

# Foreword

## *Harnack's Testament*

THE SMALL, VALEDICTORY MONOGRAPH ON 1 Clement<sup>1</sup> that Adolf von Harnack bequeathed to participants in his seminar on church history,<sup>2</sup> and to future generations of students,<sup>3</sup> was the culmination of a lifetime of research on the first of the so-called Apostolic Fathers,<sup>4</sup> but was also, in a deeper sense, Harnack's "intellectual testament,"<sup>5</sup> in which he sought to convey what was essential for an understanding of Christian history. As an historian, Harnack regarded 1 Clement as "the most important document we have received from earliest church history," after the writings of the New Testament, because in this epistle "the great church of the Greeks and Romans . . . the mother of all churches . . . represents itself in spirit and essence," so that without difficulty "one is able to foresee its further development into the catholic church."<sup>6</sup> As a Protestant theologian, Harnack found in 1 Clement a "pure" and "simple morality," expressed in humility, love and service, rooted in a consciousness of the reality and sovereignty of God,<sup>7</sup> an ethical idealism that Harnack saw

1. Harnack, "Das Schreiben der römischen Kirche."

2. On the conclusion of Harnack's seminar, see Zahn-Harnack, *Adolf von Harnack*, 436.

3. Emphasized by the term "Studierende" in the title and the explicit statement of purpose in the foreword, Harnack, *Das Schreiben der römischen Kirche*, 3 (1).

4. On the centrality of 1 Clement to Harnack's work, see Harnack, *Das Schreiben der römischen Kirche*, 3 (1); "Ansprachen," 7–15. In 1876, Harnack published a critical edition of 1 Clement in *Patrum Apostolicorum Opera*, followed a year later by a second edition, which added numerous manuscript variants. For a more detailed account of Harnack's engagement with 1 Clement throughout his academic career, see Marksches, "Harnack's Image of 1 Clement and Contemporary Research," 54–69.

5. So characterized by Unnik, "Studies on the So-Called First Epistle of Clement," 116.

6. Harnack, *Das Schreiben der römischen Kirche*, 5 (3).

7. Harnack, "Der erste Klemensbrief," 42–43 (148–49); *Das Schreiben der römischen*

threatened by the impending crises of the early twentieth century.<sup>8</sup> Harnack committed his understanding of the history and theology of the church to a monograph of only 128 pages, in the hope that students would learn from 1 Clement “the strength and purity of a will to goodness and to the building up of a new humanity energetically devoted to the welfare of others.”<sup>9</sup> Were Harnack’s hopes fulfilled?

## I

Without doubt, Harnack’s most important insight was that the Scriptures of Israel (in Greek translation) are the wellspring of Clement’s religiosity: “The Christianity of Clement’s epistle finds its God-given, plenary and sufficient foundation in the Old Testament, and consequently is nothing other than a religion of this book.”<sup>10</sup> Harnack recognized that Clement’s appropriation of Scripture differed from that of the Epistle to the Hebrews and the Epistle of Barnabas, indeed, differed most from that found in Paul: in Clement, there is no caesura in the meaning of the text, occasioned by the coming of Christ, requiring allegorical interpretation; rather, the words of Scripture apply directly to the lives of the “elect” to whom Clement writes, providing instructions for conduct and examples of nurture.<sup>11</sup> Harnack did not hesitate to draw the consequences: “In its foundation and its religious attitude, the Roman epistle belongs to the history of Old Testament religion and of ancient Judaism.”<sup>12</sup>

Harnack was so convinced of the importance of Scripture in 1 Clement that he gave the insight to his most brilliant student, William Wrede, as a topic for research, to which Wrede then devoted the second half of his doctoral dissertation.<sup>13</sup> Scholars have continued to build upon Harnack’s insight. Annie Jaubert emphasized Clement’s knowledge of Levitical

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*Kirche*, 58 (48).

