

GOVERNANCE IN THE FIRST-CENTURY CHRISTIAN CHURCH IN ROME: WAS IT COLLEGIAL?

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My previous essay in this series¹ drew attention to three main areas of inquiry concerning church governance in the first-century church in Rome: (1) an ancient Roman political governance pattern which may have furnished a background for the type of ecclesiastical governance used in that first-century Christian community, (2) pertinent contemporary Christian documents, and (3) ancient non-contemporary information from Roman episcopal succession lists. In addition, we observed that certain crucial issues emerged from the data of the different succession lists, particularly the question of the sequential placement of Clement of Rome in the postapostolic succession and the dates for his episcopal tenure.

With regard to the Roman system of governance, we found that the collegiality pattern of the magistracies in the Roman Republic (508-27 B.C.) was carried over into the Principate (the form of government established in 27 B.C.) and that it continued to be held in high esteem in Rome itself and in the West during the first century A.D. This was so in spite of the fact that the *princeps*, or "first citizen," had become the leading figure in the Roman government. We noted, for example, that Octavian (Augustus),² the founder of the Principate, ruled by means of offices and authorities carried over or derived from the Roman Republic; that he declined several offers of offices that would have given him autocratic power; and that among his first-century successors the ones who ruled autocratically received at death the official execra-

¹Kenneth A. Strand, "Church Organization in First-Century Rome: A New Look at the Basic Data," *AUSS* 29 (1991): 139-160.

²"Augustus" is a title (corresponding to the Greek term *sebastos*) which Octavian, the adopted son of Julius Caesar, was granted by the Roman Senate in 27 B.C. Common practice from that time onward has made it the designation of preference for him.

FIGURE 1
CHURCH ORGANIZATIONAL PATTERNS AS EVIDENCED IN THE EARLIEST APOSTOLIC FATHERS

<i>Rome, and Elsewhere West of the Aegean Sea (Not Monepiscopal)</i>	<i>Regions East of the Aegean Sea (Monepiscopal)</i>
<p>1 Clement (Ep. to Corinthians), ca. A.D. 95: <i>Presbyterial</i> organization in Corinth (see chaps. 42, 44, 47, 54, 57) <i>No mention</i> of church polity in Rome</p> <p>Hermas, <i>Shepherd</i>, ca. A.D. 95 (?)–140(?):* <i>Reference to twofold ministry</i> ("elders" in <i>Vis.</i> 2.4.3 and 3.1.8, and "bishops" and "deacons" in <i>Vis.</i> 3.5.1 and <i>Sim.</i> 9 [deacons in 9.26, and bishops in 9.27])</p> <p>Ignatius of Antioch (Ep. to Romans), ca. A.D. 110 or 115 (no later than A.D. 117): <i>No hint of monepiscopacy</i> in Rome, although in this letter he refers to himself as the bishop of Syria and in his six other letters (directed to the Roman province of Asia, east of the Aegean) his references to monepiscopacy abound (see the next column)</p> <p>Polycarp of Smyrna (Ep. to Philippians), ca. A.D. 110 or 115 (shortly after letters of Ignatius):** <i>Presbyterial</i> organization in Philippi (see especially 5:2, 6:1, and 11:1)</p>	<p><i>Didache</i>, probably 1st cent. A.D. and Syrian "rural" provenance (cf., e.g., Jean-Paul Audet, <i>La didachè: instructions des apôtres</i> [Paris, 1958], and Robert A. Kraft, <i>The Apostolic Fathers</i>, 3 [New York, 1965]: 72-77. A <i>twofold</i> settled ministry is apparently depicted in 15:1,2; but the context of the work is, of course, cultic (the reference is to "bishops and deacons" as honorable persons along with "prophets and teachers")</p> <p>Ignatius of Antioch, ca. A.D. 110 or 115 (no later than A.D. 117): Calls himself <i>bishop of Syria</i>, and requests that the Roman Christians pray for the church in Syria, which "has God for its shepherd" in place of Ignatius (Rom 2:2; 9:1) Makes <i>numerous references to monepiscopacy</i> in the Roman province of Asia (in addition to his mention of several bishops by name, cf., e.g., Eph 2:2; 3:2; 4:1; 5:3; 6:1; 20:2; Magn 3:1; 6:1; 7:1; Trall 2:2; 3:1; 7:2; 12:2; 13:2; Phld 7:1,2; 10:2; Smyrn 8:1,2; 9:1; 12:2; Polyc 6:1)</p> <p>Polycarp of Smyrna (Ep. to Philippians), ca. A.D. 110 or 115 (shortly after letters of Ignatius):** Identifies himself as <i>bishop of Smyrna</i> (Introd. to the Epistle)</p>
<p>Notes: *The dating of this source is questionable. Visions 1-4 could be as early as between A.D. 95 and 110. However, from vision 5 onward (the <i>Shepherd</i> proper) the material may be of a date considerably later than ca. A.D. 95. The <i>Muratorian Canon</i> states that the <i>Shepherd</i> was written by Hermas while "his brother Pius, the bishop" (accession ca. A.D. 140) occupied the chair of the Roman church. The <i>Muratorian Canon</i> is not especially reliable, of course; but it is possible that Hermas' work was composed over a fairly lengthy period of time (or at two widely separated times), with the final editing being done ca. A.D. 140.</p> <p>**P.N. Harrison, <i>Polycarp's Two Epistles to the Philippians</i> (Cambridge, Eng., 1936), has argued for a later date for chaps. 1-12 than for 13 and possibly 14; but even should he be correct, we would simply have to defer still further the <i>terminus non ante quem</i> for establishment of monepiscopacy in Philippi.</p>	

