Worldview and Melodic Imagery in Clement the Alexandrian, Saint Athanasius, and their Antecedents in Saints Ignatius and Irenaeus

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Abstract: This paper addresses aspects of the melodic imagery utilised within two Alexandrine apologies, Exhortation to the Gentiles, by Clement, and Against the Gentiles, by St Athanasius, together with their significance for the early Christian interactions with broader cultural milieus, as well as for the articulation of the ecclesial worldview. Borrowing from various sources, the two fathers employed musical metaphors and analogies for both the active rapports between the Logos and the universe, and the theological meaningfulness of the cosmos. Beginning with a review of the Christian antecedents of this approach in St Ignatius and St Irenaeus, the paper highlights, together with the continuity of tradition in representing the cosmos by way of melodic imagery, the relevance of this topic to current researches into the articulation of the cosmos as another Scripture.

This paper explores aspects pertaining to the Late Antique Alexandrine worldview as represented by two of its major Christian exponents,

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Clement and St Athanasius the Great.¹ The two Church fathers exhibited a kindred perception of the universe as ordered and meaningful, and as pointing to the providential and/or harmonising activity of the Logos. Interestingly, to make sense of the meaningful order of the cosmos and the complex activity of the Logos within it, among other strategies the two fathers made use of melodic imagery, namely, analogies in the case of St Athanasius and metaphors in the case of Clement. In doing

¹ The second and third sections of this paper represent outcomes of the research undertaken for my contribution to St Andrew’s Patristic Symposium 2012; a subsequent survey of the Christian antecedents led to the writing of the first section. An earlier version of this paper was presented for the conference ‘Addressing the Sacred through Literature and the Arts’ (Australian Catholic University, Strathfield NSW, 3-4 Aug 2013). I am grateful to the Phronema reviewers for their comments.

I dedicate this study to Archbishop Stylianos of Australia, a theologian and poet whose insight into the sacredness of creation has deep traditional roots.
so they credited music and the imagery inspired by it with the capacity of mediating theological messages and a sense of the sacredness of creation – an aspect that brings to light both further parameters of their worldview and the complex ways in which they interacted with their cultural milieu. In what follows I shall discuss the articulation of the Christian worldview by way of melodic imagery, as illustrated primarily in two of their writings, namely, Clement’s *Exhortation to the Gentiles* and St Athanasius’ *Against the Gentiles*, treatises that engage the rapports between Gospel culture together with sharing an interest in cosmology. In choosing these two works I was motivated by their commonality in terms of belonging to the same Alexandrian tradition and apologetic genre, and their very similar construal of the cosmos by way of musical images and terminology. The analysis of the two treatises will be preceded by an investigation into the use of melodic imagery in the works of two earlier fathers, St Ignatius of Antioch and St Irenaeus of Lyon, whose contributions, it is my contention, bore certain influence upon the Alexandrian teachers. In addressing musical imagery, the purpose of this paper is to bring to the fore a feature of the early Christian worldview that is less appreciated within current researches into the cosmos as another Scripture.²

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**Early Christian Antecedents**

The two Alexandrine fathers were not the first early Christian authors to make use of musical imagery for apologetic and theological purposes, and, as we shall see below, toward construing the cosmos as harmonious or melodious in structure. But before looking for samples of the same approach in the writings of two earlier fathers, it must be noted that despite their lack of enthusiasm for the outside world, balanced, in the case of Clement, by a direct and fruitful engagement with cultural trends and ideas, both earlier and later fathers found a precursor in Philo the Alexandrian. Indeed, the latter showed a vivid interest in music and employed various melodic analogies and metaphors of the ordered cosmos.¹ I cannot follow this connection in detail here, although I shall point to Philo and the relevant scholarship whenever appropriate. Below I address aspects pertaining to the construal of the ecclesial worldview in St Ignatius and St Irenaeus, which trail blazed the way for our Alexandrine teachers.

**Ignatian worldview**


Turning to the Christian antecedents, for instance in the late first century or the early second century St Ignatius the Theophore, Bishop of Antioch, combined within his Ephesian correspondence the analogy of the lyre and the metaphor of the choir to describe aspects pertaining to the life of the Church; as we shall soon realise, the saint treated both the Church and the cosmos as worshiping, or symphonic, communities. More precisely, he advised the Ephesian faithful to “run together,”⁴ that is harmoniously or in a like-minded fashion (ἐν ὑμνονικα),⁵ with their bishop and one another, following the example of the local presbyters.

For your presbytery […] is attuned (συνήμοστα) to the bishop as the strings of a lyre (ὁς χορδαί κιθάρα). Therefore Jesus Christ is being praised (ἁγοτα) in your concurrence and consonant love (ἐν τῇ ὑμνονικῃ ύμων και συμφώνω ἀγάπῃ). And each man should join the chorus (χορὸς γινεσθε) so that, being consonant in harmony (Ἰνα σύμφωνοις ὄντες ἐν ὑμνονικῳ) and taking up God’s tune in unity (χρόμα θεοῦ λαβόντες ἐν ἐνότητη), you may sing with one voice (ᾅδεται ἐν φωνῇ μιᾷ) through Jesus Christ to the Father, that he may both hear and recognise you through the good deeds you achieve, since you are members of his Son.⁶

Note the rich musical vocabulary of this passage, for the illustration of which I included the original Greek terms; this terminology functions, it seems, like a background for St Ignatius’ melodic analogies and metaphors. In the views of St Ignatius, the Church is not only membership in Christ, according to the Pauline paraphrase (cf. Ephesians 5:30: “members of his body,” μέλη ἐσμέν τοῦ σώματος αὐτοῦ), which concludes the cited passage (“being members of his Son,” μέλη ὀντας τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ). It is a structured organisation that takes as its point of reference the relationship between presbytery and bishop, the former being attuned (συνήμοστα) to the latter like a musical

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⁵ The phrase occurs twice in the fourth chapter. To the Ephesians 4.1-2 (Ehrman, 222).

⁶ To the Ephesians 4.1-2 (Ehrman, 222). For a partial citation of this passage and a brief note on the correspondence between the “harmony of the spheres […] the harmony of the individual […] [and] the harmony of the church,” see Everett Ferguson, ‘Toward a Patristic Theology of Music,’ Studia Patristica 24 (Leuven: Peeters, 1993): 266-83, esp. 278.

⁷ To the Ephesians 4.2 (Ehrman, 222). Taking due precautions, Schoedel suggests that the word μέλη in the Ignatian passage could have been construed as a play on its two meanings, namely, members and melodies. William R. Schoedel, Ignatius of Antioch: A Commentary on the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch, Hermeneia – A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 53; see ibidem, 51-53, for the entire analysis of the passage. Whilst this possibility is fascinating insofar as it strengthens the musical carats of the passage, it remains unlikely here due to the obvious Pauline association.
The analogy of the lyre is but one musical type within our passage, which conduces to and makes room for another musical image of the ecclesial life, the metaphor of the choir – without this suggesting, as Schoedel believes, that for St Ignatius the actual topic was the relationship between the choir and the lyre and not between the choir, i.e. congregation, and the choirmaster, i.e. the bishop. Unified by taking “the tune of God” (χρόμα θεοῦ λαβόντες ἐν ἑνότητι), the entire congregation has to work like the presbyters in a communal fashion, so that in the “concurrence and symphonic love” of its members (ἐν τῇ ὑμνονίᾳ ὑμόν καὶ συμφωνοῦ ἀγάπη) “Jesus Christ is sung” (Τησσοῦς Χριστοῦ ἄδεται). Note the explicit metaphor referring to the workings of the Church in terms of a symphonic or melodious activity – in which we recognise Philo’s idea that the unity of the community in performing virtuous actions is a symphony – the harmony of the congregation appearing as an embodied praise of Christ. By presenting the Church as supposed to “become a chorus” (χορὸς γίνεσθαι) St Ignatius introduced imagery uncommon both to the Pauline ecclesiology of Ephesians 4:11-16, where the unity of the Christian congregation is depicted by way of the somatic metaphor, and the New Testament ecclesiology as a whole, which relies on various other images. In so doing, and whilst rehearsing certain Philonic stances, the

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Theophore is very likely to have borrowed from the liturgical experience of the Church with the entire assembly joining in chanting hymns – an experience which shaped the “doxological language” of early Christian theology, of which Blowers speaks, and in turn was undoubtedly mediated, from a cultural perspective, through the mysterious terminology discussed by Harland. Of interest here is that by all accounts the Church was called to behave, without this parallel being explicitly drawn by the passage under consideration, entirely like the celestial choir mentioned in

8 To the Ephesians 4.1 (Ehrman, 222). In To the Philadelphians 1.2 (Ehrman, 284), the same phrase refers to the local bishop, attuned to God’s commandments like the lyre and its strings (ὁς χορδαί κιθάρα). This seems to be a reiteration of Philo’s understanding that the observance of divine commandments is like music; cf. Ferguson, ‘The Art of Praise,’ 412.
9 Schoedel, Ignatius of Antioch, 52.
10 To the Ephesians 4.2 (Ehrman, 222).
11 To the Ephesians 4.1 (Ehrman, 222).
13 To the Ephesians 4.2 (Ehrman, 222). Cf. To the Romans 2.2 (Ehrman, 272).
17 The correspondence of the celestial and societal choirs has a plethora of antecedents, directly or not related to Stoicism. See e.g. Cilliers Breytenbach, ‘Civic Concord and Cosmic Harmony: Sources of Metaphoric Mapping in 1 Clement 20:3,’ in Fitzgerald, Olbricht, and White (eds.), Early Christianity and Classical Culture (cited above), 259-73. Regarding this connection in a text that shares the timeframe of the Ignatian corpus, namely, 1 Clement, see Breytenbach, ‘Civic Concord,’ 271.
19.2, a text to which I must turn now. The rapport between the Church and the cosmos, we shall see, are complex.

