

CLEMENT OF
ALEXANDRIA

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CHAPTER I

Life and works

LIFE AND THOUGHT

Clement was a traveller, always moving on. He invites Greeks to desert to God's side and to enjoy the danger of change (prot 10.93.2). In his quest for knowledge, he left home and travelled to teachers around the eastern Mediterranean, moving from Italy to Egypt.

Of these [teachers], one, an Ionian, lived in Greece, two others who came from Coele-Syria and Egypt respectively were in Magna Graecia. Others were in the east – one was from Assyria, and the other a Hebrew from Palestine. I found the last of them where he was hiding in Egypt. Here I came to rest. He was a real Sicilian bee who drew from the flowers of the apostolic and prophetic meadow and who engendered a purity of knowledge in the soul of his hearers.

(I.I.II)

He remained in Alexandria until in 202 persecution drove him to Palestine, where he died.¹ His early travels had been tied to intellectual exploration. While in Alexandria, his intellectual voyages did not cease. He explored the bible, philosophy and literature, often preserving fragments of philosophers who would otherwise be lost today, and quoting classical writers with affection and sensitivity. He was now driven by evangelical zeal: to explain the gospel, he became all things to all men.

In spiritual matters he called for exploration and movement: he exhorted Greeks to turn to Christ, to follow Christian morals in every detail of behaviour and finally to become wise in the mysteries of Christ. Practical problems drew attention and analysis from his inquiring mind. Despite his criticism of Gnostic² theosophy, he followed the flight of Theodotus, exploring new questions and problems. The Christian should

¹ Two letters of Alexander, bishop of Jerusalem (Eusebius H.E. 6.11.6 and 6.14.9), point to his death between 211 and 215.

² In this book heretical 'Gnostics' are distinguished from Clement's 'gnostic' by a capital letter.

never abandon his simple faith, but he should always be moving on in his journey towards wisdom and the likeness of God.

Clement has been seen variously by interpreters. One extolled him as a Christian liberal, while another explored his rich store of citations. Many have struggled with his literary form. One was drawn to the richness of his call to piety and perfection. Another discerned a logical pattern, which permeated his thought. More recently, one writer has shown the depth of his penetration of Plato and another his understanding of true philosophy.³

Clement, more than any other early Christian writer, knew and enjoyed Greek philosophy and literature. Saturated with study of this culture, he belonged to Alexandria, a city which was ruled by it. Clement displayed that heritage as clearly as Tertullian displayed the Roman heritage of Carthage.

Alexandria was a cosmopolitan city including Greeks, Jews, Egyptians, other native Africans and Romans. Its place in trade was dominant. It also had a long literary tradition and a special Platonic tradition which Eudorus represented. Its libraries were central in its learning. Clement quotes more than 300 different literary sources for more than a thousand references to other writers. Jewish-Hellenistic works were available to Clement. Philo was a major influence, and minor influences came from Demetrius, Aristobulus, the Sibylline oracles and others. The story of the Alexandrian origin of the Septuagint emerges in a second-century tradition which is found in Clement and Tertullian, Justin, Irenaeus and elsewhere.

Clement exhorted pagans to turn to Christ with kerygmatic fervour. His language was tied closely to the text of scripture which was ever in need of transposition from vision to metaphysic. Logic helped to elucidate scripture and to defend its truth.

His achievement began from a grasp of divine love as the core of the Christian gospel. God is not God unless he be both father and son, for the divine being is the love which joins father and son. God is love and the revealed mystery of this love is the gospel. Clement's faith in one God is expressed in both philosophical and biblical terms. God is one because he is one and nothing but one (a simple unity like a pinpoint), and

3 R. B. Tollinton, *Clement of Alexandria: a study in Christian Liberalism*, 2 vols. (London, 1914); S. R. C. Lilla, *Clement of Alexandria: a study of Christian Platonism and Gnosticism* (Oxford, 1971); A. Méhat, *Etude sur les 'Stromates' de Clément d'Alexandrie* (Paris, 1966); W. Völker, *Der wahre Gnostiker nach Clemens Alexandrinus* (Berlin, 1952); E. F. Osborn, *The philosophy of Clement of Alexandria* (Cambridge, 1957); D. Wyrwa, *Die christliche Platonaneignung in den Stromateis des Clemens von Alexandrien* (Berlin, 1983); U. Schneider, *Theologie als christliche Philosophie* (Berlin, 1999).

because he is one and universal (a complex unity like a spider's web). From this scheme he explained the duality which he found in the Johannine account of God, who is father and son, God and word.

Clement used the relation between simple and complex unity, between father and son, claiming that in philosophy as in the bible they could not be held apart. The reciprocity, which joined them, is central to his thought. He speaks (paed 1.5.24.3) of the great God who is the perfect child, of the son in father who is father in son. He quotes Is. 9:5,6 where the holy spirit tells him of the great God who is perfect child in newness and perfection. Elsewhere, he speaks of the undefiled God, who has taken the form of man, who is the servant of the father's will, who is both word and God, who is in the father and at the right hand of the father and who has the form of God as he has the form of man (paed 1.2.4.1).

We shall see how Clement follows the Platonic logic of simple and complex unity (*Parmenides* 137c–142).⁴ God is the first and oldest first principle and the cause of all things. Nothing can be predicated of him, for he is neither a whole nor a collection of parts. He has no limit, form or name, so all the names we give him are improper. We choose the best names to support our understanding and to indicate the power of God. He cannot be proved because there is nothing prior to him and he is known only by the grace and the word which proceed from him (5.12.81f). Yet the same God, as divine logos, is the creator and sustainer of all things.

QUESTIONS: MOBILITY, RECIPROCITY AND SALVATION BY FAITH

Mobility and reciprocity mark the Johannine God. The word is God and with God; he becomes flesh and as son reveals the unique glory of the father. From within the bosom of the father he declares the father. God in love to the world sends his son to die, an act of barbaric immorality unless father and son be in some way identical. Mobility is linked with work, which is constant for father and son. 'My father is still working and I must work' (Jn 5:17). The father sends the son to do the father's work (Jn 5:36f). The final prayer (Jn 17) declares the completion of God's work, which will now go on until all believers share God's life and glory.

Such a movement marks the universality and vitality of God for John and Clement. Clement echoes some words recorded by Plato, which identified the original gods of the Greeks and barbarians with the sun,

⁴ See C. Meinwald, 'Goodbye to the Third Man', in *The Cambridge Companion to Plato*, ed. R. Kraut (Cambridge, 1992), 365–96.

moon, earth, stars and sky. 'Seeing that they were always moving and running, from their running nature they were called gods or runners (*theous, theontas*) and when men became acquainted with other gods they proceeded to apply the same name to them' (Crat. 397d). Clement writes that God is unchangeably one, as he emits the perpetual flow of good things (4.23.151.3). Others had been deceived into deifying the stars and calling them gods because of their motion (prot 2.26.1).

Three problems faced Clement in the exposition of such a God:

1. The kerygma proclaimed a rational plan of divine movement declared in scripture and fulfilled in Christ. Can this plan present coherent answers to questions about God, humanity, right and wrong? How do we move from narrative and oracle to metaphysic?
2. The Gospels proclaimed one God. How can father and son be one God?
3. Paul offered salvation by faith. How can faith be the one way to truth, and what is the salvation which redeems and preserves mankind? How is faith related to knowledge?

Clement's response consists of three major concepts: divine plan/economy, reciprocity and salvation by faith.

Everything is ordered by '*the goodness of the only, one, true, almighty God, from age to age saving by the son*' (7.2.12). *Faith is the one universal salvation of mankind* (paed 1.6.30).

1. 'from age to age'. The divine plan/economy moves to fulfilment in Christ and to the offer of salvation by faith. The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. Clement adds to this divine plan of salvation the gift of philosophy to the Greeks to prepare them for Christ.
2. 'saving by the son'. The one God is marked by reciprocal love. Always, the word was with God and was God. No one comes to the father but by the son and no one comes to the son unless the father draws him. Reciprocity works on three levels: between father and son, between God and the human person, between human and human.
3. 'salvation by faith'. Salvation has turned the world into a sea of blessings. 'Faith like a grain of mustard seed bites beneficially into the soul so that it grows in it magnificently until the reasons concerning the highest realities rest upon it' (5.1.3.1).

