

# Pauline Images of the Church in 1 Clement

by

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## I. Introduction

Paul's epistles expand the divine revelation of the nature and function of Christ's church beyond the record provided in the gospels of her origin and the account of her growth in the historical narrative of Acts, and his ecclesiastical images constitute a significant portion of this new insight. With his death c. A.D. 64,<sup>1</sup> and the completion of the remainder of the canonical New Testament, the development of uninspired interpretation of and commentary upon the expanded deposit of written revelation, evidenced in the patristic writings and the historical development of theology, flourished. Ecclesiology was not excluded from this process. The question therefore arises of the accuracy of post-canonical interpretation of ecclesiastical doctrine, and specifically of patristic views of the Pauline metaphors of the church.

First Clement constitutes one of the earliest, possibly the very first, extant extra-canonical writing of Christianity. It was sent c. A.D. 96<sup>2</sup> from the church at Rome to the church at Corinth, and, although the text of the epistle does not designate its penman, historical evidences suggest that it came from a leader at the Roman church named Clement.<sup>3</sup> The letter was

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<sup>1</sup> see, e. g., D. A. Carson, Douglas J. Moo, and Leon Morris, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), 215-237. The focus of this paper lies elsewhere, so disputes about the dates of Paul's ministry, arguments about his authorship of the epistles attributed to him in the New Testament, the historicity of the material in Acts, and like issues, will not be considered. The traditional conservative view of all these matters is presupposed.

<sup>2</sup> See Michael W. Holmes, "The Letter of the Romans to the Corinthians (1 Clement): Introduction," n.p., *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations*, on CD-ROM. Accordance software 5.6.1, 2002, module version 1.0., AF Notes, 274-282/5496, Clayton N. Jefford, Kenneth J. Harder & Louis D. Amezaga, Jr., *Reading the Apostolic Fathers: An Introduction* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 104, and, in great depth, J. B. Lightfoot, ed. & trans., *The Apostolic Fathers: Clement, Ignatius, and Polycarp, Revised Texts with Introductions, Notes, Dissertations, and Translations*, 2nd ed., vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1981), 346-358.

<sup>3</sup> Debate exists over a variety of issues surrounding the authorship of the epistle. Some argue that Clement was an episcopal bishop, others consider him a leader among a group of elders that led the Roman church, and others view him as simply a scribe who wrote with the authority of the presbyters of his church. It is possible that Clement was the cousin of the emperor Domitian named Titus Flavius Clemens who, after a year of service in the office of consul, was accused of impiety and fell from favor, indicating that he no longer chose to worship the gods of the Roman empire, and was subsequently executed for atheism. It seems most probable that the patristic Clement, whatever his background, was one of a number of elders at the church at Rome. See Lightfoot, *Apostolic*

officially “The Church of God which sojourns in Rome [writing] to the Church of God which sojourns in Corinth” (1 Clem 1:0),<sup>4</sup> which suggests that the Roman church, along with its counterpart at Corinth, maintained a congregational church polity. In 1 Clement, the *presbuteros* and *episcopos* filled the same office (44:1, 4, 5). Both Corinth and Rome yet retained the ultimate power to put in place and depose their own leaders (44:3-6),<sup>5</sup> although they were not to abuse this power and, in all normal circumstances, submitted (63:1). The body at Rome is the “we” who birthed the letter, not Clement writing of his own authority as a church leader (1:1, 7:1, etc.).<sup>6</sup> Although the Corinthians seemed to have highly esteemed 1 Clement and paid

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*Fathers*, vol. 1, 358-406; Jefford, *Reading the Apostolic Fathers*, 101-106, and Henry Wace & William C. Piercy, *A Dictionary of Christian Biography* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 171-176.

<sup>4</sup> The patristic Greek text and English translation used are, unless otherwise specified, those in Michael W. Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations*, n.p., on CD-ROM. Accordance software 5.6.1, 2002, module version 1.0., AF & AF-E. All English quotations from Scripture are from the King James Version and all references to the Greek Testament follow Scrivener’s 1881 *Textus Receptus*. While a variety of ecclesiastical verses are different in the received and critical texts (i. e., Ac 2:47, 8:37, 9:21, Eph 1:1 (*en Epheso*), 5:30, etc.), the effect on the examination of Clement’s text is not great.

