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Repentance for the Corinthian Community: 1 Clement's Presentation of Christ in the Old Testament

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The letter *1 Clement* is often understood to be a significant witness to the transitional period from the apostolic era to the early church.¹ As such, the epistle is primarily analyzed for how it reflects developments in the articulation of Christian doctrine and practice, especially church polity.² Despite the attention that *1 Clement* receives as a witness to the growth of early Christianity, there has been little scholarly analysis of the epistle's Christology. For that reason, this study will analyze portions of Clement's Christology, specifically his allusions to and interpretations of the Old Testament Scriptures in *1 Clement* 12, 16, and 17. This study demonstrates that Clement's Christology draws on complex early Christian understandings of the person of Christ that inform his exhortations to unity and humility and are integral to understanding the letter's purpose.

Background on *1 Clement*

The letter *1 Clement* is one of the earliest extra-canonical Christian writings and the earliest if one dates the *Didache* later. Most scholars date *1 Clement* no later than AD 96. There have been some attempts to date the epistle earlier or later, but on the basis of the letter's own evidence, the 96 date is the majority position.³ First, the author mentions the deaths of Peter and Paul (*1 Clem.* 5:4–7), who are thought to have been martyred during the Neronian persecution of the church between 64–68. Second, some of the men that Clement wanted the Corinthian church to reinstate to their positions of leadership had been appointed by the apostles (*1 Clem.* 44:2). Finally, a clue Hagner suggests is “the most important time indicator” is found in the opening statement, “because of the sudden and repeated misfortunes and reverses that have happened to us, brothers, we acknowledge that we have been somewhat slow in giving attention to the matters in dispute among you” (*1 Clem.*

¹ Stuart G. Hall, *Doctrine and Practice in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1991), 32–33.

² Hall, *Doctrine and Practice*, 32–33.

³ Michael W. Holmes, ed. and rev., *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations of Their Writings*, 3rd ed., ed. and trans. J. B. Lightfoot and J. R. Harmer (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2007), 35–36.

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1:1a).⁴ It is widely understood that the “sudden and repeated misfortunes” to which Clement refers are an allusion to the strife Roman Christians endured under Domitian between 81 and 96.

Little is known about the author of the epistle from the text itself. The letter is addressed from the church (ἐκκλησία) in Rome to the church in Corinth. A number of early sources, which include Irenaeus and Eusebius, attribute the letter’s authorship to Clement, the third bishop of Rome after Peter, who was in office from the late 80s or early 90s until the turn of the century.⁵

The occasion for the epistle was a rebellion or schism taking place in Corinth (1 Clem. 1:1) which had resulted in the removal of church leaders from their offices within the Corinthian congregation (1 Clem. 44). Although the epistle addresses the schism, it also presents an overview of the Christian religion and states in one of the concluding chapters, “We have written enough to you, brothers, about the things that pertain to our religion and are particularly helpful for a virtuous life . . . for we have touched upon every subject” (1 Clem. 62:1–2a).

The text of 1 Clement was widely received in the early church. One of the first explicit references to the epistle appears in the works of Irenaeus (130–202), who contrasts Clement with his gnostic opponents.⁶ Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and others throughout the centuries also mention 1 Clement.⁷

Of all the writings numbered among the Apostolic Fathers,⁸ 1 Clement is second only to the *Epistle of Barnabas* in its frequency of Old Testament citation.⁹ This

⁴ Donald Alfred Hagner, *The Use of the Old and New Testaments in Clement of Rome* (Leiden: Brill, 1973), 4. Unless indicated otherwise, all translations from 1 Clement are the author’s own, though they have been influenced by Holmes’s revised translation of *The Apostolic Fathers*, 3rd ed., 44–131.

⁵ See Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica* IV.22.1 and IV.23.11 and Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* III.3.3.

⁶ Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against Heresies*, Book III, Chapter 3.3. Irenaeus highlights the fact that Clement knew and was instructed by the apostles, thus coming from an older tradition than that of his gnostic opponents, and that Clement’s epistle to the Corinthians offers a broad overview of salvation history, taking care to note God’s creative activity.

⁷ Robert M. Grant, *The Apostolic Fathers: A New Translation and Commentary* (New York: Thomas Nelson, 1964), 18.

⁸ See Holmes, *Apostolic Fathers*, 5–6. The term “Apostolic Fathers” is used for the sake of convenience and refers to the rediscovered writings of Barnabas, Clement of Rome, Hermas, Ignatius of Antioch, and Polycarp of Smyrna, collated by J. B. Cotelier (1672) who attributed them to “holy fathers who were active in apostolic times.” Since the initial grouping, the collection has been expanded to include *The Epistle to Diognetus*, the fragments of Papias, and Quadratus. Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 6, adds, “The form of the collection as it exists today, therefore, is largely a matter of tradition (and now convenience) and is undoubtedly somewhat arbitrary.”

