THE THEOLOGIANS OF THE SECOND CENTURY

Hymn: Clement of Alexandria's "Shepherd of Tender Youth"—Earliest known Christian hymn, written about A.D. 200
Scripture: 1 Corinthians 11:2; 2 Thessalonians 2:15; 3:6; II Corinthians 13:5-8
Prayer: Clement of Alexandria: Miscellanies VII.vii "What Sort of Prayer the Gnostic Employs, and How It Is Heard by God."

Three great groups of men led the church in the second century—the Apostolic Fathers, the Apologists, and the Theologians. Theology may be considered one of the defense mechanisms developed by the second century church. In the second century the Age of the Theologians was roughly A.D. 180-200. The work of theology was just beginning. Tertullian who may be considered the first of the Latin theologians wrote his great Apology just before the end of the second century and had also produced the first of a great series of theological works. Two Greek Theologians had finished or were finishing their work as the century ended. These were Irenaeus in Gaul and Clement in Alexandria. Irenaeus is often called "The Father of Theology;" or sometimes, "The Father of Biblical Theology." Clement is sometimes spoken of as "The Father of Scientific or Philosophical Theology."

IRENAEUS THE BISHOP OF GAUL

Irenaeus was born in Asia Minor. As a young man he had been taught by Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, and probably by Papias, bishop of Hierapolis. As an old man he could vividly remember Polycarp sitting before the church in Smyrna telling about the Apostle John telling about Jesus. Florinus had been a fellow student under Polycarp. Later he became a presbyter of the church in Rome; he went off with the Valentinian Gnostics. Irenaeus wrote him a letter trying to win him back, but Victor the bishop of Rome had to excommunicate Florinus. For a time Irenaeus was a student in Rome. He was in Rome when Polycarp was martyred in Smyrna. He claimed that a voice from heaven proclaimed to him that Polycarp had been martyred. Hippolytus who was head of the school in Rome and preaching presbyter of the church at the end of the century, claimed to have been a pupil of Irenaeus and to have heard his lectures. Irenaeus may have lectured for a while in Rome. In Gaul Irenaeus became a presbyter under the aged bishop, Pothinus, who was also from Asia Minor. Pothinus had sent Irenaeus on a mission to Rome when the persecution broke out in Gaul in 177 A.D. Irenaeus returned to Gaul after the persecution and was chosen bishop. As bishop he conducted mission work among the Gauls (Celts), battled the Gnostics and other heretics, exalted the Scriptures and the apostolic teachings and traditions, and found time to write several important works. His greatest work is known as Against Heresies, but the ancient title was Detection and Overthrow of the Pretended False Gnosis. It survives in Latin translation and only partially in Greek. We also have a smaller work, The Demonstration of the Apostolic Teaching. Irenaeus wrote several other works to which only the titles or a few fragments survive—usually quotations in Eusebius:

1. The Letter to Florinus, the Roman presbyter who became a Valentinian Gnostic. Eusebius gives a long quotation (V.20.4-8)
2. On the Ogdoad: written against Valentinian Gnosticism after Florinus had renounced his faith. Eusebius gives the closing words (V.20.2)
3. On Schism: a letter to Blatus, the Quartodeciman who wanted to put altars for animal sacrifice in the church.
Eusebius gives the title (V.20.1)


5. A letter to Victor concerning computing the date of Easter. Eusebius gives excerpts (V.23.3; 24.11-17)


Irenaeus is said to have also written Eleutherus, bishop of Rome, begging him to be tolerant with the Montanists (this may have been a letter of Pothinus carried by Irenaeus). Also he wrote Victor a strong letter protesting Victor's unChristian spirit in the Easter Controversy.