<sup>5</sup> The use of the verb καθίστημι (Holmes, “appoint”) in 1 Clem 44 does not require that each generation of leaders had the ultimate power to install its own successors. It can simply mean “to cause a state to be — ‘to cause to be, to make to be, to make, to result in, to bring upon, to bring about,’” or “to assign to someone a position of authority over others,” so that the congregation retained ultimate authority, but its leaders made suggestions in the matter that were considered carefully. (See 13:9, 15:175, 37:104, Louw & Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*, 2nd ed., cf. καθίστημι, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (BDAG), rev. Frederick Danker). Compare Acts 6:3, “look ye (the church) out among you... whom we (apostles) may appoint (καταστήσομεν).” Also Ac 17:15, Jam 3:6, 4:4, 2 Pet 1:8. Clement records that the elders were appointed “with the consent of the whole church” (συνευδοκησάσης τῆς ἐκκλησίας πάσης), 44:3. The verb συνευδοκέω means “to decide with someone else that something is preferable or good — ‘to agree to, to consent to.’” (Louw & Nida, 31:17) or “to join in approval with” (BDAG). See Ac 8:1, 22:20, 1 Cor 7:12-13, and 2 Macc 11:24, 35 (LXX). Consider as well 1 Clem 54:2, “I [the individual church member]... will do whatever is ordered by the people [the whole assembly].” (ποιῶ τὰ προστασσόμενα ὑπὸ τοῦ πλήθους). In any case, the power of deposition from ecclesiastical office clearly lay with the church in the context in 1 Clement (44:4-6), and this almost surely carried with it the power of appointment. Neither the textual difficulties in 44:2 nor the fact that the bare semantic range of the verbs in question could allow for the installation of new leaders by those already in authority alone can override this clear indication of the context. Note also Lightfoot’s commentary on the passage in *Apostolic Fathers*, vol. 2, 131-136. Since the church at Corinth maintained congregational discipline over its leaders, and Clement never suggests that a top-down form of ecclesiastical control existed in his church, and reproves the Corinthians only for their misuse of congregational government, not for its maintenance, the same polity evidently reigned in Rome.

<sup>6</sup> One could argue that this is an editorial “we,” an epistolary plural (cf. Daniel Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 394), and so refers to Clement alone, but nothing in the text requires such a use.

careful attention to its contents,<sup>7</sup> it was written from one self-governing and autonomous assembly to another;<sup>8</sup> Corinth and Rome were united in a common faith in their Savior, but maintained no formal ecclesiastical bond. Its contents shed important light on one early perspective on the Pauline pictures of the church, and provide material for reflection upon the accuracy of the interpretation of his inspired corpus.

## II. Paul's Images of the Church

Paul, in accord with the wider sweep of Biblical ecclesiological doctrine, believed and taught that the church, a new institution, distinct from Israel, started by Jesus Christ, was a local and visible assembly of saints, immersed upon profession of repentance and faith, which existed to glorify God through the carrying out of the Great Commission until the end of the age.<sup>9</sup> The

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<sup>7</sup> Dionysius testified in A.D. 170 that 1 Clement was read from time to time on Sunday among the Corinthians when he wrote to the Romans upon the receipt of a later letter from them, which he promised to have read in the same manner. Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, vol. 1., 361, 369-370. Eusebius (*Historia ecclesiastica* 3:16), Epiphanius (*Panarion* 30:15), and Jerome (*De viris illustribus* 15) attest to the reading of the letter in other locations as well.

<sup>8</sup> It has been alleged that 1 Clem 59:1 and 63:2 support a thesis of Roman superiority to the Corinthian church. However, “but if certain people should disobey what has been said by him [that is, God] through us, let them understand that they will entangle themselves in no small sin and danger.” (59:1), Εὰν δέ τινες ἀπειθήσωσιν τοῖς ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ δι’ ἡμῶν εἰρημένοις, γινωσκέτωσαν ὅτι παραπτώσει καὶ κινδύνῳ οὐ μικρῷ ἑαυτοὺς ἐνδύσουσιν, affirms Roman superiority only if it can be proven that Clement speaks upon his own authority, not because his letter had Scriptural warrant for its contents. The previous verse (58:2) demonstrates that he means the latter. In 63:2, “For you will give us great joy and gladness, if you obey what we have written through the Holy Spirit and root out the unlawful anger of your jealousy, in accordance with the appeal for peace and harmony which we have made in this letter,” χαρὰν γὰρ καὶ ἀγαλλίασιν ἡμῖν παρέξετε, εὖ ὑπήκοοι γενόμενοι τοῖς ὑφ’ ἡμῶν γεγραμμένοις διὰ τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος ἐκκόψητε τὴν ἀθέμιτον τοῦ ζήλους ὑμῶν ὀργὴν κατὰ τὴν ἔντευξιν ἣν ἐποιησάμεθα περὶ εἰρήνης καὶ ὁμονοίας ἐν τῇδε τῇ ἐπιστολῇ, Clement again does not speak on his own authority, but on that of the “so many and such great examples” (63:1) of the former sections of the letter, and so again speaks on the warrant of Scripture, “through the Holy Spirit” (63:2) because He is the Spirit of truth (Jn 15:26) who uses the Word of truth (Jn 17:17) to teach His people, or because Clement writes as one filled with the Spirit. Neither verse in Clement’s epistle affirms anything beyond what every member of God’s royal priesthood (1 Pet 2:5, 9) can say when he speaks with Biblical authority.

