

The Rev'd Heather McCance
*“That All Thy Church Might Be Forever One: Seeking Unity in First Clement
and the Windsor Report”*

Abstract The Letter of the Romans to the Corinthians (commonly known as First Clement) was written in the late first century to address a situation of conflict and division in the Corinthian church. The precipitating cause of this division is unknown. Rather than addressing the presenting cause or the rupture, the author offers theological and strategic reasoning for his emphasis on the need for unity within the church, based on scripture, the orders of the church, the history of the church and the nature of the unity of the triune God.

The **Rev'd Heather McCance** is incumbent of the Parish of Sharon and Holland Landing in the Diocese of Toronto and serves as Regional Dean of the Holland Deanery. She is currently completing a Masters of Theology degree at the Toronto School of Theology, with a special interest in the intersection of postmodern thought and the various liberation theologies that emerged in the latter part of the last century.

“That All Thy Church Might Be Forever One”
Seeking Unity in First Clement and the Windsor Report

In the late first century C.E., the author of the Letter of the Romans to the Corinthians (commonly known as First Clement) wrote in response to disunity and strife in the Christian church in Corinth. This epistle, for several centuries considered a part of the canon of New Testament scripture,¹ set out both a theology of unity among Christians and a series of practical means for guarding that unity. “Clement” wrote that maintaining proper order within the church was key to peace and harmony within the Christian faith. Offering copious examples from Scripture, as well as from the secular and pagan world he and his readers inhabited, Clement’s writings have profoundly shaped the structure and theology of the church ever since.

In the fall of 2004 C.E., a commission of Anglican theologians and hierarchs released a report on which they had worked for over a year. This group had been charged by the Archbishop of Canterbury to elucidate ways that the worldwide Anglican Communion, threatened with disunity and schism, might maintain unity. Drawing on the resources of scripture, church history and the wider world which the report’s authors and readers inhabit, the Windsor Report explores the shape of the Anglican church, how it came to assume this shape, and how such a disparate structure might maintain, or restore, order and unity.

The two documents emerge from very different contexts, and yet the common concern for unity in the church reflects a theme that has persisted throughout Christian history. Human beings who seek to live faithfully according the will of God sometimes come to different conclusions about how that ought best be done; perhaps the surprise is not that division happens, but rather that Christians continue to seek any degree of unity at all. Yet these two documents,

separated by two millennia of Christian and world history, bear witness to a common concern that those who call themselves Christians ought to seek unity, communion and peace amongst themselves as part of how they live and how they worship the One they follow.

Context of the Windsor Report

Because it is the more recent document, much more can be said with certainty about the context of the Windsor Report than about First Clement. The Report was commissioned by The Most Rev. Dr. Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury,

to examine the legal and theological implications flowing from the decisions of the Episcopal Church (USA) to appoint a priest in a committed same sex relationship as one of its bishops, and of the Diocese of New Westminster to authorise services for use in connection with same sex unions, and specifically on the canonical understandings of communion, impaired and broken communion, and the ways in which provinces of the Anglican Communion may relate to one another in situations where the ecclesiastical authorities of one province may feel unable to maintain the fullness of communion with another part of the Anglican Communion.²

The Anglican Communion, unlike the Roman church, for example, has no central authority structure. While the see of Canterbury is recognized “first among equals,” each province is autonomous; when provinces disagree, there is no clear framework for resolving these disputes.

Thus, we have a clear understanding of the crisis that occasioned the writing of the Windsor Report, and a list of the seventeen members of the commission, from around the globe, that collectively authored it. One may search the internet and find media coverage of the Report’s public release in October, 2004, and responses to the Report, both from official ecclesiastical authorities and from unofficial sources, continue to be generated. The Report responds to a crisis in a late-modern/postmodern context wherein one cannot realistically expect

¹ Michael W. Holmes, The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999), p 25.

unquestioning assent to the wishes of those in positions of authority, even should such positions have a degree of legislative authority that, in the Anglican context, they simply do not have.