After the moving depiction of the Church as melodiously constituted, the same epistle returns once more to the metaphor of the choir (χορός) through the so-called Ignatian Starhymn. The image, here, exemplifies the manner in which the universe has been impacted by the advent of the Lord. At the core of this rendition reside the rapport between the star of Christ’s nativity and the other celestial bodies. In the words of the Theophore,

How did he [i.e. Christ] become manifest to the eons? A star whose light shone in the sky more than all the stars, and its novelty bewildered. All the other stars, along with the sun and the moon, became a chorus for the [new] star (χορός ἐγένετο τῷ ἀστέρι), whose light surpassed that of all the others. And there was disturbance as to the source of this novelty and unlikeliness to them.

The unusual cosmic phenomenon that accompanied the nativity of the Lord obscured the established sidereal arrangement, reordering the universe. Without this being clearly stated, it seems that the passage under consideration presupposes a symbolic or meaningful relationship between Christ and the new star, a rapport that made possible for the Lord’s very centrality to be communicated to the new celestial occurrence. This is obvious in that, according to the passage under consideration yet not the evangelic text, not only the stars but also the sun and the moon – the most impressive bodies in the skies above the earth – adjusted their routine to the presence of the novel star, becoming its chorus (χορὸς ἐγένετο τῷ ἀστέρι). It is as though the ‘natural’ song previously sung by the sun, the moon, the stars and the whole of God’s creation, their inherent harmony,

as perceived by St Clement the Roman, received a new impetus and coherence through the emergence of the nativity star, and so the cosmos was endowed with theological connotations – to the extent that from then on it was freed of the veils of

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19 To the Ephesians 19.2 (Ehrman, 238).

20 For a survey of the early Christian representations of the nativity star as unusual, see Dale C. Allison, Jr. ‘The Magi’s Angel (Matt. 2:2, 9-10),’ in his *Studies in Matthew: Interpretation Past and Present* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 17-41, esp. 18-19. This survey makes only a brief reference to St Ignatius (at 32, n.49), where Allison wrongly attributes to St Ignatius the idea, which is not illustrated by our text, that the star was purposely created in order to guide the magi.

21 Rightly, Stander (‘The Starhymn,’ 213) considers that the hymn identifies the star with Christ.

22 To the Ephesians 19.2 (Ehrman, 238).

23 Cf. *First Clement* 20 (Ehrman, 72-74). The chapter seems to be summarising Psalm 103 (LXX).
deception whilst “all magic was vanquished and every bondage of evil came to nought.”

The hermeneutical bridge between Christ and the nativity star is inescapable. Nevertheless, contrary to the views of Stander, it was neither the star itself nor the “workings of the star” that caused this cosmic liberation and reordering; it was the Lord, whose salvific activity is at the core of the Ignatian thinking. This nuance is confirmed by the next section of the text, which no longer praises the phenomenon, focusing instead on the significance of the moment when “God became manifest in a human way, for the newness of eternal life.” The relation between the initial wonder as to how the Lord was “manifested” (φανερώθη) to the eons and the answer concerning his being “manifested in a human way” (ινθροπίνως φανερωμένου) is inescapable. Note also the reference to Christ as God, which is another major feature of the Theophore’s teaching. That being said, more important for the scope of this paper is that by its very structure the Starhymn establishes an implicit symmetry between the cosmos and the Church: the cosmos was saved as the Church was, in the process becoming a chorus to Christ the way the Church itself was supposed to become. The metaphor of the starfield as a choir, which is likewise encountered in another writing from the same timeframe, deserves further attention.

We recognise in this passage, which is perhaps the first patristic interpretive engagement of the nativity star, what seems to be a juxtaposition of the cosmic phenomenon described in Matthew (2:1,7,9-10) and the angelic chorus of Luke (2:13-14). This juxtaposition may have taken place within the symbolic framework of the dream of Joseph (Genesis 37:9), which Stander, borrowing a hypothesis prudently advanced by Schoedel, considered as the imaginal background of the Starhymn. 25

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27 To the Ephesians 19.3 (Ehrman, 239). For the broader soteriological implications of the passage, see Schoedel, Ignatius of Antioch, 93-94.
28 To the Ephesians 19.2-3 (Ehrman, 238).
30 See the phrase αετήρων τε χοροί (the choirs of the stars) in First Clement 20.2 (Ehrman, 72). Cf. Ehrman’s introduction to First Clement, ibid., 20, which discusses the celestial order and that of nature in general as paradigmatic for the ecclesial order.
31 This would require a revision of Allison’s impressive list of early Christian sources that referred to the nativity star. Cf. ‘The Magi’s Angel,’ n.11, at 20.
32 Schoedel, Ignatius of Antioch, 92.
33 Cf. Stander, ‘The Starhymn,’ 213. For some reason, Stander (ibidem) ignored the importance of the Lucan narrative in this construct. In turn, whilst ignoring the Lucan tradition, Schoedel (Ignatius of Antioch, 92) reticently considered the connection between the Ignatian text and the Matthew narrative of the star. Instead, he analysed the passage within the framework of the various Gnostic ideas of a
Whether or not the dream of Joseph played any role in the Ignatian construct, of relevance is that this combination resulted in the depiction of the stars as chanting, or dancing (given the polysemy of χορός), in angelic fashion around the celestial object that marked the birth of the Lord – an interpretation that, whilst the metaphor of the singing stars featured already in the Psalms (LXX 18:1-4; 148:3-4), in Philo and in the Stoics, could not be accounted for in the absence of the angelic hymns of praise in the Lucan nativity narrative. The hermeneutical impact of the Lucan angelic choirs should not be dismissed, indeed, even were the analysis to take in consideration the ancient understanding of the stars as alive and the identification of the stars as angels by the Jewish interpreters, followed by a host of early Christian authors. What makes the difference between St Ignatius’ image of the singing stars and their literary antecedents – scriptural or otherwise – is precisely the fact that the stars behaved in an identical manner to the angels of the Lucan narrative. This doxological or hymnic aspect is what matters here, irrespective of whether or not the Theophore pushed this association to the point of considering the nativity star, and overall the stars, as angels.

Furthermore, it is noteworthy that the evidence of such scriptural roots behind the praising heavens of the Starhymn, namely, the celestial choirs of the Psalter and the singing angels of St Luke, encourage a positive take on the metaphor of the eons or the celestial bodies that were dazzled by the occurrence of the nativity star. More precisely and by all accounts, the Starhymn refers to the cosmic landscape as a whole, God’s creation, not the evil powers with which Schoedel was concerned. The puzzlement

later period than the redaction of the Ignatian corpus (cf. Ignatius of Antioch, 87-93), an approach that is at least intriguing.

34 This polysemy was well exploited by Philo in On the Creation of the Cosmos, 53 and 78 (Runia, 29 and 67).
36 Cf. Ferguson, ‘Toward a Patristic Theology of Music,’ n.30 at 271.
37 Cf. Allison, ‘The Magi’s Angel,’ 21-25, 30-33. See also Alan Scott, Origen and the Life of the Stars: A History of an Idea, Oxford Early Christian Studies (Oxford University Press and Clarendon Press, 1991), 3-62. On the profession by Origen of the stars as living beings, see Allison, ‘The Magi’s Angel,’ 30-33; Scott, Origen and the Life of the Stars, 113-49. Interestingly, neither of the two authors pays attention to the construal of the stars in St Ignatius and other authors form the category of apostolic fathers. On another note, the ancient understanding of the stars cannot be reduced, however, to the astrological belief that they were living beings, as Allison and Scott propose. For very different perspectives, see Dirk L. Couprie, Heaven and Earth in Ancient Greek Cosmology: From Thales to Heraclides Ponticus (New York: Springer, 2011), 99-121; Georgia L. Irby-Massie and Paul T. Keyser, Greek Science of the Hellenistic Era: A Sourcebook, Routledge Sourcebooks for the Ancient World (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 47-81.
38 Cf. Allison, ‘The Magi’s Angel,’ 25-28 (the stars as angels), 28-30 (the magi’s star as angel).
39 Cf. Schoedel, Ignatius of Antioch, 91-92. For more on the pessimism associated in Late Antiquity with the heavenly powers, but again without reference to St Ignatius, see Scott, Origen and the Life of the Stars, 76-103. Nevertheless, the optimistic views of St Ignatius seem to anticipate the similar developments that occurred in Clement, whose attitude toward the sky and the stars is noted by Scott, Origen and the Life of the Stars, 106.
of the eons, i.e. the stars, which is so vividly captured by the passage cited above, seems therefore to represent a metaphor by which St Ignatius expressed the relativisation of a central tenet of ancient cosmology, namely, that the celestial spheres were immutable, a tenet challenged by the occurrence of the nativity star and the consequent reorganisation of the starfield. As a matter of fact, the identification of the wondering stars and/or the disturbed eons with the evil powers makes no sense both given that the celestial bodies became a choir which offered praises to God, and because of the obvious relation of this passage with Eph. 4.1-2, earlier analysed. As pointed out above, a dominant aspect of the Starhymn is its overt commonality with the depiction of the ecclesial body as a choir attuned to God and as singing praises to Christ. The same ecclesial elements indeed feature in the Starhymn, although rendered in a cosmological key; thus, the sidereal bodies turned toward the star of Christ and sang both like the Lucan angels and in the very fashion of the ecclesial community. It appears therefore that within the Ignatian representation the choir of the Church lent to the starfield its own ecclesial structure and with it a psalmic or doxological function; this cosmological translation of ecclesial realities should not come as a surprise, pertaining to the innate anthropomorphism of human consciousness. We shall see in due course that St Athanasius both reiterated and offered a counterpoint to the Ignatian Starhymn.

