The *Ad Diognetum* and contemporary rhetorical practice

Jerker Blomqvist

The text to be discussed here is traditionally known as the *Letter* (or *Epistle*) *to Diognetus*, *Epistula ad Diognetum*, *Diognetbrief*, etc. and is often classified with the writings of the Apostolic Fathers of the 2nd century AD.[1] However, lacking the formal characteristics of an ancient letter, it cannot be categorized as such, nor as an 'epistle' if, as Deissmann and Meecham would have it,[2] letter and epistle are to be distinguished as two different literary genres. More appropriately, it can be described as a pamphlet defending and explaining the author's Christian faith to an addressee who is a non-Christian and presumably a Roman magistrate, or, with Jefford's term,[3] as a 'protreptic discourse'. With that content and that objective it rather belongs with the writings of the Apologists of the 2nd and 3rd centuries, who addressed themselves to leading personalities of the empire, in particular the emperors,[4] whereas the Apostolic Fathers wrote with their fellow Christians in mind in order to confirm and strengthen their faith. Some scholars consequently prefer a more neutral title, such as *Ad Diognetum*, which we use here (with the abbreviation *Diogn.*), simply translating the title πρὸς Διόγνητον given in the manuscript, or at least they avoid the word 'letter' and its synonyms.[5]

The author of *Diogn.* cannot be identified with any known person. As for the addressee, only his name Διόγνητος is known, but nothing else. In the opening sentence of the letter he is addressed as κράτιστε, which may be the Greek equivalent of a Roman title (*egregius* or *clarissimus*)[6] and indicate an elevated position in the imperial society.[7] The date of the composition of the text cannot

1 For more exhaustive discussions on the origin of the text, authorship, date, literary character, theological content, etc., cf. Geffcken 1928, Meecham 1949, Marrou 1965, Lake 1976, Wengst 1984, Lindemann and Paulsen 1992, Ehrman 2003, Jefford 2013.

2 Deissmann 1923, 194–6, Meecham 1949, 7. The distinction is hardly necessary in this context, because the ancients did not make it but used the word ἐπιστολή as the predominating term in the relevant texts, occasionally substituting it with γράμματα etc. for the sake of variation; cf. Stirtewalt 1993, 67–87, Reed 1997, 171, n. 1.

3 Jefford 2013, 56.

4 e.g. Quadratus (Κοδρᾶτος), apparently bishop of Athens *c*.125–129 and reckoned as the earliest among the Apologists, addressed his apology to Hadrian (Euseb. *Hist. eccl.* 4.3.1–2). Comparable writings were addressed to Antoninus Pius and his sons (Aristides of Athens, Justin Martyr), or Marcus Aurelius and Commodus (Apollinaris Claudius, Athenagoras, Melito).

5 Marrou 1965 (*A Diognète*), Wengst 1984 (*Schrift an Diognet*).

6 *LSJ* [9]1940, 991–2 *s.v.* κράτιστος 2b.

7 Luke's κράτιστε Θεόφιλε (*Ev. Luc.* 1.3) may have the same implication.

be determined with certainty. Content and – as will be shown below – style indicate a close relationship to other Apologists, so a date between the mid-2nd and the early 3rd centuries seems plausible.

The text was preserved by a single manuscript, eventually ending up in the possession of the Bibliothèqe municipale of Strasbourg, where it was destroyed by wartime fire in 1870. Fortunately, it had been studied and copied by a number of scholars since the 16th century, and reliable collations have been preserved. The text was damaged, so that emendations or conjectures are called for in several passages. The concluding chapters, 11–12, constitute a particular problem. The manuscript indicated a lacuna in the text after ch. 10. According to most scholars, chs. 11–12 deviate so much in content, language and style from the preceding chapters 1–10 that they are likely to belong to a different work or may even have been written by a different person. These scholars conclude that the lacuna between chs. 10 and 11 covers the final portion of *Diogn.* proper and the beginning of another treatise, the pitiable remnants of which now appear as chs. 11–12. In my view, the divergences in language and style are not great enough to warrant the conclusion that chs. 11–12 were not written by the same person as chs. 1–10.[8] They could, however, possibly belong to a different treatise, and they will be used here mostly as an object of comparison for bringing stylistic and linguistic features of chs. 1–10 into relief.

Diogn. has found a great number of readers through the centuries, and new editions, translations and commentaries keep appearing. Commentators with a theological or clerical background appreciate it as a valuable religious document, illustrating early Christian thought and still relevant to Christians of modern times.[9] It is noticeable, however, how often and how emphatically these commentators draw attention to the formal characteristics of the text, its literary qualities, the author's skilful handling of the language and of rhetorical devices. The following study will be an attempt at characterizing the rhetorical practices of *Diogn.* compared to some texts from the same period. It could be described as a short case study on the impact of traditional Greek rhetoric on early Christian literature.

8 Marrou 1965, 219–27 vigorously defends the authenticity of the two chapters, and Hill's careful investigation of the problem ends with the conclusion that the arguments used against the authenticity of chs. 11–12 are not decisive (Hill 2006, 106–27).

9 Cf. e.g. Marrou 1965, 89 (approvingly translating an utterance by H. B. Swete): *'il n'y a pas d'œuvre chrétien, en dehors du Nouveau Testament, qui touche autant le cœur du public moderne'*.

The preface

The author's acquaintance with the literary tradition is apparent already from the opening chapter of *Diogn.* It forms a developed and rather longish proem to the treatise.

