Clement’s Gnostic Interpretation of the Old Testament: Divine Pedagogy as the Basis for Clement of Alexandria’s Biblical Interpretation

by

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A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Wycliffe College and the Biblical Department of the Toronto School of Theology in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Theology awarded by the University of St. Michael’s College.

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Master of Arts in Theology

University of St. Michael’s College

2014

Abstract

Clement of Alexandria’s interpretation of the Bible is based on his theological understanding of divine progress. This progress, or divine pedagogy, begins with faith (πίστις) and culminates in knowledge (γνῶσις) – that is, acquaintance with God. Clement refers to the one who has acquired this γνῶσις as the “true Gnostic.” By examining Clement’s interpretation of three Old Testament passages (Psalm 1, Genesis 1:26-27, and the Ten Commandments [Exodus 20:1-17; Deuteronomy 5:6-21]) various facets of his gnostic interpretation become evident: his biblical interpretation is affected depending on the stage of the spiritual journey; the true Gnostic has privilege to interpret over and against the heretics; and Scripture is full of gnostic truths. This thesis contributes to the discussion of early “Alexandrian” biblical interpretation.
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Chapter 1
Introduction

The basis of Clement’s interpretation of the Old Testament is the individual’s spiritual movement from faith (πίστις) to knowledge (γνῶσις), whereby the meaning of the “veiled” Scriptures becomes disclosed to the individual. Throughout Clement’s works, this individual is referred to as the (true) Gnostic – that is, the one who knows God. As we will see, this is a polemical title, but also one which Clement appropriates fully into his larger theological projects. Others have made arguments similar to this with respect to his interpretation of the New Testament, whereas very little work has been done on his interpretation of the Old Testament. Thus I will argue that the person of the true Gnostic is central to the interpretation of the Old Testament in the extant works of Clement of Alexandria.¹

Judith Kovacs has recently been the most prolific in terms of publishing on Clement’s exegesis.² In particular, she has focused on his interpretation of Paul. This is related to my study in that her publications on Clement’s exegesis have been concerned

¹ Again, this statement is made based on the extant works of Clement, none of which are exegetical. His non-extant Hypotyposeis, which are mentioned by Eusebius (HE 5.6; 6.8.2), are said by Photius to have been a summary exposition of the Old and New Testaments (Bibliotheca 89a); whether these share the same “gnostic interpretation,” it is (until the work is found!) impossible to know.
with his polemical, mostly anti-Valentinian, (what Clement refers to as) “gnostic” exegesis. Further, the one notable study that has focused on Clement’s interpretation of the Old Testament is her “Concealment and Gnostic Exegesis,”3 which centres on Clement’s interpretation of the Tabernacle. This passage has been noticed before, but mostly in reference to Clement’s dependence on Philo. What Kovacs notes, though not in a great amount of detail, is that Clement in his exegesis is responding to the Valentinian doctrine of the gulf between those of “faith” (the “ecclesial” Christians) and those who have knowledge (the “gnostic” Valentinians). Clement counters the claim that those of “faith” cannot be saved, by contriving the doctrine of two different stages of the Christian life (faith then knowledge) – and further, that true Gnostics are the ones who exist within the “orthodox” church. This dovetails with my argument; however I understand Clement’s theology of the true Gnostic, though reactionary, in a more constructive way.

Before Kovacs, Alain Le Boulluec had already been focusing on this anti-Valentinian side of things, where Clement theologizes constructively in response to his Valentinian opponents.4 Kovacs’s work, however, comes from a decidedly more exegetical standpoint. From this scholarship we learn more than anything that, “[Clement’s] works contain many implicit debates in which he takes issue with Valentinian ideas without

naming his opponents.” Many of these debates are exegetical in nature, as will be seen especially, but not exclusively, in my chapter on Gen 1:26-27.

1 The True Gnostic

As I noted, Clement’s idea of the true Gnostic likely began as a polemic against the so-called Gnostics, among whom for Clement seem to be (most prominently) the Valentinians and the Basilideans. However, Clement’s longest extant work is almost entirely concerned, or at least reaches its climax, with a discussion of what he considers to be the one who truly knows God. No group, except for the ecclesial Christians, has a monopoly on that term, since they alone have access to the true God through the incarnation of the Logos in Christ. Though at several points throughout the body of my thesis I will discuss in more detail some of the aspects of Clement’s true Gnostic, here I will lay out groundwork for a better understanding of what I mean when I discuss the true

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6 Throughout my thesis I will refer to Clement’s “true Gnostic” alternatively as “the Gnostic.” Clement likewise alternates between these titles. At no point do I use either of these titles – or ever “Gnostics” (the plural) – simply to refer to a different “gnostic” individual or group; if I do label them as “Gnostics” it is always qualified with “Valentinian,” “spiritual,” or something else more precise to denote to whom I am referring. Whenever I make mention of any of the religious groups formerly categorized by scholars as “gnostic,” I refer to them by their proper name, such as “Valentinians,” or “Basilideans.” A classic full-length work on the subject of the true Gnostic is Walther Völker, Der wahre Gnostiker nach Clemens Alexandrinus (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1952); also see Clayton N. Jefford, “Clement of Alexandria and Gnosis: A Dissertation in Review,” Perspectives in Religious Studies 20, no. 4 (1993): 381-96.


8 Clement often speaks of these two groups in one breath. See, for example, Str. 5.1.3.3.
Gnostic and his/her significance within Clement’s theological program and with respect to his biblical interpretation.⁹

Throughout Clement’s works we learn that there are several characteristics central to the true Gnostic. We learn most of this from the *Stromateis*, especially books 4 to 7. The earliest thing that is stressed about the person of the Gnostic is that s/he will choose what is good for its own sake. This is in contrast to the one who chooses what is good out of fear of judgment. While the ecclesial Christian who has “simple faith” (ψιλή πίστις) may choose good over evil out of fear of God, the true Gnostic has advanced to such a stage the s/he has no need for repentance, but lives in a constant state of sinlessness, since s/he chooses what is good for its own sake.¹⁰

This leads us to one of the other central characteristics of Clement’s Gnostic, which is abstinence from sin or evil. Clement says that while some philosophers espouse the idea that moderation of appetites is the thing for which to strive, the true Gnostic is removed from appetites (i.e. passions/lusts) altogether. This is Clement’s idea of “abstinence from evils” (ἀποχή κακῶν), otherwise articulated as passionlessness (ἀπάθεια).¹¹ This is vital for the true Gnostic since s/he resembles God (i.e. has attained “likeness to God”; see chapter 3), who himself is without appetites or desires. Likeness to God is the perfection or maturity (τέλειος), which accompanies the two other

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⁹ Throughout the thesis I continue to use his/her and s/he with respect to Clement’s true Gnostic. My reasoning for this is twofold. First, Clement rarely speaks of the true Gnostic in the plural (“Gnostics” often refers to the Valentinians). Second, Clement insists on multiple occasions that both male and female are able to attain to holiness; see *Paed.* 1.4; *Str.* 4.8; 4.19.

¹⁰ See especially *Str.* 4.22.

characteristics of the Gnostic seen in books 6 and 7 of the *Stromateis*: ἀπαθεία (abstinence from sins) as I have already articulated it, as well as doing good – which is tied to choosing good for its own sake.\(^{12}\)

Along with these characteristics intrinsic to the true Gnostic are two facets of his/her ecclesial function. Very basically, Clement understands his Gnostic to be the teacher of the Church.\(^{13}\) Because the Gnostic has attained the closest resemblance to God that is possible for a human, s/he has God-given authority to teach the Church. This is the first aspect, and the second is linked to it: biblical interpretation.\(^{14}\) Some time will be spent in my third chapter discussing the importance of the true Gnostic for Clement’s biblical interpretation. This is the apostolic and ecclesiastical function of the Gnostic that Clement is sure to highlight in his seventh *stromateus*.\(^{15}\) These, as I understand them, are the characteristics and ecclesial functions of Clement’s true Gnostic.

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\(^{13}\) This is throughout the seventh book of the *Stromateis*; see 7.1.3.4; 7.3.13.2; 7.9.52.3. Also see Judith L. Kovacs, “Divine Pedagogy and the Gnostic Teacher according to Clement of Alexandria,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 9, no. 1 (2001): 3-25; and Pamela L. Mullins, “Text and Gnosis: The Exclusive Function of Written Instruction in Clement of Alexandria,” *Studia Patristica* 41 (2006): 213-17.

\(^{14}\) See Str. 7.16.95.9, for the true Gnostic as the “expounder of truth.”

\(^{15}\) Though at many points one could easily conceive of Clement’s interpretation of the Scriptures and other theological teachings to be opposed to the apostolic tradition and the rule of faith, Clement makes sure to emphasize that all of the doctrines he expounds are intended to be seen within this tradition, according to the “ecclesiastical rule.” Thus one can note how throughout my thesis I attempt to interpret Clement’s meaning in keeping with the ecclesiastical “orthodoxy” of the time, as it comes down to us in Christian literature. For example, in the third chapter I see Clement’s assessment of Valentinianism and other “gnosticisms” to be in line with those of other self-proclaimed ecclesiastical and apostolic Christians roughly contemporary with him: Tertullian, Hippolytus, and Irenaeus, and also Justin Martyr before them.
2 Clement’s Theology of the Bible

As will be seen below in the brief status quaestionis, the trend in scholarship on Clement has been to highlight his theology of Scripture, often at the expense of his interpretation of it. Though I will discuss particular points of his thought concerning Scripture at more length in the body of the thesis, I want to give some of the highlights of the discoveries over the last century-or-so in order to provide some perspective on Clement’s thought, but more importantly to be able to compare this theology with his biblical interpretation.

That the Bible is central to Clement’s works and thought is a matter of agreement among scholars. Even a cursory browse of the Ante-Nicene Father’s volume on Clement (if one looks to the footnotes) reveals that he is constantly quoting and alluding to the Scriptures. Osborn has numbered Clement’s quotations of Scripture as 1,842 references to the Old Testament, and 3,279 to the New Testament; while he notes that this means that Stählin’s critical edition averages five biblical citations a page, the standard English ANF volumes average twelve or thirteen to a page. This very frequent use of Scripture points to Clement’s abiding interest in it. His use of it varies, sometimes directly quoting it, whereas at other times the allusions are so loose that they could be attributed to multiple biblical passages. Often, in the case of the former (as we will see in chapter 2) he has the Bible open in front of him; other times it appears that he has sections of the Bible memorized. All of this points to the fact that for Clement Scripture

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16 As will be evident in the footnotes, in this section I am largely indebted to Claude Mondésert, Clément d’Alexandrie: Introduction à l’étude de sa pensée religieuse à partir de l’Écriture (Paris: Aubier, 1944), though I rearrange his material considerably.
17 Osborn, Clement of Alexandria, 68.
18 Mondésert, Clément d’Alexandrie, 65-68. This problem is further compounded since it is unknown which (if it is singular at all) version of the LXX or New Testament he makes use of; see Osborn, Clement of Alexandria, 76.
19 Mondésert, Clément d’Alexandrie, 66.
is central. Clement is, whether from memory or from having his Bible open in front of him, writing in the language of the Scriptures.\textsuperscript{20} Claude Mondésert articulates it in this way: “Il nous suffit de constater que Clement a un style tout scripturaire, que les mots, les expressions, les images, les idées de l'Écriture se presentent naturellement et constamment sous sa plume.”\textsuperscript{21}

That the Scriptures are authoritative, or even inspired, Clement never argues directly.\textsuperscript{22} It is certain that he sees “barbarian philosophy” – that is, the Old Testament or Hebrew Scriptures – as more ancient than any other philosophy, and thus superior to them.\textsuperscript{23} Still, this is an apologetic argument; he makes no direct argument for it since the authority and inspiration of the Scriptures is a given, and also because he anticipates – for his \textit{Paedagogus} and \textit{Stromateis}, at least – that only Christians will be reading his works.

It is presumed that these Christians are already aware of the validity and authority of the Bible. At the same time, Clement gives hints, if not to a doctrine of authority, towards an idea of the Bible’s inspiration. Throughout his works we see the Scriptures being put on the lips of “the Spirit,”\textsuperscript{24} and more frequently “the Logos.”\textsuperscript{25} We also see in the \textit{Paedagogus} that Christ, the Pedagogue himself, is the one who speaks the words of the Scriptures. (We will see this especially in chapter 2.) The Logos is by far the most referred to with respect to biblical inspiration. Mondésert has especially drawn attention

\textsuperscript{20} See Osborn, \textit{Clement of Alexandria}, 71.
\textsuperscript{21} Mondésert, \textit{Clément d'Alexandrie}, 71.
\textsuperscript{23} Also see Mondésert, \textit{Clément d'Alexandrie}, 84-85.
\textsuperscript{24} \textit{Prot.} 9.82.1, citing Is 1:20; \textit{Str}. 2.2.7.3. See Mondésert, \textit{Clément d'Alexandrie}, 83, 106.
\textsuperscript{25} \textit{Prot.} 9.84.6; 9.82.3; \textit{Paed} 1.7.53.3; 2.10.91.1; 2.10.110.2. See Mondésert, \textit{Clément d'Alexandrie}, 82, 95-106.
to this in his monograph, seeing the Logos as the voice of the Scriptures, as well as their subject.26

Because the Logos is the speaker and speech of the Scriptures, it provides them with a unity.27 This unity is conceived of as being between the Old and New Testaments. While the Logos is present in the New Testament by way of its incarnation in Christ, it is also in the Old Testament by way of a kind of “first incarnation”: it is not that there are two separable phases of the divine condescension, but they are in fact united.28 While the two Testaments are united, there is a kind of progression from the one to the other. This progression takes several forms. Where the Old Testament is “hidden,” the New Testament is “revealed.”29 This is again linked to the Logos, in that its incarnation “realizes the perfection of the prophecies given by the Law.”30 In this progression of the Testaments, from hidden to revealed, Clement’s understanding of the Law as pedagogue is reminiscent of Paul in Gal 3:24.31 Further, this progression in the Scriptures mirrors the spiritual progress, which I will be arguing is so central to Clement’s biblical interpretation.32 But Mondésert goes further than this, and calls Christ, or the Logos, “la clef de l’Écriture” and “le centre lumineux.”33 He believes that for Clement, the Logos is the key to Clement’s understanding, and so interpretation, of the Bible. He does not think that this “key” means that all things ought to be interpreted christologically, but instead

26 Mondésert, Clément d’Alexandrie, 98.
27 Mondésert, Clément d’Alexandrie, 100.
29 Mondésert, Clément d’Alexandrie, 100-01. See, for example, Str. 5.10.61.1.
30 Mondésert, Clément d’Alexandrie, 102; see Str. 3.5.46.2.
31 See Mondésert, Clément d’Alexandrie, 101-02.
32 See Mondésert, Clément d’Alexandrie, 106
33 Mondésert, Clément d’Alexandrie, 103, 104.
that the incarnation of the Logos – that is, Christ – is the point of connection between the two Testaments, and in fact is the uniting feature of all of Scripture.34

Besides the authority of the Scriptures in Clement’s thought, the other significant aspect to Clement’s understanding of the Bible is its “mysterious form.”35 Other than Clement’s arguments for the antiquity of the Old Testament, more than anything what he argues for with respect to the Scriptures is their veiled form. The most common references to the veiled form of Scripture are as αἰνίγματα (paired with σώμβολον) and ἀλληγορέω.36 Clement also classifies all of the Old Testament as prophecy. Osborn explains the significance of this in Clement’s thought with respect to the αἰνίγματα of the Scriptures: he writes that the prophets viewed “the noetic world, but [spoke] in metaphor and riddle.”37 Thus, “the first step for anyone who wishes to expound the bible [sic] is to turn narrative and prophecy into parable and metaphysic.”38 This part of Clement’s understanding of the Scriptures is vital for our understanding of his interpretation of them, since the “authorial intent” of the prophets to some extent was to say something different (ἀλληγορέω) from what they saw, which was the “noetic world,” the eternal and unchanging truth;39 this means the interpreter – as we will especially see in chapter 4 – must look through the veiled nature of the words to the very things that they signify.40

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34 Mondésert, Clément d’Alexandrie, 104.
35 Mondésert, Clément d’Alexandrie, 81.
36 See Mondésert, Clément d’Alexandrie, 88. Also see Andrew C. Dinan, “Αἰνίγμα and Αἰνίττομαι in the Works of Clement of Alexandria,” Studia Patristica 46 (2010): 175-76, for the connection between αἰνίγματα and divine discourse.
37 Osborn, Clement of Alexandria, 56.
38 Osborn, Clement of Alexandria, 56.
39 Osborn, Clement of Alexandria, 59-60.
40 See Str. 6.10.82.3 for a distinction between “things” and their “names.”
much more extended discussion of the veiled Scriptures as Clement understands them is available in the fourth chapter of my thesis.

3 Status quaestionis

As I noted above, in recent scholarship, Clement has more often than not been lauded for his theology of Scripture rather than for his interpretation of it. Claude Mondésert, one of the first in modern times to give Clement’s understanding of Scripture a fair reading (and a founding father of the Sources chrétiennes series), appreciated how problematic it is to attempt to make a theological “system” out of Clement’s decidedly unsystematic writings. Admitting that Clement is “un auteur difficile,” Mondésert notes that most scholars have decided to write on one aspect or another of Clement’s writings while having to disregard much other content, in order to come up with a “coherent” – i.e. “systematic” and decidedly Modern – interpretation of one of his doctrines. Instead of doing this, Mondésert’s monograph focused on Clement’s thought with respect to Scripture, and examined it in the light of the theological currents throughout the rest of his writings. While this was certainly an accomplishment, it paved the way for scholars after him to focus more on Clement’s theology of the Bible than his interpretation of it. That being said, Mondésert, in his attempt to give a fair reading of Clement’s works, also provides a model for understanding a singular aspect of Clement’s works without alienating it from other aspects – thus appreciating just how intertwined are all of the various “parts” of his “system.” In the same way, I will attempt to locate and discuss Clement’s biblical interpretation within his larger theological projects. One of the contributions that Mondésert did make to the area of Clement’s biblical interpretation is

41 Mondésert, Clément d’Alexandrie, 4.
his categorization of Clement’s modes of interpretation: historical, doctrinal, prophetic, philosophical, and mystical. Mondésert uses these as heuristic categories, acknowledging that Clement does not categorize them in such a way. As will be seen in the body of my thesis, I do not find this framework particularly helpful.

Méhat, another of the preeminent Clementine scholars of the last century, has undertaken extensive work on Clement’s *Stromateis*. His main contribution to the discussion of Clement’s use of Scripture is his paper in the *Festschrift* to Cardinal Jean Daniélou, on the controversial conclusion of the first book of the *Stromateis*. He persuasively argues that the section which one might be tempted to interpret as a precursor of Origenian (and later Medieval) “fourfold” exegesis is in fact Clement’s defense of the Mosaic Law as barbarian philosophy. What some have seen to be the various senses, or levels of meaning, of the Scriptures, are in fact philosophical categories which Clement is arguing are contained in the Scriptures: ethics, physics, dialectics/rhetoric, and metaphysics/theological philosophy. Méhat thus ably dismantles the theory that Clement has any sort of systematic understanding – corresponding to different senses or levels of meaning – of how to interpret the Scriptures. Further, it is his close study of the *Stromateis* in large part that has allowed for a better understanding of Clement’s theological project.

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45 On this note also see Claude Mondésert, “Le symbolisme chez Clément d’Alexandrie,” *Recherches de science religieuse* 26 (1936): 158-80, for one of Mondésert’s earlier attempts to come to grips with Clement’s understanding and use of the Bible.
As an example of a scholar following Mondésert, and neglecting Clement’s biblical interpretation, we have Eric Osborn, who denied that Clement was an exegete;\(^46\) this has to a large extent been maintained by more recent scholarship on Clement’s use of the Bible. The standard line has been that Clement was simply “very interested”\(^47\) in the Bible: that he quoted from it extensively (and seemingly without reference to the context of a given passage). Despite this, it is well known that the “catechetical school” at Alexandria was taken up with the topic of correct methods of biblical interpretation.\(^48\)


\(^{48}\) Eusebius, *Historia ecclesiastica* 5.11.1. Eusebius speaks of the “catechetical school,” showing Pantaenus, Clement’s teacher, to be its first head, followed after by Clement (HE 5.10-11). Later Eusebius speaks of Origen as Clement’s pupil “at a young age” (HE 6.6). There is doubt, however, as to whether Clement was formally sanctioned (i.e. ordained) by the established ecclesial structures. Annewies van den Hoek, “The ‘Catechetical’ School of Early Christian Alexandria and Its Philonic Heritage,” *Harvard Theological Review* 90, no. 1 (1997): 59-87, in fact disagrees with a significant number of scholars who (in an argument based mostly on silence and on a rather sceptical hermeneutic) conceive the so-called “catechetical school” as a literary construct of Eusebius’s; their argument goes that although at a later date a formal catechetical centre was established (likely under Origen), it is unlikely that Pantaenus or Clement operated in any formal capacity. To my mind, van den Hoek offers a compelling case not only that the school operated in some more or less official capacity, but also that Clement was in fact ordained as a presbyter. Van den Hoek has Clement using “catechesis” (κατηχήσις) in a technical way, as preparation for baptism (69); this – among other things – suggests a continuous line of catechetical instruction from Clement to Origen (see 69-71). She further understands Clement to be a priest, not just from his own works, but from the letter from Alexander (preserved by Eusebius, *HE* 6.11.6) (77). She also point to the fact that he speaks of himself as appointed (καθίστημι) in/by the church (Paed. 3.12.101.3), demonstrating that past uses of the word in *1 Clement* and Irenaeus refer to “ordination” in an official capacity (66). For the negative assessments of the historicity of the “catechetical school” prior to Origen, see Roelof van den Broek, “The Christian ‘School’ of Alexandria in the Second and Third Centuries,” in *Centers of Learning: Learning and Location in Pre-Modern Europe and the Near East*, ed. Jan Willem Drijvers and Alasdair A. MacDonald (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 39-47, who follows Bardy’s earlier, “Aux origines de l’école d’Alexandrie,” *Revue des Sciences Religieuses* 27 (1937): 65-90.
What is more, the simple fact that Clement’s extant works are not exegetical does not necessarily lead one to the conclusion that he was not an exegete.

The history of biblical interpretation has been picking up significantly over the last few decades, especially as it pertains to the church fathers.\(^49\) A number of edited volumes and dictionaries have come out recently, at least two of which include sections on Clement of Alexandria. The first is McKim’s *Historical Handbook of Major Biblical Interpreters*, in which the discussion of Clement’s interpretation of the Scriptures takes up only five pages.\(^50\) The other is James Carleton Paget’s essay in *Hebrew Bible / Old Testament* on the exegesis of the “Alexandrian Fathers,” of which the topic of Clement’s interpretation of the Old Testament occupies some fifteen pages.\(^51\) Carleton Paget’s is a very helpful introduction. Unfortunately, in keeping with the currents of scholarship, Clement’s theology of Scripture, along with his “interest” in it, is what is most highlighted. He explains a number of categories of interpretation that Clement is prone to use, in order to establish – like Mondésert – a heuristic to understand Clement’s interpretation of the Old Testament. However, Carleton Paget gives very little by way of example of Clement’s interpretation of the Old Testament; furthermore he does not take into account the difference in interpretation between the Christian of “simple faith” and the true Gnostic. I draw attention to this not in order to denigrate his paper – as I said it is a good introduction to Clement’s thought with respect to Scripture. However, his section on Clement is typical of the last century of scholarship on Clement: it minimally engages


\(^{51}\) Carleton Paget, “Christian Exegesis.”
the passages in Clement’s works where the substantial interpretation of a particular passage does occur. (So Carleton Paget writes, “[Texts] are rarely a starting point for discussion,” without going into those occasions when they are the starting points.\textsuperscript{52}) Furthermore, the essay sees Clement within the Alexandrian “genealogy” between Philo and Origen, which is an unhelpful starting point whereby to approach Clement’s interpretation, since he is an interpreter in his own right.\textsuperscript{53} In many ways, Clement’s thought – and not least his interpretation of Scripture – is novel.

Thus Carleton Paget’s work serves as a summary of past scholarship on Clement. Because most studies on Clement and the Bible focus on his theology of it and very little focus on his practice of interpretation, my thesis will pick up where many of these studies have left off. I should also note that while there have been several studies on Clement and the New Testament,\textsuperscript{54} there have been no substantial treatments of Clement’s interpretation of the Old Testament to date.

