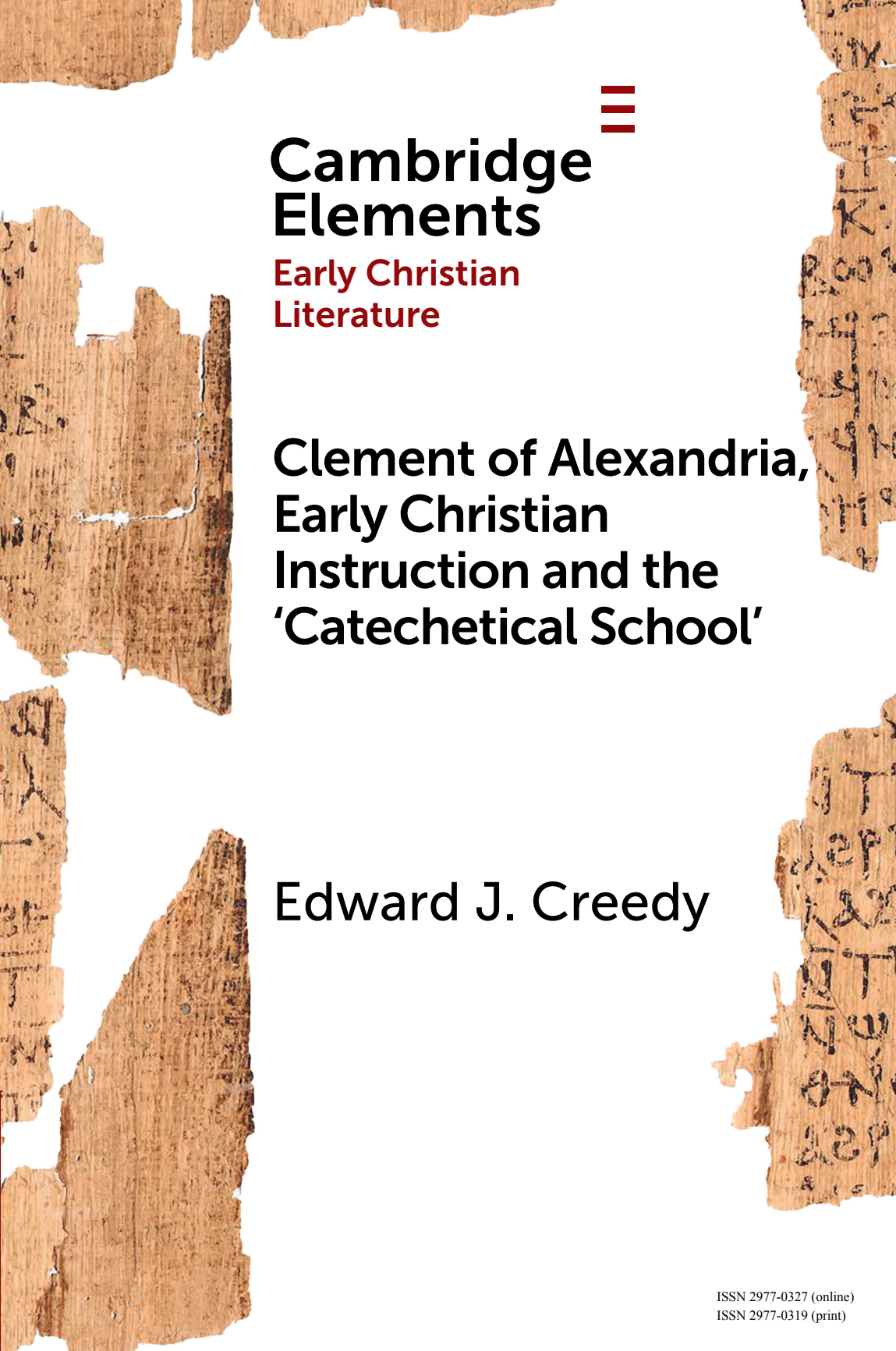




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**Clement of Alexandria,
Early Christian
Instruction and the
'Catechetical School'**

Edward J. Creedy

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Edward J. Creedy

Durham University



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Abstract: With a scant biography and a notoriously complex oeuvre, Clement of Alexandria survives as one of the most enigmatic early Christian figures. He was traditionally understood as the head of an Alexandrian Catechetical School, succeeding Pantaenus and preceding the more famous Origen. With Eusebius traditionally read as our earliest witness to such a school, however, the anachronism of formal catechetical institution in the second century has long divided scholars. This Element both reintroduces this complex figure and reconsiders the Eusebian presentation of the so-called Catechetical School. Through a close reading of both Eusebius and Clement a new understanding of Clement's pedagogical context is explored. Eusebius does not suggest an early formal institution but is in fact deliberate in describing a far looser, retrospective association between these early Christian intellectuals. With the spectre of an anachronistic Catechetical School banished, the historical reality of Clement's second-century instruction can be retrieved and reevaluated.

Keywords: Clement of Alexandria, Eusebius of Caesarea, Origen of Alexandria, Catechetical School, Early Christianity

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Introduction

Clement of Alexandria survives as something of an enigma. He simultaneously commands an outsized influence in the history of Christian intellectualism while also provoking a scepticism that has long dogged his memory. His allegorical interests and mystical emphases are seen as inaugurating an Alexandrian style of Biblical interpretation that comes to maturity under Origen in the third century, while his harmonisation of Christian teachings with philosophical expression – particularly the Middle Platonism of his Alexandrian contemporaries – provided a model for later Christian intellectuals such as Augustine and the Cappadocian Fathers. His erudition and the depths of his learning were regularly recognised and praised in antiquity.¹ Nonetheless, the complexity of his literary style and theological expression led to accusations of heterodoxy and a tarnished legacy. The Byzantine churchman Photios accused Clement of heretical belief in the ninth century, and these allegations only further tarnished his reputation.² The eastern Orthodox church ceased to venerate him as a saint in the tenth century, and the western Catholic church followed suit in the early seventeenth century. Despite evident ancient popularity, Clement's star waned as the centuries progressed.

Since the nineteenth century, however, a blossoming subfield of Clementine studies has reversed this trend. Pioneers such as Eugène De Faye may have been critical of Clement's 'verbosity' (not without cause), but they nonetheless began to reconsider his theological legacy.³ Stählin's early twentieth-century critical editions of Clement's extant works introduced them to new generations of scholars, supporting this developing interest.⁴ While Tollinton's suggestion that we find in Clement a nascent proto-Anglicanism illustrates continued confessional concern, his repatriation as a worthy subject for theological study was consolidated throughout the previous century.⁵ The likes of Osborn, Kovacs, Van den Hoek, Le Boulluec, Ashwin-Siejkowski and Heath (among others) have further

¹ Cyril (*Adv. Iul.* 6.216) lauded Clement as an expert in history, and Jerome (*De vir. ill.* 38) praised his literary knowledge. Eusebius (*EH.* 6.11.6; 6.14.9) preserves two highly complimentary letters of Alexander of Jerusalem.

² Phot. *Bibl.* 109–111. Compare Ashwin-Siejkowski, *On Trial*.

³ De Faye, *Clément d'Alexandrie*, 2.

⁴ Stählin, *Clemens Alexandrinus*, three vols. Subsequent editions are discussed in Cosaert, *The Text*, esp. 1–19.

⁵ Tollinton, *Christian Liberalism*. For a survey of research in the first half of the twentieth century: Wagner, 'A Father's Fate'. In later decades: Osborn, 'A Review'; 'One Hundred Years'.

developed our understanding of this almost paradoxical figure in recent years.⁶ For, despite such interest, Clement remains a complex subject. He continues to exist as both an influential figure and a repudiated intellectual. His life and works are of great importance, yet much of his biography is obscured and many of his writings either partially or wholly lost. Clement endures as an enigma whose resolution is far from assured.

This Element takes this enduring enigma as its subject. Clement and his writings have much still to reveal not only about early Christian activity in the empire's second city but also about the intellectual and cultural life of antiquity more broadly. Clement provides an example of Greco-Roman intellectualism in action. A product of the so-called Second Sophistic, he is so often erroneously treated with a veneer of 'Christian difference'.⁷ Despite his theological interests, however, Clement is a classical author. His Christian teachings do not detach him from his Greco-Roman surroundings and are in fact enriched by their exploration.⁸ Part of Clement's mystique, however, is that placing him within this context with any degree of certainty proves a significant challenge. As this Element considers Clement's pedagogical activity in greater detail, we will not therefore shy away from the contention that surrounds him. [Section 1](#) will examine Clement's life and work while identifying the touchpoints of controversy that hinder efforts to present a more fulsome description. [Section 2](#) will explore two key debates that have emerged since the nineteenth century. These debates – around the relationship between his major works and his own pedagogical context respectively – shape modern perceptions of Clement and his oeuvre. [Sections 3](#) and [4](#) will consider the second of these debates in detail, presenting a new model for locating Clement's pedagogical activities in the broader historical reality. [Section 5](#) will draw this Element together in a brief conclusion that argues for a fresh understanding of Clement's influential pedagogical context.

⁶ For example: Osborn, *The Philosophy; Clement*; Kovacs, 'Divine Pedagogy'; 'Echoes'; "'To Exhibit Silently'"; Van den Hoek, *Philo in the Stromateis*; 'Techniques of Quotation'; 'School'; Le Boulluec, 'la Conversion'; 'L'interprétation'; 'Clément d'Alexandrie'; Ashwin-Siejkowski, *Christian Perfection; On Trial*; Heath, *Shaping; Judgement*. Such a survey is of course only illustrative, and the published proceedings of three Clementine colloquia held since 2010 further demonstrate the breadth of scholarly interest. See Havrda et al., *The Seventh Book*; Černušková et al., *Clement's Biblical Exegesis*; Hrušová et al., *Clement of Alexandria's Paedagogus*.

⁷ Three recent PhD theses have demonstrated the merit of engaging with the cultural background of the so-called Second Sophistic: Emmett, 'The Divine Rhetor'; Thomson, 'The Barbarian Sophist'; Creed, 'To Open the Eyes'.

⁸ Heath, *Shaping*, and Creed, 'Clement's Euripides' demonstrate the merits of such treatment.

Eusebius of Caesarea is traditionally read as having placed Clement in a lineage of early Christian pedagogues who led the so-called Alexandrian Catechetical School. The fourth-century church historian is our earliest witness to this school, which remains conspicuous by its absence in Clement's extant works. Clement is nonetheless understood to lead such a school, succeeding the shadowy figure of Pantaenus and preceding the more famous Origen.⁹ This conveniently situates Clement within a Christian tradition that Eusebius can trace to his own time and provides a broader context for the Alexandrian's teachings.¹⁰ While many recognise such an institution as anachronistic in the second century, the Eusebian model remains widely defended.¹¹ This Element will suggest a novel perspective by revisiting both Eusebius' description and Clement's own portrait of his pedagogical activities. A close reading of both authors suggests that neither figure considers this second-century pedagogue to be heading a formal catechetical institution. Eusebius instead proposes a looser record of early Christian pedagogues, retrospectively identified as offering what the Caesarean recognises as distinctive, successive, orthodox instruction.¹² This new paradigm for Eusebius' pedagogical lineage frees Clement from the trappings of retrospective Christian ideals. Nullifying such later restrictions invites a reconsideration of Clement and his activities. There remains a great deal to be done in the investigation of Clement's life, writings and legacy. Much of this work is beyond the scope of this Element, but the discussion below illustrates the wealth of opportunities Clement affords scholars of early Christianity, classical antiquity and the history of ideas.

1 A Life and Legacy of Controversy

Throughout his surviving works, Clement maintains a seemingly deliberate strategy of authorial silence, providing few autobiographical remarks. He is at his most revealing in the first book of his *Stromateis*, as he reflects on his own educational journey.

⁹ On Pantaenus: Van den Hoek, 'Pantaenus'; Lilla, 'Pantaenus'; Méhat, 'Pantène'.

¹⁰ Corke-Webster, *Eusebius and Empire*.

¹¹ For example: Oliver, 'Documents written'; 'The heads'; Oliver and Madise, 'The formation'; Edsall, 'Catechumenate'.

¹² Since Bauer's influential *Rechtgläubigkeit und Ketzerei*, orthodoxy remains a charged term in early Christian studies, but Eusebius presents his understanding of Christian teaching and practice as retaining a legacy from the faith's first days. For example: Euseb. *EH*. 3.23.2, 3.25.7, 3.38.5, 4.21, 7.30.18. On Eusebius' theology and presentation of orthodoxy: Johnson, *Eusebius*; Tabernee, 'Eusebius' "Theology of Persecution"; Barnes, 'Panegyric, History and Historiography'.

Now this book of mine ... is a mere reflection and shadow of the vigorous and lively teachings and the blessed and truly remarkable men I was privileged to hear (λόγων τε καὶ ἀνδρῶν μακαρίων καὶ τῷ ὄντι ὀξιολόγων). One of these was an Ionian, who came from Greece, the remainder from the Greek Diaspora (μεγάλης Ἑλλάδος); one from Coele-Syria, one from Egypt, others from the East, one from among the Assyrians, one a Jew by birth from Palestine (ὃ δὲ ἐν Παλαιστίνῃ Ἑβραῖος ἀνέκαθεν). And when I came upon the last – who was the first in power (δυνάμει δὲ οὗτος πρῶτος ἦν) – having found him out hidden in Egypt, I found rest. He was the true Sicilian bee, who by plucking the flowers of the prophetic and apostolic meadow engendered pure knowledge in the souls of those who hear him (Σικελικὴ τῷ ὄντι ἡ μέλιττα προφητικοῦ τε καὶ ἀποστολικοῦ λειμῶνος τὰ ἄνθη δρεπόμενος ἀκήρατόν τι γνώσεως χρῆμα ταῖς τῶν ἀκροωμένων ἐνεγέννησε ψυχαῖς).¹³

Clement's mask slips ever so briefly, revealing a persistent and itinerant student. He studies under teachers from across the Mediterranean: Greece, Italy (most likely Sicily) and the 'East' – perhaps first Assyria and then Egypt – where he found his final and most significant instructor.¹⁴ The identity of this 'Sicilian bee' has long puzzled scholars, and a traditional identification of Pantaenus lacks any substance beyond convenience.¹⁵ Evidently, though, Clement was – as Osborn puts it – 'a traveller', both geographically and intellectually.¹⁶ His education was as locationally diverse as it was epistemologically varied. This training left its mark on his psyche. A pupil of many schools and traditions, Clement did not, for example, consider philosophy to be singular (despite a preference for Middle Platonism) but instead valued its diversity of thought and expression.¹⁷ His writings offer a veritable display of learning. Some 3279 New Testament and 1842 Old Testament references are joined by at least 618 Platonic citations, 248 Homeric borrowings and 119 from the dramas of Euripides.¹⁸ Clement's extensive education is on display to even the most casual reader.

Beyond this educational odyssey, Clement remains almost silent on his own life. He provides no further details on his family, birth, career or

¹³ *Strom.* 1.1.11.1–2.

¹⁴ On Clement's movements, consult: Osborn, *Clement*, 1–3.

¹⁵ For example: Kovacs, 'Clement (Titus Flavius Clemens)', 262; Ferguson, *Stromateis*, 30. The relationship between these men is reconsidered in [Sections 2, 3 and 4](#).

¹⁶ Osborn, *Clement*, 1.

¹⁷ *Strom.* 1.7.37.6. On Clement and philosophy, see Wytzes, 'Twofold Way (I)'; 'Twofold Way (II)'; Osborn, *The Philosophy*; Rankin, 'True Gnostic'.

¹⁸ Brooks, 'Witness', 41–55; Osborn, *Clement*, 68; Creedy, 'Clement's Euripides'; 'Redemption', esp. 1–5.

movements. Any biographic reconstruction must therefore rely on either later commentary or scattered clues (often oblique) in his extant works.¹⁹ The traditional biography thus compiled suggests Clement was born c.160 and reached his final teacher in Alexandria two decades later. Clement remained in the city, first being taught and then teaching in his own right, until 202, when he fled localised persecution and moved to Jerusalem. We know from Alexander's letters that he also travelled to Antioch during this period and likely died between 211 and 215.²⁰ Jerome affirms this window by suggesting Clement flourished during the reigns of Severus (r.193–211) and Caracalla (r.211–217).²¹ Though such a sketch is far from satisfactory, there is little else about which we can be clear.

Even this rough outline is far from certain. Unlike with Eusebius' enthusiasm for Origen, history preserves no 'fervent sympathiser' to record a fulsome account of his life and career, and one finds in Clement's biography not a narrative of coherence but a persistence of controversy.²² The simple fact of his birthplace illustrates the tensions around this figure. Within a century of Clement's death, the Christian author Epiphanius records divergent traditions: some consider him Alexandrian by birth, others suggest an Athenian heritage.²³ There is little to persuade the modern reader either way. His anglicised nomenclature includes the toponym 'of Alexandria' – though this is primarily (as Eusebius himself highlights) to distinguish him from the earlier Clement of Rome.²⁴ Titus Flavius Clemens survives as Clement of Alexandria, but whether this was the city of his birth or merely the one in which he made a name for himself, we are unlikely ever to know.²⁵

This simple question of heritage exemplifies the complexity of reconstructing a Clementine biography. Kovacs describes the traditional view taken by scholars who read his educational passage in search of biographical insight. 'Because of this passage and the extensive use Clement makes of Greek literature it is often assumed that he was born in Athens to pagan

¹⁹ See Osborn, *Clement*, 1–27; Kovacs, 'Clement (Titus Flavius Clemens)'; Ashwin-Siejkowski, *Christian Perfection*, 19–31. Much of the following relies upon Eusebius' scattered remarks on Clement's life.

²⁰ Compare n.1; Kovacs, 'Clement (Titus Flavius Clemens)', 262.

²¹ Jer. *De vir. ill.* 38.

²² Compare Ashwin-Siejkowski, *Christian Perfection*, 19.

²³ Epiph. *Panarion* 32.6.1.

²⁴ *EH*. 5.11.1.

²⁵ His name itself provides our most intriguing clue. With Aegyptus a significant locus of Flavian support in the late first century, Clement's Latin name may point to a family association with, for example, Vespasian's army.

parents and later converted to Christianity, but neither point is certain.²⁶ This doubt is well warranted. Clement's extensive use of Greek literature (exemplary among contemporary Christian writers) points as readily to Alexandria as it does Athens: Alexandria was the foremost Hellenistic city in the empire, and its fascination with Greek literature – both before and during the period of the so-called Second Sophistic in which Clement wrote – is well documented.²⁷ The notion of a non-Christian background and later conversion is often made with reference to his knowledge of various mystery cults in the *Protrepticus* – yet this points not only to Athens, as Alexandria was also a hub of such activity in Clement's day.²⁸ What little evidence we have points us both everywhere and nowhere. Clement's birthplace remains a mystery, with either location credible.

Other than a loose sense of his death in the early 210s, little is clear about Clement's final years. Alexanders' letters place him in both Antioch and Jerusalem after 202, but his death is obscured from view. The silences around Clement's life are significant. We do not know whether he was married, nor anything of his broader family or social circumstances.²⁹ Nonetheless, aspects of his life hover behind his writings. The spectre of a formal church community lurks in his psyche, while his social standing is somewhat apparent.³⁰ His *Paedagogus*, for example, provides detailed commentary on dinner parties, as well as reflections on homeware and dress appropriate to contemporary Greco-Roman elites. Such comments, alongside the extent of his education, suggest relative wealth.³¹ Certainly, to enjoy both the travel to and services of his many instructors, Clement would have required significant resources. He also displays an enthusiasm for elements of ancient performance culture, including an awareness of

²⁶ Kovacs, 'Clement (Titus Flavius Clemens)', 261. For example: Ferguson, *Clement of Alexandria*, 13.

²⁷ The infamous Library of Alexandria exemplifies this broader literary interest, and Galen's anecdote (*Comm. II in Hippocratis Epidem.* III.239–240) of Ptolemy III requesting the original texts of the dramas of the three tragedians in order to copy them for the library, only to retain the originals and return the copies to Athens, speaks to this desire to consume (and contain) the breadth of Greek learning and literature in the city. See also Osborn, *Clement*, 21, n.76. Osborn illustrates the tendency to connect an interest in Greek *paideia* with an Athenian background.

²⁸ As Dunand, 'The Religious System', demonstrates, Alexandria was a major cult centre in the Greco-Roman world. On top of this, the use of mystery language is more complex than mere description; it is rather a carefully curated parallel between Christian belief and erroneous belief in the old gods, particularly in the *Protrepticus*.

²⁹ Hints at his marital situation in the *Paedagogus*: Ferguson, *Clement*, 16; Hägg, *Christian apophaticism*.

³⁰ On Clement's church: Creedy, 'The Family of Faith'; Karuhije, *La Cité du Logos*.

³¹ Consider, for example, his detailed discussion of signet rings and their uses. Compare Francis, 'Signet Rings'.

theatrical events connected to elite activities such as *symposia*.³² This was a figure imbricated in the culture and activity of contemporary elites in Roman Alexandria. While the exact circumstances of his own teaching activities in this world will be further explored below, it is evident that he operated as an instructor in the city for several years. As the invitation to faith of his *Protrepticus* presupposes, his students were drawn from the circles of educated non-Christians and Christians alike and enjoyed a comprehensive education under his tutelage.

