Some Remarkable Aspects of Clement of Rome’s Letter to the Corinthians

By way of a general introduction to 1 Clement, it seems fitting to let Eusebius the fourth-century church historian speak, for he sums it up very well when he writes that:

Clement has left us one recognised epistle, long and wonderful, which he composed in the name of the church at Rome and sent to the church at Corinth, where dissension had recently occurred. I have evidence that in many churches this epistle was read to the assembled worshippers in early days, as it is in our own.

What Eusebius wrote here serves not only as a succinct outline of the celebrated letter, but the last sentence also marks it as a significant document for any serious study in early ecclesiastical development. Not least because it demonstrates that 1 Clement was sufficiently revered to exert a marked effect on the idea-shaping of this nascent religion, which appears to have included it in a primitive Christian canon that was widely accepted in the West for at least the first three and a half centuries.

The epistle itself is generally known as 1 Clement, but was, in fact, written by an anonymous writer around the middle nineties of the first century. The tradition that associates the author with the name Clement may be traced back to the second century, where it appears initially in the writings of Hegesippus, and Dionysius of Corinth. Not including Peter

1 Eusebius Ecclesiastical History 3.16.

the Apostle, Clement is said to be the third bishop of Rome, after Anencletus and Linus. While a man of such rank may well have written the epistle, the basis for this claim must be judged as too tenuous. Nevertheless, for convenience’s sake, and to keep in line with convention, the appellation ‘Clement’ will be retained here. As for the modern title’s number ‘1’, this tends to be somewhat misleading, since it wrongly suggests that the same author also wrote the work known as 2 Clement. That text is, however, a homily and likely written around sixty to seventy years later. Furthermore, both its stylistic idiosyncrasies as well as dissimilar use of the Septuagint (LXX), also rule out an identical authorship. Consequently, since 1 Clement exists only as a solitary letter, it poses considerable problems for interpretation, as the following thoughts from two equally respected early church historians demonstrate. For while, on the one hand, Henry Chadwick, in his paper presented to the Third International Conference on Patristic Studies, enthusiastically claims that ‘Clement’s letter is, I think, drafted with the utmost subtlety. Every word is selected with care and with an eye to the maximum effect,’ Walter Bauer, on the other, sees it quite differently, and writes that ‘It is easy to get the impression that by far the greater part of the letter serves only to increase its size, in order thereby to enhance its importance and forcefulness.’


4 Eusebius Ecclesiastical History 3.21.

5 Quotations in this article are from the Göttingen edition for those books published in that series; otherwise the Rahlfs edition (Stuttgart, 1935) is used.


7 Walter Bauer, Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity (London, 1972, translation of Rechtgläubigkeit und Ketzerei im ältesten Christentum [Tübingen, 1934]), 95.
These patently contrasting perspectives come about for various reasons, and include uncertainties which arise from literary features such as grammar,8 argument, or internal stylistic features.9 It is, of course, not possible to elaborate on any of these matters in a short article such as this. Nevertheless, some valuable fresh insights into the letter can be gained by focusing on Clement’s unique utilization of the Septuagint, and then substantiating to what extent the author’s language is affected by this.

One of the most striking features of 1 Clement is its extravagant employment of the LXX. What is meant here by ‘extravagant’ can best be appreciated when the epistle is compared with some others drawn from the same general era. Then, after all relevant statistical information is analysed, a truly remarkable picture begins to emerge, which this article intends to highlight.

The following greatly condensed data is based on an original ‘word by word’ comparison by this writer, of hundreds of LXX related passages culled from 1 Clement,10 1 Corinthians, Hebrews,11 and Barnabas.12 The latter three were drawn into comparison for the following reasons:

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8 For instance, when relating the story of Rahab, Clement writes that some spies had been sent to Jericho by Ἰησοῦ τοῦ τοῦ Νασα (12.2). This reduplication of the genitive is awkward and, therefore, generally avoided by Greek writers. See also below, on Clement’s combination of clumsy and elegant Greek.