tion of the Roman Senate in contrast to the *apotheosis* granted to Augustus himself and to several other "good emperors" of that period. We also took cognizance of the practice in western municipalities of having the top magistracy held either by *duovirs* (who normally had two *aediles* as assistants) or by *quattuorvirs*. This type of municipal civil administration is exemplified by the extant formal charters of Salpensa issued in A.D. 81 and of Malaca issued in A.D. 84.

Regarding the relevant Christian documents of the first century and early second century which might have a bearing on the governance of the Roman church of that time, we found that these *contemporary* documents give no indication whatsoever of the presence of moniscopacy in the Roman church, but that they instead weigh heavily against the likelihood of that modality's being in use in that church at that time. (Figure 1 indicates the main patristic sources and their pertinent data.)

On the other hand, we found that certain *non-contemporary* ancient sources, especially several groupings of succession lists of Roman bishops, indicate that after the martyrdom of the apostles Peter and Paul (probably in A.D. 66 or 67) the Roman church immediately began a succession of *sole* bishops. These groupings of succession lists reveal, however, some serious conflicts.³ (For convenient reference, figure 2 on page 68 provides the pertinent data represented by these various succession lists.)

In the present essay, we continue our investigation concerning the modality of church governance which existed in the Roman church of the first century. We begin by examining some additional relevant non-contemporary ancient sources that bear upon our topic. After this, we analyze somewhat further the main issues raised by the succession lists and by these other non-contemporary pertinent materials. Finally, we endeavor to find a solution that does the most justice to our various and varied source materials.

1. *Some Further Notations concerning the Origin of the Roman Episcopate*

In addition to the succession-list materials, there are five sources that deserve notice here because of the information they provide about Peter and Paul in Rome and about the particular

³Conflicts that are much more significant than the simple scribal errors that also occur in various manuscripts.

individuals who succeeded them in the administration of the Christian church in that city. These are (1) the pseudo-Clementine literature, (2) Rufinus' prefatory letter to the pseudo-Clementine literature, (3) Tertullian, (4) the *Apostolic Constitutions*, and (5) a conjecture set forth by Epiphanius.

The Pseudo-Clementines and Rufinus' Preface

The first two of the aforementioned sources, the pseudo-Clementines and Rufinus' preface to this literature, may be considered together. The portion of the former that is of primary interest to us here is the so-called letter of Clement of Rome to James in Jerusalem, wherein it is specifically stated that Peter ordained Clement to be that apostle's immediate successor in governing the Roman church.⁴ In fact, the whole document is devoted to this matter, with a considerable part of it detailing instructions that Peter purportedly gave to Clement. The date of this pseudo-Clementine letter is uncertain, but it probably originated no earlier than the latter part of the second century, and possibly even later.

The prefatory remarks by Rufinus (fl. ca. 410) represent an effort to harmonize this supposedly Clementine information with the tradition common to the earliest of the extant succession lists, the list as given by Irenaeus, Eusebius, and Epiphanius:

Linus and Cletus [or, Anencletus⁵] were Bishops of the city of Rome before Clement. How then, some men ask, can Clement in his letter to James say that Peter passed over to him his position as a church-teacher [*cathedram docendi*]? The explanation of this point, as I understand, is as follows. Linus and Cletus were, no doubt, Bishops in the city of Rome before Clement, but this was in Peter's life-time; that is, they took

⁴See the "Epistle of Clement to James" (prefixed to the "Clementine Homilies"), especially chaps. 2 and 19 (ANF 8:218, 221-222).