<sup>9</sup> While a declaration such as this is not a little controversial, and would, indeed, be averred without reservation only by Baptists who maintain a local-only ecclesiology and a generally dispensational eschatology, its proof lies outside the compass of the paper. This ecclesiological view, including its general perspective on Pauline

New Testament did not impose a new significance upon the word *ekklesia* and transform it into a universal entity—the difference between Christ’s “my assembly” (Mt 16:18) and other assemblies (Ac 19:32, 39, 41) did not lie in the word “church,” but in the pronoun “my.” His church was a visible assembly, like other assemblies, but one with a distinct purpose, a distinct composition, and distinct blessings as God’s supreme institution for the New Testament age. Pauline metaphors for the church accord with this fundamental meaning for *ekklesia*— just like human bodies, the bodies of animals, and all other bodies, are, by definition, localized and visible, so Paul employed the metaphor “body of Christ” to refer to the particular assembly at Corinth (1 Cor 1:2, 12:27), which stood in need of unity among its contending members (1 Cor 12:14-26), not to the universal family of God consisting of all believers.<sup>10</sup> When he spoke of “the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Tim 3:15), he spoke of God’s New Testament temple as something with bishops and deacons (1 Tim 3:1-13), within which Timothy was to “behave [him]self” (3:15), not to a catholic entity, visible or invisible. Paul similarly referred to the individual church at Corinth as Christ’s bride (2 Cor 11:2), emphasizing the close relationship He had with His institution, the place where He would walk (Rev 2:1) and dwell in a special way, as He had in the Solomonic temple and Moses’ tabernacle. Furthermore, while Paul taught that true believers would be led by the Spirit to join

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church imagery, is expounded in detail in Robert Sargent’s *Landmarks of Baptist Doctrine*, book 4 (Oak Harbor, WA: Bible Baptist Church Publications, 1990), 481-596. The effects of local-only ecclesiology (and a belief in verbal, plenary preservation of the inspired autographs through the received texts of Scripture) on dispensational theology, such as the view that the church originated in Christ’s earthly ministry rather than on Pentecost, appears in Sargent’s *Landmarks of Bible Prophecy* (Oak Harbor, WA: Bible Baptist Church Publications, 1998). An analysis of the NT word for church, *ekklesia*, which defends its solely local significance through examination of its etymology, use in Scripture, and use in classical Greek and the Septuagint, is B. H. Carroll’s *Ecclesia— The Church* (Emmaus, PA: Challenge Press, n. d., reprint ed.). If this is the Pauline and the Scriptural doctrine of the church, patristic usage must be evaluated in its light—references to, e. g., the “universal Church throughout the world” (MPoly 8:1), must then be viewed as the influx of worldly elements into Christian theology from, say, Platonic universalizing philosophy, rather than sound exegetical conclusions drawn from Ephesians.

<sup>10</sup> Thomas Strouse, “The *Soma Christou*,” pages 143-160 of *I Will Build My Church: The Doctrine and History of Baptists*, 3rd ed. (Newington, CT: Emmanuel Baptist Theological Press, 2001), provides a helpful overview from an advocate of local-only ecclesiology of the shades of emphasis in the body of Christ image in the several Pauline epistles that employ it.

the congregation through baptism (1 Cor 12:13),<sup>11</sup> he did not equate the church with the family of God, which was entered by faith alone (Gal 3:26) prior to membership in Christ's assembly. Nevertheless, since church membership consisted of the regenerate alone, the assembly was "in Christ" (Gal 1:22, 1 Thess 1:1, 2:14, 2 Thess 1:1), as were with all believers (2 Cor 5:17). This assumption that the saved would desire to identify with Christ through baptism and join the church (cf. Ac 2:41-47), alongside its exclusion of the unregenerate from membership in the assembly, allowed Scriptural images for all the elect to relate to the church; all believers are God's sheep (John 10:26-30), but Paul referred to their gathered assembly, the church, as God's "flock" (Ac 20:28-29, there the assembly at Ephesus), whose leaders were their shepherds (Eph 4:11) underneath Christ, the great Shepherd (Heb 13:20). The Pauline symbols of the church, the assembly of baptized saints, open deep and beautiful vistas into this rich New Testament doctrine.

