection with the divine triad with the probable meaning of participation by Christians in the Holy Spirit<sup>43</sup>. It will be as well to cite the relevant texts<sup>44</sup>:

*We are guided by the Spirit alone to know the true God and His Logos, to know what the unity of the Son with the Father is, what the fellowship of the Father with the Son is, what the Spirit is, and to know what is the unity and division of these<sup>45</sup> Three great ones thus united - Spirit, Son and Father* .

*For we speak of His Logos as God too and Son and of Holy Spirit likewise, united into one by power and divided in order<sup>46</sup>* .

In the last passage from *Embassy* 24 Athenagoras distinguishes the divine triad from a host of “powers” concerned with material nature.

VII. The idea of considering **the Spirit as the uniting power of the Father and the Son** is here set forth for the first time in Christian theology. No doubt one can derive it from certain Johannine phrases, but Athenagoras has supplied it with its first technical terms<sup>47</sup> .



<sup>41</sup> Joseph Hugh Crehan: *Athenagoras*, Newman Press, 1956 (ACW, vol. 23), p. 21. <sup>42</sup> A.C.W., vol. 23, p. 21, 137. <sup>43</sup> Barnard: *Athenagoras*, p. 110. <sup>44</sup> Barnard: *Athenagoras*, p. 109. <sup>45</sup> Ibid. 12. <sup>46</sup> Ibid. 24. <sup>47</sup> Joseph Hugh Crehan: *Athenagoras*, Newman Press, 1956 (ACW, vol. 23), p. 132.

### 3. THE CREATION

Athenagoras writes,

*If He (God) was not ignorant of the nature of the elements that are to be constituted in being - out of which man's body is to be formed - even before they enter severally into the composition which is proper to them, and if He was not ignorant of the parts of these elements from which He was to take what was fitting for the composition of man's body, then it is very clear that neither, after the complete dissolution of the whole, will He be ignorant of the place to which each part has gone that He took for the completion of each individual<sup>48</sup>.*

Barnard states that the implication of this passage is that God originally formed the elements of men's bodies from preexisting matter. But Athenagoras in these passages does not say that matter existed eternally as an antithesis to God, as Plato believed, although equally neither does he explicitly state that matter was the creation of God in an unformed state which He then organized, through the agency of the Logos, to bring into being the phenomenal world. It is noticeable that Athenagoras, unlike Justin, does not fall into the error of trying to bring Gen. 1:1 into line with the Middle Platonist teaching concerning the eternity of matter<sup>49</sup>.



### 4. MAN

Athenagoras views the body organs as instruments performing actions, showing thoughts and deeds, though sharing the same responsibility with the soul. So no complete worship is done

<sup>48</sup> *De Resurrectione* 2. <sup>49</sup> Barnard: *Athenagoras*, p. 115-6

without involving the body and soul, and the just judgment falls on both of them<sup>50</sup> .

The soul remains in an equable existence proper to it by nature and undertakes its natural tasks; that is to say, it is by nature appointed to govern the instincts of the body and to judge and estimate by suitable canons and measures the stimuli that occur<sup>51</sup> .

The image of God is in man's nature and is not a static thing like a stamp on wax, but a developing or growth towards a pattern of existence<sup>52</sup> .



## 5. THE BODY

The body is an instrument for fulfilling the thoughts and words, but is responsible with the soul in every action. Worship can not be realized without the fellowship of the body and soul.

He explains that the death of human beings is not on the same level with that of irrational animals, nor is the continuance of men like that of the immortals<sup>53</sup> . With the irrational animals, man must undergo dissolution of the body, yet with the immortals he shares in immortality through his soul. It is as a human being, not as a disembodied soul, that man will and must continue forever<sup>54</sup> .

Athenagoras, although arguing strongly for the reconstitution of the body after death, nowhere refers to the resurrection of Christ and in no way bases his belief on it. In the first chapter of *De Resurrectione*, he prepares his readers for this, assuring that he is writing to the non-Christians



<sup>50</sup> Embassy 27. <sup>51</sup> Joseph Hugh Crehan: *Athenagoras*, Newman Press, 1956 (ACW, vol. 23), p. 97. <sup>52</sup> Joseph Hugh Crehan: *Athenagoras*, Newman Press, 1956 (ACW, vol. 23), p. 174. <sup>53</sup> *De Resurrectione* 16. <sup>54</sup> Barnard: *Athenagoras*, p. 129.



## 6. THE SOUL

Following St. Justin, Athenagoras rejects, with Middle Platonism, the Aristotelian belief that the soul was an attribute of the body and could not exist without it. However he differs from Justin in his emphasis that man is not soul alone, nor body alone, but a composite being of the two elements united into one. The function of the soul towards the body is that of driver or commander whose bridle rein curbs the body - here Athenagoras is close to Plato's view.

Athenagoras differs from Plato; the former sees that the realities in man can't be complete without the support of body and soul together, the two are conjoined to form one composite being<sup>55</sup> so that to the one being is attributed all the actions of the soul and the body<sup>56</sup>, but the latter sees man as a spirit using a body. This Christian understanding of man itself rested on the Hebrew conception that man has not a body but is a body with no rigid distinction between physical and spiritual. Man in his totality, for this Hebrew-Christian view, is not a discarnate spirit but a spiritual-corporal entity.

Athenagoras reacted strongly against the Greek doctrine as he insisted that man must have his body with him forever. If man *as man* is incomplete without his body, that body is not a prison-house or tomb of the soul (as in Pythagorean and Platonic thought) and its union with the soul is a good thing. He was also against the Platonic theory of the transmigration of souls.

Athenagoras held that man has been created for a purpose:

*Thus since man was created neither in vain nor without cause - nor nothing made by God lacks a cause in the mind of the Creator nor yet for the need of the Creator nor of any of His creatures, it is plain that God made man, in the first and most general aspect of the matter, for Him*

<sup>55</sup> *De Resurrectione* 12. <sup>56</sup> Barnard:  
*Athenagoras*, p. 122-3.

*self and for His goodness and Wisdom's sake, that was to  
be made manifest upon the face of all His handiwork*<sup>57</sup>

Man, it will be noted, was not created by God for His own use, nor that is He in need of any creature, nor can any creature contribute anything to God. Neither was man made for the sake of other creatures, for nothing that is endowed with reason and judgment has been or is created for the use of another, whether greater or lesser than itself. Reason cannot discover any use which might be a cause for the creation of man. And the fact that man was not created to serve man follows from the same line of argument. As far as God is concerned man is well-ordered, both by his original nature which has one common character for all, and by the constitution of his body, which does not transgress the law imposed upon it, and by the termination of his life, which remains equal and common to all<sup>58</sup>.

Athenagoras gives no explicit teaching about the qualities of the soul, its simplicity, unity or distinction between its faculties. His main concern is to argue for the resurrection of the body and he introduces his views of the soul only in so far as they assist the establishment of his main thesis<sup>59</sup>.



## 7. THE ANGELS

Athenagoras' theological doctrine also contains "*a host of angels and ministers whom God, the Creator of the world, set in their places through the Logos coming from Him, commanding them to be concerned with the planets, the heavens, and the world with what is in it, and with the good order of all*"<sup>60</sup>." Our faith in angels as heavenly beings, serving God and caring for the creation, is an inseparable part of the common faith. After his defense about

<sup>57</sup> *De Resurrectione* 12. <sup>58</sup> *Embassy* 25; Barnard:  
*Athenagoras*, p. 124-5. <sup>59</sup> Barnard: *Athenagoras*,  
p. 126. <sup>60</sup> *Embassy* 19:5.

the accusation of Atheism, he adds “*But our knowledge about theology does not stop here, as we believe in a multitude of angels and servants whom God, Maker and Artificer of the universe, set in their place by means of His Word and appointed severally to be in charge of the elements and the heavens and the universe and all it contains and its good order*”<sup>61</sup>.

Athenagoras strongly emphasizes the place and function of angels within the divine providence. While God has a general and creative providence over everything the angels have a providence over each part of the creation.

“*While God had the general and creative providence over all, these angels set over each part were to have providence over that part. And just as with men who have power to choose good or evil - for you would not honor the virtuous and punish evildoers if vice and virtue were not within their free choice - some are found zealous for what they are entrusted with by you, and others remiss, so it is with these angels too: some remained at the task for which they were created and to which they were appointed by God (for they had received free will from God), while others acted wantonly towards their own nature and their charge, that is, the ruler of this realm of matter and of the forms that are in it, and others that were in charge of the first firmament. Pray, realize that we tell of nothing without evidence, but expound what the prophets have declared. Well then, these angels fell a - lusting after maidens and yielded to fleshly desires, and he, the chief of them, became heed less and wicked in the administration of his charge... Earthly wisdom differs from that of the prophets as a likely tale does from the truth; the one is earthbound and under the ruler of matter, the other is from heaven*”<sup>62</sup>.

<sup>61</sup> Embassy 10. <sup>62</sup> Embassy 24; Joseph Hugh Crehan: *Athenagoras*, Newman Press, 1956 (ACW, vol. 23), p. 62-63.

Athenagoras, like St. Justin, has more to say about the existence and activity of evil angels than that of the good angels. He believes that the angels were originally created good and, like humans, had received free-will from God. Unfortunately, some angelic administrators included a spirit who was opposed to God, therefore was untrustworthy. However this spirit, whom Athenagoras does not call the devil; nor any other name, became heedless and wicked in the administration of his charge and took to guiding and directing the material world in opposition to the goodness of God<sup>63</sup>. As “*prince of matter*,” he operated wickedly when governing the material world, while subordinates lusted after virgins and succumbed to the flesh<sup>64</sup>.

Athenagoras, in support of this theory of the fall of the angels, appeals to the witness of the prophets, no doubt by this meaning Gen. 6.2-5 which says that the sons of God came in to the daughters of men. The LXX originally rendered “sons of God” by (*angelio tou theou*) and so a tradition grew up in Greek Judaism that it was the union of angels with men which produced giants, whose souls are “*the demons who wander about the world*”<sup>65</sup>.

He held that these fallen angels dwell about the earth and sky, and so cannot stretch upwards into the regions above the heavens “*stationed at the first firmament*.” They harass and drag men hither and thither even though each man has the same rational principle within<sup>66</sup>. In particular the evil spirits are responsible for the vagaries of idol worship usurping the names of men and working through images and statues<sup>67</sup>. Polytheism and idolatry alike are delusions<sup>68</sup>.

However, in Athenagoras’ view, the activity of evil spirits is terrible yet they are not beyond control. Man, in origin and in

<sup>63</sup> Barnard: Athenagoras, p. 112. <sup>64</sup> Embassy 24;5. <sup>65</sup> Embassy 25:1. <sup>66</sup> Embassy 25. <sup>67</sup> Embassy 26. <sup>68</sup> Robert M. Grant: Greek Apologists of the Second Century, Westminster, Philadelphia, 1988, p.

himself, is a well-ordered being with a rational nature possessed of a mental disposition (*diathesis*) which was not intended to transgress its own law<sup>69</sup>. And there remains a host of good angels who have not fallen<sup>70</sup>.

His approach is more philosophical and represents a rational attempt to explain the origin of evil. Yet Athenagoras, as with the other early Christian Fathers, really believes that the evil spirits are everywhere actively urging men to work against nature. He speaks of the artifices of the demons, saying:

*... the demons who hover about matter, greedy of sacrificial odours and the blood of victims, and ever ready to lead men into error, avail themselves of these delusive movements of the souls of the multitude; and, taking possession of their thoughts, cause to flow into the mind empty visions as if coming from the idols and the statues; and when, too, a soul of itself, as being immortal, moves comfortably to reason, either predicting the future or healing the present, the demons claim the glory of themselves<sup>71</sup>.*

However he is even more sure that God's providence is ultimately in control of the universe in spite of the fact that some angels and men have abused the freedom given to them by God<sup>72</sup>.



## 8. THE CHURCH

Through the writings of Athenagoras, we can discover the features of the Alexandrian Church:

a. The Alexandrian Church was in fact a community of righteousness and sanctity:

<sup>69</sup> Embassy 25. <sup>70</sup> Barnard: Athenagoras, p. 113. <sup>71</sup> Embassy 27 ANF. <sup>72</sup> Barnard: Athenagoras, p. 114.

*If, indeed, any one can convict us of a crime, be it small or great, we do not ask to be excused from punishment, but are prepared to undergo the sharpest and most merciless inflections<sup>73</sup> .*

b. There were Christians in the Alexandrian Church in his day who were rich enough to own slaves, some few, some many<sup>74</sup> , as well as many Christians of very humble origin<sup>75</sup> . But no slave, he says, had ever brought a false accusation against them, possibly a reference to denial under torture.

Not long after the time of Athenagoras there were so many rich members of the Alexandrian Church that Clement of Alexandria devoted a special sermon to the question<sup>76</sup> , and Origen could mention “not only rich men, but persons of rank and delicate and high-born ladies who receive the teachers of Christianity<sup>77</sup> .”



## 9. THE LITURGY

It is not to be expected that Athenagoras would make any formal references to the Christian sacraments as his main purpose is simply to refute calumnies against Christians and to defend monotheism. Any references are a *priori* likely to be allusive - and, in any event, the observance of the *disciplina arcani* inhibited a full description of these rites even if Athenagoras had been minded to give such.

The **Eucharist** for Athenagoras as for the early Fathers, such as St. Ignatius<sup>78</sup> and St. Clement of Rome<sup>79</sup> , was a real sacrifice. Athenagoras certainly deserves the credit for introducing

<sup>73</sup> Embassy 2. <sup>74</sup> Embassy 35. <sup>75</sup> Barnard: Athenagoras, p. 149. <sup>76</sup> *Quis dives salvetur.* <sup>77</sup> cf. Celsus 3: 9. <sup>78</sup> For St. Ignatius the Eucharistic assembly of the church is “*thusiasterion*” or “*the place of the*

*sacrifice.*” Ep. to Eph. 5:2. <sup>79</sup> For St. Clement of Rome the bishop’s work is to offer “*prospheretia*” the oblation. (1 Clem. 14)

into the vocabulary of Christian theology the term ‘*unbloody sacrifice*’ where the sword is a word and where no blood is shed.

The **kiss of peace**, the liturgical or apostolic kiss in the Christian liturgy is mentioned by Athenagoras. It is still exchanged in the Coptic and the Ethiopian Orthodox Churches while it disappeared from other churches. St. Cyril of Jerusalem says, “ Do not think that this kiss is like that which friends are accustomed to give one another when they meet in the *agro*. This kiss unites the souls together and destroys all resentment.”

In *Embassy* 13 Athenagoras seems to be quoting from a public prayer in praise of the Creator: “*who stretched out the heavens and reared them into a vault and established the earth as the center of things, who gathered the waters into seas and separated light from darkness, who bedecked the sky with stars and made the earth bud forth every green thing, who made the animals and fashioned man.*’ Similar prayers are to be found in Melito’s *Homily on the Passion* and in the *Apostolic Constitutions*.

A minor liturgical reminiscence seems to have survived at the end of *Embassy* 10, where a Trinitarian phrase echoes the style of many early church prayers to the Trinity. The words: We ‘*call God Father and Son and Holy Spirit, proclaiming their power in unity and in rank their diversity,*’ have the articulation of later Trinitarian prayers with the balance of contrasting clauses. That Christians of the period did call upon the Trinity is shown by the hymn which runs: ‘*As we sing to Father Son and Holy Spirit, may all the powers join with us to say Amen. To the only*<sup>80</sup> *giver of all good things be power and praise. Amen .*’ This liturgical hymn is published in *Oxy. papyrus* 1786, along with the music that it was sung to, and again in *Patrologia Orientalis* 18:507. The papyrus has a 3rd century mercantile account on the reverse side. The hymn must have been in use in Egypt at least soon after the time of Athenagoras.



<sup>80</sup> Joseph Hugh Crehan: *Athenagoras*, Newman Press, 1956 (ACW, vol. 23), p. 24.

## 10. THE RIGHTS OF THE EMBRYO

At the time where law did not treat the embryo as a being with rights, Athenagoras declares the church teaching, as the embryo is a being who has the right to live, if aborted by pills, it is a crime of murder. He says, “*We call it murder and say it will be accountable to God if women use instruments to procure abortion*”<sup>81</sup>.

Abortion is condemned by Philo<sup>82</sup>, and Josephus<sup>83</sup>. The Roman law did not forbid it as a murder, but an offense against the husband’s right<sup>84</sup>.

The Apocalypses Petri<sup>85</sup> assign a punishment in hell to those who procure abortion by corrupting the work of God. The epistle of Barnabas<sup>86</sup> and the Didache<sup>87</sup> give a general prohibition of abortion.



## 11. HUMAN FREEDOM

Christians, like Athenagoras, put the Creator as a center of their philosophy ensuring the importance of man and his free will<sup>88</sup>. Freedom faces us with responsibility so we are judged for every action. If man falls into evil, he is judged, and thrown into the fire of eternity as his spirit does not vanish, and if he follows God, he lives in the heavenly eternity.



<sup>81</sup> Embassy, 35. <sup>82</sup> De spec. leg. 3:108-115. <sup>83</sup> C. Ap. 2:202. <sup>84</sup> Dig 47:11:4; 48:19:39. <sup>85</sup> The Coptic (Akhmin) fr. 26. <sup>86</sup> 19:5.

<sup>87</sup> 2:2. <sup>88</sup> W.R.. Schoedel: Athenagoras, Oxford, 1972, p. XXII; Embassy 24,25.



**12.**

# THE SCRIPTURES

89

Athenagoras' references to the Old and New Testaments are very few. His main purpose was apologetic, i.e. to defend the faith against certain calumnies by a subtle use of contemporary philosophy<sup>90</sup> rather than by a detailed appeal to the sacred books of the Church. Without this base further theological progress and the preaching of the Gospel would have been of no benefit. The biblical tradition was, for Athenagoras, not essential to his argument as he wished to defend the faith.

In *Embassy 9* he says, "*On our side we have prophets as witnesses of our ideas and beliefs, men who have spoken out under divine inspiration about God and the things of God.*" Thus, he states that the prophets guarantee Christian reasoning and mentions Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah and the rest of the Old Testament prophets as inspired by the Divine Spirit much as a flutist blows on his flute. He then quotes Exod. 20:2, 3; Isa. 44:6; 43:10, II and 66:1 as a buttress for his argument for monotheism concluding with the words "I leave it to you, since you are possessed of the books themselves, to examine more closely the prophecies of these men, in order that you may prepare with fitting reflection to remove this Disgrace from us." The apologist assumes that the LXX, which was widely known, would be consulted by those who wished to know the basis for Christian monotheism. It is significant that he suggests nowhere that the prophets were Jewish or had any status independently of Christianity. Athenagoras has a few other Old Testament quotations. In *Embassy 10* he quotes Prov. 8. 22 in connection with his doctrine of creation, and in *Embassy 12* he cites "let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die" from Isa. 22:13 (cf. I Cor. 15:32). There are only two other quotations in *De Resurrectione*, viz. *De Resurrectione 19*, a further citation of Isa. 22:13, and *De Resurrectione 23* from Exod. 20:12, 13 (cf. Luke. 18:20) - two of the ten commandments.

<sup>90</sup> Leslie W. Barnard: *Athenagoras, Paris, 1972, p 69 ff.*  
Leslie W. Barnard: *Athenagoras, Paris, 1972, p.78, 79.*

Concerning the New Testament, in *Embassy II* he quotes Mt. 5:44,45 exactly with an addition from Luke. 6:28: “*Love your enemies; bless them that curse you; pray for them that persecute you, that you may be the children of your Father which is in heaven, who makes His sun to rise upon the good and bad, and rains upon the just and unjust.*” The quotation is completed in *Embassy I2*: “*If you love them that love you and lend to them that lend to you, what reward shall you have?*” Athenagoras’ only other direct New Testament quotations is found in *Embassy 37*, the conclusion of the work, where the first half of I Tim. 2. 2 is cited. The sum total of Athenagoras’ quotations from the New Testament is five and four of these appear, in one form or another, in the Sermon on the Mount.

Athenagoras is considered an excellent witness for the inspired education,

*For poets and philosophers, as to other subjects so also to this, have applied themselves in the way of conjecture, moved, by reason of their affinity with the afflatus from God, each one by his own soul, to try whether he could find out and apprehend the truth; but they have not been found competent fully to apprehend it, because they thought fit to learn, not from God concerning God, but each one from himself; hence they came each to his own conclusion respecting God, and matter, and forms, and the world. But we have for witnesses of the things we apprehend and believe, prophets, men who have pronounced concerning God and the things of God, guided by the spirit of God. And you too will admit, excelling all others as you do in intelligence and in piety towards the true God, that it would be irrational for us to cease to believe in the prophets like musical instruments, and to give heed to mere human opinions .*

<sup>91</sup> Embassy 7. ANF.

*But since the voices of the prophets confirm our arguments, I think that you also, with your great attainments in learning, cannot be ignorant of the writings either of Moses or of Isaiah and Jeremiah, and the other prophets, who, lifted in ecstasy above the natural operations of their minds by the impulses of the Divine Spirit, uttered the things with which they were inspired, the Spirit making use of them as a flute-player<sup>92</sup> breathes into a flute .*

Athenagoras does not forget to call the two emperors to read the Bible, inspired by the Holy Spirit, which declares the perfection of truth.

*But I leave it to you, when you meet with the books themselves, to examine carefully the prophecies contained<sup>93</sup> in them .*



## 13. THE CHRISTIAN TRADITION

Athenagoras says,

*Do not be surprised that I am reproducing exactly the account customary among us. To prevent your being carried away by the unreasonable opinion of the multitude and to give you opportunity to know the truth, I give this exact report. By the dogmas to which we give assent, not man-made but divine and taught by God, we are able to persuade you that you have not to regard us as you would atheists.*

L.W. Barnard comments that Athenagoras is clearly referring to a common stock of earlier Christian teaching handed down in the Christian community to which he belonged. This no doubt

<sup>92</sup> Embassy 9 ANF.

<sup>93</sup> Embassy 9 ANF.

included items, such as belief in the Incarnation, which are not used in the *Embassy*. It is not possible however to discover, from Athenagoras' works, the creed which was used in this community<sup>94</sup>.



## 14. THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD AND SACRIFICES

God is not in need of animal sacrifices, but He wants us to acknowledge Him as our Creator and Father who is taking care of us.

*As to our not sacrificing; the Framer of this universe does not need blood, nor the odour of burnt-offerings, nor the fragrance of flowers and incense, forasmuch as He is Himself perfect fragrance, needing nothing either within or without; but the noblest sacrifice to Him is for us to **know** who stretched out and vaulted the heavens, and fixed the earth in its place like a center, who gathered the water into the seas and divided the light from the darkness...*

*And what have I to do with holocausts, which God does not stand in need of? - though indeed it does behoove us to offer a bloodless sacrifice and “the service of our reason”<sup>95</sup>.*



## 15. CHASTITY

Athenagoras praises chastity as one of the fruits of great Christian life, clarifying its positive target “you find amidst us

<sup>94</sup> Leslie W. Barnard: *Athenagoras*, Paris, 1972, p.73.

<sup>95</sup> *Embassy* 13 ANF.

many men and women, unmarried, hoping for a life deeper with God.”



## 16. THE VIRGINITY

In the early Church, virginity for the sake of God, establishes a relationship with the divine. This is stated as something taken quite for granted in Athenagoras’ *Embassy for the Christians*: “*To abide as a virgin or a eunuch unites one to God, while a mere [unclean] thought or evil desire turns one away from Him.*” There are in the Christian community, Athenagoras says, “*both men and women who are growing old in virginity in the hope of being united more closely to God*”<sup>96</sup>.



## 17. THE WORLD

Athenagoras speaks of God in relation to the universe as the Fram<sup>97</sup>er of matter, the Maker of all things<sup>98</sup>, the Father and Maker of all<sup>99</sup>, who works on matter as a potter works on his clay<sup>100</sup>. However he does not give any clear explanation as to how this matter came into existence although, in two passages, he appears to hold that matter pre-existed in an undifferentiated form<sup>101</sup>.

*“The world is fair indeed, and excels in size and array all that exists in the ecliptic and all that is about the Pole, and it excels too in the beauty of its spherical form; yet not this but its maker is to be adored... The world did not come to be for any need on the part of God. God is all*

<sup>96</sup> Emb. 33; B. Ramsey: *Beginning to Read the Fathers*, Paulist Press, 1985, p. 142.

<sup>97</sup> Embassy 15. <sup>98</sup> Embassy 4. <sup>99</sup> Embassy 13. <sup>100</sup> Embassy 15. <sup>101</sup> L.W. Barnard: *Athenagoras*, p. 115.

*in-all to Himself, light inaccessible, a universe of perfection,  
spirit, power, and reason<sup>102</sup> .”*

God’s freedom in creating was a stumbling block to the Stoic, to whom the movement of creation was a biological urge as powerful as the sex instinct<sup>103</sup> .

Athenagoras considers the world as a good divine gift, which is bestowed upon us not to worship it but the Giver;

*Beautiful without doubt is the world... Yet it is not this, but its Artificer, that we must worship...*

*If, therefore the world is an instrument in tune, and moving in well-measured time, I adore the Being who gave its harmony, and strikes its notes, and sings the accordant strain, and not the instrument<sup>104</sup> .*



## 18. PERSECUTION

As we have mentioned, Athenagoras, in a biblical thought reveals that persecution of the believers is based on the accusation of name. They do not deserve any penalty, but the world cannot accept the name of Christ, to whom the believers are attributed.

*Names are not deserving of hatred; it is the unjust act that calls for penalty and punishment. And accordingly, with admiration of your mildness and gentleness towards every man, individuals live in the position of equal rights; and the cities, according to their rank, share in equal honor; and the whole empire, under your intelligent sway, enjoys profound peace. But for us who are called Christians you have notion like manner cared; but although we commit no wrong - nay, as will appear in the sequel of this discourse, are of all men most piously and righteously disposed towards the deity and towards your government -*

<sup>102</sup> Joseph Hugh Crehan: Athenagoras, Newman Press, 1956 (ACW, vol. 23), p. 46. <sup>103</sup>

Joseph Hugh Crehan: Athenagoras, Newman Press, 1956 (ACW, vol. 23), p. 140 <sup>104</sup>  
Embassy 16 ANF.

*you allow us to be harassed, plundered, and persecuted, **the** multitude making war upon us for our name alone<sup>105</sup> .*

*The judges, instead of inquiring whether the person arraigned has committed any crime, vent their insults on the name, as if that were itself a crime<sup>106</sup> .*



## 19. ETERNAL LIFE

*He, being Himself light, sees all things in our heart, we are persuaded that when we are removed from the present life **we shall live another life, better than the present one, and heavenly, not earthly** (since we shall abide near God, and with God, free from all change or suffering in the soul, not as flesh, even though we shall have flesh, but as heavenly spirit), or, falling with the rest, a worse one and in fire; for God has not made us as sheep or beasts of burden, a mere by-work, and that we should perish and be annihilated. On these grounds it is not likely that we should wish to do evil, or deliver ourselves over to the great Judge to be punished<sup>107</sup> .*

*Therefore, having the hope of eternal life, we despise the things of this life, even to the pleasures of the soul, each of us reckoning her his wife whom he has married according to laws laid down by us, and that only for the purpose of having children<sup>108</sup> .*



<sup>105</sup> Embassy 1.  
<sup>106</sup> Embassy 2.  
Embassy 31 ANF.  
<sup>108</sup> Embassy 33 ANF.



## ATHENAGORAS AND PAGAN CULTURE<sup>109</sup>

1       **Proverbs:** Athenagoras has studied philosophy, but he is essentially a grammarian, proud of his erudition. Greek education began with proverbs, and it is natural to find them in Athenagoras. One is a tale from the *Iliad*: “Sleep and death are twins” (12.3); another is a “sentence”: “Those who test the quality of honey and whey can tell if the whole is good by tasting one small sample” (12.4). In one instance a proverb is identified as such: “The harlot presumes to teach the chaste woman,” and in the same passage adulterers and pederasts are said to live “like fish” because “they swallow up whoever comes their way, the stronger possessing the weaker” (34.1, 3).

2       **Poets:** Most of his quotations come from Homer, seventeen from the *Iliad* and only three from the *Odyssey*. There are also two from the *Orphic* literature, three from *Hesiod*, and four from unidentified tragedians; one apiece from *Aeschylus*, *Pseudo-Sophocles*, and *Pindar*; and eight from the more popular moralist *Euripides*.

3       **Literature of and on Religion:** Athenagoras cites the theosophical literature of his time for pagan ideas about the gods and the beginning of the world. He is the first known author to mention Hermes Trismegistus, who like Alexander the Great “links his own family with the gods” (28.6).

4       **Historians on Religion:** Athenagoras’ use of Herodotus is especially interesting. Like Tatian he cites the historian for the date of Hesiod and Homer (17.2), but he also uses him as an authority on Egyptian religion. Eight quotations and three references come from Herodotus’ study of Egypt in his second book and serve chiefly to show that the Egyptian “gods” were human. Such direct use was unusual, but Athenagoras was relying on Herodotus because of his critical attitude toward Egyptian religion. Perhaps

<sup>109</sup> For more details see: Robert M. Grant: *Greek Apologists of the Second Century*, Westminster, Philadelphia, 1988, p. 103 f.

he knew that an Egyptian magician had accompanied the emperor by the Danube.

**5. Historians of Art:** Tatian found Greek sculpture objectionable and used literary sources to attack the models used by sculptors.

Athenagoras seems less hostile but when he lists the originators of various arts he is trying to show how recent and artificial Greek ideas about the gods are (17.3). He explains how “tracing out shadows” leads to painting and relief modeling, which then are followed by sculpture and molding, and he finally provides a brief list of sculptors who made famous statues of gods and goddesses.

**6. Philosophers:** We have already mentioned Athenagoras’ relationship with philosophers.

### WAS ATHENAGORAS PLATONIC?

With Athenagoras, we touch upon tokens of things to come; we see philosophy joined to the chariot of the Messiah<sup>110</sup>.

In the time of Athenagoras, Tertullian was to write that Plato was used by all the heretics<sup>111</sup>, and Tatian was to produce a diatribe against the classics. It is surprising then that Athenagoras himself should show such sympathy for Platonic ways of thought, but, if his earlier life had been that of an exponent of Plato’s philosophy, then one can understand this difference of attitude very well<sup>112</sup>.

Athenagoras has a high reverence for Plato. Some scholars consider him as a Platonist, though he abandoned some Platonic opinions in later life<sup>113</sup>. But he is not overawed by the authority of the great philosopher and adapts only what he wants to serve the needs of the Christian Faith. He is a philosopher related to the re

<sup>110</sup> *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 2, p. 125.

<sup>111</sup> *Tertullian, De an. 23: omnium haereticorum condimentarium.*

<sup>112</sup> *Joseph Hugh Crehan: Athenagoras, Newman Press, 1956 (ACW, vol. 23), p.15.*

<sup>113</sup> *Michael O’Carrol: Trinitas, A Theological Encyclopedia of the Holy Trinity, Michael Glazier, Inc., Wilmington, Delaware, 1987, p41.*

cent Platonism, but does not fully submit to it. After becoming a Christian, he chose the best belief and was the first caller for elitism. This, in substance, indicates that every belief thus carrying a part of the truth is the best, so it is better for man to request the perfect truth willingly. Athenagoras reveals the inability of philosophers to reach the perfect truth, so the necessity arises for the inspiration of prophets.

The fact that Athenagoras is not overwhelmed by this eclecticism but manages instead to adapt what he wants to serve the needs of the Christian Gospel is a measure of his ability as a philosopher. Another factor in the complex philosophic environment of the second century apologists was the continuing debates between the various schools of Greek philosophy which went on throughout the Hellenistic period<sup>114</sup>.

Athenagoras' technique in developing argument is manifestly Platonic: there is the analogy from agriculture and the manual arts besought to suggest lines of thought; the derivation game is played in the manner of the *Cratylus*. It does not mean that he was Platonic. His firm rejection of the transmigration of souls is proof enough of that<sup>115</sup>.

Athenagoras expressly states that Plato was no atheist, but he does not want to call him a Christian before his time, and there is no sign that the stories of Plato's having studied the Old Testament during his visit to Egypt were believed by Athenagoras, though they had been accepted by Justin<sup>116</sup> a generation earlier, and in this Clement of Alexandria followed Justin avidly.

Plato believes in a divine providence and a judgment at the end of the world. Athenagoras goes further in holding firmly to God's divine revelation which was a work of providence beyond all human understanding and expectation. Plato's *Minos* and *Rhadamanthus*, for Athenagoras, will themselves have to submit to the

<sup>114</sup> Leslie W. Barnard: *Athenagoras*, Paris, 1972, p. 39. <sup>115</sup>  
J.H. Crehan: *Athenagoras* (ACW, vol. 23, 1956, p. 15. <sup>116</sup>  
*Justin, 1 Apol. 60.7: Clement, Strom. 5.14.103.1-4.*

judgment of God<sup>117</sup>. So Plato is not a Christian before Christ but one who hovers on the verge of the idea of revelation. It was therefore entirely proper that a Christian apologist should use so much of his philosophy as could be made serviceable for Christian needs. In this way Christianity could be presented as the crowning perfection of Greek thought and culture<sup>118</sup>.

God is accessible to *Nous* alone, says Athenagoras<sup>119</sup> in a sentence that Plato might have written, but, when he wants a word for God's inaccessibility, it is to St. Paul's vocabulary that he turns and not to the language of the Platonic way of negation<sup>120</sup>.

In Ch. 12 (Embassy) he makes what must be regarded as the first Christian use of the analogy of being in a philosophical argument.

Goodness is an inseparable accident of God's nature for Athenagoras, and herein he differs widely from Plato. There is always a problem for the Platonic scholar, whether to make the highest in the hierarchy of forms a soul or not, and those Platonists who hold that the form of the Good was the highest soul, or God, by actual identification, find it hard to avoid saying that God must necessarily produce emanations of Himself, since the Good is communicative of itself by its very nature. Athenagoras by making God's goodness an inseparable property of His being, as natural to Him as a skin is to a body or their ruddy color to flames of fire, seems to be seeking to avoid having to say that God must necessarily communicate His being by some kind of creation<sup>121</sup>.

Athenagoras does indeed speak of God the Son as the thought and power (ἐνάε ἀϊνᾶν) of the Father and says that all things were made through Him and after His fashion, or agree

<sup>117</sup> Embassy 12. <sup>118</sup> Leslie W. Barnard: *Athenagoras, Paris, 1972, p. 47.* <sup>119</sup> Emb. 10.

ἀϊνᾶν comes from 2 Cor. 9.15 and is not Platonic. <sup>120</sup> Joseph Hugh Crehan:

*Athenagoras, Newman Press, 1956 (ACW, vol. 23), p. 16.* <sup>121</sup> Joseph Hugh Crehan:

*Athenagoras, Newman Press, 1956 (ACW, vol. 23), p. 17.*

ably to Him. In this he is following the Prologue of St. John more closely than anything that is specifically Platonic<sup>122</sup>.

The devil is not the counterpart to God's being, but to His goodness, which goodness has been declared to belong to, but not to be identified with, God's being. Thus Athenagoras finds a rather primitive way of avoiding the dualism which in his Gnostic surroundings must have been very catching. That he should avoid it says much for his integrity as a Christian thinker.

One notable difference between Athenagoras and his master is in the account of the human soul. Whereas Plato has accepted the threefold division of the soul, Athenagoras has abandoned it for a twofold division. Even among the Stoics man was held to be made up of body, spirit, and mind, and Jewish thought had always accepted this threefold division. The third member, the mind was to the Stoic a participation in the divinity. Athenagoras, in order to avoid falling into this form of paganism, may have been content to accept as much of this account as he could, holding man to be body and spirit and making his mind to be independent of that of God and somehow to be identical with his spirit. Partnership rather than opposition is the keynote of their relation, and the Platonic notion of the body as a prison house has been set aside<sup>123</sup>.

When Plato said<sup>124</sup> that it was a hard task to find the Maker of this universe and impossible to declare Him to the rest of mankind, he seemed to a Christian to hover on the verge of the idea of a revelation. One had only to put his premises into relation with the other idea that God exercises a providential care over the world, to produce if not a conclusion at least a suspicion that there would be a revelation from God to lighten man's task. Athenagoras is so sure of God's revelation from his Christian faith, that he can afford to retain much of the philosophy of his former master Plato, as leading thereto<sup>125</sup>.

<sup>122</sup> Joseph Hugh Crehan: *Athenagoras*, Newman Press, 1956 (ACW, vol. 23), p. 18.

<sup>123</sup> Joseph Hugh Crehan: *Athenagoras*, Newman Press, 1956 (ACW, vol. 23), p. 19.

<sup>124</sup> Tim. 48a. <sup>125</sup> Joseph Hugh Crehan: *Athenagoras*, Newman Press, 1956 (ACW, vol. 23), p.21.

L.W. Barnard explains in detail how Athenagoras does not adopt the Platonic ideas as they were, but accepts what is in harmony with the holy Scriptures.

## **WAS ATHENAGORAS A MONTANIST?**

The Accusation of Montanism has been brought against Athenagoras, not by his contemporaries, but by some scholars. Tillemont thinks he was... depending on two things.

1- He compared the prophet to a flute, on which the Holy Spirit plays, like Manes, but that analogy was common to the Greeks. Hippolytus, Justin, Pseudo-Justin, Tertullian, and Philo, used it<sup>126</sup>. St. Clement of Alexandria called the prophets “the organs of the divine voice”<sup>127</sup>.

2. Athenagoras who agrees with the Montanists on the subject of second marriage, calls it a “*respectable form of adultery*,” or a “*decent adultery*”<sup>128</sup>, but differs in many points to marriage.

Whereas Athenagoras regards marriage as holy, his target is reproduction of children and to complete God’s purpose, Manes regards marriage as adultery, not for the chosen, to nourish lust and whoever married was not allowed to bear children.

Athenagoras considers the state of chastity as unity with God, perfected, but voluntary, not obligatory as Manes said. His refusal of the second marriage after the death of the first partner, is due to his eternal idea about marriage. It is a sacrament which death cannot part.

## **HIS MOST IMPORTANT THEOLOGICAL MISTAKES**

The church calls him philosopher not saint, due to his fall into some theological mistakes.

<sup>126</sup> Cf. Epiphanius, *Haer.* 48.4; Hippolytus, *De antichr.* 2; Justin, *Dial.* 115; Ps.-Justin, *Cohort.* 8; Tertullian, *Adv. Marc.* 4.22; Philo, *Quis rer. div. haer.* 264; Plato, *Phaedr.* 249d.

<sup>127</sup> *Stromata* 6:18:168:3.

<sup>128</sup> J.W.C. Wand: *A History of the Early Church to A.D. 500*, 1974, p 61.

1. He calls Satan as the prince of materialism, God made him its forebearer.
  - He thinks the spirit incomplete if not united to the body.
  - He calls for no punishment to children for their mistakes.
4. He stated that demons practiced sexual intercourse with girls who brought forth the Amalekites.

# THE DEANS OF THE SCHOOL OF ALEXANDRIA

## 3

# ST. CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA *HIS LIFE*

A. Harnack states that Clement's work is perhaps the most daring undertaking in the history of the Church<sup>1</sup>. H.B. Swete says, "Perhaps nothing in the whole range of early patristic literature is more stimulating to the modern reader than (Clement's) great trilogy of graduated instruction in the Christian life<sup>2</sup>. J. Patrick speaks of him as "the first systematic teacher of Christian doctrine, the formal champion of liberal culture in the Church<sup>3</sup>." "I do not know," says Maurice, "where we shall look for a purer or truer man than this Clement of Alexandria... He seems to me to be one of the old Fathers whom we should all have revered most as a teacher, and loved most as a friend<sup>4</sup>."

1 A. Harnack: *History of Dogma*, London 1896, vol. 2, p. 324. 2 Swete: *Patristic Study*, London, 1902, p. 48. 3 J. Patrick: *Clement of Alexandria*, London, 1914, p. 13. 4 see Simon P. Wood: *Clement of Alexandria*, N. Y. 1954, p. XIII, (*Frs of the Church*, vol. 23).



Titus Flavius Clement was the father of the Christian philosophy of Alexandria<sup>5</sup>, and was well-versed in the Holy Scriptures. He was born around the year 150 A.D. Concerning his birth-place, there were already two traditions in the time of St. Epiphanius<sup>6</sup> (in the fourth century), giving Athens or Alexandria. The second, arose from his long stay in that city, while the first agrees better with his book "*Stromata*" 1:11. Because of his Roman name, some historians consider him a member of the imperial family<sup>7</sup>, or an offspring of a slave freed by the emperor Vasianus or his son<sup>8</sup>.

His parents were not Christians. Clement was a converted person, not a birthright Christian. Nothing is known about the date, circumstances or the motives of his conversion. He was religious-minded. He was seeking God. But God had to satisfy him religiously, intellectually, and morally. He found that the God of the Christians could do this. The gods of the Greeks seemed to him empty of power, philosophically inept, and morally corrupt and corrupting<sup>9</sup>. So, reluctantly, gradually, thoughtfully, he rejected them, and found among the Christians the God he was seeking. It is known that he made extensive travels to Southern Italy, Syria, and Palestine. His purpose is to seek instruction from the most famous Christian teachers. He was searching unceasingly for God. At the end of his journey, he reached Alexandria where St. Pantaenus' lectures attracted him to the extent that he settled there and made this city his second home<sup>10</sup>.

Pantaenus is a shadowy figure. He was obviously a great teacher and a magnetic personality<sup>11</sup>. Of his teacher, St. Pantaenus, he states, "*When I came upon the last (teacher), he was the first in power, having pursued him out concealed in Egypt, I found rest.*"

5 Schaff: *The History of Christian Church*, vol. 2, p. 782. 6 Adv. Haer. 32:6. 7 Butcher: *Story of Church of Egypt*, vol. 1, p.49. 8 C. Bigg: *Christian Platonists of Alexandria*, Oxford 1886, p. 45. 9 John Ferguson : *Clement of Alexandria*, Twayne Publishers, NY 1974, p. 13. 10 Quasten: *Patrology*, vol. 2, p. 5. 11 John Ferguson : *Clement of Alexandria*, Twayne Publishers, NY 1974, p. 14.

*He, the true, the Sicilian bee gathering the spoil of the flowers of the prophetic and apostolic meadow, engendered in the souls of hearers a deathless element of knowledge."*

He became the disciple, and assistant of St. Pantaenus. He was ordained a priest in Alexandria, discharged his catechetical duties with great distinction, and followed St. Pantaenus as head of the School before 190 A.D. Among his disciples were Origen and Alexander, bishop of Jerusalem. It is clear, alike from his general attitude and from specific references, that he was a shepherd of souls as well as a formal teacher, a minister to the needs of others<sup>12</sup>.

Only a few years after the death of St. Pantaenus, in the time of severe persecution by Septimus Severus about 202 or 203 A.D, he was forced to leave Alexandria to take refuge (probably in Palestine and Syria).

**Why did he escape from the persecution?** St. Clement, St. Peter of Alexandria, and St. Athanasius give us a biblical answer, as we will see hereafter. However, his flight was for the benefit of the Church in Jerusalem. Its bishop Alexander wrote a letter to the Church in Antioch in c. 211, in which he mentioned that the letter was carried by the blessed priest Clement, a pious and blessed man, of whom he had heard and who had known him. He added that the coming of this priest to Jerusalem was through the divine providence, for the Church of the Lord was sustained and progressed by him. The letter concludes with the words: "I am sending this, my dear brethren, by the hand of the blessed elder Clement, a man whose quality has been amply proved. You have heard of him already and will come to know him better. His presence here, through the providential direction of the Master, strengthened and spread the church of the Lord."

Eusebius of Caesarea (260-340) notes that St. Clement was a priest and that he was regarded as a holy man of great learning

<sup>12</sup> John Ferguson : *Clement of Alexandria*, Twayne Publishers, NY 1974, p. 16.

by his contemporaries<sup>13</sup>. He also describes him as "practiced in Scripture"<sup>14</sup>. St. Cyril of Alexandria describes him as "fond of learning" and "exceptionally expert in Greek History"<sup>15</sup>; and St. Jerome as producing "notable volume full of learning and eloquence, using both Scripture and secular literature"<sup>16</sup>. Also in his letter to Magnus, an orator of Rome St. Jerome writes, "Clement, a presbyter of Alexandria, in my judgment the most learned of men"<sup>17</sup>. He mentions him as producing "notable volumes full of learning and eloquence using both Scripture and secular literature." Socrates also describes him together with Origen, as "men eminent for their information in every department of literature and science"<sup>18</sup>.

The persecution had ceased, but it seems that St. Clement did not return to Alexandria. In 215 A.D he died. By 216 A.D. Alexander of Antioch refers to him in such a way that he must have been dead<sup>19</sup>; he is one of "those blessed men who have trodden the road before us."

St. Clement never indicates that he was married or that he had a family. He does, however, devote considerable attention to the Christian standard of sexual morality within marriage<sup>20</sup> and cites the death of children as one of life's great tragedies<sup>21</sup>. Still, this does no more than "prove" that he was a student of human nature. J. Ferguson believes that he was married, as he says, "He writes with sympathetic insight of married men rather than bachelors"<sup>22</sup>. The man without a home, he says, is missing a lot<sup>23</sup>, and he writes, as if at first hand, of the wife's concern in time of

13 Rev. James E. Furman: *St. Clement of Alexandria: Making Gnosis Serve Ecclesia*, Coptic Church Review, Fall 1987, v. 8, No. 3, p. 67-68. 14 Eusebius: *H.E.* 5:11. 15 *In Jul.* 7:231; 6:205. 16 *Vir Illus.* 38. 17 *Epistle* 70:5. 18 Socrates: *H.E.* 2 : 35. 19 Eusebius *H E* 6,14,8.cf. 6, 19, 16 20 *Paidagogos* 2:10 ANF. 21 *Stromata* 2:23 ANF. 22 *Paidagogos* 3:11. 23 *Stromata* 7:12.

illness<sup>24</sup>, of home-life on a winter night<sup>25</sup>, of the quiet fellowship of the home<sup>26</sup>. But we are only guessing<sup>27</sup>.”

In the West, St. Clement is regarded as a saint in many localities, but he has been excluded from the Roman Martyrology by Popes Clement VIII and Benedict XIV.

### **WHY HAS ST. CLEMENT BEEN OBSCURED FOR A LONG TIME?**

Perhaps for the following reasons:

1. His close relationship with his disciple Origen, who was considered a heretic, and almost all Origen's Greek writings have been lost.
2. The confusion between him and his namesake St. Clement of Rome.
3. The obscurity of the theological system of St. Clement of Alexandria.



*24 Stromata 2:23. 25 Paidagogos 2,9-10 26 Stromata 3,9-10. 27 John Ferguson : Clement of Alexandria, Twayne Publishers, NY 1974, p. 16.*

# ***HIS WRITINGS***

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF HIS WRITINGS**

J. Quasten says, "Although we know very little of Clement's life, **we get a clear picture of his personality from his writings**, which show the hand of a master planner and for the first time he brought Christian doctrine face to face with the ideas and achievements of the time<sup>1</sup>."

We can summarize the characteristics of his writings in the following:

1. The writings of St. Clement reveal that he was sincere in studying contemporary culture, while his heart was inflamed with divine love. In other words he mixed philosophy and science with faith, or as Quasten says, "He must be called the pioneer of Christian scholarship. His literary work proves that he was a man of comprehensive education extending to philosophy, poetry, archaeology, mythology and literature. He did not, it is true, always go back to the original sources but in many instances used anthologies and *florilegia*. But his knowledge of early Christian literature, of the Bible as well as of all post-apostolic and heretical works, is complete<sup>2</sup>."

St. Clement's style is not always easy. He writes from a full heart and rich culture, in accordance with his character: peaceful, non-controversial, and gentle. He was contemplative and preferred to speak of the beauty of truth rather than argue for its existence; he preferred to win the heart rather than crush all opposition<sup>3</sup>.

2. St. Clement's writings explain that not only are study and faith inseparable, but also that study and pastoral work are integral

1J. Quasten: *Patrology*, vol. 2, p.6. 2Ibid. 3Simon P. Wood: *Clement of Alexandria*, N. Y. 1954, p. XII, XIII (*Frs of the Church*, vol. 23).

and inseparable. Truly he devoted his life for research and study but with an open heart and a broad-mind, inflamed with the desire for the salvation of all men, whatever their culture or education was.

According to Farrar<sup>4</sup>, St. Clement correlated science together with preaching and ministry. Compenhausen Hans Von states that his research and thoughts were endless. He was the teacher of guiding dialogues, and at the same time he was a minister, whose aim was to introduce men to Christ. He had a missionary character, was a preacher and an educated shepherd of souls<sup>5</sup>.

