Early Christian Communities between Ideal and Reality

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If Second Clement Really Were a “Sermon,” How Would We Know, and Why Would We Care?

Prolegomena to Analyses of the Writing’s Genre and Community

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έγνυ μὲν γάρ ἀπὸ τῶν ἐς σῶματι παρὼν δὲ τῷ πνεύματι (1 Cor 5:3a)
κατὰ τὴν ἐντευξίν ... ἐν τῇ δε τῇ ἐπιστολῇ (1 Clem. 63.2b)
ἀναγινώσκω ὑμῖν ἐντευξίν (2 Clem. 19.1a)
“That which we call a rose / by any other name would smell as sweet.”

I. Second Clement Is Not a Letter

All scholars, including myself, concur that the so-called Second Letter of Clement is not a letter. The opening verses contain no epistolary prescript, commencing instead with a characterization of God – and, by extension, of Jesus Christ – as “judge” (κριτῆς), and urging that believers not “belittle” Christ or their salvation (2 Clem. 1.1–2). Also, the original conclusion (2 Clement 18), where the author refers to himself as “utterly sinful” (πανθαμαρτωλός) and in “fear of the coming judgment” (18.2), contains no epistolary postscript. Neither does the later addition of 2 Clement 19–20 contain any epistolary features but ends, instead, with a doxology (20.5). Thus, we can all agree that Second Clement is not a letter. One purpose of this paper is to explore what relevance the observation that Second...
Clement is not a letter has for an analysis of the non-epistolary writing’s genre and situation and, more generally, for its interpretation.

II. Construing Second Clement as a “Sermon” or “Homily”

Subsequent to the seminal studies of Theodor Zahn, Adolf von Harnack, and J. B. Lightfoot, scholars have been largely content to distinguish Second Clement from both the author and genre of First Clement, designating the former writing as a “sermon” rather than a letter. Scholars have not, however, given adequate consideration to what it means to call Second Clement a “sermon,” or even to whether this category is apt, let alone helpful, for interpreting the writing.

In 1885, Lightfoot confidently declared, “[T]he so-called Second Epistle [of Clement] is the first example of a Christian homily. The newly recovered ending has set this point at rest for ever. The work is plainly not a letter, but a homily, a sermon.” As recently as 1992, Andreas Lindemann made much the same point: “Daß 2Clem kein Brief, sondern eine Homilie ist, ist in der Forschung immer schon gesehen worden.” The typical reasoning in regard to Second Clement’s genre has been (1) Second Clement is not a letter; (2) therefore, it is a sermon. If one accepts the premise of the disjunctive syllogism that Second Clement is to be classified as either a letter or a sermon, the conclusion can be difficult to resist. An objection not considered in any of the secondary literature on Second Clement is that it would be simplistic to surmise that any non-epistolary writing ostensibly addressed to a congregation was de facto a “sermon.”

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6 In the first excursus below (after the discussion of Lightfoot), I address the confusion caused by widely varying definitions of “sermon” and “homily” in the secondary literature.

7 Lightfoot refers to the eleventh-century Greek ms published in 1875 by Philotheos Bryennios and, in particular, to 2 Clement 19–20, which are attested in that ms (but not in Codex Alexandrinus).

8 Lightfoot, Apostolic Fathers, I/2:194, emphasis original.

9 Lindemann, Clemensbriefe, 190.

10 A disjunctive syllogism is an argument postulating that ‘x’ is either (a) or (b); ‘x’ is not (a); therefore, it is (b).

11 Historiographically, scholars would want to establish criteria for judging whether a writing that claims to be a “sermon” was, in fact, delivered as a sermon to a Christian congregation and, moreover, if such criteria could be applied to additional writings, such as Second Clement, that do not even claim to be sermons. Establishment of such criteria remains a desideratum in studies of ancient Jewish and Christian sermons.
In this essay, I challenge several scholars’ rationale for presenting “sermon” (or “homily”) as an apt designation for Second Clement and question whether this designation helps to interpret the writing or to define its Sitz im Leben as a particular liturgical context (that is, as a sermon delivered in a worship service). I begin with brief observations about variety in early Christian epistolography and highlight similarities between the Sitze im Leben (plural), on the one hand, of a letter read to a congregation and, on the other hand, of a “sermon” read to a congregation. I then review the discussions by eight scholars of Second Clement’s genre and conclude that the status quaestionis needs to be revisited. Finally, I suggest that attention to certain similarities in micro-genre between Second Clement and certain types of ancient letters offers a promising way forward.

III. The Remarkably Similar Sitze im Leben of Reading a “Letter” and Reading a “Sermon”

Several considerations collectively provide a conceptual framework for my critique of “sermon” as an apt designation for Second Clement.

1. Orality and Literacy

Virtually all early Christian literature was composed to be read aloud. Paul, for example, places the Thessalonians under oath to read his letter to the whole assembly: “I place you under oath (ἐνορκίζω) in the Lord that this letter be read to all the brothers (πᾶσιν τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς)” (1 Thess 5:27). When an early Christian letter is read in an assembly, the author is, in effect, preaching to the congregation through the person who reads the letter.

Positing a binary distinction, then, between a letter composed for a congregation and a sermon composed for a congregation is modern, questionable and, possibly, anachronistic. We have no information from the first, second, or third centuries that could corroborate (or contradict) such a distinction between the role and form of a letter or a “sermon” in early Christian literature. Both letters and “sermons” would have had equally oral functions in that they were composed to be read to one or more congregations.
2. Unusual Letters: The Authentic Letters of Paul

With the exception of Philemon, Paul's letters are exceptionally long relative to other Hellenistic Greek letters. Judith Lieu calls attention to this point when she refers to a writing entitled On Style to highlight what is not a real letter:

By the standards of the time most of Paul's letters would have been subject to the judgement of Demetrius On Style [§228] made about this time on Plato's letters, that "they should not really be called letters but books with a greeting prefixed." A Pauline letter is recognizable as a letter primarily in the opening and closing verses – that is, in rather small portions of the overall writing. Given the obvious differences between Paul's overgrown letters and their stunted Hellenistic counterparts, Judith Lieu appropriately questions the wisdom of letting Paul's letters provide "the starting point for the analysis of the New Testament letters as letters." Especially in the body of his letters, Paul bends and expands the usual epistolary genre as he makes any number of context-specific appeals to his congregations. A Pauline letter, then, has the function of an admonition from Paul to the assembly – much like the function a sermon would have if read by someone other than the author. Paul is aware of this function when he announces to the Corinthians, “For though absent (ἀπείμι) in body, I am present (πάρειμι) in spirit” (1 Cor 5:3a; cf. 16:5–12). Udo Schnelle writes about the “apostolic parousia” (or “presence”) of Paul that is effected through the apostle’s letters: “Since Paul thinks of himself being present in the congregation either personally or by means of a messenger, or through his letter, the letter brings his apostolic authority to bear on the congregation ...”

One can ask, then, what the difference in genre would be between the appeals in a Hellenistic letter's modified form (for example, in a Pauline letter), on the one hand, and a collection of appeals lacking an epistolary prescript and postscript, on the other hand. I would suggest that, in terms of the writings’ overall genre characteristics, the differences could be rather small. Without abrogating

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12 Gk.: περὶ ἑρμηνείας (ca. 1st c. b.c.e. to 2nd c. e.), attributed (incorrectly) to Demetrius Phalereus (3rd c. b.c.e.). Lieu’s point holds even more so for First Clement.
14 Lieu, Epistles, 49; the former emphasis (above) is added; the latter is Lieu’s. On a prevalent trend in scholarship since Adolf Deissmann, Lieu, Epistles, 49, surmises, “The results [of starting with Paul’s letters] have been misleading and it might be better to recognise that it is 2 and 3 John which can most fruitfully be compared with the papyri letters, and primarily 3 John.”
those differences, I contend that possible similarities also merit attention. This is not to question the importance of epistolary features for interpreting letters. Rather, I question the significance of a lack of epistolary features for interpreting non-epistolary writings.

### 3. Pseudepigraphic Pauline Letters

One can wonder if letters written pseudonymously in Paul’s (or another apostle’s) name were actually intended to be sent and read as letters. True, they have the form of a (modified Pauline) letter. But did they have the function of a letter? An assessment of the difference in form between a (modified Pauline) pseudonymous letter and an anonymous, non-epistolary appeal likewise merits attention.

