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## Introduction to the Epistles of 1 And 2 Clement



### Introduction to the Epistles of 1 And 2 Clement

The Codex Alexandrinus is a fifth century codex bound book of the entire New Testament Scripture with the two Epistles of Clement attached. Wikipedia says that the Codex Alexandrinus, "... contains all of the books of the New Testament (although the pages that contained Matthew 1:1-25:5 are not extant). In addition, the codex contains 1 Clement (lacking 57:7-63) and the homily known as 2 Clement (up to 12:5a)."

Many have alleged that the second epistle of Clement was probably not written by the first century Roman bishop. However, it is enlightening that the early Christians placed both 1 and 2 Clement at the end of the New Testament Scriptures. If the early Christians did not believe that both epistles of Clement were written within the first century then why would they have placed them along with the first century Christian scriptures? It is also significant that both 1 and 2 Clement were clearly labelled by the early Christians with the name, "Clement," so we know that they attributed both 1 and 2 Clement to the first century Roman bishop who bore that name.

### The Number of extant Manuscripts of 1 and 2 Clement According to J. B. Lightfoot

"The authorities for the text are three in number, two Greek manuscripts and a Syriac version. (1)- Codex Alexandrinus (A), where the Epistles of Clement (1st and 2nd) are added to the New Testament; an uncial manuscript probably belonging to the fifth century. It is fully described above, v. 1 p. 116 sq. It is much blurred and worn, and a leaf has disappeared towards the end of the First Epistle. Thus it omits from § 57 ἀνθ' ἧων γὰρ ἠδίκουν to the end of § 63. In the Second Epistle it breaks off at § 12 οὐτε ἀρσεν οὐτε θηλυ τουτο, the end of the manuscript being lost. The so-called ν ἐφέλκουστικον is almost uniformly inserted. All deviations from this authority in my text are noted in the apparatus criticus beneath. The lacunae in this manuscript are note stated, except where a various reading is concerned; but a complete list is given at the end of the Epistles." (*J. B. Lightfoot, Introduction to 1 and 2 Clement*)

“(2) Codex Constantinopolitanus (C), a cursive manuscript dated A.D. 1056, and containing the whole text of the Two Epistles. It is described fully above, l. p. 121 sq. The  $\nu$   $\epsilon\phi\epsilon\lambda\kappa\upsilon\sigma\tau\iota\kappa\omicron\nu$  [the following] is systematically omitted, though there are one or two exceptions. All the variations of this manuscript likewise are recorded beneath, with the exception of  $\nu$   $\epsilon\phi\epsilon\lambda\kappa\upsilon\sigma\tau\iota\kappa\omicron\nu$  which it seemed unnecessary to notice.” (J. B. Lightfoot, *Introduction to 1 and 2 Clement*)

“(3) Syriac Version (S), where the Epistles of Clement are found incorporated among the Epistles of the New Testament in the Philoxenian (Harclean) version. The extant manuscript is dated A.D. 1170. The authority is described fully in the introduction, l. p. 129 sq. How far this version may be accepted as evidence for the text, and to what extent it seemed advisable to record the variations from the Greek, I have there stated with sufficient precision.” (J. B. Lightfoot, *Introduction to 1 and 2 Clement*)

Church historians and scholars acknowledge that there is only one early extant Greek manuscript of 1 and 2 Clement that was found in Alexandria dating from the fifth century. Other extant manuscripts of 1 and 2 Clement (The Codex Constantinopolitanus and the Syriac Version) seem to have originated from this single source. Therefore we know that any later additions to the original manuscripts are likely later interpolations of the original text. This would certainly include the added text in 1 Clement, chapter 58, which appeared in the eleventh century (the Codex Constantinopolitanus).

Most scholars reject the first century Roman authorship of 2 Clement even though all three extant manuscripts of 1 and 2 Clement were found attached together with 1 and 2 Clement inscribed on the manuscripts. The historical evidence also informs us that there was another extant manuscript of 1 Clement with 2nd Clement attached to it at Corinth which has been lost. Hence, we know that every manuscript of 2 Clement was always found attached to 1 Clement with the words, The “Second Epistle of Clement” written on the manuscripts. If the second epistle of Clement was not written by Clement, then Clements’ name should not have been written on all of the extant manuscripts, nor should each of the manuscripts entitled, “The Second Epistle of Clement” have been attached after Clements’ first Epistle.

