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extract

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Be gracious, to us your children, O *paidagogos*,
"Father – charioteer of Israel" (2/4 Kgs 2:12),
Son and Father, both in one, O Lord! ...
Grant that, by night and day till the perfect day,
we may give thanks and praise to the only Father and Son,
Son and Father, the Son, *paidagogos* and teacher,
with the Holy Spirit.
Clement of Alexandria, *Paed*. III,101,2[1]

Proliferation of Divine Reciprocity. Clement of Alexandria's Trinitology as a Reaction to Valentinian Pleromatology

Veronika Černušková

1. God is one; 2. The Spirit gives the vision of the Father's face, which is the Son; 3. Divine femininity; 4. Mary as an image of the Father's motherhood; 5. Femininity and motherhood of the Son; 6. Son proceeds from the Father; the Incarnate Word proceeds from the Word being with God; Conclusion

Trinitology is certainly not one of the topics that Clement would discuss systematically. If we overlook the not very conspicuous place in the fifth book of his *Stromata* where the phrase "the holy Trinity"[2]

1 Modified translation of Eric Osborn, in *Clement of Alexandria*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2005, 251. As for the title "charioteer of Israel", see below note 24.

2 *Strom*. V,14,103,1 (transl. E. Osborn, in *Clement*, 149-150): "«The king of all things is their cause. Second and third to him are joined those who govern in second and third place» (Plato, *Ep.* II 312e1-4). I cannot understand these words

is used, and if we regard the several explicit trinitarian formulations in his other writings[3] "as expressions of the common faith of the Church rather than of the author's own theological quest,"[4] we might even get the impression that Clement does not consider the blessed Trinity at all. In this paper, I would like to show that this topic is, on the contrary, one of the most precious thoughts that Clement held in his thoughtful heart.

The basic outlines of Clement's trinitology were drawn years ago in an unsurpassed way by Eric Osborn in his book on Clement, which he wrote after more than fifty years of studying the author.[5] According to Osborn, one of the three fundamental "problems which govern Clement's thinking and which hold his thought together" is the question "how two distinct beings, father and son, constitute one God".[6] Osborn concludes that

> the centre of Clement's understanding of God is the reciprocity of father and son. This is the first ellipse, with the two foci being father and son. The second ellipse has, as its foci, God and the human person, whose

in any other way than as a reference to the holy trinity; for the third is the holy spirit and the second is the son through whom all things were made according to the will of the father." In his trinitarian interpretation of the Platonic text, Clement may be following Justin, *I Apol.* 60,6-7 (Jean Daniélou, *Gospel Message and Hellenistic Culture*, transl. John Austin Baker, Westminster Press, London 1973, 111-112); he quotes the same text without the trinitarian interpretation in two other places, *Protr.* 6,68,5; *Strom.* VII,2,9,3.

3 *Paed.* III,101,1-2; *Quis div.* 34,1; 42,19-20; *Ecl.* 13; 29,1.

4 Jules Lebreton, "*La théologie de la Trinité chez Clément d'Alexandrie*", in *RSR* 34 (1947), 55-76.142-179, here 62.

5 E. Osborn, *Clement of Alexandria*, Oxford 2005. Cf. also Ilaria Vigorelli, "*Schesis and Trinitarian Thought in Clement of Alexandria: From Philosophy to Scriptural Interpretation*", in Veronika Černušková – Judit Kovacs – Jana Plátová (eds.), *Clement's Biblical Exegesis. Proceedings of the Second Colloquium on Clement of Alexandria (Olomouc, May 29–31, 2014)*, Leiden 2016, 147-161.

6 E. Osborn, *Clement*, xiii. See esp. 107-154 and 254-268.

> reciprocity culminates in vision "face to face". Finally, the third ellipse is the reciprocity of man with man in godlike forgiveness. These themes spring from John (e.g. 15 and 17) and 1 John 4.[7]

Further, Osborn says:

> What place do Clement's three ellipses leave for the holy spirit and the trinity? In depending so heavily on chapters 1 and 17 of the Fourth Gospel, can Clement provide a place for the "other paraclete", the spirit of truth (John 14:16-20)? When he comes, the reciprocal knowledge and indwelling of father, son and believer will be evident (John 14:20). Because of the reciprocity of father and son, the spirit will lead into all truth, because he speaks from their fullness, not from himself, joining believer with father and son and thereby proliferating reciprocity (John 16:13-15). For Clement, reciprocity proliferates from father and son to spirit.[8]
> The trinity is a proliferation of divine reciprocity.[9]

There is almost nothing to add to Osborn's brilliantly simple insight into Clement's trinitology. The notion of the reciprocity of the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit – the reciprocity of the Father with the Son which proliferates into reciprocity of the Son with believer and then reciprocity of man with man (and so in fact creates a chain of more and more pairs), is clearly present in Clement's work.

Osborn, however, does not and cannot substantiate this vision with a sufficiently large number of unambiguous and easily quotable statements by Clement,[10] as Clement has no ambition, or rather deliberately abandons the ambition, to give a systematic doctrine

7 Ibid., 107.

8 Osborn, *Clement*, 149. Ibid., 152: "The trinity is seen [by Clement] in terms of the relation of reciprocity. For this relation proliferates from father and son to spirit and then to the ultimate union of believers in God. Reciprocity is the heart of the divine mystery of love whereby God is joined to man."

9 Ibid., 150.

10 As the most explicit expression of this divine reciprocity between the Father and the Son, Osborn refers to *Paed*. I,71 and 88,2-3.

of the Holy Trinity and man's participation in the divine life.[11] As previously noted, the author's statements concerning the Trinity are merely hints. The author of a theological treatise has, from Clement's perspective, the sole task of pointing the reader in the direction of the knowledge of God.[12] The one who "leads the believer into all truth" about the Father and the Son, and who enables the person to establish a relationship with the Son and relationships with other people, is then the Holy Spirit Himself. Nevertheless, the role of the Holy Spirit as revealer, unifier, and promoter of divine reciprocity is never expressed explicitly by Clement. The questions of who or "what the Holy Spirit is" (*Strom*. V,88,4), what exactly it means that it is breathed to the believer in baptism, and how one is filled with the Holy Spirit[13] (which is certainly not "a portion of God in us")[14] are avoided by Clement in his extant work, pointing out that "concealing the depths of knowledge is «good incredulity», as Heraclitus says, for «incredulity escapes from ignorance» (fr. 86 D.-K.)".[15]

Osborn does not explicitly discuss the question whether or in what manner Clement, with his concept of the relationship between the

11 Cf. *Strom*. VII,84,2: ἄμεινον δὲ οἶμαι ὑπερθέσθαι τὴν τοιαύτην φιλοτιμίαν διὰ τὸ μῆκος τοῦ λόγου, τοῖς πονεῖν ἐθέλουσι καὶ προσεκπονεῖν τὰ δόγματα κατ' ἐκλογὴν τῶν γραφῶν ἐπιτρέψαντα.

12 Cf. *Strom*. IV,4,4.

13 *Strom*. V,87,4-88,2: πολλοῦ γε δεῖ ἄμοιρον εἶναι θείας ἐννοίας τὸν ἄνθρωπον, ὅς γε καὶ τοῦ ἐμφυσήματος ἐν τῇ γενέσει μεταλαβεῖν ἀναγέγραπται ... ἡμεῖς μὲν τῷ πεπιστευκότι προσεπιπνεῖσθαι τὸ ἅγιον πνεῦμά φαμεν.

14 *Strom*. V,88,3: ἀλλ' οὐχ ὡς μέρος θεοῦ ἐν ἑκάστῳ ἡμῶν τὸ πνεῦμα.

15 *Strom*. V,88,2.4-5: ὅπως δὲ ἡ διανομὴ αὕτη καὶ ὅ τί ποτέ ἐστι τὸ ἅγιον πνεῦμα, ἐν τοῖς Περὶ προφητείας κἀν τοῖς Περὶ ψυχῆς ἐπιδειχθήσεται ἡμῖν. ἀλλὰ τὰ μὲν τῆς γνώσεως βάθη "κρύπτειν ἀπιστίη ἀγαθὴ" καθ' Ἡράκλειτον, "ἀπιστίη γὰρ διαφυγγάνει μὴ γιγνώσκεσθαι" (Heraclitus fr. 86 D-K.). The significance of this reference of Clement is often discussed, see esp. Heinrich Wiese, *Heraklit bei Klemens*, diss., Kiel 1963; Alain Le Boulluec, *Commentaire*, in Idem, *Clément d'Alexandrie, Stromate V*, SC 279, Paris 1981, 288-290.

Father and the Son and the proliferating reciprocity, responds to the Valentinian notion of the divine Pleroma, consisting of a chain of pairs of masculine and feminine aeons.

As is well known, the Valentinian Pleroma, i.e. the Fullness, is a supra-heavenly unity in multiplicity.[16] The statements about it in the Valentinian texts are very diverse and it is not possible to analyse them all here.[17] Some basic information about the Valentinian Pleroma, approximately such as Clement also had at his disposal, is provided by Irenaeus in the first three chapters of his *Adversus haereses*.[18] According to this exposition, the Pleroma is made up of thirty aeons divided into pairs (syzygies).[19] The first, masculine aeon of the first pair is often called

16 The terms "Pleroma" (Fullness) and the plural "aeons" (ages) were taken by the Valentinians from the language of the New Testament writings. The term "aeons" is perhaps a direct echo of the Septuagint-inspired formulation "for ever and ever" (εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων); the antecedent for the term "Pleroma" was again probably the words of the hymn in the *Epistle to the Colossians* on the fullness of the Godhead (Col 2:9; 1:19), filled, however, with an entirely unbiblical, Platonising content. Cf. John Dillon, "Pleroma and Noetic Cosmos. A Comparative Study", in Idem, *The Great Tradition. Further Studies in the Development of Platonism and Early Christianity*, Farnham 1997. On the very concepts of "Pleroma" and "aeons" see ibid. 107. The author here shows that Valentinian ideas about the Pleroma are primarily a reinterpretation of Plato's *Timaeus*. On the general influence of Greek philosophy on gnosis and *vice versa*, see Arthur Hilary Armstrong, *Gnosis and Greek Philosophy*, in Barbara Aland – Ugo Bianchi – Martin Krause – John Robinson – Geo Widengren (eds.), *Gnosis. Festschrift für Hans Jonas*. Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht Göttingen, 1978, 87-124; Mark Edwards, *Pauline Platonism*, in Idem, *Christians, Gnostics and Philosophers in Late Antiquity* (Variorum Collected Studies) Routledge, London 2012, 205-221.

17 For more detailed information see e.g. Einar Thomassen, *The Spiritual Seed – The Church of the Valentinians*, Brill, Leiden – Boston 2006, 193-247.

18 Cf. esp. Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.* I,1-3.

19 Not all Valentinian descriptions of Pleroma, however, give the number and names of the aeons contained in the Fullness, cf. e.g. the pleromatology of the *Gospel of Truth* or the *Tripartite Tractate*.

Βυθός or Βάθος, the Depth (cf. *Exc*. 29),[20] or the Forefather (Προπάτωρ), the Unborn Father (Πατήρ), the First Beginning (Προαρχή), or the Unspeakable (Ἄρρητος, cf. *Exc*. 29). His female companion is called Silence (Σιγή, cf. *Exc*. 29), Thought (Ἔννοια) or Grace (Χάρις). From the first syzygy comes the second, whose male aeon is most often named Intellect (Νοῦς), Only-begotten (Μονογενής), Beginning (Ἀρχή) or in other sources Father (Πατήρ),[21] and whose female partner is Truth (Ἀλήθεια). From the second pair then proceeds the third one: the Word (Λόγος) and the Life (Ζωή), and from these the fourth pair: the Man (Ἄνθρωπος) and the Church (Ἐκκλησία). From the third pair then come five more and from the fourth six more pairs of aeons. The first pair of aeons, therefore, in the Valentinian vision, gives rise to a second pair, which in turn gives rise to a third, and so on.

In this article, I would like to seek answers to the following questions: in which passages of Clement's work does his understanding of the Holy Trinity as proliferating reciprocity appear? And can critical reaction to Valentinian pleromatology be traced in Clement's trinitological remarks?

1. God is one

Clement explicitly affirms that God is one, "the Son in the Father and the Father in the Son" (*Paed*. I,24,3; John 10:38; 17:21-26).[22] "God is

20 The term Βάθος (perhaps derived from Eph 3:18) is used in *Exc*. 29 or e.g. in Irenaeus, *Adv. haer*. I,2,2, or Hippolytus, *Ref*. VI,30,7. To determine which passages of the *Excerpts* are extracts from Valentinian sources and which are Clement's own notes I accept (with minor reservations) Sagnard's classification: François Sagnard (ed.), Clément d'Alexandrie, *Extraits de Théodote*, SC 23, Paris 1948, 28-29, see Klement Alexandrijský, *Výpisky z Theodota*, *Czech translation and introduction with commentary Veronika Černušková*, Oikoymenh, Praha 2021, 42-43.

21 Irenaeus, *Adv. haer*. I,11,1.

22 Similar statements: *Paed*. I,53,1; I,62,4; I,71,1; *Protr*. 110,1.

one and transcends unity and is beyond monad itself" (*Paed*. I,71,1).[23] The Father, as "the only one truly being: the one who was, is, and will be", is good (*Paed*. I,71,2-3).[24] The Son is just, and "this designation is derived from the equal power" of the Father and the Son "by virtue of the mutual relation of love: God has made us to know the face of the good beam-balance (ἀγαθὸς ζυγός) of justice: Jesus, and through him ... we have known God" (*Paed*. I,71,3).[25] Since the term ζυγός (here "beam-balance") means primarily "yoke", it is probably an allusion to Matt 11:29-30 (χρηστὸς ζυγός), and as the term also has the meaning of a pair, a couple of persons,[26] the Matthean "to take upon oneself a good yoke" according to Clement refers to justice and to the equality of partners.[27] Thus, in accordance with this multiple meaning of ζυγός

23 Ἓν δὲ ὁ θεὸς καὶ ἐπέκεινα τοῦ ἑνὸς καὶ ὑπὲρ αὐτὴν μονάδα. It is a reminiscence of Philo's *De praem. et poen*. 40: ἐκεῖνο μὲν γάρ, ὃ καὶ ἀγαθοῦ κρεῖττον καὶ μονάδος πρεσβύτερον καὶ ἑνὸς εἰλικρινέστερον, Cf. also *Leg. alleg*. II,3.

24 *Paed*. I,71,2.3: τὸν ὄντως μόνον ὄντα, ὃς ἦν καὶ ἔστιν καὶ ἔσται, δείκνυσιν θεόν ... καθὸ μὲν πατὴρ νοεῖται, ἀγαθὸς ὤν, αὐτὸ μόνον ὅ ἐστι κέκληται, ἀγαθός. The formulation "the only one truly existent" is Platonic, but Clement also bases it on God's saying in the midst of the burning bush in Exod 3:14, as given in the Septuagint: ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ὤν (cf. *Strom*. VII,54,4, and *Quis div*. 7,2), and he alludes here also to Rev 1:4: ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος.

25 Cf. Osborn, *Clement*, 247-257.

26 Henry George Liddell – Robert Scott – Henry Stuart Jones (eds.), *A Greek-English Lexicon with a Supplement*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1996, s. v. I, IV, VII.

27 *Strom*. V,30,3. Translation by William Wilson (ed.), *The Writings of Clement of Alexandria*, in Alexander Roberts – James Donaldson – Arthur Cleveland Coxe – Allan Menzies (eds.), *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York 1905: "Now Pythagoras made an epitome of the statements on righteousness in Moses, when he said: «Do not step over the balance»; that is, do not transgress equality in distribution, honouring justice so. ... Wherefore the Lord says: «Take my yoke, for it is gentle and light» (Matt 11:29-30). And on the disciples, striving for the pre-eminence, he enjoins equality with simplicity, saying that they must become as little children (Matt 18:3)."

(yoke, beam-balance and pair) and Clement's previous interpretation, we might read *Paed*. I,71,3 as follows: "God has made us know the face of a good partnership-equality: Jesus, and through him ... we have come to know God."

> He is both just and good: he, who is truly God, who is himself all things, and all things are he, because he is himself God, the only God. ... Therefore, God is good of himself, but just for our sake and because he is good. He shows us his justice through his Word from the beginning when he became a father. For before becoming the Creator, he was God, he was good; that is why he wished to become creator and father. And this relation of love became the beginning of justice: he let his sun shine (Matt 5:45) and sent his Son. The Son was the first to proclaim the good justice which is from heaven, for he said: "No one knows the Son but the Father, and no one knows the Father but the Son" (Matt 11:27). This balanced reciprocity of knowledge is a symbol of the justice that existed at the beginning. Afterwards, justice came down among men, both in the Scriptures and in the flesh: in the Word and in the Law, drawing men to salutary repentance; for it is good.[28]

28 *Paed*. I,88,1-3. Modified translation of the one by Simon Wood (ed.), *Clement of Alexandria, Christ the Educator*, The Catholic University of America Press, Washington 1954: Καὶ ὁ αὐτὸς δίκαιος καὶ ἀγαθός, ὁ ὄντως θεός, ὁ ὢν αὐτὸς τὰ πάντα καὶ τὰ πάντα ὁ αὐτός, ὅτι αὐτὸς θεός, ὁ μόνος θεός. ... Ὥστε ἀγαθὸς μὲν ὁ θεὸς δι' ἑαυτόν, δίκαιος δὲ ἤδη δι' ἡμᾶς, καὶ τοῦτο ὅτι ἀγαθός. Τὸ δίκαιον δὲ ἡμῖν διὰ τοῦ λόγου ἐνδείκνυται τοῦ ἑαυτοῦ ἐκεῖθεν ἄνωθεν, ὅθεν γέγονεν πατήρ. Πρὶν γὰρ κτίστης γενέσθαι θεὸς ἦν, ἀγαθὸς ἦν, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο καὶ δημιουργὸς εἶναι καὶ πατὴρ ἠθέλησεν· καὶ ἡ τῆς ἀγάπης ἐκείνης σχέσις δικαιοσύνης γέγονεν ἀρχή, καὶ τὸν ἥλιον ἐπιλάμποντος τὸν αὑτοῦ καὶ τὸν υἱὸν καταπέμποντος τὸν αὐτοῦ· καὶ πρῶτος οὗτος τὴν ἐξ οὐρανῶν ἀγαθὴν κατήγγειλεν δικαιοσύνην, "Οὐδεὶς ἔγνω τὸν υἱὸν εἰ μὴ ὁ πατὴρ" λέγων, "οὐδὲ τὸν πατέρα εἰ μὴ ὁ υἱός". Αὕτη ἡ ἀντιταλαντεύουσα γνῶσις ἐπ' ἴσης δικαιοσύνης ἀρχαίας σύμβολον. Ἔπειτα δὲ ἐπὶ τοὺς ἀνθρώπους καταβέβηκεν ἡ δικαιοσύνη καὶ γράμματι καὶ σώματι, τῷ λόγῳ καὶ τῷ νόμῳ, εἰς μετάνοιαν τὴν ἀνθρωπότητα βιαζομένη σωτήριον· ἀγαθὴ γὰρ ἦν. Ἀλλ' οὐχ ὑπακούεις τῷ θεῷ· σεαυτὸν αἰτιῶ τὸν κριτὴν ἐπισπώμενος.

So God is one, and at the same time a pair in an equal partnership,[29] a pair who share a mutual and justly equal knowledge. The incarnate Word is the face – the expression – of this relationship, this mutual knowledge in God. There is no question here of masculinity and femininity: the divine reciprocity is not the union (syzygy, συζυγία) of male and female beings, although the relation between them may be called ζυγός, couple.

2. The Spirit gives the vision of the Father's face, which is the Son

Osborn's scheme of the three ellipses suggests that Clement's conception of the Trinity cannot be dissociated from his idea of salvation and the deification of man. The relationship between the Father and the Son is opened to man by the action of the Holy Spirit: man is invited into a relationship with the Son, and thus with his Father (which is salvation), and he is invited to embrace the relationship with the Son as one of equality, in the fullness of knowledge, "face to face" (which is deification). And this relationship of man with Christ is at the same time open to his neighbours and also invites them to reciprocity. In this way, man actually engages in God's work of salvation.

Clement presents God's salvation work as a ladder, a chain, or a hierarchy, at the top of which stands the Son, who is the face of the Father.[30] The Son is followed by angels and after angels by men. Salvation

29 Cf. also *Paed*. III,14,1: "The heavens are gratified with two charioteers." The two charioteers here are the sun and moon gods of the story of Faëthon (cf. Ovid, *Metam*. II,208-209). Clement, however, may also see in them a prefiguration of God the Father and the Son, cf. *Paed*. III,53,2; III,101,1.

30 *Exc*. 10,6; 12,1; 23,5; *Strom*. V,34,1; VII,58,3; *Paed*. I,22,3; 57,2; 71,3; *Quis div*. 23,2. The Christological title "Face of the Father", inspired by the Jewish intertestamental tradition (and also used in Valentinian gnosis, April DeConick, "*Heavenly Temple Traditions and Valentinian Worship*", in Carey Newman – James Davila – Gladys Lewis (eds.), *The Jewish Roots of Christological*

proceeds from the Son and is mediated by those who stand nearest to him, that is, by the angels to the people, and is then communicated among the people to each other (*Strom.* VII,9,2-3; VI,161,6; *Ecl.* 16; 57,4-5). The power that draws the saved within the whole hierarchy is not theirs – it is the Holy Spirit: the Son is like a magnet and the Spirit the magnetic energy:

> For on one original first Principle, which acts according to the [Father's] will, the first and the second and the third depend. Then at the highest extremity of the visible world is the blessed band of angels; and down to ourselves there are ranged, some under others, those who, from One and by One, both are saved and save. As, then, the minutest particle of steel is moved by the spirit of the Heraclean stone (cf. Plato, *Ion* 533d–e; Philo, *De opif.* 141), when diffused over many steel rings; so also, attracted by the Holy Spirit, the virtuous are added by affinity to the first abode, and the others in succession down to the last.[31]

So it is still the same picture: The Holy Spirit draws man into divine reciprocity, establishes a relationship and causes continuity throughout the chain or ladder of salvation, and invites man to ascend to its summit, to the First Principle, who is the Only-begotten God (John 1:18, *Strom*. V,81,3-4), also called "the image of the invisible God" and "the Firstborn of all creation" (Col 1:15; *Strom*. V,38,7; *Exc.* 8,2), the Firstborn Son (πρωτόγονος υἱός, *Strom*. VI,58,1), "the first-created Word" (πρωτόκτιστος λόγος, *Exc.* 20), "the first-created Wisdom" (πρωτόκτιστος σοφία, *Strom*. V,89,4).[32] The Son proceeds from the

Monotheism, Baylor University Press, Leiden – Boston – Köln 1999, 308-341, 325-330), was common in the Catholic Church, cf. e.g. Tertullian, *Adv. Prax.* 14.

31 *Strom* VII,9,4. (Translation by W. Wilson (ed.), *The Writings of Clement of Alexandria*, in Alexander Roberts – James Donaldson – Arthur Cleveland Coxe – Allan Menzies (eds.), *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York 1905; cf. *Strom.* II,26,2.

32 The expression πρωτόκτιστος is otherwise in Clement's work almost exclusively reserved for the highest angels, only in *Exc.* 20 is it used of the Word and in

Father, and yet is equal to the Father (*Paed*. I,71; 88,2-3); "both are one being, God" (*Paed*. I,62,4). It would be better, then, to say, in Osborn's words, that "the highest rung of the ladder of being is not a rung, but a beam-balance,"[33] the reciprocity of Father and Son proliferating in the Holy Spirit.

In his *Stromata*, Clement draws attention to the fact that "the Stoics say that God, like the soul, is essentially body and spirit": this idea, according to Clement, can be found "explicitly in Scripture."[34] In *Excerpta ex Theodoto*, Clement attributes a certain corporeality to the whole hierarchy of salvation from the lowest to the Son (*Exc*. 1012): nothing that exists is without form, appearance, shape, and body (*Exc*. 10,1-2). All that exists is circumscribed (περιγράφειν), otherwise it could not even be called by name. But form and corporeality are of a different kind in spiritual entities than in earthly ones (*Exc*. 10,2). Spiritual beings, for example, are not distinguished into male and female:

> Those [bodies] which are here are male and female and differ from each other, but there he who is the Only-begotten and inherently intellectual has been provided with his own form and with his own nature which is exceedingly pure and sovereign and directly enjoys the power of the Father.[35]

The higher a being is in the salvific hierarchy, the subtler is its body (*Exc*. 10,1). The corporeality of spiritual beings is relative: the angels, for example, are incorporeal in comparison with the stars as bodies of this world, but they are also corporeal in comparison with the Son

Strom. V,89,4 of the Wisdom, as also Michel Cambe points out (*Avenir solaire et angélique des justes. Le Psaume 19/18 commenté par Clément d'Alexandrie*, Strasbourg 2009, 51-53). Cf. Prov 8:22: κύριος ἔκτισέν με ἀρχὴν ὁδῶν αὐτοῦ; Sir 1:4: προτέρα πάντων ἔκτισται σοφία.

33 Osborn, *Clement*, 140.

34 *Strom*. V,89,2.

35 *Exc.* 10,3. Translation by Robert Pierce Casey (ed.), *The Excerpta ex Theodoto of Clement of Alexandria*. Studies and Documents 1, Christophers, London 1936.

(*Exc*. 11,3). Also, the Son is incorporeal in comparison with the angels, but in comparison with the Father he is corporeal (*Exc*. 11,3; cf. *Strom*. V,89,2) – he is the face of God. This face of God can be beholden by those who are nearest to Him with an eye that is corporeal in relation to Him, but incorporeal in relation to what stands below (*Exc*. 10,6). Only that which is corporeal can be seen. Thus, the highest created beings, the protoctists (or the first-created angels or gods), can see the Son, themselves, and the beings and things below; the archangels can see the protoctists, themselves, and everything below, but they can no longer see the Son, for he is incorporeal in relation to them (*Exc*. 12,1). The angels can see the archangels and each other, but the level of the protoctists is already beyond the reach of their vision – these are "things into which they desire to look" (1Pt 1:12; *Exc*. 12,1-2) but cannot.

The incarnate Saviour, who ascended up to the highest heaven (Heb 4:14, 8:1), as we have said, invites man to ascend to the top of the salvific hierarchy, that is, to the level of the protoctists – the gods – to see himself: the Son who is equal to the Father. Through this deification, man enters the highest level of reciprocity, which "is based on the knowledge of the gods" (*Strom*. II,102,1).[36]

The Holy Spirit, who is poured out on the believer at baptism, sustains the whole salvific hierarchy by his power. It is therefore he who makes the vision of God, i.e. deification possible for man.[37] In Osborn's words, the Holy Spirit leads the baptized one into all truth: he speaks (and shines) from the fullness of Father and Son, joining the believer

36 Καί μοι δοκεῖ παγκάλως Ἱππόδαμος ὁ Πυθαγόρειος γράφειν· "τᾶν φιλιᾶν ἃ μὲν ἐξ ἐπιστάμας θεῶν, ἃ δ' ἐκ παροχᾶς ἀνθρώπων, ἃ δὲ ἐξ ἀδονᾶς ζώων." Cf. *Strom*. VI,73,4: "Through love he is already present [here on earth] among those among whom he will be [one day]." (My translation.) ἐν οἷς ἔσται, δι' ἀγάπης ἤδη γενόμενος.

37 *Paed*. I,28,1.

with Father and Son and thereby proliferating reciprocity.[38] On the basis of this experience of relating to God, man is then further led by the Holy Spirit to relate to other people: he becomes the focus of the third ellipse, the second focus of which is another person in need of his mercy.

3. Divine femininity

We have said that, according to Clement, the human souls, the angels, and the Son himself are spiritual bodies which cannot be divided into male and female (*Exc.* 10,3): they are neutral (οὐθέτεραι), neither male nor female.[39] The Father, however, is above all, according to Clement: he is invisible and not circumscribed (ἀόρατος, ἀπερίγραφος; *Strom.* V,74,4),[40] without form and invisible (ἀσχημάτιστος, ἀόρατος; *Strom.* V,36,3). All that can be named is begotten (*Strom.* V,83,1): the Father is unbegotten (ἀγέννητος; V,82,3; cf. *Exc.* 45,1) and nameless (ἀνωνόμαστος; *Strom.* V,81,6; cf. *Exc.* 31,3).[41]

38 On Clement')s conception of love as a partnership with God cf. Laura Rizzerio, "*L'éthique de Clément et les philosophies grecques*", in *Studia Patristica* 41 (2006), 231-246.

39 *Strom.* VI,100,3. Cf. *Paed.* I,10,1-2 (transl. S. P. Wood, modified): "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» (Luke 20:34-35). There, the rewards of this life, lived in the holy union of wedlock (συζυγία), await not man or woman as such, but the human person, now divided because he is split in two by lust."

40 Cf. *Strom.* II,6,2-3: περιέχων οὐ περιεχόμενος ἢ κατὰ ὁρισμόν τινα ἢ κατὰ ἀποτομήν.

41 Similarly, when Clement speaks of Moses' entrance into the Sinai darkness, he represents it as entering into "hidden and obscure thoughts of the Being" (εἰς τὰς ἀδύτους καὶ ἀειδεῖς περὶ τοῦ ὄντος ἐννοίας, *Strom.* II,6,1). This is a literal quotation of Philo, *De post. Caini*, 14 (εἰς ἀειδῆ καὶ ἀόρατον ἔρχεται ζήτησιν). Cf. Philo, *De mut. nom.* 7-11: εἰς γὰρ τὸν γνόφον φασὶν αὐτὸν οἱ θεῖοι χρησμοὶ εἰσελθεῖν, τὴν ἀόρατον καὶ ἀσώματον οὐσίαν αἰνιττόμενοι; *De gig.* 54: εἰς τὸν γνόφον, τὸν ἀειδῆ χῶρον.