9 Metaphoric and colourfully ornamented language, for example, pervades the letter, yet an amusing hint of naïveté is displayed in Clement’s description of Moses’ handling of his leadership challenge: πρωίας δέ γενομένης συνεκάλεσεν πάντα τον Ἰσραήλ, τάς ἐξακόσιας χιλιάδας τῶν ἀνδρῶν ... (43.5). No mention is made of πρωία anywhere in Numbers, nor is the figure 600,000 suggested in the original story, although the author might conceivably have assumed this figure from the census statistics listed in the same book (Numbers 1.46, 2.32, 11.21). The impossibility of assembling 600,000 men ‘when it was daylight’, seems to escape him, and is the more out of place since the LXX makes no allusion to any such feat.

I Corinthians

Almost two generations before Clement’s exhortation, some remarkably similar problems were addressed by the Apostle Paul in his epistle to the same Corinthian church. At both times factions had arisen amongst this group of believers and Paul, in his hope to rectify this, writes: παρακαλῶ δέ ύμᾶς ... καί μή ἕν ύμῖν σχίσματα ... ὅτι έριδες ἐν ύμῖν εἰσιν (1 Corinthians 1.10-11). Around forty years later, Clement of Rome also makes an effort to solve a similar difficulty and scolds them: μιχρᾶς καί ἀνοσίου στάσεως ... ἦν ὀλίγα πρόσωπα προσετή καί αὐθάδη ὑπάρχοντα εἰς τοσούτον ἀπονοίας ἐξέκαυσαν (1 Clement 1.1).

Hebrews

The epistle to the Hebrews, although it contains only about half the word count of I Clement, shows unmistakable affinity with it. Perhaps one of the most striking passages to illustrate this is I Clement 36.2-5. This segment contains five parallel clauses to Hebrews 1.3-13, which are made up of forty-four precisely corresponding words, of which, however, only the beginning is given here:

ος ὁν ἀπαύγασμα τῆς μεγαλωσύνης αὐτοῦ (1 Clement 36.2)
δς ὁν ἀπαύγασμα τῆς δόξης ... αὐτοῦ (Hebrews 1.3)

12 Kirsopp Lake (ed.), Apostolic Fathers, LCL I (London, 1985 [1912]).
13 ‘I exhort you ... may there be not divisions among you ... because there are quarrels among you.’
14 ‘... abominable and unholy factions ... which a few rash and arrogant individuals have inflamed to such madness.’
15 ‘... who being the effulgence of his majesty ... ’
Clement’s repetition of the word ἀπαύγασμα (effulgence) is significant, since it occurs only one single time each in both NT and LXX (Wisdom 7.26)—the latter, however, in a wholly different context.

Barnabas

The Epistle of Barnabas is included in this study, mainly because it appears to share with 1 Clement a similar propensity for copious LXX utilisation, but also because it is approximately contemporaneous with it.

All Septuagint citations within these four books have been categorised into three separate groups; that is to say: Verbatim, Analogue or Free, which are broadly defined as follows: excerpts, characterised by only the most negligible deviations from the LXX, are classified ‘Verbatim’. An example of this would be 1 Clement 18.2-16, where in some 240 words the only changes¹⁷ are:

διαπαντός/διὰ παντός¹⁸
καὶ ἁσβείς ἐπιστρέψωσιν ἐπὶ σὲ/καὶ ἁσβείς ἐπὶ σὲ ἐπιστρέψωσιν¹⁹
κύριε, τὸ στόμα μου ἄνοιξες, καὶ τὰ χείλη μου ... /κύριε, τὰ χείλη μου ἄνοιξες, καὶ τὸ στόμα μου ...²⁰

Conversely, ‘Analogue’ citations are those which may include some word omissions, additions, subtractions, or changed word order which, however, do not affect the sense of the underlying Septuagint text. Thus,

¹⁶ ‘... who being the effulgence of his glory ...’

