Texts from Mt. Sinai

Pseudo-Clement (the Clementine writings) (3rd–4th century)

SermonIndex.net / Church Fathers

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RECOGNITIONS OF CLEMENT: Sinai Epitome (Arabic)

(From a MS. in the Convent at Mount Sinai. No. 508) In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, one God. The Christ is God, my strength, my help, and my hope. This is the tale of [how] Clement recognized his parents and his brothers by means of Peter the Apostle, chief of the Apostles, blessed in the faith; and this is the teaching of the above-mentioned Saint Peter, while he was at Tripolis. "It is necessary that love to God should be greater than that to parents and children, for He is the cause of all; and it is difficult for us to know what God is, but we are sure that He is God. And do not think that ye are believers, when ye are without baptism, because by it the figure of grace is found in the water, recognizing those who are baptized in the name of the Blessed Trinity, who saves from future punishment; and therefore hasten to the water, for it alone is able to quench that fire. And when he said that, he dismissed the crowd." And when I Clement had completed three months with him, he commanded me to fast for three days, and then we went to fountains of water on the sea-shore, and he baptized me there and with me Maroones, the man who had entertained us. Then he appointed him bishop of Tripolis, and twelve Presbyters, with deacons. Then he left the people of Tripolis, and went out to Antioch in Syria.

And the cause of my meeting him was this. While I was in the city of Rome, in my youthful years, I had carried chastity and righteousness to a great length, as also the recollection of death, and meditation about the soul, whether it is |16 mortal or immortal, and about this world, whether it had a beginning or not, and whether it will perish or not. And whilst I thought on these things, I did not cease frequenting the place of philosophers and wise men, and I did not find anything more from the Porch than a deceitful and vain thing, and I thought I would go to Egypt to those magicians [who foretell] about the dead, and while I thought about this, look, news was spread about in the empire of Tiberius concerning a man in the land of Judaea who was preaching the eternal kingdom of God and who confirmed that by many mighty deeds. And when this was so, behold, Barnabas came to Rome preaching the Christ, and the wise men were mocking him. And meanwhile I knew in him a righteous purpose; and I adopted his evidence, and I forsook like dogs those who do not accept the word of salvation; and I took Barnabas, and I entertained him at my house, and I heard Speech from him; and when they were going out to the land of Judea, I went out with him, and in fifteen days we came to Caesarea;

and I heard that Peter was in it, and that he intended [to have] a contest with Simon the next day; and when I went to his dwelling, Barnabas brought me in to him. And Peter received me with much affection, and he was very glad of what I had done to benefit Barnabas in Rome, and he confirmed my vocation, and commanded me to come to him, as he intended to travel to Rome; and when I promised him this, I asked him about the soul and about the world, and he made clear to me briefly by examination the folly that enters into people by means of sin, and that is what overclouds the minds of people like smoke. And he explained to me the coming of the Christ, and the resurrection to life. And in the morning, behold, Zacchaeus came saying that Simon had postponed the contest for seven days. Peter completed his teaching of us about the science of the world, according to what the Holy Spirit gave him. And after this we went to Tripolis, to the place in which I was baptized, and from thence Peter sent Niceta and Aquila with others to Laodicea, and told them to wait for him at the door of the city. |17 But I and he went to Antaradus, and I thanked him for taking me with him as his follower, and he said to me: "If I send thee to a place to buy for us what is necessary, wilt thou die?

And I answered and said to him: "Thou art to me instead of my father and my mother, and my brothers; thou hast been the cause of my knowing the truth; and thou hast made me equal to great people. Wilt thou therefore put me in the place of service? And Peter answered joking and said to me: "Dost thou think that thou hast never been a servant? And who will watch over my undressing and dressing? and who will prepare for me the many dishes that are necessary to the cooks, and this in the greatness of skill which is designed for luxurious people for the gratification of desire which is a great satisfaction, and I am clothed by it with abundance; and do not imagine that thou shalt know anything of this if thou art with me, for I do not get anything but the smallest bit of bread, and some oil with a little pulse; and all my wardrobe is these rags which thou lockest upon, and I need nothing else, for my mind looks on the good things that are eternal, and does not turn to what is contemptible. And I am surprised at thee, for thou art a man brought up in the enjoyment of the world, and thou hast despised all this, and thou art contented with things in moderation. But I and my brother Andrew were brought up in orphanage and poverty and misery, and we were accustomed to toil and that we should bear fatigue.

