
Apprehending “Demonstrations” from the First Principle: Clement of Alexandria’s Phenomenology of Faith

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I. INTRODUCTION

At first sight, the student of ancient Greek thought is puzzled by some of Clement of Alexandria’s remarks on faith. It seems that God offers “demonstrations” about himself, his voice is the surest of all demonstrations, and faith appears to be the epistemic capacity of perceiving these demonstrations:

Therefore, as is reasonable, grasping [περιλαμβάνοντες] by faith [πίστει] the indemonstrable first principle [ἀναπόδεικτον τὴν ἀρχήν], and receiving in abundance, from the first principle itself, demonstrations in reference to the first principle [τὰς ἀποδείξεις παρ’ αὐτῆς τῆς ἀρχῆς περὶ τῆς ἀρχῆς λαβόντες], we are by the voice of the Lord trained up to the knowledge of the truth [παιδευόμεθα πρὸς τὴν ἐπίγνωσιν τῆς ἀληθείας]. For we may not give our adhesion [προσέχομεν] to men on a bare statement [ἀποφαινομένοις] by them, who might equally state the opposite. But if it is not enough merely to state the opinion, but if what is said [τὸ λεχθέν] must be believed [πιστώσασθαι], we do not wait for the testimony of men, but we believe [πιστούμεθα] the matter that is in question by the voice of the Lord, which is the surest of all demonstrations [πασῶν ἀποδείξεων ἐχεγγυώτερα], or rather is the only demonstration.¹

¹ Clement of Alexandria, *The Stromata, or Miscellanies* 7.16.95.6–8, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings Down to 325 A.D.* (ANF), ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, vol. 2 (1885–96; repr., Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1978), 551, trans. W. Wilson with small emendations. Though Wilson’s translation is anachronistic in some respects, I found his translation of this passage more comprehensible than that of Hort and Mayor: “with good reason therefore having apprehended our first principle by faith without proof.” See Fenton J. A. Hort and Joseph B. Mayor, *Clement of Alexandria, Miscellanies, Book VII*, in *Greek and Roman Philosophy*, ed. Leonardo Taran (1902; repr., New York: Garland, 1987), 9:169. Compare *Alexandrian Christianity: Selected Translations of Clement and Origen*, with introduction and notes by John E. L. Oulton and Henry Chadwick (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1954), 155, where *Stromata* 7 is a revised version of Mayor’s translation. Throughout this article, Greek passages refer to the edition *Clemens Alexandrinus*, vol. 2, 3rd ed., and vol. 3, © 2009 by The University of Chicago. All rights reserved.
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According to the ancient classical perspective on demonstration, primarily developed by Aristotle in *Posterior Analytics*, the first principles cannot be a matter of demonstration and science. Nevertheless, it seems that Clement changes the relationship between such pivotal concepts as “science” and “demonstration” and the way the concept of “faith” interacts with them. First, according to Clement’s perspective, there is demonstration from the first principle itself. Second, faith appears to be a sort of bizarre epistemic capacity able to grasp the demonstrations from the first principle.

The main intent of the present article is to elaborate a rational explanation of this passage through the analysis of the Clementine concepts of “science” and “demonstration” and the role the concept of “faith” plays in its interaction with them. In his book on Clement—based as well on the effort of many previous scholars—Salvatore Lilla traces the key meanings of the concept of πίστις (faith) according to the perspective of the Alexandrian theologian:

1. *Pistis* is the attitude peculiar to the human mind when it believes in the first principles of demonstration; in more general terms, it also designates any kind of immediate knowledge.
2. *Pistis* is the firm conviction, which the human mind possesses after reaching the knowledge of something by means of a scientific demonstration.
3. *Pistis* may also mean the tendency of the believers to accept the truths contained in the teachings of Scripture without attempting to reach a deeper comprehension of them.²

2nd ed., in *Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller*, ed. Ludwig Früchtel, Otto Stählin, and Ursula Treu (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, vol. 2, 1960; vol. 3, 1970).

² Salvatore Lilla, *Clement of Alexandria: A Study in Christian Platonism and Gnosticism* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), 119. As Lilla himself shows, his list of the definitions of the concept is especially indebted to Merk, Daskalakis, and Wolfson. Compare Carl Merk, *Clemens Alexandrinus in seiner Abhängigkeit von der griechischen Philosophie* (Leipzig: Böhme, 1879), 17–27; Marcos Daskalakis, “Die eklektischen Anschauungen des Clemens von Alexandria und seine Abhängigkeit von der griechischen Philosophie” (diss., Leipzig, 1908), 32–43; Harry A. Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Church Fathers* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1964), 1:112, 1:120–27. For other scholars who have focused their investigations on various particular aspects of the concept of “faith,” see Ernst Redepenning, *Origenes*, 2 vols. (Bonn, 1841), 1:152–67; H. Ritter, *Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur* (Hamburg, 1841), 1:431ff.; H. Preische, *De γνώσει Clementis Alexandrini* (Jena, 1871), 7–19; Knittel, “Pistis und Gnosis bei Clemens von Alexandrien,” *Theologische Quartalschrift* 55 (1873): 171–219 and 363–417; Eugène de Faye, *Clément d’Alexandrie* (Paris, 1906), 207ff., and “De l’originalité de la philosophie chrétienne de Clément d’Alexandrie,” *Annuaire de l’École pratique des Hautes Études* (5e section sciences religieuses; Paris, 1919): 11–14; Karl Prümm, “Glaube und Erkenntnis im zweiten Buch der Stromata des Klemens von Alexandrien,” *Scholastik* 12 (1937): 17–57; Pierre T. Camelot, *Foi et Gnose: Introduction à l’étude de la connaissance mystique chez Clément d’Alexandrie* (Paris: Vrin, 1945), 28–42 and 43–50; Joseph Moingt, SJ, “La gnose de

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Anticipating the conclusion, my essay advances the following ideas as an explanation for the Clementine passage. Clement develops a general phenomenology of faith as an epistemic capacity. Faith is an apprehension of self-evident manifestations to the human mind and also the mind’s assent and dianoetic appetency toward these manifestations. Clement applies this general theory to the particular case of the manifestations that come from God, the first principle, calling them “demonstrations.” I would understand the term “demonstration” both as phenomenon, something given to the human mind, and as a special type of syllogism. In a fruitful ambivalence, Clement conceives of the first principle at the same time of every being and every demonstration and of demonstration at the same time as manifestation and syllogism. This phenomenology presupposes two pivotal aspects. Faith, on the one hand, is a passive intuition that represents the apprehension of those “demonstrations” (manifestations) that God offers to the human mind. On the other hand, faith is an active intention that consists of a dianoetic appetency toward God and things divine. When faith takes God as the object of its apprehension, the outcome is a knowledge immediate and exceedingly accurate.

Considering the *Sitz im Leben*, Clement’s entire endeavor to redefine the concept of “faith,” as Elisabeth Clark noticed, emerges in the context of his polemics with such Gnostics as Valentinus and Basilides, who envisaged their own communities as elected groups of people—the pneumatics, who enjoy the access to the highest knowledge (γνώσις)—and conceived of faith as a secondary and unnecessary element for salvation, peculiar to the psychic persons.³

Clément d’Alexandrie dans ses rapports avec la foi et la philosophie,” *Recherches de Science Religieuse* 37 (1950): 195–251, and 38 (1951): 82–188; Walther Völker, *Der wahre Gnostiker nach Clemens Alexandrinus* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1952), 221–54; Raoul Mortley, *Connaissance religieuse et herméneutique chez Clément d’Alexandrie* (Leiden: Brill, 1973), 109–25, 227–29; Elisabeth A. Clark, *Clement’s Use of Aristotle* (New York: Mellen, 1977), 16–26; Dietmar Wyrwa, *Die christliche Platonaneignung in den Stromateis des Clemens von Alexandrien* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1983), 152–62; Eric Osborn, *The Emergence of Christian Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 262–65, and *Clement of Alexandria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 155–96; Ulrich Schneider, *Theologie als christliche Philosophie: Zur Bedeutung der biblischen Botschaft im Denken des Clemens von Alexandria* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1999), 281–302; Peter Karavites, *Evil, Freedom, and the Road to Perfection in Clement of Alexandria* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 142–45; John Behr, *Asceticism and Anthropology in Irenaeus and Clement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 149–51; Rüdiger Feulner, *Clemens von Alexandria: Sein Leben, Werk und philosophisch-theologisches Denken* (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 2006), 68–71, 87–91, 100–101.

³ Clark, *Clement’s Use*, 16. In order to elaborate a high theology of faith, Clement makes use of Pauline theology and the Letter to the Hebrews, which contain a high theology of faith. In addition to this, Clement employs his entire philosophical knowledge.

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II. THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL BACKGROUND: THE ANCIENT GREEK CONCEPTS OF “SCIENCE” AND “DEMONSTRATION”

Clement articulates his epistemological viewpoint employing terminology inherited from the Greek philosophical tradition. His concept of πίστις is a development of the corresponding Aristotelian notion, which involves strong connections with the notions of “science,” “demonstration,” “forms,” and “first principle.” Scholars have noticed that the classical Greek distinction between science (ἐπιστήμη) and opinion (δόξα) was already developed in Plato’s and Aristotle’s writings. As Francis Peters observes, Socrates’ standpoint in *Phaedo* 96b seems to suggest that the distinction between opinion and science was actually a pre-Socratic precept.⁴

According to Plato, opinion stands for inaccurate knowledge; while it is the product of sensory perception of temporal and perishable things, ἐπιστήμη is the knowledge of the eternal Ideas or Forms.⁵ In fact, Greek philosophers bring into being the model of perfect or ideal knowledge, which includes the following elements: (1) the perfect objects of knowledge (first principles: e.g., Logos, Ideas, Forms), (2) the perfect knowledge (ἐπιστήμη), (3) the knower (human soul), and (4) the capacity for perfect knowledge (intuition: νοῦς, νόησις, φρόνησις).

