



Clement of Alexandria's Homily *Quis Dives Salvetur?* and Its Pastoral Challenges for Alexandrian Christians¹

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Abstract: The article reconsiders the structure of Clement's writing *Quis dives salvetur?* and as a consequence questions the traditional designation of this text as a homily. In the first part, the article focuses on the Gospel text quoted by Clement and attempts to explain some of the unusual choices of the text. In the second part, it highlights some pastorally interesting or, on the contrary, controversial aspects of Clement's interpretation: (a) the use of the Stoic concept of indifferent things, which makes it possible to give emphasis to the freedom of human decision; (b) the thorough justification of the allegorical interpretation of Mk 10,21; (c) the pastoral project of the "divine business" based on Lk 16,9 and finally (d) the possibility of a second repentance after baptism justified by the story of the Apostle John.

Keywords: Clement of Alexandria; *Quis dives salvetur?*; Interpretation of Mk 10,17-31; Early Christian homiletics; Biblical exegesis; Allegorical interpretation

Clement of Alexandria's text on the pericope of the vocation of a rich young man³, entitled Τίς ὁ σφζόμενος πλούσιος (lat. *Quis dives salvetur?* – *QDS*) is traditionally referred to as a homily⁴. Even a cursory glance, how-

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³ Cf. Mk 10,17-31; Mt 19,16-30; Lk 18,18-30.

⁴ The text is referred to as *logos* in Eusebius (*HE*. VI 13, 3) and in Clement himself (*QDS* 4, 1), which does not exclude the usual designation "homily". Cf. Ch. Kannengiesser, *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis: The Bible in Ancient Christianity*, v. 1, Leiden – Boston 2004, p. 509: "[...] an essay written as a *sermon* (but not delivered)" or J. Quasten, *Patrology*, vol. II: *The ante-nicene literature after Irenaeus*, Allen 1999, p. 15: "the little

ever, reveals that the text is too long for that purpose. Carlo Nardi believes that it was initially two or more quite short homilies⁵. Apart from the length itself, the content and stylistic differences between the first and second part also suggest such considerations. Let us look at the structure of the text and the topics and style that characterises them (see the Appendix)⁶.

1. *QDS* 1, 1-4, 3: Introductory Passage: the Situation of the Addressees

In the introductory part, Clement introduces the situation of the addressees and explains what led him to write a treatise on the subject⁷. Right at the beginning, he presents his text as a work written for the sake of the salvation of the souls of rich Christians⁸. Clement criticises two tendencies he sees as problematic among wealthy believers: some of them, upon hearing the radical gospel demand (“go and sell what you own”, Mk 10,21 par.), immediately give up the hope of the heavenly life. They do not even bother to listen to Jesus’ immediately following words that even what they consider impossible in their own way of thinking is possible with God (cf. Mk 10,27f), and they simply resign themselves to any spiritual growth⁹. Another group of wealthy people rightly understood that Jesus also offers salvation to them; nevertheless, they do nothing for it. They are like competitors, who expect the laurel of vic-

work *Who is the Rich Man that is saved?* is a *homily* on Mark 10,17-31, which however seems not to be a sermon delivered in a public service”. The title of the work is given by Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* III 23, 5 and VI 13, 3. The text itself is preserved in the 12th century codex Scorialensis Ω-III-19 (f. 326v-345r). Clement’s other works, *Protrepticus*, *Paedagogus* and *Stromata* are preserved in another codex, Laurentianus Pluteus V 3 from the 10th/11th century.

⁵ Cf. C. Nardi, *Clemente Alessandrino, Quale ricco si salva? Il cristiano e l’economia*, Roma 1991, p. 8; C. Nardi, *Clemente di Alessandria*, in: *La Bibbia nell’antichità cristiana I. Da Gesù a Origene*, ed. E. Norelli, Bologna 1993, p. 372.

⁶ Since our text was primarily conceived as a paper for a conference on the homiletic genre (“Tractatus populares: Homiletic forms as an effective communication means from Christian Antiquity to the Humanist era”), our approach to Clement’s text is focused only on his exegesis in *QDS*, without references to other Clement’s works.

⁷ Cf. Clemens Alexandrinus, *Quis Dives Salvetur* 1, 1-4, 3.

⁸ Cf. Clemens Alexandrinus, *Quis Dives Salvetur* 1, 4-5.

⁹ Cf. Clemens Alexandrinus, *Quis Dives Salvetur* 2, 2.

tory without the effort of long-term training¹⁰. Clement considers a different reaction as the right one: to adopt a kind of golden mean based on an attentive reading of Jesus' own words: "Hope is neither beyond their reach nor, on the contrary, to be obtained without settled purpose"¹¹. In contrast to the servile and hypocritical favour of people who uncritically glorify wealthy Christians because they hope to benefit from it, Clement, through his writings, wants to set an example of unselfish care that may not appeal to everyone but which leads to the salvation of other people's souls¹². The whole introductory passage is written in a rather complicated third-person style. There is no indication that it could be a homily. More likely, it seems to be a sophisticated justification for Clement's work, which could be written and added to the text as an introduction later on.

