In the *Lausiac History* or *Lausaikon*, Palladius’ celebrated collection of stories featuring saintly ascetics, one finds the following account:

There was another neighbor of mine whose face I never beheld, for she never went out, so they say, from the time when she left the world. She had completed sixty years in ascetic practices along with her mother [scil. the mother superior] and at last she was on the point of passing to the next world. And the martyr of that place, Colluthus by name, stood over her and said: “This day you will make the journey to the Master and see all the saints. Come, then, and eat with us in the chapel”. She arose then at dawn, dressed, and took in her basket bread, olives, and chopped vegetables. After all these years she went out and she entered the chapel and prayed. Then she watched the whole day for an opportunity when no one was within, and taking her seat, she addressed the martyr: “Bless my food, O holy Colluthus, and help me on my journey with your prayers”. She ate and prayed again, and she went back home about sunset. She gave her mother a composition of Clement the Stromatist on the prophet Amos (σύγγραμμα Κλήμεντος τοῦ Στροματέως εἰς τὸν προφήτην Αμώς) and said: “Give it to the banished bishop and tell him to pray for me, for I am on my journey”. And she died that night, without fever or delirium, but laid out for burial.¹

I am not interested here in the actual point of this story, but rather in the offhand—and therefore all the more significant—remark about the book. Let us note that the anonymous virgin was far from illiterate, and that

studying the rather sophisticated writings of Clement of Alexandria\(^2\) was probably part of her spiritual regimen; that she treasured these writings and perceived them to be in accordance with the Orthodoxy of the exiled bishop—Palladius himself; that the decision to bequeath Clement’s writing to the bishop was confirmed by her prayer and, implied in the story, by the guidance of the saint(s) in the chapel; and that, although Clement is identified as the famous ‘Stromatist’, the book in question is not the *Stromata*, but a different one: a commentary on Amos.

It seems, then, that ascetics in the Egyptian desert were interested in Clement. Evagrius certainly read him carefully, and the evidence of his literary dependence on the Alexandrian master led the eminent specialist on Evagrius Antoine Guillaumont to conclude that Evagrius was as familiar with the work of Clement as he was with that of Origen.\(^3\) This is not surprising, of course, since, as John Behr has noted,

> With regard to asceticism Clement raises themes which prefigure much of the later developments in monastic spirituality: he writes extensively about inner peace, perpetual inward prayer, contemplation, *apatheia*, and detachment; he touches upon spiritual fatherhood, on the possibility of a second baptism of tears, on being a true presbyter and deacon without receiving ordination from men, and is perhaps the first to speak of the Christian as living in the city ‘as in a desert.’ […] Clement’s works were certainly known in the desert.\(^4\)

A detailed discussion of these topics has already been provided by John Behr’s *Asceticism and Anthropology in Irenaeus and Clement*. My concern, however, is to broaden the textual basis for our examination of the Alexandrian master, by including, on equal footing with the

\(^2\) For Clement’s *Exhortation*, *Paedagogue*, and *Stromateis*, I will be quoting the English translation in the ANF collection, available online. The passages from the *Excerpta ex Theodoto*, *Eclogae Propheticae*, and *Adumbrationes* are my own translation.


\(^4\) J. Behr, *Asceticism and Anthropology in Irenaeus and Clement* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000) 217, 132. Among the *topoi* that would later dominate monastic literature, Behr notes the following: perpetual inner prayer (*Strom. 7.7.39.6-40.1*); contemplation (*Strom. 5.6.40.1*); spiritual fatherhood (*QDS 41.1*); baptism of tears (*QDS 42.14*); unordained ordination (*Strom. 6.13.106.2*); living as in a desert (*Strom. 7.12.77.3*).
Paedagogue and the Stromata, his Prophetic Eclogues, Adumbrations, and Excerpts from Theodotus. It is my contention that, viewed through the prism of these oft-neglected texts, Clement’s proto-monastic theories will appear much livelier, and that we would better understand their appeal for ascetic practitioners such as the unnamed saintly virgin in chapter 60 of the Lausatonin.

Theological Mystagogy and the Curriculum

Clement of Alexandria’s writings seem to be organised in accordance with principles of intellectual and spiritual formation. Following the pattern established by the oikonomia of the Logos (Paed. 3.1.2.1; Strom. 7.9.52.1-2), the Gnostic teacher

…follows the Logos in addressing a wide variety of students and in adapting his teaching to the capabilities and the readiness of each one. Like the divine teacher he designs an orderly progression through the sacred curriculum.5

Many scholars believe that the three stages of what Clement calls the “dispensation” (oikonomia) of the Logos—first exhorting (προτρέπων), then training (παιδαγωγῶν), and finally teaching (ἐκδιδάσκων)6—find their counterpart in Clement’s own writings: the Exhortation, followed by the Pedagogue, and by something that would correspond to the Teacher.7 Even though the debate over which writings correspond to the divine Logos as Teacher is ongoing in scholarship—the Stromata as a whole? the eighth book? the lost Hypotyposes (of which the Excerpta, the Prophetic Eclogues, and the Adumbrationes may be surviving fragments)?—there is

6 Clement, Paed. 1.1.3.3 (SC 70, 112); 3.12.97.3 (SC 158, 182).
general agreement on the fact that the Stromata, the Prophetic Eclogues, and the Adumbrationes contain a ‘higher’, more advanced, level of initiation into Christian truth, than the Exhortation and the Pedagogue.⁸

Later guardians of Orthodoxy perceived this difference in much the same way, for their criticism for Clement’s theology grows in direct proportion to the same ascension along his curriculum. Clement’s reception⁹ is in some ways similar to those of his theological heirs, Origen and Evagrius of Pontus: a theological and spiritual authority at first, he was later viewed with increasing suspicion¹⁰—indeed, a certain George the Monk, writing some time between 843 and 847, claimed that God himself had revealed the truth about Clement to one of the fathers: Clement had been an ‘Origenist’!¹¹ Similar to Evagrius’ writings, separated into the

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⁸ Even though Rizzi rejects the threefold partition of Clement’s work in favour of a distinction between writings addressed to a general audience (Protrepticus, Paedagogus, Quis dives) and ‘scholarly’ works designed to give written expression to his oral teaching (Stromata, Excerpta ex Theodoto), he retains the conviction that the Paedagogue contains a ‘lower’ exposition of Christian doctrine than the Stromata. See also Rizzi, “The End of Stromateis VII and Clement’s Literary Project” in The Seventh Book of the Stromateis: Proceedings of the Colloquium on Clement of Alexandria, Olomouc, October 21-23, 2010, ed. M. Havrda, V. Hušek, and J. Plátová (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2012) 299-314.


¹⁰ Ironically, it is none other than Rufinus who bears part of the responsibility. In defending Origen of the charge of occasionally calling the Son a creature, Rufinus argued that similar statements occur in some of Clement’s writings, and that this can only be due to interpolations: how else could anyone believe that a man so catholic in all respects and so erudite as Clement would have written such dreadful impieties? See Ruf. Apol. adv. Hier. 4 (SC 464, 294): Numquid credibile est de tanto viro, tam in omnibus catholico, tam erudito ut uel sibi contraria senserit uel ea quae de Deo, non dicam credere se uel audire quidem impium est, scripta reliquerit?

¹¹ Georgius Monachus (Hamartolos), Chronicon Breve 26 (PG 110, 84): Κλήμης δὲ ὁ Στροματεὺς, Θρησκευτὴς δὲν, ὁς τινι τῶν Πατέρων ἀπεκαλύφθη. It is
‘practical’ works, accepted as useful, and the speculative ones, judged to be heretical, the Clementine corpus was judged by Photius of Constantinople to contain a mixture of wheat and tares, with the useful elements dominating in the *Pedagoge*, the *Stromata* already afflicted with “unsound” ideas, and the *Hypotyposeis* replete with “impieties”, “fables”, and “blasphemous nonsense”. Even though Photius reverses the hierarchy of the Clementine curriculum, such that the summit of theology becomes the abyss of heresy, his evaluation lends credence to the scholarly hypothesis that the *Hypotyposeis* were designed for advanced readers, and represented, within the program of Clementine works, the highest exposition of the Christian doctrine (the *physics* and *epoptics*).

interesting that this reference occurs in a section that deals with the transmission of wisdom and letters from the Hebrews to the pagans. George the Monk simply indicates his sources, adding some offhand remarks: on the one hand, there is Josephus, a ‘blind’ Jew; on the other, there is Clement, who is not a Jew, but an ‘Origenist’ heretic. In the section dedicated to the reign of Commodus (*Chronicon Breve* 140 [PG 110, 532]), Clement of Alexandria is once again linked to Origen—"Origen was his pupil"—and listed among the heretics who flourished during that period: Paul of Samosata, Theodotion, and Montanus. For the dating of Georgius Monachus, see Dmitry Afinogenov, “The Date of Georgios Monachos Reconsidered” *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 92 (1999) 437-47.


Since Clement’s writings are organised into a curriculum of sorts, they should not be read as an undifferentiated, homogeneous whole. Some parts should be given greater weight than others. We should take more seriously into account “the other Clement”—a phrase by which I like to indicate those writings which are usually given less attention, and which may well represent surviving fragments of the lost Hypotyposes: the Prophetic Eclogues, the Adumbrations, and the Excerpts from Theodotus. (Incidentally, the writing on Amos mentioned in the Lausiac History was very likely part of Clement’s Hypotyposes!14)

**Clement on the Ascent to God: A Preliminary Account**

The pages to follow are greatly indebted to John Behr’s excellent study, Asceticism and Anthropology in Irenaeus and Clement, and have nothing particularly new to offer readers already familiar with Clement of Alexandria. I call it “a preliminary account” because crucial notions such as hierarchy, eldership, and isangelia remain somewhat ambiguous, calling for additional clarification. As a matter of fact, as I will argue in the third section, the coordinates of Clement’s ascetic theory become much clearer in the Prophetic Eclogues, the Adumbrations, and Excerpts from Theodotus, where our writer communicates, as it were, no longer in parables, but plainly. For now, let us consider the main elements of Clement’s ascetic theory.

**“In the Beginning”**

To understand Clement of Alexandria’s vision of regenerated and transformed humanity it is best to start with the beginning—or rather the Beginning, to theologise with Clement—and to consider Clement’s understanding of the initial state of humanity. A passage from the Pedagogue reads as follows:

“The view I take is that He Himself [“Jesus, our Pedagogue”] formed man of the dust, and regenerated him by water; and made him grow by his Spirit; and trained him by His word to adoption and salvation, directing

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him by sacred precepts; in order that, progressively transforming earth-born man into a holy and heavenly being (ιόνα δὴ τὸν γηγενῆ εἰς ἄγνον καὶ ἐπουράνιον μεταπλάσεις ἐκ προσβάσεως ἁνθρωπον), He might fulfill to the utmost that divine utterance, Let Us make man in Our own image and likeness. And, in truth, Christ became the perfect realization of what God spoke; and the rest of humanity is conceived as being created merely in His image.\(^{15}\)

The concern here is not the redemption and restoration of ‘fallen’ humanity, but the primordial call to become fully human. Adam and Eve were ‘children’, Clement writes elsewhere,\(^{16}\) and it is this infant humanity that is summoned, in the beginning, to be changed from “earth-born” to “holy and heavenly”. Humanity is, thus, called to constant progression from its “formation out of dust” to perfect godlikeness, from ‘image’ to ‘likeness’.\(^{17}\) Moreover, this journey is, from the very beginning, the work of the Logos (since “He Himself [Christ] formed man of the dust “), and directed towards the Logos (since ‘likeness’ to God consists in the reproduction, within the parameters of created being, of the iconic status of the Logos in relation to God).

