Fragment of the Letter of Clement to Theodore

Containing the Secret Gospel of Mark

A Study Edition

A. K. M. Adam
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Translation and notes by A. K. M. Adam.

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Text is numbered by *page* and *line*, as has become conventional for this text, but for the sake of convenience and smooth reading, line numbers have been relocated to the beginning of any word that is interrupted by a line break.

Greek text is set in SBL BibLit
   English in Scala 12/16
   Title set in Jupiter Pro

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Preface

The following short treatment of the Letter of Clement to Theodore/Secret Gospel of Mark was prepared at first as a reference for myself, a Loeb-like comparison of Morton Smith’s transcription with his English translation, as I pondered the intricate questions that dog the question of authenticity and forgery. Then I translated it for myself, without relying on Smith; then I noticed that his was no longer the only transcription available, and it occurred to me that it might be handy to have this text available to distribute to students working on New Testament apocrypha. That required a vocabulary of Clement(?)’s usage for such students as have only New Testament reading fluency.

I am not a palaeographer, so my scrutiny of the photographs of MS. Smith 65 has given me as many headaches as insights; yet as this is an utterly unambitious endeavour, I have felt it reasonable to trust the transcriptions of better readers of 18th-century Byzantine script than I (checking against the original, and then usually coming away satisfied that Smith has transcribed it correctly — which would only be expected, if it turns out that he wrote it himself).

My thanks to Andrew Guffey, Melanie Marshall, and Mark Edwards for helpful comments on a previous draft of this version.

I was excited by Morton Smith’s discovery when I first learned of it. After a while, though, it seemed a little too convenient a find, and when Stephen Carlson began framing his argument in favour of Smith’s having forged the letter, many of his observations rang true. As I keep returning to the text, though, the arguments against Smith having produced this text strike me as plausible as well. I am no longer confident that Smith himself forged the manuscript, and am more open to the possibility that the work is either an earlier forgery, or a genuine lost letter of Clement. Barring the unveiling of some decisive proof, I expect to be hesitant about authenticity for a long time. With a convenient copy of the text in Greek, however, and a viable translation, and some notes on the manuscript and vocabulary, other readers of Clement to Theodore/Secret Mark will be better equipped to make up their own minds.

A K M Adam
St Stephen’s House, Oxford
Easter, 2018
Ἐκ τῶν ἑπιστολῶν τοῦ ἀγιωτάτου Κλήμεντος τοῦ Στρωματέως· Θεοδώρῳ.

2 Καλῶς ἐποίησας ἑπιστομίσασα τὰς ἀρρήτους διδασκαλίας τῶν Καρποκρατιανῶν. Οὕτω γὰρ οἱ προφητευθέντες ἀστέρες πλανήται, οἱ ἀπὸ τῆς στενῆς τῶν ἐντολῶν ὁδοὺ εἰς ἄπερατον ἅβυσσον πλανώμενοι τῶν σαρκικῶν καὶ ἑνσωμάτων ἁμαρτιῶν.