### 4. Hortatory Writings without Epistolary Features

Some early Christian authors – most notably, the authors of Hebrews and First John – dispensed with the formal features of an epistolary prescript and/or postscript. The *Sitze im Leben* of a letter and of an appeal written to be read to a congregation are quite similar. Would the original hearers even have noticed much of a difference?

As an example of the need for terminological precision, I mention briefly Georg Strecker’s remark on the genre of the Johannine epistles. On the one hand, I could concur with Strecker that, if one grants his inference that First John addresses “multiple congregations,” it would make sense to characterize the text as “a homiletic writing addressed to the whole [Johannine] church.” Strecker correctly recognizes that a non-epistolary writing read to one or more congregations, where the author is not present to deliver the message, would have a homiletic function. On the other hand, Strecker’s characterization of First John as “a homily in the form of a letter” exacerbates the confusion surrounding the category of “sermon” or “homily” in relation to ancient letters.

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16 G. Strecker, *The Johannine Letters: A Commentary on 1, 2, and 3 John*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 3, emphasis original: “In both form and content, 1 John must be categorized differently from 2 and 3 John… . [Unlike 2 and 3 John,] 1 John lacks the essential marks of a letter… . [Those addressed in 1 John] apparently belong to multiple congregations that make up the community as a whole, rather than to a particular local congregation. From this point of view it seems that one should regard the writing as a combination of letter and sermon, and designate it a *homily in the form of a letter, a homiletic writing* addressed to the whole church, but without thereby eradicating the immediate horizon of the Johannine community.”

17 Ibid. See the citation in the preceding footnote. See further Donfried, *Setting of Second Clement*, 44–5.
IV. The Genre of Second Clement: A Selective Forschungsbericht

The preceding section problematized common assumptions about differences between a letter and a “sermon.” It remains to bring these remarks into conversation with views on Second Clement’s genre. To show how common assumptions about differences between a letter and a “sermon” routinely contribute to misunderstandings of Second Clement’s genre, I review the work of J. B. Lightfoot (1885), Holt Graham (1965), Karl Paul Donfried (1974), Klaus Wengst (1984), Andreas Lindemann (1992), Wilhelm Pratscher (2007), Paul Parvis (2007), and Christopher Tuckett (2012). Each of these offers much to appreciate in his analysis of Second Clement, but with the exception of Donfried, who resists the designations “sermon” and “homily” for the writing, none offers a satisfactory rationale for why they construe Second Clement as a “sermon.” My interaction with their work gives rise to three excurses:

I. Assumptions about the Role of a Single, Prepared “Sermon” in Early Christian Worship (Justin, First Apology 67)

II. Genre and Accountability: “Sermon” as an Excuse for Objectionable Theology?

III. 2 Clem. 19.1 Points to an Acceptance of 2 Clement 1–18 among “the Scriptures”

These excurses critique in greater detail assertions that Second Clement is a “sermon” and consider possible implications of using “sermon” as an interpretive category.

1. J. B. Lightfoot

Lightfoot’s comprehensive five-volume commentary, The Apostolic Fathers, was a considerable achievement in its day and, in subsequent generations, has retained its status as a learned and influential work. Lightfoot refers to First Clement as “The Epistle of S. Clement”18 and to Second Clement as “An Ancient Homily.”19 The designations are helpful insofar as they highlight that First Clement and Second Clement stem from different authors and occasions.

Above, I mentioned Lightfoot’s conviction that it has been set “at rest for ever” that Second Clement “is plainly not a letter, but a homily, a sermon.”20 Lightfoot supports this genre classification with two arguments. First, “The speaker addresses his hearers more than once towards the close as ‘brothers and sisters.’”21 Second, the admonitions “to remember the commandments of the Lord”

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19 Ibid., I/2:191–261. Presumably for clarity, on p. 189 Lightfoot refers to “The so-called Second Epistle of S. Clement to the Corinthians.” Cf. his designation of Second Clement as “an ancient homily by an unknown author” (pp. 306–16).
21 Ibid., I/2:194–5 at 194, referring to 2 Clem. 19.1; 20.2.

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(2 Clem. 17.3) and “to pay attention to what is written” (19.1) find a roughly contemporary analogy in Justin Martyr, who “describes the simple services of the Christians in his time.”

Both of Lightfoot’s arguments are dubious. First, imploring one’s “brethren” (ἀδελφοί) is also a common feature of early Christian letters (!), including those of Paul, Ignatius, Polycarp, and First Clement. Further, the vocative ἀδελφοί occurs throughout Second Clement (1.1; 4.3; 5.1, 5; 7.1; 8.4; 9.11; 10.1; 11.5; 12.5; 13.1; 14.1, 3; 16.1), not just in the final chapters that were added later (ἀδελφοὶ καὶ ἀδελφαί, 19.1; 20.2). Further, the vocative ἀδελφοί occurs in other non-epistolary writings, such as the Martyrdom of Polycarp and the Shepherd of Hermas. Thus, the vocative ἀδελφοί [καὶ ἀδελφαί] does not distinguish Second Clement from early Christian epistolary literature. Nor does it suggest that Second Clement originated as a sermon. On the contrary, the writing’s many admonitions directed to ἀδελφοί could be taken as a similarity between Second Clement and certain early Christian letters.

Second, appealing to Justin’s First Apology 67, Lightfoot argues for its similarities to the setting of a sermon posited for Second Clement. Justin describes Christian gatherings in which Scriptures are read and a leader gives instructions that the hearers are to carry out. Inasmuch as Justin’s descriptions are quite general and succinct, however, the recourse to Justin is unpersuasive. Nor do Justin’s admonitions support Lightfoot’s inference of “simple [worship] services,” to the exclusion of possibly more ritually or liturgically complex ones. Justin’s descriptions could, hypothetically, be applied to any number of Sitze im Leben – even to the reading of an early Christian letter within a congregation. The general descriptions of First Apology 67, then, do not support the inference that Second Clement was a “sermon.” I return to this conclusion below in the first excursus.

Particularly curious is Lightfoot’s binary approach to the question of genre, with consideration given only to the options of letter and “sermon.” Simply put, we are not on terra firma with the assumption that any early Christian non-epistolary hortatory writing was composed as a “sermon.” The same assertion could, equally dubiously, be made for other non-epistolary writings. Would it make sense, or be helpful, to posit a sermonic context, for example, for the Martyrdom of Polycarp or the Shepherd of Hermas, both of which offer numerous admonitions to their

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22 Ibid., I/2:195. See immediately below on Justin, First Apology 67.
23 E.g., the vocative ἀδελφοί in Rom 1:13; 1 Cor 1:10; 2 Cor 1:8; 13:11; Gal 3:15; Phil 1:12; 1 Thess 2:1; 2 Thess 2:1; Philm 7 (ἀδελφά); Jas 1:16; 2 Pet 1:10; Ign. Eph. 10.3; Ign. Rom. 6.2; Pol. Phil. 3.1; 1 Clem. 1.1; 14.1; 33.1; Barn. 2.10; 3.6.
24 See Mart. Pol. 1.1; 4.1; 22.1; Herm. Vis. 2.4.1 (8.1); 3.1.1, 4 (9.1, 4); 3.10.3 (18.3); 4.1.1, 5, 8 (22.1, 5, 8). See also Heb 3:1; 1 John 3:13.
25 See further Tuckett, 2 Clement, 21: “Whether 2 Clement can fit this model and/or pattern precisely is, however, probably doubtful.”
respective audiences and even address them as ἀδελφοί. Yet these writings present themselves neither as a letter nor as a sermon. Both the Martyrdom of Polycarp and the Shepherd of Hermas could (if hypothetically) have found use in admonishing gatherings of the faithful. The question would remain, however, What is gained from such a reading strategy, construing a sermonic use of a non-epistolary writing? In any case, the non-epistolary Second Clement could likewise have given many admonitions to ἀδελφοί without, in fact, having been composed as a sermon. Scholarship has not yet tested this possibility, let alone acknowledged it.

