

The heads of the Catechetical School in Alexandria

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This is the second of two articles, the first article being concerned with general questions regarding the *Didaskaleion* in Alexandria. The account of the founding of the *Didaskaleion* in Alexandria is based on information provided by Eusebius of Caesarea (263–339), a Roman historian, exegete and Christian polemicist, in his well-known *Historia Ecclesiastica*, which he wrote during the first half of the 4th century. The heads of the *Didaskaleion* are, however, not indicated by Eusebius in an exhaustive order, as he referred to only some of them. The only ancient writer who attempted to assemble a list of heads at the *Didaskaleion* was Philip Sidetes (ca 380–440), also called Philip of Side (Side being a city in ancient Pamphylia, now Turkey), also a historian, of whom only a few fragments are extant. He provided a list of 13 heads ('teachers'), ending with Rhodon who allegedly was his teacher. This article will list and discuss all the scholars being referred to as heads of the *Didaskaleion* during her existence, which could date back to the second half of the 1st century CE and ended somewhere near the end of the 4th century.

Intradisciplinary and/or interdisciplinary implications: Research about Africa done by Africans (inhabitants of Africa) needs to increase, because in many ways Africa is silent or silenced about her past. The fundamental question is: 'Can anything good come out of Africa?' My answer is, 'Yes! Come and see.' Therefore these two articles attempt to indicate the significance of Africa which was actually the place where Christian Theology was founded. This has intradisciplinary as well as interdisciplinary implications; in this case the investigation is done from a theological perspective.

Introduction

There is a huge 'vagueness' about the heads of the *Didaskaleion* in Alexandria. The first part of the 'vagueness' relates to the (non)existence of the *Didaskaleion*, which has already been alluded to in the previous article. Concerning the heads of the School, the two historians, Eusebius and Philip Sidetes, provided information about the heads that was useful. However, the number of heads, as well as the sequence in which they were given, differs between the two historians. In his *Historia Ecclesiastica*, Eusebius referred to only eight heads. Philip Sidetes (referred to as a Pamphylian; cf. Berry 2007:58, because he was born in Side, better known as Iconium in Pamphylia) wrote a 'voluminous but chaotic *Christian History*' (Van den Broek 1996:199) of which only fragments remained. In Book 24 (also called the *Twenty-fourth Logos*, now only known as *Fragment 2*) of his *Historia Ecclesiastica*, written between 434 and 439, he listed 13 heads of the School, or 'teachers' as he called them. A much more recent book also provided information about the heads. It was written in 1982 by Iris Habib El Masri. What gives much credibility to her book is the background of El Masri. She was born in 1910 to a Coptic family, and her father was secretary to the General Congregation Council of the Coptic Orthodox Church in Egypt. In her book, she named 14 heads of the School, without specifically listing them. The comparison between the three lists, complemented by an integrated list, looks as follows (Table 1):

- Whilst Eusebius (*Hist. Eccl.* 5.10) had the conviction that Mark was the founder of the School, Philip Sidetes (*Fr. 2*) assigned that honour to Athenagoras, who lived almost a century after Mark. El Masri (1982:14) concurred with Eusebius that Mark founded the School, but she also thought that Athenagoras was the first head, with the implication that Mark appointed him, as even his successor, Justus, was also appointed by Mark (El Masri 1982:14). The problem with El Masri's postulation is that Athenagoras lived at a time that Mark was already long dead. Therefore, El Masri has put Athenagoras in the wrong chronological spot – before his three predecessors, Justus, Eumanus and Marianus, whilst he should have been placed after them. She acknowledged the fact that Pantaenus and Clement were his students – therefore putting him in the correct period with relation to them. It is curious why three heads should be put before Pantaenus if

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TABLE 1: All the possible heads of the *Didaskaleion*.

| Number | Eusebius of Caesarea | Number | Philip Sidetes | Number | El Masri | Number | Integrated list |
|--------|----------------------|--------|---------------------|--------|---------------------|--------|----------------------|
| 1. | Mark | 1. | Athenagoras | 1. | Athenagoras | 1. | Mark, the Evangelist |
| 2. | Pantaenus | 2. | Pantaenus | 2. | Justus | 2. | Justus |
| 3. | Clement | 3. | Origen | 3. | Eumanius | 3. | Eumanius |
| 4. | Origen | 4. | Heraclas | 4. | Marianus | 4. | Marianus |
| 5. | Heraclas | 5. | Dionysius Magnus | 5. | Pantaenus | 5. | Athenagoras |
| 6. | Dionysius Magnus | 6. | Clement | 6. | Clement | 6. | Pantaenus |
| 7. | Pierius | 7. | Pierius | 7. | Origen | 7. | Clement |
| 8. | Peter the Martyr | 8. | Theognostus | 8. | Heraclas | 8. | Origen |
| | | 9. | Serapion | 9. | Dionysius | 9. | Heraclas |
| | | 10. | Peter the Martyr | 10. | Theognostus | 10. | Dionysius Magnus |
| | | 11. | Macarius Politicus | 11. | Pierius | 11. | Theognostus |
| | | 12. | Didymus (the blind) | 12. | Peter the Martyr | 12. | Pierius |
| | | 13. | Rhodon | 13. | Achillas | 13. | Achillas |
| | | | | 14. | Didymus (the blind) | 14. | Peter the Martyr |
| | | | | | | 15. | Serapion |
| | | | | | | 16. | Macarius Politicus |
| | | | | | | 17. | Didymus (the blind) |
| | | | | | | 18. | Rhodon |

he was the student of Athenagoras. If El Masri did not want Mark to be the first head of the School, then Justus should be the first head if her chronology was correct.

- Eusebius left a huge gap between Mark (middle 1st century) and Pantaenus (last part of the 2nd century) whilst El Masri filled that with three heads that allegedly succeeded, in her version, Athenagoras – Justus, Eumanius and Marianus.
- Eusebius and El Masri were chronologically correct in their references to the successors of Pantaenus. Eusebius, however, did not mention Theognostus as a head between Dionysius Magnus and Pierius, whilst El Masri did. He also mentioned only one head after Pierius, namely Peter the Martyr who already died in 311. From his list, one could deduce that he thought that after Constantine's Edict of Milan in 313 the School was not needed anymore, as Christianity became a state religion.
- An interesting statement by El Masri (1982:15) is that when Pantaenus was sent to India by Demetrius, he entrusted the School to Clement, who was one of his students. She did not state that Clement took over from Pantaenus, but stated that when Pantaenus came back, he 'assumed' his office as head of the School. It is assumed that Clement just acted in a temporary capacity and that he was not at that stage regarded as the (permanent) head of the School.
- In his list Philip put some of the heads in an incorrect chronological order:
 - The obvious mistake he made was to put Clement after Dionysius, instead of before Origen.
- He had the view that Origen was the student of Pantaenus and not of Clement:
 - He swapped Pierius and Theognostus.
 - He left out Achillas as a possible head after Pierius.
 - He put Peter the Martyr after Serapion, whilst Serapion died almost half a century after Peter.
- El Masri (1982:75) referred to Achillas as a head of the School, but stated that he was a close disciple of Peter

the Martyr and that he succeeded Peter. However, according to Schaff's interpretation of Eusebius (*Hist. Eccl.* 7.32.25, 26), Achillas and Pierius were heads of the School simultaneously – at least for a part of their headship (Schaff 1885h:828, 830). The case of Schaff, with Eusebius behind him, seems to be stronger. Achillas was head before Peter but he was bishop of Alexandria after Peter. This could be the reason why El Masri also wanted him to be head after Peter.

