

# The Mystery of the Eucharist and Childhood in Clement of Alexandria

Veronika ČERNUŠKOVÁ

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which the Lord himself brought forth in throes of the flesh,  
which the Lord himself swathed in his precious blood.  
O amazing birth! O holy swaddling bands! ...  
Such is the suitable food which the Lord ministers:  
He offers his flesh and pours forth his blood,  
and nothing is wanting for the children's growth.  
O amazing mystery!  
(*Paed.* I,42,2-43,1)

*Summary:* 1. The body and blood of the Lord as milk for infants (1Cor 2,14-3,3 in *Paed.* I,34,3-52,3); 2. Gratitude – thanksgiving – Eucharistic sacrifice; 3. The mystery of the Eucharist, suffering and childhood; 4. The Cheer of knowing; 5. Conclusion and possible applications to pastoral theology

In his most acclaimed work entitled *Stromata*, intended for Christians, but open to a wider intellectual audience, Clement of Alexandria (c. 150 – 220) mentions the Eucharist only in passing. Nevertheless, in *Paedagogus*, which is addressed solely to Christians, Clement refers to the topic of the Eucharist quite frequently, albeit not systematically. In this paper, I would like to present the connection Clement places in *Paedagogus* between three “mysteries”: the spiritual childhood, the Eucharist (or “gratefulness”, or “prayer of thanksgiving”) and the suffering of Christ and his followers. The Eucharist is presented by Clement as milk by which the little ones are nourished, and simul-

taneously as a means of entering the perfect knowledge of God: it is the fruit of Christ's sacrifice, which unifies the baptized person with the Spirit and purifies him or her in heart, and so enables him or her to view God.

1. The body and blood of the Lord as milk for infants (1Cor 2,14–3,3 in *Paed.* I,34,3–52,3)

The teachings of the Eucharist in Clement of Alexandria's works are formulated against the background of a dispute with the Valentinian sect. The Valentinians considered themselves to be "spiritual people" (πνευματικοί), chosen for spiritual knowledge and superior to pagans as well as the general Church, which – according to them – consists of "natural people" (ψυχικοί). This distinction between spiritual and natural people is derived from 1Cor 2,14–3,3 (cf. Jude 1,19, James 3,15, Gal 6,1):

Now the natural person (ψυχικός ἄνθρωπος) does not accept what pertains to the Spirit of God, for to him it is foolishness, and he cannot understand it, because it is judged spiritually. The spiritual person (ὁ πνευματικός), however, can judge everything but is not subject to judgment by anyone. ... Brothers, I could not talk to you as spiritual people (πνευματικοί), but as fleshly people, as infants in Christ. I fed you milk, not food<sup>1</sup>.

Valentinians themselves as "spiritual" people had their own spiritual baptism and spiritual Eucharist: in their view, baptism with water for the forgiveness of sins practiced by the general Church was realized only on physical and mental levels. In contrast, the Valentinian "spiritual" baptism consisted of secret spiritual teachings<sup>2</sup>. Sim-

<sup>1</sup> The NAB translation, slightly adjusted.

<sup>2</sup> In *Exc.* 81,2 (cf. *Ecl.* 7–8) Clement himself demonstrates that Valentinians used the term "baptism with the Holy Spirit" (John 1,33 par.) in this sense. Irenae-

ilarly, Valentinians also distinguished between the unspiritual and spiritual Eucharist: according to them, the Church celebrates the Eucharist as a mere reminder of Christ's physical death, experienced only on the mental level, for the forgiveness of sins. As "spirituals", they, in contrast, perceive Christ's death on a higher, symbolic sense and their "Eucharist" means (as in the case of baptism) initiation into secret "spiritual" teachings<sup>3</sup>.

Clement insists, however, that a person becomes spiritual simply by the act of the Holy Spirit in baptism, in which the person renounces sin and accepts forgiveness:

There are not, then, in the same Word some gnostics, and some natural people (ψυχικοί); but all who have abandoned the desires of the flesh are equal and spiritual (πνευματικοί) before the Lord<sup>4</sup>.

Clement protests against the Valentinian distinction of spiritual and natural people especially in his interpretation of milk and food in 1Cor 3,1-3 (*Paed.* I,34,3-52,3)<sup>5</sup>. According to the Valentinians, Paul

us, *Adv. haer.* 21,2, in the same manner, testifies to the distinction between ψυχικόν and πνευματικόν baptism; that is, baptism for the forgiveness of sins and redemption to perfection. The Valentinian Herakleon talks of John's baptism (physical and animal for the forgiveness of sins) in contrast to Jesus' baptism (spiritual), see E. H. Pagels, "A Valentinian Interpretation of Baptism and Eucharist and Its Critique of 'Orthodox' Sacramental Theology and Practice", in *HTR* 67 (1972), 153-169, at 155-157. Cf. J. L. Kovacs, *Clement of Alexandria and the Valentinian Gnostics*, diss., Columbia University, 1978, 75-125.