This is not surprising, since the Logos is, for Clement, not only the ‘Image’ and the ‘Face’ of God,\(^{18}\) the archē ‘in’ which creation occurs,\(^{19}\) the one who was in the beginning and before the beginning,\(^{20}\) distinct from God “not by essence but by delimitation/circumscription” (κατὰ «περιγραφήν» καὶ οὐ κατ’ οὐσίαν),\(^{21}\) but also “the pre-existent saviour” (ὁ προῶν σωτήρ), the prototype of which Adam is but a copy,\(^{22}\) and the model (ὑπογραφή) of believers.\(^{23}\)

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15 *Paed.* 1.12.98.2-3 (SC 70, 284).
16 *Protr.* 11.111.1 (SC 2bis, 179); *Strom.* 3.17.103.1 (GCS 52, 243).
17 *Strom.* 2.22.131.6 (SC 38, 133).
18 *Exc.* 12.1 (SC 23, 82); *Paed.* 1.7.57.2 (SC 70, 212); *Strom.* 5.33.6-34.1 (SC 278, 78, 80).
19 *Exc.* 10.6; 19.4 (SC 23, 80, 94); *Ecl.* 3-4 (GCS 17, 137-38).
20 *Protr.* 1.7.3 (SC 2bis, 61): “This is the New Song, the manifestation of the Word that was in the beginning and before the beginning [ἐν ἀρχῇ ὄντος καὶ προὔντος λόγου]. The Savior, who existed before [ὁ προῶν σωτήρ], has in recent days appeared”.
22 *Paed.* 1.12.98.2-3 (SC 70, 284), quoted above.
23 *Paed.* 1.6.26.1 (SC 70, 158).
Behr concludes that, for Clement, “‘likeness’ is granted to man only through rebirth, made possible by the economy of Christ, *whether man had fallen or not*,” so that “for Clement, Christ’s incarnation is not determined solely by the Fall.”24 On this issue, then, the Alexandrian master joins a venerable chorus of writers—Irenaeus, Tertullian, Cyril of Alexandria, Ps-Dionysius the Areopagite, Anastasius the Sinaite, Maximus the Confessor, Isaac of Nineveh, Nicholas Cabasilas—who view the Incarnation as a mystery of God’s primordial design, essentially unrelated to the Fall.25

**Baptism**

Clement’s spirituality is rooted in the sacramental life of the Church. In his discussion of Christian Baptism, he sets forth an exalted view of its effects upon the newly baptised:

> Straightway, on our regeneration (ἰναγεννηθέντες), we attained that perfection after which we aspired […] Being baptized, we are illuminated; illuminated, we become sons; being made sons, we are made perfect; being made perfect, we are made immortal. I, says He, *have said that you are gods, and all sons of the Highest*. […] Now we call that perfect which wants nothing. For what is yet wanting to him who knows God? […] We then alone, who first have touched the confines of life, are already perfect; and we already live who are separated from death.26

This short passage is noteworthy for its insistence on the ‘perfection’ acquired ‘straightway’ by the newly baptised (“we have attained perfection”; “we are made perfect”; “we are already perfect”), a perfection consisting in immortality (“we are made immortal”; “we have touched the confines of life”; “we already live”), derived from divine adoption. Clement has recourse to Ps 81:6 (LXX), a foundational passage for the patristic doctrine of deification.27

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24 Behr, *Asceticism* 143 (emphasis mine).
26 *Paed*. 1.6.25.1; 1.6.26.1-3 (SC 70, 156, 158).
Deification, immortality, perfection: for Clement these constitute a process beginning in Baptism, and fully realised in the eschaton.  

The Course of the Ascetic Life

Singing the praises of the new life acquired in Baptism is exactly what one would expect in a work designed for beginners in the faith. At a higher level, however, it becomes necessary to offer more precise discussion of just how to advance in the ‘perfection’ of that new life. And this is exactly what Clement delivers in the *Stromata* and the *Prophetic Eclogues*.

In the following passage from the *Prophetic Eclogues*, extracted from a larger treatment of Baptism (*Ecl. 4-8*), Clement emphasises the ascetical dimension of the life begun in Baptism:

And inasmuch as baptism is a sign of regeneration (Ἀναγεννήσεως σήμα), is it not itself an escape from matter (τῆς ὕλης ἐστὶν ἐκφώσει) through the teaching of the Saviour, even while a great and violent stream is constantly sweeping and carrying us away? Drawing us out of disorderliness, the Lord illumines us and leads us to the unshaded light, which is no longer material.

The ritual immersion is a sign of regeneration, a sign pointing to the need for strive and struggle, despite adversity, “to escape from matter”. Since, as we have seen, the Christian life is all about change and

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28 *Paed.* 1.6.28.3-5 (SC 70, 162, 164): “we do not say that both take place together at the same time—both the arrival at the end, and the anticipation (πρόληψις) of that arrival. […] Faith, so to speak, is the attempt generated in time; the final result is the attainment of the promise, secured for eternity”. Behr notes (*Asceticism* 157) that “Clement’s stress on Baptism as the beginning of the Christian life and on the nourishment which sustains such life clearly shows the sacramental dimension of this life for Clement”. For writers such as Clement and Irenaeus, “asceticism was not a detachable dimension of Christian life. […] Rather, asceticism was the realization, the putting into practice, of the new eschatological life granted in baptism within the confines of the present life” (17).

29 *Ecl.* 5.2-3 (GCS 17, 138).

30 Evidently, Clement is not thinking of a conventional sign, empty of reality, but of ‘sign’ as a rendering visible of spiritual realities. Thus, the baptismal water, whose regenerating power is derived from Christ’s Jordan Baptism, purifies and sanctifies both body and soul (*Ecl. 7.2* [GCS 17, 138]), such that even unclean spirits that are ‘entangled’ with the soul (συμπελέγμένα τῇ ψυχῇ) are filtered out (διωλίζεσθαι).
transformation, it implies *askesis*—that is, a reshaping of the self which “aims not so much at removing the natural movements of man, but at subjecting them to a strict obedience to the Logos”.

Clement’s encratite leanings are on display in his concern for “escaping matter”, as well as in the image of believers “tiptoeing upon the earth”, in an effort to “abstract the body from the earth”, and to “despise the chain of the flesh”. The regeneration acquired in Baptism and unfolded through the ascetic life will come to embody, even here and now, the heavenly and eschatological state of the perfected Christian.

Before turning to that discussion, however, it is necessary to discuss some of the signposts along the ascensional trajectory described by Clement’s ascetic theory.

### “Milk” to “Solid Food”

Clement uses the Pauline image of milk and solid food—“I could not speak to you as spiritual people, but rather as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for solid food” (1 Cor 3:1-2)—in two rather distinct ways. In *Paed.* 1.6 Clement spends considerable time and effort, to explain that milk “is perfect nourishment”. He argues that Paul’s statement is best understood if ἐν Χριστῷ is taken to qualify not ‘children’ (as the text actually states: they are “infants in Christ”, so that Paul had to feed them milk not solid food) but the beverage: in short, he insists that the ‘milk’ in question is always γάλα ἐν Χριστῷ; that it is the Logos himself who “is figuratively

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31 Behr, *Asceticism* 197.
32 *Paed.* 1.5.16.3 (SC 70, 140): “We, then, who are infants, no longer roll on the ground, nor creep on the earth like serpents as before, crawling with the whole body about senseless lusts; but, stretching upwards in soul, loosed from the world and our sins, touching the earth on tiptoe (ὁλίγῳ ποδὶ ἐφαπτόμενοι τῆς γῆς) so as to appear to be in the world, we pursue holy wisdom”. *Strom.* 7.7.40.1 (SC 428, 140, 142): “So also we raise the head and lift the hands to heaven, and stand on tiptoe (τοῦς τε πόδας ἐπεγείρομεν) at the closing utterance of the prayer, following the eagerness of the spirit directed towards the intellectual essence; and endeavouring to abstract the body from the earth, along with the discourse [i.e. the words of the prayer], raising the soul aloft, winged with longing for better things, we compel it to advance to the region of holiness, nobly despising the chain of the flesh”. Cf. Behr, *Asceticism* 213: “the Gnostics attain to an angelic, fleshless condition, in which they live above the world [...] practicing unceasing prayer and holding a continual festival”.
represented as milk”, that “the blood of the Word has been also exhibited as milk”, so that the Word “as is befitting, supplies us children with the milk of love, and those only are truly blessed who suck this breast”. His interest here is to warn against any elitist separation between milk, as inferior teaching, and solid food. And it is to be noted that “the abundance of images which Clement uses to describe the Christian’s new state of spiritual infancy—children, chicks, infants, colts, lambs, etc—is in stark contrast to a culture which had no real appreciation of the state of infancy”.34

In the *Stromata*, however—that is, in the more advanced part of the curriculum—‘milk’ stands very clearly for the “common faith” and catechesis, in contradistinction to the “solid food” of *gnosis*, and the former’s inferiority and subordination to the latter is further made clear by their use in conjunction to another pair of images: ‘foundation’ (θεμέλιον) and ‘superstructure’ (ἐποικοδομημένα).35

Of course, meat is “not something different from the milk, but the same in substance. For the very same Word is fluid and mild as milk, or solid and compact as meat”.36 Yet in the *Stromata* Clement discloses something that would have been counterproductive at an earlier stage: *pistis* is but a preliminary stage and must give way to the more excellent *gnosis*.37

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34 Behr, *Asceticism* 152.

35 *Strom.* 5.4.26.1 (SC 278, 64): “Now the apostle, in contradistinction to gnostic perfection, calls the common faith (τὴν κοινὴν πίστιν) sometimes ‘foundation’ (θεμέλιον) and sometimes ‘milk’”. *Strom.* 5.10.62.3-4 (SC 278, 128): “If, then, ‘milk’ is said by the apostle to belong to the babes, and ‘meat’ to be the food of the full-grown, milk will be understood to be catechetical instruction—the first food, as it were, of the soul. And meat is the mystic contemplation; for this is the flesh and the blood of the Word, that is, the comprehension of the divine power and essence”.

36 *Paed.* 1.6.37.3 (SC 70, 178, 180).

37 *Strom.* 7.10.57.4 (SC 428, 186): “the first saving change is that from heathenism to faith, as I said before; and the second, that from faith to *gnosis*”. *Strom.* 6.14.109.2 (SC 446, 278): “to know is more than to believe, as to be dignified with the highest honor after being saved is a greater thing than being saved”.

μετριοπάθεια το ἀπάθεια

Clement spends much time (too much, most readers would agree) regulating all details of Christian life—eating, sleeping, bathing, physical exercises, clothing, speaking, sexuality, the social life, etc. In his *Pedagogue*, “[t]he Stoic demand for a life lived ‘according to the logos’ becomes filled with a new meaning, that of obedience to the Logos-Paedagogs, Christ”. 38 The concept governing the ideal Christian life is μετριοπάθεια, moderation of passion, temperance. This changes, however, in the *Stromata*, where the bar is set higher, from μετριοπάθεια to ἀπάθεια.

…knowledge (γνῶσις) produces practice (συνάσκησις), and practice [produces] habit or disposition (ἐξην ἡ διάθεσις); and such a state as this produces impassibility, not moderation of passion (ἀπάθειαν ἐργάζεται, οὐ μετριοπάθειαν). 39

This passage allows us to add a brief note on the tension between ‘already’ and ‘not yet’, which defines the status of believers. In Baptism, as Clement writes so emphatically, the believer is already granted regeneration and perfection; nevertheless, these gifts have yet to be worked out along an ascetical trajectory following a disciplined, step-by-step, protocol:

For it is said, *To him that hath shall be given*: to faith, gnosis; and to gnosis, love; and to love, the inheritance (κληρονομία);

Such a change, then, from unbelief to faith—and to trust in hope and fear—is divine. And, in truth, faith is discovered, by us, to be the first movement towards salvation; after which fear, and hope, and repentance, advancing in company with temperance and patience, lead us to love and knowledge. 40

This sort of algorithm for the ‘alchemy’ of spiritual experience became extremely popular among later theoreticians and practitioners of the monastic life. Monastic authorities such as Evagrius, Maximus the Confessor, and John of the Ladder are all following Clement. 41

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38 Behr, *Asceticism* 164.
39 *Strom.* 6.9.74.1 (SC 446, 210).
40 *Strom.* 7.10.55.7 (SC 428, 182); *Strom.* 2.6.31.1 (SC 38, 57).
41 Take, for instance, this typical formulations in Evagrius’s *Praktikos*: “The fear of God […] strengthens faith, and abstinence in turn strengthens fear of God, and perseverance and hope render abstinence unavailing, and from these is born
There is, as has been noted, “a striking similarity [...] between Clement’s ideal of apatheia—tranquility, detachment, and perpetual interior prayer—and much of what was to emerge later as the monastic ideal”.42 Both for Clement and for later monastic writers apatheia is far from selfish, self-absorbed indifference. On the contrary, apatheia is the sine qua non condition for love, the state in which love is actually possible. More precisely, as a scholar of Evagrius explains,

apatheia is precisely the capacity to experience things as they are and not simply as they affect us by advancing or thwarting our desires and interests. Thus apatheia leads the ascetic towards love, not away from it—a point Evagrius makes quite straightforwardly by declaring that “Agape is the daughter of apatheia” (Praktikos 81.84).43

Ultimately, in the course of the ascetic life one is reshaped so as to be able to experience apathetic, ‘Gnostic’, love, which offers a foretaste of the ἀποκατάστασις, the eschatological status to which I will return later.44

impassibility of which love is the offspring; love is the door to natural knowledge, which is followed by theology and ultimate blessedness” (Evagrius, Praktikos, Prologue 8). I am quoting from Evagrius of Pontus: The Greek Ascetic Corpus, translation, introduction, and commentary by R. E. Sinkewicz (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003) 96. Cf. Praktikos 81 (Sinkewicz 110); Monks 3-5; 67-69. On the similarity between Clement and later ascetic writers see W. Völker, Der wahre Gnostiker nach Clemens Alexandrinus (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1952) 485, 633-36; Guillaumont, “Le gnostique chez Clément et chez Évagre” 195-96.