While Plato already makes the distinction between probable and necessary demonstration (ἀπόδειξις),⁶ Aristotle bestows a technical meaning on the notion of “demonstration,” namely, that of the method that leads

⁴ Francis E. Peters, *Greek Philosophical Terms: A Historical Lexicon* (New York: New York University Press, 1967), 59. Moreover, a condescending regard toward sense perception (αἴσθησις) and its connection with inaccurate knowledge or opinion (δόξα) represented the already central positions of the Parmenidean and Cratylean epistemologies. To the contrary, intuition (νοεῖν) was praised as the capacity of accessing a very select entity, being itself. For Parmenides, see *Fragmenta* 8.34–36, in *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, ed. Hermann Diels and Walther Kranz, vol. 1 (Berlin: Weidmann, 1951). See also *Fragmenta* 8.50–51 for the distinction between opinion (δόξα) and truth (ἀλήθεια, which is connected with thought [νόημα]). For Cratylus, see Plato, *Cratylus* 402a (in *Platonis opera*, ed. John Burnet, vol. 2 [Oxford: Clarendon, 1976–82]); and Aristotle, *Physica* 8.253b (in *Aristotelis physica*, ed. William D. Ross [Oxford: Clarendon, 1950]), and *Metaphysica* 1010a (in *Aristotle’s Metaphysics*, ed. William D. Ross, 2 vols. [1924; repr., Oxford: Clarendon, 1970]). Compare Peters, *Greek Philosophical Terms*, 40 and 59. At page 8, Peters also affirms: “*Aisthesis* found itself involved in the epistemological doubts raised by Heraclitus and Parmenides and debarred from any genuine access to truth.” Besides this, according to Heraclitus’s vision, intuition (νοῦς) represents the only human faculty able to apprehend the principle of the universe, the mysterious and divine Logos. Compare Sextus Empiricus, *Adversus Mathematicos* 7.129 (in *Sexti Empirici opera*, ed. Hermann Mutschmann, vol. 3 [Leipzig: Teubner, 1961]); and Heraclitus, *Testimonia* 16.18–22, in Diels and Kranz, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, vol. 1.

⁵ See, for example, Plato, *Meno* 80e–86c, *Phaedo* 75b–76, *Republica* 476a–480a, *Timaeus* 29b–d, in Burnet, *Platonis opera*. Compare Peters, *Greek Philosophical Terms*, 59.

⁶ For example, *Timaeus* 40e1–2.

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to apodictic knowledge. Hence, demonstration starts to be viewed as a species of syllogism, especially the epistemic syllogism.⁷ Its result, which is apodictic or demonstrative knowledge (ἀποδεικτική ἐπιστήμη), proceeds from “premises which are true, primary, immediate, better known than, prior to, and causative of, the conclusion.”⁸

In fact, the purpose of science is that of describing a certain object through one or more essential attributes and to secure this knowledge through the mediation of a certain, necessary method. In this way the knower can reach the essence (τί ἐστὶ) expressed in the definition of the genre to which that specific object belongs. Demonstration extends from the initial premises to the establishing of a definition of the object of science.⁹ One should notice that the character of necessity is one of the intrinsic aspects of demonstrative knowledge. First of all, the first principles are always necessary. Second, the attributes of the objects in discussion should belong necessarily to those specific objects. As Aristotle states, “Demonstrative knowledge proceeds from necessary first principles (because that which we know cannot possibly be otherwise), and essential attributes are necessary to their subjects.”¹⁰ Human knowledge, however, encompasses not only one species of sciences but a plurality of sciences. Because of that, each particular science (ἐπιστήμη) is determined by a particular type of object of investigation and particular first principles on which demonstration has to be

⁷ For the relationship between syllogism and demonstration, see Aristotle, *Analytica priora* 25b30–31. In a technical usage, Aristotle defines demonstration as epistemic syllogism; e.g., *Analytica posteriora* 71b18: ἀπόδειξιν δὲ λέγω συλλογισμόν ἐπιστημονικόν. For the Greek text, see William D. Ross, *Aristotelis analytica priora et posteriora* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1964).

⁸ Aristotle, *Analytica posteriora* 71b20–23. For the English translation, see Hugh Tredennick, *Aristotle: Posterior Analytics; Topica*, Loeb Classical Library (LCL) 391 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966), 31.

⁹ “Now every demonstration and every syllogism must prove that some attribute does or does not apply to some subject” (Aristotle, *Analytica priora* 40b23–24). See the English text in Hugh Tredennick’s translation, *Aristotle: Categories; On Interpretation, Prior Analytics*, LCL 325 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966), 317. Compare William D. Ross’s opinion in *Aristotle* (London: Routledge, 1995), 48. Compare Clement, *Stromata* 8.6.17.5–6 (ANF 2:562): “For definition is adopted before division and after: before, when it is admitted or stated; after, when it is demonstrated.”

¹⁰ Aristotle, *Analytica posteriora* 74b5–8. Another formulation of the same idea may be found in *Analytica posteriora* 75a28–33: “Since in each genus it is the attributes that belong essentially to that particular genus that belong to it of necessity, it is evident that scientific demonstrations are concerned with essential attributes and proceed from them. For accidental attributes are not necessary, and therefore we do not necessarily know why the conclusion is true” (see Tredennick’s translation in *Aristotle: Posterior Analytics*, LCL 391:54–55, and 61, respectively; see n. 8). Compare Ross’s comments: “He [Aristotle] next [i.e., *Analytica posteriora* 1.7–34] proves the consequential characteristics of demonstration in its character of demonstration, i.e., in so far as it aims at showing why properties belong to their subjects” (Ross, *Aristotle*, 40).

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grounded.¹¹ According to Aristotle, each science has its foundation on specific primary, necessary, and indemonstrable premises.

One may also notice that, since scientific demonstration can only be based on true and first premises, the nature of premises plays a significant role in the process of elaborating a scientific corpus (ἐπιστήμη).¹² Nonetheless, there is another species of premises of demonstration in addition to the species of the necessary premises, namely, that of the probable premises. If the process of knowledge starts from premises that are merely probable, the syllogism built on such premises can only be a dialectic or rhetorical demonstration (ἐνθύμημα),¹³ and its result mere opinion (δόξα), instead of scientific knowledge.¹⁴ The following diagram expresses the difference between the two processes:

True, necessary premises → by ἀπόδειξις (scientific syllogism) → ἐπιστήμη.

Probable premises → by ἐνθύμημα (dialectic syllogism, rhetorical ἀπόδειξις) → δόξα.

One of the most important epistemological aspects for my investigation, however, consists in the nature of the knowledge able to reach the first principles. Greek philosophers struggled even with the question of whether there is such a knowledge and advanced various solutions. As seen above, important pre-Socratic thinkers, such as Parmenides and Heraclitus, each in his own way, admitted the possibility of the knowledge of the first principles, namely, through intuition. Plato, in his turn, offered a similar answer, since νόησις solely, the highest faculty of the soul, is able to contemplate the noetic realm of Ideas and being.¹⁵

As seen above, Aristotle proves to be a foundationalist, though one with his own particularities. In his case, it is not demonstration that can access the premises of sciences and the primary causes but in-

¹¹ For example, Aristotle, *Analytica posteriora* 1.71a1–75b20. As Ross puts it, “Science assumes the definitions of all its terms, but assumes the existence only of its primary objects (e.g., arithmetic that of the unit, geometry that of special magnitude), and proves the existence of the rest” (Ross, *Aristotle*, 42). For example, *sophia* (the first philosophy, the science of divine things), or astronomy (the science of stars and heavens) may also be included among sciences.

¹² ἀπόδειξις μὲν οὖν ἔστιν ὅταν ἐξ ἀληθῶν καὶ πρώτων ὁ συλλογισμὸς ᾗ (*Topica* 100a27). See the Greek text in William D. Ross, *Aristotelis topica et sophisticī elenchi* (1958; repr., Oxford: Clarendon, 1970).

¹³ Aristotle, *Analytica priora* 70a10: ἐνθύμημα (dialectic syllogism) δὲ ἐστὶ συλλογισμὸς ἐξ εἰκότων (probable).

¹⁴ *Topica* 100a27–30: διαλεκτικὸς δὲ συλλογισμὸς ὁ ἐξ ἐνδόξων συλλογιζόμενος. Compare Aristotle, *Analytica priora* 46a9: εἰς δὲ τοὺς διαλεκτικούς συλλογισμοὺς ἐκ τῶν κατὰ δόξαν προτάσεων; and *Rhetorica* 1355a6: ἔστι δ’ ἀπόδειξις ῥητορικὴ ἐνθύμημα, in William D. Ross, *Aristotelis ars rhetorica* (1959; repr., Oxford: Clarendon, 1964).

¹⁵ See Plato, *Republica* 511b–e.

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tuition. When the Stagirite undertakes his own investigation on “how the first principles become known (πὼς γίνονται γνώριμοι),”¹⁶ he reaches the following conclusion: “There can be no scientific knowledge (ἐπιστήμη) of the first principles (τῶν ἀρχῶν); and since nothing can be more infallible [more truthful, ἀληθέστερον] than scientific knowledge except intuition (νοῦς), it must be intuition that apprehends the first principles.”¹⁷ Aristotle, therefore, characterizes the first principles as beyond demonstration, or indemonstrable,¹⁸ and more knowable (γνωριμώτεροι) than demonstration.¹⁹ For this reason, the capacity that reaches the first principles—the intuition (νοῦς)—becomes the ground on which the whole science is built, the principle of science (ἐπιστήμης ἀρχή),²⁰ and Aristotle even describes intuition as more accurate (ἀκριβέστερον) than ἐπιστήμη.²¹

In conclusion, the first principles of science—axioms, definitions, hypotheses, or postulates of the existence of the primary objects of science—are grasped through intuition (νόησις), which only the intellect (νοῦς) can perform, and put in words as the ground of succeeding demonstration.²² Distinct from scientific knowledge and demonstrative

¹⁶ Aristotle, *Analytica posteriora* 99b15ff.

¹⁷ Aristotle, *Analytica posteriora* 100b 10–13; Tredennick, *Aristotle: Posterior Analytics*, LCL 391:261. Aristotle’s position seems to be the solution for two opposite positions advanced by two distinct Greek philosophical schools. On the one hand, certain philosophers perhaps in connection with Antisthenes denied the possibility of knowledge in the sense of epistemic or certain knowledge, since demonstration of the primary truths (τὰ πρῶτα εἰδένα) would be simply an infinite regress and consequently impossible. Hence, the knowledge of the primary truths is also impossible, and the human mind is only able to assume hypothetically that they are true (cf. Aristotle, *Analytica posteriora* 72b5–16). Following Maier, Tredennick hypothesizes that the author of this idea was Antisthenes (*Aristotle: Posterior Analytics*, LCL 391:36, note a; cf. Heinrich Maier, *Die Syllogistik des Aristoteles* [Tübingen: H. Laupp, 1896, 1900], vol. 2, pt. 2, 15 n. 2). On the other hand, the school of Xenocrates claimed that the knowledge of the first principles was possible, and, moreover, the demonstration for everything was also possible. They, however, utilized a weak concept of demonstration, since they held that “demonstration may be circular or reciprocal,” in which case the demonstration of scientific theses becomes a matter of internal foundation. Hence, they do not need an entity of the external world in order to ground the first principles and all the other theses (cf. Aristotle, *Analytica posteriora* 72b16–18). Tredennick follows Cherniss in ascribing this position to the followers of Xenocrates (*Aristotle: Posterior Analytics*, LCL 391:36, note b; cf. Harold F. Cherniss, *Aristotle’s Criticism of Plato and the Academy* [Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1944], 1:68). Accordingly, it appears that, while Antisthenes’ solution was skeptical, Xenocrates produced one of the first versions of the coherentist theory.

