

Raymond E. Brown et John P. Meier, Antioch and Rome: New Testament Cradles of Catholic Christianity. New York: Paulist Press, 1983, 242 p.

Introduction p. 1-9 (Brown)

Antioch and Rome were among the largest cities in the Roman Empire, with a predominantly pagan population, but with significant Jewish communities. Since the conquests of Alexander the Great (4th century BC), Hellenistic culture had become dominant. Of course, there were pockets of resistance to such acculturation among the Jews, but not to the point of distinguishing between Jewish and Hellenistic culture. What about the Christians?

Jesus preached in Galilee and Judea, so most of the people he reached were Jews. Similarly, his disciples first addressed their fellow Jews, first in Jerusalem and then in the communities of the diaspora. It was only later that missionaries began to convert pagans and make them believers in Jesus. Paul declared himself the apostle to the Gentiles. But it is a mistake to think that he was the only one to reach out to the Gentiles and that all converts shared his perspective, especially on the place of Jewish observances. In fact, in the first century, there were various views among Jewish Christians who converted pagans. Therefore, we cannot speak of a Jewish Christianity and a pagan Christianity, but, if we rely on the New Testament, we must distinguish at least four groups.

1. The first group consisted of Jewish Christians and their pagan converts who insisted on complete observance of Mosaic law, including circumcision. In other words, these ultra-conservatives believed that pagans who converted to Christianity must first become Jews before receiving the messianic blessings promised by Jesus. This is evidenced in the Book of Acts of the Apostles concerning Jewish Christians in Jerusalem whom Luke calls “the circumcised” (Acts 11:2) and describes as people from the sect of the Pharisees (Acts 15:5). Less diplomatically than Luke, Paul calls them “false brothers” (Gal 2:4). Through Paul, we learn that these strictly observant Jewish Christian missionaries were quite successful in Greece (Phil 1:15-17) and Asia Minor.
2. A second group included Jewish Christians and their pagan converts who did not insist on circumcision but required pagan converts to observe certain Jewish customs. They represented a moderately conservative form of Christianity. This was the case with James (the brother of the Lord and leader of the Church in Jerusalem) and Peter (the foremost of the twelve apostles). Chapter 2 of the Acts of the Apostles and chapter 2 of the Epistle to the Galatians give us an idea of their position. Among the Jewish observances that were required were dietary laws (Acts 15:20). This explains the intervention of James’s followers in Antioch, who were surprised to see Peter eating at the same table as Christians of pagan origin; we can guess that the problem arose because Jewish dietary laws were not being observed. However, according to Acts 15:14-15, 19-29, did Peter not agree to require converts to observe these laws? We can imagine that Peter had accepted these requirements under pressure, in order to avoid conflict. In any case, we are faced with a group whose missionary work produced a different style of Christianity among both those of Jewish and pagan origin, a style that was less rigid than that of the first group described earlier, but less liberal with regard to Jewish law than that of the third group, which we will see below. This type of Christianity can be associated with the apostles of Jerusalem. Thus, the Gospel of Matthew can present a scene of sending out on mission to all nations (Mt 28:16-20), and the Didache, written around the year 100 and close to the Gospel of Matthew, is entitled: “The Teaching of the Lord to the Gentiles through the Twelve Apostles.”
3. A third group comprised Jewish Christians and their pagan converts who did not insist on circumcision or require observance of dietary laws. Although Acts 15:22 suggests that Paul and Barnabas accepted James’ position, Galatians 2:11-14 clearly states that Paul opposed the intervention of James’ entourage regarding the pagans. In particular, he did not require Christians to abstain from food that had been offered to idols (1 Corinthians 8). It can also be said that the Jewish Christians who were associated with his missionary activity shared the same point of view. Moreover, this is probably why Paul quarreled with Barnabas and stopped working with him (Gal 2:13; Acts 15:39). We can therefore speak of a Jewish/pagan Christianity that was more liberal than that of James and Peter with regard to certain obligations of the Law.

Because Paul asserted that believers are freed from the Law (Gal 3:10-13, 24-25), some biblical scholars have classified Paul as extremely liberal in terms of possible relationships with the Law. Such a classification is not justified, because Paul’s attitude is rather ambiguous. First of all, the second part of several of his letters clearly shows that he expects Christians to live according to the Ten Commandments and the high standards of Jewish morality. Furthermore, according to the testimony of Acts 20:6, 16, Paul observed Jewish feasts such as Unleavened Bread and Weeks (Pentecost), as required by the Law. And according to Acts 21:26, Paul frequented the temple in Jerusalem like the Jewish Christian leaders. All of this suggests that Paul, if he had had a son, would probably have had him circumcised, while being convinced that this act had no impact on his salvation.

4. A fourth group comprised Jewish Christians and their pagan converts who did not insist on circumcision or require observance of dietary laws, and furthermore saw no lasting significance in Jewish worship and festivals. This group was more radical than Paul in its stance toward Judaism. The Hellenists (Acts 6:1-6) belonged to this group. Who were they? They were Jews who had been raised in a strongly Greek culture, to the point of speaking only Greek, a non-Semitic language. And according to Stephen’s speech (Acts 7), they felt contempt for the temple in Jerusalem, where God did not dwell. A similar, even more radical attitude is found later in the Gospel of John, where the Law concerns only the Jews, and no longer the disciples of Jesus (Jn 10:34; 15:25), and where the Jewish feasts of the Sabbath, Passover, and Tabernacles have become foreign feasts (Jn 5:1, 9b; 6:4; 7:2). As for the temple, it will be destroyed and replaced by the body of Jesus (Jn 2:19-21). Similarly, the Epistle to the Hebrews sees Jesus replacing the Jewish high priests and sacrifices, and the Christian altar now located in heaven. We are now far from the vision

of the Gentiles as a wild olive branch grafted onto the tree of Israel, as Paul speaks of (Romans 11:24). So it is not surprising to read in the writings of Luke, a great admirer of the Hellenist Stephen: "Know therefore that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen" (Acts 28:28). Thus, we have fairly strong evidence of a Jewish/pagan Christianity that broke radically with Judaism and became, in a sense, a new religion.

Within the spectrum of Jewish/pagan Christianity, there may have been greater variety in attitudes toward the Law than the four groups we have identified. But these are based on solidly verifiable data. And since these groups were intensely involved in missionary activity, this means that they were scattered throughout the Mediterranean basin. It also means that it is a mistake to think that Pauline Christianity was dominant there. Moreover, Paul himself tells us that he avoided going where others had preached (Romans 15:20; 2 Corinthians 10:15-16), and that even where he established churches, others came later to challenge his work. Thus, we know that a region such as Ephesus was evangelized by Priscilla and Aquila, friends of Paul, and by Paul himself three years later in the 50s (Acts 18-19:41). But according to Revelation and the Johannine Gospel and Epistles, which come from the same milieu, at the end of the first century we find four groups, each with their own house church.

This situation also applies to Antioch and Rome. So, in the very beginning, the first missionaries were Jews who believed in Jesus. Eventually, in these two cities, a large number of pagans converted, so that in the last third of the 1st century, the majority of Christians were of pagan origin. But for these two cities, we must avoid talking about Jewish Christianity or pagan Christianity without first specifying what type of Jewish/pagan Christianity we are talking about and challenging the idea that, since Paul visited these two cities, Pauline Christianity was dominant.

Part One: Antioch p. 11-86

Antioch, founded in 40 BC, is the cradle of Christianity: "It was in Antioch that the disciples were first called Christians" (Acts 11:26). According to Flavius Josephus (*The Jewish War*, 3:2:4; #29), it was the third most important city in the Roman Empire, after Rome and Alexandria. Located on the banks of the Orontes River and capital of the Roman province of Syria, it was the first major urban center of the Christian movement outside Jerusalem. From Ignatius, bishop of Antioch at the beginning of the 2nd century, to John Chrysostom, priest of this Church at the end of the 4th century, Antioch was the cradle of great theologians and influential bishops, the seat of famous schools of exegesis, and equally the home of heretical tendencies. It witnessed important clashes between apostles such as Paul, Peter, and James. At the beginning of the 2nd century, it was there that the structure of ecclesiastical authority centered on a single bishop surrounded by presbyters and deacons was developed.

Where does our information about this Church come from? It comes first from Paul's letter to the Galatians (2:11-21), written around the mid-50s. It also comes from the letters of Ignatius of Antioch, written between 108 and 117. But what about the period between these two eras? A likely source is provided by the Gospel of Matthew, written around 80 or 90 AD. Therefore, if we divide time into generations, we would have a first generation of Christians in Antioch in the 40s to 70s (data from Galatians, supplemented by the Acts of the Apostles, see ch. 2), the second generation in the years 70 to 100 (data from the Gospel according to Matthew, see ch. 3), and the third generation after the year 100 (data from Ignatius, see ch. 4). One question will accompany us throughout this study: how could communities as different as those of Paul, Peter, Matthew, and Ignatius have developed in the same place? It would be a mistake to think that they simply coexisted in parallel. Rather, we will see that their connection makes sense when we understand the internal dynamics of the Antiochian Church.

1. Locating Matthew's Church in Time and Space p. 15-27

First and foremost, it is important to demonstrate that the Gospel according to Matthew was written between the years 80 and 90.

A. The Time of the Composition of Matthew's Gospel

The Gospel of Matthew depends on the Gospel of Mark, which was composed around the year 70; therefore, it must be dated after that date. Furthermore, it comes at the end of a rather complex literary process that presupposes the existence not only of the Gospel of Mark, but also of a source called Q (a collection of Jesus' words) and a source of its own, called M; each of these sources comes from both oral and written traditions with their own histories, which Matthew manages to weave together. Furthermore, the Gospel presupposes a long process of evolution in which the Judeo-Christian community opened itself to mission among the Gentiles (Mt 10:5-6; 15:24; 28:16-20), and in which the question of circumcision and dietary laws had been settled for some time. Theologically, there has also been an evolution: with regard to eschatology, the frenetic expectation of Jesus' return has given way to a realized eschatology emphasizing the presence of the risen Lord (Mt 28:20: "I am with you always, even unto the end of the age"), and with regard to history, a vision of salvation history has taken hold that considers the past life of Jesus as a sacred event that will not be repeated.

An important milestone is the fall of Jerusalem to the Romans in the year 70. In the parable of the great banquet (Matthew 22:1-14), Matthew modifies the account he takes from the Q Document by adding the sentence: "The king sent his troops, destroyed those murderers, and burned their city," which would be an allusion to the fall of Jerusalem. Such an addition assumes that the trauma caused by this event is already far behind. Furthermore, the Matthew community seems to have broken with the synagogue, an event that is dated to around the year 85. On the other hand, since Ignatius of Antioch, who died around the year 117, mentions the Gospel of Matthew in his letters, this gospel must be placed well before his death. Therefore, a date between 80 and 90 is the best choice for the composition of the Gospel.

B. The Place of the Composition of Matthew's Gospel

While there is relative consensus on the date of composition, the same cannot be said for the place of composition. Here are the locations that have been suggested.

a. Jerusalem

Some biblical scholars have suggested this city because of the conservative tone of the Gospel of Matthew and its emphasis on morality, which would be typical of a Jewish environment. But such a location is unlikely for several reasons.

- i. The Jewish War and the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD created such disruption that a Palestinian Christian community in such an environment would not have had the time, energy, or financial means to undertake a project of such magnitude.
- ii. Several chapters of the Gospel of Matthew are devoted to church organization, both in terms of authority structures and liturgy. However, this gospel was written in Greek, which would be incomprehensible if the target audience were Palestine, where the majority language was Aramaic.

b. Alexandria

In the 2nd century, this city became an important center of the Christian movement. But for the 1st century, we have no idea how the Christian faith could have developed there, making it unlikely as the place where the Gospel was composed; for its rapid spread and the warm welcome it received presuppose a prestigious and influential environment of origin.

c. Caesarea Maritima

This city was the seat of the Roman prefect or procurator. But the arguments against such a place of composition are overwhelming. First, at the very beginning of the war, the Jewish community was massacred by the Romans, and there is no evidence that it ever returned, making it unlikely as the origin of a gospel with deep Jewish roots. Furthermore, if the account in Acts 10 of the conversion of Cornelius, a pagan centurion, is historical, it means that the church in this milieu was primarily of pagan origin, a situation irreconcilable with the milieu of Matthew's Gospel. Moreover, Acts 8:40 (see also 21:8) tells us that this church in Caesarea welcomed Philip, one of the Hellenists, a group that was very liberal with regard to Jewish laws and opposed to the temple in Jerusalem.

d. Syrian countryside or Edessa

This location encompasses the entire northern hinterland of Syria. However, the arguments against this setting are similar to those mentioned earlier. First, it would be impossible to explain such a rapid spread of the gospel from the countryside. Furthermore, the dominant language of this environment was Aramaic or Syriac. For example, all the inscriptions found in Edessa from the first to the third century are in Syriac. Similarly, the earliest complete texts of Christian literature in Edessa are in Syriac. As for Damascus, while this city was of some importance for Jewish trade, it was not a rabbinical center for the study of the Scriptures and therefore could not have been a place for the scholarly Jewish-Christian debates found in the Gospel of Matthew. Added to this is the fact that the Greek language does not appear to have been widely spoken in Damascus.

e. Phoenicia

Some biblical scholars have suggested cities on the Phoenician coast such as Beirut, Tyre, or Sidon as the place of composition. Unfortunately, we know almost nothing about these Christian communities, except for brief references in Acts to Tyre and Sidon (Acts 21:3-7; 27:3). Furthermore, the Gospel of Matthew presupposes a fairly large, vibrant community and a fairly long history of Christian thought, which are unlikely for the marginal communities of the Phoenician coast.

f. Antioch

The city of Antioch was the capital of Syria, a metropolis where Greek was the main language spoken. It had a large Jewish population, probably the largest in Syria. It was in this city that the first Christian communities outside Palestine appeared. They were probably founded in the late 30s by Jewish Christians belonging to the Hellenistic group that had begun a mission there without circumcision. Of course, this mission was under pressure for a time from the strict policies of James's supporters in Jerusalem, but long before the arrival of Bishop Ignatius, it was able to move forward without constraints.

These facts may explain the tensions that can be felt between the various layers of Matthew's Gospel. On the one hand, the oldest layer reflects the dominance of the group of James with its deep Jewish roots, with a gospel addressed to a largely Jewish audience, using Jewish methods of argumentation, concerned with

Jewish customs, insisting on the fulfillment of prophecies, and confronted with discussions typical of Pharisaism. On the other hand, the Gospel is situated on the borderline between Jews and Gentiles, written in better Greek than Mark's, even allowing itself Greek puns, and offering a vibrant plea for a mission to the nations both in its finale, where the apostles are sent out into the whole world (Mt 28:19) as in its introduction with the story of the Magi (Mt 2:1-12). In short, the Gospel of Matthew reflects an environment that is influenced by both Jews and pagans, and Antioch reflects such an environment.

Since its foundation in the late 30s, the church of Antioch had benefited from the time necessary for the development of a Jewish-Christian community that had reached the level of maturity necessary to give birth to a gospel such as that of Matthew. For there was a strong tradition of scribes, and perhaps even a school of scribes, who copied various versions of the Septuagint, which could be read and studied, as well as versions of the Gospel of Mark and the Q Document (a collection of Jesus' sayings). Furthermore, it must be recognized that the production of such a long gospel requires significant financial resources and advanced knowledge, which fits well with the environment of Antioch. Finally, the place occupied by Peter in the Gospel of Matthew favors Antioch as the place of writing. Indeed, Paul, in Galatians 2:11-14, tells us that Peter was very active in Antioch and, after coming into conflict with him, decided to leave the city for his mission in Greece, leaving Peter to exercise his full influence there, with Barnabas taking his side. This could explain the phrase in Matthew 16:18 ("You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church...") concerning the founding of the church in that area.

The Antiochian origin of the Gospel of Matthew is confirmed by its use by Bishop Ignatius of Antioch, the first Church Father to do so. Three references to passages unique to Matthew have been identified, editorial passages that cannot come from oral tradition, but from the written Gospel itself.

Matthew	Ignatius of Antioch
Mt 3: 15 : "Jesus says to the Baptist: 'It is fitting for us <u>to fulfill all justice.</u> '"	<u>Letter to Smyrneans</u> , 1:1: "The Lord Jesus Christ. . . [was] baptized by John, in order that <u>all justice might be fulfilled</u> by him."
Mt 10: 16b: " <u>Be therefore as prudent as the serpents and as innocent as the doves</u> "	<u>Letter to Polycarp</u> , 2:2: "In all things <u>be as prudent as the serpent and always innocent as the dove.</u> "
Mt 1 – 2 : "...and said to him, 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, <u>for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit</u> , and she will bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus... The Magi asked, 'Where is the newborn king of the Jews? <u>We saw his star in the East</u> and have come to worship him... And behold, <u>the star they had seen in the East went before them</u> until it came to rest above the place where the child was. <u>When they saw the star</u> , they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy..."	<u>Letter to Ephesians</u> , 19:1-3 : "The prince of this world ignored <u>Mary's virginity and her childbirth</u> , as well as the death of the Lord, three resounding mysteries that were accomplished in God's silence. How, then, were they (the mysteries) revealed over the centuries? <u>A star shone in the sky brighter than all the other stars</u> , and its light was indescribable, and its novelty was astonishing, and all the other stars, together with the sun and the moon, formed a choir around the star and projected their light onto it more than all the others. And they were troubled, wondering where this novelty, so different from themselves, came from".

There is no such explicit reference to another gospel in Ignatius. And when he refers to Matthew, he uses the word "gospel."

Some biblical scholars have raised the issue of the Eucharistic words found in Matthew 26:26-28, which echo those of Mark and differ from those of Paul presented in 1 Corinthians 11:23-25 and echoed by Luke (green color), on the grounds that Paul's words were in use in Antioch.

Mark 14	Matthew 26	Luke 22	1 Corinthians 11
22a <u>And them they were eating, having taken bread.</u>	26a Then, <u>them they were eating, having taken</u> the Jesus <u>bread</u> .	19a <u>And having taken bread,</u>	23b The Lord Jesus, in the night he was betrayed, <u>he took bread.</u>
22b <u>having blessing, he broke and gave to them and said : "Take, this is the body of me"</u> .	26b <u>having blessing, he broke and having given to the disciples, he said: "Take, eat, this is the body of me"</u> .	19b <u>having given thanks, he broke and gave to them saying: "This the body of me the [one] for you being given. Do</u>	24 and <u>having given thanks, he broke and said: "This is the body of me the [one] for you. Do this in remembrance of me."</u>

		this in the remembrance of me.	
23 <u>And having taken a cup, having given thanks, he gave to them and they drank of it all.</u>	27 <u>And having taken a cup and having given thanks, he gave to them saying: "Drink of it all.</u>	20a <u>And the cup likewise after the supping,</u>	25a <u>Likewise also the cup after the supping,</u>
24 And he said to them : " <u>This is the blood of me of the covenant the [one] being poured out for many</u> ".	28 For <u>this is the blood of me of the covenant that [is] being poured out</u> with regard to <u>many</u> towards forgiveness of sins.	20b <u>saying: "This the cup of the new covenant in the blood of me the [one] for you having poured out.</u>	25b <u>saying: "This is the cup of the new covenant in the blood of me.</u> Do this as often as you might drink [it] in the remembrance of me.
25 Amen, <u>I say to you that I will drink no more of the product of the vine until that day when I will drink it anew in the kingdom of the God.</u> "	29 Then, <u>I say to you : I will not drink from now on of this, the product of the vine, until that day when I will drink it with you anew in the kingdom of the Father of me"</u>		26 For as often as you might eat this bread and you might drink this cup, the death of the Lord you proclaim the [day] he might come.

Let us first ask the question: where did Paul get his formulation of the Eucharistic words? We must admit the possibility that Paul received this formulation either during his stay in Damascus (at the time of his conversion) or during his stay in Jerusalem (to receive basic catechesis from the Apostles). Furthermore, we can question the idea that the church in Antioch or any other Christian group used only one single formulation of the Eucharistic words, especially when prophets or missionaries, often charismatic figures who were to preside over the Eucharist, were traveling around. Finally, it was probably the acceptance of the Gospel of Mark in Antioch, the basis of the Gospel according to Matthew, that stabilized this formulation.

2. The Antiochene Church of the First Christian Generation (A.D. 40-70 – Galatians 2; Acts 11-15) p. 28-44

A. Sources

As primary sources, we are limited to two documents.

a. Gal 2:11-21

Paul's letter to the Galatians deals with a single incident in Antioch, and it is the only mention of this Syrian city in the entire Pauline corpus. Furthermore, it is both highly polemical and apologetic in tone, and this must be taken into account in our analysis. Nevertheless, its great value lies in the fact that it is an autobiographical account, written by a Christian who was directly involved in the incident, which is thought to have taken place around the year 52 and was reported around the year 53.

b. Acts 11-15

The author of the Acts of the Apostles wrote his account much later, and biblical scholars have noted his tendency to soften the fierce conflicts of the early church, so much so that they have questioned the historical value of such a peaceful and rosy view of events. Therefore, we will take a middle path, where we do not immediately dismiss Luke's account on the grounds that it is purely theological reflection, but where we do not naively accept it as entirely historical; each text must be judged on its own merits and on the basis of available information from other sources. Fortunately, most biblical scholars accept the account of the early days of the church in Antioch as credible information, at least in broad terms.

Apart from these two sources, there are ancient sources that can indirectly shed some light on Judaism in Antioch, such as 1 and 2 Maccabees, Philo, Josephus, certain rabbinical documents, and later in the 4th and 6th centuries, John Chrysostom and John Malalas. It should be noted that archaeology provides us with no direct information about first-century Christians.

B. The Jewish Community at Antioch

Jews have lived in Antioch since its founding by Seleucus I Nicator (reigned 305–281 BC). They enjoyed the right to maintain their customs as a distinct group. Except during the period of persecution under Antiochus IV Epiphanes (reigned 175-164 BC), they were able to live peaceful and prosperous lives under the various Seleucid monarchs. Some estimate their population at 22,000, mainly concentrated in the southern suburbs of Daphne.

They probably belonged to the various classes of the time: wealthy leaders, merchants, artisans, the poor, and a few slaves. According to the Jewish historian Josephus, this Jewish community seems to have been presided over by a "leader" (*archōn*), a Jew from Antioch. This leader was at the head of a council of elders, who were representatives of the various synagogues of Antioch and Daphne. One cannot help but see a parallel between this structure and the one that would develop in Antioch around the bishop presiding over a presbytery or group of elders in the time of Ignatius.

The Roman conquest of Syria in 64-63 BC brought few changes for the Jewish community. Incorporated into the Roman province of Syria, the Jews enjoyed their traditional privileges, including the use of Mosaic law for internal community matters and the maintenance of close relations with the Holy Land and financial contributions to Jerusalem. Nevertheless, a notorious incident occurred in the winter of 39-40 (CE) when Caligula installed his statue in the temple in Jerusalem, sparking an outcry that was harshly suppressed. But it was the first Jewish revolt (66-73) that led to massacres of Jews in several places in Syria. At the very beginning, the Jews of Antioch were spared. But when Vespasian arrived in Syria, the Jewish apostate Antiochus stirred up the pagan population by spreading rumors of Jewish conspiracies. Riots and murders ensued (66-67), and were repeated four years later. When Titus, Vespasian's son, arrived in Antioch, the pagans asked him to expel the Jews, or at least to revoke their rights and privileges. Titus refused, but nevertheless placed some of the spoils stolen from Jerusalem at the city gate leading to Daphne, a suburb, as a memorial to the humiliation of the Jews. Also, since there was no major displacement of the Jewish population, the Christian church in Antioch enjoyed a stable and significant environment from which it could grow and against which it could define itself.

C. The Beginnings of the Christian Church at Antioch

Now those who were scattered because of the persecution that took place over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, and they spoke the [Christian] message to no one except Jews. But among them were some men of Cyprus and Cyrene who, on coming to Antioch, spoke [the Christian message] to the Gentiles also, proclaiming the Lord Jesus. (Acts 11:19-20)

The account refers to "those who were scattered because of the persecution that took place over Stephen." Who are they? In Acts 8:1, after Stephen's death, Luke tells us: "On that day a violent persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem. Except for the apostles, all were scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria." In fact, it was the people of Stephen's group, the Hellenists, who were scattered, Jews whose language was Greek. They were the ones who went to Antioch and began to convert pagans to the Christian faith. Among them were probably Lucius of Cyrene and Simeon called Niger (Acts 13:1).

How did the Jewish Christian community in Jerusalem react when they heard about these pagan conversions? "News of this event reached the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and Barnabas was sent to Antioch. When he saw the grace of God at work there, he rejoiced and urged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts" (Acts 11:22-23). Thus, Barnabas, a Levite from Cyprus (Acts 4:36), seems to have played a supervisory role on behalf of the apostles in Jerusalem. And this community in Antioch quickly grew large enough and, because it included converted pagans, became distinctive enough to be called "Christians" by the pagans (Acts 11:26). It is noteworthy that Ignatius of Antioch is the only one of the Church Fathers to use the term Christians.

Acts 13:1 also tells us: "In the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul." Note the name of Barnabas, first on the list, undoubtedly an indication of his leadership role, and that of Manaen, a childhood companion of Herod, a reminder that Christianity did not begin as a religion of slaves. Luke's passage indicates two roles in the Antioch community, and if we add the presence of the apostle Peter, we find the three roles mentioned by Paul in 1 Corinthians 12:28: "And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers." These roles are also mentioned in the *Didache*, a document of the Syrian church composed a little later, around the year 100. It should be noted that the names given by Luke above do not come from Antioch, and these people will soon leave on mission, which presupposes functions that did not involve permanent residence.

D. The Clash between Peter and Paul

a. Account of the Clash

First, we must connect Acts 15 and Galatians 2:1-10, which both recount what is commonly referred to as the "Council" of Jerusalem, and Galatians 2:11-14, which is the continuation of that event. Let us identify the points of agreement between these passages from Paul and Luke, as well as their disagreements.