42 Behr, Asceticism 217.
44 Such love, writes Clement, “is not desire on the part of him who loves; but is a relation of affection, restoring (ἀποκατάστασις) the Gnostic to the unity of the faith— independent of time and place. But he who by love is already in the midst of that in which he is destined to be, and has anticipated hope by knowledge, does not desire anything, having, as far as possible, the very thing desired” Strom. 6.9.73.3-4 (SC 446, 208). “Although not yet true as to time and place, yet by that gnostic love through which the inheritance and perfect restitution (ἀποκατάστασις) follow, the giver of the reward makes good by deeds what the Gnostic, by gnostic choice, had grasped by anticipation through love” Strom. 6 9.75.2 (SC 446, 210-212). “And through love, the future is for him already present [...]. And he, who knows the sure comprehension of the future which there is in the circumstances, in which he is placed, by love goes to meet the future” Strom. 6.9.77.1-2 (SC 446, 214).
“Abstention from Evil” to “Active Beneficence”

Similarly to the transition from *metriopatheia* to *apatheia* is the progression Clement envisages from mere “abstention from evil”, proper to beginners in the faith, to “active beneficence”, characteristic of the Gnostic.45 When speaking of the Gnostic’s “unchanging habit of well-doing”, Clement is thinking of the one thing needful: embodying the goodness of God and practicing an effective intercessory prayer.46 One could say that the perfected Christian becomes an embodiment, a manifestation, of divine providence.47 It is this increasing adherence to the work of divine providence that renders the Gnostic, as the earlier passages suggest, a human being fulfilling the potential laid forth in the “image and likeness”: he is able to “perform unerringly the commandments as far as the human nature may admit of the image”; he has acquired “the unchanging habit of well-doing after the likeness of God”. As an embodiment of providence, he is effective in his intercessory prayer and has become ‘salvific’ like the Saviour. And it is precisely in becoming a conduit for divine providence that the Gnostic is similar to the angels:

He, then, who has first moderated his passions (μετριοπαθήσας) and trained himself for impassibility (εἰς ἀπάθειαν), and developed to the beneficence of gnostic perfection (εἰς εὐποιῶν γνωστικῆς τελειότητος), is here equal to the angels (ἰσάγγελος μὲν ἑνταῦθα). Luminous already, and

45 *Strom.* 6.7.60.2-3 (SC 446, 182, 184): “But the first purification which takes place in the body, the soul being first, is abstinence from evil things (ἡ ἀποχὴ τῶν κακῶν), which some consider perfection, and is, in truth, the perfection of the common believer, Jew and Greek. But in the case of the Gnostic, after that which is reckoned perfection in others, his righteousness advances to activity in well-doing (εἰς ἑνέργειαν εὐποιῶς)”.

46 *Strom.* 6.9.77.4-5 (SC 446, 214, 216): “And besides he will pray that as many as possible may become like him […]. For he who is made like the Savior is also devoted to saving (litt. ‘salvific’, σωτήριος); performing unerringly the commandments as far as the human nature may admit of the image”. *Strom.* 6.7.60.3 (SC 446, 184): “And in whomsoever the increased force of righteousness advances to the doing of good (εἰς ἅγαθοποιῶν), in his case perfection abides in the unchanging habit of well-doing (ἐν ἀμεταβόλῳ ἔξει εὐποιῶς) after the likeness of God”.

47 *Strom.* 7.7.42.3 (SC 428, 148): “Without doubt, the holiness of the Gnostic, united (συμπλακέσσα) to the blessed Providence, shows forth (ἐπιδείκνυσι) in voluntary confession the perfect beneficence (εὐεργεσίαν) of God. For the holiness of the Gnostic, the reciprocal benevolence of the friend of God, is a kind of corresponding movement of providence (ἀντεπιστροφή τις ἔστι τῆς προνοίας)”. 
like the sun shining in the exercise of beneficence (κατὰ τὴν εἰρήνειαν), he speeds by righteous gnosis through the love of God to the sacred abode, like as the apostles.\footnote{Strom. 6.13.105.1 (SC 446, 270).}

It is abundantly clear by now that Clement has taken us beyond “the common faith”: this is no longer Christianity for dummies, but Christianity for those who would be perfect. Let us then move to Clement’s description of the perfected believer, the ‘Gnostic’ truly so called.

**In the End: “Perfect Inheritance”**

Christian perfection is, for Clement, an eschatological “inheritance” (κληρονομία; συγκληρονομία)—hence, a reality pertaining to future expectation.\footnote{Strom. 7.11.68.3 (SC 428, 214): “The Gnostic, consequently, in virtue of being a lover of the one true God, is the really perfect man and friend of God, and is placed in the rank of son. […] reckoned worthy to behold everlastingly God Almighty, ‘face’, it is said, ‘to face’”. Strom. 6.14.114.4, 6 (SC 446, 288): “the perfect inheritance (κληρονομία) belongs to those who attain to ‘a perfect man’, according to the image of the Lord. […] To the likeness of God, then, is brought he that is introduced into adoption and the friendship of God, to the just inheritance (συγκληρονομία) of the lords and gods; if he be perfected, according to the Gospel, as the Lord Himself taught”.} At the same time, however, the Alexandrian describes it as a state acquired here and now. Indeed, in his description of the Gnostic, he clearly emphasises the “already now” at the expense of the “not yet”:

ye who, while still in the body (ἐν σώματι ἐτι ὄντες), like the just men of old, enjoy impassibility (ἀπάθειαν) and immutability (ἀταραξίαν) of soul;

such an one has already attained the condition of “being equal to the angels”;

he who has come to this state is … as it were already disembodied and already grown holy above this earth (οἶνον ἁσάρκῳ ἡδὴ καὶ ἄνω τῆς γῆς ἁγίῳ γεγονότι);

The Gnostic is divine (θεός) and already holy (ἡδὴ ἁγιός), God-bearing and God-borne (θεοφόρον καὶ θεοφορούμενος).\footnote{Strom. 4.7.55.4 (SC 463, 148); Strom. 7.10.57.5 (SC 428, 186); Strom. 7.14.86.7 (SC 428, 266); Strom. 7.13.82.2 (SC 428, 250).}
A New Reading-Lens: “The Other Clement”

One wonders about how such statements are meant to be understood. What does Clement mean by calling the perfected believers “gods”? How does he understand the isangelic condition of the Gnostic? In what sense is the future already present to those possessed by divine love? The ideas remain somewhat abstract, as if something essential had been left out or obscured. Moreover, the most striking affirmations are drowned in a sea of references, to the Bible, as well as to ancient Greek poetry, drama, and philosophy, as if Clement were testing his readers’ determination to keep their focus on the subject-matter. This, in fact, is what Clement had announced at the very beginning of the *Stromata*, when he explained his decision and his strategy for committing to writing the oral teachings received.

He claims, first, that his works are giving written form to oral traditions inherited from earlier authoritative, even charismatic, teachers; second, that oral transmission within the framework of spiritual discipleship

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51 *Strom*. 1.11.1 (SC 30, 51): “Now this work of mine in writing is […] truly an image and outline of those vigorous and animated discourses which I was privileged to hear, and of blessed and truly remarkable men”. *Strom*. 1.14.1 (SC 30, 53): “The writing of these memoranda of mine, I well know, is weak when compared with that spirit, full of grace, which I was privileged to hear. But it will be an image to recall the archetype to him who was struck with the thyrsus”. (Ecl. 27.1-7 (GCS 17, 144): “Now, the elders would not write because they did not want to undermine their preoccupation with the teaching of the tradition by another, namely writing (it) down; nor did they want to expend on writing the time dedicated to pondering what was to be said. But, convinced perhaps that getting the composition right and the substance of the teaching are entirely separate matters, they deferred to others naturally endowed (as writers). […] but that which will be repeatedly consulted by those who have access to it [i.e. the book] is worth even the utmost effort, and is, as it were, the written confirmation of the instruction and of the voice so transmitted to (our) descendants by means of the (written) composition. Speaking in writing, the elders’ “circulating deposit” uses the writer for the purpose of a transmission that leads to the salvation of those who are to read. So, just like a magnet, which repels all substance and only attracts iron, on account of affinity, books also attract only those who are capable of understanding them, even though there are many who engage them”. Cf. Eusebius of Caesarea, *EH* 6.13.9 (NPNF): “In his book *On the Passover* he acknowledges that he had been urged by his friends to commit to writing, for posterity, the traditions which he had heard from the ancient presbyters”.
remains the ideal mode of training in faith;\textsuperscript{52} and, third, that, aside from the intrinsic obscurity of written texts (an obscurity caused by the absence of the living master-disciple relation), the Christian instruction comprised in writings such as his must also be concealed intentionally out of pastoral concern.\textsuperscript{53} The concern is, for Clement, who is here quoting Ps.-Plato’s Second Epistle, that “it is impossible that what has been written should not escape \((οὐ γὰρ ἔστι τὰ γραμμένα μὴ (οὐκ) ἐκπεσεῖν)\).”\textsuperscript{54} Therefore, the \textit{Stromata} are designed purposely (ἐξεπιτηδεῖς) as “a mixture of fruit-bearing and fruitless trees, since the writing aims at concealment, on account of those that have the daring to pilfer and steal the ripe fruits”; the ideal reader, however, will know how to “transplant shoots and plants, so as to adorn a beautiful park and a delightful grove”.\textsuperscript{55} Evagrius will make similar claims about his writings.\textsuperscript{56}

\textsuperscript{52} \textit{Strom.} 1.13.2, 4 [SC 30, 52, 53): “secret things are entrusted to speech, not to writing, as is the case with God. […] the mysteries are delivered mystically, that what is spoken may be in the mouth of the speaker; rather not in his voice, but in his understanding”.

\textsuperscript{53} \textit{Strom.} 1.14.3-4 (SC 30, 54): “Some things I purposely omit, in the exercise of a wise selection, afraid to write what I guarded against speaking: not grudging—for that were wrong—but fearing for my readers, lest they should stumble by taking them in a wrong sense; and, as the proverb says, we should be found ‘reaching a sword to a child.’ For it is impossible that what has been written should not escape \((οὐ γὰρ ἔστι τὰ γραμμένα μὴ (οὐκ) ἐκπεσεῖν)\), although remaining unpublished by me. But being always revolved, using the one only voice, that of writing, they [the writings] answer nothing to him that makes inquiries beyond what is written; for they require of necessity the aid of some one, either of him who wrote, or of some one else who has walked in his footsteps”. \textit{Strom.} 1.15.1 (SC 30, 54): “Some things my treatise will hint at; on some it will linger; some it will merely mention. It will try to speak imperceptibly, to exhibit secretly, and to demonstrate silently”.