2. *QDS* 4, 4-10: Text of the Gospel cited by Clement

The relatively long introduction immediately continues by quoting the Gospel text. Three interesting things are remarkable here: (1) The quotation is unusually long – Clement does not usually quote the whole pericope but paraphrases it and shortens it in various ways¹³; (2) The quotation is from Mark, not from Matthew which is the Gospel most often quoted by Clement¹⁴; (3) The text given by Clement differs significantly from the text we know from Mark (according to Nestle-Aland).

¹⁰ Cf. Clemens Alexandrinus, *Quis Dives Salvetur* 2, 3; 3, 4-6.

¹¹ Clemens Alexandrinus, *Quis Dives Salvetur* 3, 2, GCS 17, 161, 16-20: "ὅπως ἂν καὶ δι' οἷων ἔργων τε καὶ διαθέσεων ἐπαύραιντο τῆς ἐλπίδος, ὥς οὗτ' ἀμηχάνου καθεστῶσης αὐτοῖς οὔτε τοῦναντίον εἰκῇ περιγινομένης". English translation of G.W. Butterworth (LCL 92), p. 275.

¹² Cf. Clemens Alexandrinus, *Quis Dives Salvetur* 1, 1-5.

¹³ See for example Clemens Alexandrinus, *Paedagogus* I 90, 1 (Prov 8, 4 ff.); Clemens Alexandrinus, *Stromata* II 5, 1 (Wis 7,17-20); 12, 2 (Heb 11,3-25); 83, 2 (Prov. 8,17f); III 3, 4 (2Cor 11,13-15); 80, 1 (Rom 7,2f); IV 15, 4 (Mt 19,29); VII 84, 3 (1Cor 6,1f), and others. Cf. also A. van den Hoek, *Techniques of Quotation in Clement of Alexandria. A View of Ancient Literary Working Methods*, VigCh 50/3 (1996) p. 223-243.

¹⁴ Cf. Clemens Alexandrinus, *Register*, ed. O. Stählin – U. Treu, GCS 39, Berlin 1980, p. 11-18. C. Cosaert (*The Text of the Gospels in Clement of Alexandria*, Leiden – Boston 2008, p. 118-131), in his meticulous analysis demonstrates, that apart from *QDS* there are only two citations of Mark in Clement's entire work (Mk 8,38 in *Strom.* IV 70, 2 and Mk 9,29 in *Ecl.* 15,1).

Ad (1): The reason for the inclusion of the full text of the pericope is given explicitly: “For there is nothing like hearing once more the actual sayings which, because in our childishness we listened to them uncritically and mistakenly, have continued until now to trouble us in the gospels”¹⁵. Clement seems to be very anxious that the Gospel text be heard in its entirety.

Ad (2): Clement is concerned that the words of the Gospel are quoted only according to Mark, although the Gospel is neglected by Clement or by the church fathers in general. The reasons for such a choice are widely discussed: Michael J. Kok asks why Mark’s Gospel was retained in the canon and at the same time practically ignored by early Christian writers. He finds that the patristic writers were hesitant to embrace Mark because they perceived it to be too easily adapted to rival and non-orthodox Christian factions¹⁶. Matteo Monfrinotti points out four differences between text of Mark, chapter 10 and the other synoptic Gospels (there are additions or variants in the verses 17, 21, 24 and 30), and believes that just these differences are the reason for Clement’s choice of Mark¹⁷. Other authors work with the hypothesis of so-called Secret Gospel of Mark and tend to conclude that Clement became interested in the various versions of Gospel of Mark at the end of his life¹⁸.

Ad (3): Clement’s text (though referred to as Marks’) does not correspond to the standard version of this Gospel, or even to the versions of

¹⁵ Clemens Alexandrinus, *Quis Dives Salvetur* 4, 3, GCS 17, 162, 16-18: “οὐδὲν γὰρ οἷον αὐτῶν αὐθις ἀκοῦσαι τῶν ῥητῶν, ἅπερ ἡμᾶς ἐν τοῖς εὐαγγελίοις ἄχρι νῦν διετάρασεν ἀβασανίστως καὶ διημαρτημένως ὑπὸ νηπιότητος ἀκροωμένους”, tr. G.W. Butterworth, LCL 92, p. 279.

¹⁶ See M.J. Kok, *The Gospel on the Margins: The Reception of Mark in the Second Century*, Minneapolis 2015; for Clement’s use of Mark see esp. the second part of the book, p. 163s. Kok believes that Clement used the rich man pericope to counter strict ascetic teachings and low Christologies (p. 249-250).