⁵"Cletus" here is obviously simply an abbreviated form of the name "Anencletus" given by Irenaeus and Eusebius. In the Roman lists, the name has been duplicated into "Cletus" and "Anacletus." "Anencletus," which means "The Blameless," is undoubtedly the proper form. (Actually, a profusion of different spellings occur in the manuscripts and editions of the ancient source materials; e.g., "Anenclitus," "Anincletus," "Anecletus," "Aneclitus," and "Anicletus.")

charge of the episcopal work, while he discharged the duties of the apostolate.⁶

Rufinus continues by referring to another instance wherein Peter had done likewise: "He [Peter] is known to have done the same thing at Caesarea," where "though he was himself on the spot, yet he had at his side Zacchaeus whom he had ordained as Bishop."⁷ Rufinus then sets forth the following conclusion:

Thus we may see how both things may be true; namely how they [Linus and Cletus] stand as predecessors of Clement in the list of Bishops, and yet how Clement after the death of Peter became his successor in the teacher's chair.⁸

Whether these two junior administrators served concurrently or whether they served consecutively in the role attributed to them by Rufinus is not clear, but in any case the arrangement would have constituted a sort of ecclesiastical counterpart to the political practice of having senior and junior colleagues for the top magistracies in Rome and in the western municipalities.

Tertullian

Tertullian of Carthage (fl. early third century), writing no more than two or three decades after Irenaeus, differs from the latter when reporting the immediate postapostolic succession in Rome. Whereas Irenaeus places Clement third (after Linus and Anencletus), Tertullian in his *Prescription against Heretics*, indicates Clement as being the first postapostolic bishop of Rome. He makes the following statement in the form of a challenge to heretics:

"Rufinus to Gaudentius," as given in NPNF, 2d series, 3:564. This prefatory letter is prefixed to the "Recognitions of Clement" (see ANF 8:76; there the wording of the translation differs considerably from what is quoted herein from NPNF, but the same lines of thought are conveyed).

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid. It should be noted that Rufinus' explanation was not merely an invention on his part. The words prefaced to his explanation are given as follows in the ANF translation: "Now of this we have *heard* this explanation" (ANF 8:76, col. 1; emphasis supplied). Although this ANF rendering is more to the point than the NPNF wording quoted above, even it lacks the full force of the original, wherein the word *accepimus* conveys the thought of having "received" or "accepted" something already circulating (and presumably handed down).

Let them [the Gnostic heretics] produce the original records of their churches; let them unfold the roll of their bishops, running down in due succession from the beginning For this is the manner in which the apostolic churches transmit their registers: as the church of Smyrna, which records that Polycarp was placed therein by John; as also the church of Rome, which makes Clement to have been ordained in like manner by Peter.⁹

The question to be raised regarding this statement is whether Tertullian, even though he had undoubtedly read Irenaeus, chose for his own account a less authentic source—namely, the Pseudo-Clementine literature. That he might have done so is not, of course, impossible—that is, if that literature actually antedates Tertullian's reference. But in any case, we must ask whether it is logical to assume that Tertullian, who was trained as a lawyer and was usually quite perceptive, would have based his above-quoted statement on such a source. Even more importantly, we must take note of the fact that his statement itself is worded in such a way as to suggest the strong likelihood of Tertullian's having personally seen an actual succession roll from Rome.¹⁰ Irrespective, however, of the manner in which Tertullian gained his information, it is very likely that he recognized his source as representing an early and reliable tradition—a tradition to which he therefore gave credence.

The Apostolic Constitutions

The *Apostolic Constitutions*, a fourth-century compilation of a variety of earlier materials, gives still another account of the initial Roman episcopal succession. This is as follows: "Of the church of Rome, Linus the son of Claudia was the first [bishop], ordained by Paul; and Clemens, after Linus' death, the second, ordained by me Peter."¹¹ The first-person language, "by me Peter," is used because the prescriptions, rules, and commands of the *Apostolic Constitutions* purport to be given by the twelve apostles of Christ. That the

⁹Tertullian, *On Prescription against Heretics*, chap. 32 (ANF 3:258).