> ἐπειδὴ ὁρῶ, κράτιστε Διόγνητε, ὑπερεσπουδακότα σε τὴν θεοσέβειαν τῶν Χριστιανῶν μαθεῖν καὶ πάνυ σαφῶς καὶ ἐπιμελῶς πυνθανόμενον περὶ αὐτῶν τίνι τε θεῷ πεποιθότες καὶ πῶς θρησκεύοντες αὐτὸν <τόν> τε κόσμον ὑπερορῶσι πάντες καὶ θανάτου καταφρονοῦσι, καὶ οὔτε τοὺς νομιζομένους ὑπὸ τῶν Ἑλλήνων θεοὺς λογίζονται οὔτε τὴν Ἰουδαίων δεισιδαιμονίαν φυλάσσουσι, καὶ τίνα τὴν φιλοστοργίαν ἔχουσι πρὸς ἀλλήλους, καὶ τί δήποτε καινὸν τοῦτο γένος ἢ ἐπιτήδευμα εἰσῆλθεν εἰς τὸν βίον νῦν καὶ οὐ πρότερον, ἀποδέχομαί γε τῆς προθυμίας σε ταύτης, καὶ παρὰ τοῦ θεοῦ – τοῦ καὶ τὸ λέγειν καὶ τὸ ἀκούειν ἡμῖν χορηγοῦντος – αἰτοῦμαι δοθῆναι ἐμοὶ μὲν εἰπεῖν οὕτως ὡς μάλιστα ἂν <ἀκούσαντά> σε βελτίω γενέσθαι, σοί τε οὕτως ἀκοῦσαι ὡς μὴ λυπηθῆναι τὸν εἰπόντα.[10]

Syntactically, it is one unified sentence, structured into three sections:

(i) The author first notices the interest displayed by the addressee in the subject matter: ἐπειδὴ ὁρῶ ... πυνθανόμενον περὶ αὐτῶν.
(ii) He then specifies the particular questions that have been asked by the addressee and will be answered in the treatise: τίνι τε θεῷ πεποιθότες ... καὶ οὐ πρότερον.
(iii) Finally he asks for God's assistance in order to bring the enterprise to a successful end: ἀποδέχομαί γε τῆς προθυμίας ... μὴ λυπηθῆναι τὸν εἰπόντα.

Being a Christian, the author may be supposed to have been inspired by the preface of Luke's Gospel. The appearance of the polite address κράτιστε in both texts is a detail that suggests interdependence between them.[11] However, as appears in particular from Loveday Alexander's investigations, there are numerous parallels in extra-Biblical and pagan texts as well.[12] Some of them contain elements that reappear in *Diogn.* But are absent from Luke's

10 'Since I see, most excellent Diognetus, that you are extremely eager to learn about the religion of the Christians and are making such an exacting and careful inquiry about them, wishing to discover which God they obey and how they worship him, so that they all despise the world and disdain death, neither giving credence to those thought to be gods by the Greeks nor keeping the superstition of the Jews, and what deep affection they have for one another and just why this new race or way of life came into being now and not before, I welcome this eagerness of yours and ask God – who enables us both to speak and to hear – that I may be allowed to speak in such a way that you derive special benefit by hearing, and that you hear in such a way that the speaker not be put to grief.' I use throughout the translation of Ehrman (2003), sometimes with slight adaptations.

11 Commentators are of course aware of the parallelism between Luke and *Diogn.*

12 Alexander 1993; cf. also Alexander 2005, 21–3.

prefaces. According to Luke, it is on his own initiative that he sets out to write his account; his addressee Theophilus is not reported (or alleged) to have shown any previous interest. In *Diogn.* the opening ἐπειδή-clause states that it is Diognetus' interest in the matter that has inspired the writer. Prefaces with similar declarations appear in Greek scientific writings from the late 4th century BC onwards; the earliest known example comes from a medical treatise of Diocles of Carystus, addressed to King Antigonus I of Macedonia,[13] and there are several later examples.[14] Also the Apologist Melito opened his *Ἐκλογαί* with an ἐπειδή-clause stating that the reason for his writing the text was the addressee's repeatedly expressed interest.[15]

Detailed specifications of the content of the following text were also common in scientific prologues, often in the form of a string of indirect questions.[16] The address κράτιστε, that links *Diogn.* with Luke, was not uncommon in comparable contexts.[17]

Avoidance of hiatus

The parallels existing between the prologue of *Diogn.* and the extra-Biblical material indicate that the author was acquainted with the Greek literary tradition and its stylistic conventions. His models were not only the Biblical texts. Another indication of his ambition is the relative scarcity of hiatus in the text. The author does not pedantically avoid hiatus but allows it, as many writers do, after common words (e.g. the article, καί, ἤ, περί), before ἐν and οὐ, and at syntactic junctures. Disregarding those cases and passages where the elision of a final, short vowel would remove a hiatus, there are only about 17 hiatuses in *Diogn.* chs. 1–10 (compared to about 15 in the much shorter, divergent chs. 11–12).[18]

---

13 Diocles fr. 183a van der Eijk. Alexander 1993, 46–50, 213–14. The preface started with an ἐπειδή-clause describing the king as φιλοσοφίας πάσης ἔμπειρον ὄντα and τοῖς μαθηματικοῖς πρωταγωνιστήν.

14 Later examples include Apollonius of Citium's *περὶ ἄρθρων* (prologue of book 1: participle phrase describing the addressee as φιλιάτρως διακείμενον), Artemidorus' *Onirocritica* (prologue of book 3: ἐπειδή-clause referring to τὸ μεγαλεῖον τῆς σῆς σοφίας of the addressee), Diophantus' *Arithmetica* (prologue: τὴν εὕρεσιν τῶν ἐν τοῖς ἀριθμοῖς προβλημάτων, τιμιώτατέ μοι Διονύσιε, γινώσκων σε σπουδαίως ἔχοντα μαθεῖν) and Galen's *De constitutione artis medicae ad Patrophilum* (ἐπεί-clause praising Patrophilus for a 'divine' quality, i.e. the striving for learning and προθυμία).

15 Melito, fr. 3 in Perler's edition = Euseb. *Hist. eccl.* 4.26.13.

16 Alexander, *loc. cit.* Cf. Diocles' preface: ... γέγραφά σοι, πόθεν αἱ νόσοι τοῖς ἀνθρώποις συνίστανται, καὶ τίνων προγενομένων σημείων, καὶ πῶς ἄν τις αὐταῖς βοηθῶν ἐπιτυγχάνοι.