\textsuperscript{54} Ps-Plato, \textit{Second Epistle}: “Now I must expound it to you in a riddling way in order that, should the tablet come to any harm ‘in folds of ocean or of earth,’ he that readeth may not understand. […] [314A] Beware, however, lest these doctrines be ever divulged to uneducated people. For there are hardly any doctrines, I believe, which sound more absurd than these to the vulgar, or, on the other hand, more admirable and inspired to men of fine disposition. […] [314B] The greatest safeguard is to avoid writing and to learn by heart; [314c] for it is not possible that what is written down should not get divulged \((οὐ γὰρ ἔστι τὰ γραμμένα μὴ (οὐκ) ἐκπεσεῖν)\). […] Fare thee well, and give me credence; and now, to begin with, read this letter over repeatedly and then burn it up”.

\textsuperscript{55} \textit{Strom.} 7.18.111.1 (SC 428, 330).

\textsuperscript{56} Evagrius, \textit{Praktikos}, prologue, 9: “we are now going to discuss the practical and the gnostic life not as much as we have seen or heard, but what we have learned
Given that the voice of Clement’s ancient teachers is heard more often and more clearly in the *Prophetic Eclogues*, the *Adumbrationes*, and the *Excerpta* than elsewhere in other Clementine corpus, it would make good sense to use these oft-neglected writings as a reading-lens that would allow us a better grasp of the Alexandrian’s view of the regenerated Christian.

**The “Cosmic Hierarchy”**

It is on the basis of these older sources that Clement furnishes a detailed description of the hierarchical structure of the spiritual universe. This from them to say to others. [...] We have kept certain things hidden and have obscured others, so as ‘not to give what is holy to dogs and to throw pearls before swine’ (cf. Matt. 7, 6). But these things will be clear to those who have followed in the same track as they”.

57 Although to speak of ‘hierarchy’ in the case of early Jewish or Christian texts is, *stricto sensu*, anachronistic, because this term was coined only in the late fifth century by Ps-Dionysius the Areopagite, ‘hierarchy’ is simply a very convenient designation for the multi-storied cosmos characteristic of apocalyptic writings such as the *Ascension of Isaiah*, *2 Enoch* or the *Epistula Apostolorum*. In fact, the sixth-century scholiast of the Corpus Dionysiacum, John of Scythopolis was well aware of the similarities, on this point, between Clement and Ps.-Dionysius, and convinced of their essential harmony. See the discussion in B. G. Bucur, *Angelomorphic Pneumatology: Clement of Alexandria and Other Early Christian Witnesses* (Leiden: Brill, 2009) 32-35. In his scholion on the *Divine Names* 2.9, where the text had mentioned “the premier among the oldest angels” (τὸ πρῶτον προτότοκον ἄγγελον), John of Scythopolis writes: “Note how he says that certain angels are oldest (προτότοκοι ἄγγέλοι εἰναι τινας) and that one of them is premier (πρῶτον αὐτῶν). The divine John speaks of elder angels in the Apocalypse, and we read in Tobit as well as in the fifth book of Clement’s *Hypotyposes* that the premier angels are seven (ἐπτά εἶναι τοὺς πρῶτους). He [Dionysius] was wont to call the three highest orders ‘the oldest angels’ (προτότοκοι ἄγγέλοι)—Thrones, Seraphim, and Cherubim—as he often signifies in his treatise *The Celestial Hierarchy*. The Greek text is taken from PG 4, 225, 228; the English translation is, with slight modifications, that of P. Rorem and J. C. Lamoreaux, *John of Scythopolis and the Dionysian Corpus: Annotating the Areopagite* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) 198. Moreover, the centrality of the hierarchically ordered universe and its denizens was an important ‘archaising’ feature of the Ps.-Dionysian work, subordinated to one of the likely goals of this “New Testament pseudepigraphon”—namely the subversion of similar apocalyptic imagery and associated doctrines among competing groups in Christianity. See Golitzin, *Mystagogy: A Monastic Reading of Dionysius Areopagita* (Minneapolis, MN: Cistercian, 2013) 11-13.
worldview is presented in a somewhat more veiled manner in the *Stromata*:

For on one original first principle, which acts according to the [Father’s] will, the first, and the second, and the third depend; then at the highest extremity of the visible world is the blessed abode of the angels (μακαρία ἄγγελοθεσία); and coming down to us there are ranged, one [level] under the other (ἄλλοι ὑπ’ ἄλλοις), those who, from One and by One, both are saved and save (σώζομενοι τε καὶ σώζοντες);

the operative power (ἡ δραστικὴ ἐνέργεια) is imparted by descent through those that are moved successively (διὰ τῶν προσεχέστερων κινουμένων).

The description is fleshed out in great detail in Exc. 10, 11, and 27 and Ecl. 56-57. The “celestial hierarchy” features, in descending order, the Logos, the seven first-created angels (protoctists), the archangels, and the angels. The orienting principle (ἀρχή) of the hierarchy is the “Face of God”. That the “Face of God” is the Son (Exc. 10.6 [SC 23, 80]) is nothing

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59 *Strom.* 7.2.9.3 (SC 428, 60); *Strom.* 6.16.148.6 (SC 446, 356).

60 Since God is neither an accidental (σωμβεβηκός), nor described by anything accidental (*Strom.* 5.12.81.5 [SC 278, 158]), he is beyond the hierarchy, and should not be counted as the first of five hierarchical levels. To designate the Father, Clement repeatedly alludes to the famous Platonic “beyond ousia” (ἐπέκεινα τῆς οὐσίας, Rep. 509b), which had been already appropriated by Justin (ἐπέκεινα πάσης οὐσίας, *Dial* 4.1). God is one and *beyond* the one and the monad (*Paed.* 1.8.71.1 [SC 70, 236]), and *beyond* cause (τὸ ἐπέκεινα αἰτίον, *Strom.* 7.2.2.3 [SC 428, 42]).
new: Clement says as much in *Paed 1.7.57.2* (SC 70, 212), by drawing upon the theophany at “Face of God” / Εἶδος Θεοῦ / Peniel in Gen 32:30. What is new is the rich and detailed description of the principles governing the hierarchy: there is a continual propagation of the Face’s light from one level of the hierarchy to the next down to the lowest level of existence; each rank of spiritual entities is ‘moved’ by the one above it, and will, in turn, ‘move’ the immediately lower level.

The purpose of the hierarchy consists in the spiritual progress, or ‘advancement’ (προκοπή) of each of the spiritual levels (τάξεις) along the hierarchy. This ascent leads to the progressive transformation of one level into the next, because, as most clearly expressed by Jean Daniélou, “[t]he different degrees of the hierarchy are not immutable natures, but rather degrees of a spiritual ascent, so that it is possible to pass from one order to the next”.

61 There is a slight ambiguity in the description of Christ in respect to the Father: in *Ecl. 10.3* Christ is said to ceaselessly partake of the Power of the Father (προσεχόντας τίς τοῦ Πατρός ἀπολαύον δυνάμεως); elsewhere (*Ecl. 4.2; 12.3*) He is this Power “without interval” (αὐτάσσεται). François Sagnard offers a compelling solution, based on the implication of προσεχός, “terme qui indique la continuité dans l’espace, sans intermediaire. La dynamis (ou: le logos) du Père passe continuellement dans le Monogène pour l’engendrer. On peut dire aussi que le Monogène est cette dynamis du Père” (*Exc. 79* n. 2, emphasis mine). Despite what appears at first sight as a distinction between the Only Begotten and the Logos, there is no real basis for this conclusion. Clement actually applies to ‘Logos’ the action of ‘explaining’ the Father, which the Fourth Gospel affirms of the “Only Begotten” (*Ecl. 8.2, Jn 1:18*). Sagnard (*Excerpta 74*, commentary on *Exc. 8:3*) summarises Clement’s view as follows: “Le Logos ou Monogène apparaît comme Sauveur […] Mais c’est le même qui opère; c’est la même ‘dynamis’ sans coupure, sans partage: ἀὐτάσσεται (8:1; 8:3) ἀμέριστος (8:1 (cf. 4:2: οὐν δὲ διεκέκριτον) […]). Ainsi le Monogène et Premier Né désignent le même être”. This continuous, uninterrupted outpouring of the Power from the Father, continuously, uninterruptedly constituting the second principle seems to anticipate Origen’s doctrine of the Son’s “eternal begetting”.


remain at the heart of the Christian tradition. Nevertheless, the fluidity of the various levels within a temporary hierarchy, envisioned by Clement, Origen, and Evagrius, will eventually be replaced by a “stable” hierarchy of originally and permanently distinct levels in Ps-Dionysius.\(^{64}\)

discussion, see Collomp, “Une source” 23-24; Oeyen, *Engelpneumatologie* 8-9, 12.

\(^{64}\) On the difference between Origen and Evagrius, on the one hand, and Ps-Dionysius, on the other, see Golitzin, *Et introibo ad altare Dei: The Mystagogy of Dionysius Areopagita, with Special Reference to Its Predecessors in the Eastern Christian Tradition* (Thessalonica: Patriarchal Institute of Patristic Studies, 1994) 276, 327: “[For Origen] every difference, every hierarchy, is not due to any intrinsic difference or ‘inequality’ in the created nature of rational beings, but to different, temporarily assigned functions: ‘... the names are not names of the natures of living things, but of functions [τὰ ἔξεις] with which such or such a spiritual nature has been invested by God’ ([In Jn. II:23]). We take particular note of this use of τὰ ἔξεις as being in direct contrast to the use to which Dionysius will put it. Unlike Dionysius, for whom the τὰ ἔξεις are the expression of the λόγοι that God’s eternal Providence has for each creature, Origen understands the term as referring exclusively to the action taken by God and effected through the Logos after the first creation and Fall. […] If, as opposed to Dionysius, angels and humans are for Origen of one fundamental nature, and if the instruction given is intended to lead them back and up to their originally uniform status, it nonetheless remains the case that for both writers the action and reflection of Providence in the world is anagogic; everything that it establishes is given to lead the soul back and up to γνῶσις”; “Evagrius provides us with a completely traditional spectrum of reason-endowed beings ranging from the angelic hosts, through humankind, and down to the legions of hell. The doctrine of original and final equality rules out, however, any notion of permanent diversity. The Providence of Christ is provisional, and so are the structures he has created for our edification. […] They are the reflection of states of being rather than of abiding differences in essence. His τὰ ἔξεις, the ranks and distinctions proper to the secondary world, are therefore purely functional. They do not reveal the original will or intentions of God with regard to each—i.e. the creative λόγοι—as they do in Dionysius, but instead teach the temporary, pedagogic intent of Christ’s Providence. They are to be ascended […] as steps on the way back to the original γνῶσις […]. Nonetheless, however temporary and functional they are, and thus distinguished from the hierarchies of the CD, the effect—indeed, precisely the function—of Evagrius’ τὰ ἔξεις here below remains markedly similar to that of their Dionysian equivalent. […] Evagrius’ angels fulfill then the same functions as those of Dionysius. They are not themselves creators or demiurges, but they both reflect and assist Christ, the true demiurge, to effect our ἀναγωγή through purifying, illumining, and perfecting”.
The Protoctists

The first level of celestial entities contemplating the Face is first mentioned in the *Stromata*: Clement informs us that “the first-born princes of the angels (πρωτόγονοι ἅγγέλων ἀρχοντες), who have the greatest power, are seven”. Elsewhere they are called “first created (beings)”, πρωτόκτιστοι, seven in number but having “their liturgy common and undivided”:

As for the protoctists, even while they are distinct in number, and individually defined and circumscribed, the similarity (ὁμοιότης) of their deeds nevertheless points to [their] unity, equality and being alike (ὁμοιότητα). Among the seven, there has not been given more to the one and less to the other; nor is any of them lacking in advancement; [they] have received perfection from the beginning, at the first [moment of their] coming into being, from God through the Son;

And each of the spiritual beings has, on the one hand, both its proper power and its individual dispensation; but, on the other hand, given that the protoctists have come to be and have received [their] perfection at the same time, their liturgy is common and undivided;

They are those who “always look upon the Face of the Father”. But the Face of the Father is the Son, through whom the Father is known […]. So, when the Lord said: “Do no despise any of these little ones. Truly I tell you: their angels continually look upon the Face of the Father”, [he meant that] as the model is, so will also be the elect, receiving the perfect advancement. For “blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God”.

