

Meaningful Cosmos: Logos and Nature in Clement the Alexandrian's *Exhortation to the Gentiles*

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Abstract: *The paper begins by emphasising the contemporary understanding of the universe as an encoded message that does not require either an Encoder or a meaning, to which the author opposes the richer Clementine appraisal of the cosmos as theologically meaningful and existentially enriching. Furthermore, together with addressing the current lack of interest in Clement's Exhortation to the Gentiles, the essay points out the relevance of this small treatise for the category of the cosmos as another scripture. This category is of particular interest since it allows for the construal of the universe as meaningful, which Clement actually accomplished in this treatise. The content of the Exhortation, and primarily its prologue, is studied herein from a revelational perspective (the cosmos as a meaningful song) and a soteriological perspective (the cosmos as a salvific song). The paper stresses out the centrality of Christ the Logos to the Clementine construct, and the repercussions of this core conviction for the representation of the rapports engaging the cosmos, the Old Testament and the gospel; it is precisely these complex rapports that contributed to the depiction of the world as meaningful. The paper ends by highlighting the significance of Clement's worldview as an alternative to the pervasive nihilism of contemporary culture.*

At some point in his classic book, *The Mind of God*, Paul Davies addressed the topic of the natural laws that “underpin physical reality,” which act as “the ‘ground of being’ of the universe” and

make possible for the human reason to understand the world.¹ Granted, Davies referred to the complex background of the scientific notion of natural laws (which culturally draw on the Platonic ideas and Aristotelian physics through the mediation of the Christian medieval notions of “God’s law manifested in nature” and the “strongly enforced concept of civil law”)² yet he insisted that currently the interpretation of the laws does no longer require a source, supernatural or otherwise. More precisely, whilst “the laws of nature encode a message” there is no trace of an Encoder: “the laws of nature have become a message without a Sender.”³ Consequently, rather than signifying a higher meaning, “the fact that there is cosmos rather than chaos boils down to the patterned properties of this string of digits,”⁴ i.e. the zeroes and ones to which the laws can be reduced within mathematical relations. Whilst upholding a different view (to which I shall return), Davies made himself here the springboard of a widespread approach to reality proper to a variety of milieus, not only scientifically oriented; it is the trend of our times to ‘renounce anthropomorphism’ and convince ourselves that there can be letters without writers and purposeful thoughts without minds to think them; an appraisal of reality that eventually defaces the message itself. At the end of my paper, I shall illustrate this mindset by a famous passage from another scientific bestseller.

As it happens, and circumscribing the discussion to the realm of science, the fact that contemporary scientists cannot arrive from the code to the Encoder comes as no surprise, given the self-imposed restrictions of their enterprise. Indeed, science is fundamentally an exploration of nature *per se*, working along the lines of certain naturalistic penchants, like the denial of anything that cannot be empirically tested and mathematically formalised, and logical presuppositions, like the principle of causality. Precisely because it ignores the cause-and-effect schema, typical for scientific thinking, I propose that the notion of a cosmic message without a

¹ Paul Davies, *The Mind of God: Science and the Search for Ultimate Meaning* (London: Penguin Books, 1993), 72-73.

² Cf. *ibidem*, 75-77.

³ Cf. *ibidem*, 80.

⁴ *Ibidem*.

Sender is neither scientific nor logical; it is in fact an agnostic interpretation of reality, conditioned by an aversion toward the very idea of God. Yet there is nothing scientific about atheism and agnosticism, given that science, by virtue of its naturalism, cannot make metaphysical assumptions.⁵ In turn, if we apply consistently the principle of causality to the matter at hand, it results that the encoded message is the effect of a cause, namely, the Encoder, and that it should have a meaning. In other words, affirming the Sender is more logical than denying the Sender. Nevertheless, what matters here is that neither the refusal nor the affirmation of the Encoder pertains to the competency of science. It follows that, culturally speaking, affirming the Sender is as permitted as denying the Sender, and that neither possibility should influence the scientific discourse; furthermore, it follows that the scientific discourse should display no ideological preference and remain open to various interpretations. We have seen, however, that in fact scientists are not free of cultural suppositions. In light of the above, and at least for the sake of consistency, the possibility of another viewpoint could no longer be excluded; in fact, it could prove to be beneficial to a humanity that is severely wounded by the perspective of a pointless existence. This other perspective makes the object of the present study.

Acknowledging the logical necessity of the Encoder leads to very different results to those of a worldview reduced to zeroes and ones, without these results affecting the scientific data. More precisely, this other presupposition leads to a radical reinterpretation of nature, which, whilst still made of numbers, of ones and zeroes, presents itself as open to God, the Sender of the letters. Clement, the early Alexandrine theologian whose teachings are explored below illustrates this very change of angle; far from mythologising, i.e. from investing the natural laws with divine attributes,⁶ he perceived the laws and their code as marks of the Encoder. In so doing, Clement followed St Justin Martyr and Philosopher who depicted Christ not only as “our teacher and interpreter of the ignored [scriptural]

⁵ Cf. St Maximus the Confessor, *Chapters on Knowledge*, 1.1-10, esp. 8 (PG 90, 1084A-1088A).

⁶ This is a temptation of which modern scientists are not entirely free. Cf. Davies, *The Mind of God*, 82-84. See also Alexandre Koyré, *From the Closed World to the Infinite Universe* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1957), 275-76.

prophecies” (τοῦ ἡμετέρου διδασκάλου καὶ τῶν ἀγνοουμένων προφητειῶν ἐξηγητοῦ)⁷ but likewise as the Logos of all humanity and the cosmos,⁸ “who precedes all of creation” (ὁ λόγος πρὸ τῶν ποιημάτων),⁹ “through whom [God] made and ordered all things” (δι’ αὐτοῦ πάντα ἔκτισε καὶ ἐκόσμησε),¹⁰ and who enlightens the nature of things¹¹ – in other words, the one who deciphers the message he himself delivered from the beginning of the universe. Building on identical premises, Clement the Alexandrine explored the universe in search for order and the meaning of this order, which he contemplated from the vantage point of its source, the Logos of God.

The text explored herein is Clement’s *Exhortation to the Gentiles* (Προτρεπτικὸς πρὸς Ἑλλήνας), belonging to the apologetic genre and as such addressing the rapports between early Christianity and its cultural context. Of interest is the fact that, as Paul Blowers noted,¹² generally Clement regarded scriptural interpretation and the contemplation of the cosmos as unfolding according to the same principles, namely, as pointing to Christ as the source of all wisdom. My intention herein is to show that this first great Alexandrine father offered in anticipation an alternative to the modern disconnection of the cosmic code from the Sender. More precisely, I shall point out that Clement depicted the universe as a divine narrative or syntax, another scripture as it were or at least another psalm – perhaps more so than his contemporaries, St Irenaeus of Lyon and Origen, who, whilst sharing a reluctance toward the cosmos, were rather interested in articulating God and the world strictly within a scriptural framework.¹³ What singled

⁷ St Justin, *First Apology*, 32 (PG 6, 377B). My translations.