17 Cf. the prefaces of: Dionysius of Halicarnassus *De antiquis oratoribus* (ὦ κράτιστε Ἀμμαῖε), Josephus *Ap.* (κράτιστε ἀνδρῶν Ἐπαφρόδιτε), Galen *Meth. Med.* (book 2: Ἱέρων κράτιστε) and *Libr. Propr.* (κράτιστε Βάσσε), ps.-Galen *De theriaca* (κράτιστε Παμφιλιανέ), and Nepualinus, *περὶ τῶν κατὰ ἀντιπάθειαν καὶ συμπάθειαν* (κράτιστε Σέκστε).

18 Chs. 1–10 cover 270 lines in Marrou's edition, chs. 11–12, 52 lines.

The author also seems to use word order to prevent hiatus. He usually places genitives of personal pronouns after the substantive (with article) that they qualify.[19] This illustrates a tendency of contemporary Greek whereas the classical prose texts more often have them before the article.[20] By using the more 'classical' word order, the author avoids hiatus in two passages: 6.4 ἀόρατος δὲ αὐτῶν ἡ θεοσέβεια μένει and 7.6 τίς αὐτοῦ τὴν παρουσίαν ὑποστήσεται. But his avoidance of hiatus is not total, and in one passage a pre-positioned genitive creates a hiatus that would have been avoided with the alternative word order: 10.4 μιμητὴς ἔσῃ αὐτοῦ τῆς χρηστότητος.

In Hellenistic Greek there is a tendency to add a γε after καίτοι and μέντοι when a hiatus would otherwise occur.[21] In *Diogn.* there is one possible example: 8.3 καίτοι γε εἴ τις ...

The preparatory particle μέν occurs 26 times in *Diogn.*[22] In 10 cases, a disproportionately great number, the particle prevents a hiatus: 1.2 ἐμοὶ μὲν εἰπεῖν, 2.3 ὃ μὲν αὐτῶν, 2.8 εἰ μὲν αἰσθάνονται, 3.2 εἰ μὲν ἀπέχονται, 4.2 ἃ μὲν ὡς καλῶς, 6.3 οἰκεῖ μὲν ἐν τῷ σώματι, 6.4 γινώσκονται μὲν ὄντες, 6.7 ἐγκέκλεισται μὲν ἡ ψυχή, κατέχονται μὲν ὡς ἐν φρουρᾷ, 9.2 πεπλήρωτο μὲν ἡ ἡμετέρα ἀδικία. The frequent use of the particle in these particular contexts is likely to indicate a striving to avoid hiatus.

The conjunction ὅτι occurs four times in *Diogn.* In one passage the author uses its synonym διότι instead, thereby preventing a hiatus:[23] 6.5 ἀδικουμένη διότι. Cf. ἀδικούμενος ὅτι, which follows in the next line.

These observations suggest that there is a partial avoidance of hiatus in chs. 1–10, but not in chs. 11–12. Thus, the author of chs. 1–10 tried to apply a rule of literary Greek, but failed, which testifies to his ambitions but not to his competence.

19 Or after an adjective that qualifies the substantive, as, e.g. 4.6 τῆς ἰδίας αὐτῶν θεοσεβείας, 8.10 τὴν σοφὴν αὐτοῦ βουλήν. This is the normal word order in nominal phrases with this structure; see Kühner and Gerth 1904, I.619, BDR, § 284:1c.

20 Wifstrand 1949. Wifstrand's observations on enclitic personal pronouns apply to the accented genitives (ἡμῶν, ὑμῶν, αὐτοῦ, αὐτῆς, αὐτῶν) as well.

21 See Blomqvist 1969, 29–34 and 43–5.

22 Counting the textually uncertain μὲν ὄντες in 6.4, where the manuscript had μένοντες. In chs. 11–12 there are no examples of μέν at all.

23 Meecham 1949, 15.

Rhythmical clausulae

Geffcken claimed to have observed a striving for the same types of rhythmical clausulae in *Diogn.* that were common in rhetorical prose, in particular in the writings of Clement of Alexandria.[24] He identified a number of examples of cola ending in the same syllabic sequences that are common in literary prose of the 2nd and 3rd centuries. The examples presented by Geffcken are too few to show with certainty that the author used prose rhythm deliberately as a stylistic device, but a systematic analysis of colon endings in chs. 5–7 offers a certain confirmation of his observations.

Disregarding those cola that are too short for a meaningful analysis, Marrou's text of chs. 5–7 contains about 100 cola.[25] 27 of them end in cretic + trochee, 14 in trochee + trochee, and seven in cretic + cretic, i.e. nearly half of them exemplify three clausula types that belong to the most common ones in Greek oratorical prose. Of the remaining *c.*50, 10 have a final cretic preceded by varying syllable sequences (e.g. 5.4 διαίτῃ καὶ τῷ λοιπῷ βίῳ, 7.7 παραβαλλομένους θηρίοις). The hexameter final (dactyl + spondee or trochee), which was mostly avoided, occurs in eight cases. The remaining cola finals are unclassifiable or irrelevant in this context.

The sequence cretic + trochee appears in more than a fourth of the investigated cola. In 5.1–2 e.g. four successive cola end with the sequence:

> ... διακεκριμένοι τῶν λοιπῶν εἰσιν ἀνθρώπων.
> οὔτε γάρ που πόλεις ἰδίας κατοικοῦσιν,
> οὔτε διαλέκτῳ τινὶ παρηλλαγμένῃ χρῶνται,
> οὔτε βίον παράσημον ἀσκοῦσιν.

Its frequency indicates that this particular sequence was intentionally sought for by the author. The same may apply to some of the other combinations, but as they are fewer in number pure chance cannot be ruled out. The conclusion regarding rhythmical clausulae will be approximately the same as regards the avoidance of hiatus: the author strove to comply with the conventions of literary prose but was not entirely successful.

