

PETER AND PAUL IN RELATIONSHIP TO THE EPISCOPAL SUCCESSION IN THE CHURCH AT ROME

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The earliest extant information concerning the episcopal succession in the Christian community at Rome names two apostles, Peter and Paul, as originators of that succession. Paul, however, soon dropped out of this role in most of the ancient sources, with ongoing Christian tradition looking upon Peter alone as the inaugurator of the Roman episcopal succession.

The existence of this curious phenomenon is well known, of course; what is not well known is precisely how and why the transition came about. The present essay addresses this particular matter.

1. *Some Preliminary Observations*

Certain preliminary observations need to be set forth before we turn our attention to the main relevant ancient sources that have a bearing on our inquiry:

First of all, the debate as to whether the earliest administrators of the Roman church were each a *primus inter pares* or a *monepiscopus* is not particularly germane to our topic.¹ Possibly more relevant is the likelihood that the earliest governance modality in the Roman church was neither of the foregoing, but rather a formal *collegial* arrangement. Any discussion of this also stands largely aside from the issue we are exploring in the present essay.²

¹ Generally speaking, Protestant writers espouse the former of these two positions, with the latter position being represented by Roman Catholics, Orthodox, and High Anglicans.

² In essence, the extension of the collegial-governance modality to the earliest successors of Peter and Paul would merely provide a further evidence that both

Second, the question before us is not an inquiry regarding the rise and development of the expression "See of Peter," a matter that has long been heavily discussed and at times hotly debated.³ The transition from a "Peter-and-Paul" to a "Peter-only" foundation for the succession lists of Roman bishops⁴ could have been prior to, contemporary with, or subsequent to the conceptualization which gave rise to this designation for the Roman See. In any case, the earliest extant occurrence of the term itself, "See of Peter," is found in a letter written by Cyprian of Carthage to Cornelius of Rome in A.D. 252.⁵ Side issues of this sort, interesting and important as they may be in their own right, are outside the scope of this essay. In short, our investigation herein is confined to a precise and specific consideration of the "how," "when," and "why" of the transition from the portrayal of Peter and Paul as cofounders of the Roman episcopal succession to the portrayal of Peter alone in that capacity.

Third, it is of vital importance to recognize that the transition with which we are dealing is not from "Paul only" to "Peter only,"

apostles were originally mentioned together as inaugurating the episcopal succession of the Roman church.

³ Books and articles on the subject continue to appear, though some of the most forceful argumentation occurred about a century ago. One may note, e.g., the strong exception taken by Luke Rivington, *The Primitive Church and the See of Peter* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1894, xxii and 3-18), to works or opinions of W. Bright, J. B. Lightfoot, F. U. Puller, G. Salmon, et al. Also in some of the Appendix materials in his volume, Rivington quite strongly attacks various of Puller's conclusions.

In the more recent literature, there is simply general recurrence of the lines of argument already set forth by earlier generations of scholars, albeit in a more charitable vein (the tendency has been for polemical discussions to be displaced by either apologetic ones or simply straightforward historical presentations). A recent work that is particularly useful for its comprehensive presentation of pertinent ancient source materials is the 3d ed. of James T. Shotwell and Louise Ropes Loomis, *The See of Peter* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991).

⁴ For details concerning these succession lists and other relevant ancient source materials, see Kenneth A. Strand, "Church Organization in First-Century Rome: A New Look at the Basic Data," *AUSS* 29 (1991): 143-157; and id., "Governance in the First-Century Christian Church in Rome: Was It Collegial?" *AUSS* 30 (1992): 61-66.

⁵ Cyprian, Ep. 54.14 in ANF 5:344, col. 1, where the rendition is "throne of Peter" instead of the more common "See of Peter" (in the Oxford ed. this epistle is numbered 59).

but from "Peter and Paul" to "Peter only." The latter two designations—and solely those two—are represented in connection with ancient succession lists and in other accounts of the early Roman episcopal succession.