⁸ Cf. *ibidem*, 46 (PG 6, 397BC). See also his *Second Apology*, 8 (PG 6, 457AB).

⁹ Cf. St Justin, *Second Apology*, 6 (PG 6, 453A).

¹⁰ Cf. *ibidem*.

¹¹ Cf. St Justin, *Second Apology*, 10 (PG 6, 460B-461B) and 13 (PG 6, 465B-468A).

¹² Paul M. Blowers, ‘Entering “This Sublime and Blessed Amphitheatre”: Contemplation of Nature and Interpretation of the Bible in the Patristic Period,’ in *Nature and Scripture in the Abrahamic Religions: Up to 1700*, Vol. 1, Brill’s Series in Church History 36, ed. Jitse M. van der Meer and Scott Mandelbrote (Leiden: Brill, 2008): 147-76, here 149-50.

¹³ For the Irenaeian and Origenian approaches, see Blowers, ‘Entering,’ 152-53.

out the demarche of Clement in the *Exhortation* (later reiterated by St Athanasius in *Against the Gentiles*, a connection that I cannot pursue here) is that he chose to read the book of creation not only through the lens of Scripture, but also directly, as another scripture – or a song/psalm – in its own right. Although he made copious appeal to the Scriptures, this seems to have constituted a strategy leading to the confirmation, on canonical grounds, of the findings of nature contemplation. This very approach makes his contributions highly relevant to the quest illustrated by the fairly recent volumes *Nature and Scripture in the Abrahamic Religion*, where, however, the Clementine apology is passed over in silence. By analysing the *Exhortation*, a treatise usually ignored in recent scholarship, I intend to prove that Clement was consistent in his approach from the very beginning of his program of theological instruction.

This paper will explore primarily the prologue of Clement's *Exhortation*, which will be nevertheless evaluated within the whole of the apology. Special attention will be given to the Logos theory – or more precisely the Alexandrine's conviction that Christ is the Logos – and the rendition of the cosmos as a hymn whose message corresponds to the revelation of the Old and New Testaments, and as a musical instrument of God. In addressing the Clementine contributions to the quest for a Sender through the contemplation of the natural laws, I will sporadically utilise my layman's understanding of the contemporary communication theory. In this undertaking, the chapter of Luc Brisson¹⁴ on the Neoplatonic interpreters of the universe (*kósmos*) as discourse (*mûthos*) in Plato provided me with

¹⁴ Cf. Luc Brisson, 'Le discours comme univers et l'univers comme discours: Platon et ses interprètes néo-platoniciens,' in *Lectures de Platon*, Histoire de la Philosophie (Vrin, 2000): 209-18. Brisson successfully argued that Plato designated the 'maker' of both cosmos and discourse by the same terms, ποιητής (maker, creator, poet) and πατήρ (father); likewise, the favourite term for the action of making, both of the cosmos and the discourse, was ποιέω (cf. ibidem, 210). Whilst the Neoplatonic commentators of Plato were not particularly sensitive to this use of the words, the complete interpretation of the universe as discourse/text and of the discourse/text as universe was achieved in the Renaissance (cf. ibidem, 216-18). Without engaging communication theory, Jaroslav Pelikan discussed the Platonic equivalence of 'maker' and 'father' as pondered by Philo the Alexandrine. See his 'Alexandria: The God of *Genesis* as "Maker and Father" (*Timaeus* 28C),' in *What Has Athens to Do*

very useful insights into the complexities of the ancient and late antique perceptions of the world as a means for communication.

Enter the *Exhortation to the Gentiles*

Not much is known of the circumstances that prompted the elaboration of the *Exhortation to the Gentiles*, with scholars believing that this apology was written c. 195AD as a prelude to the *Pedagogue*.¹⁵ There is likewise an ongoing discussion in scholarship around the possibility for the *Exhortation* to have been part of a grand design of the Clementine corpus, which was meant, it seems, to guide its reader through a complete program of Christian initiation from its inception – with the treatise of interest here – to the mystical heights of experience and contemplation.¹⁶ Prominent in this treatise, and pertaining to its apologetic character, is the

with Jerusalem? Timaeus and Genesis in *Counterpoint*, Jerome Lectures 21 (The University of Michigan Press, 1997): 67-87, esp. 72-75.

¹⁵ On the *Exhortation* and its date of elaboration, see Claude Mondésert, SJ, 'Introduction' to Clément d'Alexandrie, *Le Protrepétique*, Sources Chrétiennes 2, deuxième édition revue et augmentée (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1949): 5-50, esp. 27-42. Herein I used the original Greek edited by Mondésert, pp. 52-193; translations mine. For further details, see also Henny Fiskå Hägg, *Clement of Alexandria and the Beginnings of Christian Apophaticism* (Oxford University Press, 2006), 62-63; David Ivan Rankin, *From Clement to Origen: The Social and Historical Context of the Church Fathers* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 126; Ronald E. Heine, 'The Alexandrians,' in *The Cambridge History of Early Christian Literature*, eds. Frances Young, Lewis Ayres and Andrew Louth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, reprinted 2006): 119-30, esp. 118, 120; Johannes Quasten, *Patrology*, Vol. 2 (Westminster: Christian Classics Inc., 1986), 6-7, 20-21.

¹⁶ For the recent discussions on this grand schema and the writings of Clement in general, see Catherine Osborne, 'Clement of Alexandria' in *The Cambridge History of Philosophy in Late Antiquity*, Vol. 1, ed. Lloyd P. Gerson (Cambridge University Press, 2010): 270-82, esp. 274-76; Bogdan Gabriel Bucur, *Angelomorphic Pneumatology: Clement of Alexandria and Other Early Christian Witnesses* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2009), 11-18; Annette von Stockhausen, 'Ein »neues Lied«? Der Protrepetikos des Klemens von Alexandrien,' in *Ad veram religionem reformare: Frühchristliche Apologetik zwischen Anspruch und Wirklichkeit*, hg. v. C. Schubert und A. von Stockhausen, Erlanger Forschungen A 109 (Erlangen, 2006): 75-96, esp. 83-92; Eric Osborn, *Clement of Alexandria* (Cambridge University Press, 2005), 5-15.

engagement of pagan culture with the aim of establishing the precedence of Christianity over any other form of devotion and wisdom. Within this context, Clement produced a theological contemplation of the universe's order that corresponded to the traditional approach to the Scriptures; more precisely, he interpreted the world as a channel, or rather a musical instrument, through which the divine Sender conveyed certain melodious messages – as though through psalms and doxologies – the way the Scriptures relayed the revelation of God. We shall discover later on that the correspondence of the cosmos and the two Testaments played an important role within the Clementine worldview. Relevant here is that in this interpretive process the Alexandrian arrived at a complex depiction of the universe.

