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Brill

2021-10-18

Yli-Karjanmaa , S 2021 , Illusory Polemics : Clement and Irenaeus on the Gnostics . in T Nisula , A M Laato & P Irizar (eds) , Religious Polemics and Encounters in Late Antiquity : Boundaries, Conversions and Persuasion . Studies on the Children of Abraham , vol. 8 , Brill , Leiden , pp. 44-64 . https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004466845_004

<http://hdl.handle.net/10138/338988>

https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004466845_004

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Illusory Polemics: Clement and Irenaeus on the Gnostics

Sami Yli-Karjanmaa

Abstract

The essay discusses Clement of Alexandria's and Irenaeus of Lyon's polemics with their theological opponents and their views concerning the epithet "gnostic," as well as the reception of these in scholarship. It is argued that the portrayal of these two authors as opponents of gnostics is without foundation. For Clement, the term "gnostic" is exclusively positive, and he is by far our best example in ancient literature of the self-designation "gnostic." He never criticizes anyone he considers a gnostic but—in addition to some whom he does not classify in this respect—only those who, according to him, "falsely" call themselves gnostics. This is true for Irenaeus as well, but a characteristic feature in his *Adversus haereses* is terminological variability: while he explicitly denies the right of all of his opponents to call themselves gnostics by calling them "false gnostics," he also calls the same people "so-called gnostics" or simply "gnostics." This variation seems not to have been noticed in research where the standard practice is to speak of Irenaeus's refutation of the gnostics. The author presents a plea for terminological accuracy and transparency that takes into account the fact that in parts of the earliest evidence the term "gnostic" is an honorific much closer to "orthodox" than "heretic."

Introduction

This essay is concerned with polemics on two levels.¹ On the one hand, I discuss some of the epithets that Clement of Alexandria and Irenaeus of Lyon apply (or do not apply) to their theological opponents. On the other hand, I analyze modern constructions of these theological disputes, i.e., scholarly portraits of these early Christian authors' criticism of other thinkers. Through this article, I wish to make a plea for enhanced terminological accuracy and transparency. I would like to emphasize two things. First, I hope it will become clear that I am not arguing for the privileging of emic terminology for reasons of principle but for practical ones. Using "gnostic"/"gnostique" etc. as an etic term is much complicated by its occurrence in ancient sources in the Greek form γνῳστικὸς as well as some equivalents in other languages. Second, this paper focuses on Clement and Irenaeus and the lessons we can learn from their works and their reception. The only broader wish I have is that of increased sensitivity and attention to the language of the primary sources in general.

Clement of Alexandria

Il ne faut pas oublier que les grands adversaires de Clément sont les gnostiques.²

Whether aware of this exhortation or not, scholars have well complied with it. Although made already sixty years ago, it still describes much of the scholarship on "gnosticism" as far as Clement of Alexandria (c. 150 – c. 215) is concerned. Not even the debate on the contents of, and the very utility of using, the concept "gnosticism" during the last decades, and the questioning of earlier postulates of scholarship that has resulted (for which see below),

¹ I thank the participants of the international meeting "Religious Polemics and Encounters in Late Antiquity: Boundaries, Conversions and Persuasion," the anonymous reviewer and M. David Litwa for their useful, critical comments on the earlier versions of this essay.

² Jean Daniélou, *Histoire des doctrines chrétiennes avant Nicée: 2, Message évangélique et culture hellénistique aux IIe et IIIe siècles* (Tournai: Desclée, 1961), 380.

have been able to shake the conviction that it is legitimate to speak of Clement's "battle with the Gnostics," his "persistently attacking Gnostics" and so on.³

Taking a closer look at Daniélou's request reveals he has read Clement without sufficient care. He wrongly portrays Clement's statement in *Str.* 3.16.100.5—"It is for them to tell us how the newly born child could commit fornication or in what way the child who has never done anything at all has fallen under Adam's curse"—as a response to "les gnostiques."⁴ Daniélou's interpretation of the word "them" (αὐτοῖς) seems based on the fact that Clement's statement appears in his long discussion of the views of those who regard birth and marriage as evil (almost all of book 3 of *Str.*). On this reading, the closest referent would be Cassian "and those who argue like him" in 3.14.95.2. Even if this were correct, Clement does not link Cassian with *gnosis*; the latter is not "yet another Gnostic."⁵ Not for Clement, anyway. But the reference to Cassian occurs some 700 words earlier, whereas the immediate context provides us with a much more probable, if somewhat surprising, referent: Clement precedes his statement at *Str.* 3.16.100.5 with several quotations. They are taken mostly from the Old testament, and are all along the lines of the first one, Jer 20:14: "Cursed be the day on which I was born..."⁶ Thus "they" from whom Clement demands an explanation are the prophets Jeremiah, Ezra and Job, all named by him.

A key problem is using an appellation—"gnostic"/"gnostique" etc.—that is derived from, and cannot but seem a direct equivalent for, the Greek word γνωστικός, and doing this in a manner that directly conflicts with the way Clement uses the term. The question is not of isolated, mistaken identifications of which of his opponents Clement calls gnostics. If taken at face value, the entire thesis of Clement of Alexandria's polemics against the gnostics is simply groundless. This is so for a simple reason: Clement only uses the term γνωστικός in a positive sense.⁷

³ Clement's "battle" or "struggle" against the gnostics is mentioned, e.g., by John Behr, *Asceticism and Anthropology in Irenaeus and Clement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 141, 143 (but cf. "the so-called Gnostics," pp. 149, 150); Davide Dainese, "The Idea of Martyrdom in *Stromateis* VII: A Proposal for a Reconstruction of Clement of Alexandria's Philosophy," 238, and Ilaria Ramelli, "*Stromateis* VII and Clement's Hints at the Theory of Apokatastasis," 248; both in Matyáš Havrda, Vít Hušek, and Jana Plátová, eds., *The Seventh Book of the Stromateis: Proceedings of the Colloquium on Clement of Alexandria (Olomouc, October 21-23, 2010)*, Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae 117 (Leiden: Brill, 2014). His "attacks" are mentioned by, e.g., Eric Osborn, *Clement of Alexandria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 25, 75; he is said to have "argued against gnostics" by Heikki Räisänen, *The Rise of Christian Beliefs: The Thought World of Early Christians* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2010), 76. Several chapters in the proceedings of the Second Colloquium on Clement of Alexandria speak of his "anti-gnostic" argument or polemic, or his "gnostic adversaries": Marco Rizzi, "The Bible in Alexandria: Clement Between Philo and Origen," 123; Miklós Gyurkovics, "The Philosophical Problem of 'Place' in Clement's Exegesis of the Prologue to the Gospel of John," 281; Davide Dainese, "Clement's Exegesis of 1 John in the *Adumbrationes*," 305, all in *Clement's Biblical Exegesis: Proceedings of the Second Colloquium on Clement of Alexandria (Olomouc, May 29-31, 2014)*, ed. Veronika Černušková et al., Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae 139 (Leiden: Brill, 2017). Many more examples could be cited.