¹⁷ Cf. M. Monfrinotti, *Quis dives salvetur? Ricezione ed esegesi di Mc. 10,17-31*, “Augustinianum” 2 (2013) p. 317-320; M. Monfrinotti, *Mc. 10,17-31: dal Quis dives salvetur? al Codice neotestamentario Alessandrino*, in: *Povertà e ricchezza nel cristianesimo antico (I-V sec.). XLII Incontro di Studiosi dell’Antichità Cristiana*, SEA 145, Roma 2016, p. 132-135; M. Monfrinotti, *Mc 10,24 in Quis dives 4,9: sulla lezione τοὺς πεποιθότας ἐπὶ χρήμασιν*, “Rivista Biblica” 69/1 (2021) p. 67-69.

¹⁸ Cf. A. Le Boulluec, *La lettre sur l’Évangile secret de Marc et le “Quis dives salvetur ?” de Clément d’Alexandrie*, “Apokrypha” 7 (1996) p. 27-41 and J. Plátová, *The Text of Mark 10:29-30 in “Quis dives salvetur?” by Clement of Alexandria*, in: *The Process of Authority. The Dynamics in Transmission and Reception of Canonical Texts*, ed. J. Dušek – J. Roskovec, Berlin – Boston 2016, p. 265-266.

other Synoptic Gospels. Clement seems to have used a peculiar edition of the rich young man in *QDS*. The main differences can be seen in the verses 21, 24 and 29-30¹⁹. David D.M. King seeks to show that Clement's way of dealing with the biblical text is very cunning. He shows Clement as an author, who picks the words from each gospel and makes subtle but very important changes to the biblical text in order to incorporate the wealthy into the church²⁰. A similar view prevails among many modern New Testament scholars²¹. According to another view, it is not Clement's intentional adjustment of the biblical text, but Clement was working with a Gospel text circulating around Alexandria at that time. It is possible to understand the Gospel-text in *QDS* not as an author's arbitrary modification of the biblical text, but as an interesting proof of the plurality of the Gospel text in Antiquity²². The most attention was paid to this question by Matteo Monfrinotti, who focused on the variant τοὺς πεποιθότας ἐπὶ χρήμασιν in the verse 10,24²³. Supported by the fact, that this reading is attested by the Codex Alexandrinus and many other gospel codices²⁴, Monfrinotti is convinced that Clement's reading comes from the Marcan Gospel, which Clement possessed. He does not believe, on the contrary, that it was Clement himself who intervened in the gospel pericope.

3. *QDS* 6, 1-27, 2: Clement's Commentary on the Biblical Text Verse by Verse

Clement's own interpretation is further divided into two quite different parts. The first one can be characterised as a commentary on the pericope about the rich young man (*QDS* 6, 1-27, 2). Clement explains Gospel verse

¹⁹ Cf. Monfrinotti, *Quis dives salvetur? Ricezione ed esegesi di Mc. 10,17-31*, p. 320-324.

²⁰ Cf. D.D.M. King, *The Peculiar Edition of the Rich Young Ruler in Clement of Alexandria's "Quis Dives Salvetur"*, in: *StPatr* 110/7 (2021) p. 177-185.

²¹ See for example J. Gnlika, *Das Evangelium nach Markus*, EKK II/2, Zürich 1979, p. 93, n. 8; V. Taylor, *The Gospel According to St. Mark*, London 1966, p. 435.

²² Cf. Le Boulluec, *La lettre sur l'Évangile secret de Marc*, p. 27-41; Plátová, *The Text of Mark 10:29-30*, p. 253-269. The plurality of the Gospel text in Alexandria in general is also attested to by C.P. Cosaert, *The Text of the Gospels in Clement of Alexandria*, Leiden – Boston 2008, p. 305-310.

²³ See above all Monfrinotti, *Mc 10,24 in Quis dives* 4,9, p. 63-87. The author has also addressed this issue in his earlier studies cited above in the footnote 17.

²⁴ Cf. Monfrinotti, *Mc 10,24 in Quis dives* 4,9, p. 77.

by verse, although he does not give equal attention to each one (see the Appendix). Note also that on two occasions, Clement abandons Mark and bases his explanation on Mathew and Luke²⁵. It is certainly consistent with the exegetical principle he mentions right at the beginning: the text of each Gospel can differ in particulars, however, the Gospels all together give the same mutually corresponding meaning²⁶. On the other hand, in the case of our author, there is undoubtedly a specific reason for abandoning the text of Mark in favour of another synoptic Gospel. The words “if you wish to be perfect” (Mt 19,21) are missing in Mark. These are highly important to Clement, however, because they allow him to develop his own reflections on human freedom: “In this divine way, *if you wish*, he showed the self-determination (τὸ αὐτεξούσιον) of the soul he was conversing with”²⁷. Clement then reflects on the admirable interplay between God who offers salvation as a gift and wants a person to appropriate it on the one hand, and of a person who can freely choose salvation and makes an effort for it on the other²⁸. Another verse different from Mark is Lk 18,22: “There is still one thing you lack [...]”²⁹. Compared to Mark 10,21, the difference is only a stylistic variant (ἔτι ἐν σοὶ λείπει instead of ἐν σε ὑστερεῖ), Clement might have chosen Luke because he wanted to refer to the situation of Martha and Mary in Luke 10,38-42³⁰.

