CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, PI

(... that is, Philosophically Inclined)
Biography

• Born in Athens: Titus Flavius Clemens
• Attached to Pantaeneus (Eusebius, Hist. eccl. 5.11.2), the Sicilian bee, who taught a 'deathless element of knowledge' (Strom. 1.1, p.302).
• Took over the Catechetical school around 200 AD.
• Fled in 202 AD under Septimus Severus' persecution.
• May have ended up in Antioch or possibly Cappadocia (Hist. eccl. 6.11.6, 16.3).
• Died sometime between 211 and 216 AD.
• Extant Works:
  • Exhortation to the Heathen
  • The Instructor
  • Stomata
  • Who is the Rich Man that Shall be Saved?
  • Excerpts from Theodotus
Exhortation to the Heathen

Let's abandon the pig pen, shall we?...
Exhortation to the Heathen

Overview of the Task:

• “Some there are, who, like worms wallowing in marshes and mud in the streams of pleasure, feed on foolish and useless delights – swinish men. For swine, it is said, like mud better than pure water; and, according to Democritus, ‘doat upon dirt.’ Let us not then be enslaved or become swinish; but, as true children of the light, let us raise our eyes and look on the light, lest the Lord discover us to be spurious, as the sun does the eagles. Let us therefore repent, and pass from ignorance to knowledge, from foolishness to wisdom, from licentiousness to self-restraint, from unrighteousness to righteousness, from godlessness to God. It is an enterprise of noble daring to take our way to God…” (Exh. 10, p. 198).

Goal of the Task:

• But let us bring from above out of heaven, Truth, with Wisdom in all its brightness, and the sacred prophetic choir, down to the holy mount of God; and let Truth, darting her light to the most distant points, cast her rays all around on those that are involved in darkness, and deliver men from delusion, stretching out her very strong right hand, which is wisdom, for their salvation. ... "For out of Sion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem, --the celestial Word, the true athlete crowned in the theatre of the whole universe. What my Eunomos sings is not the measure of Terpander, nor that of Capito, nor the Phrygian, nor Lydian, nor Dorian, but the immortal measure of the new harmony which bears God's name--the new, the Levitical song” (Exh. 1.1, p. 171).
Exhortation to the Heathen

Pagan “truth”

- “And now, for it is time, I will prove their orgies to be full of imposture and quackery. And if you have been initiated, you will laugh all the more at these fables of yours which have been held in honor. I publish without reserve what has been involved in secrecy, not ashamed to tell what you are not ashamed to worship” (Exh. 2, p.175).

Idols

- “For, in sooth, the image is only dead matter shaped by the craftsman’s hand. But we have no sensible image of sensible matter, but an image that is perceived by the mind alone,—God, who alone is truly God” (Exh. 4, p.186).
Exhortation to the Heathen

Touch Points

Self-existence

The measure of truth

Eternal

Undefined

Philosophy

Pagan Myth
Progression in Clement

**Pagan Myth**
- Varied and ridiculous.
- Mythological basis for horrible ethics.

**Philosophy**
- A stepping stone or point of contact.
- Not the whole truth, but better than Pagan myth.

**Christian Knowledge**
- The full truth.
- Completed in Hebrew Scripture.
- Useful for forming the ethical person.
Exhortation to the Heathen

Christ

SAVIOR

• The Lord pities, instructs, exhorts, admonishes, saves, shields, and of His bounty promises us the kingdom of heaven as a reward for learning; and the only advantage He reaps is, that we are saved” (Exh. 1, pp. 172).

IMAGE OF GOD

• For the image of God is His Word, the archetypal light of light; and the image of the Word is the true man, the mind which is in man, who is therefore said to have been made ‘in the image and likeness of God,’ assimilated to the Divine Word in the affectations of the soul, and therefore rational…” (Exh. 10, p.199).
Exhortation to the Heathen

“I desire to restore you according to the original model, that ye may become also like Me”