Context of First Clement

The context of the Letter of the Romans to the Corinthians is considerably less clear. There are clues within the letter as to date, but nothing definite. Most scholars date the letter between 93 and 97 C.E.³ based upon clues within the text of the letter itself. In the opening lines, there is a reference to “sudden and repeated misfortunes” (1:1) that have taken place in Rome, which many scholars have taken to be a reference to the persecution of the church under the Emperor Domitian (81-96 C.E.).⁴ Additional reasons for this dating of the epistle are the apparent time frame for the martyrdom of Peter and Paul (5:1-7), the reference to the church in Corinth as “well-established and ancient” (47:6) and that messengers being sent from Rome to Corinth have been Christians “from youth to old age” (63:3).⁵

If the dating of First Clement is uncertain, its authorship is even less so. The document never names its author, although Clement became associated with it before Eusebius wrote, in the fourth century.⁶ This is less than illuminating, however, for it leaves the basic question of authorship unanswered; who was Clement? Some believe he must have been a Jewish Christian, because of his extensive knowledge of the Septuagint; yet others have stated this is in fact an

² The Lambeth Commission on Communion, The Windsor Report 2004 (Harrisburg PA: Morehouse, 2004), p 8.

³ Other scholars have argued for an earlier dating, before the year 70, taking chapter 41, on the rituals of the Temple, to be referring to a structure that is still standing. Support for this earlier dating of First Clement is also seen to come from Ignatius; in his writings, there seems to be an established mono-episcopacy in the church, something that is clearly lacking in First Clement. If Ignatius’s writings are dated around 108, it is argued that there needs to be a significant period between the two sets of documents for such a tradition to have developed. See John Fuellenbach, Ecclesiastical Office and the Primacy of Rome: An Evaluation of Recent Theological Discussion of First Clement (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1980), p 1.

⁴ Holmes, The Apostolic Fathers, p 23.

⁵ Fuellenbach, Ecclesiastical Office, p 2.

⁶ Holmes, The Apostolic Fathers, p 23.

indication that he was of Gentile origins, since he did not use the Hebrew scriptures.⁷ Some conclude that this document had a collective authorship, that of the Christian community in Rome,⁸ mirroring what was almost certainly a collegial group of presbyters or bishops in that church, among whom Clement was perhaps a leading figure.⁹ Some have argued that the emphasis in the letter on the image of “Master” to describe God (8:2, 9:4, 11:1, 20:8, 24:1 et al.) suggests that Clement was himself a former slave.¹⁰

The Precipitating Crises

So we cannot be certain when the letter known as First Clement was written, nor do we know with any certainty who wrote it. Yet the most frustrating uncertainty about the epistle for modern readers is surely its silence on the cause of the crisis that resulted in its composition. We know that within the Corinthian church, a group of established presbyters had been deposed and other men had taken their place (44:6). Yet we do not know what occasioned this change of leadership. It has been suggested that the cause of the strife was not mentioned simply because everyone who first came into contact with the letter would have been well versed in the controversies involved, and it was therefore unnecessary to spell them out.¹¹ (Similarly, one suspects that there have been hundreds of Anglican sermons preached in the recent past about “the difficulties facing our church today” that do not get any more specific, for all hearers understand immediately to which difficulties the preacher is referring.) Additionally, several scholars have pointed out that Clement’s writing follows very specific rhetorical forms in this

⁷ Fuellenbach, *Ecclesiastical Office*, p 3.

⁸ Barbara Ellen Bowe, *A Church in Crisis: Ecclesiology and Paraenesis in Clement of Rome* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1988), p 2.

⁹ Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*, p 23.

¹⁰ James S. Jeffers, *Conflict at Rome: Social Order and Hierarchy in Early Christianity* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1991), p 102.

letter, and such forms, when strictly followed, would not have allowed for explanations of the cause of the Corinthian dispute. Perhaps Clement did not know the cause of the quarrels, or finally, it is possible, even likely, that Clement felt that whatever the immediate precipitating cause of the strife, it was simply a symptom of a wider problematic dynamic within Corinth, and thus he strove to address that dynamic rather than the presenting cause.¹²

In absence of any textual reference to the cause, however, scholars have for centuries proposed theories about what such might have been. Several have offered variations on the theme that the rebels were charismatics,¹³ perhaps itinerant prophets or preachers, who had upset the internal order of the church upon their arrival.¹⁴ Others have suggested the rebels were gnosticizing Christians whose influence within the Corinthian church had grown to a point that was unacceptable to Rome, a church that saw itself as more “orthodox,” although that term had yet to come into currency.¹⁵ One hypothesis has it that the rebels were ex-Essenes, levitical priests who had converted to Christianity, who wanted to maintain their priestly status and roles à la the Old Testament.¹⁶ In the end, however intriguing such speculation might be, we cannot know with any certainty the underlying cause of the strife in late-first century Corinth; it is enough to know that its author believed the leaders of the revolt had put their own interests above the goal of peace and concord for the entire community,¹⁷ and that whatever caused them to do so was not considered to be adequate justification for this rupture in the life of the church.