⁹ Hagner, *The Use of the Old and New Testaments*, 24. This is also the case when comparing 1 Clement to most books from the New Testament.

should come as no surprise since the Old Testament was already regarded as Scripture by early Christians, even while the documents that came to be known as the New Testament were being used and compiled.¹⁰ The text of *1 Clement* also displays familiarity with a number of New Testament texts and has a unique relationship, universally acknowledged in patristic and modern scholarship, with the Epistle to the Hebrews.¹¹

Introducing the Christology of *1 Clement*

Clement does not make an explicit case for the divinity of Christ. The Christology in *1 Clement* echoes prior Christian tradition and is recognized in Clement's application of it to his primary concern, the nature of unity and authority in the Corinthian church. Thus, Clement's christological contributions are not as widely recognized as those of Paul, John, and other early Christian writers.¹² This is not to say, however, that there are no unique christological expressions in *1 Clement*, only that his purpose in writing results in more of a Christology by application.

Before highlighting the Christology found in Clement's interpretation of the Old Testament, some acknowledgments and clarifications are in order. First, a paraenetic tone features prominently throughout the epistle in accord with the letter's purpose. There was dissension within the Corinthian church that has resulted in unholy discord and rebellion. Clement's epistle is a call to Christian

¹⁰ Additionally, scholars have noted other possible influences, contemporary with Clement, that could have contributed to his appreciation for and interpretation of the Old Testament. See Chrys C. Caragounis, "From Obscurity to Prominence: The Development of the Roman Church between Romans and *1 Clement*," in *Judaism and Christianity in First-Century Rome*, ed. Karl P. Donfried and Peter Richardson (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1998), 248–250; Raymond E. Brown, "Rome," in Raymond E. Brown and John P. Meier, *Antioch and Rome: New Testament Cradles of Catholic Christianity* (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), 179, argues that Clement's positive use of Levitical cultic language is indicative of two prominent themes of Roman Christianity: a strong Jewish heritage and an appreciation for imperial authority; Horacio E. Lona, "Die Septuagintazitate des Neuen Testaments im Ersten Clemensbrief: Textgeschichtliche Beobachtungen (besonders zum Codex Alexandrinus)," in *Textual History and the Reception of Scripture in Early Christianity*, ed. Johannes de Vries and Martin Karrer (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2013), 292, concludes that *1 Clement* evinces the possible influence of Hellenistic Judaism from Alexandria by way of the Jewish synagogue in Rome.

¹¹ Andreas Lindemann, "The First Epistle of Clement," in *The Apostolic Fathers: An Introduction*, ed. Wilhelm Pratscher (Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2010), 59; Hagner, *The Use of the Old and New Testaments*, 179–180, 191, notes that some passages of Old Testament Scripture cited by Clement agree with those cited in the book of Hebrews over against the Septuagint (e.g., *1 Clem.* 17:5; 36:3).

¹² This is not without its disadvantages since Photius, *Bibliotheca* 126 suggests that *1 Clement* should be censured for a number of reasons to include inadequate christological language. See Caragounis, "From Obscurity to Prominence," 278.

humility and submission. He draws on a number of biblical and social considerations to formulate a rhetorically compelling case for putting an end to the conflict and instructing the faithful to submit to their ecclesiastical authorities.¹³ Due to circumstances in Corinth—and possible circumstances in Rome at the time of composition—it comes as no surprise that the subject of ecclesiastical office is also prominent in the epistle and continues to be a significant aspect of current scholarly discussion of the epistle.¹⁴

These circumstances do not preclude Clement from using complex christological reasoning in his arguments. Clement's Christology and the christological traditions that precede him were foundational for his and his readers' theology, so we should expect that there is more Christology under the surface than what is stated explicitly in this letter and, as we shall see below, has been identified by modern scholarship.¹⁵ This is not to argue that there is a hidden christological agenda that completely supplants the narrative of *1 Clement*; rather, this study illustrates how a closer examination of Clement's Christology is able to detect a fuller theological rationale behind his exhortations to the church in Corinth.

Little has been done analyzing the Christology in *1 Clement*. Frances Young's chapter on "Wisdom in the Apostolic Fathers and the New Testament" features a section on Clement's use of wisdom traditions. Young's evaluation is narrow in scope and does not offer a comprehensive investigation of *1 Clement*'s Christology. She argues that *1 Clement* exhibits an overall "'wisdom' outlook" adding that, "anything that supported the ethical advice was exploited—the biblical narratives becoming models of good behaviors like repentance, or bad characteristics like jealousy and envy, alongside the use of maxims and commandments, and all

¹³ Horacio E. Lona, *Der erste Clemensbrief: Übersetzt und erklärt* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998), 42, 46. See also Hagner, *The Use of the Old and New Testaments*, 7–8.