- i. Representatives from the church in Antioch traveled to Jerusalem for a meeting to resolve the issue of converting pagans to Christianity without requiring circumcision. This was a matter that required a decision. It should be noted that, historically, Jerusalem did not hold a position of authority over Antioch.
- ii. The main representatives from Antioch were Paul and Barnabas, but they were not the only ones. Luke remains vague with his "a few others" (Acts 15:2), while Paul explicitly names Titus, an uncircumcised man (Gal 2:1, 3). According to Acts, the reason for this journey was due to the

intervention in Antioch of "some believers from the party of the Pharisees" who had come from Judea and insisted "that the Gentiles should be circumcised and required to keep the law of Moses " (Acts 15:5) if they wanted to be saved (Acts 15:1); all this triggered a serious conflict. But according to Paul, it was on the basis of a personal revelation that he took this initiative (Gal 2:2) in order to ensure that his mission was in agreement with the apostles in Jerusalem.

- iii. It should be noted that no text identifies the Jewish Christians who demanded circumcision with the apostles considered to be "pillars" or James in particular. Paul calls them "false brothers, intruders who, having insinuated themselves, were spying on our freedom" (Gal 2:4), and Luke identifies them with Jewish Christians from the Pharisee movement (Acts 15:5).
- iv. Paul explicitly names James, Cephas, and John at this meeting, while hinting at a larger group (Gal 2:1, 4, 6). Luke speaks of a formal assembly of the apostles and elders, where only Peter and James speak. The final decision is made by the apostles and elders on behalf of the entire church in Jerusalem.
- v. The decision was therefore made not to require circumcision for converts of pagan origin. Luke puts the final speech in James' mouth, reflecting his tendency to smooth over past differences in order to present a Church that is always united for theological reasons. Thus, Antioch could continue its mission to the pagans, while Peter, according to Galatians 2:8, would focus his mission on the Jews. While Paul and Luke agree that the question of dietary rules was raised after that of circumcision, Acts recounts that it was raised at the Jerusalem council, whereas for Paul it was raised later in Antioch. There is unanimity among biblical scholars in recognizing that the dietary observances of Leviticus 17-18 imposed on the Gentiles in Acts 15:20, 29 cannot historically belong to the Jerusalem agreement. Nevertheless, Luke and Paul associate James with the imposition of these laws on the Gentiles.
- vi. Shortly after returning to Antioch, Paul and Barnabas clashed in a violent conflict that ended their missionary partnership. According to Galatians 2, Barnabas embraced Peter's hypocrisy and stopped eating with Christians of pagan origin due to pressure from members of James's entourage, who had recently arrived from Jerusalem. This text does not tell us what happened after this altercation. We only know that Paul soon embarked on a long mission to Asia Minor and Europe without Barnabas. He returned to Antioch only once for a brief visit (Acts 18:22) and made no further mention of the city in his letters. Galatians 2 does not mention who won the debate. We can infer from what happened next that Paul lost and found himself isolated, particularly from Barnabas, which led him to join forces with others for the mission. Luke gives us a different version: Paul and Barnabas separated because Barnabas wanted to take John Mark with them (Acts 15:36-41). Note that Luke completely omits Peter's visit to Antioch, the pressure from James's entourage, and the resulting confrontation.

This conflict and its aftermath show that Jerusalem and Antioch were not two independent centers. The writings of Paul and the Acts of the Apostles recognize a certain precedence of the church in Jerusalem over that of Antioch. And the collection that Paul undertook for the poor in Jerusalem is a symbolic expression of this.

b. The Situation of the Community after Paul's Departure

Establishing this situation is pure conjecture, due to a lack of data. If the later period of Matthew and Ignatius can serve as a guide, there is no evidence of organized, parallel churches existing side by side. We can therefore assume that after Paul's departure, the church of Antioch did not split into two groups, Jewish Christians on one side and Christians of pagan origin on the other. But most likely, in accordance with the wishes of James's entourage, these two groups held separate meals (and therefore probably separate Eucharists). Paul's hasty departure prevented a schism from occurring, and thus a relative communion was preserved. Peter probably played a moderating role by promoting a certain compromise and maintaining the link between the two groups. In the 40s and 50s, he may have been the rallying point for those who felt torn between Paul's "liberalism" and James' "conservatism."

Maintaining peace between these two groups was probably no easy task. On the left wing, i.e., the Christians of pagan origin who were supporters of Paul, there was a desire for a universal mission without restriction, where baptism replaced circumcision and the word of Jesus replaced the Mosaic law. These Christians were probably the guardians of the various traditions of a universal mission found in Matthew, such as in Matthew 20:16-20. And they were probably aware that Peter's withdrawal from the common table in Antioch did not come from him, but from pressure from James' entourage.

But such a universalist program was difficult to undertake as long as the "right wing" of the church in Antioch, i.e., James' entourage, exerted influence over Jewish Christians and the community as a whole. Even if James had not rejected the Jerusalem agreement on circumcision, his party, which could be identified with group II in our introduction, provided a haven for the extremists, group I, whom we identified in our introduction, who opposed a mission without circumcision. And perhaps this group I were the guardians, or even the creators, of a tradition of mission strictly oriented towards Israel, which we find

in Matthew 10:5-6 ("Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans" and Matthew 15:24 ("I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel").

However, it does not seem that these extremists were able to control the entire church in Antioch. After Paul's departure, probably in a gesture of reconciliation, Peter, and perhaps even James's entourage, seem to have promoted greater brotherhood between Christians of Jewish origin and those of pagan origin in the community. This is suggested by the letter mentioned in Acts 15:20, 29; 21:25, which seems to be a compromise: Christians of pagan origin, even if they are not subject to circumcision, must nevertheless respect Jewish dietary rules. Among these rules are abstaining from meat offered to idols, not drinking animal blood, not eating meat from animals that have been strangled, and avoiding incestuous unions, rules that come from Leviticus 17-18 and which the Pentateuch considers mandatory for foreign residents. It is likely that it was through the imposition of these rules that the famous exception to the indissolubility of marriage in Matthew 5:32 (see also Matthew 19:9), the case of *porneia*, often translated as "immorality," entered the Gospel of Matthew. This would explain why such an exception is found only in Matthew, and not in Mark, the Q Document, Luke, or Paul.

Among the factors that helped to maintain the cohesion of the community despite the presence of a "right" wing and a "left" wing was probably the presence of the Hellenists, those Jewish Christians who were the initiators of the conversion of the pagans. While Stephen's speech (Acts 7) reflects their theology, the ideas of some of them were more radical than those of Paul. And there is no reason to think that after Paul's debate in Antioch, they left the city or changed their minds about the mission to the pagans. They therefore provided support for Christians of pagan origin, even though they technically belonged to the group of Jewish Christians. But the wall that Paul had failed to break down would soon be brought down by events: the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple, as well as the movement of Yavne.

3. The Antiochene Church of the Second Christian Generation (A.D. 70-100 – Matthew) p. 45-72

When we consider the situation of the Church of Antioch as reflected in the Gospel of Matthew (circa 80–90) in relation to that of the 50s after Paul's departure, we notice notable changes that now need to be explained.

A. External Factors Influencing Change in the Antiochene Church

- a. The most important factor is the First Jewish War (66-73), as well as the events that preceded and followed it. Among these events are the death of James in Jerusalem (which Josephus places in the year 62) and the destruction of Jerusalem in the year 70. It should be remembered that it was pressure from the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem and the influence of James that led to the conflict between Paul and Peter in Antioch and the end of the common table between Christians of Jewish origin and those of pagan origin. But with James' martyrdom by the Jewish authorities and the disappearance of the Church of Jerusalem, the umbilical cord that connected the Church of Antioch with its Jewish identity and Jewish past was severed. From then on, groups III and IV (see our introduction), i.e., Christians of either Jewish or pagan origin who were supporters of Paul, as well as the Hellenists, were able to make headway against the conservative elements. Faced with this situation, group II was able to be more open to going further to satisfy Christians of pagan origin, while the extremists of group I may have left the community to form a Judeo-Christian sect in order to preserve what they considered to be the true heritage of James. In the latter case, we would have one of the origins of the Ebionites and the heretical Judeo-Christian writings (e.g., the Clementine Homilies and Recognitions, the Ascents of James) that championed James, exalting him above Peter, and made Paul their enemy.
- b. Another factor that cannot be ignored is that after the year 70, the entire mission to the Jews proved to be a failure, while the mission to the pagans enjoyed some success. Faced with this obvious fact, it became increasingly difficult for Jewish Christians to oppose the mission without circumcision and not to see that the future of the Church lay with the pagans.
- c. The Jewish War exacerbated tensions between Jewish Christians and the Jews of Antioch. The debacle caused by this war led Jewish leaders, mainly those in the Pharisee movement, to gather in Yavne to reorganize, codify, and write down their traditions, and to stand together against their common enemies. This effort to impose a certain uniformity on Judaism forced Jewish Christians to choose between leaving the synagogue or the Church. This context, in which both the synagogue and the Church sought to redefine and codify their traditions, would explain the growing tensions, persecutions, and ultimately separation. This situation applied to Antioch, where Jews had been harassed and killed by pagans during the war and therefore had little patience with non-conformist Jewish Christians who had associated with Christians of pagan origin. The break with the synagogue was only a matter of time.

Despite the efforts of some conservative Jewish Christians to keep the link with the synagogue alive, as evidenced by Matthew 23:2-3 ("The scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: do therefore, and observe all things whatsoever they say unto you, but do not follow their deeds...") seems to testify, the break appears to have been consummated before the Gospel of Matthew was written; thus the expression "their synagogue" appears in contrast to "my Church." This break must have occurred between 70 and 85 AD. Thus, not only

was the umbilical cord with James and the community in Jerusalem cut, but also that with the synagogue. The Jewish Christians of Antioch were now adrift in a pagan sea, heading towards the future of the Church.

Let us not think that Christians of pagan origin did not experience harassment or persecution because they had no connection with the synagogue. Because they were distinct from the Jewish community, which enjoyed recognition by the Romans as a legitimate religion, they no longer benefited from this protection. Thus, Matthew's missionary (Mt 10:5-42) and apocalyptic (Mt 24-25) discourse speaks of opposition not only from the synagogues, but also from governors and kings, from Jews and pagans. The fact that both Jewish Christians and those of pagan origin were each suffering persecution in their own way brought them closer together.

B. Internal Factors Favoring Change in the Antiochene Church

Since its beginnings, the community had undergone a number of changes: the emergence of a mission without circumcision, objections to such a mission, its eventual acceptance, then the refusal of a common table between those of Jewish and pagan origin, and finally the compromise of applying minimal Jewish rules. All this made it possible to restore the brotherhood of the common table and the Eucharistic assembly. And this brotherhood fostered a form of symbiosis that gradually became osmosis. Added to this were the persecutions by both the synagogue and the civil authorities, which drove a group of Christians more firmly into the arms of the other. It was perhaps at this point that the right-wing extremists (group I), no longer at home in the synagogue or in the community, decided to continue their journey elsewhere.

At the turn of the 80s, the community of Antioch found itself with Christians of pagan origin, liberal Jewish Christians espousing the ideas of Paul, Hellenists, and finally Jewish Christians, who were more conservative but did not want to break the bonds of Christian brotherhood and follow the path of the Ebionites. But the situation of these conservatives was difficult, because, having lost their connections with both Jerusalem and the synagogue, how could they preserve their monotheism, their moral standards, and all aspects of their Jewish heritage which, in their eyes, made the Christian faith the fulfillment of the promises to Israel, and not a new religion? The community of Antioch therefore needed a form of synthesis that would offer a way forward for all these tensions experienced by its members. This was the pastoral and theological task that Matthew would tackle.

C. Different Streams of Gospel Tradition in the Antiochene Church

These various tensions we have just discussed crystallized in multiple currents of the evangelical tradition, both oral and written. It is in this context that we must situate Matthew, a "liberal conservative" who creatively reworked these sources in response to the identity crisis of the Church of Antioch. But first, let us consider these sources.

a. The Gospel of Mark

This gospel is the backbone of the Gospel according to Matthew. Probably written shortly before the year 70 (or perhaps shortly after), the Gospel according to Mark seems to have been quickly accepted in Antioch. This would be easily explained if it came from Rome, as communication between the Roman capital and Antioch was excellent. Moreover, since the fall of Jerusalem, it was natural for the community of Antioch to turn to the Church in the capital of the empire, where two important figures for them, Paul and Peter, had died as martyrs. The fact that tradition attributed a role to Peter in the writing of this Gospel also helped its rapid acceptance.

Thus, after the year 70, the Gospel of Mark seems to have become the gospel par excellence for liturgy, catechesis, apologetics, and polemics in the Church of Antioch. Christians of pagan origin and Hellenists certainly appreciated its openness to pagans and its criticism of Mosaic law. But over time, its rough Greek language and even rougher theology, as well as the limited scope of the subjects covered, gave rise to the need for a revision and expansion of the gospel. It is conceivable that even before Matthew's writing, additions or modifications to Mark's accounts may have been introduced while they were being read in public, in the manner of rabbinic "targums" or "midrashim." It should be remembered that in this early period of Christianity, the written text was accompanied by a rapidly evolving oral tradition.

b. The Q Document

This document is a hypothetical reconstruction of the material shared by Matthew and Luke. It is a collection of Jesus' sayings that appear to belong to a fairly early period and originate from Palestine. Since it never took the form of a complete gospel, its content and outline remain fluid, with perhaps various versions in circulation. The eclectic nature of this collection of Jesus' words fostered its acceptance in Antioch, as each group could find elements in it to support its position; similarly, it would have been difficult to reject words that present radical moral demands, eschatological prophecies, or apocalyptic wisdom.

c. The so-called M material

The term "M material" is simply a generic term that refers to all the traditions found in the Gospel according to Matthew that do not originate from Mark or the Q Document. It encompasses the various traditions that reflect the multiple currents of thought within the Antioch community. The following can be distinguished:

- i. First, there is the legacy of Group I, the Judaizing extremists, represented by words rejecting the mission to the Gentiles: "Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Mt 10:5-6). And Matthew 15:24 gives this saying a theological foundation: "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." These words harmonize perfectly with this statement in the Q Document: "Before heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter will pass from the law" (Mt 5:18 || Lk 16:17).
- ii. Group II (James' entourage), at least those who remained in the community, had to emphasize strict observance of Mosaic law according to Jesus' teachings. They are the heirs of a moral tradition such as that of the Sermon on the Mount, which does not oppose Mosaic law (i.e., do not be angry or kill, do not commit adultery in thought or deed, do not pray like the pagans) and that of exhortations to remain faithful to the authorities of the Jewish synagogue ("The scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: therefore do and observe all that they tell you..." (Mt 23:2-3). Their intention is probably to counter the danger of pagans entering the community.
- iii. Finally, there were the Hellenists, allied with Christians of pagan origin, the "left wing" of the community, who favored missionary work among pagans and opposed the Pharisees' devotion to the Law. They were probably the heirs of traditions reflected in the universal sending out on mission (Matthew 28:16-20), the story of the Magi (Matthew 2), symbolizing the coming of the pagans to Christ, the rejection of the Pharisees (Matthew 15:12-14), and the criticism of Jewish piety concerning almsgiving, prayer, and fasting (Mt 6:1-6, 16-18). The Hellenists may have been the ones who proposed a revocation of Mosaic law in favor of a stricter morality (Matthew 5:33-37: prohibition of oaths and vows), thereby seeking to calm the apprehensions of James' group about immorality and to show the imperfections of Mosaic law. This is how a catechetical morality developed that responded to the needs of these new converts coming from paganism.

It would be a mistake to think that the traditions of Mark, the Q Document, and M constitute three separate blocks that Matthew combined for the first time. On the contrary, we can imagine that interaction between these three traditions took place regularly during liturgy, catechesis, or other community activities, so that M was like the living sea of an oral tradition in which Mark and Q were immersed and imbued. It is thus possible that Mark and Q were modified even before Matthew wrote the first words of his Gospel.

d. The Scribal School of Matthew

The development of traditions presupposes an environment that makes it possible, and in Antioch there was certainly a group of teachers or scribes who reformulated, studied, commented on, and taught the expanding Christian tradition. Acts 13:1 informs us that the early leaders of the Antioch community were prophets and teachers who led public worship. From then on, this interaction between charismatic preachers or prophets, those who scrutinized Scripture filled with the Spirit, and catechists who taught gave rise to what some biblical scholars have called the Matthew school. And the evangelist Matthew was probably one of them, according to this autobiographical note: "every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 13:52). The M tradition, or perhaps Matthew himself, would not have issued the warning not to covet the titles of rabbi, teacher, or professor if there had not been Christians in Antioch who claimed these titles because of their prominent position as teachers in the community.

It was therefore in this Matthean school that the prophetic texts of the Old Testament in their various forms were studied and applied to Christian catechesis, apologetics, and polemics. When we consider the vast scriptural knowledge presupposed by the numerous scriptural quotations in Matthew's Gospel, it is impossible that this could be the work of one man alone. But if we see Matthew as the heir to a whole school of scribes, who moreover reused the work of Jewish scribes in a Christian context, then his achievement becomes understandable. Matthew's quotations would therefore have originated in a school of scribes in Antioch. And these scriptural references were particularly welcome by Jewish Christians, as they allowed them to anchor the life and preaching of Jesus, as well as the life and preaching of the community, in Scripture and Jewish tradition.

How will Matthew reinterpret and synthesize the various, sometimes conflicting traditions of the community to offer a path toward Christian identity? This is what we must now consider.

D. Matthew's Gospel as a Reply to Problems Facing the Antiochene Church

a. Problems Facing the Antiochene Church

A prerequisite for understanding Matthew's work: perceiving this gospel as a theological and pastoral response to a crisis of identity and authority in the community of Antioch, a crisis that was social, structural, and theological in nature. This was a community that had lost its bearings: the temple and the city of

Jerusalem had both been destroyed, its Christian community scattered, and its heroes, Peter and Paul, had died as martyrs.

Linked to this crisis was that of authority within the community: the authority of Mosaic law and that of the Jewish teachers in the synagogue to uphold moral teaching among Jewish Christians no longer existed. This crisis became more acute with the arrival of pagans in the community: on what theological basis could moral teaching be offered and how could this moral authority be justified?

The Gospel according to Matthew gives us several clues to this crisis, in particular the presence of false prophets “who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves” (Mt 17:15), who invoke the name of the Lord and perform miraculous deeds, but commit immoral acts (Mt 21-27). These false prophets reappear in the apocalyptic discourse when Jesus says that “false prophets will arise and lead many astray,” so that “because of the increase of wickedness, the love of many will grow cold” (Mt 24:11-12).

b. Matthew's Reply to Problems Facing the Antiochene Church

I. General principle of Matthew's hermeneutical response

It was in response to this dual crisis of identity and morality that Matthew brought together the various Christian traditions to write his gospel. His goal was to offer a new synthesis that would provide his community with an adequate explanation of its origins and nature, thereby bridging the gap between a predominantly Jewish past and a future with an ever-growing presence of Christians of pagan origin. As a liberal conservative, he did not discard the various currents of the old Judeo-Christian tradition, but tried to integrate them into a deeper perspective. This approach is clearly expressed in Matthew 13:52: “Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.” Note the order: first the new, then the old. What does this mean? The old order is understood in the light of the new order.

However, while the old must be reinterpreted in light of the new, for Matthew it is nevertheless necessary to preserve the old. On this subject, it is revealing to observe how Matthew takes up Mark's image of new wine and new wineskins. While Mark concludes the image with, “But new wine must be put into new wineskins” (Mark 2:22), Matthew adds to this conclusion: “and both are preserved” (Matthew 9:17). This is his theological program: to preserve the new and the old, starting from the perspective of the new.

II. The specific elements of Matthew's hermeneutical response

i. A history of salvation in three periods

Matthew develops his own vision of salvation history that embraces both the new and the old. This history is divided into three periods: the time of Old Testament prophecy, the time of Jesus' earthly fulfillment, and the time of the Church's universal mission. This division allows him first to retain the material of Jewish Christianity, such as that in Matthew 10:5-6 and Matthew 15:24, which prohibits mission to pagans, but this restriction is limited to the period of Jesus' earthly ministry. At the end of his Gospel (Matthew 28:16-20), the same Jesus, now risen, will be able to give the opposite command for a universal mission.

Matthew explains this reversal by presenting the death and resurrection of Jesus through apocalyptic events, first at the cross (Mt 27:51-54) with the earthquake, the opening of the tombs, and the resurrection of the dead, then at the empty tomb on Easter Sunday, with the earthquake linked to the coming of the angel of the Lord who opens the tomb and announces the Easter message. Thus, Jesus' resurrection is the beginning of a new world.

Similarly, he includes material from Jewish Christianity in his Gospel with the injunction to obey the scribes and Pharisees and the successors of Moses (Mt 23:2-3). But for Matthew, this only expresses Jesus' acceptance of the restrictions of his earthly mission. However, other passages indicate that for Matthew, the break with the synagogue had taken place: “Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees!” (Mt 16:12); “Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted. Leave them [the Pharisees]: they are blind guides of the blind” (Mt 15:12-14).

Above all, the distinction between the different periods of salvation history allows Matthew to explain why Israel ceased to be the people of God and why it was replaced by the Church. During his public ministry, Jesus addresses only the Jews. But certain scenes foreshadow the changes that will come after his death and resurrection. This is the case, for example, in the story of the healing of the centurion's servant, a pagan, a story that Matthew takes from the Q Document, but to which he adds these words from Jesus: “Many will come from the east and the west and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, but the subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside, into the darkness” (Matthew 8:11-12).

The tension between Jesus and Israel increases throughout the Gospel, especially from chapter 11 onwards. In the parable of the murderous tenants, Israel's rejection and its replacement by a new people is clearly stated: "The kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that will produce its fruit" (Mt 21:43). In his description of the Passion, Matthew emphasizes the Jews' rejection of Jesus: "His blood be on us and on our children" (Mt 27:25). This replacement of one people by another takes place symbolically at the cross when all the groups that make up the Sanhedrin mock Jesus (Mt 27:41), while "the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus were seized with great fear and said, "Truly, this was the Son of God" (Mt 27:54); the latter represent the community of pagan origin. Thus, at the conclusion of the Gospel, Jesus can give the mandate to make disciples "of all nations," asking for baptism rather than circumcision as the rite of initiation into the people of God. With the end of Jesus' earthly ministry, the privileges of Israel came to an end, and the universal Church began.

ii. The Church as a guide to moral behavior

Matthew establishes a connection between the person of Jesus Christ, the Church he founded, and the moral actions he taught. This connection can be considered Matthew's main characteristic.

a. Jesus and moral behavior

Matthew constantly emphasizes Jesus' dignity, power, knowledge, and authority when compared to Mark. Let's look at two examples:

- When he takes up Mark's account of Jesus coming to the synagogue in Nazareth, Matthew omits the scene where Jesus' authority is challenged (Mk 6:1-6a || Mt 13:53-58).
- In Mark 10:18, Jesus responds to the man who asks what he must do to have eternal life: "Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone"; but Matthew, when he recounts this story, changes Jesus' response: "Why do you ask me about what is good?" (Matthew 19:17)

Matthew's high Christology is supported by his judicious use of "Son of God" and "Son of Man." Clothed with such authority, he can teach, to the great astonishment of the crowd, as we see at the end of the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 7:28-29). And his teaching is primarily focused on moral and parenetic instructions. Christ becomes the foundation, the norm, the teacher, and the model of moral behavior.

b. Jesus and the Church

Matthew seeks to link ecclesiology with his Christology. For him, Christ founded and built his Church. In the context of moral teaching, Christ shares with his Church the authority to teach, make decisions, and forgive sins. For example, in the story of the healing of the paralyzed man in Capernaum, where Jesus tells him that his sins are forgiven, Mark 2:10 puts these words in Jesus' mouth: "So that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"; on the other hand, when Matthew recounts this story, he adds this ending: "When the crowds saw this, they were filled with awe and gave glory to God, who had given such authority to men" (Mt 9:6). The expression "to men" emphasizes the fact that people in the Church share the authority of the Son of Man to forgive sins. Similarly, for Matthew, Simon receives the rabbinical power to bind and loose, to declare certain actions lawful or unlawful, in accordance or disagreement with the teaching of Jesus: "whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven" (Mt 16:19b). Similarly, in chapter 18, the local Church receives the power to admit someone to or exclude someone from the community.

The authority to teach reaches its climax with the last pericope of the Gospel (Mt 28:16-20) when Jesus recalls that all power has been given to him and that now he grants the power to teach everything he has prescribed to his Church, especially with regard to moral action (Mt 28:20). This is the beginning of a new reality, for when he previously sent his disciples on mission, he commanded them only to heal and proclaim the kingdom of God. But now, just as God transferred the kingdom of Israel to a people who would bear fruit (Mt 21:43), so he transferred the function of teaching from the synagogue to the Church. Matthew then presents the identity of the Church through its role of teaching in order to deal with the crises and divisions of the 70s and 80s.

iii. The Church and its Institutions

Like any group that grows rapidly and faces an identity crisis, it is called upon to develop its own institutional bodies. Thus, the community of Antioch, faced with questions about its identity and

role, engaged in controversy and activities with Jews and pagans, was led to find institutional means to respond to its problems. These institutions can either betray or preserve the original charismatic spirit. For the community of Antioch, its institutions and structures of authority are reflected in the Gospel according to Matthew.

- a. The very fact that the Gospel uses the word "Church" (*ekklēsia*) three times is revealing. The early Christians used this term very early on to express their awareness of being a particular group, as evidenced by certain Pauline epistles (see 1 Thessalonians, Galatians, 1 Corinthians), and later in Acts, 1 Timothy, and Revelation. It refers to both the local church and the universal church. The Gospels, except for Matthew, ignore this term in order to respect the archaic nature of their narratives. In Matthew, two of the three occurrences refer to the authoritative act of binding and loosing, either by a person in office or by the entire local church. Thus, for him, the term *ekklēsia* certainly means the Church as a visible structure and society, with agents of authority and functions of authority.
- b. Mt 16:18-19 ("You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church...") can only be understood by placing it in the spatial and temporal context in which it was written, i.e., in the face of the problems of the Syrian Church of Antioch around the year 85. We must avoid projecting onto it our modern question of whether the sole bishop of Rome is the successor of Simon Peter, especially since in Antioch around the year 85 there was no structure of a single bishop. Rather, Matthew presents Peter as the chief rabbi of the universal Church, with the power to make decisions on how to act in light of Jesus' teaching.