1. As he loved the true *gnosis* (knowledge) he desired every Christian to be a true *Gnostic*. His Christology, therefore, concentrates on the redeeming work of Christ as the Light<sup>6</sup>, Who shines upon our minds, that they might be illuminated, and he calls baptism "illumination." In the *Protrepticus* he calls men to accept our Lord Jesus, saying, "*The Logos is not hidden from any one. He is the general Light, who shines upon all. Therefore there is no darkness in the world. May we hurry to attain our salvation. May we hurry to attain our renewal*"<sup>7</sup>."
2. St. Clement and his disciple Origen were **optimistic**<sup>8</sup>. His optimistic attitude is very clear in his writings which concentrate on the following points:

I. The first and greatest lesson for the *Gnostic* or the true believer is **to know himself, for thus not only he knows God whose joyful kingdom is within him, but also he will be in His likeness.**

II. His theology concentrates on the unceasingly inner renewal realized by the Holy Spirit who deified the believers.

III. In his writings he calls the *Gnostics* to attain the exceedingly spiritual joy under all circumstances, even while they are sleeping.

<sup>4</sup>F.W. Farrar: *Lives of the Fathers*, London, 1907, vol. 1, p. 365-6.

<sup>5</sup>Cf. *The Fathers of the Greek Church*, London, 1963, p.25. <sup>6</sup>Robert Rainy: *The Ancient Catholic Church*, Edinburgh, 1926, p. 168.

<sup>7</sup>*Protrepticus* 9. <sup>8</sup>H.W.C. Frend: *The Rise of Christianity*, 1989, p. 338.

1. St. Clement's writings reveal him as a Christian writer who is more attractive when viewed at a distance... He has a comprehensive outlook, and an ardent mind. He attracts us by his warm sympathy, his sincerity, and his zeal for the study of God<sup>9</sup>, and of man.
2. St. Clement often complained of the opposition he encountered around him<sup>10</sup>, perhaps from the false Gnostics (the heretics).

*Should there be no writing at all, or are there some to whom this right should be restricted? In the former case, of what use are letters? In the second alternative, should the right to write be given to those who are in earnest or to those who are not?... Are we, for instance, to allow Theopompus, Timaeus the author of impure fables, Epicurus the advocate of atheism, Hipponax or Archilochus, to write their shameful works, and forbid one who reveals the truth to leave to posterity writings which will do good?*<sup>11</sup>

*I am not unaware that certain ignorant people, who take fright at the least noise, would have us confine ourselves to essential things and those related to the faith, and think we ought to neglect those things which come from without and are superfluous*<sup>12</sup>.

*Some people, who think themselves to be spiritual, believe that one ought to have nothing to do either with philosophy or with dialectic or even to apply oneself to the study of the universe. They advocate faith pure and simple, as if they were to refuse to labor on a vine and wanted immediately to pick the grapes*<sup>13</sup>.

9J. Lebreton and J. Zeiller: *The History of the Primitive Church*, N.Y., 1947, p. 894-5. 10Lebreton, p. 907 f. 11Stromata 1:1:1-2. 12Stromata 1:1:18:2. 13Stromata 1:9:43:1.

7. St. Clement uses the mystical meanings of the numbers.

Here are some examples:

I. He writes, "'Confess to the Lord on the harp; play to Him on the psaltery of ten strings. Sing to Him a new song.' And does not **the ten-stringed psaltery indicate the Lord Jesus**, who is manifested by the element of the decade?"<sup>14</sup> The word *Jesus* in Greek starts with the letter *iota* which resembles number 10.

II. The servants of Abraham by whom he defeated a very great number of the enemy were 318 (Gen. 14:14). This number in Greek consists of two letters: the *iota* (i), and the *eta* (T). The *iota* is the first letter for the name of the Savior (Isos), and the letter *iota*, is the type of the Lord's sign, i.e. the cross. Therefore, victory is realized by those who fellow the Crucified Jesus<sup>15</sup>.

8. St. Clement is a biblical writer. John Ferguson states, The Bible was of course there, though his citations are interestingly free. There is no part of the Bible which he neglects, but he naturally has his favorite passages. These are *Genesis* 1 (the creation-story), the Decalogue, the Sermon on the Mount, *John* 1 (the coming of the Logos), the hymn to love in *the letter to Corinth*, *Ephesians* 4. All these are texts which illustrate his theological position. He loves the *Psalms* and the epigrammatic wisdom of *Proverbs*... He is not greatly interested in the historical books. He walks uneasily among the minor prophets, but Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel are much in his mind - though, curiously, he never cites the valley of dry bones (*Ezek.* 37). He neglects *Mark* by comparison with the other evangelists, but speaks in a letter of a longer, secret version of Mark circulating in Alexandria. Besides the canonical gospels, *The Gospel according to the Hebrews* and *The Gospel according to the Egyptians* were familiar in Alexandria, but Clement accords them a very different

<sup>14</sup>*Stromata* 2:4.

<sup>15</sup>*Stromata* 6:11.



status from the others<sup>16</sup>. He also cites works like *The Shepherd of Hermas* or *The Epistle of Barnabas* which were outside the eventual canon of scripture, but for a long while on the fringe of it<sup>17</sup>.

## DATE OF HIS WRITINGS

John Ferguson states, "We can not be certain of the dates of his writings, but Mehat has suggested a reasonable timetable of the main works as follows: c. 195 *Exhortation*; c. 197 *The Tutor*; c.198 *Miscellanies* 1; c. 199-201 *Miscellanies* 2-5; c.203 (after he left Alexandria) *Miscellanies* 6-7;c. 203 *Salvation for the Rich?*; c.204 *Extracts from the Prophetic Scriptures*; c. 204 -10 *Outlines*<sup>18</sup>."

## ST. CLEMENT'S TRILOGY OF HIS WRITINGS

The chief work of St. Clement is the trilogy, which consists of the following books: 1 - The Exhortation of the Greeks (*Protrepticus*). 2 - The Educator or the Tutor (*Paidagogos*). 3 - The *Stromata*, Carpets or Miscellaneous studies. In the last fifty years the problem of the relationship between this trilogy attracted the attention of scholars<sup>19</sup>. This trilogy, in fact, gives reliable information regarding St. Clement's theological system. St. Clement believes that God's plan for our salvation takes three steps; first, the Word of God, or the Logos invites mankind to abandon paganism through faith, then reforms their lives by moral precepts. Finally, He elevates those who have undergone this moral purification to the perfect knowledge of divine things, which he calls "*gnosis*" (Knowledge). In other words the work of Christ is considered an invitation to abandon idolatry, for the redemption from sin, and finally redemption from error which left mankind blind and helpless.

<sup>16</sup>*Stromata* 2,9,45; 3,9,63. <sup>17</sup>John Ferguson : *Clement of Alexandria*, Twayne Publishers, NY 1974, p. 19. <sup>18</sup>John Ferguson : *Clement of Alexandria*, Twayne Publishers, NY 1974, p. 16-7. <sup>19</sup>F.F. Osborn: *The Philosophy of Clement of Alexandria*, Cambridge 1957, p. 3.

This divine program for our salvation had its reflection in the Alexandrian School at the time of St. Clement. The school focused its program on the same three steps:

- . Conversion of pagans to Christianity.
- . Practicing the moral precepts.
- . Instructing Christians to attain perfect knowledge of doctrine.

### **1. The Exhortation to the Heathen (*Protrepticus*):**

The title *Protrepticus* was familiar: it is a well-known literary genre. St. Clement is suggesting that Christ, the Logos of God, calls us to the true philosophy. We expect an exhortation to the study of philosophy. Is he calling the Greeks to philosophy, seeing philosophy as a forerunner of Christ, leading men to Christ? Or is he arguing that the Christian religion is the true heir of Greek philosophy?<sup>20</sup>

In fact this work stands in the tradition of apologetic writing, with a vehement note criticizing the superstition, crudity and eroticism of pagan cults and myths, and observing that the great philosophers, despite their realization of the corruption of paganism, had failed to break with it<sup>21</sup>. St. Clement shows appreciation for the values of Hellenistic culture, and affirms that truth is also to be found in the ancient philosophers and poets. William A. Jurgens<sup>22</sup> says that this work is closely related to earlier Christian apologies; but still, Clement has found a new approach. He no longer finds it necessary to rescue Christianity from the onslaughts of slander and calumny; rather, he is deeply concerned with the educative function of the Logos, the Divine Logos, throughout the history of mankind. This being his concern, the work bears some claim to being a theology of history.

<sup>20</sup>John Ferguson : *Clement of Alexandria*, Twayne Publishers, NY 1974, p. 44.

<sup>21</sup>H. Chadwick: *The Early Church*, 1969, p. 94. <sup>22</sup>W.A. Jurgens: *The Faith of the Early Fathers*, vo. 1, p 176.

It was probably written about 190 A.D. It is a warm exhortation, addressed to the pagans, aiming at their conversion by listening to the Logos, who is called "***Protrepticus***," i.e. the ***Converter***; for He is not only the sole Master who invites us to abandon paganism, but also through Him alone we seek total conversion. The purpose of this work is to convince the worshippers of the gods of the folly and worthlessness of pagan beliefs, to point out the shameless features of obscure mysteries and to induce the pagans to accept the only true religion, the teaching of the Logos, who after being announced by the prophets, has appeared as Christ. He promises a life which leads to the fulfillment of the deepest human longing because it gives redemption and immortality<sup>23</sup> .

Eusebius states that it was suitable for Clement to declare the foolishness of paganism, for he passed through it and escaped from its plague. He shows considerable knowledge of the Mysteries which he attacks. But much ancient religion had its roots in fertility ritual: Aphrodite did have her sacred prostitutes, and there was much to shock the puritan. There is much of the student of Greek religion. Initiates of Aphrodite receive the gift of a cake of salt and a model phallus and give a coin in return. Initiates in the Mysteries of the Corybantes proclaim: "I ate from the drum; I drank from the cymbal; I carried the holy plate; I crept into the bridal bed." The ritual includes a taboo on wild celery. The priests are called "Celebrates of the Sovereigns." Initiates of Sabazios have a snake tattooed on their chest<sup>24</sup> .

In chapter three, St. Clement states that the Greeks called the Christians godless, because they did not recognize the gods of the Greeks. St. Clement flings the epithet back in their teeth. It is the Greeks who are godless in not recognizing the true God, and in giving the name of gods to beings who do not exist. An interesting parenthesis lists some of those rationalists who had attracted the

<sup>23</sup>Quasten: *Patrology*, vol. 2, p. 7. <sup>24</sup>John Ferguson : *Clement of Alexandria*, Twayne Publishers, NY 1974, p. 48.

title of godless, Euhemerus, Nicanor, Diagoras, Hippo, Theodorus, and others. Clement comments that they may not have understood the truth but they at least suspected the error, and that was enough to kindle a seed of wisdom. He now turns *to identify seven causes of*

*idolatry*. These are<sup>25</sup> :

1. The deification of the heavenly bodies,
2. The deification of the fruits of the earth,
3. The invention of gods to explain disaster in terms of punishment,
4. The representation of emotions as gods,
5. The derivation of gods from the texture of human life,
6. The twelve gods of Hesiod and Homer,
7. The invention of savior-gods to explain the blessings received from the true God.

In chapter four, St. Clement lists some cult-statues by known artists, and gives his sources. He begins to sketch a theory of art. First, technique may be praised in its own right. Second, art can create illusion, but it can never create life, and cannot take in a rational being<sup>26</sup>. He clarifies that by worshipping idols, and through lusts *they play the tyrant over beauty*. He says, “*Beauty becomes ugly when it is consumed by outrage. Mortal, do not play the tyrant over beauty. Do not commit outrage against the bloom of youth.*” St. Clement ends this chapter with a passage of real eloquence:

*Let none of you worship the sun; but set your hearts  
on the sun's Maker.*

*Do not any of you deify the universe; search for the  
Creator of the universe.*

*The only refuge, then, for the man who purposes to  
reach the gates of salvation is divine wisdom.*

In chapters five and six, St. Clement regards the philosophers as atheists in their exaltation of matter. They failed to

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, 49-50. <sup>26</sup>John Ferguson : *Clement of Alexandria*, Twayne Publishers, NY 1974, p. 53.

discern the Creator of the elements. At the same time he considers the views of all these thinkers worth recording. Epicures alone he banishes from memory. The philosophers, says Clement, are scaring us with ghosties and ghoulies, with their flux, locomotion, and unplanned vortices. It is idolatry to worship winds, air, fire, earth, stones, stocks, iron, the very world. Their astronomy is astrology. Clement's language echoes the words used of Socrates by his critics<sup>27</sup>. He goes on: "*It is the Lord of the spirits, the Lord of the fire, the Maker of the universe, Him who lighted up the sun, that I long for. I seek after God, not the works of God.*"

In chapter seven he explains that poets bear to the truth, while in chapters eight and nine he turns to what is for him the real thing, the prophetic scriptures, whose oracular utterances hold before us in the clearest possible light the direction towards piety, and so lay the foundation-stone of truth. He quotes Isaiah freely and accurately, but in the middle attributes to him a catena of passages taken from Jeremiah. He quotes Amos, but he in fact attributes the passage to Hosea. Such errors are easy to make; they show that St. Clement is quoting from a well-stored memory. He turns next to the New Testament and can still startle us by throwing in a phrase from Homer in the middle of his scriptural citations. God shows supreme love of mankind. He does not behave like a teacher to students, a master to slaves, a god to humans, but admonishes his children "like a gentle father"<sup>28</sup>. "God's instrument in teaching is the collection of the Scriptures"<sup>29</sup>.

In chapter ten he gives an answer to the objection of the heathen, that it was not right to abandon the customs of their fathers. They must not be enslaved to this evil customs, but say good-bye to fancies, opinion and false tradition.

In the last two chapters, St. Clement explains how great are the benefits conferred on the believer through the advent of Christ:

<sup>27</sup>John Ferguson : *Clement of Alexandria*, Twayne Publishers, NY 1974, p. 55.

<sup>28</sup>Homer *Od.* 2,47. <sup>29</sup>John Ferguson : *Clement of Alexandria*, Twayne Publishers, NY 1974, p.57 f.

1. He grants man freedom which he had lost. Man was originally the child of God, playing in innocent freedom. He was led astray through the serpent's pleasure. The Lord wanted to free him again, bound himself in flesh to worst the serpent and enslave death the dictator. The Lord died and man rose. The Logos, which, we must always remember, means Reason, has come to us from heaven<sup>30</sup>.

*O mystic wonder! The Lord was laid low, and man rose up; and he that fell from Paradise receives as the reward of obedience something greater [than Paradise] - namely, heaven itself<sup>31</sup>.*

1. As we have our Divine Teacher, so we ought not to bother our heads with education from Athens, the rest of Greece, or Ionia. Our Teacher has filled the whole world with His holy energies so that the whole world has become an Athens, a Greece. Athens itself has already become the domain of the Logos.
2. We receive our Savior as the Divine Light.

*Sweet is the Logos who gives us light... He has changed sunset into sunrise, and through the cross brought death to life; and having wrenched man from destruction<sup>32</sup>.*

4. We attain the heavenly love, which is kindled by the Logos:

*The heavenly and truly divine love comes to men thus, when in the soul itself the spark of true goodness, kindled in the soul by the Divine Logos, is able to burst forth into flame<sup>33</sup>.*

5. We attain the adoption to God:

<sup>30</sup>John Ferguson : *Clement of Alexandria*, Twayne Publishers, NY 1974, p. 63.

<sup>31</sup>*Protrepticus* 11. <sup>32</sup>*ibid.* <sup>33</sup>*ibid.*

*For us, yea us, He has adopted , and wished to be  
called the Father of us alone, not of the unbelieving<sup>34</sup> .*

6. He grants the saintly life, in our thoughts, words and conduct:

*Such is our position who are attendants of Christ.  
As are men's wishes, so are their words;  
As are their words, so are their deeds;  
And as their works, such is their life.  
Good is the whole life of those who have known  
Christ<sup>35</sup> .*

The Exhortation begins with an attractive borrowing from Classic heritage: the Greek myth that pictures Orpheus singing and composing music, a young and beautiful creator filling the mountain forests with new songs, gathering wood and creatures together as happy concert-goers. This story is used to introduce Jesus, moving from a Greek "alpha" to a scriptural "omega."

St. Clement, turns to Homer for the phrase "soother of pain, calmer of wrath, producing forgetfulness of all ills<sup>36</sup> ." Building on this text, St. Clement teaches that *"a beautiful, breathing instrument of music the Lord made man, after His own image<sup>37</sup> ."* In turn, this leads to a plea grounded in both the Classics and the Scriptures: *"You have, then, God's promise; you have His love: become partaker of his grace. And do not suppose the song of salvation to be new, as a vessel or a house is new. For "before the morning star it was;" and "in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Error seems old, but truth seems a new thing<sup>38</sup> ."*

The immorality of Greek mythology, the prostitution of Greek art, and the vagaries of the philosophers, were unsparingly

<sup>34</sup>Ibid 12. <sup>35</sup>Ibid. <sup>36</sup>Odyssey 6:299. <sup>37</sup>Protrep. 1:1. <sup>38</sup>Rev. James E. Furman: St. Clement of Alexandria: Making Gnosis Serve Ecclesia, Coptic Church Review, Fall 1987, v. 8, No. 3, p. 68.

set forth with an extraordinary amount of direct quotation, often of Greek classics now lost. Yet these philosophers, St. Clement went on to say, sometimes did find the truth in part and spoke by divine inspiration, Plato, Socrates, and Pythagoras. This truth, however, is mixed with error and must be refined. It contrasted the purity and mobility of the teachings of the prophets and to those of Christ. The result was taken to be conversion.

St. Clement assures that the Logos is not hidden from anyone, for He is the Light of the world, the Sun of Justice, who shines now on all the world, which is no longer in darkness, therefore let all hurry to their salvation and renewal (Ch. 9).

*Hail, O light! For buried in darkness and shut up in the shadow of death, light has shone forth in us from heaven, purer than the sun, sweeter than life here below. That light is eternal life; and whoever partakes of it lives. But night fears the light, and hiding itself in terror, gives place to the day of the Lord. Sleepless light is now over all, and the west has given credence to the east. For this was the meaning of the new creation. For 'the **Sun of Righteousness**' who drives His chariot over all, pervades equally all humanity, like His Father, who makes His sun rise on all men and distills on them the dew of the truth. He has changed sunset into sunrise, and through the cross turned death to life; and having wrenched man from destruction, He has raised him to the skies, transplanting mortality into immortality and translating earth to heaven, - He, the husbandman of God, having bestowed on us the truly great, divine, and inalienable inheritance of the Father, deifying man by heavenly teaching, putting His laws into our minds and writing on our hearts<sup>39</sup>.*

<sup>39</sup>Protrepticus 11:88,144.



*If the Sun did not exist, night would be everywhere...  
Similarly, if we did not know the Logos and He did not  
enlighten us, we would be no better than chickens fattened  
in darkness and destined for the spit. Let us receive the  
Light, in order to receive God...*<sup>40</sup>

He urges the Gentiles to taste the sweetness of the Logos  
and to receive Him, as the Heavenly treasure.

*Sweet is the Word that gives us the light, precious  
above gold and gems; it is to be desired above honey  
and the honey-comb (Ps. 19:10)*<sup>41</sup>.

At the end of this work St. Clement defines it as follows:

*What then is the address I give you? I urge you to be saved.  
This Christ desires. In one word, He freely bestows life on you.  
And who is He? Briefly learn, the Word of incorruption that  
generates man by bringing him back to the truth - the good  
One that urges to salvation - He who expels destruction and  
pursues death - He who builds up the temple of God in men  
that He may cause God to take up His abode in men*<sup>42</sup>.

It is worthy to note that St. Clement believes that turning to God, or  
achieving true wisdom, is impossible without a divine help. This  
teaching connects St. Clement with St. Paul, and sets him apart from  
the Gnostics outside the Church. He offers a brief statement of the  
doctrine of grace, an interpretation of the work of God's love in  
action. "*The heavenly and truly divine love comes to men thus, when  
in the soul itself the spark of true goodness, kindled in the soul by the  
Divine Word, is able to burst forth into flame; and, what is of the  
highest importance, salvation runs paralleled with sincere  
willingness - choice and life, being, so to*

<sup>40</sup>Prot. 11:113:3, 4.

<sup>41</sup>Prot. 11 ANF, p. 203.

<sup>42</sup>Protrept. 11, 117, 3-4.

*...speak, yoked together*<sup>43</sup>." The "turning around" of conversion is accepted: one is not trapped in "unredeemable" categories based on intellect or matter. This point is also discussed in his *Miscellanies*<sup>44</sup>.

## **2. The Educator or the Tutor (*Paidagogos*)**

The *Paidagogos, the Educator or the Instructor* was written after the *Protrepticus*, of which it is a sort of sequel, before the year 202 A. D. It presents the continuation of the "*Protrepticus*," with practical instruction dealing with social and personal conduct of those who followed the advice given in his first treatise and accepted the Christian faith. In other words, it continues the development of the idea of the educational function of the Logos, who is presented as the Educator or Tutor, who converts their daily conduct. St. Clement calls for enjoining the Christian life under the guidance of its Educator (Christ), to practice the new life and to be in the likeness of Christ.

Simon P. Wood says of the *Paidagogos* that it holds the central place in Clement's trilogy, not only in position, but also, I believe, in content. It is longer than the *Protrepticus* but less unwieldy than the *Stromateis*; it contains more doctrine than the first, yet does not evidence the exaggerations of doctrine, at least not to the same degree, as the third; it does not have the unity and the beauty of the earlier work, yet avoids the random, scattered style of the later one. For all these reasons, it is the most practical work for our purposes. It represents the thought of Clement and of the whole Alexandrian Church very well and so will give the reader an adequate introduction to Clement's teachings<sup>45</sup>.

He adds, "It is difficult to translate the word *Paidagogos* into English, for there is no one word that conveys all that the Greek expresses. Etymologically, *Paidagogos* means 'leader of

<sup>43</sup>*Paidag.* 2:1. <sup>44</sup>Rev. James E. Furman: *St. Clement of Alexandria: Making Gnosis Serve Ecclesia*, *Coptic Church Review*, Fall 1987, v. 8, No. 3, p. 69-70. <sup>45</sup>*Fathers of the Church*, vol. 23, p. XiV.

*children*,' and this is the sense Clement sometimes confined himself to. However, in its ordinary usage, it means first the slave who conducts the children of the household back and forth from school, and later, the slave, usually an educated one, who supervises their training and the formation of their characters. St. Clement makes use of all these senses of the word, but is careful to confine it to one who supervises only moral training, for he reserves the treatment of Christ the Teacher to a later work. I have settled upon 'Educator' as the best English equivalent, but the reader must keep in mind that it refers only to an education of character<sup>46</sup>. " John Ferguson says, "The *Paidagogos*, here translated "tutor," is a tutor in the exact and literal sense of the word. He was not in the intellectual sense a teacher. He looks after the child's security and well-being. He is a slave, a family retainer, who accompanies the boy wherever he goes. In one sense he is a menial. He would be responsible for carrying a torch in the dark, for carrying the boy's writing- things or other equipment, sometimes (as we see depicted on terra-cotta statuettes) for carrying the boy himself. But he is also responsible for the boy's behavior; he is in this sense a moral instructor; and this includes functions complementary to those of the academic teacher in that he is responsible for keeping the boy up to scratch and ensuring that he applies himself to his academic work<sup>47</sup>."

The *Paidagogos* was a title especially dear to the theologians of the Alexandrian tradition, who often conceived of the whole course of human life as a period of instruction, by Christ's words and redeeming deeds. St. Clement of Alexandria composed this work entitled *Paidagogos* in which our Lord Jesus Christ appears as the Educator for every detail of human conduct, even including such things as table manners. On an infinitely more exalted level, he is the Educator who reveals the Father, offering to humankind the knowledge without which it cannot be saved. This

<sup>46</sup>Ibid. <sup>47</sup>John Ferguson : *Clement of Alexandria*, Twayne Publishers, NY 1974, p.68.

is how he is depicted, for instance, in Athanasius<sup>48</sup>. The role of teacher-revealer is fit to Christ, since he is the Logos and hence the "articulation" of the Father<sup>49</sup>.

*Who is the Educator? He is the Son of God, the Immaculate Image of the Father, who became close to us through His human form. He is without sin, the ideal Model whom we must strive to resemble<sup>50</sup>. Being baptized, we are illuminated; being illuminated, we become sons; being made sons, we are made perfect; being made perfect, we are made immortal. "I," says He, "have said that you are gods, and all sons of the Highest." This work is variously called grace, and illumination, and perfection, and washing: washing, by which we cleanse away our sins; grace, by which the penalties accruing to transgressions are remitted; and illumination, by which that holy light of salvation is beheld, that is, by which we see God clearly<sup>51</sup>.*

Such teaching is balanced by clear insistence that:

*... the end is reserved till the resurrection of those who believe; and it is not the reception of some other thing, but the obtaining of the promise previously made. For we do not say that both take place together at the same time, both the arrival at the end, and the anticipation of that arrival. For eternity and time are not the same, neither is the attempt and the final result; but both have reference to the same thing, and one and the same person is concerned in both. Faith, so to speak, is the attempt generated in time;*

<sup>48</sup>Cf. *De incarnatione Verbi* 15. <sup>49</sup>Boniface Ramsey: *Beginning to Read the Fathers*, Paulist Press, 1985, p. 92. <sup>50</sup>*Paid.* 1:2:2:1,2. <sup>51</sup>*Paid.* 1:6.

*the final result is the attainment of the promise, secured for eternity*<sup>52</sup>.

The *Paidagogos* reveals that the doctrine of the Trinity was taking shape in the Church: God the Father, the Creator, who endows human being by nature with His first impulses toward the truth. God the Son, is our Savior and Educator. The Educator is a slave, and this is precisely what St. Paul says of Jesus, that he took upon Himself the form of a slave (Phil. 2:7)<sup>53</sup>. God the Spirit, the continuing living presence of God, leads human beings into all truth. This work also consists of many moral commandments, but its aim is to be in **the likeness of Christ**, being children of God, who must be holy and heavenly citizens. He asks us to complete in our souls the beauty of the Church, for we are young children with a good mother (the Church).

This work consists of **three books**:

The **first book** reveals the personality and the work of the *Paidagogos* (the Educator) who satisfies the needs of men. Human life is divided into three aspects: habits, actions, and passions. The Logos has taken charge of the first. He also directs our actions, and cures our passions. He educates all our lives, forgives our sins (Ch. 1), reveals His great mercies (Ch. 2), and teaches women as well as men (Chs. 3,4). Finally it explains the methods of education and their basis (Chs. 7-13).

In *chapter one*, St. Clement has identified *the three functions of the Logos*, and set this work within the context of a serial exposition. He has made clear his openness to Greek culture in Pindar and Homer, and in particular the integration of his thought and expression with Stoic ethical philosophy<sup>54</sup>.

*The Educator being practical, not theoretical, His aim is thus to improve the soul, not to teach, and to train it*

<sup>52</sup>*Paid. 1:6, Rev. James E. Furman: St. Clement of Alexandria: Making Gnosis Serve Ecclesia, Coptic Church Review, Fall 1987, v. 8, No. 3, p. 71. 53John Ferguson : Clement of Alexandria, Twayne Publishers, NY 1974, p.69. 54John Ferguson : Clement of Alexandria, Twayne Publishers, NY 1974, p.70.*

*up to a virtuous, not to an intellectual life. Although this same word is didactic, but not in the present instance. For the word which, in matters of doctrine, explains and reveals, is that whose province it is to teach. But our Educator being practical, first **exhorts** to the attainment of right dispositions and character, and then **persuades** us to the energetic practice of our duties, enjoining on us pure commandment, and **exhibiting** to such as come after representations of those who formally wandered in error<sup>55</sup>. The Paidagogue strengthens our souls, and by His benign commands, as by gentle medicines, guides the sick to the perfect knowledge of the truth.*

St. Clement states that "*Pedagogy is a training of children*<sup>56</sup>."

*Chapter two: Our Educator's treatment of our sins.* Our Educator resembles His Father God: sinless, spotless, passionless; so St. Clement gives the Stoic concept of passionlessness (*apatheia*) a Christian place. We are not, and we should strive to be, like Him. This is the first appearance in this work of the idea of the imitation of Christ, a potent way of life at all times in the history of Christianity. He said that it is the best to live without sin. This belongs to God. He does not say that it is impossible for men; he implies that it is improbable. There is an ambiguity here in the Christian tradition. Jesus commands His disciples to be as the Father in heaven (Matt. 5,48); yet the Christian is also witness that all have fallen short; and every movement for renewal of Christianity has been in tension between the claims of perfection and the fact of sin. Clement offers a second best; namely, to avoid deliberate wrong doing<sup>57</sup>.

<sup>55</sup>Paid. I, 1,1,4. <sup>56</sup>Paid. I,5,12,1. <sup>57</sup>John Ferguson : *Clement of Alexandria*, Twayne Publishers, NY 1974, p. 70.

*He is to us a spotless image; to Him we are to try with all our might to assimilate our souls. He is wholly free from human passions; wherefore also He alone is judge, because He alone is sinless. As far, however, as we can, let us try to sin as little as possible. For nothing is so urgent in the first place as deliverance from passions and disorders, and then the checking of our liability to fall into sins that have become habitual. It is best, therefore, not to sin at all in any way, which we assert to be the prerogative of God alone; next to keep clear of voluntary transgressions, which is characteristic of the wise man; thirdly, not to fall into many involuntary offenses, which is peculiar to those who have been excellently trained. Not to continue long in sins, let that be ranked last. But this also is salutary to those who are called back to repentance, to renew the contest.*

In chapters three and four he explains that it was in love of mankind (*Philanthropia*) that the Logos became man. God is love (*agape*), and His love is shown in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us and gave Himself for us. If we guide one another it is the blind leading the blind, but the Logos is keen eyed and sees the innermost heart; for it is the nature of good to do good. The Logos is Educator to women and men alike.

*Man is therefore justly dear to God, since he is His workmanship. The other works of creation He made by the word of command alone, but man He framed by Himself, by His own hand, and breathed into him what was peculiar to Himself<sup>58</sup>.*

*Man, then, whom God made, is desirable for himself... And man has been proven to be lovable; consequently man is loved by God. For how shall he not*

<sup>58</sup>Pidagogos 1:3.

*be loved for whose sake the only begotten son is sent from  
the Father's bosom<sup>59</sup> .*

*The virtue of man and woman is the same. For if the God of  
both is one, the master of both is also one; one church, one  
temperance, one modesty; their food is common, marriage an  
equal yoke; respiration, sight, hearing, knowledge, hope,  
obedience, love all alike. And those whose life is common,  
have common graces and a common salvation; common to  
them are love and training. "For in this world," he says,  
"they marry, and are given in marriage," in which alone the  
female is distinguished from the male; "but in that world it is  
so no more<sup>60</sup> ."*

In *chapter five* he spoke of the dependence of man (child). He states that if human beings need an Educator, they must be children. We must not be shy that we are called children, for not only the disciples of Christ were called children, but our Lord Himself, who was incarnate, was called "Child" (Isa. 9:6). As children of God, we should know that Christian education continues throughout life. Thus he opposes the Gnostics, who claim to have arrived to perfect knowledge. By calling Christians children and simple, and by emphasizing the need of unceasing education, he refutes their belief that believers are composed of two ranks: the perfect and the simple.

*We are the children. In many ways scripture celebrates us,  
and describes us in manifold figures of speech, giving variety  
to the simplicity of the faith by diverse names... For if they  
call us who follow after childhood foolish, see how they utter  
blasphemy against the Lord, in regarding those as foolish  
who have betaken themselves to God...*

<sup>59</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup>*Ibid* 1:4.



*In contradistinction, therefore, to the older people, the new people are called young, having learned the new blessings; and we have the exuberance of life's morning prime in this youth which knows no old age, in which we are always growing to maturity in intelligence, are always young, always mild, always new: for those must necessarily be new, who have become partakers of the new Word...*

*The Spirit calls the Lord Himself a child, thus prophesying by Esaias: "Lo, to us a child has been born, to us a son has been given, on whose own shoulder the government shall be; and His name has been called the Angel of great Counsel." Who, then, is this infant child? He according to whose image we are made little children. By the same prophet is declared His greatness: "Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace; that He might fulfill His discipline: and of His peace there shall be no end." O the great God! O the perfect child!*

In *chapter six* he speaks of our Lord as the "*Nourisher*," who offers His body and blood to His children through His Church. His breasts of love of mankind furnish the children with spiritual milk. He offers Himself to His children, who receive *baptism* as the illumination, the adoption to the Father, the forgiveness of sins etc. St. Clement as a church man calls the Church the mother, who nourishes her children with Christ Himself, the heavenly manna, bread and milk.

But she is once virgin and mother pure as a virgin loving as a mother. And calling her children to her, she nurses them with holy milk, viz., with the Word for childhood. Therefore she had not milk; for the milk was this child fair and comely, the body of Christ, which nourishes by the Word the young brood, which the Lord Himself brought forth in throes of the flesh, which the Lord Himself swathed in His precious blood. O amazing birth! O holy swaddling bands! The word is all to the child, both

father and mother, and tutor and nurse. “Eat you my flesh,” He says “ and drink my blood.” Such is the suitable food which the Lord ministers, and He offers His flesh and pours forth His blood, and nothing is wanting for the children’s growth. O amazing mystery! Thus in many ways the word is figuratively described, as meat, and flesh, and food, and bread, and blood, and milk. The lord is all these, to give enjoyment to us who have believed in Him.

*Chapter seven* deals with “*The Educator and His work.*” He teaches us how to honor God, directs us to the knowledge of truth, an escort to heaven. His work is to set us straight on the road of truth which leads to the vision of God. “ *Our Educator*”, he goes on, “*is the holy God Jesus, the Logos who guides all humanity the very God who loves mankind is our Educator.*” He calls him “Mystic Messenger” or “Mystic Angel.” He means that Jesus proclaims and reveals the hidden truths about God<sup>61</sup>.

*Chapters eight to thirteen* deals with “*Divine Love, Rebuke, Justice and Goodness.*” St. Clement emphasizes the following ideas:

- . There is nothing that God hates.
- . All that God does is for man’s good. He says, “*And to do good purposely, is nothing else than to take care of man. God therefore cares for man. God therefore takes care of him. In another way the useful is called good not on account of its pleasing, but of its doing good.*”
- . The good which God offers man is beneficial, not necessarily enjoyable.
- . As opposing Gnostic dualism, he assures that the Creator and the good Father are one and the same.
- . The divine rebuke and chastisement are a part of God’s love for mankind. Fear can be used as a source of salvation. We are diseased and need a spiritual doctor; we are lost and need a

<sup>61</sup>John Ferguson : *Clement of Alexandria*, Twayne Publishers, NY 1974, p. 77.

guide; we are blind and need to be enlightened; we are thirsty and need the spring of life; we are dead and need life; we are sheep and need a shepherd; we are children and need a tutor; all humanity needs Jesus. He says, “*See how God, through His love of goodness, seeks repentance; and by means of the plan He pursues of threatening silently, shows His own love for man.*”

\* Christ fully realizes the statement that man is made in God’s image; the rest of mankind can only reflect it. We are to follow His steps, and we shall in the end put on His divinity; we shall be in true tune<sup>62</sup>.

The **second** book together with the third books of the *Paidagogos* turn to the problems of Christian behavior, especially household affairs of Christians in a pagan society. The second one deals with many practical questions for the newly converted. St. Clement shows how the Christian is to eat, drink (Chs. 1,2), dress (including jewelry and cosmetics), sleep (Ch. 9), walk, talk, look, even laugh, also the Christian's attitude towards amusement and public spectacles.

J. Quasten says that with the beginning of the second book the treatise turns to the problems of daily life. Whereas the first deals with the general principles of ethics, the second and third present a kind of casuistry for all spheres of life: eating, drinking, homes and furniture, music and dancing, recreation and amusements, bathing and anointing, behavior and marital life. These chapters give an interesting description of daily life in the city of Alexandria with its luxury, debauchery and vices. Clement speaks here with a frankness which is surprising and at times repulsive. The author warns his Christians against indulging in such a life and gives a moral code of Christian behavior in such surroundings. However, Clement does not demand that the Christian should abstain from all refinements of culture nor does he wish him to renounce the world and take the vow of poverty.

<sup>62</sup>*Paidagogos* 1:9:83; John Ferguson : *Clement of Alexandria*, Twayne Publishers, NY 1974, p. 78  
9.

The decisive point is the attitude of the soul. As long as the Christian keeps his heart independent and free from attachment to the goods of this world there is no reason why he should withdraw from his peers. It is more important that the cultural life of the city be imbued with the Christian spirit<sup>63</sup>.

The **third** book deals with the elements of real beauty (Ch. 1), warning against luxury and other dangers (Chs. 4-6), admonishing us towards simplicity of living (Chs. 7,8) and practical Christianity (Chs. 9-12), and concludes by explaining the aim of these moral commandments.

The *Paidagogos* ends with a **hymn to Christ the Savior**. There have been doubts about the authenticity of this hymn. However, there is every reason to believe that Clement himself is the author of it. The imagery corresponds exactly to that of the *Tutor*. Perhaps it represents the official prayer of praise of the School of Alexandria<sup>64</sup>.

### 3. The Miscellanies (*Stromateis* or *Stromata*)

Eusebius gives us an account of the *Stromata*: In the *Stromata* he has composed a patchwork, not only from holy Scripture, but from the writings of the Greeks, recording anything that seems useful in their views, expounding generally held opinions alike from Greek and non-Greek sources, and correcting the false doctrines of the leaders of heresy. He unfolds a wide area of research, and provides a project of considerable erudition. With all this he includes the theories of philosophers, so that he has made the title *Stromata* appropriate to the contents. He uses in this work evidence from the disputed Scriptures, the so called *Wisdom of Solomon*, the *Wisdom of Jesus son of Sirach*, the *Epistle to the Hebrews*, the *letters of Barnabas*, *Clement*, and *Jude*.

<sup>63</sup>Quasten: *Patrology*, vol. 2, p. 10,11.

<sup>64</sup>Quasten: *Patrology*, vol. 2, p. 11.

He mentions Tatian's *Oratio ad Graecos*, Cassian, the author of a chronological history, and the Jewish writers Philo, Aristobulus, Josephus, Demetrius, and Eupolemus, all of whom may show in their works that Moses and the Jewish people antedate Greek antiquity. This writer's works mentioned here are packed with a great deal of useful learning. In the first volume he speaks of himself as very close in succession to the apostles, and promises in the work a commentary on Genesis<sup>65</sup> .”

E. de Fayé, a critic who is one of the greatest admirers of the *Stromata*, says about it, "This work is perhaps the most important of all Christian writing of the second and third centuries, and at the same time there is not one that is more difficult<sup>66</sup> ."

At the end of the introduction to his *Paidagogos* St. Clement remarks: "*The all-loving Logos, eagerly desiring to perfect us by a gradation conducive to salvation, suited for efficacious discipline, a beautiful arrangement is observed by the all-benignant Logos who first **exhorts**, then **trains**, and finally **teaches***<sup>67</sup> ." Since the *Protrepticus* was a work of exhortation and the *Paidagogos* a work of training, some have concluded that Clement intended to write a trilogy, of which the final installment would be a work of *teaching*<sup>68</sup> .

In other words, St. Clement looks to the Logos as:

I. The ***Protrepticus***, or the Converter, who calls men to deny the false gods and accept faith in the true Savior.

II. The ***Paidagogos***, or the Educator, who heals men from their sins.

III. The ***Didaskalos***, or the Teacher, who teaches believers, granting them the true *gnosis*, revealing to them the allegorical

<sup>65</sup>Eusebius: *H.E.* 6:13:4-8. <sup>66</sup>E. de Fayé: *Clement*, p. 45; Leberton, p. 895. <sup>67</sup>*Ibid* 1,1,3,3 . <sup>68</sup>*Stromata* ; Jurgens: *The Faith of the Early Fathers*, vo. 1.

interpretation of His words, and proclaiming to them His own heavenly mysteries, for they are His own bride.

J. Quasten believes that Clement intended to compose as the third part of his trilogy a volume entitled the *Teacher*... In Clement's mind, after all, the difference between a trainer and a teacher is in the age of the one under discipline: children are trained, while teaching is for adults. The *Paidagogos* actually deals with the latter, but under the figure of the former: we being the children of a divine Father<sup>69</sup>.

The *Stromata* does not fulfill the promise that its author had made of completing his trilogy with a work on the function of the Word as the Teacher. It is impossible to know the reason for this. The most common explanation is that Clement decided that he was unable to write the systematic work that he had promised, and that the *Stromata* is only a series of notes that he was preparing in order to write his third work, which he was unable to do before his death. In any case, it is quite clear that this work is not a systematic study of any kind, but is rather a series of miscellaneous notes, or perhaps something like a tapestry, where the threads of thought come to the surface only to be lost later on without giving the reader any clue as to what happened to them. It is in this fashion, and with an almost total lack of order or system, that Clement expounds the highest aspects of his doctrine<sup>70</sup>.

J. Quasten and W.A. Jurgens believe that St. Clement abandoned his plan and chose the literary form of the *Stromata* or "*Carpets*." It was more suited to his genius, allowing him, as it did, to bring in splendid and extensive discussions of details in a light, entertaining style. The name, *Carpets*, is similar to others used at the time, like *The Meadow*, *The Banquets*, *The Honeycomb*. Such titles indicated a genre favored by philosophers of the day, in which they could discuss most varied questions without strict order or plan and pass from one problem to another without systematic treatment, the

<sup>69</sup>*Stromata* ; Jurgens: *The Faith of the Early Fathers*, vo. 1. <sup>70</sup>Justo L. Gonzalez: *A History of Christian Faith*, vol. 1, 1979, p. 196,197.

different topics being woven together like colors in a carpet. The title *Stromateis* was not uncommonly used in the age of St. Clement for writings without any strict order and containing varied John Ferguson says, subject-matter<sup>71</sup>. The word translated "miscellanies" is *stromateis*. The full title is *Miscellanies of Notes of Reveled Knowledge in Accordance with the True Philosophy*. The word translated "notes" is *hypomnemata*, 'memory aids.' It can be used of any memorandum, the minutes of a committee, a note in a banker's ledger, a doctor's clinical notes a historical sourcebook... The word translated "notes" is *hypomnemata*, 'memory aids.' It can be used of any memorandum, the minutes of a committee, a note in a banker's ledger, a doctor's clinical notes, a historical sourcebook. But it has a special philosophical use: Arius uses the word for his reminiscences of the Stoic Epictetus. He means that they are unelaborated, but a serious contribution to philosophy and factually accurate. Further Plato uses the word of his view that knowledge is a recollection of things apprehended before birth, and Clement, a devout Platonist, will not have been averse to those overtones<sup>72</sup>.

This work consists of **eight books**, in its rough copy, therefore the topics of varied characters are not well-ordered. He himself says that this work looks like a field full of all kinds of plants, the person who seeks will find what he desires. It has been well described as "a heterogeneous mixture of science, philosophy, poetry and theology," controlled by the conviction that Christianity can satisfy man's highest intellectual yearnings. It aims at presenting a scientific account of the revealed truths of Christianity. He himself says that a book of this kind is like a field full of all sorts of plants; a man who is diligent, can find there,

<sup>71</sup>Henry Chadwick: *Alexandrian Christianity*, Philadelphia, 1954, p. 17. <sup>72</sup>John Ferguson: *Clement of Alexandria, Stromatias*, (Frs. of the Church), vol 85, p. 10.

what he is seeking for but he must look for it (6:2:4-8). The mysteries of knowledge cannot be made too plain to readers who are unfit for it (5:8,9).

His discussions are most interesting as they make known to us the master of the School of Alexandria and also the Christians who were around him.

The contents of the 8 books are as follows<sup>73</sup> :

Book 1: ***The relationship between philosophy and ☩Christian truth:***

God is the origin of all good things, including philosophy, which is a divine gift. The true philosophy is found in Jesus Christ; the Greeks offer a *propaedeutic*, a 'preparatory exercise.' St. Clement fears from using it too much, considering philosophers as children if they are compared with the believers. A long historical analysis argues for the priority of the Jews to the Greeks.

*Accordingly, before the advent of the Lord, philosophy was necessary to the Greeks for righteousness. And now it becomes conducive to piety; being a kind of preparatory training to those who attain to faith through demonstration*<sup>74</sup>.

Book 2: ***The nature of faith*** by which man became in ☩the likeness of God. Faith is the way to truth. It is an assent in the field of religion. St. Clement sets the true Gnostic in firm contrast to the heretics Basilides and Valentinus. Fear has its place in leading to repentance, hope, and love. St. Clement discusses moral responsibility. Our aim is restoration to sonship. The book ends with a preview of the next.

Book 3: ***The Christian marriage***. Ought we to marry? ☩Yes. Fornication and adultery are condemned in the law and in the gospel. He attacks the permissiveness of some heretics and the

<sup>73</sup>Cf. John Ferguson: *Clement of Alexandria, Stromaties, (Frs. of the Church)*, vol 85, p. 13-5.

<sup>74</sup>*Stromata* 1:5.



asceticism of others. His own treatment is not wholly consistent, and he finds some texts difficult, but has a beautiful exposition of “two or three gathered together” as husband, wife, child. Birth is not evil; celibacy may, but need not, be chosen; Christian marriage is a partnership.

Book 4: ***The true Gnostic*** (the perfect and spiritual ☩Christian) who has knowledge in his conduct. The true Gnostic is not afraid of death. The martyr is a witness to the sincerity of his faith. To deny the lord from fear of death is to deny oneself. God was suffering to change the world. Christian perfection lies in love of human kind. It may be approached by different paths, but the one full instance is Jesus . The true Gnostic is one with Christ.

Book 5: ***Faith and hope; the knowledge of God and ☩symbolism.*** There is no knowledge without faith or faith without knowledge. Clement treats hope briefly and passes to the reasons for veiling the truth in symbols. God cannot be expressed in words.

Book 6: ***Philosophy, revelation, and human knowledge*** ☩as a preparation for the true Gnostic. The Greeks are indebted to the Jews. True philosophy is not sectarian; it is solid knowledge. St. Clement gives a comparison between the Christian philosophy which attains the glory of the gospel, acknowledges mysteries, and passionlessness, and the Greek philosophy which has a very superficial knowledge, although it is a divine gift. The true Gnostic must be something of a polymath, and takes his knowledge into realms which others find intractable. St. Clement discusses number mysticism, and different approaches to knowledge.

Eusebius in his *Praeparatio evangelica*<sup>75</sup> quotes at some length from Book Six to demonstrate the borrowings of the Greeks from the Jews.

Book 7: ***The Christian Gnostic***: It is a defense and ☩glorification of the Gnostic Christian .He alone is the true worshipper and the real philosopher, who grows up to become in

<sup>75</sup>*Praeparatio evangelica* 10:1.

the likeness of God. The pagans made their gods in their likeness..  
.He attacks the anthropomorphic gods of the Greeks and defends the true Gnostic against charges of atheism and impiety. He then passes to a positive evaluation of the true Gnostic, a laborer in god's vineyard, who gives help to all in need. He attacks various heretics as foolish, and ends with an account of the *Stromata*.

Book 8: **Investigation**: This book is missing. The eighth ☹️book does not appear to be a continuation of the seventh but a collection of sketches and studies used in other sections of the work. It seems that they were not intended for publication, but rather that they were issued after his death against his intention. Truth is attained by seeking; the search should be peaceable. Define your terms clearly; examine your propositions in the light of your definitions. Everything is not demonstrable; we need first principles. St. Clement attacks the skeptics, and discusses the methodology of investigation, the subject matter of speech, and causality. These are unorganized jottings, based on Plato and Aristotle.

In this work he attacks the Gnostics (heretics), for they place a wide gulf between God and the world and a narrow gulf between God and the soul.

#### 4. Excerpta ex Theodoto and Eclogae propheticae<sup>76</sup>

Quasten says that these two works follow the *Stromata* in the tradition of the manuscripts. They are not excerpts made by someone else of the lost parts of the *Stromata*, as Zahn thought, but excerpts from *Gnostic* writings like those of the Valentinian *Gnostic* Theodotus and preliminary studies of Clement. It is very difficult to separate the excerpts of *Gnostic* sources from the words of Clement himself.

We know nothing of the Theodotus from whom St. Clement uses excerpts. He was a Gnostic with a typically complex

<sup>76</sup>Quasten: *Patrology*, vol. 2, p. 15.

system. Mostly St. Clement merely transmits. Occasionally he is critical, as he would have been in a fully worked out response.

In the first work, St. Clement explains what kind of knowledge (*gnosis*) we are in need,

*"who we were, what we have become (or been born as); where we were, or where we had been thrown (or made to fall); where we are hurrying to, from where we are being redeemed; what is birth and rebirth"<sup>77</sup>.*"

Much of this can be summed up, in the deepest sense, self-knowledge. It is the old Delphic commandment "*Know Yourself*"<sup>78</sup>."

The second work *Eclogae propheticae* has four well-marked sections<sup>79</sup>.

