

In Search of Christian Paideia Education and Conversion in Early Christian Biography

Peter Gemeinhardt*

Georg-August-Universität Göttingen, Theologische Fakultät, Platz der Göttinger Sieben 2,
D-37073 Göttingen, Email: peter.gemeinhardt@theologie.uni-goettingen.de

1. *Biography and Education: Introductory Remarks*

In a famous passage of his critique of early Christianity, the philosopher Celsus refers to an alleged principle of Christian preaching:

Let no one educated, no one wise, no one sensible draw near. For these abilities are thought by us to be evils. But as for anyone ignorant, anyone stupid, anyone uneducated, anyone who is a child, let him come boldly.¹

Adhering to the notion that philosophy is a practice reserved for society's elite, Celsus did most certainly not approve of admitting people of all sexes and social ranks to a philosophical community which deserved its name. It has long been realized that Celsus paints a distorted picture of the social, cultural, and educational reality of early Christianity. This has been remarked not only by modern scholars but already by Origen who wrote the first and foremost reply to Celsus's accusations:

How then is it reasonable for Celsus to criticize us as though we asserted, 'Let no one educated, no one wise, no one sensible draw near'? On the contrary, let the educated, wise and sensible man come if he wishes, and none the less let anyone ignorant, stupid, uneducated, and childish come as well. For the Word promises to heal even such people if they come, and makes all men worthy of God.²

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¹ Origen, *Contra Celsum* 3,44 (FC 50,2, 590,19-22 Fiedrowicz/Barthold): μηδεις προσίτω πεπαιδευμένος, μηδεις σοφός, μηδεις φρόνιμος· κακά γάρ ταῦτα νομίζεται παρ' ἡμῖν· ἀλλ' εἴ τις ἀμαθής, εἴ τις ἀνόητος, εἴ τις ἀπαιδευτος, εἴ τις νήπιος, θαρρῶν ἡκέτω. The translation is taken from Karl Olav Sandnes, *The Challenge of Homer: School, Pagan Poets and Early Christianity* (Library of New Testament Studies 400; London: T&T Clark, 2009), 155.

² Origen, *Contra Celsum* 3,48 (600,20-26 F./B.): Πῶς οὖν εὐλόγως ἐγκαλεῖ ὁ Κέλσος ἡμῖν ὡς φάσκουσι· Μηδεις προσίτω πεπαιδευμένος, μηδεις σοφός, μηδεις φρόνιμος· Ἀλλὰ προσίτω μὲν πεπαιδευμένος καὶ σοφός καὶ φρόνιμος ὁ βουλόμενος· οὐδὲν δ' ἤττον προσίτω καὶ εἴ τις ἀμαθής καὶ ἀνόητος καὶ ἀπαιδευτος καὶ νήπιος. Καὶ γὰρ τοὺς τοιοῦτους προσελθόντος ἐπαγγέλλεται θεραπεύειν ὁ λόγος, πάντας ἀξίους κατασκευάζων τοῦ θεοῦ. Translation: Sandnes, *Challenge of Homer* (see note 1), 157.

And indeed, we find a considerable number of educated men among the Christians in pre-Constantinian times, not least of all theologians like Origen himself or his contemporaries Clement and Cyprian. Most of them were converts to Christianity, so that they brought their education with them and sometimes felt the need to justify their having been educated according to pagan standards. For this purpose, some writers provided a narrative of their conversion which at least hints at their previous life and education. E.g., Clement of Alexandria summarizes his educational development by describing his journey from Athens to Alexandria, thereby visiting Greek and Syrian, Egyptian and Jewish teachers and finally staying with and learning from the “Sicilian bee” which is commonly identified as the Alexandrian teacher Pantaenus.³ However, whether this account, which is surely patterned on literary models, reveals autobiographical information, is doubtful, since there are striking parallels, e.g., to the educational career of the physician Galen who reports that he studied with Stoics and Platonists, Peripatetics and Epicureans.⁴ Also the Jewish writer Flavius Josephus tells a quite similar story in his autobiographical *Vita* about his search for a teacher who, however, should impart him to Jewish παιδεία and to the “philosophical schools among us.”⁵ Jewish education thus surpasses Greek παιδεία.

