Money Matters: Clement of Alexandria's argument on wealth in the Quis Dives Salvetur

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Introduction

Clement of Alexandria is one of the earliest Church Fathers with a substantial number of works available today. Born to pagan parents, he converted to Christianity during his adult life. The traditional education in literature and philosophy that he had received in his youth would continue to exert a major influence on his later thought. One of his most interesting works is the *Quis Dives Salvetur* (QDS), a treatise on the subject of wealth. The question of wealth and poverty was a central theme in Christian preaching and Clement faced the challenge of bringing this message to an audience of various standings, among which also the (very) rich. Alexandria in those times was a bustling metropole, filled with people and ideas from all over the Roman Empire. To this multitude of voices, Clement tried to add his own, using everything that his education had offered him.

This thesis examines the model that Clement proposes for dealing with wealth by placing it in the context of the intellectual milieu of his time. In order to do this, Clement's text, the *Quis Dives Salvetur*, will form the focus of the research. An analysis of the text will identify the problem Clement tries to address and the solution he proposes. His argument contains many elements reminiscent of other philosophical or religious traditions that must have been part of Clement's intellectual repertoire. They were part of a language shared between members of the cultural elite, but Clement also consciously uses them to show a contrast or common ground with Christianity. Identifying some of these elements will uncover new depths in Clement's message in the QDS.

An analysis of the argumentative structure of the *Quis Dives Salvetur* by a close-reading approach will help to identify Clement's main lines of thought on the topic of wealth. Modern scholarship has already performed a significant amount of research on the influence of contemporary schools on Clement, with a primary focus on his largest work, the *Stromateis*. This thesis will use their results to analyse how this influence manifests itself in the QDS.

The thesis will start with a biography of Clement and a description of the Alexandria of his times. The second chapter will examine Clement's argument on wealth in the QDS. The third chapter will discuss elements of Greek philosophy, Jewish scholarship and Gnostic teachings visible in Clement's writing. The thesis ends with a conclusion, tying all previous chapters together in an overview of Clement's philosophically rich contribution to ancient wealth management.

Chapter 1 – Background Information

Chapter 1.1 – Clement of Alexandria

As one of the great centres of early Christianity Alexandria played a prominent role in the development of dogma and theology. Many of the more daring speculations about God and the Christian faith hail from this city. In time, some were rejected, while others would become basic principles of the common faith. In the chronology of Alexandrian writers, Clement is one of the first. He was no bishop, and probably not even Alexandrian, but as teacher and the head of a school for advanced studies his contribution to the development of early Christian thought should not be underestimated. A significant number of his works have survived until today, among which the *Quis Dives Salvetur* that forms the subject of this thesis.

The city where Titus Flavius Clemens was born (in the year 150) is unknown, but most scholars tentatively identify it as Athens, on the basis of what Clement writes about his own life.[1] He probably came from a non-Christian family and was educated according to the classic Greek *paideia*. Clement describes how he travelled the world looking for teachers, finally settling in Alexandria, where he found Pantaenus who could satisfy his thirst for wisdom. Alexandria was probably also the city where he became a Christian.[2]

In 190, Clement succeeded his teacher Pantaenus as the head of a local school, the *Didaskaleion*.[3] There were courses on liberal arts, philosophy, theology and exegesis.[4] It functioned independently from the bishop and must be distinguished from the later catechetical schools that gave people their official preparation for baptism, functioning more in the style of a philosophical school.[5] Non-Christians could attend and baptism was not a necessary outcome. There was no fixed curriculum, and although topics could vary, the central theme was always the ideal of the Christian life.[6] The school was in the possession of a scriptorium and library, containing many Christian and Jewish sources.[7]

A persecution under the emperor Septimian Severus (in 202-203) forced Clement to leave the city.[8] He took refuge in Cappadocia with his friend, the bishop Alexander, who would later become head of the church of Jerusalem, bringing Clement with him.[9] From two of Alexander's letters, written in 211 and 215, it can be inferred that Clement died at some point between these two dates, since the first letter mentions him as alive, while according to the second one he had already passed away.[10]

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[1] Di Berardino 2006, 1066; Osborn 2005, 21.
[2] Di Berardino 2006, 1067.
[3] Osborn 2005, 19, although Osborn mentions that it is uncertain whether Clement was really his successor or if they were simply contemporaneous.
[4] Ramelli 2022.
[5] Osborn 2005, 19.
[6] Di Berardino 2006, 1067.
[7] Osborn 2005, 20.
[8] Ramelli 2022.
[9] Di Berardino 2006, 1068.
[10] Osborn 2005, 1.

Nowhere is it mentioned that Clement was a priest. Scholars agree on the fact that he probably was not. His authority was not sacramental but based on the teaching position he had at the Didaskaleion. In Clement's time, the organisation of the Alexandrian church was still in formation. It would still take decennia for the bishop to obtain his central position and for the whole structure of the local church to depend on him. The tight connection between authority and sacramental order was not yet in place in Clement's time. Also, his younger contemporary Origen omits his name in a letter that gives examples of Alexandrian philosopher-priests. It is improbable that Origen did not know Clement, since they shared the same environment and Origen's writings contain several ideas that have Clement as their source. The most logical conclusion, therefore, is that Clement was no priest.[11]

Clement's writings were clearly aimed at an educated audience from the higher regions of society. Some scholars call him one of the most important missionaries among the rich and intellectual.[12] Because of his intellectual prowess, Clement could offer the well-educated an interesting alternative to Gnosticism and pagan philosophy. Most probably he came from these echelons of society himself, judging by the impressive state of his education. Clement shows a vast knowledge of preceding Christian and non-Christian literature, with many fragments surviving to our time only through his writings, and in addition many other names and titles mentioned by him.[13] When it comes to citations, the Bible unsurprisingly is his primary source, but he also cites 348 different non-Christian authors, of whom Plato (600 times), Philo (300 times) and Homer (240 times) appear most often.[14] One can agree with Eric Osborn when he says that "Clement, more than any other early Christian writer, knew and enjoyed Greek philosophy and literature".[15]

His three major works, the *Protrepticus*, the *Paedagogus* and the *Stromateis*, form a trilogy, accompanying a person on his way to faith and *gnosis*. In the first work Clement exhorts his readers to take up the Christian faith, taking inspiration from Aristotle, who under the same title had written an invitation to the philosophical life.[16] The book has a literary style and contains many references to classic works. The *Paedagogus*, the second part of the trilogy, addresses people who were beginners in the Christian faith. Most probably they had recently been baptised, or were in preparation for baptism.[17] The last part, the *Stromateis*, acted as further studies for the more advanced. It discusses a great variety of topics, helping the reader to become a perfect Christian.[18] Together, the three works form the best illustration of the mystagogical and esoteric character of Clement's teaching, which also become visible in the QDS.

[11] Ramelli 2022.
[12] Di Berardino 2006, 1066.
[13] Di Berardino 2006, 1071.
[14] Osborn 2005, 4-5.
[15] Osborn 2005, 2.
[16] Di Berardino 2006, 1069.
[17] Osborn 2005, 14.
[18] Di Berardino 2006, 1069.

Scholars are divided on the question of whether Clement truly meant these three works to form a series, mainly because the literary character of the *Stromateis* differs so much from the other two works. In the general opinion the first two parts were meant for public distribution, while the *Stromateis* were rather a series of notes for Clement's school lectures. This would also reflect the somewhat haphazard way in which its topics seem to be organised.[19]

Osborn, however, gives compelling arguments for the structural unity of the trilogy.[20] He compares Clement with Plato, both of them having some distrust at written teaching and preferring direct contact between teacher and student—although for Clement the ultimate teacher is God himself. According to Osborn, the *Stromateis* consciously obfuscates its information, thus protecting the knowledge contained within against unworthy eyes.[21] Only those who had been educated sufficiently by a valid teacher, would be able to understand the signs and see the structure. This method of esoteric teaching brings Clement close to Gnostic traditions, which were particularly present in Alexandria.[22]

Other works have been mainly transmitted in fragments or are only known by name.[23] A significant exception is the *Quis Dives Salvetur* (QDS), a homily on a passage in the Gospel of Mark[24] concerning wealth and the perfect life. The work is interesting in its own right, since it is the oldest example of Christian exegesis with practical advice for the life of a Christian.[25]

In the centuries following his death, Clement's reputation became tarnished. With the development of technical theological language, the writings of older authors—linguistically less rigorous—could easily become controversial. Clement himself was never condemned, but his reputation suffered from his (perceived) connection to Origen, who was excommunicated by several church councils because of parts of his teaching.[26] Nevertheless, Clement contributed greatly to the missionary power of the Christian message in Alexandria through the connection he established between the new faith and the traditional Greek culture.

[19] Di Berardino 2006, 1069.
[20] Osborn 2005, 6-8.
[21] Osborn 2005, 14.
[22] Osborn 2005, 9.
[23] Cf. Di Berardino 2006, 1070; Osborn 2005, 5.
[24] The story also appears in other Gospels. Clement may have chosen Mark because, he was the traditional founder of the Alexandrian church. See Descourtieux 2011, 26.
[25] Descourtieux 2001, 26.
[26] Di Berardino 2006, 1068.