While we know the precipitating cause of the writing of the Windsor Report, it is noticeably absent from the text of the document itself. The Report deals with questions of

¹¹ Fuellenbach, *Ecclesiastical Office and the Primacy of Rome*, p 4.

¹² Jeffers, *Conflict At Rome*, p 95.

¹³ Harnack and Seeberg, quoted in Fuellenbach, *Ecclesiastical Authority*, p 30, 35.

¹⁴ Odd Magne Bakke, *Concord and Peace: A Rhetorical Analysis of the First Letter of Clement, With an Emphasis on the Language of Unity and Sedition* (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), p 284.

¹⁵ Bauer and Beyschlag, quoted in Fuellenbach, *Ecclesiastical Authority*, p 41, 60.

communion, authority, church structure and interrelationships; the many theological issues around human sexuality are not addressed.¹⁸ Thus, while with the Windsor Report we do know what caused the strife, and in First Clement we do not, in both we see a concern for peace and unity that overrides all other concerns. Whatever has precipitated each respective crisis, it is not (it is implied) as important as the more vital goal of harmony within the Body of Christ. (That such unity might be unachievable without addressing these precipitating concerns seems, in both documents, a point of view that is not considered.)

Division

For Clement, division within the church is sinful (47:7). Division reveals jealousy and envy within human beings, and jealousy and envy have occasioned deep wrongs in the past: Cain's murder of Abel, Joseph's slavery in Egypt, Aaron and Miriam's exclusion from the camp of the Hebrew people, David's persecution by Saul, and the martyrdom of Paul and Peter (4:1-5:7). Division reveals a lack of humility, against the teachings of Christ (13:1). Division causes many, inside and outside the church, to doubt the veracity of the gospel message, for if all follow Christ truly as Lord, how could those followers be divided (46:9, 47:7)? Division brings deep sadness to other Christians, for if there is one God and one Christ and one Spirit, why do we rip apart our own body? (46:6-7,9).

The Windsor Report is less free with the use of the word "sinful," but it too bears witness to a view that division within the church is undesirable and scandalous. "Perhaps the greatest tragedy of our current difficulties is the negative consequence it could have on the mission of the

¹⁶ Hoojibergh, quoted in *ibid.*, p 6.

¹⁷ Bove, *A Church in Crisis*, p 21.

¹⁸ "Further serious Communion-wide discussion of the relevant issues is clearly needed as a matter of urgency, but that is not part of our mandate." *The Windsor Report*, p 17.

Church to a suffering and bewildered world... our real witness and ministry in a world already confronted by poverty, violence, HIV/AIDS, famine and injustice,”¹⁹ writes commission chair Archbishop Robin Eames in the preface to the Report. Elsewhere it is noted that the Anglican Communion shares, with all Christians, “the call to model before the watching world the new mode of being human which has been unveiled in Christ,”²⁰ a call which (it is implied) divisions within the Church make impossible, or at least extremely difficult, to fulfill.

Order and Unity as Gift of God

Yet aside from the negative consequences of disunity within the church, division within the church is seen by both Clement and the Windsor Report to be problematic because both share a positive theology of unity and order as being a gift from God.

In First Clement, order within the church ought to mirror the order seen within creation itself (ch. 20, 33); the complementary relationship of such different entities as day and night, sea and land, earth and air is created and ordered by the Creator, and ought to teach Christians that such order is the will of the Creator. Echoing Paul, Clement looks specifically at that part of creation that is the human body; while each part has its own function, it is God’s will that all function together, as one (37:5). That sense of the proper order of things is seen in the way the family relates to one another; reflecting his culture, Clement does not question that the system of the *paterfamilias* is the will of God (ch. 21).²¹

Clement further uses examples from the Roman military and the order of priests in the Old Testament. In the order of the twelve tribes of Israel, each had their proper place; from one came priests, from another came rulers, and each tribe was understood to have its place in God’s

¹⁹ The Windsor Report, p 6.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p 22.

order (32:2-3), as God showed through Moses (ch. 43). In one of the most fascinating aspects of the text, Clement also uses order within the military of the Roman Empire, speaking of “our” generals (37:2-3) who led the military apparatus of the Empire that had evidently been persecuting Christians (1:1), as revelatory of the basic orderliness willed by the Creator God. It is patent that a strict sense of order in the relationship between captains and centurions, prefects and tribunes is clearly set out and understood in military units (ch. 37).