Some Christian authors, however, provide quite detailed accounts of their respective quests for education.⁶ I will focus on three of them. Justin Martyr is an illuminating example of such converts to Christianity who became famous teachers of their new faith (II). Another case in point, though severely critical of pagan education, is the narrator of the *Pseudo-Clementine Homilies* (III). Origen’s concept of teaching faith and philosophy in tandem is intertwined with the biography of Gregory the Wonderworker in the latter’s address when leaving Origen’s school at Caesarea (IV). A few closing remarks will highlight the impact of these observations on the general question of the relationship of education and conversion (V). It goes without saying that the present paper can be no more than a preliminary sketch of a much larger array of topics.⁷

³ Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* 1,11,1-2 (GCS 15 [4th ed.], 8,16-9,3 Stählin/Früchtel/Treu); cf. Alfons Fürst, *Christentum als Intellektuellen-Religion: Die Anfänge des Christentums in Alexandria* (Stuttgarter Bibelstudien 213; Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 2007), 43-44; Ralf A. Sedlak, “Clement of Alexandria,” *Encyclopedia of the Bible and Its Reception* 5 (Berlin: de Gruyter, forthcoming).

⁴ Cf. Sandnes, *Challenge of Homer* (see note 1), 34.

⁵ Flavius Josephus, *Life of Josephus* 10 (ed. F. Siegert, H. Schreckenberg and M. Vogel, *Flavius Josephus: Aus meinem Leben (Vita)* [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001], 24-26). These schools (αἱ παρ’ ἡμῶν αἰρέσεις) are identified as Pharisees, Sadducees and Essenes.

⁶ See recently Annemaré Kotzé, “Autobiography II: Greco-Roman Antiquity and New Testament,” *Encyclopedia of the Bible and its Reception* 3 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2011): 131-136.

⁷ The focus lies strictly on the interplay of education and religion in the biographical accounts, while I have to omit many other interesting questions, e.g., of the contents and shape of the philosophical doctrines in questions.

2. *The Quest for True Philosophy: Justin Martyr*

Let us commence with the example of Justin Martyr and his search for Christian παιδεία. We begin with a look at the end of his story. As the apologist was accused by a Roman prefect of seducing young people to conversion, his pupils bluntly denied that Justin himself was responsible for their becoming Christians, since they had already been instructed by their own parents.⁸ Conversion is thus not part of Justin's activities as a teacher. Instead, he appears as the head of a philosophical school whose aim was not conversion but insight into the mysteries of God, creation and Christ. As is emphasized, this involves a vast amount of philosophical knowledge, as Justin himself claims during his trial:

I have tried to become acquainted with all doctrines. But I have committed myself to the true doctrines of the Christians, even though they may not please those who hold false beliefs.⁹

In the opening chapters of his *Dialogue with Trypho*, Justin gives an outline of this quest for philosophical truth.¹⁰ By virtue of a literary dialogue embedded in the overall dialogical pattern,¹¹ he reports his encounter with an old man at the seaside to whom he confessed his long and frustrating search among the philosophical schools of his time: the Stoic was ignorant of God and did not even consider this a failure; the Peripatetic was eager to talk about payment before beginning with instruction; and the follower of Pythagoras rebuffed Justin because he had not learned enough about

⁸ *Martyrium Justinii* 4,5-7 (ed. H. Musurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs* [OECT; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972], 44,20-26).

⁹ *Martyrium Justinii* 1,3 (42,10-11 M.): Πάντας λόγους ἐπειράθην μαθεῖν· συνεθέμην δὲ τοῖς ἀληθεῖσι λόγοις τῶν Χριστιανῶν κἂν μὴ ἄρῆσκωσι τοῖς ψευδοδοξοῦσιν.

¹⁰ The respective passages of the *Dialogue* figure prominently within the research into Justin. See, e.g., Carl Andresen, "Justin und der mittlere Platonismus," *ZNW* 44 (1952/1953): (157-195) 160-168 (repr.: id., *Theologie und Kirche im Horizont der Antike: Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Geschichte der Alten Kirche* [ed. P. Gemeinhardt; AKG 112; Berlin: de Gruyter 2009], 1-35, esp. 3-10); Niels Hyldahl, *Philosophie und Christentum: Eine Interpretation der Einleitung zum Dialog Justins* (Acta Theologica Danica 9; Kopenhagen: Prostant apud Munksgaard, 1966); Jakobus C. M. van Winden, *An Early Christian Philosopher: Justin Martyr's Dialogue with Trypho Chapters One to Nine: Introduction, Text and Commentary* (Philosophia Patrum 1; Leiden: Brill, 1971) and Oskar Skarsaune, "The Conversion of Justin Martyr," *Studia Theologica* 30 (1976): 53-73. As with Clement (see above, p. 89), this account might have been shaped according to a biographical type of narration. Hyldahl, *Philosophie und Christentum* (see above), 149-152 adds the *Letter of Thessalos to the emperor Claudius or Nero*, Lucian's *Menippos*, the *Pseudo-Clementine Homilies*, and Josephus (see note 5). This narratological pattern does however not exclude historical appropriateness, even if it primarily reflects common expectations to an educational career. But it was surely built upon human experience (see Skarsaune, "Conversion" [see above], 67). Hence it seems overstated that Justin never should have enjoyed any philosophical training (as Hyldahl, *Philosophie und Christentum* [see above], 156-157 argues).

