

extract

Eastern
**Theological
Journal**

9/1
2023

Be gracious, to us your children, O *paidagogos*,
“Father – charioteer of Israel” (2/4 Kgs 2:12),
Son and Father, both in one, O Lord! ...
Grant that, by night and day till the perfect day,
we may give thanks and praise to the only Father and Son,
Son and Father, the Son, *paidagogos* and teacher,
with the Holy Spirit.
Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* III,101,2¹

Proliferation of Divine Reciprocity. Clement of Alexandria’s Trinitology as a Reaction to Valentinian Pleromatology

Veronika ČERNUŠKOVÁ

1. God is one; 2. The Spirit gives the vision of the Father’s face, which is the Son; 3. Divine femininity; 4. Mary as an image of the Father’s motherhood; 5. Femininity and motherhood of the Son; 6. Son proceeds from the Father; the Incarnate Word proceeds from the Word being with God; Conclusion

Trinitology is certainly not one of the topics that Clement would discuss systematically. If we overlook the not very conspicuous place in the fifth book of his *Stromata* where the phrase “the holy Trinity”²

- 1 Modified translation of Eric Osborn, in *Clement of Alexandria*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2005, 251. As for the title “charioteer of Israel”, see below note 24.
- 2 *Strom.* V,14,103,1 (transl. E. Osborn, in *Clement*, 149-150): “«The king of all things is their cause. Second and third to him are joined those who govern in second and third place» (Plato, *Ep.* II 312e1-4). I cannot understand these words

is used, and if we regard the several explicit trinitarian formulations in his other writings³ “as expressions of the common faith of the Church rather than of the author’s own theological quest,”⁴ we might even get the impression that Clement does not consider the blessed Trinity at all. In this paper, I would like to show that this topic is, on the contrary, one of the most precious thoughts that Clement held in his thoughtful heart.

The basic outlines of Clement’s trinitology were drawn years ago in an unsurpassed way by Eric Osborn in his book on Clement, which he wrote after more than fifty years of studying the author.⁵ According to Osborn, one of the three fundamental “problems which govern Clement’s thinking and which hold his thought together” is the question “how two distinct beings, father and son, constitute one God”.⁶ Osborn concludes that

the centre of Clement’s understanding of God is the reciprocity of father and son. This is the first ellipse, with the two foci being father and son. The second ellipse has, as its foci, God and the human person, whose

in any other way than as a reference to the holy trinity; for the third is the holy spirit and the second is the son through whom all things were made according to the will of the father.” In his trinitarian interpretation of the Platonic text, Clement may be following Justin, *I Apol.* 60,6-7 (Jean Daniélou, *Gospel Message and Hellenistic Culture*, transl. John Austin Baker, Westminster Press, London 1973, 111-112); he quotes the same text without the trinitarian interpretation in two other places, *Protr.* 6,68,5; *Strom.* VII,2,9,3.

3 *Paed.* III,101,1-2; *Quis div.* 34,1; 42,19-20; *Ecl.* 13; 29,1.

4 Jules Lebreton, “*La théologie de la Trinité chez Clément d’Alexandrie*”, in *RSR* 34 (1947), 55-76.142-179, here 62.

5 E. Osborn, *Clement of Alexandria*, Oxford 2005. Cf. also Ilaria Vigorelli, “*Schesis and Trinitarian Thought in Clement of Alexandria: From Philosophy to Scriptural Interpretation*”, in Veronika Černušková – Judit Kovacs – Jana Plátová (eds.), *Clement’s Biblical Exegesis. Proceedings of the Second Colloquium on Clement of Alexandria (Olomouc, May 29–31, 2014)*, Leiden 2016, 147-161.

6 E. Osborn, *Clement*, xiii. See esp. 107-154 and 254-268.

reciprocity culminates in vision “face to face”. Finally, the third ellipse is the reciprocity of man with man in godlike forgiveness. These themes spring from John (e.g. 15 and 17) and 1 John 4.⁷

Further, Osborn says:

What place do Clement’s three ellipses leave for the holy spirit and the trinity? In depending so heavily on chapters 1 and 17 of the Fourth Gospel, can Clement provide a place for the “other paraclete”, the spirit of truth (John 14:16-20)? When he comes, the reciprocal knowledge and indwelling of father, son and believer will be evident (John 14:20). Because of the reciprocity of father and son, the spirit will lead into all truth, because he speaks from their fullness, not from himself, joining believer with father and son and thereby proliferating reciprocity (John 16:13-15). For Clement, reciprocity proliferates from father and son to spirit.⁸

The trinity is a proliferation of divine reciprocity.⁹

There is almost nothing to add to Osborn’s brilliantly simple insight into Clement’s trinitology. The notion of the reciprocity of the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit – the reciprocity of the Father with the Son which proliferates into reciprocity of the Son with believer and then reciprocity of man with man (and so in fact creates a chain of more and more pairs), is clearly present in Clement’s work.

Osborn, however, does not and cannot substantiate this vision with a sufficiently large number of unambiguous and easily quotable statements by Clement,¹⁰ as Clement has no ambition, or rather deliberately abandons the ambition, to give a systematic doctrine

7 Ibid., 107.

8 Osborn, *Clement*, 149. Ibid., 152: “The trinity is seen [by Clement] in terms of the relation of reciprocity. For this relation proliferates from father and son to spirit and then to the ultimate union of believers in God. Reciprocity is the heart of the divine mystery of love whereby God is joined to man.”

9 Ibid., 150.

10 As the most explicit expression of this divine reciprocity between the Father and the Son, Osborn refers to *Paed.* I,71 and 88,2-3.

of the Holy Trinity and man's participation in the divine life.¹¹ As previously noted, the author's statements concerning the Trinity are merely hints. The author of a theological treatise has, from Clement's perspective, the sole task of pointing the reader in the direction of the knowledge of God.¹² The one who "leads the believer into all truth" about the Father and the Son, and who enables the person to establish a relationship with the Son and relationships with other people, is then the Holy Spirit Himself. Nevertheless, the role of the Holy Spirit as revealer, unifier, and promoter of divine reciprocity is never expressed explicitly by Clement. The questions of who or "what the Holy Spirit is" (*Strom.* V,88,4), what exactly it means that it is breathed to the believer in baptism, and how one is filled with the Holy Spirit¹³ (which is certainly not "a portion of God in us")¹⁴ are avoided by Clement in his extant work, pointing out that "concealing the depths of knowledge is «good incredulity», as Heraclitus says, for «incredulity escapes from ignorance» (fr. 86 D.-K.)."¹⁵

Osborn does not explicitly discuss the question whether or in what manner Clement, with his concept of the relationship between the

11 Cf. *Strom.* VII,84,2: ἀμεινον δὲ οἶμαι ὑπερθέσθαι τὴν τοιαύτην φιλοτιμίαν διὰ τὸ μῆκος τοῦ λόγου, τοῖς πονεῖν ἐθέλουσι καὶ προσεκπονεῖν τὰ δόγματα κατ' ἐκλογὴν τῶν γραφῶν ἐπιτρέψαντα.