8. Harnack, “Funfzehn Fragen,” 6–8; “Review of Heinrich Hoffmann,” 409–10.

9. Harnack, *Das Schreiben der römischen Kirche*, 103 (87).

10. Harnack, “Das Schreiben der römischen Kirche,” 53 (54). Harnack counted one hundred twenty quotations and allusions, along with seven citations from the Apocrypha (“eine ungeheure Zahl!”); this and all future page references are to the reprint of Harnack’s monograph in *Encounters with Hellenism*.

11. Harnack, “Das Schreiben der römischen Kirche,” 56–57 (57–58).

12. Harnack, “Das Schreiben der römischen Kirche,” 57 (58). “Ancient Judaism” translates Harnack’s “Spätjudentum,” in accordance with current usage.

13. Wrede, *Untersuchungen zum ersten Klemensbriefe*, 58–107.

traditions.<sup>14</sup> Donald Hagner devoted a third of his meticulous study of 1 Clement to the author's use of the Old Testament.<sup>15</sup> More recently, Peter Tomson has examined Clement's references to Jerusalem, its temple, priesthood and cult.<sup>16</sup> Scholars have been slower to engage Harnack's inference about Clement's place in the history of Judaism. Only recently has a productive debate been joined between Joseph Verheyden and James Carleton Paget: the former asserts that Clement's references to Israel, few though they are, imply a polemical attitude toward Jews and Judaism,<sup>17</sup> while the latter argues that Clement's extensive use of Scripture reveals a positive attitude toward Judaism, characteristic of "an erstwhile God-fearer, who retained a respect for his Jewish heritage."<sup>18</sup>

As a second element in Clement's formation, Harnack identified the "specifically Christian content."<sup>19</sup> Harnack endeavored to assess Clement's Christology on its own terms, that is, without reference to Paul. In this way, Harnack discovered a plentitude and diversity of christological formulations that he found "astonishing" in such an early writing.<sup>20</sup> Harnack summarized his results in an overview of the passages in which Clement uses the phrase "in Christ," or describes the church as the "flock of Christ," or focuses attention upon the "blood of Christ," etc.<sup>21</sup> Harnack inferred that behind Clement's statements about Christ and his salvific work was a broad stream of primitive tradition that was independent of Paul and Paulinism.<sup>22</sup> Nevertheless, Harnack judged that Clement's Christology, for all its breadth, was superficial and unreflected, merely repeating the formulas of tradition.<sup>23</sup>

Harnack's insight into the Christology of 1 Clement has produced little impact upon subsequent scholarship, apart from echoes in the commentaries.<sup>24</sup> William Wrede formulated the paradox identified by his teacher in an extreme manner: Christology is ultimately dispensable for Clement, since what matters is obedience to the commandments of God found in

14. Jaubert, "Thèmes lévitiques dans la Prima Clementis," 193–203.

15. Hagner, *Use of the Old and New Testaments in Clement of Rome*, 21–132.

16. Tomson, "Centrality of Jerusalem and Its Temple," 97–112.

17. Verheyden, "Israel's Fate in the Apostolic Fathers," 237–62.

18. Paget, "1 Clement, Judaism, and the Jews," 218–50.

19. Harnack, "Das Schreiben der römischen Kirche," 58–65 (58–65).

20. Harnack, "Das Schreiben der römischen Kirche," 58 (58).

21. Harnack, "Das Schreiben der römischen Kirche," 58–61 (58–61).

22. Harnack, "Das Schreiben der römischen Kirche," 61–62 (61–62).

23. Harnack, "Das Schreiben der römischen Kirche," 63 (62–63).

24. Fischer, *Die Apostolischen Väter*, 13; Lindemann, *Die Clemensbriefe*, 112–13.

Scripture.<sup>25</sup> The only monograph devoted to the Christology of 1 Clement, that of H. B. Bumpus, circumvents the problem diagnosed by Harnack, by positing the influence of intertestamental literature upon Clement.<sup>26</sup> Only Horacio Lona resumes Harnack's approach, in an excursus to his erudite commentary, listing all of Clement's christological statements, organized systematically: from preexistence to resurrection, and the sending of the apostles;<sup>27</sup> within this framework, Lona ascribes special importance to the function of Christ as "mediator" of the saving work of God.<sup>28</sup>