3 Translation of W. Wilson (*The Instructor*, in: *The Writings of Clement of Alexandria*, I, Ante-nicene Christian Library, IV, Edinburgh, 1867), adjusted. Cf. a summary of Valentinian teachings about the Eucharist, which – especially on the basis of Herakleon's fragments present in Origen's commentary on John's gospel – is clearly presented by E. H. Pagels, "A Valentinian Interpretation of Baptism and Eucharist", 162-169.

4 *Paed.* I,31,2.

5 See J. L. Kovacs, "Echoes of Valentinian Exegesis in Clement of Alexandria and Origen: The Interpretation of 1Cor 3,1-3," in *Origeniana Octava: Origen*

speaks about the milk of fundamental teachings for “infants” (the Church) and about food, which is the secret teaching for the perfect/adults: the Valentinian “spiritual Eucharist”.

Clement agrees with the Valentinians that Paul in 1Cor 3,1-3 speaks of the knowledge of God and the Eucharist, but in his interpretation, people drinking only milk and incapable of eating are those who have believed but have not yet been sufficiently prepared for baptism<sup>6</sup>: catechumens, who are not yet baptized and do not partake in the Eucharist are only “nursed” by catechesis. Only after the baptismal cleansing and enlightenment, which is the entrance to contemplation, do they begin to actively receive the food of the body and blood of the Lord – to feed on the mystical view of God in the Eucharist.

This breast-feeding and eating does not mean, however, accepting two different meals: it is still the same milk, whether the catechumen “suckles” the Word in catechesis, or if the Christian eats and drinks the Word in Eucharist. A meal made up of body and blood and a meal of milk are actually one and the same: a mother’s milk arises from her blood, so milk is the same substance as blood; similarly, a person’s body is (according to the medical theories of the time) con-

*and the Alexandrian Tradition*, I, (ed. L. Perone), Leuven, 2003, 317-329; A. van den Bunt (van den Hoek), “Milk and Honey in the Theology of Clement of Alexandria”, in *Fides sacramenti, Sacramentum fidei. Studies in Honour of Peter Smulders* (ed. H. J. Aufdur), Assen, 1981, 27-39.

- 6 According to Clement (*Paed.* I,39,1), the Eucharist cannot be identified with “solid food”, as is stated in Heb 5,12–14: the metaphor of milk and food (βρῶμα), from the *First Letter to the Corinthians*, cannot be mixed with the metaphor of milk and solid food (στερεὰ τροφή), used in the *Letter to the Hebrews*, where milk symbolises some basic teachings, but “solid food” definitely does not refer to the Eucharist. It symbolises teachings aimed for mature Christians (specifically teachings about Jesus’ priesthood, his death and obedience shown through suffering: about sacrifice for sins, which Jesus brought once and for all: Heb 5,1-10).

ceived from blood, so body is the same substance as blood<sup>7</sup>. Thus, the doctrine taught to catechumens is the milk and the meal of the mystical view of the Eucharist is also milk. Furthermore, satiation by milk is promised even at the end of the spiritual journey: in Exod 3,8, the Promised Land is described as a land flowing with milk. This allegorical milk is nothing less than the Word itself<sup>8</sup>, “which feeds us from catechesis to eternal life”<sup>9</sup>.

Christians therefore are children from beginning to end, satiated by the milk of Christ – the Word. The emergence of milk from blood also suggests that the infants’ meal of milk – the Eucharist – has its origin in blood; it is the fruit of Christ’s blood sacrifice. And the mother, in whose body this transformation of Christ’s shed blood into the milk of the Eucharist takes place, is the Church. The Word, therefore, is the milk of the Church. And at the same time, it is also the Father’s milk. Christ, the heavenly Word, is the meal and drink for believers, the milk of the Father’s love<sup>10</sup>.

In his statements about the Eucharist, Clement places great emphasis on the value of God’s forgiveness. Through baptism, the believer is washed of his or her sins and in the Eucharist is gradually purified from the consequences of sins and from the tendency to sin again. This all takes place by the mysterious acts of the Holy Spirit: at baptism, the Spirit flows into the person and the Spirit alone – not people and their secret teachings – makes it possible for man to know God. In the Eucharist, the Christian enters purity of heart and knowledge of God step by step, deeper and deeper. Purification from sin and introduction to knowledge goes hand in hand; being actually two aspects of the same process – man entering into a relationship with God.

7 *Paed.* I,39,2-3; I,48,1-49,2.