12 Cf. *Strom.* IV,4,4.

13 *Strom.* V,88,3: πολλοῦ γε δεῖ ἄμοιρον εἶναι θείας ἐννοίας τὸν ἄνθρωπον, ὅς γε καὶ τοῦ ἐμφυσήματος ἐν τῇ γενέσει μεταλαβεῖν ἀναγέγραπται ... ἡμεῖς μὲν τῷ πεπιστευκότι προσεπιπνεῖσθαι τὸ ἅγιον πνεῦμά φαμεν.

14 *Strom.* V,88,3: ἀλλ' οὐχ ὡς μέρος θεοῦ ἐν ἐκάστῳ ἡμῶν τὸ πνεῦμα.

15 *Strom.* V,88,2.4-5: ὅπως δὲ ἡ διανομὴ αὕτη καὶ ὅ τί ποτέ ἐστι τὸ ἅγιον πνεῦμα, ἐν τοῖς Περὶ προφητείας καὶ τοῖς Περὶ ψυχῆς ἐπιδειχθήσεται ἡμῖν. ἀλλὰ τὰ μὲν τῆς γνώσεως βᾶθη "κρύπτειν ἀπιστίη ἀγαθῇ" καθ' Ἡράκλειτον, "ἀπιστίη γὰρ διαφυγγάνει μὴ γιγνώσκεισθαι" (Heraclitus fr. 86 D.-K.). The significance of this reference of Clement is often discussed, see esp. Heinrich Wiese, *Heraklit bei Klemens*, diss., Kiel 1963; Alain Le Boulluc, *Commentaire*, in Idem, *Clément d'Alexandrie, Stromate V*, SC 279, Paris 1981, 288-290.

Father and the Son and the proliferating reciprocity, responds to the Valentinian notion of the divine Pleroma, consisting of a chain of pairs of masculine and feminine aeons.

As is well known, the Valentinian Pleroma, i.e. the Fullness, is a supra-heavenly unity in multiplicity.¹⁶ The statements about it in the Valentinian texts are very diverse and it is not possible to analyse them all here.¹⁷ Some basic information about the Valentinian Pleroma, approximately such as Clement also had at his disposal, is provided by Irenaeus in the first three chapters of his *Adversus haereses*.¹⁸ According to this exposition, the Pleroma is made up of thirty aeons divided into pairs (syzygies).¹⁹ The first, masculine aeon of the first pair is often called

16 The terms “Pleroma” (Fullness) and the plural “aeons” (ages) were taken by the Valentinians from the language of the New Testament writings. The term “aeons” is perhaps a direct echo of the Septuagint-inspired formulation “for ever and ever” (εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων); the antecedent for the term “Pleroma” was again probably the words of the hymn in the *Epistle to the Colossians* on the fullness of the Godhead (Col 2:9; 1:19), filled, however, with an entirely unbiblical, Platonising content. Cf. John Dillon, “Pleroma and Noetic Cosmos. A Comparative Study”, in Idem, *The Great Tradition. Further Studies in the Development of Platonism and Early Christianity*, Farnham 1997. On the very concepts of “Pleroma” and “aeons” see *ibid.* 107. The author here shows that Valentinian ideas about the Pleroma are primarily a reinterpretation of Plato’s *Timaeus*. On the general influence of Greek philosophy on gnosis and *vice versa*, see Arthur Hilary Armstrong, *Gnosis and Greek Philosophy*, in Barbara Aland – Ugo Bianchi – Martin Krause – John Robinson – Geo Widengren (eds.), *Gnosis. Festschrift für Hans Jonas*. Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht Göttingen, 1978, 87-124; Mark Edwards, *Pauline Platonism*, in Idem, *Christians, Gnostics and Philosophers in Late Antiquity* (Variorum Collected Studies) Routledge, London 2012, 205-221.

17 For more detailed information see e.g. Einar Thomassen, *The Spiritual Seed – The Church of the Valentinians*, Brill, Leiden – Boston 2006, 193-247.

18 Cf. esp. Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.* I,1-3.

19 Not all Valentinian descriptions of Pleroma, however, give the number and names of the aeons contained in the Fullness, cf. e.g. the pleromatology of the *Gospel of Truth* or the *Tripartite Tractate*.

Βυθός or Βάθος, the Depth (cf. *Exc.* 29),²⁰ or the Forefather (Προπάτωρ), the Unborn Father (Πατήρ), the First Beginning (Προαρχή), or the Unspeakable (Ἄρρητος, cf. *Exc.* 29). His female companion is called Silence (Σιγή, cf. *Exc.* 29), Thought (Ἔννοια) or Grace (Χάρις). From the first syzygy comes the second, whose male aeon is most often named Intellect (Νοῦς), Only-begotten (Μονογενής), Beginning (Ἀρχή) or in other sources Father (Πατήρ),²¹ and whose female partner is Truth (Ἀλήθεια). From the second pair then proceeds the third one: the Word (Λόγος) and the Life (Ζωή), and from these the fourth pair: the Man (Ἄνθρωπος) and the Church (Ἐκκλησία). From the third pair then come five more and from the fourth six more pairs of aeons. The first pair of aeons, therefore, in the Valentinian vision, gives rise to a second pair, which in turn gives rise to a third, and so on.

In this article, I would like to seek answers to the following questions: in which passages of Clement's work does his understanding of the Holy Trinity as proliferating reciprocity appear? And can critical reaction to Valentinian pleromatology be traced in Clement's trinitological remarks?

I. God is one

Clement explicitly affirms that God is one, “the Son in the Father and the Father in the Son” (*Paed.* I,24,3; John 10:38; 17:21-26).²² “God is

20 The term Βάθος (perhaps derived from Eph 3:18) is used in *Exc.* 29 or e.g. in Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.* I,2,2, or Hippolytus, *Ref.* VI,30,7. To determine which passages of the *Excerpts* are extracts from Valentinian sources and which are Clement's own notes I accept (with minor reservations) Sagnard's classification: François Sagnard (ed.), Clément d'Alexandrie, *Extraits de Théodote*, SC 23, Paris 1948, 28-29, see Klement Alexandrijský, *Výpisky z Theodota, Czech translation and introduction with commentary Veronika Černušková*, ΟΙΚΟΥΜΕΝΗ, Praha 2021, 42-43.

21 Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.* I,11,1.