¹⁷ Clement first, then LXX.

¹⁸ Psalm 51 (50).5, ‘throughout’.

¹⁹ Psalm 51 (50).15, ‘and the profane shall turn to you’.

²⁰ Psalm 51 (50).15, ‘Lord, you will open my mouth, and my lips ...’/‘Lord, you will open my lips, and my mouth ...’
while the author of Hebrews cites 21 Jeremiah 38.31 as: ιδού ἡμέραι ἔρχονται, λέγει κύριος, καὶ συντελέσω ἐπὶ τὸν οἶκον Ἰσραήλ καὶ ἐπὶ τὸν οἶκον Ἰούδα διαθήκην καινήν. 22 in the LXX one reads this as: ιδού ἡμέραι ἔρχονται, φησίν κύριος, καὶ διαθήσομαι τῷ οίκῳ Ἰσραήλ καὶ τῷ οίκῳ Ἰούδα διαθήκην καινήν. 23 The third group of citations, labelled 'Free', do have a definable Septuagint origin, but are rendered in such a way that their sense—as presented in the LXX—has become obscured. However, due to the limited scope of this paper, only some select findings from the first two groups will be considered here.

Clement's epistle consists of 9800 words and, as Eusebius noted, 24 is therefore rather lengthy. But 1630 of these words—or about one in six—are embedded within forty-one verbatim citations drawn directly from the Septuagint. These are often quite extensive, the longest consisting of the entire 290 words from Isaiah chapter fifty-three (16.3-14). 25 Now, when Clement’s twenty-four analogue citations are also included, as indeed they should be, this figure increases to a grand total of 2320 words. What this means is that an astonishing one in every four words of the epistle is located within altogether sixty-five separate passages which the author has

21 Hebrews 8.8.

22 ‘Behold the day comes, says the Lord, when I will fulfil on the house of Israel and on the house of Judah a new covenant.’

23 ‘Behold the day comes, says the Lord, when I shall ordain for the house of Israel and for the house of Judah a new covenant.’

24 Eusebius Ecclesiastical History 3.16.

25 Others, in order of extent, are: 18.2-17 (Psalm 50.3-19); 39.3-9 (Job 4.16-21-5.1-5); 57.3-7 (Proverbs 1.23-33); 56.6-15 (Job 5.17-26); 4.1-6 (Genesis 4.3-8); 35.7-12 (Psalm 49.16-23); 8.4 (Isaiah 1.16-20); 22.1-8 (Psalm 33.12-18); (Deuteronomy 9.12-14); 10.3 (Genesis 12.1-4); 10.4 (Genesis 13.14-16); 15.5-7 (Psalm 11.4-6); 27.7 (Psalm 18.1-4); 29.2 (Deuteronomy 32.8-9); 50.6 (Psalm 31.1-2); 52.3 (Psalm 49.14-15); 30.4 (Job 11.2-3); 48.2-3 (Psalm 117.19-20).
borrowed from the Greek Old Testament version! But, at the risk of appearing somewhat tedious, it seems appropriate to repeat that this figure does not include the many more LXX allusions and verbal echoes which are peppered throughout the letter.

**Graphical overview of Clement’s Septuagint utilization**

As Figure 1 below clearly illustrates, Clement strongly favours the Psalms above any of the other LXX books, for they account for about half, that is, 790 words, of all his verbatim quotations.