¹⁰Tertullian speaks so authoritatively about the apostolic churches transmitting their "registers" that it appears he had first-hand acquaintance with some of them. This would be especially so with regard to the one for Rome because of the close relationship and frequent contacts between Rome and Carthage, where Tertullian served as a presbyter.

¹¹*Constitutions of the Holy Apostles*, book 7, sec. 4, chap. 46 (ANF 7:478, col. 1).

traditions in this document actually go back directly to the apostles is most doubtful, of course, but they may well reflect information that was circulating earlier than the fourth century, perhaps in some cases well before that time.

Epiphanius

Epiphanius (fl. late 4th century) was mentioned in the previous essay (and also noted earlier in this essay) as the author of a succession list of Roman bishops that parallels the lists of Irenaeus and Eusebius. Epiphanius' list begins by referring to "Peter and Paul, apostles and bishops, then Linus, then Cletus,¹² then Clemens," after which there is a digression before the list is given in full from Peter and Paul to Anicetus ("Peter and Paul, Linus and Cletus, Clement, Euarestus, Alexander, Xystus, Telesphorus, Pius, Anicetus"). It is a statement in that digression which interests us now:

But possibly after Clement was appointed and had waived his claims (if indeed it did so happen, for I only surmise it, I do not affirm it), subsequently after the death of Linus and Cletus, when they had held the bishopric twelve years each after the death of saint Peter and Paul, which happened in the twelfth year of Nero [A.D. 66?], he [Clement] was again obliged to take the bishopric.¹³

This explanation obviously allows for Clement's known episcopal term from about A.D. 88 to 97, considerably after the time of Peter's martyrdom. In this respect, therefore, this "surmise" reconstruction may *seem* to have an advantage over the other above-noted attempts at reconciliation of the data. In fact, however, it is a totally untenable solution. Such an arrangement, which has Peter and Paul ordaining three persons to be bishops in linear

¹²As mentioned in my previous article, p. 154, n. 48, the name "Cletus" (Greek, κλήτος, "klētos") given by Epiphanius is undoubtedly to be identified with the "Anencletus" of Irenaeus and Eusebius. See also n. 5 above.

¹³Epiphanius, *Panarion* 27.6, as translated in J. B. Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, Part 1, *S. Clement of Rome*, vol. 1, 2d ed. (London, 1890), 329. The Greek text is given in Lightfoot, 169-170.

succession after them, is totally incongruent and completely out of harmony with what is known about early-church practice.¹⁴

(A summary of the data given by the five sources just treated is provided in **figure 3** on page 69. Further documents could have been cited, as well; but doing so would not serve any useful purpose, for these further materials simply echo the information concerning Clement that we have already noted.)

Analysis

The foregoing sources, though they vary from one another in certain respects, are all in general agreement concerning Clement's being ordained by Peter. Furthermore, except for Epiphanius' untenable conjecture, they all are also either explicit or implicit in placing Clement as the immediate successor of Peter, though the *Apostolic Constitutions* puts Linus before Clement in a modality nowhere else attested: namely, Linus as the successor of Paul, and Clement as the successor of Peter subsequent to Linus' death.

2. *Comparison of the Succession Lists and the Other Non-Contemporary References*

At this juncture it is useful to make a comparison between the succession-list information and the information from the above-noted sources (for easy reference to the relevant data, see **figures 2 and 3** on pages 68 and 69). In such a comparison, two basic conclusions are inevitable: (1) The Liberian-Catalogue/*liber-pontificalis* chronology for Clement is compatible with the evidence given by the five sources treated above—unanimously so in regard to Clement's being ordained by Peter, and with but one exception (Epiphanius' speculation) in regard to the time of Clement's episcopal service. (2) The Eusebian chronology is out of step with all the sources except Epiphanius' conjecture (a conjecture that can readily be dismissed, as already pointed out above).

These mutually exclusive considerations pose a dilemma: On the one hand, we have the Liberian-Catalogue account and chronology supported by an array of witnesses; and on the other hand, we have the Eusebian chronology supported by known historical fact. How do we get off the horns of this dilemma?

¹⁴Clement himself (in 1 Clement 42 and 44) gives evidence of what the appointment procedure was (Christ appointed the apostles; the apostles appointed their successors; these successors of the apostles, in turn, appointed their own successors; etc.).