Chapter 1.2 – Alexandria

As is the case with all authors, Clement's writings are strongly influenced by the environment in which he lived and worked. For Clement, this was the city of Alexandria, a cosmopolitan trade centre in the Nile River delta, perched on top of a limestone ridge at the banks of Lake Mareotis.[27] With a number of inhabitants of around half a million,[28] it was second in size to Rome only. The population consisted of Egyptians and Greeks, Romans and Africans, as well as a large Jewish community. Situated between East and West, Alexandria was an ideal hub for international trade.[29]

The city was founded by Alexander the Great in 331 BC. Culturally, it remained somewhat aloof from its surroundings, as a Greek island in an Egyptian sea.[30] International commerce provided the city with much of its wealth. An abundant yield of grain found its way from the Egyptian countryside to many parts of the Roman Empire[31], among which was the city of Rome itself.[32] Other important export products were wine, barley and dates[33], as well as industrial products like papyrus, glass and linen.[34] Because of its central position, Alexandria functioned as a transit-harbour and gateway to the east, with trade routes reaching into Arabia and even India. This resulted in a considerable trade in luxury goods, such as gems, spices, perfumes and pharmaceutical products.[35] In comparison to other parts of the empire, Alexandria's wealth was also highly monetised.[36]

The city was filled with all types of craftsmen. The rich agricultural output of Alexandria's hinterland found its way to the rest of the world through the city's two sea harbours. A third, even larger, inner harbour at Lake Mareotis received goods coming over the Nile.[37] A large influx of money resulted in wealth for significant parts of the population, although many were also left in poverty.[38] The fields around the city were generally the possession of rich land-owners who themselves lived inside the city, while the fields were worked by labourers, often under precarious conditions.[39]

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[27] Watts 2008, 143.
[28] Estimates range from 200.000 (Haas 1997, 46) to 750.000 (Rathbone 2008, 706).
[29] Haas 1997, 8-9.
[30] Haas 1997, 7; Di Berardino 2006, 183.
[31] Haas 1997, 21. Egypt's agricultural yield from this period would only be surpassed in the 20th century (Rathbone 2008, 700).
[32] With the *annona* the emperor subsidised a yearly grain transport from Egypt. On its return, the fleet would bring back a great diversity of products from Italy and other parts of the empire (Rathbone 2008, 710).
[33] Haas 1997, 36.
[34] Haas 1997, 33.
[35] Haas 1997, 36.
[36] Rathbone 2008, 714.
[37] Watts 2008, 144.
[38] Haas gives the number of 7500 *anexodoi*, people who could not provide for themselves and received money from the church for basic necessities (Haas 1997, 62).
[39] Descourtieux 2011, 11. The Antonine plague of 166 accelerated the process of accumulation of agricultural land in the hands of ever fewer (and richer) landowners (Rathbone 2008, 703).

In the *Quis Dives Salvetur*, Clement primarily addresses the members of this rich and culturally developed upper-class, who could appreciate his academic qualities and who at the same time were in need of directions for how to use their wealth in a way befitting a Christian.[40]

Under Alexander's Ptolemaic successors, the city grew into a centre of arts and learning without equal and became an important centre for the development of Hellenistic culture. Its many libraries, among which those of the Mouseion and the Serapeion where the most illustrious, contained a wealth of literary sources.[41] Alexandria attracted teachers and scholars from around the world and offered an invigorating environment for the development of a great variety of schools. The Platonic tradition was especially fertile in Alexandria.[42] This would also exert an unmistakable influence on early Christian theology.[43]

The city's international character also resulted in the presence of many other religions and philosophical schools. Some of these were concentrated in specific parts of the city. The Jews, for example, mainly lived in the so-called Delta quarter.[44] From a religious point of view, paganism was the dominant group, Jews were an economically important minority, and Christians were the new player on the field.[45] Christopher Haas observes that in Alexandria, these groups were socially distinct and often operated as a city within a city. He cites Clement, among others, who described the three groups as three separate *laoi*. Haas concludes: "While other Mediterranean cities had their respective pagan, Jewish and Christian communities, in very few of these cities do we find such a distinctive communal consciousness separating the various groups".[46]

This clear distinction could lead to tensions but also to fruitful interactions. Many crafts were organised in guilds, called *collegia*, that welcomed members of different ethnicities.[47] All religions were present in all social echelons of the population. Among Christians, quite a few were well-to-do.[48] It was among the elite in particular that an exchange of ideas occurred. Education, in the Greek tradition of *paideia*, was the privilege of the upper class and many attended one or more of the available schools. These often had their own ethno-religious identity, as for example the Christian catechetical schools, but this did not necessarily limit them in their acceptance of pupils. The personal relationship between teacher and pupil was more important than their religious background. In Haas' words: "It could be said that a typical form of piety found among the city's educated elite was that of the teacher and his small circle of student-initiates".[49] This was true for

[40] Descourtieux 2011, 12.
[41] Woods 2008, 146. The Mouseion held the famous Royal Library with one of the most extensive collections of Greek and non-Greek literature in Antiquity. Its importance for manuscript tradition cannot be overstated. In Clement's time, the Library had already passed its apex and many books had been dispersed over other facilities in the city (Woods 2008, 149-150).
[42] Osborn 2005, 2.
[43] Di Berardino 2006, 183.
[44] Woods 2008, 151.
[45] Haas 1997, 13.
[46] Haas 1997, 8-9.
[47] Woods 2008, 152.
[48] Haas 1997, 157. 198.
[49] Haas 1997, 154.

both philosophers and for religious teachers. Many Christians therefore received a pagan philosophical education, while Clement's school had many pagan students as well.[50] This often facilitated the exchange and development of ideas.

A large Jewish community had been present since the reign of Ptolemy I. The Ptolemies made extensive use of Jewish mercenaries and the Seleucid policy of cultural oppression resulted in a Jewish migration from Syria to Egypt. Philo estimated that about one eighth of Alexandria's population was Jewish.[51]

When they came into contact with the city's Greek culture. Jewish intellectuals enthusiastically brought the two traditions into contact with each other and made Alexandria into the capital of Hellenistic Judaism.[52] The Hebrew Bible was translated into Greek and Philo applied Greek philosophical and philological principles to its study. Many of his insights would become important tenets for Christian scholars.

The Jewish presence was not without tension, however. Periodically, conflict would arise between Jewish and Greek inhabitants. Under the reign of Trajan, a violent uprising occurred in the years 115-117, which was eventually subdued and would have severe consequences for the Jews in Alexandria, both in their number and in their influence on the city.[53] In Clement's time the Jewish community had lost much of its strength.[54]

Very little is known about the Christian population until the second century. According to tradition, the Gospel was brought to Alexandria by Saint Mark, a disciple of the apostle Peter, but this claim has no historical proof.[55] At the end of the second century, the hierarchical structure of the Church was still in a developing state. A bishop was present but did not yet have the absolute power that he would obtain in later centuries. There seem to have been several Christian schools.[56] This shows that also among Christians there was a strong intellectual elite.[57]

In the first two centuries Gnostic currents were very influential in Alexandria.[58] Angelo Di Berardino observes that their particular success in a city such as Alexandria makes sense: "This does not come as a surprise, if we consider how much the Gnostics' tendency towards cultural syncretism harmonised with the intellectual liveliness of the educated Alexandrian milieu and the multitude

[50] Women could attend the schools as well, showing that their position in the city, at least among the elite, was relatively emancipated (Osborn 2005, 22).
[51] Haas 1997, 95.
[52] Ramelli 2022.
[53] Haas 1997, 102-103.
[54] In 414 the Jews would be expelled from the city altogether (Haas 1997, 91).
[55] Di Berardino 2006, 183.
[56] Di Berardino 2006, 183.
[57] Haas 1997, 229.
[58] Di Berardino 2006, 184.

of influences that were present in it."[59] For a Christian teacher as Clement, the Gnostics were important rivals and in many of his writings he reacts to their ideas. These reactions can take the form of criticism, but just as often he borrows ideas and terminology from them. It is not without reason that Clement claims to educate his students in *true* gnosis.[60]

It is in this large, dynamic city that Clement tried to divulge his teachings. A city with great diversity, in wealth, ethnicity and convictions. A city were different world-views competed with one another, but were also mutually enriched. A city that revolved around trade and commerce and where Christians were a growing presence, some of whom also became very rich. When teaching his hearers about the Christian life, Clement necessarily had to relate to all these aspects, and it is understandable why he thought that a treatment of the dangers, and possibilities, of wealth would not be out of place.[61]

There is some discussion on where the QDS was written. Some scholars place it after Clement's flight from Egypt. Carl Cosaert, on the other hand, shows that there is no textual difference in Bible citations between the QDS and other writings that were written in Alexandria with relative certainty. Also, the text shows many references to writers that were prominent in Alexandria, like Philo and the Gnostics.[62] This would mean that the QDS was either written in Alexandria, or that Clement brought Bible manuscripts with him and remained under the influence of Alexandrian writers. Although the content of the QDS fits the Alexandrian situation well, the question of wealth could be posed anywhere in the Christian world and would be just as relevant in Cappadocia or Jerusalem. Still, Cosaert's analysis of Clement's Bible citations show that the passage from Mark has little relation to Caesarean textual traditions and is more in line with Alexandrian and even Western texts.[63] It is therefore reasonable to posit Alexandria as the place of origin for the QDS.

[59] Di Berardino 2006, 184: "Questo non sorprende, se consideriamo quanto le tendenze culturalmente sincretiste degli gnostici armonizzassero con la vivacità intellettuale del milieu colto alessandrino e la pluralità di stimoli che agivano su di esso".
[60] Osborn 2005, 22.
[61] MacMullen 2015, 504 argues that Christian charity was something rather revolutionary for the Greek and Roman mindset and was more reminiscent of Egyptian and Oriental traditions in taking care of the poor. If this is true, Alexandria is all the more an appropriate stage for Clement's message on wealth.
[62] Cosaert 2008, 18-19.
[63] Cosaert 2008, 266-267. 310.

Chapter 2 – Wealth in the *Quis Dives Salvetur*

This chapter will give an analysis of Clement's argument on wealth as found in the *Quis Dives Salvetur*. It will start with a sketch of the text's general structure and introduce the Gospel passage that forms its starting point. After that, the sections will more or less follow Clement's text and discuss its principal points.

Chapter 2.1 – Gospel Text and General Structure

Clement bases his discussion of wealth on a passage from the Gospel of Mark. Its exact formulation differs somewhat from canonical texts. Most differences are small, however, amounting to word order or the use of synonyms. As to their causes, Cosaert observes that Clement at times cites from memory and at other times seems to read from a manuscript. Some of the citations show a dependency on oral catechetical traditions. On occasion, Clement introduces personal adaptations, in order to give a certain emphasis to his interpretation of a text.[64] Some of the variations might also be due to the specific manuscripts circulating in Alexandria. As Cosaert states: "During the first few centuries the textual character of the New Testament was not always consistent in the different urban centers of Christendom."[65]

Cosaert raises another, more indirect, source of variation: citations run the risk of emendation in later manuscript tradition, when a copyist alters the text with the help of Gospel manuscripts available to him. This does not seem to be the case here, however, since the variations in the pericope do not bear any resemblance to later textual traditions. Moreover, the text resonates with Clement's exegesis and therefore seems to be unaltered.[66]

In the QDS the variations are probably due to Clement citing the passage from memory.[67] Also, some contamination from other Gospels, Matthew in particular, may be present, especially when the elements introduced support Clement's interpretation of the text. If any variation is relevant for Clement's argument, it will receive mention. Otherwise, the analysis will simply follow Clement's version of the text as given. The Gospel passage from Mark in the *Quis Dives Salvetur* is as follows:

When he set out on the road, a man who came towards him fell on his knees and said: "Good teacher, what should I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus said: "Why do you call me good? No one is good, except for God. You know the commandments: do not commit adultery, do not murder, do not steal, do not give false testimony, honour your father and your mother." The other answered him and said: "All these I have kept." Jesus looked at him, he loved him and he said: "You are still missing one thing: if you want to be perfect, then sell all that you have and give it to the poor, and you will have a treasure in heaven, and then come and follow me." But he was upset by his words and went away in distress, for he was someone with many riches and fields. Jesus looked around and said to his disciples: "With how much difficulty will those who have riches enter into the kingdom of God!"