4. *QDS* 11, 1-20, 6: The Heart of Clement’s Commentary: An Allegorical Interpretation of Mk 10,21

Clement treated most thoroughly the explanation of the words: “Go and sell what you own” (see Appendix)³¹. Apparently, these are the words,

²⁵ Cf. Clemens Alexandrinus, *Quis Dives Salvetur* 10, 1-2: commentary on Mt 19,21 and *Quis Dives Salvetur* 10, 3-7: commentary on Lk 18,22.

²⁶ Clemens Alexandrinus, *Quis Dives Salvetur* 5, 1, GCS 17, 163, 13-16: “Ταῦτα μὲν ἐν τῷ κατὰ Μάρκον εὐαγγελίῳ γέγραπται· καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἄλλοις δὲ πᾶσιν <τοῖς> ἀνωμολογημένοις ὀλίγον μὲν ἴσως ἐκασταχοῦ τῶν ῥημάτων ἐναλλάσσει, πάντα δὲ τὴν αὐτὴν τῆς γνώμης συμφωνίαν ἐπιδείκνυται”.

²⁷ Clemens Alexandrinus, *Quis Dives Salvetur* 10, 1, GCS 17, 165, 26-27: “καὶ θεῶς τὸ «εἰ θέλεις» τὸ αὐτεξούσιον τῆς προσδιαλεγομένης αὐτῷ ψυχῆς ἐδήλωσεν” (tr. JP).

²⁸ Cf. Clemens Alexandrinus, *Quis Dives Salvetur* 10, 1-2, and 21, 1-3 (interpretation of the verse Mk 10,27).

²⁹ Cf. Clemens Alexandrinus, *Quis Dives Salvetur* 10, 3.

³⁰ Cf. Clemens Alexandrinus, *Quis Dives Salvetur* 10, 6-7.

³¹ Mk 10,21 interpreted in Clemens Alexandrinus, *Quis Dives Salvetur* 11, 1-20, 6.

which caused despair and resignation of wealthy Alexandrian Christians, as mentioned above³². This is probably why Clement devotes more space to explaining Mk 10,21 than to the other verses. Clement uses Mk 10,21 to show how this text can be understood not just literally. Based on the Stoic concept of indifferent things (τὰ ἀδιάφορα), Clement considers such facts as e.g., wealth and poverty, fame and disgrace, health and illness or life and death neither good nor bad in themselves³³. It depends, however, on the skill of a person who uses them as a tool, either well or badly either as their servant or their ruler. It is a person gifted by reason who decides the quality of usage of that tool. The person has the ability to make a free decision (κριτήριον ἐλεύθερον) and the sovereign power (τὸ αὐτεξούσιον) to deal with everything he/she has been given³⁴.

Clement does not consider a literal explanation of the words “go and sell what you own” as correct. He instead thinks that the property in this case must be understood as thoughts (δόγματα), affection (συνπάθεια), desire (ἐπιθυμία), or even an unhealthy dependence on property that must be “banished from the soul”³⁵. Clement gives several reasons for the allegorical interpretation. Firstly, poverty or destitution itself, into which a person falls against his/her will, does not liberate him/her, but on the contrary, throws him/her into a double torment, which can “inflame the innate stores of evil”³⁶. Secondly, renunciation of wealth need not be a demonstration of Christian virtue. It is well known that even before the coming of Christ, some philosophers preferred an ascetic way of life for a variety of reasons. Clement gives the names of three philosophers (Anaxagoras, Democritus, and Crates) and two reasons (time for philosophizing and “dead wisdom”, which is probably meant as an opposite to “eternal life” and reputation and empty fame)³⁷. Instead, Jesus invites us to the loss of possessions *for*

³² Cf. Clemens Alexandrinus, *Quis Dives Salvetur* 2, 2.

³³ Cf. Clemens Alexandrinus, *Stromata* II 109, 3-4 and J.R. Donahue, *Stoic Indifferents and Christian Indifferents in Clement of Alexandria*, “Traditio” 19 (1963) p. 438-446.

³⁴ Cf. Clemens Alexandrinus, *Quis Dives Salvetur* 14-15.

³⁵ Clemens Alexandrinus, *Quis Dives Salvetur* 11, 2, GCS 17, 166, 24-30: “«πώλησον τὰ ὑπάρχοντά σου». τί δὲ τοῦτο ἐστίν; οὐχ ὁ προχειρῶς δέχονται τινες, τὴν ὑπάρχουσαν οὐσίαν ἀπορρῖψαι προστάσσει καὶ ἀποστῆναι τῶν χρημάτων, ἀλλὰ τὰ δόγματα <τὰ> περὶ χρημάτων ἐξορίσαι τῆς ψυχῆς, τὴν πρὸς αὐτὰ συνπάθειαν τὴν ὑπεράγαν ἐπιθυμίαν, τὴν περὶ αὐτὰ πτοίαν καὶ νόσον, τὰς μερίμνας, τὰς ἀκάνθας τοῦ βίου, αἱ τὸ σπέρμα τῆς ζωῆς συμπνίγουσιν”.