Considering the high degree of popularity the Jewish Psalter enjoyed, both among Jews as well as early Christians, his partiality may not seem surprising. Nevertheless, of the 151 Psalms contained in the LXX he uses only twenty-three, with eleven of these drawn from book one (Psalms 1-40). Of the other twelve are from book two (Psalms 41-71), two

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26 On the five books of the Psalter, in accordance with the Talmud, and corresponding to the five parts division of the Pentateuch, cf. J. Limburg, *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (as in n.2), V.526-7.
from book three (Psalms 72-88), one from book four (Psalms 89-105) and four from book five (Psalms 106-151). The fact that he repeatedly quotes lengthy sections with conspicuous accuracy, indicates that Clement was very familiar with these Psalms. The question immediately arises, however, why he only uses twenty-three of the 151, and even more to the point, why he shows such an evident partiality for book one.

From this latter he includes a broad selection, ranging from Psalm 2 to Psalm 36, yet shows no apparent knowledge of numerous topical 'admonition Psalms' contained in book two, which seem written for conditions patently comparable to what—in Clement’s mind—took place at Corinth. For example, although he cites a large section from Psalm 49 (35.7-12) and almost the entirety of Psalm 50 (18.2-17), he makes no use of any of Psalms 53–60, which all include material that would be very relevant to his cause. One would be hard pressed, indeed, to find a convincing explanation for Clement’s ‘neglect’ of these, for his topic, clearly useful Psalms, had he had any knowledge whatever of their content. It appears, therefore, that the author was limited as to which ones he could use—whether these be derived from written or oral sources27—since he indicates no knowledge of the bulk of the collection. One simple explanation for his apparent limitation could be the very high cost for a useful reproduction of an entire Psalter collection.28

Comparison with Paul’s 1 Corinthians

In notable contrast to Clement, Paul makes significantly less use of the LXX in 1 Corinthians, as Figure 2 demonstrates:

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While Clement makes a total of sixty-five specific (that is: non-‘Free’) citations from the Septuagint, Paul does so a mere thirteen times, even though his letter is about three-quarters the length of Clement’s. Yet to mention this quotation statistic in isolation tends to be misleading, because when the actual amount of LXX words which are quoted by the two writers are taken into consideration, a very different picture emerges. Whereas Paul’s thirteen excerpts never exceed ten words,²⁹ amounting to a low 107 in all, Clement’s sixty-five citations total 2320 words. Or, to illustrate the difference in another way, Paul’s appeal to the LXX in 1 Corinthians can be explicated in terms of an average one in fifty-six words, while for Clement’s letter this result is an incredibly high one in four. If, on the other hand, one wishes to discard all analogue quotations in this comparison and include only those that are given verbatim, the precisely reproduced LXX extracts in 1 Clement will still amount to seventeen percent of his letter’s word count, while for 1 Corinthians this figure reaches no more than two per cent.

²⁹ Although Romans contains some 25 verbatim citations, all except one of sixty words (3.12-18), are brief (less than 20 words).
Comparison with Hebrews

At 4900 words, Hebrews is merely half the length of 1 Clement, but about 415 of these words are borrowed verbatim from the Septuagint. This makes its author considerably more LXX focused than Paul in 1 Corinthians, but still not as strongly as Clement.

![Figure 3: The author of Hebrews's use of the LXX](image)

Both writers, Clement and the anonymous author of Hebrews, use similar books for their source texts and both depend to a high degree on the Psalms, of which Clement accurately quotes some 790 words—that is, eight per cent of his total word count. These figures change for Hebrews to 320 words, which works out to only about six and a half per cent of his letter. Despite these apparent similarities, however, one must not neglect the fact that the author of Hebrews generally does not quote such extensive passages as Clement. Thus, while the latter gives twenty-one lengthy (that is, more than twenty words\(^{30}\)) verbatim citations, the epistle to the Hebrews has a mere seven, the longest containing 136 as opposed to Clement's 290 words.\(^{31}\) Moreover, even when taking into account the approximately 150 words embedded in analogue LXX citations within Hebrews, it still equates to only about one in nine words, that is eight and a

\(^{30}\) This limit is fixed here purely for comparative purposes.