22 Similar statements: *Paed.* I,53,1; I,62,4; I,71,1; *Protr.* 110,1.

one and transcends unity and is beyond monad itself” (*Paed.* I,71,1).²³ The Father, as “the only one truly being: the one who was, is, and will be”, is good (*Paed.* I,71,2-3).²⁴ The Son is just, and “this designation is derived from the equal power” of the Father and the Son “by virtue of the mutual relation of love: God has made us to know the face of the good beam-balance (ἀγαθὸς ζυγός) of justice: Jesus, and through him ... we have known God” (*Paed.* I,71,3).²⁵ Since the term ζυγός (here “beam-balance”) means primarily “yoke”, it is probably an allusion to Matt 11:29-30 (χρηστὸς ζυγός), and as the term also has the meaning of a pair, a couple of persons,²⁶ the Matthean “to take upon oneself a good yoke” according to Clement refers to justice and to the equality of partners.²⁷ Thus, in accordance with this multiple meaning of ζυγός

23 “Ἐν δὲ ὁ θεὸς καὶ ἐπέκεινα τοῦ ἐνὸς καὶ ὑπὲρ αὐτὴν μονάδα. It is a reminiscence of Philo’s *De praem. et poen.* 40: ἐκεῖνο μὲν γάρ, ὃ καὶ ἀγαθοῦ κρεῖττον καὶ μονάδος πρεσβύτερον καὶ ἐνὸς εἰλικρινέστερον, Cf. also *Leg. alleg.* II,3.

24 *Paed.* I,71,2,3: τὸν ὄντως μόνον ὄντα, ὃς ἦν καὶ ἔστιν καὶ ἔσται, δείκνυσιν θεόν ... καθὸ μὲν πατὴρ νοεῖται, ἀγαθὸς ὢν, αὐτὸ μόνον ὃ ἔστι κέκληται, ἀγαθός. The formulation “the only one truly existent” is Platonic, but Clement also bases it on God’s saying in the midst of the burning bush in Exod 3:14, as given in the Septuagint: ἐγὼ εἰμι ὁ ὢν (cf. *Strom.* VII,54,4, and *Quis div.* 7,2), and he alludes here also to Rev 1:4: ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος.

25 Cf. Osborn, *Clement*, 247-257.

26 Henry George Liddell – Robert Scott – Henry Stuart Jones (eds.), *A Greek-English Lexicon with a Supplement*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1996, s. v. I, IV, VII.

27 *Strom.* V,30,3. Translation by William Wilson (ed.), *The Writings of Clement of Alexandria*, in Alexander Roberts – James Donaldson – Arthur Cleveland Coxe – Allan Menzies (eds.), *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Charles Scribner’s Sons, New York 1905: “Now Pythagoras made an epitome of the statements on righteousness in Moses, when he said: «Do not step over the balance»; that is, do not transgress equality in distribution, honouring justice so. ... Wherefore the Lord says: «Take my yoke, for it is gentle and light» (Matt 11:29-30). And on the disciples, striving for the pre-eminence, he enjoys equality with simplicity, saying that they must become as little children (Matt 18:3).”

(yoke, beam-balance and pair) and Clement's previous interpretation, we might read *Paed.* I,71,3 as follows: "God has made us know the face of a good partnership-equality: Jesus, and through him ... we have come to know God."

He is both just and good: he, who is truly God, who is himself all things, and all things are he, because he is himself God, the only God. ... Therefore, God is good of himself, but just for our sake and because he is good. He shows us his justice through his Word from the beginning when he became a father. For before becoming the Creator, he was God, he was good; that is why he wished to become creator and father. And this relation of love became the beginning of justice: he let his sun shine (Matt 5:45) and sent his Son. The Son was the first to proclaim the good justice which is from heaven, for he said: "No one knows the Son but the Father, and no one knows the Father but the Son" (Matt 11:27). This balanced reciprocity of knowledge is a symbol of the justice that existed at the beginning. Afterwards, justice came down among men, both in the Scriptures and in the flesh: in the Word and in the Law, drawing men to salutary repentance; for it is good.²⁸

28 *Paed.* I,88,1-3. Modified translation of the one by Simon Wood (ed.), *Clement of Alexandria, Christ the Educator*, The Catholic University of America Press, Washington 1954: Καὶ ὁ αὐτὸς δίκαιος καὶ ἀγαθός, ὁ ὄντως Θεός, ὁ ὢν αὐτὸς τὰ πάντα καὶ τὰ πάντα ὁ αὐτός, ὅτι αὐτὸς Θεός, ὁ μόνος Θεός. ... "Ὡστε ἀγαθὸς μὲν ὁ Θεὸς δι' ἑαυτὸν, δίκαιος δὲ ἤδη δι' ἡμᾶς, καὶ τοῦτο ὅτι ἀγαθός. Τὸ δίκαιον δὲ ἡμῖν διὰ τοῦ λόγου ἐνδείκνυται τοῦ ἑαυτοῦ ἐκείθεν ἀνωθεν, ὅθεν γέγονεν πατήρ. Πρὶν γὰρ κτίστης γενέσθαι Θεὸς ἦν, ἀγαθὸς ἦν, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο καὶ δημιουργὸς εἶναι καὶ πατήρ ἠθέλησεν. καὶ ἡ τῆς ἀγάπης ἐκείνης σχέσις δικαιοσύνης γέγονεν ἀρχή, καὶ τὸν ἥλιον ἐπιλάμποντος τὸν αὐτοῦ καὶ τὸν υἱὸν καταπέμποντος τὸν αὐτοῦ. καὶ πρῶτος οὗτος τὴν ἐξ οὐρανῶν ἀγαθὴν κατήγγειλεν δικαιοσύνην, "Οὐδεὶς ἔγνω τὸν υἱὸν εἰ μὴ ὁ πατήρ" λέγων, "οὐδὲ τὸν πατέρα εἰ μὴ ὁ υἱός". Αὕτη ἡ ἀντιταλαντεύουσα γνώσις ἐπ' ἴσης δικαιοσύνης ἀρχαίαις σύμβολον. Ἐπειτα δὲ ἐπὶ τοὺς ἀνθρώπους καταβέβηκεν ἡ δικαιοσύνη καὶ γράμματι καὶ σώματι, τῷ λόγῳ καὶ τῷ νόμῳ, εἰς μετάνοιαν τὴν ἀνθρωπότητα βιαζομένη σωτήριον. ἀγαθὴ γὰρ ἦν. Ἄλλ' οὐχ ὑπακούεις τῷ Θεῷ. σεαυτὸν αἰτιῶ τὸν κριτὴν ἐπισπῶμενος.

So God is one, and at the same time a pair in an equal partnership,²⁹ a pair who share a mutual and justly equal knowledge. The incarnate Word is the face – the expression – of this relationship, this mutual knowledge in God. There is no question here of masculinity and femininity: the divine reciprocity is not the union (*syzygy*, *συζυγία*) of male and female beings, although the relation between them may be called *ζυγός*, couple.

2. *The Spirit gives the vision of the Father's face, which is the Son*

Osborn's scheme of the three ellipses suggests that Clement's conception of the Trinity cannot be dissociated from his idea of salvation and the deification of man. The relationship between the Father and the Son is opened to man by the action of the Holy Spirit: man is invited into a relationship with the Son, and thus with his Father (which is salvation), and he is invited to embrace the relationship with the Son as one of equality, in the fullness of knowledge, "face to face" (which is deification). And this relationship of man with Christ is at the same time open to his neighbours and also invites them to reciprocity. In this way, man actually engages in God's work of salvation.