These protoctists are, on the one hand, numbered with the angels and archangels, their subordinates, and equated with “the seven eyes of the

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65 *Strom.* 6.16.143.1 (SC 446, 344).
66 I have used two different English words for ὁμοιότης (“similarity” and “being alike”), because our post-Nicene theological bias would automatically weaken the bearing of this word in Clement: the second time he uses ὁμοιότης, Clement has in mind “being like” as opposed to “being unlike”, not to “being the same as”.
67 Exc. 10.3-4; Exc. 11.4; Exc. 10.6 -11.1 (SC 23, 78, 82, 80).
68 *Hae namque primitivae virtutes ac primo creatae* (rendering πρωτόγονοι καὶ πρωτόκτιστοι δύναμες), *inmobiles existentes secundum substantiam, cum subiectis angelis et archangelis* (*Adumbr.* 1 John 2:1 [GCS 17, 211]). Stählin’s critical edition introduces a comma between *inmobiles* and *existentes*. I prefer to revert to Zahn’s text (*Forschungen* 3, 88), which has no comma. Thus, I take
Lord” (Zech 3:9; 4:10; Rev 5:6), the “thrones” (Col 1:16), and the “angels ever contemplating the Face of God” (Matt 18:10). On the other hand, they are bearers of the divine Name, and as such they are called “gods”. In relation to Christ, the protoctists present the prayers ascending from below; in relation to the subordinate levels of reality, they function as “high priests” with regard to the archangels, just as the archangels are “high priests” to the angels; in their unceasing contemplation of the Face of God, the protoctists represent the model (προκέντημα) of perfected souls. Evidently, Clement echoes here Jewish and Christian traditions about the sevenfold highest angelic company.


70 Strom. 7.10.56.3 (SC 428, 184); Adumbr. Jude 5:24 (GCS 17, 209). For a detailed analysis of these and other relevant passages, see Bucur, Angelomorphic Pneumatology 42-51.

71 Exc. 11.1 (SC 23, 80).

72 Passages featuring the group of seven heavenly beings are Ezek 9:2-3 (seven angelic beings, of which the seventh is more important than the other six); Tob 12:15 (seven “holy angels” who have access before the Glory, where they present the prayers of “the saints”); 1 En. (ch. 20, seven archangels; ch. 90.21, “the seven first snow-white ones”); Test. Levi 7.4-8.3 (seven men in white clothing, vesting Levi with the [sevenfold] priestly apparel); 2 En. 19.6 (seven phoenixes, seven cherubim, and seven seraphim, all singing in unison). The notion of “first created” is important to the author of Jubilees: the angels of the presence are said to be circumcised from their creation on the second day, thus possessing a certain perfection and functioning as heavenly models and final destination of the people of Israel (Jub. 2.2; 15.27). According to the Prayer of Joseph, dated to the first century CE, Israel is a heavenly being—called indistinctly both ἄγγελος θεοῦ and πνεύμα ἄρχων—who ranks higher than the seven archangels, as chief captain and first minister before the face of God. See also the discussion of heptadic traditions in Second Temple Judaism in W. F. Smelik, “On Mystical Transformation of the Righteous into Light in Judaism” Journal for the Study of Judaism 26 (1995) 131-41; R. Elior, The Three Temples: On the Emergence of Jewish Mysticism (Oxford
Hierarchy and the Angelomorphic Holy Spirit

Clement’s celestial hierarchy is paradigmatic for the widespread hierarchical cosmology in the early centuries of the common era, as well as for the type of difficulties faced by the emerging Christian theology. One such problem is whether the cosmic hierarchy and the overarching presence and work of the Logos allow for the articulation of a robust enough pneumatology, and, thus, for trinitarian theology. Indeed, the...
cosmic ladder described above seems to reserve no place to the Holy Spirit: in descending order, one reads about the Father, the Son/Logos as principle of all things, and the protoctists, the level where multiplicity sets in. It is noteworthy, however, that Clement also calls the seven protoctists “the heptad of the Spirit”:

And by one God are many treasures dispensed; some are disclosed through the Law, others through the prophets; some by the divine mouth, another by the heptad of the spirit (τὸ θ' πνεύματος τῇ ἐπτάδι) singing in accompaniment. And the Lord being one, is the same Instructor in all of these.74

The ‘heptad’ is, evidently, a reference to the seven protoctists; however, in this passage Clement equates the seven protoctists with the seven gifts of the Spirit. One is therefore justified in speaking of pneumatology.

The relation between the seven protoctists and the Holy Spirit was treated in detail by Christian Oeyen, whose thesis was that the Alexandrian master set forth an Engelpneumatologie.75 Hans-Dieter Hauschild’s cautious observations seem extremely apt at this point: interpreting Clement’s pneumatology depends to a great extent on determining the extent to which the Alexandrian is in agreement with the traditions that he is reworking. He is most likely echoing a traditional view that simply did not speak of a “Holy Spirit”, and did not have the capacity to bend the inherited framework so as to accommodate the hypostasis of the Spirit.76 It has been argued, more recently, that Clement and other early Christian writers are witnesses of an archaic ‘angelomorphic’ pneumatology, which made use of the apocalyptic imagery of the seven highest angels, and which associated “possessing the Spirit” with a process of ‘real’ angelification. At any rate, Clement subjected this apocalyptic material

74 Paed. 3.12.87.4 (SC 158, 168).
75 For a presentation of the functional identity between the Holy Spirit and the protoctists, see Oeyen, Engelpneumatologie 22-23. Ladaria refuses this identification on the grounds that the indwelling work of the Spirit finds no counterpart in the action of the protoctists, and that there is a clear distinction between the paradigmatic status of the protoctists with respect to the vision of God, and work of Holy Spirit who enables one to see God. L. Ladaria, El Espíritu en Clemente Alejandrino: Estudio teológico antropológico (Madrid: UPCM, 1980) 252 and n. 17. Against such objections I note that the protoctists serve as “high priests” of the deifying and theophanic action ultimately performed by the Logos, and therefore mediators of the visio dei.
76 Hauschild, Gottes Geist 79 n. 10.
Inherited from earlier authorities—the angelic hierarchy, the seven protocists, the process of angelification—to the spiritualising interpretation and the Logos-theology inherited from Philo. Noetic exegesis helps Clement understand the seven protocists as the sevenfold Spirit, just as it helps equate Ps.-Plato’s ‘third’ with the third article of the Christian rule of faith.  

Clement’s Ascetic Theories: Insights from “The Other Clement”

‘Angelification’

In light of the ‘fluid’ hierarchy described earlier, the references in the Stromata to the Christian ascetic “living as an angel on earth, already luminous”, “already disembodied and already grown holy above this earth”, having “already attained the condition of ‘being equal to the angels’” take on more concrete meaning. Clement’s perfect Gnostic is not only a human being who has attained closeness to the angelic realm, but a human being actually in process of becoming an angel. Indeed, believers are being instructed by the angels, and their horizon is one of angelification: at the end of a millennial cycle, they will be translated into the rank of angels, while their instructors will become archangels, replacing their own instructors, who will in turn be promoted to a higher level. All levels of the hierarchy move one step higher every one thousand years:

For those among humans who start being transformed into angels are instructed by the angels for a thousand years, in order to be promoted to perfection (εἰς τελειότητα ἀποκαθιστάμενοι). Then the instructors are translated into archangelic authority, while those who have received instruction will in turn instruct those among humans who are transformed into angels; thereupon they are, at the specified period, promoted into the proper angelic state of the body (ἀποκαθίστανται τῇ οίκείᾳ τοῦ σώματος ἄγγελοθεσία).  


78 Ecl. 57.5 [GCS 17, 154]. This periodic ‘upgrading’ also applies to the protocists, who are set higher, “so that they may no longer exercise a definite ministry, according to providence, but may abide in rest and solely in the
Note the expression εἰς τελειώτητα ἀποκοκαθιστάμενοι in reference to the promotion of archangels to the status of *protoctists*. A few sentences earlier (*Ecl.* 57.1), Clement called the highest-ranking beings οἱ ἐν τῇ ἀκρᾷ ἀποκαταστάσει προτόκτιστοι, “those first-created, who are on the summit). I understand ἀποκατάστασις here in the sense of ‘promotion’ to eschatological perfection rather than ‘restoration’ to a protological state. As André Méhat explains:

…l’apocatastase est une échelle et nullement un retour. L’expression est à rapprocher d’autres similaires: le sommet de l’héritage, de l’adoption, du Repos, etc (Strom. 2.22.134; 2.22.136; 4.22.145). Les Protoctistes, qui ont reçu dès le principe la perfection (Exc. ex Theod. 10, 1-12) n’apparaissent nulle part comme en ayant été déchus à quelque moment que ce soit. L’apocatastase n’est donc pas un retour, mais elle est l’état définitif où Dieu a rangé le monde des Esprits qui sont les plus proches de lui. Le préfixe ἀπο- n’exprime rien d’autre ici que l’idée d’achèvement.79

**Becoming a Protoctist**

Clement’s references to the *protoctists* shed the necessary light onto his portrait of the perfected believer, the ‘Gnostic’ truly so called. Consider the following passages:

[gnostic souls are said to] surpass in the greatness of contemplation the mode of life of each of the holy ranks (τῇ μεγαλοπρεπεὶ τῆς θεωρίας ὑπερβαίνουσας ἐκάστης ἀγίας τάξεως τὴν πολιτείαν) […] ever moving to higher and yet higher places [lit. “reaching places better than the better places”, ἀμείνους ἀμεινόνων τόπων τόπους], embracing the divine vision (θεωρίαν) not in mirrors or by means of mirrors;

Then become pure in heart, and close (κατὰ τὸ προσεχεῖς) to the Lord, there awaits them promotion (ἀποκατάστασις) to everlasting contemplation. And they are called by the appellation of ‘gods’, to be co-enthroned (σύνθρονοι)

contemplation of God alone. But those closest to them will advance to the level that they themselves have left. And the same occurs by analogy with those on an inferior level”. *Ecl.* 56.7 (GCS 17, 153).

with the other ‘gods’ that have been set in first place (πρώτων τεταγμένων) by the Saviour;

The true Gnostic has been brought in the presence of his glory: he means before the angels; faultless in joyousness, having become angels (angelos factos).  

In these passages, the “Gnostic soul” is described as having moved up all levels of the hierarchy and reached unmediated access to the vision of the Face, possible because of the immediate proximity. Note here the expression for this proximity—κατὰ τὸ προσεχές—which evokes the repeated use of προσεχός in the Excerpta to express the immediacy, the lack of any interval between the levels of the hierarchy! One could well say that the Gnostics actually become protoctists, since Clement states that they have pitched their tent in El, that is, in God, and “are called by the appellation of ‘gods’, to be co-enthroned (σύνθρονοι) with the other ‘gods’ that have been set in first place (πρώτων τεταγμένων) by the Saviour”.

**Becoming a Seraph**

A similar conception arises from Clement’s discussion of the theophany at Isaiah 6. Here our Christian author shows himself a worthy continuator of what Eric Osborn called Philo’s “noetic exegesis”.

[The ark] signifies the repose which dwells with the spirits who give glory (ἀνάπαυσιν […] τὴν μετὰ τῶν δοξολόγων πνευμάτων), which the cherubim represent darkly (ὁ αἰνίσσεται Χερουβίμ). […] But the face is a symbol of the rational soul, and the wings are the lofty ministers and energies of powers right and left; and the voice is delightful glory in ceaseless contemplation (ἡ φωνὴ δὲ δόξα εὐχάριστος ἐν ἀκαταπαύστῳ θεωρίᾳ);

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80 Strom. 7.3.13.1 (SC 428, 68); Strom. 7.10.56.5-6 (SC 428, 184); Adumbr. Jude 5:24 (GCS 17, 209).