## OTHER WORKS

Besides the trilogy, St. Clement composed many other works. St. Clement of Alexandria wrote several significant theological treatises and is called "the first Christian scholar" by Berthold Altaner<sup>80</sup>, but only one sermon has survived. This is his well-known address, *Who Is the Rich Man that is Saved?*

### 1. Who is the Rich Man that is saved ? (*Quis dives salvetur ?*)

A delightful tract or sermon on Mark 10:17-31, possibly the last from his pen, greatly appreciated in antiquity. Some rich Alexandrian merchants were in despair for they thought that richness makes salvation impossible.

It indicates that a growing number of wealthy persons were being attracted to the faith, and they were disturbed by the

<sup>77</sup>Excerpta ex Theod. 78. <sup>78</sup>John Ferguson : *Clement of Alexandria*, Twayne Publishers, NY 1974, p. 39. <sup>79</sup>John Ferguson: *Clement of Alexandria, Stromaties*, (Frs. of the Church), vol 85, p. 15 <sup>80</sup>Altaner: *Patrology*, p. 215.

warnings against riches in Christian literature. St. Clement answered that wealth in itself is neutral; one's attitude toward wealth is what matters: Wealth in itself is not evil, for sin, but not wealth, deprives man of salvation. Wealth is a divine gift, we can use it for our benefit and for others advantage, if we are not enslaved to it. The rich men support the needy! He tells rich believers that it would be irresponsible of them to think of throwing away their possessions when so much good can be accomplished with them. St. Clement assures that Christ condemned only the wrong attitude to wealth, not wealth as such.

He responds to this understanding by making a point about the interpretation of Biblical texts.

*... we are clearly aware that the Savior teaches His people nothing in a merely human way, but everything by divine and mystical wisdom. We must not understand His words literally, but with due inquiry and intelligence we must search out and master their hidden meaning. For the sayings which appear to have been simplified by the Lord Himself to his disciples are found even now, on account of the extraordinary degree of wisdom in them, to need not less but more attention than his dark and suggestive utterances<sup>81</sup>.*

*For he who holds possessions and houses as the gifts of God; and ministers from them to the God who gives them for the salvation of men; and knows that he possesses them more for the sake of the brethren than his own; and is superior to the possession of them, not the slave of the things he possesses; and does not carry them about in his soul, nor bind and circumscribe his life with them, but is ever laboring at some good and divine work, should he be necessarily some time or other deprived of them, is able with a cheerful mind to bear removal equally with their*

<sup>81</sup>The Rich Man's Salvation (translated by G.W. Butlerworth, Cambridge, 1960, p. 281; Rev. James E. Furman: St. Clement of Alexandria: Making Gnosis Serve Ecclesia, Coptic Church Review, Fall 1987, v. 8, No. 3, p. 78.

*blessed by the Lord, and abundance. This is he who is called poor in spirit<sup>82</sup>. Let no man destroy wealth, rather the passions of the soul which are incompatible with the better use of wealth. So that becoming virtuous and good, he may be able to make good use of these riches. The renunciation and selling of all possessions, then, is to be understood as speaking of the passions of the soul. I would then say this. Since some things are from within and some from without the soul, and if the soul makes a good use of them, they also are reputed good, but if a bad, bad; - whether does He who commands us to alienate our possessions repudiate those things, after the removal of which the passions still remain, or those rather, on the removal of which wealth even becomes beneficial? If therefore he who casts away worldly wealth can still be rich in the passions, even though the material (for their gratification) is absent, - for the disposition produces its own effects, and strangles the reason, and presses it down and inflames it with its inbred lusts, - it is then of no advantage to him to be poor in purse while he is rich in passions. For it is not what ought to be cast away that he has deprived himself of what is serviceable, but set on fire the innate fuel of evil through want of the external means (of gratification)<sup>83</sup>.*

In a sense, it is the task of this book to state that Christians can be "good" without entering into either ascetic life or monasticism.

<sup>82</sup>Who Is the Rich Man Who Can Be Saved? 6:3; Carl A. Volz: *Life and Practice in the Early Church*, Minneapolis, 1990, p. 112. <sup>83</sup>Chs. 14, 15.

*Now the reason why salvation seems to be more difficult for the rich than for men without wealth is probably not a simple one but complex. For some, after merely listening in an offhand way to the Lord's saying that a camel shall more easily creep through a needle's eye than a rich man into the kingdom of heaven, despair of themselves, feeling that they are not destined to obtain life. So, complying with the world in everything and clinging to this present life as the only one left to them, they depart further from the heavenward way...*<sup>84</sup>

Here the contrast with Tertullian is obvious. For the North African, wealth is bad of itself and a gross hindrance to Christian progress<sup>85</sup>. To Clement, however, wealth is a matter of stewardship and the church is a school (*didaskaleion*) for the imperfect where the soul is trained for the ladder of ascent towards God<sup>86</sup>.

At the end St. Clement tells the story of St. John and the young who had fallen among the robbers, to prove that even the greatest sinner can be saved if he just repents.

## **2. Outlines or Sketches (*Hypotyposeis*)**

His most important lost work is his allegorical interpretations and sketches of the writings of both the Old and New Testament, including even all the disputed books. Photius was still able to read a complete text of Clement's *Hypotyposeis*, written between the years 190 and 210 A. D. The work was in eight books, but has survived only in a few short Greek excerpts, preserved mostly by Eusebius<sup>87</sup>. Other excerpts exist in the *Pratum spiritual* of John Moschus and in a Latin translation which goes back to the time of Cassiodorus (c. 540). Photius<sup>88</sup> passed very

<sup>84</sup>*The Rich Man's Salvation* (translated by G.W. Butlerworth, Cambridge, 1960, p. 273; Rev. James E. Furman: *St. Clement of Alexandria: Making Gnosis Serve Ecclesia, Coptic Church Review*, Fall 1987, v. 8, No. 3, p. 77. <sup>85</sup>Tertullian. *De patientia*, 7. <sup>86</sup>*Paid.* 3:98:1. <sup>87</sup>Eusebius: *H. E.* 6:13,14. <sup>88</sup>*Bibl. Cod.* 109.

severe judgment on the work, citing its many rank heresies: "Correct doctrine is held firmly in some places but in other places he is carried away by odd and impious notions. He maintains the eternity of matter, produces a theory of ideas from the words of Holy Scripture, and reduces the Son to a mere creature. He relates incredible stories of metempsychosis and of many worlds before Adam. His teaching on the formation of Eve from Adam is blasphemous and scurrilous - and anti-Scriptural. He imagines that the angels had intercourse with women and begot children with them. He also writes that the Logos did not become man in reality but only in appearance. He has, it would appear, a fantastic idea of two Logoi of the Father, of which the inferior one appeared to men." Clement of Alexandria had a good reputation in Byzantium and for that reason St. Photius' conclusion is that the work is not authentically that of Clement<sup>89</sup>.

Since we have only a few fragments, and since there is no reason to doubt their authenticity, no judgment can safely be rendered on Photius' remarks<sup>90</sup>.

### **3. On the Passover (*On the Pascha*)**

Eusebius<sup>91</sup> states that St. Clement wrote this book at the request of his contemporaries to record the traditions which he had heard from the early Fathers, for the benefit of future generations. He mentions in it Melito and Irenaeus and some others, whose accounts of the matter are also set down. Only a few short quotations are preserved.

*In the celebrations of previous years, the Lord ate the paschal victim sacrificed by the Jews. But after he preached, being himself the Pascha, the Lamb of God (John 1:29), led like a sheep to the slaughter (Isaiah 53:7), he immediately taught His disciples the mystery of the type,*

<sup>89</sup> Georges Florovsky: *The Byzantine Fathers of the Fifth Century*, vol. 8, 1987, p.

<sup>80. 90W. Jurgens: *The Faith of the Fathers*, vol. 1, 91Ibid 6:13:9.</sup>

*on the thirteenth, the day on which they asked Him, "Where do You wish us to prepare for You to eat the Pascha?" (Matt. 26:17). On this day, you must know, occurred both the sanctification of the unleavened bread and the preparation of the feast. Wherefore John records that suitably on this day the disciples had their feet washed by the Lord as a preparation (cf. John 13:4-5). The passion of our Savior took place on the following day, himself being the paschal victim offered in pleasing sacrifice by the Jews...*

All the Scriptures harmonize and the Gospels concord with this precise reckoning of the days. The resurrection too testifies: He rose on the third day, which was the first of the weeks of the harvest and (the day) on which the priest was commanded by the Law to offer the sheaf (Lev. 23:10-11)<sup>92</sup>.

Here St. Clement defends the Johannine chronology of the passion, but seeks to bring that of the Synoptics into harmony with it by explaining that the Last Supper they report was a pre-paschal meal without the ritual lamb. His thesis is taken up by Eusebius, On the Solemnity of Easter 9-10<sup>93</sup>.

#### **4, 5. On Fasting and On evil-speaking.**

Nothing is preserved nor otherwise known of these two writings which Eusebius<sup>94</sup> attributes to St. Clement.

#### **6. On Patience or "A discourse to the newly baptized."**

Eusebius knows of this work. It is possible that a fragment in a manuscript of the Escorial entitled *Exhortations of Clement* is from this lost work.

<sup>92</sup>Fragment 28; Raniero Cantalamessa: *Easter in the Early Church, The Liturgical Press, Minnesota, 1993, p. 52-3.* <sup>93</sup>Raniero Cantalamessa: *Easter in the Early Church, The Liturgical Press, Minnesota, 1993, p. 150.* <sup>94</sup>Eusebius: *H.E.* 6:13:3.



## **7. Against the Judaizers or Ecclesiastical Canon.**

This work (On the rules of the Church), of which we possess but one fragment, he had dedicated to Alexander, the bishop of Jerusalem<sup>95</sup>.

## **8. On Providence ( 2 books ).**

Anastasius Sinaites reproduces a passage from the first part of this work. Several other fragments are extant which indicate that it gave philosophical definitions. It is not mentioned by Eusebius nor any of the other early ecclesiastical authors. Authenticity, therefore, remains doubtful<sup>96</sup>.

## **9. On the Prophet Amos.**

St. Palladius<sup>97</sup> is the only source which mentions St. Clement as the author of a work *On the Prophet Amos*.

## **10. Letters**

We do not have any letters of St. Clement. But the *Sacra Parallela* 311, 312 and 313 contains three sentences ascribed to letters of St. Clement, two of them from his Letter 2I.

<sup>95</sup>Eusebius: *H.E.* 6:13:3.

<sup>96</sup>Quasten: *Patrology*, vol. 2, p. 18.

<sup>97</sup>Hist, *Lausa*. 139.

# ***PHILOSOPHY, KNOWLEDGE AND THE SCRIPTURES***

Justo L. Gonzalez states that the writings of St. Clement and Origen are very different from those of St. Irenaeus and Tertullian. Their theology is much wider in scope than an apology or a refutation of heresies, but rather is free to rise in high speculative flights, and this is what makes their works the beginning of a new type of theological activity, with its values and its dangers<sup>1</sup>.



## **1. PHILOSOPHY**

I have already mentioned St. Clement's view of philosophy when I spoke of "*The School of Alexandria and Philosophical Attitudes*."

Henry Chadwick says,

He (Clement) has conventional complaints against Aristotle that he disallows providence in the sublunary sphere, and against the Stoics that their principles are materialist, pantheist and determinist<sup>2</sup>. But much use is made of Aristotelian logic in Clement's discussion of the nature of assent, and on the ethical side he owes a large debt to the Stoics. The philosopher for whom he consistently reserves the highest praise is Plato. Even here he has his critical reservations. He rejects the Platonic notion that the stars are

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Justo L. Gonzalez: *A History of Christian Faith*, vol. 1, 1979, p. 194.

<sup>2</sup> *Protrepticus* 66; *Stromata* 5: 89-90.

ensouled with divine souls that cause their orderly motion. In Clement's view the heavenly bodies primarily exist to indicate the passage of time; in so far as they control things on earth it is in obedience to their Creator, not with any independence<sup>3</sup>.



## 2. KNOWLEDGE (*GNOSIS*)

I have already mentioned St. Clement's view of *gnosis* when I spoke of "*The School of Alexandrian and Gnosticism*." We see how instead of rejecting *Gnosticism* in totality, St. Clement attempted to create a true, an authentic Christian "*gnosis*." This allowed Christianity to utilize truth wherever it was found.

### KNOWLEDGE (*GNOSIS*) IS THE LIFE OF THE SOUL

The Alexandrians were interested in the "*gnosis*," not merely for the delight of their minds, but rather for the satisfaction of the soul. The "knowledge" for them is an experience of the unity with the Father in the Only-begotten Son by the Holy Spirit. Through the true knowledge of the Holy Trinity we attain the new risen life in Christ, by the work of the Holy Spirit, instead of spiritual death which we had suffered..

*Just as death is the separation of the soul from the body, so is the knowledge as it were the rational death urging the spirit away, and separating it from the passions, and leading it on to the life of well-doing, that it may then say with confidence to God, "I live as You wish." For he who makes it his purpose to please men cannot please God, since the multitude choose not what is profitable, but what is pleasant. But in pleasing God, one in consequence gets the favor of the good ones among men. How, then, can*

<sup>3</sup> *Stromata* 6:148; *Protrepticus* 63; 102; Henry Chadwick: *History and Thought of the Early Church*, London, 1982, p. 171.

*what relates to meat, and drink, and amorous pleasure, be agreeable to such an one? such he views with suspicion even a word that produces pleasure, and a pleasant movement and act of the mind<sup>4</sup>."*

## **KNOWLEDGE AND MAN'S REDEMPTION**

The early church offers no better example of an intellectual Christian than St. Clement, who distinguishes between "*simple believers*" and the more advanced "*Gnostics*" (Christians), but not as two classes, for all believers must struggle unceasingly to grow through grace to be advanced *Gnostics*. He, however, insists that the goal of Christian education is "practical, not theoretical. Its aim is to improve the soul, not to teach, and to train it up to a virtuous, not an intellectual, life<sup>5</sup>."

*A man of understanding and perspicacity [he wrote] is then a Gnostic. And his business is not abstinence from what is evil (for this is a step to the highest perfection), nor the doing of good out of fear . . . nor is he to do so out of hope of a promised reward . . . but only the doing of good out of love and for the sake of its own excellence is to be the Gnostic's choice<sup>6</sup>.*

The Alexandrians, especially St. Clement, did not separate knowledge (*gnosis*) from redemption, because they considered ignorance the first cause of evil. The person who enjoys the redeeming action of God is called "*Gnostic*" by St. Clement, which means a person who has spiritual knowledge. More than any other Father, and quite differently from St. Irenaeus, St. Clement uses the noun *gnosis* to refer to the true, spiritual meaning of Scripture, and its adjectival and adverbial forms to describe the Christian life<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> *Stromata* 7:12.

<sup>5</sup> See Carl A. Volz: *Life and Practice in the Early Church*, Minneapolis, 1990, p. 103, 222; *Paidagogos*, 1:1..

<sup>6</sup> *Stromata* 4:22:135.

<sup>7</sup> Robert J. Daly: *The Origins of the Christian Doctrine of Sacrifice*, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1978, p.113.

*The Gnostic (believer) who has spiritual knowledge or (gnosis) is consequently divine, and already holy. God bearing, and God-borne...*

*He who, therefore, has God resting in him will not desire to seek elsewhere. At once leaving all hindrances, and despising all matter which distracts him, he cleaves to heaven by knowledge, and passing through the spiritual essences, and all rule and authority, he touches the highest thrones, hasting to that alone for the sake of which he alone knows... For works follow knowledge, as the shadow follows the body<sup>8</sup>.*

*The succession of virtues is found in the Gnostic, who morally, physically and logically occupies himself with God.*

*The Gnostic must, as far as possible, imitate God<sup>9</sup>.*

*It appears to me that there are three effects of Gnostic power: first the knowledge of things; second, the performance of whatever the Word suggests;*

*and the third, the capability of delivering, in a way suitable to God, the secrets veiled in the truth<sup>10</sup>.*

St. Clement speaks of our Lord as the Physician of the souls and as the Divine Teacher. He considers **healing our souls** as a way to attain **divine knowledge**, at the same time divine knowledge grants the believer spiritual healing.

*Health and knowledge are not the same; one is a result of study, the other of healing. In fact, if a person is sick, he cannot master any of the things taught him until he is first completely cured. We give instruction to someone who is sick for an entirely different reason than we do to someone who is learning; the latter, we instruct that he*

<sup>8</sup> Stromata 7:13.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. 4:26. <sup>10</sup>

Ibid. 7:1.

*may acquire knowledge, the first, that he may regain health. Just as our body needs a physician when it is sick, so, too, when we are weak, our soul needs the Educator to cure its ills. Only then does it need the Teacher to guide it and develop its capacity to know, once it is made pure and capable of retaining the revelation of the Word. Therefore, the all-loving Word, anxious to perfect us in a way that leads progressively to salvation, makes effective use of an order well adapted to our development; at first, He persuades, then He educates, and after all this He teaches<sup>11</sup>.*

*Darkness is ignorance, for it makes us fall into sin and lose the ability to see the truth clearly. But knowledge is light, for it dispels the darkness of ignorance and endows us with keenness of vision<sup>12</sup>.*

## **CHRISTIAN EDUCATION**

His theology concentrates on **Christian education**. He assures that the Logos is the Educator who practices his educational work throughout the history of mankind. He worked through the prophets, and the philosophers, until finally He descended to our world, to renew it.

He not only offers commandments but renews the life of the *Gnostic* by Himself in its entirety. He educates man enabling him to discover the divine truth, and creating a zeal and desire to know, love, and possess the Truth.

According to St. Clement, the *Gnostic*, illuminated through knowledge of the true Light, becomes a new being equipped to answer the basic questions that troubled humanity then as now: "*Whence is man and what is his destiny?*" The *Gnostics* sought to know "*who we were and what we have become, where we were,*

<sup>11</sup> Paidagogos 1:1:3 (Frs. of Church, 23).

<sup>12</sup> Paidagogos 1:6:28 (Frs. of Church).

*and where we were placed [in time] and whither we are hastening, and from what we are redeemed and what is birth and re-birth*<sup>13</sup>.

For St. Clement, the Church is the place or the divine school where Christ teaches and educates His believers.

## KNOWLEDGE AND GOOD WORKS

The truth that is revealed in Christ is not theoretical nor philosophical ideas, but a power to follow our Educator, to practice goodness, virtue, and to love.

*Works follow knowledge, as shadow the body*<sup>14</sup>.

## WHO IS THE Gnostic?

In his second book of the *Stromata*, St. Clement indicated three conditions for the *Gnostic* life which the philosopher (true Christian) practices; i.e., *Contemplation, fulfilling the commandment*, and having *the form of good men*. If a believer loses one of these conditions his *Gnosticism*<sup>15</sup> is being revoked. In other words, the *Gnostic* must have a divine knowledge (*gnosis*); which he called contemplation or speculation, and he must practice it by performing the commandments, and live by the spirit of the church" for the formation of good men."

Walther Volker states that *Gnosticism*, according to St. Clement, is nourished by men's self-control, and the acknowledgment of the Holy Scriptures and is attained by illumination by the work of Christ, which is in harmony with the work of the church<sup>16</sup>.

## THE PURPOSE OF GNOSIS

As we have already said true *Gnosticism* is enjoying the knowledge of God, His vision and possessing Him. This knowl

13 Clement: *Excerpta ex Theodoto*; W.H.C. Frend: *The Rise of Christianity*, 1989, p.198. 14 *Stromata* 7:13 ANF. 15 *Stromata* 2: 10; Louis Bouyer: *The Spirituality of the N.T. and the Fathers*, 1960, P. 265f. 16 Walther Volker: *Der Wahre Gnostiker nach Clemens Alexandrinus*, Berlin - Leipzig, 1952

edge in fact is practicing the heavenly life, through which we become equal to the heavenly hosts and in the likeness of God<sup>17</sup>.

The true *Gnostic* knows that spiritual insight is granted to those who are humble and pure in heart, who deal with God as children with their own father. Through this knowledge they are raised up from faith to the ***blessed vision*** of the divine life, by union with God. "*The Gnostic is consequently divine, and already holy, God-bearing, and God-borne*<sup>18</sup>."

## SOURCES OF GNOSIS

a. St. Clement believes that *Gnosticism* is a divine gift, granted by God the Father through the Logos; it is **the gift of Christ Himself**. Christ, who is true Wisdom reveals to us knowledge of matters of past, present and future, as trustworthy rhinos.

*If, then, we assert that Christ Himself is Wisdom, and that it was His working which showed itself in the prophets, by which the Gnostic tradition may be learned, as Himself taught the apostles during His presence; then it follows that the gnosis, which is the knowledge and apprehension of things present, future, and past, which is sure and reliable, as being imparted and revealed by the Son of God, is wisdom*<sup>19</sup>.

- . He grants us *gnosis* through the habit of contemplation on the Holy Bible, with the Church's spirit, so that we (the believers) do not misunderstand the biblical texts, as the heretics do<sup>20</sup>.
- . He also assures that through **baptism** *gnosis* become possible to us, by illuminating our inner eyes.

17 *Stromata* 7:13. 18  
*Stromata* 7:13. 19  
*Stromata* 6:7 ANF. 20  
*Ibid.*



d. Our Lord Jesus Christ who is **Love**, is the source of *gnosis*, for Love is the foundation of true *gnosis*. We know God, who is Love, by practicing love, i.e. practicing the divine life.

Finally, St. Clement warns us from *self-dependence* in attaining knowledge.

*The Gnostic is therefore fixed by faith; but the man who thinks himself wise touches not what pertains to the truth, moved as he is by unstable and wavering impulses. It is therefore reasonably written, "Cain went forth from the face of God, and dwelt in the land of Naid, over against Eden." Now Naid is interpreted commotion, and Eden delight; and Faith, and Knowledge, and Peace are delight, from which he that has disobeyed is cast out. But he that is wise in his own eyes will not so much as listen to the beginning of the divine commandments<sup>21</sup>.*

## THE GNOSTIC AND PERFECTION

St. Clement believes that the *Gnostics* attain a kind of perfection, even while they are living here in this world, for by divine grace they become Christlike. He also assures that no man is perfect in all things at once. *"I know no one of men perfect in all things at once, while still human, though according to the mere letter of the Law, except Him alone who for us clothed Himself with humanity... But Gnostic perfection in the case of the legal man is the acceptance of the Gospel, that he that after the Law may be perfect<sup>22</sup>."*

*Gnosticism* is not theoretical, but it is a participation in the perfection of Christ, by struggling to ascend from the Law to Christ Himself, the fulfiller of the Law<sup>23</sup>.

<sup>21</sup> Stromata 2:11 ANF.

<sup>22</sup> Stromata 4:21. <sup>23</sup>

Stromata 4:21.

This perfection is realized in the life of the believer as a whole, in his body, soul and mind. Consequently, the *Gnostic* is perfect morally, physically, and logically.

*Those, then, who run down created existence and vilify the body are wrong not considering that **the frame of man was formed erect for the contemplation of heaven**, and that the organization of the senses tends to knowledge; and that the members and parts are arranged for good, not for pleasure. Whence this abode becomes receptive of the soul which is most precious to God; and is dignified with the Holy Spirit through the sanctification of soul and body, perfected with the perfection of the Savior. And the succession of the three virtues is found in the *Gnostic*, who **morally, physically, and logically** occupies himself with God. For wisdom is the knowledge of things divine and human; and righteousness is the concord of the parts of the soul; and holiness is the service of God...*

*Now the soul of the wise man and *Gnostic*, as sojourning in the body, conducts itself towards it gravely and respectfully, not with inordinate affections, as about to leave the tabernacle if the time of departure summon. "I am a stranger in the earth, and a sojourner with you," it is said (Gen. 23:4; Ps. 39:12)<sup>24</sup>.*

Thus the *Gnostic*, by occupying himself with God through his behavior and thoughts, he succeeds to be glorified in his soul as in his body. He becomes like Moses, whose face was glorified through his inner righteousness. Thus *gnostic's* body has the seal of righteousness on his soul<sup>25</sup>.

## **VARIOUS KINDS OF KNOWLEDGE**

*As, then, knowledge is an intellectual state, from which results the act of knowing, and becomes apprehension irrefragable by reason; so also ignorance is a reced*

<sup>24</sup> *Stromata* 4:26.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

*ing impression, which can be dislodged by reason. And that which is overthrown as well as that which is elaborated by reason, is in our power. Akin to knowledge is **experience, cognition, comprehension, perception, and Science.***

***Cognition** is the knowledge of universals by species;*

*and **Experience** is comprehensive knowledge, which investigates the nature of each thing.*

***Perception** is the knowledge of intellectual objects;  
and **Comprehension** is the knowledge of what is compared, or a comparison that cannot be annulled, or the faculty of comparing the objects with which Judgment and Knowledge are occupied, both of one and each and all that goes to make up one reason.*

*And **Science** is the knowledge of the thing in itself, or the knowledge which harmonizes with what takes place.*

***Truth** is the knowledge of the true; and the mental habit of truth is the knowledge of the things which are true<sup>26</sup>.*



26 *Stromata* 2:17.

### 3. THE HOLY SCRIPTURE

Although many scholars see that Clement is directly or indirectly, the cause of Hellenism in Christianity<sup>27</sup>, they state that he is not another Minucius Felix or Boethius, whose writings give more evidence of pagan rather than Christian humanism. Commentators may call him Platonist or Neo-Platonic, Stoic or Aristotelian, but they must also call him an exegete of the Scriptures. Mondésert does not hesitate to say that his style is above all else Scriptural. There are copious quotations from Old and New Testaments, constant allusions and turns of thought too numerous to be noted. And for Clement, Scripture is the final appeal; when he says, as he often does: *graphetai* ('it is written'), he is invoking an authority from which he feels there is no appeal. The Alexandrian school may have stressed Christian philosophy, but it is a **philosophy drawn from the pages of the Scriptures**<sup>28</sup>.

St. Clement states that the Holy Scripture is the voice of God who works for man's goodness. It also, as interpreted by the Church, is the source of Christian teaching<sup>29</sup>. St. Clement loved the Holy Scriptures, especially the book of Psalms, Proverbs, Wisdom, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, the sermon on the mount, Gospel of St. John, etc.

*I could adduce for you a myriad of Scriptures, of which not one letter shall pass away without being fulfilled; for the Mouth of the Lord, the Holy Spirit, has spoken these things*<sup>30</sup>.

St. Clement also offers solid endorsement of the Jewish Scriptures as part of Christian revelation. "Now the law is ancient grace given through Moses by the Word. Wherefore also the Scripture says, "The law was given through Moses," not by Moses, but

<sup>27</sup> Simon P. Wood: *Clement of Alexandria, 1954, p. X (Frs. of the Church, vol. 23).*

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, X, XI.

<sup>29</sup> *Stromata* 7:16:39.

<sup>30</sup> *St. Clement of Alexandria: Protrepticus* 9:82:1; W.A. Jurgens: *The Faith of the Early Fathers, vol. 1, article 404.*

by the Word and through Moses His servant. Wherefore it was only temporary; but eternal grace and truth were by Jesus Christ. Mark the expressions of Scripture: of the law only is it said "was given"; but truth being the grace of the Father, is the eternal work of the Word; and it is not said to be given, but to be by Jesus, without whom nothing was<sup>31</sup>." In other words, the link between the Christian era and that which preceded it in Israel is absolute and without contradiction<sup>32</sup>.

St. Clement blames the mistakes of heretics their habit of "resisting the divine tradition"<sup>33</sup>, by which he means their incorrect interpretation of Scripture; the true interpretation, he believes, is an apostolic and ecclesiastical inheritance<sup>34</sup>. The heretics quoted and warped the meaning of some verses, so as to render them fruitless.

*And if those also who follow heresies venture to avail themselves of the prophetic Scriptures, in the first place they will not make use of all the Scriptures, and then they will not quote them entire, nor as the body and texture of prophecy prescribe. But selecting ambiguous expressions, they wrest them to their own opinions, gathering a few expressions here and there, not looking to the sense, but making use in the mere words. For in almost all the quotations they make, you will find that they attend to the names alone while they alter the meanings, neither knowing as they affirm, nor using the quotations they adduce, according to their true nature. But the truth is not found by changing the meanings, for so people subvert all true teaching, but in the consideration of what perfectly belongs to and becomes the Sovereign God, and establishing each one of the points demonstrated in the Scriptures again from similar Scriptures. Neither then do they want to turn to the truth being ashamed to abandon the claims of self-love;*

31 Paid. 1:7. 32 Rev. James E. Furman: *St. Clement of Alexandria: Making Gnosis Serve Ecclesia*, Coptic Church

Review, Fall 1987, v. 8, No. 3, p. 72.

33 *Stromata* 7:16:103. 34 Kelly, p. 47.

*nor are they able to manage their opinions by doing violence to the Scriptures*<sup>35</sup>.

He uses the allegorical interpretation of the Bible which hides the truth and at the same time reveals it. It hides the truth from the ignorant, whose eyes are blinded by sin and pride, hence they are prevented from knowledge of the truth. At the same time it always reveals what is new to the renewed eyes of the believers.

He is considered as the first Christian theologian who used the allegorical interpretation, giving a cause of using it in a practical way. He says that the Bible has hidden meanings to incite us to search and discover the words of salvation, and to be hidden from those who despise them. The truth is in the pearls which must not be offered to the swines.

The Bible looks like St. Mary the virgin who brought forth Jesus Christ and her virginity was preserved. Thus we discover spiritual meanings of the Bible, but its meaning is still virgin, as it has many hidden spiritual meanings.

The genuine *Gnostic* has "grown old in the holy Scriptures" and "lives and breathes" from them. His study is the search for the mystical sense concealed beneath the letter of the Bible. According to Clement, the biblical authors, inspired by the Holy Spirit, use allegory for much the same purpose he had set himself in the composition of the *Stromata*: allegory keeps simple Christians from doctrines they are not mature enough to handle and piques the curiosity of the more intelligent and spiritually advanced. Finding the deeper meaning is thus the process by which God would guide the more mature in spirit<sup>36</sup>.

St. Clement<sup>37</sup> states that the understanding of the Holy Scriptures belongs not to all, but to the Gnostics who are guided by the Holy Spirit, the Giver of knowledge.

35 *Stromata* 7:16:96 ANF. 36 Joseph Wilson Trigg, *Origen*, SCM Press Ltd, 1985, p. 55. 37 *Stromata* 5:16.

## THE ALLEGORICAL INTERPRETATION OF SCRIPTURE<sup>38</sup>

St. Clement believes that the allegorical interpretation of Scripture is one of the main instruments of hermeneutics.

*For many reasons, then, the Scriptures hide the sense. First, that we may become inquisitive, and be ever on the watch for the discovery of the words of salvation. Then it was not suitable for all to understand, so that they might not receive harm in consequence of taking in another sense the things declared for salvation by the Holy Spirit. Wherefore the holy mysteries of the prophecies are veiled in the parables -preserved for chosen men, selected to knowledge in consequence of their faith; for the style of the Scriptures is parabolic<sup>39</sup>.*

However, one must be careful not to exaggerate Clement's proneness to allegorism, for he tries not to abandon the historical sense of Scripture, as has often been done by many an allegorical interpreter. St. Clement says once and again that the Scriptures do have a literal historical sense<sup>40</sup>. This is why, referring to Clement, Claude Mondésert can say that "the Bible is for him . . . the narration of a revelation which has been experienced in history; it is the story, in concrete facts and in personal actions, of the acts of God towards men, and of repeated divine interventions in world history<sup>41</sup>."

Every text has at least two meanings: a literal and a spiritual one. This is the basic rule of Clement's exegesis, although sometimes he finds several levels within the spiritual sense.

The literal sense is that which is found directly in the text itself, without attempting to discover any hidden meaning. This

<sup>38</sup> Justo L. Gonzalez: *A History of Christian Faith*, vol. 1, 1979, p. 200  
ff. <sup>39</sup> *Stromata* 6:15. <sup>40</sup> *Stromata* 1:21; 2:19; 3:6; 6:3,8; 7:3. <sup>41</sup>  
Mondésert: *Clement*, p. 87.

does not mean that the literal sense is always that which follows from a literalistic or naive interpretation of the text, and for this reason it may be more accurate to call this the "first meaning," in contrast with the "further meanings" that may be discovered through allegorical interpretation. There are cases in which this first meaning coincides with the literal sense of the words found in the text. Such is the case in the historical texts of the Old Testament. But there are also instances in which the first meaning is not strictly the literal or naive one, for such an interpretation would be completely false. This is the case of the many parables, metaphors, and allegories that can be found in Scripture, and whose first meaning is not their literalistic interpretation, but their figurative sense.

This primary meaning of a biblical text is certainly not the highest, and the Christian who hopes to achieve a profound understanding of his faith must not be content with it; but this does not imply that the "first meaning" is unimportant, or that it can be left aside without forsaking biblical truth. On the contrary, the "first meaning" is the point of departure of every other meaning of the text. Especially in the case of historical and prophetic texts, to deny this first and literal sense of Scripture would imply a denial of God's action and promises. There is only one reason that can be adduced in order to deny the literal meaning of a particular text: that it says something that is unworthy of God. Thus, for example, the texts that refer to God in anthropomorphic terms must be interpreted in such a way that it is clearly seen that their anthropomorphism is an allegory that points to profound truths<sup>42</sup>.

**The exegetical principles are:**

The allegorical interpretation must not discard the primary meaning of the text, except when this meaning is such that it contradicts what is already known of God's character and dignity.



Each text must be interpreted in the light of the rest of Scripture. This means primarily that every text must be understood within its proper and immediate context<sup>43</sup>.



c. Mondésert states that meditating on the text of the Scripture Clement discovers at least five senses: a historical sense; a doctrinal sense; a prophetic signification; a philosophical sense; and a mystical sense<sup>44</sup>.



<sup>43</sup> *Stromata* 3:11.

<sup>44</sup> *Clement d' Alexandrie*, Paris 1944, p. 154; Alexander Kerrigan: *St. Cyril of Alexandria*, Roma 1952, p. 29.

# ***HIS THEOLOGY***

## **1. FAITH**

St. Clement explains **the importance of faith**, which the philosophers despise as useless.

*Happy is he who speaks in the ears of the hearing. Now **faith is the ear of the soul**. And such the Lord intimates faith to be, when He says, "He that has ears to hear, let him hear;" so that by believing he may comprehend what He says, as He says it<sup>1</sup>. But faith, which the Greeks disparage and regard as useless and barbarous, is a voluntary preconception, the assent of piety;<sup>2</sup> "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of those things which are not seen" (Heb. 11:1), according to the divine Apostle<sup>3</sup>. "For by it most especially did the men of old have testimony borne to them; and without faith it is impossible to be pleasing to God" (Heb. 11:2,6). Others, however have defined faith as an intellectual assent to a thing unseen, since certainly the proof of a thing unknown is manifest assent... He, then, that believes in the Divine Scriptures with firm judgment, receives, in the voice of God, who gave the Scriptures, an unquestionable proof. Nor by proof does faith become more firm. Blessed, therefore, are those who have not seen and yet have believed (John 20:29)<sup>4</sup>.*

1 Stromata 5:1. 2 The terms *prolhyiv* = preconception, and *sugkataJesiv* = assent, are borrowed from Stoic philosophy, in which the preconception is an instinctive or implanted notion, and the assent is of the mind to such a conception. 3 St. Clement attributes Hebrews to St. Paul. 4 Stromata 2:2:8:4 ; 2:2:9,6(Jurgens).

***Faith is the way... Faith is discovered to be the beginning of action***<sup>5</sup>.

***Faith is the power of God, and the power of the Truth*** (Matt. 17:20; 9:29)<sup>6</sup>.

*For knowledge is a state of mind that results from demonstration; but faith is a gift which leads on from what is undemonstrable to what is universal and simple, to what is neither concomitant to matter itself, nor subject to matter... Aristotle, however, says that faith is that decision, which follows upon knowledge, as to whether this or that be true. Faith, then, is superior to knowledge, and is its criterion*

<sup>7</sup>.

*Such a change as this, by which someone comes from unbelief to belief, and, while hoping and fearing, yet believes, is of divine origin. Indeed, faith appears to us to be the first inclination toward salvation; after which hope and repentance and even fear, advancing in company with moderation and patience, lead us on to love and to knowledge*

<sup>8</sup>.

*Instruction*<sup>9</sup> *is given to engender faith, but faith comes by the Holy Spirit and by baptism*<sup>10</sup>.

St. Clement does not deny the role of sensation as a ladder of knowledge; but through faith the believer is raised up by the Holy Spirit to attain the heavenly mysteries and to find rest in the Truth.

<sup>5</sup> Stromata 2:2. <sup>6</sup> Stromata 3:11. <sup>7</sup> Stromata 2:4:14:3; 2:4:15:5 (Jurgens). <sup>8</sup> Stromata 2:6:31:1 (Jurgens). There follows a quotation from the so-called Letter of Barnabas, which Clement expressly attributes to the Apostle Barnabas. <sup>9</sup> katechesis, the term used to designate elementary instruction of catechumens. <sup>10</sup> Paidagogos 1:6:30 (Frs. of Church).

*"Well, Sensation is the ladder of knowledge; while Faith, advancing over the pathway of the objects of sense, leaves Opinion behind, and speeds to things free of deception, and reposes in the truth"<sup>11</sup>.*

## **I. FAITH AND KNOWLEDGE**

The fact that "*knowledge is to be believed*" is the core of Clement's answer to those who try to develop an autonomous philosophy. The parallel fact that "*faith is to be known*" is the core of his opposition to the heretics. These latter are like men who cannot distinguish between a true and a false coin, for they do not have the knowledge necessary to make a judgment. If faith is not an arbitrary decision, but makes use of the help that knowledge gives it, the heretics do not have true faith, for their "faith" is based on their own thoughts and not on the knowledge of Scripture<sup>12</sup>.

St. Clement believes that the beginning of philosophy is faith. To confront philosophy from a Christian perspective is to realize that all philosophy without Christ is vain and without foundation<sup>13</sup>. At the same time, faith (*Pastis*) is not the point of departure of knowledge (*gnosis*); but knowledge is necessary for faith. For faith is not a mere guessing or an arbitrary decision as to what principles are true. That decision is made on the basis of knowledge. "*Knowledge, accordingly, is characterized by faith; and faith, by a kind of divine mutual and reciprocal correspondence, becomes characterized by knowledge*"<sup>14</sup>.

St. Clement believes that faith and knowledge are inseparable and harmonious and that the proper combination produces the perfect Christian and the true *Gnostic*.

<sup>11</sup> *Stromata* 2:4 ANF. <sup>12</sup> Justo L. Gonzalez: *A History of Christian Faith*, vol. 1, 1979, p. 199. <sup>13</sup> *Stromata* 1:20. <sup>14</sup> *Stromata* 2:4 (ANF, 2:350). E. F. Osborn *The Philosophy of Clement of Alexandria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1957), pp. 113-74.

*Knowledge is characterized by faith; and faith, by a kind of divine mutual and reciprocal correspondence, becomes characterized by knowledge*<sup>15</sup>.

*But it has escaped their notice that, in order to believe truly in the Son, we must believe that He is the Son, and that He came, and how, and for what, and respecting His passion; and we must know who is the Son of God. Now **neither is knowledge without faith, nor faith without knowledge***<sup>16</sup>.

He expresses most appositely the relation between faith and knowledge. At times, it is true, he goes too far by attributing to Greek philosophy an almost supernatural and justifying role, but he regards faith as fundamentally more important than knowledge: '*Faith is something superior to knowledge and is its criterion*'<sup>17</sup>. He also can write that philosophy possesses a pedagogical significance for every Christian who can rise above mere faith to *gnosis*. But at the same time this must be done "*in accordance with the canon of the Church*"<sup>18</sup>.

*Faith, then, is a comprehensive knowledge, so to speak, of the essentials; but knowledge is the strong and firm proof of what is accepted through faith, and which is built upon faith by the Lord's teaching, and which leads to infallibility and understanding and to sudden comprehension. And it seems to me that the first saving change is from paganism to faith, as I said before; and the second is that from faith to knowledge. This latter develops into love, and afterwards presents the one loving to Him that is loved, and the one knowing to Him that is known.*

<sup>15</sup> *Stromata* 2:4 ANF. <sup>16</sup> *Stromata* 5:1 <sup>17</sup> *Stromata* 2:4:15; Quasten, p. 20-1. <sup>18</sup> *Stromata* 7:7:6,15; G. Florovsky: *Byzantine Fathers of the Fifth Century*, 1987, p.81, 82.

*And such a one, perhaps, has already attained the condition of being like to an angel (Luke 20:36)<sup>19</sup>.*

*The perfection of knowledge is faith<sup>20</sup>.*

*Nothing is lacking to faith, for of its nature it is perfect and entirely complete. If there is anything lacking to it, it is not wholly perfect, nor is it truly faith, if defective in any way<sup>21</sup>.*

St. Clement writes precisely about false Gnostics while concentrating on central aspects of Christology.

*Of the Gnostic so much has been cursorily, as it were, written... There are some who draw the distinction that faith has reference to the Son and knowledge to the Spirit. But it has escaped their attention that, in order to believe truly in the Son, we must believe that he is the Son, and that he came, and how, and for what, and respecting his Passion. And we must know who is the Son of God. Now neither is knowledge without faith nor faith without knowledge. Nor is the Father without the Son, for the Son is with the Father. And the Son is the true teacher about the Father... In order that we may know the Father, we must believe in the Son, that it is the Son of God who teaches, for the Father brings us from faith to knowledge by means of the Son<sup>22</sup>." "Believe, O man, him who is man and God. Believe, O man, the living God who suffered and is adored<sup>23</sup>.*

*For knowledge is a state of mind that results from demonstration; but faith is a grace which from what is indemonstrable conducts to what is universal and simple, what is neither with matter, nor matter, nor under matter<sup>24</sup>.*

19 Stromata 7:10:57:3-5 (Jurgens). 20 Paidagogos 1:6:28 (Frs. of Church). 21 Paidagogos 1:6:28 (Frs. of Church). 22 Stromata 5:1. 23 Protreptikos 10; G. Florovsky: Byzantine Fathers of the Fifth Century, 1987, p. 84. 24 Stromata 2:4.



St. Clement who concentrate on the close relation between faith and human knowledge also says,

*But as we say that a man can be a believer without learning, so also we assert that it is impossible for a man without learning to comprehend the things which are declared in the faith<sup>25</sup>.*

*For the prophets and disciples of the Spirit knew infallibly their mind. For they knew it by faith, in a way which others could not easily, as the Spirit has said. But it is not possible for those who have not learned to receive it thus... For if we act not for the Word, we shall act against reason. But a rational work is accomplished through God. "And nothing," it is said, "was made without Him" the Word of God<sup>26</sup>.*

## II. FAITH AND REPENTANCE

Faith is the beginning of the spiritual way<sup>27</sup>, but it is the way itself, in which the *Gnostic* walks all his life. Through this faith in God as the Redeemer and the Judge he attains repentance as the royal way that leads him to the kingdom of God.

*Repentance is an effect of faith. For unless a man believes that to which he was addicted to be sin, he will not abandon it, and if he does not believe punishment to be impending over the transgressor, and salvation to be the portion of him who lives according to the commandments, he will not reform<sup>28</sup>.*

Without faith everything is useless, even repentance itself, for without it we cannot attain the forgiveness of sins.

<sup>25</sup> *Stromata* 1:6 ANF.

<sup>26</sup> *Stromata* 1:9. <sup>27</sup>

*Stromata* 2:2. <sup>28</sup>

*Stromata* 2 6 ANF.

*And what place is there any longer for the repentance of him who was once an unbeliever, through which comes forgiveness of sins<sup>29</sup> ?*

### **III. FAITH AND HOPE**

Faith is the beginning of the spiritual ladder that leads us to heaven; it opens the gates of hope in eternal life and heavenly glorification; therefore St. Clement say, "*Hope, too, is based on faith... Hope is the expectation of the possession of good. Necessarily, then, is expectation founded on faith<sup>30</sup> .*"

### **IV. FAITH AND LOVE**

St. Clement explains the two integral sides of faith, i.e. love and fear. I will refer to the love and fear of God afterwards.

*Fear is the beginning of love, becoming by development of faith and then love. But it is not as I fear and hate a wild beast (since fear is twofold) that I fear the father, whom I fear and love at once. Again, fearing lest I be punished, I love myself in assuming fear. He who fears to offend his father, loves himself. Blessed then is he who is found possessed of faith, being, as he is, composed of love and fear. And faith is power in order to attain salvation, and strength to eternal life<sup>31</sup> .*

### **V. FAITH AND WORKS**

The Alexandrian Fathers explain "good works" as our response to God's love towards us which we have to practise by God's help. St. Clement says: "*For each of us He laid down His life ... and He requires in return that we should do the same for*

<sup>29</sup> Stromata 2:3 ANF.

<sup>30</sup> Stromata 2:6 ANF.

<sup>31</sup> Stromata 2:12. ANF.

each other<sup>32</sup>." But we can not do this without God, because "He is for us the source of all good. From Him we learn the good life and are brought to eternal life<sup>33</sup>."

When we hear, "Your faith saved you,"<sup>34</sup> we do not understand [the Lord] to say simply that they will be saved who have believed in whatever manner, even if works have not followed. To begin with, it was to the Jews alone that He spoke this phrase, who had lived in accord with the law and blamelessly, and who had lacked only faith in the Lord<sup>35</sup>.

We ought to have works that cry aloud, as becoming "those who walk in the day" (Rom. 13:13). "Let your works shine" (Matt. 5:16), and behold a man and his works before his face. "For behold God and His works" (Isa. 62:11). For the Gnostic must, as far as is possible, imitate God<sup>36</sup>.

As, then, the virtues follow one another, why need I say what has been demonstrated already, that faith hopes through repentance, and fear through faith; and patience and practice in these along with learning terminate in love, which is perfected by knowledge?<sup>37</sup>

## VI. FAITH AND FREE-WILL

Faith, which is a divine gift<sup>38</sup>, is attained through free-will, and is the work of the free soul, which has the choice to believe or not to believe<sup>39</sup>. St. Clement presents an example, a person has the choice to seize a ball or ignore it, but he cannot seize it unless it is thrown towards him.

<sup>32</sup> *Quis Dives Salvetur* 37. <sup>33</sup> *Protrepticus* 1:7. <sup>34</sup> Matt. 9:22; Mark 5:34; Luke 8:48. <sup>35</sup> *Stromata* 6:14:108:4, 5 (Jurgens). <sup>36</sup> *Stromata* 4:26 ANF. <sup>37</sup> *Stromata* 2:9. ANF. <sup>38</sup> *Stromata* 2:4; 3:7. <sup>39</sup> *Stromata* 3:9.

Free-will, according to St. Clement is superior, and all the powers of the mind submit to it.

## 2. GOD

### I. THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

St. Clement speaks of the knowledge of God which can be attained even through our natural law:

*For into all men in general, and indeed, most particularly into those who are engaged in intellectual pursuits, a certain divine emanation has been instilled, by reason of which they confess, if somewhat reluctantly, that God is one, indestructible and unbegotten, and that somewhere above in the heavenly regions, in His power and familiar vantage point, He truly and eternally exists<sup>40</sup>.*

Henry Chadwick says, St. Clement loves to write of the natural knowledge of God found in all men<sup>41</sup>. There is no known race that has not the idea of God<sup>42</sup>. It was breathed into Adam at the creation<sup>43</sup>. The beneficence of God is universal and has no beginning at some special point in history - as if he had first begun to be interested in nations other than the Hebrews only after the coming of Christ<sup>44</sup>. There was primitive monotheism among the earliest races of men long before religion was corrupted into demonic polytheism<sup>45</sup>.

To attain the **knowledge of God** we need to pass through three stages:

a. The purification from sin, for sin prevents us from acknowledging the divine secrets.

*If, then, abstracting from all that pertains to bodies and to such as we call corporeal, we cast ourselves into the*

40 St. Clement of Alexandria: *Protreptikos* 6:68:2, 3 ; W.A. Jurgens: *The Faith of the Early Fathers*, vo. 1, article 403. 41 *Protreptikos* 25f.; *Stromata* 5:87f. 42 *Stromata* 5:133. 43 *Paidagogos* 1:7-8; *Stromata* 5:87; 94. 44 *Stromata* 5:133-4; 141. 45 *Stromata* 1:68; 71; 6:57,3. Henry Chadwick: *History and Thought of the Early Church*, London, 1982, p. 176.

*greatness of Christ, and then advance into His immensity by holiness, we may reach somehow to the conception of the Almighty, knowing not what He is, but what He is not. Neither form nor motion, however, nor standing, nor sitting, nor place, nor right, nor left are to be conceived of as belonging to the Father of the universe, although these things are written of Him. What each of these means will be shown in its proper place. The First Cause, therefore, is not located in a place, but is above place and time and name and conception. On this account did Moses also say, "Show yourself to me," (Exod. 33:13), indicating most clearly that God cannot be taught to men nor expressed in words, but can be known only by an ability which He Himself gives<sup>46</sup>.*

b. We must see beyond the literal meanings of the text, and the naive materialistic interpretations. For God is beyond any name or shape. He is called the One, the Good One, the Mind, the Eternal One, God, the Creator or the Lord. All these names or titles are not accurate, for they cannot describe Him as He is, but these are used for us that we may acknowledge Him<sup>47</sup>. God is revealed to us by our human language which is unable to express Him as He is.