5 Πεφυσιωμένοι γὰρ εἰς γνώσιν, ὡς λέγουσι, τῶν βαθέων τοῦ Σατανᾶ λανθάνουσιν εἰς τὸν ζόφον τοῦ σκότους τοῦ ψεύδους έαυτοὺς ἀπορρίπτοντες καὶ καυχώμενοι ἑναι δοῦλοι ἐλευθέρους εἶναι δοῦλοι γεγόνασι ἀνδραποδῶν ἑαυτοὺς ἀποῤῥίπτοντες καὶ καυχώμενοι ἑλευθέρους εἶναι δοῦλοι γεγόνασι ἀνδραποδῶν ἑαυτοὺς ἀποῤῥίπτοντες καὶ καυχώμενοι ἑλευθέρους εἶναι δοῦλοι γεγόνασι ἀνδραποδῶν ἑαυτοὺς ἀποῤῥίπτοντες καὶ καυχώμενοι ἑλευθέρους εἶναι δοῦλοι γεγόνασι ἀνδραποδῶν ἑαυτοὺς ἀποῤῥίπτοντες καὶ καυχώμενοι ἑλευθέρους εἶναι δοῦλοι γεγόνασι ἀνδραποδῶν ἑαυτοὺς ἀποῤῥίπτοντες καὶ καυχώμενοι ἑλευθέρους εἶναι δοῦλοι γεγόνασι ἀνδραποδῶν ἑαυτοὺς ἀποῤῥίπτοντες καὶ καυχώμενοι ἑλευθέρους εἶναι δοῦλοι γεγόνασι ἀνδραποδῶν ἑαυτοὺς ἀποῤῥίπτοντες καὶ καυχώμενοι ἑλευθέρους εἶναι δοῦλοι γεγόνασι ἀνδραποδῶν ἑαυτοὺς ἀποῤῥίπτοντες καὶ καυχώμενοι ἑλευθέρους εἶναι δοῦλοι γεγόνασι ἀνδραποδῶν ἑαυτοὺς ἀποῤῥίπτοντες καὶ καυχώμενοι ἑλευθέρους εἶναι δοῦλοι γεγόνασι ἀνδραποδῶν ἑαυτοὺς ἀποῤῥίπτοντες καὶ καυχώμενοι ἑλευθέρους εἶναι δοῦλοι γεγόνασι ἀνδραποδῶν ἑαυτοὺς ἀποῤῥίπτοντες καὶ καυχώμενοι ἑλευθέρους εἶναι δοῦλοι γεγόνασι ἀνδραποδῶν ἑαυτοὺς ἀποῤῥίπτοντες καὶ καυχώμενοι ἑλευθέρους εἶναι δοῦλοι γεγόνασι ἀνδραποδῶν ἑαυτοὺς ἀποῤῥίπτοντες καὶ καυχώμενοι ἑλευθέρους εἶναι δοῦλοι γεγόνασι ἀνδραποδῶν ἑαυτοὺς ἀποῤῥίπτοντες καὶ καυχώμενοι ἑλευθέρους εἶναι δοῦλοι γεγόνασι ἀνδραποδῶν ἑαυτοὺς ἀποῤῥίπτοντες καὶ καυχώμενοι ἑλευθέρους εἶναι δοῦλοι γεγόνασι ἀνδραποδῶν ἑαυτοὺς ἀποῤῥίπτοντες καὶ καυχώμενοι ἑλευθέρους εἶναι δοῦλοι γεγόνασι ἀνδραποδῶν ἑαυτοὺς ἀποῤῥίπτοντες καὶ καυχώμενοι ἑλευθέρους εἶναι δοῦλοι γεγόνασι ἀνδραποδῶν ἑαυτοὺς ἀποῤῥίπτοντες καὶ καυχώμενοι ἑλευθέρους εἶναι δοῦλοι γεγόνασι ἀνδραποδῶν ἑαυτοὺς ἀπο-</p>
From the letters of the most holy Clement, of the *Miscellany*: to Theodore.