8 *Paed.* I,36,1.

9 *Paed.* I,36,5.

10 *Paed.* I,46,1.

2. Gratitude – thanksgiving – Eucharistic sacrifice

Nevertheless, in this well-known and relatively extensive account of the body and blood of the Lord (*Paed.* I,34,3-52,3), Clement himself does not use the term εὐχαριστία<sup>11</sup>. In the meaning “body and blood of the Lord”, the term εὐχαριστία appears only four times in all his works, and in *Paedagogus*<sup>12</sup> once. Apart from that, the word εὐχαριστία and derived expressions often appear in Clement’s work with two other meanings. The first meaning is “gratitude”, specifically gratitude to the Creator for the world and good material things<sup>13</sup>. In the liturgical context, Clement uses εὐχαριστία and related expressions as a “prayer of thanksgiving” (just as in the New Testament)<sup>14</sup>, and only in several circumstances, as previously mentioned, does he use this word as the technical term of the “Eucharist”<sup>15</sup>. Therefore

- 11 The “Eucharist” as the term for the Lord’s Supper was used by Ignatius of Antioch (*Eph.* 13,1; *Phil.* 4; *Smyrn.* 7,1; 8,1).
- 12 *Paed.* II,20,1; *Strom.* I,5,1; IV,161,3 and *Exc.* 13,4. Clement also uses the verb εὐχαριστεῖν once (*Strom.* I,96,1) in the meaning of “celebrating the Eucharist”. P. Druille (“Los elementos de la Eucaristia en el Pedagogo de Clemente de Alejandría”, in *Revue d’Histoire Ecclésiastique* 109 (2014), 535-563, esp. 561) notes that, in *Paedagogus*, Clement places extraordinary importance on the Eucharistic wine, which he links to the act of Christ’s crucifixion and his blood shed for the salvation of the world. The author’s conclusion, however, that Clement never stated, that bread would be one of the elements of a Eucharistic ceremony, is incorrect, cf. *Strom.* IV,161,3.
- 13 *Protr.* 115,1; *Paed.* II,43,3; 72,4; *Strom.* III,52,1; 65,3; 85,1-2; 86,1; 95,3; 105,1; IV,15,6; 27,1; 54,4; 66,4; 98,3; 149,1; 159,1; 166,1; VII,62,1; 83,3. In another context, there is a reference to gratitude only in *Strom.* V,10,1.
- 14 Cf. Rom 14,3,6 in *Paed.* II,10,3; Eph 5,4 in *Paed.* II,50,1 and Col 4,2 in *Paed.* III,95,4.
- 15 While every Christian meal was accompanied by certain liturgical acts (especially a prayer of thanksgiving), thanksgiving before a common meal and drink (*Paed.* II,43,1) was not the same as the Eucharist. Unlike the practice as described by Ignatius or Justin, in Clement’s Alexandrian Church was the Eucharistic celebration separated from Christian feast (*Paed.* II,4,3-8,2), see A.

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for Clement, εὐχαριστία is always an attitude of gratefulness towards God – either explicitly unspoken or expressed in a prayer of thanksgiving, or directly giving thanks over the Eucharistic bread and wine. In some cases, the boundary between the meanings is not entirely clear: Clement speaks about thanking God, for example, and at the same time hints at the Eucharist<sup>16</sup>.

Clement emphasises that thanksgiving to God should not be limited to a specifically determined time, but should instead be a continuous state of mind<sup>17</sup>. In connection with prayers of thanksgiving, he highlights two of their special and supreme aspects, which are closely related: thanksgiving in the midst of suffering and thanking within a prayer of intercession, that is, in compassion for the suffering person for whom the intercessor prays<sup>18</sup>. “A sacrifice of thanks” in the midst of suffering – whether the suffering is personal or shared with others – suggests that a praying person has a certain knowledge<sup>19</sup>, which extends beyond the current pain; that his or her belief in God’s power and love, in Christ’s resurrection and victory, takes the character of knowledge. Therefore, a prayer of thanksgiving (εὐχαριστία), at its greatest, enters the mystery of Christ’s cross and resurrection.

In that single passage of *Paedagogus*, where Clement speaks of the Lord’s blood and flesh as εὐχαριστία (*Paed.* II,20,1), the Word is compared to the cluster of grapes, which Joshua – Jesus’ namesake – brings on a wooden pole from the Promised Land. It is, of course, an allusion to the Cross of Christ<sup>20</sup>, and combines the notion of Eucha-

Méhat, “Clément d’Alexandrie”, in *L’eucharistie des premiers chrétiens* (ed. W. Rordorf), Paris, 1976, 101-127, at 110.