*For the Divine Being can not be declared as it exists: but as we who are fettered in the flesh were able to listen, so the prophets spoke to us; the Lord savingly accommodating Himself to the weakness of men<sup>48</sup>.*

c. Vision of God: The knowledge of God is a divine gift. Christ Himself is our knowledge, whoever attains Him embraces knowledge.

## **II. THE TRANSCENDENCE OF GOD**

<sup>46</sup> Stromata 5:11:71:3-5 (Jurgens).

<sup>47</sup> Stromata 5:11; 5:12; 4:18; 2:2.

<sup>48</sup> Stromata 2:15.

St. Clement of Alexandria repeatedly emphasized the transcendence of God, perhaps to clarify the gap between the essence and the nature of God and those of the universe. For him<sup>49</sup> God is absolutely transcendent, ineffable and incomprehensible; "**God is one, and beyond one, and above the Monad itself**"<sup>50</sup>.

*God of the universe who is above all speech, all conception, all thought, can never be committed to writing, being inexpressible even by His own power*<sup>51</sup>.

*God is invisible and beyond expression by words..., what is divine is unutterable by human power ( 2 Cor. 12:4; Rom. 11:33)... The discourse concerning God is most difficult to deal with*<sup>52</sup>.

*For human speech is by nature feeble and incapable of declaring God. I do not mean His name,...nor do I mean His Essence, for this is impossible, but the power and the work of God*<sup>53</sup>.

*The First Cause is not then in space, but above both space and time, and name and conception*<sup>54</sup>.

*The Deity is without form and nameless. Though we ascribe names, they are not to be taken in their strict meaning: when we call Him One, Good, Mind, Existence, Father, God, Creator, Lord, we are not conferring a name on Him. Being unable to do more, we use these appellations of honor, in order that our thought may have something to rest on and not wander at random. He cannot be comprehended by knowledge, which is based on previously known truths, whereas nothing can precede what is self-existent. It remains that the Unknown be*

49 Paidagogos 1:71; Stromata 2:6:1; 5:65:2; 5:78:3; 5:81:3.

50 Paidagogos 1:8:71. 51 Stromata 5:10:65. 52 Ibid. 5: 12.

53 Ibid. 6: 18: 166. 54 Ibid. 5: 11: 71.

*apprehended by divine grace and the Word proceeding  
from Him<sup>55</sup> .*

*Nor is it possible to predicate any parts of [God]. For what is one is indivisible, and thereby infinite - not in regard to its being clearly inconceivable, but in regard to its being without dimensions and not having limits, for which reason it is without form and name. And if we somehow name Him, we do not do so properly, when we supply such names as the One, or the Good, or Mind, or That Which Is, or Father, or God, or Creator, or Lord. We so speak not as supplying His name; but in our need we use beautiful names so that the mind may have these as a support against erring in other respects. For each one by itself does not express God, but all together they are indicative of the power of the Omnipotent. Predicates are expressed either from what belongs to things themselves, or from their relationship to each other; but nothing of this is applicable in reference to God. Neither is He apprehended by the science of demonstration; for it depends upon primary and better known principles, while there is nothing<sup>56</sup> antecedent to the Unbegotten .*

### **III. GOD'S IMMANENCE TO THE UNIVERSE**

St. Clement, who describes this gap between God and the creation, declares that God is not far from the world, particularly from His noblest creature in this world, namely man. For He created the universe out of His gracious love for man, and for the same reason He still cares for all the universe. We can say that He is involved in our world out of His infinite love and heavenly

<sup>55</sup> Stromata 5:12:82. <sup>56</sup> Stromata 5:12:81:6;  
5:12:82:1-3 (Jurgens).



fatherhood to us<sup>57</sup>. St. Clement of Alexandria calls God, "*the Father and the Creator of the entire cosmos.*"

#### IV. GOD' GOODNESS

**God' goodness** is revealed through His love for us, at a time when we are strangers and far from Him. He embraces the whole world, desiring their own salvation. His goodness is revealed by changing even the evil things to our edification and goodness. No man is perfect in his goodness, therefore he is in need of the Logos, the source of salvation, who grants us the likeness of God.

*Human art fashions houses and ships and cities and pictures; but how should I tell what God makes? Behold, the whole world - that is His work; and the heavens and the sun and angels and men, the works of His fingers. How great, indeed, is the power of God! His mere willing it is the creation of the world; and God alone created it, because He is God in fact. By a mere exercise of His will He creates, and His simple volition is followed by its coming to be<sup>58</sup>.*

St. Clement speaks of the **goodness of the Father and the Son**, who are one in the Godhead. They love their creation and know no hate.

*Nothing exists except that which God causes to be. There is nothing, therefore, which is hated by God; nor is there anything hated by the Word. Both are one, both are God; for he says: "In the beginning the Word was in God, and the Word was God<sup>59</sup>."<sup>60</sup>*

#### V. GOD'S FATHERHOOD

57 Fr. Tadros Y. Malaty: *The Divine Providence, Alexandria, 1990, p. 4.* 58 St. Clement of Alexandria: *Protreptikos* 4:63:2, 3 ; W.A. Jurgens: *The Faith of the Early Fathers, vo. 1, article 403.* 59 John 1:1. 60 *Paidagogos* 1:8:62:3, 4 ; W.A. Jurgens: *The Faith of the Early Fathers, vo. 1.*

The Alexandrian Fathers explain in a biblical thought that God reveals His providence in its greatest depth through His Fatherhood to men. God is not in need of men's worship or offerings but of their hearts to lift them up to His glories, to enjoy His eternal love, and practice their sonship to Him.

a. St. Clement of Alexandria states that we are by nature entirely strangers, having no natural relation to God; nevertheless He loves us and cares for us as a true Father for His beloved children.

*God in everything is greater than man... This is the greatest proof of the goodness of God: that such being our relation to Him, and being by nature wholly estranged, He nevertheless cares for us. For the affection in animals to their progeny is natural, and the friendship of kindred minds is the result of intimacy. But the mercy of God is rich towards us, who are in no respect related to Him; I say either in our essence or nature, or in the peculiar energy of our essence, but only in our being the work of His will. And Him who willingly, with discipline and teaching, accepts the knowledge of the truth, He calls to adoption, which is the greatest advancement of all*<sup>61</sup>.

*O surpassing love for men! Not as a teacher to his scholars, not as a master to his domestics, nor as God to men, but as a father the Lord admonishes His children*<sup>62</sup>.

In St. Clement's time, many heretics welcomed the "loving Father" of the New Testament as a merciful alternative to the "fierce tyrant" that they perceived in the Old Testament. St. Clement assures them that there is but one God shown in the entire Bible, a Lord of grace and redemption. His response is in the form of dialogue: "*How then,*" they say, "*if the Lord loves man, and is*

<sup>61</sup> Stromata 2:16.

<sup>62</sup> Protrop 9:82.

good, is He angry and punishes?<sup>63</sup>" St. Clement's answer affirms moral use of drastic measures:

*For reproof is, as it were, the surgery of the passions of the soul; and the passions are, as it were, an abscess of the truth, which must be cut open by an incision of the lancet of reproof<sup>64</sup>.*

*Each one of us, who sins, with his own free will chooses punishment, and the blame lies with him who chooses. God is without blame<sup>65</sup>.*

*For as the mirror is not evil to an ugly man because it shows him what likeness he has; and as the physician is not evil to the sick man because he tells him of his fever -for the physician is not the cause of the fever, but only points out the fever; - so neither is He, that reproves, ill-disposed towards him who is diseased in soul. For He does not put the transgressions on him, but only shows the sins which are there; in order to turn him away from similar practices<sup>66</sup>.*

b. God - in His infinite love - declared Himself in the Old Testament as the Father of the believers but nobody, even the patriarchs and the prophets, dared to call Him: "Father". In the New Testament, the Father sent His only Begotten Son to call the believers to abide in Him by the Holy Spirit, and thus they attain adoption to the Father. This is the gift of the New Testament, which Isaiah the prophet foretold, saying: "For the Lord God will... call His servants by another (a new) name," Is. 65:15. What is the new name except "The children of God"?!

*And my servants shall be called by a new name, He says, fresh and eternal, pure and simple, and childlike and true, which shall be blessed on earth...*

63 Paid. 1:8. 64 Ibid. 65 Ibid. 66 Ibid. 1:9; Rev. James E. Furman: St. Clement of Alexandria: Making Gnosis Serve Ecclesia, Coptic Church Review, Fall 1987, v. 8, No. 3, p. 71, 72.

*Rightly, then, are those called children who know Him as their Father, who are simple, and infants and guileless...*

*The Father of the universe cherishes affection towards those who have fled to Him; and having begotten them again by His Spirit to the adoption of children, knows them as gentle, and loves those alone, helps and fights for them; and therefore He bestows on them the name children<sup>67</sup>.*

*The Gnostic (the believer who has true spiritual knowledge) in virtue of being a lover of the one true God, is the really perfect man and friend of God, and is placed in the rank of sons<sup>68</sup>.*

## **VI THE DIVINE**

6

### **PROVIDENCE**

9

Many of the ancient philosophers, such as Philo, Cicero, Seneca, Epictetus, Marcus Aureoles and others, contemplated the universe, its mighty laws, its capabilities, its beauty etc. They believed in God's providence as a fact, but frequently, they limited it to the creation of the universe with its laws; believing that God left the universe after its creation, and no longer controlled its laws. The Alexandrian Fathers looked upon philosophy as a divine gift that reveals the truth partially. They believed in God's providence in its biblical sense; namely it embraced all creation in general and man in particular. It surpassed time and space, for it was concerned with man even before his creation, i.e., before the time when he was in the Divine Mind, and it still takes care of him on earth and will continue embracing him into eternal life, or in the world to come. Divine Providence cares for believers, unbelievers and irrational creatures. This is revealed through God's tender mercies, kindness and chastening; through the pleasant events, and through the evil, sorrowful ones.

67 Paedagogos 1:5. 68 Strom 7:11. 69 Fr. Tadros Y. Malaty: *The Divine Providence*, Alexandria, 1990, p. 3.

Divine providence is one aspect of the grace of God, for the depth of the latter is revealed through the Incarnation, the crucifixion and the resurrection of the Incarnate Son of God.

St. Clement believes that the universe is a clear proof of God's providence. W.E.G. Floyd says: "Clement's proof for the existence of divine providence, if proof is needed, is a theological argument based on order and design in the universe. This is evident, he argues, even from the most superficial glance at the world. To deny that is an attack on the true doctrine"<sup>70</sup>.

St. Clement expresses the close relation between God and the universe, saying: "*He who is far off has come very near; oh ineffable marvel! 'I am a God who is near at hand,' says the Lord (Jer. 23:23)... He is very near by virtue of His power ( providence ) which holds all things in its embrace. 'Can anyone hide himself in secret places, so I shall not see him?!' ( Jer. 23: 24 ). For the power of God is always present, in contact with us, in the exercise of inspection, of beneficence and of instruction*"<sup>71</sup>.

John Patrick says: "Thus the transcendence of God, in the thought of Clement, is consistent with God's immanence, rather the immanence is an essential factor in His conception"<sup>72</sup>.

## VII GOD'S UNIVERSAL

7

### PROVIDENCE

3

God, who is immanent to His creation created it through His grace or good will<sup>74</sup>, for "*nothing at all exists unless He had willed it to exist*"<sup>75</sup>. This active and gracious will of God or this Divine providence is still at work, caring for the creation. Plato and other philosophers thought that the divine providence was constrained to the creation of the universe with its mighty laws, but

70 W.E.G. Floyd: *Clement of Alexandria's treatment of the problem of evil*, Oxford University Press, 1971, p.36. 71 *Stromata* 2:2. 72 J. Patrick: *Clement of Alexandria*, London 1914, p.73. 73 Fr. Tadros Y. Malaty: *The Divine Providence*, Alexandria, 1990, p. 6,7. 74 St. Clement: *Protrepticus* 4:63. 75 St. Clement Alex: *Paedagogos* 1:8:62.

St. Clement of Alexandria clarified that God never ceases to do good. Otherwise, He would cease to be a gracious God<sup>76</sup>. He says that the universe, like an axe, has no power in itself, but is in need of the hand of God to use it in the proper work and to fulfill its purpose. *"Just as the ax does not cut unless someone uses it, or a saw without someone sawing with it, for they do not work by themselves, but have certain physical qualities which accomplish their proper work by the exertion of the artisan; so also by the universal providence of God, through the medium of secondary causes, the operative power is propagated in succession to individual objects"*<sup>77</sup>.

Here, I refer to the words of St. Clement who said that God's rest (Sabbath) does not consist of ceasing to act, for this means to cease to be God, but is rather realized by His work in the universe attaining its aim. May our gracious God act in us as His beloved Creatures that by His providence we may become perfect in Him and He might find His rest in us.

St. Clement states that God's goodness is ever at work, like the care of a shepherd for his sheep, a king for his subjects, and a father for his children<sup>78</sup>.

### **VIII. PROVIDENCE FOR MANKIND, CHURCH AND EVERY PERSON**

God as the Omniscient One, sees the whole as well as the part at a glance<sup>79</sup>, and in His love for men *"His providence is in private, in public... He cares for all"*<sup>80</sup>. God's goodness is not mechanical, but the goodness of a loving personality<sup>81</sup>; He takes care of all mankind, of His Church and of everybody personally. He is not the adversary of anyone nor the enemy of anyone<sup>82</sup>.

<sup>76</sup> Strom. 5:14:141, 6:12, 6:16.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid. 6:16. <sup>78</sup> Stromata

6:17:157,158. <sup>79</sup> Stromata

6:17. <sup>80</sup> Ibid. 7:2 <sup>81</sup> Ibid. 1:27,

1:11. <sup>82</sup> Ibid. 7:12

Floyd<sup>83</sup> states that Clement was unashamed of his theology of providence (*paranoia*) because of its almost universal popularity among serious and well-educated persons in the Greco-Roman world of his day, but there was an essential difference between Clement and the philosophers. The latter often equated to the natural laws, for God established the unalterable laws of the universe as one might wind a clock; the pattern once set runs of its own accord. God is a monarch who reigns but not rules. St. Clement declares that God's care is for the universe, mankind, the Church and at the same time for everybody personally. He is the Lover of every man.

Floyd says: "When Clement teaches providential concern for the individual, his comments are profuse. Since man is God's most noble creation, but nonetheless a finite creature, God, out of pity for this weakness, sympathizes with the nature of each man. By His omniscience and omnipotence, He knows the needs of every person and like a king for his people or a shepherd for his flock, dispenses his beneficence accordingly. Nothing that matters to man is too petty for God's concern, for "even the very hairs of his head are numbered and the most minute movements are surveyed<sup>84</sup> ."

83 Floyd: *Clement of Alexandria's treatment of the problem of evil*, Oxford University Press 1971, p. 35. 84 *Ibid.* 36.

### 3. THE TRINITARIAN FAITH

G. Florovsky says, Throughout his extant works Clement speaks of, refers to, and underpins his thought with the unity and oneness of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. *"The all-loving, beneficent Father rained down his Logos and straightway did he become the spiritual nourishment for the good. O, the marvelous mystery! For one is the Father of all, one the Logos of all, and one is the Holy Spirit, one and the same everywhere"*<sup>85</sup>. *"Be gracious, O Educator, to us your children, O Father, Charioteer of Israel, Son and Father, both one, O Lord. Grant to us who obey your precepts that we may perfect the likeness of the image, and with all our power know the goodness of God and the kindness of his judgment. . . That we may give praise and thanksgiving to the only Father, and to the only Son, to Son and Father, Son our Educator and Teacher, together with the Holy Spirit, all in One, in whom are all things, through whom all things are one, through whom is eternity, of whom all men are members... all praise to the All-Good, the All-Lovely, the All-Wise, the All-Just One, to whom be glory both now and ever. Amen"*<sup>86</sup>. ***The Trinitarian praise ends Clement's Who Is the Rich Man Who Is Saved?*** *"To whom, by his Son Jesus Christ, the Lord of the living and the dead, and by the Holy Spirit, be glory, honor, power, eternal majesty, both now and ever, from generation to generation, and from eternity to eternity. Amen"*<sup>87</sup>.

This triune God is the Creator. The world is the result of an action of God. It has not simply emanated from the divinity nor is it a mere ordering of preexistent matter<sup>88</sup>. Creation took place outside time - a doctrine that Clement believes he can find support

<sup>85</sup> Paidagogos 1:6. <sup>86</sup> Paidagogos 3:12. <sup>87</sup> Ch. 42; G. Florovsky: *Byzantine Fathers of the Fifth Century*, 1987, p. 84,85. <sup>88</sup> Stromata 5:14.



for in the philosophers as well as in Scripture<sup>89</sup>. Furthermore, creation is not to be confused with the mere preservation of the universe. Clement believes that God, who made all things in the beginning, no longer creates, but has rather left the preservation and multiplication of things to the natural order that he established at the beginning<sup>90</sup>.

<sup>89</sup> *Stromata* 6:16. <sup>90</sup> *In a fragment preserved by Anastasius Sinaita (q. 96). English trans.: ANF, 2:584; Justo L. Gonzalez: A History of Christian Faith, vol. 1, 1979, p. 207.*

4.

## 9 CHRIST

The Logos is the Creator of the universe. He is the one who manifested God the Father in the Law of the Old Testament, in the philosophy of the Greeks and finally in the fullness of time, in His incarnation. He forms with the Father and the Holy Ghost the Divine Trinity. It is through the Logos that we can recognize God because the Father cannot be named.

The Logos, as Divine Reason, is essentially the Teacher of the world and the Lawgiver of mankind. St. Clement knew Him also as the Savior of the human race and the founder of a new life which begins with faith, proceeds to knowledge and, through love and charity leads to immortality. Christ as the incarnate Logos is God-man, and it is through Him that we have been elevated to divine life.

The Son is eternal, His generation from the Father is without beginning. St. Clement says, "*The Father is not without His Son, for along with being Father, He is Father of the Son*"<sup>92</sup> .  
The Son is essentially one with the Father, since the Father is in Him and He is the Father<sup>93</sup> .

St. Clement assures the humanity and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ. Henry Chadwick says,

We are not to think, like the Gnostics, that the incarnation was not a real taking of human flesh or an optical illusion, though Clement admits that Christ ate and drank, not because he really needed to do so, but to forestall the heretics<sup>94</sup> . He also insists that in the Passion there was no inner conflict<sup>95</sup> . Christ was without sin and suffered not for Himself but for us<sup>96</sup> . Nor, on the other

91 see Esmat Gabriel: *St. Clement of Alexandria*, *Coptic Church Review*, Spring 1980, v.1, No. 1, p. 25; Quasten, p. 21 f. 92 *Strom.* 4:162:5; 5:1:3; 7:5:5. 93 *Paidag.* 1:24:3; 1:53:1; 1:62:4; 1:71:3; 3:101:1. 94 *Stromata* 6:71; 3:91; 102. 95 *Stromata* 3:69. 96 *Stromata* 4:81f.

hand, are we to think that Christ was so good a man that he  
was 'adopted' as Son of God<sup>97</sup> ...  
He took our passible flesh and trained it up to  
impassibility<sup>98</sup> .  
The incarnation was an incognito, only penetrated  
by those to whom God's grace revealed it<sup>99</sup> .

## I. CHRIST AS A TEACHER

The Alexandrians considered "ignorance" as the cause of sin. St. Clement has shown that the knowledge of God has to be taught to us. But who is to do this? Mankind cannot do it, and even the angels cannot reveal God to human beings. The Savior is the Teacher who practiced His educational work throughout the whole history of mankind, through the prophets and the Greek philosophers and at last He was incarnate.

The Divine Teacher, not only offers the divine Law and renewing human nature, commandments, but He has the power of bestowing upon man a new life in Him. He has the power to and of educate the soul and illuminate the mind to attain "knowledge." He also sends the Holy Spirit into His Church to reveal the divine mysteries. St. Paul says, "But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God" 1 Cor. 2:10,11.

*The Word ... has appeared as our teacher, He by  
whom the Universe was created. The Word who in the  
beginning gave us life when He fashioned us as Creator,  
has taught us the good life as our teacher, that He may  
afterwards, as God, provide us with eternal life. Not that*

97 Paidagogos 1:25; Henry Chadwick: History and Thought of the Early Church, London, 1982, p. 176. 98 Stromata 7:6-7. 99 Stromata 6:132; Henry Chadwick: History and Thought of the Early Church, London, 1982, p.

*He now has for the first time pitied us for our wandering;  
He pitied us from old, from the beginning. But now, when  
we were perishing, He has appeared and has saved us<sup>100</sup>.*

*Who could teach with greater love for men than  
He?<sup>101</sup>*

*Let us call Him, then, by the one title: **Educator of little ones**,  
an Educator who does not simply follow behind, but who  
leads the way, for His aim is to improve the soul, not just to  
instruct it; to guide to a life of virtue, not merely to one of  
knowledge. Yet, that same Word does teach. It is simply that in  
this work we are not considering Him in that light. As  
Teacher, He explains and reveals through instruction, but as  
Educator He is practical. First He persuades men to form  
habits of life, then He encourages them to fulfill their duties by  
laying down clear-cut counsels and by holding up, for us who  
follow, examples of those who have erred in the past. Both are  
most useful: the advice, that it may be obeyed; the other, given  
in the form of example, has a twofold object - either that we  
may choose the good and imitate it or condemn and avoid the  
bad<sup>102</sup>.*

*For he (the Apostle) recognizes the spiritual man and the  
Gnostic (a spiritual believer who has true gnosis of  
knowledge) as the disciples of the Holy Spirit dispensed by  
God, which is the mind of Christ. "But the natural man  
receives not the things of the Spirit, for they are foolishness to  
him" 1 Cor. 2:14<sup>103</sup>.*

*For the Spirit searches all things, yes the deep  
things of God (1 Cor 2:10)<sup>104</sup>.*

100 Protrep. 1:7. 101 Paidagogos 1:7:59 (Fathers of the Church). 102 Paidagogos 1:1:1,2 (Fathers of the Church, 23). 103 Stromata 5:4. 104 Ibid. 2:2.

*Even those who claim God as their Teacher, with difficulty attain to a conception of God, grace aiding them to the attainment of their modicum of knowledge; accustomed as they are to contemplate the will [of God] by the will, and the Holy Spirit by the Holy Spirit. "For the Spirit searches the deep things of God. But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God" 1 Cor. 2:10,14<sup>105</sup>.*

*The Word that was with God, the Word by whom all things were made, has appeared as our Teacher; and He, who bestowed life upon us in the beginning, when, as our Creator, He formed us, now that He has appeared as our Teacher, has taught us to live well so that, afterwards, as God, He might furnish us abundantly with eternal life<sup>106</sup>.*

*Just as night would be over everything in spite of the other stars, if the sun did not exist, so also, had we not known the Word and been illuminated by Him, we would have been no different from fowls that are being fed, fattened in darkness and nourished for death<sup>107</sup>.*

*Our divine Educator is trustworthy, for He is endowed with three excellent qualities: intelligence, good will and authority to speak. With intelligence, because He is the Wisdom of the Father: 'All wisdom is from the Lord and has been always with Him' (Eccl. 1 1:1). With authority to speak, because He is God and Creator: 'All things were made through Him, and without Him was made nothing' (John 1:3). With good will, because He is the only one who has given Himself as a sacrifice for us: 'The Good Shepherd lays down His life for His sheep' (John 10:11), and in fact*

105 Ibid. 6:18. 106 St. Clement of Alexandria: *Protreptikos* 1:7:3. 107 St. Clement of Alexandria: *Protreptikos*: 11, 113, 3.

*He did lay it down. Surely, good will is nothing else than willing what is good for the neighbor for his own sake*<sup>108</sup>.

*Our tutor, oh children, resembles God his Father, He is the Son of God, without sin and without defect; his soul is impassible; the immaculate God under a human form, the minister of the will of the Father, God the Word, who is in the Father, who comes from the right hand of the Father, God in human form. He is for us the immaculate image, to which with all our might, we are to endeavor to assimilate our soul. But He is wholly free from all human passions; the only judge, because He alone is without sin; but we must, as much as lies within our power, strive to keep ourselves as free as possible from sin*<sup>109</sup>.

*Since the unproduced Being is unique, the all-powerful God, his firstborn is also unique,... and is the one whom all the prophets call Wisdom, He is the Master of all created beings, the Counselor of God who has governed all things by his Providence. He it is who, from the beginning, from the first creation of the world, has instructed (us) in many ways and in many forms, and He also completes his teaching. That is why He rightly says: "Call no man your master on earth." You see the prizes of true philosophy*<sup>110</sup>.

This Master is in men's hearts as a seed of truth; he is symbolized by the grain of mustard seed, by the seed of the sower, and by the heaven<sup>111</sup>. It is He who, as we have seen, has given to mankind the partial intuitions of philosophy; He is also the revealer of the two Testaments<sup>112</sup>.

Joseph C. McLelland states that his theology is a Christian 'paideia' (educating). Christ is the *Paidagogos* (Educator) who educates the believers, granting them true *gnosis* (knowledge).

108 *Paidagogos* 1:11:97 (*Fathers of Church*, vol. 23). 109 *Paidagogos* 1:2:4:1-2. 110 *Stromata* 6:7:58:1-2. 111 *Paidagogos* 1:11:96:2; *Stromata* 4:6:31:5; *Stromata* 5:12:80:8. 112 *Stromata* 2:6:29:2.

According to St. Clement, ...'there is no faith without knowledge, nor knowledge without faith... and the Son is the true Teacher<sup>113</sup>. He educates the believer by training his soul to discover truth<sup>114</sup>.

*Paidagogos* is the training of children... we are the children... To speak briefly, the Lord acts toward us as we do toward our children<sup>115</sup>."

This divine *Paidagogos* teaches us about the Father. *"In order that we may come to know the Father, we must believe in the Son, because the Son of the Father is our teacher, for the Father brings us from faith to knowledge by means of the Son"*<sup>116</sup>.

The Son, as our divine *Paidagogos*, not only grants us His grace of true knowledge, but also offers Himself as the model we have to imitate to become like Him<sup>117</sup>.

The divine Teacher - in His infinite love to the believer - is involved in all aspects of his life, taking care of even the smallest actions.

*"As the sun illumines not only the heaven and the whole world, shining on both land and sea, it also sends its rays through windows and small chinks into the furthest recesses of a house, so the Word, poured out everywhere, beholds the smallest actions of man's life"*<sup>118</sup>."

*The Word, then, the Christ, is the cause both of our ancient beginning - for He was in God - and of our wellbeing. And now this same Word has appeared as man. He alone is both God and man, and the source of all our good things. It is by Him that we are taught to live well and then are sent along to life eternal...*

113 Strom. 5:1:11. 114 Strom. 4:6:35; 6:15:121; 7:16:95. 115 Paid. 1:5:12; 1:9:75. 116 Strom. 5:1:1. 117 Protop. 12:120:4; Strom. 2:19:100. 118 Strom. 7:3:21.



*He is the New Song, the manifestation which has now been made among us, of the Word which existed in the beginning and before the beginning. The Savior, who existed before, has only lately appeared. He that has appeared is in Him that is; for the Word that was with God (1), the Word by whom all things were made, has appeared as our Teacher; and He, who bestowed life upon us in the beginning, when, as our Creator, He formed us, now that He has appeared as our Teacher, has taught us to live well so that, afterwards, as God, He might furnish us abundantly with eternal life<sup>119</sup>.*

Here are some quotes of St. Clement of Alexandria, which declare that Christianity elevates man's mind and does not abolish it by faith or by God's revelation, but makes it wise: ...*"the soul is raised to God: trained in the true philosophy, it speeds to its kindred above, turning away from the lusts of the body, and besides these, from toil and fear..."*<sup>120</sup>

*"A noble hymn of God is an immortal man, established in righteousness, in whom the oracles of truth are engraved! For where, but in a soul that is wise, can you write truth?"*<sup>121</sup>

St. Clement explains that human knowledge is necessary for the understanding of the scriptures, but not without God's help<sup>122</sup>.

St. Clement of Alexandria introduced our Lord as Jesus who heals both our body and our soul<sup>123</sup>. "He is the divine *Educator* and *Physician* who alone can deliver us from the consequences of sin.

As a churchman, St. Clement sees **the church as the place of education and the divine pasture.**

<sup>119</sup> St. Clement of Alexandria: *Protreptikos*, 1:7:1, 3.

<sup>120</sup> *Strom.* 4:3. <sup>121</sup> *Protrop.* 10. <sup>122</sup> *Strom.* 1:9. <sup>123</sup>

*Paidagogos* 3:12.

*Feed us, the children, as sheep. Yea, Master, fill us with righteousness, Your own pasture; yea, O Educator, feed us on Your holy mountain the Church, which towers aloft, which is above the clouds, which touches heaven.* <sup>124</sup>

## **II. CHRIST REVEALS HIS FATHER IN THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS**

Our Lord Jesus Christ is appropriately called the Educator "*Our Educator is the Holy God Jesus, the Logos, who is the guide of all humanity. The loving God himself is our Educator.*" In the Old Testament the "*Lord God was unnamed because he had not yet become man.*" "*The face of God is the Logos by whom God is manifested and made known*" <sup>125</sup>."

God can only be known through his Word or Son. The Son is the image of the Father, His mind or rationality. He is the Mediator between the utterly transcendent God, the One, and the world which He contains <sup>126</sup> .

*Since the first principle of everything is difficult to find out, the absolutely first and oldest principle, which is the cause of all other things being and having been, is difficult to exhibit. For how can that be expressed which is neither genus, nor difference, nor species, nor individual, nor number; nay more, is neither an event, nor that to which an event happens? No one can rightly express Him wholly. For on account of His greatness He is ranked as the All, and is the Father of the universe. Nor are any parts to be predicated of Him. For the One is indivisible; wherefore also it is infinite, not considered with reference to its being without dimensions, and not having a limit. And therefore it is without form and name. And if we name it,*

<sup>124</sup> Paidagogos 1:9. <sup>125</sup> G. Florovsky: *Byzantine Fathers of the Fifth Century*, 1987, p.83. <sup>126</sup> *Protrepticus* 98:3; *Stromata* 5:16:3; W.G. Rusch: *The Trinitarian Controversy*, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1980, p. 12.

*we do not do so properly, terming it either the One, or the Good, or Mind, or Absolute Being, or Father, or God, or Creator, or Lord. We speak not as supplying His name; but for want we use good names, in order that the mind may have these as points of support, so as not to err in other respects. For each one by itself does not express God; but all together are indicative of the power of the Omnipotent. For predicative are expressed either from what belongs to things themselves or from their mutual relation. But none of these are admissible in reference to God. Nor any more is He apprehended by the science of demonstration. For it depends on primary and better known principles. But there is nothing antecedent to the Unbegotten. It remains that we understand then the Unknown by divine Grace and by the Word alone that proceeds from Him<sup>127</sup>.*

*"Receive Christ, receive sight, receive your light; in order that you may know well both God and man. 'Sweet is the Word that gives us light, precious above gold and gems; it is to be desired above honey and the honeycomb' Ps. 19:10<sup>128</sup>."*

*"For each one (of His titles) by itself does not express God; but altogether are indicative of the power of the Omnipotent. It remains that we understand, then, the Unknown, by divine grace, and by the Word alone that proceeds from*

*Him<sup>129</sup>."*

Joseph C. McLelland writes<sup>130</sup>: "Moreover, since 'like knows like' in the Alexandrian world-view... (St. Clement states<sup>131</sup>) 'the way to the Immutable is immutability.'"

127 Stromata 5:12:82 ANF. 128 St. Clement: Exhortation to the Heathen, Ch. 9. "The Ante-Nicene Fathers." 129 St. Clement: Stromata, Book 5, Ch. 12. 130 J.C. McLelland: God the Anonymous, A study in Alexandrian Philosophical Theology", 1976, P

64. 131 St. Clement: Stromata, Book 2, Ch. 11, Section 6.

St. Clement does not ignore the role of natural law for acknowledging God.

*That which in other ages was not known has now been clearly shown and has now been revealed to the sons of men (Eph. 3:5). Indeed, there was always a natural manifestation of the one Almighty God, among all right thinking men; and the majority, who had not entirely divested themselves of shame in the presence of the truth, apprehended the eternal beneficence through divine providence... The Father and Creator of all things, therefore, is apprehended by all by means of an innate power and without instruction, in a manner suitable to all... Nor is it possible for any race to live anywhere, whether they be tillers of the soil or nomads, or even city-dwellers, without being imbued with faith in a Higher Being<sup>132</sup>.*

### III. CHRIST'S SAVING WORK

The Lord, the Educator, is "most good." He "sympathizes from the exceeding greatness of his love with the nature of each man... Nothing exists, the cause of whose existence is not supplied by God. Nothing, then, is hated by God, nor by the Logos<sup>133</sup>.

*What is the door by which the Lord makes Himself manifest? It is His flesh by which He becomes visible<sup>134</sup>.*

J.N.D. Kelly says: In expounding Christ's saving work Clement carries on the tradition we have already studied... Thus he <sup>135</sup> speaks of Christ's laying down his life as a ransom ( ) on our behalf, redeeming us by His blood, offering Himself as a sacrifice, conquering the Devil, and

<sup>132</sup> Stromata 5:13:87:1,2; 5:14:133:7,8 (Jurgens). <sup>133</sup> G. Florovsky: *Byzantine Fathers of the Fifth Century*, 1987, p. 84. <sup>134</sup> Paidagogos 1:5:22 (Frs. of Church, 23). <sup>135</sup> Quis div, 37:4; Paid. 1:5:23; 1:11:97; 3:12:98; Protr. 11:111; 12:120.

interceding for us with the Father. These are, however, conventional phrases as used by him, and this is not the aspect of Christ's achievement which makes the chief appeal to him. His most frequent and characteristic thought is that Christ is the teacher Who endows men with true knowledge, leading them to a love exempt from desires and a righteousness whose prime fruit is contemplation. He is their guide at the different levels of life, "instructing the *Gnostic* by mysteries, the believer by good hopes, and the hard-hearted by corrective chastisement<sup>136</sup>." It is as teacher that He is "the all-healing physician of mankind<sup>137</sup>," Who bestows immortality as well as knowledge<sup>138</sup>. "God's will," he remarks<sup>139</sup>, "is the knowledge of God, and this is participation in immortality." So man is deified: "the Word... became man so that you might learn from man how man may become God<sup>140</sup>." As God, Christ forgives us our sins, while the function of His humanity is to serve as a model so as to prevent us from sinning further<sup>141 142</sup>.

According to Clement, the principal activities of the Logos are, successively, to exhort people to believe and be baptized, to train them in morals and piety, and to initiate them into the knowledge of God. That means that the Logos is, in his terms, successively an Exhorter, a Pedagogue and a Teacher.

*Whence He was and who He Himself was, was demonstrated by what He taught and did. He showed Himself as the Herald of a truce, our Mediator and Savior, the Word, the Font of Life and Peace poured out over the face of the earth; and through Him, so to speak, the universe has already become an ocean of good things...*

<sup>136</sup> Strom. 7:2:6. <sup>137</sup> Paid. 1:2:6. <sup>138</sup> Protr. 12:120:3. <sup>139</sup> Strom. 4:6:27. <sup>140</sup> Protr. 1:8:4. <sup>141</sup> Paid. 1:3:7. <sup>142</sup> J.N.D. Kelly: *Early Christian Doctrines*, 1977, p. 183-4.

*The first man, when He was in Paradise, played in childlike abandon, because he was a child of God; but when he gave himself over to pleasure... he was seduced by lust, and in disobedience the child became a man. Because he did not obey his Father, he was ashamed before God... The Lord then wished to release the serpent and enslaved the tyrant death; and most wonderful of all, man, who had been deceived by pleasure and bound by corruption, had his hands unbound and was set free. O mystic wonder! The Lord was laid low, and man rose up! He that fell from Paradise receives even better as the reward for obedience: heaven itself<sup>143</sup>.*

*Just as night would be over everything in spite of the other stars, if the sun did not exist, so also, had we not known the Word and been illuminated by Him, we would have been no different from fowls that are being fed, fattened in darkness and nourished for death<sup>144</sup>.*

*The Lord then wished to release him ( man ) from his bonds, and clothing Himself with flesh - O divine mystery . - vanquished the serpent, and enslaved the tyrant; and, most marvelous of all, man that had been deceived by pleasure, and bound fast to corruption, had his hands unloosed, and was set free... He has changed sunset into sunrise, and through the cross turned death into life; and having wrenched man from destruction, He has raised him to heaven, transplanting mortality into immortality and translating earth to heaven<sup>145</sup>.*

St. Clement of Alexandria states that the Savior is the Lord not of the Jews only but of all men, therefore He came to save

143 St. Clement of Alexandria: *Protreptikos* 10:110:1-3; 11: 111:1-3 ; W.A. Jurgens: *The Faith of the Early Fathers*, vo. 1, article 405. 144 St. Clement of Alexandria: *Protreptikos* 11:111:3 ; W.A. Jurgens: *The Faith of the Early Fathers*, vo. 1, article 405a. 145 *Paidagogos* 11 (see *Stromata* 2:10:47; 4:7:51).

everyone that turns to Him; His sacrifice has its effect in all places and at all times.

#### IV. CHRIST AS A SACRIFICE

The Sacrifice of Christ is mentioned in a variety of ways: in speaking of Christ as a whole burnt offering for us, as the Passover, as the Suffering Servant and as Lamb of God<sup>146</sup>. Further, Clement's Isaac-Christ typology highlights the theological importance of his understanding of the sacrifice of Christ<sup>147</sup>:

*Where, then, was the door by which the Lord showed himself? The flesh by which he was manifested. He is Isaac (for the narrative may be interpreted otherwise), who is a type of the Lord, a child as a son. For he was the son of Abraham, as Christ was the Son of God; and a sacrifice like the Lord, only he was not immolated as the Lord was. Isaac only bore the wood of the cross. And he laughed mystically, prophesying that the Lord would fill us with joy, who have been redeemed from corruption by the blood of the Lord. Isaac did everything but suffer, as was right, yielding the precedence in suffering to the Word. Furthermore, there is an intimation of the divinity of the Lord in his not being slain. For Jesus rose again after his burial, having suffered no harm, like Isaac released from sacrifice<sup>148</sup>.*

The incarnation provides the background and foundation of St. Clement's understanding of Christ's sacrifice.

*For this also He came down. For this He clothed himself with man. For this He voluntarily subjected Himself to the experiences of men, that by bringing Himself to the measure of our weakness whom He loved, He might correspondingly bring us to the measure of His own strength. And about to be offered up and giving Himself as*

146 Stromata 5: 10-11; Paidagogos 2:8 and elsewhere. 147 Fobert J. Daly: *The Origins of the Christian Doctrine of Sacrifice*, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1978, p. 114f. 148 Paidagogos 1:5; cf. also Stromata 2:5.

*ransom, he left for us a new covenant - testament: My love I  
give unto you.*<sup>149</sup>"

## V. ISAAC AS A TYPE OF CHRIST THE RISEN VICTIM

*Again, there is Isaac ... who is a type of the Lord. He was a child, just as the Son; for he was the son of Abraham, as Christ is the Son of God. He was a sacrificial victim, as was the Lord. Yet, he was not immolated as the Lord was. Isaac did, however, at least carry the wood for a sacrifice, as the Lord carried the cross... But he did not suffer. Not only did Isaac suddenly yield the first place in suffering to the Word, but there is even a hint of the divinity of the Lord, in Isaac's not being slain*<sup>150</sup>.

## VI CHRIST AS THE HIGH 15

**PRIEST**  
"High priest" can have three meanings for Clement: First, the Old Testament high priest who offered the sacrifices; Second, Jesus Christ who offered Himself as a Sacrifice, and Third, the true Gnostic or Christian. The true Gnostic is "*the truly kingly man; he is the sacred high priest of God*"<sup>152</sup>. He offers the spiritual sacrifices. "*Does he not also know the other kind of sacrifice which consists in the giving both of doctrine and of money to those who need?*"<sup>153</sup>"

The second meaning is, of course, the central one for St. Clement; but in his thought the Christological meaning not only flows naturally from the Old Testament type, it also seems to merge, at times, into the third meaning where the true Gnostic also becomes a "high priest." The Christian believer shares in Christ's

<sup>149</sup> *Quis dives salvetur* 37; See *Stromata* 1:22; 5:6; *Paidagogos* 1:6. <sup>150</sup> St. Clement of Alexandria: *Paidagogos (The Instructor)* 1:5:23:1, 2; W.A. Jurgens: *The Faith of the Early Fathers*, vo. 1, article 406. <sup>151</sup> Robert J. Daly: *The Origins of the Christian Doctrine of Sacrifice*, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1978, p. 115-6. <sup>152</sup> *Stromata* 4:25. <sup>153</sup> *Stromata* 7:7.



high-priestly dignity. In Him the Christian believer or true *Gnostic* becomes the true archetype of the Old Testament high priests. This is most clearly seen at the end of a long passage in which he is making use of the Philonic allegory of the high priest's robe in the context of the Day of Atonement liturgy.

*And he shall take off the linen robe, which he had put on when he entered into the holy place; and shall lay it aside there, and wash his body in water in the holy place, and put on his robe (Lev 16:23-24). One way, I think, of taking off and putting on the robe takes place when the Lord descends into the region of sense. Another way takes place when he who through him has believed, takes off and puts on, as the apostle intimated, the consecrated stole (cf. Eph 6:117). Thence, after the image of the Lord, the worthiest were<sup>154</sup> chosen from the sacred tribes to be high priests....*

*Protrepticus 12* singles out two high-priestly functions of Jesus: the one, directed toward us, is the sanctifying activity of preparing us for the Eucharistic meal; the other, directed toward the Father is Christ's mediating or intercessory activity for us. Elsewhere Clement speaks more directly about the specifically sacrificial aspects of Jesus' high-priestly activity:

*If then, we say that the Lord the great high priest offers to God the incense of sweet fragrance, let us not imagine that this is a sacrifice and sweet fragrance of incense but let us understand it to mean that the Lord lays the acceptable<sup>155</sup> offering of love, the spiritual fragrance, on the altar .*

## VII. CHRIST AS OUR PHYSICIAN

*Therefore, the Word is our Educator who heals the unnatural passions of our soul with His counsel. The art of healing, strictly speaking, is the relief of the ills of the*

<sup>154</sup> *Stromata* 5:6.

<sup>155</sup> *Paidagogos* 2:8.

*body, an art learned by man's wisdom. Yet, the only true divine Healer of human sickness, the holy Comforter of the soul when it is ill, is the Word of the Father. Scripture says: "Save Your servant, O my God, who puts his trust in You. Have mercy on me, O Lord, because I have cried to You the whole day through." Ps. 85:2,3. In the words of Democritus, "The healer, by his art, cures the body of its diseases, but it is wisdom that rids the spirit of its ills"<sup>156</sup>. "The good Educator of little ones, however, Wisdom Himself, the Word of the Father, who created man, concerns Himself with the whole creature, and as the Physician of the whole man heals both body and soul"<sup>157</sup>.*

### **VIII. CHRIST AS OUR SPIRITUAL NOURISHMENT AND SATISFACTION**

According to St. Clement of Alexandria, the church is a loving mother and virgin who at the same time offers her beloved children the Father's Gift: His Logos, our Lord Jesus Christ as our spiritual food, so that we may grow up in His likeness.

*The loving and kind Father has rained down the Word, it is He Himself who has become the spiritual nourishment of the saints"<sup>158</sup>.*

*O mystic wonder! The Father of all is indeed one, one also is the universal Word, and the Holy Spirit is one and the same everywhere; and one only is the Virgin Mother. I love to call her the Church. This Mother alone was without milk, because she alone did not become a wife. She is at once both Virgin and Mother: as a Virgin, undefiled; as a Mother, full of love. Calling her children about her, she nourishes them with holy milk, that is, with the Infant Word...*

156 Fragment 50, N. 31. H. Diels, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker griechisch und deutsch* (Berlin 1903). 157 *Paidagogos* 1:2:6 (*Frs. of Church*, 23). 158 *Paidagogos* 1:6:41 (*Fathers of Church*, vol. 23).

*The Word is everything to a child: both Father and Mother, both Educator and Nurse. "Eat My Flesh," He says, "and drink My Blood."<sup>159</sup> The Lord supplies us with these intimate nutriments. He delivers over His Flesh, and pours out His Blood; and nothing is lacking for the growth of His children. O incredible mystery<sup>160</sup>!*

Our Savior and Teacher, as the spiritual Food, nourishes us, the children of God, by Himself as the source of true virtues. Thus we attain His peace and love, and become in the likeness of God.

*Indeed we are educated not for war but for peace. In war there is need for much equipment, and provisions<sup>161</sup> are required in abundance. Peace and love, however, are plain and simple sisters, and need neither arms nor abundant supplies. Their nourishment is the Word; and the Word is He by whose leadership we are enlightened and instructed, and from whom we learn frugality and humility, and all that pertains to the love of truth, the love of man, To say it in and the love of beauty and goodness. but a word: through the Word we become like God by a close union in virtue... And as for these who have been reared under this influence - their manner of walking and reclining at table, their eating and sleeping, their marital relations and manner of life, and the rest of their upbringing, acquires a greater dignity. For such a training as is imparted by the Word is not overly severe, but well-tempered<sup>162</sup>.*

St. Clement states that our Lord grants us His precious Eucharistic blood and His Spirit (the spiritual blood) to share His immortality.

*The Blood of the Lord, indeed, is twofold. There is His corporeal Blood, by which we are redeemed from*

159 John 6:55. 160 Paidagogos 1:6: 41: 3; 1:6:42:1,3; W.A. Jurgens: *The Faith of the Early Frs.*, v. 1. 161 Read trojkh, instead of trujh. 162 Paidagogos 1:12:99:1,2; Jurgens: *The Faith of the Early Fathers*, vo. 1.

corruption; and His spiritual Blood, that with which we are anointed. That is to say, to drink the Blood of Jesus is to share in His immortality.<sup>163</sup> The strength of the Word is the Spirit, just as the blood is the strength of the body. Similarly, as wine is blended with water, so is the Spirit with man.<sup>164</sup> The one, the Watered Wine, nourishes in faith, while the other, the Spirit, leads us on to immortality. The union of both, however, - of the drink and of the Work, - is called the Eucharist, a praiseworthy and excellent gift. Those who partake of it in faith are sanctified in body and in soul. By the will of the Father, the divine mixture, man, is mystically united to the Spirit and to the Word<sup>165</sup>.

On the other hand, hear the Savior: "...I am He that feeds you. I give Myself as Bread, of which he that has tasted experiences death no more; and I supply daily the Drink of immortality. I am the Teacher of lessons concerning the highest heavens. On behalf of you I contended with death, and I paid the death which you owed for your former sins and for your unbelief towards God<sup>166</sup>."

Our Savior Jesus Christ grants us an inner satisfaction. He is the source of all blessings, "By Him the universe becomes an ocean of blessings<sup>167</sup>."

<sup>163</sup> Jarslav, rightly understood, may often be translated immortality rather than incorruption. Neither body nor soul individually constitutes a man; and the Greek Fathers often term the separation of body and soul corruption. Hence, corruption is often synonymous with death; and in view of the resurrection and reunion of body and soul, salvation is termed incorruption, which may be better understood as immortality. Moreover, while some few earlier writers may have been uncertain as to the resurrection of the unjustified, by the time of Clement the term incorruption has already a special and technical meaning, referring to the resurrection and reunion of body and soul in the case of the just; and it carries with it the unexpressed but superimposed notion of salvation, but without denying in any way a resurrection to damnation for the unjustified. <sup>164</sup> This, with what follows, may be taken as an indication of a rather keen theological insight in Clement, a rather forceful expression of the fact that in receiving the Eucharist with worthy dispositions, we receive not only the Body and Blood of Christ, but receive also an increase of the indwelling Holy Spirit. <sup>165</sup> Paidagogos 2:2:19:4; Jurgens: *The Faith of the Early Fathers*, vo. 1. <sup>166</sup> Who is the Rich Man that is saved? 23:2,4-5 (Jurgens). <sup>167</sup> *Protrepticus* 10.

## IX. CHRIST AS OUR NEW HYMN

St. Clement offers his hearers a new hymn, the hymn of the Logos, the Creator, the Teacher, the Savior and the **Medicine against grief**.