- El Masri did not mention either Serapion or Macarius Politicus as heads of the School and did not mention that Didymus was the last head. However, she did not mention a head after Didymus the Blind.

Unfortunately, in the extant fragments we have of Philip Sidetes, there are no reasons given for the sequence in which he arranged the heads, nor do we have any explanation why he omitted those heads mentioned above. It could be an editorial error on his side, also because he did not elaborate on this.

To decide who 'really' the heads of the School in Alexandria were is actually impossible. In the end, it is decided to 'give everyone his due' and to name every head of the School that was referred to in this way. The question remains: who were the real heads of the School? With most certainty only two heads can really be named – Clement and Origen (cf. Fogarty 2004:29; Van den Broek 1996:200–201). All the others are disputed to some extent.

Heads of the *Didaskaleion*

The title 'head' refers to the person who was in control of the *Didaskaleion*. Titles like 'dean' and 'principal' are used by scholars. To some extent these titles are too strong when referring to the School in its early days, because these titles have more application to an official institution, which the School was not at first. This is the reason why the term 'head' is preferred here, because this term would fit all the stages

of the School, be it a house school at the head's house, or an institution or even a 'university'. Therefore, when reference is made in this article to the 'School' and the 'heads', these terms merely refer to the *Didaskaleion* and her teachers, no matter in which stage of development the *Didaskaleion* might have been.

It seems likely that when the catechumens or students were instructed at specific houses, people could refer to these houses as churches (cf. *De. Vir.* 8, 11 where the School is referred to as a church). Should this be the case, then the person in charge of the house should have had a liturgical function combined with the education that took place. This role would best be fulfilled by a priest (Van den Hoek 1997:77), which seems to have been the situation with Pantaenus and Clement and even before them. In Eusebius' *Hist. Eccl.* 6.11.6 Alexander, who was the bishop of Jerusalem, called Clement a *πρεσβύτερος*, translated with *ordained presbyter* or *priest*. Clement (*Prot.* 113.1) also called Pantaenus a *πρεσβύτερος*. Especially in Clement's time at the beginning of the 3rd century, the *πρεσβύτερος* had a 'position of particular strength' (Van den Hoek 1997:78, referring to Jerome's *Epist.* 146.1.6). However, despite this and after thorough discussions by scholars such as Munck (1933:174, 185) and Bardy (1937:82, as referred to by Neymeyr 1989:86), Van den Hoek (1997:71) argued that the School was 'essentially independent of the church'.

Mark, the evangelist

Born: Early 1st century

Died: 68 CE

Head of the School: Middle 40s – 68 CE (probably not continuously)

According to the 'first historians' – Eusebius and Jerome (who was one of the later attendees of the School) – Mark, one of Jesus' followers in Jerusalem (Clement called him 'the follower of Peter' in his *Hyp.* 1.1), 'founded' the School in the middle 40s CE (cf. *De. Vir.* 8, 11 where Jerome referred to it as a 'church'; Malaty 1995:208) and was therefore the first head (cf. *De. Vir.* 36; Malaty 1995:10). Malaty reached this conclusion by reading the *Hist. Eccl.* 2.16 where Eusebius mentioned that Mark was sent to Alexandria to preach there, although Eusebius did not state that Mark was the first head. Malaty regarded that as at least an indication of the 'early beginnings' of a school by the middle of the 1st century CE. El Masri (1982:1), citing the *Coptic Annals*, had the view that Mark only came to Egypt in 61 CE. This could be a follow-up on Mark's first visit. El Masri also stated that Mark started with the *Didaskaleion* (El Masri 1982:13 referring to Eusebius' *Hist. Eccl.* 5.10), but added that he was, however, not the first 'dean'.

Though his first name was in fact John, he was better known as Mark (Ac 12:12, 25¹). In Acts 12:12 it is stated that the house

of his mother Mary was a place in Jerusalem 'where many people had gathered and were praying'. He and his family must have been well known and trustworthy Christians, as Peter, the leader of the apostles, chose to go to their house after the angel had released him from jail (cf. Barnard 1964:145–150).

Mark allegedly was the cousin of Barnabas (cf. Col 4:10). When Saul (later better known as Paul) and Barnabas departed on their first missionary journey, they took him along (Ac 12:25). Something must have happened on the trip, as Mark left the group in Pamphylia (cf. Ac 15:37). He was the reason why Paul and Barnabas split up, as the latter wanted to take once again Mark with them on their second missionary journey, whilst Paul rejected the proposal. Mark then went with Barnabas to Cyprus. However, later on Paul mentioned Mark twice as someone working with him (cf. Col 4:10; 2 Tm 4:11), thereby indicating that he had made peace with Mark.

In his *Hist. Eccl.* 2.16, Eusebius testified to the outcome of Mark's work in Alexandria:

They say that this Mark was the first to be sent to preach in Egypt the Gospel which he had also put into writing, and was the first to establish Churches in Alexandria itself. The number of men and women who were there converted at the first attempt was so great, and their asceticism was so extraordinarily philosophic, that Philo thought it right to describe their conduct and assemblies and meals and all the rest of their manner of life.

Neither Clement nor Origen made any reference to Mark or to his work in the Delta City.

We at least have evidence that Mark was in Alexandria (*De. Vir.* 8; cf. Oden 2011:141; Pearson 2004:12), that he preached the gospel there and that he was martyred there in 68 CE (*De. Vir.* 8; cf. Oden 2011:157). Clement of Rome, in his *Letter to the Corinthians* in about 96 CE described Mark as follows:

Mark, the evangelist and first bishop of Alexandria, preached the gospel in Egypt, and there, drawn with ropes unto the fire, was burnt and afterwards buried in a place called there 'Bucolus' under the reign of Trajan the emperor.

Justus (also called Yostius)

Born: Uncertain

Died: Uncertain

Head of the School: 68–121 CE

El Masri (1982:14) mentioned that Mark, in his last days, appointed Justus as the new head of the School. Since Justus and his two successors, Eumanius and Marianus, were very busy with 'the pastoral care of the Fathers, especially with non-Christians' (Malaty 1995:183), they were not well known. Justus was ordained patriarch for Alexandria in 121 CE. Malaty (1995:183–184) stated that Pope Anianus 'took care' of the School during that time:

1. All the citations from Scripture are done from the New International Version.

Pope Anianus, who was ordained by St. Mark himself, took care of the School, and all who joined it renounced the world to devote their lives to the worship and service of God, living in true love and spiritual peace; there was no rich nor poor amongst them, for the rich gave their money to the poor, to be rich in God. They ate once a day at sunset, both men and women alike in this respect. We can say that the two most important characteristics of the School were the combination of study with spiritual life, such as prayer, fasting and almsgiving. It was open and men and women were coadmitted to the School.

At this stage, the School was seemingly not on a very high academic level, nor presenting any subjects other than Religious Studies, under the auspices of the bishop who took care of the institution (Malaty 1995:184).

Eumanius (also called Eumenius)

Born: Uncertain

Died: Uncertain

Head of the School: 121–?

Being appointed head of the School by his predecessor (El Masri 1982:14), he too was not well known, but was a righteous man, 'known as pure and chaste, famous for ordaining a large number of priests for preaching' (Malaty 1995:184). He served for more than a decade as archbishop during the reigns of Emperors Hadrian and Antoninus Pius.