It is possible that this Petrine tradition arose from Peter's historical role in Antioch in bringing stability and unity to the community. But the fact remains that for Matthew, Peter's role now has a general and universal scope: he is the sole human authority for the whole Church. Thus, Matthew proclaims that the Antioch tradition of Peter as a reconciling figure or moderating center will become the norm for the whole Church, as opposed to all the local groups, dissidents, and sects that appeal to either Paul or James as the norm for the whole Church.

But the question remains: did Matthew see a particular individual exercising such a role in his time, either in Antioch or elsewhere? Was it merely a reference to the past, or was it an allusion to the monarchical episcopate that was coming to Antioch? To answer this, we must continue our analysis.

- c. Another passage should be of interest to us, Matthew 18:17 ("If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church, and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector"), but it should not be read in the light of Matthew 16:18 ("You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church...")
 - i. The context is not the same. Matthew 16 is set in the context of Peter's confession, while Matthew 18 is a discourse on the life and organization of the Church.
 - ii. The word "Church" has various meanings: in Matthew 16:17, it refers to all the communities for which Peter acts as chief rabbi, while in Matthew 18:19, it is the local community that must meet to make a decision concerning one of its members.
 - iii. The expression "to bind/loosen" does not have the same meaning in both cases. In the first case, it refers to the power to interpret Jesus' moral teaching with authority, while in the second case it refers to the power to admit or exclude people from the local community.

Matthew 18:15-20 presents a case of disciplinary action by a local church. A sin committed by an individual must first be dealt with privately, and only when this is impossible should the local church intervene and, if necessary, excommunicate the individual.

It is noteworthy that no local leader is named in this pericope. However, Peter appears earlier in Matthew 17:24-27 in the scene of the payment of taxes and reappears in 18:21 with the call for forgiveness. Matthew's intention may be to ensure that all members of the local community share in important decisions, especially disciplinary decisions involving excommunication. And for him, such a perspective is justified theologically: the local church is a fraternal community of people in service where all must share authority and responsibility for making decisions. But why insist on this point? That is what we need to see now.

- d. Clearly, Matthew is concerned about the emerging clericalism in the Antioch community. How else can we explain all the warnings about ostentatious religious clothing and accessories (Mt 23:5), the desire for the best seats in religious gatherings (Mt 23:6), and the desire for prestigious titles (Mt 23:7-10)? Who is Matthew targeting? Probably the Jewish scribes and Pharisees in their role as teachers of authority (Mt 23:2). This reference to teaching in a position of authority is clear with the mention of titles to be avoided: rabbi,

master, father, teacher (Mt 23:7-10). This is confirmed by Acts 13:1, which informs us that the community of Antioch was led by a group of prophets and teachers. This group could be identified with the Matthew school mentioned earlier. Moreover, these prestigious preachers and Spirit-inspired teachers naturally became the leaders of the community's liturgy. This is also confirmed by Acts 13:2. Matthew is concerned to see these good and necessary roles evolve into an exercise of domination, monopoly, and clericalism.

When we consider all of Matthew's statements about ecclesial structures, we cannot help but notice a certain ambivalence in his approach. On the one hand, he exalts Peter as a leader with unique authority, the rock of the entire Church; he also presupposes a group of prophets and teachers in the Antioch community to whom he attributes real authority, as suggested by the parallels with the Jewish scribes and Pharisees. On the other hand, he is extremely wary of the inevitable pitfalls that leaders can fall into, and calls on the local church to act and make decisions involving all members in matters of discipline. This ambivalence could be explained in part by the diverse traditions with which he has to work, and in part by the fact that his Church is a Church in transition, a transition that is not yet complete, and perhaps above all by his own indecision about the extent to which the authority of a leader is good for the Church. As much as he admires the rock that is Peter (Matthew 16:18-19), he is unable or unwilling to see such a figure of ecclesial stability embodied in the local church. Perhaps it is healthy to remember that we cannot expect an evangelist to have an answer to every problem.

4. Antiochene Church of the Third Christian Generation (after A.D. 100) p. 73-84

For this period, we have two sources: first, the seven letters of Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, and the *Didache* ("Teaching" [of the Twelve Apostles]), which establishes the rules of Christian morality and the organization of the Church. Since we do not know whether the latter document was actually written in Antioch, it will be discussed last.

A. Ignatius of Antioch p. 74

When we compare Matthew's church and theology with Ignatius' church and theology, the difference is so great that we may wonder if there is any connection between the two.

a. Church Structure

In Antioch, there was a clearly defined three-tiered structure: a single bishop, a group of presbyters (a council of elders or *presbyterion*), and a group of deacons.

The bishop was the sole leader. Without him, neither baptism nor the Eucharist could be celebrated.

Let no one, except the bishop, do anything concerning the Church. Let this Eucharist alone be regarded as legitimate, which is done under the presidency of the bishop or of the one whom he has appointed. Where the bishop appears, there let the community be, just as where Christ Jesus is, there is the Catholic Church. It is not permitted outside of the bishop to baptize or to celebrate the agape, but whatever he approves is also pleasing to God. Thus, everything that is done will be safe and legitimate. (Letter to the Smyrnaeans, 8:1-2)

The bishop is also the chief teacher in the Church, the guarantor of the unity of the faith and the unity of the Church.

The question arises: how did we move from the group of prophets and teachers in Matthew's Church to this three-tiered hierarchy in Ignatius' Church, a hierarchy that seems to have been a *fait accompli* for some time? The answer probably lies in the pressure exerted on the community by growing crises, such as that caused by the rise of Gnosticism with its Docetist tendencies, which forced the group of teachers and prophets to reorganize and unify in order to face a common enemy. Then there were the persecutions against Christians under Domitian (81-96) and especially under Trajan (98-117), which led to a consolidation of leadership in the face of crisis.

In any case, around the year 100, a particularly gifted prophet-teacher broke away from the college of prophets and teachers to become the chief teacher and prophet, presiding over the college from which he came and receiving the title of "bishop" or "overseer." The rest of the teachers or prophets were called "elders" or "presbyters," and their group or college was called a '*presbyterion*' or "*synedrion*." Somewhat ironically, while Matthew wanted the greatest leader in the Church to be considered a "servant" (*diakonos*), this latter title was given to assistants (deacons) who constituted the third and lowest level of the hierarchical ladder. However, we should not imagine this group as a soulless bureaucracy. First of all, the entire Church of Antioch was probably about the size of a parish today. Secondly, Ignatius saw this Church as a living body that cooperated in mutual love to maintain its unity.

Let us summarize. The prophet-teacher who exercised the presidency became the sole bishop, the others became the college of elders, and the other workers of the Church became deacons. Writing his letters between 108 and 117, Ignatius takes this structure for granted as he seeks to consolidate the position of the

bishop in the other communities of Asia Minor. We can therefore assume that this ecclesial structure was established around the year 100, which leaves enough time before Ignatius began his letters and took this structure for granted, and also leaves enough time after the writing of the Gospel of Matthew for the development of a structure of authority. Was Ignatius thus the first bishop of Antioch? The silence on the existence of a predecessor suggests so.

b. Theology

When we examine Ignatius' theological sources, we notice that he assimilated a good deal of Pauline and Johannine thought, and he makes only rare references to the Old Testament. He probably did not know the Gospel of John directly; but since he had to combat the Gnostics and Docetists, who used the fourth Gospel, it was through them that he became familiar with it and used it to argue against them. A remarkable point is that Ignatius combines Pauline and Johannine thought with the synoptic tradition, represented in particular by Matthew, to offer a theological synthesis in the service of traditional Christian thought. He represents the first attempt to merge the major currents of New Testament thought into a coherent perspective that articulates the faith of the Catholic Church in its opposition to the Gnostics. Ignatius, the theologian bishop, in the first quarter of the 2nd century, anticipates the even more important synthesis of Irenaeus of Lyon, another theologian bishop, in the last quarter of the same century.

From a certain point of view, Ignatius can be considered Matthew's successor. Like Matthew, he had to bring together different, even divergent, traditions in the service of the unity of the Church, which was facing a new crisis. Thus, confronted with the Docetist tendency of the Gnostics, Ignatius emphasized the unity of the divinity and humanity of Jesus Christ, and more particularly the humanity of Jesus. To do this, he used Matthew's contribution to focus on the earthly life of Jesus, a contribution that seems broader than the few direct allusions in his letters.

c. Diverse Groups

Ignatius may have inherited the Matthew problem of a church divided between its "left wing" and its "right wing." Indeed, the "left wing" consisted of Docetists, some of whom may have been the heirs of the Hellenists, or may have absorbed the Gnostic tendencies of converts from paganism. The "right wing" consisted of Judaizers, some of whom came from group I, identified in the introduction, or were heirs of the people in James's circle.

One can imagine the violent confrontation between the two groups, one promoting a high Christology and rejecting Jewish Scripture around an evil creator God, the other devoting absolute allegiance to Jewish Scripture. Both groups undoubtedly considered themselves Christians and recognized the bishop in principle. But it seems that the Judaizers were less of a threat than the Gnostics. The latter are said to have seceded by abstaining from the Eucharist and public prayer in the Church. However, during a stay in Rome, Ignatius informs us that peace had been restored in the community of Antioch, which indicates that the situation was not frozen in irreconcilable opposition (see the letters [to the Philadelphians](#) 10:1; [to the Smyrnaeans](#) 10-11; [to Polycarp](#) 7). Furthermore, there is no mention of a bishop or elders at the head of the dissident groups. This would mean that the schism did not reach the point of separation into organized churches. In short, there would be similarities in Antioch between the time of Peter and Matthew and that of Ignatius.

B. The [Didache](#) p. 81

The date and place of composition of the [Didache](#) are highly debated among biblical scholars, and therefore, from a methodological standpoint, it cannot be included with more reliable sources such as the Epistle to the Galatians (supplemented by the Acts of the Apostles), the Gospel according to Matthew, and the letters of Ignatius of Antioch.

a. The date of composition

No biblical scholar denies the [Didache](#)'s connections with Matthew's traditions. Rather, the question is whether this document knew the final form of the Gospel. If we consider only its theological tendencies, it must be dated after the writing of the Gospel. When we compare them, we can make a few observations:

- i. Sometimes there is a certain departure from Matthew's radicalism. For example, in Matthew 5:48 we read: "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect," while in [Didache](#) 6:2 we read: "If you can bear the whole yoke of the Lord, you will be perfect; if not, do at least what is in your power."
- ii. Sometimes the [Didache](#) falls into a form of legalism. While it denounces, like Matthew, the hypocrisy of fasting among some people, it merely replaces fasting on Mondays and Thursdays with fasting on Wednesdays and Fridays. Matthew 28:19 presents the triadic formula for baptism ("in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit"), [Didache](#) 7:1-2 extends this formula with a discussion of the type of water that can be used, preferably cold running water, and if that is not possible, any other water or hot water.

- iii. Sometimes the Didache (8:2-3) expands on Matthew's text, such as in the Lord's Prayer, which it concludes with a doxology: "For yours is the power and the glory forever!" followed by the recommendation: "Pray thus three times a day."

These observations lead us to place the final form of the Didache after the Gospel of Matthew.

b. The place of composition

If the final form of the Didache appeared after the Gospel of Matthew, then its place of composition cannot be located in Antioch, especially considering its ecclesial structure. For in the Didache, resident bishops and deacons (elders or presbyters seem to be absent) are just beginning to replace prophets and itinerant teachers, so that one must ask that bishops and deacons be respected as one do prophets and teachers. However, the three-level hierarchy of Antioch seems to have appeared around the year 100, so that the emerging two-level hierarchy of the Didache must be placed elsewhere.

If we place the Didache somewhere in Syria, we can draw an interesting parallel with Acts 13:1-2: "There were prophets and teachers in the church at Antioch... One day, while they were worshiping the Lord." Indeed, Didache 15:1 mentions in the same order "prophets and men charged with teaching," and also the fact that they lead the liturgy or service (see also Didache 10:7). However, at the time of the Matthew community, there seems to have been a stable group of teachers oriented towards scholarship, which is far from the charismatic, sometimes greedy itinerants that were the prophets and teachers mentioned in the Didache, a more primitive ecclesial structure. But everything becomes more understandable if we place the development of Matthew's ecclesial structure in the cosmopolitan city of Antioch, and that of the Didache in a rural setting. The Didache would therefore have preserved an ancient ecclesial structure still present in certain communities in Syria, also reflected in Acts 13:1-2. It is possible that this two-level hierarchy also existed in Antioch before evolving into a three-level hierarchy. But it is impossible to be sure.

5. Summary: Peter, Matthew, Ignatius, and the Struggle for a Middle Position p. 85-86

Our study has shown the importance of Antioch in the development of Christianity. For it was in Antioch that

- The disciples are called "Christians" for the first time.
- The first mission without circumcision is organized.
- Paul sets out on mission with the embryonic theology, structure, and liturgy of the movement.
- The tradition of Peter as the center of unity develops.
- Matthew confronts a fundamental crisis over the identity and role of the Church by bringing together various traditions into a masterful synthesis that is his Gospel, the favorite Gospel of the 2nd century.
- A three-level hierarchy is proposed to respond to the new challenge of Church unity.
- Ignatius develops a theological synthesis to combine the divinity and humanity of Christ, as well as the unity of the local church and that of the Catholic Church.
- Peter, Matthew, and Ignatius undertook the delicate task of maintaining a delicate balance between the left and the right as they fought for the middle ground that would become the universal Church.

The Gospel of Matthew and the three-tiered hierarchy that emerged in Antioch would have a fundamental impact on all Christian communities as they spread throughout the Roman Empire.

A. The Gospel according to Matthew

This Gospel would be the most quoted by the Fathers of the second century and would have a significant impact on the Christology and ecclesiology of the later Church. Its rhythmic language and well-structured pericopes were particularly suited to liturgy and catechesis. One need only think of the Lord's Prayer or the Beatitudes, which found their way not only into the teaching of the Church but also into popular piety. It is not surprising that it occupies the first place in the canon of the Gospels.

B. The three-level hierarchy

This three-tiered ecclesiastical structure, with the bishop occupying a position of preeminence, became established in all the major churches of the Roman Empire. It is ironic, however, to think that the environment that gave rise to the monarchical episcopate also gave birth to a gospel that fought against clericalism (Matthew 23:1-12).

Part Two: Rome p. 87-216.

In the first part, we saw that Antioch was the first major city in the Roman Empire to become a center of the Christian movement, which justifies calling it the cradle of Christianity. Unfortunately, we have less information about the origins of the Church of Rome, although we will present evidence to show that Christianity arrived in Rome in the early 40s, less than a

decade after Antioch. We have no evidence to support the idea that the Church of Antioch or Rome was founded by an Apostle. But the clash between Paul and Peter in Antioch had an impact on the future of that Church. As for Rome, Paul arrived there in the early 60s, where he joined Peter in the final testimony of their martyrdom. Thus, the Church of the capital of the Roman Empire can claim the heritage of the two most prominent apostles. This reputation played a role in making Rome the most prominent seat of the Catholic Church.

Our analysis will first seek to determine what type of Christianity took root in Rome. Using Roman, Jewish, and Christian sources, we will show that the dominant form of Christianity in Rome in the 40s and early 50s was probably very close to Jerusalem and Judaism (ch. 6). Then we will cover three generations. Towards the end of the first generation (around 58 AD), Paul's letter to the Romans will allow us to reconstruct the early Roman Church (ch. 7). At the beginning of the third generation (around 96 AD), we have a letter from Rome to the Corinthians by Clement that expresses Roman ideals about how a community should function (ch. 9). As with Antioch, the problem concerns the period of the second generation, covering the last third of the 1st century. This gap (ch. 8) can be filled by 1 Peter, written from Rome around 80-90, and the Epistle to the Hebrews, written perhaps to the Christians of Rome sometime after 70. An additional chapter (ch. 10) will review half a dozen works that will help us complete our picture, particularly by tracing the trajectory of Roman Christianity into the second century. Overall, we will see a Jewish/pagan Christianity that is more conservative in its preservation of Jewish laws and worship than the Christianity of Paul reflected in his letter to the Galatians. It is therefore a Christianity, much like that of Antioch, that can be linked to the figure of Peter. But the Paul of the Epistle to the Romans will ultimately be associated with Peter's trajectory, so that both will be considered pillars of the Catholic Church (see [1 Clement 5:2](#)).

6. The Beginnings of Christianity at Rome p. 92-104

In the absence of direct data, we must first proceed by inference from Judaism in Rome, and then see how Roman Christianity fits into this framework.

A. Judaism in Rome

There were certainly more Jews in the major cities of the Roman Empire than in Judea or Galilee. But after Babylon and Alexandria, they came to Rome only late, because originally the initiators of Roman expansion were hard-headed Italian farmers who learned to become soldiers, and so the city could not interest Jewish merchants. Ironically, however, when Rome became a world power, its agriculture began to decline and the Romans became dependent on the arrival of wealth and products from all corners of the empire, unloaded at the last navigable landing stage on the Tiber. As a result of this development, Jews arrived in Rome, which became the first European city with a known Jewish presence.

The earliest mention dates back to 139 BCE, when the praetor Gnaeus Cornelius Hispanus is said to have asked Jews, probably visitors or merchants, to return home. Some biblical scholars have linked this event to the embassy sent to Rome by Simon Maccabeus, the Jewish high priest king, around 140 BCE. In any case, in the first century BCE there were many Jewish immigrants, a number that grew with the Jewish captives brought to Rome in 61 BCE by Pompey during his conquest of Palestine. The importance of the Jewish colony in Rome is attested to by Cicero in 59 BCE in his defense of Lucius Valerius Flaccus, a scoundrel, governor of the province of Asia, who had acquired a formidable personal fortune and was accused of stealing gold from the Jews. In his plea, Cicero used anti-Semitic prejudices, pointing out that this large group stayed together, exerted influence on politics, and that some used this to sow discord among the good Roman people. Cicero would not have mentioned the Jewish presence in Rome if it had not been well known.

Jewish support for Julius Caesar and the luck of Herod's family in Judea in ultimately siding with the winning side in the wars that followed Caesar's assassination allowed the Jews to enjoy special privileges, such as the relaxation of rules governing private associations, so that they could gather freely for worship or communal meals, the right to collect money to support the temple in Jerusalem, exemption from military service, and the right to use their own courts. Their population in Rome is estimated at 40,000 or 50,000 in the first century CE.

All this did not prevent a number of actions against the Jews. In 19 AD, there was an expulsion of Jews from Rome, probably due to the success of Jewish proselytism, such as the conversion of a lady from a senatorial family. Aelius Sejanus, a prefect of Tiberius' Praetorian Guard, led a very intense anti-Jewish campaign until his downfall in 31 AD. In 49 AD, Emperor Claudius undertook a Jewish expulsion, which we will see a little further on. But all this did not stop the exercise of Jewish influence and the maintenance of their privileges. Thus, Poppaea, Nero's second wife, was favorable to Judaism and may even have converted. Even during the Jewish revolt in Palestine in the late 60s, no action was taken against the Jews in the capital of the empire. Following the fall of Jerusalem, Emperor Vespasian did not revoke their privileges, but he redirected the individual tax paid by each Jew for the temple in Jerusalem to the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus in Rome. Emperor Domitian did the same.

One particular aspect of Roman Judaism deserves our attention: its close political and intellectual ties with Jerusalem and Palestine. Let us begin with the political ties. Most of the Jews residing in Rome were originally either immigrants or prisoners of war from the Syrian-Palestinian region. As early as 140 BCE, the Maccabean/Hasmonean high priests of Jerusalem had established contacts with Rome. Later, the Hasmonean priests supported Julius Caesar against Pompey, and King Herod the Great became an ally of Octavian Augustus. After Herod's death, members of his family became kings or tetrarchs with Rome's approval. Their descendants were raised at the imperial court and became personal friends of future emperors. Thus, King Herod Agrippa I

inherited a kingdom in Palestine through the patronage of his friends Caligula and Claudius. After the fall of Jerusalem, the Jewish historian Josephus lived the rest of his life in Rome under the patronage of the Flavian emperor, whose name he adopted: Flavius. In the mid-70s, Emperor Titus brought the Jewish king Agrippa II and his sister Berenice, who became his mistress, to Rome.

Let us now turn to intellectual ties. Even before the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, there was constant exchange between Palestinian Judaism and Roman Judaism.

- During the reign of Domitian (81-96), four famous rabbis, Rabban Gamaliel, Joshua ben Hananiah, Eleazar ben Azariah, and Aqiba, are said to have come from Palestine to Rome to preach in synagogues and engage in debates with pagans and Christians.
- According to the Talmud, a Palestinian sage named Todos went to Rome to teach and serve as a spiritual leader under Hadrian (117-138).
- Under Antoninus Pius (138-161), the Roman school of the Palestinian Matthias ben Heresh was respected by Palestinian rabbis.

Even though the examples given of intellectual and spiritual ties date from after the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD, we nevertheless have confirmation of this situation earlier in the book of Acts 28:21, which, although written in the 80s, describes a situation in the early 60s. Indeed, Paul arrives in Rome and local Jewish leaders come to meet him, saying, "We have received no letters from Judea concerning you." This is Luke's implicit indication that the Roman Jews looked to Jerusalem for guidance.

B. Christianity in Rome

a. Date

We can guess that, after seeing how many converts the Jews who believed in Jesus had made in other cities of the Roman Empire, such as Damascus and Antioch, it did not take long before they turned their attention to the promising field of Rome. But can we suggest a more precise date?

First, we must settle the question of Peter and Paul's presence in Rome. The answer is quite clear for Ignatius of Antioch ([Letter to the Romans](#), 4:3), who refers to Peter and Paul as giving orders to the Romans. Based on the First Letter of Clement, we must admit that Peter and Paul died in Rome (around 64-67) as martyrs during Nero's persecution of Christians. According to Eusebius of Caesarea ([Church History](#), 2:25:7), Peter died crucified in Nero's Circus, south of Vatican Hill, and Paul died beheaded on the road to Ostia. As for the apostles' careers in Rome before their martyrdom, Acts 28 tells us that Paul first came to Rome as a prisoner around the year 61 and remained in prison for two years. But we do not know what happened between his imprisonment and his death, except that it is assumed that he was released after two years, perhaps made a trip to Spain before a second imprisonment that led to his death. As for Peter, we have no information about when and how he arrived in Rome, or what he was doing there. What is clear is that he was not the first missionary to bring Christianity there, and he was not bishop of the Roman Church. We can only assume that he was not in Rome when Paul wrote his letter to the Romans and that he must have arrived there in the 60s, shortly before his martyrdom.

The earliest information about the Christians of Rome comes from the Roman historian Tacitus, who recounts that when Nero left the capital in 64 AD, starting on July 19 and lasting for nine days, the greatest fire in the history of Rome broke out and destroyed ten of the fourteen districts of Rome, either partially or completely. Nero quickly returned to the city and began rebuilding it from the ashes. Despite the emperor's generosity, people began to suspect that he had started the fire. Thus, a few months after the fire, Tacitus tells us:

To suppress this rumor Nero created scapegoats. He punished with every refinement of cruelty the notoriously depraved group who were popularly called Christians. The originator of the group, Christ, had been executed in the reign of Tiberius by the procurator, Pontius Pilate. But, in spite of this temporary setback, this pernicious superstition had broken out again, not only in Judea (where the mischief had originated) but even in the capital city [Rome] where all degraded and shameful practices collect and become the vogue.

First, Nero had self-acknowledged members of this sect arrested. Then, on their information, large numbers [multitudo ingens] were condemned—not so much for their arson as for their hatred of the human race. Their deaths were made a farce . . . so that despite their guilt [as Christians] and the ruthless punishment they deserved, there arose a sense of pity. For it was felt that they were being sacrificed to one man's brutality rather than to the public interest.

From Tacitus' description, we learn three interesting and relevant facts:

- i. In the year 64, Christians were clearly distinguished from Jews, as the latter were not persecuted, even though their district of Trans-Tiber was spared from the fire and they could therefore have been used as scapegoats.
- ii. There were a large number of Christians in Rome.
- iii. Even pagans made the connection between the Christians of Rome and their origins in Palestine.

If there were many Christians in Rome in the mid-60s, how long did it take to reach that number? Paul's letter to the Romans, dated around 58 AD, implies that the community had existed for a considerable period of time, since he says he had wanted to visit it "for many years" (Rom 15:23). Furthermore, when he gives thanks for its existence, he mentions that "throughout the whole world people are proclaiming your faith" (Rom 1:8). Given Paul's remarks, it is not possible that we are dealing with only a small, weak community, and we must therefore conclude that it existed at least in the early 50s.

But the information in Acts 18:2-3 forces us to go back further in time. For we learn there that when Paul arrived in Corinth (around 49-50), he found lodging with a Jewish couple, Aquila and Priscilla, who had just arrived from Italy, because "Claudius had decreed that all Jews should leave Rome." It is likely that this Jewish couple, who had arrived from Italy, were already Christians, for they joined Paul's mission without any mention of conversion, and they could not have welcomed Paul into their home without causing a great stir among the Jews.

The Christian presence in Rome in the 40s would explain this sentence from Suetonius ([Claudius 25:4](#)), which states that Claudius "expelled the Jews from Rome because of the constant disturbances they caused under the instigation of Chrestus [*impulsore Chresto*]." Chrestus and Christus refer to the same person, as it was common to replace the "i" with an 'e' after the letter "r" in a word. It is therefore possible that we have here an echo of heated discussions in the synagogues between those who accepted that Jesus was the Messiah and those who refused to do so. All this suggests that Christian preachers were successful in several Roman synagogues. However, it does not appear that there was a Jewish governing body in Rome to manage the eleven to fifteen synagogues, as there was in Alexandria, where there was a committee of synagogue leaders chaired by an ethnarch, which explains why conflicts were able to escalate without a central authority to stop them. And Emperor Claudius was not going to tolerate such dissension. How many were expelled? Luke tells us that "all the Jews" were expelled, which would imply about 50,000 people. This is an exaggeration, as the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus does not even mention it, and Cassius Dio ([History, 60:6:6](#)) denies that there was a general expulsion of the Jews. It is reasonable to assume that Claudius exiled the Jews who were most outspoken on both sides of the Christ issue, which would explain the expulsion of Prisca and Aquila, passionate missionaries. When did this expulsion take place? The historian Orosius suggests the date of 49 AD; even if this historian is not always accurate, this date confirms that given in the Acts of the Apostles.