Clement's Oeuvre

Though Clement's biography remains elusive, the record of his writings can be better reconstructed. His surviving works provide not only clues as to his identity and background but also fascinating insights into early Christian activity in Alexandria and beyond. As Völker put it in the mid-twentieth century, Clement represents something of 'a meteor whose brief appearance was surrounded by darkness'.³³ In a century where the broader landscape of Alexandrian Christian activity is almost wholly lacking, Clement represents an invaluable window into an alien world.³⁴ His unique oeuvre provides a rich and complex resource.

The Alexandrian is celebrated as a prolific author, and Eusebius preserves an impressive record of Clement's literary efforts. He lists eight books of the *Stromateis*, eight books of the *Hypotyposeis*, the *Protrepticus*, three books of the *Paedagogus*, his *Quis Dives Salvetur*, treatises *On the Pascha*, *On Fasting*, *On Slander*, *To the Recently Baptised* and a polemical work entitled *Against the Judaizers*.³⁵ The *Excerpta ex Theodoto* and *Eclogae Propheticae* are traditionally ascribed to Clement, and he further names works *On the Resurrection* and *On Continence* in his *Paedagogus*.³⁶ While it remains unclear if he even wrote these final two texts, the majority of his corpus is either lost or fragmentary. His *Protrepticus*, *Paedagogus* and *Stromateis* survive, alongside most of his *Quis Dives Salvetur*, a lengthy fragment of his *To the Recently Baptised*, and scattered fragments of his *Hypotyposeis*, *Excerpta* and *Eclogae*. Aside from the loss of the

³² Creedy, 'Clement's Euripides'.

³³ Völker, *Der wahre Gnostiker*: 1.

³⁴ Litwa, *Early Christianity*, offers a recent effort to explore this elusive period.

³⁵ Euseb. *EH*. 6.13.1–3.

³⁶ Compare *Paed.* 1.6.47.1; 2.10.94.1. Of Clement's involvement with 'Secret Mark' we will not dwell, following the persuasive deconstruction of Smith's (*Secret Gospel*) claims by Watson, 'Beyond Suspicion', 170. See further: Carlson, *Gospel Hoax*; Foster, 'Secret Mark'.

Hypotyposeis (which was extant in Photios' time), Clement's major works have survived, though through only a handful of credible manuscripts.³⁷ This record nonetheless illustrates the extent of his teaching; Clement commented extensively across a range of Christian doctrine and practice.

Clement's three major surviving writings, the *Protrepticus* (c.195), *Paedagogus* (c.197) and *Stromateis* (c.198–203), form something of a holistic Christian teaching.³⁸ His exhortation invites readers to reject ancestral custom and belief for the divine *Logos* of Christ. This is a new and better mystery, into which the initiate enters with the certainty of eternal life and a deepening knowledge of God himself. Book One of the *Paedagogus* follows with a reflection on baptism and an embrace of a Christian ethical framework under the pedagogical urging of Christ himself. Books Two and Three work this out practically for the new believer as Clement explores topics ranging from appropriate fashion and attire to homeware, social events and gendered interactions. The eight books of the *Stromateis* conclude Clement's philosophical construction, inviting the reader to comb through these cryptic 'notes' to discern the complex gnosis that God awards only to the truly enlightened believer.³⁹ Though not always intellectually coherent (see section '[Clement's Thought](#)'), these works represent both a spiritual progression and a credible intellectual framework.

These works guide their readers from a starting point of unbelief to a gnostic maturation of faith. Our oldest surviving manuscript (*Par.Gr.*451) of the *Protrepticus* gives the full title as *Protrepticus Pros Hellenes*, presupposing an audience of unbelieving readers. The work itself initially adopts a polemical stance, casting the readers in the third-person plural and the author in the first-person singular. Clement thus addresses his readers with a distinct spiritual and intellectual separation. As the work unfolds, however, and Clement invites his readers into the Christian faith he presents in contrast to the gods of Greco-Roman antiquity, Clement shifts his readership. The final appeal of chapter twelve opens with a string of exhortatory subjunctives in the first-person plural – 'let us flee' from sin and death; 'let us run' instead to Christ.⁴⁰ The audience is left in Clement's closing paragraph with a stark choice between 'either judgement or grace'.⁴¹ They are to join the author on the spiritual journey that

³⁷ For a more fulsome description: Cosaert, *The Text*, 11–19.

³⁸ On this dating: Méhat, *Étude*, 50–54. The formality of their relationship is discussed in Section 2.

³⁹ Compare *Strom.* 1.1.11.1.

⁴⁰ *Protr.* 12.118.1; 12.121.1.

⁴¹ *Ibid.* 12.123.2.

runs concurrently with the grammatical shift. They have been spiritually and linguistically transitioned from unbelief to belief, from opposition to brotherly partnership.

Implicit in the silence between the end of this exhortation and the opening of the *Paedagogus* is an acceptance of grace and the rejection of judgement. Clement thus speaks, in Book One, to those who suckle at the teats of Christ as though nursing infants depending on their mother's milk: these are spiritual babes.⁴² Clement articulates the spiritual progression his readers are undertaking: 'as baptised ones (βαπτιζόμενοι) we are illuminated; as illuminated ones we are made sons; as ones made into sons we are made perfect (τελειούμεθα); as perfected ones we are made immortal.'⁴³ This book contains some of Clement's richest prose on the merits of baptism and invites the reader to take the milk-like sustenance of the *Paedagogus* as their first steps into the illumination of eternal sonship. Books Two to Three provide that instruction. The *Stromateis* then develops what these believers now know. Borrowing the initiatory language of those who worship the mysteries of Dionysus, Clement describes his work as follows: 'it will be an image to call to mind the archetype [Christ, the *Logos*] to him who was struck with the thyrsus.'⁴⁴ This final work – by some margin the longest – represents the gnostic instruction of spiritual maturation. Those truly initiated into the mysteries of the *Logos* now progress deeper into those mysteries so that they might fulfil the promise of Clement's exhortation: that the true convert might themselves 'become like God'.⁴⁵ From addressing unbelieving opponents to providing mystic whispers for gnostic believers, Clement's extant major works encompass the full breadth of his spiritual project.

They thus represent something of an intellectual superstructure to Clement's instruction. If the spiritual progression provided in these three works encompasses the wider Christian experience – from initial unbelief through to gnostic complexity – then his other works sit within the intellectual and spiritual construction of this progression. Relevant works of Christian instruction, such as the lost *On the Pascha*, *On Fasting* and *On Slander*, provide additional teaching for those who, through the *Protrepticus*, have embarked upon the project of Christian pedagogy

⁴² Developing the language of 1 Cor 3. Compare Pavlou; 'God's Breast'; LaValle Norman, 'Divine Breastfeeding'; Druille, 'Los elementos'.

⁴³ *Paed.* 1.6.26.1.

⁴⁴ *Strom.* 1.1.14.1. Clement's use of the thyrsus here calls back to the presentation of the Christian faith as a new and better mystery cult in *Protr.* 12.119–122.

⁴⁵ *Protr.* 1.8.4; cf. *Paed.* 1.6.26.1; *Strom* 7.16.95.2.

initiated by the *Paedagogus* and developed in the *Stromateis*. This framework also provides an element of communal cohesion. Those within the structure adhere to the maxims and doctrine of the Clementine project. Those outside incur the wrath of Clement's polemical interests, be they the unbelievers of the *Protrepticus*, the followers of Basilides attacked in the third *Stromata*, or those in focus in his lost polemic *Against the Judaizers*.⁴⁶ Clement's project creates a sense of those within and without the Clementine ideal. These major works thus encompass both the identity of their readers and the experience of living out that Christian identity as Clement understands it.

Though much of his oeuvre is lost, these surviving works illuminate Clement's pedagogical interests. They reveal a fiercely competitive teacher, ring-fencing his students both against non-Christian opponents and intra-Christian rivalries. This was an articulate teacher, who explored the contours of his spiritual project in conversation with a range of source material and rival schools of thought. Evidently, Clement was a deeply learned author. His works are replete with quotations and allusions to myriad writings, ranging from biblical texts to a diversity of extra-canonical Christian writings, Jewish texts and Greco-Roman sources.⁴⁷ In one sense this was a display of learning; in another, it was a complex spiritual and philosophical construction. Clement's later influence on figures such as Origen or Augustine flows from the highly erudite way he approached his Christian faith and teaching. It is this erudition, displayed through this matrix of Christian thought and classical learning, that has fuelled subsequent scepticism regarding Clement's own understanding and expression of the Christian faith.

Clement's Thought

Several key themes emerge from Clement's works that provide both a sense of his philosophical faith and support the enduring critique of his doctrine and clarity.⁴⁸ As with the simple facts of his life and career, the reception and interpretation of Clement's thought have long been fraught with controversy. While any number of doctrinal ideals might be drawn from his writings, for the sake of expediency three examples shall suffice. Clement's doctrines of the divine economy, the nature of Christ and the church have

⁴⁶ Clement regularly turns his attention to his opponents, particularly in his *Stromateis* (notably in Book Three).

⁴⁷ As noted above (n.18) and explored in greater detail at Creedy, 'Redemption', 2–3.

⁴⁸ A tension illustrated by Ashwin-Siejkowski, *On Trial*.

all challenged subsequent readers and invited scepticism and disagreement well into the modern day.

Clement's understanding of the divine economy hinges upon a whole-hearted affirmation of God's sovereignty. The entire cosmos is managed by 'the goodness of the only, one, true, almighty God, from age to age saving by the son'.⁴⁹ The end of this divine economy is – as Osborn notes – similar to that of Irenaeus: 'a rational plan which educates and accustoms man to God'.⁵⁰ This plan relies upon an inherent goodness to God's very being ('if ever he were to cease from doing good, he would also cease to be God'⁵¹), which draws the Clementine pupil through the invitation of the *Protrepticus* to the gnostic perfection of the *Stromateis*. Yet elements of this divine plan have provoked controversy, such as Clement's underlying metaphysical presuppositions that guide his human conception of divine truth. Clement applies a hermeneutic of the 'harmonising divine *Logos*'.⁵² That is to say, Clement understands all literature, learning and creation as in some way suffused with elements of divine truth. One can therefore learn from poets and philosophers as well as from the prophets and Paul. Clement's *Logos* of God is 'a pure song, the support of the universe and the harmony of all'.⁵³ There is a universal melody ringing through all creation. The result is a generous attitude to his sources, be they philosophers, tragedians, apocryphal gospels or Pauline epistles. To varying degrees, all texts illuminate a fragment of God's divine plan. The metaphysical principle that ideas are themselves eternal, and these divine ideas precede the written form of Clement's varied sources, was heavily critiqued by Photios, led to confusion around Clement's canonical interests, and sparked controversy around his conception of truth itself.⁵⁴ Further complications arise in his articulation of salvation: criticism has included a universalist strain that offers a compelling critique of Clement's soteriological understanding.⁵⁵ The various facets of Clement's divine economy present a number of challenging elements.

Clement's divine *Logos* sits at the heart of this economy. The *Logos* incarnate he equates with the person of Jesus Christ, but the *Logos* echoes throughout history. Clement's thought has been called a '*logos-theology*',

⁴⁹ *Strom.* 7.2.12.

⁵⁰ Osborn, *Clement*, 46. Compare *Strom.* 4.23.148.2.

⁵¹ *Strom.* 6.16.141.7.

⁵² Creedy, 'Redemption'; building on the earlier work of Dawson, *Allegorical Readers*.

⁵³ *Protr.* 1.5.2.

⁵⁴ On Photios: Ashwin-Siejkowski, *On Trial*, 21–38. On Clement's canon: Brooks, 'Witness'; Osborn, *Clement*, 56–80.

⁵⁵ Compare Itter, *Esoteric Teaching*.

and this centralisation of the *Logos* has significant implications for his Christology.⁵⁶ At a foundational level, confusion reigns over whether Clement holds to a single divine *Logos* – evocative of the Word in the prologue to John’s gospel – or a plurality of *logoi* in divine reciprocity.⁵⁷ Clement is not entirely clear on the matter and proves even less distinct on the relation between Christ’s human and divine natures. This is perhaps the principal critique of Photios, that Clement is ‘deluded that the Word was not incarnate, but only appears to be so (ὄνειροπολεῖ ..., καὶ μὴ σαρκωθῆναι τὸν λόγον ἀλλὰ δόξαι)’.⁵⁸ This charge has led to accusations of Docetism, which, whilst not entirely accurate, are certainly invited by Clement’s hazy and limited Christological expression.⁵⁹ Clement’s Christology continues to inspire comment and represents a central doctrinal thread that remains both controversial and partially unspecified within his theological articulation.

Our third example again represents both erudition and obfuscation. Clement provides a rare second-century Alexandrian Christian voice yet says almost nothing about the church itself. The twentieth-century scholar Gustave Bardy argued that Clement’s ecclesiology is ultimately ‘disappointing’ – focused on heady ideals over lived realities.⁶⁰ Studies of Clement’s ecclesiology have broadly considered his doctrinal expression as void of practical application, and some – such as Bardy – argue that Clement operated almost entirely apart from contemporary Alexandrian Christian communities.⁶¹ This is primarily due to his preference for the language of the church universal over a local sense of gathered believers.⁶² Clement rarely describes elements of his own ecclesial context, and only later traditions suggest he held any kind of clerical office.⁶³ As with other autobiographical elements, Clement is almost entirely silent on his own church community and his particular role therein. While moments of ecclesial specificity suggest Bardy’s refutation of Clement’s local Christian

⁵⁶ Edwards, ‘Clement of Alexandria and his Doctrine’; Kindiy, *Christos Didaskalos*.

⁵⁷ Jn. 1.1–18. On the number of *logoi*: n.56 and Lilla, *Clement of Alexandria: A Study*; Mondésert, ‘Vocabulaire de Clément d’Alexandrie’.

⁵⁸ Photios, *Bibl.* 109.

⁵⁹ Ashwin-Siejkowski, *On Trial*, 95–112. For a suggested resolution to this debate: Creedy, ‘Taking up the Mask’.

⁶⁰ Bardy, *La Théologie de l’Église*, 128.

⁶¹ An extensive bibliography on Clement’s ecclesiology is offered in Karuhije, *La Cité du Logos*, 1–9.

⁶² For example: *Strom.* 4.10.76.2-1; *Paed.* 3.2.82.2-4; 1.5.22.2; 2.8.62.2; 2.8.73.3; 3.8.41.1.

⁶³ Creedy, ‘The Family of Faith’. Both Eusebius (*EH* 6.11.1) and Jerome (*De vir. ill.* 38) label Clement a presbyter, but neither do so with any description of a formal ecclesial role, and we have no earlier record of such a position. Compare Koch, ‘Priester?’.

participation might not quite be the case, there is still simply too little source material to consider a more fulsome understanding.⁶⁴ As Clement's ecclesiological expression has been explored, it has been found wanting. There is simply not enough to credit the Alexandrian with a coherent and consistent model of local Christian community and ministry. As with his articulation of the divine economy and his Christology, Clement's ecclesiology produces more questions than answers.

These examples represent only a fraction of Clement's surviving doctrinal thought. They nonetheless illustrate the controversy that hounds this figure. His instruction is deliberately cryptic, and this invited distortion is often compounded by complex classical references and layers of mythological and literary context. Clement does not set out a systematic expression of his theological understanding; rather, he invites his reader to treat his writings in Platonic emulation of his Sicilian bee in its meadow, gleaning pollen from one flower or another, journeying through the entire expanse and taking up what is useful from here and there.⁶⁵ This attitude towards his readership heightens the challenge of understanding his ideas, and central doctrinal teachings thus become confused. As with his life and writings themselves, Clement's thought becomes only a further touchpoint of controversy in his subsequent reception.

Conclusion

Clement remains paradoxical. An influential thinker, biblical exegete, philosopher, art critic and cultural analyst, he survives as a significant voice in the earliest Christian centuries.⁶⁶ He cannot, however, evade the controversies that tarnish his legacy. Confusion around his life and ideas provoked a form of saintly *damnatio memoriae* that stripped this figure of his standing and importance throughout church history. It is simply inescapable that Clement's biography and teachings remain incomplete, and this supports a lack of coherence in both a biographical and doctrinal sense that sustains the many criticisms of his life and legacy.

The rest of this Element is concerned with two debates that have dominated modern interest in this figure, but it is important to stress that

⁶⁴ Clement, for example, hints at a threefold hierarchy of local Christian leadership (*Paed.* 3.12.97.2), while elements of his teaching betray a creedal rhythm suggestive of liturgical practice. See further: Creedy, 'The Family of Faith', 54–59.

⁶⁵ *Strom.* 1.1.11.2.

⁶⁶ See Ward, *Scriptural Exegesis*; Osborn, *The Philosophy*. Analysis of Clement's attitude towards art and culture more broadly represents a scholarly desideratum. Only a few studies touch on the subject: Creedy, 'Why does Clement call Callimachus'; 'Rethinking'; Heath, *Judgement*; Butterworth, 'Clement of Alexandria and Art'.

neither conversation is held in isolation. More than many figures from these first centuries of Christian history, Clement really is the meteor of Völker's metaphor. But it is not only his appearance that is a bright spot in the darkness of the second-century Alexandrian church; his ideas also stand as pinpricks of illumination in the mystery of his own life and teachings. The paradox of Clement's legacy, of both respect and repudiation, continues to shape how this character and his oeuvre are treated today, and this remains a significant, if underestimated, element of Clementine studies more broadly.

2 Two Key Debates

Amidst the swirl of Clementine controversy, two debates are particularly prominent. Disagreement around the relationships – formal or otherwise – between his three major works supports a breadth of interpretation of Clement's ideas, while his place in the wider landscape of early Christian history is disputed with regard to the so-called Catechetical School. While the latter half of this Element is primarily concerned with this second question, both debates warrant reflection. The implications of each are far reaching within Clementine studies. How we understand both Clement's works and the context in which his teaching was originally delivered affects not only how we perceive the man in his own context but also how we understand Clement's legacy in both antiquity and beyond.

These debates are intertwined. Clement's writings represent the sole significant record of his teaching activity. If they form a coherent literary trilogy, or at least a coherent intellectual pathway, then that provides several salient markers for the shape of his pedagogical context. Conversely, if Clement teaches within or without an official catechetical institution, then the programme he offers requires a certain shape and audience. Throughout our later discussion of the so-called Catechetical School, the relationship between Clement's extant major works will run as a constant background theme. De Jáuregui labelled the scholarly debate around a possible literary trilogy 'a matter of incessant discussion'.⁶⁷ Thomson rather dryly remarked that the question was 'rather too tangled in its own bibliography, and [has] thereby lost the forest for the trees'.⁶⁸ Such descriptions apply to both debates. It is not only the literary trilogy question that finds itself weighed down by a cumbersome and often repetitive bibliography; the Catechetical School too provokes

⁶⁷ De Jáuregui, 'The *Protrepticus*', 12.

⁶⁸ Thomson, 'The Barbarian Sophist', 38.

unceasing scholarly opinion.⁶⁹ Given the centrality of these discussions to almost any area of Clementine research (Heath, for example, considers it ‘central to the method’ of her work on the *Stromateis* that the three texts ‘form consecutive steps in a literary sequence’⁷⁰), it is unlikely the bibliographic waters will run dry any time soon. Incessant or not, the two debates continue to shape the study of Clement and his legacy.

The Literary Trilogy

If one conceives of Clement’s *Protrepticus*, *Paedagogus* and *Stromateis* as a single literary unit, then the teachings contained therein preserve a complete Clementine ethic and provide a full sense of his pedagogical project. Two evidential strands support such a perspective. The first, and most convincing, is the joined-up emphasis on spiritual progression that moves the reader through the works from sceptical unbelief to spiritual τελείωσις.⁷¹ As a unit, these writings provide a comprehensive accompaniment to the spiritual maturation that is the repeated stated aim of each work. That these texts cohere in this regard is a persuasive support for some kind of formalised relationship. The second, and most commonly cited, relies upon the *proemium* of the *Paedagogus*. In this opening section Clement appears to indicate a threefold manifestation of the divine *Logos* in pedagogical action.

The word ... as the Pedagogue (ὁ παιδαγωγός) he is practical. He first exhorts men to acquire right dispositions, and then encourages them to pursue their duties by setting out pure commandments and by holding up examples of those who have wandered into error in the past, for us to follow ... that we may choose to imitate the good ...

... the all-philanthropic word, at first, he persuades (προτρέπων), then he educates (παιδαγωγῶν), and after all this he instructs (ἐκδιδάσκων).

ὁ ... λόγος ... πρακτικός δὲ ὢν ὁ παιδαγωγός πρότερον μὲν εἰς διάθεσιν ἡθοιοῦσας προὔτρεψατο, ἥδη δὲ καὶ τὴν τῶν δεόντων ἐνέργειαν παρακαλεῖ, τὰς ὑποθήκας τὰς ἀκηράτους παρεγγυῶν καὶ τῶν πεπλανημένων πρότερον τοῖς ὕστερον ἐπιδεικνύς τὰς εἰκόνας ... ἵνα μιμώμεθα αἰρούμενοι τὸ ἀγαθόν ... ὁ πάντα φιλάνθρωπος λόγος, προτρέπων ἄνωθεν, ἔπειτα παιδαγωγῶν, ἐπὶ πᾶσιν ἐκδιδάσκων.⁷²

Clement suggests a threefold philanthropic concern of the *Logos*-pedagogue: first persuading, then educating and finally instructing. The first two functions fit neatly with both the spirit and – crucially – the

⁶⁹ To which, it should be acknowledged, this Element adds its voice.