IRENAEUS: AGAINST HERESIES

Irenaeus undertook this great work at the request of a friend and probably worked on it over a period of several years amidst his busy ministry. He apologizes for his poor Greek style, saying that he is accustomed to speaking in the barbaric dialect of the Celts. When he completed the first two books he sent them to his friend. Then he sent him Books III, IV, and V as they were completed. Irenaeus diligently read the works of the heretics themselves. He seems to have had access to a large heretical works that had already been produced. He seems to have had access to the works of Papias, Hegesippus, to a lost work entitled "The Sayings of the Elders of Asia Minor", to a treatise of Justin Martyr against Marcion and to Justin's work Against Heresies. He may have known more recent works such as those of Theophilus of Antioch (such as Against Hermogenes, Against Marcion, and To Autolycus). He knew the works of Clement of Rome, Ignatius, Polycarp, and Heras.

Book I. Irenaeus gives his description of the heresies that have appeared in the church, along with a polemic against them. He deals first and in most detailed fashion with the Valentinian Gnostics. Then he brings in mainly different Gnostic schools: Satornil, Basilides, Carpocrates, Cerinthus, the Ebionites, the Bicolaites, Cerdon, Marcion, Tatian, and the Encratites.

Book II. He refutes the heretics from reason.

Book III. He refutes the heretics from the doctrine of the church, dealing especially with teachings concerning God and Christ.

Book IV. He refutes the heretics with sayings of the Lord.

Book V. He treats the resurrection and the millenium.

Some of the interesting teaching of Irenaeus:

1. The Trinity. The Father is the Creator of the world and the God of the Old Testament. The Son and the Holy Spirit existed before creation because God said, "Let us...." The Son and the Spirit are the right a left hands of the Father.

2. Christology:
   a. The Son was begotten of the Father but his generation is unspeakable.
   b. The Recapitulation Theory of the Atonement: Christ became the Second Adam in order to recapitulate the history of the whole race thus undoing the sin of Adam and defeating the devil. Christ had to pass through every stage of life to sanctify it: infancy, childhood, youth or boyhood, young manhood, old age.
Christ was crucified at about the age of fifty (John 19:33). Christ had to become what he came to save; he became human so that the human could become divine.

c. Mary: Became the Second Eve. The virgin Mary untied the knots tied by the virgin Eve. Mary by obedience became the advocate of disobedient Eve. Mary became the womb mother of mankind. She became the true Eve, the mother of the living. As Eve caused the fall of the human race by disobedience, so Mary by obedience caused the healing and salvation of the race.

d. Baptism: Some think Irenaeus implies infant baptism in Adv. Haer. II.xxii.4 "...He came to save all through himself; all, that is, who through him are born into God, infants, children, boys, young men and old."

e. The Eucharist: Gnostics cannot have the Supper because they deny Jesus is the Son of the Creator. Christians offer God that which is his own. The Eucharist is a participation in the body and blood of the Lord. It involves a heavenly and an earthly element.

f. The Millenium: Irenaeus believes in the millenial reign. He speaks of Relevation being written by the Apostle John almost in his own day, but admits that everyone had forgotten the interpretation of the 666 except that it represents the Antichrist.

g. Scripture: Irenaeus has a collection of New Testament books that he calls "Scripture" because they have the same character of inspiration as the writings of the Old Testament. His canon seems to have consisted of four Gospels, Epistles of Paul, Acts of Apostles, Epistles of John, the Apocalypse of John, and the first epistle of Peter. He may have accepted the Shepherd of Hermas. Hebrews is not used in his main surviving works but is referred to in a fragment of a sermon that may be genuine.

h. Rome: Heretics quote scripture. Apostolic tradition gives the correct interpretation. Scripture and tradition are one authority. The apostolic tradition is kept in the apostolic churches--those that can trace themselves to the apostles. One needs only to go to Rome which was founded by Peter and Paul to be sure of the right interpretation.

i. Tests of the Truth: antiquity, unity, universality.