While 1 and 2 Clement appear to have been highly venerated by the earliest Christians, even placing it along with sacred scripture, the later Roman Catholic Church appears to have neglected the writings of the first century Roman bishop by allowing it to fall out of use. Why would the Roman Catholic Church have been careful to copy and distribute other early Christian writings while neglecting 1 and 2 Clement which were undoubtedly known to be first century Christian documents? The only viable reason I can see is that the first century Roman bishop’s theology was diametrically opposed to the latter Trinitarian position.

New Testament scholar Udo Schnelle wrote (*in The History and Theology of the New Testament Writings, p. 355*): “In 2 Clement a larger number of logia (*pron. Lojia*) of Synoptic types are found (cf. 2 Clem 2.4; 3.2; 4.2; 6.1, 2; 8.5; 9.11; 13.4), which are in part introduced with quotation formulae. Alongside these are found quotations of unknown origin; cf. 2 Clem. 4.5; 5.2-4; 12.2; 13.2. This data and the introductory formula in 2 Clem. 8.5 [for the Lord says in the Gospel], suggest that **the author of 2 Clement used, in addition to the Old Testament, an apocryphal gospel that has not come down to us.** There is a clearly recognizable tendency in 2 Clement to trace the authority of the Lord back to written documents.”

The so called apocryphal gospel which was repeatedly cited and prefaced in 2 Clement with the words, “for the Lord says in the Gospel,” has been proved to be the Gospel to the Egyptians that was well known and read by the majority of the earliest Christians until it was destroyed by the latter Roman Catholic Church. Some Trinitarian scholars have suggested that the Gospel to the Egyptians was a spurious gospel. But why would Clement of Rome cite the gospel to the Egyptians as scripture if it was believed to be a spurious gospel in the first century?

Furthermore, there is a valid reason why the Trinitarian Roman Catholic Church would have lacked interest in circulating 1 Clement and 2 Clement. A particular unknown passage of scripture appears from a lost book of the Bible, once in 1 Clement, and again in 2 Clement. This same passage also appears to be from the lost Gospel to the Egyptians. Hence, the Clementine authorship of both 1 and 2 Clement is probable. For it is highly unlikely that an unknown passage would appear in both literary works without being written by the same author. Both 1 Clement 23 and 2 Clement 11 cite the same passage with some slight differences.

1 Clement chapter 23 says, “Far be from you that scripture where it says (2 Clement 11 says, “for the prophetic word also says”), ‘Miserable are the double-minded which doubt in their soul (2 Clement says “heart”), which say: these things we heard in our fathers’ days also, and lo! We have grown old and nothing of these things has befallen us (2 Clement says, “but we expecting from day to day have seen none of these things”). O foolish ones, compare yourselves to a tree; take the vine; first it sheds the leaf, then a shoot comes (2 Clement says “then a leaf, then a flower”), and after that a sour berry, then a cluster fully ripe. (Here 1 Clement ends and 2 Clement continues): so also my people has had unquietness and afflictions: afterward it shall receive good things.”

*(Note: Jacob J. Prahlow (PhD) wrote that Clement and other early Christian writers often cited scriptures from memory with some “rhetorical modification” rather than always citing each scripture with a scroll in hand. “For Clement, specific citation information (addresses, authors, speakers) did not matter nearly as much as if those speaking were inspired by the Spirit of God to utter the truth. Even then, the contents of what was spoken were not beyond stylistic and rhetorical modification or quotation from memory. As noted earlier, these practices place Clement very much in line with other writers of this period ... Clement’s practice of composite citation sheds light on post-Apostolic conceptions of scripture by showing one method of literary citation and pointing toward what really mattered for Christians during this period. The practice of composite citation—by no means limited to Clement, but certainly most evident in his letter—indicates that meaning rather than form was the primary impetus for citing sources during this period. Our standards of copyright and attribution simply did not exist in the ancient world and the practice of composite citation is one consequence of that fact. Additionally, we must recognize how motivations impacted approaches to scripture. Clement was primarily interested in resolving a schism in the Corinthian church by appealing to the authority of Christ, not trying to create the New Testament canon. While his use of scripture can provide evidence for his wider theology of scripture, these concerns must always be considered in light of the practical theological matters being addressed in early Christian writings.” (Jacob J. Prahlow, PhD) (<https://pursuingveritas.com/2016/10/03/scripture-in-1-clement-compositeimplications/#more-2997>)*

1 Clement 23 says that the quote is from "that scripture" while 2 Clement 11 says "the prophetic word." Since Clement regularly cited the Gospel to the Egyptians as "the prophetic word" throughout 2 Clement, we can see that Clement cited the same quote from The Gospel to the Egyptians in both 1 and 2 Clement as "scripture." How could Clement have cited the same scripture from the Gospel to the Egyptians in both 1 and 2 Clement if Clement of Rome was not the same author? Furthermore, how could the Gospel to the Egyptians have been a second century document when Clement cited it in the first century within his first epistle? Since the Gospel to the Egyptians is the only lost book of the Bible known to have been cited in 2 Clement, the mysterious scriptural quote that appears in both 1 and 2 Clement must have originated from the lost Gospel to the Egyptians. This would mean that the Gospel to the Egyptians was written before 70 A.D. while the original apostles were still alive.

