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Scripture and Tradition in Clement of Alexandria

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SHORT TITLE

CLEMENT'S CONCEPT OF AUTHORITY

SCRIPTURE AND TRADITION IN CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In the latter half of the second century Tertullian could write in his Prescription, "Quid Athenae Hierosolymis?" Not many miles eastward there lived a contemporary in Alexandria who thought Athens had much to do with Jerusalem. Clement of Alexandria had begun a tradition in the Catholic Church which was destined to influence its theological thinking until the present day. He began the never-ending task of attempting systematically to relate the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the culture of the world in which Christians live. Although he has not gained immortality through his own systematic efforts, the fruits of his labor were to be seen in his pupil Origen.

Clement had good reason to approach the message of the Church as he did. He was born in the city of philosophy, Athens, in the one-hundred-fifties. He was raised in an atmosphere of cultured paganism. Until his conversion in early manhood he was educated in rhetoric and philosophy and literature; perhaps he was initiated into the mysteries of Eleusis.[1] In his studies and in his travels he had the opportunity to become familiar with the pagan literature of

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[1]R. B. Tollinton, Clement of Alexandria (London: Williams and Norgate, 1914), I, 1-26.

antiquity and of his own day. This study instilled in him a love for literature and philosophy which was to remain with him throughout his life. In fact, Tollinton points out that Clement's conversion to Christianity was not a rejection of his former beliefs, but rather a filling of them with a new principle of knowledge.[2] These factors influenced his whole approach to Christianity. As he became better acquainted with the tradition of the Church he attempted to assimilate this with his learning in philosophy.

After his conversion he traveled and studied under various Christian teachers, without settling down to study under any single one. He arrived in Alexandria in the early years of 180. Prior to this time he may have studied with Tatian and Theodotus, but it was Pantaenus, "the true Sicilian bee," who inspired him. In the opening chapter of the Stromatéis he relates his experiences with his mentors:

> Of these the one, in Greece, an Ionic; the other in Magna Graecia; the first of these from Coele-Syria, the second from Egypt, and others from the East. The one was born in the land of Assyria, and the other a Hebrew in Palestine.
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> When I came upon the last (He was the first in power), having tracked him out concealed in Egypt, I found rest. He, the true Sicilian bee, gathering the spoil of the flowers of the prophetic and apostolic meadow, engendered in the souls of his hearers a deathless element of knowledge.[3]

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[2] Ibid., pp. 12-13.

[3] Clement of Alexander, "Stromata," 1,1, ANCL, I, 355.

We know little of Pantaenus except that he was the first teacher of the catechetical school in Alexandria which was to produce Clement and Origen. He satisfied Clement's quest for knowledge and was most likely very influential in determining Clement's later thought. After Pantaenus's death Clement succeeded him as head of the school.

At the end of the second century Alexandria was a bustling Hellenistic city. It was large and important because it was situated at a crucial place between East and West. To its great port ships of every country brought their wares. It was filled with representatives of every nation and culture. As a result its people tended to be rather sycretistic in their religion. Although Clement did not take extensive part in the activity of the city, he was quite familiar with its culture through his classroom activities. This syncretism of Alexandria became a major influence in his understanding of the Gospel. Daily he was forced to reckon with the intellectuals of Alexandria and to interpret the Church's message to them.

Apparently the Church was relatively undeveloped in Alexandria at this time. An ancient tradition attributes the city's first evangelization to St. Mark, but even if this is the case, the Church had not unfolded rapidly. In its canon, worship, ministry and creed it was lagging behind the other great centers. This explains why Clement could

work with such freedom in the school.

The school at which he instructed was called a catechetical school. It was not directly associated with the Church. It was mainly a place where Christian doctrine was discussed under intelligent leadership. It was not until Demetrius became bishop in 189 that the episcopal office gained strength in Alexandria, and throughout Clement's lifetime the school had no episcopal sanction.[4]

The head of the catechetical school was not at all times a member of the clergy, although Clement was most likely ordained to the presbyterate. It is doubtful that he ever became a bishop in the technical sense, although he is called this in at least one instance. Usually he was referred to as poimen, presbyteros, hiereus.[5]

Although there is little question about the authenticity of Clement's three major writings, there are many problems connected with their order and dating. Thus in Tollinton's opinion the only assured fact is that Clement had written no book for publication before he began the composition of the Stromata.[6] This conclusion is supported by Wendland and

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[4]Tollinton, op. cit., p. 21.

[5]Ibid., p. 20.

[6]Ibid., II, 333.

Heussi.[7] Harnack, however, gives the Stromata the final place in the order of writing. He holds that the Protrepticus was written in the final years of the second century; that Stromata I and II came into being before he left Alexandria in 202; that books III and IV were composed outside of Alexandria, perhaps in 203; and that neither the Paedagogus nor the final books of the Stromata except for book VIII (which is not actually a part of the Stromata) were composed in Alexandria. Harnack holds that these were perhaps written in Caesarea when Bishop Alexander was imprisoned.[8]

Clement's most important work is the Stromata. It is a long work of seven books comprising over six hundred pages in English translation. This title was frequently given to writings which covered a multitude of subjects. In English it is descriptively called the Miscellanies. It is a general work discussing the relationship of the Christian faith to secular learning. Almost every phase of Christian doctrine is treated somewhere in its pages. Clement gives us his reason for writing down his teaching in the opening chapter:

> Whence, to aid the weakness of my memory, and provide for myself a salutary help to my recollection in a systematic arrangement of chapters, I necessarily make use of this form. There are then some things of

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[7]Adolf Harnack, Geschichte der Altchristlichen Literatur bis Eusebius (Leipzig, J. C. Hinrichs Verlag, 1958), II; 2, 3-17.

[8]Ibid.

> which we have no recollection; for the power that was in the blessed men was great. There are also some things which are effaced, having faded away in the mind itself, since such a task is not easy to those not experienced; these I revive in my commentaries. Some things I purposely omit in the exercise of a wise selection, afraid to write what I guarded against speaking; not grudging--for that were wrong--but fearing for my readers lest they should stumble by taking them in a wrong sense; . . . For it is impossible that what has been written should not escape, although remaining unpublished by me. But always being revolved, using the one only voice, that of writings, they answer nothing to him that makes inquiries beyond what is written; for they require of necessity the aid of someone either of him who wrote, or of someone else who has walked in his footsteps. Some things my treatise will hint; on some it will linger; some it will merely mention. It will try to speak imperceptibly, to exhibit secretly, and to demonstrate silently. The dogmas taught by remarkable sects will be adduced; and to these will be opposed all that ought to be premised in accordance with the profoundest contemplation of the knowledge, which, as we proceed to the renowned and venerable canon of tradition, from the creation of the world, will advance our view; setting before us what according to natural contemplation necessarily has to be treated of beforehand, and clearing off what stands in the way of this arrangement. So that we may have our ears ready for the reception of the true tradition of knowledge; the soil being previously cleared of the thorns and of every weed by the husbandman, in order to the planting of the vine.[9]

The work is not as orderly and systematic as we should like it to be. Clement intended it to be unclear and puzzling, however, because he did not want to reveal the secrets which had been delivered to him. We will see exactly what he means by this in the chapter on Secret Tradition.

Even if, with Tollinton, we were to hold that the Stromata were begun before any of the other writings, it

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[9] Stromata, 1,1, ANCL, I, 357-358.

was probably completed last. Between its beginning and completion he wrote his Exhortation and Instructor. He apparently had in mind writing a trilogy, which would include these two works and a final one called The Teacher. In the Instructor he says,

> A beautiful arrangement is observed by the all-benignant Word, who first exhorts, then trains, and finally teaches.[10]

There is some question whether the Stromata replaced this work or not. But if we presuppose that the Stromata was begun prior to the Exhortation, it seems likely that the Stromata is the intended Didaskalos. At any rate, it appears that Clement's aims were not carried out exactly as he had intended them.

The full title of the Exhortation is the Protreptikos pros Hellenas. It is an address which aims at converting the reader by showing the futility of pagan worship and belief. Even though it has much in common with the earlier Christian apologists it corresponds more to the classical literary form used to bring someone to a certain decision. Aristotle, Epicurus, Cleanthus, Chryssipus and Poseidonius each wrote a protreptikos. Cicero's Hortensius would fall into the same category.[11] Near the end of the work he

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[10]Clement of Alexandria, "Instructor," 3,3; ANCL, I, 1-31.

[11]Johannes Quasten, Patrology (Utrecht: Spectrum Publishers, 1953), II, 7.

indicates his purpose as he calls his readers to a decision.

> What then is the address I give you? I urge you to be saved. This Christ desires. In one word, He freely bestows life on you. And who is He? Briefly learn. The word of truth--the goal that urges to salvation--He who expels destruction and pursues death--He who builds up the temple of God in men that He may cause God to take up his abode in men.[12]

The third of his great works is the Tutor or Instructor or Paidagogos. This is an immediate continuation of the Exhortation, and is intended to instruct those who have accepted the advice of the Exhortation. In general it is a treatise on Christian life written in three books. The first book attempts to lay down a theological foundation for the ethical sections by describing at length the office of the Instructor, who is the Word, Christ. In the second book Clement treats in detail amost every aspect of the Christian life. For example, he discusses eating, drinking, laughter, sleep, clothes, shoes, jewels, ornaments and many others. The final book continues with other phases of Christian behavior such as the baths, embellishing the body, hair, painting the face, walking, going to church, and others. This work gives us a fascinating picture of life in Alexandria at the end of the second century.