### III. 1 Clement's Understanding of Pauline Images of the Church

Although the great body of his epistle relates to church matters, Clement employs the word *ekklesia* only four times in three verses of his letter. 1 Clem 1:0 provides the first two uses: "The Church of God which sojourns in Rome to the Church of God which sojourns in Corinth, to those who are called and sanctified by the will of God through our Lord Jesus Christ. May grace and peace from Almighty God through Jesus Christ be yours in abundance."<sup>12</sup> The specific

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<sup>11</sup> "For by one Spirit [led by the Holy Spirit] are we all baptized into one body, [the members of the church at Corinth had been baptized into the membership of their assembly] whether *we be* Jews or Gentiles, whether *we be* bond or free [and so they had grounds for unity]; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit [and so shared His common indwelling at the moment of regeneration and blessings, and partook of the Lord's supper together]."

<sup>12</sup> Ἡ ἐκκλησία τοῦ θεοῦ ἢ παροικοῦσα Ῥώμην τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ τῇ παροικούσῃ Κόρινθον, κλητοῖς ἡγιασμένοις ἐν θελήματι θεοῦ διὰ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη ἀπὸ παντοκράτορος θεοῦ διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ πληθυνθείη.

assemblies at Rome and Corinth are clearly in view. Paul alone in the New Testament refers to the congregation as the “church of God” (Ac 20:28, 1 Cor 1:2, 10:32, 11:16, 22, 15:9, 2 Cor 1:1, Gal 1:13, 1 Th 2:14, 2 Th 1:4, 1 Tim 3:5, 15), and he does so by far the highest percentage of the time in 1 Corinthians, a letter which 1 Clement clearly references. It was appropriate to emphasize the divine ownership of the assembly to the factitious and often man-centered Corinthians. Clement’s third use of *ekklesia* appears in 44:3: “Those, therefore, who were appointed by them [the apostles] or, later on, by other reputable men with the consent of the whole Church, and who have ministered to the flock of Christ blamelessly, humbly, peaceably, and unselfishly, and for a long time have been well-spoken of by all—these men we consider to be unjustly removed from their ministry.”<sup>13</sup> Here “the consent of the whole Church” refers to the role of the assembly at Corinth in choosing its leaders. To assert that Clement refers here to the consent of the “universal church throughout the world” would be reading a foreign paradigm into the text, even apart from the consideration that believers in distant locations would have no idea of the nature of events at Corinth and could hardly consent to or dissent from them. Clement’s final use of *ekklesia* appears in 47:6: “It is disgraceful, dear friends, yes, utterly disgraceful and unworthy of your conduct in Christ, that it should be reported that the well-established and ancient church of the Corinthians, because of one or two persons, is rebelling against its presbyters.”<sup>14</sup> Here again he refers to the specific assembly at Corinth. Clement’s use of the word “church” accords with Paul’s sole particular definition of the word. To argue that this is the case solely because of the paucity of references in the patristic epistle constitutes only an

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<sup>13</sup> τοὺς οὖν κατασταθέντας ὑπ’ ἐκείνων ἢ μεταξὺ ὑφ’ ἑτέρων ἐλλογίμων ἀνδρῶν συνευδοκησάσης τῆς ἐκκλησίας πάσης, καὶ λειτουργήσαντας ἀμέμπτως τῷ ποιμνίῳ τοῦ Χριστοῦ μετὰ ταπεινοφροσύνης, ἡσύχως, καὶ ἀβαναύσως, μεμαρτυρημένους τε πολλοῖς χρόνοις ὑπὸ πάντων, τούτους οὐ δικαίως νομίζομεν ἀποβάλλεσθαι τῆς λειτουργίας.

<sup>14</sup> αἰσχροῦ, ἀγαπητοί, καὶ λίαν αἰσχροῦ καὶ ἀνάξια τῆς ἐν Χριστῷ ἀγωγῆς, ἀκούεσθαι τὴν βεβαιοτάτην καὶ ἀρχαίαν Κορινθίων ἐκκλησίαν δι’ ἐν ἧ δύο πρόσωπα στασιάζειν πρὸς τοὺς πρεσβυτέρους.

argument from silence that presupposes its conclusion.