⁴ All the translations from *Str.* 1–3 are Ferguson's and from *Paed.* those by Wood, both in The Fathers of the Church series (The Catholic University of America Press). The translations from the rest of *Str.* are Wilson's (in *ANF*). Small modifications by this author are not mentioned.

⁵ As described by Piotr Ashwin-Siejkowski, *Clement of Alexandria on Trial: The Evidence of "Heresy" from Photius' Bibliotheca*, Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae 101 (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 123.

⁶ The other ones are Jer 20:18 ("Why was I born to see trouble and toil?"), 4 Ezra 5.35 ("Why did my mother's womb not become my tomb...") and Job 14:4–5 ("No one is pure from stain, not even if his life is only of one days duration").

⁷ It thus does not hold that Clement "used the term [γνωστικός] for a person whom he considered a heretic" (Antti Marjanen, "What Is Gnosticism? From the Pastorals to Rudolph," in *Was There a Gnostic Religion?*, ed. Antti Marjanen, Publications of the Finnish Exegetical Society 87 [Helsinki & Göttingen: Finnish Exegetical Society & Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005], 13). Marjanen in practice admits this when writing that when Clement refers to "those who represent false gnosis . . . he always remembers to remind the readers that they simply pretend to have gnosis . . . or they call falsely themselves gnostics" (p. 15). Yet he later writes about Prodicus "whom Clement called a gnostic" (p. 23). But Clement speaks of "Prodicus' school, who falsely (ψευδωνύμως) claim the name of Gnostics for themselves" (*Str.* 3.4.30.1). Brakke (*The Gnostics: Myth, Ritual and Diversity*

To understand what the concept means to him, it is best to refer to his own words. Of the 287 instances of the word γνωστικός in the Clementine corpus, 274 occur in Clement's major work, the *Stromateis*.⁸ A succinct definition meets us at 1.13.58.2: "Anyone skilled in all aspects of wisdom is a gnostic in the full sense of the word."⁹ A little more elaborate one is found in 1.10.46.1: "Our philosopher holds firmly to these three things: first, contemplation; second, fulfilling the commandments; third, the formation of people of virtue. When these come together they make the gnostic." Virtues are mentioned in 4.26.163.2 as well: "And the succession of the three virtues is found in the gnostic, who morally, physically, and logically occupies himself with God." Thus, "not only are actions and thoughts, but words also, pure in the case of the gnostic" (6.12.97.2). Commenting on the "council of Gods" in Ps. 82:1 (LXX 81:1), Clement writes in 2.20.125.4: "Who are these 'gods'? Those who have mastered pleasure, those who keep themselves aloof from passions, those who understand all their actions: the gnostics, those who are superior to the world." In a similar vein, "the gnostic ought to rise out of the sphere of birth (γενέσεως) and of sin" (4.25.159.2). These statements help us understand that "the gnostics" are Clement's ideal believers, not a sect or a school of thought.¹⁰ Even Moses was "gnostic" (5.11.74.4), which is why it is not entirely accurate to speak of Clement's reserving the word "for his own ideal Christian."¹¹

The issues at stake are not merely terminological. We are also dealing with "gnosticism" having "been constructed largely as the heretical other" by modern scholars.¹² For example, Ferguson says of such figures as Valentinus and Basilides, two of "the great Gnostic leaders,"

To the mainstream body of the Church they were heretical. Clement is concerned to refute and criticize them. I have referred to them as "Gnostics" with a capital G. But Clement, somewhat confusingly, is concerned with gnosis as "Christian revelation."¹³

in *Early Christianity* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010], 33–34) notes that Tertullian too does not call Prodicus a gnostic (*Against Praxeas* 3; *Scorpiace* 15).

⁸ *Str.* makes up 60% of Clement's *oeuvre* of some 269,700 words (which is roughly twice the volume of the New Testament). The remaining occurrences of γνωστικός are found in the *Paedagogus* (3), the *Eclogae prophetae* (8) and the fragments (2). It is worth pointing out that the brief *Ecl.* is almost as "gnostic" as *Str.*; in both, the word appears once for approximately every 600 words. Within *Str.*, books 4, 6 and especially 7 have the highest numbers containing 80% of the total. In addition, Clement uses γνῶσις 436 times of which 85% are in *Str.*, while the highest frequency (every 332nd word) is found in *Ecl.*

⁹ Ferguson translates, "Christian Gnostic," but the word Χριστιανός does not appear here. It has 33 appearances in total in Clement (including three in the subheadings of *Paed.*) of which twelve are in *Str.*

¹⁰ I do not think there is enough evidence on the pre-Clementine use of the term "gnostic" to support the thesis that Clement's use of the term "emerged from conflict among rival groups of Christians [of whom some] claimed to be Gnostics" and that he "responded by adopting the epithet 'gnostic' in some way for his own form of Christianity," as Brakke (*Gnostics*, 34, also 49; emphasis added) suggests. Morton Smith says in his well-argued article that the term originated in "the Platonic-Pythagorean philosophic tradition" ("The History of the Term Gnostikos," in *Studies in the Cult of Yahweh, Vol. 2: New Testament, Early Christianity, and Magic*, Religions in the Graeco-Roman World, 130/2 [Leiden: Brill, 1996], 185–86). It is worth noting that γνωστικός appears only once in Philo of Alexandria, at *Opif.* 154; see David T. Runia, *On the Creation of the Cosmos According to Moses: Introduction, Translation, and Commentary*, Philo of Alexandria Commentary Series 1 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2001), 367.

¹¹ Kovacs, "Reading," 327. Similarly, e.g., Brakke, *Gnostics*, 34.