To wrap these matters up, we noticed the striking imaginal commonality of the two Ephesian passages. In representing both the Church and the cosmos as choruses (cf. χορὸς γίνεσθε, χορὸς ἐγένετο), implicitly

To the Ephesians 4.2 (Ehrman, 222).

St Ignatius established a meaningful axis between the two objects of his contemplation, which emerge as two connected realities and even more so two interchangeable categories. The Church is a cosmos that sings; the cosmos is a singing Church. A subtle difference occurs however in chapter 4.2, which refers to God listening to and recognising (ἵνα ύμῶν καὶ ἠκούσῃ καὶ ἐπιγινώσκῃ) the congregation provided the latter manifests consistency in its good or ‘symphonic’ workings (δι’ ὅν εὖ πράσσετε); therefore, it is a conditional blessing that depends on human worthiness. In turn, in 19.2 the sidereal bodies appear as able to immediately recognise Christ in the occurrence of the novel star. In other words, whilst the cosmos has a natural ‘instinct’ for God, so to speak, the human gathering has to cultivate it through its worthy or virtuous activities – precisely those activities that contribute to enhance the harmony of the Church. For our purposes, we retain the fact that by way of entwining various images and sources St Ignatius construed the universe as melodious and therefore meaningful.

Irenaean worldview

41 I am grateful to Mario Baghos for the conversation during which I was led to this realisation.
42 Schoedel, Ignatius of Antioch, 88, notices this literal connection but does not delve into it.
43 This Ignatian contribution escaped Ferguson’s notes on the praises to God offered in common by the Church and the heavenly bodies. Cf. Ferguson, ‘Toward a Patristic Theology of Music,’ 270-71.
44 To the Ephesians 4.2 (Ehrman, 222).
With or without a literal continuity being obvious, the melodic images that feature in the Ephesian correspondence of St Ignatius, and parallels, namely, the lyre and the chorus, are prominent, we shall see below, in the works of both Clement and St Athanasius. Before turning to the Alexandrians though, I shall make one more stop in order to discuss an occurrence of the analogy of the lyre in Against the Heresies by St Irenaeus of Lyon, Clement’s older contemporary. Within a chapter that is preserved only in Latin, St Irenaeus used the lyre (cithara) to illustrate the coherence of the universe as organised by one God. In so doing, the passage of interest seems to echo some of the Ignatian perceptions and images analysed above. The presence of such motifs in the thinking of the holy Bishop of Lyon should not come as a surprise, given his exposure as a young man to a teaching related to that of St Ignatius, received from St Polycarp of Smyrna. Relevant here is that in St Irenaeus, except for the choral metaphor, which does not feature, these perceptions and images are synthesised in support of a statement regarding the diversity and the unity of the cosmos. The statement in question affirms that whereas when taken on their own the “many and various beings that are created” (uaria et multa sunt quae facta sunt) appear as “contrary and discordant” (contraria et non conuenientia), they are “in fact well adapted to and consonant with the whole of creation” (ad omnem quidem facturam bene aptata et bene consonantia). Simply put, the different parts are reconciled within the whole; a long rehearsed philosophical stance. The choice of words in this sentence, and prominently the plural consonantia, which can be interpreted

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both musically (=harmonious) and otherwise (=in agreement), prepare the decidedly musical analogy that follows. Indeed, the cosmos is one out of many and various beings,

…the way the sound of the lyre (citharae sonus), which consists of many and opposite sounds (ex multis et contrariis sonis subsistentem), makes one harmonious melody (unam melodiam operantur ... consonantem) through the interval pertaining to them.\(^{48}\)

As confirmed by Harvey’s Greek retroversion of the terms consonantia and consonantem as σύμφωνα and σύμφωνον, we trace here the Ignatian theme of symphony together with the theological nuance associated with it by the Theophore, namely, that the ‘consonant’ beings in the universe, namely, the Church and the stars, sing to their divine maker. Indeed, in establishing the harmonious or symphonic nature of both the lyre’s sounds and the cosmos, St Irenaeus was similarly interested in highlighting the fact that the universe’s harmony points to “the one and the same artist and maker” (Artificem ... et Factorem ... unum et ipsum).\(^{49}\) More precisely, he remarked that the way when listening to the beautiful music of a lyre the audiences “have to praise and glorify the artist” (debet laudare et glorificare Artificem), those who contemplate the cosmic order should “neither drift from the faith in the one God who made all things (unum Deum qui fecit omnia) nor blaspheme against our maker (nostrum conditorem)”\(^{50}\) – a reasoning further rehearsed by St Athanasius.\(^{51}\) St Irenaeus returned to this topic a little later from a different angle, through

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affirming the agreement of both Scripture and the cosmos that there is one God who created the universe and rules over it (unum esse qui eam fecerit et regat).\(^{52}\) This juncture, in which we trace in a nutshell the later developed theme of the scriptural nature of the cosmos,\(^{53}\) is where St Irenaeus parts ways with the Ignatian tradition for

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\(^{48}\) Against Heresies 2.25.2 (Rousseau and Doutrelleau, II, 252.24-26). Harvey suggests the following Greek rendition of the sentence: ὡς ὁ τῆς λόρας ἄρσ, διὰ τοῦ ἐκάστου διαστήματος ἐν σύμφωνον μέλος ἀπαρίθμηται, ἐκ πολλῶν καὶ ἑναντίων φωνῶν ἑσπάργη. Cf. Sancti Irenaei Episcopi Lugdunensis, n.4 at 343. For an analysis of the text in its context, see Rousseau and Doutrelleau, I, 171-73.

\(^{49}\) Against Heresies 2.25.2 (Rousseau and Doutrelleau, II, 252.28-29.31).

\(^{50}\) Against Heresies 2.25.2 (Rousseau and Doutrelleau, II, 252.33-34, 254.1-2). The reference to faith in connection with the creation that proclaims the uniqueness of God relativises the position of Unger, according to whom the knowledge of God through the contemplation of creation is only “by reason, not by faith.” Cf. St Irenaeus of Lyons: Against the Heresies, n.5 at 124.

\(^{51}\) Cf. Against the Gentiles, 47.14-31 (Thomson, 132).

\(^{52}\) Against Heresies, 2.27.2 (Rousseau and Doutrelleau, II, 266.38). For the revelational correspondence of Scripture and the creation, see the notes of Rousseau and Doutrelleau, I, 170, 174-75, and Unger in St Irenaeus of Lyons: Against the Heresies, n.5 at 122-24. Steenberg, Irenaeus on Creation, 61, mentions once the passage in 2.27.2 yet without noticing the very interesting convergence of the two sources, namely, Scripture and the cosmos.

which the Scriptures played no significant role towards authenticating doctrine. Of interest here, we shall see in due course, is that although in different forms both Clement and St Athanasius adopted St Irenaeus’ double approach, namely, of depicting the cosmos as a lyre and as corresponding to the message of the Scriptures. That being said, the influence of St Ignatius was far from being effaced, as proven by the recurrent image of the chorus, present in the works of the two Alexandrine fathers.

In using a rich melodic imagery and vocabulary for the articulation of the Christian worldview, St Ignatius and St Irenaeus should be credited – more than they usually are – in terms of their creative engagement with the cultural milieu of their times. The parallels with Philo are illustrative in this sense. Furthermore, and more significant here, whilst borrowing from the broader cultural context, their musical images of the ordered cosmos point to an appreciation of God’s creation as theologically meaningful and a channel of divine revelation. Consequently, the evidence of a meaningful cosmos in their writings calls for a rethinking of the conviction expressed by Behr, that the revelational source of theology in both cases should be reduced to the input of Scripture. Nevertheless, relevant here is the actual impact of their musical perceptions on the construal of the Christian worldview. It is noteworthy that the analogy of the lyre, present in both St Ignatius and St Irenaeus, establishes a functional symmetry between the musical instrument and the cosmos, and in so doing successfully argues the case for a harmonious and meaningful universe, which points to one God. In turn and somehow more profoundly, the Ignatian chorus metaphor depicts the universe as structurally melodious and as intoning hymns to God in a very ecclesial fashion – a perception which is further endorsed by the nuanced musical vocabulary of symphony or consonance used by both fathers. Interestingly, whilst being mediated through melodic imagery the theme of a meaningful cosmos received endorsement via complex associations, namely, with the Church in St Ignatius and the Scriptures in St Irenaeus. The positioning of the cosmos on par with the Church and the Scriptures strengthens my contention that the two early Christian fathers did not ignore the revelatory potential of God’s creation. I must turn now to the views of Clement, where this understanding is both faithfully continued and creatively developed.

**Clement the Alexandrines**

Within the effervescent atmosphere of Alexandria throughout the second and in the early third centuries, Christian teachers like Clement had to face, alongside the hostility of pagan rulers and masses, the competition of many cultured opponents of the Gospel. The latter aspect determined Clement to adopt sophisticated strategies, for instance by choosing to

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54 For the history of the ecclesial approaches to the Scriptures in the early Church, see the very useful chapter of Trigg, ‘The Apostolic Fathers and Apologists,’ esp. 305-307 (St Ignatius), 327-30 (St Irenaeus).