¹¹ For the literary form see Katharina Heyden, "Christliche Transformation des antiken Dialogs bei Justin und Minucius Felix," *ZAC* 13 (2009): 204-232.

music, astronomy and geometry which direct the soul from the visible to the invisible.¹² For Justin as well as later for Augustine, Platonic philosophy was the courtyard to true knowledge, since “here I reckoned myself wise and cunning, and disregarding my limits, I hoped to see God as he is in himself, for this is the ultimate goal of Plato’s philosophy.”¹³ Justin’s philosophical quest is apparently motivated by the desire for religious truth and thus fits well into the second century CE.¹⁴

Being unexpectedly well informed, the old man immediately hints at certain shortcomings these Platonists display, e.g., concerning the alleged immortality of the soul.¹⁵ Since it is philosophy that renders man “holy,” that is, capable of realizing the truth about God and to live accordingly,¹⁶ and since apparently even Plato and Pythagoras did not obtain this holiness, Justin falls into despair.¹⁷ His interlocutor then tells him about certain prophets who are older than the Greek philosophers and who did not have to argue for the truth of their teaching but whose prophecies were confirmed by coming true before the world’s eyes. Thus the old man leaves Justin with a piece of advice: the attainment of truth requires not the search for it among philosophers but prayer alone.¹⁸ By doing so, Justin reaches the end of his intellectual journey:

Inside my soul, a fire started burning, and I was deeply touched by the love for the prophets and those men who are friends of Christ. I spoke to myself about the old man’s teachings and recognized that this was the only reliable and useful philosophy. In this way, and because of those reasons, I became a [true] philosopher.¹⁹

Interestingly, Justin does not merely assert his conversion to Christianity but provides a biographical account in order to justify his being Christian, more precisely: an educated, philosophically trained Christian. Certainly, being a Christian does not necessarily depend on being educated;²⁰ indeed, early Christian communities consisted largely of people with very little

¹² Justin, *Dialogus cum Tryphone* 2,3-6 (ed. P. Bobichon, *Dialogue avec Tryphone* [Paradosis 47,1; Fribourg: Academic Press, 2003], 184).

¹³ Justin, *Dialogus cum Tryphone* 2,6 (190 B.): ὀλίγου τε ἐντὸς χρόνου ᾧμην σοφὸς γεγευέναι, καὶ ὑπὸ βλακειᾶς ἠλπίζον αὐτίκα κατόψεσθαι τὸν θεόν· τοῦτο γὰρ τέλος τῆς Πλάτωνος φιλοσοφίας.

¹⁴ This is also true for his observation that philosophy, which had originally been one science, has fallen apart and in this is paralleled by the Christian sectarians who call themselves “philosophers” (cf. van Winden, *Early Christian Philosopher* [see note 10], 42-45).

¹⁵ Justin, *Dialogus cum Tryphone* 6,2 (202 B.).

¹⁶ Justin, *Dialogus cum Tryphone* 2,1; 3,4 (186; 192 B.).

¹⁷ Justin, *Dialogus cum Tryphone* 7,1 (202 B.); for the following, cf. van Winden, *Early Christian Philosopher* (see note 10), 111-117.

¹⁸ Justin, *Dialogus cum Tryphone* 7,3 (204 B.).

¹⁹ Justin, *Dialogus cum Tryphone* 8,1-2 (204 B.): Ἐμοὶ δὲ παραχρῆμα πῦρ ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ ἀνήφθη, καὶ ἔρωσ εἶχέ με τῶν προφητῶν καὶ τῶν ἀνδρῶν ἐκεινῶν, οἱ εἰσι Χριστοῦ φίλοι· διαλογιζόμενός τε πρὸς ἑμαυτὸν τοὺς λόγους αὐτοῦ ταύτην μόνην εὑρισκον φιλοσοφίαν ἀσφαλῆ τε καὶ σύμφορον. Οὕτως δὴ καὶ διὰ ταῦτα φιλόσοφος ἐγώ.