Modern scholarship has usually opted for the succession list of Irenaeus, Eusebius, and Epiphanius, together with Eusebius' chronology, rather than for a sequence and chronology which would make Clement the first postapostolic leader of the church in Rome. However, a further vital consideration emerges here: namely, the fact that both the Eusebian and Liberian-Catalogue chronologies rest on the questionable assumption that after the martyrdoms of Peter and Paul the Roman church immediately began a sequence of sole bishops. This is an assumption which, as we have seen, appears to be in conflict with the contemporary evidence. It involves, as well, the premise that the two chronologies are mutually exclusive.

Thus, in opting for Eusebius' general time frame for Clement, modern scholarship has ruled out the time frame given in the Liberian Catalogue. This, of course, also flies in the face of the other sources which place Clement in immediate succession after Peter. But should these sources be so readily dismissed? Perhaps they should, but *only if* the Liberian Catalogue chronology and all of these other sources can be demonstrated to have derived from a common antecedent, and then *only if* that common antecedent can be shown to be late and untrustworthy.

Although some of the sources we have noted do obviously derive or borrow from one another, and therefore are not independent witnesses, this can hardly be said regarding all the sources. In particular, the statements of Tertullian and the *Apostolic Constitutions* bear the earmarks of having a derivation different from, or at least in addition to, what is set forth in the Pseudo-Clementine literature and Rufinus. Moreover, it is doubtful that the Liberian-Catalogue chronology was merely an invention to accommodate the pseudo-Clementine account concerning Peter and Clement. The common placement of Clement in these various sources is an indication that something more substantial than the pseudo-Clementine material informed that chronology.

In view of the foregoing discussion, are we to conclude that the Eusebian and Liberian-Catalogue chronologies for Clement are not as much in conflict as is generally assumed? It would seem so. And one way in which the apparent conflict would find resolution is a reconstruction that I suggested in my previous article: namely, that Clement served as a bishop at least *twice*. This procedure finds a parallel in the pattern of consulships which Augustus had held

FIGURE 2
DATA FROM THE MAIN ANCIENT SUCCESSION LISTS OF EARLY BISHOPS OF ROME

The Listing of Names in Succession			Chronological Data Presented in Two Ancient Sources and a Modern Reconstruction		
Irenaeus, Eusebius and Epiphanius Peter and Paul Linus Anencletus (Cletus)* Clement Evaristus Alexander Xystus (Sixtus)	Liberian Catalogue Peter Linus Clement Cletus Anacletus* Aristus (Evaristus) Alexander Sixtus (Xystus)	Optatus and Augustine Peter Linus Clement Anacletus* Evaristus Alexander Sixtus (Xystus)	Eusebius** Linus (68-80) Anencletus (80-92) Clement (92-99) Evaristus (99-109) Alexander (109-119) Xystus (119-128)***	Liberian Catalogue Linus (56-67) Clement (68-76) Cletus (77-83) Anacletus (84-95) Aristus (96-108) Alexander (109-116) Sixtus (117-126)***	A Modern Reconstruction Linus (64-76) Anencletus (76-88) Clement (88-97) Evaristus (97-105) Alexander (105-115) Xystus (115-125)***
Notes: **Anencletus* is undoubtedly the proper spelling, but the name occurs in the sources with a number of different spellings. "Cletus" is how Epiphanius renders it, and the Western lists use "Anacletus." ***Eusebius' dates are from the Jeromian recension of Eusebius' <i>Chronicle</i> (dates which closely parallel those in his <i>Ecclesiastical History</i> ; cf. figure 1 in my previous article). ***Xystus is known to have acceded to the Roman episcopal chair sometime within the years 114 to 116. Thus, both the Eusebian and Liberian-Catalogue dates for him are at least a year to three years in error and perhaps even three to five years out.					
Source References: Irenaeus, <i>Against Heresies</i> 3.3.3; Eusebius, <i>Ecl. Hist.</i> 3.1, 4, 13, 15, 21, 34; Epiphanius, <i>Panarion</i> 27.6; Liberian Catalogue; Optatus, <i>On the Donatist Schism</i> 2.3; and Augustine's Ep. to Gerosomus.					

in 5 B.C. and then again in 2 B.C., after a lengthy interval from the time he terminated a series of sequential consulships in 23 B.C.¹⁵

This solution, however, does not fully solve our problem with regard to the two chronologies for Clement, for we are still left with the question as to why neither of the chronologies and none of the succession lists show Clement as being bishop twice. The explanation for this is perhaps quite simple: namely, that the compiler(s) of the succession list(s) envisaged a single line of bishops in which each bishop had only one period of service. When chronological data were added later by other persons, such data were probably based partly on sparse documentary evidence and partly on pure conjecture; but in either case, the data had to be inserted into a succession pattern whose configuration had already been predetermined by Hegesippus.