The Instructor ends with a hymn to Christ the Savior. There is some doubt as to its authenticity although it does

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[12] "Exhortation to the Heathen," 11, ANCL, I, 104.

harmonize with the imagery of the book. Quasten speculates that it may be the official prayer of praise of the Church of Alexandria.[13] No one can conclusively demonstrate either its authenticity or falsity. Harnack doubts its authenticity, but feels it could be Clementine. There is another hymn to the Paedagogus which Harnack attributes to Arethas.[14]

These are Clement's major writings, which derive, if not from his actual days in Alexandria, at least from his work in the school there. Apparently Clement was forced to leave Alexandria because of the persecution of Septimus Severus in 202. It appears he went to Cappadocia where his former pupil, Alexander, was now Bishop. After leaving Alexandria Clement must have devoted his efforts more to pastoral duties than formerly. After he left Cappadocia he went to Antioch in Syria. There is extant a letter which Clement brought to Antioch from Alexandria. In this letter Alexander commends Clement to the Church there and especially notes his efforts in building up and nourishing the Church in Cappadocia. After this we have no record of his life. He may have stayed in Antioch or he may have gone to Jerusalem to live. He probably died before 215.[15]

Of Clement's other extant writings the most important

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[13]Johannes Quasten, op. cit., II, 11.

[14]Adolf Harnack, op. cit., II:2, 20.

[15]R. B. Tollinton, op. cit., I, 20.

are the Exhortation to Endurance (or To the Recently Baptized) and Quis Dives Salvetur. If Clement devoted his later years to pastoral duties, as some would suggest, these writings would corroborate this. For they are more pastoral in character than his three major works.

The first of these two writings is mentioned by Eusebius. Today we have only a fragment from it; some have questioned if it is actually Clementine, although most scholars accept it as authentic. The fragment is not large, but it does reveal a treatise which gives instruction to one who has been baptized. It points out some of the dangers which lie ahead for the neophyte and gives encouragement and advice.

The other writing may be a sermon. It is based on Mark 1:17-31. The Greek title is Tis Ho Sozomenos Plousios; it allegorizes the Gospel account to show that it is not necessary to dispose of one's money in order to be saved, for the story only warns against the desire for money. It closes with an interesting legend of St. John watching over the Church. Although Tollinton finds it difficult to assign this writing to Clement he concedes that it does summarize his teaching;[16] the evidence seems to indicate that the work is Clementine and we shall regard it as such.

There are many writings which are attributed to Clement but are lost. The most important was his Hypotyposeis or

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[16]Ibid., II, 201.

Outlines. It was written in eight books and gave an allegorical interpretation of selected verses of Scripture. Eusebius knew it; so did Photius, who judged it harshly because he regarded it as unorthodox. Only a few excerpts are preserved.[17]

There are two other writings which are more extensively preserved. They are the Excerpta ex Theodoto and the Eclogae Propheticae. Zahn is of the opinion that these are excerpts from the writings of Clement made by someone else. Because they are so loaded with gnostic language he finds it difficult to separate the gnostic sources from the words of Clement.[18] Quasten is of the opinion that they are excerpts from writings on Gnosticism by Clement, perhaps some of his preliminary study on the heresy.[19] Harnack does not think they can be proved to be Clementine; neither does he feel that they can be proved false.[20] We shall not give much attention to these two writings.

The eighth book of the Stromata is a collection of sketches and studies on philosophy. Its style is quite different from that of the other books. Most scholars follow Harnack in maintaining its Clementine authorship although

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[17]Johannes Quasten, op. cit., II, 17.

[18]Ibid., II, 15.

[19]Ibid.

[20]Adolf Harnack, op. cit., II:2, 17-18.

he does not regard it as part of the Stromata.[21] This eighth book will not be used at all in this study since it has no relevant sections.

This brief overview of Clement's life and work should help to place our study in its proper perspective. We must remember that Clement was a pioneer as he launched into the depths of scientific theology. He lived at a precarious time in the history of the Church. He came out of a literary pagan culture and found himself faced with several generations of Christian tradition. To work out the relationship of this pagan culture and the new Christian tradition was his life's work. His problem, though one that continually faces the Church, was unique in that he worked with little precedent and a tradition which had not wholly crystallized. Philosophy and the sacred tradition were his raw materials. With the insight of his own faith he proceeded with confidence. Gilson sums up the importance of Clement in these words:

> The importance of Clement does not lie in the few philosophical ideas which can be found scattered throughout his works, but rather, in his deep and remarkably successful elucidation of the relation of philosophy to Christian faith. There is only one true philosophy, whose source is the philosophy according to the Hebrews or, in other words, the philosophy according to Moses. Since the Greeks have drawn from it, we ourselves can draw from it under its two forms, Holy Scripture and Greek philosophy. Assuredly, the

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[21] Ibid.

> doctrine of Christ is sufficient unto salvation, but philosophy can help us in leading men to Christ and in inquiring into the meaning of faith after accepting it.[22]

Clement is the first of the Eastern fathers to concern himself with problems of systematic theology. There had been efforts along similar lines in the west by Irenaeus and Tertullian, but they are of a different nature. Irenaeus and Tertullian had both concerned themselves with the tradition which had been passed on to them in dealing with heresy, but because they were in the west they operated on a much different basis from that of Clement.

Clement is important because of his doctrine of secret tradition. Although he is not completely unique in this respect he is the staunchest upholder of such a teaching. This secret tradition was closely related to his gnosis, which for Clement is a virtue, not a heresy. Instead of looking upon a special enlightenment as a mark of a secterian group, Clement sees this as the ideal for which all Catholic Christians should strive, even though few reach it.

There are two possible approaches, in this writer's opinion, to a study of tradition in the writings of Clement. One is historical, the other systematic. An examination of the post-apostolic age indicates that there were several

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[22]Etienne Gilson, History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages (New York: Random House, 1955), p. 33.

great centers of Christianity which drew heavily on the tradition handed down from a certain apostle. A good example of this is Asia Minor, where St. John reportedly spent the last years of his life. Thus, though there was basic doctrinal unanimity throughout the Church, there also existed peculiar local traditions, which, if not mutually contradictory, at least exhibited diverse guiding principles.

When the Church was very young, these local traditions probably had relatively little influence on one another. But by the second century, and particularly towards the end of the century, the great centers of the Church were drawing on various traditions. A good example of this would be the legend about St. John appearing in Alexandria in Clement's Quis Dives Salvetur.[23] The historical approach seeks to learn the source and nature of the traditions which Clement uses. This would necessitate an intimate knowledge of the first 150 years of Christianity and especially much of the apocryphal and pseudipigraphical literature.

This study, however, will attempt a more systematic approach to the problem. There has been much work in this area of Clement's thought, but this study hopes to supplement what has been done rather than reiterate. Although many scholars have spoken about tradition in Clement, no

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[23]Clement of Alexandria, "The Rich Man's Salvation," Clement of Alexandria, edited by G. W. Butterworth (London: William Heinemann, Ltd., 1919), pp. 370-376.

one except Hanson, in his study of tradition in Origen, has really attempted to clarify the basic issues.[24]

This study will attempt to spell out the relationship between the various kinds of tradition in Clement's writings. We shall use the term tradition in the broad sense which has been elucidated by Martin Chemnitz in his Examen. Here he distinguishes eight genera of tradition.[25] By this definition, Holy Scripture, the faithful transmission of these Scriptures, the creeds, the text and its proper interpretation, dogmas drawn from the Scriptures and ancient rites and ceremonies are designated as tradition. Part of our task will be to define the various genera employed by Clement. We wish further to see how he uses these various kinds of tradition in the theological task which he attempted and the authority which he gives to each.

This inquiry is not being made for purely historical reasons. Contemporary theology is acutely concerned with the problem of Scripture and tradition, in part because of the renewed interest in theological prolegomena, the ecumenical movement, and the liturgical revival. Again, sociological studies have shown that Church bodies are often more influenced by their respective traditions than has been commonly

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[24]R. P. C. Hanson, Origen's Doctrine of Tradition (London: S. P. C. K., 1954), pp. 54ff.

[25]Martin Chemnitz, Examen Concilii Tridentini, edited by Edward Preuss (Berlin: Gustave Schlawitz, 1861), pp. 69-99.

recognized in the recent past. Martin E. Marty remarks, "History, liturgy, tradition, psychic make-up, the experiences of life color the interpretation of the Scriptura."[26]

This writer feels that the only legitimate way to begin to work out in contemporary terms the prolegomena to a genuinely Catholic theology is to root it in Catholic teaching and practise. At the same time he has attempted to not allow systematic presuppositions to determind the results of his inquiry.

Most of the citations from Clement will be from the following edition of his works: Clement of Alexandria, Ante-Nicene Christian Library: Clement of Alexandria, Vols. I and II, translated by William Wilson and edited by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1867, 1869). To facilitate locating references in editions other than this one we shall list the title of Clement's work, such as Instructor, Exhortation to the Heathen, or Stromata followed by the book and chapter and then the volume and page of the edition we have used. For example: The Instructor, 3,3, ANCL, I, 131. This will apply to all citations except those of book III of the Stromata which will be taken from the following edition: Clement of Alexandria, Alexandrian Christianity, Vol. II in The Library of Christian Classics, edited and translated by J. E. L.

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[26]Martin E. Marty, A Short History of Christianity (New York: Meridian Books, Inc., 1959), p. 206.