Clement presents God's salvation work as a ladder, a chain, or a hierarchy, at the top of which stands the Son, who is the face of the Father.³⁰ The Son is followed by angels and after angels by men. Salvation

29 Cf. also *Paed.* III,14,1: "The heavens are gratified with two charioteers." The two charioteers here are the sun and moon gods of the story of Faëthon (cf. Ovid, *Metam.* II,208-209). Clement, however, may also see in them a prefiguration of God the Father and the Son, cf. *Paed.* III,53,2; III,101,1.

30 *Exc.* 10,6; 12,1; 23,5; *Strom.* V,34,1; VII,58,3; *Paed.* I,22,3; 57,2; 71,3; *Quis div.* 23,2. The Christological title "Face of the Father", inspired by the Jewish intertestamental tradition (and also used in Valentinian gnosis, April DeConick, "Heavenly Temple Traditions and Valentinian Worship", in Carey Newman – James Davila – Gladys Lewis (eds.), *The Jewish Roots of Christological*

proceeds from the Son and is mediated by those who stand nearest to him, that is, by the angels to the people, and is then communicated among the people to each other (*Strom.* VII,9,2-3; VI,161,6; *Ecl.* 16; 57,4-5). The power that draws the saved within the whole hierarchy is not theirs – it is the Holy Spirit: the Son is like a magnet and the Spirit the magnetic energy:

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 band of angels; and down to ourselves there are ranged, some under others, those who, from One and by One, both are saved and save. As, then, the minutest particle of steel is moved by the spirit of the Heracleian stone (cf. Plato, *Ion* 533d–e; Philo, *De opif.* 141), when diffused over many steel rings; so also, attracted by the Holy Spirit, the virtuous are added by affinity to the first abode, and the others in succession down to the last.³¹

So it is still the same picture: The Holy Spirit draws man into divine reciprocity, establishes a relationship and causes continuity throughout the chain or ladder of salvation, and invites man to ascend to its summit, to the First Principle, who is the Only-begotten God (John 1:18, *Strom.* V,81,3-4), also called “the image of the invisible God” and “the Firstborn of all creation” (Col 1:15; *Strom.* V,38,7; *Exc.* 8,2), the Firstborn Son (πρωτόγονος υἱός, *Strom.* VI,58,1), “the first-created Word” (πρωτόκτιστος λόγος, *Exc.* 20), “the first-created Wisdom” (πρωτόκτιστος σοφία, *Strom.* V,89,4).³² The Son proceeds from the

Monothelism, Baylor University Press, Leiden – Boston – Köln 1999, 308-341, 325-330), was common in the Catholic Church, cf. e.g. Tertullian, *Adv. Prax.* 14.

31 *Strom* VII,9,4. (Translation by W. Wilson (ed.), *The Writings of Clement of Alexandria*, in Alexander Roberts – James Donaldson – Arthur Cleveland Coxe – Allan Menzies (eds.), *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York 1905; cf. *Strom.* II,26,2.

32 The expression πρωτόκτιστος is otherwise in Clement's work almost exclusively reserved for the highest angels, only in *Exc.* 20 is it used of the Word and in

Father, and yet is equal to the Father (*Paed.* I,71; 88,2-3); “both are one being, God” (*Paed.* I,62,4). It would be better, then, to say, in Osborn’s words, that “the highest rung of the ladder of being is not a rung, but a beam-balance,”³³ the reciprocity of Father and Son proliferating in the Holy Spirit.

In his *Stromata*, Clement draws attention to the fact that “the Stoics say that God, like the soul, is essentially body and spirit”: this idea, according to Clement, can be found “explicitly in Scripture.”³⁴ In *Excerpta ex Theodoto*, Clement attributes a certain corporeality to the whole hierarchy of salvation from the lowest to the Son (*Exc.* 1012): nothing that exists is without form, appearance, shape, and body (*Exc.* 10,1-2). All that exists is circumscribed (περιγράφειν), otherwise it could not even be called by name. But form and corporeality are of a different kind in spiritual entities than in earthly ones (*Exc.* 10,2). Spiritual beings, for example, are not distinguished into male and female:

Those [bodies] which are here are male and female and differ from each other, but there he who is the Only-begotten and inherently intellectual has been provided with his own form and with his own nature which is exceedingly pure and sovereign and directly enjoys the power of the Father.³⁵

The higher a being is in the salvific hierarchy, the subtler is its body (*Exc.* 10,1). The corporeality of spiritual beings is relative: the angels, for example, are incorporeal in comparison with the stars as bodies of this world, but they are also corporeal in comparison with the Son

Strom. V,89,4 of the Wisdom, as also Michel Cambe points out (*Avenir solaire et angélique des justes. Le Psaume 19/18 commenté par Clément d’Alexandrie*, Strasbourg 2009, 51-53). Cf. Prov 8:22: κύριος ἔκτισέν με ἀρχὴν ὁδῶν αὐτοῦ; Sir 1:4: προτέρα πάντων ἔκτισται σοφία.

33 Osborn, *Clement*, 140.

34 *Strom.* V,89,2.

35 *Exc.* 10,3. Translation by Robert Pierce Casey (ed.), *The Excerpta ex Theodoto of Clement of Alexandria*. Studies and Documents 1, Christophers, London 1936.

(*Exc.* 11,3). Also, the Son is incorporeal in comparison with the angels, but in comparison with the Father he is corporeal (*Exc.* 11,3; cf. *Strom.* V,89,2) – he is the face of God. This face of God can be beheld by those who are nearest to Him with an eye that is corporeal in relation to Him, but incorporeal in relation to what stands below (*Exc.* 10,6). Only that which is corporeal can be seen. Thus, the highest created beings, the protoctists (or the first-created angels or gods), can see the Son, themselves, and the beings and things below; the archangels can see the protoctists, themselves, and everything below, but they can no longer see the Son, for he is incorporeal in relation to them (*Exc.* 12,1). The angels can see the archangels and each other, but the level of the protoctists is already beyond the reach of their vision – these are “things into which they desire to look” (1Pt 1:12; *Exc.* 12,1-2) but cannot.

The incarnate Saviour, who ascended up to the highest heaven (Heb 4:14, 8:1), as we have said, invites man to ascend to the top of the salvific hierarchy, that is, to the level of the protoctists – the gods – to see himself: the Son who is equal to the Father. Through this deification, man enters the highest level of reciprocity, which “is based on the knowledge of the gods” (*Strom.* II,102,1).³⁶

The Holy Spirit, who is poured out on the believer at baptism, sustains the whole salvific hierarchy by his power. It is therefore he who makes the vision of God, i.e. deification possible for man.³⁷ In Osborn’s words, the Holy Spirit leads the baptized one into all truth: he speaks (and shines) from the fullness of Father and Son, joining the believer

36 Καί μοι δοκεῖ παγκάλως Ἰππόδαμος ὁ Πυθαγόρειος γράφειν. “τῶν φιλιῶν ἃ μὲν ἐξ ἐπιστάμας θεῶν, ἃ δ’ ἐκ παροχᾶς ἀνθρώπων, ἃ δὲ ἐξ ἀδονᾶς ζώων.” Cf. *Strom.* VI,73,4: “Through love he is already present [here on earth] among those among whom he will be [one day].” (My translation.) ἐν οἷς ἔσται, δι’ ἀγάπης ἡδη γενόμενος.