The importance of these three concepts must be stressed if we are to find our way through Clement. Clement cites scripture 5,121 times and

348 different classical authors, including Plato 600 times, Philo 300 times and Homer 240 times. He believes with Philo that all great natures, freed from passion, can hit on the truth. Without attention to his chief problems his work will seem impenetrable. However, before we tackle the problems, we must look at his literary and historical puzzles; on both these questions, scholars have been energetically productive.

WRITINGS: THE LITERARY PUZZLE

Movement marks the plan of Clement's writing. He follows the logos who exhorts pagans to desert their falsehood for the truth of God, instructs them in the ethics of Christian practice, then goes on to teach the true knowledge of the mysteries of Christ. Following this plan, Clement's major works form a trilogy: *Protrepticus*, *Paedagogus*, *Stromateis*. In addition, the surviving minor works compound the sense of movement. There is a sermon on the salvation of the rich man (*Quis dives salvetur?*) and a fragment on patience to the newly baptised. There is a careful examination of a Gnostic work: *Excerpts from Theodotus*. There are parts of exegetical works: *Hypotyposesis*⁵ and *Prophetic Eclogues*. Eusebius cites works which are lost, except for fragments: *On the Passover*, *On Fasting*, *Against Judaisers*, *On Providence*.

Clement's 'trilogy' of major works raises questions which drew close attention during the first half of the twentieth century. The crucial passage in the first chapter of the *Paedagogus* distinguishes between the divine logos who invites men to salvation (*protreptikos*), then guides them to right action and the healing of their passions (*paidagôgos*) and finally teaches, explains and reveals first principles, clarifying symbolic and ultimate statements (*didaskalikos*). No one has questioned the first two elements of Clement's threefold economy. The *Protrepticus* and *Paedagogus* bear the names which denote their functions. Traditionally, the *Stromateis* were taken to be the *Didascalus*. De Faye⁶ in 1898 claimed that

5 The whole of which was seen 200 years ago. See my article, 'Clement of Alexandria's *Hypotyposesis*: a French eighteenth-century sighting', *JThS* 36 (1985), 67–83. In 1983, a colleague, Colin Duckworth, drew my attention to a private letter of the Comte d'Antraigues which he found in the municipal archives of Dijon. In it the writer described with much detail a copy of Clement's *Hypotyposesis* which he had seen in the library of the monastery of St Macarius, in the Wadi Natrun. After three visits to the monastery I have found no trace of the manuscript. For reasons given elsewhere, the question must remain open. See my article, 'Clement's *Hypotyposesis*. Macarius revisited', *SecCent* 10 (1990), 233–5.

6 E. de Faye, *Clément d'Alexandrie, étude sur les rapports du christianisme et de la philosophie grecque au IIe siècle* (Paris, 1898), 104.

the *Stromateis* were too unsystematic to be the final work of Clement, who had intended to write a systematic treatment of Christian knowledge but was forced by his complex environment to write a preliminary work which justified the use of Greek philosophy. The stimulus for the *Stromateis* lay in the caution of many Christians towards Greek philosophy which heretics had used (it was thought) to the detriment of the faith. De Faye was dominated by a belief in 'systems' which was characteristic of his day.

The views of De Faye were soon attacked by Heussi, who put forward a modification of the traditional view.⁷ In 1925, Prat proposed a different version to reestablish in part the traditional claim for the *Stromateis*.⁸ Munck went into greater detail and provided grounds for believing in two trilogies: *Protreptikos*, *Paidagogos*, *Didaskalos*; and *Stromateis* I–III, *Stromateis* IV–VII, and the *Physiologia*. Munck claimed that Clement did not produce the final work of either trilogy.⁹ This attractive solution appeared too systematic for Lazzati, who differently divided the works of Clement into those intended for private instruction, and those directed to the general public.¹⁰ The seven books of the *Stromateis* and the three commentary works were esoteric. The *Protrepticus*, *Paedagogus* and *Quis dives salvetur?* were for the general public. Yet another interpretation was proposed by Quatember, who argued impressively that Clement's trilogy referred to three stages of instruction, not to three written works.¹¹

A case for the traditional view can be made from the first chapter of the *Stromateis*.¹² Here Clement insists that the purpose of this work is to teach, and the argument only makes sense if the *Stromateis* are the projected *Didascalus*.¹³ Clement argues as follows:

1. Written notes are appropriate for the communication of Christian truth since they teach, instruct and proclaim. The relation between writer and reader is that of teacher to pupil. The explicit use of *didaskalos* and *didaskalia* shows that the argument is concerned to

7 C. Heussi, 'Die Stromateis des Clemens Alexandrinus und ihr Verhältnis zum Protreptikos und Paidagogos', *ZNW* 45 (1902), 465f.

8 F. Prat, 'Projets littéraires de Clément d'Alexandrie', *RSR* 15 (1925), 234.

9 J. Munck, *Untersuchungen über Klemens von Alexandria* (Stuttgart, 1933), III.

10 G. Lazzati, *Introduzione allo studio di Clemente Alessandrino* (Milan, 1939), 1–35.

11 F. Quatember, *Die christliche Lebenshaltung des Klemens von Alexandria nach seinem Pädagogus* (Vienna, 1946), 29–32.

12 E. F. Osborn, 'Teaching and writing in the first chapter of the *Stromateis* of Clement of Alexandria', *JThS* 10 (1959), 335–43.

13 *Ibid.*, 342f.

justify teaching through writing. There would be no need of intricate argument in favour of written teaching if the *Stromateis* were not going to teach.

2. The *Stromateis* are records of teaching, notes which Clement took from the words of his teachers. They record his memory of the powerful teachers whom he heard.
3. Clement claims that the teaching which he records and preserves is part of a great tradition, 'the true tradition of the blessed teaching' (I.I.II.3). This teaching comes from God through scripture and tradition. Clement is concerned to revive the memory of it and to preserve it for his readers.
4. There is extended argument on whether this great tradition should be written down and indeed whether one should write at all. It is remarkable that after having written the *Protrepticus* and *Paedagogus*, Clement sees the necessity to justify writing before he can begin the *Stromateis*. Clearly, this new work represents a different kind of discourse, and the only other kind of discourse which Clement planned is that of the *logos* who is *Didaskalos*.
5. The *Stromateis* fulfil what Clement had predicted concerning the *Didascalus*. He begins with the announcement that the work will show the opinions of philosophers and heretics and also declare true philosophy and knowledge. The first concern is true gnosis, as the title and contents of the work indicate. This concern Clement had allotted to his projected *Didascalus*.
6. The method of the *Stromateis* points to the more appropriate way of teaching philosophy. The writing does not set out a handbook but aims to kindle a spark, to sow a seed or to be the bait to catch a fish.
7. Finally, the very disorder of the *Stromateis* confirms the ultimacy of their teaching. Clement wishes to conceal, from the lazy and unworthy, certain aspects of Christian truth. There is no point in this concealment if he is not handing on the mysteries of Christian knowledge.

The chief objection to the teaching status of the *Stromateis* has been their deliberate incoherence.

For I am silent on the point that the *Stromateis*, being the embodiment of much learning, wish to hide skilfully the seeds of knowledge. As he who loves the chase, after seeking, searching, tracking and hunting with dogs, takes the quarry, so truth when sought and gained through hard work seems a sweet thing. How then did it seem good that this arrangement should be adopted in your notes? Because

great is the danger in betraying the truly ineffable word of the real philosophy to those who wish to speak recklessly and unjustly against everything, and who hurl forth quite inappropriately all sorts of names and words, deceiving themselves and bewitching their followers.

(I.2.20–1)

Indeed, the *Stromateis* stand in marked contrast to the *Didaskalikos* of Alcinous, which is a tidy Platonic handbook and which epitomises the kind of philosophy which Plato and much later Wittgenstein rejected. Wittgenstein said of something which he had written that it could not be philosophy because it suggested that philosophy could be learnt from reading a book. Plato's dialogues imply a similar view.

