

**Faith and Reason in St. Clement of Alexandria (Draft)**

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Clement of Alexandria was aware that religion he firmly believed could never have become a science or take the philosophical shape without taking into account Greek Philosophy. Clement of Alexandria's thought is one of the works in Christianity's history and early theology that expresses an engagement between Christian ideas and Greek philosophies. This was a massive moment for faith and reason's debate. Clement took advantage of Greek philosophy to convey Christian thoughts to shape a new path of viewing Christianity on the shoulders of philosophy. Through *Stromateis* and *Protreptikos*, Clements explains Christian messages to understand faith among famous writers' philosophical ideas like Platonism, Aristotelianism, Epicureanism, and Stoicism. These works could be enough to consider his writings in the first rank of history and Christian theology because of his efforts to integrate both views as a complementary work.

Different scholars' results reveal in Clement's writings an essential concern for conveying Christian thoughts and Greek philosophy, achieving an excellent environment of faith and reason's debate. Therefore, this paper will briefly presents Clement's views on Greek philosophy's origin and value, disclosing the route to accomplish a most crucial task: Christian message is recognized as the "true philosophy." First, Clement's traces of Greek mythology and philosophy to articulate his interest in defending Christianity, second to establish Clement's background of Philosophy as an essential source of Platonism, Aristotelianism, Stoicism, and Epicureanism to rely on Christianity, and third to show Clement's conception of *Gnosis* and *Pistis* as an expression of the higher value of Christianity to endorse faith and reason's debate.

## Why Philosophy and Mythology

Clement of Alexandria (c. 150–211 or 215 A.D), his Latin name was Titus Flavius Clemens, was a Christian apologist, missionary theologian to the Hellenistic world, and second known leader and teacher at the Catechetical School of Alexandria. According to Epiphanius, a 4th-century bishop, the parents of Titus Flavius Clemens were Athenian pagans.<sup>1</sup> There is little significant information about his early life. As a student, he traveled to various learning centers in Italy and the eastern Mediterranean area. Converted to Christianity by his last teacher, Pantaenus—reputedly a former Stoic philosopher and the first recorded president of the Christian catechetical school at Alexandria—Clement succeeded his mentor as head of the school about 180.<sup>2</sup>

His interest in writing about Greek philosophy and Christian thought was sparked by perhaps one of the most significant phenomena of that moment in history: Christian hostility toward Greek culture and the Greek understanding of Christian faith as a diminished expression of knowledge<sup>3</sup> (*gnosis*). Christians viewed Greek culture as a product of the evil that ran contrary to Christ's gospel. Simultaneously, the Greeks considered the Christian faith an insufficient expression of knowledge to understand the world and its essences. In response to this conflict, Clement worked to reconcile Christianity and Hellenism by merging particular ideas from Greek mythology, culture, and philosophy to support Christianity. Without a doubt, He recognized that Greek philosophy provided many of the "building blocks" that would enable Christianity to be

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<sup>1</sup> Norman L. Geisler, *The Big Book of Christians Apologetics: An A-to-Z guide*. (Grand Rapids, MI.: Baker Books, 2012), 95.

<sup>2</sup> John Ferguson, *Clement of Alexandria*. (New York.: Twayne Publishers, 1974), 13

<sup>3</sup> Clement differs between Gnosis with "G," capitalized to understand that the knowledge comes from God. The gnosis with a lower case, "g" which is the knowledge that is grasping through the world's essence.

more fully articulated to its Greek audience. Thus, in his defense of Christianity, Clement adopted an eclectic attitude towards each philosophical school, picking and choosing from them to develop his thoughts about the Christian message and explain what he viewed as the very close relationship between faith and reason. In doing so, Clement became the first theologian to discuss this relationship explicitly.

Clement grew up in a city immersed in four Greek philosophical schools: Platonism, Aristotelianism or Peripateticism, Stoicism, and Epicureanism. Like other philosophers and schools of his time, Clement continuously asked new questions and gave answers that examined the world. He tried to grasp the structural elements necessary to understand the world. Clement was likely familiar with the Greek schools' quest for the Truth about the universe and man's place within it, and he sought to express an appropriate Christian answer to these issues. He recognized that the various schools of philosophy and mythology, though they pursued a certain degree of knowledge and Truth, were limited in their ability to understand God and his divine inspiration fully.