³⁶ Clemens Alexandrinus, *Quis Dives Salvetur* 11, 3; cf. also 12, 4-5 and 14, 1.

³⁷ Cf. Clemens Alexandrinus, *Quis Dives Salvetur* 11, 4, GCS 17, 167, 6-9: “οὐτε καινὸν τὸ ἀπείπασθαι πλοῦτον καὶ χαρίσασθαι πτωχοῖς ἢ πατρίσιν, ὃ πολλοὶ πρὸ τῆς τοῦ

the sake of eternal life. The new thing Jesus asks for in the Gospel, according to Clement, is “to get rid of the soul and its thinking of passion and cut off from the heart the mundane way of thinking”³⁸. On the one hand, ascetic philosophers gave up external possessions (thus they outwardly seem to follow Jesus’ command). On the other hand, they accommodate themselves in the passions of soul such as conceit or boasting, and despised not only possessions but also people³⁹. Instead of blindly following their example, it seems far better and more worthy to do the opposite: to keep the wealth (and not worry about the remorse of not obeying Jesus’ command literally) and to use it to help those in need⁴⁰. This is related to the third purely practical reason: if everybody recklessly gave up his/her possessions, it would have been impossible to follow other Jesus’ commandments encouraging sympathy and effective help for the poor⁴¹. Clement consequently quotes texts from the New Testament to demonstrate that owning of material possession is advisable for living according to the Gospel. These texts include the encouragement to “use money, tainted as it is, to win you friends” (Lk 16,9), “store up treasures for yourselves in heaven” (Mt 6,20), Jesus’ teaching about the Last Judgement (Mt 25,35-46), and finally Jesus’ visit to the rich tax collectors (Lk 19,5f; Mk 2,14f; Lk 5,27-29)⁴².

Interpreting wealth as a passion (πάθος) and understanding wealth as an indifferent tool that can be used in a good and in a wrong way enables Clement to distinguish between two kinds of poverty and analogically also two kinds of wealth⁴³. The richness of the passions and earthly poverty connected to a miserable existence is to be rejected without any hesitation. The freedom from passions (ἀπάθεια), which Clement considers a kind of spiritual poverty, and the richness of the virtues are, however, desirable. Clement refers to Mt 5,3 (“how blessed are the poor in spirit”)⁴⁴ and requires being free from passions but being rich in virtues of the soul, which

σωτήρος καθόδου πεποιήκασιν, οἱ μὲν τῆς εἰς λόγους σχολῆς καὶ νεκρᾶς σοφίας ἔνεκεν, οἱ δὲ φήμης κενῆς καὶ κενοδοξίας, Ἀναξαγόραι καὶ Δημόκριτοι καὶ Κράτητες”.

³⁸ Clemens Alexandrinus, *Quis Dives Salvetur* 12, 1, GCS 17, 167, 14-17: “τὸ τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτὴν καὶ τὴν διάθεσιν γυμῶσαι τῶν ὑπόντων παθῶν καὶ πρόρριζα τὰ ἀλλότρια τῆς γνώμης ἐκτεμεῖν καὶ ἐκβαλεῖν”.

³⁹ Cf. Clemens Alexandrinus, *Quis Dives Salvetur* 12, 1-2.

⁴⁰ Cf. Clemens Alexandrinus, *Quis Dives Salvetur* 13, 1; 14, 1.

⁴¹ Cf. Clemens Alexandrinus, *Quis Dives Salvetur* 13, 2.

⁴² Cf. Clemens Alexandrinus, *Quis Dives Salvetur* 13, 3-7. See also Clemens Alexandrinus, *Stromata* III 54, 2-56, 1 and IV 28, 6-29, 2.

⁴³ Cf. Clemens Alexandrinus, *Quis Dives Salvetur* 17, 2-19, 2.

⁴⁴ Cf. Clemens Alexandrinus, *Quis Dives Salvetur* 17, 5.

are: faith, hope, love, friendship, knowledge, gentleness, humility and truthfulness⁴⁵. At the end of the interpretation of wealth, Clement refers once again to the verse in which Jesus encourages the wealthy man to sell his possessions. Based on two different kinds of wealth and two different kinds of poverty, Clement lets Jesus explain in a fictional speech how to “sell the possessions”: instead of the original wealth, which occupied the soul and obstructed the entrance into heaven, there is a need to put different wealth into the soul, which makes the soul divine and brings it into eternal life. It is an attitude which is in harmony with God’s commandments⁴⁶. This fictional speech of Jesus can easily be imagined as part of Clement’s original sermon.