⁷⁰ Heath, *Shaping*, 382.

⁷¹ Ashwin-Siejkowski, *Christian Perfection*.

⁷² *Paed.* 1.1.2.1–3.3.

titles of these first two major texts. As *protreptikos* the *Logos* invites mankind into new faith, as *paedagogos* he then heals sinful desire and corrects ungodly attitudes.⁷³ The issue, and perhaps the point of contention that sustains this debate, is that the final act of the *Logos* is not miscellanistic (that is, to stromatise) but instructive. The *Logos* is, thirdly, *didaskalikos*. In support of the trilogy, this is understood to very much emulate the spirit of the *Stromateis* in their current form. This captivating and complex text is a work of instruction, urging its readers into deeper mystic and gnostic Christian truth. The work is not, however, entitled *Didaskalikos*. Indeed, Clement discusses the deliberate titular choice of *Stromateis* at length.⁷⁴ Quite what we are then to make of this seeming break from what first appears to be a neat explanation of his literary endeavours has been the focus of much of the tangled bibliography Thomson decried. This linguistic spanner in the works provides a helpful launching point for a survey of the importance of this debate.

Two further potential pitfalls for a formal trilogy ought to be acknowledged. The first is the importance of Clement's lost writings. Chief among the lost or fragmentary Clementine works is his eight-book *Hypotyposeis*, equal in length and form to the *Stromateis*.⁷⁵ Both Méhat and Nautin consider the work to be the intellectual pinnacle of Clement's project, his most mystical and learned writing.⁷⁶ Certainly it was a significant undertaking, though how it reads against Clement's extant works remains a mystery.⁷⁷ Photios respects the work in his *Bibliotheca*, and it represents the first of his three summaries of Clement's writings, such that he omits a summary of the *Protrepticus* in its place.⁷⁸ If Clement intended a literary tetralogy culminating in the *Hypotyposeis* then the defence of *Paed.* 1.1.2–3 as an articulation of his wider authorial plans falls short. Secondly, our two fourth-century sketches of Clement and his works (albeit the latter heavily reliant upon the former) do not list the three in trilogical order.⁷⁹ The *Stromateis* is listed first, and both Eusebius and Jerome follow with the *Hypotyposeis*, before the *Protrepticus* and *Paedagogus*. As Méhat suggests, neither author appears to know a formal

⁷³ Clement also labels his *Logos* as exhortatory (*Paed.* 1.1.1.3) and pedagogic (1.1.1.4) shortly before the above.

⁷⁴ *Strom.* 4.2.4.1–4.2.7.4; 7.18.111.1–4. Compare Heath, *Shaping*, 133–165.

⁷⁵ Euseb. *EH.* 6.13.1–3.

⁷⁶ Nautin, 'La fin des "Stromates"'; Méhat, *Étude*, 517–522, 530–533.

⁷⁷ Bucur, 'The Place' provides a novel and persuasive defence of its importance. Hušek, 'In Search', checks modern enthusiasm regarding the text.

⁷⁸ Phot. *Bibl.* 109–111.

⁷⁹ Euseb. *EH.* 6.13; Jer. *De vir. ill.* 38.

trilogy, and their accounts overlook any such structure.⁸⁰ This reception appears to relegate the importance of any literary trilogy.

The place of the *Hypotyposeis* and the records of Eusebius and Jerome do not, however, represent insurmountable challenges to the trilogy model. Clement quickly became known as ‘the Stromatist’ within a few decades of his death, and it is thus unsurprising that both Eusebius and Jerome should list this longest work first. Given the *Hypotyposeis* rivalled the *Stromateis* in significance, its secondary position is equally unremarkable. As Heath concludes, ‘while neither Eusebius nor Jerome attests the sequence *Protrepticus*, *Paedagogus*, *Stromateis*, they do not prohibit us from understanding that as Clement’s intended compositional structure.’⁸¹ There is nothing in either author’s record that suggests the Alexandrian’s intentions lay one way or another. The addition (or not) of the *Hypotyposeis* as a supplementary text of higher learning similarly fails to negate the existence of an initial trilogy in Clement’s corpus.

This fierce debate shows little sign of abating. While one could point to any number of early perspectives, two recent studies will suffice to demonstrate the contours of this debate.⁸² Marco Rizzi refuted the existence of the trilogy, primarily through a rejection of the threefold model of the *Logos* traditionally understood through the *proemium* of the *Paedagogus*. Conversely, Jane Heath presented a spirited defence of the trilogy based largely on a close reading of the Clementine corpus as a whole.⁸³ These two studies are illustrative of the shape of the modern debate, as well as indicative of the overlap between this issue and the second key debate – around the so-called Catechetical School – discussed below.

Rizzi presented a fulsome refutation of the credibility of the trilogy statement in the *proemium* of the *Paedagogus*. He notes, by way of ‘preliminary remarks’, that if Clement intended a coherent trilogy, it seems ‘highly unlikely’ he would have ‘located the programmatic statement of such a project only at the beginning of its second writing’, going on to highlight the obliquity of this textual signposting through a comparison with Luke-Acts, written just over a century or so earlier.⁸⁴ After pointing out the lack of explicit trilogic markers in the *Stromateis*, Rizzi turns to the *proemium*

⁸⁰ Méhat, *Étude*, 71.

⁸¹ Heath, *Shaping*, 383.

⁸² For example: De Faye, *Clément d’Alexandrie*. Recent interest can be seen in, for example: Osborn, *Clement*, 5–15; Feulner, *Clemens*, 38–47; Ashwin-Siejkowski, *Christian Perfection*, 19–37; Le Boulluec, ‘Clément d’Alexandrie’, 91–95. Both Osborn and Feulner supply ample bibliographies of earlier interest in the question.

⁸³ Rizzi, ‘Literary Problem’; Heath, *Shaping*.

⁸⁴ Rizzi, ‘Literary Problem’, 156.

itself. While Marrou earlier argued that the distinction between the *Logos* προτρεπτικός and the *Logos* παιδαγωγός appears less sharp outside 1.1.3 (pointing instead to Clement's enthusiasm in Book One for a oneness of the *Logos*), Rizzi presents the *Logos* παιδαγωγός as the all-encompassing sense of the divine *Logos*.⁸⁵ He suggests a Clementine distinction between rhetorical and philosophical writing, which allows the Alexandrian to speak to both believers and unbelievers, educated elites and illiterate masses, and further into contemporary religious debates.⁸⁶ The result is an argument not for a threefold specific division (*Protrepticus*, *Paedagogus* and *Stromateis*), but a twofold stylistic division rhetorical texts marked by epideictic qualities (such as the *Protrepticus* and *Quis Dives Salvetur*) and explicitly didactic philosophical works (the *Stromateis*, *Eclogae propheticae* and *Excerpta ex Theodoto*). Rather than presenting a narrow textual horizon, Rizzi offers a revised Clementine corpus, centred on the activity of the author, rather than his specific output.

Rizzi's argument is persuasive, and if the existence of the literary trilogy were predicated on the *proemium* alone the matter would be somewhat clear-cut. If, however, we consider the threefold division of the activity of the *Logos* offered in *Paed.* 1.1.3 as illustrative of intention rather than instructive, the possibility of a deliberate and coherent literary sequence remains. Heath's 2020 study on the *Stromateis* ends with a defence of that sequence.⁸⁷ Sidestepping the ambiguity of *Paed.* 1.1.3, Heath instead offers a close reading of the three works and argues for a level of literary coherence hitherto underappreciated. Through three case studies, Heath identified what she suggests are deliberate textual echoes and allusions, weaving the three works into a closer – and crucially intentional – harmony. Her first case study, for example, examines the preface of the *Protrepticus* alongside both the opening of the sixth *Stromata* and the ending of the seventh.⁸⁸ The shared language and themes of these three sections both bookend the sixth and seventh *Stromateis* as a literary subunit but call back to the opening chapters of the exhortatory *Protrepticus* time and again. Heath's case studies demonstrate the interrelationship between these three works on a thematic and even specific

⁸⁵ *Ibid.* 157–8; Marrou and Harl, *Clément d'Alexandrie*, 7–19 and 110, n.2. On the number of *logoi*: nn.56–57.

⁸⁶ Rizzi argues ('Literary Problem', 161–162), for example, that the tale of John and the robber at the end of Clement's *Quis Dives Salvetur* (*QDS* 41) alludes to contemporary issues with ecclesial leadership and a divided Alexandrian Christian community, a speculative but intriguing idea.

⁸⁷ Heath, *Shaping*, 382–393.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.* 384–387.

linguistic basis. As she concludes, ‘these three examples of Clement’s use of imagery and motif across the different works suggest that it is at least a plausible starting point that Clement did intend the *Protrepticus*, *Paedagogus* and *Stromateis* to be read in literary sequence.’⁸⁹ Whether a formal trilogy might be placed over these works is beyond Heath’s contention, but the style of these writings is such that a literary sequence can be plausibly identified. Such a sense need not rest on the *proemium* of the *Paedagogus* alone.

Rizzi and Heath exemplify this ongoing debate. While the *Hypotyposeis* may have functioned as a fourth volume in this multi-work project, the literary cohesion of his extant works invites speculation around their relationship and the intentions of their author.⁹⁰ If that speculation relied upon the introduction to the *Paedagogus* alone it would fall short, but the compelling intertextual connections identified by Heath offer pause for thought. I have elsewhere suggested the thematic emphases of the *Protrepticus* presage the later motifs and ideas of the subsequent works.⁹¹ Such a textual foundation would only support the sense of a spiritual perfection advanced through the three works.⁹² This first major work is too often overlooked in discussions of this sequence, yet if it were the first step in this broader literary project, such foundational themes ought not to surprise us. This view develops the little-studied conclusions of Friedrich Quatember. Quatember’s 1942 doctoral thesis (published as a monograph four years later) suggested that Clement reveals his *Heilsplan* in *Paed.* 1.1.3, rather than a specific trilogy.⁹³ Clement’s teachings are articulated through these three extant major writings in service of a broader understanding of salvation history at work behind the scenes.

The potency of *Paed.* 1.1.3 is then found in service of a sequence already established by the content and nature of the works themselves. That the *Stromateis* is not titled *Didaskalikos* is inconsequential; this text still serves the wider purpose of perfecting the Christian gnostic further into the divine likeness. While the exact nature of the relationship between these three works remains contested, the depth of this relationship is evident. In supporting the project of Christian perfection at the heart of Clement’s pedagogy, these three texts guide their reader from a place of unbelief

⁸⁹ *Ibid.* 392.

⁹⁰ Bucur, ‘The Place’, argues for such a reading of the place of the *Hypotyposeis*.

⁹¹ Creedy, ‘To Open the Eyes’. For a worked example with regard to Christology: Creedy, ‘Taking up the Mask’.

⁹² Ashwin-Siejkowski, *Christian Perfection*; Rankin, ‘True Gnostic’.

⁹³ Quatember, *Die christliche Lebenshaltung*. Compare Wagner, ‘Another Look’, 251–260.

through the deepening mysticism of Clement's Christianity. As with any element of Clement's biography, the contours of this literary sequence remain contested. What Heath's analysis shows, however, is that the riches of Clement's literary creativity are still only partially uncovered.

The So-Called Alexandrian Catechetical School

Concurrent with this literary debate is the question of Clement's pedagogical context. The answer is traditionally found in Eusebius' fourth-century history. Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History* survives as the first attempted church history, and despite its flaws, remains an invaluable resource for the study of ancient Christianity.⁹⁴ Eusebius is particularly interested in locating his Christian tradition within a history of intellectual and pedagogical prowess, and figures such as Clement and – most significantly – Origen are thus celebrated throughout.⁹⁵ Woven throughout Book Six – primarily a biography of Origen – are several invaluable comments on Clement's life, including the well-known assertion that Clement lies at the heart of a trio of influential early Christian teachers in Alexandria, succeeding Pantaenus and preceding Origen himself.⁹⁶ This lineage is interpreted not only as a pedagogical dynasty but also as successive heads of an ancient catechetical school in the city. This Eusebian school (and succession) was traditionally accepted, though neither Clement nor Origen attests to it within their extant writings. Eusebius represents our earliest witness to any such school, and this shaky foundation has provoked increasing scepticism since the early twentieth century.

While the literary debate is primarily a Clementine discussion, the issue of the Catechetical School extends well beyond this figure. Eusebius is read as describing an early centre of Christian learning, the suffusion of intellectual rigour and Christian discipline in second-century Alexandria. As has been extensively demonstrated, this fits within a Eusebian desire to articulate an intellectual and doctrinally coherent history in his presentation of the now-flourishing Christian faith.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ For an introduction to Eusebius' *History* and some of the questions his work provokes, consult: Hollerich, *Making Christian History*; Corke-Webster, 'A Man for the Times'; Barnes, 'Some Inconsistencies'.

⁹⁵ On the significance of this intellectual construction and legacy as part of a wider historical-social context informing Eusebius' writing, consult Corke-Webster, *Eusebius and Empire*.

⁹⁶ At Euseb. *EH*. 6.6.1, discussed below.

⁹⁷ Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*; Corke-Webster, *Eusebius and Empire*; Hollerich, *Making Christian History*. And, as Prinzivalli ('Le genre historiographique', 107–110) articulates, a desire to promote within that the reputation and legacy of Origen – Eusebius' great intellectual inspiration.

Despite such motivations, the Eusebian picture remains alluring. Our fleeting glimpses of second-century Alexandrian Christianity make such a sketch of institutional activity deeply attractive.⁹⁸ If legitimate, this school would open a window into the pedagogical experiences of some of North Africa's earliest Christians. The debate around its existence impacts not only Clement and his immediate successor Origen but also speaks into the ways Christians participated in – and retreated from – the cultural dynamics of everyday life in antiquity. Before proposing a new model for this Eusebian school and any credible Clementine involvement in Sections 3 and 4, we will briefly sketch the traditional reading of Eusebius' comments and the outlines of the debate as it has been fought for over a century.

This so-called Catechetical School is entirely absent from Clement's oeuvre. Indeed, the term used by Eusebius to describe this school in his central passages on the subject – διδασκαλεῖον – is nowhere found in Clement's works.⁹⁹ To reconstruct this school, one is thus forced to rely wholly upon Eusebius' *History*. Eusebius survives as one of the most influential Christian writers of all time. He is rightly praised as a polymath, with important contributions as a bishop, theologian, hagiographer and politician, but he is most notably celebrated as a historian.¹⁰⁰ So often when we recount the early history of the Christian faith, we recount (at least in part) a Eusebian history. His *History* remains the earliest and most complete account of these first Christian centuries and charts the spread of this faith from the Roman province of Judea into all the world, culminating in the conversion of the emperor himself. Though Eusebius is rightly critiqued for his apologetic and often revisionist tendencies, his account nonetheless remains an essential resource.¹⁰¹ His comments on the early history of Christian education in Alexandria come against this wider apologetic and theological backdrop. In Books Five and Six of his ten-book history, Eusebius includes several fleeting comments on the Alexandrian church and the so-called Catechetical School itself.

⁹⁸ Von Harnack (*The Mission*, 2.158) considered the obscurity of early Alexandrian Christianity to be the greatest blight on our early understanding of the faith. At greater length (and optimism): Litwa, *Early Christianity*, 1–20.

⁹⁹ Van den Hoek ('School', 74) describes Clement's 'avoidance of the term' and ably demonstrates (65) the single appearance of the word in Stählin's edition of the Greek text of the *Paedagogus* to be an erroneous emendation.

¹⁰⁰ See Corke-Webster, *Eusebius and Empire*, 13; Coogan, *Eusebius the Evangelist*, 12–14.

¹⁰¹ See, for example, in addition to studies mentioned above: Grant, *Eusebius as Church Historian*; Attridge and Hata, *Eusebius, Christianity*; Carriker, *The Library*; Inowlocki, *Jewish Authors*; Morlet, *La 'démonstration évangélique'*; Inowlocki and Zamagni, *Reconsidering Eusebius*.

Central to this Eusebian understanding is a passage connecting Pantaenus, Clement and Origen, which has been widely interpreted as Eusebius suggesting a formal line of succession at the head of an Alexandrian Christian school.

Pantaenus was succeeded by Clement, who directed the catechetical instruction at Alexandria up to such a time that Origen also was one of his pupils.

Πάνταινον δὲ Κλήμης διαδεξάμενος, τῆς κατ' Ἀλεξάνδρειαν κατηχήσεως εἰς ἐκεῖνο τοῦ καιροῦ καθηγεῖτο, ὡς καὶ τὸν Ὠριγένην τῶν φοιτητῶν γενέσθαι αὐτοῦ.¹⁰²

Eusebius goes on to stress Origen's position, emphasising how Origen carried out the work of catechetical instruction in the city ('τῆς κατηχήσεως ἐπὶ τῆς Ἀλεξανδρείας').¹⁰³ This then is the record, it is understood, of the first leaders of Eusebius' *didaskaleion*. Eusebius will later chart Origen's successors, with four further names continuing to Peter, later the bishop of Alexandria who died in 311. This list overlaps with the later record of Philip of Side, whose fragmentary fifth-century ecclesiastical history records thirteen heads of the school – including Pantaenus, Clement and Origen.¹⁰⁴ The Eusebian record, however, labours the relationship between these first three and is understood to leave no doubt that these men led a *didaskaleion*, with Clement and Origen pupils under their respective predecessors. Eusebius does not dwell on the activities of this school at any great length but includes further scattered details. His readers learn that Pantaenus took charge of a school with ancient roots, that taught 'holy learning (ἱερῶν λόγων)' to its pupils.¹⁰⁵ This instruction included philosophy (particularly, under Pantaenus, Stoic philosophy), scriptural study and apostolic teaching.¹⁰⁶ The ultimate goal of the school is set out under Pantaenus' leadership: to explain 'through teaching and writing the treasures of the divine beliefs'.¹⁰⁷ Though Eusebius presents a centre of Christian learning, proponents of the school's existence concede that

¹⁰² Euseb. *EH*. 6.6.1.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.* 6.8.2.

¹⁰⁴ Philip of Side, *Frag.* 2. Despite this overlap, the two records differ, with Philip presenting Athenagoras as the head prior to Pantaenus. Philip confesses that his desire to list the heads of the school comes from an attempt to show how the final head, Rhodon, came to Side and that Philip himself learnt from him. Philip's testimony is not generally accepted and is often inaccurate. See further on the composition and transmission of Philip's *History*: Stevens, 'The Origin', esp. 633, n.13.

¹⁰⁵ Euseb. *EH*. 5.10.1.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.* 5.10.1; 5.11.1–2.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.* 5.10.4.

‘we know very little’ of its reality under either Pantaenus or Clement.¹⁰⁸ With Origen installed as its head, Eusebius reveals more of its organisation. Origen, we learn, was only eighteen years old when he took over the school and soon found himself overwhelmed by the task at hand.¹⁰⁹

But when he saw he was unable to devote enough time to the deeper study of divine things through the examination and translation of sacred texts, and more so, when he recognised that he could not handle the catechetical instruction of those who came to him, for they did not give him time to breathe (προσέτι τῇ τῶν προσιόντων κατηχήσει μὴδ’ ἀναπνεῦσαι συγχωρούντων αὐτῷ), but from dawn to dusk one group of students after another was running in and out of his school, he made a division of the numbers. He selected Heraclas from among his students, being a man zealous of divine things and also very learned and not lacking in philosophical-knowledge, and he made him a co-labourer in the catechetical-instruction (κοινωνὸν καθίστη τῆς κατηχήσεως), giving over to him the preliminary studies of those learning the basics, and reserving for himself the teaching of the experienced students (τῷ μὲν τὴν πρῶτην τῶν ἄρτι στοιχειουμένων εἰσαγωγὴν ἐπιτρέψας, αὐτῷ δὲ τὴν τῶν ἐν ἔξει φυλάξας ἀκρόασιν).¹¹⁰

With student numbers booming, the demands on Origen’s time are almost all-consuming. To counteract this growth, Heraclas is appointed as a secondary instructor, providing basic education to the preliminary pupils. Origen, despite his workload, reserves the instruction of the more advanced students for himself. In many ways this echoes what we know of contemporary Alexandrian education. The school of Ammonius – which Origen himself may well have attended – provides an excellent foil to the Catechetical School of Origen.¹¹¹ Porphyry’s *Life of Plotinus* provides a sketch of that school: Plotinus first discovers Ammonius as the instructor he has been searching for, then commits to his teaching for eleven years, and experiences a rise through the lower rings of instruction into the inner-most circles.¹¹² In this regard, the Origenian School appears to imitate its contemporary rivals, with layers of instruction offered by junior figures and pupils gaining greater access to the central instructor as they progress through the pedagogical levels. Origen’s school seems a

¹⁰⁸ Stanger, ‘Catechetical Schools’: 44.

¹⁰⁹ Euseb. *EH*. 6.3.3. The relative youth of Origen is discussed at greater length in [Section 3](#).

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.* 6.15.1.

¹¹¹ Eusebius claims Origen was at one point a pupil of Ammonius: *EH*. 6.19.6–7. On whether Ammonius’ pupil Origen was the same figure or, in fact, a different man of the same name: Edwards, ‘One Origen or Two?’