IRENAEUS: THE DEMONSTRATION OF THE APOSTOLIC TEACHING

The Christian revelation is proved by the Old Testament. The Apostles preached the Three Divine Persons, Creation, Fall, the history of redemption including the messianic prophecies, the Incarnation, Crucifixion, Resurrection and the Kingdom. They preached the unfolding of God's plans from Adam to Christ. Christ is king and Christians should live as citizens of the Kingdom.
Clement of Alexandria is often called the first Christian scholar and the father of philosophical or scientific theology. He was probably born in Athens of pagan parents and received his early education there. He was probably the best educated Christian of the second century. When he became a Christian he began extensive travels that led him to Southern Italy, Syria and Palestine, seeking instruction from the most famous Christian teachers. He later wrote that he "was privileged to hear discourses of blessed and truly remarkable men: (Strom. I.i.11). His journey brought him to Alexandria where he became a student of Pantaenus: "When I came upon the last teacher—he was the first in power—having tracked him out concealed in Egypt, I found rest. He, the true, the Sicilian bee gathering the spoil of the flowers of the prophetic and apostolic meadow, engendered in the souls of his hearers a deathless element of knowledge." Clement became the assistant and associate of Pantaenus. When Pantaenus went to India as a missionary (c. 190 A.D.) he left Clement in charge of his school in Alexandria. Origen was one of his pupils. Clement became a presbyter in the Alexandrian Church. His battle against the Gnostics made such a great contribution to the victory over them. Clement insisted that all the treasures of knowledge were hidden in Christ Jesus. The various schools of Gnostics had a false "knowledge" (gnosis). Christianity was the true Gnosticism and the Christian the true Gnostic. Clement has been called "The Christian Gnostic."

When the Severian Persecution broke in 202 A.D. Clement fled from Alexandria to Cappadocia where one of his pupils, Alexandria, had become bishop in the town of Flaviiades. About A.D. 211 he carried a letter for his bishop to Asclepiades, the new bishop of Antioch. In the letter Bishop Alexander praised Clement: "Clement the blessed presbyter, who has become my lord, and done me benefit." He regarded Clement to his country as a special providence and he treasured his good services. About A.D. 216 Alexander was made bishop of Jerusalem. In a letter to Origen he mentioned that both Pantaenus and Clement were dead: "blessed fathers who guided us on our way, and with whom we soon shall be."

Clement of Alexandria was regarded as a saint until Pope Clement VIII (1592-1600) omitted his name from the calendar. Pope Benedict XIV in 1748 refused to restore Clement's name as requested by King John V of Portugal. Photius in the Middle ages had charged that Clement's teaching were open to suspicion.

**CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA'S WRITINGS** His greatest work survives; it is the trilogy made up of The Exhortation to the Greeks, The Tutor, and The Miscellanies of Stromateis

**THE EXHORTATION TO THE GREEKS:** This first volume of the trilogy was an apology aimed at converting the pagan to Christianity. He exposes the folly and worthlessness of pagan writers. He examined the Mystery Religions, pointing out their shameful features—Clement probably had been initiated into many of them in his pagan period. Then he presented the Logos as the teacher of the world. It was announced by and inspired the prophets. The Logos was incarnate in the Christ. The Logos brought the marvelous divine grace that fulfills human desire. Christianity is the only true philosophy.
THE TUTOR: The Logos continues his educational work in this second volume. The new convert is instructed in every day Christian living. The aim is true virtue. The soul should hunger and thirst for the knowledge of God. Despising the things of the world the soul should rise to God. Clement treats in detail the problems faced by the Christian in Alexandria with all its luxury, debauchery and vices. He speaks with great frankness and seriousness.

THE MISCELLANIES OR STROMATEIS: The third volume was to complete the instruction of the Christian—the solid meat for the mature. Clement intended for this work to be THE DIDASCALOS or THE MASTER. The goal was the perfect Christian, the True Gnostic. Some think Clement only gathered material for this third volume and found himself unable to complete the systematic theology he had in mind, and that instead of calling it Didascalos he called it Stromateis which could mean Carpet (indicating intricate design) or Scrap Bag or Carpet Bag—a container for the scraps to be used in weaving a carpet. Clement may have been using a literary device of philosophers of his day—veiling or hiding deep truths in riddles, parables, short quotations; or stories. Meditating on these the True Gnostic would find hidden truths. It would hide the truth for those not ready for it. Clement believed in a doctrine of reservation—give the people only what they could digest. Later the church would regard this as very dangerous and a hiding place for heretics.