\(^{31}\) Hebrews 8.8-12 (citing Jeremiah 38.31-34), 1 Clement 16.2-14 (citing Isaiah 53.1-12).
half per cent. Although this is a noteworthy percentage, Clement resorts to the LXX about twice as often (seventeen per cent), in his effort either to make or support his argument for peace and concord.

Comparison with Barnabas

Barnabas’ treatise is made up of approximately 6300 words, 350 of which form part of fifteen verbatim LXX excerpts. Nevertheless, of the book’s approximately seventy-six ‘Free’ segments, about sixty defy conclusive derivation (cf. Figure 4), despite the fact that almost every one of them is introduced with some kind of attestation formula—e.g., λέγει γάρ ἢ γραφή ... (16.5, 9, referring to Enoch), λέγει γάρ ὁ θεός ... (5.12), τὸ πνεύμα κυρίου προφητεύει ... (9.2), λέγει δὲ οὖτως καὶ ὁ προφήτης ... (4.4), γέγραπται γάρ ... (16.6).32

These ‘quotations’ are regularly so ‘jumbled up’—that is, numerous fragmentary segments from wholly unrelated parts of the Septuagint are loosely strung together and liberally interspersed with extraneous material—that one could be excused for surmising that they are either concocted from a vague aural tradition, or the result of confused expropriation.33

It is easily visible in Figure 4 that Barnabas quotes the Psalms six times verbatim, although two of these citations are from Psalm 1, which he renders ‘correctly’, but in two separate parts, omitting only verse two.34 The other four include one nineteen word excerpt from Psalm 110, and three insignificant phrases amounting to no more than sixteen words in all.35

32 ‘... for the Scripture says ...’; ‘... for God says ...’; ‘... the spirit of the Lord prophesies ...’; ‘... and so says even the prophet ...’; ‘... for it is written ...’

33 But see Jay Curry Treat, Anchor Bible Dictionary (as in n.2), 1.611-614.

34 Barnabas 10.10 (citing vs. 1); 11.6-7 (citing vss. 3-6).
The portion from Proverbs is an equally brief, although distinct, phrase of a mere five words. However, although he quotes some 220 words verbatim from the book of Isaiah, almost half are from the four chapters 58-61, with one single longer segment of fifty-six words from chapter one. This means that about sixty-three per cent of Barnabas’ verbatim citations originate primarily from one very restricted section of the LXX. Not surprisingly, then, when his quotations are examined a little more closely and it is borne in mind that his letter betrays a good knowledge of the Septuagint, it emerges that his free ‘manipulation’ of

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35 Barnabas 6.6 (six words from Psalm 22.19 and five from Psalm 118.12); 9.1 (five words from Psalm 18.44).

36 Barnabas 5.4 (citing Proverbs 1.17).

37 Barnabas 3.1, 3; 14.9.

38 It contains allusions to at least the following books: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Psalms, Proverbs, Wisdom, Zechariah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel.
its contents may reveal a personal reluctance, as a Christian, to be subject to the written form of Jewish Scripture.39

These statistics distinctly demonstrate that Clement utilizes LXX citations fourteen times more than Paul does in 1 Corinthians; four times more than Barnabas in his epistle; and twice as much as the author of Hebrews. In fact, no other early Christian letter exists in which the Septuagint is made use of to such an extravagant degree, which, on statistical grounds, makes 1 Clement unique within the early Christian epistolary genre.

But why would the author quote such an overwhelming amount of Scripture? It is certainly not in order to fill up space (cf. Bauer, above)—after all, Clement was not a stressed out undergraduate history student! On the contrary, his epistle bears the distinctive marks of a skilled rhetorician who calculatingly employs these Scripture excerpts as an integral part of his linguistic register.40 His exceptional reliance on the LXX has, of course, long been noted, but is generally not perceived as an intentionally integrated aspect of the author’s rhetoric. One noteworthy exception is Bowe, yet she too treats this only briefly,41 and does not discuss the rhetorical significance of the totality of Clement’s citations. This paper contends, however, that they all, as a whole, constitute a purposeful and indispensable part of the author’s rhetorical approach, in order to create a common ‘neutral’ and sacred basis on which to construct the rationale for his appeal to a congregation over which he is unable to assert any mandatory authority.