It is difficult to be more precise about the arrival of Christianity in Rome in the 40s. There are two other indications, but they are too conjectural.

- i. We learn in Acts 12:17 that Peter, having just been released from prison where he had been imprisoned by King Herod Agrippa I (who reigned in Judea from 41 to 44), "left and set out for another destination." Historians have hypothesized that he left for Rome in the year 42. But Paul, in his letter to the Romans, never mentions Peter's presence there. And it is unlikely that Luke, who makes Peter a missionary hero in the first part of Acts and ends his book with Paul's arrival in Rome, would have omitted the fact that Peter went to Rome.
 - ii. Historians refer to Pomponia Graecina, wife of Aulus Plautius, conqueror of Britain (Tacitus, [Annals, 13:32](#)). She was tried and found innocent by her husband of the charge of "foreign superstition." Then, around the year 43, she is said to have worn mourning clothes for forty years following the assassination of Julia, daughter of Drusus. Based on these facts, historians have concluded that she may have adopted the newly arrived Christianity and its asceticism. But all this is based on an inference of what "foreign superstition" means, which could be Judaism or an Eastern religion.
- b. Origin

According to the Acts of the Apostles, during the first two decades of Christianity, Jerusalem and Antioch were the places from which the gospel was spread. But Luke, who keeps us informed of the missions to the west from Antioch, never suggests that there was a mission from Antioch to Rome. And so we find no argument for any site other than Jerusalem as the source of Roman Christianity, and Acts 28:21 informs us that there was a channel of theological communication from Jerusalem to Rome. Tacitus himself associates Roman Christianity with Judea.

In the following chapters, other arguments will reinforce the idea that Roman Christianity originated in Jerusalem and that it represents that Jewish/pagan Christianity associated with figures in Jerusalem such as Peter and James, i.e., group II in our introduction, Christians who kept some Jewish observances and remained partly faithful to the heritage of Jewish law and worship, without insisting on circumcision.

7. The Roman Church Near the End of the First Christian Generation (AD 58 – Paul to the Romans) p. 105-127

Towards the end of the 50s, Paul wrote, apparently from Corinth, "to all those who are loved by God in Rome" (Romans 1:7). Although he had wanted to visit Rome for years (Rom 1:13; 15:23), Paul would go there for the first time after bringing the money collected in Macedonia and Greece to the saints in Jerusalem (Rom 15:25-26). Paul was concerned

about how this collection would be received in Jerusalem and asked Rome to pray and help him so that it would be successful (Rom 15:30-31). He hopes to preach the Gospel in Rome when he goes there (Rom 1:15), but he clearly envisages a short stay, as he is on his way to Spain (Rom 15:24, 28).

A. A Letter Shaped by Roman Christianity

In all the other letters whose Pauline authorship is not disputed, Paul addresses a community that he founded and therefore knows well. However, the fact that Paul had not yet been to Rome has led to much debate among biblical scholars: did he really know the situation in Rome?

a. The issue in chapter 16

The issue concerns all the people Paul greets:

1 I commend to you Phoebe our sister, who is a servant of the church in Cenchrea, 2 that you may receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and assist her in whatever business she has need of you; for indeed she has been a helper of many and of myself also.

3 Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, 4 who risked their own necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles. 5 Likewise greet the church that is in their house.

Greet my beloved Epaenetus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia to Christ. 6 Greet Mary, who labored much for us. 7 Greet Andronicus and Junia, my countrymen and my fellow prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me.

8 Greet Amplias, my beloved in the Lord. 9 Greet Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ, and Stachys, my beloved. 10 Greet Apelles, approved in Christ. Greet those who are of the household of Aristobulus. 11 Greet Herodion, my countryman. Greet those who are of the household of Narcissus who are in the Lord.

12 Greet Tryphena and Tryphosa, who have labored in the Lord. Greet the beloved Persis, who labored much in the Lord. 13 Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine. 14 Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermas, Patrobas, Hermes, and the brethren who are with them. 15 Greet Philologus and Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints who are with them.

16 Greet one another with a holy kiss. The churches of Christ greet you. (Rm 16)

Paul greets some twenty-five people. For some biblical scholars, it is impossible that Paul knew all these people from a church he had never visited, and they have suggested that chapter 16 was not originally part of the letter to the Romans. This hypothesis is based on a 6th-century Latin manuscript (known to Tertullian and Origen around the year 200) in which the Epistle to the Romans contained only 14 chapters, and Papyrus 46 (around the year 200) in which the Epistle to the Romans contained only 15 chapters. According to this hypothesis, chapter 16 was addressed to the Church of Ephesus, as it mentions Prisca and Aquila, who stayed there, and Epenetus, a convert from Asia. Paul would therefore have sent a letter containing chapters 1 to 15 to Rome, then added chapter 16 and sent the same letter to Ephesus.

However, a thorough study shows that chapter 15 is clearly Pauline and closely linked to chapter 14. What about chapter 16? The end of chapter 15 would be unusual as the conclusion of a Pauline letter. Romans 16:17-24, with its exhortations, greetings, and wishes for peace, corresponds exactly to what would be expected in the conclusion of a Pauline letter. Furthermore, the overwhelming support of the vast majority of manuscripts argues for the authenticity of chapter 16.

The objection that the presence of recommendations in Romans 16:1ff gives the impression of a letter of recommendations rather than a conclusion overlooks the fact that recommendations are often found in the conclusions of very long ancient letters. As for the objection that Paul would not have sent so many greetings to a community with which he was unfamiliar, it overlooks the fact that Paul's letters to communities he founded do not contain very extensive greetings, since the existence of close relationships does not require special greetings. On the contrary, in Rome, Paul's recognition of people he knew would help him as a letter of recommendation, since these people were well known to the Roman Christians, but Paul was not.

Let us now consider the people who are named. It is not implausible that Aquila and Priscilla were in Rome in the late 50s. They had come to Corinth from Rome at the time of Claudius' expulsion of the Jews (around 49) and had a residence there when Paul arrived on the scene around 50 (Acts 18:2-3). A year and a half later, they left Corinth with Paul and went to Ephesus (Acts 18:11, 18-19). According to Acts 18:26 and 1 Corinthians 16:19, they were still in Ephesus in 54 when Paul returned from Jerusalem and Antioch, and at the beginning of 57 when he wrote 1 Corinthians from Ephesus; indeed, they had a church in their house. But in the middle of the year 57, riots broke out in Ephesus against the Christians, so Paul left (Acts 19:23-20:1). Imitating their approach in Corinth, Priscilla and Aquila may have left the city at the same time and

returned to Rome. (Claudius had died in 54, and the early years of Nero's reign were popular and benevolent—a five-year period of good government.) Nor is there any problem if, when Paul wrote to Rome in early 58, there was a church community meeting in their home, as seemed to be the case in several other homes (Rom 16:5, 11, 14, 15), some of which belonged to Jewish Christians. We can assume that the Jews expelled from Rome during the disputes over Christ in 49 would not have lost all their possessions, and that their houses could have been maintained for them by friends. Furthermore, it is likely that after 49, Christians of Jewish origin were no longer welcome in most or all Roman synagogues, and that their community meetings would have moved to the homes of wealthier Christians. Such a separation could explain why, in 64, Nero was able to distinguish between Christians and Jews, even though both were "foreign superstitions."

Many of the names mentioned in Romans 16 fit quite well with the Roman scene. As for "Aristobulus," a grandson of Herod the Great with that name seems to have lived his entire life in Rome, while a certain "Narcissus" was a powerful Roman freedman under Claudius. This does not mean that Paul was writing to these people, but perhaps to people connected with these families. Of the 25 names, six are Latin, the rest are Greek.

In short, we can say that chapter 16 is part of the original letter. How, then, can we explain the existence of manuscripts with 14 or 15 chapters? It is likely that these were early attempts at abridgement to make the letter less tied to a single church and more easily readable for other churches in other places and at other times.

b. The purpose of the letter

Chapter 16 can only be understood if Paul had some knowledge of the Christian community in Rome, even though he never visited it. What were the characteristics of this community? It is a mistake to think that, with the expulsion of Jews in 49 AD by Emperor Claudius, Roman Christianity was almost exclusively of pagan origin. Only the most vocal were expelled. However, it can be said that, towards the end of the 50s, the majority of the Church was of pagan origin.

So what is Paul's aim in writing this letter to them? He knows that he is not appreciated by a number of members of the Jerusalem community because of his insistence that Christians of pagan origin are free from the law, especially in his fiery rhetoric against strict Jewish Christians who observe the Law and their converts, as was the case in his letter to the Galatians. Paul therefore addresses the Roman Christians, asking them to join him in prayer so that the collection for the poor will be accepted by the authorities of the Church in Jerusalem. This presupposes that Paul firmly believes that the arguments he uses to convince the Roman Christians will also convince those in Jerusalem. Paul is able to associate the thinking of the Roman Christians with that of the Christians in Jerusalem because the dominant form of Christianity in Rome was shaped by the Christianity of Jerusalem associated with James and Peter, and was therefore a form of Christianity that appreciated Judaism and was loyal to its customs. This is what Ambrosiaster, who lived in Rome and wrote around the year 375, would later say: "[The Romans] welcomed the faith, but with a Jewish orientation."

Several biblical scholars consider the letter to the Romans to be a general treatise on theology, or even a general apology for his ministry. This ignores the clues given by Paul himself about the purpose of his letter. Nevertheless, such a perspective on this letter is acceptable insofar as it is simply complementary to Paul's main objective. For it is true that Paul brings together his views on God's plan for Jews and Gentiles. It is true that he does so in a more nuanced and balanced way than in his previous writings. It is true that he indirectly defends his apostleship. But all this can be explained by the fact that he is writing this letter while on his way back to Jerusalem, where there is a predominantly Jewish church that he has alienated, and that the church in Rome to which he is writing is quite similar to that of Jerusalem in its observance of the law and worship. As an apostle who had developed a skill for preaching to pagans, he gives a nuanced summary of his position and an apology to the Roman community (ethnically predominantly pagan), thus refining what he will ultimately say to Jewish Christians of the same persuasion in Jerusalem. If he succeeds with the Romans, he can gain a persuasive ally who will help him and his collection gain acceptance in Jerusalem, and this acceptance in Jerusalem will ultimately make Paul acceptable when he comes to Rome after Jerusalem.

B. Background of Romans

For a long time, biblical scholars have recognized the similarity between the letter to the Galatians and the letter to the Romans, with some considering the latter to be a reworking of the former, but in a more peaceful and detailed manner. But the truth is that the letter to the Romans is probably a revision of the polemical positions of the letters to the Philippians and the Galatians. For we must remember that in this letter to the Galatians, Paul boasted of having opposed Peter and James on the observance of Jewish dietary rules, claiming that they had deviated from the truth of the Gospel. He refers to the Christian authorities in Jerusalem as "so-called" pillars, who in fact do not impress him. However, by vigorously attacking the Jewish Christians of Galatia and their demands for circumcision, he seems to equate his opposition to their attitude with his previous opposition to Peter and James. It is easy to imagine that Paul's opponents subsequently sent a report to the authorities in Jerusalem,

capitalizing on Paul's contempt for them. Paul had every reason to fear that his peacemaking gesture of collecting money for the poor of the Church in Jerusalem would not be acceptable.

What Paul condemned in Galatia was the insistence that Gentiles be circumcised in order for Christ to be accepted as fully effective (Gal 5:1-12). But according to Acts 21:21, the rumor among the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem was that Paul was teaching Jews (who had come to believe in Christ) to renounce Moses, not to circumcise their children, and not to observe their Jewish customs. Consider Galatians 4:24, which describes the Sinai covenant as a covenant of slavery; and Galatians 5:2, "If you are circumcised, Christ will be of no benefit to you." Such attacks, combined with sarcasm toward Peter and James, could well have upset even the most moderate Christians in Jerusalem.

If echoes of the Epistle to the Galatians had reached Jerusalem, and if Roman Christianity had been influenced by the Jerusalem Christianity of James and Peter, it is not unlikely that Pauline phrasing similar to that of the Epistle to the Galatians would also have reached Rome. This would explain why, in the Epistle to the Romans, Paul shows concern not only about the reception of the collection in Jerusalem, but also about the reception he himself would receive in Rome. Some of Paul's fellow workers in the missions in Asia Minor and Greece were now in Rome, for example, Urban and the couple Prisca and Aquila (Romans 16:3, 4, 9). The careful greetings addressed to these people were perhaps a way for Paul to encourage the Roman Christians to consult them and not to rely on rumors to determine who he really is; he counts on them to be his advocates.

At the same time, relying solely on his friends is not enough; he must also clearly and fairly explain his real position on the value of Judaism for Christians, Jews and pagans alike. And in this effort, we must accept the possibility that Paul learned from what happened in the wake of the letter to the Galatians written around the year 55. For Paul may have emerged the loser from this heated confrontation with the Galatians. In Corinth, he encountered Christians of pagan origin who had no respect for the Law. So a wiser Paul found himself closer to Peter and James than he had been in Antioch in the year 50 or when he wrote the letter to the Galatians.

C. Observations From the Text of Romans

a. Style

Compared to the letter to the Galatians, the letter to the Romans stands out for its cautious politeness. It carefully distinguishes between unbelieving Jews and Jewish Christians, whom it refers to as "saints" (Romans 15:26, 31); we are a long way from the "false brothers" of the epistle to the Galatians.

b. The Roman Community

For Paul, this Roman community is made up of "God's beloved" (Rom 1:7) whose faith is proclaimed throughout the world (Rom 1:8). Even though he is not its founder, he recognizes the high quality of this Christianity (Rom 15:14). His only fear concerns the divisions and scandals that would lead them away from the teaching they had received (Rom 16:17). In short, he recognizes that the Romans have received a valid form of the Gospel, even if this Gospel came from the more conservative Jewish Christians of Jerusalem. By stating in Romans 16:16 that "All the churches of Christ greet you," Paul places the Roman community on the same level as the churches he founded. The same strategic role is played by the use of "we," bringing together the Roman Christians with himself and his Christians: "Through baptism, in his death, we were buried with him, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live a new life" (Rom 6:4).

c. Paul's role

Some opponents in Galatia questioned Paul's right to be called an apostle. Paul would never yield on this point, but he would use a more diplomatic tone. While in his letter to the Galatians he insisted that he had been appointed an apostle by Jesus Christ and God the Father (Gal 1:17, 19), to the Romans he said more humbly: "Paul, a slave of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle" (Rom 1:1).

Unlike in his other undisputed letters, where he associates himself with one collaborator or another to write his letter, Paul addresses the Romans alone, which means that the authority of the letter rests solely on him. Why? When he goes to Jerusalem, he will have to defend himself alone for what he preaches, and not for what others preach.

If he writes to the Romans about the role of Jews and Gentiles in Christ, it is not because he thinks they have been inadequately taught, but because he is compelled by God to preach to the Gentiles, wherever they may be, including Rome (Rom 1:14-15).

When Paul uses the phrase "I urge you" or "I ask you" (Rom 12:1; 15:30) to give his opinion, it is part of a typically diplomatic style in which the author shows that he shares the values of his audience.

In short, this is no longer the same Paul who wrote to the Galatians.

d. Paul's Christianity

Biblical scholars agree that Paul uses his letter to the Romans to demonstrate his orthodoxy. How does he do this?

which [the Gospel] He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures, concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead. (Rom 1:2-4)

This is a typically Judeo-Christian formulation of the Gospel with which the reader was certainly familiar. Thus, to win over his audience, Paul abandons his usual Gospel in favor of a creed of Jewish origin.

To defend his orthodoxy, Paul also takes a negative approach by presenting what is contrary to his convictions: "Why then should we not do evil that good may come, as some slanderers say we do?" (Romans 3:8). This passage refers to Galatians 3:19, where Paul affirms that the Law came so that transgressions might be revealed, placing under God's curse those who cannot observe the Law, but Christ has freed us from this curse. His opponents therefore accused Paul of encouraging transgression in order to increase Christ's liberating power. Attacking this truncated presentation of his Christianity, Paul writes: "Do we then nullify the law through faith? Not at all! On the contrary, we uphold the law" (Rom 3:31). This is the language that will appeal to his audience.

There was probably a Jewish/pagan Christianity in Rome that considered Judaism to have been replaced by Christianity and vigorously rejected Jewish customs and festivals. Paul's excesses in his letter to the Galatians may have led some to place him in this category. But the warnings addressed to the "strong" in Romans 14-15 may be directed at the more liberal Christians in Rome who claimed Paul as one of their own because he had a reputation for allowing his converts to eat all kinds of food without observing Jewish customs (Gal 2:12) and to mock those who considered what they put into "their stomachs" to be an important religious issue (Phil 3:19). But in Corinth, Paul had learned, to his great regret, that freedom can lead those "who had knowledge" to be insensitive to those who do not share their enlightenment. In 1 Cor 8:8, he had to lecture his own converts: "Food does not bring us close to God. If we do not eat it, we will not fall behind; if we eat it, we will not be ahead." It is therefore a wiser Paul who writes to Rome in an even more delicate situation, where those who are sensitive to the question of food are perhaps in the majority among Christians, and where the minority may think that they share Paul's point of view in considering others to be weak. In Romans 14:1 ff., Paul dissociates himself from such an attitude, which sows division. Similarly, by rebuking the boasting of the pagans and describing Christians of pagan origin as wild olive branches grafted onto the cultivated olive tree of Israel (11:24), by insisting that God has not rejected his people (11:1) and by predicting the ultimate conversion of all Israel, Paul refutes this radical Christianity not primarily because it dominates in Rome, but because he himself has been falsely accused of supporting it, an accusation that would make him persona non grata to the majority of Roman Christians. What Paul affirms about Jewish values in Romans 9-11 is therefore not an attack on dominant Roman Christianity, but a confirmation of it!

We are therefore faced with a Paul who has evolved and gained greater maturity.

- While, according to Galatians 2:11-12, Paul argued with Peter and James's followers in Antioch about their overly strict observance of dietary laws, to the point of not eating with pagans, in Romans 14:3 he seems to adopt a more peaceful attitude toward strict observers. "Let not him who eats despise him who abstains."
- In Galatians 5:2, Paul said, "If you are circumcised, Christ will be of no benefit to you," but in Romans 3:1-2 his tone is more moderate: "What, then, is the advantage of being a Jew? What is the value of circumcision? Much in every way! First of all, the revelations of God were entrusted to them."
- In his letter to the Galatians, Paul distinguished himself as having a mission to the uncircumcised, while the "pillars" of Jerusalem took care of the circumcised, but now he writes in Romans 15:8: "Christ became a minister of the circumcision to show the truth of God, in order to confirm the promises made to the fathers."
- In Galatians 3:10, 13, 23, and 24, Paul wrote: "All who rely on observing the Law are under a curse... Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law... Before faith came, we were held captive under the law... The law was our guardian until Christ came." In Romans 3, without contradicting what he said to the Galatians, Paul adopts a different tone: "Do we then nullify the law through this faith? Not at all! On the contrary, we uphold the law." (Romans 3:31).
- While in Galatians 3:19-20 Paul affirmed that the Law was given by angels, in Romans 7:7, 12, 14, and 16 he denies that the Law is sin: "The Law is holy... The Law is spiritual... The Law is good."

e. An evolving view of salvation history

It is undoubtedly his presentation of salvation history that best expresses Paul's evolution. In his letter to the Galatians, he does not really consider God's relationship with humanity as a history of salvation, that is, salvation already offered in what we call the Old Testament dispensation, which reaches its climax in Christ.

On the contrary, in the epistle to the Galatians, there is an apocalyptic contrast between an old kingdom of slavery, sin, and curse, marked by the powerlessness of the Law, and a new kingdom introduced by Christ and marked by freedom and grace. The apocalyptic element is also present in the Epistle to the Romans, for Romans 5:8, 10 describes people before Christ's death, including the Jews, as sinners and enemies of God, and Romans 5:13, 20-21 asserts that the Law allowed sin to be punished and to increase. But this negative view of what preceded Christ is tempered elsewhere by an at least partially salvific perspective, particularly in chapters 9 to 11, which give a positive value to Israel's past history under the Law: "To them belong the adoption, the covenants, the Law, the worship, and the promises. To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race according to the flesh came the Messiah" (Rom 9:4). The refrain in Romans 1:16; 2:9-10, "first the Jews, then the Greeks," is closer to salvation history than to apocalyptic thinking, especially if we add to this refrain "finally all Israel" from Romans 11:26. Unlike the Epistle to the Galatians, which emphasizes the obsolescence of the Law, the Epistle to the Romans focuses on the relationship between two peoples in God's plan of salvation.

D. Aftermath: Paul in Rome

What were the immediate consequences of Paul's letter to the Romans at the end of the 50s?

a. Paul's reception in Rome

We pointed out that Paul wrote this letter partly to defend himself, fearing that he would not be accepted in either Jerusalem or Rome. Acts 21:17-26 reports that there was strong opposition to Paul when he arrived in Jerusalem at Pentecost in the year 58, because he had a reputation among some Jewish Christians for spreading propaganda against their observance of the Law. James himself treated Paul as a brother. Nevertheless, when Paul attempted to show his goodwill by going to the temple, the Jews revolted against him, and their incessant opposition led the Romans to send him to Rome as a prisoner. As he approached the city (around the year 60), some Roman Christians went out of the city and traveled 50 or 60 kilometers, as far as the Three Taverns and even to the Forum of Appius (Acts 28:15), to welcome Paul and encourage him. Thus, if we can trust this information contained in Acts, the Paul who wrote the Epistle to the Romans was accepted both by the Jerusalem branch of Christianity represented by James and by the leaders of Roman Christianity. This last detail finds some confirmation in the statement in 1 Clement 5:2-7, written about thirty-five years later, which refers to the "good apostles Peter and Paul" as examples of the "greatest and most righteous pillars [of the Church]." The order of the two names in Clement betrays the established rank of the two men in Roman estimation; for Ignatius of Antioch, writing to Rome (4:3) about a decade after Clement, uses the same order in designating Peter and Paul as apostles of the Roman Church. Although Rome was not a Pauline church, it is clear that the letter to the Romans was sufficiently well received that the majority of Roman Christians recognized Paul's claim to be an apostle comparable to Peter (Gal 2:7-8).

b. The denunciation of Paul and Peter

Nevertheless, the implications in 1 Clement concerning the deaths of Peter and Paul indicate that all did not go smoothly in Rome for the two apostles, who both appear to have been in the capital in the early 60s. What they endured is presented as an example of death due to "jealousy and envy." If Peter and Paul died during Nero's persecution, then the inference drawn from Tacitus, Annals 15:44, suggests that "jealousy and envy" refers to the betrayal of their fellow Christians: "The first [Christians] arrested who confessed were condemned, and then, on the basis of their testimony, a great multitude." Mt 24:10 shows that Christians were handing each other over to the authorities; and that 'envy' was sometimes the cause, as is clear from Ph 1:15-17, where Paul writes as a prisoner that "some preach Christ out of envy... thinking to inflict suffering on me in my prison." Who were these fellow Christians who hated Peter and Paul so much? All the evidence points to the Jewish Christian missionaries who insisted on circumcision. In Col 11:12, Paul speaks of the "danger" he faced "from false brothers," and Gal 2:4 identifies the Jewish Christians insisting on circumcision whom Paul confronted in Jerusalem in the late 40s as "false brothers." Although they failed to turn the "pillars" of Jerusalem against Paul at that time, the ultra-conservative Jewish Christians remained his enemies, spreading propaganda against him in the early 50s in Galatia and Philippi. According to Acts 21:20, when Paul came to Jerusalem in the late 50s, Jewish Christians "zealous for the law" spread false rumors about him. Although James advised Paul to go to the temple to refute these rumors, the Jews revolted against him, which ultimately led to his transfer to Rome as a prisoner. In Romans 16:17-18, in reference to opponents of moderate Jewish Christianity, Paul clearly shows that he is thinking of the extremists who insisted on circumcision (see Philippians 3:2, 19). Apparently, after Paul's arrival in Rome, these dissidents hated him enough to eventually denounce him to the Romans.

There is less evidence of opposition to Peter, but the Christians "of the circumcision party" were also hostile to him. According to Acts 11:2-3, after Peter baptized Cornelius (in the late 30s?), they criticized him in Jerusalem for his openness to pagans. Acts 15:5-11 and Galatians 2:1-9 clearly indicate that Peter disagreed with the position on circumcision adopted by the "false brothers" or Christian Pharisees at the meeting in Jerusalem in the late 40s. However, after this meeting, according to Galatians 2:12, Peter deviated from Paul's position on Jewish dietary laws because he "was afraid of those who favored circumcision." It is certain that the image of Peter projected in 1 Peter, written from Rome (in the 80s?), would not have been

appreciated by Jewish Christians who insisted on circumcision, for 1 Peter 3:18 implies the inability of the Law to make people righteous.

c. Pierre and Paul united, because they are further to the left than the ultraconservatives

There is therefore compelling evidence that ultra-conservative Jewish Christians criticized Peter and Paul, spread propaganda against them, and endangered them in the 40s and 50s, particularly in Jerusalem. These ultra-conservatives were also present in Rome. This would explain why, in the Epistle to the Romans, although Paul went to great lengths to show his closeness to moderate Jewish/pagan Christianity, he repeated in the early chapters his opposition to any insistence on the circumcision of pagans. Then, during Nero's persecution, no blame was attributed to the Jews, as we have already noted. But did not Christians who were Jewish and their circumcised pagan converts consider themselves to be Jewish Christians, and did not the "evidence" provided to the Roman authorities (Tacitus) consist in distinguishing between them and Christians of pagan origin who had converted to Jesus without being circumcised? If such evidence, motivated in part by aversion ("envious jealousy") toward the missionary policies of Peter and Paul, led to the death of both apostles, it is understandable why later Roman tradition would have obscured the differences between the two men's thoughts and united them as "pillars," even foundations, of the Roman Church. The fact that Peter is mentioned first may mean that his position on Judaism was closest to the mainstream of the Roman Church. Paul's remarks in the Epistle to the Romans, however, apparently allowed him to be considered sufficiently moderate; and perhaps his earlier, more radical reputation as one who saw no value in circumcision and the Law was better understood when the intolerance of Jewish/pagan Christianity insisting on circumcision became apparent during persecution.

d. Marcion in the 2nd century

Rome's instinct against an overly radical rejection of Jewish heritage was revived in the mid-2nd century through opposition to the theologian Marcion of Sinope. While Paul had asserted that Christ had freed humanity from the curses of the Law, Marcion went further in rejecting the history of salvation by attributing responsibility for the Law to a demigod, as opposed to the true God who gave us Jesus Christ. The fact that Marcion made Paul, one of the two apostles of Rome, his theological hero and the center of the New Testament canon did not prevent him from being expelled by the presbyters of Rome around the year 144 (Epiphanius, Panarion, 42).