Paul referred to the church as an institution *en Christo* (1 Cor 1:2, Eph 3:21, Gal 1:22, etc.), and Clement follows him, although he does so clearly in only one place: “So in our case let the whole body be saved in Christ Jesus, and let each man be subject to his neighbor, to the degree determined by his spiritual gift.” (38:1).<sup>15</sup> “Saved” does not seem to refer here to escape from Hell and entry into Heaven, but to deliverance;<sup>16</sup> as with a human body, the body of Christ, the church at Corinth, will be effective only if united (37:1-5).<sup>17</sup> The use of present imperatives in 38:1 for σώζω and ὑποτάσσω (in contrast with the aorist τίθημι for the one-time receipt of the determined spiritual gift) also suggests a continuing process of deliverance in the church from their troubles through unity; the present infinitive σώζεσθαι in 37:5<sup>18</sup> likewise supports this view. The whole congregational body is in Christ Jesus, and all its parts should be subject one to the other under their common Head, ministering in accordance with their spiritual gift.

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<sup>15</sup> Σφζέσθω οὖν ἡμῶν ὅλον τὸ σῶμα ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, καὶ ὑποτασσέσθω ἕκαστος τῷ πλησίον αὐτοῦ, καθὼς καὶ ἐτέθη ἐν τῷ χαρίσματι αὐτοῦ.

<sup>16</sup> Perhaps even the idea of “healing” the congregational body at Corinth from the rents of strife and rebellion penumbrates from this text; such is definitely within the semantic range of σώζω, e. g. Lu 6:18, Ac 4:22, etc.; cf. Louw & Nida 23.136, BDAG on σώζω.

<sup>17</sup> Lightfoot summarizes chapter 37 as “We are fighting as soldiers under our heavenly captain. Subordination of rank and obedience to orders are necessary conditions in an army. There must be harmonious working of high and low. So it is with the human body. The head must work with the feet and the feet with the head, for the health and safety of the whole.” He likewise abstracts 38 as “So therefore let the health of the whole body be our aim. Let weak and strong, rich and poor, work together in harmony. Let each man exercise his special gift in humility of hearth and without vainglory, remembering that he owes everything to God and giving thanks to Him for His goodness.” (*Apostolic Fathers*, vol. 2, 112, 115). Salvation from eternal condemnation is not Clement’s idea of “salvation,” in this context in any sense; much less does the passage assert some notion of falling from grace or affirm justification only in the church.

<sup>18</sup> λάβωμεν τὸ σῶμα ἡμῶν ἢ κεφαλὴ δίχα τῶν ποδῶν οὐδέν ἐστιν, οὕτως οὐδὲ οἱ πόδες δίχα τῆς κεφαλῆς· τὰ δὲ ἐλάχιστα μέλη τοῦ σώματος ἡμῶν ἀναγκαῖα καὶ εὐχρηστά εἰσιν ὅλω τῷ σώματι· ἀλλὰ πάντα συνπνεῖ καὶ ὑποταγῇ μιᾷ χρῆται εἰς τὸ σώζεσθαι ὅλον τὸ σῶμα.

Clement follows Paul to refer to the church as Christ’s flock (Ac 20:28, Eph 4:11), employing this image four times. In 16:1, he states “For Christ is with those who are humble, not with those who exalt themselves over his flock.”<sup>19</sup> The flock is of necessity gathered, for men could otherwise not exalt themselves over it—as for Paul, Clement here designates the local assembly, not a universal church. 44:3 does likewise; Clement states “Those, therefore, who were appointed by them or, later on, by other reputable men with the consent of the whole Church, and who have ministered to the flock of Christ blamelessly, humbly, peaceably, and unselfishly, and for a long time have been well-spoken of by all—these men we consider to be unjustly removed from their ministry.”<sup>20</sup> Here the flock of Christ refers to the Corinthian congregation, served by its elders, whom it had now removed from their service in a manner the church at Rome considered unjust. First Clement 54:2 reads: “Let him say: ‘If it is my fault that there are rebellion and strife and schisms, I retire; I will go wherever you wish, and will do whatever is ordered by the people. Only let the flock of Christ be at peace with its duly appointed presbyters.’”<sup>21</sup> Here the “flock of Christ” must designate the specific assembly at Corinth, overseen by its particular *presbuteroi*. Note that the use of the article to refer to the church at Corinth as “the” flock (τὸ ποίμνιον) does not exclude the possibility that the congregation at Rome, at Antioch, or elsewhere is also “the” flock of Christ, nor does it necessitate a universal flock. Likewise, Pauline and Clementine references to “the” body of Christ do not require, because of the article, a universal body, or any designation whatsoever beyond a specific

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<sup>19</sup> Ταπεινοφρονούντων γάρ ἐστιν ὁ Χριστός, οὐκ ἐπαιρομένων ἐπὶ τὸ ποίμνιον αὐτοῦ.