¹⁸ “The knowledge of immediate premises is not by demonstration (ἀναπόδεικτον) . . . (*An. post.* 72b19–20; LCL 391:37. Cf. 72b22–23).” Aristotle also affirms that the principle of demonstration is not demonstration (*Analytica posteriora* 100b14). See also Plato’s criticism of the infinite regress and his option for a science of ideas based on intuition, e.g., *Parmenides* 132a1–b2, and *Republica* 511b–e, in Burnet, *Platonis opera*.

¹⁹ Aristotle, *Analytica posteriora* 100b9–10.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 100b15.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 100b8–9.

²² *Ibid.*, 100b9–15.

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and syllogistic discourse, νόησις is the faculty of perceiving a form (μορφή) or idea (εἶδος) in one simple grasp, whether that idea resides beyond the sensible world (as in Plato) or is intrinsic to the primary substances (as in Aristotle). In addition, Aristotle even calls νόησις the activity of the unmoved mover, in which case human intuition, the highest human activity, represents an imitation of the perfect intuition. Moreover, Aristotle describes this imitative activity in theological terms, defining it as “the worship and contemplation of God,”²³ and even speaks about a divine science. Hence, he does not conceive of the concept of “science” exclusively as demonstrative science but also leaves room for a “science which deals with divine objects.”²⁴ It is not a science of demonstration but of intuition.

III. CLEMENT AND THE SCIENCE OF THE FIRST PRINCIPLE

Clement, in his turn, employs a similar broad concept of “science.” On the one hand, he describes natural sciences, which are demonstrative, in ways similar to Aristotle and assumes the Aristotelian conditions of possibility for each of them: they have to be based on demonstration, while demonstration has to be grounded, in its turn, on principles that are indemonstrable, true, primary, immediate.²⁵ Besides that, Clement further develops the Aristotelian idea that faith or belief (πίστις) should accompany both the premises and conclusions of demonstration.²⁶ According to Clement, as well, there is faith that demonstration

²³ Aristotle, *Ethica Eudemia* 1249b20: τὸν θεὸν θεραπεύειν καὶ θεωρεῖν, in Richard R. Walzer and John M. Mingway, *Aristotelis Ethica Eudemia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991). Compare with the Aristotelian position in *Metaphysica* 1072b. A similar idea occurs in Plato (*Republica* 534a), where he deems νόησις (intuition, the activity of νοῦς) as the knowledge of being (οὐσία) and the true knowledge (ἐπιστήμη).

²⁴ Aristotle, *Metaphysica* A.983a5–7: ἡ γὰρ θειοτάτη καὶ τιμιωτάτη: τοιαύτη δὲ διχῶς ἂν εἴη μόνη: ἦν τε γὰρ μάλιστα ἂν ὁ θεὸς ἔχοι, θεία τῶν ἐπιστημῶν ἐστὶ, καὶν εἴ τις τῶν θείων εἴη. See Werner Jaeger, *Aristotelis Metaphysica* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1957).

²⁵ For Clement’s view on the science of the visible world, see, e.g., *Stromata* 1.4.25.4.4: κοσμικὴν εἴτε ἐπιστήμην. He employs as well the expression “natural science” (φυσικὴ θεωρία; *Stromata* 2.2.5.1), the science “which treats of all the phenomena in the world of sense,” also called φυσιολογία (*Stromata* 4.1.3.2). Another name for natural sciences is τέχναι, and they are similarly supposed to prepare the gnostic for the real knowledge of the noetic realm. See Osborn’s analysis in *Clement of Alexandria*, 203–5.

²⁶ Aristotle, *Analytica posteriora* 72a37–b4: “We must believe in the first principles [πιστεῦειν ταῖς ἀρχαῖς] (some if not all of them) more than in the conclusion. And if a man is to possess the knowledge [ἐπιστήμη] which is effected by demonstration, not only must he recognize and believe [πιστεῦειν] in the first principles more than in that which is being proved, but nothing which is opposed to the first principles and from which will result a syllogism of the contrary error, must be more credible [πιστότερον] or better known to him than those principles; since one who has absolute knowledge should be unshakable in his belief [ἀμετάπειστον].”

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procures, faith in regard to the first principles, faith in regard to the admitted points in debate, and faith in regard to the conclusion of the whole argument.²⁷

Clement, however, extends his speculation on the epistemic role of faith and—taking into consideration the distinction between *ἐπιστήμη* and *δόξα*—he also talks about an epistemic faith and a faith of opinion, or doxastic faith:

Faith is of two kinds; one scientific (*ἐπιστημονική*), the other conjectural (*δοξαστική*). Nothing prevents us from calling demonstration twofold; one scientific, the other conjectural, since we actually use two separate terms—knowledge (*γνώσις*) and foreknowledge (*πρόγνώσις*)—one enjoying its own nature in its full and precise measure, the other incompletely. . . . Conjectural demonstration (*δοξαστική ἀπόδειξις*) is a human matter; it is the product of rhetorical argument or even dialectical syllogisms. The higher demonstration, which we have alluded to as scientific (*ἐπιστημονική*), instills faith by presenting the Scriptures and opening them up to the souls who are eager to learn, and this could hardly be other than knowledge (*γνώσις*).²⁸

The passage is also significant for illustrating that Clement does not appear to make a distinction between the highest *ἐπιστήμη* and *γνώσις* and, in this way, follows the Greek philosophical tradition.²⁹

²⁷ Clement, *Stromata* 1.6.33.2: “Definition on the basis of demonstrations implants in the soul of one who follows the argument a faith which is precise and incapable of coming to any other conclusion about the subject of the demonstration; such a definition does not allow us to succumb to those who seek to deceive and undermine us” (John Ferguson, trans., *Clement of Alexandria, Stromateis, Books One to Three* [Washington, DC: CUA Press, 1991], 46). Compare Clement, *Stromata* 8.3.5.1–2 (ANF 2:559): “Similarly, also, all men will admit that demonstration is discourse, agreeable to reason, producing belief in points disputed, from points admitted.”

²⁸ Clement, *Stromata* 2.11.48.2–49.3 (Ferguson, *Clement of Alexandria*, 191–92). The same doctrine of the two types of knowledge is present in the second and the eighth books of the *Stromateis*, with minor differences. Compare *Stromata* 8.3.5.3 (ANF 2:559): “In strict propriety, then, that is called demonstration which produces in the souls of learners scientific belief (*ἐπιστημονική πίστις*). The other kind is that which merely leads to opinion.” Compare *Stromata* 8.3.7.6–8 (ANF 2:559–60): “If, then, any argument be found to be of such a kind, as from points already believed to be capable of producing belief in what is not yet believed, we shall aver that this is the very essence of demonstration. Now it is affirmed that the nature of demonstration, as that of belief, is twofold: that which produces in the souls of the hearers persuasion merely, and that which produces knowledge (*ἐπιστήμη*).”

²⁹ As seen above, Greek philosophers used the term “*ἐπιστήμη*” for denoting the highest knowledge, specific to divine realities, eternal ideas, or other celestial entities. For an illustration of this position, see nn. 25, 26, and 35, as well as Peters, *Greek Philosophical Terms*, 59: “*Eidos* and *episteme* are locked together from their first implicit appearance in the *Meno* (as a corollary of *anamnesis*, q.v.), through a similar argument in *Phaedo* 75b–76 that strongly insists that true knowledge (*episteme*) of the Forms cannot come through the senses and so we must be born with it. The broadest statement of the collocation *episteme/eide* vs. *doxa/aistheta* is given in *Rep.* 476a–480a, and illustrated in the following Diagram of the Line and the Allegory of the Cave.” Aristotle himself, in his turn, elaborates the famous scheme of all

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As an additional observation, Aristotle does not talk about the faith in God but of the faith in the first principles of science. Clement made, in this way, an extension of the idea of faith in the first principles to God, as long as he views God as *a*, or rather *the*, first principle, changing the plural of philosophers into the singular of his monotheistic faith. Clement admits therefore a strong epistemological or demonstrative sense of the concept of “science.” However, when he raises the question of whether God can be the object of a demonstrative investigation, his answer is negative. Defender of apophatic theology, Clement holds that none of the divine names or predicates can be predicated about God in himself. It will be therefore impossible to produce a syllogism and thus a demonstration and a demonstrative science of God. As Clement expresses it, “none of these [divine names] are admissible in reference to God. Nor any more is He apprehended by the science of demonstration.”³⁰ In a different passage, he expressly affirms, “God, then, being not a subject of demonstration, cannot be the object of science.”³¹

Nevertheless, in this case, how can God be known to us? The Alexandrian then concludes, in a quite Aristotelian way, by affirming that it is not demonstration that reaches the first principle, that is, God, but faith, intuition. Moreover, Clement inserts in this epistemology his Christian assumptions, producing in this way a Christian epistemology.

ἐπιστήμῃαι and conceives of a science of perfection, a science of causes primary and ultimate (see n. 26). As Peters explains, the Aristotelian “knowledge of the ultimate causes is the highest type of *episteme*, wisdom (*sophia*, q.v.)” (*Greek Philosophical Terms*, 60). Moreover, the word “γνώσις” has a large semantic extension as well, from common knowledge to divine knowledge. It is “the common Greek general term for knowledge. Typical of this ordinary usage is Aristotle, *Analytica posteriora* 2.99b–100b, where *gnosis* and its equivalents embrace sense perception (*aisthesis*), memory, experience, and scientific knowledge (*episteme*)” (74). Clement follows the same tradition regarding the term “ἐπιστήμη” (he accepts a plurality of ἐπιστήμῃαι, e.g., n. 37) and narrows the meaning of γνώσις, as in the Gnostic systems, to the sense of divine knowledge. In this way, when the object of ἐπιστήμη is divine, most likely Clement’s concepts of ἐπιστήμη and γνώσις overlap. See, e.g., Clement, *Stromata* 4.22.136.2–3 (ANF 2:434): “For, on the contrary, to desire knowledge about God [τῆς ἐπιστήμης ἐφίεσθαι τῆς περὶ τὸν θεὸν] for any practical purpose, that this may be done, or that may not be done, is not proper to the Gnostic; but the knowledge itself (γνώσις αὐτῆ) suffices as the reason for contemplation. For I will dare aver that it is not because he wishes to be saved that he, who devotes himself to knowledge (τὴν γῶσιν) for the sake of the divine science (τὴν θεῖαν ἐπιστήμην) itself, chooses knowledge (τὴν γῶσιν).” Compare *Stromata* 7.3.17.1–2 (ANF 2: 527): “Ruling, then, over himself and what belongs to him, and possessing a sure grasp of divine science (βεβαίαν κατάληψιν τῆς θείας ἐπιστήμης), he makes a genuine approach to the truth. For the knowledge and apprehension of intellectual objects (ἢ γὰρ τῶν νοητῶν γῶσις καὶ κατάληψις) must necessarily be called certain scientific knowledge (βεβαία . . . ἐπιστήμη), whose function in reference to divine things [τὰ θεῖα] is to consider what is the First Cause, and what that ‘by whom all things were made, and without whom nothing was made.’”