In regard to the author of Second Clement, Lightfoot takes issue with Harnack’s proposal that a layperson delivered this sermon. In the early church, Lightfoot says, the sermon was usually given by “the chief ecclesiastical officer of the congregation,” and the vocative ἀδελφοί is only “a very common rhetorical figure, by which the speaker places himself on a level with the audience” in Second Clement. This assessment, too, may be viewed as inconclusive. Lightfoot successfully casts doubt on Harnack’s proposal, but his counterproposal is merely a generalization based on the premise that Second Clement was a sermon. Lightfoot fails to show that the author of Second Clement was indeed a recognized authority within his congregation, let alone in the church at large. In fact, Lightfoot’s positions about Second Clement’s genre and author raise as many questions as they attempt to answer. As we shall see, an uncritical acceptance of Lightfoot’s arguments by numerous subsequent scholars persists, to the detriment of scholarship on Second Clement.

Excursus I: Assumptions about the Role of a Single, Prepared “Sermon” in Early Christian Worship (Justin, First Apology 67)

The ways that scholars apply the terms “sermon” and “homily” to Second Clement vary considerably. For example, whereas Lightfoot uses the terms synonymously, Donfried and Pratscher differentiate between them. Because of this varied use, the present essay does not operate on the basis of a single definition of “sermon” or “homily” as a possible genre designation for Second Clement. However defined, to modern readers a “sermon” tends to connote a single mes-

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27 See note 23 (above) and my counterargument to Lightfoot, Apostolic Fathers, I/2:194–5, that the vocative ἀδελφοί does not indicate a sermonic function for Second Clement.
28 Lightfoot, Apostolic Fathers, I/2:196.
29 Ibid., I/2:195.
30 See above on Lightfoot, Apostolic Fathers, I/2:194 and below, on Donfried, Setting of Second Clement, 26, and Pratscher, Der zweite Clemensbrief, 25. See further the discussion in Tuckett, 2 Clement, 20.
31 Since we do not have adequate information from the early church, it is particularly important to avoid presupposing false dichotomies – for example, Was a sermon short or long? Written or extemporaneous? Hortatory or exegetical? Theological or practical? Rhetorical or spontaneous? Polemical or pastoral?
sage written down in advance (or afterward), and delivered as a regular part of Christian worship. Unexamined in much scholarship, however, is whether this view of Christian worship was normative or even if it is fitting as a description of Second Clement’s Sitz im Leben. Indeed, the evidence is decidedly mixed.

A strikingly different liturgical praxis appears in 1 Corinthians 14. At least among the congregation(s) in Corinth, Paul presents many believers as offering some kind of message for the congregation as a whole: “Whenever you come together, each one (ἕκαστος) has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation” (1 Cor 14:26). Even if Paul uses ἕκαστος hyperbolically, he describes virtually the opposite of a meeting organized around a single “sermon.” He also mandates that two or three prophets are to “speak” and that the other prophets (οἱ ἄλλοι) are to “evaluate” what is said (λαλείτωσαν καὶ … διακρινέτωσαν, 14:29). The Corinthian prophets apparently spoke spontaneously, since Paul orders that two prophets not speak simultaneously.32

Paul’s descriptions need not be taken as normative for all Pauline congregations, let alone for later second-century congregations. Nor should his description be dismissed as an aberration. Noteworthy is his mediating position that only two or three prophets are to “speak.” In Corinth, it was apparently acceptable to have a larger cohort of prophets participating, at times with competing, cacophonous and incomprehensible results. Neither Corinthian praxis nor Paul’s corrective stance attests to the role of a prepared “sermon” in Corinthian Christian worship. One might even wonder to what extent Paul’s lengthy œuvres to the Corinthians would have been featured among so many assorted messages from the Lord.

The scene in 1 Corinthians 14 contrasts markedly with the one presented in First Apology 67. According to Justin, a reading from the apostles’ “memoirs” (ἀπομνημονεύματα) or the prophets’ “writings” (συγγράμματα, 67.3) precedes teaching and admonitions from the group’s “president” (ὁ προεστώς, 67.4). The president’s message is to be based on the writings of the apostles or prophets. Remarkably, though, Justin claims neither that the president’s message was prepared in advance nor that it was ever written down. First Apology 67 thus offers no evidence whatsoever for the role of a written “sermon” in the mid-second-century church.

Moreover, Justin’s (apologetic) account shows obvious parallels to instruction in a philosophical school, where the reading of an esteemed philosopher’s writings customarily preceded an exposition of, and even admonitions based on, those writings. Such parallels in First Apology 67 are understandable, since, after his conversion to Christianity, Justin continued to identify as a “philosopher” and, as a sign of this vocation, retained his philosopher’s cloak (Dial. 1.7). There-

32 See 1 Cor 14:30. Also, a prophet apparently stands when speaking. Paul instructs that the speaking prophet is to sit before another prophet stands to commence with a different message (14:30), so that all can learn and be encouraged (14:31).
fore, scholars should be cautious about generalizations drawn from *First Apology* 67 and applied to second-century liturgical practices. In this excursus, I dismiss neither 1 Corinthians 14 nor *First Apology* 67 as merely anecdotal. Rather, I reject the inference that *First Apology* 67 corroborates the claim for a liturgical function of *Second Clement* as a “sermon.”

2. Holt H. Graham (and Robert M. Grant)

In the interest of space, I skip ahead 80 years to Holt H. Graham’s 1965 commentary on *Second Clement*. In the very short introduction, Graham reflects some questionable presuppositions about the character of this purported sermon and its practical focus, and highlights its differences from Melito of Sardis’s homily. Referring to the author of *Second Clement* as “the preacher,” Graham writes, “The preacher is no theologian, as his efforts in chapters 9 and 14 make clear. He is, instead, intensely practical, and insists on repentance as expressed in self-control, abstinence and continence, and in good works.” Graham seems to presume that a “preacher” could not also be a competent “theologian.” To what extent an author could be both a “theologian” and a practical “preacher” ought not to be prejudiced by a presupposed and, possibly, anachronistic standard.

Later, Graham distinguishes between a “sermon” like *Second Clement* and a “homily” like that of Melito of Sardis: “As a sermon, ... 2 Clement lacks the rhetorical and logical skill evidenced in Hebrews or in the paschal homily of Melito of Sardis. ... Repentance is a central theme in [2 Clement] 8–18, but there is no clear logical development.” That Graham highlights such differences between *Second Clement* and Melito’s homily actually weakens the usefulness of using “sermon” to describe what(ever) *Second Clement* may be. Moreover, the sermon genre itself remains a scholarly desideratum, as does the purported rhetorical skill of said genre.

Graham asserts, then, that the author of *Second Clement* was a “preacher,” albeit not possessed of the theological or rhetorical acumen reflected in Melito’s paschal homily or in the book of Hebrews. One might also point out that, for the mid-second century, what we actually know about the (typical?) form, rhetoric, content, and context of Christian sermons is precious little. Thus, the contrasts that Graham draws between *Second Clement*, on the one hand, and Melito and Hebrews, on the other hand, are based on a sliver of anecdotal evidence.

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35 Graham, *Second Clement*, 109, emphasis added. See above on Harnack’s characterization of the author of *Second Clement* as a layperson.
36 Graham, *Second Clement*, 110, emphases added.
As a footnote to Graham’s position, I mention briefly Robert M. Grant’s 1992 *Anchor Bible Dictionary* article. Thirty years earlier, Grant had collaborated with Graham in a commentary series on the Apostolic Fathers. Largely repeating positions Graham had held at the time of that collaboration, Grant writes in the *ABD* article that *Second Clement* “is not a letter but a sermon on self-control, repentance, and judgment.”\(^{37}\) He adds that *Second Clement* “is simply one example of a ‘garden variety’ [second] century sermon, rhetorically inferior to the work of Melito of Sardis and Hippolytus.”\(^{38}\) One could ask what basis there is to designate *Second Clement* as typical (or “garden variety”) of anything in the second (or third) century. In any case, Grant accurately summarizes the *communis opinio* at the time the *Anchor Bible Dictionary* appeared.

3. **Karl Paul Donfried**

In his revised 1968 Heidelberg dissertation, Karl Donfried devotes an entire monograph to *Second Clement* – a rare allotment in scholarship. His attention to the question of genre\(^{39}\) is even more rare. Distinguishing a “sermon” and a “homily,” he dismisses rather quickly the term “sermon” as applicable to *Second Clement*: “To define 2 Clement as a ‘sermon’ is not helpful since we know virtually nothing about the contours of such a genre in the first century A.D.”\(^{40}\) Donfried refers only to the first century because he assigns to the writing an extraordinarily early date ca. 98–100 C.E.\(^{41}\) Nonetheless, his point that “we know virtually nothing” about early Christian sermons would hold also for the second and even the third century.