\section*{4 The Thesis Statement, Again}
It is in response to other scholarship on Clement, and against the theological background outlined above, that I will be providing a discussion around Clement’s interpretation of the Old Testament. I will argue that, like other aspects of Clement’s thought, his

\begin{footnotes}
\item[52] Carleton Paget, “Christian Exegesis,” 488.
\item[53] I am prone to believe that much of the scholarship on Clement has read the exegetical triumphs of Origen, then retrospectively read Clement and were disappointed not to find simply a less developed Origen. It unfortunately appears that contemporary scholars unconsciously continue to view Clement as the exegetically-inadequate predecessor of Origen.
\end{footnotes}
hermeneutic is not systematic, yet is still in keeping with his larger theological projects. Despite its unsystematic nature, one can identify aspects of his thought that lie at the centre of his biblical interpretation. Perhaps even more so than Philo and Origen – with whom Clement is so often compared in his biblical interpretation – the person of the interpreter is the key to whether a particular passage of Scripture is interpreted correctly or not.\(^55\) (This is undoubtedly in response to heretical interpretations; see chapter 3.) The only person who can give a true and adequate interpretation of the Bible is Clement’s true Gnostic. As one such true Gnostic, Clement claims that he interprets not simply the words (as the non-Christian or Christian of “simple faith”), but the syllables.\(^56\) He is not describing exegesis at the syllabic or etymological level, but rather he is alluding to the fact that he goes deeper than those who rely solely on the bare word. There are two reasons why he is able to do this. The first, which I have already noted, is that the Scriptures are veiled: their true meaning is not immediately available to the reader. The second is that, while all can read the Bible and be aware of the words (here he speaks not just to those of “simple faith” but also to the “unfaithful”/heretical interpreters), it is only the Gnostic who can read the syllables – that is the veiled meaning. However, Clement gives little indication of how one might interpret in this gnostic way; this is one of the major problems when attempting to articulate his interpretation. Though Clement has a theology of Scripture that is rather well articulated, he rarely gives any indication of how

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\(^55\) Though also to be noted are Karen Jo Torjesen’s article “The Alexandrian Tradition of the Inspired Interpreter,” Origeniana Octava, ed. Lorenzo Perrone (Leuven: Peeter, 2004), 287-302, where not much attention is paid to Clement; as well as Peter Martens’ recently celebrated monograph, Origen and Scripture: The Contours of the Exegetical Life (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), which deals with similar issues in Origen’s biblical interpretation.

\(^56\) Str. 6.15.131.2-3. Here he is referring to Shepherd of Hermas 5 (2.1.4).
the true Gnostic should go about interpreting the veiled Scriptures themselves. This is not surprising given his pedagogical project in which the reader of his works can move from the stage of simple faith (πίστις) to that of γνῶσις: instead of a methodology, what Clement provides are hints, and examples of what he refers to as “gnostic exposition.” It is these examples that I will study in detail.

Thus, only by keeping in mind the larger theological projects of Clement, and these aspects in particular, can one give a fair reading to Clement’s interpretation. At the same time, I have mentioned that very few works have broached the subject of Clement’s interpretation of the Bible – and especially the Old Testament. Thus I will show in my work that Clement’s biblical interpretation is in keeping with his theological project, especially as it relates to the spiritual journey towards γνῶσις, and “true” interpretation of the veiled meaning of Scripture.

5 Outline and Notes on Method
There will be three major sections comprising the body of the work. Each will be concerned with an individual passage of the Old Testament: Psalm 1, Genesis 1:26-27, and the Ten Commandments (Exod 20:1-17; Deut 5:6-21). They will all in their own way be concerned with demonstrating the thesis stated above: that Clement’s biblical interpretation is formed by his doctrine of the gnostic journey, culminating in a “true” reading of the veiled Scriptures. The first, on Psalm 1, will examine two separate passages in Clement’s works: the first is in his Paedagogus (1.10) and the second in the Stromateis (2.15). In keeping with what I have argued above, the focus of Clement’s interpretation of the psalm differs from the Paedagogus to the Stromateis, according to

57 Str. 1.1.15.1-2.
his larger theological vision of the spiritual ascent from faith to knowledge. The second compares the interpretations of the narrative on the creation of humanity, primarily Gen 1:26-27, in Clement’s notes on Valentinian exegesis (Excerpta ex Theodoto) and in his other works (especially Stromateis 2.20-22). It shows how directly Clement’s exegesis was engaged in anti-Valentinian polemic; it further shows that the true Gnostic is not just an ideal Christian, but is in fact an ideal interpreter – as Clement demonstrates in his own interpretation. The third looks at a more extended passage of Clement’s in Stromateis 6.16, which has as its starting point the Decalogue. Here Clement’s truly gnostic interpretation is most clear.

Clement’s extant works of which I will make the most use are his (what is debatably a) trilogy of the Protrepticus (Prot.), the Paedagogus (Paed.) and the Stromateis (Str.), in that order. It is in the Stromateis – Clement’s longest work – that most of his serious biblical interpretation is put forward. Other fragmentary works that are appended to two different manuscripts58 of the Stromateis are the non-Stromatic so-called Stromateis VIII, the Excerpta ex Theodoto (Exc.), and the Eclogae Propheticae. I will be using mostly the Stromateis with some reference to Excerpta ex Theodoto (for Clement’s anti-Valentinian exegesis). I also make some reference to Clement’s one extant homiletical work, Qui dives salvetur (Q. d. s.).

The English translations of Clement’s works are often my own (especially in the second and fourth chapters). Where they are not, they are based on the ANF translations; however, in all cases I have consulted the Greek critical editions, and made changes to them where I felt it was important, or where the ANF English text deviated.

inappropriately from the Greek critical editions. The critical edition of the *Stromateis* that I have employed is that of Stählin’s; the *Protrepticus* and *Paedagogus* are from *Sources chrétiennes*; for the *Excerpta ex Theodoto* I also use the *Sources chrétiennes* edition, often with reference to Casey’s critical Greek-English text. Where I refer to the Greek in the body of the thesis, I most frequently employ the “dictionary” forms of the words (nominative or first-person present indicative [non-compound], etc.), sometimes offering the plural instead of the singular, depending on context. Finally, I have tried to be as comprehensive as possible in my numbering of Clement’s sources: the final number always refers to the *subsection* (not *line*), and the penultimate to the *section*. For those longer works, in which there are both *book* and *chapter* I have included both, and in the shorter which comprise just one book, the first number is always the *chapter*.

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62 Thus in the longer *Stromateis*, it follows *Str. 1.1.1.1* (*book; chapter; section; subsection*), and in the shorter *Protrepticus*, *Prot 1.1.1.* (*chapter; section; subsection*).
Chapter 2
Psalm 1

Clement’s use of Psalm 1 is in many ways typical of his use of Scripture throughout his extant works. There are two things that especially stand out from his use and interpretation of this psalm that make it useful to have as the first of the three case studies. The first is that he clearly knows this psalm very well and quotes it frequently: the psalm is enough in his mind that when he discusses topics especially related to “blessing” or “ways” it is natural for him to quote it. The second (and for our purposes more important) thing that stands out in the passages where this psalm is used as a starting point for discussion is Clement’s appreciation of the divine pedagogy. In a passage in the Paedagogus (1.10) he interprets Psalm 1 more in keeping with the “catechetical” goal of the work; in the Stromateis (2.15) the psalm is used to apply more directly to the life of the Gnostic, with which much of this extended work is taken up. That he interprets the psalm differently in these works serves to prove that Clement’s interpretation of the Scriptures – and especially the Old Testament – is above all informed by his understanding of the spiritual progress of the true Gnostic.

1 Προκοπή in Clement

Underpinning all of Clement’s thought there is a general understanding of improvement or progress (προκοπή).\(^6^3\) This is epitomized in a statement of Clement’s in his sixth

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\(^6^3\) There is a significant number of publications on Clement’s concepts of προκοπή and παιδεία, simply because it is one of the most noticeable aspects in his writing. See these more recent monographs on the subject: Piotr Ashwin-Siejkowski, *Clement of Alexandria: A Project of Christian Perfection* (New York: T & T Clark, 2008); Arkadi Choufrine, *Gnosis, Theophany, Theosis: Studies in Clement of Alexandria’s*
s. “According to the capabilities of their nature, each one was and is made, making progress to what is better.”64 This is discussed within the context of Clement’s extended discourse on the Gnostic in the sixth and seventh books of the *Stromateis*, though it has larger implications than simply the “spiritual progress” of the individual. The movement from \( \pi \sigma \tau \iota \zeta \) to \( \gamma \nu \omicron \sigma \iota \zeta \) is only one part of this; there are other aspects of his appreciation for “progress.” The pedagogical shape of Clement’s works is also an example of this, as is the “divine economy”: according to divine \((\pi \rho)\pi \alpha \iota \delta \varepsilon \iota \alpha\) leading up to the advent of Christ, the Jews received the Law and the Greeks philosophy.65 Further, there is \( \pi \alpha \iota \delta \varepsilon \iota \alpha\), properly so-called, which is incorporated into the personal ascent from \( \pi \sigma \tau \iota \zeta \) to \( \gamma \nu \omicron \sigma \iota \zeta \) in the form of a classical preliminary education – the \( \varepsilon \gamma \kappa \upsilon \kappa \lambda \omicron \varsigma\) \( \pi \alpha \iota \delta \varepsilon \iota \alpha\).66 As we will see especially in the chapter dedicated to the Decalogue, but also in this one, this spiritual \( \pi \rho \kappa \omicron \omega \omicron \pi \eta \) is deeply important to Clement’s biblical interpretation. For the purpose of this chapter, it is necessary to give some description of the first two: the pedagogical shape of Clement’s works, and the progress from \( \pi \sigma \tau \iota \zeta \) to \( \gamma \nu \omicron \sigma \iota \zeta \).

Many and various authors have put it forward, though not without debate, that Clement’s three major works – the *Protrepticus*, the *Paedagogus*, the *Stromateis* – are designed to put together teachings that will lead people from one stage of the spiritual progress to the next.67 Clement states this explicitly throughout his works.68 The trilogy

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64 Str. 6.17.152.3-153.1; also see Str. 4.1.3.2-3; 4.22.135.1-2; 5.4.20.1.
65 See Str. 1.5.28.1-2; 1.7.37.1; 1.20.99.1-2; 6.11.94.2-5.
66 See Str. 1.19.93.5; 6.11.91.1-5; also see chapter 4 of my thesis.
67 Not all scholars have shared this opinion over the last century. Walter Wagner, “Another Look at the Literary Problem in Clement of Alexandria’s Major Writings,” *Church History* 37, no. 3 (1968): 251-60, provides a good summary of opinions up to the date of the article’s publication; he offers his own opinion that they are not a trilogy in
attempts first to persuade (*Protrepticus*), then to deliver precepts (*Paedagogus*), then to deliver a hortatory (*Stromateis*). Clement argues that these rhetorical methods are aimed at the passions, the actions, and the habits, respectively. Thus, this is what the three works in Clement’s trilogy address: first persuading against paganism towards to truth of Christianity; then teaching proper actions; and finally developing natural habits. These three levels are further in accord with the non-Christian, the one of simple faith (ψιλὴ πίστις), and the one with knowledge (γνῶσις) of God, respectively. We especially see in the *Stromateis* that Clement is ever leading the reader – often enigmatically – from faith to knowledge of God.

The idea of faith and knowledge being separate from one another is clearly derived from the Valentinians. Though Clement is fundamentally at odds with Valentinian theology, he is never hesitant to appropriate into his own theological system what he sees the proper sense of each work building upon the previous one – instead they represent ethical treatises, all of which build one up to γνῶσις. One of the recent (now late) able defenders of the coherence of Clement’s thought and literary project, in agreement with me, was Eric Osborn, in his *Clement of Alexandria*, 5-15; also see Andrew Itter, *Esoteric Teaching in the “Stromateis” of Clement of Alexandria* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 15-32; Bogdan G. Bucur, “The Place of the Hypotyposeis in the Clementine Corpus: An Apology for ‘The Other Clement of Alexandria,’” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 17, no. 3 (2009): 313-35. On the other hand, for a recent argument against his works being a trilogy, see Marco Rizzi, “The Literary Problem in Clement of Alexandria: A Reconsideration,” *Adamantius* 17 (2011): 154-63, in which he argues that the *Protrepticus* and *Paedagogus* are intended for a general audience, but the *Stromateis*, for a more “advanced” one. Wagner is likely in the minority in seeing them as separate ethical treatises; even Rizzi acknowledges that the one (*Stromateis*) is more advanced than the others. In the past, but less so recently, scholars have often misjudged Clement’s intentionality in his compositions. Méhat’s seminal work on the structure of the *Stromateis*, showing clearly that it is a coherent literary work, counters this ably in his *Étude sur les “Stromates.”*

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68 See Paed. 1.1.3. Most of the opponents of the idea that Clement’s works form a trilogy base their opinion on their understanding that this is a mistaken interpretation of this very passage in the *Paedagogus*. Again, see Rizzi, “The Literary Problem.”

69 See especially Paed. 1.1. Also see Kovacs, “Divine Pedagogy and Gnostic Teacher.”
is of benefit in another. Thus Clement writes this about the Valentinians in the first chapter of his fifth *stromateus*:

> There are some who distinguish faith [πίστις and πιστεύω throughout], which has reference to the Son, from knowledge [γνώσις and γιγνώσκω throughout], which has reference to the Spirit. But it has escaped their notice that it is necessary to believe truly in the Son – that he is the Son, that he came, and how and for what, and about his suffering – and that it is necessary to come to know the Son of God. Now neither is knowledge without faith, nor faith without knowledge, nor indeed the Father without the Son. For the Father is in fact the Father of the Son. And the Son is the true teacher about the Father. And that we may believe in the Son, it is necessary to know the Father, with whom also is the Son. Again, in order that we may know the Father, it is necessary to believe in the Son, that the Son of God teaches. For, [going] from faith to knowledge by the Son is the Father. And the knowledge of the Son and Father, which is according to the gnostic rule – and which in reality is gnostic – is the apprehension and embracing of the truth, by the truth.

We see clearly in this passage that Clement is appropriating the Valentinian distinction which made those with faith into a different class altogether than those with knowledge (the “Gnostics”), and he turns it into a progression “from faith to knowledge.” (In the next chapter we will see in more depth how deeply Clement is concerned with this.)

Further, Clement goes on later in the same chapter to say that, “The apostle [in speaking of “from faith to faith”] announces a twofold faith, or rather one which allows for increase and perfection; for the common faith lies beneath as a foundation.” And it is

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71 *Str.* 5.1.1.1-5.

72 This is throughout the *Stromateis*; see especially *Str.* 5.4.26.4; 6.1.1.3-4; 6.9.78.4-5; 6.12.102.4-103.3; 6.17.152.1; 7.2.5.1-2; 7.2.5.6-6.1

73 *Str.* 5.1.2.4-6.
knowledge of God that is built on top of the foundation that is faith.\(^74\)

Another “progress” that is especially related to Clement’s interpretation of the Scriptures, and which will take up much of the remainder of this chapter, is the progress of biblical interpretation. It does appear that Clement sees the interpretation of the one of simple faith to be markedly different from that of the true Gnostic. One of the things that this accomplishes is that it protects the Bible from the incorrect interpretation of the heretics. With this Clement is deeply concerned.

Though Clement does not at all conceive of the Scriptures as having various “senses” whereby they can be interpreted, he does at one point differentiate between different – though valid – readings of the Scriptures. While several of the works that he refers to might surprise us, he uses them to illumine how different people see and know differently from one another. For example, Clement refers to a work on the assumption of Moses.\(^75\) He writes,

Joshua son of Nun saw a twofold ascending Moses: one Moses with the angels, and one on the mountains who was honoured with burial among the ravines. And Joshua, who was elevated by the Spirit, saw this spectacle below, as did Caleb – but they did not both see the same thing. One went down [from the mountain] more quickly, a great weight urging him on, while the other, going down after – who also had grown purer – related the glory that he had seen, being able to perceive more than the other. The story, I think, makes clear that knowledge is not for all people,


\(^75\) This may be according to a Jewish or early Christian tradition. Origen, citing “a certain [non-canonical] work,” also picks up on the story of there being two Moses’s: one bodily and one spiritual (De Principiis 3.2.1; Homilies on Joshua, 2.1). What is more likely is that there is something about this in the non-extant ending of the work referred to as the Assumption of Moses, the rest of which is extant in the Latin. For this opinion, see Johannes Tromp, The Assumption of Moses: A Critical Edition with Commentary (Leiden; New York: E. J. Brill, 1993), 281-85.
since some look to the body of the Scriptures – the phrases and the names – as to the body of Moses, while others see through to the meanings and what is made clear by the names, inquiring closely after the Moses who is with the angels.\textsuperscript{76}

Clement thus sees two “levels” of reading the Scriptures, even reading Moses (i.e. the five books of the Law): there is the “bodily Moses,” and there is also the “spiritual Moses.” Perhaps Origen derived his idea of the multiple senses of Scriptures from this same text, following, and developing Clementine ideas.\textsuperscript{77} Even before this, in the same chapter of the \textit{Stromateis}, he refers also to the \textit{Shepherd of Hermas}. He writes,

Scripture is clear to all when understood according to a simple reading; and … this is the faith which has the arrangement of the letters (of the alphabet; στοιχεῖον), which is also interpreted allegorically [in the \textit{Shepherd}] as “reading according to the letter.” We understand that the gnostic unfolding of the Scriptures, when faith has progressed, is likened to reading according to the syllables.\textsuperscript{78}

Though the way Clement renders things here is a bit difficult, in the context of what we know of the discussion of the progress from faith to knowledge, it becomes clear. “Faith which has the arrangement of the letters” refers to the one who is at the stage of simple faith; s/he reads “according to the letter.” But the Gnostic, who is able to unfold the Scriptures, reads “according to the syllables”; that is, s/he reads the deeper meaning – s/he reads the “Moses who is with the angels.” Thus we see very clearly that different stages of the spiritual progress are associated with different “readings” (i.e. interpretations) of the Scriptures. We will see this in the comparison of the interpretations of Psalm 1 in the \textit{Paedagogus} – meant for the one of simple faith – and the \textit{Stromateis} – meant for the one attaining to γνώσις. Though the interpretations are in large part similar (Clement, after all, as a Gnostic interprets gnostically), the way in which he views

\textsuperscript{76} Str. 6.15.132.2-5.
\textsuperscript{77} Again, see Origen, \textit{Homilies on Joshua}, 2.1.
\textsuperscript{78} Str. 6.15.131.3.
“Moses” changes from when he is writing to the one of faith (“the body of Moses”) to when he is addressing the Gnostic (“the Moses who is with the angels”).

2 Interpretive Themes Common to the Paedagogus and the Stromateis

As noted, Clement is very familiar with the first psalm. He quotes it many times throughout his works. He even has two extended interpretations of it: one in Paedagogus 1.10, and one in Stromateis 2.15; there is also a shorter interpretation of it in Stromateis 4.18. There are a few aspects of his interpretation of this psalm that link them all together. Here in the section on the commonalities of the various interpretations, I want to provide what is generally important to Clement in his interpretation of the psalm. In the following section, I will demonstrate how his varying pedagogical contexts allow him to interpret it in different ways.

The first connection may be obvious, and that is “blessing.” Very often Clement’s quotation of the first psalm is brought about in his reflection on some other passage of beatitude: “Blessed is the one….” Though one might be tempted to call this a simple “word association” (that Clement haphazardly puts together a few remembered biblical citations), I would tend to be more generous, knowing his intellectual rigour in general. Thus a better phrase for this would be associative intertextuality. (In the next chapter we will see an extreme example of this, between the Bible and Plato). Clement identifies “blessing” – being the first word of the psalm – as central to its meaning, and thus refers

79 See especially his extended interpretation of the Beatitudes themselves in book 4 of the Stromateis (Str. 4.6).
to other instances of “blessing” throughout the Scriptures. The second idea that holds together these various interpretations is Clement’s understanding of “choice” (αἵρεσις and προαίρεσις). Clement has a robust understanding of the individual’s free will; thus especially when the psalmist (often “David,” but also “the prophet”) describes three ways of unrighteousness in the second verse of the psalm, Clement sees these as choices that one may make. Lastly, the true Gnostic – whether in the Paedagogus or in the Stromateis – often receives the focus as the one who is truly righteous, who is “as a tree which has been planted by streams of water, which will give its fruit in its time, and its leaf will not fall off, and all that it does will be prosperous.”

2.1 Blessing (μακαρισμός)
The associative intertextuality that is demonstrated in these passages on Psalm 1 is typical of Clement’s biblical interpretation. It is very common for Clement to give something of a florilegium – a string of citations – without much by way of direct interpretation. Though it may appear that there is not a high degree of interpretation, his choices of biblical texts in close proximity to one another are in fact interpretive choices.

This intertextuality is especially the case in Paedagogus 1.10. There are three other biblical verses quoted containing the word blessing. The first is in the “second part of the counsel,” which is “apprehended from present times, [and] is grasped with the senses.”

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81 On florilegia see Henry Chadwick, “Florilegium,” in Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum: Sachwörterbuch zur Auseinandersetzung des Christentums mit der antiken Welt, ed. Theodor Klauser, vol. 7 (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1969), 1131-60, especially 1144-45; also see Mondésert, Clément d’Alexandrie, 74. Florilegia were compilations of quotations on any given topic, which Clement could have used as a resource, or even which he compiled his own for his own use. However, given the differences that are evident amongst the various uses of, for example, the first Psalm, it appears that Clement had a significant amount of Scripture (or perhaps a number of “proof-texts”) memorized.

82 Paed. 1.10.90.2.
As an example of this kind of counsel, Clement gives “those who inquired of the Lord,” saying, “Is this the Christ, or do we wait for another?” To this Jesus replies, “Go away and say to John, ‘The blind see, the deaf hear, the lepers are cleansed, the dead are raised up, and blessed is the one who is not offended by me.’” The second associative intertextuality is from Prov 3:13: “Blessed is the person who finds wisdom, and the mortal who finds understanding.” This person is then later compared to the one who is blessed like a tree planted by streams of water. Last, he quotes from Bar 4:14: “Blessed are we, Israel, for the best things of God are known to us,” which he qualifies by saying, “known through the Word, through which [we are] blessed and have understanding.” It is hard from this list alone to tell precisely how Clement sees these intertextualities as interpreting one another. We will see in the following two sections, however, how Clement brings them together.

2.2 Choice (αἰρέσις)\(^{87}\)
Clement’s interpretation of the first psalm in his Paedagogus takes place within the context of his discussion of various types of rhetoric. This takes up a significant amount of the first book of the Paedagogus, especially the first chapter and the one in which this

\(^{83}\) Paed. 1.10.90.2.  
\(^{84}\) Paed. 1.10.91.3.  
\(^{85}\) Paed. 1.10.92.1.  
\(^{86}\) Paed. 1.10.91.3-4. This is one of the passages that leads one to believe that in some cases Clement is clearly not quoting from memory, but has a codex or a scroll open in front of him. After he quotes Matt 11:3-6, which does pertain to blessing, he also quotes Matt 11:28. Though this one could be from memory, it is more likely in the case of Baruch that he is reading it from the page, since in this passage he also quotes Bar 3:9 and 3:13.  
interpretation is placed: the tenth. These rhetorics are used as tools by the Pedagogue – one of Clement’s (and his favourite in the Paedagogus) eponyms for Christ – to bring one to faith and knowledge of himself and his Father. In this case the rhetoric that draws one to God is “counsel” (συμβουλή). Clement writes that the Pedagogue “counsels the things of salvation, for counsel is meant for [both] choosing and avoidance.”\(^{88}\) Clement understands this counsel to comprise three parts; surprisingly, these do not correspond to the negative descriptions of the “blessed man” in the first verse of the Psalm: (1) walking in the counsel of the impious, (2) standing in the way of sinners, and (3) sitting upon the seat of the pestilent. Instead, they are three examples of counsel taken from the first one alone: walking in the counsel of the impious. The first of the counsels represents “examples taken from past times,” which include, “what the Hebrews suffered, idolizing the golden calf, and … committing fornication and similar things.”\(^{89}\) The second counsel is “apprehended from present times, which is grasped with the senses.”\(^{90}\) Though he writes that it refers to “present times,” he sees it reflected in Matt 11:3-6: they are “those who inquired, ‘Is this the Christ, or do we wait for another?’”\(^{91}\) He is clearly referring back to the incident in the Gospel: “those who inquired” (τοὺς ἐρομένους) is a substantive aorist participle. As we will see below, Clement sees this question – “Is this the Christ?” – to refer to the present. Further, as we saw above, this Gospel passage is chosen for the reason that it includes a “blessing.” The “third part of the counsel” is used in reference to the “things that will be.”\(^{92}\) Here he quotes Matt 25:30, saying “And just as

\(^{88}\) Paed. 1.10.90.1.  
\(^{89}\) Paed. 1.10.90.2.  
\(^{90}\) Paed. 1.10.90.2.  
\(^{91}\) Paed. 1.10.90.2.  
\(^{92}\) Paed. 1.10.91.1.
this is said: those who fall into sins ‘shall be thrown into the outer dark. Then there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth,’ and the like.” 93 These are the three “counsels,” pertaining to past, present, and future.