Oulton and Henry Chadwick (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1954). Our notation will be: The Stromata, 3,1, LCL, p. 50.

CHAPTER II

CONCEPT OF AUTHORITY

There was no question in the mind of Clement concerning the foundation on which he stood. He realized that his teaching found its origin in God's revelation of Himself. He does not attempt to narrow this revelation to one time and place, although we shall see that it had its culmination in the life of the Incarnate Word of God. Rather he sees God as one who has revealed himself at sundry times and in divers manners. He was even willing to concede that some of the ancient philosophers and poets were able to perceive something of this God.

> And let it not be this one man alone--Plato; but, . . . O Philosophy hasten to produce many others also, who declare the only true God to be God, through His inspiration, if in any measure they have grasped the truth.[1]

It is wise to begin this study of Clement's concept of tradition by exploring the concept of authority for Clement. Although scholars such as Hanson point out that much of Clement's theology and so called tradition were the result of speculation, there is not any question in Clement's mind that he was deriving it from an authoritative source. Whether he actually does so or not is another question. For

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[1] Exhortation to the Heathen, 6, ANCL, I, 71. Hereafter abbreviated Exhort.

him, however, his work proceeded from divine authority rather than his own speculation.

It is obvious that for Clement there was one source of his teaching. However, he was not so concerned to distinguish its various genera. He had received a tradition which had been handed down from the Savior.

> Now that the Savior has taught the apostles, the unwritten rendering of the written has been handed down to us, inscribed by the power of God on hearts new.[2]

This teaching was handed over first to the apostles and from them it was passed on to others. It can be called by many names but it is first and foremost the tradition of the Lord. Even in later generations the church was in the possession of this tradition of the Lord, although many tried to pervert this same tradition and come into the church through other means. He is speaking about such heretics in the following section.

> But not having the key of entrance, but a false (and as the common phrase expresses it) a counterfeit key, by which they do not enter in as we enter in, through the tradition of the Lord, by drawing aside the curtain; but by bursting through the side door, and digging clandestinely through the wall of the church, and stepping over the truth, they constitute themselves the Mystagogues of the soul of the impious.[3]

It is important to note the divine origin of this

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[2] Stromata, 6,15, ANCL, II, 382.

[3] Ibid., 7,16, ANCL, II, 485.

tradition. The Church was not adding to what the Savior had said, but the apostles were a link in the chain which proceeded from God through his Son down to Clement himself. It was a continuous tradition from a divine source.

Hence he can speak of divine tradition when speaking of the transmission from the apostles. He says,

> And those have a craving for glory who voluntarily evade by arguments of a diverse sort, the things delivered by the apostles and teachers, which are wedded to inspired words; opposing the divine tradition by human teachings, in order to establish the heresy.[4]

The apostles had no obligation to teach this tradition to others, and for this reason they spent little time writing. This is his explanation for the lack of much written apostolic literature.[5] Even to this day this practise had persisted, for he feels he must defend himself when he begins to write books.[6]

The next stage was to deliver the tradition to the followers of the apostles. Clement thought that his teachers were in the same line which had preceeded from the Savior. "They [his teachers] preserving the tradition of the blessed doctrine derived directly from the holy apostles, Peter, James, John, and Paul, the son receiving it from the father."[7]

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[4] Ibid., p. 483.

[5] Clement of Alexandria, Eclogae Prophetae, quoted in R. P. C. Hanson, Origen's Doctrine of Tradition (London: S. P. C. K., 1954), p. 62.

[6] Stromata, 1,1, ANCL, I, 349.

[7] Ibid., p. 355.

This understanding of tradition led him to the conviction that he was in possession of the true teaching of the Lord. In fact, he at times referred to it as the "true tradition."[8]

To clarify further let us contrast the true tradition with the false tradition of the heretics. Throughout his writings Clement spends much time refuting not only the pagan philosophers but also the heretics of his century. He usually argues that the heretics have placed a false interpretation on certain passages of Holy Scripture. Clement was convinced that they could not reach the truth, if they did not follow the true tradition. In many cases he argues in this manner, because he does not feel that they were able to possess the true tradition. They allowed their own opinions to obstruct their interpretation.

> Those who hold that for them there is no difference between right and wrong force a few passages of Scripture and think they favour their own immoral opinions. . . . The noble apostle himself refutes the charge against him implied in their false exegesis by the words with which he continues after the saying just quoted. . . . In this inspired and prophetic way he at once destroys the devices of these licentious sophists.[9]

At the conclusion of his <u>Quis Dives Salvetur</u> he indicates how one may remain faithful to the teaching of the Church. "In this let a man trust the authority of God's disciples and of God their surety, to the authority of the prophecies,

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[8] <u>Ibid</u>., 7,4, II, 424.

[9] <u>Ibid</u>., 2,8, II, 68-69.

gospels and words of the apostles."[10]

Clement's theology was ecclesiastically orientated. He speaks often of the Church and is careful to distinguish it from heretical sects. He had a very high opinion of the Church, for it was to him the vehicle for the transmission of divine tradition. For this reason he can refer to this same tradition of which we have spoken as the ecclesiastical tradition. "So he, who has spurned the ecclesiastical tradition and darted off to the opinions of heretical men, has ceased to be a man of God, and to remain faithful to the Lord."[11]

As we have seen, tradition was for Clement the act of handing over a particular corpus of teaching. Implied in this understanding was the assumption that what was handed down had its origin from God. He also took it for granted that the apostles and their successors were faithful in their transmission of this teaching. This was their task as teachers of the Church. The act of transmission could be carried out by word of mouth or by writing. "But the husbandry is twofold,--the one unwritten and the other written."[12]

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[10]Clement of Alexandria, Quis Dives Salvetur, Clement of Alexandria, edited and translated by G. W. Butterworth (London: William Heinemann, Ltd., 1919), p. 385.

[11]Stromata, 7,16, ANCL, II, 477.

[12]Ibid., 1,1, ANCL, I, 352.

In the mind of Clement there was no intrinsic difference between these two media of tradition.

Unfortunately Clement's use of tradition is not this simple. He speaks at length of a secret tradition which was the possession of the true gnostic. He also refers often to various rules such as the rule of truth, the ecclesiastical rule and others which are part of the working tradition which he had at his disposal. These must, however, be treated in a later chapter. We shall see that his understanding and use of secret tradition and of an ecclesiastical rule support further the opinion maintained above. These were a very significant part of the oral tradition.

We have already quoted a section from the first chapter of book one of the Stromata where Clement treats written documents.[13] This is the most complete discussion of this subject in his writings. We have noted that he goes to great lengths to apologize for written compositions. Behind this is the fear that the uninitiated will lay hold of that which was only reserved for the gnostic. He is partial to the things which are unwritten for he sees these things are more important. In this case he is working on the assumption of a secret tradition which had never been committed to writing. Books such as his Stromata were, in his opinion, unprecedented.

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[13] Supra, p. 6.

In this first chapter of the Stromata he distinguishes clearly between written and unwritten tradition. In a later section he indicates that the oral tradition will be committed to writing. "And in whomsoever the eye of the soul has been blinded by ill nurture and teaching, let him advance to the true light, to the truth, which shows by writing the things that are unwritten."[14]

Before discussing the written tradition we should note one section in his Quis Dives Salvetur which can further illuminate his view toward the unwritten tradition. In this sermon he uses a story which he has received by word of mouth. The story relates an episode in the life of St. John when he rode on horseback, in spite of his years, to reclaim a lost member of the Church. Clement's introductory words are significant: "Hear a story that is no mere story, but a true account of John the apostle that has been handed down and preserved in memory."[15]

Clement speaks at length about a written tradition. In most every case he is referring to apostolic writings which later were canonized. In most instances he uses the word graphe to introduce these writings. He has in mind primarily the writings of the Old Testament, but he does not hesitate to use the term for the New Testament. In commenting on

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[14] Stromata, 1,1, ANCL, I, 354.

[15] Clement of Alexandria, Quis Dives Salvetur, Clement of Alexandria, edited and translated by G. W. Butterworth, pp. 357ff.

the genre use of the term in the second century Carrington says: "The word graphe or 'writings' is obviously used for holy books in a religious tradition, but more cannot be said."[16] We will see that Clement made much use of the graphe in all his writings, but we must be cautious not to limit the term graphe to the books of the Old and New Testament. Clement frequently uses the term when introducing quotations from Old Testament apocryphal books, or from apostolic writings such as the Epistle of Barnabas, the Epistle of Clement, and others. The significance of any written tradition for Clement is not in the fact that it was written but in the fact that it was apostolic. He can speak of St. Paul and St. Barnabas in much the same way.

Because the graphe had their origin from the Lord they were authoritative as was the oral tradition. He calls the graphe the "voice of the Lord,"[17] "Scriptures of the Lord,"[18] and the "inspired Scriptures."[19] Just as he could speak of them as from the Lord he speaks of "prophetic Scriptures"[20]

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[16]Philip Carrington, The Early Christian Church (Cambridge:: The University Press, 1957), II, 319.

[17]Stromata, 7,16, ANCL, II, 477.

[18]Ibid., 7,1, ANCL, II, 406ff.

[19]Ibid., 7,16, ANCL, II, 482.

