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# CLEMENT AND ORIGEN OF ALEXANDRIA

Patristic Theology

## ALEXANDRIA

- Vibrant intellectual climate
  - Platonic school
  - Library
  - Middle Platonism
- Jewish background
  - Jewish Diaspora
  - Septuagint
  - Philo of Alexandria
  - Destruction of the Jewish community
- Christian community (St. Mark)

### Theological school developed

- Patanaeus
  - Taught in Alexandria from c. 180-199
  - “first known rector of the school of Alexandria” (Quasten, 4)
  - Teacher of Clement
  - He is mentioned by Eusebius and Clement, but we know of no writings

## CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA

### LIFE (WOOD, VI-VII)

- Born in the mid 2nd c., probably in Athens
- Moved to Alexandria around 180
- Succeeded Patanaeus as leader of the catechetical school in Alexandria around 200
- Left Alexandria for Cappadocia in 202/203
- Died in Antioch, sometime before 215

### WORKS

- *The Exhortation to the Greeks (Protrepticus)*
- *Christ the Educator (Paedagogus)*
- *The Miscellanies (Stromateis)*
- *Quis Dives Salvetur*
- Fragments, including *Hypotypseis*, *Eclogae Propheticae*, and *Excerpta ex Theodoto*

### SOURCES

- Old Testament, especially Ecclesiasticus and Proverbs
- New Testament, especially Paul
- Shepherd of Hermas, Pseudo Barnabas, Clement of Rome, Melito of Sardis, Irenaeus, Tatian
- Homer, Pindar, Herodotus, often from later compendia

### GENERAL THEMES

- Defended the use of philosophy in Christian thinking. Educated people who seek to become Christians are afraid of philosophy: “they stop up their ears because they know that if they once allow themselves to listen to Greek learning they will not be able afterwards to find their way home again.” (*Stromata*, 6.89). Greek philosophy prepares the soul for the faith (*Stromata*, 7.20)

- Was concerned to refute the Gnostics, highlighting the goodness of the present world and the role of free will in salvation (Chadwick, 21-22)
- Progress of sanctification, mystic stages (McGinn, 105)
  - apatheia (theoria + praxis) then theopoiesis
  - The first step is to be conformed to Christ in body and mind
    - Attention to dress, feelings, and behavior (Christ is our pedagogue)
  - There are two levels of Christians in the world: the ordinary and the extraordinary (Gnostic)
- Knowledge
  - Philosophy arises from communion with God.
  - The true Gnostic is drawn by the knowledge given in Christ.
  - Knowledge of God: We cannot know God; our only access to God is through Jesus: “Now neither is knowledge without faith, nor faith without knowledge. Nor is the Father without the Son, for the Son is with the Father. And the Son is the true teacher respecting the Father (*Stromata*, 5.1.1, trans. In McGinn, 108)
  - Clement “is the first to fit gnosis within the framework of a Christian appropriation of Middle Platonic apophatic theology.” (McGinn, 101)
- The goal of Christian life is the vision of God.

“They may say that it is mere chance that the Greeks have expressed something of the true philosophy. But that chance is subject to divine providence. For no one will make chance into a god merely in order to get the better of their argument with us. Or they may call it a happy coincidence. Or in the next place it may be said that the Greeks possessed an idea of the truth implanted by nature. But we know that the Creator of nature is one only . . . And if it is said that they had a common mind, let us examine who is the author of it and of the righteousness which is apparent in the distribution of mind to all men. But if anyone says that the cause of this anticipation in Greek philosophy is a ‘previous proclamation’ or says that it is due to a coincidental agreement, he is implying that it is a form of prophecy. Moreover, others affirm that many teachings of the philosophers arise from a reflection of the truth.” (*Stromata*, 1.94)

## ORIGEN OF ALEXANDRIA

c. 185-254

- Travelled extensively
- Spent the last twenty years of his life in Caesarea
- Successor of Clement
- He was twenty years older than Plotinus.
- For Erasmus “one page of Origen meant more to him than ten pages of Augustine” (von Balthasar, 1979, xi).
- Eusebius and Jerome say he wrote (dictated) about two thousand books (von Balthasar, 1979, xii).