[64] Cosaert 2008, 24.
[65] Cosaert 2008, 15.
[66] Cosaert 2008, 235.
[67] Cosaert 2008, 120 assumes this to be the most probable explanation.

The disciples were aghast at his words. Again Jesus answered them and said: "Children, how difficult it is that those who confide in their riches enter into the kingdom of God. With greater ease a camel will pass through the eye of a needle than a rich man will enter the kingdom of God." They were shocked beyond measure and said: "Then who can be saved?" He looked at them and said: "What is impossible for men, is possible for God." Peter started to speak to him: "See, we left everything behind and have followed you." Jesus answered and said: "Truly, I say to you, whoever leaves behind his own possessions, his parents and brothers and riches, because of me and because of the Gospel, he will gain a hundredfold in return. Now, in this time, to have fields and riches and houses and brothers, together with persecutions, to what end? In what is to come, life will be eternal. The first will be the last and the last will be the first."[68]

The shock felt by Jesus' disciples undoubtedly also found its way to many of Alexandria's richer citizens. A growing number of them had adopted the Christian religion, which necessarily entailed a reflection on one's own life against the model that Jesus offered. The fact that Clement took the trouble of writing a treatise on the subject, suggests that this passage raised unease and discussion. In his introduction, he states his intention to show the right path to those who are troubled. In the spirit of Aristotle,[69] he defines two extremes to avoid and then offers the middle road as the one to take, thus from the start mitigating prophetic fervour with philosophic reason.

To be precise, he defines two middle roads: one for the rich, and one for those addressing the rich. They who deal with the wealthy should avoid slavish flattery, often practiced for personal gain. But one should not despise them either. Instead, through prayer and instruction, one must show them the path to take and help them take it. And what is that path? Rich people should not fall into despair, as if salvation would be impossible for them, nor should they consider salvation an easy gain that comes automatically.

Clement uses the (very Greek) image of the athlete: no one can win a competition if he deems himself unfit and therefore does not even try, but confidence alone is not enough and every athlete

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[68] Mc. 10, 17-31 as cited in Clement, *QDS* 4.4-10: "Ἐκπορευομένου αὐτοῦ εἰς ὁδὸν προσελθών τις ἐγονυπέτει λέγων· «Διδάσκαλε ἀγαθέ, τί ποιήσω, ἵνα ζωὴν αἰώνιον κληρονομήσω;» Ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς λέγει· «Τί με ἀγαθὸν λέγεις; Οὐδεὶς ἀγαθὸς εἰ μὴ εἷς ὁ θεός. Τὰς ἐντολὰς οἶδας· Μὴ μοιχεύσῃς, μὴ φονεύσῃς, μὴ κλέψῃς, μὴ ψευδομαρτυρήσῃς, τίμα τὸν πατέρα σου καὶ τὴν μητέρα.» Ὁ δὲ ἀποκριθεὶς λέγει αὐτῷ· «Πάντα ταῦτα ἐφύλαξα.» Ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς ἐμβλέψας ἠγάπησεν αὐτὸν καὶ εἶπεν· «Ἓν σοι ὑστερεῖ· εἰ θέλεις τέλειος εἶναι, πώλησον ὅσα ἔχεις καὶ διάδος πτωχοῖς, καὶ ἕξεις θησαυρὸν ἐν οὐρανῷ, καὶ δεῦρο ἀκολούθει μοι.» Ὁ δὲ στυγνάσας ἐπὶ τῷ λόγῳ ἀπῆλθε λυπούμενος· ἦν γὰρ ἔχων χρήματα πολλὰ καὶ ἀγρούς. Περιβλεψάμενος δὲ ὁ Ἰησοῦς λέγει τοῖς μαθηταῖς αὐτοῦ· «Πῶς δυσκόλως οἱ τὰ χρήματα ἔχοντες εἰσελεύσονται εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ.» Οἱ δὲ μαθηταὶ ἐθαμβοῦντο ἐπὶ τοῖς λόγοις αὐτοῦ. Πάλιν δὲ ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἀποκριθεὶς λέγει αὐτοῖς· «Τέκνα, πῶς δύσκολόν ἐστι τοὺς πεποιθότας ἐπὶ χρήμασιν εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ εἰσελθεῖν· εὐκόλως διὰ τῆς τρυμαλιᾶς τῆς βελόνης κάμηλος εἰσελεύσεται ἢ πλούσιος εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ.» Οἱ δὲ περισσῶς ἐξεπλήσσοντο καὶ ἔλεγον· «Τίς οὖν δύναται σωθῆναι;» Ὁ δὲ ἐμβλέψας αὐτοῖς εἶπεν· «Ὅ τι παρὰ ἀνθρώποις ἀδύνατον, παρὰ θεῷ δυνατόν.» Ἤρξατο ὁ Πέτρος λέγειν αὐτῷ· «Ἴδε ἡμεῖς ἀφήκαμεν πάντα καὶ ἠκολουθήσαμέν σοι.» Ἀποκριθεὶς δὲ ὁ Ἰησοῦς λέγει· «Ἀμὴν ὑμῖν λέγω, ὃς ἂν ἀφῇ τὰ ἴδια καὶ γονεῖς καὶ ἀδελφοὺς καὶ χρήματα ἕνεκεν ἐμοῦ καὶ ἕνεκεν τοῦ εὐαγγελίου, ἀπολήψεται ἑκατονταπλασίονα. Νῦν ἐν τῷ καιρῷ τούτῳ ἀγροὺς καὶ χρήματα καὶ οἰκίας καὶ ἀδελφοὺς ἔχειν μετὰ διωγμῶν εἰς ποῦ; Ἐν δὲ τῷ ἐρχομένῳ ζωή ἐστιν αἰώνιος. Ἔσονται οἱ πρῶτοι ἔσχατοι καὶ οἱ ἔσχατοι πρῶτοι»".

[69] The principle of the mean (μεσότης) was famously described by Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachaea* 2, 1106a 13 - 1109b 27.

has to train, if he wants to achieve victory. For a Christian the prize is the kingdom of heaven and in order to win it, he needs a life of training. Rich or poor, this is true for anyone. The best way to help someone is to show that the goal is reachable also for him, and to offer the right training regime, so that he may truly reach it. This, of course, is exactly what Clement himself intends to do with the *Quis Dives Salvetur*. After some methodological remarks (QDS 5-10) he first gives people hope for salvation (QDS 11-26) and then instructs them on how to attain it (QDS 27-37). He ends with an exposition on God's willingness to forgive past wrongs, to show that it is never too late to try (QDS 38-42). These four parts will form the subjects of the following four subchapters.

Chapter 2.2 – Methodological principles

Before he starts his exegesis, Clement introduces some general principles, the first of which is an allegorical reading of the text. Allegory helps him find consistency in the great variety of voices that Scripture seems to offer. It is also fitting for divine teachings to hide deeper spiritual meaning behind their corporeal form.[70] The allegorical interpretation of texts already known: the Homeric scholars had used this technique in their interpretation of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, and Philo had introduced it into biblical scholarship through his study of the Jewish holy texts.[71] Clement therefore stood in a firm Alexandrian tradition.

In his search for God's teaching, Clement is less focused than other authors on the specific wording of single texts. In Cosaert's words: "Clement gives the meaning—what he sees as the 'divine voice' that speaks through all texts—control over the lexical details."[72] For example, after presenting the pericope from Mark, Clement mentions that the same story also appears in the other Gospels. The variations between them he considers secondary: "In each of them, some of the words may perhaps change, but all show the same harmony in meaning."[73]

This meaning is rarely obvious and requires a good listener to become clear. For Clement it is a conscious choice of the divine author to shield advanced knowledge from unworthy ears. He explains how the words that Jesus speaks to his disciples might *seem* to be simpler than what he says to the multitude, but in reality require more effort and attention, and his teachings to the inner circle of his closest followers even more so.[74]

Clement uses the same model for his own teaching, aimed at a personal initiation into increasingly profound knowledge. All true teaching should be directed by God and lead towards the knowledge of God (γνῶσις τοῦ θεοῦ)[75], since it is there that eternal life can be found. God himself is hidden and

[70] Clement, *QDS* 5.2.
[71] As he did in the *Life of Moses* (Περὶ βίου Μωσέως) and *On Abraham* (Περὶ Ἀβραάμ). Both works exerted considerable influence on Clement.
[72] Cosaert 2008, 23.
[73] Clement, QDS 5.1: "Ὀλίγον μὲν ἴσως ἑκασταχοῦ τῶν ῥημάτων ἐναλλάσσει, πάντα δὲ τὴν αὐτὴν τῆς γνώμης συμφωνίαν ἐπιδείκνυται". See Mt. 19, 16-30 and Lc. 18, 18-30. John does not have this story.
[74] Clement, QDS 5.3-4.
[75] Clement, QDS 7.1.

unknown to us, but he can be known through his son, Jesus Christ.[76] For the faithful, Christ can be many things, but Clement mainly describes him as the teacher of life-giving knowledge.

Moreover, since Christ is himself God, he is teaching about himself. Consequently, the eternal life that the rich man is looking for, comes with knowledge of Christ. "Our Lord and Saviour was gladly questioned about what eminently belonged to him: Life was questioned about life, the Saviour about salvation."[77] As a perfect teacher, Christ starts from his interlocutor's own words ("Why do you call me good?"[78]) and from there leads him to the truth, which does not lie in following commandments, but in following Christ. "Not knowing him is death; knowing him, being familiar with him and becoming like him is the only life."[79]

Christ shows the way, but the man needs to follow. Clement cites: "If you want to become perfect".[80] This phrase does not appear in Mark, but comes from Matthew. Clement probably adds it for emphasis: the man must *want* it. God does not force the truth upon anyone, but bestows it upon those who actively seek it. The man in the Gospel turns out to be too weak to do so, because of his attachment to material wealth.[81] Clement invites his readers to make a different choice and to seek God "with a good and steadfast disposition, reaching out towards all the commandments of the Saviour."[82] No one needs to despair, but everyone needs to take the responsibility that comes with human freedom.