56 Cf. Scott, ‘Clement of Alexandria,’ in his Origen and the Life of the Stars, 104-10. See also Andrew C. Itter, Esoteric Teaching in the Stromateis of Clement of Alexandria (Leiden and Boston, Brill,
utilise within his writings, including the apologetic work discussed herein, the *Exhortation to the Gentiles*, 57 illustrations that drew on the cultural background shared together with his pagan competitors. His goal was, naturally, that of disseminating the Christian message through appropriate channels. To this end, Clement employed various features of the cultural paradigm, for instance by incorporating analogies and metaphors borrowed from the arts. Below I shall address certain aspects of the Clementine vocabulary and musical images, mainly metaphors (such as the singer, the song, the instruments, the choir and the symphony), which occur in the first chapter of the apology and parallel texts, together with their significance for his missionary strategies and, immediately relevant here, his cosmological thinking. Indeed, an important aspect pertaining to these metaphors is that they combine – within a decidedly soteriological perspective – artistic, cosmological, existential and theological dimensions, in the light of which the cosmos appears as theologically meaningful and as endowed with pedagogical significance. As Blowers points out, the pedagogical dimension represented a main concern for the Alexandrine teacher. 58 Briefly, this pedagogical dimension refers here to the capacity of the cosmos for pointing to the activity and the marks of God within it, the various melodic images serving precisely as means to communicate this wisdom to the souls aspiring to know God, as pointed out by Stapert. 59 In doing so, Clement walked in the footsteps of St Ignatius and, possibly, St Irenaeus, yet, as we shall soon see, by adopting a distinctly cosmological frame of reference he actually brought the earlier approaches to heights reached never before in the Christian tradition.

From the outset, it is noteworthy that Clement portrayed God as one who sings and who plays various instruments – as many as the layers of, and the beings within, the whole of reality, both created and uncreated. Correlatively, he represented the cosmos as a polyphonic instrument, or an orchestra, and the laws of nature as a divine

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57 For full descriptions of the writing, see Mondésert’s ‘Introduction’ to Clément d’Alexandrie, *Le Protreptique*, Sources chrétiennes 2, deuxième édition revue et augmentée par Claude Mondésert, SJ (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1949), 6-50, esp. 27-42; John Ferguson, *Clement of Alexandria* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1974), 44-67 (pp. 45-47 are especially useful, since at some length they discuss the first chapter, of immediate interest here).


song that pervaded everything. I shall return to these matters. What made possible this representation of reality by way of melodic imagery was undoubtedly his typical perception of the universe as cosmos, namely, order and beauty, aspects which the Alexandrine associated with the Pythagorean worldview and the Old Testament psalms, taking as literary antecedent – much like St Ignatius and St Irenaeus – the contributions of Philo. Thus, the created universe appeared to Clement as more than existing, moving and living within the divine milieu; by its very being the universe glorifies God through the many voices and instruments that it encompasses – a perception widely shared within the ecclesial tradition, as pointed out by Archbishop Stylianos.

To express this perception, Clement employed the standard musical vocabulary of the time, which he contextualised within the common tripartite pattern that comprised the cosmic elements, the human being and the human or ecclesial society. For instance, he pointed out that in the warmth of summer the cicadas sing their “natural ode” (ἀντόντων ϕώνην) to God, a song that surpasses the confusing ideas of pagan singers and poets. This is the humblest of examples. In fact, stirred to worship by the divine Logos who “chants a psalmody to God” (ψάλλει τῷ Θεῷ) and “offers a hymn” (προσάλει) through the polyphonic instrument of the cosmos, the entire creation glorifies God continuously. The human being itself is supposed to join this universal praise by cultivating a virtuous, imperishable lifestyle. In the intensely poetical words of the Alexandrine, “a beautiful hymn of God (καλὸς ὤμος τοῦ θεοῦ) is the immortal man, built on [the foundation of] righteousness and in whose character the precepts of the truth are engraved.” In turn, the members of the Church as a whole, and we find here echoes of the Ignatian ecclesiology and the

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61 The chapter under consideration contains phrases from the following LXX Psalms such as “the new song” of Ps 32:3, 39:3, 95:1, 97:1, 149:1 (in Exhortation, 1.2.4, 1.4.4, 1.6.1, 1.6.5, 1.7.3) and “before the morning star” of Ps 109:3 (in Exhortation, 1.6.1). Of interest here is the use of “the new song,” which is so characteristic to both the Psalms and the Exhortation, pointing to a direct literary dependence in terms of the musical sensitivity of Clement.
66 Exhortation 1.1.2 (Mondésert, 53).
67 Exhortation 1.5.3 (Mondésert, 58).
68 Καλὸς ὤμος τοῦ θεοῦ ἀθάνατος ἀνθρώπος, δικαιοσύνη οἰκοδομούμενος, ἐν ὧ τὰ λόγια τῆς ἄληθείας ἐγκεχάρακτα. Exhortation 10.107.1 (Mondésert, 175). According to Ferguson, many early Church fathers exploited the symbolic rapport between virtue and music; cf. ‘Toward a Patristic Theology of Music,’ 274-77.
approach of Philo, by cultivating both love (ἀγάπη) and virtue (ἀγαθοεργούμενοι) achieve a doxological communion which

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takes the form of a divinely harmonious, choral unison that leads them to symphony (ἀρμονίαν … θεώς μία γίνεται συμφωνία) under the direction of “one choirmaster and teacher, the Logos” (ἐνὶ χορηγῷ καὶ διδασκάλῳ τῷ λόγῳ). This ecclesial unison finds its Old Testamentary counterpoint in the “holy and prophetic chorus” (χορὸν τῶν ἅγιων τὸν προφητικόν) that is roused to praises by the revelation of the truth on the holy mountain of God. Whether the apology deals with the cosmos, the ecclesial assembly, the prophets, the human being or the cicadas, the psalmic suggestions are inescapable in these musical renditions. The presence of these psalmic overtones within a consistent description of the cosmos as theologically meaningful reveals a conjunction, in the mind of Clement, of the wisdom of the cosmos and its corresponding scriptural witnesses – a point in which his views aligned to those of St Irenaeus, discussed above. As important as this is the fact that in bringing all these witnesses together, whilst still ordering them hierarchically, Clement has never lost track of their mutual consistency as one polyphonic instrument and one song – pace Stapert as we shall soon see.

The indissoluble connections between the various participants, uncreated and created, in the Clementine cosmic liturgy pervade the

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treatise. Turning to the divine factor, Clement primarily referred to the activity of the “celestial Logos” (λόγος οὐρανιός) who, like a poet or musician, contests “on the stage of the whole cosmos” (ἐπὶ τῷ παντὸς κόσμου θεάτρῳ) where he receives, victorious, his laurel crown. The universe is depicted here, metaphorically, as the

69 Ferguson (‘The Art of Praise,’ 417-18) points out the influence of the Alexandrine synagogues upon Philo’s appreciation for choral music. The same experience must have resonated with both Clement and St Athanasius.

70 The whole phrase, εἰς μίαν ἀγάπην συναχιθήναι οἱ πολλοί, “so that the many gather together into one love” (Exhortation 9.88.2, Mondésert, 155) rehearses the repeated calls of St Ignatius to unity.

71 The phrase μία γίνεται συμφωνία, “become one symphony” (Exhortation 9.88.3; Mondésert, 155) echoes the Ignatian χορὸς γίνεσθε and χορὸς έγίνετο, discussed above.


73 Exhortation 1.2.2 (Mondésert, 54). Cf. 1.8.2 (Mondésert, 62).


75 See Stapert, A New Song for an Old World, 58-59, for an attempt to reduce the value of the cosmic song. For a contrary view, emphasising the complementarity of the musical instruments, see Costache, ‘Meaningful Cosmos,’ 119-21.

widest amphitheatre where what is put in place and performed are the foundational principles of cosmic existence, not plays of human making. Interestingly, the universe appears not only as the stage where the Logos performs his song, being likewise the crown or the prize won by the Logos first for establishing (composing?) and then for unremittingly singing those foundational principles throughout the creation. This musical representation continues with the designation of Christ, the Logos incarnate, as “my singer” (ὁ ὁδός ὁ ἐμός), in the affectionate words of Clement.77 Christ appears somehow as an antitype of Orpheus, the mythical artist whose songs permeated and reordered the cosmos. The transformation of Orpheus and other celebrated singers of antiquity78 into symbolic pointers to Christ – instead of a mere rebuttal of such figures – shows that the polemical setting within which the Exhortation was written has not side-tracked Clement from his goals of conveying the Christian message in culturally accepted forms.79 The portrayal of Christ as a singer was indeed an efficient missionary strategy. This approach is even more significant when we consider the reticence toward music and instruments, which Clement exhibited both here and

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elsewhere,80 reluctance motivated by a range of morally dangerous aspects associated with this art. What matters here is that for the Alexandrine, more so than Orpheus or any other mythical artist, it was the song of the divine Logos, Christ, he himself a symphony and harmony,81 and a “wholly harmonious, melodious and sacred instrument of God” (ὄργανον ἔστι τοῦ θεοῦ παναρμόνιον, ἐμμελές καὶ ἅγιον),82 which secured the consistency, the order and the meaningfulness of the universe. The preservation of the universe was secured by the fact that the music of the Logos was a peaceful one, as Clement put it somewhere else.83 Represented as a song, the activity

