

The Reception and Use of Sacred Tradition in 2 Clement¹

SECOND CLEMENT EXHIBITS A rich and varied use of previous writings considered authoritative by the author. The book incorporates more references to other “sources” than any other work among those included in the corpus known as the Apostolic Fathers. Before we consider those references and how the author utilizes them, a review of terminology being utilized is appropriate.

Every treatment of 2 Clement has a section devoted to this subject. Donfried refers to “quotations” in a chapter titled “Quotations from Authoritative Sources.”² Tuckett, in a chapter titled “Citations,” refers to Clement’s “extensive use of citations.”³ Neither utilizes the more recent terms, “intertextuality” and “reception,” in their thorough discussions. In the appropriate section of his introduction to 2 Clement, Pratscher uses the more recent expression, “Intertextual Relationships.” He then surveys Clement’s “Quotations from Old Testament Jewish Tradition,” “Quotations from the Jesus Tradition,” and his “Apocryphal Quotations.”⁴ My use of the terms “reception” and “reception history” reflects a recent trend in both literary and biblical/patristic studies.⁵ What is the difference between “intertextuality” (German:

1. Expressions such as “Old Testament,” “New Testament,” and “Apocryphal Books” are anachronistic during the time of 2 Clement and raise canonical questions that are also out of place at this period. I prefer the expression “sacred tradition” to refer to any previous texts or traditions deemed as authoritative for the author. In this I follow the example of Porter, *Sacred Tradition in the New Testament*.

2. Donfried, *Setting*, 49–97.

3. Tuckett, *2 Clement*, 34–46.

4. Pratscher, *Apostolic Fathers*, 75–77.

5. See, for example, de Vries and Karrer, eds., *Textual History*; and Evans, *Reception History*. Strangely, even though both of these works claim to examine how scripture was received in second-century literature, neither mention 2 Clement, although they refer often to other second-century texts known as the “Apostolic Fathers.” This oversight,

Intertextualität) and “reception history” (German: *Wirkungsgeschichte*)? The following definitions reflect the treatments of these terms in the books mentioned in footnote 5 as well as the lucid explanations by Wilhite in the inaugural commentary in the current series.⁶ *Intertextuality* is the shaping of a text’s meaning by another text. Intertextual figures include allusion, quotation, citation, and translation. The term takes into account questions of textual constitution in reference to individual texts and the ways texts stand in relation to one another to produce meaning. *Intertextuality* had its origins in twentieth-century linguistics, particularly in the work of linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913). The term itself can be traced to the Bulgarian-French philosopher and psychoanalyst Julia Kristeva in the 1960s. *Reception history*, at least how it is used here, is the study of how biblical texts have changed over time through transmission, translation, reading, retelling, and reworking. It explores all the different ways that people have received, appropriated, and used biblical texts throughout history. The agenda of biblical reception attempts to chart the series of complex interpretive “events” generated by the journey of the biblical texts down through the centuries.⁷ In literary studies, reception theory originated from the work of Hans Georg Gadamer in the 1960s and is reflected in his volume translated as *Truth and Method*.⁸ This succinct survey also sets the agenda for the rest of this chapter, which will proceed in two stages. First, the tracing of the reception history of the many “citations and allusions” in 2 Clement will address the questions of the sources and how the texts are quoted or cited by Clement. This information is what is meant by the book’s “intertextuality,” namely, the form of the older text or saying and the how it is quoted in Clement. Second, the explanation of how it was received and utilized by Clement will follow, attempting to be guided by the most recent ideas about the ways that the “receiving” author (Clement) utilizes these sacred traditions to accomplish his goals and purposes. What does Clement do with these texts in general? In chapters 2–17 there are twenty-five citations or clear allusions to previous texts, around one for every four verses, most of which are recognizable as to

which is often suffered by 2 Clement, does not reflect these authors’ quite thorough description of reception history, nor does it reflect 2 Clement’s thorough reception of sacred tradition.

6. Wilhite, *Didache*, 30–59.

7. Evans, *Reception History*, 3.

8. A related discipline, *reception theory*, is a version of reader-response literary theory that emphasizes a reader’s reception or interpretation in making meaning from a literary text. It emphasizes the history of the meanings that have been imputed to texts and traces the different ways interpreters make sense of texts to make them meaningful for the time in which they lived.

their source but a few that are uncertain as to their origin. The terms “Old Testament” and “New Testament” as well as “Apocrypha” and “canon” are used in this discussion, even though Clement himself would not recognize their exact meanings during his time.