¹¹² Porph. *VP*. 3.7–17. Compare Watts, *City and School*, 156–157.

far cry from the less formal environment of devoted students gathered around Pantaenus or even Clement, but Eusebius is understood to insist upon his readers that this remains, nonetheless, the same ancient school of Alexandrian Christian learning.

Eusebius appears then to present a simple portrait of this school, from humble circumstances under the elusive Pantaenus to its zenith under Origen at the start of the third century. While cracks begin to emerge in such a presentation when one considers more closely both Eusebius' exact descriptions of this teaching and (conversely) Clement's own understanding of his pedagogical activities, this Catechetical School has been broadly understood as both extant and influential by the late second century. This almost universal acceptance is illustrated by the plaudits the school attracted in the twentieth century. Molland considered it to be the 'first Christian academy', while Léturia went even further, awarding it the title of the 'first Catholic university'.¹¹³ Such was the confidence of this perspective that the renowned German theologian Adolf Von Harnack concluded simply that 'the significance of the Alexandrian Catechetical School' was 'immeasurable'.¹¹⁴ The impact of the school and its denizens was widely considered to be irrefutable. The narrative presented above was widely accepted, and this interpretation of Eusebius' history was well established in modern historiography.¹¹⁵ Nonetheless, the veracity of Eusebius' claims in this regard was soon challenged.

Eusebius never specifies what exactly this school was. This vagueness opened the door for modern critiques of this pedagogical interpretation. Bardy first challenged this model in a series of articles during the 1930s and 1940s.¹¹⁶ Bardy took umbrage with the name of this institution, critiquing a 'dangerous' and 'frequent' use of the ill-understood 'School of Alexandria'.¹¹⁷ Bardy argued instead that only Origen's school can realistically be understood as catechetical in the mould of later offerings elsewhere.¹¹⁸ The Frenchman's efforts reinvigorated interest in Eusebius' school, and varying perspectives soon emerged.¹¹⁹ Bardy doubled down on his criticism in comments included in his later edition of Books Five

¹¹³ Molland, *The Conception of the Gospel*, 65; Léturia, 'El primer esbozo'.

¹¹⁴ Von Harnack, *Lehrbuch*, 1:637.

¹¹⁵ For a summary of earlier scholarship, consult Le Boulluec, 'L'école d'Alexandrie'.

¹¹⁶ Bardy, 'L'église et l'enseignement'; 'Aux origines'; 'Pour l'histoire de l'école'.

¹¹⁷ Bardy, 'Aux origines', 80.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.* 109.

¹¹⁹ See, for example: Munck, *Untersuchungen*; Knauber, 'Katechetenschule'; Stanger, 'Catechetical Schools'; Hornschuh, 'Das Leben des Origines'; Méhat, *Étude*; Nautin, *Origène*. Knauber, for example, maintained a traditional perspective during this period.

to Seven of Eusebius' *History*, but this new perspective was not universally accepted.¹²⁰ Pericoli-Ridolfini, for example, offered a staunch defence of the traditional model in the second half of the twentieth century.¹²¹ For the Italian, the school of Pantaenus, Clement and Origen could find historic roots in the earliest communities in Alexandria, with a likely foundation under Ananias, between 62 and 84 CE. The school led by the Eusebian trio was 'not something different from the preceding one but its natural continuation'.¹²² Battlelines had been drawn, and the debate has, for the most part, followed these polarised parameters.

Crucial contributions by Roelof Van den Broek and Clemens Scholten in 1995 illustrate the entrenchment of this debate through the latter half of the previous century. Van den Broek pulled no punches in concluding that 'the whole idea of a Christian school with a διαδοχή of teachers handing down a fixed tradition of learning to their pupil successors is completely false, at least until the second decade of the third century'.¹²³ In contrast, Scholten offered a more generous perspective based largely on the Origenian school of the early third century, with Pantaenus and Clement broadly peripheral to his study.¹²⁴ Scholten's defence of a school (and particularly its academic nature) was further supported by Van den Hoek's inquiry into Philonic influences on the second-century school, concluding that 'although it is important to read Eusebius critically, this does not mean that one should dismiss all his claims'.¹²⁵ Van den Hoek suggested a more generous reading of this ecclesial historian and a picture of the school more in line with traditional understandings (albeit with a nuance that challenges the rigid interpretation of traditionalists such as Ridolfini). Favourable readings of the Eusebian school continue, despite the challenges raised by sceptics almost a century ago.¹²⁶

Outside the confines of this specific debate, the Catechetical School remains popular in general studies of Christianity in antiquity. While Van den Broek refuted with amazement the claim of Ellens that the Catechetical School ought to be considered as the heir to the famous

¹²⁰ Bardy, *Eusèbe*.

¹²¹ Ridolfini, 'Le origini'.

¹²² *Ibid.* 228–229, here 229: 'la scuola così innovata non rappresentò qualcosa di diverso dalla precedente ma ne fu la naturale continuazione.'

¹²³ Van den Broek, 'The Christian "School"', 41.

¹²⁴ Scholten, 'Katechetenschule'.

¹²⁵ Van den Hoek, 'School', 85.

¹²⁶ See Oliver, 'The heads of the Catechetical School'; Rodgers, 'The Origins of the Alexandrian Text'; Jakab, 'The Social History'; and in a more nuanced approach with emphasis on Origen, Kyriacou, 'On the Origins'.

Library of Alexandria, such wholesale acceptance is not alien to more credible scholarship.¹²⁷ Kindiy takes the existence of the second-century school as a given, while Oliver and Leszczyński both affirm its existence, though Leszczyński focuses only on Origen's role and school.¹²⁸ The school – despite the extent of the debate around its reality – continues to dominate within the broader academy. As Rodgers' New Testament study illustrates, the school is all too often unquestionably accepted and employed as a significant element of early Alexandrian Christianity.¹²⁹ Similarly, Edsall, exploring Clement's relationship with the Alexandrian Catechuminate, notes that 'many scholars still mistrust Eusebius' account', before offering a defence of Clement's catechetical activity in the city.¹³⁰ While Clement's pedagogical practice will be further explored below, it is worth highlighting the continued discrepancies within the academy. As Clementine scholarship has developed in recent decades, the debate around the existence of the Alexandrian Catechetical School has matched that growth. In contrast to the likes of Kindiy, Jakab and Edsall, recent work from Wywra, Thomson, Marksches and Litwa all refutes the traditional perspective.¹³¹ The battle lines drawn by Bardy et al. in the 1930s continue to dominate scholarly discourse.

In one sense, we have not come far since Bardy first questioned the Eusebian model in modern times. The existence of the school is still contested, though the traditional Eusebian perspective remains commonplace when early Alexandrian Christianity is referenced more generally. Perhaps, however, we are closer to an answer than it seems. As Litwa notes, recent research allows us to conclude that – save Eusebius' fourth-century account – there 'is simply no hard evidence' that Christian groups of which Eusebius would later approve enjoyed the necessary status and significance to establish such an institution in the early second century.¹³² Litwa continued: 'to focus on a single succession (Pantaenus–Clement–Origen) tells only a partial (and partisan) story of theological education in Alexandria.'¹³³ This sense of Eusebian approval will provide a valuable

¹²⁷ Ellens, *The Ancient Library*; Van den Broek, 'The Christian "School"', 39–40.

¹²⁸ Oliver, 'The heads of the Catechetical School'; Jakab, 'The Social History'; Leszczyński, 'Origen's exegetical method'.

¹²⁹ Rodgers, 'The Origins of the Alexandrian Text', 63.

¹³⁰ Edsall, 'Catechuminate', 101.

¹³¹ Wywra, 'Religiöses Lernen im zweiten Jahrhundert'; Thomson, 'The Barbarian Sophist', who does not use the term 'catechetical school' in his study of Clement's activity in the contemporary intellectual landscape; Marksches, *Christian Theology and its Institutions*; Litwa, *Early Christianity*, 176–179.

¹³² Litwa, *Early Christianity*, 176.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 177.

dynamic as the second half of this Element concerns itself with piecing together the evidence for Clement's own teaching activity. Our inquiry will take the reflections of Litwa as a foundation. It is self-evident that second-century Alexandria was host to several divergent groups that claimed the label 'Christian'. One need only acknowledge the vastly differing theologies of Clement, Basilides, Valentinus, Carpocrates and others to recognise this reality.¹³⁴ To focus on the pedagogical lineage proffered by Eusebius does, surely, only uncover a part of the story of Christianity in the second century. It is that part of the story that the present study is concerned with, but that it is *only* part of the story is crucial. We cannot yet identify a dominant form of Christianity within the city; our extant evidence is simply too scant to do so.

Conclusions

Both debates are integral to modern Clementine studies. The literary sequencing of Clement's major works and the implications of the pedagogical context in which he taught are fundamental to our understandings of this figure and his ideas. Of particular interest to the present study is the question of Clement and the so-called Catechetical School. Nearly a century has passed since, as Osborn puts it, Bardy 'demolished Eusebius' account'.¹³⁵ What, then, stands in its place? The overwhelming reality is that this demolition has passed most contemporary scholarship by. Eusebius' school still stands.

Where does this leave us? Have we simply 'lost the forest for the trees' amidst the bibliographic convulsions of this debate?¹³⁶ Osborn concluded in 2005 that 'while the older interpretation of Eusebius' catechetical school cannot be sustained, the evidence of Christian teaching in Alexandria is very strong'.¹³⁷ Such nuance represents a harmonisation of the arguments of both Van den Hoek and Van den Broek, among others, but is all too often lost in more general discussions around Christian teaching (and communities) in second-century Alexandria and beyond. How then might we retrieve a workable understanding of both Clement's pedagogical context and Eusebius' intentions with said context? This is

¹³⁴ Looking beyond Clement, one finds several alternative early Christian groups, embracing and extolling a range of gnostic or docetic theologies. More on these figures and their contemporaries: King, *What is Gnosticism?*; Litwa, *Carpocrates; Early Christianity*, 91–106, 138–149; Marjanen and Luomanen, *Christian 'Heretics'*.

¹³⁵ Osborn, *Clement*, 19.

¹³⁶ Compare n.68.

¹³⁷ Osborn, *Clement*, 24.

the concern of [Sections 3 and 4](#). Amidst the forest of literature defending or deconstructing the Eusebian School, the reality of Clement's instruction is all too often obscured. The rest of this Element will endeavour to retrieve a more satisfactory context for the ongoing study of his life, writings and ideas.

3 Reconsidering the So-Called Catechetical School

Eusebius' School Revisited

Despite growing scepticism, the so-called Catechetical School remains central to the study of both Clement and Origen. This is due, in part, to a rejection of elements of Bardy's argument. His dichotomic lack of nuance with regard to the issue of independence or episcopal support has, for example, generated significant pushback.¹³⁸ This Element contends, however, that in losing sight of the forest amidst the flurry of textual trees, scholars have misjudged the central question. That a Catechetical School in second-century Alexandria is fundamentally anachronistic is self-evident. Contemporary Christian communities simply lacked the structure, clarity, cohesion or wider unity to sustain such an institution.¹³⁹ Such a school – focused on the catechetical instruction of young believers and the preparation for their baptismal rites – may have been familiar to Eusebius and his fourth-century contemporaries but would have been alien to the likes of Pantaenus and Clement. (Origen, as we shall discuss below, presides over something of a turning point in the fortunes – and shape – of this school.) Anachronism aside, a recognition of retrospective influence on our understanding of this 'institution' need not wholly disregard its existence. The pedagogical baby need not be thrown out with the institutional bathwater. If Eusebius remains the key support for the traditional perspective, we must approach afresh his contribution. Instead of asking 'what school did Eusebius describe?'

¹³⁸ The school-church relationship is initially unclear but becomes somewhat uniform in the third century. Before this point, any possible link is not only unstable but also irretrievable. In response to Bardy: Neymeyr, *Die christlichen Lehrer*, 86–87; Paul, *Gedichte*, 52–53; Le Boulluec, 'Aux origines, encore', 38.

¹³⁹ This is not to suggest second-century Christian communities did not have their own cultures of education, discipleship and ritual, but rather that later, formalised structures are simply at odds with the historical reality of this earlier period. As the likes of the *Didache*, Melito's *Peri Pascha*, the *Epistle of Barnabas*, the *Shepherd of Hermas* and Justin's *First Apology* demonstrate, these early communities all adopted and adapted elements of instruction and ritual, but – as with Clement's oeuvre discussed in [Section 4](#) – they lack the formalisation and structure of later catechetical practices.

we must instead counter recent scepticism with the following questions: if Eusebius is not presenting a formalised Catechetical School in second-century Alexandria, what is he offering his readers? What is the διδασκαλεῖον found in his *History*? Is Eusebius even positing the existence of a single and established Alexandrian school?

With such questions in mind, this section and [Section 4](#) will pursue a twofold line of inquiry. This section will examine closely Books Five and Six of Eusebius' *History*, allowing for a new paradigm to emerge. Eusebius' language is deliberate in his discussions of the so-called School. Four threads come together in this argument. Firstly, we shall explore the onomastic issue of whether Eusebius names this institution. Secondly, we shall examine afresh the key passage at 6.6.1, where Eusebius ties the three pedagogues together. Thirdly, with this succession as a model, we will revisit Eusebius' efforts to stress these relationships. Finally, we shall ask what happens next to the instruction at Alexandria after Origen's third-century exit. This discussion will suggest that Eusebius nowhere affirms an explicit and formal Catechetical School under the leadership of Pantaenus and Clement but rather seeks to retrospectively apply a continuation of approved and celebrated Christian teaching, to which Origen – and ultimately Eusebius and his contemporaries – stand as the true heirs. This reconsideration of Eusebius' own retrospective scholastic creation will allow a fresh examination of Clement's pedagogical activity in [Section 4](#). Once we recognise that Eusebius is offering something far less certain and secure than the anachronistic model of a Catechetical School in second-century Alexandria, we can rightly inquire as to what Clement is doing in its place.

The survey in [Section 2](#) laid a trail of Eusebian breadcrumbs that we can now follow towards a revision of the parameters of this debate. Polarised perspectives of either a rejection of the supposed Eusebian model or a blind acceptance of its traditional interpretation obscure the apparent deliberate haziness of Eusebius' own words. It is not novel to remark that Eusebius lacks linguistic clarity with regard to the so-called Catechetical School.¹⁴⁰ The implications of this Eusebian opacity, however, are rarely worked through.¹⁴¹ Eusebius appears deliberate in obscuring the reality of the pedagogical lineage he constructs. This is not because it is non-existent, for it did exist for the fourth-century author. Rather, Eusebius

¹⁴⁰ See Osborn, *Clement*, and particularly Van den Hoek, 'School'; 'How Alexandrian'.

¹⁴¹ Scholten, 'Katechetenschule', for example, contends these issues equate to the non-existence of Eusebius' proposed lineage.

is vague with both the details and terminology surrounding the so-called Catechetical School because he is himself constructing an approved lineage of retrospectively selected pedagogues. He is not working from a pre-existing model; he is constructing the model for his readers. This is Eusebian harmonisation. He approves of doctrinal and epistemological credibility in the figures of Pantaenus, Clement and Origen that not only supports his own perspective but also lends further intellectual credibility to the Christian cause.¹⁴² He is reconstructing a history of intellectual faith for the Empire's new *religio* by constructing a lineage of intellectual instruction. As a result, he is careful not to overstate his case. The assignation of catechetical institutionalisation is a later invention and not of Eusebian origin. The limits of his literary extrapolation are evident throughout his description of this supposed school and its teachers.

Onomastic Complications

Eusebius' onomastic gymnastics supports the rejection of a formalised second-century Catechetical School in his writings. His many references to early Alexandrian Christian instruction evade any set name or title. He does not – or cannot – name the school of which he speaks. While modern scholars have long favoured some variation of the 'Catechetical School' with or without the geographical marker of 'Alexandrian', Eusebius provides no such clarity.¹⁴³ This modern name is drawn from Eusebius' use of *κατηχέω* in connection with teaching in the city, but Eusebius does not afford the confidence of such a simple – or set – title. The ecclesial historian most regularly describes the 'school' as a *didaskaleion*, which is best rendered as a 'teaching-place' or a 'school'.¹⁴⁴ But his use of *didaskaleion* throughout Book Six is far from consistent. As Van den Hoek notes, in the latter stages of the book Eusebius employs *didaskaleion* to convey a sense of a 'school of thought', giving the term connotations more closely related with ideas of 'teaching' and 'doctrine'.¹⁴⁵ Eusebius by no means reserves the term for discussion of the Alexandrian school alone. Given Clement's total omission of the term, we cannot ascertain whether this ought to be

¹⁴² See Corke-Webster, *Eusebius and Empire*; Hollerich, *Making Christian History*.

¹⁴³ For example: Von Harnack, *Lehrbuch*; Léturia, 'El primer esbozo'; Stanger, 'Catechetical Schools'; Le Boulluec, 'L'école d'Alexandrie'; Van den Hoek, 'School'; Leszczyński, 'Origen's exegetical method'.

¹⁴⁴ TLG provides only these two senses to the term, with examples from Epicurus (Frag. 50) and Dionysius of Halicarnassus (*Dem.* 2) speaking of 'schools of rhetoric' and a 'Socratic school', respectively.

¹⁴⁵ Van den Hoek, 'School': 63, discussing Eusebius' use at *EH.* 6.21.4.

understood as the formal assignation or simply a Eusebian descriptor.¹⁴⁶ Our onomastic confidence ought thus to be tempered.

Further complications emerge as Eusebius incorporates the term into a description of the school without regard for its consistent application. Rather than a loose form of literary *variatio*, this reads like a careful presentation of a range of different educational contexts. Pantaenus' school is one of 'holy learning', yet we also hear the school described as a 'school of sacred faith', 'the catechetical instruction school in Alexandria', 'the school in Alexandria' and 'the school of catechetical instruction'.¹⁴⁷ Amidst this linguistic malleability Eusebius only connects διδασκαλεῖον and κατήχησις in descriptions of Origen's headship of the school (and that of his successors), and *not* in relation to Pantaenus or Clement's supposed leadership. The sole occasion in which Pantaenus and Clement's work relates to the work of 'catechetical instruction' is in 6.6.1 as the three men are themselves connected. There, only the pedagogical activity of the three figures is mentioned, and not the institution of a school itself. To add further to this murky pedagogical haze, Eusebius also employs terms such as 'ἡ διατριβή' and 'ἡ σκολή' in his relevant comments on this Alexandrian instruction.¹⁴⁸ He applies no consistent formula in distinguishing this school from a sense of a less formalised gathering around the respective instructors and only formally connects catechetical instruction to the *didaskaleion* from Origen's headship onwards. This onomastic confusion alone illustrates the challenge of reconstructing a Catechetical School from Eusebius' account; even the ecclesiastical historian seems unaware of the exact contours of the pedagogy of which he speaks.

Establishing the Pedagogical Lineage

This onomastic obliquity suggests a more complex reality to the so-called Catechetical School. This is matched by Eusebius' reluctance to connect Pantaenus, Clement and Origen in a formal, institutional context. Other than a loose connection through a letter of Alexander preserved later in Book Six, there is only one instance where the three men are directly connected.¹⁴⁹ Even then, no formal institution is mentioned, but the literary

¹⁴⁶ As Van den Hoek notes ('School', 63–64) the related terms διδάσκαλος (teacher) and διδασκαλία (teaching) are common in Clement's oeuvre.

¹⁴⁷ Euseb. *EH*. 5.10.1; 7.32.30; (PG 20) 1524, 1.18; *EH*. 5.10.4; 6.26.1; 6.3.3.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.* 6.3.8; 6.3.1; 6.4.3.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.* 6.6.1. Alexander's letter is preserved at 6.14.8–9.

context of this passage provides important background to Eusebius' remarks and the apparent lineage he describes. This literary context – often ignored in discussions of the so-called Catechetical School – is invaluable to a right understanding of its implications.

Book Six begins with the persecutions under Septimius Severus (r.193–211) and focuses on Origen's life and career. Despite regular digression into other themes and figures, Origen dominates the book, with Eusebius describing his life from childhood to martyrdom.¹⁵⁰ Across its forty-six chapters, Book Six surveys an enormous amount of material, and its author displays something of the selectivity for which he is well known. As Attridge and Hata remark: 'Eusebius had his interests and biases, and his history was designed to serve various apologetic ends. He also had his blind spots, ignoring or slighting vast segments of the early Christian world.'¹⁵¹ Such selectivity is easy to recognise. Early in Book Six, the reader is introduced to Basilides.¹⁵² This is not, however, the early second-century gnostic whose influence and following persisted in Alexandria well into the third century; that figure is absent from Book Six entirely.¹⁵³ In Book Six, the Basilides we meet is an Alexandrian martyr, whose death followed that of Potamiaena. Her violent death is recorded in detail as she is martyred alongside her mother Marcella, following a period of intense torture. Potamiaena is burned to death, doused in burning pitch. Eusebius counts this Basilides worthy of preservation, though he is a mere footnote to the martyrdom of Potamiaena. The more influential Basilides, with his teachings antithetical to the Christianity of Eusebius, is not accorded similar treatment.¹⁵⁴

Eusebius is of course selective; he is – as any historian – weighing up what to include in his record. But his 'interests and biases' serve a particular presentation of the Christian faith: martyrs are elevated, teachers praised and wise men revered. As Corke-Webster concluded:

Eusebius' pioneering *History* works ... to construct a new and thoroughgoing vision of Christian authority in line with a traditional rhetoric of intellectual, temperate authority that was rooted in Graeco-Roman and Christian *paideia*, learned in Christian households and schools and witnessed in both life and death.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁰ His martyrdom is recorded at 6.39.5.