²⁰ Justin, *Dialogus cum Tryphone* 3,6; 5,5,3 (194; 322 B.).

schooling.²¹ But the focus of the *Dialogue with Trypho* is not whether being a Christian requires formal education but whether Christians, since some of them are perfectly capable of erudite argumentation, are the most and only reliable philosophers amongst the many voices claiming knowledge of the truth. Moreover, the narration appears as an *apologia pro vita sua* (as already Arthur D. Nock observed): apology on behalf of the Christians and apology on behalf of his conversion coincide.²²

Education and religion, as Justin sees it, exist in harmony when—and only insofar as—the Christian notion of God and its grounding in the Holy Scriptures is acknowledged as the point of departure for true philosophical training. But converting to Christianity does not mean neglecting all other kinds of philosophy; on the contrary, for the Christian philosopher to be acquainted with pagan learning is considered a given for Justin. He is, so to speak, initiated not only in Christian religious practice but also in the cosmos of knowledge of God, creation, and history.

3. *On the Road with Peter: The Pseudo-Clementine Homilies*

In contrast to Justin, the *Pseudo-Clementine Homilies* display outright criticism of pagan education. As is well known, the Greek Homilies and the Latin Recognitions are Christian adaptations of a classical literary genre, the novel.²³ They narrate the quest of young Clement for true knowledge of God and the immortality of the human soul and may thus be seen as an educational novel (*Bildungsroman*). They also contain the family history of Clement and conclude happily with the reunion of his elder twin brothers, mother and father. Here I can only hint at a few passages dealing explicitly with education.²⁴

²¹ Justin, 2 *Apologia* 10,8 (SC 507, 352,36-30 Munier); cf. 1 *Apologia* 60,10-11 (SC 507, 286,27-288,32 Munier).

²² Skarsaune, “Conversion” (see note 10), 55, quoting Arthur D. Nock, *Conversion: The Old and the New in Religion from Alexander the Great to Augustine of Hippo* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933), 250.

²³ The literary history of the *Pseudo-Clementines* is complex. According to Hans-Josef Klauck, *Apokryphe Apostelakten: Eine Einführung* (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 2005), 209, and Jürgen Wehnert, *Pseudoklementinische Homilien: Einführung und Übersetzung* (Kommentare zur Apokryphen Literatur 1,1; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2010), 32-34, the oldest textual layer we can grasp (the so-called *Grundschrift*) may have been written shortly after 220 CE and contain older tradition, while the Homilies can be dated to ca. 300-320 CE and the Recognitions to the middle of the 4th century. The introductory letters of Peter to James and of Clement to James were added perhaps even later.

²⁴ For the respective concept of Christian παιδεία see Meinolf Vielberg, *Klemens in den pseudoklementinischen Rekognitionen: Studien zur literarischen Form des spätantiken Romans* (TU 145; Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2000), 96-104; and for the intriguing question of the position of teachers to bishops and clergy during the second century see F. Stanley Jones, “The Ancient Christian Teacher in the Pseudo-Clementines,” in *Early Christian Voices in Texts, Traditions, and Symbols: Essays in Honor of François Bovon* (ed. D. H. Warren et al.; Biblical Interpretation Series 66; Boston: Brill, 2003), 355-364.

The Greek Homilies start with a letter of Clement, now bishop of Rome, to James, bishop of Jerusalem and the supreme authority within the Jewish-Christian setting of the work. Clement relates how Peter, nearing his death, entrusts his episcopal chair in Rome

to him who has journeyed with me from the beginning to the end, and thus has heard all my homilies; who, in a word, having had a share in all my trials, has been found steadfast in the faith; whom I have found, above all others, pious, philanthropic, pure, learned, chaste, good, upright, large-hearted, and striving generously to bear the ingratitude of some of the catechumens.²⁵

Clement protests desperately, but in vain, since even without Peter's explicit endorsement, he has already proven himself Peter's worthy successor in striving not for honor and offices but for true knowledge.²⁶ He is perfectly qualified to teach the pagans the Gospel of Christ, thus saving them from hell, since not only people who refuse to accept the Gospel will suffer eternal pain but also the ignorant who was not taught the way to eternal life. It is therefore Clement's task to take care for the catechetical instruction of his community, as he himself had been taught by Peter.²⁷

The *Letter of Clement to James* thus sums up Clement's biography and search for Christian παιδεία. In the *Homilies*, which are told by Clement himself and therefore appear as an autobiographical account, the young man sets out to look for answers to the most important questions about God, the world, the afterlife, which he investigates without any success.