The Father is therefore, according to Clement, incorporeal. Nevertheless, in his book *Who is the rich man that is being saved?*, an often-quoted sentence refers to God the Father as both male and female. This obviously figurative statement is based on, among other things, the closing sentence of the prologue in the Gospel of John: "No one has ever seen God. It is the only God (the only Son),[42] being in the bosom of the Father (εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρός), who has made him known."[43] The term κόλπος, as is well known, denotes in Greek the breasts, the bosom, or lap and also the womb.[44]

At the same time, Clement considers this verse of Scripture to be the key to understanding what love is:

> Look at the mysteries of love, and then you will behold the bosom (κόλπος) of the Father, whom the only God alone has made known (John 1:18). It is he himself, God-love (1John 4:8, 16), and out of love he was captured (ἐθηράθη) by us: his ineffability (τὸ μὲν ἄρρητον αὐτοῦ) [is] Father, but his compassion (τὸ συμπαθές) for us became Mother: The Father by loving became feminine (ἀγαπήσας ἐθηλύνθη), of which the mighty sign is He whom He begot of Himself. This fruit born of love is love.[45]

Clement evidently alludes here to the doctrine of the Valentinian Gnostics about the syzygies of the divine Pleroma, the highest of which, according to some sources, is the pair of the Ineffable Father,

42 Clement quotes John 1:18 in both important variants: ... μονογενὴς θεὸς ὁ ὢν εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρός... (*Strom*. V,81,3; *Quis div*. 37,1; *Exc*. 6,2; cf. *Exc*. 8,1); μονογενὴς υἱὸς ὁ ὢν εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρός... (*Strom*. I,169,4; cf. *Exc*. 7,3; 9,3).

43 John 1:18, my translation. NRSV reads: "No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known."

44 Henry George Liddell – Robert Scott – Henry Stuart Jones (eds.), *A Greek-English Lexicon with a Supplement*.

45 *Quis div.* 37,1-2, my translation. On *Quis div.* 36-37 see esp. Carlo Nardi, "*Il seme eletto e la maternità di Dio nel Quis dives salvetur di Clemente Alessandrino*", in *Prometheus* 11 (1985), 271-286.

and the Mother Grace.[46] He translates this idea into orthodoxy, as if to say: there is no primordial dyad of Man and Woman from which more and more syzygies emanate. God is one, He is both Father and Mother. He is the μητροπάτωρ of whom Orpheus speaks,[47] he is Love (1John 4:8, 16), which virginally begets[48] the only Son. And this Son is also the only Love itself. As the Father, God is ineffable and unsearchable; as the Mother, she allows herself to be "captured", to be grasped – her compassion is intelligible to us, and from her womb the Son is born, who gives men knowledge of the ineffable Father (cf. also Matt 11:27 par.).

According to Clement, the God Father also plays the role of mother in relation to created man: getting out of the baptismal water is like childbirth, with God as the "parent" and water as the "womb" (μήτρα) from which the born-again Christian proceeds (*Strom*. IV,160,2). The Father's love for man is characterized by maternal concern (*Protr*. 91,3; *Paed*. I,21,2), by feminine care: when the Israelites wandered in the wilderness, the Lord "followed them as a handmaid (θεράπαινα)" (*Protr*. 9,1).

According to Clement, the secret of love is therefore the mother's bosom or the womb of the Ineffable: "womanhood" or "femininity" which God receives out of love – his compassion for us, his tenderness and grace. Certainly, God was and is and always will be what He is (*Strom*. V,141,2). At the same time, however, we can figuratively say that, as the Ineffable Father, He "became" Grace, Compassion, "woman".[49] Or else: as the Good God, He "became" the Father, the Creator, the Just (*Paed*. I,88,2), "the man".

46 *Exc*. 29-31, which also speaks of the Father's compassion.

47 *Orficorum fragmenta* 248a, in *Strom*. V,125,2; 126,2.

48 Cf. *Exc*. 19,4.

49 Similarly, Clement says in *Exc*. 19,1-2, that the Word "became" the Son and already in the beginning "became" flesh.

4. Mary as an image of the Father's motherhood

Clement testifies explicitly of Jesus' mother Mary and her virginal conception and birth.[50] In the extant work, however, he does not place them before the eyes of his readers as the image of the Son proceeding from the Father, but rather surprisingly compares Mary to Scripture, which virginally begets the truth:

> But, as appears, many even down to our own time regard Mary, on account of the birth of her child, as having been in the puerperal state (λεχὼ εἶναι), although she was not. For some say that, after she brought forth, she was found, when examined, to be a virgin. Now such to us are the Scriptures of the Lord, which gave birth to the truth and continue virgin, in the concealment of the mysteries of the truth. And "she brought forth, and yet brought not forth (τέτοκεν καὶ οὐ τέτοκεν)", says the Scripture;[51] as having conceived of herself, and not from conjunction. Wherefore the Scriptures are pregnant for gnostics; but the heresies, not having learned them, dismissed them as infertile.[52]

The Virgin Mary gave birth to the Son of God, the Truth, and yet she cannot be said to have passed through childbirth: she did not become a puerperal woman, she remained a virgin.[53] Similarly, the Scripture, the Old Covenant of the Father with His people, virginally

50 In addition to the sites cited below, see *Strom*. I,147,5; III,102,1; VI,127,1; 132,4. On Clement's mariology cf. Alois Müller, *Ecclesia – Maria. Die Einheit Marias und der Kirche*, Universitätsverlag, Freiburg 1951, 100-106. See also Petr Havlík, "*Elements of Mariology in Clement of Alexandria and Gregory of Nyssa: Mary and the Church*", in Ilaria Vigorelli (ed.), *From Alexandria to Nyssa. Clement and Gregory in Conversation*, Brill, Leiden, forthcoming.

51 Logion 18. Alfred Resch (ed.), *Agrapha. Aussercanonische Schriftfragmente*, Hinrichs, Leipzig 1906, 305-306.

52 *Strom*. VII,93,7–94,3, transl. W. Wilson, modified.

53 Cf. Miklós Gyurkovics, "*The Concept of the Virginal Motherhood Interpreted by Clement of Alexandria in the Context of Other Alexandrian Religious Literary Works*", in *ETJ* 2/2 (2016), 203-228, 205-206.

produces the Truth, but at the same time, the secrets of the Truth still remain hidden in Scripture. It cannot be said that the Old Covenant is emptied by the birth of the Truth – that it loses its value by the coming of the Christ who is foretold in it and for whom it gradually prepared the people of God. No, the whole of Scripture – the Father's covenant – is still pregnant with the Truth – the Son.

In the background of this image, after all, is the idea of the Father who virginally begets the Son, while the Son remains hidden in his womb/bosom (κόλπος). For the Father's womb, that depth and ineffability of God (*Strom*. V,81,3), is the "place" from which the Son – the eternal Truth – proceeds and at the same time never departs, as we will discuss later (*Exc*. 7,3-4).

Mary, the virgin mother of the Word, is also for Clement an image of the Church:

> O mystic wonder! The Father of all is one, the Word who belongs to all is one, the Holy Spirit is one and the same for all. And one alone, too, is the virgin Mother. I like to call her the Church. She alone, although a mother, had no milk because she alone never became a wife. She is at once virgin and mother: as virgin, undefiled; as mother, full of love. Calling her children about her, she nourishes them with milk that is holy: the Infant Word. That is why she has no milk, because this Son of hers, beautiful and all hers, the Body of Christ, is milk. The new people she fosters on the Word, for He Himself begot them in throes of His flesh and wrapped them in the swaddling clothes (Luke 2:7) of His precious blood (1Pt 1:18-19). What a holy begetting! What holy swaddling clothes! The Word is everything to His little ones, both father and mother, educator and nurse. "Eat my flesh," he says, "and my blood" (John 6:53). He is Himself the nourishment that He gives. He delivers up His own flesh and pours out His own blood. There is nothing lacking His children, that they may grow. What a mysterious paradox![54]

54 *Paed*. I,42,1–43,1, transl. S. P. Wood. Cf. *Paed*. I,21,1; III,99,1.

The Church is a mother whose birth is virginal in the sense that she does not induce lactation.[55] The milk with which the Church nourishes her children is not her own: it is the body and blood of Christ himself.

5. Femininity and motherhood of the Son

Note, however, that in the text quoted above, not only the Church is called mother, but also the Word, i.e., the Son of God. Clement seems to express the same thing in the sixth book of the *Stromata* (*Strom*. VI,146,1-2) in interpreting the commandment, "Honour your Father and your Mother." According to Clement, this is the commandment to worship God the Father and the divine Knowledge[56] or Wisdom, i.e. God the Son (1Cor 1:24).

The Son is, in Clement's understanding, that Wisdom which God "created as the beginning of his ways" (Prov 8:22; Sir 1:4):[57] he is "the first-created Wisdom" (πρωτόκτιστος σοφία, *Strom*. V,89,4), the paternal Wisdom (πατρικὴ σοφία, *Paed*. I,97,3).[58] It is through the Son – the Wisdom, that man receives knowledge from God, and therefore the Son/Wisdom is called the Mother of the righteous – those who know God (*Strom*. VI,146,2), and the Mother of the new people, whom he begot in throes of his flesh and wrapped them in the swaddling clothes of his precious blood and he nourishes them with himself (*Paed*. I,42,3).

55 The comparison of the Church to Mary has its limits: Clement probably did not imagine that Mary would not nurse the infant Jesus, cf. Luke 11:27, in *Paed*. I,43,3-4.

56 This may be an allusion to the Valentinian doctrine that calls the masculine aeon of the second dyad "the Son" or "the Knowledge", cf. *Exc*. 31,3.

57 *Strom*. VI,58,1; VII,7,4.7; V,89,4.

58 In the *Stromata*, Clement says explicitly that the Son of God "was «before the foundation of the world» (Eph 1:4) the counsellor of the Father" (*Strom*. VII,7,4); he is the origin and the action of the Father, the Word by which all things were created. Being «the Firstborn of all creation», He is also the Wisdom whom God «made as the beginning of His ways» (Prov 8:22), cf. *Strom*. VII,7,7.

Thus the Word is called not only the Child[59] and the Son, but also the Father[60] and the Mother. As we read above, the Word is a spiritual body that cannot be understood as merely masculine (*Exc.* 10,1-3). We cannot call Him the Daughter, only because of the historical event of the incarnation and birth of the man Jesus.

6. Son proceeds from the Father; the Incarnate Word proceeds from the Word being with God

The theme of divine motherhood and breastfeeding as a metaphor for the Eucharist is the subject of much of the first book of Clement's *Paedagogus*.[61] Clement here presents a threefold interpretation of 1Cor 3:1-3,[62] by which he again opposes the Valentinian Gnostics. They apply Paul's words, "I have given you milk to drink" (γάλα ὑμᾶς ἐπότισα) to the believers of the Catholic Church, and see themselves as spiritual recipients of the "meaty food" (βρῶμα). Clement is trying to show that the milk of which Paul speaks can be both a drink and a food (it could

59 *Paed.* I,24,2; *Quis div.* 33,6; 34,1.

60 *Paed.* I,24,2; 42,3; III,101,1. This may be an allusion to Valentinus, who (according to Irenaeus) calls the masculine aeon of the second dyad "the Father", cf. Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.* I,11,1. About the title of "Father" for the Christ cf. Vittorino Grossi, "*Il titolo cristologico 'Padre' nell'antichità cristiana*", in *Aug* 16 (1976), 237-269, esp. 253-254.

61 *Paed.* I,34,3–50,2.

62 Cf. esp. Judith Kovacs, "*Echoes of Valentinian Exegesis in Clement of Alexandria and Origen: The Interpretation of 1Cor 3,1-3*", in Luigi Perone (ed.), *Origeniana Octava: Origen and the Alexandrian Tradition*, I, Peeters, Leuven 2003, 317-329; Annewies van den Bunt (van den Hoek), "*Milk and Honey in the Theology of Clement of Alexandria*", in Hans Jörg Auf der Maur (ed.), *Fides sacramenti, Sacramentum fidei. Studies in honour of Pieter Smulders*, Van Gorcum, Assen 1981; Verna Harisson, "*The Care-Banishing Breast of the Father: Feminine Images of the Divine in Clement of Alexandria's Paedagogus I*", in *Studia Patristica* 31 (1995), 401-405.

be the "liquid nutrition" of the basic teaching for the catechumens and the "meaty food" of Eucharist for the baptized). And he insists that this milk – both in its liquid and solid form – is the Word Himself (cf. 1Pt 2:2: λογικὸν γαλά). It is Christ's shed blood and his body, given for the life of the world. Milk is actually blood and blood is liquid flesh: for once a woman has given birth, her (menstrual or umbilical) blood begins to flow into her breasts and there, "under the influence of her tender feelings, it becomes pale and white, so that the child may not be afraid of it".[63] The delight, which the reception of milk produces in the breastfed child, is then a picture of Christian's joy in the knowledge of the Truth, which takes place in grateful (Eucharistic) contemplation (*Paed*. I,36,5).

We have read that the Word is not only the teacher, *paedagogus* and father, but also the mother of believers (*Paed*. I,42,3). Therefore, in Clement's first interpretation of 1Cor 3,1-3, Christ, the Word, is represented as a "woman" in whose body the change of blood into milk, which is also the Word, takes place (*Paed*. I,35,3). So the Word proceeds from itself in a certain way. We shall return to this point.

We have already seen the second interpretation: the mother here is the Church, likened to Mary, who was a virgin *in partu* and therefore did not become a common nursing woman – the Church gives milk, but not of herself: the truth with which the believer is nourished in the Scriptures and in Eucharistic contemplation is not a product of the Church – it is the Word Himself, the "milk of heaven".[64]

63 *Paed*. I,39-40. Cf. Dawn LaValle, "*Divine Breastfeeding: Milk, Blood, and Pneuma in Clement of Alexandria's Paedagogus*", in *Journal of Late Antiquity*, 8/2 (2015), 322-326.

64 *Hymnus* 42-47 addresses the Son of God, "Christ Jesus, the milk of heaven, from the sweet breasts of the lovely Bride, your wisdom, flowing forth." The virgin bride is here again meant to be the Church (Annewies van den Hoek, "«*Hymn of the Holy Clement to Christ Saviour*». *Clement of Alexandria, Pedagogue* III 101,4", in Matyáš Havrda – Vít Hušek – Jana Plátová (eds.), *The Seventh Book*

In the third interpretation, Clement identifies God the Father himself as the nursing woman:[65] it is the "breast of fatherly love" that gives the milk of the Word to those who long for truth.[66] "We flee to «the care-soothing breast» (Homer, *Ilias* XXII,83) of the Father – to the Word (*Paed*. I,43,4)", to the only Son, who rests on the bosom (κόλπος) of the Father (John 1:18).

From Himself, and not from a union of two (of a syzygy), the Father begets the only Son. The Word proceeds from the Father and at the same time is constantly present in him as truth in Scripture and as milk in the breast of a nursing woman. Or else: the Word itself is the breast of the Father (*Paed*. I,43,4; *Hymnus* 51). The milk, which is also the Word, comes from this breast of the Father, and thus becomes the fruit of his own self – as he were his own son – as the first interpretation of 1Cor 3:1-3 in *Paedagogus* suggests, and as Clement explicitly says in the fifth book of the *Stromata* and in the *Excerpts from Theodotus*. Here the Saviour, the incarnate Word, is presented as the "offspring" of the Word abiding with the Father:

> The Word that proceeded forth was the cause of creation; then it also begets himself (ἑαυτὸν γεννᾷ) when the Word becomes flesh (John 1:14) to be seen.[67]
>
> "And the Word became flesh" (John 1:14) not only by becoming man at his Advent [on earth], but also "at the beginning" (John 1:1) the immutable

of the Stromateis. *Proceedings of the Colloquium on Clement of Alexandria (Olomouc, October 21–23, 2010)*, Brill, Leiden – Boston 2012, 312-354), probably again alluding to the Valentinian doctrine of the aeon of Wisdom, cf. e.g. *Exc.* 26,1.

65 A. van den Hoek, "Milk and Honey", 31 points out the continuity of this statement of Clement (and also I,46,1 and Irenaeus' formulation in *Adv. haer.* IV,38,1) with *Odes Sol*. 4,10; 8,14; 19; 35,5, where the Word of God is spoken of as milk: it is the milk of the Father, the Son is the cup, and the Spirit pours the milk.

66 *Paed*. I,46,1; cf. *Paed*. I,49,3; *Strom*. VII,93,5.

67 *Strom*. V,16,5. My translation.

> Word (ὁ ἐν ταὐτότητι λόγος) became a son by circumscription and not in essence. And again he became flesh when he acted through the prophets. And the Saviour is called an offspring of the immutable Word (τέκνον δὲ τοῦ ἐν ταὐτότητι λόγου).[68]

Clement illustrates his claim by quoting from the Gospel of John: "«At the beginning was the Word, the Word was with God. What was in it was the Life» (John 1:13-4). «And the Lord is the Life» (John 14:6; 11:25)" (*Exc*. 19,2). The Word-Life proceeds from the Word being with God, as the offspring from the mother, as milk from the body of a nursing woman, and at once it is the same immutable Word:

> For on high, too, he was Light (John 1:4; 8:12) and that which "was manifest in the flesh" (1Tim 3:16) and appeared here is not later than that above nor was it curtailed, in that it was translated hither from on high, changing from one place to another, so that this was gain here and loss there. But he was the Omnipresent, and is with the Father, even when here, for he was the Father's Power.[69]

The incarnate Word, this milk that flows from the Word being with God, is mediated in the Church to the faithful as the drink of the basic teaching, passively received by the catechumens, and as milk in the form of the "meaty food" of the Lord's blood and body, that is, the active contemplation of the baptized, their grateful acceptance of Christ's sacrifice: the Eucharist. It is the Word of God who "became flesh at the beginning" (*Exc*. 19,1), God the Son "being in the bosom of the Father" (John 1:18), the one and indivisible God in God (*Exc*. 8,1).

68 *Exc*. 19,1-2 in R. P. Casey (ed.), *The Excerpta ex Theodoto of Clement of Alexandria* modified by Mark Edwards in Idem, *Clement of Alexandria and His Doctrine of the Logos*, in VChr 54 (2000), 159-177, 175, where he suggests translating ἐν ταὐτότητι in the *Exc*. as "immutability".

69 *Exc*. 4,2, transl. R. P. Casey; cf. *Strom*. VII,5,5.

Conclusion

According to Clement, "God is one and transcends unity and is beyond monad itself" (*Paed*. I,71,1). His fullness is constituted by a single couple, not, however, a pair of male and female entities, but by the reciprocity of two persons who are gender-neutral and can be spoken of as both male and female. The Holy Spirit "speaks" or "shines" from this Fullness: by his power a redemptive chain is formed and maintained, in which salvation from the one Saviour is propagated and transmitted through the relationships between the individual saved beings.

"At the beginning" (John 1:1) "the Word become flesh" (John 1:14) to be seen and known (cf. *Paed*. I,7,3): the Son, like all saved spiritual beings, has a relative corporeality so that he may be the object of vision/knowledge and thus enable man to enter into relationship with him. But this corporeality is of a different kind than that of earthly beings: spiritual bodies, e.g., are not distinguished into male and female. They are gender-neutral, or rather, the unity of masculinity and femininity is present in them. Thus, for example, we can speak of the Son of God as the mother of the believer without abandoning faith in the incarnate man Jesus. And even the incorporeal God the Father could be spoken of as male or as female. It would be inappropriate to assume that masculine gendered language and metaphors related to masculinity can exclusively describe Him/Her who is invisible, not circumscribed, nameless and incorporeal.

The Father, who is (figuratively speaking) both Father and Mother (μητροπάτωρ), gives birth to the Son. The Son proceeds from the Father and at the same time he does not leave his bosom, just as the divine Scriptures give birth to the Truth and yet remain pregnant with the Truth, the Word – the Word proceeds from God, and at the same time remains in God, just as milk proceeds from the breasts of a nursing mother, and still is present in those breasts. Or rather, the Word itself is the breast of the Father, and at the same time the Word itself is the milk of the Father: from the Word being with God is born the Word

Incarnate, the Life. The Word-Life proceeds from the Word being with God as the offspring from the mother, as milk from the body of a nursing woman, and at the same time it is the same immutable Word.

Interestingly enough, Clement never speaks of femininity (or masculinity) in relation to the Holy Spirit, where we would be most likely to expect it,[70] given the feminine gender of the noun "spirit" in Semitic languages.[71] In fact, Clement is almost completely silent about the role of the Holy Spirit in the Trinity. We can only intuit or "distil" some traces of Clement's understanding of this role of the Spirit from Clement's work, as Osborn does. This and many other questions concerning the Holy Spirit are intentionally left unanswered in Clement's extant work.

Clement's trinitology obviously responds to the Valentinian doctrines of the Fullness (Pleroma) as a unity in multiplicity and a chain of pairs of aeons into which the spiritual seed present in the chosen people is to enter through the Saviour. According to Clement, the Fullness of the reciprocity of the Father and the Son is proliferated by the Word becoming flesh, so that He makes Himself visible/knowable in the light of the Holy Spirit, i.e. enters into reciprocity with man, who then, in the power of the Spirit, forms a reciprocity with another man on the basis of mercy and forgiveness. Thus a chain of pairs of saved souls is generated.

Clement's statements about the femininity and maternity of the Father and the Son represent an orthodox alternative to the Valentinian idea of feminine beings present in the divine Fullness. Clement's statements on the divine femininity, originally paraphrases of Gnostic

70 Cf. e.g. *Gospel of Philip* 55,23-33; *Acts of Thomas*, 27; 50; 133; Hippolytus, fr. 7. Hans Achelis (ed.), *Hippolytus Werke*, Hinrichs, Leipzig 1987, vol. I,2 54; Jerome, *Comm. on Isaiah* 40,9 (CCSL 73, 459).

71 Cf. e.g. Sebastian Brock, "*The Holy Spirit as Feminine in Early Syriac Literature*", in Janet Soskice (ed.), *After Eve. Women, Theology and Christian Tradition*, Harper-Collins, London 1990, 73-88.

doctrines with which Clement deeply disagrees, become under his pen a representation of the Gospel testimony of God's mercy and love for man: God "maternally" undergoes suffering Herself rather than allow the suffering of the beloved. God cares and gives Herself – gives Her body and blood as a nursing mother gives them to Her child. God's love "womanly" comes closer and allows Herself to be reached and understood. The Holy Trinity is a proliferation of divine reciprocity precisely because of this "feminine" closeness that the Father and Son offer to people in the Holy Spirit.[72]*

Abstract

The aim of this article is to discuss Clement of Alexandria's Trinitarian doctrine in the context of his confrontation with Valentinian Gnosticism. Trinitarian theology is only briefly suggested in Clement's works, and especially the role of the Holy Spirit in the Trinity is nowhere clearly discussed by the author. However, the concept of the reciprocal relationship between the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit – a relationship that humans are to enter into through the power of the Holy Spirit – is one of the main lines of Clement's thought. The question is to what extent Clement, with his concept of the proliferating reciprocity of the Father and the Son, responds to the Valentinian notion of the divine Pleroma (Fullness), consisting of a chain of pairs of masculine and feminine aeons, and their theory of salvation as the entry of the spiritual seed present in man into the Fullness. This article explores how Clement uses Valentinian concepts of divine syzygies, the aeon procession and femininity in the divine Fullness to express his own view of the Trinity and divine love and mercy.

72 * This article is a result of the research funded by the Czech Science Foundation as the project GA ČR 22-20873S "Clement of Alexandria's Biblical Exegesis as a Source of His Concept of Corporeality".

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extract

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Modern Orthodox Theology: Past–Present–Future

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This lecture and the occasion of its delivery are due to Tibor Görföl's translation into Magyar of two of my books—my first and my latest, *primus et novissimus—The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition: from Plato to Denys* (1981, republished with an Afterword, 2006), and *Modern Orthodox Thinkers: from the* Philokalia *to the Present* (2015). I first want to express my gratitude—and wonder—at Dr Görföl's taking on this task. I have done some translating myself, and it is a gruelling business. I hope very much that Tibor did not too often say to himself—why am I doing this?

Tibor asked me to talk in this lecture about how I see Orthodox theology now, eight years on from my book, and I shall do that, but first let me say a little about myself. Thinking about what to say to you, I was struck by certain parallels between the two books. First of all—and most obviously—the fact that both books trace a theme by discussing a series of thinkers in something like chronological order: in the first case starting in the fourth century BC and ending up in the sixth century AD (though in its penultimate chapter, leaping forward to the sixteenth century and discussing the themes of darkness in St John of the Cross, for me, then at least, the archetypal mystic of Western Christian mysticism), in the second case beginning with the publication of the *Philokalia* in 1782 at the end of the eighteenth century and then tracing a line, or several lines, from that moment in Ottoman Greece (where it was compiled; the place of publication was Venice) through contemporary movements in Russia, which I followed through the nineteenth century, through the intellectuals exiled from

Bolshevik Russia by Lenin in a decree of 1922—the thinkers of what is often referred to as the 'Philosophers' Steamer' (though there were several)—their presence, and the impact of their presence in the West, principally Paris, and then following the rays that spread during the period *entre deux guerres* continuing to illuminate Paris, spreading further afield through other European countries, mostly England and Greece, as well as Serbia and Romania, and across the Ocean to America. That sounds straightforward, but in fact involves settling various questions, even if only *ambulando*, as I walked, so to speak. The central question in the first book was: what is mystical theology? which I interpreted as closely bound up with the influence on Plato on the succeeding centuries. I knew then, and would recognize more readily now, that there are other strands of what one might call mystical theology, altogether more innocent of the influence of Plato, not least the Syrian tradition, with its origins in such as Ephrem the Syrian, and his successors, including great men of prayer, such as Philoxenos of Mabbug, Isaac the Syrian, Joseph Abdisho, and John of Dalyatha. In explanation of my bias—not in defence of it—I would say that this world has been opened up only in my lifetime, principally by Dr Sebastian Brock, a lifelong friend from whom I have learnt very much, but who is, in fact, only a few years older than me. With the second book, I suppose the crucial question was: what *is* Orthodox theology? I simplified that question by the decision—barely a decision, more rising from a settled conviction—to talk, as I had in my first book, about people, about 'thinkers', as my title had it, because it *is* my conviction that thinking comes first, ideas thereafter. Ideas do not float in some noetic ether and combine and oppose, separate and develop, on their own: they are thought, and what they mean is what thinkers meant by them. That may sound obvious, but there are influential currents of thought in intellectual history that subordinate the thinker to the thought. I don't mean by that that one should not—or even cannot—study Orthodox theology—or anything else—in terms of ideas,

doctrines, and so on. That is certainly legitimate, and a fine example of just that is to be found in a book, even bigger than mine, by another friend of mine, Paul Ladouceur, called *Modern Orthodox Theology—"Behold, I make all Things New"*, published just four years after mine (2019). Dr Ladouceur's book is arranged chronologically, starting further back than mine, in fifteenth-century Russia, tracing a story through Russia, the émigrés—distinguishing more sharply between those who belonged to the 'Russian Religious Renaissance' and those who adhered to the Neopatristic synthesis—to Greece and Romania, before embarking on a thematic study of Orthodox theology—God and Creation, Divine Humanity, the Church, Ecumenical Theology, the Christification of Life, Social and Political Theology, the Name of God controversy, the question of the Ordination of Women, followed finally by two chapters of 'assessment'.

My own approach raised a different kind of questions, and indeed solved them, at least provisionally, by making the publication of the *Philokalia* a turning-point, or watershed, in the history of Orthodox theology, which entailed ignoring the waters that continued to flow in their own way, by-passing the watershed: in other words, the traditional Orthodox ways of theology that had emerged in eighteenth-century Russia and in the newly independent Orthodox countries that had thrown off the 'Ottoman' yoke. Seeing the publication of the *Philokalia* in 1782 (the year after Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, something I have commented on elsewhere) as a watershed in Orthodox theology is to make a value judgment—something I found easy, as it followed directly enough from what had led me to write my first book: a conviction that God is encountered in prayer, first and foremost, a conviction that had, it seemed to me in my formative years, been largely ignored, but which still seems to me too obvious to ignore. You will not be surprised to learn that the first theological book to make a deep and lasting impression on me was Rudolf Otto's *Das Heilige* (in English: "The Idea of the Holy"), which I must have read when I was seventeen.