Marianus (also called Marcianus)

Born: Uncertain

Died: 154 CE

Head of the School: During the first half of the 2nd century

He was born in Alexandria and succeeded Eumanius as head of the School. In 144, he was ordained as patriarch (El Masri [1982:14] referred to the office as 'head of the church'). He also served as archbishop for more than a decade under the reign of Antoninus Pius (Malaty 1995:185).

Athenagoras

Born: 133

Died: 190

Head of the School: During the second half of the 2nd century

According to Malaty (1995:183), Athenagoras (also called Athenagoras of Athens), a learned (Athenian) philosopher and Ante-Nicene apologist (Jacobsen 2014:82) and a contemporary of Justin Martyr and his disciple Tatian (who lived in Syria and wrote the *Diatessaron* – a Biblical paraphrase of the four Gospels), was a great influence on the School. He was so influential that the 'real beginning' of the School was ascribed to him by Philip Sidetes in his *Hist. Eccl.* (Fr. 2; cf. El Masri 1982:14; Malaty 1995:209; Quasten 1984:229). Despite his alleged popularity, Eusebius and Jerome ignored him in their writings. Only the patristic

writer, Methodius (the bishop of Olympos), quoted Athenagoras in his *Discourse on the Resurrection* 1.7.

Athenagoras held an academic position at the Musaion (one of the pagan schools in Alexandria) and was regarded as a leader in paganism, searching for mistakes in Christianity, just as the other Platonic philosophers did. Whilst he was studying the Scriptures for mistakes, 'he was so powerfully seized by the Holy Spirit that he became a defender of the faith he was attacking' (Malaty 1995:209; cf. El Masri 1982:14). He was converted to Christianity in circa 176 and, according to Malaty (1995:209–210), became one of the most famous heads of the School, whilst still embracing philosophy (cf. Barnard 1972:13). The *Coptic Orthodox Church Network* (s.a.) ascribed the following characteristics to him:

- He was distinguished amongst the apologists by his gentlemanly tone.
- He was a bookish man.
- His organisation of materials was orderly. His style was atticistic, which means that he used the character or idiom of the Attic dialect in another dialect or language.
- His acquaintance with literature and mythology was profound: he quoted Homer 18 times, Euripides seven times, Hesiod twice and Pindar, Aeschylus and Callimachus each once.

Pantaenus

Born: Uncertain

Died: 210/212 CE

Head of the School: 180–189/192

He is also referred to as Pantenus (cf. Van den Broek 1996:199; Van den Hoek 1997:66) or Pantanaeus (cf. *St. Marks Coptic Church, Melbourne* s.a.). He was probably a Sicilian by birth (cf. Schaff 1885f:2000) and was trained as a Stoic after which he became a convert Stoic (Eusebius' *Hist. Eccl.* 5.10.1ff.; cf. Fogarty 2004:29). After being trained in Alexandria, he went to Judaea and proclaimed the gospel there (cf. Schaff 1885f:2000). On his return to Alexandria he became the head of the School (from 180–189/192) when Commodus was the emperor (cf. Pearson 2004:27). According to the website *Hellbusters* (s.a.), the School was, up to the time of Pantaenus, a school of proselytes – a Sunday school focused on catechumens, or a house school. It surely has grown into a more substantial institution during the time of Pantaenus, as he made it a theological seminary.

Eusebius remarked the following about him:

At that time a man most famous for his learning, whose name was Pantaenus, headed the course of studies (διατριβή) of the faithful there [in Alexandria], since, from an old tradition (ἐξ ἀρχαίου ἔθους), a school (διδασκαλεῖον) of sacred words existed among them. (*Hist. Eccl.* 5.10.1.4; cf. *Hist. Eccl.* 6.6.1)

Although the School was 'from an old tradition', Eusebius did not mention that Pantaenus had a predecessor(s).

In his *Hist. Eccl.* 5.10.1ff. Eusebius recorded that Pantaenus went on a missionary trip to India² and that ‘after many virtuous actions, he, Pantaenus, was head of the school in Alexandria until his death, explaining through teaching and writing the treasures of the divine beliefs’. In this passage, Eusebius was seemingly referring to a second period that Pantaenus headed the School (cf. El Masri 1982:15, referred to above) and that he did so until his death in 210 or 212. Schaff (1885b:371), however, more correctly had the view that Pantaenus was only head of the School until 189 (Pearson 2004:27 said it could be until 192), after which he was succeeded by Clement, and then went on a missionary tour to the East. This is most likely, as Clement already retired from Alexandria in 202 under the persecution of Severus.

Schaff (1885f:2066) stated the following:

The world owes more to Pantænus than to all the other Stoics put together. His mind discovered that true philosophy is found, not in the Porch, but in Nazareth, in Gethsemane, in Gabbatha, in Golgotha; and he set himself to make it known to the world. (cf. Schaff 1885b:369)

Actually, Pantaenus, however great his influence upon those of his day may have been, is to us scarcely more than a name (Enslin 1954:218–219). In the words of Enslin (1954):

The utter failure by Clement to quote from one whom he obviously prized highly is not easily explained were written works available. Actually the rareness with which Clement calls him by name is surprising ... In Clement’s extant writing, a fragment from the *Eclogae Propheticae* [56.2], Pantaenus is mentioned once. (p. 219)

Eusebius, however, in his *Hist. Eccl.* 5.11, alleged that Clement named his predecessor more, stating: ‘In his “Hypotypeses” he [Clement] speaks of Pantænus by name as his teacher. It seems to me that he alludes to the same person also in his “Stromata”’. The reference to Pantaenus in the *Hypotypeses* (6.13.3) that Eusebius referred to could be true (though it has not been preserved – cf. Schaff 1885h:534), but in the *Stromateis* (1.1) Clement referred to one of his teachers (without naming the person) as ‘a Hebrew in Palestine’. To identify that person as Pantaenus, as Eusebius did, is dubious, as Pantaenus was a Stoic philosopher, not likely to be identified as a Hebrew of Palestine (cf. *New Advent Catholic Encyclopedia* [n.d.-f] on *Pantaenus* s.a.). On the other hand, though not quite likely, Eusebius could understand it as a reference to Pantaenus who was in Palestine before becoming head of the School.

Pantaenus most definitely preceded Clement and Origen in the study of Greek philosophy as an aid to theology. Eusebius referred to Origen who defended his use of Greek philosophers by appealing to the example of Pantaenus ‘who

benefited many before our time by his thorough preparation in such things’ (*Hist. Eccl.* 6.19). Pantaenus must have been in high regard by both Clement and Origen, because ‘they said Pantænus had been a hearer of men who had seen the Apostles’ (Photius, *Bibl. Cod.* 118). Pantaenus was martyred in 210 or 212 CE (*Hellbusters* s.a.).

Collaboration between Pantaenus and Clement

It has been alluded to that Pantaenus went on a mission trip to India. During that time, Clement filled his place in a temporary capacity. On Pantaenus’ arrival back he assumed the office, but according to El Masri (1982:15–16) Clement from then on was his co-worker. Their first big task was to translate the Gospel (this could be a reference to Mark’s Gospel, as El Masri did not explicate it) into the native tongue of Egypt. As the standard form of written communication during that time was *hieroglyphic pictograph* or *demotic script*, it was very difficult for the natives to comprehend. Pantaenus and Clement then decided to develop an easy script, which would replace the ancient hieroglyphs. Eventually this became the Coptic language, which was the ‘pharaonic speech written in the Greek alphabets with the addition of seven letters for sounds which did not exist in Greek, but existed in the [*sic*] Egyptian’ (El Masri 1982:15). Butler (1884:247) remarked about this: ‘The romance of language could go no further than to join the speech of Pharaoh and the writing of Homer in the service book of a Christian Egyptian’.

