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CLEMENT OF ROME AS SEEN THROUGH AN APOSTOLIC PARADIGM

DAVE NIELSEN

OVER the last one hundred years, the nature of the callings, duties, and influence of the apostles in early Christianity has been one of the most perplexing issues facing New Testament scholarship. The last century has seen a number of works about the office of the apostle in the early church.¹ For years the consensus among scholars was that the office of the apostle as instituted by Christ was not important in and of itself. Proponents of this view see the office and the men who hold it as useful only for the purpose of bringing converts to Christ, after which a rebirth in the Spirit was the only thing needed for them to stay in the fold of the good shepherd. Recently, however, other arguments have surfaced that debate the point. Bovon and Bockmuehl, in particular, have been very outspoken and have persuasively written on the way they think the apostleship should be interpreted in ecclesiastical history. Bovon's major thesis is that the early Christians preserved the memory of the apostles for certain reasons.² Those men who were with Jesus from the beginning of his ministry

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1. See, among others, Francois Bovon, *Studies in Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2003); Hans Dieter Betz, "Apostle," *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1:309–11; Walter Schmitals, *The Office of the Apostle in the Early Church* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1969); R. Schnackenburg, *Apostles Before and During Paul's time*, in W. W. Gasque and R. P. Martin, eds., *Apostolic History and the Gospel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1970), 287–303; F. Agnew, *On the Origin of the Term Apostolos*, CBQ 38:59–53; "The Origin of the NT Apostle-Concept: A Review of Research," *JBL* 105.1 (1986): 75–96; A. Ehrhart, *The Apostolic Succession in the First Two Centuries of the Church* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1953); E. J. Goodspeed, *The Twelve: The Story of Christ's Apostles* (Philadelphia: J. C. Winston Co., 1957); E. Molland, "Le développement de l'idée de succession apostolique," *Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses* 34 (1954): 1–29.

2. Bovon, *Studies*, 1–2. The four reasons he gives are (1) the memory serves as an ethical model for the Church; (2) commands love, and love equals a deepening, developing Christian notion of Communion; (3) preserves doctrine; and (4) provides authority, especially in relation to apostolic origins of episcopal seats.

were the links to the citizens struggling with alienation and sporadic persecutions to the source of their new faith. After they had passed, Bovon argues, it was the memory, almost to the point of veneration, that was a source not only of strength to the early Christians but also a source of identity. No doubt the memory of these courageous men was important. However, I propose to take this one step further. The saints in the first generations not only preserved the memory of the founders because it helped preserve their distinct identity but because the office which they held was vital to the church's foundation and organization. From the New Testament we learn that as long as the apostles were in touch with and correcting the branches in the different cities, they were being instructed in the word as the Lord would want them to be.

One of the earliest leaders to emerge after, or, depending on the dating of some New Testament writings, during the time of the traditional twelve was a man we know from tradition as Clement of Rome. In sum we have two epistles attributed to this author, the second generally regarded as spurious and unrelated to the first.³ Early Christians, it can be argued, did see Clement in an apostolic light and looked to him as an apostle in the sense that they understood from his forebears. This view arises from the fact that early Christians used his first epistle to the Corinthians for centuries. He wrote in the same style and on the same topics, and when seen in the milieu of the late first century, those who used the book had no reason to doubt its authority or see it as anything less than what they had received from the traditional apostles.⁴

The respected English scholar J. B. Lightfoot notes that 1 Clement was held in very high regard by later Christian writers and quoted frequently, including by Clement of Alexandria, who considered it scripture.⁵ Indeed, the German patristic historian Adolf von Harnack wrote his magnum opus on 1 Clement "since there is no other document which is able to rival it in respect to historical significance."⁶ Why did the Corinthians and those who read the letter afterwards respect it to the degree that they did? The purpose of this paper is to examine why those in this early period of the church did so, and attempt, as best we can, to see Clement as they would have.

The paradigm that we will use is a traditional one, articulated by Lee McDonald in his *Formation of the Biblical Canon*,⁷ consisting of five main

3. Donald Hagner, *The Use of the Old and New Testaments in Clement of Rome* (Leiden: Brill, 1973), 2.

4. These arguments are central to the paper and will be further elucidated below.

5. Michael W. Holmes, ed., *The Apostolic Fathers in English* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2006), 39.