¹² Karen King, *What Is Gnosticism?* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003), 2. She continues (p. 3) that these constructions "reflect many of the characteristics and strategies used by early Christian polemicists like Irenaeus and Tertullian to construct heresy." I agree that there is a connection, but claim that Irenaeus has been misread much like Clement. See below.

¹³ John Ferguson, "Introduction," in *Clement of Alexandria: Stromateis, Books 1-3*, The Fathers of the Church 85 (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1991), 10–11. Kathleen Gibbons (*The Moral Psychology of Clement of Alexandria: Mosaic Philosophy*, Routledge Studies in Philosophy and Theology in Late Antiquity [New York: Routledge, 2016], 5 n. 4) informs her readers of her intention to abide by the same rule Ferguson mentions, but in practice she only seems to use the

Leaving aside the question if there really was, at the time, a mainstream church confronting the outside gnostics or issuing declarations of excommunication, it should be noted that the “confusion” involved is caused by the insistence on calling many of those whom Clement (sometimes) criticizes (e.g., Valentinus and Basilides) “gnostics” on the basis of such characterizations of them by others.

In scholarly literature, we should uphold the vital distinction between the emic terminology of our sources and the largely unsuccessful etic use of the term “gnostic” in scholarly constructions.¹⁴ In my view, since the modern word “gnostic” and its equivalents in other modern languages are so naturally associated with the Greek term γνωστικός, we should abstain from using them if they do not directly represent the latter in the ancient sources to which we are referring.

Portraying the distinction—which Clement does make—between those who are gnostics and those who are *falsely* so called as one between orthodox and heterodox gnostics amounts to significant misrepresentation. In Clement, the accusations of someone being “a false gnostic” are quite few. The clearest example is Prodicus and his followers (*Str.* 3.4.30.1, 7.7.41.1–3).¹⁵ In addition, in *Str.* 4.4.17.4 Clement speaks of “falsely named” persons (οἱ ψευδώνυμοι), whose unmerited appellation he does not, however, spell out. Judging from the context where “gnostic martyrdom” (4.4.15.4) is being discussed it is probably “gnostic.” If this is correct, Clement’s characterization of these people as “not belonging to us, but sharing the name merely” (4.4.17.1) is, in effect, a very rare announcement by Clement that he belongs to a *group* that can be called gnostics. As a rule, he uses the term for the highly advanced individual.¹⁶ He nowhere explicitly claims to be a gnostic himself.¹⁷ Regardless, he is the closest example we have (in literature written in Greek) to a self-conscious gnostic.¹⁸

capitalized version when quoting other scholars. In her own text, she has no difficulty in sticking to the way in which Clement himself uses the term.

¹⁴ E.g., Osborn, like Ferguson, uses of the capital G as a token of “heresy” (*Clement*, 1 and *passim*). Ashwin-Siejkowski says he uses the term “hetero-gnostics” for “Clement’s Christian adversaries” while “Clement’s position was one of ‘proto-Gnostic’”—a term he introduces (but does not employ) in *Clement of Alexandria: A Project of Christian Perfection* (London: T&T Clark, 2008), 8–9 n. 31. In practice, however, he also uses the term “Christian gnostics” for both Clement’s ideal Christians (e.g., 13, 63, 164) and his opponents (p. 10; cf. 127). He also speaks of “the Gnostic” in the genuine, Clementine sense (e.g., 11, 48, 62). By contrast, in *Trial*, Ashwin-Siejkowski speaks of Clement’s opponents as “the Gnostics” (e.g., 18, 52, 69) but, here too, employs the expression “the Christian Gnostics” both for Clement’s opponents (pp. 36, 84, 151) and in the Clementine sense (p. 131). These are merely examples that testify to the difficulty, common in scholarship much more generally, of achieving a consistent terminology if one also opts for using the gnostic terminology for those whom Clement did not regard as gnostics.

¹⁵ For Prodicus, note 7. There is also one reference to “gnostic” as an illegitimate self-designation by unnamed persons in *Paed.* 1.6.52.2. See below, text at n. 48.

¹⁶ 91% of the occurrences of γνωστικός are in the singular.

¹⁷ Pace Smith, “Gnostikos,” 188 who says “Clement himself claims to be a gnostic” without giving a reference to Clement’s works. Nevertheless, in addition to the passage in *Str.* 4.4, Clement also comes close to saying he belongs to the gnostics in *Str.* 7.16.95.4–96.1 where he first sets the “voice of the Lord,” (i.e., the writings) as the only proof (ἀπόδειξις) of truth, then distinguishes the believers (who have “only tasted” the writings) from the gnostics (who have “become correct expounders (γνώμονες) of the truth”)—comparing the latter to craftsmen and the former to common people—and finally stating, “thus we too, giving a complete exhibition (τελείως ἀποδεικνύντες) of the writings from the writings themselves, become persuaded by faith through proof.” This kind of implicit language raises the question of the reasons for the lack of an open self-designation as a gnostic. Was Clement being modest?

¹⁸ Brakke does not hesitate to say Clement “uses the term ‘Gnostic’ as a positive self-designation in his own writings” (*Gnostics*, 33). Yet Brakke also includes him among the “[o]pponents of the Gnostics” (p. 72) and inaccurately states that Clement called “the Gnostics . . . heretics” (125). Clement as an example *par excellence* of “gnostic” self-understanding is ignored, e.g., by Birger Pearson, “Gnosticism as a Religion,” in *Was There a Gnostic Religion?*, Publications of the Finnish Exegetical Society 87 (Helsinki & Göttingen: Finnish Exegetical Society & Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005), 93–94, citing and agreeing here with

Another thing to note about Clement is that he is not as inclined to label people as he is to assess their ideas. As has been pointed out by several scholars, he sometimes openly utilizes certain thoughts of those whose other ideas he rejects and that on some issues he, e.g., stands closer to Valentinus than to Irenaeus.¹⁹ When he refers to Basilides and Valentinus as examples of “those who invented the *haireseis*” (*Str.* 7.17.106.4), we should learn from this that *hairesis* is not a category of absolute error.²⁰ Instead, there is room for acceptable opinions, as well as views and practices on which Clement takes no position (e.g., Basilides’s or his followers’ views reported at *Str.* 1.26.146.1, 2.6.27.2, 6.6.53).