Donfried gives considerably more attention to dispensing with “homily” as an apt designation for *Second Clement*.\(^{42}\) I agree wholeheartedly with his forceful statement that “the term ‘homily’ is so vague and ambiguous that it should be withdrawn until its literarily generic legitimacy has been demonstrated.”\(^{43}\) Donfried criticizes Hartwig Thyen’s form-critical study on the (supposed) style of the Jewish-Hellenistic homily, a study that has been influential in NT scholarship that treats the (again, supposed) form of the early Christian homily.\(^{44}\)

\(^{38}\) Ibid.
\(^{40}\) Ibid., 26.
\(^{41}\) Ibid., 1; see further on this point below.
\(^{42}\) Ibid., 26–34. Among several valuable observations and critiques in this discussion is Donfried’s salient point (p. 27) that, in Xenophon, ὁμιλέω refers to “a teacher’s lectures” and ὁμιλία to “instruction.”
\(^{43}\) Ibid., 26.
\(^{44}\) Ibid., 27–8, on H. Thyen, *Der Stil der jüdisch-hellenistischen Homilie*, FRLANT 47 (Göttingen: Vandenhoek & Ruprecht, 1955).
Donfried justifiably objects that Thyen “never defines homily in terms of literary form.” Even more devastating is Donfried’s criticism that “Thyen’s method is both arbitrary and circular: he selects writings which he thinks are of homiletic character, proceeds to analyze them, and then says, he has carefully analyzed the form of the homily!” Donfried concludes,

In view of the fact that the generic legitimacy of the concept ‘homily’ has yet to be demonstrated and [that continued use of the term] is more likely to confuse than to illuminate, it will be a wise methodological procedure to define 2 Clement in light of its own self-description.

Does Donfried offer a helpful counterproposal to the designations “sermon” and “homily”? Unfortunately, not. Building on a brief discussion of 2 Clem. 15.1, 17.3 and 19.1, he concludes, “2 Clement is a hortatory address.” Besides stating the obvious, that Second Clement is a “hortatory” writing, Donfried does not propose a real alternative to the problematic category of “sermon.” Nor does his designation “hortatory address” offer any more promise of “generic legitimacy” than does the equally problematic designation “homily.” If, for Shakespeare’s Juliet, “that which we call a rose / by any other name would smell as sweet,” what Donfried designates as “a hortatory address” would, in a Christian assembly, be equally homiletic or sermonic. It is somewhat surprising, perhaps also inconsistent, that Donfried refers to the author of Second Clement as “the preacher.” As discussed above, virtually all early Christian literature, whatever its genre, when read to a congregation, would function as an “address” or, however constrained, a “sermon.”

Donfried’s objections to categorizing Second Clement as a “sermon” or a “homily” have largely fallen on deaf ears. This might be due to the fact that few, if any, scholars have been persuaded by his constructive – and creative – proposal that Second Clement was a “hortatory discourse” composed by one of the recently reinstated Corinthian elders ca. 98–100 C.E. as a follow-up to First Clement.

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45 Donfried, 
46 Ibid., 28. Also problematic, according to Donfried (p. 28), is Thyen’s “uncritical dependence upon [Rudolf] Bultmann’s 1910 doctoral dissertation, Der Stil der paulinischen Predigt und die kynisch-stoische Diatribe [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht],” where Bultmann attempted to show that the Cynic-Stoic diatribe as a fixed genre [sic] and a genre that offers an analogy for Paul’s preaching.
47 Ibid., 34, referring to 2 Clem. 15.1, 17.3 and 19.1, which he discusses on pp. 34–6; I give attention to these passages later in this paper.
48 Ibid., 34–6 at 35.
49 See above on Ibid., 26, 34.
50 Shakespeare, Romeo and Juliet, Act II, Scene II, emphasis mine. See the note below on Donfried’s (Setting of Second Clement, 1) central thesis that a presbyter would read Second Clement to the Corinthian congregation, as well as Donfried’s remark (p. 19) that it “was composed and written prior to the worship service and which had just been read to the congregation.”
51 Donfried, Setting of Second Clement, e. g., 160.
was read to the church in Corinth. Whatever the reason for scholarship’s ignoring of Donfried’s insights on the problem of Second Clement’s genre, the result is unfortunate and somewhat baffling. Donfried’s unpersuasive proposals do not annul his valid critique of what was four decades ago – and remains today – the scholarly consensus of construing Second Clement as a “sermon” or “homily.”

4. Klaus Wengst

In his 1984 commentary, Klaus Wengst maintains that Second Clement is best characterized “als ‘Mahnrede’ (hortatory address),” a designation identical to Donfried’s “hortatory address.” Unlike Donfried, however, he does not reject the category of “sermon” for the writing. Wengst helpfully points out that any use of “homily” or “sermon” applied to Second Clement should not draw upon an anachronistic understanding of these terms. Accordingly, Wengst cautiously delineates a rather minimalist definition of an early Christian homily or sermon:


Wengst’s caution in regard to referring to Second Clement as a “sermon” or “homily” is laudable. Since we know so little about the actual setting and form of early Christian sermons, he finds it prudent to envision only certain basic details – a community gathering, in which someone speaks to the congregation with a message that follows, and is somehow based upon, a reading from Scripture. However appropriate, such a general understanding of a “sermon” does limit its explanatory power as a genre designation and therefore carries little weight for Wengst’s observation that “Beide Punkte treffen auf den 2. Klemensbrief zu.”

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52 Ibid., 1: “It is our thesis that shortly after their reinstatement these presbyters wrote a hortatory discourse, known to us as 2 Clement, which one of them read to the Corinthian congregation assembled for worship.” Despite the discussion entitled ‘The Origin of 2 Clement’ (pp. 1–15), Donfried’s (central!) thesis is mostly stated rather than argued (pp. 1–2), as it is accompanied by several irrelevant, or only tangentially relevant, discussions (pp. 2–15). Moreover, Donfried’s often insightful commentary on significant portions of the writing (‘The Intention of Second Clement’, pp. 98–179) considers neither how the text supports the posited scenario of a Corinthian audience ca. 98–100 C.E. nor how a reading of the text is enriched by this scenario. Donfried ignores the particular setting for which he argues even when summarizing his analysis of 2 Clement 1–18 (pp. 179–81; cf. 98–179, 1–2).


54 WENGST, Zweiter Klemensbrief, 215.

55 Ibid., 215–16.
This view poses a difficulty similar to that in the general similarities between Second Clement and Justin’s First Apology 67, to which Lightfoot calls attention. More helpful, then, is Wengst’s initial characterization of Second Clement “als ‘Mahnrede’ (hortatory address),” although, at least to me, the term “Mahnung” (appeal) is clearer than the “Rede” (speech).

Wengst next considers which passage of Scripture (“Bibeltext”) was read prior to the message of Second Clement (cf. 2 Clem. 19.1). Again with caution, he favors the argument of Rudolf Knopf that the text was Isaiah 54–66. In a search for an esteemed “Bible text” within 2 Clement 1–18, Isaiah 54 would perhaps be one of the better candidates. At 2 Clem. 2.1, the author cites Isa 54:1 (cf. Gal 4:27), and then comments (allegorically) on the verse (2 Clem. 2.2–3). At best, however, Knopf and Wengst’s hypothesis is speculative, not a confirmation that Second Clement had a homiletic function following a reading of OT Scripture.

Better advice is voiced by Daniel Völter: “Aber welcher Schrifttext das gewesen ist, darüber braucht man sich nicht den Kopf zu zerbrechen.”

5. Andreas Lindemann

Above I mentioned Andreas Lindemann’s observation in 1992 that scholars have “always” (“immer”) viewed Second Clement as a homily or sermon. In his discussion of genre (Gattung), Lindemann prefers the designation “Lesepredigt,” since 2 Clem. 19.1 (ἀναγινώσκω ὑμῖν ἔντευξιν) refers to the reading of an “appeal” to a Christian congregation.