You did well, shutting up the unspeakable teachings of the Carpocratians. For these are the prophesied wandering stars, wandering from the narrow way of the commandments into a boundless abyss of the fleshly, bodily sins. For, puffed up with respect to knowledge, as they say, of the deep things of Satan, they neglect that they are throwing themselves away into the deepest darkness of falseness, and boasting that they are free, they have become slaves of servile desires. These, therefore, are to be resisted in every way and by all means. For, even if they might say something true, not even then should a lover of truth agree with them. For neither are all true things the truth, nor is what is apparently true according to human opinion preferable to the true truth, in accordance with the faith. So of the scuttlebutt concerning the divinely inspired Gospel according to Mark, some things are entirely mistaken, and others, even if they do include some true things, still have not been handed on truly. For the true things being mixed with inventions, are falsified, so that, as the saying goes, even the salt loses its savour. As for Mark, then, during Peter’s stay in Rome he wrote an account of the Lord’s doings, For the true — having been mixed with counterfeits — are debased, so that, as the saying goes, even salt goes stale. Mark did indeed write down the deeds of the Lord during Peter’s stay in Rome;
οὐ μέντοι πᾶσας ἐξαγγέλλων, οὔδὲ μὴν τὰς 17 μυστικὰς ὑποσημαίνων, ἀλλ’ ἐκλεγόμενος ὡς χρησιμωτάτας ἐνόμισε πρὸς 18 αὐξήσιν τῆς τῶν κατηχουμένων πίστεως. Τοῦ δὲ Πέτρου μαρτυρήσαντος παρῆλθεν 19 εἰς Ἀλεξάνδρειαν ὁ Μάρκος κομίζων καὶ ταταυτοῦ*a καὶ τα τοῦ Πέτρου 20 ὑπομνήματα, ἐξ ὧν μεταφέρων εἰς τὸ πρώτον αὐτοῦ βιβλίον τὰ τοῖς 21 προκόπτουσι περὶ τὴν γνώσιν κατάληλα συνέταξε πνευματικώτερον 22 εὐαγγέλιον εἰς τὴν τῶν τελειομένων χρήσιν. Οὐδέπω ὃμως αὐτὰ τὰ 23 ἀπόρρητα ἐξωρχήσατο, οὔδὲ κατέγραψε τὴν ἱεροφαντικὴν διδασκαλίαν τοῦ 24 Κυρίου, ἀλλὰ ταῖς προγεγραμμέναις πράξεσιν ἐπιθεῖς καὶ ἁλλαζ. Ἔτι 25 προσεπήγαγε λόγια τινὰ ὡς ἡπίστατο τὴν ἐξήγησιν μυσταγωγήσειν τοὺς 26 ἀκροτάτας εἰς τὸ ἀδυτον τῆς ἐπτάκιςb κεκαλυμμένης ἁληθείας. Οὕτως οὖν 27 προπαρεσκεύασε, οὗ φθονερῶς οὔτ' ἀποφυλάκτως, ὡς ἐγὼ οἴμαι, καὶ 28 ἀποθνήσκων κατέλιπε τὸ αὐτοῦ σύγγραμμα τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ τῇ ἐν <II> 1 Ἀλεξανδρεία, ὅπου εἰσέτι νῦν ἀσφαλῶς εὐ μάλα τηρεῖται, 2 ἀναγινωσκόμενον πρὸς αὐτοὺς μόνους τοὺς μυστήρια τὰ μεγάλα μυστήρια. Τῶν δὲ 3 μιαρῶν δαίμονων ὀλεθρὸν τῷ τῶν ἀνθρώπων γένει πάντοτε μηχανῶντων, ὁ 4 Καρποκράτης, ὥστε παρ’ αὐτῶν διδαχθεῖς καὶ ἀπατηλοὶς τέχναις χρησάμενοι 5 οὔτω πρεσβύτερον τινὰ τῆς ἐν Ἀλεξανδρείᾳ ἐκκλησίας κατεδούλωσεν, 6 ὥστε παρ’ αὐτοῦ ἐκόμισεν ἀπόγραφον τοῦ μυστικοῦ