Clement proposes that mythology and the Old Testament (Law) were sustainable and played a rich role in accomplishing humankind's history and comes into Christianity. For example, the understanding of pagan idols and different schools of thought of Jewish. Regarding mythology, Clement observes that "Zeus is snake no longer, nor swan, no eagle, nor erotic man... The Cretans, Lord, have no built thy tomb. For (pardon me) Zeus like Leda is dead"<sup>4</sup>; in this way, he acknowledged two perspectives: the Greeks were shown preference and valued as the receivers the uncompleted message by worshiping false idols, and second that he knew very well mythological Greek environment to argue them. Ultimately, he uses such comparisons -Diatribes

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<sup>4</sup> Salvatore R.C. Lilla, *Clement of Alexandria: A Study in Christian Platonism and Gnosticism*. (London. Oxford University Press, 1971), 13.

of Zeus's death- to subtly emphasize that although the Greeks have been "chosen" in a unique way to receive knowledge about God, without the faith of Christianity, their knowledge is imperfect. To resolve this gap and bring knowledge to its fullest perfection, Clement posits that the specific relation between Greek gnosis and the Old Testament (Law) allows us to think that "before the advent of our Lord, philosophy" was necessary to the Greeks for righteousness... Perchance, too, philosophy was given to the Greeks directly and primarily, till the Lord shall call the Greeks. For this schoolmaster to bring 'the Hellenistic mind' as the law, the Hebrews, 'to Christ.'"<sup>5</sup>.

Clement, with his knowledge of Greek culture, his philosophy, his urbanity, and his simplicity, welcomed to the debate all Greek mythology and philosophy, seeking the recognition of Christianity as a compelling message. However, some scholars believe that Clement's approach to apology reflects a somewhat "desperate" attempt to elevate Christianity's status. On the other hand, many believe that his works express his own profound and genuine experience of the relationship between mythology, philosophy, and Christianity—a relationship that he understood in a profoundly spiritual way of continuous reflection.<sup>6</sup> Mythology is understood as preparation for welcoming Jesus Christ's message. For that reason, his *Protreptikos* presents mythology as the fertile ground in which the seeds of Christianity may be planted; however, the plants that grow from them require much pruning and care to blossom into true Christian belief.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis: Books One to Three*, trans. John Ferguson. *The Fathers of the Church* 85. (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1991), 1, (5).

<sup>6</sup> Lilla, *Clement of Alexandria*, 3.

Clement of Alexandria, *Selections from The Protreptikos*, 7.

<sup>7</sup> Clement of Alexandria, *Selections from The Protreptikos*, 6.

## Mythology and the *Protreptikos*

Mythology consists of a collection of narratives, especially those belonging to a particular religious or cultural tradition that shows the most popular understanding of supernatural views of the world, creation, heaven, and the problem of evil. For example, Greek, Roman, and Persian mythologies explain to the human intellect a transcending natural comprehension of the world through the use of particular characters, stories, and beliefs. Clement of Alexandria knew very well all the myths that belonged to Greek culture and all the essential and hidden ideas behind them. Although Clement denounces the use of pagan idols, he nonetheless acknowledges that pagan belief was man's attempt to grasp the supernatural. However, paganism is insufficient. Later on, Clement proposes the Gospel as a model of the fulfillment of what paganism sought to understand and explain.

*The Protreptikos* demonstrates Clement's knowledge of pagan mythology and religion, which informs his criticism of it. For example, Ferguson notes, "the snake was the tempter in the Christian myth of the Fall, Clement does not hesitate to suggest that Zeus appearing in the form of the snake is the tempter himself."<sup>8</sup> As an exhortatory work, *Protreptikos* explains paganism and its implications for Greek mythology but connects them with Christian ideas. Using his philosophical knowledge, Clement exhorts the Greeks to consider how they can convert the yearning they seek to fulfill their cultic religion into a yearning for the one true God.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, Pope Benedict XVI observes in his general Audience that "*The Protreptikos*, as the word itself suggests, is an 'exhortation' addressed to those who are starting out and seek the path of faith. Better still, *the Protreptikos* coincides with a Person: The Son of God, Jesus Christ, who makes

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<sup>8</sup> John Ferguson, *Clement of Alexandria*. (New York.: Twayne Publishers, 1974), 45.