16 E.g. *Paed.* II,10,3.

17 Cf. especially. *Paed.* III,101,2-3 and *Strom.* VII,35.

18 *Strom.* IV,13,3; 130,5; VII,41,6-7; 43,1; 64,3; 79,1-4,7; 80,1.

19 *Strom.* VII,79,2.

20 This is also indicated by the used word “sign” (σημεῖον), which is often used by Clement to mean “cross”, cf. *Strom.* VII,79,5-7; V,35,1; VI,84,3-4; 87,2; *Exc.* 42-43; *Quis div.* 8,2 (similarly in the *Letter of Barnabas* 12,5).

ristic blood and Christ's blood shed in his suffering for the salvation of the world, purifying man from sin:

Later on, a sacred vine put forth a cluster of grapes that was prophetic (Num 13,23-24); to those who had been led by the Educator to a place of rest after their wanderings it was a sign, for the great cluster of grapes is the Word crushed on our account. The Word desired that the "blood of grape" (Gen 49,11) be mixed with water as his blood is mingled with salvation. Now, the blood of the Lord is twofold: one is corporeal, redeeming us from corruption (1Pet 1,18-19), the other is spiritual, and it is with that we are anointed. To drink the blood of Jesus is to participate in his incorruption. Yet, the Spirit is the strength of the Word in the same way that blood is of the body. Accordingly, as wine is blended with water, so is the Spirit with man. And the one, the mixture (κρᾶμα) of wine and water, nourishes to faith; while the other, the Spirit, conducts to incorruption. The union (κρᾶσις) of both, that is, of the potion and the Word, is called eucharist, a gift worthy of praise and surpassingly fair; those who partake of it are sanctified in body and soul, for it is the will of the Father that man, a composite (κρᾶμα) made by God, be mystically united (συγκεραννύναι μυστικῶς) to the Spirit and to the Word. In fact, the Spirit is closely joined to the soul depending upon him, and the flesh to the Word, because it was for it that "the Word was made flesh" (John 1,14)<sup>21</sup>.

Jesus' blood shed on the cross mixes with our salvation just like the wine – "the blood of grapes" – mixes with water in the Eucharist<sup>22</sup>. This blood is also used to anoint a person spiritually at baptism

21 Translation of W. Wilson, slightly adjusted.

22 This is an allusion to the Stoic theory of mixing (which was also used by the Valentinians on a spiritual level, cf. *Exc.* 17). The Stoic Chrysippus differentiates between several types of mixtures: firstly juxtaposition or particulate mixture (παράθεσις), e.g. a pile of stones, where individual elements are only placed beside one another with surfaces touching, but whose quality remains unaffected (*SVF* II,471; 473). Secondly, there is a complete blending (κρᾶσις, or μίξις), that is, complete mutual penetration of elements, which (just like in the case



to participate in Jesus' life. As wine is poured into a bowl filled with water, so the Spirit is poured into man at baptism<sup>23</sup>. The mixed wine in the Eucharist is a drink which is served to the newly baptized and "brings them to the faith". In addition, the mixing of man and the Spirit (in which the two elements of the "blend" combine, but do not fuse and remain themselves) is the path to the Promised Land, to the eternal heritage and *visio beatifica*.

Thus, as we have observed, Clement views the Eucharistic feast, often described as a "sacrifice" (προσφορά, θυσία<sup>24</sup> or θῦμα)<sup>25</sup>, as being inextricably linked to Christ's suffering. The "holy sacrifice", which the Church brings through the Eucharist, is the Word – Christ him-

of the juxtaposition) retain their own quality and can be extracted from the mix unaltered (SVF II,471-473). An example is the mixture of water and wine, about which the Stoics claim that even a drop of wine in the sea is still wine (SVF II,480). Another such example is red-hot iron: the fire penetrates the iron and consequently, a blend of the two elements forms (SVF II,471; 473; 475). The third and last type of mixture is a fusion mixture (σύγχυσις), in which the bodies penetrate and – unlike in the case of complete blending – their original qualities disappear and a new quality emerges. As an example of fusion mixture, Chrysippus mentions medicinal ointments (SVF II,471-473). Using the second type of mixture, that is, total blending while retaining the original qualities with the option of returning into the original elements, Chrysippus describes the mutual penetration of fire and air in the *pneuma*, and also the penetration of the active *pneuma* (fire and air) by passive elements (water and earth), and finally the penetration of the cosmic fire – god – throughout the world.