So let us embark on considering my subject, "Orthodox Theology: past–present–and future". Again, at the present moment, I cannot consider this in the abstract. First of all, in the last year, we have seen the death of two great Orthodox theologians, whose influence in the Orthodox world was, and is, huge, and whose death leaves a palpable sense of loss among many, not only among the Orthodox. These two Orthodox theologians are, of course, Metropolitan Kallistos (Ware) who died on 24 August last year, just a few days short of his 88th birthday, and Metropolitan John (Zizioulas) who died on 2 February this year a few weeks after his 92nd birthday. They were both scholars and theologians of world renown, and both metropolitans of the Œcumenical Patriarchate. Their differences are significant: whereas Met. Kallistos was an archetypal English gentleman with a superb education in the Greek and Roman Literature, Ancient History and Classical Philosophy at Oxford University, where he was later to hold the position of Spalding Lecturer in Eastern Orthodox Studies from 1966 until his retirement in 2001, Met. John studied in the universities of Thessaloniki and Athens, then abroad at the Ecumenical Institute in Bossey, Switzerland, following that by some years in the United States, with Fr Georges Florovsky at Princeton (where Met. Kallistos had also spent a year), before pursuing a stellar international university career, with posts at Athens (from which he had his doctorate), then Edinburgh and Glasgow in Scotland, and later London, finally becoming a professor at Athens, when he returned to Greece as a metropolitan. Though both professional academics, they were rather different. Met. Kallistos' published work included few books—one, his first book, *The Orthodox Church*, written as a very new convert and published in 1963, which has never been out-of-print and been updated a couple of times as well as being translated into several languages, has been a best seller, the influence of which has been enormous; in the following year there appeared a book with a much more restricted readership, *Eustratios Argenti: A Study of Greek Church under Turkish*

Rule, which focused on a little-known eighteenth-century Greek lay theologian, bringing clarity to a subject then hardly discussed; both these books were written while he was engaged in research at Oxford, leading to the award of a doctorate (D.Phil.); somewhat later, in 1979, he published *The Orthodox Way*, about the Orthodox approach to God, practical rather than speculative. Besides these books his publications took the form of articles, less on academic topics (though based on thorough research), than on pastoral and spiritual themes. Met. John's publications were rather different: his one monograph was his doctoral thesis, published in English translation as *Eucharist, Bishop, Church: The Unity of the Church in the Divine Eucharist and the Bishop during the First Three Centuries* (2001); the rest of his publications took the form of lectures and articles directed to an academic, or at least, intellectual audience, later gathered together in several books. Although they both became metropolitans of the Œcumenical Throne, Met. Kallistos was a monk of Patmos, and had in Oxford been parish priest of the Greek Orthodox Community there for more than forty years before becoming Metropolitan Kallistos in 2007, whereas Metropolitan John had been a lay academic theologian before his elevation as Metropolitan in 1986. Furthermore, though Met. Kallistos had many research students, who did not, alas, include me, he saw his theological mentorship as helping his students to find themselves, think their own thoughts—he left behind him no 'school of theology'—whereas I think one can speak of a Zizioulan 'school of theology'—which has found unofficial institutional status at the Ecclesiastical Academy in Volos, and which has its adherents, as well as opponents, though, surprisingly, Met. John had very few doctoral students, maybe only one, Fr Nicholas Loudovikos, who has become one of the most penetrating critics of his *Doktorvater*. The comparison of the two departed metropolitans could be continued. They were both deeply committed to the Ecumenical Movement, taking part in conversations, official and unofficial, with other Christians, not

least Catholics and Anglicans; with Met. John playing a significant role in the World Council of Churches. Finally, though both Greek metropolitan bishops, Met. Kallistos came to Orthodoxy through the Russians and retained a love and sympathy for the Russian Orthodox Church throughout his life, Met. John's attitude to the Russians was, let us say, more guarded.

This leads me to the other issue that I cannot ignore at this present moment. We are now living in a world where the unity of Orthodoxy, founded on *sobornost'*—an all-embracing unity, neither confected nor imposed—has been shattered by the schism, imposed by the Patriarch of Moscow, between the Russian patriarchate and the Œcumenical patriarchate. It is now of nearly five years' standing, and has opened up a chasm in Orthodoxy that has been used to justify the invasion of Ukraine by Russia and the fratricidal war that is still continuing. We might well ask: what *is* Orthodox theology? What kind of a theology can it be, too frail to prevent war between fellow-Orthodox Christians, or so wicked as to justify it?

What am I to say? I think I shall proceed by, first, saying a little more about the two recently departed metropolitans and what their death means for modern Orthodox theology.

Met. Kallistos' gifts to the Church were above all personal: to his parishioners, to the students who listened to his lectures, to the graduate students he supervised, to his fellow theologians who sought his advice. As noted, he did not produce major theological works, or arresting theological notions, he addressed problems, often enough problems brought to him, or issues that had direct relevance to the spiritual life of Christians, Orthodox or not. This was, I am convinced, a deliberate choice. He was a brilliant scholar, with superb command of Greek and Latin, and an acute intellect. But he did not want to shine; he wanted to do good. First and foremost, he was a monk and pastor. Although he sometimes felt that he had not lived up to his monastic vocation—never spending more than two or three months a

year at his monastery on Patmos—those who experienced his wisdom and concern, especially as a spiritual father, standing (and latterly sitting) with his spiritual children before Christ in confession, found themselves convinced that the words they heard from him came from a heart purified and made a conduit for a love more divine than human. He spoke for an Orthodoxy that transcended the divisions that have become increasingly apparent in the new millennium, an Orthodoxy that did not think of itself as possessing the truth, but rather possessed by the truth, an Orthodoxy that was founded on and nurtured by a profound sense of God's love, incarnate in Christ, manifest on the Cross, and filled by the grace of the Resurrection.

Met. John Zizioulas remained, it seemed to me, an academic, even as a metropolitan. His ideas—about the Church as a eucharistic community existing under a bishop—found from most an enthusiastic reception, at least to begin with; some come to feel that his emphasis on the role of the bishop only encouraged a one-sided sense of episcopal dignity, not something, in my view, in which bishops need much instruction.[1] Nevertheless, the central theme of his theology was κοινωνία, communion: it was this that defined the nature of the church and this that nourished its life. For Met. John, *koinonia* is a sharing in common among free human beings: something rendered impossible by the Fall. For after the Fall such freedom has been compromised: it is only by coercion that humans can attain a kind of community, to which the sole alternative is some form of anarchic individualism—

1 For examples of such criticism, see two pieces by Greek priests: Fr Demetrios Bathrellos' contribution to a symposium on Zizioulas' theology, idem, *Church, Eucharist, Bishop: The Early Church in the Ecclesiology of John Zizioulas*, in Douglas H. Knight (ed.), *The Theology of John Zizioulas: Personhood and the Church*, Ashgate, Aldershot 2007, 133-145; and Chrysostom Koutloumousianos, *The One and the Three: Nature, Person, and Triadic Monarchy in the Greek and Irish Patristic Tradition,* James Clarke, Cambridge 2015; Greek original published in 2018.

both far from true *koinonia*. In such a genuine community, its members exist as free persons. Zizioulas drew on a long-established opposition between *person*, nurtured by and fostering *koinonia*, and *individual*, a unit separated from other similar units, pursuing its own agenda unless coerced by some superior force. He argued that personhood is a notion unique to Christianity, quite unknown in the classical world which thought in essentially non-personal terms. The notion of personhood, Zizioulas argued, emerged in the trinitarian theology of the Cappadocian Fathers—St Basil the Great, St Gregory of Nazianzus, and St Gregory of Nyssa—and their distinction between person, or *hypostasis*, and being, nature, or substance, later given philosophical lineaments by St Maximos' contrast between the way (or *tropos*) of *existing* (τρόπος τῆς ὑπάρξεως), characteristic of personhood, and the principle (or *logos*) of *being* (λόγος τῆς οὐσίας), belonging to nature. Zizioulas further analysed the notion of person or *hypostasis* in terms of a contrast between 'biological' and 'ecclesial' *hypostasis*. A biological *hypostasis* is the result of the natural process of conception and birth, giving rise to an individual determined by his or her nature; an ecclesial *hypostasis* comes about through the new birth in baptism into Christ's death and resurrection—by which we become members of the Church, the body of Christ. So it is that true *koinonia* is to be found in the Eucharistic assembly of persons freely gathered together under the bishop. As biological *hypostaseis*, humans aspire towards a freedom they can never attain; as ecclesial *hypostaseis*, humans are granted freedom that comes through grace—something beyond human attainment. On the biological level human existence is determined by the past and subject to nature, whereas on the ecclesial level it is set free from the past through repentance and oriented towards the future. The horizon of biological existence is natural and bound by death, whereas the horizon of ecclesial existence is personal and eschatological, moving towards the eternal life of the Resurrection. Apart from Christ, human existence is essentially tragic, in the risen

Christ, the human looks towards victory, "a victory not of nature but of the person, and consequently not of man in his self-sufficiency but of man in his hypostatic union with God".[2]

These summaries—in very different veins—give, perhaps, some inkling of what we lost in world Orthodoxy by the death of these two priests and thinkers. But we should note what is common to them, despite their differences. First of all, in one sense or another personalism: a sense of the importance in Christianity of the person, free and created in the image of God. Secondly, and flowing from this, the importance of encounter with God, whether in gathering together for the Eucharistic celebration or in personal prayer, for example, practice of the Jesus Prayer. And finally, a continuing sense of the importance of the Fathers of the Church, a category that includes, but is not limited to, the Fathers of the early Christian centuries.

I want turn my attention now to the question of what is Orthodox theology: first, exploring the question in itself, and then offering some thoughts on where Greek Catholics stand in relation to Orthodox theology, or, as I see it, what role they have in what we call Orthodox theology.

If we look back over the history of Orthodox theology throughout the last two centuries, we cannot avoid the contrast, perhaps amounting to a dichotomy, between what is often called the 'Russian Religious Renaissance'—to use the title of the famous book by Nicolas Zernov—and the Neopatristic Synthesis, a term invented by Fr Georges Florovsky. It refers to different trends among the Orthodox *intelligentsia* in the Russian emigration, especially those who came to settle in Paris in the 1920s. The idea of this dichotomy is Florovsky's, who saw his theological task, pursued with immense learning in his only real book, *Пути Русского Богословия*, "Ways of Russian Theology" (the English

2 John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, Darton, Longman and Todd, London 1985, 64.

translation widely recognized as in various ways inadequate). As I have argued in the past, the title does not mean "the various different ways of Russian theology", as it is usually understood. The psalm verse quoted on the title page suggests otherwise—"For the Lord knows the way of the righteous, and the way of the wicked shall perish…" (Ps 1:6)—there are just two ways, and his book is mostly about the first, the way of the wicked, only in the last chapter does he turn to the way of the righteous.

Florovsky intended in his book to clear the ground for the new approach to theology that he came to call the 'Neo-patristic synthesis'. He recounted the errant wanderings of Russian theology—which he wanted to characterize as 'pseudomorphosis', borrowing a geological term, applied to intellectual history by Oswald Spengler in his *The Decline of the West*—to the point where it needed to be recalled to the 'patristic style and method' which had been 'lost'. This "patristic theology must be grasped from within", he declared.[3] Florovsky spoke of 'intuition' as well as 'erudition', and argued that to regain this patristic way of thinking, or *phronema*, "Russian theological thought must still pass through the strictest school of Christian Hellenism".[4] Vladimir Lossky was to echo Florovsky in this, and though they both thought that Bulgakov was a kind of misbegotten progeny of the 'Babylonian captivity' (another borrowing of Florovsky's, this time from Luther—in captivity now not so much to arid scholasticism as to the all-too-fertile imaginings of German Idealism, with its roots in gnosticism and esotericism), in truth, Bulgakov shared many of their concerns, though perhaps had more of a sense of what was needed if Orthodox theology was to speak in the West with a voice not too forbiddingly alien.

3 Georges Florovsky, *Ways of Russian Theology*, vol. 2, The Collected Works of Georges Florovsky, vol. 6, Büchervertriebsanstalt, Vaduz 1987, 294.

4 G. Florovsky, *Ways*, 2, 297.

In thinking about the nature of Orthodox theology, then, we inherit a deep tradition of genuine reflection about the nature of theology, and in particular, Orthodox theology, on which we can and must draw in our new situation. But we *are* in a new situation; things have changed and in a variety of ways our problems are different from those that exercised the great theologians of the Russian emigration. These differences are both internal and external, both concerned with who we Orthodox are, and what are the challenges presented us by the world in which we live our earthly lives and to that extent belong. The question of who we are is becoming more and more unavoidable. There are now Orthodox theologians whose intellectual training is wholly or mostly Western: Metropolitan Kallistos is a fine example, but the same is true in a different way of Frs Schmemann, Meyendorff and Bobrinskoy; they were not Russian theologians who found themselves in the West, but people of Russian descent, educated in the West, and therefore with an intellectual formation that is genuinely Western. It is, it seems to me, becoming difficult to be clear what constitutes Orthodox theology and who is an Orthodox theologian. Another ingredient in the mix that makes up this issue is that, since the time of the period *entre deux guerres* and immediately after, the audible Orthodox voice in the West has become much less exclusively Russian. There are now plenty of other voices—Greek, Serbian, Romanian—and since the collapse of the Soviet Union we can now hear the voices of those belonging to traditionally Orthodox countries who are not émigrés and encounter the West from—in some ways—a very different perspective. It is still striking, however, that many of these newer voices—for example, to stick to an older generation and avoid a multitude of names, Fr Dumitru Stăniloae, St Justin Popović and Christos Yannaras—still seem to share an understanding of theology as outlined above: marked by personalism, theology as rooted in encounter with God, and also the importance of the Fathers. The world of Orthodox theology is now peopled with a diversity of voices that was less true (or less evidently

true) of the last century. The question of what defines Orthodox theology is one that is going to demand some attention.

How, then, could we define Orthodox theology? A theology that is faithful to Scripture and the Œcumenical Councils? That would, however, scarcely distinguish Roman Catholic theology from Orthodox theology, at least in aspiration. To expand this base by adding the Constantinopolitan councils of 1341, 1351 and 1368—as Lossky did explicitly,[5] and others have done implicitly—looks a little artificial, while to include the 'symbolic books' of the seventeenth century would seem to reduce Orthodoxy to a denomination, which I think any thinking Orthodox would want to repudiate (though there are worrying signs that some young Orthodox theologians would find it acceptable).[6]

All I have are some suggestions for discussion. First, who is a theologian? Not primarily academic theologians. According to the Divine Liturgy, it is the bishops who have the grace "rightly to divide (define? discern?) the word of Your truth" (τῶν ὀρθοτομοῦντων τὸν λόγον τῆς σῆς ἀληθείας, as we pray in the Anaphora of St John Chrysostom, quoting 2Tim 2:15)—not theologians, however learned. Another fundamental definition of theologian that we Orthodox quote all the time is that of Evagrios who equated the state of pure prayer with theology. If these are the primary meanings of the term 'theologian' within Orthodoxy, then, I would suggest, it doesn't matter that much how we define academic theologians; they aren't that important!

5 See Vladimir Lossky, *The Vision of God*, Faith Press, London 1963, 10.

6 Yannaras explicitly repudiates such a reduction in a recent book: see the chapter «Ὁ ὁμολογιακος -ισμος» ['Confessional'-ism'] in idem, *Ἐνάντια στὴ θρησκεία* [Against Religion], Ekdosis Ikaros, Athens 2006, 276-283.

But let me suggest some criteria for genuinely Orthodox theology.[7]

First, Orthodox theology, like the life of the Orthodox Christian, is focused on the *Paschal Mystery*. The Paschal mystery, and its celebration both Sunday by Sunday and pre-eminently in the Paschal Vigil, is something we are so conscious of that we are sometimes tempted to say that it is distinctively Orthodox—as if the resurrection was not central to any form of Christianity. But within Orthodoxy it is very striking and, for those who have made a pilgrimage to Orthodoxy, the experience of the Paschal Vigil—and the spontaneous and contagious joy of that occasion—is usually an important milestone. And so it should be. It is perhaps—bearing in mind what we shall consider later on in this lecture—worth quoting some words of the Orthodox priest, Fr Lev Gillet, from a homily at the funeral of his friend, Irénée Winnaert, for Fr Lev, French by birth, from the Dauphiné, became a Catholic monk and then, as a member of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, was ordained priest by Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytski, before finally being received in the Russian Orthodox Church in Paris:

> O strange Orthodox Church, so poor and so feeble, which has neither the organization nor the culture of the West and which has survived, as by a miracle, through so many vicissitudes and struggles; Church of contrasts, at once so traditional and so free, so archaic and so alive, so ritualist and so personally involved, Church where the pearl of great price of the Gospel is so preciously conserved, sometimes under a layer of dust; Church which holds of first value, in shadow and in silence, the eternal values of virginity, or poverty, of asceticism, of humility, and of pardon; Church that often knows not what to do, but that knows how to sing, like no other, the joy of Pascha...![8]

7 This list was inspired by, though is not identical with, the list offered in an article by Fr Boris Bobrinskoy: "Être orthodoxe dans le monde occidental", in *Contacts* 69 (2007), 283-292.

8 Quoted in Elisabeth Behr-Sigel, *Un Moine de l'Église d'Orient: Le père Lev Gillet*, Cerf, Paris 1993, 173.

It is here, as we contemplate the death and resurrection of Christ—the sorrowful joy, matching the 'joyful sorrow' of which St John Climacus speaks as marking the ascetic life—that we come to understand who Christ is. It is in this mystery that we learn what it means "to call upon the God of Heaven as Father, and to say: Our Father..." In the Garden of Gethsemane, we hear the Lord calling on God as Father: "Abba, Father, let this cup pass, yet not what I will, but what you will". Then, on the cross, the Lord calls out: "Father, forgive them; they do not know what they are doing", "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit". And finally, in the Garden of the Resurrection, the Lord speaks to the weeping Magdalene of "My Father and your Father, my God and your God"—extending to us participation in the mystery of being children of the One we call Father and who is our Father. What holds the whole paschal mystery together is Jesus' prayer to his Father as Father, his prayer to the One who created everything and in whose hands are all the issues of life and death as 'Father', however dark and humanly desperate things seemed to be. It was the conviction of St Maximos the Confessor that this prayer to the Father was a prayer both human and divine, the expression of both his human and divine will, that led him to resist to the point of death any attempt by the Byzantine Emperor and his compliant hierarchs to fudge the reality of Christ's experience in the Garden and on the Cross.

A second criterion is that Orthodox theology is *apophatic*. This was the conviction of all the great Orthodox theologians of the last century. For Lossky, it meant that the human intellect, encountering God, is not just conscious of its frailty, but more fundamentally challenged to its very depths by an act (or state) of "the repentance of the human person before the face of the living God": a *metanoia* in which "knowledge is transformed into ignorance, the theology of concepts

into contemplation, dogmas into experience of ineffable mysteries".[9] Fr Stăniloae saw in the apophatic dimension of theology the pressure of experience, an experience that could never be fully grasped and expounded.[10] While for Christos Yannaras, the apophatic dimension of theology, which he called an 'apophaticism of the person' as opposed to an 'apophaticism of essence', expresses the inexhaustibility of personal knowledge—and there is no other knowledge of God than personal knowledge—and "leads Christian theology to use the language of poetry and images for the interpretation of dogmas much more than the language of conventional logic and schematic concepts".[11]

My third criterion might seem mis-conceived, for I want to say something about the distinctive nature of Orthodox academic theology as such: the theology taught in seminaries and universities, and expressed in learned journals and monographs. I feel I cannot ignore this, though it might be thought that Orthodox theology should keep clear of Western academe, as too compromising an environment. For myself, however, I cannot avoid it: my forty years of teaching academic theology took place in various universities in England, not in theological colleges or seminaries. There are challenges in professing theology in such a context, where many of one's colleagues in other subjects might doubt the legitimacy of theology in a modern secular university, but these challenges will not go away by confining Orthodox theology to specifically Orthodox institutions (though I know that in such institutions my degrees might not be recognized as qualifications for teaching in an Orthodox context). But it seems to me, first of all unrealistic, to attempt to confine Orthodox theology to an explicitly Orthodox environment. It is true that there are Orthodox

9 Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, James Clarke, London 1957, 238.

10 Dumitru Stăniloae, *The Experience of God*, Holy Cross Orthodox Press, Brookline MA 1994, 96 ff.

11 Christos Yannaras, *Elements of Faith*, T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh 1991, 17.

journals, and Orthodox presses, and Orthodox Faculties—and they are needed—but a lot of Orthodox theology finds expression in journals not exclusively Orthodox, is published by University Presses with no confessional allegiance, and many Orthodox theologians belong to faculties in secular universities (or 'public' universities, as we call them in England), or in universities of other confessions—Catholic or Protestant—and often enough not in faculties of theology (which increasingly are being transmogrified in faculties of religious studies), but faculties of philosophy, or history, or some other disciplines. Academic theology—like any academic discipline—is not sealed off hermetically from other academic disciplines: it tends to 'borrow' from other disciplines and even adopt the approach of other discipline—most commonly history or philosophy, or more recently literary theory or psychology. Florovsky reflected on the role of the Christian historian as theologian in a famous paper, interestingly written originally as a contribution to the *Festschrift* for the Protestant theologian, Paul Tillich: "The Predicament of the Christian Historian".[12] In it he made the important point, which relates to his 'personalism' noted above, that the Christian historian's approach to history is concerned not with 'objects', but with 'subjects', it is a personal engagement with persons, not an impersonal survey of events and happenings.

It seems to me that it is important that there remains a Christian voice within an increasingly secular academe, one to which Orthodox must contribute if they are not to allow themselves to be enclosed in a ghetto, for there is a dimension beyond the disciplines of human learning and science that Christian theologians, whatever their academic 'specialism', must bear witness to. We are faced by a multitude of problems: problems concerning the environment, profound bioethical problems, especially those concerned with the

12 Now most conveniently found in *Christianity and Culture*, The Collected Works of Georges Florovsky, vol. 2, Nordland Publishing Company, Belmont MA 1974, 31-65 and 233-236 (notes).

beginning and end of earthly life, economic and political problems, problems concerned with justice, a justice that is to mean fairness not just between the different classes, but between nations and continents, all these problems raised in a context of relativist post-modernism, globalization and consumerism. It is too easy for these problems to be seen simply as questions of human management, so that all we need to do is work out a human solution and impose it—an approach that is likely to lead to a sense of being utterly overwhelmed by the size and complexity of the issues, which itself will lead to despair, or an ostrich-like attempt to ignore them, or a temptation to adopt draconian solutions that will undermine the very humanity that we feel to be at threat, or to a kind of hubris that imagines that, of course, we shall devise techniques, for the human is in control, now even in control of the process of evolution itself. The Christian has to try and see that all these problems take on a different dimension if we can see the universe as created by God, and all existence, including our existence, as a gift, a gift to be received in thanksgiving. Earlier, when speaking of the different valencies of apophatic theology, I might have mentioned the theologian who introduced the term 'apophatic' into Christian use, namely Dionysios the Areopagite. One of the implications for Dionysios of his apophaticism is that when we speak of God, we are not describing an object more or less accurately, but rather we are *praising* the One to whom we owe everything. The fundamental attitude to existence on the part of the Christian is to be one of praise and thanksgiving, *eucharistia*, the very name of the central Christian sacrament: an attitude of thanksgiving, not suspicion, or resentment, or simply world-weary acceptance. Only that attitude will be able to foster an approach to the problems faced by humanity that is not caught between despair and hubris, but is rather marked by humility and confidence, a confidence inspired not by ourselves or our resourcefulness, but by a recognition of God as Creator—a creator who cares for his creation.

Now where do the 'Greek Catholics' (an odd designation, however the term of choice, at last a good deal better than 'Uniates', though Vatican II uses the term *ecclesiae orientales catholicae*)[13] come in all this? I have to make an initial confession, namely, that I am more or less colourblind when I come to differences between the different Orthodox Churches and the Greek Catholics: they both seem to me varieties of the same thing. The Orthodox Churches differ among themselves, but not in ways that seem to be very significant. I should perhaps confess that in my now nearly twenty years as an Orthodox priest, my bishop has always been of the Moscow Patriarchate, and I was ordained by a bishop of that jurisdiction, but the parish I have served has been claimed by all the Orthodox jurisdictions in England—Greek, Russian, and Romanian—so my experience as a priest has been various, and I have adapted. The differences I perceive are sometimes national, very often liturgical, but they don't seem to me very important. My experience of Greek Catholics is much less, but there I find the same thing: there are national differences, and there are some, though few, different liturgical practices. When it comes to theology, my colour-blindness is almost total: I know that Fr Khaled Anatolios is Greek Catholic and so, too, are Brian Butcher and Deacon Daniel Galadza, but it doesn't impinge in any particular way. We seem to speak the same theological language, and I agree with or differ from them, as I do more generally. Indeed, as a patristic scholar I find myself reading philologists, philosophers, sociologists and so on: they all feed my reflection on the problems that concern me.

Of course, there is a reason for—or at least a contributory factor to—my colour-blindness. The history that lies behind the divisions between Roman Catholic, Greek Catholic, and Orthodox is, for the

13 See the decree, *Orientalium ecclesiarum*, of Vatican II, in Norman P. Tanner, S.J. (ed.), *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, 2 vols, Sheed and Ward and Georgetown University Press, Georgetown 1990, 900-907.

most part, not my history; I am English, for better or worse. I may know a good deal about the history of the vicissitudes of Christians of Eastern and Western rites in regions often classified as *Mitteleuropa*, but it is not my history. Indeed, since becoming Orthodox I have felt a kind of dissociation of sensibility in contemplating the history of the British Isles, which *is* my history. But that is now hardly unusual in the multicultural society that British society is increasingly becoming.

So, what is it that distinguishes Orthodox from Greek Catholic in matters of theology? The term 'Greek Catholic' derives the epithet, 'Greek', from liturgical rite—Greek being identified as 'Byzantine'. That might be a place to start, though it has its problems too. First of all, I may be wrong in this, but I think Greek Catholic covers all Eastern rite Christians who accept Papal authority. Most Eastern Churches, however, do not use a Greek rite; some do, but many don't. That question, however, does not concern our question: where do the Greek Catholics belong in relation to the Orthodox. In terms of rite, we are all Byzantine.

It is perhaps worth remembering Fr Alexander Schmemann's mixed reaction to the decree of Vatican II, *Orientalium Ecclesiarum*. While he accepted the event of Vatican II and its ecumenical intentions, and in particular the way in which the Eastern Catholic ('Uniate') Churches seem to be regarded as bridges to the Orthodox Churches rather than substitutes, he had reservations about the approach. First, there was the way in which the decree seems to reduce the differences between East and West to the sole area of rites, discipline, and 'way of life', ignoring the doctrinal principles bound up with these differences. Secondly, while the decree proclaims the *equality* of the Eastern tradition, it defines and regulates it in an essentially *Latin* way; for example, the patriarchates are given an importance they do not have in the Eastern tradition, defining them in terms of the personal jurisdiction of a patriarch over his bishops, which is alien to the Eastern tradition, according to which a patriarch or primate is always *primus*

inter pares. Thirdly and finally, over the question of *communicatio in sacris*, it is not clear that the decree realizes that any such decision would have to be bilateral and express, on the Orthodox side, the consensus of all Orthodox Churches. Reflecting on Schmemann's observations, one must also bear in mind the struggles that the Greek or Eastern Catholics have undergone to preserve even the integrity of their commitment to the Byzantine rite. As Fr Peter's study of Metropolitan Andrei Sheptytsky has demonstrated, the rolling back of centuries of Latinization in the early years of the last century was not accomplished without determination and struggle.[14] The way in which this restoration of liturgical integrity has had consequences for Eastern Catholic theology should not be ignored, either. The doctrinal principles that Schmemann spoke of need themselves to be scrutinized.

Eastern Catholics, in this narrower sense, and Eastern Orthodox differ, not by their liturgical rite, but by their acceptance or not of papal primacy. What effect does this have on their theology? If we are asking this question of theologians currently writing, then it seems to me a question that can only be intelligibly answered by placing it in a much broader context. For virtually no theologian today writes within a strictly confined tradition, in the sense of having no knowledge of or interest in other Christian traditions. We read what we find interesting and important, and particularly for theologians, whether Eastern Catholics or Eastern Orthodox, who acknowledge the determinative role of the patristic tradition, that means drawing on the wealth of patristic scholarship, mostly Western from the time of the Reformation onwards, when patristic scholarship was largely an ancillary discipline to polemical theology (mostly Catholic *v.* Protestant, though sometimes inter-Catholic, e.g. in connexion with the Jansenist controversy in France, often bound up, too, with rivalry

14 Peter Galadza, *The Theology and Liturgical Work of Andrei Sheptytsky (1865–1944)*, Orientalia Christiana Analecta 272, Rome and Ottawa, 2004.

between the religious orders),[15] though the nineteenth century saw the flowering of patristic scholarship in Russia, to be cut short by the Communist Revolution. In the last century, however, there was an enormous expansion of patristic scholarship in the West: scholarship that rapidly became ecumenical, whether self-consciously or not (one does not always, or in some contexts ever, ask oneself the religious affiliation—or not—of scholars, whose work one respects).[16] This means that the traditions in which we stand are less like divergent streams and more like Venn diagrams with complex overlap. Sometimes one will stand back and reflect on the 'confessional' bias of one scholar or another, but scholarship has become inherently 'ecumenical' (for want of a better word). Where acknowledgment of the papacy comes in is not obvious to me in terms of the day-to-day concerns of the learned scholarship with which I am familiar and in which I participate. What is much more striking is the way in which our theological palate is very nearly all-embracing—it is perfectly normal to draw on thinkers who couldn't be regarded as 'fellow workers' in any theological enterprise; even non-Christians—Nietzsche, for instance, raises questions that we need to address if we are to have any chance in addressing the world in which we live (cf. Jean-Luc Marion's seminal *L'Idole et la distance* [Paris: Grasset, 1977], the central three chapters of which are on Nietzsche, Hölderlin, and the divine Denys).

One way of approaching the question raised by the claims of the pope to primacy is to follow Pope Benedict XVI's suggestion in the context of *rapprochement* between Orthodoxy and Catholicism, that

15 See Bruno Neveu, *Erudition et religion aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles*, Albin Michel, Paris 1994.