¹⁵¹ Attridge and Hata, *Eusebius, Christianity*: 15.

¹⁵² Euseb. *EH*. 6.5.1–7.

¹⁵³ Though a brief polemic on this Basilides is ventured in Book Four (4.7.3–9).

¹⁵⁴ On this more significant Basilides, see n.134 and Löhr, 'Basilides'.

¹⁵⁵ Corke-Webster, *Eusebius and Empire*, 280.

Eusebius massages elements of his history to vindicate the cultural and spiritual conquest of the faith under Constantine.¹⁵⁶ He modelled his narrative to both validate current events and encourage future activity. His selectivity is therefore central to his argument. Basilides' inclusion alongside Potamiaena is thus deliberate, and both figures are venerated for their fidelity. Indeed, in Potamiaena's case, Eusebius reports that many in Alexandria were strengthened by posthumous appearances in dreams and visions.¹⁵⁷ Her example ends a lengthy section on Alexandrian martyrs (including Origen's father, Leonides), an important grounding for the subsequent discussion, for Eusebius' description of the so-called Catechetical School comes immediately after this martyrology.¹⁵⁸

Pantaenus was succeeded in turn (διαδεξάμενος) by Clement, who led the instruction in Alexandria until the time when Origen became one of his pupils.

Πάντανινον δὲ Κλήμης διαδεξάμενος, τῆς κατ' Ἀλεξάνδρειαν κατηχήσεως εἰς ἐκεῖνο τοῦ καιροῦ καθηγεῖτο, ὡς καὶ τὸν Ὠριγένην τῶν φοιτητῶν γενέσθαι αὐτοῦ.¹⁵⁹

Having painted a picture of inspirational martyrdom and a zealous Alexandrian Christian community, Eusebius turns to education in that community. His focus on Origen necessitates establishing the pedagogical chain through to his early third-century subject. Though, as noted above, he does not include the existence of an explicit school in this passage, he does weave in an inherent pedagogical dynamic between the three men. Origen is, after all, counted among τῶν φοιτητῶν of Clement.

Eusebius' use of φοιτητής illustrates his linguistic selectivity. Rather than the more religiously charged μαθητής, Eusebius chooses instead a term with philosophical connotations, found throughout the Platonic corpus, for example, but unattested among New Testament and very early Christian writings.¹⁶⁰ Eusebius regularly employs μαθητής in describing disciples and students, which suggests a deliberate emphasis to φοιτητής here. Indeed, this emphasis is further supported by a single earlier description of the earliest followers of Christ as φοιτητής, a break

¹⁵⁶ His own relationship with Constantine is, however, a more complicated subject. Compare Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*, esp. 140–141 and 266; Corke-Webster, *Eusebius and Empire*, 291–301; Singh, 'Eusebius as Political Theologian'.

¹⁵⁷ Euseb. *EH*. 6.5.7.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.* 6.1–5; Leonides is martyred at 6.2.12.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.* 6.6.1.

¹⁶⁰ For example: Pl. *R.* 563a; *Euthd.* 295d; *Alc.* 1.109d; *Lg.* 779d.

from his usual use of μαθητής.¹⁶¹ Eusebius groups the Twelve, the Seventy, and a ‘myriad (μυριοί)’ of other early hearers of the Lord as ‘pupils of our saviour (τοῦ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν φοιτηταί)’ in Book Three.¹⁶² These followers, Eusebius remarks, all have experience of the Saviour but it is only Matthew and John who were chosen from among these direct eye-witnesses to record their experiences in a gospel account. As his *History* goes on to describe, however, these figures were responsible (named or anonymously) for the dissemination of the faith to which Eusebius himself stands as an heir. Despite not recording their own written accounts, these ‘pupils’ of the Saviour were rightly educated so as to convey the faith the Caesarean now has inherited. Now Origen stands as a pupil of this enlightened truth, the great Origen who will go on to function as such a faithful hero for Eusebius himself.¹⁶³ This term calls back to this sense of gospel conveyance and encourages the reader to reflect carefully on Eusebius’ presentation in this particular passage.

The Caesarean strengthens the connection between this new intellectual lineage (and thus, ultimately, him) and the very dawn of the faith itself. His careful linguistic decision-making is even more apparent in his choice of διαδεξάμενος to connect Pantaeus and Clement in succession. It echoes an earlier Christian history. As Corke-Webster remarks, Eusebius’ *History* survives as the first work of Christian history since Luke-Acts.¹⁶⁴ In Acts 7, as the soon-to-be-martyr Stephen presents his defence, he reaches back into the depths of Jewish history to affirm the validity of his own nascent Christian beliefs.

Our ancestors had the tabernacle of the covenant law with them in the wilderness. It had been made as God directed Moses, according to the pattern he had seen. After receiving (διαδεξάμενοι) the tabernacle, our ancestors under Joshua brought it with them when they took the land from the nations God drove out before them. It remained in the land until the time of David¹⁶⁵

The term is a *hapax legomenon* in the New Testament corpus. It appears at the heart of Stephen’s defence as he appeals to the historical validity and trajectory of the Jewish faith: it is because of this history he can now believe

¹⁶¹ The twelve apostles, for example, are regularly referred to collectively as ‘the twelve apostles (δωδεκα ... ἀπόστολοι)’ (e.g. 3.24.5; 3.31.3) and more generally as both singular ‘apostles’ (e.g. 1.13.2; 2.1.1; 4.4.2, 4, etc.), and μαθητής, ‘disciples’ (e.g. 1.13.15; 3.23.3; 4.14.6; 7.25.12, etc.).

¹⁶² Euseb. *EH*. 3.24.5.

¹⁶³ Specifically on Eusebius’ ‘Origenist’ enthusiasm, see Kannengiesser, ‘Origenist’.

¹⁶⁴ Corke-Webster, *Eusebius and Empire*, 1.

¹⁶⁵ Acts 7.44–45.

in Christ. Stephen argues that God's glory first appeared to Abraham (7.2) before walking through the history of the Old Covenant, highlighting the Tabernacle, Moses and Joshua. His speech concludes with Christ himself, the 'righteous one (τοῦ Δικαίου)' whom the very Jewish leaders Stephen addresses have betrayed and murdered (7.52). The argument is as simple as it is profound: Christ both orients the colourful narrative of Jewish history and represents the pinnacle of it. That the Jews of the Exodus received the Tabernacle from their own ancestors is part of this argument.

Stephen's defence falls on deaf ears (or as he terms them in 7.51 – 'stiff-necked people (σκληροτράχηλοι)'), and he is shortly martyred, stoned by the Jewish leaders and their supporters (7.54–60). As the first Christian martyr, he was widely celebrated in the early church, and Eusebius is particularly enthusiastic in his recollection and veneration of this figure.¹⁶⁶ This is not, then, a coincidental transition. Stephen offered a vigorous defence of his Christian faith by appealing to a history viewed through a lens of Christ at its apex; Eusebius reflects that model in Book Six. Having documented several significant martyrdoms over the first few chapters, chapter six then situated a succession of educators that connects Origen himself (and by implication, his devotee Eusebius and his contemporaries) with this fantastical period of faithful devotion to the truth of the Gospel. Breaking off from this catalogue of martyrs to this pedagogical lineage is thus a calculated move.

Eusebius' use of διαδεξάμενος alerts the reader to a Stephanic parallel that runs deeper than this linguistic marker alone. While the *hapax legomenon* stands out in both instances, and the broader argumentative flow of Stephen's speech is matched by the progression of Book Six (a testimony to the faithfulness and glory of the Christian God through the historical record), the positioning of Potamiaena's story immediately before this pedagogical lineage illustrates the extent to which Acts 7, and Stephen's model in particular, are at the forefront of Eusebius' mind here. Potamiaena is an exemplary martyr (6.5.1) who evokes praise (reflecting praise Eusebius gives Stephen elsewhere, 5.3.5) in the mouths and hearts of her fellow Alexandrian believers. She is described as one who defends herself – as Stephen had done – with such force that her interrogators are grievously offended (6.5.2), a point Eusebius stresses. Just as Stephen appeals to heaven for the forgiveness of his persecutors (7.60), a

¹⁶⁶ At, for example: Euseb. *EH*. 2.1.8; 2.3.3, where Stephen serves as a model; 3.5.2; 5.3.5, and Eusebius lauds him as the 'perfect martyr (ὁ τέλειος μάρτυς)'. See further: Matthews, *Perfect Martyr*; Bovon, 'The dossier'.

forgiveness that the author of Acts connects directly to Paul (Acts 7.58; 8.1), who will go on to be the greatest of the apostles, so Potamiaena asks the Lord that her persecutor (here Basilides, resulting in his conversion) not be held accountable for his crimes (6.5.3). By implication, just as Stephen's martyrdom represents a significant step towards Paul's repentance and elevation, so too Potamiaena represents a step in the development of a Christian Alexandrian identity that will produce Origen, foremost (for Eusebius) among early Christian intellectuals. Further details sharpen the parallel. Both martyrs die surrounded by energetic crowds, and both remain decorous and noble to the end. Both are quickly celebrated by subsequent believers. Interestingly too, just as Stephen received a vision of the risen Lord in the moment of his martyrdom (Acts 7.55–56), so Potamiaena appears to Alexandrian believers in dreams (6.5.7), strengthening their faith as Stephen was strengthened.

While a deeper analysis of Eusebius' reimagination of Potamiaena as a new Stephen (and thus an example of true martyrdom) is beyond the scope of the present discussion, it provides a fascinating textual context for the introduction of the subsequent pedagogical lineage. As a female Stephen, Potamiaena is couched as part of a Christian milieu that then produces this succession of worthy intellectuals who themselves reflect those very first pupils (φοιτητής) of the Lord. What Clement received from Pantaenus (and then passed on to Origen) was borne out of the ferment of martyrdom and spiritual resolve that represents a history oriented towards the faith held in common from Pantaenus directly through Origen to Eusebius himself. Eusebius is consciously emphasising a Christian telology that mirrors the well-known (and much celebrated) martyrdom of Stephen in Acts. The emphasis here is not on a school (for no such school is present), but on a lineage traced back to the spiritual ferment of the mid-second century. This is the crucial contention of this Eusebian analysis with regard to the construction of the so-called Catechetical School: Eusebius is not interested in a formal school in the second century. His focus is on retrospectively applying a lineage of Christian approval that represents a teleological consistency; from Pantaenus through Origen, the reader can recognise the faithfulness of God both keeping and working through his people. It is to the construction of that lineage we shall therefore now turn.

Following the Breadcrumbs

Though most of Eusebius' comments on the so-called Catechetical School are in Book Six, he first connects Pantaenus, Clement and pedagogy

(though not yet Origen) in Book Five. In light of the interpretation of the lineage offered in 6.6.1 above, Eusebius' piecemeal presentation of faithful Christian instruction in second-century Alexandria takes on a new light. Instead of an anachronistic, superimposed and formal Catechetical School, Eusebius offers a picture of approved and retrospectively connected instruction preceding a later formalised institution.

Pantaenus is introduced as a teacher of the greatest repute (ἐπιδοξότατος), a term interestingly only applied also to Josephus in the *History*.¹⁶⁷ It is Pantaenus, this most-learned teacher, who is first connected with leading a school. He is described as leading the faithful there in Alexandria (τῆς τῶν πιστῶν αὐτόθι διατριβῆς); 'for from ancient customs a school of holy learning (διδασκαλείου τῶν ἱερῶν λόγων) was organised among them'.¹⁶⁸ Eusebius is careful to introduce several details here. Pantaenus is exuberantly praised (with a superlative hitherto reserved for Josephus alone), while the reputation of Alexandria as a centre of learning among not just unbelievers but Christians (τῶν πιστῶν) is advanced (its antiquity further linking Eusebius' lineage with a murky yet mystic past reaching back towards the foundation of the faith). Crucially it is here described not as a catechetical centre but 'διδασκαλείου τῶν ἱερῶν λόγων', a school of holy learning. This description supports Eusebius' next statement: 'and this has endured into our time (ὃ καὶ εἰς ἡμᾶς παρατείνεται...)'.¹⁶⁹ No specificity is supplied. While he goes on to say that the Alexandrian school is now led by esteemed men, he does not suggest it was the exact same school. A more general sense persists. The reputation of Alexandria is as a centre of Christian learning, of which Eusebius approves; it is this the Caesarean affirms as continuing into his own time.

Eusebius reaffirms the prominence of Pantaenus, noting that he is conspicuous among his peers (5.10.1) before restating his pedagogical role. 'And Pantaenus ... led the school (διδασκαλείου) of Alexandria until his death, and through oral and written form interpreted the treasures of divine doctrine (τῶν θείων δογμάτων)'.¹⁷⁰ Eusebius is at least consistent in his use of διδασκαλείου to describe the school here, but this coda to the tenth chapter of Book Five exposes the fragility of any earlier formal catechetical

¹⁶⁷ Euseb. *EH*. 5.10.1; Josephus is similarly described in 3.9.2. This is perhaps an indication that Eusebius' esteems Pantaenus not within a Christian system, but as superlative in a primarily non-Christian landscape, as Josephus was among contemporary historians.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.* 5.10.1.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.* 5.10.4.

construction built upon this Eusebian presentation. As Corke-Webster observed:

This characterisation [in 5.10.4] is particularly interesting, because it directly contradicts our independent evidence. Clement of Alexandria tells us that Pantaenus left no writings (*Strom.* 1.1.11), so here we have a clear example of Eusebius forcing earlier Christians to fit his ideal model.¹⁷¹

Clement himself writes that Pantaenus left behind no writings; Eusebius refutes that suggestion, presenting the oral and written teaching of Pantaenus as a deposit of some significance. The weakness to Eusebius' claim is that he himself points readers to the exact passage in Clement's first *Stromata* of which Corke-Webster speaks. Only a short while later in Book Five, as Eusebius shores up the relationship between Clement and Pantaenus, he identifies Clement's unnamed final teacher as Pantaenus himself.¹⁷² Eusebius contradicts himself: Pantaenus leaves written teachings behind, yet as Clement's unnamed teacher only a few lines later, he does not. This error reads less like support for the traditional model of a Catechetical School and more like a clumsy attempt to elevate the significance of Origen's predecessors.

Pantaenus is described not as the head of a school that offers catechetical instruction (κατήχησις is absent from 5.10) but as an instructor offering holy learning (τῶν ἱερῶν λόγων), a subtle but important distinction that cannot be overstretched without revealing the fragility of Eusebius' efforts to synthesise these pre-Origenic instructors. Clement is then introduced as an individual who 'became known (ἐγνωρίζετο)' for his 'education in the holy Scriptures (ταῖς θείαις γραφαῖς συνασκούμενος)', and he is quickly linked to Pantaenus.¹⁷³ Eusebius twice claims that Clement describes Pantaenus as his teacher: in the now-lost *Hypotyposeis* and as his final, unnamed teacher in the *Stromateis*.¹⁷⁴ With the relevant passage from the *Hypotyposeis* now lost (and frustratingly unquoted by Eusebius), we cannot weigh the Caesarean's claims against any external evidence, but it is once again important not to overstate what Eusebius has described. He has selected a particular group, identified them as 'the faithful (τῶν πιστῶν)' and celebrated Pantaenus as their teacher of holy learning. No institutions, formal catechesis or structured lessons are described. This opening gambit in the establishment of a pedagogical

¹⁷¹ Corke-Webster, *Eusebius and Empire*, 94.

¹⁷² Euseb. *EH.* 5.11.2-5.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.* 5.11.1.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.* 5.11.2-5. The *Hypotyposeis* survived until at least the ninth century (Photios, *Bibl.* 108). We cannot be sure, however, of Eusebius' reference, as he does not preserve the passage, unlike his quotation of the *Stromateis*.

lineage does nothing to suggest later interpretations of a formal school, and the fragility of Eusebius' claims in Book Five, if anything, indicates a looser association than even he can establish.

While the over-presentation of Pantaenus in Book Five is somewhat revealing as to the accuracy of Eusebius' every claim, his harmonisation of these three figures is more successful in Book Six. As Origen's life is described in detail (from his very infancy 'σπαργάνων'¹⁷⁵), Eusebius follows a discussion of his boyhood and education with the introduction of the mature Origen (now eighteen years old) in the role of educator in Alexandria.

And while devoting himself to teaching, as he himself gives an account at some point in his writing, there being nobody in Alexandria devoted to catechesis – all having been driven out under the threat of persecution – some of the unbelievers approached him to hear the word of God.

Σχολάζοντι δὲ τῇ διατριβῇ, ὥς που καὶ αὐτὸς ἐγγράφως ἱστορεῖ, μηδενὸς τε ἐπὶ τῆς Ἀλεξανδρείας τῷ κατηχεῖν ἀνακειμένου, πάντων δ' ἀπεληλαμένων ὑπὸ τῆς ἀπειλῆς τοῦ διωγμοῦ, προσήεσαν αὐτῷ τινες ἀπὸ τῶν ἐθνῶν ἀκουσόμενοι τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ.¹⁷⁶

One of these unbelievers, Heraclas, will become Origen's successor, but in reporting Origen's evangelistic prowess Eusebius reveals that there was no one left in Alexandria 'devoted to catechesis'. This represents one of the many intersections of Clement's and Origen's biographies, for this threat of persecution is traditionally understood to have been the cause of Clement's exit from the city and thus the elevation of Origen.¹⁷⁷ This is not, however, mentioned by Eusebius. There are no alternative catechetical instructors available; Clement is absent here. As an aside, Litwa's presentation of contrasting Christian 'schools' in Alexandria at this period further tempers our catechetical enthusiasm here.¹⁷⁸ To read between the lines and setting aside followers of Basilides, Carpocrates or other Christian groups Eusebius avowedly disregards; Eusebius is telling his readers that there was no approved or faithful school save the fledgling efforts of Origen.¹⁷⁹ With no one left to educate 'the faithful (τῶν πιστῶν)' of Book Five, Origen is thus described as beginning to preside over 'the catechetical school (τῆς κατηχήσεως ... διδασκαλείου)'

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.* 6.2.2.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.* 6.3.1.

¹⁷⁷ See, for example: Kovacs, 'Clement (Titus Flavius Clemens)', 262; Osborn, *Clement*, 1.

¹⁷⁸ Litwa, *Early Christianity*, 168–180.

¹⁷⁹ Compare Euseb. *EH*. 4.7.3–9.

himself.¹⁸⁰ Here, for the first time, the instruction at Alexandria is called a Catechetical School, connecting both κατηχήσεως and διδασκαλείου. This comes after Eusebius has noted an explicit break in instruction and a dearth of appropriate leadership. It comes not in the second century under Pantaenus or Clement but in 204 under Origen. From this point chronologically, Eusebius speaks of the school with greater confidence, and this is reflected in remarks made throughout Book Six that fall either side of this date.

This context develops Eusebius' pedagogical lineage: 'Pantaenus was succeeded in turn by Clement, who led the instruction in Alexandria until the time when Origen became one of his pupils.'¹⁸¹ Eusebius suggests Clement was teaching catechistically – or at least offering 'instruction' within a Christian context. Just as, however, Eusebius' connection of Pantaenus and Clement produced discrepancies, so too does this later succession. We are told that Clement remained as instructor 'until the time when Origen became one of his pupils (ὡς καὶ τὸν Ὠριγένην τῶν φοιτητῶν γενέσθαι αὐτοῦ)', yet we know Origen took over as pedagogue in 204, when he was eighteen years old. If, as is broadly understood, Clement fled in 202 (when Origen was only sixteen), then two issues arise. Firstly, there cannot have been a direct succession between the two at the head of a continuous school, as any catechetical instruction would have fallen into abeyance between 202 and 204. Secondly, if Clement left Alexandria when Origen was only sixteen, the window of possible instruction is remarkably brief. Eusebius has already twice stressed that as a boy Origen was instructed primarily in secular contexts (though he devoted himself to Christian teaching after his secular lessons were concluded).¹⁸² Van den Broek suggests the timings simply do not add up; Clement's classes were pitched at advanced students (as his *Stromateis* illustrates) and would have been beyond the abilities of the young Origen.¹⁸³ If we further understand only a part-time devotion to explicitly Christian study, this appears even less likely. The most obvious conclusion is that Eusebius is retrospectively constructing this lineage. Its historical (and thus chronological) reality is in one sense arbitrary; what matters is that through these three individuals, connected or otherwise, one can trace back models of

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.* 6.3.3.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.* 6.6.1.

¹⁸² *Ibid.* 6.2.8–9; 6.2.14–15. We later hear that Origen was taught Christian teachings by his parents (6.19.10).

¹⁸³ Van den Broek, *Studies in Gnosticism*, 197–205. This is a republished version of his earlier 'The Alexandrian "School"', set within a broader literary context.

faithful teaching into the depths of the early second century, a time of post-apostolic disciples and passionate martyrs. This is ancient Christian education, whether formal or not, and whether credibly coherent or not. Eusebius has selected the heroes of his intellectual sequence.