39 Similar to Philo, he rejects any rational interpretation of the Jewish LXX. Instead he favours his own form of symbolic exegesis, through which he attempts to change what he knows from the Septuagint into Christian doctrines.

40 ‘Register is what a person is speaking, determined by what he is doing at the time’, M.A.K. Halliday, Language as Social Semiotic (London, 1979 [1978]), 110-11.

That the author was an accomplished rhetorician is manifested, for example, by his ‘rhetoric of concord’ with its concomitant ‘peace’, for this theme reoccurs forcefully throughout the epistle. Thus, ὀμόνοια (concord) appears fourteen\(^{42}\) and εἰρήνη (peace) twenty-two times,\(^{43}\) with two occurrences each of εὐτάκτως (in good order) (37.2, 42.2) and εὐστάθεια (freedom from internal agitation) (61.1, 65.1), as well as one each of διμονοούντας (living in harmony) (62.2) and ὀμοφωνία (harmony) (51.2); the periphrastic simile ὡς ἐξ ἕνος στόματος βοήσωμεν (34.7)\(^{44}\) should also be included in this list. 1 Clement contains, therefore, a total of forty-three direct or indirect references to peace or concord.

For a further sampling of his rhetorical proclivity one might also draw attention to the conclusion of Clement’s letter, which reads:

But send back quickly (ἐν τάχει) to us those whom we have sent, Claudius Ephebus and Valerius Bito, together with Fortunatus, in peace with joy, that they may very soon (Θάττον) report our prayed and longed for peace and harmony, that we may also rejoice the sooner (τάχιον) about your good order (65.1).

This final periphrastic period is ornamented with several interesting tropes. But perhaps its most striking feature is the threefold metacasis, formed from ταχύς (quick), to effect an urgent response: ἐν τάχει ἀναπέμψατε ... ὡς ἐν τάχει, το τάχιον ... \(\ldots\) εἰς τὸ τάχιον ...\(^{45}\) Analogous to this repetition are the three doublets εἰρήνη μετὰ χαράς ... εὐστάθεια

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\(^{42}\) Preface; 2.2; 3.4; 15.1; 16.5; 19.2; 20.1, 9; 22.5; 60.3; 61.1, 2; 62.2; 64.1; 65.1; in hendiadys with διμονοούντας: 20.10, 11; 60.4; 63.2; 65.1.

\(^{43}\) 9.4; 11.2; 20.3; 21.1; 30.3; 34.7; 49.5; 50.5; 61.1; in hendiadys with εἰρήνη: 20.10, 11; 60.4; 63.2; 65.1.

\(^{44}\) ‘... we will call [on God] as with one mouth ...’

\(^{45}\) ‘... send back quickly ... so that more quickly ... in order more quickly to ...’
καὶ ἐπιποθήτην ... εἰρήνην καὶ ὀμόνοιαν,46 which follow one another closely in mid-sentence. It is impossible to avoid the writer’s compelling urgency in his plea for peace, whether linked with χαρά, or climaxing in ὀμόνοια. The hendiadys εὐκταίαν καὶ ἐπιποθήτητιν exalts it as the most longed for state—a state, it may be noted, whose final objective is εὐστάθεια (freedom from internal agitation). This is a weighty word, since it is synonymous with Clement’s central slogan εἰρήνη καὶ ὀμόνοια, and therefore, meaningfully placed at the very end of the letter’s concluding sentence.