The controversy surrounding the *Stromateis* has continued. From a useful summary of the hypotheses put forward by de Faye, Bousset, Munck and Lazzati concerning the *Stromateis*, Méhat shows that they all agree wrongly on the fortuitous ordering of the material in the work. He rejects de Faye's assertion that Clement was incapable of producing a well-ordered piece of philosophical writing;¹⁴ the works of the *Protrepticus*, the *Paedagogus* and *Quis dives salvetur?* clearly demonstrate Clement's capabilities. Moreover, says Méhat, Clement freely announces his intentions for the composition of the *Stromateis*; they aim at concealment and pay no attention to arrangement or diction.¹⁵ Clement fulfils what he proposes in this regard.

Méhat insists that, while the arrangement of the *Stromateis* is haphazard, this does not preclude the possibility of an order of teaching that is conducive to discovering the truth. Méhat cites thirty-three occasions where Clement refuses to digress from a sequence (*akolouthia*) of teaching, an order that is apparent to Clement himself, yet difficult for us to discern. Moreover, Clement is concerned with treating certain issues at the appropriate time (*kairos*) within that sequence, indicating that he has a plan for teaching and discovering the truth. However disorderly the arrangement of the *Stromateis* is, it is clear that Clement himself was teaching with a purpose.

In the same year as Méhat's compendious book appeared, an article by E. L. Fortin offered a different approach to the controversy.¹⁶ Without delving into the various hypotheses put forward by scholars, Fortin sets out two extreme points of view. There are those who claim that Clement's conviction that he is transmitting a secret and oral tradition is an 'affectation' and that such a view supports the Gnostic tendencies of the author.

¹⁴ Méhat, *Etude*, 23–35.

¹⁵ 7.18.III.1–3.

¹⁶ E. L. Fortin, 'Clement and the esoteric tradition', *StudPatr* 9 (1966), 41–56.

On the other hand, there were those scholars of the eighteenth and nineteenth century who appealed to a *disciplina arcani* which, where evidence was difficult to achieve, included ideas that could not readily be placed within the development of doctrine. Fortin argues that as accounts of Clement's writings, these views suffer because they 'both attempt to dispose of an admittedly delicate problem by slicing the knot instead of unravelling it'.¹⁷ Fortin therefore claims that, in order to take reasonably what Clement tells us about his writing and not to accuse him of withholding a secret oral teaching, we must find some middle ground. This is supplied by Clement himself when he acknowledges that his task is to write down this teaching, but that it must be put down with the utmost care; he wants to transmit, through writing, essential Christian teachings with some degree of concealment.

To this end, Fortin cites the many occasions where Clement employs literary techniques to disguise what he is attempting to communicate.¹⁸ Such techniques put the *Stromateis* into a 'special category of books' which evade general understanding. Fortin draws on the controversial Seventh Epistle of Plato to illustrate that Clement believed that his method of writing would be sufficient for the genuine seeker. This is 'accomplished precisely by means of "slight indications" of which Plato speaks and which are both necessary and sufficient for students such as these'.¹⁹ Viewed in this way, the *Stromateis* reveal themselves as an esoteric method of teaching.

The next literary comment on Clement was that of S. R. C. Lilla,²⁰ who devotes a footnote to the puzzle of the *Stromateis*.²¹ Lilla inclines to the view of de Faye and disagrees with Méhat: 'The *Stromateis*, though dealing in many sections with gnosis, never examine in detail such arguments as cosmology or theology, which represent the content of the higher gnosis and which would fit in very well with the *logos didaskalikos*, but rather touch them *en passant*.' Such a view, however, plays into the hands of Fortin, for whom Clement's brevity is exactly the means by which the 'higher gnosis' is communicated. Lilla concludes that Clement's reference to a subsequent work, dealing with cosmology and theology, points to the proposed *Didascalus*.²²

Another negative view of the *Stromateis* was put forward by J. Ferguson, who claimed that they are what the title suggests, a scrapbook of notes in

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 42.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 46. He cites examples of brachyology, symbols and enigmas, deliberate untruths, exclusions.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 52. Citing Plato *Ép.* 7.341e.

²⁰ *Clement of Alexandria*.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 189 n4.

²² 4.1.3.1-3.

which Clement stored his material.²³ Clement bit off more than he could chew, and the *Stromateis* constitute a collection of ideas which never cohere as instruction for Christians seeking higher knowledge. Ferguson claims that on occasions Clement mentions his intentions for the *Didascalus*: for instance, he will give some account of first causes,²⁴ some account of the Greek mysteries²⁵ and will write more on the true gnostic.²⁶ However, according to Ferguson these things are postponed and never written. In the *Stromateis*, Clement is only concerned with scraps, he is merely ‘composing a piece of exhibition oratory. . . a kind of sketch of words and people, lacking sharpness and vitality’.²⁷

Roberts approached the controversy from the perspective of formal criticism.²⁸ Like Fortin, he acknowledges that the *Stromateis* constitute a literary form that is difficult to categorise. Critics, he suggests, too often assume that literature prior to the eighteenth century was ‘primarily mimetic. . . characteristically object-oriented and outward-going’. Such works do not require an inward transformation of the reader in order to be understood. Works like the *Stromateis*, however, ‘require a specific effort on the part of the reader’. According to Clement, this literary genre was known to the Greeks, who ‘in this kind of composition. . . sow their doctrines secretly and not in a plain, unmistakable manner, seeking to exercise the care and inventiveness of the readers’.²⁹ These are the ‘kindling sparks’ that ignite the soul to investigate and acquire knowledge.

Roberts compares Clement’s literary categories, namely recollection (*anamnêsis*) and expression (*emphasis*) of the truth, with those found in the *topoi* or *loci* which were first used as aids for the memory by Aristotle. Roberts traces these categories into Latin, showing how a literary form such as the *Stromateis* builds a system of images (*significatio*), which are gathered together by the reader to form a ‘network of reciprocal relations’. These are called by Clement *capitula*, under which the images unite to recall the *loci* whence those images originally derived. Roberts believes that for Clement, the meadows of the *Stromateis* constitute the *loci*, while the plants, trees and seeds constitute the images that emphasise and recall the mind to the truth.

23 J. Ferguson, *Clement of Alexandria* (New York, 1974), 106.

24 2.8.37.1.

25 6.2.42–3.

26 6.18.168.4

27 Ferguson, *Clement of Alexandria*, 109.

28 L. Roberts, ‘The literary form of the *Stromateis*’, *SecCent* 1 (1981), 211–22.

29 *Ibid.*, 213. Cf. 7.18.111.3.

This theory goes some way to determining how, as Méhat suggests, there is a sequence of teaching in Clement which is logical rather than narrative. Consequently the *Stromateis* is a 'work which encompasses an encyclopaedic array of material within a single, logically unified literary form'.³⁰ Furthermore, 'reading must proceed by fitting texts together and by keeping the allusions in mind until by reflexive reference the whole is comprehended'.³¹ Roberts believes that with Clement, philosophy and hermeneutics combine to bring the reader to inward transformation as he attempts to coordinate disparate material. The literary form is defined by the experience of the reader and can only be considered 'finished in the act of performance, in the actual reading of the texts plus bringing them together into a systematic union'.³² The *Stromateis* are greater than the sum of their parts, and their success as literature can be determined only by our experience of it.

Recently Kovacs has discussed the 'divine pedagogy' of Clement, drawing attention to his ability to teach simultaneously at different levels.³³ Clement needed to reach the different spiritual levels of students and yet communicate the higher gnosis for those capable of apprehending it.³⁴ The *Stromateis* are compared with scripture: 'As the logos has carefully designed the literal and symbolic levels of Scripture so that the same text can simultaneously teach students on quite different levels, so Clement chooses the versatile genre of the miscellany'.³⁵ The *Stromateis* are designed to sort out 'advanced students' and to take them through a program of instruction.

The first puzzle in Clement is the method of the *Stromateis*. The more we can understand his reason for adopting this method, the more we shall understand his thought and the intellectual world which he addressed. The key point in understanding the *Stromateis* is the absolute priority of scripture, which is the written expression of truth, 'the truth which indicates in writing the doctrines which cannot be written' (I.I.IO.I). Teaching comes in two forms: first, in the books of the bible; and secondly in the 'new book' of Isaiah 8:1, the explanation of scripture which runs from the saviour to apostles, and to the unwritten tradition which has come to Clement (6.15.131.4–5). This second way of teaching can be expressed in the 'seeds of knowledge' which Clement scatters in his

30 *Ibid.*, 219.