5. *QDS* 27, 3-41, 7: “Divine Business” and the Possibility of Second Repentance

Up to this point, nothing can be objected to in Clement’s explanation. His pastoral project seems, however, to be more problematic as he further develops it in the second part of his homily. Based on Jesus’s appeal, “make friends for yourselves by means of the mammon of unrighteousness; that when it fails, they may receive you into the eternal dwellings” (Lk 16,9)⁴⁷ Clement introduces the practice of the so-called “divine business” (θεία ἀγορά)⁴⁸. He challenges wealthy Christians to use the property they possessed up to now unjustly, i.e. only for themselves, and to do good and redemptive deeds: to take care of those in need. In the care of the needy, the wealthy man should be neither lazy nor sparing but generous, and he himself should go and search for those to whom he can do good; he should even ask these people to accept his gift. He/she is to offer his/her resources with joy. After all, he/she will gain for his/her acting nothing less than eternal life as a reward! Caring for these “God’s little friends”, the wealthy man or women can gain a sort of protection from God⁴⁹. Clement thus openly

⁴⁵ Cf. Clemens Alexandrinus, *Quis Dives Salvetur* 18, 1, GCS 17, 171, 8-10: “ἀλλ’ ἐπὶ τῇ τῆς ψυχῆς ἀρετῇ, πίστει καὶ ἐλπίδι καὶ ἀγάπῃ καὶ φιλαδελφίᾳ καὶ γνώσει καὶ πραότῃ καὶ ἀτυφίᾳ καὶ ἀληθείᾳ, ὧν ἄθλον ἡ σωτηρία”.

⁴⁶ Cf. Clemens Alexandrinus, *Quis Dives Salvetur* 19, 3-6.

⁴⁷ The English translation according to *NAS*.

⁴⁸ Cf. Clemens Alexandrinus, *Quis Dives Salvetur* 32, 1.

⁴⁹ Cf. Clemens Alexandrinus, *Quis Dives Salvetur* 31, 6-33, 3.

proclaims that money can buy salvation for the rich one⁵⁰. By giving away earthly riches, a person gains spiritual riches – the kingdom of God, resp. immortality (ἀφθαρσία). The advantage of this “divine trading” is support even of the wealthy ones already here on earth. Through their charitable work, the wealthy gather around themselves an “army without guns”, consisting of the elderly, orphans and widows, who fight for the wealthy before God with intercessory prayers. Their actions have extraordinary power in the sphere of spiritual battle because these “little ones” are close to God in a special way⁵¹.

The second part of the text *QDS* seems different in other respects as well. While in the first part, Clement proceeds verse by verse, and the text resembles a commentary rather than a homily (an exception is the more extended passage focusing on the words “go and sell what you own”, which was already spoken about and which can be easily counted as a real homily in the past), the formulations in the second part of Clement’s text (*QDS* 27, 3-42, 15) are quite different. They are not linked to the biblical text as closely as in the first part, and they are more courageous and more poetic. In this part, Clement often speaks in the second person, whether he is addressing the audience himself or having Jesus speak to them in fictional speeches⁵². Clement’s words are based on Jesus’ new commandment to love God and a neighbour, including the immediately following explanatory parable of the Good Samaritan attested to in the Gospel according to Luke (Lk 10,27-37)⁵³. The second part of the homily is linked to the first one both by the topic of care for the needy ones and by the verse Mk 10,27:

⁵⁰ Clemens Alexandrinus, *Quis Dives Salvetur* 32, 1, GCS 17, 181, 5-6: “ὁ καλῆς ἐμπορίας, ὃ θείας ἀγορᾶς ὠνεῖται χρημάτων τις ἀφθαρσίαν”.

⁵¹ Cf. Clemens Alexandrinus, *Quis Dives Salvetur* 34, 2-35, 1. For more on the context and the topic see esp. A.M. Ritter, *Christentum und Eigentum bei Klemens von Alexandrien auf dem Hintergrund der frühchristlichen „Armenfrömmigkeit“ und der Ethik der kaiserzeitlichen Stoa*, ZKG 86 (1975) p. 1-25 und J. Ulrich, *Clemens Alexandrinus’ “Quis dives salvetur” als Paradigma für die Beurteilung von Reichtum und Geld in der Alten Kirche*, in: *Gott und Geld*, ed. M. Ebner et al., Jahrbuch für biblische Theologie 21, Neukirchen-Vluyn 2007, p. 213-238 and A. van den Hoek, *Widening the Eye of the Needle: Wealth and Poverty in the Works of Clement of Alexandria*, in: *Wealth and Poverty in Early Church and Society*, ed. S.R. Holman, Grand Rapids 2008, p. 67-75. Cf. also W.D. Hausschild, *Christentum und Eigentum. Zum Problem eines altkirchlichen „Sozialismus“*, ZEE 16 (1972) p. 34-49; M. Hengel, *Eigentum und Reichtum in der frühen Kirche. Aspekte einer frühchristlichen Sozialgeschichte*, Stuttgart 1973.