<sup>9</sup> Ferguson, *Clement of Alexandria*, 45.

himself the exhorter of men and women so that they will set out towards the Truth with determination."<sup>10</sup>

Then, *Protrepitkos* challenges pagan intellectuals to recognize the Gospel as the fulfillment of Greek culture's legitimate aspirations for proper knowledge. In the section of the *Protrepitkos* entitled "*New Song*," Clement launches a diatribe against the old gods, the priest of the old gods, and the concept that their god, Zeus, is dead. He calls upon pagan intellectuals to open their eyes to the light of the Gospel and recognize Christ as the successful attainment of all that Greek culture aspires to, in an authentic way that even Plato was unable to satisfy.<sup>11</sup> The Exhortation to The Heathen acknowledges the great variety and profound knowledge of Greek culture, as seen in its poetry or the Greco-Roman *canticus*, yet seeks to persuade pagans using their images: "Zeus is snake no longer, nor swan, no eagle, Nor erotic man. He does not fly like a god, nor chase boys nor make love, nor fight..."<sup>12</sup> Clement thus highlights the relation between the cosmos (supernatural and transcendental things) with human nature (the natural world and individual humanity) in the form of a hymn. Clement then criticizes Greek paganism in *the Protrepitkos* on the basis that its deities are both false and poor moral examples.

Additionally, *the New Song* compares the sense of liberation felt by the first Christians to the fantastic stories, myths, rites, and superstitions to which man is enslaved by paganism. Clement indeed reflects on the enslavement of pagan religions, calling upon St. Paul, who refers to the

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<sup>10</sup> Benedict XVI, General Audience on *Clement of Alexandria* (April 18, 2007), accessed November 20, 2020, at the Holy See, [http://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/audiences/2007/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_aud\\_20070418.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/audiences/2007/documents/hf_ben-xvi_aud_20070418.html).

<sup>11</sup> Clement of Alexandria, *Selections from The Protrepitkos*, trans. Thomas Merton. (Norfolk, Ct.: New Directions by James Laughlin, 1962), 11.

<sup>12</sup> Clement of Alexandria, *Selections from The Protrepitkos*, 19.

"servitude of corruption" (Rom 8:21 NABRE). Therefore, by challenging Greek pagan intellectuals in the New Song, Clement points to the idea of conversion to Christ in a double way: "Christ as liberation from a sad and obscure prison,"<sup>13</sup> as well as the safe harbor to which we can flee and find fulfillment. Orpheus's figure is prominent throughout *The Protreptikos* narrative, and Clement contrasts the *Song of Orpheus*, representing pagan superstition, with the divine Logos of Christ.<sup>14</sup> According to Clement, through conversion to Christianity alone, can one fully participate in the Logos, a universal truth.<sup>15</sup> Nonetheless, Clement acknowledged the inspiration of Greek poets ("*Exhortation to the Heathen*"). He went so far as to declare that "by reflection and direct vision, those among the Greeks who have philosophized accurately, saw God."<sup>16</sup>

According to Salvatore Lilla, Clement argues that Greek philosophy-mythology and the Old Testament's Jewish tradition are like two deeply rooted, parallel covenants. A considerable amount of literature exists on this subject. Every scholar who reads the *Stromateis* notes that Clement believed in Greek philosophy's divine origin and admits an individual correspondence between it and Jewish Law from the Old Testament.<sup>17</sup> Even Clement's disclosure of Greek mythology and philosophy allows him to see a reciprocal connection with Jewish Law and believe that the plan God had for man can be fulfilled through philosophy connected with the Christian

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> De Jáuregui, Miguel Herrero. *Orphism and Christianity in Late Antiquity*. (Berlin.: Walter de Gruyter, 2010), 132

<sup>15</sup> Sharkey, Michael., *International Theological Commission*. (Volume 2. San Francisco.: Ignatius Press, 2009), 159.

<sup>16</sup> Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis: Books One to Three*, trans. John Ferguson. *The Fathers of the Church* 85. (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1991), 1, 19.