6. W.C. van Unnik, "Studies on the So-Called First Epistle of Clement: The Literary Genre" in *Encounters with Hellenism: Studies on the First Letter of Clement*, ed. Chillers Breytenbach and Laurence L. Welborn (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 117.

7. Lee M. McDonald, *Formation of the Biblical Canon*, (rev. ed.; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995), 229.

areas: apostolicity, orthodoxy, antiquity, inspiration, and church use. Because we are dealing with an apostolic paradigm, I will first examine the nature of the apostleship in the New Testament and then see how Clement relates. Each of the other five categories will be treated to conclude that, based on the ways the “canonical” writings were judged, the early Christians were not doing anything different by using Clement as a book of holy writ.

The Apostleship in the New Testament

The use of the word *apostolos* in Koine Greek is unique. Throughout classical literature, the word is always used in relation to a messenger tied to the sea, be it commercial shipping or a military expedition. The word is not at all common outside of the New Testament (and Josephus). It is used a total of 79 times therein, four-fifths of that coming from the pens of either Paul or Luke.⁸ This is fitting because of their particular contributions to our knowledge of how the gospel originally went forth. Luke’s main purpose is to show that the admonition of Christ was to go preach to all nations, indeed to “Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

Luke also mentions for the first time the life of the most well-known missionary that is later developed in his own writings. Paul, who calls himself the apostle of the Gentiles (Rom 11:13), spent the bulk of his time preaching to those not of the house of Israel after his call from Christ (Acts 9, et al.).⁹ These simple facts teach us very much about the apostleship. These were men who did not fear a thing, who went and wore out their lives, even unto death, in preaching the kingdom to all people, regardless of station, status, or creed. This founding principle would prove to be very influential for those who came after them to fill their shoes.

The calling of the *apostoloi*, both original and subsequent, shows the main qualifications that were required of the apostles. We read in the Gospels that the men who would later become the twelve were no different than others who followed Christ. Gospel authors use the term *mathetai* to describe all the disciples early on.¹⁰ A major transformation is seen in the first mission to which Christ called the twelve.¹¹ Kittel points out that the synoptists give no reason for this initial endeavor, other than the initiative of Jesus.¹² In

8. G. Kittel and G. Friedrich, eds. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 10 vols (trans. G.W. Bromiley; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–76), 1:402.

9. Bible Dictionary, LDS 1979 edition of the KJV, 680. BD says that, “it was primarily through his ministry that the gospel was established among those of gentile lineage throughout Europe and Asia Minor, although the way was opened by Peter’s baptism of Cornelius.”

10. Kittel, *TDNT*, 1:424.

11. See Matt 10; Mark 3; Luke 6.

12. Kittel, *TDNT*, 1:425.

chapter 10 Matthew states that Christ called twelve disciples (*mathetas*) to him and gave them power (*exousia*) to act in his name. In the very next verse they are called the twelve apostles (*apostloi*), and Matthew proceeds to give a list of their names.

Here we see the word *apostolos* being used in the traditional and canonical sense. These men were sent out to perform a specific duty on behalf of another and were given power (*exousia*) to act in his stead. After further instructions by Christ of what he expects of them, they proceed to have a wonderful mission, and after their return (which Matthew does not describe), the term *apostolos* is no longer used in connection with them for the rest of the gospel account.¹³

Luke supplies the rest of the information about the calling of apostles in the New Testament. After the passion, resurrection, and forty-day ministry of Christ, we read that the small group of believers gathers to call another apostle to fill the void left by the betrayer Judas. Acting as leader, Peter calls for one among the 120, one who had been with them since the baptism of John and had been a witness of the resurrection, to complete the select group.¹⁴ After they cast lots, Matthias was chosen to join the others and was then counted among them “of this ministry and apostleship” (Acts 1:25).