¹⁴ James S. Jeffers, *Conflict at Rome: Social Order and Hierarchy in Early Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 95–96, asserts that *1 Clement* is not an affirmation of Roman primacy but draws on a number of other scholars to suggest that it reflects and speaks to developments in the Roman church just as equally as it does to the Corinthian church.

¹⁵ My inspiration to take a closer look at *1 Clement* is due, in large part, to Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), and *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels* (Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2016). In *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels*, 357, Hays observes about the synoptic writers that, "Their way of pursuing what we call 'doing theology' was to produce richly intertextual narrative accounts of the significance of Jesus. Because the language of Scripture was the Evangelists' native medium of expression, their reflection about God was articulated through subtle appropriations and adaptations of that linguistic medium." I have come to recognize that this is true also for most early Christian authors, including Clement of Rome.

exploited without differentiation.”¹⁶ According to Young, Clement’s use of various wisdom traditions is in service to his paraenesis and thus does not add to the development of a Wisdom or Logos Christology.¹⁷ Instead, she argues that for Clement, “Christ is a model of the humble-mindedness the author wishes to encourage.”¹⁸ Other aspects of Clement’s Christology are recognized but they also, as Young presents them, appear to be muted by comparison to the epistle’s paraenesis.¹⁹

A brief look at Clement’s Christology can be found in Charles Gieschen’s “The Divine Name in Ante-Nicene Christology.”²⁰ There, Gieschen identifies three passages (*1 Clem.* 58:1; 59:2; 60:4) where Clement reflects an understanding of Christ as the Divine Name of God.²¹ This is significant because it indicates that a much more complex Christology is at work in the background of Clement’s letter than is typically recognized by scholars. Christ is not merely an intermediary between God and man but also shares in the unique divine identity. This will have important implications for Clement’s identification of Christ with those who are “lowly of mind” in *1 Clement* 16:1 and what follows in chapters 16 and 17.

Perhaps the most extensive commentary on the Christology of *1 Clement* can be found in Horacio E. Lona’s extensive work, *Der erste Clemensbrief*.²² Lona includes an eight-page excursus on the Christology of *1 Clement*. In his analysis, the primary function of Clement’s Christology is to convey God’s work of salvation. He writes, “according to the prevailing theocentricity of the writing, God is the subject of the action but this is ultimately realized through Jesus Christ.”²³ According to Lona, the second function of Clement’s Christology highlights Christ as an

¹⁶ Frances M. Young, “Wisdom in the Apostolic Fathers and the New Testament,” in *Trajectories through the New Testament and the Apostolic Fathers*, ed. Andrew F. Gregory and Christopher M. Tuckett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 90.

¹⁷ Young, “Wisdom in the Apostolic Fathers,” 91.

¹⁸ Young, “Wisdom in the Apostolic Fathers,” 91.

¹⁹ Young, “Wisdom in the Apostolic Fathers,” 91. In Frances M. Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 203–204, Young argues that “paraenetic exegesis” is the primary way to read Scripture in the early Christian tradition and laments that “the primacy of this way of reading scripture in the Christian tradition has been obscured by concentration on other features such as the rejection of Halakah and the development of the Christological reading, or the supposed concern for history in the Antiochene reaction against Alexandria.”

²⁰ Charles A. Gieschen, “The Divine Name in Ante-Nicene Christology,” in *Vigiliae Christianae* 57, no. 2 (2003): 115–158.

²¹ Gieschen, “The Divine Name,” 149.

²² Horacio E. Lona, *Der erste Clemensbrief: Übersetzt und erklärt* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998).

²³ Lona, *Die erste Clemensbrief*, 403, “Gemäß der vorherrschenden Theozentrik des Schreibens ist Gott das Subjekt der Handlung, aber diese verwirklicht sich schließlich durch Jesus Christus.”

exemplar, but Lona is quick to clarify that the first function is incomparably more important for characterizing Clement's Christology.²⁴

Clement's Interpretation of the Old Testament

Larry W. Hurtado characterizes the second-century, proto-orthodox Christian use of the Old Testament according to three main approaches, and I am convinced these approaches can be helpful for identifying various aspects of Clement's use of the Old Testament: (1) the identification of Old Testament proof texts that demonstrate the fulfillment of prophecy in Jesus; (2) a typological reading of the Old Testament that understands certain figures and events to foreshadow Christ (e.g., 1 Cor 10:4); and (3) the interpretation of theophanies found in the Old Testament as manifestations of the preincarnate Son of God.²⁵ The *modern* assessment of Clement's interpretation of the Old Testament, however, is quite restrictive and only rarely places his approach to the Old Testament within one of the categories outlined by Hurtado. Clement's use of the Old Testament is often characterized as rhetorical for ethical exhortation. Hagner posits that, for Clement, the Old Testament is effectively a "source-book for Christian behavior" and his interpretation of it, in large measure, is "indistinguishable from the Jewish piety of the [Old Testament]."²⁶ Two significant passages from Hagner help assemble a portrait of the modern assessment of Clement's use of the Old Testament. Hagner writes:

It must be admitted that the majority of OT quotations in the epistle bear a literal interpretation which, if taken out of the total context, is more Jewish than it is specifically Christian. This is only to say that the epistle is filled with a type of moralizing to which few Jews would have taken exception; this is as much true of the context as it is of the form or method of Clement's scriptural argument.²⁷

Hagner goes on to add:

²⁴ See Lona, *Die erste Clemensbrief*, 404, "Von diesen zwei Funktionen ist die erste unvergleichbar wichtiger für ein Urteil über die Christologie in Clem, wenn man bedenkt, wie wenig andere Aspekte entfaltet sind, etwa die knapp angedeutete Präexistenz (s. o. Nr. 1) und vor allem das Verhältnis des Kyrios zu Gott." Lona, *Die erste Clemensbrief*, 407, also suggests that Clement has an active engagement with prior christological formulations in application to his pastoral concerns; cf. *1 Clem.* 2:1; 16:2, 17; 36:2.

²⁵ Larry W. Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2003), 565–566.

²⁶ Hagner, *The Use of the Old and New Testaments*, 125.

²⁷ Hagner, *The Use of the Old and New Testaments*, 127.

Yet Clement writes as a Christian, and it is this fact that makes his literal interpretation of the OT so interesting and unique. Clement's epistle contains a fair amount of distinctly Christian doctrine and a large number of allusions to NT writings. One cannot help wondering why Clement does not employ more of a distinctively Christian interpretation of the OT. . . . When Clement does draw Christian doctrine from the OT he usually does so, as we have seen above, by literal interpretation of what he regards as plainly prophetic.²⁸

Hagner goes on to recognize that Clement does understand Christ to speak in the Old Testament and that the Old Testament looks forward to Christ and the church. He clarifies, however, that this is constrained to purely literal, prophetic interpretations for the sake of ethical exhortation.²⁹ It does appear that of the three main approaches to the Old Testament Hurtado highlighted for early Christians, Clement's use of the first approach—the identification of prophetic proof texts of Christ—is the most obvious; however, the other two approaches—of typology and the interpretation of theophanic traditions—are also present but underappreciated by scholars, especially Clement's understanding of Old Testament theophanies.

Clement's Christological Interpretation of the Old Testament

One of the first instances of christological prophecy and typology in Clement's interpretation of the Old Testament is found in *1 Clement* 12. It is something of an anomaly for Clement because he engages there in uncharacteristically allegorical interpretation of Scripture. In the passage, Clement calls attention to Rahab for her faith and the example that she serves, "through faith and hospitality was Rahab the prostitute saved" (*1 Clem.* 12:1), exhorting his hearers to the same faith. Clement goes on, however, to describe the whole episode of Joshua 2 and concludes "additionally, they gave to [Rahab] a sign, that she hang out of her house something crimson [κόκκινον], making it manifest that through the blood of the Lord will be redemption for all who believe and hope in God," adding, "see, beloved, not only faith but prophecy is found in the woman" (*1 Clem.* 12:7–8). This indicates that for Clement there is a connection between the Christian life lived in faith and the revelation of Jesus Christ. This is not mere moralizing or identification of good examples. This indicates that, for Clement, true piety consists in identifying and identifying *with* Jesus Christ. He sees this is as much the case for the Old Testament saints as it should be for the Corinthian Christians.

²⁸ Hagner, *The Use of the Old and New Testaments*, 128.

²⁹ Hagner, *The Use of the Old and New Testaments*, 131.

This becomes clearer as we examine *1 Clement* 16–17 where Clement uses Old Testament Scripture to paint a portrait of Christ and then identifies how Old Testament saints modeled and submitted to Christ. Chapter 16 is especially interesting for its unique christological designation not found anywhere in Scripture. Clement writes: “For Christ is of those who are lowly of mind [ταπεινοφρονούντων], not those who set themselves up [ἐπαιρομένων] over his flock. The Majestic Scepter of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, did not come in haughty boasting or pride—although he was able [καίπερ δυνάμενος]—but in lowliness of mind [ταπεινοφρονῶν], just as the Holy Spirit spoke concerning him” (*1 Clem.* 16:1–2).³⁰ Here “our Lord Jesus Christ” is set in apposition to the title “the Majestic Scepter of God,” identifying the man, Jesus, in the central position of power and authority with God as the Majestic Scepter of God. Although the title is unique to *1 Clement*, it has possible precedents. In Hebrews 1:8–9, the author quotes from Psalm 45:6–7 (LXX 44:7–8), “And to the Son [he says] ‘Your Throne, O God, is forever and the Scepter of Righteousness is the scepter of your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and have hated wickedness. Because of this, God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of exaltation above your companions.’”³¹ Clement calls Christ the “Majestic Scepter of God,” whose sovereignty is contrasted with the proud who lift themselves up. Hebrews quotes Psalm 45 to highlight Christ’s exaltation to the throne of God because of his love of righteousness and hatred of wickedness.