Harnack's third insight into the sources of Clement's thought was that the letter is permeated by a Hellenistic-Roman idealism, epitomized by the works of contemporary Stoics and Platonists, such as Epictetus and Plutarch.<sup>29</sup> Harnack called attention, in particular, to the ideology of "peace and concord" found throughout the epistle, the counsel of voluntary exile in chapter 54, and the view of the natural world as a harmonious whole in chapter 20, adducing parallels from philosophers and orators.

Developing Harnack's insight into the Hellenistic milieu, Louis Sanders adduced numerous parallels between passages in 1 Clement and the writings of Epictetus, Dio Chrysostom, and Seneca, which locate the Roman epistle in proximity to the popular Stoicism of the early Empire.<sup>30</sup> Martin Dibelius and Adolf Ziegler demonstrated that the *agon* motif in 1 Clem 5–7 reflects the tradition of the Cynic-Stoic diatribe.<sup>31</sup> In a seminal monograph that takes its point of departure from Harnack, W. C. van Unnik demonstrated that 1 Clement belongs to the "deliberative genre," a kind of discourse regularly discussed by writers on rhetoric after Aristotle, and instanced in the speeches "On Concord" by Dio Chrysostom and Aelius Aristides.<sup>32</sup> Recently, Cilliers Breytenbach has investigated the sources of Clement's encomium of cosmic concord in chapter 20, as a model of the harmony he seeks to nurture in the Christian community.<sup>33</sup> Breytenbach finds the closest parallels to 1 Clem 20 in the deliberative discourses of Dio Chrysostom and Aelius Aristides, and in

25. Wrede, *Untersuchungen zum ersten Klemensbriefe*, 103.

26. Bumpus, *Christological Awareness of Clement of Rome and Its Sources*.

27. Lona, *Der erste Klemensbrief*, 401–3.

28. Lona, *Klemensbrief*, 403–4.

29. Harnack, "Das Schreiben der römischen Kirche," 65–70 (65–69).

30. Sanders, *L'Hellénisme de Saint Clément de Rome et Le Paulinisme*; preceded by Bardy, "Expressions stoïciennes dans la 1<sup>re</sup> Clementis," 73–85.

31. Dibelius, *Rom und die Christen im ersten Jahrhundert*, 192–99; Ziegler, *Neue Studien zum ersten Klemensbrief*, 24–37.

32. Unnik, *Studies over de zogenaamde Eerste Brief van Clemens*; followed by Bakke, *Concord and Peace*.

33. Breytenbach, "Civic Concord and Cosmic Harmony," 259–73.

pseudo-Aristotle's *De mundo*, where Stoic cosmology is placed at the service of arguments for civic concord.<sup>34</sup>

A final, crucial contribution of Harnack's monograph was his analysis of Clement's attitude toward the Roman state.<sup>35</sup> Harnack rightly recognized that Clement's orientation is entirely positive. In evidence, Harnack pointed to the liturgical prayer at the close of the epistle, where Clement petitions: "grant that we may become obedient to our rulers and governors upon the earth . . . to whom God has given the exercise of sovereignty" (60.4–61.1). From this, Harnack drew two consequences: first, that the earthly regime of Rome is parallel to the heavenly kingdom of God; and second, that Clement permits no right of resistance to those who must be subservient; rather, resistance to the temporal authorities is resistance to the will of God (61.1).<sup>36</sup>