However, this time the group was to remain. They were called in the same manner, but now the events that immediately followed solidified their place in the church. Acts 1:3–4 tells us that Christ was with them 40 days after he appeared triumphant from the garden tomb. The exact details of what was taught elude us, but this much we do know. He spoke of things “pertaining to the kingdom of God” which they knew they would go preach to all nations. But, he tells them in v. 4 to not go until they receive “the promise of the Father,” which v. 5 qualifies as a coming endowment of the Holy Ghost. On their first mission they had been briefly given this endowment; now they would be given what they needed to act in the office of teaching and leadership that Christ held when he was on the earth. The very next chapter in Acts

13. Kittel, *TDNT*, 1:427. Matthew does not mention their return, but Mark does. After this he too refers to those sent on this mission as *mathetai*, and withholds the title of apostle. Kittel later notes that this is because the reference is not due to the character that the office bestowed on the men, but an endowment, an actual change of their role in the community of disciples because of the calling extended them from Christ. Some have suggested in recent scholarship that this portion of Matthew 10 is a later apologetic addition for the purpose of tracing a later fabricated office to the time of Christ. The fact that all synoptic Gospels agree on this topic shows that it is very likely that the office and its nature, as we have been discussing, is of earliest origin and not a later interpolation.

14. The significance of the number twelve is quite interesting in relation to the apostleship. We know from biblical usage elsewhere that the number twelve symbolizes priesthood and perfection therein. So whatever Christ had done among them or ordained them unto post-resurrection, the twelve were to represent the fullness of his law, organization, and priesthood as a unified body.

details the events of the Pentecost, the wondrous power that was promised them in Acts 1:8. All that Christ had promised them was being fulfilled. This time, though, they would not return to their master in the flesh to give an accounting of their mission. They would now go forth and teach with a permanent endowment of the same *exousia* they had held before, only to give an account to their master when they had finished the course given them and passed from this mortal existence.

Luke, after the initial spread of the gospel to Judea and Samaria, introduces the reader to the one who would take it the rest of the way. Paul, the great persecutor, was “in the briefest of moments . . . transformed”¹⁵ while on the road to Damascus and was changed into the Lord’s greatest instrument of conversion for the nations of the Gentiles. A study of Paul’s life and teachings, though edifying, is not within the parameters of this study. His ordination or acceptance to the apostleship is, however, for Luke is very selective in his use of the title *apostolos*.¹⁶

We read that after his conversion and healing by Ananias in Syrian Antioch, Paul spent time in Arabia, most likely preaching, and then elsewhere in the holy land among the church. He informs us that at the time of the Jerusalem council, Peter, James, and John “perceived that grace was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship” (Gal 2:9). Hall is very instructive on what this passage means. The Greek word used for fellowship, he notes, is *koinonia*, which “has the meaning of being a fellow participant in an association; a partner, comrade, or companion; one belonging to a select group.”¹⁷ To summarize, Hall points out that after a decade of working for the Savior, they would not simply say welcome to the Church, but to the office that they held: that of apostleship. It is in this sense that Luke refers to Paul and Barnabas as *apostoloi* in Acts 14:14.¹⁸

Apostolicity

The period directly following the immediate first generation of the followers of Christ was the most important formative stage for the church. Even though the extent of it is unknown, we know that the apostleship had grown beyond the original core¹⁹ to adapt to changes that arose in the early church. The deaths of their leaders would have been a tough blow to take. It is human nature to look for a leader, one that exhibits right principles and

15. John Hall, *New Testament Witnesses of Christ* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2002), 229.

16. Kittel, *TDNT*, 1:428.

17. Hall, *Witnesses*, 237.

18. Hall, *Witnesses*, 237–38. That they presumably filled vacancies in the group of special witnesses is not sure and cannot be proven definitively.

19. By this I mean the group after Judas that included Matthias.

right authority. G. W. H. Lampe's work on the early church argues that they did not have the ability to judge the corpus of texts as a whole as canonical or not, and took decided the matter on a case by case basis. Any book's "intrinsic apostolic authority" was judged by the degree to which Christ spoke through it to them, and how closely that work mirrored the teachings of the apostles, as they interpreted them.²⁰ Others, like Tertullian, judged the authority of a work based on the connection it had with the apostles themselves, the reasoning being that since the apostles were close to Jesus historically, any close to them would have a much better grasp on things. Thus Tertullian placed Mark and Luke under the primacy of Matthew and John.²¹ Historically we see some looking to Rome; the supremacy of its See was accepted early on by the Christians because the martyrdoms of Peter and Paul are said to have taken place there. The leader of the church there would thus have been seen as a natural successor.²² The epistle of Clement to the Corinthians can certainly be said to speak the words of Christ on account of the scripture and divine precedence it relies on. Also, as will be further explored below, 1 Clement definitely belongs to the generation that immediately followed the apostles. This and the following categories show how he was seen as fulfilling the role that the original twelve and their immediate successors would have.