Fourth, it is vitally important, too, that a distinction be made between what we witness in accounts of the Roman episcopal succession and what we encounter in other statements about the two apostles. Somehow, Paul dropped out of the succession, but his apostolic authority continued nonetheless to be recognized and set forth in other ways. For instance, down through the centuries papal bulls have been issued in the names of both Peter and Paul, and contemporary practice in the Roman Catholic church provides other evidences of an historically ongoing reverence for both of these apostles.⁶

Fifth, it is postulated that the two apostles were *originally* considered and treated *together* as being in a coequal collegial relationship in Rome, for this is precisely the way the extant evidence reveals the situation to have been, as we shall see below. Furthermore, the evidence gives no warrant for the thesis that from the outset there were two universally accepted concepts existing side by side—that Peter alone was properly spoken of as the originator of the Roman episcopal succession, and that Paul was included with him in some of the early listings simply because Paul was a "cofounder" of the Roman church.⁷ This conjectural thesis simply is not substantiated by the way in which the ancient documents read.

2. *The Pertinent Data*

Peter and Paul as Joint Founders of the Roman Episcopal Succession

We must now turn our attention to the main ancient sources that have a bearing on our study. These include the succession lists themselves, plus other pertinent remarks scattered throughout a variety of documents.

⁶ E.g., the joint commemoration of Peter and Paul in the Mass, and also the celebration of June 29 as the "Feast of St. Peter and St. Paul."

⁷ The position, e.g., taken by Rivington, 18-19.

Irenaeus and Hegesippus. The earliest extant source concerning the Roman episcopal succession is the succession list and account given by Irenaeus of Gaul (ca. A.D. 185),⁸ who used the concept of "apostolic succession" as a guarantee that the established Christian churches, not the troublesome heresiarchs, were the true guardians and transmitters of apostolic truth.⁹ Rather than setting forth multiple examples of episcopal successions, however, Irenaeus chose to present one prominent illustration: namely, "the very great, the very ancient, and universally known Church founded and organized at Rome by the two most glorious apostles, Peter and Paul."¹⁰ He states further that the "blessed apostles, then, having founded and built up the Church, committed into the hands of Linus the office of the episcopate," with Anencletus¹¹ succeeding Linus and with Clement following Anencletus "in the third place from the apostles."¹²

⁸ Irenaeus' important work *Against Heresies* (or in any event, at least its Book 3) was written during the Roman episcopate of Eleutherus (174-189) and may have appeared a few years earlier or later than 185. This dating of the work is based on the fact that Irenaeus' succession list in 3.3.3 not only closes with Eleutherus but also specifically states that Eleutherus "does now, in the twelfth place from the apostles, hold the inheritance of the episcopate" (in ANF, 1:416).

⁹ *Against Heresies* 3.3.1 makes this fact clear. It is a common theme among all the early Christian antiheretical writers.

¹⁰ *Against Heresies*, 3.3.2 (in ANF 1:415).

¹¹ In western lists this name usually occurs as "Anacletus," but "Anencletus" is undoubtedly the original and correct form. For a brief discussion regarding the name itself and other variant spellings, see Strand, "Church Organization," 148, n. 32, and 154, n. 51.

¹² Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 3.3.3 (in ANF 1:416). The term "founded" used in this and in the preceding statement has concerned some modern authorities because the NT epistle to the Romans makes clear the existence of a Christian congregation in Rome prior to Paul's arrival there. In assessing Irenaeus' remarks (and also those of other early fathers in similar contexts), we must keep in mind two factors: (1) the tendency to identify major sees as apostolic foundations, and (2) the very real contribution which Peter and Paul made to the organization and position of honor that accrued to the church in Rome. Later writers could therefore, with some degree of justification, refer to the Roman church as having been "founded" by Peter and Paul.

Irenaeus may very well have consulted records in Rome when he visited there ca. 178.¹³ Or he may have copied an earlier list prepared by Hegesippus and incorporated in the latter's *Hypomnemata*, a work no longer extant.¹⁴ Most likely, he utilized both procedures, but probably depended basically on the work that had already been done by Hegesippus. In any case, his list matches perfectly that of Hegesippus as reconstructed from two ancient sources that are mentioned in the next two paragraphs below.