One of the paradoxes in the modern scholarship on “gnosticism” is that the epithet “gnostic” apparently never occurs as a self-designation in the sources that are usually labeled gnostic.²¹ When this problem is discussed, the extensive evidence offered by Clement is, as a rule, discarded without comment; it is he who implicitly becomes the gnostic “falsely so called”!²² Conversely, many of those whom “Clement explicitly denies . . . this honorific”²³ have become what might be called the “canonical gnostics” of modern research.

Irenaeus of Lyon

One may ask with some justification if Clement is not too *sui generis* in his emphasis on the importance of *gnosis* to be allowed to interfere with the scholarly endeavor to define the term “gnostic”—a task already difficult enough without him. Admittedly, Clement is rather unique in this respect, but when it comes to the characterization of those who are still too often called the “the Gnostic heretics” in modern research, the contradiction with the

Bentley Layton, “Prolegomena to the Study of Ancient Gnosticism,” in *The Social World of the First Christians: Essays in Honor of Wayne A. Meeks*, ed. L. Michael White and O. Larry Yarbrough (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 344.

¹⁹ David Brakke, *Gnostics*, 10; Judith L. Kovacs, “Reading the ‘Divinely Inspired’ Paul: Clement of Alexandria in Conversation with ‘Heterodox’ Christians, Simple Believers, and Greek Philosophers,” in *Clement’s Biblical Exegesis: Proceedings of the Second Colloquium on Clement of Alexandria (Olomouc, May 29–31, 2014)*, ed. Veronika Černušková et al., Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae 139 (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 327–29. For an insightful discussion of the unjustifiably “conflict-driven” nature of research with regard to “the church” and “the gnostics,” see Ismo Dunderberg, *Gnostic Morality Revisited*, WUNT 347 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), 5–10. He gives *Str.* 3.7.59 as an example of how Clement could support a view of his with Valentinus’s teachings. Indeed, while discussing self-control, Clement first alludes to Gen 6:2 (at least according to Ferguson, *ad loc.*) and then proceeds to quote Valentinus’s letter to Agathopus, 1 Cor 3:16, Matt 19:12 and Heb 9:14.

²⁰ “Heresy” is by no means always the right translation for αἵρεσις. Cf. the following statement in *Str.* 7.15.92.3: “it is necessary . . . to ascertain by way of demonstration by the Scriptures themselves how the *haireseis* failed, and how in the truth alone and in the ancient Church is both the exactest *gnosis* and the truly best *hairesis*.”

²¹ So, e.g., Michael A. Williams, “Was There a Gnostic Religion? Strategies for a Clearer Analysis,” in *Was There a Gnostic Religion?*, ed. Antti Marjanen, Publications of the Finnish Exegetical Society 87 (Helsinki & Göttingen: Finnish Exegetical Society & Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005), 75. Despite this lack, the self-designation approach as a basis for defining who the gnostics were has been advocated by Layton, “Prolegomena.” However, he has to resort to *testimonia*. Paul Linjamaa, “The Pit and the Day from Above: Sabbath-Symbolism in the Gospel of Truth and the Interpretation of Knowledge,” *Svensk Exegetisk Årsbok* 80 (2015): 199, n. 45, draws attention to the expression “the children of interior knowledge” as a possible self-designation in the Coptic *Gospel of Truth* 32.38–39. This is quite close to “gnostic” in sense, and in fact Irenaeus too speaks of τὰ τέκνα τῆς γνώσεως (1.7.6 in Harvey’s edition of the Greek, 1.13.7 in the Latin) when referring to the disciples of the magician Marcus (on whom see below, n. 29).

²² Two recent examples of books that pay no attention to Clement’s gnostic self-understanding are Roelof van den Broek, *Gnostic Religion in Antiquity*, trans. Anthony Runia (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013) and April D. DeConick, *Gnostic New Age: How a Countercultural Spirituality Revolutionized Religion from Antiquity to Today* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016). Van den Broek (p. 138) even calls Clement a “non-gnostic.”

²³ Soundly noted by Kovacs, “Reading,” 327 in a welcome revision of her earlier standpoint; in “Divine Pedagogy and the Gnostic Teacher According to Clement of Alexandria,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 9, no. 1 (2001): 20 she still speaks of “heterodox gnostics” when referring to those whom Clement calls “barbarian sects” in *Str.* 6.15.123.3. Williams, “Was There,” 76, does briefly bring Clement into the discussion of the use of the term *gnostikos* as an ideal.

ancient language becomes even more severe in the case Irenaeus (c. 130 – c. 202).²⁴ The Bishop of Lyon clearly more often than Clement denies the gnosticism of the modern scholars' "gnostics." The standard long title of his *Adversus haereses* already says the essential: *Refutation and Overthrow of What is Falsely Called Gnosis*.²⁵ These "heretics" are not, for Irenaeus, "gnostics" any more than their opinions are *gnosis*.

I have chosen to take a closer look at how Irenaeus speaks of Valentinus, Simon, Basilides and Carpocrates, the references to whom make up most of those to false gnostics. It may first be noted that none of them is introduced as a representative of a group that claims to deal with *gnosis (scientia)*;²⁶ instead, the issue comes up when their doctrines are discussed. This fact already goes some way towards showing that Irenaeus is not engaged in labeling "heterodox" groups as *gnostics*. In the present context, we cannot go through all the twenty passages I have found where a word denoting "gnostic" (typically *gnosticus*, occasionally *agnitor*) appears in *Adv. haer.*²⁷ We begin with what Irenaeus says of Valentinus:

Let us now look at the inconsistent opinions of those heretics (for there are some two or three of them), how they do not agree in treating the same points, but alike, in things and names, set forth opinions mutually discordant. The first of them, Valentinus, who adapted the principles of the heresy called *gnostic* (quae dicitur gnostica haeresis; ἀπὸ τῆς λεγομένης γνωστικῆς αἵρέσεως at 1.5.1 Harvey) to the peculiar character of his own school, taught as follows. (*Adv. haer.* 1.11.1)²⁸

I call this an instance of *reported designation*: without taking any position of his own, Irenaeus simply reports that the "heresy" is called gnostic—by whom, that is not discussed.²⁹ A few lines down, he says of Valentinus, "He also asserts that, along with the Demiurge, there was produced a left-hand power, in which particular he agrees with those falsely called gnostics (ψευδωνύμως γνωστικοίς/falsi nominis gnostici), of whom to we have yet to speak." Here we have what I call a *denied designation*: the epithet is unwarranted, as Irenaeus explicitly states.³⁰ It is noteworthy that both passages, in fact, imply that although the non-gnostics and Valentinus agree on points of doctrine, the latter is not one of the former. A comparable point seems to be made here:

Now, these remarks which have been made concerning the emission of intelligence are in like manner applicable in opposition to those who belong to the school of Basilides, as well as in opposition to the rest of the gnostics (*gnosticos*), from whom these also (the Valentinians) have adopted the ideas about emissions, and were refuted in the first book. (*Adv. haer.* 2.3.18)

²⁴ The quoted expression comes from Andrew C. Itter, *Esoteric Teaching in the Stromateis of Clement of Alexandria*, Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae 97 (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 22, 87, 128. Similarly, Gerald Bray ("Early Theologians," in *The Early Christian World*, ed. Philip F. Esler, second edition, The Routledge Worlds [London: Routledge, 2017], 565–86) on p. 571 speaks of Clement writing "against Gnostic heresies."

²⁵ As Marjanen points out, the beginnings of the "gnostic" debate can be located in the First letter to Timothy (6:20): "Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you. Avoid the profane chatter and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge (τῆς ψευδωνύμου γνώσεως)" (Marjanen, "What Is," 5).

²⁶ The introductory passages in *Adv. haer.* are 1 *praef.* 2, 1.23.1, 1.24.1, 1.25.1, respectively. The numbering is that of the Latin, if not otherwise indicated.

²⁷ I refer to 1.11.1 (twice), 1.11.3, 1.11.5, 1.13.1, 1.25.6, 1.29.1, 2 *praef.*, 2.13.8, 2.13.10, 2.31.1 (twice), 2.35.2, 3.4.3, 3.10.3, 3.11.2, 4.6.4, 4.33.3, 4.35.1 and 5.26.2.

²⁸ The translations from *Adv. haer.* are those by Roberts in *ANF*.

²⁹ According to my observations, the only cases of a reported *self-designation* in *Adv. haer.* are those of Marcellina and her group in 1.25.6 and (less clearly) of Marcus in 1.13.1: "he has induced them to join themselves to him, as to one who is possessed of the greatest knowledge (uelut ad scientissimum; ὡς γνωστικωτάτῳ at 1.7.1 Harvey) and perfection, and who has received the highest power from the invisible and ineffable regions above."

³⁰ This is ignored by, e.g., Dunderberg, who merely states that, like Tertullian, Irenaeus too distinguished between "the Gnostics" and Valentinus (*Morality*, 65).

I call this a case of *uncontested designation*, again concerning apparently the same group that had influenced Valentinus (here, the Valentinians), and now also the Basilidians.³¹ Later in the treatise Irenaeus drops the distinction between Valentinus or Valentinians and his/their influences and speaks instead of “the Valentinians and the other gnostics, falsely so called (*reliquos falsi nomini gnosticos*)” (4.35.1; similarly 4.6.4 and 5.26.2 on Valentinus himself), in each case denying the appropriateness of the epithet. The use of the term by Irenaeus is based on the beliefs—and not on the identity or name—of a given group.³²

The Valentinians are not an isolated case with respect to the three types of designation. *Figure 1* shows that for Simon (and those mentioned as his disciples) too, all three occur—but now the uncontested ones form a majority. For Basilides and Carpocrates the reported kind is absent. In total, the denied designation is the most common type with nine instances followed by the uncontested (7) and reported ones (5). *Figure 1* also shows these designations by book (now also including other teachers); the overall trend agrees with the reduced frequency of naming the “heretics” in books three to five. The share of denied designations increases from 33% in the books 1–2 to 57% in books 3–5 indicating that the disclaimer is not idle.

Figure 1. Irenaeus's references to the “(false/so-called) gnostics” by type of designation in four example cases and by book of *Adv. haer.* The proper names refer to both the persons indicated and their followers as discussed by Irenaeus.³³

³¹ On this passage Brakke comments: “Here Irenaeus distinguishes the followers of Basilides from the Gnostics he discussed in Book I and whom he identified as the predecessors of the Valentinians. Although his use of the adjective ‘remaining’ or ‘rest of’ may appear to us to mean that Basilides is included in this group, Irenaeus in fact differentiates Basilides from the group that influenced the Valentinians” (*Gnostics*, 35). Apart from noting that Brakke calls “Gnostics” those whose gnosticity Irenaeus (elsewhere) denies, even if what he says of Basilides held in terms of substance, Irenaeus uses similar language to lump Basilides, and/or Valentinus, with “the rest of”, or “all” non-gnostics also in 2.31.1, 2.35.2, 4.6.4, 4.35.1 and 5.26.2 (of these, the first one features the uncontested designation the rest being of the denied type).

³² Cf. Brakke's remark: “Ironically, when Irenaeus and Hippolytus say that people ‘called themselves’ gnostics, this may indicate that the term functions as a secondary claim to perfection rather than as a sectarian self-designation” (49).

³³ See n. 27 for the passages involved. The figures by book include each of the 19 passages (excepting 1.11.3) once. The four example cases (Valentinus, Simon, Basilides and Carpocrates) omit some of the passages (mentioning Marcellina, Saturninus,

A question crucial for understanding Irenaeus's views is: how should we interpret the occurrence of the three different kinds of designation? Is Irenaeus being undecided as to whether his referents deserve the name "gnostic"? This is clearly untenable, for we cannot assume a change of mind is the explanation when Irenaeus first uses the reported (1.11.1) or the uncontested (2.31.1) designation and then the denied one, of the same people, in the same paragraph. We need some other theory.