There is, however, a key difference between the two passages. In Hebrews 1:8–9, Christ is *bestowed* with the “scepter of righteousness,” whereas in *1 Clement* 16:1–2, Christ *is* “the Majestic Scepter of God.” Another difficulty in detecting a direct connection between Clement and Hebrews is that Hebrews 1:8 uses ῥάβδος whereas Clement uses σκήπτρον, the latter of which finds no usage in the New Testament and next to none in the LXX.³²

³⁰ The Syriac and Coptic translations of the text, as well as Jerome’s quotation of it, omit τῆς μεγαλωσύνης, but the earlier and more complete versions of the text (Codex Alexandrinus, Codex Hierosolymitanus, and the Latin translation) include it; see Tom Robinson, “First Clement,” in Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 39.

³¹ Unless indicated otherwise, all Scripture quotations are the author’s translation. Another possible precedent is found in 2 Peter 1:17 where μεγαλοπρεπούς δόξης is also used as a title but in reference to the Father. See Hagner, *The Use of the Old and New Testaments*, 248, for a more detailed discussion of Clement’s possible dependence on 2 Peter 1:17.

³² Walter Bauer and William F. Arndt, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed., rev. and ed. Frederick W. Danker (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 929b. It is possible that Clement’s usage of the term σκήπτρον is derived from the influence of Second Temple Jewish texts such as *The Testament of Judah* 24:5 and *Joseph and Aseneth* 5:6.

Clement's use of "scepter" as a title for Christ is more akin to Numbers 24:17, which if read christologically, designates Christ as the scepter (טִבַּשׁ) that rises up out of Israel. Like *1 Clement* 16:2, the scepter spoken of in Numbers 24:17 is a designation for a person. Lexical considerations present a problem, though, since the LXX does not translate טִבַּשׁ in that passage as ῥάβδος or σκήπτρον, but rather it uses the term ἄνθρωπος. Thus the title "the Majestic Scepter of God" appears to be a unique title for Christ of Clement's own invention and is applied in such a way as to indicate that Christ is in full possession of his divinity, even in the midst of humility, and that his sovereign designation is manifested in his humility. This alone indicates that Clement is moving beyond a reflection on merely ethical exhortation.

Another complex christological parallel to *1 Clement* 16:1–2 is found in the Christ hymn of Philippians 2:5–11. Paul's description of Jesus in his humility does not mean that he gains equality or loses equality with God; instead, Paul holds to a pre-existent Christology and describes how Jesus interacts with his divine status for the sake of man's salvation.³³ This is also the sense of *1 Clement* 16:2, "The Majestic Scepter of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, did not come in haughty boasting or pride—*although he was able* [καίπερ δυνάμενος]—but in lowliness of mind [ταπεινοφρονῶν]." The addition of "our Lord Jesus Christ" does not create a distinction; it clarifies "the Majestic Scepter of God" so that the Corinthians understand that the Scepter of God has come in humility.

The similarities between *1 Clement* 16 and Philippians 2 are still more interesting in light of Clement's subsequent quotation from the Old Testament. After highlighting Christ's humility, Clement adds, "just as the Holy Spirit spoke concerning him, for he says . . ." (*1 Clem.* 16:2b) and then goes on, in *1 Clement* 16:3–16, to quote Isaiah 53:1–11 and Psalm 22:6–8 (LXX 21:7–9), respectively. Richard Bauckham, in his book *Jesus and the God of Israel*, detects a connection between the theme of Christ's humiliation and exaltation in Philippians 2:6–11 with that of Isaiah 53, as well.³⁴ Bauckham has three emphases. First, Paul is engaging in an interpretation of Isaiah that identifies the Suffering Servant as the very one who receives the Divine Name.³⁵ Second, Paul is not speaking to the question of whether God can become man but whether the cross of Jesus Christ can be included in the identity of God. Bauckham writes, "The self-humiliation and obedience to which verse 8 refers are no mere ethical attitudes, but the repudiation of status . . . the

³³ Charles A. Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology: Antecedents and Early Evidence*, 1998 reprint (Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2017), 337–339; also, Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel: God Crucified and Other Studies on the New Testament's Christology of Divine Identity* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2009), 41.

³⁴ Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 37–45.