For this reason I will endure from thee toil and Service to thyself. And when I heard this from him I shuddered at it, and took an example on hearing this from a man whom the world cannot equal, and my eye wept. And when he saw me crying, he said to me: "Why are thine eyes weeping? And I answered him, saying: "In what have I sinned against thee, that thou causest me to hear this speech?"

And Peter said: "If I did wrong in saying I would serve thee, thou didst a greater wrong at the first when thou didst not see that, and there is no equality in this, yet it is fitting that I should do this to thee."

"But thou, O Apostle from God, Saviour of our souls, it is |18 not fitting that thou shouldst do this. And Peter answered and said: "Behold, I would have accepted thy opinion, if it

were not that our Lord, who came for the salvation of the world, to whom alone be honour, bore Service, that He might persuade us not to be ashamed to serve our brethren. And He washed my feet and hands, saying, Thus do to thy brethren. And I Clement said to him, "I thought I should conquer thee in Speech, and I was a fool, but I thank God who has put thee in the place of parents.' And Peter said to me: "Hast thou any kinsfolk? And I said to him, "There are noble men in my family nearly related to Caesar the Emperor. And he, the husband of my mother, possesses dignity, and by her we are three boys, twins before me, as my father told me, and I do not even know them, nor my mother, except by a faint recollection; and after them my mother gave birth to me, and her name was Matthidia, and my father's name was Faustinian and my brothers, Faustus and Faustinianus. And when I was in my fifth year, my mother saw a vision in her sleep, as my father related to me afterwards, that if the woman did not take her children immediately and go out of Rome and travel for ten years, she would perish, both she and they.

But my father, when he heard this, carried them into a ship, with provisions, secretly, with many servants, and sent them to travel to Athens, and he kept me only with him in order to console me, being overwhelmed with grief thereat. And when a year had passed after that, my father sent to Athens goods and money, in order that he might know their state; and the messengers went, and did not return. And in the third year he sent others for that [purpose], and they departed, and came in the fourth year to tell that they had not found the lads, nor their mother, and that these had never got to Athens at all; and they did not find a trace of them. And when my father heard this, he sorrowed with a great sorrow, and he was in much perplexity, but he neither knew how to find [them] nor where to weep for them. And he went to the shore of the sea, and I with him, and he began to ask the sailors from every place where ships had been wrecked for four years past, if any of them had seen a |19 drowned woman with her boys; and he did not fall in with the certainty of the matter, for no one can explore the expanse of the ocean. Thereupon he made me his heir in Rome, and appointed guardians over me;

and I that day was twelve years old, and he went from Rome in a ship, and departed to places to look for them. And now I have not heard news of him, nor [seen] writing, and [do not know if he is alive or dead, whilst I think that he must have died, and now today it is twenty years since he separated from me. And when Peter heard this, his eyes wept from pity, and he said to those believers that were with him: "One gains experience by what this man's father hath suffered. It shews concerning believers who are not vain heathen, who suffer here without reward in the last day, that those of the believers who are tried here endure suffering for the forsaking of their sins by means of it. And when Peter said this, one of those present answered before all, and besought Peter, saying, Behold, tomorrow our journey will be to the Island of Aradus in the sea that thou mayest see it. And there are there great pillars of winewood, and the sight of them is wonderful. And Peter allowed us to go, and said to us: "When ye arrive, do not go all of you together to the wonderful place, that no misfortune befall you. And we went, and came to the island, and we got down out

of the ship where the pillars were, and every one of us began to turn to some of the marvels that were there.