Origen and Beyond

This revised model makes sense of Eusebius' further remarks in Book Six. Two things become quickly evident. Firstly, if the succession of Pantaenus, Clement and Origen is 'identified' (for want of a better word) by the Caesarean, then the discrepancies around its description become secondary matters. Secondly, it is in and through Origen we find an established Christian school that leaves an institutional mark on the pages of Eusebius' *History*. Through both elements the Caesarean highlights both the faithfulness and the intellectual quality of his tradition whilst simultaneously avoiding the need to display evidence for claims he is not quite making.

In Book Six most references to the School centre on Origen, further indicating a lack of formality prior to his leadership. In place of a systematic presentation of academic succession, Eusebius instead attempts to solidify (at times tenuously) the links between the three men. In the list of Clement's works discussed in [Section 1](#), Eusebius pauses to remind his readers that in the *Hypotyposeis* Clement 'mentions by name Pantaenus as his teacher'.¹⁸⁴ Almost word-for-word with his earlier remark (5.11.2), Eusebius reaffirms the connection, entrenching the sense that these three men succeed one another, not necessarily as direct students, but as models and examples of divine favour in subsequent generations. This is further supported by a letter of Alexander, addressed to Origen, which praises both 'Pantaenus, truly blessed and masterful, and the holy Clement, my master and the one who benefitted me'.¹⁸⁵ While we have no external evidence to support Eusebius' claims regarding both the addressee and the sender of this letter, it once again brings the three figures into contact. Origen receives a commendation from both Pantaenus and Clement. These two passages aside, the first two figures in this educational triumvirate are no longer at the centre of Eusebius' attention. The connection of 6.6.1 is reaffirmed, and the focus returns to Origen.

It is Origen, after all, who is explicitly named both head of the catechetical school (performing the work 'of instruction in Alexandria

¹⁸⁴ Euseb. *EH*. 6.13.2.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.* 6.14.8–9.

(τῆς κατηχήσεως ἐπὶ τῆς Ἀλεξανδρείας)') and the school of divine instruction ('τῆς θείας διδασκαλίας') in 6.8.¹⁸⁶ Two brief references further link him to his unofficial predecessors, but the vast majority of Eusebius' scholastic references now entrench the idea that Origen founds the official Catechetical School in Alexandria and appoints its first actual successor as head after him. Eusebius describes Origen as following the 'example of Pantaenus,' praised as one who provided no little measure of help to those he taught.¹⁸⁷ An even more oblique connection to Clement is provided a few chapters later, as Eusebius records how Origen too wrote a *Stromateis*, a ten-book work.¹⁸⁸ Considering Clement's ancient reputation as 'the Stromatist', this reference to a now-lost *Stromateis* of Origen further connects the two, suggesting that the latter pedagogue imitated the form and style of his predecessor. Beyond these gestures, however, nothing more is said that contributes towards the picture of the so-called Catechetical School often promoted in modern scholarship.

Under Origen the school comes to recognisable institutional maturity. Where the institutional sense of the school is absent from Eusebius' connection of Pantaenus and Clement, with Origen we are given a lengthy description of how he took on other teachers and reserved only the most advanced classes for himself and, crucially, how he planned a succession for its leadership.¹⁸⁹ Eusebius records how in 232 Origen moved on from Alexandria, but unlike the informality of his predecessors, Origen 'left to Heraclas the catechetical school for those from that place (Ἡρακλᾶ τὸ τῆς κατηχήσεως τῶν αὐτόθι διδασκαλεῖον καταλείπει)'.¹⁹⁰ This single statement inaugurates a greater clarity in Eusebius' description of the School, its headship (Heraclas is succeeded by Dionysius, another of Origen's pupils¹⁹¹), and the episcopal succession in the city.¹⁹² The succession from Origen to Heraclas ushers in this new age for the School. Whereas previous successions were marked by Eusebian vagueness, Eusebius here uses the verb καταλείπει – literally the conveyance

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.* 6.8.1; 6.8.6.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.* 6.19.13.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.* 6.24.3. Both an imitation and eclipsing of Clement and his eight-book *Stromateis*.

¹⁸⁹ On Origen's enlarging the staff and retaining the instruction of the oldest pupils: Euseb. *EH.* 6.15.1.

¹⁹⁰ Euseb. *EH.* 6.26.1.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.* 6.29.4.

¹⁹² Which becomes increasingly intertwined with the heads of the catechetical school. Both Heraclas and Dionysius become bishops of the city. Compare Euseb. *EH.* 6.19.12; 6.26.1; 6.29.4; 6.35.1.

Table 1 *Eusebius' language*

Reference	Pedagogue(s)	Description of the school/ institution	Content of teaching	Language of succession
5.10.1	Pantaenus	συνεστῶτος διδασκαλείου τῶν ἱερῶν λόγων; τῆς διατριβῆς τῶν πιστῶν	τῶν ἱερῶν λόγων	ἡγεῖτο
5.11.1–2	Pantaenus and Clement	<i>Absent</i>	ταῖς θείαις γραφαῖς	<i>Absent</i>
6.3.3	Origen	τῆς κατηχήσεως... διδασκαλείου	τῆς κατηχήσεως	προέστη
6.6.1	Pantaenus, Clement and Origen	<i>Absent</i>	κατηχήσεως	διαδεξάμενος
6.8.1	Origen	<i>Absent</i>	τῆς κατηχήσεως	<i>Absent</i>
6.14.8–9	Pantaenus, Clement and Origen	<i>Absent</i>	<i>Absent</i>	κύριόν μου καὶ ἀδελφόν ¹⁹³
6.19.12	Pantaenus and Origen	<i>Absent</i>	τῶν Ἑλληνικῶν μαθημάτων καὶ μάλιστα τῶν ἐν φιλοσοφίᾳ	μιμησάμενοί
6.26.1	Origen and Heraclas	διδασκαλεῖον	τῆς κατηχήσεως	καταλείπει
6.29.4	Heraclas and Dionysius	τὴν διατριβὴν	τῆς κατηχήσεως	διαδέχεται

of something left behind – implying there is an institution, or organised school, that Origen can leave now to Heraclas. Furthermore, it is now described as ‘τῆς κατηχήσεως ... διδασκαλεῖον’, a formula closely echoed in the succession of Heraclas to Dionysius. Now, at last, the school has found its name. Now, at last, we have a Catechetical School.

¹⁹³ Alexander uses in this letter the language of master and brother; Pantaenus and Clement are described as his masters, and Origen as his brother, with the implication that they met one another under the care of Clement.

Conclusions

This discussion has suggested that it is impossible to retrieve any sense of a formal second-century Catechetical School from Eusebius' scattered remarks. Eusebius does not promote a coherent narrative of an unbroken formal catechetical school stretching from Pantaenus through to Origen and his successors. Rather, he appears deliberate in affirming a school of a fundamentally different quality under Origen, Heraclas and their successors. Eusebius is more concerned with clarifying a continuity for faithful adherence and pedagogy, over and above an illusion of institutional formality. His use of *καταλείπει* in the succession of Origen to Heraclas and its implication that there is at last something coherent to be left behind to the next approved pedagogue in Alexandria illustrates the arc of the above discussion. Throughout his many references to the pedagogical lineage in Alexandria, a clear shift in the formality of the pedagogical context he describes is recognisable behind his narrative through the terminology he provides. [Table 1](#) illustrates quite how this language conveys that sense.

With the exception of 6.6.1 and 6.29.4, the language of succession is highly varied, and conveys a looser sense of formal inheritance until the later stages of the school's existence. Similarly, aside from 6.6.1, the language of catechesis is not applied to the earlier stages of the Alexandrian instruction under Pantaenus and Clement. The particular focus of 6.6.1 has been discussed above, but the overall picture that Eusebius' language conveys suggests that the debate around the (non)existence of the so-called Catechetical School has been simply asking the wrong questions. The parameters of the debate have been incorrectly set, and the resulting conclusions have obscured the activities of this earlier stage of Alexandrian instruction.

By setting a false binary – centred around the existence or not of the Catechetical School – the debate has skewed towards a polarisation of those who reject its existence and those who affirm what has been understood as the 'Eusebian model'.¹⁹⁴ This analysis offers fresh parameters to the debate. Eusebius invites his readers to understand a formal Catechetical School emerging in the early third century and firmly established by the time Origen leaves Alexandria for Caesarea in 232, with Heraclas' appointment as successor. Eusebius, however, refuses to extend that picture back into the second century. Instead, he

¹⁹⁴ As discussed in [Section 2](#).

associated Pantaenus, Clement and Origen with one another to establish a retrospectively applied lineage between these three men. Eusebius stands ahead of this trio, and looking back, he recognises a connectivity between them that need not even have existed in historical reality. The important thing for Eusebius is that he can create these connections. Through subsequent generations of Alexandrian Christianity, these three men form a pivotal trinity of intellectual repute.

Eusebius never uses the formal descriptor ‘Catechetical School’ in connection with these three figures. His interest is not in creating institutions but in claiming association. He claims these figures, both one for another and all for himself. Such a presentation aligns with the overarching sense of his *History*: that throughout the first three centuries of Christian development believers had ‘surpassed their non-Christian peers at every turn by traditional Greco-Roman standards’.¹⁹⁵ His creation of a pedagogical dynasty of historic repute stretching back almost to the days of the Apostles (or at least their direct successors) illustrates just how Christians come into the new world of fourth-century toleration not with a weak and fragile tradition, but with a rich heritage of the Christianisation of *paideia* itself. Eusebius does not need a second-century Catechetical School to achieve this goal. Just as those who suggest he presents such an institution overinflate his comments, so too do the likes of Van den Broek, who reject a coherent pedagogical succession, downplay his intentions.¹⁹⁶ Eusebius is legitimising an intellectual and pedagogical heritage. This heritage produces an Alexandrian Catechetical School in the mid-third century but does not necessitate such an institution in the mid-second. In such a model, where Origen and ultimately Eusebius can and do appeal to Pantaenus and Clement as those who went before them – in spirit if not in actuality – these early pedagogues occupy an entirely different educational space. The anachronistic Catechetical School of the second century is no more. In its place we find Christian teachers participating in a diverse Greco-Roman intellectual landscape.

4 Clement among His Contemporaries

Recognising Eusebius’ retrospectively imposed lineage and dismissing the spectre of the second-century Catechetical School releases Clement’s own activities from the shackles of catechetical inhibition. Outside this model, both the context and content of Clement’s teachings take on a new

¹⁹⁵ Corke-Webster, *Eusebius and Empire*, 299.

¹⁹⁶ Van den Broek, ‘The Christian “School”’; *Studies in Gnosticism*.

tenor. For though Clement adopts a rather removed authorial stance, his silence primarily concerns autobiographical details and does not extend so comprehensively to his own pedagogical activities. Clement presents himself as one who stands before his readers, inviting them into a higher plane of Christian faith and *gnosis*. He is almost hierophantic in this role in the *Protrepticus*: he has become holy through divine illumination and initiation; his invitation is that his reader might follow him and do the same.¹⁹⁷ The *Paedagogus* thus adopts an almost encyclopaedic interest in every facet of the believer's life. Clement is variously concerned (among others) with how his reader eats, drinks, spends money, dresses, entertains, laughs, walks and smells. From diktats regarding marriage to instructions on the right footwear for the modest believer, Clement leaves few stones unturned. As he articulates in Book One, his desire is to 'outline what it is necessary for the man who is called a Christian to be'.¹⁹⁸ (Even a godly attitude to hiccups is considered worthy of attention and treated at some length in Book Two.) The *Stromateis* then represents Clement's most advanced teaching, as the reader strives towards the perfection promised in these earlier writings. Clement's pedagogical project is holistic and intensive.

The context of Clement's pedagogy thus bleeds through his prose. Despite his notorious authorial silence, the reader can engage with the educator behind these works. He is silent neither on the contemporary pedagogical world in which he operates nor with regard to his competitors in that world. Clement positions himself not simply as superior to his reader, either standing ahead of them in mystery or instructing them in standards of ethics and virtues that they themselves cannot turn back to him. Rather, Clement offers a compelling sales pitch. He presents to his reader not first and foremost as a sagely catechetical instructor at the bidding of a local priest or bishop, but instead as a pedagogue competing in the fiercely competitive and overcrowded landscape of second-century Alexandria. Students are won over in the *Protrepticus* and advanced through the *Paedagogus* and *Stromateis*. His pedagogical programme (whether or not it is formulated in and through a formal literary trilogy) shapes and forms the Clementine student.

Clement reveals himself to be a participant in this educational marketplace, competing with all manner of freelance religious and intellectual experts, vying for students (and their fees) in a city renowned for

¹⁹⁷ *Protr.* 12.120.1.

¹⁹⁸ *Paed.* 2.1.1.1.

its educational offerings. This section will explore this picture before evaluating what, exactly, this religious expert offered his students. With Clement removed from an institutional catechetical context, his teachings too can be freed from catechetical instruction. We find instead in his writings a desire to move students beyond that preparatory stage. Clement invites his readers to recognise a different emphasis in his instruction.¹⁹⁹ The picture that his extant writings (and, to a lesser degree, his lost writings preserved by both Clement and Eusebius) reveal is not one of primarily catechetical instruction, but of a Christian philosopher, inviting students into a life of spiritual perfection and enlightenment.

Clement as Pedagogue

Clement positions himself among his contemporaries – both Christian and non-Christian – and invites his reader to examine and accept his pedagogical proposition. The context his writings invite their readers to recognise is not an austere catechetical institution, but a peripatetic pedagogue offering Christian instruction in the tradition of countless ancient instructors who preceded him. Clement does not invite us to see a διδάσκαλος at the head of a formal school of Christian instruction, but a Christian philosopher peddling his teachings in a vibrant and prestigious ancient academic centre.

This identification is found in Clement's own self-perception. Clement rarely considers himself a διδάσκαλος, instead describing his own role as that of a παιδαγωγός. Though this is a title he applies to Christ (most notably in his second major work), Clement views himself as but merely a tutor to his spiritual charges.²⁰⁰ In Book One of his *Paedagogus*, where the Alexandrian sets out the spiritual and ethical background to the more didactic Books Two and Three, Clement adopts a submissive stance towards the divine παιδαγωγός, Christ. He is 'our instructor (ἡμέτερος παιδαγωγός)' – Clement's tone is of one who relates instruction that did not originate with his communicant.²⁰¹ The teachings he offers are for the benefit of the reader just as they have benefitted the author. When Christ operates as divine παιδαγωγός, Clement steps back into a subsidiary position. Christ, unlike Clement, is additionally termed διδάσκαλος. As Méhat has shown, Clement is effusive in awarding this epithet to Christ.²⁰²

¹⁹⁹ The counter-perspective to the case made in this regard is offered by Edsall, 'Catechumenate'.

²⁰⁰ Of Christ, explicitly: *Paed.* 1.1.1.4; and at length: 1.1.7.

²⁰¹ *Paed.* 1.7.55.2.

²⁰² Méhat, *Étude*, 61. See also Le Boulluc and Voulet, *Les Stromates*, 2.14.

This presentation of Christ, in tandem with his self-presentation, suggests that Clement considered himself neither a διδάσκαλος nor, given its total absence from his corpus, his school a διδασκαλεῖον. This self-identification further distances Clement from the later Eusebian model but, crucially, hints at an Alexandrian pedagogue situating himself amidst the contemporary pedagogical landscape.

This accords with what we have seen of Eusebius' own understanding of Clement as a pedagogue within the new model of the Eusebian lineage proposed in Section 3. Eusebius invites his readers to locate Clement (and Pantaenus) within a contemporary second-century milieu of Greco-Roman intellectuals. While praised for their learning in scripture and holy thought, both men are also heavily connected with philosophical teaching and activity. Pantaenus is praised as an expert in Stoicism in Book Five, while he is later celebrated for his connection to Greek thought and ideation.²⁰³ Clement is likewise connected to philosophy as a hearer of Pantaenus and through the preservation of his teachings in the *Hypotyposes*.²⁰⁴ Of Clement's *Stromateis* in particular Eusebius is explicit: it contains not only Scripture but also 'the writings of the Greeks (τῶν παρ' Ἑλλήσιν)' and 'the dogma of the philosophers (τὰ φιλοσόφων δόγματα)'.²⁰⁵ If one were to read Eusebius' comments on these two men alone – setting aside the later Origen – one would not presuppose them to be catechetical but philosophical instructors.²⁰⁶

Clement affirms such a reading, formulating his own pedagogical self-identity based on the models of instruction he himself received. To understand Clement's positioning of his own activities, we must return to part of his description of his educational odyssey.

One of these was an Ionian, who came from Greece, the remainder from the Greek Diaspora (μεγάλης Ἑλλάδος); one from Coele-Syria, one from Egypt, others from the East, one from among the Assyrians, one a Jew by birth from Palestine. And when I came upon the last, who was the first in power (δυνάμει δὲ οὗτος πρῶτος ἦν), having found him out hidden in Egypt, I found rest.²⁰⁷

Clement describes his instructors as part of a lengthy reflection on the nature and purpose of this complex work, and the preceding lines

²⁰³ Euseb. *EH*. 5.10.1–4; 6.19.12.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.* 5.11.1–2; 6.13.1–2.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.* 6.13.4–5.

²⁰⁶ Origen's description in 6.6.1. as φοιτητής rather than μασθητής only supports this philosophical sense. Compare n.160.

²⁰⁷ *Strom.* 1.1.11.2.

provide invaluable context for how Clement wishes his own teachers to be understood.

And so, in the *Laws*, the philosopher Plato – who learned from the Hebrews – orders farmers not to irrigate or take water from others until they have first dug down to that which is called virgin soil (and found that dry) in their own land. For it is right to supply want but not to support laziness. For as Pythagoras said: although it is agreeable to reason to take a share of a burden, it is not a duty to take it away.

Now Scripture kindles the living spark of the soul and directs the eye suitably to contemplation; perhaps adding in something, as the farmer when he ingrafts, but (according to the divine apostle) exciting what is in the soul.

... Now this book of mine is not a piece of writing artfully crafted for display, but it consists of notes stored up for my old age, as a remedy against forgetfulness (Ἡδὲ οὐ γραφή εἰς ἐπίδειξιν τετεχνασμένη ἦδε ἡ πραγματεία, ἀλλὰ μοι ὑπομνήματα εἰς γῆρας θησαυρίζεται). It is a mere reflection and shadow of the vigorous and animated teachings and the blessed and truly remarkable men I was privileged to hear. One of these was an Ionian ...²⁰⁸

These men are introduced in a rhetorically philosophical part of Clement's first *Stromata*. Having described how Plato ('who learned from the Hebrews') commanded farmers to dig their own irrigation before they take water from others, and then citing Pythagoras, he moves on to discuss Scripture.²⁰⁹ These holy writings 'kindle' the soul, directing it for right contemplation, exciting the soul 'as the farmer when he ingrafts'.²¹⁰ This pastoral thread ties the contemplative power of Scripture to Clement's veneration of Plato. Clement couches this scriptural growth as philosophical growth. This is to be expected; Clement later in the same book notes that Greek philosophy lays the groundwork for 'truly royal instruction (τῇ βασιλικωτάτῃ διδασκαλίᾳ)',²¹¹ while Christ's teachings are termed explicitly as 'the true philosophy (τὴν ἀληθῆ φιλοσοφίαν)'.²¹² Clement's contextualisation of his own writing then is not as a rhetorical display (perhaps a subtle attack on the kind of sophistry he critiques elsewhere in his writings²¹³) but as a record of the 'teachings' he has been privileged to hear.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.* 1.1.10.2–11.1.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.* 1.1.10.2. Compare *Pl. Lg.* 8.844a–b.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.* 1.1.10.5.

²¹¹ *Ibid.* 1.16.80.6.

²¹² *Ibid.* 1.18.90.1.

²¹³ Clement is often critical of sophistry as quasi-intellectualising (e.g. *Protr.* 1.1.2; *Strom.* 1.3.22.1–24.4; 1.8.39.1–3; *QDS* 1.1), reflecting a view discussed by Whitmarsh, *The Second Sophistic*, esp. 17.

With Plato and Pythagoras for company, these educators – who seemingly taught in an imitation of the Socratic discourses of Plato’s writings – ultimately enlightened Clement with the true philosophy of Christ. His Ionian, Syrian, and Palestinian instructors, among others, are introduced as philosophical instructors.²¹⁴ Their teaching, particularly that of the ‘Sicilian Bee’, illuminates the ‘true philosophy’ that Clement now stores up in this work for his own students.²¹⁵ Clement evidently understands that he is the student of true philosophers and that he communicates the true philosophy in his own teaching. He thus understands himself to be a philosopher too. Though Eusebius alludes to this in the philosophical commendations he attaches to both Clement and Pantaeus, the picture that Clement presents of himself as an instructor in his own writings is that of a teacher of philosophy.²¹⁶ Though Edsall claims that ‘Clement ... inherited a catechetical process that was identifiably and self-consciously Christian’, the Alexandrian in fact suggests quite the opposite.²¹⁷ When Clement presents his educational journey, his intellectual inheritance, it is not as a catechumen but as a philosopher learning from philosophers.