---

24 Geffcken 1924, 349–50 and Geffcken 1928, v.

25 All the figures are, of necessity, inexact. Syntax and punctuation offer some guidance, but identifying the colon boundaries basically depends on the analyst's subjective judgement (e.g. Jefford's division of the text into cola does not coincide with mine).

Rhetorical figures

The most conspicuous stylistic feature of *Diogn.* is the frequency with which easily recognizable figures of speech recur in the text. They exemplify a whole spectrum of devices, most of which are in particular associated with the so-called 'Asianic style'. The commentators provide extensive lists of these devices with references to the relevant passages.[26] Geffcken, in his analysis of the rhetorically elaborate ch. 9, notes *polyptoton*, which is used in order to bring home the important ideas of God's power and righteousness (the stems δυνα- and δικαι- recur repeatedly, e.g. 9.1 ἀδύνατον εἰσελθεῖν εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ τῇ δυνάμει τοῦ θεοῦ δυνατοὶ γενηθῶμεν and 9.5 ἵνα ἀνομία μὲν πολλῶν ἐν δικαίῳ ἑνὶ κρυβῇ, δικαιοσύνη δὲ ἑνὸς πολλοὺς ἀνόμους δικαιώσῃ), isocola with homoeoteleuton (9.1 ἐφηδόμενος ... ἀνεχόμενος, συνευδοκῶν ... δημιουργῶν), strings of exclamations (9.5 ὢ τῆς γλυκείας ἀνταλλαγῆς, ὢ τῆς ἀνεξιχνιάστου δημιουργίας, ὢ τῶν ἀπροσδοκήτων εὐεργεσιῶν), and antitheta (often isosyllabic, with nine or 10 syllables in each colon: 9.2 τὸν ἅγιον ὑπὲρ <τῶν> ἀνόμων, τὸν ἄκακον ὑπὲρ τῶν κακῶν, τὸν δίκαιον ὑπὲρ τῶν ἀδίκων, τὸν ἄφθαρτον ὑπὲρ τῶν φθαρτῶν, τὸν ἀθάνατον ὑπὲρ τῶν θνητῶν). In other sections of the text we find series of rhetorical questions (4.2–5), anaphora (7.4 ὡς βασιλεὺς πέμπων υἱὸν βασιλέα ἔπεμψεν, ὡς θεὸν ἔπεμψεν, ὡς πρὸς ἀνθρώπους ἔπεμψεν, ὡς σῴζων ἔπεμψεν, ὡς πείθων, οὐ βιαζόμενος), *praeteritio* (4.1 <οὐ> νομίζω σε χρῄζειν παρ' ἐμοῦ μαθεῖν), or chiasmus (2.7 ἐγκλείοντες ταῖς νυξί, καὶ ταῖς ἡμέραις φύλακας παρακαθιστάντες, 11.1 ἀποστόλων γενόμενος μαθητὴς γίνομαι διδάσκαλος ἐθνῶν, and, possibly,[27] 4.5 ἄστροις καὶ σελήνῃ ... τῶν μηνῶν καὶ τῶν ἡμερῶν).

Sentence structure

The first sentence of *Diogn.* (quoted above) comes close to a structure that could be described as a period: a sentence consisting of several hierarchically structured constituents, forming a syntactically unified whole and complete only when the last constituent is in position. Such sentences are not common in *Diogn.* Even if a sentence starts with a fairly complex and regular structure, it normally dissolves into something else. There is an illustrative example in 9.6. The sentence starts with two coordinated participle phrases: ἐλέγξας οὖν ἐν μὲν τῷ πρόσθεν χρόνῳ τὸ ἀδύνατον τῆς ἡμετέρας φύσεως εἰς τὸ τυχεῖν ζωῆς and νῦν δὲ τὸν σωτῆρα δείξας δυνατὸν σῴζειν καὶ τὰ ἀδύνατα. The temporal

26 Cf., in particular, Geffcken 1928, 21–2, 24–5, Meecham 1949, 13–15, and Marrou 1965, 126–7, plus their notes on the individual passages.

27 Provided we accept the somewhat intricate interpretation of Otto 1852, 103 as Meecham 1949, 13, 105 and Jefford 2013, 213, n. 79, do.

distance between the two situations described in them is aptly visualized by the antithetical adverbial phrases ἐν μὲν τῷ πρόσθεν χρόνῳ and νῦν δέ and highlighted by the corresponding particles μέν – δέ. Then follows the main verb with adjuncts: ἐξ ἀμφοτέρων ἐβουλήθη πιστεύειν ἡμᾶς τῇ χρηστότητι αὐτοῦ, and with that the sentence becomes complete syntactically. However, the author does not leave it at that, but after the main verb phrase he adds – asyndetically – another infinitive phrase, αὐτὸν ἡγεῖσθαι τροφέα, the last word of which is expanded into a list of 11 divine epithets: πατέρα, διδάσκαλον, σύμβουλον, ἰατρόν, νοῦν, φῶς, τιμήν, δόξαν, ἰσχύν, ζωήν. The sentence ends with one more infinitive phrase, attached asyndetically, περὶ ἐνδύσεως καὶ τροφῆς μὴ μεριμνᾶν, which must be intended to be construed with the main verb ἐβουλήθη.

The latter part of 7.2 illustrates a different but equally loose structure. It starts with the object of the main verb immediately after the connective particle: ἀλλ᾽ αὐτὸν τὸν τεχνίτην καὶ δημιουργὸν τῶν ὅλων, and the verb appears only in the very last unit of the sentence: τοῦτον πρὸς αὐτοὺς ἀπέστειλεν. Superficially, this sentence could be classified as a period. However, the verb is separated from its object by almost nine lines of text, or 80 words (partly quoted below), many of them part of loosely concatenated enumerations, and that makes the syntax confused. It is not without reason that the author adds a resumptive τοῦτον in the last unit in order to make the connexion between the verb and its object clearer.