Thus, alongside his both critical approach to and appreciation for culture,¹⁷ in the *Exhortation* Clement undertook to explore, among other matters, elements pertaining to the theology of creation and natural contemplation. It seems that what motivated his interest in these areas was his search for a deeper ground of Christianity than the various expressions of human creativity, such as the ancient arts on which paganism heavily relied. The treatise sketches from the outset a contrast between the human arts of poetry and music,¹⁸ with their utilisation in paganism, and the divine source of both Christianity and the cosmos, Christ, the Logos of God. For Clement as for St Justin a little earlier, Christianity was not a new religious movement. Even though to the established religions it appeared as a recent historical occurrence, Christianity represented the reverberation of the original song of the Logos, a new manifestation of

¹⁷ Scholars have already noted the capacity of Clement, rare during the early Christian centuries, to find positive aspects within the literary productions of cultured paganism. See for instance, Mondésert, 'Introduction,' 37-39; Heine, 'The Alexandrians,' 119; Rankin, *From Clement to Origen*, 127-31, 138, 144-45; John David Dawson, 'Christian teaching' in *The Cambridge History of Early Christian Literature* (cited above n.15): 222-38, esp. 230; Marcelo Merino, 'Clemente de Alejandría, un filósofo cristiano,' *Scripta Theologica* 40:3 (2008): 803-37, esp. 810-14, 822-23; Eric Osborn, 'Arguments for Faith in Clement of Alexandria,' *Vigiliae Christianae* 48 (1994): 1-24.

¹⁸ For some reason, Heine ('The Alexandrians,' 120) referred exclusively to the visual arts, which are far from prominent within the *Exhortation*.

the foundational truth of the universe, pertaining to the very being and architecture of the creation. It is perhaps for this reason that the treatise itself took the shape of a “lyrical work,” as pointed out by Eric Osborn,¹⁹ in an attempt to iterate Christianity as a harmony that echoes the cosmic order. Within this framework, the cosmos played the role of an open field for the communication between God and humankind. We shall see below that Clement addressed two related sides of this construct, namely, the witness to God given by the whole of creation, and the convergence in the “new song” of the Christian kerygma, the divine symphony of the cosmos and the prophetic discourse.²⁰ In this ‘apologetic’ approach, he followed implicitly a traditional schema disclosed elsewhere, which prescribed a progression from the contemplation of the cosmos, or physics, to the pinnacles of theology, or epoptics.²¹ As he stated in his *Miscellanies*,

... according to the rule of truth (κατὰ τὸν τῆς ἀληθείας κανόνα), or rather the highest vision (ἐποπτεία), within gnostic tradition the discourse on nature (ἡ [...] γνωστικῆς παραδόσεως φυσιολογία) begins with the exposition on cosmogony (περὶ κοσμογονίαν [...] λόγου) to then ascend to the theological perspective (θεολογικὸν εἶδος).²²

In accordance with this principle, the elements discussed in what follows, which contributed to the process of articulating the cosmos as another scripture (a theme that I cannot address here in full),²³ witness an effort to decipher the creation as a message written by the divine Logos, a message

¹⁹ Cf. Osborn, *Clement of Alexandria*, 31.

²⁰ For a summary of the prologue, see Mondésert, ‘Introduction,’ 30-32. This summary does not refer to the convergence of the ‘songs.’ For a more detailed summary, see Osborn, *Clement of Alexandria*, 33-36.

²¹ For more details on this gnoseological trajectory, see Osborne, ‘Clement of Alexandria,’ 275; Bucur, *Angelomorphic Pneumatology*, 18-24.

²² *Miscellanies*, 4.1 (PG 8, 1216C). My translation. Interestingly, the next lines of the text refer to the need to begin with the prophetic Book of Genesis, which shows that for Clement Genesis represented the proper (theological) lens for the consideration of the cosmos.

²³ For a relevant discussion, see Blowers, ‘Entering,’ 147-76. Likewise, see Blowers’ magnificent book, *Drama of the Divine Economy: Creator and Creation in Early Christian Theology and Piety* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), esp. chapters 5, 7 and 9. For the specific contributions of Clement

which finds its proper interpretation only when read in conjunction with other channels of the same Logos.

The Symphony of the Cosmos: A Revelational Perspective

Whilst proving discernment and an ability to see what was worthwhile even outside the safe perimeter of the Christian experience, Clement was stern in his critique of paganism as a misinterpretation of reality. For him, the source of all misinterpretation was the human ignorance (ἄγνοια) regarding God;²⁴ this point was later appropriated and developed by fathers such as St Athanasius the Great (who followed this line of argumentation within his own denouncement of the falsity of paganism),²⁵ St Basil the Great (who employed it for an overall attack on the atheism inherent to many ancient cosmologies),²⁶ and St Maximus the Confessor (who understood theological ignorance as the primary cause of sin).²⁷ But perhaps one of the most characteristic traits of the Clementine approach is the allegation that the ancient poets intently took advantage of human ignorance, depicting in their hymns a deceptive representation of reality. Thus, the poets persuaded all “the people living under the sky” to give up their God-given “beautiful and true freedom” for the “ultimate slavery” of polytheism and idolatry.²⁸ Relevant to our topic is the way in which Clement contrasted the false reverence cultivated by paganism, which directed its worship to fake images of inexistent deities, and the genuine adoration of God springing forth from the cosmic voices of the creation. For instance, he noted how warmed up by the sun, the cicadas sing “to the most-wise God” their “natural ode” (αὐτόνομον ᾠδὴν), a song which is superior (βελτιονα) to the confusions entailed by polytheism.²⁹ In fact, stirred to worship by the

to the topic, cf. Blowers, ‘Entering,’ 149-50, 162; idem, *Drama of the Divine Economy*, 37, 139, 330-31.

²⁴ *Exhortation*, 1.4.1 (SC 2, 56).

²⁵ Cf. St Athanasius, *Against the Gentiles*, 6 (PG 25, 12D-13A).

²⁶ Cf. St Basil, *Homilies on the Hexaemeron*, 1.2 (PG 29, 8A).

²⁷ Cf. St Maximus, *To Thalassius*, prologue (PG 90, 253C-256A).

²⁸ *Exhortation*, 1.3.1 (SC 2, 55). See also 6.67.1-2 (SC 2, 132).

²⁹ *Exhortation*, 1.1.2 (SC 2, 53).

divine Logos who “chants a psalmody to God” (ψάλλει τῷ θεῷ) and “offers a hymn” (προσᾷδει) through the polyphonic instrument of the cosmos,³⁰ the entire creation glorifies God continuously. Echoing the Old Testament psalms of praise, the theme of the song is central to the prologue under analysis here, and casts a liturgical light upon the rapports between God and the cosmos; this liturgical approach returns in the last chapter of the treatise, through a series of sacramental intimations.³¹ Indeed, without the term being used in the context of interest, the whole of creation seems to be in a doxological state, as endorsed by a reference to the Levite or priestly song (to which I shall return).³² Whilst noticing the presence of psalmic terminology in the *Exhortation*,³³ Fabienne Jourdan did not interpret the musical analogies of Clement as liturgical. I turn now to the manner in which the Alexandrine depicted this liturgical symphony.

