THE OTHER CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA:
COSMIC HIERARCHY AND INTERIORIZED
APOCALYPTICISM

BY

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ABSTRACT: Clement of Alexandria’s Excerpta ex Thodoto, Eclogue Propheticae, and
Adumbrationes depict a cosmic hierarchy featuring, in descending order, the
divine Face, the seven beings first created, the archangels, and the angels. This
account is problematic in that it seems to incorporate a contradiction: one set
of texts presents a fix cosmic hierarchy populated by different types having at
its top the seven protocists. A second set of texts, however, interprets this process
of initiation as a continuous ascent on the cosmic ladder, marked by an ongo-
ing cyclical transformation of humans into angels, of angels into archangels,
and of archangels into protocists.

This article sets forth the principles governing Clement’s hierarchical cos-
mos, and proposes a solution to the apparent contradiction between the two
accounts. In essence, Clement of Alexandria internalizes the cosmic ladder and
the associated experience of ascent and transformation, offering an early exa-
iple of what scholars have termed “interiorized apocalypticism.”
1. “The Other Clement” and the Secret Tradition

Dwarfed and almost obscured by the “canonical” Clement of Alexandria—the Hellenist, the Christian Middle Platonist and Stoic, the heir to Philo, the precursor of Origen—there exists, as it were, “another” Clement. The voice of this “other Clement,” echoing the theology and practices of the “elders”—Jewish Christian teachers of earlier generations—is dominant in the surviving fragments of the Hypotyposes: the Excerpta ex Theodoto, the Eclogae Propheticae, and the Adumbrationes.2

The “other Clement” is one of our most eminent witnesses of secret traditions ascribed to the apostles and circulating among Jewish Christian teachers during the first three centuries of the common era.3 According to Jean Daniélou, this secret tradition, imparted orally, only to advanced Christians, was “the continuation within Christianity of a Jewish esotericism that existed at the time of the Apostles” and concerned in large measure the mysteries of the heavenly worlds; more precisely, among Jewish-Christians, starting as early as the apostles themselves, the concern was to relate the mystery of Christ’s death and resurrection to the mysteries of the heavenly world.4 In his own exploration of this topic, Gedaliahu Guy Stroumsa sug-

2 On the Hypotyposes and their place in the Clementinian corpus, see Pierre Nautin, “La fin des Stromates et les Hypotyposes de Clément d’Alexandrie,” Vignolles 30 (1976), 268-302. For a survey of other theories pertaining to the origin and function of the Excerpta and the Eclogae, see 270-282. On the presence of Jewish and ‘Jewish Christian’ traditions in these works by Clement, see Jean Daniélou, ‘Les traditions secrètes des Apôtres,’ Etsrmos Jahbuch 31 (1962), 199-215. Throughout this essay, the term ‘Jewish Christian’ will be taken in the sense described by Daniélou in his classic work The Theology of Jewish Christianity (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1964). As long as the narrative of an early and radical parting of the ways between ‘Christianity’ and ‘Judaism’ remains normative, despite its inability to explain a great deal of textual evidence from the first four centuries, the term ‘Jewish Christianity’ remains useful as a description of ‘Christianity’ itself. For more recent treatments of this problem, see the essays collected in A.H. Becker, A.Y. Reed (eds.), The Ways that Never Parted (TSAJ 95; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003); Daniel Boyarin, Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity (Philadelphia, Pa.: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).

3 Clement mentions such Jewish Christian teachers—“the elders”—and their oral teaching with great reverence: Eclogae 11; 27.1; Adumbrationes in 1 Jn 1:1; fragments 8, 14, and 25 (in Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History 6.14.5, 6.9.2, 6.13.9).

4 “Le contenu de cette tradition secrète concerne les secrets du monde céleste, qui était déjà dans le judaïsme l’objet d’un savoir réservé. Cette tradition secrète n’est donc à aucun degré relative à l’essence du message apostolique, qui est le Christ mort et ressuscité. Mais elle correspond à une explicitation de ce mystère dans sa relation avec le monde céleste. Les Apôtres pensaient que cette explicitation ne relevait pas de
gested that Clement of Alexandria lays out something quite similar to the “secret tradition” of contemporary Rabbinic circles (Mishna Hagiga 2:1): an initiation to *ma'asse beresh* (“the things pertaining to creation”), and an initiation into the mysteries of the divine throne (*ma'asse merkavah*), on the basis of mystical exegesis of key-texts in Genesis and Ezekiel. Stroumsa’s brief note is worth exploring in greater detail.