If, as I have suggested, there was indeed a collegial type of episcopal service, plus the possibility of multiple terms in office for any given individual, the two chronologies would not necessarily be mutually exclusive regarding Clement. The same would be true too, of course, if Clement's term of service was an extended period that encompassed the time frames of both chronologies for him.

The discussion thus far has made it obvious that the question of collegiality *versus* monepiscopacy is a crucial one. Therefore it will be well at this point to review briefly the procedure by which a monepiscopal succession could have got into the succession lists, when in fact the contemporary documentation points away from, rather than toward, this sort of succession.

3. *The Origin of the Monepiscopal Notion*

As noted in the previous article in this series, the earliest extant form of the succession list—that given by Irenaeus, Eusebius, and Epiphanius—can be traced back to Hegesippus.¹⁶ As for the other two groups of succession lists of Roman bishops—the one given in the Liberian Catalogue and *liber pontificalis* and the one set forth by Optatus and Augustine—these seem actually to provide

¹⁵For details, see Strand, 140-141. Octavian had also served as one of the two consuls as early as 43 B.C.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 146-147. See also the convincing data presented by Burnett Hillman Streeter, *The Primitive Church Studied with Special Reference to the Origins of the Christian Ministry: The Hewett Lectures*, 1928 (London, 1929), 288-295.

the same succession too, once scribal errors are corrected.¹⁷ Thus we can conclude that all three major groups of lists go back, either directly or indirectly, to Hegesippus.

As also noted in the previous article, Hegesippus did not claim to have discovered a succession list. What he said was that he himself "drew up" or "arranged" the succession list.¹⁸ We must therefore ask: Why did Hegesippus put the names into a single line of bishops?

Hegesippus was a Syro-Palestinian Christian who traveled to Rome during the episcopate of Anicetus (ca. A.D. 155-166), stopping also in Corinth during this trip. This was a time when Gnosticism had become rife in Italy, as it had done earlier in the East.¹⁹ Hegesippus' purpose was to provide evidence that there had been an unbroken succession of church leaders reaching all the way back to the apostles, for this kind of continuous line of bishops would, he felt, give evidence of the genuineness of the church's doctrinal beliefs in contrast to the false teachings of the Gnostics. The Gnostics could not, of course, claim such a line of authority.

Thus, to best serve his purpose, Hegesippus would very likely have arranged from his source materials a list of prominent leaders in the Roman church, placing these leaders in a single line of succession, one after another. The strong probability of such being the case rests on two further significant factors: First of all, monepiscopacy was the *only* type of church governance with which Hegesippus had become acquainted in the East, where monepiscopacy had emerged very early.²⁰ And in the second place, monepiscopacy was also the very type of church organizational pattern that he found in use in both Corinth and Rome when he visited those places during the latter half of the second century. It would thus have been an easy and natural assumption for him to

¹⁷See Lightfoot, 270-275.

¹⁸Lightfoot in his in-text note no. "(3)" on p. 154 has correctly pointed out that the context of Hegesippus' statement (as given in Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.* 4.22) "requires διαδοχὴν ἐποισάμην, 'I drew up a list of (the episcopal) succession.'"

¹⁹For details and sources relating to this, see Kenneth A. Strand, "The Rise of the Monarchical Episcopate," *AUSS* 4 (1966): 76-80.

²⁰See *ibid.*, 71-75; also Arnold Ehrhardt, *The Apostolic Succession in the First Two Centuries of the Church* (London, 1953), for a thoroughgoing treatment of the backgrounds for monepiscopacy, including evidence for the early rise of this form of church governance in the Jerusalem church.

think that the monepiscopal form of polity had been the one and only form in use in the Roman church subsequent to the death of the apostles Peter and Paul. And hence he would have compiled his succession list accordingly.