But whilst Peter went to the pillars, behold, a woman sitting outside the gates asking alms. And when Peter saw her, he said to her: ”O woman, what is defective in thy limbs, that thou hast submitted to this humiliation of begging, and thou dost not increase what God has given thee by the work of thy hands, so that thou couldst even give bread to me from day to day?’ And the woman sighed, and said: ”O would that I had hands able for Service and work. but they are in the form hands, yet they are dead, even when I bite them with my teeth. And Peter answered and said: ”And what is the cause that obliges thee to do this? And the woman said: ”The cause of it is only weakness; if I had boldness or strength, I would |20 have thrown away my life from a mountain, or in the deep, and I would have had rest from the sorrows and the cares with which my people reproach me.’ Said Peter: ”And are those who kill themselves saved from punishment, or do they suffer more of it in Gehenna with the souls who did thus to kill them?’ And the woman said, ”O would I were sure that in Gehenna there are living souls, that I might go there and see my loved ones, even if I were in torment. And Peter said: ”And what is it that grieves thee, O woman, tell me;

and if I knew perhaps I could cure thee, and convince thee that in Gehenna there are living souls, and give thee skill that thou shouldst not long (to go) with them to drowning, or to anything else, and that thou mayest go out of the body without torment. And she was glad at the promise, and she began to relate to him, saying: ”I am a woman who was possessed of dignity, and a nobleman wedded me, a man of position, related to Caesar the Emperor. And I had twin sons by him, and I had another son besides them, and after that the brother of my husband fell in love with me, and I persuaded him to live in chastity, and I did not tell my husband of his wicked desire towards me. And I resolved that I would not consent to him, nor defile the couch of my husband, besides exciting enmity between them, and that would be a reproach to me before all my people, and I resolved on going out of the city with my son for a short time till this bad wind should cease and vengeance should pass from me, and I left my other son with his father that he might be comforted by him, and I dreamt in a dream as if I saw a vision in the night saying to me:

”O woman, go out with thy children from here until a time that I will shew thee thy return, and if not, thou shalt perish with thy husband and children. And therefore I did [it], and when I told this to my husband he shuddered at that, then he rose, and carried me into a ship with my boys, and many servants, and much goods, and sent us to Athens, and while we travelled on the sea, the winds arose against us, and the waves came over us, and we were engulfed in the night, and every one who was |21 with us was drowned and I, miserable being, was thrown with a wave to the side of a rock, and I was inveigled by it (into) a hope of finding my boys alive. On that account, I did not throw myself to the depths and go to rest, and this, by my life, would have been case then, when I was overwhelmed with grief. And when the dawn approached I began to turn and grope for my drowned sons, and I mourn

and bewail them with tears, whilst I did not see one of them nor their drowned bodies; and when the people of the place saw me, they pitied me and covered me. Then they sought for my boys in the depths, and did not find them.

And there came to me women comforting me, and they were reminded of the misfortunes and the griefs they had suffered like to what had befallen me, and that was a thing that increases my grief because there were no other misfortunes but [such as] mine with which they consoled me. And they invited me to go to them (two) and I went to a poor woman when she invited me to go to page her, and she said to me, "I had a husband, who died by drowning in the sea, and left me that day, being of my own age, and since then I have known no man, though many invited me to wedlock, and I preferred chastity and piety towards my husband. Come, we will go into one life and one household, and I lived with her that she might keep her affection for her husband. And after that I had a pain in my hand, and the woman my house-companion had a paralytic stroke there in the house, and since then for some time I sit here begging alms for myself and for my friend. And now I have explained to thee my affair and my story, and fulfil now thy promise to me, that thou mayest give me the cure, by means of which it will be possible for me to hasten from this world with my friend.

And when the woman said this, Peter fell the more into thought, and he was then standing, and I Clement came up to Peter, and said to him, "O good Teacher, where hast thou been, for I have been seeking thee for some time. What dost thou command us to do? And he said, "Go forward and wait for me in the ship. And I did as he commanded me. And he renewed the questioning of the woman, and said to her, "Tell me about thy |22 family, and thy city, and thy children, and their names, and I will give thee the medicine. And the woman did not wish to tell him about that, and she began to tell him untruthfully, that she might get the medicine. And she said to him, "I am a woman of Ephesus, and my husband was from Sicily," and she changed the names of her boys; and Peter saw that she was trustworthy, and said to her, "I had been thinking, that thou wouldst have had a good fortune of joy this day, because I thought that thou were a woman whose affairs I know. And the woman adjured him, saying: "I ask you to tell me what thou knowest, for I do not think that among women there is one more wretched than I. And Peter began to relate to her truly, and said, "There is with me a lad my follower, in search of the certain knowledge of God, and he is from Rome;

