PART ONE

METHOD
CHAPTER ONE

TEACHING, LEARNING AND WRITING IN SECOND AND THIRD CENTURY ALEXANDRIA

1.1. Background: The Alexandrian Paideia

Clement was probably born an Athenian, but he may well have been native to Alexandria.¹ Little is known of his life other than he travelled extensively in search of a great teacher, beginning in Greece and finishing in Egypt where he believed he found in Pantaenus, a Stoic convert to Christianity,² the “first in power” among all his teachers.³ It is believed that Clement replaced Pantaenus as the head of the so-called ‘catechetical school’ in Alexandria and began teaching sometime in 190, but was forced to relinquish the role and flee Alexandria during the persecutions of Severus in 202. It was probably during this time that he wrote the works that are collected under his name. Little is known of Clement beyond this point. Eusebius tells us of a letter composed by Clement’s student Alexander, delivered by Clement to the church in Antioch sometime in 211.⁴ However, in a letter to Origen dated somewhere around the year 215, Alexander indicates that both Pantaenus and Clement had passed away, suggesting Clement’s death to be some time prior to that date.⁵ Clement appears in the earlier western martyrologies, assigned to December 4.

Clement was excised from the martyrology by Clement VIII in the sixteenth century at the advice of Baronius, an ecclesiastical historian, on the grounds of the doubtful orthodoxy of some of his writings. This may have been the case since, according to B.F. Westcott, some of the MSS of Clement found in the 11th century contained excerpts from a Gnostic we have come to know as Theodotos.⁶ These writings were

¹ Epiphanius Haer. 32.6.
² HE 5.10.
³ Str. 1.1.11.2. See Eusebius HE 5.11; 6.6, 13, 14.
⁴ HE 6.11.