<sup>20</sup> τοὺς οὖν κατασταθέντας ὑπ’ ἐκείνων ἢ μεταξὺ ὑφ’ ἐτέρων ἐλλογίμων ἀνδρῶν συνευδοκησάσης τῆς ἐκκλησίας πάσης, καὶ λειτουργήσαντας ἀμέμπτως τῷ ποιμνίῳ τοῦ Χριστοῦ μετὰ ταπεινοφροσύνης, ἡσύχως, καὶ ἀβαναύσως, μεμαρτυρημένους τε πολλοῖς χρόνοις ὑπὸ πάντων, τοὺτους οὐ δικαίως νομίζομεν ἀποβάλλεσθαι τῆς λειτουργίας.

<sup>21</sup> εἰπάτω εἰ δι’ ἐμὲ στάσις καὶ ἔρις καὶ σχίσματα, ἐκχωρῶ, ἄπειμι οὐδ’ ἐὰν βούλησθε, καὶ ποιῶ τὰ προστασσόμενα ὑπὸ τοῦ πλήθους· μόνον τὸ ποίμνιον τοῦ Χριστοῦ εἰρηνεύετω μετὰ τῶν καθεσταμένων πρεσβυτέρων.

assembly.<sup>22</sup> Finally, 57:2 reads “Learn how to subordinate yourselves, laying aside the arrogant and proud stubbornness of your tongue. For it is better for you to be found small but included in the flock of Christ than to have a pre-eminent reputation and yet be excluded from his hope.”<sup>23</sup> Here the flock of Christ seems again to refer to the church at Corinth, and the “exclusion” to church discipline (57:1). It is not likely that Clement speaks of a fall from a justified state to condemnation for those here excluded; his epistle never states that one of the elect can be lost in any of its references to the term, including those in the context of this discussion of the schism and church discipline (58:2, 59:2; 1:1, 2:4, 6:1, 46:3-4, 52:2). He does seem to assume, however, as Paul did (cf. 1 Cor 6:9-11, 2 Cor 6:14-7:1, Rom 2:6-11, 8:1-4, Gal 5:19-21, Heb 3:12-14, etc.), that only those characterized by obedience have truly been regenerated, while men who continue in disobedience or who ultimately fall away never were justified. He ties together trusting in Christ, enduring obedience, and ultimate salvation (1 Clem 58:1-2). If those who were causing division in God’s flock at Corinth were unwilling to repent, they needed to seriously examine their state (2 Cor 13:5) and make their calling and election sure. In 1 Clement, the flock of God is the individual congregation, made up of regenerate sheep, who are to submit to their godly leaders, their shepherds under the Great Shepherd.<sup>24</sup> This corresponds with the Pauline image.

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<sup>22</sup> Interestingly, however, in 1 Cor 12:27 Paul’s designation of the church at Corinth as Christ’s body is anarthrous: ὑμεῖς δὲ ἐστε σῶμα Χριστοῦ, καὶ μέλη ἐκ μέρους. Of course, a Greek article only at times functions like the English definite article, and its absence does not necessarily correspond to the English indefinite article.

<sup>23</sup> μάθετε ὑποτάσσεσθαι, ἀποθέμενοι τὴν ἀλαζόνα καὶ ὑπερήφανον τῆς γλώσσης ὑμῶν ἀυθάδειαν ἄμεινον γὰρ ἐστὶν ὑμῖν ἐν τῷ ποιμνίῳ τοῦ Χριστοῦ μικροὺς καὶ ἐλλογίμους εὐρεθῆναι, ἢ καθ’ ὑπεροχὴν δοκοῦντας ἐκριφῆναι ἐκ τῆς ἐλπίδος αὐτοῦ. Note that 1 Cor 2:1 also employs καθ’ ὑπεροχὴν in a negative sense, the only occurrence of the phrase in the NT: Καὶ γὰρ ἐλθὼν πρὸς ὑμᾶς, ἀδελφοί, ἦλθον οὐ καθ’ ὑπεροχὴν λόγου ἢ σοφίας καταγγέλλων ὑμῖν τὸ μαρτύριον τοῦ Θεοῦ. “And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God.”

<sup>24</sup> While familiarity with the Pauline and Biblical corpus makes it very likely that Clement viewed church leaders and ultimately Christ in a pastoral or shepherding capacity, he does not make the image of the shepherding leader quadrating to the flock image explicit in his letter.