The Gospel to the Egyptians plainly stated that Jesus made it clear to his apostles that he is himself the same Divine Person as the Holy Spirit of the Father.

Epiphanius (340-403) wrote in Panarion 62 that the Gospel of the Egyptians states that Jesus "makes clear to the disciples that he himself is the Father, that he himself is the Son, and that he himself is the Holy Spirit."

There can be no doubt that the Gospel to the Egyptians clearly supported the ancient Modalistic Monarchian position and that Clement of Rome cited this Gospel narrative as inspired scripture within the first century. But if the earliest Christians were really Trinitarian, then why did the first century Roman bishop who knew what the apostles taught, believe in Oneness Modalism rather than Trinitarianism? Hence, we can see why the latter Roman Catholic Church would not have had any interest in copying and circulating 1 and 2 Clement.

While the quote from the Gospel to the Egyptians is paraphrased (*early Christian writers often paraphrased passages from memory*), there can be no doubt that the author of both 1 and 2 Clement cited the same passage from the Gospel to the Egyptians. Since no scholar has been able to submit a shred of evidence to suggest that Clement was not citing the lost Gospel to the Egyptians, we have insurmountable evidence to prove that the Egyptian Gospel narrative was an authentic Gospel written within the first century. Thus, we have a clear historical link to prove that the first century Apostolic Church was Oneness (Modalistic) and that the Trinity doctrine was a later development which perverted the original Apostolic Gospel.

Robert M. Grant referenced 2 Clement (in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, v. 1, p. 1061):

"An early Christian epistle (2 Clement) transmitted along with 1 Clement in the biblical Codex Alexandrinus (5th century) and the later Jerusalem Codex (1056) which includes the Didache, as well as in the Syriac version. It was not written by the author(s) of 1 Clement and, indeed, it is not a letter but a sermon on self-control, repentance, and judgment. The sermon begins abruptly: 'Brothers, we must think about Jesus Christ as about God, as about the judge of living and dead; and we must not think little of our salvation.' The preacher tells his 'brothers and sisters' that he is reading them a 'petition' or 'plea' (Gk *enteuxis*) to 'pay attention to what is written,' i.e. to the scriptures which he frequently cites (**along with quotations from 'the prophetic word,' otherwise unknown, and something like the apocryphal Gospel of the Egyptians**). He himself refers to "the books (i.e., the OT) and the apostles" as authorities (14.2)."

Clement of Rome frequently cited the Gospel to the Egyptians as if it was an authoritative document. Clement clearly believed that the Gospel to the Egyptians was inspired scripture. It is hard to imagine how a first century Christian bishop who personally knew some of the apostles in the first century could have mistakenly cited a spurious gospel narrative.

Grant further described the contents of 2 Clement (in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, v. 1, p. 1061):

"Scholars have noted the 'synoptic-type' Jewish piety of the sermon, perhaps surprising around A.D. 140-160 (the epistle's approximate date). The work appears to rely upon the Gospel of John as well, however, notably in 9:5-6: 'If Christ the Lord who saved us was Spirit at first but became flesh [John 1:14] and so called us, so shall we receive the reward in the flesh. Let us then love one another [John 13:34] so that we may all come to the kingdom of God: The kingdom will come when truth and good works are accompanied by ascetic practice (chap. 12). Until then, Christians must preserve the 'seal of baptism' (7:6, 8:6) and belong to 'the first, spiritual Church, created [like Israel, according to some rabbis] before sun and moon; for Gen 1:27 refers to the male Christ and the female Church, both spiritual; **Christ is also the Spirit** (chap. 14). **The theology is not altogether clear**, and the author soon turns to the state that he has 'given no trivial counsel about self-control,' leading into his practical appeal for repentance and going so far as to say that 'fasting is better than prayer, but alms giving is better than both' (16:4)."