77 Exhortation 1.3.1 (Mondésert, 55).
78 Exhortation 1.1.1 (Mondésert, 53); 1.2.4 (Mondésert, 55). In his brief note, Wallace-Hadrill refers exclusively to Orpheus. Cf. D. S. Wallace-Hadrill, The Greek Patristic View of Nature (Manchester and New Yourk: Manchester University Press and Barns & Noble, Inc., 1968), 100, 122. In turn, Stapert aptly discusses the four mythical Greek singers as part of Clement’s strategy to reach out to his pagan audiences. See Stapert, A New Song for an Old World, 49-51.
80 Cf. Exhortation 1.5.3 (Mondésert, 58). See also Clement, The Pedagogue 2.4.40.2, 2.4.41.1-3, 2.4.42.2, 2.4.44.4-5, in Clément d’Alexandrie, Le Pédagogue, Livre II, Sources chrétiennes 108, trad. de Claude Mondésert et notes de Henri-Irénée Marrou (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1965), 88, 90, 92, 96. For the diatribes of Clement against music and musical instruments in The Pedagogue and the Exhortation, see John Arthur Smith, Music in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 172, 174, 260. The reticence of Clement toward music and musical instruments was not singular. For similar attitudes, see Ferguson, ‘The Art of Praise,’ 407-11; Holleman, ‘The Oxyrhynchus Papyrus 1786,’ 8-11; Wallace-Hadrill, The Greek Patristic View of Nature, 97-100. Nevertheless, Clement pointed out also how music and the instruments can be put to a good use within a Christian setting. Cf. The Pedagogue 2.4.41.4-5; 2.4.42.1,3; 2.4.43.2-3 and 2.4.44.1-2 (Mondésert, 90, 92, 94).
81 Exhortation 12.120.4 (Mondésert, 190). We read, τοῦτο συμφωνία ἐστὶ, τοῦτο ἄρμονία πατρός (“he is the symphony, he is the harmony of the Father”).
82 Exhortation 1.5.4 (Mondésert, 58); 1.6.1 (Mondésert, 59).
83 Clement referred to the “sole instrument, the only peaceful Logos” (ἀν δὲ ἂν ὁργάνω, τῷ λόγῳ μόνῳ τῷ ἐμφυκοῦ) as the one through whom Christians sing to God. The Pedagogue 2.4.42.3 (Mondésert, 92). Interestingly, within their divine liturgy (λειτουργίαν θείαν; The Pedagogue 2.4.41.4; Mondésert, 90) Christians are supposed to become like the Logos, peaceful instruments, as the human being is by nature (ἐμφύκοι γὰρ ὡς ἄκηθος ὁργάνον ἀνθρωποῦ ἅγιον). The Pedagogue 2.4.42.1 (Mondésert, 92). The “God of peace” (θεὸν ἐμφυκόν) and the faithful’s “chorus of peace”
of the Logos emerged therefore as a constructive, ecosystemic factor, which “melodiously arrayed” (ἐκόσμησεν ἐμιμελός) the universe by changing “the disharmony of the fundamental elements” (τῶν στοιχείων τὴν

διαφωνίαν) into “the order of a symphony” (εἰς τάξιν … συμφωνίας). With this statement, the Alexandrine anticipated a teaching later developed, and magnificently so, by St Athanasius. For the time being we retain the complex representation of the Logos as composer, singer, song and a musical instrument, images which Clement applied concurrently to the cosmos and everything within it.

An eternal pure song

Aided by melodic images Clement construed the divine ecosystemic or providential activity from two different vantage points, namely, as a cosmological relationship between the Logos and the creation, signified by the “eternal/pure song” of the natural laws, and as an historical rapport between the Logos incarnate, Christ, and the renewed creation, signified by the “new song” of the Gospel. Regarding the first aspect, Clement referred to a foundational song that reverberates back and forth throughout the universe.

…this pure song (τὸ ἁςμα τὸ ἁκήρατον), a support of the whole (ἔρεισμα τῶν ὅλων) and the harmony of all (ἁρμονία τῶν πάντων), after being stretched from the centres to the limits and from the extremities to those in the middle, brought this universe to a harmonious measure (ἡρόσατο τόδε τὸ πᾶν) […] according to the fatherly intention of God…

Reaching everywhere, the providential soundwaves of the Logos’ song configure the whole of the universe as a dynamically attuned and convergent reality, bringing it to “the measure” of God’s will. Throughout the Exhortation, in fact, the musical sensitivity of Clement translated

this convergence in terms of a euphonic concord of the creation, or as a meaningful song in which the thoughts of the Logos, and likewise of his Father and Spirit (here signified by the “fatherly intention”), are encrypted. Returning to the quoted passage, its end is crucial for the understanding of the Clementine worldview: the “pure song” of the Logos discloses aspects pertaining to different sides of reality, namely, on the one hand the pervasive divine input, signified by the song, and on the


Exhortation 1.5.1 (Mondésert, 57).

Cf. Against the Gentiles 36-45 (Thomson, 98-126).


Exhortation 1.5.2 (Mondésert, 57-58). Cf. Exhortation 1.5.1 (Mondésert, 57). Both sections, and another reference to the divine measure, draw on Philo, as pointed out by van Winden, ‘Quotations from Philo in Clement of Alexandria’s Protrepticus,’ 208-9, 210.

other hand the structure and orientation of the cosmos, signified by the divine measure to which all things are being brought by the song. And so, for being founded on and shaped by the “pure song” of the Logos, the universe is both theocentric in its rhythms and theologically meaningful in its structure.

As a result, and from a slightly different angle, further down in the same chapter the whole of the creation is represented as a polyphonic instrument (πολύφωνον ὀργανον) that combines the lyre and the flute, an orchestra of which humankind is itself a part⁹⁰ as is likewise meant to become “a beautiful hymn to God”⁹¹ – a cosmic instrument used by the Logos of God to play the beats of the divine song.⁹² Origen, the younger contemporary of Clement, took up the theme of the polyphonic instrument within an anthropological context by stating – seemingly along the lines of his predecessor – that the human being is called to become a musical

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instrument in the hands of God.⁹³ Back to Clement, and in the light of the above, together with being perceived as a cosmic melody the divine activity establishes a melodious universe – the whole cosmos is thus harmony (ἀρμονία),⁹⁴ singing to God like the cicadas⁹⁵ – an instrument which in turn discloses the divine presence and interprets God’s intention, true, primarily as mediated by faith in the Logos incarnate, Christ,⁹⁶ and the Scriptures.⁹⁷ In the portrayal of the true Christian philosopher guided by the principles of natural contemplation, i.e. St Antony the Great, St Athanasius

⁹⁰ Exhortation 1.5.3,4 (Mondésert, 58); the passage refers to the human being as lyre, flute and temple, a triple image borrowed by St Maximus the Confessor in Chapters on Knowledge 2.100 (PG 90, 1172D-1173A). See also Exhortation 9.88.2-3 (Mondésert, 155), a passage which refers to the human agents that “bring to union in a divine symphony the polyphony and scattered harmony of the many [parts of the universe]” (ἐκ πολλῶν ἔνσως ἐκ πολύφωνων καὶ διασπορῆς ἀρμονίων λαβόσα δικήν μία γίνεσα συμφωνία). Contrary to Exhortation 1.5.3, polyphony bears in the ninth chapter a negative connotation, meaning cacophony. For more on Exhortation 9.88.2-3, see Itter, Esoteric Teaching, 206. The theme of the human positive agency referred to in Exhortation 9.88.2-3 is reiterated, as seen above, in The Pedagogue 2.4.42.1.

⁹¹ Exhortation 10.107.1 (Mondésert, 175).

⁹² Exhortation 1.5.3 (Mondésert, 58).

⁹³ Without entailing a cosmic dimension, the recently discovered Homilies on the Psalms by Origen seem to reiterate these Clementine stances. For instance, the prologue of the second homily on Ps 80 introduces the image of the musical instrument, δραμαν – λύραν ἢ κιθάραν ἢ οὐσικήν – whose qualities are put to a good use by one that is trained in the musical arts, γεγομανομένως ἐν τοῖς οὐσικοῖς ἔργοις. The image is then taken by the same prologue as an analogy for all human beings – πάντας δὲ τὸν θεόν γεγόμενοι οἱ μακάριοι προφητεύει, who are attuned to God’s will. Text edited by Lorenzo Perrone, ‘Origenes rediuisus: la découverte des Homélies sur les Psaumes dans le Cod. Gr. 314de Munich,’ Revue d’études augustiniennes et patristiques 59:1 (2013): 55-93, here 61-62.

⁹⁴ Exhortation 1.5.1 (Mondésert, 57). On the harmonic or symphonic character of the cosmos in the Exhortation, see Itter, Esoteric Teaching, 207.

⁹⁵ Exhortation 1.1.2-3 (Mondésert, 52-53).

⁹⁶ Exhortation 11.112.1 (Mondésert, 179-80).

⁹⁷ Exhortation, 8.77-81 (Mondésert, 143-48). For a similar understanding in The Pedagogue and the Stromateis, see also Blowers, Drama of Divine Economy, 317.
borrowed from Clement the same two witnesses. We retain the themes of the cosmos as both a song and a musical, polyphonic instrument. Whilst the second aspect, i.e. the cosmos as an instrument, evokes the analogy of the lyre, which we already encountered in St Ignatius and St Irenaeus, the first aspect adds intensity to the image of the singing celestial bodies from the Ignatian Starhymn. The universe is not just singing. It really is a song,

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the song of the Logos, and so a milieu of divine revelation, and likewise a multitude of songs, springing forth from the many voices or instruments of the creation – a message which Clement conveyed with much more conviction than any of his predecessors. These features complement the representation of the cosmos as a theatre of the divine activity, mentioned above, pointing out the dynamic existence of the universe and everything within it; indeed, the cosmos is not a passive stage where the performance unfolds; the stage, the amphitheatre takes an active part in the events. And so the many instruments and songs, both created and uncreated, reach a unison within this Clementine cosmic symphony or liturgy.

The new song

Regarding the temporal relationship of the Logos incarnate and the creation, the Exhortation rehearses similar metaphors in referring to Christ as a singer who chants (αἴδει) a “new song” (καινὸν ᾧσμα), a “heavenly ode” (οὐράνιος ᾧδή) or the “eternal law of a new harmony” (τῆς καινῆς ἁρμονίας τὸν αἰῶνον νόμον). The “new song” or the “new harmony” refers of course to the Gospel, which Clement understood as a novel tuneful expression of the “eternal law” or the original “pure song” that constitutes the foundation of the universe. In fact, as it reiterates the eternal song of the Logos, the novel expression, “my salvific song” (μου τὸ ᾧσμα τὸ σωτήριον), as the Alexandrine appropriated it, is paradoxically not new (καινὸν). More precisely, old and new at the same time, the Gospel of Christ reveals the foundational truth of the creation – the “eternal law” – a revelation that nevertheless brings the good news of our call to a lifestyle that prepares us for an immortal existence.