These three “counsels” fit into Clement’s understanding of counsel being concerned with making the right choices, and for avoiding the wrong ones. 94 We see this same concern for “choice” in another of Clement’s interpretations of the first psalm in the *Stromateis*. Before coming to the psalm in question, he writes this:

This blessedness is upon those who have been chosen by God through Jesus Christ our Lord. “For love covers a multitude of sins.” And the one who *chooses* repentance rather than sin or death erases [their sin]. But as many [sins] as take place not by *choice* are not reckoned: “For the one who lusts already has committed adultery,” it says. And the enlightening word releases from sin: “And in that time, says the Lord, they will seek the injustice of Israel, and it will not be there, and the sins of Judah, and they will by no means find [it],” “because who is as I am? And who will stand before my face?” You see one God declaring good – both giving one’s due according to deserts, and forgiving sins. And John shows in the greater epistle the differences of sins, teaching thoroughly in them: “If someone should see his brother sinning a sin that leads not towards death, let him ask, and he will save his life. For there is a sin that leads to death. I do not speak about that, so that someone may pray. All injustice is sin, and there is a sin that leads not towards death.” 95

We have in this passage, which immediately precedes his discussion directly related to the first psalm, the theme upon which we are dwelling: choice. It is apparently intended as a preamble to his extended primary discussion of the psalm. 96

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93 Paed. 1.10.91.1.  
94 Paed. 1.10.90.1.  
95 Str. 2.15.56.2-2.15.67.1, emphasis added.  
96 The editors of the Ante-Nicene Fathers (ANF) have Clement quoting in support of this Ezek 33:11, instead of my translation, “And the one who *chooses* repentance rather than sin or death erases [their sin].” However, for two reasons this cannot be maintained. Although the sentiment might at first appear to be the same, the vocabulary used in the LXX (i.e. in the various Greek versions) simply does not line up with this. Where Clement has μετάνοιαν for repentance, this section of Ezekiel has the verb ἀποστρέφω, and cognates, without exception. And whereas Clement has “the one who
At any rate, choice is central to both of Clement’s extended interpretations of Psalm 1. There is a choice that exists on the one hand between acts of sin and acts of righteousness. On the other hand, we also see various levels, both of righteousness and unrighteousness. Though in the first interpretation, in the Paedagogus, we see that the three negative descriptions of the “blessed man” refer to sin at different times (past, present, and future), in the Stromateis Clement offers alternate interpretations. As we have seen in Clement’s introduction to his interpretations in the Stromateis, he quotes from 1 John 5:16-17, in which the writer refers to different types of sins: ones that do not lead to death, and another that does. Clement sees that John is simply taking over from both Moses and David:

But David also – and before David, Moses – exhibits knowledge of the three teachings through these: “Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the impious,” [is] as the fishes journey in darkness into the depths; for those that do not have scales, against which Moses forbids, graze towards the bottom of the sea. “Nor stands in the way of sinners,” [is] as those who appear to fear the Lord sin as a young pig. For when it is hungry, it squeals, but when it is full it does not know its master. “Nor sits upon the seat of the pestilent,” [is] as birds preparing to snatch away [their prey]. And Moses advised, “Eat neither young pig, nor eagle, nor hawk, nor raven, nor any fish which does not have scales on it.”

Though one wonders if there is a perfect correspondence between the three ways of sin described in the first psalm and the two sins described in 1 John, they do both present different forms of sin. It is not uncommon for Clement to bring together what seem like unrelated passages and subsequently interpret them together, as we saw in the above

chooses” as ἀἱρούμενος, in Ezek 33:11, we have God saying, “I do not desire” (οὐ βούλομαι) the death of sinners. The context Clement’s comment also dictates that an allusion to this passage would not be fitting, since Clement sees the reason for the erasure of sin to be the individual’s own choice to repent. Hence his following statement that “as many as take place not by choice are not reckoned.” That is to say that if one does not choose to commit a sin, then it is not reckoned a sin. Hence when one lusts (quoting Matt 5:28 in support of this) this is considered a choice and thus it is reckoned as sin.

97 Str. 2.15.67.1-3.
discussion of associative intertextuality. Though the simple combination of these two passages might be considered an interpretation of sorts, he also provides four proper interpretations of the “three ways,” two of which associate the Law of Moses with the first psalm; these will be discussed below. For now it will suffice to say that of these four interpretations, three are related to the topic of voluntary vs. involuntary sin: based on the choice of the individual.

2.3 Knowledge (γνῶσις)
Given what I have articulated with respect to the divine pedagogy, one might expect that the idea of γνῶσις would only appear in the Stromateis. However, it is even present in Clement’s interpretation of the first psalm in the Paedagogus. In fact, though we will see below that the pedagogical shape of the works determines to a certain extent the interpretation of the psalm, there is almost an equal emphasis on γνῶσις in the interpretations in both works. In the Paedagogus, the starting point for the discussion of γνῶσις is the intertextual association of “blessing” to which Clement draws attention. On the other hand, the interpretation in Stromateis 2.15 (here I will also use a shorter passage in Stromateis 4.18) has γνῶσις as integral to the psalm itself.

As will be shown below, the interpretation of the first psalm in the Paedagogus has two parts. The first is concerned with Ps 1:1, and the second with the psalm’s last few verses. The discussion of γνῶσις occurs between these two, and is again brought into the interpretation at the end of the psalm. In the intertextual area between the two properly interpretive sections, he writes this:

Most clearly [the Pedagogue] calls [people] to kindness, through Solomon, saying, “Blessed is the person who finds wisdom, and the mortal who finds understanding” (Pr 3:13), for good is found by the one who seeks, and it loves to be seen by the one who finds. Yes, truly, also through Jeremiah [the word] “understanding” is
explained, saying, “Blessed are we, Israel, for the best things of God are known to us” (Bar 4:4) – known through the Word, through which [we are] blessed and through which we have understanding. For “understanding” is revealed to be “knowledge” through the same prophet who says, “Hear, Israel, the commandments of life; hearken to know understanding” (Bar 3:9).

Each subsequent biblical quotation is used to explain the previous one. Thus Clement learns from Solomon that wisdom and understanding make for blessing. Then the Pedagogue teaches through Jeremiah (in Baruch) that knowing the blessed things of God also makes for blessing. Finally he brings together the two by again quoting Baruch, where “knowing” and “understanding” are synonymous. By this, Clement finds γνῶσις in the first psalm, because the one who has knowledge is the one who is blessed. Through intertextual association he does not need to go far at all, finding another “beatitude” which has γνῶσις in it. As I pointed out previously, Clement is likely looking at the page of a book (an “Old Testament”?) that has chapters 3 and 4 of Baruch as we know them today; this is made clear following his interpretation of the final verses of the psalm, when he says this:

Yes, indeed, he also exhorts to knowledge through Jeremiah, saying, “If you had journeyed on the way of God, you would have dwelt in peace forever” (Bar 3:13). For, indicating there the reward of knowledge, he calls the intelligent to the love of [knowledge], and dispensing forbearance to the one who has wandered, he says, “Turn, turn, as a crop gatherer to its basket.”

In the block quotation before this Clement quoted the book of Baruch twice, and here he

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98 Paed. 1.10.91.3–4.
99 Clement is the first extant author who refers to the Old and New Testaments together as books to be read, rather than simply the “old covenant” that God had made with the Hebrews (Str. 1.5.28.2; 5.1.3.3; 5.13.85.1; Paed. 1.7.59.2; for just the OT see Str. 3.6.54.4; 4.16.100.2; 4.21.134.2-4; 5.10.61.1; 5.10.62.2; Paed. 1.7.59.1; Exc. 24.2; for just NT, see Paed. 1.5.20.2; 1.7.59.1; Str. 3.11.71.3; 3.18.108.2; 6.5.41.5; Q. d. s. 3.6); also see Osborn, Clement of Alexandria, 69. On the other hand apparently Melito of Sardis is the first one to refer to the “Old Testament” in the same way (Fragmenta 3.1.3; 3.1.16).
100 Paed. 1.10.92.3.
quotes it again. Though the first two citations serve to advance his discussion of γνῶσις, this one appears at this point only to be biblical “seasoning.” Not only is this evidence of what I described in the introduction as Clement speaking in the language of the Scriptures; it is also indicative of the likelihood that Clement had his codex (or scroll) open in front of him and saw that it could be relevant to his discussion.

Clement does not speak of γνῶσις quite as much in his interpretation in the Stromateis. This could be in part because he offers, as we will see below, several interpretive options from other sources. At any rate, when it comes to his own novel interpretation of the psalm, he does in fact associate it with γνῶσις. He interprets the first verse to show three types of abstinence from sin, which is one of the defining characteristics of the Gnostic. These three sins from which to abstain are with respect to “word,” “deed,” and (less clearly) “knowledge.” This knowledge, he says, must not be defiled.101 In one other section of the Stromateis he has something to say about the link between Psalm 1 and the true Gnostic. He writes that the Gnostic is “full of knowledge, and of the righteousness of works… ‘And his leaf shall not fall away’ – the leaf of the living tree that is nourished ‘by the water courses.’”102 Thus γνῶσις, whether spoken of in the Paedagogus or in the Stromateis, is central to Clement’s understanding of this psalm.

3 Differing Interpretations in the Paedagogus and the Stromateis

Much of the theological content of the interpretation of the first psalm in the Paedagogus has already been discussed above, not least in the section on γνῶσις. However, in this section I want to fill in what was missing in the prior one, and show what is peculiar to

101 Str. 2.15.69.1.
102 Str. 4.18.117.2-4.
this interpretation of Psalm 1, as compared to his other interpretation in the *Stromateis*. The section which contains the interpretation of the first psalm is in the first of the *Paedagogus*’s three books. One of the major discussions in the first book surrounds the types of rhetoric that one can use when teaching. We saw above that the *Protrepticus* targets the passions, the *Paedagogus* the actions, and the *Stromateis* the habits. Further, we learn throughout the *Paedagogus* that the one who does the teaching (the actual παιδαγωγός) is not really Clement; instead it is Christ himself who teaches one how to live rightly. The context within which we see this first interpretation of Psalm 1 has significant bearing on how Clement interprets it. While there are certainly some commonalities between the interpretations in the *Paedagogus* and the *Stromateis*, there are significant differences linked to the different stages of Clement’s divine pedagogy.

Throughout this passage there is reference to the Pedagogue. For example, Clement writes, “In an exhortation upon what is profitable, the Pedagogue prophesied thus through Solomon,” and he goes on to quote Prov 8:4-6. Here we see that it is not directly Solomon, even, who teaches, but it is the Pedagogue himself: Christ. This sentence is well before the interpretation proper of the first psalm, but begins the section on “counsel” and “blessing.” In his actual interpretation of the psalm he mentions the Pedagogue once more. Again, it is the Pedagogue himself who is speaking in the psalm:

Bringing to light the penalty of sinners, and how easily they are done away with, and how vain they are, the Pedagogue dissuades from accusation by the [same] penalty, and threatening chastisement according to what is deserved, out of kindness, he displayed beneficence… for our use and acquisition of what is good.

\[103\] See *Paed.* 1.1.1.3-4.
\[104\] *Paed.* 1.10.90.1.
\[105\] *Paed.* 1.10.92.3.
This passage comes in his interpretation of the verse, “Not so the impious, rather they are as the chaff, which the wind casts forth from the face of the earth.” This is apparently the “opposite on the scale of justice” from the blessing bestowed upon the one who does not sin. 106 Once in this same passage we also see “pedagogy.” Clement writes, “There is another image of the same pedagogy: blessedness.” 107 It is not altogether clear what he means by this, except that it serves to introduce the fact that the first psalm itself is a picture of the divine pedagogy which is displayed in other passages of “blessing.”

There are several markers in the vocabulary in this section that indicate the same aspect of the interpretation: Christ as counselor and encourager. As quoted above, Clement cites “the Pedagogue through Solomon” who has made an “exhortation (προτροπή) upon what is profitable.” 108 Though προτροπή is a typical word for exhortation, it does not occur even once in the Stromateis; that is, it is only used by Clement in the first two books of the trilogy, Protrepticus and Paedagogus. 109 In quoting the prophet “Jeremiah” (Bar 3:13), he makes reference to it as an exhortation, though uses a much more common word, παρακαλέω. 110 The occasions of its use are so frequent that they are hardly worth mentioning; however, it does appear with much more frequency in the Paedagogus than in the Stromateis. 111 Finally, we see one more

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106 Paed. 1.10.92.2.
107 Paed. 1.10.92.1.
108 Paed. 1.10.90.1.
109 In addition to this passage, it is in Paed. 1.10.95.2; 1.11.97.1; Prot. 9.84.5.
110 Paed. 1.10.92.3.
111 Given that the Protrepticus is only one book, the Paedagogus three, and the Stromateis seven, one can see how much more frequent it is in the former two. It occurs eleven times in the Protrepticus (1.7.6; 1.8.3; 1.9.1; 1.10.1; 9.85.3; 9.87.4; 10.94.2; 10.100.3-4; 12.118.5; 12.123.2); eleven times in the Paedagogus (1.1.1.3; 1.1.2.1; 1.5.21.1; 1.7.61.3; 1.9.76.2; 1.10.90.1; 1.10.92.3; 1.10.94.3; 2.3.37.2; 3.6.35.3;
synonym for “exhortation”: following the block quotation given above, concerning the Pedagoge “dissuading from the accusation of the penalty [for sin],”112 we see that the Pedagoge “exhorts to knowledge.”113 The word here for “exhortation” is παραμυθία, which occurs once in the Stromateis, and twice in the Paedagogus.114 But what is telling about this noun is that the other place where it occurs in the Paedagogus is the first chapter, the introduction. In this introductory chapter, Clement writes this:

Accordingly the healing of our passions ensues, in consequence of the assuagements (παραμυθία) of the examples [of the Pedagogue]; and the Pedagogue, strengthening our souls, by his benign commands, as by gentle medicines, guides the sick to the perfect knowledge of the truth.115

From this passage of the introduction, and the other instances of “exhortation,” we can see how clearly Clement places this psalm within the greater context of his pedagogical project, which he in turn understands to be Christ’s own pedagogy.

That Clement places this interpretation of Psalm 1 into the context of his pedagogy is clear. But we must question what bearing this has on his actual interpretation of the psalm. Though we will see how different it is than the one in the Stromateis below, it will do well to make some comment on it now. Clement sees this psalm, being the words of the Pedagoge, to be a picture of repentance. Not only this, but the psalm itself calls one to repentance. As seen above, choice is central not only to Clement’s interpretation of this psalm, but also to much of Clement’s theological reasoning. Clement writes, “Counsel is

3.12.95.3); and only nine times throughout the whole of the Stromateis (1.14.65.4; 1.21.113.1; 2.22.135.3; 3.11.75.1; 4.6.37.6-7; 4.7.51.3; 4.7.53.1; 5.1.9.2; 7.12.74.4).
112 Paed. 1.10.92.2.
113 Paed. 1.10.92.3.
114 Other than in the passage under discussion, Paed. 1.1.3.1; Str. 7.12.69.2.
115 Paed. 1.1.3.1.
meant for choosing or avoidance.” In fact, most of the interpretation of this psalm is taken up with the interpretation of the one line that mentions counsel: “Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the impious” (Ps 1:1). Though he does quote the rest of the verse – having to do with standing in the way of sinners and sitting in the seat of the pestilent – the only part that he interprets is the one on “counsel.” Thus he writes following his quotation of the verse, “There are three parts to the counsel.” Again, these three parts appear to correspond not to “walking,” “standing,” and “sitting,” but instead apply only to the first. Since counsel is meant for “choosing or avoidance,” he says that counsel can come from past, present, and future examples. The past examples are from the experiences of the Hebrews; he highlights the negative ones including idolizing the golden calf, and “committing fornication and similar things.” These clearly teach what not to do. The present one is taken from the Gospel. He cites the words of John the Baptist’s followers, “Is this the Christ or do we wait for another?” The Pedagogue – i.e. Christ – gives the well-known answer, “The blind see, the deaf hear, and lepers are cleansed, and the dead are raised up… and blessed is the one who is not offended by me,” which recalls the “blessing” in the first psalm. This is the question that everyone must answer, and the most basic confession of Christian faith: Χριστὸς Κύριος, “Christ is the Lord.” Finally, the future counsel has to do with the command to “keep watch over what will happen.” This he elucidates by referring to the “parable of the talents” (Matt 25:14-30), demonstrating that judgment is something to be wary of:

116 Paed. 1.10.90.1.
117 Paed. 1.10.90.1.
118 Paed. 1.10.90.2.
119 Paed. 1.10.90.2.
120 Paed. 1.10.90.2.
121 Paed. 1.10.91.1.
writes, “those who fall into sins, ‘shall be thrown into the outer dark…’” (Matt 25:30). Thus we see that the whole of the interpretation of this one phrase in the first psalm is interpreted such that it is counsel, and further that it is exhortation to repent of sin.

Following the long interpretation of this one phrase, he shows that “the Lord makes room through every treatment, electing humanity to salvation.” This recalls the passage quoted above in the Paedagogus’s introduction which also describes the Pedagogue – Christ – as something of a physician. He then goes on to quote something that appears to be taken from parts of Ezekiel (chapters 18 and 33), but only appears elsewhere in a work attributed to Clement of Rome. He writes that the Pedagogue says “through Ezekiel, ‘If you should repent with the whole heart and you should say “Father,” I will hear you as a holy people.’” After providing a few other biblical quotations, which we saw above in the discussion of γνωσις, he writes that “there is another image of the same pedagogy: blessedness.” With this preface he goes on to quote the first psalm again, this time giving some commentary:

“Blessed is the one who does not sin, and he will be as a tree which has been planted by streams of water, which will bear fruit in its time, and its leaf will not fall off” – this also speaks in an enigma to the resurrection – “And everything that he should do, it will bring prosperity to him.” He desires us to become such as this, so that we may be blessed.

122 Paed. 1.10.91.1.
123 Paed. 1.10.91.2.
124 1 Clement 8.3. Ehrman comments that this is “possibly drawn from Ezekiel 33,” The Apostolic Fathers, vol. 1, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press, 2003), 49, note 21. This is corroborated by the fact that just previous to this the writer of 1 Clement has quoted Ezekiel 33:11 (1 Clem 8.2); however, whether this is taken from an unknown LXX manuscript tradition, or whether Clement of Alexandria is taking from 1 Clement is for now impossible to know.
125 Paed. 1.10.91.2.
126 Paed. 1.10.92.1.
127 Paed. 1.10.92.1.
Here we get a glimpse of Clement’s symbolic/allegorical (“enigmatic”) interpretation, (which will be covered much more fully in the fourth chapter of my thesis): this passage speaks of Christ’s resurrection, which is eternal life. But he mentions this only in passing, attempting to use it as encouragement so that “we may be blessed.” And in fact, he continues on, saying this about the rest of the psalm:

On the other hand, the opposite on the scale of justice is pointed out: “But not so the impious, rather they are as the chaff, which the wind casts forth from the face of the earth.” Bringing to light the penalty of sinners, how easily they are done away with, and how vain they are, the Pedagogue dissuades from accusation by the same penalty, and threatening chastisement according to what they deserve, out of kindness he displayed beneficence most skillfully, for our use and acquisition of what is good.\(^{128}\)

Here Clement sees the juxtaposition of the one who chooses not to sin (and is blessed) against the one who chooses to sin (and is penalized), not as a statement of the sinner’s penalty per se; rather he sees the Pedagogue as using this as a negative incentive, so that the person might repent. This section on counsel is in fact ended by Clement asking the question of the reader, “You see the good of righteousness, that it counsels one to repentance?”\(^{129}\)

As we will see, in comparing this interpretation to the one in the *Stromateis*, much of Clement’s interpretation is based not only on where it appears in the trilogy of the “spiritual ascent,” but also where it appears within the *Paedagogus*. The most noticeable difference is that, though repentance does have a place in his interpretation of the psalm in the *Stromateis*, it is much more prominent in the *Paedagogus*.

Likewise, the context of the interpretation of the first psalm within the *Stromateis* is as important as the larger context of the trilogy for understanding Clement’s

\(^{128}\) *Paed.* 1.10.92.2-3.

\(^{129}\) *Paed.* 1.10.92.3-93.1.
interpretation at this point. In the first two books of the *Stromateis* Clement is concerned to establish the so-called “barbarian philosophy’s” priority to Greek philosophical thought. “Barbarian philosophy” becomes synonymous with the Old Testament – that is the philosophy of Moses and the prophets. And for this reason much of his argumentation is taken up with the antiquity of the Hebrew Scriptures. What is more, now that the Christ has made himself known, Clement sees Christianity to be the heir of this barbarian philosophy. Thus he established that Christianity is more ancient and so more authoritative than Greek philosophy, or any other philosophy for that matter. Within this larger discussion, the immediate context for this interpretation of the first psalm in *Stromateis* 2.15 is Clement’s discussion of voluntary vs. involuntary sin (hence the focus on “choice” that was identified above). Psalm 1 appears to be an ideal candidate for

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131 André Méhat, “‘Pénitence seconde’ et ‘péché involontaire’ chez Clément d’Alexandrie,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 8, no. 4 (1954): 225-33, gives something of a summary of opinions with respect to Clement’s view of repentance. He shows Karpp (“Die Busslehre in Klemens von Alexandria,” *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 43 [1950]: 224-42) agreeing with my assessment: that repentance is necessary for the one of simple faith, but not for the true Gnostic (Méhat, 226), whereas Völker (*Der wahre Gnostiker*, 164-74), comparing *Q. d. s.*, simply sees some difference in theory (being strict with respect to second repentance) and practice (being more relaxed) (Méhat, “Pénitence seconde,” 226-27). Yet Méhat agrees with Völker and disagrees with Karpp (and thus myself also; 229), thinking that Clement wants to remain true to ecclesiastical practice, while at the same time practicing moderation in allowing
expounding this idea, since he understands it to have three different types of sin that the blessed person must avoid in its first verse.

In this passage, vocabulary cannot tell us as much as it did with respect to the interpretation in the Paedagogus; it is more generic. However there are still a few items to pay close attention to. We noted above that there is a differentiation in the teaching that takes place in the Paedagogus from the Stromateis. The former is taken up with παιδαγωγία, a sort of “training” of the actions; the latter is taken up with διδασκαλία, a “teaching” of the habits. There are a few subtle aspects in his interpretation of the psalm in the Stromateis related to this. First is his statement regarding the passage in 1 John that he quotes concerning sins that lead to death, and those that do not. Clement writes, “John shows in his longer epistle, the differences of sin, teaching (διδάσκω) in them….”

After then quoting the passage from 1 John (5:16-17), Clement writes that, “David – and even before David, Moses – exhibit knowledge of the three teachings (δόγματα) through this,” then going on to quote Ps 1:1. Once more he uses the same verb as above, in his most highly favoured interpretation of Ps 1:1. He writes that “the lawgiver appears to teach (διδάσκω)…. These are indications that what Clement sees the Scriptures teaching is perhaps at a different, more advanced, level than we saw in the Paedagogus. These hints in Clement’s vocabulary are supported much more strongly, and directly, in the rest of Clement’s interpretation in this passage of the Stromateis.

I noted with respect to the interpretation of the first psalm in the Paedagogus that

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132 Str. 2.15.66.3-4.
133 Str. 2.15.67.1-3.
134 Str. 2.15.68.3.
repentance is central to his understanding of it. And while repentance does have a place in his interpretation of the psalm in the *Stromateis*, it is decidedly peripheral. He writes that “Blessedness is upon those who have been chosen by God through Jesus Christ our Lord. ‘For love covers a multitude of sins’ (1 Pet 4:8), and the one who chooses repentance rather than sin or death, erases [sin].”\(^{135}\) However, just as the Pedagoge was concerned to exhort one to repentance *in action*, the Didaskalos (another of Christ’s epithets) is concerned to teach one how to abstain from sin, according to habit. Before getting into this in depth, I want to provide a picture of the interpretation proper of Psalm 1.

