

## **Plot summary of Pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions* / *Homilies***

(adapted from J.B. Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers: Clement, Ignatius, and Polycarp* [London: MacMillan, 1889], part 1, volume 1, pp. 14-16, with modernizations and clarifications of differing personal names in *Recognitions* vs. *Homilies*. Public domain)

The basic plot outlined below by Lightfoot can, in large part, be followed by reading *Recognitions*, book 1, chapters 1-19 (Clement's family story and journeys in pursuit of wisdom); book 7, chapters 1-38 (Clement's and his brothers' recognitions of his mother = "beggar woman"); book 8, chapters 1-2; book 9, chapters 32-38; and, book 10, chapters 67-72 (Clement's recognition of his father = "old man").

Clement, a noble Roman citizen, was connected by birth with the family of the emperors. His father Faustinianus (in *Recognitions*) [Faustus (in *Homilies*)] was a near relation and a foster brother of the reigning emperor, and had married one Mattidia, likewise the emperor's relative. Faustinianus and Mattidia had three sons, the two elder sons, Faustinus and Faustus (in *Recognitions*) [Faustinus and Faustinianus (in *Homilies*)], who were twins, and Clement, our protagonist, who was born many years after his brothers.

At the time when Clement first comes before our notice, he is alone in the world. Many years ago, when he was still an infant, Clement's mother had left home to escape dishonourable sexual advances from her husband's brother, and had taken her two elder sons with her. Not wishing to reveal his brother's immorality to Faustinianus [Faustus] (the father), she feigned a dream which warned her to leave home for a time with her twin children. Accordingly she set sail for Athens. After her departure her brother-in-law accused her to her husband of infidelity to her marriage vows. A storm arose at sea, the vessel was wrecked on the shores of Palestine, and she was separated from her children, whom she supposed to have been drowned. Thus she was left a lone woman dependent on the charity of others.

The two sons were captured by pirates and sold to Justa, the Syrophenician woman, who educated them as her own children, giving them the names Aquila and Nicetes. As they grew up they became fellow-disciples of Simon Magus, whose doctrines they adopted. Eventually however they were brought to a better mind by the teaching of Zacchaeus, then a visitor to those parts; and through his influence they attached themselves to Peter, whom they accompanied from that time forward on his missionary circuits. They were so engaged at the moment when the narrative, to which we owe this account of their career, presents them to our notice.

Their father Faustinianus [Faustus in *Homilies*], as the years rolled on and he obtained no news of his wife and two elder children, determined after many fruitless enquiries to go in search of them himself. So he set sail for the East, leaving at home under the charge of guardians his youngest son Clement, then a boy of twelve years. From that time forward Clement heard nothing more of his father and suspected that he had died of grief or been drowned in the sea. Thus Clement grew up as a lonely orphan.

From his childhood, Clement had pondered the deep questions of philosophy, till they took such hold on his mind that he could not shake them off. Clement had especially spent much anxious thought about the immortality of the soul, but with no positive results. The prevailing philosophical systems had all failed to give him the satisfaction which his heart craved. During the reign of Tiberius Caesar, a rumour reached the imperial city that an inspired teacher had appeared in Judea, working miracles and enlisting recruits for the kingdom of God. This report determined him to sail to Judea. Driven by stress of wind to Alexandria and landing there, he fell in with one Barnabas, a Hebrew and a disciple of the teacher, and from him received his first lessons in the teaching of the gospel. From Alexandria he sailed

to Caesarea, where he found Peter, the follower and apostle of Jesus, to whom he had been commended by Barnabas. By Peter he was further instructed in the faith, and from him he received baptism. Clement joined his company, and attended Peter on his subsequent journeys. At the moment when Clement meets Peter, Peter has arranged to hold a public discussion with Simon Magus. Clement desires to know something about this false teacher, and is referred to Aquila and Nicetas, who give him an account of Simon's previous activity and of their own previous connection with him. The public discussion commences, but is broken off abruptly by Simon who escapes from Caesarea by stealth. Peter follows him from city to city, providing the antidote to his baneful teaching.

On the shores of the island of Aradus, Peter encounters a beggar woman, who had lost the use of her hands. In answer to his questions she tells him that she was the wife of a powerful nobleman, that she left home with her two elder sons for reasons which she explains, and that she was shipwrecked and had lost her children at sea. Peter is put off the right scent for the time by her giving feigned names from shame. But the recognition is only delayed. Clement finds in this beggar woman his long-lost mother, and the apostle Peter heals her ailment. Aquila and Nicetas (Clements' brothers now with these new names) had preceded the apostle Peter to Laodicea. When Peter arrives there, they are surprised to find a strange woman in his company. He relates her story. They are astounded and overjoyed. They declare themselves to be the lost Faustinus and Faustinianus, and she is their mother. It is needless to add that she is converted and baptized. After her baptism they betake themselves to prayer.

While they are returning, Peter initiates a conversation with an old man whom he had observed secretly watching the proceedings. The old man denies the power of prayer. Everything, he says, depends on a man's birth day and astrological knowledge. A friend of his, a noble Roman, had had the horoscope of his wife cast. It foretold that she would prove unfaithful to him and be drowned at sea. Everything had come to pass in accordance with the prediction. Peter's suspicions are roused by the story; he asks this friend's name, and finds that he was none other than Faustinianus [Faustus in *Homilies*], the husband of Mattidia and father of Clement. The reader comes to realize that the narrator is himself Faustinianus [Faustus], and he had represented the circumstances as happening to a friend, in order to conceal his identity. Thus Clement has recovered the last of his lost relatives, and the "recognitions" are complete. One other incident however is necessary to crown the story. The father, Faustinianus [Faustus], is still not a believer in Jesus. But the failure of Mattidia's horoscope has led the father to reject his belief in astrological methods. Faustinianus then yields and is baptized.