The scholarly consensus on Second Clement’s genre, as reflected in the work of Lindemann and others, does not stand up to several objections. First, a “sermon” or “homily” is not a fixed genre but a Sitz im Leben. By definition, a work can be identified as part of a particular genre when that work can be shown to

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58 Below I argue that, in the case of Second Clement, Wengst’s scenario is implausible. As an alternative explanation, I suggest that 2 Clement 1–18 could have been the “Scripture” to which the later addition of 2 Clement 19–20 refers.
59 D. Völter, Die älteste Predigt aus Rom, 24. Likewise Pratscher, Der Zweite Clemensbrief, 27 (“Doch sind diese Versuche zum Scheitern verurteilt”), as well as Donfried, Setting of Second Clement, 14, and Tuckett, 2 Clement, 22. I return to this point below.
60 See above on Lindemann, Clemensbriefe, 190: “Homilie ... ist in der Forschung immer schon gesehen worden.” The generalization “immer” is not entirely accurate, however, as even a casual reading of Donfried, Setting of Second Clement, 25–34, would indicate.
61 Lindemann, Clemensbriefe, 190. As mentioned above, although it is certainly correct to state that Second Clement is not a letter, I question the reasoning that, since the work is not a letter, it is to be regarded as a “homily,” and, furthermore, that the alternate designation of “homily” somehow illustrates our understanding of Second Clement.
embed literary features common to a particular body of literature (for example, wisdom literature, ancient letters, apocalypses). But one could not with confidence name any distinctive literary features that would be regularly included in a message or exhortation that was delivered orally to a Christian congregation and was preserved, either before or afterward, in writing. Indeed, our knowledge of the written *sermo* in this early period would seem to exclude any such generalizations.62

Second, if a later addition to *Second Clement* (chaps. 19–20) has as its *Sitz im Leben* an appeal (ἔντευξις) read to a congregation, that *Sitz im Leben* attests to the *reception*, not necessarily to the original purpose, of 2 *Clement* 1–18. To infer, without an accompanying argument, that the *Sitz im Leben* of an addition was also the occasion for the original text would be dubious. In fact, nothing in 2 *Clement* 1–18 suggests that the writing is a sermon.

Third, use of the term ἔντευξις (19.1) does not imply that this, or any other, writing is a sermon. In his lexicon, Frederick W. Danker illustrates this point, highlighting occurrences of ἔντευξις toward the end of both *First* and *Second Clement*: “[T]he letter [from] the church at Rome to the church at Corinth calls itself a petition, appeal [1 Clem. 63:2]; so does the sermon known as [Second Clement] (19:1).”63 In *First Clement’s* antepenultimate verse, the author(s) refer to the ἔντευξις given in the letter:

> For you will give us great joy and gladness if you obey what we have written through the Holy Spirit and root out the unlawful anger of your jealousy, in accordance with the appeal (κατὰ τὴν ἔντευξιν) for peace and harmony that we have made in this letter (ἐν τῇδε τῇ ἐπιστολῇ).64

By itself, then, ἔντευξις in 2 *Clem*. 19.1 does not indicate the form or setting of a sermon, as distinguished, for example, from the form or setting of a letter. If anything, the term suggests that the (later) author of 2 *Clem*. 19.1 understood *Second Clement* as a writing whose genre or purpose was quite close to that of *First Clement*.

Fourth, the *Sitz im Leben* suggested by the reading of an ἔντευξις (19.1) is not particularly different from that *Sitz im Leben* posited for the reading of early Christian letters. Earlier, I pointed out that, if a letter (for example, from Paul) is intended to be read to a congregation by someone other than the author (see above on 1 Thess 5:27), the difference between this *Sitz im Leben* and that of a non-epistolary “appeal” (19.1) which came to be read by someone else to a congregation would be rather small, if not negligible. Notably, nothing in 2 *Clement* 1–18 or 19–20 suggests that the author is reading *his own* appeal to a congregation.

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63 BDAG, 339, s. v. ἔντευξις.
64 1 Clem. 63.2 (ET M. Holmes).

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Excursus II: Genre and Accountability: “Sermon” as an Excuse for Objectionable Theology?

A specification of genre, even if vague or questionable, can – indeed, at times, appropriately – serve as a basis for additional observations and insights. Lindemann’s designation of Second Clement as a “Lesepredigt” has implications for his evaluation of the work’s theology. He helpfully summarizes numerous sharp criticisms, especially as voiced by German, Protestant exegetes, of Second Clement’s ostensible “works-righteousness” theology. Although Lindemann does not defend that theology, he attempts to mitigate the criticism of it, urging that Second Clement is not to be taken too seriously, since, after all, it is not a letter but only a sermon:

Naturally, we applaud Lindemann for urging a less dogmatically severe judgment of Second Clement’s theology. We can also, if hypothetically, grant the possibility that a more theologically accomplished author could have chosen to express himself or herself more simply in a sermon. But in the case of Second Clement, we have no information about how much more theologically astute this author may have been. Moreover, Lindemann’s supposition runs aground with the consideration of the similar Sitze im Leben of a letter and of a sermon read to a congregation. Both Lindemann’s purportedly simple sermon and a carefully crafted letter would have to be digested by a congregation partially comprised of simple-minded people. It would thus be questionable to assume that an early Christian letter was (always) “sorgfältig ausgearbeitet” and that one could not expect from a (mere) sermon a serious “theological” text.

Additionally, at the beginning of Second Clement, the argumentation is both theological and well organized so that, with good reason, one could characterize 1.1–8 as “ein sorgfältig ausgearbeitetes Argument.” However practically

65 Lindemann, Clemensbriefe, 195–6. See also Donfried’s concluding judgment that Second Clement “leads … in the direction of a legalism characteristic of the third century Western church” (Setting of Second Clement, 181, emphasis added [the monograph’s final sentence]).
66 Earlier in his remarks, Lindemann, Clemensbriefe, 190, seems to use the terms “Homilie” and “Predigt” interchangeably, preferring for 2 Clement the designation “Lesepredigt.”
67 Ibid., 196. Above, we saw that Graham (Second Clement, p. 110) arrived at much the same conclusion.
68 In response to an earlier version of this paper, A. Lindemann (on 27.09.2012) kindly offered clarification of his meaning in his distinction between “einer auf ein Thema konzentrierten Predigt” and “einem sorgfältig ausgearbeiteten Brief.”
69 See J. A. Kelhofer, ‘Reciprocity as Salvation: Christ as Salvific Patron and the Corresponding “Payback” Expected of Christ’s Earthly Clients according to the Second Letter of
orientated, the subsequent appeals in 2 Clement 2–18 need not be seen as less theological, rhetorical, or confrontational. For these reasons, I find Lindemann's distinction between a sermon and a letter unhelpful as a basis for assessing Second Clement's theology.

6. Wilhelm Pratscher

In his learned and generally comprehensive contribution to the Kommentar zu den Apostolischen Vätern series, Wilhelm Pratscher devotes three pages to the question of genre (Gattung).70 Defining “Homilie” as “eine Vers für Vers vorgehende Predigt über einen Text,” Pratscher is on firm ground to discard the option for Second Clement.71 Pratscher also appropriately excludes from consideration “missionary sermon” (Missionspredigt) as an apt genre designation, since Second Clement clearly addresses insiders, not outsiders.72

After pointing out that Second Clement is not a verse-by-verse “homily,” Pratscher makes a case for the writing’s “Predigtcharakter.” The writing’s homiletic character is “clear,” he claims, due to the frequency with which the author addresses the hearers.73 As examples of addressing the audience, Pratscher calls attention, albeit only in passing, to verses where the author uses the vocative ἀδελφοί (1.1; 5.1, 5) – thus perpetuating Lightfoot’s misstep.74 As pointed out above, the vocative ἀδελφοί is also prominent in early Christian letters and thus, by itself, does not indicate the genre or setting of a sermon.

On the basis of this dubious inference, Pratscher does not consider whether the writing is, in fact, a sermon but asks what kind of a sermon it is. Such a myopic and unexamined starting point for the question of Second Clement’s genre is pervasive in much scholarship. Because of the author’s congregational focus, Pratscher favors the term “Gemeindepredigt,” although he does not exclude the possibility that the work is addressed to catechumens preparing for baptism.75 Given Second Clement’s frequent appeals to proper conduct, Pratscher adds “Bußpredigt” and “Ermahnung” as possibilities.76

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Clement’, in NTS 59/2 (2013), 433–56. See also DONFRIED, Setting of Second Clement, 37–41 at 38 (on 2 Clement 2), who finds in 2 Clement 1, 2, 7, 9–10 and 18, numerous examples of a writing “very carefully and artfully constructed.” Donfried also holds that the author of Second Clement “does not appear to be using quotations and literary allusions in a random or haphazard manner. Rather, he inserts them into a well-defined and structured pattern” (p. 96).