Hegesippus, Epiphanius, and Eusebius. Hegesippus, a Syro-Palestinian Christian, had visited Rome during the episcopate of Anicetus (ca. 155-166), and on that occasion had perused records of the Roman church and assembled a succession list of Roman bishops up through Anicetus.¹⁵ This list he probably expanded later to include also Soter and Eleutherus.¹⁶ It is now quite clear, especially since the analyses of J. B. Lightfoot and B. H. Streeter, that Hegesippus' list up through Anicetus was preserved intact by Epiphanius of Salamis (late fourth century).¹⁷ This eastern church father refers to the sequence of the earliest bishops of Rome as follows: "Peter and Paul, apostles and bishops, then Linus, then Cletus,¹⁸ then Clement. . . ."¹⁹ This unequivocal statement

¹³ The trip was shortly after the severe persecution at Lyons and Vienne in Gaul, a persecution which took place in the year 177. See Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.*, 5.3-4. A letter to Christians in "Asia and Phrygia" describing in detail the persecution appears in 5.1.3 through 5.2.7.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 4.22.1, refers to the *Hypomnemata* as consisting of five books. (The term *Hypomnemata* has been translated into English variously as "Memoirs" or "Note Books.")

¹⁵ So Hegesippus tells us in an excerpt quoted by Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.*, 4:22.1-3.

¹⁶ See *ibid.*, and also 4.11.7.

¹⁷ See J. B. Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, Part 1: *S. Clement of Rome*, 1 (London: Macmillan, 1890), 326-333; and Burnett Hillman Streeter, *The Primitive Church Studied with Special Reference to the Origins of the Christian Ministry* (London: Macmillan, 1929), 290-295.

¹⁸ "Cletus" is a shortened form of "Anendetus." Cf. n. 26, below; also n. 11, above.

¹⁹ Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 27.6, as translated by Lightfoot, 329.

provides strong evidence indeed that *originally*, in the work of Hegesippus, *both apostles* were indicated as being at the head of the Roman episcopal succession.

Eusebius of Caesarea in his *Ecclesiastical History* (early fourth century) not only quotes Irenaeus' listing of the early bishops of Rome,²⁰ but also gives the same episcopal succession in references that are scattered throughout his historical portrayal.²¹ Moreover, he sets forth the identical succession in his *Chronology*, a separate work.²² Eusebius' scattered references in his *Ecclesiastical History* have undoubtedly derived from the pioneer work of Hegesippus, whom Eusebius frequently cites.²³

Peter as Sole Founder of the Roman Episcopal Succession

Tertullian, Optatus, and Augustine. The first extant patristic source which refers to Peter alone as initiator of the Roman episcopal succession is Tertullian of Carthage, who during the first decade of the third century referred to the "apostolic churches" as having "registers" of episcopal succession and to the Roman church as having recorded that Clement was ordained by Peter to be Peter's successor as bishop of Rome.²⁴ Tertullian, however, does not follow up this remark with an actual succession list.

Such a list is given by two other North African church fathers, Optatus of Mileve in Numidia (ca. 370) and Augustine of Hippo

²⁰ Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.*, 5.6.1-3,4-5: two excerpts from Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 3.3.3.

²¹ Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.*, 3.2, 13, 15, 34; 4.1, 4; etc.

²² Lightfoot, 208-209, has compiled in table format the pertinent data from both recensions of the *Chronicle* (the Armenian and Jeromian) and from the *Ecclesiastical History*.

²³ E.g., Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.*, 2.23.3,19; 3.11.2; 3.19; 3.20.8-9; 3.32.2; 4.8.1; 4.11.3; 4.21; and 4.22.1.

²⁴ Tertullian, *On Prescription against Heretics*, chap. 32. Curiously, the ANF editor has indicated that the word he has translated as "registers" is *Fastos* in the original (ANF 3:258, n. 8). Actually it is *census* (obviously here the plural). That Tertullian considers these "registers" as giving evidence of a succession is clear from his immediately preceding statement (in 32.1) challenging the heretics to produce the "roll of their bishops, running down in due succession . . ." (ANF, 3:258).

(ca. 400). Both of these place Peter alone at the head of the succession.²⁵ The "Liberian Catalog" of the year 354 and the later *Book of the Popes (Liber pontificalis)*, in which the data of the Liberian Catalog were incorporated, also place Peter alone at the head of the succession.²⁶

Jerome's Testimony. Jerome of Bethlehem (fl. ca. A.D. 400), who had originally lived in Rome and been baptized into the Christian church there, refers to Clement as the "fourth bishop" of Rome.²⁷ He also indicates that most of "the Latins" consider Clement as the second bishop of Rome, following immediately after Peter.²⁸ In both of these statements Jerome reveals that he himself believes Peter to have been Rome's first bishop, for he makes absolutely no mention of Paul.