### WORKS

- Two-six thousand volumes
- On First Principles
- On Prayer
- Exhortation to Martyrdom
- Hexapla
- Various scholia
- Commentaries on the Scriptures, esp. Commentary on John and Commentary on the Song of Songs
- Homilies

### PRINCIPLES

- Scripture is the living presence of the Word and the source of all our knowledge.
- Take platonic claims seriously by reading them through the lens of Scripture

### SCRIPTURE

- Senses of Scripture
- Allegorical interpretation
- Necessity of Scripture

### KNOWLEDGE

- The goal of life is the knowledge of God

- Knowledge of God is received in freedom and communicated in freedom
- Philosophy is valuable as a source for truth, but flawed by sin.
  - “In our present condition, the truth about the self cannot be known from the first ‘intelligible world’, but is only accessible through a new noetic object: the intelligible world of the revealed scriptures.” (McGinn, 111)
- Knowledge is an active process involving the whole person: contemplation and action go hand in hand
  - The personal transformation of the seeker is required to reach the depths of the mystery of God: “Whoever seeks access from merely dogmatic faith into that inward realm where we see with the inner eye of faith enters a world of mystery demanding not only intellectual reverence but personal holiness as well” (von Balthasar, 1979, xiii).
- Scripture purifies theology: In Scripture one personally encounters the Logos
- The culmination of knowledge is shown in the Transfiguration
- Knowledge results from Trinitarian participation

#### THE CREATED WORLD

- Perceptible things are images of the divine mysteries
- Plato’s ideas become in Origen’s thought the divine Logos, which is revealed to us suddenly at the end of our mystical ascent (see Louth, 70).
- Darkness and unknowing are only a temporary stage in the ascent of the soul to contemplation (see Louth, 74).

#### SPECULATIONS

- There is an eternal creation in the Logos that is later manifested in the physical world. Souls existed in this spiritual creation as filled with the Spirit and united in love with the Logos.
- Apocatastasis

#### SPIRITUALITY

- Real possibility of communion with God
- Become one with Christ by participation
- To know God is to share in his divinity
- Five physical senses become spiritualized
- Above the body yet in the world

## OTHER WRITINGS CONNECTED TO ALEXANDRIA IN THE 3RD CENTURY

- Ammonius
  - Contemporary of Origen
  - Sought to show the harmony between Moses and Jesus
- Dionysius of Alexandria
  - Pupil of Origen
  - Head of the catechetical school and bishop
  - Only fragments survive
- Theognostus
  - Successor to Dionysius as head of the school of Alexandria from 265-282
  - His *Hypotyposeis* exists only in a small fragment
- Pierius
  - Succeeded Theognostus
  - Fragments of his commentaries exist
- Peter of Alexandria
  - Bishop from 300-311
  - Conflict with Meletis, bishop of Lycopolis
  - An anti-Origenist
  - Only fragments of his works remain
- Hesychius
  - Made a revision of the Septuagint and Gospels around 300
- The Apostolic Church Order

## GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF ALEXANDRIAN THEOLOGY IN THE THIRD CENTURY

- Allegorical reading of Scripture
- An understanding of the human person as sharing in the life of God, or destined to do so
- Confidence in the usefulness of philosophy
- Trinitarian anthropology

## OTHER EASTERN FIGURES: ASIA MINOR, SYRIA, PALESTINE

- School of Caesarea
  - Followed the teaching of Origen and developed it, at times correcting it
- School of Antioch
  - Seems to have originated with Lucian of Antioch in opposition to Origen's exegesis
  - Exegesis focuses on the most obvious meaning
  - There are types in the Old Testament, but not in every text
- Major figures
  - Gregory Thaumaturgos (c. 213-c. 273)
    - Developed Origen's thought
  - Firmilian of Caesarea
    - Contemporary of Gregory Thaumaturgos
    - Criticizes Stephen of Rome on Baptism
  - Methodius
    - Adversary of Origen on the spiritual world
    - Redemption
      - God recapitulates everything in Christ
      - The new Adam is Christ; the new Eve is the Church
    - Resurrection
      - The resurrected body is as material as our present body
      - Our bodily existence is our existence; we did not pre-exist our bodies, therefore our bodies are our proper identity
  - Sextus Julius Africanus
    - Wrote the "first synchronistic history of the world" (Quasten, 138)
  - Pamphilus of Caesarea (d. 309/10)
    - Disciple of Origen
    - Teacher of Eusebius of Caesarea
  - Paul of Samosata
    - Condemned in 268 for teaching that Christ was an ordinary man
  - Malchion of Antioch
    - Bishop of Antioch from 260
    - Condemned Paul of Samosata
  - Lucian of Antioch
    - Revised the Septuagint
    - He was accused of being the originator of the ideas of Arius
  - Dorotheus of Antioch
    - Taught at Antioch
  - Didascalia Apostolorum
    - Church order

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