Clement was convinced that the creation possesses a quality that one could aptly call a theological insight; accordingly, each created being knows its Creator, proportionate to its natural capabilities. Obvious from the scale of the macrocosm down to the littlest beings – like the cicadas from the earlier example – this insight signals the pervading action of the divine Logos who reveals his presence and intention to the universe; it is the Encoder that speaks through the code. The ecosystemic agent, therefore, i.e. the Logos is not an anonymous, impersonal force.³⁴ In referring to the phrase “the word of the Lord” (λόγος κυρίου) from Isaiah 2:3 LXX, Clement took it to signify the “celestial Logos” (λόγος οὐράνιος) who, unlike the meaningless crowns won by the poets in theatrical contests, receives his crown “on the stage of the whole cosmos” (ἐπὶ τῷ παντὸς κόσμου θεάτρῳ).³⁵

³⁰ *Exhortation*, 1.5.3 (SC 2, 58).

³¹ *Exhortation*, 12.119.2 (SC 2, 189); 12.120.1-2 (SC 2, 189-90).

³² *Exhortation*, 1.2.4 (SC 2, 55).

³³ Cf. Fabienne Jourdan, ‘Le Logos et l’empereur, nouveaux Orphée: « Postérité d’une image entrée dans la littérature avec Clément d’Alexandrie »’ *Vigiliae Christianae* 62 (2008): 319-33, here 320.

³⁴ Osborn, *Clement of Alexandria*, 35.

³⁵ *Exhortation*, 1.2.3 (SC 2, 54-55). Jürgen Moltmann casually referred to this phrase in relation to martyrs. See his *God in Creation: An Ecological Doctrine of Creation*, The Gifford Lectures 1984-1985, trans. from the German

We will see later that by crown Clement referred both to the ordering of the cosmos and the salvation of the faithful. What matters for the time being is that the Logos is a person, the Son of the Father – of David yet before David, and the one that fulfils the fatherly will³⁶ – who, in being himself a “symphony and harmony,” as stated elsewhere in the *Exhortation*,³⁷ gives structure to the universe within the process of self-revelation. In contrast to the vain, damaging lyrics of the pagan singers, the song of the Logos is therefore a constructive factor;³⁸ it has “melodiously arrayed” (ἐκόσμησεν ἐμμελῶς) “the whole” (τὸ πᾶν) or the universe by changing “the disharmony of the fundamental elements” (τῶν στοιχείων τὴν διαφωνίαν) into “the order of a symphony” (εἰς τάξιν [...] συμφωνίας).³⁹ As a testimony to Clement’s complex approach to pagan culture, Jourdan pointed out how in the *Exhortation* this contrast did not lead to an overall denial of the validity of music, epitomised by the example of Orpheus, but to the transformation

by Margaret Kohl (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1985), 309. The imagery of the theatre was later adopted by St Basil in the *Hexaemeron*; cf. Blowers, ‘Entering,’ 147.

³⁶ *Exhortation*, 1.5.2-3 (SC 2, 58). These subtle references to the eternal status of the Logos as Son of the Father, and therefore a person in his own right, are usually not considered by scholars. See e.g. Piotr Ashwin-Siejkowski, *Clement of Alexandria on Trial: The Evidence of ‘Heresy’ from Photius’* Bibliotheca (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2010), which contains a comprehensive discussion of Clement’s theological slippery-slopes yet ignores these passages. Nevertheless, the rich metaphors of the *Exhortation* confirm the theological orthodoxy of Clement, as advocated e.g. by M. J. Edwards, ‘Clement of Alexandria and His Doctrine of the Logos,’ *Vigiliae Christianae* 54:2 (2000): 159-77, esp. 171-77, and Hägg, *Clement of Alexandria*, 189-93, 202-206.

³⁷ *Exhortation*, 12.120.4 (SC 2, 190). We read, τοῦτο συμφωνία ἐστὶ, τοῦτο ἁρμονία πατρός (“he is the symphony, he is the harmony of the Father”).

³⁸ Whilst pointing out a possible reliance of St John Chrysostom on Clement’s *Exhortation* in matters pertaining to hermeneutics, Wylie failed to see that the very Chrysostomian contrast between the damaging pagan and/or theatrical songs, and the psalmic piety of the Christian chant, drew on Clement. Cf. Amanda Berry Wylie, ‘Musical Aesthetics and Biblical Interpretation in John Chrysostom,’ *Studia Patristica* 32 (Leuven: Peeters, 1997): 386-92, esp. 387, 389.

³⁹ *Exhortation*, 1.5.1 (SC 2, 57).

of this very paradigm into a metaphor of Christ, the Logos.⁴⁰ Relevant here is that the aim of this ordering action, i.e. the song of the Logos, is “for the whole cosmos to become through it a harmony (ἁρμονία).”⁴¹ This song reverberates back and forth throughout the universe.

...this pure song (τὸ ἄσμα τὸ ἀκήρατον), a support of all and the harmony of all (ἔρεισμα τῶν ὅλων καὶ ἁρμονία τῶν πάντων), after being stretched from the centres to the limits and from the extremities to those in the middle (ἀπὸ τῶν μέσων ἐπὶ τὰ πέρατα καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν ἄκρων ἐπὶ τὰ μέσα), brought this universe to a measure (ἡρμόσατο τὸδε τὸ πᾶν) [...] according to the fatherly intention of God...⁴²

There is nothing static in this appraisal of the cosmos. The worldview of Clement differs from the ‘steady state’ Parmenidian cosmology. Instead, by describing a world in the making, in motion and resonance, it looks more like that of Heraclitus (Osborn was right to alert us of the underestimated influence of Heraclitus upon Clement)⁴³ yet combined with the musical horizons of the Pythagorean universe. For Clement, indeed, the order of the universe signified more than the etymology of the word κόσμος, ‘adornment’ or ‘beauty’; it denoted a profound and dynamic convergence of all the levels of reality, represented by the soundwaves of the ‘song’ that pervades everything, a divine information communicated to all the realms from the source and centre, i.e. the Logos. Paradoxically, this moving

⁴⁰ Cf. Jourdan, ‘Le Logos et l’empereur, nouveaux Orphée,’ 321. Whilst being right when affirming the transference of the Orpheus imagery to the Logos/Christ, Jourdan missed the fact that Clement never called Christ ‘Orpheus’ in the *Exhortation*. For a similar identification, see Constantine N. Tsirpanlis, ‘Creation and History in the Thought of Clement of Alexandria,’ *Ἐκκλησιαστικὸς Φάρος* 60:1-2 (1978): 310-16, esp. 314. For a broader use of Orphic materials in the early Christian apologists, however without referring to the actual adoption of the Orpheus-imagery as a type of Christ, see Luca Arcari, ‘Tradizione orfica e cristianesimo antico: un bilancio,’ *Mythos: Rivista di Storia delle Religioni* 4 (2010): 167-78.