A "Hybrid" Remark: The Apostolic Constitutions

The foregoing references represent the basic early sources that are the most relevant to our inquiry. However, mention must be made, as well, of one further piece of evidence that is of a somewhat "hybrid" nature: namely, a statement that occurs in the fourth-century compilation known as the *Apostolic Constitutions*. This statement is that Paul ordained Linus and that Peter ordained

²⁵ Optatus, *De schism. Donat.*, 2.3; and Augustine, epistle no. 53, *ad Generosum*, par. 2. The Latin original of the pertinent portions of both texts has been provided by Lightfoot, 171-174.

²⁶ Various editions of these have been published, but for the sections of interest to us herein, the following are both excellent and generally readily accessible: For the "Liberian Catalog" (in Latin), Lightfoot, 253-258; and for the *Liber Pontificalis* (in English translation), Louise Ropes Loomis, trans., *The Book of the Popes (Liber Pontificalis) to the Pontificate of Gregory I*, reprint of 2d ed. (New York: Octagon, 1965; copyrighted in 1944). It should be noted that "Anencletus" (western spelling) is doubled into "Cletus" and "Anacletus" in this textual tradition, and that in some texts "Cletus" is placed before "Clement" (and "Anacletus" after Clement), but with dates that nevertheless indicate Clement as being the immediate successor of Linus.

²⁷ Jerome, *Lives of Illustrious Persons* (L.: *De viris illustribus*), chap. 15.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

Clement after Linus' death.²⁹ If this remark represents even a partially valid reminiscence, it may have a bearing on the question we are investigating. On the other hand, we must keep in mind the possibility, or even likelihood, that it constitutes merely a late attempt to reconcile conflicting traditions that were circulating (there were several such attempts).³⁰

3. *The Options from the Data*

With the early basic data in hand, we may now proceed to an analysis which first sets forth the options and then deals specifically with the question of how and why the shift came about from a Peter-and-Paul to a Peter-only account of the origin of the Roman episcopal succession.

1. *The concept of Peter's primacy.* In contrast to Paul, Peter was one of Christ's original twelve disciples and also a member of a closer circle of three—Peter, James, and John—who accompanied the Master closely on specific occasions, such as Christ's transfiguration (Matt 17:1-2) and Christ's time of prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane on the night of his betrayal (Matt 26:36-37).³¹ In addition, there are NT references often considered as assigning Peter a leadership role over the other disciples, but these references are amenable to other interpretations,³² and in any case, the very

²⁹ *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles*, bk. 7, sec. 4, chap. 46 (cf. Eng. trans. in ANF 7:478).

³⁰ For the attempts by Rufinus and Epiphanius, see Strand, "Governance," 62-63, 65-66.

³¹ It should also be noted that these three were the only ones admitted to the raising of Jairus' daughter (Mark 5:37; Luke 8:51) and that it was these three, accompanied by Andrew, who appeared to be especially close to Jesus on Mt. Olives as he provided the forecast in Mark 13 (see v. 3).

³² A prominent reference often put forward in this regard is Christ's reply to Peter's confession in Matt 16:16-18; but the response, on the other side, is that the "rock" here is Christ himself, as the context would seem to imply (16:15—Jesus Christ asking, "who do you say I am?"), and as emphasized elsewhere in the NT, where Jesus is referred to as the foundation or cornerstone (e.g., 1 Pet 2:7-8, Matt 21:42, Eph 2:20). The next verse in Matt 16 (v. 19), which refers to Christ's giving authority to "bind" and "loose" in heaven, is also argued in both directions: as a

fact that James, "the brother of the Lord" (Gal 1:19), not Peter, had such a leadership role in the early Jerusalem church contradicts the theory of an original and initial primacy of Peter.³³

As to the situation in Rome itself, the earliest extant reference in conjunction with a Roman episcopal succession list refers, as we have seen, to both Peter and Paul as "the two most glorious apostles," thus not differentiating between them. Earlier than this statement from Irenaeus, however, we may note that Clement of Rome, in his letter to the Corinthian church (ca. A.D. 95), and Ignatius of Antioch, in his epistle to the Romans (ca. 115), depict both Peter and Paul in terms of equality concerning their service for the Christian community.³⁴ It would seem clear, therefore, that the evidence gives no support to the theory that from the very start there was Petrine episcopal supremacy in Rome.