[20]Ibid., p. 478.

and "apostolic Scriptures."[21] They are "divine Scriptures"[22] as well as "varied and unfading Scriptures, the oracles of the Lord, resplendent with the rays of truth."[23] They have an omnipotent authority because they come from the omnipotent Lord. "The Scriptures which we believe are valid from their omnipotent authority."[24]

Because they have such authority they may be used to determine the true tradition and to defend the true teaching against all heretics.

> He then who of himself believes the Scripture and voice of the Lord, which by the Lord acts to the benefitting of men, is rightly (regarded) reliable. Certainly we use it as a criterion in the discovery of things.[25]

The reason heretics miss the truth is because they pervert the truth of the Scriptures.

> These are they who when reading the Bible pervert the sense to their own desires by their tone of voice, and by changing certain accents and marks of punctuation twist words that are wise and useful to conform to their own lusts.[26]

These few quotations suffice to show that Clement was imbedded deep in the tradition of scriptural authority. He

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[21] Exhort., 1, ANCL, I, 20.

[22] Stromata, 2,3, ANCL, II, 6.

[23] Instructor, 2,11, ANCL, I, 262.

[24] Stromata, 4,1, ANCL, II, 140.

[25] Ibid., 7,16, ANCL, II, 477

[26] Ibid., 3,4, LCL, p. 58.

is well acquainted with the Scripture and realizes their importance in any theological enterprise, but he is not so naive as to think that they can be approached outside of the context of the Church. They are the most important part of the apostolic witness, but for him they are a part of a larger tradition. They cannot be separated from the whole of apostolic tradition.

CHAPTER III

SCRIPTURE

There has been no little amount of study of St. Clement and his use of the Holy Scriptures. The most recent of these by Claude Mondesert, Clément d'Alexandrie, has compiled some of the data relating to this problem.[1] Others have attempted to determine the text which was in use at Alexandria at this time. The information on the books which Clement quoted, the frequency which he quoted them, and related information is easily obtained. It will not be the purpose of this chapter to compile such information.

As has been pointed out we are attempting to define Clement's attitude to tradition. With this approach we have already defined the written documents which were later to be known as the Holy Scriptures as a part of this tradition. However, it is not quite as simple as this. There is no question that Clement worked on the basis of a hierarchy of authority in his received tradition. This is readily evident in his attitude to the various authors of the Holy Scriptures, such as the prophets, apostles, evangelists, etc. He also quotes books which are commonly

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[1]Claude Mondesert, Clément d'Alexandrie: Introduction a l'étude de sa pensée religieuse a partir de l'Ecriture (Paris: Aubier, 1944), pp. 65-80.

designated as apocrphyal, as Scripture. We wish then in this chapter to indicate his dependence on Scripture, but especially we wish to show that his understanding of the term graphe was not precise nor was it limited to a particular group of writings. This will help us to understand the meaning of tradition for Clement. We will not indicate all the books from which he quotes, but only those which are usually under question.

In his book on Clement, Mondesert argues at length to show how Clement was immersed in the thought of Scripture:

> Il nous suffit de constater que Clément a un style tout scripturaire, que les mots, les expressions, les images, les idées, de l'Écriture se présentent naturellement et constamment sous sa plume.[2]

There is no question that this is the case. A casual glance over a page of Clement's writings indicates this immediately. Mondesert does not exaggerate when he says that pages of his writings "sont non seulement parsemees, mais comme replies de formules scripturaires."[3] His quotations from the Scripture are voluminous. Almost every book of the Bible is used at some point in his writings. He was familiar with them and used them in the formulating of this theology and his polemic against the heretics.

But let us look more closely at some of the specific books which he uses. Most scholars are agreed that his

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[2] Ibid., p. 71.

[3] Ibid., p. 70.

canon is very difficult to determine. Tollinton is of this opinion and even goes so far as to say that in the Old Testament Clement estimated certain books on the basis of their spiritual contents rather than in terms of their place in the law or prophets.[4] Although this may be true Clement does seem to distinguish between sections of the Scripture and determines his authority on this basis. Hanson feels that Clement would be puzzled if one had asked him to define his canon, for he does not believe Clement was working in a framework such as this.[5] Actually, it is this writer's opinion that the question of the canon is the wrong question to ask of Clement. One must seek rather his authority. And Clement answers this by his use of the Scriptures.

If we begin with the Old Testament we see immediately that Clement quotes almost every book. There are some notable exceptions, such as Joshua, 1 Samuel, but this is only because he had no particular need of sections from these books. He has a preference for the Psalms, Proverbs, Isaiah, and Jeremiah. Tollinton is correct in pointing out that he found more spiritual worth in these books than in the others.

Clement seems willing to call all the Old Testament writers prophets. His understanding of prophet seems to be

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[4]R. B. Tollinton, Clement of Alexandria (London: Williams and Norgate, 1914), II, 171.

[5]R. P. C. Hanson, Origen's Doctrine of Tradition (London: S. P. C. K., 1954), p. 133.

similar to his understanding of apostle. The prophet was the apostle of the Old Testament. He spoke of things which were to come, but he was the vehicle of God's revelation until the new covenant. In his Paedagogus he says of the Word, "Accordingly, of old He instructed by Moses, and then by the prophets. Moses, too, was a prophet. For the law is the training of refractory children."[6] Jeremiah was a prophet[7] as was Isaiah.[8] He does not indicate that there is any intrinsic difference between the writings of Jeremiah and Isaiah and of Moses. He says that Moses was the means of God's revelation and Jeremiah also, for it was "the Holy Spirit of Jeremiah," who spoke.[9]

He loves to speak of the prophetic Scriptures when speaking of the Old Testament. He uses this nomenclature as freely as he does the "divine Scriptures" or other terms which we have pointed out.

> It is now time, as we have despatched in order the other points, to go to the prophetic Scriptures; for the oracles present us with the appliances necessary for the attainment of piety, and so establish the truth. The divine Scriptures and institutes of wisdom form the short road of salvation.[10]

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[6]Instructor, 1,11, ANCL, I, 179.

[7]Exhortation to the Heathen, 8, ANCL, I, 77. Hereafter abbreviated Exhort.

[8]Stromata, 5,14, ANCL, II, 298.

[9]Exhort., 8, ANCL, I, 77.

[10]Ibid., p. 76.

It is interesting and perhaps significant that in this context he does not quote the "Scriptures" but the Sibyl prophetess. He also tells us that "the prophetic utterances have the same force as the apostolic word."[11] This should suffice to indicate his general attitude toward the writings of the Old Testament.

Another large mass of literature were the apocryphal writings. Clement quoted these with the same authority as the canonical literature. In fact, he sometimes seems to prefer to quote these. His partiality to the book of Ecclesiasticus is one good example. For demonstration of this one might simply read through book two, chapter seven of the Instructor. He quotes the book nine times in these few pages and often introduces it as Scripture.[12] In chapter eight he continues with such phrases as "says the Scripture,"[13] in 3:4 "Whence the Scripture most strenuously exhorts,"[14] in 3:11 "according to the Scriptures,"[15] and similar phrases. In each of these cases he quotes the book of Ecclesiasticus. He also treats the Book of Wisdom, Judith and Tobit in the same manner. In the Instructor

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[11] Stromata, 5,19, ANCL, II, 298.

[12] Instructor, 2,7, ANCL, I, 225-229.

[13] Ibid., 2,8, ANCL, I, 234.

[14] Ibid., 3,4, ANCL, I, 294.

[15] Ibid., 3,11, ANCL, I, 316.

he quotes Baruch after introducing it as "Divine Scriptures."[16] With no distinction whatsoever he introduces a story from Bel and the Dragon when he gives his Biblical evidence of the history of the Jews.[17]

Clement was most likely working on the basis of the Septuagint and not the Hebrew text. He feels it necessary to show that the Septuagint is not merely a translation, but it is also inspired. He accepts the legend of its origin in Alexandria. He then remarks: "It was not alien to the inspiration of God, who gave the prophecy also to produce the translation, and make it as it were Greek prophecy."[18]

His approach to the New Testament is somewhat more complicated, but he will not lead us to any radically different conclusions. The problem in the New Testament is more complex because of the incarnation of the Word of God. Throughout the Old Covenant he presupposed that the Word of God was behind the utterances of the prophets and it was he that gave them their authority. But now with his advent the situation changes. Primary authority lies with the Word himself. For this reason we must begin with the Gospels which are the closest approximations of the utterances of

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[16] Ibid., 2,3, ANCL, I, 212.

[17] Stromata, 1,21, ANCL, II, 432.

[18] Ibid., 1,22, ANCL, II, 448.

the Word. The Gospels are primary in his hierarchy of authority, but they are primary simply because they record the words of the Son of God. It is possible and Clement does quote such instances that the words of the Savior were not recorded and passed on orally. These words would carry no less authority than those which were written.

He frequently uses the term Gospel to apply to sayings of the Savior but also to apply to the books commonly designated as Gospels. He can say that the Savior "says in the Gospel"[19] when he quotes Luke 7:25 but he does not seem to be referring specifically to a particular book. Similarly he quotes John 21:4,5 and introduces it by "Accordingly in the Gospel."[20] In these contexts it seems to designate the four Gospels as a unity which he simply terms "the Gospel."

In other places the term has a different connotation. "Those, therefore, who travelled over the world and preached the gospel."[21] But this usage seems to be in the minority. At times he refers to the Gospel by the name of the author such as the phrase, "And in the Gospel by John he says."[22] However, this particular reference cannot be found in the

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[19] Instructor, 2,11, ANCL, I, 259.

[20] Ibid., 1,2, ANCL, I, 122.