⁴¹ *Exhortation*, 1.5.1 (SC 2, 57).

⁴² *Exhortation*, 1.5.2 (SC 2, 57-58).

⁴³ Cf. Osborn, *Clement of Alexandria*, 17-18. However, in addressing movement as a main feature of the Clementine worldview, Osborn (*ibidem*, 37-39) ignored both its cosmic dimension and its melodious or harmonising power.

picture of waves travelling across the universe did not lead to imagining a world of chaos; the song of the Logos bridges all the chasms and unifies the whole, bringing “this universe to a measure.” In a less dynamic fashion, this same approach is rehearsed later within the *Exhortation*, by taking as a pretext the Platonic adage that “the universe is [or, revolves] around the King of all things, who is also the source of all beautiful things” (περὶ τὸν πάντων βασιλέα πάντ’ ἐστὶ, κάκεινο αἴτιον ἀπάντων καλῶν).⁴⁴ This saying led Clement to assert, again in a Pythagorean turn, that God is the actual “measure and number of all things” (μέτρον καὶ ἀριθμὸν τῶν ὅλων).⁴⁵ Even though he did not speak of zeroes and ones, order was mathematical for Clement; nevertheless, he did not construe it as an algorithm without the mathematician to elaborate it or as a message without a sender or music without a musician. The song of the Logos is the manifestation of the Logos himself, a revelation for all intents and purposes, and through this manifestation the Father himself is in touch with the created reality.

As pointed out earlier, this ecosystemic and/or providential action of the Logos is likewise a revelatory action; it seems that, for Clement, cosmology and communication theory were inseparable. In reaching everywhere by his song, the Logos speaks to all of his creation, imprinting within the very fabric of the universe thoughts and messages intended for those able to decipher them.⁴⁶ For such people who cultivate their natural affinity with the divine Logos, the universe is neither mute nor founded upon an unintelligible code – it is a musical instrument with many voices that sings glory to God. A special piece among those forming this vast polyphonic instrument is the human being, which along with the rest of the creation is ‘functionalised’ through the Holy Spirit, as we shall see immediately. Thus, right after the reference to the Logos as fulfilling the

⁴⁴ *Exhortation*, 6.68.5 (SC 2, 134).

⁴⁵ *Exhortation*, 6.69.2 (SC 2, 134). St Athanasius reiterated the same idea of the numbers of nature as a divine code which points to God; cf. *Against the Gentiles*, 47 (PG 25, 93C).

⁴⁶ Together with any reference to the *Exhortation*, the cosmos as divine language is conspicuously missing from Robertson’s analysis. Cf. David Robertson, ‘Clement’ in *Word and Meaning in Ancient Alexandria: Theories of Language from Philo to Plotinus* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 29-44.

intention of God the Father through his song, Clement explained how the former brings to fruition this intention with the aid of the Spirit; a Trinitarian appraisal of the creation. Within this Trinitarian framework, he construed a fascinating interplay involving the Logos, the Spirit, the human being and the cosmos, a particular contribution that usually escapes contemporary scholarship even when addressing the rapports between the Logos and the Spirit, or between unity and multiplicity.⁴⁷ More precisely, whilst continuing the musical analogy,⁴⁸ the Alexandrine pointed out that the Logos does not work either on its own or through “soulless,” lifeless instruments (ἄψυχα ὄργανα) in establishing the universe. First of all, the Logos accomplishes his work “through the Holy Spirit” (ἀγίῳ πνεύματι), who is likewise a person and therefore not merely a passive tool.⁴⁹ It is through the Spirit, furthermore, that the Logos harmonises both the universe and this “small world, the human being” (τὸν μικρὸν κόσμον, τὸν ἄνθρωπον).⁵⁰ Thus configured in the Spirit, the creation becomes the space within which the Logos sings his song – through the universe’s voices and particularly “through this [other] polyphonic device” (διὰ τοῦ πολυφώνου ὀργάνου), “the human instrument” (τῷ ὀργάνῳ τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ).⁵¹ Quite challenging a thought, it seems that whilst being vivified through the Spirit both the human being and the universe are called to perform a task similar to that of the Spirit, by putting themselves in the service of the Logos. This matter is not given explicit consideration within the prologue and we should not make haste to identify here a subordinationist schema that brings the Spirit down to the level of creation. Nevertheless, a similar daring nuance, this time referring to the Logos, recurs further down in the following passage, where the musical analogy meets the Genesis motif of

⁴⁷ Cf. Blowers, *Drama of the Divine Economy*, 245-312; Bucur, *Angelomorphic Pneumatology*, 28-32, 52, 54-59; Hägg, *Clement of Alexandria*, 214-17.

⁴⁸ *Exhortation*, 1.5.3 (SC 2, 58).

⁴⁹ On Clementine pneumatology, see Bogdan G. Bucur, ‘Revisiting Christian Oeyen: “The Other Clement” on Father, Son, and the Angelomorphic Spirit,’ *Vigiliae Christianae* 61:4 (2007): 381-413, esp. 387-95.

⁵⁰ *Exhortation*, 1.5.3 (SC 2, 58).

⁵¹ *Ibidem*.

the human being made in the image of God – which Clement understood as in the image of God’s Logos.

...in making it intelligent (ἐμπνουν), the Lord fashioned the human being as a beautiful instrument (καλὸν [...] ὄργανον) in his own image, since of course he is likewise a wholly harmonious, melodious and holy instrument of God (ὄργανόν ἐστι τοῦ θεοῦ παναρμόνιον, ἑμμελὲς καὶ ἅγιον), the supracosmic Wisdom and the heavenly Logos (σοφία ὑπερκόσμιος, οὐράνιος λόγος).⁵²

Although aware of the ontological difference between the Logos and the Spirit as uncreated, on the one hand, and the cosmos and the human being as created, on the other hand, Clement contemplated the whole of reality as containing registers upon registers of God’s instruments, all ‘conspiring’ toward the making of the world as an immensely complex theophany, or better yet, a symphony. Whilst divine and lordly, the Logos and the Spirit both work within the creation and are associated with it as media of the Father’s revelation. It is an overwhelmingly vivid depiction of divine economy, of a kenotic Trinity that descends toward and into the cosmos to work from within it and in association with it. For this reason the cosmos is full of the Trinity and therefore marked by its meaningful messages. In turn, the human being is both an instrument and recipient of divine revelation, since whilst being a part of the entire creation it both sings with it and listens to its song, and through the latter to the pervading song of the Logos. This is a pancosmic orchestra, a motif later rehearsed by St Athanasius the Great.⁵³ All in all, the Clementine worldview is as theologically rich and challenging as it is relevant to the quest for the traditional perception of the cosmos as another scripture or means of