16 On 20th-century patristic scholarship, see *Les Pères de l'Église au XXe siècle: Histoire – Littérature – Théologie* "*L'aventure des Sources chrétiennes*" Cerf, Paris 1997, and Dominique Gonnet – Michel Stavrou, *Les Pères de l'Église aux sources de l'Europe*, Cerf, Paris 2014. There is doubtless further literature with which I am not acquainted.

theologians might start by looking at what papal primacy meant in the first millennium, before this question had come to divide the Church. This issue had already been addressed in the 1995 profession of faith made by the Melkite archbishop, Elias Zoghby, with its two affirmations: 1) I believe everything which Eastern Orthodoxy teaches; 2) I am in communion with the Bishop of Rome as the first among the bishops, according to the limits recognized by the Holy Fathers of the East during the first millennium, before the separation.[17] I am not sure how free someone in communion with the Bishop of Rome, and especially a hierarch, is to define the terms of his obedience to the Pope by limiting it to what was accepted/conceded in the first millennium. As an Orthodox priest, I can see the wisdom of beginning a consideration of the papacy by looking at what had become accepted in the course of the first millennium, but I cannot see how the question of primacy could be limited to that. It would amount to asking the Christians of the Latin Catholic tradition to write off their whole experience of the second Christian millennium. For such a suggestion to come from Christians who appeal to *their* lived tradition over the centuries would seem self-contradictory.

Rather we need to find some way of sharing with each other what we think we have learnt—both Orthodox and Catholic—in the millennium of separation (not, in my view, a whole millennium of unrelieved separation): the traditions of theology and spirituality, of liturgical practice and proclamation of the Gospel, that began to seem distanced from each other at least from the eleventh century onwards. In such an attempt at learning to understand one another, it needs to be said that the West has had so far a better track record than the East: there are plenty of Western theologians who have worked long and hard to understand theological traditions in the East—the rise of hesychasm

17 I learnt of Abp Zoghby's proposal from Fr Khaled Anatolios in an email exchange.

and the hesychast controversy, the Slavophil movement, and so on (indeed, some of the authorities in the field of Eastern Christianity are of Catholic allegiance, one thinks of Hausherr and Špidlík); this is hardly true of Eastern theologians in relation to the rise of scholasticism, the Renaissance, the Reformation, the Enlightenment, Romanticism and so on, indeed, it is far from unknown for theologians of the East to take pride in the innocence of their tradition—and even themselves—of any taint from these developments. Moreover, it is arguable that something one might call the 'closing of the Orthodox mind' really reached its heyday in the twentieth century (there are, of course, exceptions). Interest in, at least, Western spirituality was manifest in such pillars of Orthodoxy as St Nikodimos of the Holy Mountain or St Philaret of Moscow. If we could learn, both Orthodox and Catholic, the ways of living and praying that shaped Christian lives, both Catholic and Orthodox, in the centuries of separation, we might gain a mutual understanding of each other in our 'otherness', something that is certainly needed if we Orthodox are to be in a position to see not only how the papal claims developed but also what these claims meant for how one lives as a faithful Catholic.

Abstract

First this lecture represents a personal account of Orthodox theology today: given by an Orthodox theologian from the 'Diaspora', himself belonging to the Moscow Patriarchate, invited by the Greek Catholic Church in Hungary. It does not represent a general view 'from nowhere'. So far as Orthodox theology is concerned, we stand at a watershed, presented by the deaths in the last calendar year of Metropolitan Kallistos Ware (24 August 2022) and Metropolitan John Zizioulas (2 February 2023): two metropolitan bishops of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, who were shining stars in the Orthodox theological firmament, with an influence reaching beyond to, at least

ecumenically-minded, Christians throughout the world. They were two very different theologians, for, though both academic theologians holding university posts, only Met John could be described as an academic theologian, renowned for his distinctive ideas, Met Kallistos' influence being much more diffuse, less associated with theories, but exercised through his many research students. Twentieth-century Orthodox theology, at least in the Diaspora, had been largely influenced by the concerns of the Russian émigré theologians, centred on Paris, and the divide between two paths into the future: the so-called Russian Religious Renaissance and the Neopatristic Synthesis. Our two deceased metropolitans were associated primarily with the latter, though in the latter decades of their lives the star of the most prominent representative of the former, Fr Sergii Bulgakov (died 1944), has been in the ascendant. That is certain to affect the nature of Orthodox theology in the immediately future decades. Other changes will affect the future of Orthodox theology, both the fact that the last half of the last century saw the emergence of theologians (whether native Orthodox or converts), indebted to formation in Western academic standards and approaches, as well as the change from a theological agenda determined by the impact in Western Europe and North America of the Russian émigrés to one, more and more presentative of theologians belonging to the different national Orthodox traditions: Greek and Romanian, and then after the fall of communism, Russians who grew up under communism, and others like them—Serbs, Bulgarians, and Georgians. In this new context, the first question about Orthodox theology that emerges is: who is a theologian, one who prays (following Evagrios' famous definition) or one with academic learning (something increasingly influenced by the Wester academic expectations and approaches), which leads into a question about the role of the spiritual elder in any Orthodox theology worthy of the name? What about approaches to theology? Two criteria seem to emerge from the experience of the last century: the centrality

of the Paschal mystery, and the importance of the apophatic dimension of theology. Another more general question concerns the resources for Orthodox theology, consideration of which is hampered by a stubborn tendency towards anti-Westernism. But in terms of resources—reliable editions of theological texts (nothing new in Orthodoxy as the quest culminating in the *Philokalia* of SS. Nikodimos and Makarios makes clear), as well as questions of academic methodology—it seems to me that Orthodox scholarly theology has, with whatever reluctance, accepted the influence of prevailing methods in the West. The lecture ended with a coda on the question of the relationship between Eastern Orthodox and Greek Catholic theology. Seen in the light of an opening to the West, what we have in common seems far more important than what divides us. Furthermore what divides us—finding ourselves on different sides of rift in Christendom between East and West—is an issue that needs to be addressed, as a matter of paramount importance and urgency, for the credibility of the proclamation of the Gospel in a world, increasing estranged from the values that have traditionally shaped it.

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Plato's *Sophist* in the Epistemology of Clement of Alexandria*

Lenka Karfíková

1. The "Gigantomachia"; 2. The True Dialectic

As it is well known, Clement of Alexandria's "miscellaneous" work *Stromateis* is a real treasury of quotes from ancient philosophy and literature, in which a place of honour is reserved for Plato.[1] The method of incorporating Platonic ideas into a new synthesis inspired by the biblical religion is already to be found in Clement's Jewish predecessor Philo of Alexandria.[2] As a theoretical basis for this operation, Clement

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1 See Albert Outler, "The «Platonism» of Clement of Alexandria", in *The Journal of Religion* 20 (1940), 217-240, here 222-224; Eric F. Osborn, *The Philosophy of Clement of Alexandria*, diss. Cambridge 1957, 97-100; Dietmar Wyrwa, *Die christliche Platonaneignung in den Stromateis des Clemens von Alexandrien* (Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte 53), W. De Gruyter, Berlin – New York 1983; Christoph Riedweg, *Mysterienterminologie bei Platon, Philon und Klemens von Alexandrien* (Untersuchungen zur antiken Literatur und Geschichte 26), W. De Gruyter, Berlin – New York 1987, 116, n. 3.

2 See Anita Méasson, *Du char ailé de Zeus à l'Arche d'Alliance: Images et mythes platoniciens chez Philon d'Alexandrie* (Série Antiquité 116), Études augustiniennes, Paris 1986. On Clement's appropriation of Philonic material, see Annewies van den Hoek, *Clement of Alexandria and His Use of Philo in the*

offers the idea of both Jewish Law and Greek philosophy as a *praeparatio evangelica* or as two different "pedagogues" to bring Jews and Greeks unto Christ.[3]

In this paper, I will analyse Clement's use of the *Sophist*, a dialogue which certainly does not belong among those most beloved by the Christian readers of Plato.[4]

Stromateis: An Early Christian Reshaping of a Jewish Model, E.J. Brill, Leiden – New York 1988.

3 See Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* (= *Strom.*) I,5,28,3 (Otto Stählin – Ludwig Früchtel – Ursula Treu (eds.), *Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten Jahrhunderte, Clemens Alexandrinus* [= Cl.], II, Akademie-Verlag, Berlin 41985, 18,1-5); VI,6,44,1 (Cl. II,453,16-18); VI,11,94,2 (Cl. II,479,1-5); VI,17,153,1 (Cl. II,510,21–24). Cf. Gal 3:24. See Joseph Muckle, "Clement of Alexandria on Philosophy as a Divine Testament for the Greeks", in *Phoenix* 5 (1951), 79-86.

4 According to the database *Plato apud posteros* (Academia Platonica septima Monasteriensis), the *Sophist* is quoted only by John Philoponos (*In Arist. Anal. post.* CAG 13/3, 150,28 and 191,22, cf. *Soph.* 229b; *In Arist. Categ.*, CAG 13/1, 30,20f., cf. *Soph.* 235c), who also mentions its title (*In Arist. Phys.* CAG 16, 49,23, 62,30; *In Arist. De an.*, CAG 15,27,16). Apart from Clement, the dialogue is supposed to be (vaguely) alluded to by Justin, Tertullian, Origen, (Ps.)Hippolytus, Methodius of Olympus, Isidore of Pelusium, Dionysius the Arepagite:
https://www1.ivv1.uni-muenster.de/litw3/platon/indexP01.htm
As far as I could find, the editors sometimes refer to the *Sophist* for rather general wordings; see e.g. John Behr (ed.), *Origen, On First Principles*, I, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2017, 31; Miroslav Marcovich (ed.), *Origen, Contra Celsum*, Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae 54, Brill, Leiden – Boston – Köln 2011, 492; Hubertus Drobner (ed.), *Gregory of Nyssa, In Hexaemeron*, *Gregorii Nysseni Opera,* IV/1, Brill, Leiden – Boston 2009, 19; 39; 78; Klaus-Detlef Daur (ed.) *Augustine, De magistro*, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina 29, Brepols, Turnhout 1970, 158; 194. The dialogue was translated into Latin by Marsilio Ficino, who also summarised its content (Ioannes Mertout (ed.), *Platonis Opera Marsilio Ficino interprete*, Lyon 1588, 121-137). Even for this Platonist of the Florentine Renaissance the *Sophist* does not seem to be his favourite of Plato's dialogues; in his ed. James Hankins, *Platonic Theology*, see two passages, VIII,15,1; XVII,2,4 (vol. II; VI, Harvard University Press, London 2002; 2006).

1. The "Gigantomachia"

In his account of faith in the second book of *Stromateis*, Clement quotes the passage of Plato's *Sophist* concerning the "gigantomachia"[5] of the "sons of the earth" (οἱ γηγενεῖς) against the "friends of Forms" (*οἱ τῶν εἰδῶν φίλοι*), as Plato calls them:[6]

> It looks as if those who have no faith, in Plato's words, "aim to drag everything down to earth out of the invisible and the unseen, literally grasping rocks and trees in their hands. They lay hold upon everything of this sort and maintain that real being belongs only to that which can be handled and offers resistance to the touch. They define being as the same thing as body." "But their adversaries are very wary in defending their position somewhere in the heights of the unseen, maintaining with all their force that true being consists in certain intelligible and bodiless Forms."[7]

According to Plato, the "sons of the earth" are philosophers "who violently drag everything on the level of the body",[8] i.e. who identify

5 Plato, *Sophista* (= *Soph.*), 246a4 in John Burnet (ed.), *Platonis Opera*, I, Clarendon, Oxford 1900, reprinted 1967.

6 *Soph.* 248c1-2; 248a4.

7 *Strom.* II,4,15,1-2 (Cl. II,120,8-15): οἱ δὲ ἄπιστοι, ὡς ἔοικεν, «ἐξ οὐρανοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἀοράτου πάντα ἕλκουσιν εἰς γῆν, ταῖς χερσὶν ἀτεχνῶς πέτρας καὶ δρῦς περιλαμβάνοντες» κατὰ τὸν Πλάτωνα· «τῶν γὰρ τοιούτων ἐφαπτόμενοι πάντων διισχυρίζονται τοῦτ' εἶναι μόνον, ὃ παρέχει προσβολὴν καὶ ἐπαφήν τινα, ταὐτὸν σῶμα καὶ οὐσίαν ὁριζόμενοι.» «<οἱ δὲ> πρὸς αὐτοὺς ἀμφισβητοῦντες μάλα εὐλαβῶς ἄνωθεν ἐξ ἀοράτου ποθὲν ἀμύνονται, νοητὰ ἄττα καὶ ἀσώματα εἴδη βιαζόμενοι τὴν ἀληθινὴν οὐσίαν εἶναι.» Cf. *Soph.* 246a7-b1.6-8. (I use the translations by Francis M. Cornford, *Plato's Theory of Knowledge: The Theaetetus and the Sophist of Plato translated with a running commentary*, Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., London 1935, 230, and John Ferguson, Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis, Books 1-3*, The Catholic University of America Press, Washington D.C. 1991, 167, respectively, modifying both.) Veronika Černušková finds a distant echo of this passage even in Clement's *Paedagogus* II,1,5,4 (Cl. I,157,11n.): Χαλεπώτατον δὲ πάντων πτωμάτων τὴν ἄπτωτον ἀγάπην ἄνωθεν ἐξ οὐρανῶν ἐπὶ τοὺς ζωμοὺς ῥίπτεσθαι χαμαί. Cf. Veronika Černušková, Klement Alexandrijský, *Vychovatel*, OIKOYMENH, Praha 2019, 42; 294

8 *Soph.* 246c9f.: ... παρὰ δὲ τῶν εἰς σῶμα πάντα ἑλκόντων βίᾳ.

being with body (σῶμα).[9] In its "improved version" (as presented in the sequel of the dialogue),[10] this doctrine holds that "to be" implies the capacity to act or to be acted upon (δύναμιν εἴτ' εἰς τὸ ποιεῖν ... εἴτ' εἰς τὸ παθεῖν), i.e. that "being is nothing but a potency/power/capacity" (τὰ ὄντα ὡς ἔστιν οὐκ ἄλλο τι πλὴν δύναμις).[11]

The position of the "friends of Forms", on the other hand, regards only "a kind of noetic and incorporeal forms" (νοητὰ ἄττα καὶ ἀσώματα εἴδη) as real being,[12] and thus relies on something invisible and unchangeable. In the course of the dialogue, this doctrine, too, is corrected, so that it can admit the perfect being (παντελῶς ὄν) as a noetic world, in which there is life, knowledge, and even movement.[13] In some respects, the improved doctrine of the "friends of forms" thus approaches the modified position of the "sons of the earth", since being seems to act or to be acted upon in both of them, if it is true that even knowledge affects things known and thus makes them change.[14]

9 *Soph.* 246b1.

10 *Soph.* 246d-247e.

11 *Soph.* 247d8-e4.

12 *Soph.* 246b7f.

13 *Soph.* 248e6-249a2: Τί δὲ πρὸς Διός; ὡς ἀληθῶς κίνησιν καὶ ζωὴν καὶ ψυχὴν καὶ φρόνησιν ἢ ῥᾳδίως πεισθησόμεθα τῷ παντελῶς ὄντι μὴ παρεῖναι, μηδὲ ζῆν αὐτὸ μηδὲ φρονεῖν, ἀλλὰ σεμνὸν καὶ ἅγιον, νοῦν οὐκ ἔχον, ἀκίνητον ἑστὸς εἶναι; Some interpreters assume the παντελῶς ὄν to include both the intelligible and corporeal being; see James A. Philip, "The «Megista Gene» of the «Sophistes»", in *Phoenix* 23 (1969), 89-103, 95-98, 103; Filip Karfík, *Pantelôs on and megista genê (Plato, Soph. 242c-259b)*, in Aleš Havlíček – Filip Karfík (eds.), *Plato's Sophist: Proceedings of the Seventh Symposium Platonicum Pragense*, OIKOYMENH, Praha 2011, 120-145, here 125f., 139. This assumption can be understood as the outcome of Plato's account of *megista genê* but in discussing the position of the friends of Forms Plato does not say so. Here, the *pantelôs on* seems to designate the noetic world, and in what follows I use this term in this sense.

14 On this "battle of materialists and idealists", where Plato gives critical consideration to his own position as well, see Francis Cornford, *Plato's Theory of Knowledge*, 228-248; J. A. Philip, "The «Megista Gene»", 92-95; F. Karfík, *Pantelôs on*, 122-129.

Plato does not seem to identify with any of these positions, not even in their reformed versions as proposed by the "Visitor of Elea".[15] For even the improved positions lead to an *aporia* of impossible knowledge as things in flux cannot be known.[16] The only way out of this trap will be Plato's account of the highest genera (μέγιστα τῶν γενῶν),[17] which implies that being is neither in motion nor at rest necessarily, although identity and difference necessarily belong to it.[18]

In this very interesting passage, the Visitor of Elea shows that the key concepts of the pre-Socratic philosophical schools, movement and rest (κίνησις καὶ στάσις), though mutually exclusive (ἐναντιώτατα),[19] both participate in being (τὸ ὄν).[20] In addition, rest and movement can only be thought of insofar as they both participate in identity and difference (ταὐτὸν καὶ θάτερον). In different respects, movement is both "the same" (ταὐτόν) and "not the same" (μὴ ταὐτόν), i.e. "different" (ἕτερον). It is the same in relation to itself but different from all other genera.[21]

15 On the meaning of ξένος (a guest or stranger) which, in the present context, is to be understood as "guest", see Thomas Szlezák, *Die Aufgabe des Gastes aus Elea: Zur Bedeutung der Eingangsszene des Sophistes (216a-218a)*, in A. Havlíček – F. Karfík (eds.), *Plato's Sophist*, 11-34, here 15. An analysis of the entire passage is given, e.g., by Monique Dixsaut, Platon: *Le Sophiste, Introduction, traduction (texte grec en regard), notes et commentaire*, J. Vrin, Paris 2022, 513-544.

16 *Soph.* 249b.

17 *Soph.* 254d4. Concerning Plato's account, compared to Aristotelian categories, see F. Cornford, *Plato's Theory of Knowledge*, 273-297. An analysis of this passage and its problems can be found in F. Karfík, *Pantelôs on*, 133-145.

18 Another interpretation of movement in being is given, e.g., by Francesco Fronterotta, "L'être et la participation de l'autre: Une nouvelle ontologie dans le Sophiste", in *Les études philosophiques* 3 (1995), 311-353, or Walter Mesch, *Die Bewegung des Seienden in Platons Sophistes*, in A. Havlíček – F. Karfík (eds.), *Plato's Sophist*, 96-119.

19 *Soph.* 250a8.

20 *Soph.* 250a-254d.

21 *Soph.* 254e-257a.

In this deliberation, "the different" proves to be identical with "non-being" (τὸ μὴ ὄν), for whatever is must be different from everything which it is not. As the different, non-being does not seem to be the "opposite" (ἐναντίον) of being but only "different" (ἕτερον) from it. It even necessarily has a share in being, just as being has a share in difference.[22]

However, the reduction of non-being to difference does not mean the reduction of being to identity, since in this case, all being would have to be identical.[23] Moreover, a being "is not" all which it is not, only *because* it is identical to itself; and it is what it is *because* it is not everything else. Its difference (i.e. non-being) and its identity must be held simultaneously. Therefore, the highest genera, far from being only movement and rest, seem rather to be being, difference, and identity.[24] Identity means "unity", although not as Plato's "murdered father" Parmenides[25] had it, but in the sense of identity necessarily accompanied by difference:

> We find then, that being "is not" in so many respects as there are other things; for, not being those others, while it is its single self (ἓν μὲν αὐτό ἐστιν), it "is not" all that indefinite number of other things.[26]

22 *Soph.* 257b-259b.

23 *Soph.* 255bc.

24 Cf. Plato, *Timaeus* 35a1-6. See Francis Cornford, *Plato's Cosmology: The Timaeus of Plato*, Routledge, London 1935 (reprinted Hackett Pub. & Co., Indianapolis 1997), 59-66; F. Karfík, *Pantelôs on*, 142f. J. A. Philip ("The «Megista Gene»", 101) calls the three genera, being, difference, and identity, "logical kinds".

25 *Soph.* 241d, 258cd.

26 *Soph.* 257a4-6: Καὶ τὸ ὂν ἄρ' ἡμῖν, ὅσαπέρ ἐστι τὰ ἄλλα, κατὰ τοσαῦτα οὐκ ἔστιν· ἐκεῖνα γὰρ οὐκ ὂν ἓν μὲν αὐτό ἐστιν, ἀπέραντα δὲ τὸν ἀριθμὸν τἆλλα οὐκ ἔστιν αὖ. English translation by F. Cornford, *Plato's Theory of Knowledge*, 289 (modified). On the notion of being in Plato's *Sophist* in its ontological meaning, see Francesco Fronterotta, *Some Remarks on the Senses of Being in the Sophist*, in A. Havlíček – F. Karfík (eds.), *Plato's Sophist*, 35-62.

In its necessary blending with difference and thus with non-being as well as in its mutual relations and penetration with other Forms,[27] being allows for false connections when spoken of.[28] Unlike the philosopher, the sophist does not aim at imitating the real relations of being but at producing an illusion based on mere opinion.[29]

So far the argumentation in Plato's *Sophist* has been simplified for the purpose of the present analysis. Let us turn to Clement's application thereof to be able to see how far (or how little) he can use Plato's ideas for his own deliberation of faith in both its epistemic and religious sense.

In his epistemology, Clement is not satisfied with the above-mentioned positions of the "sons of the earth" or the "friends of Forms" as mutually exclusive options. Instead, he develops an epistemology based on faith, which includes both the sense perception of the "sons of the earth" and the contemplation of the principles, as he interprets the position of the "friends of Forms".[30] It is only in their combination that sense perception (αἴσθησις) and intellect (νοῦς) can produce scientific knowledge (ἐπιστήμη). At the same time, they are inspired and even completed by faith (πίστις),[31] which Clement presents as both Epicurean precognition (πρόληψις), interpreted as an anticipation of insight, and Stoic assent (συγκατάθεσις), understood as a voluntary approval of a convincing hypothesis equally aiming at knowledge.[32]

27 *Soph.* 259a-b.

28 *Soph.* 260c. On the dangers to which speech is exposed, cf. Štěpán Špinka, *Das Sein des Nicht-Seins: Einige Thesen zur strukturellen Ontologie im Dialog Sophistes*, in A. Havlíček – F. Karfík (eds.), *Plato's Sophist*, 221-239, 223-228.

29 *Soph.* 267a-c.

30 Cf. *Soph.* 248a10-12: Καὶ σώματι μὲν ἡμᾶς γενέσει δι' αἰσθήσεως κοινωνεῖν, διὰ λογισμοῦ δὲ ψυχῇ πρὸς τὴν ὄντως οὐσίαν, ἣν ἀεὶ κατὰ ταὐτὰ ὡσαύτως ἔχειν φατέ. On Clement's interpretation of the "Gigantomachia", see D. Wyrwa, *Die christliche Platonaneignung*, 152-156.

31 *Strom.* II,4,13,2-14,1 (Cl. II,119,22-32).

32 *Strom.* II,2,8,4-9,2 (Cl. II,117,8-18); II,6,27,4-28,1 (Cl. II,127,30-128,2); II,12,55,1 (Cl. II,142,28-30); II,4,16,3-17,3 (Cl. II,121,9-22). On Clement's reinterpretation

In addition, the first unprovable principles (αἱ ἀρχαὶ ἀναπόδεικτοι) can only be comprehended by faith.[33] Rational knowledge thus both presupposes and substantiates faith in its epistemic meaning.

In its religious sense, faith, as a free and divinely inspired option, is a new sensibility towards the Logos.[34] Moving from assent as trust and conviction to religious understanding, this option demands rational training. But even at the climax of religious knowledge, faith remains the criterion.[35] In their religious sense, too, faith and knowledge are thus mutually dependent; each presupposes, implies, and completes the other. As Clement puts it: "Knowledge (γνῶσις) is imbued with faith, and faith with knowledge, through a mutual divine succession."[36]

Clement's key objection is thus not the mistaken ontology of both parts of the "gigantomachia" as was the case in Plato, but their inadequate epistemology, the "missing faith" (ἄπιστοι),[37] faith being a necessary component of knowledge in his eyes.

This epistemology shares with that of Plato the progression from mere belief to argumentative knowledge and the touching of the

of both terms, see Salvatore R. C. Lilla, *Clement of Alexandria: A Study in Christian Platonism and Gnosticism*, Oxford University Press, London 1971, 127-129; Eric Osborn, *Clement of Alexandria*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2005, 184-186.

33 *Strom.* II,4,13,4 (Cl. II,119,28); II,4,14,1 (Cl. II,119,30f.); VII,95,6 (Cl. III,67,25f.); VIII,6,7-7,2 (Cl. III,83,16-20). On Clement's idea of faith, see K. Prümm, "Glaube und Erkenntnis im zweiten Buch der Stromata des Klemens von Alexandrien", in *Scholastik* 12 (1937), 17-57; S. R. C. Lilla, *Clement of Alexandria*, 118-142; E. Osborn, *The Philosophy*, 127-145; Josef Lössl, "Der Glaubensbegriff des Klemens von Alexandrien im Kontext der hellenistischen Philosophie", in *Theologie und Philosophie* 77 (2002), 321-337.

34 *Strom.* II,4,15,3 (Cl. II,120,16-19).

35 *Strom.* II,4,15,5 (Cl. II,120,26f.).

36 *Strom.* II,4,16,2 (Cl. II,121,7f.): πιστὴ τοίνυν ἡ γνῶσις, γνωστὴ δὲ ἡ πίστις θείᾳ τινὶ ἀκολουθίᾳ τε καὶ ἀντακολουθίᾳ γίνεται. On the reciprocity of faith and knowledge, see E. Osborn, *Clement of Alexandria*, 161-169; 182-196.

37 *Strom.* II,4,15,1 (Cl. II,120,8).

first principle,[38] as well as the necessary task of persuading the soul,[39] although Clement emphasises the role of faith in the entire epistemic process much more than his predecessor did.

As Clement puts it, again alluding to the *Sophist*, faith (πίστις) differs from mere guesswork (εἰκασία), just as a tamed dog does from a wild wolf.[40] With this metaphor of a dog and wolf, the Visitor of Elea in Plato's *Sophist* illustrates the difference between argumentative scrutiny (ἔλεγχος) as the most efficacious way of purifying the soul, on the one hand, and false sophistic argumentation, which follows other goals although using similar tools, on the other.[41] Clement supplements the metaphor of a dog and wolf with that of a friend and flatterer, to emphasise that faith, which is the basis of his epistemology, is far from being an untamed and fallacious "weak assumption" (ἀσθενὴς ὑπόληψις), as applied by the sophists.[42]

2. *The True Dialectic*

Like Plato, Clement explicitly warns against the harmful sophistic art, which passes the false off as true, and he tries to distinguish it from rhetoric, i.e. the art of persuading (πειθώ), and even the eristic, i.e. the art of verbal combat (τὸ ἀγωνιστικόν), as used in philosophy.[43] In this passage from the first book of *Stromateis*, Clement proves to be inspired, among other sources, again by Plato's *Sophist,*[44] and he

38 Plato, *Respublica* VI, 509d-511e.
39 Plato, *Phaedo* 77e; 83a2-b2; *Symposium* 212b; *Leges* IV,722b-723b; X,903a-b.
40 *Strom.* II,4,16,1 (Cl. II,120,28-121,1); cf. *Soph.* 231a6.
41 *Soph.* 230d-231b.
42 *Strom.* II,4,16,1 (Cl. II,120,28).
43 *Strom.* I,8,39,1 (Cl. II,25,30-26,2).
44 *Soph.* 226a; 236c; 240d. On Clement's Aristotelian and Stoic sources in this topic, see Jean Pépin, *La vraie dialectique selon Clément d'Alexandrie*, in Jacques Fontaine – Charles Kannengiesser (eds.), *Epektasis: Mélanges patristiques offerts au cardinal Jean Daniélou*, Beauchesne, Paris 1972, 375-383, 375-377, 380, n. 39.

shares Plato's care to distinguish the philosophical search for the truth from the sophistic approach based on a semblance (τὸ φαινόμενον) and aiming at making an impression (ἡ ἔκπληξις).[45]

Plato finds true philosophy in the art of the dialectic[46] being able to "divide according to the kinds, not taking the same Form for a different one or a different one for the same".[47] In the fourth book of *Stromateis*, Clement attests to his high esteem for the art of the dialectic when, with the Socrates of Plato's *Sophist* but without his irony, he introduces the Visitor of Elea as "a god" (τινα θεόν, Clement even θεόν) because of his knowledge of the dialectic art (διαλεκτικὸν ὄντα).[48] Following Plato and even more fully than him, Clement quotes Homer speaking about "gods", who, "in the guise of strangers from afar" (ξείνοισιν ἐοικότες ἀλλοδαποῖσι), visit cities, in this context:[49]

> In the Sophist, Socrates calls the Visitor of Elea, who was a dialectician, "god": "Such are the gods who, in the guise of strangers from afar," visit cities. For when the soul, rising above the sphere of becoming, is by itself and communicates with Forms, ... it becomes as an angel and will be with Christ, dwelling in contemplation and ever keeping in view the will of God.[50]

45 *Strom.* I,8,39,4 (Cl. II, 26,9-11).

46 *Soph.* 253e.

47 *Soph.* 253d1-2: Τὸ κατὰ γένη διαιρεῖσθαι καὶ μήτε ταὐτὸν εἶδος ἕτερον ἡγήσασθαι μήτε ἕτερον ὂν ταὐτόν.