⁵² Cf. above all Clemens Alexandrinus, *Quis Dives Salvetur* 29, 6-31, 5, etc.

⁵³ Cf. Clemens Alexandrinus, *Quis Dives Salvetur* 27, 3-28, 4.

“With man this is impossible, but not with God”⁵⁴. Even the one who sadly walks away like the young man in the Gospel and the possibility of his salvation does not seem to be in sight does not need to fall into despair. One always has a second chance, justified not in human effort but in God’s mercy and grace. To support this hope, Clement does not hesitate to enter boldly into a discussion questioning the usual penitential practice of the Church in Alexandria in the second part of his writing⁵⁵.

The final part of the homily is delivered in a festive speech on the tender love of God the Father, which in its sympathy takes on a female form (συμπαθὲς γέγονε μήτηρ)⁵⁶. If a person accepts God’s love into his/her soul and lets it grow, regardless of the quantity and greatness of the past sins, he/she is able to fight against them⁵⁷. This also applies for those Christians who, because of ignorance, weakness or circumstances, which cannot be influenced, have again succumbed to sins even though they have already been baptised and have already renounced their sins. Even in such a case, Clement is certain about the possibility of repeated repentance and conversion and about God’s subsequent coming back to his children⁵⁸. God can again dwell in a person on condition of their willingness to finish with their sin once and forever and not look back again. There is no way, however, to count on God’s forgiveness boldly in advance: “Of sins already committed, then, God gives remission, but of those that are to come each man procures his own remission”⁵⁹. In the attempt to formulate the uniqueness of God’s forgiveness, Clement goes beyond what is expected: he brings God the Father to the scene, “who alone of all is able to make undone what has been

⁵⁴ This verse is primarily commented on in Clemens Alexandrinus, *Quis Dives Salvetur* 21, 1-3.

⁵⁵ See especially Clemens Alexandrinus, *Quis Dives Salvetur* 36, 1-2 and the literature mentioned in the footnotes 58 and 64.

⁵⁶ Clemens Alexandrinus, *Quis Dives Salvetur* 37, 2, GCS 17, 184, 1-3: “καὶ τὸ μὲν ἄρρητον αὐτοῦ πατήρ, τὸ δὲ εἰς ἡμᾶς συμπαθὲς γέγονε μήτηρ. ἀγαπήσας ὁ πατήρ ἐθελώνθη”.

⁵⁷ Cf. Clemens Alexandrinus, *Quis Dives Salvetur* 38, 4.

⁵⁸ Cf. Clemens Alexandrinus, *Quis Dives Salvetur* 39, 1-2. For more on the topic of “second repentance” see Clemens Alexandrinus, *Stromata* II 56-59 and A. Méhat, „Pénitence seconde“ et „péché involontaire“ chez Clément d’Alexandrie, VigCh 8 (1954) p. 225-233; D.P. O’Brien, *The Pastoral Function of the Second Repentance for Clement of Alexandria*, StPatr 41 (2006) p. 219-224.

⁵⁹ Clemens Alexandrinus, *Quis Dives Salvetur* 40,1, GCS 17, 186, 7-8: “Τῶν μὲν οὖν προγεγενημένων θεὸς δίδωσιν ἄφεσιν, τῶν δὲ ἐπιόντων αὐτὸς ἕκαστος ἑαυτῷ”, tr. G.W. Butterworth, LCL 92, p. 353.

done, by wiping out former sins with the mercy that comes from him and with the dew of the Spirit”⁶⁰.

6. *QDS 42: Final exemplum*

Clement’s text culminates in the story of the second conversion of the young man, who fell back into his sins and became a chief of robbers after his baptism⁶¹. It is simple to imagine that this functions as a closing *example* in a genuine homily. Clements’ appeal is dual: firstly, to prove that even a second conversion after baptism is possible under certain circumstances and despite contemporary practice. Secondly, to show pastoral care through the example of John the Apostle. Clement here probably takes the whole narration from an older non-canonical tradition, as evidenced by the words “hear a story that is no mere story (μῦθος), but a *true account* (λόγος) of John the apostle that has been handed down and preserved in memory”⁶². It is very likely that Clement is here drawing on some text unknown to us today, which later became part of the apocryphal *Acts of John*. The story of John the Apostle and the second conversion of the young robber is also found in the writings *Virtutes Iohannis* attributed to the sixth-century author ps.-Abdias, which is part of the critical edition of the *Acts of John*⁶³. The whole topic concerning the source of this narrative is quite extensive and undoubtedly deserves further investigation, but it is beyond the scope of this article. However, wherever Clement quotes this story from, it is certain that he aims to change Ancient Christian penitential practice. With the possibility of repeated repentance, which was quite a discussed topic in the Church of Alexandria⁶⁴, Clement does not suggest it here as a private person but

⁶⁰ Clemens Alexandrinus, *Quis Dives Salvetur* 40, 1, GCS 17, 186, 10-12: “ὅς μόνος τῶν ἀπάντων οἷός τέ ἐστιν ἄπρακτα ποιῆσαι τὰ πεπραγμένα ἐλέω τῷ παρ’ αὐτοῦ καὶ δρόσῳ πνεύματος ἀπαλείψας τὰ προημαρτημένα”, tr. G.W. Butterwoth, LCL 92, p. 353.