8. The Roman Church in the Second Christian generation (65-95 – 1 Peter and Hebrews) p. 128-158

Two works, the First Epistle of Peter, written in Rome, and the Epistle to the Hebrews, written for Rome, provide information about Rome in the period between the Epistle to the Romans (around 58 AD) and the First Epistle of Clement, written in Rome (around 96 AD). No definite date can be assigned to these two works, but it is safe to place them in the period from the late 60s to the early 90s, with the feeling that they may both belong to the 80s.

A. The First Epistle of Peter p. 128

a. Date and Destination

Determining the date depends largely on the answers to two questions:

- i. Was the epistle written at the beginning of Roman persecution, as suggested in 1 Peter 4:12-14: "Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you... If you are insulted for the name of Christ"? If so, we would have a reference either to Nero's persecution (around 64 AD), or to persecution in certain places towards the end of Domitian's reign (90s AD), or to repression in Bithynia under Trajan (around 112 AD). But a study of the language of the epistle suggests perhaps a simple situation of adversity for an isolated community rather than actual persecution.
- ii. Was this letter written by Peter, and therefore during his lifetime? Despite the beginning of the letter, where Peter claims to be the author, several arguments militate against this idea,
 - including the high quality of the Greek style, incompatible with a fisherman from Galilee,
 - the quotations from the Greek version (Septuagint) of the Old Testament rather than the Hebrew version,
 - and the echo of Pauline thought.

Is it possible, then, that this letter was co-authored, since 1 Peter 5:12 reads, "I have written this brief letter to you through Silvanus"? However, most biblical scholars opt for a date around the 80s, i.e., after Peter's death. In this case, the letter would have been written by someone who considered himself a disciple or follower of Peter, such as Silvanus.

Few biblical scholars doubt that the letter was written in Rome, for in 1 Peter 5:13 we read: "The church of God in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you greetings"; and in Jewish and Christian circles it was customary to refer to Rome as "Babylon," because the Romans had conquered Jerusalem

and destroyed the temple in 70 AD, just as Babylon had done 600 years earlier (which adds to the argument for dating the epistle after 70 AD). Furthermore, Papias, at the beginning of the 2nd century, informs us that tradition placed the composition of 1 Peter in Rome (Eusebius, Church History, 2:15:2).

Establishing the recipients is more complicated, as we read: “To the elect who live as strangers in the dispersion, in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.” Despite the use of the word “dispersion” (diaspora), which belongs to Jewish language, the recipients are clearly of pagan origin, as indicated by their backgrounds. But what do the geographical locations mentioned refer to: the Roman provinces that made up almost all of Asia Minor, or smaller areas reflecting ancient national origins? A careful reconstruction of the recipients favors the second hypothesis, i.e., rural communities of Christians living in remote areas of northern Asia Minor, regions where Paul had not traveled. This hypothesis finds some support in Pliny, who, around the year 110, searched for Christians in the region of Bithynia and found them scattered “in villages and rural areas.” If we accept the hypothesis that the recipients had been evangelized by people other than Paul and that Christianity had been their religion for several years, we must ask ourselves why a letter would have been sent to them from Rome under Peter’s name. In fact, if this region of Asia Minor had not been evangelized by Paul, it may have been evangelized from Jerusalem by missionaries representing a moderate conservative Jewish Christianity who identified with Peter. Of the regions mentioned in 1 Peter 1:1, three (Cappadocia, Pontus, and Asia) are mentioned in the list in Acts 2:9, a list that some consider programmatic of what Luke knows to have been the spread of Christianity from Jerusalem, a list that ends with Rome. Thus, the main reason for a letter from Peter and Rome to northern Asia Minor could be that the two regions shared the same type of Christianity, which had its origins in Jerusalem. The “chosen together with you” of Rome who send their greetings (1 Peter 5:13) and the chosen who receive the letter (1 Peter 1:1) could be part of the “brotherhood in the world” (1 Peter 5:9) because they had the same missionary affiliation. And it is quite possible that with the fall of Jerusalem and the flight of Jewish Christians, Rome, where Peter had died, became the main spokesperson for a Christianity that remained strongly attached to its Jewish heritage without insisting on circumcision or the Sabbath. This would explain why Rome, through 1 Clement, wrote to Corinth to correct it around 96 AD and why Ignatius could write to the Romans around 110: “You have taught others” (3:1).

b. The Jewish Aspect of 1 Peter

Several biblical scholars consider chapter 1 (and part of chapter 2) to be a homily or baptismal liturgy. This means that the beginning of the first epistle of Peter offers a fundamental way of looking at Christian conversion and the status of Christian life. It should be noted right away that this presentation of the foundations of Christianity is very strongly influenced by the Old Testament, to the point that the motifs of the Exodus, the wandering in the desert, and the Promised Land taken from the Pentateuch have simply been taken up and imaginatively reapplied to the conversion of the pagans to Christ. If this experience in the desert made the tribes enslaved in Egypt a people, indeed the people of God, Christian conversion made the pagans, who were formerly no people, the people of God (1 Peter 2:10).

Let us note the parallels outlined in the epistle.

Old Testament	1 Peter
The Hebrews who left Egypt were told to get ready to leave quickly (Ex 12:11).	Christians of pagan origin are also invited to prepare themselves mentally (1:13).
In the desert, the Israelites murmured and wanted to return to the meat pots of Egypt (Exodus 16:2-3).	Christians of pagan origin are warned against the passions of their former ignorance (1:14).
Moses was commanded to tell the people that God was making them His own: “Be holy, for I, the Lord your God, am holy” (Lev. 19:2).	The same injunction is cited to the recipients of the First Epistle of Peter (1:15-16).
Israel wandered in the desert before reaching its inheritance in the Promised Land.	Christian life is described as a time of exile with the hope of an inheritance yet to be acquired (1:17; 1:4).
Redemption and even the payment of a ransom were figures of speech used to describe God’s deliverance of his people from Egypt (Ex 6:5-6; Deut 7:8; Isa 52:3).	“You know that you have been redeemed from the futile way of life inherited from your fathers.” (1:18)
The Israelites made a calf and worshipped it as the god who had brought them out of Egypt (Ex 32:1-4), a calf made with the silver and gold that the Hebrew women had obtained from their Egyptian neighbors at the time of the tenth plague (Ex 11:2) ; when in reality, the Hebrews had been spared from this plague thanks to the blood of the	“... redeemed not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.” (1:18)

spotless Passover lamb that marked their houses (Ex 12:5-7).	
--	--

The parallels between the saving experiences of the Israelites and Christians are obvious. It is clear that such teaching originated in reflections that greatly appreciated the Jewish heritage and saw the history of salvation as an expression of divine goodness, first bestowed on Israel through Moses, but then extended and increased to the Gentiles through Christ. It is difficult to imagine that it was shaped by Jewish-Christian missionaries who shared with Paul in the Epistle to the Galatians a dualistic approach, applying the language of sin, slavery, and curse to the Israelite dispensation of the Law given to Moses on Sinai.

c. 1 Peter and Pauline Thought

I. General relationship

We have seen that Paul in his letter to the Romans presented a different face from that of Paul in the epistle to the Galatians, one much more favorable to Jewish heritage. When we now consider 1 Peter, the correspondence of this letter with a moderate Paul is significant.

First, even though the letter is presented as the work of Peter, the only two people associated with Peter in the letter are people who had been associated with Paul.

- First there is Sylvain, mentioned in 1 Peter 5:12, who is thought to be the secretary, and who is in fact also Silas in Acts 15:22, 27, who was sent from Jerusalem to bring the Gentiles the decision requiring not circumcision but obedience to certain Jewish customs, a decision in accordance with the positions of James and Peter. According to Acts 15:40, he became Paul's companion on his travels (see 1 Thessalonians 1:1 and 2 Corinthians 1:19).
- Then, Mark, in Pet 5:13, is probably the John Mark of Acts 12:12, whose mother had a house in Jerusalem and who became Paul's companion (see Acts 12:25). If, shortly thereafter, John Mark separated from Paul (Acts 13:13; 15:37-39—perhaps because he found Paul too distant from the law and respect for Jewish customs), tradition has it that Mark rejoined Paul before his death (2 Tim. 4:11—referring to a meeting in Rome?).

Is it a coincidence that these two figures echo the more conservative position of Jerusalem and that of Paul? Do they not correspond to the hypothesis that the Paul of Romans, much more moderate in his attitude toward Judaism, was accepted by the Roman Church, itself founded in Jerusalem by Jewish Christians of a more conservative bent? The association of Sylvain and Mark under Peter's aegis in 1 Peter would therefore not differ significantly from the combination of "Peter and Paul" in 1 Clement and Ignatius, or from Peter's patronage of "our beloved brother Paul" in 2 Peter 3:15.

The presence of Pauline theology in 1 Peter is perfectly explainable if the Roman community had accepted some of the main lines of Paul's thought with moderate nuances similar to those found in the letter he had addressed to them, while continuing to regard Peter as the embodiment of his theology. The ideas in 1 Peter and the letter to the Romans can be compared.

1 Peter	Letter to Romans
1:21: speaks of Christians' trust in God, who raised Jesus from the dead.	4:24: speaks of the justification of those who believe in the One who raised Jesus from the dead
3:21-22: refers to the resurrection of Jesus Christ, "who ascended into heaven and is at the right hand of God."	8:24: "Jesus Christ [...] who was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God."
2:24: The theme of abandoning sin and living righteously	6:11: "dead to sin and alive to God in Jesus Christ."
2:6: "For it is written in Scripture: ' <i>Behold, I lay in Zion a cornerstone, chosen and precious, and whoever trusts in it shall not be put to shame.</i> '"	Romans 3:15: "As it is written: ' <i>Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and a rock of offense, but whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.</i> '"

All this suggests that Paul's theology and expressions had found their place in the life of the Roman church, which inspired the author of 1 Peter to shape his message to northern Asia Minor.

II. Particular strains of thought

There are three themes, addressed in the epistles to the Romans and 1 Peter, that are important for understanding the evolution of Roman Christianity at the end of the first century. These themes are also found in the Epistle to the Hebrews and in the First Epistle of Clement.

- i. The first concerns the use of Jewish cultic language. It can be said that there is more cultic language in the Epistle to the Romans than in any other undisputed Pauline epistle, no doubt because of the Roman Christians' attachment to their Jewish heritage, including their liturgical heritage.

1 Peter	Letter to Romans
1:18-19: "Knowing that you were not <u>redeemed</u> with perishable things like silver or gold... but with the precious <u>blood</u> of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or defect."	3:25: "God presented him as a sacrifice of <u>atonement</u> through his <u>blood</u> , to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed <u>beforehand unpunished.</u> "
2:5: "You yourselves, like living stones, enter into the building of the House inhabited by the Spirit, to form a holy priestly community, to offer spiritual <u>sacrifices</u> acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."	12:1: "I urge you, brothers and sisters, in the name of God's mercy, to offer yourselves as a living <u>sacrifice</u> , holy and pleasing to God: this will be your spiritual worship."
2:9: "But you are a chosen race, a royal <u>priesthood</u> , a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light."	15, 16: "to be a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, consecrated to the <u>priestly</u> office of the Gospel of God, so that the Gentiles might become an offering, sanctified by the Holy Spirit, acceptable to God."

Clearly, the cultic language used symbolically by Paul in his address to the Romans before the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem and its sacrifices remained viable in Roman thought even after this fall. Indeed, the Christian community could be considered as "living stones built into a spiritual house" (1 Peter 2:5; compare 2 Corinthians 6:16).

- ii. The second theme concerns the Roman civil government.

1 Peter	Letter to Romans
2:13-17: Be <u>subject</u> to every <u>human institution</u> for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of <u>evildoers</u> and the praise of those who do good. For it is God's will that by <u>doing good</u> you should silence the ignorance of foolish people. Act as free people, not using your freedom as a cover for evil, but as servants of God. Honor all people, love your brothers and sisters, fear God, honor the king.	13:1-7: Let every person be <u>subject</u> to the <u>governing authorities</u> , for there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. For rulers are not a terror to <u>good conduct</u> , but to <u>bad</u> . Do you want to have no fear of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same, for it is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, then fear. For it is not in vain that they bear the sword: in punishing, they are God's servants, manifesting his wrath against the wrongdoer. That is why it is necessary to submit, not only out of fear of wrath, but also for the sake of conscience. This is also why you pay taxes: those who collect them are charged by God to apply themselves to this office. Give to each what is due: taxes, fees, fear, respect, to each what you owe him.

Such a call for submission may seem surprising. Paul's appeal may have been necessitated by the resentment of Roman Christians toward Claudius' expulsion of them a few years earlier. On the part of 1 Peter, the appeal may have been justified because imperial actions in Rome against Christians by Claudius and Nero had aroused suspicion that Christians were disloyal. Respect for imperial authority would be a recurring issue in the history of the early Roman church.

- iii. The third theme concerns the gradual articulation of a church structure. In Romans 12:6-8, Paul clearly assumes that there are different functions in Rome, specifically seven that he

names: prophecy, service, teaching, exhortation, generous giving, leadership, and acts of mercy. The pastoral epistles (1-2 Timothy, Titus), written after Paul's death, show that in some of the Pauline churches of the 80s, a more clearly articulated structure was developing: presbyters (elders) and deacons. Similarly, in the Petrine church in Rome, a structure composed of presbyters (elders) and young men (deacons?) is taken for granted (1 Peter 5:1-5). This church structure appears to be a matter of survival. Furthermore, both the Pauline pastoral epistles and 1 Peter attach great importance to the household, the place where the community meets. It is quite possible that 1 Peter's emphasis on the home / household was intended to compensate for the isolation and alienation from society felt by Christians in northern Asia Minor. However, for Rome with its house churches (Romans 16) as well as for the churches of Paul's pastoral epistles, the stability and order attributed by the respective authors to the household concern the structure of the church.

B. The Epistle to the Hebrews

Origen sums up the problem of authorship of this work as follows: "Only God knows who wrote this epistle" (Eusebius, Church History 6:25:14). Even its literary form is a mystery, for "it begins like a treatise, continues like a sermon, and ends like an epistle." Let us examine this work in an attempt to reconstruct the history of the Roman community.

a. Date and Destination

I. Title

The epistle itself has no title. The title "To the Hebrews" appears in the oldest manuscript we have, Papyrus 46 (dated 200 AD), and was used at that time in regions as diverse as Egypt (Pantaenus) and North Africa (Tertullian); no other competing title ever appeared in terms of destination. Why was it given this title? It has been suggested that the title comes from a tradition based on knowledge of the actual circumstances of its composition and destination, i.e., that the letter was intended to correct the opinions of Hebrew Christians.

So who are we talking about when we refer to the Hebrews? The term can refer to two types of Christians: those who remained faithful to the temple in Jerusalem and its worship, and those whom the Acts of the Apostles (6:1) calls "Hellenists," a group that spoke (only?) Greek, was acculturated to the Hellenistic world, and was freed from all religious allegiance, to which Stephen belonged. The first type is represented by James, Peter, and even "the apostles," who continued to frequent the temple. So, to which type of Hebrews does the title "To the Hebrews" refer?

When we analyze the epistle, the theology that emerges is very similar to that of Stephen, the Hellenistic leader, insisting on the inadequacy of the Jewish place of worship, an opinion that contrasts with the position of the Hebrew Christians in Acts who continue to frequent the temple. It is plausible that the New Testament writing closest to the Epistle to the Hebrews on the theme of the replacement of Jewish worship is the fourth Gospel, where the Incarnate Word is the tabernacle of God among us (Jn 1:14: "and dwelt among us"), where the body of Jesus is the temple (Jn 2:21), and where Jesus replaces the motifs of the Sabbath, Passover, Tabernacles, and Dedication, so that they are "feasts of the Jews" but not of Christians. John has been called "the Gospel of the Hellenists," and it can seriously be argued that the Hellenists of Acts, the author of John, and the author of Hebrews should all be classified as variants of the Group IV Jewish/pagan-origin Christians described in our introduction. It is therefore tempting (but impossible to prove) to suggest that the title "To the Hebrews," given to the work shortly after its composition, is accurate and precise, since the epistle was sent by a Hellenistic theologian in order to dissuade a group of Hebrew Christians from their attachment to Jewish worship.

II. Author and Locale

i. Author

The idea that Paul wrote the Epistle to the Hebrews, already considered problematic in ancient times, even by some Church Fathers who accepted it, is now almost universally abandoned. The differences in thought and expression are insurmountable, and even the similarities have lost much of their persuasive power, because they often involve elements common to the New Testament, and because the discussion must be limited to the undisputed Pauline letters. Among other proposals for authorship, both ancient and modern, Apollos, in Acts 18:24 ff., 1 Cor 1:12; 3:6, and 4:6, remains the figure who best matches the characteristics presented by the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews. In any case, he is a second-generation Christian (Heb 2:3) and not a well-known leading apostle.

ii. Locale

a. Jerusalem?

Who are the recipients of the epistle? Although all cities in the world have been suggested, the best candidates are Jerusalem and Rome. The epistle contains a warning against the Levitical priesthood, animal sacrifices, and the earthly Holy of Holies; Jerusalem is the only place where such cultic features could have been encountered as existing realities. However, the epistle opposes a return (Heb 10:32-39) to these elements. Moreover, after the destruction of the temple in 70, there was no longer any significant sacrificial worship in Jerusalem, which made the term "return" inapplicable. Finally, could a second-generation Christian, who did not have the rank of apostle, have hoped that his correction or dissuasion would have any influence in a city where James, the brother of the Lord and a faithful adherent of Jewish worship, enjoyed such eminence? Why would the author have written in elegant Greek a dissuasion intended for Judeo-Christians who knew Hebrew in the context of liturgy, or for Judeo-Christians native to Judea for whom Hebrew or Aramaic was their mother tongue? Why would he never have mentioned the temple, which was part of the daily life of the intended recipients? Therefore, the idea of Jerusalem as the recipient of the Epistle to the Hebrews is the least likely.

b. Final salutation details: Rome

On the other hand, the only concrete indications of the destination in the Epistle to the Hebrews (Heb 13:23-24) correspond well with Rome as the recipient.

And I appeal to you, brethren, bear with the word of exhortation, for I have written to you in few words. Know that our brother Timothy has been set free, with whom I shall see you if he comes shortly.

Let us start from the logical assumption that the recipients know Timothy and are eager to see him. In Romans 16:21, Paul makes sure that Timothy is the first person whose greetings he shares with Rome. Philemon 1:1 associates him with Paul during his imprisonment, probably in Rome in the early 60s. 2 Timothy is deuteropauline, but the author was probably inspired by a plausible historical context for the message he attributed to Paul. He presents Paul as being in prison and close to death; and if 2 Timothy was written after Paul's death in Rome, could the author have envisaged any setting other than Rome? Paul twice urges Timothy to come and see him quickly, before winter (2 Tim 4:9, 21)—an exhortation that would be extremely strange in a post-Pauline letter if Timothy had not gone to see Paul before the apostle's death. We can therefore assert that Timothy had traveled to Rome with Paul in the 60s and was well known to the Roman community, so that the news in the Epistle to the Hebrews concerning Timothy would have made sense for this destination. If we are tempted by the theory that Apollos is the author, he whom Priscilla and Aquila had trained in Christian doctrine (Acts 18:24-26), and who were in Rome at the end of the 50s (Rom 16:3-5) and would have known Timothy, then the initiative to give news of Timothy is easily explained.

The greetings are addressed "to all your leaders [*hegoumenoi*]" (Heb 13:24), a term used twice before. The first use (Heb 13:7) refers to the former leaders who transmitted the word of God to the recipients and set an example through their death and faith, which could refer to Peter and Paul, martyred in the 60s, if Rome is the destination of the letter. The second use (Heb 13:17) refers to the current leaders who watch over the souls of the recipients and are accountable, which could also apply to Rome, since in his letter to the Romans Paul names the role of leader as one of the charisms (Rom 12:10). 1 Clement, writing from Rome, expresses his admiration for the Corinthians' obedience to their leaders (1:3) and indicates that these roles also exist in Rome (21:6: "Let us honor our leaders"), an indication confirmed by the Shepherd of Hermas, Visions 2:6; 9:7 at the beginning of the 2nd century.

The greeting is addressed "to all the saints" (Heb 13:24). Romans 1:7 addresses "all those who are loved by God in Rome, called to be saints"; and Romans 8:27; 16:2, 15 show that "the saints" was a familiar designation for Christians in Rome. Let us compare three texts:

Rom 12:9,13	Heb 6:10	Ignatius, to Romans 3:1
Let love be without hypocrisy... distributing to the needs of the saints	For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have	[Ignatius praising the Church] "in the land of the Romans" as "preeminent in love"—a Church that never envied

	ministered to the saints, and do minister.	anyone but “taught others.”
--	---	--------------------------------

“Those from Italy [*apo*] greet you” (Heb 13:24). There is no doubt that in the Greek of that period, the prepositional phrase can describe the origin and therefore be translated simply as “the Italians.” The use of a country rather than a city in the sentence may favor the interpretation of the destination. For, if we refer to the place of destination, for example if the author were writing from Jerusalem to Rome, he might wish to convey greetings not only from the relatively few Roman Christians likely to be in Jerusalem or Judea, but also from the wider group of Italian Christians, since they too would have had something in common with the Roman recipients as compatriots. (Acts 28:13-14 mentions a group of Christians in Puteoli [Pozzuoli] in the Bay of Naples; there were also Christians in Pompeii and Herculaneum, and probably in Ostia. Perhaps some Christians from these places lived abroad. The Italian cohort was stationed in Caesarea according to Acts 10:1.)

c. The dissemination of the epistle

An external fact corroborates Rome as the recipient of the letter. As we shall see, the Epistle to the Hebrews was written between 65 and 90 AD, but it was already known in Rome in 96 AD! Less than thirty years after it was written, the Epistle to the Hebrews was quoted by Clement in a letter written by the Church of Rome to the Church of Corinth. And throughout the 2nd century, Rome remained the main witness to the knowledge of the Epistle to the Hebrews, as it was known in and through Roman testimonies such as the Shepherd of Hermas, Hippolytus' commentaries on the Old Testament (around 235), the Muratori Canon (late 2nd century), and the presbyter Gaius (around 200). This widespread knowledge cannot be attributed to the fact that the letter was written in Rome, because if that were the case, it would represent Roman opinions, whereas the opposite is true: both Clement and Hermas present opposing views, even though they use certain formulations from the Letter to the Hebrews. This fact is better explained if the Epistle to the Hebrews was a work received by the Roman Church but never enthusiastically appropriated. Indeed, such an explanation is almost necessitated by Rome's attitude toward the canonical status of the Epistle to the Hebrews. Even though the communities of Alexandria and the East became aware of the existence of the Epistle to the Hebrews almost a century after it was known in Rome, the epistle was relatively quickly accepted as canonical in the East and attributed to Paul. Rome, on the other hand, never suggested that it came from Paul; and indeed, at the very moment when Alexandria was attributing the epistle to Paul, the Muratorian Canon and Gaius the Roman presbyter were implicitly or explicitly denying it. As late as 380, Ambrosiaster, a good indicator of Roman opinion, commented on thirteen letters of Paul, but not on the Epistle to the Hebrews. This was possible because Rome, which had received the letter in the first place, knew that it did not come from Paul, and this memory had left its mark. The author was a second-generation Christian authority (Heb 2:3) and respected as such by the Roman recipients, but he did not have the influence of an apostle. Rome's attitude toward the canonicity and therefore the authority of Christian writings was determined by apostolic origin; thus, the Epistle to the Hebrews was not considered Scripture according to Roman criteria. It was only when the opinion that Paul was the author became accepted (around 400) that Rome agreed to consider it the fourteenth letter of the apostle.

III. Date

Biblical scholars are reluctant to date the Epistle to the Hebrews earlier than the last third of the first century. Hebrews 13:5 refers to a well-established church where financial problems had arisen. In Hebrews 2:3, it is clear that the author and the recipients share a second-generation Christianity, “attested by those who heard it.” Indeed, Hebrews 13:7 suggests that “those who proclaimed the word of God to you” have been dead long enough for their faith to now be a model to imitate. “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever” (Hebrews 13:8) only makes sense as a refrain if “yesterday” is sufficiently distant that it is necessary to emphasize the theme of continuity and stability. In Hebrews 10:32, the author exhorts: “Remember the days of old, when after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings.” The severity of the sufferings described, especially if we find an allusion to martyrdom in Hebrews 13:7, does not fit well with any period prior to the late 60s. Admitting this and knowing that in the year 96 1 Clement quoted the Epistle to the Hebrews, we can reasonably date the composition of the Epistle to the Hebrews between 65 and 95.

Some biblical scholars have used the descriptions of worship scattered throughout the epistle to establish a date prior to the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem in August 70:

- i. The verbs in the present tense would give the impression that Levitical sacrifices are still being offered, for example:
 - “There are priests who offer gifts according to the law” (Heb 8:4);
 - “The priests enter the first tabernacle continually to perform their ritual duties, but the high priest enters the second only once a year” (Heb 9:6-7);
 - “The law can never make those who approach perfect through the same sacrifices that are continually offered year after year, otherwise would they have ceased to be offered?” (Heb 10:1-2).
- ii. Although the epistle insists that a new covenant replaces the old one, which has become obsolete (Hebrews 8:13), there is nevertheless no reference to the destruction of the temple, which could have reinforced the argument.

Let's evaluate these two arguments.