Interestingly, while Clement uses images of his culture (the military, the *paterfamilias*) as exemplary of the order intended by God, the Windsor Report condemns as a source of disunity its surrounding culture. In the latter, cultural divisions in this world between western Europe and North America on one side and poorer nations largely in the global south on the other, as well as “the deep divide in contemporary American political life,” are particularly singled out as having left “their ugly mark on our ecclesial life.”²² It would appear that Clement was more comfortable, despite persecution, in his world than the authors of the Windsor Report are in theirs. Alternatively, perhaps Clement was more deeply formed by the world of the Roman Empire and immersed in its mores and norms, while the authors of the Windsor Report are able to step outside of their cultural context in order to offer a critique of it (possibly by virtue of the multiplicity of authors from a number of cultural perspectives).

Liturgy

One of the major factors that shape the life and character of Christian communities is liturgy. Thus, from liturgy can be drawn language that can speak to all members of the community, and liturgical language therefore has the potential to be a powerful force for unity.

²¹ Jeffers, Conflict at Rome, p 123.

Scholars are divided as to whether the prayer in chapters 59 through 61 of First Clement is an original composition, unique to this letter, or whether it draws upon phrases and images that were already in common use in first-century liturgy.²³ It has been suggested that these shared phrases and images, if not the prayer in its entirety (which appears to be too specific to the Corinthian situation to be anything but an original composition), were intended not only to draw together the members of the Corinthian church in their shared heritage, but also to remind the Christians sojourning in Corinth that the Christians sojourning in Rome also shared this with them.²⁴

The use of shared liturgical language is, oddly, not as large a feature of the Windsor Report (oddly because all member churches of the Anglican Communion have liturgies that are direct descendants from the Book of Common Prayer). While this shared pattern of liturgical life is mentioned explicitly as one means through which the Communion has been sustained,²⁵ where such language is employed in the text of the Report, it is subtle: for example, in reference to the use of scripture, an allusion to a collect that asks God's help to "read, learn, mark and inwardly digest" Holy Scripture is made.²⁶ Perhaps the members of the commission simply chose to use language other than liturgical in presenting their case, or perhaps it is the case that, while the member provinces of the Communion have shared liturgical roots in the Book of Common Prayer, these have diverged sufficiently at the outset of the twenty-first century so as to make liturgical language no longer a source of shared experience.

²² The Windsor Report, p 22.

²³ Fuellenbach, Ecclesiastical Office and the Primacy of Rome, pp17-18.

²⁴ Bowe, A Church in Crisis, p 40; Others maintain that the historical process was rather the reverse, that later liturgists picked up language and images employed by Clement here, cf Robert M. Grant and Holt H Graham, The Apostolic Fathers: A New Translation and Commentary, volume 2: First and Second Clement (New York: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1965), p 9.

Shared History and Historical Reconstruction

Related to the use of shared liturgical language is the use of shared history. Both Clement and the authors of the Windsor Report spend some time extolling the unity of the past and pointing to this shared narrative by which their readers shape their lives in faith.

Scholars have pointed out that the opening chapters of First Clement, in which he portrays the past of the church in Corinth in glowing terms, follow the rules of rhetorical writing at that time. While this is undoubtedly the case, I believe Clement was about more than simply attempting, through flattery, to catch readers' attention and hold it through the more difficult things that were yet to come. All the members of the church in Corinth, whether they were recent converts or second-generation Christians, had become partakers in the common history of that community. This was the case for the ousted presbyters, for the usurpers, and for the majority within the community who may or may not have been directly involved in the conflict but who, by their acquiescence, allowed the change in leadership to take place. By opening his letter with an account of this history, Clement drew all factions together. You've come this far together, he tells them; please don't give it up now.

Of course, Clement's version of Corinth's history is somewhat utopian. In the first two chapters, the Corinthians are lauded for their "magnanimous Christian piety," "the magnificent character of (their) hospitality," "(their) complete and sound knowledge," "(their) virtuous and honourable manner of life." It is only 47 chapters into the letter that Clement must acknowledge what all knew, the previous divisiveness within Corinth that had been noted by Paul decades earlier (1 Corinthians 1:12). Yet here Clement turns this past conflict into a further reason to pursue peace and harmony in the present; they overcame that difficulty together and they can do

²⁵ The Windsor Report, p 13.

it again. Clement is here using the rules of rhetoric and crafting his argument without undue attention to historical fact. Paul's letters seem to suggest that conflict was present in the church in Corinth from the beginning, and while Clement acknowledges this, his grandiose images of the perfect Christian community serve to urge the Corinthians to return to a past state of perfection that, in truth, they never knew.