In my view, it is plausible that the different passages exhibit varying degrees of specificity. Perhaps for reasons of work economy or style Irenaeus did not want to repeat his view that his opponents were not real but falsely called gnostics every time he referred to them. Indeed, he did not need to: his view should be clear anyway.³⁴ These were no gnostics.³⁵ Of every one of them, he states at some point that the epithet is not warranted. It is thus unfortunate that Irenaeus, even more than Clement, has become known as the champion of the battle against the gnostics: e.g., his work contains a "refutation of Gnosticism"³⁶ and is "the principal source" describing "[gnosticism] as a Christian heresy."³⁷ On the one hand, this is understandable, given the way the term "gnostic(s)" is used. On the other, this reputation would only be warranted if the sole type of designation attested in *Adv. haer.* were the uncontested one. I do concede that the occurrence of that type probably contributed to the development whereby the meaning of the term "gnostic" was inverted from an honorific close to "orthodox" to practically synonymous with "heretic."³⁸ But as far as Irenaeus himself and his work are concerned, however, simply describing him as an arch-enemy of the gnostics gives a distorted overall picture of what *he* says about the quality of the *gnosis* his opponents (claim to) possess and of his opinion about their right to call themselves gnostics.³⁹

Menander and Marcion, or not clearly naming anyone) but count some of them more than once, if several "heretics" are named in them. E.g., *Adv. haer.* 4.6 applies the denied designation to all four example cases.

³⁴ Brakke remarks, "We can imagine that if he were a modern writer he would put 'gnostics' in scare quotes." (*Gnostics*, 35). This is a comment on one of the designations of the denied type, and Brakke apparently means that Irenaeus could have used quotation marks instead of the expression "falsely so called." I would apply the idea to the reported and uncontested type in particular.

³⁵ I cannot explore in this paper the ancient use of the word γνῶστικός beyond Clement and Irenaeus. But a cursory look at how the author of *Refutation of all Heresies* and Epiphanius (*Panarion*) use the word reveals that both still often use a disclaimer, either a reference of the epithet "gnostic" being a self-designation (e.g., *Ref.* 5.6.4) or by speaking of the "so-called gnostics" (*Pan.* 1.243.14). Whether their cases are similar to Irenaeus's is a question beyond my scope here and has no bearing on how we should speak of Clement and Irenaeus.

³⁶ Eric Osborn, *Irenaeus of Lyons* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), xiii; similarly, e.g., Räisänen, *Rise*, 75; PHEME Perkins, "Ireneus and the Gnostics: Rhetoric and Composition in *Adversus Haereses* Book One," *Vigiliae Christianae* 30, no. 3 (1976): 195. Osborn's paradoxical statement that he has "taken the account of [Irenaeus's] Protean opponents at face value" illustrates the inversion prevailing in research (p. xiv). Similarly, Marjanen speaks of Irenaeus as refuting "heresies that he calls gnostic" ("What Is," 10). Likewise, Geoffrey S. Smith, in effect, takes the terms "gnostic" and its logical opposite, "falsely called gnostic," as synonyms in Irenaeus (*Guilt by Association: Heresy Catalogues in Early Christianity* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015], e.g., 146). This does correspond to Irenaeus's synonymic use of the different designations, but Smith's implicit conclusion is that even the "falsely called" gnostics were gnostics for Irenaeus.

³⁷ Ilaria Ramelli, "Gnosis - Gnosticism," in *Encyclopedia of Ancient Christianity*, ed. Angelo Di Berardino et al., trans. Joseph T. Papa, Erik A. Koenke, and Erik E. Hewett (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2014), 2:140. Similarly, van den Broek, *Gnostic Religion*, 5.

³⁸ On this, see below, text at and after note 43.

³⁹ On this latter point, see n. 29 above. It should also be noted that in practice, Irenaeus also had commonalities with his opponents. Recently Hughes, although still contextualizing *Adv. haer.* in "Irenaeus's conflict with Gnosticism" has argued that the Bishop takes over his opponents' prosopological exegesis ("Irenaeus and the 'Heretical' Roots of 'Orthodox' Pneumatology," paper presented at the SBL International Meeting, Helsinki, August 2018). See Kyle Hughes, *Trinitarian Testimony of the Spirit: Prosopological Exegesis and the Development of Pre-Nicene Pneumatology*, Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae 147 (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 98–148.

In addition to the similarity between Irenaeus and Clement of not refuting gnostics but non-gnostics, there is an important difference in relation to the role of knowledge for the believer.⁴⁰ Irenaeus gives it a much more limited niche and content than Clement. Yet he does not deny its value altogether.

On the one hand, he cautions against striving for perfect knowledge. In chapter 28 of the second book of *Adv. haer.* he says this applies not only to knowledge of God's mysteries but also to natural phenomena like the flow and ebb of the ocean or the waxing and waning of the moon: "On all these points we may indeed say a great deal while we search into their causes, but God alone who made them can declare the truth regarding them" (2.28.2). In spiritual matters curiosity is futile: "If, for instance, any one asks, 'What was God doing before He made the world?' we reply that the answer to such a question lies with God Himself," and "it is not proper for us to aim at bringing forward foolish, rash, and blasphemous suppositions" (28.3). Another issue Irenaeus takes up is this:

If anyone, therefore, says to us, "How then was the Son produced by the Father?" we reply to him, that no one knows that production, or generation, or calling, or revelation, or by whatever name one may describe His generation, which is in fact altogether indescribable, neither Valentinus, nor Marcion, nor Saturninus, nor Basilides, nor angels, nor archangels, nor principalities, nor powers, but the Father only who begat, and the Son who was begotten. (*Adv. haer.* 2.28.6)

Here we again see Irenaeus's anti-non-gnostic logic: there are those who claim to possess knowledge that cannot be possessed; the false gnostics are those who cannot know what they (ostensibly) claim to know.⁴¹ Irenaeus's main point is that human beings should not "form endless conjectures concerning God," (28.7), but instead we, "as long as we are connected with the scheme of things in this world, should leave perfect knowledge (perfectam scientiam), and such questions [as have been mentioned], to God" (28.8). Irenaeus ends ch. 28 with a demand of omniscience concerning things mundane (such as the number of hairs on their head) addressed to "Valentinus, or Ptolemaeus, or Basilides" etc.; only if they could demonstrate perfect knowledge of trivialities might they be believed with regard to the "spiritual and super-celestial" things (28.9). Here the expression "those who maintain that they have searched out the deep things of God" (but, in Irenaeus's view, have done nothing of the sort) functions like "those who are called 'gnostics'" (but falsely): both present, for Irenaeus, a baseless claim.