23 Cf. *Ecl.* 8,2.

24 In Eph 5,2, both of these terms (προσφορά και θυσία) are used; cf. also 1Cor 11,26.

25 Cf. A. Méhat, "Clément d'Alexandrie", 108. Cf. M. Rizzi, "La vita del cristiano come 'sacrificio' tra Giustino e Clemente Alessandrino", in *Annali di Scienze Religiose* 7 (2002), 15-28. Clement uses the terms προσφορά about the Eucharist in *Strom.* I,96,1 and VI,113,3; θυσία in *Strom.* VII,31,7-8 and VII,32,4 (cf. *Paed.* II,67,1); θῦμα in *Strom.* V,66,3-5 and V,70,3. Clement speaks indirectly about Christ's sacrifice through a citation of the prophet Malachi (I,10-11.14) in *Strom.* V,136,2-3.

self sacrificed on the cross<sup>26</sup>. The Eucharistic mystery and the mystery of salvation become one in Clement's thinking. Similarly, the prayer of thanksgiving (εὐχαριστία), in its supreme form, is linked to the suffering of a Christian, whether his or her own, or shared with others in intercessory prayer.

### 3. The mystery of the Eucharist, suffering and childhood

The term μυστήριον, "mystery" – the word which later becomes the Christian term "sacrament" – was known to Clement's readers from the Scriptures in the meaning "(God-revealed) mystery"<sup>27</sup>. In *Paedagogus*, Clement usually uses the terms "mystery" (μυστήριον), "mystical" (μυστικός) and "mystically" (μυστικῶς)<sup>28</sup> in connection with the Eucharist, with Jesus' suffering and with spiritual childhood<sup>29</sup>. These

26 Clement explicitly states this in *Strom.* V,66,3-5.

27 The term μυστήριον is not uncommon in the New Testament, cf. e.g. Matt 13,11 par.: "mysteries of the Kingdom of God"; 1Cor 14,2: "utter mysteries by the Spirit"; Col 3,4: "Christ's mystery". Other occurrences: Mark 4,11; Rom 11,25; 16,25; 1Cor 2,1,7; 4,1; 13,2; 15,51; Eph 1,9; 3,3.4.9; 5,32; 6,19; Col 1,26.27; 2,2; 2Thess 2,7; 1Tim 3,9.16; Rev 1,20; 10,7; 17,5.7. This term is also used in the *Septuagint* especially in Wis, Sir and Dan.

28 Clement himself introduces the adjective μυστικός and adverb μυστικῶς into Christian literature. Unlike the noun μυστήριον, they appear only very rarely in early Christian writings and in the works of Philo, H. G. Marsh, "The Use of μυστήριον in the Writings of Clement of Alexandria with Special Reference to His Sacramental Doctrine", in *JTS* 34 (1936), 64-80, at 71-72.

29 About the Eucharist: *Paed.* I,43,1; 46,3; 49,2; II,20,1; 29,1; about Christ's suffering: I,23,2; 42,1-2; II,62,3; 75,1bis; about spiritual childhood: I,14,4; 21,3; 22,2; 43,1; 59,1. Other contexts include human fertility (II,96,2), the divinity of the Word (II,100,4), Christ's humanity and deification of man (III,2,1), intercessory prayer (III,12,5), the liturgical kiss (III,81,3) and love for God and neighbour (III,82,3bis). H. G. Marsh, "The Use of μυστήριον", 64-80, concludes that with Clement (when looking at his work as a whole), it is not yet possible to see a clear connection between the term μυστήριον and the Church's sacraments.

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contexts frequently intermingle. This connection is most noticeable in *Paed.* I,42,2–43,1:

[Mother Church] nourishes by the Word the new born people, which the Lord Himself brought forth in throes of the flesh, which the Lord Himself swathed (Luke 2:7) in his precious blood (1Pet 1,19). O amazing birth! O holy swaddling bands! The Word is all to the child, both father and mother and tutor and nurse. “Eat my flesh”, he says, “and drink my blood” (John 6,53–54). Such is the suitable food which the Lord ministers, and he offers his flesh and pours forth his blood, and nothing is wanting for the children’s growth. O amazing mystery (μυστήριον)!<sup>30</sup>

The triune mystery of childhood, suffering and the Eucharist/thanksgiving is also presented in the threefold interpretation of Isaac “the child” in *Paed.* I,21,3–23,2<sup>31</sup>. Here Clement first interprets the story of Isaac’s stay in Gerar at the King of the Philistines. At that time, Isaac, like his father Abraham, denied the identity of his wife and claimed to be her brother. And like Abraham, he was exposed: once, when the king looked out of his window, he saw Isaac playing with Rebecca (read according to the *Septuagint*). The term παίζειν, which could have also been translated as “jesting”, “bantering”, or “joking”, is derived from the word παῖς, “child”. In *Paed.* I,21,3–22,1 Clement first presents an interpretation of this story:

I for my part also associate Isaac with the word child (παῖς). Isaac means laughter. The meddlesome king saw him playing (παίζειν) with his wife

Marsh does not consider, however, its specific use in the *Paedagogus*, a work intended for the Church as the audience.