This is the new song (τὸ ᾧσμα τὸ καινὸν), the revelation that now shines towards us – of the Logos who was in the beginning and pre-

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existed. […] In the beginning, as [our] demiurge (ὡς δημιουργός), he was the one bestowing the power of life (τὸ ζῆν) after [our] moulding; now

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98 Cf. Life of St Antony, (on the value of Scripture) 75.4.14-18; (on the centrality of the faith in Christ) 78.1.3-4. See Athanase d’Alexandrie, Vie d’Antoine, intro., texte critique, trad., notes et index par G. J. M. Bartelink, Sources chrétiennes 400 (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1994), 328, 333-34.
99 Exhortation, 1.6.5 (Mondésert, 60).
100 Exhortation, 1.4.3 (Mondésert, 57).
101 Exhortation, 1.2.4 (Mondésert, 55). See also, briefly, Rhee, Early Christian Literature, 68-69, on Christianity as both old and new in Clement.
102 Exhortation, 1.6.3 (Mondésert, 59).
103 See more on this in Costache, ‘Meaningful Cosmos,’ 123-25.
manifested, as a teacher (ὁς διδάσκαλος) he taught [us] how to live well (τὸ εὖ ζῆν), so that as God (ὁς θεός) he bestows [on us] later the power to live forever (τὸ ἀεὶ ζῆν).\(^4\)

Whilst taking as a starting point his preferred musical metaphor, here the “new song” of the Gospel, like St Ignatius before him, Clement both spoke the language of his time, namely, of the mystery religions\(^5\) (transparent in the schema of the three phases, evocative of the initiation process) and conveyed an uncompromisingly soteriological message. This message presents three aspects or initiation stages pertaining to the song of the Logos incarnate, Christ, as the foundational law of the universe and a life-giving force (the source of τὸ ζῆν), as an ethical guide (the source of τὸ εὖ ζῆν) and as the source of life eternal (τὸ ἀεὶ ζῆν). As illustrated by these three aspects, in the vision of Clement Christ’s ‘melodious’ activity appears therefore as both pervading and supporting all the levels of the created existence, functioning like a cantis firmus for all the songs of the world. As such, it represents the focus of the universe and the human experience, the sacred mystery at the heart of reality, a reality that is itself sacred or rather sanctified by the Presence\(^6\) – a Presence that in this process is revealed under the guise of Christ’s three attributes, Demiurge, Teacher and God. It follows that, being rooted in the foundational song of the universe, the song of the Gospel tells a double story, of Christ the Logos as source of everything that is, and of the whole of the creation as encoded with the signs and marks of Christ the Logos, to the extent that in order to access the true nature and purpose of things one cannot avoid listening to the “new song.” Without us knowing what the impact of this

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strategy was upon the first readers of the Exhortation, the able approach of its author, in terms of both content and form, is inescapable.

It is noteworthy, furthermore, that by way of the rich melodic imagery and the highly evocative terminology employed in this treatise, the Alexandrine managed to connect God, the cosmos, the Gospel and human existence within one, complex and complete worldview. These are the marks of a genuinely Christian narrative of everything. Indeed, the decidedly soteriological dimension of the Clementine worldview, the way it is articulated in the passage quoted above, confirms what we discovered earlier with reference to the symphonic convergence of the singers, the instruments and the songs within the overall cosmological thinking of the great Alexandrine teacher – a thinking which our passage appends with the emphasis placed on the ethical criteria disclosed by the Logos as teacher and the hope pertaining to the eschatological horizon of immortality. All in all, Clement managed to produce an impressive construct according to which the primary source of the cosmic song, the Father, ‘sings’ the foundations of the universe through his Logos who, in turn and providentially, stirs to

\(^{4}\) Exhortation 1.7.3 (Mondésert, 61). The imagery of the Logos as a teacher was later developed within Clement’s Paedagogus. Cf. Blowers, ‘Entering,’ 150. For a parallel of the text cited above, see Exhortation 1.7.1 (Mondésert, 60). These stages of existence are supposed to be understood cosmologically and not only anthropologically. Related, Archbishop Stylianos, ‘The Sacredness of Creation,’ 8, points out that the divine economy works toward elevating the whole of creation “from ontological mortality to charismatic immortality.”

\(^{5}\) Cf. Lugaresi, ‘La natura ‘drammatica’ del mistero cristiano,’ 40-42.

song the polyphonic instrument represented by the universe and everything within it. The outcome of this depiction is a melodious universe, a symphony where all the factors, created and uncreated, have a part to play, to the extent that when the cacophony represented by atheism, idolatry and sinfulness emerges, all these singers and/or instruments rally around the Logos incarnate – answering the “pure song” that pervades everything – to both restore the original song and further enrich it with soteriological nuances. This meaningful rendition of the Christian worldview through melodic imagery appears to find an indirect echo, from a purely aesthetic viewpoint, in Tolkien’s myth of the origins presented in ‘The Music of the Ainur.’

When divested of its more exotic, gnostic-like nuances, Tolkien’s myth tells the similar story of a universe that is ‘sung’ into being and that in turn contributes to the original song the many songs, loftier or humbler, of the beings within it.

To wrap this section up, interestingly, the same musical sensitivity translated elsewhere in the Clementine corpus into an intricate melodious arrangement or order (ἀκολουθία) of the thoughts of our Alexandrine, as witnessed to by the use of “composition” (συντακτικόν) – according to the note of Itter. This same perception seems to be likewise illustrated by Clement’s hymnographical experiments in the classical mode, such as the “Hymn to Christ the Saviour,” referred to above, albeit these were meant for a learned readership and not for liturgical use, as Smith pointed out. In the light of all this evidence, one may safely conclude that Clement appropriated the melodic imagery and vocabulary both in order to articulate a worldview and in his personal commitment to theological reflection, which might indicate an interiorisation or a full appropriation of his missionary strategies. We shall discover soon that St Athanasius’ Against the Gentiles, to which I now turn, reiterated a similar understanding without simply imitating the approach of the illustrious Alexandrine predecessor.

St Athanasius the Great

St Athanasius’ Against the Gentiles is a fourth century Alexandrine apology, aimed more at the hesitant intelligentsia within the Christian Church rather than the opponents of the Gospel. Behr is right when describing it and its sequel, the treatise On the Incarnation, as being “almost catechetical pieces.” We could assume that it is partly due to this different focus that St Athanasius has shown within it less inclination than Clement toward depicting the cosmos by way of musical metaphors – without this approach

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\(^{108}\) Itter, Esoteric Teaching, 36-37.

\(^{109}\) Smith, Music in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity, 211. For more on the same, see van den Hoek, ‘‘Hymn of the Holy Clement to Christ the Saviour,’’ 315-22. On the musical avatars of Clement’s hymn in the last five hundred years of composition, see Jane Schatkin Hettrick, ‘Musical Settings of Clement’s ‘Hymn to Christ the Saviour,’’ in Havrdá, Hušek and Plátová (eds.), The Seventh Book of the Stromateis (cited above), 323-39.

breaking the continuity between the two Alexandrine writings, as we shall soon discover. It is likewise very possible that as an author St Athanasius nurtured quite different sensitivities to those of Clement. One thing is clear, namely, that in his apology, in contrast with the predecessor who chose to do something of the work of a literary and cultural critic, our saintly shepherd adopted a very discursive and overtly polemical approach. As a result, and to move closer to the topic, in its relevant chapters (35-47)\(^{111}\) Against the Gentiles appears as more rigorously cosmological than the Clementine work for which, we have seen, the universe is metaphorically depicted at once as a polyphonic instrument, a song and a chorus conducted by the main performer within the drama of divine economy — to borrow Blowers’ phrase — the Logos of God. Apart from these variances, Against the Gentiles shares important features in common with the Exhortation, such as the focus on the divine Logos as the centre of all reality and of providence as an ongoing, both ordering and revelatory, activity of God within the creation. In the footsteps of Clement, St Athanasius believed that an important proof of divine providence in the universe is the richly diversified and ordered cosmos, full of beauty and meaning; likewise, that in being harmoniously organised, the universe points to the Logos as ecosystemic agent.\(^{112}\) Another shared feature, relevant here, is the fact that St Athanasius represented the providence of the Logos, among other means, by way of analogies, including a couple of melodic images,\(^{113}\)

\[\text{\ldots\ldots}51\ldots\ldots\]

and a richly evocative terminology that recalls the Clementine musical sensitivity. Below I shall explore his use of melodic imagery in chapters 38, 42 and 43 of Against the Gentiles, in conjunction with two other analogies, anthropological and societal, and in the light of the musical vocabulary that pervades the apology. Surprisingly, both the melodic images and terminology of the treatise have passed almost unnoticed by contemporary scholars.