According to Clement, “the gnostic tradition according to the canon of the truth” comprises first an account of the world’s coming into being (*perioskogonía*), beginning with “the prophetic utterances of Genesis” (ἀπὸ τῆς προφητευθείσης . . . γενέσεως), followed by an ascent to “the subject-matter of theology” (ἐπὶ τὸ θεολογικὸν εἶδος). This *θεολογικὸν εἶδος* is elsewhere (*Strom 1.28.176*) also described as a matter of visionary contemplation, ἐπιστεία, and explained in light of Plato and Aristotle. Yet εἶδος also happens to be the term used by the LXX version of Ezekiel 1:26 (ομοίωμα ὡς εἶδος ἀνθρώπου). Moreover, we know that Jews and Christians of the Greek diaspora were fond of drawing a connection between Ezekiel 1:26 and the Platonic theory of forms (e.g., εἶδος ἀνθρώπου in Parm 130 C). It appears quite likely, then, that “the subject-matter of theology” that Clement has in...
mind concerns both Plato’s “vision of truly great mysteries,” and Ezekiel’s
vision of the divine chariot-throne.9

Within this second area of speculative concern—“the ascent to the sub-
ject-matter of theology,” to use the phrase in Strom 4:1:3—the following
pages will discuss the hierarchical cosmology that Clement inherited from
earlier tradition, and the way in which he modified it to suit his own theo-
logical concerns.

2. Clement of Alexandria’s Celestial Hierarchy

On the basis of a theological tradition inherited from Jewish Christian
“elders,” Clement of Alexandria furnishes a detailed description of the hier-
archical structure of the universe.10

a. The Principles of the Hierarchy

This celestial “hierarchy”—if the anachronism is acceptable—features, in
descending order, the Face, the seven beings first created, the archangels,
finally the angels.11 Clement’s “celestial hierarchy” comprising the Logos,
the seven *protoctists*, the archangels, and the angels;" seems to be continued by an ecclesiastical hierarchy, since Clement affirms that "the advancements (προκοπαῖ) pertaining to the Church here below, namely those of bishops, presbyters and deacons, are imitations (μιμηματε) of the angelic glory" (Strom. 6:13:107). The orienting principle (ἱερό) of the hierarchy is the "Face of God," a theme whose prominence in the apocalyptic literature of Second Temple Judaism was only amplified with the emergence of Christianity. More than "the radiant façade of God's anthropomorphic extent," more than a code-expression for "a vision of the enthroned Glory," the Face of God is for Clement, as for some later Hekhalot traditions, a hypostatic "Face." For Clement, "the Face of God is the Son" (Excerpta 10:6)—an

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12 Since God is neither an accident (συμβεβηκός), nor described by anything accidental (Strom. 5:12:81), he is beyond the hierarchy, and should not be counted as the first of five hierarchical levels (pace Collomp, "Une source," 24, and Oeyen, *Engelpneumatologie* 20). To designate the Father, Clement repeatedly alludes to the famous Platonic "beyond ousia" (ἐπάνω τῆς οὐσίας, Rep 509b), which had been already appropriated by Justin (ἐπάνω πάντων οὐσίων, Dial 4:1). God is one and beyond the one and the monad (Paed. 1:8:71), and beyond cause (τὸ ἐπάνω αἰτίου, Strom. 7:2:2).


14 Orlov, *The Enoch-Metatron Tradition*, 282: “It is evident that all four accounts, Exodus 33:18-23, Psalm 17:15, 1 Enoch 14, and 2 Enoch 39:5-6, represent a single tradition in which the divine Face serves as the terminus technicus for the designation of the Lord’s anthropomorphic extent.”