[21] Ibid., 2,8, ANCL, I, 230.

[22] Ibid., 1,19, ANCL, I, 167.

Gospel of John. Most likely he is quoting Matthew 3:7 or Luke 3:7 where the phrase "Serpents, brood of vipers" occurs. But I believe this has given us a hint to his use of the term "Gospel." He frequently refers to a saying of Jesus which he claims to be a part of one of the four Gospels but which is not. At other times he will quote sayings of the Savior without reference to any Gospel. He puts the words "Be ye skilful money-changers" into the mouth of Christ but there is no such statement in the received Gospels.[23] There is a similar example of this in Stromata 2:15.[24] In one place he quotes a saying from the Oxyrhyncus Logia which is not found in the canonical Gospels.[25] In one place Clement puts into the mouth of the Savior words from the Didache or Epistle to Barnabas.[26]

All of these examples indicate that the main source of the sayings of Jesus was in the four Gospels. However, Clement apparently had some statements from other sources which he readily used if the situation presented itself. Again, we must emphasize that the authority came from their origin in the Word of God, Christ.

An oft-quoted book of Clement was the Gospel of the

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[23] Stromata, 1,28, ANCL, I, 467.

[24] Ibid., 2,15, ANCL, II, 48.

[25] Ibid., 3,15, LCL, p. 89.

[26] Ibid., 2,4, ANCL, II, 56.

Egyptians. His attitude to this book is not precise. In the Quis Dives Salvetur he speaks of the accepted Gospels and Mark as one of these.[27] In one place Clement quotes this Gospel in the same context with St. Paul to demonstrate his point.[28] But in other places he seems to have some reservation about it for he refers to it as "the books they quote" in reference to the heretics.[29] But in this instance he does not condemn them for quoting this Gospel but for perverting the sense of the words of the Lord. In one place he does seem to clarify matters on the whole question of the Gospels.

> In the first place we have not got the saying in the four Gospels that have been handed down to us, but in the Gospel according to the Egyptians.[30]

At first glance this statement seems to approach the Church's later attitude to the four Gospels. There is no doubt that they were rapidly approaching their later status. But in view of other statements we must confess that Clement is somewhat inconsistent and unclear in the whole matter. Even a later dating of the Stromata would not eliminate the problem, for it seems unlikely that there is an explicit change of

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[27]Clement of Alexandria, Quis Dives Salvetur, Clement of Alexandria, edited and translated by G. W. Butterworth (London: William Heinemann, Ltd., 1919), pp. 281ff.

[28]Stromata, 15, 15, LCL, p. 86.

[29]Stromata, 3,6, LCL, p. 61.

[30]Ibid., 2,13, ANCL, II, 83.

attitude through his writings.

We must next look at the apostolic writings. In general we must agree with Tollinton that they stand somewhat below the Gospels in authority, although this is not too clear.[31] The problem does not lie in their relationship to the Gospels, but in their relationship to the other apostolic writings and consequently the relationship of the three groups to one another. There is much ambiguity in his usage for he frequently quotes an epistle of St. Paul alongside, for example, the Shepherd of Hermas.

One must be careful that one does not simply take quotations from these writings as a sign that they were authoritative. Clement was extremely versatile in his education and quoted from many sources. Often he quotes simply to illustrate or further explicate his argument. This is quite different from his usual habit with the Scriptures. For in these cases he usually quotes them because they are authoritative. But in many cases Clement does use other apostolic writings in the same manner as he uses the Gospels and St. Paul and Peter.

He accepts 1 Peter as Scripture[32] as also Jude[33] and

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[31] R. B. Tollinton, op. cit., II, 204.

[32] Stromata, 6,6, ANCL, II, 331.

[33] Ibid., 3,3, LCL, p. 45.

1 John.[34] He does not actually use the term Scripture in connection with 1 John, but the words "divine indeed and inspired" and apostle. He simply refers to Jude as speaking prophetically which would indicate that he looked upon it in the same manner as the other apostolic writings.

Hanson believes that the Epistle of Barnabas had a great influence on Clement. In several instances he quotes this book with sections from Scripture.[35] In one place he refers to him as an apostle and a fellow worker with St. Paul. We might argue from silence that the lack of any mention of Scripture is significant, but this I believe would show little. In the first place the use of the term Scripture is not precise, and the criterion of authority in most cases seems to be the writer's apostolicity. The same would be true for 1 Clement which he quotes several times. In these cases he refers to Clement as an apostle and uses his quotation in this manner.[36]

More problematic is the question of such books as the Shepherd of Hermas, the Gospel of the Hebrews, and the Traditions of Matthias. In these cases we are amazed at his willingness to quote these works and rest his case with them.

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[34]Clement of Alexandria, op. cit., p. 347; Stromata, 3,6, LCL, p. 61.

[35]Stromata, 2,15, ANCL, II,41; 2,18, II, 50; 2,20, II, 66.

[36]Ibid., 4,17, ANCL, II, 187; 4,18, II, 190.

Perhaps the most illuminating statement is one in book three of the Stromata which outlines his position. He is refuting the Basilideans.

> though the last sect professes to cite the opinion of Matthias. I say "professes," for the teaching, so also the tradition of all the apostles has been one and the same.[37]

The implication here is that it is impossible for the apostles to disagree with one another. The only way in which this could happen is if someone would deliberately misinterpret a statement of an apostle. Also implicit in this statement is that the words of Matthias are accepted as authoritative even though in this spurious book. He quotes this same book in other places with the same underlying assumption.[38]

In one instance he introduces a quotation from the Shepherd of Hermas between two quotations from Romans. Again the implication is that Hermas carries a similar authority to Paul. In the next paragraph of this section he quotes the Traditions of Matthew and the Gospel of the Hebrews.[39] In this last instance we must be careful because he also quotes Plato's Timaeus in the same manner as these two works. There are not enough examples of this practise to draw any final conclusions.

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[37] Ibid., 7,17, ANCL, II, 485ff.

[38] Ibid., 7,13, ANCL, II, 468.

[39] Ibid., 2,9, ANCL, II, 28.

There are other examples of this practise but these should be sufficient to demonstrate the point. To exonerate Clement from too liberal a usage of apocryphal literature we must look at the other side. In several instances he makes it a point to show that his opponents are quoting from an apocryphal work and for this reason their conclusions are negligible. He says

> They derived their doctrines from an apocryphal work. I will quote the text which is the mother of their licentiousness. And whether they themselves, I mean the authors of the book, are responsible--or whether they derived their ideas from some other whom they fell in with, they have taken a sound doctrine and perversely misapplied it.[40]

He then quotes the passage to refute it.

At one place Clement speaks of the New Testament (nean diatheken) in quoting a passage from Matthew 5.

> Right from the beginning the law, as we have already said lays down the command, "Thou shalt not covet, ..." long before the Lord's closely similar utterance in the New Testament, where the same idea is expressed in his own mouth. . . .[41]

Here follows the passage from Matthew. It is difficult to say whether this reference is to the New Testament as a body of writings, but this seems to be the least likely possibility. It appears to be a reference to the new covenant in contrast to the old.

Throughout this chapter we have indicated our conclusions

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[40] Ibid., 3,4, LCL, p. 53.

[41] Ibid., 3,11, LCL, p. 73.

concerning his attitude to Scripture. Let us summarize briefly here before proceeding.

Clement had at his disposal the Septuagint and most of the writings of the New Testament. He looks upon these writings as authoritative for himself as a Christian theologian. By his usage of the Old Testament books he indicates his acceptance of their authority because they were the law and prophets. They were the means which the Word of God used to make himself known to the Hebrews.

His approach to the New Testament was similar, but he distinguished more clearly between two groups of writings. However, this distinction was not a distinction between canonical and non-canonical. It was a distinction between those which were sayings of the Lord and those which were apostolic. He indicates a preference for the former, but there seems to be little difference in authority of the two; in fact, there is no difference in authority between these and the writings of the Old Testament. The other apostolic literature was generally accepted in the same manner, although he was often reluctant to accept some of the pseudepigraphical writings.

After presenting the evidence in Clement on these questions Hanson concludes with these words:

> This evidence should surely be enough to convince anyone that Clement of Alexandria has almost no conception of what we mean by the Canon of Scripture, in the sense of a list of books guaranteed as authentic tradition in contrast to others whose genuineness is not certain.

> The most we can say is that he seems to assume that the Canon of the Gospels is closed, though even here he apparently is ready on occasion to admit exceptions.[42]

Tollinton, also indicates that the Canon was not authoritatively defined for Clement. He gave pre-eminence to the Gospels and special weight to anything apostolic. But it is difficult to view the New Testament as a separate body of inspired writings.[43] Philip Carrington expresses the same opinion.[44]

We see then that Clement's understanding of the Holy Scriptures can be seen only in the broader framework of his complete doctrine of tradition. Only if we view the Scriptures as a part of this tradition are we able to understand Clement's attitude to them. There is, however, a tendency to begin to distinguish between the written Scriptures and the interpretation of them by the Church and its teachers. We have already noted this in some of the relevant passages from Clement.

To explore this further will be our task in the remaining chapters. By the very fact that he concerns himself with a secret tradition and a rule indicates that he realized the complexity of the theological enterprise of interpreting the Scriptures. We must now see how he carries out this task.

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[42] R. P. C. Hanson, op. cit., pp. 127ff.

[43] R. B. Tollinton, op. cit., II, 173ff.