*a. ταταυτοῦ [MS, PV] τα ταυτοῦ [AT]
b. ἐπτάκις [AT] ἐπτάκις [PV]
c. καὶ [PV] καὶ [AT]
not, however, recounting all, nor indeed intimating the mysterious, but choosing what he supposed most useful for the growth of the catechumens’ faith. And when Peter was martyred, Mark escaped to Alexandria, taking along both his own and Peter’s notes, from which he transferred the things suitable for progress toward knowledge into his first book; he arranged a more spiritual gospel for the use of the advanced. Likewise, never once did he betray the forbidden things, nor spell out the esoteric teaching of the Lord, but setting out the aforementioned deeds and others. Moreover, he added certain sayings whose interpretation he knew, to initiate the hearers into the sanctuary of the sevenfold hidden truth. So therefore, he prepared beforehand — not enviously or heedlessly, it seems to me — and when he died he left his treatise to the church in Alexandria, where still to this day it is kept completely secure, being read only to those who have been initiated into the great mysteries. And as the blood-stained demons are always plotting destruction to the human race, Carpocrates, taught by them and using deceptive skills, so enslaved some presbyter of the church in Alexandria that from him he acquired a copy of the mystical
εὐαγγελίου, ὀ7 καὶ ἐξηγήσατο κατὰ τὴν βλασφημίαν καὶ σαρκικήν αὐτοῦ δόξαν8. Ἔτι δὲ καὶ ἐμιλάνε ταῖς ἀχράντοις καὶ ἀγίαις λέξειν ἀναμιγνύς9 ἀναιδέστατα ψεύσματα. Τοῦ δὲ κράματος τούτου ἐξαντλήται τὸ τῶν10 Καρποκρατιανῶν δόγμα. Τούτοις οὖν, καθὼς καὶ προείρηκα, οὐδέποτε οὐδὲ προτείνουσιν αὐτοῖς τὰ κατεψευσμένα συγχωρητέον τοῦ Μάρκου12 εἶναι τὸ μυστικὸν εὐαγγελίου. Όλλὰ καὶ μεθ’ ὀρχον ἀρνητέον. Οὐ γὰρ ἀπασὶ13 πάντα ἀληθῆ λεκτέον. Διὰ τοῦτο ἡ σοφία τοῦ Θεοῦ διὰ Σολομώντος14 παραγγέλλει, ἀποκρίνου τῷ μωρῷ ἐκ τῆς μωρίας αὐτοῦ, πρὸς τοὺς τυφλοὺς τὸν15 νοῦν τὸ φῶς τῆς ἀληθείας δεῖν ἐπικρύπτεσθαι διδάσκουσα. Αὐτίκα16 φησί, τοῦ δὲ μὴ ἔχοντος ἀρθήσεται, καὶ ὁ μωρὸς ἐν σκότει πορευέσθω. Ἡμεῖς17 δὲ ύποι φωτός ἐσμεν, πεφωτισμένοι τῇ ἔξω ψυχῇ του πνεύματος18 τοῦ Κυρίου. Οὐ δὲ τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ Κυρίου, φησίν, ἐκεῖ ἐλευθερία. Πάντα γὰρ19 καθαρὰ τοῖς καθαροῖς. Σοὶ τοῖνυν οὐχ ὅκνησον τὰ ἡρωτημένα20 ἀποκρίναις τῷ αὐτῶν τοῦ εὐαγγελίου λέξεων τὰ κατεψυσμένα ἐλέγχων. Αὐτίκα21 ἀμέλεις ἐμεῖς τῷ ἦσαν δὲ ἐν τῇ ὅδῷ ἀναβαίνοντες εἰς Ἰεροσόλυμα, καὶ τὰ22 ἔξως23 ἐσμέν, μετὰ τρεῖς ἡμέρας ἀναστήσεται. Ὡς24 ἐπιφέρει κατὰ λέξιν, καὶ ἔρχονται εἰς Βηθανίαν καὶ ἦν ἐκεῖ μία γυνὴ ὑς ὃς ἂδελφός αὐτῆς25 ἀπέθανεν. Καὶ ἐλθοῦσα προσεκύνησε τὸν Ἰησοῦν καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ, Ὕι25 Δαβίδ ἐλέησόν με.
Gospel, which he interpreted according to his blasphemous and fleshly notion. Even more, he defiled the uncontaminated and holy discourses by mixing in most shameless falsehoods. From this mixture is drawn the doctrine of the Carpocratians. To these, then, as I have said before, one must never yield, nor concede — when they allege slanders — that the mystical gospel is from Mark, but should even deny with an oath. For not to all should one say every true thing. Because of this, the wisdom of God through Solomon commands, ‘Answer the fool from his folly,’ teaching that it is necessary that the light of truth be concealed from blind minds. For example, it says ‘from the one who has not, it will be taken away’ and ‘Let the fool proceed in darkness.’ But we, we are sons of light, having been enlightened by the dawn from above of the spirit of the Lord. And where the spirit of the Lord is, it says, there is freedom. For to the pure, all things are pure. So I will not hold back from answering you what was asked, disproving the slanders through the same discourses of the gospel. Of course, after the ‘they were on the way, going up to Jerusalem’ and the next things, until ‘After three days he will rise again,’ here it adds, word for word, ‘and they came to Bethany and there was one woman there whose brother had died. And she came and worshipped Jesus and said to him, “Son of David, have mercy on me”.’
Οἱ δὲ μαθηταὶ ἐπετίμησαν αὐτῇ. Καὶ ὁργισθεὶς ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἀπῆλθεν μετ’ αὐτῆς εἰς τὸν κήπον ὅπου ἦν τὸ μνημεῖον, καὶ εὐθὺς ἠκούσθη ἐκ τοῦ μνημείου φωνὴ μεγάλη, καὶ προσελθὼν ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἀπέκυλισε τὸν λίθον ἀπὸ τῆς θύρας τοῦ μνημείου, καὶ εἰσελθὼν εὐθὺς ὅπου ἦν ὁ νεανίσκος ἠγάπησεν αὐτὸν καὶ ἤρξατο παρακαλεῖν αὐτὸν ἵνα μετ’ αὐτοῦ ἦν. Καὶ εξελθόντες ἐκ τοῦ μνημείου ἦλθον εἰς τὴν οἰκίαν τοῦ νεανίσκου, ἦν γὰρ πλούσιος. Καὶ μεθ’ ἡμέρας ἐξ ἐκ τοῦ μνημείου ἠλθον εἰς τὴν οἰκίαν τοῦ νεανίσκου, ἦν γὰρ πλούσιος. Καὶ μεθ’ ἡμέρας ἐξ ἐκ τοῦ μνημείου ἠλθον εἰς τὴν οἰκίαν τοῦ νεανίσκου, ἦν γὰρ πλούσιος. Καὶ μεθ’ ἡμέρας ἐξ ἐκ τοῦ μνημείου ἠλθον εἰς τὴν οἰκίαν τοῦ νεανίσκου, ἦν γὰρ πλούσιος.
And the disciples rebuked her. And Jesus, becoming angry, went away with her into the garden where the tomb was, and immediately a loud sound was heard from the tomb, and Jesus approached and rolled away the stone from the door of the tomb, and immediately entering where the youth was, he reached out his hand and raised him and grasped his hand, and the youth, seeing him, loved him and began to request of him that he might be with him. And coming out of the tomb, he went into the house of the youth, for he was wealthy. And after six days, Jesus commanded him, and when it was evening, the youth came to him wearing nothing but a robe.\(^a\) And he remained with him that night, for Jesus taught him the mystery of the kingdom of God. From there, he rose and returned to the other side of the Jordan.’ And though these follow the ‘and James and John came forward to him’ and the whole pericope, on the other hand the ‘naked to naked’ and the other things concerning which you wrote are not found. And after the ‘he came into Jericho’ it adds in only ‘and there were the sister of the youth whom Jesus loved, and his mother and Salome, and Jesus did not welcome them.’ But the many other things which you wrote both seem to be, and are, slanders. So, the true explanation, in accordance with true philosophy...