15 According to Nathaniel Deutsch (Guardians of the Gate: Angelic Vice Regency In Late Antiquity [Leiden; Boston: Brill, 1999], 43), at least one Merkabah passage (§§ 396-397), “explicitly identifies Metatron as the hypostatic face of God,” so that “the title sar ha-panim . . . is better understood as ‘prince who is the face [of God]’.” See also Orlov, *The Enoch-Metatron Tradition*, 124-125.
affirmation repeated elsewhere. To describe the continual propagation of light from the Face down to the lowest level of existence, Clement uses the adverb προσεχές, suggesting immediacy, the lack of any interval between the levels: each rank of spiritual entities is “moved” by the one above it, and will, in turn, “move” the immediately lower level. The purpose of hierarchy consists in the spiritual progress, or “advancement” (προκόπη) of each of the spiritual levels, or τοξικα.17

The first level of celestal entities contemplating the Face is constituted by the seven προτοκτησίων, celestial beings “first created.” On the one hand, these προτοκτησίων are numbered with the angels and archangels, their subordinates.18 On the other hand, they are bearers of the divine Name, and, as such, they are called “gods.”19 Clement equates them with “the seven eyes...
of the Lord” (Zech 3:9, 4:10; Rev 5:6), the “thrones” (Col 1:16), and the “angels ever contemplating the Face of God” (Mat 18:10). The protocists are seven, but they are simultaneously characterized by unity and multiplicity: although distinct in number, Clement writes, “their liturgy is common and undivided.”

The protocists fulfill multiple functions: in relation to Christ, they present the prayers ascending from below (Excerpta 27:2); on the other hand, they function as “high priests” with regard to the archangels, just as the archangels are “high priests” to the angels, and so forth (Excerpta 27:2). In their unceasing contemplation of the Face of God, they represent the model (πρωκέντημα) of perfected souls (Excerpta 10:6; 11:1).

Here we find a definite echo of the Jewish and Jewish-Christian traditions about the highest angelic company. The group of seven is found in Ezekiel...
22 1 En 20 (The Book of the Watchers) features seven archangels, echoed by “the seven first snow-white ones” in 1 En 90:21 (Dream Visions); 1 En 40:9 (Similitudes) counts only four archangels.

A list of references to “angel/angels of the face” in the Pseudepigrapha is furnished by Seow, in his article on “Face,” referred to above.23 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). The Prayer of Joseph seems to imply that Israel ranks higher than the seven archangels, as chief captain and first minister before the face of God.24

Among the Christian texts available to Clement, Revelation mentions seven spirits/angels before the divine throne (1:4; 3:1; 4:5; 5:6; 8:2), and the Shepherd of Hermas knows of a group of seven consisting of the six “first created ones” (πρῶτοι κτισθέντες) who accompany the Son of God as their seventh (Vis 3:4:1; Sim 5:5:3).

Moving on to later Jewish writings, 3 En 10:2-6 mentions that Metatron is exalted above the “eight great princes” who bear the divine Name. Pirkê de Rabbi Eliezer, composed around 750 CE, but incorporating material going back to the Pseudepigrapha, combines the number seven and the notion of “first created.”25

It is quite clear that Clement’s references to protocists reflect ancient angelological speculations characteristic of Second Temple Judaism. However, it should be noted that Clement subjects this material to the spiritualizing interpretation and the Logos-theology inherited from Philo. The

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24 See also the introductory study by J.Z. Smith in OTP 2:704, where Christ and the seven protocists in the Excerpta are offered as a parallel.

25 God “has a scepter of fire in his hand, and a veil spread before him, and his eyes run to and fro throughout the whole earth, and the seven angels which were created first minister before him within the veil, and this (veil) is called Pargod” (Pirkê de Rabbi Eliezer [The Chapters of Rabbi Eliezer the Great] According to the Text of the Manuscript Belonging to Abraham Epstein of Vienna [tr. G. Friedländer; New York: Hermon, 1965], iv:23).
In Strom. 4:25:156, Clement presents a typical Middle Platonic cosmology, featuring an utterly transcendent God, and the Logos who, as God’s agent, founds multiplicity of creation, which eventually will be reduced to Logos. According to Lilla, “Clement found already formed in Philo the doctrine of the Logos as the totality of powers which are identical with the ideas” (Salvatore Lilla, *Clement*, 204. Eric Osborn [The Philosophy of Clement 41] affirms that Clement “explained the existence and nature of things by ‘powers’ just as Plato had done by ‘forms’ and the earlier Stoics had done by immanent reason or divine fire”). However, the simple equation of the “powers” with the Platonic ideas does not account for the complexity of the text. I submit that he is here attempting to fuse the Logos-speculation with an earlier and established teaching on the “powers of the spirit,” a teaching originating not in the philosophical tradition, but in Jewish or Jewish Christian speculation about angelic “powers.” It is significant in this respect that Clement immediately quotes the Book of Revelation: “the Word is called the Alpha and the Omega...” (Rev 1:8; also 21:6; 22:13). What he has in mind is surely the throne-visions of Revelation, depicting Christ and the seven spirits or angels in attendance before the throne (Rev. 1:4; 8:2).