(Exh. 11, p.205).
The Instructor

Real life matters, folks...
The Instructor – Jesus Christ the Word

• Possesses a soul *devoid of passion*, so he is free from the unreasoned posture of sinfulness;
  • sin is contrary to reason. He is able *cure the unnatural passions* by means of exhortation but beyond this cures the body and soul through the gift of forgiveness.
• Is the leader of humans towards *immortality*
  • salvation is both for now and for the future
• Fills us with Joy
  • gives us illumination and perfection
• Gives knowledge and *illumination now*, in this life
• Gives the knowledge of salvation to *everyone*;
  • rejected the Gnostic exclusivity
• Provides the Word: our Spiritual nourishment
• *Rouses the dead* and sluggish to wakefulness and toward salvation
  • we need strong medicine and that involves wrath and reproof
  • but this does not mean that God is not good, in fact he is good because he cares enough to do this; he does not cause evil by pointing it out, the physician must point out the malady and cure it
  • makes threats of punishment so that fearing the penalty we may abstain from sinning
• Is a *model* for realized salvation:
• Lays down the Christian life
Avoid all Excesses!

Dirty Jokes ➔ Clothing ➔ Hiccups!

“Why in the world do you seek after what is rare and costly, in preference to what is at hand and cheap?”

(Paed. 2.11, p.267)
The Instructor

- Three parts to the soul (Plato calling)
  - Clement defines two: the intellectual, reasoning faculty, and the appetite.
  - Flesh may dominate, but Christ took on flesh to free it.
  - The beauty and wealth that are offered by the world are false beauties, opinions as it were.
    - The true beauty of a person is not in the dying of hair, but the new Spirit which acknowledges humility and frailty and grey hairs.
    - True righteousness is to ignore change in appearance and focus on change towards obedience.
    - Wealth is located in virtue.

- Speaking to a sexually liberated culture?
- The upright life in God’s economy is one available to all, contra Gnosticism.

In the end, the emphasis of salvation for Clement is found in the **proper response of the life of the believer who has put on his or her heart the commandments of God and lives a reasoned life**, contrary to the unreasonable, appetitive, life of the pagans. That reason is contained in the teaching of Christ who illuminates us to the truth and puts serious demands on our moral life to reflect the wisdom or knowledge. Salvation is knowing the wisdom, via the teacher, and putting it into rigorous practice.
Stromata

The Case for Philosophy

The Divine Logos

Faith and Scripture

Rational Human Beings
“...it is clear also from what source it was bestowed—manifestly from Providence, which assigns to each what is befitting in accordance with his deserts."

Rightly, then, to the Jews belonged the Law, and to the Greeks Philosophy, until the Advent; and after that came the universal calling to be a peculiar people of righteousness, through the teaching which flows from faith, brought together by one Lord, the only God of both Greeks and Barbarians, or rather of the whole race of men” (Strom. 6.17, p.518).
Stromata

Tasks for Philosophy

- Strengthening the individual, confirmation of one's faith.
- Combat heresy/Purge doctrine
- Informs the Truth/Scripture
- Rational Ascent to God: Dialectical Process
- Proper Legislation
Stromata

But the multitude are frightened at the Hellenic philosophy, as children are at masks, being afraid lest it lead them astray. But if the faith (for I cannot call it knowledge) which they possess be such as to be dissolved by plausible speech, let it be by all means dissolved,[4] and let them confess that they will not retain the truth. For truth is immoveable; but false opinion dissolves....Such a bulwark are dialectics, that truth cannot be trampled under foot by the Sophists....It is, then, not by availing himself of these as virtues that our Gnostic will be deeply learned. But by using them as helps in distinguishing what is common and what is peculiar, he will admit the truth. For the cause of all error and false opinion, is inability to distinguish in what respect things are common, and in what respects they differ. For unless, in things that are distinct, one closely watch speech, he will inadvertently confound what is common and what is peculiar And where this takes place, he must of necessity fall into pathless tracts and error” (Strom. 6.10, pp.498-99).
• Faith First
  • the *prerequisite* for knowledge and the only way to please God.
  • the *starting point* because God is not derived, so he cannot be proven; He is a mystery.
  • must occur as a *choice* to rationally assent to God.
  • a type of *sense* that is able to perceive, or catch the truth.
  • *leads to knowledge*, and knowledge carries us on the road of faith.
Stromata

• God provides in Jesus Christ the Teacher

• Scripture backs up faith showing it to be true because it is where God, the mysterious first principle, speaks.

• Faith leads to knowledge and growth
  o Certainty
  o Greatness
  o Divine Perfection
Conclusion
Bibliography


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