A similar dynamic is in place in the Windsor Report. The Report traces the history of the ordination of women in the Anglican Communion, as an example of how mutual discernment and decision-making has successfully taken place in the past. The story began with the irregular ordination to the priesthood of deaconess Florence Li Tim-Oi in 1944, to allow Chinese Anglicans in Hong Kong under Japanese occupation to continue to receive the Eucharist. Discussion on the ordination of women took place both prior to and following this event, particularly at the Lambeth conferences. In 1970, the Bishop of Hong Kong and Macao sought the advice of the newly-formed Anglican Consultative Council (in accordance with a resolution of Lambeth in 1968), which informed the Bishop (by a vote of 24-22) that it would encourage all member provinces of the Anglican Communion to continue in communion if he chose to proceed with the ordination of women to the priesthood. By the meeting of the next Lambeth Conference in 1978, four provinces had ordained women to the priesthood and eight others had accepted the practice in principle. What the Windsor Report chooses to highlight here is that Hong Kong "did not understand itself to be so autonomous that it might proceed without bringing the matter to the Anglican Consultative Council as requested by the Lambeth Conference 1968."²⁷ Thus, the ordination of women to the priesthood (and subsequently to the episcopate) is taken in the Report

²⁶ Ibid., p 30.

²⁷ Ibid., pp 14-15.

to be an example of the proper functioning of the so-called “Instruments of Unity” as a means of maintaining communion among the various diverse and autonomous provinces.

As Clement took some rhetorical liberties with the factual truth of the church’s history in Corinth, according to Bishop Ann Tottenham, retired suffragan bishop of the Diocese of Toronto “this section [of the Windsor Report] is a breath-taking re-writing of Anglican history that few ... would recognize as either helpful or appropriate.”²⁸ Tottenham notes that the bishop who ordained Li Tim-Oi as a priest was soundly condemned by the “Instruments of Unity” for doing so, and maintains:

“In fact, the ordination of women to the priesthood and to the episcopacy became possible only because individual provinces, like Canada, exercised their autonomy in the face of the various “Instruments of Unity” which exhorted them to delay, to exercise caution, to do nothing that might offend any other province in the communion.... Without the actions of courageous individuals and autonomous provinces, [my 25-year ministry as both priest and bishop] would not have been possible in my lifetime.”²⁹

Thus, the authors of the Windsor Report seem to be engaged in a re-shaping of historical events in order to suit the point they wish to make, similar to that which Clement crafted. The reasons behind this seem to be comparable; in both cases, the authors wish to urge their readership to return to a (largely mythological) past in which Christians behaved towards one another in ways that created peace, harmony and unity within the community rather than dissension and strife.

Scripture

The Windsor Report and First Clement both use scripture in shaping their appeals for unity, but they do so in different ways. A full 25% of the text of Clement’s epistle is direct quotation from the Septuagint. Clement cites scripture to show the consequences of faith and the

²⁸ Ann Tottenham, “Windsor Report Slight Women Clergy,” in The Anglican, vol. 48 no.2 (February, 2005), p 6.

²⁹ Ibid.

consequences of jealousy and strife. He uses scriptural references to the various duties of the levitical priesthood to allude to the proper order of ministries in the Christian church. He uses psalms and other passages of scripture in expressing praise to God. Yet above all, the author uses scripture not only to buoy up his arguments but to do so with reference to a shared tradition and story, shared both between Rome and Corinth and shared between the various factions within Corinth. If the story of scripture is authoritative for all sides of the community, then arguments from scripture will bear much weight both for the purposes of persuasion and as a reminder of a shared legacy.

The Windsor Report does some of this; its use of Paul's first letter to the Corinthians has been noted. However, the occasion that gave rise to the composition of the Windsor Report was directly related to the question of how scripture is used in the life of the Anglican Communion.