Their second task was even bigger: upon the positive reaction of the people to their translation of the Gospel, they decided to translate the whole Bible into Coptic (cf. El Masri 1982:16).

Clement

Born: 159

Died: 215

Head of the School: 193–202

Clement’s full name was Titos Flavios Klemens. He was born in Athens³ to a pagan family during the reign of emperor Antoninus Pius (Roberts & Donaldson 2004:166), with Polycarp still living and with Justin and Irenaeus in their prime. Schaff (1885b:369) referred as follows to the dawn of one of the greatest church fathers in history.

The 2nd century of illumination is drawing to a close, as the great name of this Father comes into view, and introduces us to a new stage of the Church’s progress. Clement, who had followed Tatian to the East, tracks Pantænus to Egypt, and comes with his Attic scholarship to be his pupil in the school of Christ.

Before he went to Alexandria, he first studied under Christian teachers in Greece, Magna Graecia, Syria and Palestine (Van den Broek 1995:42). Because of the missionary work done by especially Paul and Peter, gentile Christians have travelled to Alexandria to study there. Pagans also attended the School

2. Interestingly, the ‘whole East’ (the ‘whole East’ referred to the known Christendom during that time, cf. Schaff 1885b:734) was centred in Alexandria. In fact, the West was still almost entirely a missionary field. But then Schaff (1885b:734) added that missionaries had already visited other parts of the ‘East’: ‘Demetrius, then bishop, at the times with which we are now concerned, sent Pantænus to convert the Hindoos, and, whatever his success or failure there, he brought back reports that Christians were there before him, the offspring of St. Bartholomew’s preaching; and, in proof thereof, he brought with him a copy of St. Matthew’s Gospel in the Hebrew tongue which became one of the treasures of the church on the Nile’.

3. Alexandria is given as an unconvincing alternative by Enslin (1954:220–221).

to study philosophy there (cf. Hyldahl 2014:140). After some extensive travelling, Clement also reached Alexandria and became a student of Pantaenus (Eusebius' *Hist. Eccl.* 6.6). Apparently, Pantaenus' lectures inspired him so much that he was converted to Christianity (cf. Hyldahl 2014:140). According to El Masri (1982:14), he was also a student of Athenagoras.

It is not certain when he became the head of the School. Fogarty (2004:125) had the view that he succeeded Pantaenus as early as 180, but that was the time when Pantaenus became the head. Osborn (2005:21) stated that Clement became head in 193. This would be in accordance to Pearson (referred to above), who stated that Pantaenus was head until 192. During the time that Clement headed the *Didaskaleion*, he 'became the leading intellectual voice of the Christian community in Alexandria' (Fogarty 2004:125). One of his most famous students was Origen, who joined the School in 200 CE (Fogarty 2004:29).

Whilst Clement was head of the School, he was also affiliated with the Alexandrian church, as Eusebius (*Hist. Eccl.* 6.11.6) referred to him as a *πρεσβύτερος* (an ordained presbyter) – so did Jerome in his *Letter XX to Magnus an Orator of Rome 4* (cf. Roberts & Donaldson 2004:166–167; Williamson 1989:185). He had no reputation as a minister (Olsen 1999:85).

By the beginning of the 3rd century, Emperor Severus became alarmed by the increasing number of the believers in Alexandria and its environs. In 201–202, he authorised persecution of the Christians in Egypt and martyred them in Alexandria. At that time, Clement left Alexandria for Palestine, possibly for Caesarea (Enslin 1954:223; Fogarty 2004:127; Malaty 1995:263). Clement left Alexandria surely not as a coward fleeing danger, else Alexander, himself a confessor, would scarcely have viewed his advent in Caesarea as in accordance with the will of God, and that he spent some time in Caesarea in effective service; that possibly – this is far from sure – he had visited Antioch on his way from Alexandria (Enslin 1954:223).

Not much is really known about his life, except what we learn from his writings and from what others witnessed about him. Origen remarked in one of his major works, *Contra Celsum* 1.48, that Clement 'at all times avoided unnecessary talk about himself'.

The early church could not offer a better example of an intellectual Christian than Clement. He insisted that the goal of Christian education is 'practical, not theoretical and its aim is to improve the soul, not to teach, and to train it up to a virtuous, not an intellectual, life' (*Paed.* 1.1.1.4–1.1.2.1). Clement maintained a threefold process for acquiring knowledge: study (leads to) knowledge (leads to) action (cf. Osborn 2005:217). He reserved Biblical interpretation for the Christian intellectual, purely out of concern for misunderstanding (the Protestant Reformation also had this conviction), and not to constitute an 'elitist theology' as Gonzalez (1984:73) claimed.

Clement's brilliance and comprehensiveness in his works lay a vital, sophisticated foundation for the development of Christian theology and was a key reason for the ongoing development of theological work carried out by his successors at the *Didaskaleion*. According to MacCulloch (2009:148), Clement was one of the earliest Christian writers on moral theology, due to his detailed address on a Christian's daily life, focused on moral progress as found in Books 2 and 3 of his *Paedagogus*.

Due to the philosophical background of Clement, Schaff (1910:782) called him the father of the Christian philosophy in Alexandria. As Clement was influenced by Philo, his aim was to make Christianity acceptable to the students in Greek philosophy (Isichei 1995:20). These, amongst other considerations, made Schaff (1885d:696) declare Clement the founder of formalised Christianity. Enslin (1954:240) remarked that '[i]t might even be said that, unlike many of his early colleagues, he made it pleasant to become a Christian'.

For some time Clement was in Jerusalem at the beginning of the reign of Caracalla, still teaching Christians and other pilgrims. According to a letter of Alexander, then bishop of Jerusalem, to Origen, it became clear that Clement had died:

For this also has proved to be the will of God, as you know, that the friendship that comes to us from our forefathers should remain unshaken, or rather grow warmer and more steadfast. For we acknowledge as fathers those blessed ones who went before us, with whom we shall be before long: Pantaenus, truly blessed and my master, and the holy Clement, who was my master and profited me, and all others like them. Through these I came to know you, who are the best in all things, and my master and brother. (cf. Eusebius' *Hist. Eccl.* 6.14.8ff.)

This letter can be dated at about 216 or 217, which means that Clement died during that time or just before (Enslin 1954:223). It can be deduced from this letter that Alexander was also a student of Clement. Schaff (1885b:371) dated his death to 220, without referring to the said letter.

Origen – The true African

Born: 185

Died: 253/254

Head of the School: 203–234

Origenes, most commonly known as Origen (also referred to as Origen Adamanti[n]us – cf. *De. Vir.* 54; *New Advent Catholic Encyclopedia* [n.d.-d] on Origen s.a.; *New Advent Catholic Encyclopedia* [n.d.-e] on Origen Adamantius s.a.), was born and grew up in Africa. It is not clear what the term 'Adamantius' really meant. Schaff (1885c:547) referred to this as his surname and characteristics: 'His surname denotes the strength, clearness, and point of his mind and methods'. Tripolitis (1985:2) postulated that it meant 'Man of Steel'.