Chapter 2.3 – Hope for the wealthy

Clement's first task is to show that the stark message from the Gospel does not have to lead the rich into despair. He does so through an allegorical interpretation of Jesus' instruction: "Sell your possessions."[83] Jesus is not speaking about material wealth here, but wants the soul to lose its unhealthy affections: "He does not command you to throw away the goods in your possession and leave behind your riches, but to banish the thoughts about riches from your soul, your attachment to them, your excessive desire, your unrest and fever concerning them, your anxiety for them."[84]

This leads the focus away from material wealth and poverty. Indeed, poverty is no goal by itself, nor is it an enviable state to be in. If it were, every poor beggar would be blessed.[85] Voluntary poverty is

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[76] Clement, QDS. 8.1, alluding to Mt. 11, 27.
[77] Clement, QDS 6.1: "Ἠρώτηται μὲν γὰρ ἡδέως ὁ κύριος ἡμῶν καὶ σωτὴρ ἐρώτημα καταλληλότατον αὐτῷ, ἡ ζωὴ περὶ ζωῆς, ὁ σωτὴρ περὶ σωτηρίας".
[78] Clement, QDS 4.5: "Τί με ἀγαθὸν λέγεις;".
[79] Clement, QDS 7.3: "Ἡ μὲν γὰρ τούτου ἄγνοια θάνατός ἐστιν, ἡ δὲ ἐπίγνωσις αὐτοῦ καὶ οἰκείωσις καὶ ἡ πρὸς αὐτὸν ἀγάπη καὶ ἐξομοίωσις μόνη ζωή".
[80] Clement, QDS 4.6, citing Mt. 19, 21.
[81] Clement, QDS 10.2-5.
[82] Clement, QDS 1.5: "…διαθέσεως χρηστῆς καὶ μονίμου καὶ πάσαις ταῖς ἐντολαῖς τοῦ σωτῆρος ἐπεκτεινομένης."
[83] Clement, QDS 11.1: "Πώλησον τὰ ὑπάρχοντά σου".
[84] Clement, QDS 11,2: "[Μὴ] τὴν ὑπάρχουσαν οὐσίαν ἀπορρῖψαι προστάσσει καὶ ἀποστῆναι τῶν χρημάτων, ἀλλὰ τὰ δόγματα περὶ χρημάτων ἐξορίσαι τῆς ψυχῆς, τὴν πρὸς αὐτὰ συμπάθειαν, τὴν ὑπεράγαν ἐπιθυμίαν, τὴν περὶ αὐτὰ πτοίαν καὶ νόσον, τὰς μερίμνας".
[85] Clement, QDS 11.3.

worth little, if it is not done for Christ and for the Gospel.[86] It can even damage the soul. Clement identifies two dangers. On one hand there is the danger shown by the philosophers, who turn poverty into a source of pride and a reason to look down on other people, as if the choice for poverty is some extraordinary personal feat.[87] On the other hand poverty is simply a wretched state to be in and hard to bear without breaking down in one's mind.[88] As long as the soul is not freed from its passions, material poverty will only make things worse.[89]

A Christian should regard material wealth as secondary and irrelevant for the question of salvation, and focus on the wealth of his soul, instead.[90] A wealthy soul is filled with the desire for material gain, which leaves no room for God. The kingdom of heaven will be closed off for such a soul, because it is ensnared by the world and does not even look up.[91] The soul must be purged from this wealth and be rendered poor and naked, so that it may follow the Saviour.[92] Thus, the order in the Gospel to sell one's possessions does not pertain to material wealth per se, but to the soul's attachment to it. The man in the Gospel did not leave because he was wealthy, but because he was unable to put God first.

To strengthen his argument, Clement shows that the same principle applies at the end of the Gospel passage, where Jesus promises his disciples that anyone who gives up his family for the Gospel, will receive a hundredfold in return.[93] There is no need to do away with one's family, but family ties should not stand in the way of one's relation to God. Clement offers the example of a father who tries to lure his son away from the faith, and argues that if we have to love our enemies, we certainly have to love our families, but Christ should have precedence over all.[94] Money, too, once it becomes an obstruction to follow Christ, should be disposed of, but it is not wrong to possess it, if it does not. A rich person should not be repelled, simply because he happens to be born from rich parents, or because he managed to collect some wealth through wisdom and parsimony.[95]

Wealth and riches are morally indifferent, because they are external realities, just as beauty and strength are. Salvation does not depend on these externalities, but on the virtue of the soul.[96] They are not completely irrelevant, though. Souls use the world around them to produce acts. Riches can thus serve as a material (ὕλη) or instrument (ὄργανον) for the soul to use. A just soul will use them justly, an unjust soul unjustly.[97] It is not useful to blame the instrument if it is the one using it who is ultimately responsible.

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[86] Clement, QDS 1.4.
[87] Clement, QDS 12.2.
[88] Clement, QDS 12.5.
[89] Clement, QDS 15.2.
[90] Karras 2004, 48 describes the difference as one between greed (a moral vice) and wealth (an amoral condition).
[91] Clement, QDS 17.1.
[92] Clement, QDS 16.1-2.
[93] Clement, QDS 22.1, citing Mc 10, 29-30.
[94] Clement, QDS 22.5-6. In Clement's time, such a case was far from hypothetical.
[95] Clement, QDS 26.3.
[96] Clement, QDS 18.1.
[97] Clement, QDS 14.2-3.

From this perspective, instead of being a danger, wealth can even be instrumental to salvation. The truly unhappy man is materially poor, while carrying a desire for wealth in his soul. His opposite, the man who has many riches but whose soul is not bound by them, is double blessed. Not only is he walking the right path, but he also possesses a great instrument to help him advance further on that path, by doing good. If no one had anything, no one would not be able to help others, but since some are rich and other poor, they can support each other and thus grow in communion (κοινωνία).[98] For Clement, this shows that wealth can truly be a gift from God.

Chapter 2.4 – The road of love

The question now becomes how to use riches in the correct way. Clement shows that the answer again lies in the Gospel text. He starts with Jesus' famous double commandment of love: Love God with all your heart and love your neighbour as yourself.[99] The first part urges to give God precedence over everything else. Since the kingdom of heaven can be equated to the knowledge of God, and the love of God brings a person closer to him, everyone should direct all his actions and use all his means with this in mind.[100]

For the second part of the commandment, Jesus offers a story about a traveller who is beset upon by bandits and left half dead at the side of the road. His fellow Jews pass him by without helping him, but a Samaritan stops and restores him. The choice for a Samaritan is poignant, because Jews and Samaritans were not on good terms and a Samaritan would not be the first choice for a Jew when thinking about neighbours. Yet, in this story it is the Samaritan who shows himself to be the true neighbour, because he is willing to help, thus showing his love for his fellow man. Jesus, and Clement in his wake, exhorts us to do the same.[101] Clement adds another observation: the Samaritan did not come empty-handed, but carried everything necessary with him to help the wounded man: wine, oil, bandages, a beast of burden and money for the innkeeper.[102] Thus, the Samaritan becomes an example for the wealthy in particular: they, too, possess much that can be helpful to others.

But who is my neighbour? In most sermons nowadays, churchgoers would be invited to see the story about the Samaritan as a message that we should not ask this question about others, but instead become a neighbour for them ourselves by helping those in need. Clement agrees with this, but adds an element that was more widespread in the early Church than nowadays: the Samaritan in the story clearly is an image for Jesus himself and, hence, Jesus is our first neighbour. That is why Jesus can call the two commandments equivalent to each other, for in fulfilling the second commandment, by loving our neighbour Jesus, we immediately also fulfil the first commandment, since Jesus is also God.[103] We should love God above all and love our neighbour Jesus as ourselves, since he is the God who chose to become our neighbour by becoming human just as we are.

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[98] Clement, QDS 13, 2-4.
[99] Mt. 22, 27-39.
[100] Clement, QDS 27.5.
[101] Clement, QDS 28,4.
[102] Clement, QDS 28,4.
[103] Clement, QDS 29.5.

In a second step, Clement broadens this love for our neighbour Jesus to a love for all people who believe in him, using a phrase from the Gospel: "Whatever you did for one of the least of my brothers, you did for me".[104] Again, the early Church had a somewhat different interpretation than is common among Christian believers nowadays. Most modern readers will read "the least of my brothers" as "any human being". Early Christians understood the expression in a more restricted way and saw it as a description of the faithful. Consequently, the commandment not only concerns the love for Christ, but also for his disciples, and any rich person should be as prepared as the Samaritan to help Christ's brothers, especially those who are in need.[105]

Clement adds two more instructions. Firstly, one should not give hesitantly or only when asked, but the initiative should come from the giver. Become a true disciple of your Master and seek out those who are worthy and in need.[106] This will not only strengthen your neighbourly love, but also deepen your relation with God, for "God loves a joyful giver".[107] Secondly, one should not be too severe in discerning who is worthy. Man sees from the outside, but the inside often remains hidden, which makes it hard to know for certain who are truly God's friends. Any selection runs the risk of denying some of them wrongly, which is punishable by eternal fire.[108] The better option, therefore, is to help all those in need, the ensure that the commandment is fulfilled.[109]

Clement then turns to Jesus' instruction to "sell all that you have and give it to the poor".[110] No trade of goods for money is meant, here. Instead, Jesus envisions another kind of commerce. The crux lies in the words that immediately follow: "and you will have a treasure in heaven".[111] Jesus proposes an exchange of temporal goods with eternal ones, by using earthly riches to help people in need. The virtue of the giver's soul is certainly part of the return value, but there is more to gain.

To show this, Clement cites the Gospel of Luke: "Make friends for yourselves by the Mammon of injustice, so that when you depart from here, they may receive you into the eternal dwellings".[112] Although wealth by itself is no injustice, it can lead to perdition if it makes the soul selfish. When that same wealth is used to help others, however, and especially those who are friends with God, then it can lead to some very advantageous relations. For after their death these friends of God will

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[104] Mt. 25, 40, in Clement, QDS 30.4: "Ἐφ' ὅσον ἐποιήσατε ἑνὶ τούτων τῶν ἀδελφῶν μου τῶν ἐλαχίστων, ἐμοὶ ἐποιήσατε".