Clement believes that philosophy was the schoolmaster to lead the Greeks to Christ just as the Law brought the Jews to Christ. Faith and knowledge are not incompatible as the Gnostics claimed. Faith was the basis of all knowledge. Fear could be useful in bringing to repentance. All these should lead to charity which leads to the true Gnostic, the perfect Christian, who bears the image of God. Clement attacks the moral and religious teachings of the Gnostics. He especially defends Christian marriage as superior to celibacy—marriage is a part of the training of the perfect. He defends the allegorical method of interpreting Scripture. The philosophers have borrowed from Moses and the prophets. The true philosophy of Christianity is a gift from God.

WHAT RICH MAN SHALL BE SAVED? This is a homily on Mark 10:17-31. It is not the rich man but the sinner that is excluded from heaven. What counts is a man's attitude toward his riches. Clement tells the story of John and the young preacher who became a robber and was restored to the church by John.

EXERPTS FROM THEODOTUS: a collection of passages from the Valentinian Gnostics that Clement made for his own use.

LOST WORKS OF CLEMENT:

THE HYPOTYPOSEES: Clement's commentary in eight books on the difficult passages from both Old and New Testaments.

Clement also wrote on The Prophet Amos, On Providence, On Easter, On Evil Speaking, On Fasting, Patience, Against the Judaizers, On First Principles, On Prophecy, On Angels, On the Devil,
The origin of the Universe, the Unity and Excellence of the Church, On the Offices of Bishops, Presbyters, Deacons and Widows; on the Soul, On the Resurrection; on Marriage; on Continence; Against Heresies.

NOTEWORTHY POINTS CONCERNING CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA:

1. Clement had a comprehensive education including philosophy, poetry, archaeology, mythology and literature. He knew Christian literature and quotes every Old Testament book except Ruth and Song of Solomon and every book in the New Testament except James, Philémon and II Peter in his extant works. He also quotes as Scripture The Shepherd of Hermas, Barnabas, Clement of Rome, Tobit, Wisdom of Solomon, and Ecclesiasticus. It has been estimated that he quotes 1500 passages from the Old Testament, 2000 from the New Testament, and 360 passages from pagan writers. Classical scholars tend to treasure Clement for the quotations from the pagan classics.

2. Clement believed Greek philosophy had a supernatural character. God gave man the ability to arrive at truth by natural reason. Philosophy was good and useful and that which is good could not have come from the evil one. Philosophy brought the Greeks to Christ just as the Law brought Jews to Christ. His Hellenistic education enabled him to make of the Christian faith a philosophical system. He proved faith and philosophy, religion and secular learning were not enemies. Christianity is the crown and glory of philosophy—the highest truth. All truth belongs to the Logos.

3. Truth leads to virtue. When man knows the right he will do it. Faith leads to knowledge which produces love which leads to the restoration of the likeness of God. His goal was the perfect Christian. Good works follow knowledge just as the shadow.

4. Clement did not despise the ordinary believer who was not a scholar. Here he differed strongly with the Gnostics who taught that the ordinary believer would be burned up and was incapable of salvation. Clement believed the Lord reassured the simple believer. The teacher should match the teaching to the level of the pupil so that he could grow toward maturity.

5. The Church is the one virginal Mother for Clement. The threefold hierarchy of bishop, presbyters, and deacons is modulated after the hierarchy of the angels.

6. Sin is not inherited by generation but is learned by example. Man must free himself of all evil impulses for only the pure in heart can see God. God punishes men to purify them.

7. The Logos is the center of all his thinking. The Logos forms with Father and Holy Ghost the divine Trinity. The Logos is the divine reason, the teacher of the world, the creator of the world, the source of the Law and of Philosophy. The Logos was incarnate in Jesus Christ, the Sun of Righteousness that changed sunset to sunrise and through his cross brought death to life.