A majority of the sentences are short. We have already mentioned the author's predilection for series of exclamations and rhetorical questions. Several short sentences of about the same length appear one after the other, sometimes organized in antithetical or paradoxical pairs. A most conspicuous example is 5.5–17 with its description of the situation of the Christians in their pagan or Jewish surroundings:

πατρίδας οἰκοῦσιν ἰδίας,
ἀλλ᾽ ὡς πάροικοι.
μετέχουσι πάντων ὡς πολῖται,
καὶ πανθ᾽ ὑπομένουσιν ὡς ξένοι.
πᾶσα ξένη πατρίς ἐστιν αὐτῶν,
καὶ πᾶσα πατρὶς ξένη.
γαμοῦσιν ὡς πάντες, τεκνογονοῦσιν,
ἀλλ᾽ οὐ ῥίπτουσι τὰ γεννώμενα.
τράπεζαν κοινὴν παρατίθενται,

ἀλλ᾽ οὐ κοινήν.[28]
ἐν σαρκὶ τυγχάνουσιν,
ἀλλ᾽ οὐ κατὰ σάρκα ζῶσιν.
ἐπὶ γῆς διατρίβουσιν,
ἀλλ᾽ ἐν οὐρανῷ πολιτεύονται.
πείθονται τοῖς ὡρισμένοις νόμοις,
καὶ τοῖς ἰδίοις βίοις νικῶσι τοὺς νόμους,[29] etc.

The author is fond of constructing long strings of short sentences, phrases or even individual words, which would not normally count as a sign of literary skill or linguistic competence. However, even these, mostly tedious, concatenations are not totally devoid of artistry. The individual items often appear in groups of three. The author is likely to have deliberately tried to achieve a certain symmetry. In some sentences he creates variation by rounding off an enumeration with a syntactically divergent, longer unit, such as the concluding infinitive phrase περὶ ἐνδύσεως καὶ τροφῆς μὴ μεριμνᾶν 9.6 (discussed above). By combining five tripartite sections he creates this elaborate structure in one passage (7.2; part of the quasi-periodic sentence discussed above):

ᾧ πάντα διατέτακται
καὶ διώρισται
καὶ ὑποτέτακται,

28 κοινήν was the reading of the *codex unicus*. Most recent editors prefer Maran's conjecture κοίτην (in his edition of 1752), which gives the meaning 'they provide a common table, not a common bed'. Maran thought that the antithesis between common table and common bed was intended as a defence against allegations of promiscuity, directed against the Christians; he compared Tert. *Apol.* 39.9 *omnia indiscreta sunt apud nos praeter uxores* 'among us all things are common except wives' (with a following polemic). However, the sentence appears in a passage which is not primarily a defence of Christians against particular pagan accusations but which points out a series of paradoxical features of the Christians' own situation in the Roman society. It is not alien to the author's rhetorical style to exploit the double meaning of κοινός for a wordplay that highlights one of those paradoxes; he uses word-play also in πᾶσα ξένη πατρίς ἐστιν αὐτῶν, καὶ πᾶσα πατρὶς ξένη and ἐν σαρκί ... οὐ κατὰ σάρκα. With 'common table' the author of *Diogn* refers to the Eucharist. Justin (*Apol.* 66.2) also denies that the food and drink served at the Eucharist meal could be classified as something κοινόν: οὐ γὰρ ὡς κοινὸν ἄρτον οὐδὲ κοινὸν πόμα ταῦτα λαμβάνομεν 'we do not take this as ordinary bread or as ordinary drink'. In early Christian literature the adjective κοινός was used about 'impure' food and drink (*Ep. Rom.* 14.14–17, *Act. Ap.* 10.14, 11.8, Justin, *Dialogus cum Tryphone* 20.3, *Protevangelium Iacobi* 12; cf. BDAG, *s.v.* κοινός 2b), so the readers of *Diogn.* would easily understand its intended meaning here. Cf. Otto 1852, 106 and Blomqvist and Blomqvist (forthcoming) [2014], n. 73.

29 'They live in their own countries, but as expatriates; | they take part in everything as citizens and endure everything as aliens; | every foreign country is their homeland and every homeland is foreign; | they marry like everyone and have children, but they do not throw away their offspring; | they provide a common table but not common food; | they exist in the flesh but do not live according to flesh; | they spend their lives on earth but are citizens in heaven; | they are obedient to the established laws but surpass the laws with their ways of life.'

οὐρανοὶ καὶ τὰ ἐν οὐρανοῖς,
γῆ καὶ τὰ ἐν τῇ γῇ,
θάλασσα καὶ τὰ ἐν τῇ θαλάσσῃ,
πῦρ,
ἀήρ,
ἄβυσσος,
τὰ ἐν ὕψεσι,
τὰ ἐν βάθεσι,
τὰ ἐν τῷ μεταξύ.

Thus, the sentences of *Diogn.* mostly consist of strings of short cola, joined to each other either asyndetically or by the most common connective particles (καί, δέ), which do not specify their logical relationships. The preferred style of composition is an extreme form of the λέξις εἰρομένη. The preponderance of short cola allows the author to embellish the text with a variety of rhetorical figures, in particular isocola, homoioteleuta, anaphora, and similar devices. The series of short units are also arranged in a way that avoids the monotony of plain enumerations and reveals the author's artistic ambitions.

In a few cases the author has created sentences that come close to periods but are partly constructed from the same strings of short units that dominate most of the text. The author is likely to have been acquainted with periodic sentence structures (λέξις κατεστραμμένη), but in his text they are virtually absent, whether by deliberate choice or not.