81 Ecl. 57.3-4 (GCS 17, 154); Strom. 7.10.56.6 (SC 428, 184). The preeminent position of the “other gods” can also indicate that they are the earliest to have been placed in their position of highest ranking celestial beings (‘gods’) by the Saviour. Cf. Exc. 10.4, on the protoctists: ἐξ ἀρχῆς ἀπειληφότον τὸ τέλειον ἡμα τῇ πρώτῃ γενέσει παρὰ τοῦ Θεοῦ διὰ τοῦ Υἱοῦ.

He [the Gnostic] all day and night, speaking and doing the Lord’s commands, rejoices exceedingly […] and is ever giving thanks to God, like the living creatures who give glory (tà ζῶα tà δοξολόγα), figuratively spoken of by Isaiah (διὰ Ἡσαίου ἀλληλογοροῦμενα). 83

Like the later Alexandrian liturgical tradition (Anaphora of Serapion; Anaphora of the Liturgy of Saint Mark), 84 Clement identifies the seraphim of Isaiah 6 (which he calls tà ζῶα tà δοξολόγα) with the cherubim of the ark in Exodus 25 (tà πνεύματα tà δοξολόγα) and with the two ζῶα found in the peculiar LXX reading of Hab 3:2 (“you will be known between the two ζῶα”). His main point, however, 85 is that the seraphim and the cherubim should be decoded allegorically as references to the life of the perfected soul: for him, it is the “Gnostic” who “rests” in a state of ceaseless contemplation and perpetual praise of God. Ultimately, Christian perfection consists in becoming a seraph.

Overall, Clement of Alexandria preserves an ancient biblical and extra-biblical tradition—namely that of a transformation from human into angelic—also retained by certain strands of Judaism (e.g. 1 En. 71.11; 2

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83 Strom. 7.12.80.4 (SC 428, 246); Strom. 5.6.36.3-4 (SC 278, 84).
84 Eucharistic Prayer of Bishop Serapion (Greek text and English translation in M. E. Johnson, The Prayers of Sarapion of Thmu: A Literary, Liturgical, and Theological Analysis [Rome: PIO, 1995] 46-47): “Let the Lord Jesus speak in us and let the holy Spirit also hymn you through us. For you are above all rule and authority and power and dominion and every name being named, not only in this age but also in the coming one. Beside you stand a thousand thousands [Dan 7:10] and myriad myriads of angels, archangels, thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers. Beside you stand the two most-honored six-winged seraphim (tà δύο τιμωτάτα σεραφείμ). With two wings they cover the face, and with two the feet, and with two they fly; sanctifying. With them receive also our sanctification as we say: Holy, holy, holy, Lord of Sabaoth; heaven and earth are full of your glory”. Liturgy of Saint Mark: “Before you stand thousands and ten thousand times ten thousand armies of holy angels and archangels. Before you stand your two most honourable creatures (tà δύο τιμωτάτα σου ζῶα), the many-eyed Cherubim and the six-winged Seraphim (tà πολλώμματα Χερουβιμ καὶ tà ἕξαπτέρυγα Σεραφείμ); with two they cover their feet…” etc.
85 It seems that, although “Clement seems to reflect a Philonic influence”, he “develops the theme in such a different way that he seems here to be essentially independent; echoes may reflect only a broadly common tradition”. A. van den Hoek, Clement of Alexandria and His Use of Philo in the Stromateis: An Early Christian Reshaping of a Jewish Model (Leiden: Brill, 1988) 134.
En. 22.11; cf. 3 En. 15.48(C). T. Levi 4.2, for instance, is explicit about the possibility of becoming a ‘son’ to God and a “prince of the presence”. Similarly, in 2 Enoch, the patriarch is not merely a visitor to

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86 See the discussion and extensive list of primary sources in W. D. Davies and D. C. Allison, Jr., A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew, 3 vols (London: T&T Clark, 1989) 3: 227-28; J. H. Charlesworth, “The Portrayal of the Righteous as an Angel” in Ideal Figures in Ancient Judaism; Profiles and Paradigms, ed. J. J. Collins and G. W. E. Nickelsburg (Chico, CA: Scholars, 1980) 135-51; J. J. Collins, “The Angelic Life” in Metamorphoses: Resurrection, Body and Transformative Practices in Early Christianity, ed. T. K. Seim and J. Økland (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2009) 291-310; M. Mach, Entwicklungsstadien des jüdischen Engelglaubens in vorrabbinischer Zeit (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992) 163-173. According to C. Fletcher-Louis, Luke-Acts: Angels, Christology and Soteriology (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997) 254, the relation between Jesus-followers and angels is one of “substantive continuity of identity” and “ontological affinity” (78). See also N. Deutsch, Guardians of the Gate: Angelic Vice Regency in Late Antiquity (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 1999) 32-34: “Metatron’s […] transformation from a human being into an angel reflects an ontological process which may be repeated by mystics”. For a different opinion, see K. P. Sullivan, Wrestling with Angels: A Study of the Relationship Between Angels and Humans in Ancient Jewish Literature and the New Testament (Leiden: Brill, 2004): “Despite the similarity in appearance and the closeness of interaction, there does not seem to be any reason to suppose that there was any blurring of categories between angels and humans. When there was an apparent transformation from the human to the angelic (Enoch = Metatron or Jacob = Israel), it was a one-time transformation that occurred beyond the earthly sphere” (229); the boundary between humans and angels is “fix, but not absolute” (230): “fix” because these remain “very different beings”, yet “not absolute” because the boundary between the human and angelic realms can be crossed. Regardless of the manner in which one understands the angelic or simili-angelic status of humanity, it is important to observe that the depiction of eschatological humanity as angelic or angelomorphic corresponds to the depiction of protological humanity as angelic or angelomorphic (e.g. 2 En. 30.11, where Adam is said to have been created as “a second angel, honoured and great and glorious”); thus, angelification signals the return to Paradise. See in this respect Mach, Entwicklungsstadien 168-69; A. Orlov, “Resurrection of Adam’s Body: The Redeeming Role of Enoch-Metatron in 2 (Slavonic) Enoch” in his book Apocalypticism to Merkabah Mysticism: Studies in the Slavonic Pseudepigrapha (Leiden: Brill, 2006) 231-236; idem, “The Pillar of the World: The Eschatological Role of the Seventh Antediluvian Hero in 2 (Slavonic) Enoch” Henoch 30 (2008) 119-134 esp. 129, 132, 133.

87 “The Highest then hath heard thy prayer to separate thee from unrighteousness, and to make thee his son and servant, and a minister in his presence”. Cf. 4QSB 4.25, “all the glory of Adam shall be theirs”. 
the heavenly realms, but “a servant permanently installed in the office of the sar hapnapim”. Similarly, in the so-called Self-Glorification Hymn at Qumran (4Q491),

The ascension [...] is not just a case of celestial tourism, viewing the wonders of heaven, and receiving a prophetic and/or priestly commission. It involves transformation—angelification, possibly even apotheosis. The ascender takes his seat in heaven above the angels. 

According to Rachel Elior, the Qumranites “expressed profound identification with the angels [...] they envisaged a heavenly cult of angelic priests”, and saw themselves as “partners and counterparts of the angels”. For them, “[a]dherence to the solar calendar [...] was construed as imitatio angelorum, imitation of the angelic sacred service in sacred heavenly space”; “[t]hose who fulfill the covenantal terms, including the observance of the commandments, maintenance of strict purity, and the proper sequence of time, indicate that they have joined the ranks of the angels”. The rabbinic Sages, by contrast, were at best ambivalent about—and usually critical of—such transformational mysticism; however, “rejected traditions often went underground only to emerge again as soon as the circumstances changed”. Indeed, Hekhalot literature speaks about becoming superior, more glorious than the “eight great princes” (3 En. 10.2-6), even becoming “the lesser YHWH” (3 En. 12).

The description of eschatological humanity as having undergone a transformation towards an angelic (or simili-angelic) status is also affirmed in early Christianity. In a brilliant essay entitled “Qumran and the Genealogy of Western Mysticism”, Philip Alexander offers the following summary:

…the old Jewish priestly doctrine of the celestial liturgy, which we have discovered flourishing already in the Second Temple period, was taken up in Christian tradition, and there contributed powerfully to the development of an influential angelikos bios strand of Christian mysticism. [...] By the

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angelikos bios type of mysticism I mean a mysticism in which the angels are seen as exemplars of the supreme relationship to God to which a creature can attain. The mystic’s aim is, through a process of elevation and transformation, known in some later Christian texts as theosis, to join the choirs of angels, and so share in their nearness to God.92

In the New Testament, the eschatological state of believers is described in terms of change (1 Cor 15:51, “we shall all be changed”, πάντες ἄλλαγμα), similarity or equality to the angels (ὡς ἄγγελοι, Mk 12:25 and Matt 22:30; ἵσταται and κύριον θεοῦ, Luke 20:36), and participation in angelic worship (Col 2:18, ἐν ... θρησκείᾳ τῶν ἄγγελων δὲ ἐόρακεν ἐμβατεύων, taking ἐμβατεύων as entry into the celestial temple and θρησκείᾳ τῶν ἄγγελων as subjective genitive—“angelic worship”; cf. Heb 8-9; Rev 4-5). Nevertheless, early Christians recontextualised the notion of an angelic transformation at the end time, and made it dependent on the apostolic kerygma. For instance, according to Phil 3:20-21, the transformation of the believer is effected by Christ upon his end-time return (σωτήρα ἀπεκδεχόμεθα κύριον Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν, δὲ μετασχηματίσει τὸ σῶμα τῆς ταπεινώσεως ἡμῶν), and consists of a change that results in a

“christomorphic” humanity (Χριστός σώματος τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ). Some early Christians (Hermas, Irenaeus) express the conviction that, at the eschaton, humanity will even surpass the angels, others (Tertullian, Origen) assume that the New Testament passages above indicate a process of real ‘angelification’. Christian tradition eventually discarded the idea of a real ‘angelification’. Despite extensive talk about the ascetical holy man living as an “angel in the body”, and despite the depiction of an angelic life in heaven, the transformed holy man of monastic literature is ‘angelomorphic’ rather than ‘angelic’. The monastic ἀγγελικὸς βίος is an important rhetorical trope in the literary and

93 Cf. Mark 9:1-2, where the eschatological reality of “the Kingdom of God come into power” is represented by the transfigured Jesus.
94 The best known proponent of this view is Irenaeus of Lyon (Haer 5.36.3): after the parousia, humankind will “contain the Word, and ascend to Him, passing beyond the angels (supergrediens angelos)”. Cf. 2 Bar. 51.12, “And the excellence of the righteous will be greater than that of the angels”. In the Shepherd of Hermas, the eschatological reward is described successively as “being numbered with us [the angels]” (Herm. Sim. 9.24.4), or “being granted entry (πάροδος) with the angels” (Herm. Sim. 9.25.2; Herm. Vis. 2.6.7). However, becoming “coheir with the son” (Herm. Sim. 5.2.7-8) is, logically, a status superior to that of the angelic counsellors; this would suggest (although Hermas never says it explicitly) that the exalted Christian will be placed above the angels, even above the first-created angels. See the discussion in Y. de Andia, Homo Vivens: Incorruptibilité et divinisation de l’homme chez Irénée de Lyon (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1986) 327-28.
95 Tertullian, Marc. 3.9.4, 7: “And, really, if your god promises to men some time or other the true nature of angels (veram substantiam angelorum)—for he says, “They shall be like the angels”—why should not my God also have fitted on to angels the true substance of men (veram substantiam hominum), from whatever source derived? […] Since the Creator ‘makes his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire’ […] he [God] will one day form men into angels, who once formed angels into men (homines in angelos reformandi quandoque qui angelos in homines formarit aliquando)”. Origen, Cels. 4.29: “And we know that in this way the angels are superior to men; so that men, when made perfect, become like the angels. For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but the righteous are as the angels in heaven, and also become equal to the angels. We know, too, that in the arrangement of the universe there are certain beings termed thrones, and others dominions, and others powers, and others principalities; and we see that we men, who are far inferior to these, may entertain the hope that by a virtuous life, and by acting in all things agreeably to reason, we may rise to a likeness with all these”. See also the passages from On First Principles discussed below.
theological discourse about ascetic individuals (and, later, also of ascetic communities). The attribute of ‘angelic’ is applied to a manner of life characterised by sexual abstinence, dispassion, humility, and stability; obviously then, ἁγγελικὸς βίος functions as a metaphor: the monastic conduct of life is called ‘angelic’ in the same way that a person or mode of existence may be described as ‘seraphic’, ‘cherubic’, ‘paradisiacal’, ‘heavenly’, ‘edenic’, and so forth.