As Clement matures as a teacher, his exhortatory *Protrepticus* provides perhaps the closest glimpse of his pedagogical context. This first major work is inherently competitive, framing the choice of faith (‘either judgement or grace (ἢ κρίσιν ἢ χάριν)’) as a binary between the gods of the Greco-Roman world or Clement’s Christ.²¹⁸ In chapter one, Clement describes this choice as two songs ringing out in a discordant clash: Greco-Roman culture sings the old song of the gods; Christ himself sings the new song about his own work of salvation.²¹⁹ As the work progresses, Clement is often in a combative mood, levelling accusations of stupidity and blind error against his readers.²²⁰ At times, the mask of protreptic discourse slips, and Clement reveals fragments of his own interactions beyond the written appeal. In chapter six, the philosophers are heavily critiqued

²¹⁴ A striking echo of Justin’s presentation of his own philosophical peregrinations (*Dialogue with Trypho*, 2).

²¹⁵ They are invited into his ‘meadow of learning’ to – as the Platonic bee – glide from flower to flower to draw out the nectar of true learning. *Strom.* 1.1.11.2. Compare Creedy, ‘Redemption’, 25–26.

²¹⁶ Euseb. *EH.* 5.10.1–5; 5.11.1–5.

²¹⁷ Edsall, ‘Catechumenate’, 119.

²¹⁸ *Protr.* 12.123.2.

²¹⁹ See Lugaresi, ‘Canto del Logos’; Cosgrove, ‘Early Christian Music’; Halton, ‘Clement’s Lyre’.

²²⁰ Who are, as discussed above, both stylistically and grammatically opposed to the author. Compare nn.40–41.

(a rare reversal of his usual praise for the likes of Plato, Aristotle and Pythagoras) for their part in leading his audience astray. Speaking auspiciously to Plato, but ultimately to his audience directly, Clement speaks with familiarity of those in Alexandria itself who parrot their teachings.

I know your teachers (οἶδά σου τοὺς διδασκάλους) even if you would try to conceal them. From Egyptians you learn geometry, from Babylonians astronomy, from Thracians you gain healing spells, and much from the Assyrians too.²²¹

Clement identifies these teachers – not, perhaps, genuine individuals – but rather the calibre of instruction on offer, through a caricature of educational greatness. Traditional links are exploited to show that Clement competes on a level playing field; though a Christian instructor, he can hold his own with any of his rivals.²²² Earlier in the same chapter, he identifies – and scoffs at – the way in which these rivals teach and the fragility of what they offer.

For what reason, as if alluding to truth, do you show your followers that they are ruled over by ‘flux’ and ‘motion’ and ‘strong currents’? And why do you fill life with idols, fashioning wind, air, fire, earth, stones, wood, iron, this universe, into gods? You even prattle on about the divinity of the wandering stars to those men who have become truly misguided through this much-talked-of (not astronomy, but) astrology.²²³

Through a mix of meaningless platitudes and frivolous language, these teachers prattle on and seduce their foolish audiences. Clement’s critique of these contemporary teachers is simply that they repeat the ancient errors of their famous forebears. In one sense, his exhortatory work offers a lofty invitation to an embrace to divine mystery and true faith. In another, it merely holds out a better philosophical model and a more promising pedagogical product. By equating his spiritual opposition to the customs of the Greco-Roman gods and their worship with the intellectual opposition of a divine philosophy competing against flawed and fundamentally errant philosophical models, Clement positions himself in competition with these other – unnamed – teachers. He inserts himself directly into the pedagogical landscape of Roman Alexandria, a city famous for its schools, peripatetic instruction and intellectual prowess.

²²¹ *Protr.* 6.70.1.

²²² A display of learning that mirrors other such ancient pedagogical peacocking in this regard, compare n.214.

²²³ *Protr.* 6.67.2.

This landscape was not populated only by philosophers, however, and Clement hints at other intellectual and pseudo-spiritual practitioners with whom he competes in chapter nine as he briefly turns his attention to another subgroup of this multitude.

Men who believe in enchanters receive amulets and charms which are supposed to provide security. Would you not rather wish to wear the heavenly amulet, the Word who truly saves (τὸν σωτῆρα λόγον), trusting in the enchantment of God?²²⁴

Magicians were an integral part of the cultic and intellectual contours of the Roman city.²²⁵ Here Clement attacks not the activity of such spiritualists (perhaps as Christian participation therein is well attested²²⁶) but the practitioners themselves. He couches his own offer in the same terms, cajoling his audience to reject false amulets and fake spells for the true amulet of Christ the salvific *Logos* of God. Once again, though, Clement conceives of himself and locates himself among these individuals. His offer is made as an equal – one with a better product – but an equal participant in this intellectual and cultural milieu, nonetheless. The satirist Lucian, who flourished only a few decades before Clement's career, produced a humorous work entitled *Philosophies for Sale*.²²⁷ In it, Lucian envisaged a crowded slave market where each philosophical school, personified in the weary body of the enslaved figure of their founder, was brought on-stage to be auctioned off. Their virtues and demerits were spelled out for the crowd, and each lot was methodically worked through. The work is a satirical take on the notion of selling wisdom and learning, but in its satire, it points us to the very world in which Clement operated.

Clement invites his readers to understand him first and foremost within the teeming masses of Alexandria's broader pedagogical offering. Wendt has persuasively theorised the activities of Christian instructors in the first century within this broader framework of intellectual practitioners, and such a model enfleshes Clement's own reality.²²⁸ The landscape Clement inhabited is exemplified by a late first-century letter from Oxyrhynchus.²²⁹ The young author, Neilus, writes to his family describing his search for an appropriate teacher in Alexandria. The letter paints a picture of a city bursting with potential tutors and instructors.

²²⁴ *Protr.* 9.115.2.

²²⁵ See further: Frankfurter, 'Religious Practice'.

²²⁶ See Meyer and Smith, *Ancient Christian Magic*; Brashear, 'The Greek Magical Papyri'.

²²⁷ Written c.170.

²²⁸ Wendt, *At the Temple Gates*.

²²⁹ *P. Oxy.* XVIII 2190.

Neilus initially struggles to find a teacher, not because he is met with slim pickings but because there is simply too much choice.²³⁰ Clement's *Protrepticus* hints at a teacher embroiled in that world. Clement is not instructing austere Christian catechumens within the strict confines of an ecclesiastically approved institution. He is teaching among and alongside the many intellectual practitioners of the ancient city. He competes for pupils within a market saturated with both demand and supply. It is a cutthroat setting; he can afford to pull no punches in critiquing his opponents and enticing potential students. But it is not, first and foremost, a Christian setting. Though Christian contemporaries are, no doubt, operating and recruiting for their own schools (such as Basilides, Carpocrates and Valentinus²³¹), Clement is overt in competing against Christian and non-Christian educators alike.

Indeed, the very fact that Clement's attacks on these Christian teachers are reserved for the *Paedagogus* and even more so the *Stromateis* suggests they do not represent primary competitors in the initial struggle for new pupils. Clement need not play defensively in these early spiritual and pedagogical skirmishes. It is only in later works that the followers of the likes of Basilides or Carpocrates require refutation. This silence in these early stages further supports Clement's teaching taking place outside a formal catechetical context. He does not appear worried about losing students to Christian competitors at an early stage; rather, at the later stage in his intellectual and spiritual project, these men compete at a higher level, not an initiatory one. Nonetheless, Clement does in his later writings refute these figures. This is unsurprising: if we understand that there was some sort of a peripatetic or gathered school around Clement himself in the 180s and 190s, then he likely knows of a number of Christian alternatives. As Litwa concludes:

By the time Pantaenus arrived in Alexandria (about 180 CE), there were at least eight known 'schools' of Christian thought that were present or had once existed in Alexandria (Basilidean, Valentinian, Marcionite, Eugnostan, Carpocratian, Prodican, Cassianic, and Naassene).²³²

While we cannot necessarily attest to all these competitors as continuing to thrive in Clement's time, his writings place him in competition with Basilidean, Valentinian, Marcionite and Carpocratian rivals. The third *Stromata*, for example, is largely given over to a refutation of

²³⁰ Compare Winter, *Philo and Paul*, 25.

²³¹ Compare n.232, and n.134 above.

²³² Litwa, *Early Christianity*, 177.

Basilidean teachings on marriage.²³³ One cannot even speak of Clement's school as being 'the' Christian school of Alexandria, regardless of its exact shape and formality.

Clement evidently considers himself a peer to the sophists of the Mouseion, or the peripatetic teachers for whom Alexandria was long respected.²³⁴ We would do better to understand him operating a private school, centred on his own philosophical understanding of the Christian faith, and competing with contemporary freelance experts. Several elements discussed above further support this conclusion. Firstly, the display of learning found throughout his writings (and well-illustrated by his copious and widespread literary borrowings) suggests an author positioning himself as an individual learned in both Classical and Christian wisdom. Secondly, his own educational record (which he crafts to display himself as both a philosopher and a polymath) adds notable credentials to his own reputation. Thirdly, his evident disinterest in the involvement of the local church, particularly in the *Protrepticus* but throughout his corpus, suggests a pedagogical context aside from that community. This all combines to point us away from the model of a second-century Catechetical School. This does, however, further align with Eusebius' identification of Clement as a significant pedagogue in the generation between Pantaenus and Origen. Van den Hoek suggested that the question of whether Clement operated in a private or an official context ultimately 'clarifies little'.²³⁵ The above discussion suggests otherwise. Not only does this distinction illuminate Eusebius' broader construction of an Alexandrian pedagogical lineage, but it further reveals Clement as both an individual and educator. With a sense of his own context, operating a private school in a landscape saturated with rival educational offerings, his works themselves can be re-evaluated for the content they contain and the Christian project of divine illumination they support.

²³³ In such detail that the Victorian translators of the *Stromateis* for the *Ante-Nicene Fathers* series, fearing the moral corruption of Clement's exposition, supplied a Latin translation for the third *Stromata* instead of English.

²³⁴ Though sophistry is often negatively conceived in Clement's writings (n.213) the Mouseion was respected as an important intellectual institution, as evidenced by Hadrian awarding honourific membership to Dionysius of Miletus and Polemo of Smyrna in the early second century. Compare Philostr. *V.S.* 524, 533.

This new perspective for Clement's pedagogical context provides new colour to the lengthy critiques of sophistry in the first *Stromata*, as Clement is not perhaps attacking anonymous abstractions but rather entrenching his students against contemporary rivals. As Minnone ('Greek Grammatical Tradition') and Barnhart ('Speaking Unnoticeably') have recently shown, Clement defined himself in intellectual conversation with his Greco-Roman contemporaries beyond the church itself.

²³⁵ Van den Hoek, 'School', 86.

Clement's Pedagogy

Clement's comments on his pedagogical context point us away from the traditional Catechetical School model. This institutional perspective is often supported, however, by an appeal to the content of Clement's extant writings. Edsall illustrates this approach: '[Clement's] own work nevertheless betrays a thorough knowledge of and concern for contemporary catechetical practices.'²³⁶ This remark represents a broader scholarly affirmation of Clement's writings as catechetical in nature.²³⁷ Few defenders of this perspective, however, elaborate on what that catechetical nature entails. The term is widely understood to convey a sense of Christian instruction connected to baptism, but this connection is itself understood in two broad senses: either catechesis as preparation for the baptismal rite or catechesis as basic doctrinal instruction following baptism and the acceptance of the faith.²³⁸ Κατηχέω originally meant to teach or speak orally, and κατήχησις thus related to any form of oral teaching. In New Testament texts, for example, the word is used eight times with this broad range of meaning.²³⁹ By Eusebius' time the Christianisation of the term was more fulsome, and the baptismal connection was more firmly entrenched. The problem with considering Clement as a catechist is that he writes in a second-century context where the maturation of this language was not complete. While the *Didache*, for example, points to an early form of baptismal training with its Two Ways tradition, it omits the later doctrinal instruction that came to define catechesis in the third, fourth and fifth centuries.²⁴⁰ Such elements are absent also in any understandings of a Justinian school in Rome.²⁴¹ These examples illustrate the problem: catechesis as Christian instruction is primarily a later development.²⁴² To even read Clement 'catechistically' is to impose on

²³⁶ Edsall, 'Catechumenate': 101.

²³⁷ For example: Le Boulluec, 'Clément d'Alexandrie', 65–72; Van den Hoek, 'School'; Wywra, 'Religiöses Lernen', 271–306; Knauber, 'Handbuch', 318–320; Saxer, *Les rites de l'initiation*, 101; Neymeyr *Die christlichen Lehrer*, 55.

²³⁸ Fogleman, *Knowledge*, 11–12. Compare Litwa, *Early Christianity*, 178.

²³⁹ Four times by both Luke and Paul: Luke 1.4; Acts 21.21; 18.25; 21.24; 1 Cor 14.19; Rom 2.18; Gal 6.6 (twice).

²⁴⁰ See Butler, 'The "Two Ways"'; Milavec, *The Didache*. Compare n.139.

²⁴¹ Whether formal or otherwise. See Justin's own pedagogical context: Georges, 'Justin's School'.

²⁴² The contemporary Latin text, the *Passion of Perpetua*, describes Perpetua and her fellow martyrs as catechumens (1.1). Another contemporary Latin author, Tertullian, famously declared that 'Christians are made, not born (*fiunt non nascuntur Christiani*)'. (*Apol.* 18.4.) This language was far from settled as the likes of Tertullian and Clement wrote at the turn of the century. For a broader introduction to catechesis and the development of Christian instruction in antiquity, see Fogleman, *Knowledge*.

this figure later standards and understandings that were simply unknown and unavailable to the second-century author.

Clement represents a waypoint in this linguistic development. His use of the term and its cognates looks very different – for example – from Augustine’s thoughts in his fourth-century *De Catechizandis rudibus*. Osborn suggested that Clement articulated a preparatory scheme that converted unbelievers, readied them for baptism and produced catechists in turn.²⁴³ This formalised progression seems at odds with Clement’s own stated aims, and he nowhere, for example, speaks explicitly of catechumenates as a formalised group.²⁴⁴ Κατήχησις is really only a primary concern in Book One of his *Paedagogus*, and even there his use of the term is specified within a broader intellectual project. To designate Clement’s writing as catechetical is to impose later standards, either through the overlaid model of the so-called Catechetical School or through a less formalised structuring of his teaching as fundamentally centred on baptism and its production of faith. Having argued for a location of Clement not within a formal Christian structure but as part of a contemporary intellectual milieu, this section will close by holding Clement’s teachings up against the two broad understandings of catechesis as either pre- or post-baptism. We will see, as we do so, that Clement neither dedicates his pedagogical project to those preparing for baptism nor restricts it to those requiring the basic doctrinal and spiritual instruction of the newly baptised believer. His intentions are far more ambitious.

Catechesis as Baptismal Preparation

If we posit an understanding of catechesis as preparation for the rite of baptism in Clement’s context, then we must determine where, in Clement’s intellectual project, baptism is expected. This act obviously precedes the *Stromateis*, an advanced work that presupposes not only a committed Christian reader but also acknowledges (repeatedly) its complexity and mystic secrets.²⁴⁵ To search for a pre-baptismal demonstration of Christian instruction, we must look earlier in the intellectual and spiritual trajectory of Clement’s extant corpus.

The *Paedagogus* is explicitly addressed to believers and represents surely the most appropriate text for such a catechetical work. Immediately, however, it becomes apparent that Clement speaks to those who can identify as believers through their experience of the baptismal rite.

²⁴³ Osborn, *Clement*, 21.

²⁴⁴ Unlike, for example, the fourth-century canons of Elvira (*Canon* 42) and Nicaea (*Canon* 2).

²⁴⁵ At, for example, *Strom.* 1.12.55.3–56.3; 4.2.4.1–7.4; 7.18.111.1–4.

And we who are baptised ones [βαπτιζόμενοι], having wiped away the sins that obscure the light of the Holy Spirit, have the heavenly eye of the Spirit free and unimpeded, full of light so that we alone contemplate the divine...²⁴⁶

Clement writes to those already baptised, οἱ βαπτιζόμενοι. It is they who are the pupils of the divine pedagogue of Christ. As he had just a little while earlier explained to his audience: ‘As baptised ones (βαπτιζόμενοι) we are illuminated; as illuminated ones we are made sons; as ones made into sons we are made perfect (τελειούμεθα); as perfected ones we are made immortal.’²⁴⁷ The *Paedagogus* is broadly understood to be a catechetical handbook in connection with baptism.²⁴⁸ But here, as Clement sets up the spiritual and ethical context of his second major text, he points his readers not to baptism but through it. His students are those who have by this point journeyed through baptism into the illumination and sonship of a new divine existence. Baptism is expected not as the fruit of reading the *Paedagogus* and submitting to its teachings, but as an act completed prior to this work. Baptism is neither the focus (though Clement is happy to dwell on the subject at length as he begins the work) nor the goal of its effect. Clement understands his readers to have been spiritually elevated to his level. There is a corporality in the fact they all stand before the divine pedagogue of Christ as οἱ βαπτιζόμενοι. A pre-baptismal sense of catechetical instruction must then precede this second major work.

The *Protrepticus*, however, is clearly designed to precede any sense of catechetical instruction leading to baptism. Even supporters of Clement the catechist recognise this spiritual and intellectual positioning. ‘The whole purpose of the *Protrepticus* is to act pro-catechetically (or to enable others to do so).’²⁴⁹ The work represents the stage before catechesis, namely an exhortatory work inviting the reader to embrace the faith necessary for this process to move forward. The work is suasorial, not catechetical.

The protreptic style ... is a pro-active, missionary tool of inviting, encouraging, stimulating, exciting, promising, persuading, urging, exhorting, impelling, and pushing his audience into the Christian fold. A reading of Clement makes it clear that προτρέπω can have all these meanings.²⁵⁰

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.* 1.6.28.1.

²⁴⁷ *Paed.* 1.6.26.1.

²⁴⁸ Compare Knauber, ‘Handbuch’; Pujiula, *Körper und christliche Lebensweise*, 84–94; Stockhausen, ‘Ein “Neus Lied”’, 92; König, ‘Dass du dich retten lässt’, 102–103.

²⁴⁹ Edsall, ‘Catechuminate’: 106.

²⁵⁰ Van den Hoek, ‘Apologetic and Protreptic’, 81.

Clement embraces the style of this genre in the work. We have already noted the grammatical movement of the subject readers. Clement's urging is of an audience embroiled in the culture and activities of their predecessors. 'Let us repent therefore and pass on out of ignorance and into knowledge, out of senselessness into sense, out of unwholesomeness into self-control, from unrighteousness into righteousness, from godlessness to God.'²⁵¹ He does not speak to those themselves reflecting on the doctrines and truths of a newfound faith; he speaks to those for whom the first step is a total transformation from unbelief to belief. His tragic parallel between an imagined Pentheus and Tiresias in chapter twelve illustrates this well. While Clement's Pentheus rejects what he hears from the author and descends further into drunken madness, the blind Tiresias is transformed, 'you shall see heaven, oh aged one, even though you cannot see Thebes'.²⁵² The implication is clear: be not like Pentheus, but like Tiresias. And so the work ends with this choice.

The place for pre-baptismal catechesis, and indeed for baptism itself, is therefore between Clement's first two major works. The *Protrepticus* leaves the reader with the choice between judgement or grace. The work presents an invitation into the true sight of the imagined Christian convert Tiresias, a blind man given sight by faith once again, before the *Paedagogus* takes up the sense of illumination and sonship that succeed the act of baptism.²⁵³ The place for the celebration of this rite is therefore between these two works. As Clement writes late in Book One of this second major work:

For the life of Christians, that we are now trained in, is a system of reasonable actions, these being the things taught by the Word, an eternal energy that we have named faith. This system is the laws of the Lord... written for us [as believers] ourselves.²⁵⁴

Clement accompanies and urges his reader deeper into the mysteries of the faith first suggested in the final chapter of the *Protrepticus*. The Christian life is one of training, and the *Paedagogus* picks up that training after the rite of baptism. Clement is explicit, he writes to people of the faith, who, along with the author, can be categorised as οἱ βαπτιζόμενοι – the baptised ones.²⁵⁵ Far from a pre-baptismal catechetical manual, Clement anticipates

²⁵¹ *Protr.* 10.93.1.

²⁵² *Ibid.* 12.119.3.

²⁵³ Judgement or grace: 12.123.2; Tiresias as an example of faith: 12.119.2–3.

²⁵⁴ *Paed.* 1.13.103.4.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.* 1.6.2.1 and 1.6.28.1.

that the catechesis of these new believers will be undertaken outside of his extant works, and that they come to the *Paedagogus* as those who have already been baptised. It is evident that there is no place for this understanding of catechetical instruction within Clement's extant corpus.

Catechesis as Post-Baptismal Instruction

A preparatory model for catechetical instruction evidently falls short of Clement's pedagogical project. This is unsurprising since Clement's literary record skews towards more advanced study and invites a sense of spiritual progression throughout. If he were to preserve a record of Alexandrian catechetical instruction, it would better suit a model of catechesis that takes the catechumen through baptism and into the doctrinal and ethical tenets of their newfound faith. On the surface, this seems a more promising understanding. Save the exhortation of the *Protrepticus*, all his major works are located (in a spiritual-temporal sense) at the post-baptismal stage. This, therefore, appears to be the perspective embraced by those who maintain a catechetical model within Clement's teaching. Building on the work of Marrou and Knauber, Van den Hoek labelled the *Paedagogus* 'a kind of handbook for catechumens and the recently baptized', locating the catechetical force of this work as within the post-baptismal space.²⁵⁶

Clement certainly embraces catechetical language in this second major work. Much of his first book is given over to an allegorical interpretation of 1 Corinthians 3.1–3, where Clement sees baptism as inaugurating a path for the believer from first taking the divine breast milk of Christ as nursing infants before moving to solid foods as the believer spiritually matures.²⁵⁷ His use of the language of catechumens and catechesis represents the development of this language in early Christian rhetoric by the late second century.