31 *Ibid.*, 220.

32 *Ibid.*, 222.

33 J. L. Kovacs, 'Divine pedagogy and the Gnostic teacher according to Clement of Alexandria', *J ECS* 9 (2001), 3–25.

34 *Ibid.*, 9. Cf. Plato. Rep. 535a–536d.

35 *Ibid.*, 25.

Stromateis (1.2.20.4; cf. 1.12.56.3 and its context). Such dissemination is a form of concealment that Clement uses to resolve the contradiction which he sees between the oral teaching of teacher to disciple (or of logos to believer) on the one hand and the written teaching which is open to all on the other. This method of dissemination governs Clement's writing throughout the *Stromateis*. It is reflected in the tension between Clement's clear plan on one side and his many detours. It promises that if the reader culls the varied flowers of the orchard, he will gain the elements of knowledge. Clement used the same metaphor when he spoke of his own teacher who gathered pollen from the flowery field of prophets and apostles. Such dissemination is distinctive to the *Stromateis*, which are a unique venture.

Such conclusions may be confirmed by a careful examination of the beginning of the *Stromateis*. Here Clement contrasts oral and written teaching and sees his own method of writing as a direct consequence of the priority which he gives to the biblical word. For that reason, while he draws on Plato's *Phaedrus*, his dependence on scripture is a means of avoiding the weaknesses of writing which Plato had described. His purpose is to expound scripture to Greeks and Jews (4.1.1.3). He returns at several points to explain his procedure, but his initial account in *Stromateis* I is the most extensive. The purpose of any prologue is to 'invent' or 'shape' the reader, and the prologue begins by speaking of the relation of the teacher to the pupil.³⁶ Beginning from the Platonic accounts of the pupil as the child of the teacher, Clement uses biblical language to describe a new relation. While Plato distinguishes, in literary composition, the sterile gardens of Adonis and the treasury of recollection, both of which are unsatisfactory when placed beside the creative power of dialectic, Clement joins all in a genre of *spiritual planting and growth which passes between teacher and disciple* and may be oral or written (1.1.1.3–2.1). This dissemination of spiritual seed leads to a harvest of life eternal (1.1.4.2). Clement gains the interest of his readers by using familiar language. He joins an echo of Heraclitus with the two Gospel parables concerning many pearls and a pearl of great price, or many fish and a fish of great size and beauty. Each of these references points to the need for discrimination or dialectic to find one among many. To this first move, Clement adds an explicit claim for philosophy which is subordinate to

36 A. Le Boulluec, 'Pour qui, pourquoi, comment? Les "Stromates" de Clément d'Alexandrie', in *Patrimoines, Religions du Livre, Entrer en Matière. Les Prologues* (Paris, 1998), 23–36. These paragraphs are indebted to the essay of Le Boulluec.

scripture and which is, like nuts, not wholly edible and possessed of a shell which both hides and protects. Philosophy will act as a protecting fence through the use of dialectic (6.10.81.4). Also, in the 'prologue' or first chapter of *Stromateis*, Clement describes dialectic as the way in which philosophy contributes to the demonstration of the faith (1.1.20.2). Dialectic is a matter of comparison and contrast, and for Clement the standard of each move is that of scripture. Platonic dialectic is able to be a rational defence of what faith has believed. Along with the wisdom which the Greeks required, scripture gives knowledge for the Jews. Prophecy, which is the foundation of all second-century theology, proclaims the lord (6.15.127.4). The signs performed by the saviour give grounds for the conversion of Jews; the wisdom promised to the Greeks is a way of elucidating the knowledge which the Jews demand.

The relation of Clement's 'prologue' to the *Phaedrus* has been amply demonstrated by Wyrwa.³⁷ To his treatment must be added the dominant importance of the references to scripture which Clement makes. Whereas for Plato the pupil is the off-spring of the philosopher, in Clement the pupil is not a son of the teacher, who is an intermediary between God and man and who declares the word of God who is the true teacher (1.1.4.1-3). Both written and unwritten teaching or cultivation are the work of the lord who is teacher and who alone will give the harvest (1.1.7.1). The labourer is but the servant of him who gives the growth, a co-worker with God (1 Cor. 3:7-9; 1.1.7.4). Epistle and Gospel are the source of Clement's theory of teaching. There is only one master of him who speaks as of him who hears; he is the source of understanding of the word (1.1.12.3).

This biblical element, which distinguishes Clement from Plato, emerges again when he speaks of his recollections. These have a higher significance for Clement because his human teachers recall a trace of the divine teacher from whom alone knowledge may be gained. While the deficiencies of writing are denounced in the prologue as they are in the *Phaedrus*, the criticism is from a different motive. Both writer and reader are confronted with a choice, which decides their salvation (1.1.4.2-3). The indirect style of writing separates the friends who receive the truth (1.2.20.1) from those who do not. It establishes a form of learning, which is a strenuous search for meaning (1.2.21.1). 'The mysteries are transmitted in a mysterious manner' (1.1.13.4). The oral traditions of the apostles are transmitted by word of mouth. Clement speaks of an unwritten expository tradition (5.10.62.1; 6.7.61.3). The written transmission of knowledge

37 Wyrwa, *Die christliche Platonaneignung*.

shares in this secrecy by concealing or securing the truth. So Clement leads us to the conviction stated at the beginning, that truth is to be found in scripture, which declares in written form the things which cannot be written, and that this mystery is to be found not directly, but indirectly through the seeds which Clement has scattered in the *Stromateis* (1.2.20.4).

A useful study discusses the place of the Christian teacher in the church of Alexandria and in the writing of Clement.³⁸ Clement is a Christian teacher, the successor of Pantaeus.³⁹ A letter of Bishop Alexander speaks of Clement as a presbyter and a skilled and trustworthy man (H. E. 6.11.6). The claim that Clement was a priest was virtually destroyed by Koch;⁴⁰ however, the use of that title in an official letter counteracts some of his criticism. When Clement left Alexandria in the time of persecution, he chose a way to perfection other than that of martyrdom: the way of teaching and writing.

Within his own writing the ideas of teacher and teaching recur. Clement gives a plan which is governed by stages of teaching. The *Protrepticus* precedes catechetical instruction. It is a handbook for Christians as missionaries, taking the gospel to those who do not believe. In the *Paedagogus*, Clement sets out a Christian *katêchêsis*. His programme is described in *Stromateis* 6.1.3. The work is clearly directed towards catechumens and presents a picture of the whole Christian life (paed 2.1.1). In this work Clement brings together the instruction which he has given to catechumens, pointing them on the Christian way and offering a handbook to guide them. The *Didascalus* was concerned to explain the propositions of faith and to interpret the words of scripture.⁴¹ The *Stromateis* fulfil this role by transmitting the teaching which Clement received, connecting oral and written teaching. The hidden element in them is a guard against their misuse by the mediocre or the bad. In his oral teaching, Clement imparted the seeds of truth and his writing recalls them. Non-Christians also can read because Clement edits his oral teaching to give it wider accessibility. However, the chief recipients of the *Stromateis* are those who are on the way to becoming Christian

38 U. Neymeyr, *Die christlichen Lehrer im zweiten Jahrhundert: ihre Lehrtätigkeit, ihr Selbstverständnis und ihre Geschichte* (Leiden, 1989).

39 But this has been challenged, for the account of Eusebius is not reliable. *Ibid.*, 42.

40 H. Koch, 'War Clemens von Alexandrien Priester?' *ZNW* 20 (1921), 45. Several passages had suggested that Clement was a priest at Alexandria (6.4.37.3, 6.13.106f; 7.1.3; paed 3.12.101.3) and his role as teacher might be fused with his role as priest.