37 *Paed.* I,28,1.

with Father and Son and thereby proliferating reciprocity.³⁸ On the basis of this experience of relating to God, man is then further led by the Holy Spirit to relate to other people: he becomes the focus of the third ellipse, the second focus of which is another person in need of his mercy.

3. *Divine femininity*

We have said that, according to Clement, the human souls, the angels, and the Son himself are spiritual bodies which cannot be divided into male and female (*Exc.* 10,3): they are neutral (οὐθέτεροι), neither male nor female.³⁹ The Father, however, is above all, according to Clement: he is invisible and not circumscribed (ἀόρατος, ἀπερίγραφος; *Strom.* V,74,4),⁴⁰ without form and invisible (ἀσχημάτιστος, ἀόρατος; *Strom.* V,36,3). All that can be named is begotten (*Strom.* V,83,1): the Father is unbegotten (ἀγέννητος; V,82,3; cf. *Exc.* 45,1) and nameless (ἀνωνόμαστος; *Strom.* V,81,6; cf. *Exc.* 31,3).⁴¹

38 On Clement's conception of love as a partnership with God cf. Laura Rizzerio, "L'éthique de Clément et les philosophies grecques", in *Studia Patristica* 41 (2006), 231-246.

39 *Strom.* VI,100,3. Cf. *Paed.* I,10,1-2 (transl. S. P. Wood, modified): "The Scripture says: «For in this world, they marry and are given in marriage,» for this world is the only place in which the female is distinguished from the male, «but in that other world, no longer» (Luke 20:34-35). There, the rewards of this life, lived in the holy union of wedlock (συζυγία), await not man or woman as such, but the human person, now divided because he is split in two by lust."

40 Cf. *Strom.* II,6,2-3: περιέχων οὐ περιεχόμενος ἢ κατὰ ὄρισμόν τινα ἢ κατὰ ἀποτομήν.

41 Similarly, when Clement speaks of Moses' entrance into the Sinai darkness, he represents it as entering into "hidden and obscure thoughts of the Being" (εις τὰς ἀδύτους καὶ ἀειδεῖς περὶ τοῦ ὄντος ἐννοίας, *Strom.* II,6,1). This is a literal quotation of Philo, *De post. Caini*, 14 (εις ἀειδῆ καὶ ἀόρατον ἔρχεται ζήτησιν). Cf. Philo, *De mut. nom.* 7-11: εἰς γὰρ τὸν γνόφον φασὶν αὐτὸν οἱ θεῖοι χρησμοὶ εἰσελθεῖν, τὴν ἀόρατον καὶ ἀσώματον οὐσίαν αἰνιττόμενοι; *De gig.* 54: εἰς τὸν γνόφον, τὸν ἀειδῆ χῶρον.

The Father is therefore, according to Clement, incorporeal. Nevertheless, in his book *Who is the rich man that is being saved?*, an often-quoted sentence refers to God the Father as both male and female. This obviously figurative statement is based on, among other things, the closing sentence of the prologue in the Gospel of John: “No one has ever seen God. It is the only God (the only Son),⁴² being in the bosom of the Father (εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρὸς), who has made him known.”⁴³ The term κόλπος, as is well known, denotes in Greek the breasts, the bosom, or lap and also the womb.⁴⁴

At the same time, Clement considers this verse of Scripture to be the key to understanding what love is:

Look at the mysteries of love, and then you will behold the bosom (κόλπος) of the Father, whom the only God alone has made known (John 1:18). It is he himself, God-love (1John 4:8, 16), and out of love he was captured (ἐθιγράθη) by us: his ineffability (τὸ μὲν ἄρρητον αὐτοῦ) [is] Father, but his compassion (τὸ συμπαθές) for us became Mother: The Father by loving became feminine (ἀγαπήσας ἐθιγλύθη), of which the mighty sign is He whom He begot of Himself. This fruit born of love is love.⁴⁵

Clement evidently alludes here to the doctrine of the Valentinian Gnostics about the syzygies of the divine Pleroma, the highest of which, according to some sources, is the pair of the Ineffable Father,

42 Clement quotes John 1:18 in both important variants: ... μονογενῆς θεὸς ὁ ὢν εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρὸς... (*Strom.* V,81,3; *Quis div.* 37,1; *Exc.* 6,2; cf. *Exc.* 8,1); μονογενῆς υἱὸς ὁ ὢν εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρὸς... (*Strom.* I,169,4; cf. *Exc.* 7,3; 9,3).

43 John 1:18, my translation. NRSV reads: “No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father’s heart, who has made him known.”

44 Henry George Liddell – Robert Scott – Henry Stuart Jones (eds.), *A Greek-English Lexicon with a Supplement*.

45 *Quis div.* 37,1-2, my translation. On *Quis div.* 36-37 see esp. Carlo Nardi, “*Il seme eletto e la maternità di Dio nel Quis dives salvetur di Clemente Alessandrino*”, in *Prometheus* 11 (1985), 271-286.

and the Mother Grace.⁴⁶ He translates this idea into orthodoxy, as if to say: there is no primordial dyad of Man and Woman from which more and more syzygies emanate. God is one, He is both Father and Mother. He is the μητροπάτωρ of whom Orpheus speaks,⁴⁷ he is Love (1John 4:8, 16), which virginally begets⁴⁸ the only Son. And this Son is also the only Love itself. As the Father, God is ineffable and unsearchable; as the Mother, she allows herself to be “captured”, to be grasped – her compassion is intelligible to us, and from her womb the Son is born, who gives men knowledge of the ineffable Father (cf. also Matt 11:27 par.).

According to Clement, the God Father also plays the role of mother in relation to created man: getting out of the baptismal water is like childbirth, with God as the “parent” and water as the “womb” (μήτρα) from which the born-again Christian proceeds (*Strom.* IV,160,2). The Father’s love for man is characterized by maternal concern (*Protr.* 91,3; *Paed.* I,21,2), by feminine care: when the Israelites wandered in the wilderness, the Lord “followed them as a handmaid (θεράπεινα)” (*Protr.* 9,1).

According to Clement, the secret of love is therefore the mother’s bosom or the womb of the Ineffable: “womanhood” or “femininity” which God receives out of love – his compassion for us, his tenderness and grace. Certainly, God was and is and always will be what He is (*Strom.* V,141,2). At the same time, however, we can figuratively say that, as the Ineffable Father, He “became” Grace, Compassion, “woman”.⁴⁹ Or else: as the Good God, He “became” the Father, the Creator, the Just (*Paed.* I,88,2), “the man”.