Orthodoxy

The occasional nature of the writings of the New Testament becomes apparent to any who closely read the texts. Because the term orthodox is anachronistic in relation to the time the New Testament texts were being composed, there is no one group of teachings that permeates all 27 books.²³ Because 1 Clement is written to the Corinthians, we will briefly examine the structure of the letters in the Pauline corpus and see how the text of Clement relates.

20. G. W. H. Lampe, *The Early Church* (London: SCM, 1956), 91.

21. McDonald, *Formation*, 232.

22. Developments in later centuries show that the leaders of the big four cities of the empire and of the church, Rome, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem, had more ecclesiastical say and power with what was going on. I am trying to say here that it is possible that this movement began during the time of Clement, who would have inherited this elevated position in the eyes of those he wrote to.

23. Students of the New Testament will immediately remember that in the speeches of Peter and Paul in Acts (but also abundantly found elsewhere) is found a unifying theme: the *kerygma*. This is a five-point presentation that pervades these speeches, namely that (1) Jesus is the Son of God; (2) he suffered and died; (3) he was resurrected and ascended to heaven; (4) he will come again in glory; (5) we need to act on this knowledge (morally).

Reading 1 Clement feels very much like reading a Pauline epistle.²⁴ The first thing that strikes a reader is the opening formula he uses.²⁵ 1 Clement 1:1 reads: “The Church of God that temporarily resides in Rome, to the Church of God that temporarily resides in Corinth, to those who have been called and made holy by the will of God through our Lord Jesus Christ. May grace and peace be increased among you, from the all-powerful God, through Jesus Christ.” Any number of Paul’s letters could be used to demonstrate a parallel. Ephesians 1:1–3 reads:

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus: Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.

As Nibley rightly points out, the only thing missing is Clement’s claim to authority.²⁶ A possible explanation is that Paul was writing during missionary travels and was never really able to call one place a home or base. If it was understood or at least known among the Corinthians what was happening in Rome, Clement would not need to state his authority.

The overall structure and intent of the works of both authors are similar. Quasten divides the text into four sections, just as a Pauline letter, containing an introduction (Chapters 1–3), two main parts (Chapters 4–36 and 37–61), and a closing benediction (Chapters 62–65). The first main part is generally about the problems in Corinth, those of discord and envy, and tells them how to overcome those pitfalls. The second main section, the Quasten notes, is more specific to the situation in Corinth. To teach them discipline, Clement discusses the rigorous training of the Roman army and their obedience, as well as a call to remember the patriarchal hierarchy of God’s people in the Old Testament.²⁷ Just as Christ had set up the organization of his people, so have the apostles chosen righteous men to lead in their stead, and it is not meet for

24. Clayton N. Jefford, *The Apostolic Fathers: An Essential Guide* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2005), 12, 63.

25. Similar passages are found in the closing formulas that are important to our discussion but are not included above so as to avoid redundancy. 1 Clem. 65:1 asks for them to send news back by his envoys, and v. 2 closes with “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you and with all those everywhere who are called by God through Him. Through whom be to Him all glory, honor, power, greatness, and the eternal throne, forever and ever. Amen.” Eph 6:21 says that someone would be by to check on them, then 23–24 reads, “Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ with sincerity. Amen.”

26. Hugh Nibley, *Apostles and Bishops in Early Christianity* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2005), 24–25.

27. Johannes Quasten, *Patrology* (Westminster, MD: Christian Classics, 2005), 1:44.

the church members to take it upon themselves to choose another. The overarching theme in the epistle is love, a love for fellow members, their leaders, and ultimately of Christ that leads to proper behavior and respect of his church. Obviously, the purpose of both is to correct a wayward group of saints. And, the way they do this is by a two-part structure that is very Pauline, that of the indicative/imperative method. Within the main body of the text there are numerous periscopes that illustrate this. Chapters 14–18 are indicative sections wherein Clement is referring to Old Testament parallels of obedience and submission to the Lord’s will, including (among others) the stories of David, Elijah, and Job. Then in chapter 19, Clement applies it to his audience, admonishing them to “gaze intently on the Father and Creator of the entire world and cling to his magnificent and superior gifts of peace and acts of kindness. . . . We should realize how he feels no anger towards his entire creation.”²⁸ Clement goes on to exhort them for the next ten chapters until he begins another teaching section.