besides, he told me about a father whom he had, and twin brothers, and he believed that his mother, as his father had told him, saw in a vision that she should go out of Rome with her sons that she might not perish with her husband, and she went out, and he does not know what became of her, and that his father went in search of her, and news of him failed also, and he does not know what became of him. And when Peter said this, the woman fell in a faint, and Peter came forward, and took her hand, and said to her: "Have confidence, and trust me, and tell me truly what thou hast to do with that. As she recovered from the faint, and wiped her face, she said: "Where is this lad whom thou didst tell me of? And Peter said: "Tell thou me first thy affair, and I will shew thee him. And she said: "I am the mother of this boy. Said Peter, "What is his name? She said: "Clement is his name. And Peter said:

”He is the youth who is present, and I commanded him to wait for me in the ship. And she fell down and did homage to him. And she said: ”Hasten first to the ship, that thou mayest show me my only son, for when I see him, I have seen my boys who were drowned here. And Peter said to her:

”I will do this to thee, but when thou seest him, be silent until thou comest down from the Island. And the woman said, ”I will do so. And Peter took her by |23 the hand, and brought her near to the ship. And when I saw him holding a woman by the hand, I smiled, then I honoured him for that, and I began to lead the woman, and when I caught her hand, she cried with a loud voice, weeping and embracing me, and she began to kiss me. And I, because I did not know the thing, thought she was insane, or bewitched, and I pushed her from me. And Peter said, ”Why, my son, dost thou push thy mother from thee? And when I heard this from him, that she was my mother, my heart was troubled, and my eyes wept, and I threw myself towards her and my heart warmed to her, page n and weeping overcame me for joy and pity, and I kissed her; and all the people who were there came near us, hurrying to see the beggar woman, how she had recognised her son. And when we wished to go out from the Island, my mother said to me: ”O my beloved son, it is my duty to say good-bye to the woman who received me, and besides, she is a paralysed woman, bed-ridden in the house.

And when Peter heard [this], he marvelled at the sense of the woman, and he commanded that the paralysed woman should be carried on a couch, and they brought her to him. And when they came near, Peter said, the people listening, ”If I am an apostle of Christ, let these people now believe, that God is the only one, Creator of all, and the restoration of this woman is complete. And when Peter said this, the woman rose whole, and did obeisance to Peter, and asked him about these things. And he convinced her, and she knew the certainty of the thing; and when all the people heard they wondered with a great wonder and Peter made them a Speech about religion and about the last day. He said: ”Whosoever wishes to hear: the certainty about God for the salvation of his soul, let him travel to Antioch, as I have resolved to stay there for three months; and more obligatory than absence for the merchandise of the gains of the world [is] the search for the salvation of Souls, and the gain of the other [world]. And after the speech of Peter to the people, I gave a thousand drachmas to the woman whom Peter had cured, and entrusted them to an honest man, and recompensed the women who all had known my mother; and we travelled to Antaradus with Peter, and my |24 mother and the rest; and when we arrived at the house, my mother asked me, saying, ”How is thy father, O my son?

and I said to her, ”From the time when he went out in search of thee no trace was known of him”; and when she heard that she sighed and grieved. And after a day we went out to Laodicea, and when we came near to it, behold, before the gates disciples of Peter, Niceta and Aquila, and they met us and took us to the house; and when Peter saw the place suitable, he was pleased to stay there ten days, and Niceta and Aquila asked me, saying, ”Who is this woman ? and I said to them: ”This is my mother, whom God permitted me to know by the

forethought of my lord Peter"; and when I said this, Peter explained to them the certainty of the thing, how it was, according as I had related it about my mother, according as he heard from her, and he it was who had led us to a knowledge of each other. And when Peter said this, they marvelled much when they heard Peter about the woman and her recollection of her sons Faustus and Faustinianus, and they were astonished at the tale. And they said," Do we see? Is this a vision or the truth? If we are not be-witched it is true.