41 Neymeyr, *Die christlichen Lehrer*, 58.

teachers themselves. Clement sets out the important things for a Christian teacher to know about his office and activity. All true teaching flows from Christ, the one great teacher (1.1.12.3). The Christian teacher stands in the place of Christ pointing to perfection and knowledge.⁴² The teacher must examine his motives and ask whether he is concerned with the salvation of those who hear him and the good of those near to him, or whether he looks for rewards of honour (1.1.6.1).⁴³

The first task of the Christian teacher is the interpretation of scripture, the explanation of ambiguities and equivocations; he divides and separates what the letter of scripture brings together (1.9.44.3). Just as the hidden meaning of the *Stromateis* is accessible through a spoken interpretation, so the hidden meaning of scripture can be explained by word of mouth. Christian teacher and pupil must become biblical theologians in order to meet the challenge of false teaching. Scripture is the place where the teaching of Christ is to be found; he is the lord who through prophets, gospel and apostles, in different ways, guides from beginning to perfection, along the way of knowledge (7.16.95.3).⁴⁴

From the interpretation of scripture, philosophy and Greek *paideia*, a deeper understanding of the gospel may be achieved. Philosophy is a cooperating cause and a help in the understanding of truth (1.19.99.1). Clement identifies his perfect Christian with the Christian teacher. Christian perfection is not a private possession but a quality necessary for the teacher within the community of faith (7.9.52.2).

A clear picture of Clement's teaching method in the *Stromateis* includes his use of esoteric ideas and methods. Clement aims to take his reader through a varied programme which will mould him 'intellectually and spiritually so that he reaches the perfection of the complete Christian. Clement is a doctrinal theologian, but also a metaphysician, a mystagogue, a skilled spiritual teacher, concerned not only with doctrines themselves, but also with the method of rekindling them to life in the Christian'.⁴⁵

42 *Ibid.*, 65.

43 *Ibid.*, 66.

44 *Ibid.*, 69.

45 A. C. Itter, 'Method and doctrine: esoteric teaching in the writings of Clement of Alexandria' (Dissertation, La Trobe University, 2003), 190. It has become increasingly easy to believe that the *Stromateis* are the *Didascalus*. Clement could not hope to achieve his end by a compendium like that of Alcinous. 'The *Stromateis* is the Διδάσκαλος. Its miscellaneous nature creates a literary labyrinth through which the soul of the initiate has to pass' (191).

PLATO AND HERACLITUS

Clement's purpose in the *Stromateis* can be illuminated by a consideration of the two philosophers whom he, like Justin, most admired: Plato and Heraclitus. The dialogues of Plato make it clear that Plato would not have seen Alcinous' handbook as compatible with his method in philosophy. This emerges in a recent study of Plato's teaching and practice of concealment.⁴⁶ The disorder of the dialogues, it is claimed, points to gaps which compensate for the deficiency of writing. The writing of philosophy preserves past teaching for old age (Phaedr. 276d) and makes philosophy accessible for Plato and his fellow-travellers. Plato's writing, like that of Wittgenstein, puts a lock on the door which catches the eye of those who can open it.⁴⁷ Since Schleiermacher there had been a reluctance to recognise an esoteric element of Plato's work. More recently, however, there has been a slender case made for an esoterism which points back to original oral teaching.⁴⁸

Plato does not claim the kind of ambiguity which had been claimed for Homer from the sixth century onwards. Philosophy is not concerned, as Isocrates claimed, with *logoi amphiboloi*.⁴⁹ For Plato, knowledge is clear and firm, *saphes kai bebaion* (Phaedr. 275c), and while writing may produce immediate effects, these effects do not last. 'For Plato, the speedy process of instruction through writing which is basically insufficient (276c) can never replace oral dialectic.'⁵⁰ Yet writing can be valuable to refresh the memory of the person who possesses knowledge (276d). The philosopher writes *aide-mémoire* for himself in old age and for others of like mind (249c). But writing cannot present the ideas which are the greatest and most precious objects of knowledge (Pol. 285e). Plato's 'basic thought – that there are things which it is better not to reveal in writing, because if they are communicated prematurely, they do not explain anything and are thus "useless" – remains intact and unchanged from the metaphorical image of medical remedies in the *Charmides* through to the twelfth book of the *Laws*, where the significant concept of *aporrêta* is finally coined' (968e).⁵¹ However, the claim that the 'unwritten teachings'

46 T. A. Szlezák, *Reading Plato* (London, 1999).

47 L. Wittgenstein, *Vermischte Bemerkungen*, ed. G. H. von Wright (Frankfurt, 1977), 23.

48 H. J. Krämer, *Der Ursprung der Geistmetaphysik* (Amsterdam, 1964); K. Gaiser, *Platons ungeschriebene Lehre* (Stuttgart, 1968); Szlezák, *Reading Plato*.

49 However, this is not true of Clement, who believes philosophy and dialectic to be useful tools in discerning the ambiguities of scripture (1.9.44.3–45.5).

50 Szlezák, *Reading Plato*, 43.

51 *Ibid.*, 65.

of Plato should supersede the Dialogues displays a deep ignorance of Plato's achievement.

The debate concerning the unwritten teaching of Plato will bear little fruit because it is natural to question the possibility of ascertaining what Plato left unwritten. The important point is the one which Clement has taken up: that teaching may be concealed while the reader or hearer becomes ready to understand it. This makes good sense. The conclusion of any theory or argument will not be comprehended until the problems with which it is concerned have been understood by the learner. Here we have a doctrine of recollection in Clement,⁵² which is dependent on Plato. In his concern for preserving truth, Plato links the writer to the reader, when a teacher is not present to kindle the sparks of memory.⁵³ It is enough, says Clement, that his notes point the direction for those setting out on an unknown road, since they must discover and recollect the truth themselves.⁵⁴

If the work of a philosopher is seen as the elucidation of certain problems, then Plato and Clement are acting responsibly in postponing the statement of conclusions until difficulties and problems have been perceived by the reader. 'We need not fear any secret teachings: Plato did not consider his thinking on the principles as secret (*aporrêta*), but as not prematurely communicable (*aprorrêta*)' (cf. Phaedr. 275de, Laws 968e).⁵⁵ However, the idea that these teachings can in time be written down makes little sense of Plato or Clement. Plato chose the dialogue form to defeat sophists and to teach dialectic; dogmatic secret teaching could not have achieved either of these goals.

The other major figure behind Clement's method is Heraclitus, whose obscurity was proverbial. Clement's use of Heraclitus continues to be underestimated. He quotes Heraclitus as the authority for his concealment and disorder.⁵⁶ Those who look for gold, Heraclitus had said, must dig a lot of earth to find a little gold.

52 Roberts, 'Literary form', 211–22.

53 The discussion that takes place at Phaedr. 274b–277a revolves around the suitability of writing as a means to communicate the truth of things. The simile of the gardens of letters likens an effective method of writing to a farmer who grows plants for long-term posterity rather than for ephemeral display. The same concern appears in the controversial seventh letter of Plato (341c–e).

54 4.2.4.4. See also 7.14.88.4.

55 Szlezák, *Reading Plato*, 112.

56 Among the authors Clement mentions as writing works that 'present the mind of the writer veiled', Clement cites Heraclitus' *On Nature* (5.8.50.2).

Let our notes be, as we often said, because of those people who light upon them carelessly and ignorantly, patched together in a motley fashion as the name itself [*stromateis* or patchwork] declares, continually dropping one subject for another, suggesting one thing in the course of discussion and declaring another. 'For seekers after gold', says Heraclitus, 'dig much earth and find a little gold' (DK 22[8]). But those who really are of golden stock, mining for what is akin to them, will find much in a little. For the writing will find one reader who will understand it. The *stromateis* of notes work together for the recollection and the declaration of truth for those who can rationally inquire. But we must also work out and investigate other things too.

(4.2.4)

Apart from the stylistic affinity which Clement claims, many similarities may be noted.⁵⁷ Dominant is the theory of the logos, who (for Heraclitus) permeates all things (DK 2[92]) and who (for Clement) moves through the three stages of instruction. In the *Protrepticus*, Clement uses the logos concept as a bridge between the Fourth Gospel and his Greek readers; he quotes Heraclitus on the limitations of human knowledge without divine revelation (DK 78[96]). In the *Paedagogus* the dryness of the soul is taken from Heraclitus (DK 118[74–6]) as support for Clement's account of temperance in drinking (paed 2.2.29.3). In the *Stromateis*, Heraclitus is cited on the need for a basis of faith before knowledge can begin (DK 86[116]) (2.4.17.4) and the necessity for hoping what seems to be beyond hope. The prophetic claim of Isaiah that without faith there can be no understanding is supported by Heraclitus: 'If one does not hope for what is beyond hope, one will never find it, for it is essentially beyond discovery and access' (DK 18[7]) (2.4.17). This deference to faith places him above all the Greek philosophers who denigrate the role it plays.