[44] Philip Carrington, The Early Christian Church (Cambridge: The University Press, 1957), II, 407.

CHAPTER IV

THE GNOSTIC AND SECRET TRADITION

One of the most puzzling problems of the Alexandrian school of the second and third centuries is that of their use of a secret tradition. This secret tradition is characteristic of both Clement and Origen. Closely related to their notion of a secret tradition is the conception developed by Clement of a gnostic theology. However, this gnosticism is not the heretical sect which we usually associate with the term. Apparently there are parallels and similarities, but for Clement the gnostic was the exception in the Catholic Christian community. He was an exception in a positive sense, for to be a gnostic was an ideal for which many strove but to which few attained. We must consider briefly some of the salient points of this gnosticism before we can consider his doctrine of secret tradition.

Many writers have attempted to construct an image of the ideal gnostic on the basis of Clement's writings. This is not too difficult for he says much of the gnostic and considered himself and his teachers as such. For Clement, the outstanding characteristic of the gnostic was that he was in possession of a more profound understanding of that tradition which had been delivered from the Lord. From this many implications follow. He was in possession of the correct

interpretation of the Scriptures and is responsible for the preservation of this interpretation and its careful dispensation to others.

> The gnostic alone is able to understand and explain the things spoken by the Spirit obscurely, "and he who understands in that time shall hold his peace"; says the Scripture, plainly in the way of declaring them to the unworthy. For the Lord says, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear," declaring that hearing and understanding belong not to all.[1]

Not only is the gnostic possessed with a fuller understanding and the responsibility of careful transmission, but he must be trained to teach this tradition to others. He must have the "capability of delivering, in a way suitable to God, the secrets veiled in the truth."[2] This was a very demanding task. Throughout his writings, Clement is cautious in his explanation of these secrets. He often indicates that one must write in a manner which not only reveals the secrets but also hides them from the uninitiated. Elsewhere he says: "It is the prerogative of the gnostic, then, to know how to make use of speech, and when, and how, and to whom."[3]

Clement frequently compares the gnostic to a doctor of medicine. He saw the task of each as similar, for they both had a responsibility to their patients and hearers, and

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[1]Stromata, 6,15, ANCL, II, 372.

[2]Ibid., 7,1, ANCL, II, 408.

[3]Ibid., 6,15, ANCL, II, 372.

in many cases they were obligated to withhold and even pervert the truth for the benefit of the uninformed.

> Whatever, therefore, he has in his mind, he bears on his tongue, to those who are worthy to hear, speaking as well as living from assent and inclination. For he both thinks and speaks the truth, unless at any time, medicinally, as a physician for the safety of the sick, he may lie or tell an untruth.[4]

We are not called upon in a study of this sort to determine whether this attitude is reflective of the broad stream of Catholic tradition, but it must be pointed out that Clement was convinced that this view of secret tradition was a teaching which had been handed down directly to him from the Lord. Here, as elsewhere, this conviction of divine authority of his theology is evident.

We must not, however, jump to the conclusion that Clement was speaking of some clandestine extra-ecclesiastical group of teachers. On the contrary, for he saw the gnostic as an intrinsic part of the Church and a function of the Body of Christ.

> As a body, the church of the Lord, the spiritual and holy choir, is symbolized. Whence those, who are merely called, but do not live in accordance with the word are flesh parts. . . . But he that is joined to the Lord in spirit becomes a spiritual body by a different kind of conjunction. Such an one is wholly a son, an holy man, passionless, gnostic, perfect, formed by the teaching of the Lord.[5]

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[4] Ibid., 7,9, ANCL, II, 444.

[5] Ibid., 7,14, ANCL, II, 471ff.

Clement sharply distinguishes between the gnostic and the heretics. The heretics, who in this instance he calls sophists, are outside of the ffellowship of the Church because they are heads of schools rather than leaders inside the Church. In view of Clement's position in the catechetical school this reference is somewhat puzzling. We know that Clement was the head of a school and every indication suggests that it was only loosely connected with the Church. Clement says that these sophists "glory rather in being at the head of a school than presiding over the Church."[6] Perhaps he envisioned his work in the school as a necessary part of the Church's activity and thus considered it orthodox, which could not be said of the teachings of the sophists.

We may conclude our discussion of the gnostic with this fairly complete description of Clement.

> Our gnostic then alone, having grown old in the Scriptures and maintaining apostolic and ecclesiastic orthodoxy in doctrines lives most correctly in accordance with the gospel, and discovers the proofs, for which he may have made search . . . sent forth from the law and prophets. For the life of the gnostic, in my view is nothing but deeds and words corresponding to the tradition of the Lord.[7]

One cannot fully understand Clement's doctrine of secret tradition without reference to the use of the "rule" in

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[6]Ibid., 7,15, ANCL, II, 475.

[7]Ibid., 7,16, ANCL, II, 484.

Clement, especially in view of Hanson's research.[8] We shall see that Hanson concludes that the rule and the gnostic tradition are actually one and the same thing for Clement.

We wish in this section to simply present Clement's general attitude to a secret tradition and we shall in the following chapter discuss the relationship of this secret tradition to the rule of faith. In view of the purpose of this paper this can be done without sacrificing accuracy, for we are primarily concerned with Clement's attitude to authority.

Clement begins with the assumption that the Scriptures are in themselves veiled. He has many explanations for this phenomenon, but this principle runs throughout his writings. From this starting point it is a simple step to the conclusion that the Scriptures are subject to many different interpretations. And from this follows the necessity of someone to interpret them in the correct manner. The gnostic or secret tradition fulfills this necessity.

> For many reasons, then, the Scriptures hide the sense. First, that we may become inquisitive, and be ever on the watch for the discovery of the words of salvation. Then it was not suitable for all to understand, so that they might not receive harm in consequence of taking in another sense the things declared for salvation by the Holy Spirit. Wherefore the holy mysteries of the prophecies are veiled in the parables--preserved for chosen men, selected to knowledge in

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[8] R. P. C. Hanson, Origen's Doctrine of Tradition (London: S. P. C. K., 1954), pp. 53-72.

> consequence of their faith; for the style of the Scriptures is parabolic.[9]

This secret interpretation was given to the apostles and was handed down to later generations. Beginning with the divine origin of this tradition he argues deductively:

> If, then, we assert that Christ Himself is Wisdom, and that it was his working which showed itself in the prophets, by which the gnostic tradition may be learned, as He himself taught the apostles during His presence; then it follows that the gnosis is wisdom. . . . And the gnosis itself is that which has descended by transmission to a few, having been imparted unwritten by the apostles.[10]

In these two quotations we notice several other aspects of this secret tradition. Clement maintains that the Holy Scriptures are actually parabolic in character and cannot be rightly understood in any other way than that interpretation which the Lord gave to his Church. This is consistent with his allegorical method of exegesis. "And now also the whole economy which prophesied of the Lord appears indeed a parable to those who know not the truth. . . ."[11] The Scriptures have a "secret meaning" (<u>to tes gnomes aporreton</u>).

The secret tradition is further distinguished from the Holy Scriptures in that it is unwritten. Clement feels it is necessary to maintain a consistency with the Old Testament

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[9] <u>Stromata</u>, 6,15, <u>ANCL</u>, II, 378.

[10] <u>Ibid</u>., 6,8, <u>ANCL</u>, II, 339.

[11] <u>Ibid</u>., 6,15, <u>ANCL</u>, II, 379.

practise. There can be no difference in the method of transmission of the two covenants. It would be incongruous if there was a practise of oral transmission in the New Covenant which was different from the practise of the Old Covenant. He says: "There were certainly some things delivered unwritten among the Hebrews."[12] He does not go into a description of this tradition, nor does he indicate whether he possessed this unwritten tradition of the Old Covenant, but he is concerned to show the precedent.

The oral transmission of this secret tradition was not accidental. There was a definite purpose in such a manner of transmission. He has already indicated to us that it was to be guarded and dispensed with care. If it had been entrusted to writing, anyone could have access to it and only a limited few of these could actually understand it. It would lead to confusion.

This is in essence the argument of the first chapter of the Stromata. This may further explain why we moderns have such difficulty in understanding much of Clement's obscurity. He was purposely attempting to make himself obscure and ambiguous. For a gnostic to write was unprecedented for "Secret things are entrusted to speech, not to writing, as

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[12]Clement of Alexandria, Quis Dives Salvetur, Clement of Alexandria, edited and translated by G. W. Butterworth (London: William Heinemann, Ltd., 1919), p. 283.

is the case with God."[13] In the same chapter he says: "But the mysteries are delivered mystically, that what is spoken may be in the mouth of the speaker; rather not in his voice, but in his understanding."[14]

We might legitimately ask the question concerning the origin of Clement's teaching about an oral secret tradition. Hanson has admirably shown that Clement has precedent in Plato, Philo, and the Epistle of Barnabas, all writers with whom he was familiar.[15] He is convinced that Clement draws heavily on Philo for the basis of his doctrine. There seems to be no reason to dispute this conclusion. Although it is illuminating to know from where Clement might have gotten his attitude toward secret tradition, this information does not throw much light on the specific problem of authority in Clement.

In conclusion we may say that Clement thought he was in possession of a genuine tradition which had been handed down from the Lord. It was not the result of a special inspiration or revelation to him privately, but it came through his teachers who had received it from others who had received it from the apostles. This tradition is closely related to an interpretation of the Holy Scriptures and most

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[13] Stromata, 5,10, ANCL, II, 258.