Models and parallels

The rhetorical ambitions of *Diogn.* are immediately clear to the reader. From the very beginning, when *Diogn.* became known to scholarship, those qualities were noticed. It was also recognized that *Diogn.* was different, in that respect, from a number of other early Christian writings. The writers of the New Testament and the Apostolic Fathers offered nothing like it, and the commentators found no obvious parallels in the writings of the Apologists either. The *codex unicus* ascribed the text to Justin Martyr but stylistic differences became an important argument against Justinian authorship.[30]

When searching for stylistic parallels to *Diogn.*, earlier commentators often pointed to Clement of Alexandria.[31] Just like *Diogn.*, Clement's writings reveal the rhetorical schooling of their author. However, Clement differs stylistically from *Diogn.* The sentence structures consisting of short, more or

30 The definitive rejection of Justin as the author of *Diogn.* came with Otto's third edition of the text in 1879. Cf. the discussion of the linguistic evidence in Otto 1852, 36–41. Cf. also Jefford 2013, 102–03.
31 e.g. Geffcken 1924, 350, Geffcken 1928, v and 13, Meecham 1949, 62–4.

less artistically, arranged cola that dominate in *Diogn.* do not appear with such frequency in Clement. His sentence construction is more varied, and periods are not a rarity in his texts. He is well acquainted with the usual rhetorical figures but, also in that area, he is more varied than *Diogn.* and uses such devices with more moderation.

Clement was also influenced, not only stylistically but also as regards linguistic details, by the Atticist movement,[32] while *Diogn.* was not. While Clement's prose abounds with duals and optatives, such Atticist niceties are next to absent from *Diogn.*[33] Other characteristics of Atticism do not appear either.[34] On the contrary, *Diogn.* exemplifies a number of features denounced as non-Attic by the 2nd-century Atticist lexicographer Phrynichus. These include the lexical-morphological items ἤτω (for ἔστω in 12.7), καθάρας (for καθήρας in 2.1), γενηθῶμεν, γεν[ν]ηθείς(?) (9.1, 11.2, with a passive aorist instead of medium γενώμεθα, etc.),[35] πάντοτε (for διὰ παντός *vel.sim.* in 11.4) and τυγχάνουσιν (for τυγχάνουσιν ὄντες in 2.1, 5.8 and 10.7). If we can trust the manuscript in these matters, *Diogn.* always prefers a non-Attic phonology in words like θάλασσα (16 instances),[36] γίνομαι/γινώσκω (six times), and σήμερον (11.5). Clement, on the other hand, uses the aorist ἐκάθηρα and the imperative ἔστω (ἤτω only in quotations) and varies between -σσ- and -ττ- and between γιν- and γιγν-. At least he knew the Attic rules and sometimes respected them. Thus, although both writers had a rhetorical education, the author of *Diogn.* does not exemplify the same literary and rhetorical tradition as Clement.

More relevant material became available for comparison when Campbell Bonner published his reconstruction of a sermon by Melito of Sardis, delivered on the occasion of an Easter celebration.[37] The text was improved considerably when Papyrus Bodmer XIII was published by Testuz in 1960.[38] The same dominant, conspicuous rhetorical devices are manifest in this text, too, just as in *Diogn.* The sentence structure is dominated by short units. Pairs or strings of isocola, homoioteleuton, and antitheses are plentiful, and rhetorical figures embellish the text. Series of exclamations and rhetorical questions occur, anaphora abounds. The general character of the style may be illustrated by sentences such as these:

---

32 On the necessary distinction between style (λέξις) and language (φράσις) see Norden 1915, 349–51, Fabricius 1967, 187, n. 2.

33 On linguistic and stylistic differences between the 2nd-century Apologists and Clement see Wifstrand 1962, 63–4 and Fabricius 1967, 195.

34 Except for some potential optatives (2.3 (*bis*), 2.4, 2.10 (*bis*), 3.3, 3.4, 7.3, 8.3), the 'principal markers' of Atticist usage enumerated by Horrocks 2010, 138, are absent from *Diogn.*

35 The thematic aorist ἐγενόμην etc. occurs nine times in *Diogn*.

36 *Diogn.* has ἐλαττούμενον once (10.6), but that verb never occurs with -σσ-; cf. BDR, § 34:1b.

37 Bonner 1940.

38 See Testuz 1960.

2.7–12: οὕτως ἐστὶν καινὸν καὶ παλαιόν,
ἀΐδιον καὶ πρόσκαιρον,
φθαρτὸν καὶ ἄφθαρτον,
θνητὸν καὶ ἀθάνατον τὸ τοῦ πάσχα μυστήριον.

71.494–504: οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ ἀμνὸς ὁ φονευόμενος·
οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ ἀμνὸς ὁ ἄφωνος·
οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ τεχθεὶς ἐκ Μαρίας τῆς καλῆς ἀμνάδος·
οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ ἐξ ἀγέλης λημφθείς,
καὶ εἰς σφαγὴν συρείς,
καὶ ἐσπέρας τυθείς,
καὶ νύκτωρ ταφείς,
ὁ ἐπὶ ξύλου μὴ συντριβείς,
εἰς γῆν μὴ λυθείς,
ἐκ νεκρῶν ἀναστάς,
καὶ ἀναστήσας τὸν ἄνθρωπον ἐκ τῆς κάτω
[ταφῆς.