46 *Exc.* 29-31, which also speaks of the Father’s compassion.

47 *Orficorum fragmenta* 248a, in *Strom.* V,125,2; 126,2.

48 Cf. *Exc.* 19,4.

49 Similarly, Clement says in *Exc.* 19,1-2, that the Word “became” the Son and already in the beginning “became” flesh.

4. *Mary as an image of the Father's motherhood*

Clement testifies explicitly of Jesus' mother Mary and her virginal conception and birth.⁵⁰ In the extant work, however, he does not place them before the eyes of his readers as the image of the Son proceeding from the Father, but rather surprisingly compares Mary to Scripture, which virginally begets the truth:

But, as appears, many even down to our own time regard Mary, on account of the birth of her child, as having been in the puerperal state (λεχῶ εἶναι), although she was not. For some say that, after she brought forth, she was found, when examined, to be a virgin. Now such to us are the Scriptures of the Lord, which gave birth to the truth and continue virgin, in the concealment of the mysteries of the truth. And "she brought forth, and yet brought not forth (τέτοκεν καὶ οὐ τέτοκεν)", says the Scripture;⁵¹ as having conceived of herself, and not from conjunction. Wherefore the Scriptures are pregnant for gnostics; but the heresies, not having learned them, dismissed them as infertile.⁵²

The Virgin Mary gave birth to the Son of God, the Truth, and yet she cannot be said to have passed through childbirth: she did not become a puerperal woman, she remained a virgin.⁵³ Similarly, the Scripture, the Old Covenant of the Father with His people, virginally

50 In addition to the sites cited below, see *Strom.* I,147,5; III,102,1; VI,127,1; 132,4. On Clement's mariology cf. Alois Müller, *Ecclesia – Maria. Die Einheit Marias und der Kirche*, Universitätsverlag, Freiburg 1951, 100-106. See also Petr Havlík, "Elements of Mariology in Clement of Alexandria and Gregory of Nyssa: Mary and the Church", in Ilaria Vigorelli (ed.), *From Alexandria to Nyssa. Clement and Gregory in Conversation*, Brill, Leiden, forthcoming.

51 Logion 18. Alfred Resch (ed.), *Agrapha. Aussercanonische Schriftfragmente*, Hinrichs, Leipzig 1906, 305-306.

52 *Strom.* VII,93,7-94,3, transl. W. Wilson, modified.

53 Cf. Miklós Gyurkovics, "The Concept of the Virginal Motherhood Interpreted by Clement of Alexandria in the Context of Other Alexandrian Religious Literary Works", in *ETJ* 2/2 (2016), 203-228, 205-206.

produces the Truth, but at the same time, the secrets of the Truth still remain hidden in Scripture. It cannot be said that the Old Covenant is emptied by the birth of the Truth – that it loses its value by the coming of the Christ who is foretold in it and for whom it gradually prepared the people of God. No, the whole of Scripture – the Father’s covenant – is still pregnant with the Truth – the Son.

In the background of this image, after all, is the idea of the Father who virginally begets the Son, while the Son remains hidden in his womb/bosom (κόλπος). For the Father’s womb, that depth and ineffability of God (*Strom.* V,81,3), is the “place” from which the Son – the eternal Truth – proceeds and at the same time never departs, as we will discuss later (*Exc.* 7,3-4).

Mary, the virgin mother of the Word, is also for Clement an image of the Church:

O mystic wonder! The Father of all is one, the Word who belongs to all is one, the Holy Spirit is one and the same for all. And one alone, too, is the virgin Mother. I like to call her the Church. She alone, although a mother, had no milk because she alone never became a wife. She is at once virgin and mother: as virgin, undefiled; as mother, full of love. Calling her children about her, she nourishes them with milk that is holy: the Infant Word. That is why she has no milk, because this Son of hers, beautiful and all hers, the Body of Christ, is milk. The new people she fosters on the Word, for He Himself begot them in throes of His flesh and wrapped them in the swaddling clothes (Luke 2:7) of His precious blood (1Pt 1:18-19). What a holy begetting! What holy swaddling clothes! The Word is everything to His little ones, both father and mother, educator and nurse. “Eat my flesh,” he says, “and my blood” (John 6:53). He is Himself the nourishment that He gives. He delivers up His own flesh and pours out His own blood. There is nothing lacking His children, that they may grow. What a mysterious paradox!⁵⁴

54 *Paed.* I,42,1–43,1, transl. S. P. Wood. Cf. *Paed.* I,21,1; III,99,1.

The Church is a mother whose birth is virginal in the sense that she does not induce lactation.⁵⁵ The milk with which the Church nourishes her children is not her own: it is the body and blood of Christ himself.

5. *Femininity and motherhood of the Son*

Note, however, that in the text quoted above, not only the Church is called mother, but also the Word, i.e., the Son of God. Clement seems to express the same thing in the sixth book of the *Stromata* (*Strom.* VI,146,1-2) in interpreting the commandment, “Honour your Father and your Mother.” According to Clement, this is the commandment to worship God the Father and the divine Knowledge⁵⁶ or Wisdom, i.e. God the Son (1Cor 1:24).

The Son is, in Clement’s understanding, that Wisdom which God “created as the beginning of his ways” (Prov 8:22; Sir 1:4):⁵⁷ he is “the first-created Wisdom” (πρωτόκτιστος σοφία, *Strom.* V,89,4), the paternal Wisdom (πατρική σοφία, *Paed.* I,97,3).⁵⁸ It is through the Son – the Wisdom, that man receives knowledge from God, and therefore the Son/Wisdom is called the Mother of the righteous – those who know God (*Strom.* VI,146,2), and the Mother of the new people, whom he begot in throes of his flesh and wrapped them in the swaddling clothes of his precious blood and he nourishes them with himself (*Paed.* I,42,3).

55 The comparison of the Church to Mary has its limits: Clement probably did not imagine that Mary would not nurse the infant Jesus, cf. Luke 11:27, in *Paed.* I,43,3-4.

56 This may be an allusion to the Valentinian doctrine that calls the masculine aeon of the second dyad “the Son” or “the Knowledge”, cf. *Exc.* 31,3.

57 *Strom.* VI,58,1; VII,7,4-7; V,89,4.

58 In the *Stromata*, Clement says explicitly that the Son of God “was «before the foundation of the world» (Eph 1:4) the counsellor of the Father” (*Strom.* VII,7,4); he is the origin and the action of the Father, the Word by which all things were created. Being «the Firstborn of all creation», He is also the Wisdom whom God «made as the beginning of His ways» (Prov 8:22), cf. *Strom.* VII,7,7.

Thus the Word is called not only the Child⁵⁹ and the Son, but also the Father⁶⁰ and the Mother. As we read above, the Word is a spiritual body that cannot be understood as merely masculine (*Exc.* 10,1-3). We cannot call Him the Daughter, only because of the historical event of the incarnation and birth of the man Jesus.

