

Exercise 1.4

Clement's letter to the Church at Corinth is an exhortation to humility as the key to the life of a worshipping community. Using exemplars from the Jewish scriptures he shows how pride has no place in the Church as a corrective to the notion that bishops made by the apostles and their successors can be deposed.

There is ample evidence of a community under siege from within and without. Clement notes unexpected misfortunes that have prevented him dealing more swiftly with their problem. He depicts a community subjected to ridicule from without. Further the dissension he addresses in Corinth appears to exist in Rome as well, as he admits to the problems there and to factions that don't agree with him. The major threat from within dealt with in the letter is the Corinth Church losing its way from Clement's perspective by deposing their legitimate leaders.

There is description of the everyday life of the believer in the idealised depiction of Corinth under the rightful bishop. A community of hospitality, giving and mutual support is described, yet sober, humble, accepting and without envy.

For Clement, authority is based on the traditions of the Jews and upon the words of Jesus and his apostles. Already innovation is regarded as a sign of envy and pride that goes against the vast storehouse of heritage wherein elders are honoured. Specifically, since the bishops of Corinth owe their appointment to the apostles, the people cannot remove them.

Ignatius as someone on his way to execution also suggests a community under siege, as does his insistence on the absolute primacy of the bishop. Throughout his letters he is concerned with what appear to be hydra headed heresies and potential schisms from such groups as Gnostics and Judaisers. In the

letter to the Smyrneans he documents the social mission of the church with its concern for the widows, the oppressed, the prisoners and the hungry.