“A mention of scripture today can sometimes seem actually divisive, so aware are we of the bewildering range of available interpretative strategies and results. This is tragic, since, as with the Spirit who inspired scripture, we should expect that the Bible would be a means of unity, not division. In fact, our shared reading of scripture across boundaries of culture, region and tradition ought to be the central feature of our common life, guiding us together into an appropriately rich and diverse unity by leading us forward from entrenched positions into fresh appreciation of the riches of the gospel as articulated in the scriptures.”³⁰

A significant section of the Report speaks of the ways scripture functions in the life of the Anglican Communion; how new (and never neutral) biblical scholarship is received differently in different parts of the Communion; how too many Anglicans have an unacceptably low level of biblical literacy; how culture enters into the matrix of scriptural interpretation; and how the triune God continues to speak to and work in the church to this day.³¹ Where Clement was able to appeal to the narratives of scripture as authoritative for the lives of all Christians, the authors of the Windsor Report are forced by the situation with which they are faced to negotiate what

“authority of scripture” means. Thus, as they note, what might be expected to be a source of unity becomes rather a further point of division.

Love among Christians

On the same night when Christ is portrayed praying for unity among his followers, he also admonishes the apostles of the love they ought to bear one another, just as Christ has loved them (John 13:34-35). St. Paul followed up his image of the church as the body of Christ with the famous meditation on love, without which spiritual gifts are worthless (1 Corinthians 13). Thus, it seems appropriate that both First Clement and the Windsor Report speak of the love of God and of love between Christians as prerequisite to and a sign of unity within the church.

Clement’s meditation on love in chapters 49 and 50 seems to borrow significantly from Paul’s earlier work: “love endures all things, is patient in all things... there is nothing arrogant in love,” (49:5). Clement begins this section by speaking of the love of God, its indescribable height and majesty. Then he makes an important connection: “Love unites us with God.” There follows a description of what that love looks like (and negatively, what it does not look like) in the lives of believers, and finally there is a portrayal of the benefits that befall all those who have this love. The logical argument here is brilliantly executed: if your lives demonstrate arrogance (and by Clement’s definition, all involved in the dissension in Corinth are guilty of arrogance), then you do not truly have love. Therefore, you are not united to God. Therefore, you will not be forgiven your sins (50:5) and will not receive in the blessings of those chosen by God (50:7).

The Windsor Report also makes reference to Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians, but references the letter in its entirety rather than chapter 13 specifically. There is recognition here

³⁰ The Windsor Report, p 30.

that the unity Paul encourages is “characterised not by a mechanistic or formal structure but by that all-demanding and all-fulfilling virtue which the early Christians called *agape*, love.”³²

There is not the same accusation that we see in Clement, that those who are in dissension are lacking in love, although there is a note made of a growing lack of trust in many areas of life within the church³³ that one might see as related to the theme of *agape* love. Rather, those elements that hold the Communion together despite the lack of a strong, central body with legislative authority are called “bonds of affection,” a covenantal affection that is mutual and that involves relationship with God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, as well as relationships with the whole body of Christ.³⁴

Structures and Offices

Exactly how far the church had moved in the direction of formalized structures and order at the time of the composition of First Clement is a matter of debate. Some scholars lay at Clement’s feet the entire blame or credit, depending upon the scholar, for the theology of life-long order of ministries within the church. It is in this document that we find for the first time in Christian history an explanation of what has come to be called “apostolic succession.” God sent Christ, Christ chose apostles, the apostles chose bishops and deacons in each town where they preached, later giving these offices a “permanent character,” and these men would be succeeded by others appointed by them “with the consent of the whole church” (42:1-4; 44:1-3). Clement’s appeal to the rebels in Corinth, to restore the deposed presbyters (a word he seems to use

³¹ Ibid., pp 27-30.

³² Ibid., p 12.

³³ Ibid., p 22.

³⁴ Ibid., p 24.

interchangeably with “bishop”), is then based on this history, with its theological implications that this order of things is the will of God.