6. Son proceeds from the Father; the Incarnate Word proceeds from the Word being with God

The theme of divine motherhood and breastfeeding as a metaphor for the Eucharist is the subject of much of the first book of Clement's *Paedagogus*.⁶¹ Clement here presents a threefold interpretation of 1Cor 3:1-3,⁶² by which he again opposes the Valentinian Gnostics. They apply Paul's words, "I have given you milk to drink" (γάλα ὑμᾶς ἐπότισα) to the believers of the Catholic Church, and see themselves as spiritual recipients of the "meaty food" (βρωμα). Clement is trying to show that the milk of which Paul speaks can be both a drink and a food (it could

59 *Paed.* I,24,2; *Quis div.* 33,6; 34,1.

60 *Paed.* I,24,2; 42,3; III,101,1. This may be an allusion to Valentinus, who (according to Irenaeus) calls the masculine aeon of the second dyad "the Father", cf. Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.* I,11,1. About the title of "Father" for the Christ cf. Vittorino Grossi, "Il titolo cristologico 'Padre' nell'antichità cristiana", in *Aug* 16 (1976), 237-269, esp. 253-254.

61 *Paed.* I,34,3-50,2.

62 Cf. esp. Judith Kovacs, "Echoes of Valentinian Exegesis in Clement of Alexandria and Origen: The Interpretation of 1Cor 3,1-3", in Luigi Perone (ed.), *Origeniana Octava: Origen and the Alexandrian Tradition*, I, Peeters, Leuven 2003, 317-329; Annewies van den Bunt (van den Hoek), "Milk and Honey in the Theology of Clement of Alexandria", in Hans Jörg Auf der Maur (ed.), *Fides sacramenti, Sacramentum fidei. Studies in honour of Pieter Smulders*, Van Gorcum, Assen 1981; Verna Harisson, "The Care-Banishing Breast of the Father: Feminine Images of the Divine in Clement of Alexandria's *Paedagogus I*", in *Studia Patristica* 31 (1995), 401-405.

be the “liquid nutrition” of the basic teaching for the catechumens and the “meaty food” of Eucharist for the baptized). And he insists that this milk – both in its liquid and solid form – is the Word Himself (cf. 1Pt 2:2: λογικὸν γαλά). It is Christ’s shed blood and his body, given for the life of the world. Milk is actually blood and blood is liquid flesh: for once a woman has given birth, her (menstrual or umbilical) blood begins to flow into her breasts and there, “under the influence of her tender feelings, it becomes pale and white, so that the child may not be afraid of it”.⁶³ The delight, which the reception of milk produces in the breastfed child, is then a picture of Christian’s joy in the knowledge of the Truth, which takes place in grateful (Eucharistic) contemplation (*Paed.* I,36,5).

We have read that the Word is not only the teacher, *paedagogus* and father, but also the mother of believers (*Paed.* I,42,3). Therefore, in Clement’s first interpretation of 1Cor 3,1-3, Christ, the Word, is represented as a “woman” in whose body the change of blood into milk, which is also the Word, takes place (*Paed.* I,35,3). So the Word proceeds from itself in a certain way. We shall return to this point.

We have already seen the second interpretation: the mother here is the Church, likened to Mary, who was a virgin *in partu* and therefore did not become a common nursing woman – the Church gives milk, but not of herself: the truth with which the believer is nourished in the Scriptures and in Eucharistic contemplation is not a product of the Church – it is the Word Himself, the “milk of heaven”.⁶⁴

63 *Paed.* I,39-40. Cf. Dawn LaValle, “Divine Breastfeeding: Milk, Blood, and Pneuma in Clement of Alexandria’s *Paedagogus*”, in *Journal of Late Antiquity*, 8/2 (2015), 322-326.

64 *Hymnus* 42-47 addresses the Son of God, “Christ Jesus, the milk of heaven, from the sweet breasts of the lovely Bride, your wisdom, flowing forth.” The virgin bride is here again meant to be the Church (Annewies van den Hoek, “«Hymn of the Holy Clement to Christ Saviour». Clement of Alexandria, *Pedagogue* III 101,4”, in Matyáš Havrda – Vít Hušek – Jana Plátová (eds.), *The Seventh Book*

In the third interpretation, Clement identifies God the Father himself as the nursing woman:⁶⁵ it is the “breast of fatherly love” that gives the milk of the Word to those who long for truth.⁶⁶ “We flee to «the care-soothing breast» (Homer, *Ilias* XXII,83) of the Father – to the Word (*Paed.* I,43,4)”, to the only Son, who rests on the bosom (κόλπος) of the Father (John 1:18).

From Himself, and not from a union of two (of a syzygy), the Father begets the only Son. The Word proceeds from the Father and at the same time is constantly present in him as truth in Scripture and as milk in the breast of a nursing woman. Or else: the Word itself is the breast of the Father (*Paed.* I,43,4; *Hymnus* 51). The milk, which is also the Word, comes from this breast of the Father, and thus becomes the fruit of his own self – as he were his own son – as the first interpretation of 1Cor 3:1-3 in *Paedagogus* suggests, and as Clement explicitly says in the fifth book of the *Stromata* and in the *Excerpts from Theodotus*. Here the Saviour, the incarnate Word, is presented as the “offspring” of the Word abiding with the Father:

The Word that proceeded forth was the cause of creation; then it also begets himself (ἐαυτὸν γεννᾷ) when the Word becomes flesh (John 1:14) to be seen.⁶⁷

“And the Word became flesh” (John 1:14) not only by becoming man at his Advent [on earth], but also “at the beginning” (John 1:1) the immutable

of the Stromateis. Proceedings of the Colloquium on Clement of Alexandria (Olomouc, October 21–23, 2010), Brill, Leiden – Boston 2012, 312–354), probably again alluding to the Valentinian doctrine of the aeon of Wisdom, cf. e.g. *Exc.* 26,1.

65 A. van den Hoek, “Milk and Honey”, 31 points out the continuity of this statement of Clement (and also I,46,1 and Irenaeus’ formulation in *Adv. haer.* IV,38,1) with *Odes Sol.* 4,10; 8,14; 19; 35,5, where the Word of God is spoken of as milk: it is the milk of the Father, the Son is the cup, and the Spirit pours the milk.

66 *Paed.* I,46,1; cf. *Paed.* I,49,3; *Strom.* VII,93,5.

67 *Strom.* V,16,5. My translation.