[105] A modern reader could argue that this interpretation defeats the whole purpose of the parable: Jesus chides his Jewish interlocutor for caring just for his own people, but his disciples then apply it only to their fellow Christians. A member of the early Church would answer, however, that Jesus makes no political statements here, but uses the Samaritan as a symbol of his own otherness as God who comes to dwell among men. The early Church interpretation is more mystical than political.

[106] Clement, QDS 31.7.

[107] Clement, QDS 31.8, citing 2Cor. 9, 7: "Ἱλαρὸν γὰρ δότην ἀγαπᾷ ὁ θεός".

[108] Cf. Mt. 25,41, where Jesus depicts the Final Judgment.

[109] Clement, QDS 33.3.

[110] Clement, QDS 4.6, citing Mc. 10, 21: "Πώλησον ὅσα ἔχεις καὶ διάδος πτωχοῖς".

[111] Clement, QDS 4.6, citing Mc. 10, 21: "Καὶ ἕξεις θησαυρὸν ἐν οὐρανῷ".

[112] Clement, QDS 31,5, citing Lc. 16, 9: "Ποιήσατε ἑαυτοῖς φίλους ἐκ τοῦ μαμωνᾶ τῆς ἀδικίας, ἵνα ὅταν ἐκλίπητε, δέξωνται ὑμᾶς εἰς τὰς αἰωνίους σκηνάς". According to the dictionary of Liddell, Scott and Jones, Mammon is a Syrian deity, associated with wealth and riches. Jesus uses the name to describe human idolatry of money.

obtain a place in heaven, and once you die as well, they will receive you there. Or, more precisely, God will receive you: "Because I will give it not only to my friends, but also to my friends' friends".[113] A rich man can therefore enter the kingdom of God through friendship with the poor.

This is the best way for a rich man to invest his money, since every other good is transitory, but a dwelling with God is eternal. Clement calls it a "a divine commerce".[114] With something perishable it is possible to buy something imperishable. Who could refuse such an offer? The rich man from the story, as it turns out, since he was too attached to his riches. Clement warns his readers not to make the same mistake, but to seize the opportunity that fate has given them through their wealth.

As a bonus, these poor friends of God will also prove beneficial in this life. Since they are unattached to wealth and immune to its temptations, they will not resort to flattering to get the rich man's money, while leading him further astray.[115] Instead, they will prove to be trustworthy guardians of his soul, through prayer, teaching, advice and admonition. And this love of theirs is true, because they love God above all and work for their own salvation just as much as for that of their friends. In their eyes, the rich man is the poor brother in need of help.[116] The road of love thus becomes a reciprocal one, with every one giving from what he has, be it much or little, directing all possessions and faculties towards the common ultimate goal of entering the heavenly kingdom.

Chapter 2.5 – Forgiveness of sins

In the remainder of his treatise Clement addresses a question that, especially among the earliest Christians, had great relevance: what if someone had already taken the wrong path? In the early Church the rite of baptism, through which one became a Christian, cleansed the initiate of all previous sins, purifying him for the new life in Christ. For the rest of his life he had to maintain this state through faith, prayer and good works. Baptism was a one-time opportunity. Anyone who became defiled again through serious sin had no alternative left.

To be sure, opinions varied greatly on the question if forgiveness of subsequent sins was possible at all, and if so, for what sins and in what way. In later centuries, the Church would develop an elaborate orthopraxy centered around the administration of the sacraments and that of confession in particular. In Clement's time this system was still beyond the horizon and people feared falling out of grace so much that some even postponed baptism until their dying beds, just to evade the risk of losing one's final chance at redemption.[117]

This question needs an answer, otherwise wealthy Christians who had not followed Clement's advice would still despair about their chances of passing through the needle's eye. He responds with

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[113] Clement, QDS 33.1: "Δώσω γὰρ οὐ μόνον τοῖς φίλοις, ἀλλὰ καὶ τοῖς φίλοις τῶν φίλων". Clement presents it as a citation, but no biblical source is known that contains this saying. Clement probably coined it himself, based on Matthew 25, 40.

[114] QDS 32.1: "Ὢ θείας ἀγορᾶς".

[115] Clement, QDS 1.1-3.

[116] Clement, QDS 35.1-2.

[117] Perhaps the most famous example of this phenomenon is emperor Constantine the Great, as told by Eusebius of Caesarea. See Fowden 1994, 147.

the daring statement that forgiveness is always possible, as long as one is willing to work for it. He does not allow people to bow their heads to fate, but encourages them to always seek the right path, ensuring them that God always keeps the door open.[118] As an illustration, he tells a compelling story about the apostle John, who managed to convert a baptised youth turned robber baron, and even made him a bishop.[119] If theft and murder can be forgiven, argues Clement, than there is certainly no need to despair for those who used their wealth unjustly.

As proof, Clement cites several places from the Bible that focus on God's willingness to forgive even the greatest sins. There is an important condition, though: repentance. Just as wealth is not evil, but the rich man has to be willing to use his riches well, sin is never hopeless, but the sinner has to be willing to change his ways and eradicate the sins from his soul with root and branch.[120]

This factor of the human will is very central in Clement's thought. Although it is God who saves, man has to cooperate. Or, rather, God will cooperate with those who want to be saved and put in the effort. God does not force, and saving people against their will would be force. Clement even says that God likes to *be* forced. If people proceed with force and determination, he gladly gives way. "God is happy to be the lesser in such matters."[121]

Clement exhorts his readers to never give up, but always strive for betterment. The final judgment will come at the moment of death and everyone will be judged as he is at that moment. "As I find you, He says, so I will judge you."[122] Someone who has done much good, but in the end turns towards evil, will be condemned, whereas a sinner who repents will be saved. Baptism washes away all sins from before. All subsequent sins can be overcome by changing one's ways and living the life of the righteous.[123] This will require effort, the more so after greater sins. Clement therefore advises to seek a spiritual guide, a man of God who can warn and give advice with authority.[124] Even then it might not be easy. "But with God's power, human supplication, brotherly help, sincere repentance and unceasing effort it can be made aright".[125] Keeping true to the Gospel, Clement warns against the presumption that it is possible to save oneself through one's own works, and he stresses the fundamental importance of faith in Christ. For what is impossible for men, is possible for God.

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[118] Clement, QDS 39.2.
[119] Clement, QDS 42.1-15.
[120] Clement, QDS 39.2.
[121] Clement, QDS 21.3: "Χαίρει γὰρ ὁ θεὸς τὰ τοιαῦτα ἡττώμενος".
[122] Clement, QDS 40.2. This is no direct citation from the Bible, but alludes to a prophecy from Ezechiel (Ez. 33, 10-20).
[123] Clement, QDS 40.1.
[124] Clement, QDS 41.1.
[125] Clement, QDS 40.6: " Ἀλλὰ μετὰ θεοῦ δυνάμεως καὶ ἀνθρωπείας ἱκεσίας καὶ ἀδελφῶν βοηθείας καὶ εἰλικρινοῦς μετανοίας καὶ συνεχοῦς μελέτης κατορθοῦται".

Chapter 3 – Relations to other Groups

"The distinguishing characteristic that sets Clement apart from other early church fathers is his extensive knowledge and use of literature—whether pagan, Jewish, or Christian."[126] Clement's texts contain many elements also known from other traditions of thought. This chapter will discuss three groups: Greek philosophy, Jewish scholarship and Gnostic teaching. All three had a significant presence in Alexandria. As a consequence, Clement was not only familiar with their content, but also had to define his position towards them. Each subchapter will examine the traces of one of these groups in Clement's works.

Chapter 3.1 – Greek Philosophy

Few ancient Christian writers show such a positive attitude towards pagan philosophy as Clement. His continued esteem for philosophy as an important source of ideas and language makes him stand out among his contemporaries. He also explicitly defends his reasons for doing so: he sees philosophy as part of divine revelation.

For Clement, the divine Logos leads humans towards the truth in a twofold way. Firstly, man is created in the image of God, with a mind (νοῦς) that is capable of truth. Secondly, God actively plants seeds of wisdom in people who are searching for it.[127] Greek philosophy therefore has both a natural and an inspirational access to divine revelation and has value also for a Christian. In Cosaert's words: "Clement's concept of the divine Word or *Logos* working among all nations in preparation for the coming of Christ enables him to discern a divine voice behind the words of any author."[128]

Clement's ideas contain Platonic, Stoic and Aristotelian elements, which has earned him the name of an eclectic, picking from various philosophical traditions what he could use for the propagation of the Christian message. Salvatore Lilla, however, with a thorough study has argued that Clement did more than that: he made philosophy into an integral part of his own thinking. Moreover, syncretism was characteristic of most education in that time and of Middle-Platonism in particular, which was then the dominant school of thought.[129] Clement himself was raised in Middle-Platonism and in his use of language very much resembles a Middle-Platonist like Albinus.[130] It was therefore probably through Middle-Platonism that Clement received much of the material that he used from other schools.

Middle-Platonism is a modern term that refers to a period that starts with Antiochus of Ascalon in the first century BC and ends with the Neo-Platonist Plotinus in the third century AD. After the rise of Stoic philosophy and the sceptic turn taken by the Academy, several philosophical questions had

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[126] Cosaert 2008, 20.
[127] Lilla 1971, 14-17.
[128] Cosaert 2008, 20. Interestingly, even the argument itself of the Logos sowing wisdom in all men is an idea Clement shares with Greek philosophy, the Platonic school in particular (Lilla 1971, 53-55).
[129] Lilla 1971, 227.
[130] Descourtieux 2011, 21.

come to a deadlock. Antiochus and others tried to reaffirm Plato's authority by arguing that his writings contained the answers to all the important questions.[131] Their work concentrated mainly on the reinterpretation of Plato's original writings.[132] While doing so, however, they made extensive use of other philosophical schools, both for the definition of the questions and the formulation of their answers. Instead of eclecticism, it would be more fitting to call it a process of appropriation, using Stoic, Peripatetic and Pythagorean material in order to advance philosophy under the authority of Plato.[133] In the words of Chiaradonna: "Going back to Plato primarily meant the choice for—or (for more profound thinkers) development of—a version of Platonism, together with its defence, which interacted in various ways with other versions and with the teachings developed by other philosophical traditions."[134] Middle-Platonism was mostly concerned with the application of Platonic thought to specific questions. The birth of new grand philosophical systems would have to wait until Neo-Platonism.[135]

There are several points of agreement between Clement and Middle-Platonism, some of which appear in the QDS as well. For example, the Aristotelian principle of 'keeping the middle' (μεσότης) was also part of Middle-Platonism.[136] Clement uses it at the start of his treatise, when he argues that the rich should be neither despondent nor complacent about their salvation and that those addressing them should refrain from both adulating and vilifying them.[137]

Another example is the Middle-Platonic criticism on the Stoic concept of fate (εἱμαρμένη) that it destroys freedom of choice and personal responsibility.[138] They also reject the Aristotelian idea that God exercises his providence only in the region above the moon.[139] Clement agrees on both points. On several occasions in the QDS, he forcefully argues that the wealthy must actively seek salvation, in order for God to help them reach it.[140] Providence is therefore active in this world, even on a personal level, and fatalism is to be rejected.