*This is the New Hymn, the manifestation of the Logos that was in the beginning, and before the beginning. The Savior, who existed before, has in recent days appeared... The Logos, who was with God has appeared as our Teacher. The Logos, who in the beginning bestowed on us life as Creator when he formed us, taught us to live well when He appeared as our teacher; that as God He might afterwards conduct us to the life which never ends... He accomplished our salvation... (The seducer is one and the same) that at the beginning brought Eve down to death, now brings thither the rest of mankind. Our ally and helper, too is one and the same - the Lord, who from the beginning gave revelations by prophecy, but now plainly calls to salvation... The Savior has **many tones of voice** and many methods for the salvation of men; by threatening He admonishes, by upbraiding He converts, by bewailing He pities, by the voice of song He cheers... And now the Logos Himself speaks to you, shaming your unbelief; yea, I say, **the Logos of God became man, that you may learn from man how man may become god...***

*“For I am,” He says, “the Door,” which we who desire to understand God must discover, that He may throw heaven’s gates wide open to us.*

*For the gates of the Logos being intellectual, are  
opened by the key of faith<sup>168</sup> .*

The Logos has accomplished those things claimed for other singers. He has tamed the least manageable of all wild animals - man. He has tamed birds in flighty men, reptiles in crooked men, lions in men of strong passions, pigs in pleasure-seekers, wolves in men of rapacity, stocks and stones in men of folly. Yes, and it was this new hymn which made a melodious composition out of the universe, with the Holy Spirit providing instrumental accompaniment.

Here St. Clement, starting from the Jewish philosopher, Philo, anticipates the writers of odes or hymns to St. Cecilia, who later became the patron saint of music, and borrows his account of the order and harmony of the universe from a philosophical tradition going back at least to Socrates and especially strong among the Stoics.

And now St. Clement comes to one of the great words of Christian affirmation as he speaks of God's philanthropy, his love for mankind. The Word (Logos) was in the beginning (John 1,1). But He only recently manifested himself to explicit statement of a dogma which was later to split the church. He is our Teacher; so St. Clement anticipates the final revelation of how to live well (the thought is from Aristotle), and so are brought on our way to eternal life. He is our Savior; He exhorts us to salvation. Like a good doctor he offers different treatment for different patients; from poulticing to amputation, from lamentation to threatening. In the prophets the Divine Reason appeals through reason (a slightly odd evaluation of those often obscure poets, but St. Clement cannot resist the pun)<sup>169</sup> .

Christ who presents Himself as our eternal and new Hymn, who changes our life into a constant feast, grants us to be a hymn of God, as we become His pleasure in Jesus Christ.

168 *Protrepticus* 1. 169 Cf. John Ferguson : *Clement of Alexandria*, Twayne Publishers, NY 1974, p. 46-7.

*The noblest hymn to God is an immortal man, who is built up by righteousness, a man on whom are stamped the oracles of truth<sup>170</sup> .*

## **X. CHRIST IS OUR INNER BEAUTY**

*That man with whom the Logos dwells does not alter himself, does not get himself up: **He has the form of the Logos**; he is made like to God; he is beautiful; he does not ornament himself; his is beauty, the true beauty...<sup>171</sup>*

## **XI. THE BODY OF JESUS CHRIST**

Some see that St. Clement, in his Christology, allows a certain attenuated *Docetism* to intrude; he affirms that Christ, in His body, is exempt from natural needs (eating and drinking) and that his soul is free from the movements of the passions.

*The one who has deeper wisdom<sup>172</sup> is such that he is subject only to the affections which exist for the maintenance of the body, such as hunger, thirst, and the like. In regard to the Savior, however, it were ridiculous to suppose that the body demanded, as a body, the necessary aids for its maintenance. For He ate, not for the sake of the body, which had its continuance from a holy power, but lest those in His company might happen to think otherwise of Him, just as afterwards some did certainly suppose that He had appeared as a mere phantasm. He was in general dispassionate; and no movement of feeling penetrated Him, whether pleasure or pain (Matt. 9:22; Mark 5:34; Luke 8:48)<sup>173</sup> .*

170 Prorepticus 10. 171 Paidagogos 3:1. 172 ognwstikoV, literally, the gnostic. Clement uses the term in reference to those who practice the true faith, and without the odious overtones which the term generally has. Clement's gnostic, then, is the true gnostic, as distinguished from the gnostic falsely so-called. Unfortunately for our language, it is the latter who finally came into sole possession of the name. 173 Stromata 6:9:71:1,2 (Jurgens).

## 5. THE HOLY SPIRIT

St. Clement speaks of the Spirit as the light from the Word who enlightens the faith. The Spirit is also the power of the Word, which pervades creation and attracts individuals to God<sup>174</sup>.

### I. THE SPIRIT OF SANCTIFICATION

St. Clement of Alexandria declares the unceasing divine work in our life, saying, [*the Educator created man from dust, renews him by water and nurses him by the Spirit*]. What does St. Clement mean by the words. "*The Educator nurses man by the Spirit*"? The Divine Educator, Jesus Christ, sent His spirit in the Church not only to grant us adoption to God, but to nurse us continuously by the divine life, or by "holiness in Jesus Christ" that we might become holy as our God is Holy [Lev. 11:44, 45, 1 Pet. 1:16].

### II. THE HOLY SPIRIT GRANTS US TO BE CHRISTLIKE

The essential work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the Church is to prepare her as a heavenly bride to be united with her Heavenly Groom. It is His work in the life of every member to renew him, granting him to be Christ-like.

*Haste to the ascent of the Spirit, being not only justified by abstinence from what is evil, but in addition also perfected, by Christ-like beneficence*<sup>175</sup>.

### III. THE HOLY SPIRIT AND DAILY LIFE

The Alexandrian Fathers, through their Biblical thoughts and practice, looked to Christian life as a "life in Christ" or a "new life" realized by the Holy Spirit who dwells in their hearts. This life cannot be separated into parts, but it is one life that Christians practise in their church, houses, at their jobs, in their social

<sup>174</sup> Strom. 6:138:1 f.;  
7:9:4. <sup>175</sup> Stromata 4:6  
ANF.



activities and so on. It is one life granted by the Holy Spirit that embraces a Christian's relationship with God, Church, family members, friends, all mankind, heavenly creatures, earthly creatures and even with his own body. The Holy Spirit guides believers to attain closer relationship with God through their spiritual worship, and to examine the communitarian life through practical love not only towards their brothers in the faith, but also towards all mankind if possible.

H.B. Swete says<sup>176</sup>: Of the Holy Spirit Clement speaks freely, and with much beauty, but with reference either to some passage of the Holy Scripture or to the experienced life of a Christian. Thus from the statement that Bezalel was filled with the Spirit of God (Exod. 31 :2) he infers that artistic taste and skill are a gift from God<sup>177</sup>. Those who have been brought to believe in the Holy Spirit are called by St. Paul 'spiritual men'<sup>178</sup>. But spiritual men differ in their gifts, because according to the Apostle; the Spirit divides to every man as He will. Yet He is not Himself divided, as if a portion of God were given to each<sup>179</sup>. Clement frequently refers to the gift of the Spirit as a fact of Christian experience. Though he is not Montanist, he recognizes fully the place of the Holy Spirit in the life of man, especially within the Church.

*The Lord, of His love to mankind, invites all men to come to the knowledge of the truth, and has sent the Paraclete for that end*<sup>180</sup>.

*We who are baptized have the eye of the Spirit, by which alone we can see God, free from obstruction and bright, the Holy Spirit flowing in upon us from heaven*<sup>181</sup>.

176 H.B. Swete: *The Holy Spirit in the Ancient Church*, London 1912, p. 124-6. 177 *Stromata* 4:25. 178 *Paidagogos* 1:6:36. 179 *Stromata* 4:21:134; 5:13:89. 180 *Protrept.* 9:85. 181 *Paidagogos* 1:6:28.

*The Spirit blends and unites itself (Himself) mysteriously with the human spirit, as wine with water; and the true Gnostic, who earnestly strives to be spiritual, "is united to the Spirit through the love that knows no bounds"<sup>182</sup>.*

*The Spirit is the Holy Anointing Oil compounded of heavenly spices and is prepared by Christ for His friends<sup>183</sup>.*

*It is the soul's jewelry, which decks it with the radiant colors of righteousness, practical wisdom, courage, self-control, love for all that is good, and modesty<sup>184</sup>.*

*The more truly "Gnostic" a man becomes through righteous living, the nearer the bright Spirit of God draws to him<sup>185</sup>.*

*As the magnet attracts iron, so the Holy Spirit attracts the soul to higher or lower mansions, according to personal character; only the evil falls to the ground<sup>186</sup>.*

*The Spirit is the royal gold which, mingling with the other elements of our nature, makes Christians such as they are<sup>187</sup>.*

182 Ibid. 2:2:20; Stromata 7:7:44.

183 Paidagogos 2:8:65. 184 Ibid.

3:1:64. 185 Stromata 4:17:109.

186 Ibid. 7:2:9. 187 Ibid. 5:14:99.

## 6. DIVINE GRACE

### I. DIVINE GRACE AS GOD'S SELF-GIVING

He grants us His own dwelling within us and His own life to enjoy.  
*“Generous is He who gives for us the greatest of all gifts, His own life!”*

### II. THE DIVINE GRACE AS GOD'S SELF-REVELATION

God reveals Himself through His creation (Ps. 19:1)<sup>188</sup>. It is clear that our Trinitarian Faith is correlated to God's Grace or God's Self-Revelation. From the beginning God our heavenly Father planned to reveal Himself to us through the incarnation of His Only Begotten Son, Who dwelt among us, uniting us with His Father in Him. He spoke to us about the Father not only by words, but through unity with Him and participating in the divine life, and by granting us His mind and understanding (1 Cor. 2:16).

*The Word... has appeared as our Teacher, He by Whom the universe was created. The Word Who in the beginning gave us life when He fashioned us as Creator, has taught us the good life as our Teacher, that He may afterwards, as God, provide us with eternal life. Not that He now has for the first time pitied us for our wandering; He pitied us from old, from the beginning. But now, when we were perishing, He has appeared and has saved us*<sup>189</sup>.

*"For I am," He says, "the door", John 10:9, which we who desire to understand God must discover, that He may throw heaven's gates wide open to us. For the gates of the Word being intellectual, are opened by the key of faith. No one knows God but the Son, and the one to whom the Son has revealed Him (Matt. 11:27)*<sup>190</sup>.

### III. GRACE OF RENEWAL (DEIFICATION)

<sup>188</sup> St. Athanasius: *Contra Gentes* 27,35; *De Incarnatione Verbi Dei* 11-15.

<sup>189</sup> *Protrepticus* 1:7. <sup>190</sup> *Prot.* 1.

By deification the Alexandrians mean the renewal of human nature as a whole, to attain the characteristics of our Lord Jesus Christ in place of the corrupt human nature, so that the believer may enjoy "partaking in the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4), or the new man in the image of His Creator (Col. 3:10). This theological mind drew the heart of the Alexandrians away from the arguments about the term "grace" to concentrate on attaining it as being an enjoyment of Christ Himself Who renewed our nature in Him.

*For this He came down, for this He assumed human nature, for this He willingly endured the sufferings of man, that by being reduced to the measure of our weakness He might raise us to the measure of His power*<sup>191</sup>.

*The Word of God, became man just that you may learn from a man how it may be that man should become god*<sup>192</sup>.

The Alexandrians, in all their theological views, concentrate on the grace of God as a grace of the continuous or dynamic renewal of our nature by the Holy Spirit, who grants us the close unity with the Father in the Son, or the communion with God. In Jesus Christ, not only do we receive forgiveness of sins by the Holy Spirit, but we also attain the "new life" which is free of sin by divine grace. St. Paul speaks of "putting off the old man" or "the old corruptible nature" and putting on "the inner man" or the renewed nature in the Spirit, created after the likeness of God in justice and holiness (2 Cor. 5:21' Rom 8:1). By divine grace, we become members of the Body of Christ, children of the Father, have the power to practice true life, for we are sanctified in Christ, consecrated to the Father. The believer as a whole, his soul, body, senses, emotions, mind etc. is sanctified as a tool for righteousness (Rom. 6:13).

<sup>191</sup> *Quis Dives Salvetur* 37.

<sup>192</sup> *Protrepicus* 1:8:4.

St. Clement of Alexandria was the first to use the term "theopoiein", i.e. "to divinize"<sup>193</sup>. He believed that sin has introduced an internal conflict in the nature of man, and it is not part of his nature, though it infects all mankind. We sin without knowing how we do it; it comes from lack of knowledge<sup>194</sup>. The Word of God comes as a teacher, granting us true knowledge (*gnosis*). It is through His teaching that He divinizes<sup>195</sup>, granting the *Gnostics* to share in the divine life. He repeats the idea of the renewal of our nature in the Incarnate Son of God, as follows<sup>196</sup>:

*He had taken upon Him our flesh... He scorned not the weakness of human flesh, but having clothed Himself with it, has come into the world for the salvation of all men. O mystic wonder! The Lord was laid low, and man was raised up! "Know you not" says the Apostle, "that you are the temples of God?" (1 Cor. 3:16). The Gnostic (a believer who has true spiritual knowledge) is consequently divine, and already holy, God-bearing, and God-borne. The Word of God became man, that you may learn how man may become god! He, the Husbandman of God,...having bestowed on us the truly great, divine, and inalienable inheritance of the Father, deifying man by heavenly teaching, putting His laws into our minds and writing them on our hearts. But that man in whom reason (ἔϊᾱῖδὸ) dwells is not shifty, not pretentious, but has the form dictated by reason (ἔϊᾱῖδὸ) and is like God. He is beautiful, and does not feign beauty. That which is true is beautiful; for it, too, is God. Such a man becomes god because God wills it.*

193 Henri. Rondet: *The Grace of Christ* (tran. by W. Guzie), Westminster, Md, 1967, p.73 n. 38. 194 Strom 2:15; Earnest Jauncey: *The doctrine of Grace*, SPCK 1925, p.133. 195 Protr. 1, 12. PG 8:64D, 368 A-B. 196 Strom 7:2:7, 8; Protr 11:3; Strom 7:13; Paidag 1, protr. 11.

*Rightly, indeed, did Heraclitus say: "Men are gods, and gods are men; for the same reason (ἐἰαὶδὸ) is in both."<sup>197</sup> That this is a mystery is clear: God is in a man, and a man is God, the Mediator fulfilling the will of the Father. The Mediator is the Word (Ἐἰαὶδὸ) who is common to both, being the Son of God and the Savior of men<sup>198</sup>.*

*In a word, through Him we become like God by a likeness of virtue. Labor, then, and do not grow weary; you will become what you dare not hope or cannot imagine (1 Cor. 2:9)<sup>199</sup>.*

It is God's grace that renews man's life; but God gives His grace to those who show an earnest desire for it. St. Clement says:

*While a man strives and labors by himself to subdue his vicious affections, he can do nothing; but if he manifest an earnest vehement desire to do so, he is enabled by the divine power to accomplish his purpose; for God favors and co-operates with the willing minds<sup>200</sup>.*

*He, who has first moderated his passions and trained himself for impassability and developed to the beneficence of Gnostic perfection, is here equal to the angels. Already luminous and shining like the sun in the exercise of beneficence, he speeds by righteous knowledge through the love of God to the sacred abode, just like the apostles. Now the apostles did not become such by being chosen for some distinguished quality of nature, since Judas also was chosen along with them. But they were capable of becoming apostles on being chosen by him who foresees even ultimate issues. Matthias, accordingly, who was not chosen along with them, on showing himself worthy of becoming an apostle, is substituted for Judas...*

197 Heraclitus, fragment 62, in H. Diels, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, Berlin 1903. 198 *Paidagogos* 3:1:1:5;3:1:2:2; Jurgens: *The Faith of the Early Fathers*, vo. 1. 199 *Paidagogos* 1:12:99 (*Frs. of Church*). 200 *Quis div. salv.* 21 {df. *Strom* 7:7}; Jauncey, p. 134.

*And the chosen of the chosen are those who by reason of perfect knowledge are called [as the best] from the church itself and honored with the most august glory -the judges and rulers - twenty-four (the grace being doubled) equally from Jews and Greeks. For it is my opinion that the grades here in the church: bishops, presbyters, and deacons, are imitations of the angelic glory and of that economy which, the Scriptures say, awaits those who, following the footsteps of the apostles, have lived in perfection and righteousness according to the gospel. For they, when taken up in the clouds, as the apostle writes ( 1 Thess 4:17), will first minister, and then be classed in the presbyterate by promotion in glory (for glory differs from glory - 1 Cor 15:41) till they grow into "a perfect man" Eph 4:13<sup>201</sup>.*

Through our fellowship with Christ we attain **His likeness**, even in **His incorruptibility**.

*We have in the conduct of the Lord an unmistakable model of incorruptibility, and are following in the footsteps of God<sup>202</sup>.*

#### **IV. GRACE OF ADOPTION TO THE FATHER**

He grants us the adoption to the Father in His Only-Begotten Son by the Holy Spirit, so that we may receive Him our own Father, and dare settle in His bosom eternally. St. Clement of Alexandria says<sup>203</sup>,

*O surpassing love for man! Not as a teacher speaking to his students, not as a master to his domestics, nor as God to men, but as a Father, does the Lord gently admonish His children... And how the more benevolent God is, the more impious men are; for He desires us to become sons not*

201 Stromata 7:13. 202 Paidagogos 1:12:98:3 ; W.A. Jurgens: *The Faith of the Early Fathers*, vo. 1. 203 Protrep; 9 Paid. 1:5.

*slaves, while they scorn to become sons. O the prodigious folly of being ashamed of the Lord! The Father of the universe cherishes affection towards those who have fled to Him, and having begotten them, again by His Spirit to the adoption of children, knows them as gentle ones, loves them, aids and fights for them; and therefore He bestows on them the name of child.*

## **V. GRACE AND THE PLEDGE OF ETERNITY**

St. Clement calls the true believer who practices the divine grace a "Gnostic." One of the essential characteristics of the *Gnostic* is perfect "love," through which he enjoys the pledge of "eternity"<sup>204</sup>.

## **VI. FREE GRACE**

This free gift is not granted to men by force, or to careless souls, but it is offered freely to all men, to act in those who seriously desire it. Man has the choice to accept or reject this free grace. J. Patrick clarified St. Clement's opinion in this regard, saying<sup>205</sup>:

If faith was only an advantage of nature, as Basilides maintained, there could be no room for praise or censure in the case of belief or disbelief, for man would be the creature of a natural, or divine, necessity. If men were moved like lifeless puppets by natural forces, the distinction between voluntary and involuntary is superfluous; and the same is true of the impulse which leads to choice<sup>206</sup>. From this conception of freedom as absolute, important conclusions in the matter of salvation are drawn. God wished us to be saved from ourselves<sup>207</sup>. Because man is not a lifeless instrument, he must hasten to

<sup>204</sup> Louis Bouyer: *Spirituality of the N.T. and the Fathers*, 1960, p. 274; *Stromata* 6:15.

<sup>205</sup> Clement of Alexandria, 1914, 0.145-6. <sup>206</sup> *Stromata* 2:3. <sup>207</sup> *Ibid.* 4; 12:96; *Ec. Pr.* 22.



salvation willingly and of set purpose<sup>208</sup>. Readiness of mind is our contribution to salvation<sup>209</sup>. Faith as well as obedience depend on freedom<sup>210</sup>. Choice and life are yoked together<sup>211</sup>. He who sins of his own will makes choice of punishment<sup>212</sup>. That which is involuntary is not judged<sup>213</sup>. God only requires of us the things that are in our power<sup>214</sup>. By instruction we are taught to choose what is best<sup>215</sup>. God Himself has a respect for this freedom, and exercises no compulsion in the matter of salvation. No one will be saved against his will, for force is hateful to God<sup>216</sup>. Man must cooperate with God<sup>217</sup>. Those who are foreordained were foreordained because God knew before the creation of the world that they would be righteous<sup>218</sup>. Even, as has already been noted, the argument from the miraculous must not be such as to compel the assent of the spirit of man; for such compulsion were out of harmony with the nature of God and man<sup>219</sup>. But though God will not compel man, there is a sense in which man may exercise compulsion upon God. The kingdom of God is not for the slack or the sleepers; the "violent takes it by force," and snatches life from God; for in such conflicts He rejoices to be defeated<sup>220</sup>.

208 *Strom* 7:7;42. 209 *Ec. Pr.* 22.

210 *Strom* 2:3:11; 2:6:26; 2:20:113.

211 *Protr.* 11:117. 212 *Paid.* 1:8:69.

213 *Strom* 2:14. 214 *Strom*

2:6:26;7:7:48. 215 *Strom* 1:6:35;

2:16:75. 216 *Quis div. salv.* 10. 217

*Strom* 5:4:157. 218 *Strom* 7:7:107.

219 *Stah* vol. 3, p. 217. 220 *Quis*

*div. salv.* 21.

## VII. UNIVERSAL GRACE

*God is the Lord not only of the Jews but of all men, though He is more intimately the Father of those who know Him*<sup>221</sup>.

*For "I become all things to all men, that I might gain all men" 1 Cor. 9:22. Since also "the rain" of the divine grace is sent down "on the just and the unjust" Matt.*

*5:45. "Is He the God of the Jews only, and not also of the Gentiles? Yes, also of the Gentiles: if indeed He is one God" Rom. 3:29,30, exclaims the noble Apostle*<sup>222</sup>.

## VIII. GRACE AND THE BELIEVER'S ROLE

*A man by himself, working and toiling at freedom from passion, achieves nothing. But if he plainly shows his great desire and complete sincerity in this, he will attain it by **the addition of the power of God**. Indeed, God conspires with willing souls. But if they abandon their eagerness, the spirit which is bestowed by God is also restrained. To save the unwilling is to exercise compulsion; but to save the willing belongs to Him who bestows grace. Nor does the kingdom of heaven belong to the sleeping and the lazy; rather, the violent take it by force (Matt. 11:12)... On hearing these words,*<sup>223</sup>  
*the blessed Peter, the chosen..., paid the tribute (Matt. 17:27), quickly grasped and understood their meaning.*

<sup>221</sup> Stromata 6:6:47. <sup>222</sup> Ibid. 5:3 <sup>223</sup> Our Savior had said that it was easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter heaven. His disciples met His statement with the question, "Who, then, can be saved?" Clement is now referring to our Savior's reply to that question, with which words the present chapter opens: "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

*And what does he say? "Behold, we have left all and have followed you!" (Matt. 19:27; Mark 10:28)<sup>224</sup>.*

<sup>224</sup> Who is the Rich Man that is saved? 21:1-5 (Jurgens).

## 7. PROVIDENCE AND DIVINE CHASTISEMENT

W. Floyd says: [Besides the rosy picture of providence which depicts God as the merciful provider, Clement is not blind of its shadow. Providence is also a disciplinary art which chastens man both for his own benefit and as an example to others. Censure is the mark of fatherhood, of God, and of goodwill; not ill will. Therefore God is good despite the rod, threatening and fear.<sup>225</sup>]

John Patrick says: [The controversy raised by Marcion led Divine justice to Clement to touch specially on the relation of Divine goodness<sup>226</sup>].

Marcion attributes justice to the God of the Old Testament, describing Him as violent in His punishment of men, while he attributes goodness to the God of the New Testament, describing Him as kind and pitiful to men. St. Clement clarifies that the God of the Old Testament is the same of the New Testament, and God is merciful and good in His justice and just in His goodness.

Punishment by God does not arise from anger; He is truly just and good at the same time. His punishment of men is not for vengeance, but always disciplinary and remedial. He chastises for three reasons:

1. For the sake of the person who is chastised that he rises superior to his former self. His goal is the salvation of the reprovéd.
2. By being an example to others, that by admonition they may be driven back from sin before committing it.
3. God chastises the wrong-doer that the wronged person may not become an object of contempt and a fit subject for being wronged.

*"Do not any longer", he says, "my son, despise the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when you are rebuked of*

<sup>225</sup> W. Floyd, p. 40.

<sup>226</sup> John Patrick, p. 90.

*Him," Prov. 3: 11. O surpassing love for man! Not as a teacher speaking to his scholars, not as a master to his domestics, nor as God to men, but as a Father the Lord admonishes His children<sup>227</sup>.*

*For there is nothing which the Lord hates", Wisd. 11:24... Nor He wishes anything not to exist ... If then He hates none of the things which He has made, it follows that He loves them.*

*Much more than the rest, and with reason, will He love man, the noblest of all objects created by Him, and a God-loving being... But he who loves anything wishes to do it good... God therefore cares for man and takes care of man... "How then", they say, "If the Lord loves man, and is good, is He angry and punishes?"... Many of the passions are cured by punishment ... For reproof is, as it were, the surgery of the passions of the soul... Reproach is like application of medicines, dissolving the callousness of the passions, and purging the impurities of the lewdness of life; and in addition, reducing the excrescences of pride, restoring the patient to the healthy and true state of humanity<sup>228</sup>.*

*See how God, through His love of goodness, seeks repentance; and by means of the plan he pursues of threatening silently, shows His own love for man. "I will avert," He says; "My face from them, and show what shall happen to them," Deut. 32:20. For where the face of the Lord looks, there is peace and rejoicing; but where it is averted, there is introduction of evil<sup>229</sup>.*

*He uses the bitter and biting language of reproof in His consolations by Solomon, tacitly alluding to the love for children that characterizes His instruction, "My son, do not despite the chastening of the Lord, Nor detest His*

227 St. Clement of Alex.: Protrep.

9 228 Paidagogos 1:8. 229 Ibid.

*correction; For whom the Lord loves he corrects, just as a father the son in whom he receives," Prov. 3:11,12<sup>230</sup> .*

*Such is the disciple of wisdom ("for whom the Lord loves He chastens"), causing pain in order to produce understanding, and restoring to peace immortality<sup>231</sup> .*

*The name that He has tells us by divine inspiration that the Educator will save. It is for this reason that the Scripture associates Him with a rod that suggests correction, government and sovereignty. Scripture seems to be suggesting that those whom the Word does not heal through persuasion He will heal with threats; and those whom threats do not heal the rod will; and those whom the rod does not heal fire will consume. 'And there shall come forth,' it is said, 'a rod out of the root of Jesse' (Isa. 11:1)<sup>232</sup> .*

*Therefore, it is not from hatred that the Lord reproves men, for instead of destroying him because of his personal faults, He has suffered for us. Because He is the good Educator, He wisely assumes the task of correcting by means of reproach, as though to arouse by the whip of sharp words minds become sluggish, and then He attempts to encourage the same men<sup>233</sup> .*

*Correction is also called in Greek 'nouthetein'<sup>234</sup> , ' whose etymology means placing something in the mind; therefore, correction is really transformation of the mind<sup>235</sup> .*

*It is clear that He who threatens desires to do nothing that will harm us, or to execute none of His threats. Yet, by giving us cause for fear, He takes away any*

230 Ibid. 1:9. 231 Stromata 2:2. 232 Paidagogos 1:7:61 (Frs. of Church). 233 Paidagogos 1:7:66 (Frs. of Church). 234 nouthetein is derived from nous (mind) and tithemi (place). 235 Paidagogos 1:10:94 (Frs. of Church).

*inclination to sin, and at the same time reveals His love for men by delaying over and over, and repeatedly manifesting to them, what they will suffer if they continue in their sins, unlike the serpent that bites without delay. Therefore, God is good<sup>236</sup>.*

*It is not inconsistent that the Word who saves should make use of reproof in His care for us. As a matter of fact, reproof is simply the antidote supplied by the divine love for man, because it awakens the blush of confusion and shame for sins committed. And if there is need for reproach and for harsh words, then there is also occasion to wound, not to death, but to its salvation, a soul grown callous; in such a way He inflicts a little pain, but spares it eternal death<sup>237</sup>.*

*Truly, the Educator of mankind, the divine Word of ours, has devoted Himself with all His strength to save His little ones by all the means at the disposal of His wisdom: warning, blaming, rebuking, correcting, threatening, healing, promising, bestowing favors--in a word, 'binding as if with many bits<sup>238</sup>' the unreasonable impulses of human nature. In fact, the Lord acts toward us just as we do toward our children: 'Have you children? Chastise them,' Wisdom advises, 'and have you daughters? Have a care of their body and show not your countenance gay toward them<sup>239</sup>.' Yet we have a great love for our children, sons or daughters, more than that we have for anything else<sup>240</sup>.*

*Generally speaking, His use of fear is a device for saving us, but to save proves that a person is good. 'The mercy of God is upon all flesh. He corrects and chastises*

<sup>236</sup> Paidagogos 1:8:68 (Fathers of Church, vol. 23).

<sup>237</sup> Paidagogos 1:8:74 (Fathers of Church, vol. 23).

<sup>238</sup> Plato: Laws 7:808D. <sup>239</sup> Eccli. 7:25. <sup>240</sup>

Paidagogos 1:9:75 (Fathers of Church, vol. 23).

*and teaches as a shepherd does his flock. He has mercy on those that receive chastisement and that eagerly seek His friendship.' Eccli. 18:12,13 (Septuagint)<sup>241</sup>.*

*Correction and chastisement, as their very name implies, are blows inflicted upon the soul, restraining sin, warding off death, leading those enslaved by vice back to self-control<sup>242</sup>.*

*There are two sorts of fear, one of which is accompanied by reverence. This sort citizens feel toward their rulers if they are good, and we toward God, as well-trained children do toward their father. 'A horse not broken,' Scripture says, 'becomes stubborn, and a child left to himself will become headstrong' (Eccli 30:8). The other kind of fear is mixed with hate: this is the way slaves feel toward harsh masters, and the Hebrews when they looked on God as their Master and not their Father. It seems to me that what is done willingly and of one's own accord is far more excellent from every point of view than that which is done under duress in the service of God<sup>243</sup>.*

*As the mirror is not unjust to an ugly man for showing him exactly as he is, and as the doctor is not unjust to the sick man for diagnosing his fever (for he is not responsible for the fever, but simply states it is present), so he who corrects is not ill disposed toward one sick of soul. He does not put the sins there, but only shows that they are present, so that similar sins may be avoided in the future<sup>244</sup>.*

**THE DIVINE ANGER** *Revenge is returning evil for evil, imposed for the satisfaction of the one taking vengeance, but He would*

<sup>241</sup> Paidagogos 1:9:81 (Fathers of Church, vol. 23).

<sup>242</sup> Paidagogos 1:9:81 (Fathers of Church, vol. 23).

<sup>243</sup> Paidagogos 1:9:87 (Fathers of Church, vol. 23).

<sup>244</sup> Paidagogos 1:9:88 (Fathers of Church, vol. 23).



*never desire revenge who has taught us to pray for those  
who calumniate us (Matt. 5:44; Luke 6:28)<sup>245</sup> .*

*Really, then, the Divinity is not angry, as some suppose, but  
when He makes so many threats He is only making an appeal  
and showing mankind the things that are to be accomplished.  
Such a procedure is surely good, for it instills fear to keep us  
away from sin. 'The fear of the Lord drives out sin: for he that  
is without fear cannot be justified.' The punishment that God  
imposes is due not to anger, but to justice, for the neglect of  
justice contributes nothing to our improvement<sup>246</sup> .*



<sup>245</sup> Paidagogos 1:8:71 (Frs. of Church, 23). <sup>246</sup>  
Paidagogos 1:8:68 (Fathers of Church, vol. 23).

# ***HIS ECCLESIOLOGY***

## **1. THE CHURCH**

The Alexandrians who enjoyed the membership of an apostolic and well organized church adopted this spiritual concept. According to them, the Church is not a human organization, but a divine fellowship of repented sinners who trust in the Savior and enjoy unity with Him and also unity with each other in Him, through the Holy Spirit. Moreover, the Alexandrians' view of knowledge (*gnosis*) as a divine gift constantly granted by the Father through His Son to the spiritual believers, that they may enjoy His divine mysteries, attracted even the clergymen towards practising contemplation, studying the Holy Bible, worshipping etc. and not towards involvement in church administration<sup>1</sup>.

J.N.D. Kelly says: [Meanwhile at Alexandria, as we might expect, while the visible Church received its need of recognition, the real focus of interest tended to be the invisible Church of the true *Gnostic*; the treatment accorded to the early hierarchy was generally perfunctory<sup>2</sup>.]

As a **Churchman** he loved the church, her tradition and laws. The sign of our membership of the Church is our spiritual knowledge of God. Its unity is based on the oneness of faith. Her (the Church) motherhood is correlated to the fatherhood of God.

### **I. THE VIRGIN MOTHER**

St. Clement of Alexandria speaks of the Church as the Virgin Mother of the Christians, her motherhood is correlated to God's

<sup>1</sup> Fr. Tadros Y. Malaty: *The Church, Alexandria, 1991, p. 4 f.*

<sup>2</sup> *Early Christian Doctrines, 1978, p. 201*

fatherhood, through her loving kindness she feeds her children on the Logos as holy milk . She asserts Him as the Educator (*Paidagogue*) and as the "Subject of teaching." He says:

*"Their children," it is said, "shall be borne upon their shoulders, and fondled on their knees; as one whom his mother comforts, so also shall I comfort you" Isa. 66: 12, 13. The mother draws the children to herself; and we seek our mother the Church . Whatever is feeble and tender, as needing help on account of its feebleness, is kindly look on, and is sweet and pleasant, anger changing into help in the case of such ... Thus also the Father of the Universe cherishes affections towards those who have fled to Him, and having begotten them again by His Spirit to the adoption of children, knows them as gentle, and loves those alone, aids and fights for them; and therefore He bestows on them the name of child<sup>3</sup> .*

*O wondrous mystery! One is the Father of all, one also the Logos of all, and the Holy Spirit is one and the same everywhere and there in only one Virgin Mother; I love to call her the Church. This mother alone had no milk, because she alone did not become woman, but she is both virgin and mother, being undefiled as a virgin and loving as a mother; and calling her children to her she nurses them with holy milk, the Logos for the children<sup>4</sup> .*

J. Lebreton comments on this text, saying, "This fine passage brings to us echoes of a teaching we have heard more than once in the course of the second century, the motherhood of the Church which the old Hermas already revered with such touching tenderness<sup>5</sup> . That the Word became by His incarnation the milk of children had likewise been said by Irenaeus<sup>6</sup> . All these symbols

<sup>3</sup> *Paidagogos* 1:5.

<sup>4</sup> *Paidagogos* 1:6:42:1.

<sup>5</sup> *Shepherd* 2.

<sup>6</sup> *Adv. Haer.* 4:38:1. "He, the perfect bread of the Father, has given himself to us as to little children under the form of milk; that is, his presence as man. He desires that nourished by his flesh and

flow together here into one and the same mystical current, which carries the soul towards the Church. And the Church which Clement envisages is not at all the Church imagined by the Gnostics in the far-off shadow of the Pleroma, it is the one visible Church, which carries within itself all Christians, and feeds them all with the one Word<sup>7</sup>."

One must be careful not to interpret Clement's doctrine of salvation in excessively individualistic terms, for the church has an important part in the process of salvation. The church is the Mother of Believers<sup>8</sup>, and it is within her that the process of illumination and divinization takes place which leads the Christian to the life of the "true *Gnostic*." One enters this church through baptism, and is nourished within it by means of the Eucharist<sup>9</sup>.

She is also the virgin mother of Christians, feeding them on the Logos as holy milk<sup>10</sup>. It becomes the gathering of the elect<sup>11</sup>, an impregnable city ruled by the Logos<sup>12</sup>. It is an icon of the heavenly Church, that is why we pray that God's will may be accomplished on earth as it is in heaven<sup>13</sup>.

*The Mother draws the children to herself and we seek our Mother, the Church*<sup>14</sup>.

*Feed us, Your little ones, for we are Your sheep! Yes, O Master, fill us with Your food, Your justice. Yes O Educator, shepherd us to Your holy mountain, the Church, which is lifted up above the clouds, touching the heavens*<sup>15</sup>.

*accustomed by this food to eat and drink the Word of God, we may be able to assimilate to our selves the bread of immortality which is the spirit of the Father."*

<sup>7</sup> Lebreton, p. 904.

<sup>8</sup> Paid. 1:5.

<sup>9</sup> Justo L. Gonzalez: *A History of Christian Faith*, vol. 1, 1979, p. 208.

<sup>10</sup> *Paaedagogus* 1:6:42; 1:5:21.

<sup>11</sup> *Stromata* 7:5:29.

<sup>12</sup> *Stromata* 4:26:172.

<sup>13</sup> *Stromata* 4:8:66; J.N.D. Kelly: *Early Christian Doctrines*, 1977, p. 202.

<sup>14</sup> *Paidagogos* 1:5:21:1.

<sup>15</sup> *Paidagogos* 1:9:84 (*Frs. of Church*, 23).

*As a mother consoles her little children, so will I console you. The mother leads her little children, and we seek for our mother, the Church*<sup>16</sup>.

St. Clement assures the salvation of men as the purpose of the church, "Just as the will of God is an action, and is called the world, so its intention is the salvation of men, and this is called the Church"<sup>17</sup>.

In the final chapter of the *Paidagogos* Clement calls the Church the spouse and mother of the Tutor. She is the school in which her spouse Jesus is the Teacher<sup>18</sup>. He then continues: *O graduates of His blessed tutorship! Let us [by our presence] make complete the fair countenance of the Church, and let us as children run to our good Mother. And when we have become hearers of the Word, let us extol the blessed dispensation by which man is brought up and sanctified as a child of God, and being trained on earth attains to citizenship in heaven and there receives his Father, whom he learns to know on earth*<sup>19</sup>.

He mentions how the believer must **prepare himself or herself before entering the Church**. He also mentions that the Church in his days did not use **musical instruments**. Jesus Christ Himself is the lyre of the Church<sup>20</sup>.

## II. A COMMUNITY OF JOY

The Alexandrians often look to the Church as the "Community of Joy." According to St. Clement, the Church was symbolized by Rebecca which - in his opinion - means "laughter." He

16 *Paidagogos*.1:5:21:1. 17 *Paidagogos* 1:6:27:2 18 *Paidagogos* 3:12:98:1; Quasten, p. 24 19 *Ibid* 3:12:99:1. 20 *Paid.* 2:4.

says: “*The Spirit of those that are children in Christ, whose lives are ordered in endurance, rejoice*<sup>21</sup>.”

### **III. THE BODY OF CHRIST**

St. Clement of Alexandria clearly teaches that the Church is the body of Christ, nourished on His Body and Blood<sup>22</sup>.

### **IV. A NEW CREATION**

St. Clement of Alexandria states that the Church is the holy vine, or the holy tree, where the saints, who became a new creation in Christ, together with the heavenly creatures, dwell on its branches. He comments on the parable of the mustard seed (Matt.

13: 31,32), saying: “*To such increased size did the growth of the Word come, that the tree which sprung from it (that is the Church of Christ, established over the whole earth) filled the world so that the fowls of the air, that is, the divine angels and lofty souls, dwelt in its branches*<sup>23</sup>.”

### **V. THE FIRST-BORN CHURCH**

*For this is the first-born Church (Heb. 12: 23), composed of many good children; these are the first born enrolled in Heaven, and hold high festival with so many myriads of angels. We too are first-born sons, who are reared by God, who are genuine friends of the first-born, who first and foremost attained to the knowledge of God*<sup>24</sup>.

### **VI. THE CHURCH, OLD AND NEW**

St. Clement of Alexandria who proclaims the Church as a continuation of the old one, confirms that she is new in Christ. He asserts that she never become old, for the Holy Spirit always renews her youthfulness.

21 Paidagogos 1:5. 22 Paidagogos 1:6: 42. 23 St. Clement Die Griechescher Christlichen Schriftsteller, 3:226. 24 Protrepiticus 9:82.

*The new people, in contrast to the older people, are young, because they have heard the new good things<sup>25</sup>.*

*We are always young, always new: for those must necessarily be new, who become partakers of the new Word<sup>26</sup>.*

## **VII. THE HEAVENLY CHURCH**

The earthly Church is usually described as the image of the heavenly one, and that it is this ideal Church, "the church on high," which is more often the subject of Clement's thought in the *Stromata*<sup>27</sup>.

St. Clement of Alexandria states<sup>28</sup> that the earthly Church is a copy of the heavenly one, that is why we pray that God's will may be accomplished on earth as it is in heaven. He also says that the perfect Gnostic, i.e., the spiritual believer practises heavenly life while he is on earth, for he "*will rest on God's holy mountain, the Church on high, in which are assembled the philosophers of God, the authentic Israelites who are pure in heart ... giving themselves over to the pure intuition of unending contemplation.*" He also says: "*If you enroll yourself as one of God's people, heaven is your country, God your legislation*<sup>29</sup>."

## **VIII. ONE CHURCH AND ONE FAITH**

St. Clement, as a churchman, looks at "unity as a natural characteristic of the Church, who is united with one God, has one Bible and one Faith. He stresses on the Church unity based on the "One Faith," asking us to avoid the heretics for they cause schism<sup>30</sup>.

25 Paed.1:5:20 26 Paidagogos 1:5. 27 Stromata 4:8:66:1; 4:26:172:2; 6:14;108:1; 7:2:29:3; 7:6:32:4; 7:11:68:5; Lebreton, p. 917. 28 Stromata 4:8:66. 29 Stromata 6:14. 30 Stromata 7:17; Paidagogos 1:4.

Like God Himself the **Church is one**<sup>31</sup>. St. Clement is firmly convinced that there is only one universal Church as there is only one God the Father, one divine Word and one Holy Spirit. J. Lebreton<sup>32</sup> states that the insistence with which Clement affirms this unity of God and of the Church marks a reaction against Marcionism. We often find in this work the same controversial preoccupation "*Our Pedagogue is the holy God Jesus, the Word who teaches the whole human race, the God who is the friend of mankind*"; He it was who made His people come out of Egypt, who gradually formed it in the desert; it was He who appeared to Abraham, Jacob and Moses<sup>33</sup>. This controversy becomes more direct in *Paidagogos* (Chs. 7-12), in which St. Clement proves, against those who deny it, that the same God is just and good.

St. Clement too believes in the deposit, in the oneness of the teaching of the Christian faith from the very beginning.

*For just as the teaching is one, so also the tradition of the apostles was one*<sup>34</sup>.

*It is my view that the true Church, that which is really ancient, is one. . . For from the very reason that God is one, and the Lord is one, that which is in the highest degree honorable is praised as a result of its oneness, for it is an imitation of the one first principle. In the nature of the One, then, the one Church is one . . . Therefore in substance and idea, in origin, in preeminence, we say that the ancient and Catholic Church is alone, gathering as it does into the unity of the one faith . . . in its oneness the preeminence of the Church, as the principle of union, surpasses all other things and has nothing like or equal to itself. Those who "pervert" the "divine words" have not the key*

<sup>31</sup> *Paidagogos* 1:4:10. <sup>32</sup> *The History of the Primitive Church*, p. 904, n. 36. <sup>33</sup> *Paidagogos* 1:7:55:2 -58:3. <sup>34</sup> *Stromata* 7, 17.



but a counter key "by which they do not enter in as we enter in, through the tradition of the Lord"<sup>35</sup>.

St. Clement discusses at length the relationship between this tradition and Scripture. The Church has, as "the source of teaching," both the Lord and the Scriptures<sup>36</sup>.

*From what has been said, then, it seems clear to me that the true Church, that which is really ancient, is one; and in it are enrolled those who, in accord with a design,<sup>37</sup> are just. ... We say, therefore, that in substance, in concept, in origin and in eminence, the ancient and Catholic Church is alone, gathering as it does into the unity of the one faith which results from the familiar covenants, - or rather, from the one covenant in different times, by the will of the one God and through the one Lord, - those already chosen, those predestined by God who knew before the foundation of the world that they would be just<sup>38</sup>.*

## IX THE CHURCH AND THE HERETICS

This Church differs in its unity and in its antiquity from the heresies:

*Such being the case, it is evident, from the high antiquity and perfect truth of the Church, that these later heresies, and those yet subsequent to them in time, were new inventions falsified [from the truth]. From what has*

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. 7:17.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid. 7:16; Georges Florovsky: *The Byzantine Fathers of the Fifth Century*, vol. 8, 1987, p. 81.

<sup>37</sup> One might ordinarily translate *kata proJesin* as *purposely* or *of set purpose*. In view of what follows, however, it would appear that Clement is stressing the fact that these just or righteous men are what they are because God has so providentially ordained it. They are just, then, in keeping with God's plan, i.e., in accord with a design. Taking the passage in its entirety it is clear that Clement extends membership in the Church to all those who have been predestined to salvation even those who lived in the centuries before redemption was accomplished by Christ. It is not clear, however, that he restricts membership in the Church to only the predestined. If Clement errs, his error is not so evident as that in the condemned propositions of Hus and Quesnel, which implied that membership in the Church belongs to all and only the predestined.

<sup>38</sup> *Stromata* 7:17:107:3 (Jurgens).

<sup>39</sup> Quasten, p. 24-5.

*been said, then, it is my opinion, that the true Church, that which is really ancient, is one, and that in it those who according to God's purpose are just, are enrolled. For from the very reason that God is one, and the Lord one,, that which is in the highest degree honorable is lauded in consequence of its singleness, being an imitation of the on first principle. In the nature of the One, then, is associated in a joint heritage the one Church, which they strive to cut asunder into many sects.*

*Therefore, in substance and idea, in origin, in preeminence, we say that the ancient and Catholic Church is alone collecting as it does into the unity of the one faith those already ordained, whom God predestined knowing before the foundation of the world that they would be righteous. But the pre-eminence of the Church, as the principle of union, is in its oneness, in this surpassing all things else and having nothing like or equal to itself<sup>40</sup>.*

Clement knows that the great obstacle for the conversion of pagans and Jews to the Christian religion is the fact that Christianity is divided by heretical sects:

*First then they make this objection to us saying that they ought not to believe on account of the discord of the sects. For the truth is warped when some teach one set of dogmas, others another.*

*To whom we say that among you Jews and among the most famous of the philosophers among the Greeks very many sects have sprung up. And yet you do not say that one ought to hesitate to philosophize or to be a follower of the Jews because of the want of agreement of the sects among you between themselves. And then, that heresies should be sown among the truth as 'tares among the wheat' was foretold by the Lord; and what was predicted to take place could not but happen. And the cause of this is that everything that is beautiful is always shadowed by its caricature.*

<sup>40</sup> Stromata 1:17:107 ANF.

*If one then violate his engagements and go aside from the confession which he makes before us, are we not to stick to the truth because he has belied his profession? But as the good man must not prove false or fail to ratify what he has promised although others violate their engagements, so also are we bound in no way to transgress the rule of the Church. And especially the confession, which deals with the essential articles of the faith, is observed by us, but disregarded by the heretics*<sup>41</sup>.

## **X THE CHURCH'S**

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### **DEMOCRACY**

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One of the important characteristics of the early Alexandrian Church was its democracy, that appeared clearly in its famous school. Admittance to this school was open for all people regardless of their religion, culture, age, sex, etc.

St. Clement clarifies the democracy of Christianity, saying,

*So the Church is full of those chaste women as well as men, who all their life have contemplated the death of Christ. For the individual, whose life is framed as ours is, may philosophize without learning, whether barbarian, whether Greek, whether slave - whether old man, or a boy or a woman. For self - control is common to all human beings who have chosen it. And we admit that the same nature exists in every race, and the same virtue.*

*Respecting human nature, the woman does not possess one nature, and the man exhibit another, but the same: so also with virtue ... Accordingly a woman is to practise self - restraint and righteousness, and every other virtue, as well as man, both bond and free; since it is a fit consequence that the same nature possesses one and the same virtue.*

<sup>41</sup> Stromata 7:15:89 ANF. <sup>42</sup> Fr. T. Y. Malaty: *The Church*, 1991, p.23, 24.

*We do not say that a woman's nature is the same as a man's, as she is a woman. For, undoubtedly, it stands to reason that some difference should exist between them, in virtue of which one is male and the other female. Pregnancy and parturition, accordingly, we say belong to a woman, as she is a woman, and not as she is a human being ... As then there is sameness, as a far in respect to the soul, she will attain to the same virtue; but as there is difference in respect to the peculiar construction of the body, she is destined for childbearing and housekeeping. " For I would have you know," says the apostle, " that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man: for the man is not the woman, but the woman of the man. For neither is the woman without the man, nor the man without the woman, in the Lord" 1 Cor. 11: 3, 8, 11...*

*But as it is noble for a man to die for virtue, and for liberty, and for himself, so also it is for a woman. For this is not peculiar to the nature of males, but to the nature of the good. Accordingly, both the old man, the young and the servant will live faithfully, and if need be die, which will be to be made alive by death. So we know that both children, and women, and servants have often, against their fathers' and masters', and husbands' will, reached the highest degree of excellence...*<sup>43</sup>

Now we can summarize the Christian democracy, according to St. Clement in the following points:

- . All human beings are equal for they have the same nature, all have sinned, are in need of the same Savior, and can attain the same virtues.
- . This equality that depends on the same human nature does not cancel the differences between them, for man has his own role that fits his manhood and woman has her own role. This dif

<sup>43</sup> Stromata 4:8.

ference creates a kind of integrity in human beings, the male is in need of the female and vice versa.

c. All kinds of obedience that the wife, or the children, or the servants show, do not weaken the personality of the person, for he or she practises it in the Lord, for the edification of mankind, through his or her breadth of heart and broad-mindedness. If it is misused and the person is obliged to deny his faith or to commit sin he has the right to disobey, suffering even death, as a sign of his love for God.

**2.**

# THE CHURCH TRADITION

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4

Eusebius comments. In the first of *Stromaties*, Clement shows us that he himself was very close to the tradition of the Apostles... He promises that he would write traditions that he had heard from the presbyters of the olden times<sup>45</sup> ."