Reception History of “Jewish” Traditional Books

Readers can recognize around fourteen quotations and allusions to OT books. Quotations are obvious citations of a text and are often accompanied, at least in Clement, by a formula such as the name of the author or “the scripture said.” Allusions are quotations of a text that involve a greater measure of freedom but maintain enough of the language for most readers to identify the source. These can be summarized as follows: 2.1 (Isa 54:1), clearly a quotation; 3.5 (Isa 29:13); 6.8 (Ezek 14:14–20), clearly an allusion; 7.6 and 17.5 (Isa 66:24); 13.2 (Isa 52:5); 14.1a (Ps 71:5, 17 LXX); 14.1b (Jer 7:11); 14.2 (Gen 1:27); 15.3 (Isa 58:9); 16.3 (Mal 3:19; Isa 34.4); 17.4–5 (Isa 66:18). Two citations are drawn from what probably is an unknown Jewish source: (1) 11.2–4, which is cited as “scripture” (ἡ γραφή αὐτῆ) in 1 Clem. 23.3. Lightfoot suggested that it is from the lost book *Eldad and Modat* that is mentioned in Herm. Vis. 2.3.4; and (2) 11.7 (also similar to 1 Clem. 34.8). These citations are usually preceded by a formula including the verb λέγειν, except in 2.1 and 17.5. The speakers of the cited text are identified as God (15.3), the Lord (13.2; 17.4–5), and the scripture (the singular γραφή, 14.1–2).

While more detailed aspects are explained in the commentary, a few general reflections are as follows. Six of the OT quotations are from Isaiah, frequently close to the LXX text, which probably assumes that the author had access to a manuscript of that book. Other quotations are quite close to the LXX, but some vary slightly. The purpose of citing these texts is almost always hortatory, with 2.1 (no citation formula) and 14.1–2 (“scripture”) utilized to make a specific theological point.⁹

Reception History of Jesus *Logia*

Seven quotations have close parallels to the sayings of Jesus in the canonical Gospels. These are: 2.4 (Matt 9:13; Mark 2:17; Luke 5:32); 3.2 (Matt 10:32; Luke 12:8); 4.2 (Matt 7:21; Luke 6:46); 6.1 (Matt 6:24; Luke 16:13);

9. The treatment of “Intertextual Relationships” by Wilhelm Pratscher was helpful in formulating some of the above ideas. Pratscher, *Apostolic Fathers*, 75–77.

6.2 (Matt 16:26; Mark 8:36); 9.11 (Matt 12:50; Mark 8:35; Luke 8:21); and 13.4 (Matt 5:44; Luke 6:27–28). Each of these is introduced by some sort of citation formula (except 6.2). As in the OT citations, the verb used is the present tense of λέγειν (except 9.11, εἶπεν). As the speaker in these formulas, Jesus is referred to as Christ (3.2); Lord (6.1); and God (13.4). An interesting feature is how the quotation in 2.4 is traced to “another scripture” (ἐτέρα δὲ γραφή). This usage raises the possibility of at least one written Gospel that was utilized. Apart from 2.4, it is difficult to be dogmatic about the specific sources of these quotations, whether written or oral. While the Matthean tradition seems fairly visible, sometimes the quotation is closer to Luke (for example, 3.2 and 4.2). The specifics of this important issue will be addressed in more detail in the commentary.

As was the case with the OT quotations, the purpose of citing these sayings is almost always hortatory; that is, they serve the author’s purpose to exhort hearers about ethical behavior. The exception is 2.4, where a clearly soteriological application is made, namely, salvation from the hearers’ heathen background (see 1.8). In keeping with the speaker’s stress on a “pay-back” owed to God and Christ, hearers are to learn from Jesus to confess with their deeds, not just with their mouths (3.2; 4.2). A follower of Jesus does the will of the Father (9.11). To be inconsistent in one’s words and deeds is to blaspheme the name of Christ (13.4). Consistent with the hortatory thrust of the entire discourse and with the quotations from the OT, these citations of Jesus *logia* have as their purpose the promoting of obedient behavior in a disciple of Jesus. This behavior is essential for entering into the life that is now and is to come.