Clement provides four different interpretations of the first psalm in this passage in the *Stromateis*. They are not necessarily consistent with one another, and it seems that Clement puts them forward as interpretive options. We will see especially in the fourth chapter of my thesis that Clement values multiple view-points in biblical interpretation; and so it is likely that in placing them side-by-side he does not mean to discount any of them. On the other hand, he does put them in a particular order, and gives credit in all but one of them to other previous interpreters. Following the first, he refers to Barnabas; we know – the epistle of Barnabas being extant – that Clement is right in crediting it to him.\(^{136}\) The second is from “a wise man,”\(^{137}\) and the third is from “a different person.”\(^{138}\) The fourth Clement attributes to the “lawgiver,” which is one of his typical epithets for Moses.\(^{139}\) Thus Clement does not provide an interpreter for this final one, and so we

\(^{135}\) *Str.* 2.15.65.3-66.1.

\(^{136}\) *Str.* 2.15.67.4. See *Barnabas* 10:10.

\(^{137}\) *Str.* 2.15.67.4.

\(^{138}\) *Str.* 2.15.68.1.

\(^{139}\) See *Str.* 1.24.158.1; 1.26.168; 1.26.169.2-3; 2.5.21.1-5; 5.5.29.3.
assume that this is his personal interpretation of it. Because this is his own interpretation (though we do not disregard the first three), we can see what he chooses to emphasize most with respect to the first psalm.

Clement sees the first interpretation from Barnabas as David interpreting Moses. Like the following interpretations – and like many in the following history of interpretation – the three “walking,” “standing,” and “sitting,” are taken as having different referents. In this case, David’s three correspond to a different set of three of Moses:

“Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the impious,” just as the fish that journey in darkness towards the depths. For those fish without scales, which Moses forbids, graze at the bottom of the sea. “Nor stand in the way of sinners” – just as those who [only] appear to fear the Lord sin like a young pig. For, when it is hungry it squeals; but when it is full, it does not know its master. “Nor sits on the seat of the pestilent” – just as birds preparing to snatch away [their prey]. And Moses advised, “Eat neither young pig, nor eagle, nor hawk, nor raven, nor any fish without scales.” Barnabas says these things.

Though the sources of these apparently biblical references in Barnabas are unknown,

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140 Str. 2.15.67.1.
141 See, for example, Basil, Homiliae super Psalmos 1; Diodore of Tarsus, Commentarii in Psalmos 1.1a-c; Augustine, Ennarationes in Psalmos 1.1.
142 Str. 2.15.67.1-4.
143 Barnabas 10:10 refers back to Barnabas 10:5, which has various creatures (including “hyena” and “weasel”) which appear not to be mentioned in the Mosaic Law at all. James Carleton Paget, The Epistle of Barnabas: Outlook and Background (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1994), 150-51, has it that the confusion of sources in chapter five of the Epistle of Barnabas lends itself to the idea that the author is borrowing from earlier material, and redacting it. It is clear that he is not simply using Jewish sources, which some have argued, since his polemic is decidedly against Jewish practice of following the letter of the Law; instead he is adapting it to his own purposes (153). Carleton Paget also points to Kraft’s dissertation, which discusses how these other animals may be significant (R. A. Kraft, “The Epistle of Barnabas: Its Quotations and their Sources” [PhD diss., Harvard, 1961], 197-209); as of yet I have been unable to obtain a copy of this dissertation. For more on the importance of Barnabas for Clement see Allan E. Johnson, “Interpretative Hierarchies in Barnabas 1-17,” Studia Patristica 17, no. 2 (1982): 702-6, which suggests that Barnabas before Clement had an idea of an
they are assumed by Clement to have come from Moses. And while this interpretation is not terribly clear, the sets of three obviously refer to different classes of sins: the first is disobedience of the commandments, the second is a sort of hypocrisy or pretense, and the third is some kind of “snatching.” It also appears that these sins proceed from least to most severe.

The second interpretation Ps 1:1 is surprising, for the reason that it is not Clement’s preferred one. He writes, “I have heard these things for myself from a wise man,” and proceeds to equate the “counsel of the impious” with “the Gentiles,” the “way of sinners” with “certain Jews,” and the “seat of the pestilent,” with “certain heresies.”

Though he does treat this interpretation with respect (being from a “wise man”), he gives no further comment on it. This is surprising, since “ethnic reasoning” is so important for Clement’s understanding of the new people group called “Christians.” Much has been written on this of late; it will suffice to say here that the fact that there are two interpretations preferential to this indicates how highly he esteems the following two.

The next interpretation is as follows:

A different person said more fittingly that the first blessing is ordained upon those who do not follow wicked judgments, who do not stand apart from God. The next is upon those who do not remain in the “wide and broad way” (Matt 7:13), whether

“orthodox” Christian γνῶσις. Thought Carleton Paget finds this thesis unlikely, he does not dismiss it out of hand (49, note 256); also see Carleton Paget, Epistle of Barnabas, 144-45.

Str. 2.15.67.4-68.1.

they grew up in the Law, or even if they have converted from the Gentiles. “And the seat of the pestilent” should be the theatres and courts of justice, or rather following the toilsome and brutal powers, and fellowship with their works.

The differentiation between the three “blessings” is perhaps less clear in this interpretation than it is in the others. It does not appear that these, unlike the first one, proceed in any particular ascending or descending order of severity – or goodness, since it speaks of blessing rather than sin. Instead, they seem simply to be different manifestations of the blessed life. The first has to do with “following” of “judgments”; how these judgments are related to “standing apart from God” is less clear. The second has to do with “conversion”: those who have found their way from the “wide and broad way” to the “narrow path,” despite their non-Christian upbringing. The third does not even speak to the blessing itself, but rather to the negative: attending theatres and law courts, and the like. We must assume that this third blessing is for those who do not attend such ungodly gatherings, and who do not follow the “powers” of the world.

Though these three are put forward as good examples of interpreting this psalm, Clement at last provides his own. Because it seems that this interpretation is of his own devising, and is not borrowed from earlier interpreters, he makes sure that it fits well within its literary context. And as I mentioned above, his introduction of it is different from that of the other three. He writes, “The lawgiver [i.e. Moses] appears to teach the three ways of abstinence from sin in another way.”

He then writes this:

[Abstaining from sin] in word [is given] through the speechless fish. For in reality there are times when silence is better than speech: there is also in silence a gift free from danger. And from [sins] in deed [it indicates] by violent and carnivorous birds. And a young pig “takes pleasure in filth” and in manure, and it is necessary to have knowledge which is not defiled.

\footnote{146 \textit{Str.} 2.15.68.3.  
\textit{Str.} 2.15.68.3-69.1.}
Although Clement does not refer explicitly to the three ways of blessing/sin in Ps 1:1, it is evident that he has this in mind, since (1) this is the context in which he gives his interpretation; (2) Barnabas similarly connects the Law to the first psalm; and (3) he follows this interpretation of the three animals (“the three ways of abstinence from sin”) by quoting the end of the psalm (Ps. 1:4-6). So, he sees the three “walking,” “standing,” and “sitting” as being three ways of sin; but more than this he sees that the psalm itself provides teaching – as Clement himself says – for abstinence from sin. It shows how not to sin by word, by deed, and (though he does not explain this sin quite as clearly) in knowledge. While the link here may not be noted explicitly, I want to suggest that we can see these as mirroring Clement’s divine pedagogy. And because pedagogy is so prevalent throughout Clement’s works, it is unlikely that this is a simple coincidence. These three – “word,” “deed,” and “knowledge” – are seen to be representative of the spiritual progress, and reflective also of the trilogy’s pedagogy. “Word” may correspond to the “passions,” reminiscent of the epistle James where the tongue dominates (“steers”) the body. 148

“Deed” (ἔργος) corresponds directly to “action” (ἐνέργεια). And throughout the Stromateis, knowledge – γνῶσις – is the habit of the true Gnostic.

Identifying that Clement is intent on articulating the spiritual progress is essential for our understanding of his interpretation of the first psalm in the Stromateis. It is important because here we even see a different interpretation of the psalm than we did in the one in the Paedagogus. In it, we saw the psalm – literally “the Pedagogue” –

148 See how silence functions on all levels of the spiritual progress for Clement in Raoul Mortley, “The Theme of Silence in Clement of Alexandria,” Journal of Theological Studies 24 (1973): 197-202. Here we see that Clement’s view of the connection between the “tongue” and the “passions” is indeed reminiscent of James.
“counseling to repentance.”\textsuperscript{149} In this interpretation in the \textit{Stromateis}, we see Clement saying something different. Though the psalm continues to speak to sin and blessing, it is no longer the Pedagogue speaking, but now “the lawgiver” teaching; and more importantly, it does not teach repentance – turning away from sin (an \textit{action}) – but it teaches “abstinence from sin,” which is decidedly a \textit{habit}. There is nothing from which to turn away, since one is essentially sinless. This is not just seen in this short “ideal” interpretation of the psalm at the end of the longer passage; instead it is there nearly from the beginning of the passage. Clement writes, “The enlightening word releases (ἀφίημι) from sin.”\textsuperscript{150} Following this statement, he appears to give a quotation, which though not found in the Scriptures is reminiscent of Jeremiah 31 (among others): “In that time, says the Lord, they will look for Israel’s injustice, but it will not be there, and the sins of Judah, but they will by no means find it.”\textsuperscript{151} This is not speaking of repentance per se, but instead of a state of sinlessness in which repentance is not necessary, since sin is not a reality in such a person’s life.

Perhaps this seems a subtle or even pedantic distinction; however it is one that Clement makes himself. Abstinence from sin is one of the fundamental identifying marks of his true Gnostic. This is especially clear in the later books of the \textit{Stromateis}; abstinence from evils (ἀποχὴ κακῶν [ἐργῶν]\textsuperscript{152}), otherwise referred to as abstinence from sins (ἀποχὴ ἁμαρτημάτων\textsuperscript{153}), is one of the defining characteristics, along with

\textsuperscript{149} Paed. 1.10.93.1.
\textsuperscript{150} Str. 2.15.66.1-2.
\textsuperscript{151} Str. 2.15.66.2-3.
\textsuperscript{152} Str. 4.6.29.2; 4.17.109.3; 4.21.130.2; 4.22.135.1; 4.25.160.2; 6.7.60.1-3; 6.12.102.3; 6.16.138.1; 6.18.164.2; 7.12.72.3; 7.12.79.1.
\textsuperscript{153} Str. 6.12.103.4; 7.4.27.4.
beneficence (ἐὐποία, ἐὐεργετέω, or both together\textsuperscript{154}), which contributes to “gnostic perfection.”\textsuperscript{155} Though I need not go into it here, the fact that abstinence from sin is being referred to, even in the second book of the \textit{Stromateis}, signifies that Clement is speaking of the true Gnostic rather than the one of simple faith. Thus his interpretation differs – albeit subtly – to suit his own pedagogical program.

### 4 Conclusion

Clement’s understanding of the progress from faith to knowledge is central in forming his interpretation of the Bible. In the case of Psalm 1, one of Clement’s most frequently quoted Old Testament texts, the interpretive object of the psalm differs according to the stage of the subject who interprets or who receives the teaching. The first psalm can at once speak to the one who has simple faith, training them to repentance, while at the same time teaching and forming the true Gnostic’s habits, leading to abstinence from sin. This chapter, as we move on to the next two, has been intended to lay the foundation for a greater understanding of Clement’s Old Testament interpretation as speaking to, and being dependent on, Clement’s understanding of the spiritual progress.

\textsuperscript{154} Str. 6.12.102.3; 6.12.103.4; 6.18.164.2; 7.12.72.3.

\textsuperscript{155} For insight into the prominent theme of abstinence from evil and sin in Clement, and especially in \textit{Str.} 6, see Murphy, “Impassible State.”
Chapter 3
Creation of Humanity (Gen 1:26-27)

In the last chapter we saw that Clement, in his understanding of the spiritual progress from Πίστις to Γνῶσις, at once subtly combats Valentinian theology, while also carefully incorporating into his own theological framework those insights which he deems more acceptable to ecclesial Christianity. In this chapter we will see Clement doing the same thing, though much more intentionally engaging the biblical interpretation of the Valentinians. At the same time we will see the means by which Clement goes about arguing for the supremacy of his biblical interpretation over that of the heretics.

Though in many ways Mark Edwards’s study Catholicity and Heresy shows Clement’s debt to Valentinian speculative religious thought,¹⁵⁶ we must still recognize that Clement was more than a simple polemicist. At every point – and especially in his exegesis¹⁵⁷ – he is countering Valentinian claims. In this chapter the claims we will be discussing centre on the anthropology of Gen 1:26-27. I will compare the interpretation of this passage by the Valentinians with Clement’s, in order to show what is reactionary and also what is peculiar in Clement’s interpretation. It will be found that Clement’s interpretative methodology does not differ significantly from that of the Valentinians. In fact, in many ways he adopts the methods of the Valentinians (the “Gnostics so-called”). Clement retells the myth of creation and restoration in an “ecclesial” way, because he reinterprets the Scriptures; he also does so by reappropriating Plato’s contribution to the

¹⁵⁶ Mark Edwards, Catholicity and Heresy in the Early Church (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2009), 57-64.
¹⁵⁷ As Kovacs points out in many of her articles on Clement’s interpretation of the Bible: “Echoes of Valentinian Exegesis”; “Clement of Alexandria and Valentinian Exegesis”; “Grace and Works”; “Concealment and Gnostic Exegesis.”
creation myth. Valentinus, as many have argued (and along with others of the “Gnostics”), is reliant on Plato’s cosmology/cosmogony;\(^{158}\) Clement, in finding alternative parallels between the Scriptures and Plato (i.e. in sections which are not cosmological), refutes Valentinus’s conflation of the two philosophical systems, and gives a truly gnostic interpretation to the creation of humanity “in the image and likeness of God” (Gen 1:26). Not only does he give what was apparently a traditional ecclesial Christian interpretation of Gen 1:26-27, but that interpretation is in line with his own vision of the spiritual progress, from πίστις to γνῶσις.

Clement defends the orthodoxy of his interpretation in two ways. The first, which he does not dwell on as much as we might expect – especially given the interests of his contemporary orthodox writers\(^ {159}\) – is by the use of a “rule of faith.” Though he does not use the specific vocabulary of “rule of faith,” he is clearly using “ecclesiastical rule” (ἐκκλησιαστικὸς κανών) as a synonym for it.\(^ {160}\) The second, which is not only more

\(^{158}\) The origins of the various forms of “Gnosticism” is a complex question. For a recent survey of scholarly opinions, see Carl B. Smith, No Longer Jews: The Search for Gnostic Origins (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004), 19-43.

\(^{159}\) This is well known: earlier Irenaeus (Adversus haereses 1.10; 3.4), and slightly later the Latin-speaking/writing Tertullian (De praescriptione haereticorum 12-26; Adversus Marcionem 3.1; 4.5; Adversus Praxeum 3).

\(^{160}\) Str. 6.15 and 7.16 are the most clear in demonstrating Clement’s acceptance (despite his eccentricities) of a regula fidei according to apostolic tradition. We learn in these chapters that the rule of faith is important for the interpretation of Scripture, especially in combating the interpretations of the heretics, which are decidedly against this “rule.” Clement’s variations on a rule (κανόνα) are as follows: Str. 1.1.15.2: τὸν ... τῆς παραδόσεως κανόνα, in speaking of the apostolic tradition; Str. 1.19.96.1: τὸν κανόνα τῆς ἐκκλησίας, speaking of traditional praxis in the Lord’s Supper; 4.15.98.3: κανόνα τῆς πίστεως; Str. 6.15.125.3: κανόνα δὲ ἐκκλησιαστικός, where “the ecclesiastical rule” is described as “the concord and harmony of the Law and the Prophets in the covenant delivered at the coming of the Lord” (ANF); Str. 6.18.165.1-2: τῆς τοῦ κυρίου διδασκαλίας καὶ τὸν ἐκκλησιαστικὸν κανόνα, Clement demonstrating that his “gnostic” teaching is in accord with the Lord’s teachings and the rule of faith; Str. 7.7.41.3: τὸν ἐκκλησιαστικὸν κανόνα, again, the Gnostic is in accord with the ecclesiastical rule; Str.
pertinent to the central argument of my thesis, but which is also more prevalent in
Clement’s works, is the privilege of the Gnostic as interpreter of the Scriptures. The true
Gnostic is seen to have priority over all others – Jews, Greeks, heretics, and even those
with “simple faith” – in his/her interpretation of the Scriptures, because s/he is the one
who can see through the veil which God has placed over them.

1 The Valentinian Cosmogony, Cursorily

The basic Valentinian account of the creation of the world has become well known to
scholars of early Christianity over the last century. In its various forms, it was clearly one
of the most prevalent and widespread heresies in the earliest centuries of Christianity, and
it appears to have been relatively well known at that time also. Both Irenaeus in his
Adversus Haereses and Hippolytus in his Refutatio Omnium Haeresium give us early
accounts of what they see as the various schools of Valentinianism. In these polemical

7.15.90.2: τὸν ἐκκλησιαστικὸν ... κανόνα, where the heretics transgress the rule, “we”
follow it, in the interpretation of the Scripture; Str. 7.16.94.5: τὸν κανόνα τῆς ἀληθείας;
Str. 7.16.105.5: τὸν κανόνα τῆς ἐκκλησίας. Also see Eric F. Osborn, “Reason and the
Rule of Faith in the Second Century AD,” in The Making of Orthodoxy: Essays in
Honour of Henry Chadwick, ed. Rowan Williams (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge
University Press, 1989), 40-46; F. R. Montgomery Hitchcock, “The Creed of Clement of

The Gospel of Truth, which most scholars agree to be at least the closest
approximation of Valentinus’s own theology (and at most his own composition)
unfortunately says very little about Valentinian cosmology; see Bentley Layton, The
Doctrine of Valentinus the Gnostic,” Vigilae Christianae 50, no. 4 (1996): 331-34; R.
McL. Wilson, “Valentinianism and the Gospel of Truth,” in The Rediscovery of
Gnosticism, ed. Bentley Layton, 2 vols. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1980), 1: 133-45. However,
what it does have of a cosmogony largely agrees with the reports from Hippolytus,
Irenaeus, and Clement. On the reliability of early Christian accounts of Valentinianism
and other “sects,” see Michel Desjardins, “The Sources for Valentinian Gnosticism: A
Question of Methodology,” Vigilae Christianae 40, no. 4 (1986): 345. For a much more
adequate summary of the “Gnostic” Valentinian myth (including soteriology, which I do
not discuss), see J. Zandee, “Gnostic Ideas on the Fall and Salvation,” Numen 11, no. 1
works we see various schools, each of which put their own particular creative touches into the cosmological mythology. Both Irenaeus and Hippolytus relate the complicated effluences of the One (also “Father,” Bathus, etc.) into, eventually, thirty Aeons making up the Pleroma; all of these Aeons are placed into their own respective symmetrical copulative pairings, or syzygies. We learn something of the “fall” of Wisdom (Sophia, also called Achamoth), and her attempt, in imitation of the Father, to originate something from herself alone – that is without her respective syzygy. Because she was not the originating principle like the Father, all she was able to form was some undifferentiated mass, which was the state of things prior to the biblical creation account (Gen 1:2). The first and greatest of the syzygies, Nous and Aletheia, then produced an offspring (called alternatively Stauros, Horos or Metocheos) to protect the Pleroma from the mass that Sophia had created, and in doing so isolated Sophia from the other Aeons. Out of sympathy for her plight, the Aeons then decided to aid Sophia in her distress over being separated from the Pleroma. They sent to her “Jesus,” the “joint fruit of the Pleroma” (so named because it was produced by all the Aeons together).

Irenaeus also relates that angels of the same nature as Jesus were produced, as his “body

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162 Irenaeus, Adversus haereses 1.11.1.1.
163 Hippolytus, Refutatio 6.24-25; Irenaeus, Adversus haereses 1.1.2-3. With respect to these syzygies, the Excerpta seem to agree with Hippolytus’s description of the Father being alone. This is opposed to other descriptions (such as in Irenaeus, Adversus haereses 1.1.1), of the Father being paired with Silence (Sige; also Ennoia or Charis).
164 Irenaeus, Adversus haereses 1.4.1.
165 In the Excerpta, as well as Hippolytus, we appear to have one Sophia only, and not a “lower” and a “higher,” one on each side of the boundary. This appears to be according to a simpler, less developed, “Eastern” Valentinianism. See G. C. Stead, “The Valentinian Myth of Sophia,” Journal of Theological Studies 20 (1969): 78, 81-90.
166 Irenaeus, Adversus haereses 1.2.2.
167 Hippolytus, Refutatio 6.25; Irenaeus, Adversus haereses 1.2.3.
168 Hippolytus, Refutatio 6.26; Irenaeus, Adversus haereses 1.2.4.
guard.”  

Jesus successfully removed Sophia’s passions from her, transforming each of them into substances: animal desire, material, demons, and entreaty/repentance. The first of these – animal desire – we find out, is the Demiurge: the god of the Old Testament, and creator of the cosmos. When the Demiurge, thinking and proclaiming himself to be the greatest of all things, began to create, Sophia felt it necessary to exert control over him so that his creation might not be all bad, and so that it might be redeemable in some respect. It was this intervention, of which the Demiurge was ignorant, that led to the differentiation of human natures. Hippolytus writes that these three different natures contained three different substances upon their creation: (1) soul alone, (2) soul and demons, and (3) soul and logoi, which are from above.

We learn much more than this about Valentinian anthropology from Clement’s notes in the *Excerpta ex Theodoto*. They seem to agree with the creation of humanity as Hippolytus relates it:

> Those from Valentinus say with respect to the forming of the psychical body that a male seed was implanted by the Logos in the elect soul when it was asleep, and that this is an effluence of the angelic [seed], so that there may be no gap [between the Ogdoad and the material realm].

The “male seed” is likely identical with the *logoi* of Hippolytus’s description. Further, Clement goes on to say this about the Valentinians:

> The Valentinians say that the finest emanation of Wisdom is spoken of in “He created them in the image of God, male and female he created them.” Now the males from this emanation are the “election,” but the females are the “calling” and they call the male beings angelic, and the females themselves the superior seed. So

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169 Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses* 1.2.6.
173 *Exc. 2.1.*
also, in the case of Adam, the male remained in him, but all the female seed was taken from him and became Eve, from whom the females are derived, as the males from him. Therefore the males are drawn together with the Logos, but the females, becoming men, are united to the angels and pass into the Pleroma.\(^\text{174}\)

We see in this passage that there are natures that are destined to be saved. However, there are also those natures that will not be. Clement again comments that, “According to the Valentinians, those who came out from Adam, who are righteous, making their way through what has been created, were held in Space; but the others [who also came out from Adam], dwelling on the left, among those who were created in the darkness, feel the fire.”\(^\text{175}\) It is certainly more complicated than this, and I recognize that I have not filled in all the gaps of the myth. However, even the best accounts that we have, both second- and first-hand, appear to have gaps in them. My purpose for retelling the myth is to put the biblical interpretation of the Excerpta ex Theodoto into its broader theological, cosmological, and philosophical context.

I also want to note that, even from the time of Hippolytus, ecclesial Christians were arguing that these “gnosticizing” Christians were not Christian at all, but Platonic or Pythagorean. For example, nine chapters of the sixth book of Hippolytus’s Refutatio are taken up with proving this.\(^\text{176}\) No doubt this is a polemical device, but the point stands that the Valentinian mythology embraces much of biblical, Platonic, Pythagorean, and probably hermetic teachings. So much for the Valentinian background of the Excerpta.