Clement, starting in chapter 37, makes deft use of the Pauline picture of the church as Christ's body. In 37:1-4 he employs a military metaphor for the parts of the congregation; each has its place under Christ the Head (cf. Eph 1:22, 4:15, 5:23, Col 1:18, 2:10, 19), and submission to leadership is required; all cannot hold a position of authority. This parallels the idea of 1 Cor 12:12-27, although it does not employ the specific language of that passage.<sup>25</sup> Clement then begins to explicitly invoke the body metaphor in 37:5<sup>26</sup> in the language of 1 Cor 12; the head and feet need each other (1 Clem 37:5b-d, 1 Cor 12:21), the smallest or most feeble members (μέλη) are necessary, *anagkaios*, (37:5e, 1 Cor 12:22), and all the members must work together and submit to one another (37:5f–38:1, 1 Cor 12:23-26, cf. Eph 5:21-23). For Clement, spiritual gifts are for use in the body (38:1), as they are for Paul (1 Cor 12). Clement continues to elaborate on the theme of the body throughout chapter 38. His use of the *soma* picture in 37-38 deals with the congregation at Corinth specifically, not with saints in different locations as one catholic body; certainly only saints that meet and interact can mutually submit, and seemly deference in the Corinthian assembly, as enjoined by Clement, would have no obvious effect on the ability of believers in Alexandria or Spain to minister to each other and the world.

The theme of the body comes up again in chapter 46, where it continues the preceding discourse on the congregation's unjust ejection of righteous presbyters (44–45). Clement rebukes the Corinthians for their strife, dissension, and schism (46:5, cf. 1 Cor 3:3) through a rhetorical question, and continuing reminds them “Do we not have one God and one Christ and

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<sup>25</sup> It is worth noting that both 1 Clem 37:1 and 1 Cor 12:1 begin a new section with the vocative ἀδελφοί.

<sup>26</sup> Let us take our body as an example. The head without the feet is nothing; likewise, the feet without the head are nothing. Even the smallest parts of our body are necessary and useful to the whole body, yet all the members work together and unite in mutual subjection, that the whole body may be saved. λάβωμεν τὸ σῶμα ἡμῶν ἢ κεφαλὴ δίχα τῶν ποδῶν οὐδέν ἐστιν, οὕτως οὐδὲ οἱ πόδες δίχα τῆς κεφαλῆς· τὰ δὲ ἐλάχιστα μέλη τοῦ σώματος ἡμῶν ἀναγκαῖα καὶ εὐχρηστά εἰσιν ὅλω τῷ σώματι· ἀλλὰ πάντα συνπνεῖ καὶ ὑποταγῇ μιᾷ χρῆται εἰς τὸ σώζεσθαι ὅλον τὸ σῶμα.

one Spirit of grace which was poured out upon us? And is there not one calling in Christ? Why do we tear and rip apart the members of Christ,<sup>27</sup> and rebel against our own body, and reach such a level of insanity that we forget that we are members of one another?”<sup>28</sup> (46:6–7).<sup>29</sup> Clement’s symbol is similar to Paul’s body image in Eph 4:4-25<sup>30</sup> and Rom 12:4-5; he affirms that each member of the Corinthian church was a “member” with the others, part of the same body under Christ. If the “we” of 46:5-6 affirms that Clement or the Roman church constituted parts of the same *soma* as the assembly at Corinth, it would also follow that the Roman Christians were tearing and ripping apart the members of Christ, rebelling, and reaching a level of insanity that brought them to forget that they were members one of another, even as they wrote to remind the Corinthians of this matter—the “we” therefore refers to the recipients of the letter alone, although Clement and the Romans employ the first person pronoun to add grace to their reprimand through identification with its terms.<sup>31</sup> Clement continues his discussion of the need to maintain unity and avoid schism in the body (46:9, 1 Cor 12:25) in chapter 47, reminding

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<sup>27</sup> 1 Cor 6:15, 12:12, 27.

<sup>28</sup> Rom 12:5, Eph 4:25.