- i. The use of verbs in the present tense is not decisive. Josephus, in Against Apion (2:77), twenty-five years after the destruction of the temple, writes in the present tense about Jewish worship: “We offer sacrifices for them [the emperor and the Roman people] without ceasing.” 1 Clement 40:4-5, also written a quarter of a century after the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, says: “Those who make their offerings at the appointed times are acceptable and blessed... for the high priest is assigned his own liturgical functions” - a use of the present tense that is all the more significant given that the work illustrates the mentality of the Church of Rome! Mishnaic documents, compiled more than a century after the destruction of the temple, describe sacrifices and priestly duties in minute detail, as if the cult were still in force. Clearly, the present tense in these works describes an ideal, that is, the permanent customs of a ritual considered to have timeless value. And it is this value that the Epistle to the Hebrews attacks as now outdated.
- ii. The idea that the author should have invoked the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, if it had already taken place, to prove his point, misunderstands his argument. Indeed, temple sacrifices ceased when the Babylonians destroyed the first temple in Jerusalem in the 6th century BC, but they resumed seven decades later when the second temple was built; and many expected the same thing to happen after the destruction of the second temple. The Epistle to the Hebrews asserts that these cultic practices no longer have any value, not because the temple in Jerusalem was destroyed—an argument that would have reduced the issue to something temporary and temporal—but because Christ has forever replaced their significance. This interpretation of the author's point of view is related to the fact that he writes about the Tabernacle rather than the temple.

If the author did not need to mention the destruction of the temple, there is no compelling reason to date the Epistle to the Hebrews before the year 70; and all the evidence points to the thesis that the Epistle to the Hebrews was written to the Roman Church between 75 and 90.

b. The Message of Hebrews to Roman Christianity

i. Context: the destruction of the temple

The fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple in 70 CE certainly had an impact on Roman Jews. Many undoubtedly witnessed the triumphal parade marking Titus' return from Jerusalem, with the sacred liturgical vessels of the temple prominently displayed. (Josephus, The Jewish War 7, 5, 3-6; #118-57.) And for many years, coins celebrating the defeat of the Jews were minted, so that in their daily monetary transactions, the Jews were reminded of their humiliation. In the year 80, as Titus was nearing the end of his life, the great arch that bears his name was completed at one end of the Roman Forum, where one can still see the graphic representation of the spoils of Jerusalem and the temple brought to Rome. The Jews, who until then had paid an equivalent tax for the maintenance of this temple, were now forced to pay a special “Jewish tax” for the maintenance of the Roman temple of Jupiter Capitolinus, a not-so-subtle reminder of which god and which nation had won.

ii. Replacement of the destroyed temple

Despite the destruction of the temple, some Roman Jews reportedly harbored the hope that it would one day be rebuilt in Jerusalem: a third temple that some Orthodox Jews still aspire to today. The Jewish apocalypses of the time (IV Esdras, II Baruch) allude to an analogy with the earlier fall of Jerusalem to Babylon. The fact that the temple was rebuilt after this fall may have inspired the petition in the oldest form of prayer, the Shemoneh Esreh, composed at that time: “Be merciful, O

Lord our God... to Jerusalem, your city; to Zion, the dwelling place of your glory; and to your temple, your dwelling place." What about Roman Christians, whether Jewish or pagan in origin, in a dominant Christianity marked by its origins in Jerusalem, where their spiritual ancestors had combined their loyalty to the temple with their faith in Jesus (Acts 2:46; 5:42; 21:23-26)? More conservative Christians might logically have expected the temple in Jerusalem to be replaced by another earthly sanctuary of a specifically Christian character. The idea that there should be a visible replacement for Jewish Levitical worship, sacrifices, and priesthood may have seemed particularly compelling in Rome, where visible pagan worship, with its Pontifex Maximus and the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus, seemed to be the rival replacement after the Roman victory over Jerusalem. After all, Christians had in their tradition a statement that Jesus would destroy the temple in Jerusalem and build "another" one. The diversity of interpretations of the New Testament concerning this "other" shows that there was no unanimity as to whether the replacement would be visible or of another kind, whether it would be a purified continuation or a radical break.

iii. The New Israel

It is entirely plausible that in Rome, among Christians of both Jewish and pagan origin, there was a conservative mindset that nurtured the hope of seeing the destroyed temple of Jerusalem replaced by a purified visible continuity. All this can be explained by the place occupied in the religious imagination by the exodus from Egypt, the gift of the Law and the covenant at Sinai, as well as worship in the tent in the desert. Israel became the people of God's covenant during this experience centered around Sinai; now, God was renewing his covenant through Christ. His way of acting with Israel shed light on his way of acting with the Church. The scene of Pentecost (a Jewish feast commemorating the covenant at Sinai, the gift of the Ten Commandments seen as words of fire) in Acts 2:1-12 can only be fully understood when placed in the context of the covenant. The common goods of the Church of Jerusalem and their distribution to the needy reflect the ideal of the desert in Deuteronomy 15:4, according to which there would be no poor in Israel. Even the term "Church" echoes the Septuagint of Deuteronomy 23:3,8, which uses this term to refer to "the assembly of the Lord" in the desert. The parallels between the Christian community in Jerusalem and the community of the Dead Sea Scrolls (Qumran) have often been pointed out. They are understandable because both communities considered themselves to be the Israel renewed by God's covenant, and both were inspired by the original Israel at the time of the Sinai covenant.

iv. The Desire For a New Home

In our presentation of 1 Peter, a letter written from the Roman church, we noted that its Christianity was strongly influenced by the Old Testament background concerning the exodus, the wandering in the desert, and the promised land. After the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem, could not the Christians of such a church think that the temple would be replaced by a return to the Levitical sacrificial worship of the desert, a worship that was no longer tied to a fixed building in Jerusalem and which, for that reason, was suitable for a spiritual Israel in the diaspora, a Levitical cult that was not burdened by the corruption of wealth and splendor and was therefore better suited to a pilgrim people? Recall that Acts 6:7 tells us that "a large number of priests" in Jerusalem accepted faith in Christ, and that there may have been elements of this Levitical heritage in the Christian community in Rome. These Christians probably did not desire a new physical temple in Jerusalem, but rather a "dwelling place" as an embodiment of the desert worship, a visible and purified Christian continuity of the Levitical worship not localized in the temple in Jerusalem.

v. Attack of This Nostalgia For a Bygone and Obsolete Past

The Epistle to the Hebrews was therefore written to correct these hopes, if they had existed. Representing the radical (Hellenistic) "left" of the Christian spectrum, the conclusion (Heb 13:14), "We do not have a permanent city here, but we seek the one to come," is almost identical to the promise in Jn 4:21: "The hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. Based on his bookish knowledge of ancient Israelite worship, the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews shaped the image of Jesus as a high priest whose sacrifice on the cross and intercession in heaven are more effective than worship in any earthly sanctuary could ever be. The only true dwelling place is now in heaven (Heb 8:1-2; 9:24); there has been a change in both the priesthood and the Law (Heb 7:12); the new covenant renders the old covenant obsolete and causes it to disappear (Heb 8:13).

In the context of this conservative Christianity in Rome, the difference in approach between Paul in his epistle to the Romans and the author of the epistle to the Hebrews is remarkable. Paul wrote to this community in the late 50s to assure them that he was not a radical (Hellenist) and that he was in favor of some of the hereditary privileges enjoyed by Israel. The Epistle to the Hebrews was addressed to the same community some 20 years later when it was, in whole or in part, seized by nostalgia for the Israelite heritage, probably because the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem seemed to open the way for Christianity to appropriate that heritage. The epistle is an

unapologetically Hellenistic treatise, considerably more radical toward the Jewish heritage than Paul was.

The danger perceived by the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews is the attraction to a more conservative form of Jewish Christianity, in which Jesus is placed in an unbroken line of salvation history, after the angels and Moses as revelators of God's will. The Epistle to the Hebrews insists, based on Jewish scriptures, that as the Son of God, Jesus breaks with this pattern, for he is above the angels who gave the Law and above Moses. Even though he was fully human, like us in every way except sin (Heb 4:15), Jesus rendered all sacrifices, the Levitical priesthood, and the earthly Holy of Holies useless. "By one offering he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy" (Heb 10:14). He is a great priest, holy, blameless, spotless, exalted above the heavens, who remains forever (Heb 7:24-26). In asserting his point of view, the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews is not simply opposing a "back-to-basics" movement in favor of the status quo; he distances the recipients from an existing Jewish adherence that he compares to elementary training (Heb 5:11-6:1). The first order, consisting of Jewish worship, was abolished in order to establish a new order in accordance with God's will (Heb 10:9). The Epistle to the Hebrews ends with a resounding call: "Let us go forth from the camp" [of the desert of the Exodus] (Heb 13:13). While the fall of Jerusalem aroused nostalgia, he declares: "We do not have a permanent city here" (Heb 13:14).

- vi. The diplomatic approach and rhetorical skill of the Epistle to the Hebrews
The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews demonstrates great oratory skill and a keen sense of diplomacy.
- He urges the "brothers" to whom he is writing to bear with the brief "word of exhortation" he has written to them (Heb 13:22).
 - His tone is gentle: "Even though we speak like this, we are convinced, beloved, that you have within you better things that belong to salvation" (Heb 6:9).
 - His reasoning is based on a more excellent ministry and a covenant founded on better promises (Heb 8:6). The blood of sacrificed animals did indeed purify temporarily, but how much more does the blood of Christ purify (Heb 9:13-14)?
 - He praises the "elders" of Israel, but as believers in the promise they could not yet see, namely the "better" things that God had reserved for Christians (Heb 11:2, 39-40).
 - He acknowledges the brotherly love of the Church to which he addresses himself and asks that this love continue (Heb 13:1), and he praises the respect it shows to its "leaders" (13:7, 17).
- vii. A mixed reception for the Epistle to the Hebrews
- Despite its sensitive and polite tone, the Epistle to the Hebrews did not convince the Roman Church, at least not its most conservative faction. Nevertheless, it was not rejected outright. Its merit lies in having forced the community to come to terms with the challenge that lay ahead, even if the end result was a greater attachment to Rome and Levitical worship. The letter was preserved because the more balanced section of the Roman Church also rejected an ultra-conservative nostalgia for Levitical worship.
- viii. A letter more radical than that of 1 Peter
- Both letters were written after the destruction of the temple. Both agree that Christians offer sacrifices to God through Christ ("spiritual sacrifices" in 1 Peter 2:5; "sacrifice of praise" in Hebrews 13:15). But while 1 Peter speaks of a spiritualized continuation of Levitical realities, Hebrews speaks of replacement by another world: in 1 Peter, it is Christians who are now clothed with the holy or royal priesthood (1 Peter 2:5, 9) and who constitute the new dwelling place, a spiritual dwelling place, whereas in the letter to the Hebrews, the priesthood has disappeared, except for that of Christ, and the sanctuary has disappeared and been replaced by a heavenly dwelling place. The response of the first epistle of Peter to those who aspired to a material continuation of worship would therefore have been less radically antithetical, a response in keeping with a tradition strongly attached to the Jewish heritage.

9. Roman Church at the Beginning of The Third Christian Generation (AD 96 – 1 Clement) p. 159-183

We now turn to a work written in Rome in the 1990s that demonstrates a good knowledge of the fundamental ideas developed in the three previous works and perhaps even of the works themselves. However, 1 Clement is not simply repetitive; it reformulates the Jewish cultural heritage and offers a typically Roman vision of church order, providing guidance for Christian hierarchical models for centuries to come.

A. Date, Author, Situation

a. Date

1 Clement 5-6 cites the trials of Peter and Paul as an early example of how “zealous jealousy” among Christians led to persecution and death. It is clear that the author is reminding his readers of the careers of these two “pillars” of the Church, even though he refers to the apostles as a past generation in chapters 42 and 44. He is therefore writing some time after the deaths of Peter and Paul in the mid-60s. Similarly, the author describes the church of Corinth (founded around 50 AD) as “ancient” (47:6). However, the author still speaks of Peter and Paul as having “fought in the days closest to us” (5:1), and of the multitude of Nero’s martyrs as having suffered “among us,” so that a date several generations later (in the 2nd century) seems impossible. It is generally assumed that the initial reference (1:1) “to the sudden and repeated misfortunes and calamities that have befallen us” recalls the persecution of certain Christians in the last years of Emperor Domitian (81-96), a persecution that also seems to be evoked in the book of Revelation when it describes Rome as a prostitute “drunk with the blood of the saints and the blood of the martyrs of Jesus” (Rev 17:6). For these reasons, Clement’s first epistle is dated to around 96 AD, just after the end of the persecution.

b. Author

This is a work of the third Christian “generation,” written by an author who was certainly not an apostle, nor apparently a disciple of an apostle. We have moved from the sub-apostolic period (second generation), which produced 1 Peter and the Pauline pastoral epistles, to the fully post-apostolic period of the third generation, where a community or author must rely on its own authority, at most claiming to be in apostolic succession. 1 Clement is sent by “the church of God which dwells in Rome,” but the author never identifies himself by name. The Shepherd of Hermas (Visions 2:4:3), written in Rome (in part, around 100-120), mentions 1 Clement, whose task was to send writings concerning the church to other cities. Dionysius, bishop of Corinth (the church that received 1 Clement), wrote to Rome around 170 about the letter “which was sent to us previously by Clement” (Eusebius, Church History 4:23:11). A decade later, Irenaeus (Against Heresies 3:3:3) writes: “In Clement’s time... the church of Rome sent a very powerful letter to the Corinthians.” This evidence, coming from various sources where the author could be identified, convinced virtually everyone that Clement was indeed the true author, even though he did so “in the name of the Roman church” (Eusebius, Ibid. 3:16). Who was this Clement? Around the year 95, the noble Titus Flavius Clemens (consul, nephew of Vespasian, and cousin of Domitian) was put to death for indolence and/or atheism, a charge often brought against Jews and Christians. But it is wrong for some biblical scholars to attribute the letter sent to the Corinthians to this Clement. It is more plausible to suggest that there was Judaism and/or Christianity in the consul’s house, and that a freedman who had taken the name of the house where he had been a slave was the Christian Clement who wrote the letter. Some biblical scholars have suggested that Clement was of Jewish origin because of his knowledge of the Old Testament. But we forget that Christians of pagan origin often reflected the Christianity of the Jews who had converted them. A pagan from such a Christian background could very well have used Jewish traditions throughout his work and nevertheless written the Greek of 1 Clement, which is more elegant than that of 1 Peter (perhaps written by a Jew), and display the Hellenistic and Stoic patterns of thought found therein. Certainly, the names of the messengers sent to Corinth with 1 Clement (65:1: Claudius Ephebus, Valerius Vito, Fortunatus) suggest that Gentiles were strongly present among Roman Christians. This seems to have been the case for a long time, since 63:3 indicates that these men had been part of the Christian community since their youth.

c. Situation of the Author

If Clement was not a noble consul of Rome, what ecclesiastical office enabled him to write to Corinth in the name of the church of Rome? Irenaeus, Against Heresies 3, 3, 3, mentions that Clement was assigned the bishopric of Rome. The link between the Petrine office in the first century and the fully developed Roman papacy took several centuries to evolve, so it is anachronistic to consider the early leaders of the Roman church as popes: the threefold order of a single bishop, with subordinate presbyters and deacons, was not in place in Rome at the end of the first century; on the contrary, the twofold order of presbyter-bishops and deacons, attested a decade earlier in 1 Peter 5:1-5, was still in force. Indeed, the fact that Ignatius (c. 110) did not mention the single bishop in his letter to the Romans (a very important theme in his other letters) and the usage of Hermas, who speaks of several presbyters (Visions 2.4.2) and bishops (Similitudes 9:27, 2), make it likely that the single bishop structure did not arrive in Rome until around 140-150. However, in the dual structure of presbyter-bishops and deacons, 1 Tim 5:17 indicates that, while presbyters (in the plural) were the overseers of the church in a given region, not all presbyters necessarily had to exercise this function. At a certain stage in the development of the ecclesial order, a single presbyter could supervise a house church, while the city church was supervised by the collective group of these presbyter-bishops of house churches.

Thus, Clement of Rome, as Hermas suggests (Visions 2:4:2-3), may have been one of the presbyter-bishops whose specific task was to write letters to other churches on behalf of the Roman presbyter-bishops. Thus, 1 Clement may have been sent by the collective Roman presbyterate of overseers and written by the hand of its secretary, a priest-bishop.

The fact that Rome wrote to other churches is confirmed not only by Hermas’ passage, but also by Ignatius (Letter to the Romans 3:1: “You have taught others”) and by Bishop Dionysius of Corinth (c. 170), who, in citing all the good that Rome has done for “many churches in every city,” mentions another letter from Rome

to Corinth (Eusebius, Ibid. 4:23:10-11). Does this mean primacy for the early Roman church, even though it was not led by a single bishop? Any Christian community could have the right, in Christ, to correct another community, but in fact Rome seems to have exercised this right more frequently than any other church of the time and seems to have felt that such exercise was expected. We can never rule out the possibility that the church in the capital of the empire felt responsible for Christianity throughout the empire, but the main source of Rome's attention probably had religious rather than political roots. Remember that Peter, who embodied a moderate Christianity, and Paul, who had reconciled himself with a moderate Jewish/pagan Christianity that was thriving in Rome and recognized as an apostle, both died as martyrs in Rome. And Corinth was a church founded by Paul. So, the Roman community may have assumed responsibility for the Jewish/pagan Christianity of the Pauline churches as well, hence Clement's letter to Corinth. Thus, Rome would have written to other churches and taught them because it considered itself the heir to the pastoral office of Peter and Paul.

How was this letter received in Corinth? This letter, in addressing the problem of dissension in the Corinthian community, recalls that this is the second time this problem has been addressed, since Paul had done so in a letter [about 40 years earlier]. It seems that Clement's intervention was successful, because 2 Clement, a speech delivered to the church in Corinth by the presbyters and dating from 98-100, mentions that they owe their reinstatement to their positions to the intervention of 1 Clement.

B. Continuation of Romans and 1 Peter

There is no doubt that the author of 1 Clement was familiar with Paul's epistle to the Corinthians, but it is reasonable to assume that he was also familiar with the epistle to the Romans. The following passages are often compared:

1 Clement	Romans	
Opening	1:7	Grace and peace from God and Jesus Christ
32:2	9:5	Christ according to the flesh is from Israel
33:1	6:1	What shall we do/say:then? Sin?
35:5	1:29-32	List of vices
35:6	1:32	Not only doing things but taking pleasure
37:5	12:4-6	Many members in one body
50:6	4:7-8	Ps 32:1-2 on forgiveness

Similarly, it is reasonable to assert that Clement was familiar with the First Epistle of Peter:

1 Clement	1 Peter	
Opening	1:2	Grace and peace
Opening	1:17; 2:11	Sojourning (<i>paroikein. Paroikia: paroikos</i>)
7:4	1:19	precious blood of Christ
8:1	1:11	Spirit spoke through prophets
16:10:17	2:21-22	Christ as an example from Isa 53:9
30:2	5:5	Prov 3:34: God resists the proud (not LXX)
49:5	4:8	Prov 10:12: Love covers a multitude of sins (not LXX or MT)
57:1	5:5	"Submit yourselves to the presbyters"
59:2	2:9	Called from darkness into light

Beyond this fact, what matters is to understand how certain important themes common to the Epistle to the Romans and the First Epistle of Peter appear in 1 Clement. Let us first examine the main reason why Rome wrote to Corinth.

It seems that the Christians of Corinth removed from their liturgical functions certain presbyters whose character was irreproachable (44:6; 47:6). It is difficult to know the reason for this. Was the problem one of a fixed term of office or a lifetime position? Or was it that the Corinthians were accustomed to charismatic leadership rather than fixed offices, or even that there was a rebellion by impatient young people against the rule of the presbyters? The polemic against "jealous zeal" in 1 Clement 4-6 indicates that there may have been a more serious division (or "schism," as the author calls it) in which Christians of different convictions were attempting to take control of church offices. Perhaps a more radical group in Corinth claimed to be the true heir of Paul, while for Clement, moderate Roman Christianity was the true heir of Paul, since he was an apostle who had died "among us" (6:1). In any case, 1 Clement argues that presbyters should not be removed from office, because the order of the church has a divine aspect and should not be altered. Moreover, these internal conflicts caused by jealous zeal are known to outsiders and thus provide them with a dangerous tool for persecuting Christians. The experience of the Roman church, which saw zeal lead to the deaths of Peter, Paul, and a great multitude, makes this church very sensitive to the need for a united front against those "who depart from us" (47:7). Division among Christians is a great enemy; that is why, quoting Paul's hymn on love from 1 Cor 13:4-7, 1 Clement 49:5 adds: "Love does not admit schism; love does not give rise to dissension." In 51:1, those who led the dissent in Corinth are challenged to consider "the common hope." These people must say to themselves: "If sedition, quarrels, and schisms have arisen because of me, I will leave... Let the flock of Christ be at peace with the presbyters who lead it" (54:1-2). "You, therefore, who have laid the foundations of dissent, submit yourselves to the elders... Learn to be submissive" (57:1-2).

Earlier, we identified three themes common to the Epistle to the Romans and the Epistle of Peter. Let us examine how they are taken up by 1 Clement.

a. First, Jewish heritage, especially the cult

It is estimated that about a quarter of Clement's first epistle is a direct quotation from the Old Testament, almost always from the Greek version (LXX). What is striking for our purposes is the application of cultic language to the functions of church leaders. According to the Epistle to the Romans and the First Epistle of Peter, Christ's bloody death had sacrificial aspects; but for Christians, it was "spiritual sacrifices" that were recommended. A Christian like Paul performs a priestly service by preaching the Gospel, and the Christian people are a "royal priesthood," just as the Christian community is a "spiritual house" replacing the temple. Such a spiritualization of worship was less radical than the replacement of the priesthood, sacrifice, and place of worship advocated in Rome by the Epistle to the Hebrews. In 1 Clement, however, we see a revival of cultic terminology in a less spiritualized form; this constitutes a movement that goes beyond 1 Peter, but in a direction quite opposite to that advocated by the Hebrews. Let us compare the two different perspectives.

Hebrews 10:10-12,18

We are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. On the one hand, every priest daily stands liturgically ministering [*leitourgein*], again and again offering the same sacrifices that can never take away sins. But this man [Jesus Christ] has offered forever one sacrifice for sins. . . . There is no more offering for sins.

1 Clement 40:1-5; 41:2

We ought to do in order [*taxis*] all things that the Master commanded us to perform at fixed times. He set offerings and liturgies [*leitourgia*], so that there should be no random and irregular pattern, but fixed times and hours. Moreover, He has set by His sovereign will where and by whom He desires these things to be done. Those, therefore, who make their offerings at the appointed times are acceptable and blessed. . . . To the high priest his proper liturgical ministries are allotted. To the priests their proper cultic place has been appointed. To the levites their proper ministries have been assigned. The lay person is bound by the rules laid down for the lay people. . . . Not in every place are the sacrifices offered (perpetual offerings, or free-will offerings, or sin offerings, or trespass offerings), but only at Jerusalem . . . before the sanctuary, at the altar, after inspection by the high priest.

Why does Clement place so much emphasis on the divinely established order in the Jerusalem church and among its staff? Chapter 42 provides a clear answer: because there is a similar divinely designed order in Christian ministry. God sent Christ, who appointed apostles; and they, in turn, with the help of the Holy Spirit, preached the gospel and appointed proven converts as bishops and deacons. Indeed, this latter development had been foretold in the (modified) LXX of Isaiah 60:17: "I will set their bishops in righteousness and their deacons in faith." Thus, if Judaism had received from God a high priest, priests, and Levites, God's arrangement for his Christian people is Christ, the apostles, bishops, and deacons. 1 Clement (63:1; 64) agrees with the Letter to the Hebrews in identifying Jesus Christ as the high priest, but with the effect of consolidating the Christian equivalent of a Levitical structure, not replacing it. The Pauline pastoral epistles, especially 1 Timothy and Titus, speak at length about presbyter-bishops and deacons without any reference to Levitical imagery or cultic functions. Yet, according to 1 Clement 44:4, one of the roles of the episcopate is to offer sacrifices. The main fault of the Corinthians was to have removed the presbyters from their liturgical office, thus upsetting a divine model revealed when the apostles appointed bishops (presbyters) and deacons to succeed to the liturgical ministry (42:4; 44:2). At about the same time that Clement was writing this exhortation to Corinth, the Didache 14:1-3 interpreted the Eucharist as the fulfillment of Malachi's prophecy in 1:11 concerning a pure sacrifice offered among the pagans. In some churches in Asia Minor, the presidency of the Eucharist was becoming a function of the episcopate-presbyterate (already an established model in the eyes of Ignatius around 110). Thus, although Clement does not identify presbyters as those who presided over the Eucharist and does not call them priests, his work reflects a trend at the turn of the first century that would consolidate and develop throughout the second century until the bishop, presbyters, and deacons were represented as the high priest, Christian priests, and Levites, centered on their role in the Eucharist as a Christian sacrifice. Thus, this Roman Christianity, which grew out of the temple-faithful Christianity of Jerusalem, triumphed vicariously in the direction given by 1 Clement toward a more than spiritual survival of Levitical ideals.

b. Second, obedience to civil authority

As part of his campaign to convince the church of Corinth to reinstate the presbyters who had been deposed to their liturgical ministry, 1 Clement goes beyond the Levitical order that God revealed to Israel and appeals to a divine order in chapter 20, often considered to reflect Stoic influence, as does 1 Clement's appeal to moral order. But for our purposes, the influence of the Epistle to the Romans and that of 1 Peter is particularly visible in 1 Clement's appreciation of the order manifested in the Roman system of imperial government. If, in

41:1, the “orderly rank” in Levitical worship is presented as a model for combating Christian schism and dissent in Corinth, another model is found in chapter 37 in the “orderly rank” of an army with its generals, prefects, tribunes, etc. “Let us therefore serve as soldiers, my brothers,” exhorts 1 Clement, “for each one, in his orderly rank, carries out the emperor’s command” (37:1.3). Neither Caligula’s madness nor Claudius’ expulsion of Jewish Christians from Rome discouraged Paul from advising: “Let every person be subject to the governing authorities” (Romans 13:1). Nero’s persecution did not prevent Peter (2:13) from exhorting: “Be subject, for the Lord’s sake, to every human institution [...] to the emperor as to a supreme ruler. Similarly, “the repeated misfortunes and calamities that befell [under Domitian]” (1 Clement 1:1) did not dissuade Clement from praying to God in 60:4–61:1: “Grant us to be obedient to our princes and rulers on earth, for you, Master, have given them the power of the kingdom.” The “visit of the kingdom of Christ” may still be to come (50:3), but part of the power of the kingdom of God is apparently manifested in the Roman Empire. There is not in 1 Clement such a strong sense of final eschatology as in Paul or even in 1 Peter. Clement’s vision of a well-ordered church, modeled to some extent on the imperial system, implies a church that will have more than a passing existence. Since this model of order comes from God, it can be appealed to in order to exhort discipline. God, who places men above others in the civil and natural order (61:2), has placed the presbyters above the flock of Christ (54:2). Just as the Romans and 1 Peter exhort submission to civil authorities, 1 Clement 57:1 exhorts “submission to the presbyters.”