According to St. Clement "the true *Gnostic*, having grown old in the Scriptures, and maintaining apostolic and ecclesiastical orthodoxy in his doctrines, lives most correctly in accordance with the gospel and drives from the Law and the prophets the proofs for which he has made search...For the life of the Gnostic, in my view, consists simply in deeds and words which correspond to the tradition of our Lord<sup>46</sup> .

He states that he who spurns the Church tradition ceases to be a man of God<sup>47</sup> , and that *gnosis* came down from the apostles through their successors to a few (of us) being handed on orally<sup>48</sup> .

Jean Daniélou says, "With the two Alexandrian Fathers, Clement and Origen, we find both elements of early Christian tradition, eschatological and liturgical, and certain minor details utilized by tradition in their development<sup>49</sup> .



44 Fr. Tadros Y. Malaty: *Tradition & Orthodoxy*, Alexandria, 1979, p. 29.

45 Eusebius H.E 6:13:8,9.

46 *Stromata* 7:16.

47 *Ibid.*

48 *Stromata* 6:7:61.

49 Jean Daniélou : *From Shadows to Reality, Studies in the Biblical Typology of the Fathers*, Newman Press, 1960, p. 103.

### 3. BAPTISM

Although the teaching of the Logos occupies the center of Clement's theological doctrine, he does not fail to pay attention to the *mysterion*, to the sacrament. In fact, Logos and *mysterion* are the two poles around which his Christology and ecclesiology move. Baptism to him is a rebirth and a regeneration. Adoption as children of God takes place in the sacrament of regeneration. Clement also uses the terms seal, illumination, bath, perfection and mystery for baptism<sup>50</sup>.

St. Clement was interested in the Church sacraments, especially **Baptism**, as a new birth by which we receive Christ Himself in our lives and attain His knowledge. Baptism is called illumination, perfection, washing from our sins, and forgiveness of sins, etc. He speaks of baptism as a spiritual regeneration, enlightenment, adoption to the Father, immortality, remission of sins<sup>51</sup>. Baptism imprints a seal, or stamp, which is in fact the Holy Spirit.

*This is the one grace of illumination, that our characters are not the same as before our washing. When we are baptized, we are enlightened Being enlightened, we are adopted as sons. Adopted as sons, we are made perfect. Made perfect, we are become immortal. "I say," he declares, "you are gods and sons all of*

*the Most High*<sup>52</sup>."

*This work is variously called grace, illumination, perfection, and washing*<sup>53</sup>. *It is washing by which we are cleansed of sins; a gift of grace by which the punishments due our sins are remitted; an illumination by which we behold that holy light of salvation - that is, by which we see*

<sup>50</sup> Esmat Gabriel: *St. Clement of Alexandria, Coptic Church Review, Spring 1980, v.1, No. 1, p. 26.*

<sup>51</sup> *Paidagogus* 1:6:26.

<sup>52</sup> Ps. 81 [82]:6.

<sup>53</sup> *carisma kai jwtisma kai teleion kai loutron*. A knowledge that such are the various names given to Baptism will be of assistance in arriving at a better understanding of numerous Scripture passages, where these or related terms are used, notably: Rom. 5:2; 5:15; 7:25; Eph. 5:26; Titus 3:5; Heb. 6:4; 7:11; 10:32; and James 1:17.



*God clearly; and we call that perfection which leaves nothing lacking.*

*Indeed, if a man knows God, what more does he need? Certainly it were out of place to call that which is not complete a true gift of God's grace. Because God is perfect, the gifts He bestows are perfect<sup>54</sup>.*

St. Clement states, "*Baptism is the blessed seal.*". This seal, (*Sphragis*) makes us become God's, His own, for it was the custom, that a person seals his own precious possession by his seal. Also, it declares that we are God's sheep and soldiers, and are under His protection<sup>55</sup>.

*We, who are baptized, have wiped off the sins which obscure the light of the Divine Spirit, and have opened the eye of the Spirit: free, unimpeded, and full of light, by which, alone, we contemplated the Divine, the Holy Spirit, flowing down to us from above. This is the eternal adjustment of the vision, which is to be able to see the eternal light. Since things alike love each other, also that which is holy loves that from which holiness proceeds, which has appropriately been termed "light." "Once you were darkness, now you are light in the Lord," Eph. 5: 8... But he has not yet received, they say, the perfect gift...*

*In baptism, by the divine Spirit, we get rid of sins which dim our eyes like a mist, and leave the eye of the spirit free and unhindered and enlightened. By this eye alone, we behold God, when the Holy Spirit pours into us from heaven<sup>56</sup>.*

In Baptism, the Holy Spirit grants believers spiritual rebirth and transforms them into members of the sacramental Body of Christ. Through this divine grace, the Spirit grants us "new life" in

<sup>54</sup> Paid. 1:6:26;1-3.

<sup>55</sup> For more details see my book: "*The Holy Spirit ...*" Alexandria 1981, p62-68 ( in Arabic); Kay's writings of Clement of Alexandria, London, 1835, p. 439.

<sup>56</sup> Fr. Malaty: *The Gift of the Holy Spirit*, Alexandria, 1991, p. 34-.5

Christ, the resurrected life, the illumination of the soul and participation in the divine life.

*We are washed from all our sins, and are no longer entangled in evil. This is the one grace of illumination, as our characters are not the same as before our washing... "For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female: for you are all one in Christ Jesus" Gal. 3:26-28<sup>57</sup>.*

*Even though a man receives nothing more than this rebirth, still, because he is by that fact enlightened, he is straightway rid of darkness<sup>58</sup>.*

According to the early Coptic rite of Baptism, the newly baptized person drank milk mixed with honey. St. Clement of Alexandria says that "honey" in this rite refers to attaining our Lord Jesus Christ who is sweet food to believers<sup>59</sup>. Truly, in Baptism, the believer attains Christ by the Holy Spirit, Who fills our life with His heavenly joy.



<sup>57</sup> Fr. Malaty: *The Gift of the Holy Spirit*, Alexandria, 1991, p. 71-2.

<sup>58</sup> Paidagogos 1:6:27 (Frs. of Church). <sup>59</sup> Paidagogos 1:6.

## 4. THE EUCHARIST

St. Clement saw the Eucharist as instrumental in the accomplishment of the task undertaken by the Logos of God to bestow on men immortality<sup>60</sup>

There is a passage in *Stromata*. 7,3, which indicates that Clement did not believe in sacrifices:

*"We rightly do not sacrifice to God, who, needing nothing, supplies all men with all things, but we glorify Him who gave Himself in sacrifice for us, we also sacrificing ourselves... for in our salvation alone God delights."*

However, it would be incorrect to draw the conclusion from these words that St. Clement does not know the Eucharist as the sacrifice of the Church<sup>61</sup>. Michael O'Carroll said that his writing on sacrifices, which he appears to reject, must be read in the context of his thinking on pagan and Jewish sacrifices<sup>62</sup>. He knows such a ceremony very well. He mentions in *Stromata* 1,19, that there are heretical sects which substitute bread and water. He invokes a canon of the Church and of a celebration of the Eucharist. He condemns the use of water as being against this canon of the Church, which demands bread and wine, and he speaks of *"Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who gave bread and wine, furnishing consecrated food for a type of the Eucharist."* Thus he recognizes in the Eucharist a sacrifice, but he sees it also as the food for believers<sup>63</sup>.

*"Eat you of my flesh, and drink my blood" (John 5:53). Such is the suitable food which the Lord ministers, and He offers His flesh and pours forth His blood, and nothing is wanting for the children's' growth. O amazing mystery! We are enjoined to cast off the old and carnal*

<sup>60</sup> Michael O'Carroll: *Corpus Christi, An Encyclopedia of the Eucharist*, article: Clement of Alexandria, p. 48.

<sup>61</sup> Quasten, p. 29.

<sup>62</sup> Michael O'Carroll: *Corpus Christi, An Encyclopedia of the Eucharist*, article: Clement of Alexandria, p. 48.

<sup>63</sup> Esmat Gabriel: *St. Clement of Alexandria, Coptic Church Review*, Spring 1980, v.1, No. 1, p. 25.

*corruption, as also the old nutriment, receiving in exchange another regimen, that of Christ, receiving Him if possible, to hide Him within; and that, enshrining the Savior in our souls, we may correct the affections of our flesh.*

St. Clement goes on then to speak allegorically:  
*But you are not inclined to understand it thus, but perchance more generally. Hear it also in the following way. The flesh figuratively represents to us the Holy Spirit, for it was created by Him. The blood points out to us the Word, for as rich blood the Word has been infused into life; and the union of both is the Lord, the food of babes - the Lord who is Spirit and Word.*

St. Clement distinguishes between the human and Eucharistic blood of Christ:

*The blood of the Lord is twofold. For there is the blood of His flesh, by which we are redeemed from corruption; and the spiritual, by which we are anointed. And to drink the blood of Jesus, is to become partaker of the Lord's immortality; the Spirit being the energetic principle of the Word, as the blood is of the flesh. Accordingly, as wine is blended with water, so is the Spirit with man. And the one, the mixture of wine and water, nourishes to faith; while the other, the Spirit, conducts to immortality. And the mixture of both - of the drink and of the Word - is called Eucharist, renowned and glorious grace; and they who by faith partake of it are sanctified both in body and soul.*

*As wine is blended with water, so is the Spirit with man*<sup>64</sup>.

*The union of both, that is, of the potion and the Word, is called the Eucharist, a gift worthy of praise and surprisingly fair; those who partake of it are sanctified in body and soul, for it is the will of the Father that man, a*

<sup>64</sup> Paidagogos 2:2.

*composite made by God, be united to the Spirit and to the Word. In fact, the Spirit is closely joined to the soul depending upon Him, and the flesh to the Word, because it was for it that 'the Word was made flesh' (John 1:4)<sup>65</sup>.*

b. It seems that in the second century, the liturgy of the Eucharist started at the sunset of Saturday, or at the eve of the Sunday, celebrating the Vespers. The congregation **spent all night singing hymns and celebrated the Eucharistic liturgy at dawn**

(1 Thess. 5:6-8), not for fear of the rulers or the pagan popular, but rather as a chance to meditate on the withdrawal of the soul from the body, or its departure from the night of this world to settle in the light of the Paradise.

*But the variety of disposition arises from inordinate affection to material things. And for this reason, as they appear to me, to have called night **Euphrone**<sup>66</sup>; since then the soul, released from the perceptions of sense, turns in on itself, and has a truer hold of intelligence (**phronesis**). Wherefore the mysteries are for the most part celebrated by night, indicating the withdrawal of the soul from the body, which takes place by night. "Let us not then sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep, sleep in the night; and they that are drunken, are drunken in the night. But let us... be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love as the helmet of the hope of salvation" (1 Thess. 5:6-8)<sup>67</sup>.*

c. St. Clement mentions the tradition of **praying towards the East**, as a symbol of our new birth, and our illumination by the sun of the righteousness.

*Since the dawn is an image of the day of birth, and from that point the light which has shone forth at first from the darkness increases, there has also dawned on those involved in darkness a day of the knowledge of truth. In cor*

<sup>65</sup> Paidagogos 22:19 (Fathers of Church, vol. 23).

<sup>66</sup> Euphrone is plainly "kindly, cheerful" (ANF).

<sup>67</sup> Stromata 4:22.

*respondence with the manner of the sun's rising, prayers are made looking towards the sunrise in the east*<sup>68</sup>.

d. According to St. Clement the Liturgy of the Eucharist is correlated with the sanctification of the Lord's day (Sunday), not only through worship but also through the pure spiritual conduct and the continuous contemplation on the heavens, hoping in participating in the glories of the resurrection.

*He, in fulfillment of the precept, according to the Gospel, keeps the Lord's day, when he abandons an evil disposition, and assumes that of the Gnostic, glorifying the Lord's resurrection in himself. Further, also, when he has received the comprehension of scientific speculation, he deems that he sees the Lord, directing his eyes towards things invisible, although he seems to look on what he does not wish to look on; chastising the faculty of vision, when he perceives himself pleasurably by the application of his eyes; since he wishes to see and hear that alone which concerns him*<sup>69</sup>.

e. For participation in the celebration of the liturgy of the Eucharist, there are inner preparations together with that which touches the body. These inner preparations are attaining love and purity. He asks the believers to behave in their daily life in harmony with that inside the church.

*So it is said that we ought to go washed to sacrifices and prayers, clean and bright; and that this external adornment and purification are practised for a sign. Now purity is to think holy thoughts. Further, there is the image of baptism, which also was handed down to the poets from Moses as follows: "And she having drawn water, and wearing on her body clean clothes"... It was a custom of the Jews to wash frequently after being in bed. It was then well said, "Be pure, not by washing of water, but in the mind." For sanctity, as I conceive it, is perfect pureness of mind,*

<sup>68</sup> Stromata 7:7 ANF.

<sup>69</sup> Stromata 7:12 ANF.

*and deeds, and thoughts, and words too, and in its last degree sinlessness in dreams. And sufficient purification to a man, I reckon, is thorough and sure repentance*<sup>70</sup>.

. The liturgy of the Eucharist is a participation with the heavenly creatures and the saints in giving hymns to God.

. St. Clement allegorically interprets Ps. 150 which is used in the liturgy of the Eucharist, during receiving the Communion. He speaks of the risen Church as a musical instrument, on which the spirit play the symphony of love.

*The Spirit, distinguishing from such revelry the divine service, sings, "**Praise Him with the sound of trumpet**"; "for with the sound of trumpet He shall raise the dead.*

*"**Praise Him on the psaltery**";" for the tongue is the psaltery of the Lord. "**And praise Him on the lyre.**" By the lyre is meant the mouth struck by the Spirit, as it were by a plectrum.*

*"**Praise with the timbrel and the dance,**" refers to the Church meditating on the resurrection of the dead in the resounding skin.*

*"**Praise Him on the chords and organ.**" Our body He calls an organ, and its nerves are the strings, by which it has received harmonious tension, and when struck by the Spirit, it gives forth human voices.*

*"**Praise Him on the clashing cymbals.**" He calls the tongue the cymbal of the mouth, which resounds with the pulsation of the lips. Therefore He cried to humanity, "**Let every breath praise the Lord,**" because He cares for every breathing thing which He has made*<sup>71</sup>.

h. St. Clement adds that the church does not use the musical instruments in his age, giving a reason, that these instruments were used by the nations in wars to incite hatred and in parties. He

<sup>70</sup> Stromata 4:22 ANF.

<sup>71</sup> Paidagogos 2:5.

sees that our **Lord Himself is the Instrument of our hymns**, not only through the church worship but even through our daily life.

*For man is truly a pacific instrument; while other instruments; if you investigate, you will find to be warlike, inflaming to lusts, or kindling up amours, or rousing wrath.*

*In their wars, therefore, the Etruscans use the trumpet, the Arcadians the pipe, the Sicilians the pectides, the Cretans the lyre, the Lacedaemonians the flute, the Thracians the horn, the Egyptians the drum, and the Arabians the cymbal.*

***The one instrument of peace, the Word alone by which we honor God, is what we employ.***

*We no longer employ the ancient psaltery, and trumpet, and timbrel and flute, which those expert in war and contemners of the fear of God were wont to make use of also in the choruses at their festive assemblies; that by such strains they might raise their dejected minds...*

*In the present instance He is a guest with us. For the apostle adds again, "Teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your heart to God" (Col 3:16 ).And again, "What soever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and His Father" (Col. 3:17). This is our thankful revelry. And even if you wish to sing and play to the harp or Lyre, there is no blame. You shall imitate the righteous Hebrew king in his thanksgiving to God. "Rejoice in the Lord, you righteous; praise is comely to the upright," says the prophecy (Ps 33:1-3). "Confess to the Lord on the harp; play to Him on the psaltery of ten strings. Sing to Him a new song." And does not **the ten-stringed psaltery indicate the Lord Jesus**, who is manifested by the element of the decade? [the word Jesus in Greek starts with the letter iota which resembles number 10.] And as it is befitting, before partaking of food, that we should bless the Creator of all; so also in drinking it is suitable to praise Him on partaking of His creatures.*



*For the psalm is a melodious and sober blessing. The apostle calls the psalm "a spiritual song" (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16)<sup>72</sup>.*



<sup>72</sup> *Stromata* 2:4.

## 5. PRIESTHOOD

St. Clement composed a book of the bishops, priests, deacons and widows, beside his book the "Church order," which are lost. Undoubtedly these two works give an account of the church service, the liturgical prayers and the role of the clergymen and laymen in the church service. For this reason perhaps he does not write in details about these topics in his other works.

The hierarchy of the Church, consisting of the three grades, the episcopacy, the priesthood and the diaconate, is according to St. Clement an imitation of the hierarchy of the angels<sup>73</sup>. This order of the **Priesthood** (Bishops, Priests and Deacons) is not based only on distributing the responsibilities, but also on participating in serving the Lord Himself through which they attain heavenly glories.

*Even here in the Church the gradations of bishops, presbyters, and deacons happen to be imitations, in my opinion, of the angelic glory and of that arrangement which, the Scriptures say, awaits those who have followed in the footsteps of the Apostles, and who have lived in perfect righteousness according to the Gospel. For these taken up in the clouds, the apostle writes, will first minister [as deacons], then be classed in the presbyterate, by promotion in glory (for glory differs from glory) till they grow into a "perfect man" Eph. 4:23<sup>74</sup>.*

The Priest must grow in spiritual knowledge to be equal with the angels. He should acknowledge that he has to learn while he is teaching others. All believers, clergymen and laymen, need to learn for their own progress. St. Clement says, "*A multitude of other pieces of advice to particular persons is written in the holy books: some for presbyters, some for bishops and deacons; and*

<sup>73</sup> Strom. 6:13, ANF; Esmat Gabriel: St. Clement of Alexandria, Coptic Church Review, Spring 1980, v.1, No. 1, p. 25, 26.

<sup>74</sup> Stromata 6:13:107:2.

*others for widows, of whom we shall have opportunity to speak elsewhere<sup>75</sup>."*

As a priest, St. Clement was very cautious about his own salvation, reminding himself that he must not be proud of the glory of his priesthood, asserting that the real glory of the priest is realized through his illuminated life, and his behavior as an angel of God.

*He, then, who has first moderated his passions and trained himself for impassability, and developed to the beneficence of Gnostic perfection, is here equal to the angels. Luminous already, and like the sun shining in the exercise of beneficence, he speeds by righteous knowledge through the love of God to the sacred abode, like the apostles. Not that they became apostles through being chosen for some distinguished peculiarity of nature, since also Judas was chosen along with them. But they were capable of becoming apostles on being chosen by Him who foresees even ultimate issues. Matthias, accordingly, who was not chosen along with them, on showing himself worthy of becoming an apostle, is substituted for Judas.*

*Those, then, also now, who have exercised themselves in the Lord's commandments, and lived perfectly and Gnostically according to the Gospel, may be enrolled in the chosen body of the apostles. Such an one is in reality a presbyter of the Church, and a true minister (deacon) of the will of God, if he do and teach what is the Lord's; not as being ordained by men, nor regarded righteous because he is a presbyter, but enrolled in the presbyterate because he is righteous. And although here upon earth he be not honored with the chief seat (Mark 12:39; Luke 20:46), he will sit down on the four and twenty thrones, judging the people, as John says in the Apocalypse (Rev. 4:4; 11:6)<sup>76</sup>.*

#### **GENERAL PRIESTHOOD**

<sup>75</sup> Paidagogos 3:12:97:2; Jurgens: *The Faith of the Early Fathers*, vo. 1.

<sup>76</sup> Paidagogos 2:4.

St. Clement distinguishes between the priesthood of the *gnostic* priesthood and the priesthood based on ordination. He states that the pious and righteous Gnostics who teach and do God's will are its true priests and deacons, even if they have never been promoted to such office on earth<sup>77</sup>. The *gnostic* is a priest not by reason of ordination but by reason of virtue.

*But now, those who have exercised themselves in the Lord's commandments, and lived perfectly and Gnostically according to the gospel, may also be enrolled in the chosen body of the apostles. For what actually makes such a person a presbyter is not that he does and teaches the Lord's work because of being ordained by men, nor is it that he is considered to be righteous because he is a presbyter; but rather, such a person is enrolled in the presbyterate because he is righteous. And even though here on earth he should not be honored with the chief seat (cf. Mark 12:39), he will sit down on the twenty-four thrones (Rev 4:4 11:16; cf. Matt 19:28 par), judging the people, as John says in the Apocalypse...*<sup>78</sup>



<sup>77</sup> J.N.D. Kelly: *Early Christian Doctrines*, 1977, p. 202.

<sup>78</sup> *Stromata* 7:13.

**6.**

## MARRIAGE<sup>7</sup>

St. Clement of Alexandria defended Christian marriage, as a type of the church. He considered the marital lodging<sup>80</sup> as the place where the Lord is in the midst<sup>81</sup>, and defended the equality between husband and wife. St. Clement of Alexandria<sup>81</sup> states that the domestic church is constituted by the same Spirit Who constitutes the Universal Church. He grants power to the members of the family to witness to evangelic life through their love and unity in Christ.

His teaching on marriage is found mainly in *Paidagogos* and the *Stromata*. At the end of the second book of his *Stromata*, he gives a short survey of what pagan philosophers thought of marriage. The bulk of St. Clement's discussion of marriage is found in the third book of *Stromata*, which is devoted to refuting the *Gnostic* and *Encratite* rejection of marriage, partly on the basis of Genesis 1:28, and partly on more secular and philosophical grounds, namely the maintenance of one's country and the perfection of one's self and the world<sup>82</sup>.

Tatian, a former pupil of the apologist Justin, stood at the head of a long line of Christians who were called "*Encratites*" (the "*Chaste Ones*," from the Greek word *enkrateia*, meaning "chastity" or "self-control"). The Encratites interpreted the stories about Adam and Eve in the opening chapters of Genesis as an account of the fall of humanity from a pristine, Spirit-filled existence into the sinful, mortal condition now epitomized by human sexuality. Only by rejecting marital intercourse and procreation, the Encratites taught, could people be restored to their original, spiritual condition intended by God the Creator<sup>83</sup>.

<sup>79</sup> See Fr. Metthias F. Wahba: *The Doctrine of Sanctification in relation to marriage according to St. Athanasius*, Ottawa, 1993, ch. II; David G. Hunter: *Marriage in the Early Church*, Minneapolis, 1992.

<sup>80</sup> *Stromata*, 111.68, p. 71.

<sup>81</sup> *Stromata* 3: 10; David Coffey: *Grace, the Gift of the Holy Spirit*, 1979, p. 162.

<sup>82</sup> *Stromata* 3:25-26, 34-37, 100-101.

<sup>83</sup> David G. Hunter: *Marriage in the Early Church*, Minneapolis, 1992, p13.

St. Clement's defense is based on the following points

a. His theological starting point is the doctrine of **creation**. Those who reject marriage, he argues, "*blaspheme both the creation and the holy Creator, the Almighty and Only God*"<sup>84</sup>. "Encratites, who claim to be already living the resurrected life by repudiating marriage, ought logically to stop eating and drinking as well, St. Clement maintains, since these bodily functions will also be obsolete in the next life"<sup>85</sup>. Marriage is good for it is the invention of the one good God, the Creator. He said, "*If marriage according to the law is sin, I do not know how anyone can say he knows God when he asserts that the command of God is sin. If the law is holy, marriage is holy.*" For Clement, those who consider the lower parts of man's body as indicating inferior workmanship that cause sexual impulses

*"fail to observe that the upper parts also want food and in some men are lustful"*<sup>86</sup>.

St. Clement believes that the best text blessing marriage is the saying of the Lord, "Where two or three are gathered together for my sake, there I am in the midst of them" (Matt. 18:20). St. Clement believes in the **church home**, saying, "*Who are the two or three gathered in the name of Christ in whose midst the Lord is (Matt. 18:20)? Does He not by the "three" mean husband, wife, and child?*"<sup>87</sup>

St. Clement declares clearly that "*marriage is cooperation with the work of God's creation*"<sup>88</sup>. He insists that marriage and procreation are an intrinsic and positive part of God's plan for the human race. He frequently cites Gen. 1:28 "Increase and multiply" and regards human procreation as an act of co-creation with God: "*In this way the human being becomes the image of God, by*

<sup>84</sup> Stromata 3.6.45.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid 3:6:47. <sup>86</sup>

Ibid 3:84. <sup>87</sup> Ibid

3:68. <sup>88</sup> Ibid 3:66.

cooperating in the creation of another human being<sup>89</sup>." Echoing Musonius Rufus, St. Clement also maintains that **marriage serves a civic function:**

*By all means, then, we must marry, both for the sake of our country and for the succession of children and for the completion of the world... For if people do not marry and produce children, they contribute to the scarcity of human beings and destroy both the cities and the world that is composed of them<sup>90</sup>.*

*The purpose of intercourse is to produce children and the ultimate aim is to produce good children. In a similar manner, the farmer sows seed with the aim of producing food, intending ultimately to harvest the fruit. But far superior is the farmer who sows in living soil. The one farms with the aim of producing temporary sustenance, the other does so to provide for the continuance of the entire universe. The one plants solely for himself; the other does so for God, since God himself said, Multiply [Gen. 1:28], and we must obey. In this way the human being becomes the image of God, by cooperating in the creation of another human being<sup>91</sup>.*

*Nature treats legitimate marriages as it does eating and drinking: it allows whatever is appropriate, useful, and dignified, and it urges us to desire to produce children. But those who indulge in excess violate the laws of nature and harm themselves in illegitimate unions. Above all, it is never right to have intercourse with young boys as if they were girls. That is why the philosopher, following Moses' lead, said: "Do not sow seed on rocks and stones because it will never take root and achieve the fruitfulness that is its nature<sup>92</sup>."<sup>93</sup>*

<sup>89</sup> Paidagogos 2:10:83. <sup>90</sup>

Miscellanies 2.23.140-41. <sup>91</sup>

Paidagogos 2:10:83. <sup>92</sup>

Plato, Laws 8.838E. <sup>93</sup>

Paidagogos 2:10:90.



Appealing to the married saints of the Old Testament and to the married apostles of the New Testament, St. Clement argues that there is no incompatibility between the practice of the self-controlled marriage and a life of service in the church. Both celibacy and marriage offer distinctive forms of service (*leitourgia*) and ministry (*diakonia*) to the Lord. Indeed, Clement is even capable of regarding marriage as, in some respects, superior to celibacy. The celibate who is concerned only for his salvation is "in most respects untried." By contrast, the married man who must devote himself to the administration of his household is a more faithful reflection of God's own providential care<sup>94</sup>.

*"Children are a man's glory after his death, just as corks hold up the net, saving the fishing lines from the deep," according to the tragic poet Sophocles cf. Aeschylus<sup>95</sup>. Lawmakers do not entrust the highest offices to unmarried men. For example, a Spartan lawmaker established a penalty not only for failure to marry, but also for unlawful marriages, late marriages, and the single life. The noble Plato orders the unmarried man to pay into the public treasury the cost of a wife's maintenance and to give to the magistrates the appropriate expenses<sup>96</sup>. For if people do not marry and produce children, they contribute to the scarcity of human beings and destroy both the cities and the world that is composed of them<sup>97</sup>.*

He gives the title of Antichrist to those who "under a pious cloak blaspheme by their continence both the creation and the holy Creator... and teach that one must reject marriage and begetting of children, and should not bring others in their place to live in this wretched world<sup>98</sup>." He assaults the sexual permissiveness of Carpocrates (and Epiphanes) who taught that wives should be

94 *Miscellanies* 7.12.70; David G. Hunter: *Marriage in the Early Church*, Minneapolis, 1992, p. 15.

95 *Choeophori* 505-7. 96 cf. *Laws* 6.774. 97 *Stromata* 2:23:47; David G. Hunter: *Marriage in the Early Church*, Minneapolis, 1992, p. 48. 98 *Stromata*, 3:45.

"common property"<sup>99</sup>. About the *Carpocratians* he cries, "*these thrice wretched men treat carnal and sexual intercourse as a sacred religious mystery, and think that it will bring them to the kingdom of God*"<sup>100</sup>. Thus he confirms the Christian tradition that marriage is good, and the physical relationship is to be kept within marriage<sup>101</sup>.

*Some openly declare that marriage is fornication and teach that it was introduced by the devil. They boast that they are imitating the Lord himself who neither married nor possessed anything in the world, and they claim to understand the gospel better than anyone else. To them Scripture says: God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble (Jas. 4:6; 1 Pet. 5:5). Moreover, they do not know the reason why the Lord did not marry. First, he had his own bride, the church; second, he was no ordinary man who had need of a helpmate after the flesh (cf. Gen. 2:18). Nor did he need to beget children, since he lives eternally and was born the only Son of God. The Lord himself says: What God has joined together, man must not separate (Matt. 19:6). And again: As it was in the days of Noah, they were marrying and giving in marriage, building and planting, and as it was in the days of Lot, so will be the coming of the Son of Man (Matt. 24:37-39)*"<sup>102</sup>.

*If, however, marriage, though commanded by the Law, were yet sinful - really, I do not see how anyone could say that he knows God and yet say that sin has been commanded by God. If the Law is sacred, then marriage is a holy estate*"<sup>103</sup>.

99 *Stromata*, 3:8. 100 *Stromata*, 3:27. 101 *Strom.* 3:27. 102 *Stromata* 3:6; David G. Hunter: *Marriage in the Early Church*, Minneapolis, 1992, p. 52. 103 *Stromata* 3, 12, 84, 2 (*Jurgens*).

## I. MARRIAGE AND CO-OPERATION

*The loving care of a wife and the depth of her faithfulness exceed the endurance of all other relatives and friends, just as she surpasses them in sympathy. Above all, she prefers to be always at his side and truly she is, as Scripture says, a necessary help (Gen. 2:18)<sup>104</sup>.*

*Now marriage is a help, especially to those who are advanced in years, when it provides a caring spouse and produces children by her to nourish one's old age<sup>105</sup>.*

*The marriage of some people is an agreement to indulge in pleasure, but the marriage of philosophers leads to a harmony that is in accordance with reason. In such a marriage wives are ordered to adorn themselves not in outward appearance, but in character; husbands are commanded not to use their wives like mistresses, with the aim of indulging bodily wantonness, but rather to preserve marriage as a help for their whole life and as an occasion for the highest form of self-restraint<sup>106</sup>.*

## II. MARRIAGE AND PLEASURES OF LOVE

*Wise, then, was the person who, when asked his opinion of the pleasures of love, replied: "Silence, man, I am very glad to have fled from them as from a fierce and raging tyrant<sup>107</sup>." Nevertheless, marriage should be accepted and given its proper place. Our Lord wanted humanity to multiply [Gen. 1:28], but he did not say that people should engage in licentious behavior, nor did he intend for them to give themselves over to pleasure as if they were born for rutting. Rather, let the Pedagogue put us to shame with the words of Ezekiel: Put away your fornication [cf.*

104 Stromata 2:23 ; David G. Hunter: *Marriage in the Early Church*, Minneapolis, 1992, p. 47.

105 Stromata 2:23 ; David G. Hunter: *Marriage in the Early Church*, Minneapolis, 1992, p. 48.

106 David G. Hunter: *Marriage in the Early Church*, Minneapolis, 1992, p. 48. 107 Plato, *Republic* 1.329C.

*Ezek. 43:9]. Even irrational animals have a proper time for sowing seed.*

*But to have intercourse without intending children is to violate nature, which we must take as our teacher. We should observe the wise precepts that her pedagogy has established concerning the proper time, by which I mean old age and childhood; the young are not permitted to marry, the old are no longer permitted to do so. Otherwise, one may marry at any time. So marriage is the desire (orexis) for procreation, but it is not the random, illicit, or irrational scattering of seed<sup>108</sup>.*

*We must, then keep marriage pure and free of all defilement, as if it were a sacred offering, as we rise from our sleep with the Lord and go to sleep with thanksgiving and prayer, "both when we lay down to sleep and when the holy light comes"<sup>109</sup>. Let us bear witness to the Lord with the whole of our lives, preserving piety in our soul and exercising control over the body. It truly pleases God when we extend good conduct from our lips to our actions, for shameful speech leads to shamefulness, and both end up in shameful behavior. Scripture recommends marriage and does not allow release from the union; this is evident from the precept: You shall not put away your wife, except because of fornication (Matt. 5:32). It is regarded as adultery if either of the separated partners marries, while the other is alive<sup>110</sup>.*

*The human ideal of self-control (enkrateia), I mean the one found among the Greek philosophers, consists in struggling against lust (epithymia), and in not yielding to it so as to manifest its deeds. But among us self-control means not to experience lust at all. Our aim is not merely*

<sup>108</sup> Paidagogos 2:10:95; David G. Hunter: *Marriage in the Early Church*, Minneapolis, 1992, p. 44-45.

<sup>109</sup> Hesiod, *Works and Days* 339.

<sup>110</sup> Stromata 2:23:145; David G. Hunter: *Marriage in the Early Church*, Minneapolis, 1992, p. 49.

*to be self-controlled while still experiencing lust in the heart, but rather to be self-controlled even over lust itself. But this kind of self-control is attained only by the grace of God. That is why he said: Ask and it will be given to you [Matt. 7:7]. Moses received this grace, even though he was clothed in the needy body, so that for forty days he felt neither thirst nor hunger [cf. Exod 24:18]...*

*In general, then, let this be our position regarding marriage, food, and other matters: to do nothing out of lust, but to wish only for those things that are necessary. For we are children not of lust, but of the will [cf. John 1:13]. The married man must exercise self-control in procreation, so that he does not feel lust for his wife, whom he must love, while he produces children by a holy and chaste will<sup>111</sup>.*

### **III. SEXUAL RELATIONS**

St. Clement held the belief that sexual relations are to be avoided. He held that the Apostles lived with their wives as "sisters;" so living with one's wife as with a sister is a realization of the resurrection state on earth<sup>112</sup>. In Clement's view, the difference between the pagan ideal of self-control and the Christian ideal is that, while the pagan ascetic feels desire and does not give in to it, the Christian does not feel any desire at all<sup>113</sup>. St. Clement sees that the uncleanness of marital intercourse needed every time the ceremonial washing such as that prescribed in Leviticus (15:18), but the Christians are cleansed once and for all by their baptism for every such occasion<sup>114</sup>.

In fact, he does not completely condemn sex but he restricts it to the purpose of reproduction. He warns of the danger of allow

<sup>111</sup> Stromata 3:7:57, 58; David G. Hunter: *Marriage in the Early Church*, Minneapolis, 1992, p.

54. <sup>112</sup> Ibid 3:53.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid 3:57, 58.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid 3:82.

ing family ties to override the duties connected with the Christian profession<sup>115</sup>. Thus marriage is holy because "the seed of the sanctified is holy"<sup>116</sup>.

He also says,

*But those who are permitted to marry have need of the Pedagogue, so that they might not fulfill the mystic rites of nature during the day, nor have intercourse after coming home from church or from the marketplace or early in the morning like a rooster, for these are the proper times for prayer and reading and the other deeds done during the day. But the evening is the proper time to take one's rest, after dinner and after giving thanks for the benefits one has enjoyed*<sup>117</sup>.

*It is absolutely impossible for a man to be considered dignified by his wife, if he does not show any sign of dignity during the pleasures of intercourse. The good feeling that admittedly accompanies intercourse blossoms only for a short time and grows old along with the body. But sometimes it happens that it grows old even before the body, and desire is extinguished; this occurs when marital chastity has been violated by pleasure taken with prostitutes. The hearts of lovers have wings, and charms are quenched by a change of mind. Love frequently changes into hate if there are too many reasons for condemnation*<sup>118</sup>.

*Now even though this is the case, they should still consider it shameful if the human person, created by God, should show less restraint than the irrational beasts who do not mate with many partners indiscriminately, but with*

<sup>115</sup> Stromata 4:8:12; 7:11:12; C.J. Cadoux, *The Early Church and the World*, T. & T. Clark, 1955, p. 466; P. Brown, *The Body and Society*, p. 136. <sup>116</sup> Ibid 3:46. <sup>117</sup> Paidagogos 2:10:96. <sup>118</sup> Paidagogos 2:10:97; David G. Hunter: *Marriage in the Early Church*, Minneapolis, 1992, p.

*one of the same species, as do pigeons, ring-doves, and turtledoves, and animals such as these*<sup>119</sup>.

St. Clement rejects marital intercourse during pregnancy or the menstrual period because it involves the illegitimate wasting of seed. Like contemporary medical writers (e.g., Galen), St. Clement seems to have regarded the loss of semen during ejaculation as a drain of the body's vital energy<sup>120</sup>.

St. Clement condemned homosexuality, saying, *The Logos has proclaimed this loudly and clearly through Moses: Do not lie with a male as with a female, for it is an abomination (Lev. 18:22). When the noble Plato recommended that "you shall abstain from every female field that is not your own*<sup>121</sup>*," he derived this from his reading of the biblical injunction: You must not lie with your neighbor's wife and defile yourself with her (Lev. 18:20). "There should be no sowing of sterile, bastard seed with concubines*<sup>122</sup>*." Do not sow "where you do not wish the seed to grow*<sup>123</sup>*." "Do not touch anyone except your own wedded wife*<sup>124</sup>*." Only with a wife are you permitted to enjoy physical pleasure for the purpose of producing descendants, for this is all that the Logos allows. We who have a share in the divine work of creation must not scatter seed randomly, nor should we act disrespectfully or sow what cannot grow*<sup>125</sup>.

#### **IV. NO DIVORCE EXCEPT FOR REASON OF ADULTERY**

*That Scripture counsels marriage, however, and never allows any release from the union, is expressly con*

<sup>119</sup> Stromata 2:23:139. <sup>120</sup> The Instructor 2.94. <sup>121</sup> Laws 8.839A.. <sup>122</sup> Laws 8.841D. <sup>123</sup> Laws 8.839A.. <sup>124</sup> Laws 8.841D. <sup>125</sup> Paidagogos 2:10:91; David G. Hunter: *Marriage in the Early Church*, Minneapolis, 1992, p.

tained in the law: "You shall not divorce a wife, except for reason of immorality" (Matt. 5:32; 19:9). And it regards as adultery the marriage of a spouse, while the one from whom a separation was made is still alive...

"Whoever takes a divorced woman as wife commits adultery" (Ibid., also Luke 16:18, it says; for "if anyone divorce his wife, he debauches her" (Mark 10:11), that is, he compels her to commit adultery. And not only does he that divorces her become the cause of this, but also he that takes the woman and gives her the opportunity of sinning; for if he did not take her, she would return to her husband<sup>126</sup> .

To that woman marriage was a misfortune. To fall under the sway of the passions, then, and to yield to them is the ultimate slavery; similarly, to keep the passions under control is the only true freedom. The divine Scripture, therefore, says that those who have violated the commandments are sold to strangers, that is, to sins that are alien to nature, until they turn around and repent [cf. Judge. 2:14]<sup>127</sup> .

Most people know nothing of continence and live for the body, not for the spirit. But the body without the spirit is earth and ashes [Gen. 18:27]. Now the Lord condemns adultery even in thought [cf. Matt. 5:28].

It is proper that not only our spirit be made holy, but also our behavior, our way of life, and our body<sup>128</sup> .

## **V. MARRIAGE AND CELIBACY**

Parenthood, St. Clement writes, is co-operation with the Creator<sup>129</sup> , and (according to some passages) it is wrong to regard

126 Stromata 2:23:145:3; 2:23:146:2,3 (Jurgens). 127 David G. Hunter: *Marriage in the Early Church*, Minneapolis, 1992, p. 49. 128 David G. Hunter: *Marriage in the Early Church*, Minneapolis, 1992, p. 51. 129 *Paidagogos* 3:83; *Stromata* 3:66.



celibacy as inherently more spiritual than the married state<sup>130</sup>. Sometimes St. Clement regards virginity is better than marriage<sup>131</sup>, and in other texts he regards the married state as superior to virginity, as he said, *"The children of this world marry and are given in marriage" (Cf. Matt. 24:38), but if we renounce the deeds of the flesh and clothe this pure flesh with incorruption, we are living a life like that of the angels*<sup>132</sup>.

Although virginity ordered toward salvation, still, one who bears up well under the superior trials and temptations of the married state may yet surpass one who leads the more or less carefree life of a celibate.

*And one is not really shown to be a man in the choice of a single life; but he surpasses men, who, without pleasure or pain, has disciplined himself by marriage, by the begetting of children, and by care for the household; who, in his solicitude for the household, has been inseparable from God's love; and who has withstood every temptation arising through children and wife or through domestics and possessions.*

*He, however, who is without a family, for the most part escapes temptation. Caring, then, for himself alone, he is surpassed by one who is inferior to him in what pertains to his own salvation, but is superior to him in the conduct of life*<sup>133</sup>.

Believing that the married and unmarried states are alike gifts of God "Both celibacy and marriage have their own different forms of service and ministry to the Lord"<sup>134</sup>, he puts his concept as such: *"Our views is that we welcome as blessed the state of abstinence from marriage in those to whom this has been granted by*

<sup>130</sup> Stromata 3:105; 7:70; Henry Chadwick: *History and Thought of the Early Church*, London, 1982, p. 175-6.

<sup>131</sup> Stromata 4:147-9.

<sup>132</sup> Paidagogos 2:10:100 (*Fathers of Church*, vol. 23).

<sup>133</sup> Stromata 7:12:70:4,5 (Jurgens).

<sup>134</sup> Ibid 3:79.

God; and admire monogamy and the high standing of single marriage<sup>135</sup> ."

*Whether one chooses to be celibate or to marry for the sake of procreation, one must remain unyielding to what is inferior. If a person can endure such a life, he will acquire for himself greater merit with God, since he practices self-control in a manner that is both pure and rational. But if he has gone too far in choosing the rule for the greater glory, he may fall short of his hope. Just like celibacy, marriage has its own distinctive services and ministries for the Lord; I refer to the care of one's children and wife. The special characteristic of the marital union, it seems, is that it gives the person who is committed to a perfect marriage the opportunity to show concern for everything that pertains to the household he shares with his wife<sup>136</sup> .*

St. Clement said that the unmarried man is inferior to the married because he has fewer opportunities of self-denial, while the married man "*shows himself inseparable from the love of God, and rises superior to every temptation which assails him through children and wife and servants and possessions*"<sup>137</sup> . He also said that men who chose to marry must acknowledge the suitable time and suitable wife.

*For it is not necessary that everyone should marry, nor at all times, but there is a time when it is appropriate, and a person with whom it is appropriate, and a time up to which it is appropriate to marry. It is not suitable for just anyone to marry just anyone else at any time, nor in some utterly random way. But a person must be in a certain condition, and he must marry an appropriate person at an appropriate time for the sake of children. The partner should*

135 Ibid 3:4. 136 Stromata 3:12:79; David G. Hunter: *Marriage in the Early Church*, Minneapolis, 1992, p. 55

56. 137 Ibid  
7:70.

*be similar in all respects, and she should not be compelled by force to submit to the man who loves her*<sup>138</sup>.

## **VI. MUTUAL RESPECT AND LOVE IN THE CHURCH HOME**

*The crown of the woman must be considered the husband' (Prov. 12:4), and the crown of the husband is his marriage; for both, the flower of their union is the child who is indeed the flower that the divine Cultivator culls from the meadow of the flesh. 'The crown of old men is their children's children and the glory of children is their father' (Prov. 17:6), it is said. Our glory is the Father of all, and the crown of the whole Church is Christ*<sup>139</sup>.

*The hearts of lovers have wings, affection can be quenched by a change of heart, and love can turn into hate if there creep in too many grounds for loss of respect*<sup>140</sup>.



<sup>138</sup> Stromata 2:23:137; David G. Hunter: *Marriage in the Early Church*, Minneapolis, 1992, p. 46.

<sup>139</sup> Paidagogos 2:8:71 (*Fathers of Church*, vol. 23). <sup>140</sup> Paidagogos 2:10:97 (*Fathers of Church*, vol. 23).

## OTHER THOUGHTS

### 1. WOMEN

St. Clement explains St. Paul's statement in 1 Cor. 9:5 "Have we not the right to take a woman around with us as a sister, like all the other apostles?" to say that women were helping the apostles.

*That is why he says in one letter: Do we not have the right to take with us a wife who is a sister, as the other apostles do (1 Cor. 9:5)? These apostles, in order to devote themselves to preaching without distraction, as befitted their ministry, took their wives with them, not as married women but as sisters, to be their fellow ministers to women in the households. Through these women the teaching of the Lord penetrated even into the women's quarters without any scandal. We also know what sort of regulations were given regarding women deacons by the noble Paul in his second (first) letter to Timothy (cf. 1 Tim. 3:11)<sup>1</sup>.*

His disciple Origen, in commenting on the role of Phoebe, writes that "even women are instituted deacons in the church," and that "women who have given assistance to so many people and who by their good works deserve to be praised by the Apostle, ought to be accepted in the diaconate<sup>2</sup>." Gryson, in an extensive commentary on these texts, insists that Clement and Origen are dealing only with theoretical considerations and not with concrete situations and a living practice in third-century Alexandria. Both Fathers use the past tense to explain biblical texts that refer to women associates of the apostles, but there is no evidence of deaconess who are contemporary with the Alexandrians.

<sup>1</sup> Stromata 3:6:53; David G. Hunter: *Marriage in the Early Church*, Minneapolis, 1992, p. 53. <sup>2</sup> Comm. on Rom. 10:17; Carl A. Volz: *Life and Practice in the Early Church*, Minneapolis, 1990, p. 194.

*Let us recognize, too, that both men and women practice the same sort of virtue. Surely, if there is but one God for both, then there is but one Educator for both. One Church, one virtue, one modesty, a common food, wedlock in common, breath, sight, hearing, knowledge, hope, obedience, love, all are alike [in man and woman]. They who possess life in common, grace in common, and salvation in common have also virtue in common and, therefore, education too. The Scripture says: 'For in this world, they marry and are given in marriage,' for this world is the only place in which the female is distinguished from the male, 'but in that other world, no longer' (Cf. Luke 20:34). There, the rewards of this life, lived in the holy union of wedlock, await not man or woman as such, but the human person, freed from the lust that in this life had made it either male or female<sup>3</sup>.*

The Logos is Educator to women and men alike. This was an attitude not found in traditional Judaism: the Jew gave thanks that he was not born a woman. It was not found in Greece, least of all in the Athens where Pericles declared that the greatest glory of a woman was not to be spoken of by men for good or bad. It was not found in Rome, where despite the freedom of some aristocrats the woman was under the authority of first the father and then of husband. It is authentically the spirit of Jesus, whose freedom in speaking with the woman of Samaria startled his disciples, who denied a twofold standard of morality over the woman taken in adultery, and whose attitude to Mary and Martha speaks of a new type of relationship. It is true to the early church, where Mary, mother of John Mark, played a prominent role, Nympha presided over a house church, Phoebe was deaconess of Cenchreae, and Priscilla was named before her husband Aquila. This partnership between men and women was part of the Christian revolution, the

<sup>3</sup> *Paidagogos 1:4:10 (Frs. of Church, 23).*

Christian transvaluation, and Clement is in the true tradition in offering it<sup>4</sup>.  
☒ ☒ ☒

## 2. WIDOWS

Carl A. Volz states that St. Clement of Alexandria writes:

*"Innumerable commands such as these are written in the Holy Bible and directed to chosen persons, some to presbyters, some to bishops, some to deacons, others to widows<sup>5</sup>."* **Origen** also speaks of special obligations required of widows, priests, and the bishop, and he writes that second marriages prevent aspirants from assuming ecclesiastical dignities - namely, that of bishop, presbyter, deacon, and widow<sup>6</sup>. A special vocation of widows was to prayer, fasting, and chastity. Origen adds others - to teach younger women to be sober, to love their husbands, to raise their children, to be modest, chaste, to be good housekeepers, to be submissive to their husbands, to be kind, to practice hospitality, to wash the feet of the saints, and to fulfill in all chastity all the other duties which are ascribed to women in Scripture<sup>7</sup>. Thus we find that widows are also given the task of teaching younger women and serving them as examples of virtue and charity<sup>8</sup>.

Tertullian and St. Clement of Alexandria referred to the widows' participation with the clergy in the healing of sinners and the comforting of those in distress<sup>9</sup>.

## 3. SERVANTS

4 John Ferguson : *Clement of Alexandria*, Twayne Publishers, NY 1974, p. 72. 5 Paid. 3:12. 6 *On Prayer* 28:3; *Hom. on Luke* 17. 7 *Comm. on Rom.* 10:20 8 Carl A. Volz: *Life and Practice in the Early Church*, Minneapolis, 1990, p. 187. 9 *Who is the Rich...*34; *Tert. on Monagomy* 11; on *Penitence* 9-10; Carl A. Volz: *Life and Practice in the Early Church*, Minneapolis, 1990, p. 188.