I grieved over this, not knowing that I had a fair inmate, even my thought, which was to be to me the cause of a blessed immortality, as I afterwards knew by experience, and gave thanks to God, the Lord of all.²⁸

His deep despair resulting from the uncertainty regarding the immortality of his soul and the possibility of life after death leads him even to consider a journey to Egyptian sages and magicians, hierophants and prophets.²⁹ Heeding a friendly philosopher's advice, Clement finally decides against this endeavor. But he had already acquired a thorough Greek education:

²⁵ *Epistula Clementis ad Jacobum* 2,3 (GCS 42 [3d ed.], 6,11-7,1 Rehm/Strecker): τῷ ἀπ' ἀρχῆς μοι μέχρι τοῦ τέλους συνοδεύσαντι καὶ οὕτως πασῶν μου τῶν ὁμιλιῶν ἐπακούσαντι, συνελθὼν ἐρῶ, ὃς ἐν πάσι πειρασμοῖς μου κοινωνήσας τῇ πίστει προσκαρτερῶν εὐρέθη, ὃν πλεῖον πάντων πεπειράμαι θεοσεβῆ, φιλόφρονον, ἀγνόν, πολυμαθῆ, σώφρονα, ἀγαθόν, δίκαιον, μακρόθυμον καὶ γενναίως εἰδότα φέρειν τὰς ἐνίων τῶν κατηχομένων ἀχαριστίαν. Translations are taken (with slight modifications) from Thomas Smith et al. in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* 8 (ed. A. Roberts and J. Donaldson; Buffalo: Christian Literature Company, 1886; repr. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1989), 215-346.

²⁶ *Epistula Clementis ad Jacobum* 3,2 (7,10-13 R./Str.).

²⁷ *Epistula Clementis ad Jacobum* 6,1; 13,1 (10,4-7; 15,11-13 R./Str.).

²⁸ Pseudo-Clemens, *Homilies* 1,2,2-3 (GCS 42 [3d ed.] 23,17-19 Rehm/Strecker): οὐκ εἰδὼς σύνοικον καλὴν ἔχων ἔννοιαν, ἀθανασίας ἀγαθὴν αἰτίαν μοι γενομένην, ὡς ὕστερον τῇ πείρᾳ ἐπέγνων καὶ θεῷ τῷ πάντων δεσπότῃ ἠὲ χαρίστησα.

²⁹ Pseudo-Clemens, *Homilies* 1,5,1 (24,27-25,3 R./Str.).

From my boyhood, then, being involved in such reasonings, in order to learn something definite, I used to resort to the schools of the philosophers. But nothing else did I see than the setting up and the knocking down of doctrines, and strifes, and seeking for victory, and the arts of syllogisms, and the skill of assumptions. . . . Perceiving therefore, now, that the acceptance does not depend on the real nature of the subjects discussed, but that opinions are proved to be true or false, according to ability of those who defend them, I was still more than ever at a loss in regard of things.³⁰

Like Justin, Clement delves into all available philosophical doctrines but does not find anything comforting or illuminating. Criticism of this kind prevails throughout the Clementine writings, culminating in the saying that “the whole learning of the Greek is the most dreadful fabrication of a wicked demon,”³¹ as Clement points out in his dispute with Appion. The latter in turn praises the former’s “noble birth and liberal education” but adds a severe complaint:

He, being related to the family of Tiberius Caesar, and equipped with all Greek learning has been seduced by a certain barbarian called Peter to speak and act after the manner of the Jews.³²

Although there are also some passages in the *Pseudo-Clementines* that discuss the impact of rhetorics for the purpose of Christian missionary teaching without such outright hostility,³³ the novel makes it clear that Clement who had been educated according to the Greek ἐγκύκλιος παιδεία acquires true knowledge only by following the model of Peter who in turn is the primordial imitator of Christ. Thus, education is a spiritual affair, not a matter of schooling. This is already made clear when Barnabas takes Clement to Peter who at once acknowledges the gifts of the young man and sets out to instruct him in the Christian wisdom.³⁴ It is only upon

³⁰ Pseudo-Clemens, *Homilies* 1,3; 1,4 (23,21-25; 24,5-8 R./Str.): ἐκ παιδὸς οὖν ἡλικίας ὧν ἐν τοιούτοις λογισμοῖς, χάριν τοῦ μαθεῖν τι βέβαιον εἰς τὰς τῶν φιλοσόφων ἐφοίτων διατριβὰς, καὶ οὐθὲν ἕτερον ἐώρων ἢ δογμάτων ἀνασκευὰς καὶ κατασκευὰς καὶ ἔρεις καὶ φιλονεικίας καὶ συλλογισμῶν τέχνας καὶ λημμάτων ἐπινοίας . . . ἐπιστήσας οὖν ἤδη ποτὲ ὅτι οὐ παρὰ τὰς ἐκδικουμένας ὑποθέσεις ἢ κατάληψις γίνεται, ἀλλὰ παρὰ τοὺς ἐκδικοῦντας αἱ δόξαι ἀποφαίνονται, ἔτι μᾶλλον ἰλιγγίω ἐν τοῖς πράγμασιν. For the philosophical training of Clement cf. Nicole Kelley, *Knowledge and Religious Authority in the Pseudo-Clementines: Situating the „Recognitions” in Fourth Century Syria* (WUNT II 213; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 43-44.

