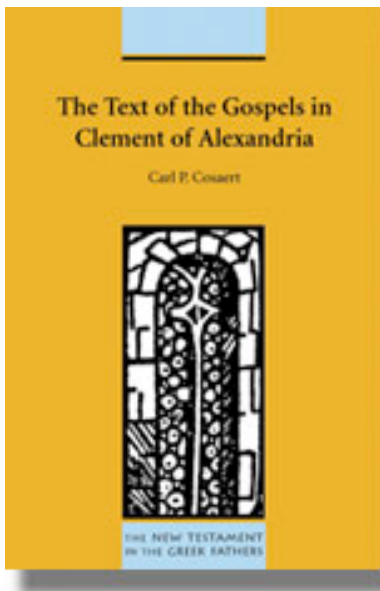


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Cosaert, Carl P.

The Text of the Gospels in Clement of Alexandria

The New Testament in the Greek Fathers 9

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This volume is the published dissertation of Carl Cosaert (Ph.D, Chapel Hill) on the text of the Gospels in the writings of Clement of Alexandria (ca. 150–216 C.E.). Cosaert endeavors to show that, while there is a textual link between Clement and the later Alexandrian fathers, his text of the Gospels was not monolithic. The textual witness of Clement suggests that a wide array of textual traditions were present in Alexandria in the late second century. Cosaert claims to detect a primarily Alexandrian influence upon Clement's text of John and Matthew, while citations of Luke and Mark exhibit a stronger Western influence.

The opening chapter provides an overview of the life, ecclesial career, literary works, and extant witnesses of the works of Clement of Alexandria. Cosaert rightly notes the problem of his task, as there are only single authorities for each of Clement's extant works. There is also the dilemma of provenance, as Clement spent a significant amount of time outside of Alexandria during periods of persecution, and it is not always certain where (and under what textual influences) Clement might have written. In the end, Cosaert concludes that, regardless of the provenance of his writings, the overall nature of Clement's citations of the Gospels do not vary substantially from one volume to another.

The substance of chapter 2 focuses broadly on Clement and the New Testament. Cosaert notes Clement's hermeneutical approach, which, though allegorical, is distinctive in the sense that it depends not on investing ideas into individual words but emerges from Clement's identification of patterns and themes in a cross-section of literature that he believes contains the divine voice that speaks through these texts. The problem of Clement's citations of the New Testament, according to Cosaert, is that we can never really be sure when Clement is citing a physical text, quoting catechetical material, or relying on memory. Overall, he suspects that Clement's use of introductory formulae indicates when he is using an exemplar of some kind. Generally speaking, Clement quotes the Pauline Epistles with more textual exactitude than the Gospels, and Clement's more free-handed approach to their citation is due to his belief that the divine and living voice of the Lord continues to address the specific needs of his people. Thereafter, Cosaert provides a summary of previous textual studies on the subject including P. M. Barnard, F. C. Burkitt, J. Patrick, R. J. Swanson, J. A. Brooks, G. Zaphiris, and M. Mees, and he finds most of their labors deficient either in their method or their conclusions.

Chapter 3 introduces the text and its critical apparatus. Cosaert classifies his material into four categories: citation, adaptation, allusion, and lemma. The subsequent chapter includes a list of all of Clement's Gospel references that can be identified against a particular verse, and these are found in chapter 4, with material arranged in canonical order with apparatus. In chapter 5, on quantitative analysis, Cosaert applies statistical formula to calculate the degree of correspondence between Clement's texts against individual texts. He essentially follows Colwell and Tune's method of determining the genetic relationship of a manuscript with a distinct textual group if there is approximately 70 percent agreement and differences with nongroup members of 10 percent. Much mathematical analysis follows with relevant tabulations. Cosaert infers from his data that Clement's Gospel texts do not correspond to any single text-type. In Matthew and John, he identifies a close relationship between Clement and an Alexandrian reading. In Mark and Luke, he thinks that Clement is more in accordance with the Western text-type. The fact that overall percentage agreements between Clement and an individual text-type fall below 65 percent may indicate the relative fluidity of the transmission of Matthew, Mark, and Luke in Alexandria, whereas the text of John appears stable, with very little influence from outside of the Alexandrian textual family.

