

THE RECEPTION OF JESUS IN
THE FIRST THREE CENTURIES

VOLUME TWO
FROM THOMAS TO TERTULLIAN:
CHRISTIAN LITERARY RECEPTIONS
OF JESUS IN THE SECOND AND
THIRD CENTURIES CE

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Cover image: The Good Shepherd, fresco (3rd century) in the Catacomb of Priscilla (3rd century), Rome, Lazio, Italy. (© DeAgostini/Getty Images)

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Ed. Chris Keith

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John Granger Cook

CHAPTER FIFTY-FIVE

Second Clement

JAMES A. KELHOFFER

1. INTRODUCTION

The primary focus of 2 Clement is soteriological, the primary tone hortatory and admonishing. Christ is variously credited with the roles of “saving” believers, calling them out of darkness to be saved, and judging whether they adequately respond to the gift of salvation and will therefore be saved.

Much of our analysis focuses on a relational Christology—who Jesus is in association with God and with those who are being saved. Clement¹ also says a fair bit about what Jesus did for believers—deeds with christological implications. Lastly, attention is paid to the numerous quotations of authoritative materials in this text, which provide clues to the kinds of traditions about Jesus with which the author was working. In several places, indications of Matthean and Lukan redaction in the gospel materials Clement cites show that at least some of his sources postdated those two Gospels.

Some isagogical observations will set the stage for analyzing the writing’s Christology. Second Clement is commonly dated to around the middle of the second century.² There is no scholarly consensus about its place of origin. Nor is there an obvious connection to 1 Clement or to the Clement who was Bishop of Rome. The text presents itself as an exhortation to a Christian congregation. The absence of epistolary features does not, however, support the prevalent view that 2 Clement was a homily or a sermon.³ Although it is clearly not a letter, repeated addresses to “brothers” also occur regularly, for example, in Paul’s letters.⁴

One striking feature is the abundant quotation of authoritative texts. Within the ninety-nine verses of chapters 2–17, a citation is begun in roughly every fourth verse, and many of those are

¹For the sake of convenience, in this essay I refer to the anonymous (and otherwise unknown) author of 2 Clement as Clement. No presumption is made about the author’s actual identity.

²See, e.g., Ernst Baasland, “Der 2. Klemensbrief und frühchristliche Rhetorik: ‘Die erste christliche Predigt’ im Lichte der neueren Forschung,” ANRW II.27.1 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1993): 78–157, esp. 88–89; Christopher M. Tuckett, *2 Clement: Introduction, Text, and Commentary*, Oxford Apostolic Fathers (Oxford: Oxford University, 2012), 62–64.

³See J. A. Kelhoffer, “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,” in *Early Christian Communities between Ideal and Reality*, ed. Mark Grundeken and Joseph Verheyden, WUNT 342 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), 83–108 (85–87).

⁴See Kelhoffer, “Sermon,” 88–89 at 89: “[I]mploring one’s ‘brethren’ (ἀδελφοί) is also a common feature of early Christian letters . . . including those of Paul, Ignatius, Polycarp, and *First Clement*. Additionally, the vocative ἀδελφοί occurs throughout *Second Clement*,” in 1:1; 4:3; 5:1, 5; 7:1; 8:4; 9:11; 10:1; 11:5; 13:1; 14:1, 3; 16:1.