To begin with, it is noteworthy that chapters 38 and 43 contain three analogies each for the providential and pervasive activity of the Logos in the universe. Interestingly, the two chapters present not only similar images; they display them as in a mirror or according to a chiastic pattern, like in Table 1.\(^{114}\) Looking at chapter 38,

\[\text{\ldots\ldots}50\ldots\ldots\]


\(^{114}\) Meijering (Orthodoxy and Platonism, 37) noted the similarities but, in looking at the group constituted by chapters 35-39, could not see the chiastic structure represented by chapters 38 and 43.
it introduces a societal analogy, an anthropological one, and a musical one, in this very sequence. More specifically, the three images refer to the order of a city which points to the active presence of its ruler, the consistency of the body which reveals the activity of the soul, and the harmonious sound of a lyre which indicates the skills of the musician. After reviewing the three metaphors, St Athanasius concluded that in like manner the harmony of the cosmos points to the Logos as the one “master and king of all creation” (τὸν ἀρχόντα καὶ βασιλέα τῆς πάσης κτίσεως). Whilst using different words, chapter 43 reiterates the same conclusion, which functions as a meaningful axis for the chiastic structure represented by the two chapters. In turn, chapter 43 introduces first the musical analogy, then the anthropological one and finally the societal one. The symmetry of the two chapters appears as breached by the fact that, whilst the anthropological and the societal analogies coincide perfectly, the musical paradigms they propose differ significantly. More precisely, whereas chapter 38 speaks of the lyre and the musician, chapter 43 replaces this analogy by the image of a choir and its choirmaster; it is noteworthy that the metaphor of the choir, as it featured in earlier fathers, is transformed here into another analogy, very likely due to the more discursive character of the treatise. What matters is that apart from this variance the chiastic symmetry of the two chapters – at least on a structural level – remains intact. That being said, the actual significance of this chiasm is not clear, although thinking of the general purpose of a chiastic arrangement we could surmise that it was meant to enforce the message that St Athanasius conveyed, namely, that the Logos rules over all as provident God. We shall discover later on that this structure is doubled by another chiastic construct.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Analogy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>The order of a city points to the active presence of its ruler</td>
<td>Societal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The consistency of the body reveals the activity of the soul</td>
<td>Anthropological</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The harmonious sound of a lyre indicates the skills of the musician</td>
<td>Musical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38 and 43</td>
<td>The Logos rules over all</td>
<td>Meaningful axis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

115 *Against the Gentiles* 38.7-17 (Thomson, 102-104). For soteriological rehearsals of this analogy, see *On the Incarnation* 9.17-22 (Thomson, 154) and 10.2-11 (Thomson, 154-56).
116 *Against the Gentiles* 38.17-23 (Thomson, 104).
117 *Against the Gentiles* 38.35-42 (Thomson, 104-106). See also 42.22-28 (Thomson, 116), and briefly 39.32-33 (Thomson, 108). The same analogy of the lyre appeared earlier, as a simile for the harmonious functioning of the senses in the human being; cf. 31.24-37 (Thomson, 84-86). See a brief reference to this last image in Ferguson, ‘Toward a Patristic Theology of Music,’ 276-77.
118 *Against the Gentiles* 38.46 (Thomson, 106).
119 *Against the Gentiles* 43.26-27 (Thomson, 120).
120 *Against the Gentiles* 43.1-7 (Thomson, 118).
121 *Against the Gentiles* 43.7-12 (Thomson, 118).
122 *Against the Gentiles* 43.12-32 (Thomson, 118-20).
The polyphonic choir is led by its choirmaster

The soul secures the good functioning of the body

The king puts in motion the activity of the city

Table 1: A chiastic structure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>43</th>
<th>The polyphonic choir is led by its choirmaster</th>
<th>Musical</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The soul secures the good functioning of the body</td>
<td>Anthropological</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The king puts in motion the activity of the city</td>
<td>Societal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Before looking at the texts, it is noteworthy that in chapter 38 are present clear traces of such traditional antecedents like the analogy of the lyre and possibly the polyphonic instrument. Likewise, in chapter 43 the impact of the chorus imagery utilised by earlier fathers is equally obvious. Furthermore, when taken together the musical images employed by St Athanasius suggest an understanding of the universe as meaningful and melodious, not dissimilar to the one discerned in Clement. This understanding finds confirmation in that Against the Gentiles consistently uses nouns that illustrate a musical perception of reality, such as ‘harmony’ (ἁρµονία) and ‘symphony’ (συµφωνία) with their morphological variations, sometimes combining them within the same sentence. The presence of this terminology gives the real measure of the Alexandrine’s musical perception, making up the background against which the two analogies should be assessed.

From another viewpoint, and notwithstanding the equivalent use of melodic analogies in the two chapters, in section 38 St Athanasius appears to have been more interested in the musician, i.e. the Logos, rather than in the depiction of the universe as melodious, or in music and the instruments as it were. This aspect emerges with clarity in the Athanasian analogy of the lyre. The relevant passage reads as follows.

When one hears from a distance a lyre made of many and various strings (λύρας ἐκ πολλῶν καὶ διαφόρων νεύρων), and marvels at the harmony of its symphony (ἁρµονίαν τῆς συµφωνίας), [...] even without seeing the musician [one would infer] that there is someone who by his knowledge combined the sound of each string into a melodious symphony (ἐναρµονίον συµφωνίαν). Similarly, given the perfectly harmonious order (παναρµονίου [...] τῆς τάξεως) within the whole cosmos [...] and the one perfect order of all things (μιᾶς...)

[123] See for instance Clement’s representation of the song of the Logos, discussed above, that “melodiously arrayed” the universe “into the order of a symphony.” Exhortation 1.5.1 (Mondèsert, 57).
[124] For ‘harmony’ and its variations see e.g. Against the Gentiles 36.2 (Thomson, 98); 37.27 (Thomson, 102); 38.3,22,37,41,43 (Thomson, 102, 104, 106); 40.2 (Thomson, 112); 42.9,22,38 (Thomson, 114, 116, 118), etc. For ‘symphony’ and its variations, see Against the Gentiles 36.1 (Thomson, 98); 38.37,42 (Thomson, 104, 106); 39.32 (Thomson, 108); 42.9 (Thomson, 114), etc.
τῶν πάντων ἀποτελομένης τάξιως), it follows that there should be construed one master and king of all the creation, […], who by his own light shines upon all things and moves them.125

The text rehearses liberally, in terms of its content, Clement’s depiction of the song of the Logos that brings together in harmony all the levels of reality. Literally speaking, however, the passage reiterates the Irenaean proof of the oneness of the musician inferred from the harmonious sound of the lyre, going as far as concatenating two phrases borrowed from the holy Bishop of Lyon (uaria et multa sunt quae facta sunt; ex multis et contrariis sonis),126 analysed above, in its opening line (ἐκ πολλῶν καὶ ὀμαφόρων). Furthermore, the last line of the passage, “by his own light shines upon all things” (τὸν τὸ ἐαυτοῦ φωτὶ τὰ πάντα καταλάμποντα),127 brings to mind the Ignatian Starhymn, which refers to the light of the nativity star that overshadowed the other celestial bodies;128 without matching textually, the sentences are strikingly similar. The same final line of our passage appears to offer, in turn, a counterpoint to the Ignatian theme of the incarnation as causing the utter surprise of the eons by a cosmic reorganisation;129 in St Athanasius, there is no doubt that the Logos is the ecosystemic agent that “moves all” (τὰ πάντα … κινούντα).130 This rich association of patristic images, phraseology and understandings would compel one to question the accuracy of the note in the prologue, that St Athanasius composed Against the Gentiles without having the works of the fathers at hand.131 Nevertheless, if that were true, his excellent command of patristic sources is even more impressive. What matters for our purposes, however, is that

the analogy of the lyre would seem to suggest the presence in St Athanasius of a similar perception to that of the earlier fathers, namely, regarding the musical character of the cosmic order, which would therefore confirm the significance entailed by the terminology of symphony and harmony. And here we reach the point made above. Indeed, at a closer look, our text does not convey this message as strongly as we found it, for instance in Clement.

There is a noticeable tension between the musical sensitivity signified by the frequent use of the terms ‘harmony’ and ‘symphony,’ and our text, which is not focused on the melodious nature of the universe. The passage under consideration takes both the harmonious song of the lyre and the order of the cosmos merely as pretexts to point out the existence of a musician132 and, respectively, an ecosystemic

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125 Against the Gentiles 38.35-47 (Thomson, 104-106). For a brief reference to this analogy, see Meijering, Orthodoxy and Platonism, 33.
126 Against Heresies 2.25.2 (Rousseau and Doutrelleau, II, 252.20,26).
127 Against the Gentiles 38.46-47 (Thomson, 106).
128 In the Starhymn, “whose light surpassed that of all the others” (αὐτοῦ δὲ ἦν ὑπερβάλλων τὸ φῶς αὐτοῦ ὑπὲρ πάντα). To the Ephesians 19.2 (Ehrman, 238).
129 In the Starhymn, τῶραμή τε ἦν, πόθεν ἢ καινότης ἢ ἀνόμιος αὐτοῖς (“it was disturbance [among the worlds, or eons, and the stars] as to the source of this novelty and unlikeliness to them”). To the Ephesians 19.2 (Ehrman, 238).
130 Against the Gentiles 38.47 (Thomson, 106).
131 Against the Gentiles 1.13-14 (Thomson, 2).
132 For another and similar occurrence of the lyre imagery, see Against the Gentiles 47.24-26 (Thomson, 132), where the instrument discloses the existence of its maker.
agent, the Logos – here portrayed as provident king of the universe. This emphasis, in various degrees shared by the earlier Church fathers studied here, should not come as a surprise. Whereas they worked towards depicting the world as melodious – and from this viewpoint prominent among them was the undertaking of Clement – the primary interest of the fathers was in affirming one creator and provident God, and not in articulating a cosmology. Nevertheless, within the economy of Against the Gentiles this is not the only way in which the Alexandrine shepherd utilised the analogy of the lyre. For instance, he returned ingeniously to this very image in chapter 42, aiming to construe another proof as in a mirror, namely, from the ecosystemic agent to the cosmic order. This is a simpler chiasmus, as illustrated by Table 2, encompassed within the larger one discussed above.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Analogy</th>
<th>Message</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>The harmonious sound of a lyre indicates the skills of a musician</td>
<td>Cosmic order points to the activity of one ecosystemic agent, the Logos of God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>The skills of the musician make the lyre produce harmonious sounds</td>
<td>The ecosystemic agent, the Wisdom of God, makes possible the cosmic order</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Another chiastic structure

More precisely, the text shows the divine factor, here designated as God’s Wisdom (ἡ τοῦ Θεοῦ σοφία), as bringing the various parts of the universe to harmony. As St Athanasius noted,

> The way someone produces a meaningful melody (ἐν τὸ συμμανύμενον μέλος) by musically tuning (μουσικὸς ἀρμοσάμενος) a lyre, with skill bringing to an accord the low sounds and the high ones, also the intermediate ones and the other sounds, likewise the Wisdom of God produces […] both this one cosmos and one order (ἐνα τον κόσμον καὶ μίαν τούτου τάξιν) by holding the universe like a lyre (τὸ ὄλον ὡς λύραν ἐπέχων). Thus he brings together things in the air and things on earth, also things in the sky and things in the air, combining the wholes with the parts, and making them turn about by his command and will [...].