A Stoic concept with a more positive reception in Middle-Platonism was that of *apatheia,* meaning the absence of passions.[141] Passions are connected to the irrational part of the soul. It is the task of the *nous*, under the guidance of the divine Logos, to control them and prevent them from hindering a growth in virtue and knowledge.[142] Where Platonism generally aims for moderation (μετριοπάθεια), Clement goes even further and requires the passions to be vanquished completely:

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[131] Bonazzi 2017.
[132] Fowler 2016, 10.
[133] Bonazzi 2017.
[134] Chiaradonna 2008, 239: "Rifarsi a Platone significava anzitutto scegliere o (per i pensatori più profondi) elaborare e difendere una versione del platonismo che interagiva in vario modo con le altre versioni e con le dottrine elaborate dalle altre tradizioni filosofiche".
[135] Fowler 2016, 21.
[136] Lilla 1971, 64-65.
[137] Clement, QDS 1-3.
[138] Lilla 1971, 48-49.
[139] Boys-Stones 2017, 324.
[140] See QDS 10.2-4; 21.1-2; 31.7; 40.1.
[141] Lilla 1971, 71.
[142] Lilla 1971, 96-101.

"Salvation is for pure souls without passions."[143] Specifically, the passion for wealth is dangerous and should be removed.[144]

Wealth itself, on the other hand, is indifferent (ἀδιάφορος)—another term from Stoicism that was adopted in Middle-Platonism.[145] Since happiness depends only on the virtue of the soul, all external goods are irrelevant.[146] This is true for strength, beauty, power and also wealth.[147] With the distinction between inner wealth (which is the passion for riches) and external wealth (which are the riches themselves), Clement adheres to this Stoic principle.[148]

The Stoa did value some external realities more than others, based on their usefulness. The goal of a Stoic was a harmonious life, and if something could be of help in obtaining this, it should be preferred (προηγμένον), whereas something that would be an obstacle, was to be rejected (ἀποπροηγμένον).[149] The same idea appears in the QDS, when Clement argues for the usefulness of wealth. This time, the goal is to live in harmony with God in the eternal life, and the possession of money brings with it the ability to help the poor and fulfil the divine commandment of love.[150] Therefore, if used in the right way, money can be instrumental to one's salvation and is not to be rejected.[151]

In his description of eternal life, Clement again uses several concepts that seem to come from Greek philosophy. The goal of life is to know God (γνῶσις τοῦ θεοῦ) and the way to obtain it is to grow in both knowledge and virtue. God is not only the highest level of being, but also the source of life for all other beings, and man will find his fulfilment in becoming similar to God (ὁμοίωσις).[152] The concept of *homoiosis* is Platonic, the idea of finding harmony with the Logos is Stoic.[153] Aristotle held that virtue is not part of nature, but man has to strive for it. All these elements were also part of Middle-Platonism, although Clement's pairing of *homoiosis* with *apatheia* is more closely related to later Neo-Platonism.[154]

Clement's generally positive attitude towards Greek philosophy is at times interspersed with sharp criticism, usually by way of defence. Early Christianity was met with resistance from many, among whom also the philosophers. In Clement's lifetime, the pagan philosopher Celsus had recently written *The True Word* (Ἀληθής λόγος), an influential criticism against Christian doctrine. Celsus

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[143] Clement, QDS 20.6: "Ἀπαθῶν γὰρ καὶ καθαρῶν ψυχῶν ἐστιν ἡ σωτηρία". See also Lilla 1971, 103.
[144] Clement, QDS 12.1.
[145] Clement, QDS 15.3; 20.2. For its presence in Stoa and Middle-Platonism, see Lilla 1971, 69.
[146] Donahue 1963, 439.
[147] Clement, QDS 18.1.
[148] Clement, QDS 15.3.
[149] Donahue 1963, 440.
[150] Clement, QDS 12.5; 32.1.
[151] Clement, QDS 20.2. A similar argument comes from the Stoic philosopher Hecaton of Rhodes through a citation by Cicero, stating that we should aim to be rich not only for ourselves, but also for others. See Cicero, *De Officiis* 3.63.
[152] Clement, QDS 7.1-3
[153] Lilla 1971, 44. 62.
[154] Lilla 1971, 109-113. Merki 1952 is a monograph that sketches the development of the concept of ὁμοίωσις from Plato to Gregor of Nyssa.

argued that Jews and Christians had deviated from the common wisdom present in all great civilisations and had corrupted the ancient truths.[155] Clement retorts that the relations are in fact reversed: Christianity brings a divine truth that existed from the beginning and that through the times has been revealed in Jewish and Christian tradition. Although pagan philosophy has some elements of truth as well, it has stolen them from the people of God, and often inadequately.[156]

The polemic appears in the QDS, when Clement reproaches Greek philosophers who chose a life of poverty out of vanity or for other wrong reasons: "some for the sake of study and dead wisdom, others for empty fame and glory, the Anaxagorases, Democrituses and Crateses".[157] These three philosophers where the subjects of famous anecdotes that probably also circulated in Alexandria, offering them as examples of wisdom.[158] Clement contrasts them to the superior way of the Christian who chooses poverty for the love of God.

This criticism could be a direct reaction to Celsus. Celsus' treatise is lost, but Origen cites many passages in his *Contra Celsum*, one of which touches on the subject of the QDS: "After this he [Celsus] says that Jesus' sentence on the rich, when he says that it is easier for a camel to pass through a needle's eye than for a rich man to enter God's kingdom, is taken straight from Plato, with Jesus corrupting the Platonic saying, where Plato says that it is impossible for someone who is exceedingly good to also be exceedingly rich."[159] Even though Clement does not mention Celsus by name, it is not unreasonable, in the light of Origen's statement, to see Clement's words as a defence against Celsus.[160]

A more fundamental difference comes from Clement's emphasis on the need for grace. In Platonism, the soul can attain knowledge of the intelligible world by itself. The Logos may be the source of this knowledge, but it has no active role in the process. Clement identifies the Logos with Christ and calls him not only Saviour, but also Teacher[161] In his eyes, it is impossible for a human to reach

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[155] Baltes 2023. Celsus stood in a Platonic tradition of criticising other schools that they thought misinterpreted Plato's teachings (Zambon 2015, 478-479).

[156] Lilla 1971, 36.

[157] Clement, QDS 11.4: "Οἳ μὲν τῆς εἰς λόγους σχολῆς καὶ νεκρᾶς σοφίας ἕνεκεν, οἳ δὲ φήμης κενῆς καὶ κενοδοξίας, Ἀναξαγόραι καὶ Δημόκριτοι καὶ Κράτητες".

[158] Descourtieux 2011, 130 provides Diogenes Laertius' description of the fame surrounding these three philosophers. Anaxagoras gave his riches to his family, after being criticised that he did not take proper care of the family property, with the words: "Then you look after it!". He then devoted all his energy to his philosophical pursuits. Democritus took the smallest part of his father's inheritance and spent it all on travels, after which he had to be provided for by his brother. Crates left his money in a bank, with the instruction that his sons should receive it if they took up a normal life, but if they became philosophers, the banker should distribute the money among the poor, since a philosopher has no need of money.

[159] Origenes, *Contra Celsum* VI, 16: "Μετὰ ταῦτα τὴν κατὰ τῶν πλουσίων ἀπόφασιν τοῦ Ἰησοῦ, εἰπόντος· «Εὐκοπώτερον κάμηλον διὰ τρήματος ῥαφίδος εἰσελθεῖν ἢ πλούσιον εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ», φησὶν ἄντικρυς ἀπὸ Πλάτωνος εἰρῆσθαι, τοῦ Ἰησοῦ παραφθείραντος τὸ Πλατωνικόν, ἐν οἷς εἶπεν ὁ Πλάτων ὅτι «Ἀγαθὸν ὄντα διαφόρως καὶ πλούσιον εἶναι διαφερόντως εἶναι ἀδύνατον»". The passage mentioned by Celsus is in Plato, *Laws* 743a.

[160] Lilla 1971, 37 expresses the same thought. The absence of Celsus' name in Clement's works does not negate this, since it was not uncommon to give citations anonymously.

[161] Clement, QDS 6.4.

wisdom, if the divine Word is not leading him there.[162] This is also why the rich man in the Gospel cannot be saved by following the commandments alone, but has to confide himself to Christ.[163] True wisdom, after all, entails both knowledge and virtue, and the grace of Christ is needed also for the victory over one's passions.[164]

All of the above shows that Clement was firmly embedded in the philosophical traditions of his time. His writings contain elements from various sources, but predominantly seem to be in tone with Middle-Platonism, that was the dominant school of his time. We can therefore agree with Lilla: "The natural conclusion is that the curriculum of the Christian school of Alexandria was planned after the example of the contemporary Platonic schools, which the Christian teachers wanted to emulate."[165] Clement did not stay with Middle-Platonism, however, but contributed to further philosophical developments that would also become part of Neo-Platonism. In other occasions he took a more personal direction, but always in an attempt to find words for the mystery of Christ.