26 The entire hierarchy is characterized by relative corporality. On the presupposition that anything that exists is an οὐσία, and is implicitly characterized by form, nothing is “without form,” whether angels, archangels, protocists, or even Christ. However, Clement immediately notes, this type of “form” is entirely different from any earthly forms; moreover, the corporality of the spiritual beings is characterized by progressive “subtlety,” in proportion to their position in the hierarchy. In fact, this type of corporality is entirely relative, since the beings on any given level can be

protocists are both “angelic powers” and “powers of the Logos” that mark the passing of divine unity into multiplicity, and, conversely, the reassembly of cosmic multiplicity into the unity of the Godhead. The entire hierarchy is characterized by relative corporality. On the presupposition that anything that exists is an οὐσία, and is implicitly characterized by form, nothing is “without form,” whether angels, archangels, protocists, or even Christ. However, Clement immediately notes, this type of “form” is entirely different from any earthly forms; moreover, the corporality of the spiritual beings is characterized by progressive “subtlety,” in proportion to their position in the hierarchy. In fact, this type of corporality is entirely relative, since the beings on any given level can be

27 As Collomp (“Une source,” 34; 39) has already demonstrated, here Clement seems to be reworking a source either identical or similar to what has been preserved in the Ps.-Clementine Homilies (17:7), featuring much cruder descriptions.

28 Excerpta 10:1: Ἐὰν τὰ πνευματικά καὶ νοερά, οὐδὲ οἱ Ἁρχάγγελοι, ἢ Πρωτόκτιστοι, οὐδὲ μὴν οὐδ’ αὐτός, ἐμφάνεται καὶ άνείδες καὶ άσυμμετρεῖ καὶ άσωματικός ἑστιν, ἀλλὰ καὶ μορφήν ἔχει ἰδίαν καὶ σώμα ἀνά λόγον τῆς ὑπεροχῆς τῶν πνευματικῶν ὑπάρχειν. (“But neither the spiritual and intelligible beings, nor the archangels, nor the protocists, not even [Christ] himself, are without form, without shape, without frame, and bodiless; rather they do have both individual form and body . . .”).

29 Excerpta 10:2-3: Ὅλος γὰρ τὸ γεννητὸν σώκ ἀνάστασιν μὲν, σώκ ἢμοιον δὲ μορφήν καὶ σώμα ἔχοις τοῖς ἐν τῷ τέλει κόσμῳ σώματιν (“On the one hand, anything that has come to be is not without cause; on the other, they [referring back to the spiritual beings] do not have a form and a body like the bodies [to be found] in this world”).

30 The form, shape and body of spiritual entities is “in proportion to their degree
among spiritual beings”; the protoctists have form and shape “in proportion to the level of the beings below them.” I use “in proportion to” to render ἐνά λόγον + G, and “level” for ἐπιγέρση.

b. The Function of the Hierarchy

The advancement on the cosmic ladder leads to the progressive transformation of one level into the next, an idea for which Clement offers a highly complex account. According to Clement’s Eclogae Propheticae, the believers are being instructed by the angels; their horizon is one of angelification. At the end of a millennial cycle, they are translated into the rank of angels, while their instructors become archangels, replacing their own instructors who are also promoted to a higher level. All degrees of the hierarchy move one step higher every one thousand years; humans become angels, and will function as the angelic guides and teachers of humans:

For those among humans who start being transformed into angels are instructed by the angels for a thousand years, in order to be restored to perfection. 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, reestablished into the proper angelic state of the body (Eclogae 57:5).