Yet as with his presentation of the history of the church in Corinth, it would appear that Clement has here taken some liberties with historical fact in order to make his point. The New Testament writings do not bear witness to one structure of “church,” to one way of ordering the various functions of ministry within the church. For Clement to claim that the apostles had instituted the order he lays out here ignores the historical reality that different communities ordered their lives differently;³⁵ a few scholars have called Clement’s reconstruction of the evolution of office a “historical fiction.”³⁶ Some principles, clearly, can be traced to the New Testament: the *episcope*, for example (1 Timothy 3, Titus 1). But that this kind of succession and these specific orders of ministry were divinely inspired and to be used for all time within the church seems to have been new concepts with Clement.³⁷ With the advent of this kind of formal, almost legalistic order of offices within the church, several scholars have seen the death of the older, charismatic leadership systems;³⁸ others believe that Clement was taking an established order and giving it a new legitimacy.³⁹

Since the removal of the presbyters of Corinth was seen by Clement to be a symptom of wider strife and division within the community,⁴⁰ and since he sees a degree of permanence in the orders of ministry, scholars have raised the question as to whether, and how, leaders might be legitimately removed from office in Clement’s schema. Some scholars have concluded that, for

³⁵ Knoch, quoted in Fuellenbach, *Ecclesiastical Office*, p 92.

³⁶ Martin, Bauer and Meinhold, quoted in Fuellenbach, *Ecclesiastical Office*, p 106, 41, 43; against others, including Scherer and Marsh, who accept that Clement was reporting historical fact from the position of one who was historically very close to the apostolic period (in *ibid.*, pp74, 78.)

³⁷ Rudolph Zollitsch and Fischer, quoted in Fuellenbach, *Ecclesiastical Office*, p 108 and 83.

³⁸ Campenhausen, Lietzmann quoted in Fuellenbach, *Ecclesiastical Office*, p 47, 36.

³⁹ Hasenhuttl, quoted in Fuellenbach, *Ecclesiastical Office*, p 103.

⁴⁰ Bowe, *A Church in Crisis*, p 23.

Clement, once in office the office-holder could not be removed, that God would simply not allow the office-holder to act in such a way that his removal would be desirable.⁴¹ Others have taken Clement's emphasis on the "blamelessness" of those who had been removed (44:4) to be an indication that, if they had been blame-worthy, their removal would not have been problematic.⁴² Did the people labelled as "rebels" have a legitimate reason to wish their former presbyters out of leadership? We cannot know, and because of this gap in our knowledge it is difficult to conclude whether Clement believed that bishops could not, on principle, be removed from office, or whether they could be removed but that this was not justified in this instance. His insistence on unquestioning obedience to those in office might suggest the former; to disobey the authorities was, in First Clement, to disobey God (47:6-7).

The Windsor Report is reflective of an institution that has inherited and further codified the "apostolic succession" of the orders of ministry Clement first enunciated. Yet in some ways the situation facing its authors was similar. The Windsor Report lists and offers a brief explanation of the role of the Lambeth Conference, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Anglican Consultative Council and the annual meeting of Primates. It explains that none of these has any legislative authority over the autonomous provinces that are members of the Communion, but that each functions as a way for the provinces to check in with one another on matters of shared concern.⁴³ Clearly, these structures, as those of first-century Corinth, have proven inadequate to the task of holding the Communion together in the midst of the current crisis.⁴⁴ Perhaps not

⁴¹ Jeffers, *Conflict at Rome*, pp 124, 175.

⁴² Bowe, *A Church in Crisis*, p 150.

⁴³ *The Windsor Report*, pp 41-44.

⁴⁴ A crisis which, many maintain, isn't about sexuality at all: "The issue is that there are two different branches of theology and they can't live under the same umbrella." (Lesley Bentley, spokeswoman for Anglican Essentials, quoted by Lynda Hurst, "Anglican divide becomes a chasm," in *The Toronto Star* (March 5, 2004), p A23; "... Conservatives in the U.S. as well as the global South knew they would lose the debate on divorce [and remarriage] and women clergy. So homosexuality became the battleground over what they see as a hijacking of the church by liberals," The Very Reverend Peter Elliott, Dean of Christ Church Cathedral, Vancouver, quoted in the same article.

surprisingly, the authors of the Report, while expressing their desire to maintain the autonomy of local provinces, ultimately recommend increasing the legalized, formal powers of each of the instruments of unity named above.⁴⁵

Reception

“In classical theological terms, ‘reception’ was the process by which the pronouncements of a Council of the Church were tested by how the faithful ‘received’ it. The *consensus fidelium* (‘common mind of the believers’) constituted the ultimate check that a new declaration was in harmony with the faith as it had been received.”⁴⁶

We do not know whether Clement’s instructions to the Corinthian church were followed, whether those who had deposed the blameless presbyters stepped down and went into exile, whether the presbyters resumed their ministry of oversight, whether peace was restored (or perhaps created for the first time) in Corinth. Yet the enthusiastic reception of the letter by the church at large is attested to by its inclusion as canon in some early New Testaments and its use as authoritative by other early Christian writers.⁴⁷ By this “ultimate check,” regardless of its historical inaccuracies or theological bias, First Clement has been a received piece of the Christian tradition since very soon after its production.