Harnack puzzled over the apparent incongruity between Clement's attitude toward the Roman state and his knowledge that Christians had suffered persecution under Nero (chapters 5–6). Harnack concluded that Clement's attitude toward the Roman state was a defensive posture calculated to protect the Christian community: "that our Roman community-writing represents this attitude, despite the Neronian and Domitianic persecution, must have been of the greatest importance. Recognition of the right of the authorities and a passive posture were alone able to protect the political existence of the church."<sup>37</sup> As a concrete instance of the danger facing the Christian community, Harnack pointed to 47.6–7, where Clement alleges that the "report" that "the church of the Corinthians is in revolt . . . has not only reached us, but also those who are of a different allegiance from us, so that you are creating danger for yourselves." Harnack suggested that Clement raises here the specter of action by the Roman authorities, in response to the discord in the church at Corinth: "indeed, it seems that in Corinth an intervention by the police was at least threatened (a house-search in consequence of the conflicts?)."<sup>38</sup>

Paul Mikat built effectively upon Harnack's hypothesis in his investigation of the importance of the concepts *stasis* and *aponoia* for an understanding of 1 Clement.<sup>39</sup> On the basis of a close reading of 47.7 and 54.2, Mikat concluded that Clement saw the Corinthian church threatened by a dangerous situation: the intervention of the Roman authorities, in order to put an end to the conflict in the house churches. Mikat explained: "The prayer

34. Breitenbach, "Civic Concord and Cosmic Harmony," 263–70.

35. In the excursus "Die politische Haltung" in Harnack, *Das Schreiben der römischen Kirche*, 71–72 (70–71).

36. Harnack, "Das Schreiben der römischen Kirche," 71 (70).

37. Harnack, "Das Schreiben der römischen Kirche," 71 (70).

38. Harnack, "Das Schreiben der römischen Kirche," 99 (104).

39. Mikat, *Bedeutung*.

for the rulers of this world in 1 Clement arises from the concern that a persecution may occur; so long as the *stasis* continues, there is a risk that the temporal authorities will be provoked to intervene. If there are Christians whose conduct can be plausibly described as *aponoia*, the authorities may suspect that the movement is a *superstitio*, rather than a *religio* which affirms its support for the welfare of the empire through its cult.”<sup>40</sup>

## II

Toward the end of the monograph, before the notes to his felicitous German translation, Harnack listed eighteen problems posed by the Roman epistle which had not been fully resolved, and which might be profitably pursued in future seminars.<sup>41</sup> Several of these issues have since become the subject of research, as we have seen: the Old Testament citations in 1 Clement, the engagement of the author with the ideals of Greco-Roman culture, the rhetorical style and genre of the letter, etc. Recently, Clare Rothschild has taken up one of the issues raised by Harnack, namely, the Pauline character of Clement’s epistle. In a thorough investigation of the reception of First Corinthians in 1 Clement, Rothschild demonstrates that Clement borrows the authority of Paul’s voice, while simultaneously altering Paul’s message.<sup>42</sup> When Clement makes use of Paul’s language, it is mostly for rhetorical effect; his thought is generally at odds with Paul’s theology, or else Clement adds to Paul’s text what he really wishes to say.<sup>43</sup>

It is instructive to consider which issues were omitted from Harnack’s list of “not yet fully investigated problems.” First among these is the matter of the date of the epistle, which Harnack confidently assigned to the final years of the reign of Domitian.<sup>44</sup> In this, Harnack followed the suggestion of the first editor of the epistle, Patrick Young (1633 CE), who interpreted the mention of “sudden and repeated misfortunes and hindrances which have befallen us” in the preface to the epistle (1.1) as an allusion to the persecution of the Christians of Rome by Domitian,<sup>45</sup> a view that was popularized by J. B. Lightfoot,<sup>46</sup> and that by the time of Harnack had become the scholarly consensus.<sup>47</sup>

40. Mikat, *Bedeutung*, 39.

41. Harnack, “Das Schreiben der römischen Kirche,” 82–83 (82–83).

42. Rothschild, “Reception of 1 Corinthians in 1 Clement,” 35–60.

43. Welborn, “Take up the Epistle of the Blessed Paul the Apostle,” 345–57.

44. Harnack, “Das Schreiben der römischen Kirche,” 87 (88–89).

45. Young, *Clementis ad Corinthios epistola prior* (1st and 2nd ed.).

46. Lightfoot, *Clement of Rome*, 1:27, 81, 346–58, 383.

47. See the list of early proponents—Cotelier, Ritschl, Reuss, Hilgenfeld, Gundert, Tischendorf, Lightfoot, Zahn, et al.—in Gebhardt and Harnack, *Patrum Apostolicorum*

