

Studies in Patrology X

Christian Writings in the Apostolic Age The Oldest Christian Homily

The so-called second epistle of St. Clement was written between 130 and 162 AD. This document is in actuality an anonymous homily of the mid-second century. Most of church's fathers and Patrology scholars did not support that St. Clement (the writer of Clement I) wrote this letter. Both Eusebius in his "Ecclesiastical History" and St. Jerome in his book "Life of Famous Men" denied connection of this homily to St. Clement of Rome.

Harnack purports that it is the letter written by Soter (bishop of Rome - 166-174) to the church of Corinth. He purposes that Soter probably used an old homily which seemed to him to be suitable. This letter was kept in the archives of the church at Corinth together with I Clement, which had also come from Rome; later on, when they were both being copied, the real or actual facts were forgotten and both were supposed to be letters of St. Clement (Harnack, *Chronologie I*, pp. 438).

Lightfoot is inclined to think that it was an ancient homily of some unknown person in the church at Corinth. He adopted Harnack's theory of explaining why the document came to be connected with St. Clement - it was found in the Corinthian archives together with I Clement.

Other scholars have thought that II Clement was originally an Alexandrian homily. Their reasons are the theological character of the book, and the possible use of the Gospel of the Egyptians. This theory explains the contents of the book more naturally than do the views of Harnack and Lightfoot, but fails to show why it was ever connected with I Clement.

The main object of the writer is to inculcate a high Christology, a pure life, and a belief in the resurrection of the flesh. The following will shade some light on the letter's contents:

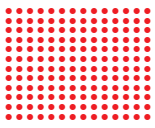
Chapter 1: We ought to think highly of the Lord Jesus Christ "Brethren, we ought so to think of Jesus Christ, as of God, as of the Judge of the living and the dead" 1:1.

Chapter 2: The church, formerly barren, is now fruitful "Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, you that travailest not; for she that is desolate has many more children than she that has a husband" 2:1-3.

Chapter 3: The Duty of confessing the Lord Jesus Christ "Seeing then that He bestowed so great mercy on us; first of all, that we, who are living, do not sacrifice to these dead gods, neither worship them, but through Him have known the

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Father of truth. What else is this knowledge to Himward, but not to deny Him through whom we have known Him? Yea, He Himself saith, *whoso confesseth Me, Him will I confess before the Father*" 3:1-2.

Chapter 4: True confession of the Lord Jeus Christ "So then, brethren, let us confess Him in our works, by loving one another, by not committing adultery nor speaking evil one against another nor envying, but being temperate, merciful, kindly. And we ought to have fellow-feeling one with another and not to be covetous. By these works let us confess Him, and not by the contrary" 4:3

Chapter 5: This world should be despised "Wherefore, brethren, let us forsake our sojourn in this world and do the will of Him that called us, and let us not be afraid to depart out of this world" 5:1.

Chapter 6: The present and future worlds are enemies to each other "But the Lord saith, *No servant can serve two masters. If we desire to serve both God and mammon, it is unprofitable for us: For what advantage is it, if a man gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?* Now this age and the future are two enemies. The one speaketh of adultery and defilement and avarice and deceit, but the other biddeth farewell to these. We cannot therefore be friends of the two, but must bid farewell to the one and hold companionship with the other" 6:1-5.

Chapter 7: We must strive in order to be crowned "So then, my brethren, let us contend, knowing that the contest is nigh at hand, and that, while many resort to the corruptible contests, yet not all are crowned, but only they that have toiled hard and contended bravely. Let us then contend that we all may be crowned" 7:1-2.

Chapter 8: The necessity of repentance while we are on earth "While we are on earth then, let us repent: for we are clay

under the craftsman's hand" 8:1.

Chapter 9: We shall be judged in the flesh "And let not any one of you say that this flesh is not judged neither riseth again. Understand ye. In what were ye saved? In what did ye recover your sight? if ye were not in this flesh. We ought therefore to guard the flesh as a temple of God" 9:1-3

Chapter 10: Vice is to be forsaken, and virtue followed "Wherefore, my brethren, let us do the will of the Father who called us, that we may live; and let us earnestly follow after virtue, but forsake every wicked tendency which would lead us into transgression; and flee from ungodliness, lest evils overtake us" 10:1.

Chapter 11: We ought to serve God, trusting in His promises "Let us therefore serve God in a pure heart, and we shall be righteous; but if we serve Him not, because we believe not the promise of God, we shall be wretched" 11:1.

Chapter 12: We are constantly to look for the Kingdom of God "Let us expect, therefore, hour by hour, the kingdom of God in love and righteousness, since we know not the day of the appearing of God" 12:1.

Chapter 13: God's name not to be blasphemed "Therefore, brethren, let us repent forthwith. Let us be sober unto that which is good: for we are full of much folly and wickedness. Let us wipe away from us our former sins, and let us not be found to be men pleasers. Neither let us desire to please one another only, but also those men that are without, by our righteousness, that the Name be not blasphemed by reason of us" 13:1.

Chapter 14: The Church is spiritual "Wherefore, brethren, if we do the will of God our Father, we shall be of the first Church, which is spiritual, which was created before the sun and the moon; but



if we do not the will of the Lord, we shall be of the scripture that saith, *My house was made a den of robbers*. So therefore let us choose rather to be of the Church of life, that we may be saved" 14:1.

Chapter 15: He who saves and he who is saved "Now I do not think that I have given any mean council respecting continence, and whosoever performeth it shall not repent thereof, but shall save both himself and me his councilor. For it is no mean reward to convert a wondering and perishing soul, that it may be saved" 15:1.

Chapter 16: Preparation for the day of judgment "But ye know that the day of judgment cometh even now as a *burning oven, and the powers of the heavens shall melt*, and all the earth as lead melting on the fire, and then shall appear the hidden and manifest deeds of men. Almsgiving therefore is a good thing, even as repentance from sin. Fasting is better than prayer, but almsgiving better than both. And *love covereth a multitude of sins*, but prayer out of a good conscience delivereth from death. Blessed is every man that is found full of these. For almsgiving lifteth off the burden of sin" 16:3-4.

Chapter 17: Same subject continued "Let us therefore repent with our whole heart, lest any of us perish by the way" 17:1.

Chapter 18: The author sinful, yet pursuing "For I myself too, being an utter sinner and not yet escaped from temptation, but being still amidst the engines of the devil, do my diligence to follow after righteousness, that I may prevail so far at least as to come near unto it, while I fear the judgment to come" 18:2.

Chapter 19: Reward of the righteous, although they may suffer "Let us therefore practice righteousness that we may be saved unto the end. Blessed are they that obey these ordinances. Though they may endure affliction for a short

time in the world, they will gather the immortal fruit of the resurrection" 19:3.

Chapter 20: Godliness, not Gain, the true riches "Let us then have faith, brothers and sisters. We are trained by the present life, that we may be crowned with the future" 20:2.

Glory be to God forever, Amen.