This periodic “upgrading” also applies to the top level of the hierarchy. Even the protoctists, “the first-created, at the highest level of restoration” (Eclogae 57:1)—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 contemplation of God alone. But those closest to them will advance to the degree that they themselves have left; and the same occurs by analogy with those on an inferior level (Eclogae 56:5).

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31 Excerpta 11:3: Ὄπε πρὸς τὴν σύγκρισιν τῶν ἐπὶ τῶν ἁγιάσματα (ὁν οὐκ ἠτρέψει) ἁγιάσματα καὶ ἀνείδες, <ἀλλὰ> ὡς πρὸς τὴν σύγκρισιν τοῦ Υἱοῦ σώματα μετετριμένα καὶ άειθητά-σύστας καὶ ο Γιὸς πρὸς τὸν Πατέρα παρανοολόμενος. (“Thus, compared to the bodies here [such as the stars] they are bodiless and shapeless; yet, compared to the Son, they are measured and sensible bodies. Likewise is the Son in regards to the Father.”)

3. The Problem

As Christian Oeyen has rightly noted, in his fundamental study dedicated to Clement’s Engelpneumatologie, this raises numerous problems. Have the protocists been created perfect and immutable (Excerpta 10:3; 11:4), or have they acquired perfection? (Eclogae 57)? How can the protocists be a group of no more and no less than seven, given that no limitation on the number of those “promoted” in their stead has been mentioned? If the protocists are “the highest level of disposition” (Eclogae 57:1), to what “higher” level can they be translated?

4. Towards a Solution: “Interiorized Apocalypticism”

To answer the questions just raised, it is necessary to determine in how far the Alexandrian master is in agreement with the Jewish and Jewish Christian traditions that he is drawing on. It is well-known that Clement shares Philo’s interest in “noetic exegesis.” I submit that the result of such exegesis is the internalization of the cosmic ladder and of the associated experience of ascent and transformation.

a. Clement on the Interior Ascent

In Strom 4:25:158, Clement discusses the necessity of the seven-day purification required for the priest who has touched a corpse (Ezekiel 44:26). Since the entire text is a prophetic vision about the eschatological temple and its ministers, Clement can easily allude to an interpretation of the seven days of purification and subsequent entry into the temple as a purification

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33 Oeyen, Engelpneumatologie, 12.
34 It should be mentioned that the vast majority of scholars are in agreement that all of these passages belong to Clement. Salvatore Lilla (Clement of Alexandria: A Study in Christian Platonism and Gnosticism [Oxford; Oxford University Press, 1971], 176-183) instead, attributes them to a Gnostic source (179; “perhaps to Theodotus himself”), arguing that the type of Himmelsreise present in these passages “plunges directly into Gnosticism” (181, cf. 183). The underlying understanding of “Gnosticism” has in the meantime become untenable. But even if one were to concede the Gnostic character of Excerpta 10-15 and 27, the problem remains no less acute, because Eclogae 57 would then also be labeled as “Gnostic” (see Lilla, Clement, 185; 179, n. 6). In short, whether Clementian, “Jewish-Christian,” or Gnostic, these passages incorporate a contradiction.
from moral corruption, followed by the ascent through the seven heavens. However, Clement moves beyond the traditional seven-storied cosmology:

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.

It seems that all imagistic details, such as specific intervals of space or time are emptied of the literal meaning they had had in the apocalyptic cosmology inherited from the “elders.” Whether “seven days,” or “one thousand years,” or “seven heavens,” or “archangels,” or “protoctists,” the details of the cosmic-ladder imagery become images of interior transformation. This is why the inconsistencies in Clement’s account about the protoctists are only apparent. At times, Clement refers to the data he has received from tradition. Thus, in the Stromata, he shows himself familiar with the idea that “the whole world of creatures . . . revolves in sevens” and that “the first-born princes of the angels (πρωτόγονοι ἀγγέλων ἄρχοντες), who have the greatest power, are seven”, and in the Excerpta he presents a detailed description of the entire hierarchy. At other times, however, Clement suggests that these data ought to be further interpreted. For instance, he speaks of . . . gnostic souls that surpass in the greatness of contemplation the mode of life of each of the holy ranks (τῇ μεγαλοπρεπείᾳ τῆς θεωρίας ἀπερμάνικους ἐκατότητας ἄρχων τάξεως τὴν πολιτείαν) . . . ever moving to higher and yet higher places [litt. “reaching places better than the better places,” ἀμέτρων ἀμέτρών τόπων τόπων], embracing the divine vision (θεωρία) not in mirrors or by means of mirrors. This is the vision attainable by “the pure in heart”; this is the function (εἰρήνη) of the Gnostic, who has been perfected, to have convene with God through the great High Priest . . . The Gnostic even forms and