In an article published in 1984, I challenged this consensus by demonstrating that no linguistic basis exists for interpreting the language of 1 Clem 1.1 as a reference to persecution.<sup>48</sup> The most serious event denoted by the hendiadys συμφοραί (“misfortunes”) and περιπτώσεις (“hindrances”) relates to the incidence or consequence of civil strife (στάσις).<sup>49</sup> When one takes account of the genre of 1 Clement as a deliberative appeal for concord, the function of the first sentence of the epistle becomes clear: it serves as a *captatio benevolentiae*, guarding against the impression that the Roman church is lording it over their Corinthian brothers and sisters by intervening in their conflict.<sup>50</sup> What Clement means to suggest by mentioning the “misfortunes and hindrances” that had delayed the Roman church from responding to the crisis at Corinth is made explicit in 7.1: “We are writing these things, beloved, not admonishing you alone, but also reminding ourselves; for we are in the same arena, and the same struggle lies before us.” The impact of my article upon scholarship has been to sever the long-postulated connection between the language of 1 Clem 1.1 and the Eusebian tradition of a persecution by Domitian, throwing open the question of the date of the Roman epistle. In retrospect, Harnack’s failure to list the date of 1 Clement among the “not yet fully investigated issues” did much to consign the matter to scholarly oblivion for more than two generations.

A second matter that Harnack evidently regarded as settled was the occasion of the Roman epistle: the church of the Corinthians had unjustly removed some of its presbyters from their ministry (44.3–6; 47.6).<sup>51</sup> Harnack did not inquire further into the motive for the revolt, concluding that it was merely a quarrel between cliques, without any foundation in principle.<sup>52</sup> But reflecting upon the influence that a few prominent persons (1.1; 47.6), the instigators of the uprising (51.1; 57.1), had been able to win over the entire Corinthian community, Harnack made the following suggestion (in a footnote): “That the majority [of the rebels] counted among its members especially many young people, and that some women also made their influence felt here, has, in light of 1.3; 3.3; 21.6–7 (note the bitter irony), a high probability.”<sup>53</sup>

In the first volume of his magisterial history of the early church, a work dedicated to the memory of Adolf von Harnack, Hans Lietzmann took up Harnack’s tentative suggestion about the motive for the revolt and

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*Opera*, lix–lx.

48. Welborn, “On the Date of First Clement,” 35–54.

49. Welborn, “On the Date of First Clement,” 46–48.

50. Welborn, “On the Date of First Clement,” 47.

51. On the precision with which the occasion of 1 Clement can be determined, see Harnack, “Das Schreiben der römischen Kirche,” 75 (74–75).

52. Harnack, “Das Schreiben der römischen Kirche,” 76 (75–76).

53. Harnack, “Das Schreiben der römischen Kirche,” 76n60 (76n11).



the identity of the perpetrators, and put forward the hypothesis that the conflict at Corinth in the time of Clement was inter-generational in character: “The younger generation revolted against the regime of the older and deposed the bishops and deacons from their office.”<sup>54</sup> In a monograph published in 2018, I sought to confirm this hypothesis by analysis of the rhetoric and argumentation of 1 Clement, with attention to the themes and motifs that recur frequently in ancient accounts of generational conflict.<sup>55</sup> I also argued that certain women provided financial support for the young men who deposed the established presbyters.<sup>56</sup> Among the motives for the revolt, I posited frustration at the routine exclusion of the young from church office,<sup>57</sup> and a revival of the memory of a Pauline polity in which age was not a qualification for leadership.<sup>58</sup>