48 *Strom.* IV,25,155,3 (Cl. II,317,13f.): καὶ ἐν τῷ Σοφιστῇ δὲ τὸν Ἐλεάτην ξένον διαλεκτικὸν ὄντα ὁ Σωκράτης θεὸν ὠνόμασεν. Cf. *Soph.* 216a5: ... οὐ ξένον ἀλλά τινα θεὸν. On Clement's interpretation of this passage, see D. Wyrwa, *Die christliche Platonaneignung*, 293f.

49 *Strom.* IV,25,155,3 (Cl. II,317,14f.); cf. *Soph.* 216a6; c5; Homer, *Odyssea* XVII,485.

50 *Strom.* IV,25,155,3-4 (Cl. II,317,13-19): καὶ ἐν τῷ Σοφιστῇ δὲ τὸν Ἐλεάτην ξένον διαλεκτικὸν ὄντα ὁ Σωκράτης θεὸν ὠνόμασεν, οἵους τοὺς θεοὺς «ξείνοισιν ἐοικότας ἀλλοδαποῖσιν» ἐπιφοιτῶντας τοῖς ἄστεσιν **. ὅταν γὰρ ψυχὴ γενέσεως ὑπεξαναβᾶσα καθ' ἑαυτήν τε ᾖ καὶ ὁμιλῇ τοῖς εἴδεσιν, ... οἷον ἄγγελος ἤδη γενόμενος σὺν Χριστῷ [τε] ἔσται, θεωρητικὸς ὤν, ἀεὶ τὸ βούλημα τοῦ θεοῦ σκοπῶν.

In this passage, Clement abandons the frame in which the dialectic art is presented in the *Sophist* to ascend, again inspired by Plato,[51] "above the sphere of becoming" (γενέσεως ὑπεξαναβᾶσα), to "communicate with Forms" (ὁμιλῇ τοῖς εἴδεσιν) and to approach Christ. Elsewhere in the *Stromateis*, Clement's dialectic even "ventures to transcend" from Christ to God (the Father),[52] as Plato progresses from the realm of Forms to the Form of the Good as its fundament and principle.[53]

Unlike Plato, but with the Middle Platonists, Clement posits the Forms as present in God's intellect: "The place of Forms is the intellect; and God is the intellect."[54] Therefore, he can derive the godlike nature of the dialecticians from their ability to contemplate these Forms and thus approach God. His idea of knowing the unprovable principles by

51 See Plato, *Respublica* 517b4-5; b8-c1; 511b3-c2; *Symposium* 210a4-211d1.

52 *Strom.* I,28,177,1 (Cl. II,109, 5-9): μικτὴ δὲ φιλοσοφίᾳ οὖσα τῇ ἀληθεῖ ἡ ἀληθὴς διαλεκτικὴ ἐπισκοποῦσα τὰ πράγματα καὶ τὰς δυνάμεις καὶ τὰς ἐξουσίας δοκιμάζουσα ὑπεξαναβαίνει ἐπὶ τὴν πάντων κρατίστην οὐσίαν τολμᾷ τε ἐπέκεινα ἐπὶ τὸν τῶν ὅλων θεόν. On the angelic "powers", see 1Cor 15:24; Eph 1:21; 3:10; Col 1:16; 1Pt 3:22; on Christ the Almighty, see Apoc 1:8. On the stages of this anabasis, see Pierre Nautin, "Notes sur le Stromate I de Clément d'Alexandrie", in *Revue d'Histoire Ecclésiastique* 47 (1952), 618-631, 630f.

53 See Plato, *Respublica* 517c1-5.

54 *Strom.* IV,25,155,2 (Cl. II,317,11): νοῦς δὲ χώρα ἰδεῶν, νοῦς δὲ ὁ θεός. Similarly, *Strom.* V,3,16,3 (Cl. II,336,8f.): ἡ δὲ ἰδέα ἐννόημα τοῦ θεοῦ, ὅπερ οἱ βάρβαροι λόγον εἰρήκασι τοῦ θεοῦ. Cf. Alkinoos, *Didasc.* 9 (163,14-17); on this passage, see John Dillon (ed.), *Alcinous, The Handbook of Platonism: translated with an introduction and commentary*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1993, 93-100. The idea of Forms as the archetypes in the mind of God can also be found in Philo of Alexandria, *De opif.* 5,20. See Salvatore Lilla, *Die Lehre von den Ideen als den Gedanken Gottes im griechischen patristischen Denken*, in Herbert Eisenberger (ed.), *ERMHNEYMATA: Festschrift für Hadwig Hörner zum sechzigsten Geburtstag*, C. Winter, Heidelberg 1990, 27-50, 27-32, 36-38. Roberto Radice even assumes Philo to be the originator of this idea; see Roberto Radice, "Observations on the Theory of the Ideas as the Thoughts of God in Philo of Alexandria", in *Studia Philonica* 3 (1991), 126-134.

faith is thus completed by the knowledge of Forms in God's intellect, by the ascending dialectic of Platonic tradition.

Some scholars even suppose that Clement identifies the Forms, i.e. the contents of the intelligible world, with angels, being inspired in this option by, among other sources, Plato's idea of *pantelôs on* (the intelligible world) as a living being in the *Sophist*.[55] Clement's ascending dialectic in the first book of *Stromateis* actually starts from analysing the things of our world (τὰ πράγματα)[56] and, considering the angels (τὰς δυνάμεις καὶ τὰς ἐξουσίας) and coming to Christ as the mightiest of beings (τὴν πάντων κρατίστην οὐσίαν), it "ventures to transcend to God" (the Father), as we have already heard.[57] Whether the intelligible world of Forms should be identified with angels,[58] the "analysed things"[59] or Christ, the Logos,[60] Clement hopes for the soul elevated above the world of becoming "to communicate with Forms" (ὁμιλῇ τοῖς εἴδεσιν),[61] just as the Visitor of Elea presupposes that the friends of

55 *Soph.* 248e6-249a2 (quoted above), n. 13 See J. Pépin, *La vraie dialectique*, 381f.

56 So presupposes J. Pépin, *La vraie dialectique*, 381: "considération du monde empirique".

57 *Strom.* I,28,177,1 (Cl. II,109,5-9), quoted above, n. 52.

58 See J. Pépin, *La vraie dialectique*, 381f. Similarly, E. Osborn, *The Philosophy*, 153: "The 'powers' of Clement fulfil the function of the forms of Plato."

59 See D. Wyrwa, *Die christliche Platonaneignung*, 128. The author understands the *pragmata* (Cl. II,109,7) as the things analysed in their kinds in the dialectical process. Therefore, he feels justified in identifying them with forms.

60 Clement ascribes the identification of Platonic Forms with the divine Logos to the "barbarians", i.e. probably Philo of Alexandria (e.g. *De opif.* 24). Cf. *Strom.* V,3,16,3 (Cl. II,336,8f.) (quoted above), n. 54. This, however, does not mean that he would not share the idea himself. See S. Lilla, *Die Lehre von den Ideen*, 37; E. Osborn, *The Philosophy*, 157.

61 *Strom.* IV,25,155,4 (Cl. II,317,16). As Jehler Wytzes suggests on the basis of Philo's accounts, Clement could have meant communication with celestial powers. See Jehler Wytzes, "The Twofold Way (II): Platonic Influences in the Work of Clement of Alexandria", in *Vigiliae Christianae* 14 (1960), 129-153, 132f. On the possible identification of the forms in God's intellect with the spiritual

ideas "share" with the real being (κοινωνεῖν ... πρὸς τὴν ὄντως οὐσίαν) in Plato's *Sophist*.[62] In any case, Clement seems to understand the realm of Forms as a living being, thus approaching, intentionally or not, the *pantelôs on* of the improved "friends of Forms" in the *Sophist*.

Besides the above-mentioned elements of his epistemology borrowed from Plato's *Sophist*, Clement alludes to this dialogue several times in his *Stromateis*, referring to its title,[63] to the "Ionian Muses" quoting Heraclitus, as Plato did in the *Sophist*,[64] or to the "great Parmenides" of Elea as mentioned by Plato, too.[65]

"powers", cf. Philo, *De opif.* 20; *De conf.* 172; *De somn.* I,62. See S. Lilla, *Die Lehre von den Ideen*, 31.

62 *Soph.* 248a10-12: Καὶ σώματι μὲν ἡμᾶς γενέσει δι' αἰσθήσεως κοινωνεῖν, διὰ λογισμοῦ δὲ ψυχῇ πρὸς τὴν ὄντως οὐσίαν, ἣν ἀεὶ κατὰ ταὐτὰ ὡσαύτως ἔχειν φατέ.

63 *Strom.* IV,25,155,3 (Cl. II,317,13); V,14,112,2 (Cl. II,402,6).

64 *Strom.* V,9,59,4 (Cl. II,366,8): Ἰάδες μοῦσαι. Cf. *Soph.* 242d6-7. In the next part of the text, Clement quotes Heraclitus, 22B 104 (Hermann Diels – Walther Kranz (eds.) [= DK], *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, Weidmannsche Verlagsbuchhandlung Berlin, 9th edition 1960, I, 174,5f.): ... εἰδότας ὅτι «πολλοὶ κακοί, ὀλίγοι δὲ ἀγαθοί» (Cl. II,366,9f.) and 22B 29 (DK I, 157,7-9): «αἱρεῦνται γάρ ... ἓν ἀντὶ πάντων οἱ ἄριστοι κλέος ἀέναον θνητῶν, οἱ δὲ πολλοὶ κεκόρηνται ὅπως κτήνεα» (Cl. II,366,11f.). Concerning these quotes, see Alain Le Boulluec (ed.), *Clément d'Alexandrie, Les Stromates*, V/2: *Commentaire, bibliographie et index* (Sources Chrétiennes 279), Cerf, Paris 1981, 220f.

65 *Strom.* V,9,59,6 (Cl. II,366,14); V,14,112,2 (Cl. II,402,6): Παρμενίδης ὁ μέγας. Cf. *Soph.* 237a4-5. It is not quite clear that Clement mistakes the following quote from Parmenides as being cited by Plato in the *Sophist* too, as Anthony Outler (*The "Platonism"*, 224) assumes. The borrowing from the *Sophist* can be limited to the honorary title the "great Parmenides". Cf. *Strom.* V,14,112,2 (Cl. II,402,6-9): Παρμενίδης δὲ ὁ μέγας, ὥς φησιν ἐν Σοφιστῇ Πλάτων, ὧδέ πως περὶ τοῦ θείου γράφει· «πολλὰ μάλ', ὡς ἀγένητον ἐὸν καὶ ἀνώλεθρόν ἐστιν,/ οὖλον μουνογενές τε καὶ ἀτρεμὲς ἠδ' ἀγένητον.» Cf. Parmenides, 28B 8,3f. (DK I, 235). Concerning this quote, see Alain Le Boulluec, *Les Stromates*, V/2,335f. To be sure, Plato cites Parmenides in his dialogue, see *Soph.* 237a8-9; 258d2-3; cf. Parmenides, 28B 7,1f. (DK I,234,31f.). This particular quote, however, cannot be found in the *Sophist*.

In the *Paedagogus*, addressed to the readers at the early stage of their Christian life, Clement invokes Plato's words from the *Sophist* to show that ἔλεγχος, in the mouth of the Visitor of Elea a method of cross-questioning and refuting, in Clement's interpretation "correction", is the best means of purification.[66] Even in his moral treatise *Quis dives salvetur*, Clement anonymously alludes to the *Sophist* speaking about the enemy which resides inside the soul in the form of inappropriate desires and which, being all the time present in the soul, is even more dangerous than external persecution.[67]

All the above-mentioned borrowings and allusions document Clement's knowledge of the *Sophist*, although he does not seem to be interested in the ontological impact of the "gigantomachia" but in its epistemic implications in the first place. In his account of the true dialectic art, Clement openly alludes to the *Sophist*, but develops the intended "communication with Forms" from the middle Platonic idea of Forms in the divine intellect, alien to Plato, although coming close to the *pantelôs on* of the *Sophist*.

66 *Paedagogus* I,9,82,3 (Cl. I,138,11-15): Ταύτῃ τοι καὶ Πλάτων τὴν μεγίστην τῆς ἐπανορθώσεως δύναμιν καὶ τὴν κυριωτάτην κάθαρσιν τὸν ἔλεγχον εἰδὼς ἀκολούθως τῷ λόγῳ τὸν τὰ μέγιστα ἀκάθαρτον ὄντα ἀπαίδευτόν τε καὶ αἰσχρὸν γεγονέναι διὰ τὸ ἀνέλεγκτον εἶναι βούλεται, ᾗ καθαρώτατον καὶ κάλλιστον ἔπρεπεν τὸν ὄντως ἐσόμενον εὐδαίμονα εἶναι. Cf. *Soph.* 230d6-e3: Διὰ ταῦτα δὴ πάντα ἡμῖν, ὦ Θεαίτητε, καὶ τὸν ἔλεγχον λεκτέον ὡς ἄρα μεγίστη καὶ κυριωτάτη τῶν καθάρσεών ἐστι, καὶ τὸν ἀνέλεγκτον αὖ νομιστέον, ἂν καὶ τυγχάνῃ βασιλεὺς ὁ μέγας ὤν, τὰ μέγιστα ἀκάθαρτον ὄντα, ἀπαίδευτόν τε καὶ αἰσχρὸν γεγονέναι ταῦτα ἃ καθαρώτατον καὶ κάλλιστον ἔπρεπε τὸν ὄντως ἐσόμενον εὐδαίμονα εἶναι.

67 *Quis dives salvetur* 25,5 (Cl. III,176,15): τὸν γὰρ ἐχθρὸν ἐν ἑαυτῷ περιάγει πανταχοῦ. Cf. *Soph.* 252c7-9: τὸν πολέμιον καὶ ἐναντιωσόμενον ἔχοντες, ἐντὸς ὑποφθεγγόμενον ὥσπερ τὸν ἄτοπον Εὐρυκλέα περιφέροντες ἀεὶ πορεύονται.

Zusammenfassung

In seiner Analyse des Glaubens in *Stromateis* II,4,15,1-2 zitiert Clemens von Alexandrien die Stelle aus Platons *Sophistes* 246a9-b1.6-8 über die "Gigantomachia" der "Söhne der Erde" gegen die "Formen-Freunde", wie Platon sie nennt, und spielt mehrfach auf Platons *Sophistes* an. Clemens' zentraler Einwand in der "Gigantomachia" ist nicht die von Platon selbst kritisierte falsche Ontologie beider Parteien, sondern eine unzureichende Epistemologie, der "fehlende Glaube" (*Strom*. II,4,15,1), da der Glaube, so Clemens, ein notwendiger Bestandteil der Erkenntnis ist. In *Strom*. IV,25,155,3 bezeugt Clemens seine hohe Wertschätzung für die Kunst der Dialektik, wenn er mit dem Sokrates aus Platons *Sophistes* den "Gast" aus Elea als einen "Gott" vorstellt (*Soph*. 216a5). Anders als Platon, aber mit den Mittelplatonikern, setzt Clemens die Formen als im Intellekt Gottes anwesend voraus. Daher kann er die Gottähnlichkeit der Dialektiker aus ihrer Fähigkeit ableiten, diese Formen zu betrachten und sich so Gott zu nähern.

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The Many Faces of Dionysius
Reflections on *The Oxford Handbook of Dionysius the Areopagite*

Paolo Colizzi

1. Introduction; 2. The Platonic Heritage; 3. Dionysius' Metamorphoses; 4. Beyond the Pseudonymity

1. Introduction

The *Corpus Dionysiacum*, written between the end of the fifth century and the beginning of the sixth century, is known to be one of the most important texts of all Christian Theology. Not only for its theological and philosophical content, but also for its massive influence in the subsequent history of theology and philosophy. The newly published *The Oxford Handbook of Dionysius the Areopagite*,[1] in which the various sources of Dionysius' thought are also reconstructed, is undoubtedly an indispensable work tool for those who want to understand the crucial historical value of the Dionysian thought.[2]

1 Mark Edwards – Dimitrios Pallis – Georgios Steiris (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Dionysius the Areopagite*, Oxford University Press, New York 2022.

2 On Dionysius' *Wirkungsgeschichte* see also Ysabel De Andia (ed.), *Denys L'Aréopagite Et Sa Postérité En Orient Et En Occident: Actes du colloque international de Paris, 21 – 24 septembre 1994*, Collection des Études Augustiniennes, Série Antiquité 151, Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, Paris 1997, and Sarah Coakley – Charles Stang (eds.), *Re-thinking Dionysius the Areopagite*, Directions in Modern Theology 7, Wiley-Blackwell, Chichester 2009.

As is well known, the author of the *Corpus Dionysiacum* is claimed to be the Dionysius converted by Paul at the Areopagus in Athens (Acts 17:34). In this way, he was able to have an enormous influence on the later theological tradition. In fact, it was just with Lorenzo Valla, during the Italian Renaissance, that for the first time was clearly stated and demonstrated that the real Dionysius, who lived in the first century, was not the author of the *Corpus*.[3] Before this moment, theologians used the *Corpus Dionysiacum* giving it something like an apostolic authority – although sometimes, starting even from the sixth century, the doubt was raised about the identity of Dionysius.[4] Because of this authority, his influence was huge, even in contexts so different from one another, from Late Antiquity to the Medieval Period or the Renaissance. Moreover, as is also shown in the *Handbook*, his influence did not end with the discovery of the pseudepigraphic character of the *Corpus Dionysiacum*, arriving both to contemporary theology and philosophy.[5] In this regard, what is interesting in the idea that lies behind the *Handbook*, is the fact that it makes us see concretely the hermeneutical power that emerged from the *Corpus* during the history of thought – at the same time also reflecting on the different sources that merged in Dionysius' work. Therefore, Dionysius' *Handbook* is a way of reading many of the crucial moments of the entire philosophical and theological tradition through

3 See Denis Jean-Jacques Robichaud, *Valla and Erasmus on the Dionysian Question*, in M. Edwards – D. Pallis – G. Steiris (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Dionysius the Areopagite*, 491-514.

4 Carlo Mazzucchi, "Damascio, autore del *Corpus Dionysiacum*, e il dialogo Περὶ πολιτικῆς ἐπιστήμης", in *Aevum* 80 (2006), 299-334, 309-312.

5 Cf. Mark Edwards, *Three Theologians: Dean Inge, Vladimir Lossky, and Von Balthasar*, in M. Edwards, D. Pallis and G. Steiris (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Dionysius the Areopagite*, 584-603; Dimitrios Pallis, *The Reception of Dionysius in Modern Greek Theology and Scholarship*, in M. Edwards – D. Pallis – G. Steiris (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Dionysius the Areopagite*, 604-637; Timothy Knepper, *Jacques Derrida and Jean-Luc Marion*, in M. Edwards – D. Pallis – G. Steiris (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Dionysius the Areopagite*, 653-669.

the hermeneutical keys of the *Corpus Dionysiacum*. Moreover, at the same time, it is an attempt of trying to show concretely why the philosophical-theological tradition could not be what it is without the *Corpus Dionysiacum*. With Dionysius, the treasure of ancient thought, both Pagan and Christian, finds one of its most decisive syntheses, passing through the entire history of our culture. This is why this *Handbook* is so important: without the *Corpus Dionysiacum*, our metaphysical and theological cultures would not be what they are.

Since the *Handbook* is so massive, covering a period that goes from the Gospels to Jean-Luc Marion, it will not be possible in this contribution to deal with all the different authors on which it is focused. Resuming such a philosophical path would be impossible: what I will try to do in the following – before reflecting on the general image of Dionysius that emerges from the *Handbook* – is to reflect on some crucial aspects of Dionysius' reception analyzed in the volume. First, I will consider the problem of his Platonic sources – both Patristic and Pagan – also discussing some of the thesis affirmed in the *Handbook*. Then I will go through the problem of Dionysius' reception through the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, trying to look critically at some of the aspects of rupture in the interpretation of Dionysius among some of his most important interpreters.

2. The Platonic heritage

The analysis of Dionysius' sources is the task achieved by the first part of the *Handbook*.[6] Many of the contributions of this section deal with the Platonic tradition – both Patristic and Pagan. In the following, I will consider some of the most important of these sources.

For what concerns the Patristic tradition, the *Handbook* deals in particular with Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Gregory of Nyssa.

6 Cf. *Section I: The* Corpus *in its Historical Setting*, 13-154.

Regarding Clement, an aspect on which he may have influenced the author of the *Corpus Dionysiacum* is the initiatory conception of theology as something secret, to be hidden from the ignorance of the many – and, also, to be transmitted orally, since "secret things are entrusted to speech, not to writing [...] the mysteries are delivered mystically".[7] In order to broaden the mapping of Dionysius' influences on this topic, it may also be added that this way of conceiving theology as something secret and initiatory can also be found in the Pagan Platonic tradition – as we can see, for example, looking at Proclus.[8] Also, it is obvious how the assertion of the superiority of orality over writing has its primal source in Plato's *Phaedrus*, amply analyzed in this regard by scholars within the debate on the unwritten doctrines.[9]

Analyzing the Origenian influence, which also passes through Evagrius, Ilaria Ramelli immediately points out that her goal is to show "that Dionysius is a true Origenian, deeply indebted to the actual teaching of Origen, rather than an «Origenist», holding doctrines that were denounced as heresies in the sixth century".[10] This link

7 *Strom.* I,1,13,2,4. This way of conceiving theology was inherited by Clement from Philo of Alexandria (Bogdan Bucur, *Philo and Clement of Alexandria*, 78-93, 89-90). We do not have enough information in order to affirm that Dionysius read Philo; at least, what we can say is that – since it is very likely that he read Clement (being him a Church Father) – it can be argued that he was indirectly influenced also by Philo, through his influence on Clement (cf. 78).

8 As Salvatore Lilla points put, "l'idea della tradizione segreta lega strettamente ps. Dionigi sia a Proclo che a Clemente" (Salvatore Lilla, *Dionigi l'areopagita e il platonismo cristiano*, Letteratura cristiana antica 4, Morcelliana, Brescia 2005, 183).

9 Cf. Plato, *Phaedr.* 274b-275d. Regarding this topic and the "unwritten doctrines", cf., for example, Giovanni Reale, *Per una nuova interpretazione di Platone*, Metafisica del Platonismo nel suo sviluppo storico e nella filosofia patristica. Studi e testi 3, Vita e Pensiero, Milano 1987, 89-113.

10 Ilaria Ramelli, *Origen, Evagrius and Dionysius*, in M. Edwards – D. Pallis – G. Steiris (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Dionysius the Areopagite*, 94-108.

could be seen in different regards: first of all, an influence can be easily traced in the Dionysian idea that God can be named both as ἀγάπη and ἔρως, in accordance with a conception developed in particular in Origen's *Comment on the Song of Songs*.[11] Also, very important to prove the Origenian heritage is the idea of the ἀποκατάστασις – the return of everything (even the devil) in God's goodness at the End of Days.[12] In this regard, it must be noted that while it is not clear if Dionysius specifically endorses the Origenian doctrine, his use of the term "ἀποκατάστασις" is nonetheless remarkable.[13] The use of this term in Dionysius is also linked to the Neoplatonic idea of ἐπιστροφή,

11 Cf. Dionysius Areopagita, *De divinis nominibus* (=DN) 156,1-158,18 (The critical edition of Dionysius' texts to which I will refer is Beate R. Suchla – Günter Heil – Adolf M. Ritter (eds.), *Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita, Corpus Dionysiacum*, 2 vols., Patristische Texte und Studien 33, 36, De Gruyter, Berlin – New York, 1990-1991). for what concerns Origen, cf. *Commentarium in canticum canticorum*, 68-69. On this Origenian influence in Dionysius, cf. also Anders Nygren, *Eros und Agape. Gestaltwandlungen der christlichen Liebe*, Erster Teil, Studien des apologetischen Seminars 28 Bertelsmann, Gütersloh 1930, tr. it. *Eros e Agape. La nozione cristiana dell'amore e le sue trasformazioni*, a cura di Nella Gay, Economica EDB 16, Bologna 2011, 604-605.

12 The expression "ἀποκατάστασις" appears only in Acts 3:19-21; cf. also 1Cor 15-18, and Mt 17:11.

13 Cf. DN 146,13-22 (concerning the cyclical return of the stars to themselves); *De ecclesiastica hierarchia* (=EH) 82,13-83,10 (concerning the movement that the priest makes from the altar to the end of the church and then back to the altar); DN 160,11-15 (here the term is explicitly used in reference to the conversion of creatures to the Principle). On this topic, cf. Ilaria Ramelli, *The Christian Doctrine of Apokatastasis. A critical Assessment from the New Testament to Eriugena*, Vigiliae Christianae, Supplements 120, Brill, Leiden – Boston 2013, 694-721.

through which every being is always connected to the Good.[14] Both in Origen's ἀποκατάστασις and the Neoplatonic ἐπιστροφή there is the idea of the return of all beings in God. Of course, there is also a crucial difference: the Neoplatonic ἐπιστροφή is not in itself eschatological – it is a metaphysical property of reality – while the ἀποκατάστασις, in Christian terms, has this kind of historical connotation. As also Werner Beierwaltes noted, Dionysius does not insist very much on eschatology.[15] Moreover, in fact, we can also see that he does not explicitly use ἀποκατάστασις in that sense. Nevertheless, the fact that this term is so strongly used – and the Dionysian emphasis on the idea of God as "all in all" (1Cor 15:28),[16] together with the theodicy he develops in Chapter IV of the *De divinis nominibus*, so strongly influenced by the Proclian *De malorum subsistentia*, in which evil is conceived as something merely para-ipostatic[17] – can make us think that his conception of eschatology could have been dependent on Origen, in agreement in this sense with the results of Ramelli's contribution. For what concerns Gregory, he can be considered as one of the most

14 In this sense, it is very interesting to note that even Proclus (because of a Stoic influence that we can also find in Dionysius) speaks precisely of ἀποκατάστασις to describe the orbits of the celestial bodies; moreover, he also speaks of the movement of the ἐπιστροφή of the whole universe to the Principle (cf. Proclus, *In Timaeum* I,87,19-30). On this topic, cf. Ilaria Ramelli, *Proclus and Apokatastasis*, in Danielle Layne – David Butorac (eds.), *Proclus and his Legacy*, Millennium-Studien / Millennium Studies 65, De Gruyter, Berlin – New York 2017, 95-122.

15 I. Ramelli, *The Christian Doctrine of Apokatastasis. A critical Assessment from the New Testament to Eriugena*, 694-721, 90-91.

16 Cf. DN 221,5-10.

17 It was specifically the strong similarity of the Dionysian arguments with the *De malorum subsistentia* that, at the end of the nineteenth century, was considered by Hugo Koch and Joseph Stiglmayr as the crucial philological proof to demonstrate the strong dependency of Dionysius on Proclus (cf. Christian Schäfer, *Hugo Koch and Joseph Stiglmayr on Dionysius and Proclus*, in M. Edwards – D. Pallis – G. Steiris (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Dionysius the Areopagite*, 568-583, 570-573).

important Christian sources for Dionysian mystical theology.[18] As Dionysius, Gregory insists on the transcendence of God in respect to every language, either positive or negative, also stating God's infinity.[19] Also, he uses the image of Moses climbing the Sinai to describe the image of the soul ascending to God.[20] At the same time, the author of the *Corpus Dionysiacum* radicalizes Gregory's apophatism, conceiving God as even beyond οὐσία itself.[21] In the words used by Michael Motia in his contribution in the *Handbook*: "for Gregory, any theory of divine incomparability that kept God at a distance imposed a limit on an unlimited God";[22] so that "when Dionysius writes that God must be «unknowingly» known 'beyond being', therefore, he is drawing on and radicalizing Gregory's emphasis on divine infinitude".[23]

This way of conceiving God naturally depends, in Dionysius, also on the influence that the Neoplatonic tradition had on him, as shown in the *Handbook*. Without forgetting the Christian goal of the *Corpus*, scholars usually accept the idea that it should be understood starting from the broader framework of late ancient Neoplatonism.[24] More

18 Cf. Michael Motia, *Dionysius and Gregory of Nissa*, in M. Edwards – D. Pallis – G. Steiris (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Dionysius the Areopagite*, 109-121.

19 On this topic, cf. Ekkehard Mühlenberg, *Die Unendlichkeit Gottes bei Gregor von Nyssa*, Forschungen zur Kirchen- und Dogmengeschichte 16, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen 1966.

20 Of course, I am referring to Gregory's *De vita mosis*: cf. 2,163; or 2,238-239; for what concerns Dionysius, cf. Dionysius, *De mystica theologia* 143,17-144,15.

21 In fact, Dionysius conceives God as an "ὑπερούσιος ὕπαρξις". As he says in DN 126,14-16: "ἐπὶ τῆς ἑνώσεως τῆς θείας ἤτοι τῆς ὑπερουσιότητος ἡνωμένον μέν ἐστι τῇ ἐναρχικῇ τριάδι καὶ κοινὸν ἡ ὑπερούσιος ὕπαρξις, ἡ ὑπέρθεος θεότης, ἡ ὑπεράγαθος ἀγαθότης".