36 Clement explicitly rejects anti-somatic ideas: “not that the body was polluted, but that sin and disobedience were incarnate, and embodied, and dead, and therefore abominable.”


38 Strom 4:25:139, ANF.

39 Strom 6:16:142-143.
creates himself (ναὶ μὴν ἐσωτέρων κτίζει καὶ δημιουργεῖ;); and besides also, he, like to God, adorns those who hear him;\footnote{Strom 7:3:13, ANF slightly modified.}

\ldots Then become pure in heart, and near (κατὰ τὸ προσεχές) to the Lord, there awaits them restoration to everlasting contemplation; and they are called by the appellation of “gods,” being destined to sit on thrones with the other gods that have been first put in their places by the Savior;\footnote{Strom 7:10:56-57.}

\ldots “This is the generation of them that seek the Lord, that seek the Face of the God of Jacob” (Ps. 24:3-6). The prophet has, in my opinion, concisely indicated the Gnostic. David, as appears, has cursorily demonstrated the Savior to be God, by calling Him “the Face of the God of Jacob” \ldots \footnote{Strom 7:10:58.}

In these passages, the “Gnostic soul” is described as possessing unmediated, perfect access to the vision of the Face, taking its stand in His immediate proximity, κατὰ τὸ προσεχές (cf. the repeated use of προσεχές in the Excerpta to express the immediacy, the lack of any interval between the levels of the hierarchy!). The true Gnostic has been brought “in the presence of His glory: he means before the angels, faultless in joyousness, having become angels.”\footnote{Adumbrationes in Juda 5:24.} The Gnostic “has pitched his tent in El, that is, in God.”\footnote{Eclogae 57.3.} Clement arrives at this conclusion after a creative exegesis of Ps 18:2 (“he pitched his tent in the sun”), by moving from ἐν τῷ ἡλίῳ to ἐν τῷ ἠλί, on the basis of similarity of sound,\footnote{It appears that “aspiration had ceased in Athens already before the end of the classical period. When observed in script, it was as an old relic, not as a living item of language . . .” (Chris Caragounis, The Development of Greek and the New Testament [WUNT 167; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004] 391). According to the rhetorician Tryphon, living in the first century BCE, aspiration was “a rule of the ancients, which the moderns set aside” (Caragounis, Development 391, n. 166).} and from ἐν τῷ ἠλί to ἐν τῷ θεῷ on the basis of Mark 15:34 (“Ελί, Ελί, τό εἶναι μου, θεός μου,” “And is not he set his tabernacle in the sun to be understood as follows: \textit{he set in the “sun,”} that is “in El,” or “God,” just as in the Gospel: \textit{Eli, Eli instead of my God, my God}?”). \footnote{Eclogae 57:3: καὶ μὴ τι τὸ ἐν τῷ ἡλίῳ ἔθετο τὸ σκήνωμα αὐτῶν; οὐδεὶς ἔξεικνυται ἐν τῷ ἡλίῳ θεότητι, οὐδεὶς, ἐν τῷ ἢλι ἔργω θεό, ὡς ἐν τῷ εἰσαγγελία ἢλι ἢλι ἐν τῷ θεό; μου, θεός μου. (“And is not he set his tabernacle in the sun to be understood as follows: \textit{he set in the “sun,”} that is “in El,” or “God,” just as in the Gospel: \textit{Eli, Eli instead of my God, my God}?”).} Moreover, when Clement says that “the function (ἐνέργεια) of the Gnostic who has been perfected” is such that “he even forms and creates himself (ναὶ μὴν ἐσωτέρων κτίζει καὶ δημιουργεῖ)” \textit{(Strom 7:3:13)}, the verbs (κτίζει and δημιουργεῖ) are a transparent allusion to Gen

40 Strom 7:3:13, ANF slightly modified.
41 Strom 7:10:56-57.
42 Strom 7:10:58.
43 Adumbrationes in Juda 5:24.
44 Eclogae 57.3.
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One could well say that the Gnostics actually become *protoctists*, since Clement states that “they are called by the appellation of ‘gods,’ being destined to sit on thrones with the other gods that have been first put in their places by the Savior.”