³⁰ Clement, *Stromata* 5.12.82.3 (ANF 2:464).

³¹ Clement, *Stromata* 4.25.155 (ANF 2:438).

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The intuition of God is possible solely on the basis of a divine opening and revelation, a manifestation toward us, namely, God’s divine grace or Logos. The intuition represents, therefore, the apprehension of this divine manifestation. As the Alexandrian states, “It remains that we understand [have the intuition: νοεῖν], then, the Unknown (τὸ ἄγνωστον), by divine grace (θεία χάριτι), and by the word alone (λόγω) that proceeds from Him.”³² In this way, he constructs a concept of “science” appropriate for the first principle: it is a science of intuition, not of scientific demonstration. Similar to Plato and Aristotle,³³ Clement conceives of an ἐπιστήμη of the first principle, which he identifies with God, and views this science as absolutely distinct from the one based on sense perception. He thus envisages two types of sciences: one natural, investigating the phenomena belonging to the world of senses,³⁴ and one concerning the noetic things, those beyond the universe, the things divine and heavenly.³⁵ In his *Stromata* 2.10.47.4, the Alexandrian claims that Scripture admonishes humans to seek God and endeavor to know (γινώσκειν) Him as far as possible, in order to reach the highest contemplation (θεωρία μεγίστη), which scrutinizes the greatest mysteries (ἡ ἐποπτική), which is the real science (ἡ τῷ ὄντι ἐπιστήμη), irrefragable by reason (ἀμετάπτωτος λόγῳ), and the knowledge of wisdom (τῆς σοφίας γνῶσις). Besides the similarity between the Clementine, Platonic, and Aristotelian traditions with regard to the divine science, scriptural texts expound a comparable perspective. Biblical language as well admits the existence of an ἐπιστήμη of God; as one can see, for example, in Wisdom 8:4, the sage “is initiated in God’s science” (μύστις ἐστὶν τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ ἐπιστήμης). As important scholars have previously showed, the way to the divine ἐπιστήμη and γνῶσις,

³² Clement, *Stromata* 5.12.82.4 (ANF 2:464).

³³ For Plato, as one can see in *Meno* 85d–86c; *Phaedo* 75b–76; *Republica* 476a–480a; or *Timaeus* 29b–d, the word “ἐπιστήμη” denotes the contemplation of the eternal ideas or forms. According to the platonic tradition, this species of knowledge (ἐπιστήμη) represents the highest and surest human knowledge. Plato’s argument derives from his ontological assumptions: since eternal ideas enjoy the highest ontological status—eternal, unchanged, and incorruptible—ideas also deserve the highest epistemological status.

³⁴ Clement usually makes a distinction between ἐπιστήμη and natural science (φυσική θεωρία: *Stromata* 1.9.43.1, I.15.73.5). However, ἐπιστήμη seems to be one of the natural sciences in *Stromata* 1.4.25.4.

³⁵ Compare Clement, *Stromata* 6.8.68.1: “truly perfect science” (ἡ τελεία ὄντως ἐπιστήμη). For the idea that theology is the science of things divine and heavenly (ἐπιστήμη τῶν θείων καὶ οὐρανίων), see *Stromata* 1.28.177.1. Compare *Stromata* 6.18.162.4 (ANF 2:518): “For real science (ἡ τῷ ὄντι ἐπιστήμη), which we affirm the Gnostic alone possesses, is a sure comprehension (κατάληψις βεβαία), leading up through true and sure reasons to the knowledge of the cause (ἡ τῆς αἰτίας γνῶσις).” The discipline of Sophia is either identified with ἐπιστήμη (*Stromata* 4.3.8.8) or defined as the science of the things divine and human and of their causes (*Stromata* 1.5.30.1).

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according to Clement, is the way or the process of faith.³⁶ However, Clement's specific difference resides in his stress on grace or the divine gifts present in the whole epistemic process.

IV. THE PASSIVE DIMENSION OF *PISTIS*

A. *Clement's Re-elaboration of the Notion of ἀπόδειξις*

The Clementine concept of "demonstration" needs further discussion due to its complexity and especially to its extension beyond demonstrative science. The passage given in the introduction of this article explicitly affirms that the principle (ἀρχή) is indemonstrable (ἀναπόδεικτος) in the full scientific sense of the word "indemonstrable." Contrary to this, the same passage maintains that the "principle itself" (αὐτή ἡ ἀρχή) offers, to the one who apprehends it by faith, an abundance of demonstrations (ἀποδείξεις) about itself, and these demonstrations are the "surest of all."³⁷

Is Clement contradicting himself? The answer would be positive if Clement's notion of "demonstration" were the technical Aristotelian one. My hypothesis, however, is that Clement is not contradicting himself as long as he understands the notion, in this context, in a different way. It is worth noting that the word "ἀπόδειξις" has a different story independent of the context of Aristotelian logic. The meanings that the lexicon of Henry G. Liddell and Robert Scott offers for the word "ἀπόδειξις" are "showing forth," "making known," "exhibiting," "setting

³⁶ See, e.g., Osborn's *Clement of Alexandria*, 163: "There is one faith, which grows continuously from common faith, which is the foundation of the ascending faith which builds on it. Faith is the grain of mustard seed which bites the soul so that it grows into a tree on which the highest reasons fly to rest. The power of faith moves through a sequence from a common faith to higher faith. The common faith is the foundation of salvation as it is of knowledge. . . . The higher faith is built on this foundation and grows to perfection through study and obedience. It becomes the apostolic faith, which is able to move mountains (5.1.2.6)." Compare Clark, *Clement's Use*, 17; and Moingt, "La gnose," the whole article. Clement also talks about two conversions, from heathenism to faith and from faith to gnosis in *Stromata* 7.10.57.4. However, a tripartite structure of conversions, from philosophy to faith, from faith to gnosis, and from gnosis to love is present in *Stromata* 7.11.60.1–61.1.

³⁷ Clement, *Stromata* 7.16.95.6–8 (ANF 2:551): "Therefore, as is reasonable, grasping (περιλαμβάνοντες) by faith the indemonstrable first principle (ἀναπόδεικτον τὴν ἀρχήν), and receiving (λαμβάνοντες) in abundance, from the first principle itself (παρ' αὐτῆς τῆς ἀρχῆς), demonstrations (ἀποδείξεις) in reference to the first principle (περὶ τῆς ἀρχῆς), we are by the voice of the Lord trained up to the knowledge of the truth. For we may not give our adhesion to men on a bare statement by them, who might equally state the opposite. But if it is not enough merely to state the opinion, but if what is stated must be confirmed (πιστώσασθαι δεῖ τὸ λεχθέν), we do not wait for the testimony of men, but we establish (πιστούμεθα) the matter that is in question by the voice of the Lord (τῆ τοῦ κυρίου φωνῇ), which is the surest of all demonstrations (πασῶν ἀποδείξεων ἐχεγγυωτέρα), or rather is the only demonstration (μᾶλλον δὲ ἢ μόνη ἀπόδειξις)."

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forth,” “publication,” “exposition,” “proof,” “arguments in proof of,” or “examination.”³⁸ Most likely, Aristotle borrowed the word with the last three meanings and produced the technical term of his logic, namely, “demonstration,” a “deductive proof by syllogism.” The associated verb, ἀποδείκνυμι, gives a similar witness, as long as some of its key meanings are to “point out,” “display,” “make known,” “bring forward,” or “show forth.”³⁹

Accordingly, the original meaning denotes the act of a subject who shows forth, makes known, or exhibits something perceptible toward other subjects able to receive and understand the apparition as shown. The original sense encapsulates, therefore, a phenomenological structure. It designates the appearance of a phenomenon to a subject that perceives it. This phenomenon also presupposes a certain source that displays, shows forth, or exhibits the phenomenon. The ulterior understanding of ἀπόδειξις appears to be a semantic evolution in which the meaning has been focused on the result of this phenomenon, which is proof.

For this reason, a better translation for ἀπόδειξις in this context might be “manifestation,” or “showing forth,” “phenomenon.” This translation makes more intelligible and intellectually full of meaning the Clementine references to the ἀποδείξις received from God. Clement’s expression most likely refers to the divine manifestations, the content of knowledge that God shows forth, exhibits, and makes known directly to the human intellect (νοῦς). This phenomenon is self-evident, immediate, intuitive, the noetic gift that God makes manifest to the human intellect.

As Clement alleges, due to their divine source and self-evident epistemic character, divine manifestations become the most certain type of knowledge. On the basis of these self-evident divine manifestations, theologians may later construct Christian doctrine.⁴⁰ One should remember that, for Aristotle, intuition (be it of earthly or heavenly realm) is more accurate (ἀκριβέστερον) than ἐπιστήμη.⁴¹ Likewise, in accordance with Aristotle’s view, Clement’s noetic perception represents the foundation for any further argumentation and demonstrative science. Any demonstration is based on this first intuition, and the most secure intuition is the one received from God. Similar to the

³⁸ See Henry G. Liddell and Robert Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1925), 1:195–96.

³⁹ Liddell and Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 1:195. It is also worth noting that the word is a compound verb formed of ἀπό (from) and δείκνυμι (to bring to light, to show forth, to set before one, to explain, etc.); cf. 1:373.

⁴⁰ See, e.g., nn. 53, 54.

⁴¹ Aristotle, *Analytica posteriora* 100b8–9.

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Aristotelian epistemology, demonstrations come from the first principles. Recalling Clement's fruitful ambivalence of the concept of principle—which may be at the same time ontological (the principle of the world) and linguistic (the principle of demonstration)—one may affirm that demonstration, which takes its origins from principle, involves at the same time an ontological dimension (which I render through “manifestation” or “phenomenon”) and a linguistic or logical one.