<sup>17</sup> Salvatore R.C. Lilla, *Clement of Alexandria: A study in Christian Platonism and Gnosticism*. (London. Oxford University Press, 1971), 11.



message. Regarding this matter, Clement tried to follow Philo of Alexandria, who belonged to a prominent Jewish school in the same city. He produced several works in philosophy and interpretations of the Jewish Bible. At the same time, although Clement agrees with many aspects of Philo's teaching, Clement asserts that the connection between Jewish Law and Greek philosophy remains unfulfilled without Christianity. For example, He proposes that Greek mythology-philosophy and the Jewish tradition of the Old Testament correspond as a "route of preparation" to the reception of God's plan in the Christian message. Like Justin Martyr, Clement believed that the truth of philosophy was borrowed from the Hebrew Scriptures. He wrote, "I know thy teachers, even if thou wouldst conceal them. You have learned geometry from the Egyptians, astronomy from the Babylonians; ... but for laws that are consistent with truth, and your sentiments respecting God, you are indebted to the Hebrews."<sup>18</sup>

### **Clement's Philosophy**

Clement's solutions to convey and explain Greek philosophy's origin are in keeping with the work of various other Greek philosophers who seek an answer to the fundamental question, "what is truth?" through understanding the essence of the world. Clement, however, asserted that such truth is not definitive. As Christians, we believe that Jesus Christ is the Truth. In order to demonstrate this, Clement attempted to catechize the Greeks by using their own language and concepts and incorporating it into his articulation of Christianity. Schools of thought, such as Gnosticism, developed in places such as Rome and Alexandria; some of them were rooted in basic Christian principles, and so Clement sought to draw from these schools any aspects of belief that

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<sup>18</sup> Clement of Alexandria, *Exhortation to the Heathen [Protreptikos]*. Ante- Nicene Fathers: Vol. II. Fathers of the Second Century. Trans. Rev. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson. (Grand Rapids, MI: WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company), 8 [https://ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf02/anf02/Page\\_168.html](https://ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf02/anf02/Page_168.html)

could be merged with and used to articulate Christianity. He, along with Origen, agreed with some ideas associated with Platonism, Aristotelianism, and Pythagoreanism. These schools had a kind of mystical vision of God, and believed that there was a tremendous gulf between God and the world. For example, Clement accepted and incorporated into his writings three primary principles: matter, forms, and the transcendent God who thinks the Forms. Furthermore, Clement incorporated Plato's belief in the form of the Good, and Aristotle's belief in the ultimate Good, into his moral theology. Aristotle's concept of the Unmoved Mover, on the hand, was used to articulate Clement's understanding of God as the first undemonstrated principle. Essentially, Clement (and Origen as well) take from these various philosophical schools whatever suits their purposes, in service of Christianity, and leave behind the rest.<sup>19</sup> For example, Ferguson points out, "Two aspects of Aristotle's philosophy remained of particular importance. One is his vision of a kind of ladder of being with God at the top, who is pure form, pure Actuality, the Unmoved Mover... the other importance is his ethical theory."<sup>20</sup> Ferguson observes that Aristotle's theories are sprinkled throughout Clement's writing, though of course Clement acknowledged the many limitations to philosophy. The Greeks had only "certain scintillations of the divine word."<sup>21</sup> Therefore, faith is the means of attaining the full revelation of God.

Additionally, Clement's conception of Gnosis and Pistis is fundamental to recognizing and explaining the role that Christianity will eventually play in the debate over the relationship between faith and reason's debate. Clement's understanding of the relationship between Gnosis and Pistis comprise his particular contribution to the resolution of the problem among Christian, Greek, and

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<sup>19</sup> Ferguson, *Clement of Alexandria*, 34.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>21</sup> Clement of Alexandria, *Exhortation to the Heathen [Protreptikos]*. Ante- Nicene Fathers, 7

Gnostics. In *Stromateis*, for example, Clement argues against Valentinus followers, noting that "Valentinus' followers attribute to us in our simplicity but arrogate knowledge to themselves as saved by their nature... They claim that it is very different from faith, as spirit is from the soul."<sup>22</sup> Valentinus and the other great Gnostic leaders emphasized *Gnosis* "knowledge" as revealed, not acquired, and as available only to certain elite or "elect" persons. Clement response, however, that there is neither knowledge nor skill without faith. Also, faith is a source of wisdom and the mother of virtue. Therefore, knowledge is merely an aid for grasping the *Pistis*, Sophia, and the divine inspiration. Clement asserts, "I do not think that philosophy directly declared the Word, although in many instances philosophy attempts and persuasively teaches us probable arguments."<sup>23</sup> In other words, even the best and truest philosopher does not possess that which directly reveals Christ.