⁶¹ This passage is not preserved in codex Scorialensis Ω–III–19, but only by Eusebius, *HE* III 23, 6-19.

⁶² Cf. Clemens Alexandrinus, *Quis Dives Salvetur* 42, 1, GCS 17, 188, 2-3: “ἄκουσον μῦθον οὐ μῦθον, ἀλλὰ ὄντα λόγον περὶ Ἰωάννου τοῦ ἀποστόλου παραδεδομένον καὶ μνήμη πεφυλαγμένον”, tr. G.W. Butterwoth, LCL 92, p. 357.

⁶³ See *Acta Iohannis*, ed. E. Junod – J.D. Kaestli, CCAp 2, Turnhout 1983, p. 799-834.

⁶⁴ Cf. E. Junod, *Un écho d’une controverse autour de la pénitence: l’histoire de l’apôtre Jean et du chef des brigands chez Clément d’Alexandrie (QDS 42,1-15)*, RHPR

under the apostolic authority. This is probably the reason why this text, unlike Clement's other texts, was quoted in its full version by Eusebius in his *Ecclesiastical History*⁶⁵ and subsequently made its way into the Medieval collection *Legenda aurea*⁶⁶.

Clement's text then concludes with a vision of a happy future for converted Christians in heaven⁶⁷, whom the Saviour himself leads into the Father's arms. As it is appropriate to a real homily, it ends with the words of the final doxology⁶⁸.

7. Conclusion

Quis dives salvetur? is a unique and first-ever comprehensive explanation of the pericope on the rich man's vocation. It probably contains at least two actual preached homilies (the part on the explanation of the verse "go and sell what you own" and the entire second part including the final *exemplum*); however, these two or more parts are secondarily incorporated into one whole.

There are several reasons why Clement's text is so remarkable: (1) it is the very first allegorical interpretation of Mk 10,17-31; (2) it provides evidence of the existence of an alternative text to Mark; (3) it has preserved for us the non-canonical tradition about the Apostle John; (4) Clement here proposes two remarkable pastoral projects. The first one, so-called "divine business", has turned out to be quite problematic and not actually viable in the history of the Church. The second one, however, i.e., the possibility of repeated repentance, has been widely accepted.

60 (1980) p. 153-160; V. Grossi, *Nota sulla pastorale giovanile nella chiesa antica. A proposito di un diverbio tra l'apostolo Giovanni e un vescovo locale asiatico (Clemente Alessandrino, Quis dives salvetur 42.)*, "Lateranum" 71 (2005) p. 313-318.

⁶⁵ See footnote 61 above.

⁶⁶ On the literary 'fortunes' of the final *exemplum*, see C. Nardi, *La fortuna del "Quis dives salvetur"*. *Il racconto del giovane brigante*, in: C. Nardi, *Clemente Alessandrino, Quale ricco si salva? Il cristiano e l'economia*, Roma 1991, p. 117-172; cf. J. Plátová, *Klementovo kázání Který boháč bude spasen? jako pramen Zlaté legendy*, "Studia Theologica" 21/3 (2019) p. 45-66.

⁶⁷ Cf. Clemens Alexandrinus, *Quis Dives Salvetur* 42, 16-19.

⁶⁸ Cf. Clemens Alexandrinus, *Quis Dives Salvetur* 42, 20.

Appendix: Structure of the text *Quis dives salvetur*?

Introduction

- 1, 1-4, 3 Situation of the addressees; reason for writing
 4, 4-10 text of the gospel (according to Mark)
 5, 1-4 exegetical principles

Part I

- commenting the biblical text verse by verse*
 6, 1-3 commentary on Mk 10,17
 6, 4-8, 2 commentary on Mk 10,18
 8, 2-9, 2 commentary on Mk 10,19-20
 10, 1-2 commentary on Mt 19,21
 10, 3-7 commentary on Lk 18,22
 11, 1-20, 6 commentary on Mk 10,21
 20, 7 commentary on Mk 10,22
 21, 1-3 commentary on Mk 10,27
 21, 4-7 commentary on Mk 10,28
 22, 1-24, 2 commentary on Mk 10,29-30
 25, 1-8 commentary on Mk 10,30
 26, 1-27, 2 commentary on Mk 10,31

Part II

- loosely related reflections on the salvation of the rich ones*
 27, 3-38, 3 the generosity of God's love and the commandment to love one's
 neighbour (on Lk 10,27-37)
 "divine business" (on Lk 16,9)
 38, 4-41, 7 calls to repentance, possibility of the second repentance

Conclusion

- 42, 1-15 *exemplum* (the story of the second conversion)
 42, 16-20 vision of a happy future in heaven

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