[14] Ibid., 1,1, ANCL, I, 356.

[15] Ibid.

likely was precisely this. Only a few were in possession of it and were obligated to teach it with discretion. It was in no sense inferior to a written tradition, but it was authoritative for the Catholic community. Whether Clement actually possessed such a tradition from the Lord is doubtful as we shall see, but that he thought he possessed such a tradition is indisputable.

CHAPTER V

THE RULE IN CLEMENT

A perplexing historical problem in Clement centers about his use of an ecclesiastical rule or canon. This complexity is increased by the present disagreement among scholars as to the precise nature of the rule in the early Church. Until the present day there are studies being made on this problem in the Church of the second century. Because of its relatively late development it is difficult to be very precise about the ecclesiastical situation in Alexandria. In Clement the problem is compounded, because the rule is closely bound up with his understanding of a secret tradition. The following are tentative conclusions on this problem in relationship to our general concern.

We have already referred several times to the work of Hanson on Clement. Much of what follows is dependent on his scholarship and our conclusions will reflect his influence.

Throughout we will use either canon or rule as a translation of the Greek kanon, Clement's term. The most striking thing about this word is that Clement uses it in a technical sense. It almost always carries the implication

of a rule for life or a standard of doctrine.[1] He never uses the term in connection with a list of books, whether they be pagan or Christian. In most contexts it is the rule by which something is judged. He speaks often of the restraint which it places on Christians so that "we are bound in no way to transgress the canon of the church."[2]

Some of the most frequent usages may be summarized. In Stromata 3,18 he uses the term "rule of continence."[3] In cases of this sort the rule is used to distinguish the behavior of the gnostic from that of ordinary believers. The most frequent phrase is the "ecclesiastical canon" or the "rule of the church" (ton ekklesiastikon kanona). This is used in so many different contexts that it is hard to determine precisely its exact connotation. At times it seems to indicate a guide for liturgical practise as in Stromata 1,19.[4] Elsewhere it is the correct interpretation of the Scriptures.[5] Sometimes Clement uses the term "evangelical rule," or "rule of the Gospel" in the same

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[1]R. P. C. Hanson, Origen's Doctrine of Tradition (London: S. P. C. K., 1954), p. 62.

[2]Stromata, 7,15, ANCL, II, 473.

[3]Ibid., 3,11, LCL, p. 73.

[4]Ibid., 1,19, ANCL, I, 416ff.

[5]Ibid., 6,15, ANCL, II, 377.

sense as the "ecclesiastical rule."[6] In other places he uses the phrase "rule of truth."[7]

One must first ask whether it is safe to assume that each one of these phrases is simply a synonym for the same thing. In every case he uses the word "canon," but it is in every case qualified by an adjective. In spite of this, the evidence indicates that he is speaking of the same thing.

In the third book of the Stromata Clement has a lengthy discussion on marriage. In several places he uses the phrase "rule of godliness" or "rule of continency" to describe the behavior of Christians. In another place he uses the term evangelical rule to indicate precisely the same.

> But why do they not go on to quote the words after those spoken by Salome, these people who do anything rather than walk according to the truly evangelical rule.[8]

In a similar manner Clement uses the phrase "canon of the truth" with reference to the right interpretation of the Scriptures. In the same chapter of this book he uses the phrase "according to the rule of truth" with the same meaning.[9] Other instances could be cited, but there seems to

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[6] Ibid., 4,4, ANCL, II, 146.

[7] Ibid., 6,15, ANCL, II, 381.

[8] Ibid., 3,10, LCL, p. 70.

[9] Ibid., 6,15, ANCL, II, 377-378.

be no doubt that the various uses of the term rule mean approximately the same thing for Clement. Apparently he varied his qualifying adjective with the context and the precise application he wished to make of the rule.

We have indicated one passage where the rule referred to proper conduct of one's life. Besides this moral application it also seems to say something about the corporate life of the Christian community.

> And those . . . involved in heresies, "I enjoin" remarks Wisdom, saying "Touch sweetly stolen bread and the sweet water of theft": the Scripture manifestly applying the terms bread and water to nothing else but to those heresies, which employ bread and water in the oblation, not accordingly to the rule of the church. For there are those who celebrate the Eucharist with mere water. . . .[10]

Apparently the rule is in this instance a guide for the proper celebration of the Holy Eucharist. He is hardly referring here to a proper understanding of the theology of the Blessed Sacrament, but he is very definitely referring to the liturgical practise of the Church. If this then is the same as the rule of continence and the other rules, and it does not seem as if any other conclusion is possible, then the rule must have been quite inclusive indeed.

It would be incomplete to see the rule only as a guide for life and practise, for it most assuredly has a theological

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[10] Ibid., 1,19, ANCL, I, 416-417.

content. For Clement the truth is closely associated with the rule. In reality the truth comes from the Savior to Clement through the rule. He says:

> For we must never, as do those who follow the heresies, adulterate the truth, or steal the canon of the church by gratifying our own lusts and vanity, by defrauding our neighbours; whom above all it is our duty, in the exercise of love to them, to teach to adhere to the truth.[11]

His language implies that the truth and the canon are one. Although he usually does not equate the two, it would be impossible clearly to differentiate them in Clement. To adulterate the truth is to steal the canon of the church. In another place he says more explicitly that the rule has come from the Truth Himself, namely the Savior.

> For those who make the greatest attempts must fail in things of the highest importance; unless, receiving from the truth itself the rule of truth, they cleave to the truth.[12]

Consistent with Clement's principles, the rule derives its authority from its divine origin.

Some scholars maintain that they can determine to some extent the content of this rule in Clement. There are several passages which give hints as to its content, although they are often vague. Every indication suggests, as we have noted, that the rule was very inclusive, covering most probably areas of life, theology, and also philosophy. It was not,

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[11] Ibid., 7,16, ANCL, II, 485.

[12] Ibid., 7,16, ANCL, II, 477.

however, a static document but a fluid tradition in oral form which was adaptable to varying circumstances. This characteristic allows Clement's own theological work, for he looked upon his Stromata as a more complete statement of the rule. Hanson is persuaded to take the following passage as representative of the content of the rule, because it uses the term paradosis twice.

> The science of nature, then, or rather observation, as contained in the gnostic tradition according to the rule of truth, depends on the discussion concerning cosmogony, ascending thence to the department of theology. Whence, then, we shall begin our account of what is handed down, with the creation as related by the prophets, introducing also the tenets of the heterodox, and endeavouring as far as we can to confute them. . . .[13]

The passage does indicate that the rule was not comprehensive.

Thus far we have been able to determine that Clement was in possession of some rule or standard which was normative for the Church. Although the precise content, or any particular phrase from it, cannot be conclusively determined, every indication leads to the conclusion that it was a rule for life and worship and doctrine.[14] The very fact that no precise formulas of this rule are found in his writings perhaps indicates that it was not credal in character, but it was a much more general oral tradition.

We have not shown that the rule is closely linked to the secret tradition. Hanson, however, has demonstrated

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[13] R. P. C. Hanson, op. cit., p. 64.

[14] Stromata, 4,1, ANCL, II, 303.

fairly conclusively that we must equate the secret tradition, of which we spoke in the previous chapter, with the rule of the Church.[15] His conclusions must be accepted, although in certain points he has not ironed out all the kinks in the problem. The fact that the rule is at times called an ecclesiastical rule suggests that it must be more than the property of a minority group. Also the passages which speak of the rule as determinative of liturgical usage would lead to the same conclusion. There may be some variance between the secret tradition and the rule, but in general we must affirm that they are primarily one and the same tradition.

We have already noted in the previous chapter the meaning of the term gnostic for Clement. We have seen that the gnostic was he who was in possession of a tradition from the Lord which was secret or mystical. The first indication that this secret tradition is related to the rule of the Church is the close proximity of the term gnostic and rule in the many contexts. Clement speaks of "he who is truly a gnostic according to the rule of the church."[16] He speaks elsewhere of the gnostic tradition in a sense very close to that of the rule.[17]

But even more conclusive than these is the fact that

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[15] R. P. C. Hanson, op. cit., pp. 65ff.

[16] Stromata, 7,7, ANCL, II, 435.

[17] Ibid., 6,8, ANCL, II, 339.

the secret tradition consisted in the main of the proper interpretation of the Scriptures. The rule of the Church is seen as the same thing. This is the key to the whole problem. Clement felt that he was in possession of an interpretation of the Scriptures which had been delivered by the Lord to the apostles and through teachers to him. Because many people would misunderstand this tradition it must be carefully preserved by those who had reached the understanding of a gnostic. This was the main purpose of the rule of the Church and from this interpretation of the Scriptures all heresies could be refuted.

If one admits that Clement looked upon his task as an interpreter of the Scriptures, which is evident from the use he makes of it, then it becomes clear why such a guide was needed. The heretics constantly fell into error because they either do not know the rule or refused to submit to it. Clement describes his efforts:

> But as the work advances, we shall in each section, noting the figures of speech mentioned above by the prophets, exhibit the gnostic mode of life, showing it systematically according to the rule of the truth.[18]

He does not mean by the phrase "mode of life" that he is going to simply describe behavior, but he intends to develop a picture of the complete moral and intellectual life of the gnostic.

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[18] Ibid., 6,15, ANCL, II, 38.