70 Pratscher, Der zweite Clemensbrief, 25–7.
71 Ibid., 25.
72 Ibid., 26.
73 Ibid., 25, emphasis added: “Der Predigtcharakter ist aber schon auf Grund der häufigen Anreden (1,1; 5,1.5 u. ö.) deutlich ... .”
75 Pratscher, Der zweite Clemensbrief, 26. Against the inference of an audience of catechumens, see Tuckett, 2 Clement, 23.
76 Pratscher, Der zweite Clemensbrief, 26.

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He also calls attention to a reference to the present time (ἀρτι), “while we are being admonished by the elders” (ἐν τῷ νουθετεῖσθαι ἡμᾶς ὑπὸ τῶν πρεσβυτέρων, 2 Clem. 17.3), and places the author among the elders who admonish (νουθετέω) the congregation. Significantly, 17.3 does not identify the author as an elder with the task of admonishing the faithful in a homily. Furthermore, one may ask what, specifically, about admonishment indicates the form or context of a sermon. Above, I questioned the assumption that any non-epistolary early Christian writing may be classified as a sermon. Like many other scholars, Pratscher seems to be unaware of that problematic assumption.

7. Paul Parvis

In his contribution to a 2007 volume of essays introducing the Apostolic Fathers, Paul Parvis aptly summarizes what Second Clement is not: “Though known as the Second Letter of Clement to the Corinthians,” in two (of the three extant) manuscripts that list a title for this work, “the text is not a letter, does not claim to be by anyone named Clement, and has no clear connection with Corinth.”77

In the very next sentence, Parvis makes a leap in logic that is now familiar to us, construing this non-letter as a “homily”: “It is in fact a homily, and it is apparent from the full text [2 Clement 1–20] that it was valued enough in at least one church to be itself read out to the congregation after the reading of the scriptures.”78 Like Wilhelm Pratscher, although apparently independently of him, Parvis echoes the sentiment of Theodor Zahn that Second Clement is “the earliest surviving Christian homily,” except for, in Parvis’s view, the depictions of sermons in the Acts of the Apostles.79

On the basis of his characterization of Second Clement as a homily, Parvis goes on to explore what can be ascertained about the homily’s setting. Following Lindemann, he sees a literary seam before 2 Clem. 19.1 and views chapters 19–20 as the work of a later hand – conclusions with which I concur.80 Parvis calls attention to the unusual vocative, “brothers and sisters” (ἀδελφοὶ καὶ ἀδελφαί, 77 Parvis, ‘2 Clement’, 34. At p. 34 n. 5, Parvis adds that in Codex Alexandrinus, where the last pages of Second Clement are missing, a title would have appeared at the end of the work and that this codex’s list of contents gives the title “Second Epistle of Clement” without mention of the Corinthians.

78 Ibid., 34. For a critique of Parvis’s (and others’) suggested timing of the reading of Second Clement after a reading of Scripture, see the discussion below.

79 Ibid., 34. Parvis’s essay and Pratscher’s commentary (Der zweite Clemensbrief, 2007) appeared in the same year. Cf. T. Zahn, ‘Das älteste Kirchengebet und die älteste christliche Predigt’ (1876). Parvis’s point in regard to the sermons in Acts is dubious: Luke’s (later and historicized) depictions of homilies do not amount to a genre. Nor can they be taken (without argument) as indicative of the form or content of actual early Christian sermons.

80 Parvis, ‘2 Clement’, 34; see further Lindemann, Clemensbriefe, 255–6.
19.1; 20.2); from those gender-inclusive vocatives, Parvis infers certain particularities of the liturgical setting that this sermon may reflect:

The differentiation of ἀδελφοί from ἀδελφαί may suggest a setting in which men are seated or standing on one side of the assembly and women on the other – as became the norm in the ancient church and was perhaps already true of the synagogue; we can even imagine the speaker turning from one to the other as he proceeds. In other words, in [chapters] 19–20 we may be hearing an echo of a more fully developed, more carefully articulated liturgical context… . We then get quite a vivid snapshot of a Christian service in the middle of the second century.81

We note with suspicion that in this citation, Parvis’s initial caution (“… may suggest … we can even imagine … we may be hearing an echo …”) eventually gives way to more certainty (“We then get …”). A little later, Parvis proffers, “We can say more about the situation of the preacher and his audience” (p. 36, emphasis added), after which he elaborates at some length on this “situation” (pp. 36–7). No reason for the evolving increase in confidence is given other than the rhetorical reiteration of a hypothetical scenario. I would call attention to the assumption that Second Clement is a sermon. That assumption, widespread in scholarship, undergirds Parvis’s speculations. Without it, there would be no basis for his inferences, at least not without a tendentious interpretation of ἀδελφοὶ καὶ ἀδελφαί (2 Clem. 19.1; 20.2) in a secondary conclusion to the writing.

Also unjustified is Parvis’s use of the later addition of chapters 19–20 as a basis to envision the liturgical setting for which 2 Clement 1–18 was composed. The approach introduces as much of an anachronism as would the use of Mark 16:9–20 (ca. 120 c.e.)82 as a basis for determining the original purpose of Mark’s Gospel (ca. 70 c.e.). Mark 16:9–20 and 2 Clement 19–20 certainly point to the reception of, and to a continued esteem for, the respective writings to which they were appended. Yet it remains that we do not know when, or by whom, 2 Clement 19–20 was composed.83 For Parvis’s proposal to be plausible, one would have to infer, as Parvis does, that the compositions of 2 Clement 1–18 and 19–20 belong to one and the same Sitz im Leben. I return to this point momentarily.

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83 For a proposal that 2 Clement 19–20 was composed as an appendix to both First and Second Clement, see Grünstäudl, ‘Epilog, Ouvertüre oder Intermezzo?’. 
2 Clem. 19.1 exhorts the hearers “to pay attention to the Scriptures” (εἰς τὸ προσέχειν τοῖς γεγραμμένοις), an exhortation with soteriological implications (ίνα καὶ ἑαυτοὺς σώσητε). Parvis is correct to state that the appendix to Second Clement clearly indicates a setting in which an esteemed text is read. But is this enough to confirm that 2 Clement 1–18 was composed as a sermon? Or, how does a sermon’s Sitz im Leben differ from that in which any other esteemed text (for example, a letter of Paul) is read to a congregation? The τοῖς γεγραμμένοις refers not to the reading of a recent or contemporary “sermon” but, rather, to the reading of “the Scriptures” (however those Scriptures are to be construed).

Again following Lindemann, Parvis explains the referent of τοῖς γεγραμμένοις by surmising that chapters 19–20 and 1–18 when “recopied … were, in effect, put in the wrong order.” As Lindemann and Parvis would have it, the following sequence occurred:

1. A reading from “the Scriptures.”
2. The exhortation of 2 Clement 19–20 to “pay attention to the Scriptures” (19.1).
3. The reading of this “homily” (2 Clement 1–18) as a complement to a reading from Scripture.