Paul uses this style in most of his letters in the New Testament so that he can address the occasion that caused him to write to them by teaching correct principles, then admonishing them to do what is right in his ethical section. Let us look at 2 Thessalonians for an example. The people in that Grecian town were having difficulties understanding the parousia (a widespread problem in the early church), and Paul writes to instruct them more fully. After an opening and thanksgiving section comprising chapter 1, he teaches them about the signs of the coming (2 Thess 2:1–3:16), then teaches by means of paranesis and exhortation that they need to actively work towards the time of the second coming, and prepare themselves for the arrival of their Lord, not just wait for it. He then closes with a blessing and greeting (3:16–18).

Other rhetorical styles illustrate the stylistic connection between Paul and Clement. Though a known and well-used device, the diatribe is characteristic of Paul in the corpus of the New Testament. Rom 3:3–4 reads: “For what if some did not believe? Shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar.” 1 Clem. 33:1 is very similar: “What then shall we do, brothers? Shall we grow idle and not do what is good? Shall we abandon our acts of love? May the master never let this happen to us!”

Both use the illusion of the church being the body of Christ.²⁹ Both 1 Cor 12:12–27 and 1 Clem. 37:5 talk about the relationship between body parts and how that relates to the church. Another similarity between the fathers has to do with charity. 1 Clem. 49 and 1 Cor 13 almost parallel each other in their

28. Bart D. Ehrman, *Lost Christianities: The Battles for Scripture and the Faiths we Never Knew* (New York: Oxford, 2003), 71.

29. 1 Cor 12:12–27: “And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.”

discussions on charity, especially the verses from 1 Cor 13:4–7 that focus on the unifying characteristic of love. Another very clear parallel has to do with the importance of the office and role of bishop. 1 Clem. 44:1–4 reads:

So too our apostles knew through our Lord Jesus Christ that strife would arise over the office of bishop. For this reason, since they understood perfectly well in advance what would happen, they appointed those we have already mentioned . . . to the effect that if these should die, other approved men should succeed them in their ministry. Thus we do not think it right to remove from the ministry those who were appointed by them or, afterwards, by other reputable men, with the entire church giving its approval. For they have ministered over the flock of Christ blamelessly and with humility, gently and unselfishly, receiving a good witness by all, many times over.

The famous corresponding passage in Ephesians 4:11–14 states:

And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.

More may be gleaned from examining the texts. It is safe to say that Clement's role, whether given to him by the hand of Peter or not, would seem quite authoritative as it was being read by the people in Corinth.

Inspiration

Clement claims inspiration in the same breath wherein he says that Paul wrote under the influence of the Holy Spirit (1 Clem. 63.2). However, because of the sheer volume of quotes taken from the Old and New Testaments, some have claimed that Clement is no more than an editor using an ancient form of “cut and paste.”³⁰ The bulk of the quotations and allusions come from the Hebrew Bible, while the New Testament is used less frequently and never reproduced verbatim.³¹ The question of exactly what Clement used is difficult to answer because he alludes to so many scriptures without actually citing them. It is confirmed that at the very least he knew and quoted the synoptic Gospels, Hebrews, much of the Pauline corpus, Acts, Peter, and James.³²

³⁰ Jefford, *Guide*, 68; Bart D. Ehrman, *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to Early Christian Writings* (New York: Oxford, 2004), 455.

³¹ Hagner, *Testaments*, 135.

³² Hagner, *Testaments*, 135.

Because an in-depth study of each is worthy of a book, and because many as of late have questioned his use of Hebrews in particular,³³ it is there we will focus on this section.