On the other hand, however, even though trying to attain perfect knowledge cannot be successful and only leads to false knowledge, true knowledge is, according to Irenaeus, necessary. He writes that it is "better and more profitable to belong to the simple and unlettered class" than speculate about the demiurge, but continues by presenting a comparison between two kinds of knowledge:

And for this reason Paul exclaimed, "Knowledge (γνῶσις) puffs up, but love builds up" (1 Cor. 8:1): not that he meant to inveigh against a true knowledge of God (ueram de Deo scientiam), for in that case he would have accused himself; but, because he knew that some, puffed up by the pretense of knowledge (sub occasione scientiae), fall away from the love of God, and imagine that they themselves are perfect . . . It is therefore better, as I have said, that one should have no knowledge whatever (nihil omnino scientem) of any one reason why a single thing in creation has been made, but should believe in God, and continue in His love, than that, puffed up through knowledge (scientiam)

⁴⁰ The two thinkers differ in that whereas Irenaeus explicitly calls, e.g., Valentinus and Basilides (or their followers) non-gnostics, Clement calls them neither gnostics nor non-gnostics (in so many words; see text at n. 50 below).

⁴¹ Somewhat inconsistently, Lilla takes at face value Irenaeus's descriptions of the Valentinians' "claim[s] to possess a higher teaching", but not his denial of their gnosticity, instead calling them "Christian Gnostics" (*Clement of Alexandria: A Study in Christian Platonism and Gnosticism*, Oxford Theological Monographs [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971], 150–51). But, to his credit, Lilla does not postulate any systematic antagonism between Clement and the Valentinians. He notes both similarities and (some) differences between Clement's thought and "Gnosticism" (e.g., 161–63, 181–84, 229), and makes a distinction between them. He contrasts "the orthodox Clement" with "heretical Gnosticism" (p. 187), and describes the former as "an orthodox Christian" (p. 183), implying *this* was the reason Clement could not accept the idea of an inferior Demiurge—a good example of essentialist labeling where the label begins to define the thinker and not vice versa.

of this kind, he should fall away from that love which is the life of man; and that he should search after no other knowledge (scientiam) except [the knowledge of] Jesus Christ the Son of God, who was crucified for us, than that by subtle questions and hair-splitting expressions he should fall into impiety. (*Adv. haer.* 2.26.1)

Paul thus could have called himself a “gnostic” in a sense that Irenaeus would have accepted: Paul had the right kind of, true knowledge of Jesus that suffices for the simple believer. Irenaeus returns to the matter in the fourth book:

True knowledge (agnitio uera) is the doctrine of the apostles, and the ancient constitution of the Church throughout all the world, and the distinctive manifestation of the body of Christ according to the successions of the bishops, by which they have handed down that Church which exists in every place. (*Adv. haer.* 4.33.8)

Clement could have agreed: “For the life of the gnostic, in my view, is nothing but deeds and words corresponding to the tradition of the Lord” (*Str.* 7.16.104.2), although a more in-depth conversation between the thinkers about what each of them meant would have brought to surface major differences.

Gnostics—Who Were and Who Were Not?

It is good to remember that in the ultimate sense the question of which individuals and groups *were* gnostic, is not a meaningful one, because one’s identity and loyalty are not the same as one’s essence. The only thing we can really discuss is how people called themselves and others, how they wanted to be called by others, and how we should call them. I have argued above that Clement and Irenaeus should not be said to have opposed gnostics. But am I not forgetting that both of them report on those who considered themselves gnostics (even if they dispute the epithet). Am I refusing to imagine the viewpoint of their opponents? My answer comes in three parts. (1) Such a self-designation may well have existed among others besides the “Clementinians.” I am not taking any position on who had the right to use it. Yet (2) this gives us no grounds to declare Irenaeus or Clement “opponents of gnostics” when they argue against those whom they did not consider gnostics. This holds even where this was the self-designation of their interlocutors. In all cases, it is vital for researchers to explain what exactly they mean by the term and from whose viewpoint it is used. (3) A sobering step to take is to realize that, as an adjective, “gnostic” was often a highly positive term.⁴² It is used, e.g., by Eusebius about a century after Clement and Irenaeus as a laudatory attribute of persons:

At all events he is named Enos, which is “true human being,” by a well-applied appellation. For it is said that we ought to consider and to call no other a “true human being” than him who attains to the knowledge (γνώσεως) of God and to piety, who is at the same time verily a gnostic (τὸν ἀληθῶς γνωστικόν) and pious. (*Praep. ev.* 7.8.5).⁴³

I agree with Williams who states that the term “gnostic” as a self-designation is “a claim to a quality.”⁴⁴ This quality is one that is desired, competed for, and denied others.⁴⁵ The title “gnostic” is, in Clement and Irenaeus, much like

⁴² But not always. Already Tertullian’s three instances of the term “gnostic” (Marjanen, “What Is,” 17) are of the uncontested sort (*Scorp.* 1, *An.* 18, *Val.* 39). It is worth noting that in all the cases Tertullian speaks of the gnostics and the Valentinians as separate groups.

⁴³ Trans. Gifford modified. See also *Praep. ev.* 7.8.9, 11.6.32, 13.13.1. Eusebius does also mention that, according to Irenaeus, Carpocrates was the father of the *hairesis* called that of the gnostics, who are explicitly distinguished from the teachings of Basilides (*HE* 4.7.9). Of Clement, he writes that he “sifts the false opinions of the heresiarchs” (*Hist. eccl.* 6.13.5) saying nothing of gnostics in this context.

⁴⁴ Williams, “Was There,” 76.

⁴⁵ Brakke notes this in the case of Clement, but not consistently for Irenaeus. Instead, he claims the latter in fact “granted this term of praise to Christians he considered to be mired in hopeless error” and explains this with Irenaeus’s acquaintance with “Christians [who] did use ‘Gnostic’ to identify themselves as a philosophical or religious movement; they belonged to ‘the Gnostic school of thought.’” Yet Brakke acknowledges Irenaeus insisted that the gnostics are “falsely so called” and that he

the *opposite* of “heretic.”⁴⁶ Williams refers to the descriptions of the Naassenes by the author of *Refutation of all Heresies* (formerly wrongly identified as Hippolytus of Rome) who call themselves both “gnostics” and “the only Christians” (as well as “the spiritual” etc.).⁴⁷ This is very much to the point. In the words of Clement (*Paed.* 1.6.52.2): “It is a matter for wonder to me that some people [whom Clement does not identify] dare to call themselves perfect and gnostics (σφᾶς τελείους τινὲς τολμῶσι καλεῖν καὶ γνωστικούς), laying claim in their inflated pride to a loftier state than the Apostle.”⁴⁸ Other epithets used in a way that reflects disputes around the question, “who is and who is not?” include “orthodox” and “Christian,” and also “heretic.”⁴⁹