This proposal is unnecessarily complicated, speculative, and un-confirmable. It also anachronistically assumes what would (not) have been construed as Scripture in 2 Clem. 19.1. Additionally, Parvis seems to be inconsistent in regard to the “canon” of Scriptures reflected in Second Clement. On the one hand, he observes, correctly, that Second Clement “belongs to a time when the idea of a normative collection of writings, including Christian, ‘apostolic’ ones, has emerged, but there is as yet no notion of a closed canonical list, even of Gospels.” On the other hand, Parvis does not consider the same principle of an “open” canon in 2 Clem. 19.1. It is noteworthy that Second Clement cites various esteemed writings as γραφή – namely, a saying of Jesus (2 Clem. 2.4), the prophet Ezekiel (6.8), an otherwise unknown writing that supposedly claimed the church’s preexistence (14.1); and the creation of man and woman in Genesis (14.2). Furthermore, in the work’s single use of εὐαγγέλιον (2 Clem. 8.5) a written Gospel other than

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84 See Parvis, ‘2 Clement’, 35, that 2 Clem. 19.1 “followed the reading of scripture.”
85 Ibid., 36 n. 9, with Lindemann, Clemensbriefe, 152–3. See also above on Parvis, ‘2 Clement’, 34, that Second Clement was “to be itself read out to the congregation after the reading of the scriptures.”
86 Ibid., 37; see further, above, on Parvis, p. 34.
87 2 Clem. 2.4: καὶ θηλῆ δὲ γραφὴ λέγει, ὃτι οὐκ ἠλθον καλέσαι δικαίους, ἀλλὰ ἀμαρτωλοὺς.
88 2 Clem. 6.8: λέγει δὲ καὶ ἡ γραφὴ ἐν τῷ Ἰεζεκιήλ, ὅτι Ἐαν ἀναστῇ Νῶε καὶ Ἰωβ καὶ Δανιήλ, οὐ ρύσονται τὰ τέκνα αὐτῶν ἐν τῇ αἰχμαλωσίᾳ.
89 2 Clem. 14.1b: ἐσόμεθα ἐκ τῆς γραφῆς τῆς λεγούσης ἐκείνηθή, ὅ τι πρὸς σπήλαιον ληστῶν, ὡστε ὅσον ἀιρετοποιώμεθα ἀπό τῆς ἐκκλησίας, τὸν ἄνθρωπον ἄρσεν καὶ θηλυ.
the NT Gospels is cited with authority. In the following excursus, we show that, contra Parvis, there is no reason to apply an arbitrary limitation to the referent of τοῖς γεγραμμένοις in 2 Clem. 19.1 that would a priori exclude 2 Clement 1–18 from “the Scriptures” that are to be read to the congregation.

Excursus III: 2 Clem. 19.1 Points to an Acceptance of 2 Clement 1–18 among “the Scriptures”

The preceding discussion touched upon the problem of how to interpret 2 Clem. 19.1. Lindemann and Parvis maintain that 19.1 implies a liturgical setting in which a sermon follows a reading of Scripture. I will show that 19.1 offers no basis for this inference. The verse in fact refers to “writings,” or “Scriptures” (τοῖς γεγραμμένοις, plural) and does not hint, let alone claim, that some other writing of Scripture was read prior to 2 Clement 1–18. My alternate explanation for 19.1 makes no pretense to have solved the question of Second Clement’s genre, setting, or purpose, but I do hope to remove a common misunderstanding of 19.1.

This addition to Second Clement claims merely that a reading exhorts the hearers “to follow the Scriptures” (ἀναγινώσκω ὑμῖν ἔντευξιν εἰς τὸ προσέχειν τοῖς γεγραμμένοις, 19.1). The ἔντευξις being read could be construed as referring to 2 Clement 1–18, 19–20, or 1–20. The purpose of the reading, indicated by the telic articular infinitive (governed by εἰς), is that the hearers will “pay attention to,” or “follow” (προσέχω), the Scriptures. 2 Clem. 19.1 makes no reference to the reading of any text other than Second Clement.

My construal of τοῖς γεγραμμένοις as designating “the Scriptures” and as including Second Clement among those Scriptures requires an additional comment. A participial use of γράφω to refer to an immediately preceding writing finds a precedent in First Clement:

1 Clem. 63.2: τοῖς ὑφ᾿ ἡμῶν γεγραμμένοις, referring to First Clement as a whole

Cf. 2 Clem. 19.1: ἀναγινώσκω ὑμῖν ἔντευξιν εἰς τὸ προσέχειν τοῖς γεγραμμένοις

Additionally, the Shepherd of Hermas uses τὰ γεγραμμένα in reference to the instructions on fasting that the author had just given. The apostle Paul and First Clement (the latter, twice) use the singular τὸ γεγραμμένον in reference to

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92 See above on Lindemann, Clemensbriefe, 152–3 and Parvis, ‘2 Clement’, 34, 36 n. 9.
93 As indicated at the outset, that is not the purpose of this essay, which offers several prolegomena to such an analysis of Second Clement’s genre.
94 Herm. Sim. 5.3.7 (56.7): συντελέσας τὰ γεγραμμένα, ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἡ νήστευες, referring to the preceding instructions on fasting (Sim. 5.3.1–6 [56.1–6]).
OT Scripture.⁹⁵ Similar formulations are attested already in the LXX, as well as in Justin Martyr and the Epistle to Diognetus:

Deut 28:58 (LXX): πάντα τὰ ῥήματα τοῦ νόμου τούτου τὰ γεγραμμένα ἐν τῷ βιβλίῳ τούτῳ

Justin, Dial. 8.4: τὰ ἐν τῷ νόμῳ γεγραμμένα πάντα

Justin, Dial. 114: οὐδὲ ἡμῖν προσάγουσιν ὡμάς τοῖς γεγραμμένοις πιστεύετε, preceding a citation of Jeremiah

Diogn. 12.3: τὰ γεγραμμένα, about the trees God planted in Paradise (cf. Gen 2:15–16)

These observations are not decisive for our interpretation of 2 Clem. 19.1, but they do show that there is a sound philological basis for considering whether τοῖς γεγραμμένοις (2 Clem. 19.1) could refer to 2 Clement 1–18.

Among the following English translations of 2 Clem. 19.1, only that of Holt H. Graham,⁹⁷ retaining the plural of the substantive participle, translates τοῖς γεγραμμένοις as “the Scriptures”:

“Give heed to the things which are written” (J. B. Lightfoot)
“Pay attention to that which is written” (K. Lake, who in the margin supplies the section heading “Attention to the Scriptures”)
“Give heed to what is written” (E. Goodspeed)
“Heed the Scriptures” (H. H. Graham)
“Pay attention to what has been written” (B. Ehrman)
“Pay attention to what is written” (M. Holmes)

I find all of the above translations acceptable. For the present argument, the key factor is that, whatever its content, this esteemed collection of “writings,” to which one must “pay attention” in order to be “saved” (19.1), may be identified, and even translated, as “Scriptures.”

I will now propose that the later author of 19.1 refers to 2 Clement 1–18 as Scripture. This hypothesis is not new, having first been proposed by Walther Schüssler in 1907, and taken up by Donfried in 1974.⁹⁸ Schüssler and Donfried hold that 2 Clement 1–18 is what 19.1 refers to as “the Scriptures.” I regard that as possible but think it more likely that 19.1 includes 2 Clement 1–18 as among

⁹⁵ See 2 Cor 4:13: κατὰ τὸ γεγραμμένον, introducing a citation of Ps 115:1 LXX (= Ps 116:10); see also 1 Clem. 3.1; 13.1.
⁹⁶ Deut 28:58 is but one example. See also Deut 28:61; 29:19, 26; 30:10; 31:9; Josh 1:8; 8:34; 22:6; 1 Kgs 2:3; 14:29; 15:7, 23, 31, etc.
⁹⁷ GRAHAM, Second Clement, 131.
⁹⁸ W. Schüssler, ‘Ist der zweite Klemensbrief ein einheitliches Ganzes?’, in ZKG 28 (1907), 1–13. One need not (and I do not) concur with Schüssler’s questioning of Second Clement’s compositional unity to see the merit of his suggestion in regard to the referent of τοῖς γεγραμμένοις in 2 Clem. 19.1. Likewise, albeit based on a different rationale, Donfried, Setting of Second Clement, 14 concludes that 2 Clem. 19.1 “does not refer to a scripture lesson which preceded the preaching of 2 Clement.” Rather, it “refers to 2 Clement which was composed and written prior to the worship service and which had just been read to the congregation.” Here, we see another sound finding by Donfried ignored by subsequent scholarship.
“the Scriptures.” Scholars have hardly entertained this possibility.99 In support, I cite, first, that, as discussed above, the various referents for γραφή in 2 Clement 1–18 point to a somewhat “open” canon.100 I suggest that 19.1 reflects a similarly “open” canon. Second, formulations in the LXX and in other early Christian literature are consistent with a rendering of τοῖς γεγραμμένοις as a reference to “the Scriptures.”101

Additionally, the few extant ancient witnesses attest to the reception of Second Clement as Scripture. For example, that Eusebius of Caesarea does not “recognize” First or Second Clement as part of the canon strongly suggests that there were others in the late-third or early-fourth century who did include these writings in their “Bible.”102 The canonicity of Second Clement is likewise attested by two of the three extant mss – Codex Alexandrinus (5th c.) and a Syriac ms (12th c.). These two mss preserve First and Second Clement as part of the New Testament after Revelation (A) or between the Pauline and Catholic letters (S).103 Those believers to whom Eusebius objected in regard to the canonicity of First and Second Clement are thus represented in the hands behind Codex Alexandrinus and the Syriac ms.