³¹ Pseudo-Clemens, *Homilies* 4,12,1 (87,22-24 R./Str.): αὐτίκα γοῦν ἐγὼ τὴν πᾶσαν Ἑλληνικὴν παιδείαν κακοῦ δαίμονος χαλεπωτάτην ὑπόθεσιν εἶναι λέγω.

³² Pseudo-Clemens, *Homilies* 4,7,2 (86,7-9 R./Str.): ἀνὴρ πρὸς γένους Τιβερίου Καίσαρος ὢν καὶ πάσης Ἑλληνικῆς παιδείας ἐξησκημένος ὑπὸ βαρβάρου τινός, τὴν προσηγορίαν Πέτρου, τὰ Ἰουδαίων ποιεῖν καὶ λέγειν ἠπάτηται. Trans. Roberts and Donaldson, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* 8 (see note 25), 253.

³³ See Kelley, *Knowledge and Religious Authority* (see note 30), 51-57; Peter Gemeinhardt, *Das lateinische Christentum und die antike pagane Bildung* (STAC 41; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 333-334.

³⁴ Pseudo-Clemens, *Homilies* 1,16,1-5 (31,14-32,2 R./Str.).

long journeys and extensive catecheses that Clement is baptised,³⁵ and only thus is he finally prepared to become Peter's successor as bishop of Rome. During his first meeting with Peter, Clement points to the fact that he was already taught the truth about Christ, God, and the world, this, however, "quickly" and not, like at school, "slowly."³⁶ As a matter of fact, the whole meaning of Peter's message only becomes clear by following the apostle and hearing his predication.

By means of their literary setting, the *Pseudo-Clementines* underline, as Justin did, that conversion to Christianity is an educational process. However, in contrast to Justin, there is a critical stance taken against pagan learning even if it is subordinate to the spiritual and practical teaching of Peter.³⁷ Visiting contemporary philosophical schools confuses rather than illuminates young Clement, as was the case with Justin. Thus, insight into the superiority of Christian teaching over pagan learning is the result of Clement's search for παιδεία. The bone of contention is the amount of education which is necessary to draw the distinction between pagan philosophy and Christian theology. Whether the former might turn out to be useful as propedeutic is open to further discussion. We will therefore take an additional glance at Origen and his comprehensive concept of education and religion.

4. *Learning in Paradise: Gregory the Wonderworker on Origen's School*

Our third example is located in Caesarea in Palestine, where the famous Alexandrian theologian Origen had re-founded his school in 231, after he had been expelled from his hometown.³⁸ More than a decade later, one of his pupils named Gregory, later bishop of Neocaesarea and known as "the Wonderworker," delivered a panegyric speech on occasion of his leaving school in 244. His farewell address does not only give an account of Origen's teaching but also contains elements of autobiography: Gregory

³⁵ Pseudo-Clemens, *Homilies* 11,35,1 (171,5-8 R./Str.).

³⁶ Pseudo-Clemens, *Homilies* 1,21,9 (34,19-20 R./Str.): οἶδα γὰρ ὅτι ἔνεστιν ὧν βούλεται τις καὶ τάχως λαβεῖν καὶ βράδευς μὴ τυχεῖν.

³⁷ There is however a difference between the unequivocal rejection of the hellenic παιδεία in the *Homilies* and the more subtle discussion and even appreciation of Greek educational values in the *Recognitions*; see Vielberg, *Klemens* (see note 24), 189-192.

³⁸ The literature regarding Origen's school (and the so-called "Catechetical School of Alexandria") is abundant. See Clemens Scholten, "Die alexandrinische Katechetenschule," *JbAC* 38 (1995): 16-37; Alain Le Boulluc, "Aux origines, encore, de l'école d'Alexandrie," *Adamantius* 5 (1999): 7-36 (repr. in idem, *Alexandrie antique et chrétienne: Clément et Origène* [ed. C. G. Conticello; Collection des Études Augustiniennes, Série Antiquité 178; Paris: Institut d'Études Augustiniennes 2006], 29-60); Michael Fiedrowicz, "Theologe werden—in der Schule des Origenes," *Trierer Theologische Zeitschrift* 118 (2009): 95-108; Peter Gemeinhardt, "Schola animarum: Bildung und Religion in der Schule des Origenes," in *Alexandria—Stadt der Bildung und der Religion 2* (ed. R. Feldmeier et al.; Biblische Notizen Neue Folge 148; Freiburg: Herder, 2011), 113-123.

confesses that the “holy logos” had guided him on his search for παιδεία and finally led him to Origen, that is, to a paradise on earth.