Are there any other quotations from the NT apart from the Jesus tradition? Words in 11.7 are cited as scripture by Paul in 1 Cor 2:9 (“ear has not heard nor eye seen nor the heart of man imagined”), but the statement is very similar to Isa 64:4 and does not prove dependence on Paul. A general response among scholars to the question of Pauline citations in has been a rather firm no. On the other hand, some possible allusions to NT texts appear in a few places, such as the athletic analogies in chapter 7 (see 1 Cor 9:24–47).¹⁰ Dissenting from the majority view that Clement offers no Pauline citations, Donfried offers a very thorough discussion of the sources (Jewish and Christian) for Clement’s extensive citations.¹¹ His general conclusion is worth consideration as to Clement’s general naming of his authoritative sources. “Given the whole of 2 Clement, we note three sources of authority:

10. After a thorough review of possible Pauline allusions in 2 Clement, Foster agrees with earlier conclusions that Pauline references are simply absent. Foster, “Absence of Paul in 2 Clement.”

11. Donfried, *Setting*, 49–97.

τὰ βιβλία (the Jewish Scriptures), ὁ κύριος (especially with reference to the Jesus *logia*), and οἱ ἀπόστολοι (including Paul).¹²

Second Clement's possible use of NT texts has been addressed by two major works on the subject. In 1905 the Committee of the Oxford Society of Historical Theology sought to handle the entire issue of the use of the NT in the Apostolic Fathers.¹³ The general conclusion about 2 Clement is that in regard to possible Gospel texts, "our homilist quotes throughout from a single Evangelic source, if we were at liberty to imagine it a sort of combined recension of two or more of our Synoptists . . . an earlier local type of harmony than Tatian's *Diatessaron*." "As regards the NT Epistles, the phrase 'The Books and the Apostles' prepares us to find pretty free use of them, even though they are not formally quoted."¹⁴ A century later, another major project addressed the important issue again, though more in-depth. Gregory and Tuckett concluded as follows about 2 Clement's use of the NT.

2 Clement . . . clearly uses material that has been shaped by Matthew and Luke, although not necessarily directly, but it also contains Jesus tradition that may originate elsewhere. Parallels with material elsewhere in the New Testament locate it firmly in the same general milieu, but none demands a literary relationship with any of those texts. The strongest evidence for such dependence is found with respect to Ephesians and Hebrews, but these parallels, though tantalizing, are insufficient to raise dependence to the level of probability, rather than mere possibility. Thus we have found firmer evidence for the use of Matthew and Luke than was claimed in 1905, but less secure evidence for Hebrews.¹⁵

In the later commentary on specific texts, there will be opportunity to interact further with these two important works.

Reception History of "Apocryphal" Texts

At least four quotations in 2 Clement are taken from noncanonical sources (4.5; 5.2–4; 8.5; 12.2–6). The speaker in the citation is sometimes the "Lord," but in 5.4 it is Jesus, and in 12.6 no personal subject is expressed. In contrast to the prominent use of the present tense of λέγειν in the "Jesus" sources,

12. Donfried, *Setting*, 95.

13. Bartlet et al., *New Testament in the Apostolic Fathers*.

14. Bartlet et al., eds., *New Testament in the Apostolic Fathers*, 125.

15. Gregory and Tuckett, "2 Clement and the Writings," 292.

the use of εἶπεν is prominent in 4.5; 5.4; and 12.2. While the oral nature of the sayings is stressed, in 8.5 a written source is mentioned, where the speaker utilized what has been called an “apocryphal gospel.” The question of specific sources of these sayings is one of the most interesting issues in the study of 2 Clement. Each of these will be discussed in turn at its appropriate location. While three of these have similar ideas in some gospel texts (for example, 8.5 in Luke 16:10–12), the quotation in 12.2–6 has no NT parallels. It may be from the nonsurviving Gospel of the Egyptians but has some interesting echoes also in the Gospel of Thomas 22.