The closeness of the two in the relevant sections was noticed early and led many, including Eusebius, to wonder whether or not Clement was the author (or translator) of Hebrews.³⁴ His dependence on the text, though again not verbatim, is confirmed by the fact that he follows the text of Hebrews where a LXX passage is used more closely than the LXX vorlage (1 Clem. 36:3–4; Heb 1:3–4; Ps 103:4–5).³⁵ Perhaps the best example, though there are many, of textual dependence (based on topical order and Greek grammar) is Heb 11 compared to 1 Clem. 9–12. That he used Hebrews is not the thesis under consideration, but more why he did so. Goodspeed has suggested that Heb 5:12 was the impetus for the epistle in the first place. It states, “For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk and not of strong meat.” His reasoning is that, if the epistle to the Hebrews had just been received in Rome, the “frequent reflection of its language and method is only natural.”³⁶ It is clear that Clement knew well and was taught by Hebrews, and because of this familiarity, he was able to relate the material to the situation with Corinth he was dealing with at the time, finding a mine of information and terminology “perfectly adaptable to . . . his own purposes.”³⁷

It is well known that Hebrews itself relies heavily on the Hebrew Bible, as do other New Testament books, albeit not to the same degree as 1 Clement. We must remember that much of the New Testament is written in a way to show God working through history (Heilsgeschichte) for the salvation of Israel. As Hebrews quotes the Hebrew Bible to inspire faith and give examples through familiar material, so does Clement the same with the Corinthian church. Both Ellingsworth and Mees agree that Clement’s thought is independent at crucial points from that of Hebrews, as well as the fact that Clement is indebted to the same tradition of scriptural exegesis and exposition as the author of Hebrews.³⁸ When it is remembered that Clement is writing to

33. Hagner, *Testaments*, 179–95.

34. Hagner, *Testaments*, 179. See also David W. Bercot, ed., *A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998), 169.

35. Hagner, *Testaments*, 179–95.

36. Hagner, *Testaments*, 195, and note 2.

37. Hagner, *Testaments*, 195.

38. Edgar J. Goodspeed, “First Clement Called Forth by Hebrews,” *JBL* 30.2 (1911), 157–60. There is also one more element that may tie the two together, that they both rely on a common liturgical tradition. For more on this, see Fullenbach’s summary of scholarship in *Ecclesiastical Office and the Primacy of Rome* (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1980), 17, as well as note 184.

a wayward congregation that has thrown out its leaders after a dispute over authority, it makes perfect sense that he would structure his themes and arguments as other books of scripture did, and rely upon the authority of the scriptures that were known by all.

Antiquity

It is generally accepted that the letter to the Corinthians was written in 95 or 96 C.E. The *terminus post quem* and *terminus ante quem* fluctuate from between 70 and 140 C.E., respectively.³⁹ The consensus agrees with the 95/96 C.E. dating, based on the following evidence presented in the text.

The prologue (1 Clem. 1:1) states:

By reason of the sudden and repeated calamities and reverses which are befalling us, brethren, we consider that we have been somewhat tardy in giving heed to the matters of dispute that have arisen among you, dearly beloved, and to the detestable and unholy sedition, so alien and strange to the elect of God, which a few headstrong and self-willed persons have kindled to such a pitch of madness that your name, once revered and renowned and lovely in the sight of all men, hath been greatly reviled.

It is generally assumed that the “sudden and repeated calamities . . . befalling us” refer to the persecutions of the emperor Domitian near the end of his reign, circa 95 or 96 C.E. 1 Clem. 44:2 says that the presbyters installed by the hands of the apostles have died, as well as alluding to the passing of their successors (44:3). The church in Corinth is called ancient (47:6), and elsewhere we learn that elders from Rome have lived from boyhood to old-age since the time of the apostles (63:3). Thus we may assume, based on the traditional dating of Peter and Paul’s deaths to the Neronian persecution of 64 C.E., that it is most likely that Clement indeed belongs to the generation he refers to in 5:1, but must be in the twilight of his life. Though there is some disagreement, traditional Catholic sources place Clement third in line from Peter, which would perfectly place him at the end of the first century.⁴⁰ When we consider the dates that scholars attribute to some New Testament books, the dating of 1 Clement is seen with the proper significance. McDonald, summarizing other

39. A full discussion of the dating arguments is not within the scope of this paper. For more information one should consult Andrew Gregory, “1 Clement: An Introduction,” *The Expository Times* 117.6 (2006), 223–30; Bart D. Ehrman, *The Apostolic Fathers* (Loeb Classical Library; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 1:23–25; L. L. Welborn, “The Preface to 1 Clement: The Rhetorical Situation and The Traditional Date,” in *Encounters with Hellenism: Studies on the First Letter of Clement*, ed. Chillers Breytenbach and Laurence L. Welborn (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 197–216.