⁵² *Exhortation*, 1.5.4 (SC 2, 58). For an excellent paper on Clement’s notion of the human being created in God’s image, see Laura Nasrallah, ‘The Earthen Human, the Breathing Statue: The Sculptor God, Greco-Roman Statuary, and Clement of Alexandria,’ ed. Konrad Schmid and Christoph Riedweg, *Beyond Eden: The Biblical Story of Paradise (Genesis 2-3) and Its Reception History*, *Forschungen Zum Alten Testament 2. Reihe* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008): 110-40, esp. 128-29. On another note, the terms Logos and Sophia emerged as equivalent earlier in the Alexandrian tradition, in Philo. Cf. Pelikan, ‘Alexandria: The God of *Genesis* as “Maker and Father” (*Timaeus* 28C),’ 83-84.

⁵³ See e.g. *Against the Gentiles*, 43 (PG 25, 85BC).

revelation; a worldview centred on the indissoluble connection between the Sender and the message that encodes, giving structure and meaning to the universe. I must turn now to how the Alexandrine teacher connected the various channels of revelation in the person and work of Christ, outside of whom the full disclosure of the song was impossible.

Convergent Hymns: A Soteriological Perspective

Affected by the wrong choices of humanity and misinterpreted through the various pagan arts, for Clement, both the symphonic arrangement of the cosmos and its meaningfulness came to be restored in the personal revelation of the Logos incarnate and his salvific economy. Thus construed, and as a central topic of the *Exhortation*,⁵⁴ salvation amounts to the ultimate clarification of the Logos' foundational message, manifesting its implications for the life of the world. The idea is paradoxically fleshed out in a statement referring to Christ as chanting (αἰδεῖ) the “eternal law of a new harmony” (τῆς καινῆς ἁρμονίας τὸν αἰδίδιον νόμον), “which bears the name of God, the new song, the Levite one” (τὸ ἕσμα τὸ καινόν, τὸ Λευιτικόν).⁵⁵ The “new song” or the “new harmony” is of course the gospel of Christ, which the Alexandrine depicted as a novel expression of the “eternal law,” the one upon which the universe is established; thinking of Clement's efforts to accredit the ‘antiquity’ of Christianity, the connection between the historical message delivered by Christ and the cosmic law should come as no surprise. But this does not make the statement any less striking. The gospel is the new beat of the oldest song, a harmonic restoration of the divine law that makes the universe be what it is. With its treacherous songs and poems, the polytheist and idolatrous humankind abhorred precisely this “eternal law.” It is as if to say, if we recall the stance of St Justin about Christ and the unknown prophecies,⁵⁶ that the message was there,

⁵⁴ Osborn, *Clement of Alexandria*, 34.

⁵⁵ *Exhortation*, 1.2.4 (SC 2, 55).

⁵⁶ Quasten (*Patrology*, Vol. 2: 13, 21) signalled the similarities and differences between the approaches of the two fathers. See also Hägg, *Clement of Alexandria*, 182-83.

written in the laws of nature, yet ignored if not utterly misinterpreted when considered outside the revelation of the Lord.

Interestingly, the new, gospel version of the cosmic hymn is introduced both directly, as a reverberation of the foundational harmony, and indirectly, by the suggestive imagery of the Levitic or priestly song, liturgical and Old Testamentary in nature. We find here a trilateral schema, of the gospel related to the cosmos, of the gospel related to the Old Testament, and of the Old Testament related to the cosmos. To my knowledge, this complex schema is not discussed in scholarship – at least not with reference to the passage under scrutiny.⁵⁷ Whilst immediately echoing the “eternal law” of the cosmos, the gospel is likewise indirectly related to the universe by the fact that the Old Testament – which is inseparable from the gospel – is related to the cosmos. This schema subtly enforces the multiple connections between creation and revelation, making impossible to ignore the contribution of this Clementine text to the articulation of the cosmos as a means of divine revelation or as another scripture. Within this triangle, the very reference to the “new song” by the old, Levite, designation is again puzzling. This subterfuge was undoubtedly meant to endorse the contrast between the misinterpretation of the “eternal law” by the ancient poets and its genuine interpretation brought – in connection with the priestly chant of the Old Testament – by the liturgical or doxological approach of the gospel.⁵⁸ What matters more is that, with one brushstroke, Clement portrayed Christ, “my singer” (ὁ ᾠδὸς ὁ ἑμὸς),⁵⁹ as a point of convergence for the whole of creation, the

⁵⁷ Whilst Quasten (*Patrology*, Vol. 2: 21-22) had the intuition of this schema, first in the form of the Logos founding the creation, and then as speaking and being incarnated in history, he provided no textual evidence for it. Almost in the same words, and again without referring to our text, see Hägg, *Clement of Alexandria*, 181-82. Similarly, Merino, ‘Clemente de Alejandría,’ 826-27, spoke of Clement’s three Testaments, of the creation, of the historical or verbal revelation and of the incarnation. What singles out Merino’s views in this respect (‘Clemente de Alejandría,’ 825) is, however, his reluctance toward the cosmos as a genuine means of divine revelation. Likewise, there is no reference to the cosmos as a revelatory organ in Osborn, *Clement of Alexandria*, 31.

⁵⁸ Cf. *Exhortation*, 1.3.1-2 (SC 2, 55-6).

⁵⁹ *Exhortation*, 1.3.1 (SC 2, 55).

revelation entrusted to the Old Israel and the gospel proclamation of God's mercy. The theme was already alluded a few paragraphs earlier, where Christ's song was shown as revealed on "the holy mountain of God" and as reiterating "the most luminous wisdom" disclosed through the prophets.⁶⁰ A typical symbol of the mystical experience, the mountain signifies here the cosmic dimension as a reference point for the other two channels of revelation, represented by the song of Christ and the prophetic wisdom. In this way, the image metaphorically anticipates the convergence of the New Testament, the Old Testament and the creation, discussed above in relation to the new, "Levitic song" of Christ.

In the light of these complex associations, the Christian gospel appears as both ancient and venerable, and more than that. Let me be specific. On the one hand, given that it is the inheritor of the "Levitic song" and the prophetic testimony, Christianity is as old as the classical religions; on the other hand, it actually precedes any religion, wisdom and revelation, since it draws on the song of the Logos, the original, "eternal law" of the creation, which it echoes and in fact restores as a "new harmony." Clement is clear on this matter,

...do not consider my salvific song (μου τὸ ἄσμα τὸ σωτήριον) as something new (καινόν) [...], for it was "before the morning star" (πρὸ ἑωσφόρου) [Psalm 110:3 LXX] and "in the beginning was the Logos and the Logos was turned toward God and the Logos was God" (ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεὸν καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος) [John 1:1].⁶¹

Here, the whole argument for the antiquity of Christianity stands on Clement's axiomatic conviction that Christ was none other than the Logos;⁶² as a matter of fact, he was so persuaded of the identity of Christ and the Logos that he did not see a point in arguing for it further. As a consequence of representing the very song of the Logos, Christianity was unquestionably venerable. Nevertheless, within another Clementine

⁶⁰ *Exhortation*, 1.2.2-3 (SC 2, 54). See also 12.119.1 (SC 2, 188-89).