Still, writers such as Origen and Evagrius, who (like Clement) see angels and humans as, essentially, νός differentiated only by the degree of their temporary separation from God, were very likely taking a more literal view of the Christian’s progress towards ‘angelic’ perfection. Clement lays the groundwork for Origen’s description of the ascetic life as part of a vast cosmic process. Like his predecessor, Origen speaks of certain human souls “whom, in consequence of their progress, we see taken up into the order of angels” (ex quibus per profectum etiam in illum angelorum ordinem quosdam videmus assumi); and he views the ascetic life as a form of instruction dispensed through the flesh (per carnem)—that is, by means of embodied existence—with the aid (adiutorio) of angelic powers and under attack by demonic adversaries. But Origen insists much more on depicting human life as the transitional stage in the fluid spectrum ranging from angelic to demonic. Indeed, he holds that demons can, theoretically, undergo a gradual and individually differentiated ascent (some sooner, some later; some in this age, others in future ages) made possible through the beneficial energy (of God) and their own free will (ἐνεργεῖος καὶ βουλησμένος), ascending from demonic to human, and, eventually, to the highest heavenly rank. This lengthy and harsh, pedagogical, punitive and purgative ascent occurs under the guidance, first, of angels—

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96 This rhetorical device functioned both to enhance the profile of ascetics ad extra and as an ad intra motivator. See Muehlberger, “Ambivalence about the Angelic Life” 460: “ascetics understood the idea of living ‘the angelic life’ as more than just the praise heaped on them by non-ascetic Christians; it was also adopted as one way for them to frame their own experiences”.

presumably during the human stage—then by increasingly higher powers.  

Evagrius states that the perfect monk becomes ἵσαργγελος and that one should, therefore, honour the elders ὡς τοὺς ἄγγελους.  

Augustine Casiday adopts a very cautious position: “What is clear from Evagrius’ teaching is that a monk can emulate the function of angels; what is not altogether clear is whether this means that a human can become an angel”. For my part, I think that, when read against the background of Clement, Evagrius’ On Prayer 113-14 allows for greater certainty. Here is the text: “Through prayer a monk becomes equal to the angels (ἱσαργγελος), in longing to see the Face of the Father who is in heaven (Mat 18:10)”.

It is noteworthy that Evagrius follows the peculiar use of Mat 18:10 we encountered in Clement, emphasising not the need to value and care for “the little ones”, but the “Face of the Father” (identified with Christ) and the angels contemplating it. Whereas, for Clement of Alexandria, the “angels ever contemplating the Face of God” (Matt 18:10) are the protocists and constitute the heavenly pattern of the Gnostic, Evagrius—and, later, John Climacus—apply ἵσαργγελια to the perfected monastic.

98 Origen, princ. 1.6.3 (Görgemanns-Karpp, 226): per maiora ac graviora supplicia nec non et diuturna ac multis saeculis tolerata asperioribus emendationibus reparati et restituti eruditionibus primo angelicis tum deinde superiorum graduum virtutibus.

99 Evagrius, On Prayer 113: “Through prayer a monk becomes equal to the angels (ἱσαργγελος), in longing to see the face of the Father who is in heaven (Mat 18:10)” (Sinkewicz, The Greek Ascetic Corpus 205). Evagrius, Praktikos 100: “We should honor the elder like the angels (τιμητέον ὡς τοὺς ἄγγελους), for it is they who anoint (ἀλείψοντες) us for the struggles and who heal the wounds inflicted by the wild beasts” (Sinkewicz, Greek Ascetic Corpus 113).

100 A. M. Casiday, Evagrius Ponticus (London and New York: Routledge, 2006) 237 n. 44.

101 This is duly noted by Casiday (Evagrius 237 n. 44): “Elsewhere, Evagrius identifies Christ as the ‘face of the Father’ (see in Ps 16.2a, 23.6γ; 29.8ζ; 68.29θ; 79.8δ), from which we may deduce that the monk wishes to see Christ. As regards becoming ‘equal to the angels’ (ἰσαγγελος), Evagrius’ immediate precedents for taking the Lord’s seriously are found in Clement, Origen, and Gregory of Nyssa. See Clement, Paed. 1.6.36.6; Strom. 6.13.105.1.2; 7.10.57.5; 7.12. 78.6; 7.14.84.2; Origen, Cels 4.29; Comm. John 2.22.140; 13.16.99.5; Making of Man 17, 18; Creation Of Man 1”.

102 See e.g. Ladder 1 (PG 88:633B): “The monk is one who, in an earthly and soiled body, strives towards the rank and state of the incorporeal beings (τάξις καὶ κατάστασις ἀσωμάτων […] ἐπιτελουμένη”). Ladder 1 (PG 88, 636A): “Those of
Deification

We know today that “by the time Porphyry first wrote of the philosopher deifying himself, Christians had already been speaking of deification for more than a century”. Indeed, writing not long after Irenaeus of Lyon affirmed that “the Word of God was made man […] so that man, having been taken into the Word and receiving the adoption, might become the son of God” (Haer. 3.19.1), Clement of Alexandria is “the first ecclesiastical writer to apply the technical terms of deification to the Christian life”.103

For him, the perfected Christian “studies to be a god” (μελετᾶ εἶναι θεός), is expected to become “a god going about in the flesh” (ἐν σαρκὶ περιπολῶν θεός), and can even be called “divine” (θεῖος) and “already holy” (ἡδὴ ἅγιος), God-bearing and God-borne (θεοφορὸν καὶ θεοφοροῦμενος).104 But it is, yet again, the archaic theory of the elders, postulating the celestial hierarchy as the locus of a real transformation from archangels into protoctists, from angels into archangels, and from humans into angels, which sheds light on Clement’s understanding of ‘deification’. Deification—becoming and functioning as a god—means, for Clement, that one has attained to the rank of the protoctists so as to be “called by the appellation of ‘gods’, to be co-enthroned with the other

us who wish to go out of Egypt and to fly from Pharaoh, certainly need some Moses as a mediator with God and from God, who, standing between action and contemplation, will raise hands of prayer for us to God […]. Those who came out of Egypt had Moses as their guide, and those who fled from Sodom had an angel. […] That is why they need a helper, an angel, so to speak, or at least one equal to an angel (ἀγγέλου, ἢ γον ἱεραγγέλου, ἴνα οὕτως εἴπω, τοῦ συμβοηθοῦντος ἐπιδέονται)”.

103 N. Russell, Doctrine of Deification 52, 121. For the deification of the perfected Christian, Clement uses mostly θεοποιῶ and ἐκθεόω. Even though he does not use the term θέωσις, he is a great proponent of the notion of deification. See, for instance, Protr. 1.8.4 (SC 2bis, 63): ὁ λόγος ὁ τοῦ θεοῦ ἀνθρωπος γενόμενος, ἵνα δῆ καὶ σὺ παρὰ ἄνθρωπον μάθης, πῇ ποτε ἄρα ἄνθρωπος γέννηται θεός. Protr. 11.114.4 (SC 2bis, 183): οὕρανιο διδασκαλία θεοποιῶν τὸν ἄνθρωπον. For more on deification in Clement, see G. W. Butterworth, “The Deification of Man in Clement of Alexandria” Journal of Theological Studies 17 (1916) 157-69; N. Russell, Doctrine of Deification 121-40. Unfortunately, Russell does not discuss the Eclogae and Adumbrationes.

104 Strom. 6.14.113; Strom. 7.16.101.4 (SC 428, 304); Strom. 7.13.82.2 (SC 428, 250).
‘gods’ who were first assigned (πρῶτον τεταγμένων) beneath the Saviour”.

I said that continuing Philo’s “noetic exegesis” of authoritative, biblical and ‘Greek’, texts, Clement internalises the cosmic ladder and the associated experience of ascent and transformation. All imagistic details, such as specific intervals of space or time (“seven days”, “one thousand years”, “seven heavens”, archangels, protoctists, etc) are emptied of the literal meaning they had had in the apocalyptic cosmology of the ‘elders’.

Whether, then, the time be that which through the seven periods enumerated returns to the chiefest rest, or the seven heavens, which some reckon one above the other; or whether also the fixed sphere which borders on the intellectual world be called the eighth, the expression denotes that the Gnostic ought to rise out of the sphere of creation and of sin.

A fitting formula to describe Clement of Alexandria’s treatment of the inherited apocalyptic cosmology of the elders would be “interiorised apocalypticism”. This term has been proposed for the use of apocalyptic motifs in Byzantine monastic literature, and its definition seems perfectly applicable to Clement: “the transposition of the cosmic setting of apocalyptic literature, and in particular of the ‘out of body’ experience of heavenly ascent and transformation, to the inner theater of the soul”. Reread in this manner, the cosmic ladder becomes a metaphor for the spiritual ascent of every believer. It is evident that the interiorised ascent to heaven and transformation before the divine Face, so prominent in Jewish apocalypticism, is what the Christian tradition, following Clement, calls, in shorthand, theōsis, ‘deification’.

Sonship and Eldership

“Studying to be a god” takes places in the context of discipleship. And since we are talking, ultimately, about a process of angelification, this discipleship consists in receiving the guidance of those angels, lowest on the hierarchy and closest to humans. Clement sees them at work in

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105 Strom. 7.10.56.6 (SC 428, 184).
106 Strom. 4.25.159.2 (SC 463, 320, 322).
theophanies, in prophetic inspiration, in the providential gift to the Greek and Barbarian philosophers, in guiding the embodiment of souls (Ecl. 50.1: angels even “manipulate” the erotic impulse which leads to procreation!), in the disembodiment upon death, and in the continued spiritual growth after death (Ecl. 41.1). But the ascetic struggle is also helped by those perfected Gnostics who, although ‘already’ in the state of isangelia, are still embodied and live among humans.

It is important at this juncture to recall Clement’s hierarchies and to note that the contact-point between the human and the angelic worlds is not the bishop, as some centuries later in Ps.-Dionysius’ Hierarchies, but rather (as in Revelation, the Shepherd of Hermas, the Ascension of Isaiah) the prophet—and, in the new dispensation, the Gnostic ascetic.

Even though Clement envisages a continuation of the “celestial hierarchy” by an ecclesiastical hierarchy—he writes that “the advancements (προορισμοί) pertaining to the Church here below, namely those of bishops, presbyters and deacons, are imitations (μιμήματα) of the angelic glory” the designations of ‘bishop’, ‘priest’, and ‘deacon’ are interpreted as stages of spiritual advancement rather than as designations of ecclesiastical offices.

108 Ecl. 51.2 (GCS 17, 151): “the covenants were wrought (ἐνηγήθησαν) by the visitation of angels, namely those upon Adam, Noah, Abraham, and Moses. For, moved by the Lord, the first-created angels worked in the angels that are close to the prophets (οἱ πρωτόκτιστοι ἄγγελοι ἐνήργουν εἰς τοὺς προσεχεῖς τοὺς προφήτας ἄγγελους εἰς τοὺς προσεχεῖς τοὺς προφήτας ἄγγελους). Adumbr. Jude 9 (GCS 17, 207): “Michael here designates the one who argued with the devil through an angel close to us (per propinquum nobis angelum”). Adumbr. 1 John 2:1 (GCS 17, 211): “Moses calls on the power of the angel Michael through an angel near to himself and of the lowest degree (vicinum sibi et infimum)”. Strom. 7.2.12.5 (SC 428, 66): divine providence leads souls to repentance “by means of the proximate angels” (διὰ τῶν προσεχῶν ἄγγελων). The same phenomenon applies to the gift of philosophy to the pagans. Strom. 7.2.6.4 (SC 428, 52): the Logos “gave philosophy to the Greeks by means of the inferior angels” (διὰ τῶν ὑποδεξεστέρων ἄγγελων).