Chapter 3.2 – Philo and Alexandrian Judaism

Alexandria hosted its own tradition of Jewish scholarship that was mainly focused on the study and interpretation of the Hebrew Bible. Its most significant representative was Philo. Although his position within Judaism was somewhat exceptional, his work would have profound influence on Christian Alexandrian theology, mainly because of the way he succeeded in applying Platonic and Stoic thought to the study of the Holy Scripture.[166]

Clement is the first to mention Philo explicitly.[167] In his writings, he refers to 25 out of Philo's 32 known works, which means he must have had access to a considerable part of Philo's oeuvre. In all probability, Clement's school had a well-stocked library, including a collection of Judaic scholarship. It is unknown how the school obtained this; the manuscripts might have come from the Royal Library, or perhaps Jewish converts had brought the scrolls with them. There are no signs that Clement had any direct contact with the Jewish community in Alexandria.[168]

In general, Clement seems most interested in Philo's exegetical work on the Torah and on the person of Moses especially.[169] Philo also is an important source for the etymology of Hebrew names.[170] In the QDS, Clement has little need for either, since the work concerns the interpretation of a Gospel text. Also, its homiletic genre does not invite scholarly citations. This may explain the

[162] Lilla 1971, 113.
[163] Clement, QDS 8.4-5.
[164] Clement, QDS 21.1; 29.3; 40.5-6.
[165] Lilla 1971, 56.
[166] Van den Hoek 1988, 209.
[167] Runia 1993, 132.
[168] Van den Hoek 1997, 81-85.
[169] Runia 1993, 142 shows that Clement often cites from *De vita Moysi*. Other books he frequently consults are *De posteritate Caini*, *De congressu eruditionis gratia* and *De virtutibus*.
[170] Van den Hoek 1988, 220-221.

absence of explicit references to Philo. Another explanation might be that Clement no longer had access to Philo's manuscripts, in case the QDS was written after he left Egypt.[171]

Nonetheless, Philonic influence is clearly present in the QDS. With his philosophical approach to the Bible and his use of allegory in explaining its texts, Philo wants to extract from Scripture the philosophical ideas that are hidden there.[172] Clement's method follows the same pattern in the QDS, mentioning several times that one should not read the Bible superficially, but try to penetrate its spiritual depths.[173]

Philo is also important for Clement's defence of the Jewish Law. A Christian group called the Marcionites rejected the Hebrew Bible as divinely inspired and considered the Creator God an evil antagonist to the God revealed by Christ. Clement defended the unity of divine revelation, but in doing so had to deal with the crudeness of many passages that clashed with Greek aesthetic sensibilities. Philo gave him this possibility by showing the Torah's humane character and introducing a motive of progression, with God leading his people in consecutive steps towards an ever deeper understanding of divine truth.[174]

Following Philo, Clement shows how the Old Testament is an earlier phase in God's revelation. For him as a Christian, however, the Law is only a first step, whereas Christ is the endpoint and full realisation of wisdom.[175] Nevertheless, by acknowledging the didactic role of the Old Testament, Clement forcefully counters the Marcionites. He also is more positive than most other Christian authors, who generally go no further than seeing the Law as a prefiguration that has lost its value with the coming of Christ. For Clement, the Jewish Law remains a viable road towards divine knowledge.[176]

Clement's attitude towards Scripture is visible in the QDS as well, when he describes how Christ leads the rich man step by step towards knowledge of divine truth.[177] He also says that the Law is good and that the rich man is to be commended for following it. Still, it is not enough: the fullness of salvation lies in the imitation of Christ.[178] That is why the man has to sell everything and follow Jesus.

Other Christian groups were highly distrustful of pagan philosophy. Here, again, Philo helped Clement in its defence, not only because he had successfully applied Greek philosophy to the interpretation of Scripture, but also because of the same idea of progressive education, now applied to a different group. For Philo, Greek wisdom was mirrored in the Jewish Law. Clement made both

[171] Runia 1993, 144 offers a case in point with books I to V of the *Stromateis* containing many citations from Philo, whereas the later books VI and VII hardly do so. However, the date of the QDS is unknown and determining it as late because of the absence of citations from Philo would result in a circular argument.
[172] Osborn 2005, 93.
[173] For example QDS 5.4; 18.1.
[174] Van den Hoek 1988, 217.
[175] Osborn 2005, 82.
[176] Van den Hoek 1988, 228.
[177] Clement, QDS 6.4.
[178] Clement, QDS 9.1-2.

into preliminary stages, with philosophy being for the Greeks what the Torah had been for the Jews: a path preparing its disciples for the revelation of the full truth in Christ.[179] Clement calls Plato the Greek Moses and speaks of 'Greek philosophy', 'barbarian philosophy' and 'true philosophy', meaning Greek, Jewish and Christian teachings respectively.[180]

Even when following Philo's didactic model, Clement adds emphases of his own, because of his Christian perspective. In Philo, divine education leads to wisdom and makes man more similar to God. Clement agrees, but also creates an intimate connection between wisdom and love. Love is the royal road towards knowledge of God, because God himself is Love, between the Father and the Son—a concept that Philo obviously would never adopt.[181]

In conclusion, Philo is present in the QDS through the allegorical approach that Clement takes on the Bible. His positive opinion on both the Jewish Law and Greek philosophy also stems from Philo. Finally, he adopts Philo's model of divine education, while simultaneously moulding it into a more Christian form by focusing on the love of Christ.

Chapter 3.3 – Gnosticism

Gnostic groups came in a great variety and often functioned independently of each other, in much the same way as different philosophical schools. The phenomenon did not limit itself to Christianity, but had already been present before Christ. In Alexandria, Gnostic Christians formed a significant competition for their catholic counterparts.[182] Two groups in particular, the Basilidians and the Valentinians, were quite successful. When Clement speaks of Gnostics, he generally means one of these two groups, and the second one especially.[183]

Their differences notwithstanding, gnostic groups shared certain characteristics of thought. Their central belief is summarised by Burns as "salvation via knowledge of one's divine origins."[184] In Gnostic thought, the Father God had brought forth numerous emanations called aeons, generally in pairs of male and female, who represented some of his aspects and at the same time were subsistent beings, together forming the spiritual realm of the Pleroma. When one of these aeons, Sophia, desired to know the Father directly and without respecting the existential order, she was consequently estranged from the Pleroma into a lower realm. In order to save her, the Father assigned a Demiurg to create the cosmos from matter and soul and then sent Sophia in it as a spiritual seed. This is the divine spark possessed by humans. When this spiritual seed is educated in knowledge about its true origin, then it will be able to leave behind the material world and ascend

[179] Runia 1993, 134.
[180] Osborn 2005, 92-93.
[181] Clement, QDS 37-38.
[182] Gnosticism may initially have been the dominant form of Christianity in Alexandria. Runia 1971, 133 notes that Clement's own school probably had Gnostic origins, before Pantaenus became its head.
[183] Dubois 2018, 156; Descourtieux 2011, 137. Edwards 2018, 129 notes that Clement was more positive towards Valentinians than Basilidians, because of Basilides' too fatalistic view of the natural order.
[184] Burns 2016, 78.

back to the Pleroma. Jesus was sent as a Teacher in order to save humanity by means of his teaching.[185]

Gnosticism was firmly embedded in the Middle-Platonic traditions of its time.[186] In its advocacy of a God who actively involved himself in human affairs, it described a history of salvation through providential care just as the Christians did.[187] In Gnostic thought, however, salvation only involved the spiritual, whereas the material element was destined for destruction. Mankind consisted of three different groups: spirit-people (πνευματικοί), soul-people (ψυχικοί) and matter-people (ὑλικοί). The spirit-people were in possession of the divine spark and would return to the Pleroma through gnosis. Soul-people could be saved through faith and good works, although their exact destination was unclear. Matter-people would simply end with the rest of the cosmos.[188] Although variations existed, these were the main points of the Gnosticism that Clement encountered.

Clement shares many characteristics with the Gnostics. The importance of knowledge (γνῶσις) is omnipresent in his writings.[189] In the QDS, he calls the knowledge of God the foundation and the goal of life, since knowledge of God is equivalent to being in communion with God.[190] Study does not suffice to obtain it, but a person also has to grow in virtue and thus become more similar to God. Without virtue, no one is ready to discern the deeper truths. Study, prayer and good works therefore go hand in hand.[191] This leads to Clement's definition of the gnostic in the *Stromateis*: "The Christian gnostic is the individual who, through faith and love, possesses true knowledge, able to undertake a journey of detachment from the world and union with God."[192]

Inspired by Platonic examples, Clement tends to use mystagogical language, which is another point of similarity with the Gnostics. The Logos leads believers towards the truth in a way resembling an initiation into a mystery cult.[193] The conversation between Jesus and the rich man in the QDS is an example of such an initiation.[194] Human teachers should follow Christ in using this method of instruction, leading their students to an ever deeper understanding of Scripture and of divine truths.[195] Clement says that certain texts are more difficult than others, even if on the surface they seem simpler, in order to shield their truth from the eyes of the unworthy.[196] He also at times chooses not to delve too deeply into a text, because it is not necessary for his present task.[197]

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[185] Thomassan 2018, 163-165.
[186] Dubois 2018, 158.
[187] Burns 2020, 123.
[188] Dubois 2013, 212-214.
[189] Wytzes 1960, 131-135 describes gnosis as knowledge of the intelligible world, and of God in particular.
[190] Clement, QDS 7.1-3.
[191] Costache 2018, 260-261.
[192] Clement, *Stromateis* VII.12.74-80, as cited in Downs 2014, 500.
[193] Riedweg 1987, 158-161.
[194] Clement, QDS 6.1-4.
[195] Rizzi 2017, 122.
[196] Clement, QDS 5.2-4.
[197] See for example QDS 26.8, where he refers to another work for a more advanced exegesis of the image of the camel and the needle.

Clement's words reflect his choice for the mystagogical model. He often speaks of mysteries (μυστήρια) and initiation (μυσταγωγεῖν)[198]. When describing the vision of God as the final goal of gnosis, he uses the word ἐποπτεύειν, which referred to the highest level of initiation in pagan cults as well.[199] This happens for example when he says: "Behold the mysteries of love, and then you will perceive the bosom of the Father, whom only the only-begotten God has made known."[200]

Clement agreed with the method of secrecy and gradual initiation that characterised pagan cults and Gnostic practice.[201] His own trilogy of the *Protrepticus*, *Paedagogus* and the *Stromateis* reflects a similar method of initiation, educating his students from catechumens into enlightened and into believers, eventually leading them to gnosis.[202] The emphasis on both knowledge and purification was another similarity with the mystery cults, as was the importance of oral tradition.[203] Clement rejects the idea that all knowledge should be written down clearly and openly, since not all knowledge can be valued by those who have not yet advanced enough.[204] In his tendency towards esotericism, Clement very much resembles his Gnostic counterparts.