There is irony in the fact that it is this process of reception, described so clearly in the Windsor Report itself, that may ultimately condemn the Report to irrelevancy. Only a few months after its release, a meeting of the Primates of the Communion rejected several of the key components of the Report’s recommendations that would see added legislative authority to the Anglican Consultative Council, the Archbishop of Canterbury, or a proposed council to assist

⁴⁵ The Windsor Report, pp 44-50.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p 33.

⁴⁷ Bakke, Concord and Peace, p 282.

him.⁴⁸ As to the recommendations that bishops cease to interfere in one another's dioceses and that the American and Canadian churches apologize for their actions, neither one has to date been followed in such a way as to satisfy all member provinces.⁴⁹ In reading the Report, the overwhelming sense one gets is that defining the structures of the Communion and how the autonomous provinces ought to relate to one another and to the see of Canterbury, is work that ought to have been done decades ago rather than in the heat of the current crisis. When asked directly whether the Communion is already in schism, Primate Andrew Hutchinson replied: "If it looks like a duck and walks like a duck.... It's definitely brokenness."⁵⁰

Conclusion

Both the Letter of the Romans to the Corinthians and the Windsor Report 2004 are documents that seek to restore, or establish, unity in situations of great conflict and strife. The two address greatly different churches (from the local to the global), different cultural contexts and different periods in Christian history. They employ similar strategies; drawing the readers to a sense of shared (if reconstructed) history and tradition, shared faith and a conviction that unity is, in and of itself, a worthy goal. Finally, both ground their appeals in the love of God and the faith that Christian unity is a gift of God. Both Windsor and First Clement warn that unity is hard work:

“[The Lord] exhorts us, who believe in him with our whole heart, not to be idle or careless about any good work.... Let us, then, being gathered together in harmony with

⁴⁸ This proposal was rejected as “suspiciously like a curia,” Archbishop Andrew Hutchinson, Primate of Canada, in an address “Schism: Is It Inevitable?” at St. James’ Cathedral, Toronto, March 16, 2005.

⁴⁹ As to the former, the Primate of Rwanda left a February, 2005 meeting of Primates to go to Vancouver, B.C. and work with congregations there (Ibid.); as to the latter, while both churches have apologized for the hurt their actions have caused and for not consulting widely enough with the wider Communion, “I cannot imagine a conversation saying, ‘We got it wrong.’” — Archbishop Frank Griswold, former Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church (USA), quoted by Lynda Hurst, “*Anglican divide becomes a chasm.*”

⁵⁰ Hutchinson, “Schism: Is It Inevitable?”

intentness of heart, cry out to him earnestly, with one mouth, that we may come to share in his great and glorious promises.” -- 1 Clement 34:1,7

“Communion clearly makes demands on all within it. It involves obligations, and corresponding rights, which flow from the theological truths on which the life of the Christian community rests.” -- The Windsor Report, p 26.

Unity is hard work, and yet, “the Church is committed to continuing this painful journey.

Whatever happens, God reigns. The Holy Spirit is at work in her church. The church is in God’s hands, and in his love. From this, we take hope.”⁵¹

⁵¹ Ibid.

Bibliography

Bakke, Odd Magne. Concord and Peace: A Rhetorical Analysis of the First Letter of Clement with an Emphasis on the Language of Unity and Sedition. Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001.

Bowe, Barbara Ellen. A Church in Crisis: Ecclesiology and Paraenesis in Clement of Rome. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1988.

Fuellenbach, John. Ecclesiastical Office and the Primacy of Rome: And Evaluation of Recent Theological Discussion of First Clement. Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1980.

Holmes, Michael W., ed. The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999.

Hurst, Lynda. "Anglican divide becomes a chasm," in The Toronto Star (March 5, 2005), p A23.

Hutchinson, Andrew. "Schism: Is It Inevitable?," an address at St. James' Cathedral, Toronto, March 16, 2005.

Jeffers, James S. Conflict at Rome: Social Order and Hierarchy in Early Christianity. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1991.

The Lambeth Commission on Communion. The Windsor Report 2004. Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse, 2004.

Tottenham, Ann. "Windsor Report slights women clergy," in The Anglican, vol. 48, no. 2, February, 2005 p 6.