³⁵ Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 42–43.

voluntary descent to the place furthest removed from the heavenly throne to which he is then—and Paul says ‘therefore’—exalted.”³⁶ What this means for Paul, then, is that “only the Servant can be the Lord.”³⁷ Third, Bauckham asserts that Paul, in Philippians 2, is making a christological statement about the identity of God, that “his humiliation belongs to the identity of God as truly as his exaltation does.”³⁸

Clement has a similar Christological understanding. Like Paul in Philippians 2:5, “Let this mind be in you which is in Christ Jesus,” Clement invokes the image of Christ as the model of humility that should characterize those who identify with him, “For Christ is of those who are lowly of mind” (*1 Clem.* 16:1a). Clement then goes on to describe Christ as fully possessing the divine nature with the unique title of “the Majestic Scepter of God,” who is identified with the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53. Clement’s use of the Old Testament is more than mere ethical exhortation. He draws on the christological interpretation of the Suffering Servant to identify Christ and to identify *with* Christ. His conclusion is similar to what Bauckham has highlighted for Philippians 2:6–11 but with a slightly different emphasis: the only Lord is a servant.³⁹

The most significant difference between *1 Clement* 16 and Philippians 2 is where Clement ends his quotation from Isaiah 53 and where Paul begins his allusion to it. Whereas Clement quotes from Isaiah 53:1–11, the most explicit allusions to Isaiah 53 in Philippians 2:7–8 point to the next verse, Isaiah 53:12, at the end of the chapter where the Suffering Servant is exalted.⁴⁰ The differences between Paul and Clement in their choice of allusions and direct references to Isaiah 53 is likely in the different occasions for each epistle. There are a number of theories as to what kind of “opponents” Paul is addressing at Philippi, but the presence of internal opposition or discord is much more muted than in some of his other epistles such as the letter to the Galatians.⁴¹ Instead, Paul is intent on thanking the Philippians for their share in the ministry (Phil 1:3; 4:10–20) and strengthening them against false doctrine (Phil 1:27; 4:9). Clement, on the other hand, is speaking to a situation referred to throughout the epistle: some have set themselves up in the place of those who were duly appointed. Unity and order within the church are under threat. Clement’s intent in quoting Isaiah 53:1–11 is to call attention to the need for the faithful to

³⁶ Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 44.

³⁷ Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 45.

³⁸ Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 45.

³⁹ Cf. Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 45, “only the Servant can be the Lord.”

⁴⁰ Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 43.

⁴¹ See Jerry L. Sumney, “Studying Paul’s Opponents: Advances and Challenges,” in *Paul and His Opponents* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 25–29.

identify with Christ and emulate his humility by submitting to God's good order and not to rush ahead to their own exaltation.⁴²

Thus, while Paul goes on to allude to Isaiah 45:23, "By myself I have sworn, from my mouth has the word gone out in righteousness and it shall not return, to me shall every knee bow and every tongue confess" (cf. Phil 2:10–11), Clement goes on to quote from Psalm 22:6–8 (*1 Clem.* 16:15–17), "And again he [Christ] himself says: 'But I am a worm and not a man, a reproach among humans and an object of contempt to the people. All those who saw me mocked me; they spoke with their lips; they shook their heads saying, "He hoped in the Lord; let him deliver him, let him save him, because he takes pleasure in him." ' ' "⁴³ Clement's reference to Psalm 22:6–8 indicates that he views it as a dialogue between the Father and the Son and that he uses it to stress for his hearers that the same Majestic Scepter of God, manifested in the midst of suffering, is identified as the one who trusts in the Lord. He assumes that the reality of God suffering in Christ would have been understood by his hearers and that such a reality is congruent with—even requires as a matter of their very identification with Christ as Christians—the lowliness of mind (*1 Clem.* 16:1, 2) to which he now exhorts his hearers.

The beginning of chapter 17 signals an interesting shift in Clement's argument. In chapter 16, he identifies Christ with the majesty and sovereignty of God while

⁴² Another example of an author identifying the Christian with the person of Christ in his humility by echoing Philippians 2 can be found in *The Letter of the Churches of Vienna and Lyons to the Churches of Asia and Phrygia including the story of the Blessed Blandina*: "The Witnesses were zealous in their imitation of Christ, who, being in the form of God, thought it not a prize to be treated like God." As found on "The Medieval Sourcebook: The Persecution & Martyrdoms of Lyons in 177 A.D.," Fordham University, accessed January 13, 2021, <https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/source/177-lyonsmartyrs.asp>.