In particular the latter example illustrates how Melito, just like *Diogn.*, avoids monotony by varying his expression. The result is a sentence structure reminiscent of the portion of *Diogn.* 7.2 quoted above. Just like *Diogn.*, Melito creates variation in what might have become a monotonous enumeration by concluding it with a colon longer than the immediately preceding ones.[39] On the other hand, Melito's predilection for anaphora sometimes results in immoderately long sequences of similar cola, e.g. in 93.680–91 (12 cola starting with forms of πικρός) or 103.769–79 (11 occurrences of ἐγώ). These have no counterpart in *Diogn.* Melito also uses more metaphorical language. That was a characteristic of the Hellenistic variety of Asianism.[40]

When Melito's sermon first became known, scholars expected to find its stylistic models among the Biblical texts. The *parallelismus membrorum*, which is a common feature of the poetic texts of the Old Testament, seemed similar to the bipartite, antithetical sentences of Melito. However, in an important article from 1948, Wifstrand demonstrated that there was a fundamental difference between the sermon and Biblical poetry: in the Biblical texts, the members of the parallel pairs are normally not antithetical but express the same thought twice over, while Melito's sentence pairs display a sophisticated formal parallelism that is, on the whole, lacking in the Biblical parallels. The short cola with antithetical content, of equal length and with assonances rather belong to the Greek – i.e. non-Jewish and non-Christian – rhetorical tradition often denoted as Asianism, a term that seems to have been coined

39 Cf. *Diogn.* 9.6 (quoted above).
40 Norden 1915, 137.

as a deprecatory designation for a stylistic school that stood in opposition to Atticism. The Asianic style originates from the experiments of the earliest known Greek rhetoricians, Gorgias of Leontini and his immediate followers. It had a vogue in the Hellenistic period when it dominated oratory, but its stylistic ideals were condemned by the Atticist movement and it gradually went out of fashion. Still, in the 2nd century AD there were Greek writers whose style was clearly influenced by Asianism. They included Maximus of Tyre, Polemo, Lucian in his declamations, and the authors of a couple of orations wrongly attributed to Dio Chrysostom in the manuscript tradition (nos. 37, probably by Favorinus, and 64, possibly by Herodes Atticus).

Melito's sermon and *Diogn.* show traces of having been influenced by the stylistic ideals of Asianism. Wifstrand, in his article, mentions only chs. 11–12 of *Diogn.* and describes them as 'part of a sermon that is added as an appendix' to the main text and as written in 'a style very closely akin to that of Melito'.[41] The same could be said about chs. 1–10 of *Diogn.* Later commentators recognize the stylistic and rhetorical affinity of *Diogn.* with Melito and with the second sophistic.[42] It is possible to find influence of such stylistic ideals also in other early Christian texts, e.g. in Polycarp's writings and the homilies of Asterius of Amasea.[43]

Diogn. and, in particular, Melito represent a rather extreme form of Asianism. The characteristic features of the style are unusually prominent in the two texts. In the texts of pagan writers of the 2nd century which they have been compared to, the typical stylistic devices are used with more restraint and discretion. The style of Melito is suitable for a sermon to be delivered before devotees of the same faith as the speaker. Its emotional language is apt to affect the audience only if they are positively predisposed to the message. The style is for oral performance, both in a pagan and in a Christian context, and not primarily for a written pamphlet such as *Diogn.* Its author is likely to have been inspired both by his rhetorical training and by Christian preachers. It is even possible that he took over portions of actual sermons and included them within his own text, after adapting them only partially for a different purpose.[44]

41 Wifstrand 1948, 219. Also Jefford 2013, 57 notes the similarity of Melito's homily with chs. 11–12. In Wifstrand 1962, 63–4, chs. 11–12 do not seem to be distinguished as a separate part of the text.

42 e.g. Jefford 2013, 6, 97–8.

43 On Polycarp see Hill 2006; on Asterius see Kinzig 1997, 648–50.

44 On chapters 11–12 as part of a sermon see Wifstrand 1948, 219. Jefford (2013, 33–42, 111–26) argues that not only chapters 11–12 but also other extensive portions of *Diogn.* originate from orally performed texts.

Conclusion

The style of *Diogn.* and its literary qualities have usually been highly praised by the commentators. Marrou is probably the most enthusiastic among them, when he claims that educated readers could be 'séduits par l'élégance et la simplicité de sa langue, par l'art très adroite qui utilise sans effort les ressources de la rhétorique traditionelle et, pour tout dire, par la beauté du style.'[45] Meecham speaks of a 'language at once simple and stately' and a 'style throughout ... elegant and graceful' and quotes verdicts of others such as 'among the finest remains of Christian antiquity' (Neander), 'the noblest of all Christian writings' (Lightfoot), and 'indisputably, after Scripture, the finest monument we know of sound Christian feeling, noble courage, and manly eloquence' (Bunsen).[46] Also later commentators with a theological or clerical background make similar comments.[47] Even leading classicists clearly saw such merits in the text. Eduard Norden, in his *Die antike Kunstprosa*, after denouncing another Apologist (Theophilus) for serious failings in 'Inhalt, Disposition, Stilistik und Sprache', declares that *Diogn.* 'nach allen diesen Gesichtspunkten zu dem Glänzendsten gehört, was von Christen in griechischer Sprache geschrieben ist', and Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff in his *Griechisches Lesebuch* chose *Diogn.* as an appropriate illustration of early Christian literature.[48]

A discordant note is struck by Johannes Geffcken. In an early work on the Apologists he calls *Diogn.* 'dieses leichte Machwerk', characterized by 'Abgedroschenheit', although at the same time dutifully paying reverence to Norden. His characterizations of passages in *Diogn.* in his edition of 1928 range from 'immerhin ... etwas eintönig' to 'eine durch starke Antithesen, Variationen u. dgl. Rhetorika bis zum Übermass aufgeputzte Ausführung'. Geffcken describes the author as one to whom 'das Sachliche nur als Fundament für seine Formalistik dient' and who 'allen Fleiss wesentlich darauf verwendet, dem Ganzen ein formell möglichst vollkommenes Äusseres zu geben'.[49]

The last two quotations are strangely reminiscent of Denniston's verdict on Gorgias: 'Starting with the initial advantage of having nothing in particular to say, he was able to concentrate all his energies upon saying it.'[50] Geffcken

45 Marrou 1965, 90.

46 Meecham 1949, 3, 13.

47 e.g. 'seine Bildung zeigt sich schon an seiner glänzenden Rhetorik' (Wengst 1984, 305), 'das hohe sprachliche Niveau' (Lindemann and Paulsen 1992, 304), 'highly educated, rhetorically trained' (Ehrman 2003, 126), 'its lucid and flowing style reflects the abilities of an educated author', 'educated literary style' (Jefford 2013, 3, 14).