⁶¹ *Exhortation*, 1.6.3 (SC 2, 59).

⁶² On this conviction, see Tsirpanlis, 'Creation and History in the Thought of Clement of Alexandria,' 314-15.

paradox, the theme of Christianity's venerable antiquity came to be joined with the perspective of its newness. A few lines after the above statement we read that precisely because "now" (νῦν), that is historically, the Logos "assumed the name" (ὄνομα ἔλαβεν) and the identity of Christ, the gospel can very well be called a "new song" (καινὸν ᾠσμα).⁶³ Old and new at the same time, venerable yet fresh, the gospel of Christ is the ultimate revelation of the foundational truth of creation – the "eternal law" which precedes and pervades the universe – a revelation that nevertheless brings the good news of our call to an existence beyond mortality. Clement construed this manifestation, namely, the epiphany of the second person of the Holy Trinity as a full disclosure of the latter's intention in relation to humankind; the message of the Sender that was hidden in the laws of nature and now brought to the fore. Whilst exhibiting all the features of an act of communication, the revelatory perspective meets here the soteriological one.

This is the new song (τὸ ᾠσμα τὸ καινόν), the revelation that now shines towards us – of the Logos who was in the beginning and pre-existed (τοῦ ἐν ἀρχῇ ὄντος καὶ προόντος λόγου). The pre-existent saviour (ὁ προὖν σωτήρ), the teacher (διδάσκαλος), at last is manifest; the one who is in him that is (ὁ ἐν τῷ ὄντι ὢν) is revealed, for the "Logos was turned toward God"; the Logos that crafted everything (ὃ τὰ πάντα δεδημιούργηται λόγος) is revealed. In the beginning, as [our] demiurge (ὡς δημιουργός), he was the one bestowing the power of life (τὸ ζῆν) after [our] moulding (μετὰ τοῦ πλάσαι); now manifested, as [our] teacher he taught [us] how to live well (τὸ εὖ ζῆν), so that as God (ὡς θεός) he bestows [on us] later the power to live forever (τὸ ἀεὶ ζῆν).⁶⁴

Whilst arguing for both the antiquity and the newness of Christianity, Clement was concerned with highlighting its salvific efficiency. Given

⁶³ *Exhortation*, 1.6.5 (SC 2, 60).

⁶⁴ *Exhortation*, 1.7.3 (SC 2, 61). For a parallel of the text cited above, see *Exhortation*, 1.7.1 (SC 2, 60), where the salvific goal is termed as "how to live well" (τὸ εὖ ζῆν) and to be led "to the eternal life" (εἰς αἰδίων ζωὴν). The theme of the three stages of existence emerged again in St Maximus the Confessor, as being (τὸ εἶναι), wellbeing (τὸ εὖ εἶναι) and eternal being (τὸ ἀεὶ εἶναι); cf. *Difficulty* 65 (PG 91:1392A).

that the Logos of creation is also our Saviour, Teacher and God⁶⁵ – a unique feature of Christianity – the new song of the gospel constitutes the revelation of both the supreme teaching and the principle of a renewed life. Furthermore, in being new in its expression, eternal in its content and foundational for the cosmos, the gospel presents both the authority of antiquity and the quality of a fresh and effective instrument of salvation. Clement addressed the salvific power of the “new song” or the “heavenly ode” (οὐράνιος ᾠδὴ)⁶⁶ from various angles – of people’s liberation from the “sour slavery” of deceit and their transfer to the heavens;⁶⁷ of their restoration as a “seed of godliness”,⁶⁸ of their transformation into “people of the day”,⁶⁹ of a return to life of those that were “otherwise dead” by being deprived of “the real life.”⁷⁰ All these converge in affirming the restorative and transformative power of the gospel, which arises on various existential and epistemological levels, resulting in the human beings’ renewed capacity to understand the divine message and be able to return to God. Indeed, the salvific power of the gospel emerges in the regeneration of our senses or receptive capabilities (e.g. the healing of our blindness and deafness), and in our leading, lame and errand though we are, to righteousness (εἰς δικαιοσύνην χειραγωγῆσαι).⁷¹ The sentence follows a logical sequence, for only when we become receptive to the “new song” are we able to learn the true path. The end of this process of restoration is God’s manifestation (θεὸν [...] ἐπιδείξει) to us and thus our reconciliation – the disobedient – with him, our Father (υἱοὺς ἀπειθεῖς διαλλάττει πατρί). This relational aspect is accompanied by our being brought above corruption

⁶⁵ For the various ‘names’ and economical functions of the Logos, see Hägg, *Clement of Alexandria*, 180-81.

⁶⁶ *Exhortation*, 1.4.3 (SC 2, 57).

⁶⁷ *Exhortation*, 1.3.2 (SC 2, 55-56).

⁶⁸ *Exhortation*, 1.4.2 (SC 2, 56).

⁶⁹ *Exhortation*, 1.4.3 (SC 2, 57). For notes on this passage, and generally on the transformative power of the “new song,” see von Stockhausen, ‘Ein »neues Lied«?’ 80-82.

⁷⁰ *Exhortation*, 1.4.4 (SC 2, 57).

⁷¹ *Exhortation*, 1.6.1 (SC 2, 59).

and death.⁷² Here, the revelational and soteriological perspectives meet the relational one; disclosure leads to salvation yet salvation is none other than to be in communion, and communication, with the initial Sender of the message – a topic which both Norman Russell and Osborn consider as central in Clement.⁷³ The gospel of Christ is not just a matter of closing a full circle in divine revelation; it is a matter of fulfilling the human destiny as revealed from the outset by the Sender.

How could the “new song” of the gospel accomplish all of this? Clement showed that its transformative power resides in the identity of Christ with the Logos and of the gospel with Christ; Christ himself is the power of the gospel – “the instrument, God’s Logos, the Lord and the new song” (τὸ ὄργανον, ὁ τοῦ θεοῦ λόγος, ὁ κύριος, καὶ τὸ ἄσμα τὸ καινόν).⁷⁴ The efficiency of the new song stems from its identity with the original song of the Logos and of the message with the Sender himself. In an excellent and dynamic summary of the above, Clement proclaimed that in listening to the “new song” we learn from the Logos/Christ himself, and thus we make room for him to work for us, to talk to us and save us.⁷⁵ This is the “crown” of the singer Logos, referred to above, the salvific efficiency of the “new song,” which restores both humanity and the cosmos.⁷⁶ To the great Alexandrine, this transformative power pertaining to the “new song” and the “eternal law” – which operates both existentially and cosmically – represents the ultimate consequence of the understanding of the Logos as a person, on the one hand, and of Christ as the Logos incarnate, on the other hand.