In itself, obedience to church leaders is not new in the Christian world. Already, more than 40 years earlier, Paul wrote to the Thessalonians: “We ask you, brothers, to recognize [...] those who lead you in the Lord and to hold them in high esteem in love” (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13) and to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 16:15-16), calling for submission to those who exercised ministry among the saints. What is new in 1 Clement is the close parallel drawn between submission to elders and obedience to civil or military leaders. This parallelism reinforces the thesis that the Roman church necessarily had to quickly adapt to the impressive organization of the empire by appreciating the strength of the system at its true value. The repulsion manifested in Roman law for civil disobedience and schism seems to have constituted an a fortiori argument for not sympathizing with schism in the church.

c. Thirdly, aspects of the church structure

1 Clement does not specifically refer to house churches, but the attention given to domestic order in 1:3 and chapter 21 (passages dealing with community leaders, elders, and young people) suggests that the house church was still an important feature of the Roman scene. “The church of God dwelling in Rome” (beginning of 1 Clement) was likely a spiritual whole composed of many individual house churches. The importance of “houses” is reflected in the emphasis placed by 1 Clement 11:1; 12:1.3 on “hospitality” (*philoxenia*), a word found in the New Testament only in Romans 12:13 and Hebrews 13:2.

With regard to the structure of presbyter-bishops, there is little change in 1 Clement compared to 1 Peter. The warning not to exalt oneself above the flock of Christ (16:1) is similar in theme to the warning given to presbyter-shepherds in 1 Peter 5:3: “Do not lord it over those entrusted to you, but be examples to the flock.” The notable development in 1 Clement does not concern the presbyteral structure, but the insistence that the presbyterate is derived from the succession of the apostles by appointment. 1 Clement 44:1-2 reports that the apostles feared that the episcopate would be a source of conflict, and so they planned that upon their death, “other approved men would succeed them in their liturgical ministry.” 1 Clement 42:4 and 44:3 clearly indicate that these men were appointed by the apostles. Didache 15:1, on the other hand, takes a different perspective, exhorting its recipients to “appoint bishops and deacons worthy of the Lord.” Similarly, in Titus 1:5, this apostolic delegate is charged with appointing presbyters in each city himself, thus fulfilling what Paul was unable to do. So we may ask ourselves: in speaking of the appointment of presbyter-bishops by the apostles, did 1 Clement oversimplify things, or even invent them outright? However, Acts 14:23 indicates that Barnabas and Paul appointed elders in each church, and it is unlikely that several independent statements concerning apostolic appointment were made without any real basis. 1 Thessalonians 5:12 describes certain people as having authority over others in the Lord a few months after Paul founded the community—is it not likely that Paul himself was responsible for such an arrangement? Does 1 Clement 42:4, where the apostles appoint their first converts as bishops, not reflect the fact that the first convert offered his house as a meeting place for the congregation and ultimately supervised (*episkopein*) the congregation that met there, as in the case of Stephen (1 Cor 16:15-16)? Finally, we must remember that Clement had to persuade the Corinthians who received his letter; they would certainly have recognized and rejected a pure invention concerning the origins of the presbyterate. The most plausible solution seems to be that 1 Clement generalized an apostolic practice that was occasional but not consistent or universal.

In opposing the dismissal of the presbyters by the Corinthians, the author appealed to two authoritative models: the Levitical priesthood in Jerusalem and the imperial political and military organization. The Jewish high priesthood was hereditary, and during its two prosperous periods, the Roman imperium was transmitted by inheritance (family descent from Augustus to Nero, and from Vespasian to Domitian). Chaos had set in in the year 69 with the deposition of three emperors, and it was precisely this chaos that the Corinthians were introducing into the church. Thus, from a functional point of view, apostolic appointment may have served in Clement’s mind as the Christian equivalent of Levitical and imperial inheritance, providing a divine guarantee for an orderly system of governance.

However, apostolic succession probably served an even more important purpose for the Roman church by justifying the Roman presbyterate in its rebukes to Corinth with apostolic authority. A warning appears in 1 Clement 59:1: "If some have disobeyed what has been said by God through us, let them know that they will become entangled in transgression and in no small danger." Obedience is exhorted in 1 Clement 63:2 "to what we have written through the Holy Spirit." Clement's assurance that divine communication comes through the word or writing of the Roman church is probably related to the style of the apostolic leadership in Jerusalem. Acts 15:28 contains a passage from a directive letter written by the apostles and elders of the church in Jerusalem to the regions under their influence: "It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us." Clement adopts the same authoritative style in giving directives to missionary churches such as Corinth. Even though Corinth was a church of the Pauline mission and not of the Jerusalem mission, this did not matter to Clement, for he associated Paul with Peter as "pillars" and "good apostles" (1 Clement 5:2-5), just as Paul, in 1 Corinthians 15:5-11, associated himself with Cephas (Peter), the Twelve, James, and all the apostles to form an authoritative 'we' when addressing the Corinthians: "Whether it was I or they, we proclaimed and you believed. Clement's conception of presbyters as the designated successors of these apostles allows the presbyterate in general (and certainly the Roman presbyterate in particular) to demand obedience to what "we" have said or written, as having divine sanction.

C. Evaluation

a. The controversy surrounding 1 Clement

1 Clement has been at the center of heated controversy in recent studies. On the one hand, there are those who have seen in this work the death knell of a truly Christian conception of church leadership, as the leadership by Spirit-filled charismatics that dominated the New Testament era gave way to a fixed and ossified succession of church offices, falsely (even misleadingly) presented as originating with the apostles and sanctioned by God. On the other hand, admirers of 1 Clement have regarded this letter as an authoritative justification of the "apostolic" approach to the episcopate, according to which, in the spirit of Jesus and his apostles, the governance of the church by bishops and presbyters was divinely specified. On both sides, many biblical scholars oversimplify the historical situation that prompted this letter, agreeing only that, for better or worse, 1 Clement has remarkably succeeded in shaping the future thinking of the church.

The debate over 1 Clement is biased by the assessment of the current organization of the church, and thus becomes a substitute for a battle between the passionate descendants of the Protestant reformers and the Catholics of the Council of Trent. On both sides, the human sociological factors behind either the charismatic functions in the churches of the 50s or the church leadership promoted by Clement are overlooked. On what basis can one declare that one church structure is more Christian than another, since Jesus himself does not seem to have addressed the question of the structure of a community that should continue his work? In fact, one may suspect that much of the aversion to 1 Clement stems not from the letter's response to the situation it faced, but from the subsequent developments and attitudes of the church, which used the letter to justify itself. A better attitude is to recognize that the problem lies not in the direction given by 1 Clement, but in the constant need for reformative vigilance to keep any church structure accountable to the Gospel.

b. Evaluation criteria

A fair assessment of 1 Clement must be made within the historical context in which the letter was written and by considering its contribution to the trajectory of Roman Christianity. It should be remembered that Christians had already been executed in Rome during Nero's reign and persecuted in certain parts of the empire during Domitian's reign. How could such a "foreign superstition," considered antisocial and atheistic, survive? According to Clement, the greatest enemy was internal disorder: the zealous jealousy of Christians towards their fellow believers. He countered this danger by calling for order, drawing on two important themes of Roman Christianity: a strong Jewish heritage and respect for imperial authority.

c. Jewish heritage

Drawing on Jewish heritage, 1 Clement drew on the symbolism of the Levitical priesthood and adapted it to provide significant support for the church structure that had developed in many churches at the end of the first century, namely a structure composed of presbyter-bishops and deacons. This structure is seen as rendering not only a social service to the community, but also a sacred service to God, not only a *diakonia* (service), but also a *leitourgia* (liturgical office). This liturgical office means for Clement that Christian ministers must be respected as members of an order approved by God and cannot be removed at will. Such a clearly articulated structure may have arisen out of social necessity, but 1 Clement ensures that the ministry does not fall victim to a survival-of-the-fittest attitude toward the structure; he demands unwavering allegiance from Christians to their presbyter-bishops in times of trouble, thereby enabling the church to face two hundred years of Roman persecution.

d. Respect for authority

Clement's admiration for military discipline betrayed, albeit in an embryonic form, the understanding that the Roman Empire would never be Christianized unless Christianity understood and took advantage of its

adversary's strength. Rome was reasonably tolerant of private worship, provided that it was not immoral and did not challenge the requirement of outward conformity to religious and social order. Thus, early Christian writings relating to the Roman church demanded obedience to the Roman government; 1 Clement goes further by instilling similar obedience to church authorities. Christianity would succeed because its communities were well structured and its institutions effectively retained converts. It would shape an organization as rigid (if not more rigid) than that of the empire and offer greater motivation for adherence. Thus, 1 Clement proposes a formula not only for surviving persecution, but also for defeating the persecutor, which would happen later when Christianity became the official religion of the empire.

e. The Christian push towards Rome

Clement is merely continuing an existing trajectory. The Acts of the Apostles simplifies Christian history by focusing the unfolding of events around Peter and Paul and by beginning the history of the church in Jerusalem and ending it in Rome. In this scheme, the Acts embody the judgment that Christian destiny rested on Rome and the pagan world it ruled. It was an expression of the conviction that Christianity was good news for all and therefore had to move toward Rome, the center of the world. It is noteworthy that Paul, who did not like to visit churches founded by others, ardently desired to go to Rome (Romans 1:10, 15; 15:22). Why Rome? Athens was the museum of classical antiquity, serving as a great repository of cultural heritage, but Paul shows no sign of wanting to go to Athens. Alexandria was the library of classical knowledge, but Paul never seems to have been there. Does the focus on Rome rather than Athens or Alexandria betray an early understanding that the power to change the world lay in the political capital, not in the museum or library? The early Christians may have been quite pragmatic and unromantic in translating the incarnation into the fact that the gospel had to use political structures as its vehicle. If there was a "Christian push toward Rome," it was partly because that city was the center of the mechanism that governed the known world and through which that world could be claimed for Christ.

f. The dangers of copying the Roman Empire

The later Roman church would continue Clement's choice in favor of clear order rather than ambiguity and freedom, which allowed divisions within it. Of course, by borrowing the model of imperial authority, it consciously or unconsciously embarked on the path of imperial domination and exposed itself to the risk that the values of the Roman system would dominate the church from within. In this respect, Johannine Christianity exercises a form of balance by reminding us that there is only one true shepherd, Christ, and that Peter was given a pastoral role only after he had fulfilled the criteria of the good shepherd by the way he had given his life. Paradoxically, this means that Nero did the Roman church a service when he martyred its great apostle in the circus near Mount Vatican. Equally paradoxically, Constantine did not necessarily do that same church a service when he paved the way for its bishop to later become *pontifex maximus* of the Roman religion. The Caesar who sought to kill Christianity was perhaps less dangerous than the Caesar who sought to use it as an ally.

g. Two criteria for today: faith and love

Our Christian ancestors may have provided the Roman church with useful standards for self-criticism. In the late 50s, Paul wrote the first praise of the Roman church: "Your faith is proclaimed throughout the whole world" (Romans 1:8). Fifty years later, in the introduction to another letter to the Romans, Ignatius praised the Roman church as "preeminent in love." Praised for its faith and love since its inception, the Roman church may be destined to be evaluated on these two points.

Paul's assessment of Rome's faith proved remarkably prescient in light of the second century, when those who were later recognized as heretics, such as Valentinus, Marcion, and Tatian, came into conflict with the Roman presbyters. This particular sensitivity to the content of the Christian faith may explain why, in order to combat heresy, Irenaeus first cited Rome: "It is in this order and by this succession [of Roman bishops] that the ecclesial tradition of the apostles and the preaching of the truth have come down to us" (Against Heresies 3:3:2-3). In the Christological and Trinitarian controversies of the 3rd and 4th centuries, various bishops of the great Christian centers (Antioch, Alexandria, Constantinople) were deposed for heresy or excommunicated, but Rome had an enviable record of prudent orthodoxy. Even in a divided Western Christianity, many who disagree with Rome's theology acknowledge that it has preserved a zeal for orthodox faith.

But what about preeminence in love? For some, touched by Roman zeal for orthodox faith, a lack of love is apparent; others would speak of a love that must chastise. Be that as it may, during our century, thanks to the actions of a Roman bishop, John XXIII, many people who were not faithful to the Roman church felt for a moment a touch of love, which changed their view of Rome. Perhaps, then, a lesson can be learned from the history of the early church of Rome. If "the church that dwells in Rome" must preach to other churches and exhort them, this exhortation will be more effective when zeal for a "faith proclaimed throughout the world" is embodied in a church "preeminent in love."

10. Supplements to Our Knowledge of Early Roman Christianity p. 184-210

In the previous chapters, we used four documents written over a period of forty years (58-96) to reconstruct the dominant form of Christianity in Rome at the time of the New Testament. This was a form of Christianity that had its origins in the Jerusalem mission, was associated with the position of the Jerusalem apostles (especially Peter) toward Judaism, and remained faithful to its Jewish origins, heritage, and traditions even as the Christian community in Rome grew to include more and more members of pagan origin. However, in addition to the four works examined, many other writings have been associated by scholars with early Roman Christianity. Some are New Testament writings considered to have been addressed to Rome or sent from Rome; others are extra-testamental writings from the period up to the year 150. Let us consider some of these works, excluding only those that are fanciful or implausible, in order to verify our hypothesis of Roman Christianity.

A. Paul to the Philippians p. 185

a. Where Was This Letter Written?

This letter was sent to Philippi by Paul from prison (1:13, 17, 19). The two main places of imprisonment considered are Ephesus (around 56-57) and Rome (around 61-63). Although no imprisonment in Ephesus is mentioned in Acts, such an ordeal is not unlikely, given Paul's references in the late 50s to what he suffered in Ephesus or Asia (1 Cor 15:32; 2 Cor 1:8-10). Most scholars today accept the Ephesus hypothesis, as the proximity of this city to Philippi makes possible the three or four round trips between Philippi and Paul in prison mentioned in the letter. Furthermore, they find that the epistle to the Philippians is closer in theme to the epistles of the late 50s (Galatians, 1-2 Corinthians, Romans) than to the epistles to the Colossians and Ephesians, which are dated to Rome in the early 60s. However, these arguments lose their force if we accept the critical hypothesis that the epistles to the Colossians and Ephesians are post-Pauline and date from after 70, so that we know nothing of what Paul wrote from Rome in the early 60s to be able to make a comparison. Furthermore, the problem is complicated by the assertion of many scholars that the epistle to the Philippians itself is composite, consisting of several letters that were not all written at the same time. The Roman hypothesis, which was almost universally accepted before the 18th century and still has respectable defenders, is supported by Paul's imprisonment in Rome, which is reliably recorded (Acts 28:16, 30), and by Marcion's statement around 150 that Paul wrote the Epistle to the Philippians from his prison in Rome.

b. Reconciliation between Paul's statements and the Roman milieu

Here is a reconciliation table

Letter to the Philippians	Roman Christianity
Reference in Phil 1:13 to the Praetorian Guard and in 4:22 to the Christians in the house of the emperor (Caesar).	Acts 28:16 mentions that Paul was kept in Rome, and Romans 16:11 mentions Christians belonging to Narcissus, perhaps the person who was a close advisor to Emperor Claudius.
In Philippians 1:1, Paul greets the bishops and deacons of the church in Philippi.	This dual structure of "bishops/deacons" is attested to in Rome in the 80s and 90s in 1 Peter and 1 Clement, and Paul would confirm that it existed there at the time of writing his letter.
In Philippians 1:12-13, Paul recounts what actually happened when he arrived as a prisoner: "I want you to know that what has happened to me has really helped to advance the gospel, so that my imprisonment in Christ has become known throughout the whole praetorium."	Romans 1:15: "I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome."
Phil 1:15-16: "Some, it is true, do so out of envy and rivalry, but others proclaim Christ with good intentions. These act out of love. They know that I am here to defend the Gospel."	It was the Jewish Christians/Christians of pagan origin in Rome who insisted on circumcision who were guilty of "zealous jealousy" toward Paul and contributed to his martyrdom by the Romans under Nero.
In Philippians 2:17, Paul speaks of himself in prison as "being poured out as a sacrifice [<i>thysia</i>] and liturgical service [<i>leitourgia</i>] for your faith."	In Romans 12:1, Paul exhorted the Romans to "offer their bodies as a living sacrifice [<i>thysia</i>], holy and pleasing to God, which is spiritual worship," and in Romans 15:16, Paul spoke of himself as a minister (<i>leitourgos</i>) of God in the priestly service of the Gospel.
In Philippians 3:4-7, Paul presents his status as a Jew ("circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee...").	Romans 11:1: "For I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin..."
Phil. 3:18-19: "For many, as I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, behave as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their end is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their	Romans 16:18: "For such people do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own belly. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people."

glory is in their shame, with minds set on earthly things.”	
---	--

Overall, if the Epistle to the Philippians was written in Rome in the early 60s, it could easily fit into the picture of Roman Christianity and Paul's experiences in Rome, where he had been warmly welcomed but had to contend with supporters of circumcision who contributed to his martyrdom by the Romans under Nero.

B. The Epistle to the Ephesians p. 188

The epistles to the Colossians (Col 4:3, 18) and to the Ephesians (Eph 3:1; 4:1; 6:20) also appear to have been written by Paul while in prison. However, many biblical scholars believe that the epistle to the Colossians is post-Pauline. An even greater number of biblical scholars believe that the epistle to the Ephesians is post-Pauline and was written with inspiration from the epistle to the Colossians, but by another hand. For our analysis, we will work with the post-Pauline hypothesis.

a. Where Was this Letter Written?

Which imprisonment is considered a fictional setting in both letters? When the letters were considered authentic, it was generally assumed that this referred to Paul's imprisonment in Rome between 61 and 63. If we assume a fictional setting, the argument in favor of Rome (the city where Paul died) is perhaps even stronger, as the author would hardly have chosen a lesser-known imprisonment. But even if Rome was in the author's mind, we must be extremely cautious in determining what this tells us about the actual situation of Roman Christianity in the 80s. Did he know the situation of the Roman Church, or was he using his imagination?

b. Connections with Writings Associated with Rome

Some biblical scholars consider it “very likely” that 1 Clement and 1 Peter knew Ephesians. Although the author of the Epistle to the Ephesians drew inspiration from several Pauline epistles, many commentators have emphasized its close relationship with the Epistle to the Romans. There are therefore external reasons for linking the Epistle to the Ephesians with Rome. Furthermore, while the author of the Epistle to the Ephesians draws heavily on the Epistle to the Colossians, he seems to avoid a crucial part of the latter, namely Col 2:16-23, which describes the Jewish Gnostic heresy that gave rise to the entire Epistle to the Colossians. In other words, the author of the epistle to the Ephesians does not seem to think that the local circumstances of the epistle to the Colossians will be useful to his readers, and no particular heresy or group of adversaries seems to be considered by him.

Let us compare the letter to the Ephesians with writings associated with Rome.

Letter to Ephesians	Writings associated with Rome
Ephesians 2:18-22 speaks of Christians as forming a house of God that grows to become a holy temple in the Lord.	Peter 2:5 speaks of living stones that are built into a spiritual house.
Ephesians 2:12-16 speaks of the Gentiles as a group that was once alienated from the community of Israel, but is now brought near by the blood of Christ, so that the dividing wall is broken down and the two are now one.	Romans 11:17-24 considered the Gentiles to be wild olive branches grafted onto the tree of Israel, and according to <u>1 Clement</u> 5, the Roman Church had reconciled the images of Peter and Paul, so that the two, who were once divided in their understanding of Christ's implications for Jews and Gentiles, were now pillars of the same Church.

Biblical scholars have argued that the author of the Epistle to the Ephesians emphasized the essential continuity between the original Church of Jerusalem, composed of Jewish Christians, and the predominantly pagan Church of Paul's mission. Rome fit perfectly with this vision. Paul, in the Epistle to the Ephesians, while referring to himself as an apostle (Eph 1:1), seems to consider “the apostles” on whom the (universal) Church is founded as another group (even if he does not exclude himself) — a vision in harmony with that of Rome, where “the good apostles” were ranked in the order of Peter and Paul. Thus, in some respects, the Epistle to the Ephesians may well correspond to Roman Christianity in the 80s. However, the argument in favor of a link between the Epistle to the Ephesians and Rome as its place of origin remains very tenuous.

As for the other so-called Pauline epistles, such as 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, and Titus, current analyses do not allow us to determine their probable place of origin.

C. Gospel According to Mark p. 191

a. What do we know about Mark and the place of composition?

I. What does the New Testament say about this name?

- i. According to the Acts of Apostles
 - Acts 12:12 : “So, when he had considered this, he came to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose surname was Mark, where many were gathered together praying.”
 - Acts 12:25 : “And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem when they had fulfilled their ministry, and they also took with them John whose surname was Mark [to Antioch, then to Cyprus for the first missionary journey]”
 - Acts 13:13 : “Now when Paul and his party set sail from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia; and John, departing from them, returned to Jerusalem”
 - Acts 15:36-41: “Then after some days Paul said to Barnabas, “Let us now go back and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they are doing.” Now Barnabas was determined to take with them John called Mark. But Paul insisted that they should not take with them the one who had departed from them in Pamphylia, and had not gone with them to the work. Then the contention became so sharp that they parted from one another. And so Barnabas took Mark and sailed to Cyprus; but Paul chose Silas and departed, being commended by the brethren to the grace of God. And he went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.”
- ii. In the authentic Pauline letters
 - Philemon 1:24: [towards the end of the 50s or early 60s, while Paul was in prison] “as do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow laborers”
 - Col 4:10: “Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, with Mark the cousin of Barnabas (about whom you received instructions: if he comes to you, welcome him)”
 - 2 Tim 4:11: [Paul is in prison and close to death] “Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry”
- iii. En 1 Pierre (vers 80)
 - 1 Peter 5:13: She who is in Babylon, elect together with you, greets you; and so does Mark my son

Do these three references refer to the same person?

- A first problem: do ii) and iii) refer to the same person? The imprisonment in 2 Timothy probably took place in Rome, as did the imprisonment in Colossians/Ephesians. The idea of two Marks in Rome in the 60s, one associated with Paul, the other with Peter, seems much less likely than the idea that they were the same man.
- A second problem: is the Roman Mark (ii and iii) also the John Mark in Jerusalem in i) who, in the 40s, was associated with Paul and Peter (through the house of John Mark's mother)? A priori, the fact that Mark and John Mark were both missionaries argues for the same person. A posteriori, in the 80s, the two were implicitly identified by the author of Colossians, who linked Mark to Barnabas, just as Acts closely associated John Mark with Barnabas. It seems that around 50 AD, Mark was perhaps closer theologically to Peter than to Paul in the dispute at Antioch, just like Barnabas (Galatians 2:13), and that this is why Barnabas and Mark separated from Paul after this dispute. Mark may have changed his attitude towards Paul afterwards.

II. What does tradition say about this name and the gospel associated with it?

- i. According to what Papias, bishop of Hierapolis at the beginning of the 2nd century, heard from a disciple of Jesus' disciples (reported by Eusebius, Church History, 3:39:15), a certain Mark, who had not been a disciple of Jesus and had not heard him, became Peter's interpreter and thus recorded in writing what had been said and done by Jesus. Mark's account, although not in order and representing a memory of Peter's oral adaptations to his listeners, was neither erroneous nor false. It should be noted that Papias knew 1 Peter, and so when he describes Mark as Peter's interpreter, he was almost certainly thinking of the Mark whom Peter, writing from Rome, called “my son.”
- ii. Origen (reported by Eusebius, Ibid., 6:25:5) identifies the evangelist with the Mark of 1 Peter.
- iii. Jerome, in his commentary on verse 24 of Philemon, expresses his opinion that the Mark mentioned there is the author of the Gospel.

In short, it seems likely that at the beginning of the 2nd century, there was a tradition that Mark, probably John Mark of Jerusalem, who had traveled with Paul in the 40s and had been a companion of Peter and Paul in Rome in the 60s, had written a gospel in Rome under Peter's influence just before or shortly after Peter's death (which took place no later than 67).

Is this tradition reliable?

Three factors are involved: Mark, Peter and Rome.

- i. Firstly, did (John) Mark really write the Gospel? The modesty of this claim works in its favor, for the presumed author is not a famous apostle, nor a disciple with an unblemished career, nor an eyewitness to Jesus (despite John Mark's residence in Jerusalem). It is difficult to explain an uncontested tradition of authorship attached to such an unlikely subject as Mark if there were not some truth to it. On the other hand, some would say that the evangelist does not seem to know the geography of Palestine and therefore cannot be the John Mark of Acts.
- ii. Secondly, did Mark obtain his tradition from Peter? If Mark was not an eyewitness, where did he get his knowledge of Jesus? According to the New Testament, Peter had stayed with John Mark; and in Rome, Mark was Peter's companion, even his "son." Even without solid information, would we not be tempted to assume that Mark got his information from Peter? Even biblical scholars who believe that the evangelist had contact with an eyewitness admit that much of the Gospel tradition is better explained as derived from earlier sources rather than from oral accounts of eyewitnesses. As for the vivid and colorful scenes that might seem to come from an eyewitness, Peter is absent from most of them, so there is no internal reason to make him the agent of such presentations. And even in the scenes where Peter does appear, such as the transfiguration, Gethsemane, and the denials, most biblical scholars consider these scenes to be highly theological. Furthermore, Mark's portrayal of Peter is the least favorable of all the Gospels, and there are important Petrine scenes in Matthew that are absent from Mark. There would therefore be little internal reason to justify Papias' portrayal of Mark as Peter's interpreter, or to support Justin's designation of Mark as Peter's "memoirs."
- iii. Third, was Mark's Gospel written in Rome? The absence of a serious traditional competitor favors the historicity of the 2nd-century tradition that points to Rome. Nevertheless, since the epistles of Paul and Peter associate Mark with Rome, it is not impossible that, if Mark was considered the evangelist, the association of his gospel with Rome represents an ancient hypothesis. Does analysis of the gospel confirm this hypothesis? The gospel explains Aramaic expressions (Mk 3:17; 5:41; 7:11, etc.) and basic Jewish customs (Mk 7:3-5), so that Palestine as the place of composition can be plausibly ruled out. There are more Latinisms in Mark's Greek than in any other gospel, and this statistic suggests an environment where Latin was frequently spoken. In particular, it has been argued that the bronze coin *kodrantēs* in Mark 12:42, "two *lepta* that make up a *quadran*," was not in circulation in the eastern part of the empire, so Mark would be proposing a monetary equivalence for Western readers. Mark 15:21 identifies Simon of Cyrene as "the father of Alexander and Rufus," presumably because these two sons are known to Mark and his readers; and attention has been drawn to the only other Rufus in the New Testament who lived in Rome (Romans 16:13), but this identification is uncertain. Most scholars believe that the authors of Matthew and Luke knew and used Mark independently of each other in the two decades following its writing, and we can therefore assume that the place of composition was a place that had contact with other Christian communities far removed from each other. Overall, therefore, the internal data are not unfavorable to the tradition that Rome was the place of origin of Mark.