Since 1 Clement attempts to persuade the Corinthian Christians to ‘bury their hatchets’, his perspicacious register includes an abundance of citations drawn from the sacred writings which they themselves revered, and thereby establishes a fraternal rapport between himself and his audience, which makes his letter less likely to be perceived as an act of imperious meddling. In fact, Clement repeatedly emphasises that neither he himself, nor the Roman church on whose behalf he makes this entreaty, is in a position to exert any dictatorial power over the Corinthian congregation.47 This is conspicuously unlike Paul, who on an other matter, writes with confident apostolic authority: τοῖς δὲ γεγαμηκόσιν παραγγέλω, οὐκ ἕνω ἀλλὰ δ κύριος ... (1 Corinthians 7.10).48 And similar to him, James, Peter, Jude, and the writers of 1 John and Revelation, all empower their letters with some equally explicit declarations of apostolic authority. Clement, on the other hand, shows no indication of any such ascendancy, which is why he must resort to the most effective means of persuasion of which he is capable: rhetoric—and not mandate!

46 ‘... peace with joy ... prayed-for and longed-for ... peace and concord ...’

47 For example, he uses the third person plural hortatory subjunctive ‘let us ...’ 71 times: 5.12, 3; 7.2.2, 4.2, 5.2; 9.1.1, 2, 3; 13.1, 3; 14.3; 15.1; 17.1; 19.2.3, 3.2; 21.3, 5, 6.2; 23.2; 24.1, 2, 4; 25.1; 27.1, 3; 28.1.2; 29.1; 30.1, 3.2; 31.1.3; 33.1, 5, 7, 8.2; 34.5.2; 35.4; 37.1, 2, 5; 38.3; 46.4; 48.1.3; 50.2.2; 51.1; 55.1; 56.1, 2; 58.1.

48 ‘... but to those who are married I command, not I but the Lord ...’
Clement’s extravagant LXX utilization obviously poses the question as to what extent the letter’s language is affected by that of the Septuagint. One would naturally expect it to betray a considerable linguistic influence from the Judaeo-Hellenic ‘Septuagint Greek’ of that version, yet remarkably few instances of this can be found. Sure, he is ‘guilty’ of using the cognate participle: γινώσκουσα γινώσκω (knowing I know = I know for sure), but this kind of Hebraism occurs only one single time, and even that within a free LXX allusion from the story of Rahab (12.4-6). In actual fact, apart from his citations, one is hard pressed to find any distinct evidence of ‘Septuagint Greek’ amongst the author’s own words. This does not mean that his letter is written in flawless Greek. It isn’t. There are a few awkward lapses which certainly disqualify it from the ‘high’ literary sphere of cultured Greek works. Attention could be drawn, for instance, to the total absence of a single μέν ... δέ construction; or to his mechanical application of over 130 hendiadeis, to name just some.

Nevertheless, having said this, one would be woefully amiss not to stress that the letter contains many very commendatory features, which make it evident that its author does have a cultured Hellenic background. For Clement is very capable to put to effective use various classical terms and elegantly cultivated expressions. For instance, the phrase πρὸς τούτοις καὶ τοὺς μεμαρτυρημένους (17.1) presents an instance of the classical use of πρὸς with the dative case, meaning: ‘in addition to’. Although this occurs six times in the NT as well, there it has always the more frequent sense of near, at, or by. He is also confident enough of his linguistic intellect to include at least four meaningful new words which occur for the first time in his letter—apparently specially coined by him for the occasion: ἐνστερνίζομαι (2.1), αὐτεπαίνετος (30.6),

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50 ‘... in addition to them, also the ones who have been testified to.’

While the word ἵνδάλλομαι (23.2) is not new, Clement uniquely uses the 3rd. sing. imperative middle ἵνδαλλέσθω, whose meaning is difficult to establish within this particular context. Finally, the phrase: διαφύλαξη άθραυστον ό δημιουργός ... (59.2) is an arresting pretension to Atticism, as he links both these classical words together in a rare deesis. It is obvious that Clement's literary style is intrinsically indebted to the Hellenic rhetorical tradition, since his language is imbued with frequent and diverse classical tropes, metaphors, and stylistic ornamentations, all of which he takes skilful advantage of in his effort to persuade the Corinthian believers to restore church harmony.