<sup>29</sup> ἢ οὐχὶ ἓνα θεὸν ἔχομεν καὶ ἓνα Χριστὸν καὶ ἓν πνεῦμα τῆς χάριτος τὸ ἐκχυθὲν ἐφ’ ἡμᾶς, καὶ μία κλήσις ἐν Χριστῷ; ἵνα τί διέλκομεν καὶ διασπῶμεν τὰ μέλη τοῦ Χριστοῦ, καὶ στασιάζομεν πρὸς τὸ σῶμα τὸ ἴδιον, καὶ εἰς τοσαύτην ἀπόνοιαν ἐρχόμεθα ὥστε ἐπιλαθέσθαι ἡμᾶς ὅτι μέλη ἐσμὲν ἀλλήλων;

<sup>30</sup> There are strong reasons to conclude that Clement was familiar with Paul’s letter to the Ephesians. Here, for example, he refers to one God, Spirit, and calling, which looks very much like a recollection of Eph 4:4-6. However, even if he had not read it, he could still have known of its teachings, which he would have taught “everywhere in every church” (1 Cor 4:17).

<sup>31</sup> A “we” which does not include its speaker appears in Rom 6:1, 15, 7:7, 12:4-5, Gal 1:8, Eph 4:14, Heb 2:3, etc. Cf. 1 Clem 26:1, 28:1, 63:1.

the Corinthians of Paul’s discussion in 1 Cor 1:10–17, 3:1–23<sup>32</sup> of their earlier factionalism, and then providing further exhortation to repent of congregational schism in chapter 48 and regain *φιλαδελφία* for each other (47:5, 48:1).<sup>33</sup> Finally, having expounded the need for unity and mutual service and love in the body, he commends love as the means through which this can occur (49-50), just as Paul follows his discussion of the body in 1 Cor 12 with his ode to love (1 Cor 13)—as it provided the answer to the problems at Corinth earlier, so Clement knew it would lead the church at Corinth to again bear patiently with the faults that excited schism (49:5). If the Corinthians recalled “the love which he had for us, Jesus Christ our Lord, [so that] in accordance with God’s will, [he] gave his blood for us, and his flesh for our flesh, and his life for our lives” (49:6),<sup>34</sup> and lived that love out among themselves, division in Christ’s body would cease, and the Corinthian congregation would be “found blameless (*ἄμωμος*) in love, standing apart from the factiousness of men” (50:2), as Christ desired for His church.<sup>35</sup> Clement, in

<sup>32</sup> Note that in 1 Cor 3 the corporate assembly is the temple of the Spirit, while in 1 Cor 6 it is the individual believer.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Romans 12:10, where the command for *φιλαδελφία* is given in the context of ministry in the body of Christ at Rome (12:4–13).

<sup>34</sup> *διὰ τὴν ἀγάπην, ἣν ἔσχεν πρὸς ἡμᾶς, τὸ αἷμα αὐτοῦ ἔδωκεν ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς ὁ κύριος ἡμῶν ἐν θελήματι θεοῦ, καὶ τὴν σάρκα ὑπὲρ τῆς σαρκὸς ἡμῶν καὶ τὴν ψυχὴν ὑπὲρ τῶν ψυχῶν ἡμῶν.* Compare the image of Christ’s dying love for His congregation in Eph 5:1-2, 24-33, so that they could be “members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones” (Eph 5:30, *μέλη... τοῦ σώματος αὐτοῦ, ἐκ τῆς σαρκὸς αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐκ τῶν ὀστέων αὐτοῦ*). While Clement does not do more than allude to Paul’s description of the assembly as Christ’s bride, all indicators in the text suggest that he would also have identified the particular congregation as the bride of Christ, His institution for the NT age and the place where special communion with Him was possible.

<sup>35</sup> Ephesians 5:27, “That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish (*ἄμωμος*)”—*ἵνα παραστήσῃ αὐτὴν ἑαυτῷ ἔνδοξον τὴν ἐκκλησίαν, μὴ ἔχουσαν σπίλον ἢ ρυτίδα ἢ τι τῶν τοιούτων, ἀλλ’ ἵνα ᾖ ἀπλῆ καὶ ἄμωμος.*

chapters 46-50, follows Paul's order in 1 Cor 12-13, his message in those chapters, and his image of the particular congregation, not the universal company of the saints in all the world, as the body of Christ.

#### IV. Conclusion

First Clement employs the Pauline images of the church as an institution in Christ, as His flock, and as His body, in accord with the sense in which Paul himself understood them; each image described the *ekklesia*, the local and visible assembly of baptized believers. Any universal views of the church alleged in 1 Clement must, as with the Pauline corpus, be eisegeted in, not derived out of natural, grammatical-historical analysis. His epistle provides patristic testimony to local-only ecclesiology. At the end of the first century, the church at Rome taught justification before God by faith alone (32:4), maintained no distinction between bishop and presbyter, employed a congregational polity, viewed itself as an equal among sister churches, and held, as did Paul, a concept of the church that excluded *katholikos* entirely.

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