2. *The concept of Peter's early arrival and lengthy tenure in Rome.* According to relatively late sources, Peter had a tenure of twenty-five years in leadership of the Roman church, Peter's arrival in Rome having occurred either during the reign of Tiberius (14-37) or in the second year of Claudius (A.D. 42).³⁵ It is difficult,

reference to Peter (the Catholic view) or as a reference to all twelve disciples collectively and/or all Christians (the general Protestant view). There are, in fact, no so-called attestations to Petrine primacy in the NT that can *unequivocally* be considered as furnishing evidence of Peter's having had ecclesiastical primacy over the rest of Christ's twelve disciples.

³³ Cf. that James was the person presiding at the Jerusalem council reported in Acts 15, that early Christian tradition looked upon him as "the first to be made bishop of the church of Jerusalem" (Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.*, 2.1.2, in NPNF, 2d series, 1:104), and that even the so-called "letter of Clement" prefaced to the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies*, was addressed to James, with the strong implication of James's considerable authority for the universal church.

³⁴ Clement, "To the Corinthians" (often referred to as "1 Corinthians"), chaps. 5-6; Ignatius, "To the Romans," chap. 4. Clement and Ignatius, however, do not set forth succession lists, the first such extant list being, as we have noted, the one given by Irenaeus.

³⁵ See, e.g., *Liber Pontificalis* (or the "Liberian Catalog") under the entry for Peter; and Jerome, *Illustrious Persons*, chap. 1. The former of these indicates Peter's 25-year tenure in Rome as being from A.D. 30 to 55 (obviously an impossibility).

however, to square such information with actual historical fact.³⁶ Much more likely to be correct is the tradition that both Peter and Paul came to Rome during the reign of Nero (54-68) and were martyred there late in that reign (probably in the year A.D. 67).³⁷

3. *The concept of Pauline and Petrine segments in the Roman church, with the Petrine leadership line gaining ascendancy and permanency.* It has sometimes been conjectured that there were two major segments or factions in the Roman church of the apostolic period—one under the leadership of Paul, and the other under the leadership of Peter.³⁸ This conjecture has apparently arisen from, or been stimulated by, the so-called "hybrid" statement from the *Apostolic Constitutions* mentioned above. Not only, however, is the dependability of this particular source suspect, but so is the very theory of there having been two segments in the Roman church under the ministry of Peter and Paul; for surely, the typical apostolic emphasis on unity (see, e.g., Rom 12:4-8; 1 Cor 1:11-15; 12:12-25) suggests otherwise, as do also the aforementioned testimonies of Clement and Irenaeus. These point rather to a unified congregation having the two apostles in *collegial*, not separate, leadership. And in any case, the statement in the *Apostolic Constitutions* does not say anything about segments or divisions in the Roman church.

4. *The concept that Peter outlived Paul.* According to the remark in the *Apostolic Constitutions*, Paul appointed Linus; then after Linus' death, Peter appointed Clement to be Peter's own successor. The strong implication is that Paul, as well as Linus, was dead at the time when Peter appointed Clement. Although the statement

³⁶ If we allow for Peter a 25-year term of service with the church in Rome, it is difficult to account for that apostle's activities as described in the NT book of Acts, plus 7 years in Antioch—plus also the time required for Peter's preaching ministry in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia (a preaching ministry attested, e.g., by Jerome, *Illustrious Persons*, chap. 1, and implied by the NT epistle "1 Peter" [inasmuch as that epistle is addressed, in 1:1, to the diaspora in those regions]). A still further puzzle, if Peter spent 25 years in Rome, is why Paul in his epistle to the Romans shows no awareness of Peter's being there when Paul wrote the epistle or of having been there previously.

³⁷ The *Liber Pontificalis*, as well as other sources, gives this tradition (in addition to the conflicting one mentioned above!).