These points support the correlation I am drawing between the aforementioned ancient witnesses and the referent of τοῖς γεγραμμένοις in the later addition to Second Clement (19.1), namely that 2 Clement 1–18 was among “the Scriptures” read to a congregation, Scriptures to which the hearers must pay attention in order to be “saved” (ἵνα καὶ ἑαυτοὺς σώσητε, 19.1). Our interpretation of 2 Clem. 19.1 also avoids un-confirmable hypotheses about later scribal redaction – as Lindemann and Parvis would have it, switching the compositional order of chapters 1–18 and 19–20. If our interpretation is correct, it may be that

99 Writing in 1908, D. Völter, Die älteste Predigt aus Rom, 23, first summarizes Schüssler’s argument and then dismisses it out of hand: “Das alles ist sicher falsch.” Völter objects (pp. 23–4) that 2 Clement 19–20 fits awkwardly after 2 Clement 1–18 and therefore must not have been composed to follow it as a reading of Scripture. Völter’s objection to Schüssler is at best arbitrary and inconclusive, however. Posing what may be described as a “criterion of conformity” is dubious for additions to ancient (including early Christian) literature – including for the Gospel of Mark’s “Longer Ending” (16:9–20) and Mark’s “Shorter Shorting” (it1), which were composed to follow, however awkwardly, Mark 16:8. On this, see Kelhoffer, Miracle and Mission, 67–71, 158–69, 238–43.

100 See above on 2 Clem. 8.5; 14.1. Also interesting is the citation about “the double-minded (οἱ δίψυχοι)” that is cited with authority (and attested only) in 2 Clem. 11.2 and 1 Clem. 23.2. While 2 Clem. 11.2 presents the citation as ὁ προφητικὸς λόγος (cf. 2 Pet 1:19), 1 Clem. 23.2 introduces it as ἡ γραφὴ αὕτη. See further Donfried, Setting of Second Clement, 52–3, 150–1.

101 See above on 1 Clem. 63.2; Deut 28:58 (LXX); Justin, Dial. 8.4; etc.

102 Here, I follow Parvis’s (‘2 Clement’, 33) astute observation on Eusebius, Hist. eccl. 3.38.4.

103 The exception is the eleventh-century Greek ms published by Philotheos Bryennios in 1875, which includes First and Second Clement among other “Apostolic Fathers.” See further H.-J. Holtzmann, ‘Die Stellung des Clemensbriefes in der Geschichte des neutestamentlichen Kanons’, in ZWTh 20 (1877), 387–403.
the later hand behind 2 Clem. 19.1 took a cue from 1 Clem. 63.2, where τοῖς ὑφ᾿ ἡμῶν γεγραμμένος refers to First Clement as a whole. Therefore, we may abandon Lindemann and Parvis’s inference that 2 Clem. 19.1 presents 2 Clement 1–18 as a sermon that was read after the reading of some other Scripture in a worship service. That speculation is based on a misreading of 19.1. My proposal for 19.1 does not speak directly to the genre, purpose, or setting of 2 Clement 1–18 but offers a counterargument to those who take 19.1 as evidence of a sermon composed to follow a reading of the (OT) Scriptures.

8. Christopher Tuckett

In his newly published commentary for the (also) new Oxford Apostolic Fathers series, Christopher Tuckett devotes a little over eight pages to the genre of Second Clement.104 At the outset, he aptly acknowledges that “[d]etermining the genre of 2 Clement is by no means an easy task.”105 To his credit, Tuckett moves beyond the letter-sermon dichotomy and weighs arguments for classification of the writing not only as a letter (pp. 18–19) or sermon (19–23) but also as deliberative rhetoric (συμβουλία, 23–4) and paraenesis (24–5). He concludes that “we can describe 2 Clement as some kind of ‘sermon’, addressed to those who are already Christians [and as] intended to be read in the context of a liturgical gathering for worship.”106

Tuckett is to be commended for his nuanced contribution and, even more so, for calling attention to the question of genre as a factor relevant for Second Clement’s interpretation. He therefore provides a welcome step forward. Yet inasmuch as his conclusion that Second Clement is broadly, if vaguely, “some kind of ‘sermon’” affirms the status quo, that conclusion is exposed to many of the same criticisms discussed in this essay.

V. A Proposal for Future Inquiry: From Macro-Genre to Micro-Genre and to an Analysis of Function

A central aim of our study has been to show the extent to which scholarship has misconstrued the genre and setting of Second Clement. The essay’s title thus poses the provocative questions, “If Second Clement really were a ‘sermon,’ how would we know, and why would we care?” Naturally, we would care if any credible argument could be given that the writing had been composed as a “sermon.”

104 TUCKETT, 2 Clement, 18–26. Most of the present paper was written in the summer and early autumn of 2012, prior to the appearance of Tuckett’s commentary in November 2012.
105 Ibid., 18.
106 Ibid., 25.
Although surviving early Christian literature does not allow us to corroborate (or to question) *sermo* as a genre, knowing something about the setting within which the writing was to function would be very valuable indeed.

There are also historiographical challenges in verifying that the writing was composed to be delivered as a “sermon” and that it did, in fact, have such a liturgical function. Scholarship on *Second Clement* has yet to acknowledge, let alone address, these formidable problems.

Further, a discussion of genre is not an end in itself. To be pertinent and persuasive, it must fulfill at least two requirements: it (1) must show that a particular writing belongs to an identifiable category of writings – that is, writings that share distinctive literary features and (2) must also show how an identification of genre aids in an interpretation of the writing. Judged by the criteria, the 125 years of scholarship identifying *Second Clement* as a “sermon” or “homily” have amounted to a colossal failure. The designations of “sermon” and “homily” as a genre for the writing should therefore be abandoned.

A reappraisal of *Second Clement*’s genre, function and *Sitz im Leben* is therefore needed. Neither “homily” nor “sermon” (however defined) is a fixed genre; rather, the terms suggest only a vague *Sitz im Leben* about which, from the church of the first, second, and third centuries, we have precious little information. I have proposed that the later addition of 2 Clem. 19.1 attests to the reception at some point of *Second Clement* as part of “the Scriptures” to be read to a congregation. This observation does not, however, speak directly to the original *Sitz im Leben* of chapters 1–18, nor to questions about genre or purpose.

Nearly forty years after Karl Donfried sharply questioned whether *Second Clement* was a “sermon” or a “homily,”107 scholarship has hardly advanced on the matter. We may return, in retrospect, to the categorical pronouncements of Lightfoot and Lindemann, with which our discussion of genre began:

> [T]he so-called Second Epistle [of Clement] is the first example of a Christian homily. The newly recovered ending has set this point at rest for ever. The work is plainly not a letter, but a homily, a sermon.108

Daß 2Clem kein Brief, sondern eine Homilie ist, ist in der Forschung immer schon gesehen worden.109

At present, the un-nuanced positions of Lightfoot, Lindemann and others remain the norm in scholarship.

We may now be in a better position to ask, What is the significance of (correctly) recognizing that *Second Clement* is not a letter? I have maintained that,

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107 DONFRID, Setting of Second Clement, e.g., 26: “the term ‘homily’ is so vague and ambiguous that it should be withdrawn until its literarily generic legitimacy has been demonstrated.”

108 LIGHTFOOT, Apostolic Fathers, I/2:194, emphasis original.

109 LINDEMANN, Clemensbriefe, 190.
by itself, this uncontroversial tautology tells us rather little. If questions about *Second Clement*’s genre and *Sitz im Leben* receive a more satisfactory consideration, we can hope for a sounder basis for probing what can be ascertained about the community it addresses or about the ideal community its author envisions.

A shift in approach is needed – an approach highlighting similarities in *micro-genre* and *function*. In particular, I propose that we give more attention to the *context-specific exhortations and admonitions*, for example, of a Pauline letter, on the one hand, and to those of *Second Clement* (along with those of Hebrews and First John), on the other hand. Such an exploration will have to be the subject of another study. The present essay will have served its purpose if it brings us to a new and more promising starting point for understanding the so-called *Second Letter of Clement*. 