One could recognise in the cosmological part of the passage an echo of the Clementine, and Philonian, idea of the song of the Logos that reverberates back and forth through the various layers of reality – an image further rehearsed by St Maximus the Confessor. Likewise can be traced here an echo of the Irenaean theme of the intervals pertaining to the sounds of the lyre, which typify the consonance of the various parts of the one creation. Of immediate interest is that the point made by this passage is almost identical to that of chapter 38, the difference consisting in the obtrusive designation of the universe as a musical instrument, a lyre, in the text here considered. Music provided St Athanasius, therefore, with appropriate analogies both

133 Against the Gentiles 42.22-28 (Thomson, 116).
for the God who sings and the cosmic instrument on which God plays his song. Apart from this contribution, however, neither of the two Athanasian passages dealing with the analogy of the lyre depicts the universe as a melody, at least not directly. A more transparent description of the cosmos as melodic, which still remains far from the highly suggestive

\[\text{\ldots\ldots.57\ldots\ldots}\]

metaphors of Clement, occurs in St Athanasius’ reference to the “image of a great choir” (Ὧς ἐν εἰκόνι χοροῦ μεγάλου), in chapter 43.\(^{135}\)

Chapter 43 contains, as we have seen, three analogies of the cosmic order and its dependence on the Logos of God. The first of these analogies, of relevance here, is that of a great choir composed of singers that vary in gender and age yet still “produce a single harmony” (μίαν ἀποτελεσθεὶς ἀρμονίαν) under the direction of one choirmaster (καθηγεμών).\(^{136}\) St Athanasius observed, interestingly, that in being one chorus and producing one melody, the many members of the choir preserve their particularities (ἐκαστὸς μὲν κατὰ τὴν φύσιν ἐκαστοῦ καὶ δύναμιν φωνεῖ)\(^{137}\) – e.g. a man sings like a man whilst a child sings like a child etc. It is possible that St Maximus borrowed this depiction for his own sketch of the divine liturgy as unifying the various members of the Church as one body under Christ, its head;\(^{138}\) in turn, when interpreted in the light of the Maximian rendition St Athanasius’ image of the chorus emerges as a reference to the ecclesial assembly and, in so doing, reiterates familiar themes such as the ecclesial choir of St Ignatius and the prophetic chorus of Clement. Relevant here is that when this image is translated in cosmological terms, it points to a perception of the cosmos for which the different beings within it sing one song whilst all preserve their distinctiveness. Interestingly, the association of the variously differentiated ecclesial assembly and the variously differentiated cosmos features quite similarly within the Maximian context referred to above.\(^{139}\) Back to St Athanasius, the idea of

\[\text{\ldots\ldots.58\ldots\ldots}\]

a diversity of beings that congregate as one cosmos is plainly reiterated at the end of the chapter, where the Logos of God is depicted as arranging and/or embellishing all things (τὰ πάντα διακοσμηται) in such a way that “from all these things one order is […] achieved” (παρὰ πάντων […] μία τὰξις ἀποτελεῖται); at the same time, all things preserve their own characteristics (τὰ οἰκεία παρ᾽ ἐκάστου γίνεται).\(^{140}\) Whereas there is no explicit reference here to the melodic arrangement of the universe – due to the fact that this conclusion is supposed to highlight the common message of the three

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\(^{135}\) Against the Gentiles 43.2, and the context (Thomson, 118).

\(^{136}\) Against the Gentiles 43.4.7 (Thomson, 118). The word καθηγεμών is endowed with various meanings, such as the leadership of a statesman and the standing of the head of a philosophical school. In contrast, Clement’s choice for χορηγός (Exhortation 9.88.3; Mondéret, 155) draws attention to the sense of either a choir leader or a financial provider for the chorus. In the light of these meanings, one finds behind the icon of Christ as choirmaster the notions of authority and providence.

\(^{137}\) Against the Gentiles 43.4-5 (Thomson, 118). Lit. “each of them sings according to his/her nature and capability.” For a very brief note on this aspect, see Meijering, Orthodoxy and Platonism, 37.

\(^{138}\) Cf. The Mystagogy 1.163-84,199-203 (Boudignon, 12-14).

\(^{139}\) See The Mystagogy 1.199-206 (Boudignon, 14).

\(^{140}\) Against the Gentiles 43.27-32 (Thomson, 120).
analogies – in mentioning the preservation of distinctiveness in unity this passage still echoes the image of the great chorus and its many voices. Apart from the straightforward musical terminology of harmony and symphony, this is the closest that *Against the Gentiles* gets to the powerful melodic metaphors of the Clementine apology. Before concluding this section, it is noteworthy that in the final chapter of the treatise St Athanasius expressed a conviction that the analogies utilised therein were sufficient to draw people’s attention to the theological meaningfulness of a cosmos that pointed, beyond itself, to God.141

Less metaphorically inclined in his apology, St Athanasius managed nevertheless to implement some of the nuances entailed by the melodic imagery utilised by the earlier Church fathers, such as the presentation of the Logos as harpist and choirmaster, together with the cosmos as a harmonious and theologically meaningful order, typified by the song of the lyre and the chorus. True, in utilising musical analogies he neither depicted the providential activity in the universe as a song nor did he designate the order of the universe as melodious. I suggested earlier that this approach might have been conditioned by the different focus of *Against the Gentiles* and St Athanasius’ auctorial sensitivities. That being said, we discovered that the rich musical vocabulary that pervades the Athanasian apology complements the limited range of the analogies of the lyre and the chorus. I must add here that the Alexandrine shepherd’s sensitivity seems to have been rather toward the realm of the text and syntax, not of music; thus, his perception referred primarily to the narrative structure of

the universe,142 a dimension that echoes the Irenaean reference to Scripture and the cosmos, and the connection drawn by Clement between the Psalter and the meaningful universe. For the time being, suffice it to say that when the image of a narrative cosmos combines with the melodic analogies and vocabulary analysed herein, the Athanasian discourse appears to be as rich and significant as that of Clement. The use of musical references in *Against the Gentiles*, and even more so in his *Letter to Marcellinus*,143 confirms this understanding. In so doing, St Athanasius wrapped up his vision of the cosmos both in faithfulness to tradition and in a creative fashion.

**Concluding Remarks**

We have seen above how in their respective efforts to reach out to their audiences, both Clement and St Athanasius utilised a variety of strategies, of which musical

141 Cf. *Against the Gentiles* 47.20-26 (Thomson, 132).
142 Cf. *Against the Gentiles* 38.1-7 (Thomson, 102). See also his *Life of St Antony* 78.1 (Bartelink, 334.4-7).
imagery was an integral part. Against the background constituted by their open criticism of pagan culture and a sense of reticence toward a nature that was utterly misrepresented and misused, the employment of melodic imagery by the two Alexandrine teachers, imagery mainly borrowed from the same culture, casts new light upon the early Christian construal of both culture and nature. For both fathers, indeed, the various melodic metaphors and analogies served toward articulating cosmic order as an order-which-makes-sense, more precisely a theologically meaningful order and a sacred one at that – aspects pertaining to a positive appraisal of the creation. True, their sensitivities were not identical. Whereas Clement preferred the imagery of the cosmos as song, St Athanasius gave precedence to the cosmic order as syntax. That said, their perceptions should be seen as kindred given their shared utilisation of melodic imagery to convey the theological message, a complex message which refers to the multiple connections between the Logos or Wisdom of God and the universe, between humanity and the cosmos, and between humanity and God. In so doing, the two fathers have endowed the musical images they employed with the capacity of illustrating the experience of the sacred – since by definition the sacred is an experience of holistic connectivity – thus bridging theology and the arts. This is in itself a significant contribution to the history of the rapports between Christianity and culture in Late Antiquity. More importantly here, through their achievements the two Alexandrine fathers wrote another chapter in the saga of the early Christian efforts to articulate the cosmos as a theologically meaningful milieu, by way of melodic imagery. We have seen above that these efforts began with St Ignatius and, to some extent, were continued by St Irenaeus, whose ideas prepared the way for the Alexandrine developments. And although scholars have addressed the specific contributions of these fathers and other early Christian authors (as partially evidenced by the sources discussed herein) in the area of musical imagery, the relation of such contributions with the articulation of the Christian worldview has been largely ignored. Moreover, these contributions are not yet assessed as relevant to the patristic efforts of articulating the cosmos as another Scripture, or a means of divine revelation. With the fathers studied herein, one may confidently affirm that for the early Christians the universe was indeed another Scripture but also a genuine song or psalm within whose rhythms they were able to discern various voices, of God, of the Church, of the human being, and of the whole of creation.