Robert Grant commented on Clement's theology not being "altogether clear" because 2 Clement 14 identifies Christ as the Holy Spirit. Trinitarians are supposed to believe that the Son is not the Holy Spirit. Therefore, it is easy to see why the later Roman Catholic Church lacked interest in copying 2 Clement which explains why we have only a few extant manuscripts of the document.

Most modern scholars now believe that 2nd Clement may not have been written by Clement himself even though the words "Second Clement" appears on the fifth century manuscript itself found in Alexandria, on the early Greek Manuscript found in Corinth (not extant), and upon the Codex (C) and the Syriac (S) manuscripts. It amazes me that Trinitarian scholars refuse to accept the first century Roman bishop as the author of 2 Clement, even though every single manuscript of 1 Clement was always found with 2 Clement attached it with the words "Second Clement" appearing on the manuscript.

Furthermore, Grant wrote (op. cit., p. 1061): "Scholars have noted the 'synoptic-type' Jewish piety of the sermon, perhaps surprising around A.D. 140-160 ..." Scholars have noted that the synoptic type of Jewish style of writing is "surprising" for a document dated after the first century. Hence, the internal evidence within Second Clement itself lends support to it being composed within the first century.

There are three primary reasons why 2 Clement is not believed to be written by Clement of the first century Roman Church.

1. 2 Clement cites The Shepherd of Hermas which was also written in the first century, but Hippolytus' third century Muratorian Canon falsely ascribed Hermas to the mid second century (many scholars such as John Robinson and George Edmondson have proved that the Muratorian fragment is "full of errors"). However, besides the internal evidence which states that Clement of Rome sent "The Shepherd of



Hermas" to churches throughout the world within the first century (which links Clement and Hermas together within the first century), church historians A. T. Robinson and George Edmondson have convincingly documented the evidence proving that both Hermas and Clement were contemporaries within the first century Apostolic era. The Shepherd of Hermas itself states in Vision 3:5 that some of the first century apostles were still alive while the Shepherd of Hermas was written, which proves that both 2 Clement and the Shepherd of Hermas were originally written as first century composition.

2. The author of 1 and 2 Clement quoted texts from the Gospel to the Egyptians which he regarded as scripture. This presents a problem for Trinitarian scholars because the historical data proves that "The Gospel to the Egyptians" was highly regarded as sacred scripture by the early Modalistic Monarchians which Origen described as "the general run of Christians" in the East (by Origen – Commentary of the Gospel of John, book 1, chapter 23 – 200-253 AD) and Tertullian described as "always making up the majority of the faithful" in the West (Against Praxeus 3 – 160-225 AD). Epiphanius (340-403) wrote that The Gospel to the Egyptians states that Jesus "makes clear to the disciples that he himself is the Father, that he himself is the Son, and that he himself is the Holy Spirit (Panarion 62)." This book was regarded as sacred scripture among the Modalistic Christian majority within the first few hundred years of Christian history, but this Gospel narrative was later rejected by the Semi-Arians and by later Trinitarians due to its graphic "Sabellian" content.

Epiphanius (340-403) wrote in Panarion 62: "But their whole deception, and the whole power of their deception, **they currently have** from certain apocryphal [writings], **especially from the gospel called Egyptian**, upon which some place this name. For in it many such things are quoted (**not just in the past but in the present**) mysteriously, as if in a corner, **as if from the person of the Saviour, such as when he makes clear to the disciples that he himself is the Father, that he himself is the Son, and that he himself is the Holy Spirit.**"

Notice that even in the fourth century, Epiphanius speaks of the Modalists citing the Gospel to the Egyptians as a gospel narrative that they "currently have" in the late fourth century. Epiphanius further stated that the Modalists cited the Gospel to the Egyptians, "not just in the past, but in the present." Therefore, it appears that the Gospel to the Egyptians was still extant in the late fourth century but was likely destroyed by the later Roman Catholic Church due its overt Modalistic content.

3. The contents of 2 Clement also contain graphic Modalistic theology, so it is not surprising that Trinitarian scholars would have questioned its authenticity.

#### THE GOSPEL TO THE EGYPTIANS

Luke opened his gospel narrative by writing, "In as much as MANY HAVE UNDERTAKEN TO COMPILE A NARRATIVE of the things that have been accomplished among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught (*Luke 1:1-4*)."

We know that the gospel of John was the last gospel narrative to be written, so it is unlikely that the "many" which preceded Luke could have only been two, Matthew and Mark. This is a very strong argument in favour of their being at least one other true gospel narrative that has not come down to us. Could the lost Gospel to the Egyptians have been destroyed by the latter Roman Catholic Church because of its graphic Modalism which was completely incompatible with Trinitarianism?

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