40. Charles A. Columbe, *A History of the Popes: Vicars of Christ* (New York: MJF, 2003), 21–24.

scholarship, states that “today’s more developed critical tools of investigation have enabled biblical scholars to show fairly convincingly that some of the literature of the New Testament—especially 2 Peter, probably the pastorals, and possible other literature as well—was written later than other non-canonical Christian books, later than the Didache, 1 Clement, Hermas, [and others].”⁴¹ Thus both New Testament and apocryphal scholars place Clement well within the paradigm of canonicity.

Church Use

Ehrman writes that “1 Clement was known and appreciated in parts of the Christian church for several centuries,” and that, according to Dionysius of Corinth, it was read side by side with Paul’s letter to them, cited by many church fathers, and that “it was eventually included among the books of the New Testament in several of our surviving manuscripts.”⁴² We know that it was translated at an early date into Syriac, Coptic, and Latin—languages that would have covered most of the world missionaries were able to reach for the first few centuries of the church.⁴³ The same author also states that the text was broken up into pericopae so as to be read in liturgy of the worship service and had been (by 170 C.E.) an ancient custom.⁴⁴ Again Ehrman has written that around the same time (ca. late fourth century) in Alexandria, Didymus the Blind listed it as part of his canon.⁴⁵ The best preserved copy of the text is contained in the Codex Alexandrinus, which places it just after the apocalypse of John, again attesting to what Christians of the day thought of it. Another twelfth century Syrian manuscript places the two letters attributed to Clement immediately after the Catholic Epistles and before the Pauline.⁴⁶ Metzger has found that a fourth-century work from Syria called the *Apostolic Canons* lists both 1 and 2 Clement as part of the New Testament.⁴⁷

It may come as a surprise to learn that, in fact, the name of the author does not appear anywhere in the text itself. The earliest reference is made by

41. McDonald, *Formation*, 237.

42. Holmes, *Fathers*, 28.

43. Charles Kannengiesser, *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 409.

44. Unnik, *Studies*, 118, note 13.

45. Bart D. Ehrman, “The New Testament Canon of Didymus the Blind,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 37 (1983): 1–21. For a complete and exhaustive list of who quotes 1 Clement and where, see J. B. Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers: Part 1, Clement of Rome* (Macmillan: London, 1890), 1:149–200. The references range from Barnabas and Ignatius, very early in the second century, all the way to the autographs of writers through the tenth century, and include such influential men as Polycarp, Hermas, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Origen, Eusebius, Epiphanius, Ambrose, and Augustine.

46. Holmes, *Fathers*, 39.

47. Bruce M. Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 313.

Dionysius of Corinth (ca. 170 C.E.) via Eusebius, who spoke of “the letter that was formerly sent to us through Clement.”⁴⁸ There is no way of confirming the truth or untruth of his statement. Since he is from the same town to which the letter was originally sent, in nearly the same generation, and since there is no objection against this, we follow suit.⁴⁹ Given the antiquity and the clues from the generation that followed the epistle, possible connections with the apostles themselves are intriguing. Philippians 4:3 refers to one Clement, whom Paul calls his fellow laborer and says his name is written in the book of life. The belief that both Peter and Paul both died in Rome after spending time there is almost universally accepted by scholars. Clement also alludes to being in contact with these great men themselves. 1 Clem. 5:1 reads, “But, to pass from the examples of ancient days, let us come to those champions who lived nearest to our time. Let us set before us the noble examples which belong to our generation,” afterward giving examples of the faithfulness of Peter and Paul in the face of persecution. The possibility of a close association with Paul and other leading authorities (most notably Peter in Rome), not only as an acquaintance but as a fellow missionary makes the appearance of a bestowal of authority very attractive. Even though Paul has a precedent for making his former companions into apostle material,⁵⁰ such a possibility remains just that and cannot be proven either way.