### 2 Excerpta ex Theodoto

The work that is often referred to as Excerpta ex Theodoto can hardly be considered a

\(^{174}\) Exc. 21.1-3.  
\(^{175}\) Exc. 37.1-38.1.  
\(^{176}\) Hippolytus, Refutatio 6.16-24.
“work” in that the text was probably never intended for publication, but rather for Clement’s (or whomever’s) own reference. The *Excerpta* are appended to a manuscript of Clement’s *Stromateis*, along with the *Eclogae Propheticae* and the so-called eighth *stromateus*. These appear to have been placed there by an editor, perhaps even by someone who viewed themselves as Clement’s literary executor; in making public these other “works” of Clement’s, she or he made available a greater corpus of Clement’s published writings. In this manuscript it is properly entitled ἐκ τῶν Θεοδότου καὶ τῆς ἀνατολικῆς καλουμένης διδασκαλίας κατὰ τοὺς Οὐαλεντίνου χρόνους ἐπιτομαί. Though Casey believes that there is no particular school with which “oriental/eastern teaching” should be associated – thus Casey’s translation of the title, “Extracts from the works of Theodotus and the so-called ‘oriental teaching’ at the time of Valentinus” – it does appear that the teachings contained in the *Excerpta* are largely parallel to the “eastern” form of so-called Gnosticism that both Hippolytus and Irenaeus describe in their works. In keeping with this, Thomassen translates the title as if Theodotus’s

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179 *Exc*. 1.1.
180 The three primary sources relating two different schools of Valentinianism (“eastern” and “western” respectively) are the title of the *Excerpta*, Hippolytus, *Refutatio* 6.35.5-7, and Tertullian, *Adversus Valentinianos* 11.2. Thomassen, *The Spiritual Seed: The Church of the “Valentinians”* (Leiden; Boston, MA: Brill, 2008), 39-45, shows that although there is a distinction between them, it is hard to discern, since different sources give different accounts of the variations. However, he concludes that the difference between the “eastern” and “western” variants of Valentinianism is primarily with respect to soteriology (81-82). This is in keeping with the classic readings of the early Christian heresiologies; see, for example, Jean-Daniel Kaestli’s paper, “Valentinisme italien et valentinisme oriental: leurs divergences à propos de la nature du corps de Jésus,” in *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism*, ed. Bentley Layton, 2 vols. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1980), 1:391-
teaching is synonymous (καί, as adverb “also” or “even,” not as conjunction) with the “oriental teaching.” And as we will see, these extracts from Theodotus (whoever he is) appear to be in the eastern Valentinian tradition.

What I hope to do in the remainder of this section is lay out Theodotus’s interpretation of the biblical narrative of the creation of humanity, paying particular attention to the passages introduced above: Gen 1:26-27. I will also attempt to place Theodotus’s interpretation of the creation of humanity within the context of Valentinian understandings of the creation of Adam and his offspring. The explanation of this Valentinian interpretation of the creation is done in order to lay the groundwork for a better understanding of what precisely Clement is launching his polemic against in his own interpretation of the Gen 1:26-27.

In the Excerpta, as in Clement’s own works, emphasis is laid on creation “according to the image” (κατ’ εἰκόνα) and “according to the likeness” (καθ’ ὁμοίωσιν) of God (Gen 1:26). These two statements are not synonymous in the Excerpta; rather

403. In the same year as the publication of Thomassen’s work, Kalvesmaki argued that the geographical epithets of Valentinianism are all but useless: “Eastern vs. Italian Valentinianism?” *Vigiliae Christianae* 61, no. 1 (2008): 79-89. It seems to me that while for the heresiologists it may have been useful to classify the Valentinians into “eastern” and “western,” it is no more than a heuristic. If modern scholarship is to maintain this, then it must recognize it as such. At the same time, Kalvesmaki perhaps too readily dismisses the similarities amongst different groups of Valentinians, allowing for diversity while disavowing the unity of Valentinian thought.


182 Mark Edwards, “Clement of Alexandria and His Doctrine of the Logos,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 54, no. 2 (2000): 175-76, suggests the Theodotus of the Excerpta may be identical with the Theodotus of Byzantium whom Hippolytus takes pains to refute (*Refutation* 7.35.1-36.1). Sagnard is doubtful that this is the Theodotus to whom the Excerpta are referring, since Hippolytus’s Theodotus is an adoptionist, and this is at odds with the Valentinianism of the Excerpta; nor does he think it is the other Theodotus mentioned in the next chapter (*Refutatio* 7.36); Sagnard, *Extraits de Théodote*, 5.

183 Again, if Thomassen’s suppositions are correct. See note 180 above.
they refer to two different classes of people. Ὁ κατ’ ἐικόνα ἄνθρωπος is the one who has
“an earthly and material soul, irrational and of the same essence as the beasts.” On the
other hand, ὁ καθ’ ὁμοίωσιν ἄνθρωπος is “according to the likeness’ of the Demiurge
himself … into whom he breathed and inseminated, putting into him by the angels
something of the same essence as himself.” While it may appear in this description of
the two different ἄνθρωποι that they could be one and the same – one may simply exist
after the Demiurge/creator breathed into him – it is later made clear that these are entirely
different persons, and that they are representative of different classes of humanity. Thus
this myth serves to explain where the Valentinians, the ecclesial Christians, and the rest
of humanity came from, and what is the cause of their differences. A little after this
interpretation of Gen 1:26-27, Theodotus writes this:

    From Adam three natures are begotten: first is the irrational, whose [representative]
    was Cain; second is the rational and just, which was Abel; and third is the spiritual,
    which was Seth. And the one [made] of dust is “according to the image”; the
    psychical is “according to the likeness” of God; and the spiritual is according to its
    own.

Here it is seen very clearly how the three different classes are distinct from one another.
The one “according to the image” is the one merely from the dust; the one “according to
the likeness [of God]” is “psychical,” and the one that is not discussed with relation to
these two categories of Gen 1:26-27 is the “spiritual” which has its own nature, plainly
distinct from the other two. This corresponds to what we know of Valentinian
anthropology, and the way that the Valentinians related to, as well as differentiated
themselves from, the rest of humanity. The Valentinians are the “spiritual” ones, who

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184 Exc. 50.1.
185 Exc. 50.2.
186 Exc. 54.1-2.
have nothing to do with the Demiurge, since they are not of as low a state as his. The ecclesial Christians are the psychical ones who have a chance at attaining to salvation, though not all will. And there are those “dusty” ones that have no seed in them, and no likeness to the spiritual realm (Pleroma), and are therefore beyond any sort of redemption. This idea is directly corroborated in Theodotus’s own work not long after the above-quoted section. He writes this:

Our father Adam, the first human, is from the dusty earth. And if he had sowed out of the psychical and out of the spiritual [natures], just as he did out of the material, all people should have become equal and just, and the teaching should be in all. Because of [Adam’s uneven sowing] the material ones are many, whereas the psychical ones are not many – and the spiritual ones are rare. Thus the spiritual one is saved by nature, whereas the psychical one, being free willed, has a tendency both to faith and incorrupibility, as well as to faithlessness and corruption, according to personal choice. But the material one, by nature, is destroyed altogether.\(^{187}\)

Here, not only do we see a kind of allegorical interpretation of the creation narrative of Adam, and of his three sons, but we also see what the ecclesial Christians took issue with: the “fitting in” of the biblical narrative into a “gnostic” myth.

Further, as we saw briefly above, the Excerpta have some references to the “left hand” and the “right hand.” These have to do with those human natures that will be destroyed, and the others who may eventually be taken up into the Pleroma. Those on the right “know” the Saviour,\(^ {188}\) whereas those on the left were first to be created by the Demiurge before he had created light – which means they have no affinity with the light.\(^ {189}\) By contrast, “those on the right were put forward by the Mother [that is, Sophia] before the demand for the Light, but the seeds of the Church after the demand for Light,  

\(^{187}\) Exc. 56.1-3.  
\(^{188}\) Exc. 23.3.  
\(^{189}\) Exc. 34.1.
when the angelic elements of the seed had been put forth in the Male.”¹⁹⁰ It seems here that “the seeds of the Church” are a group superior even to those “on the left” and “on the right.” Likely they correspond with the three groups above: the “left” with the material, “right” with the psychical (which “the Mother put forward”), and the “seeds of the Church” with the spiritual “Gnostic.”¹⁹¹ Furthermore, the “right” and “left” seem to refer to those on the different sides of the Cross. We get this from the observation made by Theodotus (or whichever Valentinian writer Clement is quoting) that the Aeon called Stauros (also called Horos or Metocheos), that is “Cross,” is the boundary between the Pleroma and the created world. But like the symbol of the cross, not only is there this horizontal boundary, but also the vertical, which separates those things in the created world: “The Cross is a sign of the Limit in the Pleroma, for it divides the unfaithful from the faithful, as that divides the world from the Pleroma.”¹⁹² The reason this is so important is that for one of Clement’s more extended interpretations of Gen 1:26-27, this is something that he is combating.

As we will see in the section to follow, Clement by no means give a “literal” or “plain-sense” interpretation of Gen 1:26 – he is likewise ever the allegorist. Still, his interpretation of the creation of humankind in the image and likeness of God is interpreted in light of a different “myth”: that of the narrative from creation to restoration (ἀποκατάστασις) through the redemptive work of Christ. Thus the interpretation of what might seem like an insignificant passage only takes shape within a larger mythological framework – for Theodotus as well as for Clement.

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¹⁹⁰ Exc. 40.1.
¹⁹¹ This is in agreement with Irenaeus’s explanation in Adversus haereses 1.6.1.
¹⁹² Exc. 42.1.
3 Clement’s Anti-Valentinian Interpretation: Gen 1:26-27 and Plato’s *Theaetetus* 176b

The previous section set up what it is precisely that Clement is reacting against. The fact that the *Excerpta* come down to us appended to Clement’s works gives credence to the idea that in it we have at least an approximation of the Valentinianism against which Clement was reacting. And though we do not get thorough direct explanations of Valentinianism in Clement’s works as we do in Hippolytus or Irenaeus, these *Excerpta* give us insight into the object of much of Clement’s polemic. It is true that Clement in his theological thought is reacting against Valentinianism and other sects (αἱ ρέσεις), which he understands to be at odds with the truth; the same goes for his exegesis. Still, Clement cannot be judged simply a reactionary. He does not reject outright the systems of his opponents; instead he often appropriates them into his own theological and philosophical reasoning. More than anything this appears to be the case with respect to his appropriation of Valentinian thought. Much of this has been articulated in the last chapter on the first psalm: Clement, instead of envisioning classes of people (ἀνθρώποι) who are different “by nature,” sees choice (προαιρεσις) as central for leading one from infidelity (ἀπιστία) to faith (πίστις), and ultimately to perfection, or knowledge (γνῶσις). And in the same way that the last chapter showed this spiritual progress (προκοπή) working its way out in Clement’s own pedagogical exegesis, we see it in his interpretation of the creation narrative, especially Gen 1:26-27.

The two books in which we see this most are *Stromateis* 2 and 4. While *stromateus* 2 can be seen (along with the first book) as his synthesis/eclecticism of “Greek” and “barbarian” thought and his defense thereof, *stromateus* 4 is the beginning of his description of the true Gnostic, within the context of a discussion of martyrdom. Further
he makes his view regarding the “sects” and their relation to the Scriptures clear in the
first chapter of the fourth book: “Many refutations against the heterodox await us, trying
in writing to do away with what is brought forward by them, and to persuade them
against their will, cross-examining them by the Scriptures themselves.”\textsuperscript{193} Clement is
well aware that the “heterodox” whom he is attempting to “persuade” use the Scriptures
to form their own theological understandings, not least of humanity (as we saw in the
previous section); more explicitly, what we are trying to show in this chapter, Clement
lays out in the tenth chapter of the sixth book of the \textit{Stromateis}. With respect to the skills
and training that the true Gnostic ought to acquire, he writes this: “For what those toiling
in the heresies use wickedly, these the Gnostic will use for good.”\textsuperscript{194}

One of the common trends in Clement’s biblical interpretation is his use of what I
referred to in the last chapter as associative intertextuality. With Psalm 1, Clement’s use
the word “blessed” (μακάριος) conjures up for him all the other “beatitudes” in the
Scriptures. In this case, the words of Gen 1:26-27, conjure up for him more than just
other Scripture quotations. The passage most commonly associated with his quotation of
Gen 1:26 – that is καὶ εἶπεν ὁ θεός Ποιήσωμεν ἀνθρωπόν κατ᾽ εἰκόνα ἡμετέραν καὶ καθ᾽ ὀμοιωσιν – is actually what Clement understands to be Plato’s definition of “happiness”
or “the end” (τέλος). In the Theaetetus Plato’s Socrates sees happiness (εὐδαιμονία) to be
φυγῆ – “flight” – from earth to heaven; and φυγὴ δὲ ὀμοιωσις θεῶ κατὰ τὸ δυνατὸν· ὀμοιωσις δὲ δίκαιον καὶ ὅσιον μετὰ φρονήσεως γενέσθαι.\textsuperscript{195} Though I will provide

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{193} \textit{Str.} 4.1.2.3.
\item \textsuperscript{194} \textit{Str.} 6.10.83.1.
\item \textsuperscript{195} Plato, \textit{Theaetetus} 176b. See Henny Fiskå Hägg, “Deification in Clement of
Alexandria with a Special Reference to His Use of Theaetetus 176B,” \textit{Studia Patristica} 46 (2010): 169-73; further, for the importance of this verse for Plato’s thought, and for
specific examples below of how precisely he uses this connection to interpret Gen 1:26, I want to put forward an example now in order to demonstrate just how intentionally linked the two concepts are for Clement. In the fifth book of the *Stromateis* Clement writes this:

> Man (ἄνθρωπος) is “according to the image and likeness.” For the image (εἰκών) of God is the divine and royal word, the impassible man (ἀνθρώπως); and the image (εἰκών) of the image (εἰκών) is the human mind. And by a different name, if one wishes to apprehend assimilation (ἐξομοίωσις), he may find it in Moses, following the divine address. For it says, “Walk after the Lord your God and keep his commandments.” And all those who follow and serve God, I think, are virtuous. Therefore the Stoics have said that the end (τέλος) of philosophy is to live following nature, and Plato [has said it is] likeness (ὁμοίωσις) to God (as we showed in the second *stromateus*).¹⁹⁶

At the beginning of this passage we see Gen 1:26 (“Man is ‘according to the image and likeness’”), and at the end a reference to Plato’s *Theaetetus* 176b (“the end… [is] likeness to God”), which (as Clement notes) is given fuller treatment in *Stromateis* 2.19-22. There is no doubt that what Clement is doing here is conflating the two expressions. We will see that he is doing something analogous to the Valentinians in as much as he is attempting to create a synthesis of Platonic understandings of humanity and its destiny, and plainly Christian ones. However, we will see he does this very differently than the Valentinians.¹⁹⁷

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¹⁹⁶ Str. 5.14.94.3-95.2.
¹⁹⁷ While Lautaro Roig Lanzillotta, “A Way of Salvation: Becoming Like God in Nag Hammadi,” *Numen* 60 (2013): 71-102, gives a picture from Nag Hammadi of a Platonic “spiritual progress” in which one attains to become “like God,” it does not seem to me that this spiritual progress must be Platonic in any respect. The idea of a progression in virtue, and to becoming “like God” – or else, as he notes for “females becoming male” – was equally as prevalent in, for example, Stoic thought. At any rate, if
Clement understands Valentinus and his followers to have conceived of the “image” and the “likeness” as two groups distinct by nature (respectively the “material” non-Christians, the “psychical” ecclesial Christian – along with another, the “spiritual” so-called Gnostics). On the other hand, Clement sees “image” and “likeness” as two stages in the spiritual progress of the ecclesial Christian. This is demonstrated through his interpretation of Gen 1:26. As noted, the two books most concerned with this are *Stromateis* 2 and 4 – and to a lesser extent the *Paedagogus*. The first section in *Stromateis* 2 in which Gen 1:26-27 and *Theaetetus* 176b play a significant role discusses the definition of happiness (εὐδαιμονία), which is the end/purpose (τέλος) of humanity. Clement writes,

He is the Gnostic who is “according to the image and likeness” of God, who imitates God as much as possible, lacking in none of the things which tend towards the possibility of likeness, practicing self control, submitting, living righteously, ruling the passions, bestowing of what he has as much as possible, and doing good both in word and in deed.

This is the beginning of a section (*Stromateis* 2.19-22) which discusses, as I said, the end of humanity. We know that for Clement the end is conceived of as γνῶσις. According to this passage that same Gnostic is “according to the image and likeness of God.” This is the discussion around which much of Clement’s interpretation of this biblical verse will

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198 I want to note that this is only how Clement perceives Valentinianism; it is in this respect not an accurate portrayal of Valentinianism as we now know it. As an example from above, in Clement’s own *Excerpta*, we have a Valentinian writer saying that the “psychical” Christians are able to attain salvation. Whether this salvation is conceived of as a progress from “image” to “likeness,” or from πίστις to γνῶσις, is harder to discern. At any rate, we do see in the Nag Hammadi texts a less deterministic picture of human natures than the classic early Christian heresiological portrayal of the “Gnostics.” There is clearly some form of spiritual progress, which is seen, for example, in Roig Lanzillotta, “A Way of Salvation.”

199 *Str.* 2.19.97.1-2.
revolve. Much more precisely, Clement, like Valentinus and his followers, sees “image” and “likeness” as referring to two distinct groups. But this is far from arbitrary: Clement does this on the basis of the biblical text itself. Later on in this same section of Stromateis 2, Clement asks the rhetorical question of the reader, “Is it not so that some of our [interpreters] have taken up the argument that man received what is ‘according to the image’ immediately upon his creation, but that he will receive afterwards what is ‘according to the likeness’ in the future after his perfection?” 200 This appears to have been a common interpretation of this passage for early Christian writers. 201 And the interpretation comes about on the basis of Gen 1:26-27. In verse 26, God deliberates, saying, “Let us make man according to our image and likeness.” However, following that in verse 27, the narrator states that, “God made man according to his image.” There is no mention in the second verse that God ended up fashioning humanity according to his

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200 Str. 2.22.131.5-132.1.
201 For an excellent assessment of Clement’s own theological (as opposed to strictly exegetical) understanding of the “image” and the “likeness,” see Augustinus Mayer, Das Gottesbild im Menschen nach Clemens von Alexandrien (Rome: Pontificum Institutum S. Anselmi, 1942). For an in depth look at the same passage in Second Temple Judaism and in Paul, see Jacob Jervell, Imago Dei, Gen. 1,26f. im Spätjudentum, in der Gnosis und in den paulinischen Briefen (Göttingen: Vandenhoek & Ruprecht, 1960); here we do see the beginnings of a “twofold” understanding of the creation of humanity, though not in the same way – for example in Philo’s idea of the “heavenly Adam” and the “earthly Adam” (64-67). For an interpretation similar to Clement’s (though it is unlikely that Clement is getting the interpretation directly from here given the differences) see Irenaeus’s understanding of humanity’s creation and destiny in Anders-Christian Jacobsen, “The Importance of Genesis 1-3 in the Theology of Irenaeus,” Zeitschrift für antikes Christentum 8, no. 2 (2004): 299-316. For a book that gives a comprehensive look at the early history of interpretation of this verse – and especially in the context of middle- and neo-Platonism – see Hubert Merki, Homoiōsis Theōi: von der platonischen Angleichung an Gott zur Gottähnlichkeit bei Gregor von Nyssa (Freiburg: Paulusverlag, 1952); R. McL. Wilson, “The Early History of the Exegesis of Gen 1:26,” Studia Patristica 1 (1957): 423-37, suggests that these two verses (Gen 1:26-27) have not been given significant treatment, and that they ought to in the future; he appears to have been unaware of these earlier successful attempts to do so!
likeness also. There is one more indication in the *Paedagogus* that Clement is aware of this interpretation, and that he follows it:

The view I take is that [Christ] himself formed the man (ἄνθρωπος)\(^{202}\) out of the dust, and regenerated him by water, and grew him by the Spirit, and trained him by the Word, to adoption and salvation, guiding him by holy commandments, so that, in transforming the earth-born man into a holy and heavenly [man] by approaching humanity, he might fulfill to the utmost that divine utterance, “Let us make man according to our image and likeness.” And indeed Christ became this fulfillment of what God had spoken; but the rest of humanity is conceived as being created only in his image.\(^{203}\)

Here Clement speaks of the relationship between Christ/the Logos and the rest of humanity, clearly showing that “the rest of humanity is… created merely in [God’s] image.” However, Clement clarifies that there are two places where humanity will appear “according to God’s likeness.” The first is in Christ following his incarnation. The second is in the one who is regenerated by water, grown in the Holy Spirit, trained by Christ’s word to adoption and salvation, and directed in the holy commandments. Though there are other mentions of Christ bearing both the image and likeness of God in his humanity,\(^{204}\) Clement’s recurring interpretation of this passage is with respect to the Christian who is being trained in righteousness: the true Gnostic.\(^{205}\)

Twice in the same section of the second book of the *Stromateis* – once before and once after a long doxography of various philosophical “sects” (αἱρέσεις) – Clement sees that Plato comes the closest to understanding this Genesis-informed Christian view of

\(^{202}\) I understand this to be Adam, thus specifically “man,” not generically “human.”

\(^{203}\) *Paed.* 1.12.98.2-3.

\(^{204}\) Str. 5.14.94.5-6; *Paed.* 1.2.4.1-2; 1.3.9.1-2; *Prot.* 10.98.3-4.

\(^{205}\) Laura S. Nasrallah, “The Earthen Human, the Breathing Statue: The Sculpture God, Greco-Roman Statuary, and Clement of Alexandria,” in *Beyond Eden* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 110-37, makes the further suggestion that Clement interprets the two separate accounts of humanity’s creation to be indicative of the same thing: that humanity’s creation (in the first account) is less than its destiny (which is pointed to in the second account) (113-14).
humanity’s relationship to the Divine. In the first he writes this:

Plato the philosopher, defining happiness (εὐδαιμονία) as the end (τέλος), says that it is “likeness to God (ὁμοίωσις τῷ θεῷ) according to ability” (Theae. 176b), whether agreeing with the teaching of the Law (“for great natures that are stripped of passions sometimes hit the mark respecting the truth,” as the Pythagorean Philo says in relating the things of Moses), or instructed by certain sayings of the time, thirsting as he always was for instruction. For the Law says, “Walk after the Lord your God, and keep my commandments.” For the Law calls assimilation (ἐξομοίωσις) “following”; and such a “following” assimilates according to ability (see Theae. 176b). The Lord says, “Be pitiful and merciful, as your heavenly father is merciful.”

The way Clement sees Plato’s philosophy relating to Christian truth has to do with his understanding of the divine economy as delivered to the Greeks before the advent of Christ. But for our purposes, it suffices to say that for Clement revelation from God is not confined to the Scriptures alone (though he does place their revelatory authority above all other sources). At any rate, given what Clement has apprehended from the Scriptures, one can see how he would be inclined to place Plato in agreement with them. And though at this time he does not state that Plato had read the “barbarian philosophy,” much of his argument in the Stromateis is dedicated to showing how the Greek philosophers plagiarized from much earlier “barbarian” – that is to say “Eastern,” and ultimately Hebrew – philosophy. What is more, Clement, as we saw in the last chapter, is never against using one part of Scripture to interpret another. Here he understands “likeness” to God be synonymous with “following” God. Thus we see that his teaching in this case is entirely in agreement with the passage of the Paedagogus above where he sees obeying Christ’s (and God’s) commandments as identical to “likeness” to God.

Once more, after the long doxography of what the various philosophers have

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206 Str. 2.19.100.2-4.
207 This is throughout Stromateis 1 and 2.
claimed as the τέλος and εὐδαιμονία, Clement places Plato at the end. Clement refers to the pertinent part of Plato’s *Theaetetus* 176b three times in this short passage (we saw one in the quotation above), once quoting it,\(^{208}\) and twice paraphrasing it.\(^{209}\) Though only on one of these occasions is Gen 1:26 directly related to the discussion, in all of them “likeness to God,” which Clement has already demonstrated to be synonymous with the “likeness” of Gen 1:26, is conceived of as the τέλος. Further, “following” (ἄκολουθία) and “imitation” (μίμησις and cognates) continue to be used as synonyms for “likeness.”

Though there are other shorter passages that deal with the “twofold nature”\(^{210}\) of humanity that is expressed in the phrase “according to the image and likeness [of God],” this one in *Stromateis* 2 is the most extended. Many of the other sections of Clement’s works that deal with Gen 1:26 are concerned almost solely with the Gnostic him/herself. This is where we can truly see just how different Clement’s understanding of the “twofold” nature of humanity (“according to the image and likeness”) is from the Valentinian one. Clement claims on multiple occasions that the Valentinians argue for salvation “according to nature.”\(^{211}\) That is to say that one cannot *choose* whether he or she has the “spiritual seed” or not; it has simply been implanted from the beginning (by Sophia through the Demiurge): one cannot choose to be a simple psychical ecclesiastical Christian or a spiritual “gnostic” one. Clement, as we have seen in the last chapter on the

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\(^{208}\) *Str.* 2.19.99.3.

\(^{209}\) *Str.* 2.22.131.5-6; 2.22.136.6.