\(^a\) So the NRSV; more directly, ‘a robe over his nakedness’
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LETTER OF CLEMENT TO THEODORE

VOCABULARY

Page I (sheet I, recto)

2 ἐπιστοµίσας, aor act ptc mas nom sg ἐπιστοµέω, stop up, close up. AT transcribes as the aorist infinitive.

4 ἀπέρατον, fem acc sg ἀπέρατος, here probably limitless in the sense of I Tim 1:4 ‘endless genealogies,’ though I Tim uses the more usual spelling ἀπέραντος. ἀπέραντος might on the other hand bear the sense of not to be crossed, impassable.

7 ἐνσωµάτων, fem gen pl ἐνσώµατος, corporeal, incarnate

8 ἀνδραποδώδων, fem gen pl ἀνδραποδώδης, servile

10 προκριτέον, fem acc sg προκριτέος, to be preferred

11 θρυλουµέων, pres pas ptc neut gen pl θρυλέω, LSJ gives the passive sense of to be common talk; BrDAG, to be repeated, be commonly said. Some read this as foregrounding repetition, but the sense of various rumours spread abroad seems more to the point here: more everyone is talking about than everyone keeps repeating.

14 πλάσµασι, neut dat pl πλάσµα, in general something made or formed; in a neutral sense, something dreamed up, an invention or fantasy; in a hostile sense, as here, a counterfeit, a fake.