Basic to Clement's conception of the place of the rule in the Church lies the fundamental assumption that the Scriptures are veiled to ordinary understanding. This is very consistent with his method of exegesis. Clement is very clear on the proper interpretation of the Scriptures, but this interpretation was not at all times the obvious sense of the words. Robert Grant[19] is in agreement with Hanson[20] that the secret tradition included an allegorical method of interpreting the Scriptures.

In several instances Clement makes this quite clear. He is adamant against the heretics for their errors by which they reject the teaching of the Lord. "They do not quote or deliver the Scriptures in a manner worthy of God and of the Lord. . . ."[21] And later he reiterates the point that their fault lies in not interpreting them

> according to the canon of the truth explaining the Scriptures; for neither prophecy nor the Savior himself announced the divine mysteries simply as to be easily apprehended by all and sundry, but expressed them in parables. The apostles accordingly say of the Lord, that "He spake all things in parables, and without a parable spake he nothing to them."[22]

In another place he describes the ecclesiastical rule as follows:

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[19]Robert M. Grant, The Letter and the Spirit (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1957), p. 88.

[20]R. P. C. Hanson, op. cit., pp. 57-59.

[21]Stromata, 6,16, ANCL, II, 377.

[22]Ibid.

> "But all things are right," says the Scripture, before those who receive and observe according to the ecclesiastical rule the exposition of the Scriptures explained by him; and the ecclesiastical rule is the concord and harmony of the law and the prophets in the covenant delivered at the coming of the Lord.[23]

And this rule is then "the gnosis itself . . . which has descended by transmission to a few, having been imparted unwritten by the apostles."[24] In this passage he equates the gnosis with the unwritten tradition which has been handed down.

We can agree then with Hanson in not separating the secret tradition from the rule, although as we have indicated this does not answer all the questions. Hanson summarizes in these words,

> Once it is granted that the Gnostic's kanon and the church's kanon are the same kanon (and I don't see how this conclusion can be avoided), then it becomes positively demonstrable that the church's kanon is the secret tradition, and not simply a rule or guide for it. Both the "gnosis" and the "canon" are described as a harmony of the Scriptures. We cannot imagine two separate tradition, each of them consisting of a harmony of Scripture, as existing in Clement's thought. We are driven to the conclusion that in Clement's theological system the "gnosis" is the "canon" and the "canon" is the "gnosis."[25]

Modesert is insistent that it is impossible to maintain a separate and secret tradition in the Church of Alexandria. He describes the tradition in Clement as "la grande tradition

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[23] Ibid.

[24] Stromata, 6,8, ANCL, II, 339.

[25] R. P. C. Hanson, op. cit., p. 59.

vivante, de laquelle, maintenant qu'il l'a trouvée, il ne veut, à aucun prix, se séparer."[26] He feels that there is one ecclesiastical tradition of which Clement speaks. Again he emphasizes that "Clément se refuse absolument à admettre la séparation."[27] However, Mondesert seems to be laboring under his own conceptions of catholicity and finds it impossible to reconcile himself to the evidence in Clement. Hanson realizes this and criticizes him strongly for attempting to dispense with secret tradition in Clement.[28]

Thus we see that the rule and secret tradition are very closely related for Clement. They may be different ways of expressing what was actually one oral tradition. The rule was very complete and was normative for the Church because of its divine authority. In the final chapter we shall try to summarize the important aspects of Clement's thought on the problem of authority and bring the various genera of tradition into relationship with one another.

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[26]Claude Mondesert, Clément d'Alexandrie: Introduction a l'étude de sa pensée religieuse a partir de l'Ecriture (Paris: Aubier, 1944), p. 119.

[27]Ibid., p. 58.

[28]R. P. C. Hanson, op. cit., p. 67.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

In our study of Clement we have observed that Clement views himself as one in a line of teachers which extends from the Divine Instructor until his own day. He was the recipient of a multi-formed tradition which had been handed down from Christ. The following summary outlines the process as Clement conceived of it.

Christ was sent from God into the world. An important part of his mission was to bring to men the wisdom which comes from God. While he lived on earth Christ imparted this knowledge to his apostles. For this reason he is known as the teacher.

> And he who is called wisdom by the prophets. This is He who is the Teacher of all created things, the Fellow-counsellor of God, who foreknew all things; and He from above, from the first foundation of the world "in many ways and many times" trains and perfects; whence it is rightly said, "Call no man your teacher on earth."[1]

The knowledge which comes from Christ is the truth and is effective in the accomplishment of salvation.

> Now it is well pleasing to Him that we should be saved; and salvation is effected through both well-doing and knowledge, both of which the Lord is teacher.[2]

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[1] Stromata, 6,7, ANCL, II, 337.

[2] Ibid., 6,15, ANCL, II, 375-376.

The faithful transmission of this tradition which had been received from the Lord was necessary because of its importance for the Church. The apostles were carefully instructed and trained to carry out this task. "Now that the Savior has taught the apostles, the unwritten rendering of the written has been handed down to us."[3]

From the apostles the tradition was handed down to the next generation of teachers.[4] It was subsequently handed down from one generation to the next. The transmission was faithful and the tradition correct so that Clement could claim that even he had been instructed by the Lord.

> The proof of the truth being with us, is the fact of the Son of God Himself having taught us. For if in every inquiry these universals are found, a person and a subject, that which is truly the truth is shown to be in our hands alone.[5]

The tradition which Clement had received was divided into two basic kinds. The first was written and consisted primarily of the Old Testament, some apocryphal books and the majority of the books of the New Testament. The second was an oral tradition which consisted of an interpretation of the written tradition in such matters as doctrine, liturgical practise and moral behavior.

Although at times Clement gives indication that he is

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[3]Ibid., 7,17, ANCL, II, 485.

[4]Ibid., 7,16, ANCL, II, 483.

[5]Ibid., 6,15, ANCL, II, 375-376.

speaking of an exclusive group who had received this tradition, it is clear that his accent is fundamentally ecclesiastical and not sectarian. Tradition for Clement was the tradition which was the property of the Church. This is especially clear in his most frequent designation of the rule as the "ecclesiastical rule."

In the majority of the passages in which the question of authority arises Clement is engaged in a discussion with these who have perverted the truth. He is consistent in maintaining at all points that they are outside of the tradition which the Church has received and consequently cannot come to the correct understanding of the teaching of the Lord. To demonstrate this he argues that they do not follow the rule of the Church. The Church is prior to heresy; it has its origin with Christ. Heresies are new and erroneous teachings which do not have their origin in the tradition of the Lord.

> It is evident, from the high antiquity and perfect truth of the church, that these later heresies, and those yet subsequent to them in time, were new inventions falsified (from the truth).[6]

The Church was the guardian of the tradition. She is the mother who guides her children into truth. "The mother draws the children to herself; and we seek our mother the church."[7] The teachers of the Church must always take care

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[6]Ibid., 7,17, ANCL, II, 487.

[7]Instructor, 1,5, ANCL, I, 128.

that they follow its guidance and not that of those who have perverted the truth.

And we who are children guarding against the blasts of heresies, which

> blow to our inflation; and not putting our trust in fathers who teach us otherwise, are made perfect when we are the church, having received Christ the head.[8]

The Church is one in its understanding and confession of the truth. Those outside of it have transgressed the rule of truth and perverted the true tradition. Since the Church has its origin in Christ it can be confident that it does transmit the truth which He gave to it.

> then it is my opinion that the true church, that which is really ancient is one, and that in it those who according to God's purpose are just, are enrolled. For from the very reason that God is one, and the Lord one, that which is in the highest degree honourable is lauded in consequence of its singleness, being an imitation of the one first principle. In the nature of the One, then, is associated in a joint heritage the one Church, which they strive to cut asunder into many sects.
>
> Therefore in substance and idea, in origin, in pre-eminence, we say that the ancient and universal church is alone, collecting as it does into the unity of the one faith--which results from the peculiar Testaments, or rather the one Testament in different time by the will of the one God, through one Lord--those already ordained, whom God predestinated, knowing before the foundation of the world that they would be righteous.[9]

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[8] Ibid.

[9] Stromata, 7,17, ANCL, II, 487.

To summarize the relationship between the tradition and the Church we quote Mondesert.

> il laisse voir sa profonde conviction dans le reproche fréquent fait aux hérétiques de trahir l'unité l'Eglise, cette unité qui est non seulement unité de vie sociale, mais unité de foi, unite d'enseignement et unité de vérite comme d'alleurs unité des moyens de salut. Eglise et Tradition se confondent pour lui en une seule réalité vivante et présente.[10]

There was then for Clement a living oral tradition which served as interpreter of the written tradition in the Scriptures. Although the oral tradition was incorporated in a rule it was guarded by a select group of teachers. These were the gnostics who were to have "the capability of delivering, in a way suitable to God, the secrets veiled in the truth."[11] "The gnostic alone is able to understand and explain the things spoken by the Spirit obscurely."[12]

The living tradition perpetuated by these teachers was not an addition which the Church made to the tradition which had been received from the Lord. This living tradition was also of divine origin and for this reason it gave the authentic understanding of the Holy Scriptures. God in his wisdom had given to his Church through his Son a deposit of divine wisdom. To preserve this wisdom in his Church he

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[10]Claude Mondesert, Clément d'Alexandrie: Introduction a l'étude de sa pensée religieuse a partir de l'Ecriture (Paris: Aubier, 1944), p. 119.

[11]Stromata, 7,1, ANCL, II, 408.

[12]Ibid., 6,15, ANCL, II, 372.

maintained an oral and living tradition which continually led the Church into all truth.

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