In the same book of the *Stromateis*, Clement turns to Xenocrates and to Heraclitus for support in his claim that ultimate knowledge is knowledge of first principles or first causes (2.5.24). Such knowledge is beyond demonstration and can be received only by listening to revelation. Demonstration is therefore not autonomous, but depends upon first principles which it cannot prove.⁵⁸

The contribution of Heraclitus to Clement's epistemology is clear. For both claimed the necessity of rational argument which followed a hope which went beyond reason.

57 Such as his treatment of eschatological fire (5.14.100.4), and the doctrine of opposites (4.6.40.3). See further P. Valentin, 'Héraclite et Clément d'Alexandrie', *RSR* 46 (1958), 27–59.

58 Valentin, 'Héraclite', 48.

THE CATECHETICAL SCHOOL OF ALEXANDRIA:
THE HISTORICAL PUZZLE

On this topic there has been much debate which illuminates Clement's setting. The traditional picture of an official school under control of the bishop has long been challenged.⁵⁹ Bardy demolished Eusebius' account, with its succession of teachers dating back to Pantaenus and Clement;⁶⁰ these two philosophers taught a private circle of advanced Christian students.⁶¹ Recently, two Dutch scholars⁶² have taken the matter further. Van den Hoek showed that in Clement's writings the Alexandrian *paideia* is not allied to an official community, and that the church as an institution is not conspicuous. Clement, who became head of the school after Pantaenus in approximately 190, shows little connection with a local bishop. We may even question Bardy's distinction between 'official' and 'private' instruction. Such a distinction existed in earlier days with Justin in Rome, and later between Origen and Demetrius, but there is little evidence for a division in Clement's time.

What do Clement's literary sources tell us? His vast array of texts has a 'strongly local bias' towards Alexandria and its library. Yet the concentration and variety of Jewish and Christian sources suggest a Christian institution like the 'school of sacred learning' which Eusebius mentions.⁶³ By the later half of the second century, Alexandria had a *scriptorium* containing a biblical text that was superior to others available in that period.⁶⁴ Such evidence suggests the presence of a Christian school which functioned independently of a Christian hierarchy.

Yet Eusebius should not be dismissed. There is some evidence to suggest that there was a succession between Pantaenus, Clement, and Origen,⁶⁵ and that the Alexandrian school undertook catechetical training as part of its curriculum. 'Clement evidently sees himself in an ecclesiastical setting,

59 A. van den Hoek, 'The "Catechetical" School of early Christian Alexandria and its Philonic heritage', *HThR* 90 (1997), 59–87. She refers to Bardy's 'Aux origines de l'école d'Alexandrie', *RSR* 27 (1937), 65–90; 'L'église et l'enseignement pendant les trois premiers siècles', *RSR* 12 (1932), 1–28; 'Pour l'histoire de l'école d'Alexandrie', *Vivre et Penser* 2 (1942), 80–109.

60 A. van den Hoek, 'How Alexandrian was Clement of Alexandria? Reflections on Clement and his Alexandrian background', *HeyJ* 31 (1990), 179–94.

61 See also R. M. Grant, 'Early Alexandrian Christianity', *ChH* 40 (1971), 133–44.

62 A. van den Hoek, R. van den Broek.

63 H. E. 5.10.1.

64 G. Zuntz, *The text of the Epistles. A disquisition upon the Corpus Paulinum* (London, 1953), 273.

65 This view reflects the intentions of Clement and Origen, who refer directly or indirectly to their predecessors. Van den Hoek, 'The "Catechetical" School', 80–1, 86. See further *Ibid.*, 81 n107, and van den Hoek's article, 'Origen and the intellectual heritage of Alexandria: continuity or disjunction', in *Origeniana Quinta*, ed. R. J. Daly (Leuven, 1992), 47–50.

appointed in the church by no less than Christ himself.⁶⁶ Both Clement and Pantaenus are called *presbuteroi*, indicating not only their age but their church office. On the other hand, Clement never used the term *didaskaleion* to refer to his school and is not consistent in his use of terms such as *scholê*, *diatribê*, or *hairesis*. He was probably dissociating himself from other schools whose opinions he believed false,⁶⁷ and even Eusebius did not use a consistent term to refer to the school at Alexandria.

Philo underlines Clement's Alexandrian identity. Since the dissemination of the Philonic corpus came through Alexandrians, particularly Clement and Origen, we must conclude that Alexandria contained a *scriptorium* for copying texts. This is supported by the lack of Philonic citations in the last three books of Clement's *Stromateis*, composed probably after he left Alexandria during the persecutions of 202.⁶⁸ When Origen later went to Caesarea he took a collection of books and scrolls, including works by Philo, which was to become the basis of the library of Pamphilus and Eusebius. The Christian library in Jerusalem had been founded earlier by Alexander, Clement's student, who would have used his experience in Alexandria under Clement as a model. All of this confirms that there existed in Alexandria a school, library and *scriptorium* with a strong tradition of biblical scholarship as early as the middle of the second century.

Further light has been shed on the school at Alexandria and the succession between Pantaenus, Clement and Origen.⁶⁹ Eusebius speaks of a direct succession between the three, which is supported by Photius in the ninth century and by Philip of Side in the fifth century.⁷⁰ In the twenty-fourth book of his *Christian History*, Philip lists thirteen Alexandrian teachers from Athenagoras in the second century to Rhodon at the end of the fourth century. However, van den Broek asserts that the idea of an unbroken succession of Alexandrian teachers is 'completely false, at least until the second decade of the third century'. Against van den Hoek, he notes that Origen never refers to Clement⁷¹ and finds it improbable

66 Van den Hoek, 'The "Catechetical" School', 66.

67 *Ibid.*, 74.

68 See D. T. Runia, *Philo in early Christian literature: a survey* (Assen, 1993), 144 and A. van den Hoek, *Clement of Alexandria and his use of Philo in the 'Stromateis': an early Christian reshaping of a Jewish model* (Leiden, 1988), 197–208.

69 R. van den Broek, 'The Christian "School" of Alexandria in the second and third centuries', in *Studies in Gnosticism and Alexandrian Christianity* (Leiden, 1996), 197–205.

70 Photius, *Bibl. Cod.* 118. For the text of Philip of Side see G. Chr. Hansen (ed.), *Theodoros Anagnostes Kirchengeschichte* (Berlin, 1971), 160.

71 This is not important. Christians claimed to differ from heretics in discounting allegiance to human teachers. Further, Origen's enthusiasm for martyrdom would estrange him from Clement, who fled persecution.

that Origen attended Clement's classes, which were for advanced students and beyond the capacities of one so young as Origen was at the time.

While van den Broek doubts the succession between Pantaeus and Clement, because Clement saw his role as *didaskalos* linked directly to the apostles, van den Hoek believes that the *didaskaloi* and *presbuteroi* continued the tradition of Rabbis and Jewish elders who directed religious life from first instruction to advanced theology.⁷² In other words, the role of Pantaeus and Clement was more ecclesiastical than academic. Again, while van den Broek acknowledges that there was a *scriptorium* in Alexandria by the middle of the second century,⁷³ he does not believe that there was also a 'school, in the sense of a Christian academy'.⁷⁴ He further claims that Eusebius confused the persecutions under the governor Aquila (206–210/11) with those in the year 202, when givers of pre-baptismal instruction fled Alexandria. This allowed him to posit a direct succession between Clement and Origen. It is only with Demetrius' appointment of Origen as head that we can confidently speak of a 'school' in Alexandria. Yet most scholars consider that the school of Alexandria finds historical ground in Pantaeus, the teacher of Clement. It is represented by Eusebius as a sign of the conquest by the church of Greek culture.⁷⁵

What can Clement himself tell us about his school? It is probable that Clement was born in Athens⁷⁶ and received his education there in the renewed Ephobia, where the standard of learning was high. Clement writes as a scholar with an extensive literary background. He describes his own purpose in detail: he is concerned to convert Greeks, to prepare candidates for baptism and above all to produce spiritual teachers or competent catechists. These will have been taught the truly gnostic *physiology* in symbolic exegesis, contemplation, perfection, the nature of the angels and the logos, all within a Christian theology based at once on the bible and philosophy. This is the climax of his programme of instruction and his true gnostic is unsurpassed as a teacher who traces his authority and knowledge back to the apostles and finally to Christ.