However, the most interesting demonstrations/manifestations are those coming from God, and Clement's theology in itself may be envisioned as a phenomenology of ἀπόδειξις. In this way, faith in God is based on the most certain manifestation (*Stromata* 2.11.49.3: ἡ ἀνωτάτω ἀπόδειξις) and provides the “greatest contemplation” and the “real science.” Once again, Clement relies on the Platonic tradition according to which ἐπιστήμη is the highest and surest human knowledge. The nature of this science, according to Clement, is almost synonymous with the nature of contemplation (θεωρία), rather than discursive or doctrinal knowledge.⁴² His vision is therefore one in which the first principle, God himself, constitutes the primary source that offers, through his manifestations, the most secure and accurate knowledge.⁴³

The Son has a cardinal role in this phenomenological framework. He is mediator and discloser par excellence. Clement even affirms in *Stromata* 4.25.155 that, in contradistinction to God the Father, who is not a subject of demonstration, the Son admits demonstration and explanation. The Son is still manifested in Scriptures, a preeminent place where the demonstrations that come from God may be perceived as the voice or the word of God. Carrying on his phenomenology of demonstration and faith, Clement engages in an analysis of the ἀπόδειξις

⁴² The roots of this idea may be traced back to Plato, according to whom the contemplation of the Good (*Republica* 540a–c, in *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. J. M. Cooper and D. S. Hutchinson, trans. G. M. A. Grube and C. D. C. Reeve [Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997], 971–1223) or the contemplation of Beauty (*Symposium* 210b–212a, in *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. J. M. Cooper and D. S. Hutchinson, trans. A. Nahamas and P. Woodruff [Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997], 457–505) is the highest human knowledge. Aristotle, following Plato, also views contemplation (θεωρία) as the highest human activity, as one can see in *Ethica Nicomachea* 10.1177a–1179a, in *Aristotle: Nicomachean Ethics*, ed. and trans. Roger Crisp (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 183–204. An important aspect of contemplation consists of its direct and concrete perception, instead of discursive knowledge.

⁴³ Most likely this is the reason why Clement frequently underlines the idea that humans have to exercise their noetic capacities in order to procure the “spirit of perception” (πνεῦμα αἰσθησεως; cf. Exod. 28:3), the “divine perception” (αἴσθησις θεία: *Stromata* 1.4.26.2–3), or the “perception which deals with piety” (τὴν ἐν θεοσεβείᾳ αἴσθησιν: *Stromata* 1.4.27.2–3). This sensorial terminology also denotes the level of intuition and sense perception. In all these cases, Clement does not use the term “αἴσθησις” as denoting the sensible perception but the intuition of noetic, intelligible realities.

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acquired by the hearing of the words of Scripture, be they received through reading or hearing: “If a person has faith (ὁ πιστεύσας) in the divine Scriptures and a firm judgment (τὴν κρίσιν βεβαίαν ἔχων), then he receives (λαμβάνει) as an irrefutable demonstration (ἀπόδειξιν ἀναντίρρητον) the voice of the God who has granted him those Scriptures (τοῦ τὰς γραφὰς δεδωρημένου).”⁴⁴ God’s voice is double faceted, at the same time spirit and letter, ontological revelation and linguistic expressions (i.e., the Scriptures), the latter encapsulating in words the noetic mystery of the former. It is worth noting that, from a logical perspective, Scripture has to provide the principles or the premises of the subsequent demonstrations of the Christian doctrine.⁴⁵ For Clement’s phenomenological context, however, the Scriptures do not provide logical principles of faith but demonstrations, phenomena given to the human mind. In fact, in this passage too, Clement grounds faith on the process of perceiving a divine gift, a manifestation (ἀπόδειξις)—in this case the voice of God—draped in the words of Scripture. In other passages, the Alexandrian also speaks about the possibility of hearing the truth and describes faith as the “ear of the soul.”⁴⁶ Hence, the words of Scripture represent a vehicle of the divine

⁴⁴ Compare Clement, *Stromata* 2.2.9.6 (Ferguson, *Clement of Alexandria*, 163). See also the same doctrine expressed in the following two passages: *Stromata* 2.11.48.3 (Ferguson, *Clement of Alexandria*, 191): “Is there any reason to doubt that the demonstration (ἀπόδειξις) we provide alone leads to truth (μόνη ἀληθής), when it is provided (χορηγομένη) out of divine Scripture, sacred writings, and the wisdom the Apostle describes as ‘God-taught’ (τῆς θεοδιδάκτου σοφίας)?” *Stromata* 7.16.96.20–22 (Hort and Mayor, *Clement of Alexandria, Miscellanies*, 169): “So too we, obtaining from the Scriptures themselves a perfect demonstration concerning the Scriptures, derive from faith a conviction which has the force of demonstration.” This fragment follows the fragment given in the introduction of this study (i.e., *Stromata* 7.16.95.6–8), which discloses a similar conception about the “voice of the Lord,” the surest of all demonstrations (or manifestations [ἀποδείξεις]) or, rather, the only manifestation, the paradigm of all manifestations.

⁴⁵ Thomas Aquinas, for example, articulates the system (*scientia*) of Christian doctrine (*sacra doctrina*), elaborating the demonstrations of the valid theses or propositions of the Christian system by taking from Scripture his premises, not his demonstrations, as Clement does (e.g., *Summa Theologica* 1.1.2; 1.1.8). In other words, Aquinas elaborates the demonstrations and the argumentative chains of the *sacra doctrina*; he does not take them from the Scriptures. Employing a different methodology, Clement is not an Aquinas *avant la lettre* as, for example, Prümmer wanted to present: “Prümmer understands in the following way the fundamental statements about faith in *Stromata* 2: Clement conceives of theology as the science of conclusions deduced from premises grounded on reason, and, where reason is not sufficient, from premises deduced from the authority of the Bible. Thus, Clement anticipated Thomas Aquinas!” (Die grundsätzlichen Äußerungen von Str II über den Glauben deutet Prümmer so: Clemens verstehe Theologie als Wissenschaft der Konklusionen aus vernunftbegründeten und, wo die Vernunft nicht ausreicht, von der biblischen Autorität abgeleiteten Prämissen; Clemens habe damit Thomas von Aquin vorweggenommen!), in Schneider, *Theologie*, 282, my trans.; cf. Prümmer, “Glaube und Erkenntnis,” 38.

⁴⁶ See, e.g., Clement, *Stromata* 2.4.17.2–3 (Ferguson, *Clement of Alexandria*, 168): “If the learner does not lack a preconception (προλήψεως) capable of grasping what is said in the

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manifestation that is given through the material mediation of the acoustically or visually perceived word. Due to its noetic nature, this manifestation is irrefutable by scientific demonstration.

B. Πίστις as Apprehension of Self-Evident Phenomena

Clement provides an interesting answer to the question regarding the ultimate foundation of science and demonstration (ἀπόδειξις). Expounding on the possibility of any science *in genere*, Clement acknowledges that it has to be based on demonstration. In its turn, demonstration has to be based on the self-evident phenomena offered either by (1) sense perception (αἴσθησις) or by (2) intuition (νόησις).⁴⁷ Employing the term “self-evident” (ἐναργής), a notion that had an important career, especially within Epicurean and Stoic philosophy, Clement avers that scientific demonstration cannot be based ad infinitum on another demonstration. To the contrary, the whole epistemic corpus has its foundation on something that appears to the human mind as self-evident (ἐναργής).⁴⁸ While faith plays a significant role in apprehending either a sense perception or an intuition, one may suppose that its role is different in each of the two cases. In the case of sense perception, faith receives the sensible impressions as self-evident. In this case, faith starts from the things given in sense perception, and sense perception can be considered its principle.⁴⁹ In the case of intuiting God, as one can see in the introductory passage, divine “demonstrations” (manifestations) take the role of sensible impressions and appear to faith as self-evident. The faith they procure is most secure and precise. As Clement affirms in a different passage, “The higher

course of learning (τῆς τῶν λεγομένων παραδεκτικῆς), then he is a person with ears open to the truth (τὰ ἀκουστικά τῆς ἀληθείας). . . . To hear properly is to comprehend (τὸ κατακοῦσαι συνεῖναι ἔστιν).” Compare *Stromata* 2.6.25.1 (Ferguson, *Clement of Alexandria*, 174): “Faith comes from hearing, hearing comes from the utterance of God,” says the Apostle.” Compare *Stromata* 5.1.2.1 (ANF 2:444): “Now faith is the ear of the soul.”

⁴⁷ Clement, *Stromata* 8.3.7.3 (ANF 2:559): “It will also turn out that there are other starting points (ἀρχαί) for demonstrations, after the source which takes its rise in faith—the things which appear clearly to sensation and understanding (τὰ πρὸς αἴσθησίν τε καὶ νόησιν ἐναργῶς φαινόμενα).” Compare Mortley, *Connaissance*, 227–29. *Stromata* 8.3.8.6 (ANF 2:560): “In all questions, then, there is something which is previously known—that which being self-evident is believed without demonstration.” Compare *Stromata* 8.3.7.2 (ANF 2:559): “all demonstration is traced up to indemonstrable faith.”

⁴⁸ Clement, *Stromata* 8.3.7.1. For the theme of ἐναργής/ἐνάργεια in antiquity, see Frédérique Ildefonse, “Évidence sensible et discours dans le stoïcisme,” 113–29; Woldemar Görler, “Les ‘évidences’ dans la philosophie hellénistique,” 131–43; and Clara Auvray-Assayas, “L’évidence de la sensation épiciurienne: Le témoignage de Cicéron,” 145–75, all in Carlos Lévy and Laurent Pernot, eds., *Dire l’évidence: Philosophie et rhétorique antiques* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1997).

⁴⁹ Quoting Theophrastus, Clement conceives of sense perception as a principle of faith (τὴν αἴσθησιν ἀρχὴν εἶναι πίστεώς; Clement, *Stromata* 2.2.9.5).

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demonstration, which we have alluded to as scientific, instills faith.”⁵⁰ The ultimate foundation of the divine science is, consequently, noetic demonstration.

Contrary to this, the domain of language and discourse is characterized by inferring conclusions from premises (λήμματα) and making syllogisms (συλλογίζεσθαι).⁵¹ Within this domain, faith represents a mere psychological trust. As seen above, faith consists in the capacity of receiving self-evident phenomena given through sense perception and intuition.⁵² Self-evident phenomena are not matters of syllogism and discursive thought, but they presuppose those processes of mind in which the human consciousness perceives the manifestations given to it. Faith thus is a nondiscursive, intuitive grasp of self-evident phenomena, a primary, direct acquaintance, which is indemonstrable and the foundation for future syllogisms or logical demonstrations.⁵³ Faith in God becomes, in this way, a very unordinary epistemic capacity, the only one able to have the intuition of God.⁵⁴

V. THE ACTIVE ASPECT OF *PISTIS*

The event in which the believing mind encounters the real manifestations of God also includes an active dimension. In fact, faith, accord-

⁵⁰ Clement, *Stromata* 2.11.49.3 (Ferguson, *Clement of Alexandria*, 192): ἡ γὰρ ἀνωτάτω ἀπόδειξις, ἣν ἠνιξάμεθα ἐπιστημονικὴν, πίστιν ἐντίθησι.