16 ὑποσηµαίνων, pres act ptc mas nom sg ὑποσηµαίνω, give secret signs, express obliquely

17 μυστικάς, neut acc pl μυστικός, in technical usage having to do with the mysteries, or less technically mystic, mysterious
μεταφέρων, pres act ptc mas nom sg μεταφέρω, most usually transfer, transport or change, transform; here the sense is clearly to take from [notes] and write into a narrative, for which the attested sense of translate (not necessarily from one language to another, but from one setting to another) seems more to the point than transfer, but would also likely ask too much of casual readers

κατάλληλα, neut acc pl κατάλλελος, ordinarily corresponding, parallel, but here in the secondary sense of appropriate, suitable; substantive use of the adjective

ἀπόρρητα, neut acc pl ἀπόρρητος (ἀπόρρητος), forbidden, prohibited; unmentionable, unspeakable; from ἀπό and ῥητός (εἴρω)

ἐξωρχήσατο, aor mid ind 3rd sg ἐξορχέοαι, let out, betray, divulge ἱεροφαντικὴν fem acc sg ἱεροφαντικός, hierophantic - which won’t convey much to ordinary readers, so esoteric

προγεγράµµέναις pf pas ptc fem dat pl προγράφω, write before, write at first; here, aforementioned points back to the ‘deeds’ from I, 16. 

προσεπήγαγε, aor act ind 3rd sg προσεπάγω, bring in, add μυσταγωγήσειν, aor act inf μυσταγωγέω, initiate, guide in sacred mysteries

ἄδυτον, neut acc sg ἄδυτον, ‘inaccessible,’ the most sacred place in a temple, sanctuary

προπαρεσκεύασεν, aor act ind 3rd sg προπαρασκεύαζω, prepare in advance ἀποφυλάκτως, adv, unexpectedly, or heedlessly

σύγγραµµα, neut acc sg σύγγραµµα, writing, book, composition

Page II (sheet I, verso)

μάλα εὖ intensifier for adjectives and adverbs; extremely, completely

μιαρῶν, neut gen pl μιαρός, blood-stained, contaminated 

μηχανώντων, pres act ptc neut gen pl μηχανάω, usually does not appear in the active, but in the middle; in the active, plot, contrive

ἀπατηλοῖς fem dat pl ἀπατηλός, cunning, tricky, deceptive

ἀπόγραφον mas acc sg ἀπόγραφος, subst use of the adjective
transcribed, copied; thus, a copy

8 ἐμίανε aor act ind 3rd sg μιαίνω, stain, taint, defile
    ἀχράντος mas dat pl ἀχράντος, uncontaminated, undefiled
    λέξεσιν fem dat pl of λέξις, speech, phrase, style; here, since the context
    seems to point to Jesus's sayings in general, discourses
    ἀναμηγνύς pres act ptc mas nom sg ἀναμηγνύμι, mix together, mix up

9 ἀναιδέστατα superlative degree, neut acc pl ἀναιδής, shameless, so most
    shameless
    κράματος neut gen sg of κράμα, mixture
    ἐξαντληται pres pass ind 3rd sg of ἐξαντλέω, is drawn off

10 εἰκτέον neut εἰκτέος, impersonal, one must yield
    προτείνουσιν pres act ptc mas dat pl προτείνω, stretch forward, extend,
    allege

11 καταψευσμένα pf mid ptc neut acc pl καταψεύδομαι, to lie about, allege
    falsely, slander
    συγχωρητέον, neut συγχωρητέος, impersonal, one must concede

12 μυστικὸν See I, 17
    ἀρνητέον neut ἀρνητέος, impersonal, one must deny

15 ἐπικρύπτεσθαι pres pas inf ἐπικρύπτω, cover up, conceal
    αὐτίκα adv, at once, now, immediately; for example

20 λέξεων See II, 8
    καταψευσμένα See II, 11

22 ἐπιφέρει pres act ind 3rd sg ἐπιφέρω, in the NT twice carrying the
    sense of inflict, but here in the neutral sense of offer, give, bring in
    addition. The implied subject is 'the mystical gospel.'

Page III (sheet II)

11 ἐπετεῖ pres mid ind 3rd sg ἐπομαι, follow

14 ἐπάγει pres act ind 3rd sg ἐπάγω, bring to, lead to; introduce, add to. The
    implied subject is again 'the mystical gospel.'