Chapter 6 applies Bart Ehrman's group profile method to Clement's text of the Gospels to determine the precise textual affinities of these texts. Cosaert believes that this strengthens and clarifies the results from his qualitative analysis: it provides a more precise assessment of the relationship of Clement's text to text-types. This profile method yields the result that Matthean materials in Clement are closely related to Byzantine readings and primary Alexandrian influence. Mark and Luke exhibit strong influence from Western witnesses

on Clement's text. As for John, Clement's text contains Alexandrian proclivities, more specifically a Primary Alexandrian character.

Given the observation that Clement's text of the Synoptic Gospels yields less than 65 percent agreement with any text-type, this may suggest that there was no single dominant text-type in Alexandria at the time of Clement. This leads Cosaert to inquire in chapter 7 about whether Clement's text is an early witness to a Byzantine text-form of Matthew, whether Clement's textual affinities are indicative of dependence on a specific textual tradition or mere happenstance, and, lastly, what Clement's textual affinities contribute to our knowledge of the text of the Gospels in Alexandria in the late second century. The answer that Cosaert approaches, based on an adjusted application of the profile method following Zuntz and Racine's methodology and nomenclature, is that the readings identified as Byzantine in Matthew and Western in Mark and Luke do not sufficiently preserve a distinctive textual character. This accentuates the degree of diversity that probably characterized the Alexandrian textual traditions.

Finally, in chapter 8 Cosaert provides a summary of the transmission of the Gospels in Alexandria based on Clement and the Alexandrian fathers. He concludes that Clement's citations suggest that a number of diverse readings were in circulation, Clement was not beholden to any single textual tradition, and there was no monolithic textual tradition in Alexandria in the second century. Cosaert proceeds to conjecture about what can be known about the presence and state of each textual group in Alexandria in Clement's time (i.e., Caesarean, Byzantine, Western, and Alexandrian). Notable for Cosaert is the parity of Clement's text with that of the other Alexandrian fathers. The volume closes with several helpful appendices on "Indeterminable Gospel References," "Catena Fragments and Latin References," "The Gospel Text of Clement's Opponents," and "Clement in the Apparatus of the NA27 and UBS4."

Cosaert has produced a significant work in a still largely uncharted area on the text of the New Testament in the church fathers, and there is much potential remaining here for showing the value of patristic authors for establishing the history of the text, scribal habits of the transmitters, and the reception of the New Testament. It is obviously impossible to determine the veracity of his data without the Greek text of Clement in front of you, but overall the impression I get is that his study is accurately detailed and analytically sound. Indeed, Cosaert's near encyclopedic listing of Clement's Gospel citations (including that of Clement's opponents in an appendix) makes this a valuable reference resource that New Testament researchers and patristic scholars will want to avail themselves to.

The only major reservation that I have about this volume is the continued use of the notion of text-types such as "Alexandrian," "Western," "Caesarean," and so forth. The

Coherence-Based Genealogical Method (CBGM), pioneered in Münster, seems to have shown that variants indicative of a particular text-type are dispersed over a wide array of witnesses and that, furthermore, documents can fluctuate in the “type” of text that they exhibit. Application of the CBGM has so far been limited to the Catholic Epistles (where text-types are the least discernible), and one can still recognize the textual affinity of various manuscripts in a common trajectory or textual tradition whereby an identifiable textual group remains evident. Still, whether the historical nomenclature of text-types represents the most fitting way to express the fluidity and accordance of the manuscripts and patristic citations remains an open question. If anything, Cosaert’s study supports this, since he shows the relative fluidity of the textual traditions in Clement and the lack of a single dominant textual form that Clement’s texts of the Gospels corresponds to (with the exception, perhaps, of the Alexandrian quality of John). He is also correct to ask in what meaningful sense the primary influence on Clement’s text of Matthew can be Byzantine when Byzantine readings do not emerge as a unified text-type until the fourth century. I question, therefore, whether it is profitable to even try to place Clement in relation to a particular text-type. The most we can do is identify Clement against a series of analogous readings from other texts that may themselves fluctuate in the character and origin of their witness. That question aside, Cosaert has produced an outstanding volume that contributes significantly to matters of textual criticism in relation to the church fathers.