*We must treat servants as we do ourselves, for they are men even as we are. God is the same to all, free or slave, if you consider. We ought not to inflict torture on servants who do wrong, but only chastise them: 'He who spares his rod hates his son' (Cf. Prov. 13:24)<sup>10</sup>.*



## 4

St. Clement speaks of the virginity in party thus: *"For certain people say that Mary examined by the midwife after she had given birth was found to be a virgin."*<sup>12</sup> The source is evidently the *Protoevangelium of James*.

St. Clement speaks of the Scriptures, like Mary, bringing forth truth.

He points to the Mary-Church parallel in the following words: *"O mysterious wonder! There is only one Father of all, only one Word of all, and the Holy Spirit is also one and he is everywhere. There is but one Virgin Mother. I like to call her the Church. Alone this mother has not had milk, for she alone is not a woman but a virgin and a mother, immaculate as a virgin, loving as a mother; and she calls her children and feeds them with holy milk: the Word a child."*<sup>13</sup>

St. Clement taught the virginal conception. He attributed the making of Christ's human body to the Holy Spirit<sup>14</sup>. Some of the early Fathers thought of the Word himself. *"But the Lord Christ, fruit of the Virgin, did not seek the sweet breast of a woman, did not ask her for his food. When the Father, full of*

<sup>10</sup> Paidagogos 3:12:81,82 (Frs. of Church). <sup>11</sup> Michael O'Carroll: *Theotokos, A Theological Encyclopedia of the Blessed Virgin Mary*, Delware, 1988, p. 103. <sup>122</sup> Stromata 7: 16. PG, 9, 529, 30. <sup>133</sup> Paidag. 1:6: 21. PG, 8, 300-301. <sup>14</sup> Excerpt from Theodotus 60. PG, 9, 688B.

kindness, rained down his Word, the latter became for men a spiritual food."



## 5.

**MARTYRDOM**<sup>1</sup>  
In Alexandria there was a tradition, going back at least to Clement, that a martyr is not one who dies, but one who is perfected<sup>16</sup>: "*We call martyrdom perfection, not because the man comes to the end of his life as others, but because he has exhibited the perfect work of love*"<sup>17</sup>. He also says, "*If the confession to God is martyrdom, each soul which has lived purely in the knowledge of God, which has obeyed the commandments, is a witness both by life and word, in whatever way it may be released from the body, -shedding faith as blood along its whole life till its departure*"<sup>18</sup>."

St. Clement sees in martyrdom the perfect work of love. But with the cool eye of reason he also rejects all reckless enthusiasm for it and any desire for it which stems from any motive but the love of God. He prefers, it seems, to emphasize the *Gnostic* martyrdom of a life lived according to the Gospel:

*The Lord says in the Gospel, "Whoever shall leave father or mother or brethren," etc., "for the sake of the gospel and my name" (Matt 19:29), he is blessed; not indicating simple martyrdom, but the Gnostic martyrdom [cf. also Stromata IV 14], as of the man who has conducted himself according to the rule of the gospel, in love to the Lord....*<sup>19</sup>

St. Clement thus sees both blood martyrdom and *Gnostic* martyrdom as sacrificial, but without making much of the point. He prefers, it seems, the latter, but sees the virtue of love as towering over both.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Fobert J. Daly: *The Origins of the Christian Doctrine of Sacrifice*, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1978, p. 120. <sup>16</sup> Stromata 4:4. <sup>17</sup> Stromata 4:4 ANF. <sup>18</sup> Ibid. <sup>19</sup> Stromata 4:4; cf. also 4:18.



St. Clement of Alexandria, Origen, St. Cyprian and St. Dionysius all defend flight from persecution - their own, and that of the brethren. St. Clement of Alexandria says that those who provoke martyrdom are accomplices in the crime of the persecutor<sup>20</sup>. St. Athanasius gives the imprimatur to flight<sup>21</sup>. Canon 60 of Elvira, held in Spain at the dawn of the fourth century, says that those who destroy idols and are consequently killed are not to be considered martyrs. *"If anyone breaks idols and is killed on the spot, since this is not written in the Gospel nor will it be found that it ever happened in the days of the apostles, he shall not be received into the number of the martyrs"*<sup>22</sup>. It was for this reason that a person like Cyprian would flee from the authorities until he felt sure that his time for witness had come<sup>23</sup>.

*· Alone, therefore, the Lord, for the purification of the men who plotted against Him and disbelieved Him, "drank the Cup," in imitation of whom the apostles, that they might be in reality Gnostics, and perfect, suffered for the Churches which they founded. So, then, also the Gnostics who tread in the footsteps of the apostles ought to be sinless, and, out of love to the Lord, to love also their brother; so that, if occasion call, enduring without stumbling afflictions for the Church, "they may drink the cup." Those who witness in their life by deed, and at the tribunal by word, whether entertaining hope or surmising fear, are better than those who confess salvation by their mouth alone. But if one ascend also to love, he is a really blessed and true martyr, having confessed perfectly both to the commandments and to God, by the Lord; whom having, loved, he acknowledged a brother, giving himself up wholly for God, resigning pleasantly and lovingly the man when asked, like a deposit"*<sup>24</sup>.

20 Stromata 4:10 211 De fuga 22. 22 Canon 60 23 Cf. epistle 81; Boniface Ramsey: *Beginning to Read the Fathers*, Paulist Press, 1985, p. 126-7. 24 Stromata 4:9.

*Although we do not wrong, yet the judge looks on us as doing wrong, for he neither knows nor wishes to know about us, but is influenced by unwarranted prejudice; wherefore also he is judged. Accordingly they persecute us, not from the supposition that we are wrong-doers, but imagining that by the very fact of our being Christians we sin against life in so conducting, ourselves, and exhorting others to adopt the like life. But why are you not helped when persecuted? say they. What wrong is done us, as far as we are concerned, in being released by death to go to the Lord, and so undergoing a change of life, as if a change from one time of life to another? Did we think rightly, we should feel obliged to those who have afforded the means for speedy departure, if it is for love that we bear witness; and if not, we should appear to the multitude to be base men. Had they also known the truth, all would have bounded on to the way, and there would have been no choice. But our faith, being the light of the world, reproves unbelief. "Should Anytus and Melitus kill me, they will not hurt me in the least; for I do not think it right for the better to be hurt by the worse," [says Socrates]. So that each one of us may with confidence say, "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear: what shall man do to me?" (Ps. 118:6). "For the souls of the righteous are in the hand of the Lord, and no plague shall touch them" (Wisd. 3:1)<sup>25</sup>.*

*When, again, He says, "When they persecute you in this city, flee you to the other," He does not advise flight, as if persecution were an evil thing; nor does He enjoin them by flight to avoid death, as if in dread of it, but wishes us neither to be the authors nor abettors of any evil to any one, either to ourselves or the persecutor and murderer. For He, in a way, bids us take care of ourselves. But he who disobeys is rash and foolhardy. If he who kills a man*

<sup>25</sup> Stromata 4:11.

*of God sins against God, he also who presents himself before the judgment-seat becomes guilty of his death. And such is also the case with him who does not avoid persecution, but out of daring presents himself for capture. Such a one, as far as in him lies, becomes an accomplice in the crime of the persecutor. And if he also uses provocation, he is wholly guilty, challenging the wild beast. And similarly, if he afford any cause for conflict or punishment, or retribution or enmity, he gives occasion for persecution<sup>26</sup>.*

## **I THE SACRIFICE OF THE CHURCH** 2

According to St. Clement the sacrifice of the church is considered something intensely communal:

*Breathing together is properly said of the church. For the sacrifice of the church is the word breathing as incense from holy souls, the sacrifice and the whole mind being at the same time unveiled to God.... Thus we should offer God not costly sacrifices but such as he loves. The mixture of incense mentioned in the law is something that consists of many tongues and voices in prayer, or rather of different nations and natures, prepared by the gift bestowed in the dispensation for "the unity of the faith" (Eph 4:13) and brought together in praises, with a pure mind, and just and right conduct, from holy works and righteous prayer<sup>28</sup>.*

## **II THE SACRIFICE OF THE CHRISTIAN** 2

Through the fellowship with Christ who offered Himself as a sacrifice for us, we also become sacrifices for His sake. St.

26 Stromata 4:10. 27 Fobert J. Daly: *The Origins of the Christian Doctrine of Sacrifice*, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1978, p. 117-8. 28 Stromata 7 :6. 29 Fobert J. Daly: *The Origins of the Christian Doctrine of Sacrifice*, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1978, p. 116 f.

Clement said, "We glorify Him who gave Himself in sacrifice for us, we also sacrificing ourselves"<sup>30</sup>. The Christian becomes, like Christ, the offering itself: "We have become a consecrated offering to God for Christ's sake"<sup>31</sup>.

*The sacrifice acceptable to God is unswerving abstraction from the body and its passions. This is the really true piety. Is not, then, Socrates correct in calling philosophy the practice of Death?... It was from Moses that the chief of the Greeks drew these philosophical tenets. For Moses commands holocausts to be skinned and divided into parts [cf. Lev. 1:6]. For the Gnostic soul must be consecrated to the light, stripped of the coverings of matter, separated from the frivolousness of the body and of all the passions which are acquired through vain and lying opinions, and divested of the lusts of the flesh*<sup>32</sup>.

St. Clement not only follows Philo in seeing Old Testament sacrifices as symbols of the soul's progress toward God, and Barnabas in rejecting the validity of a literal interpretation of these sacrifices; he also goes beyond this by using at some length the cult criticism of the pagan philosophers and poets and not continually referring to the authority of Scripture<sup>33</sup>.



## 6. GOOD AND EVIL ANGELS

St. Clement of Alexandria and also Origen explain that the demonic order attempts to make man fall, lead him into slavery and make him an ally with themselves. The divine providence does not leave us helpless before the demons, for it supports us with the angels for our protection if we accept their actions for our sakes

<sup>30</sup> Stromata 7:3. <sup>31</sup> Protrepticus 4. <sup>32</sup> Stromata 5:11. <sup>33</sup> Robert J. Daly: *The Origins of the Christian Doctrine of Sacrifice*, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1978, p. 113-4; Stromata 7:6.

(Heb. 1:14); and to lead the believers to the heavenly wedding room if the believers wish.

*For regiments of angels are distributed over the nations and cities (Deut. 32:8 LXX), and, perchance, some are assigned to individuals<sup>34</sup>.*

*For by angels, whether seen or unseen, the divine power bestows good things. This method of operation is manifest in the covenants of the Jews, the legislations of the Greeks, and the teachings of philosophy<sup>35</sup>.*

*The angels of God serve the priests and deacons in the ministering of earthly affairs<sup>36</sup>.*

*So is he (the Gnostic) always pure for prayer. He also prays in the society of angels as being already of angelic rank, and he is never out of their holy keeping; and though he prays alone, he has the choir of saints standing with him<sup>37</sup>.*

*The priest, upon entering the second veil, would take off his mitre beside the altar of incense. He himself would enter further in silence, with the Name engraved upon his heart. Thus he shows that the setting aside of the golden mitre which had become purified and light by the cleansing, as it were, of the body, was really a setting aside of the weight of the soul... He puts aside this light mitre when he has come with it inside the second veil, in the world of the intellectuals, that is, the second veil, alongside the altar of incense, beside the ministers of the prayers that are being offered, the angels. Then the naked soul, having become in reality a high-priest, is thereafter moved directly by the Word... Passing beyond the teaching of the angels, she goes on to the knowledge and understanding of things,*

34 Stromata 6:17. [See Strom 7:2]. 35 Ibid. 6:17. 36 Stromata 7:1; In Lev. hom. 9:8 [Jean Daniélou: the Angels and their missions according to the Fathers of the Church, translat. by D. Heimann, Westminster MD, 1982, p. 63]. 37 Stromata 7:12.

*no longer merely betrothed but dwelling with the  
Bridegroom<sup>38</sup> .*

*Now the devil, being possessed of free will, was able both to  
repent and to seal; and it was he who was the author of the  
theft, not the Lord, who did not prevent him<sup>39</sup> .*



## 7. THE DOCTRINE OF MAN

Henry Chadwick says, The soul is not a portion of God<sup>40</sup> , but is created by God's goodness and as such is the proper object of divine love<sup>41</sup> . But this love is not automatic, as the heretics assume. It is one of the fundamental grounds for complaint against the Gnostics that their doctrine of the divine spark in the elect obliterates the gulf between Creator and creature<sup>42</sup> .

The Word of God became man, so that He might live among men as one of them (John 1:14). The Alexandrian churchmen looked at the incarnation as a sign of God's honorable concept of man . St. Clement of Alexandria says, "*He had taken upon Him our flesh ... He scorned not the weakness of human flesh, but having clothed Himself with it, has come into the world for the common salvation of men<sup>43</sup> .*" He also says: "*O divine mystery!... O wondrous mystery!... The Lord was laid low, and man was raised up!<sup>44</sup>*"

We are indebted to the Gracious God not only for the existence of the universe for our sake and caring for it continuously on our behalf, and for our coming into existence from

38 Excerpt., 27; see also Stromata 7:3 [Daniélou, p. 92, 93]. 39 Stromata 1:17. 40 Stromata 5:88.

41 Paidagogos 1:17. 42 Stromata 2:74; 77; Henry Chadwick: History and Thought of the Early Church, London, 1982, p.

172. 43 Stromata

7:2:7,8. 44 Protrep.

2:3:3.

nothing, but also for the special love of God for us even before our creation. St. Clement of Alexandria states that man, *the noblest of the created objects*<sup>45</sup>, the *dearest creature to God, the Hymn of God*<sup>46</sup>, was in the Divine Mind before the creation. In His infinite love, God created the universe for man's sake, then He created man in His image and likeness to enjoy communion with Him. Man is chosen for himself and thus belongs to the Choosier<sup>47</sup>.

*Man is justly dear to God, since he is His workmanship. The other works of creation, He made by the word of command alone, but man He formed by Himself, by His own hand, and breathed into him what was particular to Himself. What, then, was fashioned by Him, and after His likeness, either was created by God Himself as being desirable on its own account, or was formed as being desirable on account of something else*<sup>48</sup>.

St. Clement, who discovers the redeeming work of the Creator acknowledges how man is the beloved creature.

*Therefore, man, the creation of God, is desirable in himself... Man is, then, an object of love; yes, man is loved by God*<sup>49</sup>.

*A noble hymn of God is an immortal man..., in whom the oracles of truth are engraved. For where but in a soul that is wise can you write truth? where love? Where reverence? Where meekness?...*<sup>50</sup>

For Clement, as for Irenaeus, Adam was created with childish innocence, and he was to achieve the purpose of his

<sup>45</sup> Paidagogos 1:3; 1:8:63. <sup>46</sup> Protrpticus 10. <sup>47</sup> Paidagogos 1: 3,4. <sup>48</sup> Paidagogos 1:3; 1:8:63. <sup>49</sup> Paidagogos 1:3:8 (Frs. of Church, 23). <sup>50</sup> Protrpticus 10.

creation through further growth unto perfection<sup>51</sup>. This was delayed by the fall, which took place because man made use of his sexual capabilities before God had intended it<sup>52</sup>.

J.N.D. Kelly says: In his primitive state, according to Clement<sup>53</sup>, man was childlike and innocent, destined to advance by stages towards perfection. Adam, he states<sup>54</sup>, “was not created perfect in constitution, but suitable for acquiring virtue... For God desires us to be saved by our own efforts.” Progress therefore depends upon free-will, on which Clement places great emphasis. The fault of Adam and Eve consisted in the fact that, using their volition wrongly, they indulged in the pleasures of sexual intercourse before God gave them leave<sup>55</sup>. Not that sex was wrong in itself (Clement strongly repudiates<sup>56</sup> the *Gnostic* suggestion that it is), but the violation of God’s ordinance was. As a result they lost the immortal life of Paradise, their will and rationality were weakened, and they became a prey to sinful passions<sup>57</sup>. But while Clement accepts the historicity of Adam, he also regards him as symbolizing mankind as a whole. All men, he teaches<sup>58</sup>, have a spark of the divine in them and are free to obey or disobey God’s law, but all except the incarnate Logos are sinners<sup>59</sup>. They are, as it were, sick, blind and gone astray; they are enslaved to the elements and the Devil; and their condition can be described as death<sup>60</sup>. He nowhere hints, however, that they are involved in Adam’s guilt and in one passage<sup>61</sup>

*51 Stromata 2:22. 52 Stromata 3:17. Justo L. Gonzalez: A History of Christian Faith, vol. 1, 1979. 53 Prot. 11:111; Strom. 2:22. 131. 54 Strom. 6:12:96. 55 Prot. 11:111; Strom. 3:17:103. 56 E.g. Strom. 3:12:88f.; 3:17:102. 57 Strom. 2:19:98; Paid 1:13, 101; Protr. 11:111. 58 Protr. 6:68; Strom. 2:15:62; 3:9:63ff.; 4:24:153. 59 Paid. 1:2:4; 3:12,93. 60 Protr. 1:6 f.; 11:114; Paid. 1:9; Strom. 1:11:53; etc. 61 Strom. 3:16:100.*



vehemently denies that a new-born baby which has not performed any act of its own can have “fallen under the curse of Adam.” In another<sup>62</sup> he explains Job 1, 21 (“Naked I came from my mother’s womb”) as implying that a child enters the world exempt from sin. On the whole, his insistence against the Gnostics that only the personal misdeeds that men have committed are imputable to them leaves no room for original sin in the full sense. On the other hand, although certain contexts<sup>63</sup> might seem to suggest that the connection between the general human sinfulness and Adam’s transgression amounts to no more than imitation, he in fact envisages it as much more intimate. His teaching<sup>64</sup> seems to be that, through our physical descent from Adam and Eve, we inherit, not indeed their guilt and curse, but a disordered sensuality which entails the dominance of the irrational element in our nature<sup>65</sup>.

*In fact, the inspired word reserves the name ‘man’ to what is complete and consummate; David, for example says of the Devil: ‘The Lord abominates the man of blood,’ man in the sense that he is consummate in wickedness. Scripture calls the Lord man, too, in the sense that He is consummate in goodness. The Apostle, for example, writing to the Corinthians, says: ‘For I have betrothed you to one man, that I might present you a chaste virgin to Christ,’ or as little ones and saints, but, at any rate, only to the Lord. And in writing to the Ephesians he expresses clearly just what we are saying: Until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the deep knowledge of God, to perfect manhood, to the mature measure of the fullness of Christ<sup>66</sup>.*

62 Strom. 4:25:160. 63 Esp. adumbr. in Jud. 11. 64 Strom. 3:16:100 f.; 3:9:63-5.

65 Kelly, p. 179-180. 66 Paidagogos 1:5:18 (Frs. of Church, 23).

*The soul consists of three parts<sup>67</sup>. The intelligence, which is also called the reason, is the inner man, the ruler of the external man. But it is led by someone else, that is, by God. The part in which anger resides is akin to the beasts and lives close to madness<sup>68</sup>.*

We are subject to the Devil, and thus become slaves of sin and death. This does not mean that human freedom is utterly destroyed. On the contrary, when God, by means of His Word, offers faith, it is man who must decide whether to accept it or not, thus exercising his freedom<sup>69</sup>.



## 8. FREE-WILL

Man's freedom is the most important divine gift that God bestows on man. According to St. Cyril of Alexandria, the image of God in which man was created (Gen 1: 26) was his own freewill, and the spoilage of his human nature, that occurred by his disobedience to God, was the loss of his free-will.

According to Athenagoras, the dean of the Alexandrian School in the second century, man has the choice to do good or evil. Man has the freedom to sin or not to sin; otherwise he could not be condemned, rebuked, exhorted, or summoned.

St. Clement of Alexandria interprets the goodness of the first man not as being perfect but as having free-will to be advanced towards perfection. He said that Adam was childlike and innocent; "He was not created perfect in constitution, but suitable for acquiring virtue ... For God desires us to be saved by our own efforts<sup>70</sup>."

Therefore the Alexandrians looked at Adam's life in Paradise as if it were a kind of divine life, because of Adam's free -

<sup>67</sup> Cf. Plato: *Republic* 4 *passim*, esp. 435-441. <sup>68</sup> *Paidagogos* 3:1:1 (*Fathers of Church*, vol. 23).

<sup>69</sup> Cf. Osborn: *Clement*, p. 51; Justo L. Gonzalez: *A History of Christian Faith*, vol. 1, 1979, p. 208. <sup>70</sup> *Protr.* 11:11; *Stromata* 2:2:131.

will that grants him the ability to be in close contact with God. In this atmosphere, Adam and Eve received God's commandment not as a restriction that they had to suffer, but on the contrary, as a chance to express their love through obedience to God by their own free-will. In other words, without this commandment our first parents would find no way to accept God's love by practicing love, and had no way to have the experience of free-will.

According to St. Clement of Alexandria, the fault of Adam and Eve consisted in the fact that, using their volition wrongly, they indulged in the pleasures of sexual intercourse before God gave them leave<sup>71</sup>. Not that sex was wrong in itself, but the violation of God's ordinance was. As a result, their will and rationality were weakened, and they became a prey to sinful passions. He says: "*The first man played in Paradise, at liberty, since he was the child of God. Then he fell, through pleasure ... and was led astray through his desires... How great the power of pleasure! Man was free, in his innocence, and then found himself bound by his sins*"<sup>72</sup>."

His teaching<sup>73</sup> seems to be, that through our physical descent from Adam and Eve, we inherit, not indeed their own guilt and curse, but a disordered sensuality which entails the dominance of the irrational element in our nature, and a lack of knowledge, for sin is due to "ignorance"<sup>74</sup>.

J. Pelikan says: As a spokesman for the Christian faith, in response to the heathen and the heretics, Clement of Alexandria delivered just such an exhortation; "As far as we can, let us try to sin as little as possible." Only God could avoid sin altogether; but wisemen were able to avoid voluntary transgressions, and those who were properly trained in

71 J.N.D. Kelly: *Early Christian Doctrines*, 1978, p. 179-180; *Protr.* 11:111, *Stromata* 3:17:103. 72 *Protr.* 11: 111. 73 Kelly, p. 180; *Stromata* 3: 6: 100f; 3:9:63-5. 74 *Stromata* 3:16:100.

Christianity could at least see to it that they fell into very few<sup>75</sup>.

St. Clement asserts free-will to all rational beings: good and bad angels and man.

*Now the devil, being possessed of free-will, was able both to repent and to steal; and it was he who was the author of the theft, not the Lord, who did not prevent him*<sup>76</sup>.

*Above all, this ought to be known, that by nature we are adapted for virtue; not so as to be possessed of it from our birth, but so as to be adapted for acquiring it*<sup>77</sup>.

### **FREE WILL AND GOD'S PROVIDENCE**

Someone may ask: How can we interpret God's providence through the free will of men, for if God takes care of everyone, even of the number of hairs of the head (Matt. 10: 30) how will we accept the free will of others who would harm me or even kill me through their free will ?

Our God who in His goodness grants us free will, through His infinite wisdom uses this human freedom for the edification of His children, for He changes even the evil deeds to the salvation of others. St. Clement of Alexandria gives a biblical example. Jacob's sons sold Joseph as a slave, but God used this evil action for Joseph's glory. Joseph said to his brothers: "But now, do not therefore be grieved or angry with yourselves because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life... so now it was not you who sent me here, but God, and He has made me a father of Pharaoh, and lord of all, Gen 45:5-9; 'Do not be afraid, for am I in the place of God? But as for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive' (Exod. 50: 19, 20).

75 J. Pelikan: *The Christian Tradition, vol. 1, The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100-600)*, 1961, p. 284; Clem. Alex. *Paidagogos* 1:2:4:1-3. 76 *Stromata* 1:17 ANF. 77 *Stromata* 6:11 ANF.



## 9. SALVATION IN THE LIFE OF BELIEVERS

The perfect believers or "*Gnostics*" who have true spiritual knowledge and practise fellowship with Christ attain the righteous life. St. Clement of Alexandria could have devoted a treatise to spiritual perfection in which the implication is that a life without sin is possible at least for a few in this world. The "*Gnostic*," or perfect Christian, Clement writes, has gained mastery over himself and is never tempted, except by divine permission, and then only for the benefit of others. His whole life is one of prayer and communion with God; he "*lives in the spirit with those who are like him in the choirs of the holy ones, even though he is still detained on the earth*"<sup>78</sup>.

The *Gnostic* becomes the image of Christ and in His likeness. Some scholars ask if there is a difference between the *image* and the *likeness* of Christ. Some of the Fathers, such as St. Clement of Alexandria and Origen, make a distinction between image and likeness. The image of God is what is received at birth, while his likeness is something achieved by the effort of a lifetime. "*The human person was given the dignity of the image in his first creation,*" Origen writes, "*but the perfection of likeness is reserved for the consummation*"<sup>79</sup>. Other Fathers, however, make no distinction whatsoever between the two words (*likeness* and *image*), and St. Cyril of Alexandria says rather bluntly that, if there is a difference, no one has been able to prove it to him<sup>80</sup>.



<sup>78</sup> *Stromata* 7:12:80; Boniface Ramsey: *Beginning to Read the Fathers*, Paulist Press, 1985, p. 64.  
<sup>79</sup> *De Principiis* 3:6:1; Boniface Ramsey: *Beginning to Read the Fathers*, Paulist Press, 1985, p. 67. <sup>80</sup> *De dogm. solutione*; Boniface Ramsey: *Beginning to Read the Fathers*, Paulist Press, 1985, p. 68.

## 10. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF BELIEVERS (GNOSTICS)

a. The true believer **searches for every knowledge.**

*The Gnostic must be erudite... The Gnostic of whom I speak, himself comprehends what seems to be incomprehensible to others; believing that nothing is incomprehensible to the Son of God, whence nothing incapable of being taught. For He who suffered out of His love for us, would have suppressed no element of knowledge requisite for our instruction<sup>81</sup>.*

*If the love of knowledge produces immortality, and leads the kingly man near to God the King, knowledge ought to be sought till it is found<sup>82</sup>.*

b. The Gnostic is a **true pious worshipper**: *It is our purpose to prove that the Gnostic is holy and pious, and worships the true God in a manner worthy of Him, and that worship meet for God is followed by loving and being loved by God... The service of God, then, in the case of the Gnostic, is his soul's continual study and occupation, bestowed on the Deity in ceaseless love. For of the service bestowed on men, one kind is that whose aim is improvement, the other ministerial. The improvement of the body is the object of the medical art, of the soul of philosophy. Ministerial service is rendered to parents by children, to rulers by subjects. Similarly, also, in the Church, the elders attend to the department which has improvement for its object; and the deacons to the ministerial. In both these ministries the angels serve God, in the management of earthly affairs; and the Gnostic himself ministers to God, and exhibits to*

<sup>81</sup> Stromata 6:8. <sup>82</sup> Stromata 6:15 ANF.

*men the scheme of improvement, in the way in which he has been appointed to discipline men for their amendment. For he is alone pious that serves God rightly and unblamably in human affairs... And as Godliness is the habit which preserves what is becoming to God, the godly man is the only lover of God, and such will he be who knows what is becoming, both in respect of knowledge and of the life which must be lived by him who is destined to be divine, and is already being assimilated to God. So then he is in the first place a lover of God. For as he who honors his father is a lover of his father, so he who honors God is a lover of God. Thus also it appears to me that there are three effects of Gnostic power: the knowledge of things; second, the performance of whatever the Word suggests; and the third, the capability of delivering, in a way suitable to God, the secrets veiled in the truth<sup>83</sup>.*

The *Gnostic* is a **man of prayer**. Prayer is essential in his life, he practises the "Canonical Hours," at the same time that his prayers are not limited by a certain time or place, but all his life is changed into a prayer. He always thanks God for His providence.

*Now, if some assign definite hours for prayer - as for example, the third, the sixth, and ninth - yet the Gnostic prays throughout his whole life, endeavoring by prayer to have fellowship with God. And briefly, having reached to this, he leaves behind him all that is of no service, as having now received the perfection of the man that acts by love. By the distribution of the hours into a threefold division, honored with as many prayers, those are acquainted with... the blessed triad of the holy abodes<sup>84</sup>.*

<sup>83</sup> *Stromata* 7:1.

<sup>84</sup> *Stromata* 7:7.

*His whole life is prayer and converse with God... So he is always pure for prayer. He also prays in the society of angels, as being already of angelic rank, and he is never out of their holy keeping; and though he prays alone, he has the choir of the saints standing with him<sup>85</sup>.*

*The form of his prayer is thanksgiving for the past, for the present, and for the future as already through faith present.*

The Gnostic prays by his body and his soul, he prays through gestures and even by his silence.

*Prayer is, then, to speak more boldly, converse with God. Though whispering, consequently, and not opening the lips, we speak in silence, yet we cry inwardly (1 Sam. 1:13). For God hears continually all the inward converse. So also we raise the head and lift the hands to heaven, and set the feet in motion at the closing utterance of the prayer, following the eagerness of the spirit directed towards the intellectual essence; and endeavoring to abstract the body from the earth, along with the discourse, raising the soul aloft, winged with longing for better things, we compel it to advance to the region of holiness, magnanimously despising the chain of the flesh. For we know right well, that the Gnostic willingly passes over the whole world, as the Jews certainly did over Egypt, showing clearly, above all, that he will be as near as possible to God. Prayer, then, may be uttered without the voice, by concentrating the whole spiritual nature within on expression by the mind, in undistracted turning towards God<sup>86</sup>.*

c. For the *Gnostic*, **earth is changed into heaven**. St. Clement who asserts the sanctification of the body together with

<sup>85</sup> *Stromata* 7:12. <sup>86</sup> *Stromata* 7:7 ANF.



the soul, says that the sanctified soul changes its body into heaven, by the work of the Holy Spirit.

*The soul is not then sent down from heaven to what is worse. For God works all things up to what is better. But the soul which has chosen the best life - the life that is from God and righteousness - exchanges earth for heaven*<sup>87</sup>.

The Gnostics' aim is **to put their treasures in heaven**, not on earth:

*At any rate, we should repeat on every occasion that most inspiring of all our doctrines, that the good man, in his prudence and uprightness, 'lays up treasure in heaven' (Cf. Matt. 6:20)*<sup>88</sup>.

*Such is the Gnostic laborer, who has the mastery of worldly desires even while still in flesh; and who, in regard to things future and still invisible, which he knows, has a sure persuasion, so that he regards them as more present than the things within reach*<sup>89</sup>.

The Gnostics examine the pledge of heaven itself.

*O wondrous mystery... Man was cast out of Paradise; and now he receives a reward greater than that of obedience, the reward of Heaven*<sup>90</sup>.

d. The believers **attain a kind of perfection** through the work of the Holy Trinity, as a pledge of the eternal perfection. They imitate God.

*But, they object, man has not yet received the gift of perfection. I agree with them, except that I insist he is already in the light and that darkness does not overtake him (John 1:5). **There is nothing at all in between light and darkness.** Perfection lies ahead, in the resurrection of*

87 Stromata 4:26. 88 Paidagogos 3:6:34 (Fathers of Church, vol. 23). 89 Stromata 7:12 ANF. 90 Protr. 11:3.

*the faithful, but it consists in obtaining the promise which has already been given to us*<sup>91</sup>.

*The Gnostic is divine, and already holy, God-bearing, and God-borne*<sup>92</sup>.

The *Gnostic*, as we already mentioned, struggles to be in the likeness of Christ, by divine grace.

*He is the Gnostic, who is after the image and likeness of God, who imitates God as far as possible, deficient in none of the things which contribute to the likeness as far as compatible, practising self restraint and endurance, living righteously, reigning over the passions, bestowing of what he has as far as possible, and doing good both by word and deed. "He is the greatest." it is said, "in the kingdom who shall do and teach;" imitating God in conferring like benefits*<sup>93</sup>.

*But "it is enough for the disciple to become as the Master" (Matt. 25:10), says the Master. To the **likeness of God**, then, he that is introduced into adoption and the friendship of God, to the just inheritance of the lords and gods is brought; if he be perfected, according to the Gospel, as the Lord Himself taught*<sup>94</sup>.

The members of the church must be sanctified in their thoughts and dreams.

*So it is said that we ought to go washed to sacrifices and prayers, clean and bright; and that these external adornments and purification are practised for a sign. Now purity is to think holy thoughts... Sanctity, as I conceive it, is perfect pureness of mind, and deeds, and thoughts, and words too, and in its last degree, sinlessness in dreams*<sup>95</sup>.

91 *Paidagogos* 1:6:28 (*Frs. of Church*).

92 *Stromata* 7:13. 93 *Stromata* 2:19. 94

*Stromata* 6:14 ANF. 95 *Stromata* 4:22.

e. The believer attains the heavenly peace, therefore he is **never anxious about tomorrow:**

*'Do not be anxious about tomorrow' (Matt. 6:34). He means to say that he who has dedicated himself to Christ ought to be self-sufficient and His own servant and, besides, live his life from day to day<sup>96</sup>.*

f. The believer, full of joy in Christ, is **always smiling:**

*Now, the proper relaxation of the features within due limits--as though the face were a musical instrument -is called a smile ( that is the way joy is reflected on the face); it is the good humor of the self-contained... It is well that even the smile be kept under the influence of the Educator<sup>97</sup>.*

g. The Christian is **gentle and quiet:**

The Christian avoids obscenity with ears, mouth, and eyes. It is common, pagan, uneducated, and shameless. One could wish that all Christians had shown such balance and sanity. He also avoids jeering at anyone; it's a small step to insulting behavior and violence. If he has to sneeze or belch, he does so quietly. He does not pick his teeth so that the gums bleed. The Christian's society is calm, tranquil, serene, and peaceful<sup>98</sup>.

*Let the gaze be composed, and the movement of the head and the gestures be steady, as well as the motion of the hands in conversation. In general, the Christian is, by nature, a man of gentleness and quiet, of serenity and peace<sup>99</sup>.*

*The beauty of anything, whether plant or animal, is admittedly in its perfection. But man's perfection is justice and temperance and courage and piety<sup>100</sup>.*

<sup>96</sup> Paidagogos 1:12:98 (Fathers of Church, vol. 23).

<sup>97</sup> Paidagogos 2:5:46 (Fathers of Church, vol. 23). <sup>98</sup>

Paidagogos 2. <sup>99</sup> Paidagogos 2:7:60 (Fathers of Church, vol. 23). <sup>100</sup> Paidagogos 2:12:121 (Fathers of Church, vol. 23).

h. The *Gnostic* is **the Temple and the Altar of God**<sup>101</sup> :

The Christian or true *Gnostic* is now not just the offering and the offered but also the place of worship. St. Clement not only takes up the traditions which saw both the church and the believer as the true temple, and the soul(s) of the Christian(s) as the true altar<sup>102</sup>; he also develops this theme still further: . . . *he who builds up the temple of God in men, that he may cause God to take up his abode in men. Cleanse the temple, and pleasures and amusements abandon to the winds and the fire, as a fading flower; but wisely cultivate the fruits of self-command, and present yourself to God as an offering of first fruits*<sup>103</sup> .

St. Clement believes that the reception of the Eucharist is enshrining Christ within us as in a temple:

*Such is the suitable food which the Lord ministers, and He offers His flesh and pours forth His blood, and nothing is wanting for the children's growth. O amazing mystery! We are enjoined to cast off the old and carnal corruption, as also the old nutriment, receiving in exchange another new regimen, that of Christ, receiving Him if we can, to hide Him within and to enshrine the Savior in our hearts so that we may correct the affections of our flesh*<sup>104</sup> .

St. Clement also speaks of the heavenly temple<sup>105</sup>, and of the whole church - in heaven as well as on earth - as a temple<sup>106</sup>; but it was the temple here below, the temple of the Christian community and the *Gnostic* as a member of the Church, which particularly captivated his attention.

*How can He, to whom belongs everything that is, need anything? If God had a human form, he would, like*

101 Cf. Fobert J. Daly: *The Origins of the Christian Doctrine of Sacrifice*, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1978, p. 120f. 102 *Stromata* II 20; IV 21; *Paidagogos* II 10: *Quis dives salvetur* 18 2. 103 *Protrepticus* 11. 104 *Paidagogos* I 6. 105 *Stromata* 5:1. 106 *Stromata* 6:14.

*man, have need of food, shelter, housing and what goes with these. Those who are similar in form and affections will require similar sustenance. And if the temple has two meanings, both God Himself and the structure raised to His honor, is it not proper for us to apply the name of temple to the church which by holy knowledge came into being in God's honor? For it is of great value to God, not having been constructed by mechanical art nor embellished by an impostor's hand, but by the will of God fashioned into a temple. For it is not now the place but the assemblage of the elect that I call the church. This temple is better for the reception of the greatness of the dignity of God. For the living creature, which is of high value, is made sacred by that which is worth all, or rather which has no equivalent in virtue of the exceeding sanctity of the latter. Now this is the Gnostic, who is of great value and who is honored by God. For in him God is enshrined, that is, the knowledge respecting God is consecrated<sup>107</sup>.*

*The altar, then, that is with us here, the terrestrial one, is the congregation of those who devote themselves to prayers, having as it were one common voice and one mind.... Now breathing together is properly said of the church. For the sacrifice of the church is the word breathing as incense from holy souls, the sacrifice and the whole mind being at the same time unveiled to God.... And will they not believe us when we say that the righteous soul is the truly sacred altar, and that incense arising from it is holy prayer?<sup>108</sup>*

*At another time, He speaks of us under the figure of a colt. He means by that that **we are unyoked to evil**, unsubdued by wickedness, unaffected, high-spirited only*

<sup>107</sup> Stromata 7:5.

<sup>108</sup> Stromata 7:6

*with Him our Father. We are colts, not stallions 'who whinny lustfully for their neighbor's wife, beasts of burden unrestrained in their lust' (Cf. Jer. 5:8). Rather, we are free and newly born, **joyous in our faith**, holding fast to the course of truth, swift in seeking salvation, spurning and trampling upon worldliness. 'Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion. Shout for joy, O daughter of Jerusalem. Behold, your King comes to you, the just and Savior, and He is poor and riding upon an ass and upon a young colt' (Zach. 9:9)<sup>109</sup>.*

i. The true *Gnostic* attains **the new life in Christ as Festival**:

The true believer practices the pledge of the joyful heavenly life.

*Then, since we shall already be living the life of heaven which makes us divine, let us anoint ourselves with the never-failing oil of gladness, the incorruptible oil of good odor. We possess an unmistakable model of incorruptibility in the life of the Lord and are following in the footsteps of God<sup>110</sup>.*

"Joy" is one of the essential characteristics of the Church who is guided by the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22). Truly we are called to participate in the Lord's crucifixion, but He grants us His Spirit, the Paraclete, or the Comforter (John 14:16;16:1) who dwells within us even during tribulations and makes our hearts flow with unceasing joy (Phil. 4:4). Through grace we acknowledge the continuous presence of God within our soul that grants us unceasing joy. Our whole life changes into endless feast. St. Clement says:

*The (Gnostic's) whole life is a holy festival<sup>111</sup>.*

<sup>109</sup> Paidagogos 1:5:14 (Frs. of Church, 23). <sup>110</sup>

Paidagogos 1:12:98 (Fathers of Church, vol. 23). <sup>111</sup>  
Strom. 8:7.

*Holding festival, and that in our whole life, since we are persuaded that God is altogether on every side present. We cultivate our fields, praising; we sail the sea... The Gnostic, then is very closely allied to God, being at once graceful and cheerful in all things, graceful on account of the bent of his soul towards the divinity, and cheerful on account of his consideration of the blessing of humanity which God has given us<sup>112</sup>.*

*I appeal to Isaac as an illustration of this sort of childhood. Isaac means 'rejoicing.' The inquisitive king saw him playing with his wife and help-mate, Rebecca (Gen. 26:8). The king (his name was Abimelec) represents, I believe, a wisdom above this world, looking down upon the mystery signified by such child-like playing. Rebecca means 'submission.' Oh, what prudent playing! Rejoicing joined to submission, with the king as audience. The Spirit exults in such merry-making in Christ, attended with submissiveness. This is in truth godly child-likeness<sup>113</sup>.*

*Isaac rejoiced for a mystical reason, to prefigure the joy with which the Lord has filled us, in saving us from destruction through His blood. Isaac did not actually suffer, not only to concede the primacy of suffering to the Word, but also to suggest, by not being slain, the divinity of the Lord; Jesus rose again after His burial, as if He had not suffered, like Isaac delivered from the altar of sacrifice<sup>114</sup>.*

*There is **peace and joy** in the hearts of those upon whom the face of the Lord looks, but for those from whom He turns away there is an accumulation of evils<sup>115</sup>.*

112 Strom 7:7. 113 Paidagogos 1:5:21 (Frs. of Church, 23). 114 Paidagogos 1:5:22 (Frs. of Church, 23). 115 Paidagogos 1:8:70 (Frs. of Church, 23).

*He (the Gnostic), all day and night, speaking and doing the Lord's commands, **rejoices exceedingly**, not only on rising in the morning and at noon, but also when walking about, when asleep, when dressing and undressing*<sup>116</sup>.

St. Clement looks to the Christian life as an unceasing feast, asking us: "holding festival... in our whole life"<sup>117</sup>.

j. The *Gnostic* practices goodness not through his fear of punishment, nor waiting for recompense, but through **his love to goodness itself**. He has Christ-like desires and goodness naturally through the work of the Holy Spirit.

*We must then, according to my view, have recourse to the word of salvation neither from fear of punishment nor promise of a gift, but on account of the good itself*<sup>118</sup>.

. The *Gnostic* is **a spiritual king**. And in truth, the kingly man and Christian ought to be ruler and leader. For we are commanded to be lords over not only the wild beasts without us, but also over the wild passions within ourselves<sup>119</sup>.

. The *Gnostic* who is Christ-like **cannot hate any man**; for he has no enmity to men, but to the Devil, sin and heresy.

*And who could with any reason become the enemy of a man who gives no cause for enmity in any way? And is it not just as in the case of God? We say that God is the adversary of no one, and the enemy of no one (for He is the Creator of all, and nothing that exists is what He wills it not to be; but we assert that the disobedient, and those who walk not according to His commandments, are enemies to Him, as being those who are hostile to His covenant).*

<sup>116</sup> *Stromata* 7:12. <sup>117</sup>

*Stromata* 7:7. <sup>118</sup>

*Stromata* 4:6 ANF. <sup>119</sup>

*Stromata* 6:15 ANF.



*We shall find the very same to be the case with the Gnostic, for he can never in any way become an enemy to any one; but those may be regarded enemies to him who turn to the contrary path<sup>120</sup>.*

*He never remembers those who sinned against him, but forgives them. Wherefore also he righteously prays, saying, "Forgive us; for we also forgive" (Matt. 6:12; Luke 11:4). For this also is one of the things which God wishes, to covet nothing, to hate no one. For all men are the work of one will<sup>121</sup>.*

m. The Gnostic is **satisfied by his Savior**. *He who has God resting in him will not desire naught else. At once leaving all hindrances, and despising all matter which distracts him, he cleaves to heaven by knowledge<sup>122</sup>.*



## 11. THE MORAL

J. Lebreton states, "About the same date, Tertullian was given at Carthage the same moral teaching. But there was a great difference between them: Tertullian adopted a more vigorous treatment; he found, not in books, but in life itself the faults and follies he opposed, and he condemned them with such harshness that he often ran the risk of wounding those he wished to heal. The priests of Alexandria did not display the passionate ardor of the priests at Carthage, nor did he speak with the same tragic accent. He denounced with a polite smile the follies of the worldly life; he had a very just sense of decency and of what was fitting in Christians; and in him the noble human ideal, set forth by the best of the pagans, and traced out once more after them, has been transformed by the ideal model, the Christ, who projects His divine light upon all our life. These characteristics, so plainly brought out

<sup>120</sup> Stromata 7:12. <sup>121</sup> Stromata 7:13 ANF. <sup>122</sup> Stromata 7:13. <sup>123</sup> J. Lebreton: *The History of the Primitive Church*, p. 904 f.

in the whole of the first book (of the *Paidagogos*), appear once more at the end of the work, where they are set forth in full light:

*O let us foster a blessed discipline of teaching! Let us complete in ourselves the beauty of the Church, and as little children let us run to our good Mother. Even when we have become the hearers of the Word, let us glorify the blessed dispensation by which man has been brought up; he is sanctified as a child of God, and the education he receives on earth makes him a citizen of the heavens; there he finds the Father whom he has learnt to know upon earth; and all this formation, this teaching, this education, comes to us from the Word... To complete this praise of the Word, it remains for us to pray to Him. Be propitious to your children, O pedagogue, Father, Horseman of Israel, Father and Son, both one single thing, and Lord! Grant to us that by following your commandments we may complete the likeness of the image, and to realize as much as we can that God is good, and not a severe judge. Grant us to live in your peace, to be transported to your city, crossing without shipwreck the ocean of sin, and wafted on by the sweet breeze of the Holy Spirit, who is ineffable wisdom, night and day, until the dawn of the eternal day, singing a song of thanksgiving to the one Father and Son, Son and Father, to the Son our tutor and master, with the Holy Spirit. All to the One, in whom are all things and by whom all are one, by whom is eternity, of whom we are all members, to whom is glory and the ages. All to Him who is good all to Him who is wise, to Him who is just, all to Him! To Him be glory now and forever, Amen <sup>124</sup>!*



## 12. CHARITY AND LOVE

When St. Clement speaks of love, especially towards our enemies, he knows that its cost is very expensive, but we practise it for the sake of our Christ to be in His likeness, and through this sacrifice **we are considered as martyrs.**

<sup>124</sup> *Paidagogos* 3:12:90:1; 101:1-2.

*You have got a compendious account of the Gnostic  
martyr<sup>125</sup>.*

For the *Gnostic*, **love is his fortress**, in which he is protected from sinning, and even if he falls in sin, through love he has hope in His Savior to attain forgiveness of his sins.

*Love permits not to sin; but if it fall into any such case, by reason of the interference of the adversary, in imitation of David, it will sing: "I will confess unto the Lord, and it will please Him above a young bullock that has horns and hoofs. Let the poor see it, and be glad." For he says, "Sacrifice to God a sacrifice of praise, and pay to the Lord your vows; and call upon Me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me" (Ps. 50:14, 15). "For the sacrifice of God is a broken spirit" (Ps. 51:17). "God," then, being good, "is love" (1 John 4:8,16)... Whose "love works no ill to his neighbor," neither injuring nor revenging ever, but, in a word, doing good to all according to the image of God becomes like Christ. "Love is the fulfilling of the law" (Rom. 13:10)... By love, then, the commands not to commit adultery, and not to covet one's neighbor's wife, are fulfilled, [these sins being] formerly prohibited by fear. It is God Himself who has brought our race to possession in common, by sharing Himself, first of all, and by sending His Word to all men alike, and by making all things for all. Therefore, everything is common, and the rich should not grasp a greater share. The expression, then, 'I own something, and have more than enough; why should I not enjoy it?' is not worthy of man nor does it indicate any community feeling. The other expression does, however: 'I have something, why should I not share it with those in need?' Such a one is perfect, and fulfills the*

*command: 'You shall love your neighbor as thyself' (Matt. 19:19)<sup>126</sup>. It is unbecoming that one man live in luxury when there are so many who labor in poverty. How much more honorable it is to serve many than to live in wealth! How much more reasonable it is to spend money on men than on stones and gold! How much more useful to have friends as our ornamentation than lifeless decorations! Who can derive more benefit from lands than from practising kindness?<sup>127</sup>*

*An Agape is in reality heavenly food, a banquet of the Word<sup>128</sup>.*

*But there is another sort of beauty for men: charity<sup>129</sup>.*

*Lavishness is not capable of being enjoyed alone; it must be bestowed upon others. That is why we should shy away from foods that arouse the appetite and lead us to eat when we are not hungry. Even in moderate frugality, is there not a rich and wholesome variety?<sup>130</sup>*

*If anyone object that the great High Priest, the Lord, offers up to God incense of sweet odor (Eph. 5:2), let this not be understood as the sacrifice and good odor of incense, but as the acceptable gift of love, a spiritual fragrance on the altar, that the Lord offers up<sup>131</sup>.*



## 13. CONTEMPLATIVE LIVE

*126 Paidagogos 2:12. 127 Paidagogos 2:12:120 (Fathers of Church, vol. 23). 128 Paidagogos 2:1:5 (Fathers of Church, vol. 23). 129 Paidagogos 3:1:3 (Fathers of Church, vol. 23). 130 Paidagogos 2:1:14,15 (Fathers of Church, vol. 23). 131 Paidagogos 2:8:67 (Fathers of Church, vol. 23).*

## AND ACTIVE LIFE

St. Clement believes that the greatest lesson is to contemplate on one's self by the work of the Holy Spirit who reveals the kingdom of God within the believer, and illuminates his sight to acknowledge the divine love. Thus the believer can attain the likeness of Christ.

*It is then, as appears, the greatest of all lessons to know one's self. For if one knows himself, he will know God; and knowing God, he will be made like God<sup>132</sup>.*

*"In contemplative life, one in worshipping God attends to himself, and through his own spotless purification beholds the holy God reverently, for self-control, being present, surveying and contemplating itself uninterruptedly, is as far as possible assimilated to God<sup>133</sup>."*



## 14. WISDOM

St. Clement asks us to be wise through attaining the knowledge of God, of our nature and of oneself.