In a volume titled *Intertextuality in the Second Century*, Christopher Tuckett reviews the possible use of the NT by 2 Clement. After analyzing both the methods of the citations and the citations themselves, Tuckett concludes that “it is thus hard to establish with any certainty any clear evidence that Clement knew and used specific Pauline texts.”¹⁶ Therefore, he concludes that the reference to “the apostles” (14.2) refers to what Justin Martyr later called “the memoirs of the apostles,” that is, the canonical Gospels. Regarding the “canonicity” of these sources, Tuckett’s conclusion is as follows.

The evidence of 2 Clement reinforces the general picture of what many have painted of the situation in the first half of the second century C.E., with quite a lot of fluidity and freedom in relation to the issue of Scripture and canonicity. 2 Clement certainly seems to know texts that later would become a firm part of the Christian NT, that is, the Gospels of Matthew and Luke; but it knows other traditions too and is not in the slightest way embarrassed to use them alongside what would become later the ‘canonical’ texts.¹⁷

Having examined the textual way Clement cites sacred tradition, I must inquire about the specific ways Clement “receives” these sacred traditions. The ways he uses these authoritative texts indicates he recognizes that his “argument” is based on an authoritative tradition. His summary statement in 2 Clem. 14.2 indicates such a dependence on authority: “Also, the scrolls and the apostles (τὰ βιβλία καὶ οἱ ἀπόστολοι) say that the church does not belong to the present, but has existed from the beginning.” It is widely recognized that this is a general reference to the Jewish Scriptures and to the writings of the apostles, recognizing that the terms “Old Testament” and “New Testament” would be anachronistic at this point, and that many of those NT books were not yet recognized as “canonical.”¹⁸ More

16. Tuckett, “2 Clement and the New Testament,” 34.

17. Tuckett, “2 Clement and the New Testament,” 36.

18. Lightfoot, trans., *Apostolic Fathers*, I.2, 245; Donfried, *Setting*, 93–95 (noting the similar phraseology in 1 Clem 42 and 43); and Tuckett, *2 Clement*, 253–54.

attention will be given to the meaning of this expression in the commentary. As has been his custom, the speaker does not delve into the theological implications found in these unnamed texts, but his intent is again hortatory. He utilizes these texts or sayings to stress the importance of reciprocating to God what we owe him because of his great salvation extended to us. “The use of that many quotations in 2Clement 2–17 shows how important it was to Clement to demonstrate that other authoritative traditions supported his exhortations and argumentation.”¹⁹

In expounding on how *Wirkungsgeschichte* (reception history) takes place in Christian writers in the second century, Evans explains that “in the patristic period, reception of the subjection paraenesis is indeed in doctrinal and practical commentaries, homilies, apologies, letters and similar writings. Reception of these texts outside of these parameters has not survived, and is not easily conceived.”²⁰ Although Evans does not mention 2 Clement specifically, our document fits his description well, whether or not it is an example of a true homily.

In addressing the reception of these sacred traditions by 2 Clement, an important question concerns how these texts function in the speaker’s purpose. In other words, what does he desire them to do? Donfried has discerned a common pattern.²¹ The citations are often inserted after a theme is introduced. Often a “paraenetic theme” is followed by a “paraenetic allusion.” “In chapter 3, verse 1 contains the theme in the form of a theological summary of chapter 1. Verse 2 contains a quotation from the gospel tradition which both illustrates and supports the points previously made. The paraenesis proper is found in verses 3–4, and this is followed by a quotation from Isaiah, which again illustrates and supports what precedes.”²² This pattern is followed in chapters 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, and 13. At two points a quotation is taken up and an “exegesis” of that quote is attempted (chapters 2 and 12). At no point, however, do the citations play a role in an extended argument as one can find in the NT (for example, Rom 4; Gal 3; or Rom 9–11). The texts are cited in either an illustrative or supportive function, most often in a context of paraenesis. As the above quotation from Kelhoffer also affirms, Clement’s appeal is to the authority of the Jewish and Christian traditions, not only to illustrate but also to provide authoritative support for what is being communicated.

19. Kelhoffer, “Pigeonholing a Prooftexter?,” 267.

20. Evans, *Reception History*, 144. The word “subjection” refers to submission to an authority.

21. Donfried, *Setting*, 96–97.

22. Donfried, *Setting*, 96.