110 Evidently, Clement’s assertions about Church hierarchy imply the real existence of ecclesiastical office holders in Alexandria, even though for him (and later for Origen), it is the inner quality that creates the function, which is then reflected in the ecclesiastical rank. This point is argued emphatically and supported by quotations from Origen and Cyprian of Carthage, by G. Roncaglia, Histoire de l’église copte, 3 vols. (Beirut: Dar al-Kalima, 1971) 3: 187-89, 192-94. See also A. Jakab, Ecclesia Alexandrina: Évolution sociale et institutionnelle du christianisme alexandrin, IF et IIII siècles (Bern: Peter Lang, 2004) 183.
Such an one is in reality a presbyter of the Church, and a true minister [deacon] of the will of God, if he does and teaches what is the Lord’s; not as being ordained by men, nor regarded righteous because a presbyter, but enrolled in the presbyterate because righteous. And although here upon earth he be not honoured with the chief seat, he will sit down on the four-and-twenty thrones, judging the people, as John says in the Apocalypse;

... those who, following the footsteps of the apostles, have lived in perfection of righteousness according to the Gospel ... [are] taken up in the clouds, the apostle writes, will first minister [as deacons], then be classed in the presbyterate, by promotion in glory (for glory differs from glory) till they grow into “a perfect man”.\footnote{Strom. 6.13.106.2;107.2-3 (SC 446, 272, 274).}

The following passage in \textit{Stromata} 7 deserves special attention:

For the Gnostic, then, the service to God consists in constant care for his soul and attending to that which, according to unceasing love, is divine in himself. Now, when it comes to the care for people, one kind is meliorative (βελτιωτικη), the other ministrative (ὑπηρετικη). [...] So also in the Church, the πρεσβύτεροι reflect the meliorative, the διάκονοι to the ministerial [care]. These two ministries are performed both by the angels (in the management of earthly affairs for God), and by the Gnostic himself (who, on the one hand, ministers to God, and, on the other hand, discloses to humans the contemplation which leads to their improvement.\footnote{Strom. 7.1.3.2-4 (SC 428, 42, 44). My translation.}

Clement assumes a certain mirroring between the realities in heaven and those in Church. He describes a twofold angelic activity, the ‘meliorative’ and the ‘ministrative’ (ἡ μὲν βελτιωτική, ἡ δὲ ὑπηρετική [θεραπεία]), and states that priests and deacons reproduce that pattern—literally, they “preserve the image” (ποιεῖν σικώνα) of angelic activity in its two aspects.\footnote{Clement’s hierarchy has, on this point, great affinities with that of Ps.-Dionysius. However, in order to uphold the perfect mirroring between the celestial and the ecclesiastical hierarchies in spite of a disappointing historical reality, they adopt divergent strategies: while Clement approaches the issue from the perspective of the spiritual reality of hierarchy, and thus challenges the authenticity of any ecclesial rank that does not fully mirror that spiritual reality, Ps.-Dionysius writes from the perspective of ‘rank’. As Golitzin notes, “his identification of advancement into God as coterminous with priestly rank must […] be reckoned one of the gravest defects of his system”, as it forces him to paint a “supremely
insertion meant to add some clarity; Clement’s interest in this passage is actually the perfect mirroring between the ministry of the angels and that of the Gnostic. The phrase is very clear: ἔγγελοι τε ... καὶ αὐτός ὁ γνωστικός; whatever the angels do the Gnostic also does. The Ladder of Divine Ascent will speak similarly of a mirroring between angels and monastics:

These [the noetic powers] are not satiated (κορεσθήσονται) unto the ages of age with praising the Maker, and neither is the one entering in the heaven of stillness (ἡσυχίας) satiated with hymning the Creator. The immaterial beings do not trouble themselves about matter, and material beings do not concern themselves with food. The former do not perceive food, and the latter require no promise of it. The former do not care about goods and possessions or the latter about the evildoing of spirits. For those above there is no desire of visible creation; neither for those below (who desire things above) is there longing for some visible image [in prayer]. The former do not cease from progressing (προκόπτοντες) in love; neither do the latter, who emulate them (ἐκεῖνοι ἐμιλλώμενοι).

But Clement’s Gnostic teacher is not merely ‘functionally’ angelic—that is, ‘angelic’ inasmuch as he imitates an angelic model. Clement expresses himself more clearly on this subject in the passage discussed earlier (Ecl. 57.5).

For those among humans who start being transformed into angels are instructed by the angels [...]. Then the instructors are translated into archangelic authority, while those who have received instruction will in turn instruct those among humans who are transformed into angels...

Evagrius will also speak boldly about the kinship between the monastic elder and the angels. As for John Climacus, although he notes that the


The Greek text reads as follows: Ταύτας ἂμφω τὰς διακονίας ἄγγελοι τε υπηρετοῦνται τῷ θεῷ κατὰ τὴν τῶν παραγείων οἰκονομίαν καὶ αὐτός ὁ γνωστικός, θεῷ μὲν διακονοῦμενος, ἀνθρώπως δὲ τὴν βελτιωτικὴν ἐνδεικνύμενος θεωρίαν

John Climacus, Ladder 27 (PG 88, 1101A).

Scholia on Proverbs 163 (SC 340): “If the sons of Christ are brothers of one
notion of a perpetual progress among angels appears ‘strange’ to his contemporaries, he seems fully convinced that perfected ascetics are transformed into angels, and angels into seraphs.

And even though this statement may appear strange (ξένον) to most, I would nevertheless say, O blessed one, that, on the basis of the above-mentioned demonstration, not even the noetic beings are lacking in progress (ἀπροκόπως);

…the wealth of progress (προκοπής) is not unknown to the former [scil. the angels], nor the desire of ascent to the latter [the ascetics]. Those stretch out until they reach the seraphim; these do not flag until they become angels.117

It is quite likely that ἀγγελικός βίος and ἰσαγγελία would not have been understood in the same way by Clement of Alexandria, Evagrius of Pontus, and John of the Ladder. But the exact meaning of their statements, and, therefore, the differences among them, appear more ambiguous when later monastic authors are read in light of Clement’s ascetic theory. Perhaps we should accept a certain blurring of the vision as unavoidable when the boundary between ‘real’ angelification and angelification as ‘mere metaphor’ is to be described with the instruments of modern scholarship.

The Elder as ‘Rest’: A Little Speculation

When writing on the crucial role of the Gnostic teacher in the discipleship leading to Christian perfection, Clement probably had in mind his own relationship with those anonymous masters mentioned occasionally in his writings. In the opening section of the Stromata (Strom. 1.11-15) he tells us that among those “blessed and truly remarkable men” he had met, the foremost in power (δυνάμει πρῶτος) was a man whom he found “concealed in Egypt”; upon meeting him Clement resettled to Egypt and remained there (ἀνεπαφοσάμην). I find the use of this verb noteworthy.

another, and if angels and just people are sons of Christ, then angels and holy people are brothers of one another (ἀλλήλων εἰσίν ἀδελφοί), begotten by the spirit of adoption” (tr. in Sinkewicz, The Greek Ascetic Corpus 283 n. 73 to On Prayer 113). KG 6.90: “All who have attained spiritual knowledge shall assist the holy angels and return rational beings from evil to virtue and from ignorance to knowledge” (Sinkewicz, The Greek Ascetic Corpus 261 n. 102 to Praktikos 100).

117 John Climacus, Ladder 26 (PG 88, 1068B); Ladder 27 (PG 88, 1101B).
Literally, Clement tells us that he “found rest” in his relationship with that anonymous elder, who “engendered in the souls of his hearers a deathless element of knowledge (γνώσεως χρήμα)’’ (Strom. 1.1.11.2). Should we not suspect the Alexandrian of deliberately directing his readers’ thoughts to the crucial concepts of ἀνάπαυσις and, immediately afterwards, γνώσις? I would venture to propose that, for Clement, a perfected Christian—one who is “living as an angel on earth, already luminous”, having “already attained the isangelic condition”—embodies in his very being and offers to those with whom he interacts a foretaste of the ‘rest’ in God to which the seeker aspires.

To conclude, then: for Clement (and his early Christian readers) “studying to be a god” requires submission to an ascetic program designed to bring about the ‘angelification’ of the devotee, under the guidance of a teacher who has himself advanced on the path of angelification, and who has been divinely entrusted with the instruction of “those among humans who are transformed into angels”. Such a Gnostic teacher, writes Clement, “mediates contact and fellowship with the divinity” (πρὸς τὸ θεῖον συνάψειάν τε καὶ κοινωνίαν ἐμμεσιτεύει). Therefore, by appropriating “the contemplation that leads to improvement” from a trusted Gnostic teacher, one is integrated into the hierarchy which channels the Logos to the lowest level of existence. Eldership and discipleship are thus sine qua non conditions for the ascetic reshaping of the believer.

In Place of Conclusions:
On Reading Clement of Alexandria

I began this chapter by noting that Clement of Alexandria’s writings were read and treasured by early Christian ascetics. It is my contention that Clement’s influence on later ascetic theories is best understood by taking into account what I have called “the other Clement”. It is in these writings that one finds the strongest echoes of apocalyptic traditions inherited from an earlier generation of charismatic teachers, focussed on the ontological

118 Let us recall some of the relevant texts on anapausis. Strom.2.22.134.4 (SC 38, 136): “It is on account of this love that the restoration (ἀποκατάστασις) to hope occurs, which (he says in another place) is laid up for us as rest (ἀνάπαυσις)”. Strom. 7.11.68.5 (SC 428, 214, 216): the perfect Gnostic “is placed in the rank of son” (ἐν υἱῷ καταλεγείς τάξει), made worthy of the vision of God, of being wholly spiritual, and abides in the rest of God (ἐἰς τὴν ἀνάπαυσιν τοῦ θεοῦ”).
119 Strom. 7.9.52.1 (SC 428, 174).
reshaping of those who are determined in their pursuit of perfection. The description of the multi-storied spiritual universe and of the associated experience of a ‘real’ angelification, which looms large in “the other Clement”, places the ascetic life of the Christian and its horizon of *theosis* within a vast cosmic framework. Viewed through the prism of these oft-neglected texts, Clement’s ascetic theories gain colour and contour, their impact on the thought of Origen and Evagrius becomes obvious, and we can better understand the appeal of the Stromatist for ascetic practitioners such as the unnamed saintly virgin in chapter 60 of the *Lausaikon*.

Discussing the Alexandrian’s ascetic theories brings one close the very intention behind Clement’s writing about conversion to Christ, catechetical instruction, further initiation into the mysteries of the faith—all in support of the reader’s transformation along the lines discussed above. It would therefore be a terrible betrayal to not enquire about how Clement would have wanted to be read.

Since Clement views Christian doctrine as divine revelation, dispensed pedagogically by the Logos in order to be appropriated mystagogically, and the teaching activity of the Gnostic as mirroring that of the Logos (*Paed. 3.1.2.1; Strom. 7.9.52.1-2*), we may assume that Clement has high expectations of his readers. To be more precise, Clement’s ideal reader is to assume not an ‘objective’ perspective on the cosmic ladder, but a continuously shifting, ascensional, perspective, determined by the mystagogical transformation of the exegete according to the pattern laid out in the sacred text. In short, within a theological, ascetical, and liturgical interpretive context of the “celestial hierarchy”, the very act of deciphering the Scriptures under the guidance of Clement of Alexandria is supposed to be an increasingly transformative experience.\(^{120}\)

It is evident that we read Clement differently than he would have recommended it, and differently than the ascetic hero of Palladius’ *Lausaikon*. In fact, we are just the kind of readers Clement feared: much like the thieves of the pyramid treasures, we are “those that have the daring to pilfer and steal the ripe fruits”. The approach of modern scholarship—unlike that of the anonymous virgin in the *Lausaikon*—is, by definition, one that maintains a critical distance to the text. Indeed, the

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theological, ascetical, and liturgical interpretive context, shared by Clement and his ideal reader, and facilitating the reader’s dynamic assimilation of the writer’s theological mystagogy, is, to a large extent, lost to us, and can only remain the object of tentative scholarly reconstruction.