And they beat upon their faces, and they said, "We are Faustus and Faustinianus, and our hearts were straitened when thou didst begin the tale, and we held firm till we should hear the end of the tale, because many of the things are like one another. And this by my life is our mother, and this is our brother.' And when they said this, they embraced me with much weeping, and they kissed me, and they went in to our mother, and found her asleep. And Peter said to them, "Do not wake her, lest an emotion of joy overcome her suddenly, and her soul grow small within her. And when our mother awoke, Peter began to say to her, "I will instruct thee, O woman, about our religion, and our faith in God; we believe in one God, Creator of all this visible world, and we keep His commands, and sanctify and honour [our] parents ; and we live a pure life, and have no communion with the heathen in meat or in drink, unless they are baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.

And if there is a father or mother or wife or son or brother unbaptized, we |25 do not trust him and do not be grieved if thy son is bound by this unless thou becomest like him.' And when she heard this, she said, "And what is necessary, that I should not be baptized today, and that I should not come to this, because my soul has hated false gods, because they inspire the reverse of chastity, on account of which I fled from Rome with my sons Faustus and Faustinian? And when our mother said this, my brothers Niceta and Aquila did not wait, but they [were] overjoyed and they embraced her and kissed her. And the woman said, "What is this thing? Said Peter, "0 woman, keep thy presence of mind. These are thy sons Faustus and Faustinianus, whom thou didst think were drowned in the sea, how are they here before thee? "The sea swallowed them in the middle of the night, and how is the one called Niceta, and the other Aquila? "Let them tell us now that we and thou may know.1 And when Peter said this, the woman fell in a faint from joy, and we restored her with great labour, and when she sat up, she said to us, "I beg of you, my beloved sons, tell me what happened to you in that night.

And my brother Niceta said, "I relate to thee, O my mother, that in that night when our ship was wrecked they carried us into the boat, to make merchandise of us, and they rowed with us to the land, and came with us to Caesarea, and they tormented us there with hunger, and beating, in order that we should not say anything that did not suit them. And they changed our names, and sold us to a Jewess, whose name was Justa, and she bought us and educated us, and when we came to years of discretion, we acquired a sure faith in God, and we began disputing and conversing that the godlessness of all the heathen might be reproved; and we learnt the sayings of philosophy, that by this we might examine vain philosophies and

reasonings. And we associated with a man, a wizard, whose name was Simon, and we had much affection for him, and he nearly led us astray. And it came to us that there was a prophet in the land of Judaea, and everyone who believed in him would live without sorrow or death, and we thought it was Simon; and after that we met a disciple of our master Peter, whose name was Zacchaeus, and he exhorted us much and |26 hurried us from the wizard, and conducted us to Peter, and he led us to the knowledge of the truth.

And we seek from God that he would count thee worthy to welcome thee to the grace to which we have come, that we may be filled with grace towards one another. This is the reason why thou didst think that we were drowned that night, and we also thought that thou hadst perished in the sea.' And when Niceta said this, our mother ran to Peter and said, "I ask and beg of thee that thou wouldst baptize me, that I may not be deprived one day of intercourse with my children. And we begged this of him; and he commanded her to fast for three days, then after that he baptized her in the sea, in presence of her children, and we took food with her, and we rejoiced at this in the glory of God and the teaching of Peter, and in the knowledge we had got of our mother; and we learnt that chastity is the cause of salvation to the nations; and after that day Peter took us to the harbour, and we washed there, and prayed. And behold, an old man sitting there looking towards us, and observing our prayer closely, and after we had prayed, he approached us to reprove us and to say that everything happens by fortune, and that invocation and prayer are useless; and we remained three days to persuade him to change his opinion of this thing. And thereupon, during our discourse to him, we were calling him "O Father"; and he was calling us, "O my sons.

And this was a providence from God, because by it we began to know this word; and Aquila said to me and to Niceta, "Why do you call this stranger Father? And my brother said to me, "Do not complain of this," and we continued in our talk to him, and he in that opinion of his, and he said: "Although the discourse has convinced me, yet I think of my wife, whose star and whose fortune was in vice, and she fled from wickedness on account of the disgrace, and she was drowned in the sea. And I Clement said to him, "And how dost thou know that the woman when she fled did not marry one of the slaves, and that she died? "I know certainly, that she did not marry, because she was chaste, and after her death, my brother related to me how she loved him at first and he, in fidelity towards me and his continence |27 in his chastity, did not wish to defile my bed. And she, poor creature, in her fear of me and of disgrace, used an artifice, and she is not to be blamed, for this was fated against her, and she feigned that she had seen a vision and she said to me that: "if I remain here, I shall perish with my sons.