⁵¹ Clement, *Stromata* 8.3.6.2–5. Compare Aristotle, *Analytica posteriora* 71b 24–25.

⁵² Clement, *Stromata* 8.3.7.3: εἶεν δ' ἂν καὶ ἄλλαι τῶν ἀποδείξεων ἀρχαὶ μετὰ τὴν ἐκ πίστεως πηγὴν, τὰ πρὸς αἰσθησίν τε καὶ νόησιν ἐναργῶς φαινόμενα. Compare *Stromata* 8.4.14.3: ἀρχὴ δὲ τούτων ἀπάντων ἐστὶ τὸ πρὸς αἰσθησίν τε καὶ νόησιν ἐναργές. The idea also appears in *Stromata* 2.9.5, 2.118.2–4, 2.13.2, 2.119.22–24, 3.83.24–29, or 3.88.20–21. See also *Stromata* 8.3.7.1 (ANF 2:559): “those things which are self-evident will become the starting points [and fundamental grounds] of demonstration.” See also nn. 18, 47. Lilla shows that Clement took over this epistemological point of view from Antiochus (Lilla, *Clement*, 126).

⁵³ Compare Clement, *Stromata* 8.3.7.1–3 (ANF 2:559): “In point of fact, the philosophers admit that the first principles of all things are indemonstrable. So that if there is demonstration at all, there is an absolute necessity that there be something that is self-evident, which is called primary and indemonstrable. Consequently all demonstration is traced up to indemonstrable faith (ἐπὶ τὴν ἀναπόδεικτον ἄρα πίστιν ἢ πάντα ἀπόδειξις ἀνάγεται).” Faith is also defined as indemonstrable in *Stromata* 2.2.9.6, 2.4.14.3, 2.5.24.3, or 8.3.7.2. Compare Clark, *Clement's Use*, 19.

⁵⁴ Clement, *Stromata* 2.4.13.4–14.1 (Ferguson, *Clement of Alexandria*, 166): “If anyone should suggest that scientific knowledge (ἐπιστήμην) is provable (ἀποδεικτικὴν) by the help of reason (μετὰ λόγου), he must realize that the first principles are not able to be proved (αἱ ἀρχαὶ ἀναπόδεικτοι). They are not found (γνωσταί) by technical expertise (τέχνη), which is a matter of practical action rather than contemplation (θεωρητική), or by practical thought (φρονήσει), which is concerned with the mutable. By faith alone is it possible to arrive at the first principle of the universe.” Compare *Stromata* 2.5.24.2 (ANF 2:352): “And it has been shown, that the knowledge of the first cause of the universe is faith [or a matter of faith], but is not demonstration (δέδεικται δὲ τῆς τῶν ὄλων ἀρχῆς ἐπιστήμη πιστή, ἀλλ' οὐκ ἀπόδειξις εἶναι).”

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ing to the ordinary meaning, is action, a human commitment. Clement expresses the active aspect of faith by converting or reshaping several philosophical concepts into new idioms, including

πρόληψις ἐκούσιος (voluntary preconception; *Stromata* 2.2.8.4),
πρόληψις διανοίας (preconception of thinking; *Stromata* 2.4.16.2),
πρόληψις πρὸ καταλήψεως (preconception before comprehension; *Stromata* 2.6.28.1),
θεοσεβείας συγκατάθεσις (pious assent; *Stromata* 2.2.8.4, 2.6.27.2, 2.12.55.1, 5.13.86.1),
ὀρεκτικὴ προαίρεσις (volitional choice; *Stromata* 2.2.9.2),
ὄρεξις διανοητικὴ (dianoetic appetency; *Stromata* 2.2.9.2),
ἀρχὴ πράξεως (principle of action; *Stromata* 2.2.9.2),
ὑπόληψις ἐκούσιος (voluntary conviction or hypothesis; *Stromata* 2.6.28.1), or
πρώτη πρὸς σωτηρίαν νεύσις (first movement toward salvation; *Stromata* 2.6.31.1).

A. Πίστις as Preconception

Clement further refines his conception about the nature of πίστις through Epicurian and Stoic terminology, such as linguistic expressions (λεκτά), conceptions (ἐννοήματα), and concepts (ἔννοιαι) or preconceptions (προλήψεις).⁵⁵ In order to have a conception (i.e., a generic thought), the mind needs an anticipation or preconception (πρόληψις). Most likely Chrysippus viewed πρόληψις as the imprint in the mind produced by many impressions (φαντασίαι) of a similar kind, and Epicurius defined it as “a memory of an external object often experienced.”⁵⁶ More specifically, we may have, in a concrete context of life, a preconception of a person whom we have seen many times; that preconception consists of the delineations that our mind produces when we hear or think of his or her name.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ See Anthony A. Long and David N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

⁵⁶ For Chrysippus, see *Fragmenta logica et physica* 83, in *Stoicorum veterum fragmenta* (SVF), ed. Hans F. A. von Arnim, 4 vols. (Stuttgart: Teubner, 1968), 2:83; see also Epicurus’s fragment in Diogenes Laertius 10.33.2–3: τουτέστι μνήμην τοῦ πολλάκις ἔξωθεν φανέντος (Herbert S. Long, *Diogenis Laertii vitae philosophorum*, 2 vols. [Oxford: Clarendon, 1964, 1966]).

⁵⁷ Diogenes Laertius 10.33: “For as soon as the word ‘man’ is uttered, immediately its delineation also comes to mind by means of preconception” (Long and Sedley, *Hellenistic Philosophers*, 88).

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An application of this epistemic position can be found in the important question regarding the existence of a preconception of God or gods raised by Hellenistic philosophers. Cicero, for example, embraces a solution he claims was first elaborated by Epicurus, according to which there is a preconception of gods, and it is naturally imprinted within the human mind.⁵⁸ Exploiting this terminology, Clement defines faith as a “voluntary supposition” and a “benevolent preconception.”⁵⁹ At first sight, the function of preconception may appear to be a passive one. However, the Clementine account of Epicurus’s concept of πρόληψις gives witness to its active nature, at least according to Clement’s point of view: “Even Epicurus, who set much more store on pleasure than on truth, supposed faith to be a preconception of intelligence (πρόληψιν εἶναι διανοίας). He expounds ‘preconception’ as a close attention (application, ἐπιβολή) directed to a clear object (self-evident, ἐπί τι ἐναργές) and a clear concept of the object (ἐπί τὴν ἐναργῆ τοῦ πράγματος ἐπίνοιαν). He said that it is impossible to conduct an investigation or pose a problem or even have an opinion, or even refute another, without this ‘preconception.’”⁶⁰ As one can see in the fragment, preconception is not simply memory, as a sort of furniture populating the mind, but involves an application (ἐπιβολή) to something self-evident offered to the human mind. The self-evident manifestation presented to the mind may be provided either by the external world or by the mind itself. If faith is a preconception, then it is an application, an active response of the mind to a divine intellectual manifestation.

⁵⁸ See, e.g., Epicurus, *Letter to Menoecus* 123–24, in *The Essential Epicurus: Letters, Principal Doctrines, Vatican Sayings, and Fragments*, ed. and trans. Eugene O’Connor (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1993), 61–68; Sextus, *Against the Professors* 9.43–47, in *Sextus Empiricus*, ed. and trans. Robert G. Bury, 4 vols. (LCL 382; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957); Cicero, *On the Nature of Gods* 1.43–49: “For he [Epicurus] alone saw, first, that the gods existed, because nature herself had imprinted the conception of them in all men’s minds. For what human nation or race does not have, without instruction, some preconception of the gods? Epicurus’ word for this is *prolepsis*, πρόληψις that is what we may call a delineation of a thing” (in Long and Sedley, *Hellenistic Philosophers*, 141).

⁵⁹ Clement, *Stromata* 2.6.28.1 (Ferguson, *Clement of Alexandria*, 177): “Faith is a hypothesis made by the free will (ὑπόληψις ἐκούσιος). It is a prejudgment (πρόληψις) made by a person of sound judgment before the actual apprehension (πρὸ καταλήψεως). It is an expectation of something which is going to happen (προσοδικία δὲ δόξα μέλλοντος).” ὑπόληψις ἐκούσιος (voluntary conviction, hypothesis) may also have roots in the Aristotelian definition of faith as ὑπόληψις σφοδρά (intensified conviction: *Topica* 126b18). In a different passage, Clement defines faith as πρόληψις διανοίας (preconception of thinking; *Stromata* 2.4.16.2), thus emphasizing the noetic and nonsensible nature of the preconception that God imprints within the human mind.

⁶⁰ Clement, *Stromata* 2.4.16.3 (Ferguson, *Clement of Alexandria*, 168).

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B. Πίστις as *Dianoetic Appetency*

While supporting the free choice and the free character of faith against Basilides,⁶¹ Clement employs a well-known Aristotelian ethical notion: προαίρεσις. As Francis F. Peters maintains in his *Greek Philosophical Terms*, Aristotle was the first to make an analysis of the moral choice, for instance, in *Ethica Nicomachea* 3.1111b, where he conceived of προαίρεσις as a volitional act, an aspiration led by a previous intellectual act of deliberation (βούλευσις). Προαίρεσις represents, therefore, the human act of free will, an intention based on a previous intellectual choice.⁶² Using this Aristotelian vocabulary, Clement conceives of faith as deliberate choice (προαίρεσις) and right act of free choice (προαιρέσεως κατόρθωμα).⁶³

In addition, he describes προαίρεσις as ὀρεκτική (appetitive), an adjective originating from the Aristotelian term “ὄρεξις,” which has the sense of “appetency” or “desire.” One may notice that all three species that the notion of “appetency” encompasses—ἐπιθυμία (desire), θυμός (volition), and βούλησις (will)—emphasize various active aspects of the human mind.⁶⁴

Nevertheless, the key attribute of faith as appetency consists of its dianoetical nature. Using likewise an Aristotelian expression, Clement defines faith as ὄρεξις διανοητική (dianoetic appetency, i.e., intellectual appetency or desire).⁶⁵ The origin of this idea might be Platonic, since in *Rep.* 509b and *Phil.* 20d Plato conceives of Goodness as the necessary object that humans need to access. As Aristotle later explains, appetency (ὄρεξις) represents an internal process activated by an object that is perceived as good and desirable. Now, as Clement’s expression may suggest, the intellectual or dianoetical desires (such as those for sciences or divine objects) have to be superior to the sensible ones, which focus on the sensible objects. Moreover, the most desired object cannot be anything but God, and here Clement sets himself in a tradition that probably starts with Aristotle, for whom the first mover

⁶¹ See, e.g., Clement, *Stromata* 2.3.10–11.