22 Michael Motia, *Dionysius and Gregory of Nissa*, 118.

23 Ibid.

24 In this regard, cf., for example, the already quoted Werner Beierwaltes, *Dionysius Areopagites: Ein christlicher Proklos?*, in Idem, *Platonismus im Christentum*, and also idem, *Theophany: The Neoplatonic Philosophy of Dionysius the Areopagite*, State University of New York Press, Albany 2008.

specifically, it is a fairly accepted hypothesis that the author of the *Corpus* was probably a student of Proclus at the Neoplatonic school in Athens.[25] Through the contribution by Charles Stang in the *Handbook*, it is shown clearly, for example, how Dionysius takes from Iamblichus' Neoplatonism his use of the term "theurgy" – the ἔργον τοῦ θεοῦ, which was strictly connected in Pagan theology with the *Chaldean Oracles* and was then inherited by the Neoplatonic tradition. Replying to Porphyry's *Letter to Anebo* – where he aroused doubts about theurgy – Iamblichus wrote the *De mysteriis Aegyptiorum*, the first systematic treatise on theurgy. In his regard, θεουργία means "the work of God", understood as a subjective genitive – in the sense that the gods work "disposing the human mind to participation [in them] (τὴν γνώμην τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἐπιτηδείαν ἀπεργαζόμεναι πρὸς τὸ μετέχειν τῶν θεῶν)".[26] The theurgist is something like a conduit through which the gods manifest themselves. The use of this term in the *Corpus Dionysiacum* is massive: 1) on the one hand, it cannot be referred to the Pagan theological tradition; it is generally referred to God's salvific work in the world, and more specifically to the Incarnation of Christ and the texts and traditions connected to it;[27] 2) but, on the other hand, the *formal way* through which theurgy deifies men remains quite close with respect to Iamblichus. It is specifically from him (and also from Proclus, who is also heavily influenced by Iamblichus) that Dionysius inherits the idea of theurgy as "work of God" understood as a subjective genitive, *i.e.* an

25 Cf. Henri-Dominique Saffrey, "Un lien objectif entre lo Pseudo-Denys et Proclus", in *Studia Patristica* 9 (1966), 98-110. There are some important contributions on the problem of the relationship of the author of the *Corpus Dionysiacum* with the Neoplatonic School of Athens; E.S. Mainoldi, *Dietro "Dionigi Areopagita". La genesi e gli scopi del Corpus Dionysiacum*, 113-142, offers a very interesting and also detailed analysis.

26 Iamblichus, *De mysteriis Aegyptiorum*, I,12,36-37.

27 Cf. Charles Stang, *Dionysius, Iamblichus and Proclus*, 132.

action of God in the world.[28]

Moreover, Dionysius inherits specifically from Proclus his peculiar declination of the Neoplatonic idea of God as beyond Being. Of course, the idea that the Good is ἐπέκεινα τῆς οὐσίας is a common framework of the Neoplatonic tradition, starting with a theological exegesis of *Resp.* 509b. Already Plotinus made the explicit association of the One of the *Parmenides* with the Good beyond being of the *Republic*.[29] But with Proclus, we can see an important shift in terminology since he often starts using the preposition ὑπέρ in adverbial and adjectival compounds.[30] While ἐπέκεινα means specifically "on yonder side", "the preposition *hyper* means «above» or «beyond», and thus conveys two distinct spatial relations: being above something (on a vertical axis) and being beyond or across something (on a horizontal axis)".[31] In Dionysius we can precisely find this terminology, also radicalized by a tendency to repeat these kinds of terms many and many times, almost hypnotically.[32]

In addition to this analysis, Mark Edwards and John Dillon show the relationship of Dionysius with respect to later Neoplatonism focusing on Proclus and also Damascius. They reflect on different aspects of this relationship, analyzing first of all the problem of theodicy – an

28 Ibid., 133. In developing the idea that both pagan and Christian Neoplatonic ἔργον τοῦ θεοῦ should be understood as subjective genitives, Stang follows Gregory Shaw, "Neoplatonic Theurgy and Dionysius the Areopagite", in *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 7/4 (1999), 573-599. On the influence of Proclus on Dionysius regarding theurgy, cf. Dylan Burns, "Proclus and the theurgic liturgy of Pseudo-Dionysius", in *Dionysius* 22 (2004), 111-132.

29 Cf. for example Plotinus, *Enneades* V,4,3,38-44.

30 In this regard, I recall that Proclus uses frequently the expression "ὑπερούσιος". Cf. for example *Elementatio Theologica* 100,28; 104,16; 106,22; 108,25; 110,2; 114,18; 120,12.

31 Cf. C. Stang, *Dionysius, Iamblichus and Proclus*, 131.

32 Cf. ibid., 133.

aspect on which the Proclian influence shows itself to be very strong[33] – and also the conception of theurgy, on which, as it is rightly noted, "Proclus is a disciple of Iamblichus".[34] Very suggestive, regarding the way in which Dionysius' relationship to Late-Neoplatonists is to be conceived, are the last pages of their contribution. The main idea of the last paragraph is that Dionysius would be closer to Damascius than to Proclus in the way he thinks about the ineffability of God, thinking of Him as beyond not only affirmations but also negations. This is a crucial issue, not least because, among the hypothesis made by scholars, there is also the one – developed by Carlo Mazzucchi – for which the author of the *Corpus* should be identified with Damascius.[35] Although there is no space here to address the problem closely, I believe there are elements to be able to address this issue from a different perspective than the one outlined in the *Handbook*.

In fact, even though it is true that Damascius insists in a much more systematic way on God's ineffability, developing his theology

33 Mark Edwards – John Dillon, *God in Dionysius and the Later Neoplatonists*, in M. Edwards – D. Pallis – G. Steiris (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Dionysius the Areopagite*, 136-152, 140-145.

34 Ibid., 146.

35 Cf. Carlo Mazzucchi, "Damascio, autore del *Corpus Dionysiacum*, e il dialogo *Περι πολιτικῆς ἐπιστήμης*". Mazzucchi's path – but in a different way (more plausible, I would say) – has been followed also in Tuomo Lankila, The "*Corpus Areopagiticum* as a Crypto-Pagan Project", in *Journal for Late Antiquity Religion and Culture* 5 (2011), 14-40, who also tries to show the Pagan identity of Dionysius, but not identifying him with Damascius. On the contrary, the idea that the author of the *Corpus Dionysiacum* should be of a Christian theologian – philosophically trained at the Neoplatonic School of Athens but then converted – is defended in E.S. Mainoldi, *Dietro 'Dionigi Areopagita'. La genesi e gli scopi del Corpus Dionysiacum*; cf. in particular 483-513 (Mainoldi also considers it possible that, alongside the main author, there was a team working with him, in the attempt of giving an ecumenichal foundation to Christian thought also carried out by Justinian).

in an aporetic and paradoxical sense,[36] it must be emphasized that in Proclus we can already find the seeds of his conception of God. In fact, in his perspective, theology culminates in a negation of negative theology itself,[37] as it appears clearly both in the second book of the *Platonic Theology* and the sixth and seventh book of the *Commentary on Plato's Parmenides*.[38] Dillon and Edwards argue that Damascius differs from Proclus "in holding that we approximate more closely to the truth about God not by negation alone, but by the paradox of affirming in faith what we have denied by logic".[39] On the contrary, I have the impression that Proclus – not less than Dionysius – is aware of the transcendence of God over logic, as also of the necessity of transcending reason for faith.

In the *Mystical Theology*, describing the different methods of theology, Dionysius argues that apophatic theology is epistemologically higher than the cataphatic one, and at the same time that the dignity

36 As Joseph Combés suggested, that of Damascius can be defined as an aporetic theology: cf. Joseph Combés, "La théologie aporétique de Damascius", in *Cahiers de Fontenay* 19-22 (1981), 125-139.

37 On this topic, cf. Michele Abbate, "Il linguaggio «dell'Ineffabile» in Proclo", in *Elenchos* 22/2 (2001), 305-327; and Werner Beierwaltes, *Proklos: Grundzüge seiner Metaphysik*, Philosophische Abhandlungen 24, Vittorio Klostermann, Frankfurt am Main 1965, 395-398.

38 See in particular Carlos Steel (ed.), *Proclus, In Parmenidem*, VII,514,40–521,30, where Proclus discusses the end of the first hypothesis of Plato's *Parmenides*, and more specifically the lines 142a6-8, where Plato would seem to conclude the hypothesis by affirming its impossibility. Proclus tries to give reason of this passage in the context of a constructive metaphysical of the first hypothesis. In this sense, he argues that – even though negations are better than affirmations while talking of God – at the end also all negation must be transcended. This is, for Proclus, what Plato is saying in *Parm.* 142a6-8, which is "a single negation which embraces all the precedent negations, and showing that the One, being none of all things, is cause of all things (nullum ens omnium, causa est omnium)" (*In Parm.* 517,17-19).

39 M. Edwards – J. Dillon, *God in Dionysius and the Later Neoplatonists*, 147.

of God, being detached from everything, is also beyond any negation (ὑπὲρ πᾶσαν ἀφαίρεσιν ἡ ὑπεροχὴ τοῦ πάντων ἁπλῶς ἀπολελυμένου).[40] To unite with the Ineffable, every word must disappear in an absolute silence. In the same way, Proclus, in *Theol. Plat.* II,10, after having exposed in the preceding paragraphs the nature of both affirmative theology and negative theology and their role in the human attempt to research the Ineffable God, says that

> And having reserved such a method for the First God, one must in turn substract the latter from negations as well: for of that there could be "neither definition nor name" whatsoever, Parmenides states. But if there is no definition of that, it is evident that <there is> no negation either [...] if in fact there is not even a single discourse concerning the One, not even this very discourse of ours which undertakes to support these theses is suited to the One [...] [...] So that even if there were a speech of the ineffable, it still never ceases to self-refute and thus comes into conflict with itself.[41]

Not only for Dionysius and Damascius, but also for Proclus, negations are not enough in order to speak of the Ineffable God. For this reason, Proclus says that we should venerate Him in silence (moreover, he also says that there should be a psychological state beyond silence itself).[42] Furthermore, he also thinks that this encounter with God can only take place through faith (πίστις).[43] As already said, there is no space in this contribution to specifically address the problem of the relationship between Proclus, Damascius and Dionysius. However, it can be reasonably argued that, looking at these aspects of the Dionysian mystical theology, there is no need to dissociate Dionysius from Proclus. On the contrary, his relationship with Proclian thought seems to be even fortified in this way.

40 Cf. MT 150,8-9.
41 *Theologia Platonica*. II,10,63,20-64,9.
42 Cf. *Theol. Plat*. II,11,65,13.
43 Cf. *Theol. Plat.* I,25,110,6-16.

3. Dionysius' metamorphoses

It is now time to give a look at Dionysius' influence: I will focus specifically on his relationship with the Latin tradition, using some aspects of his reception as case-studies in order to show the hermeneutical power of the *Corpus Dionysiacum*. In the history of Dionysius' reception in the Latin medieval tradition the year 827 is particularly important: a manuscript of the *Corpus Dionysiacum* arrived at the Carolingian court and was then transferred to the monastery of St Denys.[44] After the translation into Latin by Abbot Halduin, there was the one by John Scotus Eriugena, which was later spread around all Western culture. It is difficult to overestimate Eriugena's role: without him, in the words of Dierdre Carabine, "I suspect the mysticism of the medieval period and beyond would have been bereft of a most singular way of speaking about the source of the all".[45] Another very important translation was the one by Robert Grossateste. This translation was done in the XIIIth century – a period in which we can also find some of the most important medieval interpreters of Dionysian thought: above all, Bonaventure, Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas (all taken into account in the *Handbook*). As Monica Tobon also points out at the beginning of his contribution, Jacques Bougerol said that Bonaventure was "sans doute l'esprit le plus dionysien du moyen âge".[46] Beyond this judgment's rightness, Dionysius' importance for Bonaventure is undisputable. For the Seraphic Doctor, the Areopagite was a crucial theological and mystical authority that he also used for his

44 Cf. Dierdre Carabine, Occulti manifestatio: *The Journey to God in Dionysius and Eriugena*, in M. Edwards – D. Pallis – G. Steiris (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Dionysius the Areopagite*, 315-327, 315.

45 Ibid., 325.

46 Jacques Bougerol, *Saint Bonaventure. Études sur les sources de sa pensée*, Variorum Collected Studies 306, Variorum Reprints, Northampton 1989, 31; cf. Monica Tobon, *Bonaventure and Dionysius*, in M. Edwards – D. Pallis – G. Steiris (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Dionysius the Areopagite*, 350-366.

project of "forging a distinctively Franciscan theological and spiritual synthesis centered on the ecstatic person of St Francis".[47] Among the different aspects of Dionysius' influence in his theology, I mention here the importance of the Dionysian *Mystical theology* for his *Itinerarium mentis in Deus*. If only to give a small illustration of this influence, it would be enough to recall, for example, that in Chapter VII – entitled "De excessu mentali et mystico, in quo requies datur intellectui, affectu totaliter in Deum per excessum transeunte" – Bonaventure explicitly refers to *De mystica theologia*, 142,5-11, where Dionysius speaks of the necessity of putting aside every intellectual activity in order to unite with God. He almost paraphrases one of the most apophatic passages of Dionysius' *Corpus*, to be found in *De mystica theologia*, 142,5-11, where Dionysius speaks about the necessity of abandoning everything, both from sensible and intellectual worlds – and also of being unaware of the self – in order to be "in a total and absolute ecstasy of a pure mind, transcending yourself and all things, [so that] you shall rise up to the superessential radiance of the divine darkness".[48]

Among the different sources of Bonaventure's interpretation of Dionysius, as is also argued by Declan Lawell, there could also be Thomas Gallus. Gallus' distinctive interpretation was the emphasis on the "affective" aspect of Dionysius' mysticism – namely, the idea that it is through love and affect, and not concept, that we can unite with God.[49] In synthetizing his perspective, Lawell says that Thomas Gallus' ideas are a "popularization" of Dionysian thought: in fact, focusing specifically on the affective aspect of mysticism, and not on the scientific one, they can arrive and be shared also by common Christians.[50]

47 Ibid., 350.

48 Cf. *Itinerarium* 7,5.

49 Cf. Declan Lawell, *Thomas Gallus: Affective Dionysianism*, in M. Edwards – D. Pallis – G. Steiris (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Dionysius the Areopagite*, 379-393, 390.

50 Cf. Ibid.

Having said this, we should ask a more general problem regarding the correct way of interpreting Dionysius' thought: is the hermeneutical key of affective mysticism useful in order to understand Dionysius' conceptions? On the one hand, it is true that – affirming explicitly the necessity of transcending reason and intellect – Dionysius' thought cannot be considered as a "rationalistic" one. At the same time, it must be emphasized that, in order to achieve this goal – even just looking at the anagogical path described in the *Mystical Theology* – the Dionysian philosopher should first try to know and study the nature of *everything* that exists, from the lowest up to the highest being. Therefore, Dionysius' philosophy is not purely affective – the "scientific" phase of theology is crucial: without going through the path of all knowledge there could be no union with God. In this sense, Dionysius' mysticism cannot be considered as something "popular". In fact, going through that initiatory conception of theology that, as we have seen, he inherits both from Patristic and Pagan sources, Dionysius firmly believes that the theological path demands the necessity of separating from the "many" and their profane culture.[51] The mysteries of theology are too difficult for ordinary people to understand. In addition, we have to remember that – even though the *Corpus Dionysiacum* is written in a way that we could call "declamatory", so that it appears easier to be read than the texts usually belonging to the Neoplatonic metaphysical tradition – regardless of its literary style, it is historically proved that Dionysius was influenced by the rigorous theoretical thought of the Neoplatonists, and particularly of Proclus, who was head of the Athenian School for half of the Vth century. In the Athenian Neoplatonic philosophical environment, mysticism is not conceived as something purely "irrational", with which science would have nothing to do. On the contrary, the union with God is conceived as something

51 The initiatory conception of theology is omnipresent in the *Corpus Dionysiacum*. By way of example, see CH 16,19–17,2.

meta-rational that the philosopher can achieve only after exercising a rigorous scientific thought, that only later will be transcended.[52]

A very interesting chapter of the volume is then the one focusing on Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas.[53] In particular, it is important to emphasize the fact that they interpret Dionysius through a harmonization with Aristotle. In fact, for Aquinas, "Dionysius nearly everywhere follows Aristotle as will be evident to anyone diligently examining his book".[54] Aquinas inherits his way of conceiving the relationship of Dionysius with ancient thought from his master Albertus, who tries to reconcile the Latin Augustinian Platonism with Dionysian apophatic theology and Aristotelian philosophy mediated by Arabic philosophy.[55] Among these sources, there is also the pseudo-Aristotelian *Liber de causis*, which seems to be the *apex* of Aristotelian theology for him, but was, on the contrary, a crypto-Proclian text (as also Aquinas for first understands).[56] Albert tries to make a synthesis of this tradition, building the image of a "peripatetic Dionysius". In this way, he also has the need to reduce the radical

52 Mystical silence is, in fact, the result of the pursuit of scientific inquiry into the One and the consequent awareness of its limits. Exemplary, in this sense, is the sentence with which Proclus' *In Parmenidem* closes. In discussing the last lemma of the I hypothesis of the Plato's *Parmenides* (142a6-8) – which in Proclus' view refers to the First God – he says: "silentio enim conclusit eam que de ipso theoriam" (*In Parm.* 521,25-26). On this peculiar aspect of Neoplatonic mysticism, cf. Werner Beierwaltes, *Henosis*, in *Denken des Einen: Studien zur neuplatonischen Philosophie und ihrer Wirkungsgeschichte*, Vittorio Klostermann, Frankfurt am Main 1985, 123-154.

53 Cf. Wayne Hankey, *Dionysius in Albertus Magnus and his Student Thomas Aquinas*, in M. Edwards – D. Pallis – G. Steiris (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Dionysius the Areopagite*, 394-416.

54 *In Quatuor Libros Sententiarum*, 2 d, 14 q, 1 a 2 co.

55 Cf. W. Hankey, *Dionysius in Albertus Magnus and his Student Thomas Aquinas*, 395.

56 Cf. ibid., 396-397.

apophatism that Dionysius, as we have already seen, inherits from ancient Neoplatonism. In doing so, he understands the Dionysian perspective as one in which God is conceived as accessible to mental vision and gives less importance to the radical and aporetic conclusions of the *Mystical Theology*.[57] More than Albertus, Thomas recognizes the Platonism of the *Corpus Dionysiacum* – also because he is more familiar with the Neoplatonic tradition, with Proclus at its *apex*, than Albertus.[58] Nevertheless, he remains convinced about the teaching of his Master regarding the idea that Dionysius agrees with Aristotelian thought. In fact, even though, comparing the *Liber de causis* with Proclus' *Elements of Theology*, Aquinas concludes that behind the *Liber* there is a Proclian source – at the same time also recognizing the strong similarity between the *Liber* and Dionysius' philosophy[59] – he draws crucial differences between the Proclian and Dionysian conceptions. By way of example, it could be recalled that he finds a crucial difference between the two in the fact that for Proclus, God is unknowable in principle, while for Dionysius (as for Aquinas) this should not be considered true, being his unknowability determined only by the inadequacy of the creature. This occurs, for Aquinas, since "the Platonic First is unknowable because it exceeds being. In contrast, «according to the truth of things»", for Dionysius, "the first cause is above existing things insofar as it is infinite actual being (*ipsum esse infinitum*)".[60] In this Thomistic perspective, God is not ἐπέκεινα τῆς οὐσίας. On the contrary, He is the Being itself of which it is spoken in Es 3:14. Through this kind of interpretation, the ineffability of God

57 Cf. ibid., 396.

58 Ibid., 397-398.

59 Thomas Aquinas, *Super Librum de causis expositio*, prop. 4, 33, 11-12. On this topic cf. also Wayne Hankey, "The Concord of Aristotle, Proclus, the Liber de Causis & Blessed Dionysius in Thomas Aquinas, Student of Albertus Magnus", in *Dionysius* 34 (2016), 137-209.

60 W. Hankey, *Dionysius in Albertus Magnus and his Student Thomas Aquinas,* 409.

becomes weaker since it is not absolute: the cloud of darkness, of which Dionysius speaks referring to God's ineffability to us, is for Aquinas, "the way into and the place of perfect knowledge".[61] God is not in himself unknowable; the ignorance depends just on our weakness in this life: "in this present life our intellect is not so joined to God as to see his essence but so that it knows of God what he is not".[62]

In my view – and looking at the reconstruction of Dionysius' sources that we can find in the *Handbook* – the Thomist interpretation, insofar as pro-Aristotelian, is a metaphysical betrayal of Dionysius' philosophy. From an Aristotelian perspective, every knowledge is ultimately guaranteed by the principle of contradiction (POC). For Aquinas, also God's nature obeys to this principle.[63] As noted many

61 Ibid., Hankey is here commenting *Super I Epistulam B. Pauli ad Timotheum lectura*, cap. 6,3, where Aquinas explains that God's darkness is "darkness inasmuch as [God] is not seen, and light as much as he is seen".

62 *In librum beati Dionysii de divinis nominibus expositio* I, XIII, 3, § 996.

63 Cf. Aquinas' *quaestio* "utrum Deus sit omnipotens", q. 25, art. 3: "Sed si quis recte consideret, cum potentia dicatur ad possibilia, cum Deus omnia posse dicitur, nihil rectius intelligitur quam quod possit omnia possibilia, et ob hoc omnipotens dicatur. Possibile autem dicitur dupliciter, secundum philosophum, in V Metaphys. Uno modo, per respectum ad aliquam potentiam, sicut quod subditur humanae potentiae, dicitur esse possibile homini. Non autem potest dici quod Deus dicatur omnipotens, quia potest omnia quae sunt possibilia naturae creatae, quia divina potentia in plura extenditur. Si autem dicatur quod Deus sit omnipotens, quia potest omnia quae sunt possibilia suae potentiae, erit circulatio in manifestatione omnipotentiae, hoc enim non erit aliud quam dicere quod Deus est omnipotens, quia potest omnia quae potest. Relinquitur igitur quod Deus dicatur omnipotens, quia potest omnia possibilia absolute, quod est alter modus dicendi possibile. Dicitur autem aliquid possibile vel impossibile absolute, ex habitudine terminorum, possibile quidem, quia praedicatum non repugnat subiecto, ut Socratem sedere; impossibile vero absolute, quia praedicatum repugnat subiecto, ut hominem esse asinum" (Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, q. 25, art. 3 co.). On the crucial metaphysical role of the principle of contradiction in the Thomistic tradition see Maria Bartolomei, *Tomismo e principio di non contraddizione*, CEDAM, Padova 1973.

times by Nicholas of Cusa (on whom I will focus in a while), the God of whom Dionysius speaks precedes the POC, being beyond every opposition, and therefore, also the one between true and false, on which the Aristotelian POC itself is based.[64] Insofar as God transcends the POC – conceived in the Aristotelian tradition as the principle of reality and of our knowledge of reality itself – He is also beyond any kind of possibility of knowledge, no matter how powerful the intellect that would like to know it.[65] Moreover, in the Dionysian perspective, God is not only Being (Es 3:14), but at the same time paradoxically also "beyond beingness (ὑπερουσιότης)".[66]

In this sense, compared to the Thomist interpretation, the one of Nicholas of Cusa is much closer to Dionysius' way of conceiving God. Cusanus gives a Dionysian hermeneutics characterized in anti-Scholastic sense, in whose respect he carries on a bitter controversy.[67] In fact – more than Aquinas and in contrast to Aquinas – he recognizes

64 *Metaph.* 1005b19-21. It will not be possible here to discuss closely the Aristotelian formulation. On the topic, see, for example, Gianluigi Pasquale, *Aristotle and the Principle of Non-Contradiction*, Academia Philosophical Studies 26, Academia Verlag, Sankt Augustin 2006, 17-67; Enrico Berti, *Il principio di non contraddizione come criterio supremo di significanza nella metafisica aristotelica*, in idem, *Studi aristotelici*, Methodos 7 Leandro Ugo Japadre Editore, L'Aquila 1975, 61-88.

65 It is no coincidence that his idea of God as *coincidentia oppositorum* provoked the harsh reaction of the scholastic theologian Johannes Wenck, who criticised Cusanus for having destroyed the principle of contradiction and, with it, science itself (cf. Edmond Vansteenberghe, "Le «De ignota litteratura» de Jean Wenck de Herrenberg contre Nicolas de Cues", in *Beiträge z. Geschichte d. Philosophie d. Mittelalters* 8/6 (1910), 19-41,29). Cusanus answered to Wenck in the *Apologia doctae ignorantiae*, defending himself from the "aristotelica secta" (*Apologia doctae ignorantiae*, 7, 20).

66 Cf. DN 108,9.

67 Cf. Theo Kobusch, *Dionysius the Areopagite and Nicholas of Cusa*, in M. Edwards – D. Pallis – G. Steiris (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Dionysius the Areopagite*, 454-475.

the strong connection and similarity between Proclus' and Dionysius' philosophies. Therefore, thinking that Dionysius is truly the character represented in Acts 17:34, who lived in the first century, he believes that Proclus was directly influenced by his thought.[68] In this way, on the one hand, Cusanus reverses the real relationship between the two (as we have already seen, it was Dionysius who, being probably a pupil of Proclus, was influenced by him) but, on the other hand, as Theo Kobusch also points out, he shows himself close "to being one of the great historians of philosophy".[69] In this regard, it is important to mention that – even though Proclus' *Elements of Theology* had great influence in the Middle Ages – Cusanus is the first Latin author to be systematically influenced by his *Commentary on the Parmenides*. While in the *Elements of Theology* Proclus describes the structure of reality in a systematic and theorematic way, in the *In Parmenidem* – particularly in its last parts – he reflects on the grounding structures of his system in a more problematizing way. It is this Proclus – more aporetic – in whom Cusanus is more interested. And the resulting interpretation of Proclus' philosophy also has a great influence on his reading of the *Corpus Dionysiacum*.

Through this way of reading Dionysius, he goes through a different path with respect to the Thomistic one. Cusanus' polemic with the Scholastic tradition finds a paradigmatic expression at the end of his philosophical journey in the *De li non aliud* (1461-62). The *De li non aliud* represents Cusanus' attempt to reflect on the nature of the inexpressible God by conceiving Him as beyond any kind of distinction, radicalizing the Neoplatonic idea of a God at

68 Cf. *De li non aliud*, XX, 90.

69 Th. Kobusch, *Dionysius the Areopagite and Nicholas of Cusa*, 454.

once transcendent and immanent,[70] particularly emphasizing the epistemological consequences of such a conception. In fact, the *non aliud* – that for Cusanus is both the principle of all being and knowledge[71] – is introduced in the first instance as the principle of all definitions. Cusanus' reasoning is the following: in order to define "p", it has to be first of all defined as "not other than p". For example, in order to define the sky, we must say that "it is not other than the sky" (*caelum est non aliud quam caelum*).[72] In order to be other (*aliud*) with respect to the other beings, everything that exists must be essentially constituted by the *non aliud*. Being *non-aliud*, God is not something *aliud* with respect to the *aliud*. He is not simply something "other" than every being in the sense of something only transcendent. In fact, in this way he would not be *non-aliud*. On the contrary, to be *non aliud*, God must also be immanent to every being. Therefore, it is at the same time – from the epistemological point of view – the *definiens* and the *definiendum*, and – from the metaphysical point of view – the *creare* and the *creari*.[73]

70 On the Cusanian idea of God characterized both by transcendence and immanence and its relationship with the Neoplatonic tradition, see Thomas Leinkauf, *Nicolaus Cusanus. Eine Einführung*, Buchreihe der Cusanus Gesellschaft 15, Aschendorff, Münster, 143-153; and Enrico Peroli, *Niccolò Cusano. La vita, l'opera, il pensiero*, Biblioteca di testi e studi 1427, Carocci, Roma 2022, 458-464.

71 "Deus igitur per 'non aliud' significatus essendi et cognoscendi omnibus principium est" (*De li non aliud*, 9,3-4).

72 "Quid enim responderes, si quis te «quid est aliud?» interrogaret? Nonne diceres: «non aliud quam aliud»? Sic, «quid caelum?», responderes: «non aliud quam caelum»" (*De li non aliud*, 5,1-4).

73 Cf. Davide Monaco, Deus Trinitas. *Dio come* non altro *nel pensiero di Nicolò Cusano*, Collana di teologia 68, Città Nuova, Roma 2010, 272-273, 302-303. The *non aliud* is "definitio, quae se et omnia definit" (114,1). The idea of God as a coincidence of *creare* and *creari* is developed by Cusanus in *De visione Dei*, 49: "Sed sine, domine piissime, ut adhuc vilis factura loquatur ad te. Si videre tuum est creare tuum et non vides aliud a te, sed tu ipse es obiectum tui ipsius, es

Hence, it is also beyond the POC, as Cusanus states, by confronting directly with the Aristotelian tradition. The cardinal firmly believes that applying the POC to what is beyond contradiction itself is wrong. The POC can be applied only where there is distinction between the opposites. However, God is "contradictionem absque contradictione".[74] In expressing this idea, Cusanus explicitly refers also to Dionysius himself by saying that "likewise, the theologian Dionysius saw that God is the opposition of opposites without opposition (sicut Dionysius theologus Deum oppositorum vidit oppositionem sine oppositione)".[75] Starting from his interpretation of the *Corpus Dionysiacum* – conceived also in this regard as in deep harmony with Proclus' thought[76] – Cusanus carries out a scathing attack on the Aristotelian tradition. As also Kobusch affirms,

> The historical significance of the critique of Aristotle cannot be overestimated. Nicholas says here with particular emphasis, in the writing *De non aliud*, that the principle of contradiction is in no way the universal principle that Aristotle supposed it to be. If the other is an other, this is also the reason why it is nothing other than the other. The not-other is also a constituent of the otherness of the other. Thus

enim videns et visibile atque videre, quomodo tunc creas res alias a te? Videris enim creare te ipsum, sicut vides te ipsum. Sed consolaris me, vita spiritus mei, quoniam etsi occurrat murus absurditatis, qui est coincidentiae ipsius creare cum creari, quasi impossibile sit, quod creare coincidat cum creari" (49,1-7).