72 See R. van den Broek, 'Juden und Christen in Alexandrien im 2. und 3. Jahrhundert', in J. van Oort (ed.), *Juden und Christen in der Antike* (Kampen, 1990), 181–96.

73 Citing the work of G. Zuntz in support.

74 It must be acknowledged that although these two authors are discussing the same topic, there is a difference in emphasis. Van den Hoek looks at the 'catechetical' element of the school, while van den Broek considers the existence of a 'school' itself in Alexandria.

75 A. Le Boulluec, *La notion d'hérésie dans la littérature grecque IIe–IIIe siècles*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1985).

76 He gives priority to Athens. Through the diffusion of powers in the new creation, the whole earth has become an Athens and a Greece (prot 11.112.1).

Clement gives us insight into the Christian community at Alexandria, which has its orders of deacons, priests and bishops but is not set under one supreme bishop. Teaching is the chief activity of the church; its authority comes from a succession of teachers, not of bishops. Clement never speaks of an episcopal succession in Alexandria, but shows no sign of tension between priests and teachers. He writes (6. 13.106.2) that 'he is a true priest of the church and a true deacon of the will of God, who does and teaches the things of the lord; for it is not because men have obeyed him and he is a priest that he is considered righteous, but it is because he is righteous that he is inscribed in the priesthood'.⁷⁷ Authority is shared within the church between teachers and priests; later tension develops when Demetrius becomes the supreme bishop and the conflict causes the departure of Origen from Alexandria. It is unlikely that Clement left Alexandria because of such tension; the reason for his departure was the persecution of 202 (or perhaps that of 206).

Christianity at Alexandria was diverse. Those whom Clement teaches are educated and wealthy, able to appreciate references to Greek literature and philosophy and to respond to the invitation of Clement's *Protrepticus*; women are emancipated within this community and are potential philosophers. On the other hand, not all the Christians at Alexandria belong to this group. Clement refers to the many simple believers; these may be poor and diverse. Further, there are those whom Clement considers as heretics or heterodox: the followers of a false form of *gnôsis*, like the disciples of Valentinus and Basilides. He does not trace a succession of

77 The evidence for this tension does not justify the view of Dawson (*Allegorical readers and cultural revision in ancient Alexandria* (Berkeley, 1992)) that Clement was involved in a three-sided contest between hierarchy, Valentinus and himself: Clement was caught between the official church and the attraction of the more 'speculative, meditative, spiritual gnosis'. All this is fictitious, and the 'voice-based' hermeneutic which allegedly springs from his logos theology is a small part of the story. Logos means logic. 'Those who hunt for the sequence of the divine teaching must approach it with the utmost logical skill' (1.28.79). Clement's '*feine Unkirchlichkeit*' (von Campenhausen) makes him an unfortunate subject for Discourse Power theory. Clement's 'pedagogic and imitative Christianity consequently has no serious interest in the intrusions of an alleged authority. . . It is therefore certainly no accident that Clement shows no more than a superficial interest in the "official" and "sacramental" Church in general. But, it must be said once more, this does not in his case as yet imply conscious rejection or hostility. . . the Church herself never felt any special difficulties with him' (H. von Campenhausen, *Ecclesiastical authority and spiritual power* (London, 1969), 211. Telfer comments on Clement's identification of the true presbyter with his true gnostic (6.13.106.2). 'Like Polycrates, Clement believed that whoever discharges the office of a bishop will receive corresponding exaltation in heaven. But on earth he rejoiced to see the apostolic faith coming to life again in the person of great Christians, rather than as being dependent for its preservation upon a succession of mediocre ones.' W. Telfer, *The office of a bishop* (London, 1962), 118.

heresy as does Irenaeus, nor does he connect heresy with philosophy. Indeed, he shows an ambivalence towards Valentinus and Basilides, whose opinions he can cite in support of his own arguments (3.7.59.3; 6.6.53.1–4).⁷⁸ Clement does not, in his Alexandrian works, engage with Jews and Jewish Christians. He draws on their intellectual heritage in Philo, Aristobulus and others, and mentions the possibility of their conversion (2.1.1.2).⁷⁹

The achievement of the 'school' at Alexandria was later to be seen as a triumph of divine providence in which Christianity and classical culture were brought together. The Hebrew 'philosophy' was identified with the Christian message; the one logos, who was Christ, had spoken by Moses and the prophets. This philosophy is plainly prior to that of the Greeks, which has drawn upon it, and among barbarian wisdom the prophetic bible takes precedence as being more ancient than Greek culture and fundamentally symbolic.⁸⁰

Clement has produced a Christian Hellenism which makes use of the writers of ancient Greece within the context of Greek education and learning. Through mathematics and dialectic, it leads to intellectual realities, to wisdom and to the contemplation of the Good. He covers the doctrines of creation, imitation of Christ, love, eschatology, prayer, penitence and baptism. His way of abstraction towards the supreme being ends in the magnitude of Christ, through whom alone an understanding of the supreme God is reached. His 'physiology' extends beyond the interpretation of natural phenomena to an understanding of the enigmatic language of the scriptures. Clement appears throughout as a teacher.⁸¹ Especially in the *Stromateis* there are learned annotations at every point. While he writes, there is good reason to see his writings as based on words he has already spoken as a teacher.

It is evident that Clement's Jewish, Christian and heretical sources were chiefly of local origin. Christian Alexandrian writings include the Preaching of Peter and the Letter of Barnabas, and several gospels (Hebrews, Thomas, Egyptians). There are also traditions related to Matthew. To these may be added heretical authors like Carpocrates and Cassianus. Other works, which were widely read in Egypt, like the Didache, Hermas,

78 See Le Boulluc, *La notion d'hérésie*, 324–32.

79 We cannot conclude that he wrote in isolation from Jews who were also Hellenised; but the evidence is slight.

80 Clement also takes account of other religions, notably those of the Egyptians, the Scythians, the Chaldeans and the Indians.

81 On this topic, see van den Hoek, 'How Alexandrian was Clement of Alexandria?' 179–94.

1 Clement and Irenaeus, were also of importance. Clement's acquaintance with Irenaeus is linked to the very early diffusion of Irenaeus in Egypt. One papyrus fragment is almost contemporary with the writing of 'Against Heresies'.⁸² The environment of Clement in Alexandria with its *scriptorium*, library and Christian centre for instruction enabled Clement to achieve his interpretation of the bible and his appropriation of the classical tradition. While the older interpretation of Eusebius' catechetical school cannot be sustained, the evidence of Christian teaching in Alexandria is very strong.

ATHENS AND JERUSALEM

Over the last fifty years, we have seen, the discussion of Clement's writings and Alexandrian setting has done much to illuminate his background. Sixty years ago he was described as a meteor whose brief appearance was surrounded by darkness.⁸³ Today, his enigmatic *Stromateis* are seen as an invitation rather than an exclusion. Alexandria is better known, partly through the expansion in Philonic studies. Within this setting, Clement comes to us as an original thinker. As theologian he cites and expounds scripture interminably, for Plato told him that only the gods and their sons can speak of God. Scripture contained the words which God in Christ had spoken and the words which prophets and evangelists, the sons of God, had received from God their father. As apologist, Clement displayed a wide knowledge of Greek literature – not only philosophers but also poets and dramatists pointed to Christ. He explained the complexity of scripture in a way which was intelligible to his culture, and he claimed scripture, the barbarian philosophy, as the crown of all culture. His compressed accounts of scripture and of Greek literature demand conceptual stamina from modern readers. His masses of metaphors require aesthetic and logical awareness. As an evangelist he spoke to those within and beyond the church. Pagans had to find the treasure which was in Christ. Christians had to explore it, to advance beyond the mediocrity in which they slumbered. Tertullian spoke at this time of 'nostra mediocritas'. Faith must grow into knowledge. Clement showed more sympathy with Gnostic sects than did his contemporaries; at least Gnostics saw the need to move on. His own ideal, the true gnostic or

82 See C. H. Roberts, *Manuscripts, society and belief in early Christian Egypt* (London, 1979), 12, 23, 53. Note also L. Patterson, 'The divine became human: Irenaeus themes in Clement of Alexandria', *StudPatr* 31 (1997), 499.