<sup>30</sup> Translation of W. Wilson, slightly adjusted.

<sup>31</sup> The first of these explanations is discussed in detail by A. Dinan, “The Mystery of Play: Clement of Alexandria’s Appropriation of Philo in the *Paedagogus* (I,5,21,3–22,1)”, in *SPhA* 19 (2007), 59–80. Cf. also A. M. Grosso, “Clemente Alessandrino: il cristiano come l’uomo che sa sorridere”, *Quaderni del dipartimento di filologia, linguistica e tradizione classica Augusto Rostagni*, 2001, 235–242.

and helper Rebecca (Gen 26,8). In my opinion the king (named Abimelech) seems to be a kind of supramundane wisdom gazing down upon the mystery of play (τῆς παιδιᾶς τὸ μυστήριον). Rebecca, as they say, means patient expectation (ὑπομονή). O prudent play (παιδιά). Laughter is helped by patient expectation, while the king is an overseer. The spirit of children in Christ exult when they conduct themselves with patient expectation. This is the divine play (παιδιά). This is the kind of sport (παιδιά), that Heraclitus says his Zeus plays (Heraclitus, fr. B52 FVS). For what other activity is appropriate for one who is wise and perfect, than playing (παίζειν) and jubilating (συνευφραίνεσθαι) in the patient expectation of the good and the management of the good, all the while celebrating the festival with God?<sup>32</sup>

In Clement's eyes, Isaac embodies childish laughter and Rebecca embodies ὑπομονή: endurance or patient expectation, i.e. an unshakeable hope in fulfilling God's promises<sup>33</sup>. For Clement, the king looking out of the window symbolises Christ – he is apparently aware that the king's name "Abimelech" means "my father is king"<sup>34</sup>. Isaac's fun and childish approach are a foretaste of the fact that a Christian can freely rejoice along with the hope of God's providence. However,

32 Transl. A. Dinan, "The Mystery of Play", 64-65. For this excerpt, Clement is inspired by Philo (*De plant.* 169–170), who, however, presents the biblical story referenced not as an illustration of spiritual childhood, but as an argument that a slight drunkenness and enjoyment with wine is appropriate for a wise man. A. Dinan, "The Mystery of Play", 68-80, demonstrates that in this part Clement also works with Philo's *Quaest. et sol. in Gen.* IV,188. Cf. also H. Rahner, *Der spielende Mensch*, Einsiedeln 1952, 28-43; J. Daniélou, "La typologie d'Isaac dans le Christianisme primitif", in *Bib* 20 (1947), 363-393, esp. 382-384.

33 Clement uses the term διοίκησις "management, administration" (I,22,1), in several places to mean Providence (*Strom.* II,4,2; 144,1; IV,40,3; 52,4; 148,2). Through this formulation, which literally means "with the administration/providential granting of good [things]", Clement seems to want to express the assurance, which is given to a Christian by knowing God's providence (cf. A. Dinan, "The Mystery of Play", 65 and 71).

34 Clement also refers to Christ as "supramundane wisdom" in *Protr.* 5,4.

there is more to it: our author also presents Isaac's play as divine, as a profound mystery about God himself. The key to understanding here is his unobtrusive allusion to Heraclitus<sup>35</sup>.

Clement reminds the reader of one of Heraclitus' most obscure extant statements, preserved by Hippolytus as follows:

Age is a child playing, playing draughts, the kingdom belongs to a child<sup>36</sup>.

In Hippolytus' reading, which is considered to be Heraclitus' *ipsisima verba*, the sentence seems to speak about the human age, that is, either the duration of human life, or old age. The Stoics, however, interpreted the term "age" (αἰών) as Aion, that is, "god" or "Zeus", and Hippolytus, aware of this interpretation, translates Heraclitus' testimony to the Son of God<sup>37</sup>.

In a similar way, Clement also wants to introduce the character of playing Zeus as a metaphor for Christ to the receptive reader. This is evidenced, inter alia, by the description of Jesus only a few sentences later as "mighty God" and "perfect child"<sup>38</sup>. Clement therefore points to God's mysterious sense of fun: according to him, Christ offers man the role of a fellow actor in his divine play<sup>39</sup>.

35 A. Dinan, "The Mystery of Play", 65. H. Wiese, *Heraklit bei Klemens* (Ph.D. diss.), Kiel, 1963, draws attention to the extraordinary role played by Heraclitus' citations in Clement's work; see also W. R. Crockett, *Clement of Alexandria and the Pre-Socratics. A Study in the Relation between Faith and Culture* (Ph.D. diss.), University of Chicago, 1971, at 112-174; P. Valentin, "Héraclite et Clément d'Alexandrie", in *Recherches de science religieuse* 46 (1958), 27-59; E. F. Osborn, *Clement*, Cambridge, 2005, esp. 16-18 and 145-146.