*Wisdom, in its perfection, is the understanding of things human and divine, and includes all things; therefore, it is the art of living in that it presides over the human race. In that way, it is everywhere present wherever we live, ever accomplishing its work, which is living well<sup>134</sup>.*

Wisdom creates an unceasing desire for learning, as it is written in the Book of Wisdom (6:12-20).

*For he (Solomon) teaches, as I think, that true instruction is desire for knowledge, and the practical*

132 Paidagogos 3:1 ANF. 133 Stromata 4:23 ANF.

134 Paidagogos 2:2:28 (Fathers of Church, vol. 23).

*exercise of instruction produces love of knowledge. And love is the keeping of the commandments which lead to knowledge. And the keeping of them is the establishment of the commandments, from which immortality results. "And immortality brings us near to God"<sup>135</sup>.*

St. Clement states that the teaching of Christ is the source of wisdom and truth.

*The proof of the truth being with us, is the fact of the Son of God Himself having taught us... For the Son of God is the person of the truth which is exhibited; and the subject is the power of faith, which prevails over the opposition of everyone whatever, and the assault of the whole world"<sup>136</sup>.*



## 15. EXTRAVAGANCE OR LUXURY

St. Clement believes that moderate life in Jesus Christ is the royal way that leads us to heaven. He exhorts us not to live in luxury, nor to indulge in extravagance. At the same time, food, clothes, furniture should be appropriate to the individual, his age, his work, and the particular occasion. The best wealth is poverty of desires.

Extravagance is unreasonable, contrary to the Logos.

*A middle course is good in all things, and no less so in serving a banquet. Extremes, in fact, are dangerous, but the mean is good"<sup>137</sup>, and all that avoids dire need is a mean.*

*Natural desires have a limit set to them by selfsufficiency"<sup>138</sup>.*

a. Concerning **food**: St. Clement deals with "Food and Drink" in *Paidagogos* 2:1,2. Concerning food, he says that we are to eat to live, not to live to eat. Our diet should be simple, directed to growth, health, and controlled energy. Avoid elaboration; avoid

<sup>135</sup> Stromata 6:15 ANF. <sup>136</sup> Stromata 6:15 ANF. <sup>137</sup> Cf. Seneca, Ep. 5, passim. <sup>138</sup> Paidagogos 2:1:16 (Frs. of Church).

excess. We should not forget how much the love (*agape*)-feast, the taking of a common meal together, meant to the early church at least till the third century. Don't eat and drink at the same time; they don't go together. Concerning drink, "A little wine for your stomach's sake" (1 Tim. 5,23). All right, but it is a small dose for strictly medicinal purposes. Otherwise, water is best, and the young should certainly abstain from wine; they're hotheaded enough already! Besides wine swells the sex organs and encourages sexual curiosity. For the 18-30 age-group, he advocates moderation. The older are permitted freer refreshment, provided they keep the mind clear, the memory active, and the body under control. Wine is dangerous, and Clement cites Aristotle and a doctor named Artorius as authorities for his statement. He also says that women should not reveal too much of their bodies: it's a risky business for the men who are attracted by the sight, and for the women who are aiming to attract them. And drunkenness, to return to the point, is out<sup>139</sup>.

*You will never be able to become wise' if you indulge in such extravagance, burying your mind deep in your belly; you will resemble the so-called ass-fish which Aristotle claims is the only living thing which has its heart in its stomach<sup>140</sup>, and which the comic poet Epicharmis entitles 'the huge-bellied'<sup>141</sup>. 'Such are the men who trust in their belly, 'whose god is their belly, whose glory is their shame, who mind the things of earth.'" For such men the Apostle makes a prediction foreboding nothing good, for he concludes: 'whose end is ruin' (Phil. 3:19)<sup>142</sup>.  
God has provided food and drink for His creature, I mean man, not for his dissipation, but for his welfare. It is a natural law that the body is not benefited by excessively rich food; quite the contrary, those who live on simpler*

139 John Ferguson : *Clement of Alexandria*, Twayne Publishers, NY 1974, p. 80-1.

140 Aristotle, *Frag.* 326, in V. Rose, *Aristotelis Fragmenta* (Leipzig 1886). 141

Epicharmis. *Frag* 67, in G. Kaibel *Fragmenta poetarum graecorum* VI:1 (1899).

142 *Paidagogos* 2:1:18 (*Fathers of Church*, vol. 23).

*foods are stronger and healthier and more alert, as servants are, for example, in comparison with their masters, or farmer-tenants in comparison with their landlords*<sup>143</sup>.

*We have been created, not to eat and drink, but to come to the knowledge of God. 'The just man,' Scripture says, 'eats and fills his soul; but the belly of the wicked is ever in want' (Prov. 13:25), ever hungry with a greed that cannot be quenched*<sup>144</sup>.

*Other men, indeed, live that they may eat, just like unreasoning beasts; for them life is only their belly (Cf. Phil. 3:19). But as for us, our Educator has given the command that we eat only to live. Eating is not our main occupation, nor is pleasure our chief ambition. Food is permitted us simply because of our stay in this world, which the Word is shaping for immortality by His education. Our food should be plain and ungarnished, in keeping with the truth, suitable to children who are plain and unpretentious, adapted to maintaining life, not selfindulgence*<sup>145</sup>.

b. Concerning **clothes**: *We should not seek for expensive clothes, either, any more than for elaborate dishes. In fact, the Lord Himself set Himself to give special counsel for the soul, for the body and for a third class, external things, all separately. He advises that external things were to be provided for the body, the body to be governed by the soul, and then instructs the soul: 'Be not solicitous for your life, what you shall eat nor for your body, what you shall put on. The life is more than the meat, and the body is more than the raiment*<sup>146</sup>.

<sup>143</sup> Paidagogos 2:1:5 (Fathers of Church, vol. 23).

<sup>144</sup> Paidagogos 2:1:14 (Fathers of Church, vol. 23).

<sup>145</sup> Paidagogos 2:1:1,2 (Frs. of Church). <sup>146</sup> Paidagogos 2:10:102 (Fathers of Church, vol. 23).



*I maintain that man needs clothing only for bodily covering, as a protection against excessive cold or intense heat, so that the inclemency of the weather may not harm him in any way. If that is the purpose of clothes, then one kind of garment surely should not be provided for men and another for women*<sup>147</sup> ...

*If someone should remind us of the full-length robe of the Lord, [we reply that] His multicolored tunic really represents the brilliance of wisdom, the manifold and unfading value of Scripture, words of the Lord that glow with rays of truth. For this reason, the Spirit clothed the Lord with another similar garment when it said in the psalm of David: 'I will put on praise and beauty, clothed with light as with a garment' (Ps. 103:1.) Therefore, we must avoid any irregularity in the type of garment we choose. We must also guard against all waywardness in our use of them. For instance, it is not right for a woman to wear her dress up over her knees, as the Laconian maidens are said to do, because a woman should not expose any part of her body*<sup>148</sup> .

*Dignity in dress comes not from adding to what is worn, but from eliminating all that is superfluous. The unnecessary luxuries that women wear, in fact, like tail-feathers, must be clipped off, because they give rise only to shifting vanity and senseless pleasure. Because of such vanity and pleasure, women become flighty and vain as peacocks, and even desert their husbands. Therefore, we should take care that the women are attired properly, and clothed abundantly in the modesty of self-restraint, so that they will not break away from the truth through vanity*<sup>149</sup> .

<sup>147</sup> Paidagogos 2:10:106 (Fathers of Church, vol. 23). <sup>148</sup> Paidagogos 2:10:113, 114 (Fathers of Church, vol. 23). <sup>149</sup> Paidagogos 3:11:57,58 (Frs. of Church).

*Let the clothes be in keeping with the person's age,  
with the individual himself, the place, his character, and  
occupation. The Apostle well advises us: 'Put on Christ  
Jesus, and as for the flesh, take no thought of its lusts'  
(Rom. 13:14)<sup>150</sup>.*

c. Concerning **perfumes and adornment with crowns of flowers:**

This matter includes a long and rambling section, which occupies rather more than an eighth of the whole second book of the *Paidagogos*, and makes one realize that this way of living, is an existential issue among the Christians of Alexandria. St. Clement begins with a direct pellucid assertion: “*There is no necessity for us to use garlands and perfumes.*”<sup>151</sup> The rest of the chapter works this out, starting, with a good deal of symbolism, allusion, and wordplay, from the sinner who poured the ointment over Jesus. Christmas symbolizes the Christ. Precious stones allude to the Logos, and gold, the symbol of royalty, to him in his changelessness. Christian men need only the odor of goodness, women the royal unctions of Christ. In the literal sense, unguents have their uses. In moderation they can please without overwhelming the senses; they can keep off insects; they have their use in athletics. To use flowers for garlands is to exploit them; the flower and its beauty wither. It is a fine passage for any concerned with defense of the environment. Symbolism breaks through again. The husband is the wife’s garland, marriage is the husband’s garland, children are for both the flowers of marriage, God is the gardener of the fields of the flesh, Christ is the garland of the church. The wreath symbolizes freedom from care; hence its use for the dead. Further, to make wreaths of flowers for our living is to mock the Savior’s crown of thorns<sup>152</sup>.

*Besides, it is inconsistent for us who celebrate the holy  
suffering of the Lord, who know that He was crowned*

150 *Paidagogos* 3:11:56 (*Frs. of Church*). 151 *Ibid.*, 2:8:61. 152 John Ferguson : *Clement of Alexandria*, Twayne Publishers, NY 1974, p. 84-5.

*with thorns, to crown ourselves with flowers. The crown the Lord wore is a figure of ourselves who were once barren, but now encircle Him as a garland through His Church, of which He is the head. That crown is also a type of our faith: it is a type of life, through the substance of wood; of joy, because it is a crown; of trial, because it is a crown of thorns, and no one can approach the Word without shedding blood. But the other crown, the one intertwined [with flowers], withers away; a wreath of wickedness, it falls apart and its flowers fade, just as the beauty of those who do not believe in the Lord withers away<sup>153</sup>.*

**d. Concerning adornment with precious stones and gems:**

*Tradition assures us that the heavenly Jerusalem that is above is built up of holy gems and we know that the twelve gates of the heavenly city, which signify the wonderful beauty of apostolic teaching, are compared to precious jewels. These priceless stones are described as possessing certain colors which are themselves precious, while the rest is left of an earthy substance. To say that the city of the saints is built of such jewels, even though it is a spiritual edifice, is a cogent symbol indeed. By the incomparable brilliance of the gems is understood the spotless and holy brilliance of the substance of the spirit<sup>154</sup>.*

**e. Concerning women's earrings:** *The ears of women should not be pierced, either, to enable them to suspend earrings and ear pendants from them. It is contrary to nature. It is wrong to do violence to nature in a way nature does not intend. Surely, there is no better ornament for the ears than learning the truth, nor is there any that enters the ears in as natural a way. Eyes anointed by the Word and ears pierced to hear are ready to*

<sup>153</sup> Paidagogos 2:8:73 (Fathers of Church, vol. 23).

<sup>154</sup> Paidagogos 2:11:119 (Fathers of Church, vol. 23).

*contemplate holy things and to hear divine things. It is only the Word who reveals true beauty which eye has never seen before, nor has ear heard*<sup>155</sup>.

. Concerning **the beauty of the body**:

. Lebreton says, "We find even here the moderation of the moralist: he allows women to adorn themselves to please their husbands, but they ought *"gradually to lead them to simplicity, by accustoming them little by little to greater moderation*"<sup>156</sup>.

*The Spirit gives witness through Isaiah that even the Lord became an unsightly spectacle: 'And we saw Him, and there was no beauty or comeliness in Him, but His form was despised, and abject among men' (Isa. 53:2 Septuagint). Yet, who is better than the Lord? He displayed not beauty of the flesh, which is only outward appearance, but the true beauty of body and soul: for the soul, the beauty of good deeds; for the body, that of immortality*<sup>157</sup>.

*It is not the appearance of the outer man that should be made beautiful, but his soul, with the ornament of true virtue. It should be possible, too, to speak of an ornament for his body, the ornament of self-control*<sup>158</sup>. But women, busy in making their appearances beautiful, allowing the interior to lie uncultivated, are in reality decorating themselves, without realizing it, like Egyptian temples. The entrances and vestibules of these temples are elaborately ornamented, the sacred groves and meadows are cultivated, the halls are adorned with huge columns, and the walls, each covered with some highly finished painting, glitter with rare jewels. The temples themselves are studded over with gold and silver and electrum, and sparkled with gems from India and Ethiopia which cover them, while the inner sanctuary is curtained

155 Paidagogos 2:12:127 (Fathers of Church, vol. 23).

156 Paidagogos 3:11:57, Lebreton, p. 905, n. 39. 157

Paidagogos 3:1:3 (Fathers of Church, vol. 23). 158

Paidagogos 3:2:4 (Fathers of Church, vol. 23).

*off by an overhanging gold-embroidered veil. But if, anxious to see the lord of such a temple, you pass beyond into the interior of the sacred precincts, seeking the god that dwells in the temple, a pastophore or some other hierophant will look sharply about the sacred shrine, chant a hymn in the Egyptian tongue, and then draw back a bit of the veil that you might see his god, but he reveals an object of veneration that is utterly absurd. There is no god within, whom we were so anxiously looking for; there is only a cat, or a crocodile, or a snake native to the land, or some other similar animal suited for life in a cave or den or in the mud, but certainly not in a temple. The god of the Egyptians, then, turns out to be only a beast curled up on a rich purple pillow. Women who are loaded down with gold seem to me much like that temple. They carefully curl their locks, paint their cheeks, stencil under their eyes, anxiously dye their hair, and practise perversely all the other senseless arts; true imitators of the Egyptians, they adorn the enclosure of the flesh to lure lovers who stand in superstitious dread of the goddess. But, if anyone draw back the veil of this temple, I mean the hairnet and the dye and the garments and gold and rouge and cosmetics<sup>159</sup> - or the cloth woven of all these things, which is a veil-- if he draws back this veil to discover the true beauty that is within, I am sure he will be disgusted. He will not find dwelling within any worthy image of God, but, instead, a harlot and adulteress who has usurped the inner sanctuary of the soul. The beauty within will turn out to be nothing more than a beast, 'an ape painted up with powder;<sup>160</sup>' as a deceitful serpent, it will devour man's intellect with love of ornaments and make the soul its den. Filling the whole soul with its deadly drug and vomiting out the poison of its deception, this*

159 The Scholion says this is a scarlet sea weed. 160 Adesp. 517, CAF 3:503; cf. Aristophanes. Eccles. 1072.

*serpent-seducer has transformed women into harlots (for gaudy vanity bespeaks not the woman, but the harlot) .*

*Such women have little care for managing household expenses for their husbands. Rather, they unloose the strings of their husbands' purses and waste their fortunes on their own desires, that they might win for themselves a host of admirers charmed by their cultivated appearances<sup>161</sup> .*

In his moderation, St. Clement advises women to take care of their beauty by practising works.

*Beauty is the natural flower of health; the latter works within the body, while the former manifests the state of the flourishing organism which is unfolding itself. Accordingly, the best and most healthy activities, by exercising the body, produce healthy and lasting beauty<sup>162</sup> .*

*Work gives true beauty to women, it exercises their bodies, and embellishes them naturally, not indeed with the vesture which comes from the labor of others, a vesture without charm and good for slaves and courtesans, but with the vesture which a good woman weaves for herself by the labor of her hands<sup>163</sup> .*

g. Concerning **sleeping** and the **softness of the bed**:

Practicing moderation needs a largely vegetarian diet, and early to bed without waiting for the others<sup>164</sup> .

*But we must specially keep the softness of the bed within limits, for sleep is meant to relax the body, not to debilitate it. For that reason, I say that sleep should be taken not as self-indulgence, but as rest from activity<sup>165</sup> .*

h. Concerning **laughing**:

<sup>161</sup> Paidagogos 3:2:4,5 (Fathers of Church, vol. 23).

<sup>162</sup> Paidagogos 3:11:64:3 - 65:1. <sup>163</sup> Paidagogos 3:11:67:1. <sup>164</sup> Paidagogos 2:7. <sup>165</sup> Paidagogos 2:9: 78 (Fathers of Church, vol. 23).

St. Clement wants his laughter under control; he is afraid of degeneration into obscenity; he doesn't mind mild pleasantries, and prefers the smile to the belly-laugh. In this section (Paidagogos 2:2) he quotes Homer more than the Bible. The overall result is to make us wonder how much we, who inevitably rely on written sources, really know about ancient humor<sup>166</sup>.

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## 16. POVERTY OF HEART

*Poverty of heart is the true wealth (Matt. 5:3), and the true nobility is not that founded on riches, but that which comes from a contempt for it<sup>167</sup>. It is disgraceful to boast about one's possessions; not to be concerned about them any longer very clearly proves the just man. Anyone who wishes can buy such things from the market; but wisdom is bought, not with any earthly coin, nor in any market, but is acquired in heaven, at a good price: the incorruptible Word, the gold of kings<sup>168</sup>.*

☒ ☒ ☒

## 17. AWAKENESS

*He who has the most respect for life and for reason will stay awake as long as he can, reserving only as much time for sleep as his health demands; much sleep is not required, if the habit of moderation be once rightly formed<sup>169</sup>.*

*The care of discipline begets a constant alertness in our labors. Therefore, food ought not to make us heavy but enliven us so that sleep will harm us as little as possible. Incidentally, how capable a winless meal is of lifting one*

166 John Ferguson: *Clement of Alexandria*, Twayne Publishers, NY 1974, p. 83. 167 A play on words: 'true nobility' he calls *megalo-phronein*, ('to think great things'), identifying it with *kata-phronein* ('to think down upon'). 168 *Paidagogos* 2:3:39 (*Fathers of Church*, vol. 23). 169 *Plato, Laws* 7:808BC.

*from the very depths to the peak of wakefulness ! Falling asleep, indeed, is like dying, because it renders our minds and our senses inactive, and, when we close our eyes, shuts out the light of day. So, let us who are the sons of the true light not shut out that light, but, turning within into ourselves casting light upon the vision of the inner man, let us contemplate truth itself, welcome its rays and discover with clarity and insight what is the truth of dreams<sup>170</sup> .*

*When we do manage to keep awake the greater part of the night, we should not allow ourselves, for any consideration, to take a nap during the day<sup>171</sup> .*

*It is not the soul that needs sleep ( for it is ever-active ); the body becomes relaxed when it takes its rest, and the soul ceases to operate in any bodily way, but continues to operate mentally in keeping with its nature...*

*The soul, then, ever keeping its thoughts on God and attributing those thoughts to the body by its constant association with it, makes man equal to the angels in their loveliness. So, from its practise of wakefulness, it obtains eternal life<sup>172</sup> .*



## **18. LOVE AND FEAR OF GOD**

The Gnostics, true members of the Church, accept the divine call of sanctity not in fear of punishment nor for enjoyment of earthly recompense but because they love goodness for itself as they become gods (in image of God).

*But he who obeys the mere call, as he is called, neither for fear, nor for enjoyments, is on his way to knowledge (gnosis)... It is possible for the Gnostic already*

<sup>170</sup> Paidagogos 2:9:80 (Fathers of Church, vol. 23).

<sup>171</sup> Paidagogos 2:9:81 (Fathers of Church, vol. 23).

<sup>172</sup> Paidagogos 2:9:82 (Fathers of Church, vol. 23).



*to have become god. "I said, you are gods, and sons of the highest" (Ps. 132:6)*<sup>173</sup>.

Faith is the outward acceptance of God out of fear and respect<sup>174</sup>, which leads us to His love. St. Clement claims that faith must be followed by fear and hope, which lead to love and finally to a "true gnosis"<sup>175</sup>.

The Christian's calling is to love the Creator in His creatures<sup>176</sup>. Love is the basic principal by which the Logos educates His children, unlike the education of the Old Dispensation which is based on fear. However, the Savior administers not only mild but also stringent medicines because God is at the same time good and just and as a successful tutor balances goodness with punishment. God's righteousness and love do not contradict each other. St. Clement refers here to the heretical doctrine of the Marcionites that the God of the Old Testament is not the same as that of the New. Fear is good if it protects against sin<sup>177</sup>:

*Such a fear, accordingly, leads to repentance and hope. Now hope is the expectation of good things, or an expectation sanguine of absent good; and favorable circumstances are assumed in order to good hope, which we have learned leads on to love*<sup>178</sup>.

*The bitter roots of fear arrest the eating sores of our sins. Wherefore also fear is salutary, if bitter. Sick, we truly stand in the need of the Savior; having wandered, of one to guide us; blind, of one to lead us to light; thirsty, of the fountain of life of which whosoever partakes shall no longer thirst (John 4,13-14); dead, we need life; sheep, we need a shepherd; we who are children need a tutor while*

173 Stromata 4:22,23. 174 Stromata 2:12; 5:1; 7:12; G. Florovsky: Byzantine Fathers of the Fifth Century, 1987, p. 82. 175 Justo L. Gonzalez: A History of Christian Faith, vol. 1, 1979, p. 208. 176 Stromata 6:71,5. 177 Quasten: Patrology, vol. 2, p. 10. 178 Stromata 2:9 ANF.

*universal humanity stands in need of Jesus... You may learn if you will the crowning wisdom of the all-holy Shepherd and Tutor, of the omnipotent and paternal Word, when He figuratively represents Himself as the Shepherd of the sheep. And He is the Tutor of the children. He says therefore by Ezechiel directing His discourse to the elders and setting before them a salutary description of His wise solicitude: "And that which is lame I will bind up, and that which is sick I will heal, and that which has wandered I will turn back; and I will feed them on my holy mountain" (Ez. 34,14,16). Such are the promises of the good Shepherd. Feed us, the children, as sheep. Yea, Master, fill us with righteousness. Your own pasture; yea, O Tutor, feed us on Your holy mountain the Church, which towers aloft, which is above the clouds, which touches heaven*<sup>179</sup>.

*Notice how the justice of the Educator is manifest in His chastisements and the goodness of God in His mercies. That is why David, or rather, the Spirit through him, includes both when he says, in the psalm, of the same God: 'Justice and judgment are the preparation of Your throne. Mercy and truth shall go before Your face' (Ps. 88:15)*<sup>180</sup>.

In another place St. Clement mentions the fear and love as essential in our spiritual progress.

Righteous conduct also is twofold: *that which is done for love, and that which is done through fear. For indeed, it is said, "The fear of the Lord is pure, remaining forever and ever" (Ps. 18 [19]:10). Those who, because of fear, turn to faith and righteousness, remain forever. Fear does, in fact, motivate to abstaining from*

<sup>179</sup> Paid. 1,9,83,2-84,3 ANF. <sup>180</sup> Paidagogos 1:9:87 (Fathers of Church, vol. 23).

evil; but love, building up to free action, exhorts to the doing of good<sup>181</sup>.

*The material He educates us in is fear of God, for this fear instructs us in the service of God, educates to the knowledge of truth, and guides by a path leading straight up to heaven<sup>182</sup>.*

**How can we gain true love?** The answer is: By receiving the Logos Himself, the divine flame of love!

*The heavenly and true love comes to men thus, when in the soul itself the spark of true goodness, kindled in the soul by the Divine Word, is able to burst forth into flame; and what is of the highest importance, salvation runs parallel with sincere willingness - choice and life being, so to speak, yoked together<sup>183</sup>.*



## 19. ABORTION

*But women who resort to some sort of deadly abortion drug kill not only the embryo but, along with it, all human kindness<sup>184</sup>.*



## 20. SINS AND PUNANCE

According to St. Clement, the sin of Adam was his refusal to be educated by God and has been inherited by all human beings not through procreation but through the bad example given by the first man<sup>185</sup>. Clement is convinced that only a personal act can stain the soul. He agrees with Hermas that there should be only one

181 Stromata 7:12:78:7; 7:12:79:1. (Jurgens). 182 Paidagogos 1:7:53 (Frs. of Church). 183 Paidagogos 11. ANF, p. 204. 184 Paidagogos 2:10:96 (Fathers of Church, vol. 23). 185 Esmat Gabriel: St. Clement of Alexandria, Coptic Church Review, Spring 1980, v.1, No. 1, p. 25; Quasten, p. 31.. 186 Stromata 3:16.

penance in the life of a Christian, that preceding baptism, but that God, out of mercy for human weakness, has granted a second, which can be obtained only once. He distinguishes between voluntary and involuntary sins which can be forgiven. Those who commit voluntary sins after baptism must fear the judgment of God. A complete break with God after baptism cannot be forgiven. However, in reality St. Clement does not exclude any sin for its greatness from the second repentance.

He who has received the forgiveness of sins ought to sin no more. For in addition to the first and only repentance from sins (that is from the previous sins in the first and heathen life - I mean that in ignorance), there is forth-with proposed to those who have been called, the repentance which cleanses the seat of the soul from transgressions, that faith may be established. And the Lord, knowing the heart, and foreknowing the future, foresaw both the fickleness of man and the craft and subtlety of the devil from the first, from the beginning; how that, envying man for the forgiveness of sins, he would present to the servants of God certain causes of sins, skillfully working mischief, that they might all together align with himself. Accordingly, being very merciful, He has vouchsafed, in the case of those who, though in faith, fall into any transgression, a second repentance, so that should any one be tempted after his calling, overcome by force and fraud, he may receive still a repentance not to be repented of. 'For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remains no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking-for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries' (Hebr. 10,26-27). But continual and successive repentings for sins differ nothing from the case of those who have not believed at all, except only in their consciousness that they do sin. And I know not which of the two is worst, whether the case

of a man who sins knowingly, or of one who, after having repented of his sins, transgresses again<sup>187</sup>.

*He then who from among the Gentiles and from that old life has betaken himself to faith, has obtained forgiveness of sins once. But he who has sinned after this, on his repentance, though he obtains pardon, ought to fear, as one no longer washed to the forgiveness of sins. For not only must he abandon the idols which he formerly held as gods, but the works also of his former life must be abandoned by him who has been 'born again, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh' (John I:13) but in the Spirit; which consists in repenting by not giving way to the same fault. For frequent repentance and readiness to change easily from want of training, is the practice of sin again. The frequent asking of forgiveness then for those things in which we often transgress is the semblance of repentance, not repentance itself<sup>188</sup>.*

St. Clement distinguishes in these passages between voluntary and involuntary sins. He is of the opinion that of sins committed after baptism only those that are involuntary sins can be forgiven. Those who commit voluntary sins after baptism must fear the judgment of God.

## **21. THE HOLY KISS**

*If we have been called to the kingdom of God, let us live worthy of that kingdom by loving God and our neighbor. Love is judged not by a kiss, but by good will. There are some who make the assembly resound with nothing but their kisses while there is no love in their hearts. We should realize that the unrestrained use of the kiss has brought it under grave suspicion and slander. It should be thought of in a mystical sense (the Apostle speaks*

<sup>187</sup> Stromata 2:13:56-57 ANF.

<sup>188</sup> Stromata 2:13:58-9 ANF.

*of it as holy [Cf. Rom 16:16; 1 Cor. 16 :20) . Let us, instead, taste the kingdom with a mouth that is chaste and self-controlled, and practise good will in heart, for this is the way a chaste character is developed. There is another kiss that is unholy and full of poison, under the guise of holiness. Do you not realize that just as a poisonous spider touches a man only with its mouth, yet inflicts pain, so the kiss often injects the poison of lust? It is clear to us that the kiss is not charity, 'for charity is of God' (1 John 4:7)<sup>189</sup> .*



## 22. RICHES

*Therefore, it is not he who possesses and retains his wealth who is wealthy, but he who gives; it is giving, not receiving that reveals the happy man. Generosity is a product of the soul; so, true wealth is in the soul<sup>190</sup> .*

*Generally speaking, riches that are not under complete control are the citadel of evil. If the ordinary people look on them covetously, they will never enter the kingdom of heaven, because they are letting themselves become contaminated by the things of this world and are living above themselves in self-indulgence<sup>191</sup> .*

*Holiness and that kind of reason which is more precious than any treasure are the true wealth, and are not increased by cattle or lands but are given by God. It cannot be taken away ( for the soul alone is the treasure of such a man), and is a possession that is supreme for him who owns it, making him blessed in possessing the truth<sup>192</sup> .*



<sup>189</sup> Paidagogos 3:12:81,82 (Frs. of Church). <sup>190</sup>

Paidagogos 3:6:35 (Frs. of Church). <sup>191</sup>

Paidagogos 2:3:38 (Fathers of Church, vol. 23). <sup>192</sup>

Paidagogos 3:6:36 (Frs. of Church).

## 23. THE DIVINE PROVIDENCE AND EVIL

The Alexandrian Fathers in their controversy with the heretical Gnostics dealt with Divine Providence and its relation to evil. They had to answer the following question:

1. Are materials, bodies, birth, marriage, the world etc. evil things ?
2. How do we explain the temptations to which Christians are exposed and the triumph of unrighteousness in persecuting them?
3. How do we explain the existence of evil in a world governed by Divine Providence ?

### I. THE WORLD AND EVIL

The Gnostics regarded the world as intrinsically evil, but the Alexandrian Fathers, especially St. Clement considered the world a divine gift to man, governed by the providence of God. It is the best of all possible worlds. God loves everything He created and hates nothing. Truly it is just a bridge for man to pass over into eternity and enjoy heavenly glories, but it is formed by the gracious God who creates no evil.

Floyd says: [Like the Gnostics, Clement conceded a gap between the Supreme Being and the visible world, but unlike them he saw it bridged by God Himself instead of by intermediary beings or demons. By the incarnation, on one hand, God entered the world as a human being, and on the other hand, by His example, passion, and death, He "pointed the path" towards unity with Him through grace. According to the Gnostics there is no solution at all for the relation between God and the world<sup>193</sup>.

*This is the highest excellence which orders all things in accordance with the Father's will and holds the helm of the universe in the best way, with unwearied and*

<sup>193</sup> W.E.G. Floyd: *Clement of Alexandria's treatment of the problem of evil*, Oxford 1971, p.74.

*tireless power, working all things in which it operates,  
keeping in view its hidden designs<sup>194</sup> .*

## **II. MATTER AND EVIL**

St. Clement of Alexandria opposes the Marconites who said that matter is evil; on the contrary, he declares that it is under the control of God; everything created by the Good God is good, even riches...

Wealth is like a tool which may be used skillfully or the reverse; it may be a servant of righteousness or unrighteousness. The words of Christ to the rich young man in Mark 10:17-31 are not to be understood in a carnal sense, but we must seek to penetrate their innermost meaning.

*It is not the outward act, but something else indicated by it, greater, more godlike, more perfect, the stripping off of the passions from the soul itself and from the disposition, and the cutting up by the roots and casting out of what is alien to the mind... Riches which also benefit our neighbors, are not to be thrown away... If you use (wealth) skillfully, it is skillful; if you are deficient in skill, it is affected by your want of skill, being itself destitute of blame, such an instrument is wealth. Are you able to make the right use of it ? It is subservient to righteousness. Does one make a wrong use of it ? It is, then, a minister of wrong. For its nature is to be subservient not to rule. That then, which of itself has neither good nor evil, being blameless, ought not to be blamed; but that which has the power of using it well or ill, by reason of its possessing voluntary choice. And this is the mind and judgment of man which has freedom in himself and self-determination in the treatment of what is assigned to it.*



*So, let no man destroy wealth, rather the passions of the soul, which are incompatible with the better use of wealth. So that, becoming virtuous and good, he may be able to make good use of these riches<sup>195</sup>.*

### III. MAN'S BODY AND EVIL

Marcion considered the body of man, being formed of matter, as evil by nature; it is an enemy of the soul. Plato looked upon it as the grave of the soul. On the contrary, the Alexandrian Fathers-perhaps except Origen - had a sanctified view of the body, for the following reasons:

. It is created by God, who is Good, and created no evil. He hates nothing, even the body, but loves all which He created<sup>196</sup>.

. The body is the instrument, the seat and the possession of the soul<sup>197</sup>.

. As a dwelling-place of the soul, it shares with her the sanctification wrought by the Holy Spirit<sup>198</sup>, and man as a whole - body and soul - will be glorified in the world to come.

. The harmony of the body contributes to the goodly disposition of the soul and of the mind<sup>199</sup>.

. The Word of God assumed our humanity in its true meaning and received a real body to declare the sanctification of our bodies. He became Man that He might speak with the mouth of a man<sup>200</sup>. He did not despise our body which He took for Himself, assumed it to Himself as a proof of the essential worth of mankind (the whole human nature), matter and the world.

*Those, then, who look upon created matter and vilify the body are wrong; not considering that the frame of man was formed erect for the contemplation of heaven, and that the organization of the senses tends to knowledge; and*

<sup>195</sup> *Quis Dives Salvetur* 12,14.

<sup>196</sup> *Strom.* 3:3:16. <sup>197</sup> *Paed.*

1:8. <sup>198</sup> *Strom.* 4:26:163. <sup>199</sup>

*Ibid.* 4:4:18. <sup>200</sup> *Ibid.*

7:11:112.

*that the members and parts are arranged for good, not for pleasure. This abode becomes receptive of the soul which is most precious to God; and is dignified with the Holy Spirit through the sanctification of soul and body, perfected with the perfection of the Savior. And the succession of the three virtues is found in the Gnostic (a believer who has spiritual gnosis or knowledge), who morally, physically and logically occupies himself with God...<sup>201</sup> The soul is not good by nature, nor on the other hand, is the body bad by nature... God improves all things to the good, but the soul which has chosen the best life, the life that is from God and righteousness - changes earth to heaven. The harmonious mechanism of the body contributes to understanding, which leads to goodness of nature... He who in the body has devoted himself to a good life, is being sent on to the state of immortality<sup>202</sup>.*

#### IV AFFLICTION AND 20

**EVIL**<sup>3</sup>  
According to the *Gnostics*, the problem of evil was insoluble. There was no explanation for the existence of evil in the world and afflictions which the believers suffer unjustly by persecutors in a world governed by the Almighty and Good God, where nothing takes place without His Good will. St. Clement of Alexandria and other Alexandrian Fathers offer the solution, in the following points:

a. The existence of evil does not contradict the divine providence or the goodness of God, for through this providence man attains free will, one of the best divine gifts. Therefore God does not prevent evil, but he does not cause it. The responsibility lies with him who makes a choice; God is not responsible<sup>204</sup>.

201 Ibid. 4:26. 202 Ibid. 4:4. 203 See W.E.G. Floyd: *Clement of Alexandria... E.F. Osborn: The Philosophy of Clement of Alexandria, Cambridge 1957, Chs 6-8. 204 Stromata 8:9:27, 28.*

Osborn says:

Clement states the problem and gives his answer. God did not will that our Lord and the martyrs should suffer. Yet nothing ever happens which is not God's will. "The only possible solution left, expressed concisely, is that such things happen without the prevention of God. Only this preserves the providence and the goodness of God. We must not think that God actively causes our affliction. That is quite unthinkable; but we should be of the conviction that He does not prevent those who cause them<sup>205</sup>. A distinction is here made between what God causes and what happens without God's prevention. It would be inconsistent with God's providence and goodness for Him to cause evil. But it is not inconsistent with the providence and goodness of God for evil things to happen without his prevention. Good things are caused by God. Evil things happen without his prevention... Therefore what prevents is a cause, while what does not prevent judges the soul's choice justly; so that God is never in any way responsible for the evil in our lives<sup>206</sup>. The causes of sins are choice and desire<sup>207</sup>. Not that any one voluntarily chooses evil, but, pleasure deludes one into thinking that something bad is good and desirable. It is in our own power to avoid ignorance. The choice of what is base and pleasant and the deceptions of the devil.

Despite the activity of the devil, God orders all things from above for good. Nothing can oppose God, nothing can stand against Him, for He is the Almighty Lord. The thoughts and deeds of the rebellious are partial and spring from a bad disposition. Though they originate in

205 Ibid. 4:86; 2:286:11. 206 Ibid. 1:84; 11:54. 207  
*Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta, Von Arim, 3:236.*

a diseased condition the universal providence steers them to  
a healthy conclusion...<sup>208</sup>

A modern thinker has said, "Without freedom to choose evil, or the lower good, a man might be a well-behaved puppet or a sentient automaton, but not a moral agent. But the best possible world implies the existence of moral agents; its crown cannot be the puppet or the automaton<sup>209 210</sup> .

b. God does not prevent those who cause afflictions, for He bestows upon men free will, but He transforms their evil choice into good. He did not prevent the folly of the Cross, but brought good out of it<sup>211</sup> .

Osborn says: God does not prevent his adversaries from doing evil but "He uses up for good the wrongs which his adversaries have dared against Him". Clement quotes Isaiah 5:5: "I shall destroy the wall and it shall become a trampling-ground". This verse refers to the vineyard which produced brambles instead of grapes. God did not destroy it but removed the wall which had protected it. Animals were no longer prevented from trampling the vines under foot. Their trampling, though an act of aggression and destruction, was to have beneficial results. The brambles would be destroyed and the vineyard would be cleared of its wrong contents. God uses the crimes of the enemies of his vineyard for the benefit of the vineyard. For providence, as Clement goes on to say, is a form of correction, which benefits those who experience it. There are other ways in which God turns evil into good. Philosophy is the result of a crime, wisdom was stolen from God, but God turned theft to good account.

208 *Stromata* 1:86; 2:55:19. 209 *Temmant: Philosophical Theology*, Cambridge 1925-30, vol. 2, p. 188. 210 *E.F. Osborn*, p. 71-3. 211 *Strom.* 4:12:87.

*It is the chief work of divine providence not to allow the evil which results from willful revolt to remain useless and unprofitable and to become altogether harmful. For it is the function of the Divine wisdom and virtue and power not only to do good (for this is the nature of God, so to speak, as that of fire is to heat and that to light is to give light), but also and above all to a good and useful end what has happened through the evils contrived by any, and to use to good account things which appear to be bad, as is the testimony which proceeds from temptation<sup>212</sup>.*



## 24. THE GOODNESS OF THE WORLD

Henry Chadwick says, On the question of the creation Clement firmly rejects the idea that the world is eternal or that it is created in time<sup>213</sup>. He does not deny the existence of a qualityless matter as raw material and (like Philo and Justin) speaks with an ambiguous voice on creation *ex nihilo*... It is enough to say that nothing exists in being which is not caused by God, and that there is no part of His creation which falls outside His care<sup>214</sup>. Once he declares that 'God was God before becoming Creator,' i.e. that the world is not necessary to God<sup>215</sup>.

St. Clement of Alexandria believed that God created everything good, therefore He loved everything and hated nothing. By grace we also have God's view of everything, to find that everything in the world is good and beautiful. Evil and sin are strange to the world that God created, therefore we can truly have the same feelings of St. Clement that our world is the most beautiful world that can ever exist<sup>216</sup>.

212 Strom. 1:86, 2:55:22. 213 Stromata 6:142; 145. 214 Paidagogos 1:62. 215 Henry Chadwick: *History and Thought of the Early Church*, London, 1982, p. 172. 216 See our book: *God's Providence*, Ottawa 1987, section 7.

We praise God for creating the world for our sake, but we must not be enslaved to the love of the world.

*Divine Scripture, addressing itself to those who love themselves and to the boastful, somewhere says most excellently: "Where are the princes of the nations, and those who rule over the beasts which are upon the earth; they that take their diversion among the birds of the air; they that hoard up silver, and the gold in which men trust -and there is no end to their acquiring it; they that work in silver and in gold and are solicitous? There is no searching of their works; they have vanished and have gone down into Hades<sup>217</sup> <sup>218</sup>".*



## 25. WEALTH

The pagan author Celsus accuses Christians of being credulous and illiterate and gives the impression that they all come from the lowest stratum of society: they are woolworkers, shoemakers, washer-women, he says, who succeed in attracting to their absurd beliefs only those who are equally ignorant and lowborn<sup>219</sup>. It was towards the end of the second century that St. Clement of Alexandria produced his "*Who is the Rich Man that shall be Saved?*" perhaps at the behest of a rather large number of wealthy Alexandrian Christians who were worrying that they would have to divest themselves of their material goods in order to be saved<sup>220</sup>. We have already seen St. Clement's view of wealth, when dealing with this work.



## 26. MUSIC

<sup>217</sup> Baruch 3:16-19. While our chief interest in this passage is in Clement's use of the term Divine Scripture, - h Jeia - - - grajh, - we include his full citation, since it is from a seldom-quoted and deuterocanonical book. <sup>218</sup> Paidagogos 2:3:36:3; Jurgens: *The Faith of the Early Fathers*, vo. 1. <sup>219</sup> Origen: *Against Celsus*, 3:44and 55. <sup>220</sup> Boniface Ramsey: *Beginning to read the Fathers*, p. 182.

Early Christian attitudes toward music were at first ambivalent. St. Clement of Alexandria was opposed to the use of instruments, though St. Basil of Caesarea believed music had an educational value, "that through the softness of the sound we might unaware receive what is useful in the words." Jerome speaks of the office of a cantor who was to lead in song<sup>221</sup>.

*The Spirit, to purify the divine liturgy from any such unrestrained revelry, chants: 'Praise Him with sound of trumpet' (Ps. 150:3-6), for, in fact, at the sound of the trumpet the dead will rise again; 'praise Him with harp,' for the tongue is a harp of the Lord; 'and with the lute, praise Him,' understanding the mouth as a lute moved by the Spirit as the lute is by the plectrum; 'praise Him with timbal and choir,' that is, the Church awaiting the resurrection of the body in the flesh which is its echo; 'praise Him with strings and organ,' calling our bodies an organ and its sinews strings, for from them the body derives its co-ordinated movement, and when touched by the Spirit, gives forth human sounds; 'praise Him on highsounding<sup>222</sup> cymbals,' which mean the tongue of the mouth, which, with the movement of the lips, produces words. Then, to all mankind He calls out: 'Let every spirit praise the Lord,' because He rules over every spirit He has made. In reality, man is an instrument made for peace, but these other things, if anyone concerns himself overmuch with them, become instruments of conflict, for they either enkindle desires or inflame the passions<sup>223</sup>.*

*But as for us, we make use of one instrument alone: only the Word of peace, by whom we pay homage to God, no longer with ancient harp or trumpet or drum or flute which those trained for war employ. They give little*

221 Carl A. Volz: *Life and Practice in the Early Church*, Minneapolis, 1990, p. 73. 222 The Scholion says: 'This word (alalagmou) means a shout of victory. To those who have conquered sensual uncleanness, a shout of victory is very appropriately assigned.' 223 *Paidagogos* 2:3:41, 42 (*Fathers of Church*, vol. 23).

*thought to fear of God in their festive dances, but seek to  
arouse their failing courage by such rhythmic measures<sup>224</sup>.*

*Imitate the holy Hebrew king in his thanksgiving to God:  
'Rejoice in the Lord, O you just; praise becomes the upright,  
"as the inspired psalm says: "Give praise to the Lord on the  
harp, sing to Him with the lyre" - an instrument with ten  
strings - "Sing to Him a new canticle" (Ps. 32:1-3). There  
can be little doubt that the lyre with its ten strings is a figure  
of Jesus the Word, for that is the significance of the number  
ten<sup>225 226</sup>.*



## **27. CONDEMNING OTHERS**

*You, however, shall not judge who is worthy and who is  
unworthy. For it is possible that you might err in your  
opinion. When in doubt and ignorance it is better to do good  
to the unworthy for the sake of the worthy, than to guard  
against the less good and thereby fail to fall in with the  
sincere. For by being too cautious, and by aiming to test who  
you will or will not find worthy to be received, it is possible  
for you to neglect some that are dear to God; and for this the  
penalty is punishment in eternal fire<sup>227</sup>.*

## **28. THE PASCHA (THE FEAST OF THE EASTER)**

*In his work "Stromata" he wrote, Wherefore the tithes, both of the  
ephah and of the sacrifices, were presented to God; and with the  
tenth day*

<sup>224</sup> Paidagogos 2:3:42 (Fathers of Church, vol. 23). <sup>225</sup>

*The Greek 'i' (iota) of Iesus represents the numeral ten.*

<sup>226</sup> Paidagogos 2:3:43 (Fathers of Church, vol. 23). <sup>227</sup>

*Who is the Rich Man that is saved? 23:2,3 (Jurgens).*



*began the paschal feast, the transition (diabasis) from all trouble and from all objects of sense<sup>228</sup>.*

This is the first instance of a Christian writer interpreting the Pascha as *humanity's* passing over<sup>229</sup>.



## 29. THE ESCHATOLOGICAL HOPE

For St. Clement, the *Gnostic* has the experience of heaven, even while he is in this world. He is waiting for the eternal life to partake of Christ's inheritance. He attains the pledge of the above Jerusalem in his inner man.

*I shall pray the Spirit of Christ to wing me to my Jerusalem<sup>230</sup>.*

*Such, according to David, "rest in the holy hill of God," in the church far on high, in which are gathered the philosophers of God, "who are Israelites indeed, who are pure in heart, in whom there is no guile;" who do not remain in the seventh seat, the place of rest, but are promoted, through the active beneficence of divine likeness, to the heritage of beneficence which is the eighth grade; devoting themselves to the pure vision of insatiable contemplation<sup>231</sup>.*

St. Clement believes that there will be different degrees in heaven.

*Conformably, therefore, there are various abodes, according to the worth of those who have believed. To the point Solomon says, "For there shall be given to him the choice grace of faith, and a more pleasant lot in the temple of the Lord." For the comparative shows that there are*

228 *Stromata* 2:11:51:2. 229 Raniero Cantalamessa: *Easter in the Early Church, The Liturgical Press, Minnesota, 1993, p.*

149. 230 *Stromata* 4:26. 231 *Stromata* 6:14.

*lower parts in the temple of God, which is the whole church. And the superlative remains to be conceived, where the Lord is. These chosen abodes, which are three, are indicated by the numbers in the Gospel the thirty, the sixty, the hundred. And the perfect inheritance belongs to those who attain to "a perfect man," according to the image of the Lord.*



### 30. TRUE AND FALSE BEAUTY

St. Clement deals with “Beauty” in his *Protrepticus* 4, and *Paidagogos* 3:1. The artists do their efforts to make beautiful statues for worshipping them, but beauty is realized through purity, chastity, inner freedom and dominion, and attaining the likeness of God. Also men and women want to be beautiful by wearing gold and precious stones, but it is the likeness to God, especially in practising love, that makes them thus. The dwelling of the Logos in man’s heart makes him beautiful.

*Beauty becomes ugly when it is consumed by outrage. Mortal, do not play the tyrant over beauty. Do not commit outrage against the bloom of youth... If you want beauty to be beautiful, **keep it pure**. Be a **king** over beauty, not its tyrant. Let it remain free. When you have kept its likeness pure, then and only then will I acknowledge your beauty. When beauty is the true archetype of all that is beauty, then and only then will I accord it worship<sup>232</sup>. If one knows himself, he will know God; and knowing God, **he will be made like God**, not by wearing gold or long robes, but by well-doing, and by requiring as few things as possible... That man with whom the Logos dwells does not alter himself, does not get himself up: **He has the form of***

<sup>232</sup> *Protrepticus* 4.

*the Logos*

*; he is made like to God; he is beautiful; he does not  
ornament himself; his is beauty, the true beauty...* 23

Our Savior, the Logos, is the source of the true beauty of  
our bodies and souls, for He grants us immortality. 3

But it is not the beauty of the flesh visible to the eye, but the  
true beauty of both soul and body, which He exhibited, which  
in the former is beneficence; in the latter -that is, the flesh -  
immortality<sup>234</sup> .



## 31. YMNS

F. Forrester Church and Terrence J. Mulry published the  
following Hymns written by St. Clement of Alexandria<sup>235</sup>:

*Bridle of colts untamed, Over our wills  
presiding; Wing of unwandering birds,  
Our flight securely guiding. Rudder of  
youth unbending, Firm against adverse  
shock; Shepherd, with wisdom tending  
Lambs of royal flock: Your simple  
children bring In one, that they may sing  
In solemn lays Theirs hymns of praise  
With guileless lips to Christ their King.  
King of saints, almighty Word Of the  
Father highest Lord; Wisdom's head and  
chief; Assuagement of all grief;*

233 Paidagogos 3:1. 234 Ibid. 235 F. Forrester Church and Terrence J. Mulry: *Earliest Christian Hymns*, Macmillan Publishing Co., New York, 1988, p. 83-5.

*Lord of all time and space,  
Jesus, Savior of our race;  
Shepherd, who does us keep;  
Husbandman, who tillest, We,  
the people of his love, Let us  
sing, nor ever cease, To the  
God of peace above.*

*Let us receive the light and we will receive God! Let  
us receive the light and become disciples of the  
Lord! For he promised the Father: "I will reveal  
your name to my brothers. In the midst of the  
congregation I will sing to you."*

*Sing, O Word, His praises and reveal God, your  
Father, to me! Your words will save me and your  
song will teach me. Until now I was going astray  
in search of God. But ever since you enlightened  
me, Lord, you have taught me to find him who is  
my God as well, and I receive your own Father  
from you. I became his heir with you, for you  
have not been ashamed of your brother.*