\(^{211}\) *Str.* 2.3.10.2; 5.1.3.3.
first Psalm, counters this perceived aspect of Valentinianism with a robust theology of human free will. In the same section of the *Stromateis* that we have been discussing, Clement writes this:

> Nobility is itself shown clearly in choosing (αἱρέω) and practising what is best. Then did such nobility benefit Adam? No mortal was his father; for he himself was the father of people in the beginning. He willingly chose (αἱρέω) what is shameful, following his wife, and had no care for what is true and good. On this account he exchanged his immortal life for mortal life, but not forever.\(^{212}\)

In the same chapter he writes this:

> For in the [statement] “according to the image and likeness,” as we have said before, it is not disclosed with respect to the body..., but with respect to the mind and reason, by which the Lord fittingly impresses the seal of likeness to rule. For governments do not succeed on account of corporeal qualities, but by judgments (κρίσεις) of the mind.\(^{213}\)

For Clement, coming to be the true Gnostic is not a matter of the Demiurge’s implantation of some “spiritual seed,” but it is a matter of choosing, judgments, and “practicing what is best.” This is how one attains to the likeness of God.

The idea that the true Gnostic is the only one able to attain to the likeness of God is seen much more in book 6, and especially book 4 of the *Stromateis*. In Clement’s extended interpretation of the Beatitudes, he also mentions the image and the likeness. However, here we see him reacting against the Valentinians’ understanding of those who stand on the “right” and those on the “left.” Like the Valentinians, Clement also accordingly separates out those who will perish from those who will not. In the *Excerpta ex Theodoto* we see that “those who are righteous, making their way through what has been created, were held in Space; but the others [who also came out from Adam], dwelling on the left, among those who were created in the darkness, feel the

\(^{212}\) *Str.* 2.19.98.3-99.1.  
\(^{213}\) *Str.* 2.20.102.6-7, emphasis added.
fire.”\textsuperscript{214} That is, they feel the fire of destruction. However, we see that Clement (now countering the Valentinians) has it that whether one is on the left or on the right is dependent on choice.\textsuperscript{215} One can choose to remain merely “according to the image,” or to progress to life “according to likeness to the Saviour.”\textsuperscript{216} It is those who “draw near to the word of salvation on account of the good itself… [who] stand on the right hand of the sanctuary.”\textsuperscript{217} Clement’s re-interpretation of the Valentinian language of “right hand” and “left hand” associates the terms with the “likeness” and the “image,” respectively. He writes, “And does not the [expression] ‘according to the likeness and image’ emerge here – that those who are ‘according to the likeness’ of the Saviour live as fellow citizens, while those who stand on the left hand are ‘according to their image’?”\textsuperscript{218}

The fourth book of the \textit{Stromateis} is taken up with the idea of the martyr, who is also the perfect Gnostic: that is, the one who chooses what is good for its own sake. The sixth is altogether taken up with the Gnostic, much like the seventh after it. In these we get a better picture of how he interprets the “likeness” to be in accord with the perfect gnostic life. He writes in the fourth book, for example, that doing what is good for its own sake is to “pass life after the image and likeness of God.”\textsuperscript{219} But he expands upon the picture. After typically speaking of the Gnostic as the one who follows the saying “be perfect, even as your father is,”\textsuperscript{220} we learn that s/he is also the person who is “waiting to

\textsuperscript{214} \textit{Exc.} 37.1-38.1.  
\textsuperscript{215} \textit{Str.} 4.6.30.2-3.  
\textsuperscript{216} \textit{Str.} 4.6.30.1.  
\textsuperscript{217} \textit{Str.} 4.6.29.4-30.1.  
\textsuperscript{218} \textit{Str.} 4.6.30.1-2.  
\textsuperscript{219} \textit{Str.} 4.22.137.1-2.  
\textsuperscript{220} \textit{Str.} 4.22.137.3.
put on the divine form (σχῆμα).”²²¹ Here he uses σχῆμα as a synonym for “likeness,” such that we get another picture of what this “likeness” is. Knowing that σχῆμα also can refer to a “fashion” or “dress,” Clement puts forward a picture of the Gnostic who in his/her perfection is being clothed in the Divine. On another occasion in the sixth book of the Stromateis, he writes that, “as silver is often purified, so is the just man brought to the test, becoming the Lord’s coin and receiving the royal image (χάραγμα)… that is, when the gnostic soul is in many ways sanctified, through release from earthy fires.”²²² This is apparently a metaphor of the image of a Caesar or some other monarch being pressed onto a coin. Thus we see that through trials the true Gnostic is refined and acquires likeness to God. Indeed, later in the same passage he states that “perfection abides in the unalterable habit of doing good according to the likeness (ὁμοίωσις) of God,”²²³ thus showing that χάραγμα is synonymous with ὁμοίωσις. Using these pictures – “clothing” and “engraving” – as synonyms for likeness gives us a broader picture of what Clement imagines when he interprets Gen 1:26 in this way.

Though Clement regularly uses “likeness” to refer to the state of perfection, he is not entirely regular in his use of language. In the sixth stromateus he makes an exceptional statement: “He who is made like (ἐξομοιόω) the Saviour is also devoted to saving; performing unerringly the commandments as far as the human nature may admit of the image (εἰκών).”²²⁴ This statement makes εἰκών (“image”) synonymous with ὁμοίωσις (“likeness”); however, we know based on his customary usage that here what he names “image” – along with the verbal form of ὁμοίωσις (“made like”) – is the τέλος

²²¹ Str. 4.22.138.1, emphasis added.
²²² Str. 6.7.60.1-2, emphasis added.
²²³ Str. 6.7.60.3, emphasis added.
²²⁴ Str. 6.9.77.5.
of his theological system, which is “likeness.” Thus we see, except for this one slight irregularity, that his interpretation of Gen 1:26-27 governs his use of the words “image” and “likeness” in his theology of the creation and destiny of humanity.

4 Interpretive Privilege of the True Gnostic
In dealing with the heresies of the Valentinians, Clement shows his interpretation to be superior to theirs not just because it is according to the “ecclesiastical rule,” but even more so because the true Gnostic alone is privileged to see through the veiled Scriptures. Karen Jo Torjesen has drawn attention to the fact that there is an “Alexandrian” (by which she apparently means corresponding to Philo and Origen) “tradition of the inspired interpreter.” In her paper she sees these two figures as biblical interpreters as well as prophets and teachers. Though she does not do much in the way of substantiating her arguments in reference to the primary texts, the point stands. Each of these interpreters has criteria not only for how to interpret (methodology), but also for who is fit to interpret. In passing over Clement – as so many do when speaking of an “Alexandrian” tradition of biblical interpretation – she has neglected the one whose doctrine of the inspired interpreter is the most profound. Recently Peter Martens has followed up on Torjesen’s suggestions with his dissertation-turned-monograph Origen and Scripture: The Contours of the Exegetical Life. He argues – rather convincingly – that Origen’s vision of biblical interpretation is more than simply putting a methodology into place (about which so many monographs have already been written); it is about someone

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226 Martens, Origen and Scripture.
227 Notable ones being Henri de Lubac, Histoire et esprit: l’intelligence de l’Écriture d’après Origène (Paris: Aubier, 1950); R. P. C. Hanson, Allegory and Event: A
who through the spiritual progress has attained to a pious likeness to God, and so has
privilege in interpreting. While Martens does not quite express it like this in his
monograph, this idea of the interpreter who is privileged through his spiritual ascent is
directly inherited from Clement himself.

The reason that Clement has such a profound view of the privileged interpreter is
that he has a comprehensive vision of the “holy man”: the true Gnostic. Clement has such
a compendious view of the true Gnostic in his/her learning, life, thoughts, prayers, and in
every other way, that it is obvious to him that this same person is also privileged to teach
the Scriptures with the greatest insight into the Divine. The two chapters where this is
seen the most in his works are Stromateis 6.15 and 7.16. The former speaks of the
interpreter in his/her own right; the latter speaks of the one who interprets truly, in
opposition to the many heresies.228

Stromateis 6.15 begins with the assertion that “The Gnostic is impressed with the
closest likeness: the mind of the Teacher.”229 And it is this same Gnostic who, Clement
states, “teaches worthily… those capable of being built to a lofty height; and begins the
doing of what is spoken, in accordance with the example of life.”230 And though Clement
opens this long chapter with the mention of the Gnostic, most of it is taken up with the
main discussion concerning the veiled nature of the Scriptures (which will be discussed at
length in the following chapter). For now it is enough to comment that Clement clearly

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228 Thus when I speak of privilege I am speaking properly of one who has authority
over and against another.

229 Str. 6.15.115.1.

230 Str. 6.15.115.1-2.
teaches that “the holy words are hidden.”

This is important to note, because towards the end of the chapter Clement says this: “The truth is not for all people; it is veiled in many ways, causing the light to arise only on those who are initiated in knowledge (γνῶσις).” He hints at this again in the same chapter by saying that “some look to the body of the Scriptures, the expressions and the names…, but others see through to the thoughts and what is revealed by the names.”

Clement’s discussion in Stromateis 7.16 is even more enlightening as to the status of the gnostic interpreter. The seventh book of the Stromateis is almost exclusively devoted to the discussion of the true Gnostic. He does this in a different way than he has in the previous books, introducing the seventh by saying, “It is now time to show the Greeks that the Gnostic alone is really pious.”

Because he is addressing the Greek, throughout this book he quotes Scripture less than he does in the others. Still, Stromateis 7.16 is taken up with Clement’s argument for the supremacy of the Scriptures as the true testimonies of God. While Scripture demonstrate the truth, everything else is simply opinion; it is this opinion that characterizes the heretic. Clement writes,

While all people have the same judgment, some who follow a persuasive word, make arguments, and others who give themselves up to pleasures, force Scripture towards their lusts. But the one who loves the truth, I think, needs vigour of the soul. For those who make the greatest attempts must fail in things of the greatest importance, unless, receiving the rule of truth by itself, they might hold to the truth. But such people as these, falling away from the straight path, suitably fail in most individual points, for the reason that they do not have means of judging of what is true and what is false, being trained precisely what it is necessary to choose. For if they had acquired it, they would have obeyed the divine Scriptures.

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231 Str. 6.15.116.1.
232 Str. 6.15.129.4, emphasis added.
233 Str. 6.15.132.3.
234 Str. 7.1.1.1.
235 Str. 7.16.94.4-6.
Thus it is only through the demonstration of the Scriptures that anyone can come to the truth, without falling away. While this is the case, Clement puts forward the argument that there are those who do in fact read and adhere to the Scriptures faithfully. Though some Christians of simple faith can read the Scriptures faithfully (Clement wants to make this clear), it is the true Gnostic who is so immersed in the Scriptures that s/he is the only one who can see their meaning clearly:

Therefore our Gnostic alone, having grown old in the Scriptures themselves, maintaining apostolic and ecclesiastical orthodoxy in doctrines, who lives most correctly according to the gospel, should search to discover proofs from the law and the prophets, having been sent forth by the Lord. For I think that the life of the Gnostic is nothing other than deeds and words following in the tradition of the Lord. That the Gnostic is privileged, authoritative, and in line with the apostolic tradition, manifests itself in his own biblical interpretation.

Presumably Clement himself is one such Gnostic. (How can one teach what he does not know?) Thus his interpretation of Gen 1:26-27, among all of his other biblical interpretations and teachings, is one demonstration of this privileged position. Not only is Clement, as a true Gnostic, privileged above the simple faithful; he is also especially privileged above the heretics. He uses his position of privilege to show that his interpretation of Gen 1:26-27 is correct, where the Valentinian one is not. Thus, in light of his discussions of the privileged gnostic interpreter in these two passages (Stromateis 6.15 and 7.16), we are able to see Clement himself in this same privileged position.

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236 Str. 7.15.90.5: “It is said that it is on account of ‘those that are approved that heresies exist.’ He calls ‘approved’ either those who have arrived to faith (πίστις), presenting more discriminately the teaching of the Lord… or those who have already become approved both in life and knowledge (γνῶσις).” Also Str. 7.16.95.9: “Those who have only had a taste of the Scriptures are believers, while those who, having advanced further, and know the truth exactly, are Gnostics.”

237 Str. 7.16.104.1-2.
Although his interpretation might appear to his reader to be valuable in its own right (and in its accordance with the rule of faith), it is all the more valuable because it is spoken from the mouth of the one who has attained “likeness to God, as much as possible.”

5 Conclusion
This chapter has dealt with both the Valentinians’ and Clement’s interpretations of Gen 1:26-27. From this it is clear that Clement, in reacting to Valentinian exegesis, is doing two things. First, he is rejecting the Valentinian interpretation of the Scriptures that he sees as claiming “salvation by nature,” rather than by God’s gracious election (normally “providence,” πρόνοια), along with human choice or free will. The second thing is that he appropriates what is beneficial in the Valentinian doctrines into ecclesial Christian teaching – and ultimately into his true “Gnosticism.” Theodotus and other Valentinians interpret Gen 1:26-27 to say that there are different natures according to God’s ordinance and creation: the material who are “according to the image” of the Demiurge, the psychical (ecclesial) who are “according to [his] likeness,” and the spiritual who are “according to their own [nature],” who were implanted with the superior seed. Clement similarly takes the “image” and the “likeness” to be expressions of different classes of people. However, they are not different “by nature.” There is no human nature which is saved “according to its own.” If one is “according to the image” it is by choice; if one is “according to the likeness” it is also by choice. Further, one – again, by choice – may progress from the mere image, into the likeness of God, which is the destiny of humanity. Such an interpretation of this important anthropological passage is not only according to Clement’s own gnostic system, but it is, he notes, from an even earlier Christian interpreter. It is even in accordance with the κανών ἐκκλησιαστικός. But Clement goes
further than this, and allows the one “according to the image” to be the one with simple
faith, whereas the one who is “according to the likeness” is the true Gnostic. And though
we see that there are two states which are “according to the likeness” – the one of the
Gnostic in this life, and the one of Christians in the life to come\textsuperscript{238} – it is the former upon
which Clement focuses. It is this same Gnostic who is privileged to interpret the
Scriptures truly, for the Church.

\textsuperscript{238} See Salvatore R. C. Lilla, \textit{Clement of Alexandria: A Study in Christian
Chapter 4
The Gnostic Exposition of the Decalogue

In the last two chapters we have seen that the Gnostic is the primary focus of Clement’s interpretation of the Old Testament. We have also seen that Clement interprets the Scriptures according to the divine pedagogy from πίστις to γνῶσις. And apart from this constructive Christian focus of his interpretation, we saw especially in the last chapter that Clement counters the claims of his opponents. But even in these polemical, anti-Valentinian interpretations, the true Gnostic remains central to Clement’s understanding of biblical interpretation. In this final case study, before we conclude, the Gnostic continues to be at centre-stage. For, in the passage examined in this chapter, Clement puts forward his only explicit example of a “gnostic exposition.”

That the Scriptures are veiled is seen time and again throughout Clement’s *Stromateis*; that the Gnostic alone is able to see the form behind the veil, is equally as clear. There is no place where this is more evident than in *Stromateis* 6.15 to 6.16. *Stromateis* 6.16 comprises the whole of Clement’s gnostic exposition of the Ten Commandments. Though this expository passage is very important in its own right for our discussion of his interpretation of the Old Testament, it must be examined in the context within which Clement has thoughtfully placed it. The gnostic exposition of the Decalogue is put forward as an example of a truly gnostic reading of Scripture within the context of two larger discussions that take place throughout the *Stromateis*: symbolic/mystical interpretation, and the true Gnostic. *Stromateis* 6.15 should be considered the height of Clement’s discussion of the former, and nearing the pinnacle of the latter.
As noted in the chapter on Psalm 1, the *Stromateis* has a pedagogical shape to it – within Clement’s trilogy – and books 4 through 7 (though even before that) reflect primarily on the highest spiritual achievement: γνῶσις. And, as seen in the previous chapter, one of the things with which the Gnostic is concerned is proper biblical interpretation. Thus Judith Kovacs has pointed out that each of these last four books of the *Stromateis* includes one extended example of biblical interpretation.⁴³⁹ Although the exposition of the Decalogue is the only occasion that Clement refers to one explicitly as a gnostic exposition (and I think this is important), we can infer that the other three are indicative of the same sort of exposition. While the examples in books 4 and 7 interpret New Testament passages, those in 5 and 6 interpret passages of the Old Testament. In chapter 5, we have Clement’s interpretation of the Tabernacle and its furnishings; in 6, we have the focus of this chapter: the Decalogue. The analogy between these two interpretations is important, because both are notably influenced by the context in which Clement places them. The fifth book is largely taken up with the symbolic interpretation of, among other things, the Scriptures; thus Clement’s interpretation of the Tabernacle relies heavily upon symbolical interpretation. The sixth book is taken up with the importance of training for γνῶσις through, among other things, encyclical studies; thus Clement’s interpretation is concerned with the use of these disciplines – these μαθήματα. Because Judith Kovacs has offered an excellent paper on the interpretation of the Tabernacle, and especially how it relates to the gnostic progress,⁴⁴⁰ I will put forward an explanation of his interpretation of the Decalogue.

This chapter will be arranged into three sections. The first is related to Clement’s

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⁴⁴⁰ Kovacs, “Concealment and Gnostic Exegesis.”
understanding of the symbolic, or veiled, nature of Scripture. Though he discusses this more in the fifth book of the *Stromateis* than in the sixth, Clement’s preface to his gnostic exposition of the Decalogue is partly taken up with a discussion of it. I will follow this by two sections concerned directly with his interpretation of the Decalogue. The first is his use of interpretive μαθήματα, or the ἐγκύκλιος παιδεία – “encyclical disciplines”; the second is what is properly “gnostic” in his interpretation of the Decalogue.

One further note: past scholarship on Clement’s interpretation of the Decalogue is very scant. Most scholars who touch on the subject of ancient interpretation of the Decalogue often simply mention it in passing. There are a few, however, who have noted some of its more significant characteristics. Bourgeault’s analysis of early Christian use of the Ten Commandments from the years AD 60 to 220 only briefly discusses Clement interpretation of them, but nevertheless still manages to see how important γνώσις is, perhaps because he analyses the Ten Commandments in each of Clement’s works separately: the *Protrepticus*, the *Paedagogus* and the *Stromateis*.241 Doing this, it is hard not to notice the movement that I have argued is central to Clement and his trilogy: the divine pedagogy. Robert Grant, in an article dedicated to early interpretation of the Decalogue,242 and Alison Salvesen, in her paper covering early Latin, Greek, and Syriac interpretations of the Decalogue (all in 19 pages!), also note that this movement is evident through the progression of the three works.243 Salvesen mentions something of

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243 Alison G. Salvesen, “Early Syriac, Greek, and Latin Views of the Decalogue,” in *The Decalogue through the Centuries: From the Hebrew Scriptures to Benedict XVI,*
his methods in this passage of the *Stromateis*, but constrained by the length of the chapter is unable to discuss how the journey to \(\gammaν\omegaσ\iota\) is related to the techniques that Clement uses in his interpretation; the same goes for Bourgeault and for Grant. As we will see below Kalvesmaki also discusses this section of the *Stromateis*, which he refers to as “On the Decalogue,” though his primary concerns are the “theology of arithmetic” (arithmology) and Clement’s anti-Gnostic polemics.\(^{244}\)

1 Scripture’s Veiled Meaning

Because in the second chapter, on Clement’s interpretation of the first psalm, I sketched the movement that takes place from \(παι\delta\alphaγωγ\iota\) to \(δι\δασκα\alpha\iota\) – from the *Paedagogy* to the *Stromateis*, from \(π\iota\sigma\tau\iota\) to \(γν\omegaσ\iota\) – in this section I want to focus primarily on Clement’s gnostic interpretation as such. While, in describing Clement’s true Gnostic, one should not forget the stages that went before \(γν\omegaσ\iota\), I will constrain my discussion to the interpretation of the Decalogue according to the true Gnostic alone, since in the sixth book of the *Stromateis* Clement’s attention is devoted to the same. Thus it will suffice to rely on those who have gone before and noticed that Clement is consistent in his vision of the divine pedagogy with respect to his interpretation of the Old Testament.

That Clement is concerned here with \(γν\omegaσ\iota\) and the true Gnostic is not only

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evident from his brief introduction to his exposition of the Decalogue: “Let the
Decalogue be put forward cursorily, as an example of gnostic exposition.”245 It is also
shown by the discussions of true knowledge and the veiled nature of the Scriptures which
come in the section before the interpretation of the Decalogue. The line that is perhaps
most telling with respect to the link between the true Gnostic and his/her interpretation of
the Scriptures is this: “The Gnostic alone is able to comprehend and make clear the things
spoken by the Spirit obscurely.”246 Clement elucidates what precisely the “things spoken
by the Spirit” are in the latter part of the section directly before his gnostic exposition:
that is, the Scriptures. In contrast to the true Gnostic, “the liars… do not quote or deliver
the Scriptures in a manner worthy of God and of the Lord.”247 It has been made clear in
the previous chapters of my thesis who precisely these liars are: the heretics in general,
and the Valentinians (and Basilideans, etc.) in particular. Further, though those of simple
faith are not liars, they still do not have access to understanding of “the things spoken by
the Spirit obscurely.” Here we learn even more than we did in the previous chapter about
where the authoritative biblical interpretation of the Gnostic comes from. The Gnostic is
able to explain the obscure things not because s/he has some special directly-inspired
“spiritual insight,” but rather because “it for the Gnostic… to know how to make use of
speech, and when, and how, and to whom.”248 And in his explanation of the Pauline idea
of “engrafting” (though here he is decidedly not referring only to Gentiles, but to all of
those without faith), he speaks of those who are “fruitful by skill (τέχνη) in farming and

245 Str. 6.16.133.1.
246 Str. 6.15.115.5-6.
247 Str. 6.15.124.3.
248 Str. 6.15.116.3.
gnostic knowledge (ἐπιστήμη τῆς γνωστικῆς).” That the pedagogy from πίστις to γνώσις involves certain skills (τέχναι) is clear in this section as well as in others, not least the beginning of the second book of the *Stromateis*. There he writes, “Whatever explication should be necessary in its prescribed place will be embraced, and especially what is concealed of the barbarian philosophy, the style of symbol and enigma.” Later in this same section in the second *stromateus*, he goes on to say, “By consequence we must also treat what is called the curriculum of study (ἐγκύκλιος παιδεία) – as much as it is useful – of astrology, and mathematics, and magic of sorcerers.” These are apparently the same skills to which he refers in the sixth book when he speaks of the skills, or more often the disciplines (μαθήματα), of the Gnostic. However, it should also be noted that in this same introduction to the second book Clement is reluctant in his use of everything that is Greek. In fact, he writes, “We have said already that we have neither practiced, nor do we study, expressing ourselves in pure Greek; for this suits those who seduce the multitude from the truth.”

Clement continues, in the passage which serves as the introduction to his gnostic exposition of the Decalogue, to explain precisely why it is that the Scriptures have been veiled. Though he gives several explanations here, the explanations in this section are significantly truncated when compared to the discussion of the veiled (and also symbolic) nature of Scripture in the fifth book. Chapters four to ten of the fifth book of the

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249 *Str.* 6.15.118.2.
250 *Str.* 2.1.1.2. For Clement’s use of terms “enigma” see Dinan, “Αἴνιγμα and Αἰνίττομαι.”
251 *Str.* 2.1.2.3.4, emphasis added. Though it is apparent in other passages that Clement is serious about astronomy and mathematics, he is most likely being ironic in his use of “the magical [discipline] of sorcerers,” since he goes on directly after this to discuss the “boastful” or “puffed up” reputation of all the Greeks.
252 *Str.* 2.1.3.1.
Stromateis are taken up with symbolism, not just in the Scriptures but also with respect to pagan literature and culture more generally. Chapter nine is devoted to the reasons for the veiled nature of Scripture. The first reason that Clement provides in this section is that the Scriptures “wish us to require an interpreter and guide.” Thus Scripture is veiled so that only those who “have drawn near and have given [the Scriptures] scrutiny by faith and in their life” – i.e. true Gnostics – will be able to see “the things” “and not be particular about words.” In one of Clement’s more striking passages on the veil that covers the Scriptures he writes this:

All things that shine through a veil display the truth in a grander and more majestic way, just as fruits shining through water, and figures through veils are reflections of what is truly revealed. For in addition to the fact that unconcealed things are perceived in one way, the rays of light shining also reveal defects.