4. *An Assessment of the Data*

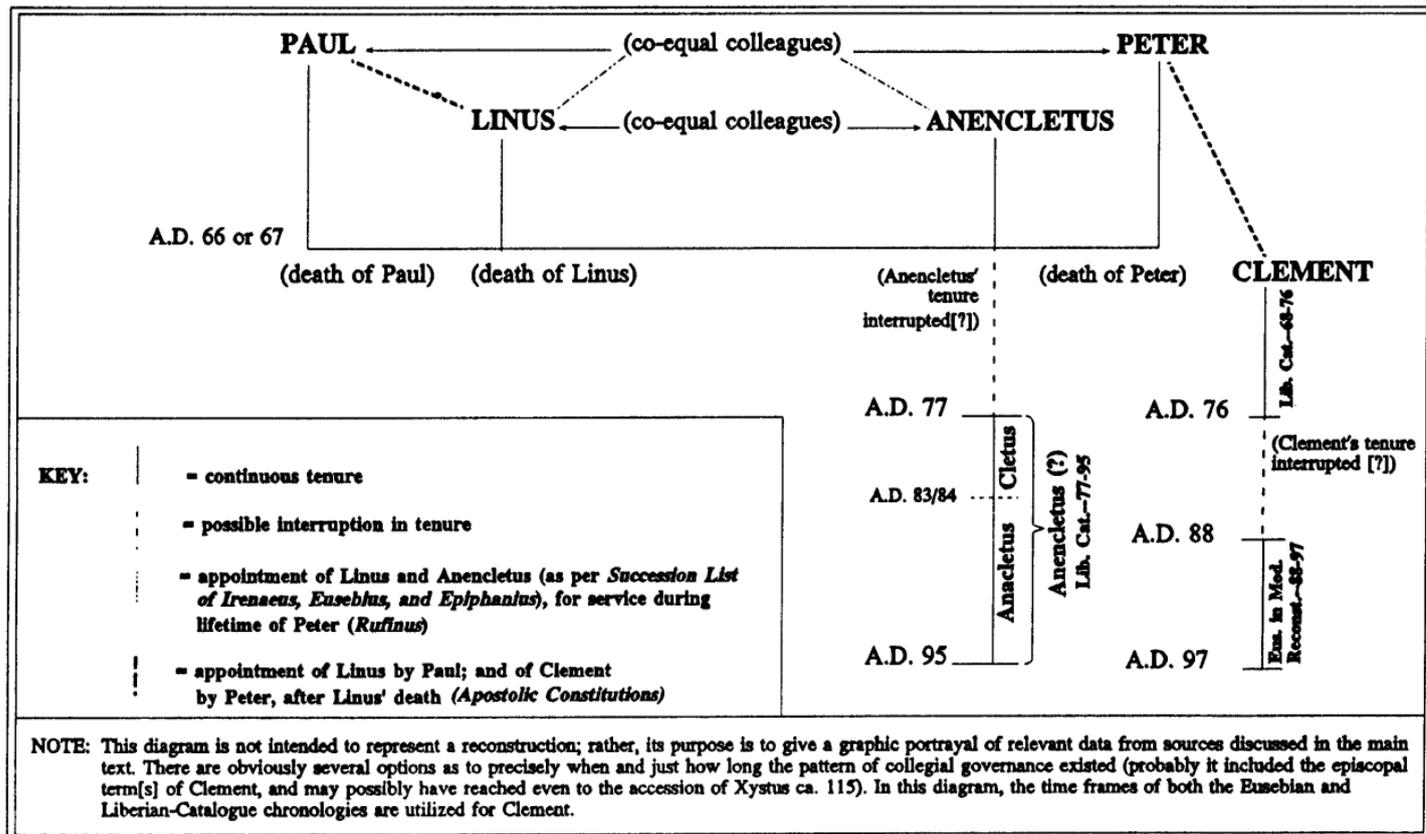
In view of what has been said above, we may now turn our attention more directly to the indications of collegial leadership in the first-century Roman church. First of all, there was in Rome, as we have seen, a mentality attuned to collegiality (as evidenced in Roman civil administration). In addition, we may note the following considerations: (1) There is known to have been a collegiality of the apostles Peter and Paul in serving the Roman church together for a number of years, a practice that implies the high acceptance level of this kind of ministry in that church at that time. (2) The chronology given in the Liberian Catalogue suggests an overlapping in leadership prior to the deaths of Peter and Paul, since Linus' tenure in episcopal office was contemporary with that of the apostles. (3) The explanation conveyed by Rufinus indicates that Linus and Cletus (Anencletus) served as administrative leaders of the Roman church while Peter was still alive and ministering there. (4) The evidence of the *Apostolic Constitutions* indicates a "dual episcopacy" of some sort or other.

Although it is impossible, of course, for us to reconstruct from the extant data a precise line of collegial bishops and their exact dates of service, the foregoing considerations are weighty enough to warrant our looking in that direction. And even though the nature of our sources and the gaps in our knowledge would make foolhardy any attempt to outline a specific scenario (several possibilities exist), it may be useful to put into diagram form the main data we have reviewed. This is done in figure 4.