One could understand the scripture as follows: 'But I could not speak to you, brothers, as spiritual but as fleshly people, as infants in Christ' so that fleshly could be understood as new catechumens (νεωστὶ κατηχουμένους) that are still infants in Christ. He calls 'spiritual ones' those who have already come to faith in the holy spirit, while he calls 'fleshly ones' the new catechumens (νεοκατηχήτους), not yet purified...²⁵⁸

²⁵⁶ Van den Hoek, 'School', 67.

²⁵⁷ On the medical context of this passage, consult LaValle Norman, 'Divine Breastfeeding'. See also Edsall, *Reception*, 93–125; Buell, *Making Christians*, 121–130.

²⁵⁸ *Paed.* 1.6.36.2–3.

Van den Hoek suggests such language indicates a complex catechetical reality behind Clement's writing, though she concedes the metaphorical tenor of the passage challenges such a perspective.²⁵⁹ Regardless of whether Clement speaks of an experienced reality (which is surely the more likely option – if Clement anticipates baptism between the *Protrepticus* and *Paedagogus*, then this necessitates further Christian activity outside of his written pedagogical project) or not, he tackles here the issue around spiritual immaturity in connection with baptism. He therefore locates both baptism (which his readers have already experienced) and catechesis (which seems to him an initial or introductory stage) as but waypoints in a broader Christian progression.

He also says: 'I gave you milk to drink', saying by this I poured knowledge (τὴν γνῶσιν) into you, which from catechetical instruction (ἐκ κατηχήσεως) onwards nourishes into eternal life.²⁶⁰

Here we recognise several elements in Clement's own conception of his spiritual project. The initial stage is represented by this divine breastmilk. This accords with the macro as well as the micro of Clement's *Paedagogus*; the work speaks to spiritual infants in reflection of contemporary pedagogue–child relationships and seeks to train up to a maturity that will be further reflected in the *Stromateis*. He also locates catechetical instruction as prior to or around baptism itself, with the understanding that this stage will be surpassed (as noted above, new catechumens have not yet matured in spirit or purity). Van den Hoek recognised this stratified progression in Clement's thought.

Clement depicts a gradual process that in its initial phase reaches faith through catechism and baptism. From there, through a continuous training, the faithful aim at a higher spiritual and virtuous realm, namely that of knowledge.²⁶¹

The challenge then becomes where we locate Clement's teaching in this process, and the answer is simple. Clement does not primarily or even significantly promote himself and his writings as catechetical in nature or focus. His project is part of the 'continuous training' Van den Hoek identifies above. As he articulates it in the introduction to the second book of his *Paedagogus*, as he turns to the explicit ethical instruction

²⁵⁹ Van den Hoek, 'School', 68–70. For an opposing view, see Hornschuh, 'Das Leben des Origines', 199, n.74; 202, n.81.

²⁶⁰ *Paed.* 1.6.36.4.

²⁶¹ Van den Hoek, 'School', 69.

that dominates the work: ‘keeping then to our purpose, and selecting the Scriptures that are beneficial for training for life, we must outline what it is necessary for the man who is called a Christian to be during his whole life.’²⁶² Clement’s goal is to remake the Christian. He is not primarily concerned with forming the believer in the initial stages of faith, his desire is to mould them in a deeper and ultimately gnostic understanding of the faith.

Indeed, throughout his corpus, Clement maintains a distinction between simple and more complex believers. Clement perceives a consistent distinction between the readiness for faith, and thus the preparation for baptism and the higher knowledge of learning once one has been illuminated into that faith.²⁶³ He is therefore primarily concerned with those who seek this deeper illumination, for after all even in the invitation to faith of the *Protrepticus* Clement is concerned about faith producing progress through illumination. ‘Let us allow in the light, that we might allow in God. Let us allow in light, that we might become disciples of the Lord.’²⁶⁴ Clement’s spiritual project is never about producing catechumens: it is about producing Christians on a disciplined path to perfection.

Just as, then, to be saved simply is the result of right action, but to be saved rightly and properly is true accomplishment, so also every action of the gnostic might be called true accomplishment, but that of the simple believer intermediate action, not yet perfected according to reason, not yet made right according to knowledge, and that of every unbeliever on the contrary is sinful.²⁶⁵

There is a fundamental distinction (and even value proposition) between the simple and the gnostic believer. Clement’s interests lie with the latter. While all believers are of equal worth in salvific terms (he elsewhere affirms Paul’s teaching on this in Gal. 3.28²⁶⁶) Clement nonetheless maintains a clear distinction: there are two types of believers with regard to the model of education he holds forth. Clement’s primary concern with these simpler believers and their intermediate action is that they remove themselves from his pedagogical care.

And even now I fear, as it is written ‘to cast pearls before pigs, lest they tread them underfoot, and turn and tear you to pieces.’ For it is difficult to present the truly pure and transparent words respecting the true light to piglike and untrained hearers ... But in truth the outlines

²⁶² *Paed.* 2.1.1.1.

²⁶³ *Paed.* 1.6.26.1. Compare n.43.

²⁶⁴ *Protr.* 11.113.3.

²⁶⁵ *Strom.* 6.14.111.3.

²⁶⁶ *Paed.* 1.6.31.2.

of these notes contain the truth scattered and sown here and there like fragments, that it may escape the notice of those who pick up seeds like jackdaws; but when they find a good farmer, each one of them will germinate and produce grain.²⁶⁷

Clement is anxious that simple believers, here scorned as bestial and swinish, might not corrupt his gnostic notes through their untrained misunderstanding. He thus scatters his learning through the work in such a manner that these bestial believers might not stumble upon it, but the true gnostic might discern its depths. Any catechetical interest in the *Paedagogus* is not as a handbook of doctrine or ethics for every believer. Clement instead recognises that the ‘bare faith (ψιλή πίστις)’ of those who have just received baptism and catechesis represents merely the taking of the first steps down the path for the true gnostic into greater divine illumination.²⁶⁸ To return to a passage cited above:

And we who are baptised ones [βαπτιζόμενοι], having wiped away the sins that obscure the light of the Holy Spirit, have the heavenly eye of the Spirit free and unimpeded, full of light so that we alone contemplate the divine...²⁶⁹

The status of baptism, awarded after the acceptance of faith in Clement’s *Protrepticus*, leads to a spirit-filled life of divine contemplation.²⁷⁰ Now that the believer is baptised, they might progress. But Clement points his readers not to baptism or catechesis but through it. The true gnostic is one who moves from their baptism to a contemplation of the divine. As he elsewhere remarks, baptism leads to both training in the spirit and a sense of progression, racing on into ‘eternal light, [as] children of the father.’²⁷¹ Clement’s work is not offering a catechetical handbook for the pre-baptism convert, nor is he equipping baptised believers with the core tenets of the faith (if he were, the controversies around basic doctrines such as Clement’s ecclesiology or Christology would be far less significant). Clement’s *Paedagogus* is instead a catalyst for the progression of the gnostic believer into deeper Christian mystery, guiding the reader towards the spiritual complexities of the *Stromateis*. As remarked in [Section 2](#), the harmony of these major works comes not primarily

²⁶⁷ *Strom.* 1.12.55.3–56.3.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.* 1.9.43.1.

²⁶⁹ *Paed.* 1.6.28.1.

²⁷⁰ As Costache recently termed it, Clement seeks to remake believers as ‘holy gnostics’, contemplating the divine in a deeper and richer sense. Costache, *Nature Contemplation*, 67–93.

²⁷¹ *Paed.* 1.6.30.2; 1.6.32.1.

through formal literary ties but through coherent assistance of Clement's eager pupil. One progresses through the Clementine project from a point of unbelief to conversion and baptism, all before the *Paedagogus* sets the path in earnest for the mystic and intellectual complexities of Clement's Christian ideal going forward.

At this juncture, another Clementine work warrants consideration. The surviving fragment of Clement's *To the Recently Baptised* is often wholly neglected in such discussions. This extant fragment is significant, and in it Clement sets out several precepts that guide the believer to imitate and reflect on the divine goodness of Christ. Clement urges newly baptised believers (the βαπτιζόμενοι of the *Paedagogus*) to cultivate a steadiness of mind and soul that allows the Lord to work with them. 'For a mind seated upon a quiet throne gazing closely upon the Lord is necessary to control the passions.'²⁷² The entire fragment reflects this humble ponderousness. Clement is cultivating, in those who are newly baptised, not only a quiet humility but also a thoughtful spiritual reflection. Their speech is to be thoughtful ('περιεσκεμμένως') and they are to 'consider and reflect on (προεσκεψώ καὶ προενόησας)' all they say.²⁷³ As opposed to frivolity and levity, Clement urges his readers to 'begin with wisdom and virtue' and thus become 'gentle and high-minded.'²⁷⁴ While the text reads as something of the ethical reflection of the *Paedagogus* in miniature, its tenor is of preparation for the higher things of the *Stromateis*. It accompanies Clement's intellectual project well, but it does not catechise spiritual babes with rote learning of doctrine and practice. It prepares the newly baptised for the right life of mystic learning, supporting a sense that Clement's project is aimed at taking pupils beyond a simplicity of faith.

The *Protrepticus*, *Paedagogus* and *To the Newly Baptised* all draw the reader through baptism and catechesis to pastures new, to the philosophical meadow of Clement's *Stromateis*.²⁷⁵ Clement's entire project is not catechetical – either with a pre- or post-baptismal sense of the term – but gnostic (in the sense of pursuing γνῶσις). Clement seeks divine illumination, not simple faith. This makes sense of Clement's reaffirmation of spiritual mystery and selective understanding in the first *Stromata*. As Clement describes his own writing, 'it is required therefore to hide

²⁷² *To the Newly Baptised* II.9–11.

²⁷³ *Ibid.* II.21–22; II.27–28.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.* I.36; II.39–41.

²⁷⁵ *Strom.* 1.1.11.2; 4.2.6.2–3; 6.1.2.1. Compare Heath, *Shaping*, 111–16; 175–82. Of course, the deeper one journeys into Clement's project, the further one also moves away from the teachings of Clement's competitors.

the wisdom that is spoken in a mystery, that which the son of God taught.²⁷⁶ Clement does not want such mysteries to fall before pig-like believers but before true spiritual students. The *Stromateis* introduces spiritual mysteries and complexities that build on the foundation of the *Protrepticus*, *Paedagogus* and other earlier writings, a foundation that prepares the pupil for the deeper mystery of Clement's teaching, not for catechetical instruction alone. As baptised ones, Clement's readers are now subject to the improving power of the Divine *Logos*, here styled as the divine pedagogue.

From this then comes the healing of passions, in accordance with the comfort of these examples, the Pedagogue strengthening our souls by his philanthropic commands as though gentle medicines, guiding the sick to the perfect knowledge of the truth.²⁷⁷

The aim is never to remain content with a youthful faith alone. It is not to rest on one's spiritual laurels but to be spiritually strengthened, remade from a former sickly sinner into a perfect gnostic of divine truth. The *Paedagogus* thus speaks to spiritual babes, those who – though baptised – are only beginning in the faith. The aim is to progress them, not merely to stabilise them. Clement's project – far from offering a kind of post-baptismal instruction – seeks to create true gnostic believers that surpass those who maintain only a simple faith. As discussed above, the boundaries around Clement's insight are strictly drawn; these teachings are for true initiates, not simple believers. The spiritual milk of the *Paedagogus* is always designed to swiftly give way to the meat of Clement's later teachings.²⁷⁸

Conclusions

Clement's writings point us only further away from an anachronistic second-century Catechetical School. He invites his readers (and thus students, whether contemporaneous or posthumous) to locate his school among philosophers and magicians, not bishops and church walls.²⁷⁹ As a result, his teachings reflect the world in which they were written. Clement's penchant for authors such as Euripides or Callimachus reflects

²⁷⁶ *Strom.* 1.12.55.1.

²⁷⁷ *Paed.* 1.1.3.1.

²⁷⁸ His *Stromateis*, and likely, his *Hypotyposeis* (cf. Bucur, 'The Place').

²⁷⁹ Further legitimising the sense that when both Eusebius and Jerome label Clement a presbyter, they do so as an honorific, rather than indicating a formal position within Alexandrian church leadership. Compare n.63 above.

not traditional views of Christian instruction but an embrace of contemporary *paideia* and cultural interests.²⁸⁰ Likewise, he writes as a philosopher (imitating stylistic conventions in his exhortation, for example, drawn from Aristotle's own rhetorical guide²⁸¹). Clement presents himself as a pedagogue, subordinate to the divine pedagogue of Christ, not as a catechist or episcopate, but as a teacher. Clement's school was not the Catechetical School of Origen and his successors, but one centred on the personality and teaching of its head, Clement himself.

Clement therefore understands that he is neither a doctrinal specialist nor an ethical instructor. His works provide no systematic presentation of the Christian faith designed to equip fresh-faced converts with spiritual necessities. His writings satisfy no sense of catechetical instruction. He is certainly aware of contemporary Christian instruction and seems (as Van den Hoek noted) to affirm the opportunities for those to whom he speaks to engage in basic Christian instruction.²⁸² Clement's interest in catechesis is just that, however: a passing interest. It is a staging post on a spiritual journey that Clement guides his readers ever further into. Clement offers neither pre-baptismal nor post-baptismal catechetical instruction. He wants his readers to join a quest for greater illumination, one that ultimately provides a divine gnosis that sees the Clementine pupil – in wisdom and in faith – become something like God himself.²⁸³ He does not discount simple believers, those who are unable to partake of this spiritual journey, but he does not speak to them either. His interest is quite the opposite of ecumenical equality; he wishes to draw out gnostic pupils from among the ranks of his fellow believers. Clement is no catechist. He will always remain a teacher, but the content and context of his teachings are far from the environs of a later or simply fictitious second-century Catechetical School.

5 Conclusions

Clement of Alexandria remains an enigma. Questions abound on the contours of his school, whether (such as Ammonius and Origen) he employed auxiliary teachers, how far-reaching his influence could be felt

²⁸⁰ Compare Creedy, 'Rethinking'; Karanasiou, 'A Euripidised Clement'; Creedy, 'Why does Clement call Callimachus'.

²⁸¹ Clement borrows elements of Aristotle's rhetorical division (cf. Creedy, 'To Open the Eyes', 74–78) and imitates Aristotle further in titling his work as he does. On Aristotle's largely lost *Protrepticus*: Hutchinson and Johnson, 'Aristotle's *Protrepticus*'.

²⁸² Compare n.261.

²⁸³ Clement regularly expresses a nascent doctrine of deification: *Protr.* 1.8.4; *Paed.* 1.6.26.1; *Strom.* 7.16.95.2. See further: Hofer, 'Logos *Protreptikos*'; Yingling, 'Ye are Gods'.

and who (and how many) his students were. Many of these answers will not be forthcoming, but such questions find no satisfactory answer in an anachronistic Catechetical School. This *Element* has pushed back both against the traditional reading of Eusebius' comments on the subject and the location of Clement within that reading. The model for both Clement's instruction and his broader involvement in Christian pedagogy in second-century Alexandria and beyond provides a clearer backdrop for the ongoing study of this surprising and often paradoxical figure. Removed from the trappings of an institution that even Eusebius does not claim to have existed in the late second century, Clement's own teaching activities are available for fresh and further analysis.

Controversy has long been a watchword of Clementine studies. The complexities that surround this figure – bringing even his birthplace into significant uncertainty – ensure he remains a divisive subject, but this *Element* has suggested his place in the broader history of early Christian intellectualism is perhaps less controversial than traditionally understood. Eusebius neither advocates for a model of Christian instruction that is as coherent (and thus anachronistic) as is so often understood, nor does Clement indicate a pedagogical context that would support the imposition of this later model. Taken together in an evaluation of this context, their writings suggest the modern debate has, to borrow from Thomson's description of the related trilogy debate, simply lost sight of the forest for the trees. Neither Eusebius nor Clement supports the existence of a formal Catechetical School in second-century Alexandria.

By way of conclusion, let us harmonise the two accounts of Clement's educational activities by briefly revisiting Eusebius' *History*. The Caesarean describes Pantaenus' school in Book Five.²⁸⁴ This most-renowned teacher (ἐπιδοξότατος) operated a school of 'holy learning' that modelled itself on 'the philosophical system of the ones named Stoics'. This one man *tour de force* (κατορθώμασι) left a pedagogical legacy that preserved his fame. Eusebius might well have been describing Clement's school: a dexterity of learning, philosophically influenced, centred on holy things, and praised through extensive hyperbole. Pantaenus' school, not Origen's, provides the model for Clement's activity. Eusebius paints a picture of Pantaenus' school that echoes contemporary Greco-Roman philosophical schools yet leverages that image to place a respected Christian intellectual in their midst. This is the achievement of Eusebius' lineage of Alexandrian intellectuals. It is not that Pantaenus, Clement and Origen represent a

²⁸⁴ Euseb. *EH*. 5.11.1–4. The following quotations are drawn from this passage.

specific Christian institution but that, in turn, they represent Christian exceptionalism within a wider Greco-Roman landscape. To return to Corke-Webster's conclusion discussed above:

Eusebius' pioneering *History* works ... to construct a new and thorough-going vision of Christian authority in line with a traditional rhetoric of intellectual, temperate authority that was rooted in Graeco-Roman and Christian *paideia*, learned in Christian households and schools and witnessed in both life and death.²⁸⁵

Eusebius constructs his vision for a Christian supersession of Greco-Roman *paideia* not by creating a formal Alexandrian Catechetical School (though this does emerge in the third century), but through the imbrication of Christian intellectuals within the broader world of sophistry and education. Eusebius highlights these individuals not because they form a single Christian school but because they together represent Christians whom Eusebius can later champion teaching Christian truth and wisdom in fundamentally non-Christian contexts. It is not only Clement that has been mistreated through the assignation of a 'Christian difference' to his personal legacy. The Christian schools of Alexandria have likewise been themselves misunderstood. Litwa's suggestion that any school identified by Eusebius would only be a partial picture of Christian pedagogical activity in the city in the second century is correct.²⁸⁶ But the close reading of both Eusebius and Clement above allows us to go further. Eusebius' picture has been misjudged, and he provides for us a valuable glimpse of second-century pedagogical activity. The quality of Pantaenus' teaching (and then Clement's) that matters for Eusebius is their Christian nature, but they are also representative of second-century education more broadly. Theological conviction aside, with this deconstruction of a retrospective and erroneously identified second-century Catechetical School, Pantaenus and crucially Clement provide two examples of the philosophical schools for which Alexandria was long famed.

The question of the school, and Clement's involvement therein, illustrates how much the study of Clement has suffered from twin jeopardy. Not only has the veneer of 'Christian Difference' distorted his place and immersion in contemporary cultural and intellectual activity, but the application of later Christian standards has further corrupted his legacy. Catechetical Schools of the type familiar to Augustine, Eusebius, Cyprian and even Origen were in their nascent form even in Origen's own day.

²⁸⁵ Corke-Webster, *Eusebius and Empire*, 280.

²⁸⁶ Litwa, 2024: 177.

Likewise, the theological standards and even language of later generations were either only beginning to emerge (such as in Clement's close association of catechesis with baptism²⁸⁷) or yet to develop (sparking the Christological indistinction that has long tarnished Clement's legacy²⁸⁸). Eusebius represents the first significant attempt to paint Clement with a later Christian brush, though how exactly he did that has been misunderstood. Eusebius did not slot Clement of Alexandria into the lineage of heads of a so-called Catechetical School. Rather, he located him within a contemporary pedagogical landscape and instead traced through him a succession of approved and faithful Christian pedagogues that reached its zenith (in both importance and institutionalisation) with Origen in the early third century. Clement, for his own part, invites his reader to understand in his literary project not a picture of nascent Christian catechesis (though this does appear to lurk behind elements of his teaching) but rather a second-century classical curriculum with Christianity at its heart.

The opportunities such a reading presents are myriad. In Clement we can retrieve not only an early model of Christian instruction but also a comprehensive model of second-century classical instruction. Clement's corpus presents the record of a school that is self-affirming in its immersion in the wider second-century intellectual milieu. Added to this, if, as explored above, Clement's teachings do not represent a model of early Christian catechesis, then what do they offer their reader? Excellent recent work has demonstrated the possibilities of considering Clement's intellectual efforts on their own merit, but there remains an enormous amount of untapped material. His first major work, for example, the *Protrepticus*, remains considerably understudied. Lesser writings such as his *Quis Dives Salvetur* or the fragment of *To the Newly Baptised* are rarely examined. The approach taken by this Element illustrates the merit of considering Clement of Alexandria not only as a Christian author but also as a classical author. His writings and legacy are ripe for reconsideration. Outside the austere walls of a retrospective and unfounded 'Catechetical School', Clement remains both a fascinating enigma and a wonderfully fertile subject for future investigation.

²⁸⁷ Van den Hoek, 'School', 69, n.46.

²⁸⁸ Creedy, 'Taking up the Mask', 180–83.

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Early Christian Literature

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