### **Clement's Theory of *Pistis*.**

The idea of *Gnosis* represents the most critical aspect of Clement's philosophy. However, to grasp its full meaning, it is essential to recognize the Clement's theory of *Pistis* ("faith"). Clement's *Pistis* theory represents a serious attempt to arrive at a scientific comprehension of faith and its references in the Gospels while acknowledging that in accordance with Aristotle's principle of the Unmoved Mover, there is something behind all of this that is "undemonstrated." For example, the word *Pistis* in the Gospels appears several times. In the Gospel of John, it appears 107 times, indicating the dynamic dimension/activity of faith. On the one hand, Clement encountered opposition from some non-Greek Christians for his attempt to combine the dynamic dimension of faith as seen in the gospels with the philosophical dimensions. Such Christians

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<sup>22</sup> Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis*: Books One to Three, trans. John Ferguson. The Fathers of the Church 85. (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1991), 2, 10 (2).

<sup>23</sup> Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis*: Books One to Three, 1, 19.

rejected any attempt to give scientific content to their beliefs, asserting that these explanations were a product of the devil. On the other hand, some Greeks rejected his work on the basis that faith is not demonstrable and is thus little more than mere opinion. Based on the opposition of the latter group, Clement appealed to the teaching of Aristotle to convince them that Christianity was compatible with their philosophy. To resolve this conflict, Clement merges Gnosis with Pistis, identifying Pistis as a high form of Gnosis that is available to all<sup>24</sup>.

Clement's solution forms the basis for his explanation of the relationship between faith and reason. He proposes that only by accepting God as our revelation is it possible to know the truth. Only through the gift of faith are we allowed to share in God's divine knowledge. He defends the role of philosophy in preparing us to grasp faith because reason helps us to distinguish truth from false opinions. Philosophy provides Christians with a rationality for their faith. Our acceptance of faith is a submission that guarantees us the truth. Accepting God's words assures us that are accepting all proper understandings of truth, such as might appear in some schools of philosophy.

Clement presents in his theory of *Pistis* three senses that will help us to understand its meaning. These senses draw on the thoughts of both philosophers and historical theologians such as Philo of Alexandria, who incorporated philosophy into his work. Salvatore Lilla points out some different meanings of *Pistis*.<sup>25</sup> First, he attempts to logically demonstrate an epistemological way to understand the concept of *Pistis* itself. Second, he focuses on understanding the difference between science and opinion. The third sense pertains to one's moral attitude toward faith, using "faith" as understood scripturally. Regarding the third meaning, Merton observes, "the Christian is a 'soldier of peace' in an 'army that sheds no blood'." He defends his faith not with human

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<sup>24</sup> Lilla, *Clement of Alexandria*, 133.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 119.

weapons but with the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God,"<sup>26</sup> positing the importance of Scripture in Christian life as an reflecting an attitude towards others.

Concerning the human mind's attempt to grasp the invisible or non-understandable things, Clement explains it through the principle of demonstration. He deals mainly with logic and epistemological comprehension of faith. He says in *Stromateis* that everything needs a demonstration (something is itself trustworthy). However, requiring a demonstration of each demonstration involves an infinite amount of demonstrations. Eventually, some demonstrations must be based on undemonstrated principles, which are themselves trustworthy.<sup>27</sup> Clement here draws on Aristotle,<sup>28</sup> who maintains that it is impossible to require a demonstration for every demonstration; thus, some demonstrations must start from one absolute, undemonstrated, true, and trustworthy principle.<sup>29</sup>

### **Clement's Theory of *Gnosis***

In his *Stromateis* and *Protreptikos*, Clement presents his theory merging *Gnosis* with *Pistis*. Ferguson shows how Clement articulates all these: "The disciple of Christ has grasped firmly and broadcast what the leaders of philosophy could offer only clues to. What is more, Clement synthesizes four passages from Paul (1 Cor. 1:13; Gal. 3: 28; Eph. 4:24; Col. 3: 9-11) to express

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<sup>26</sup> Clement of Alexandria, *Selections from The Protreptikos*, 13.

<sup>27</sup> Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis*: Books Four to Eight, 7, 95 (6).  
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8, 8 (1).

<sup>28</sup> Barnes, Jonathan. "Aristotle's Theory of Demonstration." *Phronesis* 14, no. 2 (1969): 125.