83 Völker, *Der wahre Gnostiker*, 1.

man of knowledge,⁸⁴ was within the reach of all believers. At the same time he attacked Gnostics for their lapses in reason and morals.

Two assessments of Clement's hellenising are worth noting. Clement is recognised as the most Greek of early Christian writers.⁸⁵ Yet he insisted that the source of truth was to be found in the scriptures of the Jews and in the Gospels and Epistles. What then can be said about this ambiguous relationship? To hellenise, or to be Greek, is for Clement to concentrate on forms of expression and language, whereas the realities, the *pragmata*, are one's proper source of concern (2.1.3.1–2). The important thing is to put into words, as best one can, what is necessary. At the end of *Stromateis* VII, Clement makes the same point (7.18.III.3). There are indeed two forms of truth, the words and the things. The Greeks are concerned with words and the barbarians are concerned with things. Appropriately, the lord had a physical body of quite ordinary aspect, so that he would draw people by the intelligible content of his message rather than his outward charm. Expression is not as important as signification (6.17.151.2–4). There was a widespread tradition concerning the absence of physical beauty in Christ.⁸⁶ Greeks speak in philosophy, and Hebrews in enigma and prophecy. Does God speak Greek? Yes, in the sense that the best of the Greeks lead to truth through indirect language which is analogous to prophecy.⁸⁷ Does God speak Greek? No, says Clement, because divine instruction transcends every human dialect. Clement speaks of the true philosophy which comes from the only-begotten who has spoken in different ways from the foundation of the world (Heb. 1:1). This transmission of divine truth through the son (who is the sole wisdom of God) is above all human speech. God knows and hears all, not merely what is spoken, but what is thought, just as for us, comprehension does not come through the physical act of hearing, but by intellection and discernment (7.7.36.5–37.5). God speaks as spirit to spirit (7.7.43.3–5). Finally, the soul of the true Christian becomes so endowed with logos that it reaches the condition of the great high priest and is directly inspired by the logos himself. No longer is such a soul taught by scripture, but lays hold of

84 I have normally translated Clement's true *gnostikos* as 'sage', 'complete Christian', because the literal translation suggests that he was primarily concerned with a competitive Gnosticism. Rather, his chief concern was to join Athens and Jerusalem.

85 On the following, see A. Le Boulluec, 'Clément d'Alexandrie et la conversion du "parler grec"', *Hellenismos, quelques jalons pour une histoire de l'identité grecque* (Leiden, 1991), 233–50.

86 Justin dial. 85.1; 88.8; 100.2; Is. 53:2–3; Tertullian carn. 9; Clement prot 10.110.1; 3.17.103.3; Origen Cels. 6.75.

87 This indirect language is expressed chiefly through the verb *ainittomai*. See below, chapter 3, page 56 on prophecy and Plato.

ultimate reality; no longer is it joined to the logos but becomes logos itself (exc 27.3–5). The voice of the lord is word without shape, pure light and truth itself. So beyond all language there remains another order of communication conveyed by the metaphor of light in a relationship which is face to face with God; in this relationship, light becomes logos.

A second assessment had claimed that Clement's objective was to establish for Christian faith a scientific, comprehensive view of the world.⁸⁸ He had already achieved his solution to some extent in his own person, for he was a convinced Christian and his way of thought was Greek. He stands in sharp contrast to Philo, who remained a law-observing Jew, who appropriated the Hellenic world of thought simply to bring his religion up to date with contemporary ideas.⁸⁹ Clement was, by contrast, as deeply convinced of the world-view of Plato and Greek culture as he was of his Christian faith. Inevitably, his scientific treatment does not always appear scientific to the modern reader, especially in his interpretation of the hidden sense of scripture; but he saw Greek philosophy as a preparatory covenant to be set beside the Mosaic law. Clement could make such a claim because he saw in Greek science the activity of the spirit of God. His belief in the pre-existent Christ enabled him to attribute the works of reason to the divine logos without secularising revelation. Together with *logos*, Clement took over the concept of *physis*. For the nature of the world reflected the transcendent God and was therefore able to provide a norm for human behaviour. In this natural order, the logos reigns supreme. Stoic ethics had seen this much, but had no concept of the fulfilment found in the Christian approach; only through the revelation of God could perfection of human conduct be reached. In all Clement's ethical theory, the freedom of the will remained essential; God had given this freedom to men as their privilege. Clement with his Greek background has no place for original sin; for a good God must grant to men the ability to fulfil the divine prescription. Christ stands as the incarnate but ever-present logos, whose activity is a place where grace is found. Over past history Christ has taught and guided mankind until the perfection of God's revelation in his incarnation. 'I am', says Christ in the *Protrepticus*, 'the logos of God, who became man, so that you might learn from a man how a man can become God.' There are many uneven points in Clement's account of the perfect Christian.

88 On the following, see M. Pohlenz, *Klemens von Alexandria und sein hellenisches Christentum*, NAWG.PH (Göttingen, 1943), 175f.

89 See below, chapter 4.

Not all achieve the perfection of his Hellenic Christian, who is distinct from other believers. Yet Clement has a strong sense of Christian community; indeed, his picture of the true gnostic who is found in the church is a much more effective weapon against heresy than negative vituperation. Clement's importance for the development of Christianity is hard to exaggerate. His introduction of the claims of scientific thought and investigation gave to Christianity the heritage of Greece.⁹⁰

Tradition at Alexandria has been identified with a liberal approach to Christian theology; it was praised by the rationalist Renan.⁹¹ Yet by others an opposite verdict was returned: the Alexandrian school was seen as the end of Hellenism at the hands of the Hebrew God. These two estimates of the tradition of Alexandria both contain an element of truth. On the one side it brings a liberalism to Jewish and Christian tradition, on the other hand it submits the Greek mind to the dominance of biblical teaching.

The prime concern of intellectual history is with 'ways of speaking as ways in which people in the past *made sense* of their world' and 'the most complex explorations of the limits of language or conceptual frames at a given time will always have pride of place'.⁹² Clement's place in the joining of Athens and Jerusalem will continue to attract interest.⁹³ The diverse studies of the past fifty years have brought us to a position where we can grasp a clearer picture of Clement's contribution. Clarity comes with a recognition that the *Stromateis* are miscellanies, that Clement repeats himself because everything is joined to everything. 'This idea is the relatedness of all things among themselves, the intelligible bond which sets them in order, and brings them together again, which makes them one beneath their multiplicity, one by their cohesion and their unity'.⁹⁴

90 Pohlenz wrongly sets in contrast to Clement the western tradition which derives from Tertullian.
91 See A. Le Boulluec, 'L'école d'Alexandrie. De quelques aventures d'un concept historiographique', in *Alexandrina. Hellenisme, judaïsme et christianisme à Alexandrie*, FS C. Mondésert (Paris, 1987), 403–17.

92 A. Brett, 'What is intellectual history now?' in D. Cannadine, *What is history now?* (Basingstoke, 2002), 127.

93 C. Edsman, 'Clement of Alexandria and Greek myths', *StudPatr* 31 (1997), 385–8. 'The classical philologist Christian Gnilka has recently criticized a number of formulations intended to characterize the encounter of classical antiquity and Christianity. He calls the christianization of the old world a "macro-mutation", a quite new creation. In this process elements of the ancient culture are taken up in a selective manner. The church fathers adopted a method *χρησις ὀρθή usus iustus*, "the right use"' (see Chr. Gnilka, *ΧΡΗΣΙΣ, Die Methode der Kirchenväter mit der antiken Kultur. I. Der Begriff des 'Rechten Gebrauchs'* (Basel/Stuttgart, 1984), 25f) (385).

94 C. Mondésert, *Clément d'Alexandrie, introduction à l'étude de sa pensée religieuse à partir de l'écriture* (Paris, 1944), 151. For example, his true dialectic will meet us in his account of the bible, his Platonic metaphysics and his logic. It plays a different role in each context.