³⁸ Even J. B. Lightfoot for a time adopted this position tentatively, but subsequently rejected it. See Lightfoot, 68, n. 1.

could be interpreted in several ways, the most plausible interpretation is that Paul appointed Linus to be either a junior colleague or a successor to Paul himself. In the latter case, we would have a four-step succession: Paul (or Paul and Peter), then Linus, then Peter, then Clement. This scenario would require that Linus died very soon after taking office—a possibility, but not a probability (otherwise, it would be necessary to abandon the well-supported historical tradition that Paul and Peter died in close time-proximity to each other).³⁹

5. *The influence of the Pseudo-Clementine literature.* Two major documents falsely attributed to Clement of Rome (died ca. A.D. 100), the *Recognitions* and the *Homilies*, plus the shorter "Epistle of Clement to James," constitute what has come to be known as the "Pseudo-Clementines."⁴⁰ These literary pieces exalt the ministry of Peter in both East and West, but perhaps were written more for the purpose of exalting Clement as Peter's disciple and successor. Particularly the so-called letter of Clement to James of Jerusalem describes emphatically Peter's ordination of Clement as successor to himself in the Roman episcopal office.⁴¹ This literature is to be dated no earlier than the last half of the second century; in fact, it probably did not arise or circulate until the third century. In any case, there is no evidence until considerably later than the second century that any *bona fide* church leader or chronicler took stock in it.⁴²

6. *A counteractive to the Marcionite Scripture canon.* During the latter part of the second century the Christian church took special

³⁹ Various sources indicate that the martyrdom took place on the very same day—stated, e.g., by Jerome, *Illustrious Persons*, chap. 5, as being on the same day in the very same year. Prudentius (ca. A.D. 400) in his *Peristephanon*, hymn no. 12, however, gives the somewhat unusual information that the martyrdoms took place on the same day of the year, but were one year apart (with Paul being the first of the two to suffer martyrdom).

⁴⁰ See the discussion of this literature in Strand, "Governance," 62-63.

⁴¹ Note especially this "Epistle of Clement to James," chaps. 2 and 19 (given in Eng. translation in ANF 8:218, 221-222).

⁴² Absolutely clear and unequivocally certain reference to this literature does not occur until about the time of Rufinus ca. A.D. 400. The still-later *Liber Pontificalis* incorporated material from the Pseudo-Clementine epistle to James and from Rufinus into the later of two ancient recensions that are extant.

interest, as is well known, in declaring which of the early Christian writings were apostolic and therefore authoritative and normative, this in opposition to both Gnosticism and Marcionism. The former claimed special esoteric knowledge, and Marcion produced a NT canon which he and his followers set forth as the genuine NT.⁴³

Marcion had come to Rome from his native Pontus, and there soon attached himself to the heresiarch Cerdo, who had arrived in Rome during the episcopate of Hyginus (ca. 136-140).⁴⁴ Marcion, like Cerdo, began to teach that there were two very different Gods—the OT one and the NT one.⁴⁵ He gained a large following, established congregations, and prepared a work entitled *Antitheses* (supposedly showing contradictions between the OT and NT writings). Because he considered parts of the traditionally accepted NT writings as too "Jewish" and too compatible with the OT, he decided to prepare his own NT canon. This consisted of the Gospel of Luke in shortened and expurgated form, plus some of the Pauline epistles, also in an adjusted form.

Obviously, Marcion's intent was to produce a compilation of supposedly "inspired writings" whose content would support his own heretical teachings. Though this Marcionite scripture canon may not have been prepared as early as the time of Justin Martyr (d. ca. 165), Marcion was already beginning to have a deleterious effect in Rome at that time, as mentioned in Justin's first *Apology* (dated ca. 150).⁴⁶ In fact, Justin wrote a complete work against Marcion, but this work is not extant.⁴⁷ Irenaeus, too, polemicized

⁴³ All recent major works on the history of the early Christian church treat Gnosticism and Marcionism. For reference to Marcion in the early-church period itself, see citations in nn. 44-49 below.