Gregory himself was not converted by Origen, as were many others of the latter’s pupils.³⁹ Instead, he was baptized at the age of fourteen,⁴⁰ a point in time he later reckoned providential, since both the human and the divine “logos” took their place in him at the same time.⁴¹ But several years had yet to pass until divine providence was finally to show him the way to a Christian education. Initially, his mother was eager to provide an excellent rhetorical training for Gregory and his brother; Eusebius adds that both were inflamed with love for Greek and Roman letters.⁴² However, it was the “divine teacher” himself who instigated Gregory’s Latin instructor to bring him to study Roman law and, for this purpose, send him to Beirut, not far from Caesarea.⁴³ Soon he was invited to accompany his sister to Caesarea where her husband acted as counselor of the prefect of Palestine.⁴⁴ The soldier who had delivered this message and then brought Gregory and his brother to Caesarea turned out to act as a “divine companion and proper guide and guardian,” since he led Gregory on the last part of the long way from his hometown to Origen’s school.⁴⁵

Compared to Justin, young Gregory did not strive for philosophical knowledge but to be a competent lawyer. Instead, his philosophical training only takes place during the six-year stay at Caesarea: Origen taught not only Christian theology but, as a kind of preparatory course, all kinds of philosophy (except of Epicureism).⁴⁶ By teaching dialectics, physics and ethics he aimed to combine the human and the divine logos. Παιδεία in an Origenian sense contained both pagan and Christian learning, though there is a certain hierarchy: being a philosopher is necessary in order to be a Christian gnostic, not vice versa.⁴⁷ Therefore Origen insisted that

³⁹ Edward J. Watts, “The Student Self in Late Antiquity,” in *Religion and the Self in Antiquity* (ed. D. Brakke et al.; Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 2005), (234-251) 246.

⁴⁰ Gregory Thaumaturgus, *In Originem Oratio Panegyrica* 5,50 (FC 24, 140,18-21 Guyot/Klein).

⁴¹ Gregory Thaumaturgus, *In Originem Oratio Panegyrica* 5,53 (142,9-11 G./K.).

⁴² Eusebius, *Historia ecclesiastica* 6,30 (GCS Eusebius Werke 2,2, 584,15-16 Schwartz).

⁴³ Gregory Thaumaturgus, *In Originem Oratio Panegyrica* 5,57 (144,9 G./K.): ὁ θεῖος παιδαγωγός.

⁴⁴ Gregory Thaumaturgus, *In Originem Oratio Panegyrica* 5,67 (146,27-148,2 G./K.).

⁴⁵ Gregory Thaumaturgus, *In Originem Oratio Panegyrica* 5,71 (148,21-22 G./K.): θεῖος δέ τις συνοδοιπόρος καὶ πόμπος ἀγαθὸς καὶ φύλαξ. See Joseph W. Trigg, “God’s Marvellous *Oikonomia*: Reflections on Origen’s Understanding of Divine and Human Pedagogy in the Address ascribed to Gregory Thaumaturgus,” *JES* 9 (2001): 27-52.

⁴⁶ Gregory Thaumaturgus, *In Originem Oratio Panegyrica* 13,152 (184,25-186,2 G./K.).

⁴⁷ Gregory Thaumaturgus, *In Originem Oratio Panegyrica* 6,79 (152,21-22 G./K.). See also Origen, *De principiis* 1,1,6 (GCS Origenes Werke 5, 23,1-14 Koetschau) on the gradual formation of the Christian mind.

his pupils should not neglect any philosophical teaching until they had thoroughly dealt with it and even surpassed it intellectually.⁴⁸