Origen was born in Alexandria to (most probably) Christian parents (cf. Barrett 2011:37). The fact that his name meant 'born of Horus' could indicate that his parents were only

converted after his birth (Isichei 1995:21). His parents most probably spoke the indigenous language, but also Greek, fluently. He was a product of the eclectic intellectual environment of the Egyptian metropolis of Alexandria (Tripolitis 1985:1) and grew up as a boy of 'great intellectual brilliance' (Duncan 2011:18). From 'his earliest youth' he devoted himself to study the Scriptures (Schaff 1885g:529). His father, Leonides, who was a teacher in rhetoric or grammar (Schaff 1885c:547), educated Origen in various branches of Grecian learning, as well as in the reading of Scriptures (Eusebius' *Hist. Eccl.* 6.2.6, 6.2.8; cf. Schaff 1885c:547). Even at a youthful age, he already looked past the plain and obvious meaning of the text to penetrate into its deeper significance (Eusebius' *Hist. Eccl.* 6.2.9).

He somehow survived the persecution by Septimius Severus of 202, during which his father was beheaded (Eusebius' *Hist. Eccl.* 6.1). According to Severus (*Hist. Aug.* 17.1–2), these persecutions prohibited conversion to Judaism and Christianity, whilst Crouzel (1989:5) had the view that they were aimed at the catechists (heads) of the School in particular. Many people and/or Christians, mostly Greek and Roman citizens, fled the city (Holliday 2011:676). Quite a few people approached Origen during these times, resulting in the spread of Christianity amongst them. Eusebius⁴ (*Hist. Eccl.* 6.3.1) referred to Clement and Origen as witnesses to the exodus of Christians from the city.

Origen was eager for martyrdom (Eusebius' *Hist. Eccl.* 6.2.3), but his mother dissuaded him from exposing himself to that kind of danger (Eusebius' *Hist. Eccl.* 6.2.5; cf. El Masri 1982:26). After his father was martyred, Origen and his family were reduced to extreme poverty, as their belongings were confiscated to the imperial treasury – 'a customary practice with the Romans' (El Masri 1982:26; Eusebius' *Hist. Eccl.* 6.2.13). Fortunately, a rich Christian woman of Alexandria took Origen, who was the eldest of seven children (El Masri [1982:27] thought the lady took all of them in), into her house and gave him everything he needed (Eusebius' *Hist. Eccl.* 6.2.13; cf. Löhr 2010:164; Robertson 1875:139; Scholten 1995:19). A gnostic teacher by the name of Paul of Antioch also lived in that house, having been adopted by the benefactor to be her heir (Eusebius' *Hist. Eccl.* 6.2.14).

After some time Origen left the house and became a teacher of grammar. As he was very diligent and professional in his work, he attracted many students like Plutarch (who died a martyr) and Heraclas, who would become head of the School after him (Eusebius' *Hist. Eccl.* 6.3.2; cf. Schaff 1885c:548). At the *Didaskaleion* he was under the instruction of Clement. Olson (1999:100–101) speculated that Origen could also have attended a philosophical school in Alexandria, perhaps leading to his participation in founding Neo-Platonism, that was mainly attributed to Ammonius Saccas (Barrett 2011:48).

Clement left the *Didaskaleion* that had been broken up by the persecution. According to Eusebius (*Hist. Eccl.* 6.3.3 & 6.15.1), Origen was appointed head of the School in 203 by Bishop Demetrius of Alexandria:

He was in his eighteenth year when he became head of the school of catechetical instruction (*διδασκαλεῖον*), and there he progressed during the persecutions at the time of Aquila, the governor of Alexandria. (cf. El Masri 1982:22)

The *Didaskaleion* seemingly reached her zenith whilst he headed it. This was the time that he started writing. He was probably the most prolific writer of the ancient world (Olson 1999:101). Origen wrote for the educated because he realised that if Christianity was to succeed in conquering the world and moulding its civilisation, it had to justify itself to the intellect as well as to the heart of humankind (Barrett 2011:39). He grew as theologian to become the father of theology (cf. *Coptic Orthodox Church Network* s.a.).

After his appointment, Origen lived in poverty and even sold his own small library to make ends meet (Eusebius' *Hist. Eccl.* 6.3.9; cf. Duncan 2011:19). This was because he refused all remuneration for his work (cf. Schaff 1885c:548). After a day at School, he spent most of the night investigating Scriptures, sleeping on the ground and fasting frequently (Eusebius' *Hist. Eccl.* 6.3.9). Later on, he found a patron in Ambrosius, who supported him financially (Schaff 1885c:550; Scholten 1995:20).

Eusebius reported that when Origen discovered that he had more work than he could handle, he decided on Heraclas to assist him (*Hist. Eccl.* 6.15.1; cf. *Hist. Eccl.* 14.11 & 26.1). In 215, Origen's work at the School was interrupted for a short whilst as he was driven from the city because of the furious attack of Emperor Caracalla upon the Alexandrians. He returned home and in 228 was sent by Demetrius on a mission to Achaia to preach there (El Masri 1982:23). On his return he passed through Caesarea in Palestine, where he also preached in churches, being requested and ordained to do so by Alexander and Theoctistus, the bishops of Jerusalem and Caesarea respectively (Eusebius' *Hist. Eccl.* 6.8.4; cf. *Hist. Eccl.* 6.19.17).

Origen was 40 years old before he started writing *extensively* (Hillerbrand 2012:41). Being a native Egyptian, he wrote much of his work in Africa and later transmitted his extensive African library and teaching to *Caesarea Palestina*. Apart from Greek and unusual for his time, Origen also studied Hebrew, which would benefit his Scriptural interpretation considerably (Schaff 1885c:549). Because he was such a prolific writer and a preacher, he was much in demand in foreign countries. Demetrius, the bishop of Alexandria, was not pleased with all the foreign journeys of Origen. He even tried to denounce Origen, but the churches in Greece and Palestine refused to endorse it. This could have started when Demetrius refused to ordain Origen as a priest, referring amongst others, to his 'objectionable doctrines' (cf. Vrettos

4. Van den Hoek (1997:62) articulated that the life of Origen was Eusebius' favourite subject in his writings.

2001:190), which could only be a reference to his philosophical background. The bishop then ordered him to come back to the School (cf. Schaff 1885c:549).

In 228/229, Origen travelled to Greece on some church business (called 'ecclesiastical affairs' in Eusebius' *Hist. Eccl.* 6.23.4). On his way he stopped at Caesarea and was then ordained as a presbyter by the same bishops who had invited him to preach on his previous visit. When Origen returned to Alexandria some 2 years later, he learned that Demetrius was angry with him, as he felt that his authority had been flouted. As Origen was only a layman, his bishop, Demetrius, regarded this action as a breach of ecclesiastical discipline. In 231 Demetrius summoned a synod (consisting of Egyptian bishops and Alexandrian presbyters) and declared Origen unworthy to be head of the School and excommunicated him from the fellowship of the church of Alexandria (cf. Holliday 2011:675; Schaff 1885c:551). According to El Masri (1982:23–24), the bishop excommunicated him on two reasons:

- The ordination of an Egyptian priest was the prerogative of the church of Egypt.
- Origen was a eunuch (cf. later) and 'thus had lost the right to priestly ordination, for only men without blemish could be ordained' (El Masri 1982:24; Eusebius' *Hist. Eccl.* 6.8).

According to El Masri (1982:32), Origen, upon his excommunication, did not return to the School but in 234 went to Palestine where he raised the Biblical and Theological School to soon outshine the School in Alexandria (cf. Holliday 2011:674–696). In concurrence with Holliday, Schaff also had the opinion that Origen started this school in Caesarea (cf. Schaff 1885g:529), but Fletcher (2004) thought that Pamphilus founded the school. In his new homeland, Origen continued with his literary work, his continuous preaching and his lecturing. Amongst his students was Gregory Thaumaturgus (the Wonderworker), who later became bishop of New Caesarea (cf. Schaff 1885d:3).