36 Αἰὼν παῖς ἐστὶ παίζων, πεσσευῶν, παιδὸς ἢ βασιληΐη. Heraclitus (fr. B52 FVS = fr. 93 Marcovich) in Hippolytus, *Phil.* IX,9,4.

37 M. Marcovich, *Heraclitus. Greek Text with a Short Commentary*, Merida, 1967, at 190-193.

38 *Paed.* I,24,1-3.

39 A. Dinan, "The Mystery of Play", 65-68; cf. H. Rahner, *Der spielende Mensch*, 17-18. Cf. *Strom.* VII,28,3, where Plato's description of human being as "god's

Subsequently, in I,22,2–23,1, Clement presents a second interpretation of the same story:

That which is signified by the prophet may be interpreted differently—namely, of our rejoicing for salvation, as Isaac. He also, delivered from death, laughed, playing and exulting with his spouse, who was the type of the Helper of our salvation, the Church, to whom the stable name of endurance (ὑπομονή) is given; for this cause surely, because she alone remains to all generations, rejoicing ever, subsisting as she does by the endurance (ὑπομονή) of us believers, who are the members of Christ (Eph 5,30). And the witness of those that “have endured (τῶν ὑπομεινάντων) to the end” (Matt 10,22), and the thanksgiving (εὐχαριστία) during this, is the mystic play (ἡ μυστικὴ παιδιὰ), and the helping salvation accompanied with decorous solace. The King, then, who is Christ, beholds from above our laughter, and “looking through the window” (Gen 26,8), as the Scripture says, views the thanksgiving (εὐχαριστία), and the blessing, and the rejoicing, and the jubilation (εὐφροσύνη), and furthermore the endurance (ὑπομονή) which works together with them and their embrace: views his Church, showing only his face, which was wanting to the Church, which is made perfect by her royal head (Eph 4,15). And where, then, was the door by which the Lord showed Himself? The flesh by which he was manifested<sup>40</sup>.

In this second interpretation, Isaac prefigures the believer, who rejoices in Christ’s resurrection and salvation from death. Isaac’s wife Rebecca represents the Church as Christ’s bride. The king is already explicitly interpreted as Christ, who through the window of incarnation shows his face – thereby enabling God to be known – to the Church, which consists of children, but is complete, perfect and mature with its royal head.

The name Rebecca – meaning endurance – belongs to the commu-

toy” is cited (*Leg.* 803C5); cf. also *Protr.* 111,1, where Adam is depicted as playing in the Garden of Eden.

<sup>40</sup> Translation of W. Wilson, slightly adjusted.

nity of the Church for two reasons: firstly, because its joy is everlasting and never ends, and secondly, because she has been told: “Who [despite persecution] endures to the end will be saved” (Matt 10,22). Fun is now associated here with an extremely serious topic, which is the persecution of Christians and suffering in general: the mystical play (and at the same time helping salvation) is martyrdom united with joyful thanksgiving<sup>41</sup>.

In the third interpretation of Isaac’s childhood, the patriarch is directly portrayed as a model of Christ in his suffering. Here, Clement abandons the story of Isaac’s play with Rebecca and recalls Abraham’s sacrifice on Mount Moriah:

He is Isaac (for the narrative may be interpreted otherwise), who is a type of Lord, a child as a son; for he was the son of Abraham, as Christ the Son of God, and a sacrifice as the Lord (Gen 22,9–14), but he was not immolated as the Lord. Isaac only bore the wood of the sacrifice, as the Lord the wood of the cross. And he laughed mystically (μυστικῶς), prophesying that the Lord should fill us with joy, who have been redeemed from corruption by the blood of the Lord. Isaac did not suffer, as was right, yielding the precedence in suffering to the Word. Furthermore, there is an intimation of the divinity of the Lord in his not being slain. For Jesus rose again after his burial, having suffered no harm, like Isaac released from sacrifice<sup>42</sup>.

<sup>41</sup> Let us note that “helping” and derived terms are repeated several times in Clement’s interpretations of the story of Isaac’s playing, even though they are not at all contained in the Bible story being interpreted, or in Philo’s exegesis (where, in contrast, Isaac’s self-sufficiency is emphasised). Clement uses them to express that the need for help and a certain kind of dependence is one of the fundamental features of a Christian as a “perfect child”: he does not rejoice and play alone, he needs help and a partner. This is pointed out by A. Dinan, “The Mystery of Play”, 72. Clement also expresses the idea of thanksgiving in the midst of suffering in *Strom.* IV,75,4; VII,72,5-6; 80,4-6; and in *Hyp.*, fr. incert. 3 Plátová (= Vaticanus arabus, 452, fol. 29<sup>v</sup>), see Klement Alexandrijský, *Exegetické zlomky* (ed. J. Plátová), Praha, 2014, 191.