Thus he sees that the plenitude of interpretations of the Scriptures when it is veiled is a manifestly positive thing. How dreary, and even defective, it would be if the Scriptures only offered a bare and singular meaning! Further, though later “Antiochene” biblical interpreters argued that their intentionally non-allegorical methods led to ἀκρίβεια – that is precise or accurate readings of Scripture – Clement argues the opposite: if the Scriptures were to be said plainly, they could not provide a precise picture of anything, least of all the divine nature. Embedded in this are Clement’s deep convictions of the

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253 Str. 5.9.56.4.
254 Str. 5.9.56.3.
255 Str. 2.1.3.2-3.
256 Str. 5.9.56.5-57.1.
257 Robert C. Hill, Reading the Old Testament in Antioch (Leiden: Brill, 2005). My intention here is not to supply an anachronistic comparison between these “schools” of biblical interpretation; rather I seek to highlight Clement’s vast vision of a symbolic world that points to God, as compared with some later Christian interpreters.
ineffability of God. Still, he is clearly taking from pagan precedent, which from early on in the classical period interpreted Homeric myth “allegorically,” because it was filled with so-called αἰνίγματα (riddles). This is one of the several terms that Clement uses frequently with respect to the veiled nature of the Scriptures.

So far Clement has presented two reasons for the Scriptures being veiled: that one may require a teacher, and that veiled Scripture means the truth is presented as “grander and more imposing.” Perhaps the most important of the reasons is presented third and last: he writes, “Since we may draw several meanings… the ignorant and unlearned man fails, but the Gnostic apprehends.” Though earlier by implication we saw that the Gnostic is the “teacher” who is required, here it is made explicit. However, Clement is approaching a different subject here, with which we have been concerned in the previous chapter: protection from heretics. The veiled nature of the Scriptures, combined with the Gnostic alone being privileged to interpret the Scriptures truly, means that the Bible is free from the potential to be interpreted incorrectly. The “ignorant and unlearned” refer not only to those of simple faith, but especially to the heretics. As Clement argues after this, “It is not wished that all things should be exposed indiscriminately to all and

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258 See Str. 5.12.
259 For the relationship between enigmatic and divine speech (oracles, prophecy, etc.) see Peter T. Struck, Birth of the Symbol: Ancient Readers at the Limits of Their Texts (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 21-76, and 163-203; and also Robert Lamberton, Homer the Theologian: Neoplatonist Allegorical Reading and the Growth of the Epic Tradition (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1986). Still more, Birth of the Symbol demonstrates that the words σύμβολον and αἴνιγμα are connected in classical allegorical interpretation; the same goes for Clement’s works (see Str. 2.1.1.2).
260 Str. 5.9.57.1-2.
261 This is especially the case throughout the seventh stromateus.
sundry…; nor are the mysteries of the Word to be expounded to the profane.”

Though Clement discusses these things in the fifth book of the *Stromateis*, the discussion takes a slightly different turn in *Stromateis* 6.15, the chapter which precedes the gnostic exposition of the Ten Commandments. Whereas in the fifth book Clement was concerned to show how widespread veiled meaning and allegory are, now he shows how applicable they are to the Christian faith. Further, while before he focused on those reasons for Scripture being veiled as protective against false readings (with the exception of the “grand” nature of veiled truth), here he gives decidedly positive ones. (It is important to keep in mind that at this point the reader is perhaps closer to γνῶσις than s/he was before.) He states, “The Scriptures hide the sense … that we may become inquisitive and be ever on the watch for the discovery of the words of salvation.”

However, this idea of veiledness is much bigger than simply reading the Scriptures. In fact, in reading the *entire economy of God*, one must be aware of the veiled nature of things. He writes this:

The Lord also, who was not of the world, came to men as one who was of the world. For he was clothed with all virtue; and it was his aim to lead humanity, the foster-child of the world, up to the intellectual things, and to the most essential truths by knowledge, from one world to another…. And now the whole economy which prophesied about the Lord is a *parable*, as truly it appears to those who do not perceive the truth, when someone says that the Son of God – the one who made all things – took on flesh, and was conceived in the virgin’s womb… and subsequently… suffered and rose again, being “to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness,” as the Apostle says.

The very incarnation is apparently veiled, in that the Logos allows himself to be “veiled in flesh” (as the Christmas carol goes). And again Clement reinforces that – unlike Greek

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262 Str. 5.9.57.2-3.
263 Str. 6.15.126.1, emphasis added.
264 Str. 6.15.126.3-127.2, emphasis added.
literature that uses figurative language for the sake of beauty of diction – the veiled nature of Scripture is because “truth does not appertain to all people, [but] only to those who are initiated in knowledge (γνῶσις), who seek the truth through love.”

These are the reasons that Clement puts forth for God’s apparent veiling of the Scriptures. On the other hand, throughout these passages he makes no mention of how one might go about interpreting the Scriptures correctly. Instead the question that he is answering is who is the one who may truly interpret Scripture. This is the true Gnostic, who, because s/he has sought and found true γνῶσις, is able to read what is otherwise beyond the understanding of all other people.

2 The Disciplines of Gnostic Interpretation

As I have mentioned, there are certain disciplines which Clement puts into the service of his gnostic exposition. Specifically the disciplines with which Clement is concerned are those that fall under the umbrella of the ἐγκύκλιος παιδεία. The ἐγκύκλιος παιδεία – “general education” – is of primary importance in this chapter of the Stromateis. Henri-Irénée Marrou, in his monumental work the Histoire de l’éducation dans l’antiquité, was the first to offer a systematic treatment of ancient Greek and Roman education. Marrou presented a picture of a three-stage pedagogy. The first stage, under a γραμματιστής, was

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265 Str. 6.15.129.4.
266 I am constrained by length and so I am unable to give a fuller account of the relationship between traditional ancient education in the Greek world, and Clement’s understanding of education. For a more adequate discussion of this, see Karl Olav Sandnes, The Challenge of Homer: School, Pagan Poets and Early Christianity (New York: T & T Clark, 2009), 124-40.
267 H.-I. Marrou, A History of Education in Antiquity, trans. George Lamb (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1982); Teresa Morgan has argued that Greek and Roman pedagogies were synonymous since the Romans were entirely reliant on Greeks in this respect, in Literate Education in the Hellenistic and Roman World (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 24.
occupied with learning how to read and how to count.  

The second stage was occupied – on the literary side of things – with matters of grammar and literary interpretation (under a γραμματικός); we know that Homer was the primary concern of most teachers.  

This second stage was also taken up with arithmetic, geometry, music, astronomy, and other lesser scientific studies. It is the combination of all of these disciplines in the second stage that we can conceive of as the ἐγκύκλιος παιδεία – an all-encompassing education.  

After these first two stages one had several options for study: for example, medicine, rhetoric, or philosophy. While this fixed tripartite system has been revised somewhat since the publication of Marrou’s monograph, his scheme basically holds up.  

Clement’s references to the ἐγκύκλιος παιδεία are largely restricted to the first few books of the Stromateis, though there is also one mention in the seventh. In all of these, the general education is preparatory (propaideutic), paving the way for greater acquisition of knowledge. Another common term which Clement uses synonymously with ἐγκύκλιος παιδεία is προπαιδεία. As I mentioned in my first case study, Clement adopts the idea of a pedagogical development in a few of his frames of reference. In this case, he sees the ἐγκύκλιος παιδεία as occupying a primary place in the education of the one who would be trained up to true Gnosticism. Though he admits that it is not

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273 In addition to those mentioned below, *Str*. 1.23.153; 2.1.2; 3.2.5; 7.3.19.
necessary for one to have this education, it is certainly beneficial. In the very first chapter of the *Stromateis*, when Clement lays out the groundwork of the entire work, he writes,

Our notes [the *Stromateis*] will not shrink from making use of what is best in philosophy and other preparatory instruction (προπαιδεία). [...] The subtlety of speculation also suits the sketch presented in my commentaries. In this respect the resources of learning (χρηστομαθία) are like a relish mixed with the food of an athlete, who is not indulging in luxury, but entertains a noble desire for distinction.

Thus he sees philosophy and the other “preparatory instruction” to be helpful, with some exception. The good is mixed with the bad, and so one must be discerning. In quoting Philo, he makes it the most clear: “As the encyclical branches of study contribute to philosophy, which is their mistress; so also philosophy itself cooperates in the acquisition of wisdom.”

Clement then comments on this, saying, “Wisdom is therefore queen of philosophy, as philosophy is of preparatory culture.” And later in this chapter we will see that for Clement “wisdom” is synonymous with γνῶσις. Further, in agreement with Plato, he writes, “[Plato] does not allow that the curriculum of training (τὴν ἐγκύκλιον παιδείαν) suffices for good, but cooperates in rousing and training the soul.” And while these comprise his explicit references to the ἐγκύκλιος παιδείας, in other places he outlines its content, that is, the μαθήματα themselves:

“We must lop, dig, bind, and perform the other operations. I think that the pruning knife, the pickaxe, and other agricultural implements, are necessary for the culture of the vine, so that it may produce edible fruit for us. [...] So also here, I call him truly learned who brings everything to bear on the truth; so that, from geometry,

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274 Str. 1.6.35.2-3. However, in this same passage Clement argues that one must be educated in the ἐγκύκλιος παιδεία in order to advance from faith to knowledge.
275 Str. 1.1.15.3-16.1.
276 Str. 1.5.30.1; Philo, *De congressu eruditionis gratia* 14.79.
277 Str. 1.5.30.1.
278 Str. 1.19.93.5.
and *music*, and *grammar*, and *philosophy* itself, culling what is useful, he guards the faith.”

Not only does this description agree with what we see in Marrou’s examination of the various ancient sources. It also agrees with Clement’s discussion of things in the sixth *stromateus* which is the one in which we also find the gnostic exposition of the Decalogue. Just a few chapters before his gnostic exposition of the Decalogue, he writes,

> For [the Gnostic] knowledge (γνώσις) is the principal thing. Consequently, therefore, he is dedicated to training for knowledge (γνώσις), taking from each of the subjects what is useful for truth. Pursuing, then, the proportion of harmonies in *music*; and in *arithmetic* noting the increasing and decreasing of numbers and their relations to one another, and how most things fall under some proportion of numbers; and studying *geometry*, which is being itself, he perceives a continuous distance, and an unchanging being which is different from these bodies. And by *astronomy*, again, being raised from the earth in his mind, he is elevated along with heaven, and will revolve with its revolution; studying divine things, and their harmony with each other – from which Abraham also started, ascending to knowledge of Him who created them. Further, the Gnostic will avail himself of *dialectics*, singling out distinction of genera into species, and will master the differentiation of beings, until he should come to what is primary and simple.

He further enumerates these same disciplines (μαθήματα) in the eleventh chapter. This eleventh chapter is vital for our understanding of the gnostic exposition of the Decalogue itself, since it provides examples of ways in which one is able to use these μαθήματα for interpretation. He mentions arithmetic, *geometry*, *music*, *astronomy*, and

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279 Str. 1.9.43.2-4, emphasis added. Clement hints elsewhere at the accepted disciplines included in ἐγκύκλιος παιδεία. In addition to those below in the sixth *stromateus*, see Str. 1.19.93.4, quoting Plato: “geometry, with its postulates and hypotheses…, music, which is conjectural…, astronomy, crammed full of physical, fluid, and probable causes”; Str. 1.20.97.4; Str. 1.23.153.2-3, on the (apparently Hellenistic!) Egyptian education of Moses: “arithmetic, geometry, poetry, harmony… medicine, and music…, philosophy which is conveyed in symbols… literature…, knowledge of the heavenly bodies [astronomy].”

280 Str. 6.9.79.2-10.80.5.

281 Str. 6.11.84.2.

282 Str. 6.11.85.4-86.3.

283 Str. 6.11.88.1-90.2.
philosophy. These are above all the disciplines that Clement puts into practice in this example of gnostic exposition. But before I examine just how Clement uses these \(\mu\alpha\theta\eta\mu\alpha\tau\alpha\) in his interpretation of the Decalogue, I want to emphasize that the disciplines of which the \(\varepsilon\gamma\kappa\omicron\upsilon\lambda\iota\sigma\zeta\ \pi\alpha\iota\delta\epsilon\iota\a\) is comprised are, for Clement, in the service of \(\gamma\nu\omega\sigma\iota\zeta\).

Probably the most apparent of the \(\mu\alpha\theta\eta\mu\alpha\tau\alpha\) that Clement brings to bear on the Decalogue is arithmetic (\(\arit\theta\mu\eta\tau\iota\kappa\iota\)). This is, as we have seen, “the increasing and decreasing of numbers and their relations to one another, and how the most of things fall under some proportion of numbers.” This \(\arit\theta\mu\eta\tau\iota\kappa\iota\) is clearly derived from Pythagoreanism, and Clement, in his erudition, may have been familiar enough with the symbolism of numbers to make his own way, or he may have learned this from Philo “the Pythagorean.” Because of its Pythagorean nature, I note that any use of this so-called \(\arit\theta\mu\eta\tau\iota\kappa\iota\) is, for Clement, less “scientific” than it is representative of divine realities.

It is in fact through his symbolic understanding of the numbers that Clement is able to put into practice his appreciation for the plenitude of interpretations that the veiled meaning of Scripture allows. Thus the number ten in the Ten Commandments refers

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284 Str. 6.11.90.3.
285 Str. 6.11.91.1-94.3.
286 For the widespread use of Pythagorean arithmology outside of Pythagorean circles, see Frank E. Robbins, “The Tradition of Greek Arithmology,” Classical Philology 16 (1921): 97-123.
287 As he is called in Str. 1.15.72.4, 2.19.100.3; see Frank E. Robbins, “Arithmetic in Philo Judaeus,” Classical Philology 26 (1931): 345-61; see also David T. Runia, “Why Does Clement of Alexandria Call Philo ‘the Pythagorean’?” Vigiliae Christianae 49 (1995): 1-22. I simply do not have space to discuss Philo’s influence on Clement’s interpretation of the Old Testament. For an excellent monograph on Clement’s use of Philo’s works, see Annewies van den Hoek, Clement of Alexandria and his Use of Philo in the Stromateis (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1988). However, throughout in the footnotes I will make some suggestions of where Clement may be indebted to Philo.

288 Str. 6.16.133.3-4.
289 Str. 6.16.134.2-3. This is one of the passages where Clement’s borrowing from Philo is the most obvious – though we see serious theological adaptions. For Philo, seven is the number of human body parts (Opificio mundi 40.118), which comprises the five senses, the power of speech, and the power of reproduction (Opificio mundi 40.117). Numbers 8-10 are additions for Clement. Also see Legum allegoriae 1.4.11-13, for other sevens of “body parts.”
290 Str. 6.16.134.3.
291 Str. 6.16.134.3. While the “cosmic” decalogues appear to be adapted from Philo (De congressu 19.104-5), the “anthropological” ones are of Clement’s own creation. As will be seen in the footnotes throughout this section, Clement is rather inconsistent in his borrowing from Philo. Though sometimes he borrows, other times he utterly disregards material to which we know (from elsewhere in his works) he had access. Because at times he deals with the same passages – namely the Sabbath (which is the subject of Clement’s main excursus in this passage) and the Decalogue – we are able to compare the two. With respect to the Sabbath, Horst Moehring, in “Arithmology as an Exegetical Tool in the Writings of Philo of Alexandria,” in School of Moses: Studies in Philo and Hellenistic Religion, ed. John Peter Kenney (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1995), lists what the number seven is symbolic of. Though a few of these do match up, the majority of them do not; at the same time Clement mentions many symbols that Philo does not. Thus it is difficult to judge how dependent he is on Philo in these cases.
From this brief summary of Clement’s use of the number ten, one might note that there is much in the introductory section to the commandments that seems to be extraneous to any actual interpretation of the Decalogue. And reading this section of Clement closely confirms that he does not fully explain himself. There are two reasons why this is. The first is that, in his interpretation, he is providing an example of how one might use numbers in interpreting the Old Testament — that is, he explains the symbolical significance of them. The second is that in his *Stromateis* he likes to write in a veiled way, which is analogous to the way in which he understands Scriptures to be veiled. Thus often he will only hint at how one is to understand the symbolism of these numbers.\(^{292}\) So, although the number ten may be symbolic of these various “decalogues” (of the heaven, of the earth, and of the human), he does not speak to how the scriptural Decalogue — the Ten Commandments — relates to these other symbolic groupings of ten.\(^{293}\) The only link from the numbers back to the text that Clement provides, I already quoted above: “The law appears to give its injunctions to [the human organs].”\(^{294}\) Thus, in this introductory section of his exposition of the Decalogue we get an indication of the significance that Clement places on the numbers themselves, and also how a Gnostic might use them in his/her interpretation of the Scriptures. However, there is more to it than this: Clement is hinting at spiritual realities by way of the numbers. The number ten

\(^{292}\) See *Str*. 1.1.15.1-2.

\(^{293}\) Kalvesmaki sheds some light on this in his chapter on Clement’s use of numbers in his *Theology of Arithmetic*. Because Kalvesmaki is looking at the theological symbolism of numbers, rather than biblical interpretation, he does not touch on this point. Still, he shows successfully that Clement is appropriating Stoic and Valentinian numerical/arithmetical conventions, especially with respect to anthropology, into his own “proto-orthodox” theology (133-36). Clement uses the number ten on other occasions to refer to the human person (*Str*. 2.1.50).

\(^{294}\) *Str*. 6.16.134.3.
at this point is indicative of the multiplicity of creation, as opposed to God’s own unity. This theme of the contrast between God and creation will also be seen in his more direct interpretation of the commandments – not just in his use of the numbers. As we will also see, this points to the journey from fallen creation to likeness to God which the Gnostic undertakes in his/her progress.

For this same reason, it is not surprising to find that the greater part of the gnostic exposition of the Decalogue is taken up with the treatment of the numbers 6, 7, and 8 in his interpretation of the commandment to keep the Sabbath. He writes, “The third word is the one that discloses that the world is from God, and that he gives rest to us on the seventh day on account of life’s misery.” After briefly discussing the nature of the rest that God provides – which I will discuss below – Clement lands upon that subject which is so important to him in the sixth book of the *Stromateis*, and also to the Gnostic. He writes, “Therefore, we must also remember these things, having come to them secondarily, since the word [i.e. commandment] makes an introduction to the numbers seven and eight.” It is in this exposition that he makes much more extensive use of Greek philosophy, citing variously Aristotle the philosopher and Polybus the doctor, the Pythagoreans, “the Chaldeans,” Seleucus the mathematician, and Solon. In Clement’s discussion of these numbers, his indebtedness to these various schools – not least the Pythagoreans – becomes evident.

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296 *Str*. 6.16.137.4.
297 *Str*. 6.16.138.5.
298 *Str*. 6.16.139.1-2.
299 *Str*. 6.16.139-140.
300 *Str*. 6.16.143.1.
301 *Str*. 6.16.143.3.
302 *Str*. 6.16.144.3.
He is able to discuss the numbers six and eight for this reason: “The eighth may very well be properly the seventh, and the seventh by appearance may be the sixth; the former is properly the Sabbath, the latter is a day of work.”

He extends his discussion of the number seven to the other two numbers by making use of the Greek, literally-based, numbering system (a technique sometimes wrongly-labeled “gematria”); this appears to have been popular very early on in the history of Christian literature, for example in the so-called Epistle of Barnabas. Much of the discussion surrounds the letter that signifies the number six (ϛ’; digamma), which for much of the history of the Greek language up to that point had been lost. Clement seems to be arguing that if this letter were to be discounted from the numerical system, it could cause the letters that signify the numbers to shift by one – that is, what used to signify seven (ζ’) now would signify six, and what used to signify eight (η’) now would signify seven. This is how Clement is able to say that one number may become another. Apart from this transposition of the literary symbols, there would have been no reason for him to go into detail in a discussion of the numbers 6 and 8, which he is very happy to do. And as Kalvesmaki has noted, this shift in itself is an allusion meant for the careful gnostic reader, where the increase from seven to eight signifies the spiritual progress from πίστις...
to γνῶσις.\textsuperscript{305} Though this is not said directly, we know that Clement communicates to the Gnostic by hints and allusions. The fact that the rest of the exposition of the Decalogue is explicitly concerned with γνῶσις confirms that his use of the numbers alludes to the same thing.

Clement further discusses the Pythagorean “theology of arithmetic”\textsuperscript{306} in some detail, appropriating it into his own use for biblical interpretation:

I think, then, that the Pythagoreans hold the number six as complete, from the genesis of the world according to the prophet, and call this the Even-Middle (μεσευθὺν) and Marriage (γάμος), on account of the fact that it is the middle of the even numbers – that is, between ten and two. For it appears that it is an equal distance from both. And when a marriage of male and female procreates, the number six is begotten out of the odd number three (which is called a male number) and the even number two (which is considered female). For, twice three is six. Again, such are the principal motions, according to which every beginning takes place: up and down, right and left, forwards and backwards. Therefore fittingly, the number seven is called motherless and unbegotten, interpreting the Sabbath, and interpreting allegorically the image of the rest, in which, “they are neither given nor taken in marriage.”\textsuperscript{307}

Thus Clement is able to appropriate Pythagorean arithmology (in its very nature symbolic of divine things).\textsuperscript{308} What he is doing here can hardly be considered interpretation of the

\textsuperscript{305} Kalvesmaki understands that the transposition of the numbers to be representative of the spiritual progress based on other passages in Clement’s \textit{Stromateis}, on progressing from the seventh to the eighth; “Formation of Early Christian Theology of Arithmetic,” 202.

\textsuperscript{306} The title of a treatise (probably) falsely attributed to Iamblichus. Kalvesmaki also gives this title to the monograph based on his dissertation.

\textsuperscript{307} \textit{Str.} 6.16.139.2-140.1. The idea of the “motherless” – and often “virgin” – number seven was apparently very common (often in reference to Athena). Though Clement could here be taking from Philo (\textit{Opificio mundi} 33.100; \textit{Legum allegoriae} 1.5.15; \textit{De decalogo} 11.102), it was well-known enough that Clement in his erudition could have been familiar with it. With respect to the “up, down,” etc., Philo has these same things, but in two of his works uses them differently: once for six (\textit{Opificio mundi} 41.122), and once for seven (\textit{Legum allegoriae} 1.2.4).

\textsuperscript{308} Clement’s explanations of these numbers are rather different than what we know of Pythagorean number symbolism from other sources. Burkert, taking from a testimony of Aristotle, notes that the Pythagoreans have it that 3 and 4 are male and female
commandment to observe the Sabbath. However, he is aware of this, and only sets out on this self-confessed tangent secondarily, in order to indicate the divine significance of the numbers, which Pythagoras and his followers had previously developed so comprehensively. Here we also see that Clement is truly using the discipline of ἀριθμητική as he described it in the eleventh chapter (seen above): he is looking to the sequence and intervals of the numbers themselves for some explanation of their significance. These interpretations of the numbers are all in keeping with those who came before him, not least Philo.309

He further makes use of other disciplines that were included in the ἐγκύκλιος παιδεία. Astronomy appears to be another of Clement’s favourites, especially in his understanding of the Decalogue. He writes this on the significance of the number seven:

And now all the cosmos – all things that have been made alive and brought forth – is encircled in sevens: seven are the firstborns who have the greatest power, who rule the angels; and the mathematicians say that there are seven planets, the lights that accomplish the administration of the earth. By these, the Chaldeans believe that all things pertaining to mortal life happen according to sympathy, and by them they also endeavour to say things about the future. And of the fixed stars, the Pleiades are seven. And the Bears, by which farmers and sailors accomplish their work, are also made up of seven stars. And the moon undergoes changes in position every seven days: thus in the first seven, it becomes a half-moon, and in the second a full

respectively, and that the number 5 is “marriage”; this is in reference to the right triangle whose sides comprise these three integers and thus is the perfect example of the “Pythagorean theorem”; Walter Burkert, *Lore and Science in Ancient Pythagoreanism*, trans. Edwin L. Minar (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972), 429. Still, it is consistent with Pythagoreanism to have the odd (male) number combined with the even (female) number – whether added or multiplied – resulting in a number called “marriage” (Burkert, *Lore and Science*, 433). (The idea of the adding of 2 and 3 is earlier Pythagorean, and the multiplication is later; see Burkert, *Lore and Science*, 467, note 8.) Interestingly this represents a transgression of the Greek – and even English – norm of the titles “even” (ἀρτιος, i.e. “well-structured”) and “odd” (περιττός; i.e. “excessive”); see Burkert, *Lore and Science*, 437. Clement maintains this “cultural transgression.” Also see Kalvesmaki, “Formation of the Early Christian Theology of Arithmetic,” 296-305; 321-24.