When Origen left Alexandria the church and the School almost became the same institution, as his two successors, Heraclas and Dionysius, both became bishops of the Alexandrian church, as soon as 1 year after he has left (cf. Eusebius' *Hist. Eccl.* 6.26; 29.4). The heads were now also officials of the church, 'but the bishops seem to have granted them a relatively independent position' (Van den Broek 1995:47).

Although Origen returned to Alexandria once, he was banned by Heraclas and then made Caesarea his permanent base (Chang 2010:16). During these days, there was a lack of cohesion amongst early Christians. In 250, Emperor Decius started a wave of persecutions against the Christians. They arrested and tortured Origen, imprisoning him in Tyre, but he managed to survive. He died a few years later, in 253 (Barrett 2011:28), or 254 (Schaff 1885c:554) in Tyre, probably because of the torture (cf. also *De. Vir.* 54).

Schaff (1885c) characterised Origen as follows:

The character of Origen is singularly pure and noble; for his moral qualities are as remarkable as his intellectual gifts. The history of the Church records the names of few whose patience and meekness under unmerited suffering were more conspicuous than his. (p. 554)

Origen did not want to add knowledge to his students, but to 'teach them to answer by themselves the questions that arose in the process of learning one or another discipline' (Behr, Louth & Conomos 2003:53). He was highly student oriented and he aimed to preserve unity amongst his classes, based on mutual respect and friendship. He therefore knew his students well. He saw the most important task as teaching the love of God (Barrett 2011:42). Origen rather wanted to be a lifelong mentor than to be a teacher (cf. Green 2004:112). The way in which he conducted his personal spiritual life was a good example to his students and it attracted them.

From his youth Origen was a master of allegory, where Scripture is seen as having several layers of meaning. Whereas the literal interpretation has little regard for history (MacCulloch 2009:112), the allegorical interpretation resembles the spiritual reality (Eusebius' *Hist. Eccl.* 6.19.8; cf. Lynch 2010:101; Schaff 1885c:556). According to Origen, literal truth is more superficial, whilst allegorical (mythological) truth is the reality and it requires much discrimination for discovery. He 'inherited' this way of interpretation from Philo and from Alexandrian Judaism before Philo (Sundkler & Steed 2000:11).

Origen also contributed on the level of typology. Using typology, he compared the Old and New Testaments with each other. At that stage, the canon of the New Testament was not yet set. He already accepted the four Gospels as authoritative (Barrett 2011:54). The struggle Christians faced at that time was to reconcile the Old Testament with the new covenant presented in the New Testament. Origen utilised typology to interpret both, understanding the elements of the Old Testament as a foreshadow of what was to come in the New Testament. In the words of Barrett (2011:55): 'Typology was the same method which explained allegorical interpretation; the literal meaning of scripture was confronted by the deeper, and more elusive, figurative meaning'. He saw Biblical interpretation as something that was open for misunderstanding and therefore he preferred to reserve it only for the spiritual elite – evoking a sort of Christian elitism (*contra* Clement).

Added to the fact that Origen followed his teacher, Clement, adhering to the Platonic cardinal virtues of wisdom, self-control, justice and courage, he advocated an ascetic lifestyle, but a little different from many others: Instead of withdrawing from society, he rather limited himself from physical comforts (cf. Williamson 1989:182–183). For him deeds spoke louder than words (cf. Harris 1966:34). His ascetism became extreme, to such an extent that he castrated

himself for the sake of the Kingdom (Justin Martyr's *Apol.* 1.29; cf. Duncan 2011:19; Isichei 1995:22), due to a:

[P]erverted interpretation of our Lord's words in Matthew xix. 12 and the desire to place himself beyond the reach of temptation in the intercourse which he necessarily had to hold with youthful female catechumens. (Schaff 1885c:549)⁵

Origen was a rational Christian philosopher, but also a dogmatic theologian (cf. Harris 1966:12). He lacked a substantial Christian point of historical reference, but he allowed spiritual and intellectual convictions to guide his theological efforts (cf. Barrett 2011:56): 'Origen's work was the first attempt at a system of Christian doctrine, or philosophy of the Christian faith; a pivotal moment in the development of Christian thought' (Barrett 2011:40; cf. Harris 1966:42). Isichei (1995:21) described him as the 'first major thinker of the early church seriously to tackle the intractable problems of Christianity'. Like other writers of his time, this true African did not give much attention to the Holy Spirit, but was much concerned with the relationship between the Father and the Son.

After his death, he was accused of the following (cf. *The Development of the Canon of the New Testament* s.a.):

- He regarded the Son as inferior to the Father, acting as a foreshadow to Arianism (of the 4th century).
- He was spiritualising away the resurrection of the body.
- He denied the existence of hell.
- He proclaimed a morally enervating universalism.
- He also speculated about pre-existent souls and world cycles.
- With his allegorical interpretation, he dissolved redemptive history into timeless myth, therefore turning Christianity into a kind of Gnosticism.

Schaff (1885c) commented on the fact that he was branded as a heretic:

However, no doubt the chief cause of his being regarded as a heretic is to be found in the haste with which he allowed many of his writings to be published. Had he considered more carefully what he intended to bring before the public eye, less occasion would have been furnished to objectors, and the memory of one of the greatest scholars and most devoted Christians that the world has ever seen would have been freed, to a great extent at least, from the reproach of heresy. (p. 554)

Heraclas

Born: 177

Died: 247/248

Head of the School: 231–247/248

He was 5 years older than Origen, but one of his first students. Eusebius (*Hist. Eccl.* 6.19) recorded what Origen said about Heraclas:

⁵For clarity's sake the verse of Mt 19:12 is attached: 'For there are eunuchs who were born that way, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by others – and there are those who choose to live like eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. The one who can accept this should accept it'.

In this we imitated Pantænus, who before our day assisted many and had no little knowledge of these matters, and Heraclas, who is now one of the priests of Alexandria, whom I found a hearer of my own teacher of philosophical studies, for he had already been with him for five years before I began to attend these lectures.

Origen converted both him and his brother Plutarch to Christianity. According to Eusebius (*Hist. Eccl.* 6.33), after his brother's martyrdom, Heraclas 'gave a great example of philosophical life and *askesis*'. Being a distinguished philosopher who studied for 5 years under Ammonius Saccas (Van den Broek 1995:46), he became the assistant of Origen at the *Didaskaleion* to teach the newly converted in 218 (Eusebius' *Hist. Eccl.* 6.15) and was made priest by bishop Demetrius. In 231, when Demetrius condemned Origen, Heraclas became the head of the School and soon after that, he succeeded Demetrius as bishop (patriarch). When Origen returned to Alexandria after leaving for Caesarea in 234 CE, Heraclas deposed him from the priesthood and banished him out of Egypt. Photius (*Synag. Kai Apod.* 9 – cf. also Chang 2010:16; *New Advent Catholic Encyclopedia* [n.d.-c] on Heraclas s.a.) recorded it as follows:

In the days of the most holy Heraclas, Origen, called Adamantius, was plainly expounding his own heresy on Wednesdays and Fridays; the said holy Heraclas therefore separated him from the Church and drove him from Alexandria, as a distorter of the wholesome doctrine and a perverter of the orthodox faith.

Heraclas was martyred in 247/248 (*New Advent Catholic Encyclopedia* [n.d.-c] on Heraclas s.a.). Eusebius only reported that he died (*Hist. Eccl.* 6.35).