<sup>29</sup> Lilla, *Clement of Alexandria*, 121. The author points out also to the doctrine or principle of ἀρχή, which is regarded by Plato as the end of the dialectic process and which is identified by Aristotle with the trustworthy and undemonstrated principle of demonstration.

Christian universalism."<sup>30</sup> *Gnosis* cannot be fully appreciated without considering its relationship to its cultural environment. Moreover, in Part IV of *Protreptikos*, Clement says, "Philosophy, the ancients tell us, is a prolonged consideration, aimed at attaining the eternal love of wisdom."<sup>31</sup> Here, Clement considers the role of philosophy in *Gnosis*'s meaning as Logos, expressing the full understanding of counting, speaking, and thinking. Also, he admits that this eternal love of wisdom has a disposition in three aspects: as an ideal of the contemplative life, the intelligibility of realities, and the source of teaching.

Clement's conception of *Gnosis* distinguishes two different stages of meaning. First, man can already attain *Gnosis* during his earthly life. Secondly, the soul still possesses *Gnosis* after its separation from the body.<sup>32</sup> Thus, Clement portrays his understanding of *Gnosis* by examining its cultural background and disclosing the route to support Christianity as the true philosophy in some singular points: the role of the Logos as source and teacher; the idea of the contemplative life in a relationship of grasping sensible world and intelligible realities; the role of the disciplines in building *Gnosis*. In all these ideas, Clement follows Philo of Alexandria. Philo belonged to a prominent Jewish-Alexandrine school and thus possessed an exquisite background of philosophy that helped other Greek-speaking Jews to grasp their religious doctrines, the teaching of the Old Testament, for example, and the allegorical interpretation of the Jewish tabernacle.<sup>33</sup> Likewise, Clement of Alexandria developed his own theories using many materials that were within his reach in order to defend and support Christianity.

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<sup>30</sup> Ferguson, *Clement of Alexandria*, 63.

<sup>31</sup> Clement of Alexandria, *Selections from The Protreptikos*, 23.

<sup>32</sup> Lilla, *Clement of Alexandria*, 143 – 144.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 174.

## Conclusion

Clement's conception of *Gnosis* and *Pistis* reveals the route to achieving a tremendous goal: Christian way as "true philosophy." His interpretation of *Gnosis* asserts his views on cosmology and theology to reach the contemplation of the highest divinity, which he also calls *Gnosis*, representing Christian philosophy's ultimate aim. His *Pistis* theory represents a serious endeavor to give a scientific foundation to faith using the first principles of demonstration. Thus, Clement posits the foundational basis for the faith and reason debate.

Pope Benedict XVI summarizes: "From Athens, he inherited that marked interest in philosophy which was to make him one of the pioneers of the dialogue between faith and reason in the Christian tradition. While he was still young, he arrived in Alexandria, the 'city-symbol' of that fertile junction between the different cultures that was a feature of the Hellenistic age."<sup>34</sup> Following St. John Paul II, he observes that Clement understood philosophy as the instruction which prepares for Christian faith, maintaining the idea that God gives philosophy to the Greeks as their testament.<sup>35</sup>

In conclusion, Clement of Alexandria rooted his defense of Christianity in the traces of Greek philosophy and mythology, challenging pagan intellectuals to recognize the Gospel as the fulfillment of all legitimate aspirations of Greek culture. However, his philosophical eclecticism is problematic for many scholars. Also, some scholars consider Clement's work—particularly in comparison with Justin Martyr, who adopted a similarly eclectic approach toward defending

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<sup>34</sup> Benedict XVI, General Audience on Clement of Alexandria.

<sup>35</sup> John Paul II. Encyclical Letter on the relationship between Faith and Reason *Fides et Ratio* (December 1, 1998) (Washington, DC.: Paulist Press, 1998), 37.

Christianity—to be inaccurate and somewhat convoluted.<sup>36</sup> Yet, at the same time, his synthesis of Hellenism and Judaism to aid and influence Christianity was fruitful because he provided a comprehensive inquiry. Overall, Clement is nonetheless to be commended as the first to take on such a challenging task, despite the imperfections in his approach. Using his background in Greek culture, Clement challenged pagan intellectuals to understand and fulfill the Gospels using traces of mythology and philosophy. Ultimately, he challenged both his contemporaries and readers today to recognize Jesus' message as both the "True Gospel" and "True Philosophy."

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<sup>36</sup> Lilla, *Clement of Alexandria*, 14



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