309 Robbins, “Arithmetic in Philo Judaeus.”
moon; and in the third, waning, again it becomes a half-moon, and on the fourth it disappears. And also, as Seleucus the mathematician hands down, the moon changes form seven times. For it comes from nearly a crescent shape, to a half-moon, then to a gibbous, then to a full moon; and after to a gibbous, a half, and again back to a crescent.\footnote{Str. 6.16.142.4-143.3. See Opificio mundi 39.115 for a parallel with respect to the “Bears” and Pleiades.}

We see here that Clement takes from more than just Pythagorean philosophy, which is not surprising given his eclecticism. He is learned in the ἐγκύκλιος παιδεία and here makes use of it. He cites Seleucus and shows how important seven appears to be based on the observations of astronomers.\footnote{Again we have Philo commenting on the same thing. The one most reminiscent of Clement is from Opificio mundi 34.101; it is also seen in De specialibus legibus 1.177; and Legum allegoriae 1.4.8. Still, at this point Clement refers explicitly to a different source (Seleucus) and so not only does this appear to be common knowledge of the educated person (so Philo is aware of it), but Clement is well-read enough to have heard from a more authoritative source than Philo.} He further compares the six days in which the world was created to the fact that “the movement of the sun from solstice to solstice is completed in six months; at the end of one, the leaves fall, and at the other the leaves bud, and seeds comes about to maturity.”\footnote{Str. 6.16.138.6. Interestingly, unlike Clement, Philo has the equinox occurring every seven months, not every six (Opificio mundi 39.116; De specialibus legibus 1.182); here we see – if Clement is taking from Philo at all, which I believe he is – Clement seriously adapting the material that he has to work with.}

We continue to see that Clement makes no direct attempt at moving this symbolism back to the biblical text. That is, he hints at these particular numbers for the reasons stated above: so that the meaning of the Scriptures may be hidden from the simple, and made known to the true Gnostic alone, that s/he may teach those of simple faith.

Clement makes use of the other μαθήματα that we have identified as belonging to the ἐγκύκλιος παιδεία. In passing he mentions geometry and music. He writes, “They call eight a cube, with seven spheres wandering around the fixed one, by which the ‘great
anniversary’ happens, a sort of period of repayment for what was promised.”\textsuperscript{313} In his short allusion to music he writes, “On a seven-stringed harp we will pluck new hymns, writes a not insignificant poet, teaching that the ancient lyre was seven-toned.”\textsuperscript{314}

Though these four are the μαθήματα which Clement properly ascribes to the ἑγκόκλιος παιδεία, he also mentions medicine on occasion. In fact, he makes use of the medical (“biological”) significance of the numbers 6, 7, and 8 much more than he does with geometry or music. For example, he cites Polybus and Aristotle, saying, “They even say that the infant is matured exactly at the sixth month, that is in one hundred and eighty days, in addition to two and a half months, as Polybus the physician recounts in his

\textit{Concerning the eighth month}, and Aristotle the philosopher in his \textit{Physics}.”\textsuperscript{315} Further, and predictably given what we saw in Clement’s discussion of the number ten, he writes, “The organs of the senses fitted about our face are also seven: two of the eyes, two of the means of hearing, two of the nostrils, and the seventh is the mouth.”\textsuperscript{316} But again he makes another comment that is explicitly “medical” (as opposed to what we might

\textsuperscript{313} Str. 6.16.140.2-3. See Dorothea Forstner, \textit{Der Welt der Symbole} (Innsbruck; Vienna: Tyrolia, 1967), 56, who mentions that the cube was associated with the number eight (a cube having eight sides, and also the cube of two being eight), which was also representative of the seven planetary spheres, along with the eighth which is where the deity lives; Forstner takes this from Plato’s \textit{Republic} 10.616b-617b.

\textsuperscript{314} Str. 6.16.144.1-2. Here the connection between number and music is again reminiscent of Pythagorean ideas of numbers and “harmony.” See Burkert, \textit{Lore and Science}, 356, for an older example wherein the ancient lyre is said to have had not seven, but four, strings, which in turn are representative of seasons and elements. Also see Philo, \textit{Opificio mundi} 42.126, and \textit{Legum allegoriae} 1.5.14, for a seven-stringed lyre (though not “of old”).

\textsuperscript{315} Str. 6.16.139.1-2. Though elsewhere throughout this we see Clement borrowing freely from Philo – and here he could have again – he instead takes from Polybus the doctor. It is unclear why he does, except that perhaps he understands Polybus’s medical assessment to be more accurate: where Polybus gives six months, Philo, following Hippocrates, gives seven months, in two different works (\textit{Opificio mundi} 41.124; \textit{Legum allegoriae} 1.4.9).

\textsuperscript{316} Str. 6.16.144.2-3.
consider strictly “biological”), after he quotes Solon on the seven stages of growth from a boy to a man.\textsuperscript{317} he writes that the seventh and fourteenth days are the important numbers when it comes to treating “critical illness.”\textsuperscript{318}

Although at first glance a discussion of the μαθήματα may seem to be superfluous to understanding Clement’s interpretation of the Old Testament, I belabour the discussion of the encyclopedic disciplines for the simple fact that Clement himself belabours it. And he discusses it at length with good reason: through his use of the μαθήματα he is teaching the Gnostic enigmatically, not only how to use the numbers for interpreting the Bible, but also how the numbers themselves are indicative of gnostic truths. Further, what is implicit in Clement’s use of the numbers is explicit throughout the rest of his gnostic exposition of the Decalogue, as we will see in the section below.

3 The Didactic Side of Gnostic Interpretation

This last section should serve to explain more clearly what is particularly “gnostic” in Clement’s interpretation of the Decalogue. There are three aspects to this gnostic character that come through especially in the exposition. The first, which we have seen above, is that the ἐγκύκλιος παιδεία are put into the service of the progress to true Gnosticism. Clement intentionally adopts, and adapts, aspects of classical pedagogy and pagan philosophical schools. The second is the didactic side of Clement’s interpretation

\textsuperscript{317} Str. 6.16.144.3-6. Clement here is most likely taking from Philo, as his quotation is identical (even in the length of what he reproduces of Solon’s) to Philo’s in Opificio mundi 35.104. Still, there are significant differences in Clement’s and Philo’s accounts: where Philo goes on to cite Hippocrates also (Opificio mundi 36.105), never once does Clement quote Hippocrates, instead referring to Polybus the physician (Str. 6.16.139.1).

\textsuperscript{318} Str. 6.16.145.1-2. See Philo also: “Severe bodily sicknesses too, especially persistent attacks of fever due to internal disorder, generally reach the crisis on the seventh day; for this day decides the struggle for life, bringing to some recovery, to others death” (Opificio mundi 41.125).
of the Decalogue. In many cases Clement does not see the commandments to be commands at all, rather they are moments for theological teaching. Clement “translates” the commandments from the imperative mood into the indicative. Finally, we see in this passage that the Gnostic is the one to whom the Decalogue is applied directly. The Gnostic continues to be seen as one who learns from and knows God, and who chooses what is good for its own sake; s/he does not act from fear, or from repentance, but instead abides in the habit of the Good.

From the outset of his interpretation of the Decalogue it is apparent that Clement’s interpretation will be taken up with true Gnosticism. By way of introduction to the passage of interpretation, he writes, “Let the Decalogue be put forward cursorily, as an example of gnostic exposition.”319 In his introductory discussion of the “historical” situation of the delivery of the Ten Commandments, Clement mentions the Ark of the Covenant that holds the tablets upon which the commandments were written. He writes, “The ark which holds these is the knowledge (γνῶσις) of divine and human things – even wisdom.”320 In this we already see Clement’s tendency to highlight the gnostic things. Further his interpretation of the number ten (mentioned above) becomes something of a tangent – not even related to the number ten – on the nature of the ruling and subject faculties of the soul.321 This relates to the Gnostic inasmuch as it is the ruling faculty that is responsible for knowledge (γνῶσις).322 This “ruling faculty” is (after Paul the apostle, and probably also after Plato) set up in opposition to the “fleshy spirit,” which is apparently designed to be that which is subject to the ruling faculty. While the fleshly

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319 Str. 6.16.133.1.
320 Str. 6.16.133.5.
321 Str. 6.16.135-137.
322 Str. 6.16.135.4.
spirit can rule over the “ruling faculty,” this is contrary to nature. In support of this, Clement quotes, “The flesh lusts against the spirit, and the spirit after the flesh” (Gal 5:17). Within this context, Clement argues that it is the Gnostic who lives according to the ruling faculty – that is, by the rational faculty (τῷ λογικῷ).

Following this introduction, the commandments continue to be interpreted gnostically, in various ways. Clement understands the first commandment to communicate this:

That one only is God Almighty, who led the people out from Egypt, through the desert, to the ancestral land, so that they might comprehend his power by [his] divine actions, as much as they were able, and that they might desert the idolatry of created things, having all hope in God according to truth. This is hardly an unreasonable interpretation of the “plain” sense of the first commandment. On the other hand, it does not deal at all with the imperative of the “first word.” What we understand to be the first two commandments – concerning having no other gods and making no idols – Clement seems to conflate into one. There are thus two imperatives that Clement has opportunity to interpret “literally” – that is as applying to the Christian directly and straightforwardly. Instead he highlights the doctrine of the oneness of God and his purposes. These purposes are evidently that when the Christian sees God’s delivering power, s/he might “hope in God according to truth.” This is a characteristic of the true Gnostic.

The gnostic character of his interpretation comes out much more clearly in his interpretation of the other commandments. For the most part, these “words” are things

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323 Str. 6.16.136.3-4.
324 Str. 6.16.137.2-3.
325 He may be numbering them according to the Catholic (as opposed to Protestant) system. However, the numbering and order that he uses for the rest of the Commandments makes it hard to reach any solid conclusion.
that disclose (μηνύω) the nature of God. The “second” and “third words” – pertaining to taking God’s name in vain and observing the Sabbath – both highlight the theological distinction between begotten/created (τὰ γενητὰ) and unbegotten/uncreated (τὰ ἀγένητα) things, which we also saw above in Clement’s use of the number ten. The “power of God” is synonymous with the “Name of God.”326 And though “the craftsmen of the humans” have borne “the invocation of the Name upon created and vain things,” this is not appropriate since “the one who is [i.e. ‘the Name’] is not ranked” among the things humans have made.327 With respect to the Sabbath, Clement compares humanity to God: “For God is untiring and impassible and unlacking, but we who bear the flesh need a rest.”328 Furthermore, though I described at length Clement’s use of the number seven in his discussion on this commandment, I also noted that Clement recognizes that the discussion of the numbers is only secondary (πάρεργος) to an interpretation of the “third word.”329 The primary interpretation of the Sabbath is that it exists as a “preparation for the primal day which is truly our rest” – that is, the day of the parousia.330 In no way is the seventh day commanded to be a day of rest, but it is heralded or proclaimed (κηρύσσω), as if it were news of the primal day itself.331 It is further from this primal day that “the first [i.e. foremost] wisdom and knowledge (γνῶσις) shine upon us.”332 He refers to this wisdom and knowledge as “the light of truth,” which by “following it

326 Str. 6.16.137.3.
327 Str. 6.16.137.3-4.
328 Str. 6.16.137.4.
329 Str. 6.16.138.5.
330 Str. 6.16.138.1.
331 Str. 6.16.138.1.
332 Str. 6.16.138.2.
through all of life, we are brought into a state free from suffering, and there is rest.”

In his interpretation of the Sabbath he quotes “David” the Psalmist: “This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it” (Ps 118:24); he interprets this in such a way that it means that “according to the divine knowledge (γνῶσις) imparted through [God], we may rejoice in feasting.” All of this speaks of the Last Day when full knowledge of God will be disclosed. However, we further learn from the seventh stromateus that the true Gnostic is already enjoying this same rest. So we see this passage applying also to the true Gnostic who is perfectly at rest in the present age.

I further want to emphasize just how clearly Clement is teaching the reader of the gnostic exposition what the true gnostic life is like. Before broaching the discussion of the numbers at the end of his exposition of the Sabbath commandment, he writes this: “Participation [in wisdom]… manifestly teaches (διδάσκω) one to know divine and human things.” This is the didactic function of the Stromateis (also seen in the chapter on Psalm 1), which comes through especially at this late point in the work. He at once provides an interpretation of the Decalogue, while also teaching the one who would attain to γνῶσις how s/he might go about it. This is not surprising since we know that for Clement all the Scriptures are read symbolically – because they are written in a veiled, enigmatic way – to refer to knowledge of the Divine. This is what holds together all of Clement’s interpretation. And because at this point he is putting forth his singular example of gnostic exposition, it is to be expected that he would focus on the pinnacle of the spiritual life, which is γνῶσις.

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333 Str. 6.16.138.2-4.
334 Str. 6.16.145.5.
335 Str. 7.10.
336 Str. 6.16.138.4-5, emphasis added.
The next word, which he calls the fifth in sequence (even though he appears to have called the previous one the “third word”), is “about honouring father and mother.” But “father and mother” are not literally one’s own biological or legal parents, but are instead “the Lord God,” and “wisdom” respectively. He writes,

And clearly [the commandment] calls “father” also “the Lord God.” Thus, it also calls those who acknowledge him sons and gods. So the Lord and father is creator of all; and the mother is not, as some have it, the being from which we are begotten, nor, as other teach, the church, but it is divine knowledge and wisdom – as Solomon said, the “mother of the righteous,” referring to wisdom.  

We see that Christians, since they are called “sons and gods,” may rightfully call God “father.” Still, he patently disregards those who say that “the mother” is the one who begets us, as well as those who say that she is the church (here we see Clement at odds with later orthodox teachings); instead, since he somewhere finds that Solomon calls wisdom the “mother of the just,” the mother which the Christian is to honour is in fact wisdom herself, otherwise known as divine knowledge (ἡ θεία γνῶσις). Following this Clement goes on to write, “[Wisdom] is chosen (αἱρετή) for its own sake. And all that is good and holy is made known by God through the Son.”

In this quotation we see how deeply ingrained is Clement’s understanding of the gnostic life. That “Wisdom is chosen for its own sake” (and not that one is simply ordered to honour “the mother” as the commandment plainly says) is Clement’s view of the Gnostic: that he or she will choose what is desirable because it is good in itself. The Gnostic is so far assimilated to God that s/he does not need to be commanded to choose what is good, but does so of his/her own accord. We saw this clearly in the chapter on Clement’s interpretation of the first

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337 Str. 6.16.146.2.
338 Str. 6.16.146.2.
339 See especially Str. 4.22. This is found all throughout the Stromateis. It is one of the primary criteria that differentiates the one of simple faith from the Gnostic.
psalm.

The next three commandments, which Clement ceases to number, are concerned with adultery, murder, and theft. They are, like those before them, allegorized. Adultery, for example, ceases to refer to any sort of sexual act. The same goes for the two that follow. In fact,

It is adultery if one – leaving behind the ecclesiastical and true knowledge (γνῶσις), and the persuasion concerning God – should come upon unseemly and false opinion (either making something which is created into God, or even making an idol of something that does not exist) towards overstepping, or rather stepping out of, knowledge.\textsuperscript{340}

One can see that in Clement’s gnostic exposition he continues to teach the Gnostic. To commit adultery, which is in fact idolatry (he later cites Paul and the prophets in support of this\textsuperscript{341}), is to “step out of” knowledge. It is not simply to transgress (what I have translated as “overstep”; ὑπέρβασις), but it is in some respect to commit apostasy (ἔκβασις) from true knowledge. For he goes on to write, “False opinion is foreign to the Gnostic, just as the truth is both [his/her] kin and syzygy.”\textsuperscript{342}

The “word about murder” is likewise interpreted in an allegorical way. As he did with adultery, Clement gives a new definition to murder. He calls it “forcible [or ‘violent’] removal [or ‘destruction’].”\textsuperscript{343} Though there is a lacuna in the text at this point,\textsuperscript{344} it is clear enough that we can see that the real murderer is “the one who desires

\textsuperscript{340} Str. 6.16.146.3.
\textsuperscript{341} Str. 6.16.147.1.
\textsuperscript{342} Str. 6.16.147.1. Here Clement is very clearly using Valentinian language to demonstrate just how closely the Gnostic is related to truth (ἀληθεία), which is actually the name of one of the Aeons. Thus first we see that Sophia (wisdom) is the mother, and that Aletheia is the procreative partner (i.e. the syzygy). He is thus able – again, as we saw in the last chapter – to appropriate Valentinian discourse into his own thought.
\textsuperscript{343} Str. 6.16.147.2.
\textsuperscript{344} See Stählin at this location.
to destroy the true word about God.”\textsuperscript{345} It is very closely connected with the following commandment on theft: in the commandment on murder we see that “destroying the true word about God” involves the “forceful removal” of what rightly belongs to God (e.g. his creation or provision), and attributing it to something else. This is precisely what the thief is also guilty of. In his “word about theft” Clement uses a “ὡς ..., οὕτως…” clause; he writes, “Just as the thief does great wrong to the things of others…, so the one who usurps the divine things… through skill of either moulding or drawing also proclaims himself to be the maker of animals and plants.”\textsuperscript{346} Further the thief, who Clement says will “suitably fall upon his deserved evils,”\textsuperscript{347} is like the one who usurps the divine things, since “immediately he will suffer for the impious enterprise.”\textsuperscript{348} Thus we see that these commandments – of murder and of theft – apply not at all to physical theft or murder, but that they are applied in a symbolic way, directly to God: they are truly allegorical.

4 Conclusion
As we have seen in this chapter, for Clement the veiled and enigmatic nature of the Scriptures is inextricably linked to what he refers to as symbolic interpretation (and what contemporary scholars often refer to as allegorical). What has become even clearer is that Clement takes from other disciplines and other philosophies, employing them to the end of interpreting symbolically. In this case and in the rest of Clement’s “gnostic trilogy,” his symbolical interpretation is made in reference to humanity’s gnostic ascent to the

\textsuperscript{345} Str. 6.16.147.2.
\textsuperscript{346} Str. 6.16.147.3.
\textsuperscript{347} Str. 6.16.147.3.
\textsuperscript{348} Str. 6.16.148.3.
Divine.

In my introductory chapter I commented that scholars have so often compared Clement to Origen, and found him wanting. He has in some sense been seen simply as a lesser development of Origen, theologically-speaking. The same has held true with respect to biblical interpretation. However, to impose an Origenian interpretive model onto Clement would not only be anachronistic, but it would be unfair to Clement’s own robust methods of interpretation. In Clement’s symbolical interpretation that we have seen in this chapter especially, there is no evidence for a fixed number of “senses” of Scripture, such as we see articulated in Origen’s works. Thus while some before Méhat had seen this at the end of the first *stromateus*, he has demonstrated that this was not at all what Clement was doing.\(^\text{349}\) Clement does not limit his interpretation to a certain number of senses. For a limitation is truly what he would consider it to be. To imagine that the Scriptures in their divine character would be limited to three or four levels of interpretation would be to imply that the truth of God is itself limited.

Clement understands God’s revelation to humanity to be enigmatic – that is, veiled. This veiling allows for no fixed number of interpretations: instead it is reflective of God’s own infinitude. At the same time, Clement does not understand God’s revelation to humanity to be isolated to the Scriptures. Instead, as we have seen by his use of Greek and barbarian philosophies, among other things, he sees God not only to be present simply in the Scriptures. As the rain falls on the just and unjust alike, God’s revelation is seen throughout his whole economy: in the creation – the earth, and heavens, and all that is in them; in the workings of the human mind; and especially in the incarnation of the

\(^{349}\) André Méhat, “Clément d’Alexandrie et les sens de l’Écriture.”
Logos. All of these aspects of God’s economy are symbolic of God’s own person. So we see the vastness and the unity of Clement’s symbolic domain, in his symbolical interpretation of the whole enigmatic economy of God. Thus one can imagine how harmful it is to impose Origen’s later interpretive framework of “levels” or “senses” onto Clement’s.

Though Clement acknowledges in his earlier works – the Protrepticus and the Paedagogus – that the Ten Commandments are injunctions, the Gnostic in the Stromateis knows that there is much more to them than this. The Ten Commandments though imperatives are veiled descriptions of the person of God. Further, there are other “decalogues” (in nature and in humanity) that likewise disclose the nature of the Divine. Clement uses the “wisdom” of the philosophers before him and contemporary with him to describe the divine mysteries, because even in this philosophy does God’s revelatory light shine through. And ultimately he uses this symbolical conception of the Decalogue to refer to the spiritual progress from πίστις to γνῶσις.

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350 See Str. 6.7, as well as 6.13.106.3-107.2, on the unity of God and the noetic – i.e. symbolic – realm. Also see this short paper for some elucidation on the topic of Clement’s comprehensive vision of the “symbolic domain”: Marco Rizzi, “Unity of the Symbolic Domain in Clement of Alexandria’s Thought,” Studia Patristica 41 (2006): 247-52.
Chapter 5
Conclusion

Throughout my three case studies, on Psalm 1, Gen 1:26-27, and the Ten Commandments, I have argued that γνῶσις is central to Clement’s biblical hermeneutic. Time and again throughout his extant works, which I have also argued form a trilogy of the spiritual progress, Clement draws attention to the fact that the end (τέλος) of the spiritual progress is γνῶσις. With γνῶσις as his goal, and the goal of the life of every Christian – indeed of every human – Clement orders all of his theological reasoning, and so biblical interpretation, around it. In the first case study (Chapter 2) I related at length how Clement’s foci of interpretation differ from book to book (especially from the Paedagogus to the Stromateis), as Clement serves as a Christian’s guide from simple faith to knowledge. While the Paedagogus trains one’s actions, so that one might be repentant, and serve God out of fear, the Stromateis teaches habits, so that one might serve God out of love of what is good, abstaining from evil, and remaining in contemplation of God at all times. Clement’s interpretation of the first psalm serves as an example of these differing emphases based on the spiritual progress that ends in acquaintance with, and assimilation to, God.

We found in the second case study, on Gen 1:26-27, (Chapter 3) that this same true Gnostic is responsible for teaching the Church. Indeed, s/he has such a close resemblance to God and is so intimately acquainted with him, that s/he is the only one fit to interpret the Scriptures; these Scriptures, being veiled in riddles and parables, are not for everyone to interpret. Thus in addition to teaching ecclesial Christians, the Gnostic also has interpretive privilege over and against the heretics. In his/her true interpretation
of the Bible, s/he safeguards God’s revelation to humanity through his/her privilege in interpreting it. Only the one who is truly acquainted with God has full access to the things of God: this is the Gnostic. So we see here that while the divine progress is central to Clement’s interpretation of the Scriptures throughout his literary project, it is equally important to the praxis of interpretation in the quotidian life of the Church.

Finally, in the last case study on the Decalogue (Chapter 4) it became clear how Clement interprets the Old Testament for the one who has reached the pinnacle of the Christian life: the true Gnostic. In his interpretation of the Ten Commandments, he not only provides an example of how a true Gnostic might interpret the Scriptures, but he also continues to use it as an aid for teaching. That is, even in Clement’s sole example of gnostic exposition he continues to teach the one who has come so far along the spiritual journey. Because this gnostic exposition is placed so close to the end of his literary project – his trilogy – he is at that point teaching the one who has attained, or is at least close to attaining, true γνῶσις. But the more important thing to take away from this interpretation is the way in which it is γνῶσις-centred. At every point in Clement’s interpretation of the Decalogue, he takes the opportunity to show just how frequently the Scriptures themselves speak enigmatically of γνῶσις. At this late point in his *Stromateis* he gives his best example of a true gnostic hermeneutic. Thus we see that in many ways Clement’s conception of true γνῶσις is central to his biblical interpretation, especially in his interpretation of the Old Testament.

My hope is that this thesis, in its close attention to Clement’s interpretation of the Old Testament, within the context of his theological and literary projects, will serve to forward the discussion surrounding “Alexandrian exegesis.” My attempt has been to
counter much of the scholarship that highlights Clement’s theology of the Bible with very little reference to his actual interpretation of it. In many ways I follow Judith Kovacs; however, I have tried to explore more deeply and more broadly how significant Clement’s doctrine of γνῶσις is for his biblical interpretation. In doing this I also hope that I have shown how Clement is a biblical interpreter in his own right. It is true that none of his exegetical works (his Hypotyposeis for example) have come down to us. Still, in his non-exegetical works, Clement’s theological interpretation of Scripture shines. Yes, he has an interesting theology of the Bible; but his interpretation of it is equally interesting.

I do, however, also believe that his interpretation comes to bear on the discussion of Philonic and Origenian biblical interpretation. Still, I have attempted to downplay this in order to show that Clement’s contribution to early Christian biblical interpretation does not rest in these two figures. Whether or not one is convinced that Clement is more significant than the others is not important to me in the least; indeed, we know that Origen is much more influential in later generations of Christian interpreters of the Bible, not least in our own age. My hope is simply – and I think in this respect I am in line with Mondésert’s contribution from the last century – that one might begin to see Clement’s interpretation of the Bible as a serious contribution to the discussion of early Christian biblical interpretation.
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