Dionysius Magnus ('the Great')

Born: 190/200

Died: 265

Head of the School: ca 232–247

Besides being referred to as *Dionysius of Alexandria* by Jerome (*De. Vir.* 69), he was called *The great bishop of Alexandria* (ὁ μέγας Ἀλεξανδρέων ἐπίσκοπος) by Eusebius (in the preface to *Hist. Eccl.* 7.30) and *The illustrious and blessed bishop* by Basil (in his *Letter 70: Without address*). He was born from distinguished pagan parentage in Alexandria. He was a star worshipper (a *Sabeian*) and a physician (El Masri 1982:43), and he attended various schools of philosophy, before he became a Christian under the influence of Origen (Roberts & Donaldson 1871:157). Thereafter he was made a presbyter in Alexandria. He studied together with Gregory Thaumaturgus.

When Heraclas became bishop in the third year of Emperor Philip, Dionysius succeeded him as head of the *Didaskaleion*. He stayed on as head for some 15 years, even after he had succeeded Heraclas as bishop in 246. He was bishop of Alexandria, 'at that time, beyond all comparison, the greatest and the most powerful See of Christendom'

(Schaff 1885d:181) until 248 and then again from 264 to 265. According to Eusebius, Dionysius was the most outstanding bishop of the 3rd century, after Cyprian. According to a *scholium* in the *Codex Amerbachianus*, he held the position of bishop without the mentioned break between 248 and 264, for 17 years on end.

In 249, there was a great persecution by Emperor Decius. Dionysius was arrested and taken to a small town called Taposiris (Eusebius' *Hist. Eccl.* 6.40.4). He miraculously escaped (Eusebius' *Hist. Eccl.* 6.40.7–9). Numbers of Christians were martyred in the cities and villages. After the persecution came the pestilence. Dionysius (in his *Epistle XII: To the Alexandrians*) described how the heathen thrust away their sick, fled from their own relatives and threw bodies half dead on the streets. Their bishop recounted the Christians' heroic acts of mercy. He also described how many priests, deacons and persons of merit died from succouring others. According to him, these deaths were in no way inferior to martyrdom.

When Origen died in 253/254, Dionysius, who was in Libya at that time, wrote a letter in his praise to Theotecnus of Caesarea. In 257, under Emperor Valerian, he was banished from Alexandria after a trial before Aemilianus, the prefect of Egypt (*Catholic Online* s.a.). When toleration was decreed by Emperor Gallienus in 260, Dionysius returned to Alexandria. He stayed there and died an old man.

According to the *New Advent Catholic Encyclopedia* (n.d.-c) on *Dionysius of Alexandria* (s.a.), there were quite a few similarities between him and Cyprian:

- They were better administrators than theologians were.
- Their writings usually took the form of letters.
- Both of them were converts from paganism.
- Both were engaged in the controversies as to the restoration of those who had lapsed in the Decian persecution, concerning Novatian and with regard to the iteration of heretical baptism.
- Both of them corresponded with the popes of their day.

Dionysius had a widespread influence on the church of both the East and the West. Schaff (1885d:181) noted that his life ran in a parallel line with that of Gregory and that both of them died on the same day.

It was mainly Eusebius (*Hist. Eccl.* 6 & 7; *Praep. Evang.* 14) who reported about Dionysius and to some extent Jerome (*De. Vir.* 69; *Praef. ad Lib.* 18 – *Comment. in Esaiam*), Athanasius (*De Sent. Dion. & De Syn. Nic. Dec.*) and Basil (*De Spir. Sanc.* 29; *Epist. ad Amphiloch. & Epist. ad Max.*).

When Dionysius died, being the bishop of Alexandria, the Delta City was in such high regard as the 'centre and bulwark of Christian scholarship' that it was referred to as a 'second Jerusalem' (El Masri 1982:55).

Theognostus

Born: 210

Died: 270

Head of the School: 260/265–270

Dionysius, the then bishop of Alexandria, appointed Theognostus to be the head of the School (El Masri 1982:45). Neither Eusebius nor Jerome mentioned him, but Athanasius (the 20th bishop of Alexandria) referred to him as ἀνὴρ λόγιος ('an eloquent and learned man' – *De Decret. Nic. Syn.* 25) and Θεόγνωστος ὁ θαυμάσιος καὶ σπουδαῖος ('the admirable and zealous Theognostus' – *Epist. ad Ser.* 4.9). According to Photius (*Bibl. Cod.* 106), he too was a student of Origen and later became head of the *Didaskaleion* at about 260 or 265 CE (Schaff 1885d:374). He died in Heliopolis (Egypt) in 270.

Pierius

Born: Uncertain

Died: After 309

Head of the School: 270 to uncertain

Dionysius also appointed Pierius as head of the School after the death of Theognostus (El Masri 1982:45). He was a priest or presbyter and head of the School at the same time as Achillas (Eusebius' *Hist. Eccl.* 7.32.25, 26, 30), the Greek writer. At that time Theonas was the bishop (pope) of the city (cf. *De. Vir.* 76). Eusebius referred to him because he was well known for his voluntary poverty, his ascetism, his skills in philosophy as well as his exegesis and exposition of the Scriptures and his sermons in the church (cf. *Hist. Eccl.* 6.2.15, 3.8–9). He was also an ascetic and an exegetical writer. According to Jerome (*De. Vir.* 76), he was well qualified in dialectic and rhetoric, and was called *Origenes junior* (*Origen the younger*), or 'the new Origen' (cf. El Masri 1982:45; Van den Broek 1996:205), as he furthered the doctrines set by Origen. The doctrines of Origen, which he followed, were on the Holy Spirit and the pre-existence of souls (Schaff 1885d:378).

He left Alexandria for Rome after the persecutions of Diocletian in 284. He died in Rome. Philip Sidetes (*Fr.* 4.7, referring to Theodorus *Book* 13) postulated that he was martyred.

Achillas

Born: Uncertain

Died: 313

Head of the School: 303

Achillas, mentioned under the previous heading, is also said to be one of the heads of the School after Pierius (Eusebius' *Hist. Eccl.* 7.32.30; cf. El Masri 1982:93; Scholten 1995:17), but only for a short time. He was the eighteenth bishop of Alexandria from 311 to 313. He was head of the School before Peter the Martyr, but became bishop of Alexandria after Peter.

Together with Pierius (already mentioned), he was ordained a presbyter by Pope Theonas and became head of the School after Pierius. El Masri (1982:93) gave the date as 303. There is a possibility that he was head of the School at the same time as Pierius, distributing the work between them as Origen and Heraclas did (cf. Scholten 1995:33). When he became bishop, he reinstated Arius as priest in Alexandria that was after Peter the Martyr had excommunicated Arius (cf. Schaff 1885d:620). Achillas was famous for his work in Greek philosophy and theological science. He was called 'Achillas the Great' by Athanasius (*Ad Epis. Part 2: To the Bishops of Egypt* 2.23).

Peter the Martyr

Born: Uncertain

Died: 311

Head of the School: Beginning of the 4th century

El Masri (1982:72) called Peter a 'sagacious person'. Butler (1846) reported about Peter as follows:

Eusebius calls this great prelate the excellent doctor of the Christian religion, and the chief and divine ornament of bishops; and tells us that he was admirable both for his extraordinary virtue and for his skill in the sciences and profound knowledge of the Holy Scriptures. (p. 511)

These words originated from *Hist. Eccl.* 7.32, 8.13 and 9.6. Anastasius Bibliothecarius wrote a lengthy testimony on the life of Peter (Apud Maium, *Spicilegii* 52; cf. Schaff 1885d:607–621).