These linguistic observations clearly beg the question, how to reconcile Clement's clumsy, with his elegant Greek? Ancient literature simply must not be 'pigeonholed' as either 'classical' or 'colloquial' writings. It is certainly apparent that Clement's artless lapses do not compare favourably with the stylish works of sophisticated Atticists, such as the roughly contemporary Aelius Aristeides or Dio Chrysostom, despite

52 'I store away within myself'; 'self-praising'; 'unselfishly'; 'I give an oracular answer'.

53 A. Urbán (ed.), Concordantia in Patres Apostolicos, Primae epistulae Clementis Romani ad Corinthis Concordantia (Hildesheim, 1996), 120. He comments: 'The opinion of the authors can gather in three groups: 1) be haughty, raise or elevate one's-self ('effero', Vizzini; 's'enfler', Jaubert; 'gonfiarsi', Quacquarelli); 2) hesitate, doubt, mistrust ('diffido' Latin Version; 'vacilar', Ruiz Bueno); 3) be deluded, harbour uselessly false hopes ('sich falschen Gedanken hingeben', Dibelius-Koch/Lindemann-Paulsen; 'indulge in caprices and humours' = 'indulge in idle humours', Lightfoot; 'be fanciful', Lake). To be noted that the second group, that of the Latin Version, seems to be more coherent with the next context where the verb διστάζω, 'doubt, hesitate' (οἱ διστάζοντες τῇ ψυχῇ) appears as a synonym with διψυχέω (διψυχώμενοι διψυχεῖ). The third group, on the contrary, seems more coherent from the etymological point of view.' The present writer holds that the spirit of ch. 23 is represented best by the second group.

54 '... the Creator may preserve unbroken ...'
certain similarities which have been observed by some. Nevertheless, this does not mean that the Greek of 1 Clement is colloquial, for if this were the case, how would one account for the strong presence of his learned classical elegance encountered throughout the epistle?

Consequently, the author’s literary competence must lie somewhere in between the two polarised literary extremes; which leads the present writer to propose that the language of Clement’s letter ought to be appreciated as a prime example of a written work belonging to, what Lars Rydbeck has discerningly termed, Zwischenschichtsprasa. In other words, the epistle stands somewhere in between the more sophisticated and the more colloquial Greek of the first century CE. What this means is that the way in which Clement expresses what he writes is determined firstly, by his own literary abilities; and secondly, by his audience and their ‘problem’ that he addresses. Clement did not set out to write a piece of ‘literature’, but a genuine and pragmatic letter of entreaty, in which, by means of his experienced rhetorical insistency and not vainly stylistic literary beauty, he attempts to persuaded his audience to restore peace and harmony among themselves.

In conclusion, it bears reiterating that the plethora of LXX quotations on which Clement builds the rationale of his entreaty (peace and concord), is intended to provide a ‘neutral’ Scripture basis that is perceived sacred by both the Roman and Corinthian groups of believers, and consequently reduces the likelihood of the letter being interpreted as meddlesome interventionism by the empire’s prestigious capital city church. Therefore, the present writer proposes that Clement’s unique ‘Bible quoting’ approach should be acknowledged as an integral part of the author’s resourceful rhetorical repertoire. The language of the epistle itself—despite the huge mass of LXX citations—shows no significant influence of

55 Bowe (as in n.41 above), 65-9, where she refers to discussions by Van Unnik and Eggenberger.

any ‘Septuagint Greek’, but is instead strongly influenced by various traditional Hellenic literary forms, which range in style from awkward to highly elegant. Accordingly, the letter ought to be studied in the light of Zwischenschichtsprosa, an important observation that seems so far to have been overlooked by commentators.

Albrecht Gerber
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