Conclusion: The Emergence of Rome in the Affairs of the Corinthian Church

In his discussion on the bishopric of Rome, Nibley correctly points out that the See of Rome gained prominence simply because of its being in the most powerful city in the empire.⁵¹ Quoting Norman Baynes, he also writes, “[the religion spread] from the provincial capital to the country side so that the provincial capital came to be regarded as the mother church,”⁵² an idea later canonized after Nicaea that officially gave supremacy and power to the bishops of the large cities (especially the “big 4” of Rome, Antioch, Jerusalem, and Alexandria). These notions were no doubt already in motion during the life of Clement, whose image of authority to others was increased because of the city in which he lived.

48. Unnik, *Studies*, 119, especially note 16.

49. Unnik, *Studies*, 119.

50. In Acts 14:4, 14, Paul’s companion is called an apostle in the same breath as Paul. Although the bible dictionary says that Barnabas is not an apostle, but only mentioned as one, I affirm that he was indeed by this time inducted into the ranks and we simply do not have a record of it.

51. Nibley, *Apostles*, 75.

52. Nibley, *Apostles*, 83.

Many other scholars agree with the notion that the respect which the letter from Rome demands is particularly because of its birthplace. Cauwelaert speaks for most: “l’intimité de leurs relations ordinaires qui a en quelque sorte forcé les sentiments de solidarité chrétienne de l’Église de Rome à s’expliquer, dès lors que le bien de l’Église de Corinthe se trouvait en cause.”⁵³

Still there are others who want to say that the letter is not a normal *correctio fraterna* but was written because of a latent sense of apostolicity.⁵⁴ The letter never specifically asserts its ecclesiastical authority, but there is never a denial of it either. Based on linguistic evidence and the occasion of the letter, we conclude with Unnik that Clement is sent as a symbol and marks the beginning of a natural and deliberate attempt of the church at Rome to take the place that Jerusalem and Antioch did before as the center of operations for the church.⁵⁵ This is especially poignant when we remember that the very reason the letter was written was to reprove a church who had deposed its leaders and to teach them that “a congregation is bound to act at all times within the lawful order commanded by God.”⁵⁶ Beyond the natural lessons contained in the scriptures that he quotes, Clement is not trying to teach anything new or revolutionary—he is simply trying to defend the system set in place by the apostles as they did in their official correspondences. In his championing the system of elders we see him taking the place of a leader watching over the church. This is significant in that the same system is now a binding aspect of apostolic tradition, and, as von Campenhausen notes, “It may be said that here for the first time the structures of canon law are included in the category of doctrines and dogma, and given the same sacral and immutable character.”⁵⁷

Thus we have seen that the first epistle of Clement truly deserves its place of primacy in the study of the early Church. Clement indeed acted in an apostolic way, not only in the style in which he taught but also in the way he looked after the church. Because of this the earliest Christians recognized its inherent worth for themselves and for the Church, and accordingly used it since its inception in the first century C.E. until the fourth and fifth centuries, and after in the liturgies and sermons of the congregations throughout the empire.

Too often we, after mastering the scholarship and history of the past two millennia, judge too quickly about complex issues that have nothing to do with studying texts, but everything to do with a desire to do one’s best in following the Savior. I have attempted to show that, through internal textual and

53. R. van Cauwelaert, “L’intervention de l’Église de Rome à Corinthe vers l’an 96,” *Revue d’histoire Ecclésiastique* 31 (1935): 305.

54. Unnik, *Studies*, 125.

55. For the entire exhaustive argument see Unnik, *Studies*, 124–80.

56. Hans von Campenhausen, *Ecclesiastical Authority and Spiritual Power* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1969), 87.

57. Von Campenhausen, *Authority*, 92.

external historical evidences, that it is possible to see the life and ministry of Clement of Rome through an apostolic paradigm. This standard was given them from the practices and traditions of the early church who knew the importance of the apostles who taught them. These bodies of believers received not only additional instruction but an identity that distinguished them from other religious movements, including other tangents of the emerging Christian faith. Their teachings were fundamental for the community, its worship and also its social life.⁵⁸ Through this study we are thus better able to see not only the institutions and structures of the early Christian movement, but also the perspective of those who lived in them and what they believed and considered to be important.

58. Wolfgang A. Bienert, "The Picture of the Apostle in Early Christian Tradition," in *New Testament Apocrypha*, ed. W. Schneemelcher (Louisville, KY: Westminster/ John Knox Press, 1991), 2:26.