⁴⁴ See Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 1.27.1-3 (referred to by Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.*, 4.11). Details concerning Marcion's life and teaching are given by various ancient writers (some of the main ones will be cited below). A standard modern work on Marcion that is very useful is Adolf von Harnack, *Marcion: Das Evangelium vom fremden Gott* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1960 [reprint of the 1924 ed. published in Leipzig by J. C. Hinrichs Verlag]).

⁴⁵ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 1.27.1-3.

⁴⁶ See, e.g., Justin Martyr, *Apology*, chap. 58.

⁴⁷ See Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.*, 4.11.8-9.

against Marcion (ca. 185).⁴⁸ It was, however, Tertullian early in the third century that set forth the most pronounced and lengthy refutation of Marcion that is still extant.⁴⁹ Clearly by then, Christian leadership felt a distinct and urgent need to clarify in detail what constituted Christian teaching (as contrasted with Marcion's views) and to delineate which writings were accepted as authoritative by the church.

Since Marcion placed such an extreme emphasis on Paul as a true apostle of Christ, with Peter excluded in this respect, is it possible that Christian leaders in the Roman west began to place more emphasis on the role of Peter than on that of Paul by designating the former as the person from whom the Roman episcopal succession stemmed? The church in the west continued, of course, to accept both apostles as true spokesmen for God and considered that the writings of both of them were authoritative; but in spite of this fact, could it be that the Roman church deemed it now more advisable to place emphasis on Peter as originating its succession of bishops—especially so inasmuch as the purpose of succession lists was to guarantee apostolic truth and to give evidence of the church's unity?

4. *Analysis of the Options*

In addition to the six options set forth above, there may be others of lesser prominence and/or lesser worth. Even in selecting from among these six options, we face the fact that the evidence is too scant and confused to draw conclusions that are more than tentative. Nevertheless, it may be well to look for a possible direction in which the solution to our basic question lies—the question of how and why there was a transition from the Peter-and-Paul to the Peter-only concept concerning the origin of the Roman episcopal succession.

First of all, we have noted in the ancient sources (1) that the concept of a Peter-and-Paul origination of the Roman episcopate appears earlier than does the Peter-only one, and (2) that the latter makes its initial appearance in an extant patristic source shortly after the year 200. We may reiterate here that the term "See of

⁴⁸ See, e.g., Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 1.27.1-2; 3.4.3; 4.8.1.

⁴⁹ Tertullian's treatise *Against Marcion* consists of five books, which appear in Eng. trans. in ANF 3:271-474.

Peter" as a designation for the Roman episcopate manifests itself still later, the first known reference being the one given by Bishop Cyprian in a letter to Bishop Cornelius of Rome in 252. It should be added here that Cyprian did not, however, use the term to indicate any primacy of the Roman See over his own in Carthage.⁵⁰

In suggesting possible options as to the how and why of the transition which we are exploring, I have suggested six possibilities: (1) the concept of Peter's having had primacy over the other apostles; (2) the concept that Peter arrived in Rome earlier than Paul and had a longer tenure of service there; (3) the concept of there having been Pauline and Petrine factions or segments within the early Roman church, with the Pauline line dying out in favor of the Petrine one; (4) the concept that Peter outlived Paul; (5) the influence of the Pseudo-Clementine literature; and (6) a polemical reaction to Marcion and Marcionism, with an emphasis on Peter in contrast to Marcion's emphasis on Paul.

The first and second of these suggestions would be, in my estimation, only secondary factors strengthening the transition, once that transition itself was under way. If they had been causative factors in bringing about the transition, the earliest evidence should have made this clear; instead, we find reference to these considerations only later. (There is, of course, no doubt but that the Peter-primacy concept eventually became very important for the ongoing development of the authority of the Roman See. And as for the tradition about Peter's supposed early arrival and lengthy tenure in Rome, the very fact that this tradition was perpetuated in the *Book of the Popes* would seem to indicate that it, too, had some influence on the ongoing Petrine-primacy concept, once the concept itself had already arisen and was gaining momentum.)