⁶² Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea* 1113a2–5, in Ingram Bywater, *Aristotelis ethica Nicomachea* (1894; repr., Oxford: Clarendon, 1962): βουλευτὸν δὲ καὶ προαιρετὸν τὸ αὐτό, πλὴν ἀφωρισμένον ἤδη τὸ προαιρετὸν: τὸ γὰρ ἐκ τῆς βουλῆς κριθὲν προαιρετὸν ἔστιν.

⁶³ προαιρέσεως κατόρθωμα ἢ πίστις (Clement, *Stromata* 2.3.11.1). For προαίρεσις, see also *Stromata* 2.2.9.2.

⁶⁴ Aristotle, *De anima* 431b2, in William D. Ross, *Aristotle: De anima* (1961; repr., Oxford: Clarendon, 1967).

⁶⁵ Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea* 1139b4–5: διὸ ἢ ὀρεκτικὸς νοῦς ἢ προαίρεσις ἢ ὄρεξις διανοητική, καὶ ἢ τοιαύτη ἀρχὴ ἄνθρωπος; compare Clement, *Stromata* 2.2.9.2: εἰ μὲν οὖν προαίρεσις ἔστιν, ὀρεκτικὴ τίνος οὕσα, ἢ ὄρεξις νῦν διανοητική.

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or the Good has to be the most desired thing and the ultimate goal of human appetency.⁶⁶

The question regarding the temporal preeminence between appetency and apprehension should also be raised. Perhaps the most plausible possibility is that apprehension precedes appetency as long as the apprehension of certain manifestations is the first to come to mind, while appetency, deliberation, and deliberate choice are possible only on the basis of those previous manifestations. Faith, therefore, seems to represent a response to God’s manifestations, while the initiative appears to belong to God.

C. Πίστις as Assent

In general terms, a human act involves both deliberate choice (προαίρεσις), which selects that specific act among a pool of possible acts, and will, the capacity to place the human being in motion or activity. In the particular case of faith, human activity consists of knowing the divine, and it needs to be chosen and willed. Clement is also interested in the psychological processes of free choice, and he borrows a Stoic concept—συγκατάθεσις (assent)—and conceives of faith as “pious assent.”⁶⁷ Συγκατάθεσις represents a Stoic technical term designating the commitment of the human mind, guided by the “commending part of our soul” (ἡγεμονικόν), to a representation (φαντασία). Representation or impression, as the modern historian Anthony A. Long explains, indicates any phenomenon that appears to the human mind, either from outside or from within.⁶⁸ The commending part

⁶⁶ For example, Aristotle, *De anima* 3.433a27–28, and *De motu animalium* 700b25–35.

⁶⁷ Clement, *Stromata* 2.2.8.4: πίστις δὲ . . . θεοσεβείας συγκατάθεσις. The word “συγκατάθεσις” means “assent,” “approval,” “agreement” (Liddell and Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 2:1662); Bailly offers similar translations: *assentiment*, *approbation*, *concorde*, *soumission*, and the Stoic meaning, *accord de l’esprit avec les perceptions* (see Anatole Bailly, *Dictionnaire Grec-Français* [Paris: Hachette, 1950], 1809). The noun comes from the verb συγκατατίθημι—“to deposit together or at the same time.” The verb was taken over into the context of political life wherein its meaning became quite technical: “to put down the same vote with another or agree entirely with his political opinion.” Henceforth, the verb appears in philosophical milieus with the sense “to agree with” or “to assent to.” It seems that the first philosopher to make use of the verb was again Epicurus (see Liddell and Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 2:1663), in his work *Sententia Vaticana* 29 (see O’Connor, *The Essential Epicurus*, 77–86).

⁶⁸ “A representation is anything at all that ‘appears’ to us, anything that constitutes an instance of our awareness. . . . The representations that we receive as individuals from external and internal stimuli are powerfully determined by a wide range of factors—our natures as human beings, our experience as particular persons, our beliefs, desires, foibles, education and so forth” (Anthony A. Long, “Representation and the Self in Stoicism,” in *Stoic Studies* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996], 274). Compare Claude Imbert, “Théorie de la représentation et doctrine logique dans le stoïcisme ancien,” in *Les Stoïciens et leur logique*, ed. Jacques Brunschwig (1978; repr., Paris: Vrin, 2006), 79–108.

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of the soul always involves a positive or negative reaction (i.e., acceptance or rejection) toward any representation, and this reaction is called “assent.” Assent thus consists of a human moral choice and a special commitment projected toward the representation that appears in the human mind.⁶⁹

In fact, one of most important Clementine positions consists in identifying faith with assent in general. By doing that, Clement equates faith with the general human response, which can take many forms, including opinion, judgment, assumption, and acquisition of knowledge. Faith as assent, therefore, consists of the intention of our consciousness toward any form of intuition, the response in general to any sort of phenomenon or impression. “Every opinion (δόξα), every judgment (κρίσις), every assumption (ὑπόληψις), every process of learning (μάθησις)—and we live by these and take our place in the company of human beings through them (οἷς ζῶμεν καί σύνεσμεν αἰεὶ τῷ γένει τῶν ἀνθρώπων)—is an intellectual assent (συγκατάθεσις). Clearly this is simply an act of faith (ἢ δ’ οὐδὲν ἄλλο ἢ πίστις εἶη ἅν).”⁷⁰

Faith therefore reveals the way we live, the way the human mind reacts to each minute intuition or impression. Faith is the general name of each infinitesimal commitment of the human mind. In fact, Clement’s persistent effort to define faith (as apprehension, preconception, appetency, assent, etc.) may be seen as an attempt to find the conditions of possibility for divine and earthly knowledge. In the words of modern philosophy, one may portray his enterprise as an attempt to construct a transcendental concept of faith. In his seminal study, Ulrich Schneider proposes a transcendental reading of the Clementine conception of faith. He envisions faith as the apprehension of the transcendental starting point of knowledge.⁷¹ Clement’s effort, therefore, in this context, consists of trying to find the manner through which the human mind can understand anything *in genere*. His answer is through the mind’s capacity of performing faith. Faith is therefore the epistemic function that makes knowledge possible—not in its real source (which for Clement is God who sends his divine demonstra-

⁶⁹ “Any representation is a part of my experience, but I can make it mine—my outlook, or belief, or commitment—or not mine, by giving or withholding assent. We should note that the role of assent in this account of life and action is restricted to acceptance or rejection of the representation. Assent does not generate the thought-content itself. The role of the assent is judgmental, interpretative, and volitional” (Long, “Representation,” 274; see n. 68). Compare P. Hadot, *La citadelle intérieure: Introduction aux Pensées de Marc Aurèle* (Paris: Fayard, 1992), 119–44.

⁷⁰ Clement, *Stromata* 2.12.55.1 (Ferguson, *Clement of Alexandria*, 196).

⁷¹ “An apprehension of the transcendental starting grounds of knowledge” (*Ein Erfassen der transzendentalen Anfangsgründe der Erkenntnis*), in Schneider, *Theologie*, 285.

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tions)—but possible for the human mind and knowledge. As Schneider expresses it, it is the transcendental ground of knowledge.⁷²

The special context in which Clement engages Stoic vocabulary is that of delineating the features of the human mind in its capacity of grasping the divine. He elaborates his phenomenology of faith by viewing divine manifestation as a representation or impression (*φαντασία*) given to the human mind and faith as the assent toward that manifestation. Assent also reflects an active dimension of the mind and encompasses a strong connection with the human capacity of free choice.⁷³ In addition, the moment of faith as assent, which is a first movement of the mind toward a representation, plays a key role within the process of knowing the divine; faith as assent involves the human being in the atypical and remarkable sort of knowledge that is the knowledge of God.⁷⁴ It opens the way to receiving other divine manifestations and a new power to desire, aspire, and search for the divine knowledge.

At this point, a key question reemerges: which mental process appears first, divine manifestations, or human intention? The passive or the active dimension of faith? If one takes into account the above discussion of the passive or receptive aspect of faith, then the active aspect may be viewed as the mind’s response to God’s noetic gift and a search for this gift. Furthermore, the process of knowing the divine does not consist of a single apprehension and a single response of the soul but of a long chain of multiple pairs of manifestations and responses, or pairs of apprehensions and appetencies. It is a continuous process and creates a balance between the divine manifestations and the human appetency for them.⁷⁵

⁷² “Transcendental foundation of knowledge” (*Transzendente Grundlegung der Erkenntnis*), in *ibid.*, 289.

⁷³ Cicero, *Academica* 1.40, in Brad Inwood and Lloyd P. Gerson, *Hellenistic Philosophy: Introductory Readings* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1988), 89: “But to these presentations [Inwood’s translation for *φαντασίαι*] which are, as it were, received by the senses he [Zeno] joined the assent given by our minds, which he claims is in our power and voluntary.” Envisioning faith as assent, Clement also has the intention of emphasizing two of its main attributes: (1) faith is a free act; (2) faith, unlike unbelief, is not a weak assent but a strong one, of piety or veneration of God, a *θεοσεβείας συγκατάθεσις*.

⁷⁴ Clement, *Stromata* 6.17.154.3 (ANF 2:516): “And when they have embraced the foundation of truth, they receive in addition the power of advancing further to investigation. And thence they love to be learners, and aspiring after knowledge, hasten to salvation.” Compare *Stromata* 2.2.4.2, where faith is seen as the “path of truth” (*δὸς τῆς ἀληθείας*).

⁷⁵ See the previous note. See also Osborn, *Clement of Alexandria*, 161: “Faith and knowledge are joined by a ‘divine sequence and reciprocity’ (2.4.16.2),” and 168: “So knowledge is marked with faith and faith marked with knowledge ‘by a divine sequence and reciprocity’ (2.4.16.2). Faith is a preconception essential to all learning, which turns preconception into comprehension. The preconception is the ear that hears, and hearing is comprehension. Here, reciprocity between faith and knowledge is essential” (2.4.17.1).