There can be no doubt that Clement preserves something that will be eliminated in mainstream Christian theology, but retained by certain strands of Judaism: the real, ontological “angelification.” In 2 Enoch, the patriarch is not merely a visitor to the heavenly realms, but “a servant permanently installed in the office of the *sar happanim*.”

Similarly, *Test Levi* 4:2 is explicit about the possibility of becoming a “prince of the presence.” Hekhalot lore speaks about becoming superior, more glorious than the “eight great princes” (3 Enoch 10:2-6), becoming “little YHWH” (3 Enoch 12).

In Christian tradition, however, 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 human being appears “angelomorphic,” rather than ontologically “angelic.”

The “real angelification” of the earlier tradition, echoed by Clement, was eventually discarded. The cause had probably something to do with the concern for the Incarnation as a “confirmation” of human existence, and with an awareness of the difficulties that Clement’s worldview raises for eschatology.

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47 Alain Le Boulluec, the editor and translator of *Strom* 7 for the Sources Chrétiennes series, draws attention to the verbs (Clement d’Alexandrie, *Stromate VII* [SC 428 Paris: Cerf, 1997] 70, footnote 2).

48 *Strom* 7:10:56-57.


50 According to Deutsch (Guardians of the Gate, 32-34), “Metatron’s . . . transformation from a human being into an angel reflects an ontological process which may be repeated by mystics . . . .”

51 I am using the term “angelomorphic” according to the following definition: “Though it has been used in different ways by various scholars, without clear definition, we propose its use wherever there are signs that an individual or community possesses specifically angelic characteristics or status, though for whom identity cannot be reduced to that of an angel” (Crispin H.T. Fletcher-Louis, *Luke-Acts: Angels, Christology and Soteriology* (WUNT 94; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997), 14-15.

52 In his concise but very dense treatment of Clement’s eschatology, Brian Daley notes that Clement’s dynamic conception of “a painstaking development rather than . . . eschatological crisis” is consonant with his view of the punishments after death as “a medicinal and therefore temporary measure” (*The Hope of the Early Church: A Handbook of Patristic Eschatology* [reprint; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2003], 46).
I conclude that Clement interprets the tradition about millennial cycles and the ascent on the cosmic ladder as descriptions of an interior phenomenon. He also happens to have been the one to supply the convenient shorthand for this interiorized ascent to heaven and transformation before the divine Face: θεωρία, “deification.”

b. *The Relevance of the Church Hierarchy*

Confirmation of this view can be found in Clement’s affirmations about the church hierarchy. I have noted earlier his conviction that “the advancements (προοπόστα) pertaining to the Church here below, namely those of bishops, presbyters and deacons, are imitations (μιμημάτα) of the angelic glory.”53 This would yield a model of “church hierarchy,” composed of bishops, priests, and deacons, quite similar to that advocated by Ignatius of Antioch.

However, Clement undermines this edifice, by offering the following exegesis:

Such a one is in reality a presbyter of the Church, and a true minister (deacon) of the will of God, if he do and teach 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 honored with the chief seat, he will sit down on the four-and-twenty thrones, judging the people, as John says in the Apocalypse.54

Quite clearly, Clement takes “bishop,” “priest,” or “deacon” not as designations of ecclesiastical office-holders—he appears, in fact, quite unhappy with those “ordained by men” and “honored with the chief seat”—, but rather as functional designations of the stages of spiritual advancement.55 For Clement (and, later, for Origen), the function trumps the degree; or, to be more accurate, the inner quality creates the function, which is then reflected in the degree.56

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54 Strom 6:13:106, ANF.