The third option I have suggested—that of Petrine and Pauline factions in the Roman church—represents a concept which, as far as we can tell from early Christian literature, has no sound basis in historical fact, but rather the contrary. Moreover, the statement

⁵⁰ Though a number of Cyprian's epistles show high regard for the Roman See, it is clear that he felt no compulsion to obey orders from that See. In fact, he even strongly rebuked Roman Bishop Stephen ca. 257 over the latter's position on the "anabaptist" question, and he was the recipient, as well, of responses from other bishops who castigated the Roman bishop very severely (e.g., Firmilian, bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia, whose letter appears in the corpus of Cyprianic correspondence, Ep. 75, Oxford ed.).

from the *Apostolic Constitutions* that has served as the incentive for proposing this theory of Petrine and Pauline factions gives no suggestion whatever of such. Thus, the third option, in my opinion, must be rejected outright as having no relevance to our inquiry.

The fourth option—that Peter outlived Paul and during that interval originated the ongoing succession of Roman bishops by ordaining Clement—rests on the same dubious source of information, the statement in the *Apostolic Constitutions* that forms the basis for the third option. If there were any significant time period after Linus' death (and presumably after Paul's death) during which Peter alone ordained Clement, there is absolutely no solid evidence to indicate so. Rather, the time proximity of the deaths of the two apostles seems fairly well established.

The fifth option—that the influence of the Pseudo-Clementines was responsible for bringing about the Peter-only rather than Peter-and-Paul placement at the head of the Roman succession—seems most implausible in view of the lack of attention to this literature (if it even existed as yet) at the time when the evidence for the "Peter-only" concept of the origination of the Roman episcopal succession began to emerge. Tertullian's statement in this regard, the first from a recognized patristic writer, did not derive from the Pseudo-Clementines, as is sometimes conjectured. Instead, as Tertullian himself makes clear, he derived his information from Roman "registers."⁵¹ By some two hundred years later, this Pseudo-Clementine literature had, of course, begun quite visibly to play its role in the exaltation of Peter.⁵² Thus, this fifth option can, like the first two mentioned above, be considered as giving a supporting role to a development which had already begun to take place.

The sixth option—that relating to the Marcionite crisis—probably deserves more attention than is apparent at first sight. In the flow of history, reactions to dangers come readily; and moreover, they often lead to counter-swings of the pendulum beyond the balanced midpoint. Could it be that this sort of dynamic was at work in developing the Peter-only thesis concerning the origination of the Roman episcopate? Could it have

⁵¹ Tertullian, *On Prescription against Heretics*, chap. 32.

⁵² By the time of Rufinus, as noted earlier. Rufinus even made a translation of some of this literature, as urged by Bishop Gaudentius of Brixia.

arisen because of the dangers and opposition to Christian faith that were manifested in Marcionism, with its extreme nonbiblical views and rejection of the apostolic authority of Peter?

The strong likelihood of such being the case is supported, it seems to me, by a consideration of the specific time frame and geographical region in which the Peter-only theory first emerged—namely, early in the third century in Rome itself and elsewhere in the Latin west (notably Carthage, where Tertullian was a presbyter). Christian leaders at that time and in that region had begun to manifest an urgent concern for the threats posed by Marcion and his followers.

5. Conclusion

Of the six factors considered above in connection with the question of the transition from a "Peter-and-Paul" to a "Peter only" concept concerning the origin of the Roman episcopal succession, the best relevant evidence points in the direction of the transition being a response to the Marcionite crisis close to the year A.D. 200, with several of the other factors subsequently becoming supportive of the transition. But why, we may ask, was Paul obliterated from his position as the apostolic collegial originator of the Roman episcopal succession while at the same time being retained along with Peter as an authoritative apostolic teacher?

The answer lies, perhaps, in the fact that episcopal succession had a meaningfulness beyond that of the teaching ministry *per se*. It was unthinkable in the Roman church to deny Paul's significant role in Rome as a true apostolic teacher, and it was just as unthinkable to repudiate his valued "canonical" writings.

However, as the concept intensified concerning the existence of only a single succession line of bishops in each major Christian congregation, the Roman church could have deleted the name of Paul from its succession so as to keep in a consonant pattern with the idea that there was only *one* apostolic founder for each major church. This pattern was indeed well established throughout Christendom even before A.D. 200, and the Marcionite crisis may well have been the "trigger" that set in operation the concept that this same modality pertained also to the Roman church. At that stage, some of the other factors mentioned above could easily have begun to enter the picture—and probably did so—to play their part in enhancing the idea that the Roman see was the "See of Peter" (with no mention of Paul).