In short, we cannot reject the likelihood that the author of the Gospel is Mark and that it was written in Rome. But we can doubt that Peter was the source of this Gospel.

- b. How is the Gospel of Mark related to the three documents associated with Rome?
 - I. Although Clement shows that he is familiar with the information about Jesus contained in the Synoptic Gospels, it is very difficult to be certain that the author knew of any specific gospel. Furthermore, the absence of any reference to Mark in early post-NT Roman documents poses a problem for the thesis that Mark was composed in Rome and especially for the thesis that Mark originated with Peter, the great apostle of the Roman Church.
 - II. Similarly, while the author of 1 Peter is familiar with the elements relating to Jesus found in the Gospels, we can suspect that he drew his knowledge from a tradition that predated the writing of the Gospels; there is therefore no reason to think that he used Mark. Even some of the themes addressed are not specific enough, such as the ransom aspect of Jesus' death (1 Peter 1:18 || Mark 10:45) or the persecution associated with the coming of the Parousia (1 Peter 4:13 || Mark 13), to be attributed to the particular theology of the Roman Church.

III. Finally, let us compare the Gospel according to Mark and the Letter to the Romans on certain themes.

Letter to Romans	Gospel according to Mark
11:7-8: "What then? Israel has not obtained what it seeks; but the elect have obtained it, and the rest were blinded. Just as it is written: <i>God has given them a spirit of stupor, Eyes that they should not see And ears that they should not hear, To this very day</i> (Isa 6:9)"	4:11-12: "And He said to them, "To you it has been given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but to those who are outside, all things come in parables, so that ' <i>Seeing they may see and not perceive, And hearing they may hear and not understand; Lest they should turn, And their sins be forgiven them.</i> '" (Isa 6:9-10)"
13:9-10: "For the commandments, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, You shall not covet, and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law."	10:19: "You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery,' 'Do not murder,' 'Do not steal,' 'Do not bear false witness,' 'Do not defraud,' 'Honor your father and your mother.'" and 12:29-30: "Jesus answered him, "The first of all the commandments is: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This is the first commandment.""
14:9: "For to this end Christ died and rose and lived again, that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living."	12:27: "He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living. You are therefore greatly mistaken"
1:3-4: "concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead"	12:35-37: "Then Jesus answered and said, while He taught in the temple, "How is it that the scribes say that the Christ is the Son of David? For David himself said by the Holy Spirit: 'The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.'" ' Therefore David himself calls Him 'Lord'; how is He then his Son?" And the common people heard Him gladly."
14:20: "Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All things indeed are pure, but it is evil for the man who eats with offense."	7:19: "because it does not enter his heart but his stomach, and is eliminated, thus purifying all foods?"
11:25-26: "For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that hardness (<i>porosis</i>) in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: The Deliverer will come out of Zion, And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob"	3:5: "And when He had looked around at them with anger, being grieved by the hardness (<i>porosis</i>) of their hearts, He said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored as whole as the other."

What conclusions can we draw? Certain themes, such as the reference to Isaiah 6:9 or the enumeration of the Ten Commandments and their synthesis in the commandment of love, were common Christian themes (Acts 28:27; John 12:40). At times, Mark seems more severe than Paul, as on the question of dietary rules, or even more radical than Paul, as in his assertion that the traditions of the Pharisees are those of men and not of God, and are even sometimes contrary to God's will (Mark 7:7-9). With expressions such as "the Pharisees and all the Jews," using the third person, Mark gives the impression that his audience is not Jewish.

In short, this comparison of Mark with the three documents associated with Rome is inconclusive, partly because it is unclear whether Mark was written to confirm a community in its view of things or to correct it and help it change its mind. In the latter case, Mark may well be in conflict with some of these Roman documents.

c. How could the Gospel of Mark be associated with Roman Christianity?

Let us limit our analysis to listing observations about Mark which, if the gospel had been written in Rome, could either challenge or support our reconstruction of the dominant Christianity in Rome, namely that derived from Jerusalem, with strong Jewish origins and continued loyalty to the Jewish cultic heritage. The difficulty of this analysis stems from our inability to distinguish with certainty between the writing or editing of Mark and the tradition that was transmitted to him—a certainty that, if possible, would make it easier to isolate the situation of the evangelist and his community.

- I. Negative Challenges
 - i. Even if, during the last third of the first century, Christians of pagan origin constituted an ethnic majority in Roman Christianity, could they have been as ignorant of fundamental Jewish customs regarding purity as Mark 7 suggests, if their Christianity continued to have strong ties to Judaism? One could respond that Rome's loyalty to the Jewish heritage was selective, focusing on worship rather than Pharisaic purification rituals; but it must be admitted that Mark seems to be addressing a pagan audience that knows virtually nothing about Judaism.
 - ii. The figure of Peter in the Gospel can pose problems. According to more moderate interpretations of Mark, during Jesus' ministry Peter is portrayed as someone who has good intentions but does not understand the Son of God. In more radical interpretations, Mark attacks Peter and the Twelve as proponents of a false Christology that emphasizes Jesus as a divine man confirmed by miracles, which raised false hopes of an imminent parousia, hopes linked to the Jewish revolt against Rome. This latter opinion (often refuted) can only be reconciled with Mark's location in Rome if the Gospel is considered a correction of the Roman idealization of Peter.
- II. Positive Support
 - i. Biblical scholars have detected in Mark an emphasis on persecution as inevitable and even as a present or imminent reality, which would be a reference to the events of the Jewish war against Rome, the flight of Christians from Jerusalem to Pella, the persecution under Nero, and the destruction of the Temple—in short, the events of the years 65-70. The anti-Jewish elements in Mark and the antipathy toward the high priest would be an apology addressed to the fellow citizens of the Christians of Rome, telling them that the same Jewish forces involved in the revolt against Rome were hostile to Jesus, so that the wrath of the Romans should be directed against the Jews, not against the Christians.
 - ii. More commonly, scholars have detected in Mark an insistence on the necessity of Jesus' suffering and crucifixion, so that Jesus cannot be understood without this perspective: it is only through suffering that the Christians of Mark's time can attain true faith in Jesus. In a tour de force, Mark transforms the suffering endured in Rome into a positive catechesis on a way of life in which redemption produces its effects.
 - iii. To some, Peter's death in Rome may have seemed like a defeat: the great apostle who had been delivered so many times from death at the hands of his Jewish adversaries had fallen before the Roman emperor. But Mark teaches that even the first of the Twelve could not fully understand Jesus without taking up his cross.

All this data is obviously inconclusive in the sense that attributing Mark to Rome, although it presents certain difficulties, could probably be reconciled with the situation of Christianity coming from Jerusalem to Rome. However, such an attribution would add little additional information to that which can be gleaned from other documents.

D. Ignatius to the Romans p. 202

While being transported under guard from Antioch, where he had been bishop, to Rome, where he would die as a martyr under Trajan (98-117), Ignatius wrote a series of letters. One of these letters is to the Romans. The letter provides little insight into Rome. A few facts can be listed, most of which have already been mentioned in previous chapters as part of our reconstruction of Roman Christianity:

- Ignatius' greeting "to the Church that presides in the principal city of the Roman province" is more laudatory and flattering than that addressed to any other Church. The Church of Rome is "worthy of honor, worthy of congratulations, worthy of praise, worthy of success, worthy of holiness." Since Ignatius agrees with Clement's greeting, which refers to "the Church of God that dwells in Rome," both works oppose the thesis that the community in Rome did not constitute a Church because it was not founded by the apostles.
- In particular, it is a Church "eminent in love," a Church that has never been jealous, a Church that has taught others.
- It is a Church that received instruction from the apostles Peter and Paul, which may explain Ignatius' respect.
- No single bishop is mentioned in Rome, probably because the Church still had the dual structure of presbyter-bishops and deacons.

E. The Shepherd of Hermas p. 203

Although no complete Greek text of this long and confusing work has survived, Irenaeus (Against Heresies 4:20:2) referred to it as Scripture; Origen (Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans 16:14) called it “inspired by God”; and Eusebius (Church History 3:3:6) reported that it was read publicly in churches. There is no doubt that it was written in Rome (Visions 1:1:1; 2:1:1; 4:1:2); and the suggestion that Clement sent it abroad (Ibid. 2:4:3) may mean that Hermas' revelations had ecclesiastical status in Rome. The work can be divided chronologically into two parts: visions 1 to 4 (where Clement is mentioned) may have been written at the beginning of the 2nd century, and the rest of the work, where the Shepherd makes his appearance, may have been written around 135-145. Hermas bears witness to Hellenistic traditions and concepts, but at the same time he was deeply influenced by Jewish traditions. This is an indication that Rome was home to a Jewish/pagan-origin Christianity that was strongly attached to Jerusalem and Jewish tradition. Although Hermas was probably of pagan origin, he is representative of this persistent trend in Roman Christianity. For example, the depiction of the Church as an old woman created before all things and for whom the world was established (Visions 2:4:1; see 2 Clement 14:1) is probably a reflection of Lady Wisdom, created before the beginning of the world (Sir 1:4) and who came to dwell in Israel (Sir 24:8-12), so that the Church becomes the continuation of Israel. As for the church structure, it is still composed of presbyter-bishops and deacons, a sign of its conservative spirit.

In any case, it is not really difficult to place Hermas within the trajectory of Roman Christianity described earlier. And just as 1 Clement took the opposite view of the Epistle to the Hebrews, which rejected the Levitical priesthood and worship, so Hermas takes the opposite view of Hebrews 6:4-6, which declares forgiveness impossible after “enlightenment.” Rome did not like extreme positions.

F. Legends of Peter and Simon Magus at Rome p. 205

a. Acts of Apostle

Acts 8:9-24 tells the story of a magician named Simon, originally from a city in Samaria, who was acclaimed as “the power of God called the Great.” Believing in Jesus, he was baptized by Philip; but later, he came to envy the gift of the Spirit that the apostles Peter and John could bestow. His offer of money to obtain this sacred power (hence the term “simony”) was angrily rejected by Peter, who judged Simon to be bound by iniquity. The story ends with Simon, fearing divine punishment, asking Peter to pray for him. Simon was not the only “magician” encountered by the preachers of the Gospel; and he appears in a more sympathetic light than Elymas bar Jesus, the magician and false prophet who opposed Paul in Paphos, Cyprus (Acts 13:6-11). Nevertheless, Simon became the subject of a legend that symbolically embodies the conflicts of the Church in the 2nd century.

b. Justin of Nablus

Around 155, Justin, a native of Nablus in Samaria, who came to Rome before the year 150 and was martyred there around 165, addressed his First Apology to Emperor Antoninus Pius (138-161). In chapter 26, he reports that Simon, a magician from Gitto in Samaria, practiced diabolical magic in Rome during the reign of Claudius (41-54), so that he was considered a god. Indeed, a statue was erected to him on an island in the Tiber between the two bridges, with the Latin inscription: *Simoni deo sancto*, “To Simon, the holy god.” A woman named Helen, a former prostitute, accompanied him, hailed as “the first idea generated by him” as a god. Menaeus, also a Samaritan, was Simon's disciple. It is quite clear that the statue Justin refers to is related to the marble inscription found on the island in the Tiber in 1574 and dedicated to the Sabine god Semo Sancus: *Semoni Sanco Deo Fidio Sacrum*. Some have thought that it was a misreading of the inscription that led Justin to compose the legend of Simon. It is much more likely that he knew the legend of Simon either in Samaria or in Rome and mistakenly associated the statue with the legend.

c. Irenaeus of Lyon (122-202)

Some twenty years later, Irenaeus, in Against Heresies 1:23, presents us with a more developed version of the legend of Simon. It is now very clear that it was Simon the Magician of Acts 8 who was honored with a statue during the reign of Claudius Caesar. He opposed the apostles; his faith in Jesus was a sham; and he was glorified as a god. He presented himself as the father of all; and his Phoenician slave companion, Helen, whom he saved by descending to deliver her from earthly contamination, was the first conception of his spirit. His thought is presented as Gnosticism in its own right; and he becomes the father of all Gnostic heresies, with Menander as his successor. It is true that Irenaeus does not say that Simon Magus came to Rome, but the reference to the statue seems to suggest it.

d. Writings from the early 3rd century

Shortly thereafter, the apocryphal Acts of Peter (180-225?), possibly composed in Asia Minor or Syria, tells us that Peter, summoned by a divine vision, came to Rome to refute Simon Magus, who was acclaimed as a god. At about the same time (222), Hippolytus, writing in Rome (Philosophumena or Refutation of All Heresies 6:1-

15), paid close attention to Simon Magus as a Gnostic and ancestor of Valentinus. Peter resisted him in Rome, and Simon Magus perished there when he was buried alive but did not rise again on the third day (Ibid. 6:20).

e. In the 4th century

By the 4th century, there was already a vast body of literature (wrongly) attributed to Clement of Rome. The term “pseudo-Clementines” is often used to refer to the Homilies and Clementine Recognitions, as well as certain letters addressed to James. Scholars have identified sources behind the Pseudo-Clementines dating back to the 2nd century, some of which are certainly of Judeo-Christian origin, i.e., composed by Jewish believers in Christ who considered the Christian faith to be the only difference between themselves and non-Christian Jews (Clementine Recognitions 1:43:2; 1:50:5-6). One of the prominent figures in the early sources of this literature is James, the brother of Jesus, whom the Lord ordained as bishop of Jerusalem (Ibid. 1:43:3). In a letter supposedly sent by Peter to James, the latter is called “lord and bishop”; and another letter from Clement to James addresses “the bishop of bishops who governs Jerusalem, the holy Church of the Hebrews, and the Churches everywhere.” In the underlying story, James is very successful in Jerusalem in his early days, converting the Jews of Jerusalem to the faith, to such an extent that even the high priest is ready to be baptized (Ibid. 1:69:8). But then Saul appears, physically attacking James and destroying the work of conversion, resulting in the flight of 5,000 persecuted Christians from Jerusalem to Jericho (Ibid. 1:70-71). This flight most certainly reflects the tradition that Christians fled to Pella after James’ death in the 60s, rather than joining the Jewish revolt against Rome. The superimposition of this event on Saul’s persecution of Christians before his conversion in the 30s leads scholars to suspect that the real target of the 2nd-century Pseudo-Clementine sources is the Christian Paul who, according to the judgment of later Jewish Christians, caused their failure to convert large numbers of Jews through his radical stance toward the Law. In the following chapter (Ibid. 1:72), Peter goes to Caesarea to confront Simon, a Samaritan magician, thus kicking off a very long series of disputes between Simon and Peter. The disputes take place in Caesarea, although Clement of Rome is the narrator, and from the outset, Peter intends to go “to the city of Rome” (Ibid. 1:12-13). Eventually, Simon flees Caesarea for Rome, where he will be publicly honored as a god; and after three months, Peter leaves Caesarea to follow him (Ibid. 3:63-74). Thus, even though Simon and Peter did not actually clash in Rome, this tradition is well known and was moved to Palestine, probably because the Pseudo-Clementines were written in the Palestine-Syria region.

These scattered data show that in the 2nd century, the legend that, in the early days of Christianity, an evil and diabolical thinker, Simon Magus, had been defeated by Peter, first in Palestine (Samaria) and then in Rome, was widely spread. The nature of Simon’s evil doctrine depends on the narrator’s point of view, for example Gnosticism (Justin [incipiently], Irenaeus, Hippolytus) or Hellenistic and anti-Jewish Christianity (reconstructed from the Pseudo-Clementines). In these legends, we find the trajectory of Peter’s image beyond his lifetime, through the Roman reaction to movements deemed heretical in the 2nd century, for example when Rome resisted both Valentinus the Gnostic and Marcion the arch-Pauline in the 140s.

G. 2 Peter p. 208

This work was written after the first epistle of Peter by another author, probably at a considerable interval. In fact, most biblical scholars date it to the second century based on its content and thought. Very Greek in style and thought, the second epistle of Peter has the characteristics of a farewell speech by Peter, comparable to Paul’s pseudepigraphical farewell speech in 2 Timothy 3-4. There is no internal indication of the place of origin, but the reference to a previous letter from Peter (2 Peter 3:1) raises the possibility that the Second Epistle of Peter is connected either with Asia Minor, which received the First Epistle of Peter, or with Rome, from where the First Epistle of Peter was sent. The indication that this previous letter from Peter was sent to the recipients of the second epistle of Peter (2 Peter 3:1: “This is the second letter I am writing to you”) is not precise, since 2 Peter 3:15-16 refers to letters from Paul known to the recipients (“has written to you”)—there is no geographical region common to the first epistle of Peter and the Pauline epistles.

But we may wonder what we learn about the author’s context from the implications of the letter. Peter is the most important authority for the author. If Peter’s authority must be defended, it is because the tradition that he and others have handed down, especially concerning the parousia, is opposed to false prophecies and false teachers (2 Peter 1:16–2:3). Paul’s epistles are known to the author and seem to be treated as Scripture (2 Peter 3:16–17). They are distorted, but this is because the difficult thoughts of “our beloved brother Paul” are misunderstood. Nevertheless, most of 2 Peter is not based on 1 Peter or Paul, the recognized authorities, but on the unrecognized epistle of Jude, “the brother of James” (Jude 1:1). Based on both the content and the reference to James, Jude is considered to have come from a Christianity deeply rooted in Judaism. In the 2nd century, the Roman Church, which originated in Jerusalem, was still inspired by Jewish traditions while exalting Peter and Paul in that order. Thus, the strange combination of authorities behind 2 Peter would have been quite at home in Rome. Indeed, one may wonder whether the false teachers and wicked distorters of Paul attacked in 2 Peter do not echo Rome’s struggle with Valentinus and his Gnostic disciples and with Marcion around 140.

In any case, as the final NT contribution to the Petrine trajectory, 2 Peter portrays Peter as a figure who embraces Paul while implicitly relying on James’s brother as an authority. Perhaps the key to Peter’s ecclesial usefulness during his lifetime was his ability to maintain the unity of the Christian center, being recognized as an apostle by Paul, without alienating the more conservative supporters of James.

Conclusion p. 211-216.

1. Summary on Antioch

In his analysis of Antioch, Meier describes a first generation marked by conflicts between different types of Christians of Jewish origin and their pagan converts. In the 40s, in Antioch, disputes broke out between the Hellenists and Paul on one side, and Peter and the disciples of James on the other. The issue at stake was the meaning of the Gospel in relation to the Jewish heritage. Until the second generation, the Christian tensions arising from these initial struggles persisted in Antioch, so that after 70, the local church included conservative and liberal Jewish Christians, as well as a growing majority of Christians of pagan origin. By introducing new ideas while combining the "old" traditions of the different tendencies, Matthew, the evangelist of Antioch, sought to maintain the unity of this heterogeneous Christianity by establishing a clear ecclesial identity. His conception of salvation history and the Law was more conservative than Paul's, but his attitude toward pagans was more liberal than that associated with James. The figure of Peter served as a bridge for Matthew, embodying the teaching of the Church and allowing him to insist on a centrist position. Apparently, this authority was still exercised by prophets and teachers, and Matthew was very careful to ensure that no particular current dominated and exercised a monopoly. Nevertheless, in the two decades following Matthew, and thus in the era of the next generation, a solid authoritarian structure composed of a single bishop, presbyters, and deacons emerged in Antioch. And Ignatius, the bishop of Antioch, became a propagandist for this structure in response to the incessant theological struggles between the Christian "left" and "right." Because of their openness to the pagan world, the more liberal Christians were moving toward Gnosticism, pushing a Christology elevated to a Docetism that erased the humanity of Jesus. At the opposite end of the spectrum, the Judaizers remained, even if they were relatively few in number. Adopting a middle ground, Ignatius seems to have had only marginal communion with the extremes, even if a complete schism did not yet exist. Ignatius's notion of the Catholic Church had Pauline roots, but a broader heritage.

2. Summary on Rome

In his analysis of Rome, Brown suggests that the strongest Christian tendency in Rome originated in Jerusalem in the 40s and represented an attitude similar to that of James and Peter toward Judaism. The pagans converted by this mission would therefore have been more faithful to the Jewish heritage than the pagans converted by the Pauline mission. When Paul wrote to Rome in the late 50s to gain support for his collection for Jerusalem and in the ultimate hope of visiting Rome, his position toward Judaism was more moderate than it had been before, a change due in part to experience and in part to the desire to be well received. This more moderate Paul was welcomed in Rome, but it was above all his martyrdom in that city (after being denounced by extremely conservative Judeo-Christian zealots?) that earned him a place of honor alongside Peter in the Roman list of heroes ("pillars"). The image of Peter remained dominant; and in the name of Peter (1 Peter) or Peter and Paul (in that order: 1 Clement), the Roman Church took up the ancient mission of Jerusalem to the pagans, attempting to instruct the other churches. These instructions presupposed the continuing value and imagery of the Jewish cultic heritage; for even the letter to the Hebrews, eloquently emphasizing the replacement of cult by Christ, failed to persuade Rome. At the end of the century, 1 Clement associated the Levitical heritage with another heritage characteristic of Rome's situation, namely, an appreciation of Roman imperial order and authority. Although Antioch had already attributed cultic and doctrinal authority to a single bishop (with presbyters and deacons under his command), Rome retained the plural structure of presbyter-bishops (with deacons under their command) for longer. Nevertheless, the authority of the Roman Church was no less great, for the ideology of the Levitical and imperial order was associated with the structure of the Church. Therefore, while Ignatius of Antioch influenced the Catholic Church in its definitive adoption of the triple order of bishops, presbyters, and deacons, Rome's appreciation of a fixed order based on apostolic succession, as seen in 1 Clement, gave this structure much of its sacred and sociological importance.

3. This study could be pursued in two directions.

- A. First, we emphasized the provisional nature of much of what we propose. We are aware of the weak links in the chain of evidence, particularly in the second generation. Meier, in positing that within two decades Antioch moved from the prophets/teachers of Matthew to the bishops/presbyters/deacons of Ignatius, is making a huge leap. Brown's diagnosis that the Epistle to the Hebrews is an unsuccessful correction addressed to Rome and his use of this attack as a mirror reflecting the Roman situation are bold, but constitute a plausible hypothesis in relation to a New Testament work about which we can only make assumptions. If other researchers are willing to study our thesis, they may be able to help us strengthen these weak links. We therefore extend an invitation to those who are tempted to pass a completely negative judgment: give us a better reconstruction that makes more sense of the disparate elements discussed. All biblical study involves reconstruction, and we reiterate that if we fail to gain acceptance for our own solution, we will be happy to have inspired someone else to propose a better one.
- B. Second, other Christian centers and their mixtures of Christianity need to be studied. For example, through the Pastoral Epistles, the Epistles to the Colossians and Ephesians, and the Acts, one can trace the currents of Pauline Christianity and their divergences after Paul's death. Studies on Johannine Christianity have already been carried out. If Ephesus (rather than Syria) was the center of the Johannine community, it may be that two powerful legacies, that of Paul and that of John (as well as other currents of Christianity), coexisted there in a tense relationship. Asia Minor was much more daring than Rome in the development of new Christian currents in the 2nd century. Does the life of the two churches in the 2nd century reflect their different lives in the 1st century,

with Ephesus as a region where no Christianity dominated and Rome as a region where a dominant (more conservative) Christianity prevailed?

4. For a holistic approach to Christianity

Some biblical scholars prefer to study the various works of the New Testament in isolation, without bothering to draw up an overall picture. This overlooks the fact that Peter, Paul, and James maintained relationships with each other, preserving *koinōnia* or communion, even when they disagreed. A work written later in the name and tradition of one sometimes mentions the other (2 Peter mentions Paul), or implicitly refers to the other's thinking (James rejects a Pauline slogan about faith and works), or deals with the same characters (Ignatius and Clement both mention Peter and Paul; the Pauline writings and 1 Peter both mention Mark). In other words, the Christianity of the works we have discussed was interdependent, and a proper interpretation of these works requires an effort to uncover this interdependence.

5. Studies that remain relevant today

The studies we conduct are not purely academic. Antioch may have disappeared as a church, but Rome continues to exist; and as we have seen, the advice of Paul and Ignatius to the early church in Rome remains good advice for the church in Rome today. On a broader level, the theological debates and political struggles, the changes in Christian existence and reinterpretations of Christian life, the internal divisions and external persecutions that marked the New Testament churches during the first three generations, all provide abundant lessons and paradigms for Christian churches and individual believers in our own time. For example, the place of a moderate center between the left and right wings that threatened to divide the church is one of the most enduring images left by the early church. In the 80s and 90s, both the church in Antioch (Matthew) and the church in Rome (1 Clement) appealed to the image of Peter as a symbol of the center. For James and Paul left a legacy to varying degrees in both churches, but it seems that during their lifetimes they were too absolute to serve as an ideal image of reconciliation for these communities. During his career, Peter was rebuked face to face by Paul, while being pulled in the opposite direction by James's men (Galatians 2:11-12). In a twist of history, his position, which saw him caught between two fires, was used after his death to justify a middle ground between those who used James and Paul as figureheads for increasingly harsh extremism.

André Gilbert, Gatineau, October 2025