74 *De li non aliud*, 89,8-9,

75 *De li non aliud*, 89,12-14. Dionysius alludes to this idea in DN 185b. However, the formula Cusanus refers to does not appear explicitly in the *Corpus Dionysiacum*. As it has been shown by Beierwaltes (cf. Werner Beierwaltes, "Deus oppositio oppositorum. Nicolaus Cusanus, De visione Dei. XIII", in *Salzburger Jahrbuch für Philosophie* 8 (1964), 175-185), the expression "oppositorum oppositio" can instead be found in Eriugena (*De div. nat.* I,517a-b).

76 Cf. for example *De principio*, 26,1-13, where Cusanus quotes almost explicitly *In Parm.* 519, where Proclus speaks about the relationship between the One and the laws of logic.

> for Nicholas the other and the not-other are to be distinguished, but they do not stand over against each other in the sense of the Aristotelian principle of contradiction. Under the rubric of the not-other something is cognized here that escapes the Aristotelian principle of contradiction.[77]

Looking at Cusanus' critics of the Thomistic interpretation, we can say that, more generally (of course, it is a simplification but also a useful key to read this crucial cultural shift), what we can see in the passage from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance is a shift in the way in which generally Dionysius is interpreted, in the sense of a radicalization. While – also because at that time many texts of Plato and the Platonic tradition could not be read[78] – the Thomistic tradition read Dionysius in a philo-Aristotelian way, in the Renaissance, starting from Pletho, Bessarion, Cusanus, and going to authors like Pico della Mirandola and Marsilio Ficino, he is read in close connection with Neoplatonic sources.

There is not enough space here in order to insist specifically on the different aspects of this topic. Nevertheless, it will certainly be useful to recall the case of Ficino, in which this tendency appears in a paradigmatic way. Not only did Ficino write commentaries both on the *Mystical Theology* and *The Divine Names*, but, as famously well known, he was also the first to translate Plato's entire *Corpus* into Latin. As Mark Edwards points out, the purpose of his commentaries on the *Corpus Dionysiacum* was, among the other things, "to show that Dionysius had been to the Neoplatonists what Moses had been to Plato himself"[79] – and, therefore, that there was no risk in using the

77 Th. Kobusch, *Dionysius the Areopagite and Nicholas of Cusa*, 465.

78 On the return of Platonic and Neoplatonic tradition in Renaissance philosophy, cf. James Hankins, *Plato in the Italian Renaissance*, Columbia Studies in the Classical Tradition 17, Brill, Leiden - London 1990.

79 Mark Edwards with the Assistance of Michael Allen, *Marsilio Ficino and the* Dionysian Corpus, in M. Edwards – D. Pallis – G. Steiris (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Dionysius the Areopagite*, 476-488, 476.

philosophical tool of the Neoplatonists in order to lead the soul towards God. Ficino was a priest; but, for sure, he conceived himself first as a philosopher with the crucial historical duty of resurrecting the Platonic wisdom. Moreover, this wisdom was conceived as in harmony not only with Christianity, but more generally with the unique golden chain of a religious tradition that holds together with Plato Zoroastrianism, Hermeticism, Orphism and Pythagoreanism.[80] For Ficino, theology was the noblest part of philosophy, but theology itself could not be reduced only to the Christian tradition. It is not something random, in this sense, that about Dionysius, Ficino said: "Platonicus primo ac deinde Christianus".[81] In other periods of the history of our culture, this would have been said as an insult; on the contrary, for Ficino, it was the result of the awareness that the *Corpus Dionysiacum* was a treasure containing the metaphysical grounding structures of a unique true theological tradition, both Christian and Pagan.

To get an idea of the spread of this way of conceiving the relationship with theological traditions in the Renaissance, it is certainly useful to refer to the idea expressed by Cusanus regarding Dionysius' relationship with Plato, which gives us a distinct view of the kind of syncretistic cultural environment peculiar to the revival of Platonism in the Renaissance. Speaking about the hunt for wisdom (*venatio sapientiae*), Cusanus traces a metaphysical-theological path that from Plato goes to Origen, Proclus and Dionysius:

> Dionysius, who imitates Plato, made a similar hunt in the field of unity, and argues that negations, which are not deprivations but are excellent and abundant [negative] affirmations, are truer than affirmations. Proclus, on the other hand, who quotes Origen, is later than Dionysius.

80 On this topic cf. James Hankins, *The Development of Ficino's "Ancient Theology"*, in idem, *Plato in the Italian Renaissance*, 2 vols, Brill, Leiden – Boston 1991, 460-464.

81 Marsilio Ficino, *Oratio de laudibus philosophiae*, in *Opera*, ex officina Henricpetrina, Basileae, 1576, 758 (wrong pagination 768).

> Following Dionysius, he denies of the First, which is wholly ineffable, the one and the good, although Plato designated the First by these names. Since I believe that we should praise and follow these extraordinary hunters, I refer those dedicated to study to the careful analyses they have transmitted to us in their writings.[82]

4. Beyond the Pseudonymity

Having reconstructed the main sources of Dionysian thought and analyzed some of the most important passages in its reception, it is now time to make some concluding remarks on the *Handbook* project, which has been our guide in this reflection on the many faces of Dionysius.

As already said, the *Handbook* is, in its essence, a reception study on the *Corpus Dionysiacum*. Nonetheless, it is called *The Oxford Handbook of Dionysius the Areopagite*. Two elements are here important: 1) it is a volume on Dionysius, not pseudo-Dionysius; 2) it is a volume that, focusing on Dionysius' reception, claims at the same time to focus on Dionysius himself. These two closely related aspects are part of the key idea behind the book: *understanding the* Corpus Dionysiacum *cannot only mean identifying the "real" author.* The latter, of course, is a crucial task; but it is by no means sufficient to understand the content of the *Corpus*. The purpose of understanding the *Corpus* also involves understanding its historical power to influence – and even enable – some of the most important theological and philosophical systems of our tradition. To say it with the very words of Edwards, Pallis and Steiris,

> Without the *Corpus Dionysiacum*, there would have been no Maximus the Confessor, no Eriugena, no Aquinas, no Cusanus, and no Ficino as we know them. The pejorative label "pseudo-Dionysius" belies his place

82 Cusanus, *De venatione sapientiae*, 64,11-18.

> in history, for there are no authentic writings by this disciple from which his elucubration need to be distinguished [...] The name of Dionysius is synonymous with a single body of literature, just as the name of Homer is synonymous with the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. His text, like that of Homer, is protean, and like Homer, he grows in stature with every new appropriation – all the more so the more appropriation departs from what we have now supposed to have been his "intent". And just as it would have been slighting to call him pseudo-Dionysius, so it would have been needlessly pedantic to call this volume on the reception of his writings: it is indeed so, for the most part, but this is surely a case in which the reception is the man.[83]

To study the *Wirkungsgeschichte* of a text is to study something that, although it is other than the text, at the same time deeply belongs to it, even in the misunderstanding. Of course, the interpretations involving the text in different eras may be very different from each other, as we can see, for example, by looking at the reception of the *Corpus Dionysiacum* in Scholastic thought and in authors such as Nicholas of Cusa or Marsilio Ficino. Obviously, the fact that the same text may be involved in two conflicting interpretations does not imply that they are both true, but neither does it imply that they are both false, or that one is totally true and the other false. Although one may think that one of the two interpretations is closer to the philosophy of Dionysius than the other – and I am personally quite convinced that the Renaissance interpretations of the *Corpus Dionysiacum* are closer to its philosophical end than the Scholastic ones – what is important in showing their conflict is that it makes us understand the hermeneutic power of the text. What remains historically true – beyond any personal interpretation – is that Dionysius' philosophy, for different reasons and in different ways, has been engaged in some

83 Mark Edwards – Dimitrios Pallis – Georgios Steiris, *Introduction*, in M. Edwards D. Pallis – G. Steiris (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Dionysius the Areopagite*, 1-10, 6.

of the most important moments in the theological and philosophical tradition. It has been used in different philosophical and theological contexts, even conflicting ones, in which it has been regarded as a useful hermeneutical key in seeking to investigate the nature of God.

The conception of God that we can find in the *Corpus Dionysiacum* is to be conceived as a re-interpretation, in a Christian context, of the late Neoplatonic tradition. Through the revival, in a renewed form, of some of the fundamental conceptions of the Neoplatonic tradition, Dionysius has played a crucial role in the development of the tradition of Christian Platonism in its various historical expressions. For this reason, the *Corpus Dionysiacum* is certainly one of the most important texts in the entire Patristic tradition, and, certainly, the study of its influence in the theological and philosophical tradition – the task fulfilled by the *Oxford Handbook* – is crucial in order to look, from an original perspective, at the history of theology, which is also, from a Dionysian perspective, the history of philosophy. For Dionysius, no perfect theology could exist without philosophy, nor true philosophy without theology.[84] To study his influence in our tradition is to study how Christian theology absorbed the Platonic heritage as a crucial hermeneutical tool for investigating the Mystery of God.

84 This is evident firstly from the very structure of the *Corpus Dionysiacum* and its strong use of the Neoplatonic heritage. But it is also confirmed by the fact that Dionysius identifies the true and perfect philosopher with the figure of the monk: "Ἡ δὲ τῶν μεριστῶν οὐ μόνον ζωῶν ἀλλὰ μὴν καὶ φαντασιῶν ἀποταγὴ τὴν τελεωτάτην ἐμφαίνει τῶν μοναχῶν φιλοσοφίαν ἐν ἐπιστήμῃ τῶν ἑνοποιῶν ἐντολῶν ἐνεργουμένην" (EH 117,23-25). This Dionysian conception of the figure of the monk is also crucial from a historical point of view, becoming very influential during the Middle Ages (cf. René Roques, *L'univers dionysien. Structure Hiérarchique du monde selon le Pseudo-Denys*, Théologie 29, Aubier, Paris 1954, 188-189).

Abstract

Scopo fondamentale del presente lavoro è di riflettere sulla *Wirkungsgeschichte* di Dionigi Areopagita a partire da un'analisi del recente *The Oxford Handbook of Dionysius the Areopagite*. Si coglierà l'occasione per analizzare il ruolo storico di cesura occupato dal pensiero dionisiano, avente come cifra fondamentale l'incorporazione di aspetti fondamentali della metafisica tardo-neoplatonica all'interno della tradizione teologica cristiana – perdipiù, al confine fra il mondo classico e la tradizione successiva. Oltre che riflettere sul problema delle fonti dionisiane, si potrà anche esplorare la questione della ricezione del *Corpus Dionysiacum*, analizzando in modo particolare il passaggio dall'ermeneutica dionisiana medievale a quella rinascimentale, con un focus specifico sul caso di Niccolò Cusano. Inoltre, guardando al complesso percorso compiuto nell'*Oxford Handbook*, si potrà riflettere sulla fecondità ermeneutica del *Corpus Dionysiacum*, oltre che sul fondamentale ruolo da esso svolto per la costituzione del canone teologico-metafisico proprio della nostra tradizione culturale.

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La memoria e la fede in Clemente Alessandrino[1]

Miklós Gyurkovics

1. Introduzione; 2. La ricezione della teoria della memoria di Platone; 3. L'impronta del rapporto del Padre con il Figlio; 4 La memoria e la fede razionale; Conclusioni

1. Introduzione

Clemente di Alessandria è stato il primo e più importante filosofo fra i pensatori cristiani che abbia armonizzato, con successo, la fede con la disciplina della filosofia.[2] Secondo lui, nessuna delle due può essere attendibile senza l'altra, poiché l'insegnamento sulla fede sarebbe solamente vuoto sofismo senza le argomentazioni razionali e scientifiche. Clemente ha formulato questo argomento sia nei confronti dei maestri gnostici, che hanno propagandato la gnosi senza le indagini scientifiche,

1 Una versione più breve della presente ricerca è stata presentata a Roma durante il *XLVIII Incontro di Studiosi dell'Antichità Cristiana* dedicato al tema: *La memoria. Forme e finalità del ricordare nel cristianesimo antico*, in data 5-7 maggio 2022, Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum.

2 Cf. Laura Rizzerio, *Clement of Alexandria and the Articulation of Philosophy and Biblical Tradition as a Tool to Fight the Gnostics*, in Markus Vinzent – Vít Hušek (eds.), *Studia Patristica. Vol. CX. Papers presented at the Eighteenth International Conference on Patristic Studies held in Oxford 2019*, Peeters, Leuven 2021, 127-144. Inoltre, cf. Matyáš Havrda, *Clement of Alexandria (on Christian philosophy)*, in Mark Edwards (ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of Early Christian Philosophy*, Routledge, New York – London 2021, 357-371; Dietmar Wyrwa, *Die christliche Platonaneignung in den Stromateis des Clemens von Alexandrien*, De Gruyter, Berlin – New York 1983; Salvatore Lilla, *Clement of Alexandria: A Study of Christian Platonism and Gnosticism*, Clarendon, Oxford 1971.

sia nei confronti dei cristiani che, per ottenere la fede, hanno rigettato la disciplina della filosofia.[3] La quantità, sorprendentemente elevata, di citazioni e di allusioni filosofiche nelle sue opere potrebbe suggerire l'idea che egli si sia servito di florilegi per la composizione dei suoi trattati e non piuttosto che abbia approfondito lo studio dettagliato delle fonti filosofiche originali. Uno degli scopi della presente ricerca è di dimostrare che questa ipotesi non può essere completamente vera per quanto riguarda gli scritti di Platone. Non siamo in grado di dimostrare l'influenza di Platone sull'insegnamento di Clemente né grazie al registro, per altro giustamente famoso, di Otto Stählin, né grazie alle ricerche dell'intelligenza artificiale, poiché il nostro interesse riguarda la ricostruzione della complessa mentalità teologica e non solo la dimostrazione dei riferimenti letterali, che naturalmente sono stati veicolati dalle diverse opere scritte e dagli insegnamenti orali. Pertanto, l'influenza di Platone sulla teologia di Clemente non emerge solamente dai comuni riferimenti, ma, cosa più importante, dal riconoscimento del fatto che le domande di Clemente si sono identificate con le domande di Platone. In altre parole, accade spesso che le domande teologiche di Clemente siano le medesime di Platone. Fra le questioni aperte vi era anche quella relativa alla reincarnazione, alla memoria e alla fede razionale.

2. *La ricezione della teoria della memoria di Platone*

È ben noto che le idee di Platone sulla memoria sono inseparabili dal suo insegnamento sull'immortalità dell'anima che consiste nelle dottrine della preesistenza dell'anima e della reincarnazione dell'anima

3 Ho avuto l'opportunità di studiare le opinioni di Clemente sull'uso della filosofia rispetto ai pensatori gnostici nei seguenti contributi: Miklós Gyurkovics, "La croce nella disputa antignostica di Clemente Alessandrino", in *Eastern Theological Journal* 6/2 (2020), 313-342, e: Idem, "La teologia «non scritta» in Clemente di Alessandria", in *Eastern Theological Journal* 3/2 (2017), 289-316.

(*Fedone* 73b; 73c; 81a; 83d).[4] Poiché anche Clemente si riferisce a questi concetti platonici, alcuni studiosi hanno ritenuto che anche Clemente valuti positivamente queste stesse dottrine.[5]

Un altro tema platonico, che si intreccia anche con la dottrina della memoria, riguarda il dibattito epistemologico intrattenuto da Platone con i sofisti (*Menone* 80d). Il fatto che i simboli di Platone che illustrano le sue idee sulla memoria (la tavola di cera, il colombario e i piccioni, l'arte maieutica) si trovano anche nei discorsi di Clemente ci può portare alla conclusione che il nostro autore cristiano abbia semplicemente battezzato la filosofia pagana. Tuttavia, se osserviamo più dettagliamente gli stessi dialoghi platonici, abbiamo l'impressione che questi argomenti siano rimasti delle questioni aperte anche per

4 Sophie-Grace Chappell, *History of Philosophy of Memory: Plato*, in Sven Bernecker – Kourken Michaelian (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of Memory*, Routledge, New York – London 2019, 385-395.

5 Secondo Sami Yli-Karjanmaa, Clemente condivideva l'idea della reincarnazione delle anime, perché non la condannava abbastanza apertamente. La base di questa affermazione si troverebbe nei seguenti passi: *Strom.* III,3,13,1-3; IV,12,83,1-2; IV,12,85,2; IV,12,88,1-5; V,14,91,1-5; VI,2,24,1-10; VI,4,35,1-4; VII,6,32,1-9; VII,14,88,5; *Exc.* 28. Cf. Sami Yli-Karjanmaa, *Clement of Alexandria's Position on the Doctrine of Reincarnation and Some Comparisons with Philo*, in M. Vinzent – V. Hušek (eds.), *Studia Patristica. Vol. CX*, 75-90. Al contrario: Ilaria Ramelli, *Clement and Metensomatosis: Comments on Sami Yli-Karjanmaa's Paper*, in *Studia Patristica. Vol. CX*, 91-95; Piotr Ashwin-Siejkowski, *Clement of Alexandria on Trial: The Evidence of 'Heresy' from Photius' Bibliotheca*, Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae 101, Brill, Leiden – Boston 2010, 115-128. Secondo Itter, Clemente non insegnava la preesistenza delle anime in senso assoluto (*Prot.* 1,6,4); cf. Andrew C. Itter, *Esoteric Teaching in the Stromateis of Clement of Alexandria*, Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae 97, Brill, Leiden – Boston 2009, 113-139. Le conclusioni di Itter sono state valutate in modo più rigoroso da Havrda, che ha avvertito che occorre evitare di considerare la dottrina di Platone sulla preesistenza delle anime come parallela all'insegnamento di Clemente: Matyáš Havrda – Andrew C. Itter, *Esoteric Teaching in the Stromateis of Clement of Alexandria* Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae 97, Brill, Leiden – Boston 2009, 573-579, 577-579.

Platone. Uno degli esempi più caratteristici di questa incompletezza è l'enigmatica "conclusione" del *Teeteto* che non poteva sfuggire né all'attenzione di Clemente né a quella degli altri filosofi del suo tempo.[6]

I dati statistici indicano che Clemente era particolarmente interessato a leggere e ad interpretare i brani del *Teeteto*. Secondo l'analisi di Otto Stählin (*Register,* 50),[7] nei suoi scritti Clemente si riferisce al *Teeteto* circa 35 volte; in 22 di queste circostanze egli menziona il tema della divinizzazione. Ciò che colpisce ancora di più è che i concetti espressi nel *Teeteto* intessono una rete dottrinale che copre quasi tutte le opere di Clemente.[8] Sembra che le domande dei due autori possano provenire dalla stessa famiglia, anche se, come dimostreremo, con concetti simili i due autori pervengono a conclusioni diverse.

6 Sul tema cf. Vito Limone, *Origene e la filosofia greca. Scienze, testi, lessico,* Letteratura cristiana antica, Nuova serie 30, Morcelliana, Brescia 2018, 161-164, 166-170, 178-183.

7 *Clemens Alexandrinus, Register, Erster Teil, Zitatenregister, Testimonienregister, Initienregister für die Fragmente, Eigennamenregister*, 2, bearbeitete Auflage herausgegeben von U. Treu. (Band 4,1 apart), O. Stählin (Hrsg.), Berlin 1980, 50.

8 I temi del *Teeteto* di Platone (la tavola di cera, il colombario e i piccioni, l'arte maieutica, la deificazione) si trovano in Clemente nei seguenti brani: *Teeteto* 150d in *Strom.* I,1,1,2; 151d in *Strom.* V,14,99,1; 155d in *Strom.* II,9,45,4 cf. V,96,3; VII,4,2; 155d in *Strom.* VII,10,60,1 cf. II,9,45,4; 155e in *Strom.* V,6,33,5-6 cf. *Paed.* I,57,2; *Exc.* 10,6; 12,1; 23,5; 173c in *Strom.* V,14,98,5-8; 173c in *Strom.* IV,25,155,4; 173d in *Strom.* VII,7,36,3 cf. 37,4-6; 38,2; 176b in *Prot.* 86,2; 176b in *Prot.* 122,4; 176b in *Paed.* I,1,4,2; 176b in *Strom.* I,11,52,3; 176b in *Strom.* II,18,80,5; 176b in *Strom.* II,19,100,3; 176b in *Strom.* II,22,131,5; 176b in *Strom.* II,22,133,3; 176b in *Strom.* II,22,136,6; 176b in *Strom.* III,4,42,5; 176b in *Strom.* IV,22,139,4; 176b in *Strom.* IV,23,252,3; 176b in *Strom.* IV,26,168,2; 176b in *Strom.* V,14,95,1; 176b in *Strom.* VI,7,57,1; 176b in *Strom.* VI,11,97,1; 176b in *Strom.* VI,12,104,2; 176b in *Strom.* VI,17,150,2-3; 176b in *Strom.* VII,1,3,6; 176b in *Strom.* VII,14,84,2; 176b in *Strom.* VII,14,86,5; 176b in *Qds.* 7,2-3; 184b-c in *Strom.* I,10,48,3; 184d in *Strom.* II,20,113,2; 185e in *Strom.* V,14,97,3 (96,1 – 98,5); 206d in *Ecl.* 32,2-3 cf. *Paed.* III,11,76,1-2; *Strom.* VII,14,88,4; 208d in *Strom.* VII,2,4,3.

3. L'impronta del rapporto del Padre con il Figlio

Nei suoi dialoghi Platone ha accennato al fatto che sia attraverso l'apprendimento razionale sia attraverso il desiderio gli umani tendono a ricordare le verità già conosciute in passato. O meglio, essi tendono a non essere semplicemente i proprietari della verità, ma a possederla effettivamente. E da questo desiderio si dovrebbe dedurre che l'anima sia preesistente e, quindi, immortale (*Fedone* 73c). Secondo questa catena logica, l'incarnazione delle anime preesistenti avrebbe causato l'amnesia relativa alle conoscenze precedentemente acquisite (*Fedone* 81a, 83d; *Teeteto* 194c-d).

Tuttavia, vale la pena notare che il linguaggio mitico di Platone a proposito del tema della "memoria" sollecita delle questioni estremamente importanti da un punto di vista epistemologico: Come si cerca l'ignoto? Come si può cercare qualcosa senza essere consapevoli dell'esistenza di quella cosa che è cercata (*Menone* 80d)? Da dove proviene il desiderio irrequieto che ispira il saggio a cercare la verità sconosciuta (*Teeteto* 197b-199d)?[9] Quest'ultima, quasi imbarazzante domanda, è la domanda del *Teeteto*, grazie alla quale il lettore è incoraggiato ad essere coinvolto nella "caccia" della verità.

Una interessante risposta di Clemente si trova in *Paed*. I,2,6,6, in cui egli sostiene che l'uomo sia l'opera più compiuta di Dio, perché l'essere umano è l'unità di corpo ed anima. Dio ha creato la ponderazione e la saggezza nell'anima e ha plasmato il corpo con la bellezza e la proporzionalità (l'armonia). Queste eccellenti qualità, che appartengono all'unità del corpo e dell'anima, consentono all'uomo di agire nella società con azioni moralmente ordinate. Ordinate sia spiritualmente sia fisicamente. Il concetto biblico di "respiro di Dio",

9 Simili domande si rintracciano anche in Giustino cf. Craig Allert, *Revelation, Truth, Canon and Interpretation. Studies in Justin Martyr's Dialogue with Trypho*, Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae 64, Brill, Leiden – Boston 2002, 63-121.

per Clemente, è il dono della capacità da parte dell'uomo di condurre una vita giusta. L'uomo, in quanto è unità di corpo ed anima, è capace di compiere gli atti con i quali imita l'attività costruttiva ed armonizzante di Dio.[10] Questa "abilità" interiore, secondo Clemente, è l'immagine divina dell'uomo. In altre parole, l'immagine divina è quel "respiro" che muove l'uomo a voler agire come Dio (Gen 1,26; 2,7). Ma da dove proviene questa tensione naturale ad imitare le azioni divine?

Clemente formula delle risposte a questa domanda partendo dalla natura divina. La prima risposta è che Dio, per affezione, tende verso l'uomo: a Dio piace l'uomo, quindi Dio ama (φιλέω) l'uomo (*Paed*. I,3,7,1). Questa tensione di Dio verso l'uomo si rispecchia anche nel suo desiderio: quindi, Dio desidera (αἱρέομαι) l'uomo (*Paed*. I,3,7,2). E al vertice della relazione di Dio con l'uomo risplende l'amore di Dio (ἀγαπάω) (*Paed*. I,3,7,3).

Perché l'uomo tende a Dio? Dio, per mezzo del suo proprio respiro, ha creato nell'uomo l'impronta dell'immagine della sua propria realtà interiore. Si tratta dell'impronta d'amore tra il Padre e il Figlio, l'impronta della relazione e della tensione divina. Grazie a questa impronta l'uomo è capace di affezionarsi, di desiderare e di amare. Tuttavia, secondo il nostro autore, questa divina impronta è una impronta incompiuta, che spinge gli esseri umani a desiderare la completezza. Quindi, l'impronta divina che si manifesta nell'uomo non è solamente una abilità dell'affezione, del desiderio e dell'amore, ma è anche quell'attrazione che intende avere pienamente possesso del desiderato.

La descrizione della naturale tensione umana in qualche modo somiglia al concetto stoico di *oikeiosis* (οἰκείωσις).[11] Tuttavia, Clemente

10 Cf. Gretchen Reydams-Schils, *Platonism and Stoicism in Clement of Alexandria: "Becoming like God"*, in Lewis Ayres – Henry Clifton Ward (eds.), *The Rise of the Early Christian Intellectual*, Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte 139, De Gruyter, Berlin – New York 2020, 129-144.

11 Crisippo, *Etica*, SVF III,178; SVF II,759; SVF III,182; Max Pohlenz, *La Stoà. Storia di un movimento spirituale*, Bompiani, Milano 2005, 105-107; 163-164.

ha sottolineato che ciò che muove l'amore reciproco del Padre e del Figlio non è la carenza (mancanza), ma è il dinamismo che esiste tra la tensione e il possesso di entrambe le persone divine. Si tratta del dinamismo completo e reciproco del desiderare-avere-amare.[12] Questa dinamica relazione dell'amore nel momento della creazione non rimane in Dio, ma risplende anche nell'uomo: il Padre celeste ama l'umanità con un amore simile a quell'amore con il quale ama il suo Figlio, e il Padre tende verso l'umanità con un desiderio simile a quello con il quale tende verso suo Figlio.[13]

La dottrina della *oikeiosis* degli stoici si riferisce all'egoismo dell'uomo; al contrario, come Filone di Alessandria, anche Clemente afferma che questo stesso concetto si riferisce alla attrazione naturale dell'uomo verso la verità e verso Dio.[14] Con questa idea Filone ha esposto la radicale dipendenza dell'uomo da Dio,[15] e Clemente spiega, attraverso l'immagine dell'impronta incompleta, che la tensione dell'uomo rimane incompiuta fino a quando l'uomo non si unisce a

12 *Paed*. I,3,7,1-8,1. Per la descrizione del rapporto eterno e reciproco del Padre e del Figlio cf. Miklós Gyurkovics, "Il duplice Logos divino e umano. La teologia del Logos da Clemente di Alessandria a Fozio di Costantinopoli", in *Eastern Theological Journal* 1 (2015), 99-134.

13 Cf. *Paed*. I,3,7,1-8,2 è importante considerare anche i riferimenti biblici: Gen 2,7 (Gen 1,26); Gv 1,18; 16,27; 17,23.

14 Cf. Gretchen Reydams-Schils, *Philautia, Self-Knowledge, and Oikeiôsis in Philo of Alexandria and Plutarch*, in Rainer Hirsch-Luipold (ed.), *Plutarch and the New Testament in Their Religio-Philosophical Contexts*, Brill's Plutarch Studies, 9, Brill, Leiden – Boston 2022, 125-140. Reydams-Schils ha messo in evidenza che, secondo Platone, alla natura di ogni uomo appartiene la abilità di amare se stesso (Platone, *Leg.* 731d6-732b4); al contrario, per questa abilità, secondo Filone, ogni persona è consapevole delle proprie mancanze, e quindi in ogni istante dovrebbe ricordare Dio (*Sacr.* 52-58; *Mut.* 54).

15 Cf. *Poster.* 135 (Gen 29,31).

Dio.[16] Se esaminiamo lo stesso modello della tensione umana secondo il fattore del peccato, possiamo affermare con Clemente che il peccato non elimina l'immagine divina dell'uomo, né la capacità della sua tensione naturale, ma deforma la sua direzione, per cui l'uomo non aspira istintivamente al Sommo Bene (Dio), in quanto le sue tensioni sono egocentriche e ispirate dai fantasmi del diavolo. L'azione redentiva del Salvatore, quindi, mira a ristabilire la direzione giusta della tensione naturale dell'uomo.[17]

Vediamo, dunque, che secondo la teologia di Clemente l'immagine divina nell'uomo non si riferisce ad una "impronta passiva", ma alla abilità per la quale l'essere umano è capace di possedere la verità, le idee divine, finanche il Logos divino. Grazie alla reinterpretazione del simbolo platonico della "tavola di cera" attraverso la dottrina stoica della "oikeiosis", Clemente afferma che l'uomo non nasce con le immagini delle conoscenze, ma con le cosiddette impronte incomplete nell'anima, che spingono l'uomo verso la ricerca della verità e di Dio. Pertanto, tale impronta non sollecita la memoria a ricordare la dottrina dimenticata, ma ricorda all'anima di voler acquistare la verità e, dunque, di voler essere in rapporto con Dio. L'impronta divina non incoraggia il ricordo della conoscenza dimenticata, ma ricorda e sollecita l'acquisizione della vera conoscenza.