And when I heard that from her, verily, through my desire for her safety and [that of] her sons, I sent her, and I kept with me a third son whom I had, as she asserted that she saw in her dreams. And when I heard this from him, I said, "Perhaps this is my father," and my eye wept. And when my brothers Sprung forward, wishing to embrace him, Peter prevented them, and said to them, ' Be silent till it pleases me.' And Peter answered and said to the

old man,' What is the name of thy son, the youngest boy?' And the old man said: "His name is Clement. And Peter answered him and said, "If I shew thee today thy chaste wife with her three sons, wilt thou believe that a chaste mind is able to conquer animal emotions, and that my discourse which I made to thee about God is the truth? And the old man said, "Just as what thou hast promised me cannot be, so there cannot be (anything) without fate. Said Peter, "I call those present to witness that this day I present to thee thy wife with her three sons alive in her chastity. And the proof of this is my knowing the certainty of the thing better than thee. And I tell thee all that she related, in order that thou mayest know and all these may know all this.

And when Peter said this he began to relate, saying, "This man whom ye see, my brethren, in his ragged raiment, he is of the people of Rome, of a great lineage, and noble dignity, akin to Cesar, and his name is Faustinianus; and he married a noble woman, and her name is Matthidia; and he had three sons by her, two of them twins, and the third younger than they, whose name is Clement, and this is he, and these are the others, the one Aquila, and the other Niceta, and their names at first were, one Faustus, and the other Faustinianus. And when Peter said this, and named them by their names, the old man was bewildered, and fainted, and his sons fell upon him kissing him and weeping, supposing that he was dead. And the |28 people were bewildered by this marvel, and Peter commanded us to lean off from the old man, and he took him by the hand, and raised him, and he related to the people all the misfortunes that had befallen him, and the reason that they happened. And when our mother learned this, she came hurrying, crying and saying: "Where is my husband and lord Faustinianus, who has been miserable on account of me for a long time, seeking me in every city? And while she was crying thus, the old man sprang hastily towards her with tears, and they embraced one another.

And after all this Peter sent away the crowd of people, and commanded them to come the next day and hear the story. And behold, a man of the nobles came with his wife and children to ask us to go to his house, and Peter did not accept that from him.

And thereupon, behold, [there was] a daughter of the man [who had been] struck by a devil who had possessed her for twenty years, and on that account she was bound with chains, imprisoned in a house; the house was opened suddenly, and the chains were broken, and the devil came out from her; and the girl came and did obeisance to Peter, and said: "O lord, I have come to thee today on account of my salvation, and do not grieve me nor my father." And Peter asked them about the girl, and her parents were bewildered when they saw the chains fallen from her, and her request to Peter. And Peter had pity on her, and commanded us to go to his house. And on the morrow our father came to us, and did all that Peter commanded him; and we turned the discourse so that there might be certainty in the controversy, and after very much speech in reproof of folly, Peter commanded our father not to dwell for any time on what is not necessary to God in religion, but that he should repent, for the end of life is near not only to old men, but also to young ones. And he exhorted the old man with all the people for some days, then he baptized the old man in the name of the

Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, to whom be glory and praise for ever and ever, Amen.

O [thou] who readest, pray for him who wrote it. The Lord remember thee in mercy, Amen, and all believers. [Footnote numbered and placed at the end] 1. lit. ”desire of wickedness”

Source. English translation: an out-of-copyright translation as transcribed, or commissioned and given to the public domain, by Roger Pearse for his collection ***Early Church Fathers – Additional Texts*** (tertullian.org/fathers). SermonIndex has only divided it into chapters and short sections; the wording is the translator’s own. Footnotes are left out, and Greek or Latin words, square brackets and any transcription error are as the source prints them. No Greek or Latin text is shown beside it yet, and no modern English version has been made.

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