<sup>42</sup> Translation of W. Wilson, slightly adjusted.

Christ's redemptive sacrifice is compared here to Isaac's sacrifice, and the reader could also make the connection with the Eucharist. In Clement's version, Isaac, whose name means "laughter", laughs even in the face of danger and his joy prophesies Christ's resurrection. At the same time, his escape from death prophetically testifies to the divinity of the risen Christ.

Therefore, we see that in the *Paedagogus*, Clement often places spiritual childhood, Christ's suffering (or even the Christian's part in it) and the Eucharist (or thanksgiving: the joyful and thankful praise of God) side by side, and presents these three facts as a mystery.

#### 4. The Cheer of knowing

At the Eucharist/thanksgiving held under any circumstance, even at times when great endurance is required, the royal Child looks down through the window of incarnation. His children can see him, attentively watching their joyful play and rejoicing in their jubilation (εὐφροσύνη). They join him in his own play and, despite persecution, honour the holy celebration with cheer, ease and child-like trust<sup>43</sup>.

The term "jubilation" (εὐφροσύνη) does not appear by chance in the text on thanksgiving, which looks at the face of God. Clement uses it in his work quite consistently: either in the original meaning of "mirth", "merriment", "good cheer" or – following the example of the *Septuagint* – to express the joy of knowing God<sup>44</sup>. In *Paedagogus*, he always speaks of this inner jubilation in connection with the Eucharist/thanksgiving, or in connection with Christ's suffering

43 *Paed.* I,21,4-22,1.

44 Εὐφροσύνη is often used in the *Septuagint* (esp. in Psalms, see 16/15,11; 30/29,12; 68/67,4; 97/96,11; 100/99,2; 137/136,6) with the meaning "joy of God" (most often the translation of שִׂמְחָה). In this sense, the expression appears in *Paed.* I,22,3; 36,5; 46,3; 98,3; II,32,2; 73,3; *Strom.* I,8,3; V,48,8; 51,5; VI,49,3; 75,1; VII,13,1; 67,2; 101,3.



(at the prospect of resurrection), and sometimes also with spiritual childhood<sup>45</sup>.

5. Conclusion and possible applications to pastoral theology

For Clement, the Eucharist is first and foremost an expression of gratitude for Christ's sacrifice: for giving his life for his friends, saving them from evil and death. It is the body and blood of Christ, the Word through which God the Father and the mother Church nourish their children. In the Eucharist, the Holy Spirit flows into man's soul, unites with him, and continues to purify him more deeply, bringing him into contemplation of God. This contemplation, this profoundly understanding gratitude, leads to inner jubilation.

Expressing gratitude to Christ under every circumstance, even in situations of personal suffering or shared suffering in intercessory prayer, is the supreme prayer of the Christian. It is a child's play through which a Christian joins in the divine play of the Child Jesus. For the Christian – God's child – martyrdom or bearing suffering is no pathetic gesture or heroic act: as an unexplored mystery, a child's joy and cheerfulness is present in everything the Christian experiences; this play that God himself enjoys.

*Paed.* I,32,2-3: Jesus therefore, rejoicing in the spirit, said: "I thank you, O Father, God of heaven and earth, that you have hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to children" (Luke 10,21); the Master and Teacher applying the name children to us, who are readier to embrace salvation than the wise in the world, who, thinking themselves wise, are inflated with pride. And he exclaims in exultation and jubilation (ὑπερευφραϊνόμενος), as if lisping with the children, "Even so,

45 In connection with the Eucharist/thanksgiving: *Paed.* I,22,3; I,36,5; I,46,3, II,32,2 (I,98,2-3); with Christ's suffering: I,46,3; II,32,2; II,73,3). In *Stromata*, this spiritual cheer is also linked to an allusion the Eucharist in two places (*Strom.* I,8,3; VI,49,3).

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Father; for so you liked it” (Luke 10,21). Wherefore those things which have been concealed from the wise and prudent of this present world have been revealed to children<sup>46</sup>.

Gratefulness to God in every circumstance is both a child-like state of mind and the most mature of attitudes. In these times, it could also be a remedy against despair as against pride and pseudo-spiritualism<sup>47</sup>.

<sup>46</sup> Translation of W. Wilson, slightly adjusted.

<sup>47</sup> This article is a result of the research funded by the Czech Science Foundation as the project GA ČR 18-09922S “Biblical Exegesis of *the Other Clement of Alexandria*”.