It is not necessary to go into the details of Origen's teaching here, and I will also refrain from narrating his own biography which Eusebius depicts as a kind of intellectual biography.⁴⁹ I would just like to point out that for Gregory, becoming a member of the philosophical community in Caesarea was the culmination of his quest for παιδεία. Unlike Justin, he did not seek out the philosophers of his time on his own account but was led by other people's decisions (e.g., when he was encouraged to study the law or when he was summoned to Caesarea). This is the foreground story to his path. In the background, however, the real agent of his intellectual biography is a divine angel, the "λειτουργός,"⁵⁰ who guided Gregory until his arrival at Origen's school which the teacher himself reckoned "a place of learning and a lecture room, a schoolroom for the souls."⁵¹ Unlike Clement, Gregory did not disapprove of pre-Christian παιδεία but regarded himself as living in a paradise on earth when enjoying the company of his teacher and fellow pupils.⁵² Accordingly, the prospect of leaving Origen's school seemed to him equivalent to the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden.⁵³ He even feared that he would never again have leisure to occupy himself with "the higher matters" and "the divine prophecies."⁵⁴ Fortunately, the bishopric would soon provide further opportunities for studying the scriptures and perhaps even philosophy, though in the later tradition, he is mainly known as divine preacher and missionary, as, e.g., the account of Basil of Caesarea illustrates.⁵⁵

5. Conclusion

As we have seen, education and biography are intertwined in manifold ways in ancient Christianity. Educational ideals are conveyed by way of accounts of prominent theologians' lives: the most ingenious apologist Justin,

⁴⁸ Gregory Thaumaturgus, *In Originem Oratio Panegyrica* 14,170 (194,11-14 G./K.). See Winrich Löhr, "Christianity as Philosophy: Problems and Perspectives of an Ancient Intellectual Project," *VigChr* 64 (2010): 160-188.

⁴⁹ See Peter Gemeinhardt, "Glaube, Bildung, Theologie: Ein Spannungsfeld im frühchristlichen Alexandria," in *Alexandria* (ed. T. Georges et al.; Civitatum Orbis Mediterranei Scripta 1; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, forthcoming).

⁵⁰ Gregory Thaumaturgus, *In Originem Oratio Panegyrica* 5,72 (150,4 G./K.).

⁵¹ Origen, *De principiis* 2,11,6 (190,1-4 K.): *Puto enim quod sancti quique discedentes ex hac vita permanebunt in loco aliquo in terra posito, quem 'paradisum' dicit scriptura divina, velut in quodam eruditionis loco et, ut ita dixerim, auditorio vel schola animarum.*

⁵² Gregory Thaumaturgus, *In Originem Oratio Panegyrica* 15,183 (198,25-26 G./K.).

⁵³ Gregory Thaumaturgus, *In Originem Oratio Panegyrica* 16,185 (200,6-10 G./K.).

⁵⁴ Gregory Thaumaturgus, *In Originem Oratio Panegyrica* 16,193 (204,10-12 G./K.): *καὶ σχολὴ μὲν ἡμῖν οὐκέτι πρὸς τὰ κρείττω οὐδ' ἤτισσόν, οὐδὲ λόγια τὰ θεῖα λαλήσομεν, λαλήσομεν δὲ τὰ ἔργα τῶν ἀνθρώπων.*

⁵⁵ Basil of Caesarea, *De Spiritu sancto* 29,74 (FC 12, 302,8-304,22 Sieben).

the later bishop of Rome, Clement, and the exegete and teacher Origen. We have however observed striking differences between these accounts: while apologists like Justin and Origen share a common view regarding the importance of antiquity's educational heritage for Christian life and thought, the *Pseudo-Clementines* are severely critical of classical παιδεία. The biographical genre thus participates in the inner-Christian debate about the appropriate relationship to pagan culture, values, and ethics. And this debate was not to cease until the institutions of Greco-Roman education had fallen apart, that is, until the Middle Ages. However, even the outright criticism contained in the *Pseudo-Clementines* (or likewise the criticism voiced by Tatian and Tertullian) presupposes that Christianity exists in a world of education and cannot but deal with that fact in one way or another. And the literary shape of those biographical accounts indicates that stories about education and conversion were at least to be told in an artful manner.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Der Beitrag untersucht die Bedeutung autobiographischer Konversionsberichte im Blick auf die Bedeutung von Bildung im frühen Christentum. Während Justin eine *Tour d'horizon* durch die antike Philosophie unternimmt und sich aufgrund seiner einschlägigen Kenntnisse den paganen Philosophen als gewachsen, ja überlegen fühlt, sind die *pseudoklementinischen Homilien* ostentativ bildungskritisch, so dass der junge Protagonist eine spezifisch christliche Bildung erwirbt. Die Dankrede des Gregor Thaumaturgus an Origenes illustriert schließlich die grundlegende Rolle paganer Bildung und Philosophie für den Erwerb christlicher Bildung, so dass christlicherseits eine begründete Stellungnahme und Abgrenzung möglich wird. Allen drei Textkomplexen ist gemeinsam, dass die Autoren das Bedürfnis verspürten, ihre vor- oder außerchristliche Bildung zum christlichen Glauben und Leben ins Verhältnis zu setzen.