There are also several further points that deserve mention: First of all, even though I have suggested that allowance for a collegial episcopate and for multiple terms of service for the early Roman bishops reduces the conflicts among our sources, we must nevertheless bear in mind that by no means are all such conflicts eliminated. This should give us due caution in considering any and all possible reconstructions.

Second, it may be argued that since any attempt at outlining a collegial episcopal succession would involve speculation, therefore the idea of there being such a succession should be dismissed out of hand. To those who would take this position we

FIGURE 4
SYNOPSIS OF DATA PERTAINING TO THE ROMAN EPISCOPAL SUCCESSION



may well ask: What, then, are we to do with the strong indications that there was indeed a duality in the early episcopate in Rome? And, moreover, is not the premise of moniepiscopal succession equally speculative, or even moreso, inasmuch as it goes contrary to a considerable amount of evidence?

Finally, we take note of the fact that the possibility of two bishops serving concurrently in the early Roman church has not gone unnoticed by modern scholarship. Indeed, the information set forth in the *Apostolic Constitutions* has heretofore led some modern researchers to a theory that there were two lines of bishops—one line drawing its succession from Paul, and the other deriving its succession from Peter. Each line, so it was supposed, served its own distinct segment of the Roman church. Even J. B. Lightfoot at first adopted this theory, but he eventually rejected it.²¹

This particular idea of "dual leadership" presupposes some sort of schism or division in the early Roman church,²² which, if ever it did exist, would certainly not have been condoned and perpetuated by the apostles Peter and Paul nor by Clement, for their counsel was ever toward a unified "body of Christ."²³ This untenable suggestion that there were initially two lines of concurrent Roman bishops is vastly different from my proposal of a collegial-leadership pattern, for my proposal envisages *cooperative leadership* of two co-equal administrators working toward the same goals within *one unified Christian community*.

5. Conclusion

The previous essay and this one have led us into what usually is considered to be a large "hodge-podge" of conflicting information. As we have seen, however, the conflicts need neither be as numerous nor as irreconcilable as is usually thought by modern scholars. The rather strong possibility that there was in the earliest period of the Roman church a collegial form of governance for that church opens the way for at least a partial resolution of the differing data.

²¹See Lightfoot, p. 68, n. 1.

²²In *ibid.*, Lightfoot indicates that his thesis had envisaged two Christian communities in Rome (Jewish and Gentile) which were fused together under Clement.

²³In the NT, see especially, 1 Cor 1:10-17; 3:1-9; and 1 Pet 3:8-10. In the "Apostolic Fathers," see the entire epistle entitled "1 Clement."

Researchers have normally found themselves in the position of choosing between the monepiscopal and the presbyterial governance modalities as the only possible alternatives anywhere in the early Christian church. Therefore, they have opted for one or the other of these modalities for the first-century Roman church,²⁴ this in spite of the lack of evidence for either of these, and despite the fact that neither of them do justice to the strong hints that exist in favor of collegiality in the earliest period of Roman church history.

The suggestion which has been put forward by some specialists to the effect that the early Roman church initially had two lines of bishops—one for each of two segments of that church—is also untenable. It is, moreover, simply a variation in, or adjustment to, the concept of monepiscopacy, for it rests on the notion that only two alternatives—monepiscopal governance and presbyterial governance—were possible, and it opts for the former.

On the other hand, my suggestion envisages a genuine and viable *third alternative*: namely, the pattern of *collegial* governance. Such governance was already evidenced in Roman political institutions. Moreover, it was exemplified in the Roman church itself in the type of service rendered by the apostles Peter and Paul.

We may close by taking note of the fact that a differing pattern of church governance in Rome from what it was in other regions should not be surprising. What it highlights is the ability of the early church to adapt in matters wherein different customs or different needs suggested the desirability of such adaptation. The NT itself indicates that as time went on, new needs and conditions led to certain new administrative offices or structures. This was the case both in Jerusalem and in the churches of Asia Minor (cf. Acts 6:1-6 and 14:23). That the church in Rome likewise utilized a form of governance adapted specifically to the conceptualization and needs of its members is precisely what we could and should expect.

²⁴The matter as to which of the two governance patterns is chosen by various modern scholars seems often to be related to these scholars' own church traditions of today (or are at least influenced by such traditions).