16 Cf. *Strom.* IV,23,148,1-2; VI,9,73,2-3 inoltre, cf. Ilaria Vigorelli, "Clemente d'Alessandria e la preghiera: φιλανθρωπία e desiderio nell'assimilazione a Dio", in *Eastern Theological Journal* 3/1 (2017), 41-54, 43: "Si tratta perciò di una disposizione stabile di affetto (στερκτικὴ), che rende affini gli amanti nella reciproca appropriazione (οἰκείωσις)".

17 Cf. *Paed.* I,3,9-4; *Prot.* I,5,4; I,2,4-3,2; II,38,1; IX,82,7; IX,82,1-84,6; X,97,2; X,103,2; *Strom.* II,13,56,1; IV, 25,160,1; V,14,92,1-94,6; VI,8,65,6-66,5. Per il tema degli aspetti psicologici delle tentazioni del diavolo cf. il mio studio: *Non-canonical sources for Clement of Alexandria's "psychology"*, in *Studia Patristica. Vol. CX*, 111-125.

Clemente dimostra che con questa disposizione naturale si rivela negli uomini il mistero interiore di Dio,[18] il reciproco rapporto di amore eterno tra il Padre e il Figlio, il reciproco dinamismo tra il desiderio e la unione completa.[19] Tale dinamica relazione delle persone potrebbe essere descritta in termini epistemologici nel modo seguente: l'intelletto divino tende al possesso della verità divina, e la verità riempie perfettamente l'intelletto divino. Questa è la descrizione del rapporto eterno tra Padre e Figlio e, allo stesso tempo, la dichiarazione della missione universale dell'uomo creato ad immagine di Dio. Si tratta di una descrizione nella quale il concetto dell'amare coincide con il concetto del conoscere e con il concetto dell'essere.[20] Perciò, con la conoscenza della verità divina l'uomo rafforza il suo amore e anche

18 Ilaria Vigorelli mette in evidenza la connessione dottrinale tra Mt 5,48 e *Strom*. VII,3,21,2-4; VII,14,88,5-6: Ilaria Vigorelli, *La somiglianza con Dio «per quanto possibile» negli Stromateis di Clemente e il De virginitate di Gregorio di Nissa: cristocentrismo e ruolo della filosofia*, in Jerònimo Leal – Manuel Mira (eds.), *L'insegnamento superiore nella storia della Chiesa: scuole, maestri e metodi*, Edizioni della Pontificia Università della Santa Croce, Roma 2016, 112; Inoltre, cf. Eadem, *Soul's Dance in Clement, Plotinus and Gregory of Nyssa,* in Markus Vinzent – Ilaria Ramelli – Kevin Corrigan – Giulio Maspero – Monica Tobon (eds.), *Studia Patristica. Vol. LXXXIV. Papers presented at the Seventeenth International Conference on Patristic Studies held in Oxford 2015, Vol. X, Evagrius between Origen, the Cappadocians, and Neoplatonism*, Peeters, Leuven 2017, 59-75, 59 (*Strom*. IV,25,155,4,3; V,98,5,3).

19 Cf. *Paed*. I,8,71,3,3-7; I,9,88,2,1-8; *Strom*. VII,7,38,4-39,1. Inoltre, cf. Ilaria Vigorelli, *La relazione: Dio e l'uomo. Schesis e antropologia trinitaria in Gregorio di Nissa*, Città Nuova, Roma 2020, 31-46. Per il rapporto reciproco tra Padre e Figlio cf. Miklós Gyurkovics, *La giustizia bilanciata nell'insegnamento di Clemente di Alessandria*, in Massimiliano Ghilardi – Gianluca Pilara (eds.), *Povertà e ricchezza nel Cristianesimo antico (I-V sec.). XLII Incontro di studiosi dell'antichità cristiana*, Studia Ephemeridis Augustinianum 145, Istituto Patristico Augustinianum, Roma 2016, 111-119, 116-117.

20 Cf. Platone, *Carmide* 167c; 170d-e. Secondo Clemente il rapporto fra il Padre e il Figlio è analogo al rapporto fra la mente e l'intelletto, oppure fra la verità e l'intelletto: *Strom*. I,11,52,3; IV,18,116,1-3; VI,7,55,1.

la sua esistenza.[21]

Se esaminiamo profondamente l'interpretazione teologica della nozione di "immagine di Dio", possiamo osservare che questa dottrina di Clemente è incompatibile con la dottrina della preesistenza dell'anima e con la dottrina della reincarnazione delle anime umane. Secondo Clemente, infatti, la salvezza umana non è il ristabilimento di uno stato già preesistente, ma il compimento definitivo della tensione dell'uomo verso Dio. Pertanto, la dottrina della "immagine di Dio" in Clemente non si accorda con quella della conoscenza dimenticata, oppure della preesistenza e della predestinazione delle anime. L'"immagine di Dio", nella interpretazione di Clemente, è una rievocazione universale che chiama tutta l'umanità a unirsi a Dio.[22] La salvezza dell'uomo non dipende dal ricordarsi di uno stato precedente, ma dall'adempimento della missione destinata alla salvezza. L'immagine divina nell'uomo, perciò, è una continua rievocazione al possesso delle verità divine e alla unione definitiva con Dio.[23]

21 Cf. *Paed*. II,75,1-2; *Strom*. IV,23,148,1-2; V,60,1-62,5; VII,10,57,4-5.

22 Cf. *Paed*. III,100,1-101,2; *Strom*. IV,2,4,3; VII,14,88,4. Cf. M. Havrda – A. Itter, *Esoteric Teaching in the Stromateis of Clement of Alexandria*, 578-579.

23 Quindi, la direzione della salvezza tende verso la *theosis* e verso la *apokatastasis* in Dio. Per il concetto della apocatastasi cf. Ilaria Ramelli, *The Christian Doctrine of Apokatastasis: A Critical Assessment from the New Testament to Eriugena*, Brill, Leiden – Boston 2013; Ead., *The Mysteries of Scripture: Allegorical Exegesis and the Heritage of Stoicism, Philo, and Pantaenus*, in Veronika Černušková – Judith L. Kovacs – Jana Plátová (eds.), *Clement's Biblical Exegesis. Proceedings of the Second Colloquium on Clement of Alexandria (Olomouc, May 29–31, 2014)*, Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae 139, Brill, Leiden – Boston 2017, 80-110, e il mio articolo: "I sacrifici dell'assimilazione a Dio secondo l'esegesi di Clemente di Alessandria: aspetti antropologici", in *Eastern Theological Journal* 7/1 (2021), 83-103.

4. La memoria e la fede razionale

Nel corso dello studio sulla "memoria" perveniamo alla seguente domanda: come possiamo desiderare di conoscere Dio senza nemmeno conoscerlo?[24] Come abbiamo visto, da un punto di vista epistemologico, Platone cerca di rispondere a questa domanda per mezzo dell'insegnamento sulla preesistenza dell'anima, sulla memoria (sulle impronte della tavoletta di cera, oppure per mezzo del racconto dei piccioni). Invece, come dimostreremo a breve, la risposta di Clemente non dipende dalla dottrina dalla preesistenza, ma dalla reinterpretazione del concetto di fede. Secondo la visione del nostro autore, la fede – cioè l'assenso volontario all'insegnamento del Logos divino – forma certe impronte nell'anima umana.[25] In contrasto con gli insegnamenti gnostici, Clemente sostiene che le prime "impronte" (della fede e non della gnosi) non siano nate con l'anima dell'uomo, bensì provengano da "fuori", grazie al libero assenso della catechesi.[26] Queste prime impronte della fede nell'anima modellano le forme incomplete, che sono in attesa di essere colmate. Detto in altre parole,

24 Cf. Platone, *Teeteto* 191b; 191d-e; 192a.

25 Cf. *Strom*. I,11,50,1-54,1; II,1,7,1-2,2,9,4; II,4,14,3; II,4,15,5; II,6,26,1-27,2; V,13,81,1; VIII,7,1-8; VIII,14,3; VIII,II,3,1-8,3,6 (Aristotele, *Ethica Nicomachea* VI,2,4,1139a,31; *Metaphysica* 3,1006a; 3,7,1011b; *De anima* 427a 17-24; 428a 19-24; *Physica* 8,8,262a,18-19; *Analytica posteriora* II,19,100a; 100b 5-17; Platone, *Teeteto* 187a-210d). Per il concetto di πρόληψις in relazione alla fede cf. Epicuro fr. 255; Diogene Laerzio X, 33; Cicerone, *De natura deorum* I. 44; Clemente, *Strom*. II,1,8,4-9,1; II,4,16,3; II,4,17,1-2; II,12,54,1-5; inoltre, per πίστις e συγκατάθεσις cf. *Strom*. II,6,27,2; II,2,4,1; II,2,8,4; II,2,9,2; II,12,55,1-2; V,1,5,2; V,13,86,1. Salvatore Lilla, *Clement of Alexandria*, 119-131; Eric Osborn, "Argument for Faith in Clement of Alexandria", in *Vigiliae Christianae* 48 (1994), 1-24, in particolare 15; Silke-Petra Bergjan, "Logic and Theology in Clement of Alexandria: The Purpose of the 8th Book of the Stromata", in *Zeitschrift für antikes Christentum* 12/3 (2008), 396-413, 407-413; Harry Austrin Wolfson, *La filosofia dei Padri della Chiesa*, Paideia, Brescia 1978, 108.

26 Cf. *Strom*. VII,10,57,2-5; *Paed*. III,11,76,1 (sarà esaminato più avanti).

le impronte della fede stimolano (rievocano) i fedeli a possedere razionalmente le verità divine, per essere coscienti delle conoscenze teologiche.[27] Il percorso epistemologico che dalle sensazioni spirituali conduce alla fede cosciente non è una corsa diritta, ma somiglia, in un certo senso, al nuoto sincronizzato di mente e cuore, di religiosità e scienza, in armonia con la grazia divina. Clemente ritiene che i metodi dialettici ricavati dalla filosofia pagana assicurino che le "impronte della fede" siano riempite con le verità della teologia scientifica, ossia con la gnosi.[28] Secondo questa prospettiva epistemologica, la filosofia e la tradizione teologica cristiana offrono le regole dell'indagine scientifica circa i princìpi della fede. E nello stesso tempo Clemente afferma che le verità della fede cristiana possono essere riconosciute alla luce della ragione umana.[29] I maestri gnostici conosciuti da Clemente,[30] tuttavia, insegnano che gli "eletti", quando imparano, non fanno altro che ricordare la loro conoscenza già preesistente.[31]

Per quanto riguarda la dottrina della memoria, un'attenzione particolare deve essere rivolta al metodo dell'esegesi biblica. Secondo Clemente, le parole della Sacra Scrittura sono come le impronte dei ragionamenti divini, quindi sono modelli, "illustrazioni" (παραβολή) delle verità divine.[32] Il passo di *Ecl.* 32,2-3 trasmette questa idea con espressioni che sono ricavate dai dialoghi di Platone (*Teeteto* 197c-200a; 206d; *Sofista* 219d-223c):

27 Cf. *Strom.* I,11,50,1-12,56,3; I,27,176,1-179,4, II,2,9,2-7, II,5,24,1-2; I,11,48,2; III,7,41,1-43,3; V,3,16,1-8; V,11,71,1-5.

28 Cf. *Strom.* IV,22,135,1-146,3.

29 Cf. Clemente – Platone: *Strom.* VI,17,155,4-156,2; 166,3 – *Teeteto* 189e; 190c.

30 Cf. *Exc.* 48,1-54,3; 56, 1-5; *Strom.* II,8,36,2-4; II,51,4.

31 Basilide: *Strom.* II,3,10,1; Valentino: *Strom.* II,3,10,2; La risposta di Clemente si trova in: *Strom.* II,3,10,3-11,2; II,2,9,2-4; *Paed.* I,6,25,1.

32 Per approfondire il tema cf. Emmanuel Albano, "Dalla parola al silenzio: Le diverse forme della rivelazione divina. Un itinerario all'origine della Scuola di Alessandria", in *Eastern Theological Journal* 3/2 (2017), 183-255.

> "Scrutando", dunque, accuratamente "le Scritture" (Gv 5,39) – poiché, come tutti ammettono, si sono espresse "in parabole" (Sal 77,2 LXX; Mt 13,34-35), a partire dai termini si devono cacciare (θηράω) le opinioni (δόξας). Lo Spirito Santo, che possiede delle idee riguardo agli esseri, le insegna, dato che ha impresso (ἐκτυπωσάμενον), per così dire, il proprio pensiero nelle espressioni (λέξεις), perché, con un esame accurato, ci siano spiegati i termini, pur suscettibili di molti significati, e il senso nascosto sotto molti livelli si manifesti chiaramente mediante un procedimento che lo faccia conoscere.[33]

Quindi, secondo questa citazione, le parole della Scrittura sono "modelli" (παραβολαί) dei pensieri divini espressi in termini umani. I riferimenti biblici di *Ecl.* 32,2 avvertono (Sal 77,2 LXX; Mt 13,34-35) che attraverso le parole della Bibbia si possono catturare anche le idee divine. Il verbo θηράω è una delle espressioni preferite di Platone (*Teeteto* 197c-200a), con cui egli descrive la caccia della verità; Clemente, invece, usa questo concetto per descrivere lo sforzo spirituale degli esegeti delle Scritture. Ai cacciatori delle verità teologiche Clemente consiglia di sottoporre le espressioni della Bibbia a un esame razionale. Infatti, egli è convinto che lo Spirito Santo abbia sigillato i propri ragionamenti nelle espressioni bibliche e, quindi, che sia possibile ricavare le verità divine nel corso dell'esegesi razionale. I fedeli possono scoprire le verità divine attraverso indagini appropriate, e in più le possono rievocare consapevolmente, in quanto le verità divine fanno parte della loro realtà spirituale.[34] Le regole di questo procedimento dell'indagine biblica coincidono con le regole dell'esegesi allegorica. Pertanto, il metodo dell'allegoria espresso da Clemente è la dialettica di fede e ragione, di anima e intelletto. Questo procedimento viene espresso attraverso la reinterpretazione di Lv 11,3 in *Paed*. III,11,76,1-2:

33 *Ecl*. 32,2-3 (GCS 17/3, 146-147), tr. it.: Carlo Nardi (ed.), *Estratti profetici. Eclogae propheticae di Clemente Alessandrino*, EDB, Bologna 2004, 71.

34 Cf. *Strom.* VII,10,57,4-5; inoltre: *Strom.* I,1,4.1; I,5,20,2; II,6,31,1; IV,6,36,3; IV,7,53,1; IV,17,109,2; V,14,106,2-4; VII,7,46,3.

> Infatti ogni (animale) con unghia bipartita e che rumina (Lv 11,3) è puro: l'unghia bipartita significa la giustizia imparziale, la quale rumina il cibo adatto alla giustizia, cioè il logos, che dall'esterno entra in noi – proprio come il cibo – tramite l'insegnamento dottrinale, e dall'interno poi viene a sua volta indirizzato dall'intelletto, come fosse lo stomaco, verso la memoria razionale. Così il giusto, avendo nella sua bocca il logos, rumina un cibo spirituale, e la giustizia appare manifestamente con l'unghia bipartita, poiché allo stesso tempo ci santifica in questa vita e ci porta a quella futura.[35]

In questo brano Clemente cita un passo della *Lettera di Barnaba*; tuttavia, la conclusione di *Paed*. III,11,76,1-2 è diversa dall'intenzione del Padre Apostolico. L'autore della *Lettera di Barnaba*, attraverso l'interpretazione di Lv 11,3, ha sottolineato che il testo biblico non proibisce il consumo di creature, ma piuttosto di appropriarsi (memorizzare e imparare) della immoralità associata a questi animali elencati. Per Clemente, il simbolo del mangiare il cibo si riferisce all'acquisizione di un insegnamento, o di un metodo scientifico.[36] Quindi, la consumazione degli animali che hanno l'unghia bipartita e ruminano diventa il simbolo del metodo dell'esegesi allegorica della Scrittura.[37] Il simbolo del cibo nutriente per Clemente è il Logos divino che, attraverso l'accoglimento della catechesi, pone le impronte nella ragione umana (memorizza) e, quindi, l'intelletto dei fedeli si trasforma secondo l'immagine dell'intelletto divino.[38] Dal punto di vista epistemologico, le descrizioni di *Paed*. III,11,76,1-2 e

35 *Paed*. III,11,76,1-2 (GCS 12/1, 278), tr. it.: Dag Tessore (ed.), *Clemente Alessandrino, Il Pedagogo*, Testi patristici 181, Città Nuova, Roma 2005, 322.

36 Cf. *Paed.* II,1,1-18,4; 1Cor 3,1-3 in *Paed.* I,6,34,1-3; 35,1-38,3; *Prot.* IX,88,1; *Strom*. VII,7,38,2.

37 Cf. *Strom*. VII,18,109,2-110,1. Clemente cita la *Lettera di Barnaba* 10,11 in *Strom*. V.8,51,4 (Lv 11,3; Dt 14,6). Il tema relativo al rapporto tra fede e filosofia, espresso attraverso l'allegoria dei cibi, si trova in: *Strom.* I,1,18,1-2 (cf. Filone, *Somn.* 1,245-249: bevanda); *Strom.* I,5,29,4-32,4.

38 Per il tema dell'adeguato nutrimento spirituale cf. *Paed.* I,102,3-104,2.

di *Ecl.* 32,2 sono eloquenti, cioè rivelano il processo spirituale lungo il quale le verità teologiche rientrano nel consapevole ragionamento dell'intelletto umano.[39]

In *Strom*. VII,18,109,1-2 Clemente, per mezzo della reinterpretazione di Lv 11,3 mette in rilievo il metodo dell'apprendimento delle verità divine. Anche in questo passo il simbolo biblico del vero esegeta è l'animale ruminante, perché costui, riesaminando le prime impronte spirituali della fede nell'anima, possiede consapevolmente le verità divine, che ormai fanno parte della sua ragione. Sulla base di ciò, a proposito del genere degli *Stromati* possiamo dire che le citazioni bibliche registrate insieme con gli insegnamenti dei filosofi offrono l'opportunità di "ruminare". Dalla relazione razionale delle note (ὑπομνημάτων) bibliche con le note filosofiche si origina la voce della ragione divina.[40] E, quindi, gli *Stromati* non servono solo per rimediare all'amnesia dello scrittore, ma per offrire una via (un metodo) tramite il quale le impronte della fede si colmano con la gnosi divina.[41]

Nel *Teeteto* Platone ha messo in rilievo che ogni vero filosofo desidera avere realmente e consapevolmente le verità scientifiche e non solo in modo nominale. Clemente sottolinea spesso nei suoi scritti che il cristiano non dovrebbe essere un cristiano solo per nome, dotato delle impronte incomplete della fede nell'anima, ma colui che tiene veramente Cristo in se stesso.[42] Per così dire, il fedele è già l'erede

39 Cf. *Paed.* I,101,1-3.

40 Cf. *Strom.* I,1,10,4-11,1.

41 Sul genere degli *Stromati* di Clemente cf. Jane Heath, *Clement of Alexandria and the Shaping of Christian Literary Practice Miscellany and the Transformation of Greco-Roman Writing*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2020, 114-115 (memoria), 133-191 (memoria), 248-250, 311-328, 370-375.

42 Cf. *Strom.* II,4,18,3; II,9,45,4-7; IV,2,4,2-4 (*Repubblica* V 468e); IV,16,99,1; V,6,33,5-6 (*Teeteto* 155e); V,14,97,3-98,5-8 (*Teeteto* 173c-174d); VI,17,149,5; VII,7,36,3-37,4 (*Teeteto* 173d); VII,7,44,3; VII,9,52,1-3; VII,10,60,1 (*Teeteto* 155d); VII,11,64,3-7; VII,14,88,4-8; *Ecl.* 32,3.

ufficiale delle verità divine, anche se in realtà non le possiede ancora. Come le tavole di cera, oppure il colombario di Platone, così la fede semplice crea le impronte nell'anima. Se vogliamo usare di nuovo l'espressione del *Teeteto*, possiamo dire che per Clemente, dopo questo primo periodo della fede, segue ancora la lunga fase della maieutica, che si conclude con la nascita del cristiano gnostico, che consapevolmente ragiona con le verità divine. In conclusione, se il cristiano riceve con la pura fede l'insegnamento del Logos divino nel suo cuore (κῆρ) come su una tavoletta di cera (κηρός), avrà tutte le possibilità per rinascere come uomo nuovo,[43] per diventare simile a Dio. [44]

Conclusioni

In questo studio abbiamo preso in considerazione i seguenti aspetti epistemologici della dottrina della memoria di Clemente:

1. sebbene Clemente conosca la dottrina della memoria di Platone, le conclusioni di questi due pensatori non sono le medesime. Per Clemente, le impronte dell'anima non rimandano alla preesistenza dell'anima, dunque non indicano i ricordi, ma sono rievocazioni, imperativi generali alla conoscenza delle verità divine e alla assimilazione a Dio. Questa impronta, in primo luogo, è l'immagine della reciproca tensione che esiste fra il Padre e il Figlio, e muove ogni uomo verso l'esperienza personale di Dio;
2. la catechesi, accolta con la fede, pone le prime impronte delle verità divine nell'anima dell'uomo;
3. il metodo dell'esegesi allegorica conduce l'interprete dalle parole della Bibbia (che sono le impronte delle idee divine) alla ragione divina;

43 Cf. *Strom.* I,1,11,1; II,11,52,3-7 (*Teeteto* 176b); II,12,56,1; II,22,131,2-5; II,22,134,2-4; III,5,42,6; IV,22,138,4-139,5; IV,26,169,1.

44 *Strom.* V,14,93,4-98,8; VI,7,55,1-61,2; VI,12,104,1-2.

4. attraverso le indagini razionali, le impronte della fede si riempiono per mezzo delle verità divine e diventano conoscenza cosciente della mente del vero gnostico.

Abstract

In this article we attempt to demonstrate how Clement of Alexandria reinterpreted the following themes of Plato: memory and pre-existence of souls from the perspective of the doctrine of faith. It seems that the questions of the two authors may come from the same family, although, as we will point out, they arrive at different conclusions with similar concepts. We can describe our investigation according to the following points: for Clement, the 'imprints' of the soul do not refer to the soul's pre-existence, thus they do not indicate memories, but are reminiscences, general imperatives to the knowledge of divine truths and assimilation to God. This 'imprint', in the first place, is the image of the mutual tension that exists between the Father and the Son, and moves every man towards personal fulfilment with God. Catechesis, accepted by faith, places the first 'imprints' of divine truths in the soul of man. The method of allegorical exegesis leads the interpreter from the words of Holy Scripture, which are the 'imprints' of divine ideas, to divine reason. Through rational investigation, the 'imprints' of faith are filled with divine truths and become conscious knowledge in the mind of the 'true Gnostic'.

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extract

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Review of M. Monfrinotti, *Clemente lo Stromateo: fama e oscurità. Rassegna e studio dei Testimonia greci (III-XVI sec.),* "Patrologia. Beiträge zum studium der Kirchenväter" 40, Peter Lang, Berlin 2020, 206 pp.

This book intends to provide a reconstruction of the historical, biographical, and literary profile of Clement of Alexandria, through the presentation and the critical commentary of two different kinds of sources: on the one hand, some autobiographical elements within his works, and, on the other hand, all the later Greek testimonies, namely, the *Testimonia*, which embrace a chronological span from the IIIrd to the XVIth centuries.

The figure of Clement, as it is presented in this research, is as much celebrated and worthy of fame as it is shrouded in darkness. As a matter of fact, during his life and in the period immediately following, Clement became a landmark, a real *auctoritas*, for all the authors who wanted to be defenders of orthodoxy and who saw precisely in him a strong advocate of the correct Christian doctrine against the heretics of his time. However, although we dispose of many details about his thought, Clement's life is in some ways unknown. Most of the studies published to date focus on Clement's thought and theology, whereas the biographical sphere of the author is still in the shadows, with the exception of some studies published from the beginning of the last century. Monfrinotti refers to these studies and, albeit placing himself in continuity with them, in the volume he nevertheless makes some original contributions, analysing various sources in depth and providing an updated and more systematic picture of the biographical story of the Alexandrian theologian. The author presents, for orientation purposes, an overview of these studies in the introduction to the volume but, although in continuity with these, Monfrinotti's work claims a further contribution, examining all the Greek *Testimonia* ranging from the IIIrd to the XVIth century, from the pre-Constantinian age to the

Byzantine age, providing a broader picture and a critical analysis of the sources that integrates and completes the previous literature. The several testimonies are not studied individually, but are constantly placed in dialogue with each other, in order to evidence similarities and differences between them, which are noteworthy for a broader and deeper historical research. And this method is probably the most considerable contribution of Monfrinotti's book.

The volume is divided into two parts. The first section takes into account the autobiographical sources, whereas the second part proposes a review and commentary on the Greek *Testimonia*.

The autobiographical sources investigated in the book describe Clement's intellectual training and his teachers, on the one hand (chapter 1.1), and his conversion, on the other hand (chapter 1.2). The autobiographical sources are given greater reliability, although they do not have a biographical aim and they keep silent about important elements of the Stromateus' life, such as his origins, the identity of his teachers, his education, and the teaching in the *Didaskaleion* of Alexandria, the last years of his life. As a matter of fact, these sources do not have an autobiographical aim and they must be read considering the literary context in which they are placed. Clement's biographical background in his work is always secondary to the teaching he wants to convey and, when quoted, it has no memorial or historical purpose, but it must only help to better understand his message. Starting from these autobiographical passages, Monfrinotti manages not only to outline a biographical profile of the author, as far as possible with the aspects present in the Clementine work, but also to shed light on the biographical details which Clement passes over, trying to explain the reasons of this silence. Hence, the investigation into the autobiographical sources also manages to explain some aspects of Clement's thought and to clarify them further.

The second section, which occupies the largest part of the volume, is dedicated to the study of the Greek *Testimonia*, listed in

chronological order. The selected texts, translated and commented by the author, are those considered relevant for the purposes of the biographical investigation, whereas the remaining testimonies, in which a reference to Clement appears, but irrelevant for the purposes of the investigation, are cited in the "Appendix" at the end of the work. Therefore, Monfrinotti's book, as compared to the previous literature, in particular to the repertoire of texts provided in Adolf von Harnack's *Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur bis Eusebius*, has the merit of taking into consideration all the Greek *Testimonia* which have come down to us between the IIIrd and the XVIth centuries, providing a broader and more systematic picture of the sources.

Among the different testimonies, a central position is undoubtedly occupied by the *Historia ecclesiastica* by Eusebius of Caesarea, since most of the later sources are based on that. According to this tradition, which originates from Eusebius and it is also found in Julius Africanus, Simeon Logotheta, John Zonaras and Ephrem of Oenus, Clement would have been known at the time of the emperor Commodus, he would have been a pupil of the presbyter Panthenus, he would have taught in the *Didaskaleion* of Alexandria, and he would have been also the teacher of Origen. However, there is no lack of divergent testimonies from Eusebius' tradition, such as that of Philip of Side. The value of a global reconsideration of the *Testimonia* lies precisely in the need to discuss these positions. Finally, starting from Eusebius' writings and the most recent studies about that, Monfrinotti defines also an updated chronology of Clement's works.

For the reconstruction of Clement's biography, the analysis of the *Epistulae* of Alexander of Jerusalem is also crucial. They report some elements which are noteworthy in order to clarify the last years of the Stromateus' life and his role in the Church. Furthermore, they give us also an important notice about the relationship between the Alexandrian Church and the Cappadocian one before Origen.

A further detail highlighted by the research is that, over the centuries, the *Testimonia* turned their interest less and less to historical-biographical details to focus more attention on the works of Clement, on his theological authority and on the importance of his thought within the history of the Church. From this point of view, the reconsideration of the *Testimonia* in their entirety helps to shed light not only on the author's biographical background, but especially on the *Wirkungsgeschichte*, on the history of the effects of Clement's thought and on the reception of his works and thought in the following centuries. Hence, in the IIIrd-VIIIth centuries there is a great interest in the figure of the Stromateus, because of the interest of historians, such as Eusebius, for a reconstruction of the first steps taken by the Christian religion and by the Church. In this period, Clement was also respected by historians and heresiologists, and he enjoyed great fame due to his undisputed theological authority and fervent anti-heretical commitment. However, in the IXth century, following the harsh condemnation of the Clementine work by Photius, we notice a lesser interest in the Alexandrian theologian. That interest was rekindled in the period between the XIIth and XVIth centuries by Byzantine authors, thanks to whom Clement was also rediscovered in the western, Latin intellectual world. On the analysis and commentary of the Latin *Testimonia*, the author refers to a second volume, which will constitute the natural completion of the one reported here.

Therefore, Monfrinotti's volume is able to provide an updated profile of the person of Clement of Alexandria, although it is not completely exhaustive, because of the scarcity of sources and the difficulties of such research. Another important aspect of Monfrinotti's study is that the critical analysis, both of the autobiographical sources and of the Greek *Testimonia*, allows us to outline the historical-biographical past of the Stromateus, but at a certain point it goes beyond the simple historiographical investigation and shows, depending on the details highlighted in the single testimony, the reception of Alexandrian

philosophical-theological thought over the following centuries, offering a significant contribution not only to historical studies, but also to philosophical and theological ones.

In conclusion, the identity of Clement of Alexandria, as it is reconstructed by Monfrinotti in the book, is never completely defined, since it is the identity of a person who has enjoyed great fame over the centuries and who is still an object of interest for scholars today, but at the same time he remains in the shadows, without being completely acquainted. Fame and obscurity have matched the figure of Clement for ages, and they still match him today: famous and studied, the Stromateus's life is never fully known and his identity seems to be enigmatic just like his celebrated works.

Marco Montali

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