Word (ὁ ἐν ταυτότητι λόγος) became a son by circumscription and not in essence. And again he became flesh when he acted through the prophets. And the Saviour is called an offspring of the immutable Word (τέκνον δὲ τοῦ ἐν ταυτότητι λόγου).⁶⁸

Clement illustrates his claim by quoting from the Gospel of John: “«At the beginning was the Word, the Word was with God. What was in it was the Life» (John 1:13-4). «And the Lord is the Life» (John 14:6; 11:25)” (*Exc.* 19,2). The Word-Life proceeds from the Word being with God, as the offspring from the mother, as milk from the body of a nursing woman, and at once it is the same immutable Word:

For on high, too, he was Light (John 1:4; 8:12) and that which “was manifest in the flesh” (1Tim 3:16) and appeared here is not later than that above nor was it curtailed, in that it was translated hither from on high, changing from one place to another, so that this was gain here and loss there. But he was the Omnipresent, and is with the Father, even when here, for he was the Father’s Power.⁶⁹

The incarnate Word, this milk that flows from the Word being with God, is mediated in the Church to the faithful as the drink of the basic teaching, passively received by the catechumens, and as milk in the form of the “meaty food” of the Lord’s blood and body, that is, the active contemplation of the baptized, their grateful acceptance of Christ’s sacrifice: the Eucharist. It is the Word of God who “became flesh at the beginning” (*Exc.* 19,1), God the Son “being in the bosom of the Father” (John 1:18), the one and indivisible God in God (*Exc.* 8,1).

68 *Exc.* 19,1-2 in R. P. Casey (ed.), *The Excerpta ex Theodoto of Clement of Alexandria* modified by Mark Edwards in Idem, *Clement of Alexandria and His Doctrine of the Logos*, in VChr 54 (2000), 159-177, 175, where he suggests translating ἐν ταυτότητι in the *Exc.* as “immutability”.

69 *Exc.* 4,2, transl. R. P. Casey; cf. *Strom.* VII,5,5.

Conclusion

According to Clement, “God is one and transcends unity and is beyond monad itself” (*Paed.* I,71,1). His fullness is constituted by a single couple, not, however, a pair of male and female entities, but by the reciprocity of two persons who are gender-neutral and can be spoken of as both male and female. The Holy Spirit “speaks” or “shines” from this Fullness: by his power a redemptive chain is formed and maintained, in which salvation from the one Saviour is propagated and transmitted through the relationships between the individual saved beings.

“At the beginning” (John 1:1) “the Word become flesh” (John 1:14) to be seen and known (cf. *Paed.* I,7,3): the Son, like all saved spiritual beings, has a relative corporeality so that he may be the object of vision/knowledge and thus enable man to enter into relationship with him. But this corporeality is of a different kind than that of earthly beings: spiritual bodies, e.g., are not distinguished into male and female. They are gender-neutral, or rather, the unity of masculinity and femininity is present in them. Thus, for example, we can speak of the Son of God as the mother of the believer without abandoning faith in the incarnate man Jesus. And even the incorporeal God the Father could be spoken of as male or as female. It would be inappropriate to assume that masculine gendered language and metaphors related to masculinity can exclusively describe Him/Her who is invisible, not circumscribed, nameless and incorporeal.

The Father, who is (figuratively speaking) both Father and Mother (*μητροπάτωρ*), gives birth to the Son. The Son proceeds from the Father and at the same time he does not leave his bosom, just as the divine Scriptures give birth to the Truth and yet remain pregnant with the Truth, the Word – the Word proceeds from God, and at the same time remains in God, just as milk proceeds from the breasts of a nursing mother, and still is present in those breasts. Or rather, the Word itself is the breast of the Father, and at the same time the Word itself is the milk of the Father: from the Word being with God is born the Word

Incarnate, the Life. The Word-Life proceeds from the Word being with God as the offspring from the mother, as milk from the body of a nursing woman, and at the same time it is the same immutable Word.

Interestingly enough, Clement never speaks of femininity (or masculinity) in relation to the Holy Spirit, where we would be most likely to expect it,⁷⁰ given the feminine gender of the noun “spirit” in Semitic languages.⁷¹ In fact, Clement is almost completely silent about the role of the Holy Spirit in the Trinity. We can only intuit or “distil” some traces of Clement’s understanding of this role of the Spirit from Clement’s work, as Osborn does. This and many other questions concerning the Holy Spirit are intentionally left unanswered in Clement’s extant work.

Clement’s trinitology obviously responds to the Valentinian doctrines of the Fullness (Pleroma) as a unity in multiplicity and a chain of pairs of aeons into which the spiritual seed present in the chosen people is to enter through the Saviour. According to Clement, the Fullness of the reciprocity of the Father and the Son is proliferated by the Word becoming flesh, so that He makes Himself visible/knowable in the light of the Holy Spirit, i.e. enters into reciprocity with man, who then, in the power of the Spirit, forms a reciprocity with another man on the basis of mercy and forgiveness. Thus a chain of pairs of saved souls is generated.

Clement’s statements about the femininity and maternity of the Father and the Son represent an orthodox alternative to the Valentinian idea of feminine beings present in the divine Fullness. Clement’s statements on the divine femininity, originally paraphrases of Gnostic

70 Cf. e.g. *Gospel of Philip* 55,23-33; *Acts of Thomas*, 27; 50; 133; Hippolytus, fr. 7. Hans Achelis (ed.), *Hippolytus Werke*, Hinrichs, Leipzig 1987, vol. I, 2 54; Jerome, *Comm. on Isaiah* 40,9 (CCSL 73, 459).

71 Cf. e.g. Sebastian Brock, “*The Holy Spirit as Feminine in Early Syriac Literature*”, in Janet Soskice (ed.), *After Eve. Women, Theology and Christian Tradition*, Harper-Collins, London 1990, 73-88.

doctrines with which Clement deeply disagrees, become under his pen a representation of the Gospel testimony of God's mercy and love for man: God "maternally" undergoes suffering Herself rather than allow the suffering of the beloved. God cares and gives Herself – gives Her body and blood as a nursing mother gives them to Her child. God's love "womanly" comes closer and allows Herself to be reached and understood. The Holy Trinity is a proliferation of divine reciprocity precisely because of this "feminine" closeness that the Father and Son offer to people in the Holy Spirit.^{72*}

Abstract

The aim of this article is to discuss Clement of Alexandria's Trinitarian doctrine in the context of his confrontation with Valentinian Gnosticism. Trinitarian theology is only briefly suggested in Clement's works, and especially the role of the Holy Spirit in the Trinity is nowhere clearly discussed by the author. However, the concept of the reciprocal relationship between the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit – a relationship that humans are to enter into through the power of the Holy Spirit – is one of the main lines of Clement's thought. The question is to what extent Clement, with his concept of the proliferating reciprocity of the Father and the Son, responds to the Valentinian notion of the divine Pleroma (Fullness), consisting of a chain of pairs of masculine and feminine aeons, and their theory of salvation as the entry of the spiritual seed present in man into the Fullness. This article explores how Clement uses Valentinian concepts of divine syzygies, the aeon procession and femininity in the divine Fullness to express his own view of the Trinity and divine love and mercy.

72 * This article is a result of the research funded by the Czech Science Foundation as the project GA ČR 22-20873S "Clement of Alexandria's Biblical Exegesis as a Source of His Concept of Corporeality".



HU ISSN 2416-2213

ISSN 2416-2213



9 772416 221003 >