48 Norden 1915, 513, n. 2, Wilamowitz 1902-1908, I:2, 356–63, II:2, 225–7.

49 Geffcken 1907, xli. The following quotations are from Geffcken 1928, iv (n. 3), vi, 14, and 17.

50 Denniston 1952, 12.

obviously says something essential about the author of *Diogn*., also in this respect he continued the tradition of Gorgias; form was at least of equal importance to him with content.

References

Alexander, Loveday. (1993) *The Preface to Luke's Gospel: Literary Convention and Social Context in Luke 1.1-4 and Acts 1.1*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

– (2005) *Acts in its Literary Context: A Classicist Looks at the Acts of the Apostles*. New York: T&T Clark.

BDAG = Danker, Frederick W. (2000) *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*. Chicago, London: The University of Chicago Press.

BDR = Blass, Friedrich, Albert Debrunner, and Friedrich Rehkopf. (1975) *Grammatik des neutestamentlichen Griechisch*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.

Blomqvist, Jerker. (1969) *Greek Particles in Hellenistic Prose*. Lund: Gleerup.

Blomqvist, Jerker and Karin Blomqvist. (forthcoming) [2014]. 'Eucharist Terminology in Early Christian Literature. Philological and Semantic Aspects'. In *Sacred Meal, Communal Meal, Table Fellowship, and the Eucharist – Late Antiquity, Early Judaism and Early Christianity*, edited by David Hellholm *et al*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.

Bonner, Campbell. (1940) *The Homily on the Passion by Melito, Bishop of Sardis, and some Fragments of the Apocryphal Ezekiel*. London, Philadelphia: Christophers.

Deissmann, Adolf. (1923) *Licht vom Osten. Das Neue Testament und die neuentdeckten Texte der hellenistisch-römischen Welt*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.

Denniston, John D. (1952) *Greek Prose Style.* Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Ehrman, Bart D. (2003) *The Apostolic fathers. 2. Epistle of Barnabas, Papias and Quadratus, Epistle to Diognetus, Shepherd of Hermas*. Harvard: Harvard University Press.

Fabricius, Cajus. (1967) 'Der sprachliche Klassizismus der griechischen Kirchenväter. Ein philosophisches und geistesgeschichtliches Problem'. *JbAC* 10: 187–99.

Geffcken, Johannes. (1907) *Zwei griechische Apologeten*. Leipzig: Teubner.

– (1924) 'Der Brief an Diognetos'. *ZKG* 43: 348–50.

– (1928) *Der Brief an Diognetos*. Heidelberg: Winter.

Hill, Charles E. (2006) *From the Lost Teaching of Polycarp: Identifying Irenaeus' Apostolic Presbyter and the Author of Ad Diognetum*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.

Horrocks, Geoffrey C. (2010) *Greek. A History of the Language and its Speakers*. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell.

Jefford, Clayton N. (2013) *The Epistle to Diognetus (with the Fragment of Quadratus)*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kinzig, Wolfram. (1997) 'The Greek Christian writers'. In *Handbook of Classical Rhetoric in the Hellenistic Period (330 BC – 400 AD)*, edited by Stanley E. Porter, 633–70. Leiden: Brill.

Kühner, Raphael and Bernhard Gerth. (1904) *Ausführliche Grammatik der griechischen Sprache. Zweiter Teil: Satzlehre*. Hannover, Leipzig: Hahn.

Lake, Kirsopp. (1976) *The Apostolic Fathers. 2. The Shepherd of Hermas. The Martyrdom of Polycarp. The Epistle to Diognetus*. Harvard: Harvard University Press.

Lindemann, Andreas and Henning Paulsen. (1992) *Die apostolischen Väter. Griechisch-deutsche Parallelausgabe.* Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.

Marrou, Henri I. (1965) *A Diognéte*. Paris: Éditions du Cerf.
Meecham, Henry G. (1949) *The Epistle to Diognetus*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
Norden, Eduard. (1915) *Die antike Kunstprosa vom VI. Jahrhundert v. Chr. bis in die Zeit der Renaissance. I–II*. Stuttgart: Teubner.
Otto, Johann Carl Theodor. (1852) *Epistola ad Diognetum Iustini Philosophi et Martyris nomen prae se ferens*. Leipzig: Weigel.
Perler, Othmar. (1966) *Méliton de Sardes, Sur la pâque et Fragments*. Paris: Éditions du Cerf.
Porter, Stanley E. (1997) *Handbook of Classical Rhetoric in the Hellenistic Period (330 BC-AD 400)*. Leiden: Brill.
Reed, Jeffrey T. (1997) 'The epistle'. In *Handbook of Classical Rhetoric in the Hellenistic Period (330 BC-AD 400)*, edited by Stanley E. Porter, 171–93. Leiden: Brill.
Stirewalt, M. Luther Jr. (1993) *Studies in Ancient Greek Epistolography*. Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press.
Testuz, Michel. (1960) *Papyrus Bodmer XIII: Méliton de Sardes, Homélie sur la Pâque, manuscrit du IIIe siècle*. Cologny-Genève: Bibliotheca Bodmeriana.
Wengst, Klaus. (1984) *Didache (Apostellehre). Barnabasbrief. Zweiter Klemensbrief. Schrift an Diognet*. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft.
Wifstrand, Albert. (1948) 'The Homily of Melito on the Passion'. *VChr* 2: 201–23.
– (1949) 'A Problem Concerning Word Order in the New Testament'. *STh* 3: 172–84.
– (1962) *L'église ancienne et la culture grecque*. Paris: Éditions du Cerf.
– (2005) *Epochs and Styles. Selected Writings on the New Testament, Greek Language and Greek Culture in the Post-Classical Era*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.
Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, Ulrich von. (1902–1908) *Griechisches Lesebuch*. I:1–II:2, Berlin: Weidmann.