⁷² Ibidem.

⁷³ Cf. Norman Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 121-40, esp. 121-22. Cf. Osborn, *Clement of Alexandria*, 35-36, 39-42, 46-48.

⁷⁴ *Exhortation*, 1.6.1 (SC 2, 59). See also 12.120.4 (SC 2, 190). The same approach appeared in the, possibly contemporary text, *Letter to Diognetus*, 7.2, in *The Apostolic Fathers*, vol. 2, ed. and trans. Bart D. Ehrman, Loeb Classical Library 25 (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2003), 144.

⁷⁵ *Exhortation*, 1.6.2 (SC 2, 59). The imagery of the Logos as a teacher was later developed within Clement’s *Paedagogus*; cf. Blowers, ‘Entering,’ 150.

⁷⁶ *Exhortation*, 1.6.1-3 (SC 2, 59).

In critically addressing ancient music and poetry, Clement arrived at the articulation of a metaphorical worldview from the vantage point of which the cosmos – i.e. both the human microcosm and the universe – appeared as harmoniously lively, as melodiously attuned and beautiful. Furthermore, the order and beauty of this cosmos signified meaningfulness. Indeed, the *Exhortation* refers to a cosmos full of divine presence and information, where the Sender is an active factor. This meaningful universe constitutes an unfolding song – “the song of creation,” to borrow Fr John McGuckin’s metaphor⁷⁷ – symphonically played by the creator and provident Logos through the polyphonic instrument that is the cosmos itself, a song whose efficiency was both amplified and intensified by the gospel, the “new song” or the “new harmony” of the “eternal law” of the creation. In light of these complex rapports engaging the cosmos and the Scriptures, we can safely infer that Clement construed the universe as meaningful song, as another scripture or a message that makes sense only because it constitutes the very interface of communication between the Sender and the listeners.

Concluding Remarks

The renewed interest in Clement notwithstanding, until quite recently and as a rule scholars have ignored the cosmological connotations of revelation and salvation, namely, that the creation is a channel for the communication of salvific messages, connotations that originate in the Alexandrine’s conviction that Jesus Christ is none other than the creator and provident Logos. From this viewpoint, it represents an important step forward that recently Clement’s ‘reading’ of the book of the cosmos as ‘another scripture’ has finally come to light. Curiously though, scholars do not seem to notice the relevance of the *Exhortation* for this theme. I hope that through the above exploration I contributed a necessary complement to the conspicuous lack of scholarly interest in this apology for matters pertaining to the ‘scripture’ of creation. The *Exhortation* proves indeed

⁷⁷ Cf. John Anthony McGuckin, *The Orthodox Church: An Introduction to its History, Doctrine and Spiritual Culture* (Blackwell Publishing, 2008), ch. ‘The Song of Creation,’ 204-10.

that Clement was clear and coherent on the theological meaningfulness of the cosmos from the outset of his catechetical program, and not only in the later works, which usually stir the scholarly interest.

As we have seen above, the great Alexandrine teacher accomplished a moving depiction of reality, within which divine and created factors operated in synergy. As a result of this global interaction, which in his ‘communicational’ representation took the shape of a song and a symphonic orchestra that included both created and uncreated instruments, the universe emerged as another scripture and as theologically meaningful, rich and significant, conveying to the human listeners, more than numbers, the messages of the Sender in a fashion that was at once informationally accurate and melodiously enjoyable. Furthermore, given that the same Encoder, the Logos of God, spoke and/or chanted through both the creation and the Scriptures, for Clement the communication outlet represented by the cosmos functioned within the same soteriological parameters as the gospel itself, and as such was meant to contribute to the fulfilment of the human destiny together with the whole of God’s creation.

When so lively depicted as a meaningful framework, the cosmos could no longer be imagined, the way it is in modern times, as oppressive and futile in its supposedly silent immensity. It was this conclusion that drew my attention to the *Exhortation* in the first place, since the treatise seemed to indirectly address, beyond the gulfs of history, burning issues of our own time, like the sense of pointlessness experienced by many of our contemporaries who reduce the universe to strings of zeroes and ones that would neither require a Sender nor bear any meaning. What one is able to contemplate today within a universe of numbers without significance is just the perspective of defeat and of utter desolation. Another classic reference of our times, Steven Weinberg’s *The First Three Minutes*, ends precisely on such a note. I quote from its epilogue:

...whichever cosmological model proves correct, there is not much of comfort in any of this. It is almost irresistible for humans to believe that we have some special relation to the universe, that human life is not just a more-or-less farcical outcome of a chain of accidents reaching back to the first three minutes, but that we

were somehow built in from the beginning. [...] It is very hard to realize that this all [our life, the planet] is just a tiny part of an overwhelmingly hostile universe. It is even harder to realize that this present universe has evolved from an unspeakably unfamiliar early condition, and faces a future extinction of endless cold or intolerable heat. The more the universe seems comprehensible, the more it also seems pointless. But if there is no solace in the fruits of our research, there is at least some consolation in the research itself. [...] The effort to understand the universe is one of the very few things that lifts human life a little above the level of farce, and gives it some of the grace of tragedy.⁷⁸

It seems that the only message conveyed by the zeroes and ones written within the fabric of the universe is, indeed, bad news; the very opposite of the Christian gospel. Thankfully, Weinberg's nihilism is no longer the prevalent opinion among contemporary scientists. Davies himself expressed a contrary conviction when observing, "Through conscious beings the universe has generated self-awareness. This can be no trivial detail, no minor byproduct of mindless, purposeless forces. We are truly meant to be here."⁷⁹ Opinions like that of Davies allow for various other presuppositions in the assessment of the zeroes and ones that constitute the universe; this is where the discourse of Clement can be brought into the conversation. Like many of his predecessors and contemporaries, Clement was aware of the numbers that encode the universe, even if the numbers of the ancients were not as precise as those discerned by modern cosmologists. Yet Clement considered the numbers of nature, indeed nature itself, as part of a complex syntax or as musical notes written by the Logos on the portative of the universe; messages from the Sender, for us to read, understand and sing; for us to find enrichment and enjoyment in a world that inspires the hope of more than the thought of tragic nonsense. If time has come for a new, meaningful reading of our numbers, then the great Clement could be just the guide we need.

⁷⁸ Steven Weinberg, *The First Three Minutes: A Modern View of the Origin of the Universe*, updated edition (New York: Basic Books, 1993), 154-55.

⁷⁹ Davies, *The Mind of God*, 231-32.