55 Evidently, Clement’s assertions about Church hierarchy imply their real existence of ecclesiastical office holders in Alexandria (Jakab, *Ecclesia Alexandrina*, 183).

The “promotion” from one level of the hierarchy to the next reflects the one’s spiritual progress:

... 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.”\(^{57}\)

If the affirmation that the church hierarchy is an imitation of the celestial hierarchy is given full weight, it would seem logical for Clement to posit the same sort of “promotion” and transformation on the cosmic ladder—from “angels” to “archangels” to “protoctists”—as dependent solely upon the degree of spiritual progress. Obviously, the number twenty-four in the case of the elders from Revelation is not taken any more literally than the number seven in the case of the protoctists.

Conclusions

The “celestial hierarchy” echoed by Clement, goes back not only to Pantaenus, but to an older generation of Jewish-Christian “elders.”\(^ {58}\)

Clement’s hierarchy has, on this point, great affinities with that of 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 “function” and thus challenges the authenticity of any “degree” that does not fully mirror the “function,” Dionysius writes from the perspective of “degree” and is forced to paint a “supremely idealistic—to say the least—portrait of the Christian clergy...” (Golitzin, \textit{Et Introibo}, 134). For the ongoing tension between hierarchy and personal holiness in ascetic literature (reaching back to Origen), see Golitzin, “Hierarchy Versus Anarchy? Dionysius Areopagita, Symeon the New Theologian, Nicetas Stethatos, and Their Common Roots in Ascetical Tradition,” \textit{SVTQ} 38 (1994), 131-179.

\(^{57}\) \textit{Strom} 6:13:107, ANF.

A fitting formula to describe Clement of Alexandria’s treatment of the inherited apocalyptic cosmology of the elders would be “interiorized apocalyptic.” This term—which, in keeping with the established definitions, I would change to “interiorized apocalypticism”—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.” Golitzin has furnished proof of this transposition as early as the fourth and early fifth century Eastern monastic literature; Stroumsa, on the other hand, argues that the shift was completed, at least in the Christian West, with Augustine of Hippo. I believe that we may safely affirm that Clement of Alexandria offers one of the earliest examples of “interiorized apocalypticism.”

The archaic theory of the elders, postulating the celestial hierarchy as the locus of a real transformation from archangels into *protoplasts*, from angels into archangels, and from humans into angels, may prove illuminating for our understanding of Clement’s statements about the perfected human as “living as an angel on earth, but already luminous, and resplendent like the sun,” ἀνθρώπος μὲν ἐν οὐρανῷ ἐµφανίζεται ἀλλὰ ἐν φως ἐστὶ ὡς ὁ ἡλίας λάμπει (Strom 7:10:57). Clearly, such views are not unrelated to the later notion of the ascetical *bios angelikos*. However, if the Jewish-Christian worldview echoed by Clement constitutes the original framework of the “angelification,” providing it with a very specific meaning, it would be interesting to see to what degree later ascetical literature retained these cosmological associations.

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59 Credit goes to John J. Collins (The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to the Jewish Matrix of Christianity [New York: Crossroad, 1984], 2-11) for the distinction between “apocalypticism” as a worldview and “apocalypse” as a literary form. Apocalypticism is “a worldview in which supernatural revelation, the heavenly world and eschatological judgment play an essential role” (10).


61 “For him [Augustine], the real secrets are no longer those of God, but those of the individual, hidden in the depth of his or her heart, or soul. With him, we witness more clearly than elsewhere, perhaps, the link between the end of esotericism and the development of a new interiorization. This process of interiorization is ipso facto a process of demonization: there remains no place for esoteric doctrine in such an approach” (Stroumsa, Hidden Wisdom, 7).
The texts discussed in these pages are 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. The most acute problem was the necessity of adapting the hierarchical framework to a theology of the Trinity; more precisely, the difficulty of “fitting” the Holy Spirit in the hierarchy. In relation to Clement of Alexandria, this topic has been dealt with masterfully and in great detail by Christian Oeyen, in his *Engelpneumatologie*. A larger presentation would have to take into account the conjunction of hierarchy, prophecy, and the angelic spirit, characteristic not only of “the other Clement,” but also of other early Christian authors. I leave the demonstration of this thesis for a later and much larger undertaking.

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