

ROMAN CHURCH WITH NO GOSPELS

Christians like to argue that the gospels were well known soon after being written and thus must be true for nobody refuted them or said they were nonsense. This is the pivot of their argument that Jesus really existed and really died on a cross and really rose from the dead.

We are going to study the First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians. It seems that it was written in 96 AD. In Early Christian Writings page 21, we read that whoever wrote it “knows 1 Peter, Hebrews and the tradition that lies behind the Synoptic Gospels. All that is missing is the Johannine tradition.” The traditions that became the gospel of John were absent. The Second Epistle of Clement is universally dismissed as a forgery. The Clement who wrote the real epistle is listed as St Clement 1 in Catholic lists of popes and he is called Clement of Rome.

The First Epistle is really a homily not an epistle and it is not from Clement personally. It is a letter from the Church of Rome to the Church of Corinth which means that if it implies that the gospels were secret then we have a Church that was in the dark since Christ died.

Clement uses the Old Testament a lot to defend Christian teaching and quotes Jesus just twice which implies that it was the best he could do and that there were no Christian scriptures (page 147, The Unauthorized Version). He tries to prove the possibility of the general resurrection and instead of using the testimony of the Gospels to the resurrection of Jesus he uses the weakest sort of arguments to do it. He gives the myth of the phoenix coming back to life and the way things die and grow again on earth as evidence. If Clement had even one gospel he would not have done this. Clement quotes Jesus saying that it is better for a man to be drowned than for him to corrupt the chosen (46). Clement gets it mixed up with Jesus’ declaration that Judas would have been better off if he had never been born. Also, Jesus said a man is better drowned if he leads a child astray. He said nothing similar about his chosen. He said child and he did not say his chosen. He said child so Clement has it wrong. To mislead the chosen is not as bad as misleading a child for a child knows no better. Clement prefixes it with a command to the people as if he is inventing the rule himself so it is not a command from Jesus. If anything, it inspired the gospels! You don’t tell people to recall a quotation from a book and use your own memory to repeat that quotation. Christians want us to believe that Clement did. You go to the book to get it right first. The quotes do not prove that the gospels existed but only that some of the legends in them were doing the rounds. The mix-up proves that Clement did not know the Gospels and could not know them – not even Mark which was supposedly written in Rome years earlier.

The Church had nothing to fear from telling the words of Jesus – it was the history that it had to be ashamed of. And so its not having the teachings shows that the Jesus story was still at its conception process. It wasn’t even an embryo yet.

Clement is surprised that a woman, Judith, who beheaded Holofernes when he had drunk himself unconscious, could be so brave (55). Does that look like something that a man who knew how brave Mary was in agreeing to be the mother of Jesus though it would get her classed as an adulteress would write? Here we have a leader of the Church who never touched a gospel scroll. He would have read it over and over again if it had until much of it stuck in his mind. He had to with his rank and for there was an ever-present danger of the Church being suppressed by hostile Rome.

Clement comfortably taught that it is never too late to repent (7). He was unaware that the Gospels warned that there is no forgiveness in earth or in the world to come for the person who insults the Holy Spirit and that was spoken to people who had a long time to live. If he had known this he would have put it down as an exception for he wouldn’t have been writing this letter if the people it would reach were all experts in religion and knew that he didn’t literally mean that all sins would be pardoned. The sin of Christians cursing Christ and calling him an evil fraud for an easy life was big in those days too and Clement was concerned for their souls and never mentioned the duty of bearing witness to Jesus whatever the consequences.

If Clement knew the gospels which said that the Old Testament was perfectly preserved and always would be he would not have perverted an Old Testament verse to show that Jesus’ return was imminent like he did at the end of chapter 23. Even after the alteration the verse is still ambiguous. Incidentally, Clement could never have been a pope when he expected the return so soon. What would be the point of being head of the Church and organising the Church so that you have yourself at the top and good organisation to help you run the Church if Jesus is going to come any minute?

Clement never heard that Jesus banned altering the Old Testament. We know that because Clement changed Isaiah 60:17 to make it talk about bishops and deacons. See the end of chapter 42. It is no wonder Catholics believe that this liar was a pope for he lies like one.

Clement does quote the material that was worked into the Gospels but it is clear that he knew little about the material and nothing about the gospels. A leading Churchman not having an inkling of the gospels! It can only mean that they were still confined to a small and select and secretive band of readers or perhaps forgotten about in some cave. Because he could not depend on any allegedly historical gospels he had to settle for using threats to win believers and he wrote that what he and his helpers were writing to the people of Corinth was written by the Holy Spirit and great danger will befall those who do not obey the instructions of the epistle. (The Catholic claim that this is evidence of papal infallibility for they think that Clement was a pope is just an assumption though it is presented in Question 48 of the ever dishonest apologetic, Radio Replies, Vol 3 and it even contradicts the fact that Clement wrote we and not I). All Christians believe that what they preach is the word of God even if the Bible is in the strict sense the word of God for they believe their teaching is a paraphrase and elaboration of the Bible.

Speaking of the Jewish sacrifices the Epistle says, “The sacrifices made every day, the peace-offerings, the sin-offerings and trespass-offerings are not just offered anywhere, brethren, but on the altar that is before the Temple” (41). Whoever wrote this didn’t know that sacrifice had ended with the destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem in 70 AD. It is explained by scholars that Clement is not saying that these rites are still going on but is just referring to the sacrificial regulations which were still in force among the Jews though they could not be kept. But the author would have written that they are meant to be offered not that they are being offered. The Church of Rome did not know that there were gospels saying that Jesus foresaw that the Temple would be totally destroyed which happened in 70AD. They had no gospels to read this prophecy in.

In Glenn Miller’s pathetic attempt to prove that Clement knew the gospels and the rest of the New Testament we find no evidence that Clement knew of the historical claims of the gospels. Read his web page, Were the Apostolic Fathers unable to Distinguish Between Authentic and Unauthentic Books? It even goes as far as to say that the words of Clement ready unto do every good work which match Titus 3:1 as if this could not have been coincidence. Why would Clement trawl through scrolls to get a phrase like that when he could have put in his own words? Since scrolls were laborious to search through Clement would have had a notebook with his favourite quotations in it. But since many of his Old Testament quotes are inaccurate as are many of the New Testament ones it looks as if the letter was not really written by Clement at all for the notebook absence shows us that it could not have been Clement but it was somebody with very limited resources while a Church leader would have had more.

Clement is evidence that the gospel data was not highly regarded by the early Church or perhaps was not even known of even half-properly. Clement gives no hint of knowing of gospel books, does not say where his quotes come from and most importantly does not say the people had access to such books. The wording does not line up indicating that Clement himself who should have had them did not.