Apart from mystagogy, there are more linguistic similarities between Clement and the Gnostics. For example, at a certain point in the QDS, Clement describes God both in male and female terms, in relation to the Son's mission to mankind. This reflects the Gnostic tendency to posit aeons in pairs, leading to new emanations. In contrast to Gnosticism, however, Clement does not separate male and female into two beings, but he considers them as different aspects of the same God.[205]

Despite their similarities, Clement also disagrees with the Gnostics on several points. In the QDS he argues against the Gnostics' division of mankind in three groups, especially because the Gnostics believed this division to be fixed from birth.[206] Gnostic groups probably differed among themselves in how strongly they divided these groups. At any rate it seems unlikely that they claimed some people to be without a soul. Nevertheless, they put a strong emphasis on fate and at least some of them seem to have restricted the possession of the spiritual element to only part of humanity.[207] Clement disagreed strongly.

For Clement, salvation is possible for all people and not restricted to some by nature.[208] Since all men have the same nature, differences occur through their will. In the QDS, the most striking change in the Gospel text is the addition of "If you want to be perfect".[209] With it, Clement

[198] Clement, QDS 26.8, 36.1, 37.1, 3.2.
[199] Ramelli 2017, 81. Völker 1952, 403 shows that θεωρία is another word that Clement often uses in this context.
[200] Clement, QDS 37.1: "Θεῶ τὰ τῆς ἀγάπης μυστήρια, καὶ τότε ἐποπτεύσεις τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρός, ὃν ὁ μονογενὴς θεὸς μόνος ἐξηγήσατο".
[201] Ramelli 2017, 80-81.
[202] Costache 2018, 258.
[203] Ramelli 2017, 82-87.
[204] Osborn 2005, 16.
[205] Clement, QDS 37.2-3.
[206] Descourtieux 2011, 38.
[207] Thomassen 2018, 165-166; Dubois 2013, 213-214.
[208] Dubois 2013, 215.
[209] Clement, QDS 4.6, coming from Mt. 19, 21: "Εἰ θέλεις τέλειος εἶναι".

emphasises the importance of the human will against the Gnostics. Somewhat later he elaborates by saying that it is in every man's to choose salvation. God will grant it to those who want it and ask for it and strive for it.[210] The rich man in the story, on the other hand, does not really want it and therefore does not get it. For Clement, the elect distinguish themselves not ontologically, but morally.

The importance of the will becomes even clearer when Clement invites his readers to force God into giving his salvation. "The Kingdom of God does not belong to the sleepy and the lazy, but those who use violence will grab it."[211] God is even happy to be violated in this regard and will give his grace to those who forcefully strive for heaven. It is a daring image in light of discussions on grace and free will in later centuries, but it makes good sense in the context of Clement's argument against the Gnostics.

Interestingly, the division between various groups of humans does occur in Clement, even when it is more on a moral than an ontological level. He distinguishes between the simple 'common faith' and the more learned 'superior faith', the difference between the two being the practice of gnosis.[212] This echoes the Gnostic distinction of soul-people and spirit-people. Matter-people would then be those who do not believe at all. The idea appears very clearly in the QDS, when Clement says:

All the faithful are noble, godly and worthy of their name, which they wear as a diadem. But there are some who are more elect than the elect, [...] whom the Word calls 'light of the world' and 'salt of the earth'. They are the seed, the image and likeness of God, his true child and heir, being sent here as in a foreign land through the Father's great arrangement and harmonious conducting. Through that same God all visible and invisible things of the world have been made, some to serve it, others to train it, others to teach it. And while the seed remains here, all is kept together, but once it is collected, it will all be dissolved.[213]

Many Gnostic ideas are present, here. There is a clear distinction between the general faithful, or soul-people, and the elect among the elect, the spirit-people. The elect possess the spiritual seed that was sent to earth in order to be saved. The material world is only an instrument towards this salvation. The return of the seed to the Pleroma will result in the end of the material world. All these concepts fit the Gnostics' description of salvation history perfectly. The only element that sets

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[210] Clement, QDS 10, 1-2.

[211] Clement, QDS 21.3: "Οὐδὲ τῶν καθευδόντων καὶ βλακευόντων ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ, ἀλλ' οἱ βιασταὶ ἁρπάζουσιν αὐτήν".

[212] Dubois 2013, 215.

[213] Clement, QDS 36.1-3: "Πάντες οὖν οἱ πιστοὶ καλοὶ καὶ θεοπρεπεῖς καὶ τῆς προσηγορίας ἄξιοι, ἣν ὥσπερ διάδημα περίκεινται. Οὐ μὴν ἀλλ' εἰσὶν ἤδη τινὲς καὶ τῶν ἐκλεκτῶν ἐκλεκτότεροι, [...] οὓς ὁ Λόγος *φῶς τοῦ κόσμου* καὶ *ἅλας τῆς γῆς* καλεῖ. Τοῦτ' ἔστι τὸ σπέρμα, εἰκὼν καὶ ὁμοίωσις θεοῦ, καὶ τέκνον αὐτοῦ γνήσιον καὶ κληρονόμον, ὥσπερ ἐπί τινα ξενιτείαν ἐνταῦθα πεμπόμενον ὑπὸ μεγάλης οἰκονομίας καὶ ἀναλογίας τοῦ πατρός· δι' οὗ καὶ τὰ φανερὰ καὶ τὰ ἀφανῆ τοῦ κόσμου δεδημιούργηται, τὰ μὲν εἰς δουλείαν, τὰ δὲ εἰς ἄσκησιν, τὰ δὲ εἰς μάθησιν αὐτῷ, καὶ πάντα, μέχρις ἂν ἐνταῦθα τὸ σπέρμα μένῃ, συνέχεται, καὶ συναχθέντος αὐτοῦ ταῦτα τάχιστα λυθήσεται". For the translation of ἀναλογία, see Mortley 1971, 83: "Ἀναλογία est le terme qui caractérise la relation entre la vie céleste et la vie d'ici-bas. Il s'agit d'un principe de distribution qui maintient l'harmonie de l'univers crée".

Clement apart is his identification of the Saviour God with the Creator God, who where two different beings in Gnostic theology.

Overall, Clement again seems to have little fear of using Gnostic language and ideas. Much of his theology has Gnostic flavour, which may be related to the traditionally strong presence of Gnostic Christianity in Alexandria. Nevertheless, he keeps a critical stance and chooses a different direction in several fundamental issues, for example the existence of one God and of one human nature.

Conclusion

Clement of Alexandria wrote the *Quis Dives Salvetur* to address the question what a rich Christian should do with his wealth. An analysis of the text has shown that Clement offers an argument of considerable depth. In his discussion of a Gospel passage about the meeting between a rich man and Jesus, Clement shows both the value and the dangers of wealth and defines a salutary road for those who possess it, evading both desperation and complacency. Desperation would occur, if people thought that salvation is impossible for the wealthy. Complacency would ensue, when people put too much trust in an 'easy' grace and not work themselves.

Clement's argument revolves around the distinction between 'inner' and 'outer' riches. The outer riches are the material presence of wealth, whereas the inner riches are the soul's passion for wealth. Since salvation is a reality regarding the soul, danger mainly comes from passions that detract from God, for example the passion for wealth. Riches by themselves are not necessarily evil. They can even be an instrument for good, if the one who possesses them manages to use them for the promotion of love of God and neighbour. A lack of riches, on the other hand, can still lead to damnation, if the poor person's soul remains filled with the desire for wealth. Clement thinks it unnecessary to do away with riches, but exhorts all people to free their souls from the attachment to wealth. Once they manage to do so, they can use their wealth to help others. In doing so, they will not only grow in virtue themselves, but also strengthen the community of the faithful and create a network of friends who will help them enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

The language that Clement uses during his argument contains many elements that are reminiscent of other philosophical and religious traditions. This comes as no surprise, since Clement was well-educated in Greek culture and knew how to participate in the intellectual discourse of a cosmopolitan city as Alexandria.

Greek philosophy had formed the backbone of his own education, particularly in the form of Middle-Platonism. As a converted Christian, he retained a positive attitude towards philosophy, seeing it as part of divine revelation towards mankind. Concepts like *homoiosis* as the goal of human life, the importance of *apatheia* and the ultimate irrelevance of external goods can all be traced back to Platonic and Stoic sources, through the Middle-Platonic school. The QDS also contains some criticism of philosophers, which can mainly be seen as an apologetical move within the broader polemic between pagans and Christians of his time. Clement's most fundamental difference with Greek philosophy is his denial that man would be able to attain perfection himself. For Clement Christ is indispensable, both as Saviour and as Teacher.

In Alexandria, Clement met with a strong Jewish intellectual tradition that exerted a considerable influence on Christian thought, especially through the person of Philo. This Jewish philosopher had paved the road for the use of Greek philosophy in the interpretation of the Bible and also was Clement's predecessor in the allegorical reading of Scriptural texts. Finally, Clement's positive attitude towards the Old Testament was largely due to Philo's example.

The city also harboured Gnostics, especially of the Basilidian and Valentinian variety, who were a close relation and direct competitor of catholic Christianity. Clement was in continuous discussion with them, which also radiates from the text of the QDS. His main point of critique regarded the Gnostics' division of mankind into three groups with different fates, already decided upon by their nature. For Clement, all people can be saved, if they only wish to and exert themselves to obtain salvation. At the same time, his language is thoroughly gnostic, distinguishing between the common faith and a higher form reserved for the elect. The process of gnosis was intended for this last group and consisted of an esoteric, mystagogical process of personal teaching and exercise in virtue not unlike Gnostic practices.

Everything considered, Clement shows himself to be an open-minded and versatile thinker who is willing to see the good in many different traditions. He does not shrink away from using language and ideas that were already known in other contexts and would be familiar to people of some cultural level. Nevertheless, he is also willing to criticise and offer alternatives. In the end, he is not copying their philosophy, but using their models as instruments for coming to a deeper understanding of the Christian message, that is always the norm and focus of his thinking.

In the *Quis Dives Salvetur*, Clement manages to show the role that wealth can take in the life of a Christian. While using many concepts from various philosophical schools, he forms a unified model that rich Christians can follow, exhorting them to always primarily pay attention to the virtue of their souls, following the teachings of Christ. When doing so, instead of an obstacle to salvation, wealth will become an opportunity for reaching it.

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