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D. Πίστις as μεγάλη εἰς γνώσιν ῥοπή

Faith as dianoetic appetency toward God involves the human being in a new and unusual domain of knowledge. Clement expresses this idea through the phrase μεγάλη εἰς γνώσιν ῥοπή (“great turning point in knowledge”).⁷⁶ What in fact this expression underlines is deeply connected with the whole argument of the present study, namely, that faith was for Clement first and foremost a matter of knowledge. In addition, Clement makes use of two remarkable motives to emphasize the great change in knowledge: “transplantation” and “engrafting.” Both suggest life and continuation of life through a radical change. The human being is taken from a precarious epistemic domain and “transplanted” into, or “engrafted” within, the domain of real knowledge.⁷⁷ Clement further describes the change from unbelief to faith as divine, a θεία μεταβολή that leads to salvation and temperance, love, and knowledge.⁷⁸

The change from unbelief to faith and the image of “great turning point” convey a dynamic perspective to the Clementine phenomenology of faith. Most likely, rather than perceiving faith as a static and momentary event, Clement envisions it as a progression into and an engagement with the journey toward reality, salvation, and truth.⁷⁹ Accordingly, faith is an epistemic process not only leading to but also grounding the process of knowledge. Based on divine self-evident man-

⁷⁶ Clement, *Stromata* 2.2.9.3: μεγάλην γούν εἰς γνώσιν ῥοπήν ἀπερίσπαστος παρέχει προαίρεσις. Liddell and Scott translates ῥοπή as “turn of the scale,” “fall of the scale-pan,” “weight,” “balance,” “suspense,” “turning-point”—as in ῥοπή βίου μου—“decisive influence or moment” (Liddell and Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 2:1575).

⁷⁷ “If he get besides the divine power, through faith, by being transplanted into the good and mild knowledge, like the wild olive, engrafted in the truly fair and merciful Word, he both assimilates the nutriment that is supplied, and becomes a fair and good olive tree. For engrafting makes worthless shoots noble, and compels the barren to be fruitful by the art of culture and by gnostic skill” (Clement, *Stromata* 6.15.118.1–2 [ANF 2:507]).

⁷⁸ “This great change, that a person passes from unfaith to faith and comes to faith through hope and fear, comes from God. This is important: faith appears to us as the first leaning towards salvation; fear, hope, and penitence develop in the wake of faith, in association with self-control and patience, and lead us to love and knowledge” (Clement, *Stromata* 2.6.31.1 [Ferguson, *Clement of Alexandria*, 179]).

⁷⁹ “The righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith.’ The apostle, then, manifestly announces a twofold faith, or rather one which admits of growth and perfection” (Clement, *Stromata* 5.1.2.3–4 [ANF 2:444]). As Osborn observes, “Clement joins with Paul in his account of faith as the way to reality” (*Emergence of Christian Theology*, 262). See also Moingt’s analysis in “La gnose,” where the author emphasizes the same active aspect of faith as a journey to divine knowledge. At the same time, Mortley and Osborn observe that, seen from the prism of the confused life of passions and unbelief, the realm of faith is a land of stability and stillness, a domain of στάσις (cf. Mortley, *Connaissance*, 116–17; Osborn, *Clement of Alexandria*, 171; Clement, *Stromata* 2.11.52.3, 4.22.143, and 4.25.157).

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ifestations and intuitions, faith becomes a firm, steadfast basis (θεμέλιος βέβαιος) and the criterion (κριτήριο)⁸⁰ for knowledge and science.⁸¹

However, the entire process is not unidirectional, from faith to knowledge. Clement describes the journey toward God as a mutual, adjusting, and dialectical relationship between faith and knowledge, a relationship that characterizes most accurately the earthly human existence. As he expresses the idea: “Knowledge is marked with faith and faith marked with knowledge by a divine sequence and reciprocity.”⁸²

Finally, as the following passage shows, the objective of the entire progression in faith and knowledge is deification.

Knowledge therefore is swift to purify, and suitable for the welcome change to the higher state. Hence, too, it easily transplants a man to that divine and holy state which is akin to the soul, and by a light of its own carries him through the mystic stages, till it restores him to the crowning abode of rest, having taught *the pure in heart to look upon God face to face* with understanding and absolute certainty [ἐπιστημονικῶς καὶ καταληπτικῶς]. For herein lies the perfection of the gnostic soul, that having transcended all purifications and modes of ritual, *it should be with the Lord* where He is [πάσης καθάρσεώς τε καὶ λειτουργίας ὑπεκβῆσαν σὺν τῷ κυρίῳ γίνεσθαι], in immediate subordination to Him. Faith then is a compendious knowledge of the essentials [σύντομος τῶν κατεπειγόντων γνώσις], but knowledge is a sure and firm demonstration [ἀπόδειξις] of the things received through faith, being itself built up by the Lord’s teaching on the foundation of the faith, and carrying us on to unshaken conviction and scientific certainty [μετ’ ἐπιστήμης]. As I mentioned before, there seems to me to be a first kind of saving change from heathenism to faith, a second from faith to knowledge [γνώσις]; and this latter, as it passes on into love, begins at once to establish a mutual friendship between that which knows and that which is known. And perhaps he who has arrived at this stage has already *attained equality with the angels*. At any rate, after he has reached the final ascent in the flesh, he still continues to advance, as is fit, and presses on through the holy Hebdomad, into the Father’s house, to that which is indeed

⁸⁰ κυριώτερον οὖν τῆς ἐπιστήμης ἢ πίστις καὶ ἔστιν αὐτῆς κριτήριο (Clement, *Stromata* 2.4.15.5). Compare *Stromata* 2.120.26–27.

⁸¹ “The practice of faith (μελέτη τῆς πίστεως) immediately becomes knowledge (ἐπιστήμη) based on strong foundations (θεμελίῳ βεβαίῳ ἐπερηρυσμένη)” (Clement, *Stromata* 2.2.9.3 [Ferguson, *Clement of Alexandria*, 163]). See also *Stromata* 7.10.55.5: θεμέλιος γνώσεως; *Stromata* 2.2.9.4: θεμέλιος βέβαιος ἐπιστήμης.

⁸² Osborn’s translation of *Stromata* 2.4.16.2–3 (πιστὴ τοίνυν ἢ γνώσις, γνωστὴ δὲ ἢ πίστις θεῖα τινὶ ἀκολουθεῖα τε καὶ ἀντακολουθεῖα γίνεται), in *Clement of Alexandria*, 168. Compare Ferguson, *Clement of Alexandria*, 167–68: “Knowledge is one with faith, and faith one with knowledge, through a mutual succession derived from God.” Compare Wilson’s translation in ANF 2:350: “Knowledge, accordingly, is characterized by faith; and faith, by a kind of divine mutual and reciprocal correspondence, becomes characterized by knowledge.”

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the Lord's *abode*, being destined there to be, as it were, a light standing and abiding for ever, absolutely secure from all vicissitude.⁸³

VI. CONCLUSION

Clement of Alexandria offers us, over centuries, a new paradigm of conceiving faith. It is an epistemic faculty. By characterizing faith as apprehension of self-evident phenomena, assent, preconception, and appetency, Clement elaborates, on the one hand, a "secular" phenomenology of faith that might be seen as an investigation of the transcendental ground of knowledge. On the other hand, applying this theory to the intuition of divine manifestations, Clement articulates a "religious" phenomenology of faith that involves two distinct aspects: one passive (the apprehension of what God makes manifest to the human mind) and one active (the human appetency for God's manifestations). While the process of apprehension procures the most certain, self-evident epistemic grounding for all knowledge, appetency leads the human being to divine knowledge and new divine manifestations.

Faith is therefore an intuition of a divine manifestation followed by an intentional act oriented toward the knowledge of what God makes manifest to the human mind. Rather than an acceptance of a certain set of propositions or dogmas, faith is first and foremost the epistemic capacity of perceiving the manifestations of God and reacting as an appetency for an even deeper knowledge and acquisition of divine manifestations. The knowledge that faith inserts into human beings is

⁸³ Clement, *Stromata* 7.10.56.7–57.5 (Hort and Mayor, *Clement of Alexandria*, 99–101). Some of the emblematic Clementine texts regarding the deification of the Gnostic are the following: *Stromata* 4.6.40, 4.23.149, 6.14.114, 6.16.146, 7.13.82, 7.16.95, 7.10.56.3–7. See also the Clementine idea that the aim of faith (σκοπὸς τῆς πίστεως) is reaching the likeness or assimilation with God (ἔξομοίωσις τῷ θεῷ; *Stromata* 2.22.136.6). Commenting on Clement's view, Osborn articulates the same idea in the following way: "Faith is not just intellectual, but a movement from creature to God and a final detachment from self. The opposite to faith is not sense-perception. Nor is faith merely a beginning, but goes on to ecstasy in the self-transcendence of the highest part of the soul, to assimilation with God and perfection" (*Emergence of Christian Theology*, 265). Compare P. Cuthbert Lattey, "The Deification of Man in Clement of Alexandria: Some Further Notes," *Journal of Theological Studies* 17 (1916): 257–62; Camelot, *Foi et gnose*, 122; Karavites, *Evil, Freedom*, 142; Arkadi Choufrine, *Gnosis, Theophany, Theosis: Studies in Clement of Alexandria's Appropriation of His Background* (New York: Lang, 2002); or Osborn, *Clement of Alexandria*, 171–72. However, in addition to the Greek platonist terminology, Clement also describes this journey to deification through Jewish apocalyptic vocabulary: angels and equality with the angels, thrones, heavenly abodes, houses, and liturgies, divine light, vision of God face to face, etc.; see, e.g., Moingt, "La gnose," 227, 232–37; Gedaliahu A. G. Stroumsa, "Clement, Origen, and Jewish Esoteric Traditions," in *Hidden Wisdom: Esoteric Traditions and the Roots of Christian Mysticism* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 109–31; or Bogdan G. Bucur, "The Other Clement of Alexandria: Cosmic Hierarchy and Interiorized Apocalypticism," *Vigiliae Christianae* 60, no. 3 (2006): 251–68.

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of a very different sort from any other human knowledge. Clement’s conception of faith should be then associated with the Platonic appency for the contemplation of the forms of Good or Beauty, or with the Aristotelian intuition of the first principles.

Likewise, faith is not only a static psychological state of mind but, rather, a dynamic process of knowing, a contemplation that is imperceptibly developed into the direct knowledge or contemplation of God and heavenly mysteries. Moreover, this understanding of faith seems to be closer to the biblical conception. Scriptures envisage faith either as the trust in a person, in Jesus Christ, or as the opening toward, and expectation of, a visual encounter with divine realities. Passages such as John 11:40 (“Jesus said to her, ‘Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?’”) and Heb. 11:1 (“faith is the hypostasis of things hoped and the proof of things not seen”) represent emblematic examples of that conception. Likewise, faith seems to be primarily, in Clement’s perspective, an assent to God’s phenomena or manifestations, rather than an intellectual assent to a doctrinal system.