A native Egyptian, Peter became the bishop of Alexandria after Theonas in 300. He was the 16th bishop after Mark – therefore the 17th bishop of Alexandria. According to Philip Sidetes (*Fr.* 5.4 [12]), he also became head of the School and was a strong opponent of Origenism. During the last nine of his 12 years as bishop, he endured violent persecutions carried out by Diocletian and his successors. Butler (1846:511–512) reported: 'That violent storm, which affrighted and disheartened several bishops and inferior ministers of the church, did but awake his attention, inflame his charity, and inspire him with fresh vigour'. Many endured with him, but some betrayed their faith to escape torments and death, even Meletius, the bishop of Lycopolis in Thebais. Peter called a council and convicted Meletius (Theodoret's *Hist. Eccl.* 1.8).

Arius, who was in Alexandria at that time, followed Meletius 'cause, but then quitted and was ordained a deacon by Peter,. Not too long afterwards, he relapsed back to Meletius' views and was excommunicated by Peter. Peter himself was in prison during the reign of Galerius Maximus, but set free soon afterwards. When the persecutions started again in 306, Peter fled Alexandria, but returned in 311. During the same year, a renewed persecution started and Emperor Maximin himself went to Alexandria, where Peter and three of his priests were seized and rushed to execution on his decree (Eusebius' *Hist. Eccl.* 7.32.31; Philip

Sidetes' *Fr.* 2). Peter was allegedly the last Christian slain by Deocletian. That is why he is called ἱερομάρτυς ('The holy martyr', or as El Masri [1982:74] put it, 'The Seal of the Martyrs').

His death has driven many of his followers to the deserts, living there as hermits. Schaff (1885d:649) elaborated on this: 'It now introduced *monasticism*, in its earliest and least objectionable forms, into Egypt, whence it soon spread into the Church at large'.

Serapion

Born: Uncertain

Died: 360/370

Head of the School: 339–360/370

He was also known as Serapion of Arsinoc, Arsinoe, or Serapion the Scholastic, and was a brilliant scholar and theologian (*Catholic Online* s.a.). He started off as a desert monk (living in the Egyptian desert) and after the death of Antony (a hermit of the Benedictine order), he and Athanasius worked closely together, especially in their struggle against Arianism. After 343, he became the bishop of Thmuis, near Diospolis in Lower Egypt on the Nile Delta (*De. Vir.* 99; Vaschalde s.a.). Because he unambiguously backed Athanasius and the latter's opposition to Arianism, he was exiled for some time by the zealous Arian emperor Constantius 2. *Catholic Online* (s.a.) refers to him as 'Bishop and head of the famed Catechetical School of Alexandria, Egypt', which should be from 339 until his death in 360 or 370.

Macarius Politicus

Born: 300

Died: Uncertain

Head of the School: Uncertain

His name was only Macarius, but his fellow-countrymen called him 'Politicus' (that means 'of the city') to distinguish him from 'Macarius of Egypt' who lived in the desert most of the time (Sozomen's *Hist. Eccl.* 3.14; Schaff 1885i:648). He was born in Upper Egypt in ca 300 CE and was a monk and hermit. More than this is not known of him. Why he formed part of the list of 13 'teachers' of Philip Sidetes is an unanswered question.

Didymus the Blind

Born: 313

Died: 395/398

Head of the School: The second half of the 4th century

Didymus, who was known as 'the Blind Seer of Alexandria' (El Masri 1882:163) was regarded as the foremost Christian scholar of the 4th century, as well as an influential leader (Aiken 2014) – a 'pious man; his theology, his exegesis, and his study of philosophy all move from a desire to

understand his piety and to have that piety understood' (Saieg 2006:9). Although he became totally blind at the age of four (cf. *De. Vir.* 109), he hungered to learn and developed the amazing ability to apply himself to retaining information. In his youth, he prayed to God for the illumination of his heart and not his sight, although he allegedly admitted to Antony, one of his students, that the loss of his sight was a grief to him (cf. Jerome's *Cast.* 68.2; Aiken 2014).

Already at a young age he was one of the most learned men of his day, very familiar with grammar, rhetoric, logic, music, arithmetic and geometry (Theodoret's *Hist. Eccl.* 4.26), as well as the Scriptures, knowing much of it by heart. He also 'spent time and labour in order to study Aristotle' (Tzamalikos 2012:244). Jerome, another student of Didymus, was so impressed with him that he called him 'the Seer' (Rufinus' *Apol.* 1.43; cf. *De. Vir.* 109). The orator Libanius wrote to an official in Egypt:

You cannot surely be ignorant of Didymus, unless you are ignorant of the great city wherein he has been night and day pouring out his learning for the good of others. (Rufinus of Aquileia's *De Vitis Patrum* 2.24)

Jerome came to him for a month in order to have his doubts resolved with regard to difficult passages of Scripture (cf. *Apol.* 2.12; *New Advent Catholic Encyclopedia* (n.d.-a) on *Didymus the Blind* s.a.).

He became head of the School at a very young age and remained in that position for almost 50 years (El Masri 1982:164). He stayed a layman and never became part of the clergy. During his time the School was accessible for blind students as they could study through a system in which reading letters were engraved into the surface of wood (El Masri 1982:164). He was strongly influenced by Origen and adopted most of his ideas.

Didymus lived the life of an ascetic, although he remained in the city and did not live in the desert as other ascetics did. *New Advent Catholic Encyclopedia* (n.d.-a) on *Didymus the Blind* (s.a.) recalled a story Didymus had told Palladius: one day, whilst he was fasting and thinking about the persecutor of his time, called Julian, he fell asleep in his chair. In a dream, he saw white horses running in different directions, whilst the riders cried out, 'Tell Didymus, today at the seventh hour Julian died! Arise and eat, and inform Athanasius the bishop, that he may also know it'. Didymus noted the exact time and it happened just as it was foretold in his dream.

He was one of the big opponents of Arianism and was very orthodox about the Trinity and Christology. As has been noted above, Van den Broek (1995:47) is of the opinion that Didymus' death in 398 marked the end of the School. He died at the age of 85.

Rhodon

Born: Uncertain

Died: Uncertain

Head of the School: End of the 4th century

According to Philip Sidetes (*Fr.* 2) Rhodon allegedly succeeded Didymus towards the end of the 4th century. In this *Fragment* he claimed that he studied under Rhodon, 'after he had transferred the school from Alexandria to Side in the time of Theodosius the Great (379–395)' (Van den Broek 1995:41). As Philip Sidetes stated himself in *Fr.* 2, the School had been moved to Side when Rhodon was the head, although he had the conviction that it was still the *Didaskaleion*. No more evidence about Rhodon could be found.

Conclusion

This concludes the two articles engaging with the *Didaskaleion* in Alexandria and her heads. Postulation plays a big role in determining whether there really was a School and who really headed the School. With some certainty, the existence of the School can be argued, but with lesser certainty the number and names of the heads of the School, who could be narrowed down to Clement and Origen. These two scholars of high repute headed the *Didaskaleion* during the late 2nd and early 3rd centuries CE. As there are references to the other 16 individuals as belonging to the *successio* of heads in the School, they were discussed in this article.

Should we accept that the School was founded as early as the 1st century CE, we must conclude that at first she operated rather independently from the church, in the sense that a bishop was not in charge of the School – the first heads would only be laymen. Clement and Origen took the *Didaskaleion* to her pinnacle and Didymus' death saw the end of the School. This was the time when the bishops took over the responsibility in matters of doctrine for the Christians in the Delta City.

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