The most serious—and poignant—omission from Harnack’s monograph is the absence of any critique of Clement’s attitude toward the Roman state. To be sure, Harnack rightly judged that Clement provides no basis for resistance to the temporal authorities. As we have seen, Harnack explained Clement’s subservience as a defensive posture calculated to protect the Christian community. But, unfortunately, Harnack did not stop there: he added that, through compliance, the church became a “positive factor” for the Roman state.<sup>59</sup> And worse, Harnack foresaw that by endorsing the government as a divinely-willed institution on earth, Clement prepared the way for a later day when the church itself would assume temporal authority.<sup>60</sup> Harnack’s uncritical stance toward the church-state relationship led him to greet the Concordat between the Roman Catholic Church and the Fascist government of Italy as a “rekindling” of the spirit manifest in 1 Clement.<sup>61</sup> The tragic denouement of Harnack’s blindness was revealed fifteen years after the publication of his monograph, when the senior student in Harnack’s seminar, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, was put to death in Flossenbug prison for his resistance to the Nazi regime.<sup>62</sup>

54. Lietzmann, *Geschichte der Alten Kirche*, 201.

55. Welborn, *Young Against the Old*, esp. 21–48, 129–72.

56. Welborn, *Young against the Old*, 189–94.

57. Welborn, *Young against the Old*, 200–202.

58. Welborn, *Young against the Old*, 202–6, building upon a suggestion of Barclay, who devoted a paragraph of his essay, “There Is Neither Old Nor Young?” (235–36), to 1 Clement.

59. Harnack, “Das Schreiben der römischen Kirche,” 71 (70).

60. Harnack, “Das Schreiben der römischen Kirche,” 71–72 (70–71).

61. Harnack, “Das Schreiben der römischen Kirche,” 4 (6).

62. Marsh, *Strange Glory*.



## III

Harnack's life-long interest in 1 Clement was not merely antiquarian. Rather, the monograph discloses that Harnack resonated deeply with the religious character of the Roman epistle. Harnack saw the religion of 1 Clement as "a moral movement based upon a monotheism of the greatest seriousness and highest vitality: or better, based upon the reality of God."<sup>63</sup> As the truest heirs of Clement's religiosity, Harnack pointed to Calvin in Geneva, and the Puritans in New England.<sup>64</sup> The epilogue to the monograph reveals the hope—a hope also expressed in Harnack's lectures and letters—that an encounter with the "classic" Christianity of 1 Clement would somehow serve to maintain the relationship between the Reformation and the Enlightenment that Harnack viewed as essential for the future of humanity.<sup>65</sup>

Almost a century after the publication of Harnack's farewell monograph, it seems that Harnack's highest hope has been disappointed. The spirit of Reformation and Enlightenment has departed, and not only from Berlin.<sup>66</sup> The attack upon history-writing from a Protestant perspective by J. Z. Smith in his widely acclaimed *Drudgery Divine* has discredited Harnack's project in the academy.<sup>67</sup> Even Christoph Marksches, Professor of Ancient Christianity at the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, concludes that Harnack's research method was "denominationally dictated," and moves along one of the "dead-end streets from today's perspective."<sup>68</sup> Whether this will be the ultimate legacy of Harnack's "testament" is in the hands of readers of this long-delayed translation of Harnack's monograph.

—Larry Welborn

63. Harnack, "Das Schreiben der römischen Kirche," 47 (48).

64. Harnack, *Das Schreiben der römischen Kirche*, 47 (48).

65. Harnack, "Das Schreiben der römischen Kirche," 85–86 (86–87).

66. Following a conference on "The Rise of Early Christianity in Greece" at the Humboldt-Universität in May 2017, I asked a post-doctoral research assistant if he might guide me to the Zionskirche, where Dietrich Bonhoeffer once served as a pastor, for Sunday worship services. The research assistant replied, "Haven't you heard that Christianity has left Berlin?"

67. Smith, *Drudgery Divine*.

68. Marksches, "Harnack's Image of 1 Clement and Contemporary Research," 68–69.