⁴³ The translation for this passage is provided by Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 67, 69. It is interesting to note that Clement understands Christ to be the speaker in Psalm 22:6–8 and not merely to have recited verse 1, as Christ does from the cross in Matthew 27:46 and Mark 15:34. Commenting on Clement's use of Psalm 22:6–8, Matthew W. Bates, *The Hermeneutics of the Apostolic Proclamation: The Center of Paul's Method of Scriptural Interpretation* (Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2012), 263, suggests that Clement is amenable to the prosopological method of interpretation—a method used by some early Christian authors to identify otherwise ambiguous speakers in scriptural texts—because he identifies Christ as the speaker in his introductory formula for Psalm 22:6–8. For further discussion on the use of prosopological exegesis by early Christian writers see also Matthew W. Bates, *The Birth of the Trinity: Jesus, God, and Spirit in New Testament and Early Christian Interpretations of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015) and Kyle R. Hughes, *The Trinitarian Testimony of the Spirit: Prosopological Exegesis and the Development of Pre-Nicene Pneumatology*, Supplements to *Vigiliae Christianae* (Leiden: Brill, 2018). For further discussion on the application of the entirety of Psalm 22 to the life and ministry of Jesus, see Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels*, 78, 83–86, and Hagner, *The Use of the Old and New Testaments*, 94, with his discussion of the Testimony Book hypothesis and C. H. Dodd's alternative to it.

also identifying him as the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53 and as the speaker in Psalm 22. Christians show due reverence and humility towards Christ by joining him in humility. In chapter 17, Clement directs his hearers' attention to those who prefigured Christ by humbling themselves before him when he appears to them. This interpretive move is consistent with his prophetic and paraenetic focus but involves much more complex christological assumptions.

In *1 Clement* 17:1, Clement writes, "Let us be imitators also of those who walked about in goatskins and sheepskins, preaching [κηρύσσοντες] the coming of Christ. And we are speaking about Elijah and Elisha, and also Ezekiel, the prophets, and with them also those of renown" (*1 Clem.* 17:1; cf. Heb 11:37). Clement then goes on to highlight in more detail the Old Testament figures of Abraham, Job, and Moses (*1 Clem.* 17:2–6).⁴⁴

Clement has a twofold understanding of how the men of renown proclaimed Christ. First, Clement describes each man in much the same way he has described Christ in chapter 16. These exemplars proclaim Christ by being worthy, godly men who humble themselves as Christ humbled himself. Of Abraham, Clement writes, "Abraham was greatly renowned and titled [προσηγορεύθη] 'friend of God,' but said in lowliness of mind [ταπεινοφρονῶν] when he gazed intently [ἀτενίζων; see *1 Clem.* 7:4] on the Glory of God, 'I am only dust and ashes'" (*1 Clem.* 17:2). Here there is a pattern like Christ's: Abraham holds a special status before God but humbles himself before God despite that status. Abraham emulates Christ with his "lowliness of mind" (*1 Clem.* 16:1, 2). A similar connection can be made between his self-humbling statement, "I am only dust and ashes" and Christ's words from Psalm 22:6–8 (*1 Clem.* 16:15–16). Thus Abraham is "preaching the coming of Christ" by his example. This pattern is also in Clement's references to Job and Moses. Clement quotes Scripture to describe Job as "righteous and blameless, true, abstaining from all evil" (*1 Clem.* 17:3; cf. Job 1:1) and Moses as "faithful in all his house" and "greatly glorified" (*1 Clem.* 17:5; cf. Num 12:7; Heb 3:2). These men then humble themselves, despite their greatness and honor, and thereby prefigure and preach Christ in their conduct.

The second way in which these exemplars, specifically Abraham and Moses, preach Christ is their humble acknowledgment of the presence of Christ. This second form of proclamation involves the association of Christ with Old Testament theophanies. The first indicators are the words of Abraham that Clement quotes. Abraham says, "I am dust and ashes" while he is being visited by the Angel of the

⁴⁴ In doing this, Clement is echoing a number of New Testament passages that also identify Christ as the content of Scripture to which the Law and the Prophets point (e.g., Luke 24:27; John 1:45; 5:39; Gal 3:24).

Lord and is interceding with him on behalf of the hypothetical righteous in Sodom (Gen 18:27). Gieschen observes that Genesis 18:1–19:1 is probably one of the most well-known passages from the Old Testament where God appears as a man.⁴⁵

The second indicator is Clement's designation, "the Glory of God" (*1 Clem.* 17:2). Gieschen notes that the "Glory of God" has a wide range of meaning in Jewish literature, but within that range of meaning, it can signify the visible presence of God and is commonly associated with the language of the temple cult.⁴⁶ Given that Clement uses the expression within the context of a widely recognized theophanic tradition, he uses the designation for the visible manifestation of God, specifically, for Christ himself.⁴⁷ This conclusion is strengthened by the fact that elsewhere, in the most explicit expression of his Christology, Clement identifies Christ as the tangible and final mediator between God and man who fully possesses the divine nature:

This is the way, beloved, in which we found our salvation, Jesus Christ, the High Priest of our offerings, the benefactor and helper of our weakness. Through him we gaze intently [*ἀτενίζομεν*] into the heights of heaven; through him we see in a mirror his faultless and transcendent face; through him the eyes of our hearts have been opened; through him our foolish and darkened mind revives into the light; through him the Master has willed that we should taste immortal knowledge, for he, being the radiance of his majesty, is as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent. (*1 Clem.* 36:1–2)

This passage resonates with much of the New Testament witness about Jesus—especially the Epistle to the Hebrews—that he is the visible manifestation of God and is God himself. If anyone has seen God, it is the Son, who has been seen. This conclusion is not only asserted by *1 Clement* 36 but is also in his description of the "preaching of the coming of Christ" (*1 Clem.* 17:1–6).

Clement appeals to another prominent theophanic tradition with his reference to Moses' conversation with God in the burning bush (*1 Clem.* 17:5; cf. Exod 3:1–

⁴⁵ Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology*, 59–60.

⁴⁶ Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology*, 78.

⁴⁷ Where exactly Clement gets his "Glory theology" is difficult to determine. Given the apparent familiarity that Clement has with much of the Pauline corpus, it would seem that the most likely source for his understanding of Jesus as the Glory of God comes from Paul. There are, however, a number of other connections that suggest a familiarity with the Johannine tradition or a common tradition, even though there is nothing in the way of direct quotations from the Johannine literature. Perhaps the most significant possibility for a connection is found in several intertextual allusions shared between *1 Clement* 34 and Revelation (e.g., [*1 Clem.* 34:3 and Rev 22:12; *1 Clem.* 34:6 and Rev 5:11]). Direct connections are rather tenuous and a fuller discussion of the possibilities is outside of the scope of this paper.

4:17). In addition to the direct reference to the burning bush theophany of Exodus 3 and 4, Moses is clearly recognized as having been one to whom God spoke face to face (see Exod 33:11).⁴⁸

It could be taken as a coincidence that Clement chooses to highlight two theophanies in the lives of two men who “preached Christ” and humbled themselves before Christ. However, given both the evidence that these theophanies were widely recognized as such (especially in the case of Genesis 18) and the use of titles that bear those kinds of connotations, such as the “Glory of God”—and perhaps even “the Majestic Scepter of God”—it appears that this is Clement’s association of humility with submission and identification with Christ—with the tangible experience of Christ’s presence.⁴⁹ This line of reasoning is strengthened by the fact that Clement’s exhortation to the Corinthian church involves their submission to their called and ordained ministers.

Clement’s appeal to the Corinthians that they imitate the Old Testament exemplars has two elements. First, that they imitate the men as figures of Christ and thereby proclaim Christ through humility. Second, that they imitate the men in their submission to Christ as he appears to them. The latter imitation advances Clement’s

⁴⁸ Clement’s description of Moses as “faithful in all his house” echoes Numbers 12:7 and Hebrews 3:2. It is likely that Clement’s reference here is principally drawn from Hebrews and is partially informed by the background of Hebrews. A unique feature of Hebrews 3 is that it is the only place in the New Testament where Jesus is overtly called “Apostle.” Gieschen notes that there is a well-established tradition of referring to angels as “apostle,” and the author of Hebrews is highly likely conscious of this (Heb 1:14). Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology*, 304, observes that in Samaritanism the “Apostle” designation began to replace the designation “Angel of the Lord.” Furthermore, for some Jews and Samaritans, Moses was considered to be the Apostle par excellence. An example of this is found in a Samaritan writing that refers to Moses in a number of ways including “Apostle,” “the Son of the house of God,” “Priest,” “faithful one,” and “Servant.” Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology*, 305, then argues that “the use of these designations not only forms a portion of the author’s argument for the superiority of Christ over Moses, but probably is also a polemic against veneration of Moses in Jewish and Samaritan groups.” The convenience of this argument for Clement is apparent since, like the author of Hebrews, he wants to highlight the supremacy of Christ and make positive use of Moses, as one who “is faithful in his house,” pointing to Christ. It could be that Clement simply extends the argumentation of Hebrews by referring to a theophanic tradition where Moses and the Angel of the Lord are rightly distinguished from each other. Clement is then able to highlight Moses’ humility in this distinction for the purpose of his own pastoral concerns for the church in Corinth.

⁴⁹ A distantly related note: Leo the Great comments on the significance of the appearance of Moses and Elijah thusly, “Because, as says the blessed John, ‘the law was given through Moses: but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ,’ in Whom is fulfilled both the promise of prophetic figures and the purpose of the legal ordinances: for He both teaches the truth of prophecy *by His presence*, and renders the commands possible through grace” (Leo the Great, “Sermon 51,” in *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, First Series, 14 vols., ed. Philip Schaff [Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1969–1976], vol. 12: 163).