Unlike Irenaeus, Clement does not report Valentinus, Basilides or their followers as having been called “gnostics.” He does mention that the followers of Valentinus “attribute faith to us simple ones, but knowledge to themselves” (*Str.* 2.3.10.2), which comes close to being a claim to “real” gnosticism on their part. Importantly, Clement never calls the Valentinians “false gnostics.” On the contrary, he sometimes distinguishes the Valentinians from such people.⁵⁰ Basilides is not directly linked with *gnosis* by Clement, but on one occasion Clement speaks of “the gnostic Moses” who “announced that the world was only-begotten, as Basilides says, and that God is one, as does not (οὐκέτι)⁵¹ appear to Basilides” (*Str.* 5.11.74.3).⁵² The passage is a good example of Clement’s pragmatic attitude towards those with whom sometimes agrees and sometimes disagrees. His approach to his interlocutors was not label-oriented, which is why statements like “it is quite possible that Clement’s critique in [the promised but now apparently lost] *Περὶ ψυχῆς* included a polemic against some Gnostic theories, including also Basilides’ doctrine of reincarnation” are suspect.⁵³ When a theory is labeled “gnostic,” it is saddled with the undetermined and contradictory (but in any case “heretical”) load the term carries. So if the doctrine of reincarnation is gnostic—in the modern “sense” of the

“likened [ed] ‘gnostic’ to ‘perfect,’ suggesting that the term can be used also as a more generally positive adjective, as Clement did.” (*Gnostics*, 33–34).

⁴⁶ Cf. “In order to elevate one Christian tradition above all the others, the nascent ‘orthodoxy’ denigrated others by calling them heretical. In this process, the term ‘gnostic’ became practically synonymous with a ‘heretic’” (Antti Marjanen, “Gnosticism,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies*, ed. Susan Ashbrook Harvey and David G. Hunter [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008], 208). Similarly, “Most summary definitions of Gnosticism continue to describe it as a Christian heresy” (King, *What is*, 191). As far as ancient texts are concerned, this conceals the important difference between, e.g., Irenaeus and Tertullian noted above (n. 42).

⁴⁷ Williams, “Was There,” 76, referring to *Refutation of All Heresies* 5.11.1 and 5.9.22.

⁴⁸ Cf. Wood’s translations of γνωστικός in *Paed.* 1.6.31.2 and 35.1: “enlightened Gnostics” and just “enlightened”, respectively.

⁴⁹ See, e.g., Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 35–36; Ps.-John Chrysostom, *De pseudoprophetais* 59.561.49–50; Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catecheses ad illuminandos* 1-18, 6.12.2–4; John Malalas, *Chronographia* 17.11; emperor Julian, *Epistulae* 114.5.

⁵⁰ *Str.* 3.4.29.3–30.1: “If these people [apparently the circles of Carpocrates and Nicolaus, 3.4.25.5] were speaking of spiritual unions, like Valentinus’ followers, then one might perhaps accept their assumption. But only a person who has renounced salvation could attribute to the holy spirit of prophecy a union consisting in sexual violence. Similar doctrines are expressed by Prodicus’ school, who falsely claim the name of gnostics for themselves, calling themselves natural sons of the primal god.”

⁵¹ Wilson translates, “not yet,” whereas the basic meaning of οὐκέτι is “no more, no longer, no further.” Furthermore, Basilides was surely long dead by the time Clement wrote this, as already Justin (d. c. 165) speaks of his followers (n. 49 above). I suggest that the word serves to indicate a limit: Basilides’s understanding extends “no further.”

⁵² There is dispute among modern scholars concerning whether Basilides was “a gnostic.” Cf. Layton’s emphatic “no” vs. Pearson’s unequivocal “yes” (Bentley Layton, “The Significance of Basilides in Ancient Christian Thought,” *Representation* 28 [1989]: 149–50; Birger Pearson, “Basilides the Gnostic,” in *Companion to Second-Century Christian “Heretics,”* ed. Antti Marjanen and Petri Luomanen, Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae 76 [Leiden: Brill, 2005], 28). In a historical sense, Layton seems to be correct, although his comment that Irenaeus “carefully distinguished Basilides’ views (1.24.3-5) from those of the Gnostics (1.29)” ignores the repeated instances of Irenaeus lumping them together (above, n. 31).

⁵³ Ashwin-Siejkowski, *Trial*, 123 n. 29.

word—the inevitable conclusion is that Clement’s attitude could not be anything else than one of rejection. Such a conclusion would, however, have little to do with historical realities.⁵⁴

Conclusions

Should we abandon the term “gnostic” altogether because of the difficulties in defining it and because the attempted definitions do not fit the ancient sources?⁵⁵ Or because it is a pejorative term used in Catholic polemics?⁵⁶ My view is that we should decide case by case with the minimum requirement of being—and keeping our readers—always aware of the referent. In principle, any etic terminology that is explicitly defined, and preferably with some consensus, is feasible. However, when a term appears in the ancient sources, defining it in a way that directly conflicts with some of its emic uses is confusing. The illusory polemics postulated in research between Clement and Irenaeus on one hand, and the “gnostics” (often without defining the term) on the other, is a case in point.

Clement claims the title “gnostic” for his ideal religious person. Sometimes he also denies the legitimacy of its use by some of those with whom he disagrees. In Irenaeus, the latter phenomenon is much more common, whereas he lacks the category, “the gnostics”; his opponents do not count, because they are falsely so called. By contrast, the epithet is central, practically as a self-designation, to Clement. Irenaeus does value “true knowledge” of matters divine, but he delimits it to what he calls the doctrine of the apostles and gives it neither the esoteric character nor the salvific role we find in Clement.

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⁵⁴ Contrary to the claims of most scholars, Clement nowhere rejects reincarnation. The matter cannot be discussed further in the present context, but my article “Clement of Alexandria’s Position on the Doctrine of Reincarnation and Some Comparisons with Philo” has been accepted for publication in the *Studia Patristica* (Peeters: Leuven).

⁵⁵ So Williams, “Was There,” 56.

⁵⁶ As discussed by DeConick, *Gnostic New Age*, 5–6. She herself does not advocate this but instead wants to see “the ancient Gnostics ... as real actors in history” (p. 9).

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